FORTY MILLENNIUMS OF

CULTIVATION

修真四万年·卧牛真人

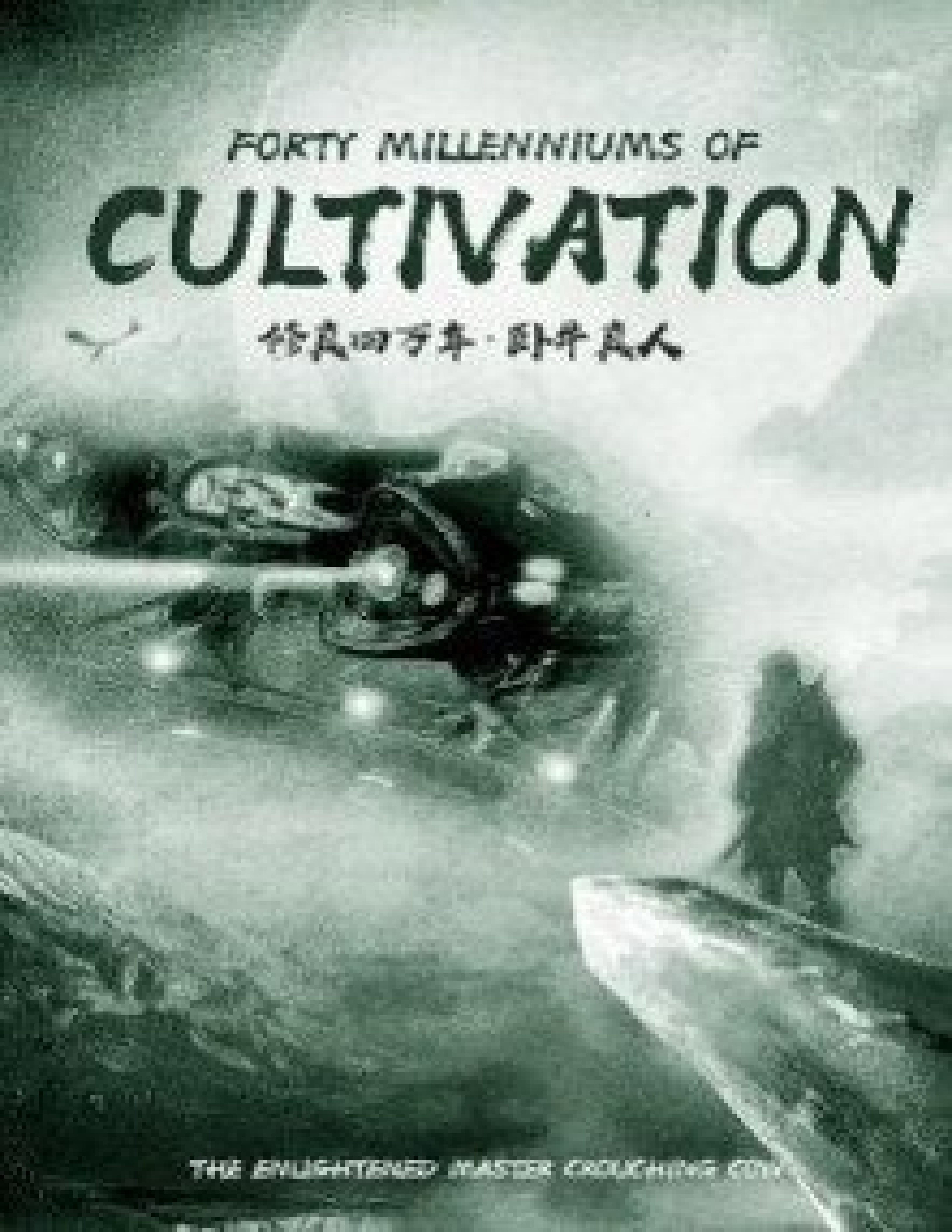

THE ENLIGHTENED MASTER CROUCHING COW

Forty Millenniums of Cultivation

The Enlightened Master Crouching Cow, □□□□

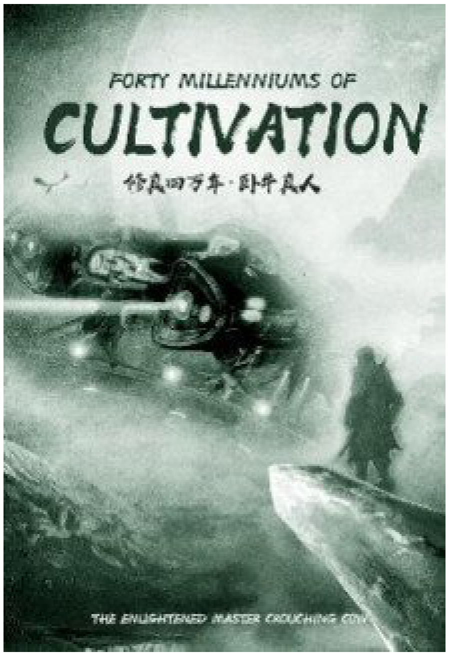
FORTY MILLENNIUMS OF
CULTIVATION
修真四万年·卧牛真人
THE ENLIGHTENED MASTER CROUCHING COW

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Forty Millenniums of Cultivation c1-2387

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    21. Chapter 2322 - Token of Trust!
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    23. Chapter 2324 - A Thousand Years Cannot Soothe the Pain!
    24. Chapter 2325 - Throne of Gods!
    25. Chapter 2326 - Fight For the Imperium For Another 100,000 Years!
    26. Chapter 2327 - What the—

27. Chapter 2328 - Good Brother, Let’s Challenge Blackstar the Great!
28. Chapter 2329 - At the End of the Trench!
29. Chapter 2330 - Li Yao Versus Blackstar!
30. Chapter 2331 - Put Out the Fire that You Started!
31. Chapter 2332 - A Valiant Cultivator!
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Chapter 1: Artifact Graveyard

Chapter 1: Artifact Graveyard

Lake Rusty.

Federal Special Waste Treatment Plant No. 23.

Also known as the “Artifact Graveyard.”

Growth of civilization has been fueled continuously by the powers of cultivation. Artifacts used to be out of reach back in the day, but the artifacts that could only be operated by Cultivators spread to every household. They became necessary items in ordinary lives, helping them with living, traveling, studying, and working.

They made the lives of people easier, but also brought forth a great deal of waste — artifact waste and metal scrap.

Artifact waste usually has quite some essence energy remaining in them, easily causing radiation pollution. The glyph arrays that compose the artifacts are highly volatile such that there is risk of explosion. If left unattended, artifact waste could cause major damage to the environment.

Therefore at the perimeter of every federal city, “Special Waste Treatment Plants” were installed in order to treat artifact waste.

Special Waste Treatment Plant No. 23, located at the southern outskirts of the Federal Cultivation City “Floating

Spear.”

Underneath the hazy yellow sky, a purple polluted swamp emits a heavy stench. A mountain peak of metal shards protrudes from the swamp like the spine of a dinosaur. Fragments of flying swords lay scattered chaotically on the peak. Sitting next to the swords was a rusted crystal golem; it’s vacuous eye socket showed its spirit fire had long extinguished. The only thing left was an essence eating bug, which poked out of the skull, cautiously looking around in the “Artifact Graveyard” where danger lurks on all corners.

“BOOM!”

Closeby within another mountain of trash, a discarded artifact’s glyph array began to fracture. Its excess essence energy suddenly exploded and sent half the mountain flying through the air.

Countless metal parts scattered in the sky like a maiden scattering flowers, spattering in all directions. The surrounding mountains were triggered into chain reactions. Looking up, all that could be seen was smoke and dust. It gave the image of a dance of demons that covered the entire sky.

Here, it appeared that life was forbidden. Only insignificant cockroaches and worms could consider this a paradise.

However...

Li Yao dormantly lurked behind a mountain of trash. Licking his cracked lips, he wore a dirt yellow windbreaker covered in dust that made him blend with the environment.

He shot a glance at the slowly rising mushroom cloud nearby. In his clear youthful eyes, no trace of emotion could be seen, no feelings rippled out.

Only when the dirt and metal shards spattered upon his refuge mountain of trash did he retreat somewhat deeper into the trash heap. At the same time, he slipped on goggles, covering half his face.

“It’s here!”

When the essence watch on his wrist began to vibrate, the youth became excited and the corner of his mouth hooked into a sly grin.

3:52:38 pm, the daily routine garbage disposal time, also known to “salvagers” such as Li Yao as party time!

The essence watch on his left wrist was an Elite Hunter Model produced three years ago by the cultivator guild ”Zephyr Guild”. He had found it within a garbage mountain and it took him no less than two months to repair.

It had an extraordinary function besides telling time. It could record the frequency of unique vibrations. When a unique vibration propagates in the vicinity, the owner is notified.

This function was intended to be used to alert hunters of the existence of powerful Fiend Beasts nearby.

However, after being modified by Li Yao, the function was changed to alert at the arrival of garbage ships.

Shortly, accompanied by an insignificant sound of buzzing, a dozen or so black dots appeared on the northern horizon.

Covering the earth and concealing the sky, the smoke and dust brought upon by the explosions still had not dissipated.

The dozen or so black dots were mixed within and could not be distinguished.

Li Yao raised his nose. His finger brushed gently against the glyph located on the side of his goggles. “Swoosh.” A sheet of blood red appeared on the surface of the googles.

Under the red gaze, the garbage ships hidden by the smoke had their round silhouette rendered clearly.

The essence watch’s hunting function also allowed locking on to the unique vibrational frequency of a single garbage ship.

“Garbage Ship No. 1327, I choose you!”

From when Li Yao was born until he was ten, these ten years he stayed in the “Artifact Graveyard.” He knew every inch of dirt and every garbage ship in the sky, as if they were fingers on his hand. This “Garbage Ship No. 1327” was specifically responsible for collecting trash from Floating Spear Inner City’s Upper East Side.

The Upper East Side was the most luxurious of the rich districts, containing the residences of several cultivators. The artifacts they threw away were of most value.

Several of the artifacts were still in good condition. They were only discarded without care by the cultivators and the rich simply because they had gone out of style, or because a new generation of artifacts had been released.

From Li Yao’s perspective, this was not a garbage ship. It was a treasure ship filled to the brim with gold!

“Swoosh!”

Li Yao’s pair of legs rippled out power. Like a shell being shot, he madly sprinted through the mountains of trash and charged into the smoke and dust, charging towards Garbage Ship No. 1327.

The mountains of trash all around him were on the verge of collapsing. Bubbles of the dangerous poison swamp rumbled beneath his feet. Li Yao was like the most nimble monkey of the mountains and woods. Every now and then, he would apply force somewhere on a mountain of trash, moving tens of meters with every step. His movements were like the floating clouds and running waters, giving a sense of tranquility.

“Li Yao, you bastard. You’ve come to fight over food with me again!”

At the moment, from behind the base of a few mountains appeared a dozen or so figures. They were dressed similarly to Li Yao, except they didn’t have the advanced red goggles and essence watch equipped on Li Yao.

Holding metal spades and rods, these people aggressively approached.

They were the same as Li Yao. They relied on “Special Waste Treatment Plant No. 23” for survival as garbage salvagers

Where there is profit, there is competition. A ship’s discarded artifact waste may only be trash for the upper echelon cultivators, but for these people at the lowest rung, these artifacts represent hope for survival. Li Yao was the salvager that had adapted the best to the Artifact Graveyard. Of course, this also made him the greatest thorn in the other garbage salvagers’ sides, a thorn in the flesh.

Actually, Li Yao did not care about getting along. With a laugh, his waist suddenly emitted power and his body twisted in a strange fashion. Without warning, he turned 90 degrees, splitting away from the glaring fat youth with furrowed brows that was in front of him. He seized the opportunity to use his foot to ferociously launch off of the fat face, propelling his whole body by 30-40 meters.

“Fatty Leung, everyone’s here to bring dinner to the table. It all depends on who is faster! You should lose some weight!”

The fat youth’s face was stamped red, his nose nearly sunk into his fatty flesh. He was angry to the point of tantrum. Unable to accept this, he commanded his men to pursue and they quickly entered the smoke and dust filled area.

As an explosion had just occurred, the area was super unstable. Dozens of garbage mountains could collapse at any time, causing even the diabolical Fatty Leung’s group of youths to have no other option but to slow their steps and stare blankly at Li Yao’s lightning speed.

Seeing this, Fatty Leung could not help but spit a mouthful of saliva.

“This son of a b*tch! He really lives up to the reputation of caring about money more than his life! God, if you have eyes, may lightning strike him dead...”

True to those words, a mountain of garbage exploded near Li Yao. Thousands upon thousands of metal parts and broken artifacts flooded down like a torrent!

“It came true!” Fatty Leung and the youths were flabbergasted. They were at a complete loss!

However, a shriek pierced through the smoke and dust crying, “Small Black, Save me!”

A path more profound than the night sky, a black streak shot out like lightning and carved a hole in the flood of metal. It was rusted, it had a nicked edge, and it was completely black. This flying sword possessed a giant handguard that had the shape of two extending black wings. Li Yao was like a drowning man grasping tenaciously on a rice straw. He hugged the flying sword for dear life. Curling his entire body onto the black streak, he pierced into the sky.

In the middle of the sky, the giant figures of a dozen or so garbage ships had already emerged. Each garbage ship was hundreds of meters long and had a round plump figure like the mythological turtle that props the earth. On top of each “turtle shell” was carved tens of thousands of glyphs, all densely packed together. They flickered with the light of essence in five vibrant colors, helping those gigantic over-ten-thousand-tons guys resist the effects of gravity.

“Crash!”

The ”giant turtles” opened the hatches on their bellies one after another. Out came a rain of metal parts and broken artifacts that blotted the sky, pounding relentlessly against the earth.

In a moment, the essence energy within the entire field was madly disturbed and shook. A perilous situation was triggered!

Even the over-ten-thousand-tons garbage ships shook left and right in the midst of the essence energy waves. Under the violent turbulence, they had no option but to use all their strength to separate from each other, in hopes of reducing the damage.

Fatty Leung’s group even more so did not dare to rashly approach. They feared being caught in the turmoil.

Li Yao was still riding on the black flying sword, dashing quickly through the waves of essence energy. His appearance was destitute to the extreme, but he moved nimbly just like mud fish.

Naturally, he did not dare to directly face the raging waves and stormy sea head on. Rather, he relied on over ten years of survival experience, striving to discover areas where the tides of essence energy destructively interfered with each other and cancelled into tranquility, solely for the sake of approaching as close to the location of the dumped artifact waste as possible. The pavilion closest to the water was the first to bask in moonlight.

Finally-----

After nearly 10 minutes of dumping, the garbage ships let out a rumble like a behemoth. They changed their direction, lazily returning home. The smoke and dust gradually dissipated as well.

Fatty Leung had just barely climbed into the center of massive garbage dumping. He saw right away Li Yao sitting comfortably on a newly made mountain of garbage, looking at him with a beaming smile.

“Sh*t!” Fatty Leung’s face was shaking in anger, but his heart was a mess.

Li Yao chose this garbage mountain rather cleverly. It was not the largest, and it also did not seem to have the most abundant of materials.

There were still dozens of garbage mountains all around, all containing priceless discarded artifacts.

As for the salvagers, there were more than just these two parties...

If Fatty Leung continued to compete with Li Yao, it was possible that some of the profits may be snatched up by other fishing salvagers.

The figures of other salvagers had already faintly emerged. Joyful cries could be heard from the peaks of several garbage mountains; people had discovered valuable treasure.

Not to mention...

Fatty Leung had heard that this loathsome kid, Li Yao, was a student of Floating Spear City’s famous Crimson Nimbus Guild's Second Affiliated High School.

The Crimson Nimbus Guild was a famous sect located in the southern part of the Federation. Their strength was tyrannical and they had numerous experts.

Although Li Yao may not have learned any true techniques of masters, he was not someone who could be handled with just three fists and two legs. Otherwise, he would not have made a living battling for over ten years in this Artifact Graveyard, still being perfectly healthy and spry, also seizing the nickname “Vulture!”

But how could Fatty Leung just let it go? Where did his face go? His nose was still embedded inside his flesh!

While his heart was a mess, a gale of wind swept by. Fatty Leung subconsciously grasped out his hand, and his hand felt something ice-cold. In his hand was actually a scrapped crystal processor unit the size of a fist.

Li Yao laughed heartily, saying, “Fatty Leung, everyone’s here to make a living. I just snatched a”Starlight” class CPU from you last time. It’s not like I murdered your father. Isn’t it unnecessary to go this far, to be unceasing until the point of death? Here, I just found a ‘Brave Dragon-17’ CPU produced by the Viridian Dragon Guild. It’s the newest model, capable of calculating over 5000 telepathic thoughts per second. Even though it’s fried, I reckon you can get three or four thousand bucks for it. Just take it as a sign of respect from me, big brother Fatty Leung. From now on we’re even, what do you say?”

“You...” Fatty Leung did not expect Li Yao to say something like this. He was immediately stunned and was somewhat distrusting, as he scratched the fat on his face.

“Yo! Look over there. Wild Wolf’s men are almost here. They don’t run solo like this guy. They will absolutely digest dozens of garbage mountains completely bare. They won’t leave behind a single screw for you!” said Li Yao as he rapidly pointed towards the west.

Fatty Leung’s face changed color. He squinted his eyes for quite a while and finally made a resolution. He immediately gave Li Yao a giant thumbs up, squeezing out a sentence, “Alright kid, you’ve got chops! Let’s go make out with the goods asap!”

A party of salvagers scattered in all directions, charging towards garbage mountains in every direction.

“Whew....”

Li Yao let out a long sigh of relief. His butt was sitting on a garbage heap and big beads of sweat rolled down his forehead. The grin on his face transformed into wailing as he suddenly got up.

“Die Fatty! I painstakingly found that Brave Dragon-17 Processor, and it became yours for nothing!”

“Just you wait. Do you think it is that easy to take from me, the ‘Vulture’ Li Yao? There will be a day where what you’ve eaten of mine will be spat back to me. I will take back what you took from me with interest. I will make sure it's of high interest too! I will let you know... Why everyone calls me the ’Vulture who values money more than life’!’”

“No, this won’t do. I need to be faster. Wild Wolf’s Gang, those bunches of mince-meat, they’re even more unreasonable than Fatty Leung!”

Li Yao pulled down his goggles so that it rested on his neck. Rubbing his hands together, his pair of eyes contained a gleam of light. Licking his lips, he rushed towards a newly created garbage heap!

Chapter 2: Hologram Projector

Chapter 2: Hologram Projector

Five hours later, nightfall had descended.

“Morning Sun Village” was located next to Special Waste Treatment Plant No. 23.

Although its name was pleasant sounding, Morning Sun Village was actually Floating Spear City’s most dilapidated, cheapest residential rental area.

A location right next to the Artifact Graveyard meant the climate was absolutely vile. Year round, an acrid odor would permeate through the air. Even when the main city had blue skies and white clouds, there would be a sheet of gray overcast over here. Of Floating Spear City’s nineteen residential rental areas, this one had the lowest quality of life. Naturally, the rent was the lowest.

No matter how cheap the rent was, not many people would want to live next to a waste treatment plant. Several residential buildings were completely empty. Due to years of wear and tear without any maintenance, both the exterior and interior were covered in cracks. Corridors were covered in cobwebs. It was, for all intents and purposes, a ghost town.

And Li Yao was a long term resident of this “Ghost Town.”

He liked the quietness here. He wouldn’t disturb anyone when he repaired and modded his artifacts at home. It was close to the Artifact Graveyard. The rent was cheap. It simply served a multitude of benefits.

His home was roughly fifty square meters. There were two rooms, an outer one and an inner one. The outer room was for eating, drinking, and entertainment. The inner bedroom was remodeled into an artifact workshop.

When one enters the house, the first eye-catching image one would see would be the hundreds of crystal processors hanging down by rope, looking like hundreds of skeletal skulls.

These crystal processor units were mostly relics of several hundreds of years past, already losing their computing abilities. They were picked up by Li Yao, becoming a part of his collection. He was a crazy crystal processor fan and was super into these kinds of artifacts which were able to process a myriad of telepathic thoughts like the brains of cultivators.

In this tiny living room were piles of paper books, something rarely seen in this era. The piles revealed titles such as＜A General Guide to Repairing Artifacts＞，＜A Beginner’s Textbook on Crafting Flying Swords＞，＜An Artificer Prepares＞，＜Black-Mountain Elder-Devil Class Crystal Battleship Maintenance Manual＞, and＜99 Ways to Detonate a Planet＞ . Many were ancient texts from hundreds of years ago. They were gray and yellow as well as flakey and mushy.

Surrounded by the books and crystal processors was a used and somewhat-old straw mattress. This was Li Yao’s table, chair, and bed.

And within the artifact workshop of the inner room were piles of precious treasures that Li Yao had collected from the waste treatment plant. There were shimmering flying swords, talismans with mystical calligraphy drawn on it, and elixirs with an extremely pleasant scent...

Even more artifacts were dismantled by him into their most elementary components and were absentmindedly piled up in the corner, becoming miniature garbage mountains.

At this moment, Li Yao held up a silvery white cube-shaped artifact. His eyes shined and glistened, just like a big bad wolf eyeing a small bunny. A line of saliva nearly trickled down the edge of his mouth.

The long, black-winged flying sword was extending out his back, trying to take a look around like a rather curious plump snake.

“Surprisingly it's the Thousand Illusion Guild’s newest generation’s ‘3D Hologram Projector’ with a market price of over 20,000 bucks! If I can repair this, I may be able to get up to 10,000 bucks for it! Small Black, we’ve struck it big this time!” Li Yao was unable to resist letting out a long whistle.

The black flying sword made squeaking noises. It’s two sheets of wings flew up and down, as if dancing in merriment. Unexpectedly it displayed the same hint of “greed” as its owner.

Li Yao’s hands flared and seven to eight oddly-shaped tools used for maintenance appeared among his fingers. Some resembled screwdrivers, some resembled tiny pliers. There were also long and thin silver needles as well as curved and hooked unnamable tools.

“Small Black, guess a number of seconds?”

The Black Flying Sword make two sneering squeaking sounds, flying in the air using its pointed end to draw out a “50.”

“50 seconds? You’re totally underestimating me!”

He closed his eyes and took a deep breath, becoming tranquil for three seconds. After opening his eyes, the greed and excitement within his eyes disappeared without a trace. Like an unmoving ancient well, all that was left was cold and clear overflowing confidence.

Li Yao’s pair of hands suddenly mobilized. Ten fingers turned into ten paths of flowing light, completely enveloping the silvery white artifact. At first, if one looked closely, they could vaguely make out the courses and movements of the tips of his fingers. Soon, however, only a cloud of dazzling fluorescence could be seen. Within the fluorescence came the sound of rustling.

Half a minute later, the fluorescence shook and a rustling sound faded away. Hundreds of shadows retreated back to their origin. Li Yao’s pair of eyes were still set on their original position, not making the tiniest of movements.

As for the silvery white artifact, the “3D Hologram Projector” had already been dismantled by Li Yao into 425 elementary parts.

“39 seconds, and done!”

Li Yao let out a victory cry, winking in pride at the black flying sword. Then, he began to study with full concentration.

“Tsk tsk, this Thousand Illusion Guild’s newest model hologram projector really is something. An elaborate composition, the balance of essence is like a work of nature. The most amazing part is this master crystal chip is It’s about the size of a fingernail, but somehow over three-hundred glyphs were engraved on this crystal chip, all working in tandem with each other to form over twenty glyph arrays — it’s simply a work of art!”

Li Yao’s hand was holding a magnifying glass, carefully observing the extracted master crystal chip. His face was filled with intoxication like that of a pilgrim. The more he observed, the more profound his expression became.

“That’s not right… There aren’t just three-hundred glyphs. This master crystal chip appears to be utilizing crystal folding technology, taking three crystal chips and layering them atop of each other, altogether containing over a thousand glyphs and forming over a hundred three-dimensional glyph arrays. This is inconceivable!”

The more he studied, the more profound and deep he felt. Li Yao entered a state of complete engrossment, forgetting the passage of time, and studied meticulously for a complete three or so hours. He failed to completely comprehend a single glyph array; instead, his observations caused him to become dizzy and lightheaded as his vision became black.

Right now, he had at most the level of a “Junior Artifact Technician.” The gulf between his level and that of a “Thousand Illusion Guild” Master Artificer was really too wide, far far too wide.

If this “master crystal chip” had a problem, then he would have no choice but to take this 3D Hologram Projector and sell it as a defect.

Fortunately, after using an “essence reserve tool” to inject essence energy, Li Yao discovered that the essence energy flowed smoothly in the master crystal chip. The essence circuits were clear, the glyph array was stable, and there were no anomalies.

After a careful inspection, he discovered that the problem originated from a crystal conduit. An essence energy fluctuation anomaly had caused this crystal conduit to burn out.

Luckily for Li Yao, this crystal conduit was a standard component and was very easy to replace. Li Yao quickly found a replacement from the inventory in his house.

Closing his eyes, he recalled in silence the process of his recent dismantling. An image of a complete structural diagram surfaced in his mind. His hands mobilized automatically, a gust of wind swept, and the 3D Hologram Projector was assembled once more.

He used the essence reserve tool to inject a river of essence energy. The pure white exterior faintly emitted a blue fluorescence as if it were a lustrous transparent sapphire, giving the appearance of being possessed by a living fairy.

When the blue glow swept over his forehead, from the depths of Li Yao’s mind, dozens of control glyphs automatically came into view.

“Hologram Projector, power on!” Li Yao thought to himself and the control glyph in his mind flared.

The blue fluorescence of the hologram projector converged into a single glyph in the shape of “”. The two rings spun rapidly, looking like a vortex. From the middle of the vortex, a blue beam of light was emitted into the air and solidified into a massive hologram. What appeared was the image of a middle-aged cultivator wearing an Eight Trigrams Dao Robe, rendered down to the finest hair, looking true to life.

Behind this esteemed cultivator’s back was an even larger hologram. On the hologram were interweaving red and green glyph-script, numbers, and arrows, all constantly pulsing and fluctuating.

The middle-aged cultivator’s face was expressionless. With a voice like that of an unmoving ancient well, he said, “Up next, news in the world of finance. Today’s top story is undoubtedly the “Traceless Sword Faction’s” announcement of the release of their newest flying sword propulsion glyph array, “Violet Lightning”. Reports say that after implementing “Violet Lightning,” the maximum velocity can be increased by 9 percent, the instantaneous destructive power can be increased by 11 percent, and the essence consumption can be decreased by 5 percent. Towards flying swords, the composite increase in performance is obvious.”

“Receiving favorable reviews, the share price of the Traceless Sword Faction is on the rise. Starting before 10 AM, the share price approached the market limit and remained at that level til the market closure.

“The rest of the Sword Cultivation Industry is feeling ripple effects from the announcement. This includes the Giant Sword Gate, Polar North Sword Sect, and the 22 families of schools within the Southern Sea Sword Faction. The stocks are hot and on the rise up until market closure. The Sword Cultivation Industry as a whole rose by 5.42 percentage points.”

“On the flip side of this announcement, the defense-focused “Gold Armor Sect’s” share price fell. Experts believe that with the announcement of the glyph array “Violet Lightning”, flying swords have made a revolutionary leap in technology. Modern mainstream battle armor is fundamentally unable to guard against the newest models of offensive flying swords. By market closure, Golden Armor Sect’s shares had tumbled 8%.”

“After market closure, the Golden Armor Sect called for an impromptu news conference. The Golden Armor Sect’s spokesman, Elder Hei Yan, announced a development in the newest generation of “Star Strike Shields” thanks to an imminent breakthrough in battle armor research and development. A prototype will be available within the year and will absolutely be able to guard and nullify all flying sword attacks.

“As for the Grasslands Region in the northern part of the Federation, the calamity known as the Black Roundworm Epidemic continues to spread, already proliferating into the cultivation bases of many Beast Taming Sects’ spirit beasts. The afflicted spirit beasts numbered over 500,000. This rarely seen disaster drove the stock prices of the beast industry continuously down. Several Beast Taming Sects’ share prices have tumbled to a three-year low.”

“Now, let’s turn to a famous market analyst, Tianxingzi, here to comment for everyone on today’s developments.”

“...”

Li Yao watched for a while. He confirmed that the image was stable, that the sound was clear, and that there weren’t any static or streaks. The 3D was exceptional, being extremely distinct and causing one to feel immersed. The artifact should be completely repaired.

After pondering a bit, he thought deeply within his mind, “Switch to the entertainment channel.”

The blue glow flashed. The middle-aged cultivator and the red-green hologram flashed and faded away. In their place was a stadium buzzing with activity.

This full-house stadium was filled with a hundred thousand people with sounds of clamoring people rumbling through the air. Under the shining rainbow rays of light, a hundred thousand fired-up teenagers raised their hands up high. Together, they were cheering a name:

“Lu Yinxi!”

“Lu Yinxi!”

“Lu Yinxi!”

Atop the three-story main stage towered a dozen or so jutted crystals like entwining canine teeth. When the cheers of the teenagers converged to their peak, the thickest of the crystals suddenly burst. With an appearance like that of clear, cold snow yet possessing an expression heated like lava, a young lady wearing white jumped out from the crystal. Slanted on her waist was a zither that seemed to be formed out of a stack of crystals. Her slender white hand swept across the strings, and the magical clashing sounds of metal like that of a powerful army roared out.

“Within my heart, I have the dream to fly proudly. The opposing shore of the celestial river is our direction! This belongs to us. Cultivate! A! New! Era!”

Just like with all the teenagers, Li Yao’s blood also began to boil.

The girl, “Lu Yinxi”, radiated energy all throughout the stage. She was a singer of an idol school that recently rose abruptly in the last two years. Immediately debuting with an ice-cold figure and an explosive performance style, she attracted a great number of adolescents. She composed the song “Forty Millenniums of Cultivation” that became popular in the whole nation within a short half a year. Countless teenagers were motivated by this song to walk the path of cultivation.

Li Yao was also one of her fans, but for a reason different than other people’s. The reason why he liked Lu Yinxi was because their past were the same.

They were both orphans.

Li Yao was born in Special Waste Treatment Plant No. 23. For as long as he could remember, the skies were always ashy and yellow.

He ate rotting meat from the garbage heaps. He drank contaminated putrid water. He relied on primal instinct as well as a little “secret” hidden deep in his memories, struggling to survive. Since the beginning, he suffered and endured for these ten or so years, transforming into the Artifact Graveyard’s most dangerous existence, the “Vulture”.

If the “Old Man” had never appeared, Li Yao probably would have become part of the garbage plant, turning into a “Fatty Leung” or a “Wild Wolf”.

But one day, six years ago, a garbage ship had dumped the old man together with dozens of tons of garbage. Li Yao felt compassionate and dragged the scar riddled old man back home.

From then on, destiny had completely changed for him.

The old man never talked about his past. Li Yao only knew for certain that he was a tremendously skilled Expert Artifact Modder. In a short five years, the old man taught Li Yao all sorts of fantastic and bizarre skills for modifying artifacts. He taught Li Yao knowledge of all kinds of fundamental academic subjects. He also spent money for Li Yao to attend a private high school in the city, allowing Li Yao to blend into normal society.

A year ago, one of the old man’s old injuries flared up again and he passed away. He left behind for Li Yao a mysterious flying sword named “Black Wing.” The old man said Black Wing was a strange weapon that he tried to study for half a lifetime with no success. In the end, he left Li Yao some words:

“Little Yao, this old man has been to dozens of worlds in his life. I have seen and met thousands upon thousands of Expert Artifact Modders and Master Artificers. But, your natural talent is the highest I have seen!”

“With only the hands of an insignificant mortal, you are able to maintain low-level artifacts. You really are talented.”

“But relying only on one’s natural talent is not enough! By only relying on one’s talent, you will always only be capable of maintaining low level artifacts, civilian artifacts!”

“Promise this old man that you will properly study, fight and get accepted into into a university, and become a cultivator! Only by becoming a cultivator will you then have the chance to move further along in artifact repair. Such that one day in the future you...”

“Become a Master Artificer!”

When the old man had spoken these words, his pair of eyes were wide open. His eyes blossomed with radiance and were filled with boundless energy. This memory was fresh in Li Yao's mind.

A Master Artificer… A part of the circle of cultivators, one of the most prestigious professions.

He did not know whether he would end up disappointing the old man.

The sword Black Wing silently accompanied his side, listening to the young lady and her volcanic performance. Its two protective wings twisted fervently, dancing along to the energetic song.

After quite some time, the youth's expression became clear. The corner of his mouth once again hooked into an unperturbed smile.

“What am I thinking so much for? Regardless of the consequences, I just have to stake it all!”

“Lu Yinxi was a small orphan and she transformed into the federation's most popular female singer. Why can't I, a small salvager, become a Master Artificer?”

The youth thought back to a time long long ago, in a place far far away. He remembered hearing this sentence:

“One should always have dreams, for what if they come true someday?”

Chapter 3: The Uncanny Dream

Chapter 3: The Uncanny Dream

“F*ck, Li Yao, no wonder everyone calls you the ‘Traceless Hand’! This 2011 model Mustang GT you modded can go from zero to a hundred in three seconds. It’s like you swapped it for a different car! It's practically a rocket! I’m ecstatic!”

“...”

One minute fifty-nine seconds! One minute fifty-nine seconds! Good heavens, am I reading this right? A new god of underground racing has been born!”

“...”

“Promise me you won't go street racing any longer. Become an honest car mechanic, no one will look down on you. There will be a day when we will have our own Auto 4S Shop!”

“...”

“Brother Yao, Brother Yao, I’m begging you, help me out. Soar one last time. Besides you, who else can achieve a time of 1 minute 59 seconds on this track? I owe Violent Scar 300 grand. If I don’t pay him back by today, I’ll die. I’LL DIE!”

“...”

“Doctor! Doctor! Hurry and save him! He’s only 23 years old!”

“...”

While in the midst of producing an ear-piercing scream, Li Yao abruptly leapt up from the floor. His body was drenched in sweat.

From outside the window, the rays of morning dawn illuminated all around. The Hologram Projector continued to chitter and chatter, broadcasting classic songs. The youth, like a puppet, was lifeless for half a minute; he was slowly shaking off the utterly realistic nightmare.

This nightmare was his deepest secret. Even the old man was never told about it. Since he could first remember, he would have this same uncanny dream every few days. It was like a period from a memory… one that was impossible to forget.

In this strange dream, his name was still called Li Yao, but he possessed a completely different life. He was in an utterly bizarre world, in a place that was called an Auto “4S” Shop, working as a “Car Mechanic.”

And at night under the city of bizarre rainbow lights, he was part of the “Underground Street Racing Circle” as an extraordinarily skilled expert car modder and racer. The rumbling of each and every engine ignited adrenaline within the night. He soared, setting staggering records — until he soared to his death!

Over and over, he repeatedly died in that dream world. Even though this was an experience filled with suffering, Li Yao did not actually loathe it. Instead, he was somewhat glad. If the dream world had not given him the experience of an another life, he would absolutely not be able to survive in the crisis-filled Artifact Graveyard until now.

It did not matter if this was a strange nightmare or if this was an entangled memory from a past life, neither was important.

There are various yesterdays, such as a yesterday of death; there are various todays, such as a today of life.

It did not matter what kind of person yesterday’s Li Yao was. Today’s Li Yao is one of Heaven’s Origin Sector’s, Star Glory Federation’s, Floating Spear City’s, ordinary high-school student

---One who will become a Master Artificer!

He took a deep breath. He had finished tidying up his room in a simple manner and completed washing his face and rinsing his mouth. The time is just past six o’clock. Li Yao shouldered his school bag, carrying the 3D hologram Generator, and with large strides walked out the house door.

Today was Monday. Dawn was just about to break. He needed to hurry to school before 7:30.

Morning Sun Village’s distance to the Crimson Nimbus Second Affiliated High School was a length of 30 miles. He could take the underground crystal rail’s third line and transfer to the seventh line to arrive at his destination. However, that would require spending 8 bucks in rail fare.

Li Yao hated spending money. He swung his long legs out, used the skill his school taught him, Body Art of the Spirit Serpent, and shot out like lightning towards the main city.

At this time, the morning sun was just rising and the multi-colored light of sunrise was boundless; it was a dawn that bubbled with spirit energy.

From afar away, Floating Spear City appeared like a giant beast waking up. Every major sect unleashed and dispersed their powers, emitting bright rainbows of radiance.

Many cultivators were floating in the air. Availing the transition between night and day, they absorbed and emitted solar essence and moonlight. Their bodies spiraled and wound in the form of an eight-figured luminous diffusing glyph script. At some people’s sides were immortal cranes and fire crows. Meteors were orbiting around. Grand and great powerful noises were produced. Altogether, they produced a domineering appearance.

A large-scale floating airship dragged along a fiery tail, sluggishly advancing in the middle of the sky. The fiery tail interweaved with the blue sky and white clouds, becoming a net of essence. The delicate and exquisite private flying shuttles continuously needled through the mesh, emitting beautiful sounding whistles.

---This was precisely the Federal Cultivation City Floating Spear’s morning!

Li Yao bounced and bounced like a spring stored with great energy. With every step, he leaped over twenty meters. His speed was exceedingly fast. Although his stance looked quite ugly and caused passersby to stare, he couldn’t give a damn and continued to concentrate on cultivating his art. In only half an hour, he arrived at his school. A white mist swirled above his head and on his back was a layer of pure white salt produced from sweat.

He did not go directly into the school gate. His body flickered and he leapt into a destitute alley next to the school.

Deep within this small alley hung a rusted store sign. On it read five words: “Old Wang’s Second-Hand Shop.” Below was a row of densely packed tiny words: “Specializing in all sorts of second-hand artifacts, also providing artifact modding, battle armor refinement, magical beast training, glyph array maintenance, monastery ceremony, and other professional services.”

As if knowing that Li Yao would arrive, a window slid open to expose a big bald head. It was a shifty-eyed old fellow.

“Haaa, last night I lost over two grand playing cards. I was just worrying about how to explain this matter to my wife, but the God of Wealth dropped by right away. Little Devil, what good stuff did you bring to your old grandpa this time?” The old fellow smiled sinisterly.

“Save it! Even if you lost your underwear, don’t think I will slash down my prices!” Li Yao, with no restraint, batted down Old Fellow Wang’s extended claw. He hesitated for a second and even though it caused him emotional pain, he still took out and passed over his hologram projector.

A large part of him wanted to hold onto the device so that he could further study the three layer stack folding crystal chip technology, but when all's said and done, genuine gold and silver was more important. Studying at a private high school was expensive. In order to cultivate, people must purchase essence pills and auxiliary equipment, racing to increase their killing capabilities.

No matter what, at the end of the year, being poor in education and rich in martial might was also valid in leading to the road of cultivation — one that needs piles of shining white silver to complete.

“This really is some good stuff!”

It was clear that Old Wang knew his stuff. Receiving the Hologram Projector, his eyes swept. His eyes exuded a radiance of praise. He did not test it and instead spoke, “ A flat price, 9,500!”

A warmth bubbled from the bottom of Li Yao’s heart. This price was not that different from the actual second-hand market price. Old Fellow Wang was once again giving Li Yao a good price.

Even though this Old Fellow had a shifty-eyed appearance of a suspicious man, he was actually the one person, besides the old man, who treated Li Yao best. Every transaction, he would more or less add a bit to the price for Li Yao. And every few days, he would give Li Yao some work with high pay.

Without Old Fellow Wang’s assistance after the old man’s death, Li Yao would very likely be unable to continue paying the expensive fees of the private high school.

“I don’t need that much, just 9,000 is fine. Give the 500 left over to Ms. Wang, just say you won it from cards. No need for thanks, who told me to respect the elderly and cherish the young? I can’t bear to watch you and your weary old body having to kneel and wash clothes on a washboard. Gotta catch the morning assembly. Just deposit the money in my bank account!” Li Yao waved his hand and hopped away.

Old Wang suddenly shouted after him, “Hold on, Little Devil.”

Li Yao stood and purposely said, “Wa, Die, old fellow. You don’t think 500 is too little do you?”

“Bah, back in the day, this old fellow was a step above top ranking master artifact modders. In a few minutes, I could make several million. From the looks of it, in this regard, you can only make scraps? This old fellow wanted to tell you that the university exam is in a hundred days. You, youngster, need to properly take it and get accepted into a good university. Do not believe that you already have the skill of artifact repair and not know the immensity of heaven and earth! The world is huge and you will realize this when you go to university. In front of a true Master Artificer, your current ability isn't worth a damn!” Old Fellow Wang fumed.

Li Yao’s heart once again stirred with warmth and he vigorously waved his fist, “I will absolutely get accepted into university, Grandpa Wang!”

Chapter 4: Fiend Blade Peng Hai

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The head instructor gazed like a tiger watching its prey as Li Yao ducked his body and scuttled little by little to the closed school gate. Li Yao let out a breath and checked his watch 7:29 — just in the nick of time!

Just like all the other high schools in the federation, Crimson Nimbus has entered early into the yearly “Crazed University Entrance Exam Season”. An aura of murder permeated through the campus, similar to that of a battlefield. Right through the school gate entrance towered a gigantic hologram in the center. Upon it were several words:

“Time until the entrance exams: 99 days 18 hours 32 minutes and 57 seconds!”

The numbers on the hologram pulsed and changed every second. The change was small, but it brought the exam candidates a great deal of pressure.

On the two sides were several lines of slogans:

“As long as studying has not reached the point of death, one should beat studying to death!”

“Rising by a point means crushing a thousand people!”

“Crimson Nimbus Second dominates the federation. Vow to pierce through the examination or be exiled!”

“Gain admittance into the ‘Nine Elite Universities’. Become a cultivator. Step onto the apex of life!”

A fervent and passionate march resonated through the campus. Nearly a thousand students moved like a tide of water, rushing towards the sports field. Li Yao increased his footsteps as well, sneaking into the tide of people. As soon as they arrived at the field, the tide of people separated into three sections, changing into completely different groups.

The first group had about forty students. All carried a dignified appearance with handsome features appearing chiseled by nature. These were the overbearing and arrogant heaven’s chosen. The school uniforms that covered their bodies were made from heaven’s silk, custom tailored, and refined by cultivators. They fluttered in the absence of wind, stirring from the rays of hidden treasures. All these contributed to give an uncommon martial appearance. These people were of the “Important Class” of students; each was a one-out-of-ten-thousand cultivation genius. They had the strength to shock seedlings of the ‘Nine Elite Universities.’

The second group of people were the most numerous, numbering about seven to eight hundred students. The clothes they wore were also spun from heaven’s silk, but they weren’t custom tailored, nor did they undergo refinement from cultivators. They looked to be dull and mediocre, like the faces of a thousand people. They were the “Ascending Class” of students, comprising mostly of the children of Floating Spear City’s rich and elite families. In regards to their aptitude, their strength stemmed from using heaps of resources.

The third group had a hundred or so people. Their clothes were inferior school uniforms weaved from ordinary materials. The uniforms were loose and worn, large and baggy, giving a somewhat sloppy appearance. The owners of this uniforms also did not give off any special energy. This was the “Common Class” of students. Most were born as children of common worker class families. Within the private high school “Crimson Nimbus Second”, they were an existence like a mishmash of fish.

Li Yao was quite familiar with the “Common Class” and found his position within the formation. Just when he was about to stand fixed, someone patted his shoulder. A voice sounding somewhat greasy rang out, “Little Devil, you only just got here? There’s probably going to be an important person coming to our school today!”

Li Yao did not need to look back to know that this was his best friend, “Meng Jiang”. Raising his eyes, he looked at the main platform. Sure enough, he discovered that there was the headmaster, vice-principal, and disciplinary director among the people on the stage. All of the high-ranking people were present. This was indeed a special occasion never seen on a typical morning.

“Which important person could be so tremendous? Even Baldy Zhao has personally appeared to greet him!”

To be exact, Baldy Zhao was Crimson Nimbus Second’s Headmaster, Zhao Shude. He was the very serious and solemn core member of the Crimson Nimbus Guild. His Refinement stage was that of a high-level cultivator. However, rumors claimed that when he was young, he suffered an internal injury while cultivating in the “Fiend Beast Wasteland” to the northwest. Year round, he would remain behind closed doors training, rarely coming out personally to supervise school affairs.

“Its Peng Hai! Man, it’s ‘Fiend Blade’ Peng Hai!” Meng Jiang’s excitement was maxed out. His voice was completely shaking.

This one name had also caused Li Yao’s heartbeat to speed up its tempo in a flash.

Fiend Blade Peng Hai was Crimson Nimbus Second’s largest alumni legend in several hundred years.

He was born in the slums. Since childhood, he’d exhibited a dazzling gift for cultivation. When he was eleven, he was specificallyspecially recruited by Crimson Nimbus Second. By twelve, his “Spirit Actualization Quotient” reached 100% and he awakened to a spirit root of the highest quality, stepping onto the road of cultivation. At age thirteen, he was accepted to the “Nine Elite Universities’”, “Grand Desolate War Institution”. By the time he graduated at age fifteen, he had already stepped into the 10th rank of the Refinement stage, becoming the Federation’s star of hope!

From after his time in the “Grand Desolate War Institution”, he rejected high salary offers from over a dozen Cultivator Sects, resolutely deciding to join the “Federal Army”. In the Fiend Beast Wasteland, he fought against millions of fiend beasts in order to defend the federation’s youth and blood, creating a mountain of corpses and a sea of blood from the fiend beasts, amassing the fierce and impressive name “Fiend Blade”. Finally at age 22, he became the federation’s youngest ever Cultivator to reach the Foundation stage!

After retiring from the army, Peng Hai returned to his hometown. With an astronomical signup bonus as a condition, he joined the Crimson Nimbus Guild. In a short three years time, he had already become the business manager of Crimson Nimbus Guild’s new “Crimson Nimbus

Transporter Group” department, responsible for creating new transportation routes in dangerous areas where fiend beasts ran rampant. Aside from his outstanding salary, it is said he also possessed a large share of stocks in the “Crimson Nimbus Transporter Group,” receiving mountains of gold and silver yearly just from dividends!

“Did you hear the rumor? Peng Hai was just at the border of the ‘Silver White Beach’. He bought an unparalleledunequalled seaside villa. It’s said to be worth seventy to eighty million! Tabloid reporters say he often brings dozens of women back to his villa for open parties!” Meng Jiang drooled as he spoke, unable to conceal his jealous and envious thoughts.

From being a penniless kid in the slums to becoming a great faction’s upper-level manager. Having a net worth over a hundred million, exotic cars and beauties, and a seaside mansion — this was simply the dream of all slum kids. Li Yao and Meng Jiang were also no exceptions.

They all thirsted to become the next Peng Hai!

“He’s here!”

Li Yao’s wrist-watch vibrated lightly, indicating that something was arriving at high-speeds through the air. He raised his eyes to look towards the eastern horizon. A black stream of lightning shot over, its speed was extremely fast. A second ago, it was at the horizon. With a single Blink skill, it was already silently floating in the sky over the field. It was a black flying shuttle!

The body of this flying shuttle was sleek and narrow like a stretched drop of water. Its length was nearly twice as long as that of common flying shuttles. Its exterior was crystal clear and no seams or rivets could be seen; it was of the highest quality. It was hard to tell from the exterior what kind of offensive magical devices this flying shuttle was equipped with. However, hidden under the radiance of its black glow was actually a dangerous air that caused the pulses of people to stop. It was a killing intent that seemed to reject being restricted to the confines of space and caused the thousand of high school students to simultaneously feel stifled.

“It’s the ‘Battle Shuttle Mystic Bird’! The federation’s most advanced military shuttle! Its battle strength may be greater than that of a peak Foundation stage Cultivator! When piloting the ‘Battle Shuttle Mystic Bird’, even the Fiend Beast Wasteland can be crossed unhindered, without restraint!” Li Yao called out wildly from within his heart.

As Li Yao was an artifact fanatic, it went without say that the “Battle Shuttle Mystic Bird” elicited great admiration, greater than that towards Peng Hai himself!

More importantly, he knew that the barest configuration of the Battle Shuttle Mystic Bird would reach a market price of nearly a hundred million. Even ordinarily rich and powerful families absolutely could not afford it.

A second passed. The pits of thousands of students’ stomachs loosened. They were able to resume their breaths. The Battle Shuttle Mystic Bird that was once in the air had already faded out of sight.

Left behind was only a pair of pupils, pitch black to the abyss. There was still a radiance within them. Every now and then, they would flit around, reminiscent of lightning, like a fiend blade.

Whomever his gaze reached was affected. Even Second’s Headmaster Zhao Shude and the usually fiendish

Disciplinary Director were unable to bear it, shuffling faintly sideways. They did not dare to meet his gaze.

“Cultivators really are wealthy! They really are awe-inspiring! They really are domineering!” Li Yao mumbled, swallowing some saliva.

“Rumor has it that the school specifically invited Peng Hai back to coach the ‘Important Class’ of students! Little Devil, hey, did you know that our Crimson Nimbus Second was a century famous school, but the examination scores for the past few years were not too remarkable. There were not many students who were accepted to the ‘Nine Elite Universities’. As such, The Crimson Nimbus Guild’s reputation has not been so hot, so this time, they specifically invited Peng Hai to come back to do some specialized training in hopes of reversing this decline in fortune and once more give birth to glory!” Meng Jiang’s voice was permeated full of jealousy.

After all, only the “Important Class” of students were fortunate enough to enjoy being personally taught by Fiend Blade Peng Hai. There was no chance for them, the “Common Class” of destitute youths.

Li Yao heard the news and he inwardly sighed a breath as well.

The “Nine Elite Universities” had the federation’s most profound inner knowledge. They were abundant in resources, and these nine institutions had the greatest number of high-level experts. Out of the myriad of schools in the federation, this was the ultimate dream.

Ordinary universities did not necessarily place fostering cultivators as their primary objective. Even if a student had high natural talent, no matter how hard they tried, no matter what multitude of good fortune they encountered, the probability of becoming a cultivator did not exceed one in ten-thousand.

However, the Nine Elite Universities had the backing of numerous cultivator sects. They specialized in fostering cultivators as their objective. As long as one gains acceptance to the Nine Elite Universities, one would have a thirty percent chance of becoming a cultivator, stepping onto the apex of life!

Becoming a Master Artificer requires that one must first become a cultivator. And to become a cultivator, one must first pass the university entrance exam for the Nine Elite Universities. Li Yao always regarded this as his objective to strive for, but from beginning to end, his innate talent was at a disadvantage, incapable of being redeemed. The distance to his dream appeared to grow further and further.

With these worries on his mind, Li Yao's enthusiasm somewhat waned, even causing him to not hear what was being said on stage. The time of a cultivator was valuable. Fiend Blade Peng Hai did not speak for too long and Headmaster Zhao Shude soon announced the end of the morning assembly.

Peng Hai was escorted by the arrogant heaven's chosen youths of the Important Class and left. And so, the Ascending and Common class of students also had their enthusiasm disperse as they walked in twos and threes towards the school building.

And with that, today's studies have officially begun!

Chapter 5: Exam Simulation

Chapter 5: Exam Simulation

As students were currently cramming for the college entrance exams, any courses that should have been taken had already been completed long ago. These last hundred days were primarily for filling up gaps and taking all sorts of tests. On a certain morning of each week was a very important exam simulation.

Under the urging of the impatient teachers, Li Yao took a deep breath and stepped into the “Examination Chamber” tagged with his student number. The chamber door sealed shut and the entire world became deathly silent.

“Even though I didn’t receive personal tips from Peng Hai, I still need to test into the ‘Nine Elite Universities’. If I give my all, what do I have to fear?” Li Yao clenched his fist resolutely.

“BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!” On an inner face of the examination chamber appeared a hologram, upon which a number ticked. At the moment, it was counting down. Upon hitting zero, an emotionless voice, like an ancient well, rang out, ”The examination has begun. Prepare yourself, student!”

In response, thousands upon thousands of arcane glyphs carved onto the inner face of the examination chamber flared simultaneously. Li Yao only saw the scene in front of his eyes blossom with the turning and flying of stars, having already appeared in the middle of a red-brown wasteland.

The ground was roasting hot and his feet had the sensation of pins and needles. The air was thick to the point of almost congealing; it was like having a wet towel wrapped around one's body that could not be shaken off. Occasionally, a hot gust of wind would blow by, carrying with it the strong odor of mish-mashed blood. From all directions came faint ghostly wails and wolfish howls.

It was vivid to the five sense, as if one was truly standing in this world, placed in this murderous field of malevolent spirits.

Nevertheless, Li Yao knew that this was the "Great Illusionary Land" metamorphosed by the examination chamber. Time was of the essence. He composed himself and sped forward, following the directions of a translucent arrow symbol in the sky.

The Fifty Kilometer Long-Distance Cross-Country run. It was one of the Federation's basic courses designed for the purpose of distinguishing the elites from the rest of the youths, in hopes that they would one day become cultivators. The path was filled with danger and chocked full of traps.

Sure enough, when Li Yao passed through a faintly bulging mound of dirt, the mound of dirt burst, shooting out countless rock fragments. In the midst of the rock fragments was a pair of dirt yellow Sand Wolves!

This species of Demon Fiend Beast was larger than ordinary feral wolves by a factor. Their spines bulged high and on top grew an abnormality, a small head. It was a mutated form of the low-ranking demon fiend beast, "Sand Wolf." Besides having the advantage of camouflage within the sand dunes, they also possessed a high level of intelligence. It was an extremely troublesome opponent for a highschool student.

But for Li Yao, who had survived in the Magical Equipment Artifact Graveyard for 18 years as the “Vulture”, observing every inch of his surroundings had long already become instinctive. The camouflage of the two Sand Wolves was rather sloppy, and he had seen through them early on.

“Dire Bear Stance!”

Without hesitation, the two Sand Wolves pounced into to the air. Li Yao’s pair of legs launched, his body curled into a ball, and his shoulders sank. His appearance was like a berserk dire bear as he fiercely rammed across!

The timing he chose was impeccable. It was when the pair of wolves’ flight had reached their apex. The wolves’ power had all been exhausted with nowhere to borrow strength and, furthermore, were incapable of changing directions. They were hit head-on by Li Yao.

“SNAP!”

The pair of Sand Wolves were sinisterly cunning, but their bodies were fragile, designed primarily for ambushing unsuspecting enemies, not fighting an opponent head-on. In a single exchange, their spines were snapped by Li Yao’s “Dire Bear Stance”. They bounced back towards their sand pit.

Li Yao sneered and slithered forward. He extended his claws like a blade’s edge, firmly grabbing the small heads on the Sand Wolves’ backs.

“Steel Hawk’s Claw!”

The wolf heads disintegrated in a flash. The pair of Sand Wolves let out a blood curling scream and died.

From the void rang a sweet “Ding Ding” sound. It was the examination chamber calculating Li Yao’s score for his kills.

Li Yao felt delighted in his heart. The set of skills he used in succession originated from the basic martial art <<Thirteen Forces of the War Beasts>>. At minimum, he would gain 10 points for himself.

He did not hurry on impatiently but rather dragged the corpses of the two Sand Wolves out from the sand pit. In his perimeter, he found a rock that was quite sharp, and with it, he cut open the bellies of the demonic beasts.

Not long after, four ribs were whet into four bone blades, and with difficulty, the wolf pelts were sewn into a water sack which was then filled with wolf blood.

A sack of wolf blood can save one’s life in this broiling wasteland.

After reorganizing, resting, strategizing, and completely arming himself, Li Yao continued to advance forward. Not even an hour later, he had already shouldered a black crisis, killing four low-ranking Demon Fiend Beasts. Although the examination had just begun, this was still nothing more than a warm-up. The following rounds were the ones that caused every Federation test taker to encounter so much pain that they’d wish they were dead.

In the midsts of the sky, green glyph characters showered down like a torrential storm, forming into a quiz:

“Xiao Ming is a cultivator of the Refinement stage. His body had formed 52500 crystals worth of spiritual energyessence.

Once, when he was cultivating, he accidently was hit with a strange ‘Heart Devouring Bug’. Every second, 48 crystals of spiritual energy essence were gobbled. Xiao Ming’s master discovered his condition 1 min 13 secfive minutes later. In order to save him, he passed 55 crystals of spiritual soul energy per second into his body. In addition, after two minutes, he increased his rate to 59 crystals of spiritual soul energy per second. Question----”

“One, how much time does Xiao Ming need to restore his spiritual energy essence to his original level?”

“Two, please summarize the method for refining the ‘Heart Devouring Bug’. Also provide the steps for treating the symptoms after being afflicted by the heart devouring bug.”

“Three, please state which sect guild first succeeded in refining the ‘Heart Devouring Bug’. List at least five major leaders of this sect guild. Furthermore, outline the root cause of the destruction of this sect.”

Li Yao lightly slapped his cheeks. He never thought that such a highly troublesome “comprehensive question” would come up, mixing mathematics, history, and medicine. The knowledge of Warzone Medic Studies and other numerous subjects were needed. This “Exam Simulation” was worthy of being called a complete simulation!

Attention rapt and without disturbing the air, he pondered deeply and carefully. Within his mind appeared countless knowledge accrued from calmer times. Li Yao concentrated his attention and responded at lightning speeds. He overcame one question after another. At a rapid speed, a light blue answer appeared underneath the green problem as he spoke telepathically.

The answer was completed, onto the next question!

“A cultivator on the right path of the ‘Spirit Mountain Guild’ steps his foot onto a flying sword. He flies from the east towards a ravine at a speed of 247 meters per second. And another cultivator on the depraved path of the ‘Blood Murder Stronghold’ treads his foot onto a black cloud. He flies from the west in the opposite direction at 239 meters per second. Currently, the two people are separated by a distance of 122.5 kilometers. The question is, how much time later will it take for them to meet?”

“Suppose the cultivation of these two are equivalent and that they employ equivalent fundamental techniques and artifacts of their various sects. Please link the characteristics of the Spirit Mountain Sect to the Blood Murder Stronghold and deduce the course of battle between these two — at least deduce seven exchanges. The number of words may not exceed 500.”

This problem was clearly much simpler than the previous. But right when Li Yao was about to answer the problem, the assailing odor of Demon Fiend Beasts permeated from ahead. Impatient, low-sounding roars came closer and closer.

---In the midst of this terror, he calculated, answering the question. The test takers’ stamina, martial skill, willpower, calculation abilities, and the strength of quick thinking were tested. All these capabilities are synergized into an individual that surpasses the ordinary. Only then could one distinguish himself in the Federation’s university entrance exams, stepping onto the road of cultivators!

Li Yao’s pair of hands crossed as he pulled out two ghastly white bone blades. He licked his lips and welcomed the front of him as countless thoughts boiled ceaselessly in his brain, calculating at high speeds...

There was an absolute silence in the large campus. Every classroom was set up with 90 examination chamber units. In the Great Illusionary Land, each and every third-year student was frantically striving and struggling, disposing of the heads of demonic beasts and exam questions.

Imperceivable to the test takers, over four hours had already passed within the Great Illusionary Land. The examination was heading towards its conclusion.

Li Yao’s entire body was covered in seventy to eighty cuts of all sizes. Several areas had bled dry. Of greater concern was his abdomen, which had been pierced by the fang of a Demon Fiend Beast. He did not dare to pull it out. The bone blades he held in his hands were practically ground into sticks.

Only his pair of bright, crystal moon eyes remained unbroken. They retained their clarity, hardly concealing the radiance that was bubbling up.

“This should be the final problem...”

At this moment, the fluorescence of an eight-figured rune character appeared in the sky, glistening with golden rays of light. Li Yao relied on his abundant test-taking experience to make the judgment. This was the final great problem worth a hundred points, the “Summary Question”.

As expected, the question wasn’t long, but each word was supreme: “Please summarize ‘The Great Dark Age’.”

Chapter 6: The Great Dark Age

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Li Yao’s eyebrows trembled; his complexion was somewhat grave. The period of “the Great Dark Age” was the most important phase in the development of the Cultivator Civilization. So much so that one can say the Great Dark Age divided civilization into two periods — the “Classical Cultivation Period” and the “Modern Cultivation Period”. This was an extraordinarily typical question. Although everyone knew about it, it was not easy to give a comprehensive answer.

Muttering deeply for a moment, Li Yao’s thoughts coursed with electricity and were spoken telepathically, flying upwards, “The cultivators of the ancients held an eternal life without death as their ambition, creating a matchless Ancient Cultivator Civilization that was full of splendor. They established from the Refinement and Foundation stages to the Orichalcum and Monad stages… until the Tribulation Ascension and True Immortal stages. These are the ascending stages in their system in order to gain immortality. Moreover, to advance bravely on this strip of path means to unceasingly break through the limits of life and stride towards the endless sea of the stars.”

“When Ancient Cultivator Civilization was at its peak, the Greater Thousand Worlds were established one after another by Ancient Cultivators. They constructed ancient transmission formations to run through the endless sea of stars, allowing for travel at will between stars and worlds.

They’d reached a level where they began exploring the ultimate mystery of time!”

“With the continuous evolution of the Ancient Cultivator Civilization, the Ancient Cultivators became more and more powerful, their lifespans grew longer and longer, and the amount of resources they seized grew larger and larger.”

“When the Ancient Cultivator Civilization was in its early stages, there were only several hundred Orichalcum stage cultivators and dozens of Monad stage cultivators within the three thousand worlds. The “Apotheosized Devils of the Old” and the “Tribulation Ascended True Monarchs” were unheard of. On dozens of worlds, only one may appear after thousands of years. They were an existence that was few and far between.

“But when the Ancient Cultivator Civilization reached its later stages, the number of high stage cultivators exploded massively, multiplying factor by factor like a geometric series. During this time, there was a saying: ‘Monads were numerous like dogs and the Apotheosized were happy to walk them.’”

“And so, there were numerous high stage cultivators, all needing tremendous amounts of resources to cultivate. Additionally, more and more cultivators reached the penultimate stage to immortality. Their craving towards resources also reached — an endless bound!”

“In the beginning, it was possible to satisfy the avarice of the high stage cultivators through the exploitation of resources on the Greater Thousand Worlds. But after ravaging resources over the course of thousands upon thousands of years, after discovering nearly five thousand worlds and spending an entire millennium, the Ancient

Cultivator Civilization came to find not a single new existence of a Greater Thousand World.”

“A world is limited, but the demands of cultivators are boundless — the Ancients spent a millennium in order to understand this truth. Naturally, civil war broke out as cultivators contested over the natural resources.”

“A three-thousand year civil war swept across all the Greater Thousand Worlds. Ancient cultivators that could conjure profound magics and transform nature engaged in slaughter on every star! Planets flamed and the ancient transmission formations were destroyed. Crystal battleships detonated one after another, and the high stage cultivators who claimed to be immortal fell one by one. The ‘Orichalcum Seizers’ and the ‘Old Monad Devils’ were like the mortals they had once treated like ants, turning into worthless cannon fodder. They disintegrated into scattered ash and smoke by the assaults sufficient to cause the annihilation of planets. ”

“Over seventy percent of the Greater Thousand Worlds were destroyed during the later stages of the civil war, and countless Greater Thousand Worlds had their connections severed from the Master World. Over 90% of the high stage cultivators turned to ash. The remaining low-stage cultivators struggled at death’s door in the midst of ruin.

“It seemed like the civil war was about to collapse, likely ushering the dawn of a new peaceful era — until an ignorant cultivator genius on an unknown Greater Thousand World invented a ‘Small Playful Invention’.”

“Historical records of this cultivator genius's name and sect had long been lost. His refining methods had also been swept away by the winds of time. Modern society calls what he invented — the ‘Fiend God Virus’!”

“Perhaps his thought process was very simple: since there weren’t enough soldiers, why not create something that could enhance the combat abilities of spirit beasts to replace cultivators in the battlefield — after all, there was seemingly no end to the number of spirit beasts!”

“He succeeded. The beasts that were catalyzed by the Fiend God Virus, countless once-docile spirit beasts, were transmogrified into terrifying machines of slaughter, becoming war machines known as Fiend Beasts. They did not tire. They did not falter. They appeared to be undying!”

“In a short 10 years, this cultivator genius relied on his army of Fiend Beasts to unify his Greater Thousand World. His Fiend Beast army numbered a hundred million strong. Cultivators of other worlds discovered what he had done and each began to refine their own ‘Fiend Beasts’.”

“In a hundred year’s time, Fiend Beasts became the main forces of the cultivator civil war, emerging in every nook and corner within the sea of the stars.”

“Unfortunately, all of the cultivators failed to realize two key issues.”

“The first, the ‘Fiend God Virus’ possessed an extremely powerful self-replicating ability and was violently contagious.”

“The second, while the ‘Fiend God Virus’ raised the fighting power of the Fiend Beasts, it also continuously increased the intellect of the Fiend Beasts at a rate that was imperceivable at first. Within a hundred years of savage blood-filled battle, a tremendous number of 10 billion fiend beasts had undergone catalyzation. A ‘Fiend Race’ possessing intellect surpassing mankind was born!”

“Eventually, on the final day of the three-thousand year civil war — the Fiend Race awakened!”

“All of the Fiend Beasts within the sea of the stars rebelled nearly simultaneously against their masters, as if they were being conducted by an existence of terror. The cultivators, who had been hiding behind closed doors living like royalty for ages, stood not a single chance against the experienced Fiend Beasts. Additionally, the Fiend Beasts grasped the technology and skills of cultivator human society!”

“Spirit countries were razed to the ground one after another. Entire sects were utterly extinguished. Within a hundred years, the Fiend Race ferociously hunted down the cultivators that managed to escape their net within the sea of the stars. The once high and lofty cultivators were now like stray dogs. They hid in the dark regions and cracks in space-time of the sea of stars, living in endless terror, unable to carry on.

“The next 30,000 years in its entirety was humanity’s ‘Great Dark Age’. Within this infinite darkness, the Fiend Race established a tremendous ‘Fiend Beast Dynasty’ and all of mankind was reduced to being lowly slaves. They lost their dignity. They lost their pride. And they lost what was most valuable of all — the right to cultivate!”

“It lasted three millenniumsthirty-thousand years, an entire three millenniumsthirty-thousand years! The old days lustered with glory where the Ancient Cultivator Civilization ruled the boundless sea of the stars. However, it was like a castle of sand, destroyed by the raging waves, with no trace left behind! The descendants of the high-level cultivators of the days of old, who possessed “an eternal immortal life”, could only rely on the most powerful primitive methods of reproduction, reproducing in great quantities, striving to ensure the preservation of their race!”

“The Great Dark Age ended only after the passing of 30,000 years due to internal power struggles within the Fiend Race; they constantly had conflicting views which split their society. Only then was humanity able to take a faint breath of opportunity. Cultivators launched three ‘Cultivator Revolutions’ from the shadows under the relentless efforts of countless cultivator geniuses. They set up a ‘Modern Cultivator Civilization System’ completely different from that of the Ancient Cultivator Civilization. Only then could they walk anew on the surging road of cultivation, reviving this road of glory!”

“Under the guidance and tenacity of the unprecedented ‘Supreme Emperor’, humanity was able to excavate a great number of the vestigial remains of the Ancient Cultivator Civilization and was able to found twenty ‘Guilds of Provenance’ anew once more. A thousand years of blood-filled battle passed and the humans achieved prosperity. Mankind became the rulers of the endless sea of stars once more; Modern Cultivator Civilization had achieved a shining and thriving reprieve from annihilation!”

“Ten thousand years have passed since the end of the ‘The Great Dark Age’. And an entire forty thousand years have past since the collapse of the Ancient Cultivator Civilization. The present is currently the best age of cultivation history; it's the year forty thousand of the Cultivation Era of endless glamour!”

While Li Yao was pondering over the final passage, a countdown had appeared in the sky, representing that the examination was coming to a close, leaving him no choice but to abandon his thoughts on continuing to expound on the “Supreme Emperor's” life. He spoke a few factual sentences without much thought, ending the passage in a rush.

In nearly the instant the final word emerged in his mind, the entire world collapsed with a loud bang and shattered into butterfly-like fragments. Li Yao was ejected by a tremendous force, his vision blossomed, and his consciousness returned back to the classroom.

Chapter 7: Second's School Goddess

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“BZZZZ...”

The out-dated examination chamber opened slowly, allowing Li Yao to take a step outside. He shook his head trying to clear a faint headache, a side effect from overtaxing the mind after staying too long in the Great Illusionary Land.

“Damnit! My head hurts like hell! The only students that are still using these kinds of garbage devices are those of us in the ‘Mish-mash class’. All the students of the Important Class and the Ascending Class had their spirit exam chambers swapped to the newest generation. There wouldn’t be any side effects for them no matter how taxing it was!” Meng Jiang was at his side complaining loudly, rubbing his eyes soon after. “Little Devil, this time, the difficulty of the exam simulation was really high. I probably failed again. When I get back, I’ll definitely eat some stir-fried bamboo shoots. How did you do?”

“So so I suppose.” Li Yao rubbed his nose. This time, the examination’s difficulty was indeed a bit high. Although in comparison his fundamentals were more solid and his mentality was sufficiently calm, he felt that he had been drawn to his utmost limit.

“Come on, let’s see!” Meng Jiang moved to the examination chamber’s side and began to extract a device. Every examination chamber had high-speed crystal processing units installed, allowing for test scores to be instantly calculated. The test scores were released the instant the examination ended.

“Wow! 525 points! What a high score! Thats enough to get admitted to the main universities. And yet, you said you did so-so? To be excessively modest is really just being arrogant. Go die Little Devil!” Meng Jiang cried out in surprise.

Li Yao swept a glance at the hologram. He actual letting out a dark sigh within his heart. Indeed, a score of 525 points wasn’t technically low. It was barely enough to meet the minimum passing score for a few of the well-known, main universities within the Union. However, the following numerical value was red, causing his eyes to feel somewhat prickled.

“Spiritual Actualization Quotient, 35%.”

The Spirit Root. A “pineal gland” located on the front medial part of the brain of those of the human race. It was a mysterious organ. It was a mystery because from the perspective of anatomy, this organ fundamentally does not exist; not a single genuinely true specimen of the spirit root has been found in the hundreds of thousands of years up to now.

However, this organ genuinely exists in the world of cultivation. Moreover, this organ is of most importance for cultivators. It is the link between mankind and the essence energy of heaven and earth. It is the key to the Essence Energy of the Universe!

Only when one’s Spirit Actualization Quotient reached 100% can one’s “Spirit Root Awakening” occur. Only then could one step onto the road of cultivation!

When an ordinary university decides on their admissions, they don’t look at the value of an applicant’s Spirit Actualization Quotient. It didn’t matter even if the value was just 1% since an ordinary university only fostered ordinary people.

But when it came to the admission process of the “Nine Elite Universities”, who specialized in fostering cultivators, they would take the examination score and multiply it with the Spirit Actualization Quotient to produce a final score. Naturally, the higher one’s Spirit Actualization Quotient was, the more of an advantage one had.

Li Yao’s Spirit Actualization Quotient was pitifully low. After multiplying 500 or so points with 35%, only a mere 200 points remained.

As for the arrogant Important Class of the heavens, it was common to have a Spirit Actualization Quotient exceeding 60%. In other words, others only needed to score 300 or so points to be able to effortlessly crush Li Yao.

Even worse was that the when one’s Spirit Actualization Quotient became higher, their thinking process became quicker, their five sense became sharper, and the degree of control over their body became greater. How could the scores of those from the Important Class not be different from them of the mish-mashed Common Class.

It wasn’t that Li Yao never thought of putting in painstaking work to increase his Spirit Base Opening Degree. Its that this matter was different than studying. Facts from books can be learned from rote memorization. Physically ability and martial skills can be exercised and cultivated crazily. Yet, one’s spirit base opening degree genuinely needed one to rely on heaps of natural resources to improve.

Take the arrogant heaven’s chosen one’s of the Important Class as an example. Everyday, they consumed all sorts of heavenly materials, earthly treasures, and strengthening concoctions. They purchased special “Actualization Quotient Trainers” for home use or they went to “Underground Cultivation Shops” for special training. The amount of money they spend on opening their spirit bases each month varied from being less than several tens of thousands to being over dozens of billions. Only by demolishing mountains of gold and silver could they increase their Actualization Quotient by a single percent.

As for Li Yao, he scavenged scraps from the Artifact Graveyard. The most he made was 10,000 a month. After paying rent, living expenses, and tuition fees, all that was left was chicken feed, not even enough to fill his stomach. How would he have the money to increase his Actualization Quotient?

To summarize in a sentence--- He was poor as f*ck!

Right while his heart was bogged with worries, he heard Meng Jian howl like a pig being slaughtered, “Damn! Two people got 691 points! Its Si Jiaxue and Helian Lie, those two bastards. These two are tied for first place again in the exam simulation this time!”

This time, all the third-years took the exam simulation simultaneously. In the front of the classroom was a hologram projector. The names and information of the top 10 students of the entire school came into view at lightning speeds.

Those tied for first were a beautiful girl who was as cold and pure as snow and a tall teen with an intimidating gaze and a flourishing heroic appearance.

Their scores did not really shock Li Yao. But the Spirit Actualization Quotient that followed caused flames of jealousy to erupt within his eyes.

Si Jiaxue, Actualization Quotient 71%; Helian Lie, Actualization Quotient 72%!

Meng Jian was still clamoring, “Tsk Tsk Tsk, They are truly worthy of being Crimson Nimbus Second’s stars. The school beauty and the school Adonis. The elites of the top dozen elites of the Important Class! Come take a look at these two bastards. Not only is the dude handsome and the chick beautiful, but they also come from rich and powerful families. Rumor has it that several cultivators have emerged in their family line. Their grades are good and their Actualization Quotient are also high. They are our school’s secret weapons for attacking the entrance exams! Everyone says that it should be a cinch for them to test into the Nine Elite Universities. The school specifically asked Fiend Blade Peng Hai to give them special training. This also has another meaning. The school hopes that they would be able to break into the top scores of Floating Spear City’s university entrance exams. At least breaking into the top 10 in the city!”

Speaking and speaking, Meng Jian let out an exaggerated sigh, “Alas, goods will eventually be thrown away, people will eventually die. Everyone here are equals as high school students. Everyone’s all hanging out in this school, but once we get through the university examinations, I am afraid that they shall fly, soar away, and enter the circle of cultivators, crossing over to indulge in a life of luxury, living a declining life of degeneracy. As for poor kids like us, we could only become laborers for life, the salaried class. Thinking about this cools my heart!”

He had spoken for a long time, but he was not met with a reaction. Meng Jiang turned his head to look and was surprised to see Li Yao’s pair of eyes staring blankly, gazing at Si Jiaxue’s picture. The look in his eyes was serene and remote, leaving no clues as to what he was mulling. Meng Jiang promptly tapped the head of his best friend, “Hey kid, it can’t be that you fell for Si Jiaxue? I’ll remind you out of the kindness of my heart. This women is indeed untouchable for you and I. She and Helian Lie are childhood family friends. Rumor has that their two main families have the intention of joining by marriage. And also, Helian Lie has her as a must-have target. Don’t you even look at this tall insurmountable power, for he has the smallest tolerance. Never has he allowed anyone else to get close to Si Jiaxue. Last time, it was a fresh transfer student who didn’t know his limits. He let out a declaration that he would pursue Si Jiaxue. The result was that in ‘Martial Arts Class’, Helian Lie broke three of his bones. As for us mish-mash of students, Helian Lie only needs a single sneeze to cause us to cough blood from internal injuries.”

“Nonsense.”

Li Yao retracted his gaze and appeared to make a resolution. “Let's not mention Helian Lie for now. Lets just talk about this Si Jiaxue, who spends the entire day assuming the ice cold face of a dead person. Most likely, it's because she has a frigid personality. How can I like this type of girl?”

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The school’s resources was biased for the most part towards the Important Class and Ascending Class. Their policy towards the Common Class was very relaxed. After taking the simulated exam, the students of the Common Class focused on each of their weaknesses and practiced special skills. The day went by quickly. At 4 in the afternoon, class was about to end.

“Wait a moment so that we can walk together. I found a pancake stall recently. The owner’s third uncle works part time as the Vulcan Sect’s burner. The owner was also taught the skill ‘Fire Cloud Palm’. The ‘Hand Engraved Crimson Flame Omelet’ he produces is of the utmost quality. Today, I’ll treat you to dinner. What do you say?” Meng Jian heroically pounded his chest a multitude of times.

“I can’t, I have something I need to do today.”

“Or, I’ll treat you tomorrow then!” his best friend replied without hesitation. Li Yao fled the classroom at lightning speeds.

For a moment, he looked to his left and to his right, acting like a thief. Circling around the campus, he moved half a giant circle’s distance. He passed through two chow halls and stopped in a forest grove at the back of the campus for a dozen or so minutes before turning back the way he came. He walked quietly on his tiptoes, sneaking towards the first floor of an old school building where there was a room filled with junk.

He closed the door softly and was met with the faint and indistinct fragrance of wild valley orchids.

A pair of cold eyes like a clear spring was glaring somewhat impatiently right at him from the darkness. Beneath those pupils were a nose that was tall and raised and thin lips that were pursed tight.

If Meng Jiang was here, he would absolutely let out his iconic pig-slaughtered howl, “Okay, you’re a dead little devil. You really actually hooked up with the Second’s School Goddess! You! Your thirst knows no bounds!”

Chapter 8: Repairing a Crystal Processor

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“You’re late by 55 minutes,” said the beauty coldy, like a frozen mountain.

“Sorry, this place was kind of hard to find. Did you bring the goods?” Li Yao criticized implicitly as he extended his dirty claw.

Si Jiaxue willow-like eyebrows wrinkled slightly as she judged Li Yao’s appearance. She felt that it appeared she had chosen the location without much thought. She hesitated for a short while but, nevertheless, fished out a crystal processing unit from her school bag.

“It’s this CPU. It’s super unstable after bootup. It crashes every time if you let it run over three minutes. I already went to dozens of repair shops and they all say that the architecture is way too archaic, that there’s a lot of components inside that are no longer produced, and that it's impossible to repair. I’ve heard you are a veteran crystal processor enthusiast and also a complete expert on repairing them. If you can fix this, name whatever price you want. Money is not a problem. Of course, if you can’t fix this... Please don’t break any of the countless components within.”

“Let’s discuss this after I take a look.”

Repairing crystal processors required a broad and profound set of skills. Li Yao did not dare to give a guarantee. He pulled out a pair of dust-repelling gloves and put them on. Only then did he solemnly take the CPU.

When the CPU was pressed into his hand, he felt fully the firmness of a true crystal processor classic. This was an antique CPU with at least over a hundred years of history. Half of the architecture was still mechanical in nature. There was a triangular button on the ball-shaped exterior.

When Li Yao lightly pressed the button, the crystal processing unit made a humming sound and lightly vibrated as it awakened. It seemed that its mechanical architecture was operating at lightning speed. A few seconds passed and suddenly, it flew out of Li Yao’s palm to float in midair. Two beams of light shot out from the two openings on its top and bottom, condensing together to form a giant hologram. It morphed 49 glistening, shining glyph characters into existence, which formed a elaborate virtual glyph keyboard.

“This is simply a work of art…” Li Yao’s eyes became filled with an incomparable tenderness.

He identified that this was the Heavenly Zither Sect’s Tube Type CPU, the Vast Tomb-7, developed over a hundred and forty years ago.

In the history of crystal processor development, the “Tube-Type CPU” was only in the arena for a mere dozen years before falling to the more advanced “Chip-Type CPU”. Moreover, the Heavenly Zither Sect was a small sect that only existed for 50 or so years. This small sect relied on the success of releasing generations of the “Vast Tomb” Crystal Processor architecture, but they never kept up with modern developments in technology. During the decade when Chip-

Type CPUs were rampant, this sect decided to go all in. They poured all their resources into developing the Vast Tomb-7. Ultimately, their source of capital fractured and they had to declare bankruptcy.

Thus, the Vast Tomb-7 was known as the shining final glory of all Tube-Type Crystal Processors, setting its place as a masterpiece.

Li Yao’s pair of hands turned into a light breeze as they hopped around on the glowing, rippling glyph keyboard.

His typing speed wasn’t necessarily fast, but his movements were natural and flowing, rolling freely and easily. His appearance wasn’t that of tapping a keyboard but of strumming a priceless zither. Appearing on the hologram were rows and rows of glyph script instructions that followed his movements, dropping down like a torrential storm of rain. And the crystal processor followed as well through its interface by emitting an utterly weak beep that was incomprehensible to the ordinary person.

Li Yao leaned his ear closer, listening attentively. He had an expression of complete concentration. Each of his movements was incomparably precise.

After all, Tube-Type CPUs were artifacts created over a hundred years ago. Their architecture was simpler in comparison to the opposite mainstream Chip-Type Processor of the present. Two minutes later, Li Yao was able to make an initial verdict, “There should be something wrong with the heatsink, causing the internal temperatures of the crystal processor to become abnormally high during run-time. The functionalities of modern crystal processors are becoming more and more powerful, having to process greater amounts of telepathic data and information. As for the older type crystal processors of over a hundred years ago, the load becomes too heavy. It is the same as a 150 year old man who’ve had to bear over a thousand pounds of weight everyday, year in year out. It’s hard to avoid destroying the joints.”

“This crystal processor is a remnant left behind by a close relative of mine. To me, it’s an important memorial containing meaningful memories. As long as you can fix it, I am willing to pay any cost,” Si Jiaxue spoke seriously.

Li Yao thought and thought, and nodded his head, “A scraped heatsink is a common breakdown in crystal processors, technically it’s not a big issue. The reason why none of the repair shops you went to were unable to repair is primarily because this model number of crystal processors is way too rare. The technology utilized by this processor is also way too obsolete. The heat sink used inside has not been produced in the last hundred years, and modern heatsinks used in modern processors are fundamentally incompatible. Anyways, it doesn’t matter. I just happen to have some extremely precious antique heatsinks in my collection. All I need to do is give it a few tries, even if a few of them become scrapped, I should be able to mod one to fit as a heatsink for this processor.”

“No need to bullsh*t! Just name a price!” Si Jiaxue had read between the lines.

“Oh my. Isn’t it sad to be so urgent to discuss money matters between fellow students? Anyways, it’s not a big problem. Time is short, let me bring it home. I estimate all I need is one night to finish this. As for the dismantling fees, testing fees, repair fees, component costs, assembling, and installation fees, and adding my labor fees altogether… I’ll discount it down to 95% for you. I calculate it to be 98,500 credits. Do you want to pay in cash or do a transfer?”

“Hmm?”

Si Jiaxue squinted her eyes. A dangerous glow exuded from within the depths of her eyes. All of a sudden, the ambient temperature of the junk room seemed to drop by ten degrees.

“I may have money, but it doesn’t mean I’ll let other people treat me as an easy target to cheat. Do you understand?”

Li Yao swallowed some saliva with utter difficulty. He bore against the pressure explaining, “Its true. When compared to repairing an ordinary crystal processor, this price is a little bit high. With nearly 100,000 credits, one can buy a high-end crystal processor with ‘Computational Power’ comparable to a cultivator at the peak of the Refinement stage. However, your crystal processor unit has over a hundred years of history. It can already be considered an antique. Obviously, the price for repairing an antique is different! Lets not talk about the other costs, let’s just talk about the several heat sinks I will need to use on this crystal processor. They were all acquired through years of bloody effort. I had to spend tremendous utmost effort in order to acquire these rare collection pieces. All of them are simply priceless treasures! So believe me, this is an absolutely fair and reasonable price!”

Si Jiaxue did not speak a single word. Her serene eyes fixed onto him.

Her Spiritual Actualization Quotient exceeded 70%, bringing with it spiritual pressure that was unyielding. Li Yao’s heart tightened and he was on the verge of collapsing. But when he thought of his own “objective”, he still forced himself to speak, “If my fellow student Si Jiaxue feels it’s too expensive, that’s also not a problem. Lets just say that my inspection was free this one time. You can mail it to a few of the large repair shops in a different country. Let them slowly find the corresponding heat sink for your model. I think it will take at most 3-5 months in order to find one or two in stock. If you decide to go this way, the cost should be cut down to under 10,000 credits.”

“Three to five months...”

Si Jiaxue groaned lightly. She knew that Li Yao spoke the truth since the technicians of several repair shops told her the same thing. From what they said, repairing the old CPU types wasn’t difficult, but finding the appropriate components was very hard. They also gave an estimation of three-five months. However, if her luck was bad, it was possible that she would have to wait up to half a year.

Presumably, this little rascal also saw this point, thereby considering herself to be an easy target!

Forget it. She, herself, still needed to go cultivate. There’s no need to get tangled up with these bastards of the Common Class. Si Jiaxue nodded her head, and with an expressionless face said, “Okay fellow student Li Yao, I can give you 100,000 credits, but business transactions require business contracts. Tomorrow at this time, I want to see the crystal processor looking completely brand new. Also, you will guarantee its operational stability into the future. If something goes wrong every now and then, I won’t pay any follow up repair fees. Is there any problems?”

“There’s absolutely no problems. After I replace its heatsink with a suitable one, it can resume normal operation for at least three years. During these three years, you can continue searching for the appropriate heatsink for this model. As long as you replace it at regular intervals, it will be fine," Li Yao responded at lightning speed, wearing a smile on his face.

"Then that's fine," Si Jiaxue nodded her head. She was unwilling to deal with this small rascal for even one more second, so she turned around to leave.

Li Yao sat down onto a box of junk, his head was covered with cold sweat. Only after much time had past did he feel the weight off his shoulders, letting out a whistle.

Success!

With 100,000 credits, he can go to the "Underground Ghost Market" to buy the illegally produced "Knock-Off Strengthening Drugs", giving him the chance to increase his Actualization Quotient by a huge percentage!

Knock-off strengthening drugs contained a great amount of impurities and their consumption causes extremely violent side effects. However, they are superior in termstimes of cost and sufficiency. 100,000 credits was enough to buy a three month's supply of dosage for consumption, giving him the opportunity to temper his spirit root within the "Hundred-day Sprint" timeframe — to be completely reborn!

"My desire is to test into the 'Nine Elite Universities'. This is my one and only chance. Even if you are the 'Second's School Goddess', I have no choice but to fiercely cheat you of your money. I am really sorry!" Li Yao shoved the "Vast Tomb-7" CPU into his school bag. He rubbed his somewhat swollen and aching temples for a bit. A glimpse of a smile appeared on his face as he strutted out the room of junk.

(TL Note: I translated the CPU types to be “tube type” and “chip type” because I feel that they analogous to our vacuum tube and solid-state transistor technology. I decided to use “chip” over “wafer” because a “master chip” was stated in chapter 3, where as wafers would refer to moreso the silicon wafer upon which integrated circuits are created via the lithography process.)

Chapter 9: Salted Fish and Shoes

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With the day’s school session end came a rare moment of calmness over the campus. Along a small path above the shade of the trees flew cheerful laughter and conversation. Several luxury private shuttles slowly descended from the air as parents arrived to pick up their children. There were also several students like Li Yao, who dragged their weary bodies along, slowly walking towards the school gate.

Just as he was about to exit the school gate, Li Yao suddenly felt his body tighten up. A tall silhouette obstructed the path in front of him, “You’re called Li Yao? Was it you who was with Si Jia Xue just a moment ago?”

Li Yao’s eyes suddenly shrank back into their sockets. He felt like ten-thousand needles had stabbed into his entire body. His heart rate sped up in a flash. A chill spread from his tailbone and rushed up to the top of his skull. The pressure exuded by this person was too great. He was like a poisonous viper staring fixated at a mouse. Li Yao was absolutely unable to move a single step. Even swallowing some saliva became incomparably difficult.

“It’s He Lianlie! Its Crimson Nimbus Second’s number one expert, He Lianlie! This time I’m done for!” Li Yao shrieked in his heart. He intended to explain himself, but he was unable to speak even half a word.

He Lianlie stood casually and wantonly. A crystal processor was clasped in his right hand and was immersed in calculating through a set of applicable exam questions, not at all looking directly at Li Yao in the eyes. He said without much thought, “No need to be afraid. I obviously know that with your type of trash, it’s impossible for you to have something with Small Xue. I’ll forget it this one time. I don’t feel like cleaning you up.”

His finger tapped a hologram lightly, switching to the next question. He Lianlie continued speaking, “Nevertheless, right now it’s the urgent and critical moment — the ‘Hundred-day Sprint’. Small Xue and I are the people who will attack for first place in Floating Spear City’s university entrance exams. I hope that during this time-frame, there won’t be any sketchy garbage disturbing Small Xue, distracting her. Do you understand yet?”

Li Yao’s eyes squinted into slits as he firmly bit down his teeth, “You’re saying I’m trash?”

He Lianlie didn’t even lift his head as he said indifferently, “Don’t be mistaken, I’m not specifically targeting you. From my point of view, you bunch of mishmash Common Class students, each and every one of you — are trash!”

After he said his last word, he finally raised his head and swept a glance at Li Yao.

Just a single glance caused Li Yao to feel like the pits of his stomach were ferociously hit by massive hammer. It was unbearable. He fell back two steps and coughed violently.

He Lianlie snorted coldly. Disdain filled his face as he turned and left.

Li Yao was bending over coughing, looking like a giant shrimp, and even coughed up his tears. A long time passed before he was able to stand straight. He breathed heavily and glared unwaveringly towards the direction of He Lianlie's departure.

"DAMN IT!"

"Don't tell me that in these days, all one needs is to be tall and lofty, to be bold and powerful, to be handsome and stylish, to be confident and relaxed, to have thin eyebrows and starry eyes, to be born to a rich and powerful household with a net worth of 18 billion, to possess an exceedingly powerful talent for cultivation and unyielding strength of a tyrant — then one can be this arrogant?"

……

Half an hour later.

"Lucky lucky, indeed this time luck has brought me to grandma's house. For the sake of repairing Si Jiaxue's crystal processor, I actually offended He Lianlie! If I had known things would turn out this way, I absolutely would have increased my price. Only a minimum of 200,000 credits would have been worth it!"

"Also, there's He Lianlie. This. Son. Of. A. B*tch. Armed with the power of money, he consumes heavenly materials and earthly treasures as if they were food. He drinks strengthening drugs as if they were tap water. He also has underground cultivator experts helping him strengthen his mind. Great martial arts masters help him forge his physique. Only then could he raise his Actualization Quotient to over 70 percent. Surprisingly, he is this arrogant! Trash? I am not trash! The day will come. I will become a true Master Artificer. I will beat you into a pig’s head and stuff you in a trash can!”

A lone youth walked solitarily on the road home. His expression was just like a devil’s as he gnashed his teeth in anger. Occasionally, when he happened onto a small rock by the road, he would ferociously kick it flying.

The appearance of He Lianlie caused him to clearly understand the distance between him and a cultivator genius, and sure enough, the gap was extremely large. It caused him to understand that the chance of success of his dream of “testing into the Nine Elite Universities, stepping onto the road of cultivation, and becoming a Master Artificer” were however uncertain.

A scene that he saw over and over in his uncanny dreams emerged in the sea of Li Yao’s mind. It appeared to be a scene from a movie.

There was a youth wearing a red tank-top. With raised eyebrows and open-wide eyes, he spoke loudly, “If we don’t have any dreams in life, how are we different from salted fish!?”

From the past until now, this scene would motivate Li Yao deeply. It let him advance bravely on the road of his dreams without any fear.

It was only at this time that he finally recalled the rest of his dream. What the other person’s response was when the red-tank-top youth had finished his words was:

“You don’t even have shoes. Doesn’t that make you a salted fish?”

Li Yao stood fixed as he subconsciously looked down at his pair of feet.

What he wore was a pair of basic exercise shoes picked up from the garbage heap. Normally, he cultivated like mad, so his shoes had been overworn long ago. Not only was the sole’s engraving worn away, even a hole was rubbed into the tip of the left shoe, exposing a big dirty toe.

He thought back to a moment ago when he saw the shoes He Lianlie wore. It was a pair of the newest model of the cultivating shoes, “SuperStar G-9”. They were handcrafted and refined using the toughest and most durable hides of fiend beasts. Scales were attached to the exterior, increasing the wear resistance by a large degree.

It was said that the sole is made of two layers, and in between was a cushion of air refined from the swim bladder of the deep sea devil fish. Not only does it increase jumping power, it also protects one’s leg joints. The price of this mere pair of shoes runs several tens of thousands of credits!

In this entrance exam battlefield where mighty forces were displayed and where only one can reign on top, there were still countless students of rich and powerful families just like He Lianlie, all wearing SuperStar G-9s and consuming endless resources!

For himself, a poor youth possessing nothing, how could he be capable of suppressing and rising above these people in the cruel blood-filled field of battle? How can he realize his dream?

Li Yao’s heart was above all at a loss, and his steps turned particularly heavy as well. The road ahead seemed to be long — quite long.

Night fell and the evening lamps lit up. He had finally made it to the main district.

Ahead was a large crystal bridge. If he crossed over the high-speed crystal rail tracks and went through the culvert under the bridge, he would find himself in Morning Sun Village's residential area.

This was the suburbs; it was relatively barren with very few people coming and going.

Right when Li Yao was about to go through the culvert, he suddenly heard a piercing explosion from the side of his ear. All he could see was a radiating glow all around. A crystal train was crossing the bridge.

Li Yao suddenly stood fixed and rubbed his eyes, looking towards the bridge.

In the instant the flash of light shot out a moment ago, he made out an image. There was a person standing on top of the bridge!

This was probably the rail line bridge's expert railway passer-througher!

The "high speed crystal rail" was one of the Federation's 10 ginormous grand artifacts, praised to be a "national treasure". It's maximum velocity can exceed 1000 km/hour. Furthermore, every cut of car on the crystal rail train was outfitted with the best defensive military grade artifacts to defend against fiend beasts. The destructive capabilities of its high speed assaults were in no way inferior to a high stage cultivator striking with his all!

In order to prevent unexpected accidents, the high speed crystal train was normally levitating a dozen or so meters off the ground on its dedicated rail line. The rail line was sealed all around as a restriction— How did this idiot crawl inside?

That’s right, Li Yao saw it clearly. An old man actually stood on the bridge’s rail line.

This old man looked very odd; he was old and gray-haired, and his appearance was dull and ancient. He looked like he was unearthed tens of thousands of years ago, like having once been in a museum seen by Li Yao.

But, his body actually exuded an air that was extremely heavy. Even though they were over a hundred meters apart, it caused Li Yao to practically hear his own heartbeat beat violently.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

It was like a large hammer was continuously bombarding a metal sheet!

The old man’s air was like a vast ocean. He Lianlie’s oppressive strength was simply feeble and pitiful in comparison. The difference between the two was greater than the gap between the sun and a firefly. Li Yao also had a certain feeling. When compared to He Lianlie’s created display of fame and power, this old man simply wasn’t manifesting this air consciously. Although there were waves inadvertently overflowing from the old man, what Li Yao felt was just the tip of the iceberg!

The old man wore a simple and plain coarse robe, it was like he stepped out from the ancient world of cultivation 40,000 years ago!

“Hey—” It was a dangerous moment. Li Yao could not make out whether this old man was lunatic or some kind of eccentric. He saw that the train was arriving here at galloping speed. His hands and feet were gesticulating as he cried loudly.

The old man turned a deaf ear to Li Yao’s shouts as he continued to size up the continuously expanding light in the front of him.

It appeared he was in a state of complete curiosity about everything in his surroundings. He was especially curious about the crystal rail line that lay on the bridge and the screaming crystal rail train that was about to arrive. Even more so was the expression that appeared on his face; it containing the joyful thoughts of a mischievous child who had discovered a brand new toy.

In the next second—

Chapter 10: Possessed by a Ghost

Chapter 10: Possessed by a Ghost

The high speed crystal train rushed across. With a “Pwa”, like the shattering of an egg, the old man was rammed head on! He disintegrated in a millisecond! Limbs and bones snapped and disintegrated under the bombardment of a torrential surge of essence energy. He was annihilated all the way down to the cellular level, vanishing from the face of the planet!

All Li Yao saw was a bright flash of red and the mysterious old man disappeared completely!

He let out a somewhat helpless sigh from within his heart.

Having grown up in the Artifact Graveyard, which had a terrifying environment filled with danger, encountering dead bodies was nothing out of the ordinary for him. Furthermore, he personally experienced countless deaths in his uncanny dreams, and so when it came to the issue of death, Li Yao was not the ordinary kind of person who would react with terror or unwell feelings.

Nevertheless, in the end, this was still a living being and having this life fade away in front of him in this miserable manner left his heart feeling somewhat strange.

“This old man was probably a cultivator who fell into madness, going insane. This is the only reason why someone would do something this crazy,” Li Yao thought to himself inwardly.

The crystal train was not affected at all by this minor mishap and maintained its high speed, moving along. It went away, never to return, disappearing quickly into the horizon.

Li Yao knew what would happen. There would be security guards on the train who would surely notify the local police department of this matter. There was also the military; they would rush here with large numbers of their military police.

He was a scavenger who collected scraps in the Artifact Graveyard. It can be said that his actions bordered on the edge of the law. As always, Li Yao would abstain from dealing with the military police in order not to stir up any trouble. He straightened his clothes, sped up his footsteps, and passed through the culvert.

Yet, he was unaware that in a separate plane that was invisible to him, a transparent crystal human form, looking like an exact carbon copy of the mysterious old man, appeared in the exact same place where the mysterious old man was standing on the bridge’s rail line. The old man looked somewhat puzzled as he sized up his surroundings. Finally, the old man eyes flashed, locking into a state of irradiating anger.

The transparent crystal figure suddenly shattered into a myriad of traceless and incorporeal fragments, refracting and shining bright in the moonlight like thousands upon thousands of gorgeous butterflies using their wings to soar. Without any warning, they silently entered inside Li Yao’s body!

“It’s cold!”

Li Yao felt a bone-chilling ghastly wind. He seemed to be hearing something murmur an absolutely ancient and mysterious language quietly near his ear. It was an unspeakable terror; a unmentionable horror. He involuntarily gave a shiverish shake.

Bizarre — this is really too bizarre. Some of his hair stood on its end, and his blood ran cold. He straightened his school uniform and simply started running.

According to logic, when a person begins to run, their four limbs would move and their body would generate heat. But no matter how much Li Yao ran, no matter how much he increased his sprint to the extreme tornado-like limit, to the point of puking, the bone-chilling coldness in his soul followed without end like a shadow following the body. It was as if there were maggots in the bones of his feet, swallowing him inch by inch.

He staggered home and threw himself through the house door. By that time, his entire self had already frozen into an ice cube. But if one were to look at his exterior appearance, they would actually find his face flushed red, his brows beaded with sweat, and his entire body surrounded by a white mist of steam vapor rising in the air. It was a unspeakable strangeness!

“Small Black, Small Black, I think I got sick. Quickly help me to my bed and then find the anti-fever medicinal artifact from the medicine box!” Li Yao spoke with a slurred speech. Bursts of darkness appeared in his vision. The top and the bottom of his eyelids were battling endlessly. He was unable to wait for the Blackwing sword to fly over. His legs had weakened, and he had already fallen on the floor. He gave a wheeze and was completely passed out.

It was like he had sunk in a deep swamp. His five senses were stripped to practically nothing. He was unceasingly in an absolute darkness. **. **. It was never-ending.

Eventually, right before he was about to go mad, right before he was going to pray to the hundreds of millions of gods in this infinite world for them to simply put an end to it all, his whole body loosened and the darkness retreated like the receding tides. He breathed fresh air once again — and the air he breathed was a hundred fold fresher than any he had ever breathed!

“What kind of place is this?” Li Yao observed his surroundings, feeling somewhat bewildered.

He knew subconsciously that he had fallen into a dangerous and fearsome “nightmare.” However, this nightmare was different than when he went over to the ”uncanny dream.” This dream world was extremely clear, containing strong elements from an ancient era.

He was standing above an incomparably vast military ground. In all directions were countless numbers of gigantic weapons and bronze statue artifacts towering tall, reaching through the clouds. They encompassed this enormous field of over a hundred acres. And this ground surprisingly lay on the peak of a floating mountain in the sky.

Below at the edge was an unforgettable sight, the rolling of large waves in a giant black sea!

The masculine odor of blood and stinky sweat of smoky figures assailed and bombarded Li Yao’s nostrils, nearly killing him from the stench. In his surrounding were several thousands of muscular humanoids with well developed limbs, bright bursting muscles, and fierce faces. Each of these buff humanoids carried a hammer that looked to weigh over a thousand pounds upon their shoulders. They spared no energy, engaging in drills.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Several thousand-pound hammers smashed simultaneously against the floor, causing the base of the entire floating mountain to tremble and shake.

At this moment, Li Yao was in a state of shock. He discovered that he had unexpectedly become one of these nine-feet tall burly giants. Even his looks had changed entirely. He touched his chin with his hand and felt beard stubble that was like iron needles!

He was grasping in his hand the same type of iron hammer, the size of a tree. Its coiled-rope grip had rubbed, breaking into his palm and soaking in his blood.

At the front of this military ground was a giant that was twice as large as all the other giants. It was simply not of human race, a “Titan.” It glared as it opened its large copper-bell eyes and shouted like a thunderstorm, “You 3527 useless pieces of sh*t, you have already been officially admitted under the ‘Hundred Smelting Guild’ and have become the lowest level workers of the Hundred Smelting Guild. This is the result of the cumulative efforts of your forefathers, a good fortune created from three generations of cultivation. We, the Hundred Smelting Sect, are the greatest and most powerful crafting guild within this ‘Grand Foreworld’. Our guild is strict. Even if you have the smallest and most rudimentary job in this guild, you too must put forth your life in cultivating!”

“As low-grade workers, each day, each of you must carry 3000 pounds of water, chop down 50 trees, and travel to the

‘Abyssal Sea’ below to hunt at least 10 Thornridge Sharks. This shall be your food!”

“However, the absolute most important thing is… you must cultivate in the Hundred Smelting Guild’s foundation techniques, the<<One-Hundred-and-Eight-Hands Chaos-Gale Hammer Technique>>. After you all have finished listening to me, you useless shits. Everyday, you must swing down your iron hammers 10,000 times, and each swing cannot be lacking. When you are able to hammer out a deep hole within this pure-orichalcum-smelted floor, then you will be promoted to a ‘Metal-Forge Worker’ and be able to cultivate techniques of higher quality!”

“Cultivate! Cultivate! Give me your life for cultivation! Ou Yeming, what are you standing around like a retard for? Why aren’t you cultivating?”

Li Yao still hadn’t understood what was going on when he discovered that the entire group of humanoids were observing him with eyes of extreme pity. His heart immediately froze. A whirlwind filled with ferocity and malice lunged over from ahead. It was the enormous Titan coming from over a hundred meters away. In a blink of an eye, the Titan used a skill to appear right in front of him. The Titan towered above and glared ferociously at Li Yao.

“Ou Yeming, yesterday you were babbling nonsense at dinner. You were also the one saying some crazy talk about absolutely becoming the Hundred Smelting Guild’s Guildleader in the future. Whats wrong? You don’t feel that the<<Chaos-Gale Hammer Technique>> is too rudimentary, that it’s not suitable for you, the ‘Future Guildleader’, to cultivate? Alright then. Today, I will let you experience for a bit how formidable the One-Hundred-and-Eight-Hands Chaos-Gale Hammer Technique can be! DIE!”

The Titan’s pair of hands spread opened. Black smoke condensed in the palms of his hands and transformed into giant hammer that was larger than Li Yao’s skull. It danced, producing a strong wind; and it struck, smashing through Li Yao’s head. Li Yao still had not process what was going on. All he felt was that he grew a pair of wings as he soared through the air, and his head felt like it had grown 10 times in size. He shrieked endlessly in his heart, “What’s wrong with this f*cker?!”

Chapter 11: As if a Dream

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From this day onward, Li Yao assumed the identity of “Ou Yeming“, and the miserable life of a low-level Hundred Smelting Guild worker unfolded for him.

This strange dream was completely different from a typical dream to the extent that it seemed even more real than the uncanny dreams that Li Yao had experienced since childhood. Even the passage of time appeared to be abnormally slow. No matter what Li Yao tried, there wasn’t even a single trace of indication that he would awaken from this dream.

It was as if he had truly become “Ou Yeming”, carrying out an entirely different chapter of life.

Being a low grade worker in the Hundred Smelting Guild was not easy. Along with the slow passage of time, the burden that was pressed upon their shoulders grew greater and greater every day.

In the beginning, they carried 3,000 pounds of water and cut down 50 giant trees. Then it turned to carrying 10,000 pounds of boiling molten iron and cutting down 100 of the metal-like orichalcum trees. Additionally, they had to swing the 1,020 pound ‘Heaven Forging Hammers’ down 30,000 times!

And the Instructor of the Low Level Workers, the Titan, seemed to have Li Yao firmly marked in his mind as a thorn in his flesh. Everyday, he would bring Li Yao troubles during the three daily meals. If Li Yao made the smallest mistake, he would unavoidably be hit with a series of the One-Hundred-And-Eight-Hands Chaos-Gale Hammer Techniques, beating him into a state between life and death, a state so painful one wishes they were dead.

Day after day, year after year, time passed in the dreamworld like flickering lights and passing shadows. It was as if 10 years had passed.

Day in and day out, the grueling and mundane drudgery of work was of inhumane torment and slowly extinguished Li Yao's sense of self. The name "Li Yao" was a thing that was already far distant. Even his past memories became mere grains of sand within the deepest depths of his mind. They had sunk into the hidden depths of the ocean floor and not a single ripple emerged on the surface.

He was completely "Ou Yeming". The Ou Yeming who was the most outstanding of the Hundred Smelting Guild's low level workers!

30 years of blood, sweat, and tears. He forged himself a majestic body of steel muscles and iron bones. And much to the bitterness of the Titan, he also completely comprehended the essence of the One-Hundred-And-Eight-Hands Chaos-Gale Hammer Technique to the extent that his proficiency surpassed several inner members of the Hundred Smelting Guild.

Other than the Titan, people no long called him "Ou Yeming"; all the low level workers called him "Elder Brother Ou Ye!"

Year 11. He finally became the number 2 ranked Metal-Forge Worker of the Hundred Smelting Guild and received the qualifications to enter the "Metal Forging Room".

The following years passed by at flying speeds.

Year 14. He became an outer member of the Hundred Smelting Guild and received the title of “Blacksmith”. He was now qualified to assist in casting and forging the low-grade flying swords used by the outer guild members.

Year 21. He became a “Master Craftsman” and possessed his own Crafting Furnace. He could now cast and forge low-grade flying swords all by himself.

Year 29. He became a “Grandmaster Craftsman”. He was the number one crafter among the outer guild members.

Year 31. The demonic cultivators invaded. Ou Yeming took charge in resisting against the Seven Great Demonic Guilds on the battlefield. He smashed and killed 24 Building Foundation Stage members of the demonic cultivators. It was at the time that the Hundred Smelting Guild discovered that he’d taken the most basic technique, the One-Hundred-And-Eight-Hands Chaos-Gale Hammer Technique, pushed forward an evolution, and transformed it into One Hundred and Eighty-Nine Hands!

Year 33, Ou Yeming sat and paid respects to the Hundred Smelting Guild’s Elder ‘Daoist Yu Chang”. He became an inner guild member of the Hundred Smelting Guild. Another three years later, he and became a core guild member and was the Metal Forging Room’s attendant.

Year 38. Ou Yeming distinguished himself amongst the Hundred Smelting Guild’s countless youths by becoming the first to reach the peak boundary of the Building Foundation Stage. Also, deriving from “Ou Ye Elder Brother”, other people began addressing him as “Senior Master Ou Ye!”

In the same year, he took the Hundred Smelting Guild’s thirty-fifth supreme guild leader’s only daughter as his wife.

At the wedding festivities, beautiful women lined the walls. Ou Ye Ming was like the rising sun — his future looked boundless. He thought back to the days when his identity was a low-level worker, when he had declared in jest, “Eventually there will be a day, when I will become the Hundred Smelting Guild’s Guild Leader!”

It seemed that this was no longer an impossibility.

At present, he held great power. He sat upon endless resources and advanced peacefully down the road of cultivation, making tremendous progress. Numerous elders of the guild watched over him from above, and countless blood-brothers aided him from below. His future landscape was truly boundless. He was at the apex of life!

Only… When he thought back to when he had said those words in jest dozens of years ago, he could faintly recall memories of some sort. Inevitably, a ripple of recollection would churn from the depths of his mind, letting him feel somewhat uneasy.

“My husband, you will certainly make and build our Hundred Smelting Guild to become the most powerful crafting guild within the three-thousands worlds...” his darling wife lay upon the bed gazing at him with a smile. Her blurry eyes were as tender and soft as water.

Ou Yeming deeply, deeply deeply, deeply deeply deeply deeply felt a cold shiver.

A strange vision rippled suddenly, surfacing. It was as if there was something distorting space and time, ripping a hole in the world. The face of his wife lying on the bed became fuzzy, unclear, and hazy. It changed to a another face that was clean to the point of pureness.

““Promise me, don’t go street racing any longer. Become an honest car mechanic, no one will look down on you. There will be a day when we will have our own Auto 4S Shop!””

“Promise me! Dear Yao!”

He subconsciously nodded his head. He blinked his eyes once and suddenly woke up.

It was a feeling that was completely bizarre. Something similar to a spirit had disengaged from the body. It changed into a transparent empty shadow and floated midair. It looked with absolute calmness in the bridal room at Ou Yeming and his wife. It had once shared Ou Yeming’s personal experiences, but now it turned into a complete spectator.

“I am not Ou Yeming, I am not Ou Yeming! Who am I? I am… I AM — LI YAO!”

It was like a rush of clear spring water had flushed his heart. His mind awakened to a bright comprehension that was incomparably clear. In a flash, he found his sense of self once more and the seventy two years of past memories also shattered into multi-colored shards, a transient dream.

“Too close. Too close. If I’d kept on wallowing in this dream and was unable to free myself, then I fear that the day I woke from this dream, the one who would awaken would be only Ou Yeming, not the real me!” Li Yao thought back to his various moments in the past, and he could not help but to be drenched in sweat as he let out a shout of luck.

From this day forward, he assumed the role of a spectator and continued to participate in the dreamland’s development. Even though he still had not broken free, he knew clearly that this was a dream. Within the dream were countless things that caused him to be perplexed.

In psychological terms, this was called a “lucid dream”.

The rate at which the dreamland unfolded grew faster and faster. It was like the blurred lightning speed of a crystal rail train. Only during important moments did the speed slow down, allowing Li Yao to clearly see their details.

Year 41. Li Yao saw Ou Yeming become the Hundred Smelting Guild’s youngest Elder in history. In that same year, he crafted a secret sword, the Profound Spark, and beheaded True Monarch Dulong, a demonic cultivator tyrant who’d seized the Core Formation Stage.

Year 43. Li Yao saw Ou Yeming representing the Hundred Smelting Guild in the “10 Worlds on Sword Theory” competition. He used the might of the one-of-a-kind, tyrannic greatsword, “Hundred-Meter Swallowing Dragon”, to suppress the other outstanding competitors. He cut through, breaking 92 of his opponents weapons in succession, seizing the title “Blade Saint of 10 Worlds”, and became a master swordsmith that could shake this dozen of worlds.

Year 52. Li Yao saw the demonic cultivators invade once more. Their most important target was the Hundred Smelting Guild. Dozens of necessary core members, the Guild Leader, highest level members, Elders, fell one by one.

The situation was dire. Ou Yeming was elected to act as the Hundred Smelting Guild’s 36th generation Guild Leader.

Under his leadership, the Hundred Smelting Guild transformed into a gigantic weapons manufacturing plant, steadily providing Masterwork Weapons to guilds on the path of good.

Year 68. The final disciples of Nine Great Demonic Guilds were exterminated and slayed by the Masterwork Weapons crafted by Ou Ye Ming!

At this time, there were no longer any people who called him “Senior Master Ou Ye” or “Guild Leader Ou Ye.”

Every person addressed him with absolute veneration as — Ou Yezi!

Year 109. The name Ou Yezi had already spread through to the several hundreds of surrounding worlds. Even people on the other shore of the sea of stars from unknown worlds, even people from close distances of millions and millions of kilometers braved the danger of being consumed by the raging maelstrom of primordial chaos. They crossed over using ancient transmission arrays, arriving at the Grand Foreworld, all for the sake of acquiring a Masterwork Weapon crafted by Ou Yezi.

Year 130……. Year 250…… Year 320……

At last ------

“Supreme Guildmaster! Elder Forebearer! Please sir, think twice, think twice about this! Tunneling through time is fundamentally impossible! You sir are the great pillar of heavens that supports our Hundred Smelting Guild. You absolutely cannot undertake such a risk yourself!”

Li Yao looked on within the giant palace hall that was incomparably majestic and upon which clouds and mist curled around. Over ten thousand cultivators were kneeling simultaneously on the ground. They were facing towards Ou Yezi and were kowtowing repeatedly. The knocking called the entire hall to echo with “bang bang” sounds while blood flowed to fill the earth.

Ou Yezi, who’s hair and beard were completely white, was standing magnificently in the center of a grand and mysterious transmission array. With a flick of his sleeve, he indifferently said, “There are a great number of worlds in the universe. There are a great number of eras in eternity. The true meaning of cultivation is… to explore the endless mysteries of the cosmos. This old man has happened to coincide with destiny and has accidentally crafted something that could possibly traverse time, the ‘Great Time Array’. Even if the possibility is uncertain, I need to test it out. To find out if it can truly traverse to the ends of time.”

He stopped for a moment. Slowly, he swept his eyes across the people within the great palace hall. Ou Yezi face was written full of melancholy. He murmured, “My disciples, you need not speak any further. All the artifacts in this world have already been studied fully by this old man. I have no regrets. I just hope that at the distant era on the other shore, this new world several tens of thousands of years in the future, there would be new artifacts capable of making people somewhat happy.”

His tone left nothing out. Ou Yezi had already ignited the Great Time Array. A pillar of blinding light came from the depths of the bizarre transmission array and enveloped him within.

This pillar of light flooded with an incomparably violent surge of essence energy. It was just like a flood rushing and spreading in all directions. All those at the great palace cowered and shivered in front of the surge of essence energy. All the cultivators were forced to erect essence shields of protection. The cultivators closest to Ou Yezi were directly caught in the wave of essence energy and were overturned.

And that essence energy seemed to be infinite. It continued to gather unceasingly... increasing, expanding. It was like the essence became a mythical beast which beared its fangs.

“No. Not good. Right now this transmission array is assimilating the surrounding essence energy in an unending stream, transforming into a chaotic flow of essence energy. It can explode at any time!”

“Something has gone wrong with the transmission array. Everyone, quickly evacuate. RUN!”

“No, we can’t escape in time. Hurry, put up the essence shields. Use the most powerful artifacts to withstand it!”

“AHHH------”

The last scene Li Yao saw in his eyes was an expanding ball of milky white bright light that was like a roaring sea. The entire palace, the hundreds of floating mountains outside, and even the entire sea below were all engulfed entirely.

And in the instant Li Yao witnessed the milky white ball of light expand to its limit, he completely and thoroughly awakened. In the Cultivation Era Year 40,000, in Heaven’s Origin Sector, in the Star Glory Federation, in Floating Spear City’s suburbs, in Morning Sun Village’s residential area, In his house, Li Yao suddenly sat up in his bed.

Chapter 12: Ecstatic Enough to Fly

Chapter 12: Ecstatic Enough to Fly

“PAIN, PAIN, PAIN, PAIN, PAIN, PAIN, PAIN, PAIN!”

Li Yao’s head felt like it had a splitting migraine. Hundreds of years of time birthed from the vivid, realistic dream and transformed into countless sand grains of information that flowed into his mind. It was like a mountain flood had erupted within the depths of his brain, shaking, barging, and colliding around. At last, they directly collided into the pineal gland near the medial part of his brain!

The flesh between his eyebrows twitched and twitched. It was like the shoots of a stump that had experienced rain. Something was on the verge of piercing through the skull, breaking through the body to rise up!

Suddenly, Li Yao was overcome by a bizarre feeling that was indescribable by words.

It was as if his exterior was bound heavily like an encased person, and every time he experienced this pain, a hole was ripped in his exterior shell. His five senses improved substantially, allowing him to perceive an absolutely marvelous true world.

In a flash, he enumerated 327 cracks in the ceiling. He saw clearly the several hundred small print characters engraved on a tea cup located over 3 meters away. Moreover, he recognized that this was a battlefield poem written by a poet of the Federal Army 133 years ago. At the same time, this Army Poet’s life history and experiences within seven military campaigns emerged within Li Yao’s mind. Even the outcomes of the seven military campaigns were extremely clear.

Incidentally, he also heard the sounds of flesh hitting flesh from within the adjacent room twenty meters away down stairs.

“What the hell is this! This is practically... an overturning invigoration!”

Li Yao blinked his eyes, and every time he blinked, he felt the world become clearer by a degree. Countless gorgeous colors that he was unable to speak the names of struck against his optical cells. The collisions caused his head to become giddy and his eyes to become dim. His heart blossomed with joy.

Both his hands rubbed forcefully at the flesh between his eyebrows. Li Yao attempted to clear up his thoughts, but the information within his mind flowed like a destructive tsunami. Like an overflowing great river, it could not be controlled.

“58,942 multiplied by 88,743 equals 5,230,689,906! Last year’s issued winning ticket number for the Federation’s Cultivator Lottery was awarded to number 73 89 52 74 55 16 with a prize of 13,547,328 credits. After deducting 14.32% in special taxes, one would receive 11,607,350.64 credits! The area of Star Glory Federation’s territory is 37,140,000 square kilometers. The total population is 10.455 billion. The size of the military is 16.7478 million. The military possesses 13 gigantic ‘Elder Heaven’s

Provenance’ class strategic crystal battleships; 52 ‘Open Heaven’s Founder’ class heavy armament crystal cruizers...”

“Three years ago on May 30th, I crossed the intersection between Luofu Main Street and Qishan Street. That day, the temperature varied between 13 and 21 degrees, and there was a category 2 wind blowing from the north west. From my southwest direction situated 11 meters away was a woman wearing a light green skirt. Her age was between 26 and 29 years old. The wind gust lifted up the skirt, it was pink with a light violet pattern!”

The warfare of attrition occurring right now downstairs should be Elder Zhou’s Family. 72 strikes were made within a minute. This rate is higher than Elder Brother Zhou’s typical display by 35.8%, and the female’s yelling shouts were also sharper than normal by at least 23.4%. If Elder Brother Zhou hadn’t eaten some sort of secret medicine, then I fear that he is being cuckolded!”

“Is this a mistake? How am I suddenly able to think of so many things and process this many numerous and disorderly thoughts? It's exactly like… being the same as a cultivator!”

Li Yao was frightened by his own thought and jumped! He thought back to just a moment ago when he had escaped from the dream of grandeur and felt somewhat of a chill in the back of his head.

He squinted his eyes and gripped firmly on his thigh. He used pain to focus his thoughts and came to a state of quiet concentration. He reflected on the causes and effects.

A short time later, over a hundred strips of pertinent information jumped out from within the area of his brain that was the storehouse of information. It was like a glistening shining pearl that was made up from tying information into a chain of clues.

“Crystal Processor. Activate!”

Li Yao let out a soft breath of noise. A crystal processor emerged at the end of the bed and emitted a soft beam of light. After a series of musical “ding ding” start up rings, the beam diffused and became a giant hologram.

Li Yao accessed the world wide web. He opened a website called “Wanxiang Searcher”, entered into the search field the three words “Hundred Smelting Guild”, and lightly pressed down on the “Launch” glyph script.

The webpage flowed with brilliant lights and vibrant colors; all seven colors of glyph script danced chaotically and formed into several short paragraphs of glyph writing.

“The Hundred Smelting Guild was a guild from 47,000 years ago as of this time, situated in the middle of the Classical Cultivation Period. It was a guild that was once flourishing, located in the ‘Center Provence Domain’s Grand Foreworld’. Their specialty was crafting, casting swords, and forging famous artifacts. Of special note is their 36th Guild Leader, Ou Yezi, who was known as the ‘Model Artisan’. He was a well-known and moving Master Artificer. He is mentioned in several ancient writings and records.”

“Approximately 46,000 years ago, the Hundred Smelting Guild’s headquarters was destroyed by a large explosion of unknown origin. Within a timeframe of a short dozen years, they vanished like smoke into thin air, completely perishing.”

“According to written records by cultivators of that era that were unearthed so far, there are claims that Ou Yezi crafted a certain transmission array that can shuttle through time. When he conducted the first experiment, he inadvertently triggered a large essence energy wave explosion and ended up being vaporized. His consciousness was scattered and destroyed.”

“Nevertheless, not a single remnant of the Hundred Smelting Guild has been discovered at the present time. All information pertaining to the Hundred Smelting Guild have their origins in ancient writings, classified as indirect evidence. The true cause for the sudden death of Ou Yezi and the decline of the Hundred Smelting Guild is still unknown.”

“Addendum: The Hundred Smelting Guild appears within the newest game developed by our Wanxiang Group, <>. Players can play as a character disciple in the Hundred Smelting Guild, interact directly with ‘Model Artisan’ Ou Yezi, and explore the most profound secrets of crafting! If you join now, you will receive a novice gift box. The first 10,000 players to telepathically download this game will also receive an additional 5 cool and amazing battle armour equipments. What are you waiting for!? Download telepathically now! Join the game!”

Li Yao ignored the last paragraph of information in a straightforward manner and flipped between the previous few paragraphs a few times. He looked and looked.

Gradually, his eyes began to shine. His mind flew and spun as he read telepathically. Countless thoughts like shuttling threads interweaved into an intricate and complicated delicate design.

“So it turned out to be this way. The Hundred Smelting Guild really existed as an ancient sect. Ou Yezi too was a Master

Artificer with outstanding talent that warped the heavens. 46,000 years ago, he invented some time machine that could travel through time. Moreover, he experimented with it on himself. He did not expect it would trigger a world shaking gigantic explosion and cause the destruction of the Hundred Smelting Guild.”

“Although the Hundred Smelting Guild was destroyed, Ou Yezi’s experiment was actually a success. He really crossed over the obstructing wall of time and arrived 46,000 years later in the year 40,000 of the Cultivation Era!”

“This era possesses innumerable mystical artifacts unthinkable by the ancient cultivators. Ou Yezi, being a madman crafter, was obviously thrilled in his heart when met with them, especially towards the modern large-scale artifact system that is the high speed crystal rail train. How could he research and figure out its inner nature with a just a moment with it?”

“The result is that he was… hit and killed by the train!”

“I reckon that in the matters of time traveling, cultivators would receive great harm to their bodies. Ou Yezi must have received serious damage and his cultivation base took a large hit. Otherwise, based on the tyrannical strength he displayed in the dreamworld, I can’t say for sure if the crystal train would have been even capable of knocking him off the bridge.”

“Regardless of any words, Ou Yezi’s corpse was ripped to shreds by the crystal rail train. However, his incomparably tremendous mental consciousness would vanish to thin air that easily. He just happened my crossing below the bridg,e and his mind entered my body with a futile attempt to force me out!”

“Yes, it was right when I felt a bone chilling wind wreak havoc within my body. It has to be this old despicable fellow with malicious intentions. The dream took many unusual forms, it was all him trying to deceive me by dressing things up to look good. If I had not promptly seen through his illusion, the one who would be lying on this bed would without a doubt be the ‘Ou Yezi’ who would feel that he got a good deal!”

“But, I am just a lowly commoner in terms of cultivation How did I resist Ou Yezi’s powerful mind and thwart his possession attempt?”

Li Yao’s thoughts coursed with electricity and turned. He muttered to himself for a short time and thought back to within the dream of grandeur when he was about to join with the supreme guild leader’s daughter in the bridal room. At that time, an inharmonious ripple had emerged.

His mind suddenly flashed with divine light. He had found what was the cause.

“Ha ha, Ou Yezi this fellow is truly unlucky!”

“When considering his peerless tyrannical cultivator mental strength, if he’d tried to possess any person within the federation who could be considered low stage cultivators, I fear that he would not have encountered even the least bit of inconvenience.”

“But I am different. A memory not of this world is originally hidden beneath the surface within the deepest depths of my mind. To explain in a certain sense, this body of mine has already been seized once by Li Yao of planet Earth. It's the equivalent of having already been injected with a vaccine. There is a natural immunity towards possession.”

“Even the most ruthless virus is powerless against a person who has had a vaccine. Ou Yezi just had bad luck. Not only was he unsuccessful in possessing me, he has instead left behind great benefits!”

No matter how slow Li Yao’s reactions were, he was aware of all the fearful serious changes that had occurred to his body. His thought process speed was quicker than his previous by at least tenfold.

The other changes will not be mentioned. Let’s just say that the fundamental information he clawed out was able to be processed within 3 minutes to figure out the causes and effects to a pretty accurate degree. If it were the him from the past, it's very likely that he would not understand things even after three days and three nights.

“The teacher of the Profound Cultivation Arts once said that the highest realm of the Profound Cultivation Arts is to enter a kind of incomparably slow flowing river of time. While 1 minute passes in the real world, a year would occur in the mental world, a fantastic situation. If one were to cultivate in this situation, great benefits would be provided to raise their Spiritual Actualization Quotient!”

“While I was in the dream of grandeur, it seemed that several hundred years of time had past. Could it be that I really entered into this kind of mysterious realm. I was also sharpened by Ou Yezi’s formidable mental mind. Did my Actualization Quotient rise greatly while I was unconscious?”

Li Yao heard the teacher say before that raising the Actualization Quotient would increase one’s ability to recall large amounts of memories in a flash, raise analyzation and computational abilities, and thought process ability and perception.

Another direct sign of further proof was the pineal body between his eyebrows. There he felt a growth that was on the verge of bursting out.

These signs matched with what had happened to his body!

“Development! Development! I don’t know how much my Actualization Quotient was raised. Could it be that I now possess the power to beat that heaven’s arrogant person of the Important Class by the nostrils and turn his head into a pig’s head?”

Chapter 13: Reincarnation of a Glutton

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Li Yao was like a nouveau riche with the sudden acquisition of wealth. His excitement was palpable and his mind was filled with scenes of various annoying natures. He tossed aside his blanket and jumped off his bed. Surprisingly, his two legs buckled, and with a popping sound of despair, he fell and sprawled out on his back. In his body, only an empty and vacated feeling remained, and he was unable to bring forth even half his strength. It was as if a thief had cleared out a house and even taken the door with him!

The black sword heard the noise. It flew in from the outer room while urgently shouting in squeaks. With a swoosh, it flew back out again, brought back with it a handheld mirror, and shined the mirror onto Li Yao's body.

“How can this be!” Li Yao was gobsmacked.

It was as if he had been stranded in a giant desert for several months, struggling on the verge of death. All that was left of him were mere skin and bones. A deep set of hollow eyes took up half his face. There simply wasn't any flesh left on him from head to toe. Light purple veins drooped around his skeleton weakly without strength. He was the same as an earthworm that had been baked dry by the sun. His skin had completely turned into an ash-like color, largely like that of a vampire.

This fright was not important... The sharpness of his five sense. His outstanding faculty of memory. The crystal brain calculated and analyzed his abilities. In a flash, his previous scare disappeared like smoke in the air. Li Yao was nearly struck back with shock to his normal self. His abilities had only improved by a tiny bit when compared to his previous self.

It was at this time that he felt as if his stomach was stuffed with a ball of fire. A spreading ball of fire of never ending explosions!

Li Yao seemed to hear the cells in his entire body from head to toe all scream and howl mournfully, “Hunger! Hunger! Hunger!”

It was extreme to the point that even the myriad of telepathic thoughts in the depths of his mind were all at the limit of hunger, devouring each other!

“Hurry, Small Black, hurry and give me food!”

Li Yao never thought he would be this extremely hungry. He felt the same pain as the flaring of a drug addiction. He rolled about on the floor and suddenly got up when he heard Blackwing give a great shout.

Blackwing squeaked out two shouts. It was not happy with its owner’s behavior. Nevertheless, it still flew to the outer room and quickly brought back two 5 lb cans of “Giant Creatures of Starry Skies” canned meat.

Although the name “Giant Creatures of Starry Skies” sounded very domineering, high class, and luxurious, in truth, it was actually a product of modification by cultivator sects using secret drugs. They took ordinary meat from pigs and elephants and hybridized it. Classified as a rapid growth product. Within three months time, they induced the life of a 10 ton heavy artificial livestock. The final canned product was very greasy, and its taste was of the utmost inferiority. The typical resident of the city rarely ate this product.

However, this canned meat, with its blend of bones and viscera, had a cheap sales price. 15 credits can buy an entire 5 lb large can of the meat and was considered a rare delicacy among the poor class. It was also Li Yao’s primary source of protein. He held 35 cans in stock in his house at any given time.

When Li Yao came in contact with the can of Giant Creatures of Starry Skies, he was like a 3-day starved feral wolf meeting a lamb that was skinned, cleaned, and spiced. His eyes let out a red glow and “wheezing wheezing” sounds came out of his throat . It was unknown where he drew the strength, but his entire person lept up and seized the can of meat into his embrace. He opened his mouth wide into the gaping bloody hole of a predator and gnawed down, ignoring the circumstances.

“Gnash Gnash! Gnash Gnash!” The sound of teeth colliding was like two meat grinders striking against each other. Sparks flew out from between the sawlike teeth.

A can of Giant Creatures of Starry Skies meat was extremely salty, extremely fishy, and extremely oily. Normally, Li Yao only needed a thin, small flake to pair with three big bowls of rice. This time though, it was like he was eating the world’s most precious rare and delicious delicacy. He devoured the food ravenously as if possessed by a Taotie, finishing the entire 5 lb can of the canned meat in a minute.

There was a numbness between his lips and teeth, and his stomach had actually swelled to an incomparable state. The

Giant Creatures of Starry Skies meat is compressed into great density. When the meat is introduced to liquid, it can increase in size by at most a dozen fold.

A thought shook in the depths of Li Yao’s mind and jumped out as a scene. It was from the dream of grandeur. The instructor of the Hundred Smelting Guild’s low level workers, the Titan, was speaking,

“Breathe in the stars and swallow the moon. This Fasting Cultivation Technique allows you to devour the essence energy of heaven and earth directly. Only high stage cultivators can use this profound art. You pieces of sh*ts aren’t even capable of attempting it!

“For you pieces of sh*ts, your only source of essence energy is from food. The basis for all cultivators is to ‘eat’. Learn how to ‘feast’. It is the first step to becoming a cultivator!”

“Next, I will impart onto you all the Great Art of the Swallowing Whale. This technique has the specialized purpose of teaching you all how to feast. It is capable of helping you all gorge down the sea and absorb the energy contained within the food!”

“When this art is cultivated to the pinnacle, the digestive strength and speed of the digestive system is raised by a hundredfold, allowing one to swallow 800 lbs of animal meat per day. Even the toughest and hardest skulls of magical beasts are grounded to dust, completely absorbed, and transformed into the most fundamental of energies — essence. The essence instantly replenishes within the skeletal bones of the entire body, allowing one’s blood vessels to expand energetically, giving one extraordinary strength.

“Keep in mind, the Hundred-and-Eight Hands Chaos Gale Hammer cultivator art is not perfect. There is still a small margin for improvement. However, if you don’t practice the Great Art of the Swallowing Whale well, you will forever be a mortal. Don’t even think about stepping on the road of cultivation!”

“Ou Yeming, come up here for this senior. Take this repulsive 200 pound fish and eat all of it down. This senior will first teach you members of the Hundred Smelting Guild’s Main Mountain this secret technique, the Great Art of the Swallowing Whale!”

……

Li Yao’s eyelids suddenly opened to a pair of round and protruding eyes. A “Rumble Rumble” sound pierced out from within his stomach. It was as if a powerful engine had suddenly been ignited!

In a split second, it was like several monsters fleeing within his stomach. The skin of his belly was stretched to near transparency!

The speed of his stomach intestines digestive movement exceeded that of a normal person by a dozen fold. It digested the Giant Creatures of Starry Skies meat at lightning speeds, breaking the meat down, transforming it into the most rudimentary form of energy, and supplied steady energy to the dried skeletal bones of Li Yao’s body and also to Li Yao’s eight meridians!

The speed of the Giant Creatures of Starry Skies meat’s expansion when introduced with water was not able to exceed the speed of digestion and absorption. The protruding belly quickly flattened down to its normal state and even started to cave inward.

“This won’t do. I’m still hungry. Hurry, bring me another can!”

The food just slid down Li Yao’s throat. With two or three bites, he devoured his second can of Giant Creatures of Starry Skies meat completely clean. Still, he was not satisfied. He slapped the floor board to let Blackwing know to continue fetching meat.

Three cans. Five cans. Twenty cans ...

In a short hour, he had unrelentingly eaten a total of 31 entire cans of the Giant Creatures of Starry Skies canned meat. He had drank down a full bucket of water, eating dry and wiping clean his house’s entire stock of food. Only then did he let out a burp, wishing he had more to eat.

“Squeak squeak, Squeak squeak?”

Blackwing looked at his owner somewhat worryingly. It had never seen a person eat the Giant Creatures of Starry Skies canned meat in such a crazed fashion. It did not know what kind of illness it’s owner caught and could not help asking with concern.

Li Yao smacked his lips and used his tongue to pick out a sliver of shredded meat from his teeth. He reflected quietly, “It seems like I’m not full yet. I can eat three or five more cans.”

“...” Blackwing was speechless for a moment. It would have surely rolled its eyes at this moment if it had eyes.

“Finally, I am alive again!” Li Yao was completely satisfied and let out a relaxed breath. He held his fist tight and carefully sized up his arm, trying to understand the bubbling force coming from within the depths of his marrow.

Following the crazed digestion and absorption of the cans of Giant Creatures of Starry Skies meat through the use of the Great Art of the Swallowing Whale, his body had experienced a change like the turning of heaven and earth.

The beast meat had transformed into the purest of essence energy, and an abundance of essence energy permeated through his body. The once dried veins filled once more, and the withered muscles swelled once again. His skeletal system became like reinforced steel, and his body had turned exceptionally durable.

Looking in the mirror, his face still had a somewhat ashy tone to it. His body was a bit thin compared to before; however, concealed below his pale dark skin were dense muscles that bulged out with only a slight flex. His muscles were like coils of thick steel rope.

Li Yao held his fist tight. He hammered his pecs twice with strength that wasn’t too light nor too strong, making a muffled sound. It was as if seven to eight layers of dried leather were padded around his sternum; he absolutely did not feel any sort of pain.

“Whoosh! Whoosh!” He swung his arm, consciously swinging out seven to eight punches. Three to five oppressive images appeared suddenly in the empty air, and the sound of the fists piercing the air of the void rang out.

“My punching power has increased by at least 15%. My punching speed has increased by at least 20%. The Great Art of the Swallowing Whale can be summarized in one sentence — It's really f*cking tyrannical!”

The recollection of the fragment of memory from the dream of grandeur gave him a technique that could surprisingly be used in the real world. Li Yao could not help but be wild with joy. He was similar to a wandering hobo who had picked up a windfall that fell from the sky.

However, when he was revisiting the enormous storehouse of memories within the dream of Ou Yezi, he discovered that although he could remember with absolute clarity the first second, the next second was mired with haze. Spots were mottled. It was absolutely useless.

“If only I could recall the dream world in all its details... Even if I am only able to sneak learning from Ou Yezi’s life experiences from his youth to his death, becoming the first Master Artificer of the Federation would be as easy as turning over my hand! When that time comes, I’ll have mountains of gold and seas of silver, I’ll have luxurious vehicles and beautiful women, I’ll be revered by everybody, I’ll be the most popular idol of millions and millions of youths…”

Li Yao chuckled with a foxy smile as he let his mind imagine freely.

Blackwing made a cold snort of complete utter disdain. It twisted its hilt and flew away.

Right at this time, the crystal processor suddenly let out a “Dee Dee” sound. A virtual origami crane flew out from the right hand corner of the hologram. It flew and orbited around Li Yao’s head for three rotations. With a “Bang” sound, it exploded, transforming into an ice cold message strip,

“You didn’t come to school today?”

A small plump yellow avatar followed at the end. The small avatar’s eyebrows were angled vertically; its entire face was filled with questioning. It was Si Jiaxue.

Chapter 14: Little Border of Hidden Lake

Chapter 14: Little Border of Hidden Lake

Li Yao had to stare blankly for quite a while for him to recall that “yesterday” he had made a promise with Si Jiaxue. Only when he looked at the time did he realize that it was already 5 pm in the afternoon. He had surprisingly slept for an entire day and night.

No matter what fantastic magical abilities he could conjure in the dream world, in the real world, he was still the ordinary poor youth with an embarrassing lack of money. Just a moment ago, he had eaten his entire stock of a few months worth of food provisions with a single breath. A hundred thousand credits was simply a huge sum of money for him. He had the urge to hold it physically tight within his grasp.

Li Yao hastily typed a response on the virtual glyph-script keyboard, “Where are you? In two hours — no, in one and a half hour, I will deliver it to you!”

When he hit “Send”, the glyph script condensed and transformed into a tiny virtual magic origami crane. It flew to the lower right hand corner of the hologram and faded away.

Only after exactly 3 minutes did Si Jiaxue send out an address, “I’m at this location. There will be a person waiting outside the door for you in half an hour. It will be fine to just directly hand over the goods to this person.”

It appeared as if she really did not have a good impression towards Li Yao. She did not even want to meet face to face with him.

Li Yao did not care though; everything was fine as long as he received his money. He replied with an “OK” and closed the hologram. He took out Si Xiaxue's outdated crystal processor and with a “crack crack” of his knuckles he began to repair it.

“Huh?”

He immediately discovered something different about himself when he was opening the crystal processor with a screwdriver.

Today, his mental state was especially good and his mind was especially clear. With just a careful scan with his two eyes, he seemed to be able to clearly understand the underlying architecture of the complicated and profound interior of the crystal processor in front of him.

He softly closed his eyes. A phantom transparent image of the outdated crystal process slowly emerged into view. One by one, every piece of fine component broke away and whirled slowly in mid air, allowing him to see each component from every angle and giving him an extremely clear understanding of the details in its entirety.

Li Yao had a certain feeling that even if this job wasn’t the kind of easy task that swapping a heat-sink was, but rather the challenging assignment of repairing the crystal core and the like, he would still be capable of tinkering and repairing the processor.

“It looks likes it wasn’t a total waste to watch Ou Yezi craft artifacts for several hundreds of years. Although I have completely forgotten about all the dream’s details, my visual judgement has improved by leaps and bounds!”

And as such, his repairing speed had increased phenomenally. He only needed 30 minutes of his original estimation of at least an hour of work in order to complete the repair successfully. In addition, he also subtly modified the heat sink structure. He used a new type of heat sink structure that only existed 30 years ago and applied it within this hundred year old crystal processor. He estimated that the heat dissipation efficiency of this crystal processor would increase by 17%, increasing the clock speed needed to trigger the thermal trip by at least 9%.

“It's practically perfect. To have this job done is worth paying 100,000 credits. It's not the least bit expensive!”

Li Yao scrutinized his own work and was extremely satisfied. He felt that this was the most remarkable piece of work he had ever displayed since birth.

While engrossed in his satisfaction, an acrid stench permeated into his nasal cavity. Li Yao was suddenly aware of the sticky sweat he had produced while he was dreaming; it stained his body. He lifted his wrist to look at the time, it still wasn’t too late in the night. He might as well go take a shower. He scrubbed his body up and down ferociously, changed to a clean set of clothes, and walked out relaxed and invigorated.

The address given by Si Jiaxue pointed to a buffet-style restaurant located in the upper eastern district. The upper eastern district was a rich district where the bigwigs gathered. Li Yao rarely went here in the past, and during the times he did pass through this area, he would always feel a sense of shame and inferiority. He had felt like he was a beggar bursting into a banquet hosted by high society.

But today, he lifted his head high, held his chest straight, sucked in his belly, and raised his nose to the sky. With each step, he travelled three meters. He did not care what others thought of him. He was in high spirits!

Even though his wrinkled jacket had its colors already washed out, even though the top of his knees were patched cloth, even though the toes of his pair of feet met the open world with a smile, even though, with a glance of an eye, one could tell that he was a destitute youth who did not know when his next meal would be...

His expression was like that of a tyrannical guild leader who was just about to sign a billion dollar contract, carrying a chunk of gold in his pocket.

This fiery aura came from the dream world, from amassing countless imperceivable influences from countless high stage cultivators. It was a pure state of mind of the utmost superiority that had nothing to do with physical strength, rank, or status.

He was like a person who had lived dozens of years dealing with prehistoric dinosaurs. An encounter with a tiger would only be considered meeting a fat housecat to him.

The upper eastern district was located in the center of Floating Spear City and encompassed a total of 7 areas of the artificial lakes. Each of these areas were concealed, isolated from each other. The address provided by Si Jiaxue pointed to the border of one of these areas of artificial lakes, “Hidden Lake of Winter”. It was a buffet restaurant called Little Border of Hidden Lake.

This restaurant had bamboo forests orbiting around its surroundings and the restaurant also utilized the natural environment. Weather glyph arrays were set up to cause the drift of snow all year round within the radius of a hundred meters.

The snowfall wasn’t heavy but instead gave the restaurant a trace of an astral zen.

This restaurant wasn’t considered one of Floating Spear City’s highest class of luxury restaurants. The price was relatively cheap and its environment was not bad; it was very stylish. For those in power who have not seized great wealth, for the children who were supported by rich parents and were given allowances, spending money at this location matched quite well with their status.

A woman wearing a silk skirt uniform was standing outside the door of Little Border of Hidden Lake. This beautiful waitress was in costume for she carried a paper fan. She greeted Li Yao as he swaggered inside with large steps. The manner which Li Yao walked and the clothes he wore were completely contrary to one another. It was awkward to look at, causing the waitress to actually stare for quite a while. Only after did she act with her shallow procedure of etiquette, “Hello sir, may I ask if you are a student of Crimson Nimbus Second, Li Yao?”

“That’s correct. Si Jiaxue must have made you wait for me. I have the goods here. Do you need to give it a test run?” Li Yao did not waste words as he grabbed and handed the crystal processor over.

The costumed waitress smiled and said, “There’s no need. Young lady Si said that she will naturally go and find her fellow student Li Yao should any problems really occur. Please, accept this card.”

With a slight bow, the costumed waitress held a translucent glass card covered in glyph scrypt in both hands and handed it over with the utmost respect.

This was an anonymous instant cash card. The glyph script inscribed on the card can be read by a crystal processer and the money contents inside can be transferred to a bank account. The card can also be used at most stores by swiping. It was very convenient.

When Li Yao received the instant cash card, he gently brushed against the light purple glyph characters that were twined in silver on the upper left corner of the card. The instant cash card trembled slightly, and on the card’s surface emerged a string of digits — 100,000.

Si Jiaxue unexpectedly pooled in the whole price in one card. Li Yao’s eyes were bright. With a somewhat unintended boasting whistle, he said, “Fair lady, many thanks! Oh thats right, when it's convenient, help me convey my thanks to Si Jiaxue. And if she wants to do any sort of further business, remind her often that I will totally give her a large discounted price!”

Li Yao took the instant cash card and stuffed it very gently and cautiously into his skin-tight pocket. He turned around and left with smiles and giggles. He was calculating what he would buy at the supermarket located in the commoner district. He would buy several hundred more pounds of the Giant Creatures of Starry Skies canned meat to bring home, and buy an entire flat bread beef sandwich. He was excited to eat this midnight snack.

It was right at this moment that a “Tsss” sound traveled through the air from within Little Border of Hidden Lake. It was the sound of a small fresh and tender beef steak searing against an iron grill.

The faint smell of meat mixed with the aroma of a dozen or so rare spices into a unique fragrance that rose as an intoxicating breeze and floated outside.

Li Yao’s stomach rumbled. He suddenly stopped still. It was if an invisible rope was tugging at him.

“Damn it. How am I hungry again so soon!?”

He contested in intellect and in bravery while he was joined with Ou Yezi within the dreamland. The energy he consumed, from his mental will to his physical stamina, was too great. He had simply overtaxed his life force. Consuming several dozens cans of Giant Creatures of Starry Skies meat was simply not enough to restore him. He was fine before, but when he smelled the fragrance of meat, he was simply sent back to the same drug addicted state he had experienced a few moments ago. His stomach turned into an empty pit. Every part of his body down to his bones ignited with the raging flame of hunger. His face twisted to the extreme and drool dripped down away from the edge of his mouth.

Li Yao automatically reversed his steps and charged inside with a blank stare.

His fiery aura like that of a hungry tiger frightened the costumed waitress. The young lady blocked the entrance subconsciously.

“Hmm?”

Li Yao squinted his eyes. His molars were rubbing against each other, creating a “ka ka” ringing sound. He was like a velociraptor that could only eat grass for the last three days.

The young lady was about to burst into tears. Her heart cried, “Where did this savage man come from? Based on his appearance, is he going to swallow me too?”

She could not help but fall back two paces. She composed herself and with great difficulty put on a smile as she said, “This, this guest. Sir has come at the right time. We of Little Border of Hidden Lake are celebrating today. We have 15% off all items and are waiving the service fee. The self-served dinner is only 1280 credits per guest. It also comes with a 30 year old bottle of maiden wine. The owner personally buried them in our basement in those years past.”

This was a restaurant winery located in the rich district. The waiters and waitresses received special training in serving people. Their skills were extremely high. Naturally, they wouldn’t kick someone out based on appearances. They would not commit the folly of using his clothes to determine if he was poor sick person.

This was especially because they were located at a Cultivator Hub which housed a sizeable population of bizarre individuals with somewhat twisted mentalities. These people were dragons who liked to wear the guise of fish. They disguised themselves as pigs in order to eat tigers. It was a sin if their eyes could not recognize the greatness of these people. Not to even mention what great fortune could happen in a fraction of a second. The entire staff could end up using sick leaves at the hospital’s intensive care unit.

And thus, in the rich district, as long as a guest did not come to eat food just wearing his boxers, all guests are treated equally and favorably in this luxurious food joint.

The costumed waitress also did not know what place this rough god Li Yao came from. She had been extremely tactful with her clear speech on the restaurant's quality and had quickly ducked to the side.

“1,280 credits?”

Li Yao’s pair of eyes went somewhat blank. This number ran through his mind and transformed in a flash to a number of Giant Creatures of Starry Skies meat that filled every nook and cranny. His number one thought was to turn around and leave.

Nevertheless, the body is more honest than the mind. The fragrance of barbeque seemed to transform into full-bodied, juicy beautiful women in front of him who licked her red lips, flicked with charming eyes, and laughed lightly with a musical tone.

It was like he swallowed a giant walnut. His adam’s apple rolled up and down continuously. The devil and angel in his heart were raging war. He was completely paralyzed.

He was in a deadlock for an exact... half a second. His heart’s defense was completely shattered. A flame burned in Li Yao’s eyes. Hunger was etched upon his face. He loosened his waist belt by a bit and was like a fierce tiger stepping off the mountain. Like a hungry dog let out of a cage, he howled as he entered.

“It's only 1,280 credits right? I just got 100,000. One meal won't make me poor. Today will be an exception!”

The interior design of Little Border of Hidden Lake was complete genious. The dining area was made into a long corridor. Lanterns and gardens divided into a dozen or so private areas. Tables placed full of food could be found all around in each of the areas. This guaranteed that each guest could eat in their own private environment.

And what a bounty of fine delicacies there were! How could it even be described? At this point, Li Yao felt that his knowledge of biology had been swapped with that of his combat training class. Not only could he not name most of the exotic delicacies, but he had not encountered most of them ever before!

Li Yao found a more peaceful corridor, and he unrelentingly grabbed an over 20lb strip of lamb leg roast without restraint. He ruthlessly bit down the meat, blood and all.

“Twelfth level attained. The Realm of Completion. Overdrive Mode — The! Great! Art! Of! The! Swallowing! Whale!”

Chapter 15: Audacious

Chapter 15: Audacious

Under the clean shining moonlight, a group of teenagers with an uncommon, outstanding bearing was located 20 meters away from Li Yao, separated by a lotus pond. They were Crimson Nimbus Second’s Adonis and Goddess, Helian Lie and Si Jiaxue.

Helian Lie’s expression was cordial as he half rose from his seat, “ Small Xue, my apologies. I was too rash yesterday. I should not have sought out that trash from the common class. I did not expect this matter to travel down the grapevine. You were even questioned by your father. It was completely my fault, please accept my apologies.”

Si Jixue’s manners were, as before, cold as ice and frost. She was like an iceberg that had been frozen for the last 10,000 years. She replied in a tone as cold as frost, “I can accept your apologies; however, I wish for you to put an end to this matter. Remember, I have the freedom to deal with whomever I wish. That bastard is really just a greedy scoundrel that could never be satisfied. It’s none of your business to come criticizing!”

“I understand, I understand. Come, let's go inside and drink a cup with Junior Zheng. Today is his birthday. Let’s not get angry because of a piece of trash,” said Helian Lie patiently enduring her temper.

“I feel a bit tired, I will go back first. Say a word to Junior Zheng for me,” Si Jiaxue had received the crystal processor.

She did not give a single bit of face as she turned around to leave.

Helian Lie had a gloomy look in his eyes. He stared fixed at the figure of the beautiful woman until it disappeared. Then he returned to the back of the corridor. There was a cracking sound. The limestone flooring beneath his feat had surprisingly split into a spreading web of cracks.

“Tsk tsk tsk tsk, Your leg strength is quite strong Senior Helian,” an exaggerated sarcastic voice sounded from behind. It looked to be a drunken youngster wearing purple clothing with somewhat swollen eyes.

“Junior Zheng,” Helian Lie retracted his gaze. His expression resumed to being tranquil.

“It’s just a girl. What does it matter that Si Jiaxue’s family has some influence in Floating Spear City if it makes you humble and submissive?” said Junior Zheng laughingly. His right hand was hanging on Helian Lie shoulder without restraint.

Those in the Crimson Nimbus Second who would dared to say that Helian Lie was a humble and submissive person have already been beaten into a condition that not even their parents would recognize.

However, this rich junior, Zheng Dongming, was the third generation eldest grandson of the impressive Zheng Household in Floating Spear City. The family had the backing and support of numerous profound and fearsome cultivators. He was also an elite student, but of the Phoenix Ridge Guild’s Auxiliary High School. His Spirit Actualization Quotient was at 74%. He was a powerful competitor within the college entrance exams known as “Floating Spear City’s

Exam Top Scorer”. His strength was faintly above Helian Lie’s.

And as such, Helian Lie could only restrain his ferocity and anger. He said with great difficulty, “You don’t understand my feelings towards Small Xue.”

Zheng Dongming shrugged his shoulders and said with a high pitched voice, “Of cooouurse, how could we common folk possibly understand the subtle moods of the great sacred emotions you possess, Helian? Since I don’t understand, we might as well go drink wine. Today’s my birthday, you aren’t going to keep wearing a sour face are you?”

Helian Lie made a snorting sound. A bit of life returned to his complexion. The two intended to enter the room when several groups of rich youngsters suddenly walked out with weird expressions. Each of them was holding in their laughter until their faces turned purple and their breaths gasped for air.

“What can possibly be so funny? Tell us about it so that we can share in your moment of happiness,” Zheng Dongming asked with a smile.

“Junior Zheng, there’s a bumpkin over there. Who knows what kind of place this guy spawned from. He’s like the incarnation of a Preta who hasn’t eaten for three years. His eating manners are unsightly,” the rich youngster clasped his stomach. He was almost cramping from his laughter.

At places like Little Border Hidden Lake, the customers were mostly made up of people from high society. They focused on the style and the atmosphere; this was a place to socialize. Eating food was not the priority. People took care not to overdo things in order to preserve the grace worthy of elegant nobles.

If one’s first concern was to stuff oneself by swallowing and chewing great amounts of food, there were better places to go to.

Zheng Dongming said lazily, “Although, at present, the quality of Little Border of Hidden Lake is unacceptable, it couldn’t possibly be that someone has specifically come here to eat? It looks like next time we will have to find a more quiet place to go out to eat. Nevertheless, it's only bad table manners. It can’t be that funny to make you laugh until this state?”

“Nope, Junior Zheng. That guy really is too ridiculous!”

A different rich youngster suppressed a smile as he gestured reaching out with his hand. “It was this long, the leg of barbeque meat was this long! Snap Crack! He ate it down in three bites, crushing even the bones to powder! He swallowed everything, not a single speck was left behind!”

The first rich youth supplemented him, “There’s more, there’s more. An entire large bowl of deep sea king crab, shell and all! Shell and all! Was wiped clean in two or three bites by the bumpkin! You haven’t seen the plates after he eats, tsk tsk tsk tsk. They were cleaner than if they were scrubbed and brushed!”

The other rich youth proceeded to follow, “Yep I saw him, eyes blinking not even once, swallow 20 sea urchins in under half a minute, shell and all!.

“In summary, it really is ridiculous! Junior Zheng, do you want to see for a moment?” the two youths spoke in unison.

“Forget it, my interests lie in watching women strip, not to watch dudes eat. Helian, are you into this sort of thing?” Zheng Dongming let out a slight yawn.

“Not interested,” Helian Lie said indifferently.

The first rich youth suddenly said, “Thats right! Senior Helian, I think that bumpkin is wearing your Crimson Nimbus Second’s school uniform.”

“Yea?” Helian Lie glared and his complexion immediately turned somewhat ugly.

Zheng Dongming also became interested. His irises shined. “Helian, although your Crimson Nimbus Second cannot be compared to our Phoenix Ridge Second, your high school is still considered to be among the high side of the rankings in Floating Spear City. Surprisingly, you guys have this kind of person? We must check this situation out!”

“All of Crimson Nimbus Second are the cream of the crop. How can there be this kind of glutton!” Helian Lie said harshly. He glared at the two rich youths for a glance and with large steps he walked in the direction they came from.

Zheng Dongming promptly gave the two rich youths a wink, he mouthed out silently, “If it turns out that you were mistaken, Helian will go on a rampage for sure. You best pray for some luck then!”

After he finished talking, he followed behind Helian chuckling.

They had not even walked down the corridor when they heard the sounds of snapping and cracking. The sound of chewing was like the sound of swords striking.

“This... this really is ferocious enough,” Zheng Dongming mumbled when he saw Li Yao occupying the dining table, chewing loudly. Zheng Dongming stared blankly for a while.

He shot a glance to the person at his side. Zheng Dongming felt Helian Lie was about to explode. He resisted a smile and prodded the person by his side in the waist.

“Senior Helian, may I ask if this... warrior is a great talented student of your school?”

The other two rich youths, who were hiding behind Zheng Dongmings back, could not help letting out “Hee Hees” in laughter.

Helian Lie seemed to have turned into a statue. He was dark and cold, silent for three seconds.

His eyes narrowed into a pair of sharp curved blades. Suddenly, his figure flashed and with a step he crossed over to be in front of Li Yao. His voice was thick when he asked, “What are you doing here?”

Floating Spear City is a large city. Their population numbered several million. Helian Lie did not believe that there could be this kind of coincidence. This trash of the common class had come at the right time to Little Border of Hidden Lake to cause shame.

He must have stalked Si Jiaxue. That's how he got here!

Li Yao had eaten until he was in high spirits. Suddenly, there was someone roaring next to his ear. Turning his head to look, he stared slightly and could not help but frown. As he chewed, he sneered as he said, “I am here to wash myself. Don’t tell me you can’t see that?”

While Li Yao was in the dream of grandeur, he'd encountered many cultivators with tyrannical strength. The sort of small side character that was Helian Lie simply could not become even cannon fodder. Li Yao's irises automatically displayed a wisp of disdain.

Helian Lie of Crimson Nimbus Second always kept to his word. Even the students of the important class did not dare to disobey him. It was unthinkable that this trash of the common class had not only ignored his warning but also deliberately mocked him with an expression of disdain. Suddenly, his rage was boiling! “You piece of trash! You're simply tempting death!” Helian Lie suddenly made one large step across. With his hand like a pitchfork, he spread open his fingers and ferociously slapped Li Yao across his face!

Chapter 16: One Strip of Sea Cucumber

Chapter 16: One Strip of Sea Cucumber

“Whoosh-----”

Helian Lie gave off an air that was both astonishing and imposing. His hand was as fast as lightning, like a high-speed crystal rail train. He hadn’t even made contact, but the eye-blinding gale he produced had already hammered fiercely upon Li Yao’s face.

Li Yao’s eyeballs were like pin cushions. A chill rose up his spine and collided into his heart. Suddenly, it seemed like a “Gate” had opened from within the recesses of his mind. Five incomparably sharp senses had just awakened from the dream of grandeur a moment ago to descend once again.

Within a tenth of a second, he saw with absolute clarity the dumbstruck faces of three rich youths standing not so far away. He saw clearly each stem, branch, leaf, and flower of every plant. He smelled the fragrance of a dozen dishes coming from within the kitchen fires. He even clearly saw a mosquito wobble in flight at a distance of seven to eight meters away.

At the same time, he also saw a sea cucumber lying on the floor in between himself and Helian Lie. He had dropped that sea cucumber on the floor just a moment ago.

From the depths of his mind, a mass of numeral digits exploded, exploded, and exploded. They combined together into a series of wondrous formulas, condensing into countless torque rotational forces, levers and fulcrums, force vectors, motion trajectories, and more as a flow of information.

After this tenth of a second had passed, Li Yao blinked and blinked his eyes. His body reacted first before his thoughts had yet to produce a response. He subconsciously shifted a small step to the left.

Helian Lie immediately reacted at the moment of Li Yao’s shifting. His figure slightly shimmered, moving his attack trajectory by 0.1 meters. Thus, when he slammed down fiercely with his right foot, he stepped perfectly on the slippery sea cucumber and lost balance in his body!

Helian Lie would not have been this careless if he were facing a different opponent, but Li Yao was no more than an insignificant piece of trash in his eyes. Afflicted by rage, Helian Lie was simply not prepared and his leg slipped out from under him.

Li Yao turned slightly sideways. Helian Lie slid across from a hairs distance by Li Yao’s side. Li Yao even saw clearly Helian Lie’s shocked and heartbroken expression. Helian Lie’s bulging eyes seemed to be bursting out of their sockets. After sliding three meters, Helian Lie crashed into a table filled with food, flipping it over. With a “Crash!”, three or four large plates of food flipped over and smashed onto his skull.

The thick juice of the sea cucumber had the rich smell of scallop. The sublimely delicious pearl fish balls... not a single bit was wasted. All of it appeared on the Helian Lie’s hair, face, shoulder, and his expensive hand tailored lavish clothing. It looked like Helian Lie had just taken a bath in a bucket of slosh.

He was silent. It was a terrifying silence, like the silence of a cemetery!

Helian Lie was stupefied. Every nerve in his face was frozen. His bizarre expression had been twisted into being somewhat confused, ashamed, wrathful, and crazed.

Li Yao blinked his eyes. He looked helplessly at the strip of sea cucumber on Helian Lie’s “sharp eyebrows and starry eyes” that was like a carved work of art. The sea cucumber slid leisurely down onto the floor, appearing reluctant to part from Helian Lie.

“This, this fun situation is escalating into something big. Where did this youngster spawn from? He’s too reckless!” Not far away, Zheng Dongming seemed to be violently twitching like an epileptic. His once healthy face had already turned purple from stifling his laughter.

He dragged the two rich youths and backed a few steps in a calm and collected manner. He couldn't help but laugh and say, “I never thought watching a guy eat food could be more fascinating than watching a girl strip her clothes. Do you guys think Helian Lie set this entertainment show up specifically for my birthday?”

One of the rich youths hesitantly said, “It can’t be? I remember Helian has some sort of O.C.D. Junior Zheng, look and see. From Helian Lie’s expression, it looks likes he’s about to cry. Should we go help him?”

“Obviously not. This sort of wonderful show simply comes once in a blue moon. Obviously, we must watch until we’re fully satisfied!” said Senior Zheng without any loyalty at all.

Sure enough, Helian Lie had awakened from his initial shock and stupefaction. He was now like an active volcano that had awakened from a state of hibernation. Broiling hot magma was about to erupt. A concentrated aura of fire, so dense that the naked eye could make out its essence, coiled around his body. The temperature of the atmosphere within a half meter radius had risen by several degrees!

“Crack! Crack!” A series of explosions like the cries of firecrackers rang out from his entire body. It caused one to tremble with fear.

Li Yao’s brain went off processing at maximum velocity. Countless memory fragments whirled frantically within the depths of his mind. The surfaces of each of these memory fragments reflected images of intense battle.

On the surface, it appeared that he was completely intimidated and suppressed by Helian Lie’s bottomless fearsome aura, that Li Yao was struck as dumb as a wooden chicken.

But beneath his lifeless exterior, every muscle fiber of his began to slowly tighten. He was like a spring compressing to its utmost limit, gathering and condensing a great and powerful force.

His hands grasped the void, but he automatically reached towards both sides of his body. It seemed like he was gripping two shafts of thousand pound hammers. He rocked faintly, waiting to unleash his stored power.

Right when the air was splitting, right when he was hanging by a thread —

A fat, chubby hand occupied the space on Helian Lie’s left shoulder. A middle-aged fatso weighing around 200 pounds wore the uniform of a manager had appeared behind Helian

Lie without making a sound. With a smile, he said, “Senior Helian, you’re drunk.”

Helian Lie’s pupils abruptly contracted. His concrete hostility turned 180 degrees, fully disclosing the enmity towards the fatso’s direction.

This large fatso manager did not seem to be the type to have cultivated in any sort of martial techniques. However, when confronted against Helian Lie’s hostility, he brushed it away like the spring breeze, completely unaffected.

He said composed, “Absolutely any guest who comes to Little Border of Hidden Lake to eat a meal are given top quality service. We depend on them to make a living. This goal has been our tradition for the past dozen years at Little Border of Hidden Lake. Who doesn’t know this out of all those in the upper eastern district? If Senior Helian isn’t drunk, why else would you behave this way? To strike a hand at the guests who I need to make living?”

“Are you threatening me?” Helian Lie paused after each word, his tone was heavy.

The fatso manager gave a slight laugh; the fat on his face jiggled randomly. He had a somewhat cunning appearance when he said, “I would not dare to threaten Senior Helian even after eating the heart of a bear and the guts of a leopard. This is nothing more than a one sentence reminder. Behind Senior Helian at the third corridor, eating at dining table number 22 is a journalist of the Floating Spear City Entertainment Daily.”

“There's a reporter?” Helian Lie’s face turned absolutely ugly. He lowered his head to look at the mess on his body. If a photo this “glorious” was shot by a tabloid reporter, he would absolutely become Floating Spear City’s most famous rich and powerful youth within half an hour. He absolutely did not want this type of fame.

He tenaciously, tenaciously glared at Li Yao. He gritted his teeth, bearing the pain and without saying a word or looking back, he slipped out of Little Border of Hidden Lake.

It was only then did the fatso manager turn his head to look back. He silently sized up Li Yao.

Li Yao’s external appearance was completely different from his cool and collected manner, causing the fatso manager to be a bit astonished. After a brief stare, the fatso manager apologized with complete sincerity, “This honored guest, I am truly sorry for the inconvenience. It’s because we neglected our jobs that we let you receive harassment at Little Border of Hidden Lake. I wish to compensate for your damages. Today, your meal is completely on us. Think of it as a treat by us. I hope today’s episode won’t influence your impression of Little Border of Hidden Lake, and I hope you will continue to find our store favorable.”

This restaurant was able to stand for several dozen years in the upper eastern district because they possessed great attention to detail and exceptional design. The manager would not judge a guest based on their appearance and their identity. In all, they carried on the ultimate service, following its theory. It was only through this remarkable level of service that the restaurant was able to build a public praise that was worth its weight in gold.

Li Yao gave a stare, and right when he was about to give a nod, the fragrance of wine assaulted his senses. A peeping youngster with oiled hair and a powdered face appeared right in front of Li Yao. There was a smile across this youngster’s face.

“My fellow student, I am called Zheng Dongming. You can call me Junior Zheng. You can also call me Big Dong, but never in a million years can you call me Small Ming. I saw everything that just happened. I feel that you are simply a giant amongst men, one picked out of ten-thousand, the best quality goods of the best quality goods. How ‘bouts you and me be friends?”

Under the vigilant watchful gaze of Li Yao, Zheng Dongming reached out his hand cooly and calmly. A gorgeous spirit-patterned business card was wedged lightly between his fingers. “No need to be nervous. I have no ulterior motives. I just wish to introduce you to an extraordinary professional insurance sales agent. I suggest you to go withdraw all your money right now and immediately buy the most expensive personal injury protection insurance you can afford, because—”

He paused for a bit. A smile of utter strangeness permeated across Junior Zheng’s face. He said sorrowfully, “Believe me, you will be using it tomorrow.”

Chapter 17: Aunty of the Ghost Market

Chapter 17: Aunty of the Ghost Market

An hour later.

Li Yao walked alone on the main street under an intoxicating evening breeze. He thought back to when Helian Lie’s head was covered in lobster, scallops, and sea cucumber and to the image of how he’d run away with his tail between his legs. Once again, he could not hold back from laughing at the top of his lungs.

His life had actually changed over a day and a night. It hadn't even been 30 hours, and yet a wonderful reversal had happened!

Just a day ago, he was confronted by Helian Lie. Like a mouse confronted by a hungry wolf, he couldn’t resist at all. Even breathing lightly became impossible for him.

A day later, he actually made Helian Lie slip and fall flat on his face. He had forced this Adonis of the Crimson Nimbus Second into defeat, causing him to flee.

If those crazed Helian Lie fangirls within the school saw what had happened, they would probably all dislocate their jaws in shock!

Is there a more miraculous reversal that could happen on this earth?

As for Zheng Dongming’s warning, he did not take it seriously.

An indescribable confidence faintly permeated upwards, originating from the depths of Li Yao’s marrow. Although he was certain that he still was no match for Helian Lie, he knew that once he went through a period of cultivating, he would certainly break into a new horizon of heaven and earth that was unbounded and wide, ferociously trampling Helian Lie beneath his feet!

“Helian Lie. Yesterday, you insulted me, calling me trash. Today, you wanted to slap me across the face. I will firmly remember these two matters deep in my heart.”

“Three strikes and you’re out. If you behave well, if you straighten your character, if you conduct yourself with your tail in between your legs, and if you cease provoking me, I will be disinclined to handle you, for I am a great person of great magnanimity.”

“But if you insist on stubbornly continuing with your foolhardy way, if you continue to bumble about in front of Li Yao the Vulture, your next scene won’t be as simple as today’s!”

Unbeknownst consciously to Li Yao, a biting cold air like that of a forty-six-thousand-year-old ancient cultivator had manifested and coiled around his body.

Right now, he was originally preparing to head home for a night’s rest. Tomorrow, he would go to the Underground Ghost Market to buy the knockoff Strengthening Drugs. However, at this moment, he suddenly changed his mind and strolled towards the elevator that led underground.

Only 99 days remained until the university entrance exams.

He had to strive for each minute, snatch up every second, and grasp for every bit of time in order to cultivate. Then he would stun the world at the university entrance exams!

“Helian Lie, didn’t you say that we, students of the common class are all mishmashes of fish, are all pieces of trash? If this ‘piece of trash’ unexpectedly scores higher than you in the university entrance exams — what kind of ‘thing’ would that make you?”

Every major city within the federation had an underground ghost market. It was a unique landscape that belonged to the common social class.

In Cultivation Era 40,000, peace did not necessarily exist. The right path and the devil’s gate. The human race and the demon race. The conflicts between the various powers of influence caused constant unrest. The Star Glory Federation had also been in a state of war for a long time.

Every Strategic Cultivator Hub in the Federation had 10,000 feet excavated from the ground during their initial construction. They built refuges, air-raid shelters, sewers, and ventilation wells.

Each of the various underground facilities were interconnected with each other, forming a tangled and complicated knot into a maze-like dark fortress. And the underground city kept a large amounts of food, fresh water, and other living necessities in stock. They used spiritual energy to envelope and seal these goods, forever preserving the goods in their freshest state.

In the worst case scenario, even if the surface had been overrun and occupied by the demon race, humanity could still defend by retreating into the underground fortress. The various supplies were enough for several hundred thousand people to survive on for at least a decade.

And the underground arsenal contained the most secret of hidden weapons of artifacts and flying swords that could, in an instant, mobilize a hundred thousand soldiers for a counter-offensive opportunity, lying in wait.

However, at this time, humanity was enjoying its golden years of prosperity within the Heaven's Origin Sector. The Star Glory Federation had continued to pioneer and enlarge its territory within these several hundred years. With strategic military offensives, they broke through mountains and cut down citadels. The military presence that once existed in the olden days gradually waned as territorial frontiers became hinterland. And so, the underground fortress also unintentionally lost its military significance.

No one was sure when it began, but several members of the poverty class slowly emmigrated into the empty underground space, living and reproducing in great quantities underground.

Or perhaps, at first, it was because they were forced to flee underground due to the combined pressures of the ever more expensive housing and sky high costs of living on the surface. However, they quickly discovered that the facilities of the underground world were completely intact and that there were wide and vast amounts of open space. It was much better than the slum housing on the surface.

It was in this fashion that the number of underground dwellers grew. The underground world had already grown by a flourishing extent after going through several hundred years of development. Although it was somewhat inferior, the underground world’s bustling noise and excitement far exceeded that of the surface’s land of prosperity.

This place wavered on the edge of the law, existing in a grey area; it had its own unique social order and ethos.

To put it simply, merchandise had somewhat unknown origins in the underground ghost market. The residential environments were somewhat of poor quality. There were a little bit more thieves and a little bit more pickpockets. The food was a little bit unsanitary.

However, if one was able to overlook these somewhat insignificant “inconveniences”, one would be able to enjoy an incomparably low cost of living and experience a myriad of completely different cultures and customs from that of the surface world.

“Bang! Bang!” the old spiritual energy powered elevator shuddered violently, letting out monotonous sounds of striking, and headed several hundred meters underground towards the Ghost Market.

The air changed, carrying with it a trace of dirt that faintly blended with the smell of people’s cheap perfume.

Li Yao took a deep breath. He was like a fish returning once again to water after having flopped ashore for a long time. His entire body become reinvigorated again.

He liked mingling within the Underground Ghost Market much more than in the Upper East Side. If it wasn’t for the convenience of being near the Artifact Graveyard to scavenge, he would certainly choose to rent directly within the Underground Ghost Market. The rent was 50% cheaper.

Three minutes later, the spiritual energy powered elevator stopped at the entrance of the marketplace where the noises and clamor of people rang. Li Yao pulled heavily on the rusted iron fence, pulling it open with ear piercing creaks. A burnt smell with an arousing feel assaulted his face.

Every structure within the Underground Ghost Market shared the same composition and only differed by a little. Since they were initially employed following military building fortification codes, numbers were used to mark out the districts.

Li Yao entered District No. 59.

This was a well-known culinary street. The ingredients had a suspicious history, having gone through all sorts of unimaginable and bizarre means, and were transformed by the culinary arts into the Ghost Food and Drinks that were famous far and wide. The taste was guaranteed to cause people to even swallow their own tongues, provided that they don’t research the manufacturing process too deeply.

The piping hot lard rice cake stickers... The golden searing of deep fried stinky tofu... The blutwurst made from a blend of garlic, pigs blood, and horse meat and most importantly used oil that was produced by simmering lamb tail to delicately saute the product. Then an additional sprinkle of the Black Crystal Salt, a specialty product from the great northwestern Demon Beast Wasteland was added. The blutwurst caused people to urgently take a bite, burning their tongues. The half congealed blood paste blended with the lamb tail oil slipped down the throat before one could even begin to chew. One only felt the warmth of spring blossom in their body, relaxing and stretching the entire body as it opened every pore. It was something unexchangeable with even the most free and everlasting of immortals!

It's said that quite a few cultivators could not resist the ghost food and drinks. They often changed their guises to come and eat to their hearts content.

Even though he had just stuffed himself an hour ago at the sumptuous buffet, Li Yao moved to feed himself. He bought 5 blutwurst sausages and stood in front of the vendor, squinting his eyes in pleasure.

A thirty year old aunty hugging a baby squeezed in. Rushing in his face, she said in a low voice, “Young lad, are you interested in jade slips?”

She withdrew a leather bag from beneath the baby’s sling. Reaching her plump hand inside, she snatched out three jade slips and spread them out in her hand.

The bodies of these jade slips sparkled clear and translucent. They flowed with brilliant lights and vibrant colors, emitting a rainbow of ripples. The colors converged in front of Li Yao’s eyes, becoming three names.

<<Female Cultivator Baijie>>, <<Youngster Sword Immortal Ahbin>>, <<The Sly Master Medicinal Refiner>>

“Too old. I’ve seen them already.” Li Yao swept a glance and remained unmoved.

“These are different. These are high fidelity remasterings that have gone through refinement by powerful cultivators from scratch. Every jade slip contains 900,000 imprints of telepathic will. The definition is at least 10 times higher than normal. Every stem of hair can be seen clearly and distinctly. I guarantee that for you, young lad, once you watch it, you will never forget it. Once you watch it, you’ll want more!” the aunty made her spiel with great enthusiasm.

“......still, forget it. I came out to kill time and didn’t bring money with me. I’m truly sorry for the inconvenience. When I’m back, I’ll be sure to help out your business.”

He got rid of the jade slip selling aunty with great difficulty and also finished eating his five blutwurst sausages. Li Yao wiped his mouth feeling perfectly satisfied. He walked calmly without hurry into the public restroom at the culinary street’s corner.

Chapter 18: Strengthening Drug

Chapter 18: Strengthening Drug

The culinary street had people coming and going. Scoundrels were mixed in with honest people like dragons concealed amongst fish. The air surrounding the restroom was utterly disgusting with its overwhelming stench.

Li Yao pinched his nose as he opened a toilet stall. As expected, he found several dozen packed lines of information written on the back of the stall door.

“Are you lonely? Are you yearning for someone? During those long nights lying on your pillow, do you find it hard to sleep? Hurry and send a message to Spiritual Energy Crane Link Number 3877134. Succubi of the devils gate. Shrine maidens of the buddhist sect. Gorgeous female sword cultivators. 90 beautiful women are here for you to pick and choose from. You won’t need to suffer through long dark nights any longer!”

“We specialize in used flying shuttles. We have the best quality cars and the lowest prices. We absolutely don’t sell lemons. Message E-Crane Link No. 893764.”

“7734982. We have over a hundred ex-special forces soldiers and Ten Refinement Stage Cultivators. We specialize in resolving any ‘inconvenience’!” The word “inconvenience” was written in red. There was also a skull drawn at the end. It was a very fervent display.

Li Yao skimmed quickly, reading ten lines with a single glance. He scanned down and soon was able to find the information he wanted.

“We specialize in supplying strengthening drugs. Our prices are cheap and the drug’s effectiveness is stable. Our drug’s side effects are small. Scan the arcane glyph for further details.”

At the end of this strip of information was an engraved silver twine that made up a profoundly mysterious, intricate, and complicated arcane glyph.

Li Yao took out a handheld mini crystal processor from his pocket and turned on its scanning function. A blue ray of light swept over the arcane glyph. The crystal processor’s hologram jumped to a webpage. It was actually the local bulletin board of Floating Spear City, a post in the “Free Exchange Section”.

This post listed over a hundred different strengthening drugs. The post even introduced in detail the prices, effects, and side effects as well as instructions for use and other information.

The term “Strengthening drugs” referred to a collective group of drugs. Basically, every cultivator of every sect, even those who just dabbled in drug synthesis, have tried to create their own version of the strengthening drug.

Every strengthening drug contained different ingredients and underwent different synthesizing methods, thus they also had different efficacies.

Some drugs could raise one’s Spirit Actualization Quotient, health, and fitness. Some drugs could burn one’s life force to produce great martial power. Some could nourish one’s cells and maintain their cellular activity, increasing one’s lifespan. Some could cause one to be aroused to awe inspiring heights, to have a golden spear that can never fall, to be able to plow hundreds of women in a night.

After hundreds of years of research and development, each sect now produced thousands upon thousands of safer, more stable, and more effective strengthening drugs. However, the selling price of these drugs were on the absolute high end. Normal commoners would find them difficult to obtain for long term consumption.

The drug market was incomparably large. Naturally, there would be people who wanted to make knock-offs of the strengthening drugs.

After several hundred years of continuous experimentation, a small town called Serpent Mountain Village, located at the southern frontier of the Federation, finally managed to produce the first knock-off strengthening drug.

This was something that could ruin lives. They feared labeling their names onto the production of this strengthening drug and simply marked the drugs as produced by the “Knock-off Guild”.

Serpent Mountain Village continued to expand. It turned from a small town on the frontier’s edge into the most chaotic city in the Federation with a population of 10 million people. It became known as a “Lawless Ground”. The word “Knock-off” also became a term that specifically referred to imitated goods.

The drug that Li Yao was preparing to buy was a knock-off version of a strengthening drug that was well known to be used by youths for the university entrance exams.

This type of strengthening drug was synthesized mostly in illegal factories. Its quality varied extremely, and it was absolutely necessary to find a more reliable seller.

Li Yao took his time reading over the descriptive details of the drug. He first scrolled to the end of the post to skim over replies by other netizens.

He discovered that other netizens' had not bad impressions towards this supplier. It seemed that the supplier did not fluff up his goods. Furthermore, the location of the business had an address that was a regular numbered address.

The type of reputation that this shopkeeper had was much greater than that of a wandering peddler.

He inputted this address into the Wanxiang Searcher. He did not discover any negative news about them.

Only then was he able to relax and look up the items he needed. Soon, he was able to find relevant information.

He saw, with a bit of surprise, that the prices for the typical knock-off good were higher than normal by around 5%. However, the owner had a statement saying that they used the exact same materials and ingredients as certified products. The synthesization procedure followed closely to that of the original's. Their synthesized strengthening drug was of the utmost purity; there were absolutely no side effects.

After considering for a moment, Li Yao sent a message via E-Crane link to the owner, "I want one hundred of the 'Proud Heaven's Path' strengthening drugs that are meant for university exam takers. Do you have any in stock?"

“I do, I am at my store. We can make the deal any time.” This amount of money was not small business. The owner had replied very quickly.

“OK, I am coming right away.”

Li Yao shut off the crystal processor. He thought and thought, and pulled out a pen. With great difficulty, he found a sliver of space on the stall door and squeezed within the crooked lines of information his own paragraph.

“Retired High Ranking Master Artificer of the Crimson Nimbus Guild that still burns with passion for work. Aided by over 10 elite disciples. Specializing in repairing every type of flying swords, artifacts, and flying shuttles. We provide an economical price. We can also provide maintenance for the above items.

At the end, he left the E-Crane link number he used for work. He schemed in his heart. If a cash cow were to drop in, he could let Old Wang play the part of the Retired High Ranking Master Artificer of the Crimson Nimbus Guild and ruthlessly gut the cash cow.

Feeling satisfied, Li Yao clapped his hands and walked out of the public restroom.

The address provided by the shop owner pointed to a location that was four districts away from the culinary street, a distance of approximately 1,500 meters. Li Yao increased his pace.

He went through two districts and happened upon an Automatic Arcane Glyph Vending Machine on the road.

This was a convenient machine that was commonly installed. In stock with the unit were several hundred different types of common Arcane Glyphs with prices on the lower side. It was self-service to purchase so it was very convenient for the city’s residents.

Li Yao thought of something. He felt for three coins in his pocket, took them out, and stuffed them in the vending machine’s coin slot. With a light tap of his finger, he selected the “Pattern Mask Glyph.”

The vending machine vibrated at high speeds for two seconds and something that was as light as a feather fell out from the dispenser below.

He ripped apart the packaging and discovered a sticky facial mask. Several dozen glyph script characters were engraved on the surface. They snaked down, interweaving and forming into an elegant decorative design.

He stuck the facial mask on his face, which created “tshh tshh” slithering sounds. Li Yao felt the muscles of his face contract and pull. He looked at the glass window of a store on the side of the street. There was a strange spider-esque design covering his entire face. If his bro for life Meng Jiang were here to witness this, he would probably not recognise him and wonder what deity this was.

The underground ghost city had criminals mixing in with ordinary people. This was Li Yao’s first time dealing with this particular drug supplier. He did not know any inner information on the other party. He couldn’t help but be prudent and careful by changing his guise.

In this way, if the two parties produced any sort of altercation based on conflict, the worst case scenario would be a departure with a slap on the butt in a direct and efficient manner. A mess wouldn’t be left behind.

This type of Pattern Mask Glyph produces a unique decorative design on the face. Its use was to change one’s ambience into something else. The final effect can be maintained for 10 or so hours. It was the most popular and the hottest selling Arcane Rune in the Underground Ghost Market.

Since Li Yao was going to conduct in the shady business with only himself as a party, he believed that the drug owner would not find anything to be suspicious.

District No. 63 was the Underground Ghost Market’s spiritual energy supplier district. They were responsible for supplying the entire underground infrastructure and ventilation ducts with uninterrupted spiritual energy.

This place did not have many pedestrians. The passageways were narrow, and thick pipelines were crisscrossed all around, appearing like a myriad of entrenched giant metal snakes. Because they were worn through the years without repair, quite a few of the metal pipelines were full of rusted spots, and steam spurted out at the seams going “Tss Tss”.

The metal passageways were dim and dark. Half the crystal stone spiritual energy lanterns were broken. The other half flickered between bright and dark. The lighting was intermittent.

At the depths of a passageway was a narrow, sliding metal gate that was half opened. Imprinted on the gate was a black wolf that was baring its fangs and brandishing its claws. The black wolf had a military spike stabbed in it that drew blood from its head. And on top of the metal gate were four square-shaped words that were made by welding metal strips.

“Militant Wolf Slayers!”

Sudden shouts, the “thump thump” sounds of beating, the smell of rust, and the dense stench of men came from inside.

This was a Cultivation Gym.

Chapter 19: Militant Wolf Slayers

Chapter 19: Militant Wolf Slayers

The Star Glory Federation had a culture rooted in martial might. The cultivators with outstanding martial strength held the most paramount of statuses. Without exception, all common citizens of the Federation wished to step onto the road of cultivation and achieve the highest level of glory.

Even if one was not able to become a cultivator, people loved to steadfastly work on their strength, sharpen their physique, carve out their build, and dedicate their lives to maintaining cultivation practices.

And so, fitness centers could be found on every major street and alley, consisting of cultivation gyms and martial art schools. The majority of those that practiced cultivation in these centers weren’t extreme martial experts who were fearsome and vicious, but rather were obedient and disciplined law-abiding students and workers who strictly followed the rules.

When Li Yao saw the “Militant Wolf Slayers” sign, he felt more confident towards buying the drugs.

He knew that owners for places like these were mostly feverish cultivation fanatics. The knock-off strengthening drugs they synthesized were meant to be consumed mainly by themselves and the members of their cultivation gym. Their priorities weren't necessarily to increase profits, so they often did not cheap out on manufacturing costs, guaranteeing the final product’s quality.

Li Yao felt around on the spider design on his face and strolled along inside.

The front gate of the cultivation gym was not large and lead to a completely different world inside — a dozen or so muscular dudes dripping in sweat grasped barbells with bursting muscles in a three to four hundred square meter strength training room. Steel rope and iron plates pounded with “bang bang” ringing. A ripped giant was in the corner ferociously pounding on a sand bag.

Li Yao gazed around in a circle. He noticed that these ripped giants weren’t lifting too much weight and that their facial appearances were relatively kind and friendly. The feeling that they gave off wasn’t that of fear and violence. They appeared to be ordinary job workers. Li Yao couldn’t help but let out a sigh with his heart feeling more at ease.

He walked to the corner and prepared to ask the ripped man who was punching the sandbag a question; this gentleman looked to be the most friendly of the bunch.

This ripped man was in the middle of a pulled tight stance. He thrusted the pulled-back hand forward. The explosive power unleashed by the entire body coalesced into this one heavy fist. The sandbag was smashed and flew upwards towards the sky, just happening to collide into Li Yao’s face with a “Pow!” sound.

The ripped man let out a “Ah!” and asked worryingly, “You ok dude?”

Li Yao’s head was dazed and his nose was somewhat painful. His nostrils throbbed twice and he shook his head saying, “It’s nothing. May I ask where I can find Zhao the gym leader?”

……

In a small, small tea room located in the back of the strength training room, two buff dudes each sat upon their own green-camo-colored cushion. In between these two were two mugs, bacon, roasted chicken, peanuts, and other sorts of cooked food.

The person on the left was approximately forty to fifty years old. On the bald, bump-riddled head was a tattoo of the wolf stabbed with a military spike. His left arm was missing, cleanly chopped off from the shoulder blade. In its place, was a spiritual-energy-powered prosthetic arm engraved with over a thousand glyph characters.

Over on the right looked to be a young man no older than 30 years old. He wore a very low-key gray-colored military jacket. He seemed to have worn it for many years since the colors had already been washed out and faded.

If Li Yao saw this person, he would be excited to the point of pissing and collapsing. This awe-inspiring young man was the idol of every student in Crimson Nimbus Second, the new upstart within the cultivator circle of Floating Spear City, a member of the foundation stage — Fiend Blade Peng Hai!

At this moment, Peng Hai was not producing half a single bit of the imposing air of a cultivator from his body. He raised his mug and spoke frankly and straightforwardly towards the bald tattooed man, “Old Instructor, come. To our years in fierce battle during those days in the Demon Beast Wasteland. Another cup!”

The mugs clearly contained the coarsest of Sorghum Liquors. Peng Hai was of great extravagance, living a life of luxury as a big member of the cultivation circle. But his behavior was as if he had encountered the nectar of gods, drinking it all in one gulp. He smacked his lips loudly, “Good alcohol! This sh*t is what all men ought to drink!”

Moving somewhat rigidly, the bald headed tattooed man used his spiritual energy prosthetic arm to grasp and raise the mug. He said, deeply moved, “Peng Hai, kid, I know that you place great importance in feelings. Our camaraderie, even if you have become a cultivator of the Foundation Stage, has not been forgotten by you. You have not forgotten this old instructor and the days we braved through the fires of hell together! Even now, you are considerate. It’s fine when you come every few days to drink with me, but it really isn't necessary to continue to practice cultivation at this place of mine. This place of mine is meant for amateurs. Our achievements are very low. As a Foundation Stage Cultivator, you are wasting your time by practicing here!”

Peng Hai laughed, “Old Instructor, the friendship between us simply cannot be described adequately with the words, ‘braving through the fires of hell’. Think back to that year when we executed ‘Operation Razor’s Edge’ together. That one time... If you had not blocked them off for me, I would be long dead to the point of no return. How would I have been able to become a Foundation Stage Cultivator then? And Old Instructor, you...”

His gaze swept over to the the left side of the bald tattooed man’s body. Peng Hai’s voice carried with it a hint of heaviness when he said, “You actually threw away your entire left arm. The shock was so much that even your heart lost 70% of its strength. You fell from the 13th stage of refinement all the way down to being a common military grade man, having no choice but to leave the ‘Wolf Regiment’.”

The bald tattooed man gestured back and forth with his hand. He said unperturbed, “The road of cultivation is filled with danger at every corner. I’ve faced death in the eye, yet I am still alive. When I had already stepped onto this road of no return, I had lived life on the edge far early on. I am prepared to lose my life to the underworld at any time! This is just a hand I’ve thrown away. What does it matter? If you couldn’t even see through this point, why did you continue to cultivate in those days? Wouldn’t it have been safer to just go home as soon as possible and live life as a white-collared office worker and marry a wife? You don’t need to keep on carrying that matter in your heart. We, who choose to cultivate, when our arms are severed, when our legs are cut, those limbs still return to the origin through death, happily seeing God. This is fate! My severed arm was decreed by fate! What does it have to do with you? I’ll repeat again. If I can’t cultivate myself, then why can’t I teach others to cultivate? This uncle collects a huge veteran’s disability pension every month. I drink some alcohol, roast some skewers, and everyday, there’s always someone on top of my bed. You don’t know how free and chill I have it, how happy I am! As for the old war companions who still remain in the military, you are correct. Quite a few have become Foundation Stage Cultivators. There are even two people who formed their core becoming big shots. What does that matter? You can’t say for sure that tomorrow they won't become a sack of chunkless diarrhea inside a fiend beast’s stomach without even a trace left behind! If you think about it, I got off good. Hahahaha!”

Peng Hai cheerfully replied, “Seizing opportunities, letting go of worries. You are the Old Instructor of my memories. Your bones clang like iron with your body of steel! However you are a bit mistaken, Old Instructor. I am not wasting my time by coming here everyday. I’m actually engaging in some extremely important cultivation methods.”

The bald tattooed man said with eyes wide in surprise, “Cultivating? In this broken down place of mine, what kind of techniques can you even cultivate?”

Peng Hai lightly laughed and explained, “I can already explode my essence force into reaching the high levels of the Foundation Stage for a moment. However, my state is very unstable. In so many critical moments of battle, my power would unexpectedly fall into the mid levels of the Foundation Stage, nearly causing my death. This is because I raised my absolute power far too quickly, and so I have not yet achieved perfect control over my strength. If I want to truly stand firmly in the high levels of the Foundation Stage, if I want to assault the boundary of the Foundation Stage’s apex, then I absolutely need to thoroughly and completely resolve this problem.

The tattooed bald man muttered to himself for a moment. He nodded saying, “ You are the youngest Foundation Stage Cultivator in the Federation — there is no one like you. You advanced too quickly. Indeed, this has brought you your problem with your unstable foundation. How do you intend to solve this?”

Peng Hai laughed answering, “In order to control my body’s power, I suppress my power down to 3% every time I come visit Old Instructor’s Militant Wolf Slayers Cultivation Gym. I only bring out 3% of my strength and I do progressive overload training!”

A light bulb went off in the bald tattooed man’s head, “So it turns out you’ve been only emitting 3% of your strength? No wonder, I can’t feel even the least bit of a cultivator’s aura from your body.”

Peng Hai nodded, “I have persevered being in the 3% state of power for a month already. In this way, when I release my limits and bring forth 100% of my strength, I feel that my instantaneous explosive strength will increase by a huge margin. My control over spiritual energy will also increase quite a bit. My ultimate goal is to suppress my strength down to 1% and still be able to proceed with progressive overload training and sparring. If I can achieve this, I will definitely rush to the boundary of the peak Foundation Stage!”

He paused for a moment and laughed without worries, “My greatest weak point is my unstable spiritual energy. I don’t want other people to know this, so I can only come to Old Instructor’s gym to do training. I only trust two people within Floating Spear City, and Old Instructor is one of these people. Unfortunately, the strength of your gym members are far too weak. None can withstand three minutes of my attacks in my 3% mode, and it seems they also differ by a stretch when just comparing strength training.”

The tattooed bald man glared an eye at him, “My gym members are all diligent salaried class workers. They don’t specialize in military applications, so of course they aren’t enough for you to fight. Even if you do use just 3% of your strength, you would completely slaughter them! Needless to say, this Old Instructor will take care of it. I know you’ve been looking for a durable high-level sparring partner, so I specifically got in touch with a small famous gold medalist in my circle for him to be your sparring partner. Wait a bit for him to arrive.”

When Peng Hai heard this, he became interested, “Oh? Is he skilled?”

The bald tattooed man replied, “I contacted him through a friend and have not met him yet. Nevertheless, this person has hung out in the Underground Ghost Market crowd for quite a number of years already. He’s been at several gyms and schools as a specialized sparring partner. It’s said that his defensive and resistive strength is extremely strong, giving him the nickname of ‘Iron Turtle’. He should be able to take on three minutes of your attacks in your 3% state, right?”

A one-way transparent glass made up the entire wall of one side of the tea room. By looking out from within, one can see what was going on in the strength training room.

When these two were talking, they saw Li Yao walk inside and get smashed ferociously in the face by the sandbag as if nothing had happened.

“He’s here. What do you think, is he not good enough for you?” The bald tattooed man stood up.

Chapter 20: A Man Doing Body Exercises

Chapter 20: A Man Doing Body Exercises

“There’s a bit of meaning. His defensive and resistive strength are considered the best in the civilian martial arts. He’s ten times better than the weak chickens of your cultivator gym.” Peng Hai also stood up and slowly moved his joints. Every bundle of muscle fiber of his was like a myriad of vipers flowing and roaming underneath his pure white jade-like skin. Spiritual Energy stirred incomparably.

“Of course! This guy’s a professional! How about you first go to the sparring room to prepare. Don’t forget to use the ‘Pattern Mask Glyph’. Don’t let other people discover your true identity,” the bald tattooed man had said to the side. He pushed open the door and walked into the strength training room.

The ripped dude who was hitting the sandbag faced the bald tattooed man and said, “Gym leader Zhao, this mister has been looking for you.”

The tattooed bald man nodded his head. He gave a gaze over to the spideresque design on Li Yao’s face and laughed saying, “You’re here. We have discussed the price quite clearly. You don’t have any problems right?”

“Everything’s good, there are no problems. Let us directly make the transaction,” said Li Yao coldly as he donned the appearance of an old experienced actor.

“Then that's good. Come with me.” The bald tattooed man led the way in front. He went through a corridor and brought Li Yao to a hundred square meter sparring room.

The atmosphere of the sparring room was more crude. Placed all around on the walls were straw mats meant for cushioning against impacts. The flooring was just a straightforward rough cement floor that had seen use for quite a while since there were bumps everywhere. Cracks could also be found chaotically all around.

The tattooed bald man took out from the corner a set of protective sparring gear, sewn from nine layers of leather, and offered it to Li Yao, indicating that he should wear it.

“We are all part of the same circle, so I don’t need to keep blabbering on. Anyways, as long as you can endure past three minutes, you will receive 10,000 credits. But if you can’t withstand three minutes, then you won’t receive even half a penny. This senior is saying, you’ve worked at quite a few martial art schools as a gold medal sparring partner. What we have here is all standard. You don’t have any problems right?”

“Three minutes? Gold medal sparring partner?” Li Yao blinked his eyes and realized that the opposing party was had mistaken his identity.

The pattern mask glyph wasn’t necessary random in nature. There was a total of over 1,300 different styles. On occasion, it was possible that two different people may receive the same design allowing for mistaken identities. This was known as being “doppelgangers”.

This owner was probably waiting for someone else, a gold medal sparring partner with a spideresque design on his face. Li Yao actually mistakenly became this person.

“I am sorry — ” Li Yao’s next intention was to explain himself, but then his thoughts suddenly stirred.

What did this bald tattooed man just say? If I can withstand 3 minutes, I can get 10,000 credits? Being a sparring partner was surprisingly this profitable?

Li Yao was a bit envious.

He struggled through life and death in the Artifact Graveyard. With painstaking effort, he could only make around 10,000 a month. Even though this time he had painfully gutted Si Jiaxue a blade and earned 100,000 credits, this type of cash cow wasn’t something that Li Yao could happen on anytime he wanted. Right in front of him was the opportunity to earn 10,000 credits just by enduring for 3 minutes. It was enough to buy a dozen more of the strengthening drugs. What was he waiting for? Just do it!

His body had just undergone a change, becoming different. His defensive and resistive strength had increased by a large margin when compared to his previous self. His top layer of skin had become a thick coarse layer of flesh!

And the gym members who would come to Cultivation Gyms of this quality were mostly at the amateur level. Maybe they just got off of work and they might need to go get groceries in a bit. How much strength could they possibly have?

Li Yao line of thought went like this as he looked up and gazed forward to the opposite side. He almost let out a laugh.

A man with a tall thin stature stood in the corner of the sparring room. His upper body was bare, revealing a lack of muscle. His skin seemed to be somewhat deathly pale. On this gentleman's face was also a ‘Pattern Mask Glyph’. Red and black decorative lines interweaved into the appearance of a laughing clown.

The feeling this clown gave was that this was a completely normal person, a trivial commoner. This person lacked completely the air of an expert.

Li Yao could not help but smile as he entered. This gentleman was in the middle of warming up in completely serious manner. He was doing the Federation’s most fundamental exercise, The 5th Sequence of Body Exercises!

This sequence of body exercises was developed by expert cultivators of the Federation specifically for commoners to keep in shape and to loosen their bodies. Every citizen of the Federation had started learning this since kindergarten. This absolutely was not a type of military-grade technique. It was the most basic of limb movement exercises that did nothing more than to unfold bones, muscles, and tendons.

Nowadays, if one had increased their skill level, they would have displayed more complicated movements such as the 9th Sequence of Body Exercises, which needed slightly more martial skill. As for the completely basic 5th Sequence of Body Exercises, only an elementary school student would continue to use it as a warm-up exercise.

It was clearly the warm-up exercise an elementary school student would use. The smiling clown was actually executing it down to the letter. Not a single hair was out of place. Every movement stretched his body to the limit. It was like the clown was cultivating in some sort of earth-shattering unrivaled feat.

“This 10,000 credits is simply free money off the ground! If I don’t collect it, God will strike me down!” Li Yao shouted madly within his heart.

The bald tattooed man took the protective leather set and draped it on Li Yao’s body. He frowned and asked, “Is there a problem?”

“Uh...” Li Yao muttered to himself for a moment and asked, “I can only take blows? I can’t hit back?”

The bald tattooed man stared blankly for a moment. His expression was both of that of a smile and not a smile. It was like he had just heard the funniest joke in the world. He took from an equipment chest in the corner, a big iron plate insert and strengthened ceramic sheets. He stuck them into specialized pockets on the surface of the protective leather gear.

In this way, Li Yao had three layers of protection on his body — a strengthened ceramic sheet, an iron plate insert, and nine layers of leather.

The bald tattooed man said, “If it makes you happy, go ahead and hit back~ Anyways, I strongly encourage you to first do the utmost to withstand his attack before thinking about this. Okay~ You guys play slowly. I’ll come back in in three minutes. I hope...”

He ended the subject and looked at Li Yao with eyes that conveyed meaning without words. He patted Li Yao once on the shoulder with a strength that was not light nor strong when he withdrew from the sparring room and closed the door.

“It really is a hobbyist level Cultivation Gym. Nevertheless, it's three minutes of sparring training and nothing more. Is there a need to wear this much safety gear?” Li Yao tried jumping two times and he also swung out a series of sluggish fists. He felt the effect of the protective gear on his body.

He found out that this set of protective gear was made in an utterly elaborate manner. Even though adding the iron plate and strengthened ceramic sheet caused his weight to increase by ten pounds, it did not affect the movement of his limbs. Other than reducing his speed faintly by a bit, it did not affect his offensive and defensive capabilities.

And his opponent was still leisurely warming up. He moved from the fourth movement, the Stretching Exercise, to the sixth movement, Chest Expansion Exercise. If Li Yao was not mistaken, there was still five small movements left!

“This senior, you have been warming up since I entered. Can it be you need to finish the entire sequence of body exercises? Is there a need to be this serious?” Li Yao could not help asking.

The smiling clown was in the middle of maintaining a striding open and arched stance, a state with his chest open. When he heard Li Yao’s words, he ceased his movements. He asked exasperatingly slow, “ You don’t need to warm up?”

“There’s no need. In a real battlefield, you won’t have this much time to warm up!” Li Yao replied somewhat impatiently. He had struggled for survival in the Artifact Grave. Anyways, if he said he would fight, he would fight. If he said he would run, he would run. Fatty Long, Ye Wolf... These bastards. Who would give him time to warm up?”

The smiling clown tilted his head and let out a soft “ah” in surprise. It seemed he did not expect Li Yao to be able to speak out words with this much reason. He pondered for a short moment and nodded saying, “What you said is correct. I am done preparing. Three minutes... starts now!”

“Whoosh!”

In practically the moment when the words “Starts Now” traveled into Li Yao’s ears, the ear piercing sound of the wind breaking bore into his eardrum. Just an instant ago, the smiling clown was still several dozen meters away engaging in his arched stance doing his chest expansion exercise. The next instant he had actually completely disappeared.

Li Yao absolutely was not capable of seeing through the movement trajectory of this smiling clown. All he felt was a stab of pincushion-esque pain coming from his sternum. It was like an incorporeal hand had pierced through his three layers of protection in an instant! It directly pierced into his chest and firmly gripped onto his heart!

“— What the devil is this!?”

Chapter 21: Dividing Four By Zero

Chapter 21: Dividing Four By Zero

The depths of his mind had only produced half a thought when his sternum felt like it was fiercely rammed by a high-speed crystal train. All of a sudden, he was flying seven to eight meters away. The wall went “Bang!” as he crashed into it and sent seven to eight straw mats flying. All of a sudden, straw reeds were flying in the air!

Li Yao fell heavily to the ground. His eyes, his nose, his mouth — all sorts of liquids squirted from his orifices. He lost feeling in his entire chest. The numbing sensation was like a lightning fast virus spreading within his body; he felt his entire body freezing up!

“Too, too fast. I couldn’t even see if it was his fist or his foot. What kind of person is this bastard? He has this much strength, yet he still cultivates in this hobbyist gym. So that’s why if I endure three minutes I can make 10,000 credits!” Li Yao’s brain was just a sheet of blankness. Only after gasping half a day’s worth of air was he able to barely support himself against the wall and stand up.

Li Yao’s pair of legs were completely shaking. When he looked at the clock that hung on the opposing side of the wall... he saw that only five seconds had passed. Why did it feel like five minutes had passed instead!?

The smiling clown stood lightly 10 meters away. He was a bit surprised and frowned when he asked, “Your defensive power doesn’t seem to be that strong. If you can’t keep going, it would be better to call it off. There’s no need to struggle.”

“Who says I can’t keep going!? I wasn’t ready just then. Again, come again!” Li Yao took a deep breath. He swallowed a ball of liquid pain back down his throat. His eyes gradually began to emit a red glow. His brain was filled completely with thoughts of “Three minutes, 10,000 credits”!

10,000 credits can buy a dozen or so strengthening drugs; or 3,500 cans of the Giant Creature of Starry Skies meat; or an entire set of Cultivator Glyphs with high scalability made from special materials; or 10 banquets at the Little Border of Hidden Lake restaurant!

In the Artifact Grave, he was called by others to be the “vulture who values money more than life”. When faced with this enormous sum of money, how could he abandon it so easily? That’s simply a joke!

“Come! Come then!” Li Yao stood firm and adopted a defensive stance. He stared unwaveringly at his opponent’s two feet. He beckoned at the smiling clown by curling his finger, and his opponent nodded his head in response without a hint of courtesy.

“Swoosh!” The smiling clown disappeared once again!

“How can this be!? It’s still not visible! I can’t see the trajectory of his movement!” Li Yao’s eyes were wide open. He strived to find the smiling clown’s trail, but he ended up with nothing. His eyeballs were fundamentally unable to keep up with his opponent’s speed. He could only rely on his instinctive reaction to danger to withstand the attack.

“Bang!” It was as if a giant python viciously rammed itself into Li Yao’s right side. Somehow, he managed to defend himself this time. He moved sideways with great difficulty. The strengthened ceramic sheet inserted on his right shoulder disintegrated with a shattering sound. Even the inner iron plate was hit into ringing echoes of “bang bang”.

“This strength is too terrifying!” Li Yao’s head was covered in sweat. In a single move, his opponent had smashed the armor on his shoulder into pieces. Yet, the smiling clown had not the least bit intention of stopping. The clown attacked in a tricky manner at unfathomable angles. It was like a shower of gales that enveloped him in a flash!

Suddenly, the sounds of “pow pow pow pow pow” came from his body as strengthened ceramic sheets ruptured. “Bang bang bang bang bang” could be heard as well as the iron plate warped.

“Can’t see him. Can’t see him. I completely can’t see him! If these attacks keep coming, it won’t even be a minute before my armor all explosively turns to mush. I won’t have any protective gear. This monster only needs half-a-minute to send me flat on the ground!” A scene of new 10,000 credit bills stuck on the wings of birds flying away with “quack quack” sounds emerged from the depths of his mind. A trace vicious malice gradually appeared on Li Yao’s face.

“I need to think of a method quickly. I must see through his attack pattern!”

Li Yao felt like his body was being crushed underfoot by a crystal rail train coming and going. He was in so much pain that he wished to be dead.

To his astonishment, he was surprised that he knew this type of painful feeling knew quite well and was quite familiar with it. Memory fragments like wisp of debris once again emerged from the depths of his mind.

From within the sea of his mind, memory fragments collided, smashed, conformed, and reorganized, ultimately forming a warped scene.

He suddenly was able to think back to the dream of grandeur, to when he was still a low-level worker at the Hundred Smelting Guild, to when he was being persecuted day and night by the titan with giant iron hammers. It was at this time when he was unable to see through any of the attacks, that an old companion who he had hung out with all around the world told him:

“Ou Yeming. Do you feel that the titan’s iron hammers come at you way too quickly, that you can’t see them clearly? Come, give your next month’s worth of fish fins to this uncle to eat. This uncle will teach you a unique skill! What unique skill you ask? It’s simple... If you can’t see clearly with your eyes facing directly, then tilt them as much as possible to the limit. Use your peripheral vision to see. Your peripheral vision can capture clearer scenes than your direct vision!”

Using one’s peripheral vision?

Li Yao’s thoughts coursed with electricity. He did not have time to think it over, so he squinted his eyes and consciously used his peripheral vision to gaze over his surroundings.

Li Yao saw him!

The smiling clown’s entire body was curled up into a ball. He looked like a lethargic house cat. Right now, he was ducked behind Li Yao’s right rear. All of a sudden, he let loose, and in a flash, the lethargic house cat turned into the embodiment of a malevolent python. A simple strike of a whipping leg swept across at Li Yao's right tibia!

This strike was like an explosive jet taking off. Not only would the strengthened ceramic sheets on his right leg completely burst, even the bones of his right leg would receive serious effects. Li Yao's speed would be reduced by at least half. It was possible that he would lose support in his leg entirely!

"That 10,000 credits is mine for sure!" Li Yao bit down on his mushy lips. He mustered nearly every single moving cell in his body. His right calf was like a folded blade. "Swoosh" it had folded up to the inner side of his thigh!

The smiling clown's attack all of a sudden failed, causing his entire body to lose balance in a flash. The clown had to continue moving half a step forward. This was the first time the clown's figure was forced into the open.

The offense that was like flowing quicksilver was broken forcibly. It was like the super-fast tempo of a song was forced to come to an end spontaneously.

Li Yao took a step and twisted. He originally wanted to take advantage of his bent leg and give his opponent a hidden kick.

The smiling clown seemed to be able to predict such matters. A strike could not be made since the clown had dodged seven to eight meters away in a flash. The clown looked at Li Yao with a smile that was not quite a smile. The clown's eyes displayed a hint of astonishment and praise, "In a short 57 seconds, you were able to see through my attack trajectories? Like hidden dragons and crouching tigers, the Underground Ghost Market really does have concealed talent!"

“That... that goes without saying. Do you or do you not want to know which method I used in the end, to be able to see through your attack? It was spoken by my master. It was twenty years ago on a stormy rainy night...” Li Yao breathed heavily like an ox. He was trying with all his might to stall for time.

“Don’t want to!”

The smiling clown cut off the conversation in a completely straightforward manner. Once again he disappeared from where he was standing. This time Li Yao caught sight of the clown’s attack trajectory in the same way. What was weird was that the smiling clown seemed to transform into two separate people. They pounced at Li Yao from both left and right sides simultaneously!

……

Within the tea room, the bald tattooed man leisurely drank sorghum liquor, gnawed on chicken wings, and hummed to military songs.

A man with a spideresque design on his face suddenly knocked on the door, entering in soon after.

His build was short and stocky with a form that greatly resembled a wall.

“And you are?” The bald tattooed man fixed his gaze onto the stocky man, as he held a chicken wing midair. The chicken bone shook and shook.

……

……

In the sparring room, two minutes and thirty seconds had passed already!

Li Yao was like a small fishing boat that was being flipped up and down in the raging waves of a stormy seas. One after another, he was hit ruthlessly by an earth-shattering wave, smashing into the abyss. Yet somehow, he was able to once again float back up to the surface after a short moment each time!

Li Yao’s body. He had received Ou Yeming’s powerful spiritual purification and flood of training. Every single muscle fiber, every single cell was incomparably tough and durable. Even though every punch he received gave him a feeling of pain down to his marrow, he still did the utmost to persevere. It was a perseverance of complete insanity. It was only because...

“Dear god. I’ve already been hit by this bastard for a full two and a half minutes with six hundred and twenty fists! If I give up now, wouldn’t all this beating have been in vain?”

Two minutes thirty-one seconds, Two minutes thirty-two seconds...

When every second passed, Li Yao’s conviction to persevere increased firmly by a measure. What was even crazier was that he felt his opponent’s super high speed assault during this time had decreased in speed and strength by a negligible strand. Perhaps, the clown would soon expose some mistakes.

In this two and a half minute interval, he was not just taking a beating like a sandbag. He was paying complete attention, observing his opponent. Even though the smiling clown’s speed was strangely fast at incomparable speeds, he discovered that there was an utterly small habituary pattern in his movements. Every time the clown attacked from the right side, he left leg first would bend slightly once.

This unnecessary movement approximately caused the smiling clown’s speed to be slower by 0.1 seconds.

Li Yao was waiting exactly for this opening!

He was not a buddhist practitioner who would never raise a hand and only take beatings. The strength of his opponent clearly was much much higher, just landing a fist of air would be fine!

Nevertheless, now was not the time. At this time, the opponent still had strength. He was still vigilant, he was still smiling.

It’s fine. Li Yao could wait. He was like a vulture waiting for the most opportune moment to hunt. Living in the Artifact Graveyard for over a dozen years had taught him how to conceal his claws and the importance of patience.

While he was being knocked about, while he ducked his head scampering like a rat, while he wailed like a ghost and howled like a wolf, all this time, Li Yao’s brain still maintained a calloused tranquility. Memory fragments whirled at lightning speeds in the depths of his mind. The scene of the full potential of the Hundred-and-Eight-Hands Chaos Gale Hammer Technique as unleashed by the titan condensed once more in his mind. It had turned clear from fuzziness.

The first move... The second move...

He searched at lightning speed within the weapons storehouse of his memories for the most suitable of “weapons” for this situation.

……

In the tea room.

The bald tattooed man suddenly stood up, spilling the sorghum liquor onto his body, “You are the ‘Iron Turtle’?”

“Of course I’m the Iron Turtle. Didn’t we get in touch just a while ago? It was you who told me to wear the spider-esque design and come. Is there a problem?” the short stocky man frowned his brows, feeling at a loss.

“If you are the Iron Turtle, then who the hell is the guy in the sparring room?” the bold tattooed man’s expression turned incomparably strange. He was distracted for a short time, then all of a sudden, he pushed the Iron Turtle aside. With two or three steps, he crossed over to the sparring room’s entrance and turned the handle to the big door.

“Hey Hai! Quickly stay your hand!”

“Three minutes are up!” At practically the same time, Li Yao, with blood all over his face, let out an ear-piercing shriek.

The two had not intended to yell at the same time. It caused the smiling clown’s offensive that was like the moving clouds and flowing water to abruptly stop. The clown subconsciously looked up gazing towards the wall. He discovered that actually only...

Two minutes and fifty-nine seconds had past!

“The time is now!”

Li Yao let out a low roar. He loosened his body, advancing. His right hand stabbed the void. His left fist was concealed behind his body. His fingers pinched causing his bones to produce a chaotic ringing of “ka ka” as his joints protruded, giving a mace-like appearance. Right after, he used his left heel as a pivot point and his entire body rotated 90 degrees at lightning speed. Borrowing an enormous amount of centrifugal force, he took his left fist and threw it out swinging furiously!

“Pow pow pow pow pow pow!” The fist’s spear-like tip had unexpectedly punctured the air, emitting a series of sonic booms! Li Yao’s clenched fist was like a whistling iron hammer as it directly pounded towards the smiling clown!

“Chaos Gale Hammer Technique, The 94th Hand, Murderous Hammering Tornado!”

“Please let him off easy!”

The howling of the bald tattooed man was somewhat mournful when it came from the entrance. However, Li Yao was unable to stay his hand. His clenched fist was at the tip of the smiling clown’s nose. There was approximately a hair-width of distance between his fist and the clown.

Then, the smiling clown changed.

He was still the same person. His eyelashes hadn’t even shook half a brow. 36,000 pores on his entire body seemed to spurt out in a flash a dense air. His aura seemed to contain actual substance. It was like he donned a layer of solid armour. His entire person swelled up a level. From a common martial arts practitioner, he transformed into an exceptional expert!

Li Yao realized at this time that the words “Please let him off easy” was not meant for him.

0.01 seconds later, he had no idea how but his clenched fist changed directions and fiercely smashed upon his own nose, sending him flying over a dozen meters. He was still in mid air without even the time to scream half a shriek, when he completely passed out!

The absolute air that curled around the smiling clown only persisted for half a second before fading without a trace. He changed completely back into the domesticated harmless commoner.

He walked leisurely to Li Yao’s side. Half squatting down, he checked out Li Yao’s breath.

“How is he? It’s nothing right?” the bald tattooed man had ran over without delay, asking somewhat nervously.

“He’s passed out. It appears to be serious, an overtaxing of his strength. It should be fine if we immediately replenish his strength with a strengthening drug.” Fiend Blade Peng Hai felt Li Yao’s nose. He said somewhat surprisingly, “This bastard is quite amazing. He actually made me break my baseline. I exploded out to 4% of my strength.”

Chapter 22: Fed Until Satisfaction

Chapter 22: Fed Until Satisfaction

In the depths of the Militant Wolf Slayers Cultivation Gym.

A recovery pod towered over two meters high within the Gym leader's private medical treatment room. Looking through the transparent glass observation panel, one could see Li Yao's naked body submerged in a great quantity of strengthening drugs. His pair of eyes were closed as he bobbed up and down. A large quantity of bubbles curled around his body.

The bald tattooed man and Fiend Blade Peng Hai were standing right in front of the recovery pod. They stared with great interest at the unconscious and unwakeable Li Yao floating within the green liquid drug.

Fiend Blade Peng Hai seemed to have just eaten to satisfaction. His entire face radiated with perfect content as he said, "Old Instructor, this bastard is truly worthy of being called a gold medal sparring partner. Not only did he withstand 3 minutes of my storm-like gale of attacks while I used 3% of my strength, he also surprisingly had enough energy left over to launch a counter-attack at the end. It was really unexpected! I originally thought I could perfectly suppress my strength down to 3%. I never thought that under this bastard's surprise attack, I would still fail at the end. I was forced to explode out with 1% more power!"

He paused for a moment. Peng Hai still had some words he still wished to express. He licked his lips and said, “This 10,000 credits spent really is way too worth it! Old Instructor, ask for me later to see if he has time tomorrow night. I want three more minutes with him!”

The bald tattooed man scratched and scratched his head. He hesitated for a long time before he replied with an expression of loss on his entire face, “Hey Hai, earlier I wanted to tell you this, but this youngster is not the gold medal sparring partner, Iron Turtle, that I had arranged for you.”

Fiend Blade Peng Hai’s eyebrows jumped up, “He’s not the Iron Turtle? Then who is he? There’s still such an amazing expert in Old Instructor’s gym? That’s not bad!”

The bald tattooed man’s expression turned gloomy as he said, “That’s the problem. This youth is not a member of my gym. I simply don’t know where the hell this guy spawned from. Oh, that’s right. He was wearing the school trousers of your high school. Who knows, he could be a school mate.”

Having said that, the bald tattooed man brought Li Yao’s trouser over and pointed at the school’s crest for Peng Hai to see.

This time, even Fiend Blade Peng Hai was astonished to the point of jumping. With shock, he said, “It can’t be. When I was sparring with this youngster, I could clearly feel out that even though his combat strength wasn’t especially strong, his combat sense was extremely good. He had plenty of combat experience. In that final moment, he brought forth a smell that was violently and imposingly sharp. It was as if he had experienced several thousand years of life or death slaughter, sharpening himself on a mountain of corpses and a sea of blood! Crimson Nimbus Second. When did they produce such a fierce person? How could I not know?!"

Fiend Blade Peng Hai thought back to the time when he saw the students of the Important Class. Although there were a few who had pretty good strength, all of them were flowers grown in greenhouses. Not one of them had endured the onslaught of rain and wind, of trials and tribulations. This youngster with an imposingly sharp air was completely different from them.

Could it be that he was one of the elite graduates of recent years?

"Do you want me to use the special lotion to wash off the spideresque design off his face? Then we can see his appearance and find out his identity," asked the bald tattooed man somewhat worryingly.

Fiend Blade Peng Hai muttered himself for a moment before shaking his head, "He applied the Pattern Mask Glyph. That means he doesn't want other people to know his identity. I did not feel any sort of hostility emanating off of this youngster's body. Even if he was one of my hated enemies, he wouldn't have assumed this kind of bastard role to come find me. I think there must have been some sort of misunderstanding. Let's wait till he awakens. Then we can ask him clearly."

In the Underground Ghost Market, removing someone's guise without their permission was an extraordinary rash action, with the potential of breeding a kind of unceasing and undying hate. Fiend Blade Peng Hai did not fear making enemies, but he also did not want to disrespect the customs of the Underground Ghost Market.

“I don’t know when this youngster will wake up. For a typical person, staying in the recovery pod for an hour should be enough for them to regain their consciousness. It’s been exactly half-an-hour since this youngster has been in here, yet he's still snoring loudly in deep sleep!” The tattooed bald man glanced an eye at Li Yao, having suddenly discovered this very strange thing.

The color of the strengthening drug in the recovery pod became diluted quite a bit just a moment ago. Originally, the deep green colored liquid drug churned along with Li Yao’s body, producing a great quantity of bubbles. At lightning speeds, it turned to a light green color, then to a sky cyan color, then finally it became almost transparent.

The tattooed bald man stared distracted. He walked in front of the recovery pod and brought up a hologram. “Pa Pa” he went on the hologram. After a few taps in rapid succession, a string of digits appeared before his eyes.

“The strengthening drug’s concentration changed from 33% to 14%. It continues to decrease at a lightning fast speed of 1% every minute!”

“That’s enough strengthening drug to restore three to five buff guys that were beaten black and blue back to their original condition. Within an interval of 30 minutes, this youngster surprisingly engulfed it all? That’s impossible!” the bald tattooed man involuntarily cried out in alarm.

From the depth’s of Fiend Blade Peng Hai eyes bubbled forth a radiance that was serene and profound. He muttered saying, “It’s like this youngster’s body had been starved for far too long. Anytime there's the opportunity, his body would impatiently devour ravishingly any nourishments, fully absorbing an entire pod’s worth of strengthening drugs to process! I did not expect this. He surprisingly dragged this type of starved hunger with his body to come spar with me! If his body could ‘eat its fill’, what would he become?”

After muttering to himself for a moment, Fiend Blade Peng Hai wrote down names and dosages of several dozen strengthening drugs on top of the hologram while saying, “Old Instructor, follow the prescription that I am writing here. Recalibrate three standard doses of this blend of strengthening drugs. Add it to the recovery pod.”

The bald tattooed man glanced at his writing with an eye. He frowned, saying, “If I follow this prescription, one standard dosage would cost at least 50,000 credits. And looking at his absorption rate, he may consume three to five doses every time I give him his medication. That’s a hundred-ninety to two-hundred grand. No matter how I look at him, he looks to be the type of person without money!”

Fiend Blade Peng Hai laughed with ha ha’s. He said with the least bit of concern, “It doesn’t matter. I will pay the costs.”

“Oi Hai, what you’re doing is...” The bald tattooed man did not understand.

Fiend Blade Peng Hai shrugged his shoulders and said, “Old Instructor, wait till the youngster wakes up. You ask him whether, for a month starting this day, he would be willing to come every night to this place to spar 3 minutes with me? If he is willing, I can sign a contract with him. The reward is 10,000 credits a day. Also, he will be supplied strengthening drugs in sufficient quantities!”

The bald tattooed man said, “The reward is a small matter. But after a month of this, the costs in strengthening drugs would not be a small amount of money. It might cost several million!”

Fiend Blade Peng Hai laughed lightly, “I have a premonition. This youngster is absolutely a monster. If I spar with him, my ‘strength precision control’ cultivation will be completed very quickly for certain. I will be able to stand firm in the high levels of the Building Foundation Stage!” What is several million credits worth in comparison? Going to the Demon Beast Wasteland and hunting the head of a high-stage Demon Beast would make that money back!”

“Ding!”

The bald tattooed man’s portable processor rang out a pleasant sound.

Fiend Blade Peng Hai put on his military jacket and walked out to the exit as he said, “ Old Instructor, I just transferred 5 million credits to your bank account. Have it pay the costs of the strengthening drugs. Use however much money is needed to feed this youngster until he's full. Tonight, I still need to go the Crimson Nimbus Second to give a few of the top students in the Important Class a course lecture on ‘Night-time Raiding’. I will come spar with this youngster tomorrow night!”

He reflected on the three minutes just a moment ago, when he was filled to his heart’s content. Fiend Blade Peng Hai all of a sudden felt that the course he will be lecturing in a moment later would be somewhat dull. No matter how strong the top students of the important class were, they would never peak his interest.

This was because their bodies were missing a sort of air — the murderous air of bloodshed!

When he walked to the entrance, Fiend Blade Peng Hai could not help but cast a glance back.

Within the recovery pod, Li Yao’s 36,000 pores were entirely spread open. They were absorbing nutrients in a thoroughly famous and extremely vicious manner from the strengthening drugs. A wisp of strange luster surfaced on his ashy white skin with each undulation of his sternum. Each bundle of muscle fiber and each blood-filled vein gradually floated and surfaced, like a once hibernating Fiend Dragon sleeping in the abyss. They sketched a strong physique that was heart-shaking.

Fiend Blade Peng Hai laughed lightly as he turned around and left.

He was brimming with anticipation towards the three minutes of tomorrow night!

Chapter 23: Eating Without Discrimination

Chapter 23: Eating Without Discrimination

From Li Yao’s perspective, the events that had transpired tonight were all part of an inconceivable and fantastic trip.

All he remembered was himself being beaten black and blue by the smiling clown and that he had shamefully fainted and passed out. Then, he felt like someone put him in a piping hot sauna. He felt himself bobbing up and down in broiling hot magma.

He had been steeped for a full five hours before he awakened. Li Yao had never felt an ecstasy as pleasurable as this his entire life thus far!

This sense of satisfaction was hard to describe with words and was absolutely impossible to describe using pen and ink. It can barely be described in the following way. It was as if from head to toe in his body every single muscle visible, every single strand of vein, and every single cell had enjoyed an incomparably fine banquet, soaked in a very comfortable bath, and lastly received a meticulous whole body massage for three hours. The pleasure simply carried him beyond the highest clouds!

The only thing was... A dark expression on the bald tattooed gym owner’s face. The owner glared at Li Yao with a bad complexion. It was as if Li Yao had cheated the owner of 900,000 credits!

It was only after the 30 second interval where Li Yao snorted down two large bowls of corn congee, swallowed down four giant sausages that were as large as arms, all while engulfing twenty meat buns, that the owner’s complexion turned a bit better.

“Have you served in the army?” the owner asked him abruptly.

Li Yao stared blankly and shook his head.

“The way you eat is very similar to some special forces soldiers in the army. True special forces soldiers who survived through the malevolent battlefield of slaughter know how to do this. They know how to consume the greatest amount of energy in the shortest amount of time. This is an extremely important skill that raises your survival rate by leaps and bounds! From the way you eat, you must have received special training. If you haven’t served in the army, that means one of your family elders must have been ex-military. Probably someone with an extraordinarily high ranking in the secret forces!” the bald tattooed man explained as he looked attentively at Li Yao’s expression and became completely cordial.

He didn’t continue nagging Li Yao about his background. He just straightforwardly fished out a brand new contract.

“That member you sparred with a while ago was utterly pleased with your performance. He wants to sign a month’s contract with you acting as his sparring partner. Are you interested?”

……

And just like that, on the early morning on the second day, at the same time when Li Yao appeared in front of Crimson

Nimbus Second’s school gate with vigor and valiance, his bank account increased by a whole 11,000 credits. An invaluable contract lay in his pocket. His veins rushed and bubbled with a strength that was on the verge of eruption. It was as if his chest was stuffed deeply full with crystal explosives. Each time his heart beated, it was like an earth shattering explosion had detonated!

“There’s still 97 Days, 18 hours, 33 minutes, and 45 seconds until the University Entrance Exams!”

Li Yao stood fixed beneath the front of the University Exam Countdown sign. The flickering digits reflected deep in his irises, becoming two fiendish fanatical flames. He waved his fist with aggression, wishing he could let out a whistle and fly up to fiercely kick the countdown sign into pieces!

“Little Devil, where did you go yesterday? You didn’t even respond to my E-crane message. What happened?” His bro for life Meng Jiang’s voice came from behind his body.

Li Yao did not look back. He tossed the oily paper bag he had in his hand behind his body. The bag landed perfectly in Meng Jiang’s embrace. “I got a fever all of a sudden yesterday, so I stayed at home to rest for the day. Here’s an egg pancake from the Fire Cloud Palm Vender!”

Meng Jiang cried with “wa wa” as he got scalded by the hot bag. He opened the oily bag to look. Eyes brightened as he said, “Wow, you’re rich! You actually gave me an ten entire pancakes. How can I eat all of this?”

“Eat five of them and toss the rest!” Li Yao laughed heartily as he hooked his arm around his best friend’s neck. The two chatted bantered as they walked to the classroom.

“Hey, Little Devil. Did you hear the rumors? Some earth-shattering and explosively shocking news emerged last night about our school!” Meng Jiang said, winking his eyes.

“What kind of news?” Li Yao ate a pancake with each bite. In a flash, he had eaten three scalding hot egg pancakes and looked at Meng Jiang looking stupefied.

Meng Jiang composed himself and said, “Rumor has it that last night outside, out of us mishmash of fish of the Common Class, there was actually a retard who had a conflict with the number one expert of our school, Helian Lie. We don’t know what method he used, but somehow he messed with Helian Lie and made him into a sorry figure. When Helian Lie got home, he was berated by his family elders. It was so bad that he’s grounded in his house for a full week! They forbid him from going out and stirring up trouble!”

“Oh?” Li Yao’s steps slowed and his complexion turned somewhat odd.

Meng Jiang did not notice the change in his good friend. With smiles of delight, he continued speaking, “I heard that this conflict arose due to Si Jiaxue. Alas, we don’t know which one among us Common Class is this heroic and courageous person with this much character. Who made Helian Lie, the tyrant of this school, eat defeat. Nevertheless, this reckless retard will be extremely miserable in their next encounter. I think today there should be a nice show to watch!”

Li Yao asked strangely, “Didn’t you say that Helian Lie’s forbidden to leave his house? That he hasn’t come to school? How can there be any kind of show to watch?”

Meng Jiang shook his head, “Little Devil, normally, you don’t care for the inner politics of our school. That’s why you don’t know about Helian Lie's influence within the school. It's not that simple! Let's not talk about how his father, Helian Ba, is the number one board member of Crimson Nimbus, possessing an enormous amount of influence. Let's just talk about about Helian Lie himself. He is the president of Crimson Nimbus Second's Student Council and is also the organizer for several clubs. He possesses a large amount of subordinates with tyrannical strength. No matter what he competes in, there isn't anyone who can surpass him!"

He paused for a bit. Meng Jia said with a lowered voice somewhat secretively, "Do you still remember? Last year, there was a student in the Ascending Class who somehow offended Helian Lie. Not only was he beaten miserable, but after he was sent to the sick bay, they 'accidently' used the wrong medication on him. It took him half a month of lying in bed before he could recover with great difficulty. Then the school actually found an excuse to expel him. Tsk tsk tsk tsk, it truly was a life worse than death!"

Li Yao's pupils contracted suddenly. "Helian Lie has this much influential power?"

Meng Jiang nodded his head, and with an expression of full of sympathy, he sighed a breath as he said, "You only know just now? If he doesn't retaliate back, why would everybody have a reason to be so fearful of him? In brief, it doesn't matter who provoked him last night. That person will need to take the initiative to quit school as soon as possible. At least then they would avoid a round of physical pain. Huh? Little Devil, when did your complexion become this bad?"

"Really, its bad?" Li Yao chewed nonchalantly and burped out loud.

“It’s bad. Who told you to eat six pancakes with a single breath! You fathead. You’re probably stuffed way too full from the last one!” Meng Jian suddenly slapped his back. “Strange, do you have some sort of padding on your back? Why do the muscles on your back feel so hard? It’s like a chunk of rock!” …

Ten minutes later at Gymnasium number 9.

There were a total of nine gymnasiums in Crimson Nimbus Second. The ninth gym was constructed in the oldest decade. Its equipment were the most obsolete, and its conditions were of the poorest quality. It was the primary place for students of the Common Class to practice cultivation.

The gymnasium was somewhat empty. All sorts of cultivation training equipment were set up inside. Over a hundred of Common Class students had already changed into the stretchy training clothes and were engaging in extremely difficult training. The sounds of battle cries, the sounds of strikes landing, and the sounds of iron plates and barbells colliding rang out. All sorts of sounds blended together and resonated under the dilapidated ceiling.

Li Yao squeezed into an examination chamber, getting ready to test out his Spirit Actualization Quotient.

He faintly felt that his Actualization Quotient had increased greatly, as if he had been reborn into a different person!

Chapter 24: A Leap of Advancement

Chapter 24: A Leap of Advancement

The world in front of his eyes twisted and warped as a myriad of arcane glyphs flared one by one, changing the world completely into the Great Illusionary Land. Soon, Li Yao found himself in the middle of an enormous arena made up of embedded black stone tiles.

The test he was about to take was a simpler one, so the coming challenges were unlikely to prove as big of a spectacle as the ones from the last exam simulation.

The black stone arena was about 500 meters in diameter. Black walls were placed in all directions reaching towards the clouds. One could see countless passageways the color of blood all around when gazing far into the distance. The faint roars of demon beasts came out from inside them.

The figures of savage demon beasts gradually came into view.

Li Yao warmed up each joint of his body in a loose yet not leisurely manner, causing his body to produce a ringing of “pop pop pop pop” bursts. He thoughts suddenly moved to action when he thought back to last night and the earnest motions of the Federations 5th Sequence of Body Exercises performed by the smiling clown.

“It seems that this exercise is nothing special, there’s nothing profound about this. Forget it. Let’s first test the limits of my speed!” Li Yao ignored the dozen or so demon beasts that were approaching. He knelt on one knee, used his pair of hands to support himself, and stuck his buttocks up, adopting the stance of a starting runner.

“Bowowowowow!” Several demon beasts with scarlet eyes shouted for Li Yao to come over.

“Woosh!” Every single muscle fiber in Li Yao’s two legs burst forth like thousands upon thousands of sharp blades unsheathing. Two gaping holes the size of fists were stamped into the black stone tiled floor. He turned into an image of savageness as he flashed past seven to eight demon beasts!

Li Yao did not pay any attention at all to the eye-catching demon beasts. He only had one thought in his head, and that was to run!

He dashed 250 meters away from the center to the edge of the black tiled arena in an instant. He was 50 meters away from the wall, yet he still maintained his sprinting speed. Just when it looked as if he was about to crash into the wall, his body flew into the air and turned in a strange fashion. His pair of feet stomped heavily against the wall.

“Bang!”

A web of cracks appeared on the wall’s surface. Li Yao was like an arrow let loose from a bow as he shot towards the other side of the arena.

The dozen or so demon beasts had not even grasped half a hair on his head up to this point!

He traveled another 500 meters at lightning speed. Li Yao reversed directions once again and was standing fixed once more in the center of the arena. He had done this in the time it took to glance up at the sky.

“1000 meters in 1 minute and 32 seconds! Not bad. I have improved by 41 seconds over my previous self. The next thing to do is to test the limits of my jumping power!”

Li Yao squatted once again. He took off, sped up, and sprinted forward. Right before two of the demon beasts was about to rip him to shreds, he leapt super high, and like a released flying sword, he pierced towards the sky!

It was in this fashion that he tested his speed, endurance, jumping power, anti-gravity strength, and limit-burst ability under the surrounding pressure of demon beasts.

An hour later.

Li Yao was weary; his strength was spent. He was gasping for breath while he sat in the middle of the dismembered corpses of demon beasts. His face was painted with the wild blood of the vanquished foes.

His eyes pierced through the fog of blood. He gazed towards the sky, brimming with anticipation.

A black cloud was raging in the middle of the sky; a dark wind wreaked havoc while muffled lightning struck in waves; a series of complex calculations was happening. Finally, the Great Illusionary Land produced his current Spirit Actualization Quotient:

“58%!”

“58%!”

When Li Yao saw this sparkling shining figure, he could not help but wave his fist and roar out in excitement.

Two days ago, his Actualization Quotient was only 35%, categorized into the worst aptitude grade. After his mind went through purgatory training in the longest dream with Ou Yezi, his Actualization Quotient actually increased by over 20%. He was only one distant step away from reaching the cultivation geniuses of the Important Class.

Even though he knew clearly that this type of bodily rebirth probably can only happen once, there were still exactly 97 days until the exams. He had the absolute confidence that he could raise his Actualization Quotient by another 10% within this time frame!

The road ahead of him was still very long, but if he could forge onwards and pierce through any obstacles no matter how difficult, he would surely pass the test and join the Nine Elite Universities to step onto the road of cultivation — to become a Master Refiner!

Only when Li Yao left the Illusionary Land and stepped out of the examination chamber, did his heart finally stir greatly with emotion. It took a long time before he calmed down.

He felt an itch in every joint of his body. He felt every fiber of his muscles howling. Every time he breathed, he puffed out steam. His strength wandered throughout his body with nowhere to disperse. It caused him to stir incomparably restless and made him extremely impulsive.

He surveyed his surroundings. Everyone was training diligently. His best bro, Meng Jiang, was nowhere to be found. Li Yao was unable to share in his delight.

He swallowed a mouthful of spittle. The fire of restlessness still remained in his throat. Li Yao took a deep breath and walked to the end of the gym.

An old, dilapidated Strength Tester machine was set up over there.

These days, students were long accustomed to using the Great Illusionary Land to test their strength. They had no interest towards this old artifact with its simple mechanism and glyph array structure.

It had been a long time since someone had last used this old strength-tester artifact. The strength-testing machine was covered fully in dust. It was like a giant creature that had been dead for who knew how many years. Only a dark skeleton remained.

Li Yao was actually very fond of these kinds of old artifacts that were the complete opposite of the virtual and formless Great Illusionary Land. He felt these artifacts that were comprised of assembling countless parts, glyph arrays, and channels had an elaborate composition. It was a profoundly complicated, old artifact. It had a charm that was moving and thrilling.

The him of the present… needed urgently to unleash the feelings of excitement within his heart.

While it’s true he could do anything he wanted in the Great Illusionary Land, it was still incomparable with the real physical world. How could it compare with the real feeling of fist hitting flesh?

“Bang!”

Li Yao exploded out with an extremely simple fist. It landed perfectly on the center target of the strength tester machine. Suddenly, dust surged into the air, filling the sky as far as the eye could see.

The old artifact was like an enormous beast awakening from its slumber. Arcane glyphs flared one after another. Sweet sounds of colliding metal resonated from within the artifact. The sounds of gears churning and the sounds of essence energy surging through crystal channels rumbled out. Finally, a series of numbers appeared on the crystal channel counter on the surface of the strength tester machine.

“355 Pounds!”

“One strike of my fist only produced 355 lbs of force? It seems that my strike wasn’t very strong! I feel like I’m missing something… In the end, what could it be?” Li Yao squinted his eyes, allowing the dust to curl around his body. He stared dazedly at his fist, thinking hard from every angle.

He let out a light laugh a moment later and fished two earbuds out from his pocket.

This was the “Tone Bell” artifact crafted by the “Sounds of Wonder Guild”. With these plugged in one’s ear and with a telepathic thought, the microglyph arrays within these earbuds begin to operate to produce the sound of beautiful music for one’s ears.

“Look and see. The dark rolling clouds are incapable of blocking the ever-flowing galaxy!”

“The endless darkness will dissipate under the radiance of the heavenly stars that ignite all of life aflame!”

A recording of a resounding singing voice that caused one to believe in themselves over false gods and buddhas exploded between Li Yao’s pair of ears!

That’s right! This is it! The dark rolling clouds are incapable of blocking the ever-flowing galaxy! “DIE!” Li Yao’s hips sunk as he unleashed a deep howl. The dust that had settled on his body just a moment ago dispersed in a flash, forming a light gray orb with a radius of half a meter around his body. And just a moment later, this orb was ripped apart by the wind of his fist!

“Bang!”

“Bang Bang Bang!”

“Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang !!!!”

Right when the strength tester machine was producing the result, the tall silhouette of a bold and powerful person strode leisurely into the gymnasium.

Chapter 25: The Iron Beast, A Storm Arrives

Chapter 25: The Iron Beast, A Storm Arrives

Several dozen students of the Common Class were engaging in strength training near the entrance of the gymnasium. Right at this moment, they seemingly became aware of something that caused them to drop their barbells at practically the same time. They stared at each other in terror and unintentionally swallowed a mouthful of saliva at the same time.

“What a terrifying aura, who could it be...?”

The sun’s light shone in through the large entrance door. An extraordinary mighty giant blocked half the light from shining in, forming an enormous shadow that enveloped these several students of the Common Class and caused the students to tremble in fear.

“It’s… It’s Wei Tie!”

Some of the students murmured subconsciously before awakening from their thoughts. They immediately covered their mouths. “Ge ge” sounds of teeth grinding could be heard coming from the slits between their fingers.

This person had a height that exceeded 210 cm and his entire body was covered in bursting muscles. He was like a giant monster that had donned a layer of metal armor and was known as “Iron Beast” Wei Tie. Wei Tie was the strongest in the Ascending Class and was also a vicious and fierce eminent tyrant!

Rumor has it that he overdosed on strengthening drugs for a long period of time, causing his body’s organic functions to be in disorder. His muscles grew excessively, but the growth of his Spirit Actualization Quotient was adversely affected. So, he was unqualified to enter the Important Class.

Despite this, there was no one who would dare doubt his battle strength. Most notable was his sheer power. It was even stronger than some of the elite students of the Important Class.

However, there was something even more fearsome than his bizarre strength and that was his tyrannical temperament. He loved to bully the weak on a fundamental level. After he entered his third year and because he hadn’t been accepted by the important class, his temperament became aggravated severely. He was blood-thirsty as if he was mad. His crazed insane tantrums caused him to hit even the teachers!

Strictly speaking, all the students of the Important Class were the heaven’s chosen arrogant children. They did not cross often with the riffraff students of the Common Class. Even if something escalated to the Important Class, the Important Class students were disinclined to go out of their way to bully the Common Class.

So in the eyes of the Common Class, the arrival of this Iron Beast Wei Tie even more terrifying than an entrance by Helian Lie!

“I’ve heard that this Iron Beast Wei Tie carries a small book on him for recording how many bones he’s broken in each month. Rumor has it that he broke 22 bones last month and that he wants to break that record this month as well!”

Several students of the Common Class looked at each other, sending warning messages tacitly in understanding to each other. They separated to the two sides of the gym without saying a word.

There was only one person who reacted too late. He was still doing bench presses and had only just got up. His entire skull was clamped by Wei Tie’s giant hand. Wei Tie lifted the student directly up saying, “Howdy, small troublemaker. There’s someone among your class called Li Yao. Where is he?”

The pitiful student was 189 centimeters tall and was considered one of the taller and mightier students in the Common Class. But under the palm of Wei Tie, he was like a small little toy. He was flailing his legs frantically for his face was being choked to a deep red. With a blood-curdling screech, he shouted, “Older Brother Tie. I... I don’t know! I haven’t seen him!”

“Humph!” With a squint of Wei Tie’s eyes, he easily tossed the over 150 lb student like he was a piece of trash. The student was tossed over 20 meters away and crashed into a few of the female students. The female students immediately began to scream.

However, as soon as the female students saw that Wei Tie was standing not so far away, their shrieks stopped abruptly. It was like a hen’s throat had been slashed by a blade.

An eerie silence enveloped the entire gymnasium. Every single student was shivering coldly. They did not dare to gasp even half a breath of the atmosphere. Even the teacher had gone to who knows where.

Everyone looked at each other in dismay. Everyone had the same thought circling in their minds:

“This monster came here to give whom some trouble? Some Li Yao? This time Li Yao is going to experience misfortune!”

“Elder Brother Tie, Elder Brother Tie!” Meng Jiang heard whispers within the crowd of students.

He heard that this Iron Beast was actually looking for his bro for life? His face turned deathly white. He hesitated for a good moment, but he still rushed out of the crowd. He obstructed Wei Tie with a face full of smiles and said, “Elder Brother Tie, You’re looking for Li Yao? He just had what seems to be a stomach ache. He went to the bathroom!”

“Oh?”

Wei Tie stopped his steps. He swept a glance at Meng Jiang and laughed. Suddenly, he launched a flying kick straight at Meng Jiang’s stomach!

Meng Jiang’s eyes bulged wide open. He sunk to his knees on the ground and vomited a huge mouthful.

“Nonsense. Did I ever ask you?” said Wei Tie coldly. He swept his surroundings and fished into the crowd of people by saying, “You. Come out!”

The crowd suddenly dispersed leaving only a short and small female student. Her flowery look lost all color under the tremendous intimidating aura. With no choice, she walked trembling with fear to be in front of Wei Tie. She laughed with a laughter more hideous than crying, “Tie, Older Brother Tie.”

“Be good. Tell this Older Brother Tie. Can you tell me where Li Yao is at?” Wei Tie smiled, revealing a strong thick fang.

“I… I don’t know.” The girl shook her head frantically.

“You don’t know? If you don’t know then go ask somebody at once!” Wei Tie glared and let let out a thunderous roar.

The girl’s legs turned knobbly and she almost collapsed on the floor from paralysis. She moved frantically back amongst her fellow students. She asked with a sobbing manner, “You all, which one of you all have seen Li Yao?”

The gymnasium wasn’t actually too big. Li Yao’s training corner was not very hidden. Soon, he was discovered.

Wei Tie gave a cold snort. He turned his neck that was as thick as the waist of a young girl and headed towards the corner with large strides.

Everybody feared being close to Li Yao and Wei Tie. Even more people did not dare to warn Li Yao. A few of the less courageous girls even covered their eyes, fearful of seeing the bloody scene that was about to occur. A few people frantically tried to escape by fleeing the gymnasium. No one knew if they were going to go call a teacher or to just simply get away.

As for Li Yao, he was still immersed in his showers of gale fists. He was in the middle of his explosive music that could pierce clouds and split stone, indulging in the pleasure of using his bombarding strength with the music. He absolutely did not notice the events that were happening behind him.

Finally, Wei Tie arrived behind Li Yao. A fiery aura enveloped him. It was like a lion, whose stomach was rumbling with hunger, was standing behind a small white bunny.

“You are that Li Yao? Someone put out 50,000 credits for me to break 10 of your bones. It would be better for you to choose. Ultimately, which 10 bones shall I break?”

Right when Wei Tie said these words, the final passage of “Conquer the Cosmos” by Lu Yinxi just happened to play in Li Yao’s ears.

“Whenever I feel despair in my soul, there will always be a song that I can sing loudly!”

“No matter how cruel destiny is too you. You will become that much stronger!”

The blood racing lyrics were like a bolt of lightning splitting into Li Yao’s marrow. It was like the rusted shackles in the depths of his mind were completely cleaved open.

An absolute and bizarre strength entered his pair of legs from the ground, vibrating and swelling within his skeleton as it passed through his entire body. It rushed into his pair of arms like a mountain flood breaking out. The One-Hundred-And-Eight Chaos Gale Hammer technique transformed into fist techniques. He shot left and right in a chain of cannon strikes. He let loose with all his firepower!

“Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang !”

“714 lbs! 822 lbs! 794 lbs!”

He punched with over thirty fists that produced sparks like flint. Every single punch was held at over 700 lbs. The heaviest fist even reached 915 lbs. The strength testing machine was punched into bouncing back and forth repeatedly. The thick rivets securing the machine to the ground groaned with “zhi zhi” sounds. They twisted and deformed.

When he was done, Li Yao’s pair of fists gave off a curling white smoke that rose in spirals, like having a ladle of cold water poured on a red-hot iron. And the center target of the strength testing machine was already caved in deep. No matter how much time passed, it would never return to its former elasticity.

Li Yao took off his earbuds and turned around. He looked somewhat suspiciously at Wei Tie. “What did you say just now?”

Wei Tie was completely stupefied.

Chapter 26: Someone Fiercer Arrives

Chapter 26: Someone Fiercer Arrives

Wei Tie saw the crystal tube counter continue to tick away a string of digits, causing him to swallow a mouthful of spittle with great difficulty.

Cold sweat formed on his forehead, back, and between his waist. His body was as if it had just been scooped out of a body of water.

Wei Tie, also known as the Iron Beast, did not dare to even make a single move to wipe off his sweat. His mind was filled with a scene of those 30 explosive fists bombarding upon his body.

He would absolutely... be beaten to death!

“You must be Older Brother Tie of the third years. What business do you with me?” Li said as he recognized that this was the school’s infamously fierce Iron Beast.

Wei Tie’s lips trembled, not knowing how to respond.

Li Yao was likewise extremely surprised and blinked his eyes few times. He had heard long ago that Wei Tie was notorious for being a ruthless person. However, everyone minded their own business in the past. Wei Tie and Li Yao had not crossed paths before. Today was the first day they exchanged words. Why did it seem like this guy… was a bit retarded?

“Li. Fellow student Li Yao. I came looking for you since I have something I need your help with,” answered Wei Tie in a stammer.

“What is it?” Laughed Li Yao in reply.

“It's— It's like this. When I punch out with power, I feel that there's something not quite right. I don't know if fellow student Li Yao has some time to give me some pointers? As the martial arts teacher would say, I should be able to punch out with 50% more force with my strength, but the power of my punches always fails to reach that lever of power!” said Wei Tie with the utmost sincerity.

Li Yao was stunned. It took quite a while before he responded by going through the motions, “Sure thing~ As fellow students, we ought to learn from one another. The thing is… I'm all booked for today. How about we exchange pointers next time when I have time?”

“Sure! Sure! So it turns out that Older Brother Yao has matters to tend to. Then let's exchange pointers next time. I'm going to go now! Older Brother Yao go ahead and tend to your stuff! Go ahead!”

Wei Tie left. Or it can be said… that he broke into a run.

This sight would have been unbelievable if not personally seen with one's own eyes. It would have been very hard to believe that the 210 cm tall and over 300 lb buff giant would be able to utilize the Spirit Serpent Footwork Technique to the degree of moving like the floating clouds and flowing water. He left without a trace, exercising caution to avoid calamity.

The hundreds of students in the gymnasium were left feeling stupefied, dumbstruck, and shocked. All of them watched with eyes that stared rigidly at Li Yao, feeling as if they had fallen into an illusion. They stared at him as if he was the king of the demon beasts wearing the skin of a human.

“What the hell is going on? Why did the Iron Beast run in such a panicked manner after saying a few sentence? What did they say in the end?”

“Loud thunder can be accompanied by small raindrops. This is probably the Iron Beast’s style. I had thought that he would break all of Li Yao’s ribs!”

“What kind of cultivation technique did Li Yao use? Could it be that he stashed a high quality ‘Hypnosis Glyph’ on his body? Hypnotizing the Iron Beast?”

The students discussed earnestly within themselves. They were extremely astonished.

Bro for life Meng Jiang massaged his stomach. He managed to nudge to Li Yao’s side with great difficulty. Unable to deal with the pain, he said urgently, “Little Devil, is there anything wrong? In the end, what did the Iron Beast want?”

Li Yao rubbed his skull. Shaking his head he said, “I don’t know man. It's a complete mystery. He said he wanted to find some time to study punching techniques together. Give a few pointers to each other.”

Meng Jian jumped in astonishment as he shouted bewildered, “What? The Iron Beast wants to study punching techniques with you? Don’t you know that the last person who ‘studied punching techniques’ with the Iron Beast had their right leg broken into three pieces while he was still conscious?! But — but why did he go and leave?”

“I said I still had matters to attend to today, that I didn’t have time, and that we can do it next time. He went ‘Oh’ and then walked away! Huh? Did you just vomit?” Li Yao circled around his bro for life. When he discovered the imprint of a shoe on his bro for life, his pupils suddenly contracted and his irises gave off a cold glow.

He understood now.

“I know roughly why Wei Tie was looking for me. Damn! I should have made him stay just then… Small Jiang. It would be better for you to keep some distance from me for the next few days,” said Li Yao with utter seriousness.

Meng Jian stared at him and asked, “Why?”

Li Yao creased his nose and said, “Didn’t you just say that some poor unfortunate student of our Common Class had provoked Helian Lie? That he will suffer a misery incomparable for vengeance? That poor unfortunate student… seems to be me.”

“Wha?”

Meng Jian jumped with shock, ejecting over three meters away subconsciously as if Li Yao was the demon of pestilence. When he came to, he felt a bit ashamed. With a bitter face, he said, “Little Devil, we are all good brothers. Needless to say, my code of honor isn’t lacking. Let’s see, which hospital’s intensive care unit would you like to stay at? I will help you reserve a bed right now!”

……

Wei Tie ran in a small sprint the entire time. He scuttled out of the Ninth Gymnasium and had just turned around the corner when he saw someone standing by the flowers and bushes. A tall skinny youngster with a malicious expression on his face.

The youngster’s hips were quite high on his body. His pair of legs were at least 102 cm long. The pants of the school uniform were wrapped tightly around his muscular legs; originally the pants were designed to be loose, but on him, it was like they were skin-tight pants.

“Really? This fast? Are you sure you broke 10 of his bones? You’ve recorded the whole ordeal right? I’ll send it via e-crane link for Senior Helian to watch!”

Wei Tie did not dare to be bossy in front of this malicious youngster, adopting a well-behaved attitude.

It’s because this youngster with the name Zhao Liang was a student of the Important Class.

Although he was the lowest ranking student, ranked 41st, of the Important Class, he had an elite Spirit Actualization Quotient of 60%. Zhao Liang was not someone Wei Tie could confront.

“Older Brother Liang. When I walked in the gym just now, I felt some pain in my stomach. It’s probably my appendicitis flaring up again. I need to go see the doctor asap!” Wei Tie’s eyeballs turned about and he clenched his teeth. His face was scrunched up into a ball. His enormous body even began to shiver and his forehead began to sweat once more.

“Appendicitis? Did you make a mistake!?” Zhao Liang was unable to restrain his rage. He wished very much to slap Wei Tie across the face. He said in a low roar, “At first, I thought that you had a bit of potential. I even put in a few good words for you with Senior Helian Lie to help you move up Senior Helian Lie’s ladder and receive some good benefits later on. I never thought you were actually a pile of shit. How could you not withhold your end in this key moment!”

“Right, right. It’s exactly as Older Brother Liang says. My appendicitis flared at the worst moment. Oh man, it hurts! It hurts! What if it's infected!” Wei Tie covered his mouth. The pain was enough to squeeze a few tears out of his eyes. He squinted his eyes, peaking at Zhao Liang. He tested the waters by asking, “Older Brother Liang. How about I first go to the infirmary to get it checked out and to take a bit of a rest. If it’s not too bad of a hindrance, I can come back to teach a lesson to this kid?”

“Fuck off! Fuck off! Senior Helian wants to see the kid beaten the sh*t out of as soon as possible. Who has the patience to wait for a pile of shit like you to get checked by a doctor? In the end, I have no option but to do the job myself. How annoying!” Zhao Liang was ruthless. A leg kicked over that was like rapid bolt of lightning whipping onto Wei Tie’s body, creating a “Bang” of explosion.

Wei Tie was grimacing in pain, but his eyebrows indicated that he was happy beyond delight. He said repeatedly, “Expert Brother Liang, it's a given that you will beat this kid so badly that even his parents won’t be able to recognize him! Ok! Let’s not talk about this anymore. I’m going to go ahead and see the doctor. I’ll come back again to give Elder Brother Liang an apology!”

His neck shrunk and he slipped into a small run. Soon Wei Tie ran away without a trace.

“This kid, why is he acting kind of strange today? As if he's hiding something like a thief?” Zhao Liang did not understand so he rubbed his head. He faintly felt that there was something not quite right. But then he recalled Helian

Lie’s appearance when he’s in his towering rage. He quickly broke out in a cold shiver and headed to gymnasium number 9.

“Which one of you is Li Yao? Get the fuck out here!”

Chapter 27: Actually, He's the Fiercest

Chapter 27: Actually, He's the Fiercest

The voice was both sharp and piercing, like the cry of a bird of prey. It ripped through the just-congealed atmosphere within the gymnasium.

The students had just recovered with great difficulty back from their stunned state when they became seriously frightened once more.

No one expected that a person even more fierce and malicious than the Iron Beast would come the instant the Iron Beast had just left. Zhao Liang was a student of the Important Class. With an Actualization Quotient surpassing 60%, he was a cultivation genius. He was in a completely different world of existence when comparing the skies of the Important Class to the earth of the Common Class.

“This Li Yao, just which person did he offend? To cause Wei Tie and Zhao Liang to come bulldozing over searching for him?”

“We don’t know what methods he used to drive Wei Tie away just now. What's going to happen this time when he faces Zhao Liang?”

“You guys don’t even know. Man, last night Li Yao offended Helian Lie!”

“What? He’s the unfortunate bastard who offended Helian Lie? Then he’s done for!”

Whispering rose and fell like waves in the group of people. Everybody looked at Li Yao with expressions full of pity, as if he were a sick patient with his body fully cast in plaster.

While numerous students were making lamenting sounds, Li Yao walked very slowly over. He walked with great hesitation. From time to time, he would put a hand on a piece of training equipment to support himself. It seemed that he was somewhat scared to advance onward.

“So you are that Li Yao. You’re nothing special!” Zhao Liang observed Li Yao from head to toe for a long time. A cruel smile emerged on his malicious face. He said softly, “I have a combat technique problem that I don’t quite understand. I wish to exchange pointers with fellow student Li Yao. Come then!”

“So they’re actually going to duel!” Everyone tilted their heads and took a deep cold breath.

In Cultivation Era 40,000, Demon Beasts ran rampant. The flames of war burnt on. Humanity had adopted a culture of valiance. They held the philosophy of “Survival of the Fittest where the Weak are Prey to the Strong” in extreme revere. Private schools, such as Crimson Nimbus Second, followed this philosophy particularly closely and had the goal of producing cultivation geniuses. They did not prohibit students from dueling each other.

Besides, the schools had perfect medical treatment facilities that contained miracle cures that could bring people back from various near-death situations, and the students were even overseen by several of the greatest medical researchers. As long as someone didn’t die on the spot, they would quickly be restored back to be as good as before.

So, when hot-blooded youngsters full of vigor had some beef with each other, they would often exchange the words “exchanging some pointers” as the preamble to conducting a duel.

However, typically duels were conducted between two students with similar strength. A duel issued between Zhao Liang, an elite of the Important Class, and Li Yao, this riffraff of the Common Class, would be a great loss of reputation for Zhao Liang.

Zhao Liang would not have gone forward in this manner that would reduce his reputation were it not for the raging fury of Helian Lie. Helian Lie wanted to absolutely see Li Yao be beaten black and blue by the end of today, and Wei Yei had unexpectedly backed out at the key moment.

Therefore, Li Yao adopted a meek attitude. He said softly under his breath, “You are a great expert of the Important Class. I’m no match for you. I forfeit!” These words were felt by all the students of the Common Class and Zhao Liang to be an expected matter and a natural course of action. These words weren’t surprising at all.

A riffraff student of the Common Class under the provocation of an elite student of the Important Class could only surrender and beg for forgiveness. How could there ever be a second option?

Zhao Liang yawned and said somewhat impatiently, “So it turns out you’re this sensible. I’m also disinclined to take care of your sort of trash. Be good, go kneel down and let me break 10 of your bones. Then this matter will…”

The last word “will” had just been half spoken when Zhao Liang felt his tail bone turn cold. A chill rushed to his scalp. The only thing he felt was a strong gale assaulting his senses. He reached his hand out subconsciously to block it and heard only a “Bang.” A white mist had exploded in front of him. Countless dust-like pellets stabbed into his eyes. The scene in front of him suddenly turned snow white. The pain was incomparable. He could not see a damn thing!

“AHH!” Every student of the Common Class let out cries of surprise. They did not dare to believe in the scene they had just witnessed.

It was when Li Yao was cowering his head in forgiveness; his right hand had suddenly awakened and within his palm was gym chalk that was commonly used to increase friction for strength training which he grabbed at an unknown time. That chalk was now right in Zhao Liang’s eyes!

Zhao Liang lost his vision for an instant.

Li Yao used the opportunity to lift a 30 lb dumbbell with his foot. He smashed the dumbbell onto Zhao Liang’s skull!

“Boom!”

Zhao Liang was worthy of being an elite student with an Actualization Quotient of 60%. When the gym chalk entered his eyes, when he temporarily lost his vision for a moment, he was still able to maintain a high state of vigilance. He responded to Li Yao’s attack by using only the sound of the wind, crossing his two arms to block the dumbbell attack firmly!

But he had not expected that Li Yao would reach such a terrifying degree in strength. Even more than that, he had not foreseen that Li Yao would be so shameless and despicable as to use a dumbbell to attack. Under the bombardment of the great powerful energy, his pair of arms were smashed completely and snapped. The force was strong enough to even send his entire body flying dozens of meters away!

The numerous students of the Common Class went into states of astonishment once again. Only a small minority of students, the ones who were proficient in martial skill, had been able to see how much Zhao Liang wanted to use a soaring stylish method to dispel Li Yao’s offense and give birth to an exaggerated scene.

However, it did not matter what Zhao Liang’s intentions were. In the end, Li Yao sent Zhao Liang flying. Just this sole move was enough to send all of Crimson Nimbus Second into an uproar!

“*SPLAT!”

From over a dozen meters away, Zhao Liang spat a mouthful of blood. A flaming hot rage twined around his body. He knew that what had transpired today was like a large ship being capsized by force of a mere small steam. Things should have gone smoothly today, but everything had gone completely wrong instead. At this point, even if he beat this kid to the ground, he would still remain the laughingstock of the Important Class.

“Way too despicable! Way too shameless! You actually used gym powder and a dumbbell! But I'm afraid trash like you wouldn’t know that my greatest weapon is not actually my arms but my legs!”

Zhao Liang laughed hideously. He spread his fingers into a pair of pitchforks and stabbed his own eyes fiercely. Large drops of tears flowed from his eyes immediately, causing the gym chalk to be washed out of his eyes. Once again, a blurry image came into view before his eyes. His eyes locked in Li Yao’s direction.

“I'LL SLAUGHTER YOU!”

With a shriek, Zhao Liang’s pair of legs turned into a pair of bizarre serpents. He devoured a dozen meters of distance with only a single leap. His left leg stamped hard, producing wood splinters and fragments, and the power of his right knee was like a fierce tiger taking off like lightning!

The Thirteen Forces of the War Beasts technique with the greatest power was unleashed…Treading Tiger Strike!

It took no more than half-a-second to execute the leap and the knee strike. Li Yao simply wasn’t able to react in the least and wasn’t even able to adopt a defensive stance. Zhao Liang’s knee struck directly onto Li Yao’s sternum.

“AH!”

Quite a few female students let out cries of alarm and subconsciously closed their eyes. They could not bear to see the tragedy that was about to occur.

… When Zhao Liang was crying out tears to wash out gym chauk a dozen seconds ago, Li Yao had leisurely grabbed a 35 lb plate and stuffed it down his clothes to protect his chest. Everyone else had witnessed this scene very clearly.

“*CLANG!”

A sound like the ring of a monastery bell came from Li Yao’s sternum.

A stabbing pain of pins and needles could be felt around Zhao Liang’s kneecap.

Even though Zhao Liang’s kneecap was very hard, the hardness could not be compared to metal. The knee strike had been performed using his entire strength, resulting in his right knee shattering completely! Being smashed into fracturing!

A strong and experienced military soldier could’ve perhaps withstood this splintered knee fracture, bear through the pain, and still be able to maintain their combat strength. But no matter how vicious and fierce Zhao Liang was, he was still an ordinary high school student. A broken knee would cause him to lose his combat strength completely.

Zhao Liang screamed miserably over and over. He fell to the floor in shock. The pain caused him to start twitching.

Li Yao ripped open his school uniform, took out the iron plate, and discovered that there was a small crater in the center of the iron plate. It appeared that if he had not donned the iron plate guarding his chest, his sternum would have been completely shattered.

“This ‘Treading Tiger Strike’ move really is overpowering!” Li Yao raised his eyebrows as he praised his opponent. He sized up his opponent from left to right. He headed towards a barbell rack.

Li Yao stuck his left hand into his pocket. His right hand casually picked up plates and loaded both sides of a barbell with a great amount of weight. The barbell now weighed over a hundred pounds. He tried brandishing the barbell for a bit. “Whoosh whoosh” sounds permeated through the air, causing people’s scalps to turn numb.

Li Yao walked towards Zhao Liang dragging the barbell.

The half-bit of malice remaining on Zhao Liang’s face flew away and scattered from fear. Even his miserable shrieking was stiffly stifled in his throat, turning into sharp thin pleading words for forgiveness, “You. What are you up to? DON’T GET ANY CLOSER!”

“Little, Little devil. Calm down a bit! No need to create a big mess out of this!” Everyone was stunned and dumbstruck. Their scalps were numb. Only his bro for life Meng Jiang was able to eek out of the state of shock and alarm, dissuading Li Yao with stammers.

Li Yao was silent for a period of time. He turned around and returned the barbell back to the rack, “Okay. After all, we are all fellow students. I also do not wish to be too excessive…”

“That’s the right thing to do…You! what are you doing!” Meng Jiang had just let out a breath of relief when he suddenly saw Li Yao lift a somewhat lighter but at least 75 lb barbell. The lips Meng Jiang had just sealed had opened up once again. But this time, he did not know what he should say.

And this time Li Yao didn’t give him that chance to talk. He walked directly to the left side of Zhao Liang and raised the barbell up high, aiming at Zhao Liang’s undamaged left knee.

“You — you, don’t you know!? Senior Helian was the one who sent me here!” Zhao Liang let out cries of fear, curling his entire body, looking like a giant dying shrimp.

“And that matters how?” asked Li Yao.

The barbell tore through the air, exploding out with a strong gale of wind, ferociously smashing downwards.

“*SNAP!”

Zhao Liang’s pair of legs were bent in an unnatural position. He was in so much pain that he was frothing at the mouth and his eyeballs went completely white. He had gone completely into shock.

Chapter 28: Of Course He Needs to be Aggressive

Chapter 28: Of Course He Needs to be Aggressive

Five minutes later, doctors from the school infirmary came bustling through the ninth gym’s entrance.

Zhao Liang’s pair of legs were in an extremely critical condition. There was no way to carry him to the infirmary, so the doctors directly came on-site for treatment.

For the medics who had mastered the latest cultivation technology in the Federation, fixing a shattered bone fracture would be a trivial matter with an expected recovery within a few days. At most, there would be a little bit of… pain in the process.

“AHHHHHHHHHHH!” Zhao Liang’s miserable shrieks echoed throughout the gymnasium in large waves and waves. All those who heard the shrieks had their scalps turned numb. The stabbing pain in his knee was incomparably painful.

And Li Yao, together with his bro for life Meng Jiang, squatted by the flowers and shrubs outside of the gym. An incorporeal air seemed to have curled around both of their bodies, causing all the other students of the Common Class to avoid them and keep their distance. They did not dare to get close to Li Yao and Meng Jiang.

Meng Jiang’s face was knotted in a state of loss. He wanted to say something, but he was hesitating.

Li Yao glanced at his bro for life. “What do you want to know? Come on, ask. Ask before a teacher takes me away!”

Meng Jiang spat out a dirty air. With a bitter laugh. he said, “My mind is a chaotic mess right now. I still haven’t processed all this yet. You little devilish monster. When did you become so strong?”

Li Yao thought for a bit and said, “I was on the breach of a breakthrough in a cultivation technique. Before practicing this technique, my strength was weak and feeble, just like that of the average person. But as soon as I succeeded in my training, my strength exploded into sky soaring heights! The reason why I didn’t come to school yesterday was because I was at a critical point in my training yesterday. Right now, I have already succeeded with the first step of this technique!”

“So it’s that amazing!” Meng Jiang’s eyes brightened and he did not inquire any further.

The Federation had an unwritten rule. It was the greatest taboo to investigate the roots of the combat skills and technique origins of other people. Even cultivators with power overflowing the heavens could not ask other people of their secret family techniques.

Without this rule, the consequences could be dire... Today, a cultivator might randomly interrogate the weak for the source of their combat skills. Tomorrow, the Federation could call up an army of millions to encircle a cultivation guild’s base and force them to give up their deepest secret extermination miracle techniques.

In every world, there was the most basic of rules — to protect the weak from the tyranny of the strong. People have fought for the basic right of not being taken advantage of.

It was because there were these rules that society was able to be established, that the strong and the weak could be united!

The Star Glory Federation relied on precisely these sets of rules to reach unity between cultivators and the common folk, to face-off jointly against the Fiend Beasts and those that walk the Demonic path. The Federation would have long perished if these rules weren't in place. Cultivators and commoners would be hostile enemies towards each other, and the state of the Federation would sink into volatility, like a sheet of scattered sand. How could they possibly hope to fight against the Demon Beasts and Demonic Cultivators if this were the case?

And so, Li Yao thought of this pretext to explain his own sudden increase in strength. He wasn't worried about being exposed by others. Even if people discovered that he was lying, his secrets would not be exposed… In the world of cultivation, who doesn't have a few hidden secrets?

Meng Jiang nodded his head as he accepted the fact that his bro for life had suddenly increased his strength. However, he wrinkled his brow as he asked, "But, is there a need for you to be this excessively vicious? You had already sent Zhao Liang to the ground, yet you still pulverized his left knee. Isn't that too extreme? You don't know how scary you looked when you lifted that barbell up. You basically looked like… a blood-thirsty monster!"

"I had to do it," Li Yao explained, "You told me this morning the enormous power Helian Lie holds in this school and how he has many henchmen. Since I've already offended him, his underlings will certainly come searching for trouble. Zhao Liang is only the first of them!"

He paused for a moment, before continuing, “Zhao Liang is the lowest ranked student of the Important Class; he’s in last place. If I only knock him to the ground, do you think other people would be scared? Wouldn’t they continue coming one after another to cause me trouble? No matter how I fight, I would fall before a revolving wheel of war! But now, when Helian Lie’s gang sees Zhao Liang’s pair of knees and hear his painful shrieks, they would reconsider a little bit before looking for me. The vast majority of them might even shrink back.”

Meng Jiang fixed into a blank stare. He did not think that far. He had only felt that Li Yao’s actions were too excessive.

Li Yao patted the shoulder of his bro for life and said seriously, “Small Jiang, you know my background. You know that since I was a kid, I lived and grew up in the trash heap. In the world I grew up in, people could get in blood feuds over even a half-rotten banana. One time, I even saw two groups of people have a brawl over half a bag of cold meat buns. In the end, two people died. Two people died over half a bag of meat buns! Trust me. I grew up in this kind of environment, so I know how to deal with threats and trouble!”

“But, but....” Meng Jiang’s mind was a huge mess. All this time, he had never witnessed this other face of his bro for life.

Perhaps, this was Li Yao’s most genuine face.

Li Yao said flatly, “The experience of a dozen years of life in the waste treatment facility had taught me…When it comes to facing the threats of other people, it’s not that thing’s can’t be reasoned and that a compromise can’t be found. It’s that first, the opposition must be beaten to such a state that even their parents would not recognize them, then negotiations and compromise can proceed. Otherwise, things can’t be reasoned out and compromises can’t be made. Instead, you place yourself in a pot for others boil or steam! As for what happened today… When Zhao Liang first arrived, he wanted me to kneel before him. And he wanted to break 10 of my bones. I was already determined not to kneel, and I also did not want to have 10 of my bones broken. What other choice did I have besides to fight him to the bloody end?

Meng Jiang had a blank expression for quite a while, “I heard you say before that you had a nickname in the garbage dump. The Vulture. When I heard that I had my doubts. I thought you were just talking big. I believe you now.”

With a laugh, Li Yao said, “Yea man~. The me back then was ten times more vicious and a hundred times more crazy than the me now. I had no choice. I was just a kid who couldn’t even hold a knife steady. If I weren’t a bit vicious and crazy, how could I have fought for food from the mouths of the grownups? Later, I met my Old Man. He taught me many things, including social standards and rules. When I assimilated into ordinary society, I lost a bit of my edge. Anyway, my Old Man is long dead. When I encounter this sort of situation, I can act only in accordance to the instincts of the ‘Vulture’ in order to settle things~.”

Meng Jiang let out a sigh, “I understand now after hearing you, Little Devil. You had no other option. But other than me, people would take you as a kid tooting his horn and that you are being too aggressive.”

“Aggressive? Of course, I have to be aggressive!” Li Yao’s nostrils flared. He spoke, objecting, “We who live in the Artifact Grave must work to eat as scavengers. We live in the now, not the future, for who knows what type of priceless treasure we may salvage in the next minute… only to have, the minute after, it's spiritual energy explode so greatly that nothing remains! So for us scavengers, as soon we have power, we must immediately act with aggression. I won't wait till the next second to be aggressive if I can be aggressive now. I won't act with 90% aggression if I can act with 100% aggression! If I don't be aggressive when I have this strength, if I continue laying low… What if I dropped dead in the next second? Wouldn't it all have been a waste? It's like winning 5 million credits in the lottery. Say you don't spend it to live a life of luxury. You would rather stick it in the bank. What if right after you deposited your money, you get hit by a flying shuttle and die!? You've been wronged even as a ghost!"

Meng Jiang conceded saying, "Okay okay, since you're this confident, you can act aggressively. But did the thought of Helian Lie using his family's influence to make you quit school ever cross your mind? What will you do then?"

"I don't have to remain here, there are other places I can be. Crimson Nimbus Second is not the only school under the skies. At worst, I will just switch schools. Even if I don't go to school, the Federation still lets citizens enter privately in the university examinations. The procedure is just a little bit more troublesome! If Helian Lie applies pressure for me to quit school, I'll just let him fulfill that wish. After all, why not? There's a long future ahead. He and I will still have our beautiful youthfulness!" Li Yao's eyes produced a vicious aura as he spoke nonchalantly.

While these two were talking, a short, thin, weak figure tottered towards them.

“It’s a teacher!” Meng Jiang said in light voice and pulled Li Yao to stand up, jumping off of a short wall by the bushes.

“Isn’t that Old Sun, the school’s warehouse logistics manager? What did he come here for?” Li Yao stared confused.

Chapter 29: Fiend Blade Forger

Chapter 29: Fiend Blade Forger

The old fogey who walked over had a thinning head of white hair, ashen white seemingly-cataract eyes, a hunchbacked posture, and a shortness of breath. A gust of wind could practically topple him.

Li Yao remembered that when school started, he and his fellow students had gone to the warehouse to get their uniforms. He had met this old fogey once before at that time.

“Even though he’s only a warehouse manager, I’ve heard that over 70 years ago, this old fogey ‘Sun Biao’ was the school’s Combat Skills Teacher and was a tremendous and extraordinary expert. His foresight for talent was extremely fierce. He found quite a few cultivation geniuses and was the one who discovered Fiend Blade Peng Hai from the slums, recognizing that the boy at the time was out of the ordinary. He was the one who had Peng Hai specially admitted! Even though he's already over 150 years old and is practically retired having quit teaching 10 years ago, he felt too restless at home, so he continues working at this school as he’s done for all his life. This time as the warehouse logistics manager to kill time. At first glance, he looks completely ordinary with his emancipated figure, but his reputation holds great influence in this school. Even Headmaster Baldy Zhao has to show him a bit of face!” Meng Jiang was the school’s king of gossip and rumors, letting out a flood of words to explain to Li Yao.

“The man who unearthed Fiend Blade Peng Hai!” said Li Yao with deep veneration.

“I never thought Old Sun would appear. It seems that things may have changed for the better. Remember, he’s an old man so if you’re a bit clever about it, you may be able to get off scot-free and avert disaster. Go on, hurry!” Meng Jiang pushed Li Yao hard, but suddenly said, “Wait wait!”

“Huh?” Li Yao stood and stopped.

“Little Devil, you said just a moment ago that when facing the threats of opponents, one must first fight to the bloody end. Then one can negotiate and reach compromise. Your words sounded very grand.... But, what if you and your opponent can’t come to peace with each other?” Meng Jiang was pondering over Li Yao’s words all this time. The more he thought, the more he felt the words were cool, awesome, and domineering, but he felt something was a bit off somewhere in those words. And now, he had realized what it was.

“If you can’t make peace, then just run. If you can’t lose them by running, then stall. If you can’t halt by stalling, then you can always just die~!” Li Yao rolled his eyes at his bro for life and walked towards warehouse manager Sun Biao.

He was taller than Sun Biao by a full head. When he stood right in front of Sun Biao, all he could see was the sparse hair on the top of a head. The top of the head was covered in liver spots and looked normal with nothing out of the ordinary.

Actually, Li Yao was at the peak of nervousness with his heart beating wildly... The man who unearthed Fiend Blade Peng Hai was in front of him!

Sun Biao tilted his neck. It seemed that his neck muscles weren’t too good for he used some effort to slant his head. Sun Biao sized up Li Yao carefully and attentively for a long time.

The expression in his eyes was like that of a feverish gourmet eyeing a fresh, tender juicy piece of veal. He stared at Li Yao until Li Yao’s scalp was turning numb and Li Yao’s back had chills before he slowly said, “Not bad, scattering that gym chalk!”

Li Yao was caught off-guard and stared blankly. He couldn’t help but reveal a smile. He also felt that using the gym chalk was a good move; it allowed him to seize the advantage and secure a narrow victory.

Otherwise, in a fair fight against Zhao Liang with his Actualization Quotient of 60%, the outcome of which one of them would be beaten into a pig’s head would not be certain!

“However...” Sun Biao took the conversation for a turn and reached out two dried up fingers of his. “If it was me, I wouldn’t have used gym chalk, but rather the iron shavings in the sandbags. As long as enough strength is applied, if there is a direct collision with the retina, it would cause the opponent to lose his vision completely! Then I would scatter iron nails all over the floor. And since my opponent wouldn’t be able to see, he would step all over them and have his foot be absolutely pierced! Of course, this wouldn’t result in death. But when it comes to these sorts of good darling babies who’ve grown in a sheltered environment, their greatest fear is pain. This would certainly cause them to lose all mobility! With the loss of both vision and mobility, all I would need is two seconds to get rid of him!”

Li Yao was dumbstruck hearing Sun Biao. It took a long time before awakening from his stupor. He couldn’t help debating, “But the circumstances were dire. It’s already not bad of me to be able to sneakingly grab a handful of gym chalk. How can there be time to break open a sand bag to get the iron shavings inside? The iron nails are even more ridiculous. Where in the gymnasium are there great quantities of iron nails for me to scatter?”

Sun Biao laughed two evil “ha ha’s”, saying, “As a fighting expert, one must take every second of the 24 hour day to make preparations for battle. Iron shavings, iron nails, and other miscellaneous oddities should absolutely already be carried on your person. Even if you’re taking a shower, you still need to have an iron nail wedged in your ass. You lack even this most fundamental of preparations, and you still dare to come out and fight with others at this school!?”

Li Yao was speechless for a time. He felt all of a sudden that this old fogey was more despicable and shameful than himself by a hundredfold.

Sun Biao gave a cold snort. He continued by saying, “However nowadays, the number of youngsters who can truly fight are dwindling~ I see that you have some potential I suppose. Walk. Let’s go to my place. Chat and keep this old fogey company!”

After all was said, he turned around. With two hands held behind his back, he walked to the warehouse.

Li Yao hesitated for a moment and followed obediently behind the old fogey.

Then he discovered something strange… Sun Biao looked to be unsteady and wavering, shifting with small steps. A single sneezed seemed to be able to topple him. But his speed was not the least bit slow. And, it seemed that he had eyes on the back of his head, for he adjusted his speed according to Li Yao’s. He maintained a distance of 5 meters in front of Li Yao from beginning to end.

Li Yao could not believe he couldn’t catch up to Sun Biao. He clenched his teeth and directly used the Spirit Serpent Footwork Technique, running into a small sprint.

As always, Sun Biao had his pair of hands clasped behind his back and walked with unsteady steps.

But no matter how much Li Yao increased his speed, even to the point of causing his head to sweat in steam, he was completely incapable of cutting the distance by even a hair!

“Is it a high-level footwork technique? Or is it a kind of spatial warping cultivator technique?” Li Yao was astonished down to his core.

To the side, a few students slowly walked at a snail's pace across them. It was only then did Li Yao suddenly realize. It wasn't that Sun Biao was walking very fast, but rather he was moving extremely slow!

He was clearly using the Spirit Serpent Technique to its peak hurricane like speed, but he hadn't even ran 10 meters after running for a long time. All that time, before the other students crossed paths with him, he did not have the slightest clue that something was wrong.

“Could it be an illusionary mental attack?” Li Yao's scalp turned numb. He finally understood just how unfathomable Sun Biao was. He stopped his technique and followed obediently behind Sun Biao with his tail in between his legs, not daring to act carelessly or rashly.

Something strange happened when he stopped using the footwork technique. The speed of the two had inconceivably sped up. There were over a thousand meters of distance between the ninth gym and the warehouse, but they were able to see the big door of the warehouse after only a minute of walking.

The warehouse was a small building filled and piled with dust. Peeling paint was on quite a few places on the walls, exposing the yellowish brown bricks inside. Overall, the appearance was a bit ugly.

The building did not appear to be big, but a whole universe seemed to be contained inside. At the 7th turn and 8th detour, after passing by piles of goods and items, a shocking sight appeared in front of Li Yao's eyes — a standard stadium-sized essence Cultivation Field.

Dumbbells, barbells, pec fly machines, squat machines, strength tester machines, crystal clay gel humanoid training dummies… It contained all sorts of cultivation equipment that one could ever need.

However, the majority of the equipment were dozen-year-old models. The finish was coarse, black, and full of rusted spots. They let out a rough and doughty air.

Dust covered every cultivation equipment entirely. It seemed that it had been a long time since they were last used.

They walked to the center of the cultivation field. Sun Biao turned around and did something that Li Yao would have never expected no matter how much he guessed.

This retired old teacher was 150 years old. He unearthed Fiend Blade Peng Hai. He was a person of great reputation and prestige. Yet unexpectedly he faced Li Yao and bowed solemnly. His voice turned incomparably serious as he said, “First and foremost. Student Li Yao, please accept my apologies.”

Chapter 30: You Are So Arrogant~

Chapter 30: You Are So Arrogant~

“Sun, Teacher Sun. Sir, what are you doing?” Li Yao was confused and flustered. He stepped forward, intending to help Sun Biao up. But he never thought that this old fogey would be as immovable as casted metal that continued to maintain its bowed form. No matter how much Li Yao tried, Sun Biao would not move.

Sun Biao was still bending over when he said seriously, “This school is meant for discovering talent and is a place where talented people are fostered. Your overall combat strength isn’t too outstanding, but you possess the combat awareness like that of a keen beast, and you have an abundance of combat experience as well. Indeed, you are a sapling that’s worth nurturing. However, our school was unable to unearth you from the Common Class a bit earlier, wasting and harming a great amount of your youth. This was a neglect of duty by all members of our teaching faculty and staff. So, I can only represent our school in giving you an apology. Student Li Yao, I am truly sorry.”

Li Yao’s mouth was gaping open. He truly did not how to respond. He was indescribably touched from the depths of his heart.

“Is this the mettle of a true ‘teacher’?”

Li Yao had never met a teacher like Sun Biao. No wonder Sun Biao was the man who was able to unearth Fiend Blade Peng

Hai!

“Then…” Sun Biao finally rose and once again a frivolous expression appeared on his face. A fanatical flame burned in the depths of his eyes. “Kid, have you heard of the Federation’s Youth Limit Challenge?”

Li Yao’s pupils suddenly shrunk back and he subconsciously nodded his head. His heart rate sped up abruptly.

Of course, he had heard of it before. The Federation’s Youth Limit Challenge Competition was held jointly between the Federal Army and the Nine Elite Universities. It was a large-scale competition that was meant to unearth cultivation geniuses. The competition was held every year around two months before the university exams, with a scope that encompassed the whole nation. It was comprised of several hundred competition arenas that ran simultaneously. This Youth Cultivation Competition was the Federation’s oldest tradition.

It’s said that each competition arena was like an isolated island, built in such a way that no one could escape. The military would set loose countless savage Demon Beasts on the island, and the competitors would have to find a way to survive for five days on the island in unarmed and defenseless circumstances. Besides facing the Demon Beasts, competitors must also complete a series of utterly difficult missions. These missions were known as the “100% Complete Simulation of True Combat”. The difficulty level was set at an absolutely hellish standard.

Competitors were required to push their physical bodies and mental capabilities to the limit. Only then would they be able to distinguish themselves from the many other young geniuses.

Scouts from the Nine Elite Universities were very likely to keep an eye out for those who succeeded and would directly recruit them into the Nine Elite Universities on the spot. There wouldn't be a need to take the University Entrance Exams.

Even if your performance wasn't that outstanding, as long as one demonstrated a type of special strength, there was still a huge possibility that one would get on the Nine Elite Universities' Preferential Score Admittance List. If one was able to get their required entrance score reduced by 10~20 points, they would be able to simply eliminate thousands upon thousands of competitors!

These benefits caused all the third year exam takers to rush madly to compete in the Limit Challenge Competition. They sharpened their mental capabilities to prepare to compete, and Li Yao was no exception.

However, this was an important competition. No average Joe Shmoe could willy-nilly take part in it.

Every year, the competition organizers would send out invitations to every major high school in the Federation. The number of "admission tickets" they sent for each high school was determined by the high school's ranking and strength.

This year, Crimson Nimbus Second received 10 of these tickets!

The competition would start in about 40 days. Crimson Nimbus Second was assigned to competition arena #0571. This area would contain three thousand elite students of Floating Spear City and thirteen neighboring cities. All of these students would be gathered under one roof, to go head to head against each other!

In a month, Crimson Nimbus Second would hold a fighting competition in which all of the third year students were qualified to participate. This was the fairest method to decide which students would get these 10 tickets!

Sun Biao saw Li Yao’s heart racing and infatuated expression and said, “Kid, I know you stirred up some trouble in this school. However, there is a way to get off scot-free! All you need to do is to prove your strength by seizing one of these tickets in the fighting competition. Then Helian Lie can’t do a thing to you!”

Li Yao thought it over and asked, “Over a thousand students make up the third years and there are only 10 admission tickets. In other words, my strength must reach the top 10?”

Sun Biao shook his head saying, “There will certainly be luck involved when the entire grade fights in the competition. Following what happened in the previous years, those whose strength were in the top 20 were able to seize the hope that is the admission ticket.”

Li Yao thought back to his memories. The top 20 in the grade seemed to be composed of cultivation geniuses with an Actualization Quotient of at least 65%.

His Actualization Quotient was only 58%. He could not even achieve an absolute victory just then against the person who was ranked last in the important class, Zhao Liang with his Actualization Quotient of 60%. Li Yao had to rely on underhanded means for victory.

Videos of the fight between him and Zhao Liang would certainly be spread across the entire campus instantly. Everyone would be on their guard. They wouldn't give him opportunities to prevail.

After a month, would he be able to face directly and prevail against those experts with Actualization Quotients exceeding 65%?

His heart was filled with hesitation, and this hesitation was written all over his face. Sun Biao laughed lightly and said, “Kid, based on your current strength, don’t even think about being top 20 in the whole school. You might not even count as top 50! But, if you receive my special training for a month at my place, then things may change!”

“What?” Li Yao’s pair of eyes flickered and glowed. He jumped from excitement and asked enthusiastically, “Teacher Sun, you’d be willing to teach me personally?”

The man standing across from him was the super amazing man who unearthed Fiend Blade Peng Hai. Yet, this man was willing to carry out special training for him! Tsk tsk tsk tsk. As long as he could cultivate to the strength of Peng Hai’s pinky finger, it would be enough for him to strut arrogantly at Crimson Nimbus Second!

Sun Biao laughed heartily, exposing a big mouth that was missing a few teeth. “This old geezer has been working in this stuffy warehouse for many years. The bones in my entire body are practically rusted. It was rare enough to discover this interesting toy. Free time is still free time. I can play as I wish! However, it’s a bit too soon to be celebrating. This old geezer’s special training program can’t be endured by any average schmuck. Come, kid. Look at this old geezer’s hellish special strength training program.”

Sun Biao’s arm flickered causing a micro crystal processor to project a hologram that was densely packed with words describing cultivation training programs.

“Day one, at 4 am. Run 20,000 meters at a variable speed as a warm up.”

“At 5 am, 10 sets of 10 reps of 500 kg squats. To be done in half an hour.”

“6 am. Breakfast while studying the military applications of the Thirteen Forces of the War Beasts. Only that cultivated by the special forces of the military. It removes all the fanciness and reduces it down to its principles, raising the killing potential of the Thirteen Forces of the War Beasts. It’s completely different than the simplified version cultivated by high school students.”

“7 am. Frog jumping 5km while bearing 100 kg of weight.”

“8 am……”

“9 pm, the first day of special training is done!”

“Day 2……”

Sun Biao grinned nastily and said, “Whats wrong? If you can’t handle this, then speak up now! Don’t be embarrassed. Back in the day, countless cultivation geniuses were trained into dying dogs under this old geezer’s special training program. They had no choice but to give up. Over the course of 90 years, only a few people were able to make it through an entire month!”

Li Yao read through the program rapidly. He finished reading at rapid speed. He asked somewhat baffled, “It looks to be nothing special. Completely average with nothing weird. There’s nothing particular about it...”

In the dream of grandeur, he had assumed the identity of a low-level worker at the Hundred Smelting Guild. He bore through training that was a hundredfold more painful and bitter. That was true persecution and ruin that could easily break a trainee completely. Then the trainee had been kneaded back together, and broken again, then kneaded back together. Only after this happened over and over for several hundred times did he rise from a low-level worker to a forge worker.

Sun Biao’s special training program was, in the end, at the high school level. In the eyes of Li Yao, there was nothing excessive about it.

“Student Li Yao, you sure are arrogant!”

This special training program was formed from 90 years of Sun Biao’s heart and blood. An unknown number of cultivation geniuses had shown shock and horror when faced with this special training program. Yet today, Li Yao had devalued the program to being worthless. And, according to the calm and composed expression on Li Yao’s face, Li Yao really didn’t think this training program was serious.

A prickling glow was unable to be held back by Sun Biao and was let out immediately from the depths of his eyes. Sun Biao’s entire face was wrinkled and bunched together. In an instant, his expression had suddenly changed to an incomparable malevolence.

Chapter 31: I'm No Salted Fish!

Chapter 31: I'm No Salted Fish!

Li Yao cried out deep in his heart, “this is bad”. Internally, he asked himself how could he ever take the cruel tempering training of an ancient cultivator guild from 40,000 years ago to be the norm.

He had to keep in mind that in the dream of grandeur, the hundred smelting guild had several hundred low-level workers who were unable to endure the torment and died, crossing over to the afterlife.

The Hundred Smelting Guild was one of the more lenient and benevolent among the major ancient guilds. Several thousands of people would die each year if it were one of the harsher guilds. The Hundred Smelting Guild’s training could be considered a trifling matter.

Needless to say, in regards to the demonic cultivator guilds, the creation of each strong individual came with it, the sacrifice of ten-thousand weaklings.

The Ancient Cultivation Civilization was this ruthless.

“Hic. Teacher Sun, I took a good look at it again. Your infernal special training program of death truly comes from the depths of hell. It’s super deadly and super terrifying~ I’m so scared that I won’t be able to finish it!” Li Yao spoke tongue in cheek.

As an old man, Sun Biao was very much experienced. How could he not see that Li Yao was putting on a show? He was agitated into rage. With a sneer, he said, “Okay, kid. No need to shoot off talking big. Change into training clothes. First, try it out by doing 10 sets of squats.”

Sun Biao got up. He felt out a set of training clothes that had an utterly old-fashioned design from the dust-packed corner of the cultivation field. He tossed it over towards Li Yao.

“Squats? My favorite!” Li Yao warmed up for a bit. He took off his school uniform, changing it for the dust-smelling, old-fashioned training clothes. His eyes gave off a glow as he giggled and spoke.

His current strength was bizarre and astonishing, so what he was least fearful of was squats, bench, and other strength training exercises. In just a moment, when he shows his maximum strength, he will certainly cause the old fogey to have eyes bulging from their sockets!

He walked up to the rusted squat rack and thought for a moment. He flung out two iron plates from the mound of Olympic plates and ferociously pounded them onto the bar.

The squatting weight was... 300 kg!

“Indeed, 200kg of weight is too light. It wouldn’t have any effect on tempering my body. I often use 300 kg as a warm up so I’m used to it. It won’t be a problem right, Teacher Sun?” Li Yao clashed a light laugh with Sun Biao, exposing his snow-white teeth.

“Of course, it's fine. I'm just scared that you might regret it later~” Sun Biao also gave a laugh, exposing tawny teeth.

“It’s no more than 300 kg. Twenty sets can be done by a single breath. What’s there to regret from?” Li Yao spat some saliva into his palms and rubbed his hands together to a burning hot state. He grabbed the bar with a death grip and lifted it onto his solid traps. Suddenly, power was sent through his pair of feet as he lifted the weight up. Then...

He felt his body tighten up. The training clothes, which were originally loose, seemed to awaken with a life of its own, suddenly contracting and transforming into a layer of tenacious leather. It bound him completely!

At the same time, an absolutely powerful bizarre strength exploded down, like a giant mountain striking down and smashing his skull. Suddenly, he was smashed to the ground!

“I forgot to mention, small bastard. This set of training clothes was an artifact that I used for training a dozen years ago. I call it ‘Give Up’. It possesses many magical abilities. The first of which is the ability to create a gravitational field. Wearing these clothes is like wearing a several hundred pound set of armor. Let’s see, right now you’re bearing 200 kilograms of weight on your body!” laughed Sun Biao nastily.

200 kg of weight. Plus the 300 kg of weight on the barbell. That's a total of half a ton. Li Yao was not prepared for that weight. Of course, he was firmly squashed.

“How despicable. But, five… five hundred kilograms is still nothing special!”

Li Yao was smashed into seeing stars. He gritted his teeth unwaveringly. He braced his hands tightly and veins, thick and solid, popped out on his arms. The bones in his entire body creaked randomly as he stiffly straightened his back.

He grasped the barbell once again, spread his feet apart, lowered his hips, and got up with complete stability.

One repetition of the standard squat… was completed!

With a total weight of… 500 kg!

In the dream of grandeur, I had to endure several dozen years under the Titan. His methods were crueler than yours by a hundredfold, you dying old geezer. You think this is hard enough to stop me? You're dreaming!" cried Li Yao in his heart. He once again squatted down to a deep position to prepare for his second rep.

Suddenly, it was like a bolt of lightning hacked into his soul. Li Yao felt that all 720 acupoints in his body simultaneously conducted with a strong current of electricity. The shock caused his hair to puff up and his eyes to go white. With a blood-curdling shriek, he fell once more to the ground. The barbell slammed heavily into the squat rack with a "Bang!", causing rust to randomly explode off and dust to fly into the air.

"The second ability of 'Give Up' is the ability to produce a powerful electric current. It has short intervals of 3-5 seconds and long intervals of 2 minutes per shock, bombarding against your body's acupoints. It will stimulate your cells into becoming stronger and purify your body and mind so it can be reborn completely. Tsk tsk tsk tsk. This is a cultivation treasure that anyone would dream of using! The only thing is the small bit of minor pain that comes with it. You can still handle it, right?" Sun Biao was beaming with smiles as he asked.

"You, you're joking! Of... of course, I can handle this!" Li Yao's lips were bitten into a bloody mess. He lay on the ground, panting for breath for a long time before he was able to crawl back up with utter difficulty. His right hand was shaking and trembling. He felt for the barbell with a difficulty incomparable.

His fingers hadn’t even touched the barbell when the assault of an unbearable pain came striking once more! This time, the pain wasn’t that of a strong electric current but that of extreme heat!

It was like his entire body was tossed into a volcano. He was struggling in the incomparably hot magma, causing his skin to be roasted and his blood to flow at racing speeds as boiling molten iron!

Then in the next second, the scorching heat suddenly dissipated. In its place was bone-penetrating freezing chill that practically caused even his brains to freeze into an ice cube. He was completely unable to take a breath or think a thought!

He felt the blazing heat and the freezing cold alternate three times before it gradually faded away. Before Li Yao could even screech miserably, an electric current attacked his acupoints once more. It tore through his body, causing him to twitch involuntarily!

“This is the final magical ability of ‘Give Up’. It produces an illusionary attack of a blazing heat and a freezing cold every minute. Be at ease. This targets the deepest and most mysterious part of your mind — it’s all an illusion. It won’t cause harm to a single hair on your body. Instead, it tempers your mental strength by breaking open the depths of your mind. If one day you become a cultivator, it can also allow you to absorb greater amounts of spiritual energy, increasing your cultivation speed by many factors over other people.”

A trace of disappointment flashed on the old fogeys face when he looked at Li Yao’s painful appearance of rolling all over the floor. The old fogey laughed to himself and yawned. He said lazily, “Okay~ I’ve had my fun. Go ahead and change clothes. These clothes weren’t prepared just for you. All you need to say the three words ‘I give up’ and it will automatically remove itself from you. It won’t torment you any longer.”

“Give up?”

Li Yao lied on the ground for a long time. He breathed and breathed, gasping like whale stranded ashore.

At last, he got up inch by inch, like a rusted metal puppet. With extreme difficulty, he placed the barbell on his shoulders, stiffly raising 200 kg of weight. The high electric current and the illusionary blazing heat struck! He exploded out with his second squat rep!

“That’s two!” Li Yao howled out like a beast from the depths of his throat.

He had sounded this battle howl quite frequently in the depths of the Artifact Graveyard.

Sun Biao went “Yi?” in surprise. A trace of shock flashed from within his eyes. Immediately, he sneered, “You only did two reps. One set has exactly 10 whole reps!”

“THR… THREE!” Li Yao’s teeth were clenched, The sound of rusted metal against metal filled the spacious training room.

Four! Five! Six! Seven! Eight! Nine! Ten!

A whole 10 reps of squats while wearing this bizarre clothing “Give Up” caused Li Yao to use up the last of his strength. He pushed out 10 reps of squat with perfect form without a trace of slack!

“I... I did it!” Li Yao’s head was dizzy and his vision was faded. His pair of ears rang with tinnitus and blood rushed wildly from his entire body to his brain. His heart was beating incomparably violently, seeming to practically rip open his chest and leap out.

He lay sprawled under the squat rack, unable to get his body to make a single movement. He stared blankly at the dazzling crystal essence lights on the ceiling. He felt unable to control even a single finger.

Sun Biao’s figure emerged in the edge of his vision with a face of amazement that could not be concealed. The old fogey spoke with a sound that contained some shivering, “Kid, you’re good, right?”

“I, I’m good. I just need to rest for a bit. I still need to do… 9 sets!” Li Yao’s mouth hooked into a smile as he laughed with a laugh that was uglier than crying.

Sun Biao was silent for a moment. He shook his head as he said, “Kid, just give up. I’ve already said that these clothes weren’t meant for ordinary people to use. You can’t possibly wear it and complete 10 sets of squats… There’s still 90 reps to go! Come on then, say ‘I give up’ and have the clothes removed.”

Li Yao swept his gaze across Sun Biao, and he stared once more at the dazzling lights on the ceiling.

Under the refraction of his tears and sweat, those lights turned incomparably bright.

He suddenly realized why the name of this artifact was ‘Give Up’.

It’s because its greatest ability was not the ability to produce a gravitational field of several hundred kilograms, nor its intense electric current assault, nor the blazing heat or freezing cold mental illusions.

Actually, it was pretty simple, ordinary, and easy, stemming from the three words “I Give Up”.

All it would take is for Li Yao’s lips to touch and use the lightest of lightest sounds to say the three words, “I. Give. Up.” to be able to remove this set of training clothes. He would escape from the weight, from the electric current, and from the illusionary mental inhuman persecution. And...

He would lose the courage to wear this set of clothes — for all eternity.

Will… he give up?

The first set of squats had already depleted all the strength in his body. Every strand of muscle, every sliver of vein, every cell in his body was squeezed dry. He felt that he lacked the strength to even go take a piss.

He still had nine sets to go. A whole entire 90 reps of squats. He would have to endure through an onslaught of bearing 200kgs, electric assaults, and illusionary mental attacks. He would have to raise the 300 kg barbell and continuously squat down, get up, and straighten his back.

For a whole 90 reps.

This ought to be fundamentally impossible, right? Even if he grits his teeth and use all of his strength to complete the two sets with all his might, three sets, four sets, five sets, sixth sets, seven sets, eight sets. Any moment during those sets, he could completely collapse, forcing him to say the three words “I give up”.

And so since this is the case, why doesn’t he just give up now?

It’s so easy. All he would need to do is touch his lips together, with a light vibration of his vocal cords, and with a slight opening of his mouth. I. Give. Up. And half a second later, he would be free and relaxed.

“I… Give...” looking at the dazzling lights on the ceiling, Li Yao spoke each word softly.

But within the dazzling lights emerged forth a string of dazzling memories.

“These clothes... weren’t meant for ordinary people.” Sun Biao had said in this manner.

But am I... an ordinary person?”

“An ordinary person... would not carry memories from a previous life upon birth. They wouldn’t remember any sort of messy ‘earth’ affairs, right?”

“An ordinary person... wouldn’t possibly be able to wrest control from and survive against the tyrannical cultivator, Ou Yezi, of 40,000 years ago, and instead, engulf Ou Yezi’s memories, right?”

“These two events, whichever bastard would have one of these things happen to them would not be considered an ordinary person. As for me, I’ve experienced both phenomenon!”

“Then… am I going to… in the face of these training clothes that weren’t meant for the ordinary person…. Give up?”

Li Yao suddenly withdrew his line of sight from the ceiling lights, shrinking into the depths of his pupils, and transforming into a needle-sharp stellar glow.

“Teacher Sun... am I allowed to listen to music?” he suddenly spoke lightly.

“Listen to music?” Sun Biao never expected that Li Yao would ask this sort of question. He was distracted for a great amount of time before saying, “Sure, if you want.”

“Okay, give me 30 more seconds.”

Li Yao laughed lightly, closed his eyes, and stuffed the “Tone Bell” artifact crafted by the Sounds of Wonder Guild into his ears.

Lu Yinxi resounded greatly with a voice in his ears that seemed to be able to pierce through the entire galaxy. Her voice immediately vibrated within the depths of his soul:

“After the raging waves and stormy seas, I stagger onward with all my might!”

“My heart fears not the striking of thunder for the lightning shall illuminate the path ahead!”

“I am completely different from you!”

Li Yao abruptly opened his eyes.

The size of the needle-sharp stellar glow in his eyes had already disappeared. In other words… His pair of eyes were filled completely with the stellar glow!

And then, he said a sentence that caused Sun Biao to be at a loss for words: “I… am no salted fish…”

“What did you say?” Sun Biao thought he had misheard. What salted fish?

Li Yao didn’t hear the old geezer’s question under the bombardment of the wild music; he was completely immersed in his own world. He spoke in whispers, “Perhaps I was a salted fish in my dream since I had given up in various situations. I dried up. I withered. And gradually, I turned into a salted fish. Turning into an ordinary person.”

“But me. I am no salted fish. I... absolutely will not give up!”

Li Yao stood up. 300 kg of weight was on his shoulders. An electric current ran all over his body. A screaming freezing chill and a devastating magma ran through the depths of his mind.

Yet still, he griped onto the barbell. His strength was very great, for even the hard steel creaked under his palm.

“The second set of squats starts now!”

The cultivation field, covered with the dust of several years, resounded once more with roars like the raging waves and stormy seas. A boiling fervor surged in waves of heat!

Chapter 32: He's a Monster!

Chapter 32: He's a Monster!

Sun Biao had a somewhat dazed expression as he saw Li Yao act in this wild and crazed manner. The muscles in Li Yao’s entire body were torn with one rep after another. Sun Biao’s thoughts flew back to a time a dozen years ago; he sunk into old memories.

The reflection of Li Yao’s figure in the depths Sun Biao’s pupils seemed to gradually be overlapped by a tall, lofty figure, becoming a different person.

Only when a chirping sound came from the lower right corner of the hologram, accompanied by a faint vibration on his wrist, did the old fogey awaken from his thoughts. He swallowed some spittle, moistening his somewhat dried throat. He withdrew himself to a corner so that Li Yao couldn’t see him and he opened up the e-crane instant messenger function.

The image of a clear and elegant figure appeared, mixed with a chilling air, in the center of the hologram.

“Old Sun. Sir, I see that you have already taken that child away. I truly thank you sir for your actions this time!” Si Jiaxue expressed her gratitude with utmost sincerity.

Sun Biao chuckled saying, “My dear little Xue. You even went through your father to come seeking for this old geezer. What more can I say? However, in the end, what is the relationship between you and this kid? Why do you want to help him?”

Si Jiaxue frowned slightly. It seemed that she was very unwilling to be associated with Li Yao. She explained seriously, “Old Sun, there’s not even a trace of a relationship between me and this little scoundrel. There’s only the matter of me entrusting him, a few days ago, with the repair of an old model crystal processor left behind by my grandma. It was because of this that Helian Lie, the mad dog that he is, created a disturbance with this scoundrel. In the end, this matter came forth because of me. So of course, I should not allow him to be bitten by mad dog Helian Lie; otherwise, wouldn’t people have misgivings dealing with me?”

With the raising of his eyebrows, Sun Biao adopted a mischievous expression, “So it’s that simple eh? It’s not that dear little Xue has fallen for this kid right?”

“Him? Preposterous!” Si Jiaxue couldn’t help laughing.

Sun Biao did not expect this response. He said speechlessly, “Even this outrageous kid is not enough for you. My dear little Xue, your standards are uncommonly high!”

Si Jiaxue lightly laughed and changed the subject. The elderly and the youth chatted idly for a few sentences. Sun Biao cut off communications and raised his head once again, hearing Li Yao roaring himself hoarse:

“THE SEVENTH SET. STARTS NOW!”

“This monster! It can’t be! Can he truly wear ‘Give Up’ and complete 10 whole sets of squats?” Sun Biao’s astonishment was enough to cause tingling in his scalp, scratching his head as he pondered. After a short moment later, he found a name from his address book and sent out an e-crane message.

Soon, a virtual crane flew out from the lower right corner of the hologram. Its wings extended and it transformed into a projection of a clear 3D figure of a person. To be exact, it was Fiend Blade Peng Hai.

Peng Hai was lying down in a relaxed comfortable manner in a bathtub. A large plate of fruit floated in front of him. Peng Hai was in utter pleasure as he soaked in his bath.

Peng Hai laughed as he said, “Old geezer, I was just about to ask if you wanted to grab dinner tonight and ask about a certain person in the meantime. Do you know if our Crimson Nimbus Second has had any sort ‘Monster-level’ student graduate within the past few years?”

“Monster-level? There weren’t any sort of special saplings in the past few years. Everyone was pretty normal and ordinary. I need to really think about this! Oh! Let’s put this matter on a hold for now. I want to tell you some explosive news... Do you still remember the clothes I specifically crafted for you a dozen years ago? ‘Give Up’?” Sun Biao rubbed his hands, wanting to give Peng Hai a scare.

The muscles on Fiend Blade Peng Hai’s face twitched as he recalled back to the unbearable memories of past events. He said with rage through gritted teeth, “Of course, I remember! You dead old geezer! You actually crafted such a vicious artifact! No wonder you were formerly known as the ‘Degenerate of the Cultivators’, you scum!”

Sun Biao laughed mischievously as he was actually quite fond of this nickname. He said impatiently, “This set of clothes has been tossed in the corner and laid there ever since you graduated. I never used it at all. But today, there has been a student who put it on!”

“What?”

Fiend Blade Peng Hai really was shocked into paralysis. With an expression that didn’t know whether to laugh or cry, he said, “Dead geezer, you have a way too mischievous heart. This type of thing isn’t something that you should give someone to wear willy-nilly. This is something that will torture someone into having a mental breakdown!

Sun Biao was somewhat embarrassed. He grumbled, “At first, I saw the kid running too wildly. I just wanted to knock him off his high horse and give him a little taste. After two minutes, he would cry for his mom and dad and remove the clothes like a good boy, right? Who would have imagined that once this kid had a taste of it, he still wanted more! Not wanting to remove it after wearing it! And he also did 7 sets in a breath of time... That’s not right, it was eight sets of 300 kilogram squats!”

Fiend Blade Peng Hai asked astonished, “Crimson Nimbus Second actually has this kind of cultivation genius? How come I didn’t know? Don’t tell me he’s not a third year, but a first or second year?”

Sun Biao extended a finger, lightly swaying it. “Nope, he’s not a cultivation genius.”

“Not a cultivation genius?” Peng Hai frowned.

Sun Biao squinted his eyes and said in complete seriousness, “Think back to those times when I crafted ‘Give Up’. You were only 14 years old, but your Actualization Quotient had already hit 100%! You were able to connect to the essence of heaven and earth and draw spiritual energy into your body. You had a strong body, and your mental strength was firm. So, you were able to cross this ordeal of ‘Give Up’!”

Sun Biao paused, breathing in and out. It seemed that even now he dared not believe the sight he’d seen. Sun Biao continued, “And this kid will already be 18 years old this year with a maximum Actualization Quotient of 60%. And his fleshly body is still completely that of a child’s. He’s using his fleshly body paired with his monstrously thick level of mental fortitude to forcefully withstand ‘Give Up’! Your kind is a cultivation genius that can hardly be seen once every hundred years. But this kind of person can only be described from head to toe as… a monster!”

Fiend Blade Peng Hai was moved. He never thought that his teacher would hold this kid in such a high regard. He was also interested. “Old geezer, send me a recording to watch?”

“No problem. Oh, that’s right. I have a recording of a fight he just had. I’ll send them both for you to watch. Although from a strength perspective, he’s still at the fighting level of a child, but in regards to his battle awareness and his usage of his surroundings... Hehe. I’ll say something that will make you mad. It seems that he’s more suited than you for inheriting my title of the ‘Degenerate of Cultivators’!”Sun Biao laughed vulgarly as he sent over a few videos.

“Why would I be mad~? I currently walk amongst the circle of cultivators, and I’ve never dared to be recognized as the succeeding disciple of the ‘Degenerate of Cultivators’. Otherwise… I fear that every minute there will be a group of justice seeking, demon beheading, devil exterminating, knights coming to cause harm to the circle of cultivators. I’m exactly looking for someone who can really inherit your legacy!”

Peng Hai giggled as he received the videos. He opened them indifferently.

The more he watched, the straighter he sat, and the more astonished his expression. A wisp of cheer flashed in the depths of his eyes.

“How is he? Not bad right? I don’t have any impression on any sort of monster-level graduate you’re looking for. Anyway, in the past dozen years, the only small monster that’s been able to shock me into stupefaction is precisely this one kid! Why don’t you come over if you’re interested and chat with this little bastard?” Laughed Sun Biao.

“No need. You go and chat without me. Later, I will ‘talk’ with him all night long and chat until daybreak!“ Fiend Blade Peng Hai said, beaming with smiles. His smiling expression was extremely vicious.

Chapter 33: A Night of Unbearable Pain

Chapter 33: A Night of Unbearable Pain

Li Yao was still struggling against the steel barbell inside the squat rack. He bursted forth with all his energy to do the final set.

He didn't know that from the start, behind him in the dim corner of the room, an old bastard called the Degenerate of Cultivators and a fiendish bastard expert known as Fiend Blade were whispering to each other. They were discussing details on strength training for Li Yao with things escalating the more they discussed.

Finally…

"I did it! 10 sets of squats!" Li Yao roared like a wild beast. His two eyes turned white as he fell straight back to create a "bang!". The sweat around his body formed a large human figure on the ground!

With a fuzzy mind, he felt Sun Biao head towards him and feed him a medicinal pill the size of a small baby's fist. When the pill entered his mouth, he didn't have the chance to chew before it transformed into an incomparable spicy, hot liquid that flowed down his throat into his belly.

Irritation. The irritation was too much. It was more irritating than eating an entire bowl of mustard. The spice caused Li Yao's eyes to overflow with tears that splattered everywhere.

Suddenly, he leapt from the ground, jumping a meter high, “Water! Water! Get me water fast!”

“Kid, how do you feel at the moment?” Sun Biao asked with a beaming smile.

“Huh?” Li Yao blinked his eyes. He felt his body from head to toe and discovered something weird. The exhaustion and spent feeling in his body had actually been swept out, although his mouth was still filled with the incomparable, irritable spiciness. Every single part of his body contained an abundance of strength. His physical ability was restored back to his maximum state!

“Today was just the opening appetizer. The true training begins tomorrow. Is there a problem~? Student Li Yao?” Sun Biao snapped his fingers lightly, causing the training clothes on Li Yao’s body to automatically be shed like the molting of a snake.

Li Yao was like a startled bunny, running to the entrance of the warehouse with only three steps. Only then did he look back and answer through gritted teeth, “Of course, it’s not a problem. I’ll still come back here tomorrow morning. You just wait!”

“Sure~!” Sun Biao laughed nastily. He then spoke to himself in a low voice, “The only thing is… I fear that you won’t even be able to get out of your bed tomorrow morning, you little monster!”

……

8 PM. Li Yao arrived at the Militant Wolf Slayers Gym right on the dot. He was overflowing with confidence towards tonight’s three minute spar.

What a joke! He was able to grit through the pain and endure through that sinister, deceitful, despicable, shameless, cruel, and brutal ‘Give Up’. It can’t be that he wouldn’t to be able to endure through 3 minutes of the smiling clown’s assault, right?

Only… Looking at the strange smiling expressions that covered the smiling clown and bald gym owner’s faces caused him to feel a bit of nervousness in his heart.

These two good friends, with their smiling faces, were like two hungry wolves with rumbling stomachs. They looked at Li Yao as if he were a clean washed rabbit slathered with sauce. This look, in the eyes of Li Yao, caused Li Yao to feel that there was a gargantuan conspiracy being covered by their smiling expressions.

“Is your belly hungry? Do you want to first eat a grand buffet? Look and see! There’s so many high-calorie military MREs. Go ahead and eat to your heart’s content!” laughed the bald gym owner.

“After you finish eating, you can also use the strengthening drug bath! And you can also get a massage from a master masseur! This way, your stamina will be restored to your peak state!” said the smiling clown.

“You guys… What are you plotting?” Li Yao had cold sweat trickle down his forehead, feeling his danger senses tingling.

The smiling clown and the bald gym owner glanced at each other. They laughed involuntarily, saying, “It’s nothing! There’s absolutely nothing going on! How could we ever be plotting something? All we wanted was just to make sure you’re brought to your best condition so that you can spar for a good five minutes!”

“Five minutes? The contract obviously says three minutes!” Li Yao suddenly jumped up.

The smiling clown raised two fingers as he said, “Twenty grand. All you need to do is endure through 5 minutes and I will give you twenty grand!”

……

The night... felt absolutely endless.

The Ghost Market was a dozen or so kilometers from the surface. The Upper Eastern District extended to include the villas on the artificial lakes. In the basement of one of the luxurious villas was…

“Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!”

A lash ripped through the air and deeply embedded itself into someone’s back. The sound of a whip striking was enough to cause one’s hair to stand on end.

A giant with exploding muscles and dark hair all over his body gripped a whip that contained special pain-causing drugs. One whip after another lashed out ruthlessly, seemingly seeking to flay the still-living Helian Lie dead.

The wooden bar within Helian Lie’s mouth had already been bitten into a pulp. Surprisingly, Helian Lie had yet to scream even half a squeak. His gaze remained fixed ahead.

In front of Helian Lie was an enormous hologram. It played, over and over, the entire fight between Li Yao and Zhao Liang that had happened during the day at the 9th gym.

Helian Lie’s expression was that of a wolf and tiger. He wished with all his hate to be able to jump into the screen and eat Li Yao whole.

“Do you know why you’re receiving this family punishment?” the towering iron giant spoke coldly behind Helian Lie. His voice was both sharp and piercing, a complete contradiction from his thick and buff body. It was a stark contrast.

“According to father, it’s my fault. I shouldn’t have stirred up trouble in public, causing our Helian family to lose face!” Helian Lie snorted indifferently.

“Nonsense!”

Helian Ba’s rage flared! A kick flew out that actually caused the torture rack to forcefully split, sending Helian Lie flying into the wall!

This powerful and heavy kick contained absolutely no mercy. Helian Lie’s skull collided directly into the wall, forming a crater in the granite adorned wall. Helian Lie fell to the ground. Blood spurted wildly from his mouth, even bringing three white thick teeth out of his mouth.

Helian Ba didn’t even glance at Helian Lie while he walked over with large strides. His leather boots crushed, with strength, onto his son’s face. He said each word with a stomp, “Although it’s true that your father doesn’t like you causing trouble in public, it’s because even though you stirred up trouble, you still lost that badly in that manner! I dislike that even more! A lion facing a rabbit still must use all his strength. Even if you were facing a piece of trash from the Common Class, you, a genius of the Important Class, should not have lowered your guard in that fashion. Keep in mind that any person who becomes your enemy is qualified for you to use all your strength. Do you understand yet?”

“Under... understand. I won’t underestimate any opponents. I will absolutely get my revenge!” Helian Lie’s skull echoed with creaks under his father’s military boots. Helian Lie howled with all his strength.

Helian Ba gave a cold snort, “Think it over before doing anything. That old fart Sun Biao pulled the kid out of trouble. Be peaceful for this period of time. Don’t give me any more trouble!”

Helian Lie’s eyes suddenly bulged open as he cried out, “It can’t be that we’re letting it go like this? Dad, you’re a board member of our school. Don’t tell me that you’re scared of that dead, retired old geezer Sun Biao? True. I’ve heard that in his younger years, he was quite a fierce cultivator in the circle, but he’s made too many enemies. He suffered a critical injury from an attack a dozen years ago. The strength he has left is no more than 1% of his peak, so he was forced to hide in Crimson Nimbus Second and act as an ordinary teacher. And right now, he’s so old with many plaguing ailments. He could die any moment now! Do we really need to be this scared of him?”

Helian Ba scowled. The weight of his foot increased by several factors. With a deep shout, he said, “What do you know? A cultivator, in the end, is still a cultivator. Even if he only has 1% of his strength, even if he only has 1 second left to live, as long as he’s not completely dead, we cannot lower our guard! What’s even more is, that this undying old man has said that he won’t dedicate his life protecting the kid. He just wants us to give him a month of time. After a month, he will stand aside and do nothing… It’s a far too unspeakable action if I don’t show him this tiny bit of face; after all, I am only a board member, not the chairman. Even if I am the chairman, I would still need to follow proper conduct as a cultivator of the circle. Otherwise, hatred may be born between me and another cultivator, one that will last until one of us dies. Death would be looming over my head every minute!”

“A month of time... Fine! I will wait a month then!” Helian Lie’s handsome face was warped and twisted under the military boot. It was an expression of incomparable enmity.

Chapter 34: A Savage Beast Emerges From its Cage

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From that day forwards, Crimson Nimbus Second had a new legend spread around campus.

“Hey, did y’all hear about ‘that’?”

“Of course~ It really was way too scary, too terrible, and too brutal!”

Lunch time in the school’s dining hall, several girls were whispering among themselves. Fear lingered in their hearts.

“What ‘thing’ are y’all talking about? How could it frighten y’all to shivers?” one of the duller girls asked puzzled.

A school girl, with a face full of freckles, looked left and right before saying in a low and secretive voice, “You didn’t hear? There’s someone in the third year called Li Yao. He’s a screwed ghost! I don’t know how he offended Helian Lie, but he even beat one of Helian Lie’s underlings down to the ground. So, Helian Lie’s been provoked into a giant rage! It’s become even worse; he tortured Li Yao! Those who’ve been tortured by Helian Lie don’t resemble people anymore. Their ghosts don’t resemble ghosts!”

“Dear god, Helian Lie! My prince charming! So in the end, how did he torture Li Yao?” asked the dull-witted girl in surprise.

The freckled girl promptly covered her mouth and said, “Be a little bit quieter! How can we talk about something like this loud and screaming? Obviously, we haven’t personally seen the details of the torture. But all you need to do is to take one look at Li Yao and you will know just how miserable people become when they offend Helian Lie!

“She’s right. I’ve heard that Helian Lie locked Li Yao into the school’s warehouse, torturing him day in and day out. I passed through the alley behind the warehouse one time. I heard blood-curdling screams going “AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH” coming out from the warehouse. Those screams seemed to come straight from the depths of hell! I don’t want to talk about how terrifying it was. It scared me out of my mind! Even though I’d left my shoe behind, I was too scared to go back to get it!” verified another chubby girl.

“Is it as exaggerated as you all say?” asked the dull-witted girl in doubt.

Right at this moment, a boy with a bloody nose, swollen face, haggard appearance, and a completely exhausted body, walked past the girls, trembling and swaying, staggering and stumbling, with an unsteady gait. The moment his buttocks hit the chair, his entire body slumped over onto the table as if he were made of mud.

“Look! That’s Li Yao right there!” The freckled girl’s eyes shined while she poked the dull-witted girl without delay.

The dull-witted girl turned around and looked. She couldn’t help let out a gasp of surprise, “Dear god! It’s even worse than you say! His entire face has turned into a pig’s head! Hurry, look! He’s shivering non-stop all over his body! There are bloody blisters all over his hands and they’re still bleeding! How horrible!”

Right as she spoke, Li Yao suddenly went into a violent twitching fit. His head even jerked up from the spasms.

“You see it, right? Those are the symptoms of being beaten into epilepsy,” whispered the freckled girl.

And opposite of Li Yao came his bro for life Meng Jiang, carrying lunch. In total, there were 10 sausages each as thick as an arm, 20 giant meatballs, a giant wooden bowl of rice, and 10 MRE biscuits meant for military consumption.

“Little Devil, don’t lie to me. Are you really getting special training from Sun Biao? You’re not getting beat up by Helian Lie’s henchmen are you?” Meng Jiang asked once again, his eyes full of doubt.

Li Yao’s mouth pulled back into a laugh that was uglier than crying. He lacked the strength to even talk.

“If you knew it would be like this earlier, it might have been better to just take a beating from Helian Lie!” Bro for life Meng Jiang let out a deep sigh.

From not too far away, the girls continued their conversation in whispers.

“How can he eat so much! He’s simply a monster!” said the dull-witted girl.

“I know the answer to this!”

The chubby girl said with some pity, “According to psychology, when one’s mental pressure becomes too strong, one would involuntarily get an insatiable appetite and would eat an enormous amount of food to relieve their stress. Personally, I have to manage depression all day due to my parents fighting at home, so I can’t help but eat more and more. However…”

The chubby girl glanced down at the two sausages, three giant meatballs, and one large ball of rice on her plate. She looked once more at the giant mountain of meat piled in front of Li Yao, coming to a conclusion, “From the way he eats, he must be at a terminal stage. He’s on the verge of a mental breakdown!”

“That’s so sad!” The dull-witted girl saw Li Yao’s figure twitching from time to time. Her expression was full of pity.

“So that’s why people say that in our school, you can mess with anyone… just as long as it’s not Helian Lie! Even if you offended Helian Lie by accident, you need to beg for forgiveness immediately! By all means, do not go against him. Otherwise… you will end up as screwed as a ghost!” said the freckled girl in all seriousness.

Upon seeing Li Yao’s “Tragic Experience”, this was the common conclusion of every student in Crimson Nimbus Second.

However, Li Yao was described in a totally different image within the e-crane messages between Sun Biao and Peng Hai.

Day Seven of Special Training. Sun Biao’s and Peng Hai’s chat logs.

Sun Biao: “He’s not human! It’s impossible that this kid’s a human! It’s only been the seventh day of special training, yet he increased the gravitational field of ‘Give Up’ to 400kg and completed the whole workout! I even increased the intensity of the training program by 20%, yet that’s still not hard enough to stop him! How about you? Ol’Hai, how goes it on your end?”

Peng Hai: “Needless to say, he sparred with me for a full ten minutes last night. There were many times where I was nearly hit by him. Even if I only used 3% of my true power, this type of feeling truly... puts me in a bad mood! Anyway, I was finally able to make huge improvements on my strength control capabilities under his pressure!”

…

Day Thirteen of Special Training. Sun Biao’s and Peng Hai’s chat logs.

Sun Biao: “This kid squatted 500 kg of weight and completed two days worth of workouts! Oh that’s right, his Actualization Quotient increased by 4% to 62% in a short three days. Does this even count as being human? Hey Ol’Hai, talk to me! Why aren’t you saying anything!”

Peng Hai: “He managed to hit me with a punch last night in the stomach.”

Sun Biao: “......”

Peng Hai: “......”

Sun Baio: “Hahahahahahaha! If I’m the Degenerate of Cultivators, then that simply makes you the Disgrace of Cultivators! You were actually hit by an ordinary person!”

Peng Hai: “I only used 3% of my true strength! I wasn’t just restricting down to 3% of my physical strength, but I was also restricting my hearing, sight, smell, speed… Everything was restricted down to 3%! It’s perfectly normal to be accidently hit by him! No, this won’t do. Tonight, I will use 4% of my true power!”

Sun Biao: “Then what will happen to your ‘Strength Control Special Training’?”

Peng Hai: “F*ck my strength control special training. This senior needs to first let out some steam!”

…

Day Twenty-Five of Special Training. Sun Biao’s and Peng Hai’s chat logs.

Sun Biao: “I’ve already raised all of Give Up’s magical abilities to their limits! It’s basically the equivalent of your training difficulty back in the day, yet this kid still can forcefully squat that barbell! It’s way too horrifying! Even I’m a bit scared of looking at his expression when he grinds his teeth with rage. What do you think… .Should I draw some of his blood to get some lab tests done?”

Peng Hai: “Lab tests, why?”

Sun Biao: “This kid absolutely has some Demon Beast blood lineage running inside him. He’s 100% a savage beast!”

…

The Final Day of Special Training. Sun Biao’s and Peng Hai’s chat logs.

Peng Hai: “Isn’t it the final day? In a few hours, it will be the ‘Hour of Intense Battle’. Over a thousand Third Year students will fight for the 10 tickets. So how is he? How’s the kid’s situation?”

Sun Biao: “I’m not sure how to say this, but I’m a bit scared to let him go out.”

Peng Hai: “Why is that?”

Sun Biao: “I’m scared that when this savage beast emerges from its cage, it will cause the entire school to explode into the heavens!”

Chapter 35: The Hour of Intense Battle

Chapter 35: The Hour of Intense Battle

April 12th. Light showers with a slight breeze. 61 Days 13 Hours 22 Minutes and 45 Seconds remain until the university entrance exams!

Today was Crimson Nimbus Second’s annual ‘Hour of Intense Battle’. All the first and second years have the day off, leaving the campus to be a battlefield for the third years. The third years will strive over 10 tickets to the “Youth Limit Challenge Competition”, fighting to the bloody end!

The rules are simple. First, 10 seeded competitors will be chosen out of all the Third Year Students via lottery fashion. Each of these students will receive a ticket to carry on their bodies and each of these students will be dispersed around the campus. It was up to the student to decide whether to go into hiding or to form a group. Anything goes, as long as the student doesn’t leave campus.

And the other students can use any methods, any strategies, and any objects found within the campus to attack these 10 seeded competitors and seize by force their tickets.

All the admission tickets were sealed in special artifact boxes. Every half a minute, these boxes will send a ripple of spiritual energy to notify every student’s handheld crystal processor of the positions of these tickets. So, the students needn’t worry about a ticket holder hiding in a dark corner, camping despicably until the contest was over.

The fierce battle begins at 10 in the morning and ends at 3 in the afternoon — a total of 5 hours. Only the students who still held onto the tickets to the end will receive the qualifications to participate in the Federation’s Youth Limit Challenge!

Early Morning, 8:45

One by one, fluffy puffy balls of flesh opened their round and plump eyes. They were of every color imaginable, like bright colors of the rainbow, and used all their effort to flutter their flabby wings. They flew through the air crying “Puji puji puji”, dispersing around campus.

This was an artificial Demon Beast whose scientific name was Flying Piglet Eye. Experts from the Beast Guild used the blood of piglets, bunnies, and various flying creatures to create this amalgamation. This new species was created after cross-breeding several dozens of generations.

Special crystal camera chips were even installed in the bodies of these Flying Piglet Eyes. Whatever is seen by these Flying Piglet Eyes can be transmitted to crystal processors nearby.

These sorts of things were originally engineered with the purpose of being floating security cameras.

However, due to their fluffy shape, chubby body, and the laughter-like “Puji puji” sounds they made while flying in the air, they soon became popular among every household. They became an extraordinarily hot household pet and were called “Puji Critters” by the masses.

A thousand Puji Critters spread to every nook and cranny across campus, getting into position for surveillance. Over a thousand real-time videos were broadcasted to gigantic holograms installed in three VIP lounges.

The first VIP lounge was set up in gymnasium number 1. It was extremely large and was meant for the family heads to come watch their children. A thousand family heads had already gathered inside, creating a cauldron of voices that clamored loudly.

The second VIP lounge was set up in the school’s assembly room, providing footage of the fights to the teachers and elite students of various sister schools within Floating Spear City… This sort of school exchange was extremely common. Crimson Nimbus Second also sends their elite students and teachers to other high schools to exchange and learn from their admission ticket competitions.

The third VIP lounge was set up directly in the headmaster’s office. All those present were either of school administration or board members.

However, at this moment, the headmaster, head instructor, supervisors of each grade, and even the board members, whose positions exceeded the rest, gathered around a single person like stars cupping the moon. With great reverence and respect, they circled around an extremely scholarly middle-aged man, who’s temple hair has gone white.

This refined and scholarly middle-aged man was called Zhou Yin and was a cultivator of the Building Foundation Stage. He was the elder responsible for nurturing new admittees to the Crimson Nimbus Guild and was the immediate supervisor to the administration of Crimson Nimbus Second!

Zhou Yin was graceful and elegant, lacking completely the air of arrogance. He said with a completely cordial laugh, “We have made much improvement in our education’s quality this year for Crimson Nimbus Second, producing some good saplings. Speaking of which, I’ve heard that a Helian Lie and also a Si Jiaxue are some decent new talent. Oh, that’s right! I remember that Helian Lie is Board Member Helian’s only son, right?”

“Yes. I never thought Elder Zhou would know of my unaccomplished son!” Helian Ba’s entire face glowed red, shining with a smile.

“As long as one has talent, I would remember them without a doubt. The future of the Crimson Nimbus Guild belongs to them~! Alrighty then! It’s exactly 9 o’clock! Begin the games!”

With a wave of his hand, Zhao Yin’s face suddenly turned serious with an expression like an unapproachable stranger; he had entered into his business mode, changing into a different person entirely.

The hour of intense battle — officially begins!

A sharp, beautiful bell rang throughout campus. A thousand third-year students, with bloodshot eyes, leapt out from various nooks and crannies within the school buildings. Each of these students had their head lowered, looking at their micro crystal processors.

Soon, they discovered the 10 ticket bearers among the crowd — their targets.

“Found one. He’s over there! Eliminate him quick!”

The 10 seeded competitors were chosen at random, so their strengths weren’t necessary strong and oppressive. With a blood-curdling shriek, they were engulfed by the tide of people.

Several dozen medical flying shuttles circled endlessly in the sky to be readily available at all times. Doctors and nurses from the nearby major hospitals were temporarily hired and stationed on these flying shuttles. They, along with several healing-specialized cultivators, would put an end to any accidental mishaps from occurring.

Since the fighting will last until three in the afternoon before coming to an end, the students who emerged first weren’t necessarily the ones with the strongest power. For example, practically none of the students of the Important Class has made a move so far. They rested with closed eyes in incomparable luxury within their classroom.

The students currently participating in the fighting were doomed with no chance of holding onto a ticket until 03:00 PM.

However, that was not a problem since the school had something to motivate these students. They specifically set up incentives of every level. As long as a student seizes a ticket for a moment, no matter if it's 5 or 10 minutes, they will receive a prize.

And so, these students of the Ascending and Common Class also fought with their lives at stake. Even though their power weren’t that special, the hair-raising rage and blood-bath attitudes they exhibited caused the scenes of fighting to be quite lively.

“AHH! DIE!!”

A student who held a ticket in his pocket leapt down the stairwell and was trampled with a kick to the sternum by another student hiding in the corner, who then seized the ticket away.

And once this student discovered that there was nobody in his surroundings, he connivingly hid himself away into the girl’s restrooms. Only to be raided by a male student who had hidden himself in ambush at an earlier time within a bathroom stall. The admission ticket changed hands again!

Similar scenes played out in the various nooks and corners around campus. Every now and then, heads were broken and blood flowed, muscles snapped and bones fractured. These injured students were lifted into the medical treatment shuttles.

Within the third VIP lounge, the VIPs commented one after another on the scenes displayed on the giant hologram.

“This student’s speed is very fast! His reactions are extremely quick! The only problem is his attacking power; it’s a little bit weak. Otherwise, he may be able to enter into the Important Class!”

“I’ve heard that Crimson Nimbus Second has, over the years, introduced several ex-military combat experts to their school. You all look! When their students fight, they bring forth a hint of military killing techniques. It looks likes Crimson Nimbus Second has large ambitions. Who knows what eruptions they will bring at this year’s university exams!”

The second VIP lounge.

Behind a placard written with the words ‘Phoenix Ridge Second’ was a person in deep sleep. This person snored loudly, covered under a school uniform that permeated with the air of alcohol.

To the side of him, a young female teacher from Phoenix Ridge Second wrinkled her brow. She prodded him without batting an eyelid and said, “Big Dong, you pestered the school cause you wanted to come over and watch the fight. Why is it that once you came here, you started sleeping again, snoring loudly?”

A voice filled with discontent grumbled out from beneath the uniform. After some time, a puffy, swollen eye opened up and a fat face snaked out. The head was oily and the face covered with makeup — it was clear that this person engaged in excessive debauchery. He squinted his eyes in the fashion of a cat and gazed indifferently at the hologram. He yawned once again, digging back under the uniform.

Zheng Dongming’s voice came lazily out from under the uniform, “Don’t be noisy. The person I want to see still hasn’t appeared yet.”

“Are you waiting for Si Jiaxue? Or are you waiting for Helian Lie?” asked the young female teacher.

A chuckle came from under the uniform. “If it’s just those two, why would I ever crawl up from my bed with 7 beauties on it and come to this damnable place?”

The young female teacher asked baffled, “Si Jiaxue and Helian Lie are both widely known to be Crimson Nimbus Second’s strongest. If even they don’t have the qualifications to attract you here, then who are you waiting to watch?”

The uniform was still for a moment. A fat wily hand suddenly extended out, groping towards beneath the young school teacher’s skirt. The female teacher’s body trembled with a shiver, and she nibbled with her pearly white teeth. But, she didn’t resist.

As Zheng Dongming groped, he spoke lazily, “The one I’m waiting for is not the strongest, but the fiercest!”

Chapter 36: Li Yao Enters the Field!

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Noon at 12 O’clock.

The second batch of people with average strength had spent all their energy fighting. Practically half of these people retired from injuries, lacking the ability to continue fighting.

Only now did the students of the Important Class leave their classroom. They warmed up their bodies and started to join in on the scramble.

They entered the field, causing the intensity of fights to increase by several factors. 10 admission tickets fell quickly into the hands of the Important Class of students. The battlefield had turned into a civil war amongst the Important Class.

01:30 PM. Aside from Helian Lie and Si Jiaxue, all the students of the Important Class took the field!

02:10 PM. Si Jiaxue slowly opened her beautiful eyes and entered the fray!

02:15 PM. The king of Crimson Nimbus Second, Helian Lie, walked out of the classroom, donning a domineering aura like a suit of armor, officially entering the war!

Helian Lie and Si Jiaxue had true strength that was clearly above at a different level than the other students. The gap between them was something that could not be closed simply by relying on the dominance of numbers.

In under a minute, these two each seized an admission ticket. Soon after, they fended off an assault from an encirclement of 7-8 students, even beating six students straight to the medical shuttles.

So therefore, there was no one who dared to try seizing the tickets held in their embrace…. In the end, there were still 8 other admission tickets. It wasn't necessary to seek death under the hands of these two monsters.

"Helian Lie, Si Jiaxue… The last time Crimson Nimbus Second produced such great saplings was 3-5 years ago!" The Crimson Nimbus Guild Elder's face, which had been fixed in a serious expression for half a day, revealed a faint trace of a smile at last.

"How boring. I should have known they would only come out now. I wasted my entire morning for nothing!" In the second VIP lounge, Zheng Dongming lay comfortably on the plump and firm thighs of the female teacher, sleeping. Occasionally, he would lift his head to glance at the hologram. Giving a smirk, he soon quickly lowered his head back to sleep.

02:30 PM. In the depths of Crimson Nimbus Second, within the school's warehouse, in the middle of an old Cultivation Field.

Li Yao's two index fingers were stabbed deeply and firmly into the wooden floor. His head was to the ground and his feet in the air. Using only the strength of his index fingers, he was doing a handstand with perfect form.

The two feet, separated to the extreme, did not have shoes on them. With toes as nimble as his fingers, he lifted a dumbbell unwaveringly with each foot. The weight of each dumbbell was 100 kg!

“*ZZZzzzz…*ZZZZzzz…”

While under this state, Li Yao’s nose emitted utterly strange snores. His pair of eyes were slightly closed and a bit of saliva trickled from the corner of his mouth — he was actually sleeping!

Suddenly…

“BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!” The micro crystal processor on his wrist vibrated violently and alarmed.

With a flicker of his body, “Bang! Bang!” sounds rang out, like two sparks of flint flying through the darkness. Something was sent flying into a wall that was over thirty meters away, creating another pair of loud “Booms!”.

The two 100 kg dumbbells were actually sent flying over 30 meters by Li Yao with a kick, deeply lodging themselves in the wall.

The entire face of the wall was full of holes. These were all craters left behind from a bombardment of dumbbells. The surface was like that of a meteor; it was a devastating sight.

“Little monster, I’ve already lifted the restrictions of ‘Give Up’. Quickly remove those clothes and join in on the fighting. You still have half an hour!” laughed Sun Biao.

“You don’t have to remind me. How annoying,” yawned Li Yao. He scratched his shaggy bird’s nest hair and walked to the exit indifferently.

02:32 PM. Li Yao emerged within the campus. He walked with sleepy and drowsy eyes to the student assembly grounds where the battle was taking place. His image quickly appeared on the giant holograms in the VIP lounges.

Everyone felt curiosity towards this last student entering the field.

According to normal practice, such students who enter the field at such a late stage had the utmost confidence in their true strength. But all the cultivation geniuses of Crimson Nimbus Second have clearly already appeared on stage. Who the hell is this bastard? Could it be a weakling student who has already given up on the competition?

In the second VIP lounge.

Dong Zengming abruptly jumped up from the female teacher's thighs. His entire self turned incomparable sharp in a flash. He was like a war blade extracted from a drinking house. The air of alcohol dispersed, giving birth to an air of murder.

"He's the one you wanted to watch? Will he be even more ferocious than Helian Lie?" The female teacher was absolutely astonished. It had been a long time since she seen Zheng Dongming act so serious.

"Helian Lie is obviously stronger than him. But If I had to choose an opponent, I would rather just choose Helian Lie. I wouldn't want to choose this guy." Zheng Dongming stared fixed at Li Yao.

"Why is that?" The female teacher didn't understand.

"Because he and I are the same type of people." With a laugh, Zheng Dongming's humble face revealed shallow dimples.

02:34 PM. Li Yao walked inside… Dining Hall Number 2!

“What the hell is he doing? There’s nobody in the second dining hall!” The numerous VIPs were discussing and clamoring.

At this time, most of the fighting had come to an end. Quite a few students sat on the ground, panting for breath. The ones worthy to watch on screen are few. The somewhat strange actions by Li Yao naturally drew everyone’s attention to Li Yao.

02:35 PM. Li Yao carried an entire tray of meat buns out of gymnasium number two. He ate as he walked, devouring a dozen fist-sized meat buns in half a second.

“Did he come here to fight, or did he come here to eat!?” The VIPs stared blankly for quite some time. After confirming that their eyes were fine, they couldn’t help but laugh with tears in their eyes.

Just a moment ago, they thought that this bastard was the secret weapon of Crimson Nimbus Second, some deeply hidden unexposed expert. They never thought that this bastard was actually a rice tub with an astonishing capacity for food!

And even within the campus, there were quite a few students who saw Li Yao.

“Look you guys, look! Even screwed ghost Li Yao has come!”

“Huh? He actually doesn’t have any injuries, how can he be so healthy and lively?”

“He must have been secretly hiding away just now and hasn’t participated in the fighting. That’s why he’s still lively like a dragon and a tiger.”

“Hey, Li Yao. Don’t go another further ahead. The students of the Important Class all gathered there. They’re all still fighting intensely and desperately. Be careful not to get accidently hurt!”

As Li Yao gnawed on a meat bun, he looked down to see his micro crystal processor, turning a deaf ear to everyone’s comments. Only when a student with good intentions warned him did he lift his head and give a smile of thanks. Right after, he continued to walk forward.

“It can’t be that his head’s been beaten retarded right?” the student who warned Li Yao commented to his companion with some pity.

The 10 admission tickets emitted special ripples of spiritual energy every half a minute, marking their positions on a virtual map. Soon, Li Yao was able to lock onto a ticket!

……

Na Lanying was leaning her back on a giant tree. She was gasping and panting for breath. The alert expression in her eyes was like a sharp blade that swept in all directions.

She was unperturbed about the trace of blood still left in the corner of her mouth. The thought of licking it never crossed her mind.

She had to breath in the greatest amount of air in the shortest time frame to maintain a clear mind for as long as possible, so as to restore her combat strength.

This was because on her body… was a precious admission ticket!

Na Lanying was ranked 21st among the Important Class. Her Actualization Quotient was at 65%. To be able to seize an admission ticket was simply a gargantuan fortune for her. She completely lacked the confidence to be able to hold onto the ticket until 3 pm.

Fortunately, her lucky stars shined bright today. A few experts in her class had gone to jointly attack Helian Lie and Si Jiaxue and had received serious injuries; they were eliminated from the competition.

The remaining students went to go fight over the other admission tickets. There were no threatening existences with extreme strength in her surroundings. At least, not at the present.

Na Lanying had been letting her imagination run wild in her mind when she suddenly felt a stab of pain in her sternum. It was as if someone stabbed a stake of ice ferociously in her heart!

The young girl let out an “ah”. Every hair on her body stood on end; she was like a started white bunny. Her body instinctively reacted, disregarding everything and fleeing 7-8 meters automatically.

Na Lanying had a certain feeling that if she had stayed there, she would already have been torn to shreds!

Standing seven to eight meters behind her, in sloppy clothes, was a completely ordinary youngster. If there was something that must be said weird about him, it would be the fact that his cheeks were stuffed full of buns. Without stopping, he kept on chewing... and chewing… and chewing…

“Li Yao?”

Na Lanying simply didn’t dare to believe her eyes… Screwed ghost Li Yao was the most famous person in Crimson Nimbus Second, the man of the moment. Obviously, she wasn’t mistaken.

“It’s actually him? Why was it that when my back was towards him, all my hairs stood on end? It was like I was facing a terrible Demon Beast. I couldn’t raise even half a thought of resistance in my mind. My only thought was to flee in desperation!” Na Lanying’s heart beat like a drum. Her bosom slightly swelled up and down in undulations. She simply couldn’t calm down.

Li Yao chewed his meat bun indifferently while walking over to her.

Na Lanying’s scalp was frying. She felt a sense of crisis becoming more and more intense. She could not stop her entire self from trembling. No matter how much she tried taking deep breaths, it was no use! ”I’m was completely suppressed to paralysis by the pressure of his aura. I can’t even move a single finger at all. How can this be happening!?” screamed the young lady in her mind.

“What the hell is she doing? Why doesn’t Na Lanying beat down this bastard with a move?” The VIPs saw this scene and were at a loss. They were discussing animatedly amongst themselves.

“This kid is the screwed ghost of Crimson Nimbus Second. I bet Na Lanying thinks it’s below her to take care of him.”

There were some people who finally asked and became clear on Li Yao’s identity. They talked with complete certainty.

Li Yao walked one step at a time until he reached in front of Na Lanying.

With a tilt of his neck, he swallowed down the last meat bun with some difficulty and gave a burp. A smile oozed all over his face, showing his contentment. In the eyes of Na Lanying, Li Yao’s appearance was just like tyrannosaurus rex swallowing down a ton of bloody meat. Traces of bloody sinew seemed to be embedded between his teeth,

“You. Don’t you come over...” Na Lanying said weakly from her heart. She was on the verge of crying.

“Hello, you must be fellow student Na Lanying. I would like to ask if you’ve seen fellow student Helian Lie and where he is?” Li Yao chuckled, asking in a refined and courteous manner.

Na Lanying stared blankly at him for quite some time. Then with a wavering hand, she pointed in the direction of the school’s sports field, “I- I don’t know. He’s probably at the sports field.”

“Okay. Thank you, fellow student Na Lanying.” Li Yao nodded with thanks, paying zero attention to the young lady’s admission ticket. He brushed past Na Lanying’s side and walked towards the direction of the sports field.

Na Lanying’s pair of legs weakened, and she nearly collapsed to the ground. She watched with shock and astonishment at Li Yao’s back as he gradually left. The back of her school uniform was soaked with sweat. Her delicate body was shivering and she had a sinking painful feeling in her stomach. Her mind was filled with the thoughts of her luck and new lease at life!

Chapter 37: Treading Tiger Strike 7 Murdering-Hit Combo!

Chapter 37: Treading Tiger Strike 7 Murdering-Hit Combo!

Within 5 minutes, Li Yao found a total of 4 ticket holders.

Anyways, his luck today has been nothing special. Helian Lie was not one of the four, so he still hadn't raised a hand. After giving these four people an enormous amount of fright, he continued heading over to the sports field.

"LI YAO, DON'T YOU WALK AWAY FROM ME!"

02:44 PM. A piercing shout exploded into Li Yao's ear. A figure, weaved with killing intent, blocked him from moving a step forward.

It was Zhao Liang, the person whom's knees he broke a month ago!

Zhao Liang's legs had been restored back to normal long ago, and in this month's time frame, he went through some bitter training. His entire person's temperament changed completely. His malice and ferocity increased. He was like a blade painted black, absorbing light.

Zhao Liang's face was warped and twisted, deforming into a horse's face. He said as he laughed nastily, "I need to thank you properly, fellow student Li Yao! I still remember vividly in my mind what you did to me a month ago. It's fresh in my memory, appearing every night in my dreams! I pay you my respects. In this month, I went through a crazed kind of training. The pain I bore is a pain unimaginable for you! HeHeHeHe. Finally, in a month's time, I went from being ranked 41st in class to being ranked 33rd! I’m no longer the last place student! Today, I will say goodbye to you by using the ‘Treading Tiger Strike Three Murdering-Hit Combo’ I’ve trained in. I don’t know if this time, you still have an iron plate tucked in front of your sternum!”

Li Yao lifted his wrist to take a look at his micro crystal processor; there wasn’t even a hint of a reaction. Zhao Liang did not have an admission ticket.

“You don’t even have a ticket, yet you’re still shooting off! Do you think we’re in a debate competition!?”

With a glare of his eyes, Li Yao shouted suddenly with force. His entire body squatted down and his pair of legs seemed to swell twice in size in a flash. They were like thick coiled springs stored full of energy!

“Whoosh!”

In a flash, Li Yao’s silhouette vanished without a trace, appearing right in front of Zhao Liang half a second later. His brutal aura locked completely onto every hair on Zhao Liang’s head. Zhao Liang could not react at all to Li Yao’s unusual incomparable speed!

The moment when an expression of astonishment appeared on Zhao Liang’s face, Li Yao seized Zhao Liang’s skull with his pair of hands, like a walnut being clenched by enormous metal pliers. Zhao Liang was totally unable to free himself!

Li Yao’s right knee ferociously rammed into Zhao Liang’s body like an artillery shell!

The strongest technique of the Thirteen Forces of the War Beasts… Treading Tiger Strike!

“Boom!”

Zhao Liang’s lower body half flew up. His entire body curled up into a ball, looking like a small shrimp. Blood spurted wildly from his mouth. The back of his school uniform was torn to shreds!

Li Yao had no intention of stopping. Just when his right leg had fallen, his left knee burst forth. The two knees struck one after another in succession. Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! His knees struck with great power seven times in a row. Each bombardment was stronger than the last by a bit. The final strike, with a knee as hard as iron, directly exploded onto Zhao Liang’s face!

Zhao Liang’s entire face caved in deeply. It was like he was smashed ferociously by a giant iron hammer. He flew several dozen meters, fiercely smashing into the ground. He didn’t even have the chance to let out a blood-curdling scream before he completely passed out!

A killing technique used by the military — the Thirteen Forces of the Warbeasts, Treading Tiger Strike 7 Murdering-Hit Combo!

“Yi!” In the third VIP lounge, the room was filled with noise and clamor just a second ago, buzzing with activity. The next second, the room turned into absolute silence. A deathly stillness… No one ever expected that an elite student of the Important Class would be eliminated in a flash by a mishmash of the Common Class!

“Ah!” In the second VIP lounge, the female teacher of Phoenix Ridge second shouted in surprise. She looked at

Zheng Dongming to the side of her. Zheng Dongming’s mouth hooked into a smile, displaying an expression that contained no surprise.

“Hmm?” In the first VIP lounge, Zhao Yin’s eyes flashed with light and soon returned to their original state. With a wave of his hand, he called his secretary. After exchanging a few words, the secretary left in a hurry.

The current time is, 02:53 PM!

Li Yao didn’t even glance of Zhao Liang. He stepped over Zhao Liang’s body, considering Zhao Liang to be a piece of trash.

The noise of the fight between these two also drew the attention of several neighboring students. Li Yao didn’t even walk far before he was surrounded by three arrogant students of the Important Class. They glared at him with complete vigilance.

These three students all witnessed Li Yao finishing off Zhao Liang with a single move. Naturally, they wouldn’t lower their guard. They considered him to be the most fearful of threats.

“You’re Li Yao? I never thought that you weren’t being tortured by Helian Lie for this month, but were actually hiding in training. You actually possess a power this strong! However, it's useless. We top 20 students of the Important class are on a totally different level than the sort of bastard Zhao Liang is!” a student of the Important Class said sneering.

“And in addition, us three have been training in joint assault techniques together ever since we entered the third year.

You are no match for us!” the second student of the Important Class stated.

“Therefore, if you’re an intelligent person, you would be a good boy and beat it! Go fight over other people’s tickets. We don’t want to suffer injuries on our side as well,” the third student of the Important Class concluded the conversation.

Li Yao looked at his micro crystal processor and discovered that they were indeed carrying three admission tickets on their bodies.

The true strength of these students lingered around rank 20 in the Important Class, oscillating up and down. They knew it would be hard to rely only on oneself to seize a ticket, so they planned early on to team up to fight. They spent most of the year painstakingly working on their joint assault technique into becoming perfected and exquisite. Indeed this time, several ranked top 15 students in the Important Class were defeated under their hand, seizing three of the precious admission tickets!

Li Yao didn’t necessarily know this information. However, there were only seven minutes of time remaining. He feared that there wasn’t enough time to find Helian Lie.

He carefully sized up the three surrounding students of the Important Class, analyzing and calculating at lightning speeds. He had no choice but to recognize that his opponents were formidable opponents on a higher level than Zhao Liang.

He examined his micro crystal processor once more. He found, to his dismay, that other than these three people, the remaining seven ticket bearing students were far away from him. It was likely that some hid inside the complicated, maze-like buildings. And most of them were moving around at high speeds. It would be very hard to catch them.

“Helian Lie, there is a veil between us. I’m forced to wait until the Youth Limit Challenge to slowly conclude things between us!” Li Yao squinted his eyes, withdrawing his gaze from the three students of the Important Class. In a slow and unhurried fashion, he took off ‘Give Up’.

“What the hell is he up to? It can’t be he wants to fight one on three?” Everyone was at a loss in the VIP lounges.

“Student Li Yao defeated Zhao Liang in a single move. Although his true strength is unconventional, he wants to fight three students, who clearly surpass Zhao Liang, as his opponents. It should be too much for him right?” The teachers were discussing animatedly.

And in the first VIP lounge, the smiling expression in the depths of Crimson Nimbus Guild’s Elder Zhou Yin’s eyes grew richer and richer.

Li Yao squatted down and folded ‘Give Up’ neatly and tidily. He placed ‘Give Up’ carefully to the side.

He was wearing a completely ordinary sports tank top and shorts. He had worn these clothes for a long time, all throughout his big torturous workouts. They were thin like a cicada’s wing, revealing faintly the lines of the muscles underneath clearly.

His stature was completely ordinary and his muscles weren’t considered anything too extreme.

But the encircling three students of the Important Class didn’t know why, but they all simultaneously felt a deep chill. When Li Yao took off his exterior clothes, a severe icy air also seemed to accompany the action, permeating and diffusing through the air. He was like…

A velociraptor that transformed in a flash into a tyrannosaurus rex!

“Bang!”

Li Yao stamped one leg to the ground, shredding his sports shoes into pieces! His speed had increased unexpectedly by a factor when compared to the recent moment when he murderously bombarded Zhao Liang. In the lifetime of a flint’s spark, he flashed to appear right in front of the opposing student of the Important Class. The Treading Tiger Strike combo was unleashed once more like a hot knife through butter!

Chapter 38: Slaying the Way to Devil Dragon Island

Chapter 38: Slaying the Way to Devil Dragon Island

The three students in the Important Class never thought that Li Yao would actually take the initiative to attack. Even more so, they never thought that his offensive would be this fierce and violent. In a flash, they turned pale with fright!

However, their reaction speeds were clearly faster than Zhao Liang's by a measure; the student of the Important Class facing Li Yao crossed his arms to defend. His waist bent in a strange manner. A "Bang!" rang out. He had barely defended against Li Yao's knee strike. A groan was stifled in his mouth, and there was an expression of unbearable pain on his face... The bones of his pair of arms were broken by a single strike of Li Yao's bombarding knee!

The other two students of the important class unleashed their assault from behind, trying in vain to keep Li Yao pinned down.

"Bang Bang!"

Li Yao did not duck or dodge. He forcibly took on the assault of the two behind him. The two students of the important class kicked his back with ferocity, but it was like kicking a giant sandbag filled with iron shavings. Li Yao's muscles immediately rippled in a strange manner. The energy was dispersed and eliminated in a flash!

“His physical resistance capabilities are this strong!?”

The blood of the two students of the Important Class ran cold. They were aware of the strange rippling movement of Li Yao’s muscles. They were clearly aware that this was an extraordinary high-class, energy-dispersion technique. Under the special guidance of a military expert, the body is struck repetitively with powerful strikes in order to grasp the technique.

“Did we make a mistake? This guy's absolutely a monster! There’s practically no different in true strength between him and Helian Lie. How is he a mishmash of the Common Class? Are all the teachers in our school blind to this extent!?”

The three students of the Important Class glanced at each other, all seeing fear in the depths of each other’s eyes.

Li Yao had no interest in the offensive launched by the two people. His pair of knees, like tigers setting off a mountain, exploded forth violently! In under a second, he exploded out with 11 knee strikes that were so insane it seemed to be of magic!

The students of the Important Class ahead could not withstand it any longer, collapsing to the ground with a blood-curdling scream.

It was an unimaginable scene. Shouts of surprise came and went in waves in the VIP lounges. None of the spectators had ever thought that an encirclement formation of three students of the important class would actually be broken by a mishmash of the Common Class, using only the sort of brute force method of pure strength and physical ability to force the formation open!

Li Yao sneered. He strode over with large strides like a tiger pouncing on a lamb. He was chasing down the broken-armed students of the important class to continue his relentless assault!

The manner of his attacks was unspeakably exquisite. Every single strike bombarded straight down. None of his strikes contained anything deceptive or had any unpredictable variations. The three students of the Important Class could all anticipate the trajectory of his next attack.

However, they were unable to find a way to break through his technique. This was because Li Yao's absolute striking strength was way too astonishing, and his physical resistance capabilities were way too strong as well.

Li Yao clearly staked it all on his body. Three vs. One. You may strike me thrice, but I will strike you once. That's the way it was!

…Li Yao was accustomed to facing against the devilish-level expert, Fiend Blade Peng Hai. According to Li Yao, the attacks of these three Important Class students were nothing more than tickles. And Li Yao's fists, even if they only brushed against their cheeks, was enough to make them cry tears of pain!

A short time later, the three students of the Important Class looked at each other and suddenly let out a whistle. At the same time, they split running in three directions to escape!

Three students of the Important Class had actually chosen to flee in desperation when facing a student of the Common Class.

“They spent several months specifically practicing these tactics. They were meant to be used against Helian Lie, but they actually employed it against a student of the Common Class. This truly is...”

Within the VIP lounge, the coach of the three students had a complicated expression on his face. The three aptly employed the battle tactics appropriately. This caused the coach to feel quite happy, but he felt far more emotions of shame and shock.

Li Yao, without any hesitation, chased unwaveringly after the first student of the Important Class. Each step he took could pull the distance closer by nearly half a meter. Soon, they were only separated by the thickness of a string. The fleeing student of the Important Class in front of him was on the verge of crying.

The other two students of the Important Class turned around, without hesitation, from the side, to cause Li Yao some trouble from behind.

This time, the manner in which they fought was clearly different. They no longer targeted Li Yao’s vital parts, but instead focused on pinning Li Yao down with harassing attacks. They wanted to stall for time; their purpose was to allow the first student to pull some distance.

When Li Yao’s patience was running thin, when he would turn around to attack someone, that person would turn and flee without hesitation.

And when Li Yao gave chase, unwilling to let his target escape, the other two students of the Important Class would change their roles. They would become the harassers!

“Us three may not have the strongest true strength in the Important Class, but our minds are the most intelligent and clear-minded of the Important Class. This set of ‘Escape-

Harassment’ battle tactics, when put fully to use, would be hard for even Helian Lie to overcome. You. How can you find the answer to break out?”

The coach of the three Important Class students stared fixed at the hologram, murmuring to himself. He also looked at the time displayed on the hologram. His throat was a bit dry from talking too much.

“You don’t have much time left remaining, student Li Yao!”

At present, the time is 02:59:30 PM. There was only half a minute until the competition official ends!

Will a miracle… happen?

All the VIPs no longer paid any attentions to the other scenes. Their sights were totally focused on Li Yao’s 1 vs 3 on the hologram. Everyone was racking their brains, with no success, trying to figure out if Li Yao could make a reversal out of this predicament. Everyone was excited and looking forward to the outcome. They were awaiting a miracle!

27 seconds… 26 seconds… 25 seconds …

The speed of the three Important Class students had reached their hurricane-like limits. They ran with faces red from exertion. Their mouths and eyes were twisted. They completely lacked the aura and elegance of a heaven’s chosen, looking like three stray dogs instead.

13 seconds… 12 seconds… 11 seconds…..

The three people were forced to draw their entire strength, down to their bones! They rushed madly, rushed frantically, they ran like mad! Li Yao chased them unrelentingly, causing them to wretchedly foam at the mouth. Their tongues were flapping as they continued running in crazily without end. It was as if the most vicious, vile, and persistent of Demon Beasts was chasing closely behind them.

7 seconds… 6 seconds… 5 seconds…..

The pathetic worm being chased by Li Yao suddenly had his legs weaken and drop from under him. He rolled about on the ground clutching his leg… He had run too much and overtaxed his body, causing a cramping in his leg!

The remaining two let out a battle cry simultaneously. The threw themselves into the air and tenaciously held fixed onto Li Yao!

3 seconds… 2 seconds… 1 second…..

With a violent roar, the muscles of Li Yao’s entire body swelled, forcefully sending the two Important Class students flying. They dropped flat on their backs.

The time is precisely 03:00 PM. The competition was over. The crisp beautiful sound of a bell rang throughout campus.

“We won!”

“We held on to the bitter end!”

The three students were surprised at first, but soon they jumped around wild with joy. They hugged each other laughing and crying. It was like the opponent they had faced just then was not a student of the Common Class, but rather a campus king like Si Jiaxue or Helian Lie!

“I managed to get a ticket!”

The first student took out a wrapped treasure from his bosom, a small box engraved with glyphs. He waved it energetically and roared loudly.

“I managed to get a ticket!”

The second student also hefted up his own admission ticket. His face was full of hope after a storm, an expression with tears of joy.

“I… where’s my ticket?”

The third student felt all over his clothes in confusion. He could not feel out anything. He thought, distracted, and seemed to have realized something. He looked towards Li Yao as his face suddenly turned deathly white.

Li Yao sat cross-legged on the ground. His head was tilted while he carefully examined the artifact box held in his hand with great detail and discovered that there was a semi-translucent crystal card that was as thin as a cicada’s wing lying inside.

Devil Dragon Island was one of the locations of this year’s Limit Challenge Competition.

Li Yao let out a soft whistle as he took out the ticket from the box and channeled the ticket with his mind. A Puji Critter rushed through the air and laughed brightly.

In the VIP lounges was a wave of uproar!

“He... When did he grab the ticket? How did I miss it?” Most of the household heads looked at each other in dismay. They dared not to believe their eyes.

In the first VIP room, Yin Zhou could not hold back a light laugh, nodding his head, “Not bad. This kid’s body is quite powerful, like those body tempering specialists from the Northwest Continent who cultivate in the path of body refinement. And, his fingers are so adept, to be able to snatch away a ticket without anybody noticing. Those fingers are very much suited for crafting and repairing artifacts; they’re simply the hands of a refiner! In these times, what the Circle of Cultivators lacks the most are these sort of multi-talented geniuses. Really, this kid’s not bad!”

At this time, his secretary walked in and stooped down to his ear, saying a few words.

“Oh, so there’s this sort of thing going on?”

Zhou Yin’s gaze drifted, like a gentle stream, towards Helian Ba, “So, word has it that your esteemed son and this student Li Yao have some misunderstanding?

Helian Ba’s eyebrows rose up; his face was filled with an expression of disbelief. “It can’t be, right? I’ve never heard Small Lie mention this before? Although, kids can be quite hot blooded. It’s quite common for them to fight with each other, and often a friendship is born from the exchange of blows. Aren’t many bro-for-life bonds born from rivalries and fights? Or it's quite possible that these two really have a misunderstanding. That’s also not a big deal. Who would still take it personally?”

Zhou Yin gradually nodded his head, “Then that’s fine. Your esteemed son is also a genius that’s quite hard to come by. His strength is superior to Li Yao’s by a factor. Both of these two have promising futures. It’s not worth getting mad over such small matters!”

Helian Ba nodded his head over and over. He spoke with utter sincerity, “Yes. Yes. What Elder Zhou says is absolute! Oh, that’s right. Headmaster Zhao, I’ve heard that student Li Yao’s family circumstances aren’t too good. Doesn’t our school have a dedicated fund to sponsor students in poverty? I propose to withdraw 100,000 credits from this fund, and I will also contribute 100,000 myself for a total of 200,000 credits as a form of a scholarship to give to student Li Yao in praise of his wonderful display in this fighting competition… Elder Zhou, sir, what do you think?”

Zhou Yin chuckled. “These are all matters regarding your school; I don’t want to get involved. In short, this student’s basic potential isn’t bad. I’m quite pleased. Headmaster Zhao, Board-member Helian, and all the guests sitting with me today, everyone has done a great service.”

When the speech concluded, Helian Ba’s heart returned, once again, stuck in his throat. He felt he had just been fished from the bathing room; his back was full of cold sweat.

“LI! YAO!” A terrifying glow flashed in the depths of Helian Ba’s eyes as Helian Ba committed this name to memory.

……

At the main stage of the first school building, Helian Lie and Si Jiaxue stood on opposite sides onstage. They opened their microprocessors to produce holograms in order to find out the names of 10 ticket holders.

“We caused several of the stronger students in our class to suffer from heavy injuries and retire from the competition. We don’t know who the other 8 people are going to be, the lucky ones who can come with us to Devil Dragon Island.” Helian Lie laughed with his head lowered.

Their smiling expressions froze in a flash, like their faces were covered with a mask of botched human skin, and like their faces were beaten viciously.

An expression of faint doubt flew up on Si Jiaxue’s face. Giant question marks rippled in the depths of her clear-water eyes.

“Li Yao?” the two read the name silently. Their tones and implications were as different as black and white.

Chapter 39: The World Of Cultivation, Is as Vast as the Skies and Seas!

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10 days later, on the east coast of the Federation, at the Far East Ocean.

It was early morning. The rising sun filled the day and the red clouds filled the sky. A myriad of golden fish-scale dots glistened and dazzled in an ocean that stretched as far as the eye could see. It was a scene from a fairytale.

Countless schools of fish and oceanic Demon Beasts leapt and fluttered about over the golden sea's surface, creating quite a vitalic sight to behold.

“*HUMM! *HUMM!”

Eight large antigravity spiritual-energy-powered ships were stuffed full of the young geniuses of Floating Spear City and its neighboring dozen towns, carrying them over and looking like eight large sea turtles. They leisurely swept over at an altitude 200 meters above the sea's surface. Their mysterious and complex glyph were vibrating endlessly, radiating all the colors of the rainbow brightly. The turbulent waves of spiritual energy surged and rippled. The ripples spread endlessly, colliding into the sea, creating explosions that sounded like the thunderous roars of large Demon Beasts, and creating white waves of froth.

Li Yao was standing at the edge of the front deck. He clung to the railing, looking downwards.

In the midst of the golden ocean, several dozen fishing boats were cruising lazily all over, scattered and fragmented.

Suddenly, an extremely strange “water bubble” swelled on the surface of the sea not too far away. Soon, a small piece of an utterly-sharp fin emerged, splitting the sea without a sound. It headed towards the several dozen fishing boats at high speeds, attacking.

When the fin reached nearly a 100-meter distance from the fishing boats, the “water bubble” suddenly expanded. A 100-meter long giant monster fish exploded out from the water bubble, leaping suddenly into the air and soaring several dozen meters high. It headed forward with reckless abandon, pouncing towards the fishing boats.

The skin of this monsterish fish was bumpy and full of scabs and was covered in growing coral of five different gorgeous colors. It looked extremely devilish. There was a tumorous growth on its head that formed the face of an incomparably ugly baby. There was even a thick tentacle, on the tip of which was a ball of meat, growing from its forehead. “*Pop” “*Pop” The ball of meat crackled as it shot explosive blue lightning in arcs.

“*WAUM! *WAUM!”

The monsterish fish gaped open its mouth, letting out a strange cry like that of a child. It’s mouth was strangely and incomparably large. The mouth actually split all they way to the middle of its body, and jagged teeth filled to the brim within its gaping mouth. The corpses of rotten oceanic beasts were even seen pierced on top of several dozen of the razor-sharp jagged teeth!

Li Yao did not have the time to yell in surprise. In a flash, it seemed that all the fishing boats had awakened from stupor. They moved at a speed comparable to lightning, splitting in all directions. The enormous, monsterish fish flung itself into the air. It's body, weighing over 10,000 pounds, smashed against the sea once again, creating a giant, sky-towering wave.

The fishing boats that had just been fleeing turned their helms one by one, faintly forming an encirclement. The enormous monsterish fish tried to escape through the air once more but was met with the fishing boats suddenly shooting balls of nets.

These nets appeared to be artifacts crafted and refined by cultivators. They hooked and coiled together mid-air, forming an 8-pointed star pattern that glowed with splendor and radiance. It was an eye-catching and dazzling glyph that soon transformed into a giant net that blotted the sky and covered the earth. It came crashing down, bolting straight towards the cranium of the gigantic monsterish fish!

All of a sudden, the gigantic monster fish thundered with a roar that contained both shock and fury. It's body twisted and rocked wildly, creating raging and storming waves. The still tranquil and peaceful surface of the sea had transformed, in a flash, into a surging battlefield with the aura of death.

But no matter how much the monster fish struggled, it was unable to free itself. Who knows what crafting materials this fishing net was made of, but as soon as it made contact with the ocean's water, it shrunk at lightning speeds to deeply embed itself into the body of the gigantic monster fish. The net bound tightly to the skin, causing the skin to split and chap. The blood that subsequently flowed was a dark green, polluting a large area of the sea's surface, and emitted noxious fishy fumes.

Even Li Yao, at a distance of several hundred meters in the air, was affected by the smell of the noxious fumes, causing his eyes to go faint and his head to be dizzy. He faintly felt a loss of consciousness. It seemed that the blood of this gigantic monster fish contained a natural and terrifying ability to cause people to lose consciousness.

"Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!"

The several dozen fishing ships launched gigantic harpoons simultaneously, piercing deep into the body of the monster fish. With the additional pain, the monster fish went even crazier. The fish thrashed and tried to flee, causing the steel rope that was hooked to the fishing boats to go taut and straight. Several dozen fishing boats were being dragged, rushing forward.

The monster fish rushed several hundred meters, dragging several fishing boats with it and causing them to tip to extreme angles, almost to the point of capsizing. From one of these ships flew out a cultivator suited in a light blue crystal-powered mobile armor that hefted a giant sword on its shoulder.

In a blink of an eye, this cultivator flew to appear right in front of the monster fish. A dangerous arc of lightning flashed across the tentacle on the forehead of the monster fish. With the giant sword in hand, an image of a sword-strike flashed out. The tentacle was actually cleaved cleanly at the base, falling down to the sea!

“TSSSS!...”

The monster fish could not hold back a sharp, blood-curdling cry.

Without waiting for the fish to respond, the cultivator sheathed the sword once again behind his back. His left hand grasped the hilt, while the palm of his right hand faced the forehead of the gigantic monster fish. A ball of light, like a miniature sun, formed in the palm of his hand and expanded at lightning speeds.

“Boom!”

When the ball of light expanded to a size larger than the cultivator’s head, the fingers of his hand spread open. He pushed forcefully, sending the ball of light into the blood gaping wound on the monster fish’s forehead, entering the brains of the monster fish in a flash. Only a world-shaking sound was heard. A geyser of blood spouted a hundred of meters into the air from the blowhole on the top of the monster fish’s brain. Its entire brain had been mashed into a pulp!

The eyes of the monster fish turned to an ash-gray in a flash. It stopped struggling, flipped belly up, and floated without strength on the surface of the sea.

The countless parasitic octopuses, crabs, and tiny Demon Beasts living on its body dispersed, fleeing without direction towards the ocean floor in panic.

“So awesome!”

Li Yao watched with wonder... This was an encirclement hunt that was planned early on. First, the fishing nets and harpoons were used to exhaust the monster fish’s physical strength and life force. Then, the cultivator cleaved its tentacle to create a wound as a weak point. Finally, a fatal strike was sent through the wound into the brain of the monster fish!

“The world of cultivation... really is incomparably vast and filled with unlimited awesomeness!”

Li Yao gazed far into the distance, to his limits. Bottomless red clouds were scattered across the horizon. A red disk of a sun did its best to break through the sea’s surface, to shoot to the sky.

This was a spectacular scene of the vastness and forces of nature, something that Li Yao did not experience often living life in Floating Spear City. He was at peace and relaxed, and his thoughts were like the image seen by his eyes — they flew to the ends of the ocean, towards the sun.

“One day, I will also be a cultivator, like this one. My hand will be holding an awesome military weapon that I personally crafted. I will rush to the great ocean, slaying Demon Beasts and wrestling with the stormy seas!” The tides of Li Yao’s heart moved up and down, heating his blood.

Everyone on this anti-gravity ship was a youth from Floating Spear City. Quite a few people were like him. In twos and threes on the deck of the ship, they were also admiring the wondrous marvel of nature unfolding before their eyes. They had seen the cultivator below slay the Demon Beast, and they cried out, one by one, in surprise.

However, Li Yao understood clearly that he was different than the others within this flock of people. What he displayed in the fight for the ticket was too much of a shock. And, he was someone who was willing to offend people with rich and powerful backing, like Helian Lie. Other people did not dare to wantonly go up and talk to him.

Li Yao enjoyed the peacefulness. He looked down at the exceptionally beautiful marvel, the reflection of the sky on the ocean. His memories flew back to the time in his dream of grandeur. Specks of detail become clearer. No matter what he remembered, no matter how useful it was, he recorded it all to his crystal processor.

This was his secret training technique that he thought of only recently. People’s ability to remember will always have its limits, say nothing of remembering the details of dreams. Li Yao feared that once some details became clear, upon awakening, everything would be forgotten completely.

The memories of Ou Yezi were undoubtedly a precious treasure trove equivalent to the wealth of an entire nation. No matter how mottled any shard of memory recollection was, each shard was capable of providing great benefits.

These days had gone by with Li Yao racking his mind away. He managed to recall many things. He was able to fumble around in the depths of his mind and discover what seemed to be a giant sealed sliding door. He was even able to hear sounds coming inside, the twinkling sounds of a treasure trove.

All he needed was one step, one small step. Then, he would be able to inherit all of Ou Yezi’s memories!

It was right at this time when the faint air of alcohol assailed his nostrils. A chubster with cat-like eyes and splendid clothes leaned against the railing next to Li Yao. This youngster said, “This view really isn’t bad. Isn’t that right, fellow student Li Yao!?”

Li Yao’s pupils suddenly contracted. Nonchalantly, he revoked the hologram of his crystal processor. Filled to the brim with caution, he said, “Aren’t you Zheng Dongming, a friend of Helian Lie?”

Chapter 40: The Different Types of Cultivators

Chapter 40: The Different Types of Cultivators

“Nope, I’m not Helian Lie’s friend. I’m his swine friend.” Zheng Dongming’s nostrils flared as he chuckled in reply.

“Is there a difference?” Li Yao stared blankly.

“To be partners in decadence means… that Helian Lie can find me if he wants to dine food, drink alcohol, race in shuttles, play with girls… Basically, anything that brings pleasure is totally fine. But if it's to help him beat someone up, especially someone who’s true strength has increased by leaps and bounds in a month, and whose Actualization Quotient increased by several dozen percents, this sort of damn awesome person... Then Helian Lie overestimates our friendship way too much!” Zheng Dongming chuckled, nudging over a step closer to Li Yao’s side.

Li Yao calmly pulled some distance away from him. “So, you’re not here to stir up some trouble with me?”

Zheng Dongming nudged over once again. It seemed that he didn’t pick up on Li Yao’s cold attitude. With a composed expression, he said, “Do you know just how many different types of time-established fine wine are in the Federation? Just how many restaurants far and near? Just how many girls have entered into the entertainment industry?”

Li Yao blinked his eyes. He felt that he could not quite keep up with Zheng Dongming’s tempo of speech, “Nope, so what’s the answer?”

With a flick of his finger, Zheng Dongming enumerated a list of numbers, “According to my statistics, the Federation has a total of 1,300 different time-established fine wine, over 300,000 critically acclaimed restaurants that are worth trying… and just last year, counting every new female actress of every major entertainment company, female idols… etc… There are at least 500,000 of them!”

Zheng Dongming paused for a bit to let out a sigh, “You should know that I am the child of rich and power parents with money in explosive amounts. There are that many kinds of alcohol waiting for me to taste. That many fine delicacies for me to eat. That many stunning and devastatingly beautiful women… all I need to do is to cough lightly… and they become like succubi, stripping on their own… stripping myself and pushing me on the bed… What do you think? Why would I give up alcohol to taste, give up delicacies to eat, give up girls to f*ck. Why would I waste my precious time to come cause you trouble?”

Li Yao squinted his eyes, examining Zheng Dongming for half a minute. Suddenly, he started laughing.

Just as Zheng Dongming was interested in Li Yao, at this moment, Li Yao also became a bit interested in Zheng Dongming.

Li Yao shrugged his shoulder. “Sure, you’re not here to stir up trouble. But what did you come here for? Do you want to team up with me? To fight hand-to-hand together on Devil Dragon Island?”

Zheng Dongming said, “That was only my first objective. The primary objective was that I wanted to chat with you. Just simply a conversation. If I were to use terms from the

Ancient Cultivation World to explain, then I would say I came here to ‘Plant a Seed of Karma’. Nothing more!”

“You’re rich and powerful. I’m damned and poor. We aren’t people of the same world. What could we possible chat about?”

“Plenty man~ For example, you are quite a talented individual, fellow student Li Yao. I’ve heard you also have quite some skills in Artifact repair. Then what will it be? Have you thought over which school you want to test into? Which type of Cultivator you want to become?”

“What do you mean ‘type’ of Cultivators? There are even many different types of cultivators?” Actually, Li Yao had never heard of such things. He still believed that there was only one type of Cultivator… and that was those who soared through the skies on flying swords, going around killing. Only that type of Cultivator.

Zheng Dongming had a certain “If you don’t know, then come. Let’s sit down and listen to young master Zheng slowly explain” expression on his face. With utter pride, he glanced an eye at Li Yao. He cleared his throat and said, “In the Ancient Cultivation World of 40,000 years ago, obviously, cultivators weren’t separated into types. There was only one kind of cultivator. At most, there were those who cultivated in the path of demons, the path of fiends… but those don’t count — only the sources of their spiritual energy were different! And 40,000 years later to the Modern Cultivation Era, society has separated different types of jobs more and more finely. Cultivators have also been separated into a total of six major types.”

He extended out his chubby right hand, spreading open his fingers. He wriggled his thumb and said, “The first type is also the most common, the most ordinary, and that is the battle-type cultivator. The battle-type cultivator is the type most inline for the average person’s traditional view of what a cultivator is like. More or less, they fly on flying swords. They travel unhindered all around to fight hand-to-hand with Demon Beasts. You have to know of this type of Cultivator. I don’t need to explain more, right?”

Li Yao nodded his head. Obviously, he understood what the battle-type cultivator was. It's just that he never thought that there were actually 5 different types of cultivators outside of the battle-type cultivator.

What kind of mysteries… do these other five types of cultivators possess?

Zheng Dongming curled his index finger, continuing, “The second type is the ‘admin-type’ of Cultivators. This type of Cultivator may not possess the strongest of spiritual energy, but they possess the best computational ability. They can, in the time it takes for a flint’s spark to flash, do several million, even several tens of millions, even over 100 million of telepathic calculations. From a ginormous endless stream of information, they can discover hidden patterns and structures and even predict the direction of how things will play out. They make the most optimum decisions… I’m sure you won’t understand from the way I’m talking. Let me give you an example. The mayor of a major city with a population of ten million people. A general who commands an entire army. The chief of a large corporation. The head leader of a guild. They all need someone to make grand strategies and run administration. The admin-type Cultivator is most suited for this job.”

Electricity coursed in Li Yao’s mind. Soon, he responded by automatically nodding his head.

There are specialists in business. Someone with battle strength is different from someone who commands a large army. Being able to level a mountain with a single explosive fist is not representative of the ability to become a capable guild leader.

The admin-type cultivator really does have its own value for existence.

Zheng Dongming supplemented with more words, “At present, the person with the highest position in our Star Glory Federation is the Chairman of the Congress, Xu Haoran. He’s an admin-type Cultivator who reached the Yuanying Stage. It's said that his brain underwent enormous development. When his spiritual energy courses through to its utmost limit, he can process over 80 million thoughts telepathically every second! He can be said to be a super-crystal processor in human form! Only with this sort of calculation prowess can one lead an enormous nation such as this!”

Even Speaker Xu Haoran was an admin-type cultivator? Li Yao was forced to have a whole new level of respect for this type.

However, he understood himself unequivocally; he knew he wasn’t made for this. Soon, he returned to being himself and asked, “Then, what’s the third type?”

Zheng Dongming swayed his middle finger and said, “The third type is the research-type cultivator. Just as the name implies, this type of cultivator is similar to the admin-type cultivator, possessing extremely high computational abilities. They are capable of processing tens of thousands of telepathic thoughts in a flash. However, their abilities aren’t as extensive; they like to concentrate on a specific subject…

The research-type cultivator often becomes a doctor, lawyer, university professor, and various scientific advisors in the industry. They are highly respected by the masses.”

Li Yao went “Oh.” When compared to the admin-type cultivator, the research-type cultivator seemed a bit weaker.

Zheng Dongming saw through his disappointment and said seriously, “Don’t feel that the research-type cultivator is useless… The powerful research-type cultivators can compute and run a simulation of a star. They can tell when it will explode and thereby absorb the energy of the star’s explosion for cultivation. They can also deduce the combat style of a powerful ancient demon beast from several billion years ago, just from inspecting a few shards of fossils. Those in love with medicine can fuse man with Demon Beast — to engineer a Beast Soldier with tyrannical strength! Of course, this is illegal in the Federation, but in some of the lawless areas outside of the Federation, there are research-type cultivators with this sort of true strength. They simply exist on the same level as a god!”

Zheng Dongming paused with a sorrowful laugh. In a low voice, he said, “If this is not enough of an explanation for you, think of it this way, 40,000 years ago in the past, the cultivator who did the R&D of the Demon God Virus, causing Spirit Beasts to evolve into Fiend Beasts… He could be considered a research-type cultivator. What do you think? Are you scared yet?”

Chapter 41: The Flagship, The Distant Expanse!

Chapter 41: The Flagship, The Distant Expanse!

Li Yao’s mind went blank; he felt an indescribable chill in the air.

There really was a cultivator who developed the Demon God Virus 40,000 years ago, leading to the rise of the Demon Beast civilization. Humanity was forced to enter into a 30,000 year long Great Dark Age.

Research-type cultivators were certainly existences on the level of devils and gods!

Composing himself, Li Yao continued with a question, “Then what’s the fourth type?”

“The fourth type is the creation-type cultivator. This type has their spiritual energy and computational ability in opposing equilibrium.They also need to have a dexterous pair of hands with bold and unconstrained imagination. In this way, they become experts in fabrication! Actually, this type of cultivator is also seen quite commonly. For instance, the most popular profession in the world of cultivators, the Master Refiner, is precisely a creation-type cultivator! Legends say that the most powerful of creation-type cultivators can craft a warship bigger than the moon, encompassing the starry skies! They can also craft the ‘Star Pulverizing Cannons’ that contain boundless power! One shell can flatten the entire continent!”

Li Yao’s eyelids twitched. Finally, he knew what his own path would be — to be a creation-type cultivator!

Zheng Dongming spread open his five fingers and curled with his pinky, saying, “The fifth type is the culture-type cultivator. Both their spiritual energy and computational abilities may not necessarily be the most outstanding, but they possess the most profound and mysterious of mental powers. At any point in time and space, they can influence someone by their side by enveloping them into their own mental world. Honestly, the culture-type cultivator is the most mysterious type of all. No matter how much the expert researchers tried studying this type, they were all unable to break open the mysteries of this type’s mental powers. Often, the culture-type is found to be the best poet, artist, novelist, and musician!”

Li Yao nodded his head thoughtfully. “Artists? Novelists? It sounds like they don’t have any combat strength!”

Zheng Dongming laughed strangely. “That’s not necessarily true. The common culture-type cultivator may not be the greatest expert in combat, but there are a few utterly terrifying culture-types different from the norm. So much so that no one would dare provoke them rashly, as they are existences with absolute strength! For a rare example, within the cultivator-types, there is a special kind of profession called the Grand Illusionist. Normally when you look at one, you only see an ordinary author, with nothing weird about him. But once he gets angry, his mental world tears and explodes through to reality. He can pull others into a fiction marble of his own creation! Just think about it. The complete laws of nature within that domain field are all created by him. They can call the wind and summon the rain. They’re omnipotent! Even cultivators several stages higher than the Grand Illusionist, once they are caught and forced into the fiction marble, will have great difficulty escaping unharmed.”

“The world of cultivators really is filled with all sorts of fantastic marvels. So there’s this many awesome jobs!” Li Yao thought deeply for a moment and was forced to admit that a Grand Illusionist would be a completely difficult enemy to deal with.

When compared to the most mystical of cultivators, the most ordinary battle-type cultivator could simply be considered a domesticated and harmless upright citizen.

Zheng Dongming’s fingers pinched together, forming a fist. He said, “The six type is the hybrid-type. They possess the characteristics of several different types, allowing them to assume many different important roles. They are rare geniuses known as jack of all trades. Anyways, the world of cultivators is vast and boundless. The more one studies in a subject, the harder they find to master it. The hybrid-type cultivators, who are able to cross over to other realms, are actually few in number. They appear once in awhile, and when they do, the major guilds will always fight over them. And they become major stars that no one dares to approach for fear of getting burned.”

Li Yao’s heart yearned. He felt that he possessed both the potential of being a battle-type and a creation-type. He had the chance to become a hybrid-type cultivator.

However, it's still early to think of these things at the present. It’s better to concentrate on dealing with the Limit Challenge Competition for now.

When Li Yao was lost in thought, the levitating ship vibrated lightly. It’s speed slowed down gradually.

The surrounding students let out gasps of surprise.

Li Yao gazed as far as he can into the distance. The view ahead was completely different from the dead calm of sea with the golden scales of fish in the ocean.

It was unknown when the ocean’s surface turned black, but there were several dozen terrifying gigantic maelstroms up ahead. They cried with ear-splitting roars of thunder. They were like dreadful sea demons opening their dozens of mouths, revealing jagged canine teeth.

And surrounded by layers of these maelstroms was a series of twisted archipelagos, long and twisted. It looked like a flood dragon in the middle of the ocean, thrashing with all its might in the raging waves and stormy seas.

This was their destination, Devil Flood Dragon Island. Arena No. 571 of the Limit Challenge Competition!

…What caused the numerous students to gasp in surprise wasn’t the figure of Devil Flood Dragon Island, but rather the demonic maelstroms that spun around the island, and even more so, the black ocean with its raging and bellowing waves.

And floating calmly above all this... was a gigantic crystal battleship half covered by the clouds!

This was a completely old, out-dated, dilapidated, yet awe inspiring, super heavy-class crystal battleship that radiated profoundness. It’s total length was over 7,800 meters, weighed over 63 million tons, and was manned by 132,510 active duty navy personnel. And manning the critical position of handling the ship were 300 refinement stage cultivators. It was only in this way that this ship was able to operate without issues.

It looked like this crystal battleship had been dealt heavy damage from its appearance. It was riddled with scars and was full of holes. There were marks of explosions and corrosion left on its exterior. Quite a few places were mottled, fragmented, and in pieces. Of special note was the forward deck and bridge at the front of the battleship. It was smashed through even more thoroughly, exposing a terrifyingly enormous gaping hole. It gave off a feeling of a regretful giant bellowing towards the skies with a giant open mouth.

It had already lost its propulsion power, so it had been floating here for a very very long time. Enough time for the ocean wind to erode its armour, leaving the traces of a countless number of years. Even it’s original shocking gaping wound had become a part of it. It had become a fossil, a monument, a gravestone.

Only… On some different mental plane, in a spiritual world unseen by the naked eye, it was quite like an awe-inspiring ferocious tiger, a giant dragon soaring over the highest of heavens. It gave of a unapproachable radiance of coldness!

“It’s the Federal Army’s eternal flagship — the Distant Expanse!” Even Li Yao was stunned by the majestic aura of this crystal battleship. His breath was stifled involuntarily.

The Distant Expanse was born 500 years ago in the Federation. The Federation mobilized practically their entire Cultivator work force to craft this master battleship!

500 years ago during the Great Blood Ocean War, the Distant Expanse acted as the flagship for the Federal Army. It fought in the fierce battle against millions of Demon forces of the Far East Demon Kingdom at the Far East Ocean.

The fate of the Federation depended on the outcome of the Great Blood Ocean War. Because they were able to secure victory in this war… Because they were able to annihilate the Far East Demon Kingdom… The Star Glory Federation was able to obtain ultimate-supremacy in the Heaven's Origin Sector. The fate of the nation grew more prosperous with each passing day!

However, even though the Distant Expanse was able to sink the enemy Heaven's Field, it also suffered critical damage and fell into the ocean. It was only 80 years ago that the Federation was able to salvage it to the surface; however, it unable to be used as a battleship.

The Federation took this crystal battleship and renovated it into a war museum and a patriotic education base. It would float forever atop the battlefield in which it fought.

However, popular legends say that although the Far East Demon Kingdom was annihilated, the Demon Emperor did not actually perish. He hides still, deep in the depths of the endless ocean. He continues to gather the souls of his Demon Soldiers that perished on the battlefield as a futile attempt to one day launch a counteroffensive, to come back even stronger.

And so, this was the reason why this area of the ocean has turned into a place where evil winds blow with fury. A place covered with maelstroms. A ghastly and terrifying sheet of deathly darkness… This was all caused by the Demon Emperor on the ocean floor wanting to create havoc.

So, the Federation took the Distant Expanse and had it hover in the air where it had fought back in the day. Year round, tour groups of hot-blooded youngster came and toured around, stimulated with vigorous thoughts of war and valor. These thoughts condensed into an Immortal National Spirit of Star Glory Federation, which would suppress the Demon Emperor for eternity and extinguish the millions of Demon Souls completely.

“Everyone, quickly look! There’s something in the air!” a student cried in astonishment.

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Author’s words:

Under everyone’s directions, I saw many friends in the comment section suggest that I add a some postscript to the end, to interact with everyone more.

Teacher Cow did think of this before, but after some deliberation I felt that this method of chasing more readers every day, would probably not make a difference. From the perspective of the general reader, if I were reading and am engrossed in the chapter, then suddenly the author jumps out with some gibberish and nonsense... I think this would have some influence on the reading experience. So Teacher Cow will still continue to keep comments/statements in this work to a minimum.

Everyone, if there’s any comments, just leaving them in the review section is fine. Teacher Cow has seen them. When I have time I will exchange words with everyone for sure.

Today I mainly want to give everyone an update. At the present, my current release schedule is not very fast. Actually, Teacher Cow’s speed can be considered so-so. I can write 8000-1000 and even 12,300 words in a day when I’m inspired.

However, my current energy has been allocated to the overarching story behind the scenes, delicate outlines, and also supporting framework, in preparation to bring together into a rough draft. So, when I don’t have any suggestions, I have no choice but to control my writing speed. This is also for the sake of the overarching framework, so that it can explode forth often. I hope everyone can understand.

Teacher Cow is a newcomer. This book may not be as dazzling and flashy as the top most popular books on the ranking list, but our comment section here is quite lively. There are quite a few friends who have offered valuable suggestions. Teacher Cow is deeply moved. I will earnestly write a good book for sure. Of course if you can everyone, hit the recommend button and etc. But, what’s still important is to make reviews in the review section often. Teacher Cow will look at every comment. Everyone communicate with Teacher Cow, and Teacher Cow will be very satisfied as well. This time I thank everyone for the support. Teacher Cow also wishes for the day when the over-arching framework is completed, and open an all-fire bombardment!

(My novel, Forty Millenniums of Cultivation, contains a lot of new content on the official Wechat platform~ There’s also a 100% lottery with big prizes for everyone! Open Wechat and hit the upper right ‘+ Friend’ button. Search for public ID ‘qdread’ and follow! Speed is of the essence!)

Chapter 42: Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars!

Chapter 42: Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars!

Li Yao stared as far as he could into the distance and was met with only the gradual projection of a gigantic hologram amidst the furious rolling waves of clouds. The hologram expanded in all directions at lightning speed. Soon, it had spread to a length of dozens of kilometers!

On the hologram appeared a blood-like setting sun, stormy winds and thunder, and a thousand crystal battleships interweaved and amongst each other. They mutually collided, tore apart, and were engulfed in explosions in a bitter battle!

“It’s 500 years ago during the Great Blood Ocean War!” Li Yao’s spirit was shaken.

The hologram soon displayed upon its screen. The stirring and tragic scene of the Distant Expanse fiercely ramming into the Wild Heaven.

Wild Heaven was the Far East Demon Kingdom’s flagship. Rumor has it that the skeletons and corpses of a hundred of giant Demon Beasts from the bottom of the ocean were catalyzed by demonic techniques to condense and refine into the incomparably large skeletal battleship.

Its total length exceeded 20 kilometers and its weight reached 190 million tons. It was simply an ugly, levitating mountain peak. It gave off a feeling of indestructibility and dread.

Even the Distant Expanse was like a dingy boat when compared to the Wild Heaven, disintegrating with only a slight bump.

But when faced with this powerful enemy, the Distant Expanse increased its speed with no thoughts of turning back. It went faster and accelerated constantly towards the hardest front deck of the Wild Heaven, bursting with all its strength.

Clearly, the Wild Heaven discovered the intentions of the Distant Expanse. The countless acid sacks on its body, demonic energy cannons, and flaming poison glands all charged up. They fired out hundreds of acidic liquids, poisonous juices, and demonic lasers. They cleaved and struck, bombarding against the spiritual energy force fields of the Distant Expanse.

The Distant Expanse was on the brink of collapse from the bombardment; its spiritual energy force fields went dark. The ship could break into pieces at any moment.

In response, quite a few of the surrounding battleships of mankind leapt forward one by one with reckless abandon for the sake of holding off the attacks on the Distant Expanse by the Wild Heaven.

The weights of these crystal battleships were rather small in comparison, and their defenses were weak. Most of them corroded completely after eating a few acid shots and poisonous juices, falling into the ocean and taking its entire crew and the whole ship to death.

But even more of humanity’s battleships blotted the sky in valiant defiance against death, as if they were all crazed. They formed the strongest shield to protect the Distant Expanse!

Finally…

The Distant Expanse and the Wild Heaven were less than 500 meters apart. For two battleships of this caliber in size, it was like a distance of a hair!

The Distant Expanse no longer powered their spiritual energy force fields. All spiritual energy were diverted into driving the propulsion arrays. The back of the battleship exploded forth with a violent red glow. The ship’s speed increased to another level, and the ship rammed into the demonic energy force fields of the Wild Heaven!

“TSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS------”

Like a meteor breaking into the atmosphere, the friction between the Distant Expanse and the demon force fields of the Wild Heaven created great amounts of radiation and heat. A scarlet red glow enveloped the Distant Expanse. The Distant Expanse had turned into… a radiating spear!

It was too late!

No matter how the Wild Heaven would dodge, it would be too late!

No matter how much firepower the Wild Heaven would pour onto the Distant Expanse, it would be too late!

On the bridge of the Wild Heaven, no matter how much the Far East Demon Emperor bellowed in rage, no matter how much he roared in fury, no matter how maliciously he cursed against the crazed elite of humanity in front of him, it was too late!

With its sky-piercing aura, the radiating spear stabbed fiercely into the forward deck of the Wild Heaven. The Distant Expanse pierced two-thirds deep into the body of the ship before setting the propulsion array at the back of the ship to overload. Bright balls of light exploded forth like fireworks. It was the final moment of the Distant Expanse.

What followed was a world-shaking series of chain reaction explosions.

The awe-inspiring and world-dominating Wild Heaven was like a body that lost its soul. Fumes of smoke were going off all over. Fire leaked out everywhere. The skeletal structure of the warship began to collapse, and the broken pieces fell one by one into the ocean.

……

As the battle ended, the projection gradually faded away The blood-stained ocean turned into blue skies and white clouds once more.

In the final scene shown by the hologram, the setting sun and blood gradually condensed into three paragraphs of scarlet red words:

In this battle, the 13,250 crewmates, including 300 Refinement stage cultivators, 50 Foundation Building stage cultivators, and the Core Formation stage cultivator who served as captain, all perished. Not one survived!”

“And there were an additional 110,000 crewmates and 4352 cultivators who perished with them!”

“What they created would forever be a powerful nation of humanity… The Star Glory Federation!”

And in this context, a red flag of monumental importance drifted carefree in the wind. It unraveled slowly, revealing a giant golden dragon that bared its fangs in the middle of the red flag. The giant dragon was seated upon a translucent crystal ball, and in this pearl were nine glistening and dazzling five-pointed stars.

The National Flag of Star Glory Federation… The Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars Flag!

The nine stars represented the first nine cultivator guilds that founded the Federation. The giant dragon represented human civilization’s stand against the river of stars — their great ambition to conquer the cosmos!

When they saw these three paragraphs, when they saw the dark-red blood-like national flag, the hearts of all these youths became stirred, overwhelmed by emotion. Their blood fired up heatedly, and someone unknown first shouted:

“Long live the Federation!”

“Long live cultivators!”

“The human race shines bright! We contend for the sea of the stars! Long live mankind!”

“We humans are the strongest battle-race in the endless sea of the stars! We will forever be the masters of this cosmos! There are no existences capable of stopping us! We will fight those who dare hinder us to the bloody end!”

“Long live the Federation! Long live cultivation! Long live the human race!”

All the youths on the eight anti-gravity ships had stirred into patriotic cries in just a moment.

As if feeling the purest of fever and willpower from the youths, the once grave-still Distant Expanse lightly trembled all of a sudden, and its entire body bubbled forth with a faint gold glow, transforming into a golden spear that stabbed fiercely towards the Devil Dragon Island below!

“Whoosh!”

Just when the golden spear pierced the “head” of Devil Dragon Island, the entire plane of the black ocean let out a weak jolt. It seemed that fragmented miserable shrieks could be heard coming from the ocean. And the maelstroms that dotted around Devil Dragon Island also seemed to freeze all of a sudden.

He wasn’t sure if it was his imagination, but Li Yao felt the air become a bit fresher and cleaner.

“Born to become a dragon. Died to become a monument. Forever defending the gate to the nation. Forever guarding the rivers and mountains!” These words had emerged in Li Yao’s mind.

“Looks likes the legends are true. This flagship of the Federation, the Distant Expanse, really has been refined into a gigantic artifact. To forever tower at the shores of the Far East Ocean, suppressing the destiny of the Far East Fiend Kingdom!”

Seeing the sight of the Distant Expanse becoming bigger and bigger, Li Yao felt a sort of calling indescribable from the bottom of his heart.

“At first I didn’t know what a Master Refiner was supposed to be. But, now I know. Only when one can craft a national treasure on the scale of the Distant Expanse can one truly be recognized as a Master Refiner!”

“If I can craft such an artifact with my own hands… Even if I’m just helping out by doing some simple maintenance… It would be of the highest glory for a Refiner!”

“I want to become this sort of Refiner. To be able to craft artifacts like this!” A torrent of emotion surged in Li Yao’s heart. He gripped so rigidly to the railing that his hands began to sweat. It seemed as if even the palms of his hands were on fire!

Author’s words:

(My novel, Forty Millenniums of Cultivation, contains a lot of new content on the official Wechat platform~ There’s also a 100% lottery with big prizes for everyone! Open Wechat and hit the upper right ‘+ Friend’ button. Search for public ID ‘qdread’ and follow! Speed is of the essence!)

Chapter 43: Sky Fantasia Academy

Chapter 43: Sky Fantasia Academy

“Thump”

The eight anti-gravity ships gradually moved into the docking bay of the Distant Expanse, like tinner fleas jumping on the back of an ocean turtle. The difference in size between the two was enormous.

Li Yao was still in a revering state of mind when he jumped onto the Distant Expanse.

The present day Distant Expanse had already been remodeled into a war museum. As soon as he stepped on the front deck, Li Yao saw an enormous bronze statue, engraved upon which was a navy officer having the expression of resolute determination. One hand was on a long sword, while the other hand pointed to a distance. He seemed to be in the middle of a battle roar.

Even though it was just a statue, there was an absolute aura of courage from that of bloody battles. Li Yao could even faintly hear the crackle of lightning and roaring of thunder coming from within the bronze statue:

“Heaven’s Field has been sunk!”

This was the first, and the last, appointed captain of the Distant Expanse. A statue of the Core Formation stage cultivator — Ping Yuantao.

There were even nine words engraved at the base of the statue, a famous quote said by this Ping Yuantao.

Legend has it that Ping Yuantao entered a cultivator guild when he was a kid. During those days, the Heaven’s Origin sector was still a paradise for Demon Beasts. Humanity could only live a bitter life full of struggles in the towns and cities controlled by the cultivator guilds. The Star Glory Federation had just been founded, and so nobody really took the Federation for a real nation. For the sake of mutual convenient communication, the nine cultivation guilds established a lax organization.

At that time, Ping Yuantao and a bunch of other youths entered together into cultivator guilds. The elders of the guilds asked them according to convention, “Why do you want to cultivate?”

The youths chatted and bustled lively. They chatted with vigor. Some said they wanted glory, riches, and beautiful women. Some said they never wanted to grow old, to be free and unconstrained for all eternity. Some said they wanted to learn a hundred magical abilities, a thousand transformations, so that they could do whatever they want and move freely within heaven and earth. There were also some who wanted to slay and destroy the Demons and Devils, to protect their friends and family.

And when it came to be Ping Yuantao’s turn, he said nine words:

“I cultivate so the Federation can rise and tower!”

A hundred years later, Ping Yuantao gave up his life for the sake of these nine words, resulting in a glorious and splendid ending. And these nine words become the motto of countless cultivators in the Star Glory Federation, encouraging them to pursue and manifest destiny, slay Demon Beasts, and make the Star Glory Federation the strongest human nation in the entire Heaven's Origin Sector!

"Way too cool!"

Even though he had learned of Ping Yuantao's story from textbooks on more than one occasion and had heard of these words before, when he saw these words on the Distant Expanse, he couldn't help feeling excited. It's said that these words were written personally by Ping Yuantao here. And so, the significance was obviously different. Quite a few students were stirred into shouts and cries. They continuously came over to take a selfie with the bronze statue of Ping Yuantao as a souvenir, posting the picture to the web to show off to their friends.

Li Yao also wanted to take a selfie, but Zheng Dongming actually dragged him away, walking directly inside, saying that he wanted to take him to check out some commotion.

"The statutes right here won't run away. We need to attend the big occasion early. If we're late, we won't be able to squeeze in!"

"What big occasion?"

"Every time before the Limit Challenge Competition, the Nine Elite Universities will hold a conference outside of the arena, an 'Interactive Exchange Convention'. The intention is to show off how awesome the Nine Elites are to the exam candidates and to attract the interest of self-candidates of genius cultivators. There is a total of nine booths where cultivators from the Nine Elites will directly exchange words with the exam candidates. The occasion is quite chaotic. We need to get in quick!" Zheng Dongming said, being familiar.

“Cultivators from the Nine Elites?” Li Yao’s eyes shined with a bright light. He didn’t need Zheng Dongming to drag him, suddenly increasing his own speed.

They entered the first holding of the ship. That large space was packed with over a thousand students. The bustling of human voices was in the air, creating a lively atmosphere.

The entire hall was into nine separate areas, and atop of each area hung the names of each university in the air.

Zheng Dongming looked left and right before pulling Li Yao to walk towards the area of the Sky Fantasia Academy.

“Why do you want to go to Sky Fantasia Academy’s booth first? Is their comprehensive true strength the strongest?” Li Yao didn’t quite understand. It looked like Sky Fantasia Academy had the most people crowded by their booth.

“Who gives a damn if their true strength is strong or not! Sky Fantasia Academy is the only school of the Nine Elites to specialize in educating culture-type cultivators. They produce large amounts of beautiful women! The quality of their women is good, and they all are super cultured!” Zheng Dongming swallowed a mouthful of saliva. His two eyes glittered with light.

The two people had just entered the crowd with extreme difficulty when they were met with Sky Fantasia Academy’s extremely plain booth. A few written works were hanging on all sides of the walls. One corner to the side had a few university students squinting their eyes, shaking and swaying their heads, being immersed in a world of music. The other side even had a youngster with unkempt hair and stubbled beard trembling all over; he was in the middle of reciting a poem.

And in front of them was someone wearing a white robe. Her black hair reached her waist to form an image of a classical beauty. She was in the middle of pouring her heart into a painting.

Li Yao watched, following her sparkling, jade-like fingertips. He discovered that her painting style was completely different from that of a goddess. The strokes were painted in an utterly violent and sharp manner. She painted out a raging sea with stormy waves, in which a small dilapidated fishing boat was struggling against an eight-clawed ocean monster.

“The painting’s not bad~...”

Although Li Yao didn’t understand the fine arts, he still felt a hair-raising aura coming from this scroll painting. He nodded lightly, and he heard the faint sound of waves coming from the corner of his ear.

The sound of waves?

Li Yao blanked out. All of a sudden, he found himself standing on the front deck of a violently shaking small fishing boat.

In his surroundings was a berserk ocean that stretched as far as the eye could see. Li Yao raised his head and saw the mountain-like skull of the eight clawed ocean monster just above the boat. A pair of blood red monster eyes stared rigidly at him. Those eyes seemed to give off a soul-sucking aura!

“AHH!”

Li Yao’s hairs stood on end, and he could not hold back a scream.

This scream seemed to shatter the illusion. His mind returned to his body that was already covered in overflowing cold sweat, waking up from a different world.

He looked to his side. Zheng Dongming was also pale and his two legs were trembling.

“You should know just how fearsome culture-type cultivators are now right? This beautiful woman did not have bad intentions, and the painting is only half completed, yet it was able to pull us into a terrifying illusion. If she were to actively attack and were to use a completed painting, do you feel like you can still escape?” said Zheng Dongming with a trembling voice.

Li Yao let out a long sigh of relief and thought back to the moment inside the illusion. The scene where the eight clawed ocean monster glared fixed at him.

Even now, he didn’t believe that the cause of this terrifying illusion was actually from just a half completed painting.

Indeed, culture-type cultivators are extremely terrifying existences.

“*Sigh… Although there are plenty of beautiful women, all these culture-type cultivators are lunatics. We cannot tease them rashly. We can only gaze from afar. We can’t disrespect and toy with them! Horrible. Just look at the bastard reciting poems over there. His face is flushed red with excitement. He’s reciting to the point of forgetting his surroundings. When his mental powers explode, who knows what sort of terrifying illusion he will create. Let's get the hell out of here. It would be bad if we get pulled into his illusion. I really don’t want to enter the mental world of an ugly guy.” Zheng Dongming dragged Li Yao, squeezing out of the crowd. They arrived at the second booth of the universities.

(My novel, Forty Millenniums of Cultivation, contains a lot of new content on the official Wechat platform~ There’s also a 100% lottery with big prizes for everyone! Open Wechat and hit the upper right ‘+ Friend’ button. Search for public ID ‘qdread’ and follow! Speed is of the essence!)

Chapter 44: A Collision of Essence Particles!

Chapter 44: A Collision of Essence Particles!

When compared to Sky Fantasy Academy’s booth, it was quite obvious that there weren’t as many students congregated here. The sign written on their booth read the words “Star Nebula University”. A white ashen, bearded old man stood next to an enormous model artifact. In high spirits, he faced several dozen students to explain as his spittle flew all over:

“Each and every student here is an elite youth of the Federation, people who are determined to become cultivators! What is most important you may ask? In the eyes of a cultivator? And that is, of course, to absorb and refine the spiritual energy from the heaven and earth! Whether everyone knows or not, the spiritual energy we speak of, what is it? Fundamentally? I’ll tell everybody. The fundamental nature of spiritual energy is that it's an elementary particle called a ‘spiritual energy particle’. We, Star Nebula University, are the sole and only university who are doing research on the spiritual energy particle, the strongest in the Federation! Each and every student, please watch this demonstration!”

The white-bearded old man pointed towards the model which had quite a strange and bizarre shape. Its core was a large tube in the shape of a ring, sealed from beginning to end; it looked like a metal tire.

After a short period of time, a glowing ball of light came into being at different times from the opposite sides of the ring. They headed to the center at the speed of a flint’s spark. They collided violently together with a “Bang”. Thousands of flaming stars set off like fireworks; it was dazzling to the extreme.

The white-bearded old man was extremely proud as he spoke:

“This is the ‘Spiritual Energy Particle Collider’ crafted by our Star Nebula University. The spiritual energy generators on both ends, in theory, can simulate the strikes of two Yuanying stage cultivators using all their strength. The two colossal energies collide directly with each, creating a large explosion, making it highly probably for a few discrete Spiritual Energy Particles to leap forth for capture in the end. Soon, we will be able to unlock the mysteries of spiritual energy! What do you all think, students? If you want to crack open the final mystery of spiritual energy, then apply for our Star Nebula University!”

“So it was like this all along! All this time, spiritual energy is fundamentally a type of elementary particle!”

“A spiritual energy particle collider! It really is amazing! I want to apply for Star Nebula University!”

All the students were in awe of the lecture given by the bearded old man, and so they discussed amongst themselves heatedly.

Even Li Yao had a ripple of emotion stir in his mind. He felt that choosing Star Nebula University would not be a bad choice.

Right at this moment, an ear-splitting voice came ringing ferociously from behind him. “Each and every student, do not be fooled by all means by the words of this old geezer. They’re all completely false!”

A tall silhouette parted the crowd, walking on stage.

This person was eight feet tall. His skin was tanned and dark. His hair was grizzled. And on his sternum, he wore the crest of the “Federation’s First Military College”.

Immediately, the face of the white-bearded old man went scarlet with rage. “Zhao Tiange, why aren’t you staying at your school’s booth like a good boy!? What the hell did you come to our Star Nebula University for!?”

Zhao Tiange snickered and his tiger gaze swept over the many students. He said, “Zhong Boya, I could not stand to watch you use these preposterous fanatical and absurd words and demonstrations to lead these people astray. What do you mean that the fundamental nature of spiritual energy is the spiritual energy particle? Simply ridiculous! All students! You all must not be misled by his words. There still hasn’t been an authoritative accepted theory for the fundamental nature of spiritual energy in the circle of academia! However, I can tell everyone here with absolute certainty that spiritual energy is not a particle, but an inseparable wave! Spiritual energy particles do not exist! It’s spiritual energy waves that do exist!”

“How absurd! How laughable! You’re simply the biggest laughingstock under the heavens! Zhao Tiange. If you want to spew out rubbish, go fart in your own booth. Don’t fart at my place!” the white-bearded old man Zhong Boya seemed to have a violent temperament as he had howled back in rage.

Contrary to his military background, Zhao Tiange was not indignant and did not rise to anger. He said composed, “In rational debates of logic, there is no need to insult the other person. Professor Zhong Boya, you spoke so heatedly just a moment ago. Why don’t you show these students just how many discrete spiritual energy particles were captured by your Star Nebula University’s Spiritual Energy Particle Collider?

As soon as these words were spoken, Zhong Boya’s expression was like that of a chicken whose neck was stuffed and choked; he was immediately struck speechless. The wrinkled old face turned deathly pale. He hemmed and hawed for a period of time before saying, “At present, we have not captured any discrete spiritual energy particles, but according to our analysis, this is because our Spiritual Energy Particle Collider is not at a high enough level; the Yuanying stage strikes it emulates does not create a sufficiently powerful explosion. As soon as we can simulate the strikes of two Spirit Transformation Stage experts giving their all, the resulting collision will produce the discrete spiritual energy particle with absolute certainty!”

“THAT’S ENOUGH!”

Zhao Tiange glared with his eyeballs. The complete iron blooded aura of a military personnel burst forth as he shouted, “For the sole sake of crafting this Spiritual Energy Particle Collider to be able to emulate the strikes of Yuanying stage experts, just how much funding did your school ask and receive from the Federation? To cause our few military colleges to live on scraps for several of years! And now, you even say that your Spiritual Energy Particle Collider needs to emulate the strikes of Spirit Transformation Stage experts at their full strength? Then I’m afraid that even 10 years of the Federation’s budget won’t be enough for you! This much money is enough to craft the military several main battleship forces, or to craft several tens of thousands of crystal tanks and arm several battle platoons to flatten the Fiend Beast Wasteland! The Federation gave you this much money, and you can’t even capture a single fart particle. Yet, you still dare to beg for more money? Indeed, the money would have been better off going to feed our military Spirit Beasts. At least they can look after and protect our yards!”

The shame and humiliation caused the white-bearded old man’s face to be flushed red. With his loss of face, his anger was at its peak. And the imposing aura of Zhao Tiange further antagonized him. The white-bearded man suddenly exploded. Veins leapt up and beat wildly all over his body. His entire body expanded, in a flash, by a fold. With violent palpitations, he said, “Zhao Tiange! Any further words are pointless! It would be better for us to go outside to settle this!”

Zhao Tiange retreated a step, staying away from the burning imposing aura of Zhong Boya. With a sneer, he said, “Zhong Boya, aren’t you a professor of Star Nebula University? Do you think you’re a barbarian of the Ancient Cultivator Civilization of 40,000 years ago? Academic disagreements, debates, and arguments are a truth that will always exist throughout eternity. What’s the point of destroying my fleshly body? Even if you crush and grind my bones to ash and shatter my soul so that I will be unable to reincarnate for eternity… Spiritual energy… will always be a wave! Never will it turn into some bullshit particle!”

These words were like a bolt of lightning that struck Zhong Boya motionless in a flash. Only after much time passed did his entire body crumble and shrink down, like leaking ball of air. With a wave of his hand, he said, “Fellow Daoist Zhao, what you said is absolutely correct. Arguments about the truth have nothing to do with the physical strengths of both parties. It was my fault. I nearly fell into madness! My loss of self-control just now was due to my lack of self-cultivation and maturity. It has nothing to do with the path I persist in. Spiritual energy is a type of elementary particle for certain. In the end, we of Star Nebula University will prove it! Each and every student, if you approve of my theory, then you can stay behind and we can discuss it some more. If you feel that Fellow Daoist Zhao’s words are correct, then you can go walk along with him. Walk to the booth of the First Military College and listen to his lecture.”

“I have no sort of lecture. The Federation’s First Military College emphasizes practical application. We don’t have excess resources to go research the mysteries of the Spiritual Energy Wave. All we can do is slay Demon Beasts and defend our nation! Each and every student, if you’re willing to come stand side to side with me on the battlefield to slay Demon Beasts, then you might as well come with and join our cause for defending the nation! We need hot-blooded men!”

Chapter 45: Debating on the Grand Dao

Chapter 45: Debating on the Grand Dao

Finishing his words, Zhao Tiange faced Zhong Boya with a nod and turned around to leave.

The vast majority of youths followed Zhao Tiange. Only a small portion of students was enraptured by the Spiritual Energy Particle Collider. They stayed behind to ask Zhong Boya more deeply.

“That was close! I even thought that these two might start a fight!” This contention was largely outside of Li Yao’s realm of expectation. His face was covered in a cold sweat. Fear still lingered in his heart when he had spoken.

These two university professors were at least at the Building Foundation stage. They broke out with all their strength to produce an imposing air that was absolutely frightening. This was not something that Li Yao could bear.

“Who said this wouldn’t happen! , Cultivators, Daoists. The character has the meaning of Truth. Every Cultivator pursues their own Truth. If truths are different, to the extent of being completely opposite, then of course there will be a collision of truths with sparks flying everywhere. There is an absolute need to demolish the opposing party! Fortunately there’s a lot of people here today; both sides were able to control themselves. If this was a different situation with no one around in all directions, the two parties will really go and have a bout. This is trivially common!” Zheng Dongming said with utter sorrow.

“They would be this extreme? They would go so far just for a theory?” Li Yao smacked his tongue.

“Of course they would go this far. Cultivators, or ‘’, means to Cultivate ‘’ in the Truth ‘.’ To explain in terms from the Ancient Cultivation World, this ‘Truth’ is our Dao-Heart. Our heart’s path. When our Truth becomes refuted by others, when doubts arise in our hearts, then our hearts become swayed and becomes an ‘Unguarded Dao-heart,’ making it easy to fall to madness. The cultivation of the self is then halted. In serious cases, their world collapses, their cultivation falls wildly, and they become cripples! Legends say that there once was a strong Monad cultivator who debated with others on the Dao. His opponent brought out an irrefutable fact, thoroughly demolishing the Truth he persevered in. The Monad exploded! And his heart became unguarded! An external demonic influence took advantage of the opening and entered his heart, transforming him on the spot into a demonic cultivator! And this demonic cultivator quite nearly caused a great calamity! And so, when cultivators debate over the Truth, it’s more like they’re debating over the greater Truth, the Great Dao. Only the brave can forge ahead and press forward. They cannot shrink back by even half a step!” said Zheng Dongming with utter graveness.

Li Yao looked pensive as he nodded his head.

Indeed, today his world has been broadened. He received so much knowledge on the world of cultivators, but there was a bit that he still did not understand.

“Oh, that’s right. At the end, Zhong Boya addressed Zhao Tiange as Fellow Daoist Zhao. What does that mean? After Zhao Tiange heard this, I saw his attitude become gentler. He even sent his regards to Zhong Boya with a nod before he left. It seemed that he wasn’t that hostile anymore.”

Zheng Dongming explained, “Fellow Daoist is an honorific used in the world of cultivators. The meaning is, ‘I may not agree with your concept, but I recognize that you and I are the same. We both pursue the truth and advance forward on the Great Dao. Our truths may be different, but we both have the same kind of heart — the kind that pursues the truth. Therefore, we are friends, though ones who walk alone on our respective Great Daos’. And that is the ‘Fellow Daoist’. It is a very formal address! When Zhong Boya addressed his opponent as a Fellow Daoist, he gave goodwill on his own accord. Zhao Tiange also did not want to escalate the matter, so he naturally went with the flow and walked off the stage.”

Zheng Dongming, upon seeing Li Yao muttering to himself and not speaking up, laughed and asked, “What is it? Are you interested in Star Nebula University?”

Li Yao thought seriously to himself. He shook his head while saying, “It looks like Star Nebula University’s expertise lies more in the underlying theory in their academic subjects. I have never received a proper education, so my fundamentals are on the weaker side. Also, I am not interested in theory. Is there a university that focuses more on practical applications?”

“Focuses more on practical applications? Of course there is. Let’s go have a look at Empyrean Capital School of Medicine!”

The two walked to the next booth — to the Empyrean Capital School of Medicine!

All who appeared here were doctors wearing white gowns and surgical masks. The air was also filled with a faint acidic smell of disinfectant.

A large glass chamber was placed in the middle of the booth. Confined within was a tiger shaped Demon Beast. It was unknown what sort of secret technique bound it down, but the Demon Beast continued to maintain a frozen state; it could not wag its tail even by a tiny bit.

Its eyeballs whirled and turned chaotically, flickering occasionally with a glow that contained both great panic and savage brutality. This was the only thing that showed that the Demon Beast was a living creature.

A few nervous white-gowned doctors were bustling in front of the console. After a short time later…

A white-gowned doctor lifted his head. With a bright voice, he said, “All students, please watch!”

Thousands upon thousands of traces of dazzling sword flashes flickered in an instant within the glass chamber. Everyone was incited to the point of tears. Quite a few people were even forced to take small steps back.

When everyone was able to see the glass chamber again, they discovered that the savage aura within the tiger-shaped Demon Beast’s eyes had already been frozen.

“Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!”

From head to tail, several dozens! Over a hundred! Over a thousand! Thin red lines appeared on the Demon Beast’s body. It was crazy! Incorporeal blades of air had cut the Demon Beast into several thousand pieces!

A white-gowned doctor spoke unenthusiastically, “What is currently going on is our Empyrean Capital School of Medicine’s ‘Demon Beast Slicing Research Project’. We take a Demon Beast and slice it into 0.01 millimeter thick sections. We then use telepathy to scan each section. From this, we are able to clearly determine the composition of the Demon Beast’s body. Taking this data and uploading it to a crystal processor, we are then able to create a complete simulation of a virtual Demon Beast.”

“By going through this process, we are able to know the Demon Beast’s habits, characteristics, and battle strength like knowing the back of one’s hand. And, we are also able to conduct all the various test we could ever want in the Great Illusionary Land without fear of being injured or killed by the Demon Beast.”

“At present, we already have 98 major classes, consisting of 1352 different types, of Demon Beasts in this Demon Beast Slicing Research Project. All students, if you’re interested, then you can apply for our Empyrean Capital School of Medicine… Our mission isn’t simply to help the dying and heal the sick — it’s primarily to exterminate demons and Demon Beasts!”

Zheng Dongming met Li Yao with a wink. “What do you think of this one? But first, I want to remind you. The minimum required score for the Empyrean Capital School of Medicine is very high. It’s pretty much the highest required of the Nine Elites. Even I have no guarantee to test in.”

Li Yao scratched his head, having some hesitation.

There were so many universities, each with their own world shocking miraculous marvels and exterminating techniques. But when compared to the university of his dreams, it seemed that there was still just that small difference in feeling.

“Within our Federation, is there a university that focuses heavily on creating Artifacts? I’m not talking about Artifacts such as the Spiritual Energy Particle Collider, but rather for military use. For example, flying shuttles, flying swords, crystal rail cannons, crystal-powered mobile armors … These sorts of War Artifacts.”

“Of course, there is. Just ahead is the Deep Sea University. In the Federation, they are the strongest in the field of crafting and refining. That place is known as the ‘Refiner’ Holy Land!’ Zheng Dongming pointed to a booth not too far away.

“The Holy Land for Refiners!”

A flame ignited and blazed within the depths of Li Yao’s eyes, transforming into a myriad of fiery serpents that danced wildly.

Like with all the other booths, the Deep Sea University’s booth had a bunch of people crowded together. It looked like the vast majority of students were extremely passionate about this university which had more of a focus on practicality. Li Yao could barely squeeze into the crowd.

In the middle of the booth was actually the enormous model of a city. It had mountains and it had rivers. It had skyscrapers and it had mansions. The sky even had flying shuttle passing by occasionally. It was small but was complete in every detail. It was crafted to be a perfect imitation.

Right at this moment, a dozen or so metal-crafted miniature Demon Beasts suddenly flew from one end of the booth, bringing with them an ear-splitting and piercing whistle. They charged into the miniature city.

At nearly the same time, over a hundred pentagonal metal balls rose abruptly from all around the city. The cubes spun rapidly in the air to form a giant net that blanketed the sky. They tangled around and held the invading flying Demon Beasts at bay, immobilizing them.

After a burst of “Ding Ding Dong Dong” sounds of fighting, all the flying Demon Beasts were intercepted by the pentagonal metal balls. The Demon Beasts were sucked and firmly stuck to the surfaces of the metal balls by an indescribable force.

“All students.”

It was a man whose hair was as white as a crane’s and whose complexion was as rosy as a child’s. This purple clothed man was full of hale and hearty vigor. With beaming smiles, he said, “The model you all just saw was the ‘Anti-Demon Beast Defense System’ that our Deep Sea University has researched, developed, and crafted. It has already been purchased by the military for use in every strategic city in the Federation. It can withstand a simultaneous attack of up to 1500 Demon Beasts and can even repel the flying swords of the strong Demonic Cultivators. With this kind of Artifact, it doesn’t matter if it's a powerful Demon Beast or a demonic cultivator. As soon as they enter the airspace of our Federation, they become gifts with their hands tied, waiting to be taken prisoner!”

Chapter 46: The Refiners' Holy Land

Chapter 46: The Refiners' Holy Land

The purple-clothed old man paused for a moment. Then, a dozen dark, dull, and completely ordinary flying swords floated and emerged from behind his back. They spun and circled randomly above the numerous students' heads. From time to time, the flying swords would perform maneuvers at rapid speeds within a small area. They dove, they turned, and they flipped, causing the observing students to cry out in surprise over and over.

With a laugh, the purple clothed old man spoke, "All students, if the recent demonstration of the Anti-Demon Beast Defense System was not enough to satisfy you, then look at the latest 'Unmanned Autonomous Flying Swords" crafted by our Deep Sea University. These flying swords come in two models. The Alpha Model can be controlled through a dedicated crystal processor remote control system, allowing for operation of the Flying Sword at a distance over 10,000 miles away from the cultivator controller. And these Beta Models you see here are completely and thoroughly unmanned and autonomous. There are absolutely no cultivators controlling these flying swords!"

"If there's no one to operate them, how are they able to fly by themselves?" There were students who could not hold back from asking questions.

“In the Master CPU in these types of flying swords, we employ a completely new type of glyph array architecture. We are able to input several hundreds of thousands of telepathic commands in advance to simulate all the possible situations that may arise in battle, and have it run the proper pre-installed combat programs in response. This is our miraculous Unmanned Autonomous technology! Of course, to actually research and develop this technology is not as easy as I described. The Unmanned Autonomous Flying Sword was just recently created; it still contains many problems. All students, if you’re interested then you might as well apply to our Deep Sea University. Together, we can research, develop, and perfect miraculous artifacts such as these!” the purple-clothed old man said beaming with smiles.

Li Yao watched the unmanned autonomous flying swords fly about through the air. He felt his heart stir and automatically thought of Black Wing.

Black Wing also flew about without Li Yao issuing commands to it. It even lies in front of the hologram projector, humming and buzzing, singing and dancing. It simply didn’t seem like an artifact, but rather an actual living being.

When compared with these Unmanned Autonomous Flying Swords, Black Wing’s “Intelligence” was clearly on a much higher level.

Anyways, his old man had once said that Black Wing was a relic found in a historical ruin in another Greater Thousand World. An entire lifetime of research and study was not enough to crack Black Wing’s architecture. He even couldn’t crack open Black Wing’s shell.

His old man had speculated that Black Wing should be the product of a different Cultivator Civilization on a higher level.

It’s already amazing enough that Deep Sea University was able to craft these kinds of flying swords that didn’t need cultivators to control them!

Right at this moment, an unmanned flying sword suddenly flipped around and swept past over Li Yao’s head. Li Yao felt an itch in his mind. He instinctively reached out with his hand, wanting to grasp the flying sword by its hilt.

As soon as his fingers were about to make contact with the hilt, the flying sword vibrated chaotically to create an azure blue glow. Like that of an electric eel, an electric arc flashed and struck Li Yao’s fingers.

“IT HURTS!”

Li Yao pulled back his hand; his fingers had turned black. He looked once more at the flying sword that continued to circle above his head. From time to time, the sword exploded maliciously with azure electricity.

With his tongue stuck out from fear, Li Yao contracted his neck. He no longer dared to be so reckless.

The purpled-clothed old man chuckled as he walked to be in front of Li Yao. He said, “This student, you should now know just how amazing the Unmanned Autonomous Flying Sword is. Fortunately, in time, the flying sword will be able to figure out your identity of being a civilian. If it had recognized you as a Demon Beast or a Demonic Cultivator, then you would have long been beheaded! Come, let me look at your hand. To see if you’re injured.”

As Li Yao obediently reached out with his hand, his mind was actually revolving with interest. He did the utmost to figure out a method to break the Unmanned Autonomous Flying Sword.

“Huh?”

The purple-clothed old man’s faced leaked out a trace of an astonished and happy expression. His smiling expression intensified. “This student, do you often do Artifact maintenance in your free time?”

Li Yao stared, stunned he asked, “How do you know?”

“I can feel that your hands are different from the common person. This kind of pliable and tough feeling should be from the growth of calluses that are later worn away. Then grown again. Then worn away. This must have happened over and over for at least a dozen times to produce your hands. Additionally, the muscles of your palm produce subtle responses. It’s impossible for other people to have these hands, only experienced Artifact technicians have these kinds of hands. How about it? Do you want to apply to our Deep See University?” the purple clothed old man asked being completely cordial.

Li Yao took a look at the Anti-Demon Beast Defense System. Then, he took a look at the Unmanned Autonomous Flying Sword circling over his head. With a forceful nod, he said, “I have a dream that one day I will become a Refiner — to craft the most powerful Artifact of the Federation!”

“Of the top ten Master Refiners in the Federation, seven of them graduated from our Deep Sea University. Deep Sea University is the Holy Land for Refiners! My name is Xie Tingxian. I’m a scout for our Deep Sea University in Arena 571. You’re pretty good. I’ll pay special attention to you during the competition, so be sure to give a good performance!” The purple clothed old man patted Li Yao on the shoulder. In the blink of an eye, he was surrounded by a blob of different students.

“Wow!”

From outside the crowd, Zheng Dongming cried out quite exaggeratedly, “You actually met Deep Sea University’s scout! He’s very influential and probably has some authoritative power for special admittance. As long as he chooses you, you won’t even need to take the entrance exams. You can be admitted directly into Deep Sea University! I should have known to let the flying sword shock me too just then!”

“You still need to be chosen in order to get in!”

Although Li Yao spoke without thinking, his heart was actually beating wildly. He was nervous, excited, happy… various feelings were tangled into a complex knot. It caused his emotions to be stirred to the peak.

Deep Sea University was the ideal university in his mind. He absolutely needed to give a good performance during the Limit Challenge Competition to make this Xie Tingxian sit up and notice him!

Having already determined his number one goal, the other universities no longer appealed as much to him. Li Yao and Zheng Dongming circled around the ship’s hold, completing a circle. They didn’t pay particular attention to the remaining universities and were preparing to leave. At this time, they suddenly discovered that there was still a small exhibition hall in the deepest corner.

The other universities had decorated their areas to be quite lavish; their setup featured state of the art technology. When comparing the exhibition halls that drew in people, this hall was really extremely unpresentable. There wasn’t even a single student taking a look inside. There was only a lonely staff member sitting in the depths of the hall.

Li Yao raised his head to look. On top were the written words “Grand Desolate War Institution!”.

“Is this also one of the Nine Elites? Why is this place so abandoned? No one wants to apply to this school?” Li Yao asked with utter curiosity.

Zheng Dongming glanced at the sign and couldn’t help laughing. “The Grand Desolate War Institution has the worst internal resources. Their overall true strength is the weakest, and they’re located in the nastiest of places, the Demon Beast Wasteland…. But these factors aren’t enough to make this hall this abandoned. The main reason lies in their ‘Combat Department’ that the Grand Desolate War Institution is most famous for. They are experts in educating people who temper their bodies to walk the martial path, the Body Practitioners. It is said that the most extreme Body Practitioners even forego all Artifacts. They believe that the body is the strongest and is the sole and only Artifact. They rely purely on their fists to fight Demon Beasts. They’re simply a group of lunatics!”

Li Yao, upon hearing his words, also agreed considerably with him.

He was born in the Artifact Graveyard. He was an expert at taking any item he can get and use it as a weapon. It was beyond stupid to rely solely on his two fists to fight hand-to-hand against his enemies.

Zheng Dongming continued, “The cultivation philosophy of the Grand Desolate War Institution has a bit of logic behind it. Because of the environment around the Grand Desolate Region is of the worst quality, resources are in short supply. Quite a few powerful artifacts with precise architectures are excessively worn-out due to overuse after using them a few times in such a bad environment, to never be used again. This kind of extreme environment is what fostered those who relied purely on their fleshly bodies, the Body Practitioners! But in the South East Region, all cultivators specialize in using Artifacts. These types of martial art methods are very unpopular here. And in addition, tempering the body is incomparably painful. Traversing the Path of Body Tempering means to endure eighty-one torments for even a slight chance of success… What do you think? Among us South-Easterners, who would rack their brains deciding to walk the Path of Body Tempering?”

Pausing for a bit, Zheng Dongming suddenly thought of something. He tapped his head saying, “I almost forgot. Your Crimson Nimbus Second produced a cultivation genius Fiend Blade Peng Hai. He decided to go with the Grand Desolate War Institution. He’s not an extreme Body Practitioner though, he’s a Sword Cultivator.“

“This is the university that Fiend Blade Peng Hai studied at?” A light flashed in Li Yao’s eyes. A strand of interest towards the Grand Desolate War Institution was born in Li Yao.

Chapter 47: Ding Lingdang

Chapter 47: Ding Lingdang

“Since they were able to rise up into the Nine Elites, they must have something that sets them apart from the norm! Let’s go over and take a look!” Li Yao spontaneously strolled towards Grand Desolate War Institution’s booth.

“The Grand Desolate War Institution is full of barbarians with well-trained bodies, but simple minds. What possibly is there to see? It would be better for you to come with me to go back to Sky Fantasia Academy to see if there’s a chance to find a few female seniors to eat dinner with. Together, we can discuss literature~! Hey. If you’re not coming, I’ll go by myself. Don’t say that I didn’t consider you a swine friend~!”

Zheng Dongming shouted a few times behind Li Yao’s back and was met with no reaction by Li Yao. Zheng Dongming then rubbed his nose, took out his micro crystal processor, and set it to “mirror” mode. He spread open his hand to comb his hair to the side. After letting out a whistle, he headed walking towards Sky Fantasia Academy.

As soon as Li Yao entered Grand Desolate War Institution’s exhibition hall, Li Yao felt his footsteps go heavy all of a sudden. It was as if a 1000 lb boulder was pressing on his shoulder. Even the air turned somewhat more viscous.

“An artificial gravity field?” Li Yao became interested.

This exhibition hall was set up in a rough and wild cultivation gym.

Dumbbells, barbells, sandbags, and other cultivation equipment were placed all around in a chaotic mess.

To the astonishment of Li Yao, most of the cultivation equipment weren’t actually made from metal but rather crafted and created from rock and Demon Beast remains. It gave one a course, barbaric, but blood-heating feeling. It made the muscles of his entire body, from head to toe, itch to give the equipment a try.

As he made his way inside, Li Yao recalled the month when he spent his utmost effort, shedding sweat and youth in the school’s warehouse.

He could not help walking up to a squat rack, hefting a barbell onto his shoulders.

This barbell on the squat rack was made and crafted from the spine of a Demon Beast. When grasped in his hand, he felt the extremely fine knurling. The feeling in his hand felt extremely good. The barbell plates, made from polished obsidian stone, had the perfect weight to them.

Li Yao took a deep breath. His toes dug into the ground. He sent power to his hips, squatting steadily down.

……

Ding Lingdang was restless.

She sat upon a dumbbell bench. Gripped in each hand was a 100 kilogram skeleton dumbbell. As she destroyed, ravaged, and tormented the dumbbells, she sent e-crane messages to the head instructor of Grand Desolate War Institution’s Combat Department thousands of miles away. Complaining loudly, she said, “Teacher Xia. Can we of Grand Desolate War Institution really recruit students from this pussy-ass place?

The arms and legs of the people here are delicate and thin. The people are weak to the extreme! I fear even a mere sneeze can topple them! And these pussies even look down upon our Grand Desolate War Institution. It’s already been half a day and only a few little kittens came in to take a look so far. And, each of them had an extremely strange expression as they looked at me from top to bottom, as if they were looking at a combat madman. So unfair! It’s really was mean of them!”

She waved with some effort and creaking noises rang out. The dumbbell had actually been squeezed bent.

Ding Lingdang went “Oh no!”, stuck out her tongue, and tossed the bent dumbbell to the side… Seven to eight dumbbells were piled up in the corner. There were hand marks clearly imprinted on each of the handles of these dumbbells.

On the hologram was a buff dude who was over 2.2 meters tall, with muscles as hard as a rock, and with scarlet red skin. The buff dude said helplessly, “Small Ding, don’t take things so personally. It’s been three years since our Grand Desolate Institution has recruited any new students from Arena 571. Everyone’s used to it. Otherwise, we wouldn’t have let you, a recent graduate and new faculty member, come and act as a scout here… We just came here to get in on the action and expand our influence. It doesn’t matter whether we recruit people or not. Anyways, in our Grand Desolate Region, there’s been plenty of cultivation geniuses trying to enter our school!”

“From what I’ve seen here, I agree. Everyone here’s a pretty boy; not one is suited to be a Body Practitioner… Hold on, Teacher Xia. I think I’ve found a target!” Ding Lingdang happened to raise her head. She saw Li Yao doing squats, causing her two eyes to glow all of a sudden.

“Really? How’s his potential?” The giant red-skin dude in the hologram was a bit astonished.

The fellows who can be considered “targets” by Ding Lingdang are few even in the Grand Desolate Region.

“He’s fairly decent. Those biceps. Those pectorals. Those lats. Those quads. Those glutes. Tsk tsk tsk tsk. Every muscle in his body is flawless and beautiful. It makes one unable to hold back from giving a few pinches~! What a natural young talent! He’s simply just made to walk the path of body tempering. Enough talk. I’m going to go over now…. to capture him!”

Ding Lingdang rubbed her hands together as her face filled with excitement. With a step, she scurried just behind Li Yao.

“Little brother, you’ve trained your pecs quite well~!”

Li Yao felt only a ferocious and vicious hurricane sweep over from behind his back. A powerful oppressive aura, nearly on the exact same level as Fiend Blade Peng Hai’s, appeared behind him!

The only difference was that… Fiend Blade Peng Hai’s aura was earth-shattering in form of ebbing tides and waves. This aura was as if a tyrannosaurus rex had come crashing from afar, fiercely and viciously. A strong air of terrible beasts was mixed in the aura!

All Li Yao felt was the tip of a spear pressing against his back. He could no longer bear the barbell, so he directly rolled forward, utterly miserably, to avoid the “terrible beast” assaulting from behind. He spun around like lightning with a strength that nearly broke his waist, automatically adopting the tightest defensive guard!

Cold sweat rained from his forehead. His wild beating heart nearly ripped open his chest!

“Who’s aura could be so overbearing!? It’s simply a tyrannosaurus rex in the form of a human!” Li Yao gasped for breath with a gaping mouth. He was trembling with fear as he sized up this “Human-shaped T-rex.”

What appeared behind his back was beyond his expectations — it was actually a woman. An absolutely young girl.

At most, this girl was 3-4 years older than him; she appeared to be just over 20.

She had a very tall stature, so much so that she was taller than him by just a little bit. Her figure was extremely healthy and beautiful with broad shoulders, a strong and flexible waist, and a slender pair of legs. Her plump thighs were bulging and bursting; they were exceptionally buff. They caused one to dream helplessly about her other bulges, wondering what sort of beautiful sensations would arise from coping a feel.

She wore the bare minimum of clothes: just a tank top and shorts, exposing a succubus-grade beautiful figure to the air.

She wasn’t the sort of classical beauty that had flesh so tender and white it seemed like congealed oil. Her skin was a color of honey-like amber, glistening and shining under the light, looking to be as smooth as velvet.

After having just done some exercise, her amber skin glistened faintly with sweat, making her skin appear sparkling, translucent, and gem-like.

Her looks weren’t considered exceptionally pretty, but that was due to her having coarse eyebrows, overly large eyes that contained too much spirit, a nose that stuck out too much, lips that were too thin, and ears that stuck straight out like a monkey’s, kind of like jug ears.

To describe her in a single sentence: she was too outstanding, too straightforward, and too forceful. Her invasive personality was too strong. There was completely no trace of the cool tenderness that most guys liked in a girl.

However, it looked like she completely didn’t give a damn. She continued being like a small sun, spreading heat and radiance absolutely without restraint.

The weirdest thing was the object on each of her beautifully contoured ankles, an ankle bracelet comprised of faded red string connecting three-four tiny bells.

Logically, she should have made some “Ding-ling-dang-lang” sounds as she leapt over here in large steps, but Li Yao didn’t even hear the tiniest of noises. Those eight strings of tiny bells seemed to be rusted to death and were tied firmly above her beautiful feet.

Li Yao gasped inwardly in surprise. This girl had already reached the peak in regards to the fine motor control of her leg muscles. She made her muscles vibrate continuously throughout the entirety of her high-speed movement, superimposing and canceling with the vibrations of her movement; through destructive interference, she was able to keep the tiny bells from moving.

“My name is Ding Lingdang. You can call me Sister Ling. You can also call me by my nickname, “Ding-ling-dang-lang”.

You’re quite strong and buff, little brother~! You were able to do quite a few squats under five-times gravity without breaking a sweat. And you were able to sense me dashing over here. Your intuition is quite sharp. You’re good material. Come! Let’s get to know each other!”

Ding Lingdang reached out her hand at lightning speed. She grasped Li Yao’s right hand and gripped firmly, leaving no chance for Li Yao to resist.

Chapter 48: Invitation from Grand Desolate War Institution

Chapter 48: Invitation from Grand Desolate War Institution

“*Inhale…..”

Li Yao felt like his palm was gripping a piece of red-hot coal. Even though he had endured a month of torment with “Give Up”, he was caught off guard and was forced to take a deep cold breath in pain!

“Your grip strength isn’t bad. I squeezed the hands of seven or eight students a moment ago. All of them cried tears of pain on the spot! One had even wet his pants… You Southeastern students are far too weak, not being able to take a single strike, you’re actually an exception!” Ding Lingdang withdrew her hand as she spoke, being completely pleased.

Li Yao shook his hand. He was pained to the point of being speechless.

He finally realized, at this time, why there wasn’t anyone who dared to come look around at the Grand Desolate War Institution’s booth.

If he had known of this earlier, it would have been better to go along with Zheng Dongming to Sky Fantasia Academy’s booth and gaze at the classical beauties…..

While his mind was running wild with imagination, a fragrance of earthly nature assaulted his nose all of a sudden. Ding Lingdang had moved closer to him abruptly. Two lips faced each other, two noses faced each other, and two pairs of eyes faced each other. Two female, beast-like eyes were staring wide and large. Those eyes were fiercely gazing fixed at Li Yao from a hair’s distance away.

“What, what are you up to?”

Li Yao was completely stupefied. His entire back was covered with cold sweat. This female beast was way too bold and straightforward. What she has done so far was simply unimaginable.

However, Li Yao was not your typical kind of person. He grew up in the Artifact Graveyard. What sort of weirdo has he not seen?

This kind of “always being led by the nose” feeling really was a bad feeling. Ding Lingdang’s aggressiveness completely awakened Li Yao’s core and fundamental nature — the vicious Vulture.

He no longer retreated. Rather, he strove forward to face her, refusing her even an inch of ground.

“If you glare at me, I’ll glare at you too. It’s not like that you would eat me under the sun in broad daylight!”

If he was face to face at hand’s reach with a different girl, like the painting classical beauty from a moment ago, this would have been an extremely alluring and exciting moment.

But from Li Yao’s perspective, he did not feel the least bit of attraction to the opposite sex coming from Ding Lingdang.

This was because of the far too violent and fierce expression coming from this girl. It was like a shining blade. The unconcealed murderous aura bubbled forth, ferociously stabbing into Li Yao’s eyes. The aura drove constantly inside Li Yao’s mind. Rushing across and crashing directly, it bombarded recklessly without reason against Li Yao’s central nervous system.

It was 10 seconds. A short 10 seconds of confrontation and it was as if Li Yao had engaged endlessly in direct combat!

Right when his two legs grew weak, when he was unable to hold on any longer, Ding Lingdang suddenly retracted her gaze. She grinned, exposing two pure-white canine teeth.

Her mouth was very large, as were her eyes, nose, and ears.

Her smile seemed to possess a peculiar charm, like the splendid sun that appeared suddenly after days of rainy clouds. It made one forget about their troubles in an instant, making one feel crisp and bright.

“Little brother, you’re quite amazing… Even in the Grand Desolate War Institution, there aren’t that many students of the lower grades who dare to face eye-to-eye with me for so long! Not bad! Not bad at all! You possess strength and spirit rarely seen in a high-school student. And your awareness is incomparably sharp. Most importantly, you will still able to resist while being enveloped by my strong killing aura. Good. This is really good! I’ve waited so long and I finally ended up with you!”

Ding Lingdang waved her fist with strength, suddenly causing air the circulate around.

Li Yao’s head was covered in a cold sweat. It seemed that the other person had misunderstood something. But if he were to say that he just came here to play around willy-nilly… wouldn’t he be beaten to a pulp of meat?

Ding Lingdang patted Li Yao’s shoulder, causing Li Yao to grimace in pain. Paying no mind, she said, “Little brother, these two eyes of senior sister have never been mistaken before… You are the real deal! A man of steel! Those dazzling flying swords, artifacts…. They’re all used by pussies. Real men of iron should become Body Practitioners by tempering their own bodies to become powerful artifacts. Use a body filled with blood-racing heat and a pair of iron fists to strike open a giant land under the heavens! Come then! Come to our Combat Department of our Grand Desolate War Institution! Here lies the paradise for hot-blooded men. We’re completely different from those pussy-ass universities!”

Li Yao summoned the courage to speak, “I’m terribly sorry. Miss… Sister Ling. My dream is to become a Refiner, so I’m preparing to apply for Deep Sea University!”

“What? A Refiner?”

In a flash, Ding Lingdang’s eyes bulged to twice their size. Not caring about anything else, she roared and thundered, “With this good of a body, with this great of willpower, you don’t want to be a Body Practitioner, but rather some Refiner? This is simply a reckless waste of talent!”

Li Yao’s head hurt as if he had been hit. He retreated to the edge of the booth without batting an eyelid. With a humble gesture, he said, “I’m truly sorry, Sister Ling. Everyone has a different understanding of the road of cultivation. Maybe in your eyes, a refiner is not a powerful profession. But where I was born and raised, everyone would seize tools and weapons for the sake of survival. They racked their heads to assemble weapons from scrap… In our hands, even if it's half a glass bottle, even if it's a piece of paper, they can all be crafted into fatal weapons! Those who know only to use their fists do not live long. Only those who can seize materials and craft them into weapons can continue living on! It’s precisely because of this that I feel Refiner is an extremely incredible profession. To become a Refiner is my dream. I cannot apply to your school’s Combat Department. I thank you for your certainty in me.”

With a slight jump, he leapt out of Grand Desolate War Institution’s booth. He turned around and was just about to leave.

“Hey…!” Ding Lingdang suddenly shouted, freezing him.

Li Yao’s body went rigid and his heart thumped… This female T-rex wouldn’t come chasing after him right?

Fortunately, Ding Lingdang did not have the intention of chasing after him. She stepped one foot onto a barbell bench. Extending a finger, she said, “Little brother, don’t make this decision so rashly. Go back and think it over carefully. You can ask around and see what the circle of cultivators think about our Grand Desolate War Institution. As everyone knows… the Federation has a total of Nine Elite Universities. Eight of them breeds Cultivators. Grand Desolate War Institution… is the university that only breeds warriors!”

Li Yao was stunned. He gave her a quick nod and turned around to squeeze into the crowd.

Looking at his back, Ding Lingdang licked her lips. She spread open her hands and then squeezed tightly. The air in the palm of her hand exploded with a “Bang!”.

“Let’s wait and see. You’re this strong and buff. You’re just made to be a part of our Grand Desolate War Institution. I, Ding Lingdang, will capture you for sure!”

……

In order to leave a deep impression of the Nine Elite Universities on the exam takers, the Exchange Convention lasted for the entire day. The hold continued being brightly lit and filled with a bustling atmosphere all the way until 9 PM,

Anyways, Li Yao had already chosen the university he most aspired. After blazing and ravaging a meal at the affiliated Buffet in the Distant Expanse, he returned early to his assigned single room to rest.

On the way back, all that appeared in his mind was Ding Lingdang’s face that was full of vitality. This girl, who couldn’t be considered that pretty, was the type to leave a deep impression on a person in just a mere half a second.

However, even if her behavior was special and her words cause one’s blood to heat and boil, it was still impossible for Li Yao to apply to the Combat Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution.

His path had already been determined — and that is the Refining Department of Deep Sea University!

“Tonight, I’m going to get a good night’s rest so that I can put on a good performance at the competition tomorrow. I will win over people by blowing their minds with my brilliance. I will catch the eye of Deep Sea University's scout, Xie Tingxian!” Li Yao made a resolution to himself in his heart.

Chapter 49: Small Ji, the Crystal Beast

Chapter 49: Small Ji, the Crystal Beast

A facial recognition glyph array was drawn on the door of the cabin. A red light swept across Li Yao's face, ringing twice with "Beep Beep" sounds. With a "*click", the cabin door opened.

The room inside was very simple and plain; there was only a bed and a tiny bathroom. There wasn't even a desk placed anywhere.

Li Yao actually knew that this was special treatment given to them.

On a crystal battleship, only officers can enjoy the benefits of having a personal room. The average enlisted sailor lived in four-people, six-people, or even eight-people rooms.

Li Yao grew up in the Artifact Graveyard. He was able to sleep perfectly fine even in a pile of garbage. The environment here was luxurious in his opinion. He walked in with large strides, tossed his luggage into the corner, and smashed himself ferociously onto the bed, letting out a sound of satisfaction.

"Puji puji. Puji puji. Student Li Yao, hello. I'm your personal Puji Critter, Puji Critter Number 2899. You can call me 2899, or you can call me Small Ji."

A chubby, plump, and charmingly innocent Puji Critter had squeezed out from under the bed with great difficulty, giving Li Yao a scare.

The white Puji Critter laboriously flapped its wings to fly into the air, speaking, “Starting from now all the way until the end of the competition, Student Li Yao will always have Small Ji at his service. Small Ji will explain the rules of the competition to you, answer your questions, help you get in touch with scouts from the Nine Elites, and shoot pictures and videos of every action you do in the competition, which will be transmitted to our monitoring center. If you encounter some sort of mortal crisis, Small Ji will even yell for cultivators to come save you! So contrary to my dull-witted appearance, I’m actually Li Yao’s good assistant in this competition!”

Li Yao stared unwaveringly at the white Puji Critter for a long time before asking suspiciously, “Small Ji, are you speaking of your own accord? Or is there someone controlling you from behind the scenes?”

The white Puji Critter began flying, orbiting around his head. It spoke cheerfully, “Small Ji isn’t saying these words by himself, and there is no one controlling me from behind the scenes. It’s that Small Ji’s body has been installed with the latest CPU system. 100,000 telepathic functions were programmed in advance so that Small Ji can perform the proper response in real time towards certain sorts of situations. Small Ji is the product of a joint R&D collaboration between Deep Sea University and the Empyrean Capital School of Medicine. I’m not your ordinary Spirit Beast! I’m the most advanced ‘Crystal Beast’ — a Spirit Beast controlled by a Crystal Processor!”

“Oh, so it was like this all along! You’re quite advanced. So they increased the intelligence of Spirit Beasts in this fashion. This way, they don’t need to worry about losing control over Spirit Beasts like with Demon Beasts!”

Li Yao’s resolution to enter into Deep Sea University hardened even further. He continued asking, “Then Small Ji, please explain to me the rules of the Limit Challenge Competition.”

“Sure thing.”

The hair on top of the Puji Critter’s head shook to and fro. A meaty pink antenna extended out, and on the tip of the antenna was a flickering and shiny synthetic crystal stone.

A beam of light shot out from the crystal, forming into a large 3d hologram right in front of Li Yao. With a flare of spiritual energy light, the holographic image of Devil Flood Dragon Island appeared in front of Li Yao’s eyes.

“The Limit Challenge Competition is a time-honored traditional competition of the Federation. Its purpose is to allow the Nine Elites to select young talent gifted in cultivation. At the same time, it also gives the opportunity for students whose expertise are more focused on practical use rather than theory to show off their talent.”

“The annual Limit Challenge Competition has always been held two months before the university entrance exams. The entire Federation is divided into nearly 1000 different exam regions with each area containing 3000 competitors.”

“Floating Spear City and its surrounding area are Cultivation Cities in the Federation. Quite a few cultivation geniuses have emerged from here. So, exam region 571 has an extremely vicious environment, gaining the nickname as an ‘Exam Region of Death’.”

“Three thousand competitors must do their best to find a way to survive for five days on Devil Flood Dragon Island along with the rampaging Demon Beasts… Student Li Yao, try not to underestimate Devil Flood Dragon Island. Back in the day, this was the location of the final battle between Star Glory Federation and the Far East Demon Kingdom. Countless corpses are buried in the depths of the ocean. Demonic aura permeates the air!”

“The Demon Beasts of Devil Flood Dragon Island absorbs this aura year round. The Demon Beasts here are far more vicious than those in other places.”

The white Puji Critter flew to face Li Yao. It shook its stubby wing, speaking completely cheerfully, “The five days of the Limit Challenge Competition are divided into two parts: the preliminaries and the finals. The first three days are the preliminaries, and the last two days are the finals.”

“Tomorrow morning at 9 AM, three thousand competitors will be tossed together into Devil Flood Dragon Island. You will be wearing the most plain of clothing: a sports tank top and shorts that contain no defensive capabilities whatsoever. You won’t have weapons. You won’t have food. You won’t have water. You won’t even have shoes! Each person will only have a single Puji Critter.”

“And what you must do is survive for three days under the attacks of countless Demon Beasts.”

“Of course, you won’t always be unarmed and defenseless. Several dozen ‘supply points’ are scattered all around Devil Flood Dragon Island. Large amounts of artifact parts and supplies are prepared there. If you have the ability, you can assemble the artifacts yourself to use to fight against the Demon Beasts.”

On the hologram, Devil Flood Dragon Island was being zoomed in without end. The hologram turned transparent, and concrete coordinates of several dozen supply points appeared.

The white Puji Critter continued speaking, “In the competition, the most important thing to keep in mind is your ‘total points’. Your final ranking is determined solely by your total points.”

“You can get points by killing Demon Beasts. The stronger the Demon Beast, the greater the number of points.”

“In order to test the competitor’s overall ability, many methods were incorporated for the competitor to earn points. For example, if you specialize in artifacts, you can repair and assemble artifacts as much as you want. If you’re gifted in synthesizing drugs, you can discover all sorts of herbs in the forest. To summarize, as long as you demonstrate a gift in an aspect of cultivation through an action you do on Devil Flood Dragon Island, you will receive points for it.”

“And another important thing to keep in mind is the ‘Trade System’. This is a rule that is set up for competitors who aren’t fighting specialists.”

“In this competition, you can use your accumulated points to perform trades. For example, say you are gifted in crafting artifacts. You assemble and craft a dozen flying swords at a supply point. You can trade these flying swords to a competitor who is a fighting specialist. As long as both parties make an oral agreement on the price, the Puji Critters will automatically conduct the point transfer. You don’t need to worry about being cheated by a competitor. This way, it’s fair for non-fighting specialists in this competition.”

Li Yao raised his right hand, putting out a question, “Let me interrupt you for a moment. I want to ask something… In regards to the non-fighting competitors who play a supportive role, when they gather resources on Devil Flood Dragon Island, will their lives be endangered?”

The white Puji Critter shook its small furry tail, “Student Li Yao, please do not worry. When the competition begins, there will be over twenty cultivators patrolling in the air above Devil Flood Dragon Island, and inside Small Ji’s body is a specially refined gel sack. As soon as a competitor is about to receive life-threatening injuries or the accumulation of his injuries reach critical status, Small Ji will automatically belch out the gel to envelope the competitor in a stasis, and Small Ji will notify the patrolling cultivators in the air.”

“This gel is a super amazing artifact. It can protect the competitor to completely guarantee his safety. It’s impossible for the level of the Demon Beasts on Devil Dragon Island to break through the gel. Just relax already!”

Li Yao nodded his head. The Limit Challenge Competition has been held over a hundred times. They had adopted perfect protective measures long ago. He was just overthinking things.

Thinking for a bit, he asked again, “You just talked about the preliminaries… What rules are there in the finals?”

Chapter 50: The Codes of an Refiners

Chapter 50: The Codes of an Refiners

The Puji Critter spoke, “After the three days of preliminaries, the 600 competitors with the highest ranking in points will then be able to enter the finals!”

“The rest of the competitors will be evacuated and brought back onto the Distant Expanse.”

“The biggest difference between the finals and the preliminaries is… the release of super powerful Demon Beasts locked in caves underground on Devil Flood Dragon Island. The strength of these Demon Beasts is not something that the typical high school student can deal with!”

“If you’re able to kill these Demon Beasts, you will receive far more points than from killing normal Demon Beasts!”

“In addition, the six hundred students will be separated into two teams, red and blue. The two teams can attack each other however much they want. When an opponent is eliminated — that is, when the opponent’s Puji Critter is forced to spout out their protective gel — all the points of the opponent will be given to you!”

“In other words, not only do you need to kill Demon Beasts, but you will also have to fight with competitors!”

Li Yao’s heart stirred as he suddenly felt an excitement indescribable.

Just being able to reach the finals means that these competitors will have accumulated a great number of points. Rather than go laboriously slay Demon Beasts, wouldn’t it be better to launch attacks on enemy competitors? As long as a competitor was eliminated, it would be the same as killing several dozens, or even over a hundred, Demon Beasts.

With these type of rules in place, the raging desire for battle will undoubtedly be satisfied in these youths. These competitors will be able to show off their complete potential!

Small Ji continued, “So, that’s pretty much all the rules. After two days of finals, the last remaining surviving students will have their points fixed and be ranked. The higher your ranking, the higher the likelihood of being chosen by a scout of the Nine Elites. The excellent ones won’t need to take the university entrance exams when they’re directly admitted. So Student Li Yao, work hard!”

“Direct admittance!”

Li Yao’s throat went somewhat dry. He licked his lips, asking, “Small Ji, how many students were chosen for direct admittance in the past few competitions?”

The white Puji Critter tilted its head to think as a buzzing sound came from deep within its body.

Li Yao could tell from hearing that this was the sound of a crystal processor running at high speeds. Small Ji was probably gathering the data right now.

A moment later, Small Ji answered, “In the past three annual Challenge Competition in Arena 571, each year on average had 51 students be directly admitted to the Nine Elites. There was also the possibility of getting on the Preferential Score admittance list should one not be directly admitted.”

“Preferential Score admittance list? What’s that?” Li Yao delved deeper, asking.

“I’ll give you an example. Say you possess some aspect of a gift for cultivation, that you’re extremely suited for a certain university. But, your overall actual strength isn’t strong enough such that your final points end up ranking you in the hundred or two-hundred range. Or even if you encountered an extremely strong Demon Beast at the start of the competition and were forced to retire!”

“All these things don’t matter. As long as you’re selected by a scout of the Nine Elites, he or she will sign a contract with you for a preferential score that reduces your score requirement on the exam by 5 points, 10 points, or even 20 points!

“That’s awesome!”

Li Yao became truly excited at this moment.

The entrance exams. The entrance exams! The competition is like an army of thousands trying to cross a single log bridge. “Scoring a point higher means to crush a thousand people!” This is no exaggeration!

If all of a sudden he was favored by a dozen or twenty points, then the odds of being admitted to Deep Sea University will increase greatly!

“Excellent! Even if I can’t beat 3000 people, enter into the top 50, and receive the qualifications for direct admittance… As long as I demonstrate my brilliance and manage to win 5 points or even 10 points of score-reducing preferential treatment, coming here won’t be a waste at all!”

Li Yao’s mouth was dry from talking so much. His excitement could not be described. He only felt a boundless energy coming from his body. He was heated up and could not wait until tomorrow morning to begin fighting at once.

“This won’t do. I need to calm down and go to sleep asap. I need to conserve my energy and stamina. Tomorrow morning is the time that will decide my fate!”

Li Yao was lying down on his bed, his pair of hands formed a pillow behind his head. He tried forcing himself to go to sleep, but no matter what he did, he couldn’t fall asleep.

The scene of Fiend Blade Peng Hai piloting the Mystic Bird Battle Shuttle through the skies filled his eyes.

That sort of freedom, that field crushing domineering aura was deeply branded in his mind. It would take a long time for him to forget that scene.

“I… Do I have the chance to become the second Peng Hai?”

Li Yao opened his eyes and saw the splatter of rust on the ceiling. He tossed and turned, causing his single bed to creak with pressure.

……

Right at the same time when Li Yao was tossing and turning on his bed, in another single room two floors above his, Si Jiaxue was in the middle of receiving a very special guest.

“Professor Xie, I’m truly indebted to you. I never thought you would come here personally.”

Si Jiaxue spoke extremely respectfully. She was welcoming the Artificing Expert of Deep Sea University, Professor Xie

Tingxian.

“Calling me Grandpa Xie is fine, little girl. You don’t need to be so polite with me. After all, your grandfather and I are old friends of nearly a hundred years. I remember back in the year when you were born, I held you with my own hands. Hahahaha.”

Xie Tingxian chuckled as he spoke, then soon changed the subject. “Little girl, you’ve called Grandpa Xie here. Is something the matter? To clarify things, if it’s in regards to the competition, Grandpa Xie can’t just cut you some slack!”

Si Jiaxue giggled. “Grandpa Xie, my specialty lies in data calculations and analysis. I’m afraid that I will walk the path of being an admin-type cultivator in the future. The Deep Sea University is most known for their Artificing Department. I fear that it’s not suited for me… So don’t worry, I won’t cause you any difficulties.”

Xie Tingxian’s old face reddened. “Little girl, don’t blame Grandpa Xia for being petty. Being a scout causes all sorts of relationships to become complicated. Sometimes, I have to mention the dirty talk first.”

Si Jiaxue nodded her head and withdrew a crystal processor from her backpack, handing it over:

“I understand, Grandpa Xie. I called you over this time is mainly to ask for your help to inspect this crystal processor… This is an heirloom left behind by my grandma. It’s an antique of over a hundred years ago and it broke a few days earlier. I found someone to fix it and it’s working now; there are no major problems when I use it. But, I don’t know if there are some latent defects. So, I wish to ask you to inspect it. I don’t know if this is convenient for you?”

“Oh, so it was like this all along. It’s a piece of cake for me.”

Xie Tingxian let out a breath of relief and his expression became lively. His vision swept across the crystal processor and he went “huh”. His eyes radiated with light full of interest.

“It’s the Heavenly Zither Sect’s Vast Tomb 7 tube-type crystal processor. A product from 144 years ago. It’s an extremely rare antique. You’ve maintained it quite well. Not bad. Not bad. You said you’ve asked someone to fix it? Nowadays, people who are able to fix these sorts of antiques are far too few. I need to take a good look at this. If the internal components are damaged, it would be such a pity!”

Si Jiaxue did not see Xie Tingxian cast any spell, but with a wave of his right hand, the crystal processor flew into the palm of his hand, spinning and whirling around. It looked as if it was being controlled by an invisible hand as one component after another separated away from the artifact to float gracefully in the air, exposing the profound and complicated internal architecture of the tube-type processor.

“This…”

He saw that the heat sink with clear traces of the cooling system used in modern CPUs that was integrated seamlessly with the classical style of the tube-style crystal processor. Xie Tingxian stared, distracted.

“How is it, Grandpa Xie? Is there any problems with it?” Si Jiaxue became nervous.

“Little girl, you’re wrong on this count~~~~” Xie Tingxian dragged out his tone.

“Me? What’s going on?”

Si Jiaxue was stupefied and was completely lost. A trace of suspicion emerged on her delicate cute face.

Xie Tingxian glanced at her and saw that she really was clueless. He frowned, saying, “Little girl, this processor of yours. You’ve clearly had it repaired by an expert.”

“This expert completely redesigned the heat sink structure. His reasoning is exceptionally exquisite, and his installation technique is perfectly skillful. He not only guaranteed the stability of its structure and heat dissipation efficiency but also left behind space for future upgrades such that another heat sink can be added using the same method, to form a heat sink system with higher efficiency. This way, the performance of your crystal processor can increase by over 10%!”

“To have such a deep understanding of antique processors and to have such brilliant techniques, it must have been a Refiner right?”

“You should know that each Refiner has their own code of honor. They have the utmost confidence in their works. You chose someone to fix this, but then you brought it to me for inspection. Your lack of confidence in him is the greatest insult to him!”

“Once he knows of this matter, not only will he have malice towards you, but he will even take some anger out on me! He might even come challenge me to a duel! To see if, in the end, I’m qualified to inspect and fix his work!”

“It’s this serious?” Si Jiaxue said in fright.

“You’re not a Refiner, so it’s natural that you don’t know codes of the circle. Each piece of work from a Refiner is his heart’s blood — it’s like their child. They absolutely won’t allow other people to mess with them! In a situation like this, you needed to at least notify the other person and receive his permission. Then, I can go ahead and exam it. Have you discussed it with the other person yet?”

Si Jiaxue was completely bewildered as she shook her head.

“Uh oh, I was also careless. I had assumed you just found a random person to repair this. I never thought it was actually an expert. This time, there’s going to be some trouble,” Xie Tingxian spoke somewhat frustrated.

“But... But I really did randomly find someone to fix it. I found a classmate,” stammered Si Jiaxue.

“What!? Your classmate… A highschool student?”

Chapter 51: The Blades of Human Civilization!

Chapter 51: The Blades of Human Civilization!

Xie Tingxian went wide eyed all of a sudden and every wrinkle on his face began to tremble. He drew an arcane glyph with his right hand and a purple beam of light enveloped the crystal processor.

Every single breath of remnant memories from the previous repair was drawn from the artifact. A long time passed before Xie Tingxian slowly nodded his head.

“Keeping what you said in mind, I telepathically scanned this artifact again for careful analysis. I was able to sample a few places that weren’t done quite skillfully. There were a few joints that were a bit conspicuous and rough. But for a high school student to be able to reach this kind of level, it’s already quite amazing.”

“I don’t quite understand. He’s just an ordinary high school student whose Actualization Quotient can’t possibly be more than 70%. Is he that amazing?” Si Jiaxue could not help asking.

“It’s precisely because his Actualization Quotient doesn’t exceed 70% that he was able to complete a work as refined as this. This makes him even more extraordinary! What's the name of this classmate of yours? Is he participating in this competition?” Xie Tingxian asked filled with interest.

“His name is Li Yao. I have some information here about him. Grandpa Xie can take a look.”

Si Jiaxue pulled out some videos from her crystal processor.

“Oh, so it’s this small fellow?”

Xie Tingxian stared blankly once again, and a smile continued to unfold from inside his heart. He nodded his head over and over. “This small fellow is very interesting. It seems like I need to keep an eye on him in this competition.”

……

Early morning the next day at 8:30 AM, three thousand students were congregated on the afterdeck of the Distant Expanse.

The spacious deck was packed tightly with three thousand hot-blooded youths. They created a clamor of noise so loud that it seemed the deck was about to tip over.

After experiencing yesterday’s Interactive Exchange Convention, everyone now understood the strengths and details of the Nine Elites and were looking much more greatly forward towards world of cultivation filled with its endless mysteries.

“KILL KILL KILL. I will kill to my heart’s content on Devil Flood Dragon Island. I’ll rise above the other three-thousand students, attract the interest of the Federation’s First Military College, and become a glorious military student!” a youth with a tall figure and a face covered with pimples roared in the crowd.

“What I’m most proficient in is medicinal synthesis. I’ve heard that that there are over 10,000 different types of herbs and medicinal plants on Devil Flood Dragon Island. Just let me demonstrate my skills and show off to the scout of the Empyrean Capital School of Medicine!” at his side, a girl with tanned skin and a pretty face spoke with the utmost confidence.

“I had an ambition since I was growing up — it’s to become a great general, to command a great army! If I make it to the finals, those who are in the same team as me will be quite lucky. I will certainly coordinate everybody with me to fight just like the way the Federal Army does. The enemy will be beaten to complete defeat!” This third youth was short and small, but his aura was strong as he spoke.

These 3000 youths were heavenly-blessed carefully chosen from a dozen cities. It didn’t matter how strong their actual strength was, their confidence was at its absolute peak.

The scouts from the Nine Elites, military representatives, and the teachers of numerous students came from the two sides of the ship’s hold. They came one by one, congregating together, and revealed smiles when they saw the exploding confidence in these youngsters; they were deeply moved.

“One year after another, and yet another year has gone by. Time really does go by quick. As soon as I saw these young fellows, I remembered back to that year and day when we participated in the Limit Challenge Competition ourselves. The us back then… we sure were young~!”

“Yeppers. The only reason why Star Glory Federation is able to to become stronger and stronger under the onslaught of Demon Beasts is due to the plenty amount of new blood that flows in every year!”

“Who knows how many young talents will be able to burst forth from this year’s batch of students and receive the qualifications to walk the road of cultivation? I want to get this out of the way. Teacher Zhang, I've already chosen exam candidate 2087. Do not, by any means, fight over him with me!"

"Haha. Number 2087? Then I'll have to pay special attention to him later. If he really is some good talent, then depending on everyone's resources, let's see who can bid the highest!"

Li Yao stood calmly in the corner of the deck during this boiling and rumbling day. The white Puji Critter was very content to lay perched on his head. Its head was tilting back and forth, it seemed that it was snoring.

Last night, Li Yao was restless and was completely unable to fall asleep. So he just got up half-way through the night to study the rules in the competition. Li Yao had somewhat bloodshot eyes, but he was still energetic from being a bit too excited.

It was because he discovered what seemed to be a loophole within the rules of the competition. Perhaps in other words, it was an 'opportunity' that only he could exploit.

He just didn't know if the battle tactics he formulated from focusing on the "loophole" would be effective.

If he was successful, he would seize a 90% chance of storming into the top 50 of the finals!

While he was mulling things over in his mind, the lighting in his vision turned dark. A tall silhouette had suddenly appeared, towering over looking down at him.

It was... Helian Lie!

“Fellow Student Li Yao, Devil Flood Dragon Island is a very large place, yet at the same time, it’s also very small. I hope you retire from the competition as soon as possible. You wouldn’t want to run into me on Devil Flood Dragon Island,” Helian Lie paused after each word, firmly squeezing out a somewhat sinister smile.

Li Yao looked at him unperturbed. After sometime later, he fished out a pair of earbuds from his ears. Wild music was blasting out from the earbuds.

“Huh? Fellow Student Helian Lie, what did you say just now? I’m terribly sorry, I was listening to music. I couldn’t hear you clearly. Could you repeat that again?” Li Yao said somewhat perplexed.

Helian Lie’s face reddened. With a cold snort, he turned around to walk away and merged into the crowd.

Li Yao watched Helian Lie’s back with special attention and then chuckled. A trace of the malevolent “Vulture” could be faintly seen in his smiling expression.

“Actually, I really look forward running into you on Devil Flood Dragon Island too~ Fellow Student Helian Lie!”

Right at this time, a large hologram flared at the front of the deck.

As if carved by a blade, a weathered and experienced face appeared in the center of the hologram. The pair of eyes set deep in their sockets seemed to contain the entire universe. 100,000 stars flickered with radiance in those eyes.

“It’s Xu Haoran. It’s the Federation’s Chairman, Xu Haoran!” Quite a few students let out cries of excitement.

“Each and every student, we have reached yet another year of the Limit Challenge Competition. Today, you all are baby hawks having yet to spread their wings and soar in the sky. You all have yet to step onto the road of cultivation!”

“But soon in the future, you will become pillars of our nation. You will defend our homeland, defend our Federation, and defend the hopes, dreams, and sanctity of our Human Civilization!”

“Therefore, struggle and fight! Fight for yourselves, and fight for the future of the Federation! The future of the Human Civilization!”

“Remember this. Humanity is the strongest race of war in the endless sea of the stars. And Cultivators… are the dazzling blades of Human Civilization! These blades will slay fiends and purge demons. Break mountains and topple temples. Exterminate nations and raze countries. Expand our borders and enlarge our land until we conquer the entire cosmos!”

“I hope that you all will become cultivators like these. To become the blades of the Human Civilization. I wish you all every success!”

The Federation’s Chairman, Xu haoran, stood up from behind his office desk. He retreated a step and, with a solemn expression, performed the official military salute towards the 3000 youths.

Demon Beasts ran rampant in the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Star Glory Federation was founded based on martial might. The highest leaders are also military personnel. The military salute was the most majestic of etiquettes, representing unsurpassable respect.

“Federation Chairman Xu Haoran actually performed the military salute to us high school students?”

“For the sake of the Federation’s future... For the sake of Human Civilization’s Future... Do we... Do we have that much power?”

“Of course we do! Right now, we may be ordinary high school students, but think about those Core Formation Stage cultivators, those old Yuanying Stage monsters… Which one of them didn’t start from elementary school, to middle school, to high school on their road to being a cultivator? Who can possibly become a Yuanying Stage monster as soon as they’re born! If they can be what they are, then obviously so can we!”

“There will be a day when I will become a great cultivator whose power shakes and radiates everywhere. To slay Demon Beasts. To defend our Federation!”

“Slay fiends and purge demons. Break mountains and topple temples. Exterminate nations and raze countries. Expand our borders and enlarge our land. And conquer the entire cosmos… Too awesome. This is precisely the path I wish to walk. This is precisely the destiny of cultivators! I really can’t wait much longer!”

The entire atmosphere was ignited with a single salute by Xu Haoran, causing three thousand youths to all enter into a state of zealotry.

Similar scenes could be seen simultaneously at the other exam regions. The blood of countless youths were heated to the utmost boiling point!

An officer dressed in black with the emblem of the skull of a Demon Beast on his shoulders stood on the upper deck. He saw how the morale was already excited to the highest point and announced in a loud voice:

“The 137th Annual Federation Youth Limit Challenge Competition officially begins now! All competitors, prepare yourselves!”

Chapter 52: A Dense Fog and the Delusion Vine

Chapter 52: A Dense Fog and the Delusion Vine

“*Vrrrrrr!”

A large hole thirty to forty meters wide opened up in the front of the deck. A biting freezing wind was drawn suddenly into the deck and hold of the ship, causing the youths, who were only wearing sports tank tops and shorts, to feel a bone-piercing coldness.

“All competitors…. Jump down!” the officer in black pointed to the large hole as he spoke expressionless.

As soon as these words were spoken, quite a few student’s faces went white.

The Distant Expanse was floating several hundred meters above sea level. Devil Flood Dragon Island was right beneath it. If they were to jump off from here, even if they fall into the ocean, they would simply be falling to their death. There’s no need to say what would happen if they landed directly on the island.”

“Whats wrong? Is no one brave enough to jump? Well, that’s fine too. You can still retire from the competition; it’s not too late. The Limit Challenge Competition wasn’t made for cowards!” The officer dressed in black laughed with disdain.

These words incited the bravery of quite a few students. The red pimpled youth who first said that he wanted to apply for the First Military College pushed through the crowd. He bellowed, “If you’re going to jump, then jump! What are you scared of? If you’re scared of death, then you can’t become a cultivator!”

His pair of legs stepped forward, his pair of arms opened wide, and he jumped down the open hole. The throat-ripping battle cry of the pimpled youth was torn and silenced by the biting wind in a flash.

With someone taking the lead, people started going continuously close behind. Actually, everyone knew that something had to be deployed down there to make sure that they don’t fall and die in vain. They just had to overcome their mental blockade.

Li Yao was mixed in the crowd and soon was nudged to the edge of the hole. He looked down while the cold wind rushed at him and saw that the previous thousand youths who had jumped earlier still had yet to hit the ground.

They were stuck in a giant transparent net hanging midair, causing their falling velocity to be extremely slow.

“A Slow Glyph Array?”

Li Yao smacked his lips. The Slow Glyph Array was absolutely a necessary type of Glyph Array for those who flew on flying swords. In the case where enemies attack them, causing them to fall, all they would need to do is activate the Slow Glyph Array. Then, they can slowly float to the ground. They probably wouldn’t instantaneously die from a fall.

However, the average Slow Glyph Array only covers an area of three-to-five meters. This Slow Glyph Array actually covered a diameter of several thousand meters; it really was drawn to be extremely large.

Li Yao no longer hesitated and grabbed his white Puji Critter. He leapt forward and jumped down from an altitude of several hundred meters!

The wind screamed by his body, birds flew below his feet. This sort of feeling, like surfing the wind on flying swords, was way too awesome for words!

However, Li Yao enjoyed this feeling for less than two seconds before he felt a white light flash all around him. His body felt sluggish as soon as he was caught within, like he had sunk into a soft ball of cotton. His speed had suddenly slowed to the minimum.

After several dozen seconds of being in this transparent cotton ball, his body loosened and his normal weight and velocity were restored. The wind started to scream in his ears yet again.

And this time, not even two seconds had passed before he entered into a second ball of “transparent cotton”.

He looked several hundred meters below where several hundred competitors were flapping their arms and legs as if they were in water. Li Yao was deep in thought; he finally understood the mysteries of the Slow Glyph Array.

A dozen or so Slow Glyph Array layers were set up in the air space between the Distant Expanse and Devil Flood Dragon Island. Every layer had a cushioning effect.

This way, the competitors are able to safely arrive on Devil Flood Dragon Island by going through the layers of cushions.

This usage of this kind of large-scale glyph array was of the utmost ingenuity. Li Yao let out a sigh of admiration in his heart, having discovered that the things he needed to learn still numbered a lot.

And from the depths of his mind came the flickering light and passing shadows of Ou Yezi’s memories; they emerged numerously and chaotically.

Until finally…

After passing through 10 layers of the Slow Glyph Array cushioning, Li Yao managed to safely reach a height of a dozen or so meters above Devil Dragon Island. A verdant and lush dense forest was as far as the eye could see. Quite a few students had already landed on the ground.

The howls of Demon Beasts and the thundering of competitors came in waves through the depths of the dense forest.

Within the first second, intense close quarter combat unfolded completely.

Li Yao suddenly opened his eyes. His blood was completely boiling, like when he would wait for the garbage ships in the Artifact Graveyard.

His pair of legs landed lightly on a branch. Using the last of his falling force and borrowing the elasticity of the branch, Li Yao changed his direction and fled into the forest, moving like a nimble black panther. He landed steadily on the ground.

He took a deep cold breath suddenly.

While he was falling and observing below him, all he felt about Devil Dragon Island was the fact that it was a strange shaped narrow island with black smoke swirling around it. He didn’t really feel anything too scary from it.

But as soon as he stepped foot onto Devil Flood Dragon Island, he discovered that actually the entire island was covered with gargantuan trees that blocked the sky and shielded the earth.

Lifting his head looking up, all he could see was the faint gray fog curling around in between the black tree branches. It was practically impossible to see the blue skies and white clouds. No matter how intense the rays of sunlight were, when shone through the gray fog, the rays turned a blurry, faint yellow.

A faint green miasma permeated through the air as far as the eye could see. It caused Li Yao to only see a distance of 3-5 meters clearly in his surroundings. Any further than that, all he could see were the gray outlines of crisscrossed canine teeth. The twisted giant trees were like corpses of Demon Beasts brandishing their claws as they swayed in the wind.

Just a moment ago, he could hear the sounds of close quarter combat. Right now, it was as if the miasma had cut them off from him. Even the howls of Demon Beasts turned vague and indistinct. One second, the howls seemed to come from the horizon, and the next second, the howls seemed to murmur in his ears. It was as if a terrible Demon Beast were hiding behind his back.

The three thousand competitors landing on Devil Flood Dragon Island were like three thousand grains of sand entering the ocean, disappearing without a trace.

It seemed like Li Yao was the only person left in this world, staying in this island inhabited by dreadful Fiend Beasts.

Li Yao was leaning his back against a large black tree covered in knobs. He warmed up his arms and legs in a calm yet not slow manner, carefully observing his surroundings.

There weren't any pre-defined paths or roads on Devil Flood Dragon Island; mud and decay ran underfoot. If one wasn't careful, one would step onto the skeletal fragments of Demon Beasts, causing the soles of one's feet to be stabbed very painfully. The green miasma released fumes that were somewhat irritating. The smell was quite similar to that of the Artifact Graveyard.

"Hsss. Hss. The Demon Emperor won't let you all go…"

An extremely minute and warped shout came suddenly from behind the black tree.

Li Yao was terrified and frightened. He turned around to look and saw that the knobs on the tree were actually twisting and squirming. They converged together, condensing into an incomparably ugly face of a Demon Beast.

This face spoke with a nasty grin, "Just wait and see. The Demon Emperor has already amassed a Demon Army numbering a million forces on the Far Eastern Ocean floor. Soon, he will assault the coast, engulf the Federation, annihilate all the males, and eat all the females and children completely. Tss! Tss! Tss! Tss!"

Li Yao sneered, speaking calmly and composed, "I've already carefully examined the introduction to Devil Flood Dragon Island. It said that the island is covered with a type of Demon Plant called the Delusion Vine. It releases a mild green hallucinatory miasma day in and day out that's capable of hypnotizing people's minds, causing people to see and hear visible and audible hallucinations. You're just an illusion, you can't trick me!"

The Demon Beast’s face suddenly froze and shattered into pieces, transforming back into tree knobs and fading away without a trace.

Li Yao let out a breath of relief. But right when he was about to leave, the black tree started to tremor. The bark wiggled and was actually pried open from the inside. A half-rotted human figure climbed out in a complete stiff manner. It lifted its head and chuckled at Li Yao.

Its body was already half-rotted. Its flesh was mangled, and it’s organs were fused with the roots of the black tree; they were blended together. The left side of its face was covered with large chunks of bark and moss. Only the right side of its face was vaguely recognizable.

It was actually… the form of Ou Yezi!

“Did you think that it would be that easy to engulf my memories? One day, I will completely possess this body! To be reborn in Cultivation Era Year 40,000!”

Ou Yezi laughed evilly as he spoke. A branch that had transformed into his arm swayed and lifted, heading to grab Li Yao over to him.

Chapter 53: Instant Kill!

Chapter 53: Instant Kill!

Li Yao's heart froze in an instant! But he recovered in the next second; he was still intoxicated in the illusion produced by the Delusion Vine.

Biting down ferociously on his tongue, he awoke from the stimulating pain in a flash. Then he felt a gale blasting at his face!

Li Yao did not have time to dodge, forming a fist instead that bombarded against something unknown. The enemy let out a shrieking cry, pushing Li Yao five-to-six meters away with a strange force and causing Li Yao to crash into some shrubs.

After shaking his head, Li Yao glared ahead. Ou Yezi's illusionary form had disappeared without a trace. In front of him was an enormous, green-covered ape with bizarrely long arms hanging from the giant tree.

There was a mutation growing on the forehead of this ape — a strange eye with a dirty-yellow iris that flickered with fiendish glow.

“Three-Eyed Ape!”

Li Yao searched at lightning speeds in his mind and quickly found the data on this Demon Beast.

The three-eyed ape was one of the more difficult of the low-level Demon Beasts. Besides its nimble body and its expertise in jungle hunting, the third eye on its forehead can discharge a special mental attack to cause its prey to have splitting headaches and give birth to a cluster of illusions.

However, today, this ape had chosen the wrong opponent. Although Li Yao’s true strength wasn’t considered to be spectacular, in the mental realm, his mind had undergone the tempering of Ou Yezi. His mind was incomparably strong and unyielding. A typical mental attack would have absolutely no effect on him.

That was why he was able to awaken from the illusion this quickly.

“HSS!”

The three-eyed ape let out an ear-piercing hiss. The third eye on its forehead suddenly opened wide, and the eye’s color also turned bright in an instant, like a piece of iron heated until it was red. And Li Yao felt a piercing pain burrow deep inside his mind.

Li Yao knew that this was the mental attack from the three-eyed ape. He let out a blood-curdling shriek on purpose and was trembling all over in an “uncontrollable” manner.

The three-eyed ape let out squeaking shouts, as it thought that its trick was a success. The ape swung on the branch a circle, borrowing the elastic force as it rushed and pounced at Li Yao. Its pair of arms opened up, leaving it wide open.

It hadn’t noticed that early on Li Yao had his right leg thrusted deeply within the spongy rotten growth below, clenching the bone of a dead Fiend Beast.

When the ape approached near, Li Yao’s right leg kicked out like lightning and the bone pierced straight into the ape’s third eye!

This bone was probably the fibula of a certain Demon Beast; it was incomparably hard. The bone delved inside in an instant, without resistance, through the third eye and pierced the brain of the ape.

A giant mass of brain matter shot out suddenly from the hollow bone.

No matter how powerful the three-eyed ape was, it would die on the spot if it took critical damage to its brain. The massive and strong body suddenly trembled, collapsing over. After a fit of unusual twitching, it ceased moving completely.

Similar scenes of slaughter occurred simultaneously all throughout Devil Flood Dragon Island. The portion of cultivation geniuses with resolute willpower awakened from their respective illusions one by one. They unleashed their terminating techniques, proceeding with bloody slaughter.

Quite a few of the youths’ had bad luck though. They were not able to shake the illusion in time and were targeted by Demon Beasts.

The instant the Demon Beasts unleashed what would be fatal attacks, the Puji Critters spouted giant blobs of pink gel like that of jello. The gel safely encased the youths within while the attacks of Demon Beasts were unable to do any damage whatsoever.

At the same time, the sky patrolling cultivators flew over at lightning speed. They took these failed competitors out from Devil Flood Dragon Island.

In the annual Limit Challenge Competition, the first 10 minutes was the hardest. A large portion of competitors were dazed in the illusion and forced to eat defeat.

This year was the same. Within the first 10 minutes, 725 competitors left Devil Flood Dragon Island with broken hearts and returned to the Distant Expanse.

And at the monitor center within the Distant Expanse were scouts of the Nine Elites, teachers of the various high schools, and high ranking military personnel. They were all gathered together here and were staring fixed with great interest at the incessantly flickering holograms.

To the side was also a large flickering list of names that displayed the top 100 ranking competitors in order.

Li Yao killed a three-eyed ape in an instant, receiving quite a few points, and had actually slaughtered his way into the top 100. At the present, he ranked number 98.

“The quality of this year’s batch of new talent is quite decent. Only 720 people left the island within the first 10 minutes. I remember last year that over a thousand people failed within the first 10 minutes!” a high ranking military personnel laughed as he spoke.

“Magnify the top 100 competitors. We need to observe them very closely,” said a scout.

A hundred holograms metamorphasised immediately, transforming larger, clearer, and brighter. And flame decals were now on the perimeter of the holograms’ frame.

“Huh?”

The Artificing Expert from Deep Sea University, Xie Tingxian, went slightly blank. He saw the entire sequence of events of Li Yao slaying the three-eyed ape.

He never thought that this youth who possessed such a high gift for artificing would actually possess such a proficiency for battle.

“I knew it! My eyes weren’t mistaken!”

The scout from the Grand Desolate War Institution, Ding Lingdang, waved her fist in excitement!

“But, what the hell is he up to now?”

On the hologram, Li Yao performed a bizarre action that caused Xie Tingxian and Ding Lingdang to simultaneously have a feeling of bewilderment emerge in their hearts.

As seen on the hologram, Li Yao did not leave after killing the three-eyed ape, but instead he removed the Fiend bone from the ape’s forehead. Using the bone as a blade, he cut the neck artery of the three-eyed ape in a completely skillful fashion and smeared the incomparably noxious Demon Beast blood all over his body.

He smeared the blood completely even all over him, not even missing a single toe for exposure. And in the end, he even soaked all the hair on his head in the blood before he clapped his hands in satisfaction. He grabbed the Fiend bone with his mouth and leapt onto a branch.

Li Yao took a deep breath, and it was as if he had returned to the Artifact Graveyard.

The crisscrossing tree branches formed narrow pathways and were quite similar to the narrow pathways among tottering towers of garbage in the Artifact Graveyard.

Sweeping a glance at lightning speed, Li Yao unleashed his calculating ability to the limit. And emerging into his mind were countless coordinates, wind vectors, and digits. An incomparably clear and transparent pathway appeared and spread before his eyes.

“Small Ji, help me locate the closest supply point!” Li Yao spoke to the Puji Critter on his head.

A moment later, the translucent map of Devil Flood Dragon Island was cast before his eyes, clearly marking his present location and the positions of several dozen supply points.

Chuckling lightly, Li Yao jumped from branch to branch lithely, shooting towards the closest supply point.

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!

Li Yao passed unhindered between the branches through what seemed to be dead ends. It was as if Devil Flood Dragon Island was made just for him — a corridor in the air that let him move as fast as lightning!

It wasn’t that there weren’t any Demon Beasts encountered on the way there. It was that every time he felt the existence of a Demon Beast, Li Yao would stop at once. He would enter into a state of deep concealment on the branch.

The Demon Beast blood on his body let out a strong Fiend Aura. And in addition, he was used to concealing himself since young in the garbage heaps of the Artifact Graveyard. He was unable to be discovered and distinguished by all the other Demon Beasts.

Sometimes, Demon Beasts would even attack amongst themselves. But presently, there were several thousand new arrivals of fat, tender, and extra-juicy “small fresh meat” on Devil Flood Dragon Island. So all the Demon Beasts were busy hunting for the smell of humans; they had no intention of eating the bitter and stenchy meat of their own kind.

Li Yao used this sort of method to arrive at the supply point, traumatised but unharmed.

His strange behavior also excited the curiosity of numerous cultivators in the monitoring center on the Distant Expanse. Everyone was making conjectures on his intentions.

“The movement technique of this competitor is quite nimble. It seems that he grew up in the mountains and woods. And his aura concealment skill is on a rather high level. Come look. Two Demon Beasts who were 3-5 meters away from him already went past him, not discovering him in the least.”

“You’re right. This competitor possesses an abundance of actual battle experience, not at all like a newbie entering the battlefield for the first time. And his mental strength is also very strong to be able to let Demon Beasts pass by him without actually moving a single whisker. Even his eyes didn’t even blink. This piece of material, after going through some education, can become an outstanding assassin!”

“However, why doesn’t he lift a finger? There were clearly several opportunities for him to kill a few Demon Beasts with little to no effort and receive a great amount of points. Why did he cock his bow, but not release the arrow? What’s he up to?”

Other than killing the first three-eyed ape, Li Yao had not dealt with any beasts for half an hour. His ranking was dropping down, soon entering the end of the 2000s ranking.

It should be known that the competitors that still remained on Devil Flood Dragon Island had killed 3-5 Demon Beasts on average by this time. Some of the experts with tyrannical strength were able to slay over a dozen Demon Beasts in a single breath.

At the moment, the name placed number one in the rankings was… Helian Lie!

“Small fellow, so you want to be the first to reach a supply point to show off the artificing side of your talents? Okay then. I will pay close attention to you. To see in the end what sort of tricks you have up your sleeve!” Xie Tingxian chuckled as his pair of eyes glistened and brightened.

With a light leap, Li Yao jumped into the supply point.

Chapter 54: Three Major Killing Weapons

Chapter 54: Three Major Killing Weapons

The supply point was a piece of flat empty ground amongst the forest. An offensive glyph array was set up encircling the surroundings. As soon as a Denib Beast enters within, the Demon Beast would be assaulted relentlessly by the glyph array. After time passed, Demon Beasts would no longer come here seeking their own deaths.

Piled up in the supply point were some food and water. There were also several dozen camo green weapon crates as well.

Li Yao swept his gaze in a circle. He opened a weapon crate first and took out a set of jungle camo battle clothes.

He did not even consider the battle boots due to the excessively complicated environment of the forest. Wearing boots would get in the way of attacking; it would be better to go barefoot.

He opened the second crate and discovered several dozen alloy blades glittering like snow inside.

As if facing a pile of garbage, Li Yao kicked the crate away in disdain.

He opened the third and the fourth crate in succession. They were packed full to the brim, loaded with artifact parts.

Li Yao examined the crates for a moment and discovered that the rest of the crates were filled with artifact parts, save for a crate containing first aid drugs and etc.

He went ahead and opened all the crates, sending the parts toppling out and forming a small mountain.

“What is he up to?”

Cultivators whispered to each other’s ears in the monitoring center.

The artifact parts in these supply points are for competitors to assemble their own artifacts. It tested the competitor’s degree of familiarity and manual dexterity with these artifacts.

However, most people would open at most one or two weapons crates and extract parts for a set. It was enough to assemble one or two artifacts.

“This little fellow took all the artifact parts and mixed them all together. Can he distinguish them clearly from one another? I mean, they are the most rudimentary of artifacts, but there would be several thousand different components when added all together. To be able to find matching sets of components would be hard. Hard. Way too hard!”

A high ranking military officer disapproved and shook his head.

Artifact Assembling Competitions were quite popular within the military. Soldiers were required to assemble complete artifacts in the shortest amount of time.

Some experts were even able to assemble artifacts to completion with their eyes blindfolded.

But these sorts of competitions used components of the same kind of artifacts. Nobody would take components of several dozen different kinds of artifacts and mix them together. How would one distinguish parts from one another?

Even though Li Yao’s ranking was falling lower and lower, the interest that these cultivators had in regards to him was growing stronger and stronger.

Li Yao didn’t know that numerous cultivators were paying careful attention to his performance from the Distant Expanse.

He was neither tense nor slow, instead moving at his own pace in this match.

He first picked out a crystal cell for the part heap. Then, he picked out some artifact parts and coiled them around the crystal cell, creating an ugly and peculiar small device.

After doing this, he took out approximately 20 more crystal cells and coiled the artifact parts around them following the same pattern. Finally, he connected them in series.

“What is this?”

The cultivators in the monitoring center were puzzled and confused. Everyone’s gazes fell towards the Artificing Expert Xie Tingxian.

Xie Tingxian looked to be deep in thought as he spoke, “Crystal cells are the cores for the most low-level of artifacts. They are responsible for providing essence energy to artifacts as an energy source. But what this competitor has made and created using crystal cells isn’t your standard artifact. At most, one can say that this is a device that carries some artifact capabilities.”

“Professor Xie, what sort of uses does this device have?” a military officer could not help asking.

Xie Tingxian thought to himself for a time. “It’s a kind of explosive device. It can disrupt the Stabilizing Glyph Array within the crystal cells to cause the powerful spiritual energy contained within the crystal cells to rupture in an instant and give rise to a great powerful explosive force.”

“Could it be that he wants to make over a hundred explosive devices and bombs his way as he goes?”

“That can’t be right. He set up 20 of them crystal cells in series. With that big of a mass, it would be impossible to carry around. Don’t even mention about going out to bomb Demon Beasts, it would be impossibly lucky of him to not be caught in such a big explosion.”

The military officer wrinkled his eyebrows having sunk into deep thought.

After making a small and a large crystal cell bomb, Li Yao did something unexpected by changing his style completely.

His dexterity increased abruptly in a flash. His pair of hands transformed into two trailing shadows as he plucked out several hundred components from the pile at lightning speeds.

A crackling exploding sound rang forth as a long sawtooth-edged sword began to form at lightning speed.

“Such fast hand dexterity!”

The monitoring center was in an uproar.

Assembling artifacts was a basic skill of cultivators. Every cultivator had some understanding of it.

But at their level, they long since ceased using their hands and instead used spiritual energy to manipulate the components.

For an ordinary youth whose spirit root had yet to awaken, possessing hand dexterity as demonically fast as these means that he had absolutely gone through long, difficult, and unsurpassed amounts of practice!

“Such solid fundamentals!”

Xie Tingxian nodded his head over and over, faintly feeling that he was about to snatch up a diamond this time.

The other cultivars could only see that Li Yao’s hand dexterity was demonically fast. With the eyes of an expert, only he could tell that Li Yao was maintaining a super high speed while also maintaining a pair of steady hands. Li Yao ensured that every component was assembled firmly and accurately. Even breathing did not cause the slightest hint of disruption.

The only thing was…

Xie Tingxian blinked his eyes. He had discovered that the assembling sequence Li Yao went through differed somewhat from the standard military greatsword assembling procedure.

At first, he thought that Li Yao had made a mistake. But a moment later, he found out that Li Yao was modifying the architecture in the most inconspicuous place. There he added a little “something”.

“Interesting. This really is interesting.”

Xie Tingxian did not expect that Li Yao, a high school student, would actually take these classical artifacts with finalized designs and go on to modify them.

Although he had yet to figure out what the small modification would entail, he was already made to nod his head over and over, firmly increasing his resolve to pay close attention to Li Yao.

Not five minutes had passed when Li Yao completed assembling the first artifact.

This was a military standard chainsword nicknamed the Tiger Shark!

It was a two-handed broadsword exceeding 1.5 meters long. A sawtooth ring crafted from super-alloy steel revolved around the exterior. Powered by crystal cells, the sawtooth ring was able to revolve at super high speeds. As for its killing power, it can easily chop through a giant tree with a girth that one could not wrap his arms around. No matter how hard the shell and bones of low-level Demon Beasts were, they were no use when faced with this sword.

“Four minutes thirty-nine seconds. This speed already exceeds that of several veteran military personnel,” the officer from a moment ago cried out.

Strictly speaking, assembling artifacts in this manner was only taking pre-crafted artifact components and assembling them together. Technically, it wasn’t real “artificing”.

But when adhering to the standards of a typical eighteen year old, Li Yao demonstrated an absolutely praiseworthy virtuoso performance.

What followed was…

Contrary to the expectations of most of the cultivators, Li Yao did not heave the Tiger Shark Chainsword out to go slaying around with it. Instead, he put it aside. He picked out a great amount of components once again and began to assemble his second artifact.

The components he picked out this time were completely different than those from last time. The style increased in crudeness, ferocity, and wildness, giving it the appearance of a war blade.

Soon, a somewhat shorter, but broader and thicker, strangely shaped blade looking like a dog’s leg was born in Li Yao’s hands.

“Thunder Blade?” the military officer shouted involuntarily.

It was also one of the most fundamental and rudimentary of artifacts. But the thunder blade and the chainsword designs were completely different in reasoning. This blade relied on the Jolt Glyph Array engraved on both sides of the back of the blade. The array generates high-frequency vibration ripples, causing the blade to produce over 10,000 oscillations per second. This way, the killing power is increased.

Each time the blade chops down, the internal organs of the Demon Beast will be completely disintegrated by the vibrations. Among the rudimentary artifacts, this was one of the most fierce!

These two types of designs had completely different logic behind them, creating completely opposite artifacts. In Li Yao's hands, they were so easy due to experience, as if he had known these artifacts since birth.

"This little guy is really quite the monster!" muttered the military officer.

And this wasn't even the end. After completing his second artifact, Li Yao was engrossed once more with the pile of parts. He selected components that were of completely different styles than that of the first two.

Again, he used another five minute interval. It was powerful and heavy. One look at this giant battle-axe caused people's scalps to go numb as it formed in Li Yao's palm.

Li Yao grasped the Drive Glyph Array on the handle tightly and slightly brandished the axe.

The numerous engraved glyph arrays on the surface of the battle-axe suddenly shined. The edge of the axe turned orange, like an iron heated red!

This was a heat-axe known as the Burning Sky. Its combat design was different again from the other two artifacts.

The large amounts of spiritual energy bursting from the crystal cells wasn't transformed into a form of mechanical energy but was directly transformed into a super-high temperature flow of heat through the use of it's glyph arrays.

When this axe descends, the internal organs of Demon Beasts will be all burnt to ash!

Three completely different styles of rudimentary artifacts with polarizing different designs were assembled in only a short 20 minutes.

There was no trace of sorrow nor happiness on Li Yao’s face. It was as if he had completed something small that wasn’t worth mentioning. He went and took a sip of cool water, splashing some onto his hands, carefully rubbing them to cool them down.

It was only now that everyone discovered his pair of hands were already burning hot, a sheet of crimson red, from the long duration of high-speed movements.

Chapter 55: Trading Artifacts

Chapter 55: Trading Artifacts

Trading Artifacts

“There’s someone with this kind of gift for artificing among today’s high school students? How extremely rare! Deep Sea University must desire this sort of genius, right?”

“Why did he assemble three completely different artifacts? The techniques required to use the Chainsword, the Thunderblade, and the Heat-axe are completely different. Can it be that he’s proficient in all three types of artifacts? He would simply be a monster then!”

“Even if he’s proficient in all of them, there’s no need to make all of them. These three artifacts are all heavy weapons. If he were to carry them all on his body, his speed would greatly reduce. This is of no benefit when fighting in the jungle; instead, it becomes a burden.”

While every cultivator discussed amongst themselves, a second competitor had arrived at the supply point.

This youth was tall and his temperament was completely vicious. Beneath his chin grew stubble all around, giving him a mature appearance.

When he saw Li Yao resting and sitting to the side, he clearly became distracted for a moment.

But as soon as he saw that there were actually three artifacts displayed on the ground, he became immediately overjoyed. He walked up to them in all smiles and grabbed the Burning Sky Battleaxe in his hand. He swung it vigorously a few times and continued to shout with excitement.

“Today is my lucky day. I never thought that there would be preassembled artifacts in the supply points. With this Burning Sky Battleaxe, I can kill a hundred Demon Beasts in a day!”

The vicious youth hefted the battle-axe. But right when he was about to leave, a voice rang out unexpectedly from behind him.

Li Yao called lazily, fixing him in place: “Hey, fellow student. I just assembled this battle-axe a moment ago. I’ll sell it to you for 200 points. Since you’re my first customer, I’ll give you a 5 percent discount for a price of 190 then.”

The vicious youth went blank, following immediately with a laugh. “So it was you who crafted these. Then I truly need to give you my thanks. I’ll treat you to dinner when I have time!”

With absolutely no intentions of trading, he hefted the battle-axe and turned around to leave.

Li Yao had foreseen this happening early on. He shouted after the youth without a change in expression “Fellow student, hold on. Please take a look at this!”

Upon speaking, Li Yao gently unfolded his arm, ferociously tossing the first crystal cell bomb he assembled far into the forest.

“BOOM!”

A large sound suddenly rang out from within the forest. A ball of smoke rose gradually into the air. Flickers of a malevolent flame were mixed within the smoke. A surging wave of heat assaulted their faces.

The vicious youth was frightened by the large sound. The color of his face changed as he turned around to stare fixed at Li Yao. “What do you mean by this?”

Li Yao held a large bomb comprised of over 20 crystal cells connected in series. He giggled while saying, “I don’t mean nothing. It was only the powerful explosion of a crystal cell bomb just now. You saw it~~~ I still have over twenty crystal cells hooked in series in my hands. If you’re not willing to trade and you want to walk away with my Burning Sky Battleaxe for nothing, then you leave me no choice but to activate the glyph array, ignite the crystal cells, and blow the both of us out of the competition then~”

“You…”

The vicious youth was suddenly struck dumb. He never expected that Li Yao would play this hand.

Li Yao chuckled, saying, “If you don't want to buy, that’s okay too. There are quite a few ordinary swords over there. You can take any you please. It doesn’t matter if you take all of them away, but please relinquish my Burning Sky Battleaxe.”

The vicious youth squinted his eyes and saw the ordinary swords scattered all around the ground. A color of disdain was revealed in his irises.

Had he not tried out the Burning Sky Battleaxe, using ordinary swords may have been fine for killing Demon Beasts.

But he already had a taste of the Burning Sky Battleaxe with its truly ecstatic feeling of being of the highest quality. He was somewhat unwilling to return and choose an ordinary sword.

Li Yao continued speaking, “Killing one low-level Demon Beast will net you approximately a dozen points. If you purchase this Sky Burning Battleaxe for 200 points, you can increase your Demon Beast killing efficiency greatly. How many dozens of Demon Beasts can you kill within three days? You can probably make back the points in half a day!”

The color of the vicious youth’s face was dark and unclear. He was in complete hesitation.

After all, the competition had only just begun. None of the competitors had many points; 190 points seemed to be all he had in his possession.

If he went ahead with the trade, his ranking would drop to the very bottom.

But what this fellow said was correct! If he had this Burning Sky Battleaxe, his Demon Beast killing efficiency would greatly increase. The rate of earning points would increase by at least two fold!

Li Yao was smiling from ear to ear. Like a business shark, he spoke with consideration for the customer out from the bottom of his heart, “Fellow student, think clearly. If you don’t buy this Burning Sky Battleaxe, later I will sell it to someone else. That person’s offensive strength will greatly increase over yours. He might rank higher in points than you later on. In this manner, you might suffer from not just a little bit of a loss.”

The vicious youth snorted coldly saying, “I admit what you say is true, but you’re not the only one who can assemble artifacts! I have taken the relevant courses in my school. I can also assemble a Sky Burning Battleaxe by spending a bit more time… What! How could you mix all the artifact components together? What a huge mess! You’re way too shameless, fellow student!”

Li Yao shrugged his shoulders, speaking indifferently: “Make up your mind already. Are you going to make the trade or what? If you’re not, then please relinquish the battleaxe. Thanks.”

“I don't believe you’ll set off the bomb!” the vicious youth stared dead fixed in Li Yao’s eyes, grinding his teeth as he spoke.

“Sure then. I’ll count down from three and we will all retire from the competition. Anyway, my actual strength differs a lot from yours. I only came here to broaden my world. I never expected to enter the finals. Three… Two…”

Li Yao laughed a devilish laugh unperturbed.

Before he could count down to “one”, the vicious youth collapsed completely and let out a crazed howl, “STOP! STOP! I’ll trade! I’ll buy this Burning Sky Battleaxe!”

The two’s Puji Critters bumped lightly into each other in the air with a “ding” sound. The 190 points that the vicious youth earned from painstakingly killing Demon Beasts were transferred completely all to Li Yao’s name!

A glistening bright name suddenly faded away from the rankings and Li Yao’s name appeared once more in the top 100… He blazed to the 88th spot in a flash!

Depression filled the vicious youth’s face. He glared ferociously at Li Yao, hefted the Burning Sky Battleaxe, and walked away with his head down dejected.

“So from the beginning, he wanted to act mainly as an ‘Artifact Peddler’. To use this sort of method to earn points!”

Numerous cultivators in the monitoring center suddenly came to an understanding. One by one, a feeling of not knowing whether to laugh or cry grew in everyone.

In the past, there were also dozens of competitions who went ahead and traded artifacts. But, they would do this occasionally in between primarily slaying Demon Beasts.

The main reason was because there were too many loopholes within the trading rules. They were quite disadvantageous towards the artifact crafter. If the crafter was even slightly off guard, their artifacts would be easily snatched by other people.

They never thought this evil little fellow would think of a “mutual destruction” method to seal the loopholes in trading!

After completing his first trade, Li Yao threw himself into assembling a new artifact.

He was just like an untiring essence golem; his hands continued to operate at high speeds without showing the slight bit of tremoring for the next few hours.

During this period of time, several hundred competitors had already arrived at the supply point.

The majority of competitors possessing sufficient points walked away with an artifact under the influence of Li Yao’s glib tongue.

In other words, Li Yao just waited comfortably in this incomparably safe supply point and earned the equivalent of killing several hundred Demon Beasts outside, if not a thousand Demon Beasts!

He was soaring up on the ranking board, managing to blitzkrieg into the top 10. There was only a one hundred point different between him and Helian Lie!

Every competitor can check the ranking board through using their Puji Critters.

Obviously, when Helian Lie saw Li Yao's name, he was shocked, astonished, and stupefied!

“This mishmash was clearly a rotten piece of trash. Piece of Trash. PIECE OF TRASH! How the hell did he blitzkrieg his way into the top 10? To have such a small difference between us? This is completely impossible!”

Helian Lie's eyes were bloodshot. His anger was exploding incomparably! No matter how he racked his head, he could not find an answer to what Li Yao did to reach here in the end!

Soon, all the artifact parts were consumed bare by Li Yao and all assembled artifacts were traded for points.

Li Yao chuckled and then whistled. He took the big explosive and put it in his military pack. He was setting out towards the next supply point!

Chapter 56: First in the Rankings!

Chapter 56: First in the Rankings!

First in the Rankings!

He did not have as much luck at the second supply point. Quite a few competitors had already arrived and snatched stuff first.

Several weapon crates were already opened. Some artifact components were already used by other competitors; however, most of the weapon crates were still relatively intact.

Afterall, when compared to fighting prowess, there weren’t that many youths who possessed a gift for artificing.

Although the majority of youths had studied the basics of artificing knowledge, the extent of that knowledge only covered a few dozen rudimentary artifact compositions and assembling procedures. They did not have Li Yao’s abundance of hands-on working experience.

Modern artifacts differ from ancient artifacts. Even the most rudimentary of cold weapons would be composed of over a hundred parts.

When assembled by a novice, aside from the slow assembling speed, whenever a part wasn’t carefully installed, there would likely be problems arising during battle. Best case scenario, the artifact would suddenly fail.

Worst case scenario, it would explode on the spot, causing the spiritual energy to backfire from the inside, creating an incomparably dangerous situation!

Therefore, the majority of youths who weren’t good at crafting still chose to use ordinary swords to fight.

Li Yao began doing procedures, starting the second round of crazed assembling!

In the beginning, the trading went rather well at this supply point. But after selling his 20th artifact, Li Yao finally hit an iron wall.

“If you want money, I have none. If you want life, I have one. I’m gonna take and walk away with this Burning Sky Battleaxe. Go ahead and set off the explosion. The worst thing would be mutual defeat!”

It was a male youth with dark skin, the height of a cow, and the size of a horse. He looked to be a demon as he spoke fiercely.

Li Yao had somewhat of a toothache.

“Fellow Student, don’t be so stubborn. I already gave you 10% off. You can buy such a great battleaxe for only 270 points! It’s simply a blood-spitting price reserved for family! Or does it mean that you really don’t believe I will set off the bomb?”

“You’re correct. I was stubborn since birth. Other people call me ‘The Stubborn Bull’ at school.

I just don’t believe it. If you have guts, then just set it off!”

The tanned male laughed loudly, hefted the Burning Sky Battleaxe, and turned around to leave without looking back.

Li Yao sneered as he looked at the male’s back. A trace of ferocity exuded from Li Yao’s eyes.

Before the tanned male could walk outside the supply point, a gale of wind blasted suddenly against his back. Without even the time to react, his body turned wet from a blob of pink gel that bound him firmly.

The tanned male was encased in the pink jello with an expression of shock and grief as he sadly left the competition!

“That’s what I’m talking about. This kid is suited to be an assassin. Think about it. He doesn’t need to be supplied with weapons when he hides behind enemy lines. He can craft and maintain any sort of artifacts himself. This kind of fellow is an existence that will cause headaches for the enemy no matter where he’s placed!”

A cultivator could not help speaking out in the monitoring center.

“How ruthless and merciless. It’s true that there’s nothing preventing competitors from attacking each other in the preliminaries, but to use this kind of deathly back-to-the-head sudden attack means that he has a strong mental fortitude. That kind of fortitude isn’t typical of a high school student. He’s good. He’s really good!”

A cultivator with a shriveled, skinny figure and cold eyes also chuckled, nodding his head repeatedly.

The competitors like the Stubborn Bull, with a block-headed behavior/one-track mind of walking towards doom, are few in number. Most of the competitors straightforwardly chose to trade with points after weighing the pros and cons.

As the competition went on, the number of Demon Beasts slain by everyone grew larger and larger. The competitors with stronger strength had over a thousand points each.

Even though Li Yao played things by ear when increasing his prices slowly, his prices were still quite fair. Most of the competitors did not want to get caught in hassles, for it would be much more delightful and easier to kill Demon Beasts with a better weapon.

The second supply point was swept clean in no time. And once again, Li Yao headed out towards his third supply point.

It took a full two days for him to sweep all of the supply points on Devil Flood Dragon Island clean. He had assembled several hundred rudimentary artifacts in succession to trade with other competitors.

Later on, he even sent a message through his Puji Critter on the public channel meant for communication between competitors. He broadcasted an advertisement:

“Great amounts of Chainswords, Thunder Blades, and Burning Sky Battleaxes are available for sale. They are mighty and very powerful. Their quality is solid. The prices are cheap. They are essential treasures for slaying Demon Beasts and earning a great amount of points. If you wish to buy, please come post haste to ‘so and so number’ supply point.”

Li Yao killed a total of four Demon Beasts. One was from the three-eyed ape in the beginning. The others happened when he had accidently revealed some tracks when moving around, so he was forced to kill three Demon Beasts.

But when the competition entered its 49th hour, Li Yao's name had actually inconceivably appeared in the first place spot on the rankings, even placing above Helian Lie's name!

This was unprecedented in the history of the Limit Challenge Competition.

But top place ranking lasted briefly; it's hard to be sustained for long.

This was because all of the supply points on Devil Flood Dragon Island were swept clean by the end of the second day.

At his first supply point, there were a lot of artifact components for him to assemble.

But after all, there were still quite a few people among the competitors who knew how to assemble artifacts. All the artifact components in the last few supply points were already consumed and exhausted.

Additionally, quite a few competitors who dealt with Li Yao earlier suffered from fatal attacks later and were forced to retire. Great amounts of Chainblades, Thunder Blades, and Burning Sky Battle Axes were lost in the forest and found by other competitors… This was something that Li Yao was utterly unable to prevent.

By the end of the second day, Li Yao's business had already become very difficult to maintain.

Li Yao didn't give a damn. He chose a rather warm and dry supply point and began… Sleeping!

While the other competitors were battling endlessly in the forest, being soaked in blood, gaining scars all over their bodies, and using up all their energy, Li Yao snored in deep sleep. He was conserving every last ounce of precious strength.

His name fell, sliding down on the ranking board. By noon of the third day, his name had dropped outside the top 100.

By the end of the third day, his ranking fell all the way down to 293rd.

Li Yao still didn’t give a damn… As long as his ranking was within the top 600, he would still enter the finals.

He was waiting for the finals to put on a good show!

“Pop!”

Li Yao opened a pressurized tin can in the supply point and ate big mouthfuls of food that he chewed over and over.

“BZZ! BZZ! BZZ!”

A strange vibration spread all throughout Devil Flood Dragon Island. Powerful restriction arrays had been initialized. The once vicious and fearsome Demon Beasts seemed to go fixed like statues. All of them turned rigid and motionless.

“Congratulations, Student Li Yao. You have entered into the final stage of the Limit Challenge Competition!”

“Please rest for three hours. All Demon Beasts will be shackled during this time period, they won’t attack you.”

“The finals will begin in three hours. There will be even more powerful Demon Beasts released onto the field during that time. At the same time, you will have 300 competitors as enemies and 299 competitors as allies. Good luck!”

The white Puji Critter orbited around Li Yao’s head dancing elegantly. It seemed to be happy for Li Yao.

A thousand or so beams of light rose from Devil Flood Dragon Island, flying towards the Distant Expanse.

Li Yao knew that those were the competitors who ranked below 600th place. None would have a chance at the finals.

The remaining 600 competitors on Devil Dragon Island were the powerful who managed to survive for three days and slew countless Demon Beasts!

The true battle just started from this moment!

Li Yao chuckled, keeping his head down and eating without a single worry in the world.

Right at this time, Small Ji’s pink antenna at the top of his head swayed slightly, casting a 3D figure in front of Li Yao. It was someone that Li Yao was familiar with.

“Headmaster Zhao!”

Li Yao was struck dumb. Appearing in front of him was the Headmaster of Crimson Nimbus Second, Zhao Shude, who was also a core member of the Crimson Nimbus Guild, a high-level Foundation Stage cultivator.

This ordinarily mysterious bigwig headmaster had a kind expression piled on his face. He repeatedly nodded his head as he spoke, “Student Li Yao, your performance has been outstanding. Speaking of which, have you thought about which university you want to attend?”

“Many thanks for the concern Headmaster Zhao. I’ve already made up my mind. I want to apply for Deep Sea University and become a Refiner!” Li Yao puffed up his chest.

“Deep Sea University is quite good. However, Star Nebula University also has quite a decent Artificing Department. Are you interested? If you want, I can represent the Crimson Nimbus Guild and have you sign an “Entrusted Education” contract. You won’t need to go through the entrance exams. You can directly enter Star Nebula University!”

Zhao Shude had spoken astonishing words.

Chapter 57: Three Options

Chapter 57: Three Options

Li Yao’s eyes bulged wide. “Entrusted Education?”

After Headmaster Zhao explained for a moment, Li Yao knew the gist of it. “Entrusted Education” is a special collaborative effort between the cultivator guilds and the universities.

Simply speaking, if Li Yao signs this contract, then he would be considered an official member of the Crimson Nimbus Guild upon graduation from high school. Then, the Crimson Nimbus Guild will entrust him to a university for his education.

The Crimson Nimbus Guild will assume all responsibility for tuition fees and living expenses during that time. And once he graduates from university, he’ll directly get a job with a corporation of the Crimson Nimbus Guild.

This kind of education process for talented students can be said to be streamlined. As long as Li Yao signs the contract, he would live a life without worries and walk a road full of future promise!

Zhao Shude smiled as he spoke, “Our Crimson Nimbus Guild just established a new company last year called the Crimson Nimbus Real Estate. They specialize in developing new towns and cities on the frontier of the Federation. Building a single new city generates several times in profit, up to 10 times!”

“But Demon Beasts run wild on the frontier. It’s not necessarily safe. And since the area is desolate, it’s hard to bring in supplies.

“Therefore, we need hybrid-type talented people who possess great battle prowess and understand how to craft and maintain artifacts to respond to safety issues during periods of construction.

If you sign this contract, when you graduate, you will get a high-ranking position in the Crimson Nimbus Real Estate. It won’t take years before you become the second ‘Peng Hai’!”

The second Fiend Blade Peng Hai!

Li Yao’s heart surged and he was in high spirits, feeling his mood floating past the highest clouds.

Zhao Shude chuckled and continued speaking, “You’re very lucky, Student Li Yao. Did you know that even Elder Zhou of the Crimson Nimbus Guild considers you of complete importance? It was precisely under his arrangement that you are able to receive this ‘Entrusted Education’ Contract.”

“He’s a real bigwig. If you enter the Crimson Nimbus Guild, you will become one of Elder Zhou’s men. Your future will be boundless!”

“However, there’s no need for you to answer in a rush. Your performance has already stimulated the interest of several universities. There should be more people looking to contact you later. You might as well weigh the offers so that you won’t blame me for not giving you any options. Hahahaha!”

Zhao Shude waved his hand without waiting for Li Yao to respond and said, “In a word, give a good performance in the finals. Elder Zhou and I will be watching you. If you have any other conditions, there’s no harm in bringing them up. Crimson Nimbus Second won’t treat any genius unfairly!”

After speaking, the image flashed and Zhao Shude’s translucent figure changed to a white glow, disappearing in a flash.

Li Yao then took a deep haggard breath.

Oh MAN! He never thought he would actually attract the interest of the major players of the Crimson Nimbus Guild. He had the chance to step into the skies!

Is he going to agree to them or not?

While he was still hesitating, Small Ji’s antenna started to sway lightly to form a second virtual image. And this second image caused Li Yao’s heart to beat even faster.

“Professor Xie!”

Li Yao bowed to the virtual image of the purple-clothed old man with the utmost respect… Opposite from him was the Artificing Expert of Deep Sea University, Xie Tingxian!

Xie Tingxian chuckled.

“Student Li Yao, congratulations. You may not have the highest point ranking in this year’s competition, but you are the one who attracted the most eyes. I’ll get straight to the point. I’ve already sent competition recordings of you to our admissions office of Deep Sea University. What I’ve requested from our Admissions Office is for you to be specially enrolled as long as you enter the top 50 rankings in the finals of the competition! If you enter the top 100, then I’ll give you a preferential score treatment of 20 points! If you enter the top 200, then I’ll give you a preferential score treatment of 10 points! How is it? Doesn’t this count as good faith?”

“Really, I’m far too grateful, Professor Xie. I will do my best and fight my way to the top 50!” Li Yao spoke loudly.

“Good. Right now’s the critical moment. I won’t bother your resting. Do your best to maintain a tranquil state of mind. Fight and bring out your best!” Xie Tingxian nodded towards him, chuckling as his figure faded in the hologram.

The instant Xie Tingxian faded away, another virtual image appeared with a jerk, seeming hotheaded and itching to get on with things. It forcefully squeezed into Li Yao’s line of sight.

“Ding… Ding Lingdang?” Li Yao went blank. It was that female T-rex.

Ding Lingdang sized Li Yao up and down with utterly scorching eyes. She spoke sternly, “Student Li Yao, you appear to have somewhat of a misunderstanding about the Grand Desolate War Institution… It’s true. Our school’s Combat Department is the strongest in the Federation!”

“But, we don’t have just empty handed ‘Body Practitioners’ in our Combat Department. We also have experts in bladed weapons and melee artifacts — Sword Cultivators. You come from Crimson Nimbus Second so you ought to know of a famous senior ‘Peng Hai’. He entered our Grand Desolate War Institution after graduation from high school and specialized in training in the usage of various melee artifacts. Later, he even won the nickname ‘Fiend Blade’. It’s okay if you don’t want to become a Body Practitioner. It would also be great if you can come to our Grand Desolate War Institution’s Combat Department to become a Sword Cultivator!”

The two words “Peng Hai” caused Li Yao to be stupefied for a second. A flame ignited in his eyes.

Upon seeing that Li Yao hadn’t immediately refused, Ding Lingdang became more lively as she spoke, “In brief, I feel that it is in your nature to become a battle-type cultivator. You’re extremely suited for the Combat Department of our Grand Desolate War Institution. As long as you can fight your way into the top 300 of the finals, I can give you special enrollment. And, all tuition fees will be waived and you will receive a giant scholarship! What do you think? Consider it over then, Student Li Yao!”

……

Even until after Ding Lingdang’s virtual image faded in the air, Li Yao was still dazed. His heart undulated with emotion. It took a long time before he could calm down.

Three gold-paved roads unfolded before his eyes, extending completely straight. Each road led to the supreme apex of the world of cultivators.

In the end, which school ought he choose?

Li Yao sat cross-legged and calmly thought over the pros and cons of each of the three options.

Of the three options, the invitation from Ding Lingdang was clearly the most sincere.

With Li Yao’s actual strength, as long as he brings out his normal strength, fighting his way into the top 300 of the finals shouldn’t be that difficult. And, Fiend Blade Peng Hai graduated from the Combat Department of this Grand Desolate War Institution. Obviously, they did not just specialize in educating Body Practitioners, but also in Sword Cultivators. It matched with his own strengths.

However, after careful consideration, Li Yao still eliminated Grand Desolate War Institution first from his choices.

He promised his long-passed Old Man that he would become a Refiner for sure. Becoming a simple battle-type cultivator would be deviating from his dream.

And Headmaster Zhao’s conditions better align with his ambitions.

Although Star Nebula University’s Artificing Department wasn’t ranked as high as Deep Sea University’s, they were still able to craft treasures like the Spiritual Energy Particle Collider. Clearly, they had their own originalities.

This quite suited Li Yao’s liking, and all expenses would be covered by the Crimson Nimbus Guild. After graduation, he would get a job in a large company controlled by the Crimson Nimbus Guild. After a certain number of years, he would be able to experience a life of new cars, beautiful women, and luxurious villas. It was simply a path of instant success.

However, everything has their negatives. After dinner comes the reckoning. Once he signed the contract with the Crimson Nimbus Guild, he would become an official member of the Crimson Nimbus Guild. Any cultivation courses he would take would be determined by the Crimson Nimbus Guild. His future path of development would also be limited. He would be unable to have his own characteristics.

Since the Crimson Nimbus Guild is paying for everything, he will certainly be educated to be a concentrated cultivator that’s specialized for a certain job. Like being a cog in a big artifact machine. He would always be on board the Crimson Nimbus Guild’s chariot.

This was something Li Yao could not stand.

After considering everything over, Li Yao still resolutely settled on his initial aspiration. He will bring forth everything in the finals to fight his way into the top 50. He will attain special enrollment into Deep Sea University!

Even if he was unable to fight his way into the top 50, at least he would fight for that 20 points of preferential treatment, so that he would have a big advantage in the Entrance Exams.

Deep Sea University is his only choice!

“Let the finals begin! I can’t wait to get started!”

He watched the muddy yellow clouds above get snatched up by the giant bird-like Distant Expanse. Li Yao licked his lips and punched hard to the sky with a fist.

“Just wait a moment, and I will let you experience just how fearsome a shameless Refiner can be!”

Chapter 58: A Commander Appears

Chapter 58: A Commander Appears

At the moment, the Distant Expanse was bustling with unusual noise.

There were cultivators in the monitoring center and 2400 defeated competitors in the hall outside.

These youths were only upset for a short while before they fixed their attention raptly onto the giant hologram, waiting for the finals to begin.

After all, they would receive benefits to their future cultivation when witnessing numerous experts radiate like burning stars during exchanges of blows.

Three hours passed quickly under the gaze of the large crowd. The Limit Challenge Competition… Officially began!

“BOW! BOWOWOWOWOW!!”

The restriction arrays that covered Devil Flood Dragon Island were released. The Demon Beasts who had been restricted for three hours impatiently jumped forth. They used the craziest of snarls to vent the rage coming from the depths of their hearts.

“ROAR! ROAR ROAR!”

Responses came from underground, shouts mixed with tyrannical strength like muffled thunder.

Upon hearing the howls, the just-before majestic Demon Beasts began to reveal expressions of utter fear on their faces as their necks shrank.

At several hundred hidden points all around Devil Flood Dragon Island, countless transmission arrays began to flash.

Under the flickering radiance, powerful Demon Beasts with larger bodies, fiercer appearances, crueler expressions, and more violent auras were set free!

They stuck their heads out, observing their surroundings. Their noses shook as they took in the fresh meat scent in the air, the smell that soon caused them to go wild. They shook their heads and wagged their tails, bore their fangs and brandished their claws, and threw themselves into the depths of the forest!

And in front of each of the 600 competitors, their respective Puji Critters listed the 600 names of those who entered the finals.

The 600 people were divided into teams — Red and Blue. A blue or red glow also curled around the Puji Critters to show the teams.

At the same time, the communication channel of the competitors promptly changed. From this moment on, they can only send messages to their own team.

Li Yao skimmed through the 600 names at lightning speed and discovered that he was on the Red Team.

And that Helian Lie and Si Jiaxue were divided into the Blue Team. Surprisingly, the fellow Zheng Dongming had become his teammate.

“Helian Lie. Per your own words, Devil Flood Dragon Island is quite large and is quite small at the same time. I hope we won’t encounter each other!”

Li Yao did final a inspection on his artifacts and laughed with utter confidence.

He was equipped with two short Progressive Daggers. They were smeared with sludge to form a blackness that won’t reflect light. They were like the fangs of a demon.

After sticking the daggers on his waist belt, he examined the myriad of improvised artifacts in his military pack. With a light leap, Li Yao entered the forest and faded away amongst the branches.

The intensity of the finals was a hundred times greater than that of the preliminaries!

Besides the several hundred powerful new Demon Beasts lurking in the forest, quite a few competitors were resting in groups together before they were suddenly split into two teams. The Puji Critters turned either red or blue.

Under each other's’ gazes, the opposing team members turned into “giant sacks of exp” filled with great amounts of points!

The just-laughing cheerful students engaged in bloody close handed slaughter in a flash!

In a short 5 minutes, 37 competitors were ejected from the competition, and their points were robbed by the competitors who “slain” them.

In the ranking board shown in the monitoring center, the top 100 names seemed to be changing every second!

“Everyone, don’t panic. We should organize ourselves and fight like the Federal Army! My name is Gao Ye and I come from a family of military. I’ve followed my father and uncles since young, learning the commander tactics of special forces. I possess extremely powerful computation and commanding abilities. Everyone, listen to my commands. Group onto my position! If you’re far away from me, group with the teammates by your side. Assemble into small battle squads!”

A sound suddenly rang out from the Blue Team’s communication channel.

The voice was somewhat hoarse but contained great confidence and powerful inspiration within. It caused people to automatically believe in those words.

Quite a few of the members of the Blue Team slightly hesitated, then subconsciously moved closer to Gao Ye’s coordinates.

“The commander for the Blue Team has appeared!” All the cultivators were in high spirits in the monitoring center.

600 students were divided into two teams in the finals. A competitor’s individual combat ability was actually not the most crucial thing. The most crucial thing was for everyone to assemble together in the shortest time frame, form into battle squads, and fight against Demon Beasts and the enemy team.

It can be said that in this battle, whichever team has an expert commanding admin-type talent first appear will seize the initiative. They would very likely seize the final victory!

In the previous competitions, often it took at least several hours, or even a day, of strife and a bitter price to pay before a “Commander” was born.

It was very unexpected for such a gifted commander talent to appear in this competition. The chaos of the Blue Team had been dissolved in a mere five minutes.

In the Blue Team’s comm channel, Gao Ye issued commands after commands, coolly and calmly, giving no chance for anybody to refute his commands.

Although there were people who questioned his strategic decisions, Gao Ye would justify himself and refute them within several seconds. They opposition were left dumbstruck and everyone accepted Gao Ye’s commands willingly.

Under his command, the remaining 280+ competitors on the Blue Team gradually grouped together, forming a standard-like battle formation.

A dozen or so competitors even formed a hunting squad, killing a powerful Demon Beast that had just walked through the transmission array!

On the other hand, the Red Team was in a bad situation. They did not have an organizing admin-type genius among their 300 competitors. Voices were clamoring in their communication channel. If you’re noisy, I’ll be noisier. Voices were talking over one another. It was like the special bargain sale time at the supermarket.

“My Actualization Quotient is at 75%. Let me be the commander for the Red Team. Everyone, convene onto me! Convene onto me!”

“Who gives a fuck if your Actualization Quotient is at 75%. My Actualization Quotient is at 77%. I can kill two Demon

Beasts with a single strike. But, I know myself. I don't have the makings of a commander. Kid, you should just stay where you belong!"

"You... You're this arrogant? What school are you from. Don't you dare going back after the competition!"

"Everyone quiet! First, let's quickly think of a way. I saw that the Blue Team has likely assembled themselves already. Our side is completely suppressed. They have seven to eight people fighting our two or three. AHH!"

"Not good. A powerful Demon Beasts appeared in my position. My coordinates are… Someone come and help!"

"No go. We've been intercepted by the Blue Team here. These goddamn bastards. How is it that the Blue Team has people everywhere! Red team. Where the hell has Red Team gone!"

Li Yao's body was smeared all over with sludge. On top of the sludge was an entwined layer of weeds, sticks, and vines. He concealed himself deep inside a shrub and waited calmly.

Even Small Ji was smeared in the same fashion of camouflage. He turned down the voice mode of the comm channel, skimming over the words in the comm channel with the weakest brightness.

Looking and looking, Li Yao let out a sigh somewhat helplessly.

He did not expect a genius level commander to appear on the opposing team while his own team was a mess. The situation seemed to be a bit disadvantageous now.

Li Yao knew himself. His skill was in crafting, not commanding the battlefield. And he didn’t have the ability to charismatically sway people with a few words. The ability to be revered and be saluted to. He did not have the makings of being a commander.

Even if he does enter a squad, he would be laughed at and ridiculed by his teammates.

“Maybe it’s about time to use my ace in the hole!” Li Yao fondled a hard and stiff object in his embrace.

It was a simple artifact that he made at the first supply point… It was a remote control.

Chapter 59: Paralyzed!

Chapter 59: Paralyzed!

The situation was within Li Yao’s expectations. Victory was cast slanted towards the Blue Team.

It could be seen clearly through the giant hologram in the monitoring center that the Blue Team had completely assembled together in under three hours.

They formed into small combat units with sizes of 3-5 competitors each. The members of a single unit were mostly from the same school and area; they were familiar with each other, so their attacking and assisting teamwork were well coordinated. They attacked and defended as one entity.

The distance between each combat unit was perfectly adjusted. Together, the combat units faintly formed a large circle, enclosing Gao Ye in the center. A dozen competitors with administrative talent provided support to Gao Ye to form a command center!

The command center was the brain and all the combat units were fists. The Blue Team came from the north side of Devil Flood Dragon Island and moved south, sweeping everything in their path.

The two teams were created from choosing random competitors, so their actual strengths as a whole hardly differed. When one side organized as a battle squad went to fight against non-organized scattered sand, the non-organized side was simply massacred!

Whether it was Demon Beasts or members of the Red Team, it seemed neither beings were capable of withstanding the Blue Team Battle Squad.

Even if there were several Red Team members with tyrannical strength who were able to resist for a while, they would immediately find themselves surrounded by tree or four, or even five or six combat units of the Blue Team. Under the endless attacks from cleaving blades, members of the Red Team were gelled off and expelled from the competition!

Not even half the first day had past and the Red Team had suffered a loss of over one-hundred-and-twenty competitors. They were routed and stunned by the Blue Team, ending in complete defeat.

On the other hand, the Blue Team only suffered a trifling loss of 30 or so competitors, and they were getting more and more proficient in coordinating with each other. The Red Team’s sphere of influence was being suppressed step by step. The battle losses between the teams further grew in difference.

“There’s no suspense. If things go on like this, it won’t even take a day and a half before the complete annihilation of the Red Team!” Several experienced military officers concluded with sure confidence.

The numerous cultivators sighed one after another. They never thought that a god-like commander genius would actually appear on the Blue Team to allow the Blue Team to achieve an overwhelming victory with ease.

It really wasn’t quite fair in regards to the ordinary competitors of the respective teams.

Nevertheless, this was reality. Sometimes, luck was more important than strength on the real battlefield.

Xie Tingxian and Ding Lingdang watched with tightly furrowed brows in the corner of the monitoring center. They also did not expect the occurrence of such a one-sided situation. The Blue Team had control of great influence. No matter how strong Li Yao's individual ability was, it was probably no use.

Fearfully, it would be very difficult for him to fight his way into the top 300.

“Li Yao. What are you still waiting for?”

Two people had their eyes gazed fixed together onto the red dot representing Li Yao on the large hologram.

Li Yao's red dot could be seen on the map to be unmoving all this time on a dark corner on the north side of Devil Flood Dragon Island. It had been motionless all this time.

Even when a great number of blue dots steamrolled in front of him, he did not have the least bit of intention of jumping out.

Right now, Li Yao was behind the Blue Team's rear line.

All around him was emptiness. All the members of the Red Team in the area were slaughtered, save for him. All that was left were four Blue Scout Groups who continued to roam around, patrolling.

A pair of eyes opened leisurely from within the depths of a dark shrub. Within them blossomed radiance.

It was as if a stomach-rumbling hungry vulture had discovered the fattest lamb.

“Swish Swish, Swish Swish,” rocked the shrub. Li Yao threaded his way out calmly, but not slowly.

He examined the footprints on the ground and gouges on the trees. Then, he moved flowingly up a large tree like a large python.

Li Yao moved between the branches without a sound. His speed was even faster than his crazed ground speed.

Soon, a Blue Team Scout Group that was formed from three competitors appeared in his sight.

As expected, these three competitors were all holding melee artifacts that he assembled.

Li Yao chuckled. This situation was within his calculations.

He had assembled several hundred artifacts during the preliminaries. There were only 600 people who entered the finals, practically each person had one.

Additionally, the Red Team had lost a portion of their manpower. Their artifacts must have been snatched by the Blue Team.

“The Artifacts you’re holding are all assembled by me… And you still want to fight with me!?”

Li Yao stomped powerfully with his pair of legs, causing the branches below his feet to split with a “*Crack.”

And just like a giant owl, he descended from the sky, throwing himself towards the Blue Scout Group!

“Enemy attack!”

The Blue Scout Group had gone through half a day of coordination, so they long fostered somewhat of a tacit understanding. They did not lose their heads from Li Yao’s ambush.

In practically a tenth of a second, the three activated the Initiate Glyph Arrays on their artifacts.

The Chainsword rumbled. The Thunder Blade vibrated. The Burning Sky Battleaxe's edge turned orange in a flash!

But within the next tenth of a second, a stabbing pain was felt in each of these three’s hands. It was like a piercing electric current had surged into their arms from the grip of their weapons, then the current flowed all the way to ruthlessly stab into their hearts!!

“AHHH!”

The three scouts let out blood-curdling cries simultaneously! Their bodies locked rigidly against their wills for a second!

In this short flash of a second of being paralyzed, two flowing black rays of light flashed past their necks. Just before the light touched their skin, three Puji Critters immediately belched out gel, securely protecting these three Blue Competitors and cutting off their hopes of advancing in the competition!

The three Blue Competitors were judged as losers and ejected from the competition!

“Swoosh Swoosh Swoosh Swoosh!”

The points under their names were immediately transferred under Li Yao's name. Li Yao shot up by over 30 places on the ranking board!

"What's the matter?"

Quite a few cultivators had seen this brief sneak-attack scene from the monitoring center.

They were bewildered by the obviously clumsy performance exhibited by the three Blue Competitors.

Have these three Blue Competitors gone retarded? Why did they all stop all of a sudden? Had it not been for that one second of stun, even at a small price, they totally can finish off this Red Competitor!"

"Huh? This Red Competitor seems to be the crafting expert who assembled several hundred melee artifacts during the preliminaries. I never thought he would survive until now and even eliminate three Blue Competitors in a flash! His actual strength is this strong!?"

"Nope. There's something weird. There's something wrong with the artifacts of the three Blue Competitors!"

Some cultivators with great insight saw through the ins and outs in a flash. Everyone threw their gazes at Xie Tingxian.

Xie Tingxian had been observing Li Yao's brilliant performance with wide open eyes all this time. He waited until Li Yao faded into the darkness before he let out a long breath and revealed an expression of revelation.

Xie Tingxian chuckled and spoke to the people around him, "Fellow Daoists, don't be baffled. This Student Li Yao did a few small modifications when he assembled each of his artifacts. He implemented a small spiritual energy loop capable of having each artifact receive remote commands from a short distance. The spiritual energy is overloaded in a flash, causing essence force to overflow. This causes a small ripple of essence force to be released."

"This ripple is weak, so it does not have too much killing potential. At most, it causes the victim to be paralyzed for one or two seconds. That's it."

Chapter 60: A Crazy Backdoor

Chapter 60: A Crazy Backdoor

The entire room was in an uproar as soon as these words were spoken.

A second or two of paralysis!? That’s what he calls “not having too much killing potential”?

One second was enough to kill an enemy a hundred times over in the world of cultivation!

“Well, did he make the same modification on all his artifacts?” a cultivator asked with bulging eyes.

“Yep.” Xie Tingxian chuckled.

Numerous cultivators turned their heads to glance at the giant hologram. They discovered that it didn’t matter whether it was the Red Team or Blue Team, seemingly every competitor’s melee artifact was an artifact created by Li Yao. They carefully rethought the outcome and simultaneously gave a cold shiver.

This kid is really way too despicable, too shameless, too fearsome!

“That’s truly remarkable! He’s already learned the practice of ‘Opening the Backdoor’ of the Refiner circle at such a young age!”

A cultivator had muttered to himself and somewhat unintentionally swept his gaze at Xie Tingxian.

There was an unspoken practice within the circle of Refiners. A great deal of Refiners were used to leaving behind some super tiny special structures on their artifacts when crafting artifacts for their customers. Ordinary cultivators were completely unable to see these marvelous structures. But in the eyes of the Refiner himself, having these structures allows him to seize the “life-gate” of the artifact.

When the need arises, they can go through the life-gate to control the artifact.

In the circle, this kind of move was called “Opening the Backdoor”.

Initially, this was a method used by Refiners only to protect themselves and to prevent others from holding artifacts they crafted and conveniently silencing them right away.

After all, when compared to battle-type cultivators, the fighting capacity of Refiners are often weaker.

Anyway, these kind of practices became more and more common as time went on. It seemed that it became an open secret within the circle of veteran Refiners; it turned into an “unwritten rule”.

There was only one way to prevent the backdoor from opening in an artifact… To craft your own artifact!

But, the present was different than the old days. In the Ancient Cultivator Civilization of 40,000 years ago, all kinds of artifacts were utterly simple in nature. There were merely flying swords, throwing knives, and spatial pouches or so. An artifact like the Heaven Upheaval Seal would be considered complicated. Cultivators were certainly able to craft these themselves.

But as time progressed into the modern era, the social division of labor became increasingly specialized and divided. The architectures of artifacts became more and more complex. The subject of Artificing became a giant can of worms, a mysterious and profound subject. It was an extremely difficult subject to succeed in without spending over dozens of years of effort. And if one doesn’t have a gift for artificing, it would require twice the work for half the outcome, spending countless hours of bitter blood. Even then, one may not necessarily comprehend the mysteries of Artificing.

It was improbable for a common battle-type cultivator, who didn't have a hint of a gift for Artificing, to spend several dozens of years to study Artificing… Otherwise, when would they have time to fight?

Therefore, after considering the matter, they could only pinch their noses and endure through the clearly known artifact loophole. Or they could find a trusted Refiner to craft their artifacts. Or after having an artifact crafted, they could find another Refiner to crack the backdoor.

The offensive and defensive battle between the installed backdoor and the backdoor cracker was also a “battle” that was completely common to see in the Artificing circle. After going through several typical battles, every Refiner sought the honor of installing an uncrackable backdoor, or even an undiscoverable backdoor. The most glorious of all was to be able to discover and crack the backdoors left behind by others.

Of course, no Refiner would admit to any backdoors installed on his artifacts.

Xie Tingxian curled his beard. He shook and swayed his head, saying, “Man! Although Student Li Yao’s methods are effective, in the end, they go against the professional ethics of Refiners. It’s somewhat inappropriate! If he enters Deep Sea University, we will certainly properly educate him. How could he leave backdoors on his artifacts willy-nilly!?”

“Come on!”

Quite a few cultivators scowled at Xie Tingxian… Deep Sea University was the Holy Land for Refiners. At the same time, it was one of the headstreams of the loathsome behavior of “Opening the Backdoor”. It would be a wonder if they were to “properly educate him”. If Li Yao really did enter Deep Sea University, he would be just like a fish back in water. It wouldn’t take years before he became a backdoor expert!

Right when everyone was simultaneously speechless, another four blue dots, representing a scout group, strangely perished on the north side of Devil Flood Dragon Island.

What replaced them was a tiny red dot; the dot flickered tenaciously.

The second scout group had fallen into Li Yao’s evil clutches!

Besides the cultivators in the monitoring center, even the 2400 competitors in the hall outside all paid attention to Li Yao’s existence at this moment.

Despite the majority of the Blue Team charging through and slaughtering all around the middle section of Devil Flood Dragon Island, the two ambushes situated behind the back lines seemed to spell the arrival of a small change in circumstances.

“Who is this fellow!? He’s actually this awesome!? He took out seven Blue Team competitors in succession!”

“Something’s fishy here. It looked like the seven Blue Team members went somewhat retarded. They simply extended their necks, waiting to be killed. Can it be that this fellow is an expert in mental illusionary attacks? That he launched mental attacks against his opponents?”

“I know why. This fellow is from my school. His name is Li Yao. Although he looks ordinary and mediocre from the outside, in fact he’s actually a super ferocious person. Even Helian Lie can’t do anything to him!”

“He’s this amazing? Then I really need to pay good attention to him!”

Helian Lie had quite the fame in Floating Spear City and even in the surrounding few cities and towns. In this Limit Challenge Competition, his points ranking was always within the top 10. He was a renowned expert.

To be considered Helian Lie’s opponent, it was clear that Li Yao was not your typical sort of person.

“Ah! Again! He slaughtered a third scout group. These fellows are really too retarded. Come on and fight back! What are you all frozen for!? Are you waiting to be killed?”

“Hey you guys, do you think that this kid will continue slaughtering everything in his path? Will he bring forth a gargantuan counter attack?”

“That’s impossible. When teams face off, a single person alone is not enough. The Blue Team has the commander genius Gao Ye. They’ve already hold great influence. They won’t be rocked that easily. You guys look. Gao Ye has noticed that something’s off. He’ll make a response soon!”

The contents of the Red and Blue Teams’ communication channels were shown in real time on the hologram, so these retired competitors were also able to see the commander tactics of Gao Ye.

Gao Ye discovered that it has been a long time since he was able to contact the backline scouts in the communication channel. He determined that there was a valiant Red Team squad or a powerful Demon Beast behind the Blue Team’s backlines.

He commanded the majority of his army to cease attacking on the spot. He ordered them to be on alert and be on standby.

At the same time, he ordered the eight strongest combat units to combine by twos, to form a new scout group, and to completely sweep the backline for the fish that escaped the net.

“Everyone must be on high alert. Don’t let this temporary victory get to your heads. Until we completely annihilate the last of the Red Team, there’s still a chance of them making a comeback! Right now, there’s most surely a great enemy within our backlines. We must understand clearly what we’re dealing with. Let’s first eliminate this big enemy before we steamroll over the defeated enemy to the front!”

Gao Ye made his decisions quickly. His voice was calm and unhurried. He had quite the bearing of a general!

His tactics were quickly shown to be effective.

After annihilating the last scout group roaming around the north side of Devil Flood Dragon Island, Li Yao became tangled with a new scout group!

This scout group was formed from seven competitors. Each of them was as tall as an bull and as large as a horse. Their eyes were filled with vigor and energy. Their temples swelled and bulged. Their actual strength was incomparably powerful and daunting.

And leading the group was Li Yao’s acquaintance… Helian Lie!

Chapter 61: Where's Li Yao

Chapter 61: Where's Li Yao

“Fellow Student Li Yao, Devil Flood Dragon Island is quite a large place. I never thought we enemies would meet face to face!”

At first, Helian Lie was stunned. But soon after, the muscles on his face twisted gradually into an evil grin.

“He’s a classmate of yours? How’s his actual strength?” The several Blue Team competitors did not dare to be careless. They adopted defensive stances and had asked filled with caution.

“His actual strength is very powerful!”

Helian Lie gritted his teeth in acknowledgment. “Not only is his strength very powerful, his methods are underhanded and despicable. He’s shameless and vulgar. He’ll do anything for victory. He’ll go to any length. He’s the most fearsome of opponents!”

“No wonder he was able to kill four of our scout groups in succession on his own. Everyone needs to be careful dealing with him. I don’t want to give him a shred of an opportunity!”

The seven Blue Team competitors raised their awareness to the max. One of them retreated to contact teammates in the area.

“Helian Lie, Devil Flood Dragon Island is quite large, yet it is also quite small… This sentence shall also be said by me to you. There really is some animosity between us. If you still consider yourself a man, come fight me one on one. Let’s settle this once and for all!”

Li Yao’s pair of hands crossed, pulled out the black Progressive Daggers, and licked the corner of his mouth.

Helian Lie laughed involuntarily. His expression was actually tranquil. He spoke unhurriedly yet not slowly, “Li Yao, you don’t have to goad me. I won’t be fooled. Right now, we’re in a competition. In accordance with the rules, I will use my greater numbers to bully your few. It will be several dozen versus one! If you want a duel, I will honor it anytime after the competition!”

“That’s fine! Just you wait!”

After speaking viciously, Li Yao blinked his eyes and jumped lightly back. Like a large ape, he leapt into the undergrowth and faded away without a trace.

He actually ran away!

Helian Lie and company were stupefied for a moment. They never thought that this kid would, in a blink of an eye, actually slip away faster than a mud fish after speaking such righteous and revering words.

Helian Lie suddenly grew angry. He felt that he had been toyed with savagely by Li Yao. His handsome face swelled deep red. He stepped forward, seeking to give chase. But Gao Ye’s voice sounded from the communication channel, “Helian Lie! Pay him no mind! The opponent’s goal is to infuriate you! To break your formation! Then, he will attack you one by one… Don’t be fooled by all means!”

Contained in Gao Ye’s voice was an indescribable authoritative power. Even the wild and unruly Helian Lie had his raging fury suppressed. Helian Lie took a deep breath and spoke through gritted teeth, “Gao Ye, what you said is absolutely correct. What do we do now?”

It took a moment before Gao Ye’s voice sounded out. It seemed that he had gone through some meticulous calculations. “Helian Lie, this person is your classmate. In the end, how is his actual strength?”

Helian Lie hesitated before speaking, “A month ago, he was just a piece of trash with mediocre strength. But through some unknown fortune, he flew ahead boldly in a month's time. Right now, he should still be beneath me, but the difference is minute. I just don’t know if he’s still concealing some strength or not.”

He paused a moment and continued, “Right, this kid grew up in the garbage dump. His circumstances growing up were extremely complicated. He possesses an extreme abundance of actual combat experience!”

Gao Ye cooly and calmly said: “Okay, let’s assume his actual strength is higher than yours, even to the point of being 1.5 times yours and that he’s an expert in jungle warfare… It’s still impossible for him to slay four of our scout groups in a flash without making a single sound. There is something weird with this matter!”

“According to my calculations, he holds some sort of secret weapon unbeknown to us in his hands!”

“Without first completely understanding his trump card, I do not propose launching an attack on him. That would just be feeding him one by one!”

“Right now, I will command all combat units to raise their alertness, consolidate their defensive lines, and be on standby. As soon as the enemy appears, do not take the initiative to attack. Rely solely on defense and immediately notify combat units in the vicinity!”

“As for Helian Lie. return with your scout group back to the command center immediately. I want to know all the data and information on this Li Yao and analyze what ‘cards’ he’s been holding in the end!”

“Okay! Let’s let him run wild for a while then!”

Helian Lie did not hesitate for even half a moment. He led his scout group and left in a hurry. After going through half an hour of trekking, he returned to the Blue Team’s command center set up within the forest in the center of Devil Flood Dragon Island.

Half an hour later.

A male with a somewhat short stature and a pair of eyes burning with life that constantly radiated light sat cross-legged on the ground. Looking lost in thought, he pounded a tree stump.

He was the commander genius, Gao Ye.

“Gao Ye, according to all my information, as well as the traces of battle we surveyed, what kind of judgment can you produce?” Helian Lie asked somewhat flippantly and hot-tempered.

Gao Ye’s eyelids closed a moment. A glow of energy glistened in his eyes. He was like a crystal processor operating at its maximum computational capabilities.

A moment later, he spoke perfectly composed, “The problem should stem from the Artifacts. The enemy is an Artificing expert. The artifacts we possess are all crafted by him. He must have installed a backdoor in them… This is a very common technique used in the battlefield. I never thought this would actually appear among common folk. This Li Yao… is really amazing!”

“It’s the Artifacts?”

Helian Lie was stunned for a moment, then he promptly tossed the Chainsword in his hand to the side, like he was shaking off a viper.

Gao Ye chuckled and spoke unperturbed, “You don’t need to be so anxious. According to my calculations, this type of backdoor doesn’t have too much killing potential. At most, it can make someone locked and rigid for a split second. Its effective range is also not that large. It can’t be controlled remotely from long range.”

Pausing for a moment, the energetic glow in Gao Ye’s eyes blossomed. “We don’t need to have all our people relinquish their weapons. We just need to choose a few elite troops to carry ordinary swords and form a small hunting squad. They will hunt down Li Yao… After he’s been slain, then we can use Artifacts without worry!”

Helian Lie frowned. “Then, we must have sufficient numbers. Too few would be suicide.”

Gao Ye nodded his head. “Relax. I won’t underestimate any opponent, especially someone as fearsome as this. I will specifically plan some tactics to hunt him. Not a hair of detail will be missed!”

Helian Lie pressed, “Gao Ye, according to your analysis, where is he hiding now?”

“Let me calculate for a moment!”

Gao Ye closed his eyes. His eyeballs trembled at high speeds beneath his eyelids.

Thirty seconds later, he suddenly opened his eyes and muttered, “I’ve analyzed with a 47% probability that Li Yao is concealing himself in the swamp region on the north side of Devil Flood Dragon Island. That area is covered with sludge and marsh. It’s disadvantageous for a large army to advance there. It’s the greatest place for guerilla warfare!”

“Other than that, there’s a 33% probability that he’s already passed through our defensive lines to return to the Red Team’s army on the south side of Devil Flood Dragon Island!”

“There’s still a 19% probability that he’s concealed himself in the large waterfalls on the west side of Devil Flood Dragon Island. He’s prepared himself to remain concealed all the way until the end of the competition, to rely on the points he had accumulated in the early stages, and obtain a decent ranking!”

“Finally…”

A ripple of astonishment emerged on Gao Ye’s expressionless face, like a clay sculpture suddenly splitting a small crack. “There’s still a 1% probability that he’s right on top of us!”

Before his voice had died away, a pitch-black metal ball dropped suddenly from the branches over his head. “Bang!” A ball of flame more dazzling than the sun suddenly exploded!

Everyone’s vision suddenly turned to boundless whiteness. They were completely unable to see anything!

“It’s a Flash Glyph Array!” someone shrieked miserably, covering his eyes.

At practically the same time, a gale of wind blasted from the skies. An unstoppable force headed straight for Helian Lie.

“Helian Lie, your life is mine!” Li Yao hissed and his daggers transformed into two black streaks of lightning!

Chapter 62: One Move Ahead

Chapter 62: One Move Ahead

“Don’t be fooled! I’m his true target! It’s absolutely not Helian Lie!”

Gao Ye shrieked. His short figure curled up into a ball and rolled backwards on the ground in a completely sorry manner.

Upon hearing Gao Ye shriek, several large and strong Blue Team competitors immediately threw themselves towards him, disregarding their own safety.

Gao Ye had long since calculated the possibility of the Red Team executing the “Beheading Tactic”, thus he had his teammates practice Anti-Beheading Tactics since the start.

In less than half a second, a sturdy and robust meat wall appeared in front of Gao Ye. Seven to eight ordinary blades danced vigorously, crisscrossing to form an unstoppable blade formation!

And sure enough, Li Yao had stopped and changed directions in an utterly strange fashion while in the air, as if he had fiercely stomped on a transparent wall of air to throw himself towards Gao Ye, ignoring Helian Lie.

It seemed like Li Yao did not foresee Gao Ye reacting so quickly. He suddenly crashed into the blade formation!

Fortunately, the Blue Team competitors had yet to recover from their dazed state caused by the Flash Glyph Array. Their visions were blurred and unclear, and all they heard were “Ding Ding Dang Dang” sounds of colliding swords. Li Yao shouted a blood-curdling shriek and threw himself back into the forest to fade away without a trace.

He left behind only a sentence: “Just y’all wait. I’ll be back!”

Three seconds later, every Blue Team competitor recovered from their dazed state. Each of them had deathly pale faces, were sweating like pigs, and looked at each other in dismay. They all saw panic in the depths of each other’s eyes.

“What a fearsome fellow. He actually tailed us without making a single noise and infiltrated our command center, all without being discovered!”

A Blue Team scout member had spoken traumatized. He could not hold back from looking at the crisscrossing branches above, as if Li Yao was still concealing himself in the darkness amidst the branches.

“However, he’s still no match for Gao Ye. In the instant, he threw out the Flash Glyph Array, we all thought his target was Helian Lie. Only Gao Ye still maintained a clear head, forcing Li Yao to fail in the end. Gao Ye, you sure are a natural commander!”

A different male had spoken cheerfully.

Gao Ye’s expression was incomparable grave as he spoke, “This is an extremely formidable opponent. He does not possess as strong computational abilities as I do, but he possesses a certain innate beast-like keen intuition. He knew for certain the difference between himself and Helian Lie. He knew that even an ambush may not have instantly killed Helian Lie!"

"What's more…Although Helian Lie possesses tyrannical combat strength, he is not someone who is key for determining victory and defeat. Even if he slays Helian Lie, he would be beheaded from the competition a second later by our numerous blades. It would have been a mutual defeat between him and Helian Lie!"

"This… was something he absolutely did not want to happen!"

"I'm different, however. I follow the road of admin-type cultivators and my expertise lies in my computational and analyzing abilities. My combat strength is ordinary and mediocre. It would be very likely for him to slay me in a single blow!"

"And once I'm out of the competition, the Blue Team would be reduced to a sheet of loose sand. Chaos would emerge for certain shortly. If the Red Team was able to seize this opportunity, they may have been able to turn the tides!"

"This fellow figured this out, so he purposely used Helian Lie as his pretense. He made it appear that there were personal grudges between him and Helian Lie on the surface, so he recklessly tailed behind to settle things. Actually, his true target had been me from the start!"

"Even more, I truly doubt this was all deliberately planned from the time when we first found him. I'm certain that once he first discovered Helian Lie from the shadows, he took the initiative to show himself for the sake of discovering the location of our Command Center!"

“Formidable! This fellow is way too formidable! If it weren’t for my computational abilities computing a move ahead, finding out his plan in the last minute, he might have successfully pulled this off!”

Gao Ye had spoken with lingering fear. His forehead was drenched with sweat.

“However, he’s still no match for you, Gao Ye. The layers of tricks that he schemed with all his might were all seen through by you. He’s already lost the initiative. Now, we’re the hunters and he’s the prey!” a Blue Team competitor had shouted with excitement.

Gao Ye forced a laugh and spoke, “That’s true. Today, things have gone this way, but our comprehensive strengths are still on par with each other. Today, I was just lucky. If it were another battlefield, I can’t say for sure whether he would successfully slay me or not.”

Helian Lie remained silent and unspeaking to the side. Shame and anger were mixed in his heart; he felt the greatest humiliation and disgrace!

Li Yao’s target from the start hadn’t been him all along!

Li Yao absolutely did not pay a single ounce of attention to him. Li Yao only took him to be a pretense — to be bait!

Only Li Yao and Gao Ye were the opposing striving players in this chess match. He was nothing more than a mere chess piece being controlled!

Even if Li Yao was no match for Gao Ye, Li Yao still exceeded Helian Lie, a chess piece, by leaps and bounds. If Gao Ye had not laid things out clearly, he would have absolutely been unable to guess what Li Yao’s plot was. Just then, he even retardedly adopted the tightest defensive stance!

It was as if Li Yao had ruthlessly slapped the proud and arrogant Helian Lie across the face. Helian Lie’s anger caused his eyes to turn bloodshot and his teeth to clench tightly. He wished with all his hate to tear and consume Li Yao’s bloody flesh bite by bite.

Through gritted teeth in anger, his voice hoarsely sounded, “Gao Ye, then what are you waiting for!? Let’s mobilize ASAP! And hunt down Li Yao!”

“WAIT!”

Gao Ye’s entire face was entwined in a complicated knot. He looked as if he was considering every angle. He muttered, “Strange. I’ve factored in every detail in my calculations. I also succeeded in fending off his attack. Why do I still feel restless? It’s like I missed something… WHAT’S THAT!?”

Gao Ye’s expression changed and he pointed to a military pack amidst the center of everyone, letting out a shriek.

This military pack’s surface was smeared all over with mud, and even a few weeds and moss. It had been casually tossed in the core area of the command center.

It was like a rock at first glance. None had noticed when this pack had appeared.

“How is there a pack? Whose is it?”

All the Blue Team competitors were at a loss. They looked at each other with dismay. It seemed that none of them had ever carried a pack such as this.

In the eyes of Gao Ye, this commonly found pack transformed into a large demon egg, as if an incomparable fearsome existence was about to break through the cocoon and burst forth. Gao Ye’s face warped and he shrieked, “Do you all still remember when dealing with Li Yao? He would hold an explosive device composed of over twenty crystal cells connected in series. He would say its might is tremendous, enough to flatten an entire supply point, and he would threaten us with mutual destruction.”

When these words were spoken, everyone’s faces underwent enormous changes. They all remembered!

“We’re f*cked!”

Gao Ye’s, Helian Lie’s, and several dozen Blue Team competitor’s pupils shrank simultaneously to their minimum!

500 meters away in the forest.

Li Yao had his back leaning against a large tree. He stood unmovingly and extended 10 fingers. One by one, they bent down: “9… 8… 7… 6… ”

“Who is it!?”

Two Blue Team competitors had suddenly emerged from the forest. They never thought a Red Team competitor would actually appear in a location so close to their command center. They could not help but be shocked.

Li Yao glanced an eye at them faintly and didn’t reply. He continued being engrossed in his countdown: “5… 4…”

“There’s something weird with this fellow. I think he’s that Li Yao that the communication channel was talking about just now. Let’s quickly drop our artifacts, use ordinary weapons instead, and notify the command center!”

The two Blue Team competitors were on high alert as they maintained a distance of 10 meters between themselves and Li Yao. They gave not a hair of opportunity to Li Yao.

Li Yao continued as before doing what he was doing. He counted down leisurely: “3… 2… 1!”

When the number “1” was spoken from his mouth, a loud earth-shaking rumbling boom exploded 560 meters behind him in the forest!

The entire forest shook and swayed, and a large gigantic white mushroom cloud gradually rose. A surging heatwave rolled and spread at high speeds, soon reaching out over 500 meters.

The two Blue Team competitors’ pupils were captured by this mushroom cloud. The hair on their heads was roasted and scorched by the heatwave. Broken branches and crushed rock were mixed in the shockwave, cleaving onto their craniums and smashing onto their bodies!

In a flash, the two were stunned and covered in dirt and grime, becoming like two clay statues.

Static came from the communication channel. Not a single person was still capable of answering their shouts.

“What... What the hell did you do?” The two Blue Team competitors could not hold back from trembling.

“I’m terribly sorry. From now on, the Blue Team’s Command Center no longer exists.”

Li Yao slowly took out his black daggers and walked over to the two Blue Team competitors with a smile.

Chapter 63: Slaughtering Everything In Their Paths!

Chapter 63: Slaughtering Everything In Their Paths!

Over a hundred competitors were still noisy and in disorder within the Red Team’s communication channel. Each of them vented at, insulted, and complained at each other; it was extremely chaotic just like the clamoring noise of a market.

The sound of the giant explosion coming from the center of Devil Flood Dragon Island intimidated them all simultaneously into silence. No one spoke a word for a long time.

Only after a long time had passed did a lazy-sounding voice sound out.

“I’ve already ‘beheaded’ the Blue Team’s commander. The entire command center has been bombarded to the skies! Right now, they’re like a flock of dragons without a leader. It’s a great opportunity!”

“What y’all must do next is very simple. You don’t need to assemble, don’t need to form squads, don’t need to cooperate. All you need to do is tear your throat screaming the words ‘Gao Ye’s dead! The Red Team shall prevail!’ Scream as if you’re a pig about to be slaughtered. Then, wave your giant swords crazily and slaughter all in your path. And that will be fine. Understand, everyone?”

“Who are you? Why should we believe your words!?” it was silent for a moment until someone who was unconvinced had spoken.

“It’s up to you if you want to believe me. Anyways, I’m going to go mow some grass. Everyone, do as you please~ It’s best if you just stay where you’re at and not move. Let me take all the points alone. Hahahaha. Gao Ye’s dead! The Red Team shall prevail! Die Die Die Die Die Die Die Die!”

A pig-slaughtering howl came from the communication channel. From the incomparably arrogant laughter, everyone could imagine this certain fellow heaving a Chainsword to go around chopping down people in a mad slaughter, harvesting all the “heads” he wishes.

“Look, the opposing Blue Team is acting a bit strangely. They haven’t made a movement in a while. It’s like they’ve gone retarded!”

Two Red Team competitors whispered in each others’ ear at the corner of Devil Flood Dragon Island.

“Damn it! It'll be a dead end if we keep being suppressed like this as the battle goes on!! F*ck it! Gao Ye’s Dead! The Red Team shall prevail!”

Two Red Team competitors hardened their hearts. They heaved their giant swords and charged over like hungry wolves throwing themselves at lambs. They blazed and collided with the Blue Team’s combat unit!

“Gao Ye’s Dead! The Red Team shall prevail!”

“Gao Ye’s Dead! The Red Team shall prevail!”

“Gao Ye’s Dead! The Red Team shall prevail!”

Berserk battle howls rang simultaneously from far and near on Devil Flood Dragon Island.

The Blue Team competitors just found out the news of the instant annihilation of their entire command center by the enemy through their communication channel. They were shocked into panic from this astonishing news and were caught off guard by the crazed assault of the devils and fiends that are the Red Team competitors. Their ears were filled with the Red Team’s hellish demonic howls. They were completely unable to bring forth the least bit of intention to fight!

At first, the scales of victory were completely slanted towards the Blue Team. No one ever thought that Li Yao would take this scale and kick it to crap. The remaining Blue Team and Red Team competitors all sank into the ugliest, the most entangled, the most pestering of chaotic melees.

And relying on their high morale and excitement from this miraculous reversal, the Red Team actually began to hold the upper hand!

On the Distant Expanse, both inside and outside of the monitoring center was absolute silence. Everyone was dumbstruck. They were all completely shocked from the brilliant performance that Li Yao had demonstrated just an hour ago.

In the beginning, he had killed four scout groups of the Blue Team in succession. Then, he purposely showed himself in front of the new Blue Team scout group. Then, he tailed Helian Lie and company, infiltrating the Blue Team’s command center in utmost secrecy. And he even laid in wait in the command center in the branches above for an entire half an hour. Lastly, he continued with two consecutive attacks to distract all the Blue Team members’ attention. Upon success, he set up the explosive pack inside the Blue Team’s command center. After he safely evacuated the area, he blew the Blue Team’s entire command center up in the sky.

This was absolutely a brilliant, outstanding, smooth, textbook-like, and classic “Beheading Operation”!’

And from initial planning to actual execution, it was all actually done solely by Li Yao!

“Swoosh swoosh swoosh swoosh!”

Several dozen names suddenly faded from the ranking board, and Li Yao’s name was rising like crazy! Moving like a hurricane!

This was due to the sudden “explosive death” of several dozen Blue Team commanders and powerful members. An astronomical number of points had rushed to Li Yao. He directly blitzkrieged his way through to the number one ranking like a hot knife through butter. And his total points was actually over ten times greater than that of second place!

In the history of the Limit Challenge Competition, this was an unprecedented high score!

“Amazing. He’s too amazing! Let’s just focus on the efforts he made to increase the explosive power of his bomb. He filled the pack with rocks, metal artifact parts, and sharp Demon Beast bones to increase the power of the bomb by ten times! This is absolutely something an experienced military veteran would do! Our Federation’s First Military College will want talent as great as this! Who dares fight over him with us!?”

After a short few seconds of reticence, a straightforward howl had broken the silence in the monitoring center. Soon, every scout was discussing lively and bellowing simultaneously.

“On what grounds? This kind of genius should belong to our Star Nebula University!”

“Our Empyrean Capital School of Medicine also needs this type of young talent. I’ve already prepared a special enrollment for him. Your move!”

“Hmph! Special enrollment is nothing special. Our Star Nebula University can offer him an enormous scholarship in addition!”

Countless cultivators had flushed red faces and ears from vying for Li Yao. The scene was fiery to the extreme.

Only Xie Tingxian was smiling without a word in the corner, keeping a cool head in this tense situation. He held a victory contract calmly in his hands.

And sitting not too far away from him was Ding Lingdang firmly biting her lip. She walked to and fro fretfully and worried. She was like a bound female dragon that could erupt in flames at any moment,

“This kid. Why the hell is he bringing out such an outstanding performance? It’s over It’s over. With this many schools wanting to give him special enrollment, this kid certainly won’t choose our Grand Desolate War Institution! Can it be that I need to knock him out and directly carry him back to Grand Desolate?”

Ding Lingdang frowned and thought seriously for a second. Then she shook her head, rejecting this plan. “I can’t. With my fist being this powerful, what if I kill him with a single punch?”

In the hallway outside the monitoring center, Li Yao’s gorgeous performance set off even more stormy waves.

It seemed as if all the youths were shocked to the max. Quite a few of them rubbed their eyes with force. They did not dare to believe everything they’ve seen. Some people even let out strange cries.

“Mother of god! One person flattened the entire Blue Team’s command center? Isn’t this way too abnormal?”

“An evildoer. He’s one hundred percent an evildoer. He’s really way too dreadful!”

“Where did this monster come from? Floating Spear City? I’ve never heard of such an expert in Floating Spear City. I’ve only heard of Helian Lie and a Zheng Dongming. I never thought that even Helian Lie wasn’t able to withstand him and was directly screwed!”

“What a fearsome fellow. He must have come from some cultivator family. Compared to us ordinary rich and powerful kids, we’re not of the same world! We’re no match for him!”

Right when these competitors were wagging their tongues spiritedly, the ejected competitors of the Blue Team command center members who had just been blown to “death” by Li Yao also returned to the Distant Expanse. They entered the spectator area with faces filled with bewilderment.

Suddenly, they were surrounded in an impenetrable circle by the two thousand competitors.

In an instant, they, especially Gao Ye and Helian Lie, turned into the focus of attention of a great many people.

“Gao Ye, you’ve always been the pride of our East Harmony City. Everyone knows you to be a commander genius. I never thought you would actually be toyed with and be ‘beheaded’ by the enemy. You okay? How do you feel?” a person asked from within a crowd in a voice dripping with sarcasm.

Gao Ye faintly chuckled. Not even a trace of the prior defeat remained on his face. He spoke calmly and peacefully, “It’s really pleasant. Really. To be able to meet such an amazing opponent who made me realize that my own commander skills are too infantile. To know that I still have great room for improvement. If we encounter each other next time, I certainly won’t make the same mistake. I will absolutely hunt this Li Yao immediately!”

He paused a bit and looked around him in a circle. Gao Ye’s eyes finally focused on Li Yao’s figure within the giant hologram. He observed Li Yao for a long time before he spoke with complete seriousness, “However, I wish even more to fight side-to-side with Li Yao on the battlefield against Demon Beasts. I even can create several dozen different tactics with him being the core. I am confident that as long as we work together, with my commander abilities combined with his individual combat capability… Needless to say of high-level Demon Beasts, even if it’s the King of the Demon Race… Those powerful Demon Generals, Demon Kings, and even Demon Gods… They won’t be able to escape the palm of our hand!”

Chapter 64: A Torrential Storm Shower

Chapter 64: A Torrential Storm Shower

Gao Ye was filled with the bearing of a general as he expressed himself, drawing quite a few students, especially the girls, to exclaim in admiration.

However, another fellow who desired to stir up trouble was disappointed by Gao Ye’s speech. His eyes turned, and he started to go after Helian Lie.

“Helian Lie, I’ve heard you and Li Yao are of the same school and that you have some personal beef with each other. Can you speak in detail what that’s all about?”

The majority of competitors were from the surrounding cities of Floating Spear City. They had no scruples about teasing Helian Lie. Onlookers would never be afraid of escalating the chaos. So there wasn’t much respect in the fellow’s words. Instead, he was doing the utmost to provoke Helian Lie.

Helian Lie’s face changed to white. His teeth were gritting deeply into his lips. His two fists were clenched rigidly tight. He felt indignant to the extreme!

He was silent for a good while before he squeezed out a stiff smile. He spoke reluctantly, “Li Yao and I previously had some misunderstanding; however, we’ve long since settled things. Li Yao has improved at lightning speed over the past month. He’s the pride of our Crimson Nimbus Second. I very much admire his efforts. Any personal grudges are simply complete nonsense! Apologies, please let me through. I need to go to the restroom.”

Without waiting for additional questions, Helian Lie pushed his way through the crowd of competitors. He seemed to be escaping, jogging his way to the restroom.

“UGH!”

Helian Lie could not hold himself up any longer in the stall. His stomach was overturning in a mess, causing him to vomit with large mouthfuls. He vomited until he was dizzy; it was as if he had vomited every last drop of stomach acid.

“Li Yao!”

Helian Lie lifted his head. His eyes were red from vomiting for a long time. His entire self looked to be haggard, withered, and crazed. He looked like a malevolent demon.

“Li Yao, you piece of trash! You entrail waste! You better not give me a chance. Not even a hair’s worth of opportunity! When I get the chance, I won’t let you go. I will absolutely use all my resources to play with you till you die! Till you die!”

Helian Lie’s pair of hands dug into the wall of the restroom. He clawed powerfully, tearing the wall. He was imagining the wall to be Li Yao’s laughing face.

10 deep notches were dug out in the metal wall by him. Each notch flowed with crazed fresh blood!

……

The Li Yao who had just been bitterly cursed by Helian Lie was comfortably concealed in a supply point in the depths of

Devil Flood Dragon Island.

He was checking his total points through Small Ji’s hologram.

He was firmly holding the top ranking position ever since the moment he blasted the Blue Team’s command center to the skies. It was impossible for his position to be rattled, save for the sudden sinking of Devil Flood Dragon Island!

To be honest, at the very beginning when Li Yao opened the backdoor on his artifacts, he did not think this far and profoundly. All he wanted was to seize and earn some convenient points.

But what followed was the emergence of the Blue Team’s genius commander, Gao Ye, and the Red Team was forced to a dead end in an instant. Desperate times calls for desperate measures, and so Li Yao was forced to go all in.

This Beheading Operation carried with it the highest level of risk. Luck had a huge role to play. It was a staggering risky gamble.

In order to preserve his own safety, the explosion of the crystal cell bomb was delayed by half a minute. If the opponents had discovered the bomb immediately, they would have time to throw the bomb far far away.

All that could be said was that luck stood by his side. Even the heavens gave him a helping hand. He was destined to enter Deep Sea University!

Li Yao was not pressed to go out and slay Demon Beasts since he has earned sufficient points. The remaining surviving competitors were few in number. The entire Devil Flood Dragon Island had transformed into a Demon Beast paradise. Quite a few Demon Beasts possessed strength at a super high, tyrannical level. Even Li Yao wasn’t sure if he was capable of slaying them.

He did not want to fail at the critical juncture, to capsize at a sure moment, to “die” at the hands of a Demon beast.

In addition… A torrential storm shower was coming.

Li Yao lifted his head and looked far into the distance. The hazy yellow sky had turned jet-black before he knew it. Purple snakes could be faintly seen struggling in the rolling black clouds, exploding out with muffled thunder.

Soon, bean-sized droplets of water hacked down in a skull-cleaving manner.

The weather above the sea changed in a flash. The clear and boundless sky had already changed to a stormy world with torrential downpours in just the blink of an eye. Black clouds rolled across the entirety of Devil Flood Dragon Island, like a myriad of black horses galloping onward. Boundless strikes of lightning tore through heaven and earth, shrieking with demonic wails. Together, they wreaked havoc with the ocean wind, appearing like a great number of swords ferociously pounding into Devil Flood Dragon Island.

Even though the sky-towering trees obstructed the weather, Devil Flood Dragon Island still experienced dark winds and angry howls. The torrential rain came down like a waterfall, beating down on people, causing them to be unable to lift their heads and open their eyes. Even the large thick trees were pulled from their roots. They blew chaotically towards the distance, sweeping away everything in their paths.

In the face of the powerful majestic might of nature, the Demon Beasts who had been baring their fangs and brandishing their claws turned tranquil. One by one, they searched for caves and slits in cliffs to hide from the weather.

“A violent storm just happened to pass through the skies of Devil Flood Dragon Island. I reckon this torrential rainstorm will last the entire night!”

The torrential storm caused the Distant Expanse to faintly rock and sway in the air. A cultivator levitated at the rear of the ship. He squinted his eyes and observed the skies, reaching a conclusion.

A bolt of lightning cleaved towards his skull. The bolt of lightning was stopped by an invisible wall an inch away from the cultivator and was transformed into 4~5 lightning serpents that coiled around his body, illuminating a rather handsome face.

The sky patrolling cultivators were having a hard time covering every nook and corner of Devil Flood Dragon Island under such berserk weather.

Additionally, the Puji Critters assigned to each competitor relied on connections between their crystal chips and the Distance Expanse. The telepathic link became unstable, and it was no longer guaranteed that each competitor’s situation was promptly monitored and that the protective gel would be spouted in fatal crisis.

The danger of the competition had increased greatly!

“Do we need to suspend the competition?”

As soon as this cultivator opened his mouth, the electric currents coiling around his body were consumed with a single bite. He licked his mouth as if wishing for more and returned at lightning speeds to the Distant Expanse towards the numerous cultivators to ask.

In the monitoring center, cultivators were whispering in each others' ears for a moment before making a decision. The competition will continue as usual. The torrential rain would not affect the competition.

“In an actual battlefield, it is highly improbable for Demon Beasts to call an armistice with humanity over bad weather!”

A great officer dressed in black with a skull emblem on his shoulders had spoken icily with a face of steel.

“Correct. If they can't withstand such a small torrential storm, how could they still want to be cultivators? Simply laughable!” a cultivator with a cross scar on his face sneered coldly.

While they were talking, twisted ripples and snowflake patterns formed on the giant hologram in front of their eyes.

This was the interference from the rainstorm affecting the connection between the Puji Critters and the monitoring center.

“Bang! Bang!”

A dozen or so holograms directly turned black. It was clear that the telepathic link had been severed.

This meant that a dozen or so competitors were no longer being monitored and were no longer protected.

“Dispatch twenty more cultivators to Devil Flood Dragon Island. Patrol in rounds. Ensure the safety of the competitors.

Give them status equal to deceased Federal Army soldiers should any accidents occur and give their families reparations!”

The cultivators and officers negotiated for a while. Soon the made a decision…. This was inline with previous Challenge Competitions.

The Star Glory Federation was capable of occupying the most fertile land of the Heaven’s Origin Sector. This land was created from a slaying a myriad of Demon Beasts into mountains of corpses and seas of blood. Every inch of the Federation’s territory was dyed red with the blood of Federal Army soldiers and Cultivators!

Cultivators were the blades of human civilization. Those that wish to become cultivators must have a dying will and an utterly fearless sacrificial conscious!

Those who fear death won’t become cultivators!

Chapter 65: Ghost Dragon-7

Chapter 65: Ghost Dragon-7

The torrential rain came down harder and harder. It was as if all the rain in the entirety of the Heaven’s Origin Sector had concentrated overhead of Devil Flood Dragon Island, trying to smash this island of Demon Beasts completely into the ocean depths.

In the midst of the raging storm and torrential rain, a strange darkness began to flourish.

“*Pant *Pant. *Pant *Pant!”

A Blue Team competitor stumbled as he rushed into a narrow cave. He was kneeling on the ground, no longer capable of supporting himself. Then, he fell flat on his face. His face was deathly pale, lacking even an ounce of blood. His entire body was shuddering as if he was cramping.

An hour ago, he was being chased by three Red Team competitors. Fortunately, the torrential rain obscured the vision of these enemies, so he was luckily able to escape their encirclement.

However, the Red Team competitors were increasing in number. He didn’t know how much longer he would be able to last.

“DAMN! We were clearly about to win! How can things change so suddenly!?”

The pain of this Blue Team Competitor caused him to smash against the rock wall. He was extremely depressed. A dark glow began to congeal in the depths of his eyes.

He observed his surroundings from within the cavern. Squinting his eyes, he looked up towards the sky.

His Puji Critter was like a headless fly, orbiting chaotically around a large tree. It let out “Tszz Tszz” sounds as if it were out of control.

“The torrential rain and thunder both will interfere with the control crystal chip of the Puji Critter. Right now, my Puji Critter and the Distant Expanse have already lost connection. Things have sunk into a chaotic and crazy state. The monitoring center won’t be able to see anything I do!”

The darkness in the eyes of this Blue Team competitor turned denser and denser.

The sounds of the Red Team competitors pierced faintly from all directions. Their encirclement was gradually shrinking. Soon, they would arrive at his hiding cave.

The darkness in the Blue Team competitor’s eyes turned malevolent.

He reached out his hand and bit through the skin of his fingertip. He used his fresh blood to draw an Arcane Glyph on the inside of his right leg.

A physical laceration of pain pierced from the inside of his right leg. It was like something wanted to tear through his bloody flesh and escape out of his body!

“Ughh…”

The Blue Team competitor gritted tenaciously. Immediately, the Arcane Glyph trembled slightly. A monstrous strength tore through the muscles of his inner thigh and a fluorescent blue drug floated from within the glyph array!

“I had only wanted to use this as my last resort. I did not want to cheat, but I’m already at an impasse. It was y’all who forced me to do this!”

“When injected into the bloodstream, this Ghost Dragon-7 Doping Drug will strengthen my body, increase my strength to a berserker level, and even strengthen my mental faculties in an instant. It will allow me to unleash one great powerful mental attack that will be enough to completely annihilate these damned hunters. I’ll be able to rush into the top 50 of the rankings!”

The Blue Team competitor had a nasty grin on his face. His expression was incomparably crazed.

Obviously, using Ghost Dragon-7 Doping Drug would have extremely heavy consequences, but when faced with the allure of special enrollment to a university, he was already prepared to ignore them!

He had used his body to block the line of sight of his Puji Critter and produced the synthesis glyph array for the Ghost Dragon-7 Doping Drug. Now, he was about to consume the drug into his body.

A bizarre laughter came from within the depths of the cave. Then, a strong malevolent wind came blowing over!

The Blue Team competitor’s vision turned into complete darkness before he could respond. He was no longer aware of anything!

His Puji Critter finally responded to his strange behavior, immediately spouting out gel. But what it enveloped was just a headless corpse.

Immediately, a monstrous force ferociously tore through the gel jello and a white streak of light shot forth at an incomparable astonishing speed, leaping into the air! A pair of hands seized the Puji Critter and tore with force!

The Puji Critter immediately split in two. It was a bloody scene incomparable!

Within the torrential storm, one out of three Puji Critters lost connection with the monitoring center in succession. This Puji Critter was one of them.

And so, the monitoring center had not discovered this event in time.

Bolts of lightning streaked through the skies, illuminating the dark forest to a snowy white from time to time.

Under the illumination of lightning, an over three-meter tall white ape stood on top of the tree tops. Its face was extremely similar to a human’s face, except for the incomparably enormous yellow devilish eye that grew on its forehead. It seemed to take up approximately half the ape’s face, pushing the two ordinary eyes all the way to the sides.

It’s appearance looked like a mutated fetus; it appeared incomparably eerie and terrifying.

This was a large-eyed ape, a one-out-of-a-thousand mutated form of the three-eyed ape. Not only does it possess outstanding intelligence, the strength of its mental attacks are ten times stronger than that of ordinary three-eyed apes. It was a Demon Beast only released during the finals and was one of the most fearsome Demon Beasts on the entire Devil Flood Dragon Island.

“Ka Ka! Ka Ka!”

In this midst of rolling thunder, the large-eyed ape let out a monstrous laughter. The Ghost Dragon-7 it held in its hairy palms emitted a demonic blue glow.

The enormous yellow eye on the forehead of the large-eyed ape spun in circles. Soon, it figured out how to use the drug, and, without hesitation, it stabbed the Ghost Dragon-7 doping drug into its thick neck. The entirety of the drug was injected into his artery.

“*ROAR, *ROAR *ROAR *ROAR *ROAR!”

A short moment later, the large-eyed ape was unable to restrain himself and shook all over!

Its flesh twitched in a strange fashion and its skin splitted in layers of cracks. The muscles drenched in blood appeared to be growing berserkly at an alarming speed. Even muscle buds began to grown in between its strands of muscle fibers. They continued to entwine, expand, blend, be filled with blood… Causing its build to suddenly erupt to two times its original size. It had turned into an incomparably malevolent ominous beast!

The sole eye on its forehead seemed to have transformed into a frozen blood-red!

“There he is. I found him!”

Right at this moment, the excited cries of Red Team competitors rang from a close distance.

A malevolent smile emerged in the large-eyed ape's cherub, demonic face under the flash of lightning. It faced towards the source of the cries, shooting off like electricity!

Immediately following came the hysterical shrieks and sounds of bones grinding and fleshing ripping from within the depths of the forest.

……

Ten minutes later.

Li Yao sat cross-legged in a supply point. He was closing his eyes, resting. A chainsword laid on to the left of him and a Thunder Blade laid to the right of him. A Burning Sky Battleaxe was on his back. On his waist were his two black Progressive Daggers hanging in a cross. It could be said that he was fully armed. He could enter into battle mode at any time.

If an ignorant Blue Team competitor would enter this supply point, he would absolutely launch an attack without the slightest hesitation!

"There's still one more day. It's been some time since the torrential storm started and it shows no signs of stopping. I'm still first place in the point ranking. Nothing unexpected should occur."

As Li Yao calculated in his mind, a relaxed smile emerged on his face.

Tremble Deep Sea University! For Li Yao, the Vulture, shall arrive!

Right at this time, his eyelids jolted up. An alarming sense of danger jumped in the depths of his mind.

“There’s something off. There’s the scent of blood in the air! What a dense bloody air!”

A well familiar figure leapt out from within the forest. As it howled like pig being slaughtered, it fled frantically over towards the supply point.

It was actually Zheng Dongming!

Li Yao was dumbstruck... Zheng Dongming was an exceptional expert of Phoenix Ridge Second. Rumor has it that his actual strength was on par with Helian Lie’s. He might even be a bit stronger than Helian Lie!

What could possibly scare Zheng Dongming into looking like he pissed his pants?

Chapter 66: Demonic Blood Cannon

Chapter 66: Demonic Blood Cannon

The Zheng Dongming at this time lacked the usual magnificent, elegant demeanor of a young master. He was just like a stray dog with a broken rear leg. He ran gasping for breath and even his tongue was out in the air. He looked to be a few running steps away from frothing at the mouth and going into a seizure!

The moment he saw Li Yao, a ray of hope emerged in his eyes, and he dashed over consumed by joy. His last few steps were like that of a tiger pouncing on a lamb, soaring directly into the supply point!

“What’s wrong? Where’s your Puji Critter?”

Li Yao asked in utter astonishment. Every competitor on Devil Dragon Island would carry a Puji Critter with them. The Puji Critter not only counts points but also provides the means of a final life-saving safeguard!

“It was eaten!”

Zheng Dongming spread out his limbs and was sprawled on his back. He was lying down, his body completely spent. “*Pant *Pant *Pant” he gasped for breath. He looked to be lucky to have a new lease at life.

“It was eaten!? What could possibly be so powerful and fierce!?”

Li Yao was frightened. How could such a vicious Demon Beast exist on Devil Flood Dragon Island? They wouldn’t be taking the lives of competitors seriously if that were the case?

Before Zheng Dongming could respond, an earthshaking roar sounded close by. The explosive noise caused Li Yao’s ears to ring.

Several large trees swayed from side to side following the roar. An old tree simply flew up!

A monster with a height of four meters and lack of skin all over its body, as if it was directly formed from muscles, leapt out. It stomped heavily on the old tree, causing the old tree to snap with a *crack! And the speed of this monster blazed to another level. It crashed recklessly into the supply point.

“What the hell is this!?” Li Yao stared flabbergasted.

Small Ji had introduced all Demon Beasts and Demon Plant Life on Devil Flood Dragon Island before the competition began. Li Yao did not recall there being such a tyrannical Demon Beast among them!

How could the organizers of the competition possibly release such a powerful Demon Beast? There's no way a high school student can withstand this kind of vicious beast!

“D-D-Damned if I know. Be careful. This monster’s already killed seven competitors!” Zheng Dongming let out some astonishing words.

As if confirming his words, the monster ferociously crashed into the surrounding Defensive Glyph Array of the supply point!

Several dozen transparent Attack Arcane Glyphs appeared in the air. They surged with over a hundred currents of electricity and formed into a tight-knit and dazzling electric net, causing the monster to howl and burn with white smoke.

But this monster resisted the currents of this powerful electric assault, pressing onwards step by step!

The Defensive Glyph Array’s radiance flickered indefinitely between brightness and darkness. The electric net could be torn to destruction at any given time! To be smashed into pieces!

“Even the Defensive Glyph Array can’t stop it? Young Master Zheng, what the hell did you do to provoke this monster? To make it want to hunt you until death?”

Li Yao’s scalp was tingling over and over. This monster was really too fearsome. It was something he was absolutely unable to deal with.

“I was just trying to help and stabbed a sword at his butt is all. I didn’t know I would stab into his asshole!” Zheng Dongming sighed as he spoke very helplessly.

Li Yao was speechless for a time. He observed attentively at the faint bloody flesh in between the monster’s buttocks. Indeed, half a chainsword was swaying endlessly there.

The other half of the chainsword had completely entered into the monster’s body. It was a total of a meter deep and that wasn’t enough to kill it. This monster’s vitality is really too strong! Too astonishing!

Li Yao spat out with difficulty as he subconsciously looked back.

“Don’t even think of running. This monster should be based off the large-eyed ape. It will be far faster than us in the forest. We won’t stand a chance! Damn! Where the hell are the cultivators!? It’s been so long and they still haven’t come over to help us. It’s killing us!”

Zheng Dongming half sat up with great effort. He spat a mouthful of fresh blood with a bitter smile on his face.

Li Yao raised his head and glanced above. Small Ji’s pair of eyes lacked consciousness. It spiraled chaotically in the air. Everytime thunder rang out, Small Ji would violently shake and emit “Tszz Tszz” sounds.

Small Ji clearly lost control of its body.

“Damn it! Let alone the cultivators, even the protective gel won’t be spat out. And even if Small Ji could spit out the protective gel, it may not be enough to resist such a ferocious mutant Fiend Beast!”

Li Yao’s expression changed incomparably ugly in an instant.

“*ROAR!”

At this moment, the large-eyed ape howled towards the sky and tore a translucent arcane glyph with its claws!

A clear crack appeared in the electric net and the ape took the opportunity to take a large step through.

“Not good. The Defensive Glyph Array can’t hold it back completely. It can come slaughtering through at any moment!”

Zheng Dongming tottered as he stood up. He glared unwaveringly at the large-eyed ape. He spoke tensely, “Li

Yao, I know that you’ve risen like a meteor. You must have had some sort of lucky encounter, so if you have any sort of hidden cards in the depths of your drawer, or if you have a god-like skill that you can use to transform yourself in a flash to increase your combat strength by ten fold and so on… Hurry up and use it! This is a critical moment, Fellow Student Li Yao! This is not the time for you to play as a pig to eat a tiger!”

Li Yao was dumbstruck and was silent for a moment before he coldly said, “I’m terribly sorry. This is already my most powerful state.”

“What? You can’t even transform?”

Zheng Dongming looked at Li Yao with utter disdain. He spoke through gritted teeth, “Fine. Then, only I’ll pull out my finisher!”

Li Yao barely held back from ferociously hitting this fellow in the head. “Since you have a finishing move, why don’t you use it earlier? What are you speaking so much rubbish for!”

Zheng Dongming’s expression turned utterly pained in an instant. His expression was utterly depressed. Through gritted teeth, he spoke, “What do you know? This is my ultimate killing move. It uses the spiritual energy of my lifeblood. It consumes the maximum out of my body when I use it. I would need three months to recover! To endure three months without debauchery!”

“Three months! A whole three months without touching a girl! Damned Demon Beast! I’ll dismember you to ten-thousand pieces and smash you to paste!”

Zheng Dongming’s expression turned incomparably malevolent in an instant. The fiery aura around his body expanded crazed, turning even more wild than that of the large-eyed ape.

He opened his arms and countless blood-red energies fiercely shot out of his pores. They formed over his head into a threatening blood mist.

Zheng Dongming muttered under his breath. He casted seals with his hands at lightning speed. In a flash, he casted over a hundred different hand-seals.

Where the seals were changing continuously, the blood mist above his head also underwent a bizarre transformation. From a chaotic blood mist, it gradually turned into a dragon, a tiger, a panther, a bear, an eagle, and etc. It changed between different forms of beasts of prey. Soon, it turned into a battle-armored warrior wielding a sharp blade. Finally, it became a three-headed-and-six-armed blood deity, breathing mist and blowing clouds!

Zheng Dongming was connected to this blood deity by countless blood strands. The blood mist endlessly absorbed his blood essence from his inner body. His originally rich figure was sucked into a figure as thin as a rake in a short moment. His prized dimbles faded and disappeared, and even his eye sockets became deeply caved. He looked just like a human skeleton.

At this time, the large-eyed ape tore through the final Defensive Arcane Glyph!

A “Bang!” rang in the air. The invisible wall shook and shattered, and the last bolt of electric current faded away without a trace.

The large-eyed ape howled and beat its sternum twice fiercely. It took one large step and faced directly in front of the two people!

Zheng Dongming took a deep deep, deep deep, deep deep deep deep deep deep breath.

As he breathed in, the blood deity was breathed into his body. His limbs and skull remained emaciated as before, though his skin inflated greatly like a ball inflated with air. His skin was stretched to transparency. A blood glow surged faintly underneath.

“DEMONIC BLOOD CANNON… AGHHHH!”

Zheng Dongming opened his mouth to the max. It seemed he even dislocated his lower jaw. A blood red mist shot violently from the depths of his throat and transformed into an incomparably ferocious blood pillar, smashing straight into the large-eyed ape’s sternum!

Boom!

Heaven and earth trembled! Li Yao could hear what seemed to be countless vicious beasts howling and spirits shrieking! A transparent hole had actually appeared running through the large-eyed ape’s sternum!

The blood mist possessed extremely powerful corrosive properties. It endlessly corroded the internal organs of the large-eyed ape with strange “Tszzz Tszzz” sounds, emitting an utterly putrid smell.

“Zhii! Zhii!” The large-eyed ape shrieked. It’s cherub face displayed an incomparably painful expression.

“Thump!”

With one attack of the Blood Cannon, Zheng Dongming looked to have spat out half his life force. He fell to the ground, decrepit. He lacked the strength to even get up.

And this doped up large-eyed ape with its strong vitality at the extreme peak, with a chainsword stuck in its ass, with a hole running through its sternum, and with its internal organs corroded by the blood mist, still actually staggered forward. Its long arms flailed wildly, trying to tear Zheng Dongming to shreds in vain!

Li Yao smacked his tongue inwardly. He pointed towards Zheng Dongming and shouted, “Big Bro Ape! We’ve never had grievances nor hatred with each other. The one who stabbed your asshole is him! You guys can slowly resolve things with each other. This brother will go ahead and leave first!”

He actually decided to slip away! To beat it!

“It can’t be! He can’t be this disloyal?”

Zheng Dongming was dumbstruck. He stared helplessly at Li Yao fade away into the forest with his tail between his legs. Zheng Dongming practically spat out another mouthful of blood in madness.

Out of the countless swine companions he made, Li Yao was absolutely the lowest of the bunch! Lower than a dog!

The large-eyed ape cackled with a devilish laughter. It seemed that it had long predicted Li Yao’s desperate escape. It looked down, towering over its prey, and raised its arm that was thicker than Zheng Dongming’s waist high in the air.

“Big Bro, I was wrong. Can you give me another chance?”

Zheng Dongming had a sincere expression all over his face when he saw the large-eyed ape’s cauldron-large fists. He spoke an apology out of the bottom of his heart.

The large-eyed ape sneered. Right when it wished to smash Zheng Dongming’s brain into paste with a fist, its body suddenly went rigid. An orange colored line appeared on his neck.

A flesh burning smell permeated through the air.

The orange line grew longer and longer, thicker and thicker. It crossed the entire neck of the large-eyed ape in a flash.

The large-eyed ape opened its mouth to howl, but it could not make a single sound. It’s body trembled and its huge skull fell to the ground and rolled around randomly. The strong carcass fell kneeling forward, collapsing to the ground!

Zheng Dongming gazed doubtfully behind the large-eyed ape.

Li Yao grasped a Burning Sky Battleaxe in his hands. He was still maintaining his beheading. The palms of his hands were bleeding because he used too much strength. He was drenched all over his body, as if he had just been fished out of a boiling pot of water. It was unknown if this was from rain or from sweat.

“Whew…”

Zheng Dongming let out a sigh of relief. His head was heavily smashed into the muck. He couldn’t even lift his pinky.

“Many thanks! My beloved swine friend!” the emaciated fatso had spoken sincerely.

“I did what I must. Swine friends are still friends.” Li Yao smiled bitterly. He walked slowly towards Zheng Dongming, dragging the Burning Sky Battleaxe.

“So next, you’re going to kill me right?” Zheng Dongming forced a laugh and asked calmly.

“Yep.” Li Yao sighed.

Chapter 67: The Armageddon Rebellion

Chapter 67: The Armageddon Rebellion

“This was precisely the reason why I didn’t want to use my transformation. As soon as I transform, everyone will take me for a Demonic Cultivator. They will absolutely want to behead and exterminate me!” Zheng Dongming let out a sigh helplessly.

“Demonic Cultivator” These two words were like traceless and invisible spirits orbiting between these two. The surrounding temperature decreased to zero in an instant!

The smiling expressions on Li Yao’s and Zheng Dongming’s face were completely frozen. A hard-like killing intent surged from the depths of their eyes.

Demonic cultivators were those who were corrupted by beyonder demons. They relinquished cultivating in spiritual energy and instead cultivated in the dark side of spiritual energy… They cultivate in “Tenebrum Energy”. They were the archnemesis of human civilization and were a hundred-fold more fearsome than the Demon Race!

Legend has it that when the Big Bang of the Universe first began, from the very initial “starting point”, endless spiritual and Tenebrum energy surged forth. Spiritual energy gradually transformed into matter, constituting the vast and boundless sea of the stars and producing the first generation of life forms — the “Pangu Race”.

The Pangu Race had an obsession to create. They split Heaven from Earth and molded three thousand Greater Thousand Worlds. They took countless scorching interstellar matter to meld planets after planets capable of housing life.

And so, human civilization has recorded the Pangu Race to be known as the “Holy Ancients”!

And on the dark side of spiritual energy was Tenebrum. Tenebrum didn’t form into matter. Large masses and masses of Tenebrum solidified into a mysterious world known as the Demonic Realm. It was a plane beyond our known universe, an alternate dimension made of pure Tenebrum.

Within the Demonic Realm, Tenebrum endlessly tore, collided, pressed, and condensed to gradually possess intelligence and evolve into Beyonder Demons!

The Beyonder Demons were a type of life-form made out of pure energy. They did not know how to create; they only knew destruction!

Their strongest obsession was to tear through the obstructing wall between the human cosmos and the Demonic Realm. To descend upon the three thousand Greater Thousand Worlds where humanity multiplied. To invade into the minds of human civilization. To corrupt the consciousness of humanity. To corrode humanity’s determination. And to cause the human race to be lost in mindless slaughter, craziness, deception, and defilement of Tenebrum. To be reduced to dreadful Demonic Cultivators!

Early on in the Ancient Cultivation Age of 40,000 years ago, before the Demon Race had even appeared, Cultivators and Demonic Cultivators were natural enemies until death.

There were even rumors that the cultivator who initially synthesized the Demon God Virus, creating the Demon Race, had actually been corrupted by Beyonder Demons long ago and had turned into a Demonic Cultivator!

And 30,000 years later when the Great Dark Age ended, when the Supreme Emperor emerged, when humanity was revived, when the Demon Race was on the verge of extinction, when the human race was about to proclaim themselves to be the rulers of the sea of the stars, it were the Beyonder Demons who engineered the “Armageddon Rebellion”, causing the world of cultivators to enter into a second civil war!

During the Armageddon Rebellion, the Star Ocean Imperium established by the Supreme Emperor collapsed in a great explosion. The links between each Greater Thousand World were severed. The raging flames of war engulfed the boundless sea of the stars once again!

Li Yao stood calmly five meters away from Zheng Dongming. His expression was as sharp as a blade. He sized up Zheng Dongming’s neck with eyes of a vulture.

Even though this fatso was weak and powerless like a sacrificial lamb to an altar, Li Yao did not dare to be the least bit careless.

His opponent was an extremely fearsome Demonic Cultivator. Who knows what sort of violent trump card he may still hold?

Zheng Dongming spoke with a bitter laugh, “So you’ve decided to take me for a Demonic Cultivator, an evil you must purge. Then why the hell did you save me just now? Wouldn’t it have been enough for the large-eyed ape to beat me to death?”

Li Yao shook his head and spoke, “You’ve misunderstood. I wasn’t saving you… I’ve heard that Demonic Cultivators are experts in close combat and quite a few of them know the demonic skill of consuming flesh and blood to restore their vitality! What if when the large-eyed ape approached you, you killed it and consumed its flesh and blood to transform further! Then I’d be screwed! I killed the ape to make sure it didn’t get close to you. I hoped to keep you in your weak and fragile state. That’s all.”

Pausing for a moment, he used his toe to draw a line in the ground and said, “Look here. I’ve maintained standing a distance of 5 meters away from you. I don’t dare to even get closer by even an inch! It’s because I fear that you might violently attack!”

As Li Yao spoke, a paragraph of information regarding the Armageddon Rebellion that he had once learned in a history course emerged from the depths of his mind.

10,000 years ago during the end of the Great Dark Age, the Demon Race’s rule over human civilization was like a candle flickering in the wind. It was definitely unstable and could go out at any time.

At this time, human civilization was rising like a raging storm with the strong appearing in great numbers.

In the southern region of the boundless sea of the stars, the Demon Race established an underground arena on the Ardent Gale Sector, a Greater Thousand World. A powerful human known as the Heaven Banisher Emperor emerged from here.

He was just a lowly Death Gladiator. He slaughtered those in his path and, in a dozen short years, became the “Battle

God”. He called countless Death Gladiators to uprise and resist against the Demon Race.

Countless experts of the Demon Race were turned to pulp and transformed to ash under his giant sword and iron fists.

And in the Chaos Star Sector of the northern region of the boundless sea of the stars emerged another hero of humanity. He was known as the Star Ocean Emperor!

He started by seizing a Demon Race patrol boat and plundered around everywhere as a Star Space Pirate. Several dozen years later, he actually expanded to a human fleet composed of millions of crystal battleships. He changed from initially launching guerrilla attacks to launching grand and disciplined campaigns capable of squaring off against the Demon Race army. He defeated his enemies over and over.

And when the Heaven Banisher Emperor and the Star Ocean Emperor met for the first time, people finally knew…

That they were actually two incarnations of the same person!

Since then, the Heaven Banisher Emperor and the Star Ocean Emperor officially combined to a single entity. This entity possessed super outstanding military strategic capabilities and unparalleled combat strength. All of humanity addressed this entity as the Supreme Emperor!

Using only his own strength, the Supreme Emperor took human civilization out from the darkness and reinstated its glory. He led every powerful person to excavate the remains of countless ancient cultivator guilds. With the Ancient Cultivator Civilization as his foundation, he founded twenty

Guilds of Provenance, and he split from his own soul twenty clones to rule these twenty Guilds of Provenance!

The strongest clone inherited the Supreme Emperor’s battle awareness and bloodlust. He was in charge of the guild with the strongest combat strength, the Blood God Guild. He was bestowed with the name Blood God!

And the countless slain Demon Race members preferred to call the Blood God as… Mad Armageddon!

When the Supreme Emperor established the Star Ocean Imperium, when he was busy rebuilding human civilization, the Blood God commanded the twenty guilds and the crystal battleship fleet. He ran wild and free through the boundless sea of the stars, banishing all Demon Race influence within every Greater Thousand World.

Within a dozen years, it seemed that all those of the Demon Race were banished to non-existence on each Greater Thousand World. The only thing that remained of the Demon Race was their old nest, the Myriad Demon Sector.

In order to completely vanquish the Demon Race, the Blood God assembled the cultivators possessing the strongest combat strength from the twenty Guilds of Provenance. He commanded seventy percent of the armed forces of the Star Ocean Imperium to form a matchless tyrannical expeditionary force!

The Supreme Emperor even split his immortal soul into two souls to temporarily be sent into the Blood God’s body, to increase the Blood God’s combat strength to rocketing heights, to be able to contend with the King of the Demon Race!

The epic Hundred-Million Light-year Expedition unfolded and surged forward!

Everyone believed that this would be the final war when the Expeditionary Forces went into battle. Humanity would forever end the suffering caused by the Demon Race. The Star Ocean Imperium would radiate with glory and blossom eternally for the next millions and millions of years!

No one ever foresaw that the Beyonder Demons were watching the Blood God carefully. With slaughter after slaughter, the Beyonder Demons endlessly enticed, corrupted, and corroded this Mad Armageddon!

When the war took a turn for the worst, when the Blood God suffered a serious injury from three Demon Gods, and when the Blood God was criticized from the back lines, the Mad Armageddon finally failed to guard his mind and fell to the Demonic Way. From a clone of the Emperor, the greatest of Cultivators, he fell into becoming the most dreadful Demonic Cultivator!

When the Mad Armageddon sank to become a Demonic Cultivator, he immediately led the Blood God Guild members to launch an attack on the other guilds.

And the Beyonder Demons took this chance to corrupt the other clones of the Supreme Emperor!

In the end, nine Guilds of Provenance fell to the Demonic Way, becoming Demon Gates!

Under the interference of the Beyonder Demons, Mad Armageddon and the Myriad Demon Sector reached a ceasefire agreement. They even formed a temporary alliance. They commanded the nine Demon Gates to launch a counterattack against the Star Ocean Imperium!

When human civilization still had not thrown off the shackles of the Great Dark Age completely, they sunk into a second Cultivator Civil War!

The bitterness of this war was not the least bit inferior to the first Cultivator Civil War of 40,000 years ago. The flames of war tore through the recently established Star Ocean Imperium. Even two of the Guilds of Provenance that remained on the side of humanity were completely destroyed within the incomparably cruel slaughter. They were forever lost in the boundless sea of stars!

In the most critical moment, the nine Demon Gates even forced their way into the Star Ocean Imperium's capital, Empyrean Terminus. The Supreme Emperor was forced to show himself and engaged in a world-shattering decisive battle with the Mad Armageddon!

The Supreme Emperor stood at the peak evolution of humanity and was the immortal legend of cultivators!

The Mad Armageddon was the incarnation of the Supreme Emperor possessing supreme martial strength and the strongest bloodlust. He also possessed a split soul of the Supreme Emperor and even received the blessing from the Hundred Million Demon Monarch of the Nine Heavens and Ten Hells. The Beyonder Demons and Demon Kings all bestowed endless Tenebrum and Fiend energy upon him.

No one could describe just how heart shaking this decisive battle was. All anyone knew was that Empyrean Terminus was completely destroyed by these two raw people!

In the end, the Mad Armageddon's fleshly body was completely smashed to pieces by the Supreme Emperor. All that remained was an injured soul, which brought the nine Demon Gates' defeated forces to flee into Demonic Realm.

And the Supreme Emperor also received a critical injury. He was forced to escape to a Smaller Thousand World that he had created. He sank to a state between life and death, reborning and dying, a mysterious long rest.

The Star Ocean Imperium had taken heavy damage from this civil war. It had also lost the matchless guidance of the Supreme Emperor. Every Fiend and Demon took the chance to counterattack. The Star Ocean Imperium collapsed completely, and all links between each Greater Thousand World were severed.

The nine remaining Guilds of Provenance still loyal to mankind fractured into thousands upon thousands of smaller guilds. They dispersed into different Greater Thousand Worlds and continued to defend humanity — to battle to the bloody end against evil!

And amongst a few of these Greater Thousand Worlds, such as the Heaven’s Origin Sector, cultivator guilds established powerful nations. They led regulated armies to slaughter Demon Beasts, to fight against the Demon Gate, and to allow civilians to still live a peaceful and tranquil life.

In a few other Greater Thousand Worlds, humanity was evenly matched with the Fiends and Demons. They sank into a several millennia long blood war. Civilians were drawn into the flames of war as well, engaging in bloody slaughter as soon as they were born… all the way until death.

An extremely small number of Greater Thousand Worlds were completely overtaken and ruled by the Demon Race and the Demon Gate. The humans there lived a life not worth living that was miserable to the extreme!

If humanity wants to completely quell the flames of war, to proclaim themselves the rulers of the sea of the stars, to conquer the cosmos, they still had a long, long road ahead of them!

This event when Mad Armageddon set off a large armed rebellion became known in history as the Armageddon Rebellion. Ultimately, it was all engineered by the Beyonder Demons!

Obviously, when Li Yao discovered that Zheng Dongming was actually a degenerate who had been seduced by Beyonder Demons, a Demonic Cultivator who could control Tenebrum Energy, his heart was shaken just how intensely!

Chapter 68: To Silence or Not

Chapter 68: To Silence or Not

“I’m not a Demonic Cultivator! You should have learned this from the school textbooks; ‘To enter Demonhood is to be Demon for life’. When one falls to the Demonic Way, when they’re purged with Tenebrum, one will lose their minds and become a puppet of the Beyonder Demons. An incomparably powerful aura of Tenebrum Energy lingers around their bodies. They absolutely won’t be like I am now!”

Zheng Dongming spoke suddenly at rocket speed, “Look! Other than when I shot my Demonic Blood Cannon, there isn’t any Tenebrum Energy lingering around my body. My mind is also quite clear, absolutely not that of one who fell into madness! I only… had some lucky encounter to be able to cultivate in both Essence and Tenebrum!”

“Oh?”

Li Yao’s expression remained unchanged and spoke seriously, “Young Master Zheng, you’re mistaken… I’m not going to kill you because you’re a demonic cultivator; I’m going to kill you because… I’ve inadvertently discovered your big secret. You will kill and silence me for certain when you finish recovering, in order to keep your identity and your fortunate encounter from being exposed. I want to save my own life, so I shall make the first move and seize the advantage!”

Li Yao took a moment to sigh. “I hope you can understand. There’s no private enmity between us two. Originally, it was still possible for us to become decent swine friends. But now…”

He shook his head and raised the Burning Sky Battleaxe.

Zheng Dongming’s expression changed as he urgently asked, “If you really want to protect your life, then you really shouldn’t kill me. Can you give me a minute of time to clearly explain to you why?”

Li Yao squinted his eyes as his eyes radiated with vitality. His telepathic mind spun at lightning speeds, blazing his computational power to the limits. He answered a short time later, “Thirty seconds!”

Without half a second of hesitation, Zheng Dongming opened his mouth and shot in rapid fire, “First, the reason why you want to kill me is because you’re scared that I’ll kill you later to silence you! But when you slayed this large-eyed ape, you can be said to be my life-saving benefactor. I, Zheng Dongming, may be a scoundrel, but how could I ever lay a hand on my life savior?”

“Bullshit! You still have twenty-five seconds!”

“Second, you assume that the reason why I would kill you is to protect my own secret of cultivating in Tenebrum — to silence you from divulging my secret! But it’s pointless to kill you since, right now, Fellow Student Li Yao placed number one in the ranking and has already garnered the reputation of being a rising star of hope. The Nine Elites will always have quite a few eyes observing you! And, you must certainly have had your own lucky encounter to have your actual strength soar at a rate that’s higher than mine. It wouldn’t be that easy to silence you. I would need to use large quantities of influence and resources for sure!”

“Your Zheng Family… Don’t you have large quantities of influence and resources?” spoke Li Yao coldly.

Zheng Dongming forced a bitter laugh and spoke, “To mobilize large amounts of resources to kill you isn’t actually the problem. The problem is the justification, see? You’re right. My Zheng Family has several cultivators of the Refinement stage. We even have two powerful Foundation Building stage cultivators. But all these cultivators are my uncles or even grand uncles! If I ask them to come kill you, they would ask me for a reason. How should I respond? Should I simply say that you’ve discovered my secret? If I explain it like this, not only would they not get someone else to do the work, these cousins and grandparents will kick me out of the house! They’ll get rid of me!”

“Sounds reasonable. These words you’ve spoken have won you ten more seconds. Continue speaking!” Li Yao gripped the Burning Sky Battleaxe tightly; he did not relax in the slightest.

“Even if I was able to convince my relatives to come and get rid of you, it would be very difficult to not leave behind tracks and clues. Everyone knows of the secret special police unit of the Federation. They specialize in handling cultivator crimes. Quite a few of the secret police possess super powerful computation capabilities. It’s very rare for criminals to escape their investigation. What if they track things down to their roots all the way back to me? Wouldn’t I have overextended myself?”

Zheng Dongming had finished speaking using a single breath. He concluded by saying, “In short, to kill a ferocious person such as yourself wouldn’t be easy at all. Even if I’m successful, there’s still a 99% chance of being discovered. Rather than go down this route, I would rather place my bets on you keeping my secret. The chances of you keeping my secret is still greater!”

“You have a few reasonable points, but it’s still not enough to convince me. Do you have any more reasons? I’ll give you twenty more seconds,” Li Yao spoke without relaxing a single bit.

“I do!”

Zheng Dongming’s pale white face let out a red glow. He shouted himself hoarse saying, “You want to kill me because you’re scared that I’ll silence you when I recover. So you’ve decided to make the first move and seize the advantage. You just want to preserve your own life! But did you ever think about this? That after you’ve killed me you will leave behind some tracks and clues. What if my Zheng Family discovers that you’re the killer! Then you will be hunted and killed by Refinement stage and Foundation Building stage cultivators! Do you think you can escape death?”

Zheng Dongming paused before he reached a conclusion. “If you kill me, there’s a 100% chance that my Zheng Family’s Foundation Building stage cultivators will get rid of you! If you don’t kill me, you can still count on a 1% chance for me to have a conscious and treat you as my life-saving benefactor. As for the actual probability, you can calculate that yourself!”

Li Yao thought deeply for a moment before speaking, “Don’t you worry. I won’t leave behind any feasible evidence.”

Zheng Dongming blinked his eyes. “The secret police will need feasible evidence in their investigation. To avenge a cultivator, it would be enough for there to be a suspect!”

Li Yao’s eyebrows shook. “I can say that I purged evil. That I rid the world of a Demonic Cultivator. Would the Zheng Family dare touch me? They might even celebrate and send me a banner as thanks for cleaning the house of the Zheng Family!”

Zheng Dongming’s mouth pulled into a crafty smile. He spoke, “The Tenebrum I cultivate in has an extremely odd characteristic to it… Aside from the moment of stimulation, the Tenebrum won’t leave the least bit of trace. Even the most supreme of cultivators won’t be able to tell. If you don’t believe me, go ahead and look at the corpse of the large-eyed ape. Not even an ounce of Tenebrum energy remains!

Li Yao was shocked. He gazed unwaveringly at Zheng Dongming and swept a glance at the large-eyed ape from the corner of his eyes.

And sure enough, there was actually not a hair’s trace of demonic energy from the gaping hole in the sternum of the large-eyed ape reeking and dripping wet of blood. It was as if spiritual energy had blasted out that hole.

“Look, there’s no evidence at all that I cultivate in Tenebrum. Therefore, you can’t use this reason to wipe yourself clean. Of course, I’m not worried about you spilling my secret. Anyway, you don’t have proof, so I don’t have a strong enough motive to kill and silence you. We don’t need to take things so far where only one of us gets out of here alive!” Zheng Dongming spoke at lightning speed.

Right at this moment, a crackling sound rang from the air. Small Ji had finally struggled free from Zheng Dongming’s camouflage clothing. A stellar aura glowed from its eyes and it flew over above the two’s heads.

“Ha. Your Puji Critter seems to have had its connection restored with the Distant Expanse. Right now, every single movement is under the observation of countless cultivators. You really won’t make a move now right?” Zheng Dongming laughed with complete brightness.

Li Yao kept quiet for a moment before laughing. He tossed the Burning Sky Battleaxe to the side, walked to Zheng Dongming’ side, and sat down on his butt under the gaze of Small Ji. He covered his lips and whispered in a voice that only themselves could hear, “Very good. You’ve convinced me, but in the end, I’ve discovered your big secret. If one day you push your demonic cultivation to an exceptional level that you can get rid of me without leaving behind even half a speck of evidence… I believe you will still make a move!”

“That’s highly likely.”

Zheng Dongming also covered his lips as he spoke calmly, “Wouldn’t I have to worry as well? What if one day you miraculously make it big and you don’t fear the retribution of the Zheng Family? And what if you’re confident that you can escape the investigation of the secret police? And you worry that I’ll kill and silence you, so you will make the first move to gain the upper hand? To get rid of me as before?”

Li Yao pondered for a moment before laughing automatically. “The probability of this happening isn’t small.”

Zheng Dongming took his arms and rested them under his head as a pillow with great difficulty. He comfortably spoke with half opened eyes, “Anyway, right now, we are both meager weakling cannon fodder. It would be impossible for us to kill each other without being discovered by the Secret Police, so before any of us learns an exceptional god-like skill, we can still be friends, right? We might even be friends worth taking a knife for!”

“There’s no need to be friends worth taking knives for. I don’t like to go stabbing around with guys,” Li Yao spoke, “Being swine friends is fine enough. We can be light acquaintances like a pig and a dog.”

“Sure, my beloved swine friend. Many thanks for your kindness of saving my life. I’ll introduce to you beautiful girls to get to know. What’s your favorite type? Hehehe. Surely you’re not one of those upright people who won’t get close to a girl and only likes to cultivate, right?”

Zheng Dongming was beaming with smiles as he asked pervertedly.

“Of course not. I like a pure girl who’s slightly provocative. And within that tease, there would be a faint shyness to her, but she actually wants it under that shyness. And what she wants would be a mix of different kinds of unspeakable passions and desires.”

Li Yao spoke earnestly.

“Got it. You have before you a pure high-class woman who’s a beast in bed. Those are pretty common man~ I know a lot of those. When you have time come over to our school…”

As he spoke, Zheng Dongming’s voice trailed weaker and weaker. In the end, his head lay to the side; he had passed out.

He had forcefully used Tenebrum and so he had overtaxed his body too greatly. Then he used an enormous amount of mental energy in the battle of wits against Li Yao. His mind was practically spent. He was pushing his limits to hold on until now.

Li Yao rested for a moment, restoring his stamina by a bit. His gaze stopped and remained at Zheng Dongming’s neck artery for quite a while

“Student Li Yao, please remain in the supply point and don’t move. Cultivators are rushing over quickly!” Small Ji suddenly spoke.

Li Yao’s pupils shrank before he moved his gaze. He used a Chainsword to support himself and stood up.

A strand of curiosity had arisen in his heart. He staggered over to the front of the large-eyed ape’s head. And with a kick, the giant head flipped over.

The combat strength of the three-eyed ape actually wasn’t that powerful. Even the mutation of a large-eyed ape couldn’t possibly drive these two into such a sorry state.

What sort of oddity did this large-eyed ape possess to transform into this crazy state?

The large-eyed ape’s face was still frozen in this ugly grimacing state, only that mouth, with crossed canine teeth, would no longer puff out a putrid stench. The bizarre incomparably giant eye on its forehead was closed tightly. It was much nicer to look at.

Li Yao stabbed his sword into the mouth of the large-eyed ape, firmly securing the large head to the ground, and took his daggers. Only then did he feel at ease to squat down and examine it.

Right about the instant he squatted down, the bizarre eye on the large-eyed ape’s forehead opened suddenly, releasing an incomparably strong blood red glow. It was as if an extremely sharp blade had ferociously stabbed into Li Yao’s forehead, reaching to the deepest depths of his mind!

A split second later…

“Kid, how could you!?”

Li Yao felt his head be in incomparable pain. An aged scream came from the deepest depths of his mind. A transparent figure of a person with aged white hair exploded and disintegrated, transforming into countless shards. A handful of these insignificant shards continued fleeing towards every nook and corner in the depths of Li Yao’s mind. And the majority of these shards spun at crazy speeds, becoming a berserk vortex.

Li Yao’s consciousness was also dragged into this strange vortex of shards. He sunk into endless darkness!

The instant before he sunk into this darkness, Li Yao saw three cultivators flying on swords and leaping down from the cloud filled sky. They shot like lightning towards him and Zheng Dongming!

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=====Author’s Notes from the original chapter=====

Friends have raised a question in the comments section:

“Since the competitors’ Puji Critters have lost connection with the monitoring center, how are they able to calculate points? Is there meaning for the competition to continue on?”

This question caused Teacher Cow to be blank for a long time.

Things are often like this when writing novels. Some things are considered logical by the author and do not need to be explained, causing the reader to feel the author hasn't explained things clearly enough, that there are contradictions.

And so Teacher Cow has pondered on this for a long time and has decided to change some things in the previous chapters by adding a few paragraphs of explanation.

Puji Critters aren't broken. They've only lost connection due to the thunder and torrential rain. While it is true that they aren't capable of transmitting data to the monitoring center during a loss of connection, Puji Critter's functions won't necessarily receive too big of an effect. The most that would happen from the torrential storm is a “delay.”

This also means that most actions performed by competitors are still recorded down by the Puji Critters. When connection to the network is reinstated, maybe when the competition ends, all information can definitely be integrated into calculating the points.

In short, the Puji Critter still remains in operation. It just goes from network mode to local mode, losing some functionality. This is also the reason why Zheng Dongming first covered up the Puji Critter's vision before he launched his Demonic Art.

This sort of method may not be a hundred percent fair. But a real battle was like this — it was filled with various variables.

……Actually, Teacher Cow isn't really willing to have these explanations outside of the main story. This is because

Teacher Cow believes that if the final written work doesn’t allow for everyone to understand what’s going on, then that represents a failure of the author.

But sometimes if every single detail is written comprehensively, although it increases the word count by a lot, it would be way too obstructive. It would lose that natural flowing feel.

To summarize, Teacher Cow will do his best to balance between these two sides and welcome everyone’s valuable insight.

Teacher Cow looks at the comment section everyday. Sometimes Teacher Cow doesn’t give a prompt response, Teacher Cow hopes everyone will understand.

Teacher Cow has to support both elderly and young people. He is normally busy with supporting the family. Time dedicated to himself is few. He usually gets up at 5-6 AM and goes to Kentucky Fried Chicken to write for two hours before he goes to work. After work if there’s nothing busy at home, he goes to Kentucky Fried Chicken to write for two hours. Sometimes he needs to take care of the old and young before he can find the time.

So most of the time Teacher Cow needs to concentrate his energy on writing. The time he has to talk with everybody is really not much.

Today Teacher Cow shall use this question by a novel friend to explain Teacher Cow’s circumstances with everyone. This is also an apology to everyone.

To summarize, everyone please leave more comments. Teacher Cow will certainly read them. Even if sometimes he can’t respond back, he will always remember them in his heart. Everyone’s support and suggestions is Teacher Cow’s greatest driving force in writing. He will certainly write this Forty Millenniums of Cultivation book to be a good book with the help of everyone.

Thank-you everyone!

Chapter 69: The Tree of Memories

Chapter 69: The Tree of Memories

In the deepest depths of Li Yao’s neural field. Within his sea of memories, an endless abyss.

A mass of countless memory shards formed an enormous crazy spinning vortex. It tore at Li Yao’s soul without end!

“My name is Ou Yeming. One day, I will become the Leader of the Hundred Smelting Guild!”

“I, Ou Yeming, swear to all the gods in all the realms and universes that I will take all the members of the nine Demon Gates and behead them one by one and exterminate their whole families, leaving not even their dogs and chickens!”

“Godsword Lithe, Warblade Carnage Dragon, Spear Soul Devourer. I’ve finally crafted these three masterwork weapons capable of slaying those old Spirit Transformation Stage monsters!

“Senior Ou Ye, Senior Ou Yezi. Please craft me an artifact. I’m willing to pay you 10 floating mountains as compensation!”

“BOOM!”

Time went by as a blur. Li Yao didn’t know how long he was stuck in the vortex of memories when suddenly he heard an earth-shattering loud noise that ruptured the entire vortex.

A bizarre object with the shape of a giant tree had actually formed in the depths of his neural field.

This “Tree of Memories” was formed from the countless pure crystal shards of memories. Each shard of memory flickered with clear scenes — they were the memory records of Ou Yezi’s life!

Starting from the tree top was the time when Ou Yezi entered the Hundred Smelting Guild, when he was reduced to a low-level worker. Memories of when he suffered the torment of the Titan.

As time passed, the memory shards spread downwards, gradually changing to show the time when Ou Yezi became a Forge Worker. Memories of when he hammered and smelted day in and day out in the forging room.

Continuing downwards were Ou Yezi’s memories of when he crafted rudimentary flying swords.

What came next was the invasion by the Demons. Memories of bloody battles all around.

This continued all the way until the base of the tree, where the memories changed to when Ou Yezi became the Leader of the Hundred Smelting Guild, having won success and recognition. It was a scene where his might made the world tremble.

All the memory shards were separated into three completely different colors.

The earliest memories from when Ou Yezi entered the guild to when he made it as a forge worker were flowing with light and overflowing with color. They shined bright, appearing to be utterly vibrant and alive.

The memories when Ou Yezi acted as a forge worker in the forge room lacked brightness and vibrancy, but they were still of various colors.

These two sections of memories took up nearly 1/10th of the total number of memory shards.

The remaining 8/10ths of memories were only of two colors — black and white.

The final tenth of memories completely faded into a mass of black fog, blurry to the eye.

“What’s this?”

Li Yao’s consciousness floated over to be in front of the giant Tree of Memories. He was astounded to the utmost point.

He never thought that Ou Yezi’s entire life would unfold completely in such a bizarre manner before him, allowing him to see everything with just a glance.

“I understand now… Although Ou Yezi failed to possess me, his soul must be quite strong. He didn’t disappear at that time. He actually concealed himself in the dark within the depths of my mind to wait for a suitable opportunity and launch a second possession!”

“I just don’t know why, but when this mutated large-eyed ape launched an incomparably tyrannical mental attack it directly penetrated my neural field and completely shattered Ou Yezi’s soul, turning Ou Yezi into countless memory shards!”

“Yep. Yep. This mutated large-eyed ape possessed an extremely high-level of intelligence. After it was beheaded by me, its hatred was to the maximum. It saved the last of its vitality for this unstoppable mental attack. Clearly, it wanted to strike me dead or at least strike me into becoming retarded!”

“I didn’t expect it to actually cleave Ou Yezi’s soul. In the end, both these two monsters suffered a sorry defeat, allowing me to fish up some benefits!”

“But the thing is, how shall I properly utilize Ou Yezi’s memory shards?”

His heart stirred. Li Yao’s consciousness floated to the topmost portion of the Tree of Memories, carefully searching through the memories.

Soon, he discovered a memory shard of a certain day, right at the moment when the Titan passed on to Ou Yezi the One-Hundred-And-Eight-Hands Chaos-Gale Hammer Technique.

Li Yao gazed at this memory shard with rapt attention.

All of a sudden, he felt his conscious be drawn by a great force. His vision turned black and he appeared once more on the large training field.

It was precisely the day shown by the memory shard!

The devilish looking Titan stood right in front of him. His hands, the size of iron hammers, rocked as he roared, “You bunch of idiots! Listen carefully to your elder here! Today, I shall teach you all the 47th hand, the Heart-Piercer Hammer! The profoundness of this technique stems from the word ‘Piercer’. The key is to aim past the body of the target!”

“For example, if the enemy you’re attacking is standing a distance of half a foot away from you, then you will need to take him for standing an entire foot away from you. Aim behind his body and exert force! Release all your strength and explode forth past their bodies! Run their intestines through completely! Come come come and take a good look everyone. See how each strand of my muscle fibers moves!."

Li Yao carefully observed the Titan's demonstration with wide bulging eyes.

The Heart-Piercer Hammer was one of the more complicated moves of the One-Hundred-And-Eight-Hands Chaos-Gale Hammer Technique.

The last few times training in the Dream of Grandeur passed by like a blur; he had forgotten everything completely by the time he woke up.

Li Yao certainly wouldn't forfeit this chance to watch this anew today.

The Titan went into a horse stance. With a howl, his aura thundered out to form a giant humanoid figure. The crushed rock beneath his feet splashed randomly as his feet stabbed deeply into the granite floor!

Meanwhile, the muscles all over his body bulged out like vipers scattering around. A strength like the tides rushed into his right arm. His fist pounded out and the air exploded forth with seven sounds of "Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang" in succession!

A series of seven circular ripples tore through the air as the fist pierced by!

"The Heart-Piercer Hammer can tear the air when it is trained to the limit, creating sounds of explosion. I can only tear the air seven times. The experts in our guild can tear the air 17~18 times with a single fist. Their strength can penetrate through even a giant boulder, turning the insides of the boulder into powder!”

The Titan had spoken with immense satisfaction. His eyes bulged open once again and faced Li Yao with a roar, “Ou Yeming, come over here! This senior will properly teach you!”

Li Yao’s heart jumped. He jolted telepathically and his body went light for some unknown reason. His soul had actually separated from Ou Yezi’s body and fled out, transforming into a semi-transparent humanoid figure that floated in the air. He watched Ou Yezi walk miserably in front of the Titan to suffer from abuse.

“So it was like this all along! This memory shard can already be used completely as I please! I can incarnate as Ou Yezi and personally experience scenes from his memories. I can also take on an observation role and admire his life leisurely!”

This discovery caused Li Yao to be greatly excited.

Below, the Titan exploded forth with a fist that shot like lightning. This was no training; this was an excuse to vent on Ou Yezi.

Li Yao watched with a frown and spoke in his mind, “These fists are too fast; I can’t see them clearly at all. How can I learn from this? If only I can go back in and use slow motion.”

He felt his vision change as this thought floated in his mind. Time had actually rewound back to half a minute ago, back to the moment when Ou Yezi was just called by the Titan to go up front.

And also, the movements of the Titan and Ou Yezi were abnormally slow. Every single explosive fist, every flowing movement of muscle fiber, were captured very clearly by Li Yao.

“That's it. The muscles of the two legs follows the rotation of the body to create strength together. So this is the key to the Heart-Piercer Hammer. This Titan really doesn’t explain things clearly; it’s clear he’s keeping things to himself!”

Li Yao could not help but let out a whistle. He had discovered that this memory shard was completely under his control, causing him to be incomparably excited. He can freely manipulate the time speed and position.

Li Yao watched the scene in slow motion repeatedly for 7-8 times. In the end, he even merged with Ou Yezi’s body and experienced things from Ou Yezi’s point of view 3-4 times. Finally, he mastered this Heart-Piercer Hammer move through careful study. He had completely assimilated the technique down to his marrow!

“This memory shard has already been completely digested and absorbed. I will never forget it. But how do I exit from it?”

As this thought just emerged in his mind, the surrounding scene exploded and crumbled. Li Yao’s conscious appeared once more in front of the enormous Tree of Memories.

“Can it be? Are all these memory shards all accessible for observation as I wish? To study from? To digest and assimilate?”

Li Yao’s soul jolted fiercely. With a long whistle, he threw himself towards a middle stage memory of Ou Yezi in wild joy… The memory of Ou Yezi crafting the Godsword Lithe!

“As long as I learn how to craft a Masterwork weapon such as this, I’ll be able to walk arrogantly across the Federation… No, the entire Heaven’s Origin Sector!”

Li Yao yelled and crashed headfirst into the memory shard and a “Clang Dang” sound actually rang out. A black ripple emerged on the memory shard. His soul had nearly crashed into pieces. He tumbled rolling backward.

“What’s going on?”

The crash made Li Yao confused and lost. The pain pierced to his soul. He rubbed his head with a confused shout, “Why can’t I enter this memory shard?”

He was unwilling to give up, so he orbited to a few memory shards to the side, circling them for a few rotations. He tried carefully to enter several times, but he was completely unable to.

He tried to enter over a hundred memory shards before he discovered a common pattern.

All these memories were from Ou Yezi’s middle and late stages of life, which can also be referred as nine-tenths of the tree that are in the two colors white and black and the black mist memories.

These memories all include the remnants of Ou Yezi’s powerful soul. He wouldn’t be able to probe them easily.

Only the bright vibrant colored memory shards and the clear multi-colored memory shards were accessible.

Anyway, there are some differences between these two memory shards… The bright vibrant colored memory shards were already under his complete control. He can choose to take either a personal or an observational role for these shards. He can even increase or decrease the speed of time, to the point where he can replay the memories over and over.

And in the ordinary multi-colored memory shards, he can only take on the role of an observer to watch Ou Yezi’s memories pass by slowly. He lacked all control.

Li Yao pondered for a long time until it seemed like he figured out the principle behind all this.

“In the early stages in the life of cultivation, Ou Yezi was an only an ordinary person. His soul wasn’t that powerful, so I am able to freely probe his memories. But later on, his actual strength grew more and more powerful, and his soul grew stronger and stronger as well until the end when he became a grandmaster. The memories of that time contain an inexhaustible magical power. They’re something that the present me obviously can’t pry into as I wish!”

“However, as my actual strength slowly grows, my soul will also become more and more powerful. Eventually, there will be a day when I can take Ou Yezi’s entire memories. I’ll swallow his memories drop by drop until they completely turn into my memories!”

Chapter 70: Fiend Star Yao

Chapter 70: Fiend Star Yao

After gobbling up about a dozen of Ou Yezi’s early memory shards, Li Yao discovered with complete astonishment that what had originally been a multicolored memory shard had become bright and vibrant colored — its radiance flickered brightly!

When his consciousness entered to probe this shard, he discovered that what had originally been an observer role only memory changed to become freely controllable, able to be observed repeatedly!

His resolution grew firmer upon this discovery. As long as his soul gradually grows more powerful, the memory fragments that were originally impossible to control would eventually change into delicious food. They’ll be completely swallowed!

From this moment on, Li Yao seemed to forget the passing of time.

He was like the greediest of thieves who had accidently discovered treasure troves containing the wealth of a nation. He stole with extreme joy, having infiltrated into this trove filled with gold, silver, and gems. The thought of leaving never crossed his mind.

The early memories of Ou Yezi were overturned completely upside down by him; they were wiped completely clean.

Again and again, he repeated the training of the One-Hundred-And-Eight-Hands Chaos-Gale Hammer Technique. It was deeply branded into Li Yao’s soul. He would never forget it.

And in the world of reality, time flowed by at lightning speed.

A week went by in the blink of an eye.

The accident that happened on Devil Flood Dragon Island led to nine competitors dying miserable deaths. One competitor received critical injuries and had entered a coma.

This was a rare tragedy in the history of Limit Challenge Competition in the Federation.

The competition ended abruptly due to this tragedy, and an investigation was launched as well. Soon, it became clear that a competitor had violated the rules by bringing in a doping drug to the competition. Then a Demon Beast stole the drug and underwent an astonishing mutation after injecting it!

However, this competitor was killed at the first moment by the Demon Beast. He had used his own life to pay for his actions.

And the peddler who had sold this competitor the doping drug actually committed suicide after finding out about these matters. This whole matter ended on a completely unsatisfactory note.

Through careful investigation, it was discovered in the underground workshop of this peddler that the Ghost Dragon-7 Drugs he sold weren’t genuine Ghost Dragon-7 Drugs. They were actually mixtures made up of the remains of several different types of doping drugs and strengthening drugs. It was unknown what sort of composition the drug had had.

Only the tyrannical body of a Demon Beast could withstand the ravaging of this sort of knock-off doping drug. If that student had injected the drug, then he might even have exploded and died on the spot.

In this entire matter, what caused people to feel the most regret, aside from the deaths of the nine competitors, was the competitor who received critical injuries, the competitor who had sunk into a coma — Li Yao.

Floating Spear City Local News Media released a series of discussion articles titled “The Fleeting Fiend Star Yao.”

“Student Li Yao was originally a rising star. In the recent Limit Challenge Competition, he produced an unprecedented record, receiving the collective interests of the Nine Elite Universities.

“A young person such as this should have a future radiating with glory, but due to an accident, he lost the chance to tread onto the world of cultivators. His brain received a bizarre mental attack, ripping his pineal gland completely to shreds, dropping his Actualization Quotient down to 7%, to the level of a low-grade elementary school student. Even if he does regain consciousness, he might not be able to ever cultivate again!”

The article was written in a tone of utter regret.

And on the online forums, netizens were engaging in all sorts of discussions.

Quite a few people felt regret for Li Yao one after another. “What a shame. If this accident never happened, he probably would have already been specially enrolled in one of the Nine Elite Universities. It really is too cruel!”

There was also quite a large portion of people who took joy in his misfortune. They spoke with scathing words, “Who told him to be this arrogant? To flip the enter command center of the Blue Team? And kick several dozen people out of the competition? How awesome he was! And now you know what? This accident has just sent him back to where he belongs!”

However, to the majority of people, this was an extremely insignificant matter.

The gargantuan news only lasted with liveliness for three days in this explosive information era of today. Additionally, the entrance exams were coming up. Everyone was training and cramming to the very end. Who would still pay attention to the news of other people?

Wasn’t this just the downfall of a genius?

With the Federation being so large, there were quite a few of the powerful, a few geniuses who experienced all sorts of circumstances, fell into a Qi Deviation, were eaten by Demon Beasts, or were silently killed in guild infightings.

What was Li Yao worth when compared to them?

After a few days of liveliness, the accident that happened on Devil Flood Dragon Island soon sunk to silence. Li Yao, this fleeting Fiend Star, was also forgotten by everyone.

……

A week later. In Floating Spear City’s First Hospital. In the intensive care unit.

A giant metal medical treatment pod was engraved with circles and circles of arcane glyphs on the exterior, forming a giant glyph array.

Over a hundred creamy white crystals were embedded around the Glyph Arrays. They vibrated faintly, emitting ripples that caused one’s mind to be relaxed.

Li Yao laid motionless in the medical pod. The body that lay under the white bed sheets appeared extremely weak and shriveled. Tubes were stuck all over his body. A Soul Calming Talisman was stuck to his forehead.

His eyelids pulsed madly underneath the talisman. He was immersed in an incomparably intense nightmare.

Zhao Shude and Xie Tingxian stood next to his bed. They listened to a white gowned doctor explain Li Yao’s condition.

“Student Li Yao’s body hasn’t actually received much damage, but he is injured from a mental attack by a mutated large-eyed ape. His spirit root is completely lacerated. His neural field has entered into a state of incomparable disorder!”

“His body has automatically sunk into a state of deep sleep in order to protect his brain. Under this state, his brain is like a black hole that’s crazily absorbing energy from his meridians, limbs, and bones all over his body. Look. No matter how much of the strengthening drug and high-energy nutrient solution we inject into his body, it's no use.”

“His mind can consume the equivalent of a month’s or even a year’s volume of energy for an ordinary person’s mind in a second!

The white gowned doctor spoke with admiration.

Zhao Shude asked with a deep frown, “Doctor Gu, from your experience, when will Student Li Yao awaken in the end? Also, his spirit root has been torn, leaving only an Actualization Quotient of 7% left. What are the odds of his spirit root recovering after he awakens?”

The white gowned doctor spoke with a bitter laugh, “Headmaster Zhao, I am truly ashamed. I have never encountered Student Li Yao’s circumstances in my many years since I entered the world of cultivators! The large-eyed ape who attacked him had injected a doping drug to mutate into a mutated form. But this doping drug is formed from a chaotic mess of inferior drugs. No one knows the specific composition, and no one knows how warped the mental attack of this large-eyed ape came to be. And what is even more unknown are the effects on the person’s brain… Under these circumstances, we can only wait!”

The gloominess on Zhao Shude’s face grew more and more concentrated. He spoke somewhat despairingly, “Doctor Gu, you are the number one Meditation Healer of Floating Spear City. You have great academic roots in the field of the mind. Even you are clueless?”

The gowned doctor spoke, “The brains of men are the most complicated and mysterious organs. The field of the mind is even more of a mysterious world incomprehensible by the ordinary person!”

“From the growth of Cultivator Civilization until now, we know the human body like the back of one’s hand, but the brain remains an uncrackable forbidden area!”

“I’ve tried to enter Li Yao’s neural field, but I’ve been obstructed by a wild power each time that nearly sent me to descend to Qi Deviation. It looks likes that doping drug is utterly ferocious to be able to strengthen the large-eyed ape’s mental attack to the peak!”

“No one knows when Student Li Yao will awaken under these circumstances. If his luck is good, he could wake up tomorrow. If his luck is bad, he might spend his entire life in this deep sleep. Nothing is certain.”

After pausing, he continued, “However, there are actually several hundreds of this sort of cases where a critical injury leads to the pineal gland to be torn and Actualization Quotient falling substantially in the past 300 years. The majority of those with torn spirit roots were completely unable to cultivate, becoming cripples. Only an extremely few people were able to recover. At most seven or eight I guess. Therefore, when you ask if Student Li Yao can continue cultivating, my answer is… the probability does not exceed 1%!”

Zhao Shude let out a long sigh. His despair was overflowing in that sigh.

He walked to the corner and turned on the micro crystal processor on his wrist. A cultured and refined middle-aged man appeared on the hologram. It was Crimson Nimbus Guild’s elder, Zhou Yin!

“So there’s no hope?” Zhou Yin could guess from looking at Zhao Shude’s expression. He asked calmly.

“Yea. The doctor also doesn’t know when he’ll wake up. Even if he does wake up, the chances of him cultivating again are less than 1%,” Zhao Shude spoke with complete pity.

Zhou Yin nodded his head and spoke without a change of expression, “It’s somewhat of a pity. However, there’s nothing to be done about it. The world of cultivation is cruel.

There are countless geniuses born every second and every second there are countless geniuses who fall. To become a cultivator, one can't do without having talent, diligence, connections, and luck. He's a genius, but he lacked luck. Who could be blamed? From now on, all resources we were originally going to throw to him shall be revoked. I remember that your school has Helian Lie and Si Jiaxue who aren't too bad. Take those resources and give it to these two then!"

"Yes. Your orders are my command, Elder Zhou. Oh right, this Li Yao and Helian Lie have created another misunderstanding on Devil Flood Dragon Island. Board Member Helian is really not happy. What if Li Yao wakes up and they…"

Zhao Shude asked probingly.

Zhou Yin laughed utterly moderately and spoke, "I originally looked upon Li Yao with favor because I took him for young talent worthy to be fostered. But at the present, he's already become trash. What sort of connection does he have with me now? There's no need to mention his matters with me anymore."

"I see."

Zhao Shude shut his crystal processor. He walked to the side of the doctor and spoke, "Since even Doctor Gu has explained as such, then I can only wait and see what happens. Doctor Gu, I'm going to leave then… Professor Xie, how about you?"

Xie Tingxian hesitated a moment before saying, "I'll continue waiting."

Zhao Shude nodded and headed outside.

The instant before he stepped out of the room, he turned around to take another look at Li Yao in the medical pod.

Crimson Nimbus Second’s Headmaster Zhao Shude’s expression turned incomparably cold — it was as if he was looking at a pile of trash.

Chapter 71: The Transformation of the Fiend Star Yao!

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Two weeks later in Floating Spear City’s First Hospital.

Li Yao slept deeply like a baby in a medical treatment pod, except the eyeballs beneath his eyelids shook like crazy as before, showing that he was still continuing to cultivate in the Dream of Grandeur.

Xie Tingxian looked at Li Yao with a face of complete loss. In the end, he faced the doctor to confirm. “Doctor Gu, has there still been no signs of Student Li Yao turning around for the better?”

The doctor shook his head. “Professor Xie, you’re quite considerate. However, this type of heavy damage to the neural field where the spirit root has been torn is different from an ordinary illness. The passing of time won’t necessarily cause things to turn for the better! Look. This is the report of his most recent days. His brain waves are undulating in a bizarre motion. His Actualization Quotient has been fluctuating sharply. The highest it reaches is 17% and then 10 minutes later it falls to 4%. This shows that his neural field is becoming more and more unstable. Or in other words, his mind is in the middle of launching a more and more fierce storm. Even if a patient like this awakens, do you feel he will still be a genius that’s needed by your school?”

Xie Tingxian hesitated for a long time. He let out a long long, long long breath. He walked to the corner and turned on his micro crystal processor to contact Deep Sea University.

An utterly short and petite old woman, who wore an utterly old and strange gold threaded robe, appeared on the hologram. She seemed to be blind; her eyes in her deep sockets flashed with a purple flame. From time to time, the flames escaped the eyes, shooting out a terrifying radiance.

Xie Tingxian's expression turned extremely respectful in front of this old woman. He spoke with great difficulty, "Dean Chu, is it possible to give me a week's more time?"

"What do you say?"

Within the hologram, the blind old woman spoke dryly. Her throat seemed to have been slashed by a blade; it was incomparably hoarse and ear-piercing. "I admit that this kid you've taken a liking to is a genius, but now he has become like this. There's no need for you to waste further time? We of Deep Sea University are the Federation's strongest. Our university possesses the greatest of inner resources. Who knows how many young geniuses there are every year who sharpen their minds to want to enter our school. What's the worst that could happen if we miss one genius? You have quite a few projects still within the school. They're waiting for your direction upon your return. One of them is a major military collaboration project, pertaining to the newest Individual assault artifact… If all the Federation's soldiers can use an artifact designed by our university… You should know how much that's worth."

"I understand. I'll return today."

Xie Tingxian's eyebrows frowned into a knot. He closed his crystal processor and hesitated for a long time before he finally made a resolution. He faced towards the doctor and said, “Doctor Gu, if Student Li Yao wakes up, make sure the first thing he does is contact me. This is my e-crane number. Many thanks.”

After finishing his words, the refining expert of Deep Sea University, Xie Tingxian, also walked out of the ward.

This time, he didn’t look back.

……

A third week passed.

Ding Lingdang let out a great, bored-to-death yawn. The yawn even caused tears to flow down. She glared like a tiger at the doctor by her side.

Cold sweat seeped from the forehead of Doctor Gu. He spoke stammeringly, “T-t-t-terribly sorry, Miss Ding. Although you’ve accompanied the patient in the hospital for three weeks, although everyone else has already walked off leaving only you here night after night, I can’t agree to your proposed treatment.”

“Why?”

Ding Lingdang crossed her fingers, cracking them to create pops. “Anyway, your conservative treatment methods are damn near useless. You might as well let me rip open this medical treatment pod, drag this kid out of there, and let me beat him up for a change. Who knows? He might be hit wide awake. This is precisely what’s called giving medicine to a dead horse!”

“Nope. No can do. Really it’s impossible. You better not mess around! Someone help!”

……

A fourth week passed.

In the depths of his neural field, Li Yao continued to cultivate madly around the clock. He engulfed Ou Yezi’s memories with incomparable savageness.

Having experienced thousands upon thousands of repetitions, he had already decomposed, swallowed, digested, and assimilated all of Ou Yezi’s memories of when he had sunk to being a low level worker in the Hundred Smelting Guild.

Most noteworthy was the One-Hundred-And-Eight-Hands Chaos-Gale Hammer Technique. He trained again and again, bringing it to perfection, to a point more skillful than the Titan.

Li Yao even changed the direction of Ou Yezi’s memories several times. In the spars against the Titan, he ferociously pounded the Titan to the ground, beating forth a blood nose and face, letting out some anger.

Fortunately, every memory shard was independent from each other. When one memory shard was changed, it wouldn't affect the direction of the next memory shard.

After swallowing the entirety of the memories of being a low level worker, Li Yao was still not satisfied. He continued engulfing Ou Yezi’s memories of when Ou Yezi was a forge worker.

But with the passing of time, his soul grew weaker and weaker. He was completely thin and withered. He had a feeling he could disappear at any time.

“Not good. I’ve been immersed in the depths of my neural field for this long. I don’t know how many days had past in the real world. Can a week have already passed?”

Li Yao’s soul violently trembled with this fear. It was as if a strange fish on the deep sea floor was rushing dimly towards a bright light, suddenly emerging to the surface.

Finally, on the early morning on the thirty-third day, Li Yao faintly opened his eyes on the hospital bed.

He woke up!

The first thing that entered his vision was the yellow paper talisman stuck to his forehead. Li Yao pouted his mouth and blew, lifting the paper talisman up.

He discovered that his body was contained in an enormous glass cover. On the inner chamber of the glass were over a thousand glyph scripts engraved and packed. The creamy white crystals surrounding him drove the glyphs, causing a faint resonance.

A ripple permeated through the void that caused one to feel utter comfort.

The faint scent of disinfectant medicine permeated through the air. He faced towards the windows and discovered that it was the greatest darkness right before the approaching dawn. A few stars were vaguely flickering in the darkness.

Li Yao didn’t know how long he had been lying down. His body was completely empty and lacked strength.

However, his brain was filled with a complete abundance of energy. His soul had solidified to have true substance. It was a type of indestructible feeling.

It was like…

A giant door had been forcefully pushed open. His neural field expanded to a limitless state. A new world had been born in the depths of Li Yao’s neural field. With every pulse, his mind was filled with an incomparably tyrannical strength!

This time, Li Yao’s five senses changed to become utterly sharp. His computational abilities rose to the utmost limits. He could recall trifling past events of memories from a dozen or so years ago. He could calculate out an utterly complicate math sequence problem. And, he could easily hear two nurses whispering outside the ward in the hallway.

“Hey did you know? The fellow who’s sleeping inside is that famous Fiend Star Yao!?”

“You’re saying that misfortunate Li Yao then. I know him. But why does everyone call him Fiend Star Yao?”

“Rumor has it that he was originally the rising star of Floating Spear City who had everyone’s attention. The Nine Elite Universities were scrambling over him. Everyone took him to be the second Fiend Blade Peng Hai. But due to an accident, his spirit root tore and he entered into a coma. His Actualization Quotient fell to the bottom — all that’s left is 7%. He’s practically become crippled. All of a sudden, the university who had all wanted to specially enroll him all retreated. He came from being a rising star to becoming a fleeting meteor. Mhm. An especially jinxed meteor. So they all call him the Fiend Star!”

“So that’s how it is. Now that I know all this, I think he’s quite pitiful. I’ve heard he’s the same as Peng Hai. They both were poor kids who came from the slums. You see. A destitute kid who was able to soar to great heights with a single step, like a fish becoming a dragon, who was looked by the Nine Elite Universities with favor, who looked to be destined to walk the road of cultivators and burst into the upper-class circle… Yet at the most critical point, he was beaten by an accident to his original state! If I were him, I would prefer to keep sleeping and never wake up. If I wake up and discover that I've fallen this far, I'll absolutely commit suicide!"

"Who says that won't happen. His Actualization Quotient fell to 7%. It's impossible for him to cultivate… Even I have an Actualization Quotient of 21%!"

The two nurses laughed together.

Li Yao lay motionless on the bed. He listened silently, his eyes filled with doubt and ridicule.

"My Actualization Quotient fell to 7%!? What jokers! I feel that right now I'm great to the point of simply exploding!"

He looked around. There was actually a small balcony connected to this room.

Li Yao pulled off the tubes connected to his body and pushed open the glass cover. He quietly got off the bed and quietly tiptoed to the balcony, closing the door behind him.

Floating Spear City was like a sleeping beast that lay calmly within the darkness.

Occasionally, anti-gravity shuttles would streak through the night sky. Their thrusters created streaks of rainbows and were swallowed by the darkness in the blink of an eye.

The spirit root was the origin for every cultivator. It was closely bound with one's five senses and thinking ability.

Everyone would approximately fill out their own Actualization Quotient and figure out what level they were at.

“My five senses are much sharper than before. My mind has become clearer. I can even easily remember matters from the past. Even if I don’t feel a sprouting sensation on my forehead, my neural field has changed to be much more vast!”

“If my original neural field could be said to be the size of a small pond, my present mind is like a vast giant ocean that stretches as far as the eye can see. My spirit root is stronger than the past by over two-fold! My Actualization Quotient must have increased by at least 17~18 percent. How could it have fallen instead of rising? To the point of 7%?”

Li Yao laughed involuntarily.

A sudden drop in one’s Actualization Quotient would bring about an extremely intense reaction for sure! For example, their heads would hurt to the point of splitting, their thinking would become blurred, their memory faculties would decline, their five senses would drop, and they might even become a retard!

When compared to his crisp and clear mind of the present, in a state of boundless energy, it was completely different!

Li Yao’s first thought was that the hospital’s sensor machine made a bad measurement. But the probability of this happening is small.

Thinking about it, the greatest possibility was that he had used up too much of his mental energy when he was consuming Ou Yezi’s memories. This lead to his Actualization Quotient to drop temporarily.

But it was also because he swallowed Ou Yezi’s memories that he was able to break open his neural field. From today on, cultivation would absolutely be a flat ground where he could gallop straight across, covering a thousand miles in a single day.

Li Yao’s mouth hooked into a smile as he thought back to Ou Yezi’s memories.

His two legs split. A fist pounded forth randomly, and he actually heard three “Bang Bang Bang” explosions. Three air-tearing ripples had appeared on the tip of the fist in front of him.

“I actually succeeded in learning this Heart-Piercer Hammer move!”

“I don’t know how many days I lay in bed for. My body consumed enormous resources; I’m as thin as a skeleton! My body lacks strength!”

“I was able to strike out with three air-tearing ripples with a single punch even under this state. If I properly recover for several days and eat several hundred cans of the Giant Creatures of Starry Skies meat, my body will recover back to its peak state. It’s possible that I might even strike out with ten air-tearing ripples!”

As he looked at the morning star to the horizon, Li Yao’s heart was moving with great undulations. He simply wanted to howl loudly without a single care, to vent his heart’s feelings of pleasure as much as he wanted.

This awakening of deep sleep was completely different from last time with the Dream of Grandeur.

The experiences of the Dream of Grandeur was spotty and blurred, flickering and passing. The memories seemed to have vanished in the blink of an eye and were completely forgotten.

This time, he remembered every detail in the dream!

Ou Yezi’s memories were completed transferred and transformed into his own memories!

Li Yao’s eyes were bright and lively. The bones of his body crackled with explosive ringing. He stood on this small balcony using his fist as a hammer. He fully displayed the One-Hundred-And-Eight-Hands Chaos-Gale Hammer Technique, feeling it to be only flowing and natural. He went through the moves from top to bottom, linking them smoothly. The small balcony become shrouded by the tip of his fists. Circle ripples permeated through the air, causing his body to appear strangely twisted.

“A fleeting Fiend Star? Not bad, not bad. This nickname Fiend Star has quite the nice ring to it. It’s more suitable than the Vulture for the big stage!”

“There will be a day when the name Fiend Star will shake the Federation and spread through the whole Heaven’s Origin Sector!”

Right as Li Yao stretched his muscles to their limits, a shriek suddenly pierced from behind his back.

It was a nurse who had opened the door to come in and was faced with Li Yao standing on the balcony. Who knows what he was up to. Her fright caused even the tray she had held in her hands to fall to the ground.

Chapter 72: A Lizard Transforming to a T-Rex

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Li Yao spent the entire day receiving a full-body exam in the hospital.

He didn’t know how many talismans were stuck to his body by the doctor. Then the doctor shoved him into 17~18 strange and bizarre machines. Then there still were four renowned mind-healing-specialist Meditation Healers who tried to hypnotize him in vain, to take a glimpse at his neural field.

Li Yao’s neural field broke through new ground having experienced Ou Yezi’s powerful soul. His mind had changed to be incomparably vast. The four Meditation Healers spent a hair-pulling half a day and were unable to find out why they can’t access his mind. They ended up concluding… Since his spirit root was torn, Li Yao had already lost the brain wave response that most ordinary people should possess.

To summarize, they tried over and over until 3:00 in the afternoon. Floating Spear City’s First Hospital issued a diagnosis report… There’s nothing majorly wrong with Li Yao’s body. Each of his organs was weak only because of his month long coma. Perhaps he needs half a year to a full year of time to recuperate for the functionality of his body to recover to normal.

Li Yao knew the actual cause. It was because consuming Ou Yezi’s memory shards took far too much energy.

As long as he used the Art of the Swallowing Whale to eat several tons of food, he would be able to recover back to normal in 3-5 days.

What do you mean a year to recover? That’s simply a joke.

Soon, a white gowned doctor with a grave expression walked to his bedside. The doctor explained with an expression of being in constipation for several years. The attack from the doped up mutated large-eyed ape caused his Spirit Root to be completely torn. His Actualization Quotient dropped to a state unrecognizable by any father or mother. Only 7% was left. The doctor estimated that he would have to say goodbye to cultivation for life.

Even though things were like this, the doctor still hoped for Li Yao to summon the courage to live life bravely. Though his body was ravaged, he should maintain an unyielding will. Don’t give up hope. And so on and so forth.

Li Yao browsed his diagnosis report meticulously. He compared pages after pages of diagrams and charts of his neural field. Li Yao used his substantially-enforced computational abilities to calculate to the limits. His thoughts coursed with electricity and surmised at lightning speed everything that had happened.

Soon, his pair of eyes flickered and shined. He had thought of a possibility.

“I have an approximate understanding why my Spirit Root had suddenly torn and why my Actualization Quotient has fallen to the bottom!”

“Suppose that a 1.8 meter 50 kg thin person expanded to be 2.5 meter 150 kg in a short day’s time due to strange circumstances. His muscles would explode to the peak and he would become a super buff guy… His skin, muscles, veins, and bones surely won’t be able to support him. They will tear over and over until they catch up with the growth of the body!”

“With every tear, he becomes a degree buffer!”

“And my soul grew at incomparable crazy speeds when it was engulfing great amounts of Ou Yezi’s memory shards. Can it be as simple as being a hundred pound skinny guy turning into a three hundred pound super buff dude?”

“My soul simply was a small lizard transforming into prehistoric Tyrannosaurus Rex!”

“My soul grew stronger too quickly. It was impossible for my pineal gland to keep up with the growth of my soul. It could only tear over and over!”

“And when this small lizard had just transformed into a T-Rex, its muscles and skin tore all over its muscles. It looked to be drenched in blood. It would naturally appear incomparably frail before eating large amounts of prey. It would appear to have received a critical injury at first glance! To be dying!”

“But as long as I can find enough prey…”

Li Yao’s eyes flickered with a devilish, stellar light. The corner of his mouth hooked into an arch containing a trace of slight savageness.

“Therefore, everyone else believes that I’ve received a critical injury, that I’m weak to the extreme, that I’ve become trash!”

“But no one knows that I’m actually not weak. I’m actually… Powerful to the point that my body can’t withstand itself!”

Li Yao’s slightly bizarre smile seemed somewhat stupid and dull in the doctor’s eyes.

Doctor Gu was actually under the impression that Li Yao was shocked by the news, that Li Yao was incapable of accepting it in this time period… This was very normal. What sort of cultivation genius can bear to hear the fact that he’s suddenly turned into an invalid?

This was not something that could be comforted with just a few words. He could only hope that time would slowly heal the wound in this fiend star’s heart.

Doctor Gu sighed a breath. He patted Li Yao on the shoulder and left the room.

A moment later, a resolute and unhesitating pair of footsteps sounded from outside. They were like two iron hammers alternately smashing the ground.

“Stomp! Stomp! Stomp! Stomp!”

A military uniformed man wearing black walked with large strides inside.

“What’s a retired military member come here for?” Li Yao was somewhat curious.

This middle aged serviceman wore a well-ironed black military uniform. He lacked an insignia of ranking on his shoulders. It’s a standard attire for retired soldiers.

There were several maimed injuries all over this man’s body. His right hand and left leg were essence prosthetics. Even his left eye was sculpted from jade. Several hundred arcane glyphs were engraved on this eyeball to form a complete Glyph Array, faintly emitting a red light. It was somewhat terrifying to look at.

“Student Li Yao, I have come here as a representative of the Federation’s Disabled Servicemen Association to declare the compensation provided for you by the Federation!”

The disabled servicemen drew his legs together and stood at attention with a “bang”. He gave Li Yao a standard military salute of the Federal Army.

“Compensation?”

Li Yao was stunned. But soon he came to.

Although he knew that he hadn’t received critical injuries and his spirit root wasn’t trash, other people didn’t know.

The Federal Army was the major organizer for the Limit Challenge Competition. The accident at this time had led to the casualties of numerous competitors. Of course, the army would distribute compensation.

And, this accident was caused by a competitor breaking the rules by bringing a doping drug into the competition. The organizers of the competition weren’t able to discover the doping drug ahead of time. It could be said to be negligence on part of the Army.

Therefore, to make up for their negligence, they had to distribute quite a compensation. It might even be an astronomical compensation!

After the serviceman had done his introductions, Li Yao discovered that he was right. Devil Flood Dragon Island's accident had already entered the military's highest level of inspection.

Aside from tracking down the main culprit, the important thing was the method in compensating the student casualties.

The accidental student deaths were rather easy to manage. Financial support and compensation were distributed to the families at the standard of a Federal Army soldier sacrificing his life.

But for Li Yao, this victim, the circumstances were somewhat a mess.

This was because his injury can't be said to be light nor heavy.

Arguing for a light injury, one could say that he didn't lose a single hair on his body. If he goes through rehabilitation for about a year, he would go back to normal. He would be as healthy and active as before.

But arguing for a heavy injury, one could say that he was originally a cultivation genius who one day was likely to become cultivator with boundless outlooks. But because of this accident, he had completely lost his hope for cultivating.

To the many people obsessed with cultivation, receiving this sort of injury is worse than death.

These two opinions were disputed without end. Rumor has it that in the end, the high ranking military officers observed Li Yao's battle video on Devil Flood Dragon Island.

Or maybe they were moved by his brilliant performance and decided to give him compensation standard to that of Class 1: Disabled Serviceman of the Federation.

“Class 1: Disabled Serviceman of the Federation!”

Even though Li Yao was prepared, he was still shocked by this exceedingly high status.

The Star Glory Federation faced the invasion of the Demon Beasts year round. The flames of war burnt for 500 years, never completely stifling. The status of servicemen was of the utmost sublimity.

It was precisely due to relying on countless servicemen of the Federation on the front lines casing their heads, bathing in blood, resisting the never ending waves of Demon Beasts that the common citizens behind the front lines could live a peaceful and auspicious life.

So ordinary people had the utmost respect, reverence, and adoration towards servicemen!

And amongst servicemen, needless to say of those who sacrificed their lives, those who received critical injuries and disabilities on the battlefield received the same veneration by society!

Disabled Servicemen were divided into four classes.

“Class 1: Disabled Serviceman of the Federation” was second only to “Special Class Disability”. Those of “Class 1: Disabled Serviceman of the Federation” must be like the serviceman before Li Yao, to be missing a hand and a leg, and even an eye. Only then one would be considered Class 1 Disability.

After retirement, not only will the nation distribute a high pension every month, but all public services like the Underground Crystal Rail Train, the High-Speed Crystal Rail Train, the Public Antigravity Ship, and so on were all free for lifetime!

Aside from this, a large majority of restaurants, dining halls, hotels, and stores will give a different discount specifically for disabled servicemen.

When a restaurant owner discovers a Class 1 Disabled Serviceman dining in his restaurant, he might even give a big wave and refuse to receive a single cent. This was quite a common occurrence.

The Star Glory Federation relied precisely on the officers and soldiers to fight with their lives at stake on the frontline, fearless of death. And the common citizens behind them had warlike, military embracing, and unyielding worshiping spirits. Only in this way could the Federation exist in the Heaven’s Origin Sector where Demon Beasts ran rampant. Only in this way could the Federation grow endlessly stronger and reign supreme!

Chapter 73: Explosive Kill with One Shell

Chapter 73: Explosive Kill with One Shell

“Student Li Yao, there’s no need to worry. All medical expenses incurred when you were in a coma and all future rehabilitation costs are completely covered by our nation!”

“And 30,000 credits will be wired into your bank account each month starting this month. This is the Class 1: Disabled Servicemen Pension!”

“If you wish to find work, our Disabled Servicemen Association will give you aid!”

“If you want to go to college, we can also set up arrangements so that you won’t need to take the entrance exams. You can directly go to school at the Federation’s First Military College in the Disabled Servicemen Special Class!”

“In addition, come find us without hesitation if you encounter any sort of troubles in society… The Federation’s Disabled Servicemen Association is one of the most powerful organizations in the whole Heaven’s Origin Sector. As soon as there’s a problem, you will have the backing of the total 63,000,000 disabled servicemen of the Federation!”

The black uniformed disabled serviceman spoke these words with complete domination.

“Things have turned big now.” Li Yao felt a bit guilty.

The image of a disabled serviceman of the Federation in his head was one with a head full of white hair, a face full of wrinkles, and a body of essence prosthetics — an old veteran that staggers along as he walks.

Crimson Nimbus Second will always have some retired servicemen of the Federation as guest speakers to give speeches of their heroic deeds of glory on the battlefield.

In circumstances without ammunition and supplies, in circumstances when their spiritual energy was completely depleted, they hefted their inoperable chainswords with their three-to-five squad mates and rushed towards the sky-blotting tide of Demon Beasts!

Li Yao's heart would become all fired up every time he heard these inspiring and tragic heroic tales; his battlelust would gale forth!

The title "Disabled Serviceman of the Federation" was an extremely high honor and was sacred in his mind. To be awarded this title was truly being subjected to shame.

And so with this train of thought, Li Yao decided to speak the truth, "To tell the truth, my injury really isn't as serious as you believe. I'll recover as long as I take a good few days to rest. I'm not disabled."

The disabled serviceman revealed an expression of unconcealed admiration from his eyes. His prosthetic arm patted down heavily onto Li Yao's shoulder, causing Li Yao to grimace in pain.

"Great kid! I like you! Us men must have an indomitable will just like you. It doesn't matter what our bodies are, we must be filled with fighting spirit and hope! That's right! You're not crippled! The 63,000,000 disabled servicemen of the

Federation aren’t crippled! It doesn’t matter how crippled our bodies are, our fighting spirit and battle lust will never be crippled! Whenever our nation demands it, we will suit up and go into battle to explosively kill a Demon Beast with each fist!”

“This is……”

Li Yao had somewhat of a toothache. He figured out that his circumstances would be very hard to explain clearly with just a few sentences.

The middle-aged disabled serviceman spoke, “Student Li Yao, Doctor Gu and I have talked. I understand your circumstances clearly. I know you can’t possibly accept your circumstances in such a short time, but…”

“The nation has national laws. The military has military rules. Rewards and penalties are defined clearly. Only in this way could we have strict compliance!”

“Before you entered the Limit Challenge Competition, you should have signed a document letting you know that all competitors are considered to be ad hoc enlisted military during the competition, possessing the status of a serviceman and having to comply with the orders of the military. Of course, you get to enjoy benefits provided by the military!”

“You faced a mutated large-eyed ape in the competition. You fully demonstrated the bloody battle spirit of the Federal Army by fighting face to face on a treacherous road and braving out victory by slaying the Demon Beast in the end!”

“If you had not struggled in a blood-soaked battle undaunted by danger, there would have likely been much more competitors meeting their bitter ends!”

“You received injuries for the sake of protecting your comrades in the midst of battle while under the status of a serviceman. You are obviously 100% a Disabled Serviceman of the Federation and are qualified to enjoy receiving the treatment of a war hero!”

“Remember this: The Federation never forgets each warrior who struggles for the nation. This compensation belongs to you, not a single cent can be missing!”

“If the nation was unconcerned with their heroes, if the nation remains indifferent when their heroes sink into bad circumstances… Who would defend this kind of nation? Who would fight their battles to the bloody end?”

“So no matter what you say, our nation will at least provide you with all basic necessities for this next half of your life since we can’t help you recover your ability to cultivate. And we will let you receive respect from the masses of society… This is what a nation ought to do. It’s what a nation absolutely must to do!”

The eye’s of this disabled veteran was like two scorching warblades deeply stabbing into Li Yao’s neural field.

Without waiting for Li Yao’s explanation, the disabled serviceman saluted, turned his body, and walked out of the room with large strides.

Despite half of his body being completely made of metal, when he walked, he still maintained a tall and straight posture like a pine tree. The distance between each step was completely identical, as if accurately measured by a ruler.

After the disabled serviceman left, Li Yao sat stunned on the edge of the medical treatment pod for a long time.

“Forget it. There’s no need to think about other matters. My priority is to restore my actual strength completely. This fact should naturally explain everything clearly.”

Even though this man had promised that he wouldn’t need to take the entrance exams and could directly enter the Federation’s First Military College’s and go to school as part of the Disabled Serviceman Special Class.

Li Yao immediately rejected this thought still.

One of the only reasons was that he was unwilling to take up the convenience of the Federation’s Disabled Servicemen.

A more important reason was that Li Yao still had not given up the idea of entering Deep Sea University.

“Only 7% remains of my Actualization Quotient, but this is just a temporary state. As long as I have enough energy and I go through appropriate cultivation training, I will soon be able to recover to my peak state!”

“There’s still a month’s time until the entrance exams. I can still give it my all!”

Upon discovering that he had actually consumed the memory shards of the Hundred Smelting Guild’s leader, Ou Yezi, larger ambitions were expanding at flying speeds in Li Yao’s heart,

Ou Yezi represented the highest level of crafting techniques in the ancient era of cultivation — an unsurpassable pinnacle.

And similarly, Deep Sea University possesses the strongest crafting techniques in the modern cultivation world.

If he could combine these two together…

“Godsword Lithe, Warblade Carnage Dragon, Spear Soul Devourer… These masterwork weapons crafted by Ou Yezi are powerful enough to slay old Spirit Transformation Stage monsters!”

“Although the treasures of heaven and earth needed to craft these masterwork weapons are hard to come by and there are many critical steps in crafting that are hard to reproduce in modern techniques, the theory of the essence operation is still the same!”

“If I could one day engulf these memory shards of Ou Yezi crafting these masterwork weapons, mastering the techniques behind these ancient weapons, figuring out the principles of the essence operations driving them, I’ll take these techniques and implement them into modern artifacts.”

“For example, if I can analyze and figure out the essence operation model of the three masterwork weapons Godsword Lithe, Warblade Carnage Dragon, and Spear Soul Devourer and apply it to the main cannon of crystal battleships, I’ll be able to craft three joint main cannons for battleships possessing the characteristics of these three masterwork weapons!”

“A single shell would be able to explosively kill an old Spirit Transformation Stage monster!”

“I can eliminate a mountain full of old Nascent Soul Stage monsters with a single volley from these three joint cannons!”

“How unreasonably powerful would that be? What tyranny! What a crisp and ecstatic matter!”

Li Yao's heart stirred as he thought to this point. He took out his microprocessor from his bedside drawer and opened his e-crane application.

There were several hundred unanswered messages in his e-crane. Li Yao skimmed over at lightning speeds; the majority of the messages were from friends.

Among them were several dozens of messages sent by his bro for life Meng Jiang. They were all inquiries about his condition.

He looked at the times and found out they were all from within the last four weeks.

Li Yao typed out the three words "I have awakened" at lightning speeds and sent out the message. The other side did not respond; thinking about it, Meng Jiang should still be in class.

Then Li Yao entered Xie Tingxian's e-crane number, searched him up, and sent him the following message: "This is Li Yao. I've awakened."

Doctor Gu had just given this number to him.

Soon, Xie Tingxian's wrinkle covered face flashed out with a paper crane from the hologram. He spoke with surprise and delight, "Student Li Yao, I just received the news from Doctor Gu. I was just about to get in touch with you. I didn't expect you would wake up so soon. This is really something to celebrate!"

Chapter 74: Time and Tide Wait for No Man

Chapter 74: Time and Tide Wait for No Man

“Professor Xie, many thanks for your concern. I just finished a full-body inspection. The doctor said my body is a bit weak is all. I will start rehabilitation training immediately. I will attend the entrance exams in a month for sure, during which my number one ambition remains to be Deep Sea University.”

Li Yao had spoken filled with confidence.

Xie Tingxian’s smile stiffened. He said rather awkwardly, “Student Li Yao, I’ve recently discussed your condition with your assigned doctor. We’ve also discussed to a point of understanding about your situation… In my opinion, there’s no need for you to be hasty. The most important thing for you to do is to first properly take care of your body! Only a month remains until the entrance exams. No matter how much you try your best to cultivate, you won’t be able to produce a good score on the exam and there’s even the chance that you might completely break your body. Would that be worth it? It would be better to spend a year to recover and wait till next year. This would be good for everyone, right?”

Li Yao was stunned. His mind coursed with electricity and quickly understood. “Professor Xie, your school won’t give me a preferential score?”

Xie Tingxian's old face went red. He hesitated for a long time before he nodded as he spoke, "Student Li Yao, you need to understand. To make the decision to give a preferential score treatment is an extremely serious matter in regards to time-established advanced education establishments such as Deep Sea University who possess deep inner resources. Every student given a preferential score need to go through a strict inspection. And the quota creates an utterly fierce competition. No one ever thought you would awaken in such a short time of a month according to your previous circumstance. So… someone else has seized your spot."

After a pause, Xie Tingxian appeared to make a firm decision and continued, "And to tell the truth. Even though you're awake now, only 7% of your Actualization Quotient is left. The chances of you testing into Deep Sea University this year are far too uncertain. Even if your required score decreases by twenty points or even thirty points, would that be of any use? Listen to me. Spend a year at home to properly recover and take a test for your Actualization Quotient next year. If your Actualization Quotient is restored to 70% or above, I will fight for you to receive a preferential score treatment or even special enrollment. I vow this to you, Student Li Yao!"

A person called from behind Xie Tingxian right at this moment. Xie Tingxian wiped off some sweat and said, "I'm terribly sorry, Student Li Yao. I'm in the middle of directing an extremely complicated project. We're assisting the military with crafting the newest model of individual assault artifacts. I wasn't able to make time to get in touch with you over the past few days… You are welcome to come contact me more in the future when there's time. If you have any questions regarding cultivating, you can discuss them with me. I will help you with all my strength!"

“... I understand. Many thanks for your kindness, Professor Xie.”

Li Yao closed his e-crane application somewhat disappointedly. He blinked his eyes. He felt a sadness and frustration indescribable.

It was inevitable and expected that Deep Sea University canceled his qualifications to receive a preferential score treatment. According to the rules, he was “slain” by the large-eyed ape and totally lost all his points, even though his points beforehand was higher than the collective total of the next 9-10 students.

What’s even more was that all that remains of his Actualization Quotient was 7%. Anyone would take him to already have become a pile of trash through and through upon seeing this number.

Not a single school would give preferential treatment for this kind of trash.

But Li Yao still had a trace of disappointment born from the bottom of his heart.

“I know you don’t believe in me right now, Professor Xie. There isn’t anyone who would believe in me now. But that doesn’t matter. I’ll use my entrance exam score to speak for me a month from now!”

“I don’t need special enrollment, and I don’t need preferential score treatment. I will enter Deep Sea University properly and frankly using my own strength!”

“But if you were able to believe in me in this moment for just a little bit. How great would that be…”

After thinking and pondering, Li Yao decided to first go to school and check out what’s going on.

He remembered that Headmaster Zhao Shude treated him with complete importance while he was back on Devil Dragon Island. The Headmaster was even willing to represent the Crimson Nimbus Guild in signing an Entrusted Education contract with him.

He had turned into trash in the eyes of others; this contract certainly is null and void. But he could ask the teacher of the Important Class to create a thirty day final sprint training program for him and also divert some school resources to nurture him. To let him strive with all his might in the entrance exams… This single request wouldn’t be excessive right?

……

Upon leaving the hospital, Li Yao chose to ride the underground crystal rail in order to save on time.

He was just about to take out his gold transfer card and swipe at the underground ticket window when a crystal processor monitor within the window suddenly shot out with faint green ray. The ray scanned Li Yao’s face and went beep beep, turning gold.

An utterly stiff voice sounded out on the spot, “This passenger should be a Class 1 Serviceman of the Federation according to facial recognition. This passenger may ride all public transport within the Federation free of charge.”

The missus behind the ticket window went “ah!” and her face was full of admiration. As she passed over the ticket covered with glyph script, she looked through the window with curiosity to size up Li Yao.

Her beautiful eyes immediately sparkled and shined as soon as she found out how unexpectedly young Li Yao was. She shouted with amazement: “Oh my! You’re so young and yet you’re already a Class 1 Disabled Serviceman of the Federation? How amazing! My name is Li Sisi. Can we get to know each other?”

With that hungry appearance of hers, she would probably have directly leapt out if it were not for the counter blocking her way.

Li Yao didn’t expect to enjoy the status of being a Class 1 Disabled Serviceman of the Federation so soon. His cheeks burned red from the hungry fixed eyes of the ticket seller missus.

“Crazy! So the status of a Class 1 Disabled Serviceman of the infantry actually has this kind of power? No wonder so many hot-blooded youths strive over each other to enter the Federal army, to be willing to struggle and be bathed in blood — to purge evil!”

It was already four in the afternoon by the time he arrived at Crimson Nimbus Second.

At this time, the first and second year students were starting to be dismissed one after another. Quite a few flying shuttles were descending and rising at the parking lot to the side of the school.

The third year students also finished up their heavy morning classes. They were right in the middle of walking beneath the shade of the trees on campus or on the sports field to get fresh air; they were preparing to continue with an all night cramming session after dinner.

As Li Yao walked through the school gate, he raised his head to take a look. The entrance exam countdown sign was still there. Upon it were the words: “Time until the entrance exams: 31 Days 7 Hours 44 Minutes and 32 Seconds remain!”

Time and tide wait for no man!

Li Yao clenched his fist tight and he felt his hot blood start to boil in every vein of his body. He itched to start cultivating like crazy right now.

He walked with large strides towards the classroom.

At first, nobody recognized him due to his quite petite figure; he simply was just skin and bones. But soon, a student pointed at him and shouted, “Isn’t that Li Yao?”

“What? Li Yao? That fleeting and passing Fiend Star? Wasn’t he in an accident on Devil Flood Dragon Island and is still sleeping in a coma?”

“It really is Li Yao! He actually woke up! But he’s gotten so skinny. It’s like he’s shed his form!”

“Ah! He was quite buff in the video of him in Devil Flood Dragon Island. I never expected he would turn into this purely miserable and ghastly appearance!”

“I’ve heard that his brain took a mental attack and his spirit root to be torn to shreds. Only 7% of his Actualization Quotient is left. He’s simply a cripple… What has he come to school for?”

The numerous students whispered secretly in each others’ ears.

The students who were just about to leave also halted in their place. Some students even faced towards their parents to explain the situation. They dragged their parents to come look at the lively scene.

After all, Li Yao was still the man of the hour at Crimson Nimbus Second, even though it’s more of the negative type of famous.

Li Yao’s five senses were quite keener than they were in the past. He heard the whispers of the numerous students clearly; however, he did not stop moving to explain himself.

Many things don’t need to be explained. Just wait until the entrance exams scores are announced, then everyone will naturally know that this Fiend Star absolutely isn’t fleeting and passing by!

Only, a tall figure appeared right in front of him before he could enter the school building.

This guy brought a smile on his face. Faint sneering and ridicule were contained deeply in his irises. It was Helian Lie.

Chapter 75: Abandoning All Civility

Chapter 75: Abandoning All Civility

“Fellow Student Li Yao, I never thought you would wake up so quickly. Your vitality is quite astonishing, just like an unkillable cockroach. Really, congratulations!”

Helian Lie towered above him arrogantly. He stooped down next to Li Yao’s ear and spoke softly.

The surrounding students were unable to hear his words. They could only see the overflowing cordial smile on his face. They even believed that these two people had already resolved their conflicts and that Helian Lie was welcoming Li Yao back to school!

Li Yao raised his eyebrows. After swallowing a great amount of Ou Yezi’s memory shards, his true strength had increased astonishingly. This fellow Helian Lie was completely reduced to the same level of existence as cannon fodder. He really wasn’t worth getting angry over.

Once again, Li Yao thought of Zheng Dongming.

Only those monsters like Zheng Dongming who can cultivate in both spiritual energy and tenebrum were qualified to become his enemy or prey, to force him to bring out his full spirit in the hunt.

Helian Lie was indistinguishable from the food between his teeth!

“Fellow Student Helian Lie, please pardon me.” Li Yao’s face was expressionless. He had spoken completely undisturbed.

Helian Lie’s eyebrows shot up. It seemed that he didn’t anticipate that Li Yao would still dare to be undisturbed in front of him, even to the point of unconcern.

A fierce expression flitted past Helian Lie’s face. He spoke through gritted teeth, “Li Yao, do you still believe you’re the tyrannical cultivator genius on Devil Flood Dragon Island? Bah! Right now you’re a cripple with an actualization quotient of 7%. A piece of trash! You still dare to be arrogant in front of me? I have a hundred different ways to toy you to death!”

“Hmm?”

Li Yao squinted his eyes. His gaze turned sharp like two ice picks fiercely stabbing into Helian Lie’s eyes.

Helian Lie felt only a sinister chill in his neural field. It was as if his pair of eyes had been ferociously stabbed, causing them to flow with tears. He subconsciously retreated two steps.

By the time he came to, Li Yao had already moved around his body.

“You…”

Helian Lie looked at his surroundings. Everyone was looking at him dumbstruck. They didn’t understand why he had suddenly froze; it was like he was terrified.

Helian Lie’s fury suddenly raged. But right before he was about to move to intercept Li Yao, he suddenly saw a dark-skinned middle-aged man walking towards Li Yao.

Helian Lie relaxed and spoke with a devilish laughter, “Fellow student Li Yao, looks likes the head instructor has some business with you. You should prepare yourself mentally. Don’t be too excited... I’ll wait for you to come out of his office, then let’s chat some more!”

Li Yao sized up the dark-skinned face with some suspicion.

The name of this head instructor was Hei Yiming, but all the students called him the “Black Faced God”. This guy’s methods were strict in the school and he was known to be ruthless. He liked to appear in the back of the classroom in complete secret to grab students who broke the rules. He was abhorred by all the students and was infamous for being stealthy and fierce.

“Student Li Yao, our school has just received news of your awakening. We were just about ready to send people to the hospital to find you. We didn’t expect you would come by yourself to school! Excellent, let’s go to the Instructor Office. I shall represent the school in communicating the issue about you attending school from this moment on!” the Black Faced God spoke coldly.

Li Yao frowned from the Black Faced God’s unkind tone. Usually, this guy had a face of a dead person, but today his expression has become especially strange. His expression seemed to actually reveal a trace of… pity?

Anyway, Li Yao didn’t say much else. With eyes staring at the back of the Black Faced God, he arrived at the Instructor's Office.

In the Instructor's’ Office, several teachers were in the middle of conversations in low voices, but they were distracted when they saw Li Yao enter the room. They exchanged glances containing profound meaning and left the room one by one.

The last one to go even closed the door lightly.

The Black Faced God coughed dryly. A bit of awkwardness appeared on his ice-cold face. As he sat on a chair, his fingertip subconsciously rapped against the table. Finally, he spoke aloud the school's decision.

Li Yao was silent for a long time after the Black Faced God was done speaking. The trace of an electric aura congealed gradually deep in his serene eyes. At last, his rage reached to the peak where he found it almost funny and ridiculous. He said indifferently, “You want me to take a break from school?”

“Student Li Yao, I know how you feel right now and I'm extremely sympathetic towards your misfortune, but I still ask you to keep your cool when you hear me out… Our Crimson Nimbus Second is a famous and excellent high school in Floating Spear City. We ask strictly of our students. Not to mention the Important and Ascending Classes, even for the Common Class students we require an Actualization Quotient of at least 25% or above!”

At first, the Black Faced God was even a bit ashamed, but his expression soon turned calm. It seemed that he even convinced himself.

He rapped against the table calmly yet not slowly and said, “Your body's current condition clearly isn't suitable for learning and cultivating at the rigorous level of the third grade. You would barely persevere. Not only won't you be able to test into a university, you will completely break your body. Wouldn't it be better to take a step back and first go through a year break from school? You can slowly nurse yourself back to health for a year, or even two or three years. It doesn’t matter. When your body recovers, when your Actualization Quotient increases, you can still come back and continue with learning!”

Li Yao only gave a sneer. He did not answer these words. The fury in his heart expanded, filling his chest to the point of bursting. It seemed he was about to explode out with lava.

He very much expected to have his special enrollment and preferential score treatment qualifications canceled by Deep Sea University. Before coming to school, he also thought that Crimson Nimbus Guild would never proceed with the recommendation to enter Star Nebula University for education. An even more of an impossibility was Crimson Nimbus Guild signing a job contract with him.

These were all reasonable matters in this business. He did not complain, and he was not disappointed.

The thing was… He never thought that Crimson Nimbus Second would force him to take a break from school for a year in this key moment. And they wanted to see the state of his body recovery next year — to see if he could continue with school!

In the end, Li Yao represented Crimson Nimbus Second in entering the competition at Devil Flood Dragon Island. If he had really gotten the number one ranking in points at that time, besides himself reaping great benefits, Crimson Nimbus Second would also be radiating with pride. They would have become the most famous school known by everyone in the South East Region.

But right now, he has been injured and has become a cripple. The school discarded him like a piece of trash, and now they’re kicking him aside?

Li Yao’s thoughts coursed at lightning speed. His eyes squinted into two blade-like slits.

He had just woken up. The school absolutely wouldn’t have made the decision for him to take a break from school so quickly under normal procedures.

The school would have first gone to the hospital to comfort him if they truly were sincere in making their decision for his sake. They would simultaneously ask for his own opinion, give him a few days of time to decide, and give him all sorts of compensation at the same time.

After all, this was a major matter where a student’s future was determined. How could they be this careless?

There has to be people playing games in the background!

“I understand. It’s Helian Lie right?” Li Yao spoke in a thick voice.

A trace of panic flashed on the Black Faced God’s face, but he quickly recovered to normal. He dragged out his voice as he spoke, “Student Li Yao, this is the best decision made by the school in regards to your individual circumstances. This is most appropriate for the school and you. This has nothing to do with other students. Don’t make things too complicated! Really, go home and slowly self-cultivate for a few years. You might even be able to recover your Actualization Quotient. The school will still welcome you back unconditionally when that happens…”

“Haha. Hahahaha!” Li Yao couldn’t hold back at last. He laughed absolutely unrestrained.

“W-w-what’s the meaning of this?” A layer of cold sweat trickled out from Black Faced God’s forehead. No matter how much he wiped, he couldn’t wipe his forehead clean.

He felt an incomparably brutal aura suddenly surge from this cripple in front of him. It was even more fearsome than Zhao Shude, who was a Foundation Building Stage cultivatorthe Zhao Shude as a Foundation Stage Cultivator.

“I appreciate the good intentions offered by your school; however, there’s no need for me to take a break from school. From this moment on, I will straightforwardly quit school. I will no longer be a student of Crimson Nimbus Second!”

Li Yao had suddenly put away his smile. His expression had changed to become incomparably intense. He had spoken pausing after each word.

After he was done, he strode outside with large steps without looking back.

Ridiculous. It was really too ridiculous. Helian Lie really believes that he’s turned into a cripple. He believes that he can pat himself on the back by toying with Li Yao using these methods. Little did he know that the Li Yao at this time was stronger by three-to-five times than the Li Yao back on Devil Flood Dragon Island. And, his potential for growth increased by several hundred fold.

The great big world had vast seas and wide skies outside. Where can’t he cultivate? Since Crimson Nimbus Second was this blind, everyone might as well sever ties and see who will regret it in the end!

“Student Li Yao, you don’t need to do this. The school never intended for you to quit school. STUDENT LI YAO!” the Black Faced God was sweating as he shouted dryly.

Li Yao suddenly stopped when walked to the door, turning his head slowly. He gave an expressionless glance at the Black Faced God.

Just this single glance caused the Black Faced God to feel his heart be grasped firmly by an invisible claw. The claw pulled fiercely, causing him to shout out “Ahh!” in pain. Tears even flowed uncontrollably from his eye sockets.

What’s going on?

This cripple was clearly as thin as a rake. He looked like he would topple merely by a gust of wind. How could his gaze be so intense? It was simply like a sword that stabbed directly in his heart!

The Black Faced God held his sternum as he gasped for a long time. By the time he raised his head, all he saw was the large open door. Li Yao had long since disappeared.

The Black Faced God felt an unfathomable fear for the first time from the bottom of his heart.

He felt the school had made an irreparable mistake. A gargantuan mistake that they would soon regret.

Chapter 76: A Hammer Decides

Chapter 76: A Hammer Decides

Li Yao wandered, feeling pleased on the path under the shady trees on the campus with two hands in his pockets.

He really had not even a bit of reluctance leaving Crimson Nimbus Second. This was a private high school. They thought in terms of money. The high amount of money he paid for tuition was only able to get him into the worst class, the common class. Other than the last month when he was under Teacher Sun Biao’s care, no other teachers had taken him seriously. And he was actually ruthlessly kicked to the side when he came back from the only time he represented the school in entering a competition.

Even though there was the certain element of Helian Lie playing games on the inside, the school didn’t have the intentions of persisting in fighting for Li Yao.

What sort of loss would there be in leaving this kind of school?

“Right now, I’m going to enjoy the status of being a Class 1 Disabled Serviceman of the Federation. I’ll be able to receive preferential treatment from quite a few cultivation gyms. In the worst case, I’ll find a high-quality cultivation gym in the last month and cultivate on my own. Then I’ll sign up individually to enter the entrance exams. I just don’t believe that I won’t be able to test into Deep Sea University!”

Li Yao resolved himself firmly. He spat out a long breath and spread out his arms. He felt only that the sky was high and the clouds were faint. An unfathomable grand feeling surged from his chest.

“Fuck you! Crimson Nimbus Second!”

A shadow obstructed the top of his head right at this moment. Helian Lie had appeared once more in front of him.

Li Yao was stunned at first, but quickly he let out a laughter from his heart.

His laughter was utterly vicious. He was like a stomach rumbling prehistoric t-rex discovering a hungry wolf. Although it was as thin as a match, it was perfect to grind his teeth with!

“This is precisely what’s called refusing to walk an available road of heaven and instead bursting into the doorless hells. Helian Lie, you’re seeking your own death. Don’t blame me!” Li Yao laughed coldly in his heart.

“I’ve heard you went into a fury in the administration office and directly quit school~ Fellow Student Li Yao!” Helian Lie spoke with a smile. He purposely spoke loudly to let all the surrounding students hear.

“What? Li Yao quit school?”

“That’s quite normal. He’s just trash with only 7% of his Actualization Quotient left. What can he do if he doesn’t quit school? It’s not like that he can test into the Nine Elites right?”

“What a real pity. I remember that he was quite fierce last month on Devil Flood Dragon Island in the Limit Challenge

Competition!”

“It doesn’t matter how fierce you are. If you offend Helian Lie in Crimson Nimbus Second, you won’t have a good outcome to enjoy!”

Quite a few students discovered the confrontation between Helian Lie and Li Yao. The surrounding students withdrew one after another to the not far distance in order to spectate cautiously. Everybody’s tongue was waggling. No one thought optimistically for Li Yao.

“Helian Lie, it was you proposed the idea for me to take a break from school for a year, right?” Li Yao laughed indifferently.

… If the fierce people back in the Artifact Graveyard, like Fatty Leung or Wild Wolf, were to see Li Yao revealing this kind of smile, they would run for sure to the furthest distance they can run.

No one was willing to be the target of this smiling Vulture.

However, it seemed that no one knew the significance of this smile on campus.

Helian Lie maliciously laughed. His pair of eyes seemed to be bulging out as he spoke through gritted teeth, “You got it. It was me who used my family’s influence to force you to take a break from school. And what can you do about it? To tell you the truth, even if you hadn’t voluntarily quit school, I would have thought of a way for you to never be able to enter the gate of Crimson Nimbus Second ever again. I just want to exterminate you, and what can you do about that?”

“And my father has already bribed practically all the famous and excellent high schools in Floating Spear City. Not a single quality school will accept you, you piece of trash!”

“As for that damned old Sun who supported you... I’m terribly sorry. When he heard the news of your spirit root being torn, his old internal wounds left from several dozen years ago flared up again, leading to his heart rupturing. He was in the hospital for two weeks. Now, he’s already quit all jobs at school to enjoy a life at home in retirement!”

The more Helian spoke, the louder his voice got. He towered arrogantly above Li Yao and extended a finger, jabbing with force at Li Yao’s chest. He howled with incomparable pleasure.

“What’s wrong? Weren’t you quite ferocious back on Devil Flood Dragon Island? Didn’t you rely solely on your own strength to blow up several dozen people into the skies? Just how domineering, just how mighty, just how arrogant you were at that time! But look! Look at you now! Only 7% remains of your Actualization Quotient. You’ve shrunk to just skin and bones. I can cause you to fall by stabbing with a single finger!”

“What does this show? This shows that trash will forever be trash. Even if a gust of wind would occasionally blow you to the skies, soon you will drop to the ground. Striking you back to your true place. Becoming a pile of trash once more!”

Li Yao picked his ears as he spoke dully with an expressionless face. “I loathe three hundred twenty four things the most in my life. The 138th thing I loathe is when people call me trash. The 275th thing I loathe is when people use the finger to jab me… Can you stop it?”

“I just want to jab you, and what can you do about it?”

Helian Lie’s excitement warped his entire face. The least bit of the elegant handsome and bright look couldn’t be seen. “I’ve cultivated like crazy this month. My Actualization Quotient has reached 78%!”

“It’s a given I’ll test into the Nine Elites. I might even seize the Top Scorer title in Floating Spear City’s entrance exams, treading onto the world of cultivators from that time on. I’ll become an unsurpassable cultivator! And you… will forever be a piece of trash! Trash! TRASH! You refuse to accept this? Well, you’re welcome to find me for revenge. I’ll wait for you patiently for 10 years, 20 years, 30 years! Trash!”

“No need. I’m not the type to hold a grudge.” Li Yao spoke without thinking, “I’m the type who takes his revenge on the spot when there’s animosity.”

His hand suddenly shot out like lightning before the final word left his mouth. He gripped fixed Helian Lie’s finger that was jabbing his sternum.

Before Helian Lie could even react in the least, he felt as if his finger had stabbed into a blob of magma. It was burning to an astonishing degree, causing him to start to subconsciously withdraw back, but unexpectedly, he didn’t withdraw.

Li Yao squeezed with force, causing a few cracking sounds to burst out. Helian Lie’s finger bones were squeezed into shattered bones. A few short finger bones were squeezed into 70~80 fragments. His finger was turned into a soft worm!

Helian Lie’s originally flush red faced changed deathly pale in a flash. A terrified and shocked expression flashed across his face. Before his expression could settle down, his expression was replaced by an even more twisted painful expression. Li Yao had actually kicked Helian Lie in the lower stomach.

All Helian Lie felt was a high-speed crystal rail train directly colliding and entering below his belly button. He was hit rigidly into letting out a few drops of urine. His entire body suddenly flew several dozen meters and crashed ferociously into a big tree. The tree shook, causing its branches to shake crazily and its leaves to fly randomly like drops of rain.

Before he could scream a first blood-curdling screech, he was overtaken by a second blood-curdling screech. The two screeches superimposed to become a strange shriek like that of a neutered chicken.

"AHHHH!..."

"The 47th hand of the Chaos-Gale Hammer Technique, Heart-Piercer Hammer!"

Li Yao's legs spread out like a bow drawn to its limits. He crossed five meters with a single step. And he crossed to be in front of Helian Lie with two steps. His 10 toes were like 10 iron hooks, tearing through his hard cultivation shoes and stabbing deeply into the earth. The back of his foot had veins throbbing like crazy and every strand of muscle fiber pulsed chaotically. His body extended forward at an incomparably fast speed. From his foot to his calf. From his calf to his thigh. Then to his abs, his pecs… A ripple of muscles surged like the tide. In the end, they converged to the end of his right arm. A fist punched out, bringing with it seven explosions of "Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang". Layers and layers, folds and folds of skull-cleaving air ripples smashed against Helian Lie's body.

"*CRACK!"

The bark suddenly exploded on the back of giant tree behind Helian Lie, causing a clear and distinct imprint of a fist to appear!

The screech came to an end. It was as if Helian Lie was hammered fixed into the tree. His expression was lifeless for a long time before he suddenly went “Puu”, wilding spouting out a bloody mist.

He could not hold on any longer. He hugged his stomach with his hands and slowly kneeled in front of Li Yao. Then his two hands landed on the ground to support him and started to vomit in large mouthfuls.

The skin of Li Yao’s entire arm had exploded and ruptured. Fresh blood dripped and dropped.

If a medical expert cultivator were to come and examine his bones, the cultivator would certainly discover microfractures covering all over the bones in his arm.

After all, he had just awakened. His body was far too overtaxed and was incapable of bearing such an intense Heart-Piercer Hammer. This fist caused his body the same enormous harm. The pain spread like wildfire along the tips of every nerve fiber.

What was different about him from Helian Lie was that… He could take it.

Li Yao grabbed Helian Lie’s ear and pulled it with all his strength. Half of Helian Lie’s ear was torn off. The pain was so much that Helian Lie couldn’t even cry out at all. His pair of legs thrashed randomly. The urine soaked spot in the crotch of his pants grew larger and larger.

Going close to Helian Lie’s ear, Li Yao spoke articulately by pausing after each word, “Can’t even take a single blow. You are… garbage!”

Chapter 77: The Scarlet Flame Queen

Chapter 77: The Scarlet Flame Queen

A silence. A deathly silence was all around!

There were several hundred students congregated around these two. Each one of them looked as if they had sunk into an incomparably absurd nightmare. They completely weren’t capable of understanding everything that had happened.

Everyone from the first years to the third years, from the students to the parents, looked at each other in confusion. The countless bewildered expressions all turned incomparably crazed, condensing into a single question:

“Did you see that? How about you, did you see that? Everyone saw that, right? I’m not the only one whose eyes are playing tricks on me, making me see this hallucination, right?”

Such a large campus gave birth to a strange silence. The sound of Helian Lie vomiting stood out alone. He vomited until he was dizzy and dim, practically vomiting out all his intestines.

“He. he. he…”

Only after a long time passed did some people pinch their thighs to come back to their senses. They said “He” for quite a while; they were actually unable to speak half a sentence.

“This cripple Li Yao actually sent Helian Lie flying with a single kick. Then he caused him to vomit by punching with a single fist?” Finally, there were some people who were able to stammeringly squeeze out a sentence.

It was as if a floodgate was opened by this sentence. The just-deathly silent campus turned incomparably noisy in a flash. Everyone tore their throats in producing gasps of shock and disbelief.

“Did we get this wrong? Didn’t Li Yao receive a critical injury and become a cripple? Isn’t there only 7% of his Actualization Quotient remaining? How could he be this powerful? So powerful that Helian Lie is completely no match for him?”

“Quitting school? This kind of expert is actually quitting school? What the heck is the school doing!”

“I’ve seen his battle videos on Devil Flood Dragon Island. He didn’t look to be as ferocious during that time. What the hell is going on? He’s simply much more powerful than he was a month ago!”

“He clearly looks as thin as a match! But when he punched out with that fist just then, his entire body seemed to be pumped with air, expanding by a factor in a flash! Were my eyes blurry? Was I mistaken?”

“Your eyes weren’t blurred. I also saw it. That one fist was super ferocious; it had the faint hint of ancient martial techniques. But it’s much more exquisite than the ancient martial techniques taught by our school. Look, you guys! Even the back of that large tree exploded from the strike!”

“Wow! It’s true! How crazy! Is this still a high school student?”

Li Yao spat out a breath slowly. All he felt was that his mind was clear and the air was crisp. The resentment that had filled his body had been swept clean, giving him an indescribable happiness. He did not feel like getting involved with his fellow students. So he strode open his legs, stepped over Helian Lie's body like stepping over a dead dog, and headed walking towards the school gate.

A few dumbstruck teachers were standing to the side. Their bodies were completely frozen. They didn't know if they should go up and stop Li Yao.

Right at this moment, an ear-piercing rumble permeated over Li Yao's head, sounding like an arriving giant beast.

Li Yao squinted his eyes and raised his head to look. He saw a flame shoot from the southeast over here at lightning speeds. It cut the skies in two, looking like a sharp flaming warblade. It reached the skies over the school in a flash and orbited around the school in a circle, creating a flaming tornado.

It was an incomparably domineering flying shuttle!

Its rumbling sound was like a great, wild giant beast howling, drawing the attention of the other students. Quite a few people raised their heads to take a look and found that they were unable to take their eyes off it. The knowledgeable students cried in astonishment:

“It's the Scarlet Flame Battle Shuttle! It's just as famous as the Mystic Bird Battle Shuttle, the Scarlet Flame Battle Shuttle!”

“Wow! It really is the Scarlet Flame Battle Shuttle! You can tell from its sound! It's the highest quality model! Its Propulsion Glyph Array went through special customization to allow its speed to burst out to two times the speed of sound! It’s a super amazing top-grade flying shuttle!”

“It’s too beautiful! It’s simply just like how they show it in the ads, a mass of concentrated flame! Its design is totally different from the Mystic Bird Batte Shuttle, but it has the same kind of complete boldness to it! It’s incomparably tyrannical!”

“Wow! You can’t find this shuttle for cheaper than 30 million right?”

“30 million? That’s just the base model! This top-grade version with its specifically customized Propulsion Glyph Array can cost at least 80 million!”

“Who else can drive such an unrestrained flying shuttle besides Demon Blade Peng Hai? To come to our school?”

The Scarlet Flame Battle Shuttle made one more circular loop in the air under the surrounding incomparably envious gazes of everyone. Finally, the shuttle found its target. It made an utterly strange, sharp angled turn in the air and stabbed down, aiming at Li Yao.

“Whoosh!”

Li Yao closed his eyes subconsciously. All he felt was a shooting star pierce through the sky heading straight in front of him!

The Scarlet Flame Battle Shuttle came to a stop at low altitude at a distance of 3-4 meters away from Li Yao. It was like a mass of raging flames hovering in the void.

This was a flying shuttle with a completely different style of design than that of the Mystic Bird Battle Shuttle. The Mystic

Bird Battle Shuttle was stealthy, minimalist, and profoundly concealed. In contrast, this Flame Battle Shuttle was totally a byword for aggressiveness, domination, and unrestrained. It was as if this shuttle was made by directly taking lava and congealing it with the skeletal remains of a phoenix. It could burn a path to your heart with just a glance of an eye. It made people be fired up with hot blood, igniting their souls!”

“Tssss…”

The cockpit door to the Scarlet Flame Battle Shuttle opened. Wearing a red tank top and shorts that were as revealing as you could imagine, with skin as exquisite as honey, with a series of eight bells tied to her ankle, a long legged woman leapt out of the shuttle.

“Gasp!”

Everyone took in a breath of cold air.

This woman was not beautiful in the traditional sense, but she was the type that was best at attracting people’s eyes. She was like a forever radiating tiny sun. An unmatched beauty, no matter how devastatingly beautiful, would be incapable of seizing away people's gazes as long as she was present.

“What a young woman! I’m guessing she must be at most in her twenties and she actually drives a luxury flying shuttle worth nearly a 100 million!”

“Her aura is so powerful! I can’t even breath from the pressure! She has to be a cultivator right?”

“She’s certainly a cultivator and a very ferocious one at that. Even if she hasn’t reached the same level as Fiend Blade

Peng Hai, she’s at least around the same level as Headmaster Zhao. Her aura is way too powerful.”

“Her eyes are super sharp; they’re simply like two blades. Two scorching blades. Scary! She’s way too scary!”

The surrounding observers were chatting animatedly. Not one of them dared to look face to face against this tiny sun. They held their heads low and whispered amongst themselves.

In an instant, everyone had taken the matter between Li Yao and Helian Lie and threw it to the back of their minds.

Everyone discussed in low voices. They could tell that this woman had a large background with a single glance. Who did she come looking for here at Crimson Nimbus Second?

Even Li Yao was stupefied in place. It took a long time before he spoke, “Ding… Ding…”

“Sister Ling, or Ding-ling-dang-lang. It’s up to you!” With a large wave of her hand, Ding Lingdang slapped Li Yao on the shoulder. She spoke with complete domination, “Come then. Sister is treating you for a meal!”

“You came here for me?”

Li Yao blinked his eyes, unable to get over his shock. Shouldn’t this woman long have returned to the Grand Desolate?

“Nonsense! I was in Floating Spear City for a whole month, precisely waiting for you to wake up! I got some information five days ago about an extremely rare Winged Indigo Shark roaming about the Far East Ocean. Its swim bladder is a priceless treasure. After going through decoction, the swim bladder has an extremely good recovery effect for patients in comas. I just paid a visit to the Far East Ocean. It took me three days to finally hunt down a Winged Indigo Shark. I didn’t expect that you would wake up already and had even sneaked out of the hospital. I had to ask around for quite some time before I found out that you went to school… Looks like your recovery is going quite well to be able to hit someone into pissing their pants!”

Ding Lingdang had casually glanced a look at Helian Lie and spoke, beaming with smiles.

“It’s going so-so. The main thing is that I haven’t eaten yet. If I ate until I’m full, my kick just then would have destroyed his bladder. He wouldn’t be able to piss at all.”

Li Yao returned to being calm and spoke while shrugging his shoulders.

Ding Lingdang laughed with a “Pfff”. She pinched Li Yao’s shoulders forcefully a few times while speaking, “You’ve really lost weight! You’re just skin and bones! Come on, let’s go eat. I spent quite some time looking for you. I’m hungry even if you’re not!”

She dragged Li Yao into the flying shuttle without giving him a chance to speak.

The Scarlet Flame Battle Shuttle was a racing-type shuttle, so it used saddle-like seats. At most, it could seat two people front and back. Li Yao sat behind Ding Lingdang. He hesitated for a moment, hardened his courage, and hugged tight her strong, supple, and powerful waist.

“Hold on tight! We’re leaving!”

With a whistle from Ding Lingdang, the cockpit door closed. The interior of the shuttle was flowing with brilliant colorful lights. It was like there was a myriad of flaming serpents dancing on the walls. Soon, a gigantic kickback force arose, forcing Li Yao to stick to Ding Lingdang’s body.

Her short hair was very hard like steel needles. They pricked against Li Yao’s face, creating a very strange numbing sensation.

“Whoosh!”

The Scarlet Flame Battle Shuttle was perpendicular to the ground, rushing perfectly straight into the air. It merged with the scarlet red sunset in a flash!

All the people throughout campus had their mouths as wide open as possible. Their necks stretched as high as they could. And their line of sight was locked dead-on the Scarlet Flame Battle Shuttle. They maintained this posture frozen until the Scarlet Flame Battle Shuttle faded through the highest clouds. It took a long time before they were able to lower their heads.

It was shocking! There was a heaven falling and earth splitting shock in everyone’s hearts!

It was outside everyone’s realm of thought! This female cultivator, who drove a near 100 million credit flying shuttle, actually came here to find this piece of trash Li Yao. The two were even good old acquaintances!

Wasn’t Li Yao a poor destitute kid from the slums? Didn’t he receive a critical injury? Wasn’t his spirit root destroyed, reducing him to a cripple? How can he be this powerful? This irrepressible? This fortunate!”

Li Yao… Was he really a piece of trash?

The surrounding observers looked at each other in confusion. Occasionally, some people would notice Helian Lie still laying on the ground and vomiting.

The look of pity thrown at Li Yao just now was increased by ten-fold at this time and was tossed towards Helian Lie.

And, Crimson Nimbus Second’s Headmaster Zhao Shude and the Black Faced God were together in the Headmaster’s Office facing the window. They watched the Scarlet Flame Battle Shuttle speechless. They were incapable of retracting their expressions of stupefaction for a long time.

It took a full thirty seconds or so for Zhao Shude to have a cold sweat trickle from his forehead. His two legs also began to tremble lightly.

“Helian Ba. Helian Lie. You two father and son have brought me disaster and calamity this time!”

Zhao Shude talked to himself at the volume of a mosquito and his facial color gradually turned ashened. He spoke through gritted teeth, “Investigate. Investigate ASAP! Which cultivator does this Scarlet Flame Battle Shuttle belong to? How could Li Yao, this destitute kid, have a relationship with a cultivator? What sort of hidden powers are backing this kid? Investigate now! NOW!”

“Yes! Headmaster! I-I-I will go right away!” The Black Faced God’s speech was also messy. He staggered and stumbled out of the Headmaster’s Office.

Chapter 78: The Wind Sweeps and Spreads the Clouds

Chapter 78: The Wind Sweeps and Spreads the Clouds

In the sky.

The way Ding Lingdang drove the flying shuttle was exactly the same as her personality. It was as rough as possible, it was as dominating as possible, and it was as tyrannical as possible.

She floored the Propulsion Glyph Array of the Scarlet Flame Battle Shuttle to its limits within only 0.1 seconds. The Scarlet Flame Battle Shuttle tore through the skies in a flash, reaching the speed of sound. It surged and charged, battering through the air completely freely.

Yet, this woman was still not satisfied. She piloted the Scarlet Flame Battle Shuttle to rush left and charge right in between the clouds, turning at incomparably exceedingly fast speeds. It seemed that Li Yao had placed himself amongst the raging waves and stormy seas; it was as if he was being yanked around fixed by an enormous maelstrom, when suddenly, a tide flung him several hundreds of meters in the air, then falling suddenly once more to the distant sea floor.

Li Yao was forced to embrace Ding Lingdang’s waist tightly. His face was a deathly white sheet. Had he not have prior car racing experience in his previous life, he probably would have vomited up even his bile long ago.

Ding Lingdang rode as fast as lightning for about three minutes before stopping. She turned around to look and raised her eyebrows in a bit of surprise. She laughed, saying, “Not bad there~ Out of ten people who ride my flying shuttle, nine of them would pass out on the spot.”

“P-p-people ride your flying shuttle often?” Li Yao had to take a few deep breaths in order to recover. He asked incredulously.

Ding Lingdang shrugged.

“At first, there were a few people. However, there hasn’t been many in the past few years. Every time I want to take people out of the kindness of my heart, everyone would avoid me like they’ve seen a ghost. How boring. Forget it. Let’s not talk about this stuff. Come on! I’ll show you something invigorating!”

She pressed a Glyph Array on the control panel and the cockpit door of the flying shuttle opened with a “Tsss”. A thick biting cold air danced madly in the narrow cockpit.

Li Yao was dumbstruck, then he gazed through the small crack to the outside. All around him was a boiling sea of clouds.

They’re several thousands up in the sky. What the hell was this woman up to?

Ding Lingdang chuckled and she actually stood atop her seat and spread open her arms. She walked swaying to the outside of the cockpit.

There were two small flame shaped wings on the two sides of the Scarlet Flame Battle Shuttle.The wings had a streamlined shape and were utterly narrow. Rather than saying they were wings, it might be better to say they were decorative bumps.

Ding Lingdang was standing on the left flame wing at this moment. She looked at Li Yao with squinted eyes that contained an expression of utter provocation.

Li Yao's mind heated up. A unrestrainable craze surged forth wildly from the depths of his veins. With an unknown source of courage, he actually clung to the edge of the cockpit, crawled out swaying, and stood on the right flame wing.

"Didn't you say you were going to treat me for food?"

Li Yao did not avoid Ding Lingdang's eyes in the least. He used an even sharper expression as a counterattack.

Ding Lingdang bathed in the afterglow of the setting sun. She spoke with utter content, "The surrounding here is quite decent, right? Look at this sky. Look at this earth. Don't you feel all your worries being flung to the back of your mind; your appetite will immediately open wide and you'll be able to eat 10 roasted chickens right away?"

Li Yao was stunned. He gazed off to the horizon and was immediately moved by the several thousand meters high view.

Layers of clouds boiled like angry waves within the vast and boundless world, molding into divine-like shapes. Layers upon layers of red were painted under the blood-red illumination of the setting sun, condensing to a rouge-like color in the greatest depths and diluted to a peach-like color on the lightest surface.

Li Yao never knew that this world actually contained thousands upon thousands of different shades of red. Every shade of red was a core-shaking red that pulled one’s heartstrings.

This red cloud sea churned, changed, condensed, and dispersed endlessly along a whistling gale. And suddenly, from the thousands of different forms of red came sketches of gold lines. They were like gold fish leaping forth from the red sea, morphing out wings and soaring freely.

A gale of wind would occasionally rip tears into the sea of clouds. Looking below the tears, Li Yao could see all of Floating Spear City below his feet.

The city was like a giant turtle with its limbs spread out, lying unmoving on its belly. Needless to say about the flying shuttles and pedestrians, even the sky-scraping buildings turned into tiny toy building blocks.

It was like they left this mortal secular world and all that was left between the billowing and grand world was these two.

Their surroundings were extremely noisy. The wind tore endlessly against their eardrums, yet at the same time, things were extremely quiet; not even the least bit of noise from the secular world existed. All they could hear was the “Badum Badum” beating of each other’s hearts.

Looking above their heads at the transparent, bowl-like sky dome, one could see the cyan blue sky gradually fade away into a draping curtain of darkness. The stars in the entire sky were like raindrops sprinkled amongst the clouds.

Li Yao’s heart stirred. He somewhat understood why Ding Lingdang brought him here.

The secular mortal world becomes incomparably ridiculous in front of such a breathtaking spectacular sight, wiping their gargantuan worries into thin air.

Even if he had turned into a cripple, seeing this magnificent view in front of him would likely still restore his fighting spirit and reignite his confidence!

Under the final illumination of the setting sun, Li Yao’s face turned flush red and a smile came from the bottom of his heart.

“This restaurant is nice. Now, where are the roasted chickens?”

Ding Lingdang fished out an enormous military pack from the back of the Scarlet Flame Battle Shuttle and closed the cockpit cover with her long legs. She placed the greasy and dirty military pack directly on the rooftop of the flying shuttle worth several tens of millions.

She fished out one after another as if performing magic, wholes and wholes of wonderfully fragrant roasted chicken, chops and chops of braised pork joints, and links and links of blood sausages. There was even an entire trunk filled with high-energy and high-nutrient performance drinks.

Li Yao’s nose quivered and he took a deep breath. With eyes radiating with an energetic glow, he said, “It’s all Ghost Food and Drinks from the Underground Ghost Market?”

Ding Lingdang grinned widely, exposing two rows of snow-white teeth. She laughed while saying, “You just woke up from a long coma. According to common sense, you should eat light porridge and mild meals. Would something this greasy be fine?”

Of course it was fine.

A thunder cry rang out from Li Yao’s stomach. Without a word, he directly spread open his hand and grabbed a roasted chicken. A bite from the left. A bite from the right. A bite from the top. A bite from the bottom. He ate this 1.5-2 kg roasted chicken completely clean in just four bites. “Crack crack” A meat grinder-like sound rang out from his mouth. His cheeks bulged out enormously, but they returned to normal in a flash.

“This is what it means to be alive again!”

With a roasted chicken down his stomach, Li Yao’s face revealed a small trace of healthiness. He licked and licked the oil-drenched edges of his mouth, wishing for more. He stretched his hand once more towards a second roasted chicken.

This time, it was Ding Lingdang’s turn to be dumbstruck. She couldn’t have possibly foreseen that Li Yao, a patient who had just awakened from a deep coma, would eat so ferociously. She was stunned for a long time before she snorted lightly and tore into a roasted chicken with her hands without a trace of etiquette. Each of her hands held half of the chicken. She stared down Li Yao as she ferociously chewed in big mouthfuls.

At an altitude thousands of meters in the air, within the waves of boiling clouds, on top of a luxurious vehicle worth nearly 100 million credits, two people exchanged not a word. They carried out in gorging ravenously in an eating competition.

The two did not keep up even a trace of proper appearances. They were like two fearsome beasts that had hungered for ten days and ten nights. A beast rammed into the mountain and the sea of meat, shaking its cheeks and revealing its back molars. They ate like a locust plague, savagely sweeping everything clean. These two ate the entire military pack of greasy meaty food clean in under half an hour. Even the chest of performance drinks was drunk such that not even a drop remained. The two should have eaten about the same amount after some careful calculations.

Ding Lingdang held the military pack from its bottom, shook it forcefully a few times, and shook out the last blood sausage. She split the sausage into two halves to split with Li Yao to eat. They looked at each other and discovered that they both had made a mess of their faces. They could not hold back from grinning and laughing at the same time.

“You never left. Why?” Li Yao finally asked this puzzle he had hidden in his heart.

Ding Lingdang really didn’t have a proper appearance when she licked her fingers; she was still immersed in the seduction of the fine food. It took a long time before she burped and said, “I was just about to leave after waiting for three weeks. But on the day before I was going to leave, I saw a diagram of your brainwave activity… A Meditation Healer had used a secret technique to draw out the approximate shape of the depths of your neural field while you were in your coma.”

Ding Lingdang extended her wrist and out from a red micro processor jumped a hologram.

It was like the colors of the rainbow at first glance. Various shades of colors were packed together to form a tall cloud-piercing mountain peak and a deep abyssal valley. Some places even appeared to be like erupting volcanos, bursting with the numerous brilliant and varied colors of the rainbow.

“And this diagram here is of another patient in a deep coma. It’s a very typical brainwave activity diagram.” Ding Lingdang brought up a second hologram.

The colors of this diagram were much darker. It seemed that only two colors black and white existed in this world, causing the entire world to change incomparably dark. There were no mountain peaks or valleys. It was just like a deathly still flat desert without hardly a trace of life.

“These two diagrams are a bit different,” said Li Yao.

Ding Lingdang nodded her head.

“The doctor told me that it was because you had recently entered your coma that your neural field world was still relatively active. As days go by, as a long time passes, your neural field world will slowly turn to a deathly still desert… But I felt that something was off. The degree of activity of your neural field world is simply much more intense than a normal person’s by a hundredfold. And moreso, I felt something faintly familiar about it, so…”

She tapped a few times against a virtual keyboard projected by the crystal processor, bringing out a third brainwave activity diagram.

This diagram was the same as the first. It had seven bright colors of the rainbow, it was filled with life, and fiery sparks radiated all around.

“Look. What’s different between this diagram and the first?” Ding Lingdang stared straight at Li Yao’s eyes when she asked.

Li Yao carefully compared the two for a long time.

There were obviously a lot of differences between the fine details of the diagrams. But, their colors were both dazzling, their undulations were both intense, and they both revealed a bloody, brave aura that caused people's spirits to be raised with a single glance, to be all fired up.

"This is also a diagram of my brainwave activity?"

Ding Lingdang shook her head and unraveled the riddle, "Nope, I pulled a few strings with the army to get this. It's the brainwave activity diagram gathered from several seasoned soldiers of the army. And they gathered this brainwave activity when… these soldiers were situated in the most dangerous of battlefields. They were engaging in precipitous close combat, fighting against the Demon Beasts to the bloody end!"

Li Yao was stunned for a moment. He tried again to carefully examine the two brainwave activity diagrams to identify any differences; he was still unable to differentiate too much between the two.

He never thought his neural field activity would be this crazy while he was swallowing Ou Yezi's memories. It was actually the same as blood-soaked soldiers engaging in close combat.

Or maybe it was due to this crazy brainwave activity that led to his spirit root to be torn and caused his Actualization Quotient to plummet.

Ding Lingdang spoke with eyes filled with admiration, "I knew it when I saw your brainwave activity diagram. Even though you had fallen into a coma, you still continued to engage endlessly in close combat within your mental world! So I changed my plans. I decided to wait one more month. And sure enough, I waited it out. So how goes it? What's the next step you’re planning to take? Are you still going to enter in this year entrance exams?”

“Of course!”

Li Yao responded instantly. He squeezed his hand lightly into a fist, making the veins on the back of his hand gradually come into view. They were like dragons hibernating within his body totally coming to!

Chapter 79: Sticking to His Dreams

Chapter 79: Sticking to His Dreams

The large mass of food that he whale-swallowed entirely transformed into pure energy, endlessly nourishing Li Yao's body. The energy caused every single dried up cell in his body to be filled once more with strength and shine with thriving vitality.

"I will be cultivating like mad for this next month. I will strive in recovering to my peak state. I will absolutely attend this year's entrance exams with all my effort!"

Li Yao punched his fist out hard. A sound of silk tearing rang suddenly in the air. A faint white ripple swept outward starting from his fist, slowly undulating across.

This white ripple caused Ding Lingdang's eyes to flash. "You're confident that you can test into the Nine Elites?"

Li Yao was silent for a moment and he squeezed his fist tighter. "My spirit root has been torn. Only 7% of my Actualization Quotient is left. If I had a year's worth of time, I'm confident I can restore my AQ to 70%. I may even be able to charge into the most powerful realm, 90% AQ and above! But one month of time is really too short. Honestly, I don't have the confidence for an absolute victory."

"However, even if I only have a 1% chance, I will use 100% of all my strength to strive for it… It would be good if I win, but losing is fine too. I will only know after I go for it with all my effort. Not giving it my all is the same as giving up — it’s not my style!”

“Great! I knew it then that you were destined to be a member of our Grand Desolate War Institution!”

Ding Lingdang did not conceal the hungry glow in her eyes at all. It looked as if she wanted to swallow Li Yao whole with a single bite.

Li Yao was stunned… Deep Sea University had given up on him. Crimson Nimbus Second also pressured him to quit school. He never thought that Ding Lingdang would represent Grand Desolate War Institution and still offer him an invitation!

Li Yao didn’t understand. “I only have 7% left of my Actualization Quotient. I’ve turned into a cripple under the vast majority of people’s eyes. Your Grand Desolate War Institution still supports me?”

Ding Lingdang looked straight at him while she spoke seriously, “I told you this when I first met you. There is a total of Nine Elite Universities in the Federation. Eight of them educate cultivators, as for our Grand Desolate War Institution… We only breed true warriors! This wasn’t an exaggeration, but is the basis upon which the Grand Desolate War Institution was founded on!”

Ding Lingdang sat her buttocks down next to Li Yao. She faced Li Yao and narrated the origins of the Grand Desolate War Institution.

Li Yao only knew then the massive difference between the Grand Desolate War Institution and the other eight Elite Universities.

Aside from the Federation’s First Military College, the other Elite Universities were created when the nation was first founded. Each and every Cultivator Guild united together to create these universities. The goal of these schools was to educate cultivators for the sake of creating new blood for the various Cultivator Guilds.

They walked the path of eliteness from the start, counting as the typical academic institutions.

The Federation’s First Military College also, more or less, had the same goal when they were established; their goal was to foster military cultivators.

Therefore, the cultivation potential of students was of high consideration by these eight universities. They looked especially at the Actualization Quotient; it was unacceptable if the AQ was even the least bit lacking.

However, the Grand Desolate War Institution was different. The Grand Desolate War Institution was located in the Demon Beast Wasteland. It was spontaneously established by unaffiliated cultivators and the martial civilians. It was completely unorthodox.

... There were over ten million square kilometers of land in the northern region of the Federation. Even though the environment was of the poorest of qualities with a sky filled with yellow sand and desert land everywhere, there was actually a rich abundance of resources and crystal mines stored underground. Countless adventurers came here within the past several hundred years with hopes of making a fortune. They settled here and multiplied.

Yet, this place was actually the region where Demon Beasts had wreaked the most havoc in the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

There were many Demon Beasts, comparable to the Far East Demon Kingdom back in the day.

According to the speculation of many experts and scholars in the cultivator world, countless cracks of space exist in the depths of the Grand Desolate Region located in the extreme north of the Federation. These cracks allow passage to a Greater Thousand World controlled by the Demon Race… The Blood Demon Sector!

The Grand Desolate Region was precisely the border between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector. The powerful Demon Beasts and Demon Race can come at any time through the cracks in space from the Blood Demon Sector, entering the Heaven’s Origin Sector in a steady stream.

The Grant Desolate Region became the Star Glory Federation’s front line for all eternity, engaging in the flames of war for several hundreds of years continually. It was known as The Demon Beast Wasteland!

Even though the Federal Army had stationed troops in the Grand Desolate Region, each of the major cultivator guilds also formed their own hunting squads to infiltrate the wasteland and purge evil. But the Grand Desolate Region spanned a distance of thousands of miles. In the end, there were several places that were unable to be covered by the army and the cultivator guilds.

The human race that lived in the Grand Desolate Region could encounter Demon Beasts at any given time. After several hundred years of cleansing, the remaining survivors were not lacking in bravery and had no fear of death! They were the strong who fought with bravery and fierceness!

Natural selection. Survival of the fittest. By slaying several Demon Beasts in close combat, these powerful also turned into absolutely strong existences with ferocity on the level of Demon Beasts. Even ordinary people, who originally did not possess good talent, were able to ascend to become cultivators through experiencing several hundred bloody battles and luckily escaping death.

The powerful amassed together automatically for the sake of survival. They took their own close-combat experience and passed it on to those like them.

At first, there simply were just some unfixed and casual activities such as Martial Arts Exchange Conventions, Hunting Experience Lectures, etc. Everyone sat around and compared notes on their martial arts while roasting Demon Beast meat, exchanging their experiences.

It wasn’t until later for the organization known as the Grand Desolate War Institution to be formed. A portion of the people who faced Demon Beasts in close combat had received critical injuries. No longer suited for fighting the enemy, these powerful stayed in this organization and passed on their martial arts and combat experiences to the youngsters.

The number of powerful humans in the Grand Desolate Region grew larger and larger with the passing of several hundred years of development within the hundred year bloody battle with the Demon Beasts. Even quite a few high stage cultivators were able to emerge forth from the mountain of corpses and the blood filled sea. The actual strength and teaching standards of the Grand Desolate War Institution kept increasing. Finally, they rose to become one of the Nine Elites!

Although they were one of the Nine Elites, Grand Desolate War Institution continued to maintain its crudeness, barbarism, and their tradition in emphasizing actual combat. Their standards of selecting students were not quite the same as the other Eight Elites.

To become a cultivator, one needs to have their Actualization Quotient reach 100%; their spirit root must be awakened.

But it wasn't necessary for things to be that complicated when becoming a warrior. Even if there was only 1% of an Actualization Quotient remaining, as long as one's fist can still be clenched tight, as long as one's heated blood can still boil, as long as one can still charge and attack without being affected by the howls of the opposing powerful Demon Beasts…… it was enough!

The Grand Desolate War Institution did not breed cultivators — they only bred warriors!

Ding Lingdang's glowing eyes shined as she stared at Li Yao. She spoke earnestly, "You've just awakened. I still don't know to what degree you can recover your body to in the end, so right now I can't give you any guarantees. However, please be convinced of Grand Desolate War Institution's sincerity. Student Li Yao, if you are willing, I hope to be able to closely observe your cultivation for the following month, to move one step closer to confirming your recovery state. At the same time, I will fight for preferential treatment for you as much as possible. The time for Special Enrollment has already passed; it would be very hard to arrange, but a Preferential Score Treatment shouldn't be a problem. I will do my best to fight for the best Preferential Score Treatment!"

Li Yao was finally moved.

The style revealed by the Grand Desolate War Institution was completely different than that of Deep Sea University.

Ding Lingdang held a unique charm that was different than that of Xie Tingxian. It was the kind that comes when one will persist until the very end once a target has been fixed. The charm that comes from absolutely completing something.

It caused one to unable to keep their blood from boiling, to wish to fight shoulder to shoulder with her, to fight until the bloody end!

“What do you think, Student Li Yao? I saw the blazing flame in your eyes. Your heart has already stirred. That’s right! Be a straightforward man! Let’s do our best together for this following month and blast out a never before seen miracle! Let’s make those people who look down on you feel regret! Then let’s enter the Grand Desolate War Institution’s Combat Department in a magnificent fashion! Become a heaven and earth defying warrior! What do you say!”

Ding Lingdang’s passion radiated all around. She was completely ignited!

Li Yao also was boiling. Suddenly, he smashed his fist down and growled, “No good!”

“Ah?” Ding Lingdang blinked her eyes. Her expression was sluggish. “Whaddya say?”

“No good. I won’t enter Grand Desolate War Institution’s Combat Department,” Li Yao repeated very seriously.

Ding Lingdang’s charming face broke down completely.

“Yo yo yo yo. Student Li Yao, we just ate that meal so happily just now. We chatted in our conversation so amiably. When I introduced the history of the Grand Desolate War Institution to you, the flame in your eyes was blazing and bursting! You were clearly super interested! That rejection you did in the end was way too snappy!”

“Amiableness is Amiableness. Happiness is happiness. Blazing flames are flames. But Dreams… aren’t something that can be sold!”

Li Yao looked straight at Ding Lingdang’s beautiful eyes. He spoke with complete seriousness, “Sister Ling, I am extremely thankful for everything you’ve invested for my sake in this month. When everyone else no longer supported me, when everyone else gave up on me, only your Grand Desolate War Institution continued to favor me and believe that I’m a manufacturable material… To the me at this very moment, this belief is the most precious of invaluable treasures!”

“The Grand Desolate War Institution's founding history and traditional school of thought are really to my liking… You should have looked through my profile and know that I was born in the Artifact Graveyard. That I am a small garbage scavenger. I’ve struggled since young at the very bottom. I started 100% from the grassroots. It should be natural for someone like me to go to your Grand Desolate War Institution!”

“However, I’ve always wanted to become a Master Refiner from the very beginning. This is not only my dream but a promise was given to the deceased person closest to me!”

“The Combat Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution is the Federation’s strongest. I believe there are many youths who thirst to become the most powerful of warriors. They are like the me at this time, striving with all their strength to chase their dreams and break into the Combat Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution.”

“If I gave up my dream of becoming a Master Refiner for the sake of emotion, for the sake of trust, for our amiable chat and other causes, to enter into the Grand Desolate War Institution’s Combat Department unresigningly and unwillingly… This would be an insult to my dream. It would also be an insult to the Grand Desolate War Institution’s Combat Department. It would be even more of an insult to the thousands up thousands of students cultivating with their all, thirsting to test into the Grand Desolate War Institution!”

“So, I’m very sorry. I can’t choose the Combat Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution. My number one goal still remains to be the Refining Department of Deep Sea University!”

“As for the trust and assistance the Grand Desolate War Institution has given me, I will engrave it all in my heart. One day in the future when I become a Master Artificer and break through in my career, I will absolutely pay back everything you’ve done for me today.”

“A dream once made is a dream forever fixed. One absolutely has to persist down that road. There isn’t anyone who can change my path!”

Ding Lingdang remained quiet until he finished his speaking. Her expression was somewhat lonely. “You’re this determined? You won’t give even a 1% chance for our Grand Desolate War Institution?”

Li Yao hesitated for a moment.

For some unknown reason, the hesitating face of Xie Tingxian had suddenly flashed in his mind alongside with Ding Lingdang’s ravenous eating appearance just now.

Right when he was about to painfully nod his head, Ding Lingdang actually laughed crisply and brightly, revealing a mouth of white teeth. “You hesitated. That means I still have a 1% chance, right? I remember that someone told me just now that even if there's only a 1% chance, he will bring out 100% of his strength and strive with all his might. After giving his all, it didn’t matter if he loses or wins, but if he didn’t give his all, it would be the same as giving up. It just wasn’t his style!”

“Excellent excellent. These words are my spoken feelings. Likewise, these are my thoughts!”

“It’s fine even if you haven’t promised me. I will stick to you like sticky candy for this following month. The Grand Desolate War Institution will also bring forth its most alluring preferential treatment, to make you understand completely our sincerity!”

“Unless I see with my own eyes you fill out the words Deep Sea University’s Refining Department on the College Entrance Exam Application Form a month later, I will, like you, persist until the very end. Before that happens, I absolutely won’t give up!”

“Why?”

Li Yao really didn’t understand. He wasn’t a narcissistic person; he really couldn’t see what was so special about him to be worthy of Ding Lingdang being attached like this, to not be discarded, to not be given up!

Ding Lingdang stood up on the flame wing and spread out her arms. Her beautiful feet tapped and she rocked swaying into to the front most portion of the Scarlet Flame Battle Shuttle. She relied on her big toe to stand on a condensed flame.

Underneath the blood-red illumination of the setting sun, she had the appearance of a devastatingly beautiful goddess.

She closed her eyes and bathed in the warmth of the setting sun. She was silent for a long time, long enough for Li Yao to believe that she wouldn’t answer this question. Then she slowly opened her mouth, “Because I see myself in you.”

“What do you mean?” Li Yao was completely confused.

But this time, Ding Lingdang only giggled lightly. She wouldn’t reply no matter how Li Yao asked.

She just stood like this quietly, looking at the beautiful view of the changing wind and clouds. Her eyes were somewhat blurred; it was as if she had sunk into distant memories.

Chapter 80: Idol!

Chapter 80: Idol!

In the dark curtain of the night, the pitch black Mystic Bird Battle Shuttle stealthily slipped into the Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School. Its exterior was riddled with multiple pot-holes as well as a starling dent. It appeared as if it was ruthlessly nibbled on by a giant demon beast.

The Mystic Bird Battle Shuttle stopped before a brightly lit office building. In the blink of an eye, the cruiser melted into thin air and was replaced by a black armor wearing young man who was covered in dust. With a flicker of his figure, the black-armored young man disappeared and reappeared inside the principal's office.

The lights of principal's office were still on. Several school leader's eyes were boiling red, noticing the black-armored young man's arrival, some hope burst forth in their eyes. One by one, they all ecstatically stood up.

"Peng Hai, you're here!"

Fiend Blade Peng Hai looked at everyone around. His facial expression was cold as ice, he appeared to be laughing yet not laughing, "What happened? I only went away to the wasteland to cultivate for just a month, yet you've created such a ruckus here. Not only that, but you also drove away Teacher Sun Biao in anger?"

Zhao Shude, Hei Mianshen, and a few other high-level school leaders were all shocked. Zhao Shude embarrassingly replied, "Old Sun is too stubborn. If he wants to go home, no matter what we do we can't stop him. We planned to wait for few days till his anger has subsided, but we didn't expect you to be back before that! However, today, it's not about Old Sun but Li Yao, did you know..."

Zhao Shude was not yet finished before Peng Hai coldly interrupted him, "Do you know why I had promised I would help Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School in instructing the students?"

Zhao Shude and Hei Mianshen stared at each other before replying hesitatingly, "Peng Hai, you're an outstanding graduate of Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School. Now, everyone is Crimson Nimbus Sect's family. You coming to instruct the younger generation is a matter of course."

"Hei hei, hei hei hei hei!"

Peng Hai laughed strangely as he very slowly and calmly said, "Zhao Shude, you listen to me carefully — if you can't remember, then let me refresh your memory. It was Teacher Sun Biao who had rescued me from the slums and brought me to the Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School. I was just a hillbilly with a dusty and dirty appearance. At that time, all of you acted like snobs and didn't take me seriously. On the contrary, all of you scolded and shouted at me and made it difficult for me. Don’t even think for a minute that I’ve forgotten anything!"

"If I wasn’t trying to be respectful to Teacher Sun Biao, I would be too lazy to even look at your rotten faces, let alone fostering the new students of Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School!"

"As for Li Yao, not only is he the newest seedling uncovered by my most respected Teacher Sun Biao, he has also helped me conduct special training for one month, by virtue of which my strength has stepped onto a new level!"

"I have the best relationship with these two. Since your actions have driven them away, why should I even stay to help you chop sueys to train new people?"

"You can look out for yourself. From this moment on, any cooperation between us is completely terminated. If Zhou Yin has anything to say, he can come and directly look for me!”

Peng Hai coldly spoke, took a long deep glance at everyone, and suddenly disappeared.

From outside the window came the departing noise of the Mystic Bird Battle Shuttle. By the time Zhao Shude and the others got to the window, a black tail like the ripples left by in a sea of black ink appeared in their sight as it disappeared into the darkness of the night.

Zhao Shude lost his wits completely. He sat down on a chair and his lips trembled for a long time, but nothing came out from his mouth.

…

Inside the Mystic Bird Battle Shuttle.

The spiritual glyphs engraved upon the control panel emitted a faint light, shining upon Fiend Blade Peng Hai's face. The expression on his face was exceptionally heavy.

After pondering for a bit, Peng Hai turned on the crystal processor and sent a message to a spiritual crane number.

Just 0.01 seconds after, dozens of kilometers away in the clouds, Li Yao's wristwatch slightly shook. The mini crystal processor had received a message from some unknown number.

"It's him?"

Li Yao was a little taken aback. It was the contact info of the man he had been sparring for one month in the Militant Wolf Slayer Gym.

Li Yao was really curious about this tyrannical mysterious figure. However, in the Underground Ghost City, everyone had to abide by its rules. One must never remove their mask if they don't know the identity of the opposing party.

"He’s inviting me to the Upper East District to see his real identity and also wants to make a deal with me?"

Li Yao pondered over the address sent by the gym guy. The address happened to point at the most central location in the Upper East District and was one of the tallest buildings in Floating Spear City. It was one of the Floating Spear City landmark, rumored to have the personal training rooms of many cultivators inside.

"Who the hell is that gym guy? Unexpectedly calling me to meet him at the 'Crystal Sky Building'!"

Li Yao was a little surprised. From the bottom his heart, an impulse to leap surged forth — he now had the opportunity to actually see how luxurious a legendary cultivator's private training room was.

After thinking for a moment, Li Yao accepted the gym guy's invitation.

"A friend is looking for you? Where do you want to go? I'll take you there!" Ding Lingdang said with a smile.

Li Yao lightly tapped on the hologram before the location area of the hologram turned into a fragment and flew out to build an extremely vivid three-dimensional map.

Ding Lingdang arbitrarily swept a glance, but suddenly, her gaze was transfixed. She appeared to be frightened out of her wits, "You want to go to this place? Do you know the owner of this place? What is your relation with him?"

Li Yao, after a bit of thinking, replied, "You can say... we have trained together for a month."

"You have trained with him for a month?"

Ding Lingdang turned completely foolish. Looking at Li Yao, the expression in her eyes was also a little sluggish, as if she was looking at some monster — one out-and-out evildoer!

"Is there a problem? Do you know this guy?" Li Yao touched his cheek while Ding Lingdang looked at him with a hint of fear.

"Yeah... this guy is your high school alumni. It would be more strange if he could not discover a monstrous genius like you with his sinister insight..."

Ding Lingdang muttered in such a low voice that only she was able to hear herself. Her facial expression had turned extremely weird. After laughing several times, she shouted, "Hold on tightly, we're leaving!"

Ding Lingdang's pair of hands tightly grabbed the Scarlet Flame Battle Shuttle's handle. The spiritual energy around her body burst to its limit, and like the outbreak of a flood in a steady stream, it flooded into the Scarlet Flame Battle Shuttle.

Her crazy spiritual energy stirred up the array glyphs powering the Scarlet Flame Battle Shuttle in an instant. The Scarlet Flame Battle Shuttle blasted off with a dazzling aura, like the dance of a peacock, and whistled towards the most prosperous Upper Eastern District of Floating Spear City, leaving a trail of flames and a series of deafening noises behind.

In a second, the Scarlet Flame Battle Shuttle tore away the sea of clouds. Rows upon rows of sky rising buildings were glistening in the dark curtain of the night as if the sun was shining upon a city of crystal.

As the Scarlet Flame Battle Shuttle soared into the Upper Eastern District's space, the battle shuttle slightly trembled and gradually slowed down as if it hit a transparent cushion.

Multiple shiny round objects floated in the sky. A translucent "Eyeball" unsteadily floated over; despite its seemingly clumsy movement, it was astonishingly fast.

Presumably, it was the defensive magical equipment responsible for guarding the Floating Spear City.

A few cultivators could also be found floating in the sky as rainbow colored lights danced around their bodies. They were in the process of absorbing moon essence.

The roaring noise of the Scarlet Flame Battle Shuttle had obviously made them a little unhappy. One after another, everyone looked over with a sharp look in their eyes.

Even through the thick wall, Li Yao felt a cold chill inside the room.

In front of the abundant cultivators, even Ding Lingdang did not dare to act rashly. She slowed down the battle shuttle, circled around at a lower altitude, and flew towards an approximately 1000m high round building.

In the Upper Eastern District, flying shuttles were the main means of transportation. Cultivators also liked to fly as high as possible on their flying swords, thus the top of each high-rise building had hundreds of branches spread out, at the end of which was a small air terminal. Looking from afar, it appeared as if the rows upon rows of crystal trees were growing to create a city of trees.

Ding Lingdang's Scarlet Flame Battle Shuttle landed upon one of these branches.

At the center of each air terminal was a small transmission formation. Ding Lingdang brought Li Yao to the transmission formation and entered a glyph on the control panel.

In Li Yao's vision, everything suddenly disappeared. With the flash of a blinding light, Li Yao and Ding Lingdang appeared inside a small training room.

The length and width of the small training room were no more than 20 meters. It was much smaller than the underground city's "Militant Wolf Slayers Cultivation Gym".

There were no windows inside; the walls slightly exuded a milky white aura, and the air inside was extremely fresh, giving off a slight grassy fragrance.

Breathing the air here made one feel refreshed.

Strengthening equipment and treadmills were casually placed inside the room. There were no priceless, high-level training equipment as Li Yao has imagined. At the corner of the room, a tall and thin young man was exercising his body. From his posture, it was quite clear he was the man from the Militant Wolf Slayers Cultivation Gym.

"How do you know this room's glyph key?" Li Yao was extremely puzzled.

Ding Lingdang seemed to be quite familiar with this place. It was like she was returning to her own room.

Instead of replying to Li Yao, with a grin on her face, she shouted in a crisp and clear voice, "Senior Brother Peng!"

The young man slowly and methodically completed his last exercise, stood up, and walked towards the two in large strides, "Junior Sister Ding, when I heard fellow student Li Yao was picked up by a Crimson Flame Battle Shuttle, I knew it was you!"

Ding Lingdang wrinkled her nose, "Senior Brother Peng, you are at fault this time. When I asked you for a place to stay, you already knew I was here for Li Yao, but why didn't you say anything to me?"

Peng Hai faintly smiled.

"At that time, I was cultivating deep inside the wasteland and I was not coming anytime soon. Not to mention, it was a secret between me and Li Yao; moreover, Li Yao was still in a coma. Even if I told you, would it have mattered? Hello, fellow student Li Yao. We are finally meeting in our true appearances. I very much miss our month long sparring!"

Li Yao's gaze was completely transfixed. He kept staring at Peng Hai with wide open eyes. Simply put, his eyes were ready to pop out.

His mouth was agape; he opened and closed his mouth a few times before stammering, "Peng, Peng Hai? Fiend Blade Peng Hai!"

"No, no, not possible! The man I've been training with for a month in the Militant Wolf Slayers Cultivation Gym was actually Peng Hai?"

Li Yao's mind went blank; he didn't know what to do.

Fiend Blade! Fiend Blade Peng Hai! His idol!

Ever since his admittance into the Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School, Fiend Blade Peng Hai had been the object of worship and envy for Li Yao and was the one idol whose place he wanted to take!

Li Yao's excitement was at its peak, and his scalp tingled yet again. Who was Feind Blade Peng Hai? He was a Building Foundation Stage cultivator! Just his hair alone could cut him into two! Yet, he actually trained with Peng Hai for a month, fought a good number of times with him, and was even beaten black and blue by him!

This was too scary!

Fiend Blade Peng Hai arrived in front of Li Yao. His sharp gaze swept over Li Yao from top to bottom.

Fiend Blade Peng Hai withdrew his gaze and lightly snapped his finger. Immediately, a big round metal ball flew in from outside the room and hovered in between the three. The metal ball automatically opened from both sides before a beautiful tea set was revealed inside.

Two long spirit arms came out from the side of the metal ball and then poured tea for the three one by one.

Peng Hai smiled and said, "Fellow student Li Yao, perhaps you don’t understand, but it doesn't matter! Let me tell you two things first."

"First, one month ago in the Militant Wolf Slayers Cultivation Gym, you have helped me finish a crucial training. Precisely due to your help, I was finally able to completely consolidate the 'High-Level Building Foundation Stage' and even began to touch the 'Peak-Level Building Foundation Stage!"

Ding Lingdong exclaimed in surprise before joyfully speaking, "Senior Brother Peng, have you started to touch the Peak Building Foundation Stage? Tsk tsk tsk, if you are successful, we will have a Peak Building Foundation Stage cultivator who has not even crossed the age of thirty. There’s no doubt you will become the top expert of the younger generation of the Federation!"

Peng Hai nodded his head and continued, "Junior Sister Ding should know... At my level, each advancement is more difficult than the previous ones! So, fellow student Li Yao, I owe you a favor!"

Chapter 81: Fiend Blade’s Saber

Chapter 81: Fiend Blade’s Saber

Li Yao flushed to his ears and scratched his head in embarrassment, "I didn't know you were Fiend Blade Peng Hai. If I knew, I wouldn't have dared to spar with you. Wasn't I simply seeking death?"

Peng Hai slightly smiled and continued, "Second, in the Crimson Nimbus Sect, the Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School and the Crimson Nimbus Transportation Group under me are two different organizations, not to mention I have only signed a six-year contract with the Crimson Nimbus Transportation Group. Once the contract period is over, I won't have any relation with them. I could leave them without any delay!"

"Even now, although the contract period isn't over, so long as I'm willing to pay high liquidated damages, I can similarly leave the Crimson Nimbus Sect!"

"Strictly speaking, I'm just an employee of the Crimson Nimbus Sect, not a Crimson Nimbus Sect disciple. I too got angry at the Crimson Nimbus Sect when I came to know about the disagreement between you and the Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School. However, I hope these silly things do not harm our friendship. To tell you the truth, I too don't like those bastards of the Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School!"

Li Yao was once again stunned; his heart gave birth to a very strange feeling.

He didn't expect to hear such a vulgar word like "Bastard" from the mouth of his idol, Fiend Blade Peng Hai.

Like he had never thought of cultivators excreting and urinating.

Although thinking about it carefully, they too were human; they would definitely eat, drink, and do all the regular things a normal person would do. However, if you really encountered a cultivator in the public washrooms, the subsequent shock would be extremely startling.

Peng Hai smiled again.

His smile was very bright and very lively, much like a twenty-year-old naughty fellow. He lowered his voice and said, "Thinking of which, when I was in Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School and had still not yet made a name for myself, I also suffered under them. These supercilious bastards had made things difficult for me too. Many times, like you, I too wanted to quit school, but looking at Teacher Sun Biao's face, I had to give in. Fellow student Li Yao, you have accomplished what I wanted but couldn’t do in the past!"

Hearing this statement, Li Yao was excited. He felt the distance between them was a little closer.

When he looked at Peng Hai again, he didn't seem to appear high and mighty again — he was like a trusted, neighborhood elder brother.

Peng Hai patted his shoulder, and with an undisguised appreciative look in his eyes, he said, "How about it? Are you confident in this year’s college entrance exams?"

"But of course!" Li Yao, with all his strength, immediately straightened his chest. He did not want to appear weak in front of Peng Hai.

"Ambitious, huh! That's more like it!"

Peng Hai neither lightly nor heavily punched his chest and said, "The Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School is nothing special. Since you've already quit school, then forget it. For the next month, I will be training in the Demon Beast Wasteland to further consolidate my level. Until then, you can have this cultivation room to yourself. You can use any strengthening agent or high energy nutrient solution anyway you like — it's all on me!"

Ding Lingdang, who stood to the side, stared with wide-opened eyes and shouted, "Senior Brother Peng, you're too much! We've known each other for so long, and yet you've only occasionally brought me to your training room. You've never allowed me to use it for one month, how can you be so generous to this brat?"

Peng Hai faintly smiled, "This is a 'Transaction' between me and him!"

Li Yao looked all around, yet he did not find anything mysterious about this small training room.

However, he knew that since it was Fiend Blade Peng Hai's private training room, it must have some mysterious, remarkable ability that was hidden from plain sight and gave the utmost advantage for training. He could not help but ask, "What deal? What do you want from me?"

Peng Hai stretched out his two fingers, "You've two options."

"First, I'll let you use my training room free of charge while providing you sufficient strengthening agents and various resources at the same time. No matter how much you want to use, you will get it until the college entrance exam. Think of it as my investment on you! Until you've stepped onto the Core Formation Stage[1], you don't need to pay me back! And if you are lucky and became a Core Formation Stage Cultivator, then go to the Demon Beast Wasteland and kill the strongest demon beast you can to repay me!"

"That's quite fair, what’s the second choice?"

Li Yao was deep in thought. In this deal, Peng Hai didn't seem to be at a loss. It was like throwing a long line to catch a big fish. Even if he didn't become a cultivator, the most Peng Hai would lose would be some strengthening agents.

Although it was an astronomical sum for Li Yao, for Peng Hai, it was a drop in the bucket.

Once Li Yao had formed the Jindan (Golden Core), he could kill a demon beast as strong as a Core Formation Stage cultivator, which would be worth a couple of towns together!

"Second, I'll invest in you just like before; however, you don't need to kill a demon beast for me so long as you address me as... Brother Hai!"

Peng Hai spoke with bright and shining eyes.

Li Yao was stunned. He could react only after a long period of time; his heart was brimming with excitement.

Fiend Blade Peng Hai, who was the talk of Floating Spear City and the new rising figure in the world of cultivators, unexpectedly wanted to become friends with a no name like him!

If he chose the first option, then it would simply be just a business deal — just an investment. Peng Hai would pay for a few insignificant resources and would get a hundredfold in return when Li Yao beheads a giant beast in the future. Once this deal was over, there would not be any relation between the two whatsoever!

If he chose the second option, it would no longer be a business deal — Fiend Blade Peng Hai would be his friend and would be paying for a friend!

"Brother Hai!"

Without any hesitation, Li Yao shouted, yet in his mind, he was still left extremely puzzled. He could not help but ask, "Brother Hai, my Pineal Gland is ruptured and my Spiritual Root Development Quotient has fallen to 7%. At a time where everyone is not optimistic about me, why do you still have such confidence in me? Why do you believe that I can still cultivate and even reach the Core Formation Stage one day?"

Peng Hai smiled, "It's very simple. It’s because I've met another person just like you. At the age of thirteen, she was a super cultivation genius who had a Spiritual Root Development Quotient of 85%, but all of a sudden, her Spiritual Root Development Quotient fell to 11%. She could barely even stand up; she was reduced to a cripple. Everyone believed that she could no longer cultivate and would spend the rest of her life in bed!"

"But this person, not only did she stand up again by putting in a hundred times more effort, an amount that no man can imagine, she once again stepped onto the road of cultivation. At the age of twenty-two, she soared to the Pinnacle Refinement Stage!"

"If I'm not wrong, after at most a year and a half, she will successfully build her foundation and become one of the youngest Building Foundation Stage Cultivator in the Federation. And If you give her thirty to fifty years... she would become the youngest Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator in the Federation!"

"There is such a fearsome person!?"

Li Yao was secretly surprised. He could not help but ask, "Who is she? Which university or cultivation sect is she in now?"

A faint smile appeared on Peng Hai's face, "She is standing next to you."

"What!?"

Li Yao was dumbfounded. His gaze turned towards Ding Lingdang.

He didn't think that such a dazzling girl would have such an unexpected past.

No wonder she said “I see myself in you”.

Was this her reason for "not abandoning and giving up on him"?

Ding Lingdang pulled a straight face and firmly nibbled her lips. She seemed to have put on a mask. Evidently, she didn't want to let others see through her.

Peng Hai also knew she was not willing to mention her past. He quickly changed the topic and said to Li Yao, "Do you understand now, fellow student Li Yao? Even if the whole world is not optimistic about you, even when no one believes you can rise once again, Ding Lingdang and I are the two people who will still believe that you can still create miracles!"

Li Yao felt warmth coursing through his body.

"Unexpectedly, there are still people in this world who still have confidence in me!"

When he had just woken up, Deep Sea University Professor Xie Tingxian didn't believe he could participate in the college entrance exams, and then the Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School directly asked him to leave the school.

These two things had really made him feel somewhat disappointed.

However, at this moment, all of his disappointment was thrown deep into the sea. Li Yao’s eyes turned moist, his blood was boiling, and his will to fight turned wild like a hurricane!

"Alright!"

Li Yao no longer hesitated and readily accepted Peng Hai's good-will.

"Brother Hai, since we are friends, we don't need to say any words of thanks. However, I just want to say one thing — if someday I become a Grand Refiner, I will definitely forge the perfect saber that could even split the seas and cut the stars for you!"

As long as he assimilated the later parts of the memories of Ou Yezi, Li Yao had absolute confidence that he would be able to forge the strongest magical equipment in the Heaven Origin Sector!

Peng Hai burst into laughter.

"Alright, you're really frank. I'll be waiting for that day to arrive then. However, a saber is not necessary because I'm proficient in swords, halberds, tridents, hooks, forks, and altogether seventeen types of weapons. It doesn’t exactly need to be a saber. If you can refine eight to ten flying swords for me, then I'll take them all!"

"Then, why does everyone call you 'Fiend Blade' when you don't even use a saber?" Li Yao was once again dumbfounded.

He discovered that his brain cells were not used enough when dealing with Peng Hai.

Peng Hai winked at him. The expression on his face now was revealed to be the same as the "Degenerate of the Cultivator World", Sun Biao, and with a smile on his face, he said, "The nickname 'Fiend Blade' was something I intentionally publicized to let others know. Now throughout the entire world of cultivators, everyone knows me as Fiend Blade and naturally believes that I use a saber. How could they know that I'm, in fact, more proficient in swords? In the scenario where I am fighting, if I suddenly brought out 17-18 flying swords or 20 long spears or used illusions to turn myself into a three-headed, six-armed man waving 7-8 meteor hammers instead of a saber, wouldn't the other guy be dumbfounded? At that moment, they would start to think about what I, ‘Fiend Blade’, was actually hiding. Just this moment of surprise would be enough for me to cut him a hundred times. Remember this — all warfare is based on deception!"

Li Yao was covered in cold sweat. He finally knew for sure that this "Brother Hai" of his was the personal disciple of the "Degenerate of the Cultivator World”, Sun Biao — both of them had no sense of shame!

"Isn't it very bad to casually reveal such a big secret?"

"It doesn't matter. Many people in the world of cultivation know me personally, and even my enemies say I'm very frank and upright. Let's say you told everyone that I don't use saber, that I'm cheating everyone, and that my name 'Fiend Blade' is just for fame and nothing more. Do you think they would believe you?"

Li Yao, after thinking about it for a long time, suddenly discovered that Peng Hai's methods were truly too insidious and too cunning!

"Brother Hai, then can you actually use a saber or not?"

"What do you think?"

"I'm not guessing, I have decided to forge a set of blades for you, comprising of flying knives, a dagger, a Miaodiao, a whip blade, a nine-ringed golden saber[2]. You can then hold a 'Blade Exhibition' in the world of cultivators and let everyone know of the name 'Fiend Blade'. This way, the next time you and your enemy cross paths, he would be worried whether you are going to take out a flying knife or a dagger to slit his throat or suddenly pull out the nine-ringed golden saber to cut him into two. At the moment he is pondering over your weapon, you can suddenly take out a ten-feet-long snake spear and stab him to death. Tsk tsk tsk, this scene will be really pleasing!"

An adult and a child; the two people started laughing crookedly at the same time.

Ding Lingdang, who stood beside them, had her eyes turned white. The shamelessness of these two guys was completely beyond her imagination.

"Alright brat, I like you more and more. Come, let me take you to see my 'real' training room!" Peng Hai smiled and said.

[1] In chapter 6, the cultivation level introduced were as follows: Refinement Stage < Foundation stage < Orichalcum Stage < Monad stage. From now on I'll be using Refinement Stage < Building Foundation Stage < Core Formation Stage < Nascent Soul Stage.]

[2] The Nine-ringed golden saber should look something like this http://daomenga.com/large/G061.jpg. Miaodiao you can check it out here https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miaodao

Chapter 82: Small Grayfield

Chapter 82: Small Grayfield

Peng Hai walked up to a milky white wall nearby and drew an imaginary line. Soon, a vibrant hologram shone on the wall.

As Peng Hai quickly punched in a few glyphs, a burst of buzzing noise came from the ceiling before a metal disc lightly fell from above.

The disc was approximately two meters in diameter, and with over a thousand glyphs engraved on a winding course, it formed a spiral-like glyph array. Its edge was slightly raised and was also embedded with over a hundred shining, transparent crystals. Evidently, one could easily discover an unlimited amount of starlight clustered at the center of each crystal.

It didn't take long for Li Yao to recognize that it was an extremely high-rank transmission formation.

From the many crystals inlaid on its edge, it was quite evident that this transmission formation required an exorbitant amount of spiritual energy to start. Certainly, the transmission formation must teleport to a very remote place.

Peng Hai swiftly punched in a couple of glyphs into the hologram. Soon, three small screens emerged in the hologram with each screen depicting a completely different world.

Peng Hai clicked on the gray world among them, then set the coordinates and other parameters before stepping onto the transmission formation.

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang similarly followed him onto the disc. The crystal inlaid around its edges were getting increasingly brighter, making it impossible to directly look at them. The array engraved underneath their feet started moving like a whirlpool, generating an inexplicable suction force which seemed to pull them into the ground.

Everything went black before Li Yao's eyes. He felt like he was like a noodle which was stretched to a hundred meter, and in 0.1 seconds, he was reverted back to his original form.

Li Yao was hit with a burst of dizziness; he had an urge to vomit. When he opened his eyes, he found himself in a very strange world.

From the sky to the earth, everything was completely gray. As far as his eyes could see, it was a lifeless gray dessert. The earth beneath his feet was composed solely of broken stones and gravel... One would not be able to find the slightest trace of life here.

This world seemed to have no atmosphere. The air here was sparse; for each breath, Li Yao had to exert all his strength. Moreover, there was an unpleasant smell in the air, and upon inhaling the air, a feeling of extreme discomfort rose within him as the air travels down from his nasal cavity to the trachea. Li Yao felt like it was not air that he had breathed but some hot volcanic gas. As the air reached his lungs, he felt as if a ball of fire had been hurled into his lungs, it was extremely stifling.

What made him even more uncomfortable was that the gravity here was several times more than that of the Heaven Origin Sector. Just from standing, Li Yao felt his strength seeping away as his knees almost buckled to the ground.

The gray sky above was devoid of any stars, the moon, and the sun. Instead, a couple huge pieces of gray rocks with a human face carved upon them were hanging in the sky. They floated in an extremely strange manner, and their eyes seemingly stared directly upon the people on the ground. Looking at those rocks, Li Yao felt jittery.

In addition, he noticed one more staggering thing — standing approximately seven to eight hundred meters away from them were three people on the other side who dressed exactly like them!

"You don't need to check, that's us. This world has a diameter of approximately a kilometer. It is a typical world fragment," Peng Hai smiled and said.

"We are inside the legendary world fragment?" Li Yao curiously looked at everything around him.

According to textbooks, there were two kinds of worlds in the universe.

The first was something like the Heaven Origin Sector which occupied a vast piece of space and stretched across several galaxies and had several habitable planets that had stable atmospheres and complete ecosystems.

This type of world was ideal for the humans or demon beasts to thrive and evolve, and for the development of civilization.

This type of world was called the "Main World" or also known as the "Boundless Universe".

The other type was much miserable. Perhaps you could say it was the space-time fragment formed due to the Big Bang at the beginning of the Universe, or perhaps a part of the Main World blasted off during the fight between super ancient cultivators, or maybe a part torn away during the spiritual energy tide, or it might even be possible that it was artificially created for all sorts of strange and unusual reasons.

This type of world was often very small with a radius varying from a couple hundred meters to even a few dozen meters, while the largest one would not even exceed the size of a continent. On account of its small volume, the fluctuation of spiritual energy was extremely intense. This type of world was very unstable and lacked a set of fixed rules of operation. It might even collapse in minutes.

This type of world went by the name of "World Fragment" or also known as the "Small World".

The Main World and the World Fragment were separated through a space-time gap; however, once the exact coordinates of the World Fragment were known, one could directly enter it through the transmission formation.

In the early days of modern cultivation civilization, mankind discovered many such World Fragments. However, at that time, humans had not yet learned how to utilize these World Fragments. These World Fragments were simply treated as a dumping site for waste from the Main World or were treated as a place of exile.

After 10,000 years of development, mankind had discovered millions of such World Fragments and realized the advantages of these World Fragments. From then on, these

World Fragments were developed and utilized — they were no longer waste but turned into treasures to be exploited.

One of the most common use was to develop the World Fragment into a training field for powerful cultivators!

Peng Hai said, "This World Fragment is called 'Small Grayfield'. The specialty of this place lies in the underlying terrifying density of the ground and the high gravity which is approximately ten times that of Heaven Origin Sector. The strangest thing about this place is the gravity, which is unstable — it changes by the minute or even seconds. The gravity may vary from eight times to twelve times of that of the Heaven Origin Sector. It doesn't follow any law whatsoever. Often, the gravity would be twelve times for one second, and in the next, it could suddenly drop to eight times! For training the control over your body, the 'Small Grayfield' is the best place for cultivation!"

"So strange!" Li Yao was secretly shocked. This World Fragment was truly weird.

If the gravitational force was ten times higher than that of the Heaven Origin Sector, then according to the norms, the density of this place could be said to be especially high.

But the gravitational field here was subjected to change in an irregular fashion, and this phenomenon had no rule or any explainable reason.

And why were there statues engraved with human faces floating in the sky? Who created them? And even more, why could they violate all the laws of gravity and float in the sky? He could not find a single anti-gravity array on them anywhere!

However, Li Yao was not a scientist. Since he could not figure it out, he simply threw it at the back of his mind. When he arbitrarily blasted two punches, sure enough, he found some irregularities at the moments when his punches discharged power.

It was the so-called "force from the ground". The first part of any attack was to take a step to borrow strength from the ground.

The subtle changes in the gravitational field had led to Li Yao having a feeling as if he was stepping on cotton. The heavy-headedness and light-footedness kind of feeling rendered the punches, which were originally strong enough to tear the air, into powerless light jabs.

"There is a full set of training equipment in here. If you can adapt to the gravity of this place within a month, then I believe that after returning to the Heaven Origin Sector, your strength will have advanced to a completely new level, and getting admitted to the 'Nine Elite Universities' would be a piece of cake for you!" Peng Hai said with a smile.

Peng Hai paused and took a glance at the nearby Ding Lingdang, who seemed like she wanted to say something, before continuing, "Junior Sister Ding, you can't say senior brother didn't take care of you later. For the period of an entire month, the training room is under your management. You must operate the transmission formation and also help me look after this brat. Make sure to never ever step onto the other World Fragments besides the 'Small Grayfield, especially him. Even you have to be careful there. Both World Fragments were prepared for Building Foundation Stage cultivators and are extremely dangerous. If an ordinary person stepped in there, he would vanish in the puff of smoke."

Ding Lingdang was brimming with happiness. She jumped in jubilation and cheered, "Long live senior brother! For a long time, I've been wanting to cultivate in the 'Small Grayfield'! However, can't you promise me one more thing?"

Peng Hai frowned, "I knew you’d be insatiable. Say it, what else do you want?"

A huge grin appeared on Ding Lingdang's face, "Senior Brother Peng, as you know, fellow student Li Yao is hesitating between the Grand Desolate War Institution and the Deep Sea University. How about the two of us have a round of bout to let fellow student Li Yao experience the true strength of the Grand Desolate War Institution. Maybe watching us will cause his blood to start boiling and burst with joy. And who knows? He might just, on the spot, gave up on becoming a bullsh*t Refiner[1] and realize that a Body Practitioner is a very promising career!"

Once she was finished, without even waiting for Peng Hai to agree, Ding Lingdang began exercising her hands and feet on her own as very frightening sounds began to come from her joints.

Peng Hai calmly and collectedly backed away half a step. A helpless smile appeared on his face, "Do you want to show fellow student Li Yao, or do you simply want to have a round of spar with me?"

Ding Lingdang stuck her tongue out.

"You saw through me! Senior Brother Peng, you're the most outstanding graduate of Grand Desolate War Institution before me. All this time, I've been looking for an opportunity to learn from you, but you’ve always refused. Today, think of it as... letting fellow student Li Yao have a taste of the firepower of a battle-type cultivator! Let him see exactly how crazy it is!"

Peng Hai glanced at Li Yao before a peculiar aura started surging in his eyes. Finally, he nodded in agreement.

"Alright, for fellow student Li Yao's sake, I'll suppress my strength to 'Pinnacle Refinement Stage' and spar with you. But first, you have to agree that this is only for thirty seconds."

"No need. If it's just 'Pinnacle Refinement Stage', then I'll blow you away in ten seconds!"

Notes:

[1] I’ll be using Refiner instead of Artificer.

Chapter 83: Your’s is but a Cannon!

Chapter 83: Your’s is but a Cannon!

Ding Lingdang was completely excited. Her excitement was clearly visible on her face; her skin, as exquisite as honey, was slightly flushed red. Even though there was no trace of visible movements on her, the eight bells tied to her beautiful ankles suddenly started vibrating frantically, producing sharp yet delicate jingles.

The jingles coming from these bells were unlike any ordinary bells. Surprisingly, they sounded like the clashing of swords and blades!

When those light and crashing jingles of bells connected into a loud bang, Ding Lingdang suddenly took off!

"Shua!"

What remained at the place she once stood was an incomparably distinct blur. Unexpectedly, Ding Lingdang appeared in front of Peng Hai!

Her pair of arms completely turned into two groups of imaginary shadows, seemingly as if she had thousands of hands, as wave after wave of white mist wandered around her body. Her arms appeared to have turned into air cannons, firing straight towards Peng Hai's head!

Yet, Peng Hai appeared to be calm and collected as a smile appeared on his face while he retreated a few steps.

Every time he withdrew a step, the step seemed to be very light, yet it somehow fractured the incomparably hard ground beneath his foot into spider web-like cracks, spattering numerous stones and gravel to create a scattered barrier in front of him.

As Ding Lingdang's rain of punches bombarded upon these bits of stone, these bits of stones were all crushed into powder, not even a single stone could remain unscathed. The strength of her punches continued to decline. She simply couldn't land a punch on Peng Hai.

"Senior Brother Peng, as expected, you're really something!"

Ding Lingdang's pair of eyes lit up. Her whole body, as if it was burning up, released a large amount of crimson aura that began to shoot out from the thirty-six thousand pores on her body, creating the image of millions of fire serpents coiling around her body, rendering the image of her body to become distorted.

On the other hand, the energy around Peng Hai also started surging with faint sounds of wind and thunder. Round after round of faint black energy emerged from the depth of his limbs and bones that poured out along the pores of his body to congeal into a sturdy set of armor which wrapped around his body.

Their figures clearly remained unchanged, but their aura was several times stronger than a moment ago. Red and black energy continued to diffuse around them as an area of a dozen meter in radius was completely enveloped by their energies.

And between the two, the point where the two energies met, had already started emitting crackling sounds, as if two armies were in the midst of war.

While criss-cross cracks started to appear on the ground, the rocks, which were within the reaches of their powerful energy, were smashed into powder.

"Come again!"

Ding Lingdang gave a long howl. Her breath shot like an arrow, creating a gorgeous ripple in front of her. This time, her figure completely disappeared. What stood in its place was a fire serpent whose length exceeded a hundred meters. Like a real snake preying upon some rodent, the fire serpent coiled around Peng Hai — Peng Hai was completely surrounded at the center!

As opposed to the fire serpent, at the center, a black mist escaped into the air as Peng Hai metamorphosed into a falcon, escaped the clutches of the fire serpent as it flapped its wings, and soared into the sky before bearing down its claws upon the fire serpent. The falcon immediately struck down towards the heart of the fire serpent!

The speed of the two seemed to have no bounds. As the two fought, their speed kept on increasing as the fire serpent and black falcon tore each other and congealed again in no time.

At the beginning, Li Yao could see the snake and falcon's form clearly. He could see each and every action and watch how they fought, but as the fight went longer, their forms later became vague and appeared to be badgering each other. Their forms now turned into a huge black and red mass of air. Li Yao could only hear lightning-like thunderclaps coming from the mass of air as the air around it burst into fierce gales, sweeping the sand and stones nearby. The ground, on the other hand, was as if a meteor shower had swept across the earth, leaving dozens of few meters deep craters behind with white steam rising from them — the scorching hot air was directly soaring into the sky!

A couple hundred meters away, watching all this, Li Yao was completely dumbfounded. His mind seemed to have lost its bearing, he was muddle-headed like he was senile, like he was intoxicated.

This was not the Heaven Origin Sector but the Small Grayfield, where the gravity was ten times stronger, yet, these two were staging such a gorgeous battle!

Such power, such violence… This was precisely the strength of cultivator which could not be stopped by anyone other than another cultivator!

And they were just Peak Refinement Stage cultivators, a stage that could only be seen as the lowest rung of the entire cultivation world.

If it was a cultivator with a step stronger cultivation, the Building Foundation Stage cultivators, or the Core Formation Stage cultivators, or some Nascent Soul Stage old devils, coupled with peerless divine weapons along with a few pieces of tyrannical magical equipment, that would simply be ——

It would not be impossible to pave a path from one end of the universe to the other, devastating everyone and everything in his path!

No wonder humankind could dominate the Universe for forty millennia, kill countless upon countless of aliens, and acquire the title of "The strongest family in the endless space"!

"Soon, I too will become a cultivator like them — even stronger than them!"

Along with strong feelings of jealousy and envy, an intense impulse to overtake them emerged in Li Yao's heart.

His bones, blood vessels, muscles, internal organs, and each and every single cell of his body began to itch. They could not wait for even a fraction of a second to start to cultivate!

A couple hundred meters away, the two entwining masses of air suddenly separated from each other and turned distinct. Soon after, the two red and black shining, bubble-like mass disappeared without a trace. Peng Hai and Ding Lingdang once again reverted back to their true form.

Ding Lingdang's whole body was laden with wounds. It appeared as if she was baked inside an oven as whirring hot air rose from her body.

Peng Hai looked down from high above as an exceptionally large metal ball appeared behind him. The surface of the metal ball happened to have nine openings. In the blink of an eye, nine unstable masses of spiritual energy started to gather in front of these openings.

"Spiritual Energy Star Cannon?"

The onlooking Li Yao almost had his eyes pop out of their sockets. This magical weapon was equipped on crystal warships — from where did Peng Hai steal this stuff?

Ding Lingdang screamed, "Senior Brother Peng, you're cheating!"

Peng Hai slightly smiled. "Junior Sister Ding, I only said that I’ll fight with Peak Refinement Stage strength. When did I say I won’t use magical equipment!?"

Ding Lingdang simmered in anger. "If it was a saber or sword, I might be able to withstand it— but your’s is a cannon!"

"Oh, it's your mistake."

Peng Hai pursed his lips into a smile as the Spiritual Energy Star Cannon opened fire with full force. Nine balls of light converged together and, without any delay or a trace of compassion, ruthlessly blasted towards Ding Lingdang!

Ding Lingdang's final line of defense, her spiritual energy force field, crumbled into nothing. Like a boneless snake, her whole body heavily crashed onto the ground!

As Ding Lingdang crashed, a burst of tremor ran through the ground before a few meters deep crater appeared.

Ding Lingdang, with an aggrieved look on her face, directly lost her consciousness.

Peng Hai slowly descended from the sky and very calmly walked towards Li Yao.

Li Yao glanced at the Spiritual Energy Star Cannon floating above Peng Hai's head before staring at the calm and unperturbed look on Peng Hai's face. He wanted to say something but, on second thought, swallowed his words.

"Just because I go by 'Fiend Blade', do you think I'm a sword cultivator?? Just because I have used a cannon during the fight, do you think I'm mean?" Peng Hai asked with a light smile on his face.

"A little bit." blinking his eyes, Li Yao replied. He didn't know how to comment on Peng Hai's conducts of battle.

"The purpose of any battle is to defeat the enemy. How you do it... is the trick. Whether it is by sword or a knife, fist or cannon, so long as the enemy is down, what's the difference?"

Li Yao felt a jolt in his mind. He came to realize the hidden meaning in Peng Hai's words.

Peng Hai snapped his fingers before the Spiritual Energy Star Cannon disappeared silently, as if it never existed.

Peng Hai patted Li Yao's shoulder and earnestly said, "Li Yao, the two of us came from the same background and struggled to get here from the lowest rungs of society. You and I are like the pebbles that had been eroded for a few hundred millennia under the waterfall. Even if we appear to be all shining and glossy on the surface, on the inside, there is a part of us which is persistent — which could never be crushed! If we have selected a target, we will stick to our path and always strive to go till the end. Even if we hit an iron wall, we will always find a way to knock a hole through the iron wall and continue to walk on our road!"

"However, you are forgetting something. There are more than one way to our destination and also more than one way to realize our dreams."

"Deep Sea University is indeed the holy land for refiners; however, if you enter the Grand Desolate War Institution's Combat Department, you will learn the applications of various kind of magical equipment. You will realize the advantages and disadvantages of various magical equipment as well as the top magical equipment requested by the soldiers at the frontline... With all these experiences, if you study refining again, perhaps you might be able to refine even more powerful magical equipment which are more suitable for combat!"

Li Yao was absorbed in his thoughts. Peng Hai's words had set off waves in his heart.

"You do not need to decide now. After all, this is a life changing decision for a student. You still have one month’s time, so you should think about it. And in the end, if you still decide to go to Deep Sea University, I am still going to support you! Alright, it's getting late. I have to go to a party with a bunch of old comrades tomorrow afternoon before leaving for the Demon Beast Wasteland. You slowly cultivate here. Ding Lingdang will wake up in another ten minutes. At that time, everything will be arranged by her."

"Brother Hai!"

Peng Hai was just about to leave before Li Yao suddenly called out to him.

"What else?" Peng Hai asked with a smile.

Li Yao hesitated for a moment before finally he decided on something. He summoned up the courage to ask, "Brother Hai, it maybe be a little rude, but — could you show me the true strength of a High Building Foundation Stage cultivator?"

Chapter 84: Jumping to the Peak!

Chapter 84: Jumping to the Peak!

Peng Hai raised his eyebrows and, with a look of surprise, stared at Li Yao.

Li Yao clenched his teeth, mustered up his courage, and directly received Peng Hai's gaze.

After a moment, a smile appeared on Peng Hai's face. He relaxed his whole body before nodding. "Alright, little brother. You are very interesting. I will let you see what a High Level Building Foundation Stage cultivator is like!"

Peng Hai raised his hand as a translucent spirit glyph flew out from his palm towards Li Yao's head.

"Bang!"

With a thunderous bang, the spirit glyph exploded into pieces before streams of light flew around Li Yao's body, coiling around his body and congealing into a transparent shield.

Li Yao knew it was the spiritual energy force field that would prevent him from getting injured by the spiritual energy waves.

"I usually suppress my strength to 3%, which is equivalent to a common martial artist. That's why you don't feel any expert-like aura from me; however, so long as I have 0.001 seconds, I can become like this —"

Peng Hai's pair of eyes opened wide as he took a long, deep breath. His entire body suddenly doubled in size. His muscles expanded as if air was blown into them, and each and every one of his blood vessels were thick and sturdy like a python that had completely wrapped around his body, moving up and down as the blood coursed through the vein.

Just a moment ago, that ordinary looking man with a tall and thin physique had turned into a super muscular man with a physique of over two meters high in an instant. Even his skin that was as hard as iron and as bronze as copper faintly reflected an oppressive kind of gloss.

Peng Hai's voice too was now incomparably hoarse as well as deep and resonant.

"Now, I have only exerted approximately 7% of strength, which is the limit to which I can stimulate and fortify my flesh and blood. This is the pinnacle state which a human body can attain and is also known as the coup de maî̂tre of a martial artist! A step further and I will have no choice but to arouse the spiritual root to absorb the world spiritual energy and use it to further strengthen the body. This is the so-called 'Refinement of Energy'!"

While speaking, Peng Hai's stature suddenly shrank down and once again turned into a tall and thin figure. However, on the top of his head, a faint splendor was flowing, proliferating invisible ripples one by one. Each ripple was like a huge ripple which spread in all directions with Peng Hai as the center.

A faint black mist surged out from all 36,000 pores of his body and lingered around him to create a hideous-looking armor of spiritual energy. The entire armor appeared to be glistening in a faint blood-red glow.

"This is 12% of my strength, then 13%, 14%..."

Peng Hai, while smiling, very slowly and unperturbedly increased his strength as round after round of the black mist around his body continued to spread, completely enveloping an area with a radius of a few dozen meters. A black falcon rose from the black mist as it opened its wings, eclipsing over a hundred meters in the sky.

"This is the Peak Refinement Stage strength that you saw a while ago — Next is the Building Foundation Stage!"

Peng Hai's pair of eyes opened wide as he let out a deafening shout. Meanwhile, the black falcon once again metamorphosed into a group of black mist. Afterward, the black mist turned into strands of black silk which retreated back into his body in an instant!

Peng Hai's pair of eyes turned as dark as an abyss; they were like a deep ancient well, like the dark sky during an eclipse!

The facial expression on his face now was extremely cold and indifferent; it was without any trace of humanity. The land beneath his feet continued to crack and create a huge spider web-like fissures within a radius of a couple hundred meters!

In an instant, Peng Hai's hair became long as his feet left the ground and his body floated in the air. Even in the absence of wind, his long hair kept on swaying on its own. It seemed extremely wild. The black mist from his pores once again spread all over the place, turning even denser, darker, and terrifying as it ran amok in all direction.

Li Yao, even after hiding inside the spiritual energy force field, could still feel the overwhelming strength which continued to surge out from Peng Hai in a steady flow.

"Bang Bang!"

Deafening explosions rang as the black mist madly crashed into the spiritual energy force field!

This kind of power had the ability to shake the heavens and the earth, a power which Li Yao absolutely could not withstand. He had a feeling — if not for the shelter of the spiritual energy force field, under Peng Hai's aura, he might have been grinded into minced meat within a half second.

Peng Hai stood tall and erect in the sky. His pair of eyes were now completely black, one could not find a single trace of white in his eyes.

Around his body, a pure black force field of spiritual energy had already taken shape. Countless number of stones ripped out the ground, rose into the air, and started orbiting around his force field.

A hint of strange smile floated on Peng Hai's face. "This is high level of the Building Foundation Stage. However... this is still not my limit!"

Just as the last word spelled out from his mouth, Peng Hai let out a wild roar. His pair of eyes became like a black sun from which an incomparably dark aura continued to surge out.

Li Yao was completely unable to describe everything he saw. He never knew that "Darkness" could be so "Dazzling"!

"Crack, Crack!"

Countless black electric currents appeared around Peng Hai, madly swimming around his body to create a second layer of spiritual energy force field. In contrast, much to Li Yao's surprised, Peng Hai's long ebony colored hair had turned dark golden, as if his head was full of dancing golden snakes as they stood erect from the roots of his hair!

"Crack, Crack!"

One after another, cracks began to appear in the space before Li Yao as criss-cross cracks spread rapidly in every direction.

Finally, the spiritual energy force field was unable to resist the terrifying aura coming from Peng Hai — it was about to collapse!

"A step stronger than the high level of Building Foundation Stage!!! This… this is the peak of Building Foundation Stage!"

Seeing all this, Li Yao became muddle-headed as if he were a drunkard. Only god knew when he had started to tightly clench his fists to the point where his nails dug into the flesh of his palms. Despite this, Li Yao didn't feel anything. He was completely immersed in the spiritual energy storm produced by Peng Hai!

"I want to become a cultivator like him. I'll definitely become a cultivator like him!"

Li Yao madly shouted deep within his heart.

Finally——

The spiritual energy storm raged for three seconds before Peng Hai withdrew the force field as all his aura returned back to his body. He reverted back to the ordinary human form — the 3% state.

"Brother Hai, you've actually cultivated to peak level of the Building Foundation Stage!?" Li Yao excitement held no bounds.

"No, I can occasionally burst out with the strength of a peak level of Building Foundation Stage cultivator but it can only last for a few seconds. It still can not be considered as having reached the peak of Building Foundation Stage." Peng Hai shook his head.

"This is still very terrifying. The complete strength exerted by a Building Foundation Stage cultivator is truly fearsome!"

As Li Yao recalled the scene from a moment ago, he was deeply shocked.

Peng Hai calmly smiled and said, "Although that was my highest state, I didn't have an ounce of 'killing intent' in my heart. Isn’t that frightening? If it was a real battlefield where I’m facing vicious demon beasts, my killing intent would burst out. And if I was facing someone of same level, my strength can further elevated by three to five times. Coupled with a peerless divine weapon... now that would be truly fearsome!"

"Can strengthen again by three to five times?"

Li Yao was so awed that he couldn't speak. He was completely flabbergasted; he was simply unable to imagine that kind of scene.

Peng Hai laughed in a jovial manner, patted Li Yao's shoulder, and, without turning his head, walked towards transmission formation. "You better cultivate well, little brother. The road of cultivation is still very long. One day, when you will arrive at my level, then you'll know!"

Li Yao stared for a long time.

Under the changing gravitational field, his breathing would sometimes become rapid, sometimes heavy, sometimes slow; it was ever-changing within the gravitational field.

However, in the end, his breathing would still remain even.

Towards the disappearing silhouette of Peng Hai in the transmission formation, Li Yao sent out a powerful punch as a smile brimming with confidence appeared on his face.

"Brother Hai, I will cultivate well and catch up to you soon!"

Chapter 85: Mining Clan High School

Chapter 85: Mining Clan High School

For the next three days, Li Yao spent all his time doing restorative training. He was working hard to restore his body back to its peak state in the shortest span of time.

To sum it up, it was just eating and sleeping.

Eating the high-energy compressed food that was specifically made for the military.

It was military specialized because it was for the cultivators preparing to hunt in the Demon Beast Wasteland. Just a fingernail-sized piece was enough to fuel a low-level cultivator with enough energy to fight for an entire day. Every hour, Li Yao would force himself to eat a jar full of this highly energy-compressed food before he would use to assimilate it, subsequently converting the food into the most basic energy used to repair his over exhausted body.

After eating, he would sleep in the special "Deep Sleep Chamber" inside Peng Hai's private training room. An hour of sleep within the Deep Sleep Chamber was equivalent to sleeping normally for an entire day and night!

In order to restore his body to its peak condition as soon as possible, for the past few days, Li Yao only slept; he didn't attempt to assimilate Ou Yezi's memory fragments in his dreams.

Every second, Li Yao felt his energy and stamina increase by a point as though each crack in his bones was being repaired every second, further advancing his body’s strength!

After three days ——

In the "Small Grayfield", Li Yao was jogging with ease. During the jog, he would sometimes alternate between jumping, squatting, and shadow boxing.

Each of his punches left an afterimage behind.

Li Yao had already recovered his vigorous and healthy physique. Compared to before his coma, he was now three centimeter taller. His body was neither skinny nor did it have excess fat. His build was well-proportioned such that it was perfectly symmetrical and filled with muscles but not to the point that it could be considered in excess. He had a streamlined body like the pebbles that had eroded under a waterfall for hundreds of millennia. Each and every bone was symmetrically arranged on his rock-hard skeleton.

Because he had not basked in the sun for quite a while, his skin was slightly pale, but it had a healthy luster to it, overflowing with a powerful aura.

"I've now completely recovered. I feel stronger than before the coma. If I test my Spiritual Root Development Quotient, I am confident that it has progressed by at least 20-30%!"

Li Yao took a long, deep breath. Under the gravity that was ten times stronger, each step sprung him 4-5 meters forward.

He squinted his eyes and felt the steady flow of power in his four limbs and bones; Li Yao was completely satisfied with his new body.

Ding Lingdang mockingly said, “The Spiritual Root Development Quotient is purely an imaginary number. In the Grand Desolate War Institution, only chicks would be crazy about Spiritual Root Development Quotient day and night — an unyielding man would only believe in their own fist!"

Li Yao was surprised for a moment as he slowly clenched his pair of fists.

"Makes sense. Even if my Spiritual Root Development Quotient tumbled down to 1%, I will not give up! Since that’s the case, let’s forget about whatever development quotient. Let's go for a run!"

"Wait!"

Ding Lingdang lifted her wrist and shone a hologram from the mini crystal processor. "You are forgetting the most important thing — signing up for the college entrance examination! I have already checked things over. The examinee has to register his identity in order to take part in the college entrance exam. It is quite troublesome, but you’ll have to run around to several places and get a comprehensive body exam along with several other tests."

"So troublesome!"

A frown appeared on Li Yao's face as he carefully went through the introduction on the hologram. He discovered that what Ding Lingdang said was correct. In accordance with the "College Entrance Examination Identity Registration Process", even if all went well, an entire three days would be spent to complete the registration process, and if even a single thing went wrong, it could drag on for one or two weeks, which was a normal occurrence.

The college entrance exam was just less than one month away and every single second was immensely valuable. He didn't want to waste too much time on this matter.

"Perhaps I can ask the 'Disabled Serviceman Association' to help me shorten the registration process."

Thinking of this, Li Yao turned on the mini crystal processor and launched the spiritual crane messenger.

He was preparing to send a message to Chairman Zhao of the Floating Spear City's Disabled Servicemen Association to ask if there was any way to shorten the process, but instead he received a message from Grandpa Wang of "Old Wang's Secondhand Shop".

Grandpa Wang had an order to repair a large-scale magical equipment framework. The individual who was supposed to help repair it was busy and could not come, so he was asking Li Yao to lend a helping hand.

Li Yao hesitated for a bit as he prepared to refuse.

However, Grandpa Wang has always been good to him. After the death of the old man, Grandpa Wang had treated him like his own son. When he was in the coma, Old Wang also came to visit him at the hospital many times. When he knew that he was awake, Old Wang had specifically invited him to a feast at his home, but as Li Yao was busy with cultivation, he had turned down Old Wang’s invitation.

As a matter of fact, he also felt quite sorry for the old man.

Thinking up to this point, Li Yao agreed to Old Wang’s proposition. He planned to spend half a day to accompany the old man.

On the one hand, he was going to help him, and on the other hand, he could also let the old man see for himself that he was quite alive and kicking, that he was still a fine strong man, besides it would also free the old couple of worries.

Upon discussing it with Ding Lingdang, this girl turned very excited. She readily proposed to start the Crimson Flame Battle Shuttle to send him off, though Li Yao, without an ounce of hesitation, flatly refused her. Using the transmission formation, Li Yao returned to the Heaven Origin Sector and took the underground crystal rail to quickly reach Grandpa Wang's address.

"Floating Spear City's Mining Clan High School?"

After an hour of trekking, Li Yao arrived at a shabby high school entrance in the slum on the northwest side of Floating Spear City — the "Limestone District".

Approximately a hundred years ago, the northwest district of Floating Spear City used to have several crystal mines with abundant reserves. Several sect's mining companies cooperated with one another and turned the Limestone District into a very prosperous mining district.

During that period of prosperity, this place was home to the hundred thousand miners and to the couple hundred thousand families. They had their own schools, hospitals, and various public facilities.

The Mining Clan High School was established at that time.

However, the prosperity was short-lived. With the gradual depletion of the lodes, all the sects withdrew one by one, leaving the couple hundred thousand unemployed miners and their families behind. Those who had the money, connections, or another means to earn money left one after another, thereby leaving only a few ten thousand unemployed miners who didn't have any other skills behind. These miners and their families continued to eke out their meager existence here.

The Mining Clan High School had also become the worst high school in Floating Spear City. Compared with the Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School, which was one of the private schools with top quality facilities, the difference was simply like heaven and earth — they were not in the same world.

Li Yao entered the campus. The campus seemed as though a cultivator had wantonly devastated the area, leaving only wreckage in its wake. Every building seemed to have been neglected over the years and have never been repaired. The playground too was also full of potholes. A rustic strength testing machine was placed in a corner. Looking at its model, it was surprisingly an antique from a hundred years ago. It appeared as if it would fall apart just from a light breeze.

The various basic facilities of this school were built a hundred years ago and, with the passage of time, were now long beyond their lifespan. Multitudes of problems could be found in every equipment.

Grandpa Wang was commissioned to repair the large-scale crystal tube system that was used to adjust the temperature in the classrooms.

The crystal tubes were like snakes, passing through each classroom to the next before finally converging at the array glyph room behind the teachers’ building.

In the array glyph room, a two-pole array glyph system composing of the “Freezing Glyphs” and the “Fire Glyphs” was installed. During the summer, the "Freezing Glyphs" would activate and blow cold air through the crystal tubes, while during the winter, the "Fire Glyphs" would activate and blow hot air through the tubes. In this manner, the classroom could be kept at room temperature, as if it were Spring, in all four seasons.

Because of thermal expansion and contraction caused by the alternation between hot and cold temperatures, the crystal tubes were vulnerable to cracks. Although the maintenance of the tubes was not complicated, as the crystal tubes were entwined and passed through a few dozen classrooms, to completely repair the entire tube network was not only very time consuming but arduous as well.

Grandpa Wang was way past his working age, and he couldn't see properly. Now that this kind of project fell into his lap, he had no choice but to call Li Yao for help.

This kind of maintenance work was quite ordinary. As the two were familiar with each other, they had no need to greet or say anything. Li Yao rolled up his sleeves and stuck out his buttocks as he and Grandpa Wang began to check and perform maintenance on the crystal tubes, classroom by classroom. After a long, arduous maintenance that spanned half a day, the two were covered in dust from head to toe. Finally, all the crystal tubes had been cleaned out from the inside out, and the broken tubes had been replaced with new ones.

Li Yao pressed his ears to the crystal tubes and listened for a while before confirming that the sound was normal and the array glyphs were operating very smoothly — the task was complete!

Li Yao pursed his lips as a grin appeared on his dark face, revealing the snow-white teeth inside.

"It's done. Grandpa Wang, this time, I’m not going to calculate money with you. Treat it as my respect for Grandma Wang. If there is nothing else, then I'll take my leave first."

"Wait."

Grandpa Wang laughed like an old fox as he dragged Li Yao out of the school building. Inside the playground stood a chubby, old man.

"This is the Principal of the Mining Clan High School, Mao. He is an old classmate of mine."

"Nice to meet you, Principal Mao."

Li Yao blinked his eyes. He found it a little strange. The maintenance of crystal tubes was not some big project. At best, it was worth a couple thousand bucks, yet Grandpa Wang dragged him out to meet the Principal, why?

Principal Mao and Grandpa Wang glanced at each other. The two were a little embarrassed. After a moment of silence, Principal Mao squeezed out a little smile on his face and said, "Student Li Yao, it is like this... I heard Old Wang say that you have withdrawn from Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School and were thinking of registering your identity in order to apply for the college entrance examination. However, perhaps you don’t know, but the process to register one’s identity is extremely complex. Besides, you still have not yet found a suitable place to train. So if you don't mind, I was thinking it might be better for you to join my Mining Clan High School. The entire registration process will be handled by the school, and you can also train here. As you can see, although the training equipment are a little old, they are all in working condition and are maintained quite well. It would be better than what you might find at home! As for the cost, you don't need to worry. Old Wang and I have been friends for many years, so I will not take a single penny from you!"

"What, Grandpa Wang, you..."

Li Yao realized that this was the real intention of Grandpa Wang for calling him here. He could not help but feel warm in his heart.

Grandpa Wang coughed twice.

"Little Devil, this old man has heard everything about you. You have offended people at Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School who have power and influence, they forced you to drop out, and you... also had a little accident. I'm afraid you won’t be admitted to a top university, but you should not give up. It is better for you to train here and vie for a good technical school. After you have graduated, you can come back and formally join me as my partner. I don't have a son, and the few grandsons I have are not interested in magical equipment maintenance. The day when my two legs can no longer support me, I'll leave my secondhand magical equipment shop to you. Don't say it doesn't bring in money! It can somehow bring food to the table. What do you think?"

Li Yao took a long deep breath to slow down his throbbing heart.

Grandpa Wang didn't know that he had already recovered his strength, and even more, he didn't know about the shocking mutation that had taken place inside his brain. Everyone believed that his spiritual root had ruptured and he was completely crippled.

Even so, Grandpa Wang didn't give up on him, still thought about him sincerely, and even helped him find such a school!

Although it was the worst high school in the entire Floating Spear City, Li Yao knew that Grandpa Wang had done the best he could.

A warm feeling slowly filled up Li Yao's chest.

Chapter 86: School Bullying

Chapter 86: School Bullying

After a moment of hesitation, Li Yao said, "Principal Mao, I have angered some very powerful figures from Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School. Aren't you afraid that your Mining Clan High School will become the target of their anger if you took me in?"

Principal Mao laughed as he pointed at the surroundings, speaking in a self-deprecating tone, "Take a look around. As far as my school is concerned, it is the worst high school in Floating Spear City. Only the children of penniless miners would come here to study and that too only for the purpose of getting into a technical school to learn cooking, maintenance, or some similar expertise in other fields. How would they take revenge?"

"Alright!"

Li Yao felt warm in his heart. He continuously nodded his head. "Grandpa Wang, Principal Mao, thank you for your kindness. I have decided to attend the college entrance examinations as a student of your Mining Clan High School. However, since I have already found a training room, I won’t always come to school. I hope you do not mind."

"It does not matter. Anyways, you just have to register your name to ease your way into the college entrance examinations, that's all. However, training rooms outside are very expensive, especially before the college entrance examination. Many training rooms will use 'Crash Course' type rooms as a way to cheat examinees of their money. You can’t be fooled. If you can get a refund, then you should take it. Train in the school and save a little bit!" Principal Mao said.

Li Yao smiled. Principal Mao's character was almost the same as Grandpa Wong; both were sincere and kind men.

He shook his head. "It's alright. It’s my friend's training room, so its cost is very cheap."

"Oh!"

Principal Mao exclaimed and no longer tried to persuade Li Yao. He then said, "Student Li Yao, wait here for a while. If you’d like, you can look around and familiarize yourself with the environment. I'll settle the account for today's maintenance with Old Wang first, then I’ll check how I should complete your procedures. To be honest with you, it has always been our students who transferred to another school. If I’m not wrong, in the past few decades, we have not received even a single transfer student from another school. Hahahaha, I will go and sort out a few files. You just need to sign a few papers."

"Alright, I'll definitely go all out in the college entrance examination to win glory for the Mining Clan High School!" Li Yao said in a serious tone.

Principal Mao laughed jovially. Regarding Li Yao's commitment, he made no comments. The two old men, with arms around each's shoulder, went inside the office building.

Li Yao, with hands behind his back, leisurely explored the simple and crude campus. His mood was pretty good.

Helian Lie, Zhao Shude, and Hei Mianshen... All of them were not optimistic about him, did not believe him, and treated him like a cripple, like trash.

However, there were others who were unconditionally good to him, like Ding Lingdang who believed in him, Fiend Blade Peng Hai who was optimistic about him, Grandpa Wang who had been very concerned about him since he could remember, and the recently acquainted Principal Mao also didn’t hesitate to support him!

He was not alone; he had so many people who believed in him, cared for him, and supported him. Why would he have any reason to fail the exam?

"Are you the guy who was kicked out of Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School and had to transfer to our Mining Clan High School?"

"Are you that fleeting Fiend Star from the news?"

"Obviously, he was just repairing the crystal tubes inside the classroom. His dirty appearance fits very well with our school. No wonder he was kicked out from Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School!"

The three burst into laughter.

Li Yao raised his head to look the three who were speaking. All three were tall and mighty; the shortest among them was approximately 190 cm tall, while the tallest was almost 2 m tall. They had well-developed muscles and wrapping around their bodies was a simple yet crude school uniform that was spun from coarse cloth. A casual movement would seemingly tear their uniform apart.

Looking at their appearance...

All three were vicious as their faces were filled with arrogance. Apparently, they were the bullies of Mining Clan High School.

Li Yao heaved a sigh. In a flash, he jumped back two meters and tossed a fist-sized pebble on the ground with his toe before sending out a punch!

"Crack!" The pebble was smashed into pieces, and its fragments splattered on the three faces, bringing them quite a bit of pain.

"Correct, I am that fleeting Fiend Star. Today, I have just transferred to Mining Clan High School. May I ask, is this the legendary school bullying?" Li Yao enthusiastically asked as he patted his hands to dust off the powder on his fists.

Silence. The three were struck with silence as if they had been subjected to some restraining technique. They remained silent for a total of ten seconds before they could wake from their stupor.

"Of course not! When we heard that there was a new student, you have no idea how happy we were! We are responsible for welcoming the new students!"

"Right, although our Mining Clan High School's teaching quality is very poor, our school's spirit is indescribably a lot better. Between fellow students, there is only a sense of unity and friendship. Everyone here is family. School bullying in Mining Clan High School? I’ve never heard about this!"

"Come, come, fellow student Li Yao. No, please allow us to call you 'Brother Yao'. Wow! Brother Yao's punch is truly powerful. Just in this punch alone, I’m afraid that there was over a thousand pound of force! Brother Yao, if you have some time, be sure to instruct your little brothers a little!"

...

Inside the principal office, Old Wang sincerely said, "Old friend, I truly have to thank you. You have really helped me out!"

Principal Mao smiled and said, "Small stuff. About student Li Yao, I have seen it on the news; a genius with a promising future, but because of an accident, he fell from the sky, unable to cultivate again. It is truly pitiful! Not to mention he is also your friend. Even if you never knew each other, so long as it came to my attention, I would also be very willing to help such a child."

"Yes!"

Old Wang heaved a long sigh as a drop of tear trickled down from the corner of his eye. "Unfortunately, it is truly pitiful. If it was someone else, they would definitely be unable to withstand such a blow. They would have long been reduced to a shadow of their past. But this brat is rather strong-willed — ‘His body might be disabled, but his will is firm’'. He is still planning to attend this year's college entrance examination. Didn't you see? He behaved so calmly in front of us and even staged a completely confident look. This truly puts me at ease. It is truly..."

"Indeed, Student Li Yao has an indomitable spirit. I was very moved. You don't need to worry. Even if he can’t go to college this year, he can still study at Mining Clan High School next year. So long as I, Dagang Mao, am still here, the doors to the Mining Clan High School will always be open for him.

While talking, Principal Mao walked to a window to get a fresh breath of air.

"Hey!"

As he arbitrarily glanced over to the ground, he suddenly exclaimed.

"What happened?"

Old Wang went to the window and looked around on the ground.

In front of the office building at the playground, three stocky and imposing muscular boys nodded and bowed as they respectfully followed Li Yao to an antique Strength Testing Machine.

In an instant, Principal Mao’s face turned dark and bitter as he clenched his teeth and said, "These good-for-nothing punks! I just left for a few minutes and they are already bullying the new student. Awful! I have taught them to be better than this — they should not be doing this!"

"That’s not right." Old Wang scratched his bald head, hesitated a moment, and then said, "It doesn’t seem like they are bullying."

"Yeah, it is a little odd. What are they doing? Do they want to test Li Yao's punching force? What a joke! Student Li Yao's spiritual root is torn; he is already a cripple, yet they still want to test his punching force! Do they want to make a joke out of student Li Yao!?" Principal Mao was extremely furious. As he prepared to stop them, Old Wang grabbed his shoulder.

Standing before the Strength Testing Machine, Li Yao had already taken three steps back, pulled his right fist as far back as he could, as if he was a cannon ready to fire, and postured himself to send out a punch with his right fist.

"He —"

Principal Mao blinked his eyes. Although he was not a cultivator, during his youth, he had been to the battlefield and had seen the blood of many soldiers. Despite being separated by a few dozen meters, he was still able to sense the exceptionally powerful and dangerous aura emitted from Li Yao.

In an instant, Principal Mao returned to a few decades back — to the moment when he had an unexpected encounter with a demon beast in a corner of the trenches in the front-lines.

Principle Mao shrunk his neck as he was suddenly covered in goosebumps.

Li Yao remained motionless, yet his aura continued to increase. The air around him became a little distorted, creating a field exclusive to him.

The three muscular boys near Li Yao, upon noticing the strangeness, involuntarily retreated 3-4 steps.

"His aura is exceptionally strong. His spiritual root is obviously torn, so how is this possible?" Principal Mao muttered to himself. Without a single blink, Principal Mao watched with widely opened eyes, carefully observing Li Yao’s each and every action.

—— But he missed everything! In his eyes, Li Yao had completely turned into a blur. In only one hundredth of a second, his right fist had ruthlessly landed upon the Strength Testing Machine.

"Boom!"

Even inside his office, the cups on Principal Mao's table madly shook.

"How’s that possible? That’s completely crazy!"

Principal Mao's eyes almost jumped out of their sockets. He immediately looked at the counter above the Strength Testing Machine; however, the numbers on the counter were quickly changing as if the shockwave of his punch had spread to the interior of the machine — like a flood, it was out of control!

Finally ——

"Boom!"

From inside the Strength Testing Machine rang a thunderous explosion as a mass of black smoke slowly rose into the air, spreading a strong smell of fire and metal!

Like a shot beast, the Strength Testing Machine swayed for three seconds as it held its ground before it finally collapsed completely, turning into a pile of crushed parts!

This punch of Li Yao had surprisingly sent this antique — with over a hundred years of history — to its grave!

"This——"

Inside the office, Principal Mao and Old Wang were like two wooden statues that had been carved using rooted trees — they stood aghast!

After over a minute of silence, Principal Mao reached out for a cup whilst his hands continued to shiver. The cup made a series of tattering noises as it collided with his teeth. He chugged down the entire tea into his stomach in one go.

"Are you sure he… he is crippled?" Principal Mao stammered as he asked.

"Yes, yes," Old Wang also stammered as he replied.

"Can a cripple’s punch wreck a Strength Testing Machine!? Was he some Nascent Soul Stage old devil in the past before he fell!?” Principal Mao screamed.

Chapter 87: Eve of the College Entrance Examination

Chapter 87: Eve of the College Entrance Examination

As the problem of applying for the college entrance examination was settled, Li Yao could wholeheartedly start his final preparations.

Aside from Ding Lingdang, an unexpected person had shown up in the Small Grayfield. It was the man who had unearthed Li Yao and Fiend Blade Peng Hai — the "Scum of the Cultivation World", Sun Biao!

This old fogey appeared to be a man of feelings. When he came to know that Li Yao was already awake and was even undergoing special training in the Small Grayfield, he said that he would help him train in any way he could. Initially, Peng Hai refused him on the spot. Because the old man had just gotten back on his feet after serious injuries, if he entered the Small Grayfield, where the gravity was ten times greater the normal, it could be extremely dangerous for him. It was quite possible that he wouldn't even be able to take a breath and would directly pass away. However, the old man's stubbornness hit the extreme as he showered Peng Hai with curses and directly broke into Peng Hai's training room. Peng Hai could not manage old man; he could only ask Li Yao and Ding Lingdang to take good care of Sun Biao. If there was something wrong, ask him to withdraw from the Small Grayfield without delay.

Sun Biao did not, in any way, have the appearance of someone who had just recovered from a serious illness. As though he was granted youth again, he was bursting with vitality, even his muddy eyes seemed to be shining. Seeing Li Yao, he laughed and said, "The training program for the next twenty-eight days is the one that I had devised for Peng Hai to advance to the Refinement Stage. Are you ready? If you are not, then you can just tell me so!"

"Come on!" Li Yao licked his lips as he hooked his fingers with Old Sun's.

"Alright! Although I, Sun Biao, am just a mediocre cultivator who doesn’t have any standing in the Cultivator World, in this life, Fiend Blade Peng Hai and you, the Fiend Star, are my greatest achievements — my life was totally worth it! The final training starts now. Your first objective is to blast apart a hundred boulders!"

Sun Biao eyes turned round as he shouted.

"Where are the rocks?"

Li Yao dumbfoundedly looked all around him. As far as he could see in this endless gray field, it was just a flat gray desert. Where were the boulders?

"First one!"

Next to Sun Biao, Ding Lingdang's beautiful eyes turned round as she exerted her strength and pounded on the ground. Criss-cross spider web-like cracks suddenly appeared beneath her foot. Grabbing it with her jade-like foot, she then tossed a hard rock that appeared to be even bigger than Li Yao's head and needed at least both arms to firmly grasp it. The boulder rolled twice in its place before it ruthlessly flew towards Li Yao!

"Come on!"

Li Yao recalled the domineering and peerless might that came from Fiend Blade Peng Hai when his strength soared to its utmost limit, bursting to the Peak of the Building Foundation Stage. Everything under the soles of Li Yao’s feet blew away as he gave a furious roar, twisted his waist, deeply bent his knees, and pulled his right hand back as if he was drawing an arrow. His entire body cut into a pose in preparation to send a fierce punch. As the boulder drew near, Li Yao sent out a punch, ruthlessly colliding with the boulder!

"Explode for me!"

First day — Li Yao forcibly smashed a hundred rocks, ran fifty kilometers cross-country whilst carrying a hundred kilogram weight under the influence of tenfold gravity before "Sparring" with Ding Lingdang using the , analyzing and re-learning each stance one by one, and inevitably get beaten black and blue by Ding Lingdang.

Second day... Third day... Fourth day...

Li Yao trained almost like a lunatic. His daily consumption of food and strengthening agents was ten times more than that of the average high school student. If Ding Lingdang and Sun Biao had not personally seen this, they might suspect whether there was a miniature black hole hidden in his stomach. How else could he engulf so much food?

Seventh day... Eighth day... Ninth day...

The speed of Li Yao’s progression was insane, even to the point where it was visible to the naked eye. The training schedule drafted by Sun Biao was not able to keep up with his progress; every day, Li Yao would only need 70% of the time to complete the training program.

In the remaining time, he would review the over and over again to thoroughly master this set of hammer techniques down to his soul and completely evolve it into One-Hundred-and-Eight Fist Techniques.

Fourteenth day... Fifteenth day... Sixteenth day...

Two weeks elapsed. Every day, Li Yao would now stay in the Small Grayfield for only half a day, while for the rest of the day he would enter the Deep Sleep Chamber, during which he would assimilate Ou Yezi's memory fragments crazily. With the identity of an "Iron-Forge Worker", he would learn the Hundred Smelting Clan's secrets of tempering all kinds of metals.

Finally, twenty-eighth day. This was also the last day of his training.

Tomorrow was the college entrance examination!

Today, the Small Grayfield had only one person, Li Yao. Before him laid a square-shaped boulder, weighing several tons.

"Ahh!"

Li Yao exerted strength into both his fists. The muscles on his arms burst out with strange fluctuations as a wave-like power landed upon the boulder before carving a spiral-like pattern on the boulder, thereby forcibly sending it a dozen meters away.

Li Yao's pair of legs kicked the grounds. Before the boulder could hit the ground, in a flash, Li Yao caught up with the mid-air boulder. His entire figure became indistinct as his phantom silhouettes surrounded the entire boulder.

"Kacha Kacha"

Only the sounds of the boulder breaking resounded in the silent gray field as though a wild, hungry beast treated the boulder as food, munching on it with all its force.

The phantom silhouettes continued to scatter pieces of stone from the boulder like a Goddess scattering flowers.

After three seconds, Li Yao silently landed on the ground. In a radius of approximately seventeen to eighteen meters around him, there was nothing but broken stone fragments.

"I did it!"

Using his toes, Li Yao tossed a fist-sized stone into the air before grabbing ahold of it. As he ruthlessly pinched the stone, "Kacha Kacha" sounds suddenly came from his palm as the stone broke apart and fell through the gaps between his fingers.

"I am now at least four to five time more powerful than I was when I was at the Devil Flood Dragon Island. I am sure with my current strength that if I now charge into the 'Blue Team', even without a strategy, I can directly crush them and can even kill several dozen blue team experts one by one!"

"It seems my assumptions were correct. Assimilating Ou Yezi's memory fragments is greatly beneficial for the development of my brain. My Spirit Root Development Quotient is definitely higher than the past; otherwise, no matter how severely I cultivated, I would not have progressed so much within one month!"

"Still, I don’t know how much my Spirit Root Development Quotient had actually increased. Maybe I should check it now?"

"Forget it, Ding Lingdang was right; Spirit Root Development Quotient is just an imaginary number. What's important is one’s own ability! Whether it’s 1% or 99%, it doesn’t matter — I will keep moving forward!"

"I have done my best, and I don't have any regrets. Tomorrow at sunrise, a war will shake the heaven and the earth!"

Li Yao took a long, deep breath, suppressed his agitated heart, and returned to the Heaven Origin Sector using the transmission formation.

There was no one present inside the room. After twenty days in the Small Greyfield, Grandpa Sun Biao's body was no longer able to hold on; his heart almost gave out. Li Yao and Ding Lingdang forced him to go home and rest.

Ding Lingdang was enjoying the wind on the balcony.

Today, she wore a fiery, thin, long, red, yarn dress. The gentle breeze made her yarn dress flutter, causing her strong and perfectly round legs to become partly visible. In the sunset, it painted an absolutely beautiful picture.

Li Yao could not help but walk over.

Upon hearing the sounds of his footsteps, Ding Lingdang also turned her head and tossed a scroll made of Demon Beast hide to him.

"What is this?" Li Yao curiously received the letter and opened it.

Now that the spiritual network had been developed, normal information was sent using the spiritual crane messenger. Only very important documents would be sent using letters.

The contents of the beast hide made Li Yao gasp for breath.

"You actually helped me get 30 points of preferential treatment? As long as I apply for the Grand Desolate War Institution, I'll get preferential treatment of 30 points?"

Chapter 88: I Have Decided!

Chapter 88: I Have Decided!

Li Yao went through the contents of the beast hide scroll over and over again to confirm that what he was seeing was right. On the lower right corner of the letter was engraved with the unique spirit seal of the Grand Desolate War Institution, which absolutely could not be forged by anyone else.

Getting 20 points of preferential treatment was already considered by far the best and most common preferential treatment a student could get, but much to his surprise, Ding Lingdang actually got him 30 points of preferential treatment — it was unbelievable!

Li Yao could not help but ask, "After my Spiritual Root was torn, I have desperately trained for just a month and have not even tested my Spiritual Root Development Quotient. How were you able to get me such preferential treatment?"

Ding Lingdang pursed her lips into a smile as she shook her fist. "I had a talk with the guys from the student recruitment center. I told them that out of all the cultivation geniuses I have seen, you are the most insane, the most ferocious, and have the highest potential. 30 points of preferential treatment was a must — if it was even a single point less, then once I return, I would smack their heads!"

Li Yao took a long, deep breath as complex feeling burst forth from the depths of his heart.

Of course, he knew Ding Lingdang was joking. The enrollment process of the Nine Elite Universities was extremely strict. How did she persuade them to give him 30 points of preferential treatment?

Ding Lingdang must have done a lot of work quietly in the back. She must have painstakingly spent a lot of effort. That’s the only reason why she was able to get such conditions!

"How is it? Didn't I say I will let you see the sincerity of the Grand Desolate War Institution? What do you think? Does our sincerity have enough weight? Well, did you think about it? Is it going to be the Grand Desolate War Institution's Combat Department or the Deep Sea University's Refining Department?" Ding Lingdang turned her head and stared at Li Yao with bright and shining eyes.

"I—"

While holding onto the beast hide, Li Yao stood in place as he was dazed. In his mind, various scenes appeared one by one.

The excitement that he had when he first repaired a civilian magical equipment, the promise he made to the old man, the embarrassed Xie Tingxian, the passionate Ding Lingdang, the sincere and earnest words of Fiend Blade Peng Hai. Each scene entangled with one another, turning into a complex mess.

Suddenly, a very strange yet extremely insane idea jumped out from this mess. As if a giant Kraken had instantly occupied his brain, no matter how much he pulled, he was unable to extract this idea from his brain; it was completely stuck in his mind.

Little by little, the hesitation in Li Yao’s eyes dissipated. In its place was an incomparably relaxed and eased look.

Almost as if a saber had cut off the chaotic thoughts in his heart in an instant!

"Have you decided?" Ding Lingdang, upon noticing his expression, knew that he had already made his decision.

"En, I have decided!" Li Yao smiled. His smile was as bright as sunlight.

"You were finally impressed by my sincerity, right!? You have decided to join the Grand Desolate War Institution, right!?" Ding Lingdang both eyes turned round. She looked as though she would pounce at Li Yao at any moment, as if she was an anxious mother leopard who was restraining herself.

"Sister Ling, before I say my choice, I want to know one thing — What if, in the end, I don’t choose the Grand Desolate War Institution's Combat Department? What will you think?" Li Yao asked in a serious tone.

The corners of Ding Lingdang's mouth twitched as she had a slightly puzzled look. Hesitating for a moment, she clenched her teeth and said, "As someone from the Grand Desolate War Institution, obviously, I would be greatly disappointed; however, since I have done all I can and was still unable to change your thoughts, I will not regret anything! And as your friend, I will support your choice. If your dream is to go to the Refining Department of the Deep Sea University and to become a Master Refiner, I will wish for all your dreams to come true!"

"I am relieved to hear that. You are truly a good person. I'm going to treat you as my friend for life, Sister Ling."

"Good my ass. If you call me a good person again, believe it or not, I will smack you head. Anyway, so to say, have you decided to apply to Deep Sea University's Refining Department?

"I did not say so."

"Then which institute are you going to choose!? Is it the Grand Desolate War Institution's Combat Department or Deep Sea University's Refining Department, or is it some other institute?"

Li Yao laughed jovially as he blinked his eyes and slowly said, "Tomorrow, wait for tomorrow. After the college entrance exam is over, you will know."

"You...”

Ding Lingdang clenched her teeth in anger. Looking at the teasing smile hanging on Li Yao's face, she could not wait to punch him in the face. After grimacing for a while, she suddenly climbed the fence and yelled toward the setting sun before jumping down — she jumped down from a few kilometer high building!

After a second, from below the balcony came a violent roar. The Crimson Flame Battle Shuttle transformed into a long rainbow and pierced towards the setting sun!

Under the light of the setting sun, Li Yao closed his eyes. Feeling its warmth, he quietly listened to the noise that came from the depths of his heart, the sound of flowing blood.

After a good while, Li Yao opened his eyes. His eyes were clear and transparent, devoid of any hesitation.

Yes, he had confirmed it again — that's what he wanted and that was the university he wanted to attend.

He turned on the mini crystal processor and sent a spiritual crane message to the Deep Sea University professor, Xie Tingxian; however, there was no reply from the other side.

Li Yao, with unrelenting patience, sent the second, third, and fourth message.

On the fifth try, he finally connected to the other side. A tired Xie Tingxian appeared on the hologram screen, barely squeezing out a smile. "Long time no see, Student Li Yao."

"Hello, Professor Xie. It seems you are quite busy with work. Long story short, today, I have sent you a spiritual crane message; however, it was not for the purpose of gaining a preferential treatment score, but rather it was solely to express my gratitude. Thank you for once being so optimistic about me and treating me as a promising student, and even waiting for so long when I was in coma — I'm really sorry for all this. I'm truly grateful for all your endeavors!" Li Yao spoke from the depths of his heart.

Xie Tingxian was surprised for a moment. With a slightly embarrassed look, he said, "Student Li Yao, I'm really sorry. I really wished to recruit you into Deep Sea University and had even wanted to make you my protege, but —"

"Yeah, I also wished to enter the 'Holy Land of Refiners' and learn the most profound refining techniques. Even now, I still don’t want to give up on this dream; however, the god of destiny makes fools out of the people. But let's not talk about that. The other reason I contacted you is that I want to sincerely apologize to you. I am truly sorry, truly, truly sorry!"

Xie Tingxian frowned. He didn’t understand Li Yao’s words at all; he was at loss. "Why are you apologizing to me? It should be me who should be apologizing!"

Li Yao replied, "I have made a decision, and this decision might very well bring a certain degree of trouble to you in the future. That's why, I would like to apologize in advance — for my actions in the future."

"Student Li Yao, what do you mean?" Xie Tingxian, upon hearing this, was even at more of a loss.

Li Yao faintly smiled. Deep within his eyes flashed an incomparably vigorous flame. He wanted to explain, but from the hologram suddenly came a loud noise. An old woman with bizarre purple eyes appeared on the screen, shoving Xie Tingxian away and took his place.

The old woman had a completely deadpan look. "I am the Dean of Deep Sea University's Refining Department, Chu Xiuhong. You are Li Yao? What is your Spiritual Root Development Quotient at now?"

A frown appeared on Li Yao's face. He was a little dissatisfied with Chu Xiuhong's tone.

However, in front of him was a highly respected elder. He honestly replied, "I don't know. For the past month, I was completely busy with training. I don't know know how much of it has recovered; maybe a few percent."

Chu Xiuhong sneered.

"Recovered only a few percent? One month ago, your Spiritual Root Development Quotient was only 7%. Even if you have recovered to 30-50%, what of it? Student Li Yao, I advise you not to rack your brain anymore to try to get any preferential treatment score. Deep Sea University will not agree to this!"

Li Yao’s pupils contracted to the size of a needle.

"Dean Chu, I'm afraid you are mistaken. Today, I simply wanted to relay a few words to Professor Xie. I had no intentions of discussing any preferential treatment conditions. I only wanted to say a few words to him, that's all."

Chu Xiuhong's wrinkles shrunk into a mass as a look of mockery appeared on her face. "Right? I have seen a lot of young men like you. You all say you don't want any preferential conditions, yet it is nothing more than taking a step back before advancing. You’re just playing cat and mouse, that’s all! Young man, I advise you to give up on this. Behave well and don't think about using underhanded means! If you have the strength, then prove yourself in the college entrance examination. So long as your score is decent, the doors of our Deep Sea University would naturally be open to you. If your strength is inadequate, no matter how many strings you pull, they all will be useless!"

Li Yao smiled. "Dean Chu, I am truly not looking to pull any strings. Not to mention, I am also not going to be applying to the Deep Sea University's Refining Department."

"That’s for the best. After all, Deep Sea University's Refining Department is the Refiner's Holy Land. The requirements to join our school is extremely high. In your current state, I'm afraid that it will truly be difficult for you to enroll here. If you have truly recovered a little, I suggest you apply to the Star Nebula University or the Refining Department of Federation’s First Military College. Although they are not in the same grade as us, at any rate, their cut-off score is low enough. Last year, it was 200 hundred points lower than our department."

"Thank you for your advice, I will consider it seriously."

"Is there anything else? Professor Xie and I are conducting a crucial refining experiment. An entire team of more than thirty Refiners is waiting for you."

"Nothing, I am truly embarrassed. I was too abrupt and had hastily sent a message. I apologize for disturbing you and Professor Xie."

Chu Xiuhong coldly snorted and directly cut off the connection. She simply didn't give Li Yao any opportunity to say anything else. The hologram screen turned dark.

Under the dark curtain of night, Li Yao stood for a long time, gazing at the countless stars in the pitch black sky.

His pair of eyes also gradually brightened like the stars.

"There are no more problems. Now, I don't have the slightest of concerns. I can't wait for tomorrow to arrive — I'm going to fight happily!"

Chapter 89: College Entrance Examination Champion!

Chapter 89: College Entrance Examination Champion!

That night, Li Yao, in deep slumber, slept soundly without a single wisp of a dream. Once he fell asleep, only at dawn did he finally open his eyes again.

In contrast, in several other places in Floating Spear City, there were many who were having troubles sleeping through the night.

2 O’clock in the night, approximately twenty kilometers away, Villa District.

In a giant container filled with silver liquid, Helian Lie gradually floated up. His face was now lacking in arrogance; instead, his eyes carried a sliver of sinisterness and ruthlessness. His face, on the other hand, was devoid of any expression. Slowly, he walked out from the giant container. His skin gave off a silver light, seemingly as if he was covered in silver armor.

"I did it!"

Standing nearby, Helian Ba showed a happy expression as he shouted, "Ah Lie, you did not disappoint Elder Zhou Yin's expectations. You have finally mastered the ‘Profound Silver War Body’ with the help of his secret method. From now on, your strength will soar!"

Helian Lie's face, on the other hand, had a completely hideous look. Slowly caressing his iron-like big and tall body, he spoke through clenched teeth, "For this entire month, I had to suffer an inhumane pain day in and day out without even a single breath of respite. In hopes to transform my body into the ‘Profound Silver War Body’, I have soaked my body in the ‘Mysterious Silver Strengthening Serum’ every day and night without rest, suffering an indescribable amount of pain. As a result, my Spiritual Root Development Quotient was forcefully raised to 88%. From now on, my road to cultivation will be completely flat, allowing me to gallop straight ahead!"

"Finally, it is the moment to pluck the fruit. Tomorrow, I will definitely become the ‘Floating Spear City's Champion of the College Entrance Examination'!"

Helian Ba nodded his head. "Yes, you must become the 'Floating Spear City's Champion of the College Entrance Examination'. It is no longer just related to only you, nor is it solely a matter for our Helian Family — now, your college entrance examination score will determine the winner of the ongoing struggle between Elder Zhou Yin and Fiend Blade Peng Hai!"

"Elder Zhou Yin is an expert from the older generation of the Crimson Nimbus Sect, while Fiend Blade Peng Hai is the most recent rising star; it is a struggle between the older generation and the younger generation. They appear to be in harmony; however, this is only on the surface. Elder Zhou Yin had only invited Peng Hai to train the new students at Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School in hopes to create an illusion that the two gets along harmoniously.”

"But in the dark, the two have had a lot of disagreements. Their contradictions run very deep — the two have even secretly fought several times!"

"The college entrance examination this year can also be considered as another form of fighting! Elder Zhou Yin is optimistic about you; he believes that you are a promising student that is worthy to be trained. That’s why he has poured so many resources to nurture you. On the other hand, Peng Hai seems to be supporting that little bastard, Li Yao. I heard that he had even lent his training room to that little bastard. He has made it clear that he is standing behind that bastard!"

Upon hearing Li Yao's name, all of Helian Lie’s muscles instantly swelled, doubling the size of his body. Stroking his lower abdomen, he slowly spoke word by word, "Li Yao, I will always remember this punch for the rest of my life. After the college entrance exam, I will definitely make you pay for it!"

Helian Ba said, "As long as you become the 'Floating Spear City's Champion of the College Entrance Examination' and prove that Elder Zhou Yin's insight was correct, his position in the Crimson Nimbus Sect will be more stable, possibly enough for him to suppress Fiend Blade Peng Hai. By then, it will be completely okay to take revenge on Li Yao however you want. Elder Zhou Yin and our Helian Family's several Elders will completely support you. However, if your test results aren't good..."

Helian Lie narrowed his eyes. "That’s impossible, father. You have seen with your own eyes the kind of inhumane suffering I have gone through this month. The title of Floating Spear City's Champion of the College Entrance Examination is already in my bag. No one could take it from me!"

"Alright, our Helian Family’s members should be domineering like this. Father will be waiting for good news!"

"Right. Father, is there any news regarding Li Yao? Is he going to be taking the college entrance exam?"

"It is rather strange. I have thoroughly checked up on the list of examinees who have personally registered their identity for this year's college entrance examination in Floating Spear City, yet out of the 5788 examinees who have personally registered, Li Yao's name wasn't there."

Helian Lie was surprised for a moment. "Maybe he has transferred to another school?"

Helian Ba shook his head. "I have asked all the high-quality high schools in the city and even inquired some relatively strong, ordinary high school, but there is no record of him. It seems that the brat has yet to recover his strength and is not going to be taking part in this year's college entrance examination."

"Oh! What a pity. These days, I have been busy training and did not put any effort to look for that waste. Once the college entrance exam is over and I get the title of Floating Spear City's Champion of the College Entrance Examination, I will look for him... and slowly compare notes with him!"

...

3 O'clock in the night, approximately twenty-five kilometers away, in an another antique villa.

Si Jiaxue softly yawned, rubbed her beautiful sleepy eyes, and carefully shut down the crystal processor hologram.

"Xiao Xue, rest a little. Tomorrow is the college entrance examination; right now, the most important thing is not reading but a good night sleep. You have to stay in your best state," a chubby, middle-aged woman behind her said with concern.

Si Jiaxue faintly smiled and said, "Mom, do not worry. It’s just a college entrance exam — it's a piece of cake for me. Four hours of sleep will be enough."

...

4 O'clock in the night, approximately thirty kilometers away, inside a dense jungle.

From inside a holiday cottage completely constructed from wood, the voices and laughter of women along with tender moans were coming again and again.

"Young Master Zheng, Young Master Zheng, you should take it easy. You have to take the college entrance exam soon, Young Master Zheng!" On a large pink bed, seven beautiful and charming girls with jade-like bodies laid on the bed. They were all dead drunk.

Zheng Dongming's two cat-like eyes shone as he lewdly laughed and said, "Finally, after dieting for two months, this young master has finally recovered. Naturally, before anything else, I must first gratify myself. College entrance exam? That’s nothing!"

…

In addition to them, in the entire Star Glory Federation, a countless number of high school students were having difficulty sleeping as they impatiently waited for the arrival of dawn. There were some who were sleepless until the darkest moment before dawn. But finally unable to endure, they fell into deep slumber.

And when they opened their eyes again, it was already 8 O'clock in the morning.

"Sh*t! The exam is going to start at 9 O'clock, get up quickly!"

Countless students throughout the federation jumped from their bed, as if they had heard the sounds of soldiers charging. They rushed out from the gate, rushed to their school, and rushed to the examination room!

Li Yao too was among them.

While the faces of the other examinees were filled with impatience, too much excitement, or panic, Li Yao’s face was, instead, devoid of these emotions; he was calm and unperturbed.

Keeping the same expression all the way to the classroom, Li Yao wormed his way through the examination chamber as its gate gradually closed. Only after he was inside the chamber and isolated from everyone else did a vibrant look appear on his face. From the depths of his eyes, a sliver of thirst could be found...

If Fatty Long and Ye Lang from the Magical Equipment Graveyard saw this expression, they would definitely recognize it within a single glance —— this was the look the “Vulture” gave when he was about to pounce on his prey.

The college entrance examination which would determine the fates of countless students in the federation officially started!

The entire Star Glory Federation was covered in a sheet of calm; no matter which city it was, it was completely quiet. A few flying shuttles that were as slow as a snail were quietly crawling their way through the sky. Even those cultivators who usually whistled across the sky as they flew on their flying swords had all now become cautious. They did not dare to make even a pin-drop noise.

Who would dare to disturb the examinees at this moment when they were giving their all? Even if it were those Nascent Soul Stage old devils, they would be drowned in the hundreds of millions of furious parents.

One hour... Two hours...

Countless examinees were diligently doing to the best of their abilities in the examination chambers, while countless parents eagerly waited outside.

Three hours elapsed. For the Star Glory Federation, those three hours were both the most tranquil and the most tense.

Finally ——

After more than three hours of examination, it was finally over. One by one, examinees who had finished their exam early left the examination chambers. They were all profusely sweating as they left the campus with ease, seemingly as if a weight had been lifted off their mind. They were the cause of the first wave of excitement and cries.

After five hours, the time allotted for the exam was over. Every examinee was forced to leave their examination chamber.

The Star Glory Federation resumed its ordinary days of hustling and bustling, even more so than five hours ago.

Every parent and every examinee were gathered inside the school, waiting for the college entrance examination results to be announced!

The examination chamber used for taking the college entrance examination were all equipped with an advanced crystal processor with ultra-high computing capability. When the examinees kill the beasts in the Virtual Space, it was possible to calculate the examinee's score in real time.

Theoretically, the moment the examinees walk out of the examination chamber, it was possible for the crystal processor to calculate the final college entrance examination score.

However, in order to ensure the fairness of the college entrance examination, after the final score was calculated, it would then be transmitted to other crystal processors in the spirit network to be reviewed again.

Each and every examinee's score would be calculated by seven different crystal processor, and at the end, when each crystal processor gave exactly the same result, it would be determined that the review was correct. Afterward, it would be uploaded to the main crystal processor of the city’s board of education.

The entire process would approximately need one hour.

One hour later, the main crystal processor of the city’s board of education would announce the results and rankings of all the examinees, and the examinees would be able to inquire through their own mini crystal processor.

However, the top-quality high schools like the Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School who had the strength to obtain the title of 'Floating Spear City's Champion of the

College Entrance Examination' would set up a huge hologram in the most conspicuous place, displaying the names and scores of the city’s top 100, 500, and 1000 students.

At the Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School, the principal, the trustees, the Head of the Teachers Office, the teachers, and the thousands of students as well as the thousands of parents were all utterly quiet as not a single sound could be heard. A tense expression could be seen on everyone’s face; their eyes were never taken off the hologram set at the center of the playground; they were all quietly awaiting for the final results to be announced.

Helian Lie stood out in the crowd like a stork in a flock of fowls; his entire body was surrounded by a powerful aura. No one dared to be within half a step close to him, thus in an area of approximately one meter in radius, there was no one else.

With both hand wrapped around his shoulders, he appeared to be perfectly calm and collected. However, if one look closer at this fingers, they were lightly tapping, revealing the restlessness within his heart.

Suddenly, the originally pitch black hologram slightly flickered before it was flooded with ripples one after another.

The deathly silent crowd promptly turned restless.

"Look, the results are going to be announced!"

"I wonder if there is anyone in our school who could grab ahold of the title of 'Floating Spear City's Champion of the College Entrance Examination'?"

"Rumor has it that this time we have two very powerful candidates. They look very promising!"

"Ah, results are out!"

The ripples in the hologram spread faster and faster as a series of blood-like red numbers fell from the top of the hologram like rain, creating a list of hundreds of examinees with their names and achievements.

The top most line displayed ——

"Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School's Helian Lie, College Entrance Examination Total Score - 715, Spiritual Root Development Quotient - 88%, Final Score - 629.2, First in Provisional Score Ranking!"

Chapter 90: Breaking News

Chapter 90: Breaking News

"Wow!"

The crowd remained silent for half a second before suddenly erupting into a pandemonium of cheers and exclamations.

"Helian Lie is Floating Spear City’s champion in this year’s college entrance examinations! A Spiritual Root Development Quotient of 88% and a total score of 629.2! In recent years, such a good score is rare!"

"After all these years, our Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School has finally produced a Floating Spear City's champion of the College Entrance Examination again!"

"Wow, look! Zheng Dongming from the Phoenix Ridge Second High School is second place. His Spiritual Root Development Quotient is 2% higher than Helian Lie, but his score is lower, making his final score just half a point lower than Helian Lie — that’s amazing!"

"Look, Si Jiaxue, another student of Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School, is in third place and is just half a point behind Zheng Dongming!"

"Two of the top three are students from the Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School. This time, Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School definitely deserves to be called the top high school in Floating Spear City!"

"I did it!"

Helian Lie yelled in excitement. Fiercely punching the air with his fist, his fist had unexpectedly given rise to ripples in the space before him.

Nearby, Principal Zhao Shude, the Disciplinary Head Hei Mianshen, and as well as the various trustees of the school took a deep breath in succession. Their faces revealed a look of ecstasy; they were all mad with joy.

Helian Ba was extremely complacent as he grinned from ear to ear.

"Old Zhao, this year, our Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School has a record-breaking harvest, and we have completely suppressed the Phoenix Ridge Second High School's fame!"

"Yes, due to this year's exam results, many good seedlings will definitely choose our Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School next year. If the students are good, the results will keep getting better and better. Now that we have gotten rid of the predicaments from the previous years and have stepped onto this virtuous cycle, we will only get stronger and stronger!"

"Old Zhao, this was only possible because of all of your meritorious deeds. As soon as this news reaches the Crimson Nimbus Sect, presumably even the Sect Master will be very happy!"

"How can that be? First and foremost, our students were able to get such a good score because of the collective support of every trustee. Credit also needs to be given to the hard-working teacher who had put a lot of effort into each student. Finally, it is also because of the hard work of our students. How could it be related to this Zhao? Hahahaha!"

Zhao Shude laughed very jovially. Over the past these months, Li Yao's matter had been stuck in his throat. He always felt as if there was a thorn in his heart; it was very uncomfortable.

Today, all the troubles had vanished in a puff of smoke. He felt as if all the dark clouds shrouding his heart had vanished; he felt as calm and clear as the clear sky and as boundless as the sea and sky. He was relaxed to the extreme. Even if he were granted the freedom and everlasting life of an immortal, he would not change!

"Beep Beep Beep!"

Someone had sent him a spiritual crane message. It was Elder Zhou Yin, who was the person in charge of education in the Crimson Nimbus Sect.

In the hologram, a smile that was as bright and as beautiful as a spring was hung on Zhou Yin’s face, as if hundreds of flowers were in full bloom.

"Principal Zhao, this time, the performance of the Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School is very good; two of the top three are students of Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School. Even Sect Master came to me for advice. Hahahaha. It is all due to your meritorious service. After discussing with the Sect Master, we have decided it will be better to let you, Principal Zhao, personally speak in the Sect's General Assembly. What do you think?"

Zhao Shude was so excited that he was about to have a heart attack; his face was flushed red to the ears. "It is all due to Elder Zhou's care, it is all due to Elder Zhou's care!"

Zhou Yin waved his arm.

"Fostering begets fostering, and hard work is paid with hard work. In short, this time, we got a big win and those who had done meritorious service will be rewarded! Ha, even the stocks of our Crimson Nimbus Sect are beginning to fluctuate. It seems they have already received the news. Our stock prices are going to soar! First, let's not talk about you. I still have to discuss with Sect Master about how we’re going to disseminate the news to the public — we are going to completely spread the good news! So you must be prepared to do several press releases. In a short while, we are certainly going to hold a press conference. Later, there will be a celebration party which will span over a few days. You and Helian Lie are going to be the main guests, so you can not be careless!"

"Yes! Elder Zhou, don't worry. I will ardently promote the Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School!" Zhao Shude was radiating in happiness; his entire face was flushed red like a completely ripe persimmon.

Soon after, from the sky came deafening whistles. A dozen or so flying shuttles were approaching at very high speed.

"It's the reporters! The reporters from all the major news channels have arrived!" Several parents with good eyesight immediately recognized the flying shuttles.

Sure enough, the flying shuttle had yet to land, but several impatient journalists jumped out from the flying shuttle. With a murderous look on their faces, they plunged into the crowd and started shouting at the top of their lungs.

"Student Helian Lie? Where is Student Helian Lie?"

"Student Helian Lie, you are the Floating Spear City's Champion of this year’s college entrance examination. Please tell us how you are feeling."

"Student Helian Lie, may I ask how do you usually train? Can you share some of your training experience with the other students?"

"Principal Zhao, Principal Zhao Shude! Since the sudden appearance of the cultivation genius 'Fiend Blade Peng Hai' a few years back, your Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School has been completely silent. In Floating Spear City, which is one of the important cultivation city in the federation, you have been continuously suppressed by the Phoenix Ridge Second High School. But why has two geniuses suddenly appeared this year in Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School? Please tell us about your thoughts, Principal Zhao!"

"There is no need to hurry; you don't need to be so anxious. Friends from the media, please be patient. I will answer all your questions, but it’ll be in the press conference which will be held very soon. If you have any questions, please wait till then. I promise I will speak without any reservation — I'll tell you all I know!"

Zhao Shude's face was radiating happiness, grinning from ear to ear.

Helian Ba also squeezed to his son's side and patted Helian Lie's shoulder with force. He could not hide his joy. "Atta boy, you have saved your father's face. Well done, you did well!"

"Are you Helian Lie? I am a reporter from Floating Spear Morning Post. First. Please reveal a bit of your experiences in private with us!" A few reporters recognized Helian Lie and desperately squeezed over.

After the excitement at the start, Helian Lie became very calm. He swept over the hologram, shook his head, and said, "Wait! Only 80% of the scores of Floating Spear City’s examinees have been calculated; there are still some districts where the scores of their examinees have yet to be calculated. This is not the final ranking."

Because there were too many examinees, the amount of data was too much, thus all the data was divided into batches, calculated one by one, and fed into the database.

Until now, there were several slum districts where the examinees' scores had not yet been uploaded and calculated.

However, in light of the results from previous years, these examinees from the slum district would not raise any big storm. After all, they didn't have enough money to put food on their table, so how were they going to train? How could they score within the top one thousand of Floating Spear City’s College Entrance Examination?

Even if they somehow made their way into the top one thousand list, it would be near impossible for them to create any big effect on top hundred. At least, in the last few decades, it was unheard of for any high school within the slum districts to have an examinee who paved a road to the city’s top one hundred.

Therefore, once the top hundred students were determined, it was 100% certain that the ranking would not change!

Very soon, at the bottom of the hologram, the progress had jumped to "90%". Citywide 90% of the examinees’ scores had been uploaded to the database and had been calculated.

"Now, the examinees' scores from the three districts had been uploaded. There has been no change in the top thousand rankings. First place is still Helian Lie — are you now ready for the interview?"

"Wait a minute!" Helian Lie gaze still didn’t leave the hologram. On the back his hand, blue veins were bulging.

"93%! This time, even the scores of examinees who had personally registered for the college entrance examination have been calculated. You are still first. Student Helian Lie, please tell us about your experiences. You absolutely can not hide it! Student Helian Lie, the majority of viewers are now anxiously waiting for your interview!"

"Wait a minute!"

"97%! In the entire Floating Spear City, only the scores of the examinees from the Limestone District have yet to be calculated. The Limestone District is a famous slum district. The few high schools it has are all rotten to the extreme. Even last year, not a single student from the Limestone District could enter the top ten thousand in the entire city! Student Helian Lie, now can you give us an interview!"

Several journalists shouted at the top of their voice. They had almost plugged Helian Lie’s mouth with their crystal mic.

"Only the Limestone District is left?"

Helian Lie heaved a sigh of relief. His entire body seemed to be brimming with energy and vitality, radiating with cheerfulness.

He nodded his head at the several journalists, took the crystal mic, and started speaking with fervor and confidence, "Respected viewers, parents, students, and teachers, hello! I am Floating Spear City's champion of the college entrance examination, Helian Lie. A reporter had asked me if I have any tips to give — Of course, I do! I have three tips: first is hard work, second is hard work, and the third is work hard like a madman! I believe as long as you have worked hard enough, everyone can create miracles..."

He was prepared to speak some more when he noticed all the journalists, parents, and students were all dumbfounded. As if they had seen some ghost, they were all firmly staring at the huge hologram behind him.

Helian Lie felt as if his heart had been ruthlessly clutched by an invisible hand. He immediately turned his head and noticed that the hologram, which had been entirely still till now, was beginning to fluctuate. At the bottom of the ranking, there were some changes happening.

"Wow, breaking news!"

"Impossible, it is absolutely impossible!"

"An examinee from the Limestone District has actually made his way into the top thousand of the Floating Spear City — Rank 998!"

"That’s incredible! Student Ge Qiang from Limestone High School is truly incredible. He has actually subverted so many competitors from high-quality high schools and paved his way into the top thousand. Amazing, this is truly amazing!"

One by one, several journalists started talking about him. All of them were talking of going to the Limestone High School to interview Student Ge Qiang after interviewing the college entrance examination champion, Helian Lie.

Helian Lie once again took a long deep breath, wiped the cold sweat from his forehead, glanced at the progress rate at the bottom of the hologram, and found that 99.9% of the examinees' scores had been fed into the database.

Only the waste school, the "Floating Spear City's Mining Clan High School" that was at the bottom of the ranking in last year’s college entrance examination, had not entered the database.

Helian Lie collected himself. On his face appeared a smile once again.

"As everyone can see, as I have said before, as long as you work hard enough, it is possible for everyone to create miracles! At the moment, behind me, nothing less than a miracle has occurred. An examinee from the Limestone High School has actually made his way into the top thousand of the Floating Spear City's college entrance examination rankings. You can imagine how hard it must have been! In fact, you should not be interviewing me, you should go to Limestone High School and interview Fellow Student Ge Qiang. It's not strange for me to get the title of college entrance examination champion. Fellow Student Ge Qiang is truly worthy..."

Helian Lie's voice once again abruptly came to a stop.

He discovered that everyone in front of him, regardless of whether it was the reporters, parents, students, teachers, head instructor, trustees, and even his own father, Helian Ba—

Everyone was staring with their mouth agape, as if they have all lost their wits — they were all extremely horrified!

This time, the expression on their faces was completely different from a moment ago.

A moment ago, it was like they had seen a ghost.

But at this moment, as if they had become a ghost, as if they had become a wandering ghost, as if they had become a zombie… or as if some spirit glyph had been pasted onto their forehead, suppressing their bodies — their bodies had become completely rigid!

In an instant, the large campus became dead silent, much like an abandoned cemetery.

Thousands of people stood upright like the thousands of weed growing by a tombstone!

Helian Lie's breath became extremely rapid. Every one of his joints was as if it had been covered in rust, even turning his neck had become extremely difficult for him.

"Look, you, you quickly take look, quickly look..."

A reported stammered. His gaze was as if it had been stuck on something behind Helian Lie; he was unable to move.

Helian Lie's mind went blank. With all his strength, he turned his head inch by inch, forcing his own gaze to fall upon the hologram.

At the top of the hologram, just above his name, appeared a brand new name.

The name was like a ghost — from the abyss of the large amount of data, it silently made its way to the top, suddenly climbing above Helian Lie!

"Floating Spear City's Mining Clan High School's Student Li Yao, college entrance examination total score 781, Spiritual Root Development Quotient 92%, final score 718.52, citywide first!"

Chapter 91: Where is the Champion of the College Entrance Examination?

Chapter 91: Where is the Champion of the College Entrance Examination?

"No——"

Helian Lie let out a heartrending cry as thick red blood from his neck spread everywhere, instantly swallowing his entire face. As his face alternated between pale and flushed in turns, his facial features completely twisted together as if it had been smashed like a broken drum!

He felt as if stars were dancing before his eyes, as if someone was playing the drums next to his ears, as if everyone was laughing at him! His temples were throbbing as if two midgets were about to drill out of his temples. His entire body was shuddering, barely able to remain standing.

"Li Yao! Li Yao! Where did you come from!? A Spiritual Root Development Quotient of 92%? A full hundred points higher than me? It's impossible! It is absolutely impossible! There must be a mistake!"

Helian Lie gasped for breath. In his heart, he was screaming in madness. Deep down his throat, it was flooding with an unstoppable tide.

Not far away from him, Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School's Principal Zhao Shude, Disciplinary Head Hei

Mianshen, and the thousand other trustees were all in a trance. They were all on the verge of collapse. The look on their faces could be described in one sentence — as if they were bereaved of both parents!

"How is this possible? How could a student from the Mining Clan High School actually defeat our student and make his way to the top, seizing the title of Floating Spear City's Champion of the College Entrance Examination?"

"Li Yao? Yes — Li Yao!"

With foreheads completely drenched in sweat, Zhao Shude and Hei Mianshen glanced at each other before stealing a glance at Helian Ba. The all-smiling Helian Ba who was like a peach flower in blossom just a moment ago has now wilted; his complexion was completely pale. He turned into an ice statue.

The quickest to react were the reporters; shortly after the silence, they started bouncing one by one as if they had been shot with a stimulant.

"Breaking news, super breaking news! The college entrance examination champion actually appeared in the worst high school in Floating Spear City! Today's ratings are going to go through the roof!"

"Wait! Li Yao… Li Yao... Why does this name sound familiar!?"

"Hey, isn't Li Yao that 'Fleeting Fiend Star'? He had actually recovered? Isn't he a lot stronger than before?"

"Something must have happened — I am sure something must have happened here! Wasn't Li Yao a student of Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School? Why did a student who was able to win the title of Floating Spear City's champion of the college entrance examination take the college entrance examination at the Mining Clan High School?"

"Principal Zhao, please explain it to us. Why did Student Li Yao's name appear alongside Mining Clan High School?"

"Yea, Principal Zhao, what actually happened? Why has Student Li Yao left the Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School? How can you bear to let such a cultivation genius leave your school?"

Under the questioning of numerous reporters, Zhao Shude wanted to cry but had no tears. His complexion turned pale, his lips started shivering, he continuously shook his head and said, "No comments, no comments!"

"Brothers, what are we waiting for? Let's quickly go to the Mining Clan High School and interview Student Li Yao!"

Noticing the deathly expression as if he was devoid of all life on Zhao Shude's face, a few reporters with quick wits instantly reacted and shouted within their heart, ‘Why should we waste our time talking to this guy? Someone with authority has yet to arrive!’

Suddenly, the situation took a complete turn. A moment ago, several dozen reporters were swarming around Helian Lie and Zhao Shude, while in the next moment, they were all completely scattered. One by one, the flying shuttles impatiently soared into the sky and sprang towards the Limestone District.

"You, all of you come back to me!"

Helian Lie's pair of eyes were blood-red. Unable to contain his fury, he tightly grabbed the sleeve of a journalist and madly shouted, "It must be a mistake made by the crystal processor! I am the Floating Spear City's champion of the college entrance examination, it can only be me! Quickly interview me, quickly interview me! You bunch of bastards are as blind as a bat!"

"Don’t waste my time!"

The reporter exerted his strength to hurl him but was unable to. Suddenly, he flared up with fury as he ruthlessly shoved at Helian Lie's stomach.

With Helian lie's strength, it would simply be impossible for him to get knocked down by a reporter, but at this moment, his body was as though all the bones in his body had been removed. From this shove alone, he softly fell onto the ground, landing on his ass.

The reporter did not even spare him a single glance. He hurled his sleeve and quickly left.

Helian Lie sat on the ground for a while with a sluggish look and a forced smile. Suddenly, he felt his stomach churn as if lightning and clouds were billowing.

"Poof"

He vomited out everything inside.

—— This was the sequelae that remained after he had suffered Li Yao's "Heart Piercing Hammer". Every time his tension reached the extreme, he would be unable to contain his vomit.

In the contest between him and Li Yao, Helian Lie had been thoroughly crushed. He was so miserable that one could not bear to look at him!

…

Limestone District, Mining Clan High School.

Compared to Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School where the scene was seething with enthusiasm, the atmosphere at the Mining Clan High School was significantly relaxed. Here, they simply didn't set any big hologram. Every examinee was querying their own results and rankings through their mini crystal processors.

Here, the examinees all knew their own limitations. They never thought they would be able to get into those big universities. They were all completely satisfied with getting into some technical schools.

So after the results of the college entrance examination was out, there wasn't an ounce of tension visible on examinees’ faces here. 30-40% of the students were gathered together as they talked and laughed.

"I scored 345 points, I am ranked 75562 in the city. Haha, it's enough. This score should be enough for me to enter the 'Mysterious Fire Cooking School'!"

"Mine is also not bad; I scored 341 points, but I have not decided which school I want to attend. My father explicitly said that I am not allowed to learn to operate mining equipment or learn any crafts related to mining. It has always been my dream to be a beautician!"

While the countless examinees of slum district were talking and laughing, deafening roars suddenly came from the sky one after another as several dozen rainbows flashed over from the sky above the Mining Clan High School, leaving a trail of colorful flames behind as they slowly dispersed.

"Wow, so many luxurious flying shuttles!"

"Look at that. That flying shuttle seems to have the insignia of the city's board of education!"

"Our Limestone District is just notorious for being a slum district. Why are there so many luxurious flying shuttle approaching here? They seem to be flying towards Limestone High School!"

Soon, all the students received the news. The "Limestone High School" belonging to the Limestone District had an examinee called "Ge Qiang" who, as if possessed by a god, had unexpectedly paved his way into the top thousand in the Floating Spear City's college entrance examination rankings.

The entire campus suddenly burst into exclamations.

"Amazing! I never would have expected that an examinee from our slum district would be able to get into the top thousand of Floating Spear City!"

"I know this Ge Qiang. His mother died very early on and his father was a miner, but he was seriously injured in an accident. As a result, his entire body was paralyzed. The whole family relied on the meager subsidy to survive, so Ge Qiang worked extremely hard. He wanted to get a good score in order to cure his father and reverse the fate of his family!"

"Yes, several times I woke up at 4-5 AM in the morning and saw Ge Qiang carrying a heavy stone running down the street. All the neighbors called him an out and out training maniac!"

"Are so many reporters as well as the officials from the board of education going to interview Ge Qiang? This kid is a perfect example of a fish leaping across the dragon gate — he has reached the sky in a single leap!"

All the examinees of the Mining Clan High School were feeling envious of Ge Qiang's result. Such a good result was enough for him to choose a good university, and perhaps some companies under a cultivation sect might spend money to train him. It could be said that from now on, his fate had completely changed.

However, who asked him to train like a madman?

No sweets without sweat. For such a result, he had paid for it with his sweat and no one was going to get jealous over that.

While the examinees were chatting with each other, an extremely strange scene appeared in the sky. Those luxurious flying shuttles, which happened to be rushing towards the Limestone High School and were about to disappear in the horizon, suddenly made a U-turn, and much to everyone's surprise, they were all directly flying toward the Mining Clan High School!

Many more luxurious flying shuttles were closing in on the Mining Clan High School from every corner of the city. The space around the Mining Clan High School was completely packed!

"What... what's going on?"

All the examinees and their parents were mind-boggled. They all stood still like wooden chickens in their place; they didn't even dare to breathe loudly.

There were so many luxurious flying shuttles, with the cheapest among them being worth a few million bucks. Why were such flying shuttles, without any previous arrangement, acting in consort and gathering at the Mining Clan High School?

This was the last ranked high school in Floating Spear City with the worst of the worst teaching quality!

A while later ——

"Where is the college entrance examination champion?"

A large group of luxuriously dressed cultivators with spiritual light looming around their bodies jumped out of the luxurious flying shuttles. They could not wait to land on the campus.

They were the managers of various sects in the Floating Spear City responsible for soliciting talent.

"Where is the college entrance examination champion?"

Behind the group, a bunch of officials from the board of education followed one after another.

"Where is the college entrance examination champion?"

A large group of journalists followed after them as they boisterously squeezed into the crowd.

The examinees and the parents of the Mining Clan High School started at each other before looking at the numerous well-dressed high society figures with a strange look in their eyes.

As though they were looking at a bunch of idiots and madmen.

—— If they were not idiots and madmen, why would they come looking for some college entrance examination champion in this ghastly place, the Mining Clan High School?

"You still don't know? Your Fellow Sstudent Li Yao is this year’s college entrance examination champion! Quickly, ask Student Li Yao to come out and give an interview! Li Yao, Student Li Yao!"

An impatient reporter started his mini crystal processor and adjusted the hologram to show the Floating Spear City's College Entrance Examination Ranking.

Reading the small characters on the first row of the list, all the examinees and the parents at Mining Clan High School were feeling confused and disoriented as stars danced before their eyes.

After a silence of an entire ten seconds, the huge campus was like a dormant volcano that suddenly recovered from its stupor. In an instant, the entire campus burst into deafening cries and exclamations.

"Are you serious? Our Mining Clan High School's examinee actually became the Floating Spear City's champion of the college entrance examination?"

"My god, is my eyesight correct? I am not seeing wrong, right?"

"Incredible, it is truly incredible. This is simply, this is simply ——"

The reporter was getting anxious. He waved his hand and shouted, "Respected students and the parents, everyone should first take it easy. Can you please first ask Student Li Yao to come out and speak a few words? He is the anticipated college entrance examination champion, you can not be able to hide him any longer!"

"Right, Li Yao, where did Student Li Yao go?" All the examinees put their head together, asking each other. Because Li Yao was a transfer student who just joined the Mining Clan High School a month back and usually didn't come to school to revise, the majority of the examinees didn't know him. After asking everyone nearby, an examinee finally said with hesitation, "I just passed the boiler room a while ago. I think I saw Student Li Yao there. He seemed to be... repairing the boiler."

"What!"

All the reporters screamed as if they were all rooster whose neck had been stepped upon.

Chapter 92: From out the Boiler Room Came the Champion!

Chapter 92: From out the Boiler Room Came the Champion!

Li Yao was indeed repairing the boiler.

In the entire Star Glory Federation, he was one of the examinees who had completed their college entrance examination early; it only took him three hours to complete all the examination questions. And immediately after, he had left the examination chamber without any delay.

There were still two hours before the college entrance examination was over. In the meantime, Li Yao chose to wander around. With his hands behind his back, he leisurely strolled around the campus. Unknowingly, he had arrived at an abandoned bath house behind the school.

When the Limestone District was in its most prosperous period, the Mining Clan High School once had more than 10,000 students. And in the residential area behind the school, a large bathhouse was built to provide students convenience in their free time. During holidays, it was even open to the community.

However, the Limestone District gradually declined with the depletion of the lodes as the number of Mining Clan High School students became fewer and fewer over time. Hence, as the number of people who came to take a bath was low, heating a large pool of water for a handful of people was simply too uneconomical. It was unknown when it began, but the bathhouse has been closed since.

After being unattended for several decades, the boiler room which was responsible for providing heat to the bathhouse was laden with rust and covered in spider webs and dust.

Through the broken window, Li Yao casually swept a glance inside the boiler room. His eyes suddenly lit up as his line of sight transfixed upon a pitch black boiler.

In the boiler room, he discovered a towering boiler which had been manufactured nine or so decades ago — the "Fire Bear" Boiler. This type of boiler was one of the first civilian magical equipment that utilized 3-dimensional array architect. The core of the boiler was enclosed in two layers flame array glyphs, consisting of an upper and a lower layer. These two layer acted as a cooling system that made it possible to remove any potential excess heat energy in a steady stream, thereby allowing the temperature to remain extremely stable. Its structure was a classic.

Previously, Li Yao had seen the schematics of this type of boiler only in a book; he never had the chance to lay his eyes upon it.

As a magical equipment fanatic, naturally, he would not miss such a great opportunity.

The door to the boiler room simply wasn't locked. Its hinges had all become rusty. Li Yao exerted his strength to push open the door.

"Crash!"

With a loud crash, the door was forcibly opened, causing the dust in the boiler room to swirl around in the air as bats and small birds flew out.

Some of the bird poop had even landed on Li Yao's head.

Li Yao simply didn't pay any attention to all of these things. His pair of eyes shone like a rat who had discovered a sack of rice. Ignoring everything else, he swooped over and hugged the "Fire Bear" Boiler as he began to research the boiler with rapt attention.

For the entirety of three or so hours, he was completely immersed in the wonderful world of magical equipment.

Although the Fire Bear Boiler was a magical equipment from almost a century ago, its double-layer array structure was astonishingly mysterious. A total of 36 fire array glyphs were connected through over a hundred very fine crystal wires. It could even be said that just moving a single wire could affect the entire structure. Completely immersed within it, every design left an unforgettable memory in Li Yao's mind.

Unconsciously, Li Yao had bent down and crawled his way into the boiler. His face, his hands, and his entire body was covered in oil. His entire body was dirty and dusty; the only thing left untainted were his two rows of neat and tidy white teeth. He could not get any more unkempt than his current state.

His eyes, on the other hand, were getting brighter and brighter. His ten fingers as gentle as a goose feather lightly whisked the crystal wire, as if he were a world-renowned zitherist lightly playing the zither and creating a beautiful tune.

Vaguely, he seemed to grasp the essence of the 3-dimensional array structure. In his eyes, the components of the huge boiler gradually turned translucent; within the depths of his mind, the large boiler was continuously being disassembled before being reassembled into its working state.

"So it was like this — this is completely ingenious! The dissipating fire-type spiritual energy is collected again in order to lower the amount of wasted spiritual energy. This design is truly a work of art!" Li Yao clucked his tongue in marvel.

"Student Li Yao? Student Li Yao? Li Yao!"

Principal Mao ran with a red flush that extended from his face to his neck. Standing at the entrance of the boiler room, he leaned on his knees as he gasped for breath for a good while. He shouted for several times, but it was all in vain as he didn't receive a single response. He was truly unable to catch Li Yao's attention. He took a look around before picking up a wooden torch and lightly poked Li Yao’s ass with it.

"Student Li Yao!"

"Wait! Principal Mao, whatever it is, it can wait. I will soon figure it out… so it was like this, so it was like this… this is too formidable! Why didn't I think of this sooner!? Originally, these three crystal wires were working in conjunction!"

Li Yao slapped his thigh. Without turning around, he said in excitement, "Principal, can you wait again? I'm absolutely sure that I can fix this boiler — it will be as good as new!"

Principal Mao didn't know whether to laugh or cry. He yelled, "Li Yao! It's getting late. You still want to repair this boiler? Quickly come out now. You have to give interviews. You are Floating Spear City's champion of the college entrance examination!"

"Don't yell. The echoes inside the boiler room make my head hurt. Whatever it is, it can wait for me. Let's talk about it after I repair the boiler. Even the college entrance exam's cham... what? I am the college entrance exam's champion!?"

Inside the boiler, Li Yao let out a wolfish howl and jumped in excitement.

"Boom!"

But soon after, the entire boiler room started shaking as the dust accumulated upon the beams of the room fell and covered the whole boiler room.

Li Yao had forgotten that he was still inside the boiler. His head violently collided with the steel plates as a bulge soon appeared on the boiler as well as on his head.

Li Yao did not care about the pain. Holding his head, he crawled out of the boiler and took two deep breaths as he collected himself. He grabbed Principal Mao's shoulder and started shaking him. "Principal, am I really Floating Spear City's champion of the college entrance exam?"

"Hey hey hey, can’t you spare my old bones? Won't you know after checking the net?" Tears of pain trickled down from Principal Mao's eyes.

Li Yao immediately let go and somewhat embarrassingly scratched his head, thereby sprinkling the dust from his messy hair. Starting up the crystal processor, he opened the page dedicated to the college entrance examination. Entering his student ID before clicking to confirm, his score and ranking soon floated up on the display.

"Floating Spear City's Mining Clan High School Li Yao, College Entrance Examination total score - 781, Spiritual

Root Development Quotient - 92%, final score - 718.52, citywide first!"

"Awesome!"

Li Yao's excitement had reached its peak. He even did three backflips before jumping three feet high into the air as he violently sent out a punch mid-air!

"I did it!"

"In one month, I, a waste with a Spiritual Root Development Quotient of 7%, has once again become a cultivation genius with a Spiritual Root Development Quotient of 92%. And I had also won the title of ‘Floating Spear City's Champion of the College Entrance Examination’!"

"I didn't disappoint Sun Biao, Peng Hai, Ding Lingdang, Grandpa Wang, and Principal Mao's expectation!"

"The most important thing is that I'm one step closer to my dream. With this score, I can pick any one of the Nine Elite Universities!"

"Student Li Yao, calm down. There are hundreds of reporters waiting outside to get your interview. Don't get excited. Calm down, you have to be calm!" Principal Mao said in a trembling voice.

He was asking Li Yao to remain calm, yet his appearance revealed the opposite of anything but calm; he appeared as though he had been injected with a large dosage of some stimulant. From his neck to his ear, his face was flushed red. His arms, his legs, and even his entire body was trembling; he was excited to the extreme.

The College Entrance Examination Champion, ah! Since the establishment of Floating Spear City's Mining Clan High School, for over a century, let alone the College Entrance Examination Champion, not a single student had appeared within the top thousand. How could Principal Mao remain calm? How could he be calm and collected?

If not for his old and frail body, he too would not be able to contain himself and would somersault a few times like Li Yao!

Upon hearing Principal Mao’s words, Li Yao took a long, deep breath as he forcefully rubbed his cheeks and muttered to himself, "Calm down, calm down. It's just Floating Spear City's champion of the college entrance exam. I will become a Master Refiner in the future. My name will move the Federation and shake the entire Heaven Origin Sector. How can I lose my bearing just from such a small scene? That’s too embarrassing..."

As he spoke these words, a calm smile emerged on Li Yao's face. His pitch black face was accompanied by shining white teeth, just like a fool.

Noticing that Li Yao was a little complacent, Principal Mao reminded him, "Student Li Yao, I heard some reporters speak and it appears that they seem to be very interested in the relationship between you and the Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School. When you talk to them, you need to be careful of what you say. Try not to offend others. After all, we do not have any deep-rooted hatred. It would not be very good to completely shed all pretenses of cordiality, do you understand?"

"Oh?"

Upon hearing the words “Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School”, Li Yao was surprised for a moment. The smile on his face disappeared as two strange glints flashed through his eyes. In large strides, he left the boiler room.

Like a bunch of uncontrollable, wild dogs, a large group of reporters vied with each other as they rushed over to the boiler room.

"Student Li Yao! Student Li Yao! Please give us an interview!"

Li Yao immediately collected himself as he quickly drew a draft in his mind. After a second, he proudly raised his head and went ahead to welcome the reporters.

He gave a cough to clear his throat. Just as he wanted to speak, the large group of reporters walked right past him as if they hadn't seen him. Like a river met with a reef, they automatically separated to either of his sides and went around him.

"Student Li Yao, where are you? Please come out to give me an interview!"

A slightly embarrassed Li Yao raised his right hand. "I'm here!"

"Where? We don't see you, Student Li Yao!"

The large group of reporters surrounded Li Yao. A few dozen of them doubtfully gazed at Li Yao as they measured Li Yao from head to toe. Not one of them paid attention to him.

The reporters couldn't be blamed for being as blind as a bat. In fact, Li Yao's current appearance was far from the most anticipated "College Entrance Examination Champion".

He looked as if he had been digging for coal for three straight days and nights. His hair was a mess, and he also had a bulge at the center of his head. The bird poop that had fallen on his shoulder was starkly visible. Only god knows when his clothes had snagged onto some rusted part of the boiler, causing it to tear a large hole on his clothes. Apparently, he could not become even more unkempt than he already was and could not look any more miserable.

For almost half a minute, the reporters looked at each other before their line of sight gradually gathered on Li Yao. With some hesitation, a female reporter took out a handkerchief from her purse and handed it over to Li Yao. "Are... are you Student Li Yao?"

Li Yao expressed his gratitude and took the handkerchief as he forcefully wiped his face for a few seconds. After having wiped his face, his appearance looked slightly better, yet remnants of dirt and oil were still smeared all over his face; his facial features were barely recognizable.

Li Yao was a celebrity in Floating Spear City and many reporters had seen him at the hospital when he was in the coma. The monicker "Fleeting Fiend Star" had come out from one of the journalist's hand.

Immediately, someone shouted, "Yes, that’s Li Yao!"

Upon hearing that, the eyes of all the reporters began shining. Once again, they scrambled to surround him as they thrust their crystal mics that were like eight feet long snake spears toward Li Yao one by one. The female reporter who had given him the handkerchief was in the forefront and got the advantage. Wrapping her arms around Li Yao's shoulder, she placed a crystal mic between them.

"Student Li Yao, your performance in this year's college entrance examination can be described as completely shocking. It was as if you had been possessed by some devil or god. You have made a complete reversal, shocking the hell out of everyone! Everyone is very curious about you. However, what we are most concerned about is — why did you drop out of Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School and come to this no-name school? As you know, Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School is a famous school within Floating Spear City. Every year, its overall strength is in the top three, while Mining Clan High School has been at the bottom of the list for the past few decades. If I may, can you tell us if there’s some underlying reason for all of this!"

Chapter 93: Igniting the Whole City

Chapter 93: Igniting the Whole City

Principal Mao stood on his toes behind the crowd as he forcefully waved both his hands. Without uttering a single sound, in hopes to remind Li Yao, he mouthed the words, "Don't be fooled! These reporters just want breaking news, don't look for trouble!"

Li Yao slightly smiled at Principal Mao, indicating he had a sense of propriety. However, in his heart, he secretly apologized.

"Principal Mao, I'm sorry. I know you are looking out for me. You don't want me to openly offend the Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School and bring harm to myself..."

"But you are too honest and too good. How could you understand the kind of person Helian Lie is?"

"Even if I am just a point ahead in the college entrance exam… For someone like him, it would be the biggest insult. No matter how low-key I remain, how I gloss over things to stay on good terms, or how much good will I express—it will be all in vain as it will be impossible for him to give up any thoughts to go against me!"

"Any compromise from my side will only be interpreted as me being weak. It would only encourage him, even more than he already has, to take revenge on me."

"If so, then why should I have any second thoughts? An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Since I have the opportunity to slap him in the face, I should use all my strength to ruthlessly slap—this is how I, Li Yao, do things!"

Clearing his throat, Li Yao grabbed the crystal mic and loudly said, "Of course, there is an underlying reason!"

"What?"

The spirit of every reporter rose as if they were wolves that had gotten a whiff of the scent of a lamb. In an instant, they all became completely awake as they stared at Li Yao with their glossy and sleek eyes.

They had thought that Li Yao would just casually say a few words or simply say "no comments".

How could they have expected that this young man would say such a thing and had even wanted to give such hot news!

In an instant, the reporters simply wanted to burst into tears. They could not wait to loudly applaud and cheer for Li Yao.

Principal Mao, on the other hand, heaved a sigh. With one hand massaging his temple, his face was filled with helplessness.

He knew that this brat was simply someone one shouldn’t mess with. Give him an inch and he’d take a mile.

"Zhao Shude, Zhao Shude... The guy you have offended is really not someone to be trifled with. You should not have offended this 'Fiend Star'. This time, your Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School is going to have a hard time!"

Principal Mao secretly shook his head. He could not help but heave a sigh.

With a sharp glint in his eyes, Li Yao spoke with a clear and mellow voice, "As you all know, two months ago, I represented the Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School in this year's Limit Challenge Competition. Because of an accidental injury, my Spiritual Root Development Quotient fell sharply, which had even sent me into a coma. Only after an entire month did I finally wake up!"

"It is reasonable to say that I went to win glory for the school. After my injuries, don’t you think it’s reasonable for the school to take good care of me no matter the circumstances? But after Crimson Nimbus Second High School's management discovered that I was injured and wasn't able to cultivate, the very day I woke up, they heartlessly asked me to leave the school and told me that whether or not I could continue would depend on my recovery!"

"And all this is just because I had once offended the son of Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School's trustee, Helian Ba—the Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School's student council president, Helian Lie!"

"Helian Lie and I have old grudges. On Devil Flood Dragon Island, he was eliminated from the competition by me and also had his spotlight taken away from him. This new hatred along with the old grievances made him disregard everything as he started to take revenge against me frantically!"

"Everyone in Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School knows about this. You can casually pick any student and interview him. Even the aunt responsible for cleaning the canteen is clear about this!"

"Fortunately, the heavens never seals off all paths of retreat! The Mining Clan High School's Principal Mao had discerning eyes that could distinguish greatness from mediocrity; he was able to discern whether a person had potential and whether they could be trained. He took a big risk to protect me. Over this past month, I have been undergoing intensive training, and fortunately, I was able to recover to my previous form, allowing me to obtain a good score in the college entrance exam!"

"For sure, I'm happy to become Floating Spear City's champion of the college entrance exam, but there are two things I’m more happy about."

"First, I didn't disappoint Principal Mao, who trusted and cared for me, and won the supreme honor for Floating Spear City's Mining Clan High School. In the future on my road of cultivation, I will keep the identity of 'Mining Clan High School' graduate as I continue to tread forth!"

"Second, I have used the facts to prove that the Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School's management is as blind as a bat. Them asking me to leave school was not my loss; on the contrary, it was their biggest lost—they can now regret without any hesitation!"

"I have said all I wanted to say. For the rest of the details, you can go to Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School and interview the students, the principal—Zhao Shude, the school trustee—Helian Ba, and the student council president—Helian Lie. Maybe they will give you a different version of the story!"

After he finished speaking, Li Yao threw the mic and elegantly took his leave.

However, he had set off a mighty uproar which in just a few hours was enough to shake the entire Floating Spear City!

A month ago, a seriously injured, poor brat from the slums who could not oppose the rich and was kicked out of a famous school. However, after a single month, he mystically turned things around and entered some no-name, waste school, eventually winning the title of “College Entrance Examination Champion” in one fell swoop and giving a ruthless slap to the face of the famous school. Through twists and turns, the entire story had become a soul-stirring journey; it was simply more exciting than any novel. Upon listening to Li Yao’s words, every reporter felt an upsurge of emotion, and their blood was seething.

The reporters had a keen sense for breaking news. One by one, every one of them had realized that all of Li Yao’s experiences could be turned into a sensational story!

It was too late to return to the mobile production control room. All the reporters sat down on the ragged campus of the Mining Clan High School one after another. For a long time and with half-squinting eyes, the reporters wracked their brain as they assembled the information piece by piece, drawing a draft for their respective news channel.

The reporters from the formal media groups still took a relatively objective stand. Their focus was on either the recovery of Li Yao or the improvement of his Spiritual Root Development Quotient. The title of their drafts were also relatively restrained, many like the following:

"THE FIEND STAR RISES AGAIN!"

"THE BIGGEST MIRACLE IN THE HISTORY OF FLOATING SPEAR CITY'S COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION!"

"WHAT TRULY TOOK PLACE PAST THIS MONTH?"

In contrast, the reporters from small media groups as well as media from the entertainment industry were not as reserved. Generally speaking, these reports would be more afraid of calm and peace in the world. Even if they had nothing, they would, out of nothing, piece out some breaking news, let alone the earth-shattering information that Li Yao had unveiled. So, titles without any ounce of integrity were born.

"BREAKING NEWS! THE BIGGEST CONSPIRACY IN THE HISTORY OF FLOATING SPEAR CITY'S EDUCATION! THE POOR GENIUS OFFENDED THE SECOND GENERATION WEALTHY AND GOT KICKED OUT OF THE SCHOOL!"

"REVENGE OF REGAL'S SON AFTER LOSING HIS GIRLFRIEND!"

"FIVE DAYS AND FIVE NIGHTS OF LOVE AND HATE—THE CHRONICLES OF DISPUTE ON DEVIL FLOOD DRAGON ISLAND!"

"THE BIGGEST JOKE OF THE COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION!"

"HELIAN LIE—THE HALF-MINUTE COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION CHAMPION!"

In this era of information where public attention was everything, it was the era of attention economic. Within just ten minutes, sensational articles upon sensational articles, like adding oil and vinegar, through the spiritual net had spread to every corner of Floating Spear City. The terminal of every crystal processor was featuring the video of Li Yao as he hurled all kinds of abuses at the Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School. Some relatively smart media groups would feature the scene of Helian Lie kneeling down on the ground vomiting next to Li Yao's video, creating a very big impact. The headlines at the top of the screen were:

"GUESS WHO IS THE COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION CHAMPION?"

In just a short period of time, the public was in an uproar. Every forum related to Floating Spear City was hustling and bustling with comments. In the blink of an eye, several posts burst forth with over ten thousand comments!

It was not that the users liked Li Yao or anything. A majority of the netizens simply took pleasure in other's misfortune. Not too long ago—when Li Yao was seriously injured, when he was given the nickname "Fleeting Fiend Star"—the netizens' comments were merciless, brimming with jeers and taunts; they belittled him and called him worthless.

But since Li Yao had staged such a gorgeous comeback, the netizens, almost without even blinking, instantly became his most loyal supporters.

The taunts and jeers that were initially pouring on Li Yao’s head like a storm had immediately expanded by a hundredfold, turned around, and fell upon the Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School and Helian Lie’s head instead.

"LOL, did you see? The guy called Helian Lie began to think that he was the college entrance examination champion. He was jumping up and down in excitement, but when the results came out, it was like he was struck by lightning. He even started to vomit later!"

"Yes, I have also seen the video. Everyone go take a look, it's absolutely amazing!"

"I heard Helian Lie is second generation wealthy. He is very arrogant, but he is out of luck this time!"

"The eyes of the principal of Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School are all just for show. Can't he even tell between a genius and a waste? A genius who had the strength to seize the titles of “College Entrance Examination Champion” was actually thrown out? If I were him, I would simply gauge out my dog eyes!"

As the majority of the netizens were all ordinary working class citizens, they didn't hold any goodwill towards expensive private high schools like Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School. And towards a wealthy kid like Helian Lie, they felt even more jealousy and envy.

This time, Li Yao, a kid from the slums, had actually very neatly and brilliantly slapped the face of Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School. This is something that they simply loved to see and hear about.

While some posts focused on Li Yao, videos of Li Yao’s ventures from Devil Flood Dragon Island were once again unearthed and posted on the net. Many of the netizens got to see his video for the first time and had all been completely shocked by his natural and fluent attacks that were sudden as well as mysterious as he continuously appeared and disappeared like some ghost.

"How is this possible? How can one person alone annihilate the opposing team’s entire command post!"

"Powerful... he is truly powerful! No wonder he could be crowned as the College Entrance Examination Champion!"

"Rumor has it that Li Yao had confronted a mutated large-eyed ape which had been injected with stimulant alone and even beheaded it. Is he really a human?"

"Helian Lie is simply nothing compared to him!"

"From now on, Brother Yao is the only idol for me! We are both poor kids from slums. If Brother Yao can do it, then why can't I! From today onwards, I will also start training madly like Brother Yao. After three years, I will also become the College Entrance Examination Champion!"

"You? Do you even know how Brother Yao trained? Come, come, come. Let me show you a copy of a special training chart secretly taken out from Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School. It’s said that this is how Brother Yao trained."

"This—Is this really the amount of training Brother Yao did in one day? That’s completely crazy! He’s simply a monster! Impossible, that's absolutely impossible!"

"A day? That's only the amount of training he did in half a day!"

Li Yao was like a tiny spark that completely ignited the entire Floating Spear City. From the shabby Limestone District to the resplendent Upper East District, from the elderly to the young students, from ordinary citizens to the cultivators, every single one of them was cheerfully and energetically discussing his endeavors.

The entire city was like a hot furnace; everyone was either feverishly watching Li Yao's videos or having heated discussions of him. There was only one place that was as cold as a morgue—the principal’s office in Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School!

Behind his desk, Zhao Shude sat as if he had lost his soul and as if his body had become paralyzed. On the desk sat a crystal processor; the hologram was constantly flashing, showcasing the news from major news channel as well as the comments of the netizens.

As he began to go through article by article, he first gnawed his teeth, but very soon, his heartbeat became erratic; he was not too far away from having a Qigong Deviation. He could no longer stand watching the hologram!

Zhao Shude's look was that of a loser as he wheezed like a cow. His forehead was covered in soybean-sized sweat, and his muddy eyes occasionally shot pernicious and furious brilliance.

As he glanced at the management staff, they lowered their heads one after another. Not a single one of them dared to look him straight in the eyes.

"How is this possible?"

Zhao Shude muttered to himself. More than once he had tried closing his eyes as he rubbed them with force, as if by doing so he could turn back time and return to two hours ago—to the moment when Helian Lie had just seized the first place ranking.

More than once he had hoped he could freeze that moment—the moment during which he was full of mettle, the moment in which he was in high spirits, the moment when Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School's fame soared through the roof, and the moment where its brilliance had covered the entire Floating Spear City!

Unfortunately, every time he opened his eyes, the hologram would always be showcasing Li Yao's cheap face.

This damned Fiend Star ruined everything!

"Principal, it’s bad, it's really bad!"

Notes:

[1] Fiend Star() - I once saw somewhere someone commenting that Fiend Star was referring to him killing the people from Demon Clan, but the Fiend Star as in Fleeting Fiend Star refers to a cultivator of the newer generation who is extremely powerful compared to his peers, whose glory has completely overshadowed others. There is also another meaning of Fiend Star, which means bad luck. But I don’t think the author meant that.

Chapter 94: Worst Situation!

Chapter 94: Worst Situation!

Head instructor Hei Mianshen unsteadily charged his way into the office and had even failed to knock on the door as he crashed right through the door.

"Bastard!"

Zhao Shude, who had been holding in his anger for the past hour, finally erupted. The blue veins at the back of his hand were completely visible as he forcefully smacked his palm on the table, causing the huge office desk carved in redwood to break into pieces.

Zhao Shude jumped right out of the chair, grabbed Hei Mianshen's collar, and angrily shouted, "Of all the time you could’ve done this, why are you doing this now!? Can the situation even get any worse!? The worst of all has already occurred, or is there still something left!?"

Although Zhao Shude was not a battle-type cultivator and had suffered serious injuries in his youth, in the end, he was still a fierce cultivator at the peak level of the Refinement Stage. As he stared at Hei Mianshen, the temperature in the office suddenly dropped by a few dozen degrees.

Everyone's face went blue; they all started shivering as a layer of white frost had seemingly covered their entire body.

And Hei Mianshen, whose collar were tightly gripped by him, was so scared that he wanted to cry. Only after shivering for a good while was he able to speak and that too with a crying look, "Principal, something big has truly happened. You... you need to quickly take a look. Some people have surrounded our school!"

"What? Who is so bold that they would even dare to surround our Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School? Don't they know that our school is a division of the Crimson Nimbus Sect!?"

Zhao Shude was fuming in anger; his pair of eyebrows interlocked as he frowned in anger. It appeared as if some aura surged forth from every one of his 36,000 pores and lingered around his body!

Hei Mianshen stammered, "It's... it's a whole crowd of soldiers..."

"The military?"

Zhao Shude's anger had reached its maximum. "We only kicked out a student, is there a need for the military to intervene? Our Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School is a private school. How we deal with our students is our private matter, so why is the military stepping in? Is there any justice left in this world? What happened to all the laws? Do they think that our Crimson Nimbus Sect doesn’t have anyone in the army?"

Hei Mianshen swallowed a mouthful of saliva with difficulty and said, "Principal, I didn’t finish speaking. They’re not active duty soldiers… All of them are veterans—all of them are members of the Disabled Servicemen Association!"

"What!"

Zhao Shude was frightened out of his wits. He immediately sent Hei Mianshen flying into a corner with a kick and stumbled his way to the window. As he opened the window, he saw a dense crowd of over a thousand soldiers dressed in black military uniforms standing at the entrance of Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School. A chilling terror crept over the entire campus.

Looking carefully at these soldiers...

These soldiers didn't have epaulets on their uniforms. Furthermore, the color of their uniforms had faded due to having been washed over a long time. There were some soldiers whose uniforms were dated back to a few decades ago and had been worn out from the washing. A few holes could even be seen on the uniforms which had been subsequently patched up; the uniforms were completely shabby. Occasionally, one would be able to find a young soldier amongst the group of soldiers.

No matter if they were an old soldier with white hair or a young soldier, they all had one thing in common—they were either missing an arm, or a leg, or were blind, or some other part of their body. Every single one of them was fitted with spiritual prosthetics. They leaned on crutches, sat in wheelchairs, and many even had to cough for a long time just to take a few steps; they looked as if even a light sneeze could blow them away.

However, when they were not coughing, they would stand straight like the pines that grew on the cliffs and precipices!

The group of over a thousand disabled veterans did not speak a single word. Like over a thousand ghosts, like over a thousand tombstones, they quietly stood at the entrance of the Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School as a strong stench of blood lingered around them.

A murderous air had enveloped the entirety of the huge campus, causing many students and their parents to shudder in fear. Those who were more timid didn’t even dare to make the least bit of noise!

The number of disabled soldiers was constantly increasing. After receiving the notification from the Disabled Servicemen Association, thousands of ordinary-looking, middle-aged men and old men with missing body parts stretched out their trembling hands and rummaged through their drawers, looking for their black military uniform which they had once worn in the past to some campaign before putting it on with difficulty

Once they were dressed in the military uniform, they no longer trembled nor were there any instability in their movements. On the contrary, they raised their head high, stuck out their chest, walked out of the house in large strides with a fierce glint in their eyes. Step by step, they neatly marched their way to Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School as if they have once again returned to the battlefield—as if they were not marching to some school but advancing to some hill which had been occupied by Demon Beasts!

It seemed as if no one would be able to stop their advance.

In just half an hour, over three thousand disable veterans had already gathered at the entrance of the Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School. And yet, thousands of disabled veterans were still firmly advancing towards the entrance like black streams that eventually converged into the sea.

They seemed as if they wanted to completely swallow Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School.

The denizens of Floating Spear City soon discovered this anomaly.

From the bottom of their hearts, the Federation citizens held these disabled veterans in high regards. Very soon, a passerby on the road asked, "Sir, where are you going?"

The disabled veteran who was asked was already 130 years old. His head was full of white hair and wrinkles upon wrinkles covered his face to the point where his facial features could hardly be discerned.

The military uniform he donned was once in fashion a long time ago in the past; however, it was now covered in patches upon patches. His chest was adorned with three shining medals while his left sleeve was dancing along the rhythm of the wind.

This elderly man also had some problem hearing. Only after identifying the source of the voice and carefully listening to the passerby as he asked the question again did he understood.

The elderly slightly smiled. As a majority of his teeth had already fallen out due to his age, the air seemed to be leaking when he spoke, making it difficult to discern what he was saying. Yet, the passerby could not help but shudder due to the bloody aura lingering around him. "I want to help out a little brother from the association—to seek justice for him," the elderly brushed his black military uniform and calmly said.

"What?" All the onlookers were shocked to the extreme.

Disabled veterans were the most respected bunch in the federation, and the Disabled Servicemen Association was the most close-knit organization. It is one of the organizations in the federation on whose bad side you don't want to get on. Many in the association had done meritorious deeds and had even bled for the federation, and many in the association were strange and powerful old fogies who had suffered serious injuries to do so. Whether it was in the military, among the civilians, or even in various sects, they had some very deep connections. All kinds of social and political figures were involved. One could say that they had a direct connection to the heavens.

Much to everyone's surprise, there was actually someone so audacious that he even dared to provoke the Disabled Servicemen Association?

"Who is so bold that they even dare to provoke the Disabled Servicemen Association?"

"Yea, the federation’s army is busting their asses off in the front lines to fight against the Demon Beasts, shedding blood and laying down their lives. They had to pay a steep price to maintain peace for the entire federation. Who would be so blind that he even dares to bully the disabled soldiers?"

"Everybody, let's go take a look. Perhaps something big is about to happen!"

Dialogues similar to these could be heard in the streets and alleys of Floating Spear City.

In just a moment, every single disabled soldier was followed by a long tail of civilians. And when they arrived at the entrance of Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School, the huge campus had already been completely surrounded. The gathered people were no less than seventy to eighty thousand.

Zhao Shude stood dumbfounded in front of the window like a wooden chicken as he watched the dense crowd of people garbed in black uniforms.

Even if he was an expert at the peak level of the Refinement Stage, he was still deeply terrified of the cold, murderous aura emitted by the group of over ten thousand disabled veterans. All 36,000 pores on his body were blocked, and his spiritual energy was completely frozen.

"Why? W-why is this happening?"

Zhao Shude wracked his brain, yet he still couldn't understand. What had he actually done to offend the Disabled Servicemen Association? What had he done to cause them to create such a big scene?'

At this moment, an extremely sturdy beam of light shot out from the black crowd before it took the form of a dozen meter tall transparent human figure in the sky. The figure took the form of a middle-aged soldier with a scar on his face. He was the president of Floating Spear City's Disabled Servicemen Association—Zhao Xinglang. He was also the soldier who Li Yao had seen in the First Hospital when he woke up.

Like a war machine purely driven by spiritual energy, the expression in the eyes of Zhao Xinglang was extremely cold, much like the way he spoke. "To the management of the Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School, listen clearly. We are the members of Floating Spear City’s branch of the federation’s Disabled Servicemen Association. We have gathered here today because we all want to ask your school one question."

"Student Li Yao is a member of our Disable Servicemen Association who was granted the status of Class 1 Disabled Federation Serviceman. We wanted to ask: why was a disabled soldier forced to leave your school? Or do you not care about all 63 million disabled soldiers in the federation?"

"We have long wanted to ask this question, but us people from the Disabled Servicemen Association are reasonable people. We are convinced with reason—If the reason you have suspended Li Yao from school or made him quit was due to his body truly not being suitable for learning and cultivation, then we have nothing to say."

"However, Student Li Yao had just obtained the title of 'Floating Spear City's Champion of the College Entrance Examination'. In other words, his injuries weren't serious to the extent that he was unable to cultivate. We can't help but want to ask: for what reason did you force him to drop out of school? Or is it really as the news says? Did the school management intentionally target him?"

"All of us, the 13,255 disabled veterans of Floating Spear City’s branch, have gathered solely for this. We are waiting for your school's reply. Don't worry, we won't rush inside or break any laws. We will just stand here as we wait for you to give a reasonable explanation!"

Once these words were spoken, the public bursted into an outcry.

Along the way, no matter how much the onlookers asked, the veterans kept their mouths shut. Only at this moment did the onlookers understand that this was related to Li Yao.

Much to everyone's surprise, the "Fleeting Fiend Star", Li Yao, had unexpectedly been granted the status of Class 1 Disabled Federation Serviceman!

"This is too much! A Class 1 Disabled Federation Serviceman was actually forced to quit school!"

"That's right, no matter whether Li Yao was a genius or not, even if he was crippled, he is still a Class 1 Disabled Federation Serviceman. Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School should really not have done this!"

"Serves them right!"

The reverence the civilians of the federation held for the disabled soldiers was something that was very difficult for others to imagine. In an instant, the public vehemently supported Li Yao from the bottom of their hearts as they started to loudly curse Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School.

As if he was struck by lightning, Zhao Shude began to sway a bit before falling flat on his ass on the ground.

Class 1 Disabled Serviceman? That bastard, Li Yao, was actually a Class 1 Disabled Federation Serviceman? How is this possible? How! Is ! This ! Possible!?

Zhao Shude's face was completely distorted. He could only silently ask the heaven!

By heaven and hell, if he had known earlier that Li Yao had received the status of Class 1 Disabled Federation Serviceman, he would still not dare to force Li Yao to quit school even if he had all the courage in the world!

But why did that little bastard not say anything? How could such an important thing remain hidden?

Zhao Shude pounded his chest as he regretted his mistake.

It could not be said that he was ill-informed or ignorant; it was truly not his fault. The status of Class 1 Disabled Serviceman was the highest glory. Each time a disabled soldier was granted this status, a grand ceremony would be held. It was propagandized on such a large scale that even a beggar in the city would know about it.

But when it came to Li Yao, it was a completely different matter.

In the final investigation, the reason why Li Yao was injured was even concealed from the eyes of the military. Some stimulant was secretly brought to Devil Flood Dragon Island. This could more or less be considered as a scandal for the military.

Not to mention that Li Yao was not exactly a regular soldier. Such a status was granted to him with the intention of giving him some kind of compensation. Naturally, the military would not propagandize this on a large scale; hence, the entire procedure was done very discretely.

Certainly, if someone wanted to check Li Yao's Class 1 Disabled Serviceman status, it could be easily checked. But, Zhao Shude was not some kind of prophet. Once he came to know that Li Yao's spiritual root had been ruptured and he had become a cripple, for all he knew, Li Yao had become a bag of waste which could only be thrown out. He put this matter at the back of his mind and had forgotten it completely.

Only someone who had nothing better to do would go and check up on this kind of thing!

Until this very moment, only under the pressure of over ten thousand disabled veterans did Zhao Shude come to realize that he had fallen into a pit of his own digging!

"Helian Ba, I, Zhao Shude, have no grievances with you nor do we share hatred. Why did you wish for me to bring my own destruction? If you just wanted to hang yourself, you should have just jumped into the river or lay down on the crystal rail track. Why did you have to go and provoke a member of the Disabled Servicemen Association? If you want to court death, then why did you drag me, Zhao Shude, with you? Why did you bring misery upon me, you f***ing bastard!?"

The Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School principal, Zhao Shude, wanted to cry but had no tears. Just as he was cursing, his mini crystal processor started to shake wildly.

Chapter 95: The War over the Genius

Chapter 95: The War over the Genius

Lifting his wrist to look at the mini crystal processor, he saw a message sent by the district’s police department.

"Sir Li!"

Zhao Shude was much like a drowning man grabbing the last straw as he hastily asked, "You came at just the right time. Currently, we are facing an unprecedented situation. A large crowd of disabled soldiers has gathered at the entrance of Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School. Quickly help me think of some way to resolve this!"

In the hologram, Commissioner Li, who wore crystal sunglasses, seemed as if he was molded from iron and steel. He calmly and coldly said:

"Principal Zhao, I have specifically come to let you know that the Disabled Servicemen Association plans to hold a large-scale victory parade for the next three days to commemorate the victory in the Battle of 9907 Peak—an extremely arduous battle to regain control of 9907 Peak 153 years ago in which two squads of Federation soldiers put up a fearless fight and had repulsed the onslaught of seven demon beasts four times by just the afternoon!"

"The police force has already approved their application for the victory parade, so it is a legitimate parade that is protected by the law!"

"Of course, if the opposite party is causing a disturbance, throwing garbage on the ground or destroying public property, or have entered the campus and are destroying property, then your school, by all means, can report to us, the police. We will definitely take serious action should such a thing occurs. We will absolutely not show favoritism just because the other party is disabled servicemen."

Zhao Shude was rendered speechless. He once again peered through the window.

There wasn't any noise nor was there anyone throwing garbage on the ground; absolutely nothing. Thousands of disabled soldiers like a frozen sea stood silently outside the campus.

Sometimes, silence was also a kind of noise—a noise more deafening than any other noise.

Zhao Shude's lips quivered. He really had nothing to say. Even if he wanted the police to intervene, he must still provide a reason. However, the other party was neither hitting you nor shouting at you; they just quietly stood outside as they deeply stared at him from all directions. No matter where you looked, they weren't breaking any laws!

Zhao Shude was completely disheartened as he disappointedly said, "Sir Li, I know our Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School is in the wrong here, but please show us some way!"

Commissioner Li heaved a sigh and said, "As your friend, let me give you a piece of advice—make the person who first asked for Li Yao’s suspension stand before the Disabled Servicemen Association to explain everything clearly!"

"As if I could do that!"

In his heart, Zhao Shude really wanted to hand over the Helian father and son duo. However, the two would definitely be skinned alive and swallowed without even having been dipped in vinegar by the large group of disabled veterans—not even dregs would remain of them!

"Alright, that's all I can say. You better take care of yourself. It's time for me to get off work!"

Commissioner Li gradually stood up. Very slowly and imperturbably, he started unbuttoning his deep blue police uniform before taking it off and opening a suitcase that had been gathering dust for god knows how long.

"Sir Li, you..."

Zhao Shude was somewhat at a loss as he watched the other party change into a well-ironed black military uniform.

Commissioner Li took off his sunglasses, revealing a pair of spiritual prosthetic eyes that shone in a red aura from the depths of his eye sockets.

Enunciating word by word, he said, "I should have told you that in the past I had lost both my eyes in Demon Beast Wasteland. I am also a member of the Disabled Servicemen Association. Now that I am off duty, I need to quickly leave and participate in the victory parade. Goodbye!"

"Swish!"

The hologram went pitch black, as the opposite party had simply cut off the connection.

In the darkness, Zhao Shude’s facial muscles began to twitch uncontrollably. His lips quivered for a long time as if he wanted to say something; however, in the end, not one word came out.

Outside the window, everything was shrouded in a deathly silence. The disabled veterans, as if assimilating into the darkness of the night, looked from afar, giving off an appearance akin to a giant black beast that was trying to thoroughly devour Zhao Shude’s soul.

"Beep Beep Beep!" The mini crystal processor on his wrist started vibrating.

Zhao Shude was already scared out of his wits. He simply wasn’t in any state to care about it; however, the caller seemed to be very stubborn, as the mini crystal processor kept on ringing.

Just as he was about to curse, lowering his head to look at the crystal processor, his entire body was struck by a chill.

He suddenly jumped up. First and foremost, he sent everyone out of the principal office and locked the door. Only then did he respectfully receive the call as he bowed and said in a flattering tone, "Elder Zhou, how are you doing!?"

Zhou Yin seemed as if he had aged by a dozen years. He very gloomily stared at Zhao Shude for a while before speaking slowly:

"What do you think!? In just a short span of one hour, the shares of our Crimson Nimbus Sect fell by more than 4 points—and it still has not shown any signs of stabilizing! Do you know what this means? Do you know how much money had been burned off?"

Zhao Shude's whole body started shaking.

With a completely deadpan look, Zhou Yin continued, "In addition, I had recommended a Core Formation Stage cultivator's wife to invest＄200,000 in Crimson Nimbus Sect's shares just yesterday. This cultivator has quite a bit of influence in the northeastern region. I have already been communicating with him for over two years, and it was highly possible for me to persuade him to heavily invest in our Crimson Nimbus Sect, or perhaps even join our Crimson Nimbus Sect as an Interim Elder. It would have helped the Crimson Nimbus Sect to disseminate its influence in the northeastern area. Now, he is telling me that he wants to reconsider the whole investment plan—tell me, how do you think I should be feeling?"

Zhao Shude face completely went pale; he was almost about to faint.

He was extremely angry to the point that he was ready to do anything. While gritting his teeth, he said, "Elder Zhou, after all is said and done, it was all that little bastard's, Li Yao's, fault. He brought such big trouble to the Crimson Nimbus Sect. We must definitely kill him!"

"Alright, go ahead and kill him," Zhou Yin coldly said.

"Me? Elder You, as you know, I'm just a teacher; I am not a battle-type cultivator..." Zhao Shude stammered as he was taken back for a moment.

"Oh, so you were a teacher. But from the way the Slaughter Qi that keeps pouring out of your mouth, I thought you were the boss of some triad... Zhao Shude, do you even have a brain!?"

Zhou Yin stared at him and even furiously roared, "Who do you think you are!? Do you think you some ancient cultivator from forty millenniums ago!? Do you think you can kill anyone at the drop of a hat? Don't you know about the federation's laws? Don’t you know the punishment for a cultivator is even more serious than a normal criminal? Don't you know how many eyes are watching our Crimson Nimbus Sect? Don't you know the Crimson Nimbus Sect has eight Elders, seven of which are just waiting for me to make a fool of myself? If truly something happens to Li Yao, there will be no need for a police investigation—even an idiot would know that it was us! Do you want to completely destroy me and the Crimson Nimbus Sect, ah!?"

Zhao Shude was frightened out of his wits from his scolding; he did not dare to reply with even one word.

The more Zhou Yin spoke, the angrier he got. If he could come out of the hologram, his finger would have already come out and pressed down on the tip of Zhao Shude’s nose. "At least use your f**king brain! Our Crimson Nimbus Sect is an honest and upright sect who respects justice and abides by the laws. There is still room to salvage our current predicament; however, the moment we are associated with murder or have murdered a member of the Disabled Servicemen Association, then it will be beyond redemption! Murder… If you like to kill so much, then why didn't you join some devil path sect and become a devil cultivator? Tell you what, if killing someone was not a crime, then the Sect Master and the other Elders would have already killed me. Before they could kill me, I would have first chopped a pig like you into pieces!"

"I, I—" Zhao Shude looked mournful as if he was in bereavement; he didn't know what to do.

Zhou Yin glared at him with a gaze that was as fierce as a tiger’s.

His gaze seemed to be able to penetrate space and directly pierced two holes in the pits of Zhao Shude's stomach.

Only having stared for a full minute did he finally speak while gritting his teeth, "Forget it. This is not going to help us in any way. In short, someone has to take the fall for such a big incident. Who do you think should be responsible for this incident? You, me, or Helian Ba?"

Zhao Shude was stunned for a moment before quickly replying:

"Elder Zhao, in fact, I know little of this matter. The whole thing was orchestrated by Helian Ba behind my back. As you also know, the Helian Family's influence in Floating Spear City is not small. Although he is just a trustee, many people are very much willing to give him face. It is easy for him to go behind my back and do some shady dealings. Additionally, since you, Elder Zhou, have to deal with thousands of problems every day and are busy with work, it is quite possible for you to hoodwinked by him once."

Zhou Yin's complexion finally eased up a little. He nodded his head and said, "En, this is reasonable. It would be better for you to think it over and give me the specifics. I will also go to Sect Master and explain it to him. Are you clear? Right... Old Ding of the Seventh Primary School affiliated with our Crimson Nimbus Sect is going to be retiring in a month. After his retirement, you are going to take over his position as principal!"

"Ah?"

"Why, don't want it? There is also a kindergarten. The Ninth Kindergarten is lacking a vice principal, do you want to go?"

"No no no, the Seventh Primary School... the Seventh Primary School is ok!"

Zhao Shude turned pale with fright as he stammered before taking a look at the hologram once more. However, by the time he looked up, he had discovered that Zhou Yin had already cut the connection.

Zhao Shude was frozen for a moment. The gloomy look on his face suddenly changed as he ruthlessly stomped and broke seven or eight tiles.

"Helian Ba, Helian Lie—you father and son can both go to hell!"

...

Most of Floating Spear City had been shocked by the victory parade. As far as the instigator of the entire situation, Li Yao, was concerned, he was totally oblivious to the whole thing, as if he was in the eye of the storm.

In an open space just outside the low-rent residential area—the "Morning Sun Village", Li Yao was surrounded by many people. If one were to take a look from the sky, the dense crowd of people would give off the impression of a vortex of humans.

Not everyone here was a journalist or a government official; there was also a bunch of recruitment staff from the "Nine Elite Universities".

Floating Spear City was an important cultivation city in the federation. Every year during the college entrance examination, the "Nine Elite Universities" would send a bunch of recruitment staff to be stationed here.

However, in the recent years, these people had it easy because most of the good seedlings with potential would have already been unearthed during the "Limit Challenge Competition", and they would have already signed a contract with one of the "Nine Elite Universities" in advance. After the college entrance examination, they would then just have to complete the formalities of the contract, that's all.

In contrast to the previous year, an earth-shattering miracle had occurred this year. Li Yao, a dark horse, suddenly leaped out of a corner, and in one fell swoop, he sat on the throne of Floating Spear City's champion of the college entrance examination. And to the surprise of these recruiters, Li Yao had yet to sign a contract with any of the universities.

Li Yao was completely free; it was possible for him to choose any university!

All the recruitment staff crazily rushed over. On one side, they were shouting at the top of their lungs for application to the headquarters of their respective school, while on the other, they staggeringly charged their way to Mining Clan High School and surrounded Li Yao. They were not willing to budge even an inch.

How could they? Ever since the start of the cultivation era forty millenniums ago, the most important thing had always been cultivation talent!

"Student Li Yao, please choose our Star Nebula University. I just got the approval from the university. All your tuition fee will be exempted!"

"Student Li Yao, our university will not only exempt your tuition fee, we can also offer you with a premium scholarship!"

"Student Li Yao, please consider our Federation's First Military College. As long as you enter our college, you will receive the status of an officer and can directly join the federation’s army once you graduate, acquiring the rank of at least major!"

Looking at the fierce, cruel, and grim looks on every one of the recruitment staff, Li Yao started to have goosebumps all over his body. He incessantly said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I'm sorry. Everybody's conditions are very appealing, please give me some time to consider it. Can't you give me a few days time for me go back and decide?"

"Absolutely not!" All the recruitment staff shook their head.

Are you joking with us? These people were all well experienced in this industry. They were all crystal clear of each other's shady dealings.

Once Li Yao returned to his home, it was highly possible for someone to secretly sneak into his house in the middle of the night and make some private deal with him. They could possibly resort to some dirty tricks like sending a beauty.

Li Yao was young and filled with passion. It was quite possible for him to lose his head in heat and lust, and he might very well agree.

If so, then they might as well remain here and present generous conditions, competing fair and square.

Li Yao was dumbfounded. He kept scratching his head as he didn't know how to get rid of these people.

At this moment, a travel-worn and weary flying shuttle screamed its way here. Its door had yet to be open, but the strong imposing manner shocked everyone in the field.

An expert has arrived!

Once the door was opened, an old man dressed in a purple robe flew out and landed before Li Yao with an ashamed look on his face.

It was Deep Sea University's expert refiner, Professor Xie Tingxian!

Chapter 96: The Final Decision

Chapter 96: The Final Decision

"Professor Xie, why did you come? If you wanted to say something, you could have just sent me a spiritual crane message!"

Li Yao was caught by surprise. Deep Sea University was about 500km away from Floating Spear City, yet Xie Tingxian had personally driven his flying shuttle at a lightning fast speed here—this was truly surprising.

Xie Tingxian forcefully laughed. "How could I sincerely express my apology through a spiritual crane message? Student Li Yao, this time, you have truly given me a slap I won’t forget!"

Li Yao immediately replied, "Professor Xie, you don't have to apologize for anything. I still highly respect you, truly!"

Li Yao's conduct towards Xie Tingxian was clearly different than how he treated Zhao Shude.

Although Xie Tingxian had retracted his offer, he at least had his reasons. Besides, within the Refining Department of Deep Sea University, Dean Chu Xiuhong was the one with the final say, thus there were plenty of things that were outside a professor’s control, which was what happened with Xie Tingxian.

Once Xie Tingxian had even said that he would personally come and help him recover. Despite not carrying it out, he could not be blamed, as he was an expert who was busy with many things. In the end, what mattered was that what he had said had already greatly moved Li Yao.

Xie Tingxian very sincerely said:

"I know our Deep Sea University had wronged you. Our Dean Chu is someone who is obsessed with skill, and she is oblivious to the ways of the world. In the cultivation world, her hot temper is already well known. Additionally, in her eyes, the honor of Deep Sea University's Refining Department is above everything else. That day when you contacted me, she thought that you were trying to rely on our relationship to procure a seat in the Refining Department, so that’s why her tone was a little more harsh than usual."

"Currently, she is reflecting on her actions, as she thinks that she had quickly jumped to a conclusion and made an arbitrary decision. She should not have spoken like that before the college entrance examination. It was also her who had exhorted me to come here to officially invite Student Li Yao to join our Deep Sea University's Refining Department!"

Li Yao’s eyes shone brilliantly, much like fireworks; however, the brilliance was instantly extinguished.

Xie Tingxian continued, "I know in your heart you are angry. It could only be blamed on Dean Chu and I for failing to see the treasure before our eyes. That's why, even if you do not choose to enroll in our Deep Sea University, I will understand and agree. However—"

Xie Tingxian paused before he sincerely said in a trembling voice, "Student Li Yao, this is not the time for you to decide with your emotions. We are talking about your dream here! I know that it is your dream to become a great Refiner. You must not forget that our Deep Sea University has the strongest professional Refiners in the federation—we have even been granted the title of 'Refiner's Holy Land'!"

"Only if you choose our Deep Sea University could you fulfill your dream!"

"If you want to blame me or Dean Chu, we understand, but please don't take your dream as a joke. You will only be hurting yourself!"

"As for the conditions for joining Deep Sea University, you completely don't need to worry about it. Not only will you be completely exempted from your tuition fees, you will also be provided with a premium scholarship. Moreover, we will treat you as an elite student, one of the most important students at our university. We will assemble a team of our most elite Refiners to be responsible for fostering you and ensuring that you will become a registered Refiner within three years. Your future will definitely be brilliant!"

"Have you heard of 'Supernova Jiang Sheng'? He is the strongest newcomer who had been on the rise within the Refiners Community in the last decade. He is just thirty years old and had become an associate professor at our Deep Sea University's Refining Department. He is hailed as a leading figure who will be at the forefront of the Refiners Community for the next fifty years, and he was trained by none other than Dean Chu and I!"

"As long as you join our Deep Sea University's Refining Department, I promise you that you will enjoy the same treatment that Jiang Sheng had once received. After a few years, you will then be the second 'Supernova'!"

While speaking, Xie Tingxian swept through the entire field with a gaze as fierce as a tiger’s as he raised his voice to speak, "Ladies and gentlemen, you might be able to come out with better materialistic conditions than me; however, when it comes to refining, I'm afraid no other university has the qualifications to rival my Deep Sea University!"

Everyone was rendered speechless as numerous recruiting staff members looked at each other.

This fact was as plain as the nose on one's face. No matter how artfully they put it, they would still not dare to shamefully say that their university was also the strongest in developing refiners.

Even the Refining Department of the Federation’s First Military College, which ranked second, was far off from the Deep Sea University's Refining Department. It was like the difference between a mouse and an elephant; they were simply not at the same level.

Over, it’s completely over. It seems that this genius is going to be taken away by Deep Sea University!

Sure enough, the look in Li Yao's eyes gradually become as firm as a steel saber and as sharp as a sword. His gaze alone could cut off everything.

Glancing around, Li Yao bent his waist as he gave everyone a sincere bow. He then solemnly said "I apologize to everyone for wasting your time. While everyone's university is the top university in the federation, and the preferential treatment conditions provided are very appealing, I have already decided which university I will be applying for."

"It's over!"

Many of the recruitment staff lamented and became dispirited.

"I have already come to my decision. In order to not waste Professor Xie’s and everyone's time, I will simply fill in my matriculation from online now!"

Li Yao started up the mini crystal processor and switched to spectator mode.

A hologram that overflowed with colorful lights and displayed each character crystal clearly appeared in the air.

By convention, from the moment the result of the college entrance examination was out, each examinee had 15 days to choose their desired university and fill in the matriculation form through the spirit net.

Normally, the examinee would carefully research each university and compare their merits. Not only would he have to consider his subject of interest as well as the employment rates, he would also have to consider whether his score was above the cut-off mark or not.

Thus, a majority of the examinees would fill in the matriculation form only in the last few days, as the application could not be changed once it had been filled in.

On the hologram, a scene of a turbulent river stream filled with countless ugly gray carps appeared. Within the river stream, the carps scurried along the stream as they struggled with one another to move forward. Within these struggling carps, there was one that was not like the others; this gray carp suddenly jumped above the stream and over a magnificent and grand dragon gate. The entire screen shone in dazzling streams of colorful light as the carp transformed into a golden dragon, rising into the sky and soaring to the highest heaven!

A carp leaping over the dragon gate in just one move.

This was the starting screen of the site used to fill out the college entrance examination matriculation form.

Like rain droplets falling in a storm, the name of every university fell from the top of the hologram one by one. The names of the Nine Elite Universities especially stood out from the rest as they shone in a dazzling glow.

"Click click click click click!"

Li Yao entered his student ID on the virtual keyboard before his score suddenly appeared on the hologram.

Along with his score was a long series of texts which provided a thorough analysis of his score as well as recommendations for a dozen of the top professions in the federation.

This was the system's built-in analysis function. Li Yao didn't even spare it a glance and directly closed the tab as he switched to the selection interface.

His gaze swept through the name of each and every university one by one and finally came to a halt at "Deep Sea University".

Li Yao stood still as he looked at the name for a very long time.

At this time, he heard the whistling of the wind.

No, not just the wind, he also heard the sound of fire crackling as a small sun tore through the darkness and rose into the sky.

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao raised his head to look. God knows when a Crimson Flame Flying Shuttle wrapped in raging flames had appeared in the sky. Sitting inside the hatch was Ding Lingdang, who sat with her long and slender legs crossed as she gazed at him with a restless look.

Li Yao gave a smile, revealing his sharp canines as he curled his fingers at Ding Lingdang, motioning for her to "Come down!"

Ding Lingdang’s eyes widened, sending the message of "Who is afraid of coming down!?"

She lightly leaped up and rose a few dozen meters high into the sky before landing right in front of Li Yao.

The two stood nose-to-nose and lip-to-lip with one another. Breathing at each other’s face as their hearts pounded in synchronization.

"Sister Ling, I'm very thankful to the Grand Desolate War Institution for trusting in me. I will never forget how diligently you have tried to help me train for the college entrance exam in past this month!" Li Yao said straight from his heart.

"Enough with your nonsense. Didn't I say that as your friend, I will always support you no matter which university you ultimately choose? The Deep Sea University is the ‘Holy Land of Refiners’. You will be able to achieve your dreams there, so choose without hesitation. Don't be shilly-shally like a b*tch!" Ding Lingdang nibbled her lips.

Li Yao looked at her as he spoke, "Sister Ling, are you really going to support me no matter what I choose? No matter how crazy it is?"

"... Yes, but if you choose the Deep Sea University's Refining Department, you must do your best to become the strongest refiner, so the time I used to help you train this month is not wasted! Remember! You must become the best, not the second or the third—but the best! If you are even a bit lacking, I will smack your head!" Ding Lingdang earnestly said word by word.

Li Yao burst into laughter from the bottom of his heart, revealing a crescent row of white and shining teeth on his black face. Then, his next action shocked the hell out of everyone on the scene.

He suddenly stepped forward and embraced Ding Lingdang!

Everyone was immediately dumbfounded!

Among the recruitment staff of the Nine Elite Universities, Ding Lingdang could definitely be considered the strangest figure. Many knew that not only was she extremely powerful, she would also let her temper speak for itself. She was the kind of girl who would act first, talk later. No one dared to easily provoke her.

They never would have expected that Li Yao would have heaven-defying guts!

"S-so cool! He truly deserves to be the college entrance examination champion! He is truly a god among men!" Many men had their eyes almost jump out of their sockets.

Ding Lingdang stared with wide-opened eyes. As a cultivator at the peak level of the Refinement Stage, she obviously had thousands of ways to extricate herself from Li Yao's arms. However, she didn't know why she just listlessly stood there firmly held in Li Yao’s embrace.

An inexplicable fragrance wafted out from Li Yao's body and tickled its way into Ding Lingdang's nose.

No matter how much Ding Lingdang was drenched in fragrant perspiration, she would never give off this kind of sweaty smell. In her over twenty years of life, she had never once smelled such a scent.

Ding Lingdang had no idea what to do; her mind gave birth to a sliver of vacantness, a kind of vacantness which she had never experienced even when faced with demon beasts far stronger than her.

"What is this stinking brat doing in broad daylight!? If you want to do something, at least wait until you go home!" Ding Lingdang angrily roared in her heart.

Li Yao hugged her only for half a second before letting her go. He took a step back and solemnly said, "Sister Ling, ever since I was a child, I have been all alone. Besides the dead old man, I have no other relative. But, I have decided! From this moment onwards, I will treat you as my sister!"

"... Sister my ass! That’s so nauseating!" Ding Lingdang instantly felt goosebumps all over her body.

"But—"

In the depths of Li Yao's eyes appeared dazzling brilliance while words weighing a thousand kilograms poured out of his mouth, "My dream has always been to become the best refiner. That's why I can not choose the Grand Desolate War Institution's Combat Department. For that, I'm truly sorry!"

"It's alright, I..." Ding Lingdang averted her gaze,

She didn’t know why, but besides the feeling of disappoint, there was surprisingly also a sense of loss in her heart.

Feeling as if a weight had been lifted off his shoulders, Xie Tingxian laughed and said, "Student Li Yao, you have made the right choice. After you have become the second ‘Supernova’ in 20-30 years, you will definitely look back and not regret today’s choice!"

"For my dream, I will never regret. However... the second ‘Supernova’?"

Li Yao just smiled and did not speak another word. His pair of hands quickly bounced over the virtual keyboard, and in a single breath, he had completed the matriculation form.

“Ding Dong!” With a loud and clear sound, a row of clear and large characters shining above everyone's head emerged on the hologram. At the center, two words were the most conspicuous.

"Refining Department!"

"Congratulations, Student Li Yao! On behalf of Deep Sea University, I welcome you to the holy land of ref..." Finally, the stone over Xie Tingxian's heart was lifted as a smile crept across his face.

"Professor Xie, I'm sorry. I'm really, really, really sorry." Without even getting the chance to finish, Xie Tingxian was cut-off by Li Yao, who had an ashamed look on his face.

Xie Tingxian blinked a few times. For a short while, he didn't understand what Li Yao meant.

At this time, he discovered that the silence around him was a little strange. Everyone's face revealed a completely horrified look.

"Refining Department" The row of small characters over those two large words seemed to be somewhat strange.

Xie Tingxian narrowed his eyes and only then did he discover the entire text that had emerged in the hologram—

"Grand Desolate War Institution, Refining Department!"

Chapter 97: The Farce and the Miracle

Chapter 97: The Farce and the Miracle

"..."

The smile on Xie Tingxian's face completely turned stiff as his beard trembled. For a long time, he was rendered speechless.

Ding Lingdang's pair of pretty eyes opened widely, and her lips quivered as she opened and closed them again and again; she was shocked to the extreme.

Every recruitment staff, reporter, student, parent, and every onlooker was as though they had been struck by lightning. For a good while, they were unable to speak.

After half a minute, as if a spiritual energy bomb had been detonated at the center of the crowd, the entire crowd burst into an uproar!

"Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department? Is there some mistake? Does the Grand Desolate War Institution even have a Refining Department? Isn't it a college specialized for training battle-type cultivators?"

"It does have one, but the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department is among the four worst departments in all the 'Nine Elite Universities'. It is small in size, and its level is too low—it’s simply the department which no one would choose on their own volition. The students from the previous years who needed to be removed from the prestigious departments were transferred there."

"Is he crazy? Instead of choosing Deep Sea University's Refining Department, why did he go and choose Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department?"

"Even if he wanted to choose the Grand Desolate War Institution, he should have at least chosen the Combat Department! Why did he choose the Refining Department? Has he simply lost his mind?"

"What the hell is going on inside his brain!?"

Many had the urge to pull out their hair with force. No matter how much they wracked their brains, they could not understand what made Li Yao make such a crazy choice—it was simply ridiculous!

Xie Tingxian was just like a statue carved out of stone; his silence lasted for an entire minute before he woke up from his stupor as the wrinkles on his face finally stretched when he forcefully smiled and said, "Student Li Yao, you always manage to do things outside of everyone's expectations. Every one of your actions makes everyone flabbergasted."

Li Yao sincerely apologized, "Professor Xie, I'm truly sorry. I truly didn't expect for you to come. Deep Sea University is truly a good university, and I also think that you and Dean Chu have the ability to train me to be the second ‘Supernova’!"

"However, I don’t want to be just the second ‘Supernova’, but rather the first ‘Fiend Star’. That's why I chose the Grand Desolate War Institution!"

Xie Tingxian heaved a long and deep sigh.

"You had once said that your dream is to enter the 'Holy Land of Refiners'. Who would have known that you would give up your dream in a spur of the moment—it’s simply not worth it, Student Li Yao!"

Li Yao smiled as he said, "Professor Xie, you are wrong. I have not done this in the spur of the moment, and not even a second had I given up on my dream. At present, Deep Sea University's Refining Department is certainly the Holy Land of Refiners; however, someday in the future, perhaps this glory will belong to Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department. Who can say for sure?"

"What?"

Xie Tingxian was stunned, Ding Lingdang was stunned, and all the recruitment staff of the Nine Elite Universities were completely stunned.

Li Yao calmly and unperturbedly said, "That's why... I have been apologizing to you. My decision to join the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department is not so simple."

"In the near future, I will lead Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department and issue a challenge to Deep Sea University's Refining Department. I am going to take away the supreme honor—the title of 'Holy Land of Refiners'!"

"I am going to let the entire federation, the entire Heaven Origin Sector know that the Grand Desolate War Institution does not only have the Combat Department as its first-class department, they will also have the Grand Desolate War Institution’s Refining Department—the best Holy Land of Refiners!"

With an extremely sincere look, Li Yao gave an incredibly crazy declaration, causing every listener to think that maybe there was something wrong with their ears. His declaration also instantly made Xie Tingxian absent-minded.

"W-what is he saying? Does he even know what he is saying?"

"Young man, just because of a slightly good score, you forgot how high the heaven is and how deep the earth is. Don't be too proud, and don’t be too overconfident. It would be best for you to temper your disposition!”

"You want to lead the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department to challenge the Deep Sea University's Refining Department? Wouldn’t that be the equivalent of a group of mice challenging an elephant?"

"What mouse and elephant? It’s just a group of ants challenging a dinosaur!"

The majority of the recruitment staff from the "Nine Elite Universities" had been angered.

Xie Tingxian's silence lasted for ten seconds before he could not help but burst into laughter. "Student Li Yao, the young needs to dream, but they should clearly know the difference between dreams and delusions—you are too conceited."

Li Yao's eyes remained as clear as water. Shaking his head, he said, "Professor Xie, I'm not arrogant. The only thing I am... is afraid. I'm just afraid, very, very afraid!"

"Afraid?" Xie Tingxian was confused.

"Yes, afraid. I’m afraid because the strength of Deep Sea University’s Refining Department is crystal clear. Deep Sea

University’s Refining Department is as though it is a deity who is shouldering the entire heaven as it stood upright. Even if I don’t issue a challenge, the mere thought of issuing a challenge is already near impossible."

"If in this second I don’t say it, I’m afraid when tomorrow arrives, I won’t be able to—no, there’s no need to wait for tomorrow. In the next hour, the next minute, the next second—I would completely lose my courage to issue a challenge to this deity!"

"But now that I have spoken in front of so many ladies and gentlemen of 'Nine Elite University', this completely crazy idea had been made public. I will no longer have any hesitation, I no longer need to afraid of any conflict, I no longer need to be afraid of getting involved, and I no longer need to be worried about retreat or giving up."

"Perhaps I will become the biggest joke or perhaps I will create a miracle that no one expected. There is no other path for me; I can only do every in my power and bite the bullet — I can only stride forward!"

Xie Tingxian was moved. "I understand. It seems you are not arrogant—you are just too young, too impulsive, too naive! A miracle is called a miracle because the chance of its occurrence is immensely small, so immensely small that perhaps the chance of it happening is only one in a thousand, perhaps even one in ten thousand!"

Li Yao smiled. From the depths of his eyes came a shine that was as dazzling as the stars. "Whether it is one in thousand, one in ten thousand, or even one in a billion... As long it is not zero, isn't it fine?"

Xie Tingxian remained silent. He just heaved a long sigh and with a deep regret boarded the flying shuttle.

Xie Tingxian left.

"Sister Ling!"

Li Yao let loose a deep breath. The smile on his face was as magnificent as the blossoming of peaches. He turned towards Ding Lingdang and said, "My choice... did not make you too disappointed, right? Do not worry! As long as there is time, I will still go to the Combat Department..."

Before he was able to finish the latter part of his sentence, Ding Lingdang, like a mother leopard, had already violently pounced on him like a bolt of lightning as she grabbed onto his collar and forcefully started shaking him.

"Smelly brat, you had already decided to choose the Grand Desolate War Institution, right? Then you pretended some bullshit of leaving far away and never meeting again, causing this grandma to be in melancholy for a long time and also f**king sigh incessantly! Why did you not just say so!?"

"I wanted to give you a pleasant surprise..."

"Surprise my ass! F**k! You were playing with my feelings! Do you think I will not smack your head!?"

[First Volume finished]

Next Volume Prequel:

"Crystal armor—the greatest magical equipment in the modern cultivation world. It is known as the ‘King of Magical Equipment’, the ‘Magical Equipment Among Magical Equipment’. Even for Deep Sea University’s Refining Department, refining a new type of crystal armor is not an easy task."

"Just by the virtue of the waste department you call the Refining Department of your Grand Desolate War Institution, you—these wastes—want to refine crystal armor?"

"What? This piece of scrap is the crystal armor you have refined? This is completely rotten! This idiotic piece of black sh't is simply nothing more than a pile of waste!"

"Such a pile of waste and you dare to call this "Profound Bone Battle Armor'!? May I ask from which angle does this pile of waste look 'Profound'?"

"I’ll help you name this pile of waste. Don't call it ‘Profound Bone’—call it 'Rotten Bone'!"

Deep within the Grand Desolate, an unfathomable storm was brewing—a one in a billion miracle is about to make its debut!

Chapter 98: Taking the First Step

Chapter 98: Taking the First Step

Three days later in a shabby little station in the western area of Floating Spear City.

In just three days, Floating Spear City had been turned upside down.

On the second day of the Disabled Servicemen Association's victory parade, Crimson Nimbus Sect had announced that it would be restructuring the personnel of “Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School”, the educational institute that was directly subordinate to it.

Both the principal and the head instructor had been transferred to a primary school under the Crimson Nimbus Sect.

And Trustee Helian Ba had been found to have committed several acts of malpractice during the period when he assumed the position as a trustee of the Crimson Nimbus Sect and as well as other four posts within the Crimson Nimbus Sect.

The Crimson Nimbus Sect had immediately taken emergency measures and had sent an investigative team led by two Elders to investigate the issues regarding the Helian Family. Furthermore, they even called for a press conference and had once again reaffirmed that they were one of the righteous factions in the long line of history of the

Star Glory Federation. They would absolutely not tolerate any kind of illegal behavior and would definitely deal with it strictly and severely.

One by one, the cultivators of the Helian Family took their stand and announced that the Helian Ba father-son duo were the outright black sheep of their family and that the Helian Family was completely ignorant of their actions. They claimed to feel deeply aggrieved for not having educated the Helian Ba father-son duo well. They said they would support any kind of investigation and punishment meted by the Crimson Nimbus Sect from their end, and after the punishment given by the Crimson Nimbus Sect, the Helian Ba father-son would be dealt with according to the family rules!

Whether it was inside the Crimson Nimbus Sect or the Helian Family, any of Helian Ba’s supporters were, in the blink of an eye, completely uprooted—he was completely forsaken by friends and allies!

Some of the family members who were not related closely drew a clear line. One by one, some even took out pieces of evidence hidden in their safes and ruthlessly stabbed the Helian Ba father-son duo in one move.

The core members of the family did not panic and waited for the arrival of the investigation team. No one dared to even take half a step outside the gate.

Helian Ba even had an urge to hang himself.

Even though Helian Lie was the second best scorer of Floating Spear City in the college entrance examination, due to this matter, he didn't receive even a single invitation from any of the "Nine Elite Universities". Through unofficial channels, a few universities had even hinted that Helian Lie would not be accepted into their university even if he were to apply.

—— When Helian Lie said “Waste” to Li Yao’s face for the first time, he never would have imagined that it would end like this.

But as far as Li Yao was concerned, he didn't care whether Helian Lie lived or died.

A world with an even broader horizon and a target even more worth fighting for had already presented itself in front of him—his challenge to the Deep Sea University's Refining Department!

And to achieve this target, he must become a cultivator as soon as possible.

After his Spiritual Root Development Quotient had advanced to 90%, the spiritual root had entered an "awakening period".

The final step of awakening the spiritual roots was no longer as simple as the accumulation of resources; the final step was training the spirit.

Once one has arrived at the stage of training the spirit, even if they had a Spiritual Root Development Quotient of 90%, it was quite possible for them to acquire a sudden epiphany, thereby finishing the development of their spiritual root in one fell swoop and embarking onto the road of cultivation.

If the spirit was not trained enough, even if the Spiritual Root Development Quotient had reached 99%, it would still be near impossible to cross the final 1% using an abundance of resources.

At most, they could only become a martial artist with boundless power, that's all.

In short, only when one has found their own path, when one has discovered the “Truth” that they must pursue, and when one has realized the reason why they wish to become a cultivator could their spiritual root be awakened!

The college entrance examination ended in mid-June. Generally, the new students would enter the college in early October.

For the majority of the students, this three-month break was the most relaxed golden period in their life as a student.

They had been relieved of the pressure of the college entrance examination, and the onerous studying they must undergo during their time in college had yet to arrive, so everyone could enjoy their life to the fullest.

In this three-month time, Li Yao planned to travel to the northern and southern parts of the federation.

In order to broaden his horizons and knowledge, it could also be considered as making up for the regret of having always dwelled in the Magical Equipment Graveyard of Floating Spear City.

And more importantly, he was going to train his heart and soul. He was hoping to get some inspiration from the beautiful mountains and the rivers of the motherland. A sliver of an opportunity or a little epiphany was all he needed to awaken his spiritual root, allowing him to embark on the road of cultivation before stepping foot into the college campus

At this small, shabby station, with a bag on his back, Li Yao was ready to depart.

His close friends arrived one by one to see him off.

"Uncle Zhao, thanks a lot. If there was no pressure from the Disabled Servicemen Association this time, the Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School would not have been so quick to admit defeat!"

Li Yao spoke sincerely as he tightly bear-hugged Zhao Xinglang, the president of Floating Spear City's Disabled Servicemen Association.

Zhao Xinglang laughed from the bottom of his heart and heavily punched Li Yao in the stomach.

"I also have to thank you. You have truly increased the prestige of our Disabled Servicemen Association. Hei hei, a seriously injured 'Disabled Soldier' had actually made a comeback and topped the college entrance examination. When I heard this information, we uncouth fellows were all completely dumbfounded. We had even suspected that there was something wrong with our ears! Hahahaha!"

Li Yao flushed red.

"Uncle Zhao, since I have already proven that I have completely recovered and have no disability, can the 'disabled veteran' status still not be taken back?"

Zhao Xinglang stared at him with wide-opened eyes.

"Do you think that the national honor is something that could be given and taken so easily? You once have suffered serious injuries, and your spiritual root had been ruptured which led to a severe disability—these are clear facts. You can’t say that just because your body has recovered, the nation should reclaim the rightful treatment you deserve!"

"But I have always felt that I was not a true 'disabled soldier'. I have always felt like I am impersonating one."

Li Yao was rather embarrassed as he spoke.

"It's simple. As you tread forward in your path of life, you just have to be strict with yourself so that your actions are worthy of these five words, 'Class 1 Federation Disabled Soldier'. Isn't this alright? If the opportunity presents itself, you can always join the federation army and happily fight in the Demon Beast Wasteland. Then, it would be even more justified!"

Zhao Xinglang waved his hand as he resolutely and decisively spoke.

Li Yao stuck out his chest and solemnly said, "I will. After I graduate from the Grand Desolate War Institution, regardless of whether I join the federation army or not, I will go deep into the wasteland and slaughter demon beasts. I will kill every single demon beast in my path!"

Zhao Xinglang burst into laughter as he patted Li Yao's shoulder with force. "Alright, kid. I know I have not misjudged you. Go! Remember, no matter where you go, you must first find the local Disabled Servicemen Association. All the disabled soldiers in the world are one big family. If you encounter any big difficulties, you can just share the burdens with your family. Your brothers will shoulder the burden with you!"

"Thank you, Uncle Zhao!"

A trace of warmth spread through Li Yao's heart. He was an orphan, and his foster father had already been dead for a good several years. He did not expect that he would have such a special "home" at almost twenty years of age.

While thinking like this, his gaze turned towards his second friend with a trace of guilt in his eyes.

"Brother Hai, I'm sorry. These days, the Crimson Nimbus Sect's stocks are tumbling down. It has already tumbled down by 18%, so your loss should be pretty big, right?"

From what Li Yao had heard, Fiend Blade Peng Hai had a lot of Crimson Nimbus Sect shares. It was unknown how much loss he had suffered this time.

"My loss is certainly not small!"

Fiend Blade Peng Hai grinned. Without caring about appearances, he said, "That's why kid, you must cultivate well and become a cultivator as soon as you can. You better compensate your brother!"

"Is the loss really that big? Is it going to have some effect on your position in the Crimson Nimbus Sect?" Li Yao felt a little tense.

Before Fiend Blade Peng Hai was able to answer, Sun Biao, who was standing beside them, laughed and said:

"Silly brat, you don't need to worry about him. These stocks are of little matter. The most crucial thing is his position in the Crimson Nimbus Sect! Peng Hai is the representative of the new generation within the Crimson Nimbus Sect and many of the sect affairs are handled by him. His ways are rather radical, while Zhao Ying is the representative of the older generation who upholds conservative and prudent methods. The two factions had long been locked in a fierce struggle! This time, you, as Peng Hai's junior brother, had actually brought bad luck to the Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School and had discreetly made Zhou Yin suffer a pretty big loss. Because of you, the younger generation had a big win. You just don't know how happy you made Peng Hai!"

"Peng Hai's junior brother?" Li Yao was surprised for a moment which was followed by a sense of relief.

He and Peng Hai were not only fellow students of the Grand Desolate War Institution, they were also both unearthed by the "Scum of Cultivation World", Sun Biao.

In the past, their relation could only be described as ordinary. These days, just an arbitrary university would have thousands upon thousands of students where fellow students calling each other "Senior Brother” or “Junior Brother" did not have much substance.

But later on, this relation was nothing trifling. If placed in the ancient cultivation world, Sun Biao could be considered as their "Enlightenment Master"[1], and both of them would be Sun Biao's direct disciples. The closest relation was definitely that of a senior brother and a junior brother.

Peng Hai smiled as he openly rectified Sun Biao’s words:

"Junior Brother Li, you do not need to fret over it so much. The Crimson Nimbus Sect is not necessarily my final destination. Could a mere loss of some shares be counted for something? After you enter the Grand Desolate War Institution, you must focus on cultivation and become a cultivator as soon as possible. Perhaps there may come a day when I establish my own organization. I might even come looking for you to join my own sect as an Elder or some other post. Hahaha!"

"You want to establish your own sect?"

Li Yao was a little astounded. However, when he carefully gave it a thought, he felt that it was reasonable.

Peng Hai was the best among the best in the younger generation of the federation. As the saying goes, a flood dragon would not stay in the pond for too long. To be able to win over such a fierce figure could be considered as a matter of luck. If there comes a day when the treatment of the Crimson Nimbus Sect made him displeased, pulling out his followers and standing alone would be the right course of action.

Thinking of this point, Li Yao nodded his head as he laughed and said, "There is no need to make me an Elder. If Brother Hai truly sets up his own sect, you must leave the 'Chief Technical Supervisor' position to me. I will be responsible for refining all the magical equipment in the sect!"

"It's a deal!"

As Li Yao firmly shook hands with Peng Hai, blue veins stood out on his temples.

Afterwards, he walked up to the three ordinary people before him.

Perhaps these three ordinary people did not have powerful strength or blazing fast computational prowess, and they might not even be able to help him in cultivation...

But...

Li Yao was equally grateful to them.

Grandpa Wang, Principal Mao, and his buddy, Meng Jiang.

"Grandpa Wang, thank you for always buying my magical equipment at a high price and also for occasionally recommending me for jobs. It’s all thanks to you that I was able to gather some money and graduate from high school!"

"Principal Mao, thank you for taking me in and letting me attend the college entrance examination as a student of Mining Clan High School!"

"Little Jiang, there is no need to say anything between us. When I was in a coma, you took some time out of your schedule to visit me at the hospital. When others were jeering at me as 'Fleeting Fiend Star', you rebuked them on my behalf and even fought with others over this—don't think that I don't know anything!"

Li Yao walked up and tightly hugged his buddy.

Meng Jiang's eyes turned red as he emotionally said, "What is this? Aren't we brothers? If even brothers are not going to believe each other, then who will? Little Devil, I knew that you would not fall so easily., To me, you have always been a monstrous genius! Once you arrive at college, you must cultivate well and become a powerful cultivator as soon as possible. At that time, I can go and brag that my buddy is Nascent Soul Stage strange old devil. Hahaha! It will definitely scare the hell out of a large number of people!"

"Rest assured. I will not let you wait for too long. I will definitely let you have the opportunity to boast. But, why is your face all black and blue? Did you have a fight with someone?"

Li Yao carefully looked at his buddy's face. He discovered that there were heavy bruises under his eyes.

Meng Jiang grinned and said, "It was my father. As a matter of fact, it's all your fault!"

[1] Enlightenment Master() - There is no correct English term for this, as this word in China represent the teacher who acts as a guiding pole, who encourages you and suggests to you the right path or future choices you should make. Sometimes he is also the one who that trains you. All in all, he is just a normal teacher but with pretty big moral values, who really act like a teacher.]

Chapter 99: Remote Reaches

Chapter 99: Remote Reaches

Li Yao was stunned as he pointed at his nose. "My fault!? You and your dad fought because of me?"

Meng Jiang nodded his head.

"Yes. As you know, my dad has always hoped for me to apply to a cooking school so that I could inherit my family’s steamed bun store in the future. However, my dream has always been to become the best hairdresser and makeup artist, and perhaps even the best Master Beautician!"

"And I’m sure that you know that my dad is as fierce as a bear. At home, he has the final say in everything and has never allowed me to go against him. That's why I originally planned to follow his wishes. If he wants me to be a chef, then a chef it is. In the end, it's just a job!"

"However, when I saw you, Little Devil, choosing the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department, I was touched. I brood over it for an entire night. Since we’re buddies, if you can stick to your dream, then why can't I? So, first thing in the morning, I had an ugly fight with my dad. Afterward, I chose a beautician school—despite it being the worst beautician school!"

A brilliant and proud smile appeared on Meng Jiang's face as he used his thumb to pound on his own chest. "Someday, other people will also call me a 'Master'. I’ll be known as the king of the Stylist Industry—Master Meng!"

With a heart set ablaze once again, Li Yao tightly hugged Meng Jiang. "In the three years of my life at Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School, my biggest gain was to have made a good friend and brother like you! Let us both stake everything in university and become the Master of our respective field!"

"Sure, I will definitely use my life to learn, to live, and to fight. I will absolutely not be any worse than you... Although I won't become a cultivator in this life, I will similarly live a wonderful life!"

Meng Jiang straightened his chest as he shouted in loud and clear voice.

The two chatted and laughed as they once again recalled their glorious school life. Only when both of their eyes had turned a little red did Li Yao reluctantly turn to his other side.

"You don't need to act all cuddly with me. You and I are not that familiar. We are just ordinary friends." Vigilantly, Ding Lingdang stared at him.

Scratching his head, Li Yao embarrassedly smiled and said, "That day it was just because of a momentary impulse. You don't need to take it to your heart."

"I have already taken it to my heart. My heart has suffered a great deal of trauma, but if you think about taking the Combat Department as your major and the Refining Department as your minor instead, then maybe I will feel a little better." Ding Lingdang still had not given up her hope. She stared at Li Yao with an eager look in her eyes.

"It depends on the circumstances. I still don't know anything about the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department!" Li Yao, while speaking, arrived before his last friend.

To be precise, he was exactly not his friend but his swine friend, the one who could control both spiritual energy and tenebrum energy at the same time—the hidden cultivation genius, Zheng Dongming!

"Who would have known that you, Floating Spear City's champion of the college entrance exam, would go and choose that waste Grande Desolate War Institution's Refining Department," Zheng Dongming calmly said.

"Haven’t you, the third highest scorer in Floating Spear City for the college entrance examination, instead chosen the Sky Fantasia Academy’s Combat Department? Aren't we the same?" Li Yao gave a slight smile.

"We are not the same, we are absolutely not the same. Although it is similarly a waste department in the Nine Elite Universities, there is a fundamental difference between your Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department and my Sky Fantasia Academy's Combat Department!"

Zheng Dongming said in a high and enigmatic tone.

"What's the difference?"

Li Yao narrowed his eyes. He could understand what Zheng Dongming was implying.

"The male to female ratio in Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department is 10 to 1, and not only are the girls small in number, they are also not that beautiful. In contrast, the Sky Fantasia Academy's Combat Department is very different. Although its results are very poor, the male to female ratio is more than 1 to 10, and all of the girls are outstandingly beautiful; they are all women of a thousand charms. Not to mention that there is a large number of close-combat related courses in the Combat Department curriculum. I can have an unreserved, zero distance contact with my senior and junior sisters and feel the collisions of our souls and bodies, don't you think that it is intrinsically different?"

Zhen Dongming gave a very lewd and lascivious smile.

Li Yao was mouth agape. Only after having been stunned for a while could he reply, "Indeed, it is intrinsically different. Then, I wish for you to have fun till your heart's content in Sky Fantasia Academy's Combat Department!"

Zheng Dongming hesitated a bit before pulling Li Yao far away and activating a "Sound Insulating Glyph" around them. Only then did he speak and that too in low voice:

"Fellow Student Li Yao, the matter of Devil Flood Dragon Island... it is better to forget it. Since childhood, I have had no ambitions. Besides eating, I have never thought of doing anything else. My only dream is to flirt with all of the girls in the world that I could flirt with. If possible, I also don't want to cultivate that damn tenebrum energy! That's why, you don't need to worry. If one day my devil techniques reaches the point of culmination, even then I will absolutely not kill you. And you, even more so because of your fear of being killed of me, don’t need to kill me before I kill you. Do you understand?"

Li Yao pondered a bit. "Oh?"

"Hey hey hey, I said so much, I expressed my kind-heartedness and all my sincerity, but all you can say is 'Oh'?

Don't think that I'm afraid of you. You have had your fortuitous encounter, and I have also had my fortuitous encounter. From here on out, we will drift along in the cultivation world. Who the f*ck wouldn’t have 8-10 fortuitous encounters? Do you think you are formidable?"

Li Yao smiled as he patted Zheng Dongming's shoulder:

"You see, no matter what I say, you are not going to believe me, and similarly, no matter what you say, I am not going to believe you. Since that’s the case, then why don't we just sprint on the road of cultivation, climbing to the peak? Come on, let's compete with each other!"

While speaking, a tattered, long-distance flying shuttle gradually descended.

With a leap, Li Yao climbed aboard, waving his hand at everyone as he said, "Goodbye, everyone! If all goes well, then maybe after three months, I will be a true cultivator myself!"

…

From this day onwards, Li Yao traveled to the far reaches of the Star Glory Federation.

His first stop was the "Seamount Island" located in the southernmost region of the federation.

It was a very small island. All year round, only a palm-sized part of the island was visible above the surface of the water. That was why it was also known as "Palm Island".

However, under the water, cultivators had instead built a huge underwater city around the endless undersea mountain range.

Here, the residents of the city resided in glittering and translucent crystal bubbles. And to leave and enter, they would use "Waterproof Beads" to clear the path before using a special underwater jet-type flying shuttle to go back and forth.

Under the sea, they cultivated a large number of colorful corals, and much like a herd of sheep and cattle, a large number of fish, shrimp, crab, and turtles were reared. This was the source of the entire federation’s fresh seafood.

In here, the women liked to wear pearl shirts sewn by tying the pearls together the most.

Every night under the pitch black darkness of the sea, wearing colorful and gorgeous pearl shirts, they would beautifully and charmingly sit on the corals as they played their spirit flute which could be heard under the sea, waiting for the powerful men of the sea to quietly come in the darkness.

In here, Li Yao enjoyed the colorful and picturesque scenery, ate the most delicious and sweetest seafood before returning back to the continent and heading to the farthest reaches of the southern west direction.

On the fourth day after his departure, he arrived at the "Lantern City".

It was a town built in the vast rain forest located at the southern region of the federation. It was a town which was completely devoid of high-rising building. Using a secret technique, the cultivators would constantly accelerate the growth of a fruit on a special tree in the rain forest called the "Lantern Tree". Finally, each and every lantern fruit hanging from the branches would be modified into houses.

The residents of this city lived in this very lantern fruit. Every night, the fruit radiated in a colorful and gorgeous shimmer, turning the entire city into a sea of lanterns.

Because the rainforest is inconvenient to travel from here and there, the residents of this city liked to ride huge grasshopper-type spirit beasts, hopping from one branch to the other as they harvested precious herbs in the jungle.

Whenever there were guests from afar, the residents would invite the guests to ride the giant grasshopper. If any one of them on their first try managed to successfully ride the giant grasshopper for over a minute, he would be treated as a true warrior and would get to enjoy the finest VIP treatment.

Li Yao tried three times, but at the last moment, he was ruthlessly thrown down by the giant grasshopper. He could only helplessly throw in the towel.

Although he didn't get to enjoy the VIP treatment, when the straw skirt wearing girls of the rainforest, who had skin as smooth and delicate as honey, held cold salves and meticulously smeared it on his body, he felt a different kind of relish.

On the ninth day of his departure, Li Yao arrived at the "Saber’s Tip Snow Mountain"

Although it was not the highest peak of the Star Glory Federation, it was one of the most difficult mountain peaks to climb.

The entire snow-capped mountain was like a double-edged saber that was as bright as snow, ruthlessly stabbing towards the sky.

The steepest part of the mountain was as smooth as a mirror; it simply didn't have a single foothold. Furthermore, all year round, the powerful gusts always lingered around the peak. Even for a cultivator riding a flying sword, it would still be very difficult for him to fly to the peak.

At the summit of the snow-capped mountain grew a very precious Seven-Star Snow Lotus. It was one of the natural ingredients absolutely necessary for a dozen types of high-level strengthening drugs.

Consequently, this was where the best flying sword riders in the entire federation were produced.

The November of every year when the wind was at its strongest and the Seven-Star Snow Lotus bloomed, countless flying sword experts would whistle through the sky as they charged through the raging winds to reach the summit.

Amidst these perilous, fierce winds, they would seek for the gaps, try to feel its rhythm as they charged left and right, and would even be tossed around for 3-5 days before eventually conquering these winds and acquiring the most precious herb!

Although it was not the blooming season for the snow lotus when Li Yao arrived, it didn’t decrease the number of flying-sword experts that gathered around the snow-capped mountain. Amidst these winds, they were undergoing training and doing all sorts of eye-catching air maneuvers, which made Li Yao feel like it was not a wasted trip; he was completely satisfied.

If it was an air-battle, the battle prowess of these flying sword expects would absolutely not be less than any flying demon beast.

In the next three months, Li Yao toured mountains, rivers, rainforests, hills, deserts, oases, and farmlands of the federation; he saw all kinds of weird towns.

There was a town located on top of a crater of an active volcano. The entire volcano crater had been sealed by a huge array of glyphs.

Rumor has it that four hundred years ago, this volcano had once erupted, ravaging a dozen nearby towns. A cultivator, after sealing the volcano, had lived here with his family, guarding the volcano.

Even to this day, the family had developed into a new town but they had never forgotten their mission as they referred to themselves as the “Guardians of the Volcano”.

There was a town which was completely built on the back of a few hundred ginormous "Alpine Camel Beasts".

In the Heaven Origin Sector, the Alpine Camel Beast was one of the largest spirit beasts on land. Each Alpine Camel Beast was like a whale surfing on the sea. People built houses on the back of these Alpine Camel Beasts, and each Alpine Camel Beast could house a few dozen families on its back. Hundreds of Alpine Came Beasts together constituted a mobile city.

The residents of the city took part in the care of animals for a living. With the changes in the season, they would drive the Alpine Camel Beasts to seek water grass to raise the cattle and sheep. Here, Li Yao ate the freshest mutton in his life; he boiled the mutton for ten minutes to the point where the blood didn't coagulate, and when he took a bite, it immediately melted in his mouth as it rolled down his throat, much like a delicious wine.

Town after town...

Chapter 100: The King of Metal Forging

Chapter 100: The King of Metal Forging

At every hill, every lake, every farmland, every town, Li Yao saw many bizarre things and met many strange people.

One time, he had encountered an old man of 130-years of age. Obviously, he was just an ordinary person; however, he had a pet “Whistling Sky Hawk”, a spirit beast with a length of 4-5 meters.

When the old man was 4 years old, he had inadvertently picked up a palm-sized bird whose wings were broken. As the bird was very pitiful, using branches, the man had helped connect its broken wings and had also smeared healing ointments.

From then on, the little bird always stuck to him, accompanying him all the way through adolescence, marriage, childbirth, and old age.

From the beginning to a century later, the little bird had always remained palm sized. The old man had also gotten accustomed to the existence of this small thing that was always around him.

But who would have known that after its 104th birthday, the height of the little bird would suddenly soar; in just a short span of three years, the bird grew to be 5m long, revealing the lofty appearance that many spirit beasts had.

Only then did the old man come to realize that he had picked up an amazing thing.

"I was just an ordinary wage earner. My house was small, and there was also my son and daughter-in-law as well as my grandchildren who were soon to be married. So, where would I be able to raise such a big bird?"

"I was forced to secretly raise it on the roof of the house. Because of this, I had been nagged by my wife, my son, and my daughter-in-law, and the neighborhood committee had even come looking for me several times—they had even alerted the police!

"A few cultivators from the cultivation sects had come knocking at my door, stating that they were willing to pay an exorbitant price for this guy, but how could I be willing to part with it? In the eyes of cultivators, it is just a spirit beast, but in my eyes, it's my whole youth, my whole life! I will not sell, I will absolutely not sell!"

The old man gently caressed the Whistling Sky Hawk's head and laughed as he spoke.

The Whistling Sky Hawk, which was known for its fierceness, very gently leaned on the old man.

The left wing was slightly twisted and signs of having been seriously injured in the past could be seen.

"And just like that, after another twenty years, I retired. My children and grandchildren don't need to worry about me, and my old woman has also left a step earlier. Finally, I can fulfill my childhood dream! Little bird, oh little bird, ever since I was a child, I have always wondered how much better it would have been if you were a spirit beast. If you were a spirit beast, then I could ride you and continue to fly—fly across the mountains, over the rivers, above the clouds, and even fly throughout the Heaven Origin Sector."

The old man jovially laughed, revealing the lack of front teeth as he climbed up on the back of the Whistling Sky Hawk with difficulty.

"Preet——"

The old man blew a whistle laden with rust. The Whistling Sky Hawk gave a long whistle before flapping its wings and soaring into the sky.

The Whistling Sky Hawk had suffered an injury to its wings, and the old man was not a cultivator and simply didn't know any skills for riding spirit beasts. A man and a spirit beast slowly soared into the sky; the way they flew was full of twists and turns, it was simply too horrible to watch.

The old man simply didn't care. He sang a song which used to be popular a century ago as their silhouettes slowly disappeared into the pile of cotton-like layers of clouds.

Along the way, Li Yao had encountered no small number of people who were no different that this old man.

He had met a sword cultivator with tyrannical strength that was both accomplished and well-known, but as the age of 90 dawned upon him, he suddenly came to a realization and had discovered that what he truly wanted to become was a scholar-type cultivator—he wanted to be a poet.

And so, this sword cultivator put down his sword. In the desolate and vast land of snow, he hiked on a mountain of snow, searching for inspiration.

Occasionally, he would encounter some highway robbers or bandits, but only as a last resort would he use the sword. On the contrary, he would try to use poetry filled with warmth and love to reform the evildoers.

Over time, everyone near the snow mountain had heard of a "Devil Poet" who had excellent sword arts as they came to fear his poems and even moreso dreaded the 3-feet-long sword in his hand.

Li Yao had also met a village doctor who had graduated from the Empyrean Capital School of Medicine and had once worked in many cultivation sects. He was a renowned master in the cultivation world and was most skilled in unblocking the eight extra meridians as well as treating Qigong Deviation.

But after the age of 180, feeling obligated, the peak Building Foundation Stage cultivator rejected many high salary offers from major hospitals and cultivation sects, concealed his identity, and started traveling to every remote village in the federation in order to treat the patients in the backwater villages.

"Three decades ago, I had once acted as a protector for a sect leader of a major sect during his breakthrough and had helped him successfully step onto the Core Formation Stage. Later on, the sect leader had gifted me a luxurious seaside villa in addition to five shops on the busiest commercial street in a major city!"

"I used to think that it would be the largest consultation fee I would ever receive in my life."

In a shabby brick house, the village doctor, while grilling sweet potatoes in the fire furnace, laughingly said to Li Yao, "That is, until yesterday when I had received the most valuable consultation fee.”

"What was it?" Li Yao very meticulously peeled the sweet potato as the hot air blurred his vision.

"I helped a little boy who had lost vision in both his eyes when he was playing with fireworks, helping him see the light after four years. He gave me a fierce kiss right here."

Pointing at his cheek, the village doctor had the most brilliant smile hanging on his face; it was truly a very natural and serene smile.

A retired old man riding a Whistling Sky Hawk, a sword cultivator who wanted to become a poet, a peak Building Foundation Stage village doctor...

There were many, many people like this.

During the day, Li Yao, in this picturesque paradise of mortals, would listen to all kinds of strange stories from these people.

During the night, even while sleeping, he would not forget to cultivate; he would zealously assimilate Ou Yezi's memory fragments.

Each memory fragments contained ten days to one month worth of Ou Yezi's memories.

And, every night, Li Yao would approximately assimilate one or two memory fragments.

If he tried assimilating any more, he would exhaust his spiritual power and would feel as if his whole neural field was on fire, causing him to feel excruciating pain.

Assimilating more than he could handle would do more harm than good for his cultivation.

In this long trek which spanned for three months, Li Yao had assimilated about 70-80% of Ou Yezi's memories of the time when he was a forge worker.

Compared to the previous illusory dreams, this was different. This time, the memory fragments had completely integrated with Li Yao's, completely integrating with his own memory.

As if he had truly been a forge worker of the Hundred Smelting Clan, practicing the superior metal forging techniques forty millenniums ago.

Although each time in the process of assimilating the memory, Li Yao, as Ou Yezi, would be tortured inhumanely to the point where he wanted to die.

But, the harvest he reaped was also enormous.

He had learned all of Ou Yezi's forging skills. In addition to < One-Hundred-and-Eight Hands Chaos Gale Hammer Technique> as a foundation, Li Yao had finally reached the peak of perfection on the road of metal forging.

In today's world where various advanced magical equipment refining techniques were used in mass production, taking a broad view at the entire Heaven Origin Sector, it would absolutely be impossible to find a second Li Yao, one who would so foolishly learn some antique forging techniques from forty millenniums ago.

Therefore, Li Yao could also be known as "The Star Glory Federation’s Top Expert in the Ancient Art of Manual Forging Techniques"!

Although it sounded like a pretty prestigious title, it didn't have much practical value. But still, Li Yao found a little satisfaction in his heart.

"Today is forging techniques, and tomorrow will be the most sophisticated refining equipment techniques. After I assimilate all of Ou Yezi’s memories about forging divine equipment and sharp equipment, even Deep Sea University will be nothing! And finally, one day, the title of Holy Land for Refiners will belong to my Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department!"

After three months, in a nameless small mountain village in the northern reaches of the federation.

"Moo..."

"Baa..."

"Woff, woff! Woff woff!"

At the entrance of a village, a large group of the wooden oxen[1] reeled left and right as they let out feeble bellows in the grain drying field.

The wooden oxen were all generic metal beast puppets made for farming purposes.

Taking the sheep that kept bleating “Baa baa” as an example, its entire body was built from metal, its joints were inlaid with various crystals, and its entire body was engraved with dozens of array glyphs, allowing it to automatically walk and look for dead branches, leaves, and straw.

After swallowing, everything would be broken down into plant fibers and would again be entwined together, turning into woolen-shaped fibers in its belly.

These kinds of fibers could be used to weave nets, and in the economically backward places, they could even be directly used to sew clothes. It was an extremely valuable puppet beast.

And the huge copper bull next to it, needless to say, was not only used to plow the fields; during the harvesting season, so long as some common parts were installed, it was possible to change its body, turning it into a harvesting machine.

Through the horn-like blades on its head, rice stalks could be completely cut off which would then enter its stomach through its mouth, where it would be processed before shining rice grains were discharged from behind.

In poor areas, these metal beast puppets were the life and blood of an entire family and would often be used for a good several generations.

The same was true for this small nameless mountain village.

The few dozen metal beast puppets were antiques from a hundred or so years ago and had already passed their life expectancy. Either their mechanical limbs were broken, or their crystals had been stolen by thieves, or some crucial place of engraved array glyphs was worn out due to the passage of time.

"Young Master Li[2], can you help auntie check whether or not this iron bull can be salvaged? It was the dowry my grandmother brought when she got married!"

"Young Master Li, if you have time, can you help this grandpa check this big dog? Although it is not alive, it had accompanied me ever since I was born. This is but 130 years of feelings!"

Li Yao was surrounded by bright and honest villagers. On one side of the house, a villager was killing a pig to make pork stew for Li Yao. It was the most delicious meat in the entire grains drying field.

It was not easy to find a master who could repair magical equipment in this kind of backwater village.

The honest villagers didn't know how to thank Li Yao, so a villager was simply butchering the big, fat pig which was prepared for the new year celebration.

Many foolhardy kids thought it was the new year as they ran around in the drying grains field with their runny nose, jumping and shouting in joy as they giggled in a sound that was as sweet as the rings of a silver bell

"Hold on for a moment, hold on for a moment, uncles and aunts! I am going to slowly check, one by one. However, I also have no way. Some are completely worn out. But as long as there is still some breath in me, I will try to completely repair these wooden oxen and flowing horses!"

Li Yao said while happily smiling.

After three months of experience, Li Yao's current appearance was completely different from the time when he had just departed. If his friends came to see his current appearance, they would absolutely be surprised.

Compared to 100 days ago, he seemed to be a bit taller, about a half centimeter. He was slightly skinny, and due to living and traveling in the wilderness for a long time, his skin had become quite tanned. His hair was in a mess, and a beard has grown on his face. All in all, it completely gave off a slightly sloppy appearance.

He was dressed in workwear sown from ordinary coarse cloth which was covered in dust and grease. At first glance, he looked no different than most of the common field workers.

But, the biggest change could be found in his temperament.

Translator notes-

[1] - - Wooden Oxen and Flowing Horses.

[2] - Here, the young master doesn’t refer to a child of a wealthy family; the master here is like expert or professor.

Note: Sorry for the delayed releasing. Ash got food-poisoning in last week and he has been back from now on. Let's look forward more amazing chapters will be coming up!

Chapter 101: Virtuosic

Chapter 101: Virtuosic

The past Li Yao, having grown up in the magical equipment graveyard since childhood, had the most extreme character brought up in him due to the poor living environment.

He was just like a vicious vulture whose first choice in an encounter was to use the most violent methods.

But now, after three months of traveling over the hills and through the river, beholding so many sublime and vast sceneries, and meeting many people with various stories, unbeknownst to him, Li Yao had become broad-minded.

Furthermore, because of assimilating so many of Ou Yezi's memory fragments, his temperament had gradually transformed, and thus he became more mature. Now, he was unlike any of the 18-19-year-old hot-headed teenagers; he was more like an adult who had been living away from home for a few years and had gone through fire and water.

It didn't mean that he had given up on his principles of life, but rather his fierce aura was no longer exposed.

In the past, Li Yao was like a vicious vulture, but today, Li Yao was like a soaring hawk.

The vulture was now “hibernating within his heart”.

While recalling the memories from the past three months bit by bit, Li Yao disassembled the wooden oxen and flowing horses as skillfully and as easily as if traveling along a familiar road. Nowadays, these unsophisticated, civilian magical equipment were as simple as ordinary toys in his hands. With proficiency similar to a butcher dismembering an ox, the metal beast puppets turned into heaps of parts one by one. After cleaning, derusting, pruning, oiling, and undergoing all sorts of processing, they were once again reassembled.

"Moo! Moo!" The iron bull bellowed at the top of its voice.

"Baa! Baa! Baa!" The bronze goat automatically spun and weaved wool-like fibers while bleating cheerfully

"Woof woof! Woof woof! Woof woof woof woof!" The big tin dog, which had been missing its hind leg and instead had a wheel installed in its place by Li Yao, bolted around the kids while swaying its hollow, iron tail left and right as it made creaking noises.

"Wow..."

The villagers had never seen such marvelous maintenance skills. Compared to Li Yao, the old magical equipment maintenance technician who had difficulty seeing clearly was simply as clumsy as a tailor who mended shoes. The entire village that had gathered in the grain drying field was completely shocked by Li Yao's quick and sharp skills. Each and every villager was grinning from ear to ear from shock and amazement.

The repaired wooden oxen and flowing horses cheerfully ran towards their owners, and naturally, the owners all had huge smiles hanging on their faces.

As for the other metal puppet beasts whose most crucial components were impossible to repair because of excessive wear and tear, their owners had a frown knitted on their forehead, and they all felt depressed.

Li Yao, after thinking for a moment, said, "Everyone, don't worry, I will think of some way. It’s just civilian magical equipment anyway. The load bearing capacity and the precision requirements for its components are very low, it would be better to—"

Under his meticulous inspection of the wooden oxen that could not be repaired, he found those truly worn components which he could do nothing about. The rusting was so severe that the iron bull was reduced to a lump of iron.

Having disassembled it into its various parts, Li Yao explained it to the villagers, "This iron bull is truly worn out; I simply have no way to repair it. Will there be a problem if I dismantle it for spare parts?"

"It's alright, Young Master Li. The rust on this iron bull is already beyond imagination. When I tried selling it as scrap iron, no one was even willing to buy it. Feel free to do whatever you like. Whether you can repair it or not, either way, it’ll be alright. We are already satisfied with all the maintenance you have done!" The village chief laughed; he had made the final decision.

Li Yao slightly smiled as he placed one of the iron bull’s leg on the anvil and raised the iron hammer high into the air.

"Young Master Li, what do you want to do?"

"Do you want to forcibly hammer a lump of iron to create components which can be used directly?"

"Impossible, even immortals can not do such thing!"

One after another, the villagers broke into discussion as they became extremely curious. Even those kids with runny noses were peeking through the gaps between the legs of the adults. Everyone was staring at Li Yao in surprise.

"Cluck! Cluck! Cluck! Cluck!"

The entire village was wrapped in silence; only the hens who were being raised on the other side of the grains drying field were completely oblivious to the situation as they were still cheerfully clucking.

Li Yao took a long, deep breath. In the depths of his brain, Ou Yezi's memory fragments started rotating wildly. The memory fragments pertaining to countless days and nights spent in Hundred Smelting Clan's metal forging room turned into colorful splendor one after another as the corresponding muscle memory swarmed into each and every part of Li Yao’s body.

In an instant, it was as if Li Yao was possessed by a god; seemingly as if it was a high-grade flying sword, the crude and thick black iron hammer in his hand surprisingly let out a dragon roar, causing undulating, invisible ripples to appear in the air.

Several nearby villagers felt a gust of wind striking their face and blowing their hair away. A kid even let out a "Wow!".

Just as the villagers blinked their eyes, Li Yao started moving!

His right hand turned into a black shadow as it strangely made a circle in the air before ruthlessly pounding at the iron anvil!

"Dong!"

Dazzling sparks burst forth in between the iron hammer and the iron anvil along with a thunderous bang, which surprisingly lingered in the air for a while, like that of a toll from an old temple bell, making everyone's ears to start ringing.

Many villagers could not help but cover their ears.

"Dong!"

The echo from the first strike had yet to disperse, but the iron hammer had once again turned into a giant black python and landed upon the iron anvil from another tricky angle, thereupon bursting forth with another shockwave akin to a toll from an old temple bell.

Like frightful billows and terrifying waves, two shockwaves, one after the other and with layer upon layer, stormed towards everyone.

This time, even the strongest among villagers involuntarily covered their ears as every child started to break into cries.

"What's going on? It's not like we have never seen metal forging before, but why is it so loud?"

"Wow, check out Young Master Li's speed! An iron hammer weighing tens of kilogram is just like chopsticks in his hands!"

"Fast, extremely fast! I am simply unable to clearly see when he is striking the anvil. I only see boundless black shadows!"

While covering their ears and staring at Li Yao with wide-opened eyes, every one of them was shouting at the top of their lungs.

However, aside from what they themselves had said, no one else could hear or understand the others. Everyone was immersed in an immense shock.

As for Li Yao, he seemed as if he didn't feel anything.

He was neither affected by the deafening, bombarding rings nor was he perturbed by the screams of the villagers.

Once he switched to his working mode, he seemed to have entered an ethereal state where he forgot everything, even himself.

With a solemn look in his eyes, he kept staring at the iron anvil.

But, if one looked carefully, the depths of his eyes bore a faint mist, one that gave off the impression as if his spirit wasn't even here; instead, it was inside the metal forging room of Hundred Smelting Clan from forty millenniums ago.

Dong! Dong! Dong! The collision of hammer and anvil continuously reverberated. Since the very beginning, Li Yao consciously controlled each and every movement of his body while displaying the＜One-Hundred-and-Eight Hands Chaos Gale Hammer Technique＞ along the entire process.

However, as the forging progressed, his speed also became faster and faster. The strikes of the iron hammer were no longer a conscious action; it became as natural as breathing to him. Afterwards, his pair of arms completely transformed into two black aurae, directly enveloping the entire iron anvil. Everyone could only hear a series of "Deng, deng, deng, deng" coming from inside the aura, but they were simply unable to clearly see any of his movements.

Suddenly, his every action came to a halt.

The flattened iron hammer was thrown aside. To everyone's surprise, the hammerhead had actually turned crimson, as if it had just gone through high-temperature smelting, and it was even emitting scorching heat.

"Give me another hammer!" Li Yao shouted as he stared with wide-opened eyes.

Because of the multiple fierce bombardments in a short span of time, the temperature of the iron hammer climbed to the peak, and thus it was no longer usable.

Witnessing such a marvelous performance, all the villagers cried out in surprise; they were all horrified.

The village blacksmith quickly handed him a new iron hammer. After weighing the hammer for a bit, another round of sounds of the ruthless pounding of a hammer echoed in the village!

In just a span of half an hour, Li Yao had replaced a total of five iron hammers. Finally—"It's done!"

Throwing away the scorching hot iron hammer, Li Yao contentedly appreciated his own masterpiece. His hands were full of bloody blisters as they constantly shook.

The villagers swarmed over, and as they carefully looked with wide-opened eyes, they discovered multitudes of parts of different shapes lying on the iron anvil as well as a pile of parts on the ground!

A completely rusted iron bull had been forcefully hammered into the over a hundred magical equipment components on the ground. The equipment components, in and of itself, were the proof that showed how formidable the forging techniques of the Hundred Smelting Clan were forty millenniums ago!

Holding a magical equipment used to measure accuracy, the village blacksmith walked over. A red beam from the magical equipment shot out, carrying out a full range scan of each and every component.

"He really made it! Although the accuracy is a bit worse than the original, for a civilian magical equipment, it is completely acceptable!"

The gray-haired, old blacksmith, after reading the data on the measuring equipment, jumped out in surprise and happiness.

In a moment, the swarm of villagers broke out into cries of exclamation just like the waves of a tsunami.

"Young Master Li is absolutely amazing! Just using an iron hammer, he made hundreds of parts!?"

"Of course, Young Master Li is a university student!"

“So what if he's a university student? Our family's third child is also a university student as well, but look at what he is doing now!”

"How can that be the same? Young Master Li is a student of a prominent university!"

While the villagers were immersed in cheering and jumping in joy, the village chief, with a big grin on his face, invited Li Yao into his own small house.

"Young Master Li, this time, I really have to thank you. You have greatly helped my village!"

"Village Chief, I simply repaired since I could. Now that university is about to start, tomorrow, I will leave to report to the Grand Desolate War Institution," Li Yao said with a smile.

"Alright. Attending university is important. On behalf of the entire village, I wish you a pleasant and safe journey. Right, I have something for you. If it's not too heavy, bring it along with you!"

From under the bed, the village chief, with difficulty, dragged out something that was wrapped in a rag. It was apparent that it was very heavy; just from the friction with the cement, it already made a squeaking noise.

The village chief cautiously unwrapped the cloth. Lying inside was an oddly-shaped lump of metal where the bottom part was thin, while the top part was thick and even had two protruding ends—it resembled a hammer that had been crafted by nature itself.

"Huh?" Li Yao's eyes began to shine.

In the memory fragments of Ou Yezi, the very first exercise he came in contact with was＜One-Hundred-and-Eight Hands Chaos Gale Hammer Technique＞.

And in the Hundred Smelting Clan's forging room, day and night, it was also the hammer which he had been in contact with.

The hammer could be said to be the tool which he was the most familiar with.

And it appeared that this bizarre-shaped, naturally formed hammer was neither metal nor any kind of ore. It looked quite ordinary, but it possessed a kind of bizarre, devil energy, one which made anyone who looked at it be reluctant to extricate their line of sight.

The village chief breathed a sigh of relief. While raising a spiritual energy lamp to illuminate the lump of metal, he laughed and said, "Look!"

Narrowing his eyes, a faint blue color appeared in his sight.

Just a moment ago, this lump of metal was completely black and gave off an appearance that was too ugly to look at. But once it came in contact with the light, a trace of a magnificent blue sheen appeared on its black surface. Within the depths of this blue sheen, it seemed to be sparkling with a brilliance akin to stars, giving it a look as if it were a huge blue gemstone; it was extremely beautiful and captivating.

"Dark Star Rock?" With one glance, Li Yao recognized the material.

This material called Dark Star Rock was neither metal nor ore since it possessed both the characteristics of metal and rock. It was not something which was naturally formed in the Heaven Origin Sector, but instead, it was a kind of meteorite from outer space. Although it was not scarce in quantity, generally speaking, its was limited to the size of the fist of a newborn child.

Such a big piece lumped together to take the form of a natural war hammer was rather rare.

The Dark Star Rock's value was not too high; although it was very hard, its spiritual energy conductivity was extremely bad, and it was very difficult to use it to refine a variety of magical equipment. Thus, it was almost equivalent to a scrap of metal.

Unless it was used to refine a very particular magical equipment with a specialized property, for general purposes, it would never be used.

However, the market price for such a big piece of Dark Star Rock was easily a few hundred thousand bucks.

A flash rushed past Li Yao's eyes as his breathing became a little rapid. He said in excitement, "Village Chief, what do you mean?"

Chapter 102: The Final Stretch

Chapter 102: The Final Stretch

The village chief laughed and said, "Young Master Li, this stone fell from the sky a couple years back. When it fell into our village, it even smashed a large, tile-roofed house. Don't be deceived by its small size—it is very heavy! Just this small lump weighs a few hundred pounds. You can give it a try, and see whether or not you can handle it."

Seeing that Li Yao stood still, the village chief approached him and pulled his hand. "Young Master Li, today, you have helped our village by repairing so many wooden oxen. The overall maintenance cost could easily be over ten thousand bucks, but as the majority of the young men from our village are working outside, with only the old and young left behind, we would not be able to gather so much money in a short period of time. A few years back, an outsider wanted to buy this piece of stone and offered 30,000 bucks. But, I noticed that he had a thievish look, one that was unlike someone who is honest, so I didn't sell it to him in the end. Today, perhaps an ordinary hammer is too light for you, I noticed that while you were using the hammer, you didn't find it comfortable to use. Furthermore, in just a short period of time, it became soft and hot, rendering it impossible to use. When I thought about it, this thing is useless to us and we can not do anything with it since it is just too heavy, so it would be better to give it to you to use as a hammer. What do you think?"

Li Yao shook his head and said, "Village Chief, let me say this in advance: I am still not a registered refiner and am just a half-baked student. What I did was nothing spectacular, so how could I even mention money? Besides, if you take this thing to an auction in some major city, it could be sold for at least 120,000-130,000 bucks. If you encountered some cultivator who was in need of this thing, it could very well sell for 200,000 bucks. I can not take it—it is just too expensive."

The village chief slapped his thigh. "I was right! That thievish-looking brat was really not a good guy. Unexpectedly, he wanted to buy a thing worth 120,000-130,000 for just 30,000 bucks. Really, we village folks don't know anything about goods! But, although we don’t know anything about goods, we can still tell good from bad. In just one glance, I knew Young Master Li was a good person. This thing is perfect for you to use, take it! If not for you, we would have to buy many new wooden oxen. Don’t mention 200,000, it might even take double. It could very well be no less than 400,000!"

Although Li Yao shook his head, his eyes remained completely glued to the Dark Star Rock; no matter how he tried, he was not able to extricate his gaze.

The village chief was an experienced man, so how could he not notice Li Yao’s fondness for it? With a smile on his face, he said, "Young Master Li, how about we don't talk about gifting or selling? For the time being, take this thing with you first. As for whether or not money will be involved, we can talk about this in the future. I know you are a poor student and don't have much money to spare, so let's talk about it again when you have the money, ok?"

Li Yao swallowed a mouthful of saliva, seriously pondered for a bit, and said, "Village Chief, how about this? Although those wooden oxen have been repaired using temporarily-made parts, those parts are, after all, not the original. Although there is not much of a difference in their appearance, they have gone through my destructive transformation, thus their lifespan will not be too high since there had been too much transformation to their internal microstructure."

"I will take this Dark Star Rock first and will go to a major city to determine its value. Once I have determined how much it costs, I will help you exchange the entire sum for the appropriate parts and send it to you. Later, you can ask the town's magical equipment technician to replace them with their corresponding parts. That way, you can reuse it for another 20-30 years. What do you think?"

Every month, Li Yao would receive 30,000 bucks as an allowance for being a Class 1 Federation's Disabled Servicemen. In addition, he was completely exempted from paying the tuition fee by the Grand Desolate War Institution. Considering that he could also receive a premium scholarship, he could, in fact, be considered as a slightly rich fellow.

He had decided to save a year’s worth of money to exchange for spare parts and send it over to these villagers.

The village chief nodded while laughing. "That is indeed good. Quickly, give it a try and see whether or not you can handle this lump of iron!"

"En!"

Li Yao's pair of eyes started shining. Much like the gaze of someone who was watching the charming figure of a peerless beauty, his gaze was completely transfixed on the Dark Star Rock.

As he bent his waist to pick up the Dark Star Rock, he felt his waist tighten; it was incredibly heavy. To his surprise, even after exerting all his strength, he was barely able to grasp this Dark Star Rock, which was not even half-a-meter long.

However, the feeling of its touch was simply too good. The Dark Star Rock was unlike any metal, which would give off a cold feeling upon touch. Instead, it was as if he was caressing a piece of mahogany[1] that was a couple of years old; it was dry as well as smooth.

And at the thin end of the Dark Star Rock, there were a dozen naturally-grown, circular grooves, which greatly improved the grip.

Having tightly clasped it with both hands, as if his blood vessels were connected with the Dark Star Rock, he felt like he became one with it and could even hear the breathing of the stars inside the Dark Star Rock.

Although this Dark Star Rock could not be refined into some powerful magical equipment, as a hammer, it was the best because it possessed a natural resistance to a variety of spiritual energy; he didn't need to worry about interference from any spiritual energy. There was no better hammer to use to forge materials that contained various kinds of spiritual energy.

This Dark Star Rock, for Li Yao, was just like adding wings to a tiger!

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao swung it in accordance with the and felt each muscle fiber in his entire body moaning in pleasure, giving off an extremely pleasant feeling.

Since just a swinging posture was so relaxing, if this Dark Star Rock was used to forge a variety of heaven and earth materials, it would definitely be so comfortable that it would be like flying in the sky!

In the depths of Li Yao's eyes, a gleam of boundless thirst could be found.

The village chief said with a laugh, "Young Master Li, once this Dark Star Rock came into your hands, you and it were both glowing—you are destined to be together! Hahaha!"

"Village Chief, I really have to thank you. Maybe this meteorite is insignificant for others, but for me, it is an extremely precious treasure which all the money in the world can not buy!" Li Yao earnestly said.

An innocent grin appeared on the village chief’s face as he suddenly strided towards the entrance. Parting the curtains, he yelled towards outside, "Everyone, drop whatever you are doing! Bring out all the liquor we have prepared for new year’s celebration! Young Master Li is going to leave tomorrow, so what do you say? Can we let him leave so easily?"

"Village Chief, you—" Li Yao was suddenly dumbfounded.

...

Two days later at the vast expanse of the northern plains, an unusually clear sky with thin clouds gave off the appearance as if the sky was particularly high, and the scorching hot sunlight shone upon the land, seemingly turning the entire world into a golden sea.

"Moo..."

With its whole body covered in long white hair, a very obese, giant spirit beast was languidly floating over the highway.

Yes, it was "floating".

"Soaring Roar" was a spirit beast that evolved from a large marine spirit beast. Since its body was extremely big and tall, its four limbs were simply unable to bear its own weight, and so, its body had adapted itself and grown sixteen holes underneath its body which could blow air, allowing it to shoot a large amount of air, and by virtue of the subsequent recoil force, it could float in the air.

At the rear of its body, there were four identical holes that could shoot air. Once the air was shot towards its back, its body, which weighed a couple dozen tons, would be able to drive forward.

Its principle was quite similar to the "Hovercraft" used by the federation army.

Because it was air-driven and hovered mid-air, every action of the Soaring Roar was incredibly stable. It could ignore any terrain, regardless of whether it was lakes, swamps, or hills, and so long as it was not a 10,000 rens[2] high mountain, it would be similar to riding on a flat plain. This mode of transportation was extremely loved by the ordinary citizens.

Loaded on the back of this Soaring Roar was a large amount of tea bricks[3], whose weight was similar to air for the Soaring Roar.

Groaning in dissatisfaction, the Soaring Roar would fling its flexible long nose to the back from time to time.

An old man whose face was completely covered in wrinkles hastily gave it a crab-apple, which was its most favorite food, and also combed its hair and removed the lice. Only then was the Soaring Roar was a little more satisfied.

Li Yao laid comfortably on the tea bricks as his head rested on both his hand. Narrowing his eyes, he looked up into the sky, looking for changes in the unending clouds. With a nose filled with the fragrance of tea and a body tanned from having basked in the sunlight, he was comfortable to the extreme. From time to time, he would even take a nap.

Only god knows how long it was until he finally heard the old man shout, "Little Brother, we have arrived at the Giant Edge Pass!"

"Grandpa Wu, thank you for giving me a ride for a day!"

Li Yao jumped down from the back of the Soaring Roar and lightly landed on the ground a dozen meters below. Waving his hand, he smilingly said goodbye to the old man, hoping that the old man would not discover the 200 bucks that he had secretly stuffed in his pocket when passing by.

Taking a long, deep breath, he did a set of strengthening exercise for the muscles and the bones. Finally, Li Yao had completely recovered from the decadent hangover from two days ago.

He completely did not expect that the wine brewed by the village would be so strong. Even he, whose physique was as strong as a peak martial artist, was unable to support himself and had to sleep for 7-8 hours after having continuously gulped down ten pitchers.

But, he was not someone who would take it lying down. Before he was drunk dead, he had successfully made the entire village tumble down on the ground—from old to young, even the aunts had not been let off.

The next day when he woke up, besides the few kids with runny noses, the men and women and the old and young of the entire village were all asleep!

"This trip, I have seen many incredible sceneries, met many odd and strange people, made a few interesting friends, and have even inadvertently obtained the Dark Star Rock, which is the most suitable hammer for refining. I have truly learned a lot!"

Li Yao pondered in a happy mood.

"The only regret is that I have not found the "feel" that belongs to me. My spiritual roots have still not awakened."

"But, it is still not urgent. How could a cultivator’s spirit be so simple? If just touring the mountains and rivers was enough to awaken the spiritual roots, wouldn't this world be full of cultivators!?"

Li Yao laughed at himself.

After three months of travel and cultivation, he felt that his Spiritual Root Development Quotient had significantly progressed. If he tested it now, it might very well be possible for it to have climbed above 99%.

Especially his forehead, every morning when he woke up, he would always have an obvious bulging feeling, one that felt like the uncontrollable "pillar propping up to the sky" in the lower region of his body. It seemed as if there was something like a bamboo shoot in the depths of his brain, one which was about to break out of his body.

It was almost the final stretch! Once his spiritual roots awakened, he would become a cultivator!

However, this final stretch was not so easy to cross. Many people had been stuck on this 99% for half a year, and even being unable to cross this bridge after 2-3 years was pretty normal.

"Rumor has it that when the spiritual roots awaken, one will feel as if their whole body is burning. They will lose their mind as all their emotions would be a hundredfold stronger than before. Unable to restrain oneself, one could only act in accordance to their desires and act as they please. But, in these past three months, I have never experienced this feeling. It seems that only after entering the Grand Desolate War Institution can I slowly look at my luck."

Li Yao gazed into the distance. The road ahead was still very long, and a wonderful university life was about to start!

"Grand Desolate War Institution, here I come!"

Looking all around and seeing that no one was in sight, for a moment, he acted in childishness as he used both his hand to pound his chest and make a gorilla-like roar.

And the black-winged flying sword, which had not appeared for a long time, drilled its way out from the backpack on his back and danced around him.

In front of them on the boundless desolate piece of land was a towering mountain range which looked like an uplifted back of a giant dragon. However, the center of the mountain range revealed a long, straight canyon which seemed as if it had ruthlessly been made by a giant ax that separated the heaven and the earth.

At the end of the straight canyon stood a lofty, domineering military fortress.

This was also known as the "World's First Impregnable Pass", the Giant Edge Pass!

TLN:

[1] Mahogany - A type of wood: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahogany

[2] Ren() - Ancient Chinese measurement unit equivalent to seven or eight chi(, 1/3rd of a meter)

[3] Tea Brick - A type of compressed tea: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tea_brick

Chapter 103: Towers of Bones

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The Extreme Heaven Mountain Range ran tens of thousands of Li across at the center of the entire Heaven Origin Sector; it was as if an extremely precise line divided the continent into two colors, dark green and greenish yellow.

The air to the south of the Extreme Heaven Mountain Range was humid, the land was fertile, and lakes, hills, and farmlands could be found everywhere. It was the home of 90% of the Star Glory Federation’s population.

And to the north of the Extreme Heaven Mountain, it was ten thousand li of desolate desert; it was a brutal world where monstrous wind ran rampant in the sky.

Here, the climate was volatile. Sometimes, rain would be pouring; sometimes, it would burst into a hailstorm; and other times, it would be a continuous drought that might even last for 3-5 months, during which not even a single drop of water would fall.

What's more was that demon beasts ran amok here; it was a place where evil creatures wrought havoc at will. The living environment was incredibly bad. And although the size was almost the same as the inland area, it only harbored 10% of the federation’s population.

The ordinary people of Star Glory Federation both love and hate this cruel territory. For the residents that lived on the inlands, this place also went by the name of “Demon Beast Wasteland”. That name didn’t mean that this place was the kingdom of demon beasts—no, it meant that only those humans who were as tyrannical as demon beasts could survive here.

And for those “demon beast-like tyrannical humans”, this land had another name, one which they affectionately called —

The Wasteland!

The Giant Edge Pass was the center point which connected the inland with the wasteland.

Five centuries ago, this place used to be the largest defense fortress in the federation.

In this place, the federation army had shed blood and laid down their lives. Using their blood and lives, they forged a great wall of steel to block off the invading demon beasts of the wasteland.

And when the federation had destroyed the "Eastern Demon Empire", this place had become the forward base from which countless federation soldiers and cultivators would depart from together while riding crystal tanks and giant floating war fortresses. Wielding chainswords and spiritual energy boltguns, they marched on this land to expand the border, breaking mountains and toppling temples, slaying demons and purging devils, razing the Demon Clan's villages, towns, cities, and countries; they struggled in hopes to win some valuable living space for the human race.

With leisure, Li Yao walked towards the Giant Edge Pass.

He had not even arrived at the front of the fortress, yet his gaze had already been attracted by the dense groups of hundreds of white towers on both sides of the road.

With distinct edges and spikes all over, an intense bloody aura emanated from these white towers.

On closer inspection, how could these be white towers? They were clearly piles of bones of nearly a thousand demon beasts!

Each tower of bones was 70-80 meters high, with the tallest being even taller than 100 meters; they were great and splendid, shooting straight up into the sky.

Arm bones, leg bones, ribs... All kinds of bones could be found in these towers of bones.

But the most common was the skull—broken skulls.

From palm-sized skulls to skulls with a height as high as a dozen meters, all could be found among the piles. One could only imagine how huge the demon beast, the owner of the skull, must have been.

"Aren’t these clearly the war trophies on display!?"

Li Yao gasped in admiration. As a human, a prideful feeling instantaneously welled up in his heart.

This was the tradition of the federation army and the cultivation world. After hunting demon beasts in the Demon Beast Wasteland, every expert, with the exception of those who needed the skeleton to forge magical equipment, would discard it before the Giant Edge Pass. These mountains of bones were displayed in order to flaunt the martial prowess of humans as well as to deter the Demon Clan.

There were nearly a thousand mountains of bones, with the first among them having been started to be built 500 years ago. The bones had already decomposed, becoming one with the land. Only by the virtue of the enchantments from the mysterious glyph arrays were they not destroyed by the fierce winds.

The most recent one had just started to be built. At the top of the tower, one could see the remains of flesh and blood as well as the blood that continually dripped onto the ground.

Witnessing this, Li Yao was horrified. He could even vaguely hear the blood-curdling screams of the demon beasts coming from these bones.

In these five hundred years, a total of seven great expeditions had been carried out by the federations, right here, from the Giant Edge Pass.

Before the Great Expedition, the Demon Beast Wasteland was the paradise of Demon Beasts and was also known to have "36 Demon Countries, 72 Demon Cities, 108 Demon Kings".

After the seventh expedition, all the Demon Countries and all the Demon Villages had all been completely destroyed, and the 108 Demon Kings had been beheaded in succession, with not a single one having been left off. All of their head were now displayed in these "War Trophies". The Demon Beast Wasteland had been completely conquered by the federation and became the fertile ground of humans!

Even now, the Demon Beast Wasteland was still not peaceful. From time to time, a large number of demon beasts and members of the Demon Clan, both of which coming from the "Blood Demon Sector", would invade from the rifts in space and wreak havoc in the human populated towns. However, not even once had they been able to successfully gain a firm footing; every time, they would withdraw to the Blood Demon Sector after paying a heavy price.

"Mankind is the strongest battle race in the endless sea of stars!"

It was not that mankind was boasting. However, all the demon beasts who had doubted this sentence were, at this moment, buried and put on display in these mountains of bones—the proof was made at the expense of their lives!

Li Yao slowly walked in between these towers of bones. From time to time, he would stop in front of one or two particularly majestic mountain of corpses, beholding the bizarre demon beast bones and gasping in admiration.

Only after spending more than three hours did he finish walking on this road of glory and thus arriving before the Giant Edge Pass.

Because the Demon Beast Wasteland had already been incorporated into the federation territory, the front line to the north had been greatly extended and today's Giant Edge Pass didn't hold much of a military value.

Like the Distance Expanse floating above Devil Flood Dragon Island, a majority of the fortress had been transformed into a war museum which was visited by many primary and secondary students for sightseeing and learning under the guidance of their teachers.

Following a group of primary school students, Li Yao made his way into the Giant Edge Pass.

Just past the fortress entrance, the first thing that filled his vision was a huge, transparent glass box which encased a lump of fossil-like object.

Upon looking carefully, it was a pile of ancient ash accompanied with some broken bone fragments.

Beside the glass casing was a glyph array which projected a 3D-hologram, sketching out a scene from millions of years ago.

The scene inside the hologram outlined a dark and narrow cave, within the depths of which were a few hunching apeman covered in long black hair sitting next to a fire as they cooked meat.

"Students, please look. These are the remains which were unearthed from the ruins of a civilization in the depths of the wasteland. According to experts' research, as early as 3.7 million years ago, a race of very intelligent ancient apes who knew how to use tools and survive lived in the depths of the wasteland. And the experts, upon extracting a trace of soul markers from the fossils of ancient apes, discovered that there was actually 0.000001% similarity with ours, humankind's, soul markers. You can say that these ancient apes were our distant relatives! So—"

The female teacher leading the primary student looked weak, but she spoke in a resolute and decisive tone, with each word weighing a thousand kilograms:

"Since ancient times, the wasteland has been our, humankind's, territory. We must use our lives to protect it! Even an inch of land can not be allowed to be snatched away by the demon beasts!"

"A true hooligan, but I like it!"

Li Yao secretly gasped in admiration. Parting with the primary students that came to tour the war museum, he walked towards the other side of the Giant Edge Pass.

The buildings to the left side of the military fortress of Giant Edge Pass had been renovated into a war museum, while the right side had been renovated into a huge crystal train station.

The Demon Beast Wasteland stretched across a vast area, and demon beasts from the other sectors would cause trouble from time to time. Not only did ordinary people like Li Yao not dare to travel alone on this road, even cultivators with ordinary cultivation could not easily ride their flying swords in the Demon Beast Wasteland—it was equal to putting themselves in the sight of countless hunters; it was a very dangerous behavior.

Even if it was Fiend Blade Peng Hai, a Foundation Building Expert who possessed the powerful support-class magical equipment known as the Mystic Bird Battle Shuttle, would not dare to venture out alone. For sure, ordinary demon beasts would be helpless against them; however, if a one in a million chance occurred where they ran out of luck and encountered a “Beast Tide”, an event where hordes of demon beasts invaded through a wormhole, then even if they were the lowest of demon beasts, thousands upon thousands of tide-like surging demon beasts could still swallow powerful cultivators.

So, in the Demon Beast Wasteland, humans lived inside heavily guarded towns.

Surrounding these towns were a large number of military fortresses, forming an impregnable defensive system, and crystal trains were used to travel between these towns.

The crystal trains in the Demon Beast Wasteland were completely different from the crystal trains in the inlands. Perhaps they might not be as luxurious, comfortable, or as fast as the “Ultra-High Speed Crystal Train”, and the condition was a little bad...

But, the crystal trains here had multiple defensive arrays installed within them and even had armored compartments installed, stationed inside which were an army of "Train Soldiers", who would safeguard the passengers.

Three days ago, Li Yao had bought a train ticket through the spirit net. But as it was the season when schools opened, many inland students had to leave for the various major universities of Demon Beast Wasteland, and then there were the new soldiers that were going to enlist in the army, who had temporarily requisitioned a part of crystal rail lines, thus the train tickets were short in supply. Li Yao was only able to buy a slow, third-class ticket.

If he as so much wishes, Li Yao could also use the identity of "Federation Disabled Servicemen" and directly take a seat in the VIP carriage, enjoying the best treatment.

But, Li Yao always had a knot in his heart. He believed that he was not really injured and felt that he did not deserve the "Class-1 Disabled Servicemen” treatment. If possible, he wanted to take advantage of it as little as possible; otherwise, he would always feel apologetic for the truly disabled veterans.

Anyway, he had spent a majority of his life in the Magical Equipment Graveyard, so how could there be a place that was even dirtier to sleep at? In comparison, the conditions of the third-class compartment were already pretty good.

Waiting for the train, he might as well close his eyes and sink his spirit into the depths of his brain so that he could assimilate the memory fragments of Ou Yezi. Whatever was happening outside had no relation to him.

Thinking like this, Li Yao walked into the waiting hall.

The season when schools opened was the time of peak passenger flow; the huge waiting hall was bustling with people, the majority of which were young students traveling to the universities in the Demon Beast Wasteland.

Many of the students had left their homes and were going so far away for the first time in their lives. They were all dancing in joy and chirping in happiness. They were all excited to travel to the thrilling and dangerous "Wasteland" from legends; the waiting room was wrapped in a cheerful atmosphere.

Li Yao took a look around, walked up to an automatic ticket machine, and from the mini crystal processor on his wrist, transferred his purchased ticket spirit code into the automatic ticket machine to scan. "Ding!" A thin train ticket was thrown out from the mouth of the ticket machine.

Just as Li Yao was about to reach out, the ticket, without any implication of wind, moved by itself and unexpectedly folded itself into a paper crane. The paper crane started circling Li Yao’s head and had even made chirping sounds akin to a bird.

"Hello passenger, I am your train ticket. Your train will leave in 1 hour 32 minutes, so you can go to the waiting room No. 8 to wait. But, our 'Old Squad Leaders' Smoked Chicken Leg' of Giant Edge Pass is very famous and is on sale in the 'Veteran Gourmet Restaurant'. As there is still time, how about you give it try? The Boss used to be the cooking squad leader in the federation army, and the chicken leg is big and far, it’s very delicious!"

"No need, I'm not hungry." Li Yao was speechless. This year, advertisements were truly everywhere!

"If you are not hungry, that's alright. In my array glyphs, there are still 15 telepathic thoughts. They can provide the information of the 1,372 products available in the vicinity of the train station. How about you take a look?" the paper crane dancing around his head said in anticipation.

"There is really no need. Can't we directly go to the waiting room?"

"Oh..."

The paper crane said in aggrievance. Fluttering its little wings, it twisted in the front as it led Li Yao to waiting room No. 8. With a very sad “Humph!”, it unfolded itself before reverting back into a thin train ticket which fell into Li Yao’s hand.

It made Li Yao a little embarrassed. He thought that by not going to the “Old Squad Leader’s Gourmet Shop” to give it a try, it was a little unfair to it.

Chapter 104: Meeting with an Old Senior

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Waiting room No. 8 was huge; dozens of rows of long iron aisles were filled with passengers, and the center of these aisles was packed with large and small bags. The fragrance of greasy meat buns filled the air, and although it smelled awful, it also brought a sliver of warmth.

Pushing the large and small bags to the side, Li Yao somehow managed to find some space in a corner, and just as he was about to sit, he heard some whispers coming from behind:

"Jiang Tao, so this is the so-called ordinary waiting room. Wow! It really is different from the VIP waiting room. There are so many people, it’s so lively, and it’s a little stinky too!"

Which was then followed by a somewhat husky voice:

"Gu Lili, I'm truly embarrassed! Currently, it just so happens that schools are about to open and there are many workers heading north to look for work in the Demon Beast Wasteland, not to mention the trains are short in supply as well. With the help of many family connections, I had originally already booked a special compartment in a deluxe express the day before yesterday, but who would have known that beast tide would break out on the front lines. Because of this, the army had temporarily requisitioned that train. I can't do anything other than to take a seat in this rotten, slow express. You’ll just have to bear with it. What can we do? This is just how the wasteland is."

"It's alright, Jiang Tao. You don't have to treat me as some delicate miss. Occasionally traveling on an ordinary crystal train is also a rare life experience. Although it smells a little bad, it will only last a day and night. Thinking back in the future, maybe I will think of this as an interesting adventure trip!" the girl said with a laugh.

"That's good, but I'm afraid you will be disappointed."

"How so?"

The girl with a smile on her face continued, "In fact, I think it will be rather interesting. The two of us are dressed so low-key and are mixed among the poor, so who would know that my dad has so many crystal mines? And even more so you, Jiang Tao, who would expect that you are a 3rd level Refinement Stage cultivator, as well as a refiner, and even a member of the Jiang Family?! Wow, it is simply a plot of a novel—a white dragon disguised as a fish, playing pig to eat the tiger! If a few ignorant rogues molest me, then you can amaze the whole world in a single brilliant feat. That's so awesome!"

Li Yao could no longer go on listening. If he continued listening, he would not be able to endure and would burst into laughter. He simply found a corner far away, and disregarding whether the ground was dirty or not, he sat down and very comfortably stretched his tired waist.

Unexpectedly, after a moment, the voices of the young boy and the young girl, like his shadow, floated from behind:

"Jiang Tao, check that farmer uncle out. He is so funny! Excluding the fact that he had brought so many sausages with him to travel, he had also brought such a big stone!"

Li Yao was stunned for a while before he realized that the "farmer uncle" in their conversation was none other than him. Lowering his head, he looked at how he was dressed—his hair was a mess, he had grown a beard, his skin was tanned, and his shirt and pants were riddled with holes. In left hand was a large package wrapped in cloth, inside of which were homemade sausages that the villagers insisted for him to take, while in his right hand was similarly a large package which carried the Dark Star Rock.

At a first glance, he very much so held the appearances of those workers who left for the Demon Beast Wasteland to make money.

"Jiang Tao", who surprisingly had good eyesight, said, "That stone is a meteorite, but it is not surging with any spiritual energy, so it is not some heaven and earth material. In a big city, I estimate that it could be sold for 100,000-200,000 bucks. I think that this villager must have inadvertently found this big stone in some nook or cranny and thought of it as a treasure, so I’m guessing that he is bringing it to a big city to sell."

"I guess he is a little strong if he can carry such a big stone with him!" Gu Lili said in wonder.

"Well, he is a farmer, so it is normal for him to be a little strong. However, the way I see it, he is stupid. Wait a while. In just a bit, he will want to cry but won’t be able to. Such a big stone that’s shaped like a war hammer is simply no different than a peerless weapon, so how could he be allowed to bring it on the crystal train? You see that? A patrolling Puji Critter is flying over. As long as it discovers the stone, he will certainly not be allowed to carry it on the train!"

Jiang Tao said as he laughed. A tinge of mockery could be heard in his laugh.

Sure enough, an army-green Puji Critter which carried a "Train inspection, prohibited to carry dangerous goods" sign flew straight in front of Li Yao and shot a green light from the antennae above its head, completely scanning the Dark Star Rock from inside out.

"Beep! Dangerous item confirmed!"

The Puji Critter flew down a little as the green light turned red and scanned Li Yao.

"See? Just a while ago, they didn’t even allow us to carry a small knife and had even confiscated it, so how could they allow him to carry such a big weapon on the train?" Jian Tao smiled.

"Ding! The passenger's identity has been confirmed. You are allowed to carry dangerous items on the train. I wish you a pleasant journey!"

After Li Yao's status as a "Class-1 Federation's Disabled Serviceman" was confirmed, the Puji Critter suddenly changed the topic and spoke very gently.

It also bent its antennae towards Li Yao, seemingly giving him a respectful salute.

Class-1 Federation's Disabled Servicemen had all been forged in the crucible of war. They were the loyal warriors of the country, so it was obvious that they would not cause any trouble on the trains. Not to mention, if they encountered a demon beast invasion, they could perhaps rely on them to fight as well.

Let alone such a small Dark Star Rock, they could even openly carry a chainsaw sword on their shoulder and could still imposingly board the train.

In the Star Glory Federation, disabled soldiers were precisely so unbridled!

"..." Jiang Tao dumbfoundedly stared.

"Jiang Tao, what is going on? Just a moment ago, such a small fruit knife had been confiscated from us, and even my two makeup bags were checked. That farmer uncle is carrying such a big lump of iron—if he waved it, he could absolutely smash someone's brain! So why are they not checking him?" Gu Lili was puzzled.

"This—" Jiang Tao had a toothache.

With half a sausage dangling in his mouth, Li Yao casually picked up the few hundred kilogram Dark Star Rock and expressionlessly walked before the two. As he took an arbitrary glance, he discovered that Jiang Tao and Gu Lili could be regarded as a handsome and beautiful couple; however, their faces were overflowing in innocence, much like two pretty flowers grown in a greenhouse. Although they were older than him, they looked a bit naive.

At this moment, the two dumbfoundedly looked at him. It seemed as if he was a demon beast wearing human skin. Gu Lili's eyes were filled with curiosity; she wanted to ask but dared not to.

Withdrawing his gaze, Li Yao walked to the canteen on the side of the waiting room.

There was still some time before the train departs, and he was a little hungry. Li Yao was not ready to go to "Old Squad Leader's Gourmet Restaurant" to be ripped off, so he simply thought of buying instant noodles instead.

The canteen was an open-type, so all the goods were placed on the open shelves. Instant noodles were the most popular product in the waiting room, where dozens of brands filled the three shelves completely. It was simply a feast for the eyes.

"Hey, there is actually shrimp instant noodles manufactured by the Sea Dragon Sect?"

A smile seemed to appear in Li Yao’s eyes. Sea Dragon Sect was a very small sect with mediocre strength, and it also didn't have any well-known, big companies under it.

However, Sea Dragon Sect had an absolutely secretive mysterious method which could be used to produce a kind of delicious product with shrimp, fish, and kelp. When it entered your mouth, it would still be extremely fresh and delicious.

Since childhood, Li Yao liked eating the shrimp instant noodles from the Sea Dragon Sect. However, Sea Dragon Sect, due to poor management, suffered losses year after year. These past few years, it had been difficult to find the products of this sect in the market. He did not expect to finally find one here.

Licking his lips, Li Yao reached out his hand.

The very moment he reached out, someone else next to him also reached out and grabbed the final shrimp instant noodles. Li Yao was not as fast as the other guy, and in the end, he only touched the back of the other guy’s hand.

"Hey?"

Li Yao and the other guy's eyes shone at the same time. Both of them felt a strangeness in the hand of the other.

Refiners pay particular attention to the actual application more so than the theory, especially the skills of their hands.

Li Yao swept a glance at the other guy's hand and then at the other guy's appearance, finding it to be mediocre. He was an ordinary-looking, bald middle-aged man, whose pair of hands seemed as if they had been carved out from jade; they were extremely delicate and faintly surging with warmth.

He was clearly a superb refiner.

And the middle-aged man was ten times more shocked than Li Yao.

Although Li Yao had currently grown a beard, he had a relatively mature temperament, and both his eyes were extremely clear. From the looks of it, he was at most 20-30 years old.

His pair of hands, on the other hand, seemed as if they had been immersed in refining techniques for 30-50 years. They were like rubber, and upon touching, one would not be able to find a single trace of his bones; however, his hands were tough to the extreme, giving others a very contradictory feeling.

The middle-aged man was intrigued. Like five poisonous snakes, his five fingers silently swam towards Li Yao’s palm.

Li Yao slightly smiled. His five fingers, like five mini-bullets, directly shot towards the other guy's fingers, and as his fingertips came in contact with the middle-aged man's fingertips, the two of them, at the same time, exclaimed, "Hey!"

Because they had both discovered that there were no fingerprints on the other’s fingertips.

All the fingerprints had been repeatedly tempered and became smooth.

This probing out only took one-tenth of a second. When the two's palm had just come into contact, Li Yao made concessions and chose the braised beef noodles next to the shrimp instant noodles.

Since the other party was a senior from the refiners community, he had to show a little courtesy.

The middle-aged man smiled in embarrassment and nodded to Li Yao as a greeting, seemingly expressing his apology as well as gratitude.

Not far from them, two passengers got up, leaving two vacant spaces. Li Yao leisurely walked over.

The bald middle-aged man hesitated for a bit but then chose to follow him. The two, side by side, sat down.

Li Yao opened the lid of the instant noodles; inside of which was a fork, a spirit glyph wrapped in plastic film, and a very greasy, square-shaped block.

Removing the fork, Li Yao, with his teeth, removed the plastic film packaging that covered the spirit glyph before pasting it onto the yellow-brown square block. Then, he waited for three seconds.

The red patterns on the spirit glyph suddenly lit up, and like a mass of burning flames, released a large amount of heat.

"Bo!" The compressed and solidified, greasy square block, in an instant, dissolved into a bowl of fragrant braised beef noodles with steam rising from it.

In fact, this kind of highly compressed noodles held no nutritional value and was often very greasy.

If one was not hungry to the point where the stomach made noises, one would rather not eat them.

But its biggest feature lied in the fact that, after the spirit glyph was activated, it would release a particularly fragrant aroma. Often, its consumer would not find it any tastier, but when one smelled that fragrance, they could not help but shout and immediately gorge it down.

Li Yao inhaled a long, deep breath of the aroma before heaving a completely satisfied sigh. Picking up the bowl of noodles, Li Yao wiped his fork on his clothes to clean it before shoving the noodles into his mouth.

Soon after, a burst of shrimp fragrance wafted from beside him and made its way into his nose, causing Li Yao to instantly remember his delightful and unforgettable childhood.

As his nose twitched, Li Yao forced himself not to look at the middle-aged man’s bowl of shrimp noodles; instead, he pulled up a virtual book from the mini-crystal processor, directing his attention to reading.

While reading, within Li Yao's mind constantly appeared the middle-aged man's appearance.

He suddenly felt that the ordinary-looking middle-aged man looked a little familiar, as if he had seen him somewhere.

Pondering for a while, Li Yao's eyes suddenly lit up. As an unbelievable idea came to mind, he switched to the title page at the front of the virtual book.

A virtual figure of a human immediately appeared on the hologram; it was an image of the book's author.

Raising the hologram, Li Yao overlapped the translucent image of the author with the middle-aged man sitting next to him. Besides the clothes, everything else was completely identical.

Li Yao exclaimed. A strand of noodle was still hanging out of his mouth, but he didn’t care about it as he excitedly asked:

"Hello, may I ask if you are Master Refiner 'Ding Yin', Professor Ding of Hidden God Valley? Are you the author of ?"

Chapter 105: Sworn Duty of a Cultivator

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The middle-aged man was surprised for a moment. Noticing his own image being projected above Li Yao's wrist, he could not help but smile. He nodded and said:

"Hello! Yes, I'm Ding Yin."

"Awesome! Professor Ding, my name is Li Yao. I'm a new student of the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department. I am an ardent fan of your books and have collected all four of your books, which I’m currently reading. I feel that your theories are easier to understand than others, and the data is very detailed as well—they are truly rare monographs of theories!"

Li Yao was extremely excited.

Although Master Refiner Ding Yin of Hidden God Valley hadn't refined any shocking masterwork weapons, in the refiners community, he was a theorist that was second to none. He had done in-depth research about refining theories and had written several important books.

The most valuable part was that the books he wrote were mainly targeted at teenagers, thus many basic theories had been explained in detail, making them very suitable as introductory textbooks.

Li Yao had learned and benefited a lot from his books.

Who would have expected that the prominent theorist of the refiners community would be dressed so ordinarily? Li Yao was completely at a loss as he spoke incoherently:

"Professor Ding, you see, I'm reading this book of yours. This, this is an original book, and your remnant telepathic thought spirit mark is still in here..."

Amused by Li Yao’s words, Ding Ying smiled and said:

"Student Li Yao, you don't need to show me, I have already sensed it. Our meeting must be destined. If you don't mind, can I sign it for you?"

"A-awesome!"

Li Yao happily handed over his mini-crystal processor. Ding Yin's eyelid drooped down as he muttered some incantations. Suddenly, his pair of eyes overflowing in brilliance opened widely, and a golden radiance flared and shot like lightning towards the hologram!

"Well, Student Li Yao, you have pretty good hands; their foundation is very solid. They are good materials for a refiner!" Ding Yin laughed and said.

In fact, in his heart, Ding Yin had some misgivings.

Judging from Li Yao's hands, it was quite clear that he had practiced very hard and had a very solid foundation. He could very well be from a very ancient aristocratic family of refiners, but how could he go to the Grand Desolate War Institution, which was like a local school in refining?

The Grand Desolate War Institution was famous for its combat department. If he wanted to study refining, it was better to go to Deep Sea University!

However, after a moment of thinking, he remembered that the Deep Sea University's Refining Department was the star department of the entire federation, thus its cut-off marks were very high. He reckoned that this little guy wasn’t able to get in and had settled for less, choosing the unpopular Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department; he must have had no other alternative.

Ding Yin was a refiner of a cultivation sect and was not a member of the "Nine Elite Universities". Usually, he would be busy with theoretical research and would rarely pay attention to what was going on in society. The news of Li Yao challenging the Deep Sea University had not yet reached his ears.

He was an experienced old man. Naturally, he was not going to poke Li Yao's scars; on the contrary, he encouraged him from the bottom of his heart.

Taking out his mini-crystal processor, Li Yao, once again, opened the virtual book. At the bottom of the title page were additional, calligraphic golden characters written in a small font that was as flamboyant as flying dragons and dancing phoenixes: "Refining the Endless Starry Sky—Presented to Young Friend Li Yao!"

Li Yao's gaze was fixed on those small characters. Suddenly, his vision blossomed as if there were countless stars rotating. He sensed an unfathomable aura of telepathic thoughts.

Li Yao knew it was Ding Yin's soul markers, which authenticated that this was his “personal autograph”, something which others were unable to imitate.

He didn't expect for such a master to be so amiable and easy to approach. Li Yao restrained the excitement in his heart and cautiously asked:

"Professor Ding, thank you for your kind encouragement, but I'm lacking in the basics. In your book, there are some places which I don't completely understand. For example, in the 7th chapter, you said that it is possible to use a double-layer folding glyph arrays architecture for the spiritual and mechanical energy conversion in weapons that are similar to the chainsaw sword. However, by doing so, the number of parts would increase. Not only would this increase the manufacturing costs, it would also greatly increase the rate of failure as well. If I may ask, what are the benefits actually?"

“Oh?”

Ding Yin's interest was also piqued. He did not expect for such a young man like him to have such a tricky perspective. Nodding again and again, he said with a smile, "Student Li Yao, you are very good. Most of the young people your age would first determine whether the magical equipment's strength is strong or weak. They usually believe that the stronger the magical equipment, the more formidable it is. I didn't expect for you to actually take into account the refining costs and the rate of failure. Good, pretty good! Come, turn the book over to that paragraph. I will explain. Using the double-layer folding glyph array architect, you can greatly reduce the energy loss during the conversion of spiritual energy to mechanical energy, and also, as long as proper refining techniques are used, the rate of failure would not increase too much. See? Especially this..."

The old and the young—the two heads bumped into each other as they burst into a heated conversation; they had completely lost themselves in the discussion.

At the beginning, the two kept each other at an arm’s reach; they were a little bit reserved.

Gradually, their conversation began to pick up. The two looked exceptionally solemn, and their tone became increasingly intense. From time to time, they would sketch some ghost-like structure in the hologram, yet the sketches would be as flamboyant as flying dragons and dancing phoenixes. “Lone Star Master Formula”, “Rock Reverend Formula”, or “Star Magnetic Rotational Forces Hypotheses”—one by one, words which seemed to have come from some book of heaven to the ordinary people were popping out of their mouths as if they were popcorn, and the passengers next to them, upon hearing, were surprised; it was as if they were looking at two madmen.

Like water overflowing from a broken dam, Li Yao could not be controlled and continuously threw strings of questions one by one as if he were firing a cannon. From time to time, Li Yao would praise him in his heart, "A master is a master. Generally, the problems which I could never understand even after contemplating for 10-15 days were solved with a few words in a way that it gave me a clear understanding. Moreover, thinking about it, he simply didn't use the concepts that were beyond my knowledge. One truly has to admire him greatly—he is really awesome!"

Little did he know that at this moment, Ding Yin had broken into cold sweat.

Because he found that this little guy was too abnormal!

Nine out of ten questions put forward by Li Yao were very basic, and Ding Yin could thoroughly answer with ease.

But after nine ordinary questions, he would often throw an extremely tricky and abstruse question. Upon hearing it at first, it would sound average, but after carefully pondering for a bit, you would find layers upon layers of stratagem inside; it was full of traps.

Ding Yin's entire body was drenched in cold sweat. He had to put forth his full concentration and use all his computing power to get the answer. Often, in his heart, he would feel unconfident as he pondered over whether his answers were complete or not.

As if the two were fighting, after a flowery fist with fancy footwork[1], he would suddenly throw one or two "trump cards", much like the heavenly steeds soaring in heaven, catching Ding Yin by surprise; he was terribly unhappy.

"This brat really doesn’t have in-depth knowledge of refining theories? Speaking of his in-depth knowledge, he is at most twenty years old. Most of the questions raised by him are very simple, thus he should not be an expert. One could even say that he is a newcomer. But, how could he raise such strange questions? They are simply as quick, as shadowless, and as traceless as a fiend blade. I'm completely baffled!"

Ding Yin was completely astonished.

After carefully recalling their conversation, Ding Yin discovered that when it came to classical refining theories from forty millenniums ago, Li Yao could fire one or two terrifying questions that could make his back drenched in cold sweat.

And when the topic was switched back to modern refining theories, Li Yao would turn into a muddled child.

Ding Yin was secretly amazed.

"Which sect raised this little monster? How does he have such deep knowledge in classical refining theories and clearly understand the rarest of hypotheses? It is truly a waste to send such good material to Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department!"

No, some of the questions raised by this brat became more and more uncommon, even to the point where Ding Yin had never heard of some of the classical theories raised by him—there were some for which he simply didn’t know their elucidation!

Ding Yin was secretly crying. He quietly guided the discussion back to modern refining theories.

Li Yao talked about interests, talked about impulses, talked about true fire, and time and time again, the conversation would again be brought back to classical refining.

At last, Ding Yin could no longer bear it. He turned his head to look and said in surprise, "Hey, it's about time for the train to leave!"

"No… Ah... There is still half an hour, Professor Ding, so you don't have to worry. What were we talking about? Ah yes, I remember. Underworld Spring Sect, a devil sect from forty millenniums ago, had refined a 'Nine Yin Mother Sword'. Its technique of binding tenebrum energy is a little similar to the fourth matrix in Professor Ding's book. Why don't we talk about the Nine Yin Mother Sword?" Li Yao enthusiastically said.

"I need to go to the washroom!" Ding Yin said with a straight face and suddenly stood up.

"I am coming too!" Li Yao followed behind him while talking endlessly, "It is said that the refining process of the Nine Yin

Mother Sword is extremely cruel, especially..."

"I need to go for the big one."

"Oh..."

Professor Ding sat in the lavatory for a complete half-hour, and only then did he reluctantly come out. Once he walked out of the lavatory, Li Yao, like a loyal and devoted dog, rushed over, but Ding Yin simply didn't give him a chance to speak. Pointing to the front, he said, "We must quickly leave for the check-in!"

"So soon for the check-in?" Li Yao scratched his head. Apparently, he wanted to continue the conversation.

"Young man, don't need to be so grumpy. I have given you my spiritual crane number, so we will have plenty more opportunities to discuss!"

Ding Yin said as if a load had been lifted off his chest. He then picked up his luggage and quickly drilled his way into the crowd.

"Professor Ding, what's your seat number? How about I find someone to exchange the ticket, so we can continue our discussion on the train?" Li Yao shouted in a loud voice as he threw the Dark Star Rock onto his back, refusing to let him leave.

Ding Yin broke into cold sweat and hesitated a bit before speaking, "No need, the magical equipment technician of the army on this train is my old classmate. We have not seen each other for many years, so we have to catch up on some things. We will have a chat next time, Student Li Yao."

"Next time, it won't be so easy to encounter a master like you on a green passenger train[2]. If it were not for the scarcity of the trains, you would be sitting in a luxurious train and would not have rushed to sit on this kind of ragged green passenger train!" Li Yao muttered.

This sentence made Ding Yin stop. He came back and said with a weird look on his face, "Student Li Yao, you are wrong. Even if there were seats available in the more luxurious fast trains, even if there were more convenient and safe modes of transportation, I and many other cultivators wouldn’t sit. In the wasteland, a true cultivator would only choose the mode of transport which is carrying the largest number of people."

"Why?" Li Yao was puzzled; he could not understand why he got such a large reaction from his words.

"In order to protect you!"

"Protect us?" The answer was beyond Li Yao's expectation.

"Of course, Student Li Yao. It's not that we cultivators can not take more advanced modes of transportation, but rather —"

Ding Yin faintly smiled. His mediocre face surged with a strong pride and arrogance. "But if all the cultivators take the more advanced modes of transportation, then the trains would only have ordinary people. Once it was struck with a beast tide, who is going to protect you?"

"...So it was like that." Li Yao said as if deep in thought.

Ding Yin nodded his head and solemnly said:

"Although an addition armored battle compartment is attached to the train and an army of federation soldiers is stationed inside, but once attacked by a beast tide where powerful demon beasts are also mixed in, ordinary people would not be able to defend themselves. Therefore, in the Demon Beast Wasteland, when a cultivator needs to travel, all of them would try to choose a means of transportation with ordinary people. In the event that there’s trouble, we can act as promptly as possible and protect the ordinary people—this is but the sworn duty of us cultivators!"

"Sworn duty of cultivators?" In the cultivation world, Li Yao seldom heard these words.

When Ding Yin spoke of "Sworn Duty"—these two words—his entire body was shining in brilliance; it was as if an inexplicable power was bursting forth from the depths of his soul, ascending him into a completely different type of existence!

"Cultivators are the swords of human civilization, protecting every human from the harm of demons and devil-like creatures. This is the noblest mission of the cultivator, and it is also our ‘sworn duty'!"

When Ding Yin finished speaking, he slightly smiled. His back that was as straight as a sword, once again, went back to slouching; he once again reverted back to an ordinary, bald middle-aged man and mixed inside the crowd, mixed in with a group of workers and student, and gradually went through the check-in gate."

Li Yao stood in place for a long time.

He completely didn't understand Ding Yin's opinion, but he could feel the "strength" present in his words.

It was a completely different power compared to "spiritual energy", "punching power", and "sword energy".

It was something invisible and intangible, vague and insubstantial, something that couldn’t even break an egg.

But, Li Yao felt the blood in his chest boiling—it was as if a flame had been ignited in his chest!

"I really want to quickly become a cultivator!" Li Yao said to himself as he tightly grabbed the luggage and also mixed into the crowd, making his way through the check-in gate.

TLN:

[1] - All show and no go, meaning ordinary question here

[2] - In China, green color train with a yellow line is mostly associated with the passenger train, and hence the green color in the sentence.

Chapter 106: Thunderstorm

Chapter 106: Thunderstorm

Li Yao traveled aboard the slowest green passenger train; it was an ancient model which had been in circulation since 150 years ago. It had a low-efficiency spiritual conversion, and a tremendous amount of heat was released when its powering array glyphs were in operation.

Therefore, at the front of the train's engine stood huge towering chimneys which were puffing steam.

The train engine was directly attached to a battle compartment equipped with powerful magical equipment, giving off an image as if it were a cold and majestic, giant beast covered in iron armor.

"One, two, three, four!"

A squad of federation soldiers dressed in black uniforms with a murderous look on their faces lined up; they were in a full battle array, awaiting orders to set out. The battle coach was then followed by a luxurious coach, a 1st class coach, a 2nd class coach, and as well as ten 3rd class coaches. At the very end, another battle coach was attached.

Many federation soldiers climbed up and down the battle coach, wiping the cold, glittering magical equipment one after another.

"Whoooooh—"

The train engine roared as the steam puffing out from the chimneys significantly increased, forming extremely dense clouds of steam above the train.

A clear and melodious ring rang in the platform, and in turn, the passengers who had yet to board the train increased the pace of their footsteps.

The roof of the battle coach was lifted open, and the huge, powerful crystal railguns rose from the gaps one by one.

Squeezing his way to his seat with difficulty, Li Yao stuffed his backpack, which carried toiletries and the black wing sword, onto the luggage rack. As for the package containing the Dark Star Rock, he had no choice but to throw it under the seat since it was too heavy. An ear piercing noise coming from the floor attracted everyone's attention.

"Kacha! Kacha!"

Driven by powerful array glyphs, one after another, invisible ripples began to spread out.

The wheels gradually started moving as the scenery outside the window kept changing. Soon, the scenery of the Giant Edge Pass was quickly flung behind them, and replacing it was a vast piece of yellow-brown land where one was only able to find a few patches of green once in a while.

Seeing that the train was on the move, the passengers started up their mini-crystal processors one by one and sent messages to their families and friends.

"Mother, I'm already on the train. Yes, it has left the station. You don't need to worry, I have enough money. Wait till I have arrived at school, I will message you again then! Ah! Everything's fine! The school is inside the city and is surrounded by the army as well as cultivators, so how could demon beasts appear? Can you stop nagging!?"

"Juan'Er, wait for me. I will definitely make a name for myself in the Demon Beast Wasteland. After I make a lot of money, I will return and marry you!"

"Little Gang, you better listen to your mother. Dad is going to find a good job in the mines of the Demon Beast Wasteland. Every month, I will send money back. You better study well, and do not trouble or anger your mother and grandma, do you understand? If you listen to your dad, then dad will buy you a flying sword model when he returns at new years. But if you don’t listen to your dad… Dad is going to spank you!"

Upon hearing the reluctant farewells of the passengers, an inexplicable emotion burst forth from Li Yao's heart. Opening the spiritual crane messenger, he sent messages saying he was safe and sound to Grandpa Wang, Meng Jiang, and his other close friends.

Only after exchanging words with everyone did he finally heave a deep sigh of relief. Once again, he directed his gaze outside the window, looking at the vast world and the boundless blue sky.

In the distance were the desert that extended as far as the eyes could see and the billowing sand that made the setting sun look incredibly huge. Not so far away, a small oasis dotted the landscape in the desert. At a glance, the spring appeared much like a crescent moon, next to which stood a towering, lone barrack. Standing before the entrance were two new teen recruits, who stood straight like pine trees.

Next to the barrack was a sizeable mine, beside which was a few dozen meter tall crusher that was as big as a prehistoric behemoth. Constantly engulfing lumps of ores from under the ground, it screened out the precious crystal powder, and through some mysterious technique, it once again compressed it back into crystals which could be directly used by humans.

This was the Wasteland—a paradise for the brave and an ocean of hope!

Despite the harsh environment, the limitless billowing sand, the brutal demon beasts, as well as the lack of warmth from the four season, which was present in the inlands and was suitable for the survival of humans...

The ground underneath this boundless wasteland bore immeasurably precious treasures; the Wasteland had 90% of all the crystal ore reserves of the entire federation. Here, a variety of rare metals as well as heaven and earth materials that were beyond imagination could be found!

Needless to say, demon beasts themselves were priceless materials. Even now, many of the materials harvested from demon beasts could not be artificially synthesized by humans; they could only be obtained through hunting demon beasts.

In the Star Glory Federation, after five centuries of development, the social classes in the inland had basically already become fixed. This made it hard for the economically poor and the culturally blank, ordinary people to get ahead through sheer effort, and even more so, making it impossible for them to pave a path in the world without having a powerful background.

But in the Wasteland, everything was possible; perhaps even a silly boy who knew of nothing else would be able to find an undiscovered mine as long as he was lucky, allowing him to acquire shares of the mines that were worth several cities and becoming rich overnight!

It goes without saying that even a new guy who had just entered the cultivation world would be able to become famous overnight as long as he hunted some powerful demon beasts, thus having a meteoric rise in success and setting foot onto the peak!

So, no matter how bad the Wasteland's environment was, no matter how brutal the demon beasts were, fearless men would continue to come here one after another, using their blood and sweat to irrigate this dry land. Regardless of whether they were an ordinary person or a cultivator, in their eyes, this land wasn’t some desolate wilderness—it was a glorious hope for a happy life!

The wheels of the train were spinning as if they were flying; the train was galloping at full speed. After more than two hours, they were already deep within the backwoods of the Wasteland, crossing an approximately 6,000 meter long bridge that was completely built from steel.

Under the bridge was a thousand meter deep canyon; the magnificent scene below was a sight to behold, causing every passenger to hold their breath.

The journey was tiring. After crossing the bridge, the rest of the journey was through the monotonous wasteland. Many of the passengers had closed their eyes; Li Yao too had sunk into the land of dreams, assimilating the memory fragments of Ou Yezi.

Only god knows how much time had passed when Li Yao was suddenly jolted awake by the intense shaking of the train and the intense waves of screams that came from all directions.

Turning his gaze to outside the window, he was surprised to see that the environment had undergone a tremendous change.

Just a while ago, the sun that was as red as blood was setting, and the world was basking in twilight. In contrast, the sky, at the moment, became completely dark, and layer upon layer of dense dark clouds, much like fiends baring their fangs and brandishing their claws, had covered the sky. Round after round of lightning, like a stretching claw, rained down from the sky. From time to time, lightning would strike in the vicinity of the train, bursting forth with large groups of streaks of lightning in the air.

"Pitter-patter! Pitter-patter! Pitter-patter!"

Next came the rain. The world that was completely dry just a moment ago had, in the blink of an eye, transformed into a carnival of a violent storm as raindrops the size of beans struck at the glass windows. Their powerful momentum made the windows clatter, giving a kind of feeling as if the raindrops would pierce right through them.

Along with the ravaging storm, even the crystal train swayed slightly; it appeared as if it was a little boat struggling in the turbulent waters.

Accompanied by lightning, thunder, the howling wind, and the torrential rain, the starless night had a dreadful hell sketched upon it!

"It's the Thunderstorm Zone." Li Yao frowned.

Sure enough, from the broadcast array glyphs installed on the roof of the train came a sweet and melodious voice:

"Ladies and gentlemen, please note that we are traveling through a Thunderstorm Zone. We expect that it will take us one and a half hour to travel through the Thunderstorm Zone. Please pay attention to your safety, and please try not to use the spiritual crane messenger, lest attracting the lightning and destroying the crystal processor."

The Demon Beast Wasteland was riddled with gravitational and magnetic field anomalies and changing climates. Often, a lot of strange weather conditions would appear in the Wasteland. The Thunderstorm Zone was one such weather condition.

In the range covered by the Thunderstorm Zone, a storm would burst forth within a short span of time and would be accompanied by lightning and thunder. The sky would be filled with incredibly tyrannical lightning spiritual energy, and not only would all means of communication be completely cut off, even the cultivators' telepathic thoughts could not be transmitted.

Ordinary cultivators simply did not dare to ride their flying swords in the Thunderstorm Zone. Even if the experts of the Core Formation Stage insisted on rushing through the Thunderstorm Zone, they would first have to carefully consider and prepare again and again.

In the event that they attracted lightning, they would be struck, which was nothing to joke about.

However, for cultivators who were proficient in lightning spiritual energy, the formation of a Thunderstorm Zone also meant a rare opportunity for cultivation.

Therefore, many lightning cultivators would especially chase the clouds and the lightning in the Demon Beast Wasteland;

these cultivators were also known as "Thunderstorm Chasers".

Although the Thunderstorm Zone was fierce, defensive arrays had been installed all around the crystal train. In normal circumstances, it would not cause any harm to the passengers.

As long as the train was out of the Thunderstorm Zone, everything would be calm and tranquil, and the sky would be bright and clear.

However, today's situation seemed to be somewhat different, as the lightning amidst the dark clouds was exceptionally fierce. The frequency of lightning rumbling through the sky was also much higher than the usual Thunderstorm Zone.

Sticking his face so close to the window that his nose stuck on the glass, Li Yao gazed outside. Just a moment ago, the vast expanse of desert had, in the blink of an eye, turned into a boundless black ocean.

And in the sky, dark clouds billowed, surging with a large number of air bubbles. Like a boiling pot, something was brewing in a speed that was visible to the naked eye, congealing as it rose to the surface.

It was as if strange insects were gnawing a big hole in the sky, but at the same time, it also seemed as if the fearsome eyes of a fiend were gradually opening.

"What's that?"

Li Yao faintly saw some fierce-looking black silhouettes zipping its way out from the dark clouds. Just as he wanted to look carefully, round after rounds of ripples suddenly propagated on the window. Soon, the window turned into an opaque hologram, displaying a clear blue sky and white clouds; a scenery with oasis everywhere.

"Has it been closed?"

Li Yao secretly wondered if the situation was moving in an unpredictable direction.

Obviously, some kind of strange development was taking place outside the window, one which could very well cause large-scale panic among the passengers, thus the conductor could only start the hologram, covering the windows and sealing off the train.

It was clearly not just a thunderstorm.

The Thunderstorm Zone was a common weather phenomenon in the Demon Beast Wasteland. Even if the passengers had not experienced this before, they would have heard of it, thus it would not cause any panic.

But clearly, it was something… more terrifying than just a thunderstorm!

"Ta ta ta ta!"

A dozen federation soldiers in black battle uniforms holding spiritual energy boltgun with a chainsword hanging on their back, one by one, rushed from the front of the train to the back as they gnashed their teeth while their murderous aura soared into the sky.

"What rotten luck! We have encountered demon beasts!" Li Yao was a little frightened in his heart.

Not long after, a weak burst of tremors was transmitted from the rear end.

Ordinary people might not perceive it, but Li Yao keenly felt it.

Pulling away the carpet, he laid down on the ground and stuck his ear to the floor to listen carefully.

"Buzzzz! Buzzzz!"

This slight sounds of vibration were released because the defense array of the crystal train had been pushed to the limit. In this mode, the majority of the crystal train's spiritual energy would be directed to the defensive arrays, which in turn would create a solid spirit energy shield that covered all around the crystal train.

"Boom! Boom! Boom!"

Something fiercely collided with the crystal train.

"Boom!"

It was the sound of an explosion.

"Kacha kacha, kacha kacha!"

Several coaches at the rear end of the train were torn!

The numerous passengers were all puzzled by their actions, pointing at them in succession.

At this point, a large number of passengers from the rear coaches were driven by the federation soldiers to Li Yao's coach.

The passengers still could not understand what was happening. Many had even shouted in anger. "What's going on? Why are you driving us out of our coaches in the middle of the night!? Tell me where should I sit!?"

The federation soldiers that were driving them out had a pale complexion. As if they were statues, they did not utter a single word.

Cold sweat constantly trickled down their forehead, clearly showing the worry in their hearts.

Chapter 107: Scarlet Calamity

Chapter 107: Scarlet Calamity

Once again, a melodious female voice came from the broadcast array glyphs:

"May I please have your attention. Ladies and gentlemen, just a moment ago, a ball lightning[1] had struck the few coaches at the rear of the train. For your safety, coaches 12 to 15 will be undergoing examination and repairs. Please follow the federation soldiers instructions and evacuate to the coaches in the front. After the coaches have been completely examined and repaired, you can return to your seats. Thank you for your cooperation."

Melodious music that was similar to the sounds of the stream flowing in the mountains was then broadcasted from the broadcast array glyphs. “Ding ding dong dong.”

The music seemed to carry some kind of spiritual power, one which may have put everyone at ease, calming their minds. The passenger that were restless a moment ago had now become completely calm as they blusteringly moved forward.

The defensive array glyphs of the crystal train had already been pushed to the limit, allowing them to withstand any kind of damage from the lightning. Even if they were unable to resist, the lightning could still go through the lightning conductor equipment, which would guide the lightning to the ground. So how could it destroy the coaches?

After ten minutes that felt as long as a year, for the third time, the female voice was broadcasted from the broadcast array glyphs; however, this time, the announcer seemed to be rather tense. Her voice was astringent and sharp—it seemed as if she was bogged down by extreme fear.

"Ladies and gentlemen, ball lightning has disrupted the propulsion array glyphs of Coach No.14. We are currently trying to completely repair them. In the journey ahead, you may experience some bumps, so please pay attention to your safety and try not to walk around in the aisle. Also, please be careful of the heavy luggage on the luggage rack and avoid getting injured... In addition, if there are any experienced magical equipment technician among the passengers, please proceed to Coach No.14, I repeat, if there are any experienced magical equipment technician, please proceed to the Coach No.14!"

"Something terrible has happened," Li Yao thought.

To admit that the propulsion array glyphs of a coach had been disrupted by a ball lightning would undoubtedly cause a certain degree of panic among the passengers. However, the truth must have been a hundred times more frightening than the ball lightning, even to the point that the army's magical equipment technician could not handle it, forcing them to seek help from the passengers.

Li Yao, without any hesitation, proceeded to Coach No. 14.

The closer he proceeded towards the rear end of the train, the intenser the vibrations he felt.

The last few coaches, instead of having even a single passenger, was completely guarded by the federation soldiers.

Several of the soldiers looked young; they seemed to have just enlisted and haven’t yet been tested. A majority of them were tightly gritting their teeth. One could even hear "cluck cluck" sounds coming from their molars.

The gate of Coach No.14 was shut closed. An officer with a pair of red eyes who seemed as if he had been suffering from conjunctivitis was checking the identity of a young man.

On a closer look, Li Yao recognized the young man—it was the low-level cultivator, “Jiang Tao”, who he had encountered in Waiting Room No. 8.

Straightening his back, Jiang Tao calmly said:

"I am a third-year student of the Star Nebula University's Refining Department and am also a 3rd-level Refinement Stage cultivator. I have already passed 2nd step refiner registration examination, and as long as I pass the 3rd step, I will become a certified refiner approved by the federation. Repairing ordinary magical equipment is nothing to me!"

"Awesome, what about you?" The red-eyed officer turned to Li Yao.

Only then did Jiang Tao notice Li Yao, and obviously, he was stunned for a moment.

He was having a hard time understanding what someone from a backwater place was doing here.

Li Yao honestly said:

"I am a new student of the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department. I was traveling to the university to report, so I still don't have a rank; however, I can do some normal maintenance work."

Jiang Tao slightly smiled as a trace a contempt flashed past his eyes.

He had already heard that the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department was the worst refining department in the "Nine Elite Universities". Today, he got to see that it truly "lived up to its name"; a new student was actually a farmer from the countryside. It was a truly interesting.

The red-eyed officer was a little disappointed as he let out an "Oh" and indifferently scanned Li Yao's identity spirit mark.

When he discovered that Li Yao was actually receiving the "Class 1 Federation Disabled Servicemen Treatment", his attitude instantly changed. Straightening his back, he could not help but shout, "Awesome, we are short on staff. Quickly come!"

The red-eyed man grabbed Li Yao's wrist and walked inside the coach.

Jiang Tao was, once again, stunned. He could not understand why the red-eyed officer was so friendly towards Li Yao, who was just a new student of the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department, instead of him, who was a top student from the Star Nebula University's Refining Department. He wanted to ask yet was too ashamed to ask. With a hesitant look on his face, he could only follow behind Li Yao's ass.

Coach No.14 was very hot and suffocating, and there was a faint smell of blood lingering in the air. Seven or eight gloomy federation soldiers were wiping the magical equipment. Some of the relatively younger soldiers had pale complexions as their legs trembled, while several bearded veterans were laughing next to them as they said some silly jokes to relieve the tension in the atmosphere.

"Shua!"

The gate behind him was closed; only then was the gate in front opened. Immediately, a burst of blood-curdling screams came over.

Li Yao and Jiang Tao were both scared to the point that their backs were drenched in cold sweat. Summoning up their courage, they proceeded to Coach No.15.

Coach No.15 had been modified into a field hospital. All the chairs had been removed, and in its place were soldiers with broken limbs lying on the floor. The wounds were irregular; it was as if some wild animal had torn them up. Among them was a person with half a body that had shriveled up, giving off an appearance as if his blood and bone marrow had been sucked dry in an instant!

Next was the last armored battle coach.

The thin gate of the coach could not stop the sounds coming from the armored coach.

Blood-curdling screams, furious roars, sounds of explosion, and sounds of thunder were mixed together to create a terribly frightening melody!

"Wear the protective suit!"

The red-eyed officer put two camouflage vests on the two. The front of the vest was inlaid with a crystal-clear luminous pearl, inside of which were over a hundred bright and shining 8-pointed star patterned spirit glyphs floating.

Li Yao pressed the start array glyph on the vest. "Weng!" A translucent light gold spiritual energy shield spread around his body, closely protecting him within.

"All good to go. I'm going to open the door!"

The red-eyed man said with a grim look on his face as he clenched his teeth. He then violently pulled open the giant door leading to the armored battle coach.

"Pitter-patter!"

A sudden, strong gust of wind and heavy rainfall made it hard for Li Yao to widely open his eyes. The only thing he was able to hear were ear-piercing wails, which were so loud that not even torrents of water rushing down a mountain could drown them out.

"Come on, you swines! All of you, come! Let this father slaughter you!"

"Damn it! I'm out of crystal cells. Quickly bring me another box!"

"There's too many! This isn’t just the outbreak of a Level 9 beast tide—it is at least Level 7! Quickly ask for reinforcements! We can’t hold on any longer!"

"It’s impossible! I’m trying, but since we are in the Thunderstorm Stone, it is very difficult to contact the outside world!"

Li Yao finally adapted to the oncoming wind and rain. Somehow widely opening his pair of eyes, the scene presented before him was one of slaughter taking place in the depths of the netherworld.

The armored battle coach looked as if it had been torn by a pair of invisible claws of some devil; the entire roof had been pried open, and the several dozen centimeter thick armor of the battle coach had been torn to shreds.

The floor was littered with corpses, the majority of which were federation soldiers dressed in black battle uniforms. The rest were the sticky remains of some octopus-like demon beast. The corpses of both the humans and the demon beasts were mixed together, and there were even some federation soldiers who had bit the throat of the octopus-like demon beasts, causing both sides to perish together.

A vast majority of the crystal railguns were falling over; they had been seriously damaged.

On the few remaining railguns sat federation soldiers, who seemed to have been lost in madness as they blast spiritual energy towards the dark clouds without any regard for their safety.

And in the dark clouds—

As Li Yao raised his head to look, he sucked in a cold lump of air.

In the layer of clouds where lightning flashed and thunder rumbled, an enormous gap had been opened, resembling a giant hole that was trying to engulf the world.

And the surrounding was distinct from the dark sky; this blood lotus-like, giant red hole gave the impression of being an entrance to a bizarre demon world.

This was a breach in space, one which connected the Heaven Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector.

Among the vast majority of the population, it also had another aggravating name—

"Wormhole!"

Countless eight-tentacled demon beasts waved their tentacles, and as if they were swimming in water, they ruthlessly scurried over to the crystal trains from the wormhole one after another.

"Chi! Chi!"

A huge majority of the eight-armed demon beasts, when attacking the crystal train, would burst into dazzling sparkles much like fireworks, electrocuting into masses of unbearably stinky black charred remains one by one.

The defensive array of the crystal train had formed an airtight electric net in the air.

But a few of the especially powerful eight-tentacled demon beasts would forcibly endure the electric shocks of the defensive arrays, breaking through the electric net and charging towards the train.

Before they could recover from the dizziness due to the electric shock, they were torn to pieces by the crossfire of the crystal railguns, turning them into bits of remains floating in the air.

In just a short moment, under the collective attacks from the defensive arrays and the crystal railguns, hundreds of eight-tentacled demon beasts had been sent to the netherworld.

However, for every one that died, a hundred eight-tentacled demon beasts would rush out of the wormhole in steady streams, shrieking ear-piercing screams, as wave after wave of new demon beasts charged towards the crystal train!

"It's a beast tide outbreak!"

Li Yao's complexion became pale.

The beast tide outbreak was the most terrible scourge of the Heaven Origin Sector and was second to none.

As many as a hundred thousand, a million, ten million, or even hundreds of millions of low-level demon beasts would tear open the barrier of the Boundless Universe and invade the Heaven Origin Sector through the wormhole, engulfing everything in sight.

Farms, cities, humans, animals, plants. Even the demon beasts native to the Heaven Origin Sector could not escape—this was the beast tide outbreak!

The lowest level "Level 9 Beast Tide Outbreak" could gather hundreds of thousands of low-level demon beasts.

Even the weakest demon beasts, the “mouse demon” and the “insect demon”, could pose a great threat to cultivators so long as their numbers surpassed a certain point.

In the history of the federation, there was even an instance in which a Core Formation Stage cultivator had been eaten alive, leaving only his skeleton behind, by a swarm of locust demon beasts that had blotted out the sky and covered the land.

Before a beast tide outbreak, ordinary humans, even more so, had no room for escape.

Fortunately, the barrier between them and the Boundless Universe was not so easy to tear.

The vast majority of the Heaven Origin Sect was very solid; it was extremely difficult to tear, thus the probability of the formation of a wormhole was minimal.

Only in the Demon Beast Wasteland, which happened to be between the Heaven Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector and had many places that were extremely fragile, could wormholes appear quite easily, allowing for demon beasts to invade.

This had brought about the endless suppression and killing situation of demon beasts in the Wasteland. However, no matter how many demon beasts were beheaded, more powerful demon beasts from the Blood Demon Sector would continue to invade in a steady stream.

With the Star Glory Federation's strength, besides being unable to enter the depths of the Blood Demon Sector, all the demon beasts had been razed to the ground. The federation could only create a large number of cities and military fortresses in the Demon Beast Wasteland, carefully marching step by step as they used attrition warfare to suppress the areas with demon beast activity.

In the past five hundred years, while dealing with the beast tide outbreaks, the federation army and cultivators had accumulated plenty of experience. Under ordinary situations, if they encountered a beast tide outbreak, as long as a distress signal had been sent, a large number of reinforcements and battle-type cultivators would arrive in half an hour.

Unfortunately, this beast tide outbreak just happened to take place in the "Thunderstorm Zone", where it was very difficult to send information.

Even now, the outside world had no idea that they had encountered a beast tide outbreak.

They were all alone!

TLN:

[1] - Ball Lightning - A lightning phenomena which may occur during a thunderstorm. For further information, you can visit https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ball_lightning.

Chapter 108: Lightning-like Pair of Hands

Chapter 108: Lightning-like Pair of Hands

Li Yao swept a glance at the crystal railguns and the crystal cells that were decreasing by the minute. The situation was worst than he thought.

Despite the federation soldiers strenuously trying to hold on, a vast majority of the soldiers were ordinary people who were unable to produce spirit energy.

In order to fight against powerful demon beasts, they had to operate magical equipment and needed to use "crystal cells" as ammunition.

However, the number of crystal cells was limited, and it would not take long before they ran out of crystal cells. Once this happened, all the magical equipment would then turn into nothing but scraps of metal.

The defensive arrays continuously flickered, appearing to be unsteady. Obviously, it was impossible for them to remain activated for an unlimited period of time. Sooner or later, a moment would come when the spiritual energy would be depleted.

"Old Ding, I found two helpers for you!" the red-eyed officer shouted.

Li Yao gazed down the direction of his voice, only to see an ordinary-looking, bald middle-aged man squatting amidst wrecked magical equipment, which appeared to be no different than a pile of giant beast remains. Around him were over a thousand magical equipment components floating in the air, circling and spinning.

It was Master Refiner Ding Yin!

Ding Yin was completely drenched from the rain, and his wet gray hair stuck to his scalp, giving off an extremely funny appearance.

In contrast, the look on his face was incredibly solemn, and the look in his eyes revealed a sliver of inhumane-like indifference, like an incomparably precise maintenance machine.

Ding Yin quickly swept a glance over Li Yao and Jiang Tao; however, he did not greet Li Yao and had instead rapidly said, "Old Li, I am repairing the 'Taiyi Lightning Railgun'. I have no time to repair ordinary magical equipment. Let them repair those!"

The red-eyed officer agreed as he threw a twisted spiritual energy boltgun to Jiang Tao:

"F*ck! Just a moment ago, due to a slightest of inattention on our end, we let a couple dozen 'Ghost Jellyfish’ slip into the coach, forcing us to engage in a scuffle. During that scuffle, not only were many magical equipment damaged, but we had even lost two magical equipment technicians. Quickly take a look and see whether or not you can repair these firearms!"

Jiang Tao's complexion turned pale as his lips quivered and his legs trembled continuously.

From head to toe, he was drenched in rain. His high and mighty arrogance had all been extinguished, making him look just like a wandering ghost.

Jiang Tao was from a rich family. Since childhood, he had always been swimming in luxury. He was no different than a flower carefully raised in a greenhouse, never having faced any wind or rain. The bloody battle scene before him was something that he had only seen in war games in the Great Illusionary Land. He had never imagined that the nightmare would become reality.

Although he very well knew that the crystal train was in big trouble and had even been raided by demon beasts to the point that they had to seek help from the civilian magical equipment technicians...

Even though he had also participated in the "Limit Challenge Competition", where he had fought with some captive demon beasts and had even personally killed a few...

He used to think that all demon beasts were like the demon beasts in the "Limit Challenge Competition", which he could probably kill with leisure, allowing him to become a great hero who is looked upon by millions of people and perhaps even allowing him to show off a bit in front of his girlfriend.

But who knew it was the beast tide that could destroy everything in sight!?

Jiang Tao was completely scared to the point that he might wet his pants at any moment, yet he remained standing. For his bladder to still be able to hold on despite the fear, one truly had to commend his bladder.

"I... I..."

Jiang Tao dryly repeated two words before looking down to examine the spiritual energy boltgun.

It was a very common, long-range magical equipment. Jiang Tao had seen it many times in textbooks and had also examined and repaired them several times. It could be said that he could deal with them with ease.

However, in this hell-like battlefield where desolate, blood-curdling screams rang in his ears, where the smell of blood clogged his nose, where the shadow of death lingered around him like thorns wrapping around his heart as his hands shook and stars danced around in his eyes, how could he wholeheartedly do repairs?

As he reached out and touched the boltgun, he felt something strange in his palm. Pulling back his hand to look, he discovered that the other side of the spiritual energy boltgun had been covered in a lot of sticky, meat-like residue; there was even something that resembled a human eye directly staring at him.

He didn't know whether it was from the soldiers of the federation army or the ghost jellyfishes.

However, Jiang Tao could finally no longer endure; his psychological barrier had completely collapsed. He threw the spiritual energy boltgun and completely emptied the contents of his stomach.

"You—"

The red-eyed officer was stunned. He didn't expect Jiang Tao to be so useless.

When several soldiers who were busy fighting turned around to take a look, they spat before turning their head and continued operating the crystal railguns as they let out roars.

"M-my area of expertise lies in manufacturing and repairing civilian magical equipment. In regards to military magical equipment, I'm not particularly proficient. Moreover, I am not a battle-type cultivator and have rarely, rarely experienced such situations..."

With a pale complexion as he held his stomach, Jiang Tao weakly offered an explanation.

"F*ck!"

The red-eyed man cursed. He didn't know whether to curse Jiang Tao or the damn ghost jellyfish in the sky.

From a pale color, Jiang Tao's face suddenly turned very red. He was definitely not someone with a good temperament, as he had grown up in a wealthy family and had been doted upon by many since childhood. Needless to say getting cursed at, not many people had even spoken to him in loud voice. Where would he have received such an insult?

However, facing such a beast tide that blotted out the sky and the earth, not even the slightest flames of anger came out. Like a rooster who had lost its feathers, he shrunk into a corner, completely spiritless.

The red-eyed man did not even give him a glance; instead, he turned his gaze towards Li Yao with eyes full of expectation.

Taking half a step forward, Li Yao bent down to pick up the spiritual energy boltgun. With a sweep of his gaze, he quickly said:

"Thunderfire Boltgun, the next-generation, long-range magical equipment jointly developed by the army and the Thunder Cry Sect, which utilizes a special spirit magnetic track architecture. Through the activation of the array glyphs, the extremely compressed spiritual energy in the crystal cells would instantly turn to gas and expand into 'Spirit Vapor'. With the volume having been expanded by thousands of times, the bullet in the barrel would be pushed and thus break out at the speed of sound in an instant!"

"Even if standard rounds are used, one shot is equivalent to an attack from an intermediate level Refinement Stage cultivator!"

Li Yao very familiarly removed the crystal cell, opened the magazine to examine, and praised, "If spiritual energy rounds engraved with offensive array glyphs are used, the maximum strength unleashed can be close to an attack from a peak Refinement Stage cultivator. Moreover, you can continuously fire 30 rounds of spiritual energy bullets. Its firepower is quite good. In the hands of an ordinary soldier, even with little training, he would be able to unleash a battle force equivalent to a low-level cultivator!"

Finding his words to be reliable, the red-eyed officer revealed a happy look. "Can you repair it?"

"It is not possible. These firearms are seriously damaged, and without proper tools, no one can repair them."

Li Yao shook his head. Then, his right hand flashed, turning into a group of phantom images. All of a sudden, the Thunderfire Boltgun was dismantled into numerous parts, and with a "flop flop flop flop", fell to the ground.

Only a small number of the components were tightly grasped in Li Yao's palm.

"Disassembling the gun with one hand!?"

Two sparks burst forth in the eyes of the red-eyed officer. Several wounded soldiers leaning on the side, even more so, stared at him with wide-opened eyes as all of them exclaimed at the same time.

Disassembling a gun was something which every soldier had to learn. In the army, for those who were proficient in this art, even if both of their eyes had been covered, disassembling and assembling a gun was not difficult for these experienced veterans.

However, using just one hand to reduce a twisted Thunderfire Boltgun into the most basic magical equipment components was quite remarkable!

Upon seeing this, Jiang Tao’s pupils contracted. He didn't expect for such an ordinary-looking guy from the countryside to turn out to be an experienced magical equipment technician. It goes without saying that even if one were to ignore his refining skills, someone with a pair of hands that moved at lightning-like speeds like his did not number many.

At this moment, everyone's gazes were completely fixed on Li Yao.

While Li Yao’s right hand was disassembling the gun, his left hand wasn't remaining idle; from the ground, he picked up another twisted Thunderfire Boltgun, and his left hand similarly turned into a group of gray silhouettes.

From time to time, magical equipment components would fall from the gaps between his fingers, creating “ding ding dang dang” sounds as they fell onto the ground.

"Disassembling Thunderfire Boltguns simultaneously with each hand?"

The red-eyed officer and several soldiers were all struck dumb by his performance.

They had been playing with guns for all their lives; however, they had never imagined that someone could simultaneously disassemble two firearms!

After a short while, a pile of distorted components filled the ground, while completely intact magical equipment components remained in Li Yao’s hands.

Next, both his hands moved together as the speed of his hands soared to their limit. His ten fingers were like ten highly skilled dancers as they dazzlingly started to move up and down.

At this time, everyone felt like they had just woken up from a dream. So it turns out Li Yao’s hand speed a moment ago was simply some slow movement—only now had he unleashed his full capacity!

After a moment, with a "kacha" sound, a brand new Thunderfire Boltgun appeared in Li Yao's hands.

Although it was missing auxiliary components like the telescopic sight[1], it was, for the most part, completely intact.

Proficiently, Li Yao inserted the crystal cell. "Zoom!" The array glyphs at the rear of the Thunderfire Boltgun flared with a red brilliance, emanating a cold murderous aura; it was as if a saber had been unsheathed from its scabbard, releasing a roar akin to one by an extremely hungry dragon as it waited for the moment to spill the blood!

Li Yao threw the Thunderfire Boltgun to a soldier and explained, "Although it is impossible to repair, but as I see it, there are lots of damaged firearms here. Since not all of the components are completely unusable, I have removed the completely intact components and reassembled them into new guns that can be used. Ten broken guns can be used to assemble three or four new guns, is that fine?"

The red-eyed officer had happiness written all over his face. Continuously patting Li Yao's shoulder, he loudly said, "Good, good! Truly worthy of a disabled veteran! At the most crucial moment, we can only rely on our own people!"

"So you were a disabled veteran!"

Several soldiers looked at each other. All of them revealed an expression that said “So it was like this” in their eyes.

They all regarded Li Yao as a battle-hardened veteran.

If it were ordinary civilians, like the guy who had curled up beside them for example, witnessing the beast tide outbreak and such a frightening heaven and moving earth-like scene, then they would have long been scared to the point of becoming completely at a loss.

Yet, someone like him was calm to the extreme, not even batting an eye in the slightest.

If he was not a veteran, then what was he?!

Ding Yin was completely buried in the magical equipment wreckage. Although he was completely preoccupied with repairing the Taiyi Lightning Railgun, he still heard the exclaiming and shocked voices continuously released by the red-eyed officer and the soldiers.

In astonishment, he raised his head to look and just so happened to see the speed of Li Yao's hands soaring to their limit and the two Thunderfire Boltguns that had been disassembled into pieces within ten seconds.

"Li Yao, come over here!" Ding Yin shouted in excitement.

Li Yao was surprised for a moment, and the red-eyed officer also could not understand what it was all about. "Old Ding, there are still several Thunderfire Boltgun which haven't been repaired!"

Ding Yin loudly said:

"One extra gun or one less isn't going to affect the overall situation. Whether we can escape today or not is completely up to the Taiyi Lightning Railgun! If it is just me alone, then it would take me at least 20 minutes to completely repair it. By then, maybe the beast tide would have already broken through the defensive arrays, completely submerging the crystal train!"

Ding Yin paused. Giving a look filled with hope at Li Yao, he quickly said, "Save your breath. Li Yao, quickly come and repair the Taiyi Lightning Railgun with me. Whether we live or die is completely up to it!"

[1]: Also commonly known as “scope”.

Chapter 109: Taiyi Lightning Railgun!

Chapter 109: Taiyi Lightning Railgun!

The Taiyi Lightning Railgun was a very advanced, large-scale military magical equipment. Only 15 years ago was it officially approved to be used by the troops. Li Yao had only seen its common architectural diagrams in a magical equipment magazine, and as for the detailed architectural diagram, it was a military secret, thus it was impossible for civilians to access it.

Even if he got to see the architectural diagram, with his current level, he would simply not be able to understand it.

Li Yao carefully looked at the Taiyi Lightning Railgun.

Sure enough, this magical equipment was colossal; just its wreckage alone had occupied half of the coach. Peering through the damaged exterior, he could see the intricate spirit threads intertwined together to create obtuse and complex 3-dimensional array glyphs inside. Many of the array glyphs were not only stacked together above and below each other, but they were also separated left and right, forming incredibly ingenious arrays of spirit glyphs one after another.

The spiritual energy of various attributes intertwined together and twisted into vortexes of spiritual energy one by one, tearing the air apart as round after round of ripples undulated while making a slight "buzz buzz" noise.

Watching this, Li Yao felt his scalp tingling. There was no way he could repair such a sophisticated magical equipment.

He was just about to shake his head subconsciously.

Ding Yin, noticing his hesitation, shouted:

"You neither need to understand the spiritual energy operating principles of Taiyi Lightning Railgun, nor do you need to repair its core structure. As long as you, in accordance with the architectural diagram that I am going to give you, combine the spare parts and install them at the right location, then it will all be fine. These are all the auxiliary devices of the magical equipment, and their structure is not particularly complicated. It’s just that they are large in quantity. It can only be possible to finish installing them in a short amount of time if one has lightning-like hand speed!"

Raising his hand as over a hundred complex and intricate magical equipment architectural diagrams were projected by the mini-crystal processor, Ding Yin looked straight into Li Yao’s eyes.

Ding Yin roared, "The life of everyone on the train is in our hands! If we can fix the Taiyi Lightning Railgun in time, we will still have a chance. Otherwise, everyone will be engulfed by the beast tide—not even a tiny bit of dregs will remain!"

"Will be swallowed by the beast tide!?"

Li Yao felt his blood turn cold. He swept a glance at the tide of ghost jellyfishes that were endlessly pouring in from the dark clouds in a steady stream. Sparks burst forth in his eyes as he tightly clenched his teeth and studied the Taiyi

Lightning Railgun's architectural diagram with all his concentration.

"I will personally handle the core battle components. You are responsible for the auxiliary components as described in diagrams No. 51 to 72. I will give you ten minutes, is that enough?" While wiping off the rain, Ding Yin asked with clenched teeth.

Li Yao's eyelids slightly twitched. His eyes sparkled as they burst forth with star-like brilliance! In the blink of an eye, each of the 21 diagrams was engraved in his brain!

Li Yao closed his eyes and calculated silently. Then, his eyes started rotating at a high speed, and his computational power soared to the extreme. In the depths of his brain, the components depicted in the diagrams, one by one, transformed into translucent images shining in golden light as they collided and quickly combined together.

After seven seconds, Li Yao fiercely opened his eyes. A gleam of strong confidence burst forth from the depths of his eyes.

"There is no need for 10 minutes—I will be done in 8 minutes 53 seconds!"

In the torrential rainstorm! Under the invasion of a beast tide!

Li Yao and Ding Yin launched a magnificent display of magical equipment maintenance.

As one would expect of Ding Yin, the energy flames of a great cultivator were ignited to the extreme in the blink of an eye, revealing the absolute strength of a Master Refiner. Over a hundred invisible and formless spiritual energy tentacles spread out from all the limbs and bones of his body, simultaneously grabbing hundreds of magical components before quickly assembling them together.

In the eyes of an ordinary person, it was as if Ding Yin had suddenly given life to the magical components. The crushed components, one by one, madly started dancing before they fused into one body.

And in the opinion of cultivators whose level was the same as Ding Yin’s, like the red-eyed officer, Ding Yin was more like a mass of burning flames, and each spiritual energy tentacle was akin to a flickering flame.

He was burning his spiritual energy reserves in madness without any regards to the depletion of his spiritual energy.

Although Li Yao didn't have any spiritual energy tentacles, his pair of hands, in the blink of an eye, transformed into tens of phantom shadows. This time, his speed was a notch higher compared to just a moment ago. Even the raging winds and torrential rain were unable to charge into the gray shadows that had been formed by his pair of hands. His entire body was completely enveloped by the gray shadows, making one unable to clearly see his visage.

And in his surroundings appeared a wet ring of water. All the raindrops had been pushed away by the phantom shadows.

This was a true example of "airtight and watertight"!

"Ding ding ding ding!"

From the wreckage of the magical equipment came a faint sound of metal colliding. The Taiyi Lightning Railgun, in a speed visible to the naked eye, was getting a new lease of life.

"Brothers, hold on! Let's let these bastards have a taste of our ferocity immediately!"

Removing the army cap and throwing it onto the ground, the red-eyed officer picked up two Thunderfire Boltguns, loaded them with powerful spiritual energy rounds, and roared again and again as he started firing in madness towards the night sky with both hands simultaneously.

The few ghost jellyfishes that had somehow broken through the defensive arrays were shredded into pieces by him; they were even too late to let out shrieks before they turned into flying ash.

The young soldiers' wills to fight burst forth as their shouts reverberated through the sky:

"Soldiers, load the guns! Take out the blade! Kill… Kill… Kill… Kill… Kill… Kill...!"

After 8 minutes 53 seconds—

"I'm done!"

Li Yao's eyes were completely bloodshot. From head to toe, steam was rising from his entire body. The fingertips of his ten fingers were all completely mutilated. His middle finger especially was so damaged that even the bone was visible and blood constantly dripped down from it.

But as though he didn't feel or know anything, he licked his lips, and like a drunkard admiring rare wine, he moved his gaze up and down on the Taiyi Lightning Railgun as a very satisfying sense of accomplishment was revealed in his bloodshot eyes.

Ding Yin was also finished repairing the core components and entering spiritual energy into the spirit glyphs that would switch on the Taiyi Lightning Railgun.

The Taiyi Lightning Railgun was just like a prehistoric behemoth that was waking from its slumber—blue streaks of lightning constantly sprang up from the gaps between the components and lingered around the magical equipment.

"Buzz!" The eight legs of the Taiyi Lightning Railgun all stood up steadily, slightly lifting the barrel from the base.

Gradually, two lightning rails that were as sharp as swords extended out from the barrel and took aim at the tides of beasts in the dark clouds!

Ding Yin inserted a special, super-compressed crystal cell into the energy compartment of the Taiyi Lightning Railgun. The dark Taiyi Lightning Railgun was immediately covered in a layer of faint blue light.

"Spiritual energy charged, 30%!"

Little by little, the blue light turned brighter, shining upon everyone's incomparably excited face.

"Spiritual energy charged, 60%!"

Bit by bit, amidst the blue light, brilliance like twinkling stars appeared. Like hundreds of fireflies, they slowly flew between the two rails of the Taiyi Lightning Railgun.

"Spiritual energy charged, 90%!"

The "fireflies" between the two rails congealed into crackling streaks of lightning one after another, constantly moving between the rails as they issued ear-piercing peals of thunder. The few soldiers close to it had their hairs stand on its end, and no matter how much they pressed down on them, they would not go down.

"Spiritual energy charged, 100%!"

The Taiyi Lightning Railgun released a dazzling blue light, and the streaks of lightning that were winding around the rail, one by one, disappeared as they were all sucked into the tail of the rails and congealed into a ball of lightning. Upon looking carefully, its core was actually emitting a pure white brilliance that was like—

The color of the sun!

"Let me do it!"

The red-eyed officer burst into a shout as his physique suddenly doubled in size. His uniform was torn into pieces which fell to the floor piece by piece, revealing his magnificent and robust body that seemed as if it had been forged with iron and cast with copper.

And upon his back that was as thick as a mountain, there was an extremely fierce criss-cross lightning bolt tattoo engraved with an unknown type of spirit ink. In the dark night accompanied with lightning and thunder, it was surprisingly emitting bright and resplendent luster, as if they were truly two bolts of lighting that had been tightly pressed onto his back and had transformed into a pair of wings!

The officer quickly sat down on the emplacement and madly started revolving the spiritual energy in his body before firing it into the Taiyi Lightning Railgun without a shred of hesitation.

Under his impetus, the ball of lightning once again doubled in size and turned much brighter, making everyone unable to look straight at it.

Taiyi Lightning Railgun!

The highly compressed lightning spiritual energy would be released through the rails in the blink of an eye, creating an unmatched bolt of lightning which was as powerful as an attack from a peak Core Formation Stage expert!

—

"By choosing to attack us in the Thunderstorm Zone so that we are unable to contact the outside world, did you bastards think you were clever?"

"But you would have never dreamed that we had a masterwork weapon—the Taiyi Lightning Railgun that could unleash 500% of its power in the Thunderstorm Zone!"

"If the ball of lightning explodes in the center of the Thunderstorm Zone, it will draw forth the lightning and create a fearsome thunderstorm. You sons of bi**hes will all be struck by lightning and annihilated instantly!"

The red-eyed officer madly roared as spiritual energy, like torrents of water rushing down the mountain, flooded the Taiyi Lightning Railgun to the limit before a glittering ball of lightning flashed out from the gap between the two rails and directly pierced the center of the beast tide.

"Shua!"

Like a supernova explosion, the ball of lightning, in the blink of an eye, expanded by thousand times of its original size. Tens of thousands of staggering streaks of lightning formed a vortex of destruction, tearing all the ghost jellyfishes present within the radius of couple hundred meters into shreds.

Many of the ghost jellyfishes desperately tried to flee outside area for their lives, yet they were tenaciously pulled back by the suction force created by the lightning, dragging them into the abyss of death.

In a single moment, a terrifying, transparent hole appeared amidst the beast tide. One could even faintly see the dazzling light coming from the stars behind the beast tide.

"Crack crack crack crack!"

Although the few hundred ghost jellyfishes in outer ring weren't torn into pieces, they were still electrocuted to death and fell from the sky like raindrops.

The remaining ghost jellyfishes spread out one by one. Only after a long time did they converge once again, but this time, they did not dare to form such a dense group.

The soldiers of the federation army burst into cheers of jubilation.

However, the red-eyed officer with the naked upper body had a solemn look instead—the Taiyi Lightning Railgun by no means had attracted the lightning. Although a large number of ghost jellyfishes were blasted to pieces, it simply didn't cause much harm to the beast tide.

Furthermore, these bastards seemed to be taking precautions. They no longer formed a tight formation, rendering it impossible to kill thousands upon thousands of ghost jellyfishes again in one shot.

As shocking as the Taiyi Lightning Railgun's might was, the consumption of spiritual energy was similarly an astronomical figure. Each shot was equivalent to burning hundreds of thousands of crystals.

They only had 3 special, super-compressed crystal cells onboard, allowing them to only fire the Taiyi Lightning Railgun nine times.

They only had eight more opportunities left to attract lightning.

Watching the jubilating soldiers around him, the red-eyed officer spat a mouthful of saliva as he charged the spiritual energy with a gloomy complexion. Taking advantage of the instant when a streak of lightning flashed in the sky, he once again fired another ball of lightning!

This time, the ghost jellyfishes had instead become a little wiser and separated from one another by a wide margin. The ball of lightning once again fiercely exploded, tearing hundreds of ghost jellyfishes into pieces before the sky helplessly dimmed down.

The sky was once again covered in a veil of darkness.

The red-eyed officer did not utter a single word. Clenching his teeth, he fired the third ball of lightning without even looking at the result, stood up from the emplacement, kicked open the hatch of the spirit energy compartment, and pulled out the steaming hot crystal cell. Without a care about the series of blisters that had appeared on his palm due to the heat, he ruthlessly pushed in the new crystal cell!

Fourth, fifth, sixth!

Three rounds of balls of lightning zipped out; the first explosion had not yet even been extinguished, yet the third blast had already exploded, creating three shining stars in the sky and clearing a large area in the sky.

Yet, many of the ghost jellyfishes continuously attacked as they collided with the defensive arrays with all their strength. Like a moth drawn to flame, they happily charged forth, never getting tired of it.

"Final crystal cell!" Ding Yin felt his heart tighten. His lips parted but not a single word came out from his mouth.

The red-eyed officer sat for the final time on the emplacement. From the corners of eyes, mouth, and from the ears, earthworm-like streams of blood flowed out. The purlicues[1] of his hand were even more mutilated to the point that they had become somewhat like pulp.

It was the backlash of spiritual energy after firing a powerful magical equipment, which could be said to be the "recoil" of the Taiyi Lightning Railgun and would bring injuries.

Therefore, he had to personally take charge. Only with his robust body of a battle-type cultivator could he barely withstand the recoil of the Taiyi Lightning Railgun. If he was an ordinary martial artist, he would have long been reduced to a pile of meat from the backlash of spiritual energy.

Yet, regardless of his injuries, like a mad devil, the pair of eyes of the red-eyed officer turned as red as a burning piece of coal as he fired another ball of lightning!

This time, it was completely out of order; the ball of lightning shot in the sky where the ghost jellyfishes were sparse. Like a bright firework, it slowly burst into a lonely bloom.

The red-eyed officer's completion turned pale. He was barely hanging by a thread, but just as everyone thought that he could no longer hold on, he suddenly let out a hysterical roar. The lightning tattoo on the two sides of his back suddenly lit up and metamorphosed into two burning wings of light!

At this point, silver snakes were dancing in the sky, bursting with thunderclaps. Again and again, new streaks of lightning were constantly produced!

The red-eyed officer, using his remaining strength, slammed his iron fist on the powering glyphs.

The entire coach was severely shaken by his fist.

"Motherf**ker, quickly burst for me!"

TLN notes:

[1] - Purlicues: Singular from - purlicue, the gap between the forefinger and the thumb.

Chapter 110: Thunderstorm!

Chapter 110: Thunderstorm!

The ball of lightning, which carried everyone's hope and despair, shot towards the immensely deep and serene night sky.

For a moment, it seemed as if it had completely disappeared in the middle of the dark clouds, leaving only an abyss-like darkness behind.

But in the next moment, peals of thunder, which seemed loud enough to shake the heaven and the earth, reverberated throughout the sky, causing the entire world to look as if it had returned to the prehistoric moment when the heaven was separated from the sky.

With the ball of lightning as the center, the lightning spiritual energy that had accumulated within the clouds was completely stimulated; tens of thousands of streaks of lightning buzzed out, weaving a giant net that blotted out the sky and covered up the earth as it illuminated the Wasteland—it was as though it was the middle of the day!

The attracted lightning had covered the entire sky, annihilating everyone and everything that stood in its path!

Even high-level cultivators would be unable to resist the calamity of the world—the thunderstorm!

In the blink of an eye, several tens of thousands of Ghost Jellyfishes had been swept away; it was even too late for them to let out a single shriek before they were electrocuted by the lightning.

And the few thousand Ghost Jellyfishes that did survive at the outermost ring let out ear-piercing, blood-curdling screams before they fled towards the wormhole for their lives, trying to escape to the Blood Demon Sector. However, within a few seconds, the lightning caught up and electrocuted them, causing them to be scorched until they had become charred, fist-sized residues which were subsequently smashed to pieces by the gusts of wind—drifting in the air, they were to forever remain in the Heaven Origin Sector’s Wasteland!

Everyone's face turned all blue when the thunderstorm lit up the entire sky, causing all their hair to stand on its ends. Everyone felt limp and numb; it was as if electricity was coursing through their body. Many people had their fingernails directly crack open, and they could even taste sourness and bitterness under their tongue[1].

The thunderstorm lasted for a complete 10 seconds before it gradually subsided. The dark clouds had been swept away, leaving the dark blue night sky behind and revealing the twinkling stars. The billowing wind and the torrential rain were also now replaced with a cool breeze and a light drizzle.

The thunderstorm had completely released the lightning spiritual energy that had been accumulated for a long time in the Thunderstorm Zone, thus the remaining spiritual energy was not sufficient to sustain the Thunderstorm Zone. Very soon, everyone welcomed the bright moon, the twinkling stars, and the calm journey ahead.

In Li Yao's heart, an immense feeling of shock surged forth.

"The attracted lightning annihilated everything in its path—the power of nature is just too strong, too violent!"

"Even such a large-scale beast tide outbreak was purged in the blink of an eye. Several tens of thousands of demon beasts were killed and reduced to ashes, leaving nothing, not even the slightest bit of dregs."

"Even if it was a Nascent Soul Stage old monster, under the premise that he is not going to rely on the strength of a magical equipment, I'm afraid that even he would be unable to release such a daunting power!"

"Ding Yin and the red-eyed officer, those two are at most Building Foundation Stage cultivators, yet by relying on a high-level magical equipment, they were able to accomplish such a feat!"

"Sure enough, refiners are extremely powerful!"

"Although today I could only paint someone else's dots and do some common maintenance on the external, auxiliary components of the Taiyi Lightning Railgun, but there will come a day when I will truly become a Master Refiner and will personally refine magical equipment that is even stronger than the 'Taiyi Lightning Railgun'!"

With the final lightning bolt piercing through the sky, the night sky finally quieted down.

The final Ghost Jellyfish powerlessly fell before it was run over by the whistling crystal train.

All the soldiers burst into cheers of jubilation.

The red-eyed officer also heaved a deep sigh of relief. His square face, which seemed to have been cut and engraved by knife and axe, spread into a smile as he powerlessly limped out of the emplacement.

Ding Yin, on the contrary, still continued to stare at the sky, while the creases on his forehead seemed to form a frown.

Li Yao felt a little puzzled, and so, he too directed his gaze along with Ding Yin’s, and upon looking, his heart fiercely started pounding.

—Although the beast tide had been reduced to ashes and the thunderstorm had abated, the wormhole was still not showing any signs of disappearing.

It was quite clear that the passage between the Heaven Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector still remained. There still remained a strong possibility that powerful demon beasts could invade the Heaven Origin Sector.

Li Yao's eyelids madly twitched. Suddenly, an intense nervous and creepy feeling gripped his heart.

It seemed that the night was doomed to be a bloody one. After a moment, from within the wormhole, dark clouds once again burst forth, turning into a black tide that covered the starry sky of the Heaven Origin Sector completely!

"Another beast tide outbreak? Two consecutive beast tide outbreak!" Li Yao could not believe what he was seeing.

The corner of Ding Yin's mouth twitched as he powerlessly slumped to the floor. Gradually, he shook his head and said with a bitter smile:

"It seems new demon beasts who are far more powerful than the Ghost Jellyfish will soon appear. Perhaps, the Ghost Jellyfishes a while ago were just 'cannon fodder' that were driven away by this batch of demon beasts to test the waters of the Heaven Origin Sector. This time... it is the real beast tide outbreak!"

"Cannon fodder?"

Li Yao tightly gritted his teeth to the point that they started aching.

The Ghost Jellyfish tide had already caused them to despair and had even forced them to fire the Taiyi Lightning Railgun eight times, depleting their reservoir to the point that they could only fire one last time.

If that was just "cannon fodder", then how fearsome was the real beast tide outbreak?

What should they use to resist again?

Very soon, an overwhelming, demonic energy invaded the coach. The temperature within the coach fell by a dozen degrees, and a nauseating, bloody smell permeated through the air.

The soldiers' cheers of jubilation turned weaker and weaker, leaving only a silence of despair behind.

On the face of many, the joy of having survived the calamity still remained, but the depths of their eyes instead flickered with deep fear.

"It's the Ghost Face Silver Mosquito!"

The red-eyed officer spat on the ground. The sputum he spat was blood red, and yet his will remained as firm as an iron nail.

"What!?"

Li Yao felt as if his entire spine was immersed in ice-cold water, and the hair at the back of his head all stood erect.

The Ghost Face Silver Mosquito was an insect-type demon beast that was as big as a dragonfly. When its wings were spread out, the patterns it revealed would then be similar to the face of a ghost, and at its rear end was a blood sac which had circle after circle of silver lines winding around it, hence giving it such a name.

The Ghost Face Silver Mosquito alone was not such a dreadful demon beast. Similar to a leech, it liked to suck blood and had a fragile physique. Even an ordinary person was able to easily eliminate it by using low-level magical equipment.

What made it frightening was its number!

The Ghost Face Silver Mosquito rarely appeared, but when it did, it would be in a form of a horde. A horde consisting of billions of Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes was like a dreadful hurricane that swept through everything; wherever it went, it was as though a swarm of locusts had passed through, leaving not a single living being behind as they sucked clean the blood of every living thing in the blink of eye, turning them into mummies.

At the beginning when the Star Glory Federation was just established, a beast tide of Ghost Face Silver Mosquito had once erupted in the Demon Beast Wasteland. An entire town with a strength of fifty thousand people was massacred in a short span of one hour. Not only were their blood and blood marrow sucked clean, even their brains had been as well, painting an extremely horrifying scene.

What was even more frightening was that the Ghost Face Silver Mosquito possessed a special ability to communicate with their mind.

A Ghost Face Silver Mosquito alone was simple-minded, much like a baby; it was just a low-level demon beast that didn't possess any intelligence. However, when their numbers reached a certain extent, the change in their quantity would lead to a qualitative change; the whole group would then come to possess a certain level of intelligence, evolving from demon beasts to a demon clan in a single step. Their intelligence was not even the slightest bit inferior to the humans, and they also came to possess the demon clan's ability to cultivate!

Sure enough, after hundreds of millions of Ghost Face Silver Mosquito charged out from the wormhole, a silver-gray aura suddenly burst out in between every Ghost Face Silver Mosquito.

Accompanied by a "buzzing" noise, the beast tide started squirming in a very strange rhythm before turning into the upper half of a giant that was taller than a hundred meter.

Its facial features made by the Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes were clearly visible, giving a hideous smile towards the passengers of the crystal train.

It was as though the earth had split open, revealing a passage to the netherworld from which the devil of the ninth level of hell had crawled out of from the endless abyss. It opened its claws and extended it towards the crystal train.

"Chi Chi Chi Chi!"

The defensive arrays suddenly flared as thousands upon thousands of streaks of lightning traversed across, barely resisting the giant claw formed by the Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes!

The crystal train shook fiercely as if it was galloping over a rugged mountain road.

Many of the soldiers stumbled here and there, ruthlessly colliding with the coach.

All kinds of magical equipment components and wrecked firearms endlessly danced in the air before falling with "ding ding ding" noises.

The spiritual brilliance of the defensive arrays flickered as ear-piercing "creaking" noises reverberated in the coach, causing everyone's heart to almost leap out of their mouths from the fear that their entire line of defense could collapse at any moment.

The red-eyed officer wiped his face and let out a mad roar before firing the last round of the Taiyi Lightning Railgun.

The lightning ball struck dead center upon the head of the "Giant".

Accompanied by a deafening explosion, half of the head of the giant was directly blown away as a large number of Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes were reduced to ash.

Before the soldiers could burst into cheers, countless Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes squirmed over as a distorted ghost face was once again formed. Compared to just a moment ago, this face was even more hideous.

"It's useless."

Ding Yin became incredibly calm. His eyes quickly started rotating as his brain started computing madly before he calmly spoke, "There are too many Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes. A qualitative change has already transpired, giving birth to a hive mind and turning them highly intelligent like a demon clan. It is simply impossible to route them using the Taiyi Lightning Railgun, and don't forget, the lightning spiritual energy stored inside the Thunderstorm Zone has already dissipated. We are unable to attract lightning a second time."

"According to my calculations, it will break our defensive array in 25 minutes and 31 seconds, and approximately 3 minutes afterwards, every passenger aboard would be completely sucked dry."

The red-eyed officer was stupefied for a second before slamming his fist on the Taiyi Lightning Railgun in anger. Just as he wanted to curse, a female whose hair was in a complete mess suddenly stumbled her way over from coach No. 15 and said in jubilation, "Battalion Commander, we have made contact with the base. The reinforcements will arrive in 29 minutes and 52 seconds, and a cultivator of the Mountain Sea Sect who is patrolling nearby will also arrive in 28 minutes and 29 seconds!"

"Great!"

The red-eyed officer ecstatically waved his robust arm, but in the next second, he once again turned gloomy. Clenching his teeth, he said, "Damn, these bastards will be able to break through the defensive array in 25 minutes! Before reinforcements arrive, we will have long been turned into mummies!"

"Three minutes… these three minutes could decide whether we will live or die… It would have been better if the Taiyi Lightning Railgun could be fired again. A couple dozen balls of lightning would be enough to delay these bastards for another 3-5 minutes!"

"But we don't have any special, super-compressed crystal cells left. Hell, we can't even fire a single round. This Taiyi Lightning Railgun is now nothing more than a piece of scrap!"

When the red-eyed officer became extremely frustrated, Ding Yin suddenly said, "We can still fire the Taiyi Lightning Railgun."

"What?"

The red-eyed officer was stunned. He unwittingly said, "How is that possible? I have carefully checked the magical equipment ammunitions loaded on the train before the train left. We only had three special crystal cells, which have already been depleted. How can we fire the Taiyi Lightning Railgun again?"

Ding Yin faintly smiled before pointing at his own shriveled chest. "Old Li, you are forgetting that we are cultivators. We have plenty of spiritual energy stored inside our body, which is enough to fire the Taiyi Lightning Railgun."

The red-eyed officer's pair of eyes almost fell out from their sockets as he roared:

"Old Ding, what are talking about? The Taiyi Lightning Railgun's most powerful shot is comparable to an attack by a peak Core Formation Stage cultivator with all his strength! Its consumption of energy is terrifying! We are just low-level Building Foundation Stage cultivators, how much spiritual energy do you think is stored inside our bodies? If we try to trigger the Taiyi Lightning Railgun, it would be like asking for a three-year-old child to wield a one-hundred-and-eighty-pound knife—it is completely a suicide! Moreover, even if we combusted our own lives and crush our souls, recklessly overdrafting our spiritual energy—we could at most fire 2-3 rounds!"

Ding Yin stared right at the not-so-far-away Ghost Face Silver Mosquito giant before very calmly asking back, "Are 2-3 shots still not enough?"

TLN:

[1] - Electrical charges change the flavor you experience to bitter or sweet, salty or sour, depending on their frequency and amplitude.

Chapter 111: Who are the Cultivators?

Chapter 111: Who are the Cultivators?

The red-eyed officer was stunned for a long time. Suddenly, he smacked his head and said with a laugh, "Yes, yes, I was muddleheaded. Even if we can’t kill these bastards, as long as we delay them for three minutes, it will be sufficient!"

The red-eyed officer paused and swept a glance at the huge demon clan giant, who appeared to be getting bigger and bigger the closer it approached. The red-eyed officer's eyes flickered with strong contempt as he said, "However, with just the two of us, even if we combust our own lives and shatter our souls, I'm afraid it would still not be enough to delay it for three minutes. Do you think someone will come forwards and—fight side by side with us?"

"I think they will, they definitely will." Ding Yin smiled as his eyes shone with an indomitable will.

Li Yao, who stood next to them and overheard their conversation that actually concealed a tragic meaning in between the lines, felt an ominous premonition floating in his heart. He could not help but shout, "Professor Ding, you—"

Ding Yin slightly smiled, spread his hands as he drew a sorry gesture, and calmly said, "Student Li Yao, I'm very sorry. In the waiting room, I promised you that we would discuss refining topics many times in the future, but I'm afraid I have to break my promise."

The red-eyed officer punched the mini-crystal processor a few times before a dozen or so holograms were projected simultaneously. The holograms then turned into a dozen or so monitoring screens which showed the situation inside the coaches.

A vast majority of the passenger had no idea what was happening outside. Everyone just believed that the bumps they had experienced had all been caused by the thunderstorm. There were even many people who were voicing out their complaints to the crew.

Only a few passenger sat restlessly, coming to realize the existence of the beast tide.

These people were from all ages; from old to young, with varying physique, even the clothes they wore were not the same, but there was one thing common in all of them—they all had an extremely clear pair of eyes that were flickering with a faint spiritual aura.

"We are in luck! There are many cultivators onboard!"

The red-eyed officer’s lips pursed into a smile. He started the transmission array glyph and said in a heavy tone, "Who are the cultivators? Please proceed to the back of the train—we need you here."

His voice changed into a moving and passionate telepathic thought that propagated through every coach.

"Who are the cultivators?"

"Who are the cultivators?"

"Who are the cultivators?"

Li Yao, staring at the monitoring screen, discovered some changes in a few of the passengers onboard.

In Coach No.2, a gray-haired, hale grandpa gradually stood up. From the luggage rack, he picked up a light-gold straw hat and meticulously placed it on his head. Turning to the window and straightening his appearance, he supported himself with a walking stick that had a dragon head on its handle and calmly proceeded towards the back of the train.

In Coach No.3 sat an obese man with a big head and large ears. On his thick and short fingers, there were three big rings shining in a golden light. Next to him sat a petite girl who was old enough to be his daughter.

From the beginning, the fat man had been holding the girl in his arm. On one side, he was consoling her, while on the other, his hands were moving all over her body as if no one was watching them, seemed a little arrogant.

However, when the obese man heard the summon, his fatty face fiercely trembled. In the blink of an eye, he turned incomparably solemn and showed a little dismay as well as fear.

The obese man hesitated for a long time. His facial feature turned increasingly hideous, and his molars were all about to break from clenching. Suddenly, he slapped his thigh and started to intensely kiss the girl in his arm!

He kissed so fervently that it seemed as if he had never kissed someone in this life and would also never be able to do so again. Despite how much the girl struggled, it was all for naught.

After kissing enough for half a minute to have passed, the obese man finally let go, stood up suddenly, and carrying his belly which resembled the belly of a woman who had been pregnant for a 5-6 month, started moving towards the back of the train with difficulty.

The girl wiped the saliva off her face and doubtfully asked him, seemingly asking where he was going.

Li Yao saw that obese man impatiently wave his hand and said just one word. From the motion of his mouth, it was apparently—

"Toilet!"

At the end of Coach No.6 sat a 30-40 years old husband-wife couple. They were dressed very ordinarily as if they were common office workers.

Upon hearing the call, the woman stood up without any hesitation. On the other hand, a fearful look appeared on the man's face who, after a moment of hesitation, reached out to grab the woman's hand.

The woman stared at him with wide-opened eyes. Her eyes flickered with intense shock and contempt. Pushing away her husband’s arm, she pointed at her husband’s nose and cursed a few times before walking towards the back of the train without even turning her head.

The husband flushed red. He was so ashamed that he was on the verge of crying. Finally, he mustered up his courage and slapped the table as he stood up and chased after his wife.

In the middle of Coach No.9 sat a young girl who wore a plain white long skirt. She looked very delicate and pretty, much like an orchid blooming inside a deep valley.

When everyone was sitting restlessly, she, on the other hand, was calmly reading a paperback book.

In this era where crystal processors were largely popular, someone who liked carrying paperback books would seldom be seen. Her slender arm changing the page gave the girl a fresh and refined look.

Upon hearing the summon, the girl's eyelashes slightly tremble as she took out an exquisite bookmark refined out a leaf and cautiously placed it inside the book. Leaving the paperback book on the luggage rack, she calmly walked towards the back of the train.

When they were passing the other coaches, there were several pairs of eyes that were overflowing in brilliance; it was the cultivators who had also perceived the danger.

However, these people just lowered their heads, so low that it was almost reached their crotch, as they did not dare to directly look them in the eyes.

Very quickly, five cultivators appeared in the armored coach.

The raging storm and the howling beast tide did not bring any change to their visage; on the contrary, it revealed a "so it was like this" look of relief.

"I am a cultivator," the meticulous old man said.

"I am a cultivator," the heavy-jowled and potbellied obese man said while gasping for breath.

"We, husband and wife, are both cultivators." The middle-aged husband-wife couple gazed at each other with a smile. Hand in hand, their fingers entwined with each other's, much like a deep-rooted twin lotus on a stalk[1].

"I am also a cultivator," the elegant as an orchid girl gave a slight smile and calmly said.

Ding Yin and the red-eyed officer looked at the each other before simultaneously bursting into laughter.

"The two of us are also cultivator. We never thought that five fellows would actually stand up and fight side by side with us today. We are truly happy!"

Ding Yin, from his ring, took out a fist-sized, circular magical equipment and placed it on his forehead. Suddenly, the circular magical equipment started shining as if he had grown a third eye.

"Whiz!"

The magical equipment abruptly shot out five red spirit threads which pierced the foreheads of the five cultivators.

"Telepathic Thought Exchanger?" Li Yao's eyes lit up.

Every high-level cultivator had powerful psychic power. It was possible for them to converse with just their telepathic thoughts without any restriction. With just the move of their thoughts, they could make the others understand their intentions.

A Building Foundation Stage cultivator like Ding Yin, apparently, still could not practice such psychic powers. However, by relying on the "Telepathic Thought Exchanger", he could transmit a large amount of information in a single breath, achieving the "hearts linked as one" effect.

With the telepathic thought exchange, the amount of information transmitted could reach an astronomical figure.

After three seconds, a look of pondering appeared on the faces of all five cultivators.

Ding Yin withdrew the spirit threads and fervently swept a gaze. "So the situation is like this. Ladies and gentlemen, what do you think?"

The meticulous old men stepped forward. Like an ancient tree that was burning, he solemnly and fanatically nodded his head and said:

"Yes, I agree with Fellow Ding's analysis. Only by sacrificing us few could we buy those valuable three minutes. This decrypt is Zhuang Zhonghai, a 13th-level Refinement Stage cultivator. However, as I am a research-type cultivator, my spiritual energy is limited. Even if I crush my soul, I'm afraid I could only fire the Taiyi Lightning Railgun no more than twice."

The obese man wiped the rain off his face and said with a laugh:

"I am Gao Dakang, an 11th-level Refinement Stage admin-type cultivator. I have my own company, and what I'm most afraid of is not being able to eat. Hahaha, I'm young and strong. Although my cultivation is not as deep and vigorous as Old Zhuang’s, if this fatty goes all out, I can also fire the Taiyi Lightning Railgun twice!"

The middle-aged husband-wife couple looked at each other as the female smiled and said:

"I am Yan Xiaodie, and my husband is called Zhang Meng. Both of us are 6th-level Refinement Stage cultivator; however, we are cultivating a rather peculiar, secret dual cultivation law, so we together can struggle to fire twice!"

The orchid of a deep valley-like girl said:

"I am Wei Qingqing. I have just graduated from the Sky Fantasia Academy this year and was going to a small village in the Wasteland to be a village teacher. My level is the lowest, and I am only in the 5th-level of the Refinement Stage. I am a culture-type cultivator and an Illusionist. Unfortunately, facing the beast tide, it can not be used. If I go all out, I can struggle to fire once."

"Alright! I and Old Ding are both Building Foundation Stage cultivators. If we burn our spiritual energy, we can fire the Taiyi Lightning Railgun 3-5 times. Even if we can not kill these bastards, we together have to at least hold on for three minutes!" the red-eyed officer gallantly said.

Everyone finished introducing themselves, and then cast their gaze at Jiang Tao, who was in the corner.

Only now did Li Yao remember that the cuddled up Jiang Tao in the corner was also a "Cultivator".

Jiang Tao looked like he had been dead for three days and three nights; his complexion was pale. He stammered, "I-I am only a 3rd-level Refinement Stage Cultivator. I'm afraid I can't even fire the Taiyi Lightning Railgun once. I, I..."

Stammering "I" for a while, he suddenly stood up and pointed at the seven cultivators as he shouted madly, "You, you are all crazy! Why would you sacrifice yourselves to save a train of irrelevant people!?"

The seven cultivators looked at him without speaking a word. The look in their eyes was full of complete indifference.

In the light drizzle, they were like seven bronze statues.

Jiang Tao, more and more, could not endure. He shouted at the top of his lungs:

"We are all powerful cultivators. We can live for at least a hundred years and enjoy a good life, so why do you wish to die in this kind of place? Why!?"

The obese man sneered:

"It is because we are powerful cultivators that we have to come forward in times of crisis. In the world of cultivation, there is a certain saying. Presumably, you have also heard it—the blood of the strong must flow for the weak!"

Wei Qingqing said:

"Moreover, haven't you seen with your own eyes how terrifying the beast tide outbreak is? Even if we don't come forward, the Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes would catch up in a few minutes. By then, we would all be dead."

Zhuang Zhonghai, the old man, calmly said:

"You are also a cultivator and possess an extraordinary computing power. You can draw your own analysis and check whether or not we have a second road."

Jiang Tao rolled his eyes and screamed:

"Of course I know this! The Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes will take some time to kill the passengers. Since we are all cultivators, in that time, we can run several dozen li and meet up with the reinforcement. We would be able to escape with our lives!"

Zhuang Zhonghai narrowed his eyes as he spoke, enunciating word by word:

"Young man, you’re saying, we should let the entire train of ordinary people become our shield, aren’t you?"

TLN:

[1] Twin lotus on a stalk means a devoted married couple.

Chapter 112: Cultivators Are Here!

Chapter 112: Cultivators Are Here!

Jiang Tao’s face flushed as he minced his words:

"O-of course that’s not what I mean! What I meant to say was that... no one can predict the beast tide outbreak. If the ordinary people die, they can only blame their bad luck. We cultivators are the elites of society—the pillars of the country! We are like the feathers of a phoenix and the horns of a unicorn[1]. Wouldn't it be a pity... to die in vain like this? Only, only if we survive could we take revenge for the ordinary people!"

His remarks rendered the seven cultivators completely speechless.

"Zhang Meng", who was hesitating to come forward a moment ago, could not help but ask his wife in a low voice:

"Xiaodie, was I as shameless as this guy?"

"How could you?"

Yan Xiaodie smiled. Gently wrapping her arms around her husband’s neck, she said with a voice full of deep love, "My husband is the most handsome man in the entire Heaven Origin Sector! Even when you are shameless, you are still very handsome!"

While speaking, she tip-toed and passionately kissed Zhang Meng on the lips.

Ding Yin indifferently looked at Jiang Tao, much like he was looking at a dog:

"Little Friend, since our opinions differ and we cannot find a common ground, and as it seems that you also do not wish to fulfill the sworn duty of cultivators, please return to your seat. And also, please be careful not to disturb the ordinary people, lest you create a panic."

"You are all stupid!"

Jiang Tao clenched his teeth and said with a distorted face, "What the f*ck is 'a cultivator’s sworn duty to protect ordinary people'!? 'The blood of the strong must flow for the weak'!? These are all ideologies from a couple centuries ago! Besides you fools, no one else takes this seriously! I don't believe there are only so few cultivators onboard. There are definitely many cultivators like me who are not going to act even until the very end—we are the ones who have made the wisest decision!"

Wei Qingqing's voice was very gentle, yet it carried an indomitable will, "I am cultivating my own truth. As for the other cultivators, it has nothing to do with me. I just want… to have a clear conscience."

"You are… simply… unreasonable!"

"Then quickly get the hell out! You don't need to be so chatty. Don't interrupt this father when he is trying to save the world!"

The obese man spat a mouthful of saliva towards Jiang Tao's feet, which fell dead right in between his legs like a flying sword, scaring the hell out of him.

Jiang Tao's complexion turned from red to purple, much like fresh pork liver. Although his lips parted, in the end, he did not dare to retort. He shrunk his neck and staggeringly receded towards Coach No.15.

Across from him laid a wounded soldier who was moaning in pain.

Without even taking a single glance, Jiang Tao stepped over him.

The red-eyed officer coldly looked and suddenly shouted at the top of his lungs, "Stone, gather every brother and take the wounded to Coach No.15!"

"Battalion Commander!"

A bearded man with a shaved head anxiously said, "I am not going! I want to fight till the bitter end with you!"

The red-eyed officer gave him a stern stare and shouted, "Company Commander Stone! I repeat, gather all the brothers and form a second defense line in Coach No.15 to protect the civilians onboard—this is my command!"

"Battalion Commander..." The bearded fellow sobbed.

"Stone, cultivators have a cultivators' duty, and the federation army has its own duty. I am a soldier of the federation army as well as a cultivator. Now is the time for me to fulfill my duty. Your time has still not arrived! Go! Stick to your post and prepare for battle. If we are not able to buy 3 minutes, then it will be your turn. Remember, even if you can hold on for an extra second, that one second will still count!"

The red-eyed officer heavily patted the bearded fellow on the shoulder.

"Yes, sir!"

The bearded fellow gathered every soldier. "Thud!" Every soldier stomped their boots as they stood at attention and saluted, splashing water everywhere.

Afterward, carrying their Thunderfire Boltgun on their shoulder, they put the seriously injured soldiers on stretchers and supported the lightly wounded soldiers as they retreated towards Coach No.15.

"Student Li Yao, you should also go." Ding Yin walked in front of Li Yao and kindly smiled.

Li Yao blankly watched everything.

His forehead was incomparably aching. An inexplicable power from left and right was trying to break from the inside; it was as if a nail was ruthlessly drilling its way out from the top of his head. He felt a buzzing sensation in his entire brain, and his whole neural field was in ebullition.

"Professor Ding, are you planning to sacrifice yourself to buy time for us?" Li Yao asked in a low voice.

Ding Yin nodded and calmly replied:

"Yes. After you have withdrawn, we will choose the right time and detach the armored coach from the train. You will continue on your journey while we cover for you in an attempt to buy three minutes."

Li Yao anxiously said:

"Professor Ding, I know you want to combust your life and overdraft your spiritual energy so that you can transcend your spiritual energy limit by ten times to fire the Taiyi Lightning Railgun—but there is no need to detach the armored coach from the train! Even if you overdraft your spiritual energy, you will not necessarily die; however, if you detach yourself from the train, the armored coach will lose its driving force and you will be engulfed by the tide of Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes! You will die, you will certainly die!"

Ding Yin sighed and said:

"Student Li Yao, it's not that simple! In the absence of super-compressed crystal cells, the Taiyi Lightning Railgun is a powerful equipment which only Core Formation Stage cultivators can use with ease. We are just low-level cultivators. Even if we combust our own lives and crush our spirits, we would be barely able to operate the Taiyi Lightning Railgun. It is also impossible for us to accurately aim."

"It is like handing the Thunderfire Boltgun into the hands of a three-year-old child; even if he had the strength to pull the trigger, he would still not be able to hit a target outside the 100 meter range, am I right?"

"This—" Li Yao was tongue-tied.

Ding Yin slightly smiled and said:

"In this case, there is only one way that could allow us to hit the target."

"That is to let them approach! Let them come closer until the target is right next to us so that the muzzle is against their temple—no, not the temple but inside the target's mouth! So when we pull the trigger, the gun will blast off its head!"

"So we have no choice but to detach ourselves from the crystal train. While you move forward, we will enter the Ghost Face Silver Mosquito tide and fire the ball of lightning from within. Only in such a manner can we hit the target."

"We seven have all drawn our own estimation and finally came to the same conclusion. There is no other choice for us besides this."

"Student Li Yao, I'm sorry that I can not compare notes with you again. Finally, I want to tell you..."

"I actually don't know anything about the Nine Yin Mother Sword's technique of binding tenerbrum energy. It was the first time I have heard of such magical equipment, so in the waiting room, I simply pretended to go to the lavatory in order to hide from you. It was not my intention to hide anything from you. Hahaha, shameful, isn't it?"

Li Yao's lips quivered. There were thousands of things he wanted to say, but in the end, not a single word came out.

"Student Li Yao, this is goodbye. May you awaken your spiritual roots as soon as possible and become a cultivator—become a… true cultivator."

Ding Yin heaved a sigh as he slightly poked Li Yao with his finger. Li Yao suddenly turned limp and powerless, completely unable to move.

Ding Yin turned around and left. Examining the Taiyi Lightning Railgun, he repaired it one last time.

"Quickly leave! It's too dangerous here!"

Two soldiers forcibly carried Li Yao to Coach No.15.

"Woosh!" The door between the armored coach and Coach No.15 tightly shut.

Only now did Li Yao recover his strength. Struggling with all his might, he arrived before the gate and stuck his nose against the tempered glass as he looked at the other side of the window.

In the dark curtain of the night, the demon clan giant created by the Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes came closer and closer.

Again and again, it stretched out its devil claws and ruthlessly clawed at the defensive arrays of the crystal train.

Every time it collided with the defensive arrays, thousands upon thousands of streaks of lightning would burst forth.

The crystal train would shake left and right like a lone boat amidst a turbulent storm.

The frequency of the demon clan giant’s attack was getting higher and higher. In contrast, the electric brilliance released by the defensive arrays was getting bleaker by the attack.

After a stalemate of over ten minutes, a “Swoosh!” sound reverberated and strange ripples appeared in the air. It seemed as if something had disappeared.

The demon clan giant's devil claws unscrupulously clawed over.

The defensive arrays were destroyed completely!

At this moment, the only thing blocking the beast tide from the train filled with ordinary people was the coach which only had seven low-level cultivators inside.

Among which was only a single battle-type cultivator, and that was the red-eyed officer.

"Now!"

The red-eyed officer roared as he heavily hammered a fist onto the detaching array glyphs at the end of the armored coach that connected it with the rest of the train

"Squeak!" The armored coach hobbled as it separated from the crystal train.

The crystal train's speed soared to the limit, and like an arrow shot from a bow, galloped ahead at full speed.

And the armored coach was gradually slowing down.

In the eyes of Li Yao, the armored carriage turned into a deadly arrow that directly shot straight towards the demon clan giant like a lightning bolt.

In his ear rang thunderclaps-like roars of seven cultivators.

"Ladies and gentlemen, let's fight side by side!"

"In this moment, let's behead the demons and exterminate the devils!"

"Evil bastards, cultivators are here! Come here to die!"

In Li Yao's field of vision, the armored coach was getting smaller and smaller, much like a small boat engulfed by the frightful billows and terrible waves created by the Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes.

But in the next second, the Taiyi Lightning Gun’s roar reverberated as incomparably dazzling streaks of lightning that were akin to a giant dragon that had been in deep slumber within the sea jumped up, brandishing its claws and baring its fangs as it tore apart the demon clan giant right from the middle!

The demon clan giant let out ear-piercing, blood-curdling shrieks as if it was in great pain.

Countless Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes were electrocuted to ashes, while the rest of them stagnated for a while before they, once again, gathered together to form a giant.

Taking advantage of the moment while the giant stopped, the crystal train had galloped a dozen kilometer ahead.

The demon clan tried to catch up, but once again, a ball of lightning rose into the sky and ruthlessly exploded just above its head, confusing and disorienting it for a while as it repeatedly wailed.

Third time… Fourth time… Fifth time...

Every time the demon clan giant wanted to charge forward, it would be completely blocked by the giant net of lightning created by the explosion of the ball of lightning, rendering it unable to move.

Li Yao watched in a daze.

God knows after how long, some burning hot liquid trickled down his face.

He very well knew that with their cultivation, it was simply impossible for Ding Yin and the others to operate powerful magical equipment like the Taiyi Lightning Railgun, which fired balls of lightning that had the strength equivalent to an attack from a Core Formation Stage cultivator with all its strength.

They, in order to madly supply the spiritual energy, even damaged their meridians, overdrafted their lives, and using their flesh, blood, and soul as a price—forcibly fired the Taiyi Lightning Railgun!

Foundation Building Stage cultivators like Ding Yin and the red-eyed officer could only forcibly fire the Taiyi Lightning Railgun 3-5 times by completely burning their lives.

In contrast, Wei Qingqing and the others were only Refinement Stage cultivators, who were not even battle-type cultivators; their spiritual energy reserves were simply not enough.

Perhaps forcibly firing just one round of Taiyi Lightning Railgun was enough to make them burn their lives and crush their souls, causing them to fall on the spot.

They were all using their valuable lives to buy three minutes for a car full of ordinary people, who were also complete strangers to them.

And that was just because—they were cultivators!

TLN:

[1] Meaning rare.

Chapter 113: Drawing the Sword

Chapter 113: Drawing the Sword

Seventh time… Eighth time...

One after another, dozens of balls of lightning exploded in the sky and weaved a giant net of lightning which was comparable to natural lightning, tightly enclosing the demon clan giant formed from the Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes within.

Letting out a furious roar that shook the sky and the earth, with a casual wave of its hand, it tore apart the electric net in a short period of time.

For a long time, there was only complete silence amidst the beast tide; no ball of lightning exploded again, seemingly as if the seven cultivators had already fallen.

Suddenly—

A shining human silhouette flew over a hundred meter into the sky and proudly stood on top of the demon clan giant's head.

Wings that were about 20-30 meters spread out. These wings that were purely composed of intertwining light and flames constantly surged out from a tattoo on the back of the human silhouette.

It was the red-eyed officer!

The red-eyed officer's whole body was completely naked; from top to bottom, there was not a single piece of clothing on him; all the scars on his body were completely revealed. Forcibly carrying the few thousand pound Taiyi Lightning Railgun on his shoulder, he was like a god who bravely stood between the heaven and the earth with a body that was basking in the dazzling blue brilliance from the ball of lightning!

"Bastards, take a look!—This is what a 'cultivator' is!"

The red-eyed officer madly laughed. The streaks of lightning coiling around him turned brighter and brighter and became more and more turbulent before finally turning into a sun-like ball of blue aura as his entire body completely melted and violently blasted open!

This final explosion was fiercer than anything before, reducing the entire head of the demon clan giant along with its shoulders to ashes.

Only after a minute was the beast tide able to once again quickly gather to draw a human form; its vivid facial features revealed a sliver of fear and confusion.

Perhaps it could simulate a human-like form and could even simulate the wisdom akin to humans.

However, never would it be able to understand why these humans would charge forth to die without even showing a single trace of fear.

It possessed a terrifying computational power, and according to its estimations, these people were all the strongest humans on board the crystal train. As long as they let it feast upon the ordinary people, they would have a 90% chance to escape.

"Humans..."

The demon clan giant shook its head as it clumsily chased after the train.

Its claws were barely able to graze the coach at the end of the train, tearing off an iron sheet.

The passengers on board the train could even hear vague "buzz buzz" noises, as if a large group of mosquitoes was buzzing by their ears.

"Brother, go to Coach No.14!" the bearded fellow, "Company Commander Stone", said to Li Yao.

Li Yao had a terrible headache, and his pair eyes were in a daze. He subconsciously replied, "They—"

As Company Commander Stone swept a glance around, every soldier of the federation army who still had the strength to stand gathered by his side.

They were like a group of statues carved from stone who didn’t reveal a single trace of emotion on their visages and the emotion in their eyes had come to a halt. A short while following the reassurance of the veterans, even the young soldiers who were horrified and restless just a moment ago became bustling with bravery as their entire bodies became engulfed in a dense, bloody aura.

"We are regular soldiers, and you are a disabled veteran. We will form the second defense line, while you will form the third defense line!" Company Commander Stone said.

For a moment, Li Yao was surprised. Clenching his teeth, he nodded his head, and without a single word, walked towards Coach No.14.

His entire body was hot, and his brain felt as if it was burning with some kind of utterly mysterious power, one which was frantically bombarding his "Pineal Gland".

At this moment, he was intensely eager to become stronger—intensely eager to become a true cultivator!

In Coach No.14, all the wounded soldiers had been transferred to this location. The lightly wounded soldiers quietly wiped their firearms and checked their ammunition as they formed the third defense line.

The heavily wounded soldiers lying on the ground were clenching their teeth, trying their best not to groan.

They truly could not endure. At this moment, they began to hum the song of the federation army in an impassioned tone.

"Give me a gun," Li Yao said to a lightly wounded soldier.

The other party took a glance at him in surprise. Then, his lips pursed into a smile as he threw a Thunderfire Boltgun to him.

"Kacha Kacha!"

Li Yao strenuously started loading the boltgun, as if the burning spirit in his brain was going to be fired from the barrel instead of the bullets.

In Coach No.15, Company Commander Stone raised the Thunderfire Boltgun, and pressing the self-destruction spirit glyph on the gun, he loudly shouted, "Soldiers, destroy your guns completely!"

"Snap! Snap!"

Dozens of Thunderfire Boltgun heavily fell on the ground before they split into pieces, turning into pieces of scrap.

"Draw your Chainswords!"

Dozens of Chainswords glistening in cold luster that were firmly held by dozens of blood-seething federation soldiers were raised into the sky as they interleaved into a steel jungle, from which an aura of slaughter emanated.

In accordance with the army regulations, when heavily surrounded by the enemy, where the enemy was stronger than you, and in the case when you had no routes of escape, the federation soldiers should first destroy their firearms, and then use their Chainswords as they engage in close combat with the enemy!

"Bighead Sun, when I count to three, activate the detaching array glyphs and detach Coach No.15 from the crystal train. We are going to slaughter these filthy swines together! Do you understand!?" Company Commander Stone shouted in a loud voice.

A young soldier with a rather large head smilingly agreed as he rolled up his sleeves in preparation for battle and said, "No problem! This father has been a train soldier for two years, yet I still haven’t had the opportunity to touch a single hair on a demon beast. Today, I can finally have some fun!"

Dozens of soldiers burst into laughter together: "Alright! Today, let's touch the hair on these bastards!"

"One!"

Company Commander Stone, with wide-opened eyes, roared.

"Come on, bastards! Try this father's Chainsword!" the soldiers roared together.

"Two!"

Company Commander Sun looked at Bighead Sun.

Bighead Sun, gritting his teeth, came before the detaching array glyphs and clenched his fists to the point that his fingernails had drawn blood.

"Just wait and watch, you filthy swines! Our cultivators will soon arrive and send you all to the netherworld where this father will be waiting for you. Just wait and watch, you will die again and again a hundred times..." The soldiers unscrupulously started laughing frantically.

"Three—"

Company Commander Stone shouted at the top of his lungs, yet he was unable to hear his own voice.

The same was true for Bighead Sun as well as for every other soldier. They all raised their heads in utter surprise.

A few kilometers above their head, an object moving at high-speeds zipped its way here and broke the sound barrier, creating a deafening, loud sonic boom

Li Yao clung to the window with wide-opened eyes, which had become so big that they were even bigger than the eyes of a bull, and looked at the dazzling ball of light that flew over from far away as it broke the sound barrier, subsequently creating a large mass of white mist that undulated behind him, creating round after round of huge ripples.

The ball of light directly arrived before the demon clan giant and came to a halt, revealing its true figure.

It was a cultivator who was wearing white crystal armor!

"It's the Mountain Sea Sect's cultivator!" several soldiers cried out in excitement.

The Mountain Sea Sect was a third-tier sect with mediocre strength in the Demon Beast Wasteland; its overall strength was not even in the top hundred of the federation, and it did not even have a single Core Formation Stage cultivator.

This cultivator was at most in the Building Foundation Stage. Even if he had the support of the crystal armor, it was absolutely impossible for him to unleash a battle force that could transcend a Core Formation Stage cultivator's.

And what he was facing was an overwhelming beast tide, one which had also produced a demon clan with wisdom. Even for a Core Formation Stage cultivator, facing such a powerful existence would cause a feeling of trepidation!

Before the tsunami-like beast tide, the silhouette of the Mountain Sea Sect's cultivator appeared to be especially insignificant.

He was like a firefly flying towards the night sky who, in the blink of an eye, would be engulfed by darkness.

This tiny "firefly" did not even hesitate for half a second and drew a long metal stick from his back. As he shook it lightly, from the both ends of the long stick poured out radiating flames that spanned a dozen meters, congealing into two mighty Anti-Ship Swords of Flames.

An Anti-Ship Sword was a terrifying magical equipment that could even cut a crystal battleship in two.

The brilliance wreathing around the "firefly", in the blink of an eye, escalated by ten times, giving the Mountain Sea Sect's cultivator the appearance of a dozen meter tall giant.

The Mountain Sea Sect's cultivator brandishing the Anti-Ship Swords of Flames, without any care for life, charged into the beast tide!

"Chi Chi Chi Chi Chi Chi Chi Chi!"

Like a red-hot knife fiercely cutting through tofu, the Mountain Sea Sect's cultivator directly chopped off the demon clan giant's arm and then opened a transparent hole from its front to the back of its stomach.

The demon clan giant itself was made up of hundreds of millions of Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes. Even if one were to kill some Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes, it would simply not cause any damage to it.

The demon clan giant flew into a rage out of humiliation. It simply no longer took the form of a human and instead transformed into a few kilometer long giant python that opened its huge mouth and swallowed the Mountain Sea Sect's cultivator.

"Boom!"

The giant python's head exploded as seven to eight streaks of light erupted from within. Its entire head, in the blink of an eye, collapsed as the flames wreathing around the Mountain Sea Sect's cultivator flared like that of a ball of heavenly flames illuminating the entire land.

From inside the ruptured giant python's "neck" came a "Buzzing" noise as countless Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes charged out from its body and once again formed a head, which then swallowed the Mountain Sea Sect's cultivator for the second time.

The Mountain Sea Sect's cultivator went all out and ignited flames madly, crushing the giant python's head once again.

A third time… A fourth time...

The flames from the Mountain Sea Sect's cultivator grew weaker and weaker by the attack, and his movement also became slower and slower. The awe-inspiring white crystal armor was stained with demonic blood of countless Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes, which constantly corroded the crystal armor as bubbles filled with gray demonic energy emerged one by one on the armor.

Finally—

When the Mountain Sea Sect's cultivator had ruptured the giant python's head for the sixth time, the flames of his Anti-Ship Swords had been completely extinguished.

His body was densely laden with marks of having been stung by the Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes.

The Mountain Sea Sect's cultivator was hanging by a thread; he was shaky and unsteady. The brilliance around his body was dim like a candle in the wind that would be extinguished at any moment.

Yet, he refused to give up. He still tried to block the beast tide from approaching the crystal train. Again and again, he tried igniting the spirit fire, tried to release the Anti-Ship Swords of Flames, yet he failed again and again.

The Ghost Fire Silver Mosquitoes squirmed, and for the seventh time, gathered to create a giant python that could swallow the heaven and the earth. Raising its neck, its head fiercely charged towards the Mountain Sea Sect's cultivator like a javelin that had been thrown.

The Mountain Sea Sect's cultivator gave up on the Anti-Ship Swords of flames and furiously brandished his fists.

Inside the crystal train, Li Yao clenched his fists together with him.

He clenched so tightly that the bones were about to burst out from beneath his skin!

"Boom!"

Just as the giant python was about to swallow the Mountain Sea Sect's cultivator, from in between the clouds suddenly came a thunderous boom that was akin to the eruption of a volcano!

Almost at the same moment, the head of the giant python turned crimson and vehemently burst open, transforming into countless masses of hot lava that splashed in all directions and quickly spread.

The lava seemed to possess spiritual fire that had life; no matter how the Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes fled, it continued jumping, splattering, and spreading and soon weaved a giant net of fire. The giant python was tightly ensnared inside the inexhaustible flames.

"True Samadhi Fire! It's the True Samadhi Fire!" Li Yao was extremely excited, and together with all the soldiers, roared like a wild animal.

Finally, reinforcements had arrived.

Chapter 114: Volcanic Eruption

Chapter 114: Volcanic Eruption

After a moment, a violent roar reverberated above Li Yao’s head as a chill gradually descended, suppressing everything around it.

It was as though a towering, giant mountain was flying above the crystal train, suppressing every living being between the heaven and earth in a 50 kilometer radius.

Li Yao, who was glued to the window to the point that his nose was almost squeezed flat, looked at the sky with wide-open eyes.

And in the sky, he saw hundreds of meter long crystal battleship passing over the crystal train with irresistible momentum as it rolled towards the beast tide.

From the colorful ripples that overflowed from the anti-gravity array glyphs under the battleship, Li Yao suddenly recognized the battleship:

"It's the Federation Army's 'Dragonslayer-class', mid-size destroyer that is specially designed to suppress beast tide outbreaks! Its front deck is equipped with a triple barrel 'Primeval True Fire Cannon[1]' whose three barrels could respectively imitate the three basic energies—'Essence ', 'Energy ', and 'Soul ' [2]. When the three barrels are simultaneously activated, the terrifying True Samadhi Fire would be shot out. The True Samadi Fire could use the corpses of demon beasts as fuel to continuously proliferate and spread—it would only be extinguished after completely burning the beast tide!"

"Whiz! Whiz! Whiz!"

Dozens of battle shuttles flew out from the crystal battleships, giving off the impression as if several dozen giant flying swords were cruising around the beast tide.

Once a Ghost Face Mosquito trying to flee the range of the True Samadhi Fire was found, the shuttles would swarm over and relentlessly pressure the Ghost Face Mosquito to fly back.

The Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes, who were all high and mighty as if nothing in the world could stop them a moment ago, had now turned pretty miserable. The Giant Python had completely collapsed into thin and long "earthworms" that were contorting and wailing as they struggled inside the flames.

At the same time, the red-as-blood, fiendish eye in the sky had also, god knows when, silently closed, returning the world to its previous picturesque appearance and painting a beautiful night sky where the bright, round moon struggled to reveal its brilliant and beautiful figure from within the clouds.

The wormhole between the Heaven Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector had completely closed.

"We won!"

Li Yao closed his eyes; his eyes were extremely sore.

Something burning hot began to appear at the rim of his eyes, as if it was lava that had been suppressed for far too long and was about to erupt with nothing being able to stop it.

Only now did he open his palm, revealing the four holes dripping with blood on his palm as the bones of fingers made “Crack Crack” sounds like rusty gears.

"Of course, we will win!"

A heavily injured soldier who had lost both legs from the thigh and had barely stopped his bleeding with the assistance of spirit glyphs had his lips parted as he said with a smile spread across his face, "We are the strongest battle race in the endless space, so how could a few tiny mosquitoes be our opponent?"

...

After three hours, the crystal train came to a halt at a nameless, abandoned station in the Wasteland that was tightly surrounded by hundreds of temporary-built barracks.

Thousand of soldiers carrying Boltguns encircled the crystal train so tightly that not even a fly could pass through.

While the "Dragonslayer-class" crystal battleship floated above the crystal train, several dozen cultivators continued to circle around the crystal battleship so meticulously that it was as though they were about to confront a great enemy.

It was a routine inspection after each beast tide outbreak.

It was all because there were precedents where some powerful, high-ranked demons with profound wisdom had quietly sneaked into the Heaven Origin Sector using the beast tide outbreak by disguising themselves as humans, causing a great deal of damage.

After suffering a few losses, the federation had become extremely responsive to the beast tide outbreak. The federation had even started using a set of rigorous inspection procedures, due to which the demon clan had never been able to find another opportunity to sneak into the Heaven Origin Sector.

However, all of this could not be clearly explained to the passengers.

Naturally, it was impossible to completely hide the earthshaking battle, so the ordinary passengers were formally informed that when the crystal train was about to leave the Thunderstorm Zone, they had encountered an attack from a small group of demon beasts that were very quickly thwarted by the train soldiers.

However, the crystal train had also suffered serious damage and needed to stop to undergo a thorough maintenance. Only then would it be possible to continue the journey.

Perhaps one day, the secret files would be declassified and everything would come to light.

The passengers would then come to know that there were seven cultivators who had traded their valuable lives for glittering thunderstorms to buy them three minutes.

The passengers would then come to know that there were some young and immature federation soldiers who, in order to buy even one more second, had destroyed their Boltguns and raised their Chainswords in preparations to charge into the terrifying beast tide.

The passenger would then come to know that there was a low-level cultivator from the Mountain Sea Sect cruising nearby who immediately rushed over without regards for his life upon hearing their distress signal and faced the turbulent waves of Ghost Face Mosquitoes as he hoisted the Anti-Ship Swords of Flames.

But at this hour and at this moment—they were completely oblivious to everything.

Inside the temporary tents, some of the passengers were rather indignant and were constantly complaining.

"Wasn't it just a small scuffle with demon beasts? How come it had drawn such a big scene? Who knows how long it will take!"

And their loved ones, those weak and frail seniors, the mothers embracing their babies... were already drifting to sleep under the protection of the federation army and the cultivators.

Whereas, inside a few white tents nearby, surgical operations were being intensely carried out as a dozen young and immature soldiers, who were about the same age as Li Yao, had some of their limbs removed and replaced with spiritual prosthetics, becoming a “Federation Disabled Serviceman”.

And despite being completely blind to what the brutal future had in store for them, these soldiers were, nevertheless, glowing with a calm smile.

In contrast, Li Yao was curled up in a corner of a platform in the station as he looked at the passengers and the federation army with an extremely confused expression in his eyes.

Although not the slightest bit of change could be found on his exterior, his brain had already been burning for three hours. Currently, it was as if he was only a curled up shell, while his spirit was still immersed in those soul-stirring three minutes…

Where seven cultivators had come forward and took the armored coach into the beast tide!

Where the red-eyed officer with a half-naked body and wings of light spread across his back carried the Taiyi Lightning Railgun on his shoulder and transformed into a ball of lightning that tore away the heaven and the earth!

Where the soldiers from the federation army had destroyed their Thunderfire Boltguns, hoisted their Chainsword, and emitted a final battle cry with soaring murderous aura!

Where the Mountain Sea Sect's cultivator had brandished the Anti-Ship Swords of Flames with indomitable will and charged forward towards the demon clan giant at full speed!

Blood seething scenes, one by one, like bright stars, constantly flashed in the depths of Li Yao's mind.

Whereas, tsunami-like roars resounded in his ears:

"Ladies and gentlemen, let's fight side by side!"

"Evil bastards, cultivators are here! Come here to die!"

These scenes… these roars… had congealed into an inexplicable wave that fiercely attacked the depths of his brain, so much that his mouth became parched and his tongue felt scorched, his breathing became erratic, his heart rate had accelerated to ten times than the usual, and his "Pineal Gland" was aching in pain to the point that he had an urge to use the Black Wing Sword to split open the top of his head.

"Ah..."

Li Yao could not help but let out a roar as he involuntarily clenched his fists tightly. All the muscles in his body started contracting, and each of his bones made "Crack Crack" noises as if they were about to pierce his skin and come out!

"What's going on? My brain seems to be frantically secreting an unknown hormone which is making my internal organs, each strand of my muscles, every blood vessel, and even every cell operate in madness! The frequency of their movements is getting faster and faster—I might not be able to hold on any longer!"

"I-is this—"

Li Yao clenched his teeth, line after line of bulging blue veins as thick as earthworms appeared as power frantically surged into his veins like a torrential tide, cleaning his body round after round!

"Brother Tao, I didn't expect you to be so formidable. You have actually repaired the Taiyi Lightning Railgun at the critical moment, allowing the soldiers to repulse the demon beasts' attack and save the entire train!"

Just as Li Yao’s spirit was burning and his blood was boiling, a sharp and clear female voice suddenly floated into his ear.

"Taiyi Lightning Railgun"—these three words had taken Li Yao by surprise for a moment. He narrowed his eyes to look towards the source of the sound.

It was Jiang Tao and Gu Lili.

Jiang Tao slightly smiled. Just as he was about to speak, he suddenly noticed the nearby Li Yao as a sliver of embarrassment appeared on his face. After a bit of thinking, he walked towards Li Yao in large strides.

"Brother, I could have never imagined that even though you have such an ordinary appearance, you would have such quick hand speed and would even be able to repair the Thunderfire Boltgun. Sure enough, a still tongue makes a wise head[3]. I am Jiang Tao from the Jiang Family. Let's be friends!"

Jiang Tao extended his hand towards Li Yao with a smile.

Although Jiang Tao was a descendant of the Jiang Family, he was from a branch family. Since there were many competitors in the family, he had limited resources in his hands.

Whereas, even though Gu Lili was not a cultivator, her father was a local tyrant who owned several crystal mines. Once their relationship was completely fixed, Gu Lili's family would provide him with massive amounts of resources to help him cultivate.

Therefore, Jiang Tao was pursuing Gu Lili with everything he had.

When it was time to "step forward", he only did so in order to show off his heroic spirit in front of Gu Lili, but little did he expect that it was the beast tide outbreak they had encountered, one which almost caused him to pee his pants.

And as luck would have it, Gu Lili didn't know the truth and it was impossible for the army to declassify everything in such a short period of time, so in order to brag about himself in front of his girlfriend, Jiang Tao had shoved everything that Li Yao had done unto himself.

But he had never imagined that he would encounter the person who had truly done it at such a timely moment; his bragging was almost exposed.

"After all, as a cultivator, to get cold feet is certainly nothing glorious. Perhaps several competitors in the family would even hype it up without restraint, which would certainly ruin my reputation."

"The train soldiers are insignificant, but this hick is going to be a little troublesome. Although he may be rustic, he is still a new student of the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department and is, after all, a student of the Nine Elite Universities. Not to mention that his hand speed is so quick, one would never know when he could soar to the top and become an influential figure."

"For such a person, it would be better to become friends before he gains fame. Once we are friends, everything will naturally be settled!"

Usually, Jiang Tao would flaunt a little, but he was, after all, still a descendant of a big family, thus he was not too stupid. After analyzing the gains and losses clearly, he immediately thought of becoming friends with Li Yao.

But, Li Yao's mind was in chaos; it was as if a volcano was about to erupt. His seven emotions and six desires[4] were heightened to the extreme, as such he simply could not control himself.

Before the brain had issued any command, four words, like flying swords, shot out like lightning from the depths of his throat:

"Get the hell out!"

Jiang Tao's complexion changed. Not so long ago, on the crystal train, the seven cultivators had a contemptuous look in their eyes towards him, as they had regarded him as a deserter, which already brought him extreme shame and anger.

He had never thought that even an ordinary person would dare to yell at him.

Glancing around, he discovered many soldiers patrolling. Forcing back his anger, Jiang Tao pulled out a blank gold transfer card from his bosom and handed it over.

"We are both learning to refine, so why do you keep people away? From the way you dress, your family should be a commoner family. Otherwise, you would not have ended up in the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department. However, learning to refine requires a great deal of money. If you want to rise above the others, you need to take private lessons on top of the normal studies. This card has 200,000 bucks. Take it and spend it as you wish. Think of it as me supporting a junior. Hahaha."

Jiang Tao stuffed the gold transfer card into Li Yao's bosom and moved closer to his ear as he spoke in a suppressed voice, "But you can not talk about what happened on the train. ‘Misfortune comes from the mouth’—as a student of the Nine Elite Universities, you should know what these four words mean, right?"

TLN:

[1] True Fire - The fire that can be produced by the cultivator himself using his internal core or qi/energy.

[2] The three essential energies are the basic energies required to sustain human life. They are also known as Jing Qi Shen or three treasures.

- Jing - The basic essence which is related to the physical aspect of the body.

- Qi - The energy or breath which propels the body. It is what moves the body.

- Shen - Soul, spirit, mind - the spiritual or psychic aspect of the body. In other words, the command center of the body.

[3] A person who is wise does not speak much.

[4] Seven Emotions - pleasure, anger, sorrow, joy, love, hate, and desire. Six Desires - The desires associated with the six sensory organs (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind)—lust, vanity, dignity, pleasant sounds, good life/death, and sensual pleasures.

Chapter 115: New World

Chapter 115: New World

His voice had yet to dissipate, yet Jing Tao could already feel a vigorous force surging towards his stomach. To his dismay, Li Yao had pushed him 3-4 steps away and had also tossed the gold transfer card at his face.

Li Yao's eye had turned blood-red as a mysterious power started gushing from the depths of his bone marrow, causing him to give birth to an unstoppable feeling and an urge to fire his burning fist towards Jiang Tao's mouth.

Jiang Tao was stunned. Not even in his dream would he have imagined that some hick would actually not only not give him face but also even dare to shove him.

And, to his disbelief—he had even been pushed away!

The awakening of the spiritual root was the most mysterious phenomena in the world of cultivation. The state of awakening one’s spiritual root differed from cultivator to cultivator. For instance, Jiang Tao, who was a pure creation-type cultivator, simply didn't have such a painful reaction when his spiritual root had awakened.

Even in his dreams, he would not have imagined that Li Yao was on the verge of awakening his spiritual root.

And as long as he got a little more stimulus, even a tiny bit of stimulus, he would then be—

Jiang Tao burst into anger. In a single step, he arrived before Li Yao and grabbed onto his collar as he spoke through clenched teeth:

"I was kind enough to befriend you, yet you actually dare to humiliate me like this! I was being considerate, and yet you failed to appreciate my kindness!"

"Why? Do you think that those seven 'idiots' are heroes and I am coward? Is that what you think? Aren't I alive, while those seven 'idiots' are dead? I can keep on living and live a happy life, while not even dregs are left of those seven 'idiots'!"

"I-D-I-O-T-S?"

From the depths of Li Yao’s eyes, flickering flames appeared one after the other.

Jiang Tao grinned hideously:

"They were all powerful cultivators, and yet for some ordinary people, they chose to die. If they aren't idiots, then what are they?"

"Let me tell you this—you are a stupid brat. We are in the Wasteland, where the number of cultivators is way more than in the inland. There were at least ten cultivators on the train who, like me, had made the wisest choice."

"Are we really cowards? Of course not! We were retaining our strength, biding our time. For a gentleman to take revenge, waiting ten years is not too late!"

"But only those seven idiots stepped forward and clashed head-on with the beast tide!"

"'The blood of strong must flow for the week'? Hahaha, what era do you think we are living in!? Such nonsense is simply laughable!"

"In short, you better listen to me. I am a 3rd level Refinement Stage cultivator and a descendant of the Jiang Family. My strength is beyond your imagination. So long as you dare to speak half a word, I, like stomping an ant to death, will crush-a-hick-like-you-to-death, do-you-hear-me?"

No.

Li Yao didn't hear anything.

The only thing he heard at the moment was a deep rumbling akin to a taut string snapping echoing in his ears. Deep within his brain, something had ruthlessly snapped.

"Ding!"

As if a shackle that had been restraining his soul had been smashed to pieces, as if a dam that had been stopping the flood had completely collapsed… strength surged forth like a tsunami from the deepest parts of his brain, thereby increasing the size of his pineal gland by a couple dozen times before blasting out through his glabella.

A blood-red flame soared to the sky!

In the blink of an eye, everything before Li Yao was blood-red; it was as though the whole world had been dyed red as rumbling resembling the howling of the wind and the seas resounded in his ear. It was as though millions upon millions of crystals had burst at the same time, blasting him into a marvelous new world!

Li Yao had completely lost the ability to think. His hungry and thirsty, iron-like fist turned into a roaring, ferocious beast and bolted out before his brain had even issued any command.

"Crack!"

A sound akin to a watermelon bursting apart was followed by a blood-curdling shriek.

As if a horn to commence the battle had resounded through the sky, making Li Yao’s blood, to the very last drop, boil.

His other fist similarly turned into a ferocious beast; involuntarily tightly clenching, the fist was raised to his chest and pulled out before punching ahead!

What he did next, he had no idea…

...

God knows how long after did Li Yao finally fiercely open his eyes. His mind was completely blank, and soon, he discovered that he was inside a small medical tent.

Half of his body was immersed in a light green medical solution, which made him feel very comfortable at the places where it was in contact.

However, his entire body, from head to toe, was in incomparable pain; it was as if a crystal train had rolled over him back and forth a dozen times.

But what made him most surprised was...

"Color? So many colors?"

Blinking his eyes, Li Yao looked all around in confusion.

He discovered that the whole world was completely different from before. It was incredibly resplendent and brimming with colors. There were even a few hundred colors which he could not name.

Moreover, many tiny, gorgeous specks of light of many colors were also floating in the air.

This kind of strange state could not describe in words.

It was like someone who was color-blind since birth and only knew two colors—black and white—in his life had suddenly gained the vision of a normal person. If the kind of incomparable shock that he got when crimson, orange, red, green, azure, blue, purple... gorgeous lights of countless color entered his retina was again multiplied by a hundred times—that would be precisely what Li Yao was feeling at this moment!

Furthermore, Li Yao discovered that not only was the brilliance radiated by every object in the surroundings incredibly resplendent, even his own body was emitting faint, rainbow-like radiance round after round.

On his forehead, just a bit above his glabella was three thin and long "spirit threads" that were lightly swaying along with his breathing.

When a few tiny specks of light gradually floated over, the "spirit threads" would suddenly reach out and fiercely suck in the specks of light.

As if a long snake was swallowing an egg, the specks of light would be sucked into his brain through the spirit thread, and via the pineal gland, it would be converted into a very pure energy which would then be absorbed into every part of his body, causing his entire body to feel calm and comfortable; it was extremely pleasant.

"What is this?"

Li Yao reached out to grab the spirit threads, but his palm instead directly passed through them. He simply didn't feel anything.

Even when he rubbed his glabella, he didn't feel anything strange.

His soul, on the other hand, could clearly feel it. There was a new organ in his neural field; an organ that had evolved from his pineal gland, and this very organ was controlling these spirit threads.

With a move of his telepathic thought, these spirit threads started dancing and very soon swallowed a few dozen specks of light before completely sucking them into his neural field, thereby nourishing his soul and body.

The specks of light, upon seeing this, escaped in succession. The speed at which these specks floated became much faster, much like frightened planktons in the ocean.

"If I can produce some more and grow them a bit longer, it would be a lot better!" Li Yao thought.

Just as this thought appeared in his mind, his brain started aching as strength stored in his soul, in a steady stream, infused into the new organ evolved from the pineal gland.

Not only had the three spirit thread grown a little longer, a slightly shorter fourth spirit thread had also been formed. Furthermore, the movement speed of the spirit threads had also increased by a lot.

Soon after, over a hundred specks of light were captured.

"So formidable! If I could grow over a hundred spirit threads at once, wouldn't I be able to sweep all the specks of light floating in the air?"

Li Yao became extremely excited.

But this time, the new organ evolved from the pineal gland didn't respond to his call; on the contrary, from the depths of his neural field came a faint warning, waking him in the blink of an eye.

This request was far beyond his capabilities. Unless he was willing to overdraft his life, it was impossible to achieve it in a short period of time.

"It seems that the growth of the spirit thread is limited. I must, step by step, grow slowly. This is not something that can be achieved overnight."

From the medical treatment pod, Li Yao somehow sat up and curiously observed the strange new world.

He discovered that even if he closed both eyes, he was still able to perceive this incomparably new gorgeous world. Furthermore, it became even more clear and vivid.

"Is it possible that this new organ evolved from the pineal gland can directly perceive the world?"

Right away, Li Yao used both his hands to cover his eyes as he gathered his telepathic thoughts in his forehead and scanned his surroundings.

"Well?"

Li Yao quickly discovered that there was another medical treatment pod just opposite to him and laid inside was a wounded man.

The "radiance" emitting from this person's body was a hundred times stronger than his!

The radiance around Li Yao's body was still not firm; it was like a flickering flame swaying in the wind, weaving in and out, giving off a feeling that it might be extinguished at any moment.

But the radiance around this person was like water in a stream that was flowing slowly. The radiance had formed a sparkling armor which tightly covered his entire body.

Furthermore—

There were only four spirit threads on Li Yao's forehead, and he relied on the movement of these spirit threads to swallow the floating specks of light.

But the spirit threads on that man's forehead were not only numerous but were thick as well. Furthermore, they had also interwoven together to form a huge vortex that was producing a powerful suction force, allowing him to inhale countless floating specks of light.

It was as easy as blowing off dust! It was a hundredfold more efficient than that of Li Yao.

"The structure of this spirit thread vortex is really mysterious!"

Li Yao secretly praised. Just as Li Yao carefully tried to take a closer look, a dazzling beam of light suddenly shot over from the wounded man's body, causing Li Yao’s brain to feel a prickling pain.

When he looked again, the wounded man was covered in a black sheet, rendering Li Yao to be unable to see any of his spirit aura.

"Little Brother, casually spying on someone else's cultivation law is the biggest taboo in the world of cultivation. As you had just become a cultivator, this father will not haggle with you, but keep in mind that outside, you can not stealthily inspect other cultivators like this."

A coarse voice said with a laugh.

Li Yao was surprised for a moment and opened his eyes to look. In the opposite medical treatment pod sat an ugly man who was as tall as a bull and as robust as a horse. The man had a beard that was stiff and straight, as if swords had been hoisted from his face.

Li Yao flushed red in embarrassment. Just as he wanted to apologize, a word from the other guy's mouth had made him surprised for a moment before he became wild with joy as he jumped out of the medical treatment pod.

"Cultivator? Right, right, my pineal gland has evolved into a spiritual root! My spiritual root has awakened—I am a cultivator!"

Li Yao yelled. As he waved his right fist, a series of water-like ripples appeared in the air, spreading and propagating for a long time.

For three months, he had been wandering all over the country, yet from the beginning to the end, he couldn't find an opportunity to break through. Never in his imagination would he have thought that on the northbound train, watching the magnanimous sacrifice of Ding Yin and the other seniors, such a bloody scene, as well as being angered by Jiang Tao would cause his blood vessels to expand, his soul to be set ablaze, and his spirit root to be awakened!

From this moment onwards, he was no longer an ordinary person and he was no longer weak.

After encountering last night’s soul-stirring scene, he would no longer need someone else's protection.

Now, it would be possible for him to fight shoulder to shoulder to the bitter end together with Ding Yin, Wei Qingqing, and the red-eyed officer.

The robust man watched Li Yao with a grin. Only after Li Yao had calmed down a bit did he slowly say, "I am Guan Xiong, a Building Foundation Stage cultivator from the Mountain Sea Sect. In the Wasteland, everyone calls me 'Mountain Sea Guan Xiong'!"

"Mountain Sea Sect, Guan Xiong?"

Li Yao immediately remembered that after the sacrifice of the seven cultivators, a cultivator who was not far away had come over quickly. With his own strength, he had blocked the beast tide, preventing it from reaching the crystal train. He was the cultivator who had bravely charged straight to the demon clan giant while waving the Anti-Ship Swords of Flames.

This rough man with a stiff beard in front of him was none other than—Mountain Sea Guan Xiong!

"Brother Xiong, you didn't die? Awesome!" Li Yao was happy from the bottom of his heart. This was truly an unexpected yet pleasant surprise.

Chapter 116: The Bottom Line of Civilization

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Guan Xiong burst into laughter as did his beard, which moved along with his jaw: "If a bunch of tiny little pests wants to swallow this father, then they would have to first go back and cultivate for another 180 years! However, my cultivation did tumble down from high-level Building Foundation Stage to the intermediate-level, but as long as I cultivate for 3-5 years, I will be like a dragon again!"

Upon hearing this, Li Yao heart sunk.

The road of cultivation was full of risks and hardships. Every advancement was extremely difficult and needed a tremendous amount of hard work, resources, luck, opportunities... and not a single one could be omitted.

Many cultivators, after reaching a certain level, would stagnate for the rest of their life and would be unable to advance even half a step.

Although Guan Xiong said it lightly, Li Yao was well aware that it would not be easy to again return to the high-level Building Foundation Stage from the intermediate-level.

Let alone 3-5 years, if he was out of luck, it could take up to 10-20 years. If he was truly unlucky, it was quite possible that he should forget about ever cultivating back to the same level for the rest of his life.

Even after suffering such a heavy blow, Guan Xiong's complexion still did not show anything; he was talking lively and jovial. He was truly worthy of being called a powerful expert of the Wasteland!

Having realized this, Li Yao nodded his head and said with a laugh, "Alright, the scene of Brother Xiong indomitably clashing with the beast tide is still being played in my mind. Brother Xiong is so awesome that let alone just falling by one level, even if Brother Xiong had fallen to the 1st level of the Refinement Stage, you would still be able to cultivate back to the previous level just like before!"

"Kid, well said! This father likes you!"

God knows from where Guan Xiong took out a bottle of alcohol before chugging down half the bottle with a “glug glug glug glug” sound.

As the drops of alcohol trickled down his beard and fell into the medical treatment solution, a "Chi Chi" sizzling noise was accompanied with rising bubbles, but he did not care and continued chugging down the alcohol.

Li Yao crawled his way out of the medical treatment pod. Once he stood on the ground, he started moving hands and feet, testing his new body after he had become a cultivator.

Then, he realized there was something not quite right. Why was his entire body aching? Why was his right eye swollen?

A small mirror so happened to be placed next to the bed. Taking a look, he discovered that he was black and blue all over, and his head was swollen like a pig’s.

Furthermore, bandages were wrapped around his body, and there were also faint traces of blood seeping through.

"Is this a side effect of awakening the spiritual root?"

Li Yao was quite puzzled. He had never heard that your head would become like a pig's after the spiritual root had awakened.

Guan Xiong let out a burp: "Don't you remember? You were beaten by someone called Jiang Tao."

"What?"

Li Yao clenched his teeth. "This is simply bullying others too much. Does being a descendant of some Jiang Family give you the right to casually hit anyone in public?"

Guan Xiong was rendered speechless. Blinking his eyes in astonishment, he stared at Li Yao with an extremely strange look in his eyes.

Li Yao felt jittery from his gaze as he touched his forehead; he felt that he seemed to have missed a crucial detail. He perturbedly asked, "Brother Xiong, am I mistaken?"

Guan Xiong mischievously grinned as he started the mini-crystal process, projecting a 3D photo.

In the photo impressively appeared a strange, badly mutilated beast, as though a monkey who had been skinned was lying on the ground. It was already more dead than alive, defecating and urinating; hanging by a breath.

Li Yao jumped in scare: "What kind of demon beast is this? It is too ugly! Just one glance is enough to make people sick for a long time. Brother Xiong, what are you trying to tell me?"

Guan Xiong replied, "This is not any demon beast. This is Jiang Tao."

Li Yao was stunned, "Jiang Tao? How could it be him..."

"How can you say that? He was beaten by none other than you!"

"Me?"

Li Yao was rendered speechless. After being stunned for a while, he vaguely seemed to remember that he had acted first and the Jiang Family's young master was just acting in self-defense. Furthermore, just after two rounds of defense, he was unable to fight back and was trampled like a three-year-old child.

Guan Xiong clucked his tongue:

"Kid, you are truly fierce. You have just advanced to the 1st level of the Refinement Stage, yet you can already beat a 3rd level Refinement Stage cultivator so much that he had peed his pants. There isn’t even a sliver of a shadow of the former human figure. He is still lying in the ICU! Look at yourself, you could be considered better off. I had not expected that you would start off so crazily, so violently!"

Li Yao's pursed his lips as he lightly gripped his fists.

He finally came to remember that his first punch fiercely had landed on Jiang Tao's face, smashing his nose completely into his face.

The refreshing feeling of breaking bones and splattering blood was truly wonderful.

Guan Xiong laughed and said:

"Kid, you were too impulsive! You should not have beaten a descendant of the Jiang Family like this. It is too late to regret now."

"Regret?"

Bit by bit, Li Yao slowly recalled the whole thing as well as the words spoken by Jiang Tao.

The hesitation and confusion on his face slowly disappeared, and what replaced it was an indomitable look.

"Brother Xiong, you are wrong. The matter of beating Jiang Tao... I didn't act on impulse, and I am also not regretting it."

"Oh?" Guan Xiong raised his eyebrows like drawing two sabers.

Li Yao clenched his fists and stretched it out before him. Feeling the spiritual energy surging through his meridians, the swelling of muscles, and the pleasant burning feeling on his fists, he said word by word:

"Whether it is Ding Yin and the others, those seven cultivators, or Brother Xiong, even after you clearly knew that you would die, you, in order to save a train full of passengers, still continued to charge forwards, fighting till the bloody end. You are all heroes, and even more so, you are also my, Li Yao's, saviors!"

"Now, when someone is cursing my saviors as 'idiots' in front of me, how could I swallow my anger and dare to say nothing? Isn't that no different than a turtle retracting its head in fear?"

"If I don't smash his nose, if I don't make him pee his pants from a beating, how could I call myself a man? How could I call myself a cultivator!?"

"If Jiang Tao wants to take revenge, then he is welcome to try anytime. I grew up in the magical equipment graveyard, so there are not just one or two people who want me dead. When I was seven years old, I was surrounded by a dozen or so robust men with blades, but I am still alive and kicking!"

Li Yao's eyes flickered with a sliver of ferociousness as he laughed and said:

"Originally, I was thinking of using the moniker ‘Fiend Star’ to roam the Wasteland, but if Jiang Tao truly wants to have this little life of mine, I do not mind letting the cruelty and the ferociousness of the 'Vulture' resound throughout the Wasteland!"

Guan Xiong was moved. He gave a smack to the medical treatment pod, which left a distinct imprint of his palm behind on its metal shell, as he yelled, "Alright kid, you are truly a man! From now on, you, my friend, are definitely a friend of this old man!"

He paused a bit, then once again laughed and said, "However, kid, you don't need to worry. You are one lucky bastard. When you were fighting with Jiang Tao, there was a surveillance camera behind you. Although its mic was broken, it could still record images. From the movement of Jiang Tao's mouth in the video, experts have identified everything he had said. That is to say, everything he had spoken has been recorded. This brat has touched the bottom line of cultivators, so he is definitely going to die and Jiang Family could do nothing to protect him."

"The bottom line of cultivators?" Li Yao was surprised for a moment.

Guan Xiong nodded his head and explained:

"Right, although the rules 'protecting the ordinary citizens is the sworn duty of cultivators' and 'the blood of the strong must flow for the weak' have been spreading in the cultivators community, but in the end, not every cultivator is willing to magnanimously die for others."

"If a cultivator, when faced with imminent disaster, flees instead of fighting, and even if the others came to know, it would just be a topic that’s ugly to hear. Besides morally condemning him, no one is going to say anything. After all, life is precious. No one is born with the obligation to sacrifice himself for the others."

"However, not only did Jiang Tao flee from the battle, but afterwards, he had even wantonly insulted the cultivators who had laid down their lives for others and had even threatened you. This kind of behavior completely goes against the bottom line of cultivators!"

Guan Xiong took a deep breath, sighed, and said:

"In this endless sea of stars in the vast universe, apart from our human race, there are many other powerful races—demon clans, devil cultivators, extraterrestrial devils, and needless to say of the various strange alien lifeforms in space."

"We humans are able to conquer these evil lifeforms and stand at the pinnacle of the vast cosmos all because of the united efforts of cultivators and the ordinary people. They have shared life and death as they fought side by side with each other!"

"Although cultivators are strong, although they have long lives, their numbers are scarce, and furthermore, there are all kinds of restrictions to utilize spiritual energy."

"Even though the battle force of the ordinary people is weak, their population is vast and their reproductive abilities are strong, enough to sustain a sector and become a massive interstellar civilization."

"Much less to say, a vast majority of the cultivators are born from ordinary people, as are a majority of the descendants of the cultivators."

"If cultivators are fish, then ordinary people would be water. If cultivators are trees, then ordinary people would be the firm land upon which they grew in. In short, a large number of ordinary people are supporting the foundation of the cultivation world. If there are no ordinary people, the cultivation world would also completely collapse!"

"Let's take the crystal battleship floating above our head as an example. Although it was designed and manufactured by cultivators, its manufacturing process still needed thousands upon thousands of ordinary workers to assist. Needless to say, the entire large scale industrial system is established by ordinary people!"

"If it weren’t for the collective effort of hundreds of millions of ordinary people, there wouldn’t be any foundation of a powerful, interstellar civilization. We, the cultivators, can refine many ordinary flying swords, but how could we refine huge magical equipment? How could we create such a glorious and splendid cultivators civilization?"

"If the words of Jiang Tao were to spread and be heard by hundreds of millions of ordinary people of the federation, putting it mildly, it would lead to the dissatisfaction of ordinary people and would increase the hostility towards the cultivators. In short, it would cause a rift between the cultivators and the ordinary people and would shake the foundations of the federation. If the federation does not have a foundation, then how are we going to contend with the demon clan, devil cultivators, and alien lifeforms?"

"Even if it's the ugly truth, if all of us cultivators act like bandits and crooks, then what's the difference between the devil cultivators and us? If this father was an ordinary person, I would directly seek refuge under the devil cultivators. Why would we still need cultivators?"

"The elders of the Jiang Family must have spoken of these notions with Jiang Tao. However, he is still a descendant of a noble family. He grew up in a protected environment where he had never faced the wind and rain and had acted all arrogant and domineering. Why would he place such thoughts in his heart?"

"This time, he has caused a huge problem. For sure, trouble will be waiting for him, so you don't need to worry about him."

Having heard this, Li Yao was relieved. He concluded:

"I understand what Brother Xiang means to say. You can choose to become a coward, but after becoming a coward, you can not perfectly justify your timidity and cowardice, nor can you turn back and insult heroes—this is the bottom line of cultivators, am I right?"

Guan Xiong raised his thumb: "Yes, that's just about right."

Li Yao was just an ignorant rookie in the cultivation world. Just as Li Yao was planning to discuss some rules and topics behind the scenes of the cultivation world…

The tent was suddenly opened by a cold-tempered, female officer with the rank of major. She swept a glance around, and finally, her gloomy gaze came to a halt at Guan Xiong's hand.

Guan Xiong's complexion changed as the bottle in his hand suddenly disappeared.

He acted as if nothing had happened and directly looked at the major with an innocent look.

The major lightly snorted and coldly said, "Wait a while. I will come back to deal with you!"

While speaking, she threw a badgeless battle suit at Li Yao. "Put it on and come with me. He wants to see you."

"Who?"

Li Yao blinked his eyes but didn't get a reply. He obediently put on the battle suit and followed the major out.

Just as he arrived at the entrance of the tent, Li Yao stopped and asked Guan Xiong one last question:

"Brother Xiong, when you alone charged towards the overwhelming beast tide… did you truly not think that you might die?"

Guan Xiong pursed his lips as a smile appeared on his face. God knows from where he took out the bottle again and took a sip before winking and said, "Kid, I didn't become a cultivator for something boring like 'live forever and never die'."

"If not for living forever, then why?" Li Yao asked back.

"Of course, it was to become a mighty knight who has the strength to match a thousand knights. I want to happily fight wherever I go!"

Guang Xiong burst into laughter before finishing the alcohol in one gulp. "Crack crack!" He even chewed and swallowed the bottle as the glass shards were struck in his stiff and sturdy beard.

Chapter 117: Lingering Souls of Heroes

Chapter 117: Lingering Souls of Heroes

The female major took Li Yao deep into the army camp.

Along the way, they met many soldiers, all of whom looked at Li Yao with an extremely frightened look, as if he was some kind of monster.

Everyone's gaze had made Li Yao feel jittery. He could not help but ask the female major, "Why are they looking at me like that?"

The female major was silent for a moment before replying, "It's because of the crazy stuff you did on the platform. You had beaten a 3rd level Refinement Stage Cultivator so much that one could not bear to look at him, and even a dozen soldiers were unable to pull you away. At that time, we truly thought that your body was possessed by a demon clan member and were about to behead you. However, after a thorough examination, we discovered that you were 100% human and that it was just your spiritual root awakening. To tell you the truth, I have seen spirit root awakening of many cultivators, but one as exaggerated as yours is still a first."

Li Yao was rendered speechless and could only smile in embarrassment.

The female major swept him a glance and continued, "However, after they came to know the reason, a lot of people in the army believed you are pretty gutsy, that you are a man!"

While speaking, the female major stopped in front a heavily guarded tent and said while pointing inside, "Go in, he is inside."

Li Yao looked around.

The black tent was located at the centermost location of the provisional army camp. There were over a hundred guards nearby while next to the tent stood a few men dressed in ordinary clothes, each with an extraordinary bearing.

Although he dared not to release the spirit threads to probe, Li Yao could still feel their remarkability. They all should be cultivators with superb cultivation.

Furthermore, a defensive array was secretly laid out around the tent. It was quite exquisite to the point that Li Yao was simply unable to gauge its depth.

Who was the “he” inside that was guarded so heavily?

Li Yao’s interest was piqued. Parting the curtains, he lowered himself and walked inside the tent.

A translucent white mist permeated inside the tent, amidst which were 7-8 men who were wearing white surgical gowns and surgical masks as they stood around an operating table. They were seriously performing an operation.

There were also four robotic arms in front of the operating table that were moving very quickly.

Just as Li Yao entered, the white mist made a rush towards him, disinfecting and sterilizing him.

Li Yao carefully glanced towards the operating table and saw something that was not human lying on the operating table. It was a rather small spirit mechanical body whose entire body was cast from metal and the most crucial parts were inlaid with hundreds of crystals. Whereas intricate spirit and crystal fibers that were glistening in a strange brilliance were spread between all the limbs and bones of its body.

A small hologram was embedded inside the head of the spirit mechanical body. While the crown of the head, which was refined from tungsten steel, was open, the four robotic arms were quickly installing several dozen crystal chips inside the “brain”. After they were finished, they cautiously closed the crown of the head and tightened the screws.

"Spiritual energy, 100% charged! We are ready to go!"

A doctor pulled down his white surgical mask before an emotionless sound that that did not contain even an iota of human emotion came.

"Beep Beep! Diagnostic system check complete!"

"Beep Beep! Cognizant crystal circuit complete. Soul and crystal chip synchronization 37%... 58%... 81%. Achieved the minimum requirement for revival!"

"Beep beep! Spirit mechanical body loop is normal. Starting the body control authorization process... Authorization process complete!"

Next, the crystals all over the body suddenly started shining. The spirit mechanical body lying on the operating table gradually sat up and shook its metal head in confusion.

Snowflakes started to float in the hologram that was embedded inside the face and soon gathered to create an ordinary human face.

It was none other than Ding Yin!

"Hello, Student Li Yao, we meet again."

Ding Yin slightly smiled. His voice, on the other hand, was completely calm and emotionless like the water in a dry well, containing not even an iota of human emotions.

He frowned slightly and said, "Starting human emotions simulation system. Test, test. Student Li Yao, is my voice normal now?"

Li Yao was completely dumbfounded. He stammered, "I-it's normal, Professor Ding—you are alive?"

"No, I'm already dead!"

Ding Yin smiled and said, "The seven of us low-level cultivators charged straight into hundreds of millions of demon beasts with a Taiyi Lightning Railgun—how could we not be dead? However, I was lucky. A wisp of my residual soul was found. Now, I can do nothing but become a 'spectral cultivator'."

"Spectral cultivator?"

Only now did Li Yao start to remember. They were a unique existence among the cultivators.

Just as its name implied, the so-called “spectral cultivators” were cultivators who had died and had their bodies destroyed, leaving only a wisp of their residual soul behind. And after going through several chances and opportunities, the soul[1], which did not dissipate, would once again embark on the road of cultivation!

During the world of ancient cultivation forty millenniums ago, spectral cultivators were seldom seen. Furthermore, the cultivation of the soul[1] had various restriction. In order to ensure that the soul[1] did not dissipate, from time to time, they would need to swallow the souls of the living and to suck blood essence. In other words, they would have to take the life of another and would have to owe countless blood debts.

That was why, in the ancient world of cultivation, spectral cultivators were notorious and were were synonymous to evil lifeforms.

However, after forty millenniums of cultivation, civilization had advanced. As long as the soul was powerful enough, it could be digitized, and the soul could be sealed inside crystal chips. And matched with a spirit mechanical body, they did not need to fear the sunlight and could walk in the sun as they embarked on the completely new road of dark cultivation[2].

Of course, humans and ghosts were completely opposite; one was yin and one was yang. The road of dark cultivation, compared to the normal road of cultivation, was a million times more dangerous. The spirit mechanical body was, after all, not a body of flesh. During a random solar flare, it was quite possible for the soul[1] to be destroyed.

Although a vast majority of spectral cultivators would never grow old, they could not live forever. After a few centuries, in the same old way, their souls[1] would grow old.

However, it was always better than vanishing in a puff of smoke!

"Fellow Daoist Ding, we welcome you in joining the ranks of spectral cultivators. Although humans and ghosts are completely opposite and it is no longer possible to reincarnate, the world of dark cultivation is extremely marvelous. Let us explore it together!"

All the doctors warmly applaud. But the sounds they emitted were like the clashing of weapons; it was as if their palms were cast from metal.

One after another, the doctors pulled down their masks, revealing eight gloomy and frightening metal skulls in front of Li Yao.

Li Yao almost shrieked—from the start, the eight doctors were all spectral cultivators!

He himself and nine ghosts were staying inside one tent.

Ding Ying smiled, waved his hand, and said, "Fellow daoists, this is not right. This little guy is very good, please don't scare him for fun."

A particularly tall spectral cultivator mischievously laughed "Hei hei" as he extended his ghost-like metal claws and lightly pinched Li Yao's shoulder before speaking in an austere gloominess:

"We have heard that this little guy is very courageous. Daoist Ding, just for you, he had beaten the crap out of an opponent who was two levels higher than him, so we wanted to test him a bit! Little guy, you are very good! You didn't pee your pants, you are truly a man!"

The other spectral cultivators enigmatically burst into laughter together. From the very beginning, they could also express emotions like normal humans. They were just putting on an act.

Li Yao suddenly didn't know whether to laugh or cry. The mysterious impression he had of "spectral cultivators" had, in the blink of an eye, collapsed. These people—no, these ghosts were too naughty!

Ding Yin pressed both his hands down as he slowly climbed down from the operating table, thereby stopping the mischievous laughing ghosts. He tried to a few steps but staggered along the way. He thought out loud, "It feels strange. It's like there is a membrane covering my body, this feeling is completely different from before."

"But of course! In the past, you were human, and now, you are ghost. In the past, your cultivation was high, but now, after becoming spectral cultivator, you have to start from scratch. After you have settled things here, Fellow Daoist Ding, please go to the 'Heroes’ Spirit Pagoda' and stay there for a few years to learn about how to be a good ghost. Only then can you truly enter the world of dark cultivation," the tall spectral cultivator said.

Ding Yin heaved a sigh and melancholy said, "When I left the house, I was still someone with flesh and blood body, but now, I have become a cold ghost. I don't know how I am going to explain it to my wife and children when I return home!"

The tall spectral cultivator said, "Fellow Daoist Ding, you don't need to worry. After the inspection is finished and we have made sure that no demon clan member had sneaked into the train, we will ensure that we have safely sent all the passengers to their destination. Afterwards, this matter will be made public. You will become a hero of federation. Your family will definitely be proud of you!"

Ding Yin blankly nodded his head. Quickly, he stabilized his mood before turning his head. "Student Li Yao, whatever you may want to talk about, we can talk about it slowly, but we have an important matter at hand for which we need your help!"

"Professor Ding, please speak. I will do my best!"

Ding Yin's impression in Li Yao's heart was particularly tall. Whatever it may be, he was certainly going to help however he could.

Ding Yin with Li Yao made his way out of the tent. His every step was very stiff.

Outside the tent was docked a thick black military shuttle which had gone through special modification. Its rear end was mounted with a tuba-like thing, and a bearded veteran was sitting at the driver seat. Next to him sat a few soldiers, all of whom had a special skull insignia on their chests, underneath which were a row of small characters:

"May the spirits of the deceased come back to us!"

"This is the most exceptional 'Soul Search Squad' of the federation. This squad is especially responsible for searching for residual souls. Just a while ago, they had already conducted a search and brought me back after they found me. Now, they are planning to conduct a search for the second time, seeing if they could find another residual soul."

On one side, Ding Yin explained, while on the other, he pulled Li Yao aboard the military shuttle.

"What can I do?"

Li Yao checked the military shuttle a bit and discovered that although the battle shuttle looked ragged, its components were well maintained; for a while, there would not be any problems. There was no place to show his prowess.

Ding Yin said, "Right after a human dies, when the soul is going to dissipate, the person who last saw them would be able to sense them especially. As you were the last person who was seen by us, your appearance will stimulate the residual souls of us. When stimulated, the souls[1] would produce a special kind of fluctuation, making it easier for the soul search squad to detect them."

"So that was the case! Then, let us go quickly!" Li Yao jumped onto the flying shuttle.

The search for the residual souls was a race against time. The blazing sun was hanging in the sky, and under its intense sunlight, the spirit would dissipate. If it came to that, then even the gods and immortals would be unable to save them.

The military shuttle carrying the soul search squad, along with Li Yao, Ding Yin, and the tall spectral cultivator, "Tang Long", started searching along the crystal rail. Soon, they arrived at the battlefield from last night.

Having arrived here, only then did Li Yao come to know how dangerous it was last night.

Along the crystal rail, in the radius of a few dozen kilometers, it was nothing but charred corpses, seemingly as if the land was covered by a black sheet.

The military shuttle flew close to the ground. The powerful jet streams fired by its propulsion array glyphs blew away the charred corpses lying on the ground as it continuously set off a cloud of black smoke.

"Bo! Bo! Bo!"

The tuba-like thing on the back of the military shuttle made a monotonous sound that spread across every direction.

A member of the soul search squad stared at the hologram under the tuba-like thing, surveying very seriously.

Li Yao was a little curious. Looking around, he closed his eyes and extended the spirit threads from the spiritual root as he tried to feel the world outside.

"Wow, so many specks of light!"

Li Yao was shocked. He discovered that the entire world was full of blood-red specks of light. It was simply like an inexhaustible sea of light. He didn't even need to use the spirit threads to suck these blood-red specks of light, as they made a bee-line for and into his spiritual roots on their own.

However, after swallowing these specks of light, he faintly felt uncomfortable. He felt muddled-headed, and a cold killing intent gushed out from the bottom of his heart.

TLN:

[1] - Here, souls refers to the dead spirit/souls. This marking of souls will be one time thing as it is pretty easy to differentiate. I didn’t differentiate because it made a little awkward and also the souls (dead souls) here are treated something similarly to living things.

[2] - Dark cultivation here is none other that cultivation way of spectral cultivators. I didn’t use spectral or ghost

cultivation, as it sounded a little awkward as compared to dark cultivation.

Chapter 118: Heaven Origin Cultivators' Nexus

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"Li Yao!"

Ding Yin shouted a timely warning, waking him from his stupor: "These blood-colored specks of light are the demonic power left behind by the demon beasts. Only cultivators who have sufficient strength could purify and absorb them through secret techniques! Since you have just broken through, your cultivation is still shallow. If you keep on absorbing this much demonic power, your spiritual energy will only be contaminated by demonic energy, and you will lose your truth, effectively turning into a demon who knows nothing but slaughtering!"

Li Yao was terrified. Only now did he come to realize that he was just a step away from embarking on the demonic path. He immediately closed his spiritual root, preventing the invasion of demonic power.

However, the demonic energy was spread everywhere and were spread even over the hills and the valleys. It appeared to be as vast as the sea and could be described as inexhaustible. Although there was such a tremendous amount of energy in front of him, all he could do was look. He was unable to absorb it and convert it into his own energy, causing the newly-born cultivator, the “hungry” Li Yao, to become truly envious.

It was akin to placing a hot, steaming chicken in front of a person who had been starving for three days and three nights, only to tell him that the chicken was poisonous—this anxious waiting feeling, which was later denied, caused Li Yao to feel as if his heart was being clawed at by a cat. He quickly swallowed a mouthful of saliva.

Li Yao was suddenly struck by a thought. Absorbing just a wisp of demonic energy, he tried to send it to the depths of his neural field, where the tree of memories left by Ou Yezi was.

Before the wisp of demonic energy had even gotten near the tree of memories, the demonic energy silently disintegrated and turned into the purest of spiritual energy!

"There is a way!" Li Yao's heart started beating rapidly; he was wild with joy.

According to Ding Yin, only the strongest of cultivators could purify demonic energy.

Although Li Yao was a newbie who had just entered the world of cultivation, the tree of memories in his neural field was congealed from Ou Yezi's vast spiritual energy. Using it to purify the remnant demonic energies of the Ghost Jellyfish and Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes was simply akin to using a cannon to kill a chicken and putting fine timber to petty uses!

However, Li Yao didn't want to wantonly absorb the demonic energy. The residual soul of Ou Yezi was his most guarded secret and was something he never intends to reveal. For now, he was still being patient; he was waiting for an opportune moment to return later and completely absorb the demonic energy.

"Bo... Bo... Bo..."

The soul search squad continued moving forward, searching for the residual souls in this vast wilderness. Although they had still gained nothing after 3-4 hours, everyone was accustomed to it and not a single one of them revealed a dejected look.

A residual soul was not so easy to find. If not for some lucky coincidence, good luck that was as large as the heaven, or a strong expert with superb cultivation, then after a cultivator had fallen, the soul would often vanish into a puff of smoke.

In the past, even after a hundred cultivators had fallen, sometimes not even a single wisp of residual spirit could be found. Otherwise, in the cultivation world, wouldn't "souls be floating and filling the sky, and the spectral cultivators would be found walking everywhere"?

This time, just converting Ding Yin into a spectral cultivator was already enough.

Traversing over a small mound, everyone was a little dispirited and discouraged. The soul search squad's captain waved his hand to return. Just as they were about to turn back, Li Yao's heart stirred, and he immediately looked towards the southwest.

Towards the southwest, there was nothing, yet he always felt as if something or someone was staring at him.

"Check in that direction. I think there is something there," Li Yao said to the soldier managing the "tuba".

"Quickly, quickly increase the power! A newly advanced cultivator's perception is often particularly keen. There might be something there!" Ding Yin became excited.

"Bo... Bo... Bo..." The tube gradually turned towards the southwest.

"Bo... Bo... Bo... BoBoBoBoBo!" The monotonous sound suddenly became rapid like drumbeats, and soon, an extremely faint black point appeared in the upper right corner of the hologram.

"Quickly scatter the 'Revealing Soul Particles'!" the soul search squad's captain shouted in a loud voice.

Two soul search squad members picked up two thick and long steel pipes. The back of the steel pipes flashed with a spiritual radiance before two balls of azure mist shot out with a "Boom!".

"Bang!"

The azure balls of mist burst open in the sky before a mist of crystal powder covered the entire sky; it was as though there were a million fireflies flying in the sky!

The fluorescent crystal powder, by the virtue of the wind, very quickly spread across a radius of a few hundred meters; the heaven and the earth were painted in an azure color.

Amidst this azure world, a light-gray fog suddenly appeared. The fog was extremely hazy and continuously moved. Gradually, the fog congealed into an extremely weak human form that was completely confused as it gradually floated towards the sky.

Although it was faintly discernible, with one glance, Li Yao recognized it to be Wei Qingqing—the orchid in a deep valley-like college student who had just graduated from the Sky Fantasia Academy and was preparing to go to a mountain village as a teacher!

"We found another!"

All the members of the soul search squad were immensely excited. Much to their surprise, out of the seven cultivators who had fallen, two could become spectral cultivators—their luck was truly heaven-defying!

Only the soul search squad's captain had a solemn look; he was still being conscientious and meticulous.

He cautiously drove the military shuttle towards the residual soul. In his hands, the huge battle shuttle was as silent as a cat.

Everyone held their breath.

In the captain's hand, a round magical equipment, one which looked like a bud that was ready to bloom, appeared. As he infused his spiritual energy into it, the bud slowly bloomed into a tender and beautiful flower.

The captain aligned the flower's pistils towards Wei Qingqing's residual soul and recited out loud, "I beseech the spirit to come back to us and embark on the road of dark cultivation—come!"

Wei Qingqing's residual soul lightly shook before it turned into a wisp of smoke and was sucked into the flower. The petals of the flower, in the blink of an eye, closed up and had once again returned to a flower bud; however, it was now emitting a weak, azure splendor.

"Thanks to you we were able to save another fellow daoist!" Ding Yin patted Li Yao shoulder and said with relief.

...

When Li Yao returned to the medical treatment tent, Guan Xiong had already left. However, he had left a jade chip behind. Just as Li Yao lightly touched it, Guan Xiong's heroic voice resounded in his mind:

"Little brother, Old Guan is going to return to the Mountain Sea Sect to recuperate. Hahaha! After I have completely recovered, I will come and look for you at the Grand Desolate War Institution. At that time, we will have a blast! You have just entered the world of cultivation, so you are still a newbie who knows nothing at all. In this jade chip, there is something that will be very helpful to you. As soon as you can, install it into your crystal processor—but, you need to find a crystal processor with strong computational power!"

Upon inspecting the jade chip carefully, Li Yao discovered that what was stored inside was an extremely huge and immensely dense structure of telepathic thoughts which could not be understood using his brain alone.

"What kind of telepathic thoughts are these?"

Li Yao became extremely curious. He immediately started up his crystal processor and inserted the jade chip. The telepathic thoughts were copied inside the crystal processor.

These telepathic thoughts were as vast as the sea; it took more than ten minutes to completely copy them.

Opening the virtual keyboard, Li Yao launched the telepathic thoughts.

"Creak! Creak! Creak!"

The crystal processor suddenly let out ear-piercing noises; every one of its components was overloaded. Each crystal embedded inside the crystal processor was flickering; it appeared that the crystal processor could not withstand the powerful impacts contained in the telepathic thoughts.

Only after five minutes were the telepathic thoughts completely running. After the telepathic thoughts installed inside the crystal processor were completely launched, they had actually used up 3/4th of the computational power of the crystal processor, causing the crystal processor to become extremely hot and incomparably slow.

"These telepathic thoughts are so powerful!" Li Yao was shocked.

Although his crystal processor was not some high-end stuff that cost a million bucks, it had still been specially modified. Its computational power was far more than any ordinary, personal crystal processor. For this crystal processor, running some huge telepathic thoughts was simply as easy as blowing dust, and its computational speed was as fast as lightning.

However, Li Yao didn't expect that these telepathic thoughts would cause his crystal processor to be like an old bullock pulling a broken cart that was panting at every step.

Li Yao carefully observed and found a small icon that was displaying a flying sword soaring amidst the clear blue sky at the center of the hologram, underneath which were four words:

"Heaven Origin Cultivators' Nexus!"

Li Yao lightly tapped the virtual keyboard and launched the mysterious website.

"Creak! Creak!"

The crystal processor was once again wailing from overloading.

Apparently, it would be best for him to upgrade its configuration after returning, only then would it be possible for it to run as fast as the wind.

"Beep, scanning telepathic thoughts. Your crystal processor does not meet the standard requirements to run the Heaven Origin Cultivators' Nexus. Closing some of the abilities so as to start at the lowest settings!"

"If you want to launch the complete abilities of the Heaven Origin Cultivator's Nexus, it is recommended that you upgrade the crystal processor. The configuration is as follows..."

"If you want to launch the complete abilities of the Heaven Origin Cultivator's Nexus, it is recommended that you upgrade the crystal processor. The configuration is as follows..."

A sweet and tender female voice came.

As Li Yao swept a glance, his eyes were suddenly transfixed—what's the bloody backing of the Heaven Origin Cultivators' Nexus? Its configuration requirements were too high! Even if I bought crystal processor components to assemble, just the standard configuration would cost me 3,000-5,000 bucks!

If it was the top configuration that gave the "best experience", without a couple million bucks, it would simply be impossible!

"It seems that being a cultivator is not that easy. Making money is no doubt easy, but money is also spent like water.

Just to log into one site, so much money is needed to be spent!" Li Yao said in his heart.

Quickly, the hologram before him burst into thousands upon thousands of specks of light that resembled fireflies and then spread out before transforming into a faint blue light that completely enveloped the medical treatment tent.

It transformed into thousands upon thousands of eight-pointed shining golden stars, glyphs, arrays, telepathic thoughts which circled around Li Yao before they gathered into a stream of information that was as vast as the sea, bringing him an immense shock!

It was as if a small, orchid-colored world had burst open from the crystal processor, overlapping and blending with the real world, much mixing like milk and water!

This kind of feeling was a little similar to the "Great Illusionary Land".

But in the Great Illusionary Land, one would not sense the real world. To be precise, it could be called a "Half-step Great Illusionary Land"!

Li Yao was completely immersed in the endless mysteries inside the Half-step Great Illusionary Land. In his heart, he wildly shouted, "If the lowest configuration of the Heaven Origin Cultivators' Nexus is this cool, how many mysterious abilities would the top-level configurations be able to show?"

A dozen rainbow-colored, gorgeous streams of information suddenly floated before his eyes:

"Hidden God Valley's cultivator, Ding Yin (spectral cultivator), confirms that Grand Desolate War Institution's student, Li Yao, has awakened his spiritual root and has embarked on the road of cultivation!"

"Mountain Sea Sect's cultivator, Guan Xiong, confirms that Grand Desolate War Institution's student, Li Yao, has awakened his spiritual root and has embarked on the road of cultivation, and has invited Li Yao to join the Heaven Origin Cultivators' Nexus!"

"Congratulations, Fellow Daoist Li Yao! You have already obtained the approval of two Building Foundation Stage cultivators. Your registration for the Heaven Origin Cultivators' Nexus is complete. From now on, you are are a glorious cultivator of the Heaven Origin Sector!"

"Here is your registered spirit brand. This is your proof of identity that is exclusive to you. Please carefully engrave it in your soul."

"Bang Bang Bang Bang!"

Countless resplendent fireworks set off in front of Li Yao. It was as if a forest of fireworks was gradually floating before him, one which was followed by hundreds of streams of information that was akin to pouring rain rolling down before his eyes.

"The Federation’s President, Xu Haoran, has sent you a congratulatory message. Fellow Daoist Li Yao, congratulations on becoming a glorious cultivator!"

"The leader of the Ultimate Heavens’ Dao Clan, Ning Tianyuan, and his 3,000 clansmen, congratulates Fellow Daoist Li! We hope that we can someday travel with Fellow Daoist Li and explore the thousands of great daos in the endless galaxy. We warmly welcome Fellow Daoist Li Yao to come and visit us. The Extreme Heavenly Dao's forum address is as follows..."

"Every member of the Supreme Clan congratulates Fellow Daoist Li. The Supreme Clan is the tenth ranked super-sect in the Star Glory Federation. We have a long line of history and are tremendously powerful. We have many Core Formation Stage cultivators as well as a Nascent Soul Stage cultivator. Moreover, our cultivation techniques are fair and gentle. Cultivating in an orderly way and using these techniques step by step, there will be no risk of Qigong deviation. It is the best choice for newly advanced cultivators! Fellow Daoist Li is, at any time, welcome to inquire. Our official spiritual crane number is..."

"Loose cultivator Shui Lianxin, 25 years old, welcomes Fellow Daoist Li to the world of cultivation. I hope I can discuss the true spirit of the great dao with Fellow Daoist Li. My spiritual crane number is… If you are not sincere, then do not bother!"

Chapter 119: Sensational News

At the beginning, Li Yao was a little complacent. He thought that he was a little famous in the world of cultivation, where the number of cultivators was monumental, as so many cultivation sects and famous loose cultivators had sent him congratulatory messages. Amongst those who had sent him congratulatory messages, there were no small number of powerful cultivators of the Core Formation Stage as well as old fogies of the Nascent Soul Stage, all of whom had kindly invited him to explore and discuss the 3,000 great daos.

However, when more and more congratulatory messages kept on rolling before his eyes, he gradually woke up from his dream—he was an insignificant cultivator of the 1st level Refinement Stage who had just taken first step on the road of cultivation. He could not even compare to one little phalanx of the old monsters of Nascent Soul Stage, so why would so many people see him in a favorable light?

After pondering for a long time, a realization suddenly dawned on him—these congratulatory messages were just sent automatically by the system. These venerable cultivators hadn’t personally sent a single message from the start.

“So it was just my wishful thinking!”

Li Yao’s face alternated between green and red. He said to himself that it was a good thing that he hadn’t acted impetuously and hadn’t gone looking for some Nascent Soul

Stage old monsters to discuss life; otherwise, he would have lost too much face.

Finally, only after receiving a couple hundred congratulatory messages did Li Yao begin to seriously start looking over the Heaven Origin Cultivators' Nexus.

He discovered that the entire "Half-step Great Illusionary Land" was divided into a dozen different regions.

When he turned his gaze towards a region, a stream of information automatically floated before him. The speed of the information flowing also suddenly increased.

It was the centermost region of the site and also hailed as the region of the "Federation Cultivators' Newsletter".

"The Golden Armor Sect's prototype of the next-gen 'Star Strike Shields' has been successfully refined. The Golden Armor Sect kindly invites the fellow daoists of the cultivation world to check and propose some valuable suggestions. As long as the suggestion put forth by you could be turned into reality, the Golden Armor Sect is willing to pay a reward of 10 million!"

"The Netherworld Squad is recruiting an alchemist! The Netherworld Squad is a famous battling team renowned for hunting demon beasts in the federation. It is composed of nine Building Foundation Stage loose cultivators who perennially hunts demon beasts in the depths of the Wasteland. The Netherworld Squad is absolutely powerful and their military exploits are brilliant! Currently, they are looking for an alchemist of the peak Refinement Stage or higher. The income will be lucrative and it comes with a freedom of coming and going at your own will. Once you have officially joined, you will also receive a top-grade beast core!"

“Wasteland battlefield report—the famous demon beast hunter ‘Fiend Blade Peng Hai’ had encountered two high-level demon beasts during his most recent hunting mission. After fighting with each other at close quarters, both parties had sustained serious injuries. But in the end, Peng Hai was successful in killing them! Currently, we only know that one of the demon beasts was a ‘Great Wilderness Snake’, whose beast core is extremely beneficial to Core Formation Stage cultivators. The species of the other demon beast still remains unknown!”

“However, after this battle, Fiend Blade Peng Hai has reaped a bountiful harvest and has advanced by leaps and bounds, firmly standing at the peak of the Building Foundation Stage. With time, he can refine the Great Wilderness Snake’s beast core and very likely become one of the youngest Core Formation Stage cultivators in the federation!”

“Latest news—in the starlit night, Fiend Blade Peng Hai has quickly set out to return to the Crimson Nimbus Sect Headquarters located in the Floating Spear City where a press conference is going to be held to officially announce that he will be leaving the Crimson Nimbus Sect!”

“Peng Hai will be leaving the Crimson Nimbus Sect and will be becoming a loose cultivator!”

“Because Peng Hai’s contract period with the Crimson Nimbus Sect hasn’t yet expired, Peng Hai will be paying as much as 2 billion in liquidated damages for this decision. The current market remains calm, as the Crimson Nimbus Sect’s shares only fell by 0.8% and have firmly remained at that level!”

“Multiple cultivation sects have sent invitations to Peng Hai. The Heavenly Dragon Sect had even invited Peng Hai as an

Elder; however, all the offers had been declined by him. According to Peng Hai, he would remain a loose cultivator and live freely for a while”

“However, according to sources—Peng Hai is in the process of building his own sect!”

Li Yao’s heart was stirred. He didn’t expect that in just three months, Senior Brother Peng would actually come up with such a big move.

In response to a thought of his, the news related to Peng Hai leaving the Crimson Nimbus Sect suddenly zoomed in as a live video of the press conference also appeared.

He saw Peng Hai with a smile hanging on his face calmly sitting behind a long table. And next to him sat a horse-faced, ashen old man. The old man wore a bluish white robe with his cuffs decorated with flames—this was the uniform of the Crimson Nimbus Sect’s clansmen.

From the seven blooming flowers of burning flames embroidered on his chest, he should be an elder of the Crimson Nimbus Sect.

A swarm of people sat in front of the table, creating a lively atmosphere. They were all reporters who desired to see the world plunge into chaos.

Fiend Blade Peng Hai smiled and said:

“Ladies and gentlemen of the media world, please be patient. This Peng has chosen to leave the Crimson Nimbus Sect not because of some dissatisfaction with the Crimson Nimbus Sect nor was it because of conflict with someone, but rather, it was just because this Peng had recently hunted two high-level demon beasts and had acquired some precious materials, including an immensely precious beast core!”

“Now, this Peng will be spending all his energy and attention to refine the beast core to advance to the Core Formation Stage. I am afraid that I will not have time to manage the affairs of the sect!”

“And on one side, continuing to remain in the Crimson Nimbus Sect is unfavorable for my cultivation, and on the other, reaping all the benefits without doing anything will make me irresponsible towards the Crimson Nimbus Sect. Hahaha, that’s why I will be taking my leave. There will be ample time in the future! It’s as simple as that!”

“Peng Hai! Peng Hai!”

The reporters struggled with each other to get ahead. A reporter jumped up and shouted, “Peng Hai, rumor has it that your mentor, ‘Sun Biao’, had recently received an anonymous disciple by the name of ‘Li Yao’ and your relationship with Li Yao is also very deep. It is also rumored that you have also personally assisted him in training! Everyone in the Floating Spear City knows that there is some conflict between Li Yao and the Crimson Nimbus Sect—does this have anything to do with you leaving the Crimson Nimbus Sect?”

Li Yao was surprised for a moment. He had never thought that it could be related to him, it was truly unexpected.

Peng Hai’s smile turned a little stiff, while the Crimson Nimbus Sect Elder sitting beside him coldly snorted and said:

“Are you really a reporter? Without any solid evidence, how can you say such nonsense? Student Li Yao was once a student of Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School. Although he had later transferred for an unspecified reason, he is still going to be the pride of the Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School. If we truly had some contradictions, do you think everyone would ever be able to know? The purpose of Fellow Daoist Peng leaving the Crimson Nimbus Sect is very simple—he needs to devote his heart and soul to advance to the Core Formation Stage. Since he had paid 2 billion in liquidated damages in accordance with the contract, what else is there to be said? All the clansmen of the Crimson Nimbus Sect wholeheartedly wish for Fellow Daoist Peng Hai to be able to successfully advance to the Core Formation Stage!”

Peng Hai nodded and said:

“Elder Ma is right. In the few years that I have been with the Crimson Nimbus Sect, I have gotten along very well with everyone from both the upper echelons as well as the lower echelons in the Crimson Nimbus Sect. Although I will be leaving, my heart is still with the fellow daoists of the Crimson Nimbus Sect. Someday, if I luckily advance to the Core Formation Stage, there will be plenty of opportunities to cooperate with the Crimson Nimbus Sect. So ladies and gentlemen, please don’t make any random speculations!”

“Peng Hai—”

Another reporter stood up. “Rumor has it that you will be establishing your own sect, is it true?”

Peng Hai slightly smiled. “Let’s talk about it when I have successfully advanced to the Core Formation Stage!”

Li Yao closed the video and heaved a long sigh.

“Who would have known that Senior Brother Peng would be so formidable? In just the span of three months that I have not seen him, he had already hunted two high-level demon beasts and acquired a beast core. Not only had he consolidated to the peak level of Building Foundation Stage, he also has a chance to advance to Core Formation Stage.”

“Once he successfully advances and forms the golden core, he would be a celebrity in the cultivation world. Afterwards, establishing his own clan and founding his own organization would be a cinch.”

“However, I will not lose to him! I have already embarked on the road of cultivation. Sooner or later, I will catch up with Senior Brother Peng’s steps!”

Li Yao collected his thoughts and continued browsing the rest of the forums of the Federation Cultivators’ Nexus.

He discovered that the Federation Cultivators’ Nexus was a huge exchange platform for cultivators.

In some of these forums, cultivators could exchange magical equipment, medications, heaven and earth treasures as well as demon beasts materials.

They could either directly exchange with each other or use the auction mode.

Whereas, some of the forums were especially for the abstruse cultivation problems where the cultivators could discuss profound mysteries. There were a vast number of special terminologies as well as lengthy spiritual energy conversion formulas, which upon looking, caused Li Yao to feel dizzy; he truly didn’t know what to make of them.

There were also forums where a lot of cultivators could gather, form hunting squads, and hunt demon beasts anywhere in the Wasteland.

In short, anything that a cultivator could think of that was required for their cultivation career could be found here.

After browsing for a long time, Li Yao discovered that a vast majority of the forums needed high privileges and only then could one participate.

In some forums, not to mention entering, he couldn’t even take a look; they were all sealed up with restriction spells.

The only thing completely open for him was just a section called “Beginner’s Guide”.

Li Yao focused his mind on the two words “Beginner’s Guide”.

A resplendent and colorful radiance bloomed before his eyes before a bearded, sage-like old man dressed in a daoist robe soon appeared, smiled at him, and said:

“Hello, Fellow Daoist Li Yao! I am a ‘cultivator’s assistant’ automatically generated by the system. I am also your exclusive guide who will give you a detailed explanation of the elementary knowledge of the cultivation world. I will help you incorporate into the immensely mysterious and wonderful world of cultivation as soon as possible!”

“Oh!” Li Yao nodded his head and said unenthusiastically.

The daoist-robed old man scanned him from top to bottom, then suddenly said, “According to past experiences, I should change my appearance in order to make you more enthusiastic!”

As his voice faded away, the daoist-robed old man’s figure suddenly shone with a brilliant radiance as a mass of feather-like white light surrounded him. After a moment, the white light truly congealed into a 30-40-year-old beautiful woman who was wearing a snow-white daoist robe.

The beautiful woman still looked attractive and had a particularly voluptuous figure. Although she had a solemn and absolutely stern look, her eyes were sparkling; there was even a sliver of desire flickering in the depths of her eyes. Her eyes coupled with her feather-white, long-slit daoist robe, her revealing soft and tender bust, and her partly-hidden and partly-visible smooth-as-jade, slender legs, gave her a noble and unsullied yet seductive, sacred yet provocative look. These two types of diametrically opposing temperaments lingering around her body formed a very charming style.

Li Yao’s face, all of a sudden, flushed red.

The beautiful woman pursed her lips into a charming smile and said in a gentle tone, “According to past experiences, this appearance can elevate the learning efficiency of a newly advanced male cultivator by 21%. However, if Fellow Daoist Li Yao has some other preferences, please do tell. In my memory, there are over a hundred skins. Whether it is a robust man, a young girl, or even a long-tailed succubus, I can freely change to anyone.”

“No need, this is fine!” Li Yao hastily said.

The beautiful woman lightly smiled and said:

“Alright, since Student Li Yao likes this appearance, then we can begin. According to the federation’s policy, I must first explain to you the＜Basic Law of Cultivators＞.”

Li Yao was a little perplexed. “Do the cultivators also need basic laws?”

The beautiful woman nodded and said in a natural manner, “That’s a given. Our Star Glory Federation is governed by laws where all men are equal. Regardless of whether it is the ordinary people or the cultivators, in front of the law, everyone is treated equally. However, as cultivators are too strong, the slightest of mistakes could cause irreparable damages, so a set of laws were specially constructed for them. Some of the most basic rules and law are to be told to the newly advanced cultivators, lest they create some trouble unknowingly. If in a one in a million chance they took the path of evil, it would be irreparable—even if we wanted to cry, we would not be able to.”

Chapter 120: Foundation of Cultivation

Chapter 120: Foundation of Cultivation

"I guess that's right."

Li Yao touched his head as he agreed with the argument given by the cultivator's assistant.

With just a casual wave of their hand, a powerful cultivator could blast apart a building, raze a city, and cause mayhem. Their destructive capabilities were a hundred times stronger than that of a T-rex. If they weren't bound by a set of laws, then the world would have already plunged into chaos.

If there were no laws in the cultivation world, perhaps the world would have forever remained in the medieval era where the strong devoured the weak, making it impossible for it to have developed into the current civilized society.

Suddenly, Li Yao felt a cool and refreshing feeling burst forth in his brain as numerous streams of information akin to streams of water plunged into his neural field. These streams of information, to be precise, were a total of 700 articles on the＜Basic Laws of Cultivators＞.

"Telepathic thoughts transmission?" Li Yao clucked his tongue in wonder.

In regards to communication, telepathic thoughts transmission was a hundred times better than speech or text.

For instance, if speech was used for communication, let's say between Zhang San and Li Si, where Zhang San said, "I just had lunch."

Li Si could at most know that Zhang San had lunch, only this information. He would be unable to grasp any more details.

However, if Zhang San conversed through telepathic thoughts transmission, the thought "I just had lunch" would be directly transmitted into Li Si's brain, which would allow Li Si to know in an instant which dishes Zhang San actually had along with the fragrance of the dishes, where he ate, and even Zhang San's mood when he ate could be vaguely perceived.

Such an amount of information could not be explained with just a few words.

However, for telepathic thoughts transmission, not only was a special tool required, the neural field of ordinary people was extremely fragile, thus it was very difficult for ordinary people to bear a surge of such a large amount of telepathic thoughts. At most, they could do it occasionally.

Since Li Yao was already a cultivator, his neural field had already been well developed due to the spiritual energy. The lengthy＜Basic Laws of Cultivators＞ had been completely transmitted into his brain in just a minute!

"So it was like this!"

In the blink of an eye, Li Yao had a rough understanding of the＜Basic Laws of Cultivators＞.

They were completely different than what he had imagined. These＜Basic Laws of Cultivators＞ did not place too many restraints on the activities of the cultivators. At the very start, it just introduced some of the duties of cultivators, rules, and other basic knowledge of the cultivation world.

The later part of the content was mostly like "cultivators can not intentionally kill people", "cultivators can not use spiritual abilities to tempt ordinary people", and so on. The laws of cultivators were not much different than the ＜Criminal Code＞ for normal citizens.

If one violated the＜Basic Laws of Cultivators＞, one would be treated as an evil cultivator, and naturally, a special anti-devil cultivator task force would be mobilized to let the devil cultivators know that "cultivators also need to have basic laws".

After the introduction of the＜Basic Laws of Cultivators＞, the cultivator's assistant began introducing the "spiritual energy cultivation exercises" to Li Yao.

Li Yao's pair of eyes lit up. "Cultivation exercises" were more appealing than the "Basic Laws of Cultivators".

Spiritual energy was omnipresent in the endless star sea; it was the most basic energy in the infinite universe.

There was a theory that believed that the entire universe came into existence through the transformation of spiritual energy. From the biggest sun, the moon, and stars to the mountain and rivers, and even the smallest of ants and bacteria, all were congealed from spiritual energy through all kinds of ways!

The cultivation of spiritual energy was a way for humans to break away from the restrictions of their corporeal body and was the only way for humans to step onto the infinite road of endless evolution.

For cultivators, spiritual energy was everything!

Low-level cultivators used spiritual energy to temper their physique and strengthen their soul to reach the limits of their corporeal bodies, only to break through their limits time and time again

Intermediate-level cultivators could make their own spiritual energy produce "resonance" with the spiritual energy of the heaven and the earth in the surroundings, as a result of which they could display all kinds of inconceivable and strange supernatural abilities.

High-level cultivators could even more freely utilize the spiritual energy of the universe, making it possible for them to derive the 3,000 great daos and display an infinite number of supernatural powers.

According to legends, high-level cultivators with the deepest of cultivation could even completely transform their own body into a spiritual energy form and become one with the spiritual energy of the universe. They could even open a "small universe" of their own!

According to legends, amongst all the cultivators in the forty millenniums of cultivation, the strongest cultivator ever known as the "Emperor" had converted all of his spiritual energy into a world fragment, creating a small universe known as the "World's Horizon". In depths of the “World’s Horizon” was a sacred golden throne where he sat alone and became immortal after a thousand years of effort!

Whoever found the World's Horizon would discover the secrets of the sacred golden throne, thereby being able to inherit the Emperor's inheritance and become the strongest cultivator in the vast universe.

However, from the most basic point of view, Li Yao always scoffed at this illusory legend.

"There are two types of spiritual energy cultivation exercises. One is breathing exercises and the other is utilization exercises! Simply speaking, if spiritual energy was money, then breathing exercises would teach you the way through which you could earn money, whereas utilization exercises would teach you how to spend the money!"

Li Yao repeatedly nodded his head. The cultivator's assistant explained the profundity in simple terms, using a very simple metaphor to allow Li Yao to understand within a second.

The breathing exercise was the foundation; if one learned a good breathing exercise, one could breathe in more spiritual energy of the heaven and earth. You could say it would be like a human who had earned a tremendous amount of money but was still afraid he would be unable to learn how to spend.

Even if they didn't learn how to spend, he could still convert all his money into coins and smash his opponent to death!

Of course, it was not so easy to "make money". In normal circumstances, everyone's talent was just about the same, and at the same level, their spiritual energy reserve was also roughly the same, so one must find a way to utilize it more than anyone else—or in other words, “spend more money” than the others.

When utilizing, it was also quite possible to win big using a small amount of effort.

"In short, breathing exercises are the foundation of cultivation. I'll first let you test a breathing exercise!"

Li Yao, with all his concentration, continued telepathic thoughts exchange with the cultivator's assistant.

In the world of cultivation, the absorption of spiritual energy was the most important thing. Naturally, the common, popular breathing exercises in the federation were a dime in a dozen.

However, a vast majority of the acclaimed and effective breathing exercises belonged to various major sects. If one wanted to learn them, they would need to pay a price.

The cost of these acclaimed and effective exercises was frighteningly exorbitant; there were even some exercises, where you are required to join the respective sect, while some require you to make a special contribution to the sect, only then would you be able to learn.

Whereas, cultivation efficiency of the majority of the low-priced and free breathing exercises was low and had hundreds of loopholes and even fatal flaws. If used for cultivation, one could easily have Qigong deviation.

Cultivators who released these free breathing exercises did so in order to find someone who would act as their "guinea pig", helping them test these breathing exercises for free.

Contrary to their low price, some breathing exercises were of good quality and had high efficiency to absorb spiritual energy and were even especially taught by famous masters who would not take any sort of payment. These acclaimed masters would even send a variety of strengthening agents and auxiliary magical equipment in order to help the cultivators cross the threshold.

The cultivator's assistant told Li Yao that whenever he found such breathing exercises—he must check again and again, and he must be careful not be swindled and choose appropriate exercise, lest he picks the wrong exercise which would ultimately doom him.

"The breathing exercises themselves often don't have any problems, and they were indeed genuine goods and were even sold at a loss!

"But, they have one fatal problem—they have poor compatibility!"

"After cultivating using these kinds of breathing exercises, one needs to follow up with a higher subsequent breathing exercise and would even need to practice a compatible supporting utilization exercise. You are also unable to change it to another exercise."

"For example, there is a very popular breathing exercise called＜Five Tiger Examining Heart Technique＞ available on the net. It is released by the cultivation sect called 'Five Tiger Clan' and could be downloaded free of cost. Moreover, the Five Tiger Clan would even regularly hold seminars and training camps and would teach the＜Five Tiger Examining Heart Technique＞ to cultivators free of charge. Many cultivators who are looking for cheap exercises would spend a large amount time and energy, and sure enough, they would finally be successful in practicing the＜Five Tiger Examining Heart Technique＞!"

"However, therein lies the problem! The free-to-download version of the＜Five Tiger Examining Heart Technique＞ is incomplete and only has the first seven stages. For the later seven stages, you would have to purchase them, and the cost is even higher than the complete breathing exercise released by other sects!"

"This is still nothing because the＜Five Tiger Examining Heart Technique＞ compatibility is poor. After cultivation, you will find that it is simply incompatible with the utilization exercises of other sects. You could only choose to train in ＜Five Tiger Soul Severing Technique＞,＜Five Tiger Slaughtering God Exercise＞, and other utilization exercises provided by the Five Tiger Clan. By then, you will have only two choices: one, you can choose to enter the Five Tiger Clan, and two, you can spend an exorbitant sum to buy the utilization exercises from the Five Tiger Clan. At that time, you would be nothing more than a fat sheep waiting to be slaughtered by the Five Tiger Clan again and again!"

"If you don't want to choose these two roads, you could only choose to disperse your cultivation and make a fresh start to practice another breathing exercise."

"However, dispersing your cultivation is equal to wasting the large amount of time and energy that you have spent in cultivation. Moreover, a little carelessness will damage your spiritual root and meridians, which is extremely unfavorable for future cultivation."

"Many cultivators, upon this point, would be in dilemma. It would be too late to regret, and you would be unable to go back."

"By relying on this kind of sinister method, the Five Tiger Clan, in just a short span of ten years, became one of the most powerful sects in the federation whose current population is monumental from an unknown little sect."

"Although the sect doesn't have many experts, they have a large number of low-level cultivators who have either been deceived and unwillingly joined them or joined them because of their clever words. Over time, like little drops of water forming into a mighty ocean, they have become an influence that can not be underestimated.”

"The behavior of the Five Tiger Clan does not violate the ＜Basic Laws of Cultivators＞. On their download page, the features of the＜Five Tiger Examining Heart Technique＞ have also been specified, thus if one paid enough attention, no new cultivator would be fooled."

The cultivator's assistant, while speaking, opened the download page of the＜Five Tiger Examining Heart Technique＞ and opened the "term and conditions".

Sure enough, a paragraph was mixed in among a big article written in dense, ant-like, small characters: "This exercise is created by the previous leader of Five Tiger Clan. It may be incompatible with other sects' exercises. Fellow daoists, please exercise caution."

This sentence was hidden in between a few thousand lines of warning. Not to mention "a little carelessness", even if one looked bit by bit with "extreme concentration", it would still be easy to overlook it!

Moreover, at the bottom, there were also comments:

"The Five Tiger Clan holds the final right to teach this exercise. Fellow daoists, please download."

And in the comments section next to it also had...

"Awesome, it is truly awesome! The＜Five Tiger Examining Heart Technique＞ is worthy to be called one of the top breathing exercise of the cultivation world. The speed of cultivation is so fast, the efficiency is so high, and there are almost no side-effects! Moreover, it is easy to practice and quick to learn. In just one month, I have achieved mastery and had practiced it to the third level in one breath! Fellow daoists who have newly entered the world of cultivation, why hesitate? Quickly download with me and cultivate!"

"Yes, now in the cultivation world, everything requires money. All the cultivation sects only have money in their eyes. Forces like the Five Tiger Clan who have such a sense of social responsibilities and makes contributions to the public welfare are not many!"

"At the beginning, I did not believe what the previous commenters were saying. It was a free exercise, so how can it be so good? Reading everyone's comments, I skeptically downloaded the＜Five Tiger Examining Heart Technique＞ and cultivated, but hey, in just half a month, I could feel my body strengthening and my soul has also become stronger. In the past, I found it hard to control magical equipment, but guess what? Now, I can simultaneously control five magical equipment! I can now operate them as if they were flying! The＜Five Tiger Examining Heart Technique＞ is truly divine!"

Chapter 121: Full Speed Ahead!

All the comments were accompanied by telepathic thoughts; they were all videos of several young, energetic cultivators cultivating the＜Five Tiger Examining Heart Technique＞ in high spirits. At first glance, all of them succeeded a little, as their entire body was surrounded by resplendent and colorful streams of light, causing everyone who watched their videos to have their hearts swayed.

“These people are all disciples of the Five Tiger Clan and have all been tasked to do this, so don’t be fooled. Of course, if you want to join the Five Tiger Clan, then that is another matter,” the cultivator’s assistant said.

Li Yao immediately shook his head while he shouted in his heart, “That was close!”

If the cultivator’s assistant hadn’t reminded him, plainly looking at such an enticing download page, he might have given it a try—that would have been truly depressing.

“Even though I always warn every cultivator when they have first entered, there would still be some who could not endure and would be fooled one after another. I also can’t do anything, as human greed is too easy to conquer. All I can do is warn them.”

The cultivator’s assistant continued:

“You are a student of the Grand Desolate War Institution. Once you arrive there, naturally, you will be taught high-grade breathing exercises. For now, I can give you a set of breathing exercise known as the＜Endless Cosmos＞, which is given as a gift by the Federation government."

"At the beginning when the federation was just established, over a hundred cultivators jointly developed this basic breathing exercise based on a set of ancient cultivators' incomplete texts. This exercise set is inefficient in absorbing spiritual energy and the cultivation speed is very slow; however, it wins in its serenity and gentleness. You will absolutely not have any Qigong deviation, and moreover, it is very simple, making it easy to master!"

"And its biggest advantage is—it has very strong compatibility! It is perfectly compatible with all the breathing exercises and utilization exercises in the federation. Even if you have practiced a few stages, you can still easily switch to a higher ranked breathing exercise."

The cultivator's assistant waved her hand as a tremendous amount of telepathic thoughts filled with data was transmitted into Li Yao's brain.

Just as it was described, the＜Endless Cosmos＞ was pretty simple. It didn't have many levels, spanned just over three stages, and was very easy to master; it was the basics of the basics.

Li Yao had already assimilated a pretty large part of Ou Yezi's memories; he already had a little bit of understanding of some of the basic cultivator exercises.

Even if he had not personally practiced it, he had seen the other ancient cultivators demonstrating it in the dreams.

With a little thought, he tried to grasp the abstruse principles of＜Endless Cosmos＞.

“The abstruse principles of this basic breathing exercise provided by the federation government, sure enough, is great!”

“It can actually simulate the beginning of the universe—the big bang, the world when the cosmos was still devoid of heavenly bodies!”

“So mysterious! So wonderful! I really want to immediately give it a try!”

Li Yao was struck by a thought. He once again thought of the battlefield that was bathing in demonic energy.

He simply could not control himself anymore. He asked the cultivator’s assistant to remember their progress and quickly logged out of the Federation Cultivators’ Nexus.

“Little Black, let’s go!”

Stuffing the Black Wing Sword in his backpack, Li Yao stuck his head out of the tent and stealthily looked around for a while. Only after having found that no one was there did he slowly and silently walk out of the tent.

Apparently, security wasn’t that tight. There were over a thousand passengers on the train who needed to be carefully inspected to check whether there was any demon clan aura remaining, and as such, all the soldiers and cultivators were too busy and could only do so much.

Li Yao had been inspected 17-18 times already and was determined to be a 100% pure human, so naturally, no one was going to pay too much attention to him.

On top of that, Li Yao’s identity was different; not only was he a 1st Class Federation Disabled Serviceman, he had also repaired the Taiyi Lightning Railgun amidst the battle, not to mention that he was also a newly advanced cultivator as well as a student of the Grand Desolate War Institution.

Each of his identity, no matter whichever it was would absolutely instill assurance into anyone.

Therefore, even though a few soldiers had found him walking around the platform, they did not care much. They all just thought that he was walking around to relieve his boredom.

Every cultivator who had just advanced would have a few quirks. Some even had a variety of strange ways to cultivate, which they would practice at the most crucial moment of their breakthrough.

As long as it was not against the law, generally speaking, no one would interfere with a cultivator.

“Little Black, let’s go!”

Li Yao took out the Black Wing Sword from his backpack and let it float in the air.

Staggeringly climbing up, he cautiously stood on the flying sword as he spread out both hands to maintain his balance.

In the past, he was just an ordinary person. He would ride the Black Wing Sword as if he was riding a broom, with both legs tightly clamped together and his hands tightly hugging the sword. It was extremely unbearable and simply could not be counted as “riding a flying sword”—it was more like “horse riding the sword”, “clasping the sword”, or even “embracing the sword”!

Now that he had successfully become a cultivator, he was naturally going to try riding the sword and roam everywhere in a free and unrestrained manner. It was only because of this that cultivating was worthwhile.

The four invisible spirit threads once again stretched out from Li Yao forehead and wound around the Black Wing Sword round after round. Li Yao suddenly felt that he had become one with the sword, as if his blood vessels and meridians had fused with the sword.

“Little Black, full speed ahead!”

Li Yao’s chest was brimming with lofty ambition and soaring determination. He looked up to the sky and gave a long howl, “Roooooaaaar, I’m the king of the world!”

The Black Wing Sword slightly shook as waves of spiritual brilliance flashed over its blade.

In the past, Li Yao could only guess from its actions, but now, he could vaguely feel its “emotions” that seemed to say:

“Go at full speed? Are you sure?”

“Of course!” Li Yao replied with confidence.

The tip of the Black Wing Sword’s sheath shook a little, seemingly as if it was helplessly saying, “Alright!”

Then—

From underneath Li Yao’s feet came a deafening howl. It was as if someone had ruthlessly punched him in the face, causing his entire body to fall backwards.

Much to Li Yao’s surprise, the Black Wing Sword soared to the limit in the blink of an eye, reaching a speed that was close to the speed of sound!

“This is simply crazy!” Li Yao screamed.

He almost fell off the Black Wing Sword. How could he still dare to stand on the sword and maintain the aloof and unrestrained posture of “riding the sword”? Just like in the past, he had his legs obediently clasped around the sword and the arms around the hilt, maintaining the posture of “riding the broom” once again. Even then, he could barely stabilize himself!

“Little Black, you are actually ten times faster than in the past! So you were just adapting to me before!” Li Yao shouted.

Black Wing Sword lightly shivered as it flew at a high-speed, and its scabbard moved up and down, seemingly as if it was coldly snorting, “What do you think?”

“Cool! It is too cool!”

After half a minute, Li Yao barely adapted to flying at a subsonic speed. The feeling of splitting through the wind was simply incomparable, feeling thrilled as adrenaline shot through him.

Whoosh! Whoooossh!

Whoooooooossssssh!

The Black Wing Sword, upon noticing that he had gradually adapted, once again increased its speed by a level. Moreover, it also did various kinds of maneuvers in the air, like accelerating, deaccelerating, suddenly stopping and accelerating, 360-degree rolls, vertical ascents, nose-dives, suddenly stopping… Each maneuver that could dumbfound even a Golden Core Stage cultivator was done by the Black Wing Sword.

“Aaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhh!”

At the beginning, Li Yao could barely keep up with the rhythm of the Black Wing Sword, and later, he could do nothing but scream.

When the Black Wind Sword carried out the supersonic maneuvers, a tremendous centrifugal force acted upon him, so much that he suspected that he was going to fall off. However, an unusual suction force appeared from the Black Wind Sword under his feet, causing him to be firmly stuck on the sword!

“Stop, quickly stop!”

Li Yao’s desolate scream was covered by the howls of the wind. God knows whether the Black Wing Sword had heard it or not.

However, even if it had heard it, it would perhaps have turned a deaf ear.

For the next five minutes, Li Yao experienced the most thrilling ride of his life. Whether it was flying at the speed of sound in one second or staying strangely still for the next, or whether the Black Wing Sword carried him to the upper reaches of the atmosphere in just half minute, almost entering the endless space, everything made this the most thrilling ride of his life.

During the last ten seconds, he, from ten thousand meters high in the sky, continuously rolled 360-degree along its longitudinal axis and made a nose-dive towards the ground. A human and a sword, like a high-speed drill, dove towards the ground. It was only when they were just a few meters away from the ground did the Black Wing Sword come to an abrupt stop and began charging horizontally forward as swiftly as lightning. Li Yao’s toes had almost plowed two deep trenches into the ground!

“Blurgh!”

When the Black Wing Sword finally came to a stop, Li Yao’s complexion was already as pale as a corpse that had been dead for three days. Holding his stomach, he emptied the contents of his stomach.

In contrast, the Black Wing Sword danced around him in excitement as it constantly circled around Li Yao, seemingly saying, “I have not flown like this for a long time!”

Finally, when it came to a stop in front of Li Yao, its scabbard rubbed around its edges, making “Squeak Squeak” noises like mocking laughters. It seemed to be saying, “Vomiting just like that?! You’re so weak!”

“Was… was your previous owner a Golden Core cultivator?” He weakly asked as tears trickled down from the corner of his eyes because of the vomiting.

The Black Wing Sword proudly shook its sword tip.

God knows how, but Li Yao immediately understood what it was saying.

“Golden Core? How can a mere Golden Core cultivator be my master?”

"…I really want to become a Master Refiner as quickly as possible so that I could take out your master crystal chip and check what your control crystal chip is like. Only then would I know how such a twisted magical equipment was created!" Li Yao said to himself.

The Black Wing Sword suddenly emitted a dangerous red aura.

"I mean to say—I really want to become a Master Refiner as quickly as possible so that I could open your outer shell and perform maintenance as well as help you upgrade!" Li Yao hastily added.

The Black Wing Sword made a "Squeak" sound, stating its satisfaction before floating in the air lazily and letting the breeze push it as it drifted around the Wasteland.

Li Yao gasped for air for a while as his crazily pounding heart turned calm. Li Yao straightened up his waist with difficulty before checking the surroundings.

Much to his surprise, he found himself already in the outer ring of the demon beast battlefield.

"Wow! In just ten minutes, we are already here. It's ten times faster than the military shuttle! You are so powerful!"

Li Yao was secretly scared but was even more so at ease.

With the Black Wing Sword, before the others could discover his absence, he would have already returned to the station unbeknownst to anyone.

As he looked around, he could find nothing but a lonely and desolate desert. Aside from a crystal rail line which extended to the horizons, there wasn't a single trace of human civilization; it was as if he was in a primitive era.

Corpses of demon beasts that were constantly releasing demonic energy were spread everywhere; it was as if an invisible force field had covered a radius of a few dozen kilometers. The air here was very sticky as well as a little stifling.

The demonic energy was strongly infectious. If someone stayed here for a long time, he would lose his sanity and would become a monster who only knew how to kill.

Even if it was a low-level cultivator, without purifying the demonic energy, he would have his meridians blocked and his spiritual energy polluted, which would eventually lead to Qigong deviation. And in the worst case scenario, he would fall onto the demonic path.

Unless it was necessary, like the soul search squad who were forced to enter such places that were flooded with demonic energy to search for residual souls, ordinary people and low-level cultivators were all reluctant to even approach such an area.

Because of this reason, there was no federation army guarding the area and neither were there any cultivators patrolling. There were only warning signs placed in the surroundings. Also, in the outer ring, a restrictive barrier was placed around it for the ordinary people.

This restrictive barrier was specially designed to block ordinary people from entering the area filled with demonic energy.

For cultivators like Li Yao that could ride the sword, of course, it didn't have an iota of an effect.

“According to Professor Ding, tomorrow, some cultivators that specially purify demonic energy would bring special magical equipment to ”purify’ this area. For now, as there is no one here, this place is the best place for me to cultivate—it’s just the right place for me to have a meal!”

Chapter 122: The Flying Sword is Also Crazy!

Li Yao was like a mouse that fell into a sack of rice. With narrowed eyes, he looked all around, only to find a dense mass of red specks of light making a headlong rush towards him.

Li Yao walked around along the rail tracks. He tried to find the place that was the richest in demonic energy.

Suddenly, in front of him appeared a big, dark black lump. On a closer look, it was nothing but a scrap of iron that had been deformed into such a shape.

He pondered for a long time before a sudden realization dawned on him—it was the armored carriage from last night that charged into the beast tide without a shred of hesitation!

He had never imagined that it would actually be deformed into such a shape under the raging beast tide; it was like it was nothing more than a box made of rotten paper in front of the beast tide.

Even though the bodies of the cultivators from this lump of iron had already been removed, Li Yao could still hear the heroic roars of the seven cultivators ringing in his ear.

“I’ll cultivate here. I hope that the seniors would lend me a hand. After my cultivation culminates, I’ll definitely slaughter the demon beasts, and I will help you get revenge!”

Li Yao struggled to climb his way up the lump of iron that was laden with blood stains. Crossing his legs, he sat at the peak and silently operated the＜Endless Cosmos＞ breathing exercise in his mind.

“According to legends, countless millions of years ago, the endless universe that we now live in used to be a plasmic[1] crystallization of pure spiritual energy, which was also known as ‘Primeval Crystallization Point’.”

“And because of an impetus of some kind of incredibly huge ‘power’, at the Primeval Crystallization Point, a huge scale explosion that was beyond any man’s imagination took place. An almost inexhaustible amount of pure spiritual energy exploded as it spread everywhere and created stars and everything in existence, including the universe itself!”

“Whereas, at the beginning of the universe…”

“There weren’t any stars nor were there any planets. There were only countless extremely hot and incomparably unstable masses of matter!”

“The relatively large masses of matter revolved at high-speeds, while the smaller masses of matter were attracted to them. Much like how a snowball would grow bigger and bigger as it rolled over the snow, the masses of matter grew to an unimaginable size and became huge as countless stars formed one by one.”

“According to the profound principles of the＜Endless Cosmos＞ breathing exercise, one must imagine themselves as the larger mass of matter at the beginning of universe after the big bang, while the spiritual energy floating in the air would be the smaller mass of matter. Then, let your own soul revolve at a high-speed and attract the spiritual energy to temper the body and strengthen the soul!”

“There are two things which are the crux of the＜Endless Cosmos＞ breathing exercise!”

“First, in the mind, imagine the scene of the universe at the starting phase of the Big Bang, where the pure spiritual energy, in the blink of an eye, expanded into the vast universe. Feel the ancient world, the ‘beginning point of the universe’, ‘the world when there were no land and sky’, and experience the inconceivable scene that transcended human imagination!”

“Second, during your meditation, let your spirit revolve at a high-speed!”

Silently pondering over the profundity of the＜Endless Cosmos＞, Li Yao’s pair of eyes were half-opened, half-closed; it seemed as if he was asleep, yet at the same time, he was not. He took a few dozen long, deep breaths, each of which lasted longer than before, as he entered a mysterious state.

In his trance-like state, the Wasteland turned into a vast and endless universe, and he was surrounded by a large amount of hot and virulent spiritual energy that constantly disintegrated, collided, compressed, fractured, and finally congealed into mass after mass of bright matter.

Each mass of matter was incomparably hot, and the temperature was more than a hundred times than that of the sun!

Whereas, Li Yao own body was also emitting a tremendous amount of heat, seemingly as if he too had turned into a red-hot mass of matter.

And his soul, in a trance, fluttered and shook as it fiercely started revolving as its speed was getting faster and faster!

Some of the smaller hot masses of matter floating around him were attracted by the torque generated by the revolution of his soul. They suddenly floated towards him and adhered on his body before merging into his body!

Demonic energy!

The demonic energy surged into Li Yao’s body like a torrential tide!

He was filled with an incomparable feeling; compared to absorbing the pitiful amount of spiritual energy in the medical tent, where he could only do so by spending a tremendous amount of effort, this was far more comfortable!

Li Yao was wild with joy. The four spirit threads revolved constantly as more demonic energy was sucked into his body. Rolling through Ou Yezi’s tree of memories, the demonic energy was purified into the purest of spiritual energy, which thereafter surged into every part of his body, constantly filling each strand of his muscles, every blood vessel, and every cell of his body with spiritual energy!

Every second, his body would become stronger. With every passing second, his body evolved by a level!

“This is too strong!”

Li Yao clenched his fists in inexplicable joy, as he felt the fearsome strength surging through his fingers.

He had a vague feeling that if the spiritual energy was stimulated to the limit and blasted through this fist, the destructive force might very well be ten times stronger than the past!

In the past, he could only rely on physical strength.

But now, he had instead become the vast universe, one of the endless stars, making it possible for him to fire the world’s energy!

In just a short span of one hour, Li Yao had engulfed an incredibly huge amount of demonic energy. Every single one of his cells had been filled to the point that he could not absorb even one more speck of red light.

Just like how a human’s appetite had a limit, the amount of spiritual energy a cultivator could absorb also had a limit. One could never engulf endlessly and completely absorb the spiritual energy in the world.

If the spiritual energy was absorbed blindly and not refined, it would more than likely lead to oversaturation of spiritual energy, which would result in “Spiritual Energy Poisoning”.

Much like drinking too much water would lead to “Water Intoxication”.

In serious cases, it could even lead to overflowing of the spiritual energy, causing the meridians to be torn which may very well lead to Qigong deviation!

After Li Yao had absorbed a huge amount of demonic energy, it was enough to allow him to continuously advance three levels.

He was very well aware of the principle of biting off more than one could chew. He restrained his greedy thoughts and jumped down from the lump of iron with a long howl.

“Well?”

An incomparably strange scene entered his vision, leaving him gawking.

What he saw was the Black Wing Sword vertically floating and gradually rotating in the air. From the inside of its scabbard, three black spirit threads had grown out and were absorbing the demonic energy.

And the way it was doing it was exactly the same as when Li Yao was cultivating!

No! On a closer look, Li Yao noticed that the efficiency of absorbing the spiritual energy of the Black Wing Sword was far more than his!

When he was using＜Endless Cosmos＞ to absorb the spiritual energy, the spirit threads were only entwined around his body and moved slowly.

In contrast, the spirit threads of the Black Wing Sword were spread out, and every thread was like a spring which coiled round after round to form an incomparably strange spiral made of spirit threads.

Obviously, under the same length, the Black Wing Sword’s spirit threads could touch far more specks of red light than him, thereby having ten times more efficiency in absorbing spiritual energy than Li Yao!

“Can magical equipment also cultivate on their own?”

“Moreover, the cultivation exercise is obviously an upgraded version of the＜Endless Cosmos＞!”

“Is Little Black imitating me after watching me cultivate? And while at it, did it just upgrade the＜Endless Cosmos＞?”

“T-this is too terrifying!”

Li Yao was stupefied for a long time. Suddenly, he reacted; his complexion changed as he screamed, “This is not good, Little Black! Quickly stay your hand… This is not right, quickly close your mouth… This is also not right! Whatever, you quickly stop!”

The Black Wing Sword suddenly stopped absorbing as its three black spirit threads coiled around each other and moved towards Li Yao. Obviously, it was greatly dissatisfied.

Li Yao impatiently ran next to it, and having sensed the density of the demonic energy, he explained:

“We can not completely absorb all the demonic energy. Tomorrow, powerful cultivators will be coming to purify the demonic energy. If they found that it is all empty here and that there is not even an iota of demonic energy, they will definitely continue to investigate. If they find out that it was us, we will be in big trouble!”

At the beginning, Li Yao thought that the Black Wing Sword was just a slightly strange flying sword; therefore, he actually didn’t mind too much.

Anyway, in the world of cultivation, there were many rare and wondrous treasures. A flying sword that would watch a hologram projector was nothing strange.

But a flying sword that could cultivate on its own would absolutely be a priceless treasure in the eyes of many cultivators. Once it was found, perhaps they would even use all kinds of means to take it away.

Li Yao did not want Little Black to be taken away by these people, only to be taken apart for research.

This guy was something left behind by the old man, not to mention it had accompanied him for so many years. It was like his half-sibling.

“Squeak…”

Upon listening to Li Yao’s explanation, the Black Wing Sword reluctantly shook its sword tip as it slowly retracted its three black spirit threads back into its scabbard.

When it was retracting its last spirit thread, the spirit thread unwillingly moved and grabbed one last speck of red light into its body with a “Swish!”. Only then did it retract it back and that too reluctantly, seemingly as if it longed for more.

Li Yao, on the other hand, had a shrewd smile hanging on his face. Knocking on the scabbard, he said:

“Hey hey hey, Little Black. I just wanted to make you act with caution, so don’t think that I don’t want to let you completely absorb the spiritual energy! My heart also aches to see such a large amount of demonic energy floating around yet unable to be absorbed!”

From childhood, Li Yao had been doing things stealthily. He was well aware of where the shoe pinches[2].

If the Black Wing Sword continued to absorb voraciously at one place, the demonic energy within that region would be entirely absorbed, creating a “demonic energy deficient” region.

At first glance, the high-level cultivators that would be coming here tomorrow would definitely know that someone was cultivating here!

If they changed place to place and absorbed a little bit of demonic energy from everywhere, how would they be discovered? In any case, it would be impossible for the high-level cultivators to know the density of the demonic energy here.

Assume that there were ten cans filled with candy. If Li Yao stole all the candies from one can, then he would, for sure, be discovered at a moment’s notice.

However, if he secretly stole just one candy from each can, it would be hard to notice.

For the next hour, Li Yao and the Black Wing Sword shuttled around the demon beast battlefield. They flew to a place, absorbed some of the demonic energy, then waved the spirit threads to scatter the remaining demonic energy so that the specks of red light were evenly distributed as far as possible.

The more the Black Wing Sword absorbed, the more Li Yao shuddered in fear.

Because Li Yao discovered that Little Black’s, this freak’s, “appetite” seemed to be inexhaustible.

In just a short span of one hour, it had already absorbed more than ten times the amount of demonic energy than Li Yao had!

Moreover, it seemed that it was still restraining itself a little. If he let it absorb voraciously, it would have even swept clean all the demonic energy here.

“Who the hell actually refined such a magical equipment that could even eat!?” Li Yao secretly criticized.

The Black Wing Sword wandered in the sea of demonic energy to its heart’s content. It seemed as if it was a glutton who had been hungry for ten straight days and ten straight nights and had thrown himself into a pool of wine and a mountain of meat, eating in a manner that could be described as wholeheartedly.

“Little Black, you can not swallow anymore. If you swallow any more demonic energy, the density would decrease by too much, and others would easily notice it! If your hunger still has not been satiated, if worse comes to worst, wait for me to earn a little bit of money. Then, I will buy you high-grade crystals that contain a large of spiritual energy to eat!”

Li Yao said with sorrow.

From the appetite shown by the Black Wing Sword, in order to buy crystals for it to eat, perhaps in just one week, all of Li Yao’s assets would vanish.

The Black Wing Sword’s spirit threads danced around as it emitted “Creak Creak” reluctant noises before using its spirit threads to nod to Li Yao, seemingly saying, “You said it! High-grade crystals, I’m waiting!”

Only then did it reluctantly retract its spirit threads and flew over to Li Yao’s front.

When Li Yao remembered about those lightning-swift, crazy ten minutes from earlier, Li Yao’s complexion changed. He righteously and sternly said, “Little Black, let us first come to an agreement. In accordance with the＜Basic Laws of Cultivators＞, when riding the sword, the ride should be calm and peaceful. You must slow down, look around, and only then should you cross ahead. You absolutely can not fly chaotically! That’s why, in the returning journey, you must —”

He was not even able to finish speaking before the Black Wing Sword had already started making “creak creak” sounds of impatience and appeared beneath his feet. With one vigorous move, Li Yao was pulled up before a strong suction appeared, pulling Li Yao firmly to the sword’s body—the whole thing made his balls ache!

“Boom! Boom Boom Boom Boom!”

After absorbing enough demonic energy, the Black Wing Sword turned even wilder. It had not yet taken off, but a torrential jet stream was already being discharged from the back of its hilt. Its blade was madly shaking as round after round of ripples rapidly proliferated and spread in the air!

“Let me down! I will just walk back!” Li Yao screamed.

Too late, the Black Wing Sword released a thick black mist that completely enveloped Li Yao as the sword and the human duo soared into the sky, breaking through the clouds and appearing beyond the ninth heaven in the blink of an eye.

Thereafter, the Black Wing Sword, inch by inch, pushed its sword tip as it gradually aligned towards the desolate land ten thousand meters below them!

“W-what are you doing? I don’t have any injustice or any hatred with you. And last night, didn’t I even oiled you and help you removed the rust!?”

Li Yao repeatedly screamed as his legs went limp and his balls went soft in fear.

From the scabbard came the sounds of metal rubbing against each other, sounding as if it was mocking him. A large mass of black mist surged out in the star space behind Li Yao, forming two black wings that spanned over a hundred meters.

The Black Wing Sword transformed into a black stream of light as it whizzed straight towards the ground!

TLN:

[1] The author wanted to give a scene where the spiritual energy is highly concentrated to the point that it had become a semi-liquid and semi-solid entity. Semi-liquid and semi-sold because the temperature and pressure were high, so I think “plasma” would better fit the description.

[2] Sources of trouble, grief, etc.

Chapter 123: Little Bluebird

When Li Yao unsteadily returned to the medical tent, his hair stood upright as if they had been scorched by a flame spirit glyph.

He ruthlessly smashed himself into the medical treatment pod. He felt as if everything was spinning, as if he was a small boat in the middle of a tempestuous storm.

He had been vomiting for a long time, and now, there was nothing left to even vomit; half way through the journey, he had already puked out all the gastric acid in his stomach and had almost spat out his heart, liver, spleen, and lungs.

“A gentlemen’s revenge is never too late, even after ten years. Little Black, you just wait and watch! The day I become a Master Refiner, I will definitely modify you into a broom!” while throwing up, Li Yao ruthlessly shouted in his heart.

However, the Black Wing Sword, who was the target, wasn’t able to hear the cries in Li Yao’s heart. After swallowing an amount that was as vast as the sea of demonic energy and flying as swiftly as lightning twice, its mood was good. It was contentedly sleeping in his backpack.

“Student Li Yao…”

At this moment, an intermittent female voice floated into Li Yao’s ear. it sounded a bit difficult to comprehend.

Li Yao was taken aback in fear.

After becoming a cultivator, Li Yao’s senses had become extremely keen, not to mention that despite there being no place for a woman to hide in such a big medical tent, he didn’t discover anyone.

“Student Li Yao…”

Once again, the female voice rang in his ear. It was faint and weak like a voice of a lingering female ghost.

Li Yao had goosebumps explode all over his back—the female voice was coming from beneath his body; however, there was nothing beneath him but the pedestal of the medical treatment pod!

“I’m in here…”

When Li Yao was just about to be absolutely terrified, a tiny spirit mechanical bird, fluttering its metal wings, flew up from beneath the medical treatment pod. Its sparkling, transparent crystal eyes flickered with an embarrassed look as she gently said, “I’m sorry, I am still adapting to this new body. I am still not able to fly proficiently. Just a moment ago, I crashed into the ground. I was not intentionally hiding or anything to scare you, Student Li Yao.”

Li Yao was stupefied. He opened his palm and let the mechanical bird carefully land on his palm.

It was a small yet exquisite spirit mechanical bird whose whole body was wrapped in a pale green brilliance. A majority of its limbs had been carved from crystals, its frame had been cast from some sort of metal, whilst translucent crystals covered the outer layer of the meticulously carved gears, flywheels, driveshafts, and U-joints. They all fit so perfectly that it gave a natural aesthetic feeling.

Li Yao could not help but wonder because this mechanical bird was giving him a familiar feeling. He always felt that he had seen the look in the bird’s eyes somewhere before.

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao widely opened his eyes: “Wei Qingqing?”

The mechanical bird fluttered her wings in joy as she lightly nodded her small head. Right now, her voice was still very gentle, and unlike the clear and melodious voice from before, her voice had become a bit soft.

“Yes, Student Li Yao, it’s me. It’s all thanks to you finding the wisp of my residual soul that Uncle Tang, Professor Ding, and the others were able to turn me into a spectral cultivator. However, as I was too weak and as a result of my soul having been exposed to the air for too long, my soul was fragmented. For the moment, my soul is not strong enough to sustain a large spirit prosthetic body, thus I can only use this small, bird-type spirit prosthetic body.”

Speaking to this point, Wei Qingqing’s eyes lit up. Her facial muscles that were made of crystal fibers also showed a smiling expression. She said in a gentle tone, “I guess this is alright too. Ever since childhood, I have liked birds. Often in my imagination, I would always think of myself as a little bluebird[1] that could fly freely amidst the clouds. Now, this can be considered as my wish having come true.”

Li Yao, holding the little bluebird, sighed with emotion in his heart.

Amongst the seven cultivators, Wei Qingqing gave him the biggest shock.

She was no more a 20 year old who had just graduated from Sky Fantasia Academy, not to mention she was a culture-type cultivator, the weakest type among all cultivators. To be honest, even if she didn’t come forward, no one would have blamed her.

Yet, she didn’t hesitate to stand up. In the happiest period of her life, she had died even before her life had bloomed—what kind of power actually drove her to come forward?

Li Yao was extremely curious about everything regarding Wei Qingqing.

“I came here specially to express my gratitude to Student Li Yao. If you hadn’t found my residual soul, perhaps I would have already vanished into a puff of smoke by now. How would I be able to see this clear blue sky and the clouds again?”

Wei Qingqing, fluttering her wing, lightly leaped from Li Yao palm and rose into the air. As she somewhat clumsily flew in circles, she intermittently said, “H-however, I still have not yet perfectly mastered this spirit prosthetic body. It takes everything for me to just converse. Student Li Yao, it would be better for you to enter my world of fiction, where we can directly use spiritual exchange. What do you think?”

“World of fiction?”

Li Yao suddenly recalled that Wei Qingqing was a very mysterious “Illusionist”, who, according to the rumors, could create an extremely powerful world of literature, and in this world of literature, everything was at their beck and call.

Li Yao was completely curious regarding illusionists. He momentarily nodded and joyfully replied, “Of course I will, what should I do?”

“You don’t need to do anything. Just close your eyes.”

With a flap of her wings, Wei Qingqing flew to his head: “Student Li Yao, welcome to my novel,＜Bluebird>. Let us together enter the＜Bluebird> world.”

“Weng!”

Li Yao felt a slight shaking in his eardrums as the scene before him blurred. He felt as if his soul was pulled out from his body and was falling down into a seemingly bottomless hole. He didn’t know how long it took before he felt as if his soul was fiercely smashed into a new body!

In his ears rang howls of the wind, and what was in front of him were the ever-changing white clouds and large groups of white clouds that were like a sea of cotton, which under the breeze were molded into all kinds of shapes and figures.

Puppies, horses, buildings, forests… Everything, shining under the golden brilliance of the sunlight, gave off an appearance akin to a city in the sky.

“Beautiful, this is so beautiful!”

The world of fiction created by Wei Qingqing was almost the same as the real world. Even more so, the illusory aesthetic feeling it gave off made Li Yao completely relaxed and happy.

Then, he found that he had wings. He had turned into a falcon who was flying and hovering freely amidst the clouds.

When he recalled the scene where the Black Wing Sword carried him beyond the ninth heaven, Li Yao’s complexion suddenly became worse.

“What is it? Don’t you like flying high in the sky? If not, then you can imagine yourself as the bird you like and we will fly a bit lower.”

An ordinary, little bluebird that was as ordinary as wildflowers in deep valleys, with the exception of the three long, lush green feathers on its tail, flew above Li Yao as it spoke in a soft voice.

“It’s nothing. I like flying high in the sky, but what I don’t like is diving directly from 10,000 meters high in the sky to just one meter above the ground in half a minute.”

While speaking, with a move of his thought, Li Yao suddenly transformed into a fierce vulture.

The little bluebird was scared by the grim and ferocious appearance of Li Yao. She flew 4-5 meters ahead before circling back. Flying shoulder to shoulder with Li Yao, she curiously asked.

“You like vultures? I thought you would prefer falcons because falcons look majestic.”

“Although the falcon is majestic, it is too noble, too proud. It is not at all suitable to live in every place, and even though the vulture looks ordinary, even though it looks a little ferocious, in the places where the falcon can not live, the vulture can live quite well.”

Li Yao stretched out his wings and soared freely. Bit by bit, he started to enjoy this feeling.

He craned his neck to look about and said, “Since we are in a novel, what is the story of this novel?”

“There is no story. This＜Bluebird> novel is just a little bluebird flying in the sky as she gazes upon the many clouds which are all changing into all kinds of forms and were overflowing with multitudes of colorful brilliance under the illumination of the sunlight and the molding of the gales of wind. I am preparing to write all kinds of shapes and colors of clouds into this world. It is simply just this.”

Wei Qingqing paused a bit before continuing with a smile, “Originally, this novel only had one character, and that was a little bluebird, but now, I think that adding a vulture would not be bad too. Together, they will fly over the mountains, rivers, and seas of the Heaven Origin Sector, watching the sea of clouds in the sky till they reach the end of the world.”

“Now, I understand. This is pure literature!” Li Yao was filled with deep veneration.

Wei Qingqing was a little embarrassed. She lowered her head and said:

“In fact, I have also written of other stuff and some popular youth novels in the market. It’s about an extremely talented heir of a major sect who fell in love with an ordinary girl, but the elders of the sect were against them and didn’t want them to be together. Instead, they had wanted to marry him to the daughter of an elder of another sect… It had things like this and that. When I was in university, I had also published two other novels, and they sold pretty well! However, in my heart, my favorite is this incomplete ＜Bluebird＞. I began writing this from the age of fifteen and was planning to write it till the age of fifty. Till now, I have not shown it to anybody else. You are the first person to see it.”

“This is too wasteful! I’m just a coarse fellow who has little, if any, education. I do not understand literature,” said Li Yao. He was immensely embarrassed.

Wei Qingqing slightly smiled. Her little feet lightly stepped upon Li Yao’s body before the little bluebird soar up and circled around the vulture:

“Maybe this is fate. Since childhood, I have liked watching the ever-changing clouds in the sky. I have always wished to turn into a little bluebird and fly in the blue sky amidst the white clouds. Who would have known that I would really turn into a little bird? Ha, now after personally experiencing it, I would definitely be able to write the best＜Bluebird> novel!”

The girl’s optimism moved Li Yao.

He asked himself—if it was him who was dead and was reborn into a spirit prosthetic body, and moreover remain life-long as a “spectral cultivator”, perhaps he could not be as calm and as optimistic as Wei Qingqing.

Li Yao could not help but ask, “Sister Qingqing…”

“Call me Little Qing! I am just 3-4 years older than you!” the little bluebird chirped.

Li Yao flushed, but fortunately, his face was covered in feathers, and the little bluebird also didn’t see:

“Little Qing, last night on the crystal train, why did you come forward? Obviously, there were many cultivators who didn’t stand up. Your strength was the weakest of them all. Wouldn’t an Illusionist’s spiritual attack play a limited role against the beast tide? Even if you didn’t stand up, no one would make any irresponsible remarks.”

The little bluebird was silent for a long time. She continued flying amidst the clouds, continuously chasing after the warm sunlight before she finally muttered:

“Maybe, maybe if I did not come forward, no one would blame me.”

“Moreover, I was so weak that even after I overdrafted my entire life force, I could only fire the Taiyi Lightning Railgun once… Even without me, perhaps they would have still been able to delay the beast tide.”

“I was also hesitating, but then I thought of my teacher and what she would have done if she were in my place. She would have definitely stood up, so inheriting my teacher’s will, I just came forward, that’s all.”

TLN:

[1]- The Bluebird is a three-footed mythical bird that is the messenger of a fairy-god mother.

Chapter 124: Big Battle Formation

Chapter 124: Big Battle Formation

"I was born in a remote mountain village in the southern region of the federation where we had poor means of transportation and communication. We also didn't have any decent industries, and the financial condition was extremely poor. In our village, most of the adults would go to the city to make a living, leaving only the elderly and children behind.”

"My teacher was the only teacher in our village. She was a hundred-year-old, gray-haired old lady."

"Since childhood, I knew that teacher was someone who possessed marvelous abilities. She could speak with many small animals in the mountain forest and could also quickly grow watermelons during the winter. With just one finger, she would ignite bonfires and eat roasted watermelon with us children."

"If anyone in our village had a headache or a slight fever, they would come to teacher, and teacher would always cure them neat and quickly."

"It was only under teacher's guidance did we, the children of the mountains, come to know that there was a vast world outside the village and that there was a mystical world of cultivation as well as wondrous magical equipment. Often, teacher, while holding our hands, would bring us into a dream again and again and would let us see bizarre and big cities. In these bizarre and big cities, we saw many people and ate many good dishes one after another."

"After a long time, I came to know that it was not a dream, but rather, a world of fiction created by teacher. Our teacher was a cultivator, and even more so, was an illusionist."

"However, by that time, she was already dead."

"When I turned 15, there was a downpour in our village which continued for ten straight days and nights. Due to the continuous downpour, the entire big mountain behind our mountain village became unstable, and finally, in the middle of the night, a landslide was triggered, bringing with it a terrifying mud avalanche."

"When teacher was helping the villagers walk down the mountain in the middle of the night, she was the first one to notice the mud avalanche."

"Rolling rocks mixed with mud were flooding down the mountain, and there was simply no time to escape nor was there time to inform the village."

"Thus, our teacher ignited her life and overdrafted her spiritual energy in order to create an incomparably solid spiritual energy shield, forcibly blocking the mud avalanche from reaching our mountain village."

"And so, everyone was able to safely escape; however, our teacher was engulfed by the mud avalanche. After ten days when her body was finally found, it seemed as if she was peacefully asleep."

"Since then, I swore that I would become someone like teacher. Following teacher's footsteps, I entered the Sky Fantasia Academy and became a cultivator as well as an illusionist who could use literature to create a world as they wished. After I graduated, I applied for the federation's 'Volunteer Program for Educating Poor Areas'. Following the same path as my teacher, I was going to a mountain village in the Wasteland to be a village teacher."

"In the process, I encountered the beast tide."

"To be honest, I had tens of thousands of reasons not to come forward, just like my teacher who, at that time, also had tens of thousands of reasons not to block the mud avalanche."

"However, she did come forward, and she didn't need any reason. Thus, I too came forward, and similarly, I too don't need any reasons. As long as there was an itsy-bitsy bit of impulse at the bottom of my heart, it's enough."

"I had never imagined that I would become something like this. I have had countless dreams, yet never had I dreamt that I would become a 'spectral cultivator' at such a young age. If you say I had no regrets, how could that be possible?"

"But there are some things which you know you will come to regret, yet you still have to do it. Because if you don't, you will regret it even more and will regret it for the rest of your life."

The little bluebird twittered. Knowingly or unknowingly, the two flew out from the clouds and wandered in the clear blue sky. Below them were magnificent mountains and rivers. The golden sunlight sprinkling over them coated their bodies with a magnificent and brilliant sheen.

The little bluebird said in embarrassment:

"I'm sorry, Student Li Yao. I just became a spectral cultivator, so my mind is in a mess. I have a lot of words to say but don't have anyone to speak to. I also don't know how I should explain this to my parents… they still don't know anything yet!"

"After thinking over and over again, you came to my mind. As you had saved me, and moreover, I heard that you had also offended a very influential VIP in order to protect the dignity of us few. I thought you could listen to some of my naggings, so I impetuously came looking for you. I have wasted so much of your time, and for that, I am truly embarrassed."

"No no no, you haven't wasted anything. Your voice is so pleasing to the ear, and this world is also very beautiful. This <Bluebird> is a very wonderful novel!"

Li Yao sincerely said.

"Do you mean it? Do you really like this world?" the little bluebird asked in joy and wonder.

Fluttering his wings, Li Yao directly charged towards the sun. After a moment, he folded his wings as he freely glided towards the mountains and rivers.

Squinting his eyes, he carefully savored every wisp of wind and every subtle feeling from his wings.

"It's true. This world is very beautiful. I like it, and I hope that I could always have the opportunity to enter the <Bluebird> world once in a while and soar together with you, leisurely watching the endless rivers, the sunset, and the windy cirri."

Just as those words came out of his mouth, Li Yao suddenly felt a throbbing sensation coming from the depths of his soul. It seemed that he now had a subtle connection with the＜Bluebird＞ world.

The＜Bluebird＞ world had also become clearer and was more moving, and the changes of the clouds were even more abundant.

Wei Qingqing eyes lit up as she murmured, "Student Li Yao, you have become the first reader of＜Bluebird＞."

"Reader?" Li Yao was surprised for a moment.

This one word clearly had a deeper meaning beyond the literal meaning.

Wei Qingqing nodded:

"That's right. We illusionists cultivate differently than normal cultivators. For you, the normal cultivators, cultivation is mainly about absorbing and utilizing spiritual energy."

"But we illusionists, instead, need to create some works of our own one after another and use these works to move people so that the readers would have a wonderful connection with us and can produce a spiritual resonance. And this very resonance would continue to increase our power."

"The more readers we have, the deeper the feelings would be, and in turn, the stronger the resonance would be, as a result of which our strength would increase more and more."

"My other two works are young adult fiction which sold rather well, and both have a large fan base. The spiritual resonance they bring is the source of my power."

"Meanwhile, this＜Bluebird> is pure literature, and thus no one would like to read something like this. You are the first 'reader' of＜Bluebird> who had triggered a resonance with me. And just because you were moved, the＜Bluebird> world became clearer, more harmonious, and closer to perfection."

"To have such a reader is my good fortune. Student Li Yao, once I have some new inspiration, I will write a new chapter and will definitely invite you once again to the＜Bluebird> world. We will together explore the limitless clouds of this beautiful world!"

Like all young women of arts and literature whose works were liked by someone, Wei Qingqing also became very happy. She completely forgot the fact that she had just died, and fluttering her exquisite wings, she danced around Li Yao.

Li Yao's face was flushed red. He had never thought that an uncouth fellow like him, who only knew how to do maintenance work, would produce a resonance with a pure literary work.

After thinking, he once again asked a question:

"Little Qing, if the readers read and trigger more resonance, which in turn would increase the strength of the illusionist, then wouldn't it be very advantageous for an illusionist to write best-selling books? The number of readers for the best-selling books would definitely be hundreds of thousands of times more than pure literature."

"In theory, that would be correct." Little bluebird nodded.

"Then, why would you pour all your effort in writing＜Bluebird>, a pure literature which would bring you nothing in return? Pure literature is difficult to write, and as no one is reading it, it is neither bringing money nor is it elevating your strength. Wouldn't it better to use your time to write a few best-selling books?"

A slight smile appeared on Wei Qingqing's face as she gazed afar at the distant fairyland amidst the clouds: "Because... I like it!"

...

After the little bluebird flew away, Li Yao wondered about this young writer who was only a few years older than him. The more he wondered, the more he found her interesting.

Starting up the crystal processor, he searched for "Green Orange".

This was Wei Qingqing's pen name.

The crystal processor slightly shook, and very soon, two of her works appeared on the screen.

As Wei Qingqing had said, she had published two best-selling, young adult fiction novels which had numerous readers and a very high number of pageviews on the net.

The first novel was＜The Teenage Sect Master Fell in Love with Me＞, on the cover of which was a handsome, elegant, dashing, and cheerful young man affectionately staring out from the hologram.

Li Yao shuddered. Mustering up his courage, he turned the page to the description page.

The story was about a sect master of a major sect who, because of a mishap during cultivation, was unfortunately struck by Qigong Deviation and had turned into a vegetable, leaving his seventeen-year-old son to carry out his responsibilities and inherit the sect.

The female protagonist was an ordinary person who, during her summer vacation, went to an enterprise under the sect to work. Because of a coincidence, the young sect master became her co-worker, and the two people slowly hit it off.

The teenage sect master, who had shallow cultivation, was at a young age when he inherited such a big sect. Naturally, there were many influential figures in the sect who remained unconvinced and would fight and scheme against one another. The excessive scheming and deception in his sect had caused him to be unbearably depressed, and it was rare to find a girl who was as pure as water and had no inkling of his identity. As to be expected, they became close and slowly started developing feelings for each other.

Since then naturally followed a huge drama filled with love and hate, grudges, and disputes. And the plots like an elder of the hostile faction scheming against the teenage sect master using a flying sword, only to be found by the heroine, who would help the teenage sect master block the sword appeared.

No matter how Li Yao racked his brain, he could not understand how an ordinary person could notice a flying sword shot by a cultivator. Even if it were to be discovered, how could the protagonist react in a timely manner? However, these were all details and were irrelevant.

Anyway, the teenage sect master and the heroine finally overcame all obstacles, and the lovers finally had a happy ending.

At this point, the teenage sect master's father, who had turned into a vegetable from Qigong deviation, suddenly woke up and resolutely opposed his son marrying an ordinary person.

And a female heir of another big sect who claimed to be the teenage sect master's fiancee also appeared in front of the heroine...

The story came to an abrupt end here; to know the later parts of the development, you would have to wait for the sequel to be published.

"Uh..."

Li Yao swept a few glances and finally gave up on the idea of carefully reading the novel. He dragged the hologram screen down to see the second book.

The second novel was＜The Tyrant Elder Fell in Love with Me＞. The story was almost the same as the first novel, the only thing different was...

The "me" in the "fell in love with me" was a boy.

And of course, the "Tyrant Elder" was also a tall, cold and powerful, robust man.

"This is too terrifying!"

At a lightning fast speed, Li Yao closed the page and rubbed both his eyes with force as tears trickled down.

He gave up on the idea of having a further spiritual exchange with Wei Qingqing.

At least, for the illusory worlds of these two novels, he would rather die than enter them.

"We will just talk more about pure literature, Student Qing," Li Yao said in his heart.

At this time, from the top of his head came waves of whizzing noises one after another.

At the beginning, Li Yao didn't pay any attention them; as it was a military camp, some military battle shuttle flying above head was normal.

However, very soon, he realized that there was something amiss—the whizzing noise continued to remain above the medical tent, and moreover, the sounds were getting wilder and wilder and increasingly rampant.

It was as if a few dozen military battle shuttles were circling around the medical tent!

Li Yao's eyes twitched. Carrying the Black Wing Sword and the Dark Star Rock on his back, he stretched his body a bit in order to maintain the best fighting state before he sprang out of the medical tent in two steps.

In the sky was a big battle formation, which, for a moment, caught him by surprise.

Chapter 125: An Overbearing Apology

Chapter 125: An Overbearing Apology

Issuing deafening roars, a few dozen flying shuttles floated in the air. Such a group appeared overbearingly grand and imposing.

None of these flying shuttles were painted in the army-green color like the ones used by the federation army; instead, they were painted with alternating white and blue stripes, giving an appearance that looked like billowing rivers flowing towards the east.

On either side of the flying shuttle, every one of them had the word "Jiang" engraved upon it in a manner that was as flamboyant as flying dragons and dancing phoenixes.

"Whiz! Whiz! Whiz! Whiz!"

Over a hundred robust men wearing blue combat suits fiercely smashed onto the ground from a dozen meter high, thereby blasting pieces of stones in every direction and raising a cloud a dust.

In just the blink of an eye, over a hundred robust men had appeared around Li Yao.

The indifferent gaze, the gruesome temperament, and the straight look made them appear as if they were a group of puppets forged from metal.

The bodies of these people were surging with an overbearing, matchless, and awe-inspiring aura, whereas round after round of spirit threads coiled around their bodies, seemingly as if they simply had not even an iota of intention to retract them.

"Are all of them cultivators?" Li Yao's pupil suddenly contracted.

In just one breath, the Jiang Family had mobilized over a hundred cultivators. Sure enough, the Jiang Family was second to none when it comes to tyranny in the Wasteland.

"Little Black, can you do it?"

Li Yao shook the backpack a bit as an idea to slip away emerged in his mind.

He had never put his life in someone else's hand and had never let his life and death be at the mercy of others.

Although Guan Xiong had said the Jiang Family would not bother him, Li Yao had also refused to believe that the Jiang Family would have the guts to harm him, a "Class-1 Disabled Serviceman", right in front of the federation army.

However, he still had no intention to let himself be surrounded by over a hundred cultivators from the Jiang Family.

Once he was encircled, he would no longer be able to retreat, and the only possibility left for him was to allow himself to be trampled upon.

Thus, no matter the reason the opposite party had come here for, the first thing he should to was to step out of the encirclement.

If the other side truly had some malicious intentions, then he would never allow himself to be caught without putting up a fight—it would be either them or him!

"Of course, I can do it!"

The Black Wing Sword in the backpack shook, eagerly wanting to give it a try.

At this moment, the group of over a hundred cultivators suddenly halted their footsteps. They did not form the encirclement but stood loosely, leaving Li Yao with a few dozen escape routes.

Bang!

From a flying shuttle, an indistinct chunk of flesh and blood was thrown down and heavily crashed into the ground. From what seemed to be the "mouth" came a blood-curdling screech.

A young girl, who had an extremely cold and detached temperament and was dressed in an ice-blue battle suit, jumped from the flying shuttle and gradually arrived in front of Li Yao. She was floating 2 meters above the ground, looking at Li Yao from high above.

Her aura seemed to be as strong as Ding Lingdang, while her temperament that was as cold as ice and frost was somewhat similar to Si Jiaxue.

The only difference was that Si Jiaxue was like an iceberg, whereas she was like an ice pick which could not be stopped by anyone.

An iceberg could not kill people, while an ice pick could instead pierce the heart in the blink of an eye and was able to take a person’s life.

"I am Jiang Bingyun, the roving supervisor of the Jiang Family. I am specifically responsible for supervising and punishing the descendants of the Jiang Family who have violated laws or regulations. To these degenerates of the Jiang Family, I impose the rules of the family upon them! Are you Li Yao?"

The ice pick-like girl asked in one sentence, but she didn't even take a glance at Li Yao.

She also didn't wait for Li Yao to reply and coldly said as she pointed right at the squirming mass of meat:

"This is Jiang Tao, who, as a cultivator facing a catastrophe, hesitated instead of pressing forward and had even wanted to use ordinary citizens as human shields so that he could escape."

"Afterward, not only did he not come to regret his actions, he had even verbally abused and insulted the heroic sacrifices of many cultivators."

"Our Jiang Family is an influential family in the Wasteland. Every bit of our family's glory was earned through the fearless sacrifices of countless descendants of our Jiang Family on the battlefield. Only through bloody battles was the glory of our Jiang Family earned!"

"Jiang Tao's actions had not only violated the bottom line of cultivators, but he had also violated the laws of our Jiang Family, bringing shame to the whole family."

"Because of this, I, as the roving supervisor of Jiang Family, will judge him according to the rules of the family and will waste his spiritual energy, returning to his true form, an ordinary person. From now on, he would forever be unable to cultivate!"

"Fellow Daoist Li, you are the witness of the entire thing and have witnessed Jiang Tao's poor behavior. Rumor has it that he had also used the Jiang Family's influence to threaten you, so I thought it would be best for you to witness his punishments."

Jiang Bingyun's voice was as cold as a mass of ice that had been frozen for ten thousand years. She simply didn't give an opportunity to intervene. Just as her voice faded away, with a flicker, she appeared next to the lump of flesh and blood.

The "lump" desperately squirmed and desperately cried:

"Jiang Bingyun, you can not do this to me! Can't you give me an opportunity, just one opportunity? I was wrong, and I will not do something like this again! I have truly realized my mistake!"

Taking out an exquisite and delicate-looking, completely rounded saber that was carved from emerald jade and was no longer than the length of a palm from her bosom, Jiang Bingyun calmly said:

"Since it's me, you should know… there is no second chance!"

Jiang Tao begged for a long time before suddenly roaring madly:

"Jiang Bingyun, don't you dare! I am from the High Forest Branch of the Jiang Family, while you have long been separated from the Sky Mist Branch. Although you are a roving supervisor of the main branch, you don't have the qualifications to make a move on me, who is from another branch. Only the roving supervisor of the High Forest Branch can judge me!"

"I guess you're right! It is reasonable to say that it should be the roving supervisor of the High Forest Branch who should decide on your matter. However, they have been... intercepted by a group of 'desert pirates' on the way. Currently, they are preoccupied with them. If I have to guess, they would not arrive for another 2-3 hours, so you are left with me."

Jiang Bingyun said without hesitation.

Jiang Tao's pair of eyes were opened so wide they almost fell out of their sockets. His voice became incomparably desolate:

"Jiang Bingyun, you actually dare to intercept the roving supervisor of my High Forest Branch?! You are too audacious! Don't you dare waste my spiritual energy! This father will definitely not let you go!"

"Oh."

Jiang Bingyun unenthusiastically reacted as her jade saber flew and whizzed around Jiang Tao in circles before ruthlessly stabbing into Jiang Tao's spiritual root!

"Chi chi chi chi chi chi!"

A large amount of spiritual energy gushed out from the back of the jade sword. It was like a pipe that was drawing all the spiritual energy out from Jiang Tao's body and releasing it back into the heaven and earth!

"Ah—"

Jiang Tao's wails resounded throughout the sky. It very much sounded like an evil spirit of netherworld struggling for its life in the netherworld

Jiang Bingyun flicked her little finger as a soundproof barrier enveloped Jiang Tao, immediately blocking his screams.

All Li Yao could see were the movements of Jiang Tao's lips and his eyes turning white. His whole body twitched, and foam came out of his mouth. He was like a person who was struck by lightning over and over again; his body kept on twitching constantly as he lost control over his bladder and bowel.

Even Li Yao, the "vulture" who grew up in the magical equipment graveyard since childhood, felt his scalp tingle and could not bear to watch.

The whole thing lasted enough for half a minute. Only when blood began to trickle down from Jiang Tao’s eyes, nose, and ears did Jiang Bingyun withdraw her jade saber.

What was strange was that Jiang Tao's forehead was as smooth as a mirror. His forehead was completely intact, and there was not a single trace of a jade saber having pierced his forehead.

Steam was constantly rising from his body. Besides the eyes that were occasionally moving, he held no semblance to a living person.

"Give him to the touring supervisor of the High Forest Branch. If Jiang Hong, that old devil, has anything to say, let him come see me!"

Jiang Bingyun spoke a few words before flying back to Li Yao. She still looked from high above, looking extremely cold and proud.

"Fellow Daoist Li, we have let you see the embarrassing side of our Jiang Family. As the saying goes, there is always a black sheep in every flock. Our Jiang Family has been developing in the Wasteland for hundreds of years. Besides the main branch, there are also eight major branches. It would not be strange to find a few degenerates in some of these branches."

"I would like to thank you for acting in a just and generous manner by helping the Jiang Family teach this scum a lesson as well as expose his ugly side to the world!"

"You don't need to worry. The High Forest Branch of the Jiang Family would not come looking for revenge. If Jiang Tao's elders dare to even move even a single strand of your hair, then they would be looked down upon by my main branch!"

"In the future, if you need anything for cultivation, you can come to my Jiang Family’s Sky Mist Branch. This is my contact number..."

Getting straight to the point, Jiang Bingyun waved her hand as a ripple immediately appeared in the air. It was a spiritual crane messenger number.

"Splitting the air to form characters?" Li Yao was terrified.

All he could do was produce ripples if he punched the air.

However, to be able to actually form a string of numbers from the ripples in the air… such accurate control over her power was too horrifying.

Jiang Bingyun did all this as if it was a normal occurrence for her. Nodding her chin, she turned around without even taking a glance at Li Yao.

After a moment, over a hundred well-trained cultivators from the Jiang Family uniformly whizzed away.

Leaving grand and imposing tails of flames behind in the air which gradually spread open.

"Jiang Family..."

"For them to even apologize so ferociously and overbearingly… the influential families from the Wasteland sure are marvelous!”

Looking up to the sky, Li Yao heaved a long sigh.

‘God knows what year and what day it would be when I would be able to gather such a vast amount of force that would allow my, Floating Spear City’s Vulture Li Yao’s, family name, “Li”, to resound throughout the Heaven Origin Sector.’

...

After half a day, the inspection was finally finished. The crystal train had also been repaired, the defensive array glyphs were once again filled with spiritual energy, and a new armored coach was attached to the back of the train. Moreover, a few battle-type cultivators had been arranged to accompany them on the journey ahead.

The passengers who were full of complaints finally turned lively; the desolate train station was now filled with cheers of laughter.

They were about to leave. Traveling through the starry night without stop, they would directly reach their destination.

Ding Ying and Wei Qingqing came to see Li Yao off.

At the beginning, everyone's destination was the Wild Waves City, but as humans and ghosts were completely opposite, they would have to part ways now.

Li Yao would continue his journey to the Wild Waves City, while the two would have to follow the other spectral cultivators to a school specially dedicated for spectral cultivators and would begin to learn how to become an ideal, moral, faithful, and loving ghost.

"Student Li Yao, you don't need to be sad. Once we have learned how to be a ghost, we will still have the opportunity to meet again. Perhaps one day, we will fight side by side with each other!"

A heroic laughter came from Ding Yin's spirit prosthetic body before he took out a jade chip from his bosom and inserted it into a port on the left side of his metal skull.

Only to hear a "buzzing" noise coming from inside the metal skull as the radiance of the jade chip also flickered.

After a moment, Ding Yin removed the jade chip and put it in Li Yao's hand.

"Student Li Yao, I have read your information. I know you are Floating Spear City's Champion of College Entrance Examination and also had the opportunity to enter Deep Sea University, but instead chose the Grand Desolate War Institution... Be that as it may, this type of courage and righteousness has made me admire you! I have nothing to give you, but this jade chip contains some of my notes from the time when I was researching weapon refining techniques. You can use them as reference. They should be very helpful when learning the basics."

Chapter 126: Heavenly Refining Tower

"Professor Ding, this gift is too precious!"

Li Yao felt a surge of warmth in his heart, while the jade chip in his palm felt incredibly hot.

Even though Ding Yin's refining ability could not be called outstanding, he was still a respected theoretical expert in the refiners' community who was especially good at researching basic theories.

His notes would, no doubt, help Li Yao lay the most solid theoretical foundation.

Ding Yin faintly smiled: "Student Li Yao, you are a genius. It's my wish that you don't waste your talent. Although the reputation of Grand Desolate War Institutions' Refining Department is insignificant and is ranked last among the ‘Nine Elite Universities’, this, by no means, implies that its strength is only limited to this. Rather, this is also related to the different concepts of refining. That is to say, the 'struggle over the great daos' between schools."

"Professor Zheng Xuan, who is the head of the Refining Department, is known as 'Madman' in the refiners' circle. The refining concepts he insists on are completely different than that of the other 'eight major refining departments'—in fact, they are polar opposites!"

"All because of this, he has always been unable to gain the recognition of the few major schools and authorities among the refiners' community, which is why the Grand Desolate War Institution has fallen to such a level."

"However, I have, on several occasions, dealt with Madman Zheng, and I feel that he is very strong. His concepts seem somewhat mad, but they are also innovative. He seems to be creating a system of his own."

"Your talent is so outstanding, and not to mention that you have already awakened your spiritual roots, so you will definitely become his direct disciple. He will carefully groom you, and in addition to my notes, perhaps you would weave out a new yet unknown path!"

"That's why you have to try hard! I heard that you have once boasted in public that you will lead the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department and challenge the Deep Sea University's Refining Department one day—this kind of heroic utterance, even if it is inconceivable, as a man, you must do everything to achieve it!"

Ding Yin extended his metal fist and heavily punched Li Yao's stomach. "If one day you truly lead the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department and challenge the Deep Sea University's Refining Department, I will certainly cheer and hoist flags for you from the back!"

"Professor Ding, then you have to prepare a super big flag so that it presents a magnificent appearance when you wave it!"

Just as Li Yao finished speaking, the two were smiling at each other.

"Little birdy!"

At this time, a chubby little girl who wore a pink skirt, revealing two chubby calves, upon noticing the spirit prosthetic body controlled by Wei Qingqing, had her big, fat eyes suddenly shine as she cried in an unclear voice. Breaking away from her mother’s hand, she clumsily ran towards Wei Qingqing.

Wei Qingqing spread her wings and danced around the little girl before finally perching on the little girl's shoulder.

"Little birdy, little birdy, I am Dudu, what's your name?" blinking her big eyes, the little girl naively asked.

"Hello Dudu, I am Qinqqing!" Wei Qingqing softly said.

"Wow, a talking bird! So awesome!"

Dudu puffed her cheeks, as though two apples had been stuffed in both sides of her mouth. Staring with wide-opened eyes, she carefully placed Wei Qingqing on her palm and tenderly said, "Qingqing, you are so beautiful and your voice is also very pleasant, can we be friends?"

"Yes, we can! Qingqing is also very happy to have a cute little sister like Dudu. From now on, we are good friends!" Wei Qingqing said with a laugh.

"Amazing! Mother, mother, look! I made a friend, it's a talking bird!"

Dudu, with the little bluebird, ran towards her mother in excitement.

Wei Qingqing revealed an incredibly satisfied look in her crystal eyes while comfortably lying in the little girl’s arm.

Ding Yin watched the little girl's back for a very long time.

Although he didn't have tear glands, Li Yao saw his artificial crystal eyes sparkle.

"I have granddaughter twins who have turned four and a half this year. They are just as old as this little girl, and their smiles are also like this little girl’s. They are so cute and silly."

Ding Yin said absent-mindedly. Suddenly, he changed the subject, "Student Li Yao, before we part, I want to tell you a secret."

"To tell you the truth, on the crystal train, I wasn't willing to come forward. I was the same as Jiang Tao. In my heart, I had tens of thousands of reasons to retreat."

"However, in the end, I was not the same as Jiang Tao. He is just a student, a nameless newbie. Even if he badmouths us, it is not a big deal."

"However, I am different. I can be considered to be a slightly reputed scholar in the refiners' community, and I am also an elder of the Hidden God Valley. I have countless eyes pointed at me. The moment I flee instead of fighting, it would turn into a big scandal, and I don't know how I would become an upright person in the future."

"That's why, even though I was not so willing to go forward, I still forcibly mustered up my courage and came forward, only to turn into a spectral cultivator in the end."

"From the moment I was dead, I was also like Jiang Tao. Countless times, I have asked myself one question—was it worth it?"

"Was it worth it to sacrifice myself for a couple thousand ordinary citizen whom I don't even know? Was it worth it for me to combust my life, smash my spirit, and forever live in this metal box? Was it worth it for me to be unable to be an ordinary husband, a father, and a grandfather?

"Until this moment, this question had always been lingering in my mind and had remained unanswered."

"However, after I saw the cute smile on Dudu's face, I found the answer."

"It was worth it, it was totally worth it."

"If someday, my granddaughter twins encounter a similar danger, I believe that there would be someone like me who would come forward to protect them, so that a carefree smile remains on their faces and they could live happily."

"I firmly believe this."

...

The crystal train gradually started moving, and soon, it left the endless army-green tents behind, replacing the scenery with a desolate desert that seemed to have no end.

This time, on the train, a single compartment had been allotted for Li Yao in accordance with the standard of the Class-1 Federation Disabled Servicemen.

Li Yao didn't refuse. He very much needed to be alone to comfortably sink into the depths of his neural field and assimilate Ou Yezi's memory fragments.

He could not wait to know whether there were any wonderful changes in his ability to assimilate memory fragments after he had awakened his spiritual root and advanced to a cultivator.

Locking the door, Li Yao laid down on the bed as he breathed evenly. The gap between each breath grew longer and longer, and soon, his soul heavily sunk into the depths of his neural field where the glittering tree of memories grew slowly.

"Sure enough, there are some changes!"

Li Yao's soul shook in astonishment. At the central part of the tree of memories, which used to be pitch black, a few dozen "leaves" began to light up one by one and turned into memory fragments that could be assimilated!

In accordance with the former step by step assimilating speed, he was still far from lighting the memory fragments of this part.

He had never dreamt that along with his advancement to a cultivator, the number of memories he could assimilate would all of a sudden increase.

Upon carefully studying for some time, Li Yao discovered that the newly lit memories belonged to the days when Ou Yezi was a Refinement Stage disciple.

"Is the lighting of memory fragments dependent on my strength?"

"After I became a Refinement Stage cultivator, do I have the qualification to assimilate Ou Yezi's memories as a Refinement Stage cultivator? If so, once I advanced to the Building Foundation Stage, will I be able to use Ou Yezi's memories from the days when he was a Building Foundation Stage cultivator?"

This question could only be slowly answered with time. For the time being, Li Yao put it aside. With a sparkling gaze, he searched through the newly lit memory fragments, and soon, he was able to find the memory of the day which he had always been dreaming about day and night.

The memory belonged to the third day after Ou Yezi had become a cultivator. The Hundred Smelting Clan's elder had brought the newcomers to the first floor of the Hundred Smelting Clan's "Heavenly Refining Tower"!

The Heavenly Refining Tower was one of the most important restricted areas of the Hundred Smelting Clan and was also known as the "Scriptures Hall" in ordinary cultivation sects!

The Heavenly Refining Tower had a total of nine floors, each of which had multitudes of wondrous exercises and techniques, and what's more, it even had a massive amount of refining books and notes that was as vast as the sea!

Li Yao cheerfully cried before his soul transformed into a stream of light and entered the memory fragment, finding himself amidst a group of newly advanced, low-level cultivators who were following the Hundred Smelting Clan's Elder and arriving at the first floor of the mysterious Heavenly Refining Tower!

"Creak—"

The giant door of Heavenly Refining Tower gradually opened, revealing a narrow space with a radius of a dozen meters before the newly advanced cultivators. But as Li Yao stepped inside, a light gray mist rose around him and separated him from the rest.

"Whiz... Whiz... Whiz... Whiz...!"

A few dozen dusty book shelves surprisingly slid over from the gray mist and surrounded Li Yao.

Each bookshelf was stacked with low-level cultivation techniques that had been accumulated over the thousands of years by the Hundred Smelting Clan.

The most sophisticated body refining exercise, <Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining>, that was used to help low-level cultivators temper their soul and body.

The <Li Fire Technique[1]> that was used to master spiritual energy flames and help low-level cultivators control the flames to smelt heaven and earth treasures.

The <Thirteen Ancient Sword Blueprint> that was intended for refiners to master the basics and had the blueprint of 13 ancient flying swords drawn in addition to the principle and refining method.

The <Thousand Fingers Supple Bone Exercise> that was derived from the Illusory Hand Pickpocketing Technique and was especially used to exercise flexibility of the fingers and increase one’s hand speed.

Every basic cultivation technique made Li Yao's pair of eyes red, his breathing become ragged, and his heart pound like drums.

From the bookshelves, he took out the <Thousand Fingers Supple Bone Exercise> and lightly blew up on it, blowing away the dust that had accumulated on it. Then, with his head buried inside the book, he took a long, deep breath.

The ancient book had a faint aroma of sandalwood, which made him feel relaxed and happy; it was comfortable to the extreme.

Ruthlessly pinching his thighs, Li Yao focused his mind as he eagerly started reading.

His indulged himself in the Heavenly Refining Tower for an entire three days and three nights. Besides eating and the usual bodily requirements, for every minute and every second, he was assimilating Ou Yezi's memories.

When he had finally, without complete comprehension, engraved the＜Thousand Fingers Supple Bone Exercise＞, ＜Thirteen Ancient Sword Blueprints＞, and a dozen other basic exercises and records of the Hundred Smelting Clan in his mind, the crystal train gradually started slowing down.

A desolate, primitive, majestic, and wide town appeared on the horizon.

"Ladies and gentlemen, in fifteen minutes, the train will arrive at its destination, Wild Waves City. Thank you for your cooperation. We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience encountered during the journey. Goodbye and we wish you a pleasant stay!"

A gentle female voice resounded in every coach.

"I have finally reached the Grand Desolate War Institution. I had never dreamt that so much would happen on the way, and neither have I dreamt that I would become a cultivator before even having stepped into the university!"

"However, I can not be proud. The world is vast, and I have a long road ahead of me. Devil knows what wonderful things are waiting for me!"

Li Yao slightly smiled as he carried the Black Wing Sword and Dark Star Rock and stepped out of the train in large strides.

TLN:

[1] - Li Fire, I could have used plain fire but it would be different. The Li() is the symbol on the eight trigrams or bagua which means Fire. In Chinese culture, the trigrams are related to everything, from astronomy, astrology, geography, geomancy, anatomy, the family, to everything else.

[2] Translator's Rambling—On a side note, as to why there are inconsistencies in the novel when there is always talk about memories. For example, he should not be shocked about Peng Hai's shocking display of power, as he must have already seen it in the memories and so on. So, here is what I think: the dream he saw, I think, is just a rough pigmentation of Ou Yezi's memories pertaining to the events that had the most impact on him. Like when he joined the sect, the torturous training, when he smelted his first weapon, or when he became a cultivator and so on. And once again reading Chapter 11, I came across a sentence which should clear the doubt—"The rate at which the dreamland unfolded grew faster and faster. It was like the blurred lightning speed of a crystal rail train. Only during important moments did the speed slow down, allowing Li Yao to clearly see their details". Only a small part of the dream he saw clearly, while the rest was blurry besides the important detail. Like in this chapter, Li Yao very well remembered when Ou Yezi became cultivator and entered the Heavenly Refining Tower. However, he didn't remember the techniques and exercises.

Chapter 127: Wasteland's Wild Waves

Chapter 127: Wasteland's Wild Waves

Wild Waves City.[1]

For a town which was hundreds of thousands of miles away from any oceans to be named “Wild Waves”, it seemed extremely strange.

However, when the passenger disembarked from the train, an "ocean" with waves that ran as high as they could get appeared in the distance behind the huge glass walls of the entrance.

To be precise, it was a vast expanse of Wasteland; because the rocks had been carried by the fierce winds for hundreds of millions of years, they had stacked upon each other, creating an appearance akin to waves upon waves. In other words, the rocks, after having been swept away by the wind, had solidified and turned into a sea of stones.

This sea of stones was painted with two colors—black and red.

The black color was the original color of the rock.

Whereas the red color was because of having been dyed with the blood of countless federation soldiers, cultivators, and demon beasts.

The blood of humans and demon beasts had so deeply perfused into the rocks that even if the rocks were smashed to pieces, one would still be able to find bits and pieces of scarlet amidst the black.

Wild Waves City was a lot different than the other cities of the Demon Beast Wasteland. Around Wild Waves City, there weren't any military camps nor were there any towering walls protecting the city.

The humans living here didn't need any city walls at all because, for a very long time, the demon beasts had not dared to invade this city.

On the contrary, the ones who needed to be protected the most by a solid wall were the enemies of Wild Waves City—even if they did have this protection, it would only buy them a few seconds, that's all.

Because there wasn't anybody or anything that could block the residents of Wild Waves City. Whether it was any kind of enclosing wall or the fangs and armor of demon beasts, there would be no effect—none at all.

This was precisely Wild Waves City.

The place where the Grand Desolate War Institution was located—a paradise for hot-blooded men!

Li Yao looked for a long time while standing behind the huge glass screen at the entrance. His heart was fluctuating up and down just like the sea of rocks made by the wind in the Wasteland.

Behind him were a couple hundred young boys and girls. They were a group of hot-blooded teenagers who had just disembarked from different trains and were all new students of the Grand Desolate War Institution.

They smiled at each other before confirming each other’s identities quickly. Everyone involuntarily raised their chests, as though they were all an inseparable group from this moment onward.

All the high-spirited young boys and girls very quickly got familiar with each other, and soon, they set forth, clattering at the entrance.

"Brother, I am from the Chaos Edge Hall, which student union are you from?"

"Ha ha ha! I am also from the Chaos Edge Hall. It seems we are family. Just a moment ago, looking at your thick arm, I thought you were from the Iron Fist Club!"

"You see that girl over there who is covered in many tattoos from head to toe? She is definitely a member of the Glyph Devils—not good, she heard us!"

On one hand, Li Yao was listening to the conversations of the students, while on the other, he was thinking about the information he had just learned from the freshman guide.

Before the Grand Desolate War Institution came into existence, it used to be a platform in the Demon Beast Wasteland where all kinds of warriors could exchange martial techniques, thus the Grand Desolate War Institution was rather free, the rules were loose, and it promoted a student autonomy.

It was not the professors who were in control of the various departments, but rather, it was the students. Every department’s student union was self-governed, and the professors were only there to guide them. As long as the students didn't cross their bottom line, then they would generally not interfere with the operation of the student union.

The Iron Fist Club, the Chaos Edge Hall, the Glyph Devils, and the Lancets were the four strongest student unions established at the Grand Desolate War Institution.

The Iron Fist Club was a student union composed of body practitioners. They all disdained the use of any kind of weapon. Any student who was convinced that their body was the strongest magical equipment would join the Iron Fist Club. The members of the Iron Fist Club continuously charged towards the limits of their body, tempering their flesh and blood into an all-conquering killing machine.

The Chaos Edge Hall was a student union composed of sword cultivators. The students who joined the Chaos Edge Hall possessed superb skills in the usage of cold weapons, and their dreams were to become a first-rate sword immortal.

The Lancets were, instead, a student organization of the Medical Department.

At the beginning, Li Yao could not understand why there was a Medical Department at the Grand Desolate War Institution, especially one that was very high level to the point that it was on par with the Empyrean Capital School of Medicine in surgery, emergency treatment, and other fields.

Only after a careful explanation from the freshman manual did he come to understand.

The Grand Desolate War Institution was a combat school that specialized in nurturing warriors who zealously fought and was a university that encouraged its students to fight.

The students would definitely be subjected to all kinds of injuries while fighting, and it would not be strange in the least for them to be injured to the point that their life was hanging by a thread—whether it was the members of the Iron Fist Club or the Chaos Edge Hall, all of them were a bunch of madmen who didn't fear death. Even if they were facing a demon beast who was ten times stronger than they were, they would still directly charged at it without even batting an eye.

Under these circumstances, a "Medical Department" appeared in the Grand Desolate War Institution which specialized in trauma treatment and were responsible for emergency treatment on the field.

Over the course of a couple hundred years, the Medical Department's level continued to rise, so much that many of the patients who had suffered serious injuries on the battlefield which could not be cured by the Empyrean Capital School of Medicine would be sent for treatment to the surgical and orthopedic hospitals affiliated to the Grand Desolate War Institution's Medical Department.

The doctors of the Grand Desolate War Institution's Medical Department specialized in the usage of a kind of scalpel that was as thin and as similar as a willow leaf to carry out the most sophisticated of operations. Over time, "Lancets" had become the synonym for the doctors of the Wasteland.

As for the Glyph Devils, their existences were even more surprising than that of the Lancets for Li Yao—to his surprise, it was a student organization of the Arts Department.

No matter how Li Yao racked his brain, he could not figure out why the Grand Desolate War Institution would have an

"Arts Department", especially one so strong that it had left his beloved "Refining Department" far behind.

The freshmen manual, yet again—broke the mystery.

In the cultivation world, there was an extremely mysterious ability called "Spirit Tattoo Technique". Using this technique, one could draw hundreds of thousands of patterns that were infused with spirit glyphs all over their body. Without even having to cultivate, they would possess a powerful strength.

The cultivators who had mastered this kind of ability were revered as "Spirit Tattoo Artists".

Let's take the most common example—if a Spirit Tattoo Artist had drawn a flame which contained complex fire-type array glyphs on the hand of a cultivator, then when the cultivator punched with that very fist, he could spontaneously mobilize flame spiritual energy and blast it. He simply did not need to form any kinds of seals, chant any spell, or any other triggering conditions.

This was just the most common, the most low-level usage of spirit tattoos.

A true Spirit Tattoo Master Artist could marvelously draw over a hundred spirit glyphs in a small tattoo that was no bigger than a square inch. Moreover, it would completely fuse with blood vessels, perfectly integrating the tattoo with its user!

You could imagine that the Spirit Tattoo Artists were simply the strongest supporters of the body practitioners.

A body practitioner who had spirit tattoos drawn all over his body was absolutely a terrifying existence on the battlefield.

Nobody knew what kind of frightening abilities he would come to possess after the tattoo had fused with his body.

For instance, the red-eyed officer who Li Yao had met on the crystal train was just a 1st level Building Foundation Stage cultivator. In truth, it was absolutely impossible for him to fly hundreds of meters high into the air in the blink of an eye.

However, the light wings tattooed on his back by the Spirit Tattoo Artists had allowed him to overdraft his life force and stimulate all the spiritual energy stored in the light wings at the last moments of his life, enabling him to soar into the clouds and launch an incomparably gorgeous strike!

The Grand Desolate War Institution's Arts Department was a place that was dedicated to fostering Spirit Tattoo Artists. In the entire federation, it was a one of a kind department that could compete with the similar departments of Sky Fantasia Academy.

The Iron Fist Club, the Chaos Edge Hall, the Lancets, the Glyph Devils... These were the four student unions that were the backbone of the Grand Desolate War Institution.

80% of the university's education funds and resources flowed into these four student unions, and they were given priority to the university's best professors, courts, and equipment.

As for the remaining meager 20%, that was left for the other departments to compete for.

Most of the radicals even believed that the Grand Desolate War Institution was placed last among the "Nine Elite Universities" because they were being dragged down by a dozen other ordinary departments, believing that they might as well completely cut off these ordinary departments and only retain the Iron Fist Club, Chaos Edge Hall, Lancets, and the Glyph Devils. Maybe then their ranking could be a bit higher!

‘First of all, I need to bring the Refining Department to the same level as the four major departments…’ Li Yao thought.

At this time, sounds of light footsteps came from behind him. A boy with short hair that was no longer than an inch asked in awe:

"Excuse me, fellow student. Your spiritual energy fluctuations are very strong. You would not... happen to have already awakened your spiritual root and become a cultivator, right?"

"Wow!"

Just as he had said this, all the freshmen came over and looked at Li Yao in curiosity.

Everyone had long heard that the "Nine Elite Universities" was a place of hidden dragons and crouching tigers and had innumerable geniuses gathered. They didn't expect to see a monstrous talent in real life before they had even entered the campus!

Li Yao was feeling a little embarrassed from the hot and fiery gazes of everyone as he nodded: "Yes, but I've just awakened it, so my level is very low. I am just at the 1st level of the Refinement Stage, that's all."

"Just awakened..."

The body with short hair pondered for a moment, seemingly thinking about something. His eyebrows started twitching as he cried, "You would not happen to be that monster—who had awakened his spiritual root on a platform and then beat a 3rd level Refinement Stage cultivator to the point that he was so miserable that one could not bear to look at him?!"

Li Yao was surprised for a moment. He had not expected that this matter would have already spread so much.

Thus, all the freshmen became mad!

A contest between cultivators would set off fluctuations of spiritual energy that could not be perceived by ordinary people, but as these freshmen’s Spiritual Root Development Quotient was over 80%, they were naturally able to perceive it.

So everyone knew that on a temporary station, a small scuffle between two cultivators had taken place.

However, at that time, a majority of the people were being inspected, so they too didn't know the exact details. They only knew that a recently awakened cultivator had beaten a 3rd level Refinement Stage cultivator into a pig—or perhaps a boneless, pickled pig head.

On the train, everyone was continuously discussing that the 1st level Refinement Stage cultivator was too fierce and wondering god knows where this monster had popped out from.

But how could they have expected that he would turn out to be their fellow student, and even more so a freshman who was just going to enter the Grand Desolate War Institution!?

At this moment, everyone had different kinds of looks in their eyes when gazing at Li Yao; their gazes were filled with envy, worship, fanaticism, and fear...

"The Grand Desolate War Institution is worthy of being the best combat institute in the federation. Even such a fierce person had chosen the Grand Desolate War Institution. I have certainly not enrolled in the wrong university!"

"Ah, the pressure is too great! In the future, we will be studying together with such a fierce student. How could we compare with such a monster?"

"Fellow student, you are thinking too much. Such a fierce person like him would, for sure, be personally guided by the 'professors' themselves, whereas ordinary freshmen like us will only get 'lecturers'. We simply have nothing to compare!"

"Does anyone know whether he is actually a body practitioner or a sword cultivator?"

The short-haired boy's face was full of worship as he said in excitement, "Fellow Student, if I can study together with you, then that would my greatest honor! Can you tell me—whether you are from the Iron Fist Club or the Chaos Edge Hall?"

Once this sentence exited his mouth, a majority of the students divided into two groups while maintaining their composure.

Most of the students on the left side had shiny skin that was reflecting a metal-like gloss. Furthermore, each and every joint was oddly big, their fists were flat, and when they clenched their fists, their fists were like warhammer that had been repeatedly tempered.

Whereas, most of the student on the right side had sharp as a blade looks in their eyes, their hands were covered in calluses, many of the students even had their fingerprints completely polished, and weapons of varying lengths hung on their waists.

They were the members of the Iron Fist Club and the Chaos Edge Hall respectively.

TLN:

[1] - You may all be wondering which city is this, or how come the name has been changed. Actually, the raws were like ‘furious waves city’, so for a better flow, we decided to change the name a bit, but as I read this chapter, it was mismatching with the first couple paragraphs of the chapter, so we have decided to change the name of ‘Wild Storm City’ to ‘Wild Waves City’. Sorry for the inconvenience.

Chapter 128: Chaos Edge and Iron Fist

Chapter 128: Chaos Edge and Iron Fist

The Grand Desolate War Institution, which had taken root in the Demon Beast Wasteland, was a university that always advocated for combat and competition. As the two strongest student unions of the Grand Desolate War Institution, the Iron Fist Club and the Chaos Edge Hall had been fighting for various resources, and over the past century, had become mortal enemies who would stand in sharp opposition to each other.

Most of the time, the Iron Fist Club had slightly suppressed the Chaos Edge Hall, with the exception of a few decade ago when "Fiend Blade Peng Hai" was the president of the Chaos Edge Hall—or as one could also say, when he was the "president of the sword cultivators student union". During those two years, the Chaos Edge Hall had suddenly risen to prominence.

However, after Fiend Blade Peng Hao graduated, Chaos Edge Hall gradually became dispirited.

Especially in recent years when "Ding Lingdang", this ferocious dragon in human form, suddenly appeared and became the president of the Iron Fist Club, Chaos Edge Hall had simply been suppressed into a meat pie.

They were somehow maintaining their somewhat feeble existence as they wait for Ding Lingdang to graduate. Of course, Chaos Edge Hall hoped that they could make a comeback!

If Li Yao took the road of a sword cultivator, then Chaos Edge Hall would very likely rise again, and perhaps the brilliant and prosperous era of "Fiend Blade Peng Hai" would appear again.

And if Li Yao was a body practitioner, then it goes without saying that for the next couple years, Chaos Edge Hall could perhaps only follow behind the Iron Fist Club's ass and take whatever was left behind!

Therefore, all the students were nervous to the extreme as their eyes were completely glued to Li Yao's mouth, holding their breath, waiting for him to answer.

Li Yao scratched his head in embarrassment: "Sorry, ladies and gentlemen, I neither belong to the Iron Fist Club nor am I a member of the Chaos Edge Hall. I belong to... the Starfire Union."

"Starfire Union—what's that?"

Many of the freshmen blinked their eyes; for a long while, they didn't react.

"Such a fierce person is actually not a member of the Iron Fist Club and Chaos Edge Hall? The Starfire Union sounds very domineering. Is it some hidden department in the Grand Desolate War Institution which specializes in recruiting super fierce people like him?"

"What hidden department? Do you think you are reading a novel? How could there be that kind of thing!?"

A few freshmen opened the freshman manual on their crystal processors and searched carefully. A moment later, they showed an extremely disappointed look, seemingly as if a petrification spell had been cast upon their bodies.

"What is it? What department does the Starfire Union belong to?" a student standing nearby curiously asked.

"It's the... Refining Department!"

"Ah? The Refining Department that is called the worst department of the Grand Desolate War Institution?"

Everyone was dumbfounded.

Li Yao, already carrying the Dark Star Rock and the Black Wing Sword on his shoulder, walked out of the train station without even waiting for them to ask any more questions, leaving a tall and enigmatic back behind for everyone.

The short-haired boy patted the shoulder of the freshman who was as dumb as wooden chicken and said with a sigh:

"You don't need to think too much about it. How could we know what goes inside the head of a straight A student?"

...

On a small square just outside the train station, the atmosphere was extremely cold and oppressive. A dozen groups of people, like an army, stood in an orderly manner, forming up a dozen close order formations.

Wherein, amidst every close order formation, a big banner fluttered.

They all came here to welcome the freshmen into their respective student union.

At the front, there was a group of over a hundred students whose average height was about two meters, with skin that exuded a metal-like gloss and eyes that were brimming with radiating vigor, much like countless glittering stars!

Their upper bodies were almost naked, thereby revealing their rock-like muscles. Most of them wore a set of thick armor, the majority of which was laden with bloodstains, weaved from beast skin. They simply looked like barbarians who ate raw flesh and drank the blood of animals!

Amidst this group of "barbarians", a huge banner, whose flagpole appeared to be made of the dozen meter long spine of a huge demon beast, was hoisted. Painted upon this flag was a huge iron fist that was smashing the skull of a ferocious demon beast into pieces!

The image seemed to be exaggerated and was drawn in rough strokes; it simply seemed as if a brute and valiant soldier had arbitrarily painted it with his hands, yet it was filled with a majesty that seemed to make everyone’s blood boil and even set the onlookers' fists ablaze.

This was the battle flag of the Iron Fist Club!

A robust, bald giant whose height exceeded 2.3 meters stood upright under the battle flag.

Even amidst the group of robust and muscular men, he could be called a crane standing amongst chickens.

It was as if a fierce mammoth had suddenly appeared amidst a group of iron-armored rhinos!

The giant had a vivid iron fist tattoo engraved on his bald head, and the tattoo was exactly the same as the image on the war flag. Although his entire body was covered in ferocious and grim tattoos, half of his body had been covered by leather armor. The partly hidden, partly visible appearance gave the impression of a ferocious tiger who had camouflaged itself very well slumbering in a jungle, making it even more terrifying.

"All body practitioners from the Combat Department, gather under the Iron Fist Flag!"

The Giant let out a terrifying shout that was just like billowing thunder propagating from the center of the close order formation.

"He is the president of the Iron Fist Club, Hua Tianxiong, an 11th level Refinement Stage expert. Rumor has it that by the virtue of the cultivation exercise he cultivates, the tattoo at the top of his head can be triggered once his anger rushes to his head, allowing his strength to soar to the peak of the 13th level Refinement Stage and maintaining it for a dozen seconds—such frightening strength is second only to the last president of the Iron Fist Club, Ding Lingdang!"

"If we follow such a fierce person, we can definitely get a lot of the resources allocated by the school!"

"Let's go!"

The eyes of a dozen or so freshmen who had chosen the "Combat Department's Body Practitioner Department" lit up with pleasure as they sprinted along the road and joined the ranks of the Iron Fist Club.

At the same time, a cold sound which seemed like the one coming from a poisonous snake also rang in ears of the freshmen.

"All the freshmen who have chosen the Sword Cultivator Department, likewise, gather under the Chaos Edge Hall's war flag!"

This voice sounded a lot different than the earth shattering roar of Hua Tianxiong; it was like the voice of a monarch which did not seem to linger for too long and was like a fleeting glare of a sharp blade.

Li Yao gathered all his attention as his five senses, like a tide, spread open, and only then did he find an ordinary young man, who had a pale complexion and a slight hunchback figure, standing amidst a group of a hundred people that was right behind the Iron Fist Club.

All of these hundred or so people wore a light gray robe, and all of them, on their backs, waists, or in the cuffs or their boots... wherever one could carry a weapon, carried something that was akin to a stick that was wrapped in cloth and was emitting a faint, cold aura.

Their temperament was also much similar to these cloth wraps, seemingly extremely average, revealing not even an iota of their abilities.

However, only their eyes seemed to be occasionally twinkling like the stars in a manner akin to the naked edge of a sharp blade, making everyone shudder.

This slightly hunchback young man made Li Yao feel terribly cold. Just one glance at him and Li Yao felt like he had fallen into a cave of ice as he felt a slight sting coming from his bone marrow.

"He is Xu Ge, the president of the Chaos Edge Hall, an 11th level Refinement Stage sword cultivator. He is going to be our boss for the next few years. Let's behave neatly so that we leave a good impression on him!"

A dozen or so freshmen who had chosen to become sword cultivators walked with heads held high and chest out as they joined the ranks of the Chaos Edge Hall.

Behind the Iron Fist Club and the Chaos Edge Hall were the Glyph Devils and the Lancets.

The member of Lancets were medical students, and a white coat was their standard uniform.

However, it was different than the ordinary white coats; the white coats they wore had a vivid bloody skeleton embroidered upon it. Amidst the fierce gales, the jaws of the bloody skeleton seemed to be laughing at death.

The members of the Glyph Devils, instead, wore an airtight robe that only revealed their face, which was completely engraved with tattoos. They were like colorful chameleons who were hiding their true appearance.

Only a few dozen freshmen were left after the Lancets and the Glyph Devils had received their freshmen, a majority of which looked ugly and repulsive and had pitiful strength.

These freshmen were those who had chosen the ordinary departments besides the four key departments.

Watching the other freshmen happily joining the four key departments one by one, these freshmen of the ordinary departments let out a sigh. They did not have any intention to conceal their envy and disappointment.

Standing amidst this group, Li Yao gave the impression of a grim wolf, whose fangs were stained with blood, standing amidst a group of pugs; it looked indescribably repulsive.

At this moment—

Li Yao's glabella twitched. He suddenly felt that the air in front of him was a little strange.

A thought struck Li Yao's mind as he spontaneously retreated a step, and at the same time, he slightly bent his knees while spiritual energy surged into his legs so that every strand of his muscles was ready to erupt at any moment.

At the very same moment Li Yao retreated, two black figures from within the group of Iron Fist Club and Chaos Edge Hall whizzed out like a flash and appeared before Li Yao.

They were precisely the bald giant, Hua Tianxiong, and the hunchback young boy, Xu Ge, both of whom were experts of the 11th level Refinement Stage!

A sliver of surprise appeared on the faces of the two at the same time. They had never expected that Li Yao's senses would be so sharp that he could predict their appearance in advance.

"Very good, you, sure enough, are someone who Professor Ding has his eyes on!"

The bald giant, Hua Tianxiong, jovially laughed as he measured Li Yao from head to toe with a satisfied look in his eyes. Nodding his head, he said, "Student Li Yao, your reputation has already spread in the entire campus before you have even arrived at university. It would truly be a pity if someone like you, who has beaten a 3rd level Refinement

Stage cultivator unarmed, is not developed in the direction of a body practitioner! You are always welcome to take a look at the Iron Fist Club. I and Master Ding Lingdang will always be waiting for you. If you are interested, it would not be difficult in the least to make a transfer!"

Before Li Yao could even respond, the hunchback Xu Ge sneered:

"Hua Tianxiong, Student Li Yao's talent in refining is obvious to all. If he joined your Iron Fist Hall, wouldn't it be truly wasteful? I, however, am different. I did not come here to ask Student Li Yao to join my Chaos Edge Hall. I just hope that Student Li Yao will consider developing in both departments. He could learn to refine as well as take the courses of a sword cultivator at the same time. It would not be difficult for him to take a 'dual degree'!"

As Xu Ge took a glance at Li Yao, his eyes sparkled like a poisonous snake who had found a little green frog as he revealed his true intention:

"Of course, if Student Li Yao is willing to take the road of a sword cultivator, then we will still welcome you—I know student Li Yao has a senior brother-junior brother relationship with 'Fiend Blade Peng Hai'. And as Senior Peng Hai was once the president of our Chaos Edge Hall, then this could be considered fate. Perhaps someday, Student Li Yao could possibly become the next president of Chaos Edge Hall and lead our Chaos Edge Hall to thoroughly pummel the Iron Fist Club, reproducing the brilliant era of 'Fiend Blade Peng Hai'!"

Li Yao smiled:

"I appreciate the kindness of you two. Maybe in the future, I will consider it, but for now, I am a member of the Starfire

Union!"

The look in his eyes was exceptionally firm; there was not a sliver of any signs that showed that he had been swayed by the two.

Hua Tianxiong and Xu Ge glanced at each other as both of them smiled at the same time.

Hua Tianxiong frankly said:

"Alright. We knew Student Li Yao would not be so easily convinced."

Xu Ge opened his mouth as he said:

"However, once you study in the Refining Department for some time, you will then come to realize the difference between the resources allocated to the ordinary departments and the ones allocated to the four major departments. It is totally different, your talent will be completely wasted in the Refining Department."

Hua Tianxiong continued:

"At that time, if you change your mind, please come to the Iron Fist Club at once. Whatever your conditions are, we will accept your transfer application anytime!"

"The same goes for us. The doors of our Chaos Edge Hall is always open to Student Li Yao!"

"Please go ahead!"

The two student union presidents cupped their hands above their chest before returning to their respective group. The

Chaos Edge Hall and the Iron Fist Club, like two well-trained army troops, silently withdrew from the wide field.

Li Yao continued going forward, searching for the flag of the Starfire Union.

TLN:

Hi guys,

Sorry for the missing chapter on Saturday. I was all day out on Friday, which made me completely exhausted to even do anything, I just jumped right into my bed and slept like a log. The missed chapter will be either released by this evening or there will be a dual release on Monday. Thank you and sorry for the inconvenience.

Chapter 129: We are Unorthodox?

Chapter 129: We are Unorthodox?

The wide field which was just bustling with freshmen a moment ago had, very soon, turned desolate, as the freshmen continued to leave with their respective student union, leaving Li Yao along with 7-8 freshmen behind.

Apart from Li Yao, every one of them had a frown on their foreheads as a sigh of despair left their lips—all of them were the freshmen of the Refining Department.

"Oh! Where is everybody? Now, only we few brothers in hardship are left behind. The Refining Department deserves to be called the worst department of the Grand Desolate War Institution. Look, the guys who should have come to pick us up is even slower than the others, and even now, no one has appeared!"

A skinny black boy pursed his lips as a bitter smile dawned upon him.

His name was Huang Tong. His outgoing personality very soon eased up the atmosphere, allowing all the fellow sufferers to introduce themselves.

When everyone had introduced their names and hometowns to each other, Li Yao could finally not bear it any longer and asked the question that had been lingering over his heart for a while:

"Fellow brothers, why is everyone so depressed? Although the Refining Department is not very good, in the end, it is still one of the departments of the 'Nine Elite Universities' and could not be any worse than other colleges. After graduating, it is guaranteed that we will find a job, so what is it that’s making you all so depressed?"

Once he said this, everyone looked at each other before all of them looked at Li Yao with an incredibly strange gaze.

Li Yao felt goosebumps all over his body from their gazes and asked in surprise, "Did I say anything wrong?"

A mischievous smile crept on Huang Tong face:

"Fellow Student Li Yao, it seems that when you were filling in the matriculation form, you definitely were not well informed about Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department."

Li Yao frowned:

"Indeed, I didn't have an in-depth understanding. I only knew that it was one of the worst departments in the 'Nine Elite Universities', so what about it? At most, the level of the university can be a bit low, but as long as we try hard, won't we become successful? Like the old saying goes, the master teaches the trade, but the perfection of the apprentice's skill depends on his own efforts!"

Huang Tong let a long sigh and said:

"Now we know that you definitely didn't have any in-depth knowledge regarding the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department. Otherwise, how could someone like you, who had topped the College Entrance Examination in his city, willingly walk into this quagmire?"

"Quagmire? I don't understand!"

"Well, let me tell you, Student Li Yao. The biggest problem of Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department is not that its standard of teaching is low, but rather, the refining ideology is simply different than the mainstream in the refiners' community today. The Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department follows a 'non-mainstream' view."

"If we use the words of the ancient cultivation era forty millenniums ago—then in the of mainstream refiners, the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department is an unorthodox school!"

"Unorthodox—is it that serious?" Li Yao was taken by surprise.

Huang Tong nodded and said, "It is even more serious than you can imagine. It is on a level that it could even spark a 'struggle over the great daos'!"

"Struggle over the great daos?" A frown appeared on Li Yao's forehead. It seemed it was very likely to be true, as Ding Yin too had said the same.

He recalled the conflict that was aroused between the professor of the Star Nebula University and the professor of the Federation's First Military College on the Distance Expanse.

A debate over the "nature of spiritual energy" had sparked a "struggle over the great dao", and the two were not far away from "taking it to a field".

If a large crowd and numerous onlookers weren't present at that moment, then they truly might have fought over it and may even have tried to take each other's life.

Zheng Dongming had also explained to Li Yao that "cultivators" are precisely the "people who pursued the truth" and that every cultivator was unusually stubborn when upholding their own ideology.

Even if it was a cultivator who had a moderate temperament, once he was entangled in a "struggle over the great dao", he would not show any restraints nor any compromise. Either the enemy believes his "truth", or he would keep fighting until one of them ends up dead.

The "truth" was the foundation of a cultivator, whereas the "struggle over the great dao" was the biggest war for a cultivator. It was even more serious than the war with demons and devils, and there was no room for compromise.

"How does the mainstream ideology and the 'truth' believed by the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department differ? How could it even reach the level that it could spark a "struggle over the great daos'?"

Li Yao was truly having a difficult time understanding this.

Huang Tong let out a dry cough and explained:

"The so-called 'struggle over the great daos', to be precise, is a dispute between the elites and the grassroots."

"The Deep Sea University, as the representative of the mainstream refining theory, follows the elite line. They believe that the more complex and compact the structure of a magical equipment is, then the more powerful and better it would be!"

"As for the production cost of refining such magical equipment, it would be too high. The complex nature of the structure also increases the failure rate. Meanwhile, the requirements to equip such magical equipment became more and more demanding... These problems for the mainstream refining theory seems small and were all insignificant."

"In accordance with this ideology, the deciding point for winning a war rested on high-level cultivators, that's why they do not hesitate to refine such powerful magical equipment at a high cost for Core Formation Stage experts and Nascent Soul Stage old devils. At most, they would only refine a few ordinary magical equipment for the Building Foundation Stage cultivators to use."

"As for Refinement Stage cultivators and ordinary soldiers, it was believed that they are unable to affect the overall situation, and hence they were not worth the effort. The refiners don’t even pay a bit of attention to them."

"This is the general view of the refiners' community today. A vast majority of universities and refining sects also thinks the same."

"Whereas, our institute's Refining Department might be the only exception. As our institute originally rose to prominence from grassroots, special attention is paid to the battle force of low-level cultivators and ordinary soldiers."

"According to the grassroots ideology, the deciding point for winning a war does not rest upon high-level cultivators. On the contrary, a sea of low-level cultivators and ordinary soldiers are the most crucial for winning a war."

"So long as hundreds of thousands of Refinement Stage cultivators and ordinary soldiers are equipped with adequate magical equipment, even a Nascent Soul Stage old devil could similarly be pummeled to the ground under the attacks of tens of thousands of Refinement Stage cultivators, much like many ants biting an elephant to death!"

"From this point of view, the deciding factor for the standard of a magical equipment quality is obviously not its power."

“For them, low production cost, simple structure, stable performance, resilience, and ease of repair were the key factors of the magical equipment! Instead of using heaven and earth treasures for raw materials, they used ordinary materials so that the equipment could be manufactured en mass on an assembly line. For such magical equipment, anyone could use it, and those from this point of view believe that this is what constitutes an undoubtedly good magical equipment!”

"You see, the elites' and grassroots' refining ideologies are polar opposites. It's the most typical case of 'struggle over the great daos'."

"At present, the elites in the refiners’ community are those who follow the mainstream ideology. 90% of the refiners belongs to elites, while we, the grassroots, are regarded as ignorant barbarians. The magical equipment refined by the grassroots are even ridiculed to the point that they are even called fire plows and lumps of iron. The magical equipment refined by the grassroots are not even regarded as true magical equipment."

"The person who could carry the grassroots on his shoulder is precisely the head of department of our department, Professor Mo Xuan. He almost single-handedly picked up the flag of the entire grassroots faction and adhered to the ideology of refining magical equipment for low-level cultivators and ordinary people. For the past few decades, he had never wavered and that's why he also got the moniker 'Madman' in the refiners’ community."

"The mainstream refiners' community very much despises the students of 'Mad Mo'. After we graduate, it is almost impossible for us to find a good job in the mainstream refiners' community. The top five hundred sects in the federation even refuse to recruit the graduates of the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department. We can only go to some small sects or go to the army in the grassroots troop and do the most basic refining work. In short, our future is bleak."

"The aforementioned is precisely the 'struggle over the great dao' in the refiners' community. As long as anyone had a deeper understanding of this, no one would ever apply to the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department."

"Take me for example. Even in my dreams, I have never dreamt of studying refining. My first choice was actually the path of the Combat Department's sword cultivator. However, I chose to 'abide by the allocation', and as my score was not enough to become sword cultivator, I was transferred to the Refining Department!"

"I did not want to come, but as I have already repeated two years, I really did not want to repeat for the third time and become a '15th grader'. Wouldn’t that be too much of a disgrace? I had no alternative but to pinch my nose and come here."

This statement of Huang Tong had garnered the sympathy of all the freshmen as everybody burst into a lively discussion.

"Same here! I also did not want to study some damn refining. It was my father who forced me to come. He says, at any rate, it is one of the 'Nine Elite Universities' and is still very prestigious!"

"Who would be willing to learn some grassroots refining techniques? I have already decided that if there is an opportunity, I will transfer to another department. Let alone the four major departments, even if it were an ordinary department, it would still be better than following 'Mad Mo'!"

"Same here! Brothers, let's work hard together to strive to transfer to another department as quickly as possible!"

Huang Tong thought that Li Yao was worried about his future when he saw Li Yao thinking about something. He could not help but laugh and say:

"Fellow Student Li Yao, what are you worried about? You are so strong that the Iron Fist Club and the Chaos Edge Hall had both invited you a moment ago. You can change your department anytime you wish. You don't have to concern yourself with the rotten Refining Department."

Li Yao stood in silence for a long time before he shook his head and said:

"Fellow Student Huang Tong, thanks a lot for your kind explanation. However, I have no intention of changing my department. On the contrary, after listening to your explanation, I think the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department might very well be the right choice for me—this refining ideology sits very well with me."

Upon hearing his response, everyone was dumbfounded. They looked at him as if they were looking at some kind of monster.

Huang Tong said in astonishment, "Are you the same as 'Mad Mo'? Do you also support the grassroots refining ideology?"

"Yes," Li Yao frankly admitted.

After having assimilated a larger part of Ou Yezi's memory fragments, a majority of Li Yao's understanding of the refining branch had, knowingly or unknowingly, been tainted by the style of the ancient cultivators era from forty millenniums ago.

During the ancient cultivators era, there weren't any magical equipment that were so complex like the Taiyi Lightning Railgun, which was refined using a couple hundred thousand components.

Even the masterwork weapons that could kill Spirit Transformation Stage monsters had at most a couple hundred components.

Therefore, Li Yao naturally advocated for the simple and straightforward refining ideology; he somewhat resisted complex and compact magical equipment.

More importantly...

Li Yao vaguely remembered that in the strange dream from very long time ago of the previous world he lived in, there used to be two superpowers which had two different designing concepts yet manufactured similar tyrannical weapons!

One was the "Soviet Style"!

And the other was the "German Style!"

The German Style weapons were like the elites' magical equipment. The weapons were of complex and compact structure and had high production costs. Their production process was pretty complex, not to mention they had high requirements for their users.

And of course, they were extremely powerful.

Whereas, the Soviet Style weapons were like the grassroots magical equipment. The weapons were specially manufactured for human wave attacks. They did not have high requirements, and their structure was also simple and reliable. They had low manufacturing cost so that they could be mass produced in the simplest of workshops. They were built in a manner so that even the uneducated ordinary people and even the women could immediately use them.

Relying on powerful German Weapons, the former superpower had once conquered everywhere and engulfed almost half of the civilized world. At a tactical level, the former superpower had obtained one brilliant victory after another.

But on the strategic level...

The Soviet Style weapons that had a common structure, low manufacturing costs, were easy to operate, and were constantly produced in a steady stream from simple factories, forming an overwhelming steel army. A sea of boorish and uncivilized soldiers, who only had the courage but not the battle experience, after equipping these simple weapons, forcibly suppressed the German Style Weapons and the elite among the elite soldiers, and in the end, had even pushed them back. Those extremely exquisite German Weapons that were called a work of art were all completely smashed into pieces.

Li Yao's motherland in the previous world also followed the Soviet Style to the limit. The weapons that were manufactured had low manufacturing costs and had an extremely ugly appearance; the weapons were simply rustic to the core. However, on the battlefield, the battle force they unleashed could, instead, be called "perverse"!

TLN:

The Soviet and German weapons in this chapter are all about World War II. The Germans weapons were exceptionally good, but they were harder to manufacture and maintain, whereas the Soviet weapons were simple and easy to produce and repair. In Russia, where it was extremely cold, the Soviet weapons were easy to maintain, while the German weapons, like tanks, had to keep running all night just to make it to the next day. And also, once the production facility of the German weapons was captured, it was quite difficult to establish another production facility, making it harder to maintain the supply to the front lines. All of this I found it on the internet, so correct me if I am wrong somewhere, as I have literally no idea about the processions of World War II to the minute details.

Chapter 130: Project Mystic Skeleton

Chapter 130: Project Mystic Skeleton

Li Yao seriously said as he thought of this:

"A Nascent Soul Stage devil could perhaps win a fight or even a battle."

"But, just a few Nascent Soul Stage devils could never decisively win a war."

"The Federation is not at all lacking in battle-type Nascent Soul Stage devils and neither are they lacking masterwork weapons, yet why don't they dare to charge into the Blood Demon Sector and ravage the demon clan's nest?"

"Is it not because there are too many low-level demon beasts residing in the Blood Demon Sector to the point that it is impossible for the Nascent Soul Stage devils to withstand their never-ending siege?"

"In my opinion, instead of consuming a lot of resources to refine one or two masterworks weapon for the Nascent Soul Stage devils, it would be better to refine many simple and reliable magical equipment for the ordinary soldiers and low-level cultivators. At that time, an army of thousands upon thousands of soldiers, perhaps even 'a hundred million' soldiers, could suppress anyone or anything in their path. Any demon king or demon general will be pummeled into their graves!"

"Everyone, please don't lose your heart. If we work together, then maybe someday, the grassroots could become the mainstream in the refiners' community. We could become highly respected professors!"

Li Yao chuckled as he pointed at the horizon and said, "Look, the members of the Starfire Union are here!"

Everyone turned their gaze towards the horizon as a huge, round flying shuttle flying in the clear blue sky appeared in their vision.

Its towering pitch black hull along with two wide and flat stabilizers that spread open on both its sides made it look like a big, ugly turtle.

"Is that a Turtle Car?"

Even Li Yao stood in a daze.

This Turtle Car was a big flying shuttle that was manufactured two centuries ago, and the sect which designed this model was a small, unknown sect. They had never experienced manufacturing a flying shuttle, let alone a large-scale flying shuttle that could carry over a hundred passengers.

Because they were unable to resolve the issues in some of the most crucial components, the flying shuttle that came out, in the end, looked very ugly, especially because the two stabilizers on both of its sides, which were added to resolve the stability issue, very much resembled the four feet of a turtle.

Looking from afar, it gave the impression of a giant turtle crawling in the sky.

Because of this, the flying shuttle had been named "Turtle Car".

The Turtle Car, in the history of flying shuttles, was a classic. Because its shape was truly horrible, in countless textbooks, it had become a negative example. Li Yao had seen it in many textbooks and classic car magazines; however, this was the first time he had laid his eyes upon the real thing.

He felt that it was—uglier than he had even imagined!

This Turtle Car had a history of almost 200 years and seemed as if it would fall apart at any moment. When it flew over everyone's head, everyone came to hear a "creak creak" noises, making everyone feel that it would fall apart into its basic components at a moment’s notice.

"Puff—"

The Turtle Car made a fart-like sound as it spurted a mass of white mist from underneath before slowly landing on the ground.

The "turtle shell" on both sides of the Turtle Car opened as a middle-aged woman, who was glowing with health, puffed up with arrogance, and carried a large flag, jumped down.

"Hello everyone, I am Yuan Manqiu, the associate professor of the Refining Department and also the instructor of the Starfire Union. From now on, everyone is a member of Starfire Union. Come on, welcome them, you, little bunnies. QUICKLY COME DOWN AND LINE UP TO WELCOME THEM!"

Yuan Manqiu, with one arm over her waist, while the other pointed inside the Turtle Car, yelled.

A dozen older students, who had a drowsy look and appeared like wraiths, walked out of the Turtle Car in single file as they lazily formed two rows and applauded without any ounce of sincerity:

"Welcome, everyone."

Someone at the back of the row also whispered, "Welcome to the abyss of suffering!"

Yuan Manqiu had sharp ears. Once she heard this, her huge, two hundred kilogram figure that was akin to a meatball went around the second row, grabbed the ear of an older student, and angrily shouted, "Do you want to die!? Don't just blurt out the truth!"

Li Yao was left completely dumbfounded. He rubbed his eyes and carefully looked at the flag that was carried by Yuan Manqiu on her shoulder.

The flag had a fiery red background with a burning crystal gear at the center. It was clearly the battle flag of the "Starfire Union", the student union of Refining Department.

Could these people who didn't know how to stand and sit properly—these miserable people who don’t resemble people, ghosts who don’t resemble ghosts—be their senior brothers? They were truly far away from the norm!?

And then, there was their instructor, who was so fat that even her neck wasn't visible and wore a flaming, bright-colored robe. Pulling on the ear of the older student, her spittle flew as she swore. She was spirited to the extreme.

She was actually an associate professor of the Refining Department? Was she a Master Refiner?

Refiners were people who were obsessed with skills and never paid much attention to their appearance. For example, Ding Yin was a simple, bald middle-aged man.

However, their temperament was still very refined. They rarely opened their mouth, but once they do, one would only hear the deepest of knowledge coming out from their mouth.

How could this two hundred kilogram weighing middle-aged woman be a master refiner? From head to toe, she didn't have the bearing of a master refiner; she was rather like the rudest and most unreasonable butcher in a flea market.

"See? Associate Professor Yuan Manqiu is the head of our department’s, Professor Mo Xuan's, wife. Rumour has it that a couple decades ago, she was the most outstanding graduate of Deep Sea University's Refining Department and was also the beauty of Deep Sea University's Refining Department who was hailed as the 'Deep Sea Goddess'."

Huang Tong's voice came from behind.

"What? She was the beauty of Deep Sea University's Refining Department, the Deep Sea Goddess?"

Li Yao's jaw dropped in surprise.

"That's right. Now, can you see how the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department destroys people? Even the 'Deep Sea Goddess' has been reduced to this. Once we freshmen join the Starfire Union, it would not even take us half a year before we would look the same as our senior brothers. We too would look like people who don't look like people, ghosts that don't resemble ghosts. That's why you better think about it again and change departments together with us!"

Huang Tong kindly said.

The appearance of Yuan Manqiu and their senior brothers made everyone's morale, which had already hit rock bottom, suddenly reach a negative number. Several freshmen looked at each other as a thought to withdraw from the institute and retake the exam hit their head.

Yuan Manqiu had also discovered that the atmosphere was a little strange. The fat on her sides trembled as she ruthlessly kicked the ass of the older student who had said "welcome to the abyss of suffering". Putting a brilliant smile on her face as her facial features overlapped with each other in happiness, she walked toward the front in large strides before giving a bear hug to Li Yao.

No, no, no, it was not a bear hug. Li Yao was completely suppressed under the mountain of flesh and did not even have enough space to breathe.

"Welcome, Student Li Yao! We have made you wait!"

Yuan Manqiu was a Building Foundation Stage cultivator. Although she was not a battle-type cultivator, her vigorous spiritual energy was not something that Li Yao, who was at the 1st level of the Refinement Stage, could contend with. As if she were grabbing a chicken by the neck, she pulled Li Yao forward as she tried to cheer up several freshmen."

"It seems that everyone is not excited. In fact, you all are somewhat unwilling and reluctant. Not only do you not have confidence in our Refining Department, but you also feel that the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department is completely rotten, that you would not learn anything here, and that there is no future, right?"

"Wrong! You are completely wrong!"

Yuan Manqiu shook Li Yao with force as she continued, "Everyone, please look at him. Student Li Yao is the College Entrance Examination Champion in Floating Spear City, which is an important cultivation city of the federation. Moreover, he has also awakened his spiritual root before even stepping into the campus and had already become a powerful cultivator!"

"Such a super fierce person had even chosen our Refining Department. There must definitely be something here or do you think that he was impulsive, that he had lost his mind?"

'If you shake me again, I will definitely lose my mind!' Li Yao felt like weeping but had no tears.

Yuan Manqiu, with a beaming look, continued to try boosting the morale:

"Let me tell you! Student Li Yao did not just apply to our Refining Department, but he had also refused the invitation of Deep Sea University's Refining Department in public and even openly and honestly issued a challenge to Deep Sea University's Refining Department, saying that one day, he would seize the golden sign of 'Holy Land of Refiners' from them and hang it on our Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department!"

"What do you think? Isn't it hot-blooded? Isn't it heroic? Isn't it passionate? Since everyone is fellow students, why isn't your hot-blood seething like your Fellow Student Li Yao? Why is your morale not as high as his?"

Not only did this statement not play any effect of cheering, but on the contrary, it had a side effect. All the freshmen let out a "wow", and when they looked at Li Yao, the look in their eyes was as if they were looking at a madman.

"I did not hear it wrong, right? He wants to challenge Deep Sea University's Refining Department and seize the title of 'Holy Land of Refiners'?"

"He is joking, right?"

"So he was a little madman. I say, how can a normal person take the initiative to apply for the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department?"

"For the next couple of years, it is going to be lively. Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department has Mad Mo, then there is also a madwoman, and now a little madman has also appeared. So many insane people gathered at one place is simply not fit for us normal people!"

Li Yao's face had turned very red, as if he was a crab who was being cooked: "Professor Yuan..."

Yuan Manqiu gave him a stare: "Don't feel embarrassed. Since you had the courage to speak your dream out loud, you should not be afraid of others laughing at your dreams!"

"I am not embarrassed. Can you please let me down first? My feet are off the ground."

"Oh! I am sorry, Student Li Yao. I was just too excited. You should know that Old Mo and I have been waiting for a good seedling like you, one who has talent in refining, for many years. You don't need to worry. As long as you are willing to learn, Old Mo and I will certainly teach you everything that we have learned in our lives. The grassroots are truly lacking a new person like you!"

Yuan Manqiu said with great emotions.

"As for you lot..."

Yuan Manqiu swept a glance at the lifeless freshmen as she pursed her lips: "Wait for me to tell you all about the complete 'Project Mystic Skeleton' to you. You will then discover that you have made the best choice in your life. At that time, you would rather cut off your legs than to leave the Refining Department!"

"What's Project Mystic Skeleton?"

All the freshmen raised their eyebrows. Although they did not understand, it sounded very powerful.

Yuan Manqiu blinked her eyes and said mysteriously:

"Why do you think we came so late? Why do you think that these little kittens are so dispirited, as if they had not slept for three straight days and three straight nights?"

"It was because all 577 professors and students of the Refining Department had all disregarded their meals and sleep for Project Mystic Skeleton, to the point that even extending their hand to welcome you all has become extremely difficult!"

"Once Project Mystic Skeleton is successful, it would certainly raise a revolutionary storm in the industry. By then, our department will become one of the strongest Refining Departments in the federation. Even if we can not rival Deep Sea University's Refining Department, at the very least, we will be a level higher than Star Nebula University's Refining Department!"

"You are not just boasting, right? Is it so formidable!?" All the freshmen had been incited by Yuan Manqiu. She had inspired a trace of morale.

"What exactly is Project Mystic Skeleton? Is it refining a powerful magical equipment?"

Huang Tong asked.

Yuan Manqiu smiled: "First... get on the car. I will tell you in the car!"

"On the car! Everyone, let’s get in the car!"

"Come on, I truly can not withdraw from the institute. I don’t want to leave and retake the exam. How can I live the life of those damn repeaters?”

"Anyway, let's first go take a look. If it is no good, we can think of some way again. If Project Mystic Skeleton is, in one in million chance, truly as formidable as Professor Yuan had said, then we have picked up a treasure!"

Chapter 131: King of Magical Equipment

The freshmen entered the Turtle Car in a single file line, while the older student followed behind them in weak spirit. After everyone was on board, Yuan Manqiu shoved herself in the shuttle.

“Creak!” The Turtle Car’s door, after having closed half-way, did not proceed anymore; it was not completely closed.

Yuan Manqiu let a kick fly as her elephant leg directly kicked the door.

“At the beginning, our Refining Department was not so short on funds that we could not even afford a new flying shuttle.

“Old Mo and I have invested the majority of our funds into Project Mystic Skeleton, which is why we are unable to make ends meet.”

“However, everyone can rest assured. Once Project Mystic Skeleton is complete, we will certainly set off a storm. At that time, not only will the institute allocate a lot of funds to us, but various cultivation sects will also fight over the opportunity to cooperate with us, and even the army will possibly approach us to purchase our magical equipment. Money would simply not be a problem!”

“By then, I’ll provide every student who remained in the Refining Department with enough money to buy a luxurious flying shuttle to play with!”

The more Yuan Manqiu spoke, the more excited she got. She could not control herself and started dancing with joy.

As for the students, their mood was not that high. Everyone dumbfoundedly stared at her with somewhat blurred gazes.

Yuan Manqiu stretched the corners of her lips as she poured spiritual energy into the propulsion drive on the right side of the driver's seat.

The Turtle Car fiercely swayed a bit before it let out a "Clink Clink Clink Clink" and then violently started shaking. It shook left and right but never did it move forward.

"Damn, there is a problem with the Propulsion Array Glyphs. If I'm right, then the spiritual energy transmission shaft is worn out, resulting in the spiritual energy not 100% being converted into mechanical energy."

Yuan Manqiu muttered a few words, laid down on the floor, and stuck up her big ass as she glued her ear on the hood of the propulsion drive to hear for a while and narrowed her eyes to discern the operating condition of over a hundred spirit glyphs inside the propulsion drive. Afterward, she stood up and patted her ass. Suddenly, she stretched out her five fingers and ruthlessly smacked a palm on the propulsion drive!

"Smack!"

After she had smacked with her palm, the shaking of the shuttle weakened a bit, and even the "Clank Clank Clank Clank" noise had turned into "Woh Woh Woh Woh" noise; however, it still didn't show any signs of starting.

Yuan Manqiu's eyes opened widely as her cheeks puffed up before she fiercely let a kick fly and shouted, "Take off!"

“Bang! Bang! Bang!”

After a smack and a kick, the Propulsion Array Glyphs finally started functioning normally.

The spiritual energy between the array glyphs started running smoothly, and all the Anti-Gravity Array Glyphs and the Jet Propulsion Array Glyphs underneath and at the rear of the Turtle Car bloomed with a dim brilliance.

The Turtle Car staggered along as it rose up into the air and flew forward. Even as it flew, it would move up and down in the air.

All the freshmen were flabbergasted.

The older students, on the other hand, were accustomed to seeing such things. Many of them had already fallen asleep, some of whom even started snoring.

Yuan Manqiu clapped her hands in pride and self-satisfaction:

“See? This is exactly the ultimate trick in the bag of refiners! If there is a magical equipment which can’t be repaired no matter how you repair it, when you have exhausted all the methods to no avail, then try to smack it or ruthlessly kick it! Often, this method will make it miraculously work!”

“Like what I did a moment ago, a＜Heart-Shattering Palm> coupled with an＜Explosive Kicking Technique> can awaken even a rotten magical equipment. Everyone, don’t you worry! In the future, when I have the time, I will teach it to everyone!”

While speaking, the Turtle Car drove into the urban area of Wild Waves City.

Wild Waves City was an academic city and was entirely built from the support of the Grand Desolate War Institution, and as such, the urban area was precisely the campus of the Grand Desolate War Institution.

Wild Waves City was the home of hundreds of thousands of people, most of whom were tyrannical cultivators and veteran martial artists who had rich fighting experience.

Apart from official students of the Grand Desolate War Institution, there were also exchange students from other universities, trainees of major cultivation sects who had been carefully picked, and special forces sent by the army for special training as well.

There were even auditing students who had meager strength yet were burning with ambition.

In addition, there were also cultivation sects who specialized in close combat like “Devil Fist Sect” and “Hundred Saber Alliance” that were stationed in Wild Waves City and had set up a hall and cultivation ground here.

This big city in the Wasteland that had the strength of hundreds of thousands of people appeared to be particularly lively and noisy, but that was not all; above all of this, it gave off an unrestrained feeling that was accompanied by madness, something which was missing in the cities of the southeast region.

A majority of the freshmen of the Grand Desolate War Institution came from mid-sized towns in the Demon Beast Wasteland, many of whom had never seen such a big, flourishing city. One by one, each and every one of them glued their face to the window so much so that their nose almost pressed flat as they gaze afar with wide-opened eyes.

“Look, there are so many floating mountains!”

“Wild Waves City is divided into a lot of levels. It is simply a three-dimensional city!”

The freshmen clicked their tongue in wonder, and some even exclaimed in admiration.

In the space above Wild Waves City, over a hundred mountains were floated in the air. Their Anti-Gravity Array Glyphs released a large amount of spiritual energy like tides that even distorted the air, creating ripples one after another, which gave the impression of a world of dreams, as if a paradise had fallen in the world of mortals.

Some of these floating mountains retained their oldest form and appeared as if a mountain peak had been uprooted and floated in the air. On their surface, there were pavilions and buildings that had been exquisitely carved and beautifully painted, while streams of water flowed under the small bridges.

Waterfalls that were tumbling down these floating mountain sprayed the water everywhere around them, eventually turning into a blurry mist which gave birth to rainbows in no time.

Whereas, some of the floating mountains evidently had traces of being artificially constructed, as if they were huge buildings that were floating in the sky.

Some were like tall and lofty palaces, some were like ancient and firm pyramids, while others were modeled after modern skyscrapers.

There were a few floating mountains which were cast from the purest of metals to give a post-modern style. Like the crystal battleships that roamed between the universe, these floating mountains soared even through the atmospheric layers as they docked in the space over Wild Waves City!

A vast majority of these floating mountains were connected using transparent tubes, wherein there were countless capsules-like objects that were moving as swiftly as the wind and lightning.

Each of these “capsules” had a few passengers riding inside as they shuttled between the floating mountains in an astonishing speed.

However, most people still chose flying shuttles over the capsules to travel between the floating mountains.

Some of the powerful cultivators simply rode their flying swords to travel as their entire bodies were wrapped in colorful streams of light that were constantly releasing a resplendent brilliance, leaving behind a trail of rainbows in the blue curtain of the sky. They were traveling in a free and unrestrained manner.

“Those cultivators who are riding their sword should be the professors of Grand Desolate War Institution, right? God knows when I will be personally taught by the ‘professors’!” A few freshmen sighed with emotions in succession.

A freshman suddenly remembered as he raised his hand and asked, “Professor Yuan, can you now tell us what exactly is Project Mystic Skeleton?”

Just as these words left his mouth, every freshman’s eyes lit up.

Everyone was an ambitious teenager who did not wish to dawdle their days in a waste department only to find a random job after their graduation—that would be too unworthy for themselves!

Yuan Manqiu slightly smiled and cleared her throat:

“Alright, since you are all interested, I will carefully explain it to you. However, before I explain, Student Li Yao, can you please tell everyone the universal concept of ‘Crystal Suit!”

Li Yao was taken aback a bit. He had never expected that Yuan Manqiu would suddenly point his name.

However, the concept of crystal suits was not the least bit profound. Not to mention cultivators, even if it were the ordinary people, they had seen it on the news, and it was even used in many virtual reality games.

Li Yao, as an experienced magical equipment fan, was naturally not unaware of it.

He formed a speech in his mind before pouring out in fervor:

“The crystal suit is not just a magical equipment that is like a common armor. On the contrary, it is an offensive-type, defense-type, camouflage-type, maneuvering-type, reconnaissance-type magical equipment… All kinds of magical equipment, after having integrated together with the assistance of powerful military crystal processors, is finally refined into a combat suit.”

“An excellent crystal suit is equivalent to the most powerful flying sword and an impregnable armor which has the fastest propulsion array glyphs as well as a reconnaissance magical equipment whose detection system has the largest range… It is a piece of magical equipment which has all kinds of magical equipment perfectly combined together to meet all the needs that a cultivator requires during a fight.

Furthermore, it also provides adequate support of spiritual energy reserves as well as calculation ability!”

“A crystal suit could not only geometrically elevate the battle force of a cultivator, but above all, it could extend the time which a cultivator could keep fighting, and even more so, it could allow a cultivator to adapt to a variety of complex terrains during a fight.”

“Whether you are in a foreign sector filled with demonic energy and devil energy, in space or place which lacks oxygen, or a world fragment that lacks spiritual energy, as long as they are equipped with a crystal suit, the cultivators could unleash their full power and destroy everything in their path!”

“Therefore, the crystal suit is known as the ‘King of Modern Magical Equipment’. Some people also describe it as the ‘Magical Equipment Among Magical Equipment’. Among all magical equipment, it is the one which is the most complex, the most expensive, the one which is most difficult to refine, and the one which after having successfully refined becomes the strongest magical equipment!”

“At the end of the Great Dark Age, mankind began to combine various magical equipment and had refined the very first crystal suit.”

“Countless weak Refinement Stage cultivators, after having their battle force elevated with the help of the crystal suit to a level comparable to Building Foundation Stage cultivators, formed a huge army of crystal suited-soldiers. Only then was mankind able to overcome the demon clan and acquire a second life!”

“Even today, cultivators who are equipped with crystal suit are still the main force of mankind who fight with demon beasts. Only if they wore crystal suits would they be able to go toe-to-toe with demon generals who possess tyrannical battle force, demon kinds, and notorious and powerful devil path cultivators!”

Li Yao explained the crystal suit’s definition, principles, and history tirelessly. He even listed several classic crystal suit models.

Although many of the freshmen knew some of the knowledge related to crystal suits, it was not so detailed and comprehensive. Everyone heard it in relish and watched with utmost concentration.

Yuan Manqiu repeatedly nodded her head before she smiled and said:

“Very good. Student Li Yao’s explanation is very comprehensive. However, you have given so many advantages of the crystal suit. Can you list two disadvantages?”

Li Yao pondered for a bit before he shook his head and said:

“The crystal suit is the most powerful magical equipment in the modern cultivation world. Its offense and defense is completely balanced. It’s an individual magical equipment which provides the strongest continuous fighting ability. For sure, from the point of the refining level, it can be divided into high and low levels, but if I have to point out any fatal flaws, then I can not tell. I can only say that it has regretful disadvantages.”

“First, the production cost of refining crystal suit is very high. Even a crystal suit of the most common structure would cost at least 500 million, and this is just the basic. If you want to carry a few flying swords, then it would be even more expensive.”

“The refining cost of some of the high-rank crystal suit designed to be equipped by Golden Core Stage cultivator or Nascent Soul Stage monsters is comparable to a crystal battleship. Furthermore, its maintenance and repair cost is exceedingly high—it is simply a behemoth that swallows gold!”

“Second, in the process of refining a crystal suit, a large number of heaven and earth treasures are consumed. It’s one thing that these materials are exorbitant in price, but most importantly, many of its raw materials are very scarce and there is simply no price for them. Even with all the money in the world, one could not buy them!”

—

TLN:

Hi guys,

One of you suggested, Mystic Bone sounds nice rather than Profound Skeleton. So we have decided to change the name to Mystic Skeleton. Also, the crystal armor we have sometimes mentioned in the past has been changed to crystal suit. As for the no release on tuesday, I will make it up by today or tomorrow. Sorry for the inconvenience, I was in bit of a jam.

Thank you for reading the novel.

Chapter 132: Mass-Production Storm

Chapter 132: Mass-Production Storm

"For example, in order to refine the well-known, heavy-class crystal armor of the cultivation world, the 'Tai Hao Battle Suit', 'Tai Hao Stone', which is extremely rare and precious, is required. This Tai Hao Stone is a meteorite from outer space and is so rare that it only falls once every five centuries in the Heaven Origin Sector. In other words, it is only possible to refine one Tai Hao Battlesuit. If one wants to refine another one, it is absolutely impossible!"[1]

"These two points together are the reason that a vast majority of crystal suits are unable to be mass-produced. Crystal suits are scarce in number, and in the battlefield, only the commanders and commandos can wear it."

"If the price of crystal suits was a little cheaper and its design was a little simpler, thereby reducing the difficulty of refining them by a bit as well as allowing them to be mass-produced and available to every cultivator, the crystal suit army of the Star Sea Imperium Era would once again reappear. Not to mention leveling the Demon Beast Wasteland, even the Blood Demon Sector could be steamrolled all the way. Any demon general or demon king would be swallowed by the mankind's waves of steel one after another."

Yuan Manqiu smile became more and more mysterious.

"Very good, Student Li Yao. You have completely pointed out the two major problems of refining crystal suits. Anyone who could resolve these two problems—that is to say, a low-priced crystal suit that could be mass-produced—will set off a storm in the industry and even change the face of the entire cultivation world’s battling style!"

After thinking for a moment, Li Yao suddenly came to understood what Yuan Manqiu was trying to say. He suddenly jumped up:

"Is our Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department amidst the process of refining a new crystal suit? One that is low-priced and can be mass-produced?"

Once these words were out, all the freshmen were in an uproar.

Anyone who could be admitted to the Nine Elite Universities was definitely not a fool. Everyone, very soon, realized that once the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department was successful in refining "crystal suits that could be mass-produced", big waves would set off.

Forget the others, just the army would order 3,000-5,000 in one breath. No, no, no, just 2,000 was enough to produce an astronomical profit, which would be enough to elevate the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department into one of the strongest Refining Departments in the federation.

"Is it true, Professor Yuan? Even for Deep Sea University's Refining Department, it is very difficult to refine a crystal suit that could be mass-produced. Can we actually do it?"

"Low-price? How low is it? Can it cost less 300 million?"

"Are you not going to use heaven and earth treasures? But many of the key components of crystal suits are very sophisticated. They have special requirements for the tensile strength and spiritual energy conductivity, which only a few heaven and earth treasures could fulfill. Wouldn't ordinary material simply be unable to bear the load? Wouldn't they just disintegrate once the load is slightly above their limit?"

A lively discussion burst forth amongst the freshmen. Their faces beamed with delight, and their morale, all of a sudden, pushed through the limit; the lifeless look which was hung on their faces had now completely disappeared.

Striking while the iron was hot, Yuan Manqiu, wearing a smile on her face, said:

"It's true! As early as twenty years ago, when Old Mo and I were exploring a vestige in the Wasteland, we inadvertently found a fragment of a jade chip. After a decade or so of analysis, we were finally able to analyze some precious information stored within it and discovered a refining technique to refine a low-level crystal suit from the Star Sea Imperium Era. However, it was incomplete and was missing many of the most crucial steps and procedures."

"Wow!"

The eyes of all the freshmen, including Li Yao's, lit up.

At the dawn of the Great Dark Age, the greatest and strongest cultivator of mankind, the "Emperor", was born and later founded the Star Sea Imperium across the universe.

That period was the peak of mankind's cultivation technologies. There were endless formidable cultivators and tyrannical magical equipment.

Unfortunately, during the "Armageddon Rebellion", the Emperor's strongest clone, "Blood God", after having been corrupted by the Extraterrestrial Devils, fell to the devil’s path. The Emperor's clone became the strongest devil cultivator known as "Mad Armageddon", and the cultivation world was razed by the flames of the second civil war.

Razed by the flames of war for a successive 1,000 years, the Star Sea Imperium was eventually destroyed, as a result of which various cultivation technologies suffered a disastrous decline. The level of the cultivation civilization regressed by at least a thousand years.

As far as the current Heaven Origin Sector was concerned, even a jade chip fragment from the Star Sea Imperium Era was downright a priceless treasure.

Yuan Manqiu was completely satisfied by the freshmen's reaction. She continued:

"About a decade ago, Old Mo and I established a research team which struggled day and night to overcome the difficulties and hoped to apply the technology from the jade chip fragment into modern crystal suits so that we could produce a low-priced, ordinary-level crystal suit that could be mass-produced."

"Five years ago, we finally had a breakthrough, so we assembled all the professors and students of the Refining Department to form a team of refiners and poured all our funds into it."

"At present, we have already refined a fair share of the key components, and the overall structure is also almost built. The most difficult part of the entire project has already been resolved, reaching a completion rate of over 90%. As long as we put in our efforts, we will soon succeed!"

"Today was the day when we were going to test the most crucial ‘Super Compressed Crystal Reactor', and as such, all the students and professors of the Refining Department were gathered in the Refining Workshop. That's why we neglected you all."

"However, as long as the Crystal Reactor is operating perfectly, we will be able to charge the crystal suits with spiritual energy in a steady stream, thereby making the entire project 99% complete!"

"As Old Mo is the leader of the entire project and the one who had first found the jade chip fragment, and also because he and I poured all our funds into the project, we decided to use the 'Xuan' character from his name for the project and called this project "Project Mystic Skeleton', while the crystal suit that is going to be mass-produced will be called 'Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit'."

"Our target is to decrease the refining cost of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit to be under... 100 million!"

"Everyone, I invite you all to take part in the 'Project Mystic Skelton' and set off a massive storm in the cultivation world, one which will sweep the world!"

Yuan Manqiu, with her head held high, said proudly.

"Wow..."

Once she finished speaking, all the freshmen were finally moved. One after another, it was as if everyone was had been injected with energy and were beaming with joy; they were all in high spirits!

What was 100 million?

The price of some of the top-grade armed flying shuttles, such as the higher versions of the Mystic Bird Battle Shuttles and the Crimson Flame Battle Shuttles, were close to 100 million. In addition to its speed being faster, the battle force of such flying shuttles was absolutely higher than that of a crystal suit.

Prior to the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, the cheapest crystal suit was worth over 500 million and that was just a training model. It wasn't equipped with any notable offensive magical equipment.

Before, spending an amount of 500 million could only arm a single cultivator, but now, it could arm at least five cultivators!

Even if the performance of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was worse than other crystal suits, the numerical advantage of five or maybe even ten could make up for the large difference in its performance.

Needless to say, some of the slightly higher grade crystal suits could cost a couple hundred million, a few billion, or maybe even more than ten billion.

If the same amount was spent on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, an entire battalion could be armed with ease!

Yuan Manqiu was absolutely right. If Project Mystic Skeleton was truly successful, then as certain as the sun rising in the east, it was a revolutionary crystal suit which would set off an earth-shattering and heaven-encompassing storm in the cultivation world—it could even change the face of the currently existing battle style of cultivators!

By then, every low-level cultivator would not hesitate to buy a Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, and the army, even more so, would send a large order at once!

The Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department did not even need to truly manufacture the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuits. They would just have to provide authorization to the army or other cultivation sects for them to refine it, and just from the "licensing fee", they would be able to earn massive profits.

"Now, do you understand that applying for the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department was the correct choice!? As long as we are truly successful in refining the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department would absolutely jump into one of the top Refining Department in the federation!"

Li Yao's face revealed a look of delight as he secretly pondered.

The other freshmen too were all grinning ear to ear; they were extremely excited.

Whereas the whirring and snoring sounds of the older students could still be heard without end.

However, in the eyes of the freshmen, even if oil was smeared all over their clothes, they started to look cuter—after all, everyone was working hard for "Project Mystic skeleton"!

Completing the project a day earlier would relieve them from their misery a day earlier!

Very soon, after crossing half of Wild Waves City, passing through the imposing Iron Fist Club and Chaos Edge Hall, and crossing a group of ginormous floating mountains, the flying shuttle arrived at a somewhat dilapidated and gloomy region.

This was like an old district of Wild Waves City; the buildings on the ground were dilapidated and the paint on the walls was peeling off, revealing the rugged surface of the bricks.

Seven to eight floating mountains were floating all alone in the sky. The size of these mountains was a lap shorter than the mountains at the center of the city.

One of the floating mountains seemed to have some problem with its Anti-Gravity Array Glyphs and was losing a lot of spiritual energy, which was leaking in the form of heat energy.

And in order to stop the heat radiating, a cooling pond was installed next to the Anti-Gravity Array Glyphs, resulting in a large amount of steam gushing out, filling the entire sky, and making the atmosphere look rather bad.

"Look! That's our school building. Don't be fooled by its inconspicuous appearance. Inside, it is instead a very advanced lab, refining workshop, and a small smelting room, all of which could fulfill the most basic requirements of refining. Like the saying goes, even though a sparrow is small, it still has all its organs!"

Yuan Manqiu, pointing at a round floating mountain, said.

This floating mountain simply had no style at all; it was as if classical, modern, and futuristic styles had been casually blended together. Purely from a practical point of view, it was like they only cared about the function and did not consider the artistic view. It simply gave off the misconception that a big lump of waste was floating in the sky.

If Yuan Manqiu had not given them that speech a while ago, presumably, almost half of these freshmen would have thought of transferring departments after looking at the school building.

However, at this moment, everyone was extremely excited. After they were immersed in the completion of Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, they were imagining the flourishing and glorious Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department.

"Even this floating mountain was built after Old Mo and I used hard and soft tactics on the Dean for several years. Only then was the funding provided. Because the funds were insufficient, that's why it looks a little ugly... but it does not matter! As long as we succeed in refining the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, we will surely build a super-huge floating mountain, one that is bigger than even the main school building of the Combat Department!"

Yuan Manqiu ruthlessly waved her fists as she said in an impassioned manner.

Li Yao's fingers started to itch after he was touched by her enthusiasm. He could not wait to fly to this "Junk Mountain" and start working on refining the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit together with Professor Mo Xuan!

"As long as we succeed in refining the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, astronomical funding and overwhelming resources will be poured into the Refining Department. In just a few years, Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department will be a major department just like the Combat Department, and within ten years, we will certainly have the opportunity to run shoulder to shoulder with the Deep Sea University's Refining Department. By then..."

"BOOM!"

While Li Yao and the others were immersed in the happy fantasy, an earth-shattering explosion suddenly rang in their ears.

A fiery brilliance shot to the sky as a mushroom cloud, which was like the arms of an octopus, spread in all direction, wrapping the entire floating mountain

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TLN:

[1] Tai Hao Emperor is one of the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors, the mythological rulers of Ancient China. More could be found here - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Sovereigns_and_Five_Emperors

Chapter 133: Skeleton of a War God

Chapter 133: Skeleton of a War God

"Quickly get on the ground! Everyone, get on the ground!" Li Yao screamed before he threw himself onto the ground.

However, it was too late! Before everyone could react, shockwaves from the explosion, like frightful billows and terrifying waves, blew the Turtle Car 300-400 meters away, ruthlessly smashing it into a four story tall building before the Turtle Car rolled and crashed into the ground!

Despite the Shock Mitigation Array Glyphs installed all over the Turtle Car, many of the people still collided with the walls seven to eight times and became confused and disoriented. A fair number of freshmen had even lost their consciousness.

Many of the people who had lost their consciousness had their faces covered with blood, while others even had their tendons torn and had their bones broken as painful groans were heard without stop in the Turtle Car.

Li Yao was one of the few students who had not been injured. He crawled his way to the Propulsion Drive and tried to hear the situation inside for a while before he determined that the Propulsion Array Glyphs were completely destroyed. Only after determining that the chance of the leaking spiritual energy leading into a chain of explosion was unlikely did he crawl his way out of the broken window and blankly stare at the sky.

In the sky, on the right side of the floating mountain, a giant hole with a diameter of a few dozen meters was blown out, from which a fiery green brilliance was gushing out, releasing a pungent smell in the air.

And inside the floating mountain, a chain of muffled explosions was still ringing; it was akin to the peals of thunder one would hear when he had buried himself under the blanket. The explosions were still continuing.

After a while, billowing black smoke was spraying out from every window and every gap on the floating mountain, gathering into a terrifying and ominous beast of black smoke in the sky.

The Anti-Gravity Array Glyphs underneath the floating mountain began to die one by one.

Under the gravitational pull, the floating mountain tilted towards the left as it slowly fell towards the ground.

Because a part of the Anti-Gravity Array Glyphs was still operational, the two sides of the junk floating mountain were under a different gravitational pull. A small part of the floating mountain was forcibly torn because of the intense and opposing gravity.

Countless broken debris, which was also mixed in with several silhouettes that were moving their hand and legs, caved in. Some of the people were trying to escape by riding their flying sword, yet they were swallowed by the consecutive explosions, painting a scene that was too ghastly to look at.

The entire ordeal lasted for half a minute before the main body of the floating mountain finally crashed into the ground, raising an endless cloud of dust and stones, which gave the misconception of a volcanic eruption.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Amidst the storm of dust, three pillars of green fire soared to the sky. An even more terrifying chain of explosions had occurred inside the floating mountain.

When Li Yao had his eyes opened wide and mouth agape, Yuan Manqiu too somehow crawled her way out of the flying shuttle.

Her face was covered in blood, and the expression on her face as she stared right at the empty sky was uglier than a ghost itself.

"Old Mo!"

After a moment, Yuan Manqiu let out a heartbreaking shrill as she threw caution to the wind and bolted right towards the place where the floating mountain had crashed.

...

After seven days, a very rare drizzle hit Wild Waves City, where the rainwater seemed to be a bit acidic.

The region where the floating mountain had crashed was already cleared.

In order to take precautions against the crashing of a floating mountain, under every floating mountain, there weren’t too many houses built, and the houses that were in the vicinity were also installed with powerful defensive array glyphs.

So this incident didn't cause too many casualties for the residents who were living on the ground, just a few dozen buildings had become unstable and were declared as dangerous because of the shockwaves and were simply demolished to remove trouble.

However, the floating junk mountain was completely scrapped.

Through the investigation of a dozen high-level cultivators, the accident this time had been determined as an experimental failure.

From simulating the scene of the accident, the accident occurred when Professor Mo Xuan was leading the entire team in doing installation work of the Super Compressed Crystal Reactor.

To be precise, the Crystal Reactor was the Propulsion Core of the crystal suit. The crystal, which contained an immense amount of powerful spiritual energy after having been compressed as much as hundred times, was installed in a palm-sized reactor, which would drive the crystal suit for a long time during a fight.

It was conceivable that once the Crystal Reactor had a problem, the crystal which was compressed to the extreme would, in the blink of an eye, return to its original size and release incomparably unstable spiritual energy that could destroy everything within a radius of few hundred meters.

The accident this time was exactly this kind of situation.

What was even worse was because of the shortage of funds, the Refining Department's floating mountain was small in size, and its crystal warehouse was not much farther away from the refining workshop.

The very moment the explosion occurred, the shockwaves continuously ran through seven layers of walls, and the walls, which were all built from metal with defensive array glyphs inlaid inside, were, just like paper, shredded into pieces. A tide of unstable spiritual energy swept through the crystal warehouse in the blink of an eye, leading to a series of earth-shattering explosions!

From the series of explosion, the entire floating mountain was eventually destroyed. Countless precious materials and magical equipment turned into scraps, priceless experimental materials and data were buried in the rubble, and even the 90% completed Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit melted into slag.

Project Mystic Skeleton returned to zero in just one second.

And this was just 1% of the total loss.

Project Mystic Skeleton was the only hope of the Refining Department, and as such, all the elites—including the head of the department, Professor Mo Xuan, a majority of faculty as well as the most experienced senior students—were all present in the refining workshop when the Crystal Reactor was being installed.

They were all killed in the explosion.

The spiritual energy tide, like a hurricane, swept everything away; every cell and every wisp of residual soul was torn to pieces.

Not to mention surviving the explosions, even if they wished to rescue a few wisps of residual souls to convert them into spectral cultivators, that was rendered impossible.

Even if the professors and students weren't present inside the refining workshop, so long as they were present in the floating mountain, every one of them suffered the disastrous effect of the spiritual energy waves, which ranged from fainting to seriously injured and immediately dying on the spot. The scene was too ghastly to look at.

Only Yuan Manqiu and a dozen older students who, because of their low level, had to leave to welcome the freshmen were lucky to escape this disaster.

They were simply not enough to sustain a department; one could even say that the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department was—completely finished!

Seven days after the disaster.

The location of the Refining Department had completely turned to ruins.

At the beginning, the institute was ready to clean up this region, and the usable resources buried within the rubble could be re-used. The institute truly could not bear to let them be buried in the rubble; however, Yuan Manqiu forcibly stopped them.

She insisted that there were many precious experimental data and material buried in the rubble, which contained all the hope of them reconstructing the Refining Department. She absolutely didn't allow anyone to move the rubble, not even a rivet was allowed.

Yuan Manqiu was like a crazed mother elephant who was defending every inch of soil in her domain, and the dean too was unable to take her away.

At the center of the rubble, a tiny statue was placed, one which was similar to a skeleton of a War God that had melted halfway.

With its bare arms spread towards the sky, its black hole-like mouth emitted a furious roar towards the endless sky.

This was the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit that was being developed by the Refining Department.

It was a condensed form of painstaking effort and will of all the professors and students of Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department, which had turned into slag in the explosion instead, thereby losing its purpose for refining.

Now, it could only be placed as a monument to commemorate the people who had sacrificed themselves on the road of cultivation.

A solemn memorial was held before the statue.

Every department's student union, including the Iron Fist Club, Chaos Edge Hall, Lancets, Glyph Devils… had sent a representative to send their condolences.

Most of the institute's professors and all the management staff were also gathered here.

Even though the Refining Department was a waste department that was not worth mentioning in the Grand Desolate War Institution, even if many professors and students had thought to revoke the Refining Department...

But for the Refining Department to completely disappear from the face of the earth in such a way, this was just too cruel!

"Today, we are gathered here to commemorate some of the great students and cultivators who, in order to defend human civilisation, ventured in the endless mystery of the cultivation world, vigorously immersed themselves in research and cultivation for days and nights, spent all their sweat and blood, and even paid for it with their valuable lives and souls!"

Underneath the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit statue, Grand Desolate War Institution's dean, Xiong Baili, said in sadness.

Xiong Baili was a legendary figure in the Grand Desolate War Institution. Rumor has it that when he was young, his strength as a battle-type cultivator had already broken through to the peak level of the Core Formation Stage. In the Demon Beast Wasteland, he commanded winds and clouds, swept through everything in his path, and got the moniker "Volcano"!

However, during a beast tide outbreak, he was heavily surrounded. For an entire day and night, he directly clashed with the beast tide.

Although he had killed thousands upon thousands of demon beasts, he had excessively overdrafted his spiritual energy and was also poisoned by over thirty different kinds of demonic poison, corroding his eight extra meridians, as a result of which, his strength had suffered a disastrous decline, rendering him no longer fit for battle.

However, he did not give up. With amazing perseverance and talent, he, much to everyone's surprise, turned into an admin-type cultivator from a battle-type cultivator. Furthermore, his strength had also recovered to the intermediate level of the Core Formation Stage!

Because of this legendary experience, Xiong Baili enjoyed very high prestige in the Grand Desolate War Institution. Even the experts who were stronger than him assented cordially for him to assume the post of the dean of the institute.

Rumor has it that Xiong Baili was ambitious and was hell bent on raising the Grand Desolate War Institution into one of the three super universities among the "Nine Elite Universities". At the very least, he wanted to get rid of the current predicament where the Grand Desolate War Institution ranked last among the "Nine Elite Universities".

And his idea was to strengthen the four major departments and to weaken or even dismiss all the waste departments, and as such, all the resources were poured into the four major departments for development.

Even though he thought like this, in the wake of this tragedy, Xiong Baili could not help but feel dejected.

Next to the dean stood Yuan Manqiu, who wore a black robe and had a pale complexion as she kept staring at the wreckage of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, seemingly wanting to forcibly take that wreckage down from the pedestal.

During these seven days, she had almost never slept as she frantically rummaged through the rubble. She had become a lot more haggard but also a little thinner. One could vaguely find a slight shadow of the "Deep Sea Goddess" from a few decades ago.

Watching her undergo a complete transformation from her previous appearance in these seven days, Li Yao was a little absent-minded.

In these seven days, almost without any ounce of sleep, Li Yao unleashed all of his special abilities which he had learned in the Magical Equipment Graveyard as he cleaned up the rubble together with Yuan Manqiu, rescuing a lot of precious jade chips, books, training equipment, and heaven and earth treasures that were buried under the rubble.

Even though Li Yao had tempered himself with the Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining technique, which he had learned from the memory fragments, at this moment, he was unable to hold on and was shaky and unsteady.

"The Refining Department is only left with an associate professor and a few dozen students who have mediocre strength. What am I going to do in the future?"

Contemplated Li Yao.

At this point, someone from behind lightly poked him. When he turned around, it was the freshman, Huang Tong.

Huang Tong was active amongst the freshmen. He was particularly outgoing; not even a few days had passed, yet he had become one with the older students and had also made a lot of friends outside the department. He was very well informed.

Huang Tong gave a wink to Li Yao: "Li Yao, what do you think? Which department are you actually going to transfer to? The Iron Fist Club or the Chaos Edge Hall?"

Li Yao was surprised for a moment: "What do you mean?"

He once again took a glance at the few remaining freshmen and older students of the Refining Department, who had gathered together beside Huang Tong. Although a sad look hung on their faces, they could not hide their aspirations in the depths of their eyes.

Huang Tong's eyebrows twitched:

"You still don't know? Right, you have been collecting the resources buried under the rubble, so you may not have heard, but—the Refining Department is about to be dismissed!"

Chapter 134: Supernova

Chapter 134: Supernova

"What did you say?"

Li Yao stared with wide-opened eyes; his face was full of astonishment.

Huang Tong pursed his lips as he disapprovingly said, "For crying out loud—isn't that obvious!? From the very beginning, our Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department was weak and was notorious as the worst department among the 'Nine Elite Universities'. The entire department was painstakingly supported by one person alone, who was none other than Professor Mo Xuan."

"Even if it was Professor Mo Xuan, he did not have any good reputation in the refiners' community, which is where he got the moniker 'Madman'!"

"Now, not only him but even a few slightly skilled and reputed professors and all the elite students have been killed by the explosion, leaving an associate professor along with rookies like us behind. Tell me, do you think our Refining Department has any future?"

"This—"

This was the very same problem Li Yao had also been thinking about.

The blow this time was truly serious. It could be said that the Refining Department was completely annihilated.

Huang Tong smacked his lips: "For a long time, the institute believed that only the four major departments should remain and that it would be better to have as few ordinary departments as possible. Only in such a manner could they promote the academic level of the institute."

"Even if no accident had taken place in the Refining Department, many would still clamor to abolish the Refining Department every year, not to mention that such a tragic accident had occurred and had blown away more than half of the Refining Department. It would be impossible for them not to abolish the department."

"And from what I hear, the institute’s management has already decided to officially announce it after the memorial service. Apart from the four major departments, for which they have to go through an examination, the students of the Refining Department can unconditionally choose other departments to transfer to!"

Only now did Li Yao come to understand why these students were beaming with delight.

The Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution was a department which had the lowest cut-off marks, so if they arbitrarily choose any department other than the Refining Department, that would be a significant upgrade.

So to say, even if they closed their eyes and randomly chose a department, they would have made a killing.

A vast majority of the Refining Department's student were here because they had no choice, not because they liked refining. Naturally, man struggles upwards as water flows downwards.[1]

Li Yao also could not say that their choice was wrong. After all, everyone had to consider their own future.

However, if the Refining Department was truly abolished, then where should he go from here?

"Is it going to be abolished? Is there no room for recovery? Can't we recruit professors again? Can't the school building be rebuilt?!" said Li Yao insipidly.

Huang Tong chuckled as he shook his head and said:

"Fellow Student Li Yao, to rebuild the Refining Department with words alone is impossible—it needs money! An astronomical sum is needed to just build a huge floating mountain that has various smelting workshops, refining workshops, and laboratories. Even 18 billion is not enough!"

"Generally, a university has three main sources of funding. The first is the education fund provided by the Federation government. However, it is so little that it can only be used to decorate the facade a bit, that's all."

"Second is the sponsoring of various cultivation sects."

"The Nine Elite Universities is sponsored by many powerful and flourishing cultivation sects from behind. For example, our Grand Desolate War Institution has powerful combat sects like the Devil Fist Sect and the Hundred Saber Alliance sponsoring us from behind."

"Naturally, those who are spending money would definitely sponsor the department they like. For instance, the Devil Fist Sect would definitely spend their money on the Iron Fist Club, whereas the Hundred Saber Alliance, for sure, would sponsor the Chaos Edge Hall. It is impossible to misappropriate the money to rebuild the Refining

Department, and you can understand why they won't, right?"

"The third is each department supporting themselves using their own unique skills."

"For example, student unions from the Combat Department like the Iron Fist Club and the Chaos Edge Hall would often form a coalition between the students and the army to hunt demon beasts deep within the Wasteland together."

"Whereas, the Glyph Devils are open to the public and provide tattoo services for money. Due to the fame of the Glyph Devils, many cultivators come and spend a huge sum of money to ask the Glyph Devils' members to tattoo them."

"As for the Lancets, it goes without saying that in the field of surgery and orthopedics, the Lancets is second to none in the federation. God knows how much money they make every day."

"Besides the small part paid to the institute as management fees, every penny they earn is used to fill the coffers of their respective department."

"Any department that wanted to build a new floating mountain or do some revolutionary project would have to gather the funds from here and there. A part of the fund would often come from the institute, who would take out a part of the government education fund it has received. Some of the funds would come from the sponsoring of the familiar cultivation sects, while a small part would be taken from the department’s small treasury, and finally, the remaining funds would come from the project leader’s own pockets."

"What does the Refining Department have? The institute is not at all optimistic and hence they have no intention to invest a single penny on the department. As for familiar sects, we don't have any, so forget about sponsors. As for our treasury, that goes without saying—and I have even heard that Professor Mo Xuan went bankrupt for Project Mystic Skeleton. He had poured his entire fortune into the project and had even borrowed a huge sum from many. So, where is the money?"

Li Yao gritted his teeth so much that they were aching.

From Huang Tong's words, he found that the problem was extremely serious.

At this point, his eyelids madly started twitching.

The four spirit threads that were slumbering inside his forehead also became restless. He felt as if they were ready to come out at any moment.

Li Yao's intuition pointed at the sky where he saw a huge, disc-shaped flying shuttle quietly floating in the clear blue sky.

This flying shuttle happened to be a work of art; its hull was exquisite to the extreme, seemingly as if it was a work of nature itself, as if gentle breezes had congealed into a flying shuttle.

It was as if it has completely fused with the air to the point that if one’s line of sight was not affixed upon it, then nobody would be able to perceive its existence.

And once Li Yao's line of sight landed on it, it released an incomparably profound aura in the blink of an eye.

It was unfathomable just like the sea itself, so much so that one could not help but have an impulse to bow in worship.

"That’s the flying shuttle of Deep Sea University!" Huang Tong let out a "Wow!" in admiration.

The deep as sea flying shuttle quietly glided to above everyone's head.

It was obviously moving at a high-speed, yet it gave everyone a "static" feeling, as if it was not at all flying, but rather, the entire world was attracted by it. This kind of feeling made everyone's scalp tingle.

Deep Sea University's refining ability was strong. From this small flying alone, they could get a glimpse or two of its depth.

Three men who were dressed in silver-white robes gradually landed on the ground and solemnly walked towards the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit statue.

They were the representatives of Deep Sea University's Refining Department.

Even though Deep Sea University's Refining Department belonged to the elite camp and Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department belonged to the grassroots camp, and even though they were occasionally engaged in a "struggle over the great daos" because of the clashing ideologies between the two...

At the end of the day, all of them were still members of the cultivation world and refiners as well. Under this kind of situation, the other party would always come to give their condolences.

Standing at the forefront was a man who was about thirty years old and wore an oval metal ring on his face that happened to completely cover his pair of eyes. The metal ring was inlaid with 18 glistening blue crystals, giving the misconception that they were 18 eyes of some strange monster.

This was very special spectacles. It should be some kind of high-rank magical equipment.

"He is none other than Supernova Jiang Sheng, the most outstanding newcomer of Deep Sea University's Refining Department in past two decades. I had never thought that he would personally come to participate in the memorial. This time, Deep Sea University seems to be sincere," Huang Tong said in a small voice.

"He is Jiang Sheng?!" Li Yao narrowed his eyes.

It was not the first time that he had heard of Supernova Jiang Sheng.

When he was still in Floating Spear City, Professor Xie Tingxian, in order to attract him, had once guaranteed that Deep Sea University would use everything at its disposal to nurture him into the "Second Supernova Jiang Sheng".

Later, Li Yao had also browsed information about Jiang Sheng. He was a rising star in the refiners' community who was hailed as the most gifted refiner amongst the younger generation.

He had graduated from Deep Sea University and was a direct disciple of Chu Xiuhong. He was also the only one who Chu Xiuhong had passed her mantle to. Even before the age of 30, he had refined a fair share of powerful magical equipment that had shaken the cultivation world and had become the youngest associate professor of Deep Sea University's Refining Department.

Because he was unusually brilliant and talented, his rising speed was just like a nova explosion, so everyone in the refiners' community called him—Supernova!

Right now, because the time he has spent in cultivation was shorter than others, he could be considered to be lacking maturity.

However, many people believed that after a few decades, he would become the leader of the entire refiners' community within the Heaven Origin Sector—he would be the most powerful Master Refiner!

Li Yao eyes flickered with undisguised flames when he gazed at the back of Supernova Jiang Sheng.

However, he quickly moved his line of sight.

Right now, Supernova Jiang Sheng had already accomplished both fame and success, caused a sensation in the federation, and was an associate professor of Deep Sea University's Refining Department.

As for him, he was just a nameless newbie who was just a freshman of Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department and nothing more.

And even the poor Refining Department was on the verge of getting abolished.

The difference in status between the two was… extremely huge!

At present, he did not have the qualifications and the strength to challenge Jiang Sheng.

For now, he still needed to accumulate strength and conceal his talons and fangs till the appropriate time.

Jiang Sheng and the three professors of Deep Sea University's Refining Department walked in front of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit statue and gave a shallow bow, thereafter they walked up to Xiong Baili's and Yuan Manqiu's side before they started conversing in a low voice.

The students of the Refining Department had their own thoughts, many of whom started discussing in turns about which department they would choose in high spirits. No one was concerned about the arrival of Jiang Sheng.

Li Yao too started pondering about how he was going to walk on the road of cultivation in the future. God knows how long after he suddenly heard a sound of dispute.

As he raised his head to look, he saw Jiang Sheng and Yuan Manqiu had gone to a secluded place and were talking in a low voice. They were talking rapidly and an agitated look hung on their faces.

Li Yao's heart was stirred. He took a few steps towards the two as he attentively listened to a word or two coming along the wind.

Jiang Sheng said:

"Senior Sister Yuan, you are the most outstanding graduate of Deep Sea University's Refining Department before me and are also the direct disciple whom Teacher Chu is most proud of. This time, Teacher Chu is sincerely inviting you to come back. As long as you are willing, you can return to Deep Sea

University regardless of any conditions, but why are you so stubborn? Why are you flatly refusing?"

Yuan Manqiu coldly said:

"Junior Brother Jiang, please go back and tell teacher that as early as twenty years ago, we have parted ways because of different refining ideologies. I have taken a different road, and now, I am the acting dean of Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department. I am not at all interested in going back to the Deep Sea University to be a teacher, please thank teacher for her kind intentions."

Jiang Sheng heaved a sigh and said:

"Senior Sister Yuan, in all likelihood, Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department is going to be abolished. Even if it is not abolished now, then next year, it will be forcibly abolished by the association. Why are you wasting a year? Once you join Deep Sea University's Refining Department, there are many projects waiting for you to take charge of. Resources, staff, heaven and earth treasures... you can have everything which is a hundred times better than that of here."

Yuan Manqiu was silent for a moment before she said in a gentle tone:

"Perhaps Deep Sea University's conditions are truly good, but only at the Grand Desolate War Institution can I continue... Project Mystic Skeleton!"

[1] It is very normal to pursue their own ideals, for a good life.

Chapter 135: Determine Your Fate on Your Own!

Chapter 135: Determine Your Fate on Your Own!

Jiang Sheng was surprised for a moment before bursting into laughter:

"Senior Sister Yuan, after all this, you still haven't given up on Project Mystic Skeleton? Do you still want to refine a low-cost, mass-producible crystal suit? Don't you know that Project Mystic Skeleton has become a big joke in the refiners' community for a long time? From the get-go, no one was optimistic about you. Including our Deep Sea University, many people had sincerely tried to persuade you that the tensile strength of ordinary materials is low and simply can not withstand the ultrahigh impacts of spiritual energy. If they are not heaven and earth treasures, then it is impossible. Your insistence has even led to such a tragedy. This is truly..."

"That's enough!"

Yuan Manqiu suddenly raised her voice and said as she stressed each word, "That's right, the attempt this time was a failure and many have died, even Old Mo."

"But, so what?"

"From the very beginning, the road of cultivation is full of hardships and danger, and death could take us at any moment. Every year, God knows how many cultivators lose their lives in the Demon Beast Wasteland, yet does no one dare to tread the Demon Beast Wasteland?"

"Cultivators should be fearless of death, and if afraid, then do not cultivate. If Old Mo and I were afraid of death, we would have lived a peaceful and normal life for a hundred years like ordinary people. There was no need for us to lose all of our fortunes just for some Project Mystic Skeleton! By our strength, we could have lived an extravagant life with wealth and glory, but we didn't!"

"Although Old Mo is now dead, I am still living, am I not? The attempt this time had led to a failure, but nevertheless, I have also obtained valuable data and have learned some things. Next time, I will definitely not make the same mistake."

"In any case, I will persevere. I will refine the true Mystic Skeleton Battle Suit, and at that time, I will naturally come to Deep Sea University's Refining Department and exchange pointers with you!"

After a moment of silence, Jiang Shen helplessly sighed:

"Alright. Since Senior Sister Yuan has said so, I can only go back and report it to teacher faithfully. Nonetheless, as your junior brother, I must remind Senior Sister Yuan one thing."

"Senior Sister Yuan, the most important thing right now is not to refine some Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, but rather, it is to somehow protect Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department."

"The Nine Elite Universities are the most prestigious universities recognized by the federation government, and as such, the annual funding and resources provided by the federation government are far more than any other universities, thus there is a very high requirement for the quality of education as well as the standards of the departments."

"Every year, the department of education will evaluate all departments of the Nine Elite Universities."

"If our Refining Department can not even foster a single registered refiner, then that would mean that the quality of education of our university's Refining Department is terrible and that we are simply not worthy of the title of 'Nine Elite Universities'."

"At that time, the department of education will revoke the university's qualifications."

"Now, you are only left with these shrimp soldiers and crab generals[1] or freshmen who had just entered. It's not that simple to foster a registered refiner out of them in just one year’s time."

Yuan Manqiu stiffly said, "Junior Brother Jiang, let me worry about it, it's none of your business. Let's part ways here."

Jiang Sheng nodded:

"Alright, Senior Sister Yuan. We are all cultivators who are seeking the truth, so although you and I have different refining ideologies, I heartily wish you success in refining the Mystic Skeleton Armor that can be mass-produced."

"Then, I will completely blow it away using the crystal suit that is refined by me."

Jiang Sheng tone was very calm, as if it was not a threat but stating a very common fact.

Having said this, he nodded to Yuan Manqiu before turning around and walking towards the flying shuttle.

At this point, he arbitrarily swept a glance at Li Yao's direction. The eighteen crystals on the metal ring suddenly lit up.

Jiang Sheng slightly smiled as he walked towards Li Yao.

"You must be Li Yao, Floating Spear City's Champion of College Entrance Examination who Professor Xie Tingxian is very optimistic about? I am Deep Sea University's Refining Department associate professor, Jiang Sheng, a descendant of Jiang Family and the distant cousin of Jiang Tao."

"A Jiang Family descendant!" These three words made Li Yao's pupil suddenly contract as he instinctively took a step back.

Jiang Sheng seemed to be oblivious to Li Yao's wariness as he continued, "Student Li Yao, thank you very much. Jiang Tao, who fled from battle, was nothing more than a bandit who had no courage. He is simply the shame of our Jiang Family, so thank you for enforcing justice and helping us clean up our Jiang Family. I will always keep this great act of kindness in mind."

Li Yao was surprised for a moment. He had never imagined that Jiang Sheng had the intention to say this.

Jiang Sheng burst into laughter: “What’s the matter? Did you think that I came looking for trouble? Student Li Yao, you are thinking too much. Not to mention Jiang Tao, that scumbag who was simply seeking his own death, even if it was another descendant of the Jiang Family, I have no interest in helping them raise their head. I am someone who is obsessed technology, and as such, in my eyes, only refining techniques are worth fighting for. I don't have any interest in family or relatives. Those things are too silly. They are simply not worth it for me to waste even half a second."

Li Yao heaved a sigh of relief and said, "Professor Jiang, you are..."

Jiang Sheng's attitude suddenly changed. A smile still hung on his mouth, but his temperament, in the blink of an eye, suddenly became incomparably cold and gloomy as he said:

"However, although I have no interest in family, and even if you, Student Li Yao, turned the Jiang Family upside down, I will still remain indifferent. But you really should not have insulted the Deep Sea University's Refining Department. My feelings for the university are a hundred times deeper than my family!"

Li Yao was baffled: "When did I insult the Deep Sea University's Refining Department?"

He was very clear how strong the Deep Sea University's Refining Department was, and he even held some fear. The "Holy Land of Refiners"—this title wasn’t just for show.

Let alone insulting it, he never even looked down on Deep Sea University's Refining Department.

Jiang Sheng indifferently said, "You have said that you will lead the Grand Desolate War Institution and challenge Deep Sea University's Refining Department—in my opinion, that is like a toad jumping out to challenge a lion. Tell me, is that not an insult to the lion?"

Li Yao narrowed his eyes: "Professor Jiang, you mean to say, my Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department is like a toad who doesn’t even have the qualifications to challenge your lion-like university? And we shouldn’t even have any idea, even if it’s just a thought is an insult to your university?"

"Yes, that's exactly what I mean. You are intelligent, Student Li Yao." Jiang Sheng showed a smile which was like a warm and gentle breeze caressing your cheeks.

"..."

Li Yao was rendered speechless.

Supernova Jiang Sheng was truly acting like a direct disciple of Chu Xiuhong should; he did not place anyone in his eyes.

"However—"

Jiang Sheng changed the topic of the conversation as a smile once again bloomed on his face: "As the saying goes, young people make mistakes and the gods will forgive everything. You are young, impulsive, hot-blooded, naive, and you will occasionally say nonsense. There is nothing wrong in itself. I will give you an opportunity to repent."

Jiang Sheng raised his thumb as he pointed at the deformed Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit behind him: "Student Li Yao, here is the opportunity. You have seen the condition of Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department. Perhaps the Refining Department would soon be abolished, so if you were to remain here, you would be wasting your talent."

"If you are willing, I can think of some way to transfer you to Deep Sea University's Refining Department. At the beginning, you will enter as an auditing student, and later, I will think of some way to officially enroll you into Deep Sea University’s Refining Department. What do you think?"

Li Yao remained silent.

At this very moment, Yuan Manqiu's loud voice echoed in his ear.

"Cultivators should be fearless of death, and if afraid, then do not cultivate!"

"In any case, I will persevere. I will refine the true Mystic Skeleton Battle Suit!"

A slight frown appeared on Jiang Sheng's glabella: "Student Li Yao, this is your last opportunity. Not every young man is fortunate like you, who has the opportunity to correct his mistakes. As long as you nod, I will personally become your teacher and guide you to the correct road of refining. Isn't that better than staying in this pile of waste?"

"As for your proclamation that you will one day challenge Deep Sea University's Refining Department, everyone knows that it is just the nonsense of a young man. Who would take it to heart? Everyone is frivolous in their youth, so everybody will understand. As long as you achieve success and win recognition, no one will laugh at you."

"Pile of waste..."

Li Yao pondered for a long time while gazing at the distant Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. At last, he shook his head:

"I'm sorry, Professor Jiang. I am someone who had come out from a pile of waste. For a majority of my childhood, I have only survived by relying on scraps gathered from piles of waste, so I think that this 'pile of waste' is rather suitable for me."

Jiang Sheng took a deep glance at him before he nodded and said:

"Alright, I will still say this: I wish you and Senior Sister Yuan success in refining the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. I also want to see how the legendary, mass-producible crystal suit would look like. But first of all, try to think of a way to keep this pile of waste, Student Li Yao."

Jiang Sheng, without turning his head, started directly walking towards the flying shuttle before it silently floated away, just like how they had arrived.

...

After about an hour later, the memorial finally came to an end.

However, the doubts and suspicion in the hearts of the students from the Refining Department still hadn't been cleared.

So everyone kept on staring at Dean Xiong Baili anxiously.

The decision to determine the life and death of Refining Department was in his hand.

Seemingly sensing the too-impatient-to-wait mood of the students, Dean Xiong Baili, after the others left, assembled all the remaining students of the Refining Department to announce a very significant decision.

And the professors of the various department, who stood behind Xiong Baili, looked at the students below the stage with an extremely strange look.

It seemed that from this moment on, they were going to pick the talented student whom they favored.

"It seems that the Refining Department is truly going to be abolished. The professors from the various departments are going to pick students."

Huang Tong, who stood behind Li Yao, said in a low voice.

Li Yao took a glance at Yuan Manqiu.

Yuan Manqiu remained expressionless, but her eyes were like two burning red coals.

Xiong Baili took a step forward and directly got to the point:

"Students of the Refining Department, you may have heard some rumors like the institute was preparing to abolish Refining Department, which is indeed correct. I will not hide it from you. At the beginning, the management had indeed decided upon this."

“After all, the Refining Department's losses were very serious. Not only was the floating mountain destroyed, but the Refining Department is only left with a single professor, Associate Professor Yuan Manqiu. Whether it is the facilities or the faculty, the Refining Department is lacking in both."

"The institute has limited funding and all the facilities need to be rebuilt, which makes it impossible to invest a lot of resources for the rebuilding of the Refining Department within a short period of time.

"Originally, you students have undergone all kinds of hardships and difficulties in order to enter the Grand Desolate Institution, which is hailed as one of the ‘Nine Elite

Universities’, and I, as the dean of the institute, am responsible for every student's future."

"So, the institute had originally decided to abolish the Refining Department, and the students could transfer to other departments."

"However, Professor Yuan Manqiu kept on insisting that there is a hope in rebuilding the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department. She had said that—our Grand Desolate War Institution's tradition has always been to never abandon, to never give up, and if there was even a single soldier left to fight, grit your teeth, straighten your back, and carry the battle flag!"

"What she had said is right. Our Grand Desolate War Institution is indeed different than the other 'Eight Elite Universities'. As long as you are willing to fight, we will give you an opportunity to fight, and we will absolutely not abandon you! This is exactly the spirit of our Grand Desolate War Institution! For several hundred years, we have always been acting like this!"

"So, we have finally decided that we will give all the student an opportunity to choose. The fate of the Refining Department—is in your hand!"

TLN:

[1] Useless troops.

Chapter 136: Eldest Senior Brother and the President

Chapter 136: Eldest Senior Brother and the President

"If there is a student who is willing to stay in the Refining Department to continue his or her studies, then we will welcome them for sure. Every department has already reached an agreement that all basic training facilities will be open for the students from the Refining Department. At the same time, the resources and the budget which is due to the Refining Department will continue to be provided."

"And if any student feels that the Refining Department isn't enough to realize your dream, the institute will still support that student and every department will be open to them. We will give everyone the opportunity to transfer to another department."

"The choice is in your hand. As Professor Yuan had said, even if there is a single soldier left, as long as there is a student who is willing to stay in the Refining Department, the Institute will adhere to its principle. We will not abandon you, we will not give up on you, and we will continue to support you!"

"However, let me make it clear. If the Refining Department still has not produced a single student who could pass the Refiners' Registration Examination after a year, the Refining Department will then be forcibly abolished by the department of education, and as such, the student who had chosen the Refining Department would have wasted a year in vain."

"And I will also solemnly swear that if there is a student who is able to pass the Refiners' Registration Examination and become a true refiner after a year, then it would mean that Professor Yuan was right. I will then do everything in my power to help the Refining Department strive for more resources, so not only would the Refining Department be rebuilt, but the Refining Department which will be built would be ten times stronger than the past!"

"In the name of the dean of the Grand Desolate War Institute, I, Dean Xiong Baili, promise you this."

"Now, the students can make their choice!"

Xiong Baili's speech was like a lump of ice smashing into a boiling hot frying pan, which burst into a "crackling" noise on the spot.

A freshman who had just entered the institute impatiently shouted as if he was set on fire:

"Dean, I want to transfer!"

"Yes, Dean, we have already thought about this. We are all freshmen and we simply haven't learned any refining, so we request the dean to transfer us as early as possible, lest we give any trouble to Professor Yuan."

From the beginning, these freshmen had only chosen the Refining Department because they had no other choice but to do so; it was their final alternative. And now, as the Refining Department had turned to such a ghastly place in front of their eyes, who would be foolish enough to still head into the abyss of suffering? If they had the opportunity, they would definitely transfer to another department!

Yuan Manqiu had already prepared herself for the freshmen's reaction. From the start, she too did not want the freshmen to remain, and even if they stayed, it would be a waste.

Yuan Manqiu's gaze turned towards several of the older students who could be considered to have good qualifications.

The older students were even more at a loss. They may not like refining, but they had, after all, poured a lot of their time and efforts into it, and if they wanted to change their road of cultivation now, their past efforts would go down the drain.

However, how could Professor Yuan, one person alone, support the entire Refining Department?

"Zhao Ming, you have been learning refining for three years already and your level is highest amongst them all. I have high expectations for you to become a registered refiner next year, so why don't you stay in the Refining Department?!"

Yuan Manqiu sent an invitation to a boy.

Zhao Ming hesitated for a bit as he somewhat tried to dodge her gaze; he did not dare to look straight into Yuan Manqiu's eye. He shook his head and said, "I am sorry, Professor Yuan. After thinking about it, I have decided to transfer to another department."

"Why?" Yuan Manqiu was stupefied.

Zhao Ming honestly replied, "In the past, there was Professor Mo Xuan along with many other professors, which gave me some confidence to become a registered refiner. But now, only you alone, Professor Yuan, is left, and we don't even have a refining workshop. I am not sure whether I can pass next year, so why should I waste a year? It's time for me to cut my losses and change tracks as early as possible for the better tomorrow."

Zhao Ming paused for a bit before he lowered his head in embarrassment: "I am really sorry, Professor Yuan. A few days ago, my father came to know about this, and I have been chatting with him online for the past few days. My family also thinks the same."

"It's alright, it is really alright. You must definitely listen to your family, and you don't need to overthink it. Study whatever you wish to study, I will support you!"

Yuan Manqiu forced a smile before her gaze turned towards a girl who had somewhat rough skin.

A sliver of an ashamed look flashed past her eyes as she lowered her head; she did not speak a word.

Yuan Manqiu's complexion turned even more ugly. One by one, she swept a glance at the other older students, who did not dare to look her straight in the eyes, not even a single one.

Everyone was either bowing their head as they looked at their own shoes or raised their head to count the clouds in the sky.

"Isn't there a single student who is... willing to stay in the Refining Department?" Yuan Manqiu said in low voice.

Xiong Baili heaved a sigh as he also found it somewhat hard to bear. He earnestly said, "Professor Yuan, you don't need to worry. Even if the Refining Department is abolished, the institute could always use a refiner. There is definitely a place for you here."

He lightly patted Yuan Manqiu's shoulder before his gaze turned towards the students below the stage as he said in a loud voice that was akin to a great bell, "Alright, since everyone has decided so, then I... If there is any student who has anything to say, please raise your hand! Please be patient, as for the specific rules of transferring departments, I will announce it to you soon."

"Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!"

A few dozen gazes turned towards Li Yao, who had raised his hand.

"Dean, you misunderstood. I do not want to ask about the rules of transferring departments. I wish to remain in the Refining Department and follow Professor Yuan in order to learn refining," Li Yao said in a loud voice.

"What did you say?"

Xiong Baili was stupefied, all the professors were stupefied, all the student were stupefied.

Yuan Manqiu's back, all of a sudden, straightened up, and her whole body was shining like a shining Buddha.

...

After an hour.

Apart from Li Yao and Yuan Manqiu, everyone had left the Refining Department.

Li Yao, who was sitting under the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, set his eyes at the wreckage around him, which was very similar to the Magical Equipment Graveyard.

Everyone, in their childhood, would have some absurd dream.

Some people would dream of quietly sneaking into an amusement park so that they would not have to line up for rides, allowing them to play to their heart's content.

Whereas, some people would dream of entering a supermarket which had no one inside, where all the goods were brilliantly arranged on the shelf, so that whatever you wanted to take, you could take it, and whatever you wanted to eat, you could directly open the package.

When Li Yao was 6-7 years old, just for a meat bun or a rusted, broken sword, he would have to engage in a life-or-death struggle with a dozen robust adults.

At that time, his greatest dream was: if someday, a huge junkyard with no other scavenger but him alone appeared so that he could discover treasure to his heart’s content, how nice would that be?

He had never imagined that his dream would come true in such a way today.

For the past seven days, he had only cleared up a small part, thus there were still many things buried in the rubble.

Whether it was damaged magical equipment, jade chip fragments, or experimental data, in Li Yao's eyes, they were all priceless treasures whose worth was equivalent to a city.

If it was the Refining Department of the past, then it would have been simply impossible for a freshman like him to instantly get started.

But now, everything belonged to him. Whatever he wanted to study was something he could.

Because, the entire Refining Department only had one student and that was him.

He had become the president of the Star Fire Union as well as the eldest senior brother of the Refining Department!

"Teachers, fellow students, all of you rest assured. I will definitely complete your unfinished business. Your concepts will definitely flourish, and the name of our Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department will shake the entire world!"

Li Yao respectfully bowed at the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit wreckage.

God knows why, when he first laid his eyes on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, he felt a wisp of a cordial feeling towards it

This crystal suit's design was very consistent with his taste.

It was common, coarse, and wild, and it looked kind of violent, which was completely different from those popular, fashionable, light, and gorgeous crystal suits.

Even though half of it had been melted, it still gave the impression of a tenacious warrior who was struggling to stand up to fight the enemy, to smash the enemy's head, and to bite the enemy's throat.

And most importantly...

Li Yao had a strange feeling. Seemingly sensing a slight fluctuation transmitting from the depths of the Mystic

Skeleton Battlesuit, it was as if something was slumbering within.

Or perhaps, it was the spirit, hope, and indomitable will to fight of all the Refining Department's students and professors!

Yuan Manqiu quietly stood on one side.

When she saw flickers of fire appear in Li Yao's eyes as he faced the wrecked Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, her face revealed a smile of understanding.

She formed a spell as a spirit seal shot out and submerged into Li Yao's neural field.

"This spirit seal grants you Level-2 privilege in the Refining Department, something which only a 'lecturer'-level teacher could have and is second only to the privileges of us professors."

"You now have 80% of the privileges of the Refining Department with this spirit seal. Now, you can open a vast majority of jade chips and a vast majority of magical equipment will not resist you as well. In short, you can use whatever you can find here in the rubble as you wish!"

Yuan Manqiu sighed and said:

"Who would have thought that everyone would choose to leave and the final one who was going to remain would be a freshman? Student Li Yao, since you believed in me, I will also not treat you unfairly. Perhaps after a year, the Refining Department will truly be abolished; however, in this one year, I will use everything to foster you so that you can learn as many things as possible, which would help you pave a better road for the future."

Li Yao slightly smiled while touching his forehead: "Teacher, don't you believe that I can become a registered refiner in a year?"

Refiner was one of the most important professions in the cultivation world, and a registered refiner was a refiner who had been approved by the Refiners' Association and a standard refiner approved by the federation government.

The Refiners' Registration Examination was one of the most difficult qualification tests of the several professions in the cultivation world, with an annual passing rate of less than 10%. Many refiners after a decade or even a few decades would be unable to have the word "registered" added to the front of their title.

Strictly speaking, every one of them didn’t even have the qualifications to call themselves "refiners"!

Li Yao did not lose confidence.

Although the Refining Department had turned into rubble, as someone who grew up in the Magical Equipment Graveyard, he felt a great pleasure in finding treasures with his own hands from the ruins.

In these seven days, he had already unearthed many jade chips from the ruins, some of which were videos of classes given by the professors and some contained refining data and information stored by the professors, which for him were of great help.

‘With the experienced Professor Yuan Manqiu’s guidance along with the many tutorials and refining data left by the professors as well as Ou Yezi's memory fragments... if I train madly in this one year, I am sure I will be able to become a registered refiner!’

Li Yao secretly made a resolution in his heart.

Yuan Manqiu seriously said, "Perhaps you are truly talented and can advance by leaps and bounds within one year, but currently, you do not even have the qualifications to take part in the examination."

Li Yao was surprised for a moment before he scratched his head: "What are the qualifications required so that I could take the Refiners' Registration Examination?"

Chapter 137: Legend… Start!

Chapter 137: Legend… Start!

Li Yao came to understand only after Yuan Manqiu's explanation.

The Refiners' Registration Examination was one of the most difficult qualification tests amongst all professions. Many prestigious academic authorities would be invited every year to be examiners, not to mention that a tremendous amount of heaven and earth treasures would be consumed during the exam.

If any Tom, Dick, or Harry could take the exam, while the wasted time of a Master Refiner could be considered as nothing significant and the squandering of heaven and earth treasures could also be considered as nothing, but if in a one in a million chance, a refining accident which leads to a spiritual energy explosion took place, then how could that be written off?

So for someone to register for the exam, there were certain requirements such as work experience, assurance from the sect, university recommendation, and so forth.

Yuan Manqiu said, "In accordance with our institute's regulations, for someone to take the qualification test for any profession whatsoever, they must have 40,000 credits. Only then would the institute write a letter of recommendation."

"40,000 credits?"

Li Yao blinked his eyes. Although he did not know how big amount was that, it sounded like a lot.

Yuan Manqiu nodded: "Maybe you can’t understand the notion of 40,000 credits, but you should know of the two genius students—Peng Hai and Ding Lingdang—who had enrolled in our institute in the last two decades. To acquire these 40,000 credits, even Ding Lingdang had taken two years, while Peng Hai took one and a half year. Aside from them, nobody else had been able to accomplish this in two years."

Li Yao stood in amazement as if he was thinking about something.

Yuan Manqiu patted his shoulder: "Now do you understand? In short, we don't need to think too much about it. In this one year, I will do my utmost to teach you. I hope that you will learn everything seriously, and whatever happens in one year, at least you have fought all out. You will not be left with the slightest bit of regret!"

"Come on, I will take you to pick some components. You need to assemble a crystal processor which has incredible computational power. It would provide a tremendous help in cultivation."

Li Yao followed Yuan Manqiu to the edge of the ruins where there was a delipidated, three-floored building.

This was the temporary school building of the Refining Department as well as the library, dormitory, canteen, and the training room.

In his heart, Li Yao was, however, constantly wondering:

‘So even Senior Brother Peng had taken one and half year to complete 40,000 credits!? This is truly awesome.'

'But, so what?'

'I have once said that I will definitely chase Senior Brother Peng's footsteps. It starts from this moment on.’

'In this one year, I will definitely surpass Ding Lingdang and Fiend Blade Peng Hai and complete 40,000 credits. Afterward... I will become a true refiner!"

'At that time, I will restart Project Mystic Skeleton and refine a true Mystic Skeleton Battle Suit with teacher, setting off a super strong storm in the cultivation world!"

A long time after they left.

The afterglow of the sunset gradually swept past the ruins as a dark curtain gradually enveloped the land bit by bit.

The wrecked Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit stood still quietly in the dark, as though it was a tombstone.

Suddenly—

A speck of a starry shimmer jumped out from the depths of the eye sockets of the wreckage.

A speck of starry shimmer which was a hundred times dimmer than the glow of a firefly.

The starry brilliance was flickering and faltering as if its faint phosphorescence would extinguish at any moment.

Following that, a second speck, a third speck, a fourth speck...

Many starry shimmers jumped out, speckling the air. Altogether, over a hundred incomparably feeble shimmers struggled, danced, and glittered as they weaved into a bunch of feeble flames which tried everything to manipulate the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit to break away from its pedestal.

However, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit's main frame had completely melted, and the joints in its steel frame had fused together. No matter how much effort these starry shimmers put forth, they were unable to move even a single inch.

"Creak—"

Finally, they were able to move the little finger of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, slightly deforming it by 0.1 mm.

This action consumed too much of the starry shimmers' spiritual energy, causing a sound to spread out from the depths of the wreckage; perhaps it was the sound of over a hundred faint sighs.

Over a hundred starry shimmers flared before they returned to slumber in the depths of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

The depths of the eye sockets once again turned hollow, and the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit once again reverted back into a monument which was staring at the pitch black ruins.

...

At night, will-o-the-wisps-like specks of radiance rose and speckled the sky above the ruins.

This was the remaining chaotic spiritual energy from the explosion surging out. It gave off the misconception of fireflies spreading out everywhere as they casually danced in the air.

In the three-floored building, Li Yao, in a completely content manner, looked at his just finished work.

It was a debilitated, stationary-type crystal processor system which had occupied half of the entire room; it was an out-and-out colossus.

All of the materials from which this crystal processor was assembled from were found in the ruins, a majority of which were the fragments of professional crystal processors and quasi-military level crystal processors used by the professors, all of whose computational power was astonishing. Even if it was given to a third-grade sect, its level was enough to become their master crystal processor.

This was the benefit of joining the Refining Department. If it was any other department, they would absolutely not allow a freshman to have access to such advanced crystal processor components.

And in the ruins of the Refining Department, there were still many wrecked precious magical equipment which Li Yao could play with as he wished.

Although this ugly, colossal crystal processor looked ordinary, it could increase the computational power of the mini-crystal processor which he was currently wearing by a hundred times, which was enough to perfectly launch huge amounts of telepathic thoughts, like the "Federation Cultivators' Nexus".

Its only drawback was that its cooling system was huge, making it impossible to carry, thus it had to be fixed inside a room.

However, this drawback was nothing to Li Yao. The mini-crystal processor he wore had gone through slight modifications which allowed him to link the mini-crystal processor with the huge crystal processor so that the huge crystal processor's transmitter could transmit telepathic thoughts to the mini-crystal processor.

As a result, the mini-crystal processor had become the display terminal of the huge crystal processor. All the computation power that was needed to carry out processing was done by the huge crystal processor and the result was then displayed by the mini-crystal processor.

As long as he did not leave the campus of the institute, the system would always work. No matter where he went, he could enjoy the assistance of computation power that was comparable to the main crystal processor of a battleship.

"That’s more like it!"

Li Yao took a deep breath and rubbed his hand. He could not wait to start up the huge, stationary-type crystal processor.

A huge spiritual energy tide spread out in every direction with a "buzzing" noise, giving him a feeling as though he was slowly being submerged in the sea. Following that, the entire room was immersed in a colorful radiance as a 3D hologram gradually appeared. Thousands of star-like, vivid icons circled around him, giving off an appearance of being inside a sea of stars.

"The huge crystal processor's computational power is really awesome. Just the start-up hologram is so cool. I wonder if this crystal processor can start the ‘Federation Cultivators’ Nexus’ at its highest settings?"

Li Yao let loose his imagination.

However, at present, he didn't have the time to play around, as he needed to clearly understand the credit system.

You could say that getting 40,000 credits in a year was a race against time.

Li Yao suppressed his excitement as he gazed at a very crude and wild icon.

The icon consisted of an iron fist which was laden with rust and smeared in blood with a crossed sword and saber in the back—this was the emblem of the Grand Desolate War Institution.

With a move of his thought, all kinds of colorful lights with varying brightness and contrast spread around as they expanded into a completely new, semi-transparent world.

Li Yao had logged into the Wasteland Battle Network!

The Wasteland Battle Network was not as simple as the internal network of a university.

Hundreds of years ago, during the time when the Wasteland was covered in bloodshed, grassroots martial artists first built the Wasteland Battle Network through which they exchanged, compared notes, traded, and did gathering like activities. Afterward, with the Wasteland Battle Network acting as the foundation, the Grand Desolate War Institution was founded.

One could even say that the "Wasteland Battle Network" was the Grand Desolate War Institution's predecessor and foundation. 50% of the studies and training of the students could be completed through the Wasteland Battle Network. Even the "Federation Cultivators' Nexus" had taken a lot of good points from the "Wasteland Battle Network" and gradually improved to the current system.

"Roar! Roar!"

Roars of demon beasts immediately floated into Li Yao's ear one after another, and his nose even seemed to get a whiff of the desolate stench of the Wasteland. Before his eyes, a red tide spreading in the wilderness-like scene appeared.

Countless experts were cultivating, fighting, hunting, and teaching in the wilderness. It was the same as the "Half-step Great Illusionary Land"; however, the Wasteland Battle Network had simulated an environment that was even more detailed than that of the Federation Cultivators' Nexus.

Not only was the visuals improved, but even the auditory, the olfactory, and the somatosensory systems had been stimulated to the extreme.

Li Yao knew that it was all because of him using the huge crystal processor which had tremendous computational power and enabled him to run the Wasteland Battle Network at its highest configuration. That was the only reason why it was possible to simulate such perfect sound and light effect.

If he had logged onto the Federation Cultivators' Nexus at this moment, then he would have similarly entered an incomparably detailed, infinitely wonderful, new world.

"According to teacher, after I have logged into the Wasteland Battle Network, I will naturally know the basic rules and regulations as well as how to get the credits. I wonder what I should do next? Is an assistant-like thing going to appear?"

Li Yao, filled with interest, wandered around the Wasteland as he watched powerful experts fight with system simulated demon beasts at a distant while wondering to himself.

At this moment, a gorgeous blood-colored crystal suddenly floated over to the top of his head, upon which had the word "credits" engraved.

A voice suddenly rang in his ear:

"Student Li Yao, do you want to learn all the information regarding credits?"

Li Yao subconsciously nodded his head before the "Crack" sound of the blood color crystal splitting into countless information fragments resounded as they submerged into Li Yao's neural field.

In the blink of an eye, Li Yao felt that there was something extra in his memories. Upon carefully searching his memories, much to his surprise, he recalled many sections regarding Grand Desolate War Institution's credit system.

It was like at some time in the past, someone had given him a full night and day course that carefully explained to him the credit system.

"Such brilliant telepathic thoughts transmission technology!"

Li Yao praised. As he recalled the information that had just submerged into his neural field, he discovered that credits played a very important role in the Grand Desolate War Institute and was most crucial for studies and training.

"If you have credits, you can wander the entire world, but if you don't have credits, you can't even move an inch." This was the true portrayal of the Grand Desolate War Institution.

For freshmen who had just entered the institute, the dormitory provided by the institute free of charge was no better than a pigsty, similarly the food provided was like pig wash, the uniforms were like beggar clothes, and the little cultivation resources provided were the size of a fingernail.

Do you want to eat delicacies? Please pay credits!

Do you want to sleep in a royal palace-like mansion? Please pay credits!

Do you want many cultivation resources? Do you want high-ranked training facilities? Please pay credits!

Even a lot of professional courses established by powerful experts required one to pay a certain amount of credits and only then could he or she study. Moreover, once you are unable to pass the exam, these credits would entirely go down the drain!

In short, if anyone wants to become a true powerful expert, it was necessary for him to use every trick in his sleeves to earn as many credits as possible and then use these very credits to acquire many resources, and after repeating the same thing again and again, you would become strong step by step!

And as the institute which is most concerned about combat within the federation, the procedure of earning credits was certainly not as simple as attending classes. One could even say that earning credits using conventional methods like attending classes or taking exams was like a drop in the bucket.

The true leading method was still open trading and combat!

Chapter 138: I Will Steamroll You One by One

Chapter 138: I Will Steamroll You One by One

The so-called open trading was none other than the students using their own abilities to exchange for credits.

An example would be the students of the Grand Desolate War Institution's Cultural Department, the Spirit Tattoo Artists who were proficient in Spirit Tattoo Technique.

When a student of the Combat Department wanted to engrave a spirit tattoo onto their body, they would go to the students of the Cultural Department and use their credits to buy services.

Likewise, when the students of the Cultural Department wished to acquire some kind of special demon beast blood to concoct "Tattoo Ink", they would post a mission and put forward "credits as rewards", and naturally, there would be many students from the Combat Department willing to go the depths of the Wasteland to hunt demon beasts.

And just in case, if the Combat Department's student who went hunting for demon beasts were out of luck and received an injury, they could always spend their credits to ask the Medical Department students to treat them.

Li Yao, as a student of the Refining Department, could likewise repair others’ magical equipment or could even use magical equipment which he himself had refined to exchange them for credits—of course, since he was just a nameless newbie, others would be inclined to not buy the magical equipment refined by him. They would rather spend a bit of their money to buy sabers and flying swords from sects like the "Hundred Saber Alliance". This was the way of the world.

From time to time, even the institute would post a variety of joint demon beast hunting missions with the sarmy as well as various sects. A large-scale mission would often have thousands of students from the Grand Desolate War Institution in addition to thousands of soldiers and experts from cultivation sects. In wake of such a march that was no different than a hot knife cutting through butter, even tyrannical demon beasts would flee at the very first sight.

Participating in such missions, not only would the students rake in a lot of credits, but along the way, with professors casting marvelous and unique skills and the mission itself, it would instill fighting experience into the students, allowing them to unconsciously master many abilities. Compared to having being taught stereotypically in the classroom, this way was much more effective.

These ways to earn credits were only open and aboveboard.

In private, many students liked betting; they would use their credits to start arena contests where not only would both participating sides bet many credits, but even the bystanders could use their insights and their experiences to determine the outcome and bet on one of the fighters.

This was a common practice among the students of the Iron Fist Club and the Chaos Edge Hall. Every day, many students from the Iron Fist Club and the Chaos Edge Hall would step onto the arena and go all out to the point that it was either “you die or I die”. However, the management of both sides’ student unions was very strict; seldom would the grudges on the arena be carried down the stage. And in order to encourage the students to exert themselves to cultivate, the school too would not stop it at all.

However...

"All these combat missions and open trading are only for the older students who have attained over 1,000 credits."

"Any student whose credits are lower than 1,000 are considered freshmen and can only take 'basic theoretical courses' to earn credits. Only when your total credits have amounted to 1,000 can you truly be able to live the wonderful life of the institute."

These two pieces of information emerged from the depths of his mind. After slightly reflecting upon this, Li Yao felt it was only right and natural.

It would be impossible for freshmen who had just embarked on their university life to have even a bit of credits; they were out-and-out paupers, so how could they trade or bet in a fight?

Even if they wanted to go to the depths of the Wasteland to hunt, perhaps others would find them "cumbersome". Who would be willing to fight with demon beasts where life and death was a matter of moments when there was a snotty nosed brat standing next to you?

Basically, freshmen had to lay their foundation, and only after solidifying their foundation could they think about entering the actual combat ring.

"Then, I have to choose some basic theory courses so that I could acquire 1,000 credits as soon as possible!"

Li Yao burned with impatience, but much to his dismay, when he carefully searched for information regarding "basic theory courses" in his mind, he could not find any.

"Why isn't there any information on basic theory courses?"

Just as he muttered these words, a second diamond-shaped red crystal floated in the sky upon which "basic theory courses" undulated in small characters. With a “crack!”, the crystal split into pieces before they submerged into Li Yao's brain from the top of his head.

Suddenly, Li Yao recalled over a hundred pieces of information regarding basic theory courses.

The Grand Desolate War Institution's courses had been divided into basic theory courses and specialized courses.

The basic courses were not divided by departments, and all basic courses were open to students from all departments. Usually, these courses didn't have a professor teaching them and were simply available on the Wasteland Battle Network, which had been devised in advance using telepathic thoughts.

Even exams were conducted on the Wasteland Battle Network. Moreover, the students could be tested at any time they so wished. Even if Li Yao took the courses at this moment, he could take the exam right away and could immediately earn the credits if he so passed.

However, every month, a student could only take the exam three times for the same course.

Moreover, even if you clear the exam, the credits provided from the basic theory courses were very low and was around 3-5 credits per course.

Of course, students could earn more credits from the specialized courses, but in order to take the specialized courses, the student would first have to spend credits to apply. Some specialized courses taught by powerful experts required one to spend a couple hundred credits, and even over 1,000 credits was possible.

And once one failed these specialized courses, those credits would go down the drain.

Thence, Li Yao, this pauper, could only honestly take the free basic theory courses.

"Although a cultivator's computational speed, memory, and integrative thinking ability were a dozen times better than an ordinary person, it would still take 3-5 days for each basic theory course, and within these 3-5 days, I could only earn a few credits. Wouldn't it take almost a year to gather 1,000 credits?"

The root of Li Yao’s teeth began to get sore.

He discovered that gathering 40,000 credits in one year was simply an impossible task!

According to the institute's curriculum, under normal circumstances, it was indeed the case. After a freshman entered the institute, it would take him one or two years to finish the basic theory courses before he could get rid of the "freshman" status and truly take part in actual combat and open trading.

Li Yao, instead, had to take just one month for what others would take one year to finish and only then would it be possible to somehow gather 40,000 credits in one year. Wasn't it just wishful thinking?

"Hey, Battle Ranking? What the hell is Battle Ranking?"

Li Yao, who was anxious, suddenly found very dazzling words among the information.

"The institute, in order to encourage the student to train madly, has set a 'Wasteland Battle Ranking' through which the students who have earned the most credits can get various rewards!"

"Whereas, for the freshman who have entered the institute for no more than a year, there was a ‘Newcomer Ranking'. At the end of every month, the top 100 students, top 10 students, top 3 students, and the top student who have earned the most credits will receive additional rewards respectively."

"For the freshmen, the first month in the institute was extremely important. Whoever finishes the most basic theory courses in the first month and stand out among the tens of thousands of other freshmen—the one who is ranked first in the ‘Newcomer Ranking'—will be directly granted a reward of 1,000 credits!"

First on the Newcomer Ranking!

1,000 credits!

With this, he could directly enter open trading and actual combat ring!

Li Yao's blood started boiling, his eyes turned crimson, and he could not wait to shout one or two times to release the excitement bubbling in his heart.

"If I want to gather 40,000 credits in a year, first and foremost, I need to become first in the Newcomer Ranking to get the 1,000 credit reward so that I could conduct open trading and enter the true combat ring. Only then could I unleash my specialty and madly zoom through courses!"

"Battle Ranking, quickly show me the Battle Ranking! Let me see who my competitors are? Who exactly are the experts here?"

Even though the Grand Desolate War Institution was popular in the southeastern region, there were still major towns and cities in the north which housed countless cultivation geniuses of the Wasteland. In their own hometown, they were akin to feathers of a phoenix and horns of unicorns.

However, for the 40,000 credits, in order to become a registered refiner, in order to make the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit soar into the ninth heaven, Li Yao could only do all he could so that he could steamroll these "feathers of the phoenix and horns of the unicorns".

"Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!"

When Li Yao muttered "Newcomer Ranking", a glittering list immediately emerged in front of him.

It had already been seven days since the institute had opened. Ordinary students might still be adapting to university life, but as far as these cultivation geniuses were concerned, the maddening blood battle had already begun!

Names of many students had already appeared on the Newcomer Ranking and were decorated with several credits after. The top most student has already earned 14 credits.

In other words, in this period of seven days, this person had already passed 4-5 basic theory courses, with an average of almost one course per day. He was truly worthy of being a one in ten thousand cultivation genius!

"Zhao Tianchong, Lu Tieshan, Gu Feixuan, Wen Ruorong..."

Li Yao narrowed his eyes as he etched these four names into his mind.

Zhao Tianchong was none other than the cultivation genius who had acquired 14 credits, while the remaining three each had 11 credits, thereby tying for second place.

These four had credits which was already in two digits, marking a much larger difference than the other students. They should be the best among the best freshmen of this year, and they were also Li Yao's biggest competitors for the next month.

"However, what the hell is this Hidden Dragon Hall?"

Li Yao discovered that all of their names were followed by two annotations; the first was the name of the student union they belonged too.

Li Yao's name itself was followed by "Starfire Union". Furthermore, it was glittering and overflowing with colorful lights to highlight his "extraordinary" identity as the "Starfire Union's President".

The four cultivation geniuses respectively came from the four major departments, but their names were also decorated with "Hidden Dragon Hall" at the very end.

The third crystal that bore the "Hidden Dragon Hall" characters floated over and split open over the top of his head, following which a realization immediately dawned upon him.

"So it was like this. The Hidden Dragon Hall is a training camp for 'specially recruited students'."

"Members of the Hidden Dragon Hall are all cultivation genius who have displayed outstanding performances during the Limit Challenge Competition and were later specially recruited by the Grand Desolate War Institution."

"They did not have to take the College Entrance Examination, so in these 3-4 months, they had gathered at the institute and were undergoing special training."

"These specially recruited students are far more powerful than the ordinary students. Each one of them is a monstrous genius, and they regard themselves very highly and consider themselves to be 'hidden dragon'. They simply disdain competing with ordinary students."

"The indeed had the ability to be proud. Every month, the top 100 positions of the Newcomer Ranking is occupied by these 'hidden dragon', and only 3-5 ordinary students could pave a way to the 70-80 positions at most."

"And there was none who could make it to the top 10."

"However, this year..."

Li Yao licked his lips as round after round of ripples gushed out from the depths of his eyes. His blood seemed to have changed into a hot steam.

"Let's see whether it will be you, these hidden dragons, or me, the vulture who would finally soar into the sky and sweep the winds and clouds!"

Having punched out, Li Yao started silently pondering with all his concentration:

"Bring up all the basic theory courses, no matter what difficulty level it is! The higher the credits, the better it is!"

Chapter 139: The Ability to Play a Pig to Eat the Tiger

Countless translucent and diamond-shaped crystals flew to his front from all sides; each crystal bore the details of one course along with an evaluation of the seniors.

“Although the < A Brief Analysis of Mental Cultivation Methods> is tedious to learn, it is a prerequisite to many courses. Furthermore, it is rather easy and has a passing rate of 92%. It is advisable for everyone to take this course.”

“< Theory of Soul Shattering Marksmanship> is very good. After learning this basic theory course, you can learn the true < Soul Shattering Marksmanship> , which is an overbearing marksmanship created after repeated revisions by countless experts in the army. Once you are successful in learning it, you will be invincible against those on the same level!”

“There is nothing to say of < A Preliminary Study of Thousand Hands Divine Needles> . It is a very ordinary exercise; however, there will be many junior sisters from the Cultural Department learning together with you. Understand junior brothers—senior brothers can only help you up till here!”

Li Yao had a hearty laugh as he continued browsing.

He first selected more than twenty refining theory courses recommended by Yuan Manqiu, including < Introduction to Refining> , < History of Refining> , < Identification of Ancient

Magical Equipment>, <A Study of Glyphs>, so on and so forth.

Although there were many courses, they did not pose too much pressure on him.

After all, Li Yao was not an ignorant novice. When the old man was still alive, he had already taught him sufficient basic knowledge, not to mention Ding Yin's notes had given him a comprehensive understanding of refining techniques.

In addition, the <Identification of Ancient Magical Equipment> goes without saying—it was simply free credits.

Supposedly, after one month of study, he could definitely amass all the credits.

However, if he so wished to steamroll those "feathers of a phoenix and horns of the unicorns" from the Hidden Dragon Hall, the Refining Department's basic theory courses were simply far from enough.

Li Yao gazed at the vast world and used more than half an hour to choose about 30 courses.

"The credits of these courses are very high, and moreover, their application is very broad. They are all somehow related to core problems of the road of cultivation."

"For instance, this <9 Heavenly Tribulations> explains the source of 'heavenly tribulation' and how to guard against it."

"Even if it is not for credits, I should seriously learn it. Who knows? One day, I might become a Nascent Soul Stage old monster. Even figures more mightier than Nascent Soul Stage cultivators might encounter heavenly tribulations."

“Hey, this＜Low-Grade Soul Converging Technique＞ actually has a 5-star importance. It could go neck and neck with many specialized course, and fellow students’ evaluation of this course is also very high. Maybe I should learn＜Soul Converging Technique＞ first!”

With a move of Li Yao’s thought, a diamond-shaped crystal which bore＜Soul Converging Technique＞ suddenly flared up before it broke into countless fragments, giving off the misconception that there were thousands upon thousands of crystal butterflies dancing around him as the fragments weaved a completely new world.

It was a scene of a typical medieval cultivation world where mountains and rivers could be seen far away while there were pavilions, buildings, and halls nearby.

A middle-aged cultivator who had a well-trained figure emotionlessly stood in front of Li Yao.

This middle-aged man was purely constructed from the fragments of telepathic thoughts; he simply didn’t exist in real life. He was only here to teach the quintessence of the ＜Soul Converging Technique＞ pertaining to a couple dozen Grand Desolate War Institution professors’ knowledge from over the past century.”

The middle-aged cultivator talked very fast; from time to time, his speech was also mixed in with the transmission of telepathic thoughts. A peerless tide of thoughts surged forth into Li Yao’s brain.

What gave Li Yao a profound impression was the three big trees that were burning at the center of the forest.

The first tree had the branches burning bit by bit.

The second tree, however, had the entire top of the tree burning.

The third tree instead burned from the top of the tree to the trunk, and even the roots underground were also burning. Very soon, the whole tree had been burned into coke.

The middle-aged man faintly said, “These three trees represent ordinary people, low-level cultivators, and high-level cultivators.”

“The vitality of ordinary people is tremendously feeble, so the consumption of their vitality per second is also very small. Their vitality flows like a mere trickle which would remain calm forever.”

We cultivators, on the other hand, could stimulate the hidden potential of our bodies to the extreme and break past the limits one after another, and even blast a way towards a completely new path of evolution. Every second and every minute, the vitality we consume is more than hundred times than that of ordinary people.”

“Like the second and third tree, which are burning from inside out, although they can emit inexhaustible light and heat in an instant, they could easily burn away themselves completely.”

“The higher the state and the deeper the cultivation level, the fiercer you will burn and the faster you will consume your vitality.”

“In the ancient cultivation world, many peerless experts whose cultivation had reached the limit could completely burn themselves, and subsequently after various kinds of visions, they would completely vanish. The ancient cultivators called it ‘Breaking the Space’.”

“But we modern cultivators know that it was nothing but burning our vitality away, burning ourselves alive to death.”

“If you want to avoid burning away your vitality, you can not maintain your strongest state all the time. Instead, you have to alternate between tension and relaxation; you have to remain calm at normal times and be prompt when taking action.”

“So, even if it is Nascent Soul Stage old monster, he would not remain in the Nascent Soul Stage at every moment and every second. If he did so, he will very easily completely burn through his entire life. It would simply be an act of suicide.”

“They would often restrain their vigor and would look no different than Building Foundation Stage or Refinement Stage cultivators.”

“Some skilled, peerless experts can even accomplish a state where not even a trickle of their life force leaks out, suppressing their strength to 0.01%. A true Nascent Soul Stage old monster will look like a feeble, ordinary person. Even if telepathic thoughts of other experts scan through them, they will not find an ounce of difference.”

“Under this kind of state, their life force passes very slowly, and theoretically, they could live for 300-500 years, and perhaps even longer!”

“And if they need to, they can transform in the blink of an eye in accordance to the different combat scenarios. They could jump to different levels one by one, from the Refinement Stage, Foundation Building Stage, Golden Core stage to even the strongest Nascent Soul Stage!”

“In their strongest state, their attack force is 100,000 times stronger than their weakest state. It would be as if they were not the same person—as if an ant has evolved into a ferocious dragon in the blink of an eye!”

“Soul converging techniques teach you how to suppress your strength—the ability to transform!”

“Soul converging techniques, breathing exercises, and utilization exercises are also known as the three basic techniques of the cultivation world. Once you have learned a soul converging technique, not only can you warm and nourish your ife flame, it can also prevent others to see your actual situation, allowing you to be a wolf in sheep’s clothing and play pig to eat the tiger. It is truly a marvelous and essential skill for you to walk in the cultivation world!”

Having finished the introduction, the middle-aged cultivator waved his hand before numerous streams of light submerged into Li Yao’s brain, which was the basic theoretical stuff regarding soul converging techniques.

Just like the breathing exercises, soul converging techniques was just a general designation for techniques. Various sects had their own soul converging techniques. The Grand Desolate War Institution likewise had a total of a couple hundred different soul converging techniques, with each of them having different features and practicing methods. The students could freely choose as they wish.

Among this basic theory course, Li Yao got to clearly understand the origin, creators, features, advantages, and disadvantages of over a hundred soul converging techniques.

As a couple 100,000 thoughts submerged into his brain in the blink of an eye, Li Yao felt as if his brain was going to explode; he felt dizzy as he constantly complained.

When he withdrew himself from the knowledge of soul converging techniques, he felt everything was revolving and faintly felt nausea.

“Awful, I truly can not bear so many thoughts submerging into my brain all of a sudden.”

“This is just the concepts of soul converging techniques forced into my brain, I still do not completely understand them. I guess it would take at least 3-5 days before I could master it, and only then will I have the hope to pass the exam.”

“No, if it will be 3-5 days just for learning one course, I can only earn 20-30 credits in one month at most. How am I going to compete with those specially recruited students? Not to mention the first in Newcomer Ranking, it would be impossible for me to make it to the top 100!”

Li Yao was quite anxious.

The Low-Rank Soul Converging Techniques could not be described as difficult among the basic theory courses, but the telepathic thoughts it had were truly too many and even included the origin, development history, and evolution of the sect. Some courses even included many cultivation experiences of seniors which would very likely to appear in the exam.

Even if it was a cultivator who had tremendous computational speed, to completely understand one, they would—just like him—need to spend 3-5 days.

It was simply impossible to learn a couple dozen courses in one month’s time.

“The learning efficiency is truly low. I wonder if there are any cultivation facility which could promote the learning efficiency!”

Li Yao was somewhat distressed.

At this moment, a diamond-shaped crystal congealed over the top of his head; at the center of which had “Super Perception Cabin”.

After it split open, Li Yao suddenly discovered that the institute surprisingly had a cultivation equipment called “Super Perception Cabin” which could promote the learning efficiency by 300%.

Practicing a second inside of the Super Perception Cabin was equivalent to practicing 3-4 seconds outside; it was like the time was being stretched—it was incredibly mysterious!

“Is there such an overbearing cultivation equipment? Then wouldn’t one month be equivalent to three months?”

Li Yao, who was completely immersed in his happiness, completely ignored the restrictions and drawbacks of the “Super Perception Cabin” and excitedly checked the location of the equipment.

The Super Perception Cabin was a very common cultivation equipment. All the major departments had it installed. The Refining Department also used to have it; however, it was destroyed in the explosion.

But as all the departments had made a commitment that the students of Refining Department are welcomed anytime to use their training facilities, they would act fairly to everyone.

“Let’s check out the Combat Department first!”

Li Yao discovered that the Combat Department had over a hundred Super Perception Cabin installed. It was a large-scale facility, and the distance was also not far away. He immediately decided to first go to the Combat Department to try his luck.

He could not wait to withdraw from the Wasteland Battle Network. Looking at the Black Wing Sword like a cheerful dog running around him, Li Yao’s complexion changed. He raised a finger.

“If I have to ride you, let’s talk first—the highest speed can not be more than the 1/3rd of the speed of sound. You are not allowed to suddenly stop and change directions, you are not allowed to abruptly go up and down, you are not allowed to do a 360 degrees barrel roll, and you are also not allowed to suddenly brake! Start gently and brake softly, fly as slow as possible, ok?”

The Black Wing Sword’s tip repeatedly moved up and down as though a dog was cheerfully wagging its tail, saying: “Okay, okay, okay!”

“That’s more like it.”

Li Yao linked the mini-crystal processor with the static type crystal processor before he awkwardly climbed onto the Black Wing Sword.

When thunderous roaring sounds came from the back of Black Wing Sword, he had an ominous premonition. Just as he was about to jump down, he had already started flying.

“Damn you, Little Black, I am not going to believe you ever again!”

Li Yao’s roars were however completely torn apart by the fierce winds.

….

Despite the fact that it was already late at night, a dozen floating mountains of the combat department were brightly lit, as though it was daytime.

“The major departments and the ordinary departments are really different. Each profession has a dozen floating mountain, and even the smallest mountain is 3-5 times bigger than the floating mountain that our Refining Department once had!”

“However, it’s alright. Someday, the Refining Department will have 10, 20, 50 floating mountains. I will build a sky city in the sky of the Grand Desolate War Institution, and then it will be worthy of the title ‘Holy Land of Refiners’!”

On the flying sword landing platform of a floating mountain, Li Yao stroked his messy hair and walked inside with his head held high.

Chapter 140: 10:1

This floating mountain belonged to Iron Fist Club, and despite it being midnight, the floating mountain was hustling and bustling with people inside. Its atmosphere was filled with an intense masculine taste, and sounds of striking could be heard without a breath of respite.

As Li Yao walked inside, a few sharp gazes converged on him.

He wore the uniform of the Refining Department, on which there was a burning crystal gear engraved on his chest, appearing to be particularly striking among the tall and robust members of the Iron Fist Club.

Very quickly, someone recognized him.

“He’s Li Yao, the only student of the Refining Department.”

“So he’s the one who would rather die than change departments? So whether the Refining Department will exist or be abolished rests on his shoulders?”

“Do not underestimate him! This guy is very ruthless. Rumor has it that when he had just awakened, he had beaten the crap out of a 3rd level Refinement Stage cultivator. Our Iron Fist Club’s instructor, Teacher Ding Lingdang, is sparing no effort to recruit him!”

A dozen fierce men with robust muscles who were drenched in sweat surrounded him.

A 2 meter tall bronze-skinned, fierce-looking man walked in large strides before Li Yao as he lowered his head and sized him up. Pursing his lips into a smile, he said:

“Are you Li Yao?”

Li Yao frowned. He slightly bent his legs, and his leg muscles shivered in high frequency, which was unable to be discerned with naked eyes, seemingly taking the pose at which he could kick the other guy’s crotch at any moment, thereby breaking the other guy’s attack.

However, his face bore calmness as he smiled and said, “That’s right, and you are…”

The robust man raised his bowl-sized fist and ruthlessly smashed on his iron cast and copper plated chest. The subsequent sound was as though a stone had struck a piece of metal as he shouted:

“I am Zhang Chuang and am also a freshman like you. I am Southern Desert City’s champion of the College Entrance Examination. Student Li Yao, I—admire you!”

“What?”

Li Yao was dumbfounded. What sort of strategy was this?

Zhan Chuang stretched out his leaf-fan sized, giant palm and forcefully smacked Li Yao on the shoulder as he said in a loud voice:

“We all know that the Refining Department had an accident and we have also heard of your choice. We all admire you. We feel that you represent the spirit of the Grand Desolate War Institution—regardless of victory or defeat, as long as even one soldier is left standing, we will fight to the end!”

“That’s right!”

Another ugly freshman came forward and roared while waving his fist, “Although everyone knows that the Refining Department can never hold on after a year, you still chose to remain without a shred of hesitation to go all out to struggle and fight!”

“This kind of spirit is exactly the persistence that our Grand Desolate War Institution has passed down for hundreds of years. We can lose and even die, but we will never surrender!”

“Come on, Fellow Student Li Yao!”

A third hunk forced his way over: “No matter the final outcome, in this year, burn your life away, exert your utmost strength to shine so that you don’t leave the slightest bit of regret! All the members of our Iron Fist Club completely support you!”

“For your dream, fight till the end!”

“Even if the Refining Department is abolished next year, it is well worth it!”

“Whatever you need, just say. We all know that cultivation is not easy. We are all brothers, and we don’t have any bad intentions!”

One by one, seemingly ferocious-looking hunks started shouting all at once.

Li Yao was stunned for a while and didn’t know what to say.

On the other hand, he was feeling warmer and warmer in his heart. A sincere smile soon crept up on his lips.

He sincerely bowed and said from the bottom of his heart, “Thank you for all your support. I will definitely do my best!”

“Alright! Since Fellow Student Li Yao has arrived on such late at night, you definitely want to use the training facilities here, right? Everyone disperse, don’t you all have your own training to do? I will show Fellow Student Li Yao around!”

Zhang Chuang held quite a bit of prestige amongst the freshmen. After everyone dispersed, he accompanied Li Yao to the depths of the floating mountain.

When he came to know why Li Yao had come here, his ugly and ferocious-looking face revealed a sliver of bewilderment.

“The Super Perception Cabin is not some popular training equipment. You can use it any way you like, but don’t expect too much of its effect!”

After having Zhang Chuang explain it, only then did Li Yao realize how foolish he had been.

The principle of the Super Perception Cabin was completely opposite to that of the “Deep Sleep Chamber”. The latter could forcefully inhibit the activity of human brain cells, thereby making one enter a deep sleeping state. In this state, one hour of sleep was equivalent to 3-5 hours of normal sleep.

Super Perception Cabin, on the other hand, would stimulate its user’s brain cells activity through special array glyphs and crystals. The activity of one’s brain cells would be enhanced to 300%, thereby improving the learning efficiency.

This method was a bit like injecting stimulants into the brain. One could support it for at most 20-30 minutes.

Following after which the brain cells would be overactive, ultimately resulting in Qigong deviation. Although its degree was very light, it would still be a bit troublesome to deal with.

Moreover, it was only enhancing the brain cell activity to 300%. The body would remain the same as before, which would give birth to a very serious dissonance between the physical and mental activities.

Often, the brain would issue a command, but the body would be unable to respond in time, making it feel like one was paralyzed.

So, the Super Perception Cabin was only suitable for learning the basic theory course; it was not at all suitable for training.

And it was only the freshman who would use it and that too for no more than half an hour, as the older students simply did not spare it a glance.

“We are here.”

Zhang Chuang brought Li Yao to a dilapidated training room, on the walls of which were a few dozen large, pupa-like structure—they were precisely the Super Perception Cabins.

Through the crystal glass window, one could see that a majority of the pupa-like structures were empty, and only a few pupae had a student sitting cross-legged inside.

These students had been stimulated with a secret method and had their brain cell activity elevated to 300%. They appeared to be particularly stimulated; each and every one of their faces were red to their ears, their eyes were completely bloodshot, and they were saying something without being able to stop.

Suddenly, Li Yao noticed that there was something wrong with a student in the upper left large pupa.

He was talking faster and faster, and his complexion was getting more hideous by the second. The blue veins on his forehead was slightly bulging, and finally, blood gushed out with a “splash”.

“Damn! Cabin No. 27 student’s brain cells are overactive. He is going to have Qigong deviation!”

“Whoosh!” The door of Cabin No. 27 opened as a couple personnels swooped to the cabin and carried the unconscious student out.

Zhang Chuang smiled and said, “Fellow Student Li Yao, what do you think? Do you still dare to try?”

Li Yao’s eyes flickered as he nodded his head.

“Whoosh…”

The cabin door behind Li Yao gradually closed, sealing him inside the big pupa.

Following that, a personnel activated the array glyphs on the outside as over a hundred crystals embedded inside the large pupa were completely illuminated.

A milky-white radiance flowed through the engravings and fused constantly before they gathered into dazzling spirit glyphs one after another.

“Lub dub, lub dub, lub dub, lub… dub, lub… dub…”

Li Yao felt his heart beat getting slower and slower as his breaths became longer and longer.

“Brain cell activity, 150%!”

He realized that it was not his heartbeat which was getting slower, but rather, it was his thought process which was getting quicker; his body rhythm was unable to keep up with his thought process.

“Brain cell activity, 200%!”

Li Yao felt as if someone was prying open the top of his head and pouring scalding hot oil into his brain, which was producing “crackling” sounds.

Countless glimpses of scenes suddenly emerged before his eyes as multitudes of sounds also rang in his ears.

They were the residual memories from a decade ago which were upturning from the depths of his brain. Even the memories where a wolfhound was chasing him when he was seven years old had surfaced.

“Brain cell activity, 250%!”

Li Yao blinked his eyes. His pupils gradually expanded as they slowly occupied his entire eye sockets. One after another, like specks of light, incredibly deep thoughts in the depths of his neural field flashed, collided, shredded, and intertwined with each other as they were stretched into countless threads of light before weaving into an intricate web where each node bore numerous information fragments of＜Soul Converging Techniques＞.

A castle of thoughts was quickly being built in Li Yao’s mind.

“Brain cell activity, 331%!”

This was the limit.

Li Yao felt as if he was standing on a higher dimension as he overlooked the just built information castle of＜Soul Converging Techniques＞. Every single detail had emerged on every single thought and every thread of information of Soul Converging Techniques. He could grasp all the details with a single glance.

This kind of brainstorming pleasure made him unable to control himself. He was completely immersed in the ocean of ＜Soul Converging Techniques＞, where he was happily wandering. He completely forgot the passage of time.

5 minutes, 10 minutes, 25 minutes, 30 minutes.

Suddenly—

Li Yao’s pupil fiercely contracted to the size of a needle tip before it once again expanded to the limit.

His brain cell activity was increasing by the minute, he was getting more and more excited, and his thoughts were flashing quicker and quicker. He felt as if countless flying shuttles, which he was unable to catch no matter what he did, were whizzing out from the depths of his neural field.

“Boom!”

The castle of thoughts suddenly collapsed and raised overwhelming frightening billows and terrifying waves, where every wave carried a seemingly inexhaustible amount of memories, while the vast majority of them were useless information. For instance, what he ate on the noon of the third day after his ninth birthday. He started to recall everything that was useless!

Li Yao let out wheezing sounds, and the corner of his eyes madly twitched as he bit his lips to the point that the blood was flowing out.

“This is bad! My brain cells are overactive, I am going to have Qigong deviation!”

“Once I have Qigong deviation, it will take me at least a day to recover, during which my spirit will be weakened, my memory will decline, and I will not be able to concentrate. I will simply be unable to cultivate.

“I can never let this happen! I must find a way to resolve this!”

Everything before his eyes had blurred, and countless resplendent scenes collided with each other. Li Yao seemed to be hearing “cracking” sounds of his brain cells bursting open like popcorn. Every time they exploded, an overwhelming amount of useless memories would burst forth.

“Memories…”

A thought struck Li Yao’s mind; he suddenly seemed to grasp something.

He gathered a trace of his remaining consciousness, and with all his strength, he rushed into the depths of his brain towards Ou Yezi’s tree of memories!

“Boom!”

The moment his consciousness was going the collapse, a bright light flashed before Li Yao's eyes and his consciousness appeared inside the Heavenly Refining Tower of Hundred Smelting Clan from forty millenniums ago.

"Pooh…"

Li Yao let out a long deep breath. This was the memory world of Ou Yezi. Even if a storm was raging through at the outside world, it would simply be unable to invade this place.

"My guess was right. Ou Yezi's soul is so huge that it can absolutely withstand the side effects of 300% brain cell activity. This place is going to be my safe haven. I can hide here for 3-5 minutes before going out, and I shouldn't have any Qigong deviation then."

Having thought of this, Li Yao crossed his legs and steadily sat at the center of the Heavenly Refining Tower's first level where he studied the＜Low-Rank Soul Converging Technique> over and over again for 10 minutes. Only then did he calmly and collectedly leave the memory fragments and made his consciousness resurface as he returned to the real world.

Sure enough, beside a little headache, he was no longer in an uncontrollable state; he was not going to have Qigong deviation.

"Fortunately I finally found a way. It seems that the 'Super Perception Cabin' has a great hidden danger, so I can not overuse it."

Li Yao secretly praised his luck.

When he swept a glance at the corner of the hologram which was displaying the time, his entire body was suddenly stupefied.

“What!? Only a minute has elapsed in the real world?”

“That’s not right. I have obviously stayed for a dozen minutes in Ou Yezi’s memories.”

“The passage of time of the memory world and the real world is in a ratio of 3:1. Three minutes in the memory world is equivalent to one minute in the real world.”

“Why has it increased by 3.3 times, reaching a ratio of 10:1?”

Chapter 141: Sleeping Can Also Turn You Into God

“Did the passage of time in the memory fragment slow down by three times because my brain’s cell activity was elevated to 331%?”

Li Yao’s heart beat like drums.

Once this conjecture was verified, then he would have ten times more cultivation time than an ordinary person.

“In that case, even the abstruse basic theory course will not be difficult for me. Not only will I be able to learn all the basic theory courses in the Grand Desolate War Institution, but I will still be left with quite a bit of time to research the refining records in the Heavenly Refining Tower!”

Li Yao licked his lip, his eyelids drooped down as he withdrew his mind, and once again, his consciousness sunk into the deep recesses of his neural field to where the Tree of Memories was present.

“Whoosh!”

Li Yao, once again, appeared at the bottom most level of the Heavenly Refining Tower. Surrounding him, there was an overwhelming amount of bookshelves that cited innumerable low-level exercises and refining records of the Hundred Smelting Clan.

The corner of Li Yao’s lips curled up as he took out the <Thirteen Ancient Sword Blueprints> from the bookshelf.

A sword was the greatest weapon among all, and if one wanted to learn refining, they would first have to learn how to forge swords. Thus, in the ancient cultivation world, refiners were also known as “Sword Forgers”.

This＜Thirteen Ancient Sword Blueprints＞ contained the classical refining process of 13 kinds of flying swords. Every one of the flying swords’ process contained a few dozen crucial refining techniques.

Once one has completely learned the＜Thirteen Ancient Sword Blueprints＞, even if one was at the basic rudimentary level, that alone would allow him to refine some of the most common flying swords.

Although the thirteen flying swords were simple, the telepathic thoughts it embodied were as vast as the sea and seemed to be inexhaustible. After Li Yao had acquired this refining record, he had always wanted to study it, but he didn’t have the time to painstakingly learn and did not dare to give it a try casually.

Now that he had such an opportunity, the endless mysteries of the ancient flying sword was a feast for his eyes, allowing him to enjoy it to his heart’s content!

“Whoosh, whoosh…”

At the bottom most level of the Heavenly Refining Tower, only the sounds of page flipping could be heard.

At first, Li Yao was planning to just have a look, but not long after, he was completely immersed in this lustrous and dazzling, breathtaking and mysterious world of ancient flying swords, completely forgetting everything else.

Real world, after three hours, dawn was about to arrive.

The cultivation gym was still hustling and bustling as countless students who had stayed all night were still ecstatically venting their strength.

“Bam bam! Bam bam bam!”

On Zhang Chuang’s body, every strand of muscles was as though crystals were exploding; like a mad gorilla, he continuously bombarded the punching target with explosive power, and the Strength Testing Machine swayed as if it was on the verge of collapsing.

“Brother Chuang, it’s bad! Quickly come and take a look at the Super Perception Cabin!” a fellow student sent the message.

“What’s going on? Did someone have Qigong deviation again? Isn’t that pretty normal? Every two or three days, someone will have Qigong deviation in the Super Perception Cabin. It’ll be fine if we just haul him for treatment,” Zhang Chuang disapprovingly said.

Although he was a freshman, he was a citywide College Entrance Examination Champion. Apart from the specially recruited students, he could be regarded as the strongest student, so he served as a small leader in the Iron Fist Club and was responsible for managing the chores in the cultivation gym at night.

“No, it’s Li Yao…” the student wanted to say something but hesitated.

“Fellow Student Li Yao? Right, when did he leave? Since I was too engrossed in cultivation, I probably didn’t notice him leave.” Zhang Chuang grabbed a towel to wipe off the sweat.

“He, he still hasn’t left… he is still in the Super Perception Cabin,” the student stammered as he replied.

“What?”

“Bang!” Zhang Chuang had actually made the towel burst as he forcibly squeezed it.

He raised his eyebrows and furiously stared as he roared, “What the hell were you doing!? Do you want him to die? An ordinary person can have Qigong deviation after just staying for half an hour in the Super Perception Cabin. He’s been staying in there for three hours—three frigging hours! His brain must be fried! You truly are, truly are—”

Zhang Chuang ruthlessly threw what remained of the towel before he exerted strength in his legs and bolted. On one side, he was running, while on the other, he was showering curses, raining curses down upon the personnel.

“Brother Chuang, calm down. It’s really not like what you are imagining. In short, it is very strange. When you are there, you will know ‘cause even if I told you now, you will absolutely not believe me!”

“Shut the fuck up! I, Zhang Chuang, am from a family of cultivators. Since I was three years old, I have started to touch the lustrous and dazzling world of cultivation, so what kind strange things I have not seen?”

Zhang Chuang roared as he increased his speed, and in a little while, arrived at the scene.

Afterward, he discovered things were truly super strange!

Three personnel and a dozen students; all stood dumb like wooden chickens before a Super Perception Cabin as they peered inside with a rather fearful look in their eyes. It was as if it was not some human cultivating inside the Super Perception Training but rather some demon god!

“What’s the matter? Why are staring at the Super Perception Cabin? Are you still not going to get the person out?! Do you really want him to die!?”

Zhang Chuang furiously pushed everyone aside and grabbed the collar of a student.

“Brother Chuang, first hear me out. Fellow Student Li Yao has indeed been staying inside for three hours; however, aside from the spike in blood pressure and heartbeat just after the first one and half hour, his physiological index remained normal and hasn’t exceeded past the normal value even a bit. Because of this, we didn’t pay any attention to it, but when we noticed him, about three hours had already passed!”

“What!?”

Zhang Chuang’s eyes were so wide-opened that they looked as if they were the eyes of a bull: “Are you joking with me? His brain cell activity has been elevated to 300% for almost 3 hours, and yet you say his physiological index is still very normal? Is he a human or a demon beast? Even if he is a demon beast, it will not be so excessive!”

The student, who had his entire faced splattered with Zhang Chuang’s saliva, said completely bewildered, “I am not finished. Not only was Fellow Student Li Yao’s physiological index extremely normal, but his heartbeat, pulse, and respiratory rate were all 70% of the standard value. We usually call this state… deep sleep!”

“WHAT!?”

Zhang Chuang’s roar almost burst opened the roof. He thunderously roared as he ruthlessly shook the pitiful student, “Do you not know why this thing is called ‘Super Perception Cabin’? It is precisely because this thing can allow someone to enter a Super! Perception! State!”

“Now you are telling me that someone who has brain cell activity of 300%, who is in a frigging SUPER PERCEPTIVE STATE, is in DEEP SLEEP!? Is there something wrong with your tongue, or am I hearing things wrongly?”

The student forcefully smiled: “Brother Chuang, there is nothing wrong with my tongue and there is nothing wrong with your hearing. Even I suspect that there is something really wrong with my eyes!”

Zhang Chuang spat a mouthful of saliva before he shoved everyone and pasted his nose on the transparent crystal window as he peered inside with wide-opened eyes.

He kept on staring for a while!

However, Li Yao, who sat in cross-legged position at the center of the pupa, had a trace of a strange smile on his face. His expression was completely calm, and much to his dismay, there was drool trickling down the corner of his mouth as he made faint snoring sounds.

All this points to one thing and one thing only, and that was he was in a deep sleep state.

From the high-speed movement of his eyes, it was quite clear that he was immersed in an incredibly wonderful dream!

“Brother Chuang, Fellow Student Li Yao has remained in this state for an entire three hours already,” the student faintly added this sentence.

Zhang Chuang was completely stupefied. He dumbfoundedly stared for a long while before he could finally recover to the state of being able to respond.

After suppressing for a while, he vented out, “Fuck, this brat is really asleep!”

…

From this day onwards, a legend appeared in the Grand Desolate War Institution.

A legend of a “God of Sleeping”!

According to the legend, the God of Sleeping was endowed with a unique talent by virtue of which he could sleep at any place. He also had a very eccentric hobby, and he especially liked to sleep in a Super Perception Cabin.

While others would have their brains fried in the Super Perception Cabin when learning the basic theoretical knowledge in madness, one could always find the God of Sleeping in a nearby pupa with a smile, sound asleep, and he would sleep for the most of the day.

This kind of self-complacent appearance simply made everyone unsure whether to laugh or cry—if he truly lacked sleep, why didn’t he enter the Deep Sleep Chamber instead of making such a huge scene?

“Maybe he has too much pressure or maybe there is something wrong with his brain, causing all stimulation to his brain cells to be unable to rouse him?”

“It’s possible. After all, he is facing a task which is impossible. He has to gather 40,000 credits in one year and become a registered refiner afterwards. Only then will he be able to protect the Refining Department. Such a task is terrible—it is simply beyond reach!”

“How many credits does he have anyway?”

“I checked the Battle Ranking and it’s… zero! He still hasn’t taken any tests!”

“What?”

These kinds of rumors were flying at every corner of the campus.

But no matter who it was, they dared not to take it out with Li Yao.

In the end, cultivators were different from ordinary people. Many students were from families of cultivators which have a profound heritage, and they have all learned priceless, wondrous, and mysterious skills

And some people had fortuitous encounter in their childhood, had beheaded strange beasts, eaten some strange fruit, or inadvertently acquired some peerless ability… In the world of cultivation, this was a pretty common occurrence.

If they imprudently went and asked, “Hey, fellow student, why can you enter deep sleep in the Super Perception Cabin? What kind of fortuitous encounter did you have? Why don’t you open the outlook of everyone?”

If such words left their mouth, even if Li Yao beat the crap out of him on the spot, no one would sympathize with him.

As for the faculty, they, even more so, weren’t concerned over this matter. A university was completely different from a high school; in high school, teachers might act like stewards and run after students all day, but in university, if a student was willing to learn, then the professors would do their utmost to teach; however, if a student snored all day long, then that was his freedom and no one would interfere.

After all, everyone was an adult. One must pave their own path step by step.

And as for Yuan Manqiu, she was pretty much busy reconstructing the Refining Department and was out on a trip to contact the scattered grassroots refiners. She simply didn’t have any time to be concerned with these trivial things—she believed that Li Yao would take at least 2-3 months to learn all the basic theory courses!

Li Yao was like a weed that spared no effort to grow under the rubble where no one could see.

One day… two days… three days…

Every day, he would spend 12 hours in the Super Perception Cabin.

While everyone thought that he was snoring, he was actually immersed in the depths of the Heavenly Refining Tower where he directed all his attention to learning the 100 basic theory courses.

In the real world, where ten days had passed, in the Heavenly Refining Tower, three months had passed, during which Li Yao had finally chewed, absorbed, thoroughly memorized, and understood 88 basic theory courses!

Afterward, he turned his gaze towards the higher-rank theoretical scriptures.

His target was to use half a month in the real world—5 months in the Heavenly Refining Tower—to thoroughly read over a majority of the scriptures.

Even if he was unable to understand, he would have engraved them deeply in his brain, which would lay a solid foundation for the next step in cultivation!

Chapter 142: Fire and Ice

Chapter 142: Fire and Ice

First and foremost, Li Yao began reading the jade chips which he had unearthed from the rubble.

These jade chips were a unique kind of magical equipment which were dedicated to storing telepathic thoughts and could often go through vicissitudes of 1,000 years. Its structure was extremely sturdy and was also engraved with special array glyphs which ensured that the telepathic thoughts stored within could never be extinguished.

Thus, even after experiencing such a huge explosion, many of the jade chips were perfectly fine.

A majority of the jade chips had cultivation data and refining processes stored which Li Yao was unable to completely analyze, even with his current strength.

However, a small part of these jade chips had notes, refining experience, as well as theoretical monographs written by various seniors stored within.

Suffice to say, countless 10,000 feet high refining theories of the entire grassroots faction was built on these unremarkable "cornerstones".

These jade chips were altogether different from Ding Yin's jade chip.

Ding Yin was a refiner who had profound knowledge in mainstream refining. His refining ideology paid more emphasis on the elite faction, but it just so happens that his explanations had a very solid basis and gave everyone a reasonable and impeccable feeling.

As he dwelled on the theories of the two factions at the same time, no matter which faction it was, both of them presented themselves as a deluge of heavenly flowers, highlighting their wonderful points, and happened to go neck and neck with each other. It was like watching a pinnacle duel between two experts, making Li Yao feel overwhelmed and dazzled.

And that's not all.

In the Heavenly Refining Tower, Li Yao also came in contact with refining knowledge from the ancient cultivation world of 40,000 years ago.

Ancient refining concepts and the modern ones were two schools which were diametrically contradictory. Although both sides advocated for a simple and straightforward approach, when it came to spiritual energy entwining and conversion, there was a big difference, and a part of the core array glyph structure and usage were also diametrically opposite.

As luck would have it, at the most intense moment of the pinnacle duel between the "two experts", a third "ancient expert" butted in and hit out, so the original complex situation had been comprehensively upgraded.

Later, the situation would often change. Just as Li Yao deeply admired Ding Yin's point of view which he believed to be an irrefutable truth...

He would find another way in the jade chips left behind by the grassroots faction refiners which were supported by massive data and was even more comprehensive, concise, and irrefutable—it was simply truth among the truth.

And when Li Yao just nodded and accepted this point of view, suddenly, he would discover a "new" point of view in the ancient books from forty millenniums ago which seemed to be... more concise, clear, and irrefutable and appeared to be as unshakable as one plus one equals two!

Just like this, the theoretical foundation which Li Yao had built in a day would be completely wrecked in an hour, and the firm conviction that he built in that one hour would then be even more ruthlessly broken into pieces within a second.

For an entirety of half a month, his theoretical foundation was broken and constructed again and again. This kind of painful and happy feeling was even more annoying than experiencing fire and ice [1]; he wanted to express but could not vent out.

Finally...

The mad theoretical study came to an end. Only one day was left before the month was over.

11:50 PM, just one day and 10 minutes were left before the deadline for the Newcomer Ranking.

Currently, in the Newcomer Ranking, powerhouses were like clouds; they were everywhere. The top 100 had almost acquired over a hundred credits. Suffice to say, in just one month, they had almost studied 50 or so theory courses.

Meanwhile, the top cultivation geniuses, much to everyone's dismay and reasoning, had acquired 200 credits.

And among the top 100, 90% of the students had their names decorated with glittering "Hidden Dragon Hall" at the back.

They were all specially recruited students and were hidden dragons who were like feathers of a phoenix and horns of unicorns in their hometown.

As for Li Yao...

His name simply didn't make an appearance in the Newcomer Ranking. For this one month, he was immersed in bitter penance in the Heavenly Refining Tower where he was confused to the point of dizziness and was even not far away from vomiting blood from the diametrically opposed refining theories. He simply couldn't spare any attention to take some trifling exam.

So his total credits were nothing but zero.

"In the Wasteland Battle Network, the basic theory test can be carried out by telepathic thoughts transmission where I can transmit hundreds of thoughts in a second. I guess 10 minutes is enough for an exam."

"I still have an entire day left. I am going to blast off 88 basic theory courses... one by one!"

Inside a three-floor high dilapidated building next to the ruins of the Refining Department, sitting cross-legged amidst a pile of jade chips, Li Yao's jet black eyes flickered with radiant light.

The Black Wing Sword lazily flew above his head.

Two spider-shaped puppet beasts quickly shuttled through as they separated the jade chips according to their class and placed them on a special bookshelf.

Over this past month, besides madly studying theoretical knowledge in the Heavenly Refining Tower, he was also insanely scavenging wastes in the ruins.

Jade chips and serious damaged magical equipment components; regardless of whether they were useful or not, as long as they were not completely melted down into an iron lump, Li Yao would retrieve it from the rubble. He was making every minute count to repair, and even when he was taking a dump, his hands were busy with fiddling with several dozen components.

On one side, he was accumulating some assets for the Refining Department, while on the other side, he was also trying to put the refining theories he had just learned into practice, testing things to find out which kind of theory was most suitable for him.

In any case, there were an inexhaustible amount of spare parts which he could squander as he wished.

These two spider puppet beasts which were specifically used to organize and maintain the jade chips had been recovered by Li Yao in accordance with the ancient refining concepts and grassroots refining concepts respectively. At first glance, there was nothing different about them; however, there were actually small differences in the core powering glyphs which utilized two different kinds of spiritual energy conversion models.

Li Yao was trying to test which model had the highest conversion rate and consumed the least amount of spiritual energy, as well as which had a longer lifespan.

If he could gather enough components, then he would be able to chew off a bit more of the jade chip that was given by Ding Yin. Li Yao also wanted to use the elite faction's method to recover a puppet beast of the same model so that he could put together three of them and compare. Only then would he be able to get to a conclusion.

After a month of in-depth study, Li Yao was no longer an ignorant child who didn't know how high the heavens were and how deep the earth was. In general, he still insisted on the ideology of the grassroots faction, but he also acknowledged that the elites' ideology indeed had some unique places which were enough to make it the mainstream refining method for hundreds of years; it was not at all an unearned reputation.

Perhaps one day, he could fuse the ancient refining techniques and the elites' refining concepts with the grassroots' concept and create a second-to-none "Fiend Star Style" refining technique.

However, for now...

A strange smile crept over Li Yao's face as four red spirit threads drilled out of his glabella and silently thrust towards the Black Wind Sword.

Just as his spirit threads charged out, four black spirit threads also charged out from the Black Wing Sword and directly cut off Li Yao's spirit threads.

Red and black; altogether, the eight spirit threads were like eight flying swords that were having a dogfight as they waged an intense and bloody battle that was invisible to the naked-eye.

Compared to a month ago, Li Yao's spirit threads were thicker and more flexible, and their reach was also longer.

However, the spirit threads stretching out from the Black Wind Sword were even thicker and more flexible. Both sides clashed with each other in the air, during which offense and defense were changing within seconds—the fight was well-matched!

Li Yao slightly smiled as terrifying spiritual energy coursed through all over his body and finally gathered at his spiritual root. Surprisingly, a 5th… 6th… 7th spirit thread appeared.

Finally, the number of spiritual threads that had emerged from Li Yao's spiritual roots had reached as many as ten, and each spirit thread had a reach of 12-13 meters!

An emergence of 10 spirit threads from the spiritual roots with every thread being 10 meters long was precisely—the sign of having entered the 2nd level of the Refinement Stage!

And... this was not all!

When the 10 red spirit threads swarmed over and surrounded the Black Wing Sword, suddenly, a strange distortion appeared in the air as every spirit thread turned back by ninety degrees, drawing a standard right angle before they intertwined with each other and weaved an airtight dragnet.

The spirit threads bent by 90 degrees to form a standard right angle, which was simply impossible for it to naturally happen in the world. It was a clear proof that the cultivators' manipulation of their spirit threads had reached a degree where they were like arms and fingers of the cultivator and could be manipulated as they wished.

In other words, Li Yao had already broken through to the 3rd level of the Refinement Stage.

In this one month, after having refined and absorbed a tremendous amount of demonic energy, which he had engulfed from the battlefield, as well as staying day and night in the Super Perception Cabin, where his brain cell activity was enhanced to 331% for a long period of time, his soul had unknowingly grown stronger.

In addition, he and Black Wing Sword had accidentally thought of this "spirit thread fighting" training, which allowed them to launch their spirit threads and fight it out with each other at leisure.

Using this way of training spirit threads, not only did it make their spirit threads thicker, more agile, longer, faster, and sturdier than any ordinary cultivator’s spirit threads, but the rate of engulfing spiritual energy had also greatly increased.

Although many descendants of wealthy and great families could break through to the 3rd level of the Refinement Stage before the age of twenty by relying on the massive amount of resources...

But for a nameless newbie like Li Yao, who had no background, to advance to the 3rd level Refinement Stage in just a short period of one month, it was absolutely a miracle.

Having swept a glance at the spirit clock, which showed that it was just 12 o'clock, on the wall, Li Yao retracted his spirit threads and licked his lips. He could not wait to log into the Wasteland Battle Network.

With the arrival of the end of the month, the competition of the Newcomer Ranking had entered a new phase of intensity. The scene of the battle network had also changed; the sky had turned blood-red while soul-stirring war drums rang everywhere, making everyone's blood seethe and anxious to give it a try.

With a move of Li Yao's thought, when he deeply thought of one word "Exam"...

Numerous streams of light swarmed over from every direction as they turned into 88 blood-red diamond crystal.

Every diamond crystal bore a tremendous amount of telepathic thoughts which represented each of the 88 exams.

Li Yao arbitrarily swept a glance around before his gaze gathered at a clear diamond crystal at one corner. This blood-red crystal immediately started shaking.

"Freshman Li Yao, are you sure you want to take the exam for ＜Elementary Body Art of Flying Swallows＞?"

"I'm sure!"

"Crack!"

The blood-red crystal split open into thousands upon thousands of blood colored fragments above his head before they started rotating at a high-speed around him and transformed into a mysterious and wondrous scene.

Li Yao stood in the air. Beneath his foot was an endless abyss. Countless swallows flew amidst the fierce winds, whereas a few transparent phantom flying swallows acted as "stepping stones" as they performed an incredibly ingenious agility technique. Woosh, woosh, woosh, woosh! They gave off a misconception of fairies flying in the wind.

"First of all, please use your thoughts to describe the source and the heritage of the＜Elementary Body Art of Flying Swallows＞."

Amidst the wind, a gentle voice floated over.

Li Yao's spirit was shaken before he began to answer!

TLN:

[1] Fire and Ice here means Fire and Ice Blowjob where two different temperature of liquids are taken in the mouth alternatively to increase sexual pleasure. For more information please refer to Google Guru.

Chapter 143: Four Experts? Explode for me!

Chapter 143: Four Experts? Explode for me!

At 5:00 PM, 1,000 meters above from the ground, the sky was covered with red clouds as resplendent lights blazed across the dusk sky.

This place was one of the highest floating mountains in Grand Desolate War Institution and was also a terribly harsh training camp known as—the Hidden Dragon Hall!

Those who accepted the special training here regarded themselves as hidden dragons who would one day soar into the sky and command the wind and clouds.

This was not arrogance but confidence because they were the most outstanding students that could be found in the entire Heaven Origin Sector. They were the best among the millions of teenagers in the federation, and in their eyes, the College Entrance Examination was nothing more than child's play. For them, they simply felt that it was beneath their dignity to take part in such an examination!

Most of all, the hundreds of students gathered here were all specially recruited students who have shown shocking displays of prowess in the Limit Challenge Competition!

At the edge of the floating mountain was a convex-shaped terrace, upon which stood four charismatic and powerful youths facing the wind who were exuding a radiance that was as sharp as a saber.

Zhao Tianchong was a freshman of the Chaos Edge Hall whose parents were loose cultivators; they were not affiliated with any sect or clan but lived a free life of hunting demon beast in the depths of the Wasteland.

In his infancy, he was on his mother's back when she hunted and killed demon beasts. While everyone else was sucking milk, he was instead drinking the blood of demons.

At the age of 11, he had personally beheaded a demon beast. Before the age of 19, he was already in the 3rd level of the Refinement Stage, greatly surpassing Fiend Blade Peng Hai's legacy.

Li Tieshan was a member of the Iron Fist Club who was from the Devil Fist Sect. His father was a Building Foundation Stage cultivator of the Devil Fist Sect who had unfortunately fallen in battle against a beast tide.

He was fostered by many elders of the Devil Fist Sect. Since childhood, he had accepted the harshest of combat training, and although he was half a year younger than Zhao Tianchong, he had also broken through to the 3rd level of the Refinement Stage.

Glyph Devils' freshman Gu Feixuan and Lancets' freshman Wen Ruorong were both from a family of cultivators, with at least one of their parents being a cultivator, thus they inherently possessed a powerful bloodline, and to top it off, since their childhood, they had undergone an incomparably terrifying training. They carried a corona of "genius" for every step they took on the road of their growth!

"Zhao Tianchong, I... lost!"

Lu Tieshan said in a bit raucous tone; his voice, however, secretly harbored a sliver of excitement.

Although he was only 18 years old, he almost seemed to appear as if he was 38 years old. His entire body was like a rock which had been chiseled away by sand and wind for centuries. His pair of fists, in particular, was covered in intricate lines which gave off the appearance that they were covered in a layer of dragon scales.

"The four of us are the strongest freshman of the Hidden Dragon Hall. We have long decided to go head to head to see who is the best, and the result is that the three of us have gained 203 credits while only you have scored 205 credits. Everyone has finished taking the exams for all the courses, and as only a few hours are left until the end of the month, it seems that you are the irrefutable champion of the Newcomer Ranking—you are the strongest freshman of the Grand Desolate War Institution!"

Li Tieshan paused a bit. His eyes radiated with a sharp gleam as he continued, "Brilliant, brilliant, very brilliant! Since childhood, I have grown up in the Devil Fist Sect, and in the sect, it can be said that I had many peers but none who could inspire all my fighting spirit. Often, I would only use 80% of my strength, and that would be enough to completely blast them off. Such a life was really tasteless and too boring! I had never thought that just as I would enter the campus, I will get to taste defeat—this taste is really good!"

Narrowing his eyes and swaying his stout fingers, he stressed each and every word, "Zhao Tianchong, you have completely stimulated my fighting spirit. Next month, I will give it 200% to madly cultivate and become the champion of the next month Newcomer Ranking—it will definitely not be you!"

The target of his words, Zhao Tianchong, who had a tall and thin stature and had a gloomy look, had yet to respond when a teenager next to him, whose face was covered in tattoos, burst into laughter: "Lu Tieshan, you can not forget me and Wen Ruorong. The credits scored by us are no less than yours!"

"Right!"

The only girl among the four people, Wen Ruorong, who was wearing a willow long skirt, slightly smiled. Her voice was very gentle, but when she spoke, her words were as sharp as a lancet: "Ever since I was young, no matter what sort of competition it was, I would always completely suppress my opponents by a large margin. Among my peers, not one person could bear to have 3-5 bouts with me! I had never imagined that today, there would suddenly appear three and one that has even surpassed me! Interesting, it is truly interesting. I am looking forward to the university life more and more!"

Only at this moment, Zhao Tianchong coldly said, "You are all welcome to challenge me anytime, I also want to try... the taste of defeat!"

The four people started at each other before they all smiled at the same time.

They were all cultivation geniuses and were not afraid of competition. What they feared the most was a lack of opponents. The feeling of drawing their swords only to find nothing around them was truly lonely.

Now that so many competitors who were not only rivals but friends as well had appeared all of a sudden, it was truly the best!

"I heard Teacher Ding Lingdang speak of a fellow student named Li Yao among the freshmen whose strength is extremely good and is enough to go head to head with you and I. For a long time, I have been looking forward to it, but who would have thought that after the accident of Refining Department, he would quiet down and now there isn’t even a sound of him."

Lu Tieshan said with a bit of regret.

A contemptuous smile appeared on Gu Feixuan's face: "It's very normal. High school and university are completely different. Many students are outstanding in the high school, but when they enter the university, they will become quiet. It is because their fundamentals are only at the high school level!"

Wen Ruorong also put on a contemptuous look:

"I have also heard of him. Isn't he the so-called God of Sleeping? In fact, the level of strength is one thing and that of effort is another! I am not discriminating against students who are poor. After all, some people are talented and some are not, but as long as they work hard with all their effort, then it would be enough! But he is doing absolutely nothing! All day, he is passing his time sleeping. This is nothing but escaping reality! Does he think that by sleeping, he will be able to regain the Refining Department? From what I hear, he did his utmost and asked teacher Ding Lingdang to decrease the cut-off marks for him to enter. Teacher Ding Lingdang can be considered as a legendary figure in the Grand Desolate War Institution, so how come she missed it and recruited such a waste who does not have the slightest bit of fighting spirit?"

When the four of them were making frivolous remarks about Li Yao, suddenly, a sharp scream floated over from a terrace not far away from them: "What? I was kicked out of the top 100? Impossible!"

Li Tieshan raised his eyebrow as he said with surprise, "It's Cao Jiang. Didn't he just enter the top 100? If I remember correctly, there was quite a big difference between him and the 101st student; it was a difference of 7-8 credits. He had actually been caught up to so quickly? This kid's luck is truly bad."

If one could squeeze into the top 100 in the Newcomer Ranking, he would earn various incentives. It was completely different from the 101st place, which was why Cao Jiang let out such a heartbreaking cry.

Lu Tieshan pursed his lips into a smile as he shouted, "Cao Jiang, come here!"

Not long after, a dark-skinned boy with a moderate physique wearing a long face appeared before the four cultivation geniuses.

Until now, Cao Jiang still hadn't recovered from his surprise. His eyes were completely bloodshot, and he appeared as if could not wait to bite off two credits from anyone.

"Cao Jiang, now do you understand that there are hidden geniuses in this school and experts are like clouds here? There isn’t just us from the Hidden Dragon Hall. Even among the ordinary students, there are many champions of College Entrance Examination. Take Zhang Chuang, the Southern Desert City's Champion of College Entrance Examination, for example. His strength is almost comparable with the specially recruited students of the Hidden Dragon Hall and gives many of us a run for our money! It is very normal for you to be kicked out of the Newcomer Ranking!"

Lu Tieshan slammed a fist on Cao Jiang's chest as he laughed and said, "There is no need to get disheartened. It doesn't matter if you didn't make it to the ranking. Next month, why don't you madly train together with me and then go kill like a man?"

At the beginning, Cao Jiang was a little bit depressed, but when heard Lu Tieshan speak, he had pretty much come around and stuck his tongue out: "Madly train with Elder Brother Tie Shan? I don't want to die!"

Just as these words escaped his mouth, everyone burst into laughter.

Lu Tieshan casually asked, "Right, who was it that squeezed you out of the ranking? Was it a specially recruited student or an ordinary student? If I remember correctly, wasn't there a pretty wide margin between you and several other students behind you? How come someone suddenly broke out?"

Cao Jiang scratched his head as he said in confusion, "It was not the people behind me who had caught up. It was... Li Yao."

"Li Yao?"

Lu Tieshan blinked his eyes. This name sounded so familiar. it was still on the tip of his tongue just a moment, but how could that be possible?

"Which Li Yao?"

"Is there anyone else? It is the Refining Department's only student, the God of Sleeping—Li Yao!"

"What!?"

The complexion on Lu Tieshan, Zhao Tianchon, Gu Feixuan, and Wen Ruorong happened to change at the same time.

Especially Wen Ruorong, her cheeks seemed to be burning.

She started up the crystal processor in a flurry to check the Newcomer Ranking while muttering, "It can't be, did I blame him unjustly?"

Gu Feixuan said in embarrassment, "It seems Teacher Ding Lingdang's vision was right. This brat is really something. I know there are some people who don't like to take the test just after learning the course and like taking all the test together after they have learned all the courses. They believe that they can thoroughly grasp the theories this way. I guess Li Yao is such a person."

Just as her voice faded away, she noticed Wen Ruorong turn pale as she dumbfoundedly stared at the hologram. Her mouth was puffed up as though two quail eggs had been stuffed in her mouth.

"Isn't it just the 100th place? Is there any reason for you to be so scared? Although we specially recruited students are relatively stronger, it is necessary for us to give way to ordinary students. We can not occupy all of the top 100 rankings in the Newcomer Ranking, right? Hahahaha!"

Gu Feixuan lightly laughed; not at all had he taken this matter to heart.

"No, it's not the 100th place," Wen Ruorong stammered.

"Well?"

"It's 90—no, it's 87!"

"This is nothing. After entering the top 100, everyone's credit is almost the same, so it's very normal to take over a dozen students after taking a test."

"But, Li Yao... he, he, he still has 30 exams left!"

"What?" Gu Feixuang screamed at the top of his lungs.

Not long after, screams could be heard coming from every corner of the Hidden Dragon Hall, seeming as if a terrifying plague was spreading.

"What? I have fallen in ranking? Who is so insane to take the exam when the month is soon about to end and also taking so many credits in one deep breath? Li Yao? Li Yao!"

"Dammit, I am kicked out of 70th place!"

"Is there some mistake? Why am I kicked out of 50th place?"

87... 69... 53... 37...

Li Yao was like an extremely accurate clock; every 10 minutes, his credits would change once, and every time the change occurred, he would jump in the Newcomer Ranking by a few positions. Several specially recruited students of the Hidden Dragon Hall were kicked out of their position, hurling them far behind.

After five hours, 10 o'clock at the night.

A deathly silence had taken over Hidden Dragon Hall. Over a hundred specially recruited students had assembled at a large stage at the top of the floating mountain where their eyes were glued at a huge hologram before them.

No one dared to say anything and didn’t even dare to breathe loudly. On the stage which was accommodating over a hundred students, it was so calm that one could even hear their heartbeats.

Everyone's heart was beating to the extreme.

Because on the glittering Newcomer Ranking, Li Yao's name, which was like a hot knife cutting through butter, had made its way to the top 10 and appeared just below the name of the four cultivation genius, firmly occupying the fifth position. The remaining "hidden dragons" had been hurled beyond the highest heaven.

Moreover...

"Woosh!"

Li Yao's name was flashing in madness. After passing another exam, he had amassed 204 credits, leaping over Lu Tieshan's, Gu Feixuan's and Wen Ruorong's head and was just a step away from Zhao Tianchong!

The three cultivation geniuses from cultivators' families had been directly blown away!

"..." Lu Tieshan was rendered speechless.

"This madman!" Gu Feixuan repeatedly cried.

"This is too abnormal! How does this guy's brain actually work? I really want to dissect it!" No matter how Wen Ruorong wracked her brain, she could not figure it out.

The other specially recruited students were in an incomparable frenzy. Just after a second, the deathly silence was broken and everyone started seething!

"There is no mistake—this guy is insane! He has actually cleared 87 courses in one day and that too with a passing rate of 100%!"

"Furthermore, he had only taken 10 minutes to clear each exam. It suffices to say that his telepathic thoughts transmission ability is very strong and he has at the very least reached the 2nd level of the Refinement Stage!"

"Isn't he the God of Sleeping? Not a day goes by that anyone doesn't find him snoring in the Super Conception Cabin, so how come he is so strong?"

"He had already blown away three of the four experts of our Hidden Dragon Hall. Right now, only Zhao Tianchong alone is left. There is only a difference of one credit between them, and Li Yao is still left with one final exam. Is he… also going to blow away Zhao Tianchong?"

"T-that's impossible, right? That’s too big of a joke!"

"Woosh woosh woosh woosh!"

Every specially recruited student's gaze gathered at Zhao Tianchong. They wanted to find some clues from Zhao Tianchong's expression.

Nevertheless, Zhao Tianchong was still cold, gloomy, taciturn, calm, and collected; he didn't even bat a lid.

Cold sweat trickled down his forehead; his heart had instead deeply betrayed him.

Chapter 144: Immortal Cultivators

While over a hundred “hidden dragon” had been deeply shocked by Li Yao’s spectacular performance, Li Yao, on the other hand, had cold sweat trickling down his forehead and his heart was in a turmoil.

He was in the midst of taking the final exam in the Wasteland Battle Network.

The reason the cold sweat had appeared was definitely not because the exam was highly difficult. On the contrary, it was too simple!

The course he was taking the exam for was called <Chivalry>.

It sounded rife with cliches; it was a course that appeared large but impractical. It quite seemed that as long as one shouted a few remarks like “I’m a righteous cultivator and my sword is always ready to be drawn to help when I see injustice during my travels”, “The blood of the strong must flow for the weak”, or “The depraved and the degenerates need to be punished”, anyone could pass.

Furthermore, it was written as such in the textbooks as well.

And even after taking half of the exam, the content was also almost the same. It seemed that it was just sending you free credits.

However, the passing rate of this course was as low as 32%!

“It shouldn’t be like this. If one just has to speak some remarks that are full of heroism, then everyone should be able to pass. No one would not say ‘If I saw some injustice during my travels, my sword is ready to be drawn to help the weak’, right? Why is the passing rate only 32%?”

On one side, Li Yao was answering, while on the other, he was quickly thinking.

Fortunately, there was a lot of time left, thus he could slowly ponder and answer.

The one who was presiding over the＜Chivalry＞ exam was a middle-aged, awe-inspiring, righteous cultivator who had straight eyebrows which were slanting upwards and outwards and eyes which were bright and shining like stars. He was the very construct which had been generated from numerous telepathic thoughts and appeared to be the epitome of a standard chivalrous heroic figure. He especially appeared warmhearted and considerate, like the ones who would behead three to five villainous degenerates before going to bed every night.

He seemed to be extremely satisfied with Li Yao’s previous answer. He nodded and concluded, “Good, good, your answers are very good. So the righteous people must eradicate the bullies and assist the weak, and safeguard justice because we are chivalrous. We have righteous ardor, right?”

Li Yao was just about to nod before his heart suddenly started pounding. He unwittingly replied, “This is only one reason!”

“Oh?”

The “chivalrous hero” was exceptionally surprised: “What’s the other?”

“The reason we must eliminate the bullies and help the downtrodden, protect justice, and even pay for it with our lives… it all because—upholding justice is beneficial to us!”

Li Yao sorted out his thoughts as he quickly answered.

“What are the benefits?” the chivalrous hero’s eyes shone with a bright gleam as he asked back.

“What is justice? In my opinion, justice is social order, it is civilized law! We cultivators are vested beneficiaries in the existing social order. We enjoy the greatest benefits which this order brings us, so of course, we have to safeguard it!”

“Vested beneficiaries? Please explain!”

The smile on the chivalrous hero’s face vanished as an expressionless look appeared on his face. It seemed that he was a bit dissatisfied by Li Yao because he was talking about interest instead of talking about right or wrong.

As the words had already left Li Yao’s mouth, it was just like an arrow which had been fitted on a bow-string and had to be released. He could only bite the bullet and speak:

“In the current social order of the Star Glory Federation, we, the cultivators, are the elites among all trades and professions. Whether it is reputation, status, or income, it is higher than ordinary citizens. Not to mention that ordinary citizens respect us from the bottom of their heart, and they too desire to become cultivators. Through the ages, this is the most suitable set of social order for cultivators. No matter who wants to break this social order, we can not allow him to succeed. Furthermore, he must be treated as a degenerate and a devil cultivator who has to be beheaded—this is justice!"

"In the ancient cultivation world of forty millenniums ago, we similarly had the same lofty status and we were respected. But still, not many ancient cultivators had a strong sense of justice, nor did they make sacrifices for the weak!" The chivalrous hero coldly smiled.

"Wrong. Ordinary people in the ancient cultivation world simply feared us. They didn't have the slightest bit of respect, not to mention the cultivators from the ancient cultivation world didn't live as comfortably as we modern cultivators do!"

Li Yao mustered up his courage and loudly said, "Take me for example. I am only a low-level Refinement Stage cultivator who had just entered the cultivation world. If I was in the ancient era, I would be treated like a slave who was at the beck and call of some high-level cultivator. And once I rose to prominence or found some heaven and earth treasure, I must put up my guard against others who would be coming to kill me or seize the treasure. Furthermore, I would have to scheme against my peers. It was a time when each and every one thought of stepping on someone else's head to climb, and it was a time when everyone was willing to stab you in the back as many times as they could. Every day, you would be in a state of anxiety, during which you would not have any appetite, be unable to sleep soundly, and can't even leisurely take a dump. How could anyone cultivate the truth?"

"The modern era, on the other hand, is different. Civilization has progressed now. An insignificant Refinement Stage cultivator like myself can freely and happily research the profound mysteries of truth and find my great dao in the highest institute of the country. Even if I found some profound and peerless technique or some heaven and earth treasure, no one would dare to blatantly kill me to seize the treasure. Whoever dared to try would become the enemy of the entire federation!”

“In this kind of environment, I can boldly cultivate at ease, due to which the efficiency is as much as a hundredfold higher compared to the ancient era! For sure, it would be a lot better if I become a high-level cultivator in the end, and even if not, even if I remain in the Refinement Stage for my entire life, it would still alright. After I am out in society, like before, I can still find a decent job and live a happy and satisfactory life.”

“Now, tell me. Isn’t a social order which can allow me to live freely and happily worthy for me to defend?”

The chivalrous hero maintained his composure: “You are right. However, we can still divide society into two parts. Among the cultivator, we can talk about morality, laws, and justice, whereas for the ant-like ordinary people, we can squeeze them dry like slaves, force them to collect resources, gather wealth, and use them as much as we can to our satisfaction. This kind of social order can similarly allow us to live comfortably and we wouldn’t need to bear the slightest bit of responsibility, wouldn’t this be much better?”

“Nope, it is not good at all. Not to mention, slavery and the feudal system is inefficient. It is not suitable for the advanced cultivation civilization. And most of all, we also have one huge competitor—the devil cultivators! If ordinary people are really desperate, they really don’t need to rely on cultivators and could just use blood sacrifice to entice heavenly devils to come, whereupon hundreds of thousands of residents of an entire town would be demonized one by one. Not to mention a few cultivators, even if it was an entire cultivation sect, they can engulf everyone to the point that not even a slag is left!”

“Hei hei, hei hei hei hei!”

Having heard his reply, the chivalrous hero suddenly burst into a sinister laughter.

With a flash, the bright and shining atmosphere turned into a gloomy and terrifying cave, while the chivalrous hero also transformed into an evil figure whose hair was hanging loose and had skulls hanging around his neck.

“If it is like this, then we should simply shed all pretenses of cordiality and become devil cultivators one after another! The more devil cultivators there are, the better it is. We can do anything we wish, take anything we want, and live a free and unfettered life to the extreme!”

Li Yao blinked his eyes and said, “Can a shop which had been selling bread for a few decades suddenly start selling pasta and compete with a nearby shop who has been selling pasta since the ancestral generation?”

The chivalrous hero was surprised for a moment. He was a construct which had been created from telepathic thoughts of countless experts and was unable to respond to such a strange question. He asked dully, “What?”

Li Yao explained:

“It is not impossible for us cultivators to turn into devil cultivators; however, the opposite side has been cultivating devil’s path for a few dozen millenniums and have already accumulated a wealth of experience. Whereas, we are just beginners who are cultivating devil’s path for the first time, so how could we compete with the other side?”

“We are like the shop which has been selling bread for a few decades who, upon noticing that the pasta shop next to us is flourishing, switched to selling pasta. How could we compete with them? Not to mention, the pasta shop is not necessarily flourishing! After all, in the 3,000 boundless universes, cultivators are still in the main trend, whereas devil cultivators are nothing but stray dogs!”

The chivalrous hero remained silent for a moment:

“You mean to say, we set out to be tigers but end up as dogs. If we cultivators turn into devil cultivators, we will be worse than devil cultivators, will simply be unable to compete with authentic devil cultivators, and can only become the lowest of rungs in the devil world?”

“That’s for sure. Take you for example:/— do you think that having messy hair and a few skulls hanging around your neck and switching off the lights will make you a devil cultivator? How can it be so simple?! Devil cultivators are the ones who tempt ordinary people. How can you even tempt anyone with that ghastly appearance of yours!?”

Li Yao looked up and down at the chivalrous hero before he shook his head again and again: “It is only us cultivators who call evil and depraved cultivators as devil cultivators. They will definitely not call themselves as ‘devils’. I have heard that some devil cultivators even call themselves ‘immortal cultivators’ and say that they walk on the road of true immortality. Even if they have tenebrum energy around them or have some ugly and hideous appearance because of cultivating evil techniques, in front of ordinary people, they would transform themselves into charismatic and robust figures and would take the shape where a halo is overflowing from them. Only this way will it be significantly handier to entice ordinary people!”

The chivalrous hero turned silent.

In the depths of the dark cave, a swaying candle light drew very, very long shadows of the two.

“Bang Bang!” Li Yao’s heart kept on pounding.

His answer from a moment ago was just a reactionary remark; he was just playing by the ear. When he recalled, he discovered that there were a lot of oversights.

If the invigilator was hell-bent on finding faults, then he would definitely be unable to do anything.

After a moment, a transformation once again took place in the environment around the two, returning the two once again to the previous summit of the hill where there was a gentle breeze, a blue sky, and fresh air. The chivalrous hero also reverted back into his awe-inspiring, righteous appearance.

“Congratulation, Student Li Yao. The＜Chivalry＞ course, you… pass! You got three credits!”

Li Yao’s heartbeat slowed down in a moment. He was wild with joy to the point that he could run three laps around the chivalrous hero. He unwittingly blurted out, “H-have I truly passed? Were my answers correct?”

The chivalrous hero shook his head with a smile:

“No, everyone’s understanding of the word ‘chivalry’ is different. The laws of the cultivation civilization are profound and abstruse, so how can there be any correct answer?”

“No doubt there were some bright points in your claims, while some are just lame arguments and perverted logic.”

“However, this course is not about some correct answer. Rather, it is to see your own understanding of the word ‘chivalry’. As long as it is not a verbatim of textbooks or some big and empty words, as long as they are substantive and constructive words, then you pass.”

“Unfortunately, too many students only know the dogma of the books and spoke of some nonsense like ‘I have a strong sense of justice and our generation’s duty is to help the weak’. In that case, it is better to fail them.”

“As for the true understanding of the word ‘chivalry’, how can you and I explain it clearly in a word or two? Fortunately, you have a lifetime to find its meaning. I hope that someday, you can find your own answer!”

“Good luck, Student Li Yao!”

The illusionary realm suddenly broke into fragments, whereupon Li Yao returned to the main world of the Wasteland Battle Network.

Three pieces of glittering diamond crystals whizzed over from the sky and quickly submerged into his body.

A clear and melodious female voice rang in his mind:

“Student Li Yao, you have passed the＜Chivalry＞ exam and have obtained three credits. Your cumulative credits are 207. In the Newcomer Ranking, you are ranked… first!”

Chapter 145: First Generation Tai'e Crafting Furnace

Chapter 145: First Generation Tai'e Crafting Furnace

The very instant the three light-gold, diamond-shaped crystal submerged into Li Yao's body, a change also took place in the huge holographic image on the topmost floor of the Hidden Dragon Hall.

Li Yao's name, which was shining brightly and overflowing with resplendent colors, after slightly shaking for a moment, jumped up with an unstoppable momentum and pushed Zhao Tianchong’s name underneath it

An exclamation of surprise burst forth in the Hidden Dragon Hall, whereupon it fell into a complete silence.

Over a hundred specially recruited students stared at each other, not knowing how to speak under such a perplexing and complicated mood.

Meanwhile, Zhao Tianchong kept on staring at Li Yao's name for a very long time; his scorching gaze seemed to have some kind of essence, seemingly as if it was a pair of swords which could pierce two transparent holes into the holographic screen.

After half minute, a trickle of cold sweat finally rolled down his forehead to his chin, and his tight facial muscles finally relaxed as the sharp look in his eyes changed to a burning look.

It was the kind of fiery look one would have when he encountered a pretty good opponent in a game of chess.

"In fact..."

Gu Feixuan was stunned for a long time before he reluctantly said, "There is still 4-5 hours left until the end of this month. Zhao Tianchong, even though it might take you two hours to thoroughly read a textbook, you should pick seven or eight theory courses and use the next two hour to take the exams. Afterwards, you can leave everything to luck. Maybe you will luck out on one or two courses, in which case this brat would not be first in the Newcomer Ranking!"

Zhao Tianchong had now completely restored to a calm demeanor, and the look in his eyes was neither sharp nor as fiery as before; it was a kind of indifferent look. All his emotions had been sealed in the depths of his light-gray eyes.

He calmly said, "Maybe it will be possible, but is it necessary?"

Gu Feixuan was stupefied: "What do you mean? That's the first position in the Newcomer Ranking!"

Zhao Tianchong unenthusiastically smiled:

"For the very first month, the first position in the Newcomer Ranking only means that Li Yao is comparatively good at learning theoretical knowledge. I grew up in the Wasteland, so I paid more attention to combat rather than theory!"

"What's the point of competing to the end in basic theory courses?"

"There is a lot of time ahead of us. When we enter a real combat ring, then the amount of credits I will have will be so much that they will absolutely steamroll him. I will definitely suppress him!"

Gu Feixuan stared blankly for a long time before an itching-to-give-it-a-try look emerged in his eyes as he nodded and said:

"You are right. There’s still a very long university life ahead of us, and what’s most important is the combat ring. No matter how good he is at learning theory, he is nothing more than a nerd."

"I am afraid his fighting skills are just as good as his theory. Are you forgetting that he had blown away a 3rd level Refinement Stage cultivator right when he had just awakened his spirit root?!"

Lu Tieshan pursed his lips into a smile as he gently rubbed his fists while looking at Li Yao's name: "Teacher Ding Lingdang indeed has a pretty good eye for people. Fellow Student Li Yao is truly one terrifying monster—he is a worthy rival for me to set my entire fighting spirit ablaze!"

"I truly want to dissect this monster's brain..." Wen Ruorong faintly sighed and said.

...

Li Yao, who was still immersed in the Wasteland Battle Network, was totally oblivious to the fact that the four strongest freshmen of the Hidden Dragon Hall were already treating him as their rival.

Along with the toll of the 24 o'clock bell, he stood at the first position of the Newcomer Ranking, whereupon a thousand glittering diamond crystals, like rain, poured down from the sky and whizzed into his body.

His cumulative credits had now reached 1,207. Although there was still a long way from 40,000 credits, when all is said and done, he had taken the first solid step.

"Bang!"

A sound which was akin to the glass shattering into pieces rang in his ear, following which the Wasteland Battle Network became even clearer as seven or eight translucent regions emerged around him; namely, they were the mission area, trading zone, arena, professional course area, and the open trading zone!

From this moment on, just like the senior students, he could freely choose difficult professional courses, complete various kinds of missions, and even go to the arena to compete with numerous powerhouses. There were now various kinds of ways available for him to madly sweep through the credits!

Seeing all this, Li Yao's eyes were dazzled, and he didn't know from where to start. Licking his lips, just as he was about to take an in-depth look, a message suddenly popped out from the corner of the battle network.

"Teacher has returned? And she also bought a small-scale, second-hand crafting furnace?"

Li Yao was wild with joy. He immediately logged out of the Wasteland Battle Network as he bolted towards a huge edifice at the other end of the ruins right away.

The edifice had hundreds of years of history; it used to be a warehouse for storing dangerous goods, so it was built particularly sturdy. It had a double wall structure, in between which reinforced defensive array glyphs had also been engraved.

Even when the floating mountain had collapsed, it did not shake even the slightest bit.

Li Yao and Yuan Manqiu had long discussed that this huge warehouse would be renovated to the central most important building of the Refining Department—the refining room!

At the center of this empty warehouse stood a towering 3 meter high small-scale crafting furnace. Although it was an antique refining equipment from over a century ago and although its pitch-black appearance was not particularly attractive, at any rate, it could still refine some of the most common magical equipment.

Lying next to the crafting furnace were two lazy Soaring Roars.

Yuan Manqiu was radiating with happiness as she ordered the workers to unload a dozen huge wooden crates before she untied their constraints, whereupon tens of thousands of magical equipment components poured down onto the floor.

These components were all fittings of the crafting furnace. At the moment, the crafting furnace was nothing more than an iron shell. For it to function normally, it had to first be completely assembled before a huge amount of crystals can be used to activate its array glyphs.

"Old Jiang, I have to really thank you. Your Mountain Sea Sect has truly solved my pressing needs by selling this crafting furnace at such a low price!"

Yuan Manqiu expressed her gratitude to a handsome middle-aged refiner via the spiritual crane messenger.

His name was Jiang Wenbo and he was the logistics supervisor of the Mountain Sea Sect as well as a refiner of the grassroots faction.

Just because they were both from the same faction, he had offered a second-hand crafting furnace to the Grand Desolate War Institution at a bargain price.

Jiang Wenbo broke into laughter and said:

"Big Sis, don’t mention it. This crafting furnace has already been in use for 150 years, so not only have the components deformed from age, but its technology can also not keep up with modern technology and is unable to refine the latest powerful equipment. We have already stopped using it for a long time. So if it can help you even a little bit, then it couldn't be any better!"

As Li Yao stepped into the warehouse, he was deeply attracted by the shadow of the crafting furnace.

Although it was just an empty shell and all its components were lying here and there, Li Yao's heart started racing when he thought of the countless peerless equipment he would be able to refine in this guy's stomach. He could not wait to give it a hug.

"This is a 1st generation Tai'e crafting furnace. Although it is over a century old and its performance parameters are relatively low, it is fairly well-maintained and can be used for low-intensity operations without a hitch, which is enough for a beginner like you to refine some of the most common magical equipment!"

Yuan Manqiu enthusiastically said. When she saw the radiating gaze of her disciple and his itching-to-give-it-a-try look, she smiled and knocked on Li Yao's head.

"However, if you want to use this crafting furnace, it is not that simple! At the very least, you have to first learn the basics!"

"You can't run before you learn how to walk; otherwise, you will run your head against a wall!"

"From what I hear, you have gotten yourself the moniker 'God of Sleeping' in the institute, what is this about? Didn't I explain the basic theory courses to you? Why didn't you concentrate on your studies? How many courses did you pass? Five? Ten?"

Yuan Manqiu was tired and exhausted from the trip and all her heart was on the crafting furnace, so she didn't care to check the Newcomer Ranking.

Li Yao swallowed a mouthful of saliva and his gaze never left the crafting furnace as he casually replied, "I scored 207 points."

Yuan Manqiu was stupefied. Her face, which had a completely grim look, bloomed as she vigorously patted Li Yao's shoulder.

"Good, good! The entire institute has tens of thousands of freshmen, yet you have unexpectedly jumped to the 207th position. This is very good. It seems I have underestimated you. I must revise your learning program!"

"Uh, teacher, I'm not in the 207th position. I have earned 207 credits. I am first in the Newcomer Ranking." Li Yao was a bit embarrassed.

"En, good, good... what? What did you say!? You have earned 207 credits? First in the Newcomer Ranking?"

Yuan Manqiu was flabbergasted. Her entire face was like fermenting bread which kept on growing bigger and bigger. She was stunned for a good while before she started up the crystal processor and swept a glance in a flurry.

When she discovered that Li Yao had actually passed 88 courses in one go, including all the basic refining theory courses, she uttered a cry which was even louder and piercing than that of a shrill scream.

"Humm!"

"Humm!"

The two Soaring Roars had been so much scared by her that they were trembling, and the workers on the back of the Soaring Roars, even more so, had been scared to death, causing even a fair share of them to almost fall off. In a hurry, they had grabbed hold of the long hair of the Soaring Roars and were swinging to and fro.

Yuan Manqiu, without even paying attention to these, started running at once.

Seeing this, Li Yao was dumbfounded: "Teacher, where are you going?"

Yuan Manqiu was flushed red to her ears. It seemed as if she was heavily drunk and was dancing with joy as she spoke incoherently:

"I, I am going to look for the Dean! With your achievement, the dean will have to throw us 10% more resources! I will also go find the faculties of the other departments so that they would release some tasks related to refining! There is hope, there is hope for the Refining Department! Yes—!"

When she had run for a couple dozen meters, she came running back with a gust of wind:

"This is the blueprint and the assembling procedure for the 1st Generation Tai'e crafting furnace. First, learn these. The outer ring components are relatively simple, so you can try assembling them. If you don't understand something, just wait till I return. I will teach you then."

Having stuffed a jade chip in Li Yao's arm, Yuan Manqiu, like a sandstorm, ran out of the warehouse and jumped onto a dilapidated flying shuttle before she drove it towards the administrative district.

It was still quite early before dawn and the dean was most definitely asleep in his house; however, how could Yuan Manqiu, with her temper, give much attention to such things? She could not wait to place a voice amplifying glyph in the administrative district and roar:

"My student is first in the entire institute!"

After 10 minutes, the overloaded flying shuttle appeared in the sky over the administrative district accompanied by "creak creak" sounds.

Yuan Manqiu aligned the flying shuttle at the living cottage of Dean Xiong Baili, and just as she was about to go down, her crystal processor started shaking.

The Mountain Sea Sect's logistic supervisor, Jiang Wenbo, had sent her a spiritual crane message, asking for a video chat.

"Big Sis, this is truly embarrassing. I have made a mistake. The jade chip I gave you doesn’t include the blueprints of the 1st Generation ‘Tai'e' crafting furnace."

On one side, Jiang Wenbo bitterly smiled, while on the other, explained.

The 1st Generation Tai'e crafting furnace was truly an antique and its blueprint had long been thrown to god knows where.

Jiang Wenbo had sent a message to the "Empyrean Terminus Sect", which was the original manufacturer of the 1st Generation Tai'e crafting furnace, and asked them to send the blueprint.

This model of crafting furnace had been discontinued for over a century already, so after looking for a long time, the disciple of the Empyrean Terminus Sect had inadvertently sent the blueprints and assembling manual of the "2nd Generation Tai'e" crafting furnace.

Although these two model had the same root and 90% of their components could be used in both cases, some of the core components were completely different and their assembling procedure was also quite different.

The Empyrean Terminus Sect's disciple, after having discovered this problem, immediately notified Jiang Wenbo who then contacted Yuan Manqiu.

"It's alright, I have still yet to start assembling it. I am letting my disciple study it a bit first. By my estimate, with his strength, it will take him a day and a night for him to be finished with the outer components. It is impossible for him to touch the core components!"

Yuan Manqiu jovially laughed and did not place this matter in her heart at all. Aiming at Dean Xiong Baili's villa, she fiercely plunged down.

"Dean, quickly wake up! I have good news, I have very good news!"

TLN:

Hi guys,

I just came across an information as I was translating this chapter. I was looking to find some alternate for the name when I came across it. Although it is completely unrelated, this shed some light on where the name of the furnace comes from.

This is a information I got from wiki:-

Ou Yezi was a legendary master of sword-making in the Spring and Autumn period. According to Yuejueshu, he forged five treasured swords for Gan Jiang and King Zhao of Chu, named, respectively, Zhanlu (), Juque (), Shengxie (), Yuchang () and Chunjun (). He also made three swords for King Goujian of Yue, named Longyuan (), Tai’e () and Gongbu ().

So Tai’e names is derived from here. That’s my take.

Chapter 146: Super Perceptive State!

“Thanks for your hard work everyone, I will take it from here. You can go back early and rest!”

After sending the porters away, Li Yao prepared common assembling tools and also brought a vat of ice cold water and an ice maker.

An ice maker was an equipment which bore mini freezing array glyphs inside, which could continue to provide ice cubes in a steady stream as long as it was connected to a water pipe.

“Splash…”

Li Yao plunged his head into the water bucket which had ice cubes floating inside, whereupon the ice cold water completely cooled down his burning hot brain.

Following that, he first took a look at the yellow jade chip with a gaze that was much like that of a little boy who had found his favorite toy. Then, he affectionately stared at the 1st Generation Tai’e furnace.

In his eyes, the pitch-black furnace had turned into a charming and elegant, young girl who had lowered her head as a shy look completely covered her face.

One which made him so horny that his blood vessels expanded energetically. He could not wait to immediately push “her” down and savor “her” most secretive and charming places to his heart’s content.

Li Yao’s heart was astir; he was truly unable to withhold the agitation and excitement in his heart.

Ever since childhood, he had only repaired magical equipment which had been crafted by others. No matter how quick and nimble his hands were, he was just dancing on the floors that were set by others.

But now that he had this crafting furnace, even though it was second-hand, even if its performance was far from the current era’s, even if a majority of its core components were worn out…

At least he could craft magical equipment in accordance with his own will!

“After painstakingly studying the basic theories of all three schools for half a year, whether it is the grassroots faction, the elite faction, or the classical school from forty millenniums ago, I have them deeply engraved in my brain.”

“The＜Thirteen Ancient Sword Blueprints＞, all the more so, had been tossed and turned by me to the point that I have thoroughly memorized it. The crafting procedures of every ancient sword are known to me by heart!”

“Although these ancient swords’ performance is far below that of today’s, many of the refining principles used are very common. I can collect the blueprints and refining procedures of some of the modern flying swords and refine a unique flying sword—my very own flying sword by combining the two!”

“But first of all, I must assemble this furnace. Only with a powerful crafting furnace will I be able to craft a matchless magical equipment!”

Holding the ice-cold water in his hands, Li Yao washed his face. He still felt that it was not enough to satisfy him, so he simply grabbed two ice cubes and stuffed them into his mouth, making “crunch crunch” noises as he chewed them into pieces.

Afterward, he inserted the jade chip into the mini crystal processor.

His mini crystal processor was connected with the huge crystal processor that was about a kilometer away via telepathic thoughts transmissions. Its computing power was far more than any ordinary, mini crystal processor, ranging to a couple dozen times.

“Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, whoosh!”

Like exploding stars, over a hundred translucent golden blueprints appeared above his head in the blink of an eye before gradually starting to revolve around him.

And as his gaze focused on a blueprint, the blueprint continued to enlarge as it turned into a 3-dimensional blueprint.

Everything was down to the minute details, and even the component’s length, width, height, and the material’s tensile strength were marked clearly. The amount of information contained was as vast as the sea; it simply could not be measured.

“Such a huge amount of telepathic thoughts! Each blueprint contains tens of thousands or perhaps even hundreds of thousands of thoughts. If I had not painstakingly studied in the Heavenly Refining Tower for so long, let alone assembling it, I'm afraid I would feel dizzy just by taking a glance at it. I would be unable to stand!"

Li Yao had never imagined that an antique furnace from a century ago would have such an intrinsic structure. Li Yao exclaimed to his heart's content before he started studying with all his concentration.

"Lub dub… lub dub… lub… dub…"

Along with the passage of each minute and second, his pupils suddenly started shaking slightly as they expanded towards the outside bit by bit while his heartbeat became slower and slower.

No, it was not his heartbeat that was getting slower; on the contrary, his brain cell activity was constantly increasing and his thought process was getting sharper and sharper. Meanwhile, the pulse of various organs in his body could not keep up with his thoughts!

"I've entered the super perceptive state!" The corners of Li Yao's eyes twitched.

These were the after effects of using the Super Perception Cabin so frequently and for extended periods of time.

The Super Perception Cabin seemed to be an extremely wonderful magical equipment, but soon after it was created, they found out that it had serious flaws and out-and-out had little value.

As far as Refinement Stage and Building Foundation Stage cultivators were concerned, their soul wasn't strong enough, so they were unable to enter the super perceptive state where their brain cell activity was 300% for a long period of time. At most, they could stay for half an hour before they had Qigong deviation.

And as far as Golden Core Stage powerhouses and Nascent Soul Stage old monsters were concerned, their brain had already reached the point where everything followed according to their single thought. They had hundreds of mystical abilities through which they could stimulate their brain to secrete hormones and enter the “super perceptive state” at any time, so why would they ever need to use some Super Perception Cabin!?

Therefore, after a couple thousand of this magical equipment, which had little value, had been manufactured, they had been completely forsaken. Only at the most prestigious universities in the country, like the Grand Desolate War Institution, could these equipment be found. As for ordinary cultivation sects, they had already stopped using it.

Even at the Grand Desolate War Institution, ordinary students would occasionally use it for half an hour.

Never had there been someone like Li Yao who would use it for a dozen hours.

Therefore, nobody, not even the sect that had created the Super Perception Cabin, had imagined that using the Super Perception Cabin for a long time would actually bring about such strange after effects.

Li Yao had inadvertently discovered that in his day-to-day life, as long as he particularly concentrated and completely immersed himself in something for more than 10 minutes, his brain cell activity would unwittingly increase. In other words, even without the help of the Super Perception Cabin, he could still enter the “super perceptive state”!

However, this was not necessarily a good thing.

In his day-to-day life, it was impossible for him to seek refuge in the depths of Ou Yezi’s memories all the time. He needed to resist the various side effects of the super perceptive state on his own.

This kind of feeling where he felt that someone was prying open the top of his head and pouring scalding hot oil into it was no joke.

And even more so, under the super perceptive state, only his brain cell had been over activated. Meanwhile, there were no changes to his body, which gave birth to a serious dissonance between his brain and his body.

The brain was issuing instructions like crazy, but his body was too lazy to keep up with them; his nerve endings were completely ignoring his brain’s thunderous shouts.

For several days, he would stumble on the road. He was living the life of a child who was crippled.

After adapting for half a month, he could barely control himself so that he won’t enter the super perception state easily.

Even if he inadvertently activated the super perceptive state, he could only maintain 150% brain cell activity

And even so, he could only hold on for five minutes, after which he would have to forcibly terminate this state.

And afterward, he would have to take rest for at least three hours. Only after letting his brain “cool down” for a long time could he once again enter the super perceptive state.

And once he let things take their own course and let his brain cell activity explode to its limit, 331%, perhaps he could not even hold on for a minute.

“Whatever. Since I have entered the super perceptive state, I should take advantage of these five minutes to see everything clearly!”

Li Yao rubbed two ice cubes on his temple, and as he lightly rubbed, the burning sensation in his brain subsided a little.

One by one, a starry brilliance shone in the depths of his eyes.

Each starry brilliance represented the panoramic view of a blueprint.

Because his brain cells were overactive, without him knowing, his face was as if he was burning with a fever and was blood-red.

The two hard ice cubes quickly melted away. Meanwhile, the ice water had yet to roll down from his cheeks before it evaporated, producing a light-gray steam around his head.

After five minutes.

“Dammit, I have reached the limit!”

Li Yao’s entire face was convulsing as he jumped to the water vat nearby with a growl and ruthlessly plunged his head into it.

“Hisss—”

It made an ear-piercing whizz, one that was as if a piece of burning red coal had been thrown into a water bucket. A large number of the ice cubes that were floating in the water melted away, giving rise to a large amount of steam.

Using the biting cold from the ice cold water, Li Yao forcibly terminated the super perceptive state.

“This is too exciting!”

“Super perception state of 150% brain cell activity is truly exciting!”

“It seems that I have to continuously train with madness. If I am able to someday stimulate the brain cell activity to 331%—the limit of super perception state—at any time, then even if it is just for 3-5 minutes, wouldn’t that mean I can go head-to-head with Golden Core Stage powerhouses and Nascent Soul Stage old monsters?”

Chewing the ice cubes, Li Yao let loose his imagination.

“There is still a long way to go. Anyway, the most important part is to first assemble this furnace so that I can craft some peerless equipment and sell them for as many credits as possible and collect 40,000 credits as soon as possible!”

Having remained in the super perception state for five minutes, Li Yao had a complete panoramic view of all the blueprints and assembling procedures.

As he narrowed his eyes a bit, his computation ability soared to the limit!

No doubt, this was the moment of truth for the results of painstakingly studying in the Heavenly Refining Tower for half a year. Li Yao's eyes frantically started rotating.

In the depths of his brain, over a hundred 3-dimensional blueprints collided with each other; it was as if over a hundred glass houses collided with each other and smashed into pieces before they once again formed a new and towering building of crystal!

The structure and the assembling process of the 1st generation Tai'e crafting furnace had been completely grasped by Li Yao!

"Let's start!"

Li Yao's eyes flickered with a sharp gleam as he exerted strength into both his legs, causing his calf to swell to double its original size. In an instant, he leaped into the air, rotated, and ruthlessly smashed into the grounds. Meanwhile, as though they were scimitars, the thumbs from both his hands had been drawn out.

Relying on his two thumbs, he firmly stood upside down.

"Snap!"

With the flip of his two thumbs, he, while "upside down", leaped into the air before he once again landed on the ground; however, this time, his body was supported by his index fingers.

Next, it was the middle fingers, the ring fingers, and finally the little fingers.

"Warm up is finished!"

In this way, he could stimulate the potential of his 10 fingers in the shortest amount of time. This was the most secretive technique among the＜Thousands Fingers Supple Bone Exercise＞, which was used by ancient thieves to train their fingers.

“Snap, snap, snap snap!”

Li Yao freely moved his 10 fingers a bit. His ten fingers seemed to have no bones; sometimes his fingers were as short as though they had only one phalange, while other times, they would fiercely shoot out like knives and emit grating howls as they pierced through the wind.

“Let’s see… which unit is it gonna be?”

Each stack of magical equipment components represented a complete unit. When each and every unit had been completely assembled and connected to the furnace with the crystal tubes, then the assembling would be completely finished.

With a flash, Li Yao appeared in the front of a heap of components on the west side.

These components could be assembled into a high-temperature heater which had flame array glyphs engraved inside. Through this unit, the furnace could be heated to 3000 degrees in the blink of an eye, which was enough to melt and refine a vast majority of heaven and earth treasures.

“Let’s start with you!”

The outer ring of Li Yao’s pupil seemed to be surrounded by a golden ring; it was the ring which was created when over a hundred star-like blueprints gathered together in the depths of his eyes. In the blink of an eye, both his hands turned almost invisible as two groups of ash-gray fog appeared, enveloping thousands of magical equipment components.

TLN:

Sorry for the unexpected delay, I was out for a checkup, which resulted in delayed translation and hence delayed editing. Sorry about that, another chapter will be added along with monday’s chapter. Thank you for your patience.

Chapter 147: The Miraculous Moment

Chapter 147: The Miraculous Moment

"Crack Crack!"

Over this past month, Li Yao had been unearthing the treasures buried in the rubble with fanaticism. His maintenance ability was way stronger than that of the past when he was in the magical equipment graveyard, and his hand speed for doing high-intensity maintenance work had also soared to an inconceivable level!

Not to mention the fact that he was now a 3rd level Refinement Stage cultivator, so in addition to his hands, there were also ten spirit threads which he could mobilize as he wished with a moment’s thought.

"Whoosh!"

Ten spirit threads stretched out from his forehead and spread to each and every direction, each of which wrapped around a rivet respectively and hurled them into the storm set off by his hands.

Generally, a 3rd level Refinement Stage cultivator was still a low-level cultivator, thus the strength of his spirit threads was very low and they were unable to move objects.

However, as Li Yao had been constantly training his spirit threads with the Black Wing Sword's, they had become longer, thicker, and sturdier.

Although they were still unable to do heavy lifting, moving some small components and rivets was quite easy.

Not to mention that apart from him, he also had the help of the Black Wing Sword, this monstrous magical equipment!

"Little Black, find me a few No.7 rivets please!"

On one side, Li Yao was assembling, while on the other, he was shouting.

Following that, ten black spirit threads charged out from the Black Wing Sword, who was hovering in the air. The spirit threads were like dancing tentacles which plunged into the messy stack of components at a lightning fast speed and accurately found the components Li Yao required.

If there was an ordinary person standing next to them watching with his naked eyes at this moment, he would see a dream-like scene—both of Li Yao’s hands had turned into two tornadoes as many small components were as though they were being sucked in by some magic, causing them to make a headlong rush into the storm!

After half an hour—

"It's done!"

The scattered magical equipment components on the ground had disappeared, and what replaced them was an octagonal, diamond-shaped unit. Li Yao's eyes seemed to radiate with a hungry look, radiating an enchanting gleam.

Li Yao had no time to appreciate, as his pair of hands were bright red as blood; it was as though he had just finished tempering them in flames.

He immediately plunged his hands into the vat of water.

"Hiss—"

Steam immediately rose from the ice-cold water.

Li Yao felt that even his bone marrow was burning and not even the ice cold water was able to quell its burning. Having added a crystal into the ice maker and activated the freezing array glyphs to the limit, he stuffed both his hands inside.

"Humm..."

The ice maker started shaking madly. Very quickly, a layer of frost condensed on Li Yao's hands, which was then immediately melted by the heat rising from the depths of his hand.

Only after repeatedly condensing and melting again and again for 4-5 times did Li Yao finally heave a long sigh of relief.

Despite his body being extremely exhausted, especially his hands, which had reached the point where each and every strand of muscle was torn...

His soul was excited to the limit and it seemed as if True Samadhi Fire was about to shoot out from his eyes!

"Next is... the cooler!"

In the refining process, many magical equipment required the temperature to be dropped from thousands of degrees to zero in the blink of an eye so that it could make the internal constituents crystallize and allow the equipment to withstand the powerful impact of the array glyphs.

Therefore, the cooler was also crucial and it very well defined the quality of a crafting furnace.

Gathering all ten fingers together, Li Yao brought them to his mouth and blew air upon them before he began the second round of crazy assembling!

For the next four hours, Li Yao didn't take a break for even a second and had even evaporated two tanks of ice-cold water for cooling.

Before the advent of dawn, he had finally completed all the assembling of the eight units!

The heater, cooler, compressor, anti-gravity unit, lightning unit... Eight units, like stars surrounding the moon, fanned out around the furnace.

Li Yao's pair of eyes had turned crimson as blood tears were quickly flowing out from the corners of his eyes.

Li Yao, however, was completely oblivious to it. Scooping out ice-cold water, he poured it on his head.

"Calm down, I have to calm down. I am only finished with the eight units. What comes next is the crucial most part. I have to use the core components to connect these eight units and integrate them with the main furnace!"

"This is the most important step. Whether the furnace can unleash 100% of its ability depends on this step!"

Li Yao took a long, deep breath as he scooped out a couple dozen ice cubes using the ladle and poured it over his head while he began analyzing the core components.

"What?"

Li Yao blinked his eyes as a sliver of a perplexed look appeared in the depth of his eyes.

"There is something wrong here! Why are these core components inconsistent with that in the blueprints?"

Still believing it to be his mistake, Li Yao placed all the core components separately and once again carefully examined the blueprints. Even after looking for a long while, he was still confused.

"Clearly, the components marked in the blueprint are more advanced and more sophisticated."

"And the components before me are comparatively crude and backward. Although they both have quite the similar refining style, they are simply not the same set of components."

Supporting his cheek with his palm, Li Yao pondered for a while. Meanwhile, the ice cubes that were poured on his head had completely melted, and the resulting water trickled down his cheeks and dripped onto the floor, making "drip drip drip" sounds.

"I understand! This furnace had an accident sometime in the past, and as a result, its core components were damaged. Therefore, to make do, they had improvised and imitated these components. That's why they are far worse than that in the blueprints."

Li Yao lightly smacked his forehead.

'This is troublesome. The components do not match the blueprints, making the assembling procedures completely insignificant. What to do now?'

'Shall I wait for teacher to return?'

Li Yao dismissed this notion at the very first moment it appeared in his mind.

What a joke! Li Yao was someone who would slaughter God if he encountered God, kill Buddha if he encountered Buddha on the road of assembling this furnace. Not to mention the fact of how happy and delighted he was when he first laid his eyes upon it.

It was like he had lured a girl onto the bed and even stripped off her pants. How could he stop abruptly at this moment?

How could that be possible?!

"Since the arrow is already fitted to the bowstring, it must be released. If I don't have the blueprints, then I will draw my own. If I don't have the assembling procedures, then I will deduce them myself!"

Firming his heart, Li Yao pulled out the jade chip from the mini crystal processor and threw it on one side before he launched a blank blueprint template. His thoughts moved at a lightning fast speed as he drew all the core components into the empty template via telepathic thoughts transmission.

It looked a little like a 3-dimensional jigsaw puzzle, where one could see thousands of pieces coming in contact with each other as they tried to draw a perfect 3-dimensional diagram. One could only imagine how hard it was!

Fortunately, Li Yao still had a secret trick up his sleeve.

"The three hours cool down period is already over. I can once again enter the super perceptive state!"

Li Yao pursed his lips into a smile. As he concentrated with all his heart, his temples once again madly started twitching, seemingly as if an inexhaustible amount of thoughts were stimulated as they clashed and spilled out from the depths of his brain!

After half an hour, during which god knows how many times he had poured ice-cold water over his head, a new translucent blueprint finally appeared in the hologram.

Li Yao was feeling dizzy and cold sweat broke out all over his body. He could barely move his lips as he somehow drew a smile that was even more miserable than when one was crying before a deep frown appeared over his glabella.

"This is still wrong!"

"There should not be any problems with this blueprint, and I have even deduced the subsequent assembling process. But the problem is..."

"If this blueprint is correct, then after I have assembled the furnace, the performance will be far less than what is demonstrated by the original blueprint!"

"If the true 1st Gen Tai'e crafting furnace can give a performance of 70 points, then this makeshift thing could give at most 40 points!"

"This won't do! Its performance is far worse."

"The 1st Gen Tai'e furnace was already an antique from a century ago, and now after these improvisations, its various performance parameters are rotten to the core. How am I supposed to refine some matchless masterworks?"

Li Yao quickly did some calculations.

In accordance with the blueprints that were given by Yuan Manqiu, the 1st Gen Tai'e crafting furnace could reach a temperature of 3,000 degrees in under a minute, and its limit temperature was 4,100 degrees!

Whereas in accordance with blueprints drawn by him, using these dilapidated components, it could only reach a temperature of 2,400 degrees in under 2 minutes, while its limit temperature was 2,900 degrees!

A temperature of 2,900 degrees was unable to melt even the cores of many demon beasts!

"This is not the crafting furnace I want! I have to modify it! But even a clever housewife can not cook a meal without rice. I don't have sturdier components which will increase the performance, so how am I going to improve it?"

Having pondered for a while, a spark suddenly flashed in Li Yao's eyes, illuminating his forehead.

"I do have them!"

"The Refining Department used to have a dozen crafting furnaces. Although they had been destroyed in the explosion, their wreckage is still buried under the rubble, all of which had been retrieved by me!"

"The oldest of these crafting furnace dates back to a century ago, and some of them are the latest model from a decade ago whose performance is unimaginably higher than that of the 1st Gen Tai'e furnace!"

"Although they have become a wreck, they still have many usable components which can be removed and installed on 1st Gen Tai'e. In that case, would I not be able to assemble an..."

"Unparalleled Super Modified 1st Gen Tai'e Crafting Furnace!?"

Li Yao, without even taking a breath of respite, immediately charged towards the warehouse where he had stored the wrecked crafting furnaces.

While running, he was quickly doing calculations in his brain, figuring out which components of the wreckage could be disassembled and fitted into the 1st Gen Tai'e crafting furnace.

Over this past month, these wrecked crafting furnaces had been tossed about by him many times for research, so he clearly knew everything about them down to the minute details. He simply didn't need to think; translucent diagrams of components jumped out from the depths of his brain one after another.

When he finally arrived at the warehouse where the wrecked crafting furnaces were stored, four to five kinds of modifying plans had already appeared in his mind.

The overall performance of 1st Gen Tai'e furnace had been improved to 130%.

If he chose the most radical, most difficult, and riskiest plan, it was possible to increase the overall performance to 210%!

"Whooossssh!"

Li Yao, like a mad devil, charged into the warehouse.

A crafting furnace itself weighed a few tons or a couple dozen tons and some could even weigh over a hundred tons. Even if they had been wrecked, they were still exceptionally heavy; it was impossible for Li Yao to tow all the wreckage.

He simply dismantled them, removing the components he required, and used a forklift truck for towing them away.

The forklift truck was originally a manned equipment, but as its performance was quite low, it was simply unable to move while carrying such heavy magical equipment components.

Li Yao found a few thick iron cables and asked the Black Wing Sword to pull hard from the front.

How could the Black Wing Sword be willing to do work? It jumped three feet into the air in anger. Li Yao showered him with praises and promised that in the future, he would help it oil three times a day and give it a high purity crystal for it to engulf. Only in this way was he able to barely make it work like a horse.

After an hour, large piles of variegated components of different shapes and sizes were scattered around the 1st Gen Tai'e crafting furnace.

"Next... is the time to witness the miracle!"

Chapter 148: Professors, Please Give Me Some Pointers!

Chapter 148: Professors, Please Give Me Some Pointers!

The Grand Desolate War Institution had a dozen crafting furnace that had been purchased from different sects and clans in different periods, a couple of which were even self-created. Thus, whether it was the style or the spiritual energy operating principle, everything was vastly different.

However, since the founding of the Star Glory Federation, in order to meet the requirements of large-scale battles, every cultivation sect had always followed the "MECS(Magical Equipment Components Standard)" system.

With regards to basic components such as rivets, screws, gears, bearings, and so on and so forth, every sect didn't need to implement their own and everyone utilized a uniform standard.

As for the core components, their interface and specification were also identical to the greatest extent so as to ensure perfect compatibility.

The magical equipment of X sect could engrave the array glyphs of Y sect and use the crystals purified by the Z sect to run; only in such a way could the cultivation world exploit its potential during the war, thereby winning the battle of survival for the human race against the demon clan!

"Which plan should I use? Safe or radical?"

After hesitating for three seconds, Li Yao firmed his heart.

"Either don't fight or fight to the end!"

"The radical plan it is! Using the advanced magical equipment components, I will strive for ultimate performance!"

The idea was good, but when he started implementing in reality, he encountered a variety of unexpected difficulties.

Some of which was due to lack of theoretical research, some due to inexperience in modifying magical equipment, and most of which was due to a lack of rich spiritual energy, thereby making Li Yao unable to engrave profound and complex powerful array glyphs onto them.

Several times, Li Yao thought of giving up and thought of switching to a safe modifying plan.

But when he imagined the 40,000 credits waiting ahead of him, he clenched his teeth and persevered!

If he encountered a problem which he was unable to solve using grassroots theories, then he would try the elite theories and the classical ways.

If he encountered powerful array glyphs which he was unable to engrave, then he would engrave seven or eight identical, low-level array glyphs and connect them in series.

If he encountered a conflict between two units which he was unable to resolve, he would add 17-18 plug-in units with stabilizing array glyphs, and then in these stabilizing plug-in units, he would once again add four to five stabilizing plugin units, like patches upon patches, to provide layers upon layers of reinforcement.

After three hours, when he was finished assembling the furnace, it was completely beyond recognition. It gave off the appearance of a monster which had been "transformed by a devil".

Around the main pitch-black furnace, there was a chaotic mess of hundreds of thick crystal cables connected to twelve units that were improvised using rivets, gears, stabilizing array glyphs, and other components.

For Li Yao, the original eight units were simply not powerful enough, thus he forcibly added four powerful units that he had dismantled from the wrecked furnaces.

At first glance, the crafting furnace looked as though it had just been wrecked by a Nascent Soul Stage old devil; it was completely a pile of scrap.

However, as far as Li Yao was concerned, the more he looked, the more he liked it and the more he found it perfect. He rushed to take out a turtle shell-like equipment at once.

This was a Shock Wave Oscilloscope, which could produce a unique spiritual wave specifically designed to analyze large-scale magical equipment consisting of multiple units and check whether it was properly installed.

If it was perfectly installed, the flow of spiritual energy between the various units would be very smooth, and as a result, the spiritual wave after circulating around all the units would again return back to the Shock Wave Oscilloscope whereupon a green light would light up.

Once the green light was lit, it meant that the equipment had been successfully installed and could be put to use as long as the anchoring and sealing array glyphs were engraved.

If there was some mistake, then the spiritual wave would explode and the magical equipment would scatter from the shock; however, it would not destroy the components, allowing the refiner to assemble it a second time.

"For heaven's sake, please be successful!"

Li Yao mumbled some words. His eyes were wide open as he started the Show Wave Oscilloscope.

…

Yuan Manqiu was in an exceptionally good mood.

After using hard and soft tactics for the whole night at the dean's residence, she was finally able to obtain an extra 5% of resources.

Although it did not seem to be much, don't forget that the original budget was arranged for hundreds of professors and students to use. Currently, the Refining Department was only left with one student, Li Yao, so an extra 5% resource was enough to fatten him.

Afterward, she once again sought out a few familiar professors and inquired about Li Yao's performance over this past month in a roundabout manner. The more she inquired, the more she found that he was unfathomable and had great potential that could be developed.

At the beginning, she was ready to return to the Refining Department at first light; however, she suddenly changed her mind.

The 1st Gen Tai'e furnace was a magical equipment from a century ago. One could say that its structure was complex yet not complex, simple yet not simple. It could be considered as a unique test to assess Li Yao's practical ability. She wanted to see when Li Yao would be actually able to discover that the core components were inconsistent with the blueprints.

After having unexpectedly waited for a long time, she still didn't receive Li Yao's message even by noon.

"Has he still not found the mistake?"

Yuan Manqiu couldn’t sit still. Moving her fat ass, she walked towards the refining room.

While walking, she was having a conversation with Jiang Wenbo, the logistics supervisor of the Mountain Sea Sect, via the spiritual crane messenger while the latter was sending the correct blueprints of the 1st Gen Tai'e furnace.

"Big Sis, the 1st Gen Tai'e furnace is too old. The technology used by many of the assembling processes are from 100 years ago. There are several arrays which are outdated and are out of use. Let alone studying them, the youths of today would have never laid their eyes upon them, and yet you have taken these things to test your disciple, isn't this simply too much?" Jiang Wenbo complacently said.

Yuan Manqiu slightly smiled:

"For ordinary people, I suppose it is too much, but my disciple is marvelous and I have high hopes for him. How about we make a bet? I bet that he has at least completely assembled five units."

Jiang Wenbo thought otherwise:

"Big Sis, you are too confident. No matter how monstrously talented he is, he is still a freshman. Three—he has completed at most three units!"

Yuan Manqiu nodded: "Alright, the refining room is just ahead. We will know the answer soon enough. As for the bet, that is—"

"BOOM!"

A loud noise interrupted her.

Yuan Manqiu and Jiang Wenbo were flabbergasted at the same time.

The two were veteran refiners, so naturally, just from the noise, they had recognized that it was noise made by the Shock Wave Oscilloscope.

"What the hell is he doing? Has that brat actually assembled the entire furnace? Is that why he’s using the Shock Wave Oscilloscope?"

"However, it seems he failed?"

"Even if he failed, he still might be a monstrous genius! Even without the correct blueprints and assembling procedures, he had still assembled it, which was just like a blind man riding a horse. Even if he assembled it incorrectly, it doesn’t matter!"

Yuan Manqiu and Jiang Wenbo took a glance at each other before she sped up her footsteps.

The warehouse was a total mess; the furnace had completely collapsed and was rolling over at the corner of a wall, whereas thousands upon thousands of magical equipment components were scattered all over the floor, giving off the impression as though two tornadoes had passed through here.

Li Yao, who was sitting in a corner, had a lifeless look hanging over his face:

"How could it fail? It should be perfectly connected, why was the spiritual energy blocked?"

Jiang Wenbo was tremendously surprised:

"Big Sis, you have an incredible disciple. He had actually assembled the entire furnace. However, since he had used the wrong blueprints, he had naturally failed!"

Yuan Manqiu was also very excited. She knew she had picked up a treasure.

So what he failed? If it was anyone else, they would have far worse practical ability than him and might not even have the qualifications to fail, as they could not even assemble the equipment from the start!

"Li Yao, did you just assemble the furnace and then use Shock Wave Oscilloscope to check it?"

Yuan Manqiu asked in a shaky voice.

Li Yao desolately replied, "Yes, teacher. I thought I had assembled it perfectly and had analyzed every connection completely, and every detail was simply perfect, but in the end, I still failed!"

Li Yao heaved a deep sigh as he dispiritedly said, "The world of magical equipment is truly mysterious—too abstruse, too wonderful. I still have many things to learn. I should not have overestimated myself!"

"It's alright, it's completely alright!"

Yuan Manqiu was wild with joy: "The 1st Gen Tai'e furnace was created over a century ago, and there are several difficulties in its assembling processes. They are out your ability, so it is very normal for you to fail. Don't be disappointed. In my opinion, you are already very strong!"

She sat down next to Li Yao and patted her disciple's shoulder: "Come, tell me about your assembling process from start to finish. Old Jiang and I will check them a bit. Right, this is Professor Jiang Wenbo. He is a veteran refiner with rich experience."

"Good afternoon, Professor Jiang!" Mustering up his spirit, Li Yao gave a bow at the holographic screen.

"It's alright, there is no need to be overly courteous. When Big Sis told me you were a genius, I didn't believe it, but now, seeing that you can even assemble the 1st Gen Tai'e furnace, even I’m inclined to believe. Come, young man, tell me how you really assemble it!"

Jiang Wenbo was also excited.

"Alright!"

A frown appeared on Li Yao's glabella as he recalled and honestly started narrating, "At the beginning, everything was going without a hitch. After I had assembled the eight units in four hours..."

"What!?"

Jiang Wenbo could not help but interrupt him: "You only spent four hours to assemble the eight units? Oh! Keep on going!"

Li Yao was surprised for a moment when he noticed the complexion of the two, which was a little weird, seemingly as if he had done something extraordinary, but after sorting out his thoughts: "When I was assembling the core components, I found that the core components were inconsistent with the blueprints, so I threw the blueprints on one side and drew the blueprints according to the actual structure. Afterward, I deduced the assembling procedures..."

"What!?"

This time, it was Yuan Manqiu who shouted. "You drew the blueprints according to these components and also deduced the assembling processes? Quickly, quickly show me the blueprints you have drawn!"

Li Yao suspiciously swept a glance at the two as he muttered in his heart: 'These two are veteran refiners, so how can they be shocked at everything and interrupt me at every sentence?'

From the crystal processor, he launched the blueprints that he had drawn as well as the assembling processed that he had deduced and presented them to the two veteran refiners.

The two swept a glance and drew in a lump of cold air at the same time.

On the way, the two had already studied the blueprints of 1st Gen Tai'e furnace for a long time and had thoroughly etched the most crucial parts into their mind. At first glance, they knew that the blueprints drawn by Li Yao were completely correct, and the assembling processes were also roughly identical!

"T-this is simply..."

Jiang Wenbo was a little muddle-headed. His lips shook for a long time, but he could not speak another word.

A freshman who had just entered university, who was still a high-school student a couple months back, much to his surprise, had drawn the blueprints from scratch just by relying on some scattered components, and he had even deduced the assembling processes!

'Did this brat start learning to assemble magical equipment from the womb?'

Yuan Manqiu, even more so, was excited to the point that she was trembling. Every strand of her facial muscles was moving up and down. Raising her eyebrows, she screamed, "What's going on!? Since you have drawn the blueprints and even deduced the assembling processes, how can you fail? Quick, quick, quick, tell me what did you next, do not miss any details!"

"Next I..."

Li Yao cleared his throat: "I analyzed the blueprints a bit and discovered that the subsequently assembled furnace will have poor performance, so I thought of modifying it."

"I had a thermostat chip from a 7th Gen Redglow crafting furnace, a spirit suppressor from a 5th Gen Profound Truth crafting furnace, as well as a quite intact anti-gravity unit from a Sapphirinus crafting furnace, also..."

He reported tongue-twister-like names of over hundred kinds of components, then he brought up a couple dozen blueprints on the hologram.

"Using these components, I developed five sets of modifying plans, all of which are here. Professors, please take a look."

"In fact, if I assembled it using the most secure plan, I might have succeeded. Everything is my fault. I was too impatient, too proud. I thought light of magical equipment and chose the most radical plan."

"I think that the difficulty of the radical plan mainly lies in engraving the stabilizing array glyphs."

"I am unable to engrave powerful, high-level stabilizing array glyphs with my current strength, so in the end, I thought of a way, a secret method which I had inadvertently found in ancient records. Using this method, I superimposed several low-level stabilizing array glyphs. Professors, please take a look. The spiritual energy operating principle of the superimposed array glyphs is like this..."

"Afterward, by using two crystal bypass switches created using elite faction ideology, you can change its spiritual energy intertwining mode to simulate the effect of high-level stabilizing array glyphs."

"In accordance with this idea, the final completed blueprint is this and spiritual energy flow chart is this... professors, please take a look. Here, here and here, these are the most important parts which I had reinforced. In theory, I should not have failed!"

"I have wracked my brain but still could not understand. Professors, please give me pointers, tell me where the problem actually lies."

For a whole ten minutes, Li Yao explained. Only after he finished did he eagerly stare at the two veteran refiners.

Yuan Manqiu and Jiang Wenbo were both dumbstruck. They directly stared at the couple dozen ever-dancing blueprints and spiritual energy flow charts in the air.

Fierce-looking diagrams of all shapes and sizes repeatedly exploded in the depths of the two's brain. The two veteran refiners' brains were completely fried!

Chapter 149: Young Man, I Have High Hopes For You!

Dizziness!

Suprise!

Unimaginable!

The two felt as though tens of thousands of iron scaled horses were galloping in their minds. Boom Boom Boom Boom! A thunderstorm was surging in the depths of their mind—they had completely lost the ability to think!

Both were experts who had been in the refiners’ circle for a couple of decades. Yuan Manqiu, even more so, used to be a student of the Deep Sea University’s Refining Department and had received the most rigorous and orthodox academic training, so what kind of strange things had they not seen? What kind of monstrous geniuses had they not encountered?

However, when it came to a freak like Li Yao, let alone seeing one, the two have never even heard of one!

Even more so, his lightning fast assembling speed, as well as the fact that he had drawn a complete blueprint from scratch just by relying on disassembled components while simultaneously deducing the assembling procedures and developing a few modifying plans…

In the opinion of these two veteran refiners, just the “safest” modifying plan was already radical to the extreme.

And the so called “radical” set, in their opinion, was simply… ‘perverse’!

The 1st Gen Tai’e furnace was an antique equipment from a century ago, while the crafting furnaces at the Grand Desolation War Institution’s Refining Department were rather advanced and new, thus the performance of their various components was extremely good.

Using such resilient components to modify the 1st Gen Tai’e furnace was like asking a couple dozen Nascent Soul Stage old devils to control a magical equipment which was specially designed for arming a Refinement Stage cultivator. How difficult it was to implement such ideas was just one of the thing; the main point was—the concept.

Besides an extremely insane madman, no one would even think of doing such a thing!

And not only had Li Yao thought about it, he had even done it. Furthermore, everything was nice and authentic, and looking at those modified blueprints and spiritual energy flow charts drawn by him, at least 95% of the structure had no problems and could work flawlessly!

“Is this kid really a freshman that’s not even 20 years old?”

Yuan Manqiu and Jiang Wenbo glanced at each other and found that both their eyes were madly flickering like frightening billows and terrifying waves.

Yuan Manqiu took a long, long, long, long, deep breath and was doing her utmost to control her ugly and grim-looking face as she said while pointing at the spiritual energy flow chart:

“Your idea is very creative; however, according to this flow chart, your heater and cooler are too close. The water type spiritual energy and fire type spiritual energy surging out from the respective units will be amplified via the same spiritual energy amplifier, due to which the alternating hot and cold will lead to thermal expansion and contraction. Will it not lead to structural deformation!?”

“Probably not.”

Li Yao was completely oblivious to the astonishing changes that had taken place on the two professors’ visage, as his mind was completely preoccupied with the modification of the crafting furnace as he said whatever came to mind: “The thermal expansion and contraction has been a big problem for many refiners throughout the ages. Many magical equipment, in the process of starting up, have to go through sudden heating and cooling. Once the thermal expansion and contraction sets in, the deformation of components is a matter of time and may lead to dissipation of spiritual energy, resulting in unnecessary waste, or in the worst case, leading to a spiritual energy tide, which would eventually lead to an explosion.”

“Specialized magical equipment like the main body of crafting furnace, which had been crafted using special material and undergone tempering again and again, remain unaffected by extremely varying temperature.”

“However, as early as the ancient cultivation world of forty millenniums ago, the head of Blue Dawn Clan’s Western Mountain Hall, Elder Xihua, proposed a Fire and Water Sub-Source Array Glyph which could perfectly resolve the problem of thermal expansion and contraction.”

“But at that time, as the various spiritual energy models and algorithms were extremely backward, the Fire and Water Sub-Source only remained at the theoretical stage.”

“It was only during the modern cultivation world when various spiritual energy models and algorithms emerged in an endless stream was it possible to construct a Fire and Water Sub-Source Array Glyph using the Micro-Particle Algorithm proposed by the 7th generation leader of the Sky Stone Valley, Senior Daoist Xuanzhen, in his work < An Analytical Introduction of Heavenly Particle Algorithm> from 322 years ago.”

“Of course, I am just a beginner freshman, so how can I thoroughly understand a high-level algorithm like the Micro-Particle Algorithm, which requires a tremendous amount of computational ability?”

“I had no choice but to use the Mustard Seed Algorithm proposed by Daoist Miaomiao in his thesis < Rediscovering Array Glyphs From Mustard Seed Level> 155 years ago as well as the Solar Corona Nine Algorithms proposed by Reverend Yufeng in his paper < From Spiritual Energy to Sunspot Eruption> 22 years ago to make up for the parts of Micro-Particle Algorithm which I could not understand. Doing such, I was barely able to construct the Fire and Water Sub-Source Array Glyphs.”

“Could the three algorithms be incompatible, leading to instability in the array glyphs constructed by me? Yes, this must be the problem!”

While Li Yao kept on talking, his eyes immediately flickered with an intelligent gleam as he heavily slapped his forehead and launched the telepathic thoughts calculator of the crystal processor. With the move of his thoughts at a lightning fast speed, a series of dazzling formulas appeared on the hologram, which rapidly expanded at an alarming rate.

Yuan Manqiu and Jiang Wenbo took a glance at each other before Jiang Wenbo spoke in a hushed tone, “Big Sis, let’s go!”

Yuan Manqiu nodded and left the warehouse on her tiptoes.

Jiang Wenbo heaved a long sigh of relief. He was stunned for a long while before a bitter smile appeared on his lips as he said:

“Big Sis, what in the bloody hell is＜From Spiritual Energy to Sunspot Eruption＞? How come I have never heard of it?”

Jiang Wenbo, a refiner who had to do various tasks in the sect, paid more emphasis on actual practice. It was simply impossible for him to thoroughly understand all the theories in the cultivation world.

Yuan Manqiu was still in a bit of trance:

“＜From Spiritual Energy to Sunspot Eruption＞ is a conjecture proposed by Reverend Yufeng. He believed that the sunspots eruption is a kind of particularly intense spiritual energy tide explosion that can be analyzed using the spiritual tide explosion model. Using the powerful spiritual energy that erupted from the sunspot eruption, he believed it was possible to use it to cultivate.”

“Solar Corona Nine Algorithms are the nine algorithms which he used to analyze the sunspot eruptions.”

“However, the theory was not widely acknowledged in the world of cultivation and remained only as a ‘hypothesis’. It’s a very unconventional theory, but even I have only taken a cursory glance or two and had not done any in-depth study at all.”

Jiang Wenbo drew in a lump of cold air: “If it’s an unconventional hypothesis, then how come that brat has seen it?”

“It’s more than that!”

Yuan Manqiu desolately said, “I do know a little of the few modern algorithms he talked about, but I have never heard of the Blue Dawn Clan’s Elder Xihua from forty millenniums ago. Not to mention coming in contact with his theories, I have never even heard of any Fire and Water Sub-Source Array Glyph!”

Jiang Wenbo was dumbfounded: “Even you don’t know?”

Yuan Manqiu thoughtfully nodded her head: “Yes, although the modifying plans proposed by him were inadequate in many places, rash, ingenuous, and based on assumptions at many steps, a typical example of ignorance is bliss, but…”

“What’s important is the approach!”

“God knows where that little devil saw so many theoretical classics, ancient, modern, grassroots, elites, and what not—some of which even I am not aware of.”

“I only know that his refining ideas are absolutely broad, so broad that it could be called perverse!”

“This is one monstrous genius. If he is not trained well and if we let him take his own course, it is very likely that all he would do would be submerging himself in the fantastic peaks of his ideas, turning into nothing but a rhetoric theorist.”

“However, as long as he assiduously dives into studies and thoroughly comprehends the quintessence of refining, if these perverse ideas could be turned into a reality…”

Yuan Manqiu did not continue and just gazed far away into the depths of the rubble.

At the center of the ruins, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit stood like an undead god of war, concealing its talons and fangs, retracting its wings, waiting for the day when it would soar into the sky and give rise to wind and thunder that would sweep the entire cultivation world!

‘Old Mo, can you see? This is the freshman of our Grand Desolate War Institution’s Refining Department! With such a student, the Grand Desolate War Institution’s Refining Department will definitely rise!’

Yuan Manqiu secretly said in her mind.

“Now, what should we do…” asked Jiang Wenbo.

Yuan Manqiu smiled: “Of course, we should quickly study the theory proposed by Elder Xihua, and there is also＜From Spiritual Energy Tide to Sunspot Eruption＞. Otherwise, we will not be able to answer any questions, and if a teacher is not as good as his student, wouldn’t that be embarrassing?”

“Right, right, let’s quickly study!”

After an hour, when the two returned to the warehouse in high spirits, Li Yao had already jam-packed more than 20 holograms with ant-like characters.

“Professors!”

When he noticed the two’s arrival, Li Yao was excited to the extreme. He sprang up on his feet and said with heartfelt admiration, “Teacher, you are really awesome! I have painstakingly pondered for such a long time but never found the problem; however, with just one sentence, teacher had actually pointed it out.”

“Oh?”

Yuan Manqiu and Jiang Wenbo stared at each other.

Li Yao said in an excited tone, “After you have left, I once again verified the three algorithms and found that the Mustard Seed Algorithm has limited applications. For sure, the Mustard Seed Algorithm can be applied at the micro level without a hitch, but if applied on the macro level, it is necessary to add very complex correctional parameters. Otherwise, it would lead to an extremely small error. Although this error in itself wouldn’t pose any problems, but after it is amplified by the Micro-Particle Algorithm, it would have serious repercussions!”

“I have repeatedly deduced several times but could not find the best solution, so I had to give up on the idea of using the Fire and Water Sub-Source and could only place the heater and cooler farther apart!”

“I only came to such conclusion after such a long time, but teacher, you had found the problem with only one glance. Brilliant, teacher, you are really brilliant!”

“However, as the two units are so far apart now, they have to rely on crystal cables to transmit spiritual energy, so it is a bit slow!”

“Professors, as you already know, during the refining of numerous heaven and earth treasure, it is necessary to drop the furnace temperature from high temperatures like 2,000-3,000 degrees to subzero temperatures within the blink of an eye in order to intentionally create the effect of thermal expansion and contraction. Only in such a way could we produce changes in the internal structure of heaven and earth materials!”

“The shorter the duration of temperature change, the more resilient the refined product would be!”

“I pondered for a long time when I suddenly recalled that Elder Fangmu from the Profound Sect of forty millenniums ago had once mentioned an ideal array glyph for controlling the temperature in an alchemical furnace in his alchemy notes＜A Theory of Blue Flames＞!”

“Although this kind of ideal state of array glyphs is unable to be achieved in the ancient era, it could be achieved in the modern era where there are multitudes of algorithms available. We can use the Heaven and Hell Algorithm proposed by Daoist Wu of Celestial Premier Sect 188 years ago in＜Heaven’s Plan Through Hell＞, as well as the No Heart No Limit Algorithm proposed by Master Wuxin 92 years ago in＜No Self No Limit,No Mind No Thought＞ to forcibly construct it!”

“Of course, to forcibly construct this kind of ideal array glyph, we would need to utilize a tremendous amount of computational power, which is something that cannot be constructed by just relying on one’s brain. However, don’t we have a high-performance, large-scale crystal processor? With the crystal processor calculating for three days and three nights, we will definitely be able to create the perfect array glyphs for controlling the furnace temperature. Hei hei

hei hei. By then, the strongest 1st Gen Tai’e crafting furnace of the cultivation world will be born!”

“Professors, please take a look. All the deduction processes are here. Can you check whether I have made any low-level errors this time?”

Li Yao was overwhelmed with anxiety. Blinking his eyes, he glanced at the two veteran refiners with an anticipatory look.

Yuan Manqiu, while keeping a poker face, turned her sleek, fat face towards Jiang Wenbo.

Jiang Wenbo, in a calm and collected manner, carefully looked for a long time as he repeatedly nodded: “Very good, very good, your deduced… structure is well-defined, well-arranged, and the data is full and accurate, concise and clear. It is very beautiful. Each level is pushing another level forward like spilled mercury, giving a hearty and satisfactory feeling. As something proposed by a freshman, it is already perfect; however, there are several places which we can discuss. For example…”

He suddenly turned around and made an “Oh” to someone as an apologetic look appeared on his face: “Sorry, Student Li Yao, there is a sudden emergency meeting. We will talk about it again next time! Young man, you are very good, very promising, I have high hopes for you! Professor Yuan is a well-known expert in the refining field. If you study hard under her guidance, you will absolutely have a promising future!”

“Click!”

The hologram went black. Jiang Wenbo disconnected and ran away.

Li Yao was surprised for a moment before he turned his fervent gaze towards Yuan Manqiu.

Chapter 150: Armadominus

Yuan Manqiu’s teeth started to ache from gritting. There were many redundancy and loopholes in Li Yao’s deduction. Various modern algorithms would hardly stump her, but [A Theory of Blue Flame] from forty millenniums ago?

What was that!?

What in the bloody hell was that!?

Yuan Manqiu forced a cough and suddenly patted on Li Yao’s shoulder heavily with wide-opened eyes.

This pat seemed to have dispelled all of Li Yao’s ideas.

“The deduction process is nothing. The most important thing right now is your future development rather than the crafting furnace!”

“Your potential is completely beyond my imagination, so I have decided to turn you into a top tier refiner in one year. The training is going to be very difficult, very painful, and even brutal, are you confident?”

Li Yao turned excited and courageous from Yuan Manqiu’s raving as he loudly replied with his head high and chest out: “Yes, I am confident! The more brutal, the better!”

Having been stirred like this, Li Yao forgot all the problems he had been pondering over a moment ago.

Yuan Manqiu nodded with satisfaction and said, “Very good! First, we have to decide which direction you want to proceed in!”

Refining contained and covered everything; it was a comprehensive subject which was extensive and profound.

There was a wide range of magical equipment, ranging from civilian to military, the smallest of which could be the size of a mustard seed, while the largest could be even bigger than an entire city.

Obviously, refining military equipment like the Burning Sky Battleaxe and civilian equipment like the Super-Fast Crystal Train didn’t have the same approach.

Even among the military equipment, the Burning Sky Battleaxe and the Thunderfire Boltgun were one thing, and huge crystal battle cruisers were another; they had a completely different type of refining concept.

So, the refiners were also divided into many branches. No matter how monstrous of a genius one was, it would still be impossible for him to cover everything.

Li Yao had long carefully pondered over the future. He resolutely and decisively said, “I hope to master the refining techniques of individual magical equipment and become a weapon expert. If possible, a crystal suit master refiner.”

The crystal suit was the king of modern magical equipment; it was a magical equipment among magical equipment. A refiner who could develop and refine a crystal suit was also a terrifying figure among all refiners.

In the world of cultivation, there was a special term for crystal suit master refiners!

Armadominus!

All cultivators, before they leave to mingle in the cultivation world, are repeatedly warned by their elders that they could provoke anyone they want, but they could never provoke an Armadominus!

The battle strength of an Armadominus was not that high, but the forces backing him were absolutely powerful. Countless powerful experts, in order to receive a customized crystal suit, would be more than willing to work for an Armadominus.

Even the lowest level Armadominus, as long as he made as much as a cough, could gather over a hundred Refinement Stage cultivators in a moment.

Even more so, a senior Armadominus who could specifically craft high-rank crystal suits was acquainted with world heroes. Which powerful sect have they not visited? Which Nascent Soul Stage old devil have they not chatted with? Contacts, forces, friendships—one could not even imagine how many extraordinary cultivators they were acquainted with!

“Do you want to become an Armadominus?”

It was not that easy to become an Armadominus.

Among a hundred refiners, at most seven or eight could become a registered refiner.

And among those hundred registered refiners, even three to five Armodomini were not certain.

Yuan Manqiu’s pair of eyes turned crimson as she said through gritted teeth:

“Very good. Originally, our Grand Desolate War Institution’s Refining Department mainly focused on small-scale, battle-type magical equipment. If you want to learn refining crystal battle cruisers, then I’m afraid I would not be able to teach you many things, but if it is a specialty in weapons…”

“In this year, let’s go for broke!”

From that day onwards, Li Yao participated in a new training that was so rigorous that one could even say it was more brutal than Spartan training, so brutal that it could only be called insane.

Yuan Manqiu’s teaching style was very peculiar.

She had disassembled all the high-level courses and fused them with the modification of the 1st Gen Tai’e crafting furnace so that Li Yao would propose a new modifying plan in accordance with what he had learned recently every day.

All the modification plans were done by Li Yao and Li Yao alone; she did intervene at all. At most, she would give remarks after the completion of a plan.

And even if the modification plan looked “completely perfect”, Yuan Manqiu, rather than letting Li Yao perform the modification, would instill him with more knowledge that was even more profound and more abstruse than the previous.

In this way, after Li Yao had learned a new course, whenever he turned around and looked back, he would always feel that the modification plan he had devised a few days back was seriously lacking; he would find many places where he could perfect the plan even more.

"A crafting furnace is the foundation of a refiner. A brilliant refiner has to be well aware of even the slightest bit of change in any of the performance parameters of his furnace. Only then can he craft the perfect magical equipment."

"The modification of the 1st Gen Tai'e furnace is a special test for you. Don't be impatient! When you have learned everything and utilize all that you've learned to modify it, then you will see what kind of monster you have actually modified in the end!"

At the beginning, Li Yao was still scratching his ears and cheeks in anxiousness and could not wait to finish the modification of the 1st Gen Tai'e furnace and start refining as soon as possible.

However, as he kept on learning high-level courses like [Glyph and Array Laws], [Theory of Augur], [High-Level Spiritual Energy Entanglement], and [Deduction of Algorithms], he gradually calmed down.

Because he discovered that with every day that passed in reality, during which he would painstakingly study in the Heavenly Refining Tower for several days, one or two powerful weapons would be added to his "armory" and the modification of the 1st Gen Tai'e furnace would be even more imaginative and perverse.

Meanwhile, Yuan Manqiu, without missing a beat, would entice in his ears—"Next week when you have finished learning so and so course, you can increase the overall performance of crafting performance by 1%, which will allow you to refine even more powerful magical equipment in the future!"

And when the "next week" arrived, Li Yao would instead discover that he had finished learning a couple of new courses and was proficient in several new algorithms, making it completely possible for him to devise even more maddening modification plan which could increase the overall performance of the crafting furnace by 3%!

Just like this, day by day, time passed. He had already devised a couple hundred sets of modification plans for the 1st Gen Tai’e furnace, each of which was more excessive and fiercer than the one before.

Under the latest modification plans he had devised, one would not even be able to recognize even a shadow of the 1st Gen Tai’e furnace—it would have completely changed into an incomparably deformed steel monster!

Another one and a half month had gone by.

Gradually, a small ripple started surging in the calm heart of Li Yao.

He discovered that he had unconsciously walked into a bottleneck.

With the help of the Heavenly Refining Tower, he had several times more learning time than any ordinary student. In addition to that, he could enter the super perceptive state at the drop of a hat; even in his day-to-day life, any messy problem, under the super perceptive state, could be solved like a hot knife cutting through butter.

In a period of two months, he had finished walking the road which any ordinary student could not necessarily finish even in two or three years.

But the problem was that the credits he had obtained were truly too little.

According to the teaching philosophy of the Grand Desolate War Institution, the specialized courses of a respective department were by no means the main channels for acquiring credits.

The Refining Department was only left with one associate professor, Yuan Manqiu, and she only could be proficient in so many domains of refining, thus the specialized courses she could set up were limited.

Not to mention the fact that refining was extensive and profound, and it became more and more difficult to move forward. Many high-level courses contained telepathic thoughts which were as vast as the sea, thus it was impossible to completely master a high-level course in one and a half day like the basic theory courses.

Over these two months, Li Yao had acquired 3,400 credits in one deep breath. His nickname had already changed to “Sleeping Devil” from “God of Sleeping”.

In the opinion of the onlookers, he was an out-and-out training madman.

But the goal of 40,000 credits was still very, very far away.

If you want to become rich, you have to take the risky road!

If he wanted to take down 40,000 credits, the conventional means were far from enough.

Currently, there were three paths laid in front of Li Yao.

Either he could log into the Wasteland Battle Network and receive some task, fight in the arena, or take the specialized courses of other departments!

However, after careful consideration, he discovered that all three roads seemed to have terrible flaws.

Take the mission for example

In the institute, there were very few tasks for a refiner. Even if some department, in order to take care of him, specially issued some maintenance task, its difficulty would also be very low, so he could at most receive a few credits, which was simply a waste of time.

Li Yao could also not say they were being stingy, as the tasks were like repairing boiler-like equipment, so how could they even give him over a hundred credits in one deep breath?

Whereas, a true highly rewarding task was like going into the depths of the Wasteland and hunting demon beasts.

And if he wanted to receive these kinds of missions, he would need to have a minimum of 10,000 credits or even higher.

The more dangerous the mission was, the higher the stipulated amount of credits were.

After all, the institute had to consider the safety of its students. If a low-ranked student rushed into the depths of wasteland, there was a high chance that most would die.

A shrimp like Li Yao, who did not even have 5,000 credits, could only receive some beginner level hunting missions in the vicinity of Wild Waves City.

He had once given it a try, during which he had to spend an entire three hours under the sun to desperately catch a Shovel-Tooth Rabbit which had been biting people.

In the end, he had plucked off its front teeth, as it was the favorite pet of a little girl—you could imagine how many credits could it be exchanged for!

“If it is going to be like this!”

“You are completely forcing me!”

“I can only go and—”

“Fight! In! The! Arena!”

Having firmed his mind, Li Yao took a trip to the arena.

But when he found the 7th-8th level Refinement Stage super macho robust students coming and going on the arena ring with a momentum that could move the mountains and shake the earth, touching his nose, he dejectedly withdrew.

What a joke!

He was a gentleman and was only a 3rd level Refinement Stage cultivator who majored in refining. Fighting was only a hobby. Even if he took 3,000-5,000 pounds of stimulants, he would still not be able to withstand the wanton bombings of those hunks!

He was only left with choosing the road of specialized courses.

Li Yao thought rather happily. Even Ding Lingdang had said that he had a talent for fighting, so wouldn’t taking a couple Combat Department’s courses be the same as playing?

But after carefully researching, he discovered that he had to actually pay more than double the credits to take the specialized courses of other departments!

For example, if a Combat Department student wanted to register for the course［Rolling Thunder Nine Transformations］, he only needed to pay 90 credits, and once he had finished learning, he would earn 360 credits.

However, if Li Yao, a student of the Refining Department, wanted to register for the very same course, he would have to pay 180 credits!

And this was not even a popular course.

If it was a very popular course, the students of the Combat Department would all rush to the higher authorities, asking for the students from the other departments to have to pay a higher number of credits to learn and to receive fewer credits when they passed.

Furthermore, Li Yao had heard that many professors of the Combat Department had a cruel and heartless temperament; they could all kill without spilling blood and fail them without even batting an eye. Each and every one of them had a title like “Fail Master”, “Fail King”, “Fail Reverend”, “Fail Emperor”, and “Fail God!”

It was very normal for 70% of the students to fail a specialized course of the Combat Department.

“These days, one really can’t do anything!”

Over the past few days, Li Yao had not slept soundly, thus his eyes were bloodshot. As he walked in the campus, everyone and everything looked like credits to him.

At this moment—

“Come to my house tonight, I have a ‘good thing’ for you to see!”

A glittering message dancingly appeared in the center of his holographic screen.

In the sender’s image box of the message, Ding Lingdang, with arms akimbo, revealing half of her wheat colored belly, smiled very arrogantly.

Chapter 151: Building Foundation Egg

Chapter 151: Building Foundation Egg

18:00, Bamboo Rain Pavilion

The Grand Desolate War Institution had a wide-range of staff, as well as many residential areas for the staff scattered all over Wild Waves City.

At the beginning, Li Yao believed that Ding Lingdang, a new professor, would be residing in the dormitory; however, the Bamboo Rain Pavilion's environment was too good and only a senior professor would have the qualifications to reside in such an extravagant area.

The entire Bamboo Rain Pavilion was extensively covered in restrictive spells, and in addition to those restrictive spells, the weather array glyphs formed a unique microclimate.

As Li Yao stepped into the Bamboo Rain Pavilion, he felt a humid wind blowing on his face as a calm sea of bamboo came into view while a continuous drizzle poured down from the sky.

Scattered in between the bamboo forest were a couple quaint villas. As Li Yao attentively gazed upon one of them, a white light suddenly bloomed before his eyes as a burst of a faint tingle appeared in his brain.

The villas were surrounded by restrictive spells to prevent others from casually spying on them.

Li Yao dared not to act rashly again and honestly walked towards Ding Lingdang's residence.

The two had not seen each other since Floating Spear City.

Ding Lingdang said that she had a premonition that she was about to breakthrough, so she asked for a leave and went to the depths of the Wasteland to cultivate.

"Has she successfully built her foundation?"

Li Yao felt a burst of joy in his heart as he sped up his footsteps.

In a short while, a small two-story villa next to a hillside appeared amidst the sea of bamboos.

From outside, the villa looked as though it had been completely built from bamboo which had lost its luster and faded away over the long passage of time, integrating completely with the surroundings, giving off an appearance as though it was naturally formed.

"Hiss!"

Right when Li Yao crossed a bamboo fence surrounding the villa, a Seven Star Silver-Ringed Horned Snake suddenly sprang out from the bamboo leaves in the surroundings and wrapped itself around his neck.

Li Yao was caught off guard; his entire body seemed to be petrified.

A Seven Star Silver-Ring Horned Snake was not a powerful demon beast at all and did not have any demonic skill that could conceal its aura.

At any rate, he was a 3rd level Refinement Stage cultivator, so why didn't he sense it a moment ago?

Contrary to expectations, the Seven Star Silver Ring Horned Snake didn't launch an attack and just used its glossy and green pair of eyes to scan his face.

Li Yao kept on gazing at the Seven Star Silver Ring Horned Snake before his eyes suddenly become transfixed.

The gaps between the scales of the Seven Star Silver Ring Horned Snake were flashing with a faint metal gloss, and its pair of eyes were crafted from crystals.

To Li Yao's surprise, it was a non-living being; it was a special magical equipment that had been refined through the fusion of flesh and blood of an actual Seven Star Silver Ring Horned Snake with heaven and earth treasures!

"Good gracious!"

Li Yao was secretly rendered speechless.

It was very common to use the flesh of demon beasts to refine with heaven and earth material, but for the refined magical equipment to come out so vividly and lifelike, seemingly filled with life and color, it was truly unfathomable!

"Hiss! Hiss! Hiss! Hiss!"

The Seven Star Silver Ring Horned Snake flicked its tongue, which was as soft as a real tongue, as it started licking Li Yao's face.

Li Yao's pupil suddenly constricted.

He discovered that its forked tongue was actually made from countless sheets of Gold Stone that were connected in series.

Gold Stone was an extremely rare material which possessed the characteristics of both metal and stone and thus has high rigidity and low tensile strength. With the slightest mistake, it could very well be broken; it was a material which is very difficult to process, thus a vast majority of refiners would be reluctant to make use of this heaven and earth material.

The Gold Stone was dissected and cut into tens of thousands of 0.1 mm thin slices, thereafter holes were cut open before they were connected in series. Furthermore, they also had array glyphs engraved upon them so that it was as flexible as the forked tongue of a real snake...

"Unfathomable! The person who refined this piece of magical equipment truly had unfathomable skill!"

"Who the hell actually refined this Seven Star Silver Ring Horned Snake? He is definitely a peerless master refiner!"

The Seven Star Silver Ring Horned Snake slithered on Li Yao's neck for while before it lightly sprang back into the bamboo leaves and disappeared.

Meanwhile, from the birdcage at the top of the porch rang a sweet and melodious twirp:

"Li Yao, come in! Li Yao, come in!"

The door opened as it made a "squeak" sound before a rainbow flew out from the birdcage and circled around Li Yao's head, giving him directions.

Having swept a glance, Li Yao discovered that it was a rainbow-colored, gorgeous parrot, and just like before, it too was a fusion of flesh and blood of a demon beast with heaven and earth treasures.

At first glance, one could simply not tell the difference between it and a living being.

Li Yao was simply flabbergasted. The two magical equipment's refining style was completely different than with that of grassroots; they were simply exquisite and extravagant, meticulous and time-consuming, and they could be even called a work of art. They were definitely worth a couple of towns together, and yet, much to Li Yao's surprise, they were actually used for guarding and welcoming guests!

"What exactly is Ding Lingdang’s background? Is her family that rich?"

Li Yao muttered for a while before he walked in with large strides.

Contrary to his expectations, the decor within the villa was very modern; it was simple and concise, with a fierce and masculine feeling.

It was as though a few chairs and tables were casually thrown inside a cultivation gym, while the rest of the space was completely packed with training equipment of all shapes and sizes. It was the complete opposite of its natural and ancient feeling that was present on the outside.

When Li Yao stepped into the living room, he had been shaken to the core by the entire wall opposite to the door.

Over a hundred heads of demon beasts which were baring their teeth and looked extremely fierce, revealing their most brutal side, were helplessly hung on the wall and were reduced to nothing but decorations.

Under the head of each demon beast, there was also an engraving in small characters.

"Flintstone Demon, hunted in Wildfire Mountain Range, blasted its heart in three punches!"

"Herculean Bear Devil, hunted in Wailing Caverns, took 47 seconds!"

"This is ridiculous!"

Li Yao wryly smiled. Anyhow, Ding Lingdang was still a young lady in her early twenties, so how could she hang these kinds of things? Not only that, but she had also casually written the hunting process. Did she fear that others would not know how incomparably mighty and fierce she was?

"Sister Ling, I'm here!"

Li Yao walked in, following the sounds coming from the corner of the living room.

Ding Lingdang had just returned from the depths of the wasteland. Clearly, she was not someone who would clean the house, as the clothes she had worn when she went to the Wasteland were thrown here and there, making quite a mess. Li Yao was extremely embarrassed to see a couple of undergarments casually lying around on the floor.

The air was filled with a faint sweaty smell; however, it was not unpleasant at all, rather a bit strange.

"Oh, you’re here? Come, eat with me!"

Dressed in a crop top and small shorts, Ding Lingdang sat on the ground very aggressively with her slim and slender legs apart. Placed in front of her was a few dozen high-energy foods which a normal girl would not even dare to look at. While she ate, she was watching a battle video that was shot in first-person view with great interest.

The video was shot by a cultivator wearing a recording magical equipment on his forehead when he was hunting a demon beast in the depths of the Wasteland. It was especially stimulating, giving the viewer a feeling as though it was happening to him.

"Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!"

The cultivator in the video was incomparably brutal; the brain of a charming and delicate iron armored warthog beast was splattered all over the ground as it breathed out its final breath.

Having cheered to her heart's content, Ding Lingdang grabbed a piece of mutton chop and stuffed it into her mouth, whereupon she wiped her greasy hands on her ass before she pulled Li Yao.

"Quickly sit down! First, do not move the chopsticks. Tell me, do I look any different!?"

If it was an ordinary girl who had asked a boy this question, the boy would just answer: "Hey, have you done your hair? What did you do? You look truly beautiful!"

That was normally the correct answer.

However, when such a question came from Ding Lingdang, Li Yao immediately understood—

"Have you established your foundation?"

"Hahaha, that's right! Tell me, quickly, on a scale of one to ten, how cool does sister look?"

Ding Lingdang unscrupulously started laughing to the point that her eyes had gone white, and of course, her mouth was wide open. She had laughed herself into fits, having not even the slightest bit of care for her image.

Along with her laughter, a thick mass of spiritual energy writhed out of her body and gradually surrounded her into a layer of mist which slowly turned into small, gorgeous beads of water, with each glowing in resplendent colors.

"Liquefaction of spiritual energy!"

When Li Yao perceived them with his spiritual roots, it was even more shocking than looking at them with the naked eye. It was as though tens of thousands of colors fiercely shot out from Ding Lingdang and grabbed ahold of his mind in the blink of an eye.

Refinement Stage cultivator had very low control over spiritual energy and could only stimulate spiritual energy, which was why it was called the "refinement of energy" stage.

However, once they could master the ability to liquefy their spiritual energy, they would step onto the Building Foundation Stage, taking a completely new road of evolution!

Ding Lingdang flaunted herself as she executed seven or eight stances one after another. Only then did she withdraw the liquefied spiritual energy back into her body, converging her aura, as she stuck out her tongue and said, "Alright, I can only do this much. I have just established my foundation, so I can not show off often. Otherwise, I would injure my soul. Wait until I have completely consolidated my state, then I will let you study it slowly. Now, come and eat the Foundation Building Egg with me!"

While laughing, she took out a shimmering demon beast egg which had already been cooked. A sweet smell greeted his nose.

"This is a Foundation Building Egg?" Li Yao curiously inspected the demon beast egg.

The ancient cultivation world of forty millenniums ago was not clearly aware of various cultivation laws; cultivators knew many cultivation principles were so, but as for why they were so, they didn’t know

For a Refinement Stage cultivator of the ancient cultivation world to advance to the Building Foundation Stage, besides cultivating madly, they also happened to need heaven-defying luck as well as taking a pill called the "Building Foundation Pill". Only then could they have any hope to succeed.

The Building Foundation Pill was refined using over a hundred priceless treasures and were tremendously rare. God knows how many time just a small Building Foundation Pill had raised a sanguinary slaughter, bringing forth countless disputes.

It was only during the modern era when civilization had developed, thereby giving birth to various skills and countless synthetic drugs that could help establish the foundation in an endless stream, was there no longer any need for cultivators to go all out for a Building Foundation Pill.

However, the importance of the Building Foundation Pill was still carried down from ancient times, evolving into a very interesting custom.

After a cultivator had established his foundation, he must personally go to seek out a demon beast egg in order to cook and eat it.

This egg was called "Foundation Building Egg" and signified that cultivators had not forgotten the tradition at all.

Moreover, not just any egg given by a demon beast could become a Foundation Building Egg. For it to become a Foundation Building Egg, it was better to have its color as close to gold as possible after it was cooked.

A golden egg was synonymous to the golden core and it was also a blessing, signifying that after eating this "golden egg", you could smoothly march all the way to the Core Formation Stage and become a Golden Core powerhouse.

"Quickly eat it, Sister Ling! May you form the golden core as soon as possible and become unparalleled in the world!"

Li Yao sincerely wished her.

"En!"

With a light tap, Ding Lingdang peeled the Foundation Building Egg. The egg shell was very soft; it was completely peeled as if it was the peel of a fruit.

Whereupon, a round golden bead appeared in her palm.

It was the egg of a Golden-Spotted Finch. The egg shell as well as the albumen(egg white) were both glittering, implying it was extremely good and high-grade among Foundation Building Eggs.

It spread out a faint, delicate fragrance. Ding Lingdang, having taken a deep whiff of the fragrance, had an intoxicated look her face. Opening her mouth, just as she was about to swallow the entire Foundation Building Egg, it seemed as if she thought of something as she pinched a small piece of the wiggling golden albumen and sent it towards Li Yao's mouth.

"Why?" Li Yao was flabbergasted.

"I want to share a bit with you so that you can also be smeared with this Sister's divine energy. Maybe you can also form your golden core a little earlier!" Ding Lingdang pursed her lips into a smile.

"How can that be ok? According to the custom, the Foundation Building Egg must be swallowed whole! The golden egg is the golden core. Have you seen anyone cultivate a half golden core?" Li Yao didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

"Stop with all this nonsense! How can just swallowing the golden egg allow you to be able to form a golden core? It’s just symbolic. Besides—"

Suddenly, she took a glance a Li Yao's left side in surprise.

In a moment of surprise, while Li Yao was distracted, a soft mass was stuffed into his mouth and rolled down his throat as though it was tender tofu.

"Hahaha, fooled you!"

Ding Lingdang stupidly laughed and casually said:

"The road of cultivation is very long. Isn't one person walking alone lonely and boring? Clearly, isn't it better to find a few friends and brothers to walk together, with everyone talking and laughing along the way? You address me as sister, so how could I let you call me such in vain? If I have good stuff, then I am certainly going to share it with everyone!"

Li Yao scratched his head; he didn't know what to say.

Between the two, Ding Lingdang was also endlessly chatting, while he did his part of listening to her attentively.

"Quickly eat and drink to have some energy. Sister will take you to her bedroom and let you thoroughly enjoy a bit!" Ding Lingdang said proudly.

"Cough! Cough! Cough! Cough!"

A piece of lamb skewer was stuck in Li Yao's throat, making him cough to the point that tears were flowing out of his eyes.

Chapter 152: You Are a Glass Jaw

Chapter 152: You Are a Glass Jaw

The word "enjoy" had ambiguous meanings; there were many things in the world which could be enjoyed.

However, usually, there was only one thing which could be enjoyed in a girl’s bedroom.

But...

Li Yao swept a glance at the over a hundred demon beast heads hanging on the wall.

Among which were a couple dozen heads that were deformed, with the cranial bones having been split open; they were miserable to the extreme.

He swallowed a mouthful of saliva. He knew what was waiting for him was definitely not that kind of "enjoyment".

Sure enough, when he entered Ding Lingdang's bedroom, which was as simple as any room allocated in the barrack, presented in front of him was impressively a...

"Teleportation array?"

Through the teleportation array in Peng Hai's private training room, Li Yao had once entered the "Small Grayfield", where he had trained for a month. Thus, he was no stranger to teleportation arrays.

"That's right, cool isn't it!?"

Ding Lingdang pushed Li Yao ahead.

This teleportation array appeared to be a circle smaller than Peng Hai's teleportation array, allowing no more than two people to stand together and that too very closely.

Ding Lingdang, without the least bit of hesitation, wrapped her arms around Li Yao’s waist.

"Hey, not bad! You have trained your muscles well, and your waist is quite firm! I thought that after joining the Refining Department, you would neglect training your body!"

Slightly pinching Li Yao's waist, Ding Lingdang said with surprise.

Li Yao slightly smiled.

He had not deliberately trained his body at all. However, as there were many wrecked magical equipment that were hundreds of thousands of pounds heavy in the rubble...

In particular, the wrecked crafting furnaces, which had multitudes of components that weighed a few tons and perhaps even a couple dozen tons...

And since there weren't any lifting or transporting magical equipment in the Refining Department, he alone had to carry all the wreckage over his shoulders or drag them along by force.

Every day, he had to carry several tons of wrecked magical equipment and run his way through the rugged ruins, making three to five trips at minimum and a dozen drips at most

He even carried furnaces that were several meters tall over his shoulders in one breath, soaring to a speed that was about 100 meters per second.

Over time, his body became incomparably robust and sturdy.

"Didn't I say that you are a natural-born body practitioner? Even if you chose refining, you should never neglect training your body. The body is the foundation. A strong body will, in turn, stimulate your brain cells, develop your brain, and grow your soul, making it very easy for you to train in anything."

Just as her voice faded away, a blue light flashed around the teleportation formation.

Everything went black before Li Yao's eyes before he appeared in a completely new world.

His body was suddenly hit with sluggishness as a huge pressure weighed down upon him from all directions and a large amount of dense liquid gushed into his nasal cavity. He was surrounded by darkness and calmness, one that was akin to that of an abyss, which was spotted by a few swimming fish.

This was the other end of the teleportation formation which, to his surprise, was under a quaint sea!

Li Yao eyes were opened wide. He discovered that there was a faint brilliance above his head and Ding Lingdang, who was in front of him and happened to have her slim and slender leg close together like a robust mermaid.

He followed behind Ding Lingdang, moving his hands and feet forcefully as he strugglingly swam his way towards the sea surface.

This sea was very odd. As the density of the sea water was extremely high, Li Yao felt as though he was a fly that had been stuck in amber; no matter how he struggled, he could not escape.

Fortunately, it was not empty underwater; many flight stair-like ruins were also present and could be used as support.

Even if cultivators could hold their breath for a long time, after strenuous movements for five minutes, Li Yao was almost out of air as stars started revolving before his eyes.

"Gasp..."

Finally, Li Yao's head broke through the surface as he gasped for a mouthful of air which carried a fishy smell along with it.

Ding Lingdang too emerged next to him while also carrying a small, glittering, transparent crab on top of her head.

Having beaten her cheeks, an arrow of water shot out before she said with a smile:

"This is a world fragment called the 'Billowing Star Sea'. The density of the sea here is five times that of the Heaven Origin Sector and there are also invisible undercurrents which, for cultivation, is even better than the 'Small Grayfield'. Did you enjoy it?!"

"Indeed!"

Li Yao heaved a long sigh of relief. His entire body happened to be exhausted to the extreme, yet his spirit was very excited.

This world fragment, the Billowing Star Sea, was even more dangerous than the Small Grayfield!

Not only was the density of the seawater higher, making it strenuous to move under the sea, but there were also invisible undercurrents, which required him to unleash more than 100% of his effort and only they could he deal with it.

Had he not been running amidst the rubble carrying several tons weighing equipment every day, thereby training an extremely tyrannical body, he would have simply been unable to adhere even for a moment here!

If he could train in the Billowing Star Sea often, his body would definitely become even more terrifying, allowing him to carry even more wrecked magical equipment at once, thereby greatly increasing his efficiency in repairing and modifications.

Upon noticing Li Yao’s fascination, a smile bloomed upon Ding Lingdang's face: "Since even you say it is good, then I also don't have to feel sad. For this world fragment, I had spent an entire 500 million, and yet I only have the right to use it for a decade!"

"500 million? Are you that rich?" Li Yao was surprised.

Ding Lingdang pursed her lips:

"If only so! This is all in installments, and even for the down payment, I had to rely on the Young Teacher's Support Plan of the institute to borrow an interest-free loan. Even then, I have to pay 60-70 million annually!"

She swam to Li Yao's side as her face brighten up with joy: "As long as I can improve my strength, what does some money count for? Let alone 60-70 million, even 300-500 million can be earned in one trip to the depths of the Wasteland by hunting a few demon beasts. What is there to be afraid of!?"

"I guess that's right. Without high investment, how can one have high returns? When I have the money, I am going to buy two world fragments—one for training and I will turn the other into a private refining room!"

Li Yao indulged in flights of fantasies.

Ding Lingdang laughed, revealing her snow-white teeth: "For the refining room, you have to depend on yourself, but as for training, you can train here with me!"

"What?"

Li Yao was a little muddle-headed. The Billowing Star Sea, which was worth a couple hundred million, was open to him for free?

Ding Lingdang nodded. After a moment of silence, she suddenly said, "Li Yao, don't you blame me?"

"Blame you for what?" Li Yao had been surprised once again for a moment.

Due to the high density of Billowing Star Sea, Ding Lingdang freely floated above the surface, gazing at the writhing dark clouds in the sky as she said in a solemn tone, "Your dream is to become a master refiner. The Deep Sea University's Refining Department was the best place for you to go, yet because of me, you had chosen the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department."

"And the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department has now turned into this."

"After thinking about it carefully, had it not been for me, you would already be in Deep Sea University's Refining Department, triumphantly advancing towards your dream, instead of falling so low that you don't even have a crafting furnace."

"Even if you don't blame me, I still feel a little sorry for you. That’s why I am lending the Billowing Star Sea to you to train. Think of it as a small compensation to you."

Ding Lingdang had a dispirited look hung all over her face as she grabbed the small, transparent crab on top of her head and threw it far away dishearteningly.

A smiled appeared on Li Yao's face.

Gazing at the dark clouds in the sky as they took various shapes due to the fierce winds, he unhurriedly said, "Aren't I still triumphantly advancing towards my dream? Moreover, very soon, I will have a crafting furnace—a unique crafting furnace."

"Do you truly not blame me?"

"Of course, I don't blame you. I have elected this road on my own and it is very good. Whether it some Deep Sea University's Refining Department or some Supernova Jiang Sheng, one day, they will be blasted away by me!"

"Hahaha, now that's some ambition! Supernova Jiang Sheng, huh? When you are going to blow him away, just give me a message. I will help you punch him!"

As though a heavy burden had been lifted off of Ding Lingdang's shoulder, her entire body was a lot more at ease as she quickly started swimming around Li Yao.

"Right."

Li Yao suddenly thought of something: "Sister Ling, if I want to keep the Refining Department, I need to gather 40,000 credits within one year, which is a little troublesome. In the past, you had taken two years to acquire 40,000 credits and Senior Brother Peng had taken only one and a half year to do so. Do the two of you have some sort of secret method?"

Ding Lingdang thought for a while before she said with a frown, "Senior Brother Peng and I were both students of the Combat Department, so we had many high credits specialized courses to choose from."

"I did it almost the same way as him. For the first year, I madly studied the specialized courses for one year and first gathered 10,000 credits."

"The first 10,000 credits are the most crucial. Once you have reached 10,000 credits, you can choose high-difficulty missions and go to the depths of the Wasteland to hunt demon beasts."

"If you are lucky and hunt a powerful demon beast, you will have the opportunity to receive a couple thousand credits, and even over ten thousand credits is quite possible!"

"With the completion of three to five high-difficulty missions, you will have then acquired 40,000 credits."

Li Yao was absorbed in his thoughts: "So I have to do everything possible to obtain 10,000 credits first?"

"That's right. The first 10,000 credits are most important. Once you have 10,000 credits in hand, as long as you are strong enough and your luck is good, then you can acquire the later credits very quickly."

Ding Lingdang patted Li Yao's shoulder as she laughed and said, "Don't be anxious. We will slowly think of some way. In any case, there is more than one way to do the same thing, so for now, you should first cultivate in the Billowing Star Sea. I'm afraid that even if you want to go the depths of the Wasteland to hunt demon beasts, without a powerful body, it would be no good."

Li Yao nodded.

Even if he joined a team as a support with the identity of a refiner, his battle strength would still be too inferior.

And in case that he held back the team, then no one would be willing to team up with him next time.

"Alright, you train here for a while first. This is a Repelling Water Bead. When you are truly out of the air, you can infuse it with your spiritual energy to stimulate it and that will allow you repel the invasion of seawater. In the meantime, I will go and post a mission. Once I am finished, I will accompany you after I return."

Ding Lingdang, while speaking, dived under the sea.

Li Yao happened to have sharp ears. When he heard the word "mission", his eyes suddenly turned red as he hastily stopped her: "Wait, what kind of mission are you going to post?"

"I have just established my foundation. Although my level has improved, I am still not quite well-versed with the use of various abilities. I have just learned a few really overbearing exercises, so I need to temper myself, and for that, I need a training partner who will help me consolidate my level!"

"How many credits?"

Having heard the two words "training partner", Li Yao's eyes lit up.

In the Militant Wolf Slayers cultivation gym of the underground ghost city, he was once a training partner of Fiend Blade Peng Hai.

This was his old line of work!

"The credits are rather high. For every minute, I will pay 10 credits to whoever can bear indiscriminate bombing; however, I have high requirements for the training partner, so it would not be so easy to find him."

Ding Lingdang said with a frown. She had been upset over this very matter. Finding a good training partner was even harder than finding a good husband.

"10 credits for every 10 minutes?"

Li Yao's excitement had reached the zenith to the point that flames were shooting out his nose. Having stretched out half his body out of the seawater, he took a beautiful pose to flex his muscles: "Sister Ling, how about me? I can take a beating! Even Senior Brother Peng wasn't able to knock me down!"

"You?"

Ding Lingdang could not hold back her laughter as she poked him with her slender fingers, pushing Li Yao pack into the sea.

"Don't be conceited. Do you think a task where you can earn 10 credits for one minute is that simple? Senior Brother Peng could not knock you down because he was just using 5% of his strength."

"My training partner, on the other hand, has to face of an indiscriminate bombing of at least 80% of my power. To put it bluntly, you are simply..."

"Too weak?" Li Yao unwillingly said.

"Not too weak—you are a glass jaw!"

Chapter 153: Falcon King Soaring Into the Sky in One Leap

Chapter 153: Falcon King Soaring Into the Sky in One Leap

"Glass? Jaw?"

"Hei hei!" Li Yao happened to be laughing mischievously as a mysterious look crept over his face: "Sister Ling, guess what level I am currently at."

Ding Lingdang swept a couple of glances over him before she casually said, "At the temporary station when you had just awakened your spirit roots, you had beaten the sh*t out of a 3rd level Refinement Stage cultivator, so your talent is pretty good. If I have to guess, then after madly cultivating for these few months, you must have advanced by another level, so you are now in the 2nd level of Refinement Stage, right?"

"Nope!"

Just as his voice faded away, she suddenly came to notice that there was something strange. She stared with wide-open eyes as a sliver of a red glow flickered in the depths of her eyes: "You are in—the 3rd level of the Refinement Stage!"

Ding Lingdang was pleasantly surprised as she ruthlessly clutched Li Yao's arm: "Awesome! In just the half year I have not seen you, you have broken through to the 3rd level of the Refinement Stage!"

Li Yao grimaced in pain, yet a smiling look could not remain hidden in the depths of his eyes: "It seems that I have trained well in the [Soul Converging Technique]. Even Sister Ling had been deceived! There is a small island over there, let me show you my strength!"

A few reefs were scattered at the corner of the Billowing Star Sea, the smallest of which was only enough for a foothold, while the largest was 30 to 50 meters in diameter and had jagged rocks of grotesque shapes, much like the jagged teeth of a dog.

Li Yao, who stood barefooted on the sharp reef with his ten toes spread apart and deeply rooted into the rock much like the claws of a falcon, remained completely motionless even under the havoc of the powerful sea breeze.

Taking a deep breath, the glint in Li Yao's eyes was completely converged as though there were two deep wells, one could not find even the slightest bit of emotions.

Suddenly, squatting down, he stretched both his hands as back as he could as he moved his fingers to take the form of a claw as if he was a falcon—or a vulture—who was ready to soar into the sky!

The eyes of Ding Lingdang, who stood on another reef not too far away, lit up:

"Soul Igniting Law?"

Soul Igniting Law was an extension of the Soul Converging Technique.

The Soul Converging Technique taught the cultivators how to restrain their soul and was an ability to seal the life force of a cultivator.

The Soul Igniting Law, on the other hand, was just the opposite; it was a technique which allowed a cultivator to stimulate their soul to the limit in the blink of an eye, burning their life to their heart's content, and release an almost inexhaustible amount of light and heat to illuminate the entire universe!

In other words, the Soul Igniting Law taught the cultivators how to—metamorphosize!

Usually, one used the Soul Converging Technique to restrain their soul and lock their life force.

And in a case of an emergency, using the Soul Igniting Law would ignite the fire of life in the blink of an eye, allowing one to have superhuman abilities.

This was the battle mode of a cultivator.

Ding Lingdang was inexplicably excited in her heart; she was simply more excited than when she had just learned a Soul Igniting Law in the past.

And just like the Soul Converging Techniques, the Soul Igniting Laws was a collective name. There were hundreds of prevailing Soul Igniting Laws in the Heaven Origin Sector.

The Soul Igniting Law Li Yao was cultivating was called [Soaring Into Heaven in One Leap]!

The principle of this Soul Igniting Law was to imagine yourself as a falcon imprisoned in iron chains in the depths of a mountain valley.

While the other birds were freely flying in the sky amidst the clouds and playing along with the winds, the falcon which had been locked by iron chains could only stretch its neck and silently look at just a small piece of the sky from the desolate valley.

The iron chains locking it were very tight, deeply embedded into its flesh and blood; the falcon could not flutter its feathers in the least.

Over the years, it remained completely motionless, no more than like a piece of rock. The iron chains seemed to have imprisoned the falcon's spirit.

Even though it would occasionally watch its kinds sweeping past the sky as they let out cheerful chirps, its eyes seemed to be transfixed, revealing not even the slightest bit of movements within them.

But in secret...

Every second, it was growing!

Every second, it was madly accumulating its power!

Every second, its desire to use its wings to break the stars and suns was soaring to the highest heaven!

Finally, one day, when it had accumulated enough power, the falcon fiercely flapped its wings, breaking the iron chains and blasting the shackles imprisoning it as it let out a sharp cry which resounded throughout the heaven. As it soared into the sky with one flap, raising a hurricane that spanned over tens of thousands of kilometers, it became the king of all falcons.

Soaring into the sky in one leap!

Becoming the king of falcons in one go!

Li Yao's pair of eyes, which were completely calm and serene like a still, ancient well, suddenly flickered; the look in his eyes that remained dim, in just one tenth of a second, became as sharp as a falcon's.

A large amount of spiritual energy surged out from his every pore and took the form of feathers; the light-gray feathers, whose edges sketched out gilded edges, gave off an impression of a shocking power slumbering within.

"Cawwww!"

"Cawwww! Cawwww!"

From next to Li Yao came sounds that were as sharp as a falcon's screeches.

These were the sounds from the sudden expansion of spiritual energy, which produced ripples and friction in the air, leading to sounds like that of a raging storm.

"4th level of the Refinement Stage!"

Ding Lingdang simply couldn't believe the scene before her eyes. Her pair of pretty eyes flickered with perplexion as she muttered, "Mobilization of energy taking a form, you can actually simulate the beginning step of the creation of heaven and earth! This state can only be possible at the 4th level of the Refinement Stage, yet you can actually do this? How long has it been since you have awakened your spirit roots?"

"Hahahaha!"

Li Yao, who got praises from Ding Lingdang, felt as if he had just eaten honey in his heart. The little image of an expert he had somehow created, in the blink of an eye, was destroyed with his unbridled laughter.

"That's right, I am in the 4th level of the Refinement Stage. What do you think? Is it enough to fight with you!?"

Over these few months, apart from frantically absorbing the theoretical knowledge in the Heavenly Refining Tower, he would also run left and right amidst the ruins while carrying several tons of wrecked magical equipment. Meanwhile, his computation speed soared to the limit as he drew multiple modification plans.

In addition, he was the only pampered child of the Refining Department, so various resources were left for him to use. Just the crystals he used were ten times of that of any ordinary freshman.

Under such frantic cultivation, he finally broke through to the 4th level of the Refinement Stage three days ago!

"In a few months, you, from an ordinary person, had suddenly turned into a 4th level Refinement Stage cultivator—you are even faster than me! My insight is truly good. In just one glance, I had picked a purebred horse like you from the mules!"

Ding Lingdang self-complacently praised herself before once again ridiculing, "However, the fact remains the same. In front of an early stage Building Foundation Stage cultivator, you, a 4th level Refinement Stage cultivator, are a glass—jaw!"

"No, don't you see how cool my form is!?"

Li Yao remained unconvinced. With the shake of his pair of arms, the feathers created out of spiritual energy sparkled.

"What's the use of a cool form?"

Ding Lingdang disapprovingly said. "The Refinement Stage is altogether divided into 13 levels. From the 1st to the 5th level, it is collectively known as low-level, the 6th to the 10th is intermediate-level, the10th to the 13th level is high-level, and above high-level is peak-stage."

"In the early-stage of the Refinement Stage, spiritual energy can only be drawn into a virtual form. It just looks good and doesn't have any battle force. Amidst combat, I can blast your spiritual energy feathers away with just the poke of my finger!"

"Not to mention..."

Ding Lingdang slightly smiled: "In these few months, you have only been studying refining, which has an extremely high requirement for computation ability. Usually, you would have to come in contact with algorithms, theorems, array glyphs, and the likes. You have been cultivating pure spiritual energy, but so what?"

"In the end, a 4th level Refinement Stage cultivator like you, strictly speaking, is a 4th level creation-type Refinement Stage cultivator. There is still a certain difference when compared to a battle-type 4th level Refinement Stage cultivator."

"You are just like Jiang Tao, who you had once beaten. He was a pure creation-type cultivator. Even though he had achieved the 3rd level of the Refinement Stage, wasn't he still beaten into a pig by you?"

This statement completely calmed Li Yao down.

After having thought about it carefully, he realized Ding Lingdang was right. Over the course of these few months, his computation ability had fiercely increased, enough for him to draw his spiritual energy into a form. A majority of the virtual form he had forcibly stimulated came from relying on his computation ability, which was simply unable to be utilized during combat.

When he thought of this, he could not help but get a bit discouraged and, even more so, a bit unwilling.

If he could act as a good training partner for Ding Lingdang, then he could get 10 credits in one minute, 100 in 10 minutes, and 600 in 1 hour!

Of course, holding on for one hour was just a pipe dream.

During an exchange between experts, life and death were a matter of seconds, even more so with Ding Lingdang, who specialized in killing within seconds. Even a "Herculean Bear Devil" would be unable to stand against her for a minute.

"If I could persevere for three to five minutes, I can have 30-50 credits. Simply practicing twice a day will allow me to have a few thousand credits in a month. If I pass the specialized courses, then just maybe, I will be able to accumulate 10,000 credits by the end of the first semester."

"This way, I will have a whole semester next year, then I can go to the Wasteland and hunt for the remaining 30,000 credits!"

Having thought of this, Li Yao's eyes flashed with a sliver of resolution as he stressed each and every word while seriously looking at Ding Lingdang, "Sister Ling, please give me a chance. I want to—"

Even before he could finish, a red light suddenly flashed past his eyes. He felt as though a high-speed crystal train had fiercely crashed into his stomach!

While spewing blood, Li Yao, like a kite with a broken string, flew back and even broke 20-30 reefs before falling flat among the reefs.

For ten seconds, Li Yao's entire body was paralyzed; he could not move an iota.

And the drilling pain of his stomach felt as though it jolted into his heart like lightning bolt one after another, simulating each and every cell along the nerves; each second felt like a year.

Those 10 seconds... were as hard as ten entire years!

"W-what the hell..."

After 10 seconds, Li Yao barely regained the ability to speak. His voice sounded incomparably hoarse, meanwhile, he felt like he had been hit by a meteor.

Ding Lingdang jumped over in an unhurried and unperturbed manner. Parting her slim and slender legs, she, without the slightest bit of modesty, sat on his stomach.

"Rip!"

Li Yao’s shirt, which was blown into pieces by the impact, was lightly torn away by Ding Lingdang, revealing a distinct fist imprint on his stomach which had flames lingering around it and his skin over his stomach, which was lightly burned.

Ding Lingdang raised her orchid-like fingers and lightly poked upon the fist imprint.

"Hisss—"

Li Yao soon had tears flowing out of his eyes from the pain. He wanted to roll and writhe from pain, but his body remained out of his control; the pain seemed to have turned into invisible shackles, firmly locking his every nerve.

"You see? Just a light punch from me and you have turned into this. How are you even going to spar with me?"

Ding Lingdang's pursed her lips.

"Didn't you just blast a punch at me?"

Li Yao felt as though he was waking up from a dream.

Only after a minute did he regain the ability to control his body. His stomach was still in an awful lot of pain, and he felt as if his heart had been entangled inside thorns, where every beat of his heart was torture to him.

Ding Lingdang stretched out her jade-like finger and lightly shook it:

"Wrong, please don't use the word 'blast'. At least, only when I have used 90% of my strength can you call it 'blast'. I just lightly 'jabbed' a punch at you!"

"You said you wanted to give it a try. I know you are very stubborn and wouldn’t give up unless I promised you, so I let you give it a try. Do you now know how big of a difference there is between the Building Foundation Stage and Refinement Stage?"

"With your current strength, you can't even clearly see the trace of my fist. Just a silly poke of mine rendered you completely incapable in your place, leaving you in a state where I can beat you as I like. So what's the difference between beating a sandbag and you?"

"Alright, don't think about it too much. Take this, it’s an ointment. Smear it over your wounds and train here at ease, while I log on and post the mission."

Patting her butt, Ding Lingdang started to walk towards the edge of the island.

Right when her charming foot touched the cold sea, a low and anguishing growl suddenly came from behind her.

"Wait!"

TLN

Sorry guys, you might not know but at the start of this month I was in a minor accident, though I didn’t get injured much, I happened to have torn the muscles of my left leg and had internal bleeding. It was healing fine, but in mid of the month, I had the slightly healed muscles which had somehow connected torn again during a slight mishap in the bathroom. I went to the hospital and was on painkillers. But a couple days ago an extreme pain flared in my leg, rendering me almost unable to move my left leg, I went to the hospital and was hospitalized. Apparently, there was a huge bleeding(clot) still in my leg which is pressing my nerves and muscles. So I was under observation for 4 days and hence unable to translate any chapters, no laptops were allowed there. Anyway, I am back and I will cover whatever I miss during this week. And on another note, a happy news is soon to be bound. You will read it soon, take it as a surprise.

Chapter 154: As Though Two Completely Different People

Chapter 154: As Though Two Completely Different People

Ding Lingdang immediately retracted her foot. A sliver of surprise appeared in the pair of her pretty eyes as she turned around and looked at Li Yao; in her heart, she was astonished.

"It can't be! Was my heavy punch still not enough for this kid to give up? He really is too stubborn!"

Contrary to her expectation, she only saw Li Yao grimace in pain as he weakly said, "Sister Ling, can you help me out? I can't walk."

"What!"

Ding Lingdang found it annoying as well as amusing at the same time. With a step, she rushed over and ruthlessly nabbed Li Yao's ear: "You conceited brat!"

Only then did she pull him to an island at the corner of the reefs.

From the get go, the Billowing Star Sea was sold to cultivators as a place for them to train, and as such, it was preinstalled with various facilities.

The island was a natural resting place and a combat zone, and the seller had set up a supply point at the corner of the island where not only were commonly used drugs were placed but also a medical treatment pod as well.

"Armor?"

On one hand, Li Yao was smearing ointment, while on the other, he was curiously gazing at the supply point, discovering that apart from the drugs and medical treatment pod, two huge weapon caches were also there.

Among which, one was jam packed with chainsword-like close combat magical equipment, while the other had seven or eight sets of armor.

Ding Lingdang shrugged her shoulders:

"These came as a gift when I bought the rights to use the Billowing Star Sea for ten years. Think of it as promotional means of the seller; otherwise, it would be too expensive. But as I am a body practitioner, I seldom use these kinds of things. If you are so interested, you can play with them as you like."

Li Yao seemed to have thought of something:

"Sister Ling, what if I wore three to five pieces of armor? Wouldn't I be able to withstand your heavy punches?"

Ding Lingdang scoffed:

"You are so wrong. If you wore a couple pieces of armor, your defenses would indeed increase, but what about your speed and reaction? The higher the defense of the armor, the heavier they would be. You would have to carry a couple hundred pounds or even over a thousand pounds. Let alone quickly dodging my attacks, you wouldn’t even be unable to walk—I might as well hit wooden poles!"

"That might not be necessarily true!"

Li Yao was still very confident in his own capacity.

He would often go to the floating mountains of the Combat Department to observe the training of the Combat Department students. Over there, he discovered that a majority of them painstakingly trained their offense and defense, but in regards to carrying heavy weight, such as squatting and so on, they don't train enough.

In comparison, he, in order to modify 1st Generation Tai'e furnace, had to carry several tons of wrecked magical equipment and run on the rugged ruins every day.

Day after day, carrying such maddening training, his capacity to carry heavy weight happened to be absolutely outstanding and even better than a majority of the Combat Department senior students.

A mere few hundred pounds of armor was simply nothing for him!

Without further ado, Li Yao first wore a piece of light armor crafted from a Black Ice Crocodile's skin. Following that, he once again donned a chain armor completely crafted from metal and another set of turtle armor refined from a Star Spotted Turtle's shell. Finally, he hung over a hundred pieces of demon beast bone spikes above the turtle armor.

Li Yao wore a complete set that weighed 400 to 500 pounds, and when he walked, a "jingling" noise could be heard coming from his entire body, head to toe—it was completely horrendous!

"Huff..."

Li Yao did two squats, jumped up and down a couple of times off the jagged rocks to check if it was alright.

Donning so many layers of armor together was still not half as heavy as the crafting furnaces; his speed had only fallen by 20%.

Ding Lingdang coldly looked at him as she yawned and lazily said:

"A while ago, when you weren't even wearing the armor, you couldn’t even see from where my punch was coming from. Now that you have worn a couple hundred pounds of scrap, your reaction would be even slower. Isn't that nothing more than a wooden stake placed on the ground? You know, I can blast this armor with a few punches and kicks before beating you into a pig. This is simply not going to help me in training anyway."

A mysterious smile crept over Li Yao's face as he confidently said:

"Give me half a minute. After that, you can attack again. I guarantee, it will absolutely be nothing like before!"

"Oh?"

Ding Lindang was surprised for a moment. Noticing Li Yao's he-got-it-all-worked-it-out appearance, it gave off the impression that he wasn’t joking and got her interested as she said to herself, 'Could it be that this kid still has some trick left in his sleeve?'

"Alright, you have your half minute. However, let me warn you—if it is going to be just like before where you can't even take a hit and can’t stand for even half a second, then I will not give you a third opportunity."

Li Yao, of course, had a trick.

Li Yao's expression turned serious as he became calm and focused. His computational ability, like an invisible tide, continued to expand within his brain.

One by one, algorithms, formulae, theorems, and array glyphs flashed past his mind as lines of light, one after another, continuously expanded, collided, blended, and intertwined together to create an abstruse and complex crafting furnace blueprint.

Lub-dub, lub-dub, lub-dub, lub… dub...

His heartbeat was getting slower and slower, but as a matter of fact, his brain cell activity was increasing.

110%, 120%, 130%...

Li Yao had entered the super perceptive state!

His pupils contracted till they seemed as though they were black tips of a nail. He somewhat provocatively smiled at Ding Lingdang, simply wanting to bend his finger in an aloof manner and gesture for Ding Lingdang to come when suddenly—

The reef not far away from him appeared to be empty—Ding Lingdang was nowhere to be found!

Li Yao felt his scalp tingle as a trail of goosebumps went down his back; his entire spine felt as though it had been immersed in an ice-cold water. Meanwhile, his brain cell activity, in the blink of an eye, broke through to 150%, and in response, his computation ability frantically soared, breaking past every limit one after another!

Behind me! On the right! Three meters! Target approaching at high speed!

This conclusion was not that he "saw" or "perceived", it was completely derived from 200% brain cell activity of super perceptive state by Li Yao!

"Move 37mm towards the left while turning 36.7 degrees counterclockwise. There is a 56% chance that I might be able to avoid the attack!"

Within one tenth of a second, his brain issued a command that was as fast as lightning.

However, his body was like an old bull pulling a broken cart; from his teleneurons to every strand of his muscle, they were all slow to process the commands madly issued by his brain.

In half of a second, Li Yao happened to move only by 29mm and turn counterclockwise by 31.4 degrees.

"Whizz!"

As if a high-speed crystal train had brushed past his body, setting off a super storm, Li Yao felt a cold feeling seeping through his waist which was followed by a burning sensation. When he lowered his head, he noticed that three to four layers of the armor on the right side of his waist had been torn away by the edge of Ding Lingdang's punch.

"So terrifying!"

Li Yao was tongue-tied. If he was even one tenth of a second slower in dodging, her punch would have truly struck him. Even if he was protected by four to five layers of armor, he could have possibly been sent flying away from the impact and rendered unconscious on the spot.

Now, he had a deeper understanding of the fierceness of Ding Lingdang, this terrifying dragon in a human form.

However, he didn't know that Ding Lingdang was ten times more surprised than him in her heart.

Using her big toes, she beautifully stood upon a sharp reef not so far away. Her cheeks happened to be slightly puffed up, and a lump had even appeared upon her glabella from frowning as her face was filled with perplexity. She could not understand how Li Yao had a quicker reaction than before even though he was bearing a couple hundred pounds of armor.

However, since her childhood, she had never been someone who liked racking her brain; if she encountered any unreasonable problem, then she would rather use her fists than her brain!

Ding Lingdang let out a long howl, whereupon the bells tied around her ankles burst forth with clear and melodious rings. Her big toes suddenly blasted the tip of the sharp reef into pieces before she herself transformed into a red beam as she whizzed past!

"Gotcha!"

Under the super perceptive state, Li Yao's brain cells were madly activated, allowing his five senses to be substantially elevated. Despite this, he was barely able to notice Ding Lingdang's quick-as-a-ghost-silhouette.

However, as a result, his perception of pain had also been increased by ten-fold. Although the punch from a moment ago had not struck him, the wind generated from the punch had nevertheless seeped into his flesh, bringing an excruciating pain which felt as though his heart and bones were being stabbed, making him drenched in cold sweat, and causing his eyes to be constantly twitching.

Li Yao tightly clenched his teeth as he forcibly endured the pain. His brain cell activity was once again elevated, frantically calculating Ding Lingdang's speed, angle, and movement trajectory as well as the direction of her next step.

When Ding Lingdang blasted a simple punch aiming at his abdomen, he even miraculously raised his pair of arms and crossed them against his abdomen to defend.

"BOOM!"

Three to four layers of protection on his arms were completely blown away, while Li Yao flew seven to eight meters away. His pair of arms were as though they had turned into two dry, burning branches; nevertheless, he didn't fall!

The depths of Ding Lingdang's eyes flickered with a blood-red brilliance as her face revealed a dense, murderous aura. She no longer gave him even one tenth of a second to do any calculations. In the blink of an eye, she appeared before Li Yao with her slender leg raised high, and without any hesitation, kicked downwards like a giant, hacking axe. All of a sudden, Li Yao was smashed into the reef, completely breaking the armor on his abdomen and leaving a deep dent on the iron armor.

Li Yao spewed out a mouthful of blood towards the sky and was no longer able to even crawl. Meanwhile, his brain had, in the blink of an eye, withdrawn from the super perceptive state and was all muddled up.

Ding Lingdang was relieved and refreshed. Bearing a smile on her face, she squatted down next to Li Yao and helped him remove the armor while gazing at him with an inconceivable look in her eye as she clicked her tongue in admiration and said:

"You are one little monster. I truly underestimated you a little bit. If I was even a little bit inattentive, you might have created a big miracle! A while ago, you could not even withstand a punch of mine, but now, you had actually dodged and blocked my punches. That's truly amazing!"

"However, your endurance is truly poor. During combat, you can not always dodge or block an enemy's attack, as you will always be hit. At that time, the ability to take a beating plays a particularly important role."

"You only lasted 10 seconds before you could not carry on and are still very far from lasting for 1 minute!"

"You might as well train here in the Billowing Star Sea for a couple of months. When you get to the next semester, just maybe, you will have the qualifications to act as my sparring partner."

"Cheer up, Little Brother!"

After a few words, Li Yao wasn't able to clearly hear anything at all; his mind was entirely preoccupied with the frustration of failing to last for an entire minute.

"Too weak, my endurance is truly too weak. Even after donning three to four layers of armor, I still could not withstand one blow of her. 10 seconds, I could only hold on for 10 seconds. I am too far away from one minute!"

"If I could increase my endurance a bit, then as long as it is even a little bit, I would be able to withstand three to five from her attacks, and with the keen perception and supercomputing ability under super perceptive state, hopefully, I may be able to last for a minute!"

"Let's see, if there isn't any exercise to increase endurance..."

Li Yao's pair of eyes suddenly seemed to be burning with fire. He, flinging caution to the wind, jumped up but was then struck again by a pain at his waist, causing him to bow down letting out an "Ouch!".

"Are you alright? Don't scare me, did I attack too heavily?"

Ding Lingdang was blaming herself a little.

"Will, will you be at home tonight?" Li Yao was extremely excited, completely forgetting the pain.

"Yes!" Ding Lingdang was rather baffled.

"Can you wait for me for three hours? No no no, five hours. 12 o’clock midnight, your house, in the bedroom, don't leave till we meet!"

Li Yao's eyes bloomed with a vicious gleam, casting a covetous look at Ding Lingdang.

Chapter 155: Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining

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Having left Ding Lingdang's house, Li Yao, at a lightning fast speed, rushed right away to the floating mountain of the Combat Department and immediately dived into the Super Perception Cabin.

"Entering the super perceptive state, brain cell activity, 331%, limit reached!"

In the blink of an eye, Li Yao's consciousness had appeared in the depths of the Heavenly Refining Tower.

Li Yao didn't hesitate for even one second and rushed straight away to the southeast corner.

Where there were two rows of bookshelves, stacked inside of which were methods for tempering the body.

During the ancient cultivators' world, the refining environment was extremely harsh; the furnaces weren't sealed well enough, and at any moment, it was quite possible that hot gases with temperatures as high as a couple of thousand degrees or extremely corrosive gases and molten ingredients would leak out.

In addition, due to the backward means of forging, many of the processing like cutting, grinding, and so on and so forth had to be forcibly done by the refiner himself.

Therefore, ancient refiners paid great attention to tempering their body.

They were like ancient blacksmiths; often, they were as robust and tall as a bull, and all of them had great physical strength.

Without a strong physique, they would neither be able to raise a few hundred pound hammer nor would they dare to get closer to a crafting furnace that was a couple thousand of degrees hot. In such an event, how would they be able to refine anything?

The first level of the Heavenly Refining Tower had stocked many wondrous and odd skills to temper the body.

Li Yao swept a glance before he reached out towards the [Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining], which was also known as the "First Tempering Canon of the Hundred Smelting Clan"!

The [Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining] was the quenching body exercise created by the Hundred Smelting Clan's Elder, "Master Tiemu"[1].

Although he didn't achieve too much in refining, for Master Tiemu, when it came to the physique, he was second to none in the Hundred Smelting Clan!

Rumor has it that during a refining mishap where the furnace had exploded, the subsequent refiners had been enveloped in hot and poisonous gases that even Golden Core experts did not dare to approach casually.

At that time, only Master Tiemu, who was in the peak level of the Building Foundation Stage, rushed into the refining room and rescued his three fellow disciples just by the virtue of his terrifying physique, astonishing the entire sect. And ever since then, the [Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining] had become the first tempering canon of the Hundred Smelting Clan!

According to the legend, since childhood, Master Tiemu had a weak constitution. He didn’t even have the qualifications to be a "metal forge worker" and enter the metal forging room, let alone the qualifications to be a refiner.

However, he was someone who was extremely crazy about refining techniques. In his free time, he would squat down at the entrance of the metal forging room and watch his fellow senior and junior brothers forging heaven and earth treasures.

Over time, he suddenly thought:

'If steel, through repeated forging, can have its impurities removed constantly and change its internal structure, becoming so hard that it is nigh impossible to destroy…'

'Then can the human body follow suit? Can it become incomparably strong after going through repeated tempering?'

If it was any ordinary person who was struck with this kind of thought, perhaps he would have thrown it to the back of his mind in the blink of an eye, treating it as nothing but nonsense.

However, Master Tiemu was a madman. He actually grabbed an iron hammer and fiercely hammered his own body in the very same method as he had seen his senior and junior brothers forge the steel.

At first, of course, he had his muscles ruptured and bones broken from the hammering, would be left vomiting large amounts of blood, and regarded as a big joke by others.

Fortunately, the Hundred Smelting Clan wasn't some ordinary sect of Jianghu; they had wondrous pills and miraculous panaceas, so besides some pain and injuries, the rest could be treated.

Just like that, Master Tiemu hammered his own body black and blue time and time again, and after a decade of experimentation, Master Tiemu embarked on a road which had never been taken before.

After a hundred years, before he had fallen, Master Tiemu had unremittingly improved his tempering exercise and finally created the［Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining］exercise.

In light of Master Tiemu's boasting in the introduction of the［Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining］, this exercise was one-of-its-kind in the entire cultivation world; it was a marvelous exercise which could increase its user’s strength by taking a beating.

Any enemy's attack was equal to getting tempered by the iron hammer—the fiercer the attack was, the quicker one's strength would elevate!

Once the exercise had been cultivated to the highest level, one's flesh and blood would turn as indestructible as heaven and earth material—"an indestructible body which even the gods won't be able to destroy"!

Although he was undoubtedly boasting, even Master Tiemu himself had also not achieved "an indestructible body which even the gods won't be able to destroy" and had nevertheless fallen.

However, after cultivating the [Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining], the body would be like steel and iron, your endurance would be greatly elevated, and this was 100% true.

"Should I cultivate this exercise?"

Li Yao muttered to himself.

As the first tempering canon of the Hundred Smelting Clan, it was obvious the [Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining] was not so easy to train; he would need to spend a large amount of time and energy.

If it was just for earning a few credits from Ding Lingdang, then it was seemingly not worthwhile.

He might as well finish modifying the 1st Generation Tai'e furnace a bit earlier and craft some magical equipment so that he could exchange them with his fellow students for credits.

However, the 1st Generation Tai'e was a small-scale crafting furnace and its production capacity was extremely limited.

And not to mention, he was also a beginner who was learning refining for the first time. Even if he was somehow successful in refining at every attempt, how many magical equipment could he craft?

Besides, others would not necessarily trade with him. The institute had naturally provided some open channels to the public so that the students could have a variety of traditional magical equipment at very low credits, which was enough for their day-to-day training needs.

These traditional magical equipment had all been continuously improved by the major sects over the course of hundred years, and the final form was the condensed from the blood and effort of countless experienced refiners.

Li Yao was not at all confident that he could suddenly craft a magical equipment that could compete and transcend traditional magical equipment.

"In the end, it still comes down to me going to the depths of the Wasteland to hunt demon beasts!"

"With the 1st Generation Tai'e crafting furnace, I can only craft some comparatively special magical equipment for my own use."

"However, at the very least, I still need to get stronger so that I would not be dragging the team behind."

"Although cultivating [Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining] will not increase my offense strength, it would greatly improve my endurance, which is equal to increasing my survivability in the battlefield. Even if I was attacked by a demon beast, I would not end up dead just from its one attack."

"But for a refiner, is it enough?!"

Li Yao, who grew up in the Magical Equipment Graveyard laden with crisis everywhere, had always deeply felt a sense of insecurity in his heart.

Although he dreamt of becoming a refiner, he had never thought that he could protect himself just by relying on magical equipment.

And having exchanged blows with Ding Lingdang twice, it had, even more so, made him realize how big of a gap there was between him and a true expert.

"With my current strength, even if my entire body is covered in magical equipment, I would still be completely suppressed when facing an early stage Building Foundation Stage cultivator."

"And in the depths of the Wasteland, demon beasts who are even stronger than early stage Building Foundation Stage cultivators can be found everywhere!"

"For the future, I must get stronger. At the very least, I have to first improve my endurance!"

When he thought of all this, Li Yao, with all his concentration, entered the world of the [Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining].

"Whizz! Whizz! Whizz! Whizz!"

Numerous thoughts started flying out of the book before fusing with Li Yao's consciousness. One after another, sitting postures, acupoint charts, and the body structure entered his soul.

The key point of the [Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining] lied in the three layers—internal, central, and external.

The internal layer meant the insides of the body. One needed to thoroughly comprehend the internal structure of

99 different kinds of heaven and earth treasure and consider oneself as these 99 heaven and earth treasures, imagining oneself to be going through forging and expelling all kinds of impurities from within the body so that the body structure would become denser.

The central layer referred to the surface of the body. One needed to stimulate all 180 acupoints so that under the ruthless bombardment of enemy attacks, one could guide the destructive force of the attacks through these 180 acupoints and infuse them into various parts of the bodies, thereby cleansing the bone marrow, reinforcing the muscles, and thoroughly remolding the body.

And the most crucial was the outer layer. One needed to release his or her spiritual energy outside to inspire it to congeal into a special cushion structure that could mitigate enemy attacks, distributing its impact uniformly, which was to be transported to inside the body through the 180 acupoints.

Obviously, the enemy wasn't some kind of an idiot; he would certainly mobilize all his strength to attack just one small part during the fight, so how could the power be distributed to the 180 acupoints? Was he going to attack 180 acupoints simultaneously? It was not some kind of massage!

"The most crucial step is to create a cushion structure using spiritual energy which will help in the distributing the enemy's strength into 180 places!"

"If there isn't a cushion, then under just one of Ding Lingdang’s heavy punches, I would definitely be blown away. How would I then temper my body?"

"Cushion, cushion..."

A deep frown appeared on Li Yao's forehead.

He discovered that the cushion structure proposed by Master Tiemu was too complicated. To his surprise, he would have to stimulate the spiritual energy out of his body and congeal it into tens of thousands of small, spring-like air masses all around the body.

When bombarded by the enemy's punch, these tens of thousands of "spiritual energy springs" would be dispersed. Not to mention dispersing the energy into 180 places, it was quite possible to disperse them into 1,800 places, and naturally, the destructive force would be mitigated to the lowest point, which was not only insufficient to cause injuries but could also be used to cultivate.

The problem was that Li Yao, this insignificant cultivator of the 4th level of the Refinement Stage, didn't have such fine control over his spiritual energy. It was simply impossible for him to divide his spiritual energy into tens of thousands of groups and then congeal each group into small, spring-like structures as well as arranging them into a certain pattern.

"This is ridiculous! Even a peak level Building Foundation Stage cultivator would not necessarily able to so exquisitely control their spiritual energy. This exercise is simply not suitable for a beginner disciple!"

"No wonder it's the first tempering canon of Hundred Smelting Clan. However, in Ou Yezi's memories, besides Master Tiemu, not many people had cultivated this exercise. That's why only a few scrolls of this exercise are placed here!"

"That's not right! How did Master Tiemy cultivate it in the beginning?"

Supporting his cheek with his arm, Li Yao pondered for a long time before he thought of one possibility.

I suppose, at the very beginning, Master Tiemu practiced in accordance with the [Golden Bell Cover], [Iron Skin], and [Thirteen Taibao Brutal Training].[2]

Later, he accidentally created this exercise and became a true master of a generation. And when he was writing the exercise, he, in order to leave his name down in history, could naturally not reveal the truth.

Otherwise, if he honestly said that his [Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining] was born out of [Golden Bell Cover] and [Iron Skin], then where would the style be in that?

Of course, he needed to write it as extremely mysterious and abstruse, making it harder to understand. Only then would it show that he was an extraordinary and refined cultivator.

This could also be considered as a bad habit of ancient cultivators. Many ancient cultivators, when they were compiling a cultivation technique, liked to write it as incomprehensible and mysterious jargon which could be summed up in one sentence—they could not talk in human words!

After criticizing for a while, Li Yao suddenly thought:

'In order to cultivate [Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining], the most crucial part is the cushion. There can't just be one spring-method acting as a cushion."

‘It is really amazing that Master Tiemu can think of spring structure in his era, but now in the modern era, there are varieties of cushions!’

Li Yao was a refiner, and the cushion was one of the very important concepts in refining. Over these few months, he had learned countless types of traditional cushions.

However, after thinking about them carefully, he was disappointed to find that every cushion structure was very complex and was nigh impossible for a 4th level Refinement Stage cultivator to simulate.

"What’s the most basic cushion type..."

Li Yao racked his brain. Suddenly, from the depths of his soul came a "bang" sound—something had exploded.

It was an airbag.

The airbags that were installed in flying shuttles.

Flying shuttles were extremely fast, so if any accident occurred, it was highly likely for its rider to lose his or her life.

So the sect who manufactured flying shuttles had a large number airbags installed in the shuttle. Usually, they were deflated, but in the event of a collision, they would inflate in the blink of an eye, inflating to a hundred times of its original size, providing a vital "cushion" to the passengers!

TLN:

[1] [Tiemu] - Literally means "iron wood".

[2]: Golden Bell Cover, Iron Skin, and Thirteen Taibao Brutal Training are ancient martial arts of China, which focuses on the body. One would not be harm by knives and swords if one has mastered these exercises.

Chapter 156: I Am Going to Bully You as I Wish

Chapter 156: I Am Going to Bully You as I Wish

Late at night, 11:55 PM.

Ding Lingdang, who was sitting cross-legged on the bed, stared right at a big and tall boy and kept on shouting:

"Duan Zeyu, luckily, I have always regarded you to be a firm and unyielding man. I can't believe that I would be requesting a little help from you, for you to be my sparring partner. Can't you give me a thrashing for thirty to fifty minutes every day? You are not going to be unfaithful to a friend, right!?"

The boy called Duan Zeyu had his face turn ashen from fright as he secretly complained in his heart.

Although he was a senior student who was about to graduate and had reached the 9th level of the Refinement Stage, how could he be an opponent of Ding Lingdang, this wild dragoness?

It would most likely be him who would be trampled upon by her for thirty to fifty minutes every day. It would simply better to die than live, and that's what you call a "little help"!?

"Professor Ding, since I have joined the Iron Fist Club, you have been the Iron Fist Club's president and have overseen our brothers and sisters training. Every day, you had taken a lot of care of us."

"So, I truly respect you as a senior and I very much want to help you!"

"But, it just so happens that I have teamed up with several fellow students and have taken a task to hunt demon beasts in the depths of the Wasteland. I think... it will take one month… no, 3-5 months... no, for a year or so. I will not be in the institute. I am truly unable to be your sparring partner, I am extremely sorry! Hey! It seems someone is calling me. I’m sorry, Professor Ding!"

Duan Zeyu quickly logged out of the spiritual crane messenger.

"A year or so? Why don't you just say eight or ten years!"

Ding Lingdang was unable to restrain her anger. Having kicked away the crystal processor, she took out a fan and vigorously started fanning. Her face was laced with brooding, which she was unable to vent, as her towering chest heaved up and down.

For finding a good sparring partner to be this hard, it was truly out of her expectation.

Sparring was a very difficult task. If her sparring partner was too weak, he or she would be unable to withstand a few of her punches and kicks, thereby losing the significance of sparring. And the students who were comparatively strong all happened to be venturing into the depths of Wasteland to hunt demon beasts or making a name for themselves in the arena, so why would they bother to become a human sandbag for her?

In addition, Ding Lingdang, this wild dragoness in human skin, was quite famous in the Grand Desolate War Institution. Everyone knew that she was a martial art fanatic. Although she was in the early stages of the Building Foundation Stage, once she went crazy, only the devil would know how much brutality she might ultimately unleash!

If she increased the credits a bit, then under the temptation of the credits, someone might muster up his or her courage, or perhaps someone who wasn't afraid of death might apply.

However, even a teacher had a limit on how many credits they could give.

If it were the professors or associate professors who could be considered seniors, they could certainly issue priceless tasks.

But Ding Lingdang, this young professor who had just graduated this year and remained in institute to work, was only at the level of an "assistant", the lowest ranked professor in the university.

The credits she could freely allocate were sparse; 10 credits per minute was already her limit.

Thus, this entire night, no one had applied for her mission. And when she brazenly asked some senior students, these steel-willed men, whilst keeping a straight face, actually started shivering as though they were in the jaws of a demon beast and equivocally came up with some excuses to stall—not even one person was willing to be her sparring partner!

"These wimps, isn't there anyone who has guts like Li Yao!?"

Ding Lingdang angrily muttered to herself.

At this point, a crisp and melodious voice floated over from downstairs: "Li Yao has arrived! Li Yao has arrived!"

The corners of Ding Lingdang's lips raised, seemingly as if they revealed a smile of understanding.

Somehow, every time she saw Li Yao, her mood would involuntarily get better.

Although, Li Yao’s, this kid's, character was somewhat extreme, and he was sometimes ignorant of how high the heavens was and how deep the earth was and even a little silly... so much so that Ding Lingdang could not help but have an urge to crush him into two...

Nevertheless, compared to those wimps, in her eyes, he seemed more like a man.

Only such a man had the qualifications to be her, Ding Lingdang's, dear brother—peas in a pod!

"Come up quickly, let me see what kind of pleasant surprise you are going to bring in a mere five hours!"

Ding Lingdang happily jumped down from the bed, and without even wearing her slippers, went to welcome him barefooted!

Sure enough, Li Yao did bring her a fair share of pleasant surprises!

When the two once again entered the Billowing Star Sea and appeared on a rocky small island, as Ding Lingdang casually blasted a punch, she immediately discovered that something wasn't right.

When her knuckles were just 5 mm away from Li Yao's stomach, a "swish" sound suddenly burst forth in the air.

It was as though a mass of gas had suddenly expanded, seemingly as if she had ruthlessly smashed a big bubble.

Of course, the big bubble wasn't enough to block her heavy punch, but her momentum, which was originally gathered at one point, was dispersed in multiple directions and was scattered and divided into seven or eight streams of power which respectively struck various parts of Li Yao's body.

Li Yao, who was wearing four layers of armor, had surprisingly blocked this punch. Although he was grimacing in pain, he was nevertheless alive and kicking!

"Not bad, not bad! In five hours, not only have you have mastered a new battle skill, but you can even forcibly block my punch!"

"I guess you should have controlled the spiritual energy to simulate some way to disperse the power, right? Alright, warm up is finished. I will now let you experience this sister's true strength!"

Ding Lingdang seemed to be burning with eagerness to have a go; she was incredibly excited. From her neck to her ear, she was flushed red, and even her ear lobes were as red as fire. In the blink of an eye, her speed had increased by a level, and Li Yao was completely engulfed by something akin to a red tide!

"Boom!"

Li Yao felt as if he was amidst frightening billows and terrifying waves, seemingly as if he was in the center of a hurricane where the ear-splitting sound of waves frantically bombarded his eardrums, causing him to even have labored breathing and heart rate.

He had already entered the super perceptive state, and his computational ability had soared to limit. Not only was he calculating Ding Lingdang's speed, angle of attack, and the possible location where she was going to appear, but more importantly, he was also controlling his spiritual energy to form small air bags in front of him one after another, which exploded in a timely manner before Ding Lingdang's punches struck the target.

To do all this, the computational ability required was much higher than that needed for modifying the 1st Generation Tai'e furnace!

Li Yao felt as though his every brain cell was on fire; every second, countless crystal bombs were exploding in his brain.

However, what was even more difficult to endure was the pain, which was so severe that even a minute fraction of it could not be described in words!

The principle of [Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining] was to distribute the enemy's power and stimulate one’s 180 acupoints. This kind of stimulation would bring its user an unimaginable amount of pain that any ordinary person would not be able to endure.

Under the super perceptive state, Li Yao’s neurons were highly perceptive, thus the pain he felt was ten times sharper than usual.

With the two things superimposed, it brought him a feeling of hovering between life and death, which let alone ordinary person, even an ordinary cultivator would not necessarily be able to endure!

"Hiss..."

Li Yao's pair of eyes turned crimson. He was so overwhelmed with pain that he wished to die. He forcibly emptied his brain and cut-off the connection between his nociceptors and his brain while silently meditating:

"I am a piece of iron, I am a piece of steel, I am not afraid of pain, I am not afraid of pain. This pain is nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing! Only with Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining would my body be indestructible to the point that not even a god can destroy!"

In these couple dozen second, the meditation had played its role; he truly didn't feel the slightest bit of pain. He had entered a profound intangible state where there was only a series of numbers continuously flashing in his brain. Ding Lingdang's each and every action was accurately broken down into speed, angle of attack, distance, and just right before the heavy punch was going to land upon him, he would always congeal a bubble out of spiritual energy.

However, Ding Lingdang very soon understood the principle of dispersing her power using the spiritual energy bubble. She was a martial art genius and thus immediately came up with a way to break this. Her every attack was followed by two layers of powerful energy; the first layer of energy was as sharp as a needle and would first pierce the spiritual energy bubble, which was then followed by the true attack that could overturn mountains and seas.

This change was simply out of Li Yao's expectation, and he was barely able to resist two of her next moves before having to surrender. Ding Lingdang’s kick had blasted him twenty odd meters away, and the armor over his abdomen had been completely smashed, causing even his sternum to faintly crack.

"Hiss..."

Li Yao, who was lying flat on his back in the midst of broken stones, looked at the sky in frustration. It was as if he had returned to the days in the memories of Ou Yezi when he had been first ravaged by "Titan" using the One Hundred and Eight Hands Chaos Gale Hammer Technique.

Ding Lingdang, with a smile laced on her face, appeared before him.

At present, the depression she had was swept away; she was completely refreshed, and her eyes were shining brightly as though she had just finished enjoying a scrumptious feast.

And naturally, Li Yao was this "scrumptious feast".

Li Yao's hands and feet had completely gone numb and could not move even a bit. All he could do was ruthlessly stare at her with a face filled with grievance and unwillingness.

Ding Lingdang, who was smearing medication on him, said with a laugh:

"Don't blame this sister for attacking with a heavy-hand. Who asked you to come with such a strange battle skill, causing this sister to be eager to have a go and be unable to control myself? That's why you have been beaten to this. However, you are also not without any gains. Guess how long have you persevered?"

"How long is it? Have I—"

In the blink of an eye, Li Yao was enlivened as he immediately sat up.

"Hahaha, sixty-two seconds! You are truly a monstrous genius!"

Ding Lingdang bent her jade-like finger and flicked Li Yao's nose.

Li Yao was wild with joy. God knows where he even got the strength to be able to actually jump two meters high in the air before he started to dance with joy: "I did it! I have truly persisted for a minute—I have earned 10 credits!"

Although it was just ten credits, he felt so happy, seemingly as if he had gotten a hundred credits. It was simply forcibly seizing 10 credits from the jaws of a T-rex!

"Don't get excited. Let me tell you some bad news, you’ll have to brace yourself."

Ding Lingdang's face was filled with a strange look: "Although you had persisted for a minute, you have never registered for my task on the internet and neither have you filmed the entire spar, so this was not a formal spar and you won't be able to get any credits"

"Otherwise, with just the two of us here, wouldn't I be able to simply provide you 100 credits by saying that you have sparred with me for 10 minutes?"

"The credit system is the foundation of the Grand Desolate War Institution, thus every credit transaction has to go through rigorous reviews. Without any evidence, no one is able to arbitrarily send credits."

"Therefore, if you want to have the 10 credits, you have to first go to the net and receive the task, then start a video recording magical equipment, and then once again persist for one minute. Now I believe that you now have the qualification to be my sparring partner!"

"What!?"

It seemed as if Li Yao had been struck by lightning; his entire body was completely transfixed in a dancing posture, and for a long time, he did not recover from his stupor.

His eyes constantly flickered with a sharp murderous gleam which was even sharper than a saber.

"You mean to say... I was beaten by you in vain."

"Technically, yes."

"Then why didn't you say so at the start!?"

"How could I have known that you would have been so fierce and would be able to persist for so long? I believed that I would be able to wrap you up with a few kicks and punches! Oh my, really worthy of the cultivation genius unearthed by me, Ding Lingdang. You are so different that those ordinary shrimp soldiers, especially in taking a beating!"

"You—"

"A man should not be so small-minded. How about I let you hit me for a minute to let you vent your anger, ok?"

Ding Lingdang started to act shamelessly.

Li Yao was about to explode in anger. He had this hideous look on his face as he ruthlessly stared at Ding Lingdang, seemingly as if he would swallow her in one bite.

In contrast, Ding Lingdang had a completely innocent look. Blinking her eyes for a long time, she finally could not hold in her laughter. She was laughing to the point that she was shaking and even tears were coming out from the corner of her eyes.

"My dear silly brother, I am just joking with you! This island is the combat zone of the Billowing Star Sea, so there is a hidden recording system at the corners that would automatically record videos of a fight."

"So as long as you have this videos, you can go online and complete the formalities and you will get the 10 credits!"

Li Yao was completely dumbfounded; he was stunned for a long time before he could ask, "Why did you lie to me?"

Ding Lingdang broke out into a laugher and replied:

"Because I suddenly wished to see you get angry. Because you can’t beat me and could only secretly sulk on the side. And then there’s that look when you were ruthlessly staring at me—yes, this look you have now, the look when you are about to explode in anger, yet can do nothing. It is so cute!"

"What the hell kind of thinking do you have?" Li Yao completely could not understand her.

"Generally, doesn't an elder sister have this kind of mentality towards her younger brother? The feeling of wanting to bully him without reason!" Ding Lingdang replied as though it was right and proper.

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and gritted his teeth: "Younger brothers will grow up. Someday, when I am stronger than you, I will bully you in turn!"

"Hahaha, that is impossible!" Ding Lingdang, while laughing, resolutely and decisively proclaimed.

"And if it comes true someday?" Li Yao's eyes bloomed with a dangerous gleam which could be found in the eyes of a vulture.

"If it came true someday, then it's ok to bully this sister as you like!" Ding Lingdang said in a tone as though she was not at all concerned about this; she simply didn't place this in her heart.

Chapter 157: Arrival of a Group of High School Students

Chapter 157: Arrival of a Group of High School Students

From this night on, Li Yao, in order to ruthlessly bully Ding Lingdang someday, frantically started cultivating.

In any case, he had already memorized various theories and classics by heart. All that was left was to continue to experiment with them and assimilate all kinds of obscure and abstruse theories through experience. It was like grinding a stone with water; it requires time and effort. These theories were something which needed a lifetime of study, so he could not rush it.

Li Yao simply reduced the time he spent studying theories in the Heavenly Refining Tower and spent a fair share of hours in the depths of the Billowing Star Sea amidst the invisible undercurrents.

While he was resisting the pressure in the Billowing Star Sea, his brain would be madly operating to utilize the Micro-Particle Algorithm, Solar Corona Nine Algorithms, Mustard Seed Algorithm... to create air bubbles one after another.

It was simply impossible to use a single air bubble to deal with Ding Lingdang, this wild dragoness in human skin.

Gradually, Li Yao's control over spiritual energy had reached a whole new level. He no longer simulated a single air bubble but instead a large air bubble that was lined with another air bubble which also had a set of seven or eight small air bubbles. Layer upon layer of air bubbles were superimposed to create something akin to an invisible armor which was firmly guarding his entire body.

But even so, it was still difficult for him to gain any advantage while fighting Ding Lingdang.

Ding Lingdang was a martial arts genius. The bubble formation which Li Yao had painstakingly spent time and effort to create was often broken by her as long as she came into contact with it for a couple dozen seconds. She was able to completely see through everything and was able to come up with ways to deal with it.

Which was then immediately followed up with some Purple Sun Palm, or Rainbow Punch, or Golden Lightning Finger, or Fierce Tiger Killer, or Meteorite Kick... She would shower him with 30 to 50 strange and marvelous skills.

Even if Li Yao's weight-bearing capacity had once again increased so much that he could don seven or eight layers of armor alongside two shields crafted from pure steel, it was all to no avail; at most, he would stick for an extra 10-20 seconds before he was ruthlessly blown away.

In the maddening training of the first ten days, he never persisted for more than a minute and a half; the best result was 1 minute 29 seconds.

Fortunately, for the first couple dozen seconds, Ding Lingdang didn't clearly understand the structure of the air bubbles. Every time she blasted a punch, her power would be broken down to a couple dozen stream of powers which were infused into different acupoints using the [Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining].

The[Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining] was worthy to be the first tempering canon of the Hundred Smelting Clan. After grasping the abstruse principle of cushioning as well as forcefully enduring the inhumane pain, Li Yao discovered that his body was transforming at a speed visible to the naked eye; his body was getting stronger and tougher as though what was located underneath his skin wasn't some strands of muscles but a bunch of thick steel bars.

And every time he was hit by Ding Lingdang, his body would get stronger by a point, allowing him to endure an even stronger blow.

Starting from the eleventh day, he gradually reduced the number of layers of armor. From the very beginning with seven to eight layers of armor, he had slowly reduced to four to five layers, and then two to three.

Li Yao pleasantly discovered that along with the reduction of armor, his speed was rapidly elevating and his endurance, with the help of[Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining], was frantically improving. At best, under the wanton bombardment of Ding Lingdang, he could hold on for an entire two minutes!

On the thirteenth day, Li Yao, with the help of his crystal processor-like computational ability and his stronger body cultivated via[Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining], could occasionally withstand three minutes of Ding Lingdang's crazy attacks.

Ding Lingdang was incomparably astonished by his transformation. She was also getting more and more satisfied with him being her sparring partner. Every day, the two would train once in the morning and once in the evening. Although Li Yao was completely suppressed, at the very least, he wasn't knocked out in a second and could also put up a struggle once in awhile.

Originally Li Yao thought that with such high intense combat training, his progress in refining skills would be affected

However, the results were contrary to his expectation.

Every time he was finished sparring with Ding Lingdang, his brain was particularly active and his thinking was especially sharp. Many times, the problems he was unable to solve were often smoothly solved.

Many bright ideas would frantically flash inside his brain, even in the midst of battling Ding Lingdang when she was punching him.

It seems that the human body and brain perfectly complemented each other.

A strong body would, in turn, stimulate the brain to become even more powerful.

Needless to say, frantically calculating Ding Lingdang's line of attack under the super perceptive state was in itself a terrifying exercise for the brain!

Just like this, Li Yao had not only earned many credits from Ding Lingdang, but he was also progressing steadily as he cleared several difficult refining specialized courses, allowing his total credits to almost reach the 10,000 mark.

Unknowingly, the first semester was about to finish.

Finally, Li Yao had completed the final modification plan and was preparing to modify his very own first crafting furnace.

He had everything worked out. By the end of the semester, he would be finished modifying the 1st Generation Tai'e crafting furnace, and during the winter break, he was also not planning to return to the Floating Spear City; on the contrary, he, while taking advantage of the quiet and serene institute, had decided to conveniently craft a few magical equipment.

While waiting for the beginning of the next semester when he could vigorously sweep the credits!

For an entire three days, Li Yao was holed up in the warehouse, blankly staring at the scattered wreckages.

Under his fierce gaze that appeared as though it could even melt steel, every piece of cold wreckage seemed to have come to life as they struggled, jumped, and danced.

Upon the break of dawn on the fourth day, Li Yao stood up and took a long deep breath before he finished a whole set of exercises, following which he slowly and unperturbedly exercised his wrist, which made "crack crack" sounds.

...

In the morning seven days later, an enormous luxurious flying shuttle entered the space of Wild Waves City.

Sitting inside which were 20 odd 17 to 18 years old teenagers, whose curiosity could not be abated even by the biting cold of the cold winds as they kept on chattering and getting surprised by everything.

"Wow, so many floating mountains! The Grand Desolate War Institution is worthy of being one of the Nine Elite Universities. Although it is ranked last, it still can not be underestimated!"

"Check that out! Two cultivators seem to be practicing sword play in the sky. Wow! So fast—I can't even see their shadow!"

"I wonder if the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department, which we have to visit, will also have such a spectacular floating mountain. Do they also have some experts? I am truly looking forward to it!"

"Looking forward to what? It seems that you were not seriously listening to the class. Let me tell you, the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department is the worst department among the nine elite universities. Moreover, just half a year ago, they had suffered a serious accident in which their entire floating mountain was blown up. It is simply too horrible to look at."

"It can't be! Even the floating mountain exploded? So why are we visiting such a place?"

"Professor Jin Quan, you graduated from Deep Sea University this year, so you must be well informed regarding news of the refiners' community. What's this all about Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department? Why must Elder Lei bring us to visit it?"

All the teenagers turned their gaze towards a corner at the forefront upon a young man who had a bit of proudful aura around him.

These teenagers were all third-year student of the "Empyrean Terminus Central High School".

And the young man who had graduated from the Deep Sea University's Refining Department this year was Jin Quan, who was also an inner disciple of the Empyrean Terminus

Sect and also gave introductory courses in refining to the students.

The Empyrean Terminus Sect was relatively traditional. Since the time it was established, it had always focused on developing various kinds of crafting furnace as their main form of business and would rarely be involved in other fields. It was an out-and-out refining sect.

A majority of the parents of Empyrean Terminus Central High School’s students were a member of Empyrean Terminus Sect or at the very least staff employed by the various enterprises under the Empyrean Terminus Sect. They were all engaged in refining related work.

Therefore, the Empyrean Terminus Central High School was completely different from comprehensive high schools like the Crimson Nimbus Second. The Empyrean Terminus Central High School was a high school which especially focused on fostering refining geniuses; it was a little bit like a specialized institute.

Every year, many students of the Empyrean Terminus Central High School would be admitted into the Refining Departments of the Nine Elite Universities. They were also a little bit aware of the news regarding the ongoings in the refiners' community, and that was also the reason why they knew that the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department was the worst among the Nine Elite Universities.

Jin Quan heaved a sigh as he spread out his hands and said rather helplessly:

"Students, the Grand Desolate War Institution is known for fostering body practitioners and sword cultivators, and its Department of Medicine and Cultural Department also has a certain level of fame. The floating mountains you just saw belonged to the key departments, so of course, they would look spectacular.

"The department we are about to visit is the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department, which is also the worst Refining Department in the entire federation. Moreover, after the horrifying accident, it is left with a single professor and student. Everybody should be able to imagine a bit what it would look like. Please prepare yourself so that you will not be dumbfounded and turned speechless and lose the face of our Empyrean Terminus Sect!"

"What?"

All the students stood up: "A single professor and student? There is such a wondrous department? Why exactly are we going there?!"

Jin Quan forced a smile as he gestured everyone to sit down:

"Students, please be patient. Our Empyrean Terminus Sect's highly respected Elder Lie Yongming brought everybody to expand your horizons. So of course, there are some things which everyone will admire. At the very least, there will be three things which you can't find in any other university. Everyone, please keep your eyes wide open or you might miss them."

"How can there be three things in the worst Refining Department of the Nine Elite Universities which can not be found in any other university? Something that even the Deep Sea University does not have?!"

"Yes, even the Deep Sea University doesn’t have it!" Jin Quan face was laced with a weird look while his eyes wore a smile.

"Professor Jin, don't keep us waiting, please do tell!"

Jin Quan had piqued everyone's curiosity completely.

Raising his finger vertically, Jin Quan slowly and leisurely said:

"First is the only working 1st Generation Tai'e crafting furnace in the entire federation!"

"Wow!"

All the students were completely enlivened.

In the history of the Empyrean Terminus Sect, the 1st Generation Tai'e crafting furnace was a very important classical crafting furnace.

Some two centuries ago, the Empyrean Terminus Sect was just a third-grade sect which was struggling to maintain its existence amidst the brutal competition between various sects.

Only when their research came to fruition and they had developed the 1st Generation Tai'e classical furnace did they emerge from their predicament, becoming bigger and stronger. Now, they could even be considered in the ranks of first-grade sects.

Therefore, many of the older generation clansmen of the Empyrean Terminus Sect had very deep feelings for the 1st Generation Tai'e furnace, which was even referred to as the "greatest treasure of the sect"!

However, the classical style would always be outdated, so then came the 2nd generation, 3rd generation, and so on.

And now, the 9th Generation Tai'e furnace was put in use, while the 1st Generation Tai'e furnace was long out of use.

Today, the 1st Generation Tai'e furnace could only be found in some museums which specialized in collecting crafting furnaces as well as the history museum of the Empyrean Terminus Sect itself, where it was meticulously preserved as an antique.

As for an operating 1st Generation Tai'e crafting furnace, that could not necessarily be found in the entire federation even when one searched for it.

However, who knew that five days ago, the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department would suddenly send a modification approval application to the Empyrean Terminus Sect.

Fortunately, the Empyrean Terminus Sect recognized that it was the outdated 1st Generation Tai'e furnace!

Chapter 158: The Three Treasures of the Grand Desolate War Institution

Chapter 158: The Three Treasures of the Grand Desolate War Institution

Conducting modifications to a crafting furnace was a sort of convention amongst the circle of refiners.

Every refiner possessed their own unique methods and habits, so their requirements for their smelting furnaces varied broadly.

The Empyrean Terminus Sect was a sect that produced crafting furnaces such as these as their primary business. While they offered modification services of their own, they wouldn’t restrict others from modifying the crafting furnaces produced by their sect.

That would be equivalent to pushing business out the door.

However, there existed an enormous problem when one sought to modify their crafting furnace by oneself. What if the crafting furnace malfunctions after the modification? What if the refined magical equipment product doesn’t match the standards? What if it even causes a serious accident like the furnace exploding? Then who, in the end, would take the blame?

It would be unclear whether the issue would lay with the body of the crafting furnace itself or the modification process.

Therefore, it was okay to perform self-modifications; however, after the modification, a refiner from the Empyrean Terminus Sect must personally conduct an examination. After checking that the furnace meets the standards, the refiner would imprint a special spirit glyph of approval onto the furnace.

This spirit glyph was proof of the Empyrean Terminus Sect’s approval that the modification was a success.

If the furnace didn’t pass the examination, the Empyrean Terminus Sect had to point out in detail where the problem laid in the modification. If the client was unconvinced of the decision, he could likely apply for arbitration from the Refiners’ Association.

The Empyrean Terminus Sect received several hundred of these modification approval applications a year. This was also every day business for the sect.

However, the modification works over the past several years were mostly focused on the 6th generation of the Tai’e furnace and above, the advanced models. Even the 2nd and 3rd generation Tai’e models were rarely seen.

No one expected that someone would modify a 1st Generation Tai’e furnace and even produce it!

The Mountain Sea Sect nearly scrapped the transfer of the 1st generation Tai’e furnace to the Grand Desolate War Institution. The Empyrean Terminus Sect had just an inkling of knowledge on the matter. Last time they helped dig out the blueprints.

However, at the time, the Empyrean Terminus Sect, from top to bottom, believed that the Grand Desolate War Institution was buying them to study them for a bit, for the purpose of becoming educational materials used in courses such as "Classical Structures of Crafting Furnaces".

It was a university after all. It was quite normal for them to collect antique furnaces.

Who knew that the Grand Desolate War Institution was actually preparing to use a 1st Generation Tai’e furnace for refining and had even submitted an application of approval. Wasn’t their situation pretty bad?

The Empyrean Terminus Sect, from top to bottom, lamented for a time. They just sent Jin Quan, the newcomer who had just graduated from the Refining Department of Deep Sea University, to execute the examination assignment.

In any case, the 1st Generation Tai’e furnace had a thoroughly simple structure. Jin Quan, with the strength of being at the 9th level of the Refinement Stage, was more than enough.

This matter had ended there, but somehow, the person with the oldest seniority, Elder Lei Yongming, had caught wind of this information.

This old man turned 180 years old this year. Even though this old man had only cultivated to the middle stages of the Foundation Stage, his seniority in the sect was so much that he had looked after several elders as they grew up. He even clearly remembered what the elders looked like in their diapers. He naturally held a different position from the others.

From the perspective of a refiner of the older generation like Lei Yongming, they had personally experienced the era when the 1st Generation Tai’e furnace had brought great splendor, so much so that they had even personally refined the components of the 1st Generation Tai’e before. The 1st generation Tai’e had long since become a symbol in their eyes.

Once this old man heard that there was actually a 1st Generation Tai’e put in production on this day, he was emotionally moved beyond control on the spot. Not only was he about to jump forth and go along with Jin Quan, he also wanted Empyrean Terminus Central High School to organize a batch of their top students to come along and take part.

Quoting this old man’s words, they had to let these little rascals experience for a bit just how difficult the older generation of the Empyrean Terminus Sect had it, and yet, despite these difficulties, the Empyrean Terminus Sect was able to refine magical equipment that were extremely durable and everlasting. They had to let these rascals know just how glorious it was to be a younger generation of the Empyrean Terminus Sect!

Jin Quan, as a new generation, naturally scoffed at the opinions of this old man.

From his perspective, idle time would be better off spent organizing a tour over at Deep Sea University’s Refining Department for the students. What was there to see at Grand Desolate War Institution’s Refining Department, this damned place?

But who said that this old man was a person of good standing and prestige? Even the elders didn’t dare to utter a sound in face of Lei Yongming, so what choice did Jin Quan have?

Well, if the old man wants to come, then he’ll accompany him. In any case, things were fine as long as this old man roars with happiness.

Currently, this old man had been invited by Professor Yuan Manqiu of Grand Desolate War Institution’s Refining Department to exchange some words. Jin Quan’s temper became a bit agitated and impatient. He wasn’t subtle; there naturally wasn’t a need to conceal his thoughts from these half grown kids.

Speaking of which, the anti-gravity shuttle slowly entered the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution.

Despite having done mental preparations ahead of time, the students were still stupefied by the scene of desolation before their eyes.

"My eyes aren’t playing tricks on me, right? Let’s not even talk about the floating mountain. Even this building is on the verge of collapse. Is this really one of the Nine Elite Universities?"

"It’s simply a sheet of ruin! A junkyard!"

"Look! There’s even a statue erected in the middle of the junkyard. It’s a big jumbled mess. What the heck is it?"

The students fussed about loudly, venting the shock in their hearts as much as they could.

Jin Quan laughed in contempt. He shot a sneer at the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit not far away:

"Fellow students, this is the second thing that you can absolutely not see anywhere else. It’s a crystal suit. A crystal suit solely refined by the Grand Desolate War Institution!"

"Crystal suit?"

All the students were stirred up.

Everyone was a top student at Empyrean Terminus Central High School that wanted to one day grow on the path of refining. Naturally, they weren’t unfamiliar towards large-scale magical equipment platforms like the crystal suit, and they knew the difficulty of refining a crystal suit.

"Even Deep Sea University's Refining Department would find it difficult to refine a new model of crystal suit. So the Grand Desolate War Institution’s Refining Department also wants to refine a crystal suit?"

"No wonder they had an accident! They are really too risky, too radical!"

The students gossiped all at once with wagging tongues.

Jin Quan waited for the students to talk their fill before speaking leisurely:

"That’s right. The crystal suit is an extremely complicated magical equipment system. Based on the level of the Grand Desolate War Institution’s Refining Department, they’re absolutely incapable of refining a true crystal suit, and yet, they recklessly and forcefully tried to refine it. You all have seen how the results went."

"It’s a lesson! A profound lesson!"

"Even if it is fine to defy the heavens when cultivating, one must wield an attitude of brandishing the sword, of slaughtering tigers and dragons, of slaying gods and annihilating buddhas when walking on the road of cultivation."

"However, sometimes, manpower is exhausted. In the end, this isn’t something that could be accomplished with recklessness. The consequences of overestimating one’s capabilities are as severe as you see!"

Someone raised his hand: "Teacher Jin, what’s the third thing?"

Jin Quan sneered as his eyes glanced with a hint of cold intent:

"The third thing isn’t a thing—it’s a person. An ignorant and fearless mad amateur who doesn’t know how high the heavens are and how deep the earth is. He is the sole student of the Grand Desolate War Institution’s Refining Department."

The bold, visionary words spoken by Li Yao back in Floating Spear City had long spread to Deep Sea University’s Refining Department.

Even though Jin Quan had already graduated, he had also heard the rumors.

As a refiner who walked out of Deep Sea University, he naturally possessed extremely deep sentiments towards his alma mater and was brimming full of pride towards the four words "Holy Land of Refiners".

Therefore, even though he hadn’t personally met Li Yao, Jin Quan was already filled with loathing towards this mad amateur who didn’t know the immensity of heaven and earth.

As soon as he reiterated Li Yao’s bold and visionary words, every student became shocked.

"Way, way too egotistical, right?"

"He just got the top score in a city, it isn’t that amazing. There are many several thousands of major cities in the Federation!"

"He wants to challenge Deep Sea University’s Refining Department all by himself? That’s nothing more than a pipe dream!"

Everyone was a youngster with racing hot blood. They didn’t reject typical, lofty aspirations.

But looking at Li Yao’s declaration of war that seemed to break away from reality and juxtaposing it with unbearable, tragic scene of the Grand Desolate War Institution’s Refining Department, Li Yao was looking more like a gargantuan joke.

Jin Quan laughed:

"What do you think? Teacher Jin didn’t trick you guys, right?"

"A 1st Generation Tai’e crafting furnace still in operation, the remains of a crystal suit that resembles dregs, and add in an ignorant and fearless mad amateur to the mix. These are the three treasures of Grand Desolate War Institution’s Refining Department, the only ones of its existence with no others like it!"

The students nodded their heads over and over; however, there was one student who couldn’t help lamenting:

"Fortunately, we’ve seen it with our own eyes. Otherwise, what if we carelessly applied for the Grand Desolate War Institution’s Refining Department after getting a poor score? Then we would be screwed!"

Jin Quan laughed loudly:

"Everyone, go ahead and relax. Something like that would never ever happen. That is because the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution will already be abolished when you fill out the matriculation form!"

The floating mountain slowly descended in the corner of the ruins while Jin Quan was talking.

Ahead was the warehouse for dangerous goods that had been remodeled into a refining workshop.

Elder Yongming of the Empyrean Terminus Sect had arrived a step earlier; he was already at the entrance of the warehouse discussing scientific topics with Yuan Manqiu. The two chatted, radiating with delight; they were in high spirits.

Jin Quan coughed lightly, winked his eye, and laughed:

"Everyone, fellow students! I’m not that far in age from you all. I only said these words because I consider everyone to be a friend. If Elder Lei hears of this, then I’m screwed! No one will tattle on me, right?"

Everyone exchanged smiles when these words were spoken.

Quite a few boys shook their heads on the spot:

"Of course not. We’re good friends with little Teacher Jin, so how would someone leak out everyone’s private conversation?"

Jin Quan graduated from a famous school. This young lad grew up to be quite handsome, and he also had a lively nature. He was rather popular back in high school and was the target of adoration of quite a few high school students. They all took him to be a big brother, so they talked rather casually.

Jin Quan nodded his head and spoke a few more words:

"Fellow students, even though the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution is incomparably crappy, I estimate that their modified crafting furnace will be baffling as well."

"Anyway, when truly meeting someone else face to face, you must still show a bit of respect. You must not, by all means, cause the Empyrean Terminus Sect to lose face."

"Stifle anything that’s funny inside your stomachs for me. Wait until we’re on the way back to slowly have a good laugh. Don’t embarrass the host in their faces."

"What’s more, this planned tour was still suggested by Elder Lei. If we really laugh on the spot, we wouldn’t be giving face to Elder Lei, right?"

"It’s true that Elder Lei is a man with a good temperament. He won’t bicker about with you babies, but when we get back to the Empyrean Terminus Sect, mommy and daddy will smack your butt till it’s mush!"

The students nodded their heads one after another:

"Understood, Teacher Jin. We will certainly bear it no matter what we see!"

"Excellent, everyone get off the vehicle. Let’s see what kind of modified 1st Generation Tai’e crafting furnace the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution can produce!"

Jin Quan’s spirit was exploding. He brought the high school students to jump off the flying shuttle.

Lei Yongming was almost two hundred years old. He engaged in refining work year in and year out. His entire body was lean and swarthy. He looked like an old village farmer that had spent too much time outside exposed to the scorching sun.

But the silver hair that filled his head glistened and shone. It was impossible to find one that was dark, making him exhibit a somewhat supernatural presence.

Lei Yongming had quite a good mood. Chuckling, he asked:

"Jin Quan, have you gone over the customs with the students about entering the refining workshop?"

Jin Quan nodded his head:

"Everything has been explained clearly. I told them that they can’t touch and move willy-nilly within the refining workshop and that they need to listen before they act."

Lei Yongming was completely satisfied. He stroke his goat-like beard:

"That’s good. I talked a bit with Professor Yuan of the Grand Desolate War Institution’s Refining Department just now. I discovered that the modifications done on their 1st Generation Tai’e furnace contain several novel ideas. It seems somewhat different than what I had imagined. Well, enough talk. Let’s ask Professor Yuan to bring us in for a look!"

"It is us who should be asking an Empyrean Terminus Sect’s elder of the older generation for guidance."

Yuan Manqiu had spoken with a smile. She waved her plump hands to the numerous youngsters: "Students of Empyrean Terminus Central High School, please follow me. A yellow line has been marked out on the ground. It will be fine for you all to just stand behind this yellow line."

Jin Quan looked back and mouthed to the students, indicating: "Bear with it. By all means, bear with it."

"Bang!"

The large door to the warehouse opened.

The group of people strutted inside.

Chapter 159: The Monster within a Jungle of Steel

Chapter 159: The Monster within a Jungle of Steel

"Whoa…"

When the 1st Generation Tai’e crafting furnace modified by Li Yao appeared in front of everyone’s eyes, everyone from the Empyrean Terminus Sect, including the experienced and knowledgeable senior refiner Lei Yongming, took in a cold breath, sinking into a sluggish state.

What they saw was absolutely not a crafting furnace but a steel jungle!

The occupied space exceeded forty meters, and the height exceeded twenty meters. The crisscross steel structure formed a mysterious and profound maze. Countless crystal fibers climbed upon the steel frame like vines, while magical equipment units were like bird nests rigged up one after another in the depths of the steel jungle. The various rainbow colors of richness and diversity suddenly flickered between brightness and darkness from the crystals, emitting an elegant radiance. It made this steel jungle seem as if it possessed life and was breathing right now.

A rough scan would yield more than thirty magical equipment units, which far exceeded the design limits of the 1st Generation Tai’e furnace!

The refining styles between the various magical equipment units and components were as different as night and day;

some were exquisite and delicate, while others were coarse and bold. Yet, they were forcibly entwined together by crystal fibers, manifesting a sort of unbridled ugliness.

Quite a few magical equipment units had radiator systems and gas conduction vents arranged around them that bubbled huge clouds of steam as it let out a humming cry. They pervaded the air like miasma, causing the steel jungle to look enigmatic. It seemed as if a monster could appear at any moment from within the depths of the miasma.

"This, what the heck is this!?"

"They took several dozen different styles of crafting furnaces and recklessly assembled them all together! It looks just like a mutated monster!"

Jin Quan recovered from his very initial period of shock. A feeling of absurdness to the extreme was born in Jin Quan’s mind.

"Even if the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution is the headquarters for grassroots refiners, this thing is way too grassroots!"

He took a peek behind him. Quite a few students looked like they were waking from a dream, all of them revealed odd expressions.

A plump boy was holding it in so much that his face flushed red, and his shoulders shook up and down; he wanted to laugh, but he didn’t dare to.

No one was unfamiliar with refining. They knew that things like magical equipment weren’t something that one could take several powerful functioning units and piece together to create a completed form that was even more powerful.

Inside laid the most important issue of compatibility and integration as a whole.

The monster level crafting furnace before their eyes was quite frightening at first glance and carried a lot of powerful magical equipment units.

But despite the style and even the operational principles of these magical equipment being as different as night and day, they still carelessly assembled together. How would compatibility be handled? What about the flow of operation? Wouldn’t a malfunction occur every three to five minutes?

The shock within Jin Quan and all the students’ eyes scattered when they tried to understand this point and was instead replaced by a faint hint of contempt.

Fortunately, the students still remembered the instruction given out by Jin Quan. There was no one who laughed on the spot; it’s just that their faces turned red one after another. They looked at each other in dismay, using gazes to exchange the ridicule they had in the depths of their minds.

Only Lei Yongming, this elder, was unable to take his eyes off of it. He gazed into the depths of the steel jungle, seeming rather pensive as he mumbled:

"Professor Yuan, this crafting furnace you all have altered… is rather complicated!"

Yuan Manqiu chuckled. She pulled up the performance parameters from a crystal processor and directed the hologram towards Lei Yongming and Jin Quan:

"Please look you two. After going through our modification, the final performance parameters of the 1st Generation Tai’e are as such."

Old Lei Yongming skimmed over it with his eyes. His expression was somewhat astonished, and the liver spots on his forehead suddenly flared.

Jin Quan’s sophistication didn’t run this deep. With just a glance of an eye, it was as if he was stung ferociously by a Hemorrhage Wasp. He shouted:

"What!? The furnace temperature increases from room temperature to above 6000 degrees in less than a minute!? The end limits of fluctuation in temperature reaches 500 degrees every second!? A single furnace can be divided into nine refining compartments of different temperatures!? It can simultaneously handle 180 jobs at once as its maximum!?"

"H-H-How the heck is this still a 1st Generation Tai’e crafting furnace? It simply matches a 6th Generation Tai’e crafting furnace in overall performance!"

"For some parameters, it’s even more powerful and ferocious than a 6th Generation Tai’e—no, more than a 7th Generation Tai’e!"

"There’s also this section. If you disregard the wear and tear and operate it at its extreme limits, even the hardest horn of the Mystic Steel-Bone Rhinoceros can be refined!?"

"Even if you really took so many remains of advanced crafting furnaces and pieced them together, forcefully reaching this kind of performance, it absolutely wouldn’t last long. It would be scrapped after a maximum use of one or two times, and it might even explode!"

Jin Quan’s face flushed red to his ears, his neck swelled out by a factor, and his speech grew faster and faster. He used chattering to mask the super-powerful shock in his heart.

And after hearing the series of magnificent performance parameters, the numerous youngsters behind him were even more stupefied; they were completely flabbergasted.

Just based on this pile of junk, some performance parameters actually overtook the newest generation of crafting furnace by the Empyrean Terminus Sect?

How! Is! This! Possible!?

Old Lei Yongming leaned close to the hologram, studying it in great seriousness:

"Professor Yuan, you are an expert of the refiner’s circle whose reputation has spread far and wide. This old man naturally wouldn’t suspect the crafting furnace that you have modified. It really does have such magnificent performance."

"However, when checking whether or not a crafting furnace meets standards, one aspect that needs to be looked at is the extreme performance limits. Another aspect that also needs to be looked at is its stability.

"Can you bring out the blueprints and spiritual energy flow diagrams out for everyone to study a bit? Let’s look at it from the perspective of theory and calculate the output of its performance. Let’s see whether or not it can maintain stability."

Yuan Manqiu laughed candidly:

"That much is obvious. Since we need to get the approval of the Empyrean Terminus Sect, the blueprints and spiritual energy flow diagrams will certainly be brought out for you two to examine. However, there’s one matter that Old Lei needs to know about… This crafting furnace wasn’t modified by me. I didn’t have a single hand in it from beginning to end. From the very initial proposal of modification to drawing the blueprints to tightening every single clamping bolt, it was solely all done by my disciple. It will be better to ask him to come and briefly explain it to you."

Old Lei Yongming didn’t respond for a time. His face revealed skepticism:

"I heard that your refining department only has one new student who just entered the school. Could it be that Professor Yuan has an even more outstanding disciple outside of school?"

Yuan Manqiu shook her head. She spoke without fooling around:

"Nope. I only have this one student. My heart will be perfectly content if I can finish teaching him. This crafting furnace was solely modified by my disciple, Li Yao, from beginning to end. I didn’t even touch a single nail. Li Yao? Li Yao!"

The two words "Li Yao" were like two vicious, heavy fists. They exploded against Jin Quan, causing him to be on the verge of collapse.

He forcefully shook his head to compose himself and yelled wildly in his heart:

‘The heck you talking big for? A new student who just entered the school for half a year can complete such a complicated modification? And can conjure out such magnificent performance? Yuan Manqiu must be giving him instructions from behind. A hands on teaching!’

In regards to Yuan Manqiu, this former Deep Sea Goddess, Yin Quan still didn’t dare to have contempt for her.

If performance such as this had conjured out from Yuan Mannequin's hands, then there was a 1% chance of its possibility.

But if it was just based on Li Yao, this ignorant and fearless mad amateur?

Not even a 0.01% possibility would exist!

‘H-Humph, I was originally going to give you all a bit of face by saying a few random words just for show and be done with it, but I never thought you all would make a pile of scrap metal such as this.You even dared to talk big, calling to attention such exaggerated performance parameters. And now you even say that it was modified by a new first-year student. Not to mention that it’s that Li Yao who doesn’t know how high the heavens are and how deep the earth runs!’

‘You think that can escape me!?’

‘When you take out those blueprints and spiritual energy flow diagrams out, I’ll randomly point out a few crucial areas. A kid such as yourself certainly wouldn’t have a clue of what’s going on. You’ll just disgrace yourself in front of everyone.’

‘You even want to wage war with our Deep Sea University’s Refining Department? Dream on!’

Jin Quan settled on his plan. His eyes flashed with a streak of light as the corner of his mouth hooked into a sneer.

"Boom! Boom! Boom!"

Following Yuan Manqiu’s shout came the sound of footsteps that shook mountains and moved the earth from behind the steel jungle.

It was as if an enormous beast was slowly walking over from within the depths of the miasma.

"What the heck? Whose footsteps can be this heavy, liken to that of a demon beast?"

The students looked at each other in dismay. Their brain cells were a bit insufficient right now.

Even though Teacher Jin warned and injucted by all means to hold in whatever they see… However…

It was really difficult to bear!

Sometime later, a youth with a stature that was neither tall nor large came boring out from the steam. His appearance on stage made everyone’s eyeballs completely bulge out!

The contours of his muscles were revealed quite clearly on his upper body, yet they were not excessive. Right now, he was in the middle of concentrating his attention on studying the hologram filled with formulas. His left hand just casually carried an enormous metal box.

Written atop of the metal box was: "Black Copper Ore, One Ton!"

Black copper ore was the number one most commonly used consumable resource when refining. It can aid in increasing the furnace temperature in a flash.

The biggest property of the black copper ore was its super high density. Its weight was extremely heavy, and just the size of a fist would weigh several dozen kilograms. Generally, magical equipment was used to transport them.

"Boom!"

Li Yao placed the metal box filled to the brim with black copper ores to the side. The intense jolt made the bottom of everyone’s foot numb.

It looked like a ton of black copper ore was honestly within the box!

"It can’t be... He can actually lift a ton of raw material with one hand, and from his appearance, it looked like he didn’t even need to use much effort at all to do so. He isn’t even sweating!"

In our Empyrean Terminus Sect, we would obviously use magical equipment to carry such heavy objects. Who the heck would carry it directly by hand!?"

"Where the heck did this monstrous fellow spawn from in the end? He has such enormous strength, yet he wants to be some refiner. Wouldn’t it be better for him to go to the wasteland and slay demon beasts?"

The students all felt a chill run down their spine. When seeing Li Yao walk over, a few of the weak natured students couldn’t help but retreat a step back as their necks withdrew back.

Yuan Manqiu resisted the urge to smile with difficulty. She spoke with a face filled with sincerity:

"I’m truly, terribly sorry to make you two see this ridiculous scene. Our Grand Desolate War Institution’s Refining Department just encountered a tragic accident, so most of our funds have been used to compensate the families of the victims. The remaining money must all be used on a blade’s edge. In addition, this is nothing for my disciple. He just wields stupid strength. If he can carry it, he’ll carry it. This saves buying an assistance magical artifact and conserves a bit of our funds!"

Lei Yongming’s lips trembled. He really didn’t know what would be proper to say.

This famous, old refiner, who has many experiences and knowledge, had his heart in a bit of a mess.

Jin Quan’s scalp was becoming even number, and his hair was standing straight up.

Li Yao finalized the final parameter and walked two steps towards the crowd. He suddenly stood fixed and bent his head to listen for a second.

He discovered that the sound of a set of radiator systems expelling steam was a bit ear-piercing.

He muttered to himself for a moment and calculated for three seconds with half-squinting eyes. Li Yao walked towards the right side of the steel jungle, taking his hand to reach out to the clamping bolt fastening a radiator system.

"What the heck is he up to?"

Everyone was at a loss. If he wanted to loosen or tighten the bolt, wouldn’t he need a wrench?

This bolt was the size of a fist and was already tightened dead-tight. It would be hard to loosen it even with a wrench.

To deal with this kind of clamping bolt within the Empyrean Terminus Sect, every case would need the use of a specialty magical equipment that relied on spiritual energy to complete the job.

It can’t be that he actually wants… to use his bare hands to loosen the bolt, right?

Chapter 160: Tit For Tat

Chapter 160: Tit For Tat

Are you kidding!?

Needless to say, the clamping bolt was already tightly secured and was absolutely impossible to loosen easily. What's more was that it was a clamping bolt for a radiator system, whose metal components were extremely hot!

Under the panic-stricken gazes of everyone, Li Yao formed a claw using his fingers and lightly grabbed onto the clamping bolt. Taking a deep breath, he suddenly applied force.

In the blink of an eye, everyone felt as if a needle was ruthlessly pricking their eardrums.

It was as though a demon beast had suddenly emerged from the darkness and released an oppressive aura.

Many students let out an "Ah!" as their face revealed a horrified look.

Li Yao's stature suddenly doubled in size. While his muscles bulged, his right arm, in particular, was simply double the size of just a moment ago, and his skin seemed to shine with a metallic gloss as though it was a rudimentary form of steel which had just taken out of the furnace after undergoing through repeated tempering!

One after another, thick green veins that were wrapped around his right arm bulged and slowly spread to his fingers. Li Yao's arm was akin to a metal claw; with just a light bit of force, it made the clamping bolt emit "Creak Creak!" sounds.

Much to everyone's dismay, Li Yao had forcibly rotated the clamping bolt by one-third of a circle!

The unimaginable, ear-piercing sound of steam escaping from the radiator suddenly turned softer, as though the unruly, giant steel beast had been put to sleep and was now gently "breathing".

"This..."

If one was not watching with their own eyes, none of these teenagers would have believed that such a thing was possible.

This monster had actually tightened the clamping bolt by almost half a circle with just his hand?

Had he gone to the Empyrean Capital School of Medicine to learn some hand technique or grafted a demon beast's claw onto his shoulder?

"Professor Jin, this guy is very strong!"

A few of the students could not help but speak to Jin Quan in a low voice.

The corners of Jin Quan's eyes started to twitch as a grim look appeared on his face.

Elder Lie Yongming look at Yuan Manqiu with a bit of surprise as he said, "The clamping bolts are the foundation of a large-scale magical equipment system and one has to pay particular attention to them. Sometimes, just slight unwinding of the bolt would affect the stability of the entire crafting furnace."

"Of course, it would save effort to use a wrench, but it lacks a subtle feeling of touch through which you can determine whether the screw is in place or not."

"Using fingers, on the other hand, can let you feel the slightest bit of change, allowing you to screw the clamping bolts perfectly!"

The elder heaved a sigh and continued:

"This is the ideology of the older generation refiners. In contrast, the modern generation of refiners have mastered various advanced magical equipment which would display all kinds of data, so why would they even bother using their own fingers to get a feel?"

"Professor Yuan, your disciple is truly out of the norm."

Yuan Manqiu gave a smile as she shouted, "Li Yao, let me introduce you to everyone!"

Flinging his arm, Li Yao's stature, in the blink of an eye, returned to its normal form, completely devoid of any hints of the hideous appearance he had a moment ago.

He gave off the impression as though what he did was common practice. Very calmly and unperturbedly, he walked towards everyone.

He had hardly realized that his terrifying performance had already scared some of the teenagers and had caused their legs to go limp!

"Come here, let me introduce you to Elder Lie Yongming of the Empyrean Terminus Sect. He is a highly respected and prestigious senior in our refiners' community."

Yuan Manqiu said with a smile. Following that, she continued with emphasis: "This is Jin Quan, today's inspector. Not only is he a top student of Deep Sea University who had just graduated this year, but he is also a direct disciple of Supernova Jiang Shen. And as Jiang Sheng is my junior brother, in terms of seniority, you two are also related by senior brother and junior brother relation. Today is a good opportunity to let your Senior Brother Jin give you some pointers!"

Li Yao's eyes immediately lit up.

It was as though an utterly bored vulture gliding in the sky had suddenly found a prey that was grazing on the ground.

The disciple of Supernova Jiang Sheng!

Jiang Sheng was not only the leading figure among the younger generation in the elite faction of the refiners' community, but he was also the one who had acted unscrupulously during the memorial ceremony in the Grand Desolate War Institution, which had deeply hurt Li Yao, causing Li Yao to have an urge to have a showdown with him.

However, Jiang Sheng had already achieved fame and success and had a very high status, so naturally, he would not place Li Yao’s challenge in his eyes.

Therefore, he was first going to use this so-called "Senior Brother Jin" to actually determine how big of a gap there was after his half year of painstaking study!

Li Yao's eyes were suddenly set ablaze, and all of his ten fingers were slighting twitching; he was completely excited.

Jin Quan squinted his eyes. A cold look which seemed to be congealed out of the essence of ice picks appeared in the depths of his eyes.

"Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!"

When the two met eye-to-eye, sparks seemed to be shooting in all directions.

Even the teenagers from the Empyrean Terminus Central High School felt the oppressive atmosphere. It was as though two experts were in a confrontation, and murderous intentions seemed to be surging in the back.

"Wow, I wonder who is going to win between Professor Jin and this weirdo?!"

"Bullshit! Of course, it's going to be Professor Jin. Professor Jin was a top-grade student of Deep Sea University's Refining Department. No matter how powerful this weirdo is, this isn't some fight, so what's the use of being stronger?"

All the teenagers, one by one, broke into a discussion while secretly cheering for Professor Jin in their hearts.

In their eyes, Jin Quan was the most powerful refiner. No one was his opponent, not to mention some muscle-brained weirdo.

"Junior Brother Li, today, I, on behalf of the Empyrean Terminus Sect, am going to inspect the 1st Generation Tai'e furnace. Let us first talk about work, and as for chatting in regards to camaraderie, let's hold onto it for later. Can I trouble you to show us the blueprints and spiritual energy flow chart? Let your senior brother teach you a thing or two!"

Jin Quan could not wait to let Li Yao make a fool of himself.

Li Yao nodded as he frankly replied, "But of course. But I wonder which part's blueprint does Senior Brother Jin want to see first?"

"Which part?" Jin Quan scoffed.

The structure of the 1st Generation Tai'e Furnace was quite simple; it only had a total of a hundred or so blueprints, so even if it had gone through six or seven modifications, it could be no more than two to three hundred.

With Jin Quan's strength, simultaneously studying a couple dozen blueprints was simply nothing.

"It's alright for you to display all the blueprints and spiritual energy flow charts. I can look at them together, and it will also save some time," Jin Quan said in a slightly impatient tone.

"Are you sure?" Li Yao was surprised for a moment.

"What's there to be sure about? In my Deep Sea University's Refining Department, simultaneously studying a couple blueprints is a basic skill," Jin Quan sneered.

Li Yao nodded, and without saying another word, quickly entered a few keys on the crystal processor before he raised his wrist which pointed at the ceiling.

"Whoosh!"

As though a whole new world had burst forth from his crystal processor, over a thousand golden streams of light soared into the air and continued to spread before they interlaced with each other, mapping out thousands of abstruse and complex 3-dimensional blueprints as well as spiritual energy flow chart, giving off an impression of a golden sea of stars that was gradually revolving above everyone's head.

"..."

The visual impact of the hologram put everyone in a trance for a moment.

Everyone's face was glistening. Many students forcibly rubbed their eyes as if they had fallen into a magnificent dream.

"Senior Brother Jin, all 1,995 modification blueprints as well as the 1,786 spiritual energy flow charts of 1st Generation Tai'e furnace are here. Please give me pointers."

Li Yao said with bright and shining eyes.

He could not wait to seek a bit of advice from the direct disciple of Supernova Jiang Sheng.

Jin Quan was dumbfounded.

When he stretched his neck to look above, his mouth was wide open while his gaze became a bit blurry.

Soybean-sized cold sweat freely trickled down his forehead, and very soon, his entire face was drenched in sweat.

He felt like a lonely boat lost in an ocean of 3,000 or so 3-dimensional diagrams.

He felt like a mouse which had been placed deep within a maze facing a bunch of fork roads. Not to mention exiting, the mouse was not even aware of where east, west, south, and north was!

Jin Quan was crazily shouting in his heart:

"So shameless, and yet, he says he didn't receive any help from Yuan Manqiu?!"

"If not for Yuan Manqiu, then how could this muscle-brained idiot personally draw such blueprints!? Can a freshman who had not even been in the institute for over half a year draw 3,000 exquisite 3-dimensional diagrams?"

"Boasting also has a limit; otherwise, it is very easy to be trampled upon by others. Now let me bust you right here!"

In the blink of an eye, Jin Quan's countenance turned extremely serious.

Jin Quan started muttering some incantation while his pupils slightly dilated and an azure radiance gushed out from the depths of his eyes, forming ring after ring surrounding his pupils.

"Azure Ringed Iris" was a unique technique of the Deep Sea University's Refining Department which enhances the visual acuity as well as the analysis of complex 3-dimensional blueprints!

"Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!"

Five rings surrounding the pupils of Jin Quan appeared while his eyeball quickly turned as he took a fleeting glimpse at tens of blueprints before he got a complete view of them.

Gradually, the corner of his lips started to rise as a sliver of a confident smile appeared on them.

"Junior Brother Li!"

Jin Quan, with a face beaming with a smile, said while drawing out his tone, "Let's take a look at Blueprint No. 109, in which the cooling tank you have depicted had clearly used the Exquisite Star Structure proposed by Elder Binghe of Ice Dragon Castle as reference. There is too much deviation, the main cooling tank and the sub-cooling tank are too close, and the arrangement of the condensing tube is all also somewhat redundant. After all, a lot of coolants are highly toxic and corrosive, and different coolants will conflict with each other, so your arrangement is rather irregular. In the case the coolants of the two cooling tanks happen to mix together, then I am afraid a huge problem will follow!"

Jin Quang heaved a sigh and sincerely said, "Although the cooling tank in the crafting furnace is comparatively less important and not so dazzling when compared to magical equipment units, it can not be ignored. It is directly related to the success and failure of the quenching process. I think you should first think of improving the layout of the cooling tank. As for the other parts, there is no need to look further."

"Wow!"

A few high school students could not help but burst into praises. Professor Jin was too awesome—he had discovered such a huge problem so quickly!

After a moment of surprise, Li Yao said with a frown:

"Senior Brother Jin, my cooling tank layout did not use the Exquisite Star Arrangement at all, but rather the Mystic Spirit Seven Transformations Arrangement proposed by Daoist Master Scarlet Moon of Divine Magus Mountain 175 years ago. At first glance, the two arrangements indeed look somewhat similar, so it is pretty normal for even Senior Brother Jin to make a mistake."

"What?!"

Even before the triumphant look on Jin Quan's face could vanish, it was completely solidified from shock.

His first reaction was that it was absolutely impossible.

But when he recalled the structure of the Mystic Spirit Seven Transformations Arrangement from the depths of his memories and carefully reviewed it, only then did he realize that he was truly mistaken!

"Whoosh!"

Suddenly, Jin Quan's face was completely flushed red.

Even the most basic layout had confused him; this mistake could not be more rudimentary than any other rudimentary mistake, and that too in front of so many students.

Jin Quan could already hear many students gasping in disbelief.

Hesitatingly, he was about to speak, but in the end, didn't. However, it was Elder Lie Yongming who came forward and fired a question with his pair eyes which were radiating in a strange brilliance:

"You actually know an unconventional layout like the Mystic Spirit Seven Transformations Arrangement? Then do you also know that this layout has very serious flaws and is therefore discarded after being used for a few years? How did you solve those flaws?"

Chapter 161: A Showdown Between Refiners

Chapter 161: A Showdown Between Refiners

"The Mystic Spirit Seven Transformations’ flaw is merely its excessively compact layout. It needs special array glyphs to control the circulation of the coolant, and this sort of special array glyph needs a specific suitable algorithm in order to bring out its greatest potential."

"It was precisely because Daoist Master Scarlet Moon didn’t have a suitable algorithm that he gave up on this kind of elaborate layout."

"And I just so happened to find several fresh algorithms from an ancient book which were then integrated with the modern Mustard Seed Algorithm, Solar Corona Nine Algorithm, and etc for a total of four modern algorithms, forming a computational cluster containing seven types of algorithms. The issue was barely able to be resolved in this way."

"Elder Lei, please look!"

Li Yao swiped his finger, pulling Blueprint No.109 over. He endlessly tapped the enlarge button.

A series of densely packed formulas immediately appeared from the void.

"A computational cluster comprised of seven different algorithms?"

Every single liver spot on Lei Yongming’s face glistened as his pair of eyes suddenly turned clear, seemingly as if he was ten years younger. He concentrated his mind for a minute and beckoned at Li Yao, "Come come come. Youngster, let me ask you..."

From the perspective of all the students of Empyrean Terminus Central High School, the following ten minutes were dreadfully the hardest ten minutes for them to forget of their third year high school period.

Elder Lei Yongming crossed verbal swords with Li Yao—you come and I will lead. The speed of their words grew faster and faster, and they tossed out jargon endlessly one after another that was extremely rare and nearly unheard of. They were simply like two alien lifeforms from millions and millions of light years away quarreling in a different language and dialect.

Not only was their talk extravagant and elusive like the clouds and mist that cover the mountains and akin to falling into a dream, even their refining teacher, Jin Quan, who was the most awesome person in their eyes, stood to the side somewhat dully. He was barely able to stick in a question, and soon, the two people had their spittle splatter all over as they spoke to settle things. Once in awhile, the two people would toss out a problem or an algorithm that would cause Jin Quan to be at a loss for words. Even if he rolled his eyes for half a day, he wouldn’t necessarily receive an answer.

"What the heck? It looks like this weirdo knows more than Teacher Jin?"

"Grandpa Lei is the most senior and veteran refiner in our Empyrean Terminus Sect, and yet, he is even chatting with great exhilaration with this weirdo. It can’t be that this weirdo's level of theory is on the same level as Grandpa Lei’s, right?"

"That’s impossible. This weirdo will get stumped by Grandpa Lei’s questions sooner or later. Just look. Grandpa Lei asked him about some Seven Stage Fire Variation Control problem and he can’t answer it!"

"That’s just not being able to answer a single question. Teacher Jin can’t even butt into the conversation!"

Even though the youngsters lowered their voices to the minimum, how could their words escape Jin Quan’s ears?

Jin Quan’s shame and humiliation reached its limits. It was as if a giant pair of invisible hands had launched a series of slaps from left to right, smacking him right in the face several dozens of times. His entire face was burning painfully.

If there was a crack in the ground, he would have certainly stabbed his way inside and never come out!

"Yuan Manqiu must have taught him ahead of time. She had him mechanically memorize this for the sake of demonstrating in front of me, a graduate of the Deep Sea University’s Refining Department. That’s just how awesome their Grand Desolate War Institution’s Refining Department is!"

The more Jin Quan thought about this, the more reasonable he felt it was. His heart was venting his anger, and his back molars were nearly ground to pieces.

In the beginning, Elder Lei Yongming was only somewhat interested in the Mystic Spirit Seven Transformations. He never thought that this ancient layout, which was discarded over a hundred years ago, would actually still be used in practice by someone. Not to mention that this someone was such a young university student. He couldn’t help asking Li Yao some questions.

He never thought that things would become this uncontrollable. The two jumped from one topic to another, jumping from a structure that was a variation to another structure that had been adjusted. Elder Lei Yongming’s sentiments towards the 1st Generation Tai’e crafting furnace ran very deep. If not for it, he wouldn’t have come to visit from distant lands. He probably never thought that the 1st Generation Tai’e crafting furnace could actually be modified in such a wild way beyond all imagination. He was captivated for a time and even forgot that he was in the middle of an examination.

He only awoke from his dreamlike state ten seconds later. He brushed his head full of hair and spoke somewhat embarrassed:

"Pardon me, Jin Quan. It's been quite a few years since this old man has encountered a modification proposal for a 1st Generation Tai’e, so I was excited by my memories when seeing this in front of me. I spoke a few extra words with our little friend Li Yao, interrupting your examination. Come come come. You can continue. Don’t hesitate to speak of any issues that still remains with these blueprints and spiritual energy flow diagrams!"

Jin Quan did not know whether to laugh or cry. My heart said that you, old grandfather, had raised all the crucial points just now, and this kid spoke so extravagantly. If I try nitpicking again, wouldn’t I be helping myself to dishonor?

Jin Quan grew all the more certain that the entire modification proposal came from Yuan Manqiu’s hands.

Perhaps Li Yao, this mad amateur, was somewhat gifted in the aspect of theory, but that wasn’t enough to complete such a complicated and exquisite modification!

In front of his many students, Jin Quan found it hard to rage. He forced himself to say:

"There aren’t any major problems with the structure and spiritual energy flow side of things. Let’s give a real time operation a shot then and see if the operational process is stable or not."

Li Yao nodded his head. He walked in front of the control console.

"Swoosh swoosh swoosh swoosh!" Seven translucent holograms suddenly lit up, surrounding him completely within.

Several thousand lines of control glyph-script emerged on the holograms, forming a super complicated, ring-shaped refining interface.

Cultivators refining magical equipment was different in nature from the steelmaking and iron forging of the common people.

There were at most a few dozen procedures in steelmaking and iron forging, and the temperature of the steelmaking furnace was usually maintained to be constant.

When cultivators refine magical equipment, they need to take several dozen or even several hundred different materials and fuse them together. The furnace’s temperature would vary over three to five times every second, and the temperature may need to be raised to be above a thousand degrees or dropped below zero each time.

When several hundred materials were placed within, with such switching of temperature every second, the tempering timing needs to be grasped perfectly… Even if it's the simplest flying sword, the magical equipment would need to undergo several hundred procedures for the initial successful step in refining.

Because of this, it was possible for the control interface of the crafting furnace to be even more complicated than that of the main control interface of a crystal warship.

From the perspective of a refiner, this was the stage where their talent could be put to full use!

Li Yao shook his fingers in a not urgent yet not slow manner.

The scope of his movement was very small, yet it caused a series of pitter-patter to ring out like that of a firecracker going off. The power of the sound was quite terrifying.

"You guys guess, what kind of magical equipment will he refine?"

"Flying sword? Saber?"

A few high school students couldn’t help commentating in low voices.

Li Yao series of gorgeous performances just now had caused them to be a bit rattled. An inexplicable expectation was born from the bottom of their hearts.

"Don’t be stupid. Only the most common of swords could be formed with only a single go in the crafting furnace. I’m guessing he will refine a very complicated magical equipment component out of it, one with a dozen or so curved surfaces."

Right at this time, Li Yao suddenly moved.

He was like a viper that had been hibernating in the depths of the underbrush; he changed from extreme stillness to extreme movements within the span of 0.1 seconds as his pair of hands suddenly transformed into two hurricanes that pounded crazily against the control glyph-script atop the translucent hologram!

"P-P-P-P-P-Pow!"

The high school students couldn’t see Li Yao’s pair of hands at all. They could only hear the faint sound of the control glyph-script after being stimulated. In the end, the sound formed a single line that was indistinct to the ears.

Ferocious!

Sharp!

Li Yao’s style of manipulation was just like his nickname, the Vulture. He was incomparably wild and brutal, and it caused people to be unable to bear being anxious for these translucent holograms. What if they were completely shredded by his wild hands!?

Following his super-high hand speed came the awakening of the entire steel jungle.

The 1st Generation Tai’e crafting furnace was like a demon beast with a stomach rumbling with hunger that had discovered its prey. Every joint and every strand of flesh from head to toe was cast into the wildest of operations.

"Tss…"

In an instant, the steam excited an ear-piercing sound that was ten times sharper than before, and a giant cloud of steam enveloped the entire steel jungle. The high school students could only stare as the countless crystals flickered between brightness and darkness within the depths of the fog, much like countless beasts blinking their pairs of eyes!

"In the end, is this refining? Or is this murder?"

All the high school students were in complete shock.

Afterall, they had seen their parents refine before, all refined and cultured, methodical. They had never seen a refining style like Li Yao’s—it was simply extremely fierce!

Within the curling mist, Li Yao’s pair of hands danced madly for five minutes. The roar of the steel beast weakened a little at last.

Li Yao's body faded within the depths of the white mist, only to emerge a short time later. He carefully and cautiously held an object as he walked towards the crowd.

"It's only been five minutes, what can he refine?"

"What could it be in the end? Could it be an extremely small assassination weapon?"

The students that shouted in curiosity stretched their heads over, striving to outdo one another.

As soon as they saw the object held in Li Yao's pair of hands, everyone went "Wow". Seven to eight large eggs could be stuffed down their mouths.

Li Yao had been so crazed, savage, brutal, fearsome... yet what he refined was actually a nail.

It was the size of a finger, had a pitch-black body, and was ordinary—it was a nail that was not altered in any way!

Even though the nail could barely count as a sort of magical equipment component, this was too unpresentable when compared to the refining style he had displayed in great seriousness!

There were even quite a few of these high school students who were able to operate a crafting furnace and refine a magical equipment component more complicated than a nail!

Only Elder Lei Yongming's eyes flickered with radiance. Taking the nail in a serious manner, he held it in the hollow of his palm and tossed it upwards to get a feel for its weight.

The old man's eyes revealed a hint of astonishment, but he didn't say a word. He kept silent as he handed the nail over to Jin Quan

Two of Jin Quan's fingers twirled about, casually swaying the nail. He was endlessly sneering in his mind and his opinions only grew firmer.

At most, Li Yao was just a bookworm with a gift in theory, or perhaps, he had mechanically memorized some unorthodox theory to scare people. When it came to practical application, his weak link was exposed.

However, he didn't come here today to evaluate Li Yao on his level of refining.

Even if someone else's level was even crappier and refined out a rectangular steel block, this had nothing to do with him at all.

"How can I make this kid disgrace himself?

Jin Quan's eyeballs turned as he tossed the metal nail to Li Yao. He put on a fake smile and said: "Then next, it's my turn, right?"

In accordance with the examination process, the refiner on the modifying side would first make a piece, then the refiner of the Empyrean Terminus Sect would make another piece.

If no issues occur after both sides give a real operation a go, then the modification was pretty much considered a success.

Jin Quan walked with his head held high, appearing before the control console, and surrounded by the refining interface.

His refining style was completely different than that of Li Yao.

Although his hand speed wasn't that fast, it appeared to be quite concise, grand, and elegant. At first glance, it made people think of the flowing rivers of the high mountains; it held an unspeakable gracefulness.

Pairing it with his handsome features, it gave him the appearance of a true immortal cultivator refining magical equipment.

He finished his refining five minutes later as well and brought his workpiece to the face of the crowd.

Everyone extended their necks to look, and all were stupefied.

What Jin Quan had refined was actually another nail.

However, it was different than the ordinary pitch-black nail that Li Yao refined under careful observation; Jin Quan's nail was as vast as the heavens and the earth.

Chapter 162: Supersonic Collision!

Chapter 162: Supersonic Collision!

At first glance, the nail forged by Jin Quan appeared dark blue; however, after staring at it for a moment, one could notice very fine golden threads amidst the dark blue.

And when rotated against the light, it became even more brilliant and lustrous as the crisscrossing golden threads formed an incomparably magnificent pattern.

As though the surface of the nail was wrapped in a layer of scales from a terrifying demon beast.

"Casting Dragon Scales!"

"Professor Jin has surprisingly used the Casting Dragon Scale Technique and forged this nail into a dragon scale Nail!"

A chubby schoolboy could not help but burst into an exclamation.

He was Jin Quan’s most faithful admirer. A while ago when he saw his idol being humiliated, he felt his heart itch as though it had been scratched by a monkey.

Finally, it was only when Jin Quan had forged the dragon scale nail that he was relieved of that feeling before his face lit up with happiness.

"Casting Dragon Scales" was a secret technique of the Empyrean Terminus Sect. When forging some rather simple and basic components, using the Casting Dragon Scales Technique, the surface of the component would be covered in a layer akin to dragon scales, turning the component harder and stronger in accordance with the bionics principle.

The nail strengthened using the Casting Dragon Scale Technique would be at least five times better than an ordinary nail forged using the same material!

"Professor Jin is truly awesome. I always thought that the Casting Dragon Scales Technique could only be used by the senior refiners of the older generation in the Empyrean Terminus Sect. I can't believe Professor Jin, who is just twenty years old, had mastered this technique!"

"That's right! Furthermore, Professor Jin looks so cool when he was crafting, unlike that weirdo who looked more like a convulsing madman."

"Yeah, a convulsing madman indeed. There also wasn’t any patterns on the nail forged by him. Isn't that just an ordinary nail? Even I can do that!"

In the blink of an eye, Jin Quan's image in the hearts of these teenagers started to rise once again.

Refining was a profession where one paid the most attention to practice. Even if one boasted using the most fantastic words, how could it amount to anything?

In the final analysis, it was all about skills!

Squinting his pair of eyes, Li Yao swept a glance at the dragon scale nail in Jin Quan’s hands as the corner of his lips seemed to move; however, he didn't say anything.

Whereas, his pupils contracted to the limit as two sharp-as-a-needlepoint aurae shot out from them.

He also admitted the fact that it was indeed a top-grade nail.

As before, holding the Dragon Scale nail, Elder Lie Yongming caressed and tossed it upward a few times but didn't say anything. He silently handed the dragon scale nail back to Jin Quan.

Jin Quan, upon noticing that Li Yao was rendered speechless, also believed that Li Yao had admitted defeat willingly and became even more elated. His prestige, which had been beaten down a moment ago, staged a comeback, and his handsome face distorted a little as he laughed and said:

"Junior Brother Li, the modifications you have done on the crafting furnace are indeed pretty good. It is operating fairly smoothly, and there is not even the slightest bit of hampering in the circulation of spiritual energy. The dispensing of raw materials and mixing of coolants is also very convenient."

"However, in accordance with the rules, we still have to test the two nails refined by us, testing their actual performance. And as long as there isn’t any too big of a defect, then your modifications will be approved!"

"In order to test the performance of these two nails forged by us, of course, we need many magical equipment and measuring equipment. However, testing through them is time-consuming and laborious, and at the very least, it would take us one and a half day to draw a conclusion."

"I am confident in the strength of your institute, and as there are also so many students here, why should we waste time? How about we do this, let the two nails collide at a high speed. Generally, through the sound, flashes, and shock waves of the collision, as well as the wear and tear after the collision, we can check the strength of the nail."

"However, using this 'collision test', we can only draw a conclusion after three to five collisions. I wonder, can your nail withstand three to five collisions with my dragon scale nail?"

"If you are not confident, then we can forget it. We can still use the conventional testing methods. We would just have to spend a bit more time, that's all."

Li Yao was surprised for a moment as he pursed his lips into a smile which carried a sliver of coldness.

In the refiners' community, the "collision test" could be considered a relatively common testing method that was suitable for some structures or basic components which needed high rigidity and tensile strength.

During the super-speed collision, when the components collide, experienced refiners could roughly determine the performance of the component from the subsequent sounds, flashes, and shock waves.

However, for him to suddenly propose the collision test, it was obvious that Jin Quan had ill intentions.

The flames in the depths of Li Yao’s eyes burned more and more furiously, as he too was eager to test his own strength. He nodded while clenching his teeth:

"Alright, I don't have a problem! Although the nail forged by me looks ordinary, I believe it can withstand three to five collision with the dragon scale nail."

‘He took the bait!’

Jin Quan burst into excitement.

He believed that the crafting furnace was derived from Yuan Manqiu's hand.

Looking for a bone in the "Deep Sea Goddess's" egg was very difficult![1]

However, Jin Quan had absolute confidence in the dragon scale nail forged by him. He muttered to himself, 'Is there any need for three to five collision? Isn't it alright as long as Li Yao's rotten nail explodes in the first collision?'

This way, he could more or less vent his hatred and also restore some face, and incidentally, also let everyone get a clear look at Li Yao’s, this braggart's, true appearance.

Elder Lie Yongming raised his white eyebrows as he deeply stared at Jin Quan. His eyes flickered with an extremely complex look. Suddenly, he said, "Jin Quan, since you are going to be using the collision test, it is not appropriate for you to conduct it, let me do it!"

Jin Quan was surprised for a moment before his face beamed with happiness.

'Did the old man also realize that Li Yao is a crazy braggart and wants to teach him a small lesson?'

The more Jin Quan thought of this, the more he found it reliable as he happily carried the dragon scale nail:

"Grand Master, please!"

Elder Lie Yongming stretched out his emaciated-like-a-stick hands, and with a slight move of his ten fingers, the two nails jumped out of Li Yao's and Jin Quan's hands and flew into the air as though they had been dragged by invisible wires!

All the silver-white hair on Elder Lie Yongming's head stood erect as though his entire body was shrouded in an invisible static electricity. As he snapped his ten fingers, the two nails started to pull apart from each other bit by bit before they were separated by twenty meters and rotating at a high speed.

Under the direction of Yuan Manqiu, the high school students retreated by a dozen meters and stood behind a defensive array glyph.

Many of them were witnessing such a stimulating collision test for the first time, and soon, they began whispering to each other:

"What do you think? How many times can that weirdo's rotten nail collide with the dragon scale nail?"

"Up to five times?"

"Three times I think, up to three times. The dragon scale nail is highly rigid. I have heard that some cultivators who move their weapons with their thoughts specially buy a large amount of dragon scale nails and use them as a hidden weapon which could even pierce the shell of demon beasts!"

"I wonder whether this weirdo's nail will bend from the collision."

"It should… be impossible. This weirdo still has some ability. I think his nail can collide with the dragon scale nail up to two times!"

Jin Quan stood proudly and comfortably with his arms crossed as though a gentle breeze was caressing his face.

He seemed to be looking up at the two nails; however, most of his attention was on Li Yao.

He didn't want to miss the stunned, embarrassed, and ashamed look on Li Yao's face when that rotten jet-black nail explodes!

Li Yao, on the other hand, was staring at the sky with rapt attention while his fists were tightly clenched to the point that thick green veins had emerged on his arms; he was extremely tensed.

"Fizz!"

With the move of Elder Lie Yongming's thoughts, the two nails rotated to the limit and made an ear-piercing noise from the friction with the air!

Suddenly, Elder Lie Yongming's eyes opened widely as they radiated with a lustrous and dazzling brilliance as though two crystal searchlights were instantly switched on!

"Whizz!"

"Whizz!"

In the front of the two nails, a mass of white mist respectively appeared.

It was the sound barrier!

The two nails broke through the speed of sound!

Under the speed of sound, the twenty meters gap was engulfed in the blink of an eye as the two nails ruthlessly collided with each other!

Everyone didn't hear anything and only saw a resplendent ball of light suddenly expand, following which something broke into pieces and was shot out.

A few fragments struck upon the defensive array glyph and burst forth with a "crack" noise.

Only now did the deafening sound of the collision, the grating noise from the high-speed air friction, as well as the sound of a nail blasting into pieces bombard their ears!

"Ah, it broke into pieces!"

"Li Yao's nail could not withstand even one collision and was broken by the dragon scale nail!"

"It's too disappointing, right? Damn, I thought he was someone with peerless skills. Obviously, the many theories he has spoken of sounded plausible!?

"What's the point of exaggerating theories in superlative terms if he can't even forge a nail? Refiner my ass!"

"That's right! Although our Empyrean Terminus Sect's dragon scale nail has high rigidity, an ordinary nail should be able to withstand at least three to five collision, right!?

"In just one collision, it broke into pieces. Isn't that disgraceful?"

The Li Yao's wrapped-in-a-shroud-of-mystery image in the hearts of the teenagers collapsed and was completely reduced to nothing but that of a rhetorical theorist.

Oh, so he was a theorist with great strength.

"Haha, it broke into pieces in just one tenth of a second. It's even weaker than I imagined!"

Jin Quan bit his tongue hard while laughing before he forced a smile on his face as he gazed at Li Yao's face.

'Never would have thought that this madman's face would be so thick that there wouldn't even be an ounce of expression on his face, but instead, with a shining bright pair of eyes akin to black crystal, he would thoughtfully stare into the air.'

"Stupid, stupid… how could I be so stupid!"

Just as Jin Quan, who was fired with boundless enthusiasm, wanted to open his mouth, two screams suddenly came from behind—it was the chubby boy.

During the collision, some fragments shot at the defensive array glyph and bounced off, which just so happened to fall not too far from him.

The young, fat boy was momentarily excited and stretched out his fat ass as he bent over to the ground to pick up the fragment.

However, he didn't know that due to the high-speed rotation and collision, the nail had accumulated a lot of heat and was just like a red-hot nail. Immediately, a bunch of blisters emerged on his fingers.

The first scream was precisely due to this.

The second scream, however, was due to the shocking discovery made by the young, fat boy. The fragment on the ground was of dark blue color and was completely covered in thin golden threads as though it was covered in a layer of dragon scales.

To his dismay, it turned out to be a fragment from the dragon scale nail!

During the high-speed collision, was the nail which exploded instantaneously... the Dragon! Scale! Nail!?

The young, fat boy was flabbergasted as he fell down on the ground with his legs apart while distractedly looking at the dragon scale nail's fragment and even forgot the piercing pain on his fingertips.

His mouth opened wider and wider to the point that the uvula in his throat was showing.

"Li Shanhao, what happened to you?"

One by one, the students noticed the strange appearance of the young, fat boy before they gathered around him

The young, fat boy kept blinking his eyes. His Adam's apple moved for a long while, but he could not utter one word. He could only use his thick and short trembling finger to point at the fragment of the dragon scale nail.

After half a second, everyone had fallen into the same panic-stricken and dumbfounded state as the fat boy!

Everyone looked at each other; they did not dare to believe their eyes.

Professor Jin Quan, who was the most handsome, the coolest, and the strongest in their mind had actually lost... he had thoroughly lost?

"Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!"

Numerous gaze simultaneously shot towards Jin Quan.

Everyone wanted to see how Jin Quan was going to respond. How would he fight back?

[1] - To find flaws

Chapter 163: Seven Layered Heavens, Hidden Dragon Scales!

Chapter 163: Seven Layered Heavens, Hidden Dragon Scales!

Jin Quan did not respond in the slightest, seemingly as if he had just been struck by lightning; he was at a total loss and didn't know what to do.

From head to toe, every part of his body was trembling, and even his two rows of teeth were clattering.

His handsome face was completely distorted, revealing an embarrassed smile which was even uglier than crying.

Elder Lie Yongming heaved a sigh as he pulled Li Yao's nail as well as the fragments of the dragon scale nail into his hand before walking in front of his apprentice grandson and waved his hands to the high school students, gesturing for them to come over.

"Jin Quan, do you know where you lost?"

Jin Quan felt like weeping but had no tears. His lips quivered, but how could he answer half a word?

Elder Lie Yongming earnestly said:

"Casting Dragon Scales is an exemplary skill of our Empyrean Terminus Sect, and I am very pleased by the fact that you, at such a young age, have mastered it as well as being able to apply it so skillfully and forge a dragon scale nail."

"However, Jin Quan... kid, you have been proud and arrogant since you were a child. You are too impatient to do everything and had been negligent in your work. Take a look at these fragments. Can you see the 'dragon scales' you had cast are somewhat scattered? Due to this, the dragon scale nail was irregularly heated inside the crafting furnace, and there is a 0.01% difference in the weight on both sides."

"The internal structure is also unstable, so what's the use of laying three to five layers of dragon scales on the surface?"

"It doesn't necessarily mean that there is a problem with your method. It is quite possible that the reason for you to forge a flawed dragon scale nail is because it was your first time using this crafting furnace and you had been too arrogant and proud. You had forged it before even familiarizing yourself with the performance of the crafting furnace!"

"And the nail forged by Student Li Yao..."

Elder Lie Yongming slightly smiled as he beckoned and said, "Student Li Yao, what's so special about your nail?"

Having approached, Li Yao said in a neither humble nor arrogant manner:

"The forging method of this nail is derived from an ancient book and is called 'Seven Layered Heavens'!"

Elder Lie Yongming's eyes flickered with a sharp gleam as he repeatedly nodded:

"Good, good, very good—Seven Layered Heavens!"

"Students, don’t be fooled by the jet-black ordinary surface of this nail. In fact, there is a universe inside!"

"The so-called "Seven Layered Heavens" is using seven levels of hidden strength. In other words, seven different kinds of material are mixed with each other layer after layer. If you cut this nail in the middle, you will be able to see a seven layer structure spanning from inside to outside. Seven Layered Heaven, each level supporting the other, softness with hardness, flexibility with rigidity. It is absolutely a notch above the dragon scale nail!"

"Furthermore, Student Li Yao has personally modified this crafting furnace and is perfectly familiar with each and every performance parameter. The nail forged by him is of uniform density, and its dimensions are accurate; there isn't a single flaw. It has a first-rate quality and can also be considered a peerless nail!"

"Jin Quan, if you had spent a dozen minutes and tried to figure out the performance of the crafting furnace, then the dragon scale nail refined by you would not have had a single flaw. Perhaps, it would have been able to collide with Student Li Yao's 'seven layered heaven nail' a dozen times, and it would have been difficult to tell who the winner would be."

"However, you were impatient and didn't place Student Li Yao in your eyes, thereby refining a flawed dragon scale nail. Of course, it could not be a match for the seven layered heaven nail."

"In other words, you didn't lose to Student Li Yao—you lost to yourself!"

"Oh..."

Upon hearing this reasoning, the high school students were caught by surprise. They had never imagined that the jet-black nail forged by Li Yao would be so exquisite.

Seven Layered Heaven Method?

It sounded quite domineering!

In the blink of an eye, Li Yao's image in their mind once again grew big and tall, turning into a humongous monster that was baring its fangs and brandishing its claws.

Jin Quan lost his wits. The lines on his forehead simply composed a "" character as a downcasted look was painted on his face.

Patting his shoulder heavily, Elder Lie Yongming said:

"Jin Quan, don't blame Grandmaster for intentionally making a fool of you. Your Grandmaster has watched you grow up since childhood. In the past, your grandfather and father have also followed Grandmaster and learned refining. In Grandmaster's eyes, you are just like a grandson!"

"And your refining talent in the Empyrean Terminus Sect is also outstanding!"

"In the first place, Grandmaster has high hopes for you, I hope that you can become a top-tier refiner and lead the Empyrean Terminus Sect to greater heights."

"However, from the beginning to end, you have been too impetuous. Although graduating from Deep Sea University's Refining Department is pretty good in the eyes of ordinary people, in Grandmaster's eyes, it’s still far from reaching your limit, let alone breaking through your limit!"

"Hopefully, today’s duel can wake you up. I hope that the impatience and arrogance deep down in your heart can be swept away once and for all so that you can walk on the true road of refining with firm footing!"

"Now, take your dragon scale fragments to the side and self-reflect, ok?"

Jin Quan's face turned red to purple and then purple to black. One by one, his face turned into seven to eight colors.

Finally, he was as silent as a grave as he walked to a corner in a crestfallen gait before squatting down, whereupon holding his head, he stayed down.

"Student Li Yao..."

Elder Lie Yongming's eyes bloomed with a magnificent brilliance. His entire body was as though it had donned an invisible battle suit as he faintly smiled and said, "In the last couple decades, this old man has never seen such exquisite modifications to a 1st Generation Tai'e Furnace, so this old man is itching to give it a try. Can you lend it to this old man to try a hand?"

Just a while ago, from Yuan Manqiu's introduction, Li Yao came to know that this old man had been immersed in refining for over a century. Although his cultivation was not that high, his experience, on the other hand, was extremely rich. He was an old ginger that could not be underestimated.

Just a moment ago, Jin Quan had lost a great deal of face for the Empyrean Terminus Sect, so of course, this old ginger would like to recover it!

Promptly nodding his head, Li Yao respectfully said, "Old Lie, please!"

"Wow, Grandpa Lie is going to refine!"

The high school students were all excited to the extreme.

Lie Yongming was an elder of the Empyrean Terminus Sect and had an aloof status. For a long time, he had never crafted anything in public. Nobody would have imagined that he would make an exception for Li Yao.

Everyone stretched their neck as they held their breaths.

Elder Lie Yongming appeared before a console as he intently observed the refining interface.

His eye revealed a deep love just like a hot-blooded young man looking at his beloved girlfriend.

Suddenly, his emaciated pair of hand started to move.

Compared to Jin Quan, he was several times slower. His every action was neither too fast nor too slow and appeared extremely ordinary.

His actions were neither crazed nor maddening like Li Yao’s, and neither was it elegant or comfortable like Jin Quan’s.

It was like an old worker who had rich experience, finishing everything with persistence and consistency; so calm, so accurate, so relaxed.

But when Li Yao was watching, the words "Governing the whole country like cooking a small fish!" emerged from the depths of his heart.

As far as Elder Lie Yongming was concerned, refining to him was perhaps just like frying a little yellow croaker; it was nothing more than simple and boring day-to-day work.

After a moment, the elder walked out of the steam, calmly holding a "nail" in his palm!

"Student Li Yao, this old man had also forged a nail. Please tell me what you think."

The eyes of the teenagers sparkled. They had never expected for Grandpa Lie to also forge a nail.

It must be a dragon scale nail—a flawless dragon scale nail!

Li Yao's eyes contracted as he solemnly used both hands to hold the nail forged by the elder.

Li Yao was a bit surprised as the nail was jet-black on the surface, appearing as ordinary as the nail forged by him. He could not see even a single thread of dragon scales.

"What?"

Many students were perplexed and could not help but shout.

Li Yao, on the other hand, was as though he was holding a masterwork weapon. His eyes were madly trembling while cold sweat emerged on his forehead.

Suddenly, he flicked his fingers, making it seem as if the nail had been struck down by lightning seven times.

"Ding Ding Ding Ding Ding Ding Ding!"

A strange thing occurred.

To everyone's dismay, with the flick of his fingers, the solid nail burst forth with cries of tigers and dragons that shot through the roof and lingered in the air.

"Sounds from the flicks of fingers?"

Elder Lie Yongming was truly astounded as he muttered to himself, "Such an unorthodox testing method. I thought that it had already been lost. I did not expect—"

Li Yao too was shocked in his heart and that too was ten times more intense than the elder.

The arrogance in the depths of Li Yao's eyes was swept away, and his face was filled with admiration: "Old Lie, your dragon scale nail is truly flawless. It is even more rigid than my seven layered heaven nail. If we do a collision test, I’m afraid that my nail would not be able to withstand even three collisions!"

"Dragon scale nail?"

"Where are the dragon scales? Why can't I see them?"

The teenagers anxiously grimaced. Their eyes were bloodshot, but they were still unable to find a single dragon scale.

Li Yao slightly smiled and explained:

"Old Lie's dragon scale nail looks ordinary from the surface, but all the dragon scales are hidden inside the nail. Furthermore, if I am right, the internal structure bears more than a layer of dragon scales, and there are at least three layers, with layers upon layers of reinforcing. The principle is almost the same as my Seven Layered Heaven Method, but the difficulty of forging layer upon layer of dragon scales is obviously ten times greater!"

"A master craftsman is a master craftsman—I am convinced!"

Li Yao made a deep bow to Lie Yongming.

The elder's skill has given him a very timely lesson, making him deeply understand that the refiners' community was filled with crouching tigers and hidden dragons. No matter how good one thought they were, there is always someone out there who is better!

Even a Building Foundation Stage refiner possessed such skills, then what about a Golden Core Stage refiner? And there is also Nascent Soul Stage refiners!

Li Yao was completely looking forward to the limitless and brilliant future!

Elder Lie Yongming was once again stupefied:

"It's not at all strange that you can perceive my "hidden dragon scales" method; however, you can surprisingly perceive that I have cast three layers of hidden dragon scales. This is truly inconceivable!"

He gave a thumbs up to Li Yao: "At the beginning, this old man came to visit your institute just to see the 1st Generation Tai'e Furnace, but who would have thought that your institute would give this old man such a pleasant surprise! Student Li Yao, this old man's skills are simply nothing. I have just accumulated a little bit of experience that’s not worth mentioning over the many years of repeated refining, that's all. I believe that it would only take a decade or two for you to surpass this old man's achievements!"

"Wow!"

All the teenagers were dumbfounded. They didn't expect that the highly respected Elder Lie Yongming of the Empyrean Terminus Sect would give Li Yao such a high evaluation.

In a moment, many of the students' complex gazes fell upon the crestfallen Professor Jin Quan at the corner.

Jin Quan was like a group of tangled roots as he held onto the dragon scale nail fragments with a blurred gaze. He seemed to be in a trance, mumbling something, and maybe even he himself didn't know what he was saying.

Suddenly, he felt heat waves billowing from all around him.

As he raised his head to look, he discovered that all the students had gathered at his side and surrounded him in a circle as they looked at him with sparkling eyes.

"You guys..."

Jin Quan flushed red to his ears; he was extremely ashamed. He didn't know how he should face his own students.

He truly fell very ruthlessly. 'The students must have come to ridicule me, right?'

"Professor Jin!"

The fat boy called Li Shanhao came forward and loudly said, "Don't be sad, we will always support you!"

"That's right, your opponent was simply a monster. Even Grandpa Lei praised him and said that he would catch up with the achievements of Grandpa Lie in a decade or two, so how could a normal person win against such a monster? Professor Jin, don't be sad. In our minds, you are still the best!"

Chapter 164: The Fiend Star Appears! Nine Star Explosion!

Chapter 164: The Fiend Star Appears! Nine Star Explosion!

"Even though this monster's depth of knowledge is more profound than that of Teacher Jin and he had refined a magical equipment even stronger than the one refined by Teacher Jin, at least... at least Teacher Jin is more handsome than him!"

"That's right! Teacher Jin's refining style was confident, smooth, and even graceful. He's just plain awesome. How can this monster even compare?"

"Teacher Jin, by all means, don't be dismayed. Even if you can't match up to him in all sorts of ways, at least you're better looking!"

The high school students thought for quite a while and were still unable to think of an aspect where Teacher Jin Quan was stronger than Li Yao. In the end, they just thought of this strong point that wasn't really a strong point.

Actually, even though Jin Quan appearance was quite effeminate and cool, Li Yao's appearance wasn't as bad as they were saying.

Even though Li Yao couldn't be said to be handsome, he still had a set of features that was both good and bad. His figure was tall and straight, and he possessed a coarse, wild, and brash charm. This charm that was steeped in his entire body possessed an energy that made people's blood go racing involuntarily.

If Jin Quan was a standard lady-killer, then Li Yao was a "model man" to the letter.

This was especially so when they witnessed the might of the Seven Layered Heavens Nail, which even Grandpa Lei had praised Li Yao to the high heaven for. The "mad convulsions" that Li Yao had demonstrated during his refining had transformed into a "radiating passion that revealed his dominance" within the hearts of quite a few youngsters.

In regards to Li Yao's particular personality from the perspective of these youths whose rebellious tendencies ran strong, Li Yao's matchless, tyrannical style of a monster was quite appealing.

However, Teacher Jin Quan was one of their people, so how could they embolden the enemy while putting out their own might?

Obviously, they had to boast up their Teacher Jin Quan as the number one most handsome dude under the heavens!

Jin Quan's spirit was at its lowest, but the childish and ridiculous cheers of the youths had roused his energy with laughter. He rubbed his face with some effort as his eyes turned clear. Letting out a long, relaxing breath, he nodded:

"Everyone's right. Victory and defeat are commonplace in conflicts. A single loss is not that serious. I'll cultivate properly when I return and surpass him next time!"

Jin Quan gripped the fragments of the dragon scale nail tenaciously within the palm of his hand, totally unaware that he was squeezing out blood. He walked with large strides to go face to face with Li Yao and performed a deep bow.

"Junior Brother Li, I accept this loss with all my heart and I thank you greatly for this profound lesson. I will forever carry this shattered dragon scale nail by my side to always have today's lesson engraved in memory. I will certainly madly cultivate when I return to the Empyrean Terminus Sect. There will be a day when I will come find you to swap pointers, and when that day comes, I hope you won't refuse!"

"That's right! Revenge is a dish best served cold. Our Teacher Jin will go back and go through bitter training for ten years. He will surely come back to find you, you big devil, and wipe out this grudge!"

The small fatty, Li Shanhao, howled while ducking behind Jin Quan.

His best friends, a few smooth-talking boys, continued to stir up trouble: "That's right, big devil! Just you wait! Teacher Jin will certainly annihilate you!"

Jin Quan was both happy and amused at the same time. His heart clearly said that he was a gifted student of Deep Sea University while his opponent was a freshman of Grand Desolate War Institution. So how could it be that Li Yao had become a big devil whose prowess was unrivaled in the mouths of the group of little rascals, while he was considered to be lower by more than a single level and needed ten years of bitter training to come back for revenge?

They’re looking down on him too much, right?

Jin Quan looked back and gave a ruthless glare to Li Shanhao. He explained with some embarrassment:

"You must not misunderstand, Junior Brother Li. I sincerely want to compare refining techniques with you. I absolutely don't harbor any grudges."

Li Yao was unable to restrain a smile. He laughed: "You're welcome to come and compare refining techniques at any time. However, I too will madly cultivate. I will certainly be stronger than I am now when you come over next time!"

"That's good then. I am very much looking forward for that day to come. When that happens, we will see just who is crazier in the end!"

After a moment's pause, Jin Quan's expression suddenly turned utterly serious. He spoke while pausing after each syllable, "Junior Brother Li, today's loss was just my sole defeat. It has nothing to do with Deep Sea University."

"Our Deep Sea University’s Refining Department is full of crouching tigers and hidden dragons. The powerful come forth in large numbers. I won't talk about the previous generation for now. There are nine great true disciples and three hundred direct disciples among Professor Jiang Sheng's students. I am just one of the three hundred direct disciples ranked near the end. I am far from being able to represent the true level of Deep Sea University’s Refining Department.

"And so, based on the strength I see before me, you are still far from being proficient enough if you truly wish to challenge the Deep Sea University’s Refining Department!"

Li Yao's eyebrows raised up high like the unsheathing of two black sabers:

"What's the difference between a true disciple and a direct disciple?"

Jin Quan explained:

"Direct disciples are recognized by Professor Jiang Sheng. They are fortunate students who are allowed to listen to his personal lectures and are naturally much more powerful in strength than a typical student."

"Not every student who receives personal instruction from Professor Jiang Sheng can receive his true teachings. This is because the professor speaks far too profoundly and mysteriously. Those who are lacking in aptitude by even just a little bit won't be able to make heads or tails of his words."

"In the last ten years, there have only been nine students who were able to obtain his true teachings. They are known as the Nine Great True Disciples. On their own, they formed together a refining seminar called... The Nine Star Chain!"

"The Nine Star Chain is like nine little stars orbiting around Supernova Jiang Sheng!"

Jin Quan spoke with seriousness:

"The nine great disciples, the Nine Star Chain, represents the highest level of Deep Sea University’s Refining Department. Each one of them is stronger than I am by ten-fold. I needed ten years of bitter training to master a method such as the Casting Nine Scales. They look at me with disdain and contempt, for they possess even stronger ultimate techniques!"

"Only those who can prevail over them are qualified to formally challenge Deep Sea University’s Refining Department!"

The radiance of nine star dots appeared within Li Yao's eyes, only to explode one after another in an instant.

"The Nine Star Chain? A very impressive name, but in the face of my endlessly rising Fiend Star, you all are destined to perish into the darkness!"

"The appearance of the Fiend Star and the explosion of the Nine Stars—this is the path I will walk!"

The little fatty, Li Shanhao, came boring out from behind Jin Quan right at this moment. Holding his chest up high, he sucked in his stomach, placed his hands on his hips, and spoke loudly:

"That's right! The experts of Deep Sea University’s Refining Department are like the clouds, and the powerful are like the rain. Just based on you, this big devil, you wish to single-handedly challenge Deep Sea University’s Refining Department? This is simply the ravings of a lunatic! Even if you're better than Teacher Jin, even if you manage to wipe out some Nine Star Chain, you still need to get past me!"

The little fatty raised his thumb and stabbed it towards his chest: "Today, I witnessed the ultimate confrontation between you two experts. Let alone the burning passion in my heart, it has made my blood race and boil! I vow from this day forth that each day, I won't sleep until past midnight. I will train like crazy and fight to test into Deep Sea University’s Refining Department and become a formidable opponent of yours, big devil!"

Li Yao was stupefied on the spot, not knowing whether to laugh or cry. When did he become a "big devil"? Wasn't his refining style just a bit sharper than normal?

"In any case..."

Li Shanhao suddenly changed expressions as he changed topics. His entire face was covered with a flattering smile as he rubbed his hands and spoke, "The minimum passing score required for Deep Sea University’s Refining Department is very high. No matter how hard I work from here on, I most likely won't be able to pass. I don't know if your Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department is still recruiting new students this year. How high is your minimum passing score?"

So this was his real goal.

Immediately, there was someone amongst the group of friends behind him who howled:

"Alright, you dead fatty. Just now, you even said that we would test into Deep Sea University’s Refining Department together and face off against this big devil together with Teacher Jin. How can you betray us so soon?"

"You don't understand crap!"

Li Shanhao's skin was super thick. He snorted with disdain: "If I can test into Deep Sea University, I will obviously follow Teacher Jin. But such a high score requirement... Can crappy people such as us test into it? We might as well join the big devil's side. After all..."

He looked at the contours of Li Yao's muscular arms with some envy. He swallowed then spoke: "Big Devil... wait no. Other than Teacher Jin, the second young refiner that I revere the most from the depths of my soul is... Teacher Li Yao, the eldest senior brother of Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department. The quality of education there has to be excellent and top-notch!"

"And there's also how bold, ferocious, and awesome Teacher Li Yao's refining style is. It simply gives a feel of being unrivaled and unmatched in the boundless expanse of the universe. It is very suitable for me, who possesses this sort of powerful strength of awesome buff manliness!"

He smoothed up his sleeves upon speaking, exposing a fat arm, and shook it with immense pride as he spoke, "Can you see it? This body of muscle!?"

Everyone was stunned by his shamelessness.

Only a few of his best friends, being cut from the same mold, came out. They defected to the enemy in the blink of an eye on the spot, crowding around Li Yao one by one:

"Teacher Li Yao!"

Eldest senior brother!"

"Give us a quick lecture then, Eldest Senior Brother. Is the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department still recruiting students this year? The minimum score shouldn't be that high, right?"

This group of good-for-nothings headed by Li Shanhao was quite notorious within Empyrean Terminus Central High School.

Even though these good-for-nothings were somewhat gifted, they were known as troublemakers in school. Their hearts and minds weren't completely concentrated on studying, and every few days, the school would ask their parents to come to handle things.

They normally relied on their talent and wasted their days, barely considered top students. How would it be possible for them to pass into the golden field of study that was the Deep Sea University’s Refining Department?

They never expected to have their eyes opened wide on this day. Yes, Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department's environment was lacking a bit, but they had such a bold and powerful eldest senior brother—this department seemed to be quite decent!

Most importantly, Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department didn't have a big reputation, so the minimum score requirement must be quite low, right?

"Teacher Jin, in my mind, you are still the number one unrivaled handsome refiner, and I will forever worship you, admire you, and grieve for you; however, I am forced to helplessness in regards to the future!"

The little fatty mouthed silently to himself in his mind: "If worse comes to worst, when I learn this big devil’s tyrannical and matchless refining technique, I'll defect back to Teacher Jin's side!"

"That's wrong!"

The little fatty's eyes bulged round and wide as he recollected about a certain matter. He smacked a fierce palm towards his greasy and shiny forehead as his expression changed greatly: "Teacher Jin just said that the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department will be abolished this year. Could that be actually true?"

"That's right!"

Several of his best friends recalled this one after another. They howled in agony: "It can't be! We just barely managed to find a minimum required score that was low and yet was in a relatively strong field. Will our hopes and dreams be crushed?"

Li Yao gave a slight chuckle and pinched Li Shanhao on the back in a not light yet not intense manner. He looked at the good-for-nothings crowded around and spoke with decisiveness:

"Go ahead and be at ease! Do your best when you get back!"

"Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department won't be abolished! We welcome your applications!"

"Today, this place may be just a sheet of ruin, but I believe that there will be a day when the ones to walk out of here will be the strongest refiners of the federation! For sure!"

Chapter 165: Armory

Chapter 165: Armory

Half a month later.

The heavy snow fluttered about for an entire night. It was only during the wee hours of three, four AM did the snow somewhat stop.

The campus after the snow was a sheet of somberness and desolation and was exceptionally cold.

It was winter vacation, so the majority of students had returned home to celebrate the new year, leaving just a few cultivation lunatics at school.

The time was precisely the moment when it was the darkest before dawn. Even the cultivation lunatics were in the Deep Sleep Chamber in deep sleep, preserving and honing their strength.

However, it was as if there was a wildfire within the refining workshop, as if it was the afternoon of a hot day. The intense sun was scorching as steam curled around.

"Boom! Boom! Boom!"

Aside from the humming that came from the high-speed operation of the crafting furnace, there was also a bombarding sound with quite the rhythm coming from the depths of the steam.

A small area was marked out in the corner opposite of the imposing 1st Generation Tai'e crafting furnace. It was a metal forging room that was built according to ancient methods, and although it was small, it was complete in every detail.

Not a wisp of steam was on Li Yao's body, exposing a body of lean muscle. The Dark Star Rock danced like the wind, instantly transforming into over a hundred streaks of hammer shadows that smashed against the anvil. The pounding caused sparks to scatter all about, splashing onto his body, yet he was totally unaware of it.

His lips pursed up under the illumination of the scarlet red furnace. He held an expression of concentration, and every breath was drawn especially long.

Nine seconds for each inhale. Nine seconds for each exhale. The timing did not vary by a hair.

His body would expand by a factor as he inhaled, and as every strand of muscle fiber bulged, they would reveal even the tiniest of details, seemingly as if countless dragons were bulging out from beneath his skin.

And his skin dispersed with a bronze, silver, and gold luster of radiance, much like a metal that had been forged to the pinnacle.

This was the number one secret body tempering technique of the Hundred Smelting Clan, the Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining technique. This was the exquisite symbol of his cultivation.

When he exhaled, his body would return to normal and all the "dragons" would return to the depths of his blood and flesh to hibernate, concealing their claws and teeth and curbing their wings, making him look no different than a normal university student. His thick back, his sturdy waist, and his bulging muscles were larger than even those buff dudes from the Combat Department.

This was the marvel of the Soul Convergence Technique!

Li Yao had already grasped the initial step through long study via the Heavenly Refining Tower, and now, he could take his strength at will and suppress it to the 1st level of the Refinement Stage.

At first glance, he was a newcomer who had just awakened.

But, as soon as he uses the Soul Igniting Law, Li Yao was confident that his strength, particularly his anti-gravity and instantaneous burst strength, would absolutely not lose to any student of the Combat Department, for he had cultivated for several months at the bottom of the Billowing Star Sea—even if they were students from the higher grades!

"Exhale..."

Li Yao wielded the Dark Star Rock at his maximum speed and forged for a full ten minutes. Fine beads of sweat seeped out from his body, making it look like he had put on a layer of glistening battle armor. Finally, he finished with great success!

Letting out a drawn out breath of relaxation, a stream of air shot out from his mouth and suddenly expanded midair, forming the appearance of a vulture flapping its wings, ready to fly. It lasted for a full ten seconds before gradually fading away.

"Not bad! I could only maintain it for 9.5 seconds yesterday, but today, I have increased it by half a second. My control over energy has become more and more exquisite. Soon, I will be able to break through the 5th level of the Refinement Stage and officially rush into the 6th level, the intermediate level Refinement Stage!"

Li Yao's pitch-black pupils flared with light as the corner of his mouth arched into a smile of self-confidence.

Through mad cultivation at the bottom of the Billowing Star Sea and through the bitter bracing of wild bombardment from Ding Lingdang, explosive progress was made whether it was in Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining, the Soul Converging Technique, or the Soul Igniting Law. During a sparring session five days ago, Li Yao broke through in a single breath to the 5th level of the Refinement Stage and even borrowed the power of this breakthrough to launch a dangerous counterattack against Ding Lingdang!

Even though he only severed a single strand of hair on her head, this was, after all, the first time he had made contact with Ding Lingdang's body. Even if he had been beaten to a pulp afterwards, Li Yao was still quite pleased in his heart.

"Work hard! Strive forward!"

"The next level breakthrough will mean I have reached the intermediate level within the Refinement Stage. Spirit energy will no longer be just for show and can be used in actual combat!"

"At that time, my combat strength will increase by three to five fold!"

However, levels one through five of the Refinement Stage are considered to be low levels, so it is relatively easy to break through to them.

To step across from the low levels to the intermediate levels would require profound comprehension in addition to the accumulation of strength. One must not be impatient for that time.

Li Yao had just reached the 5th level of the Refinement Stage a few days ago, so his state wasn't too stable. He had just let his imagination run wild for a moment and didn’t really have the impatient thoughts for quick results.

Stretching his aching back, Li Yao opened the ice maker and used his brain to touch upon the freeze array glyphs, causing them to flash. His mind was completely clear, and only then did pick up the workpiece he had just forged for careful examination.

What was twirling in his fingers was shockingly yet another nail, a seven layered heavens nail!

Actually, he had left out a step in the refining showdown that happened half a month ago.

The Seven Layered Heavens technique was an ancient refining technique from the Hundred Smelting Clan of forty millenniums ago. It absolutely could not be formed with just one go through the crafting furnace. It still needed the One Hundred and Eight Chaos Gale Hammer Technique to hammer it over and over, taking the seven layer structure and fusing it into a single body. Only in this way could it become the true Seven Layered Heavens!

If the seven layered heavens nail had gone through the ancient forging technique, then even if Jin Quan had refined the perfect dragon scale nail, Jin Quan wouldn't even have the slightest bit chance of victory. His nail would instantly explode under the high-speed collision!

However...

Li Yao snapped his fingers, and a different pitch-black nail immediately flew into the palm of his hand.

This was none other than the dragon scale nail refined by Elder Lei Yongming.

This was a gift the elder had sent to Li Yao before leaving.

"Ding!"

Li Yao flicked it with his finger and the dragon scale nail let out the hiss of a tiger and the cry of a dragon. The sound lingered in waves.

It was as if there was truly an imposing and ferocious dragon hibernating within this tiny, little nail.

Li Yao listened to the subtleties of the dragon's cry with half squinting eyes. He could perceive the internal structure of the hidden dragon scale nail. He muttered to himself:

"Marvelous, profound, and inconceivable!"

"The techniques of the previous generation of refiners have truly reached perfection. Even if I use the true Seven Layered Heavens technique, it would be impossible for me to forge even a single layer of the hidden dragon scale structure. The old grandfather had actually inserted three layers in an instant, reducing the total weight of the nail by 22% while increasing the strength by 100%. In the end, how did he manage to do this?"

"I exhausted my mind forging this seven layered heavens nail, yet it's still not enough to contend against that old grandfather's hidden dragon scale nail. After ten collisions, my nail would certainly be the one to shatter!"

Li Yao deeply recognized the distance between him and a true master refiner. It was a distance that was oh so far.

In an instant, an endless crazed swelling rose from the bottom of his heart, as the desire to battle raged and burned. His ambitions expanded crazily.

"With a universe this large, it is truly worth it to spend an entire lifetime to challenge others. I must not relax by all means. Every second must become time spent in getting stronger. Every second must be lived to boundless brilliance!"

Li Yao gave a subtle smile when his thoughts reached this point.

What Lei Yongming had given him did not end with something as simple as just a nail.

After being shaken by the astonishing potential revealed by Li Yao, the old grandfather had pulled some strings to establish a Strategic Cooperation Agreement between Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department and the Empyrean Terminus Sect.

The Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department had officially turned into an extracurricular education base of Empyrean Terminus Central High School, and the Empyrean Terminus Central High School would organize their top students to come to the department for a touring study each year.

At the same time, Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department made a promise to pay special attention to the students of Empyrean Terminus Central High School during the Limit Challenge Competition. They just had to comply with the standards to receive preferential score treatment!

The most amusing thing of all was that the good-for-nothing Little Fatty Li Shanhao and his group of good-for-nothings had gotten a hold of Yuan Manqiu and Li Yao's spiritual crane messenger number. They didn't dare to contact Yuan Manqiu, the department head; instead, every few days, they would go contact Li Yao with affection. Every message would refer to him as their eldest senior brother, addressing him quite intimately.

To give preferential score treatment, even from a third rate specialty that was the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department, was still a promise of good faith.

Obviously, the Empyrean Terminus Sect wouldn't accept this benefit for nothing. With just a wave of Elder Lei Yongming's hand, the Empyrean Terminus Sect immediately brought out eight million credits and this old grandfather personally took out two million credits for a total pooling of ten million credits in investments. They sent it to the Grand Desolate War Institution, indicating that the money was to be invested in the refining department. They even said that this was just the first stage. In the future, if everyone's cooperation goes pleasantly, they could even consider forming a special fund, a fund to be given as an investment every year to the refining department.

The entire administration of Grand Desolate War Institution was shocked in this instant.

Ten million credits investment couldn't be considered large, but it also couldn't be considered tiny. The few traditional investors of the Grand Desolate War Institution, like the

Devil Fist Sect, the Hundred Saber Alliance, and other similar sects, would invest several hundred million each year!

However, these sects were all combat sects of the Wasteland, and their relationship with the Grand Desolate War Institution was extremely close. The Combat Department was equivalent to their core reserves and base of training, so it was natural for them to give the Grand Desolate War Institution money liberally.

Meanwhile, the Empyrean Terminus Sect was a sect focused on refining and never really collaborated together with the Grand Desolate War Institution. This time, the Refining Department had forcefully broke open a new road. The investment money was only second to what was key, the slow and pervading influence of the Grand Desolate War Institution into the region where the Empyrean Terminus Sect was located.

It must be known that the Empyrean Terminus Sect was in the middle of an abrupt rise to become a top ranking sect. They had certain fame within the federation. If the two sides deepened their collaboration, the benefits that the Grand Desolate War Institution would receive would far exceed a simple 10 million credits.

As a result, this matter brought Li Yao a benefit that he could never have imagined; he received a scholarship called "Star of the Wasteland".

This was the highest level scholarship of the Grand Desolate War Institution. The requirements to get this scholarship were extremely demanding, and the student had to have an outstanding display in academics and perform enormous contributions to the school as well. The student had to do both, and neither could be lacking.

Since Li Yao was able to modify the 1st Generation Tai'e crafting furnace, his academics didn't need to be mentioned. His drawing in of 10 million credits in investments for the school could be counted as an enormous contribution. It was quite justifiable for him to receive the scholarship.

The money wasn't a lot, but the crucial point laid in the fact that the scholarship gave him a whole additional 3000 school credits as a reward!

In this way, Li Yao's total school credits easily broke through the 10,000 mark.

He had no burdens at all now. He wholeheartedly threw himself into refining madly.

The entire winter vacation was spent with complete diligence.

Every morning, he would go to Ding Lingdang's home and cultivate in the Billowing Star Sea for an hour. Then, he would spar with Ding Lingdang in low-intensity for half an hour and high-intensity for five minutes.

Soon after, he would enter the Heavenly Refining Tower with the help of the Super Perception Cabin and analyze over and over the structures and functions of various magical equipment.

Ancient ones, modern ones, civilian ones, military ones, close-combat ones, long-distance ones... Every blueprint of each and every magical equipment he could find were totally chewed to pulp by him.

After leaving the Heavenly Refining Tower, he would go back to the depths of the Billowing Star Sea to cultivate for one more hour before he would act as a sandbag for Ding Lingdang once again for another half an hour.

After eating dinner, he would start his true refining.

One magical equipment after another came freshly refined out from the crafting furnace. They went through ancient forging techniques to become harder, stronger, and more precise than those produced from purely modern arts.

All sorts of vibrant and brilliant colored magical equipment that could cut through steel like mud appeared within a small gray building to the side of the refining workshop.

Following the coming of the new semester, this little gray building shockingly turned into an awe-inspiring armory!

Chapter 166: The Fierce Battle of Verdant Tarn City

Chapter 166: The Fierce Battle of Verdant Tarn City

Three days before the start of school.

Li Yao stretched out his muscles under the setting sun. Sitting at the base of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, he let the blood red color of the setting sun dye both him and the crystal suit red. The shadows of the two merged as one, trailing out long like a black saber.

Li Yao had formed a particular habit starting from an unknown time. No matter how busy the day was, he would take out half an hour during the evening to come beneath the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and sit in silence for a moment.

He started doing this one day due to exhaustion. He discovered that when occasionally resting against the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit for a few minutes, he would suddenly feel his mind especially open up and his thoughts would become exceptionally clear. Many theories and blueprints that he wasn't able to understand normally would suddenly become clear at once.

This sort of feeling was like entering the Super Perceptive State, yet it didn't have the side effects of the Super Perceptive State. He was able to maintain it for a very long time.

It was as if there was someone else thinking with him in the darkest depths, much like joint problem-solving.

Li Yao was at a loss. He thought for several days and could not think of a reason why. He could only take it as blessings from the refining department's senior brothers and teachers from the underworld, hoping that Li Yao would able to smoothly get 40,000 credits, test and become a registered refiner, and bring Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department to glory.

He maintained this habit from that day forth.

The half hour with the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit became his moment of relaxation that was hard to come by during the day.

It was as if all the teachers and elder brothers of the refining department were hibernating in the depths of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. They cheered for his sake, letting him have the morale to madly cultivate beyond his limits and letting him press on through gritted teeth!

Based on his current state, to make something from nothing, to refine a magical equipment completely produced by himself was still something where the will was there but not the strength.

But based on sturdy fundamentals that stemmed from the strong and ferocious forging techniques of forty millenniums ago as well as his unrestrained devil modification style, Li Yao had already conducted crazy enhancements for several dozen types of typical magical equipment. Quite a few of these magical equipment had performances that far exceeded the original, so much so that they differed completely, seemingly as if they were different objects.

He refined until today, having completed 18 primary battle magical equipment and several dozen auxiliary magical equipment, displaying all the techniques he possessed to the utmost detail.

However, would his modification train of thought be accepted? Would these magical equipment be like what he had envisioned? Could they display their might on the battlefield? Would they be welcomed by his classmates? Could he exchange them for school credits...

All of these questions will have their answers found in true battle after the start of the new school semester!

"I have decided now. Once the new school semester starts, I will bring all my artifacts to the depths of the Wasteland and hunt demon beasts. On one hand, I will be able to use live combat to test the magical equipment produced from my devil modification and go a step further in fine tuning the details. On the other hand, I can record a live combat video and upload it to the Wasteland Battle Network as a live advertisement!"

More importantly, Li Yao really wanted to hone his combat skills.

Fiend Blade Peng Hai had told him this back in Floating Spear City: to become an outstanding refiner, it was best to first become a remarkable soldier.

He did not take these words to heart at the time.

But when he started to truly refine using the crafting furnace, even for engaging in minor modifications, Li Yao suddenly became aware of the reasoning behind these words.

If one doesn't dance with blades and handle guns, how would one know how to refine an outstanding saber?

Only in actual combat would he be able to gain a deep understanding of the nature of each magical equipment, and only then could he understand the essence of a refiner and become a super, top-notch master refiner.

Li Yao turned his head when his thoughts reached this point. He gave a deep glance at the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, and emotions of disappointment and frustration were born inexplicably from the bottom of his heart.

There will be a day when he will successfully refine the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. He will make this majestic Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit rise to the highest heavens and roar with wind and thunder!

But he didn't know just who would don the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit when that day comes and laugh in defiance against the heavens and earth.

Li Yao's eyelids twitched. An image of him wearing the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit suddenly appeared in the depths of his pupils. He had a world-shaking appearance.

This scene was impossible to erase once it had appeared and stabbed deeply within his heart like a growing barb. No matter how he pulled, he was unable to remove it.

"If there is a day when I can don the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, break through the skies of the highest heavens, and brave the winds and waves of the star ocean... How refreshing that would be!"

Li Yao chuckled and giggled as he let his imagination run wild.

Right at this time, Wild Waves City suddenly sounded with a resonating horn in all directions.

It was as if countless giants were standing up straight at every corner of the city, ferociously pounding their chests and letting out roars that shook the heaven and earth.

"Roar!"

"Roar!"

"Roar!"

Li Yao's pupils suddenly constricted and he suddenly jumped up. He sized up his surroundings with a bit of astonishment.

Even though he couldn't see even half a person, when the horn sounded, the entirety of Wild Waves City underwent a bizarre change.

The strong odor of blood and metal flooded the air. Even though the frigid winter wasn't over, it was as if the scorching summer had suddenly arrived.

"Whoosh!"

"Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!"

Several dozen streaks of light consisting of every color imaginable ascended slowly towards the skies from all directions. They interweaved together, faced the northeast direction, and shot out like lightning.

They were several dozen experts of at least the Building Foundation Stage!

The crystal processor on Li Yao's wrist crazily vibrated. The Wasteland Battle Network had pushed out a notification, and there was a sudden outburst of extremely important information.

This was an unprecedented event. Li Yao activated the crystal processor at once.

A stream of information made up of a mixture of gold and blood colored lights popped up. It was an ad-hoc mission of complete urgency.

"Emergency military situation!"

"Verdant Tarn City, located 478 kilometers away from Wild Waves City, has encountered a beast tide of level 8 or higher! The beast tide has already broken through the outer defense lines and has rushed into the city!"

"There are still many civilians remaining in Verdant Tarn City who are staying entrenched within the center of the stronghold. The entire city has already sunken into a messy situation where humans and demon beasts are mixed together. It is impossible for us to use super-heavy magical equipment to destroy the beast tide."

"We can only summon masses of federation forces and cultivators to enter the city and engage in alleyway and street combat!"

"The federation forces have officially asked the cultivators of all sects and universities surrounding Verdant Tarn City to enter the battlefield!"

"Our school, at its roots, is a local university of the Wasteland. When faced with a neighbor in crisis, we are bound by duty!"

"The name of this ad-hoc mission is... The Fierce Battle of Verdant Tarn City!"

"Every student who has more than 8000 credits can sign up!"

"Those who are interested, please register on the Battle Network and assemble at Field No. 2 within an hour. Time is of the essence!"

"Repeat. This mission is extremely high risk. It is very likely to lead to heavy injuries or even death. Those that do not have confidence in their own strength, don't apply!"

"Due to the urgency of the battlefield situation, the quantity and species of the demon beasts are not known. The official school credit reward for this mission has yet to be calculated; however, the school promises to give participating students rewards in accordance with the highest standard!"

"Cultivators are the sabers of human civilization. Now is the time to unsheathe these blades. An hour later, at Field No. 2, we will leave and behead the demons and exterminate the devils!"

"Behead the demons and exterminate the devils!"

The last few words made Li Yao dry at the mouth and tongue; his blood was racing.

He was just a normal person during the last beast tide invasion. He had to rely on Ding Ying, Wei Qingqing, and the red-eyed officer... these cultivators to come protect him.

But today, he had already become a cultivator of the 5th level of the Refinement Stage and had even refined several dozen masterwork weapons that could cut through steel like mud.

When it comes down to him versus a thousand, death will rain down all around him!

"Excellent! In the ancient cultivation world of forty millenniums ago, a newly forged masterwork weapon would undergo slaying several demons and devils as a baptism!"

"Verdant Tarn City. Beast tide. I will use you all to baptize my first batch of magical equipment!"

...

Field No. 2 of Grand Desolate War Institution.

A Thunderbird class light transport ship had landed at the corner of the field.

This was a transport ship that was specialized for quick response usage. It could transport over 800 passengers each trip, and it can carry ten medium-sized crystal tanks underneath it. This was a model that was specifically refined to deal with beast tides.

Generally, besides taking the crystal rail, cultivators below the Building Foundation Stage would board this kind of transport ship to enter battlefields where danger lurks at every corner.

Flying solo on a sword was tantamount to throwing away one's life. All sorts of demon beasts hibernating or lying in wait in the darkness would unleash their demonic energy and poison to instantly kill you!

Grand Desolate War Institution's dean, Xiong Baili, and his administration had already gathered below the Thunderbird transport ship.

Quite a few of the teaching and administrative staff were wearing battle armor, fully armed and prepared to enter combat.

Xiong Baili's entire face was serious and his eyebrows were locked tight. He faced a young officer with stripes of a major and asked:

"A'Chao, how did things turn out this way? Isn't Verdant Tarn City a mining town? There are several dozen military camps in its surroundings and three overlapping defensive lines. It could be said to be near invulnerable to attacks, so how did a beast tide suddenly break through? Normally, a few rounds from the crystal warships would be able to resolve this issue, but now, we're at the point where we need to engage in street fighting?"

The major’s name was Xiong Zongchao. Not only was he a graduate of Grand Desolate War Institution, he was also a distant relative of Xiong Baili; he was Xiong Baili's distant nephew.

So, Xiong Baili had asked him openly and honestly.

Xiong Zongchao spoke with a bitter laugh:

"Fourth Uncle, the outer defense perimeter of Verdant Tarn City hasn't been broken through. This time, the wormhole appeared right inside the city. The beast tide directly rushed into the city region and engaged in street warfare. Even great immortals wouldn't have been able to do a thing about this."

Xiong Baili was stunned:

"We're this unlucky?"

From the past until now, the original strategy executed by the Star Glory Federation against the Demon Beast Wasteland was an encroachment fortification tactic. Every city was constructed as a near invulnerable fort to nibble away at the Wasteland inch by inch, forcibly reducing the amount of room for demon beasts to exist.

Only through wormholes could demon beasts break through to the Heaven Origin Sector from the Blood Demon Sector and launch a surprise attack.

The emergence point of a wormhole is random. If a wormhole appears in the middle of the wilderness, then the beast tide could only gnaw against the outer defensive perimeter of the city.

They need at least three to five hours, and even half a day may not be enough for them to gnaw through the defenses.

Humanity's crystal warships can fly leisurely to the skies above the beast tide with their Primeval True Fire Cannons, Taiyi Lightning Railguns, and Shattered Star Bombarders... Various mighty, powerful, and unrivaled super-heavy magical equipment can be unleashed, cleaving skulls and brains together in an indiscriminate bombardment. No matter how unbridled the beast tide is, they would all turn to roast duck!

But this time, they were truly unlucky. The wormhole directly appeared within the city. The beast tide came pouring into the city region in an instant, mixing together with the human race.

No matter how strong crystal warships were, in the end, they couldn't just bombard the entirety of Verdant Tarn City to smithereens, right?

They could only mobilize the federation soldiers and cultivators to engage in street combat!

Xiong Baili gave a cold snort. His expression turned incomparably sharp:

"Who cares if its street combat? We of the human race are the most powerful combat race of the endless sea of stars. It doesn't matter which environment we fight in. We will surely be the ultimate victors! A'Chao, come. Experience for yourself the bearing and style of Grand Desolate War Institution's new generation!"

Chapter 167: Levels of Demon Beasts

Chapter 167: Levels of Demon Beasts

Before Xiong Baili faded away, a fiery red stream of light whizzed over.

"Brother Chao, long time no see!"

Xiong Zongchao's complexion changed. His body turned into a blur as he did nine incomparably impossible dodges. While his true body retreated by ten meters in a single breath, the remnant shadow he left behind was torn into nothing by the fiery red light.

Xiong Baili, without making a sound, came in between the fiery red stream of light and Xiong Zongchao before he said, "And this is..."

Xiong Zongchao slightly smiled:

"There is no need for me to introduce her. She is none other than one of the youngest Building Foundation Stage cultivators of our Star Glory Federation, the future star of Grand Desolate War Institution's Combat Department, Ding Lingdang. She and I have met several times in the depths of the Wasteland and have also collaborated to kill a Demon General!"

As the fiery red brilliance solidified, Ding Lingdang's strong and graceful figure was revealed.

She was dressed in a tight red combat suit which was decorated with flames, sketching out her soul-stirring curves. Her entire body was overflowing with a resplendent brilliance which was a feast for the eyes.

"Marvellous! My bones are about to rot from being holed up in the institute for the past couple of months. Finally, I can kill some demon beasts! I really can’t wait!"

Rubbing her hands, Ding Lingdang jumped up and down.

After a moment, hundreds of terrifying aurae approached at a high speed.

Xiong Baili smiled and said:

"This is the Iron Fist Club's president, Hua Tianxiong. This is Chaos Edge Hall's president, Xu Ge. Behind them are the senior students of the Combat Department, many of whom I believe you have met?"

Xiong Zongchao nodded.

The Grand Desolate War Institution and the army had close ties. Both sides often joined forces to behead demons and kill devils. Xiong Zongchao was the liaison officer sent by the army and had been long acquainted and friends with many of the senior students of the Grand Desolate War Institution.

"Brother Chao!"

"Brother Chao!"

One by one, tall and stalwart students with stubbornness written all over their faces came forward and greeted him. All of them were burning with eagerness: "Finally, I can fight shoulder to shoulder with Brother Chao and slaughter demon beasts!"

Soon, a dozen or so silhouettes appeared. Although their appearances were a bit tender, their imposing aurae was no less than that of the senior students.

These were all the best among the best freshmen.

Seeing so many freshmen excited to participate in the mission, the smiling look in Xiong Baili's eyes turned intenser:

"Come, A'Chao. Let me introduce you. This is Zhao Tianchong, a 4th level Refinement Stage sword cultivator who has been hunting demon beasts in the depths of the Wasteland since childhood. This is Lu Tieshan, a 4th level Refinement Stage body practitioner who has been painstakingly training in the Devil Fist Sect since childhood. These two are the strongest experts among the freshmen!"

Xiong Zongchao was surprised as he said with emotion:

"Advancing to the 4th level of the Refinement Stage in just half a year after entering the institute? These freshmen truly can not be underestimated! In my time, students only entered the 4th level of the Refinement Stage after spending two years at the university!"

Xiong Baili said with a laugh:

"Yes, the quality of this year's freshmen is particularly good. Not only are there two students who have entered the 4th level of the Refinement Stage, a dozen students who have entered the 3rd level of the Refinement Stage have also appeared. They are not only unusually talented, but they also cultivate with madness to the point that they did not return to their families even for the new year during their winter vacation!"

"Pleased to meet you, Dean!"

"Pleased to meet you, Dean!"

Zhao Tianchong, Lu Tieshan, and the other freshmen greeted Xiong Baili together.

All of them were members of the Hidden Dragon Hall and had cultivated together. When they came to know about the beast tide outbreak at Verdant Tarn City, they, without a moment of hesitation, came.

After half a year of painstaking cultivation, these "hidden dragons" were no longer their old selves of when they had just entered the institute; their arrogance was completely converged in the depths of their eyes, where it had been purified into a cold sharp gleam, and their temperament was calmer and more profound.

This was especially so for Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan, whose profoundness totally did not tally with their age.

Only when their eyes bloomed with sparks from time to time would the others have a glimpse of the impatience buried deep within the depths of their heart.

Their deep desire could only completely bloom when they are on a true battlefield.

Having swept a gaze, Xiong Zongchao repeatedly sighed:

"When all's said and done, our Grand Desolate War Institution is unlike any other. Obviously, they are still on their winter break, but when the horn sounded, we could still gather 300 students. Furthermore, all of them are cultivators. If such a strong army arrived on the battlefield, even Demon Generals would dare not to contend with them!"

Xiong Baili’s smile turned into a frown as he said:

"That's not right. If I remember correctly, the number of people who have applied is 301. There is still one student who hasn’t arrived yet."

Before his voice could fade away, a silhouette could be seen approaching from the distance. In just a few steps, the silhouette had traversed hundreds of meters.

Xiong Zongchao was a bit perplexed:

"This student looks very unfamiliar, is he also a freshman? Why is he carrying such a huge box on his back?"

Finally, the silhouette revealed itself to be a student who was dressed in a black combat suit and had a huge metal casket on his back which was fastened onto his body with three large belts. Every step he took seemed to be very heavy, as his every step gave burst to a "Bang! Bang!" sound on the ground.

The box appeared to be very heavy, seemingly as if it weighed at least a thousand kilograms.

However, the student seemed to lift such a heavy weight with ease, as though it was light as a feather; he did not seem to mind the heavy weight. In just a breath, he had skimmed over to the front of the Thunderbird-class light transport ship.

Xiong Baili burst into laughter:

"Student Li Yao, you are a refiner. Do you still want to go to the battlefield? It's too dangerous!"

Xiong Baili had a pretty good impression of Li Yao.

Whether it was him going against the flow, adhering to the Refining Department, or the modification of the 1st Generation Tai'e Furnace which pulled over a ten million sponsorship, these matters had surprised Xiong Baili incessantly, and he deeply remembered this somewhat special teenager.

Xiong Zongchao's eyes bloomed with a sliver of radiant splendor as he cried out involuntarily:

"Is this the only student of the Refining Department? He is really powerful!"

Xiong Zongchao had been in the army for many years. He was in the special forces and had a very sinister insight. Just from the sound of Li Yao's footsteps, he reckoned that the iron crate on his back weighed at least a ton!

'Even after running countless miles while carrying a ton on his back, his breathing is still steady and there is no change in his complexion.'

'This student's body is exceptionally powerful."

At the beginning, Xiong Zongchao regarded him as a senior student of the Combat Department. Meanwhile, in his heart, he was secretly surprised. Why hadn't he seen such a strong student before?

However, much to his surprise, Li Yao turned out to be a freshman of the Refining Department!

Xiong Zongchao was astounded to the extreme.

Li Yao pursed his lips, revealing his snow-white teeth:

"Dean, I need to amass 40,000 credits to participate in the Refiners' Registration Examination, so how could I miss such a good opportunity to sweep credits?"

"Alright!"

Waving his hand, Xiong Baili’s eyes flickered with an electric brilliance as he swept a glance over the students and spoke in a loud voice, "Since everyone is here, let me repeat it once more. This mission is extremely dangerous, and it's very likely that you will be seriously injured and some of you might even die. If there is even an ounce of hesitation in your heart, it's best for you to withdraw!"

The 301 students stood firm with their heads held high, with not a single one of them uttering a word. Everyone's face was flushed red to their ears, seemingly as if they were being burned inside an invisible and maddening will to fight.

After three seconds, Xiong Baili raised his head and let out a long roar: "Good, good, very good! Having students like you is the greatest pride in my, Xiong Baili's, life. Let us depart and slaughter those demon beasts!"

"Slaughter those demon beasts!"

Hundreds of teachers and students loudly roared. Everyone's blood was bubbling as they boarded the Thunderbird-class light transport ship.

After a moment, the light transport ship rose into the air as it whizzed towards Verdant Tarn City!

On the transport ship, Xiong Zongchao started up the large-scale master crystal processor of the ship as hundreds of telepathic thoughts were transmitted to the mini crystal processors of Grand Desolate War Institution's teachers and students.

Which included the 3-dimensional map of Verdant Tarn City, the distribution of the federation army, as well as the growing list of information of friendly forces.

When the sects within 500 km radius came to know of the beast tide outbreak at Verdant Tarn City, all of them mobilized.

Every second, countless powerful cultivators rushed toward Verdant Tarn City.

And with the vanguard troops commencing their fight after entering the city, a general understanding of the quantity and type of demon beasts was also procured.

This information was all transmitted to the main crystal processor of the Thunderbird-class light transport ship and subsequently distributed to the micro crystal processor of all its passenger.

"Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!"

Everyone checked their crystal processor with rapt attention as the colorful holographic screen was flooded with countless information just like a downpour.

Everyone was a cultivator, and as such, the speed of reading the information was very fast. In just a short moment, they had all grasped the general situation.

Xiong Zonghcao introduced:

"At present, it seems that the beast tide is of at least Level-7, and very coincidently, the wormhole had appeared in an underground abandoned warehouse in Verdant Tarn City. As a result of this, no one seemed to have noticed at the beginning. It was only when tens of thousands of demon beasts had spread across the city through its complex sewer lines and appeared within the city simultaneously did they notice. However, by then, it was too late!"

"Fortunately, in order to guard against beast tides, every city in the Wasteland is fortified from inside and outside. Many of the large scale structure inside the city were enclosed in low-rise walls and defensive array glyphs. Many of the areas even have a large number of military magical equipment installed."

"Furthermore, Verdant Tarn City is an important mining city. Many sects have mining bases in Verdant Tarn City along with a bunch of guards to protect the mine, all of whom are ex-servicemen or cultivators that are holding the line."

"And the native sect of Verdant Tarn City, the 'Azure Sun Sect', is ranked 379 among the top 500 in the federation and have ten Building Foundation Stage experts."

"Under the resistance of the Azure Sun Sect, most of the civilians were able to hide inside the fortified buildings, and the headquarter of the Azure Sun Sect even has over ten thousand civilians protected inside. Please look at the 3-dimensional map, here, here, and here. There is still a large number of civilians stranded."

"We have two missions: the first is to save all the civilians, and the second is to behead all the demon beasts in Verdant Tarn City, kill them one by one—even fowls and dogs are not to be spared!"

"Please look at the information list of the demon beasts. From the news transmitted from the frontline, this is a mixed-type beast tide. At present, we know of 43 Demon Soldiers and 5 Demon Generals; however, we have yet to discover the Demon King."

"But from past experiences, we are 80 to 90% sure that a Demon King will be commanding such a large-scale beast tide from the back!"

Along with the introduction of Xiong Zongchao, translucent, 3-dimensional images appeared one by one on everyone's holographic screen. These images included the pictures of a couple dozen demon beasts along with their habits, levels, risk factor, the heaven and earth treasures they bear... over a hundred kinds of information.

Li Yao's heart skipped a beat.

He had never imagined that the level of this time’s beast tide outbreak would be so high and that a Demon King might even appear.

The demon beasts in accordance with the strength are divided into Demon Soldier, Demon General, Demon King, Demon Emperor, Demon God, and so on and so forth, and their respective cultivation level in the human cultivation system respectively is Refinement Stage, Foundation Building, Core Formation, Nascent Soul, and Spirit Transformation.

Li Yao, on Devil Flood Dragon Island, had killed a three-eyed ape which was even weaker than the Demon Soldier. It had not even entered the lowest level and was just equivalent to an ordinary person.

Whether it was a Demon God or a Spirit Transformation Stage expert, both belonged to the legendary, peerless figures which have not appeared in the Star Glory Federation for a long time.

Even the Demon Emperor, which was comparable to a Nascent Soul Stage old monster, was also very rarely seen. Once he appeared, he would certainly be followed by hundreds of millions of Demon Soldiers, for which half of the federation would be completely mobilized. Only then was it possible to compete with them.

Starting from the Demon Soldier, demon beasts would gradually break away from the shackles of a beast, gaining high intelligence. Then, they could be called a member of the "demon clan".

The thought of actually fighting with a true member of the demon clan made Li Yao inexplicably excited!

Chapter 168: He’s Dead Weight!

Chapter 168: He’s Dead Weight!

Having finished introducing the general situation of the battle, Xiong Zongchao once again said:

"Soon, you will be entering the battlefield. I can see that a lot of you have your own weapons, but if any of you need weapons, you can head to the armory of the transport ship and take your pick. We don't have many close combat magical equipment, but we have all kinds of firearms, ready to equip. Everybody can casually take them for use!"

Li Yao's heart was astir.

All the magical equipment he had crafted were close combat-type, so it would also be better to get a firearm for self-defense.

Just as he was about to get up, he came to notice that the other students remained completely still. He couldn’t help but befuddled as he asked Ding Lingdang, who was sitting beside him, in a low voice:

"Sister Ling, why isn't anybody taking a gun?"

Ding Lingdang slightly smiled and said:

"Traditional body practitioners and sword cultivators rather don't like using firearms. It's not like we are complacent and choose to stick to our ways, but on the contrary, it’s because weapons like firearms have many flaws."

Since the development of long-range types magical equipment such as firearms, the pros and cons of long-range and close-combat type magical equipment had always been a bone of contention in the world of cultivation.

The pros of firearms were quite obvious. Not only could the firearms be fired from long-range, but the firepower was also strong. Not to mention that using the crystal cell as the energy source allows its user to preserve his or her spiritual energy, and also the fact that some low-tier firearms could even be used by the ordinary people.

However, the cons were also quite obvious. Whether it was the crystal cells or the bullets that were forged out of crystal, both were terrifyingly heavy. A Thunderfire Boltgun, along with a dozen crystal cell, plus three to five hung bullet belts would at the very least weigh over fifty kilograms.

As far as ordinary people were concerned, spending a few days or maybe even a dozen days while carrying such weight and venturing into the depths of Wasteland where demon beasts frequently lurk would truly be a terrifying thing.

And as far as cultivators go, it was compulsory for them to accelerate from zero to a couple hundred or even to the speed of sound within a couple of seconds at every move, and in just one breath, they had to dodge demon beast's attack a couple dozen times continuously in the air.

And carrying an extra kilogram of supplies would slow their high-speed movements by one second, which would decrease the number of maneuvers they could do during the battle and in-turn would make them susceptible to the demon beast's attacks!

And most importantly, due to the long confrontation with humans, demon beasts have also evolved. Many of the high-level demon beasts have a body covered entirely in a hard shell, while their vital points were concealed underneath the joints of the shell, making it very difficult to hit them from a distance of a couple kilometers. They had to approach to a hundred meters distance and fire from close-range, and only then was it possible to cause fatal injuries.

However, as far as cultivators were concerned, within a range of hundred meters, whether one used firearms or blades wasn't truly too much of a difference.

"Within the federation army, a vast majority of the soldiers were ordinary people who fight in troops, so they do not need to worry about the problems caused by the logistics support. That's why firearms are mainly used."

"Our Grand Desolate War Institution's teachers and students all specialize in close-combat and have not received strict firearms training."

"Furthermore, we are used to fighting in small teams, so we have to rely on ourselves for the logistics support. Not to mention, our hunt can easily take half a month, so we need to carefully plan every gram of supplies we will carry."

"If we are equipped with firearms, not only would it cause insufficient injuries to the demon beasts, but on the contrary, it would drag us down and affect our speed and agility!"

"However, in the cultivation world, just like sword cultivators, there are also 'firearms cultivators' who specifically train in 'gun fighting techniques'. A powerful firearms cultivator could accurately shoot between the gaps of a demon beast’s armor from a couple kilometers away!"

"The Federation's First Military College specializes in fostering firearms cultivators, and only in their hands do firearms make sense."

Having said that, Ding Lingdang pondered and said:

"However, it would also be better for you to take a gun for self-defense. In any case, you are quite powerful, and moreover, you have not formally undergone close-combat training. For you, blades and firearms are just the same. It would be rather safe for you to use the gun to shoot from afar."

Li Yao also thought the same. Apart from the［One-Hundred-and-Eight Hands Chaos Gale Hammer Technique］, he had not seriously learned any other offensive techniques.

And the［One-Hundred-and-Eight Hands Chaos Gale Hammer Technique］wasn’t actually an offensive technique but rather a basic forging skill. Just like［Thousand Tempering hundred Refining］, it was an exercise to beat and boil the muscles and bones to temper the body.

By carrying out painstaking training in the depths of the Billowing Star Sea, Li Yao had his strength and speed enhanced, allowing him to withstand Ding Lingdang's attack for a longer period of time.

Until now, he only had a physique which was seemingly cast from iron and terrifying strength; however, he did not have even one brilliant saber technique or sword technique.

If it was a firearm, he just had to squeeze the trigger and the bullet would blast its way out on its own, which he was capable of.

Having thought of this, Li Yao stood up and greeted Xiong Zongchao before walking towards the armory.

All the students who were sitting on either side of the aisle were surprised for a moment; they could not understand why someone would choose a firearm.

No one here was a rookie; they understood basic common sense. For close-combat cultivators like them, firearms would just slow them down and would simply be unable to unleash their true strength.

However, when they found out that it was Li Yao who was going to pick a gun, their eyes revealed a look of relief. One by one, many of them nodded their heads:

"Fellow Student Li Yao, you should take a few guns to defend yourself. Although we will protect you, in a street fight, anything can happen. It's better for you to prepare yourself for everything!"

"Yes! We have heard that your skills are pretty good; however, fighting is not your specialized field after all. On the battlefield, you can be considered as a support staff, and it would be better for you to hide behind us and fire one or two shots when the demon beasts are least expecting it. We will help you contain the demon beasts!"

Everyone was very cordial. They weren't discriminating against him because of his "meager strength" at all.

In their opinion, he was just a freshman of the Refining Department whose specialty lies in the technical field. It was very normal for his battle strength to be far from the students of the Combat Department.

It was already quite good for a refiner to fight shoulder to shoulder with everyone and risk his life amidst the dangerous battlefield.

As Li Yao wormed his way into the armory, suddenly, racks jam-packed with hundreds of dazzling, traditional firearms filled his view and caught him by surprise.

As a veteran magical equipment fanatic, naturally, he had a deep fanaticism for the firearms, which even matched his fanaticism for blade-type magical equipment.

However, in day-to-day life, blade-type magical equipment were rather easy to obtain, while terrifyingly powerful firearms were subjected to control and needed certain qualifications to equip them.

In the past when he was just an insignificant scavenger, the most he came in contact with were ordinary firearms like the Thunderfire Boltgun.

Li Yao's eyes suddenly flickered with greed as he glanced left and right. Drool was almost ready to trickle down the corner of his mouth as he swooped in to kiss the weapons a few times.

Xiong Zongchao smiled in his heart. As someone who was from the military, his love for firearms was just the same and he would always feel a sense of intimacy with them.

Xiong Zongchao generously said:

"Junior Brother, since you are a refiner and don't have any offensive strength, and as the city is very dangerous, you should pick a powerful firearm. You can casually pick any weapon that you fancy here. I will hand you the jade chip which will transmit telepathic thoughts and give you a rundown on its operating method and allow you to master its basic operation within three minutes."

Li Yao unconsciously nodded his head as he was somewhat dazzled by the armory and was at a loss as to which one to chose.

Until his line of sight happened to fall upon an enormous metal beast at the corner, after which he could no longer extricate. Swallowing a mouthful of saliva, he couldn’t help but walk towards it.

After five minutes.

Zhao Tianchong and Li Tieshan, who were the strongest amongst this batch of freshman, whispered to each other.

The subject of their discussion was none other than Li Yao.

Ever since the mystical reversal performed by Li Yao at the end of the month, during which he continually caught up with the four experts of the Hidden Dragon Hall and seized the first position in the Newcomer Ranking, the two had treated Li Yao as their strongest rival.

At first, the two, by relying on the specialized courses which rewarded many credits of the Combat Department as well as madly cultivating in the last semester, had pulled far ahead of Li Yao by a fair number of credits.

However, in the last days of the semester, Li Yao had successfully modified the 1st Generation Tai'e Furnace, acquired a scholarship, and had obtained 3,000 credits as a reward, thereby leaving them far behind all of a sudden once again.

The two were once again shocked as well as helpless. At first, they had intended to return home for the new year during the winter vacation, but under the stimulation, they didn't return home and were madly cultivating even on new year's eve.

Finally, they somehow had the opportunity to amass the credits; however, who would have known that Li Yao would also come!

Lu Tieshan hesitantly said:

"However, he is just a refiner. He is nothing more than a supporting combat staff, and at most, he could repair a few magical equipment. If he wants to get a large number of credits, I'm afraid it won’t be that easy, right?"

Zhao Tianchong replied expressionlessly:

"Not necessarily. That guy is a madman. If compelled, he could do any kind of mad stuff, and maybe, he could even give us some 'pleasant surprises'!"

"BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!"

Li Yao walked out of the armory with heavy steps.

Many people freely swept a glance at him before they were suddenly flabbergasted.

Lu Tieshan's eyes were ready to fall out as he involuntarily cried out:

"What the hell is that thing!?"

Li Yao was carrying a heavy firearm in his arm which was even thicker than his own thigh. The firearm had as many as six barrels, which had complex and abstruse glyphs engraved upon them and were inlaid with crimson crystals, arranged in a circle, giving off the impression of a burning trunk.

However, that was still nothing big when compared to Li Yao’s upper body. At this moment, it had a few bullet belts wrapped around several times in a cross pattern (X), where each bullet was as big as an infant's fist. Its warheads were inlaid with crystals while its shell had array glyphs engraved across. They were out-and-out spiritual explosive shells.

The entire set together would at the very least weigh over half a ton. A normal person would never think of carrying such a mass which would hinder their movement, if not crushing them to death!

"Six Barrel Rotary Cannon? T-t-this, this is something that is installed on crystal tans. He is actually carrying it through brute force?" Someone exclaimed.

Li Yao’s every step would shake the bullet belts, which would, in turn, make "clink clink clink" sounds as he swaggered his way towards his seat. In his heart, he raised an openhearted cry.

He could completely unleash the might of this matchless Six Barrel Rotary Cannon; it was simply made for him.

In contrast, the Thunderfire Boltgun was rather too weak. This was a weapon which a man must use!

Lu Tieshan had reached the ends of his forbearance as he stood in front of him:

"Fellow Student Li Yao, did you choose this gun..."

Li Yao raised his eyebrow: "Is there a problem?"

Lu Tieshan screamed, "Of course, there is a problem! How heavy just a single bullet is along with the weight of the firearm need not be said, and we all know that with your strength, you can carry it, but have you ever thought of its recoil? The recoil of such a heavy weapons is terrifying. Every shot would generate a recoil which is equivalent to a 3rd level Refinement Stage cultivator ruthlessly smashing into your stomach. Can you even withstand that?"

He suddenly retreated a few step as he punched towards Li Yao's stomach.

Li Yao was surprised for a moment.

He was used to sparring with Ding Lingdang, who was a Building Foundation Stage cultivator, so in his eyes, this punch of Lu Tieshan was straight and slow. It was simply like a punch fired by a one-hundred-and-eighty years old man. He had hundreds of methods to dodge it.

However, Lu Tieshan didn't seem to have any malicious intent, and this punch could even be said as him extending his arm, not to mention that he also stopped 22.87 mm away from his stomach.

Li Yao blinked his eyes and did not move as he just watched Lu Tieshan slowly fire a punch before slowly withdrawing it back.

"What do you mean?" Li Yao was unable to tell head or tail of Lu Tieshan's actions.

Lu Tieshan raised his voice:

"I just used strength comparable to a 3rd level Refinement Stage cultivator and fired a lightning-fast punch. While you not only could not react, you even failed to see it! If you fired this Six Barrel Rotary Cannon, it would be equivalent to having yourself pounded with a couple dozen heavy punches within one second. Wouldn’t you spit out blood?"

Li Yao suddenly came to a realization. Only now did he come to understand that Lu Tieshan was acting out of kindness. He could not help but feel somewhat embarrassed.

And if he clarified now that he could see Lu Tieshan's punch and had hundreds of methods to dodge it and counterattack, and moreover the fact that even if it did land upon his body, it would not hinder him too much, wouldn't… that be too arrogant?

Having thought for a bit, Li Yao said:

"Fellow Student Lu Tieshan, thank you for your reminder. I will be careful."

Having said that, he walked to his seat and sat down before holding the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon and started wiping it happily.

"You—"

Lu Tieshan, upon seeing that Li Yao didn't listen to his persuasion, stomped his feet on the floor in anger.

"Forget it!"

Zhao Tianchong stopped him and said in a low voice, "The newcomers are always like this. They think that the bigger the firearms are, the more formidable they are. Wait until he suffers a few times, then he will understand."

"A few times? At the very first time, his bones will be broken into pieces, and he would turn to us to save him. He is truly a dead weight!"

Lu Tieshan was a bit annoyed.

Having seen the gun Li Yao had chosen, he knew that Li Yao was a downright rookie.

He and Zhao Tianchong had a very rich amount of combat experience and knew that the most annoying thing in combat was having a rookie who wasn't clear about the general situation in the team, and often, such rookies would become a dead weight for the team.

Sitting on his seat while meticulously wiping the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon and familiarizing its structure, Li Yao casually asked:

"Sister Ling, approximately how much percent is a blow from a 3rd level Refinement Stage cultivator compared to one of your blows when you usually fight me?"

Ding Lingdang thought for a bit:

"It is almost nothing. At most, it's a few tenths, why?"

"Oh, it's nothing."

Li Yao touched his nose while he continued wiping the cannon.

At this moment, a "BOOM" came from underneath the Thunderbird type light transport ship and started shaking, seemingly as though it had been struck by a huge wave.

They had arrived in the space of Verdant Tarn City, and in front of them was the battlefield!

Chapter 169: Death Squad

Chapter 169: Death Squad

"Chi! Chi! Chi!"

The Thunderbird type light transport ship was like a lonely boat amidst a tempestuous storm; it was shaking more and more.

Upon hearing the strange noise coming from underneath their feet, everyone wondered what was corroding the hull.

The senior students who had experienced many battles could not help but have a pale complexion, and a few freshmen, even more so, constantly swallowed their saliva to ease their tension.

"Everyone, we are already flying over Verdant Tarn City. There are many hidden demon beasts underneath us who are launching attacks against us. However, they won't be able to break the spiritual energy shield within a short period of time, so you don't need to worry!"

Having calmly said that, Xiong Zongchao seemed to have thought of something as he headed to the cockpit.

In a short moment, the walls of the transportation ship started flashing as they turned into a huge, ring-shaped holographic screen, displaying the scene outside the ship, seemingly as if the hull had turned transparent in the blink of an eye.

Li Yao gazed into the distance, peering at the azure lake, Verdant Lake, at the front!

Verdant Tarn City was built by the lake and was a flourishing city whose population numbered in the tens of thousands and had sky-rise buildings. It was an extraordinarily bustling city.

"BOOM! BOOM!"

At this instance, Verdant Tarn City had lost its former glory. The entire city was shrouded in a faint cloud of dust and smoke, and explosions were ringing off the hook. Meanwhile, demon beasts were attacking the human bases, causing the defensive array glyphs to be stimulated to the extreme as colorful streams of light soared into the high heavens.

"Whoosh! Whoosh!"

At this moment, a couple of gray streams of some kind of vicious liquid quickly shot out amid the cloud of dust and smoke and struck dead-right on the bottom of the transport ship.

The transport ship fiercely jolted a bit while its passengers bounced up from their seats.

Fortunately, the transport ship had promptly launched a spiritual energy shield, guarding the transport ship against the bombardment of the gray liquid. The gray liquid stuck onto the spiritual energy shield, seemingly as though the mass of gray liquid were sentient entities that were brandishing their claws and baring their fangs as they constantly corroded the spiritual energy shield and made ear-piercing noises.

Li Yao was secretly astounded. He now knew why low-level cultivators were not willing to ride their swords in the Wasteland.

The gray liquid was certainly highly toxic and corrosive; even after the Thunderbird type light transport ship had launched its spiritual energy shield, it was unable to withstand them even for a bit.

If some low-level cultivator were hit directly, perhaps they would melt into a puddle of pus in the blink of an eye!

Xiong Zongchao simmered in anger as he shouted:

"Do you think that your father's transport ship doesn't have any offensive ability and you can target your father so unscrupulously? Analyze the trajectories of their attacks for me and fire the mystic ray. Let’s crucify all of them!"

Under Xiong Zongchao's order, all the lights in the transportation ship dimmed down as all the spiritual energy was directed to the main crystal processor for analyzing the trajectories of demon beasts' attacks.

After a moment, three milky white beams were fired from the nose of the transport ship and pierced through the cloud of dust and smoke.

Wherever the mystic beam went, nothing could hide from it. Not only was the dust and smoke no longer blocking their line of sight, but even the interior structure of the buildings was visible. The mystic beam also brought a mystifying magnification effect.

Li Yao's mind was astir, as he seemingly "noticed" three toad-like demon beasts squatting amid a broken building a few dozen kilometers away. The toad-like demon beasts were a hundred times bigger than a toad and weighed almost a ton. Their bellies engorged and shrunk alternatively and could bulge up to as much as five meters in diameter before vigorously contracting and shooting some kind of poisonous liquid into the sky!

Xiong Zongchao burst into laughter:

"So it was three Venomous Ghost Toads. Let's see where you are going to escape to now!"

The three poisonous toads also seemed to have realized that they had been locked onto by the mystic rays. One by one, they revealed a panic-stricken look and the ghost face-like pustules at their glabella burst open, shooting a mass of gray mist as their stature suddenly started to shrink.

When the Venomous Ghost Toad shot the poison, its body would expand to ten times their original size, making it difficult for it to move quickly.

As long as the Venomous Ghost Toad had a minute, it could shrink its stature by 90%, making it a lot easier to escape.

Xion Zongchao sneered a few times as he started up the crystal processor and used the long-distance transmitting mode:

"Command center, this is Ship No. Ait, Fower, Siks, Fife(8465). My ship has already used the Nine-by-Nine Mystic Rays to lock onto three Venomous Ghost Toads. It is estimated that they would finish shrinking in 57 seconds. Requesting for a Flying Sword Strike! I repeat, the enemy will flee after 57 seconds! Requesting a priority level-1 Flying Sword Strike!"

After 31 seconds.

From the three military barracks around Verdant Tarn City, a couple dozen flying swords overflowing in resplendent brilliance respectively rose into the air where they formed a full circle and ruthlessly whizzed towards the position locked onto by the Nine-by-Nine Mystic Rays.

"Crash!"

Over a hundred flying swords shot down together from three different angles. The three Venomous Ghost Toads had yet to finish contracting before they were mangled into pieces in the blink of an eye along with the building which was filled with holes and was crashing down!

The teachers and students aboard the transport ship raised cries of jubilation.

The Thunderbird-type light transport ship flew straight ahead into the city.

"Five hundred cultivators of Grand Desolate War Institution have come to fight shoulder to shoulder with the fellow daoists of Verdant Tarn City!"

...

Completely surrounded by the sea-like beast tide, a twenty-floor high edifice at the heart of Verdant Tarn City where demonic energy was soaring into the sky—

Was the "Azure Sun Center", the headquarter of the native sect of Verdant Tarn City, the Azure Sun Sect.

A particularly fat demon beast was hiding in the basement of a building a kilometer away. It looked just like the Venomous Ghost Toad, but it was three times bigger, giving off an impression of a huge mass of tumor.

It was a variant of the Venomous Ghost Toad and also the king of poisonous toads—the Ghost King Venomous Toad!

The Ghost King Venomous Toad's entire body was spotted with countless pustules, which were spewing a huge amount of gray mist, covering the entire sky and disrupting the cultivators' telepathic thoughts search.

Even the Nine-by-Nine Mystic Ray was unable to pierce the gray mist and accurately lock onto its position.

Along with the contraction and expansion of its humongous belly, a huge mass of poison was shot out from the Ghost King Venomous Toad's mouth and directly attacked the Azure Sun Sect's headquarter, whereupon the defensive array glyphs of the edifice, which were on the verge of collapse, flickered from the bombardment.

Thousands upon thousands of demon beasts were eagerly watching the venomous toad's display of power. As long as the defensive array glyphs were eroded, they could force their way into the building and chow down everything with relish!

Tens of thousands of civilians were nestling together inside the Azure Sun Center. Upon hearing the "Chi Chi" sounds of erosion and the constant bombardment coming from outside, they turned pale from fright; however, no one cried. The elderlies and the women comforted the children in a low voice:

"My dear child, the Azure Sun Sect's cultivators are here. Everything is going to be alright!"

Whereas, the men had long stood together with the clansmen of the Azure Sun Sect and had taken up magical equipment to join the bloody battle.

At this moment, a tall old man was restlessly pacing back and forth in a hall. He was the leader of the Azure Sun Sect, Han Tianyang.

"Leader!"

A ragged disciple whose entire body was bathed in blood and had a large chunk of his face corroded away staggeredly ran back.

"Elder Ji and more than half of the people he had brought along have fallen, yet we had not even seen the shadow the Ghost King Venomous Toad!"

Han Tianyang trembled and was almost about to fall down. Gritting his teeth and pondering for a long while, his eyes flickered with an ominous gleam as he firmed his mind and said:

"Prepare for the third charge. I am going to personally lead the team. All the elders, deacons, managers... every disciple above the 6th level of Refinement Stage, gather all of them and create a death squad of cultivators. We are going to fight it out!"

The disciple was frightened. He broke into tears in anxiety as he quickly got down:

"Leader, please think twice. If we do that, the entire Azure Sun Sect will be finished. It will be over for us!"

A red-faced old man who was standing behind him also cried:

"Leader, it doesn't matter if we, the old men, and you charge together, but please leave some of the seeds of the Azure

Sun Sect. We can not sacrifice every one from the Azure Sun Sect!"

Han Tianyang repeatedly laughed coldly. His laugh was incomparably sad and shrill:

"At this moment, can we still leave some seeds behind? If we can't kill the Ghost King Venomous Toad, its poison would soon erode our defensive array glyphs, and at that time, tens of thousands of demon beasts would flood-in—any seed would be completely finished!"

Han Tianyang paused for a bit before the expression in his eyes turned as sharp as a saber. He swept a glance at the numerous disciple and spoke in an imposing manner:

"Everyone who is left here are the core disciples of the sect, many of whom had been members of the Azure Sun Sect for several generations. I am also not going to utter some heroic or noble words like there are tens of thousands of fellow countrymen behind us... I am not going to speak some nonsense like that. I am only going to say one thing and only one thing!"

"Our Star Glory Federation pays more attention to meritorious military service and advocates courage!"

"In the past during a beast tide outbreak, there were also many sects who took all their forces to fight, a vast majority of whom were disabled and crippled, and as a result, the sect was almost destroyed!"

"After the battle, these sects were completely supported by the country and received vast resources for reconstruction. Not only did they rise from ashes, but they were ever more prosperous!"

"In contrast, the sects who cowered during the beast tide outbreak and withdrew from front lines were all ridiculed by the entire world. Not only did they no longer receive any support from the country, but their business partners also severed all ties with them, and even the general public were reluctant to buy the products of those sects, leaving no one willing to conduct business with them."

"These sects survived the beast tide outbreak, but after the beast tide, they had thousands of fingers pointing at them and were ridiculed by tens of thousands of people, branded with the title of coward. And ultimately, not only did they vanish from the face of the Star Glory Federation, but they had also gone down in history as a byword of infamy!"

"At this moment, we have become a beast in the cage and the only thing we can do is risk our lives. Even if you are unable to come out alive, we can fight a bloody battle till the end and show the world the courage of the cultivators of our Azure Sun Sect. Only then would we have the possibility to rise from the ashes after the battle!"

"What is a seed? You think it's a human, but that’s wrong, absolutely wrong! Only courage is the seed of our Azure Sun Sect! As long as our Azure Sun Sect has this kind of courage and uprightness, our sect will remain forever!"

Han Tianyang paused a bit before he raised his voice as his voice turned resonant like a bell:

"Members of Azure Sun Sect, listen up!"

"Under the leader, elders, deacons, and managers... every disciple in the 6th level of the Refinement Stage or higher, prepare to attack!"

"Those who have the higher cultivation will charge in the front, while this leader of yours will lead the charge!"

"If the high-level Foundation Building cultivators are dead, intermediate-level Foundation Building cultivators will lead the charge. If the intermediate-level Foundation Building cultivators are dead, low-level Foundation Building cultivators will lead the charge. If all the Foundation Building cultivators are dead, the Refinement Stage disciples will lead the charge!"

"Whoever is afraid of death, roll out now and leave the Azure Sun Sect. We will part ways right here!"

"Boom! Boom!"

The attacks of the Ghost King Venomous Toad were getting fiercer and fiercer, and most of the defensive array glyphs had been corroded by the poison. In at most half an hour, the demon beasts would charge into the edifice and start a bloody massacre.

The disciples of the Azure Sun Sect also knew that their leader’s every word was true and that they already had no room for escape.

In any case, they were going to die, so why not die a heroic death? That way, they can receive the support from the country, and once the Azure Sun Sect is reconstructed, their parents, wives, and children would receive great care.

If they cower and sit still like a turtle retracting its head and hiding in its shell, then once the demon beasts broke the array, the building would be flooded with them and their death would just be a trifling matter!

None of the disciples withdrew as they took guns and sabers out of the sheaths and prepared for a fight to the death!

At this moment, a thunderous cry rang forth in the sky:

"300 cultivators of Clear Heart Palace have come to fight shoulder to shoulder with fellow daoists of Verdant Tarn City!"

—That was just the beginning.

Within ten minutes, billowing thunderous cries rose one after another:

"150 cultivators of Fire and Ice Peak have come to fight shoulder to shoulder with fellow daoists of Verdant Tarn City!"

"80 cultivators of Permanent Sky Mansion have come to fight shoulder to shoulder with fellow daoists of Verdant Tarn City!"

"500 cultivators of Grand Desolate War Institution have come to fight shoulder to shoulder with fellow daoists of Verdant Tarn City!"

The disciples of the Azure Sun Sect were first astounded for a moment before they became wild with joy as they jumped and cheered in jubilation.

"Leader, the reinforcements have arrived. Cultivators of a couple dozen sects within the 500 kilometers have rushed over. Even the Grand Desolate War Institutions have sent 500 teachers and students to participate in the battle!"

Han Tianyang slightly quivered before he heaved a sigh of relief. His taut nerves were suddenly relaxed down. He could not even utter a word.

He waved his hands with exhaustion as though a weight had been lifted off his mind. He was drenched in sweat.

At this moment, thunderous cries once again rang forth in the sky:

"Cultivators of various sects who are bravely fighting the enemy, the federation government has just announced that all the reconstruction work of Verdant Tarn City will be handed over to the sects who are participating in this battle. Furthermore, the rights to operate the 19 mines near the Fertile Valley for a hundred year will also be awarded depending on who has performed the most bravely during the battle!"

"City reconstruction work!"

"Right to operate 19 mines for a century!"

"No matter what kind of reward is obtained, the profits would be an astronomical figure. It would be sufficient to expand our Azure Sun Sect by four to five times!"

"Forget that, just one mine would bring so much crystal resources, enough to allow our cultivation to advance by a few levels!"

"Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!"

Everyone cast their gaze at Han Tianyang. Everyone's face was laced with excitement, and their eyes were blooming with a resplendent aura.

An elder could not help but ask:

"Leader, are we still going to charge?"

Han Tianyang burst into laughter as his body was surrounded in a powerful aura. At the same time, his white hair radiated with a dazzling silver radiance, and his emaciated skin turned moist and shiny again; all of a sudden, he became a hundred years younger.

Metamorphosis!

He was burning his life force to impact the limits of evolution.

"Of course, we are going to charge!"

"Many fellow daoists have come to help us, and the beast tide must be in chaos. At this moment, rushing through the front would be as easy as a hot knife cutting through butter!"

"Furthermore, you have all heard about Verdant Tarn City's reconstruction work, and there is also the right to operate the 19 mines near Fertile Valley for a hundred year. You just have to summon up your courage, suppress your fear of death, and bravely fight for the sect!"

"Even if we are assigned just 10%, it would be sufficient for our Azure Sun Sect to prosper for the next hundred years. We can even be ranked among the top hundred in the federation!"

"A hundred years of foundation! If we are not going fight in this battle, then when will we?"

"Disciples of the Azure Sun Sect, listen up! Release all your energy and ignite your souls! Blast to your strongest state and charge with me—kill for the future of the Azure Sun Sect!"

Chapter 170: The First Battle

Chapter 170: The First Battle

The cultivators of the Wasteland were intrinsically more valiant than those from the inland. Their morale was boosted by the news of the arrival of the military, and they were excited by the reconstruction project of Verdant Tarn City and the nineteen crystal ore veins. Not only did the cultivators from the Azure Sun Sect jumped towards the Ghost King Venomous Toad like an unstoppable force, the several dozen cultivators in the stronghold ignited their life force to unleash a final counterattack.

Several hundred cultivators at the Building Foundation Stage or higher dropped down from the skies, specifically aiming at the Demon Generals within the beast tide. Demon Generals were front line commanders of the beast tide, and once they were killed, the ordinary demon beasts who possessed relatively simple brains would become a confused mess and incapable of engaging in tactics.

In addition, the military used their crystal warships to airdrop light crystal tanks which were ill-suited for city-centric combat. The Federation Army advanced in suppressing the beast tide from the outside.

The three-pronged attack wreaked havoc for a long while before the initial suppression of the beast tide was finally made. Quite a few civilians had been rescued from within the stronghold.

But this time, the wormhole had emerged underground. Countless demon beasts rushed through the sewers to the surface like a tide of water. Demon Kings, whose power was equivalent to humanity's Core Formation Stage cultivators, oversaw the battle from underground. The cruel street combat would have to continue for a long period of time.

In the factory district located in the southwest region of Verdant Tarn City, nine cultivators had formed a small squad. They advanced forward with complete vigilance.

They were all freshmen of Grand Desolate War Institution.

Aside from Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan, who possess combat experience, the remaining members had rarely exchanged blows with demon beasts on a true battlefield.

So, their first mission was to get familiar with the battlefield as quickly as possible and to accumulate real combat experience!

The demon beasts didn't devastate the southwestern portion of Verdant Tarn City as hard as the other areas. High stage cultivators had already swept through this factory district and were unable to discover any excessively tyrannical high stage demon beasts. At most, there were a few Demon Soldiers lying in wait within the darkness, which was most suitable for these newcomers to train on.

Ding Lingdang was the leader of these troops; in other words, she was the babysitter of these newcomers.

She was extremely dissatisfied about this task. She pouted and cursed as she kicked small rocks on the roadside around.

Li Yao held the Six Barrel Revolver Cannon with both hands. Ammunition belts were wound around his body, and he carried a giant metal crate weighing over a thousand kilograms on his back. All sorts of equipment were piled atop of him like a mountain, burying him entirely inside. Cheerfully walking in the middle of the squad, no matter how one looked at him, he looked like an upstart who got rich overnight.

Zhao Tianchong's and Lu Tieshan's moods became a bit displeased. They were different from normal freshmen; they had actual combat experience since the age of ten, and by now, they could be considered be veterans of the battlefield. Executing this mission of bringing along these newcomers more or less meant that they were acting as babysitters.

And there was also Li Yao within this group of newcomers. He was like a master carrying all those big guns around, showing off his combat power.

They thought about the moment when the recoil of the cannon would fracture Li Yao's bones, how Li Yao would scream with "wa wa", implicating everyone in the scene. The two became even more depressed just thinking about it.

"When this mission is over, we'll apply for a higher level mission and engage in free slaughter. It’s best to get far far away from Li Yao, this newbie!"

The two people looked each other in the eyes, each revealing their intentions from their eyes.

The blood-like setting sun dyed the dilapidated walls with a layer of red. There was no hint of people within the destroyed factory district; it was incomparably desolate.

There were collapsed buildings and abandoned flying shuttles everywhere. There were even a few shriveled up demon beast corpses in the corners. The ground was mottled everywhere with the black color of their blood.

A faint red glow floated within the air, permeating with an acrid aura.

Ordinary people could hold on for 35 minutes before dizziness, shortness of breath, and chest tightness kicked in.

Even though these nine were cultivators, their minds were agitated and their thoughts were a mess. It was a discomfort that could not be described.

Ding Lingdang took out a box of dark green ointment from between her breasts. She smeared a bit beneath her nose and passed it along to the student next to her. As the student applied it and passed it on, she explained:

"This is demonic energy. Besides the death of a demon beast, the rotting of their corpses will generate this demonic energy. Also, quite a few demon beasts can release demonic energy naturally."

"Demonic energy exceeding a concentration of 10% isn't suitable for the survival of ordinary humans, and even cultivators would find it hard to persevere for long in a concentration exceeding 30%. In a concentration exceeding 50%, one must wear a crystal suit and rely on powerful purification magical equipment in order to fight within the demonic energy!"

"The Blood Demon Sector is the headquarters of the demon beasts. It's said that quite a few places in the Blood Demon Sector have demonic energy concentration exceeding 70%. This was one of the reasons why our human race has been constantly unable to breach the Blood Demon Sector. Our crystal suits are too few in number."

"If only there was a crystal suit that was cheap to manufacture. Squads could be equipped with this crystal suit on a massive scale, and only in this way could we assemble a great force that could engage in a great decisive battle within the Blood Demon Sector, where the concentration of demonic energy exceeds 70%!"

This last sentence was purposefully directed towards Li Yao.

Sure enough, the glow in Li Yao's eyes radiated intensely and his fighting spirit soared even higher.

Ding Lingdang laughed and continued:

"Here, the concentration of demonic energy doesn't exceed 3%. Besides assaulting the nose, it won't cause any major disturbances, but everyone still needs to be careful. The dense demonic energy shows that there are quite a few demon beasts lying in wait nearby. They can appear at any time."

"Hiss!"

"Hiss!"

"Hiss!"

Before Ding Lingdang's voice could fade away, sounds that were as sharp as needles ferociously stabbed against their eardrums thrice.

Several flying shuttles were discarded to the side of the road suddenly exploding. Three black balls with a diameter of a meter each came rolling out. They made an ear-piercing hiss and split open as jointed limbs sharp like blades reached out. They turned into three two-meter tall demon beasts that bore their fangs and brandished their claws.

At first glance, they looked like a hybrid between a cockroach and a mantis that was enlarged by a thousand times. Hard black carapaces covered their bodies, the tips of their two limbs were condensed into sabers, and two barbs even grew out from the very front. Under the illumination of the setting sun, they let out a chilling aura that made one's blood run cold!

"Black Armored Saber Mantis!"

For quite a few of the freshmen, this was their first time seeing this sort of demon beast. Each of them raised their wrists to look at their crystal processors.

A large paragraph of information suddenly jumped out from within the hologram.

The Black Armored Saber Mantis was a type of joint-limbed demon beast with an extremely savage nature. A fully matured Black Armored Saber Mantis could reach the rank of a low level Demon Soldier. It could brandish its two forelimbs, which were like chainswords, to engage in combat, and it could also curl into a ball to move at high speeds and ferociously ram its prey.

Even though the Black Armored Saber Mantis was a low level demon soldier with not the highest of offensive abilities, the life force of this demon beast was very hard to overcome. Even if the main brain located in the center portion of its body was annihilated, it can still persevere for a dozen minutes by relying on its savage instincts. All of its limbs had to be cut off in order to cause it to lose all its combat ability completely.

The remaining series of data included the Black Armored Saber Mantis's maximum speed, maximum destructive ability, etc. There were also a few videos of cultivators fighting the Black Armored Saber Mantis.

However, since they were faced with powerful enemies, they naturally didn't have the time to research these videos in detail.

"Hissssssssss!"

The scarlet compound eyes of the three Black Armored Saber Mantis spun for a very long time at the sight of this many humans. Couldn’t help but be enticed, it pressed in closer step by step.

Slaughter was fused in the blood and nature of demon beasts. Even if it had an intelligence rivaling that of humans, it would still be compelled to move under the desires to slaughter and would commit acts with all sorts of extreme craziness!

In accordance with its strength, Demon Soldiers were divided into the three levels of upper, intermediate, and lower. The Lower Demon Soldiers were equivalent to low level Refinement Stage cultivators.

Even though demon beasts were more savage than humans, humans possessed more abilities and magical equipment. When the same level of opponents meet face to face, one must look at their on-the-spot performance to see who would be the victor and who would be the loser!

"I'm coming for you!"

Zhao Tianchong made a long hiss, not waiting for the other people to respond; his figure already transformed into a gray streak of light, flashing in between the three Black Armored Saber Mantises.

He unsheathed a sharp blade from his waist, and several hundred streaks of sword-light covered the entirety of ten-meter radius region. It was as if the mass of sword-light interweaved to form a hurricane that completely sucked the three Black Armored Saber Mantises inside!

"D-D-D-D-D-Ding!"

No one was able to see his actions at all. They could only hear the long sword collide endlessly with the blade-like limbs of the Black Armored Saber Mantises as sparks scattered all around!

At practically the same time came more hissing sounds from farther away. Four Black Armored Saber Mantis had sensed this fight and came rushing to aid their comrades.

"Now, it's my turn!"

Lu Tieshan laughed. He ferociously punched his seemingly scale-covered fists together, unexpectedly producing arcs and arcs of crackling electricity. Like a tiger setting off the mountain, he swooped down charging towards the four Black Armored Saber Mantises.

Three minutes later...

Great amounts of electrical arcs coiled around the bodies of the Black Armored Saber Mantises, letting out the strong stench of burnt flesh.

Not only were their brains turned to mush from the electricity, but their limbs were also all paralyzed by it. They laid weakly on the ground, unable to move a single step.

Zhao Tianchong also finished his kill. His monster-like figure withdrew back to the team.

The sword twirled in the arc of a flower and was swung to flick off the bit of demon blood on the tip before being returned to its sheath with a click.

A great amount of purple blood sprayed like mist from the three Black Armored Saber Mantis following this sound. All their limbs separated from their bodies in an instant, and their bodies were each separated into two halves with great precision!

"Senior Brother Lu's so mighty! This Thunder Devil Fist move is far too beautiful!"

"Brother Zhao is unrivaled! Within your hands, the essence of the Phantom Sword Technique is truly displayed in great detail. It has greatly opened our eyes!"

Several of the freshmen cried out in admiration one after another.

If they had made their moves, perhaps they would have been able to slay a Black Armored Saber Mantis after a bloody fight; however, it would have been impossible for them to shed the blood of their opponents so freely, skillfully, and easily like these two experts.

Ding Lingdang coldly interrupted them:

"Don't let down your guard. These six are just guards. What's next is the real enemy!"

Before her voice could fade away, a gold beetle ball with a diameter of two meters came rolling out from an abandoned building to the side. It bore its fangs and brandished its claws, stretching to be over three meters in height. It was a giant mantis whose body flickered all over with gold light.

Its blade-like forelimbs were twice as long as the forelimbs of a Black Armored Saber Mantis, and sawtooths that flashed with a chilling aura covered and hung atop of the limbs. As soon as these teeth hooked onto flesh, a huge chunk of skin and bone would be ripped off!

The Gold Armored Saber Mantis was a variation of the Black Armored Saber Mantis. Its maximum strength can reach the level of an intermediate demon soldier, and it possessed even more powerful demonic techniques and can consume metal ores to strengthen its carapace. Its carapace was the same as being equipped with a layer of hard armor. Its defensive power was extremely high!

"The Gold Armored Saber Mantis—its maximum combat ability is equivalent to the intermediate level Refinement Stage!"

A scream came out from the group of freshmen.

Anyway, everyone wasn't too nervous. After all, they had Ding Lingdang, a Building Foundation Stage cultivator, watching over them. What's the big deal about an intermediate level demon soldier?

Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan were itching to fight it.

The Gold Armored Saber Mantis was a series stronger than them, but they were all one-in-ten-thousand cultivation geniuses and they even had the support of an expert. If the two of them joined hands, even if they weren't able to surpass the gap and slay this monster, they would absolutely be able to escape unharmed!

They glanced at each other directly and were about to advance forward when someone suddenly oddly said:

"Hold on. Isn't there someone with heavy firepower within our squad? Naturally, before anything else, we should let the heavy firepower expert mow through a round against this kind of demon beast with extremely high defensive power!"

"Whoosh whoosh whoosh whoosh!"

Everyone's gazes all congregated upon Li Yao's body when these words were spoken.

Chapter 171: Super Shocking Firepower

Chapter 171: Super Shocking Firepower

Everyone was more or less a bit discontent with Li Yao's decision.

When a team was first formed, bringing along one or two support members who possess no combat ability, like a doctor, a spirit tattoo artist, or a refiner... was very normal.

These support members could display necessary functions in key moments, and everyone did their best to protect them with all their strength.

But as a support member, Li Yao needed to get his own status clear. No one expected him to display much combat strength, so it was best not to cause trouble.

If Li Yao were to wield a thunderfire boltgun or a similar ordinary firearm to occasionally suppress a demon beast at long range for a moment, no one would say anything even if he missed.

But he just had to carry such a huge Six Barrel Rotary Cannon. Let alone its excessive weight, it had ferocious recoil. If he really did open fire with it, he would hurt himself before even chasing off the demon beast. Wouldn't that be asking for trouble?

So, a student with a more impatient temperament hid to the back of the group after letting out a cry. He wanted to see how Li Yao would handle this tough problem.

Li Yao had no idea what the intentions of the others were. He rolled up his sleeves to the side; he was long from being at the state of being able to hold himself back. He wielded the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon with both hands and advanced forward a few steps with great excitement. He followed the operational procedure recorded within the jade chips and laid open its support structure.

The red crystals that coiled in a circle behind the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon suddenly flared with light, letting out an ice-cold killing aura that caused one's scalp to go numb. A humming sound came from within, making it seem like a giant metal beast was awakening from hibernation.

"Hiss!"

The Gold Armored Saber Mantis was able to sense that there was something odd with this group of humans.

However, Ding Lingdang had used the Soul Converging Technique to hide the entirety of her aura. In the eyes of the mantis, she was just a Refinement Stage cultivator.

From the perspective of this intermediate level demon soldier, even if it couldn't slaughter all of them, if it could slaughter at least a few of them, it would walk off without a second thought.

So, with eyes revealing a savage intent, it strutted forward with imposing pressure.

It had discovered the gun wielding human within the team, but the Gold Armored Saber Mantis was known for having powerful defensive strength. It would be very hard for ordinary firearms to harm it, not to mention the distance was so close. All it needed was a few seconds to charge into the crowd and let blood and flesh fly everywhere through slaughter!

A wisp of ice-cold malevolence appeared within the scarlet compound eyes of the Gold Armored Saber Mantis. Withdrawing its limbs, just as it was about to curl up into a ball and roll into the crowd...

Li Yao took a deep breath. His slightly squinting pair of eyes suddenly bulged wide as his skin-tight black combat garments suddenly expanded while endless aura came shooting out from his pores!

Igniting the soul!

Exploding with energy!

Transforming the body!

Li Yao's figure suddenly expanded by a factor as a faint gold luster appeared on his skin. He exerted force with both his legs, instantly splitting the earth. His feet entered three centimeters into the ground like two firm poles of a support frame, steadily holding the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon in place!

Everyone was shocked besides Ding Lingdang.

"Third level of the Refinement Stage!"

"What a powerful aura. He's at least at the 3rd level of the Refinement Stage!"

Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan glanced at each other with incomparably complex gazes.

The two of them had crazily engaged in bitter cultivation day night and day in the Hidden Dragon Hall for half a year to barely break through to the 4th level of the Refinement Stage.

Of the rest of the hundred or so "Hidden Dragons", there were only a few that were able to break through to the 3rd level of the Refinement Stage.

They would never have expected that Li Yao had reached the 3rd level of the Refinement Stage.

They could tell that he had very powerful combat strength from his explosive state and that he absolutely wasn't as simple as a typical creation-type cultivator.

He was a hybrid-type cultivator to the letter, possessing talent for both creation and combat!

"I never thought that he was actually a hybrid-type!"

Lu Tieshan laughed wryly.

A wisp of envy was revealed within the eyes of this cultivation genius.

This sort of gaze had only been exposed to him by others, and this was the first time for Lu Tieshan to be jealous of the talent of a peer.

Li Yao didn't hear the cries of shock from the others.

From igniting his life force and exploding his spiritual energy, he entered an extremely stimulated and profound state.

It was as if there were only three things left in the entire world.

Him, the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon, and the Gold Armored Saber Mantis.

The cannon had already fused with his flesh and blood and trembled along with his breathing.

He could clearly feel the pulsations of every array glyph on the cannon's body and of the spiritual energy of every explosive and restless bullet.

When the restlessness of this spiritual energy reached its peak, it converged into an unstoppable current of spiritual energy. His heart beat faster and faster, as if his chest would explode open in the next second...

Li Yao pulled the trigger with ferocity!

"B-B-B-B-B-B-B-Boom!"

The sight bloomed in front of everyone's eyes. They saw dazzling glowing spheres suddenly blossom in front of Li Yao.

A streak of scarlet fire of incomparable might directly assaulted the Gold Armored Saber Mantis along with an ear-deafening roar—it instantly lifted smoke and dust to fill the skies, enveloping the Gold Armored Saber Mantis completely within!

"He..."

The Gold Armored Saber Mantis was obscured by the smoke and dust. They could only cast their gazes onto Li Yao.

Everyone's pupils were slightly dilated.

Appearing within the depths of their eyes was a scene of incomparable horror.

Li Yao's crazy display was simply like another terrifying demon beast!

The recoil was extremely strong. Ordinary people would find it impossible to control. The Six Barrel Rotary Cannon, which was only found mounted on crystal tanks for fixed firepower, only slightly quivered within the control of Li Yao's powerful arms, maintaining a torrent of firepower.

Li Yao adjusted the fire rate to its maximum. Over a thousand rounds of spiritual energy explosive rounds engraved with assault-type array glyphs could be fired every minute.

This meant that he had to withstand the bombarding recoil equivalent to several dozen heavy fists from a 3rd level Refinement Stage cultivator every second!

Not only did Li Yao not shake at all, he even held up the spraying Six Barrel Rotary Cannon, withstood the heavy recoil, and forcefully advanced forward.

One step!

Two steps!

Three steps!

Every step he took embedded his feet deeply into the earth, rumbling out spiderweb-like cracks within.

Zhao Tianchong's scalp was tingling just from watching. He whispered to Lu Tieshan:

"Think you can do it?"

Lu Tieshan watched as if he was drunk. He was stupefied for a long time before shaking his head:

"If you give me enough gas, I should be able to stand there and bombard away for half the day. But to forcefully withstand the recoil while also advancing forward and have my two arms not move even an iota, this is far too shocking! This kid's strength and blow resistance ability are simply inhuman!"

Within half a minute, a full 900 rounds of spiritual energy explosive rounds were sprayed clean. The deafening roar spontaneously ended, yet the barrel still spun at high speeds, letting out a rising azure smoke. Li Yao roared:

"AWESOME!"

He never felt so awesome firing a gun before. All the fury that filled his heart had simply condensed within the spiritual energy explosive rounds to be completely exploded out. He could even bombard a Buddha!

"What Gold Armored Saber Mantis? You've just been smashed to pieces by my bombardment!"

Li Yao loaded the second ammunition belt and looked, filled with confidence, towards the depths of the smoke and dust.

The smoke cleared. The Gold Armored Saber Mantis was curled up in a shivering mass. It was frightened and unsteady, but... it was completely unharmed!

"The heck?"

Li Yao was dumbfounded, and his face immediately flushed red.

In the end, he wasn't a cultivator who specialized in guns and neither had he cultivated in the mysterious and profound arts that were gun combat techniques.

And the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon wasn't designed to be wielded by a single soldier, so it didn't have a super accurate targeting system.

Even though Li Yao's ability to resist blows was extremely strong, so much so that the recoil couldn't hurt him, the recoil was still enough to cause the barrel to waver slightly.

Coupled this with a little bad luck, most of the bullets just grazed past the Gold Armored Saber Mantis, riddling a two hundred meter high three-floor building with countless holes. It was scattered, smashed, and on the verge of collapse.

Only 1% of the rounds had hit their target. However, the Gold Armored Saber Mantis's carapace was circular shaped and extremely strong. Most of the rounds had bounced off, and even if one or two of the rounds could penetrate through the cracks of the carapace and explode, the rounds wouldn’t cause too much damage.

He was faced with this result, but there was no one who continued to make cynical remarks towards him.

The Six Barrel Rotary Cannon wasn't known to be an accurate firearm, as its main purpose was to suppress the advancement of demon beasts through its violent firepower.

Looking at the Gold Armored Saber Mantis all curled up, hugging its head and scampering, being completely suppressed in place, Li Yao had completed his task of being the heavy firepower member perfectly.

"Hiss!"

The Gold Armored Saber Mantis's compound eyes were simply about to ignite into burning embers. It never thought that its grand self of being an intermediate level demon soldier would be suppressed dead-fixed by this group of low level Refinement Stage cultivators.

It also knew that the advantage of heavy firepower laid in distance. The further the distance, the more formidable its might.

This group of humans was toast as long as it could draw close!

And it would absolutely tear that human wielding the gun at the front most of the group into countless pieces!

The Gold Armored Saber Mantis withdrew into its hard gold carapace ball in an instant and mixed together with the stench of a strong gale as it ferociously charged over to the group.

Li Yao yelled with an explosive shout. An incorporeal barrier around his body was shattered into pieces and his aura expanded by another factor.

"4th level of the Refinement Stage?"

No one even had the strength to feel shocked at this moment. They stared stupidly at Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan.

These two both reached the 4th level of the Refinement Stage. Before, everyone recognized them as two rarely seen big experts of the freshmen class.

But now appeared a third freshman at the 4th level Refinement Stage. He was able to go head to head with them.

Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan gritted their teeth. It seemed that if they were to relax just a bit, a berserk howl would come shouting out of their mouths!

Li Yao's strength had increased substantially after exploding into the realm of the 4th level of the Refinement Stage. He was able to barely suppress the muzzle of the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon into slight wavers.

Even though he could still increase by another level, he didn't prepare to do so. Instead, he crazily calculated various cryptic and abstruse problems in his brain, madly increasing his brain cell activity.

Li Yao entered the Super Perceptive State in a second!

In an instant, a series of dazzling data about the distance, bearing, and wind direction between himself and the Gold Armored Saber Mantis manifested within his field of vision.

The most optimal shooting trajectory completed calculations a moment later!

"B-B-B-B-B-B-B-Boom!"

The Six Barrel Rotary Cannon displayed its might once more.

The accuracy of this volley increased greatly. The first series of spiritual energy explosive rounds collided against the carapace of the Gold Armored Saber Mantis, causing sparks to scatter all around. It caused this demon beast equal to the intermediate level Refinement Stage to stagger.

At least 30% of the following thousand spiritual energy explosive rounds hit their target. They bombarded the Gold Armored Saber Mantis's carapace, causing it to split and burst. Blood and flesh flew everywhere and the hissing never stopped. It was forced to flee, but no matter where it rolled, Li Yao was able to calculate a new firing trajectory in an instant. The rounds seemed to converge into a flaming whip that ferociously whipped against its body, and the whip specifically penetrated inside.

The carapace of the Gold Armored Saber Mantis was chiseled apart ten seconds later. It retreated little by little as even a limb was severed to be sent flying.

"Don't tell me that he could actually use the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon to forcefully slay an intermediate level demon soldier?"

Everyone had their eyes bulging and their mouths gaping. They watched Li Yao advance step by step, forcing the Gold Armored Saber Mantis into a corner, making it completely defenseless under the bombardment.

This was completely a display of firepower—a super shocking display of firepower!

Chapter 172: The Blood Lotus Slowly Blossoms

Chapter 172: The Blood Lotus Slowly Blossoms

"Click!"

The Gold Armored Saber Mantis had been forced to retreat step by step with its flesh and blood scattered through the air and its severed limbs dying the ground with blood. Suddenly, an ear-piercing mechanical sound came screeching from the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon. The unrestrained torrent of fire came to a sudden halt, seemingly as if the dance of a berserk flame was forcefully severed.

Out of ammo!

Li Yao's eyebrows creased slightly. He now understood why Ding Lingdang and other close-combat cultivators didn't like to use firearms.

The firepower of firearms was ferocious, but the consumption rate of ammunition was a bit too much. Even several hundred rounds of ammunition weren’t enough to completely slay an intermediate level demon soldier.

If this was a high level demon soldier, a demon general, or even a demon king, how many rounds would he need?

Only the troops that ensured resources to logistics were able to pour down a torrent of firepower in a completely unrestrained manner.

It was impossible for a tiny combat squad formed by cultivators to bring several hundred thousand rounds of ammunition for each mission when they engaged in close-quarters slaughter day in and day out in the Wasteland.

On a small scale with a long timeframe, the fist or the sword was more reliable in high-intensity combat.

"Hisssssssssss!"

The Gold Armored Saber Mantis's shrieking was incomparable ear-piercing, sharp, and berserk.

It hadn't been killed, but it had received serious injuries. Not only was its carapace split in half, but three of its eight jointed limbs were severed, and even its right forelimb that carried a sawtooth edge had been severed, causing a stinky purple fluid to flow out from the wound.

There was no longer the imposing air of a mantis king. It was simply like a stray dog with a broken leg.

Although the Gold Armored Saber Mantis was seriously injured, it turned even more crazy, violent, and bloodthirsty. It painfully swallowed its last bit of reason and its scarlet compound eyes seemed to drip with blood!

It also discovered that Li Yao had exhausted the last of his rounds. Its shriek turned incomparably ruthless. It withdrew its limbs and backed up two steps—it was about to come charging over!

"Not good!"

Everyone's expression suddenly changed, realizing that Li Yao's display of firepower, of Li Yao pressing forward step by step, had caused him to be faintly separated from their protection. A lone soldier had deeply entered enemy lines, walking to the front of the Gold Armored Saber Mantis.

It didn't matter if he was a refiner or a heavy firepower user, he was in a defenseless state close to an injured and berserk demon beast. The consequences were going to be very serious!

Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan glanced at each other and nodded at the same time. They were just about to go save him.

"Wait!"

Ding Lingdang suddenly stopped them. A calm smile hung on her face. She nodded with her chin: "Don't be impatient. Let's see what happens next."

In their moment of hesitation came a shocking development right in front of them.

Li Yao tossed the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon to the side and placed down the metal box he had always carried on his back.

A boom sounded. The heavy weight smashed against the earth, causing dirt to go flying.

Li Yao muttered to himself as his pair of hands transformed into a gray cloud. He was working at lightning-fast speeds.

The several dozen array glyphs all around the metal box suddenly flared to sketch the criss-cross structure of a profound and complicated glyph.

The large metal box made a smooth mechanical sound as all sides of the box suddenly unfolded open, revealing countless crystal gears.

The entire structure went through a transformation as the gears operated at high speeds—it actually transformed into a portable weapons rack!

Sabers, spears, swords, halberds, hatchets, axes, hooks, tridents... 18 classes of bladed weapons of every variety were available, all of which were flowing with brilliant light. They were all dauntless close combat magical equipment!

"This is way too excessive!"

Everyone looked at each other in dismay. They never expected that Li Yao would carry this many close combat magical equipment.

He really deserved to be called a refiner!

The Gold Armored Saber Mantis was intimidated by the cold aura of the weapons. It was stunned for a long time before being stimulated by the savage nature of a beast from its pain. It brandished its sickle-like forelimb and suddenly came charging over!

Li Yao was composed as he reached out with his left arm towards the weapons rack and put a black iron ring on his wrist.

Then, he whistled. Five black shields the size of palms flew into the air and revolved slowly around him. Occasionally, they would combine together to form a large shield in front of his left arm. Occasionally, this large shield would disperse back to smaller shields that protected every vital point on his body.

Li Yao shot out with his right hand and grabbed a flaming saber. It was as if he was wielding a raging and burning flame. The corners of his mouth curled up as he charged at the Gold Armored Saber Mantis with a chuckle.

The Gold Armored Saber Mantis greatly displayed its mad nature. It shrieked and it heavily rammed over!

Li Yao didn't hide or dodge. The five shields on his left arm combined to form a single large shield, forcefully blocking the Gold Armored Saber Mantis's ramming attack.

With a boom, Li Yao flew seven, eight meters away.

The Gold Armored Saber Mantis also reeled back by four, five steps. It staggered and was somewhat disoriented.

"This ability to resist blows is far too terrifying! It can actually match the full force of a demon beast!"

Everyone, including the mighty Lu Tieshan, was scared witless at the sight of this scene.

The strength of the Gold Armored Saber Mantis didn't necessarily fall to the level of a low level demon beast even if it was seriously injured. Demon beasts were known for their great strength, and after being injured, the mantis greatly displayed its mad nature.

Li Yao was actually able to meet it head on?

And...

After turning his body mid air and landing on the ground, Li Yao squatted deeply with his legs and let out a long whistle. He sprung up and pounced. The flaming saber's tip was released to be over three meters long. It went to ferociously cleave through the Gold Armored Saber Mantis!

He was actually the first to recover from the Gold Armored Saber Mantis's ramming attack!

"Hiss!"

The Gold Armored Saber Mantis was still dizzy. It never thought that this human would be this dauntless.

Having been caught off guard, it was cleaved by the saber.

Even though its carapace was incomparably hard, this saber penetrated deeply into its body and a giant gush of purple fluid spurted out, which was then evaporated in an instant by the flaming saber, letting out a "Tsss".

"For its temperature to be this high, what kind of saber is this? And it can even split the carapace of a Gold Armored Saber Mantis with a single swing!"

All the freshmen had gradually gotten used to Li Yao's strong and fierce body.

However, they were curious about the model of the peculiar saber.

Most notably were the sword cultivators of the Chaos Edge Hall. Their eyes flared when they saw just how sharp this flaming saber was. They discussed spiritedly, but in the end, they were unable to think of just which sect had refined that masterwork weapon.

With this one strike hitting its target, Li Yao knew to quit when he was ahead. He instantly retreated five meters to avoid another dangerous and explosive attack from the Gold

Armored Saber Mantis. He put the flaming saber back to the weapons rack and took out a chainsword.

Not only was the sword blade of this chainsword especially large and wide, the sawteeth looked to be like the fangs of wolves and had a slight curvature to them. It was unknown what kind of forging technique was used to have a faint color of blood be infused in the tips of the sawteeth. Its imposing air was extremely terrifying.

With a shaking of his hand, the wolf sawteeth began to vibrate at high speeds to cut through the air, letting out a terrifying purr.

Li Yao, wielding the chainsword, pounced at the mantis once again!

After the dazzling display of firepower, Li Yao devoted the next ten minutes to demonstrating his wonderful, brilliant, and varied close combat magical equipment!

Aside from the flaming saber and the wolf fang chainsword, he took out battle-axes, great hammers, spears, and etc from the weapons rack one after another. He had taken out a dozen or so close-combat magical equipment.

Every type of weapon was a strange model and was far different from the close combat magical equipment commonly seen on the market.

The astonishment in Zhao Tianchong's and Lu Tieshan's eyes grew more and more intense.

The others were shocked by Li Yao endlessly producing all sorts of magical equipment, but they were shocked by the essence of Li Yao's incomparably strong and fierce body.

The two discovered that it didn't matter what magical equipment Li Yao wielded. Li Yao had only one pattern of attack.

And it was not fancy at all; it was just meeting force with force. First, he would use the shield to ram the Gold Armored Saber Mantis, and then he would take advantage of the Gold Armored Saber Mantis's dizzy state and pounce on top of it at flying speeds to unleash an attack.

And before the Gold Armored Saber Mantis could recover, Li Yao would quickly retreat and switch to a different weapon.

These tactics were utterly simple and crude, but they were absolutely effective.

However, only Li Yao, with his monstrous transformation of being able to resist blows, was able to use this kind of tactic.

If it were anyone else, even if they had a shield for protection, they would only be able to withstand up to three to five collisions before spitting up blood.

"What do you think of Li Yao's combat strength? If he was facing us two versus one instead of a demon beast, who do you think would win?"

Zhao Tianchong whispered to Lu Tieshan.

Lu Tieshan silently muttered to himself before saying:

"Li Yao's strength and ability to resist blows is completely enough to shock me. His instantaneous burst strength is also very powerful. Just look. He's deep in his squat when he suddenly explodes forth. His speed instantly reaches his maximum like a hurricane. Even the Gold Armored Saber Mantis is finding it hard to react to."

"Other than this, he's a complete expert in defense. He must have cultivated in a technique that specializes in defense. A strange protective film formed from his spiritual energy covers his entire body. The deadly offensive displayed several times by the Gold Armored Saber Mantis was all dispersed by this protective film!"

"He has this layer of spiritual energy protective film. Combine this with his steel-like physique, and Li Yao's defensive power might dreadfully be higher than that of the Gold Armored Saber Mantis. Even if I land my Thunder Devil Fist, I don't have the confidence that I would be able to blast apart his defenses."

"However..."

Lu Tieshan made a change in topic. He spoke somewhat befuddled, "Compared to his defenses, his attacks are simply a mess. I can't even stand to directly look at it. It’s completely at the level of an amateur!"

Zhao Tianchong nodded and said:

"I agree with your views, but I feel that Li Yao has chosen wisely."

"Wisely?"

Lu Tieshan scratched his hair and asked, "What do you mean?"

Zhao Tianchong chuckled and explained:

"A person's time and energy are limited. It's impossible to learn everything. For fellow student Li Yao to be able to modify and produce a 1st Generation Tai'e crafting furnace, clearly, he has put in a great amount of time and energy into refining techniques, so how much time would he have left to spend on combat cultivation?"

"Even if he doesn't have the time, he should first learn more practical skills."

"With his great strength, he can carry more magical equipment and items than us and he can display the superiority of being a 'massively equipped man'."

"His ability to resist blows is strong and he has a superior defensive technique. These can all help raise his survival rate on the battlefield."

"As for offensive techniques, it doesn't matter if he learns them or not. In the end, he's a refiner, not the main force of combat."

Lu Tieshan let out a long breath after listening. He spoke with some anxiety in his heart:

"I understand now after your explanation. It looks likes this kid is still a normal human. He doesn't know everything. His greatest weakness is being not good at attacking."

Zhao Tianchong replied:

"You can't really say it’s a weakness. Everyone has chosen a different specialty, so certainly, everyone has different paths of development. If someone knows how to refine, has extraordinary strength, and is a master in close-combat, then that's simply..."

He shook his head and didn't continue speaking.

Then, a sudden change occurred at this time.

The Gold Armored Saber Mantis, with cuts all over its body, was nearly drained of all its purple fluids. It finally was unable to endure the frontal standoff against Li Yao. Letting out a shriek and a "swoosh", two thin transparent cicada-like wings suddenly unfolded from its body

With a light leap, the Gold Armored Saber Mantis flew a dozen or so meters—it fled in a panic!

"Li Yao was able to force a Gold Armored Saber Mantis to retreat all by himself?"

Even now, there were still quite a few freshmen who couldn't believe their eyes.

Li Yao calmly felt out a small remote control from his waist. A smile filled his face. He aimed it at the direction the Gold Armored Saber Mantis was fleeing in and lightly pressed.

B-B-B-B-B-B-B-Boom!

The Gold Armored Saber Mantis suddenly shivered, and then its entire body exploded.

Several dozen balls of fire suddenly expanded, transforming into slow blossoming lotuses of blood one after another!

Chapter 173: Main Competitive Strength

Chapter 173: Main Competitive Strength

"What the heck?"

At first, the group of people was deathly silent, but then they exploded with shouts of shock one after another, never stopping.

"Did he cultivate in some exceptional mystical ability to allow his spiritual energy to penetrate into the Gold Armored Saber Mantis and have it hibernate within the mantis's blood only to have it explode during its final moment?"

Lu Tieshan forehead seeped with sweat.

The Devil Fist Sect had several similar mystical abilities, but these were high level techniques that only powerful cultivators at the Building Foundation Stage or higher could use.

How could Li Yao do such a thing by himself?

Zhao Tianchong stared dead-fixed at the remote control in Li Yao's hand and shook his head:

"It's not an ability. There are bombs!"

Lu Tieshan cried out:

"Bombs? When did he have the time to put so many bombs on the Gold Armored Saber Mantis? Not to mention that the

Gold Armored Saber Mantis's carapace is incomparably smooth, so how did he get the bombs to stick?"

Zhao Tianchong was a bit crushed as he muttered:

"We're still underestimating fellow student Li Yao far too much. We thought that he decided to meet force with force against the Gold Armored Saber Mantis by relying on his powerful and strong physique and his powerful ability to resist blows... I only realized it just now. This was all a trap to hide his killer move!"

Lu Tieshan gaped and his eyeballs spun. It seemed that he understood something as his expression grew more aghast.

Zhao Tianchong saw Lu Tieshan's ashen face and knew that he had seen through a few things. Zhao Tianchong nodded and said:

"Yes, I'm afraid it’s as you've guessed. For fellow student Li Yao met the Gold Armored Saber Mantis using force against force, it was only to cause the Gold Armored Saber Mantis to have a moment of dizziness so that he could draw in to close range."

"In the instant when the distance between the two closed in to zero, Li Yao took a few miniature bombs and secretly put them onto the Gold Armored Saber Mantis's body."

"As for how he was able to get these bombs to stick onto the Gold Armored Saber Mantis’s smooth carapace, I don't know."

"He was able to place a few miniature bombs with every collision."

"A dozen collisions later, several dozens of miniature bombs were attached to the vital points of the Gold Armored Saber Mantis."

"This demon beast was already seriously injured. It made a frantic getaway without caring for its injuries and was flying at high speeds when the dozen of miniature bombs exploded at that same time, so how else could it have ended beside it dying?"

"It's impossible for fellow student Li Yao to bring this many bombs on him in one go. We believed that each time Li Yao retreated to the weapons rack, it was to swap for a new weapon to use the Gold Armored Saber Mantis as a test subject for testing the might of his magical equipment."

"However, this was just one of his goals. A more important goal was to use the swapping of weapons to cover up grabbing more miniature bombs."

"The Gold Armored Saber Mantis has extremely high intelligence. If it had seen Li Yao grab a whole bunch of bombs, it certainly would have fled early on."

"Only in this way could Li Yao attach several dozen miniature bombs to the carapace of the demon beast. And it didn't even know what hit it—it never discovered it even until death!"

Zhao Tianchong laughed bitterly and continued:

"Fellow student Li Yao understands his weak point of having a lack of attack ability very well. He actually managed to think of such a strange combat tactic that displays his superiority in hand speed to the pinnacle."

"I had to think back in great detail to be able to think of this. He had performed a few seemingly redundant movements."

"I originally thought that his hands were flustered because he wasn't good at attacking, so I didn't think it was important."

"Only now do I know—that was the time he had placed the miniature bombs!"

"If we were his enemy and he places some bombs on our body when we exchange blows, what do you think the aftermath would be like?"

Lu Tieshan pondered for a moment before shaking his head hard:

"That's impossible. We're different from demon beasts."

"The carapace around the Gold Armored Saber Mantis is a layer of exoskeleton. There are no sensory organs, so it can't feel the subtle changes on its carapace, which was how Li Yao was able to attach several dozen bombs without it knowing. We're people who cultivate, and every fine hair is incomparably sensitive. We would find out in the first instance!"

Even so, fear still lingered in these two people's hearts.

This was because they realized that Li Yao wasn't a simple meat-head with overly developed limbs.

Even if he possessed tyrannical and incomparable strength, within the midst of battle, what he loved to use more was...

His brain!

Zhao Tianchong's expression turned incomparably grave in an instant. He clenched his teeth as he said, "People may be given the wrong birth name, but nicknames are never wrong. I've heard that fellow student Li Yao has a nickname back in his hometown called 'The Vulture'. He truly lives up to his name. He's a vulture that's vicious, crazy, and cunning!"

During their conversation, Li Yao returned with a face full of calmness.

Everyone immediately surrounded him to chatter at the same time:

"Fellow student Li Yao, you really broke into the 4th level of the Refinement Stage? That's way too incredible!"

"Fellow student Li Yao, these magical equipment you just used, just which sect refined them? No matter how I look at them, they all look somewhat familiar, but I can't think of any at all!"

"Did you really use bombs to finish off the Gold Armored Saber Mantis, fellow student Li Yao? How were you able to have the bombs stay attached to the smooth carapace of the Gold Armored Saber Mantis for so long? They didn't fall no matter how violently it moved!"

Li Yao split into a grin and spread open his empty pair of hands. His hands subtly swayed and four fine miniature crystal bombs appeared between his fingers.

They were different from normal bombs. This kind of bomb had a sticky light green slime on one side and was carefully wrapped by a layer of film.

"This is my special sticky bomb. One side is applied with the slime of a Bullet Dart Frog. As soon as it’s exposed to the air, it can generate an extremely strong adhesive strength and stick itself to the carapace of a demon beast for a full dozen minutes!"

"This was specially refined to break the hard outer husks of demon beasts!"

The Bullet Dart Frog was a large frog species that was commonly seen in the Heaven Origin Sector.

Its tongue was very long and was even coated with a powerful, adhesive fluid. As soon as its tongue lashed out, the tongue could even cling to small animals atop of branches. The tongue would then retract and the frog would eat the prey. And so, this was how its name came to be.

After people discovered the special characteristic of this frog, the Bullet Dart Frog was raised on a massive scale for the extraction of the slime of its tongue. The slime was regarded as a purely natural glue.

However, this was the first time they saw the glue and a bomb be combined together. Their eyes couldn't be stopped from lighting up.

Li Yao handed the sticky bomb to the student next to him to let everyone take a look at it. Then, he casually raised his flaming saber:

"All of the magical equipment here have undergone my modifications and enhancements. They have quite the increase from their original performances!"

"Take for instance this Scarlet-Sun Demonslayer Flaming Saber. This is a typical design pushed out by the Scarlet

Dragon Sect thirty-seven years ago. Its design is quite outstanding, and among similar flame magical equipment, it can be considered to be out of the ordinary; however, the crystal consumption for its fire is too high, and after a long period of battle, it is very likely that spiritual energy overflow would occur. As a result, the handle would then burn the hand, influencing one's combat experience."

"But after re-refining over the key areas and going through my intense forging, this Scarlet-Sun Demonslayer Flaming Saber's maximum temperature has been raised by 11% and the flaming edge has been lengthened by 8%. When using the standard purity of crystals for fire, its time in combat has been increased by 7%. Most importantly, I've fixed the defect of its spiritual energy overflow. It won't burn your hand no matter how you use it!"

"As for how to use it, each and every fellow student who uses sabers, take it for a try!"

"As for those who use swords, battle-axes, meteor hammers... Don't worry fellow students! All of the close-combat magical equipment here are all modified versions. Their performances have increased from the original version by at least 10%. I will introduce them one by one. Everyone, feel free to play!"

Li Yao held a chainsword in his left hand and a meteor hammer in his right. His mouth was a torrent of words, talking non-stop as he hyped up his magical equipment up to the heavens, causing everyone who listened to be stupefied. In the end, he spoke with radiating passion:

"Of all these modified magical equipment, the most expensive is just 990 credits, while the cheapest is just 630 credits. They're practically free!"

"What are you waiting for, fellow students? The time for battle is at hand. These weapons will greatly increase your killing efficiency when they're in your hands. Grab your crystal processors posthaste and trade with me!"

Everyone had looked through and passed on Li Yao's magical equipment. Quite a few sword cultivators revealed expressions of fondness for them, but no one said a word. The scene entered into an eerie silence.

Zhao Tianchong coughed dryly a moment later. He said with some awkwardness:

"Fellow student Li Yao, the magical equipment you've modified are really quite decent, and even I'm tempted by them. But, the price... isn't it a bit too high? Basically, they're twice as high as the original version!"

Li Yao was stunned and his brows furrowed:

"Fellow student Zhao Tianchong, we're all part of the same circle. Don't use this kind of method to haggle with me!"

"Everyone knows that the structures of the underlying magical equipment are classics. They are the coalescence of the heart and blood of numerous master refiners over several dozens of years. Even the most subtle modification wouldn't be easy to do."

"I meticulously handcrafted, hand-forged, and even assimilated high quality materials into each and every key component. Only in this way could I increase the performance by at least 10%. The amount of time, energy, and costs I spent is unknown. Increasing the price by double isn't excessive, right?"

"If the goods are real, then double the base price is not outrageous."

Zhao Tianchong admitted that increasing the performance of a magical equipment by 10% warranted increasing the price by 100%. This was a very normal thing.

In the most extreme case, even if the magical equipment was increased by 1% and the price was doubled, this would all be within a reasonable range.

After all, on the battlefield, an increase in performance of 1% could decide the matter between life and death.

The value here could not be measured by money.

"However, fellow student Li Yao, you probably don't quite understand the mentality of us students of the Combat Department."

"From our perspective, we're still at the learning stage. It isn't a good thing to use excessively powerful weapons while we're still learning."

Zhao Tianchong explained with complete sincerity:

"If we get used to using powerful weapons right now, we would become dependent on them and neglect our own cultivation. Then when we leave university, enter a true battlefield, and the masterwork weapon breaks, wouldn't we be screwed?"

"You're right!"

Another student spoke agreeing, "There's an unwritten rule in our Chaos Edge Hall. In daily training, we must use only the simplest, the most basic of weapons to temper ourselves for true strength!"

"Therefore, even though your modified magical equipment are quite decent, from our perspective, they're a bit excessive."

Li Yao was stunned for a long time before shouting:

"That can't be right!? Sure, low-grade weapons can be used to temper and train one's combat skills for day-to-day training, but on the battlefield, you can't still be using low-grade weapons, right? You have to use one or two high-grade weapons to protect yourself, right?"

A few sword cultivators glanced at each other, but in the end, it was still Zhao Tianchong who explained:

"Indeed, fellow student Li Yao. On a real battlefield, we do carry weapons of two different grades."

"If we encounter weak demon beasts like the Black Armored Saber Mantis, we would use our low-grade weapons to temper our combat skills. If we meet demon beasts more powerful than us, like the Gold Armored Saber Mantis, we would use higher-grade masterwork weapons and stake our lives."

"Even though you increased the performance of these masterwork weapons, the problem is: the underlying model is too basic. They don't count as real masterwork weapons!"

"To sum it all up, your modified magical equipment are too good to train with and too poor to stake our lives on. The price isn't particularly cheap, and they don't have any main competitive strengths!"

Chapter 174: Li Yao's Transformation

Chapter 174: Li Yao's Transformation

Li Yao deeply furrowed his brows.

At first glance, what Zhao Tianchong had said made sense but it was also strange, after careful deliberation. Li Yao thought for a long while before responding with a stomp of his foot.

"Fellow student Zhao Tianchong, there's a big problem with your explanation. Your demon beast slaying efficiency rate is greatly increased when you're equipped with better magical equipment. If before, you could kill ten demon beasts in a day and tomorrow you could kill fifteen in a day, wouldn't you still be able to meet the same objective of crazily cultivating you've been bickering about? You just think my gear is too expensive!"

A rarely seen blush appeared on Zhao Tianchong's face.

He really had been exaggerating a bit.

It was true that the Grand Desolate War Institution didn't encourage students to use masterwork weapons when cultivating on campus.

However, in real combat where danger lurks in all corners of the battlefield, a bit of a performance increase with magical equipment was certainly a good thing.

No one would despise having an overly sharp sword.

Zhao Tianchong awkwardly explained:

"Fellow student, Li Yao, if the magical equipment was only more expensive by a couple hundred credits, everyone would grit their teeth and accept it."

"But the basic magical equipment is all consumable. They would need to be replaced with a new one every few days, under intense combat. We can't just spend a couple hundred credits every few days right?"

"We wouldn't be able to make it back, even if we do increase our demon beast slaying efficiency by 10%!"

"He's right!"

Sword cultivators agreed with him one after another, for this was the most crucial factor.

If the price was right, who wouldn't want to equip themselves with more powerful performing magical equipment?

The key laid in the fact demon beasts were very hard to deal with. Some were like the Gold Armored Saber Mantis; they had a hard carapace. Some had super hard skeletons. Some even had bodies filled with corrosive acid.

Close combat weapons just didn't last more than a few days against demon beasts. Often, the blade's edge would crumble and the sword's body would split. They would be rusted by corrosion and become unusable.

Everyone was a college student strapped for credits. Every credit was saved through great difficulties. It was alright if they only had to spend several hundred credits once but who would be able to stand spending several hundred credits every few days!

Zhao Tianchong smiled wryly and said:

"Fellow student Li Yao, I just spoke the truth. We, students of the Combat Department, may earn credits at a lightning speed by taking missions but we spend a lot of credits in a lot of places."

"Not to mention, the professors of the Combat Department can destroy someone by subtle means and fail someone without blinking an eye. It makes us have to spend a large amount of credits to retake courses."

"Say that we regularly get injured during cultivation and we go find some fellow students at the Medical Department for help, their scalpels would have to be polished and sharpened until they're super shiny so that a single blade could draw blood!"

"So, we can only be meticulous about our points!"

He paused before speaking again.

"However, the magical equipment you've refined is really nice. If you can lower the price by 30%, you'll certainly make a lot of sales. I'll be the first to buy a chainsword, regardless of the others!"

"Yes, the things here are good. I really like this battleax. It's just too expensive. If you can reduce the price by 25%, I'll grit my teeth and buy it!"

A different and burly classmate stroked a battleax in his hands as he spoke with loving affection.

Li Yao blinked his eyes. He could tell that everyone spoke the truth.

Now that he thought about it, this was true. If a saber was more expensive by several hundred school credits but could be used for a year, he would grit his teeth and bear it.

However, these things were consumables. If one's luck was bad on the battlefield, encountering a demon beast with an especially tough skeleton or maybe a strong corrosion demon beast, the magical equipment would turn to scrap in an instant!

Even though the swords refined by Li Yao had their performances greatly increased, it was impossible for them to last for more than three to five days of continuous and intense combat.

Taking this into account, the price was indeed expensive.

Yet, Li Yao also had his difficulties.

If he were to sell a single close combat magical equipment for 800 credits, his net profit wouldn't be much. Most of the credits would go towards the cost.

Buying the original magical equipment to modify would require spending of hundreds of credits, to say the least.

In addition, there were all sorts of precious raw materials required. A single piece magical equipment would give him a net profit of one to two hundred credits at most.

He would have to work endlessly around to clock, modifying several hundred pieces of magical equipment, in order to reach 30,000 credits.

Not even 30%, if prices were lowered by 20%, a single piece magical equipment would only earn him a couple dozen credits. It would really take endless years to earn 30,000 credits.

Li Yao had the faint sensation that he appeared to have taken the wrong road.

He was still using the more manual, artisan style of refining methods of forty millenniums ago.

Through thousands of revisions of hard work, meticulous carving and perfecting, and forging by hand, he was able to refine a more exquisite magical equipment with slightly stronger performance.

However, the refining rate was terribly low. It would take at least one or two days for a single finished product. The more complex ones required three or four days.

Current cultivation sects long ago adopted large-scale industrial methods to refine low-level magical equipment. They refined in bulk. Their efficiency was extremely high.

With greater production, the costs could be brought very low.

The magical equipment produced by this large-scale refinement method didn't have the most powerful performance.

But the quality to price ratio was the absolute highest.

This was the perfect method of refining for low-level magical equipment with extremely high rates of consumption.

"Efficiency! The key lies in efficiency!"

Li Yao had this sudden epiphany.

"I was using the train of thought of refining quality products on refining consumable products. It takes me one to two days to modify an 'exquisite' consumable product. Obviously, I'm getting nowhere with efficiency as low as this!"

"However, a real quality product that could behead a demon god with one strike... How could I, a lowly cultivator of the 5th level of the Refinement Stage, refine such a thing?"

Li Yao thought for a moment. Then he asked with a heart filled with anticipation.

"What about the sticky bomb? It is inexpensive and it has decent power. This is my competitive product!"

This time it was Lu Tieshan's turn to speak.

"Fellow student Li Yao, it's true that your sticky bomb is decent. It's been well-purposed for use against the hard exoskeleton of a demon beast but it's way too complicated to use. What if I accidentally get it stuck to my hand? That would be very embarrassing."

"We don't have your astonishing hand speed or finger dexterity. We aren't able to stick that many sticky bombs to the carapace of a demon beast unnoticed!"

Li Yao was dumbfounded. He discovered he had made his second error.

When he was refining the sticky bomb, he had unconsciously used his own view as the viewpoint of a user.

Not only had he develop astonishing hand speed through high-intensity magical equipment maintenance, he had cultivated in the Thousands Fingers Supple Bone Exercise, a god-like technique of the ancient past devoted to increase the pliability and flexibility of fingers.

The fingers of a typical cultivator weren't as nimble as his and their hand speeds weren't as quick.

From their perspectives, using the sticky bomb was far too complicated. In intense combat, a single accident would have them sticking the bomb to themselves.

In short, it was a magical equipment exclusive to Li Yao. It was hard for others to use.

Li Yao lowered his head. His cheeks somewhat hurt with a burning sting.

"Senior Brother Peng was correct. For one to become an outstanding refiner, one must go through great quantities of real combat and first become an excellent soldier. This way, one understands what magical equipment is most popular, most practical within real combat!"

"It was because of my lack of combat experience that I refined, behind closed doors of the school campus, the magical equipment that only seemed brilliant."

"The numbers of the magical equipment was very beautiful on paper and they displayed outstanding performance during testing."

"But when they reached the battlefield, all sorts of problems were revealed."

"Real combat... I need large amounts of real combat experience!"

"I will temper my combat skills in actual combat and become a true soldier. Only in this way can I know which magical equipment will be the most well received and how to refine it!"

...

Three days later at the eastern business district of Verdant Tarn City.

Li Yao was expressionless among the ruins of dilapidated buildings. His eyes shone brightly with life. He stood in confrontation of a demon beast.

An intense change had occurred within the battlefield situation in these three days.

Large batches of cultivators had rushed over one after another. Quite a few of the students of the Grand Desolate War Institution had heard the news, heading back to campus early and entering the battlefield one wave after another to engage in slaughter.

Each day, transport ships had to make several trips back and forth between the Grand Desolate War Institution and Verdant Tarn City.

The large army expanded their territory, pressing against the demon beasts. The large beast tide on the surface was suppressed. The powerful Demon Generals and Demon Kings put up a resistance in the sewers where it was accessible from all sides. The high-level cultivators could only enter deep underground to engage in bloody slaughter in the maze of pitch-black darkness.

Small squads of demon soldiers were in every nook and corner on the surface. They were handed over to the Refinement Stage cultivators to deal with.

Li Yao was a well-known and excellent figure of the Refinement Stage cultivators.

He was facing an Armored Snapping Turtle. This was an extremely fierce and tough intermediate level demon soldier.

It was like a hybrid between a turtle and a crocodile expanded three times their original sizes. A tortoise shell armored its body. Its defensive power was even more tyrannical than the Gold Armored Saber Mantis'. It had a thick and muscular tail, covered with sawteeth, that was like a barbed iron whip. The tail ripped through the air, letting out a humming cry.

It didn't matter if one was being struck by the turtle shell or swept by the iron tail, the consequences would be disastrous.

But Li Yao was very different than the version of himself from three days ago.

After discovering his problem, he had deeply thought over the matter for a very long time. In the end, he deeply affirmed to his heart that he would properly sharpen himself in actual combat.

He sold most of the magical equipment he had refined during winter vacation at very reasonable prices to his classmates. He just left himself a Heavy Vibrosaber of great attack power.

Sabers, guns, swords, halberds, hatchets, axes, scythes, tridents... There were thirty to fifty different types of close combat magical equipment. It was obviously impossible to completely master all their properties in a single breath.

Li Yao was going to first master using the saber to become an expert in both refining and using it.

He liked the saber with its domineering air, to be able to press forward and sever things in half with a single strike!

Other than this, he conducted a modification on the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon. He adhered a mystic ray laser attachment to the barrel so that it could emit a red beam of light. This red beam of light could focus into a dot from several hundred meters away and act as a simple targeting system to increase the precision of this heavy firepower weapon.

He took the now-empty magical equipment box and modified it into an ammunitions crate. He carried thousands upon thousands of spiritual energy explosive rounds.

Right now, Li Yao had a jet-black Heavy Vibrosaber spanning across his waist, shining with light. He held the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon in his hand. A thick and heavy ammunition belt extended from the ammunition crate on his back to the firearm in his hands.

A vest covered with pockets was worn over his skin-tight combat garments. The pockets were all full and bulging, filled to the brim with sticky bombs!

He wasn't just fully armed. He was simply a walking weapons depot!

When faced with the Armored Snapping Turtle, whose strength was clearly a series higher than his, Li Yao's mouth hooked into a smile with a hint of calmness. He coldly squeezed out a single word from between his sharp teeth.

"Die!"

A streak of red light shot out from the muzzle of the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon. It precisely hit the chest of the Armored Snapping Turtle, forming a distinct targeting dot.

The Armored Snapping Turtle had yet to react when Li Yao heavily squeezed the trigger.

Amidst the loud sound, like a volcano erupting, came balls and balls of flame that exploded in front of Li Yao's body. They converged into a red stream of light that was incomparably thick and powerful. The light cleaved at the Armored Snapping Turtle's skull, ferociously bombarding it!

Chapter 175: Heavy Artillery and Insane Saber!

Chapter 175: Heavy Artillery and Insane Saber!

The Armored Snapping Turtle had its thick defensive skin and flesh to rely on, the cannon it Chen Xiang’s arm was simply nothing in its eyes. According to its opinion, how could such a weak and young low-level Refinement Stage cultivator control that cannon and have a fierce firepower? At most, it would feel ticklish; that's all!

Therefore, it didn't try to move or dodge and continue to move forward at a high speed; it would rather suffer a few bullets to cut through Li Yao's waist with a sweep of its tail!

However, never had it imagined that the onslaught of firepower would be as aggressive as a meteor rain, as though hammers weighing tens of thousands of pounds ruthlessly smashing into its stomach, making it stagger as it was covered in a blood-red violent spiritual energy in the blink of an eye!

"Ding!"

A burning pain struck the Armored Snapping Turtle; it was incomparably terrified to discover that multitudes of cracks had actually appeared on its solid chest armor. In perhaps just ten seconds, the armor would be blasted away.

"Ding! Ding! Ding!"

The Armored Snapping Turtle was scared as well as angry. It was a demon beast whose defense was tougher than the Gold Armored Saber Mantis, yet it had actually been suppressed by Li Yao's heavy fire. Lowering its hideous head, it helplessly chose to lie flat on the ground and use its sharp and protruding hard turtle shell to somehow block the matchless fire of Six Barrel Rotary Cannon!

Its four limbs were shaking, just like a stray dog. It awkwardly tried to move left and right to dodge.

Li Yao contemptuously smiled.

After three days of combat shooting training, he had a deeper understanding of the performance of Six Barrel Rotary Cannon; his control had improved greatly. At present, he could continuously fire for an entire minute, where all of the rounds were distributed over an area the size of the watermelon!

The Armored Snapping Turtle wasn't a demon beast which was hailed for its speed; how could its dodging speed compare with the speed of the bullets. It was difficult for its hard turtle shell to withstand the rainstorm-like, ruthless bombardment of the Spiritual Explosive Shells for a minute.

Even if its turtle shell had not completely cracked, its internal organs weren't able to withstand the fire and suffered grievous injuries.

Finally—

The Armored Snapping Turtle let out a heart-wrenching cry as it slammed its iron tail on the ground before raising its entire body giving the impression of a steel-cast giant wheel as it resisted the fierce fire head-on and forcibly rushed over.

It had been infuriated to the extreme. At the hazard of grievously injuring itself, it wanted to ruthlessly smash Li Yao into pieces!

Tilting his body towards the back, Li Yao suddenly exerted strength in his legs; as though his calves were filled with air, they expanded to three times their size in the blink of an eye and burst forth with astonishing strength. As he ferociously stomped on the ground, crisscross cracks appeared on the ground within a radius of fifty meters!

With the recoil force, Li Yao retreated ten meters at high speed. He closely dodged the dangerous collision with the Armored Snapping Turtle's shell, while making full use of this opportunity to fire a series of bullets, shooting a fist-sized hole in its stomach.

Both sides were quite close, making it no longer suitable to use heavy firepower. With a low roar, two array glyphs on the strap flashed as the shoulder strap was cut off and the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon, as well as the ammunition box, automatically broke away from Li Yao's body. Quickly moving his right hand, Li Yao clutched a Heavy Vibrosaber, which was wide at the top and narrow at the bottom like the leg of an ox, with its tip pointing at the sky. Meanwhile, under the vibration of spiritual energy, its blade edge vibrated at high frequency, emitting a "Chi Chi" sound, as though the stomach of a hungry, prehistoric giant beast was grumbling!

Under the excruciating pain, the Armored Snapping Turtle became mad. Regardless of how its body was torn apart, its speed increased to a whole new level. A strike coming from above suddenly changed its direction, as its iron tail pierced through the air like a meteor, raising fierce gales along the way!

In the blink of an eye, Li Yao's hair had been messed up by the wind, while his pupils turned as sharp as a needle; he was unable to open his eyes.

Narrowing his eyes, rather than drawing back, he stepped forward. As a result of sparring countless times with Ding Lingdang, spiritual energy air bubbles instinctively and frantically gushed out from his pores, forming an "airbag armor" consisting of over thousands of small air bubbles in front of him.

"Pop Pop Pop Pop!" Countless sounds burst forth, as the heavy iron tail of Armored Snapping Turtle struck upon the air bubbles, bursting over a thousand bubbles at the same time.

Meanwhile, Li Yao, with the help of cushion provided by the bubbles, strangely dodged as the iron tail brushed past him.

"Whoosh!"

The tip of the iron tail drew a blood line on Li Yao's cheek.

Without batting an eyelid, when the Armored Snapping Turtle's chest was wide open, Li Yao's left hand moved in a very concealed manner, as the flexible fingers honed with [Thousand Fingers Supple Bone Exercise] lightly threw a sticky bomb at the Armored Snapping Turtle's chest where the armor was cracked.

The Armored Snapping Turtle was more vigilant than the Gold Armored Saber Mantis. Li Yao's small action was caught in the blink of an eye.

Unfortunately, because of its shorter limbs, no matter what it did, it was unable to reach his chest and the mucus on the sticky bomb, which came from the Bullet Dart Frog and had strong adhesive properties, so that no matter how it scurried, it was unable to fling the sticky bomb.

"Ding!"

The Armored Snapping Turtle was well aware that it must be a sinister magical equipment.

Stretching its iron tail to the limit, the Armored Snapping Turtle tried to poke its heart to sweep the sticky bomb away. Whereupon, it noticed that the human happened to have sucked his cheeks and blew a whistle.

During the combat, Li Yao discovered that detonating the sticky bomb with remote control was too troublesome. Some quicker demon beasts simply won't give him the opportunity to use the remote control.

Therefore, Li Yao just added a voice control array glyph to the sticky bomb, which was infused with a weak spiritual energy in advance, which when received Li Yao's whistle, would detonate.

"Boom!"

A blood fountain shot out from the chest of the Armored Snapping Turtle.

Although the sticky bomb had a very small volume, didn't have much crystal, and its power was not strong...

However, as it was stuck upon the cracked turtle shell over the Armored Snapping Turtle's chest, just a step away from the heart, it caused a massive amount of damage.

The Armored Snapping Turtle felt as though its heart had been ruthlessly pierced by scorching hot dagger again and again.

Due to the sudden overwhelming pain, its long neck was completely stretched out of the turtle shell, as though half of the snapping turtle had crawled out from the turtle shell as it let out screams.

'It's now!'

From the very beginning, Li Yao had been concentrating the fire at the heart of the Armored Snapping Turtle just for this moment!

With a long howl, he burst forth with 3rd or 4th level of aura as his body doubled in its size. The vest, which was somewhat loose at the beginning, completely tightened; even the black combat suit was unable to conceal the clear and buffed up muscular limbs, and the skin that was exposed exuded a metallic gloss.

Tightly clutching the Heavy Vibrosaber in his hands, the bricks underneath his feet started to crack with "Crack Crack" noise as the fragments flew everywhere. The speed of cracking soared to the limit as the Heavy Vibrosaber drew a black stream, bursting forth with an indomitable aura that could even behead dragons and tigers as it ruthlessly hacked down!

Looking at his clenched teeth and ferocious and sinister appearance, it seemed as though this strike—

could even behead Buddha!

"Woosh!"

The Heavy Vibrosaber was truly too fast; surprisingly it burst forth with a howling sound as though the flying sword was galloping. With the flash of the black stream, flesh, tendons, bones were all cut one by one, as though it was sweeping through a piece of tofu; it was not hindered whatsoever!

"Puff!"

The Armored Snapping Turtle's humongous brain flew high into the sky, while blood like a fountain spurted as high as a two or three floored building, giving off the impression of a towering crimson tree that had suddenly appeared and withered soon after.

Its four sharp claws continued to shake, while the body, after losing its head, heavily fell down. Its towering iron tail struggled for a long while; however, it was unable to brush even half a hair of Li Yao, and finally, it helplessly crashed into the ground where it convulsed for a moment before it stopped moving.

The Armored Snapping Turtle's head slowly rolled over to Li Yao's feet. It still wasn't dead, gradually its turbid eyes filled with an intense surprise.

Until now, the middle-rank Demon Soldier still could not understand how it would so easily lose its life against such a weak human.

If it was a high-level Refinement Stage cultivator or Foundation Building cultivator; it could still resign itself to the destiny.

However, it died under the hands of a low-level cultivator who was weaker than itself; it was unwilling!

"Hum..."

The Armored Snapping Turtle powerlessly wailed. Its mouth weakly opened and closed as it grimaced in pain at Li Yao.

Li Yao faintly smiled and unsheathed the saber as he picked up the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon and ammunition box before reloading and raising the gun to his chest.

The Armored Snapping Turtle finally realized what this "weak" human planned to do; its gray yellow eyes bloomed with a sliver of a panic-stricken and pleading look.

In front of Li Yao, this brutal demon beast even yielded, surrendered, and pleaded for mercy.

Li Yao gazed coldly as the six thick barrels were jabbed completely at the center of its flat end. Li Yao had exerted so much power that barrels were pushed half an inch inside.

Half of the face of the Armored Snapping Turtle was deeply indented, and its eyes that were closest to the barrels madly quivered as tears flowed out from fear.

Li Yao squeezed the trigger before a series of suppressed explosion resounded and the head of Armored Snapping Turtle exploded into pieces!

"Beep!"

"Beep Beep Beep Beep Beep Beep Beep Beep!"

The mini camcorder strapped on Li Yao's shoulder had completely recorded the entire battle process and had promptly transmitted it to the Wasteland Battle Network.

After the super large scale crystal processor had analyzed and computed, he soon received many credits.

In addition to cleaning a large part of the safe zone, he had killed an Armored Snapping Turtle that was obviously stronger than him alone, for which he was rewarded with bonus credits.

A series of crisp and sweet "Beeps" signified that hundreds of credits had fallen into his pocket.

Licking his lips, Li Yao happily started calculating.

"If I could earn 200 to 300 credits daily, would I not be able to earn 10,000 credits in one month?"

"Last semester, I painstakingly tossed around doing all sorts of things for half a year, and yet could only earn 1,000 points. I had never thought that by just carrying out a mission, hunting demon beasts, I would be finished in just one month!"

"Sure enough, combat is still the best, I have not only accumulated experience, I can earn a huge number of credits as well!"

Of Course, Li Yao also knew that as this beast tide, fortunately, erupted in the middle of the city, so that everyone had no choice but to fight in the streets, sparing him from many possibilities to fight a lot of Demon Soldiers.

In most cases, the beast tide would appear outside the city, and, as long as crystal warships were mobilized and carried out a wanton and indiscriminate bombing, it would soon be resolved.

Whereas, a wanton and indiscriminate bombing was often unable to deal with Demon General, Demon King level demon beasts. At this moment, he was unable to deal with "high-rank Demon Soldiers," and those demon beasts who were proficient in concealing techniques.

Therefore, he, even more so, had to be vigilant every second, while taking advantage of the fact that many Demon Soldiers were still on the ground; he must madly kill and rake in the credits!

Suddenly, a faint red silhouette quickly flickered far away, which had been very keenly captured by Li Yao.

His eyes lit up as he loudly let out cries and cheers, and again started rushing while carrying the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon.

Nearby, Zhao Tianchon gradually turned his head expressionlessly, taking a glance at Lu Tieshan.

"Why are you looking at me?"

Lu Tieshan complained as though he had suffered from injustice, "My words were ‘Wow, there is an Armored Snapping Turtle in front of us, it has a thick shell and a terrifying defense, Li Yao, first you should use a heavy fire to suppress it a bit,’ didn't you hear as well?! I only ask him to suppress!"

"Your suppression can go to hell!"

Zhao Tianchong clenched his teeth: "The last few demon beasts, that had all been 'suppressed' by him were suppressed to ashes. If this goes on, all the credits will be sweep clean. We, two dignified experts of Hidden Dragon Hall, the strongest freshmen of Iron Fist Club and Chaos Edge Hall, would have to eat the ashes left behind his ass!"

"Why the hell are you still stunned, let's move quickly! If not, even the 'Flame-Spotted Leopard' will be blasted into ashes within half a minute!"

Chapter 176: Let’s Do It Big!

Chapter 176: Let’s Do It Big!

Amid the bloody battles, time flew quickly.

The demon beasts numbered too many. Although demon beasts like Gold Armored Saber Mantis and Armored Snapping Turtle were few, common demon beasts numbered in the hundreds. Their destructive power was still terrifying.

Often, everyone would wake in the early morning and embark the military crystal tanks into the city, where they would search for small beast tides and begin high-speed hunting.

At sundown, they would once again board the crystal tanks and return to the heavily guarded temporary campsite set up in the outskirts for maintenance and repairs.

Every day, everyone would hunt a couple dozen demon beasts.

Whereas ruthless figures like Li Yao, Zhao Tianchong, and Lu Tieshan would hunt hundreds of ordinary demon beasts, there were a few low-level Demon Soldiers and one or two middle-rank Demon Soldiers as well.

Under the high-speed combat, for a week or so, everyone had forgone the immaturity which they possessed when they had just entered the campus.

In contrast, Li Yao and the others were even shrouded in a faint sinister air, giving off the impression of veterans that had undergone hundreds of battles. Even though their level had not significantly improved, amid the combat their battle force, on the other hand, was madly soaring every second.

Li Yao, Zhao Tianchong, and Li Tieshan, these three were regarded as the cream of the crop of the freshmen, and gradually worked out a set of effective team tactics.

Every time they encountered a demon beast with a thick defense, Li Yao would take the lead and suppress it with heavy fire, while Zhao Tianchong, with his ghost-like body art, would wander around and attack, and Li Tieshan's Devil Fists were quite aggressive and acted as the head-on attacker.

When Li Yao had completed the fire suppression task, he could similarly rely on the Heavy Vibrosaver to carry out powerful attacks at the flank.

Under this "Iron Triangle" offense, a vast majority of middle-rank Demon Soldiers could be easily killed. Whereupon, with the bonus of "leapfrog hunting", the credits of the three madly soared.

In the evening, if there was an opportunity to board the crystal tank to return to the campsite, there were even more difficult tasks awaiting Li Yao.

He would slow down the battle videos shot during the day and playback while pondering the inadequacies during the fight. Following which, he would use his super computational ability to improve himself.

At present, Li Yao still didn't have any abstruse saber method. After pondering for a long while, he simply disregarded any need of a saber method; as long as he could calculate the shortest and most direct trajectory for its blade edge to cut the demon beast at fastest speed, it would the most suitable saber method for him.

"For this strike, by bending the shoulder outward by 7.5 degrees and raising the wrist slightly by 1.3 degrees, the blade edge will cut into the Armored Snapping Turtle's neck with the shortest path as well as the fastest speed, and the time will also shorten by 0.13 second. Okay, next time I will do so!"

Watching the battle video frame by frame, Li Yao nervously analyzed and calculated, at the same time he also drew motion trajectories and human structures one after another and listed a couple dozen dazzling formulas.

If an ignorant looked at the diagrams for the first time, he would think that he was solving some kind of complex mathematical problems.

After analyzing the video, if Li Yao still had the time, he would borrow some the common maintenance magical equipment at the campsite and help his fellow students maintain their equipment.

Amid the intense combat, every sword and saber would cut through over hundreds of demon beasts bones. Even if the equipment wasn't wrecked, its edges would crack, array glyphs would corrode, its structure would become fragile...these kinds of damages would definitely exist and the equipment must go through maintenance for it to be used again.

Li Yao wasn't repairing just any kind of equipment; he only repaired saber-type magical equipment that was sharp only on one side.

After experiencing multitudes of fights, he came to realize how ridiculously had he spent his winter vacation.

Any kind of equipment had hundreds of performance parameters and methods of use, for which a thorough in-depth study was required; even after a year or two, he may still not be proficient.

Whereas during the winter vacation, he actually modified eighteen weapons in one deep breath and also felt amazingly proud, believing how awesome he was.

Now it seemed that the magical equipment he modified had too many parameters that were flashy but had no substance; much of the effort was utilized in wrong places. His fellow students who willingly bought them at 30 to 40% higher than the original price had been truly swindled by him.

Fortunately, Li Yao had found the problem quickly and completely dispelled his unrealistic fantasy, treating himself as an ordinary 5th level Refinement Stage refiner and prepared to first clearly research the characteristics of saber-type magical equipment diligently to become a saber expert!

He helped his fellow students maintain their sabers and at very low cost. Earning the credits was secondary; the most important thing was to thoroughly research these damaged sabers by reversing the source of the destruction of these sabers and, thus, deeply understanding the characteristics of the sabers.

As far as Li Yao was concerned, those damaged sabers were like corpses, and he was performing autopsies.

Once he had performed autopsies on hundreds of thousands of saber corpses, his understanding for the saber-type magical equipment's structure and characteristics would absolutely be as clear as the sun and the moon.

Just like this, during the day he, Zhao Tianchong and Li Tieshan would form an Iron Triangle and constantly venture into the depths of the city, where they would pave a path filled with so much bloodshed, to the point that even the pestles could float. At the end of the day, they would be utterly exhausted.

At night, Li Yao would study the combat videos over and over again, to improve his shortest and fastest saber methods, becoming faster and stronger.

Late at night, while the others were completely tired and asleep, he would instead dismantle, repair, and maintain damaged sabers of all kinds of shapes and sizes with red eyes.

Vibrosabers, Flamesabers, Chainsabers, Long Sabers, Short Sabers, Daggers...dozens of saber-type common magical equipment available on the market, he would disassemble all of them several hundred times till his body had formed an instinct and he could completely disassemble and maintain them with closed eyes, or even while he was half-awake and half-asleep.

Only until now, he very meticulously began the second modification of his Heavy Vibrosaber.

However, this time, he was completely different as compared to the time during the winter vacation. Various advanced materials and complex array glyphs were piled in the corner of his brain, one by one.

Li Yao had a new understanding of the structure of the original magical equipment. He knew that these basic magical equipment had been repeatedly modified and sharpened by Master Refiners over the years; many performance parameters, which seemed to have been elevated, turned out to be a clumsy sleight of hand. It was like painting a snake with feet.

This time, all he did was thickened the front end of the saber blade, increased the weight, adjusted the center of gravity in accordance with his own characteristics.

While at the same time, he used the hand forging and tempering technique of the Hundred Smelting Clan from forty millenniums ago, altering the smooth edge of the blade into a slightly zigzag shape, increasing the overall destructive power while cutting.

The overall length of the saber had also been increased by 17.7 centimeters.

After the modification was finished, the overall weight had increased by 12.55%, which was suitable for someone with amazing physical attributes like his.

Under the high-speed slash, the jagged blade edge would emit a "Zoo Zoo!" howl, as though even the wind had been overtaken by the saber and sliced to death, giving out sad and shrill cries.

Therefore, Li Yao named this Super Heavy Vibrosaber "Windcutter"!

With Windcutter in his hand, Li Yao's killing intent became more intense. Since he could not rely on crafting magical equipment to fish out 30,000 credits, he must increase the efficiency of killing the demon beasts.

Unfortunately, along with the progress on the battlefield, the demon beast on the ground became fewer and fewer. After having been repeatedly searched, the suburbs had been cleaned completely; only a few demon beasts were lurking in the high-rise district where they made a last-ditch effort amid the ruins.

These demon beasts didn't dare to flee underground, for an even more intense contest was taking place there.

The underground battlefield belonged to Building Foundation Stage cultivators and Demon Generals, and even the Core Formation Stage cultivators and Demon Kings had taken up the stage, making them unable to easily step foot in.

The large-scale street fighting had already ended; all the civilians had been rescued, and the war had come to an end.

As for the remnants, they were still making a last-ditch effort at the center of the city. They were absolutely the most aggressive, most cunning, and the most frightening existence among the demon beasts.

If any low-level cultivator rashly rushed to the center of the city, he would only become a feast for the demon beasts.

Consequently, a majority of low-level cultivators turned their steps towards home.

Following which, the powerhouses of human and demon beasts began small scale searching, hiding, hunting, and anti-hunting contests.

For the demon beasts who were pushed into a corner, this was the final rush of madness!

0500 in the morning of the 27th day after the beast tide outbreak...

Li Yao, taking advantage of first light, was wiping the Windcutter with all his concentration; suddenly, he heard someone speaking outside the campsite.

Most of the juniors had returned to the institute, while the seniors and the others weren't at the campsite. Ding Lingdang and like professors, who were in Building Foundation Stage and above, were hunting high-level demon beasts under the ground. The campsite was empty, and thus, any sound was extremely clear.

He happened to hear Zhao Tianchon say with surprise.

"Form a team?"

"Ma Jian, you are a firearm cultivator who is proficient in 'gun fighting technique'. Among the freshman of the Federation's First Military College, you can also be counted as one of the top experts. You have a strong charisma. Yet, you can't even gather a few members?"

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao opened the curtain to look, where he saw Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan speaking to three youths dressed in gray urban camouflage.

Among the three youths were two males and a female; all of them were approximately in their twenties and had bright piercing eyes, which gave off the impression of six searchlights.

With every action of their bodies, the patterns of the camouflage dress would also happen to change, giving a bit of stealth effect.

In addition, the three also carried multitudes of firearms.

The youth called Ma Jiao had a moderate build and carried an assault rifle. The other boy had a tall and stalwart build, lush hair, and carried a heavy machine gun. Whereas the female could be said to be far from being beautiful. She had a ponytail and her face was spotted with freckles. Two pistols hung on her waist and she also carried a rectangular case. God knows what kind of weapon was inside.

In this beast tide outbreak, students and teachers of all Nine Elite Universities came to participate in the battle. The largest participation came from the Grand Desolate War Institution and the Federation's First Military College.

The Grand Desolate War Institution was closest to the Verdant Tarn City and also had the Combat Department, a traditional combat course.

While the Federation's First Military College specifically fostered cultivators for the army. In the state of war, of course, it was duty-bound to participate.

Ma Jiao nodded and spoke with each word as fast as a firing bullets:

"Zhao Tianchong, we are old rivals and are well aware of each other's strength; I'm not going to speak nonsense!"

"Just like your Grand Desolate War Institution has a credit system and you will be awarded credits after the completion of the mission, our Federation's First Military College will reward handsomely with a higher amount of battle merits."

"However, only some shrimp soldiers and crab generals are left in the city's outer ring now. How much benefit can we actually obtain by killing a few common demon beasts daily?"

"Therefore, I wanted to take advantage of the end of the beast tide outbreak and head to the center of the city. Let’s. Do. It. Big!"

Chapter 177: So You're That Monstrous Genius?

Chapter 177: So You're That Monstrous Genius?

"Whoosh!"

Ma Jiao raised his wrist and a 3D blueprint of the city was projected from his crystal processor. An area full of high-rises was enlarged.

"Gold Phoenix Road is the financial street of Verdant Tarn City. There are high-rises on two sides of the road and interlinked walkways in the middle of the buildings. Underground, there are four crystal rail train lines passing through, extending in all directions. The shape is very complicated."

"This is the last stronghold for the demon beasts on the surface. Countless powerful demon soldiers lie in wait on the two sides of Gold Phoenix Road. This shall be the stage where we display our skills!"

"You want to go to Gold Phoenix Road?"

Zhao Tianchong's pupils suddenly contracted.

The financial district was certainly the last stronghold of the demon beasts of the surface. A lot of powerful demon beasts were congregated there. Even high-level demon soldiers were likely to exist. The danger was extremely high.

Of course, the likelihood of getting school credits and battle achievements was greatest in the financial district.

"You guys of the Federation’s First Military College haven't formed a team with your senior students?" asked Zhao Tianchong.

Ma Jiao bluntly replied with a faint smile.

"Of course we have senior students, but most of them aren't willing to form a team with us, freshmen. Even if someone is willing to take us to Gold Phoenix Road and kill demon beasts, they would take the bulk of the kills. We would have to split the few left overs. Why should we do that? It would be better to find a few powerful freshmen to go killing demon beast with and split the gains equally!"

Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan glanced at each other and nodded in secret.

Ma Jiao's words were correct. To form a team with powerful senior students would guarantee their safety to a large degree, but most senior students weren't willing to bring newbies to the battlefield where danger lurks on all side. The seniors would feel disdain for the newbies over the burden.

Even if someone was willing to take them, the distribution of combat achievements after killing the demon beast wouldn't be advantageous towards the students of the low grades.

After all, the seniors were strong. They would certainly kill most of the demon beasts. The lower grade students wouldn't be able to do well. They would only give moral support from the side and cheer the seniors on.

What was the point of that?

Ma Jiao saw the aura of flames within the eyes of these two. He knew he had moved them and he spoke emotionally and chuckled.

"Zhao Tianchong. You and I met each other in the Limit Challenge Competition. It was what I considered to be a life or death fight for several rounds. You should know my strength."

"This fellow student, Bei Jingjing, is a first class sniper. We also have our fellow student Chunyu Peng. He is the best heavy fire power user. By your side is Lu Tieshan from the Devil Fist Sect. I've heard rumors about him. He is an outstanding close-combat expert."

"We five are the cream of the crop of freshmen from our various universities. We have long distance firepower and we have close combat killing ability. If we form a team, we will absolutely be able to break through Gold Phoenix Road. What do you say?"

Zhao Tianchong swept a gaze at Lu Tieshan. The later whispered into his ear.

"How's this Ma Jiao's power?"

Zhao Tianchong nodded gently.

"He's very powerful. In the Limit Challenge Competition, I was almost knocked out by him several times. In the end, his score was only lower than mine by three points!"

Lu Tieshan's eyes flared.

"That's quite decent. Even though we had Li Yao's heavy suppressive fire in the past, in the end, he's not a professional gunman. We have to exert a lot of effort to handle long-range demon beasts. It is because of this that we haven't been able to enter dangerous areas amassed with demon beasts. Right now, there are three powerful gunmen. It should be easy to charge into Gold Phoenix Road, right?"

Zhao Tianchong thought for a long while before raising his head and speaking.

"Ma Jiao, there aren't any problems for us to team up. However, we still have one more member. Everyone must go together, otherwise, we won't go."

"Oh, your Grand Desolate War Institution still has another amazing freshmen?"

Ma Jiao eyebrows cocked up. He was a bit surprised.

However, based on the meaning behind Zhao Tianchong's words, this freshman should be quite the decent expert.

If so, Ma Jiao wouldn't mind.

These firearms cultivators were experts in long distance combat, but they had problems once high-level demon beasts broke through their defensive force.

Therefore, in the midst of battle, they needed protection from sword cultivators and body practitioners.

The Federation’s First Military College also had a combat department, but it was a long way from the Grand Desolate War Institution's combat department.

This was also another reason why Ma Jiao didn't recruit his classmates, seeking to form a team with Zhao Tianchong instead.

If it was a close combat expert on the level of Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan, Ma Jiao would naturally welcome him!

But for some reason, Zhao Tianchong's expression was a bit warped. He coughed for a while and spoke.

"He's not of the combat department. He's a freshman of the refining department."

"Refining Department?"

Ma Jiao and the three others were stupefied on the spot. The looked at each other, "The Grand Desolate War Institution still has a Refining Department? Oh, I remember now. It seems like they do. I saw some news about them online last year. Apparently, an accident happened in your Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department. Several people died."

"But why the heck should we bring on a student of the refining department? To help us maintain magical equipment? We won't need it. This operation won't last for a very long time. At most, it'll take a day and a night. As soon as the situation goes bad, we will retreat. The wear and tear on our magical equipment won't be too critical. Also, we can do the simpler maintenance ourselves!"

"That's right. Bringing an extra support member is just an extra burden. We will need to split our gains with him when we kill demon beasts. Do we have to bring him on?"

The female sniper Bei Jingjing spoke coldly.

The buff and sturdy firepower user, Chunyu Peng, was nodding his head over and over.

Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan were all young geniuses of the north with quite the reputation. They had heard rumors of them. They were assured by the power of Grand Desolate War Institution's Combat Department. Therefore, they were willing to team up with them.

But a freshman of the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department?

What was the point of bringing such a person?

Bluntly speaking, what if they encountered a high-level demon beast and had brought along such a burden. Everyone wouldn't be able to escape!

Lu Tieshan saw the doubtful expression on these three faces. He hurried to explain.

"Even though he is a student of the refining department, he acts as the role of a heavy firepower user on our team."

It was better if he didn't explain, for this explanation caused the three to laugh. Ma Jiao could not recover from his laughter.

"It can't be. Do you still want to bring on your on heavy firepower user when forming a team with us firearms cultivators? I must have heard wrong, or have you misspoken?"

The firepower user, Chunyu Peng, cracked a smile. He slapped the heavy gun on his waist and spoke in a low and muffled voice.

"The Flaming Python Model 7 Heavy Machine Gun is the most popular standard heavy machine gun in the federation. Its firepower is the most ferocious. Its recoil is the strongest.

A typical person wouldn't be able to control it at all. A firearms cultivator whose strength is on the weaker side won't chose this model. What do you think? Do you still believe we're lacking in firepower? That you still need to bring on your on heavy firepower user?"

Ma Jiao didn't want to make the atmosphere too awkward. He explained as well.

"You two., it's not that we look down on your classmate. Since we of the Federation’s First Military College are bringing three people. You’re wanting to bring three people of your own is very normal. If you randomly brought a close-combat classmate from your combat department, we wouldn't mind, but you're bringing a freshman from the refining department, and he's acting as a heavy firepower user. There's no need for this, right?"

Ma Jiao pointed at Chunyu Peng, "This classmate of mine comes from a military family. He starting shooting at the age of five. He is absolutely the best firepower user of the freshmen of the Federation’s First Military College. Just having him is enough!"

Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan coughed dryly. They swept a gaze at the Flaming Python Model 7 Heavy Machine Gun in Chunyu Peng's hands.

Chunyu Peng felt their gazes and chuckled. He swiveled the Flaming Python Model 7 in a demonstration and laughed:

"What do you think?"

"A typical person would use the Flaming Python Model 6 at most. To be able to use the Model 7, outside of a powerful genius such as me... only strong cultivators at the high-level Refinement Stage and above can use it!"

"You guys have probably never seen this fellow let out its rage. It’s simply a metal behemoth when the bullets explode out. It's like a raging, burning, and flaming python. It can absolutely swallow everything in its path. It’s super ferocious, super savage!"

"I'm not looking down on your heavy firepower user. What gun does he use? Flaming Python Model 4? At most, a Model 5? That's nothing!"

Lu Tieshan spoke.

"Our heavy firepower user doesn't use a Flaming Python."

The three people's disdain grew as they heard his words.

The Flaming Python Heavy Machine Gun was the most common and standardized heavy machine gun for individual soldiers of the federation; its firepower was the most ferocious.

A powerful firearms cultivator of the Building Foundation Stage would obviously have more ferocious options.

Yet, for the intermediate level Refinement Stage cultivators, if they wanted to pursue fire power, they would have to choose the Flaming Python Heavy Machine Gun.

For someone who didn't even dare to use the Flaming Python Heavy Machine Gun, how 'heavy' could this heavy firepower user be?

Zhao Tianchong sighed and commented.

"Forget it. The more I explain, the messier it gets. Li Yao, just take out all of your equipment and chat then. There is this huge chance to sweep in credits. Are you interested?"

Of course, Li Yao was interested.

Ever since he heard the words "Team Up", Li Yao began to meticulously calibrate his equipment. He just finished doing so just now.

On his hip was the Windcutter Saber. On his shoulder was the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon. On his back was the heavy ammunitions crate. His waist was wrapped full of crystal bombs. Li Yao lifted the curtain and walked out, neither slowly nor urgently.

"..."

The three firearms cultivators of the Federation’s First Military College stared, stunned at the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon on Li Yao's shoulder. They were all stupefied.

Especially Chunyu Peng, who used the Flaming Python Model 7 Heavy Machine Gun. His face flushed red.

Fortunately, he had a lot of hair and his beard stubble was dense. No one could really tell.

After being stunned for a long time, Chunyu Peng stuttered.

"It's a lie. It's a lie, right? A single soldier using a Six Barrel Rotary Cannon? Is this a freshman or a powerful Building Foundation Stage cultivator!?"

Zhao Tianchong turned on his mini crystal processor and selected a combat recording of Li Yao.

The roaring sounds of explosions suddenly came from the camp, as well as the miserable shrieks of demon beasts.

The three firearms cultivators gathered their heads together. They looked in absolute silence. Cold sweat seeped from their forehead.

Of course, from the perspectives of these three firearms cultivators with elite gun fighting techniques, Li Yao's gun techniques were completely amateur.

However, the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon was never a weapon that focused on accuracy. Just based on Li Yao alone, with his astonishing monstrous strength, he was able to pour out torrents of a volcanic eruption-like firepower to suppress the demon beast so it couldn't even raise its head. This was enough to dominate the entire field.

Needless to say, after completing the task of suppressing, Li Yao even brandished his Heavy Vibrosaber to pounce on his prey. He unleashed quite the savage close-combat ability.

He could fight both afar and close. He could both strike and carry. Also, he was of the Refining Department. He had above average magical equipment maintenance abilities.

This was simply a hybrid-type genius of every combat squad's dreams. No wonder Zhao Tianchong wanted to bring this guy along!

The three people glanced at each other; their six eyes flared with light.

Though there was excitement in Ma Jiao's eyes, there was also increasing suspicion.

He cocked his head and thought for a long time before suddenly having his eye bulge round. Everyone all jumped up and pointed to Li Yao with a shriek.

"You're name is Li Yao? Are you from Floating Spear City?"

Li Yao was stunned, but he nodded.

Ma Jiao's expression grew even more amazed. His voice was even trembling.

"How to say it? In the Limit Challenge Competition, there was a monstrous genius who bombarded Gao Ye's command center to kingdom come... That was you?"

Chapter 178: Killing Their Way Into the Financial District

Chapter 178: Killing Their Way Into the Financial District

"He's the one who got rid of Gao Ye!"

In this moment, even the female sniper, Bei Jingjing, who was rather callous just before, shirked. She looked at Li Yao with incredulous eyes.

Gao Ye was the brightest star among the freshmen of the Federation’s First Military College.

Even though he was a freshman of the Commanding Department for only half a year, his terrifying computational and commanding ability was absolutely on the level of the senior students.

In many matches under the command of Gao Ye, Ma Jiao, Chunyu Peng, Chunyu Peng, and other freshmen were able to be a match for the strong. They forcefully held against the stormy attacks of the higher grade students and even won a few lucky times. They were praised to be the strongest freshmen of the Federation’s First Military College in the past ten years!

Ma Jiao and the others did not merely admire Gao Ye's commanding ability; they worshiped it. They thought of him as an invincible commanding genius.

One time, during one of their drinking parties, Gao Ye, in complete sorrow, told them of how he had once tasted defeat by the hands of a peer named Li Yao. It was a crushing defeat. He had been efficiently 'decapitated'!

Gao Ye and the others were extremely shocked at the time. The name Li Yao was firmly branded in their minds.

One man had penetrated deep into enemy territory. He laid in wait in the middle of the enemy headquarters for several hours and seized a moment to create chaos. He used this chaos to place a bomb, blasting several high commanders and powerful experts to kingdom come...

People who were able to do all of this would absolutely be known as a Soldier King in the military college!

After hearing the story of Gao Ye, Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan were all a bit stunned.

They only knew Li Yao to be an upstart from the southeast who was accepted into Grand Desolate War Institution due to great efforts of recommendation from Ding Lingdang. They never knew of Li Yao's magnificent history.

Infiltrating enemy lines solo, blasting the enemy command center, and getting rid of several key enemy personnel in a single breath?

That must be an exaggeration!

The two slaughtered their way out from the carnage of the Limit Challenge Competition. They knew full well the difficulty of the competition.

Everything Li Yao did really made them inferior.

The two glanced at each other. Their faces were a bit feverish. Their hearts were filled with shame.

The two were even arrogant after they had just entered the Hidden Dragon Hall. They looked down on Li Yao's kind, a top scorer of the entrance exams, with disdain. They believed him to be a loser of the Limit Challenge Competition and he wasn't that amazing.

They never thought that Li Yao would be this powerful, yet he hid it so well!

Ma Jiao noticed the two's astonishment. He exclaimed.

"Fellow student Li Yao, we heard a lot about you from Gao Ye back in the Federation’s First Military College. Not only did you penetrate enemy lines by yourself in the Limit Challenge Competition, you singlehandedly got rid of the enemy command center. Also, in a state where your spiritual root had yet to awaken, you slew a doped up and mutated, large-eyed ape!"

"According to post analysis, this large-eyed ape's strength very likely reached the level of a low-level demon soldier. The news was simply astonishing!"

"The heck?"

Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan all felt their scalp go numb. Ice cold chills went down their spines.

His spiritual root had yet to awaken; he had been an ordinary person at the time. Yet, he was able to slay a low-level demon soldier?

This kind of fellow had been standing by their side all this time. They even used to look down on him. They wanted to easily put him down, too?

Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan let out a breath of relief, one with a new lease on life.

They were convinced. The two accepted Li Yao whole heartedly.

Li Yao was a bit embarrassed.

While certainly he had infiltrated to the enemy headquarters and blasted them all to kingdom come by himself, he didn't kill the mutated large-eyed ape by himself. He mainly relied on Zheng Dongming's Demonic Blood Cannon to bombard the large-eyed ape which already had heavy injuries. Only then was he able to succeed, luckily.

However, there wasn't a need to explain the truth of the matter to others.

Li Yao changed topics and asked.

"What kind of benefits can we get from infiltrating Gold Phoenix Road?"

Zhao Tianchong replied.

"This will be dependent on our performance and our luck. Gold Phoenix Road is the last stronghold of the surface-level demon beasts. There are quite a few powerful demon beasts amassed there. Getting rid of these demon beasts will allow us to receive a lot of school credits and clearing an area out to be completely safe would nab us more credits. If we're lucky, we'll be able to get rid of several hundred low-level demon soldiers and several dozen intermediate-level demon soldiers; we can wipe clean all the demon beasts of a single high-rise. We might be able to nab several thousand credits in one go!"

"One mission can yield several thousand school credits?"

Li Yao's eyes flared more intensely than those of the three firearms cultivators. A substantial flame erupted forth from the depths of his pupils. The Heavy Vibrosaber on his waist buzzed in its scabbard. It couldn't wait to be unsheathed and feed on blood!

Though such an operation was bound to be dangerous.

But so what?

Everyone came out to cultivate. They never thought about going back with their tails between their legs!

...

Gold Phoenix Road was worthy of being called the last stronghold for demon beasts on the surface.

Here the high rises were in great number. There were many places to hide in the underground network. Even if warships were used to raze the surface to the ground, it would be impossible to eliminate all of the demon beasts.

The remaining beasts were able to survive the intense battles up till now. These last demon beasts were savage, malevolent, heinous, and insidious.

Normally they would hide among the ruins of buildings. It was as if they had disappeared into thin air.

As soon as they sensed the scent of a human, they would charge out like a flood. Various demon beast would be mixed together, long-distance and close-range types.

Li Yao and the others encountered three waves odd demon beasts within an hour of entering Gold Phoenix Road. Every wave contained over fifty demon beasts.

The wave in front of them contained over a hundred demon beasts.

Most of them were trash Green-Skinned Saber Mantises, but Black Armored Saber Mantises were mixed in. There were even two Green-Skinned Saber Mantises watching from the back lines.

There was something more troublesome in the darkness behind the hundreds of Saber Mantises. It seemed there was a long-range attacking demon beast lying in wait. A dangerous aura that felt like needles was coming from it. It caused everyone to feel ill at ease, their eyes flickering to corners.

"B-B-B-B-B-B-B-Boom!"

Li Yao, Ma Jiao, and Chunyu Peng, these three people sprayed like mad, their bullet barrage was like rain.

The Green-Skinned Saber Mantises could be killed with a few rounds if they didn't withdraw into their carapaces. So they simply exploded when they were bombarded with Li Yao's Six Barrel Rotary Cannon or Chunyu Peng's Flaming Python Model 7 Heavy Machine Gun. They turned into cyan pastes of flesh.

Even though the Green-Skinned Saber Mantises didn't have that much strength, there were Green-Skinned Saber Mantises and Black Armored Saber Mantises mixed together.

They used the Green-Skinned Saber Mantises as a screen to quietly press closer to the crowd of humans.

At this time, they had to rely on Zhao Tianchong's and Lu Tieshan's expert close combat fighting skill. Sniper Bei Jingjing took out two pistols as well, opening fire with both of them. She acted as close-range firepower support.

Li Yao immediately discovered what he was lacking, being mixed with two expert firearms cultivators.

He used the powerful and mighty Six Barrel Rotary Cannon. The two used a Flaming Python Model 7 Heavy Machine Gun and an assault rifle.

However, he was the weakest when it came to killing ability.

He needed to concentrate fire for seven or eight seconds to completely kill a Black Armored Saber Mantis.

Yet Chunyu Peng only needed two or three seconds to take it down with his Flaming Python Model 7 Heavy Machine Gun.

Even Ma Jiao, who used an assault rifle, used no more than three seconds.

Bei Jingjing, who danced with her pistols, would occasionally land a headshot against a Black Armored Saber Mantis, killing it.

"Clearly my gun is the most powerful. Why is my power the weakest?"

Before Li Yao could start mulling over this, a sharp wind assaulted them.

Luckily, everyone had made preparations ahead of time. They wore the thickest of body armors, not minding how cumbersome they were. The body armor detected danger and the crystals upon them suddenly flared, releasing a powerful spiritual energy shield.

Humm, an intense vibration diffused around the shield. A black poisonousness needle pushed firmly through the shield, though the speed of it slowed a little.

Li Yao cocked his head. The poisonousness needle swept past his cheek. It penetrated the earth with a ding, digging three meters deep.

"It's a Poison Dart Scorpion! Sniper!"

Ma Jiao yelled out.

Bei Jingjing squinted her eyes and retreated to the back of the group. She went into a crouching position and took the long package on her back into her hands. She removed the cloth to reveal an ash gray sniper rifle. Profound and complicated spiritual lines spiraled all around its body. It seemed to be an artisan sculpted work.

Bei Jingjing mumbled to herself. An aura that could be seen with the naked eye seemed to appear around her body. She then chanted at lighting speed, the telepathy spiraling around the barrel of the gun.

Her eyes flared brighter and brighter. Though it was daytime, her eyes were as clear as stars in the darkness of night.

When the brightness reached its pinnacle, she fired a round into the skies ahead, seemingly not aiming at all.

"Whoosh!"

An azure streak came roaring from the muzzle, rushing straight through the sky.

Li Yao was stunned. This shot was way off its mark, right?

The azure glow made a bizarre curve as it streaked through the air. It actually made a turn and pierced down behind the ruins. Only a bang was heard as purplish black blood gushed into the sky. It dyed all the ruins purplish black.

No poisonous needles were fired over ever since then.

Li Yao was dumbstruck. The Poison Dart Scorpion and the Gold Armored Saber Mantis were the same. They were intermediate-level demon soldiers. Let alone their incredible speed, they possessed impressive defensive strength. They were experts in lying in wait and evading.

Was it actually killed in a single shot by Bei Jingjing?

"The bullet can curve, yet there's still so much power. That's so awesome!"

Compared to these three professional firearms cultivators, Li Yao felt he was just holding onto a flaming rod.

The battle ended half an hour later. Six people sat together performing maintenance.

In the end, Li Yao couldn't help ask.

"Fellow student Ma Jiao, why is it that your might is so strong when you use standard weapons? You’re more amazing than me using my Six Barrel Rotary Cannon. Is it because your guns have been specially modified?"

"And fellow student Bei Jingjing was able to get rid of the Poison Dart Scorpion with a single bullet. I looked at the corpse of the Poison Dart Scorpion just now. It totally exploded. There was not even a shred of flesh bigger than the size of a fist. What kind of bullet can have such strong destructive power and turn?"

Ma Jiao laughed and spoke with pride.

"We use the most common standardized firearms. Though Bei Jingjing sniper bullet is a bit more powerful than normal, it’s still common mass-refined goods. They're nothing special."

"However, we are firearms cultivators, the gun fighting techniques we cultivate are naturally different from those of amateurs."

"Gun fighting techniques?"

Li Yao's curiosity began to rage and burn.

Chapter 179: Fearsome Gun Fighting Technique

Chapter 179: Fearsome Gun Fighting Technique

"That's right, although our battle profession, the 'firearm cultivators,' was created only after the creation of firearms, we can be dated way before that. We can even be dated back to the ancient cultivators' era of forty millenniums ago."

"Our 'gun fighting technique' cultivation is also succeeded from the most orthodox 'Sword Controlling Technique' of the ancient cultivators' era!"

As he mentioned the origin of gun fighting techniques, Ma Jiao's face flushed as he straightened up his spine and spoke.

"We firearm cultivators are also one of the traditional successors of the ancient sword immortals, just like Fellow Student Zhao Tianchong. There isn't any difference; it’s just that what we inherited is different. That's all!"

Zhao Tianchong coldly snorted. Apparently, he didn't agree with Ma Jiao's argument.

However, it was a long-standing controversy in the world of cultivation. Both sides blowing their own trumpet, yet after a couple millenniums, nothing had been cleared. He, too, was disinclined to argue with Ma Jiao.

Whereas the more Li Yao came to hear, the more confused he became.

Firearms, they were pieces of long-range magical equipment that gradually emerged during the late Great Dark Age; they were pieces of equipment that fired bullets with the help of spiritual energy explosions from the crystals, thereby allowing ordinary people, who lacked the strength, to have enough battle force to put up a fight.

Therefore, many cultivators using firearms were deemed weak.

But how was this related to the ancient sword immortals of forty millenniums ago?

Noticing the perplexed look on his face, Ma Jiao slightly smiled and continued:

"Fellow Student Li Yao, I don't know if you have read some of the ancient records in which the ancient sword immortals of forty millenniums ago had a powerful magical equipment called the 'Sword Pill.’ It was usually ingested where it was spiritually refined, and at the most crucial moment, as long as they opened their mouth or snuffled through their nose the sword pill would fly out, whereupon it would transform into a sword aura, which would draw a long rainbow as it took the heads of anyone within a range of 500kms, as easily as picking one’s own pocket?"

Li Yao nodded, "I believe I have."

With Ou Yezi’s powerful memory, how could he not know of a "sword pill" like most common magical equipment of the ancient cultivation world?

For ancient cultivators, the flying sword may be one of their most commonly used magical equipment.

However, the ‘flying sword' was not just one kind of magical equipment at all, but two.

The first type of flying sword looked just like any ordinary long sword; it had an edge, a cross-guard, a hilt, a scabbard, and a blade which was engraved with spirit array glyphs, protected by a mystic glow shining with colors and light, and could unleash thousands upon thousands of magical powers.

This kind of flying sword, on one side, could be used as a means of transportation, allowing the cultivators to step on and ride it; it was nothing to travel 500 kilometers in a day.

On another side, it could also be used as a divine weapon to fight in close quarters; occasionally, it could also be thrown to attack a relatively close enemy.

However, if the enemy was 500 meters away, it was inappropriate to use this kind of flying sword to attack.

First, this kind of flying sword was quite heavy, and it didn't have a sufficient streamlined body, making its flying trajectory very unstable. Also, the speed at which it could be thrown wasn't too high.

If a cultivator was riding the blade and controlling it, it was still alright; however, once there was no one to control it, it could very easily stall and spiral down its path, missing the target and quite possibly tumbling to the ground.

Second, if the distance was too far, there would be too many variables. Such as, if the enemy was powerful or had some kind of magical equipment to attract or absorb the flying sword, the flying sword would be taken away suddenly and quite possibly fired back down its path; wouldn't that be quite embarrassing?

In anecdotal records of Hundred Smelting Clan, Li Yao had also seen a very funny story.

According to which, there was a sword immortal during the ancient era who racked up hardships and used multitudes of heaven and earth treasures to meticulously refine a flying sword. When he fought with an enemy, he shot the flying sword, and sure enough, it was shockingly powerful; with one shot he pierced the enemy in the chest, at his heart.

Unexpectedly, the enemy happened to be ruthless. Upon realizing he was going to die, he clutched the sword's hilt with both hands forcefully, making it impossible for the sword immortal to retrieve the flying sword with his telepathic thoughts, and the enemy before dying blew himself up and ruined most of the flying sword.

Meanwhile, the sword immortal was soon to be surrounded by a large crowd of experts from the enemy's side.

If a divine sword like that was in his hand, the sword immortal could naturally unleash a superb sword technique, and even if he could not win he, at any rate, could still ride the sword and escape into the sky.

However, his hands were empty and even if he wished to escape, he could not. Finally, the sword immortal was surrounded and beaten to death; it was truly miserable to the extreme.

Then, there was a sword immortal who had spent a mountain load of wealth to refine a flying sword, and when he hunted a spirit beast with it the sword, instead of striking the vital point, pierced the rear end of the spirit beast, where it was stuck between the muscles and bones, deadly.

Whereupon, the spirit beast, in a lot of pain, "wailed" as it ran away with the priceless flying sword; it ran and ran...

Precisely because of numerous tragedies like this, cultivators slowly discovered during combat that if they wanted to hurt someone by controlling something, there was really no need to use a flying sword as such a large piece of equipment; in fact, there was no need to have crossguard or hilt, and even the edge of the sword wasn't necessary at all.

Under the heavens, among the various magical powers, there was nothing indestructible, even with all the firmness and hardness any man could achieve; only with speed could one be invincible. When speed is taken to the extreme, even a hair could kill a person. So was there any need for a sharp edge?

Because of this the second type of flying sword, the sword pill, came into existence!

Generally it was just the size of a Longan[1], easy to refine and convenient to carry; furthermore, because it was small in size, it was relatively easy to manipulate with telepathic thoughts. Usually, it was ingested, where it would be refined, and when encountering an enemy, it could be shot in the air where it would be transformed into three-inch sword aura, which could be manipulated using telepathic thoughts and fired, killing the enemy.

Any ordinary sword cultivator could launch the sword pill a couple kilometers; whereas it was a cinch for a first-grade sword immortal to have an attack range of a few dozen kilometers.

In this way, while an enemy was in close-range, the sword cultivator could use the flying sword to fight; while an enemy was in long-range, the sword cultivator could use a sword pill to greet them. It would be alright even if the sword pill missed or was received by the enemy, for the cost of refining was very low. Each sword immortal could carry a few of them and conveniently fire one.

Li Yao was struck with a thought as if he discovered something.

Ma Jiao smiled, "It seems you already understand; the sword controlling technique was precisely the ability to manipulate the sword pills by the ancient sword immortals. We 'firearm cultivators' inherited this very ability of the sword immortals. For ordinary people and an amateur gunman like yourself, bullets are just bullets, nothing more and nothing less, but for us firearm cultivators, the bullets are sword pills!"

Realization suddenly dawned upon Li Yao, he could not help but gasp in astonishment.

In the anecdotes of the Hundred Smelting Clan, he had once read of some powerful sword immortals who could manipulate hundreds of sword pills with one deep breath, forming a sword array that emanated with endless sword auras and could strangle the enemy ruthlessly.

How could the firearm cultivators like Ma Jiao not fire over hundreds of bullets in one deep breath?

Although they could not necessarily fire with power as strong as the ancient sword immortals, if these bullets were sword pills, then it was indeed a terrifying profession!

Upon noticing Li Yao's expressions, Ma Jiao felt prouder and slightly pondered as he muttered to himself, "This is just basic stuff; there is nothing secret about it. If Li Yao had researched before hand, he could have very easily found this from any channel. Telling him about it would not pose any harm; on the contrary, we could have a better relationship. After all, there will be many opportunities for cooperation in the future."

Ma Jiao stretched out three fingers and spoke, "Obviously, powerful firearms cultivators at the Building Foundation Stage and above had the ability to control thousands upon thousands of bullets, these special sword pills; as for the firearms cultivators who had just stepped into the Refinement Stage, they mainly cultivate three kinds of abilities."

"First is the shooting technique."

"The shooting technique of cultivators is not the kind of 'three points in one line, breathing evenly'[2] like a conventional shooting technique, but rather to study how to control the point of impact; so it is about controlling the point of impact of over hundreds of bullets at one point."

Ma Jiao looked around before he dragged a completely mutilated and torn up corpse of a Black Armored Saber Mantis from nearby and spoke, "Fellow Student Li Yao, this Black Armored Saber Mantis was shot by you, and as you can see, its whole body is broken into pieces; your points of impact are scattered in a very large area. The bullet did not strike at one place at all."

Following that, he once again dragged a corpse of a Black Armored Saber Mantis over: "This is the Black Armored Saber Mantis shot by me; as you can see, the points of impact are gathered at one location. All the bullets are basically at the same place."

Li Yao carefully inspected the difference between the two corpses and lightly nodded his head.

Ma Jiao said:

"Rather than hurting ten fingers, it is better to cut one finger off. Although the fire power of the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon is fierce, you are unable to control its points of impact. Every bullet's point of impact is different from the other; it is the equivalent of letting the demon beast bear the destructive force evenly throughout its body, and naturally, the local destructive force can not be increased."

"Whereas we, firearm cultivators, try to control the placement of bullets to ensure that every bullet impacts the locality of the entrance wound. In this way, the injuries will continue to add up, and the destructive force will be concentrated at one point; the power will be greatly enhanced as well."

"Maybe a moment ago you thought Fellow Student Bei Jingjing had fired a headshot with the pistol, but it was, in fact, not one shot but five shots instantaneously. Her speed was so fast that it sounded like one shot, and all the bullets instantly struck the same point. Not to mention the Black Armored Saber Mantises, she would have had the chance to even headshot the Gold Armored Saber Mantis!"

"The Building Foundation Stage and above, those truly powerful firearms cultivators are even able to fire hundreds of bullets instantaneously, and all the bullets will pierce through the same entry wound, giving the impression of just one shot and one entry wound."

"The destructive force it would possess could be imagined!"

Li Yao frowned as he ruminated for a long while before he humbly asked for advice:

"I do understand the reason for concentrating the fire at one point, but the recoil of the firearm is simply too much. Although I am doing all I can to control it, every shot is a spiritual energy explosive shell; as a result, the muzzle will slightly jolt, and the shooting trajectory will slightly deviate.Thus, the resulting points of impact will deviate from the original point of impact. So how do you reduce the recoil?"

Ma Jiao burst into a hearty laughter as he responded:

"The recoil cannot be resolved. With the increase in strength, the firearms cultivator can subsequently use more and more powerful firearms and bullets, and as long as you pursue fire power, it will always have a recoil, and the muzzle will naturally snap back."

"Our idea is not to control the barrel so that the muzzle will be motionless; this way is too stiff, too rigid."

"The right thing to do is perceive the degree of deviation of muzzle after every shot and again calculate the shooting trajectory; then carry out minute tuning in the opposite direction, ensuring that the points of impact remain consistent."

"For instance, if a shot made the muzzle jolt upwards by 0.001 mm, then just press your wrist down bit by bit, so that the muzzle is shifted down by 0.001 mm."

"Of course, this is just the principle. In combat, there are many things to consider, such as the direction of the wind, the change in distance between you and the enemy, your breathing, heartbeat, and the subtle changes in muscle movements; in short, it is ever-changing and inexhaustibly profound."

Li Yao pondered for a moment before his eyes went wide:

"You mean to say that for every shot, you calculate the shooting trajectory again?"

Ma Jiao thought before he nodded and answered:

"Although in combat, it is impossible to calculate every shot; theoretically, it is possible. At present, I can calculate the shooting trajectory per 4.7 shots, for which dealing with ordinary demon soldiers is just about enough."

Li Yao was shocked.

The rate of fire of modern firearms was quite fast; as many as a dozen bullets could be fired per second. That is to say, Ma Jiao can calculate the shooting trajectory once or twice again just every second, and also bear in mind the wind direction, wind speed, and the high-speed movements of the demon beasts.

The amount of calculation he had to do was quite shocking indeed!

However, if he could master this shooting technique, there would be no need for him to calculate once every five shots; even if he could calculate the shooting trajectory once every ten shots, the power of Six Barrel Rotary Cannon would be greatly enhanced.

By then, not to mention middle-rank Demon Soldiers, he would have the chance to blow high-rank Demon Soldiers and even Demon Generals away!

[1] Longan: A fruit from the same family of lychee.

[2] Three points in one line, means to keep the eye, the iron-sight and the target in one line.

Chapter 180: Thunder Palm

Chapter 180: Thunder Palm

When seeing Li Yao’s expression, Ma Jiao knew that he was letting his imagination go wild. Ma Jiao couldn't help laughing as he said:

"Though the theory is short, it isn't easy to truly cultivate it. Incisive understanding of various algorithms is needed, and one must also possess powerful computational ability and hand-mind coordination ability. There's no need for an amateur gunman like yourself to waste too much time in this field. In any case, you're just substituting in as a heavy firepower user for the moment. There isn't a high need for precision when it comes to your task of laying suppressive fire."

Li Yao's heart pounded and throbbed.

He was a refiner. He was no stranger to abstract, profound, and complicated algorithms. His computational ability was also higher than that of a normal close-combat soldier. As for his hand-mind coordination ability...

Under the Super Perceptive State, the grave issue of his hand and mind being uncoordinated had appeared. He had grit his teeth and trained past it quite painfully.

His hand-mind coordination ability absolutely surpassed his peers!

After a short mutter to himself, Li Yao asked:

"Fellow student Ma Jiao. You just said that there are two types of mystical abilities?"

"Not bad, the other two types of mystical abilities are Baptism and Soul Division."

Ma Jiao replied readily:

"The so-called Baptism is using various secret techniques to perform a second refining on an ordinary bullet. It lets the bullet connect with one's spirit, and the most commonly seen baptism is the Blood Baptism. The gunman's blood is used to baptize the bullet, increasing the spirituality of the bullet. Naturally, the gunman comes to have perfect command over the bullet, landing wherever he points."

He paused a bit before explaining further, "However, Blood Baptizing has enormous limitations, because it consumes way too much blood. It's impossible to refine all of your bullets using Blood Baptism, for we fire out hundreds of thousands of bullets a day. If each bullet were to be Blood Baptized, we would die of blood loss before even setting foot on the battlefield."

"Typically speaking, snipers like fellow student Bei Jingjing are more suited to using Blood Baptizing to strengthen the spirituality of their bullets. Every sniper bullet they fire has undergone Blood Baptizing of many years. Their bullets can curve and do all sorts of oddities."

"People like Chunyu Peng and I have slowly baptized a few ammo clips of Blood Bullets. Normally we hate to use them, but in critical moments where our lives are at stake, we will bring them out."

"As for Soul Division, when one opens fire, a strand of the soul is attached to the bullet. It follows with the bullet as the bullet gets fired, increasing the ability to control the bullet. It is much more powerful than typical telepathic manipulation."

"When cultivated to the peak, the bullet becomes equivalent to a clone. This mystical ability is too wonderful for words."

"However, it must be noted that for Soul Division, during the instant the bullet is just about to hit the target, one must perform a 'Soul Retrieval' and retrieve this strand of the soul. Otherwise, when the bullet explodes, this strand of the soul will scatter and dissipate as well, causing great damage to the gunman. If the damage to the enemy is 1000, then the damage to one's self is 800. It's a situation where both sides suffer."

Ma Jiao's words set off a wild surge in the bottom of Li Yao's heart.

Through endless days of bloody battle, he had discovered his weak point of having inferior attack power.

His absolute strength was excessive enough, his burst strength was high enough, and his ability to resist blows was strong enough.

But he didn't have a set of outstanding techniques. He was incapable of completely transforming his strength into destructive power.

This was the reason why he had to go through great amounts of calculations to use his Heavy Vibrosaber and Six Barrel Rotary Cannon; this was his only method to draw out his max destructive power in his current circumstances.

How could he not know just how utterly tiring and cumbersome it was to carry the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon and an entire giant crate of ammunition?

Even though he had enough physical ability to carry all of this, what if he could carry less ammunition? Wouldn't his speed increase?

If he could learn some super basic gun fighting techniques, it was super clear that his combat ability would increase. It was all good, whether it be carrying less ammo or switching to a lighter, more portable firearm. The margin for his tactical options would become much greater!

‘Calculations of the firing trajectory can be slowly tempered on a live battlefield. Dividing out a strand of the soul to control the bullet... this sort of mystical ability sounds difficult to the extreme the instant one hears it. This isn't something that could be learned in a short time. What's more, there's no place to learn it!’

‘What about Blood Baptism, Blood Baptism?’

Li Yao's heart stirred and he was wild with joy.

There were countless different types of Blood Baptism methods in the Hundred Smelting Clan!

The greatest experts of the ancient refiners would take their own blood and essence and assimilate them into their magical equipment. There were even legends of ancient sword forgers who, for the sake of forging swords, jumped into furnaces to forge swords with their bodies.

There were quite a few low level Blood Baptism techniques on the first floor of the Heavenly Refining Tower. Though they weren't sufficient to be used to baptize and strengthen magical equipment, baptizing a few small bullets to slightly strengthen their might should be more than enough, right?

"I've decided that next I will focus on blade techniques, shooting techniques, and even blood baptism techniques in cultivation!"

Li Yao was a refiner. Obviously, in battle, he had to walk the path of a massively equipped man and use all sorts of powerful magical equipment to engage in close-combat slaughter.

Whether it be close-combat magical equipment or long-range magical equipment, he had to be proficient in using them. Only in this way could he display his superiority to the maximum.

"We're heading out. Let's continue to slay the demon beasts!"

They had rested for half an hour. After a small hunting squad had sent a report back to the command center about the current situation and location, they continued to head forward!

"Rumble rumble!"

"Rumble rumble rumble rumble!"

Gold Phoenix Road isn't a street; it's a bustling area where high-rises stand in great numbers. Sounds of explosions and fighting came from all around.

Other hunting squads were engaging in bloody combat.

Everyone knew that this was their last chance. They wasted no second of time to train, sweep the area, and to rack up their meritorious military service!

"Whoosh!"

There weren't many demon beasts left on the surface that possessed anti-air attacks. The armed forces of humanity could boldly fly in the skies above the cities in their flying shuttles and small battleships. They dropped one flickering and glistening metal crate after another down with enormous parachutes appearing above them. The crates swayed as they fell to the ground.

"Bang!"

A large metal crate smashed to the ground not to far away from Li Yao and the others.

Li Yao advanced with large strides. He spread out his hand and pressed against the array glyph slightly infused with a blue glow on the large metal crate.

"Beep Beep!"

The array glyph turned green, a hissing noise sounded, streams of air spouted out from all sides of the metal crate, and the crate slowly opened.

The insides were packed to the brim with high-energy nutrition doses, clean water, ammunition, and close-combat weapons.

"Everyone quickly calm yourselves and replenish your gear. This supply crate is quite decent. They even sent us a hundred Thunder-Palms refined by the Dragon Tiger Sect!"

Li Yao's eyes lit up as he hung twenty Thunder-Palms on his combat vest and stuffed his ammunition box full.

The other people also replenished their ammunition, food, and water. Their original body armor was nearly exhausted of their spiritual energy, so they swapped to new ones.

The six people looked completely new a moment later. They went towards the depths of the Financial District to go killing.

After repelling two parts of the beast tide, they finally reached the core region of Gold Phoenix Road.

Quite a few financial companies had their headquarters here. The signs of banks, financial companies, and insurance companies hung on all the tall and large buildings to either side of them. They could vaguely see the the bustling activity of the past.

In the past, there were people coming and going; this was the center of the city, bustling with activity. Yet, now it had turned into a demon area where the chilly wind came in waves and the ghostly air was dense. The howls of demon beasts sounded out over and over, endlessly lingering in their ears.

Everyone's gazes gradually swept across the large buildings surging with demonic energy.

Explosions, roars, screams, and powerful spiritual energy waves came from some of these buildings. Clearly, some people had gotten here early.

"The most powerful demon beasts must be hiding in these buildings!"

"Which building are we choosing?"

"The bank or the insurance company?"

"Huh? This is..."

The gazes of the six people were simultaneously cast towards a large building. They all felt the powerful demonic energy coming from within.

"So its the stock exchange center!"

"No wonder, the demonic energy is this intense!"

"Wow, the green demonic energy is surging out from the broken windows to congeal into a layer of green miasma, firmly enveloping the entire stock exchange center!"

"There must be a lot of ruthless demon beasts that can kill through underhanded means hibernating within this stock exchange center!"

The six people glanced at each other and nodded their heads at the same time. They rushed into the stock exchange center after uttering low growls.

The first floor of the stock exchange center was a spacious and wide hall. Countless Green-Skinned Saber Mantises and similar demon beasts were gathered here.

These demon beasts' strengths were low. They didn't dare to go out and court death. They could only lie in wait within the large building.

Because they were short on food, they had actually started to kill each other.

Upon entering, Li Yao and the others just so happened to see a weaker Green-Skinned Saber Mantis get killed by its own kind. Seven, eight Green-Skinned Saber Mantises laid on its corpse, eating with great delight.

The Green-Skinned Saber Mantis with stomachs rumbling with hunger weren't willing to let go of their food even when they noticed the intruders. They tore off pieces of meat from the corpse of their companion before shrieking and pouncing onto Li Yao's group.

Li Yao and the others opened fire. Their crossfire was like three scarlet waves that instantaneously engulfed the Green-Skinned Saber Mantises completely, leaving not even dregs.

Upon hearing the gunfire, several hundred Green-Skinned Saber Mantises came rushing down from the second floor. Mixed among them were a few dozen Black Armored Saber Mantises, and at their rear were five Gold Armored Saber Mantises.

"Come then!"

Everyone glanced at each other, took out their Thunder-Palms without the slightest hesitation, and sent them to cleave and smash the skulls of the beast tide.

The Thunder-Palm was a secret equipment of the Dragon Tiger Sect. At first glance, it just looked like a pitch-black and unremarkable metal shell, but it was hiding intensely condensed thunder crystals and even a miniature Five Thunder Punishment Formation.

When it's set off, it would be like a field of small descending Thunder Tribulations.

From the perspectives of the demon beast, it was in no way inferior to punishment from heaven!

The Green-Skinned Saber Mantises were all fried and smashed to pieces. The Black Armored Saber Mantises had their skin and flesh split and rendered, blood and flesh flying all around. And even the Gold Armored Saber Mantises, under the chain of explosions from the several dozen Thunder-Palms, were dizzy and disoriented, staggering.

"Kill kill kill kill kill kill kill!"

Six people were like six fierce tigers with stomachs rumbling with hunger pouncing on a flock of sheep. They were like a hot knife through butter as they threw themselves straight to the Gold Armored Saber Mantises!

Li Yao remembered the words Ma Jiao had spoken earlier. He simply relaxed his control over the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon and increased his rate of fire. The jump of the muzzle of the gun increased in scope.

And Li Yao was in deep concentration as he carefully analyzed the trajectory of his own bullets.

"Whoosh whoosh whoosh whoosh!"

Before his eyes, the entire world seemed to transform into a transparent blueprint. The distance between him and the demon beasts, the relative velocity, and the firing angle were all transformed into a series of data. Like a torrential downpour, the data cleaved into his cranium.

The countless data collided together in an instant to condense and form an incomparably clear trajectory that came extending perfectly straight out from the muzzle of his gun. It extended until it reached the dead center of a Gold Armored Saber Mantis' skull!

Chapter 181: Demon General!

Chapter 181: Demon General!

Holding his breath, Li Yao tried to lower the rate of fire of the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon to the minimum, as he consciously tried to control the firepower and press the trigger along with the rhythm of his heartbeat.

For the first few seconds, the line of fire was consistent with the trajectory he had calculated.

The spiritual energy explosive rounds struck dead right at the center of Gold Armored Saber Mantis' head. And obviously, the power had also greatly elevated. After just a dozen rounds, the armor of the Gold Armored Saber Mantis was opened and a large mass of sticky liquid burst forth from inside.

However, after a few seconds, Li Yao was unable to hold on.

With every shot fired, the muzzle would slightly deviate. Meanwhile, the Gold Armored Saber Mantis also had a very quick reaction time; it would constantly jump here and there, dodging most of the bullets.

Every second, the distance, position, speed, and all kinds of information would have subtly changed; each parameter was having all kinds of varying changes.

Analyzing and calculating the new bullet trajectory in accordance with the new variables would at the very least take a second or possibly more. Meanwhile, the Gold Armored Saber Mantis would have long moved to a new location, thereby turning the new line of fire null and void.

Li Yao's computational ability was elevated to the extreme, yet he could barely calculate for a few seconds before he felt dizzy. All the values of the parameters had turned into series of stars that were revolving around his eyes.

This kind of dynamic calculation of madly changing variables was ten times more difficult compared to the calculating the static magical equipment structure!

If he forcibly continued down this path, perhaps even before the Gold Armored Saber Mantis was killed, his brain would overdraft and he would faint.

"The difficulty of calculating the bullet trajectory in real time is really too high, I can not easily master it for now. Even if I entered the super perceptive state so that my brain activity is elevated to more than 150%, I am afraid I am still unable to do it! Perhaps if my brain activity was elevated to 300% or more, I could barely calculate once every second. However, this way, I will simply be unable to hold on for too long and quite possibly have Qigong deviation."

Having thought this, Li Yao abandoned the plan of entering the super perceptive state. It was his secret life-saving method, and since he still had control over the current situation, there was no need to display it so early.

Under the Thunder-Palms and everyone's fire, even before 10 minutes were up, all the Saber Mantises were blasted into nothing but slag.

"Let's keep going!"

The six continued down the stairs, cleaning floor after floor. After they had killed four low-level demon beasts, they finally encountered big guys at the trading hall on the seventh floor.

There were seven 2 meters long and over 500-pound demon beasts that looked like huge lizards. Their entire bodies were covered in colorful and gorgeous scales, and no matter where they crawled, the scales would change their colors with the surrounding environment instantaneously. At first glance, they seemed to completely blend in with the environment, making them extremely difficult to distinguish.

The seven lizards were lazily gnawing the corpses of a few Green-Skinned Saber Mantises. When they caught a whiff of human smell, they became completely vigilant; their scales turned red as blood before they returned to their previous color of the surrounding environment in the blink of an eye. They shook their heads and flicked their tails before surrounding the six humans silently.

"Mystic Chameleons? We hit it big this time!"

Ma Jiao mischievously laughed as he glanced at the trio from the Grand Desolate War Institution with a provocative look. "What do you think? The Mystic Chameleon is one of the strongest middle-rank Demon Soldiers. Not only does it have an inherent camouflaging ability, it can also release peculiar demonic fluctuations that could disrupt our telepathic senses, making it very difficult for us to sense its accurate location. In addition, it also has an extremely corrosive and long tongue; it’s a very nasty piece of sh*t!"

"There’s nothing wrong with being afraid. Our way of escape is not yet closed off, it's not a big deal for us to retreat. We can end this mission right here, right now!"

Zhao Tianchong, Li Yao, and Lu Tieshan glanced at each other, and upon noticing the sharp war intention flickering in the depth of the eyes of the others, they sneered.

"Ma Jiao, there is really no need to goad us, we are all cultivators and have long been playing with fire and skating on thin ice, risking everything for just for one thing and one thing only, 'bravery'! Beheading a Mystic Chameleon is many times more beneficial than cutting ten Gold Armored Saber Mantises. If we are not going to fight them, then what did we come here to do? Then wouldn't it better to obediently return to the university and tuck our heads under the blanket?"

"Alright!"

Ma Jiao's pair of eyes almost turned blood-shot as he pulled out a magazine that was laced with blood-colored tattoos to reload. He burst into laughter and said, "Teaming up with brothers of the Grand Desolate War Institution is the best thing ever, you guys aren't people who are afraid of how others would perceive you running away, and try to tuck your heads under the blanket. Getting rid of these few Mystic Chameleons would be greatly rewarding, so please take out all your aces in the holes!"

"Whoosh!"

Before Ma Jiao's voice could fade away, Lu Tieshan had already torn away his body armor. Even the melee combat suit was torn to pieces, revealing his black-iron-tower-like majestic body.

His body was painted with gorgeous tattoos which gave the impression of golden snake-like lightning dancing amidst the billowing dark clouds one after another that flashed and rumbled with the bulging of his muscles. They looked quite alive.

With a roar from Li Tieshan, the lightning tattoos, like a living thing, actually jumped up as they ran around his body, forming an armor of lightning. The two iron-hammer-like fists, in particular, had hundreds of lightning bolts running around each of them, and when he smashed them with each other, they subsequently burst forth with lightning and thunder; it was quite deafening!

Unarmed body practitioner, sword cultivator, and firearms cultivator, these three professions had launched all their tyrannical, odd, and marvelous skills at this moment. This not only caused Li Yao to secretly be astounded, but the three firearms cultivators of the Federation's First Military College were dumbfounded as well; they felt their scalps tingle.

Zhao Tianchong coldly snorted as he drew an oddly-shaped longsword from his back. With distinct edges and corners, the blade consisted of segments upon segments, as though it had been forged from the spine of a demon beast. Even though no blood had been drawn, it was exuding an intense bloody aura.

"Kacha Kacha!"

The three firearms cultivators changed their bullets with the precious blood bullets that had been baptized with their own blood essence, and as they started chanted something, their eyes turned brighter and brighter. In the outer rim of their pupils, ring after ring of aura emerged, and each ring of aura was rotating at high speed.

Battle started!

Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan protected the forefront, whereas Li Yao started his crazy onslaught of spiritual explosive shells, suppressing the few Mystic Chameleons in the front. As for the three remaining firearms cultivators, they were outpouring their firepower together on a Mystic Lizard at the rightmost side.

The bullets baptized with their own blood essence were incomparably powerful. The air was filled with ear-piercing howls. The Mystic Chameleon didn't even have the time to react before it fell backward with its limbs in the air. Just as it was flipping backward, a scorching hot sniper bullet drilled its way into its right eye, ruthlessly blowing away the inside of its head.

It didn't even have the time to scream before twitching for a moment and laying flat on the ground, with a light yellow liquid pouring out from its eyes, nose, and ears

"Whoosh!"

Watching this, the six remaining Mystic Chameleons entered the camouflage state and blended with their surrounding environment. Meanwhile, they started emitting demonic fluctuations, disrupting the spiritual energy perception of the six humans.

Li Yao pursed his lips into a smile as he aimed the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon at the ceiling and aimlessly started firing.

Under the large range of suppressive fire, a few Mystic Chameleons were bound to be hit by the aimless bullets. Although it wasn't enough to cause them significant damage, it was enough for the rest to lock onto their position!

"Hiss! Hiss!"

After a moment, the six Mystic Chameleons were laced with bruises, bleeding a large amount of yellow brown mucus. They were unable to hide their traces anymore.

One of the Mystic Chameleons was even hit in the heart by a sniper bullet, causing it to writhe on the ground and scream.

The remaining five Mystic Chameleons no longer concealed themselves either; they revealed themselves from the various corners of the ceiling as they vigorously jumped towards the six.

At this time, it was the cultivators' turn to demonstrate their close combat might. Even Li Yao threw the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon down and drew the Windcutter, greeting the demon beasts.

"Whoosh!"

The five Mystic Chameleons simultaneously projected their long tongues, which were full of barbs. Their tongues were covered in a light yellow corrosive substance, which, upon contact with the ground, hissed and caused white fumes to rise into the air.

Li Yao's eyes quickly went wide as spiritual energy madly burst forth from every pore of his body, forming thousands of large and small airbags which bounced off the two long tongues. Meanwhile, taking advantage of the situation, he stepped forward and swung the Windcutter forward from bottom to top, drawing a perfect semi-circle!

This strike was the perfect attack line he had drawn after repeated calculations, enough for him to unleash his strength and speed to the extreme. Even if it was the Armored Snapping Turtle's most solid shell, this strike could chop it in half, needless to mention the soft tongue of the Mystic Chameleon!

With a flash of the blade, half of the long tongue was ruthlessly chopped off. It writhed on the ground like an earthworm burning in the sun.

The Mystic Chameleon threw caution to the wind as it desperately shook its head and revealed its fragile jaw, which was subsequently blown off by the crossfire of the three firearms cultivators.

Since there was a team behind him for protection, Li Yao had nothing to fear. After swinging that strike with all he had, not only he did not halt, he, purely relying on his calf muscles and ankle movements, forcibly took a large step forward. His entire body drew a semi-circle, dragging the saber, whereupon by virtue of the subsequent centrifugal force, its speed reached a whole new level. The blade's tip almost broke through the sound barrier as the Windcutter ruthlessly landed upon another Mystic Chameleon.

This strike was not looking for the weakness of the Mystic Chameleon at all, instead contending with just pure strength. The Windcutter ruthlessly cut the hide of the Mystic Chameleon and embedded itself deep inside its flesh. Taking advantage of the opportunity, Li Yao activated the oscillating array glyphs to the maximum, causing the Windcutter's edge to madly vibrate thousands of times every second. The blade cut through the flesh and bones, forcibly chopping off the Mystic Chameleon’s foreleg.

Just as the Mystic Chameleon opened its mouth to scream from losing its foreleg, its brain had been blown away by a quick sniper shot.

Li Yao clicked his tongue in marvel as he raised his thumb towards his back without looking.

A prideful whistle responded from behind.

The female sniper Bei Jingjing was not as cold and proud as her appearance suggested; after getting along with her for a long while, one could see her secret half.

The six became more and more skilled in coordinating. After five minutes, the final Mystic Chameleon fell on the ground with lightning running all over its body. It convulsed for a moment before finally remaining still.

Among the six, only Lu Tieshan happened to have his chest hit by the long tongue of Mystic Chameleon, leaving a seared line. However, from the calm look on his face, it was quite clear that it wasn't any life-threatening injury; he could hold on long enough to reach the medical center at the campsite.

"We made it big this time!"

"Seven Mystic Chameleons! On average, everyone has killed a little more than one Mystic Chameleon, which is enough for us to proudly return!"

Ma Jiao gasped for breath; apparently, he was very excited.

Zhao Tianchong also agreed as he nodded and said, "Everyone is quite exhausted and we have used up most of our ammunition. Our close combat equipment has also suffered some losses. We ought to return, any undue delay may bring us trouble!"

"Alright, let's return. Chunyu Peng, how many rounds do you still have left?" Ma Jiao did not turn his head for a reply.

In response to his question, only a muffled sound came as two hundred plus pound Chunyu Peng ruthlessly flew out like a sack. While spewing blood, he flew for twenty or so meters before heavily crashing into the wall, drawing a human-shape pit.

"Slither! Slither!"

A new demon beast, which was surrounded by the matchless aura of a leader, slithered out from the complex criss-cross ventilation pipes in the ceiling. Its narrow eyes seemed like topaz as they coldly stared at everyone, while its eyes flickered with a sliver of ridicule.

The complexions of Li Yao, Ma Jiao, Zhao Tianchong, Lu Tieshan, and Bei Jingjing all changed at the same time.

"Such an intense demonic energy, is it a high-rank Demon Soldier?"

"No way, it is stronger than the high-rank Demon Soldiers. It's...it's a Demon General!"

Chapter 182: The Bravest One Wins!

Chapter 182: The Bravest One Wins!

More than ten meters in length, the lower half of a giant python that was as thick as a bucket, an upper body resembling that of a human covered in snakeskin, and a total of six limbs with three fingers. Four of its limbs were close to the abdomen and were used to assist in crawling, while the remaining two were located on either side of the humanoid torso and each tightly clutched a blood-stained saber.

The Six-Armed Naga was a low-level Demon General; its strength was comparable to that of a low-level Building Foundation Stage cultivator. It was a demon beast with which six medium-level Refinement Stage cultivators who still had not reached their teens could not compete!

"No!"

Just when everyone was perplexed as to what to do, Li Yao shouted, "This Six-Armed Naga is definitely grievously wounded!"

"If it wasn't injured, it would have long returned to the underground. If not, then what it is doing above the ground? Waiting for death?"

"Furthermore, we are simply not its opponent, and it could have killed us all long before!"

"If its injuries were light, it would have taken the opportunity to attack when we were fighting with the Mystic Chameleons. If that had happened, we would not have even had a 0.1% chance to win!"

"As it dared not attack us, it's quite clear that it must have a reason not to do so!"

"And as you can see, I have been talking for a long while, yet it did not attack. It must have internal injuries!"

At first, everyone was surprised for a moment before they pulled themselves together.

That's right, the Six Armed Naga was brutal in nature; had it not been grievously injured, it would have torn them into pieces long ago.

A fiery light that could simply burn a hole through the sky emerged from the depths of Li Yao's eyes as he said with teeth clenched:

"The moment the Six-Armed Naga appeared, it also put on an imposing and menacing appearance. It wanted to scare the hell out of us so that we would flee, and in the process of our escape, when we revealed our flaws, it would destroy us!"

"When two people meet on a narrow path, only the brave wins. This is our only opportunity, so instead of drawing back, we must step forward and fight with it."

"Either it will kill us, or we will kill it!"

Everyone took a glance at each other and saw flickers of flames burning in the depths of each other's eyes.

Li Yao was absolutely right. When placed on a field of death, one would fight to live[1]! Even if it was the Demon General, once its head was chopped off, would it not still die!?

Zhao Tianchong quickly glanced at the crystal processor before a sliver of ferociousness crept into his voice:

"The Spiritual Nexus is jammed, there is no signal. We can't even call for help, so it seems we have no choice but to fight with it!"

The Spiritual Nexus was the third greatest invention of the cultivation revolution, and since then the cultivation world had officially entered the information age, an era of networking. The cultivators could very easily transfer telepathic thoughts and send information through the Spiritual Nexus; it was an efficient and orderly way for the federation to come together.

In a protracted war with the mankind, the demon beasts were also constantly evolved. Many powerful demon clan experts, after paying the price of blood, had gradually grasped the demon technique of blocking the Spiritual Nexus.

In a demonic energy filled war zone, where flashes of lightning and peals of thunder burst forth and flames of war reached the sky, the Spiritual Nexus would most likely be jammed.

"Fight!"

"Fight!"

"Fight!"

Li Yao and the three took the front line, meanwhile, Ma Jiao and Bei Jingjing quickly retreated towards the back, searching for the right position to shoot.

A newborn calf is unafraid of a tiger. Facing the all-powerful Demon General, except for the panic at the beginning, all five burst forth with excitement to fight, disregarding their lives and deaths entirely. Even if they died, they would still bite off a piece of meat from the Six-Armed Naga!

"Hiss!"

The Six-Armed Naga didn't expect these teenagers to be so brave; the ridicule in its eyes turned to hesitation.

Apparently, Li Yao's guess was right on the mark. The Six-Armed Naga was indeed grievously injured in the underground battle by an intermediate-level Building Foundation Stage cultivator. It had fled in panic for a few days to find a foothold, where it gathered a bunch of Mystic Chameleons as subordinates and ordered them to catch Green-Skinned Saber Mantises daily for it to consume. Originally, it thought that after recovering from injuries for a few days, it would sneak into the underground, and find an opportunity to return to the Blood Demon Sector.

However, never had it imagined that it would encounter these pricks instead!

Although these kids’ cultivation was not too high, their firepower was quite powerful and they had good teamwork. If it wanted to kill all of them, it might have to pay a relatively large price. And if its old injuries relapsed, it would have to stay here and recover for three to five days.

Meanwhile, if, in a one in a million chance, the underground battle came to end, the remnants of the beast tide would withdraw to Blood Demon Sector, and it would die without a burial.

However, the six kids had powerful spiritual energy stored within their flesh and blood; if it could engulf them, it would help it recover early.

It was also impossible for the Six-Armed Naga to give up such a scrumptious piece of meat from its mouth.

Therefore, its plan was indeed the same as Li Yao had said; it wanted to scare the six and make them flee, then tail them and hunt them down.

Even if it was impossible for it to kill all of them, as long as it could devour two or three, it was sufficient for a while.

Never had it imagined that after Li Yao laid bare its plan, the kids would want a fight to the death, forcing it into a dead end.

The Six-Armed Naga fumed in anger. It could understand the human language; it knew it was none other than Li Yao who had foiled its plan. Its body shrunk before it fiercely shot its snake tail. "Whoosh!" Just like a spring that had been tightly pressed and then released, its tail shot at Li Yao with astonishing speed!

For Li Yao, it was as though a storm was blowing past his face. The subsequent wind made it impossible for him to open his eyes, whereupon he simply closed his eyes and only perceived the world through his telepathic thoughts. After his premolars almost broke from clenching, he tightly clutched the Windcutter, raised it above his head, and facing the vigorous gales, ruthlessly cleaved down!

"BOOM!"

This saber strike felt as though it was cleaving a speeding super fast crystal train.

The blade was suddenly adorned with cracks, while its tip also broke and flew away.

As though it was none other than Li Yao who was hit, he retreated a dozen steps in one go. His legs went numb as he fell down on his ass on the ground, spewing a mouthful of blood.

His hands, on the other hand, felt as though they had been deep fried in a seething oil pot for three minutes; on the surface, they were numb, whereas a drilling pain constantly spread out from the depths of his bone marrow.

Li Yao raised his hands to look. His hands were torn from the jaws of death; they were badly mutilated and were involuntarily trembling. He simply unable to hold the saber.

"A Demon General is actually so frightening!"

The Six-Armed Naga's narrow snake face revealed an incomparably shocked look as a somewhat deep slanted wound appeared on its left shoulder. It was even unable to operate its left arm a bit as the saber in its left hand fell on the ground.

Its topaz-like eyes turned cloudy, as though the killing intent in its eyes would materialize and ruthlessly shoot towards Li Yao.

Just as it twisted its body to ruthlessly strangulate Li Yao, Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan charged in from left and right and attacked.

Zhao Tianchong's long sword issued "Wu Wu"-like sharp howls as the sword aura exploded to three meters in length, while the lightning surrounding Lu Tieshan's body got brighter as though he turned into huge spherical ball of lightning.

Both of them had their speed burst out to the extreme. Under the dizziness, Li Yao was simply unable to make out anything. All he saw was a mass of vague gray shadows stuck in a stalemate for three to five seconds before Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan flew out while spewing blood, giving the impression of two withered rice sacks falling on the ground.

Only the hilt of his blade remained in Zhao Tianchong's hand, whereas Lu Tieshan's entire body was laden with terrifying, crisscrossed injuries. The beautiful tattoo on his body was a terrible mess; the gorgeous scene of lightning and thunder had completely dissipated. Occasionally, it would burst forth with tiny electric sparks, like a flickering candle in the wind which could be extinguished momentarily.

"Hiss! Hiss!"

The Six-Armed Naga issued a series of furious hisses.

Its body had dazzling lightning arcs wrapped around it, and the broken half of Zhao Tianchong's sword was deeply embedded in its chest. Finally, all the lightning arcs charged down the blade and into its body, running between its internal organs and causing it to be in unbearable pain. Under the stimulation of lightning arcs, its old heart injuries were just about to relapse!

Originally, the Six-Armed Naga was seriously injured, and its strength fell to that of a high-rank Demon Soldier. The five kids thought they were against the ropes and unleashed their strength to the extreme. The lightning arcs had coincidentally flowed into its body, which actually caused it to sustain serious injuries.

Before the Six-Armed Naga could respond, the two firearms cultivators also unleashed their final attack. A couple dozen quick gunshots sounding like incomparably short, sharp howls rang out as a couple dozen crimson streaks of light, dragging long streaks of flames and drawing strange arcs, hit the various vital points of Six-Armed Naga at inconceivable angles from all directions!

"Tuk-tuk-tuk, tuk-tuk-tuk!"

Tens of bloody fountains shot out from all over the Six-Armed Naga's body and shrouded it in a dense bloody mist. It seemed to have stopped struggling.

"How should we deal with it?"

The five had their hearts in their mouths.

Li Yao, Zhao Tianchong, Lu Tieshan, Chunyu Peng... the four were grievously injured!

In contrast, Ma Jiao and Bei Jingjing were out of blood bullets and were even running low on conventional bullets, which simply weren't enough to deal fatal damage to the Six-Armed Naga!

At present, the battle strength of the hunting squad had been pummelled down to less than 10%!

"Hissss, Hiiiissssss!"

Amid the bloody mist, a wail which seemed like a wail of doom, but also like a strange ear-piercing scream, as though wails of countless demon beasts were superimposed, rang out; when it rang in the depths of everyone's ears, it caused everyone to feel endless fear.

This was one of the inherent demon techniques of the Six-Armed Naga. Once it was cast, it would consume its life source, the demonic essence of the Six-Armed Naga, which would aggravate its injuries. Thus, it was reluctant to utilize it until a moment ago.

At this moment, the Six-Armed Naga's anger soared to the highest heavens; it became extremely mad. The demonic energy spread just like a flood. The Six-Armed Naga wanted to tear these brats into pieces by all means!

"Escape!"

Having hit by the demonic technique, everyone had the same idea and involuntarily retreated towards the stairs as though they were hypnotized.

"Escape through the window!"

Li Yao's soul was firmer than that of his counterparts. Under the attack of Six-Armed Naga's demonic technique, he still remained clear-headed.

It was the seventh floor, and by virtue of the cultivators' tyrannical bodies, even if they jumped down, they wouldn’t fall to their deaths; not to mention, it was much faster than taking the stairs!

Everyone woke a bit from their stupor by Li Yao and suddenly came to realize this.

Throwing the sniper rifle to one side, Bei Jingjing clenched her teeth as she somehow carried the unconscious Chunyu Peng.

Ma Jiao helped Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan. Although the two were seriously injured, they weren't unconscious; they could still walk. The three with their arms on each other's shoulders tottered their way towards the window.

"Do you...want...to escape?"

Amid the blood mist, the Six-Armed Naga issued a savage laugh with a very strange tone.

"Slither, Slither!"

Slithering with its blood-covered body, the Six-Armed Naga once again appeared before everyone.

Despite having one of its limbs broken, receiving a huge charred wound on its chest from the lightning, and being riddled with thousands of bullets...

The overflowing demonic energy only grew in intensity; its topaz-like narrow eyes were completely red as blood at this moment.

At this moment, it had finally madly mobilized its demonic essence despite the recurrence of its old injuries and burst forth with its true strength!

To retaliate against the Six-Armed Naga, under the push from the electrical array glyphs, the six barrels of the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon started rotating at high-speed, emitting a weak whirring sound.

This was the sign of the impending bulletstorm!

Chapter 183: Want to Kill Me? Taste The Hellfire-Lightning!

Chapter 183: Want to Kill Me? Taste The Hellfire-Lightning!

"Pop Pop Pop Pop Pop!"

Before the spiritual energy explosive shells burst, a series of firecrackers burst in the air around Li Yao, as though storm kept on coming from inside his body. On the either side of his torso, innumerable transparent plumes appeared as the two wings of spiritual energy were formed. When they spread, they tore through the air, emitting an eagle's cry.

Soul Igniting Law, Soaring Into Heaven in One Leap – the falcon king soaring into the sky in one leap!

Li Yao released his soul completely, making his fire of life unscrupulously burn as he constantly broke through the limits and burst to his highest state possible!

Meanwhile, all the windows on the floor they were on instantaneously shattered, leaving fragments floating around in the air. Amid the energy waves, they were crushed into transparent particles which seemingly gathered around Li Yao to create a crystal armor.

"Refinement Stage's 3rd level?"

"Refinement Stage's 4th level?"

"Refinement Stage's—5th level?"

None of them dared to believe their eyes, but their spiritual roots clearly perceived Li Yao's flames of life soaring, releasing light and heat which was already far beyond their level.

"He is truly in the 5th level of the Refinement Stage!"

No matter how many times Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan swore again and again, no matter what inconceivable things had occurred with Li Yao, both of them would not find it strange, but this time, they were still—

Left! Extremely! Shocked!

Li Yao was surrounded by spiritual energy wings that were visible to the naked eyes, while violent spiritual energy just like lava course through his blood vessels. Under the fierce explosion of spiritual energy, his brain activity tremendously exceeded the norm.

150% brain cell activity!

The entire world in Li Yao's eyes gradually became translucent as all things turned into nothing but constantly changing parameters.

200% brain cell activity!

The Six-Armed Naga disappeared and became a combination of parameters; body, vital points, speed, movement trajectory, everything turned into parameters!

250% brain cell activity!

All the parameters madly clashed with each other, lines intersected with each other, bullet trajectories fiercely moved up and down one after another, and finally combined together.

300% brain cell activity!

Locked!

The Six-Armed Naga was completely locked.

No matter how the Six-Armed Naga moved, no matter how the thousands of parameters changed, Li Yao could always calculate the new bullet trajectory instantaneously. He was firmly locked onto the target!

331% brain cell activity!

Li Yao's entire body roared as his muscles rapidly expanded to the point that the highly flexible combat tights were taut to the extreme. They tore at a few places on his arms and chest, revealing the light gold, hard skin.

Suddenly, his gun exploded before him like a volcano as he ruthlessly fired a scorching crimson line of bullets at the Six-Armed Naga!

A sliver of disdain appeared in the blood-red eyes of Six-Armed Naga. It twisted and jumped, but as it tried to dodge the fire line...

It never imagined that the fire line seemingly had long eyes and would be tuned and re-adjusted instantaneously; it ruthlessly lashed out just like a red-hot iron whip. The strike's power was far more than it had imagined, a bloody flower burst at the Six-Armed Naga's chest!

Suddenly, the Six-Armed Naga's pupils shrunk into two lines as it emitted a blood-curdling scream and performed high-speed maneuvers in an effort to dodge.

However, no matter how the Six-Armed Naga dodged, the fire line, like a deep-rooted ulcer on the bones, was right on its tail. Having been continuously hit, its body was badly bruised. Its skin burst open and its flesh hung in shreds as it let out blood-curdling screams one after another.

"BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!"

Half of the trading hall was covered by the crazy onslaught of the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon, giving off the impression of hundreds of Thunder Palms simultaneously exploding.

Wherever the fire line went, everything was smashed into pieces!

For an entire half-minute, Zhao Tianchong, Lu Tieshan, Ma Jiao, Bei Jingjing...all of them dumbfoundedly watched Li Yao and his crazy onslaught, seemingly watching the arrival of a war god as it slaughtered everything in his wake!

When the shots stopped, Li Yao threw the Six-Armed Rotary Cannon as well as the huge ammunition case forward before he quickly ran to their side. Whereas, his companions had yet to react.

"Did...did you kill it?"

Ma Jiao asked in a quaking voice.

Having watched Li Yao's terrifying performance, Ma Jiao was completely sure that once this guy acted, he would become crazy; even if a mountain was blocking him, he would directly blast the mountain!

"What the hell do you think?! That's a Demon General!"

Blood seemed to be overflowing from the Li Yao's eyes, ears, and the corners of his mouth; his appearance was somewhat hideous. And, because he over-drafted his brain, he was not far away from having a Qigong deviation!

Stepping on the windowsill, Li Yao crazily roared:

"Hurry up, or you’ll never escape!"

Everyone woke from their stupor and carried their injured companions to the windowsill.

"Hiss! Hiss!"

The Six-Armed Naga behind them, whose entire body was badly mauled from the explosions, let out a series of despotic screams.

The Six-Armed Naga's condition was extremely bad. Its whole left arm along with the scapula was shot off and its heart had suffered serious injuries. If Li Yao could sustain the onslaught for another half-minute, maybe the Six-Armed Naga would have been killed.

Unfortunately, Li Yao had reached the end of his computing power. Even a second more and he would have suffered Qigong deviation on the spot!

"BOOM!"

Just as the Six-Armed Naga gave a chase, the interlacing exhaust pipes and lights on the ceiling came crashing down, right on top of the Six-Armed Naga's head.

It was nothing other than Li Yao's making; having known that he could not sustain his onslaught any longer, he intentionally diverted some of the shots at the last minute and broke the supports of the fixed pipes and light fixtures one by one.

Certainly, there was no way these things would crush the Six-Armed Naga to death, but it could stop it for a few seconds.

And taking advantage of these few seconds, Li Yao and the six jumped down from the seventh floor!

"Activate the spiritual energy shield with maximum power!"

In the air, amid the howling wind, Li Yao shouted in a high voice.

"Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!"

Everyone stimulated the spiritual energy of their body armor to the extreme before curved transparent shields were released one after another.

"Hiss!"

Finally, the Six-Armed Naga broke out from the twisted group of metal pipes. In a breath, it shot its way to the window.

Having been driven to madness, it lost its mind and seemed to not care whether it would be found by some high-level cultivator. Its brain was only filled with one thought and one thought only: chase these humans and kill them all!

At the very least, kill that kid who used the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon to seriously injure it!

Having thought this, the Six-Armed Naga resentfully took a glance at the cannon and the ammunition box thrown by Li

Yao.

It had long seen this kind of weapon, all it could do was deal with those insignificant Demon Soldiers. Never had it imagined that such a weapon would cause it to sustain serious injuries!

At this moment, the Six-Armed Naga turned stiff. Suddenly, it sensed an incomparably sharp danger.

It was as though some peerless expert had broken space and appeared beside it.

Every scale on Six-Armed Naga's body shrunk as its terrified gaze swept everywhere for a long while before finally stopping on the ammunition case not too far away from it.

"Inside..."

The Six-Armed Naga trembled as it let out terrifying shrieks.

Almost at the same instant, just as Li Yao was about to fall on the ground, he fiercely pushed his waist down.

"BOOM!"

The three floors of the stock exchange center were instantly enveloped in a sea of fire. Flames were shooting up from every window, giving off the impression of countless ferocious beasts angrily trying to escape only to be pulled back by some kind of invisible power. In the wake of the powerful explosion, everything inside the building was devastated.

Billowing hot waves just like six hammers ruthlessly impacted the six before they heavily crashed into the ground.

Even with the powerful physique of a cultivator, it was difficult for them to persevere. Ma Jiao and Bei Jingjing each spat a mouthful of blood; they had broken their fair share of bones.

However, at this moment, there was no time to take a breather.

"Hurry up!"

Li Yao slapped a freezing glyph on his head to quickly cool his boiling brain down before the six, with their arms around each other, ran hundreds of meters in one deep breath. Finally, they could not hold on and fell to the ground, laying flat on their backs.

"Beep!"

The spiritual nexus was online.

Zhao Tianchong sent a request for help right away.

In all directions, where there was nothing but buildings, there were also many battle squads who had noticed the explosion at the stock trading center. Several dozen cultivators rushed over at high-speed.

Everyone dumbfoundedly looked at the stock trading center.

The three floors were completely engulfed in fire which continued to spread upwards, painting the entire building red.

A black silhouette jumped out from the raging flames. It quivered atop the windowsill before it fell from the seventh floor. It was completely charred. And even before it could crash to the ground, it broke into four to five pieces in the air and breathed its last breath.

"T-that wouldn't be the Six-Armed Naga, right?"

"What the hell is going on? How the hell could there be such a powerful explosion?"

"Is it a bomb? Li Yao, you also carried such a powerful bomb? This bomb must be huge, right?! So where were you hiding it? How come I never saw it?"

"Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, whoosh!"

Everyone turned their gaze at Li Yao.

"It's the Hellfire-Lightning!"

Lightly rubbing his temple, Li Yao explained with a tired look on his face. "When I was modifying the weapon case into an ammunition case, I realized that we would be fighting on the front lines and could get support anytime. Although two bullet belts were a bit insufficient, there was no need for an entire box of bullets."

"Wouldn't it be a waste if I brought so many bullets and didn't finish them? Not to mention the possibility that the barrel might even get overheated or damaged somehow?"

"So, I changed the ammo case into a double-layered structure. The outside had the bullets and the inside was a personally-modified super bomb created by combining ten Hellfire-Lightnings."

"Ten Hellfire-Lightnings?!"

Everyone was shocked as they gazed at Li Yao with a dreadful look in their eyes.

The Hellfire-Lightning was an explosive-type magical equipment specifically crafted by the army by connecting highly condensed fire crystals and lightning crystals in series by a special triggering array glyph.

It was true to its name; once it exploded, the blast was akin to lightning strikes and volcanic explosions!

However, the Hellfire-Lightning was huge and very heavy. Even though its power was quite strong, it was not suitable for a soldier to carry or throw at all.

It was mainly used as a landmine or utilized for blasting a fixed demon beast lair.

No one had ever thought that Li Yao would be crazy enough to carry ten of them together, and even more so, chain them together. It was truly crazy!

From the get-go, the Six-Armed Naga was seriously injured. Then, it had suffered a crazy bombardment from the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon for half minute, and then finally got to taste ten Hellfire-Lightnings at close range. It had truly suffered a wrongful death.

"However..."

After they came to know the truth, everyone was drenched in cold sweat; they could not utter a single word for a long while.

Just the thought of themselves having been in such a close proximity to ten Hellfire-Lightnings was terrifying. And, if Li Yao's modification technique was even a bit worse, if the bomb happened to get set off, not even a single hair of them would have remained!

It was absolutely terrifying!

"Wh-What were you planning on doing with so many Hellfire-Lightnings? Had you long planned to deal with a Demon General?"

Ma Jiao stammered.

Li Yao smiled:

"No way! The reason I carried so many Hellfire-Lightnings was that if, and only if, I somehow ended up at a dead end, where I was surrounded by powerful demon beasts and had no room for escape, I could blow them."

"I am Vulture Li Yao. Although I may be a nameless newbie in the cultivation world who has insignificant strength, I am not so easy to kill."

"You want to kill me? No matter whether you were Demon General or Demon King, you would have to pay a fatal price!"

Everyone was rendered speechless. After remaining silent for a while, Bei Jingjing heaved a long sigh of relief as she whispered to Ma Jiao:

"When I first saw him, I could not believe that a guy who was carrying a Six Barrel Rotary Cannon and a Heavy Vibrosaber could infiltrate Gao Ye's command center and execute the Beheading Technique against a talented commander like him!"

"But now...I believe!"

Chapter 184: Total Victory

Chapter 184: Total Victory

Early morning, two days later.

The harsh winter was already over and with the advent of spring, everything was coming back to life; the grass was growing, birds were chirping.

Li Yao jumped out from the medical treatment pod, but there was still some light green high-energy nutrient solution covering his body. With a few strange movements of his muscles, it was absorbed through his pores into his flesh and blood, nourishing his strong physique.

After a moment, quite a few black droplets oozed out from all over his body, emitting a pungent smell.

It was the extravasated blood and the waste from the body circulation.

With a slight shake of his body, the hairs across his body immediately stood while all the droplets disappeared without a trace from the shock.

Li Yao burst into a jovial laughter as he wore the tight black combat suit and comfortably stretched his muscles before casually doing a few sets of［Thirteen Forces of War Beasts］.

Suddenly, tiger and dragon roars could be heard coming from inside the medical tent.

Having been undergoing treatment for two days, not only had all the internal injuries Li Yao had sustained been cured, the excessively overdrafted brain cells had also recovered. Furthermore, carrying out the battle under the limit state of 331% brain cell activity had faintly stimulated the potential of Li Yao's soul, giving him the chance to touch the barrier of the 6th level of the Refinement Stage.

And despite not having entered the 6th level Refinement Stage, Li Yao could vaguely see the high and abstruse glittering great Dao which was gradually opening in front of him, leading him to the highest heaven beyond the clouds, to the endless cosmos.

"I have really reaped a great harvest in the battle of Verdant Tarn City. Not only have I raked in a lot of credits, I have also grasped a little chance to rush into the intermediate-level of the Refinement Stage."

"Once I entered the intermediate-level Refinement Stage, I can utilize the spiritual energy for combat. My battle force will experience a breakthrough, and it will be quite different compared to my strength in the low-level Refinement Stage!"

"Ah, right, two days have already passed, I wonder whether the credits for the final battle are calculated or not?!"

Without further ado, Li Yao started up the crystal processor as he entered the mission interface of the Grand Desolate War Institution.

Since the last battle was fought together with the students of the Federation's First Military College, the allocation of merits involved negotiations between the two universities. The algorithm for the allocation was quite complex, and hence the final settlement could not be done on the spot at all.

When Li Yao accessed the mission interface, the translucent holographic screen immediately burst with a long list of credits awarded as crisp "Beep Beep Beep Beep" sounds of notification rang incessantly.

"Wow, I made a fortune!"

Li Yao's eyes lit up brightly.

The Gold Phoenix Road was the last stronghold above ground for the demon beasts and was extremely dangerous, and as such, additional credits were awarded to the low-level students like Li Yao who dared to take such risks.

After the system had done complex calculations, most of the merits for killing the Six-Armed Naga landed upon his head.

He alone was assigned 60% of the battle merits, while the rest of the 40% was allocated between the five.

In addition, there were battle merits for killing Mystic Chameleons and a large number of low-level demon beasts, as well as merits for suppressing the entire stock trading center, then there were also the battle merits accumulated from the previous battles.

All in all, when all of Li Yao's military achievements in the Verdant Tarn City battle were converted into credits, they surpassed 10,000 and reached a terrifying digit of 16,993, which compared to the credits acquired during the previous semester was quite a lot!

Adding the previous credits, Li Yao's total credits were 23,749.

Had it not been for Li Yao procuring various magical equipment as well as raw materials, for which a large number of credits were spent, the total number of credits would have surpassed the 25,000 mark.

Even so, it was still an astonishing digit.

Even Ding Lingdang and Peng Hai had not achieved such terrifying result till the second half of the 1st year.

Li Yao had already set a record as the fastest scorer in last two decades of Grand Desolate War Institution.

"Amazing, this time my luck was too good."

Li Yao slightly smiled, from the 20,000 or so credits, a vast majority came from killing the Six-Armed Naga during the last battle.

The Six-Armed Naga was a low-level Demon General, whose strength was comparable to a low-level Building Foundation Stage cultivator. Compared to him, who was just a low-level Refinement Stage cultivator, there was too big of a gap.

He was an epitome of the weak overcoming the strong. Not only had he put a demon beast that was far stronger than him to death, he had also rescued his five teammates. When these factors were finally calculated, the subsequent bonus reward was an astronomical figure.

The system finally showed a long list of information on military exploits, and at the end, presented him with three choices.

First, it was converting all the military achievements into credits, which amounted to 16,993 credits.

Second, he could convert a certain percentage of his military achievements into a lump sum.

Some of the money was awarded by the nation itself.

The Star Glory Federation was in a state of war year around, thus, among all the taxes, the most important was the "National Defense Tax".

While the National Defense Tax on one side was used as military expenditure, on the other, it used to set up a special fund which provided rewards to the non-military personnel depending on the strength of the demon beast they hunted.

In addition, the demon beasts' body was also very valuable.

The Six-Armed Naga goes without saying. Although its flesh and blood were charred, its snake bile, heart, and other similar organs were precious heaven and earth treasures.

Even low-level Demon Soldiers had valuable parts. The Black Armored Saber Mantis’ incomparably sharp saber-like limb was a rare material.

After the battlefield was cleaned by the army, all the corpses of the demon beasts would then be collected and sorted out, which after being processed could be taken out for sale.

And finally, a small part of the total income would be turned over to the federation, while the majority of the money was allocated to the staff participating in the battle in accordance with the merits recorded in the battle video.

It was also an another way to promote the enthusiasm to fight.

Or else, the cultivators who came all the way and busted their asses may fall due to the slightest bit of inattentiveness.

It would be too much to ask the people to live up to justice without a little bit of reward.

The third option was to acquire materials.

Obviously, if Li Yao was interested in some material, let's say if he was in need of Six-Armed Naga's bile for cultivation, after he had filed an application for it, the snake bile would be returned to him, and the subsequent money or credits awarded would be a little less.

What it's gonna be? Credits, money, or materials?

Li Yao sunk into thought before he chose to convert all the merits to the credits.

At present, he was really not short of money as there was the scholarship and the special allowance provided as a result of him being the Federation's 1st Class Disabled Servicemen. In addition, he didn't have to pay the tuition fees too.

As for the materials from the demon beasts like the Six-Armed Naga and the Gold Armored Saber Mantis, they were not too beneficial to him.

Credits, they were more precious than the money and materials.

With more than 20,000 credits, he could apply for some high-rank courses of Combat Department, cultivate powerful superior exercises, and tread further on the road of cultivation. In the future, he might even earn hundreds of millions.

Imagining the better days ahead, Li Yao grinned as he switched to the forum interface.

The battle of Verdant Tarn City was everyone's focus of attention. Every day, the students who had not participated in the battle watch the progress of the war through the network. The university had specially opened up a Verdant Tarn City battle zone section in the forum, which was a place where the battle situation was discussed.

The students were highly excited. Over thousands of posts were made just within a few days, where every post had hundreds of thousands of threads.

Among which, many posts' main topic was none other than Li Yao!

"Wow! A freshman vs Armored Snapping Turtle! Damn, so strong! He has so neatly blasted the demon beasts!"

"Crazy! This is completely crazy! Just a Refinement Stage student can confront a Six-Armed Naga head-on with a Six Barrel Rotary Cannon!"

"Vulture Li Yao? What's so good about him?"

Posts just like these were jampacked with battle videos of Li Yao. Even some people had dug out the videos from the Limit Challenge Competition at the Devil Scaly Dragon Island. The awe-inspiring fame of "Vulture Li Yao" had already spread through the entire Grand Desolate War Institution. Even some of the cultivation sects located at the Wild Waves City had heard of a ruthless freshman who had carried ten Hellfire-Lightnings with him!

In a moment, Li Yao had become a famous figure who was known to all of the residents of the Wild Waves City. His fame had completely covered the special enrolled students like Zhao Tianchong's and Lu Tieshan.

Many people believed him to be stronger than Ding Lingdang and Peng Hai back in their days, but even more believed that regardless of whether Li Yao was stronger than the two during their time in college, his craziness at the very least was far more than theirs.

After all, whether it was Ding Lingdang or Peng Hai, they had never carried ten Hellfire-Lightnings along with them to the battlefield like they were walking in their own backyard!

The students of Grand Desolate War Institution held strong lunatics in awe and veneration even more so than they revered the strong. Many people held Li Yao in admiration to the point that they would be willing to throw themselves at his feet. Some even secretly reckoned that maybe no one could stop Li Yao from amassing 40,000 credits, and subsequently creating an unprecedented record!

Having seen these posts, the corned of Li Yao's lips involuntarily rose as he began giggling in an exaggerated manner.

How could the hot-blooded youth not have some vanity?

Li Yao sighed in self-satisfaction as he thought of the irony of life; just last year he was still struggling with the idea of whether he could be accepted into a good university or not, just like wandering in the vast and dark cosmos, where he could not see any sign of light at his front. The Nine Elite Universities were like stars hanging above the clouds, simply out of his reach.

Whereas in just one year, he had become a famous figure of the Grand Desolate War Institution. It was like quickly running on the road of his dream.

What's it going to be like after another year?

Li Yao felt extremely excited as he let his thoughts run wild.

At this time, a hubbub suddenly came from outside before Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan happily came running inside the tent while dancing and shouting:

"Victory! We have won!"

"The beast tide was pushed back and the wormhole is also sealed!"

"We have not only completely won, we have also captured a Demon King!"

"Li Yao, hurry up! A regiment is about to drag the captured Demon King from the underground. Let's quickly go and see the Demon King!"

At first, Li Yao was taken by surprise before he jumped high up in the air as he vigorously waved his fists, giving rise to seven subsequent waves in the air:

"A live Demon King? Awesome!"

After the bloody battle at the stock trading center, where the three went through fire and water together, a deep friendship was forged. Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan did not put any airs of being special recruited students in front of Li Yao. The three with their arms around each other made their way out while laughing.

The news of victory sent dozens of campsites in ebullition as everyone gathered to celebrate.

Whether it was low-level cultivators or young soldiers in the army, everyone swarmed outside to watch the spectacle. The soldiers could barely curb their excitement. As for the local cultivators, they could not control themselves as well as the soldiers. Many among which were raising cries of cheers, shooting in the air, some even launched their flying swords in the air, covering the sky in resplendent colors as they clashed with each other, bursting forth with colorful fireworks one by one.

"Victory! We won!"

"Hip-hip-hurray, hip-hip-hurray!"

"So what if it's a Demon King? If he dares to intrude upon our Heaven Origin Sector, he will be captured!"

Li Yao and the three somehow climbed their way atop the crystal tank as they stood on their tiptoes to watch.

Under the brilliant lights, a team with soaring killing intent gradually walked from afar.

"Look, our team is triumphantly returning from underground. Wow, so many high-rank demon clan experts are captured!"

Chapter 185: Lawful Punishment

Chapter 185: Lawful Punishment

At the forefront of the parade walking in, there were twenty cultivators, each armored from head to toe in a crystal suit. They were at the very least in the Building Foundation Stage, and after the boost from the crystal suit, they gave off the impression of twenty torches burning through the sky that were absorbing powerful spiritual energy waves all the time.

The spiritual roots of low-level cultivators like Li Yao felt an absolute pressure as their pores sealed up in the blink of an eye, not daring to release even a single spirit thread.

And the intense killing intent emanating from them was not intentional at all, but rather due to fighting a bloody battle repeatedly in the dark and dreary underground with the demon beasts. Their spirit was naturally shrouded in a layer of fiendish aura.

It was as if they had gone through hundreds of battles, killing everything in their wake, causing the fiendish aura to materialize. When it was used on the battlefield to kill, it was a hundred times sharper than the spiritual energy itself.

Regardless of the fact that their crystal suits were incomplete, ladened with blood stains, or the fact that a majority of the crystal suits' joints and exquisite glyphs were corroded...

Li Yao's eyes when looking at them were filled with envy and jealousy. He wanted to run over to them, snatch a suit, and don it.

The twenty crystal suit cultivators walked in an ostentatious and awe-inspiring manner. Following them were ten trucks that sent demonic energy soaring to the sky and had thick liquid dripping from every opening. They were filled with demon beasts' corpses.

This was the just first batch. There were still a large number of demon beasts' corpses remaining underground which had to be dealt with as soon as possible. Otherwise, an epidemic would soon follow, which was nothing to joke about.

The convoys of trucks transporting the demon beasts' corpses were followed by crystal tanks that were pulling large iron cages one after another. Each iron cage had hundreds of array glyphs carved upon them, countless crystals inlaid on their bases, and crackling lightning arcs running between the railings.

Imprisoned inside the cages were powerful demon beasts who were restless upon finding themselves being displayed to the human onlookers. They were rampaging more violently than the lightning itself, desperately jumping up and down, struggling with all they had.

However, every time they touched the cages, they would be stuck by a bolt of lightning, causing them to grimace in pain while their scales stood erect. The air was filled with a faint stench.

"These are all Demon Generals. This time, we have captured a total of nineteen Demon Generals; it was truly difficult!"

Zhao Tianchong said while laughing.

Li Yao looked fixedly and noticed that the Demon Generals in the cages were completely different from the low-level demon beasts such as Demon Soldiers. Most of them appeared to be similar to humans.

Especially their eyes; in them, one could clearly find panic, anger, hatred, and a sharp killing intent.

Even though some of these particularly aggressive Demon Generals were repeatedly struck by lightning, so much that their bodies were laden with deep wounds where even the bones were visible, they did not care and cast a deadly glare upon the cultivators and soldiers nearby.

As though they would tear the humans into pieces just with that brutal gaze.

"Even such aggressive Demon Generals are captured. It's quite difficult to imagine how intense the underground battle was!"

Li Yao clucked his tongue in marvel, he could not help but feel a bit ashamed.

Just a while ago, when he got to see the posts about him, he was getting all proud and mighty; believing himself to be quite formidable for being able to kill a grievously injured Demon General.

Now, he only got to realize how big of a gap was actually there between him and a true expert.

If he had entered the underground battlefield, perhaps he would not have been able to hold on for one short hour before getting crushed into nothing but slag.

"I am still not strong enough!"

"At present, I only have just an itsy-bitsy bit of reputation in the Grand Desolate War Institution. Everyone is only optimistic about by potential, nothing more, nothing less!"

"In this vast cultivation world, I am just an insignificant figure, who doesn’t even have the qualifications to participate in the underground battle!"

"I have to become stronger as soon as possible! At the very least, I have to enter the Building Foundation Stage even earlier than Ding Lingdang and Senior Brother Peng. Only then would I have the qualifications to participate in the undoubted battles in the world of cultivation!"

Li Yao silently pondered. Suddenly, Lu Tieshan nudged him a bit:

"Demon King is here!"

Li Yao turned excited as he stood on his tiptoes and stretched his neck to gaze far away.

Even before he could see the Demon King, his line of sight was taken away by an ugly-looking, long-bulbous-nosed man who in some ways resembled a pekinese.

This person wasn't wearing a crystal suit, he was just draped in a loose linen robe, while his hands were hidden inside wide sleeves.

He was all secretive and low-key; very difficult for anyone to find his true colors. Nevertheless, the air around him was stronger than the cultivators who had donned crystal suits.

In particular, his long sleeves seemed as though they were hiding a terrifying blade. Even though Li Yao was hundreds of meters away from him, he could still feel the dangerous aura emitted by that blade.

"Is it a saber?"

From the vague outline mapped on the sleeve, this person was apparently carrying a saber-type magical equipment.

At present, Li Yao was researching sabers, and thus, his gaze focused involuntarily upon that man's sleeve as it was attracted by that peerless saber hidden inside.

Having stared at that man's sleeve for three seconds, Li Yao suddenly felt his scalp tingle, as if an invisible saber was launched from within that man's sleeve towards him, sweeping away everything in its path before it struck dead right upon his throat!

"Ah!"

Li Yao could not help but scream as he tottered and retreated two steps back; almost falling off the crystal tank.

The sudden burst of pain he felt coming from his throat was so real that goosebumps had exploded all over his body as his hands covered his throat, while cold sweat oozed out from his forehead. He felt as though he had died once!

Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan took a glance at him with a bewildered look in their eyes. They could not understand why Li Yao suddenly went limp.

Hundreds of meters away, the bulbous-nosed man felt the oddity of Li Yao as he calmly glanced at him before his eyes flickered with a sliver of surprise.

"That man is Long Wenhui, an illustrious demon beast hunter of wasteland and the vice president of Hundred Saber Alliance. He is in the Core Formation Stage and was one of the peak battle forces in the battle of Verdant Tarn City. He is also the one who captured the Demon King!"

Zhao Tianchong introduced.

"So he was a Core Formation Stage powerhouse, no wonder his strength was so tyrannical. I just spied on him a bit, but it felt like I had been cut by a blade. I was simply unable to block!"

Li Yao still had a lingering fear. If he had known that he was a Core Formation Stage expert, how could he have dared to peep at his blade?

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao stabilized his mind before he narrowed his eyes as he tried to peer behind Long Wenhui.

Behind Long Wenhui was two crystal tanks side by side that were dragging an enormous transparent cage. All the railings had been forged using crystals which were not only engraved with dense glyphs on the surface, but had numerous micro-array glyphs which were floating within the crystal. They glowed with ever-changing brilliance.

Within the cage stood an over two-meter tall humanoid monster with a body covered in light blue scales. It had a long and narrow tail, clear and distinguishable facial features which seemed like a distorted human face, and two horns on either side of its head that were pointed towards the sky. The horn on the left side was broken and a light golden liquid was flowing out.

The Demon King's palms and feet had been pierced with long crystal nails which were affixed to crystal chains, connecting his limbs to the four corners of the cage. His scapulas had two light purple cones deeply embedded which were releasing lightning with no end.

Even Li Yao, who was a hundred meters away, could hear crackling sounds coming from inside the Demon King’s body.

However, there wasn't even a sliver of change in the expression on the Demon King's face. Only the deepest part of his eyes occasionally flickered with an extremely brutal aura as he gradually swept his gaze over the audience, giving the crowd the impression that he was looking at a group of insignificant ants.

Suddenly, the Demon King’s glance skimmed over Li Yao.

Powerful! Terrifying! Tyrannical! Brutal!

These words suddenly popped out from the depths of his brain one after another.

Regardless of him being heavily shackled to the cage, a tyrannical aura unscrupulously emanated from the Demon King that made Li Yao highly tense. An urge to fight a battle to the death rose up in him.

One could only imagine, if the Demon King hadn't been shackled and became crazy, how horrible would it be?

"Beep Beep!"

"Beep Beep!"

"Beep Beep!"

The mini-crystal processors of Li Yao and the other two simultaneously rang. Having taken a glance, the three simultaneously revealed an ecstatic look.

"The three of us have been selected as representatives of the Grand Desolate War Institution!"

"This peerless Demon King is going to be beheaded by us!"

...

The outskirts of Verdant Tarn City was a temporary safe zone, which was filled with a sea of tents.

All the rescued citizens were safely reallocated here, where they were waiting for the end of the beast tide before they could return to their homes.

It was also one of the reasons why the army would rather initiate bloody battles street by street and was unable to use heavy firepower.

The wasteland was sparsely populated and poor in transportation modes. There was an extreme shortage of a variety of building materials, making it rather difficult to build a large city that could harbor a couple hundred thousand people.

If a city that size was leveled to the ground with heavy firepower, not only would it be impossible to safely reallocate so many citizens, the reconstruction would also be a huge, long, drawn-out project that would cost an astronomical figure.

In the meantime, mankind would have lost a permanent base and the subsequent consequences would be immeasurable.

Therefore, unless it was a last resort, the federation army would not personally destroy a city that was built after over a hundred years of painstaking effort. This way, not only could humankind could preserve their strength a bit, it would also be rather convenient to reconstruct homes.

At this moment, the entire temporary safe zone was bursting with joy upon learning of the great victory.

From the child who had just started babbling to elderly folk with long beards, everyone was shouting and jumping for joy, shouting the slogan, "Long live the cultivators and the federation army!"

Especially when the convoy of captured demon clan experts gradually passed through the temporary safe zone, the atmosphere was hot to the extreme; the masses broke into loud cheers and their hands were almost swollen from clapping.

Many had tragically lost their relatives during the beast tide outbreak, so their hatred for the demon clan ran deep. The masses charged toward the convoy without a care in the world, only to be blocked by soldiers.

"Don't be anxious, you will have the time to take your revenge!"

Next to the temporary safe zone, a simple war tribunal that could accommodate 100,000 people was built within a few days with the help of a few cultivation sects.

In just a short amount of time, it was jampacked. The citizens who had lost their relatives in the beast tide outbreak were arranged in the VIP seats, while the seats of the rest of the people were decided through lotteries. Those who could not get seats gathered outside the war tribunal, where they could watch the proceedings live through a huge hologram in the sky.

Today, a Demon King and nineteen Demon Generals would be publicly tried in the special war tribunal of Verdant Tarn City!

This was the custom of the Star Glory Federation.

As far as the Demon Soldiers and incoming demon beasts were concerned, all of them were treated as nothing more than wild animals; it didn't matter how they were killed.

However, when they reached the Demon General level, their wisdom wasn't any worse than that of a human. They too had established a Demon Beast Empire, dominating the universe for tens of millenniums and once posing as masters of humankind.

This was a humiliating history which humankind had engraved into their hearts and bones.

Therefore, if the high-level demon clan experts were treated as wild animals, it was tantamount to insulting themselves.

Thus, humankind defined the war between the demon clan and themselves as a war of survival between two different civilizations.

The demon beasts of or above the level of Demon General were treated as commanders of the enemy civilization. Once they were captured, they would be treated as POWs and get a trial in the war tribunal, where they would be punished properly according to the laws.

As for the outcome of the trial, there has always been just one.

The death penalty, which would be carried out immediately!

Not only that, the death penalty would be enacted by two kinds of people.

First would be low-level cultivators who had personally taken part in the war and performed brilliantly on the battlefield.

Second would be ordinary citizens, the relatives of the people who had died under the jaws of demon beasts and had a blood feud with them.

As far the sinister Demon Generals, Demon Kings, and even Demon Emperors went, they were not afraid of death at all.

They were no different than the high-level cultivators of humankind, who would also magnanimously die when there was no way left.

However, for the Demon King who was a respected figure in the Blood Demon Sector, dying in the hands of low-level cultivators and the ordinary citizens who did not even have the strength to tie up a chicken was truly a humiliating thing.

In the Star Glory Federation, even an insignificant ordinary worker had the chance to kill a Demon King and personally avenge their families. This was the greatest solace and the greatest inspiration for mankind’s morale!

So, Li Yao gloriously became one of the thousand executioners.

The peerless Demon King who was equivalent to a Core Formation Stage powerhouse of humankind would die in his and 999 fellows' hands!

Chapter 186: The End of Hunters

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2:59 PM.

The trial was about to begin.

Billions of citizens across the entire Star Glory Federation were closely watching the war tribunal of Verdant Tarn City through a live telecast on the Spiritual Nexus.

Each and every bustling city, which had previously been hustling and bustling with traffic, had now become deserted and quiet. Every flying car floated motionless in the air as everyone watched the live telecast through the hologram inside the car.

Many people also stood on the road as they stretched their necks to watch the huge hologram installed on sky-rise buildings with mouths agape.

These holograms originally used to telecast ads, but at present, all of them were telecasting the war tribunal of Verdant Tarn City, focusing on the savage-looking Demon King who appeared fierce, but was devoid of his strength.

Every place was full of noisy crowds. Teahouses, restaurants, pubs, and other establishments were all burning with ardor. However, no one was speaking loudly, everyone had their fists clenched and breath held as they waited for the coming of justice.

The Star Glory Federation believed in one justice and one justice alone.

Tooth for a tooth, eye for an eye, blood for blood.

Under the burning hot gazes of 100,000 citizens, twenty demon clan commanders led by Demon King Pieu who were imprisoned in special restrictive barriers gradually rose to the center of the war tribunal from underground.

Demon King Pieu was condemned by resenting masses, dragged from his high and aloof position in the Blood Demon Sector to that of a prisoner. He was now surrounded by a furious mob and was soon to be punished under human laws. He felt powerless; this feeling of not being able to control his own destiny was not something he had ever experienced.

Even under the restrictive barrier, Demon King Pieu straightened up his chest. He wanted to release a huge amount of demonic energy to deter these insignificant ants.

However, all of his tendons had been cut off and 1,800 demon locking nails were embedded inside his flesh and blood. How could he still muster up any demonic energy?

When the Demon King discovered a teenager with one arm on his hip, while the other pointed at his nose as he cursed and spat towards him, the great dignity and arrogance of the Demon King was finally shaken.

The Demon King was a bit terrified as he gnashed his teeth towards the teenager. He proceeded to sit down in a trance at the center of the restrictive barrier.

Now the Demon King had finally realized that all the might, ferocity, honor, and glory in his life had come to an end in the hands of these insignificant ants.

At 3:00 PM, the trial officially began.

Three judges dressed in blood-colored robes sat down on the bench seats. First of all, they each drew an incomparably sharp longsword from their waist and lightly touched their forehead.

It was the custom of Star Glory Federation.

The judges of war tribunal were the most aggressive, most bloodthirsty, and most crazy powerhouses from the army. They were dressed in blood-red robes that were lacking any fancy shades. Before the hearing, touching their forehead with a sharp blade signified that they would act as the sharpest blade for the federation and implement the harshest laws of human civilization. Any alien fallen in their hands would have one end and one end only, and that was death!

"Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!"

A couple dozen huge holograms appeared in the sky before playing the early videos of the beast tide outbreak.

The video showed the quiet and peaceful city, where countless citizens were working, studying, participating in recreational activities, spending their money...

A mother, with her baby in her warm embrace, leisurely strolling down a boulevard. In a secluded location, a young boy and girl, who seemed to have skipped their classes, were billing and cooing.

Suddenly, countless manhole covers flew up to the sky as demon beasts like black fountains surged out from the ground.

Even from the exit of the underground crystal train, countless demon beasts charged out before they began a bloody slaughter.

Despite the fact that the video wasn't accompanied by any sound and all the gory details were blurred, everyone was still terrified as though it was the end of days.

The center of the hologram was filled with a black background, painted upon which were white characters. It was showing the names of thousands upon thousands of victims; it was like a long river, which was quietly flowing to no end.

Having watched these videos, billions of humans in the entire federation were extremely furious.

Even Li Yao's breathing became quicker as he involuntarily clenched his fists. His face was terribly hot, the anger seemed to have materialized into lava and filled his chest.

"One day, we humans will invade the Blood Demon Sector like a torrential current of iron and steel, and make bastards pay a hundred times over!"

Li Yao silently thought.

The war judge began to read the counts of the twenty demon clan commanders, which lasted for a whole three hours.

Starting from the beginning of the second hour, the video playing on the hologram changed as it switched to the videos of joint street fighting of the army and the cultivators.

The whole federation, which had fallen into a solemn mood, began to recover their fighting spirit after watching the bloody slaughter for an hour.

Countless ordinary people on the streets, in the restaurants, tea houses, pubs, wherever they were, began to cheer for the heroic performance of army and the cultivators.

"Long live the federation army!"

"Long live the cultivators!"

"Long live the Star Glory Federation!"

"Long live the human civilization!"

Having watched the videos, Li Yao's mind too was astir as his blood began to boil.

He also saw himself in one of the pictures among the videos.

It was the scene after an intense battle; he was laden with dust, leaving only his white teeth visible as he laughed like a fool while carrying the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon.

Hearing everyone cheering at the top of their lungs, Li Yao suddenly came to realize that among the cheers raised by hundreds of thousands of people, some of the many people were also cheering for him.

This made him very, very, very proud.

Following that, the videos slowly began to show the underground battle which was just starting to get bloody.

In the underground battlefield that was meticulously constructed by the high-rank demon clan experts, countless experts fell!

Especially during the last fight with the Demon King Peiu, where seven Building Foundation Stage cultivators had lost their lives in his hand, and a dozen people were left grievously injured!

"Cultivators aren't afraid of death; if they are, they shouldn't embark on the road of cultivation!"

This sentence was often hanging on Yuan Manqiu's lips.

Only at this moment did Li Yao finally came to completely understand what kind of righteous ardor and sacrifice did these sixteen simple words entail.

Watching the cultivators swooping towards the Demon King regardless of the increasing death tolls, a deep pride once again began to rise in Li Yao's heart.

"After becoming a cultivator, I can be associated with these heroes. This is so awesome!"

At last—

After the trial continued for five entire hours, the chief judge once again drew the sharp sword and pointed at Demon King Pieu and the nineteen Demon Generals.

"The tribunal has reached a verdict. We, the tribunal court, find the defendant Demon King Pieu on the count of war crimes, guilty, on the count of crimes against humanity, guilty, and on the count of massacre, guilty. The war tribunal sentences Demon King Pieu to death, which is to be carried out immediately. His demon soul shall be scattered, never to be born again!"

"We, the tribunal court, find the defendant Demon General Gulun on the count of war crimes, guilty, on the count of crimes against humanity, guilty, on the count of massacre, guilty. The war tribunal sentences Demon General Gulun to death, which is to be carried out immediately. His demon soul shall be scattered, never to be born again!"

"We, the tribunal court, find the defendant Demon General Suoshan, on the count of war crimes, guilty, on the count of crimes against humanity, guilty, on the count of massacre, guilty. The war tribunal sentences Demon General Suoshan to death, which is to be carried out immediately. His demon soul shall be scattered, nevermore to be born again!"

"We, the tribunal court, find the defendant Demon General Qitian..."

Once the verdict was announced, the tribunal, in the blink of an eye, changed into an execution ground without the slightest bit of nonsense. An execution platform built from crystal rose from the underground, sketched upon which were hundreds of thousands of glyphs that ultimately formed a huge array.

The Spirit Gathering Slaughtering Demon Array could gather the spiritual energy of countless cultivators, which, after being compressed to the extreme, could be shot instantly. The power of countless low-level cultivators would be superimposed, and it would blast with a huge amount of energy which was comparable to a shot from a high-level cultivator using all his strength!

Demon King Pieu was the first to be pushed upon the execution platform.

Until now, this fiend remained calm. He shook his head as though he disdained this Spirit Gathering Slaughtering Demon Array.

However, the constantly twitching corners of his eyes betrayed him as it revealed the struggle in the depth of his heart.

A crystal ball was present in front of five hundred low-level cultivators who were to act as his executioners. At this moment, the crystal ball began to flash.

Recalling the wanton slaughter carried out by the beast tide on the ground as well as the cultivators throwing themselves at Demon King Pieu without care for their lives in the final battle, only to fall one by one...

Li Yao, without a sliver of hesitation, placed his hands on the crystal ball before he burned his life force to the max; thereupon, his spiritual energy madly surged into the crystal ball, down the thick crystal tube, and was gathered at the Spirit Gathering Slaughtering Demon Array.

"Swish!"

A tiny ball of light appeared upon the Spirit Gathering Slaughtering Demon Array, which slightly trembled, giving the impression of holding a life. Following that, it constantly grew and became brighter and brighter, just like a rising sun.

The spiritual energy provided by the five hundred low-level cultivators burning their life forces gathered into a huge mass of spiritual energy.

The five hundred ordinary people who had been chosen through the lottery also had a crystal ball in front of them which simultaneously began to flash, sketching out the outline of a palm.

This was a special trigger mechanism. When all five hundred ordinary people had placed their palm on the crystal ball, Demon King Pieu's head would be suddenly blasted by the huge mass of spiritual energy; he would be thoroughly killed by the explosion.

This means that the five hundred ordinary people would "personally" kill the culprit, taking revenge for their relatives who had lost their lives during the beast tide!

At this moment, Demon King Pieu finally started screaming at the top of his lungs:

"Do you think that these ants are worthy of killing this King?"

"You just wait and watch, Verdant Tarn City is just the beginning. Someday, my Demon Beast Empire will rise again in the endless cosmos. You, ants, are destined to be food and slaves for my demon clan! Slaves, nothing more!"

In response to his outcry, slight beeping sounds rang.

"Beep!"

Yao Guifen, a middle-aged female worker of Verdant Tarn City's Second Woolen Mill had triggered the array.

"Beep!"

Mao Xiaowei, a 3rd class student of Verdant Tarn City's No.12 High School had triggered the array.

"Beep!"

Yang Shuijin, the owner as well as the chef of Verdant Tarn City's Unforgetful Stewed Meat Shop at the Red Star

Farmers' Market on the Eastern Happy Street had triggered the array.

"Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!"

All five hundred ordinary people had placed their palm on the crystal ball.

The Spirit Gathering Slaughtering Demon Array was completely energized. The light ball jumped up as it stretched into a long arrow of light which pierced the head of Demon King Pieu in the blink of an eye.

Demon King Pieu's roars came to an abrupt stop before being replaced by desolate screams. The huge mass of spiritual energy tumbled around left and right inside his head before it broke the entire skull into pieces in the blink of an eye, distorting his face to the extreme.

Thereupon, Demon King Pieu's body constantly expanded, as his true form was revealed under the stimulation of extreme pain—a ten-meter-long giant beast that seemed to be a cross between a scaly dragon and a lizard.

Regardless of how he struggled, from beginning to end, he was firmly locked in place by the barrier. Finally, his body stopped expanding, but his head grew bigger and bigger as strange bulges appeared one by one.

"Swish, swish, swish, swish!"

The bulges began to rupture as numerous streams of spiritual aura intermingled with blood gushed out; the entire head of Demon King Pieu exploded.

"Rumble!"

At the same time, a bolt of lightning flashed in the sky, followed by a light drizzle.

Watching the gradually stiffening corpse of Demon King Pieu amid the drizzle, Li Yao felt incredibly excited. His hands kept on shaking, and he was unable to calm them down no matter what he did.

Before coming to the Verdant Tarn City, how could he have ever thought that he would actually get the chance to personally kill a Demon King?

"Today, I could only behead a Demon King by the virtue of the execution ground."

"However, someday, I will fight on a true battlefield with a peerless saber in my hand, and butcher the Demon Kings just like pigs!"

"The battle of Verdant Tarn City is already over. Now, I have to embark on a new journey. I still have three months’ time to accumulate around ten thousand more credits. It's not impossible, but I must work harder and harder!"

"I have to keep on moving forward for my dream!"

Chapter 187: Lone Hunter

Chapter 187: Lone Hunter

One month later.

Zenith Province at the northwest of Wasteland.

Amid the desert that stretched as far as the eye could see stood jagged rocky mountains of all kinds of shapes and sizes, just like a forest carved out of rocks.

Each piece of rock was peppered with hundreds of thousands of holes. On the inside, they were full of caves that stretched out in all directions, carving out a cave which was no different than a maze.

In addition, hidden under the ground were many-hundred-meter-long underground rivers, turning this seemingly lifeless stone forest into a paradise in the Wasteland.

It was also the best hiding place for the demon beasts.

Crouching inside a gray-brown thermal camouflage netting, Li Yao looked just like a piece of rock.

A poisonous scorpion crawled its way from his ass to his head before slowly crawling down, its tail all curled up, apparently searching for a prey between the rocks.

"It seems today isn’t good as well!"

Very carefully, Li Yao sucked in a mouthful of water with a straw.

Because it was in the sun for a very long time, the water bag that was stitched up using the demon beast leather was sizzling hot, and sucking the water brought a sour taste to his mouth.

Nevertheless, Li Yao was reluctant to waste even a drop of water. He slowly nourished his parched throat with a small mouthful.

He recalled the events from one month ago, where he slaughtered everything in his wake in Verdant Tarn City, madly raked in credits, and even beheaded a Demon King as an executioner… These scenes filled with zeal and morale caused him to be fired up with boundless enthusiasm!

However, in that battle, he seemed to have used up all his luck. In the following month, his progress wasn't that smooth.

Since the battle of Verdant Tarn City, the demon clan seemed to be well-behaved all of a sudden. Or perhaps, after losing a Demon King, the high-level demon clan experts of Blood Demon Sector didn't dare to act rashly and were readjusting their battle strategy.

In short, in the following month, the southern regions of the Wasteland were pretty calm. Only two small-scale beast tide outbreaks had occurred, and the wormholes only opened up within the wilderness.

When Li Yao received the news, the army had long mobilized a large number of crystal battleships and bombarded the beast tide to the point that not even slag remained.

The northern part of the Wasteland, the vast domain which was not yet fully under control of humans, had several demon beast lairs hidden. A few even sheltered small wormholes, which would open several times in a year, allowing a large herd of demon beast to enter the Heaven Origin Sector.

However, only high-level cultivators or an army regiment dared to deeply venture into this perilous domain. No matter how gutsy Li Yao was, he knew the difference between seeking death and taking a risk.

Once, Li Yao and a team of senior students who had at least reached 7th level of the Refinement Stage had taken a high difficulty mission to hunt a high-ranked Demon Soldier, Red Griffin.

After spending seven days and seven nights straight, experiencing countless storms and eating loads of sand, they finally killed the Red Griffin. However, as Li Yao was the weakest, his contribution was the least, and therefore the credits he obtained were just crumbs . He might as well honestly stay at the institute and take the courses!

After eating such a loss, Li Yao was no longer willing to team up with senior students.

In contrast, Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan weren't in immediate need of credits like him. They would rather proceed step by step and steadily cultivate than go out and take risks every now and then.

Anyhow, they had earned a lot of credits in the battle of Verdant Tarn City, which would last for a while.

Having thought this over again and again, Li Yao bit the bullet and made a decision which would be considered crazy in others' opinion.

He applied for multitudes of hunting missions and prepared to go solo, freely hunting the demon beasts in the Wasteland.

Acting solo was not good at all. Although he would be free to act as he wished and have a monopoly on credits for the demon beasts hunted, he would not have any support, supply or intel; he would be on his own for everything.

In this crisis-ridden Wasteland where demon beasts were everywhere, it was the most dangerous profession.

Obviously, Li Yao wasn't heading for his doom, he also had a secret weapon.

It was precisely the self-cultivating magical equipment—the Black Wing Sword!

Although Little Black was a piece of magical equipment, it cultivation was even crazier than Li Yao’s. Among the credits Li Yao had spent, a large portion of the credits was used for buying high-purity crystals for Little Black to engulf.

After engulfing the crystals, the black spirit threads that spread around its body would grow in number and become thicker; they could now be very clearly intertwined into black wings.

When these black wings spread, Little Black could also get faster.

Li Yao, for one, had experienced this firsthand. Little Black's speed could very easily break through the sound barrier and reach Mach 2.

After that, Little Black could still increase the speed by a notch, but Li Yao's body was unable to hold on.

If the sword sped up, his body could very well be torn to pieces by the air resistance.

This speed had already surpassed many combat-class flying shuttles.

And as an incomparably flexible flying sword, Little Black's small maneuvers were far more intricate and complex than that of the Mystic Bird Battle Shuttle, Crimson Flame Battle Shuttle, and other comparable vehicles.

It was because of Little Black that Li Yao dared to venture alone in the Wasteland.

He had specifically selected the missions for which he would not have to venture far away from the military base, allowing him to stay within a relatively safe zone. The demon beasts he would hunt were not strong either, but they still had precious materials on their bodies.

And once a high-ranked Demon Soldier or any enemy ranked above that appeared, he would hug the Black Wing Sword and escape through the sky immediately.

Once, he also let his imagination run wild: maybe, without any ability, he could directly stab a demon beast or even a Demon General with the quick speed of Black Wing Sword.

However, Little Black's master forgot that it didn't have any limbs; if it was restricted by some kind of barrier, it would lose its ability to attack.

Whenever Li Yao drove the Black Wing Sword to launch an attack at a demon beast, this guy would always circle around constantly, seemingly confused.

Li Yao studied for half a day, but could not find any reason why it couldn’t attack. He could only give up and treat the Black Wing Sword as a pure escaping tool.

In the vast expanse of the Wasteland, the fighting between the human and demon beasts was completely different than street fighting in the city.

Here, there were no impetuous demon beasts who would gather and rush at Li Yao like a tide, only to be killed by him in the end. The Six Barrel Rotary Cannon and Heavy Vibrosaber-like heavy weapons were cumbersome. There was too much room for the demon beasts to escape. Just as the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon started to spin, the demon beasts would escape underground. So, no matter how fierce the firepower was, how could it do anything?

Since he didn't have the support of any heavy magical equipment, Li Yao could only take risks to cultivate a powerful technique and take very difficult Combat Department courses in order to up his offense and hunt powerful demon beasts.

The course he chose was "Desert Storm Saber Technique!"

This domineering-sounding saber technique originated from the frequently-occurring desert storms in the Wasteland. When it was trained to its highest level, the subsequent energy released from the saber would rotate just like a hurricane; sand and stones would fly, giving rise to thousand-meter-high waves of sand, which would gather into a giant sand blade that would ruthlessly slash towards the enemy.

Among all the courses in the Combat Department, the "Desert Storm Saber Technique" course was one of the most difficult. Usually, only 7th level Refinement Stage and above senior students would learn this technique.

In order to strengthen his offense, Li Yao spent close to 2,000 credits without an ounce of care and chose the "Desert Storm Saber Technique".

In the end, reality taught him a deep, harsh lesson—he failed!

Although university life wasn't complete without a failure, Li Yao was so depressed that he was about to vomit blood.

The loss of 2,000 credits wasn't as important as the fact that he didn't have much time remaining.

Li Yao discovered that he had fallen in a vicious circle.

If he wanted to earn a lot of credits in a short period of time, he had to take risks and head into dangerous zones to hunt high-ranked demon beasts.

And if he wanted to hunt high-ranked demon beasts, he had to improve his strength as soon as possible.

And if he wanted to improve his strength, he had to take risks and spend a lot of credits to train in highly difficult and powerful techniques.

However, once he failed, the large number of credits he had to spend would go down the drain.

And while he was going around and around in this vicious cycle, the time was quickly passing by the minute.

The deadline for the Refiners' Registration Examination was also not far away!

Fortunately, it seemed that every cloud has a silver lining. At the beginning of last week, his luck gradually returned to him.

First, under the stimulation of failure, he gave full play to his craziness. When he was madly training the "Desert Strom Saber Technique" during a stormy night, under the madness brought about due to his wish and his fanatic training, he actually rushed into the 6th level of the Refinement Stage and became an intermediate-level Refinement Stage cultivator!

With such strength, one could also hold a basic-level post even in the top five hundred cultivation sects of the federation.

Afterward, splurged and once again applied for the "Desert Storm Saber Technique" course. Whereupon, by relying on the comprehension he gained during the stormy night, he finally cleared the course. As a result, not only did he make up for the loss of credits, he also earned a bit.

Immediately following his recent success, Li Yao rode the Black Wing Sword and flew thousands of kilometers away as he arrived at the Zenith Province to the northwest of the Wasteland.

It was the active region of high-rank Demon Soldiers and Refinement Stage cultivators, and a place where priceless prey lurked.

Li Yao quickly found a Three-Horned Lancehead[1].

An adult Three-Horned Lancehead could be as strong as an intermediate-rank Demon Soldier. Its venom contained a very rare ingredient that was an essential raw material for producing many high-rank strengthening agents after it was purified; furthermore, it could not be produced artificially.

Therefore, the Three-Horned Lancehead's value was pretty high. If its venom gland remained intact, it could be converted into a lot of credits, a lot more than what he could receive for hunting some of the many high-rank Demon Soldiers.

However, the Three-Horned Lancehead was extremely vigilant. Usually, it would hide inside its complex, maze-like lair, avoiding the attacks of human experts and crystal battleships. It would seldom come above the ground.

Unless...

The sand scorpion which had just disappeared amid the stones once again appeared, crawling under Li Yao's nose.

Li Yao utilized the "Soul Converging Technique" to the extreme. All his pores were sealed tight.

Not only was he not emanating even an ounce of spiritual energy, he even had slowed his breath down a lot.

And as his entire body was covered with a thermal camouflage netting, all the heat was completely locked inside so that his temperature was one with the surrounding rocks.

The favorite prey of the Three-Horned Lancehead was none other than the sand scorpion.

Since the appearance of the sand scorpion, Li Yao had been continuously staring at the Three-Horned Lancehead, which had been hiding in the darkness for four hours already.

Finally—

Watching the sand scorpion crawling towards the distance, the Three-Horned Lancehead could no longer hold itself back.

With a flash, the Three-Horned Lancehead, like a javelin, ruthlessly charged towards the sand scorpion at lightning fast speed.

Just as it opened its mouth and swallowed the sand scorpion, the "rock" nearby suddenly cracked.

With a roar, Li Yao took a step before turning his body!

His body, under the influence of tremendous centrifugal force, turned into a whirlwind. Only then was the saber drawn from its sheath as its tip blew away the sand in its path. A fist-sized head flew into the sky; its eyes were still filled with the satisfied look of enjoying its meal. Even in death, it could not react.

In just half a second, the curtain of perfect hunting fell.

This was a contest of patience, in which Li Yao was the final winner.

Chapter 188: Hunting Efficiency

Chapter 188: Hunting Efficiency

With a slight shake of his wrist, the slightly curved blade vibrated at high-frequency as the stinking snake blood disappeared immediately.

Li Yao sheathed the saber. He was very satisfied with this blade.

In order to display the maximum might of the "Desert Storm Saber Technique" and apply the shortest and most direct attack to subdue his foes, Li Yao had optimized the Windcutter by reforging it, reducing its weight, and slightly curving its blade. It now appeared to be a combination of straight saber and scimitar.

He was most satisfied with the eight grooves on either side of the blade. They were the fruit of countless air propulsion tests, accurate calculations, and forgings carried out by him. These grooves would guide the wind to the flat side of the blade, which would create a propulsion force and push the blade from behind, thereby improving the speed of the saber when attacking by a notch.

Today was its first trial in the real combat. Sure enough, the results were pretty good. While still ensuring lethality, the attack speed had increased to a whole new level, allowing him to unleash the essence of the "Desert Storm Saber Technique" most vividly.

Li Yao's raised the corner of his lips and a sliver of smile appeared on his face as he walked towards the corpse of the Three-Horned Lancehead.

Squatting down, just as he was about to extend his arm to pick it up, his smile suddenly froze.

With wide-open eyes, as Li Yao carefully inspected it using his scabbard to turn the snakehead over and over again, his smile grew stiffer and his complexion grew uglier. Finally, he could not help but ruthlessly curse.

He was fooled!

This demon beast was not the Three-Horned Lancehead at all, but its close relative called the Hump-Nosed Viper.

The two had a striking similarity, however, the former's forehead had three very sharp little horns, while the latter's forehead had three pointed sarcomas.

At ten to twenty meters away, amid the flying sand, even a cultivator with keen vision would be easily confused.

Because Li Yao didn't want to scare the snake away, he had only used his peripheral vision to scan the prey. He simply dared not gaze at it directly. Only at this moment did he discover that he was mistaken.

Although the two were close relatives, the Hump-Nosed Viper was just a low-level Demon Soldier whose venom was quite ordinary and could be synthesized.

Comparing it to the Three-Horned Lancehead was like comparing clouds and mud; it could not even be converted into a few credits.

Remembering himself laying prone on the ground for an entire four hours in this scorching desert, where he was not far away from turning into a dehydrated mummy, only to ambush such waste... Li Yao had no way to vent his anger; he could only blame his bad luck.

The Zenith Province was the paradise of the Wasteland, both predators and prey lurked and hid in the darkness.

Just this short fight had already garnered the attention of many. Furthermore, the faint smell of the Hump-Nosed Viper’s blood was also permeating into the air, which had been perceived by many powerful hunters.

"Crash!"

Suddenly, some movement could be seen at three nearby places amid the stones as three chubby heads emerged.

Three very cute small animals with fleshy and stout heads drilled out from the ground.

They looked like overly obese marmots which were carefully sniffing the bloody air as they awkwardly wriggled on the ground, twisting their obese asses while slowly crawling towards Li Yao.

"What is this?"

Although at first glance they didn't look dangerous, it was imperative to never lower one's vigilance in the Wasteland.

Clutching the hilt of the saber, Li Yao bent his waist as he slowly retreated, quickly searching his brain for any info as to what kind of beast they were.

After three seconds, a name suddenly popped out from the depths of his brain as Li Yao suddenly turned pale.

"Barbed Rock Pig, a high-rank Demon Soldier, specialized in long-range attack!"

"Little Black!"

Li Yao screamed.

Three high-rank Demon Soldiers who specialized in long-range attacks was not something he could deal with.

The moment Li Yao screamed, the three Barbed Rock Pigs also tore their disguises as their bodies, just like filling a ball, expanded to ten times their previous size. Their cute faces turned incomparably hideous, their soft and supple hair stood erect, appearing as though they were acupuncture needles. Under the sunlight, they sparkled with a strange blue gloss.

"Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!"

The moment the bodies of Barbed Rock Pigs swelled to the extreme, they immediately shrunk as a few dozen poisonous thorns headed towards Li Yao like bullets.

With a shout, Li Yao heavily stamped on the ground, splashing countless stones around and creating a thin barrier before him as he flew a dozen meters back. While he flew, his arm stroked his waist.

A shiny ebony pistol appeared in his hand.

"BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM!"

Even without looking, Li Yao, fired six shots as six beams of blood-red light shot out from the muzzle almost simultaneously. With ear-piercing howls, the bullets headed towards the three Barbed Rock Pigs.

Blood bullets!

They were the special bullets baptized with Li Yao's blood using the secret technique of Hundred Smelting Clan!

Not only were they tremendously powerful, they even had a mysterious contact with his soul; as a result, after they were shot, they could be controlled with his mind. Their strike rate was 100%.

"Ping! Ping! Ping! Ping! Ping! Ping!"

The three Barbed Rock Pigs once again fired multitudes of poisonous thorns that directly struck his six blood bullets.

The six blood bullets exploded into six bloody veils of mist in the air.

Li Yao didn't even look back. In one breath, he had retreated by fifty meters. Thereafter, he once again exerted his legs as he rose into the sky just like a firecracker. Not so far away from him, a black beam of light quickly arrived in front of him and was grabbed tightly in his embrace.

How could the Barbed Rock Pigs willingly watch their cooked duck fly away? After the three furiously roared, their bodies swelled, reaching almost two meters in diameter, while their gray-brown skin turned completely red. In one go, they had fired hundreds of poisonous thorns which were even faster than bullets!

"Swish!"

The Black Wing Sword's speed soared to the limit. The hilt seemed to have eyes; it continuously rotated and changed direction as it weaved through the dense screen of poisonous thorns, displaying fantastic dodging maneuvers.

As the speed of the thorns and the Black Wing Sword was almost the same, Li Yao helplessly watched countless blue poisonous thorns gradually fly past him. As he watched some of the many poisonous thorns nearly pierce his skin, only to be dodged by a hair’s breadth at the last moment, Li Yao felt cold sweat dripping down his forehead.

After hovering at death's door for a second, the Black Wing Sword carrying Li Yao soared out of the rainstorm-like cluster of poisonous thorns!

The three Barbed Rock Pigs let out furious howls, all of which were ignored by Li Yao. Li Yao, lying atop the Black Wing Sword, flew over fifty kilometers away in one breath.

Only when they arrived near the military base did Li Yao dare to slow down.

First, Li Yao spread his spirit threads as far as he could to determine that there were no powerful demon beasts around.

Only then did he vigilantly jump off the Black Wing Sword. Li Yao slumped down on the ground with his back against a giant rock. He sighed with relief while his heart remained throbbing with fear.

"Little Black, you have saved me once again!"

Li Yao's chest still heaved up and down when he recalled the soul-stirring scene from a moment ago.

In the crisis-ridden Wasteland, who was the predator and who was the prey could change in the blink of an eye. Even a powerful hunter could very likely become prey in a second.

If he did not have Little Black, this ace in the hole, Li Yao simply didn't dare to come here alone to hunt.

"These demon beasts are truly cunning!"

Li Yao had wasted half a day over nothing and had even nearly died to the poisonous thorns of the Barbed Rock Pigs. Being unable to vent the fiery anger in his heart, Li Yao slammed his fist on the rock, cracking the giant rock in four to five places.

Demon beasts were originally extremely clever, especially the demon beasts of the Wasteland.

Nature is all about survival of the fittest. All the demon beasts who were not intelligent enough to survive had already vanished in a puff of smoke under the repeated cleansing of powerful human experts and crystal battleships. They had died a graveless death.

On the other hand, the demon beasts who could survive under the nose of human civilization were all sly and crafty.

These demon beasts were completely opposite of the demon beasts who had just arrived from the Blood Demon Sector that were quite impatient to charge towards the human cities. The demon beasts who had survived in the Wasteland for a few decades or over a century might not be tyrannically strong, but they had all kinds of strange life-saving means.

Hunting these demon beasts was rather difficult compared to annihilating a large beast tide.

"It can't go on like this. My hunting efficiency is too low. If this goes on, I simply will not be able to reach 40,000 credits in the next two months."

"What to do? How can I increase my hunting efficiency?"

Supporting his cheeks, Li Yao devoted his mind to finding a solution.

Having analyzed the hunt over these few days, Li Yao discovered that his low efficiency could be mainly attributed to two reasons.

First, playing the tiger to scare the pig.

Second, playing the pig to eat the tiger.

The so-called "playing the tiger to scare the pig" refers to the ordinary demon beasts and low-level Demon Soldiers, who, in order to survive, have gone through a slow and long evolution, and gradually looked more and more like powerful demon beasts.

This was a natural and special camouflage.

For instance, the Hump-Nosed Viper from a while ago. Originally it was just a low-level Demon Soldier, however, after slowly evolving, it developed a striking similarity to the Three-Horned Lancehead, which allowed it to disguise itself as an intermediate-rank Demon Soldier.

The world of demon beasts follows the law of the jungle. Many middle-rank Demon Soldiers, when seeing the Hump-Nosed Viper from afar, may not dare to attack it.

In nature, this is a very common phenomenon.

Many butterflies' wings are bright-colored, extremely gorgeous, and can simulate the textures of ferocious beasts so that other carnivorous insects dared not approach them.

On the other hand, the so-called "play the pig to eat the tiger" was exactly like the Barbed Rock Pigs. Obviously, they were very powerful high-rank Demon Soldiers, yet they camouflaged themselves as low-level Demon Soldiers. Some even camouflaged themselves as far as developing the appearance of ordinary demon beasts, which in turn made their prey relax their vigilance and allowed them to kill with one strike!

Often during the hunt, Li Yao encountered these two cases, which gave him a great deal of trouble.

In the final analysis, it was all because he was not familiar with the different species of demon beasts. In other words, he was unable to identify the species, values, and characteristics of the demon beasts.

He was finding it very difficult to solve this problem.

After going through millenniums of evolution, the number of species of demon beasts far surpassed ten million. Just the number of most common demon beasts found in the Heaven Origin Sector numbered in millions, where each demon beast had a certain probability to mutate.

A few million species of demon beasts, where each demon beast had completely different characteristics. Some might even have very subtle differences in their appearances, making them hard to recognize.

Even a cultivator who had extremely strong computation ability would find it impossible to remember everything.

The memory is a very strange thing. Even if one could remember, he might not remember quick enough in the crisis-ridden battlefield.

Take the Barbed Rock Pig for instance; Li Yao had obviously seen the details of this demon beast in the database along with the details of over ten thousand demon beasts, the information on which was sealed in the depths of his brain.

However, when he saw it for the first time, he had taken three seconds, a whole three seconds before the details of the Barbed Rock Pig popped out from the depths of his sea-like memory.

During a fight between a cultivator and a demon beast, life and death could be determined in a fraction of a second; three seconds was way too long.

"What to do? The details of demon beasts are too complex, I am simply unable to remember in a short period of time. And even if I could remember it somehow, who's to say that I could remember it at the most crucial moment?"

"Mini-crystal processors could store the details of many demon beasts, but it would be too idiotic to lower my head to look at the crystal processor at the moment when life and death could be decided."

"Furthermore, even if there is a huge database, without the name of the demon beast, it would still be very difficult to find the specific details of the demon beast."

"And if I used the ‘general search' function, information on a few dozen similar demon beasts would be shown, how could I actually determine which one is correct?"

"Is there a magical equipment which could accurately display the information on demon beasts with one scan, and is also convenient to look at so that it would not affect the fight?"

Li Yao quietly pondered. If there was such a magical equipment that could identify the species, value, and danger-level of demon beast with one scan, it would greatly improve his efficiency and would also ensure his safety for sure!

Chapter 189: Self-Crafting a Magical Equipment!

Chapter 189: Self-Crafting a Magical Equipment!

Once this idea emerged in his mind, he was no longer able to contain himself.

Li Yao returned to the Grand Desolate War Institution at lightning-fast speed and headed straight to the 2nd laboratory of the Refining Department.

With progress being made on the cleaning of the wreckage, plus the sponsorship of the Empyrean Terminus Sect, the Refining Department's situation was getting better and better. Two small-scale laboratories were built, which were used by Yuan Manqiu and Li Yao respectively.

Even though Li Yao's laboratory was not too big, the crystal processor used there was assembled from the wreckage of the super crystal processor recovered from the ruins, causing its computing power was extremely strong.

In addition to the processor, Li Yao had bought a Super Perception Cabin at cheap price from the Combat Department shamelessly through his relationship with Ding Lingdang.

As far as others were concerned, the Super Perception Cabin was useless to them. However, he could utilize its full effects.

Li Yao had directly installed the Super Perception Cabin in the laboratory. Whenever he encountered a problem which needed careful consideration, he would flee to the Heavenly Refining Tower through the Super Perception Cabin and research there.

Apart from the training in the Billowing Star Sea and hunting demon beasts in the Wasteland, Li Yao would spend rest of his remaining time in the laboratory, thereby greatly improving his efficiency.

In the pitch black 2nd laboratory, tens of shining holograms floated in the air as information quickly fell from above like a waterfall, along with complex blueprints that would trickle down every now and then.

These were relatively popular methods that were used to detect demon beasts in the Star Glory Federation.

Sitting on the ground with his legs crossed, Li Yao would slap freezing glyphs on his temples from time to time, cooling down his brain that was sizzling hot from operating at high-speed.

In the darkness, his brightly lit eyes were just like those of a beast that was hiding in the depths of a forest, ready to hunt a wild animal at any moment.

At present, there were three kinds of commonly used demon beast detection methods in the Federation.

The most popular was what Li Yao had been using before. He would feed the crystal processor with the details of all the demon beasts, which could be activated with sound and then retrieved via special telepathic thoughts.

It was just like the time when Li Yao had encountered the Black Armored Saber Mantis in the Verdant Tarn City. As long as he yelled "Black Armored Saber Mantis!", the telepathic thoughts would automatically be activated, which would then retrieve all the details of Black Armored Saber Mantis from the database and display them before Li Yao in a translucent hologram.

Even though it sounded good, many times the user didn't know the scientific name of the demon beast.

At that time, the telepathic thoughts would use the default "general search" function.

For instance, if the user didn't know the scientific name of the demon beast, but could see that the demon beast belonged to Saber Mantis Family from its appearance, he could shout "Saber Mantis" and thousands of saber mantis' images would appear for the user to refer to.

If the description was more detailed, like "Black Saber Mantis" or "Black Saber Mantis with two blade-like forelimbs", the subsequent search options would be fewer and more accurate.

The problem with this type of detection method was that the species of demon beasts were too complex and too many. Even if described as "black colored Saber Mantis with two blade-like forelimbs and sturdy armor", the search options would still not be limited to Black Armored Saber Mantis, as there is also the Black Armored Large Sickle Mantis, Black Armored Small Sickle Mantis, Seven-Starred Black Sickle Mantis, Nine-Starred Black Sickle Mantis... and a few dozen more species.

The appearance of these demon beasts were strikingly similar, but in strength, they were far apart.

The Black Armored Saber Mantis was just a low-rank Demon Soldier, while the Nine-Starred Black Sickle Mantis was a vicious high-rank Demon Soldier that could even tear the Gold Armored Sickle Mantis apart just for food!

"This kind of search method is too slow!"

"By the time I could accurately determine that I was facing a Nine-Starred Black Sickle Mantis among the several dozen other black-colored Saber Mantises, the Nine-Starred Black Sickle Mantis would have already arrived before me to play with my life!"

The second method was by sensing the particular vibration frequency to detect any nearby demon beast.

When Li Yao was living as a scavenger in the Magical Equipment Graveyard, the essence watch he had that was manufactured by the Zephyr Guild possessed the same function.

At that time, he used that function to detect the priceless garbage ships. Every time, he was faster by a step and could seize the initiative.

However, this method could only tell its user the existence of a powerful demon beast nearby at the most or could determine the distance between the two. It was very difficult to accurately determine the demon beast's species.

If it was used for hiding and escaping, it was an excellent method.

As for attacking, it was not appropriate at all.

The third method was employed by the military, who used a huge long-range detector.

The operating principle of this magical equipment was completely different and could be subdivided into "optical detectors" and "sound detectors".

Either detector could accurately detect the scale and approximate strength of demon beasts from hundreds of kilometers away to thousands of kilometers.

However, this kind of magical equipment was engineered to deal with beast tide outbreak. Although it could determine the scale and an approximate number of demon beasts, it was impossible to determine the species of every demon beast. Not to mention, the magical equipment was rather huge; the smallest one still needed a crystal battleship to carry it.

"Among the common magical equipment in the market, there is nothing that suits my needs."

"Who could I blame them; after all, hunters who are as weak as me and yet wander alone in the Wasteland are the minority."

"If it's the powerful high-level cultivators, their computation ability is relatively high and they could remember more information of demon beasts.

"And if it's a hunting team, then among the numerous people, someone would always know the details of the demon beasts, and even if no one knew, one of them could always refer to the crystal processor slowly."

"Since I cannot find anything in the market, how about… I craft it myself?"

Li Yao's head was struck with a thought; suddenly, his fingers started to itch.

Since the winter break, during which he had refined some flashy magical equipment, he just stuck to the basics. Usually, he would refine some complex structural components to practice the basics; at most he would modify his own saber and firearm.

Could someone like him, a freshman, craft a completely new magical equipment?

The frequency of freezing glyphs pasted on Li Yao's forehead increased significantly, while his teeth clattered from cold.

On one side, he was shivering, while on the other, thinking calmly.

"For my needs, the magical equipment must be pre-inputted with a database of millions of demon beasts' species."

"No, there is no need to have millions; as long as it is pre-inputted with the demon beasts that would appear in the specific area, it would all fine."

"For instance, if I am hunting on the Wasteland, obviously, there is no need to include the information for the demon beasts residing in the sea as well as in the forest."

"This way, the amount of information will be greatly reduced, I will only have to store the information of a couple hundred thousand species which could be stored in an ordinary memory crystal card."

"Second, the magical equipment needs a very high precision camera that can find a demon beast from a distance; most importantly, it should be able to scan every detail of the demon beast's body."

Li Yao pondered for a bit and summarized that it could be done.

The camera was a special magical equipment. In the cultivation world, it was also known as "crystal eye". It had a highly complex structure consisting of numerous lenses and imaging array glyphs.

The highest-grade camera could even take a picture of a cultivator's soul as well as a high-level demon beast's true form. It was known as the "Dæmon Illuminateur"!

In the world of cultivation, there was a fair share of refiners who would spend their lifetime crafting the crystal eye.

Some even spent over a decade on a top-grade crystal eye, utilizing great care and precision. However, they would never sell it, only keep in their hands to play with and take a picture.

According to them, there was no need to let others know the indescribable pleasure of gazing at the beautiful world contained within a square inch.

No matter whether others said something like "crystal eyes ruined three generations of fortune or the camera ruined their life", they would still never be bored with it.

Although Li Yao was utterly ignorant of the crystal eye, nowadays, whether it was the cultivators or ordinary people, they loved taking pictures using the mini-crystal processor; as a result, the crystal eye technology was continuously developed and commercialized.

Currently, on the market, there were many powerful crystal eyes to choose from.

Although for the accuracy required by Li Yao, the price of crystal eye wasn't cheap, this thing could be used for a long time; thus, he could only clench his teeth and accept it.

"The next problem would be how to compare the images of demon beast taken by the crystal eye with the vast database."

"This needs a very powerful algorithm, and also a unique analogizing array glyph."

Li Yao tensely pondered. Just as the cold sweat dripped down his forehead, it was immediately frozen into ice pellets by the freezing array glyphs.

Not long after, his forehead was covered in ice pellets.

However, his eyes were getting brighter and hotter as though they could melt the ice pellets one by one.

"The algorithm is not a problem. I have many ancient and modern algorithms in my hands. I could always find a suitable algorithm through repeated trials with the help of the large crystal processor."

"The analogizing array glyph is even less of a problem!"

"Every crafting furnace has a set of analogizing array glyphs. We, refiners, are most familiar with this type of array glyphs!"

When the refiners mass produced magical equipment, it was impossible to refine each component one by one.

Last time, when he and Jin Quan, the refiner of Empyrean Terminus Sect, dueled, the two respectively forged a nail purely for the sake of showing their abilities.

In a normal crafting process, hundreds of thousands of the same type of components were forged all at the same time.

And whether these components were "exactly the same" or there were there any flaws was judged with the help of analogizing array glyphs.

Many pieces of magical equipment needed a high degree of precision for their components. High-grade analogizing array glyphs could even distinguish a hair’s difference.

Different species of demon beasts looked similar, but could the difference between them be any smaller as compared to that between an ideal nail and defective nail?

When even ideal nails and defective nails could be identified in a furnace, would it not be a piece of cake to identify the species of a demon beast?

"Alright!"

Li Yao snapped his finger. He was so excited that he wanted to shout.

"Database, crystal eye, analogizing array glyph, algorithm... all the crucial points are no problem, they can be completely resolved with the current technology!"

"The only problem is to assemble the crystal eye, memory crystal card, and the processing crystal chip carrying the array glyphs in a square inch of space. The magical equipment cannot be too big, it has to be very light and conveniently carryable. When fighting, it should be able to automatically retrieve the information so that both hands are free to use!"

"Think, think..."

In Li Yao's mind, countless magical equipment blueprints emerged, as they quickly rotated, constantly expanded, and broke into pieces.

After half a minute, his eyes flickered with an intelligent gleam as the blueprint of a slightly weird magical equipment jumped out.

"That's it!"

Li Yao fiercely waved his fist, as though he was trying to grasp a fleeting speck of dust in the air.

He immediately plunged into the Super Perception Cabin and his consciousness fled to the Heavenly Refining Tower, where he began drawing the blueprint with madness!

Chapter 190: Just Out of the Furnace!

Chapter 190: Just Out of the Furnace!

Three days later, in the refining room.

Over these three days and nights, Li Yao didn't sleep a wink. His eyes were almost blood-red, his hair was disheveled, and incoherent mumblings could be heard coming from his mouth.

A silver-white metal ring was wrapped around his forehead, engraved upon which were a few dozen freezing array glyphs. Whenever his body temperature shot higher than 40 degrees, it would automatically start operating, releasing a cold stream of air which would keep his brain temperature lower than 38 degrees.

"Whish! Whish!"

From the metal ring, a cold stream of air was constantly released, forming a faint layer of mist around Li Yao's forehead. It made him look almost like an extremely mysterious immortal.

Licking his dry lips, Li Yao inputted over a thousand blueprints and spiritual energy flow diagrams into the command crystal processor of the crafting furnace.

Although he wanted to invent a tiny magical equipment, in order to pursue lighter, faster, and more ergonomic design, he had made hundreds of thousands of changes in each component within these three days, and finally devised the most optimal structure.

In order to bring this model to fruition, the refining process was extremely cumbersome. Its difficulty was comparable to modifying the 1st Generation Tai'e Crafting Furnace.

"Let's begin!"

Inputting the blueprints and spiritual energy flow diagrams, debugging the performance parameters and the mixing ratios of various raw materials…

Li Yao moved his hands in a neither hurried nor slow manner. His flexible hands, after being trained using the "Thousand Fingers Supple Bone Exercise", seemed as if they had no bones.

Li Yao's breaths grew longer and longer, the blood in his eyes gradually began to fade away and was replaced with a deep, pitch-black calmness. The deepest point was dotted with a twinkling of stars, as though the entire universe was hidden inside his eyes.

Gradually, Li Yao entered the intangible state of no-joy-no-sorrow, no-self-no-world, giving off the impression of a peerless master refiner from forty millenniums ago. All the fatigue from three days and three nights had flown away, the anxiousness over 40,000 thousand credits was thrown to the back of his mind, he had even completely forgotten who he was. In his brain, there were only over a thousand blueprints that intensely collided with each other again and again.

"Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!"

Ten translucent holograms appeared before him as they surrounded him in a circle before gradually rotating.

In order to craft this new magical equipment, Li Yao had made relevant upgrades to the 1st Generation Tai'e Crafting Furnace, installing two units for specially crafting ultra-small components. As a result, the complexity of the refining interface had tremendously increased. The ten translucent holograms consisted of thousands of command array glyphs, where each array glyph could control a few dozen variations.

When Li Yao lightly touched the starting array glyph, the steel giant beast that had occupied half of the warehouse once again let out a low hum.

Steam spouted from the joints of the metal pipes, the crystals inlaid in the magical equipment units flickered, while the temperature within the furnace constantly increased.

Watching various jumping parameters on the monitoring hologram with rapt attention, Li Yao didn't even dare to blink, his pupils were completely transfixed as though he had lost his mind.

"Whoosh!"

After 37 seconds, a large gust of cold air was once again released by the silver-white ring covering Li Yao's head. Apparently, his brain was operating at the limit.

As if the horn for the battle had resounded, Li Yao's pupils suddenly shrank to the size of a needle tip and his hands transformed into two masses of gray mist; moving at such a fast speed that only the afterimages were visible.

After several months of training, Li Yao's refining techniques had experienced amazing progress.

At first glance, his hands would not even have the slightest bit of wasted movement, just like the movements of Elder Lie Yongming's hands, which were not that fast but not too slow either; there was not a single trace of any rashness or anxiety.

Upon looking carefully, one would discover that although the range of his arm movement was not too large, even being somewhat slow and unperturbed, his palms and ten fingers were moving like a whirlwind. Every second, they would move more than a hundred times, tapping those few dozen command array glyphs, issuing over a hundred refining instructions.

The combination of calmness above the wrist and madness below the wrist gave a strange yet beautiful feeling, as if a storm was blowing within a teacup!

Under the incomparably precise operations of Li Yao, water, wood, metal, fire, earth, and various aspects of spiritual energy set off a small storm within the furnace, causing newly-entered raw materials to be molded into a strange form as they were slowly purified, compressed, cut, and combined.

After 47 minutes, the first batch of components was taken out of the furnace.

From a total of hundred and four components, only thirty-seven were perfect; the rest were defective.

This was quite normal.

After all, there were new components which were designed by Li Yao, many of which he had never refined before. Furthermore, he was refining a dozen kinds of components of varying shapes all at the same time within one crafting furnace.

With Li Yao's refining methods, such yield was already outstanding.

In Li Yao's vision, the new magical equipment consisted of 1,424 components.

In today's world, where the magical equipment was getting increasingly complex, this was not a big figure.

However, most of the components were very small in size, they belonged to the category of mini-type components[1]. Refining these was quite troublesome.

Having poured a can of high-energy drink in his mouth to regain strength, Li Yao crushed the can into a ball and threw it towards the back, whereupon the ball made a beautiful arc as it fell right into a dustbin twenty meters away with a "clang".

"Let's begin the second batch!"

Li Yao rubbed his hands before another storm appeared between his ten fingers.

After a day and night of endless refining, the entire set of magical equipment components was finally finished. In order to prevent any mishap during assembling, he refined two sets of components.

However, this was not the most difficult step. The most crucial part of the entire magical equipment was the command crystal chip.

To distinguish between an ideal and defective product within a furnace, there wasn't any high-requirement as to how much time it would take. The analogizing array glyphs could take from a dozen seconds to a whole minute, identifying the components slowly.

In contrast, Li Yao needed the analogizing array glyph to identify the species of the demon beast in the blink of an eye. Not to mention a few seconds, even a second was too slow.

This required very powerful boosting array glyphs to speed up the operation speed of the analogizing array glyph.

In order to shorten the recognition time to within a second, Li Yao planned out an accelerating group that combined 31 boosting array glyphs in series with a special algorithm.

Then, he would add the rest of few dozen essential array glyphs on the finger-nail-sized command crystal card. All in all, he had to engrave one-hundred-and-one array glyphs.

It was a test of the micro-engraving technique of a refiner.

The five hundred top super sects of the federation possessed a mystical magical equipment called "Mystic Laser Micro-Engraving Machine", which could assist the refiners in engraving hundreds of thousands of array glyphs within a square inch.

However, the Mystic Laser Micro-Engraving Machine was highly expensive. So expensive that it was a couple dozen times more expensive than an ordinary crafting furnace.

At present, the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department didn't have a need for such a configuration.

Li Yao could only rely on his hands.

A pair of hands that had been repeatedly trained in the Heavenly Refining Tower of the Hundred Smelting Clan from forty millenniums ago.

The time passed on, second by second.

Li Yao was like a stool attached to the front of a table as he showered his talent and creativity on the fingernail-sized crystal card under the magnification of a microscope that consisted of twelve crystal lens and eleven magnifying array glyphs.

An entire nineteen carving pens crafted from adamantyl stone had been ruined. Only God knew how many times his ten fingers had been blistered. However, after soaking them in the medication for a while, regardless of the drilling pain he was experiencing, he would once again begin carving like an insane person.

Finally—

Since the flash of inspiration in his mind, an entire week had already passed.

A new magical equipment shining with a magnificent gloss appeared on the scarred palm of Li Yao!

Watching his very own idea come into being and seeing it lying quietly on his palm, Li Yao felt like crying.

Over this one week, the painstaking effort, the sweat and blood, the frustration and depression whenever he failed...was worth it!

All of it was worth it!

This magical equipment weighed only 97.45 grams. The memory crystal card and command crystal card were integrated upon a mini-crystal panel which was firmly wrapped in a silver-white shell that was refined from a titanium alloy.

It looked like an ear pad. It was created totally in accordance with the contours of Li Yao's ear, allowing it to seamlessly fit upon his left ear. No matter how severe the movements were, it would never fall off.

The front of the ear pad had two titanium alloy brackets that extended towards the front, while sandwiched between them was an ultra-thin lens crafted from red silicon crystal, which could be controlled with the rotation of his eyeball as well as the expansion and contraction of his pupils.

In appearance, this magical equipment was a combination of communicator and monocle.

The lens that was slightly glowing in red light was in particular strangely enchanting.

Li Yao could not help but put the magical equipment on his left ear before vigorously shaking his head.

There was no discomfort. It fit quite perfectly. As long as the head was not hit directly, no matter how much the head swayed, it would not fall off.

And, due to a special ventilation design, wearing it for a long time would not produce a hot feeling.

Adjusting a hologram onto the lens mode and looking carefully at the lens, Li Yao was extremely satisfied with the magical equipment’s appearance.

His somewhat valiant face appeared even more aggressive against the slightly red lens; it brought a faint antagonistic appearance.

As far as he, the "vulture" who grew up in the Magical Equipment Graveyard, was concerned, this shape was very much to his liking.

"Good, that's a hundred points for the appearance. The trends of this year's teenagers would change completely—if they had this magical equipment in one ear, with the red lens covering an eye, their aura would shoot up by 300%!"

Li Yao slightly smiled.

Although its appearance would dazzle everyone, its performance was even more powerful.

The magical equipment was equipped with a "super falcon"-class crystal eye that was manufactured by the Holy Light Sect. It was a quasi-military-grade crystal eye. Its dynamic imaging performance was quite powerful. Once it was pushed to its limit state, it could easily capture any object moving at a subsonic speed within a range of three hundred meters.

Meanwhile, the memory crystal card could store the information of 990,000 demon beasts.

Additionally, the boosting group on the command crystal card had reduced the identification time to 0.78 seconds.

It could even take a photo and identify three kinds of demon beasts simultaneously!

"Awesome! In the past, I have always been working on and modifying someone else's magical equipment."

"And now, the first magical equipment designed and crafted by me is finally finished!"

Despite it being a very common auxiliary magical equipment, Li Yao’s heart was racing; he was extremely excited as he let out cheerful cries.

After having thought for a long time, Li Yao finally decided to name the magical equipment "Demon Beast Detector!"

[1] The level of scales is huge>small>micro/mini>nano. That’s the general outline of sizes. Nano scale still hasn't been introduced and I highly doubt it will be in near future, but just to make things clear, I have introduced it to you.

Chapter 191: This Magical Equipment is Somewhat Interesting

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After a break of one week, Li Yao once again arrived at the Zenith Province to conduct the first combat trial of the demon beast detector.

Chopping a rattlesnake into two, Li Yao quietly placed it on the desert floor, whereupon the sweet scent of fresh snake blood wafted hundreds of meters away.

This was Li Yao's bait.

Very soon, a half-meter long lizard crawled out from the cracks between the rocks. It stuck its head out and looked about. Having carefully observed its surroundings for a long while, it could no longer endure the torment of its hungry stomach and jumped.

"Whoosh!"

Two skin membranes just like two wings opened on either side of its body, making it glide extremely fast in the air as it swooped towards the rattlesnake in the blink of an eye.

However, its vigilance was much higher than that of the the Hump-Nosed Viper. The moment it pounced on the rattlesnake's corpse, it vaguely sensed that something wasn't right.

"Whoosh!"

Once again two semi-circular fleshy wings opened from either side of its head, making its head look ten times bigger than usual.

In nature, it was a very common intimidation technique.

Under the setting sun, the fleshy wings radiated with a strange glow as round after round of blue annular stripes appeared on them.

At first glance, it seemed to be a highly toxic Blue-Ringer Flying Lizard.

In addition to having quick movements, it had poisonous glands under its tongue that could shoot fatal poison a dozen meters away. It was a very nasty high-rank Demon Soldier.

However, in Li Yao's eyes, there was a completely different scene.

"Beep! Beep!"

Within just half a second, the crystal eye had scanned all the characteristics of this flying lizard and was carrying out a comparison with 1,875 species of lizard-type demon beasts.

In less than one second, a short paragraph of information appeared in the light-red lens:

"Purple-Ringed Flying Lizard, low-level Demon Soldier, non-poisonous, agile, can glide for a brief period, specializes in disguising itself as its close relative the Blue-Ringed Flying Lizard to scare off enemies."

"An adult Purple-RInged Flying Lizard's battle force is comparable to a 5th level Refinement Stage cultivator at most."

Li Yao grinned as he jumped out from his camouflaging netting. A blade of light flashed from his waist, blowing sand and stones in the air.

"Waste of space with a battle force less than 5th level of Refinement Stage, just die!"

...

When Li Yao was slaughtering demon beasts in the Zenith Province with the help of the demon beast detector, the HoD of Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department, Yuan Manqiu, was conversing with the logistics supervisor of Mountain Sea Sect, Jiang Wenbo, via the spiritual crane messenger in the 1st laboratory.

Jiang Wenbo was also a refiner from the grassroots faction. Since he had discovered Li Yao, this rising star, he held a quite a bit of love for him. Every once in a while, he would converse with Yuan Manqiu regarding the progress of Li Yao's cultivation. Not only that, he had also taken the post of a guest professor and opened up two specialized courses for Li Yao. He even persuaded the Mountain Sea Sect's management to provide a sponsorship of five million to the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution.

Such funding could not be considered much, but for the past two years, the Mountain Sea Sect was in deficit due to poor management. Although it was not to the point that they could not make the ends meet, the current cash flow was comparatively tight. Both Yuan Manqiu and Li Yao were very pleased and were grateful for their kind intentions.

In the hologram, Jiang Wenbo looked somewhat frustrated as he dejectedly said:

"Big Sis, I am entrusting this matter to you. You have a wide range of connections, and you also have some connections with the army. If there is someone who needs a 'Mystic Laser Micro-Engraving Machine' and its supporting assembly line, please help us communicate with them!"

"Alright! But let me forewarn you, the Mystic Laser Micro-Engraving Machine and the mini-components assembly line is very expensive. More importantly, it has few and specific applications. I am afraid I cannot find anyone in a short period; by my estimate, it will at least take a few months."

Yuan Manqiu paused for a bit before speaking in a slightly reprimanding tone:

"Old Jiang, don't be offended, but your Big Sis told you when your Mountain Sea Sect was spending a large fortune to purchase this piece of equipment to launch some 'essence watch project' that the current essence watch market is already saturated. There is a giant called Zephyr Guild who has been manufacturing the essence watch for a few centuries."

"Your Mountain Sea Sect doesn't have any experts and doesn't have any new technology. How are you to compete with the other party?"

"I have told you that the precision of the essence watches manufactured by you is pretty good, but they make a lot of tick-tock-tick-tock noises which can be heard be demon beasts from over a hundred meters away. How can anyone be able to hunt while wearing it? It would be even more strange if someone bought your magical equipment!"

Jiang Wenbo took a long deep breath before he helplessly said:

"Do you think I don't know of these problems? However, in the Star Glory Federation, sects are everywhere. Not only are the top five hundred major sects taking more and more aggressive stances, there are many young cultivators who are establishing their own sects. Although they are not too strong, they are creative and have enough tricks to craft magical equipment that fits the liking of youths. Furthermore, they can enter the market without any burdens, it is easier for their small enterprises to change their line of products, some of which would eventually show results."

"Our, Mountain Sea Sect is a second-grade sect and is out of luck. We are squeezed in the middle, we are not able to go up, nor can we afford to go down; we are not that big but not too small either. We don't have some powerful magical equipment to take hold of the market, nor do we have a Core Formation Stage or above expert who could lead a team to kill high-level demon beasts. We didn't know what we could do. The entire sect, from top to bottom, has to live on air!"

"When we were feeling desperate, we could only think of purchasing a new facility; we wanted to change our structure."

"But who would have thought that the difficulty of manufacturing essence watches would be so high? With the functions of mini-crystal processors getting stronger and stronger, the market for traditional essence watches is gradually shrinking."

"These days, even the Zephyr Guild is having a hard time, how could we have a way to make a living?"

"In short, we have arrived on a fork in the road. We could only hope to sell this set of equipment asap so that we can recover some of the loss."

Yuan Manqiu nodded and said:

"I guess that's right. Walking on the road of cultivation is like sailing against the current, we have to move forward or we'll fall behind. This is true for humans and the same goes for the sect as well. If we can't think of a way to ensure the competitive edge, we could be by eliminated any time!"

"Worry not, I will find a way to help you contact the buyers."

"Thank you, Big Sis."

The two chatted for a bit before Yuan Manqiu terminated the call. Afterward, Yuan Manqiu pulled up a huge telepathic thought message sent by Li Yao from her mailbox.

Although Li Yao was Yuan Manqiu's only disciple, she didn't interfere too much with Li Yao's training as in accordance with the institute's tradition.

Until and unless Li Yao took the initiative to ask her guidance, or she needed his help in refining, the two researched independently. They did not bother each other.

Yuan Manqiu had long known that Li Yao was crafting a completely new magical equipment, but she held her curiosity in check. She did not ask until now.

"What the hell is that kid refining? Is it an incomparably powerful saber?"

Yuan Manqiu knew Li Yao was studying saber-type magical equipment and his progress was amazingly fast. His understanding of many sabers had already surpassed hers and he could even draw dozens of blueprints of rare ancient sabers.

As she opened the message, instead of finding some saber, all she saw was an auxiliary magical equipment.

"Demon beast detector? This is a bit interesting."

An auxiliary magical equipment with such a function was rare in the market. Yuan Manqiu's interest was piqued.

As she turned page after page on the hologram, the look on her face became more and more solemn, the expression in her eyes became hotter as she grew increasingly excited.

"If this thing can be improved a bit, it has a wide range of applications in combat."

"Furthermore, its components aren’t that complex; aside from the high-precision crystal eye which is relatively expensive, other things don't need any heaven-and-earth-class treasures. This can be mass produced."

Yuan Manqiu spent an entire five hours studying the report on the demon beast detector.

At this moment, Li Yao, with his body wrapped in a bloody aura, returned from the wasteland. He respectfully knocked on the door, waking her up from her stupor.

"Why are knocking on the door, it's such a waste of time, quickly come in!"

Sitting in front of Yuan Manqiu, Li Yao was feeling somewhat apprehensive.

The results of the first combat trial were pretty good. His hunting efficiency had increased by 500%. Not only had he hunted a dozen relatively weaker low-level Demon Soldiers that were worth a lot of money, he was able to promptly see through the disguises of high-rank Demon Soldiers, which allowed him to avoid their fatal traps. He didn't even waste a fraction of a second on a needless fight.

What would the opinion of Yuan Manqiu, this experienced and knowledgeable "Deep Sea Goddess," be for this piece of magical equipment?

"Teacher, what do you think?"

Li Yao asked in anticipation.

Yuan Manqiu carefully observed the demon beast detector on his left eye as she nodded. After having pondered for a moment, she said:

"If I approve this magical equipment, what are you going to do next?"

Li Yao replied in a natural manner:

"Obviously I am going to craft more of them and sell it to the students!"

Yuan Manqiu shook her head and said:

"In my opinion, the demon beast detector has a great value in combat, but I am afraid acquiring 40,000 credits by selling them will be pretty difficult."

Yuan Manqiu paused for a bit before explaining:

"First of all, this magical equipment is completely new and most of all, it is invented by a freshman. How can you make everyone believe in the reliability of this magical equipment?"

"Yes, you have once modified some close-combat magical equipment and your fundamentals of classic magical equipment have also progressed, but you didn't alter the overall structure of the equipment."

"Furthermore, close-combat magical equipment has always been treated like a consumable, the emergence of some minor failure on the battlefield is pretty normal!"

"However, the demon beast detector is completely different, this is a very sophisticated piece of magical equipment. How can you make others believe that this piece of magical equipment could differentiate between two different species of demon beasts with 100% accuracy?"

"Even if the probability of mistaking a Demon General for a Demon Soldier was 0.1%, it would be disastrous for its user."

"For matters of life and death, everyone is very cautious. They would rather choose products of a more reliable sect, or choose the products crafted by well-known senior refiners in the industry. They might not completely believe a 1st-year freshman like you."

Li Yao's lips parted, wanting to justify. However, having wracked his brain for a long while, he could not say anything.

"Second and most important of all, you have used purely your hand to engrave the crystal card. This technique is really superb, even I'm very shocked."

"But what about the output? Can you even craft three or five a day?"

Li Yao shook his head:

"No matter how fast I am, it would take me at least five days to craft a demon beast detector."

Yuan Manqiu said:

"So to say, after working tirelessly for one month, you can craft six demon beast detectors at most."

"Furthermore, you have used a quasi-military grade crystal eye, and hence, your production cost would not be very low."

"What kind of price will you set in order to earn more than 10,000 credits in the remaining two months?"

"Perhaps even 2,000-3,000 credits per piece would not be enough!"

After having carefully pondered this, Li Yao came to the same conclusion. Furthermore, no one would be willing to spend so many credits just to buy an auxiliary magical equipment.

Scratching his head, Li Yao asked in a perplexed tone, "Teacher, what should I do?"

Yuan Manqiu smiled:

"Don't you worry, in my opinion, the demon beast detector is pretty important in combat. Its prospects in the market are very broad, it will not just bring you 10,000 or so credits."

"However, first you have to apply for a patent for the demon beast detector."

Chapter 192：30,000 Credits!

Chapter 192: 30,000 Credits!

"Apply for a patent?"

Li Yao blinked his eyes, stupefied for a brief moment.

Although the Demon Beast Detector was invented by him, the array glyphs and algorithms it employed were the creation of others. Even the most important crystal eye was manufactured by others. How could he even apply for a patent?

Yuan Manqiu said:

"The technology employed by the Demon Beast Detector is very well developed and is ready to use, but its components are new and very creative, greatly elevating the practicality of many array glyphs and algorithms. Therefore, you can apply for a 'utility patent' and the probability of it getting approved is rather large. And once you have obtained the utility patent, you will also be awarded 3,000 credits as per the Institute's rules and regulations!"

Li Yao smacked his head as he suddenly came to realize.

The Star Glory Federation's patent system consisted of two kinds of patents: the invention patent and the utility patent.

The invention patent had very stringent requirements. It required that the corresponding array glyphs, algorithms, and technology be completely original. Furthermore, it had to go through a review for a long period of time, and also needed its creator to explain its origin and development clearly. If it was array glyphs, algorithms, and the like, then the creator had to provide all the first-hand drafts.

When Li Yao had just obtained multitudes of classics from the Heavenly Refining Tower, he had also wondered whether he could copy some of the ancient array glyphs and apply for some invention patents.

However, after having meticulously studied the review process of invention patents, he dispelled this notion.

He wasn't confident at all that not a single flaw would be discovered by Core Formation Stage powerhouses and Nascent Soul Stage old monsters in the firsthand draft forged from ancient books from forty millenniums ago.

In contrast, utility patents were not the same. One could use the works of predecessors for reference so long as one could create a new concept. And the auditing process was also relatively standard. It would only take one or two months before the results were out.

However, the patent term for utility patents was comparatively short. Generally, it was about three to five years. In addition, if one wanted to commercialize his or her invention, he or she would have to pay a certain share of the profit to the creators of the array glyphs and algorithms mentioned in the patent.

For instance, for the boosting array glyphs employed in the Demon Beast Detector, Li Yao would have to pay a certain share of the profit to the inventor of boosting array glyphs for every Demon Beast Detector sold.

Of course, he could also pay a huge lump sum up front and buy out the utilization rights of boosting array glyphs for several years.

In the world of cultivation, all the array glyphs, algorithms, exercises, spiritual powers, and everything else that one could think of were considered intellectual property.

To be precise, intellectual property was the foundation of the cultivation world and was sacrosanct.

All the mainstream cultivators attached a lot of importance to this very point.

Yuan Manqiu continued:

"The most valuable part of your magical equipment lies in its new structure, and to be honest, it could very easily be copied."

"This is also one of the reasons why I don't agree for you to trade it."

"If it is acquired by someone with aspirations once it is out in the market, and he applies for the patent before you, then you can cry all you want but it will do you no good."

"Only when you have first applied for the patent can you boldly sell it. Furthermore, you should not sell it on small scale by crafting it with your own hands. How many do you think you could craft in one day?"

"If you mass produced it through a magical equipment assembly line, you could manufacture hundreds of Demon Beast Detectors a day. And who knows, maybe you could even earn a few billion annually!"

"A few billion?"

Li Yao's eyes went wide with disbelief. The first thought in his mind was:

"Then wouldn’t I be able to buy two luxury flying shuttles?"

"I would be able to buy a Mystic Bird Battle Shuttle and a Crimson Flame Battle Shuttle! At that time, my prestige will be comparable to Senior Brother Peng and Ding Lingdang!"

Scratching his head, Li Yao pursed his lips into a stupid grin:

"Is this toy so good? However, it would still be okay if I could earn only a few hundred million. Our Refining Department has thousands of pending tasks. If we want to restart Project Mystic Skeleton, we also need to throw in a lot a money. If I can earn a few hundred million, it can be used as initial capital!"

Yuan Manqiu smiled:

"Silly Kid, don't you remember the last failure? Project Mystic Skeleton is a bottomless pit, even the Institute doesn't dare to invest in it. Do you really want to throw in your hard-earned millions into this bottomless hole?!"

"Even if you could somehow earn 40,000 credits, that is still not the endpoint. The future holds infinitely wonderful starting points. The road of cultivation is very long, there will be many times where you might need to use the money. If you can earn some money, it’ll be smooth sailing going forward. As your teacher, this can be also be considered to be my duty!"

Li Yao felt warm in his heart. Rolling his eyes, he said:

"I am not throwing the money at this in vain. Think of it as an investment. After I put in the money, I will be a shareholder and will be entitled to a certain share of the profits once we are successful in crafting the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. Don’t you think this would make me look majestic! Wouldn’t it be a lot better!?"

Yuan Manqiu was angry, but happy as well. Stretching her plump arm, she slapped Li Yao's forehead as she shouted:

"The chicken has not even laid any eggs, and you’re counting your chickens! First, think of some way to earn 40,000 credits!"

"Yeah!!!"

Li Yao started to frown.

Even if the application for the utility patent was approved, it would only earn him 3,000 credits. How could he earn 10,000 or so credits in the next two months?

"I have to fight it out!"

"Next, I need a big kill in the Wasteland!"

"With the Demon Beast Detector, not only my hunting efficiency is improved, I can also notice powerful demon beasts nearby in advance. Now I can venture into more dangerous zones to hunt."

"While hunting, not only can I hone my battle force continuously, I can also discover any defects in the Demon Beast Detector and thereby make subsequent improvements at the same time!"

"On another note, it can also serve as a great advertisement!"

"Since I am just a freshman, it is natural that no one will believe that I can craft my very own magical equipment!"

"Later, it can also prove how useful the Demon Beast Detector is for everyone!"

From this day on, Li Yao began to make hunting trips in the Wasteland like a madman.

Besides occasionally returning to the Institute for some maintenance and recuperation, he would wander in the Wasteland day and night.

All the low-danger demon beast zones had been swept clean by him just like a hurricane.

He avoided the dangerous high-rank Demon Soldiers as well as the low-level Demon Soldiers that were somewhat difficult to hunt but were less valuable thanks to the Demon Beast Detector.

He particularly hunted the low-level Demon Soldiers that had lower battle strength but had valuable and precious materials on their bodies.

Every time, Li Yao would return with a large haul. He was like a tiger heading down the mountain to hunt. He was no different than a hungry wolf pouncing on sheep; his success rate was 100%. This flabbergasted everyone.

On the newcomer ranking list, Li Yao's name was sitting up at the leading position and was followed by a long series of five figures. It had not changed much for a month or so.

Everyone thought that Li Yao had reached a bottleneck and would have to stop for some time.

Even when the amount of credits took a giant leap once in a while, it could all be accredited to luck. Li Yao just so happened to encounter another priceless prey.

However, no one had imagined Li Yao's luck to be so scary that his credits would climb at an explosive speed. He was so fast that his earning speed could be compared with Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan combined, who were in 2nd and 3rd place on the list!

All of a sudden, Li Yao became the talk of the campus forums. Every day, someone would post a comment:

"Once again, the insanity of Li Yao starts!"

"27,000 credits! His credits have broken the twenty-seven freaking thousand mark!"

"28,000! What the hell happened, how did he get a thousand credits? He can't be this fast unless he’s cheating!"

"Today, Li Yao hunted two very precious Silver-Striped Fragrant Foxes!"

"Damn, last time, our team of seventeen to eighteen people wanted to hunt this thing. In the end, we spent three days and three nights and somehow caught two. But when we looked closely, we found out that they were just worthless Grey-Striped Fragrant Foxes. Damn it, I'm about to explode!"

"His luck is truly too good! Every time he’s been hunting, he hasn’t missed, not even once. Moreover, he would return with an amazing haul every time. Just the Silver-Striped Fragrant Fox has been captured by him, and twice at that!"

"This is still nothing; check out some of the missions he has taken, all of them are hunting missions in dangerous zones. Even seniors do not dare to rush into many of these regions, but how could he, who is just a low-level Refinement Stage cultivator, withdraw with at most some minor injuries every time?"

In order to advertise, Li Yao did not hide the Demon Beast Detector and even swaggeringly walked around the campus while carrying priceless demon beast corpses and wearing it a few times.

Such flamboyance naturally didn't go unnoticed.

Discussion about the Demon Beast Detector suddenly appeared in the forums.

"Did you notice? Li Yao was wearing a weird magical equipment on his left eye. It looked a lot like a monocle."

"What is that? Is it some kind of telescopic magical equipment?"

"Idiot, how can it be a telescope? I looked at the list of common magical equipment and did not find this kind of equipment. It seems that it is some kind of magical equipment modified by him. It is certainly not as simple as a telescope!"

"In my opinion, maybe this thing is related to all his good fortune! After all, he has returned with a big haul every time!"

However, many comments posted by the girls were focused on a completely different thing:

"Li Yao wearing a light-red monocle looked… so handsome!"

"Right! Right! His aura was totally astonishing. I secretly took a photo!"

"Wahhh, I so want to go and confess to him. However, everyone said that he is a bit fierce. I heard that his former moniker was 'Vulture', it totally doesn't sound like he is a good man."

"Don't talk nonsense, I’ve talked to him twice. How do I say it... rather than saying he is fierce, he is someone who is immersed in his own world. His eyes would go wide whenever he began to study close combat magical equipment! He is totally unaware of what is happening in the outside world. He only appears cold and detached, that's all."

"Besides, who cares if he doesn't seem like a good person. This year, only the bad boys are sexy!"

Li Yao didn't look handsome; he wasn’t nowhere close to being some dandified, handsome-looking young man.

However, the girls of the Wasteland wouldn't care about some scholar who couldn't even kill a chicken.

They worshipped the strong and liked dauntless and robust men.

Li Yao was one of the three experts among the freshmen. For three to five days, he would hunt alone in the Wasteland, and with the domineering Demon Beast Detector, he looked exceptionally fierce. Very soon, he became the idol of many female students.

However, Li Yao had no time to concern himself with this. The only thoughts in his mind were those of wandering and hunting alone in the Wasteland.

Finally, there was just a month left until the registration deadline for the Refiners' Registration Examination.

Meanwhile, Li Yao's credits had broken through the 30,000 mark!

Chapter 193: One Against Two Thousand?

Chapter 193: One Against Two Thousand?

"Now, only the last 10,000 credits remain!"

In a cave, Li Yao carefully baked a hare with the help of a fire glyph. Meanwhile, he had also laid down fresh air glyphs around so that all the air would remain in one place and the demon beasts outside the cave would not get a single whiff.

A knowing smile appeared on his somewhat gaunt face. His deep black eyes seemed to appear bigger.

Spending a month alone in the Wasteland, Li Yao's appearance had undergone enormous changes. Not only had he become slender, his skin also had a metallic luster, but it didn’t radiate light like steel.

At first glance, he looked no different than an ordinary rock found in the Wasteland.

However, once he discovered prey, he would suddenly erupt, while his speed and strength soared to the limit. He would turn into a ferocious hunter in the blink of an eye.

Over this month, he had not only amassed credits, he had also accumulated hunting experience.

The demon beasts of the Wasteland were a treacherous, cunning, and vigilant bunch. More importantly, these demon beasts were the best at camouflaging and sneak attacks.

If one wanted to hunt such demon beasts, he or she would need to be even more treacherous, more cunning, and better at camouflaging and sneak attacks.

On one side, Li Yao was hunting, while on the other, he was learning as well. All the demon beasts were Li Yao's teachers.

He learned how to hide like a poisonous snake, crawl like a centipede, kill prey in one attack like a scorpion, glide like a flying chameleon, and even studied how to lay down traps and put out bait like a spider.

Soon afterwards, these techniques, along with a decade or so of techniques honed through surviving in the magical equipment graveyard, turned into even more powerful hunting techniques. With these skills, he became a field survivor as well as a hunting expert. He became a true guerrilla expert!

"One month and 10,000 credits."

"Even if the utility patent is approved, I will only earn 3,000 credits. I'll still be lacking 7,000 credits."

"The demon beasts in the southern regions of the Wasteland are too weak. If I keep hunting in this area, I'll simply be unable to amass 7,000 credits."

"Moreover, it's is not 100% certain that the utility patent will go through. If I fail at the most crucial moment, it will be truly embarrassing."

"It seems I have to take the risk and head deep into northern regions!"

The forces of the Star Glory Federation were concentrated more on the southern regions of the Wasteland. There were fewer cities deeper into the north. Meanwhile, the lesser the signs of humans, the more powerful demon beasts could be found.

In order to acquire 10,000 credits within one month, Li Yao was prepared to play with his life.

He planned to wander fifteen days in the southern regions of the Wasteland.

And if he was unable to save enough credits, or if the utility patent wasn't passed, he then planned to go to the northern regions of the Wasteland and wander in more dangerous regions!

"But first, I should return to the Institute and cash in the prey from this trip." Weighing the heavy, rumbling backpack, a satisfied crept upon Li Yao's face.

Li Yao's harvest from this trip was also pretty good. He would probably be able to exchange it for a few hundred credits.

Having returned to the Institute and converted the spoils of his hunting for credits, Li Yao returned to the medical room to deal with some minor injuries. He had not even taken a rest before he received an invitation from Ding Lingdang, asking him to celebrate breaking the 30,000 mark.

"Li Yao has arrived! Li Yao has arrived!"

In front of a small house amid the sea of bamboo, a colorful and gorgeous parrot squawked as the door automatically opened.

Just as Li Yao stepped into the door, a light breeze brushed his face.

Li Yao was taken by surprise. He had been suddenly caught by Ding Lingdang.

The latter also ruthlessly twisted his arm behind his back, making him grimace in pain.

"What the hell is going on? Didn't you ask me to dinner to celebrate breaking the 30,000 mark?"

"Of course, we are going to eat, but first of allꭥ—"

Having twisted his arm a bit again, Ding Lingdang angrily said, "Let this sister first twist your arm for a while so that I can vent my anger. You, Smelly Brat, have so quickly and quietly broken the 30,000 mark. You also broke the record for the fastest student to attain 30,000 credits, taking down Senior Brother Peng!"

"At the beginning, I was the second fastest student to break the 30,000 mark, but now, you have thrown me into third place. Tell me, is that all right? You are truly a monstrous genius. Maybe one day you will even become stronger than me. Then, would I not be bullied to death by you? Absolutely not! While I'm still stronger than you, I'll crush you a bit; I might as well get the most out of it until then!"

Twisting his hand once again, she exclaimed:

"What is going on? In the one month I have not seen you, your muscles are even more solid. Twisting your hands feels like twisting a stone. It's not even a bit interesting, forget it! Let's eat!"

Without uttering even a word, Li Yao followed her to the living room. But when he got to see the dinner placed on the table, he didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

"Didn't you say we were going to celebrate? So, did you invite me to eat noodles?"

Ding Lingdang, who was carrying a bowl of noodles, sat down on the ground as she started slurping the noodles. She was eating with one hand and was handling some work on the crystal processor with the other. She muttered:

"I have been swamped with work and had no time to cook fish or meat. Make do with it for now. Didn't I add two soy eggs to your bowl?!"

Having said that, she paused a bit before continuing:

"I have seen your hunting results, you're really doing a good job. From looking at the wounds, you've attained perfection in the 'Desert Storm Saber Technique'. Even if it was me hunting in the southern regions of the Wasteland, I would also be unable to do better than you!"

"However, high-value demon beasts are, after all, rare in the southern regions. If you want to amass 10,000 credits in one month, you have to head north, which is the habitat of high-level demon beasts."

"I know that you are quite crazy and like to take risks. Maybe someday you will secretly head north, playing with your life. So, today, I specifically asked you to come to tell you that you don't need to worry."

"Recently, I have been very busy and could not spare any time. However, I'll be done in ten to fifteen days, after which I have some days off. At that time, I will accompany you to the north and help you hold the line!"

Li Yao felt warmth in his heart.

So this was the real reason why Ding Lingdang asked him to come.

With Ding Lingdang, one of the youngest Building Foundation Stage experts in the federation, holding the line, the danger would drop significantly. He could hunt demon beasts far more easily.

Holding the bowl of noodles, Li Yao was at a total loss; he didn't know what to say.

Ding Lingdang burst into jovial laughter, a noodle dangling at the corner of her mouth. Waving her hand, she said:

"You have been acting as a human sandbag for me for a long while, so why can't I help you a little? Besides, you, 'Vulture Li Yao', are currently at your peak. You are an influential figure among the freshmen of our Grand Desolate War Institution. For a genius like you, the Institute is surely going to provide special care so that we can speed up your progress. This is absolutely normal! If I had not been swamped with work recently, I wouldn’t have waited to accompany you to the northern regions!"

"Sister Ling, thank you!"

After having hesitated for a long while, Li Yao somehow uttered these words.

Having sat down next to Ding Lingdang, Li Yao took a big bite out off the fragrant soy egg.

"En."

Ding Lingdang's response was just one word as she began dealing with her work with rapt attention.

Li Yao, while slurping the noodles, happened to take a fleeting glance at Ding Lingdang's face. Suddenly, he discovered that as long as this ferocious dragoness in human skin didn't utter one word and concentrated on her work, she looked incredibly beautiful.

This kind of quiet and indifferent temperament gave off the aura of a completely different person, someone completely different from the person that talked non-stop and charged around impulsively.

It appeared as though there were twins who looked exactly the same but had diametrically opposite dispositions. It was extremely weird.

"What are you looking at?"

Ding Lingdang somewhat discontentedly stared at him as she found the strange look in Li Yao's eyes.

"Nothing."

Li Yao's face suddenly flushed red. Instantly, he turned his gaze at the hologram as he changed the topic in a panic. "I'm looking at your work. Recently, you have been so busy. Are you starting a lot of new courses? Hey, 'All-Freshmen Interdepartmental Thunderbolt Cup'? What is this? The winner will be awarded...10— 10,000 credits!"

Suddenly Li Yao sprang from the ground. Half of the bowl of noodles even fell of his chest. Nevertheless, he didn't even care to clean up his mess as he anxiously shoved his head towards the hologram.

"Freshman tournament... the winner will be awarded 10,000 credits? Awesome, I want to register! I am going to register now!"

Li Yao began to dance with joy.

Ding Lingdang forcibly pushed him back. She was angry and found it funny as well.

"Don't get excited, first take a look clearly. This interdepartmental match is a group match where each student union has to act as one unit. It is not an individual match. I admit that you are strong, but you are the only student of the Refining Department. How are you going to participate?"

"Based on student union? There are no individual matches?"

All of a sudden, cold water had been poured over his excitement.

"That's right, in accordance with previous years’ conduct, it's a match between the freshmen of two student unions in the Combat Department, the Chaos Edge Hall and the Iron Fist Club. Both sides will choose their best 1,000 freshmen and carry out a contest."

"And as I am a new professor, I'm mainly responsible for freshmen's chores. Also, I am relatively familiar with the situation, so I am one of the staff for this year's tournament. This is the reason why I have been swamped with work recently."

The All-Freshmen Interdepartmental Thunderbolt Cup was the traditional tournament of the Grand Desolate War Institution. It had been going on for a few decades already.

Its purpose was to allow the freshmen to display the results of their first year of cultivation at the Institute, while also allowing various sects to select geniuses in the process.

On another note, it also served as the competition to decide how resources would be allocated next year.

The main sources of income for the Grand Desolate War Institution were the multitudes of combat sects who revered martial arts. They provided a lot of resources, and obviously, they would want their resources to be spent on the strongest department.

Since the beginning, the Thunderbolt Cup had been sponsored by the Devil Fist Sect, the Hundred Saber Alliance, and a few dozen other famous combat sects of the Wasteland. During the tournament, a real-life combat scenario was simulated and the winner would take all!

In short, the Thunderbolt Cup was a way for the two student unions of the Combat Department to compete for the annual resources. The tournament was specifically tailor-made for them.

According to the rules, other departments could participate too. As long as they were strong enough, they could get the sponsorship of numerous combat sects.

However, in combat, how could other departments compete with the Iron Fist Club or the Chaos Edge Hall?

They would simply be tidied up in minutes.

Ever since the first decade or so, where some departments took part in the tournament to try to gain some undue advantage only to end up last, for the last three decades, there had been fewer departments registering for the Thunderbolt Cup.

Over time, the Thunderbolt Cup turned into a civil war between two student unions from the Combat Department.

Li Yao was immersed in magical equipment all day. He simply had no free time. Therefore, it was quite normal for him to be completely ignorant of the details of the Thunderbolt Cup.

Having gained some knowledge of the details, Li Yao sank into deep thought.

As he wracked his brain, Li Yao thoughtfully asked:

"According to the rules, student unions of all departments can participate in the Thunderbolt Cup. The upper limit for people from any one union is 1000. However, there is no lower limit."

"As long as one wins, he or she could get 10,000 credits, which would be subsequently divided among the participants."

"In short, I, as the president of Refining Department's student union, have all the qualifications to register for the tournament. And as long as I win, I alone could enjoy all 10,000 credits, for I'll be the only student from the Refining Department who would be taking part in the tournament."

"Theoretically, that's right!"

Ding Lingdang snappily said, "The problem is, there would be 1,000 participants from the Iron Fist Club and 1,000 participants from Chaos Edge Hall. My smart little brother, do tell me, how are you going to compete? How are you going to knock out all 2,000 opponents?"

Chapter 194: Impossible Misson

Chapter 194: Impossible Misson

One vs. two thousand?

Such a massive difference between the two sides was more than enough to deter the vast majority of people.

However, Li Yao wasn't just everyone.

His eyes started to squint ever so slightly as though a venomous snake was eyeing prey that was a hundred times bigger than itself.

"Assuming that my Refining Department's student union can register for the tournament, what kind of match is it gonna be?"

"Will there be 2,000 participants on one side of the ring while I'm on the other side, just fighting directly?

"And I think that as this tournament relates to the allocation of resources for the next year, the Iron Fist Club and Chaos Edge Hall are going to be true opponents, but I'm sure they are not monolithic. I guess that it will impossible for them to act together to fight me, right?"

Very calmly, Li Yao shared his thoughts.

Having pulled the specific information about this year's tournament from the crystal processor, Ding Lingdang said:

"The Grand Desolate War Institution pays more attention to the actual combat. And of course, the competition is not some simple hand-to-hand combat. Each match is equivalent to a small-scale drill. There is a backdrop, and victory conditions as well. It's not necessarily enough for one side to eliminate everyone from the other side, but—"

"At present, you are an influential figure of the Grand Desolate War Institution. The illustrious name and fame of 'Vulture Li Yao' have spread throughout Wild Waves City. You, Zhao Tianchong, and Lu Tieshan are known as the top three experts of the freshman class. Moreover, you are also in the leading position."

"Leaving your strength aside for the moment, just wandering around the field while carrying ten Hellfire-Lightnings was enough for everyone to know your ferocity."

"If you really do sign up for the tournament, do you think that everyone will not fight you to the death? Do you think that everyone will let you relax in the cool shade? Do you think that everyone is so stupid!?"

"Besides, the rules of the tournament would absolutely not let you reap profits without lifting a finger while the rest fight with each other. The victory conditions of the tournament will definitely be set so that it will be highly difficult for you to win."

"After all, if you won, the credits awarded to you will be a thousand times more than the others."

"Therefore, it will be a thousand times more difficult for you to win and it's also right and proper!"

"A thousand times," these three words made Li Yao's pupils constrict suddenly.

Li Yao didn't utter a single word as he sucked in his lip while carefully looking at the hologram.

This year's match would take place after ten days and would be carried out in a world fragment with a very complex environment using various kinds of terrains.

Just as before, only the Iron Fist Club and Chaos Edge Hall would be participating this year at present.

Each side would be sending 1,000 freshmen, many of which would have reached the 3rd level of the Refinement Stage or maybe higher.

In order to stick close to the actual combat, each year a theme would be set for the tournament. The winning conditions would be formulated around the theme for both sides.

The theme of this year was "The Mayhem of Jade Chip". There was also a backdrop around the theme:

"The Iron Fist Club and Chaos Edge Hall are two contradictory cultivation sects. There have been many conflicts in order to compete for their commercial interests and military contracts."

"According to the legend, both sides have fought in the dark many times already and have even lost many experts. An endless blood feud has been forged in between them."

"The Chaos Edge Hall, in order to completely disintegrate the Iron Fist Club, had sent a spy who had infiltrated the Iron Fist Club for two decades and had been scheming day and night to get ahold of concrete information. Finally, he stole highly confidential secrets, including a variety of secret array glyphs, exercises, and even commercial secrets of the

Iron Fist Club, all of which are stored inside a jade chip. Now he is preparing to flee to the Chaos Edge Hall."

"Unexpectedly, his escape has been discovered and 1,000 clansmen from the Iron Fist Club are on his tail."

"Meanwhile, a reinforcement of 999 clansmen from the Chaos Edge Hall is also in front."

"A great battle between 2,000 people to seize this jade chip is imminent!"

Li Yao frowned:

"What nonsense is this?"

Ding Lingdang pursed her lips:

"A backdrop setting! This is done in order to increase the sense of competition between the students and also make the competition interesting!"

"In short, the theme of this year is a jade chip battle. This kind of theme, rather than asking one side to completely decimate the other side, asks the participants to bring the jade chip to their base and insert it in a huge crystal processor for a certain amount of time. If the opponent has not been able to grab it back in that stipulated amount of time, they would win."

"In fact, in order to foster a combative atmosphere among the students, the Institute very much wants to encourage other departments to participate in the tournament. The winning condition will also be made a bit more flexible"

"Twenty-seven years ago, the student union of the Medical Department, the Lancets, participated in the tournament.

The theme at that time was 'The Great Escape'. As long as the members of the Lancets could flee from the Iron Fist Club and Chao Edge Hall, they would win."

"However, no matter how flexible the conditions were, at the end of the day, fists and swords had to be used to decide the outcome."

"Five hundred Lancets members were wrapped up in just three minutes. All of them were captured and they became a big joke."

Since then, there have been no other departments willing to register for the tournament."

"If you do register, I think, the Institute will probably set an escape-like winning condition for you. In other words, as long as you can escape from the combined assault of 2,000 members of the Iron Fist Club and Chaos Edge Hall, you will win."

"However, like I said, you are a well-known dangerous figure. If you took part in the competition, others would definitely crucify you first. They would absolutely not let you have an opportunity to sit back atop the mountain to watch the tigers fight. So save your breath!"

Li Yao's eyes spun in circles before they burst forth with a sharp gleam:

"Escape-type mission? If I can escape from the encirclement of 2,000 participants, I will have the opportunity to win 10,000 credits?"

"2,000 participants, among which a vast majority are cultivators. And there are experts like Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan as well. Since the two have been cultivating for so long, they might have also reached 5th level of the Refinement Stage, yeah?"

"Plus, there will also be hundreds of 3rd and 4th level Refinement Stage experts; it will be really frightening."

"However, at the end of the day, they are still not monolithic. As long as I could find a gap between them, I do have the opportunity..."

Having thought of this, Li Yao's eyelashes shook as he said while gnashing his teeth:

"I am going to represent the Refining Department's student union, the 'Starfire Union', and sign up for the All-Freshman Interdepartmental Thunderbolt Cup!"

Ding Lingdang pursed her lips:

"I knew it, you brat. There’s no way you would not give up on your sinister designs. You can fill out your details on the Battle Network. Well then, I'll give you this soy egg."

Grabbing a soy egg from her bowl, Ding Lingdang stuffed it into Li Yao's mouth.

"Why?" Li Yao was dumbfounded.

Ding Lingdang rolled up her eyes:

"If you are going to eat so little, how will you have the strength to take the beating of 2,000 robust fellows?!"

The news of Li Yao's participation in the tournament spread like wildfire, setting off a huge uproar in the campus.

After a lapse of twenty-seven years, a group other than the student unions of the Combat Department was going to sign-up for the Thunderbolt Cup for the first time.

And the group participating turned out to be just a single student from a tiny student union.

Li Yao would be competing alone, challenging 2,000 stocky and murderous students from the Combat Department!

In a moment, the entire Institute was in an uproar.

Half of the forum's posts were discussing Li Yao's suicidal and crazed behavior:

"Oh, no! Li Yao is actually going to represent the Starfire Union and will be challenging the Iron Fist Club and Chaos Edge Hall? Each side will be sending 1,000 members, while he is just one man!"

"This is too reckless, right? Although we all know that he is one of the three experts among the freshmen, so what? There are still two others who are neck and neck with him! Even though Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan's levels are lower than his, both of them are pure battle-type cultivators. Their battle force is not much weaker than his!"

"He's just one man! Does he think that he can fight with Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan who will be leading 2,000 students?"

Although the winner would be awarded 10,000 credits, no matter how much everyone wracked their brains, they could not imagine Li Yao having any chance of winning.

Even if it was an escape-type mission, his chance of escaping from a heavy encirclement of 2,000 Combat Department students was close to zero!

After this matter spread, a fair share number of people immediately went to interview the two leading figures of the freshmen, Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan. They wanted to ask how were they going to deal with Li Yao if he really participated.

The two strongly expressed that Li Yao was the most dangerous and most terrifying figure among the freshman without any doubt. If he did participate, the Iron Fist Club and Chaos Edge Hall would first eliminate him before they confronted each other.

"We both are Li Yao's friends. We do know that he needs to earn 10,000 credits in one month."

However, as far as the tournament is concerned, the Thunderbolt Cup is related to the honor of two student unions. In addition, it is also related to the allocation of resources next year, which concerns thousands upon thousands of students."

"If necessary, we are willing to team up with Li Yao and head north to hunt, helping him amass credits."

"However, we will most definitely not throw the game."

"If Li Yao is going to be participating, we will certainly knock him out—mercilessly!"

Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan resolutely and decisively said.

The Institute was also a bit surprised by Li Yao's application.

Although the match each year had turned into a civil war between the two major student unions of the Combat Department and become a bit boring since the last two decades or so, the Institute very much hoped that even more student unions would participate and add some unknown variables to the tournament. They might even give a bit of trouble to the Iron Fist Club and Chaos Edge Hall, which would help the Institute assess their ability to adapt to chaos.

However, the Starfire Union was the smallest student union in the history of the Grand Desolate War Institute. It had only one student. Even if it did participate, what would be the use?

He was no different than a tiny mouse sandwiched in between two colliding crystal battleships which could barely make a squeak before being crushed to death.

However, Li Yao turned a deaf ear to all these criticisms.

After having set off a huge uproar, it was as though it was of no concern to him. He was still wandering and hunting alone in the Wasteland.

However, no one was aware that he had consciously increased the training of his camouflaging and escaping techniques.

The most common method he used was swaggeringly appearing under the eyes of a group of middle-rank Demon Soldiers. Occasionally, he would even cut his finger and bleed some blood to increase the appetite of demon beasts. After attracting their attention, he would escape from the chasing group of Demon Soldiers at lightning-fast speed; he would flee like crazy!

After five days, Li Yao received the reply of the Institute.

His application had been approved. In this year's All-Freshmen Interdepartmental Tournament, the Starfire Union, Iron Fist Club, and the Chaos Edge Hall would be participating together, vying for the Thunderbolt Cup!

The theme of the match remained the same. It was still "The Mayhem of Jade Chip", but they changed the corresponding backdrop slightly. It read:

"The Starfire Union is the most secretive, evil sect in the world of cultivation."

"Li Yao, who is an evil expert from the Starfire Union, has infiltrated and spied on the Iron Fist Club for years. Finally, he has stolen the core secrets of the Iron Fist Club, which are stored inside a jade chip."

"Right as he left, his identity was discovered and now a thousand clansmen of the Iron Fist Club are on his tail."

"On another side, the Chaos Edge Hall, which was hostile to the Iron Fist Club, also came to know of this matter. They too sent a thousand elites and set up an ambush along the route Li Yao had to take in order to return to the Starfire Union. They want to kill Li Yao and grab the jade chip."

"And although the hatred between the Iron Fist Club and Chaos Edge Hall runs as deep as the seas, they are determined above all else to win the jade chip. After having learned of Li Yao's identity as an 'evil expert', they will stop at nothing to capture him and satisfy their vengeful desires."

"Once they encounter him, Li Yao will be the priority target. Although they may experience intermittent skirmishes, only after they have captured the jade chip will the large armies fight each other all-out."

"Li Yao will face pursuit by a thousand students from the back and a blockade of thousand students in the front. If he can cut through the entire battlefield and reach the designated Starfire Union's point of contact while in possession of the jade chip, he will be the final winner and claim the Thunderbolt Cup. He will also get to enjoy 10,000 credits alone!"

Chapter 195: Escape

Chapter 195: Escape

"Whoosh!"

Included in the instruction manual was a 3-dimensional map, which introduced the site of the competition, the "Yellow Wind Ridge".

The Yellow Wind Ridge was a world fragment which was no different than the Heaven Origin Sector. It was not suitable for cultivation, but it was the best place for combat drills.

From south to north, it measured roughly twenty kilometers long and was successively divided into flatland, jungle and canyon regions.

Among which, the jungle region, which was the centermost region of the whole world fragment, was filled with swamps, hills, shrubs, and caves. It was the largest region among all three.

It was also perennially filled with a light yellow mist. Although it was harmless to human body, it caused some interference with the line of sight, hence the name, Yellow Wind Ridge.

It was quite foreseeable that the jungle region would be the main battlefield of this match.

Such complex terrain along with the interference of the mist would add a large number of variables to the entire match. The freshmen could quite possibly encounter their foes waiting in ambush at any time, which would subsequently develop into brutal encounters.

Such a terrain was a paradise for guerilla warfare.

Nevertheless, Li Yao was anything but pleased.

His winning conditions weren't something like surviving in the Yellow Wind Ridge for few hours or a couple of days. Instead, starting from the southernmost part of the Yellow Mist Ridge, he would have to go through the flatland, the jungle, and the canyon. His goal was the northernmost region of the map which was the "contact point of the Starfire Union".

However, the Chaos Edge Hall's base was located in the two-kilometer-long canyon.

The canyon region had steep mountains on either side. There was only a narrow winding pathway in the middle.

It was quite conceivable that Chaos Edge Hall's base would certainly be heavily guarded.

Even if Li Yao could somehow break through the encirclement in the jungle, he would still have to forcibly rush through the two-kilometer-long canyon.

There was no other way!

More importantly, according to the enactment, although the Chaos Edge Hall and Iron Fist Club were rivals who were absolutely irreconcilable, as Li Yao was a notorious evil expert and was also carrying a jade chip for which each side would stop at nothing...

Li Yao would become the priority target of 2,000 members from both the Chaos Edge Hall and the Iron Fist Club. Therefore, without acquiring the jade chip first, both sides would not open fire for sure. Maybe they would even collaborate to search for his whereabouts.

"It is indeed a thousand times more difficult!"

Li Yao was having a hell of a headache.

Slowly rubbing his temples, Li Yao researched the map over and over again.

The layout of Yellow Wind Ridge was shaped like an ellipse. The base of both Iron Fist Club and Chaos Edge Hall were located on the two tapered ends of the ellipse respectively.

And according to the victory conditions for them, after having taken the jade chip from Li Yao, they would have to return to their own base while also facing the pursuit of their rivals. They would then have to insert the jade chip into a static-type crystal processor for one hour.

During this period, if their base camp was attacked by other side and the jade chip was pulled out, then the countdown would start over again.

The only advantage for Li Yao was that he was allowed to use magical equipment.

However, all magical equipment must be included in the magical equipment list specified by the Institute. He absolutely couldn't use some extremely brutal magical equipment like "Hellfire-Lightning".

Of course, he still had five days to modify the magical equipment specified in the list.

However, apart from the blade, the carried magical equipment eventually had to be able to fit inside a standard military jungle backpack.

The explanation given by the institute was also quite reasonable—it was an escape, not some goddamn war.

It was impossible for someone to carry a Six Barrel Rotary Cannon along with a huge case of ammunitions on his back along with ten Hellfire-Lightnings. After all, he would be running for his life, right?

More importantly, in complex terrain like jungles and swamps, where the line of sight was also impeded by a faint mist, "masterwork weapons" like the Six Barrel Rotary Cannon would simply be nothing more than iron scraps, which only served to slow him down and make him a bigger target.

Even if the rules allowed it, Li Yao would never even want to carry heavy machine guns while he was running for his life in a jungle. This was simply courting death.

"All I can carry is magical equipment that can fit inside a standard military jungle backpack, and all of the magical equipment must be chosen from the specified list. Even though I can modify, I only have five days?!"

"It seems that earning 10,000 credits at once is as hard as climbing the sky!"

"Beep! Beep!"

Just when he was ruminating and wracking his brain, Ding Lingdang sent him a spiritual crane message.

"Ha, I just applied and became the Institute's liaison with the Starfire Union for this tournament. My dear Starfire Union president, the extremely dangerous 'evil expert', Student Li Yao, do you have any questions regarding the rules of this tournament?"

"If you have any doubts, I'll—answer. If you have any request, I will forward it to the Institute. However, the victory conditions are already set. There will be no further changes!"

Ding Lingdang said with a mischievous laugh.

She seemed to be enjoying Li Yao's crushed appearance.

Li Yao turned a deaf ear. His eyes seemed to be transfixed as he supported his cheeks. Apparently, he was deep in thought. He pondered for a long time, and only after Ding Lingdang had yawned a couple of times did he suddenly say:

"Sister Ling, since the match is a simulation of an actual combat scenario and I'm playing the role of a meticulous evil expert who has infiltrated the enemy camp for ten years, then should I not be like a spy? If so, then in accordance with my identity, can I mention some requirements that tally with common sense?"

Ding Lingdang was surprised for a moment. She pouted her pink lips:

"Tell me the specifics, but I will not let you take advantages of any loopholes!"

Li Yao slightly smiled as the depths of his eyes twinkled. Stretching a finger, he said:

"First of all, since I've used a jade chip to steal the core secrets of Iron Fist Club, then should this jade chip not be provided by me?"

Ding Lingdang pursed her lips as she spoke in proud and self-satisfied manner:

"Ha, I figured that you would want to mess with the jade chip. Alright, you can provide the jade chip, but it must be one of five most common jade chips specified on the magical equipment list. Moreover, you have to hand over the jade chip a day before the match so that the Institute can inspect it. Only after that will the special telepathic thoughts that will represent the core secrets of the Iron Fist Club be inputted."

"More importantly, you can neither tamper with the telepathic thoughts stored inside the jade chip nor carry out any disruptive modifications on the jade chip. You must ensure that the jade chip is the most common jade chip found in the cultivation world. Let me put it in simple terms—the jade chip should be such that any person could recognize it at first glance!"

"You are dumbfounded, right?"

"Do you think that the Institute would not foresee your little trick?"

"Do you think that you can grab 10,000 credits under the eyes of 2,000 members of the Iron Fist Club and Chaos Edge Hall so easily?! Don't forget that this sister was the former president of Iron Fist Club. How could I watch your treacherous plan succeed!"

"Just wait a few days, then this sister will be free and will accompany you to hunt in the northern regions, okay!?"

Li Yao remained unmoved. He stretched out his second finger:

"Second, according to the rules, I can only use the magical equipment from the list. I think that's not fair. I think that as a meticulous spy, I should have already predicted that I will have to flee; therefore, it is quite reasonable to say that I would have crafted one or two life-saving pieces of magical equipment in advance. So I request that I be allowed to use a special magical equipment, the magical equipment crafted by me."

Li Yao tapped his left ear: "I want to use the Demon Beast Detector. This is just a field survival-type auxiliary-class magical equipment. It doesn't have any attack capabilities, and it is also not going to explode. The Institute can confirm it with my teacher."

Ding Lingdang tilted her head as she thought a bit before she nodded and said:

"Alright, this requirement is not too excessive. It is indeed in line with a spy's behavior. The Institute should agree."

"However, is this thing really so good? Is this thing the reason why you could gather so many credits recently? When are you going to craft one for your sister to play with?"

Li Yao chuckled:

"It is still in combat trials as there are some minor problems waiting to be solved. The detection speed of the demon beasts can also be improved a bit. Once I have resolved all the flaws, I'll definitely craft a special version just for Sister Ling. Rest assured!"

Having said that, Li Yao raised his third finger:

"Third, I need the concrete details of all 2,000 participants from the Iron Fist Club and Chaos Edge Hall, including their strength, the martial arts they are specialized in, and their combat videos. I need all of their information."

A frown crept upon Ding Lingdang's face:

"What do are you planning? This is cheating, right?"

Li Yao shook his head:

"I beg to differ, I think that it is perfectly reasonable."

"Because I am an evil expert who has infiltrated the Iron Fist Club for almost a decade and is also a meticulous spy, over these years, I must have gathered information on a lot of the Iron Fist Club's experts, and as Chaos Edge Hall is the biggest enemy of Iron Fist Club, the information on their clansmen should also be within my scope of investigation."

"Even if I don't have the information of all the experts, at the very least, I should be well aware of some hundred top experts of each side, otherwise it will not be in accordance with the character setting."

"Furthermore, this info is not some top secret information. All the students cultivate openly in their day to day life. What martial technique courses they have chosen can also be found out, and many people like posting their combat videos to show off. As long as I have some time to gather information, even I could figure everything out."

"However, at present, time is very pressing, so I need the Institute to gather this information for me, that's all."

"However, if I was truly an evil expert who had infiltrated for a decade, I could have calmly collected every piece information over these years, maybe even be perfectly clear of which expert got a hernia too!"

Ding Lingdang stared at him suspiciously:

"Listening to you, your request does sound reasonable, but why do I always feel that there is some kind of conspiracy!?"

Li Yao curled his lips:

"Of course there is a conspiracy. If there was no scheme, would I really tussle with 2,000 robust fellows!"

Having contemplated for a moment, Ding Lingdang nodded:

"Alright, at least you've persuaded me. I will do everything I can do get them for you from the Institute. Are there any more requirements?"

"There is one last thing."

Li Yao slowly raised his thumb:

"Since the Thunderbolt Cup is a tournament which determines the allocation of next year’s resources, does that mean that if I am somehow lucky enough to win the match, the Refining Department will get more resources than the Combat Department?"

Ding Lingdang sucked in a cold lump of air:

"Do you really think you can win?"

"But of course."

Li Yao said, "I'll fight it out and will win!"

...

Five days later, under the dark sky before dawn.

The 1st Generation Tai'e Crafting Furnace in the refining room without any lights seemed like a pitch black jungle of steel.

Sitting in the Lotus position, Li Yao rested in the deepest part of this seemingly steel jungle.

In the darkness, even his fingers that were arms apart weren't visible. All one could see was a weak red light which seemed to be emitted by the Demon Beast Detector. It was operating at high-speed, giving his left eye a dangerous appearance.

After five hours, the All-Freshmen Interdepartmental Thunderbolt Cup would begin!

Chapter 196: Eliminate Li Yao First!

Chapter 196: Eliminate Li Yao First!

Regarding the conditions proposed by Li Yao, after careful consideration, the Institute had finally agreed to let Li Yao use the Demon Beast Detector as well as give the necessary details of the 2,000 students participating the match.

The Thunderbolt Cup was carried out under the banner of actual combat. In the real world, if there was indeed such a dangerous spy, it would be absolutely impossible for him to know nothing about his opponents.

More importantly, the Institute also hoped that Li Yao could hold on for a long while and give some more trouble to the Iron Fist Club and Chaos Edge Hall. He could add some itsy-bitsy bit of variability to the tournament that had been repeated again and again over a few decades.

Maybe with these conveniences, Li Yao could hold on for...30 minutes?

And as for the fourth point, it was absolutely impossible to be honored completely.

After all, the Thunderbolt Cup was just one match among series of matches held by the Combat Department; it was just a contest between the freshmen.

After the Thunderbolt Cup was over, the senior students of the Iron Fist Club and Chaos Edge Hall would start an even more intense match, which was the main highlight of the fight for the allocation of the resources.

However, after careful rumination, the Institute had made a public announcement:

If Li Yao could break through the heavy encirclement and win the Thunderbolt Cup, not only would he alone enjoy the reward of 10,000 credits, the Institute would invest ten times more resources into the Refining Department next year!

One must bear in mind that the resources invested in the Refining Department this year were calculated when the department had nearly a thousand people. And next year, even if the Refining Department remained, it would be impossible for it to recruit a couple hundred students. The Refining Department would certainly be taking a small but smart route. Maybe they could recruit one or two classes, or at most a hundred students.

In other words, as long as Li Yao won the Thunderbolt Cup, the cultivation resources that the students of the Refining Department would get to enjoy next year would be ten to twenty times more than the average amount of resources obtained by the Combat Department's students!

This was absolutely a second-to-none treatment in any university in the entirety of the Federation.

All this could come true under only one eventuality

Li Yao had to cross tens of kilometers under the encirclement and pursuit of 2,000 stalwart students. He had to fight his way out through them!

"Beep! Beep!"

The crystal processor signaled that it was 7:00 AM in the morning.

In the dim morning twilight, Li Yao suddenly stood up and slowly walked out from the depths of the steel jungle.

Appearance wise, although he looked a bit haggard, his eyes were as sharp as two flame sabers that could melt and cut everything blocking their path!

Last night, he had already prepared all the magical equipment he would need.

For the following twelve hours, he had been quietly sitting in the depths of the steel jungle, trying to comprehend the mood of an evil expert in the darkness.

He tried to think, feel...

If the three cultivation sects, the Starfire Union, the Iron Fist Club, and the Chaos Edge Hall were indeed there, and if there was indeed a spy who was undercover for a decade, what would he do when he had flee, when his life was on the line?

The vague outline of a plan that had been circling in his head for past few days gradually began to clarify itself in his head.

As for whether it would work, it would become clear after four hours!

8:00 in the morning.

There were only three hours left until the match begin.

Since a couple days ago, the freshmen arena zone of the Wasteland Battle Network began to seethe. And at this moment, it was blazing to the extreme.

All the previous Thunderbolt Cups were just a civil war between the freshmen of the Combat Department, therefore, the students of other departments weren't very concerned about it.

However, this year's Thunderbolt Cup was quite different. With the variable known as Li Yao, the contention of 1,000 vs 1,000 that more or less remained the same over the years had now become a contention of 1 vs 2,000. Meanwhile, "1 vs 2,000" glittered at the topmost part of the arena zone!

Whether it was the Combat Department or other departments, the curiosity of all the students was piqued to the apex.

Everyone wanted to know, how would Li Yao actually deal with 2,000 heavily-armed, stocky and murderous opponents in the match?

Even before the match had started, various tactical prediction posts had been flying high in the forums. All the students were discussing Li Yao's tactics:

"I'm sure Li Yao will quickly flee into the jungle and deal with the 2,000 opponents with the help of the complex terrain there!"

"The Yellow Mist Ridge is huge and is also filled with a faint mist. It is the best battlefield for guerilla warfare. Even if all 2,000 participants head into the jungle, they would not be enough to comb through the entire jungle. If Li Yao is lucky, maybe he can make his way out of the dragnet[1]!"

"Not to mention, he is obviously more powerful than everyone else. As long as he doesn't encounter Zhao Tianchong or Lu Tieshan-level experts, he could kill everyone else in seconds!"

Not even two minutes had passed since this thread was posted, it had been immediately submerged in angry posts like a tide:

"Since even you can think of this, then do you think that Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan cannot think of it?"

"I agree that the main battlefield of this match is the jungle, however, if Li Yao wants to win, he needs to pass through the two-kilometer-long canyon which is surrounded by steep cliffs on either side. There is only a narrow and winding pass in the middle, where the base of Chaos Edge Hall is located. As long as there are a few dozen people blocking the way, no matter how strong is Li Yao, can he do anything? Can he kill a few dozen people in seconds?"

"Furthermore, as long as the slightest trace of him is discovered, the remaining 1,900 people would then all be on his tail. Slowly, the encirclement would become smaller and smaller, and finally, Li Yao would definitely be caught. He ain't got no opportunity!"

In a short period of time, similar kinds of tactical analysis posts popped up in droves. Tens of thousands of students discussed his chances at great length. However, the only conclusion that was drawn was that so long as the 2,000 members of the Chaos Edge Hall and Iron Fist Club remained clear-headed and eliminated Li Yao first, his defeat was certain. There was not a single thread of opportunity that Li Yao would win the Thunderbolt Cup.

And whether it was because of the tournament’s rules, the identity settings of both sides, or from the pre-game speeches of both of the leaders' points of view, how could they lose their heads and give Li Yao any opportunity to sit atop the mountain and watch the tigers fight?

Thus, two and a half hours before the start of the match, the topic of discussion changed from what tactics Li Yao would employ to how long he could survive.

Because in everyone's opinion, continuing a discussion regarding Li Yao's tactics was meaningless. No matter what tactics he was going to employ, Li Yao was going to lose without a shred of doubt!

From the polls with the largest number of respondents, 57% of the respondents believed that Li Yao would surrender within half an hour, 22% of the respondents believed that Li Yao could hold on for one hour before he was captured, and 15% of the respondents believed that Li Yao could hold on for 90 minutes.

The number of respondents who believed Li Yao could win was zero. There was absolutely no one who believed in Li Yao's victory.

9:00 AM.

There were only two hours remaining until the match started.

The Chaos Edge Hall's headquarters glittered like ice and snow as 1,000 armed freshmen, each sporting soaring killing intent, assembled. All in all, there was an oppressive pressure in the air.

Meanwhile, a surround-type hologram repeatedly played a series of combat videos, where the protagonist was none other than Li Yao!

Not only were the battle videos from Verdant Tarn City were being played, even his awe-inspiring performance at the Devil Flood Dragon Island during the last year's Limit Challenge Competition had been dug up.

Zhao Tianchong, who stood before the surround-type hologram, tightly sucked in his lip. A grave look appeared on his face, while his eyes turned red as he tried to arouse 999 of the Chaos Edge Hall's top freshmen:

"My fellow students, as you all know, the Thunderbolt Cup is the highest honor a group of freshmen can attain, and more importantly, it is also related to the amount of resources we are given next year. Therefore, it goes without me saying that everyone should go all out in the match, not just for the glory of Chaos Edge Hall, but for yourselves as well. Let us all fight to the bitter end!"

"However, this year's Thunderbolt Cup is different from previous ones. Not only are we going to be facing our old rival, the Iron Fist Club, there is a new enemy as well, the Starfire Union. Although the Starfire Union only has one student taking part in the much, don't make the mistake of underestimating this student, because...he is none other than Li Yao—Vulture Li Yao!"

"All of you have repeatedly studied Li Yao's combat videos for past couple of days, and you're all clear that his strength is absolutely not below mine. Furthermore, he is a guerrilla expert who is good at jungle warfare. And maybe, in this complex jungle terrain, he could display an even more aggressive battle force. He is also more likely to use various kinds of weird magical equipment!"

"Therefore, let me repeat it one last time, there is no doubt that the Iron Fist Club is our biggest enemy, but Li Yao is our most dangerous opponent. In the match, our first priority target is gonna be Li Yao; we are going to remove this variable first, and once we have captured the jade chip, only then will we compete with the Iron Fist Club!"

"I have faith in Lu Tieshan's wisdom, he must also be giving a similar briefing at the Iron Fist Club. There is a tacit understanding between us and no one is allowed to break it, not in a million years. Do you all understand?"

"Hooah!"

999 young sword cultivators shouted at the top of their lungs. Apparently, their blood was boiling.

"Alright! Let's get rid of Li Yao, capture the jade chip, and clash with Iron Fist Club. The final victory is gonna be ours!"

Zhao Tianchong, while zealously waving the Chaos Edge Hall's banner, shouted:

"Chaos Edge Hall members, move out!"

Almost at the same time, at the Iron Fist Club's headquarters, Lu Tieshan, with his head held high and Iron Fist Club's banner in his hand, marched ahead.

Following him were 999 robust teenagers, each strong as a bear and supple as a tiger. Every single one had a vivid spirit tattoo that radiated a powerful and majestic aura.

"Let's eliminate Li Yao, seize the jade chip, and steamroll the Chaos Edge Hall. The final victory belongs to us!"

"My brothers of the Iron Fist Club, follow me!"

10:00 in the morning.

Only one hour was left until the start of the match.

A dozen luxury flying shuttles smoothly and quietly flew into the Grand Desolate War Institution.

Aboard these flying shuttles were the executives of various combat sects in the Wasteland; they were all VIPs who had been specially invited for the Thunderbolt Cup.

A large part of the educational fund of the Grand Desolate War Institution was sponsored by these sects. As far these sects were concerned, the Grand Desolate War Institution was equivalent to a youth training center.

With the year at an end, they would most definitely want to check the good seedlings fostered by the youth training center this year.

If there was a freshman with incredibly good potential, he or she would become the key focus of their investment. Maybe they would even sign a contract with him or her on the spot, entice him or her into joining them.

It seemed that the news of three student unions contenting for the first time in twenty-seven years had piqued their interest. This year's VIP list was nothing but exemplary and magnificent. Many sects sent their elder-level executives to participate.

The Hundred Saber Alliance had sent their Vice-President, Long Wenhui.

The Devil Fist Sect had also sent their Elder, Bai Mushen.

Both of them were illustrious and super fierce people who had roamed the Wasteland freely for decades and left mountains of corpses and seas of blood in their wake. Both of them were in the Core Formation Stage!

As the matter stood, a total of four Core Formation Stage powerhouses, including the Dean of the Grand Desolate War Institution, Xiong Baili, and the head of the Combat Department, Xia Yanyan, were watching. Several dozen high-level Building Foundation Stage experts were also paying attention to the match at real time inside the VIP Hall.

10:55 AM.

Only 5 minutes left before the All-Freshmen Interdepartmental Thunderbolt Cup started!

Chapter 197: Can He Fly to the High Heavens?

Chapter 197: Can He Fly to the High Heavens?

"Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!"

Thousands of crystal eyes hidden in various parts of the Yellow Wind Ridge started up, providing a clear shot of each and every corner.

The campus which used to be hustling and bustling was now utterly silent.

Everyone was logged into the Wasteland Battle Network through the crystal processors to watch the match live.

"Hurry up, the match is about to start! 1 vs 2000, Li Yao is definitely going to be trampled upon, devastated, hung up and beaten!"

Whether they were in a dormitory, classroom, canteen, or playground, all of the students on campus had formed groups of two or three so that their heads were leaning against each as they waited for the match to start with bated breath.

Meanwhile, 200 of the strongest experts of the Combat Department, under the leadership of the Iron Fist Club's President, Hua Tianxiong, and the Chaos Edge Hall's President, Xu Ge, were watching their younger brothers compete together in the auditorium of the Combat Department.

After the end of freshmen competition, it was the senior students’ turn to compete

"I just hope that this year's freshmen of your Chaos Edge Hall are a bit stronger, unlike last year's, who were not even able to hold on for five hours and were completely blown away by our Iron Fist Club. It was truly boring."

Hua Tianxiong spoke slowly and imperturbably while caressing his fists.

Xu Ge coldly laughed. The blade hanging on his waist slightly trembled as he retorted; he was reluctant to appear weak:

"Our Chas Edge Hall's freshman, Zhao Tianchong, has been pressing your Iron Fist Club's freshman, Lu Tieshan, on the newcomer rankings. This year, it will be you who is going to be blown away for sure!"

Last three minutes.

The 2,000 participants of Iron Fist Club and Chaos Edge Hall appeared through their respective large teleportation arrays at the base camps on the either side of the Yellow Wind Ridge.

In accordance with the rules of the match, the members of Chaos Edge Hall could only use the mass-produced Chainswords, Vibrosabers or other close combat magical equipment specified on the list.

The members of Iron Fist Club could only utilize the most common 1,300 spirit tattoos. They weren't allowed to utilize powerful secret tattoos.

In addition, the contestants weren't allowed to wear their own armor. All they could wear was the gray-colored light armor provided by the Institute.

One should not underestimate this armor. Even though it looked quite ordinary, it was top quality defense-class magical equipment. It was worth a lot. At a critical moment, it could release a powerful spiritual energy shield that could greatly mitigate the enemy attack.

As long as the attack did not exceed the full-force attack of a high-level Refinement Stage cultivator, the light armor would mitigate the damage by one-third.

Its effect was equivalent to the pink gel spouted by the puji critter during the Limit Challenge Competition. It would ensure the safety of the contestant.

More importantly, it was subtle, convenient, did not need some puji critter to fly over one's head, and most of all, there was no need to worry about accidentally damaging the puji critter, thereby losing the protection.

However, even though the light armor would mitigate the attack, the sensory array glyphs on the light armor would calculate the corresponding damage.

When the damage value reached a certain figure, the light armor would automatically apply different magnitudes of electric currents to the wearer which would correspond to different degrees of injuries.

And if it was "irreversible, chronic injuries", then the corresponding current would continue all the time.

The strongest current could even knock the contestant out, which would mean that the contestant had been killed in a second!

Last two minutes left until the start of the match.

In the VIP room, four Core Formation Stage powerhouses and several dozen Building Foundation Stage experts stared at hundreds of constantly flashing holograms with interest.

Especially when the crystal eyes swept through the 2,000 well-trained, powerful and grim-looking freshmen of the Chaos Edge Hall and Iron Fist Club, all of them, even more so, burst forth with a series of praises.

"This year's Combat Department's freshmen are very good. They are comparable to Peng Hai and Ding Lingdang!"

The Hundred Saber Alliance's vice president, Long Wenhui, was the Core Formation Stage powerhouse who had captured Demon King Pieu. However, at this moment, there wasn't even an iota of murderous aura emanating from him. His amazing cultivation was sealed tight such that not even the slightest trace of energy could escape from his body. He seemed just like a fat, middle-aged businessman. He smiled at an emaciated old man and continued, "It seems to me that the Iron Fist Club's leader, freshman Lu Tieshan, is from the Devil Fist Sect, am I right? Old Bai, congratulations! If my insight is right, if this kid is still alive after ten years, he will definitely be in the Building Foundation Stage!"

The emaciated old man was none other the Devil Fist Sect's Elder, and a Core Formation Stage powerhouse, Bai Mushen!

When Lu Tieshan's father was still among the living, he was Bai Mushen's favorite direct disciple. And after the death of his father, Bai Mushen directed Lu Tieshan and watched him grow up. In Bai Mushen's eyes, Lu Tieshan was no different than his grandson.

Today was Lu Tieshan's most important battle after having entered the university, so Bai Mushen specially came to watch the match. And the results did not let him down.

Although the match had yet to start, from Lu Tieshan's subtle movements, it was quite evident that he had advanced by leaps and bounds. As compared to the naive and ignorant juvenile from a year ago, he seemed to have been reborn completely; he had cast off his old self and taken on a new self.

However, what made Bai Mushen most gratified was Lu Tieshan's ability to command.

Under his leadership, 999 of the Iron Fist Club's freshmen strictly followed orders and prohibitions just like a true army.

This kind of leadership was even rarer than battle force.

However, Bai Mushen's eyes didn't reveal the slightest bit of smile as he spoke:

"Chaos Edge Hall's Student Zhao Tianchong is also a one-in-million cultivation genius. In my opinion, he will become an outstanding sword cultivator within ten years!"

"Zhao Tianchong is pretty good, but his parents are loose cultivators. If I am correct, then he will walk on the path of loose cultivators. Even if he joins some cultivation sect, it would absolutely not be the Hundred Saber Alliance as he is a pure sword cultivator!"

Long Wenhui sighed before smiling again, "However, I did not come just for Zhao Tianchong, there is yet another freshman who is also very interesting. He is none other Li Yao, who is taking part in the match on behalf of the

Refining Department. Old Bai, in just a minute, you will need to pay attention to him."

"I have indeed heard of this Li Yao. He is one of the three experts among this year's freshmen. In the battle of Verdant Tarn City, his performance was shocking, if not crazy. Not only had he carried a Six Barrel Rotary Cannon while casually walking through the battlefield, he also had ten Hellfire-Lightnings strapped on his back, which he finally blasted a Six-Armed Naga to death with. He is indeed quite formidable!"

"However, from his combat videos, in my opinion, he is a very powerful refiner. He specializes in modifying and controlling heavy magical equipment."

"In the city battle, he had logistics support and also had the support of his teammates."

"However, now, all he can carry is a backpack full of magical equipment. He doesn't have any logistics support. Not to mention that inside the jungle and swamps, he will be encircled by 2,000 contestants. Can he fly to the high heavens?"

Bai Mushen disapprovingly said.

He was the most traditional body practitioner who only believed in fists. Even though he had seen Li Yao 's combat videos, he did not appreciate the combat method employed by Li Yao. Li Yao placed too much emphasis on magical equipment, a trait Bai Mushen did not appreciate.

Long Wenhui calmly smiled.

"Maybe, maybe not. In any case, at least Li Yao's appearance has added a small bit of variability to this match, which has been dull for over two decades. I believe that this year's match will be very exciting. Ah, only ten seconds are left before the game starts."

Last ten seconds to the start of the match.

Li Yao, through a small teleportation array, entered the Yellow Wind Ridge!

"Look, it's Li Yao!"

Three crystal eyes simultaneously turned towards Li Yao. All the holograms switched to different angles of his face in the blink of an eye. Tens of thousands of spectators in the campus had their eyes upon him; not bit of the expression on his face could be missed. Everyone was hoping to guess his plans from his expression.

However, everyone was disappointed.

Li Yao wore green jungle camouflage clothing. Even his face was painted with alternating yellow and green stripes, making it extremely difficult to discern even his eyes and nose, much less the expression on his face.

The only thing that could identify him as Li Yao was the weird magical equipment worn on his left ear. At present, many people were already aware that this thing was called a Demon Beast Detector, a reconnaissance-class magical equipment invented by Li Yao himself.

"Why is he wearing the Demon Beast Detector?"

Although the Yellow Wind Ridge was home to some demon beasts, they were of "ordinary" level. As far as cultivators were concerned, they were nothing more than clay chickens and pottery dogs. They could be easily killed; there was simply no need to take any kind of precautions for them.

Apart from the Demon Beast Detector, Li Yao had a bulging, standard-issue jungle backpack strapped to his shoulders as well as a short, double-edged scimitar hooked to his belt. Dressed in his neat and tidy jungle camouflage uniform, Li Yao didn't give any kind of impression of someone who had carried Six-Barrel Rotary Cannon and ten Hellfire-Lightnings during the battle of Verdant Tarn City.

"Li Yao's skills completely lie in heavy magical equipment. Without the Six-Barrel Rotary Cannon and Hellfire-Lightnings, he is unable to do anything and will be eliminated at once!"

Many people said it with certainty.

Making the best use of the last few seconds, Li Yao jumped and rotated his joints with all his concentration; stretching each and every strand of muscle to the limit.

At this instance, he was at the southernmost tip of the Yellow Wind Ridge.

Right behind him was the Iron Fist Club's base.

1,000 stalwart and tall fellows cast a covetous stare right at the back of his head.

Li Yao could not help but turn his head to take a glance, but all he saw was countless big and bulky fellows with their arms crossed, smiling at him.

"Fellow Student Li Yao, we all admire your spirit and courage, but this is a competition where our Iron Fist Club's honor is on the line, so we will show no mercy. We are gonna treat you just like a true evil expert and a spy, we will not hesitate to blast you away!"

From the base of Iron Fist Club came a coarse and unrestrained shout.

Li Yao pursed his lips before turning his gaze towards the front once again, peering at the mist-filled jungle.

In accordance with the rules of the match, Li Yao would be given a ten-minute head start. He would have to cut through the flatlands, jungle, and canyon, breach through the Chaos Edge Hall's base, and reach the northernmost tip, which was the contact point of the Starfire Union.

The distance between the starting point and the finishing point was 20.5 kilometers.

"Five...Four...Three...Two...One...Let the All-Freshmen Interdepartmental Thunderbolt Cup commence!"

When the starting signal was transmitted from the sky, the fierce group of Iron Fist Club members became even rowdier.

As for Li Yao, he turned a deaf year to everything, took a deep breath, bent his legs, and ran like hell!

His attitude was quite strange. It seemed as if he was frightened and fleeing in panic like a centipede, but on the other hand, he was also like a poisonous snake that was quietly moving around as it slowly crawled its way towards its prey. With each step, all the joints in his body would twist, making it difficult to distinguish whether he was running away or attacking.

Nevertheless, his speed was incredibly fast. In a blink of an eye, he had already cut through the two-kilometer-long flatlands and made his way into the jungle.

His ten-minute head start was quickly over.

"We don't want to have any kind of conflict with Chaos Edge Hall for now. First of all, we have to find Li Yao, eliminate him and obtain the jade chip!"

One thousand angry men from the Iron Fist Club madly roared as they ran out, seeming like a thousand ferocious tigers heading down the mountain as they charged into the jungle!

Chapter 198: If You Want to Kill Me, Let's Die Together!

Chapter 198: If You Want to Kill Me, Let's Die Together!

At the northernmost region of the map, Zhao Tianchong ordered a hundred members of the Chaos Edge Hall to remain at the base, blocking the canyon so that not even a drop of water could trickle through.

And in order to prevent Li Yao using some kind of flying magical equipment to fly over their head, all the contestants left by Zhao Tianchong were flying sword experts.

In the event that Li Yao tried to traverse the canyon through the sky, dozens of flying swords would immediately greet him and treat him as a live target!

Afterward, Zhao Tianchong led 900 remaining experts from the Chaos Edge Hall to the jungle, pressing towards the center of the map.

Before the Iron Fist Club had a chance, they must find Li Yao, eliminate him, and grab the jade chip. The first one to seize the initiative would be the one who would take the jade chip back to their respective base and insert it into static-type crystal processor.

Following which, they would just have to hold the line while facing the fierce attack of the opposition, that's all.

A defensive war was always a bit more advantageous.

"Time is pressing, keep up the pace!"

"There are 1,000 of Iron Fist Club's members behind him and they can only head north. Everyone, please maintain formation, you can't be too scattered. The mist in the jungle is quite dense, so everyone has to make sure that each of you has at least two of your companions in your sight!"

"Once you have found Li Yao attacking your companions, do not engage. First, you have to greet with at least two of your companions and form a tactical team of three; only then should you respond to the enemy attack!"

"I repeat, three, at least three people; only then should you go and engage with Li Yao. In any case, we have 100 people posted at the canyon, the sky is also completely blocked. Even if he has wings, he cannot fly through!"

"And most important of all, before anyone has taken the jade chip, no one, and I mean no one, is allowed to engage with Iron Fist Club!"

On the live broadcast system in the Wasteland Battle Network, an enormous hologram displayed a translucent three-dimensional map of Yellow Wind Ridge. It was spotted with 2,001 tiny dots of light.

The red dots represented the Iron Fist Club.

The blue dots represented the Chaos Edge Hall.

While the lone black dot represented the Starfire Union, or to say, Li Yao!

After having scurried into the jungle, the black dot seemed to be aimlessly moving around in circles. Li Yao seemed to have qualms regarding the hunters in the front. He dared not proceed forward and tried to find a hiding spot at the center of the jungle.

Not long after, a large number of red and blue dots slowly fanned into the jungle, pressing onwards from the both sides towards the center.

In order to prevent anyone being left alone and subsequently being attacked by Li Yao, both sides maintained a tight formation; they did not spread throughout the jungle at all, leaving many gaps behind.

Nonetheless, it seemed that they were gradually tightening the noose. As they moved back and forth, the room for Li Yao to move was definitely getting smaller and smaller. But they would always get noticed for a short moment.

Both sides gradually got closer. Finally—

The blue and red dots representing the vanguard teams overlapped. Both sides made the first contact.

In the mist-filled jungle, the vague towering trees looked as though they were gigantic beasts that were bearing their fangs and brandishing their claws.

Amid the shrubs, the croaks and shrieks of unknown demon beasts made the already tense atmosphere even more scorching.

Everyone's forehead was drenched in sweat, their nerves highly taut.

Meanwhile, their eyes moved here and there; taking precautions against any kind of sneak attack made by Li Yao from each and every direction.

From the opposite side of the mist, a tall and stalwart human silhouette gradually revealed itself, its eyes not concealing its hostility.

"Slow down and sheath your swords. Now is not the time to fight with the Iron Fist Club!"

Zhao Tianchong shouted at the top of his lungs.

He knew that everyone was a hot-blooded youth. Generally, their relation was already anything but harmonious. In the past, small conflicts had taken place just to compete for training equipment and field space.

It was difficult to ensure that no one would do a stupid thing in a moment of hot-headedness. If so, then everything would be finished.

Meanwhile, from the opposite side, Lu Tieshan's voice likewise resounded from the mist.

Zhao Tianchong was quite pleased.

Lu Tieshan's temperament was rather stable. He was not some boorish fellow who had well-developed limbs but a moronic head. Furthermore, during the battle of Verdant Tarn City, they had also forged a deep friendship.

Now that he was found, presumably the scene would not get out of control.

"Lu Tieshan, it's me, Zhao Tianchong. Let’s have a chat."

Soon, Lu Tieshan, along with a few capable and vigorous-looking Iron Fist Club members vigilantly drilled their way out of the mist.

Spreading his hands, indicating that he had no malicious intentions, Zhao Tianchong, along with a few core members of the Chaos Edge Hall, walked to the center of the jungle.

"Lu Tieshan, although your Iron Fist Club and my Chaos Edge Hall have had many contradictions in the past, at the end of the day, we both belong to righteous factions. At this instance, we're hunting a notorious evil expert. We don't have any reason to seek each other and mutually destroy each other first, do we? I think that you are very clear on the meaning of the saying—'Fisherman benefit from the tussle between sandpiper and clam'!"

Since it was a simulation of true combat, Zhao Tianchong had also completely entered into the role as he gradually spoke in accordance with his identity.

Lu Tieshan nodded and said:

"Indeed, I have already informed all brothers that without finding the jade chip first, no one is allowed to engage with the Chaos Edge Hall. I just hope that your people do not act on impulse!"

Zhao Tianchong slightly smiled as he said:

"You don't need to worry, over these days, we have repeatedly studied Li Yao's combat videos. His aggressiveness and craftiness have left a deep impression, they will not act rashly and give Li Yao any opportunity to sit atop the mountain and watch the tigers fight!"

"Well, I've got a better idea, how about we divide the jungle between you and me? You will be responsible for the southern part of the jungle and I will be responsible for the northern part of the jungle. We will slowly search inch by inch, leaving no stone unturned. Only after having found Li Yao and the jade chip should we resolve our grudges!"

Lu Tieshan's eyelid dropped down. Just as he was about to nod, a shriek suddenly came from a distance.

Both of them happened to have their pupils constrict to the limit at the same time, cold sweat appeared on their foreheads in anxiousness as both of them coincidentally and simultaneously shouted:

"WHAT'S GOING ON? DON'T DO ANYTHING!"

Having said that, each led a dozen core members towards the direction of the scream.

At the same time, they also transmitted orders to various members of their respective clubs via the crystal processor telling them to remain calm, relay all of their information, and to not take any action until further notice.

Unfortunately, the Yellow Wind Ridge was filled with mist and was a world fragment that was quite far away from the Heaven Origin Sector, making the network unstable and filled with interference; the network was going on and off every now and then.

Many battle teams seemed to have thrust into the enemy's rear, and when the mist cleared slightly, they discovered that they were already entangled with each other.

However, everyone did keep in mind that they could not engage, so all they could do was give a black look to each other.

When Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan arrived, they discovered a three-man team from the Chaos Edge Hall and a similar team from the Iron Fist Club side in a stalemate.

Both sides were poised on a razor’s edge; there was a chill in the air, and a conflict could break out at any moment.

"What's going on? Haven't I told you that without finding the jade chip first, no one is allowed to..."

Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan snapped at the same time. However, they were not able to berate them in full.

Because at that moment, they noticed a giant tree between the both sides which happened to have its bark peeled out, thereby revealing its white part, upon which two crooked characters were engraved.

"Jade chip!"

There was also a small arrow pointing towards a tree hole.

Meanwhile, half of the jade chip was sticking out of the tree hole.

In the blink of an eye, Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan had an impulse to swear, while a sense of helplessness and powerlessness welled up in their heart.

"Calm!"

"Everyone please remain calm!:

"This is obviously a trap, can't you see that? Li Yao just wants us to kill each other, this jade chip is obviously false. There might even be a bomb hidden at the back of the jade chip, and as long as we moved it, you might all be blown away!"

Zhao Tianchong shouted in a strict voice. Having said that, he too was having some doubt in his own speculation.

As Li Yao could only a backpack full of magical equipment, which even if it was filled with bombs, no matter how they were arranged, the subsequent explosion would not be that big. Whereas in an open terrain, the explosion would not even be able to blast a few people away.

"Everyone, retreat, hide behind the trees, I'll check it out!"

Everyone retreated a dozen meters away and took cover behind the towering trees.

Releasing his spirit threads, Zhao Tianchong slowly approached the jade chip.

"Whoosh!"

The moment his spirit thread touched the jade chip, a mutation occurred as a small paper crane suddenly flew out of the tree hole, dancing in the air.

It was the most common magical equipment in the Star Glory Federation, the "Transmitting Paper Crane".

From the paper crane rang Li Yao's voice:

"Friends of the Iron Fist Club and Chaos Edge Hall, hello!

"Please don't doubt the authenticity of the jade chip in front of you, I am sincerely handing the jade chip over to you."

Assuming an air of self-conceit, the Transmitting Jade Chip spoke freely and frankly just like Li Yao:

"If I don't hand over the jade chip, all 2,000 contestants will treat me as their target. I will be hunted down by all of you. I simply did not have a single shred of opportunity!

"Therefore, my plan goes like this—first I will hand over the jade chip to you and let all of you fight to the death with each other. In the best case scenario, both sides will be defeated and wounded, then I will swaggeringly come and effortlessly reap the spoils of a contest fought between you two!

"If you are worried about the authenticity of the jade chip, it's very simple; you can take it to a static-type crystal processor on any of your bases and check it out. You can check whether the stored data are authentic or not. The chip is encrypted with special telepathic thoughts that I am unable to copy or tamper with."

Having finished speaking, the paper crane paused for a long while; seemingly giving both sides time to consider.

Only when both sides were somewhat dazed did the paper crane continued as it flapped its wings:

"Of course, even if say this, there is 90% chance that everything I just said is a lie, this jade chip is false and I am just luring both sides into a fight.

"You can all think that I am bluffing and continue to hunt me down. I believe that under the web of 2,000 contestants, I cannot hide for too long.

"However, it has never been my style to play the pig to eat the tiger, so let me forewarn you.

"I have already advanced into the 6th level of Refinement Stage, my spiritual energy can now be used in combat and as such my battle force has advanced by leaps and bounds. I can say for sure that three to five of you can't deal with me.

"If you truly want to eliminate me, you have to form a team of thirty to fifty people!

"However, friends of Chaos Edge Hall, I advise you to be a bit slower when hunting me down; do not rush too fast, or all of you will become my hunting targets!

"Once you have formed an alliance to hunt me down, I will specifically target your Chaos Edge Hall members!

"Anyone armed with swords and sabers will become my hunting target!

"Believe me when I say that before you can eliminate me, I will take thirty to fifty members of Chaos Edge Hall with me!

"From the beginning, your Chaos Edge Hall's strength has been worse than the Iron Fist Club’s. In all the Thunderbolt Cups held in the past decade, you have only won twice. Just last year you suffered a crushing defeat; it was quite miserable already!

"I am quite sure that with my 'help', you will lose even more miserably!

"Especially Zhao Tianchong… you are the most crucial member of the Chaos Edge Hall. You’d better hope that you don't encounter me in the jungle, for I will eliminate you at any price without any hesitation, maybe even die along with you.

"If you come to kill me, I will take the Chaos Edge Hall down with me!"

Chapter 199: Daggers Drawn

Chapter 199: Daggers Drawn

The pale green paper crane danced energetically, seemingly harmless to humans and animals, and the voice it transmitted was also quite calm. Nevertheless, it caused everyone to feel a chill running down their backs.

After having scared the hell out of everyone to the point that they were all drenched in cold sweat, he continued:

"However, if Chaos Edge Hall forgoes hunting me down and engages in full-scale war with Iron Fist Club instead, then I will attack the Iron Fist Club members with all I’ve got until the outcome is no longer a foregone conclusion!"

"The reason is quite simple. Among all three of us, the Iron Fist Club is the most powerful. Only if the two of us align ourselves together and weed out Iron Fist Club will we have a chance of victory!"

"Zhao Tianchong, and friends of the Chaos Edge Hall, as long as you stand where I stand and calmly think, you will realize that I am not necessarily deceiving you; this is the only method for me to improve my chance of winning!"

"After Iron Fist Club is eliminated, my chance of winning may increase from 0 to 10%, while your chance of winning will increase from 0 to 90%. If we formed an alliance, it would be way better for the Chaos Edge Hall!"

"I rest my case here. Now the outcome of the match in is your hands, ladies and gentlemen. As for where we go from here, it all depends on your decision!"

The paper crane slightly shook as it slowly floated down to the ground.

In everybody's eyes, it seemed as though a thousand kilogram boulder had been smashed onto their hearts, causing a great stir.

Whereas at every corner of the campus, everyone watching this scene through the hologram had long since been dumbfounded.

Before the start of the match, everyone had proposed countless strategies which Li Yao could employ. Many people believed that the only way for the Li Yao to win was to propagate dissent and discord, setting a spark between the Iron Fist Club and Chaos Edge Hall in advance.

However, no one had ever imagined that driving a wedge could be done in such a fair and square way!

The Devil Fist Sect's Elder, Bai Mushen, slightly frowned:

"This tactic is... somewhat despicable, right?"

Most of the body practitioners were straightforward. They had always advocated physical strength and head-on confrontation, and had always been less interested in scheming and such.

Whereas the eyes of the Hundred Saber Alliance's vice president, Long Wenhui, burst forth with a sharp gleam as he smiled and said:

"From the start, Student Li Yao is playing the role of an evil expert. These kinds of tactics totally sync with his identity. And most of all, it's 1 vs. 2,000, how can he win without being a bit despicable?"

Meanwhile, as far as the said victims of all this debacle who were presently at the center of the jungle were concerned, the so-called "despicable" tactic of Li Yao wasn't as simple as it seemed.

Even before the paper crane landed on the ground, the Chaos Edge Hall members already had an ugly complexion.

Everyone whispered to each other:

"Is he serious? Doesn't he just want to drag our Chaos Edge Hall members into a fight? Isn't this bullying? What have we done wrong? Why does he have enmity with us?"

"Of course, it is serious. It's 1 vs. 2,000. He made it quite clear that if he dies, he will drag a few of us down with him. What is so strange about that?"

"Didn't you hear what he said at the end? As long as we fight with the Iron Fist Club, he will stand by us!"

"Thinking about it, he is indeed right. Our overall strength is weaker than that of the Iron Fist Club. Even if they paid heavy price to capture him, in all likelihood, we still could not endure the wanton attacks of the Iron Fist Club!"

"We might as well form an alliance with him first and eliminate the Iron Fist Club...even if we are only left with 100 people, I think we can capture a single person, yeah?"

"What do you think, is this jade chip authentic?"

"Who knows! There is a 99% chance that it is false, but what if it is authentic? Maybe it’s the so-called, ‘when false is taken for true, true becomes false[1].’ Li Yao is so treacherous. Maybe he has brazenly placed the real jade chip here, and wants us to think that it is false. When we are finished fighting with each other, he will boldly come back and retrieve the jade chip. Wouldn't it be very retarded of us to leave it here?"

"No matter whether it is real or false, let's take the jade chip first and take it to the base to check it; if it's false, we will throw it away, and if it's real, we will keep it!"

Along with the whisperings of Chaos Edge Hall members, the members of the Iron Fist Club knowingly or unknowingly drew close to each other and caressed their spirit tattoos, drawing every strand of their steel-like muscles taut. They each entered a battle state so that they could activate their spirit tattoos at moment's notice.

"Hey, something doesn't feel right, I feel that the opposite party's murderous aura is getting more and more intense!"

"Nonsense, didn't you hear what Li Yao said? If you were a member of Chaos Edge Hall, would you still cooperate with us if you knew you will lose without a doubt?"

"It seems that they are ready to attack us at moment notice. How about we attack first and take the initiative?"

"Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!"

Numerous gazes turned towards Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan.

Lu Tieshan's complexion looked bleak. A soybean-sized drop of sweat even had oozed out on his forehead as he spoke in a hoarse voice:

"Zhao Tianchong, you can't walk into his trap. This is clearly a trap, I can bet that there is 99% chance that this jade chip being false. Are you going to fight with us over a false jade chip!?"

Zhao Tianchong's eyebrows twitched as he stressed each and every word:

"Of course I know this is Li Yao's scheme. This jade chip is most likely false, but in any case, Li Yao is right: if he targeted our Chaos Edge Hall, we would lose no doubt. Lu Tieshan, tell me, why should we work together?"

Lu Tieshan rolled his eyes in circles as he hastily said:

"How about our Iron Fist Club takes the front line? If someone is going to die, it will be us. Is this good enough to show our sincerity?"

Zhao Tianchong sneered:

"If you are the vanguard, then Li Yao would be captured by you, meaning the jade chip will also be acquired by you. We would still lose, wouldn't we?"

Lu Tieshan was tongue-tied.

He came to realize that this hand of Li Yao’s was quite good. Li Yao was simply unafraid of it being seen through.

It was not a conspiracy, but at the same time, it was!

Zhao Tianchong coldly said:

"Lu Tieshan, I have a suggestion. Let's see if you have the courage to go through with it!

"If you want to work together, we can. However, in order to do so, you have to make up for the losses the Chaos Edge Hall would suffer during the hunt. The Iron Fist Club must choose a hundred people and let us strike them down, eliminating them from the tournament."

"This will balance the overall battle force of both sides. Only then will we continue to cooperate."

"In addition, this jade chip must be kept by me; I will take it to the Chaos Edge Hall's base to check its authenticity."

Lu Tieshan was stupefied:

"Zhao Tianchong, are you kidding? You want a hundred people on my side to 'suicide', and you want us to hand this jade chip over to you? This is absurd! It is impossible!"

While remaining expressionless, Zhao Tianchong stressed each word:

"I know that my request is absurd. However, in all likelihood, Li Yao is hidden somewhere nearby and is ready to perish together with me! If I am finished, the Chaos Edge Hall will lose for sure. Tell me, if you can't satisfy these conditions why should I cooperate with you?

"If you don't agree, then even if I clearly know that it's a scheme, I still have to bear with it and cooperate with Li Yao to eliminate you first!

"This way, at least I will have a better chance of winning!"

Lu Tieshan remained silent. After Zhao Tianchong finished speaking, he too fell silent while grasping the hilt of his sword, waiting for an answer.

The people behind the two discussed in low voices. However, gradually they turned unscrupulously noisy.

Both sides' hostility was getting stronger by the second. The sword cultivators all had grabbed their swords, while the spirit tattoos on body practitioners emitted a strange brilliance. Their murderous aura was like two continuously expanding bubbles which were on the verge of colliding with each other.

"Calm down, for f*ck’s sake, all of you calm down!"

The blue veins on Lu Tieshan's neck stood out. In the blink of an eye, his eyes were completely bloodshot. His throat became hoarse as he spoke:

"Zhao Tianchong, even though your requirements are outrageous, they are not without reason. But give me time to explain them to everyone; it really cannot be done in a short amount of time! Now the most important thing is to restrain our forces. We absolutely cannot have anyone taking any action! Once anyone attacks, everything will turn chaotic!"

Lu Tieshan was someone who acted decisively. Having mused and gnashed his teeth for a moment, Lu Tieshan was actually ready to accept Zhao Tianchong's conditions.

Zhao Tianchong too heaved a sigh of relief as he let go of the hilt and spoke frankly while raising his hands:

"Alright, only you can do it. I will not ask for more; let's work together to find Li Yao and eliminate him. Even if several dozen experts of my Chaos Edge Hall fall, or I am eliminated, I will accept everything and will not make a fuss!"

"Alright, a real man—!"

Lu Tieshan had hardly spoken before sounds of fighting, through the mist around them, came from both far away and nearby.

The two had their complexions change at the same time. Both of them started the communication channel and shouted in strict voices:

"Who the hell attacked?"

"We have not even finished the negotiations here, don't attack, stand down quickly!"

Due to the interference from the mist, "buzz buzz" noises came from the communication channel, mixed in with shouts and sounds of taking attacks. The communication channel was going on and off continuously, no one responded to their shouts.

Only after listening with rapt attention for a while could they make out few words:

"Jade chip!"

"The jade chip is in his hands, ah, quickly grab it back!"

Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan looked at each other:

"Jade chip?"

Wasn't the jade chip in front of them?

"Damn it!"

The two of them simultaneously thought of one possibility. In the blink of an eye, they felt a chill down to their marrows.

Back at the Institute, tens of thousands of spectators came to know Li Yao's entire plan a few minutes in advance through over a thousand monitoring crystal eyes.

Li Yao had not just placed one jade chip in the jungle, but one hundred.

All hundred jade chips along with one hundred Transmitting Paper Cranes were evenly distributed in conspicuous locations at the center of the jungle.

Once they received even the slightest bit of disturbance, the Transmitting Paper Crane would dance in the air and lay out Li Yao's entire plan without missing anything.

Currently, the contestants from both sides were thrust deep into each other sides. Almost everyone knew of Li Yao's "scheme".

They also understood the dilemma they were facing.

And they knew that the jade chip before them was...

99% false.

However, what if Li Yao was using this very psychology and passed off the real jade chip as false?

Or maybe they could take it back to the base to check it out, just to be sure. They might as well bet on this 1% chance, they just might acquire the jade chip!

Having thought like this, everyone quietly moved closer to the dubious jade chip.

Afterward, they discovered that not too far away on the opposite side, their old opponent was also eyeing it and was ready to make their move.

In the blink of an eye, Li Yao's words from a moment ago welled up in their mind.

"What if the Chaos Edge Hall's guys are thinking of cooperating with Li Yao and attacks our Iron Fist Club?"

"What if these kids of the Iron Fist Club are afraid of us cooperating with Li Yao and attack us first to take the initiative?"

Each side was thinking like this. Meanwhile, this daggers-drawn situation was getting more and more tense.

Gazes from both sides were ruthlessly clashing in midair, seemingly giving birth to crackling sparks.

Until now, everyone was still exercising patience and didn't take any action.

The nerves of 2,000 people were like 2,000 bowstrings that were stretched to the limit. And all of them were using their last bit of reasoning to restrain their hands.

Suddenly—

"Ah!"

"They took action!"

From the mist all around them, extremely unexpected voices resounded.

It was another 100 Transmitting Paper Cranes which were all hidden amid the shrubs and grasses and were skillfully imitating the screams.

[1] : A phrase from The Dream of Red Chamber[]. The original full verse is ,, meaning — "When false is taken for true, true becomes false. If nothing becomes something, something becomes nothing."

Chapter 200: Ambush on All Sides

Chapter 200: Ambush on All Sides

Among the 2,000 contestants, the vast majority turned somewhat vigilant from the sudden screams. They faintly felt that something wasn't right, so they didn't take any rash actions.

However, the terrifying part of Li Yao's trap was that as long as a few people opened fire, even if they numbered in dozens, it would cause a chain reaction. It was just like a snowball that grew bigger and bigger as it rolled, only to finally turn into an avalanche that was impossible to contain!

At the west side of the jungle, two Iron Fist Club members and two Chaos Edge Hall members were in a stalemate.

Right in between them was a jade chip placed upon a huge piece of bluestone and a paper crane dancing in the air.

Just last month, a huge fight had broken out once between the four over a training field. During the confrontation, unbeknownst to everyone, the Chaos Edge Hall's side had suffered a small loss.

The current situation was the so-called "when enemies come face to face, their eyes blaze with hatred." The four were like four bulls, ruthlessly staring at each other.

When they heard the screams, the four simultaneously shivered. Their pupils constricted to the size of a needle tip.

The Chaos Edge Hall members were the first to launch an attack. Two swords were drawn out of their sheaths and emanated a sharp sword aura akin to that of a poisonous snake.

"Attaboy, you have joined hands with Li Yao!"

The Iron Fist Club member yelled and ruthlessly punched at his own chest, activating his spirit tattoo to the extreme. He was suddenly enveloped in a layer of weak flames and his iron fist directly charged towards the sword aura.

At the south side, north side, and east side...

Flames of war rose in every part of the jungle, turning the jungle into a tempestuous sea of fire in the blink of an eye.

Even if many people were pretty clear that the screams at the beginning were all a trap laid down by Li Yao...

Since both sides had already begun fighting, they had no choice. All they could do was attack first and seize the initiative!

Under a towering tree, just as a member of Iron Fist Club picked up the jade chip, a beam of sword aura thrust right towards his heart from across the tree. The light armor burst forth with dazzling beams of blood-colored brilliance, protecting the wearer. However, although the attack was no longer fatal, the armor released an incomparably painful current, causing its wearer to twitch uncontrollably and foam at the mouth before fainting on the spot.

The Chaos Edge Hall member smiled as he came out from behind the tree. Just as he bent down to take the jade chip from the hands of his victim, a howling gale suddenly came crashing down on his head.

An Iron Fist Club member with his body covered in a metallic gloss came crashing down as his knee fiercely hammered his opponent’s spine.

The Chaos Edge Hall member's light armor burst forth with a light red brilliance as an electric current coursed through his spine in the blink of an eye, preventing any damage but causing him a tremendous amount of pain. Although he was not dead, he had suffered an "irreversible chronic injury," rendering him immobile. All he could do was lie flat on the ground while waiting to be rescued.

The Iron Fist Club member who had jumped down from the tree had not even taken a breath before two Chaos Edge Hall members who were enveloped in murderous auras walked out of the mist from the opposite side...

All around the jungle, intense small-scale encounters started at the same time. Screams, sounds of fighting, bombardments, and explosions enveloped the whole jungle.

And due to the restrictions imposed by the terrain along with the line of sight obstructed by the mist, whenever the contestants from the two sides found each other, they would often find themselves very close together.

Following which, it would turn into a fight to the death, with only one side making it out alive. There would be no other ending.

Therefore, the fatalities in this year's match were way higher compared to previous matches.

In a short period of thirty minutes, over 300 contestants had been struck down and 400 contestants had suffered irreversible, chronic injuries and lay incapacitated.

Even the 100 members of Chaos Edge Hall who were guarding the base could not hold themselves back.

From the beginning, the Chaos Edge Hall's overall strength was inferior to the Iron Fist Club’s. If the Chaos Edge Hall was lacking its 100 members, it would simply be a one-sided massacre.

Eventually, only thirty people were left to defend the base.

The remaining 70 people charged into the bloody battle happening in the jungle without a shred of hesitation. However, many of them were struck down in just a few minutes.

The well-designed battle plan that Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan had devised prior to the match had been completely disrupted.

There were no instances of tactics that could be seen. The match was uglier than all the matches from the past few decades. It was by far the clumsiest battle.

The maker of this catastrophe, Li Yao, was calmly wandering amid the branches, just like a python.

He wore a camouflage uniform with a double-sided pattern.

One side could simulate the trees, shrubs, and grasses, while the other side could simulate a variety of rocks' patterns.

Along with the camouflaging technique perfected through hunting in the Wasteland, he could remain invisible while hiding amid the branches or rocks.

As Li Yao observed the battles one by one through the Demon Beast Detector with rapt attention, continuous lines of information appeared one by one.

"Zhou Zhongping, Iron Fist Club freshman, 3rd level Refinement Stage expert. Specialties: Golden Fists, Mystique Cold Exercise. Temperament: Bold and unrestrained, walks on the path of head-on collision. Weak points: Center of gravity is unstable, the left knee was once seriously injured."

"Ching Mingyuan, Chaos Edge Hall freshman, 3rd level Refinement Stage expert. Specialties: Red Dragon Spearmanship. The long spear has a chain hidden inside and can separate, allowing it to extend to a dozen meters in the blink of an eye. Attack range is very large. Weak points: Defense is weak.

"Fang Xinghui..."

"Zhou Junzhi..."

Pieces of information like waterfall continued to fall from above the Demon Beast Detector.

This was precisely the reason why Li Yao wanted the combat details of all 2,000 contestants.

The Demon Beast Detector could distinguish between two extremely similar demon beasts, so it goes without saying that identifying a person based on his or her appearance was a piece of cake.

The latter was truly very simple. In the Star Glory Federation, the facial recognition technology was very mature. It was applied in wide variety of public places. Li Yao only had to tweak the Demon Beast Detector a bit before inputting new data, turning it into a "Combat Scouter".

And his purpose was to seek the important figures of both sides using this very Combat Scouter.

"It's gonna be you!"

When the Demon Beast Scouter found a 4th level Refinement Stage Iron Fist Club freshman, Li Yao's eyes lit up as he sneaked up to the canopy behind him and hid there silently.

Only after the target had continuously struck down two members of Chaos Edge Hall and was panting for breath did he silently slide down the tree and closed in on the target.

Amid the dark mist, Li Yao made himself look like the shadow of the target as he moved closer.

Only when the distance between the two was less than a meter did the target suddenly became vigilant.

Just when he was about to turn his head, the target felt a prickling sensation on his neck as an electric current ruthlessly swarmed into his throat, rendering him incapable of even shrieking, no matter how much he wanted to. His eyes turned wide as he clutched his throat. He knelt down before lying paralyzed in the mud.

Before he even hit the ground, Li Yao had long since disappeared, becoming one with the jungle once again.

"Well, this kid is quite ruthless whenever he attacks. He eliminated a 4th level Refinement Stage cultivator so silently that the target, even in death, didn't get to see so much as his shadow!"

Sitting in the VIP room, the Devil Fist Sect elder, Bai Mushen, who found Li Yao unworthy of a single glance a moment ago, straightened up and was somewhat moved.

The Hundred Saber Alliance vice president, Long Wenhui, slightly smiled:

"This is the third 4th level Refinement Stage freshman eliminated by him. It seems he is trying to level the playing field for both sides so that the Iron Fist Club and Chaos Edge Hall remain in conflict for a longer period of time. This is the best way to inflict heavy casualties on both sides."

"Look, he is attacking once again. This time, it's a 4th level Refinement Stage freshman from the Chaos Edge Hall. This freshman is also baffled."

"Oh, why are you so surprised, huh? He has already eliminated three Iron Fist Club experts, so obviously he is going to eliminate one or two Chaos Edge Hall experts, in order to keep the balance! Or do you truly believe the words of an 'evil expert,’ do you think he will sincerely work with the Chaos Edge Hall?"

Long Wenhui looked quite self-complacent as he disapprovingly said.

Bai Mushen turned solemn as he slowly said:

"If this keeps on, the conflict between both sides will only grow more and more intense. If their experts aren't killed by the conflict, then they will definitely be assassinated by Li Yao. In the end, maybe he will truly pave a road of blood. Let's see how Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan are going to deal with this!"

Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan were part of only a few people who remained clear-headed.

The moment the sounds of fighting and shouting resounded, they immediately realized that it was all Li Yao's plot.

Lu Tieshan burst into shouting:

"Zhao Tianchong, you've to think clearly. Li Yao will not sincerely team up with you for sure. He will definitely think of ways to weaken our power so that a delicate balance is always maintained between our sides, in order to ensure that we cause maximum fatalities to each other!"

"If you and him team up, I am absolutely sure that at the end of the day, you will be definitely be chewed up by him to the point that not even slag would remain!"

Zhao Tianchong silently pondered this for a moment before his eyes burst forth with a knife-sharp glare as he promptly came to a decision:

"For the sake of this plan, we can only cut our losses!"

"The conflict has already started, and in the end, we aren't army commanders and our fellow students aren't well-trained soldiers. There’s no way we can bring everyone back under control."

"All the people here are the strongest core members. We should team up and head towards the north, quelling as much as conflict as possible. If we come across one we can’t stop, we should just bypass it and save some time!"

"Any jade chips we find en route should be equally distributed. Each person must get his share!"

"We have to seize every minute and every second to reach the canyon as quickly as possible and intercept Li Yao!"

"We have to set a trap at the canyon and let Li Yao experience the taste of ambush from all sides!"

Both sides had deeply felt the dreadfulness of Li Yao. So, without hesitating for a moment, everyone immediately began to move.

En route, if they reached a relatively mild conflict with both sides’ members only lightly injured, both leaders would team up to calm the combatants down and then move on.

If they encountered a conflict in which both sides were locked in a fierce struggle and had members who were laden with injuries lying on the ground, they would run by as fast as possible.

As for the fights happening in the distance, they had no time to stop them.

It only took them forty-two minutes to reach the canyon, and the people from both sides had formed a hybrid force of 185 contestants.

Even though their group was relatively small, they were the strongest and most capable core members from both sides.

Moreover, they could survive in any kind of chaos; most of them had relatively stable temperaments, shrewd thinking abilities, and they would not easily fall into a trap.

In addition, the smaller the number, the better the leadership Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan could display, decreasing the chances of both sides falling into chaos.

Furthermore, the canyon region wasn't obstructed by the mist; the visibility was quite clear, allowing anyone to easily catch everything within a range of two kilometers.

"Li Yao, now we have 200 or so members tightly blockading the canyon. Let's see if you still have some way to sneak past us!"

Chapter 201: Final Plan

Chapter 201: Final Plan

The two kilometer long canyon was surrounded by a steep cliff a few kilometer high, whereas the upper regions were also sealed by a special barrier. It was absolutely impossible for anyone to climb.

At the center of the two cliffs was a winding, long and narrow passage which had rugged rocks of all sizes lying on either side.

The combined team of the Iron Fist Club and Chaos Edge Hall, which comprised of one hundred and eighty five experts, hid behind those very jagged rocks, setting up a deadly trap.

In order to lure Li Yao into the trap, of the thirty sword cultivators that were originally guarding the Chaos Edge Hall's base, twenty were also transferred behind the jagged rocks for the ambush.

On the surface, only ten people were guarding the entire canyon.

"Will he be fooled?"

Lu Tieshan, who was hiding behind a huge piece of rock, asked in a somewhat tense manner.

"He will definitely be fooled, for we are similarly using a trap which is not a trap but is a trap!" Zhao Tianchong sneered and said, "In the meantime, both of us will continue to communicate with our respective team members, slowly calming everyone down, and ask them to retreat from the battlefield and converge on our position.

"And with the passage of time, more and more people will gather at the canyon, and in a few hours, we will recover our entire team or what's remaining of them!

"As for Li Yao, he can only carry a backpack full of magical equipment, a vast majority of which were jade chips that have fallen into our hands completely. How many more pieces of magical equipment can he still have to play any more tricks on us?

"Therefore, the only way for him to win is to have a race against time with us. He has to make use of the little time he has before we react and make a beeline to the canyon forcefully!"

While he was speaking, many members from both sides, who were laden with dust, continued to walk out of the forest as they stumbled towards the center of the canyon.

Fortunately, due to Li Yao's tactic of leveling the field, the overall battle force of both sides was almost the same, ensuring the dispute between both sides.

In order to mask the trails of late-coming surviving contestants, all of them had been arranged to proceed to the second-half of the canyon for the ambush.

"Feng Bing, Cao Le, as your legs are injured, it will be difficult for you to move. Thus, you should go to the latter part of the canyon for the ambush. If Li Yao actually manages to break through our heavy encirclement, you have to fight to the death. Even if you have to use your teeth, you must take a bite out of him!"

Waving his hand to the two limping members of Chaos Edge Hall, Zhao Tianchong said in somewhat impatient manner.

The two were far from lightly injured.

In particular, Cao Le, whose face had been heavily punched.

Although a majority of the attacks had been mitigated by the light armor, his face was still laden with black and blue bruises, as well as the injuries from the electric shock he had received.

While supporting each other, the two stumbled their way towards the latter part of the canyon.

God only knows how but Zhao Tianchong felt a chill in his heart as if they were committing some kind of fatal mistake.

By no means was this was the result of any kind of precise calculation but rather the intuition born from surviving in the Wasteland as a swordsman since his childhood.

As his sharp gaze shot towards the two people who just went past, under his nose, Zhao Tianchong shouted in a loud voice:

"Wait!"

Feng Bing slightly trembled as he turned his head, perplexed.

Cao Le, on the other hand, turned a deaf ear and continued on his way.

Zhao Tianchong's complexion changed for worse as he shouted, "He is not Cao Le, he is Li Yao!"

In the blink of an eye, the entire atmosphere suddenly changed!

Cao Le, who was still limping and faltering just a moment ago, soared at a lightning fast speed just like a bullet and dashed towards the latter part of the canyon!

Meanwhile, from behind the rocks on either side of the narrow and winding pathway, thunderous and furious roars rang out as almost two hundred people charged towards him.

Many amongst the Iron Fist Club members were clutching fist-sized rocks which they ruthlessly threw at Li Yao.

"Li Yao, you cannot escape!"

Lu Tieshan let out a thunderous shout as he forcibly lifted up a thousand pound boulder and fiercely threw it towards the front.

"Tap-Tap-Tap!"

Tapping the ground lightly, Li Yao's figure strangely turned seven to eight times in different direction as he dodged oncoming rocks one after another.

However, his charge had been interrupted by these oncoming rocks, slowing him down by half-a-beat.

Meanwhile, in this short moment, over a hundred people had already blocked the front of the narrow passage, while the remaining hundred people were outflanking him from both sides.

Noticing the road blocked, Li Yao preemptively rushed towards a tall contestant, bent his body and kicked him away just like a scorpion moving his tail without a moment of hesitation.

And then, taking advantage of the impact, turned around and fled towards the jungle!

"You still think you can escape?"

Zhao Tianchong sneered as several dozen sword aura soared into the sky before intertwining into a dense sword net and charged towards him.

Lu Tieshan and the others roared repeatedly and activated their spirit tattoos as billowing energy waves covered the sky and earth, catching up from Li Yao's rear.

Seeing that the encirclement was about to close, Li Yao suddenly blew a sharp whistle.

"Peng!"

"Peng!"

"Peng!"

A couple dozen people burst into huge fireballs as their light armors emitted crackling noises and burst forth with bloody auras one after another. Apparently, they all have been completely stunned from the electric current.

These people had all been "struck down" one by one.

In the blink of an eye, a huge gap was forcefully opened in the encirclement.

As a matter of fact, this was still nothing, the fireballs were mixed in with dense black smoke which, in the blink of an eye, covered the entire field.

The entire scene was suddenly a huge mess, everyone was at a loss.

"Puff! Puff! Puff! Puff!"

Li Yao had been pierced by a number of sword auras.

At the end of the day, Li Yao wasn't any different than a normal person. Although he had created a series of chaos, how could it be possible for him to break through a sword net composed of a few dozen sword auras in a short period of time without paying some price?

His light armor released an intense current, making his entire face twitch in pain.

However, his speed soared once again. He was soon about to break out of the disordered encirclement.

"Lu Tieshan, now!"

Zhao Tianchong jumped up and unsheathed his sword. His entire body seemingly metamorphosed into a beam of sword aura.

Closely followed by Lu Tieshan who, in the blink of an eye, burst with an endless power as he ruthlessly punched just right at the sole of Zhao Tianchong. Whereupon, Zhao Tianchong's legs bent slightly as his speed by the impetus of this punch soared to a whole new level before he ruthlessly fired a beam of sword aura right at Li Yao's chest while predicting Li Yao's course of escape.

"Ahhhhh—!"

Li Yao let out a blood-curdling scream as his light armor burst forth with a couple dozen dazzling arcs of lightning that wrapped around his body.

Li Yao's light armor flashed with a light, crimson like blood, indicating Li Yao had suffered an 'irreversible, chronic injury'!

Yet Li Yao did not stop even for a moment.

Li Yao kicked right at Zhao Tianchong's lower abdomen and from the subsequent recoil, Li Yao was swept away by a couple dozen meters and crashed a few times on the ground before finally crashing into the jungle; following which, he disappeared.

When the smoke dissipated...

The remaining hundred or so hunters gawked at each other. They were rendered speechless.

From the revelation of Li Yao's identity to his disappearance in the jungle, only half a minute had passed.

Nonetheless, a lot more than a dozen contestants had already fainted from the electric shock; leaving their "immobile body" behind.

"It was the jade chips!" Zhao Tianchong said while grimacing in anger, "The hundred jade chips he had intentionally released were not only false, they also had crystal bombs hidden inside. No, to be precise, those things are crystal bombs crafted in the form of jade chips to be exact!"

Wiping the cold sweat, Lu Tieshan muttered:

"I should have realized it already. When we were in Verdant Tarn City, this guy was superbly playing with the mini-crystal bombs. Crafting some crystal bombs in the form of jade chips would be really easy for him!"

The two looked at each other. Their hearts had been gripped by a lingering fear.

Fortunately, Zhao Tianchong's keen intuition had quickly discovered Li Yao's identity.

If he had infiltrated deep within and reached the latter part of the canyon, perhaps he may have the opportunity to break through just by relying on the chaos created by the jade chip bombs alone.

Lu Tieshan let out a long sigh:

"Fortunately, luck was on our side. No matter how he wracked his brains and schemed, at the end, he had fallen short of success."

"Now, everything is alright. Li Yao has exhausted all his means, and also, he has suffered 'irreversible, chronic injuries' from your sword. In accordance to the rules, any serious injuries apart from having been 'killed within seconds', the injured would lose a majority of his battle force within ten seconds, moreover, he or she would die within half an hour."

"However, just to make sure, we should head to the jungle and search for Li Yao's body. And when we have recovered the real jade chips from him, only then should we engage, lest he takes advantage of some final loopholes. What do you think?"

Zhao Tianchong locked his brow into a frown before gradually shaking his head.

"Something still doesn't sit right with me, I still feel that we have fallen right into Li Yao's trap.

"Previously, all his plots had been going so well, and at the end, he so recklessly tried to breakthrough and also seriously injured by us, isn't that too good to be true?

"Not to mention, his disguise was very likely to be seen through, and the jade chip bombs wouldn't necessarily be on us. If he relied on these two things, that is somewhat risky, right?"

Lu Tieshan was surprised by what Zhao Tianchong said. "It's 2,000 vs 1, of course, he's gonna have to take some risks. Furthermore, now that he is seriously injured, he is simply unable to escape from us. Do you really think that he still has some tricks up his sleeve?"

Zhao Tianchong shook his head and looked confused. "Honestly, I don't know. All I have is a faint premonition as if he intentionally appeared and forcefully tried to break through as well as got seriously injured all to goad us into hunting him."

"However, he only has half an hour to live, and also lost his battle force. Even if we left our nests, what can he do? As long as there are three to five people guarding the canyon, he cannot break through!"

"Ah, yes!"

"Just a moment ago, when the jade chip bombs exploded, there was too much smoke, the smoke had permeated all around, maybe, just maybe he has done some underhanded trick at that time!"

"Search, quick! Search every inch of the places Li Yao ran through carefully. Check whether he has performed some tricks or left something behind!"

Zhao Tianchong burst into a roar like he was insane.

Following his shout, a flat and ordinary piece of rock next to the narrow and winding passage rose up and quickly started moving!"

"That's it, cut it!"

Although the "rock" was fast, there were several dozen robust fellows behind it and also the narrow passage at the front was completely blocked.

With a flash of a few beams of sword aura, the "rock" was quickly pierced and soon its camouflage split into pieces, revealing its glittering true form.

It was a modified, remote-controlled miniature model of a flying shuttle!

When the hatch was opened, a jade chip was impressively lying inside!

Finally, Zhao Tianchong heaved a long sigh of relief and sat down on the ground before muttering, "This is Li Yao's ultimate plan!

"From the beginning, he knew we would not engage in a conflict down to the last man."

"He also knew, just the jade chip bombs and a disguise would be insufficient to cut through the two-kilometer-long canyon.

"His plan was to rush into the canyon and set a remote controlled model disguised as a rock, and then get seriously injured, all for luring us out into search his 'body' for the jade chip.

"And although he has suffered 'irreversible, chronic injuries', his war force is at the lowest, and he only has half an hour to live, but the remote controlled model could still get it done.

"In short, it was nothing but 'luring tiger from the mountain'!

"His aim was to lure us again into the jungle and also to reduce our vigilance, let us mistakenly think that as long as there were three or five people guarding the canyon, it would be enough.

"However, three to five people are simply insufficient to watch the two kilometer long canyon, and let's not forget that everyone's focus would be at the front, who would pay attention to a flat and ordinary rock?

"You see, this model has been modified, it's propulsion is quite amazing, if there is no one to intercept it, in at most one minute it would be out of the canyon!

"This is precisely Li Yao's final plan!"

Chapter 202: Three Jade Chips?

Chapter 202: Three Jade Chips?

Having been caught by surprise by Zhao Tianchong's series of intricate analysis, Lu Tieshan opened his mouth to speak, but after a long while, he chose to keep it shut. Eventually, he could not help but lash out:

"Li Yao, this brat is truly insidious. What kind of environment did one have to live in to turn out so monstrous?"

Rubbing his face with force, Zhao Tianchong said, "We have seen his information, didn't we? From childhood, he grew up in the Magical Equipment Graveyard. From the time when he was seven or eight years old, he had to fight a battle of wits and strength with insidious and atrocious adult scavengers. Maybe, just for a half a piece of biscuit he had rack his brain and come up with twelve to thirteen interlocking plans, and only then could he seize said biscuit."

"Although you and I have experienced combat in the Wasteland, at most we have only faced demon beast on the level of Demon Soldiers. Even if they were intelligent, how could their intelligence be compared to humans?"

Lu Tieshan was rendered speechless. After a long while, his hot gaze turned towards the jade chip inside the remote-controlled shuttle as he muttered, "So, this is the real jade chip?"

Before he could get a clear picture completely, he didn't dare get close to the thing.

Because of jade chip bombs being smaller in size, the crystal that could be embedded had a limit. Thereby, it could not produce too strong a destructive power, unless it was infinitesimally close to the body, in which case, it could blast a Refinement Stage cultivator to death.

However, even if the jade chip bomb caused some injuries to the limbs, it would still be extremely troublesome. After all, the game would still continue afterward...

Peeking a glance at Zhao Tianchong, Lu Tieshan swallowed a mouthful of saliva, he was just about ready to take action.

But apparently, Zhao Tianchong guessed his intentions. Shaking his head, Zhao Tianchong said, "Not necessarily, I find the appearance of this jade chip still a bit weird.

"Just as I've spoken, the remote controlled shuttle started moving. It's rather apparent that it was done for it to be found by me intentionally.

"Search, continue searching!

"Wait, first take thirty people, divide them into three teams and send them to block the canyon by forming a line-up. All of them must be adept flying sword experts. Lu Tieshan, if you have someone who is rather agile - someone who specializes in agility techniques - you can also send them to join. Everyone must pay attention to blocking the sky!

"As for the remaining people, turn over every piece of rock that was within the range of dense smoke from a while ago, do not miss even a single piece of stone!"

Everyone shouted loudly in agreement before spreading out orderly and carefully started searching.

Sure enough, after ten minutes, an amazing discovery was made under a piece of giant rock.

It was the second remote-controlled shuttle disguised as a rock!

It seemed that Li Yao knew that the game was good as lost or perhaps he had already lost his consciousness from electric shocks. The remote-controlled shuttle was honestly lying under the rock; lying right there just to be caught by the others.

Lu Tieshan sucked in a cold lump of air.

"So, taking advantage of smoke, when our line of sight was blocked, he had not just placed one but two remote-controlled shuttles, did he? His hands sure are quite nimble!"

Zhao Tianchong squinted his eyes, seemingly quickly calculation a bit as he nodded and said, "It should be just two. He didn't have the time to place the third. Moreover, after having camouflaged as rocks, the remote-controlled shuttle is quite big. After having placed a hundred jade chips and two remote-controlled shuttles, his standard military backpack must have reached the limit, it would be impossible for him to carry the third.

"And it goes without saying that once we are aware of this tactic, placing one or two hundred is just the same, they will be discovered by us.

"However..."

After Zhao Tianchong retrieved the jade chip from the second remote -controlled shuttle, Zhao Tianchong suddenly took an action which astonished everyone.

He lightly flicked the jade chip which everyone had been hell-bent on obtaining into the rocks.

"You!"

Lu Tieshan was unclear of the reason why. In a moment, he was enveloped in an obvious murderous intention.

"Be patient!"

Zhao Tianchong calmly took a glance at him while he exerted force in his hands.

"Crack! Crack!"

To everyone's dismay, the second shuttle model was forcibly torn from the middle.

"What is this?"

Lu Tieshan was completely stupefied as he saw that within the interior of the second shuttle model was a small space, the small space held the — third jade chip!

Lu Tieshan felt his entire body turn cold. His mind couldn't hold back but play a scene:

Everyone came to believe that they have seen through all of Li Yao's schemes and the jade chip placed inside the cockpit of second shuttle model was the real one. Subsequently, they threw the shuttle model and took the jade chip to the static-type crystal processor to check its authenticity.

Naturally, everyone's gaze was attracted by the hologram; and no one was concerned about an empty shuttle model.

At that time, the shuttle model suddenly started up and accelerated, and under everyone's stunned gaze, it soared out of the canyon!

As for the time, there were still three minutes remaining until Li Yao's so-called "death", but that was enough!

No wonder, he did not start this shuttle model until the last moment and pretended to be helpless, as if it was captured.

Originally, this was his final ace in the hole!

Lu Tieshan, who had been stunned for a long while, finally, heaved a sigh of relief.

"Whenever I am together with insidious freaks like you guys, I always feel I'm not putting my brain cells to enough use. Fortunately, in a true battlefield, you guys are my companions. If you guys were my enemy, I absolutely don't want to get anywhere close to you. I will just direct call the crystal warships and use their cannon to blast you all to death!"

Then, he added, "However, if it is Li Yao, I'm really not sure whether the main cannons of crystal warships could blast him to death!"

Zhao Tianchong bitterly smiled.

"Lu Tieshan, don't you overestimate my intelligence, I did not see through any of Li Yao's conspiracy, I just relied purely on my hands to realize it."

"As a sword cultivator, our blade is everything. My hands have very keen perception, allowing me to easily distinguish between the weights of two different weapons."

"Appearance-wise, although the two shuttle models looked the same, the same is not true for their weights. There is a subtle difference between their weights, the second shuttle model is a tad bit heavier."

"Therefore, I felt that there was something wrong with the second shuttle model."

"After all, facing a terrible opponent like Li Yao, no matter how careful you are, it's not enough."

Having said that, Zhao Tianchong, without breathing another word, placed the jade chips between himself and Lu Tieshan, while his left hand grasped the hilt. He remained silent.

Lu Tieshan came to realize what was going on and he too turned silent, while he adjusted his breathing, recovering his stamina.

As for the remaining hundred people, they quietly chose to wait as the seconds and minutes went by.

They were all waiting for Li Yao's death!

After three minutes.

"Li Yao is dead!" Zhao Tianchong said with relief as if a heavy burden had been lifted off his mind.

"Li Yao is dead!" Lu Tieshan, wiping his head which was drenched in cold sweat. He had an urge to cry with joy.

"That monstrous guy is finally dead!"

"No matter how many sinister plans he had, all of them weren't cast out!"

Everyone burst into cries of joys. Yet, after a moment, everyone woke from their stupor and sunk into a strange silence.

In the blink of an eye, the hostility, in their sharp gazes, soared to the limit.

Since Li Yao was dead and the real jade chip had already appeared, then the next fight would be the final battle!

"Hold on a minute, just to make sure, why don't we check the authenticity of the three jade chips. If you are worried, you can bring another person. Two from your side, while I'll remain alone. The three of us will go together."

Noticing the ever-rising murderous intention between Lu Tieshan's eyebrows, Zhao Tianchong suddenly interjected.

After having thought of a bit, Lu Tieshan agreed, "Okay!"

Having been given a scare by Li Yao's schemes, again and again, they were still not sure where the real jade chip was, even though Li Yao was already dead. They just want to be more at ease.

What if it was the case of "when false is taken for true, true becomes false"?

Having brought a confidant with him, Lu Tieshan, along with Zhao Tianchong, went towards the base of Chaos Edge Hall.

The so-called "base" was just a giant circle painted using the white paint. Set around which was defensive arrays so that it would not be attacked. And in the center, a static-type crystal processor was placed.

In accordance with the rules of the match, one could try to seize the jade chip, but they could never destroy the crystal processor.

And in order to prevent the I/O interface of the crystal processor getting damaged, the crystal processors employed by both sides used very advanced non-contact-type telepathic thoughts transfer method.

When Zhao Tianchong placed the first jade chip atop the crystal processor, a light blue light flashed as the jade chip floated in the mid-air, while surrounded by countless octogram glyphs. Subsequently, one after another, transparent spirit threads gradually reached out from the jade chip and inserted into the crystal processor.

"Whoosh!"

A beam of light shot from the crystal processor before turning into an enormous hologram in the mid-air.

At the center of the hologram was Li Yao's grinning face.

"Sure enough, it's a fake!"

The first jade chip turned out to be a fake. It did not come as a surprise to everyone, on the contrary, it brought a sense of accomplishment of having seen through Li Yao's scheme.

"Hello everyone, if you are seeing this message, then I'm already 'dead'. Hahaha, 1 vs 2,000, it was really difficult!"

In the hologram, Li Yao's laugh was quite simple-minded.

As though the series of insidious and cunning plans simply did not come from his hand.

Watching his slightly innocent face, Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan gritted their teeth in hatred.

Li Yao forcefully coughed and continued, "The reason I'm leaving this message to everyone is to first congratulate everyone for finally defeating me, the 'evil expert', and second, I hope that you don't hate me.

"After all, this is just a game, a form of combat exercise. Even if I was dead, it's not that I'm really dead, right?

"In the society, there are plenty of people who are rather more insidious, cunning, and despicable than me!

"I'm just a fake evil expert, and if I can create such a chaos, kill so many guys, then what if it was a true evil expert?"

Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan took a glance at each other. Coincidentally, they both said in their hearts, "Even if it was a true evil expert, he or she could not be as insidious as you!"

"Oh, right!" Suddenly, Li Yao though of something as he slapped his head and said, "If I'm right, you have intercepted my shuttle models in the canyon and now you should have arrived at the Chaos Edge Hall's base to check the authenticity of the jade chip, only then could you be watching this message.

"And just to be safe, the surviving strongest expert from both side should have come together to check the authenticity of the jade chip, am I right?

"So, brothers of Iron Fist Club, I advise you to be careful.

"Although Zhao Tianchong is not so scheming as me, at the end of the day, he is still a little bit more scheming than the muscle-brained guys of your Iron Fist Club.

"As far as I can say, from the get-go, he is likely to have set up an ambush at the base.

"After all, I'll be running towards the north, the canyon will probably be the final battlefield. And once you have obtained the jade chip, it would be quite right and proper to check the authenticity at the base of Chaos Edge Hall.

"At that time, as long as he ambushed you a few guys, it will be quite easy to kill an unarmed—"

Li Yao had yet to finish his sentence before Zhao Tianchong's face turned pale as he let out a shout, "Attack!"

"Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!"

Suddenly, the ground cracked as four beams of sword aura shot towards the vital points of Lu Tieshan!

Chapter 203: Final Winner

Chapter 203: Final Winner

Chapter 203 - Final Winner

Li Yao's words made vigilance arise in Lu Tieshan's heart as he excited his energy to the limit. At this moment, he did not plan to dodge, on the contrary, he chose to close the distance between himself and Zhao Tianchong before fiercely colliding into him. At the same time, he ruthlessly launched a kicked, forcing back the right hand of Zhao Tianchong with which he planned to unsheathe the sword.

"Clang!"

Under Zhao Tianchong's momentarily lapse, he actually failed to unsheathe the sword.

"Boom!"

Zhao Tianchong, who had been powerfully hit by Lu Tieshan, flew ten meters back in the blink of an eye and crashed into a huge piece of rock.

"Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!"

There were still four swords aimed at Lu Tieshan. However, they didn't strike the vital points. So, he still retained 90% of his battle force.

Almost at the same time, the two leaders, ignoring their injuries, straightened up their necks and shouted:

"Attack!"

"Attack!"

Long had the hundred or so experts of Iron Fist Club and Chaos Edge Hall secretly occupied a favorable terrain. In the meantime, they were also quietly observing their opponents, planning the best angle and positioning for an attack.

Followed by the shouts, the canyon, in the blink of an eye, turned into a tempestuous sea of spiritual energy. Resplendent and colorful beams of spiritual energy collided with each other, giving rise to shock waves upon impact, breaking the rocks into pieces, while the broken pieces of stone were crushed into nothing.

In a moment, sand and stone flew here, there, and everywhere, the entire area was filled with powerful gales as though a sandstorm had struck.

Amid the sandstorm, miserable screams, sounds of swords cutting down, and blasts of spiritual energy rang to no end. The scene continued for ten minutes before calming down gradually.

When the dust settled, the scene was too horrid to look at. Over a hundred people were lying amid the stones, many of whom had lost their consciousness from electric shocks. There were a few whose limbs were still twitching from the electric shocks. Their mouths were covered in foam as they wailed incessantly.

Finally, only nine shaky figures remained standing.

These nine were the members of Iron Fist Club and appeared to be seriously injured.

Glancing at the unconscious Zhao Tianchong underneath his foot, Lu Tieshan was filled with emotions.

Finally, among the top three of the Newcomer Rankings, he had defeated Li Yao and Zhao Tianchong, and became the final winner!

The price he paid was quite tragic. Just below his heart, he had been ruthlessly stabbed by Zhao Tianchong. The electric current flowing was just a hair-breadth away. If it flowed into his heart, he would have perished together with Zhao Tianchong.

"Dangerous, it was too dangerous!"

"Had Li Yao not reminded me at the critical moment, I probably would have been eliminated by Zhao Tianchong. Then, no one could tell who would have won!"

Lu Tieshan gasped for breath as he calmed his mind and asked the remaining eight members to converge on his position. He discovered that although everyone was heavily injured and their battle force sealed by the subsequent electric currents so that not even 30% remained, but their movement wasn't hindered at all.

After a body search of Zhao Tianchong was done, the last two jade chips were soon found, which were subsequently checked using the crystal processor.

Sure enough, a jade chip finally bore countless profound and intricate glyphs. It was none other than the information stored by the institute prior to the match.

"Found it, this is the true jade chip!"

In the blink of an eye, the nine robust teenagers had an urge to burst into tears.

"It's too early to get excited, we still have to cross the jungle and return to the Iron Fist Club's base.

"Although Zhao Tianchong is eliminated, there are still many surviving members from both sides scattered around the jungle killing anyone in their sights out of confusion.

"And we still don't know who has the upper hand.

"Therefore, we are simply not going to pay attention to them. We will quietly go around them, we're going to remain concealed and make our way to the base!"

Having said that, Lu Tieshan pondered before taking a fake jade chip for himself while handing over the remaining two chips to two other companions.

"Ma Feixing, you're the best when it comes to agility and speed. The real jade chip will be in your custody, once we encountered danger in the jungle, the rest of us will protect you, your mission is to go all out to reach the base camp!

"Now, let's go!"

A row of nine people once again headed into the jungle, walking at the edge of the jungle, flanking the main battlefield.

En route, they were on tiptoes. They proceeded very carefully, they dared not make even an iota of noise.

By their estimate, since the beginning of the chaos in the jungle, Li Yao must have assassinated many core members of Iron Fist Club to ensure that a balance was maintained between both sides.

At present, in the chaotic battle happening in the jungle, maybe Chaos Edge Hall's members were relatively greater in number.

Therefore, they did not dare to call for support.

If, out of a one in a million chance, they attracted the attention of Chaos Edge Hall's remnant forces, they would just be making a fool of themselves in trying to the smart thing.

Fortunately, luck seemed to be on their Iron Fist Club's side. As they walked in a big circle, after flanking round half of the jungle, they had not encountered even a member of Chaos Edge Hall.

And of course, they also didn't see any member of Iron Fist Club. From the very beginning, they were walking at the remote edges of the jungle which was full of swamps, vines, and mist, making their visibility range no more than three to five meters, after which everything seemed to be vague.

"After half an hour, we'll be at the Iron Fist Club base, and that would mark our win!"

While cutting the vines blocking the way, Lu Tieshan turned his head to cheer the rest.

Followed by responses in low voices from the mist behind him.

Only God knows why but an extremely uncomfortable feeling welled up from Lu Tieshan's heart.

It seemed as though a poisonous snake was wrapped around his collar, crawling down his spine.

Lu Tieshan suddenly halted his footsteps as he tightly clenched his fists to the point that blue veins bulged on the back of his fists.

One by one, from the vague mist, came his team members.

"One, two, three...six?

"Where are the other two?

"Yan Qi, Wan Zhixing!"

Everyone gawked at each other. The last member of the Iron Fist Club subconsciously retreated two steps and walked back into the mist; he thought he could go back and find his disappeared companions.

Following which, they felt as though a cool breeze brushed their faces; everyone's heart was grabbed by a chill.

"Bang!"

From the fog, a sound of something heavy falling on the ground came.

Or perhaps, a person had fallen on the ground.

"Enemy attack!"

In the blink of an eye, the remaining six members felt a chill running down their spine as they quickly converged and entered a battle formation.

Their slightly vibrating, iron fists aimed at the fog in all directions.

Under the cover of the fog, the jungle seemed terrifyingly ominous. From among the branches in the surroundings, the occasional chirps of birds made the environment ever tenser.

Suddenly—

A black silhouette jumped out of the fog!

Three Iron Fist Club members roared as they step forward and punched hard towards the oncoming black silhouette.

However, when they found out that it was none other their unconscious companion upon looking carefully, they forcefully pull back their hands, which in turn, made their movements completely out of order and subsequently opened a big gap.

One of them could not control his momentum and staggered.

"Whoosh!"

From behind the black silhouette, a second black silhouette jumped out, made his way through the gap between the three in a flash, and appeared before the remaining people.

"Crack! Crack! Crack!"

The body of the man burst with dazzling electric arcs as he tumbled down to the ground with a stunned look, where he lay, twitching.

In contrast, the remaining four had even more astounded looks painted on their faces.

The one who had appeared before them was none other than the guy who should have been long dead, Li Yao!

Li Yao seemed like a ghost who had crawled his way out of the underworld, as he quietly watched them.

Furthermore—

Not only did he have a scimitar in his hands, his elbow, knees, soles of his feet, all happened to have curved, protruding parts, all of which had gleaming blades fixed to them.

Every time he elbowed, kneed, or kicked, each hit would cause devastating damage.

From how he appeared, armed like a steel hedgehog, it clearly indicated that he in no way had encountered them by chance, but planned on killing them!

A rift seemed to have appeared in between Lu Tieshan's organs, through which his heart fell into a bottomless abyss!

Lu Tieshan somehow mustered up his courage and stepped forward. On one side, he gave a signal behind his back, hinting for the companion who had the real jade chip to act if any opportunity presented itself, while on the other hand, he would stall for time as he asked in a loud voice, "Li Yao, how come you aren't dead?!"

Li Yao smiled slightly as he reached to his abdomen and pressed a bit. Suddenly, his body burst forth with a blood color aura as a couple dozen lightning arcs escaped his body.

Despite the bloody aura and electric arcs, he didn't appear to be in any kind of discomfort; to Lu Tieshan's question, he replied, "I have crafted a very common device. I'm even embarrassed to call it a magical equipment as it doesn't have any kind of ability whatsoever. All it can do is emit some bloody aura and electric arcs, which looks like a real one, giving others the impression that I am grievously injured, nothing more nothing less."

Lu Tieshan was rendered speechless. His pair of eyes were almost on the verge of bleeding. Having been stunned for a long while, Lu Tieshan disappointedly said, "There is still something I don't understand. How come you knew Zhao Tianchong would set an ambush at his base, and why did you warn me?"

Li Yao replied, "In the final analysis, it was because of your oversight. If we had thrown caution to the wind and set out to find your corpse, it would have been all right!"

Having paused a bit, he continued, "I was not completely sure Zhao Tianchong would set an ambush. However, since the main battlefield was going to be the canyon region, the Chaos Edge Hall was quite likely to become an important site of the fight. If it was me, setting some assassins in advance was quite normal indeed!"

"As for reminding you, it's very simple actually! I don't wish the Chaos Edge Hall to acquire the jade chip."

"Only if Iron Fist Club had the jade chip, would they need to pass through the entire forest, only then would I have the opportunity to easily hunt you down."

"Very good!"

Lu Tieshan burst into laughter. As Lu Tieshan clenched his fists and struck them against each other, an incomparably ruthless expression crept on his face, "Li Yao, you are really formidable. Everything has been playing out in the palm of your hand. All right, the jade chip is with Your Father, you want it, come and get it!"

"The jade chip is not on you but on that young fellow behind you who is ready to make trouble, his name is Ma Feixing, a 3rd level Refinement Stage expert. He specialized in Electro

Steps. His speed is quite astounding. If you and I fight for a while, he really might get away with it.

"However, it's useless anyway."

Li Yao tapped the Demon Beast Detector and calmly said, "I had immersed the true jade chip in a specially prepared dark phosphorous solution, as a result of which it will emit UV lights which will be invisible to naked eye, but I have tweaked my Demon Beast Detector and added a UV Detecting Glyph.

"In my eyes, the true jade chip is like a firefly in a dark night. It is so bright and eye-catching that I can detect it from a couple dozen meters away.

"This is also the reason as to why I was able to lock onto you in this fog."

Before his voice faded away, Li Yao's figure, like a true ghost, disappeared and reappeared between the four before his figure rotated at high speed, turning into a storm!

"Ma Feixing, get going!"

Lu Tieshan burst into a shout, as his huge stature blocked Li Yao's path completely.

However, much to everyone's surprise, Li Yao fiercely threw the scimitar in his left hand which drew an incomparably strange arc and plunged right into Ma Feixing's left leg.

Whereupon, Ma Feixing staggered and fell forward.

The next thing that followed happened in half a second.

Li Yao's right hand flashed with a sharp gleam as it easily cut across Lu Tieshan's neck.

At the same time, he jumped into the air, stepped on Lu Tieshan's shoulder and crossed Lu Tieshan's neck, like a hawk pouncing towards a rabbit, ruthlessly kneed the remaining two Iron Fist Club members right on their chests.

The fierce knee strikes, along with the momentum of the blades, made the two fly backwards while their chests burst forth with a lot of electric arcs.

Li Yao like a giant owl once again rose into the air and glided to the front of Ma Feixing. The moment he landed on the ground, his elbow cut through a majority of Ma Feixing's neck arteries while his five fingers ran across Ma Feixing's waist.

Clutching his throat, he glared at the electric sparks that gushed through the gap between his fingers as he gradually fell down.

The moment before his demise, his staring, round eyes saw Li Yao putting the jade chip in his bosom before quickly disappearing into the fog without even taking a glance at them; shooting towards the north.

Chapter 204: The Invitation of Long Wenhui

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When Li Yao boisterously crossed through the canyon and appeared at the contact point of the Starfire Union carrying the jade chip, the huge campus entered a strange silence for an entire five minutes.

The Thunderbolt Cup at the Wasteland Battle Network happened to have not a single thread posted for a good long while.

Everyone was shocked in disbelief.

Only after a long while did someone made a short post:

"This match will be remembered for the next five decades to come!"

This post ignited all the emotions of everyone. In the blink of an eye, hundreds of thousands of posts flooded the Battle Network:

"So powerful, so crazy, this is truly shocking!"

"What's the matter, why has Li Yao not come out yet?"

"1 vs 2,000, he really did it!"

"Zhao Tianchong is smart, Lu Tieshan is calm and stable. These two aren't people who can be easily fooled. All of the traps set by Li Yao had indeed been seen through by them, but who would have thought that all these traps were just bait to hide the last but the deadliest trap!"

Every student's heart, who had watched the match, was in turmoil. They could not calm themselves down for a long while.

If it was someone who didn't know the details of the match, saw the outcome, he would definitely think that the members of Chaos Edge Hall and Iron Fist Club were morons who couldn't even catch a single person even when their numbers reached 2,000.

Only those who had watched the match from beginning to end knew full well that both sides had done their best. Basically, they did not make any mistakes.

If it was someone else, perhaps he or she would have been assassinated at the very beginning or would have been unable to notice the remote-controlled shuttle camouflaged as a rock, or maybe he or she would have found the first, or maybe second, but would not have broken open the second shuttle to check inside.

As long as anyone committed any of these mistakes, Li Yao would not have gone through so much trouble and would have long won!

It was the high-level plays of Zhao Tianchong and Lu Tieshan which forced Li Yao to resort to any means necessary; this resulted in a brilliant match!

In a moment, the entire campus was covered in a hubbub of marvel, sighs, retrospections...almost 30 to 50% of all the students had gathered together and were excitedly discussing the match.

Many students who were relatively slow were still muddleheaded until this moment. They kept pestering others with questions.

"Wait, please tell me why did Li Yao intentionally revealed the ambush at Chaos Edge Hall's base?"

At the VIP room, although the high-level figures from various cultivation sects weren't speaking, the surprised look was still dangling on their faces.

Long Wenhui sighed with relief as he gradually said, "Old Bai, if you were the leader of Iron Fist Club, how would have you dealt with this?"

Bai Mushen's complexion became dignified as he slowly replied, "It's quite difficult. Every trap has flaws. Obviously, the series of traps set by Li Yao had a multitude of flaws. Since we are viewing from sideline, and discussing after everything had occurred, we can obviously find ways to deal with them from theories.

"But in combat, in order to crack those plans, there are three prerequisites.

"First, the leader of both sides need to have high-level leadership skills. Their commands should be like arms directing the fingers.

"Second, their men need to be extremely clear headed. They should always do as they are told, never disobey. No matter what, they should not be incited or affected by rage.

"Third, both sides must have absolute trust in each other. Both sides should have treated Li Yao as their biggest enemy and should have sincerely cooperated."

Bai Mushen bitterly smiled and continued, "However, in combat, these three prerequisites cannot be achieved.

"The 2,000 contestants were all hot-headed and happened to have conflicts with each other. How can they obey orders like a well-trained elite army?

"However...

"I suspect Li Yao of exploiting the rules by disguising his injuries.

"In combat, injuries are injuries, no appearance of electric arcs and bloody aura would impair the enemy's judgment."

Long Wenhui said with a smile, "In reality, there are many human cultivators and demon beasts who practice special techniques which can feign death or fall in suspended animation.

"Moreover, in combat, Chaos Edge Hall simply didn't need to go and seize jade chip. Their purpose was to fight Iron Fist Club. Had they cooperated with Li Yao, they could have dealt a heavy blow to Iron Fist Club. Why did they go through so much hassle?

"That's why, they soon fell deeply into Li Yao schemes, and ever so quickly crumbled."

Long Wenhui shrugged his garlic nose as he said with a smile to Xiong Baili who was sitting next to them, "Dean Xiong, I would like to talk to Student Li Yao alone, is it possible?"

...

Southwest of Wild Waves City, on a secluded walk next to a quiet artificial lake.

Having finished the match, Li Yao, without even clearly looking at what the Thunderbolt Cub looked like, ran all the way there non-stop. His chest heaved up and down, his heart beat like drums.

In front of him was an ordinary looking, bulbous-nosed man in a gandoura[1] with wide sleeves. It was none other than the Vice-President of Hundred Saber Alliance, the Core Formation Stage powerhouse, Long Wenhui.

It was the person who had captured Demon King Pieu at Verdant Tarn City!

He was truly an illustrious and important figure of Federation.

Li Yao's heart beat quickly with tension, apprehension, envy, worship, thirst...all kinds of complex emotions, gathered into flickering flames.

Long Wenhui, on the other hand, didn't put on any airs. His gait itself was somewhat lazy, giving the impression that, apart from on the battlefield, he had no intention of spending even an iota of his strength.

Long Wenhui leisurely said, "Student Li Yao, it's not the first time we have seen each other. At the Verdant Tarn City, you inadvertently spied on my recently refined double-edge saber, only to end up treated as an enemy by my saber. At that time, I firmly remembered you.

"A Refinement Stage cultivator who has yet to become twenty can actually make my blade have hostile intentions is definitely not some ordinary character!

"Therefore, when I came to know that you alone would be fighting against 2,000 members of the Combat Department in this year's Thunderbolt Cup, I especially came to watch, and as expected, you didn't let me down.

"I really want to know, how you thought of those schemes?"

Li Yao was taken by surprise. How could he have ever imagined an honorable Core Formation Stage Cultivation such as Long Wenhui especially came for him.

However, from the beginning, Li Yao was someone who was heaven-daring. Having noticed Long Wenhui had converged his energy, and amiable in nature, just like any ordinary uncle from the neighborhood, the tension in Li Yao's heart abated gradually before Li Yao spoke frankly, "It's actually nothing. I grew up in Magical Equipment Graveyard. Since the time I can remember, I, just for a piece of bread or half a bottle of water, had to fight and scheme. I was small and weak and didn't like joining gangs. So, if I wanted to contend with those vicious adults, all I could do was use my head.

"Since I was eight, I lived in Magical Equipment Graveyard, which housed a total of fifteen different gangs. All of which consisted of tall and robust adults.

"Whichever gang it was, they could crush me quite easily.

"But amid the cracks between these gangs, I survived. I lived very well!

"After ten years, when I was alive and well on my eighteenth birthday, of the fifteen gangs only four remained!

"A lot of things have long integrated with my blood and turned into a kind of instinct. What appears to be sinister schemes in Zhao Tianchong's and Lu Tieshan's eyes, are as normal as using chopsticks to eat to me."

Long Wenhui slowed down his footsteps. "Very good!

"Student Li Yao, let's be honest with each other, what say you? I very much like you; I believe you are a rare genius, and I’m here to formally invite you to the Hundred Saber Alliance!

"The Hundred Saber Alliance can be counted among the top hundred sects in the federation and is at its peak. It can even rival with top ten sects and has a long history. It has deep heritage. It's a glorious sect well worthy of its name and reputation!

"If you are willing to sign a contract, I can provide you with resources for three years to study. In these three years, you can freely study at the Grand Desolate War Institution, and the Hundred Saber Alliance will provide you adequate cultivation resources exclusively for your personal use!

"And when you are free during vacation, you can come to the Hundred Saber Alliance too. I will arrange for a true expert to guide you so that you can quickly advance in combat.

"Once you graduated, I will give you two options.

"First, you can enter the Hundred Saber Alliance's R & D Center of Sabers.

"Although our Hundred Saber Alliance is a combat sect, we have paid attention to saber techniques for centuries and also possess very rich experience in refining sabers. As far as the level of refining saber-type magical equipment is concerned, we are second to none in the entire federation.

"Second, you can join the expedition team and become an explorer who can tread in places where few people have ever gone, the places where demon beasts roam freely, discover new mines!

"As you know, in the Wasteland, the ground bears countless treasure. Anyone with adequate strength and guts can discover them.

"And I believe that you are that kind of person!"

Having spoken till here, Long Wenhui halted his steps as he smilingly looked at Li Yao.

The pounding heart, which Li Yao had just calmed down, once again started to beat ever more fiercely.

The invitation of Hundred Saber Alliance!

The Hundred Saber Alliance, a super sect that was ten times stronger than the Crimson Nimbus Sect!

Furthermore, Long Wenhui offered two positions. The former one was joining the R & D Center of Sabers, which was still nothing as compared to the latter, which was becoming an explorer which was the one of the most lucrative occupations coveted by many cultivators!

Whether it was humans fighting with the demon beasts, or training of cultivators, what was the most indispensable?

Resources! Crystals! Mines!

Joining an exploratory team as an explorer, one could tread the remote and uncharted region which few had ever trodden, struggle against nature itself, fight with demon beasts, discover new resources, crystals, and mines!

Not only could one become rich overnight, he or she could be revered as the hero of the sect, and could even become a star of the entire federation!

Having been offered such a tempting proposition, Li Yao's heart palpitated with excitement.

However, after a moment of pondering, Li Yao still lightly shook his head and sincerely said, "President Long, I'm very grateful for you your appreciation. I too hope to join the Hundred Saber Alliance but before that, I want to complete the Project Mystic Skeleton with my teacher first and craft the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit!

"I don't know when I will be able to complete the Project Mystic Skeleton, therefore, I cannot accept your invitation."

"En?"

Long Wenhui was somewhat speechless. His lightning-like gazes directly pierced through Li Yao's eyes.

Li Yao braced his eyelid and clenched his teeth to persevere as he directly greeted Long Wenhui's gaze.

The glance between the two lasted for three seconds, but for Li Yao, it felt as long as three days and three nights.

Just before Li Yao was about to collapse, Long Wenhui suddenly receded his gaze and revealed a smile from the bottom of his heart.

"Whoosh!"

A silver-white card sandwiched between Long Wenhui's fingers appeared as he held it in front of Li Yao.

"Adhering to your commitment and also bold, Student Li Yao, I appreciate you more and more!

"You can think of this card as another invitation. As for where it came from, it is from an organization which is at a whole new level as compared to my Hundred Saber Alliance!"

Chapter 205: The World Is So Big

Chapter 205: The World Is So Big

"An organization that's a level higher than the Hundred Saber Alliance?"

These words sent Li Yao's heart in a turmoil.

The Hundred Saber Alliance was one of top hundred sects in the federation and could be counted as top ranking, super sect, which held its position in between thirtieth to fiftieth throughout the years.

Even the ten strongest sects in the federation, that were bigger than the Hundred Saber Alliance scale-wise, did not dare to say that they were "a level higher".

Exactly what kind of existence was this organization which Long Wenhui spoke of?

Having subconsciously taken the silver-white card, the subsequent sense when he touched it astounded Li Yao even more.

At first glance, the card was even smaller than the gold transfer card, yet it was extremely heavy. On touching, it felt neither metallic nor wooden, when pinched, it felt like a mass of free-flowing metal.

As Li Yao carefully flexed the card with his fingers, Li Yao came to find that the card was rather thin, so thin that its thickness was under a tenth of a millimeter.

It was quite reasonable to say that the edges of such a thin card would be very sharp, yet when Li Yao cautiously rubbed his thumb upon the edge, some kind of weak power happened to block his finger.

When Li Yao further applied strength to his fingers, a ripple-like texture appeared on the surface of the card before the card started bending until it surprisingly folded in the middle.

As Li Yao let go, the card, like a spring, recovered its original shape as the ripples diffused. One simply could not find any trace of folding marks upon it.

"What is it made of?" Li Yao was extremely surprised.

Having been learning under the guidance of the "Deep Sea Goddess" Yuan Manqiu for a year, along with the assistance of ancient records in the Heavenly Refining Tower, Li Yao's theory and basics were solid. Various common materials that could be found in the cultivation world were on the tips of his fingers.

Whereas a material with such strange characteristics would absolutely not be something that could be buried under shade, yet why had he not heard of it ever?

Long Wenhui said with a smile, "This card is an invitation but, at the same time, also a test. All the information of the federation is stored inside this card. Student Li Yao, explore it slowly, okay? Once you have uncovered all the secrets of this card, a gateway to the new world will gradually open to you!"

Long Wenhui's words piqued Li Yao's curiosity to the high heavens.

His gaze once again fell on the card's smooth, mirror-like surface.

"The card doesn't appear to have anything inside, so how can it hold a lot of information?"

Li Yao, who had flipped the card up and down for a long while, didn't find anything apart from his own anxious look.

Subtly tracing with his finger, some strange changes in the subsequent frictional force caught Li Yao's attention.

Li Yao's eyes flickered with brilliance as his fingertips subtly traced the card's surface.

He immediately discovered that the card's surface was uneven, albeit so subtle that one was unable to notice any traces of the shallow engraving. It seemed that the surface was engraved with a sentence written in calligraphy that was as flamboyant as flying dragons and dancing phoenixes.

Having closed his eyes, Li Yao carefully felt the subtle changes from his fingertip and read out in low voice, "When the stars shine..."

Just as these words escaped his mouth, the card happened to lightly tremble as ripples on the silver, reflective surface madly spread and a black hole appeared at the center, continuously corroding the silver-white surface.

After a moment, the card had been engulfed in darkness!

No, no, no, it wasn't darkness but rather as deep, serene, and dark as the sky in the night, spotted with flashes of starry brilliance that gathered to compose a shining whirlpool which was surely rotating, albeit slowly!

Suddenly, Li Yao felt as if sandwiched between his finger was the whole universe!

This incomparably strange scene lasted for a second before the everything went black; the galaxies broke as the card turned back into a silver-white mirror.

Sending Li Yao into a trance, leaving him shocked.

His spirit was still immersed in that vast and endless starry sea; for a long time, he was unable to calm down.

"What an incredible material, such a profound ability!

"Mysteries of endless cosmos interpreted within a few square inches!

"This technique simply transcends the limit of Heaven Origin Sector!

"When the stars shine? What does it mean? Does it represent the purpose of the federation?

"Is this a kind of federation?!"

In Li Yao's mind, endless thoughts circled madly.

Whereas Long Wenhui was as amazed as Li Yao was. Touching his bulbous nose, he muttered, "Within only 1 minute 42 seconds, he was able to solve the first mystery!?

"In the past, I took an entire 9 minutes!"

As Long Wenhui calmed his spirit down, his eyes flickered with extraordinary splendor. He smiled and said, "Student Li Yao, keep the card. When you're not busy, take your time to study it.

"What you've just discovered was nothing but one percent of the secrets that this card holds. The world is vast and wonderful, and it's waiting for you to discover it!

"Remember, this card not only represents the supreme glory but also mysterious and unpredictable dangers.

"Building Foundation Stage, you have to at least step into the Building Foundation Stage before you'll have the qualifications to research the new world on the back of this card!"

Long Wenhui paused for a bit before he touched his bulbous nose and said in a heavy voice, "In accordance with the tradition, each year, any freshman that displays particularly good performance in the Thunderbolt Cup will be entitled to guidance from the guests. I don't have too much time on hand to teach you a whole set of saber techniques, let alone to someone like you, who, I'm afraid need not just one or two sets.

"So, I'll send you a gift!"

Long Wenhui's gaze wandered before he walked to rocks on the lakeside and bent down before extending his chubby palm towards a fist-size rock.

This seemingly run-of-the-mill action, in Li Yao's eyes, however, gave birth to a feeling as though wind were raging and a storm was about to arrive.

The air seemed to turn into a strong adhesive that put him right where he was; Li Yao seemed unable to move even a millimeter.

All he could do was somehow open his eyes wide and watch Long Wenhui's chubby hands with rapt attention.

"Whoosh!"

With a flick of Long Wenhui's sleeves, a fleeting aura passed by before he grabbed the rock and blew upon it.

"Fffffffff." The dust scattered about.

The rock that used to be irregular, after having the dust dispersed, actually revealed eighteen smooth and glossy surfaces, just like a piece of gemstone that had been carefully chiseled.

Long Wenhui flashed a smile as he handed the rock over to Li Yao.

Only at this moment did the air return to its normal condition and Li Yao was finally able to breathe freely and unimpeded.

However, no matter how much attention Li Yao had paid a moment ago, he still failed to capture Long Wenhui's actions.

All he knew was that Long Wenhui took out his saber for sure and slashed one after another to cut the rock into current appearance!

"I even failed to capture the trajectory of the saber! Is this how powerful a Core Formation Stage powerhouse is?"

Solemnly, Li Yao took the rock using his both hands as though he was taking over a magical equipment worth an entire city.

As he traced his fingertips upon it ever so subtly, his pupils immediately contracted.

'They are not the same!'

The seemingly smooth and glossy mirror-like surfaces had subtle differences.

Each surface carved out by the saber, the impact speed of the blade, angle to the strength exercised seemed to have incomparably mysterious variations.

This saber technique of Long Wenhui seemed to have reached the peak of perfection of Core Formation Stage powerhouse. In what appeared to be just an instant, traces of eighteen completely different saber strikes had been left on the rock!

Holding his breath and closing his eyes, Li Yao used his hands, just as lightly as the wind, to feel about the rock surfaces continuously.

In his mind, inconceivable saber aurae appeared one after another. Li Yao was completely immersed in the world of the saber technique.

When he was so feverish that sweat was dripping down his face, Li Yao opened his eyes to find that Long Wenhui had already left some time ago.

The surface of the artificial lake was ever so calm, yet a series of footprints was impressively left upon its surface, extending to the other side of the lake.

It appeared that Long Wenhui had walked right over the lake's surface.

Whereas the footprints he left behind bore such terrifying spiritual energy that even after a long time, the water surface still remained solidified!

At this moment, a calm voice rang in Li Yao's ears, "Be sure to put your best into cultivation. Student Li Yao, we don't have much time left!"

"Puff—"

Li Yao exhaled a breath of relief as he sat down on the lakeside, gazing at the footprints on the lake's surface in a daze.

Whether it was the silver-white card that would change into a star-filled universe or the amazing technique revealed by Long Wenhui, Li Yao got to experience a higher world.

A wonderful world that he had never dreamed of!

"The world of cultivation is vast indeed!

"The me of today can only set off a little wave in the Wild Waves City.

"I have to put my full effort into cultivation, craft the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, and also enter the Building Foundation Stage as soon as possible; then I can step into Log Wenhui's so-called new world!

"That would truly be a wonderful life!"

Having thought of this, a smile crept upon Li Yao's lips.

In any case, he had won the Thunderbolt Cup and received a reward of 10,000 credits. His total credit had broken through the 40,000 mark. Now, all he had to do was to get a letter of recommendation from the dean and he could go and participate in the Refiners' Registration Examination!

As long as he passed the examination, the Refining Department would remain as is and the institute would also increase next year's funding; allowing them to restart Project Mystic Skeleton.

As long as he worked hard, such a prosperous future could be achieved!

"Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!"

The crystal processor had received a message.

"What?

"The Utility Patent I had applied has also passed, now I hold the patent for the Demon Beast Detector!

"Awesome! Hooray!"

Jumping high in the air, Li Yao punched the air in excitement.

He was too excited, so much so that he could not get hold of himself and happened to jump into the lake!

Over the next few days, Li Yao was rather busy.

He had received the letter of recommendation personally hand-written by Dean Xiong Baili himself. Also, the "Thunderbolt Cup" crafted from amethyst would be kept by the Starfire Union for a year until the next year's match, after which it would be handed over to the next winner.

Having won the Thunderbolt Cup, Li Yao's credits had broken through the 40,000 mark in just a year, thereby creating an unprecedented new record in the Grand Desolate War Institution, and inevitably became the focus of much attention. He had also been interviewed a few time by the campus reporters.

In addition, he had been warmly invited by the fellow students of Iron Fist Club and Chaos Edge Hall to talk about his winning experience.

Which Li Yao flatly refused on the spot. 'What a joke! Wouldn't I be walking right into a trap?!'

Even Ding Lingdang planned to help him celebrate winning the Thunderbolt Cup and invited him over to her house for dinner. However, he dared not go.

Every day, aside for being holed up in the research laboratory where he improved the Demon Beast Detector and prepared for the Refiners' Registration Examination, Li Yao would take out the silver-white card and the rock cut by Long Wenhui to research, whenever he had the time.

The more he researched, the more profound he realized the mysteries within them were.

Even when he blankly stared at them for a day and night, he would not get tired.

However, after three days, an unexpected message interrupted his much devoted cultivation.

"The Zephyr Guild wants to buy the patent of Demon Beast Detector from me?"

Chapter 206: Doesn't Know What's Good For Himself

Chapter 206: Doesn't Know What's Good For Himself

At Willow House, the largest tea house in Wild Waves City, Gao Guanyu who, having taken a small sip of the tea, could not help but frown.

The environment of the Wasteland was rather poor, so poor that even the best tea had a sandy taste to it, bringing a sour flavor to the tea.

Gao Guanyu was a handsome and refined middle-aged man. At first glance, his good-looking, round, and chubby face would make anyone have a good impression of him; they would not be even the slightest bit vigilant against him and might even find him somewhat clumsy.

However, in the Zephyr Guild, he went by the name of "fat fox", for the hidden dagger in his smile and the fame he acquired by employing treacherous and deceitful tactics.

Gao Guanyu was the senior manager of the Zephyr Guild's patent center.

Zephyr Guild was a major refining clan. The new patents exercised by it every year were as vast as the sea.

It stands to reason that hundreds and thousands of patents could not be developed by the refiners of Zephyr Guild themselves. Many of the patents were purchased from outsiders.

Gao Guanyu's job was to find a patent that had more potential in the market and buy it back at a rather low price before its inventor could see its value.

Then Zephyr Guild could make a huge fortune by using it themselves and reselling it through their vast network.

Having been in this line of work for a couple decades, Gao Guanyu had a vast experience and was keenly aware of the value of the Demon Beast Detector's patent.

Once it was commercialized, maybe it would set off a wave.

What was even worse was that its application somewhat overlapped with many magical equipment produced by the Zephyr Guild.

Not to mention the fact that, in Gao Guanyu's opinion, the Demon Beast Detector's design was much better than the Hunting Watch and other similar magical equipment produced by the Zephyr Guild.

Once the Demon Beast Detector was on the market, it would impact the sales of Zephyr Guild's magical equipment for sure.

Ergo, Gao Guanyu was determined to acquire the patent of Demon Beast Detector.

"The difficulty of this task should not be that high.

"The other party is just a freshman who isn't even in his twenties. Whereas the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department is ranked third among the third-grade sect. Until now I have never even heard of them ever refining this kind of magical equipment.

"If my guess is right, then this kid must have been momentarily inspired and designed the Demon Beast Detector by chance. Perhaps he himself isn't even aware of its value.

"So long as I gave him a little bit of money, he would sell the patent to us..."

A slight smile appeared on Gao Guanyu's face as he closed his eyes and rested his mind, using the final few minutes, to ponder what he was going to say.

Suddenly, two waitresses chatting with each other came to his attention:

"Have you seen the video yet? The Vulture is a really apt nickname; he is truly insidious and cunning!"

"But of course, I think this Vulture is our Grand Desolate War Institution's newest ruthless figure. If I am going to provoke someone, I would rather provoke Iron Fist Club and Chaos Edge Hall!"

The Wild Waves City was an academic city. Many students worked at tea houses, restaurants, and other establishments in the Wild Waves City as part-time workers. It was not just for the money but also for developing their self-sustaining abilities.

The two waitresses were, in fact, students of Grand Desolate War Institution.

"Vulture?"

Gao Guanyu was intimidated before he broke into a laughter; he was laughing at his own nervousness.

The Grand Desolate War Institution was famous for its Combat Department. Having heard of the name Vulture, he reckoned that he must be a ruthless figure from the Combat Department, whether he's insidious or fierce, what's that got to do with him.

He must think of some ways to deal with this silly freshman!

After a moment, apart from his bright and shiny eyes, a seemingly mediocre teenager dressed in school uniform walked into the tea house. After having looked right and left for a while, he started walking right towards Gao Guanyu.

Putting the most kind and cordial expression, Gao Guanyu said with a smile, "Student Li Yao, hello.

"I'm Gao Guanyu from Zephyr Guild. This time I came mainly to discuss regarding the transfer of Demon Beast Detector's patent with you.

"We have carefully studied your patent and although it is somewhat impractical and hard to commercialize, in terms of design, it is still somewhat ingenious, we can see your ingenuity in it. It can play a supporting role in some magical equipment crafted by our Zephyr Guild.

"Therefore, we would like to buy it from you and enrich our Zephyr Guild's patent library.

"Here are some of the clauses drafted by me, you can take a look. In fact, our Zephyr Guild buys hundreds and thousands of patents from outside sources every year, basically, we operate in accordance with similar clauses.

"You don't need to worry; our Zephyr Guild is a famous and major sect with a long line of history. The aforementioned clauses are perfectly just; we would not let you suffer any loss."

Gao Guanyu transferred the contract to Li Yao's crystal processor.

Having heard Gao Guanyu say that the Demon Beast Detector was impractical and quite difficult to commercialize, a slight frown appeared upon Li Yao's forehead.

When his gaze swept through the contract and saw the series of digits, a ridicule could not help but appear in his eyes.

"Five million?

"Want to buy all the legal rights to the Demon Beast Detector with just five million?"

With a faint smile on his face, Li Yao glanced at Gao Guanyu.

At present, Li Yao was at the 6th level of the Refinement Stage and on the verge of breaking through to the 7th level of the Refinement Stage, earning just 5 million wouldn't be difficult!

Not to mention the fact that he could simply go on a spree hunt and slaughter demon beasts in the Wasteland. And if he sold them in the market rather than taking the hunt back to the institute to redeem them for credits, he could very well earn 5 million quite quickly as well.

The Demon Beast Detector would also play the most crucial role in his efficiency to hunt the demon beasts.

With a mere 5 million, how could he ever think of buying off the patent of Demon Beast 'Detector?! Do you really think of me as nothing but a stupid brat who has never seen money?!'

And the aforementioned clauses made Li Yao shake his head. On the spot, Li Yao abandoned the idea of cooperating with the Zephyr Guild.

In accordance with the clauses, Zephyr Guild buying off the patent of Demon Beast Detector wasn't just limited to that, the contract also included the subsequent improvements as well as the research and development of this patent.

In other words, once Li Yao signed the agreement, he would be unable to conduct further refining as well as research of the Demon Beast Detector.

Which was absolutely unacceptable to Li Yao.

In Li Yao's mind, the current Demon Beast Detector was just 1st generation, it could not even be counted as a true "detector".

For it didn't have the ability to detect itself. All it could do was scan, and by relying on the shape and characteristics obtained through the scan, it would then compare it to the database.

If an unknown type or a rare variant of demon beast appeared, and there was no relevant data in the database, then it would fail to detect.

Furthermore, even among the same kind of demon beasts, some were strong and some were weak. High-level demon clan members could also cultivate. It would be basically impossible to judge their strength after cultivation by solely relying on their species.

Therefore, Li Yao planned to continue to develop the Demon Beast Detector to 2nd generation, 3rd generation, 4th generation...

Until the point when the Demon Beast Detector could possess true detecting ability where it wouldn't have to rely on the database. As long as it performed a scan using the mystic beam, it would be able to roughly estimate the strength of the enemy.

This kind of magical equipment would not just detect the battle force of demon beasts but also detect the battle force of cultivators and devil cultivators as well.

This was the ultimate magical equipment in his mind; the Battle Force Scouter!

Therefore, how could he hand over all the rights of subsequent research and development to others?

Shaking his hand, Li Yao refused, "I'm sorry, the noble conditions offered by Mister Gao somewhat differed from what I had in my mind. Let's work together again if we ever have the opportunity in the future."

Refused?

Gao Guanyu raised his eyebrows. In his heart, he was slightly surprised. With a brighter smile on his face, Gao Guanyu calmly said, "Student Li Yao, the difference doesn't matter. We can slowly discuss. If you are not satisfied with the price, I still have a bit of authority, I can help you fight for it."

Li Yao smiled, "I am really not satisfied with the price. Perhaps the difference could not be compensated with 'a little bit of authority'. But what I find the most unacceptable is transferring the rights of follow-up developments and improvements.

"What I can accept is the authorization of its production.

"After getting my authorization, the Zephyr Guild can mass produce the Demon Beast Detector, and the resulting profits can be shared by both party. I can lower my shares a bit too.

"But the patent of Demon Beast Detector will remain in my own hands so that I can do further development and crafting at will."

Gao Guanyu's smile became a bit stiff, "Student Li Yao, is that necessary?

"We are not clear about the market prospects for the Demon Beast Detector, and even if it is successfully commercialized, who knows how well it will sell and for how much?!

"And speaking of dividing the profits, your risks are pretty big!

"If you feel that 5 million is too low, I can forward a request to the headquarter and increase the final transfer price to 8 million!

"But we must get the complete patent rights, including the rights for subsequent modifications and R&D.

"Our Zephyr Guild isn't some ordinary, insignificant sect. Just the production rights aren't much different from contract manufacturing, which we never do. We must have the entire patent rights of the magical equipment produced by us.

"How about this, if you are willing to forgo the rights of subsequent modifications and R&D, I will add another 2 million to the price I previously offered, making the final patent transfer price 10 million!

"What do you think?"

Seeing Li Yao being silent, Gao Guanyu came to believe Li Yao was hesitating, so he added another spark, "Student Li Yao, let's be honest.

"The Demon Beast Detector is indeed a pretty good piece of magical equipment.

"But even a pretty good piece of magical equipment would face many problems in the process of its commercialization, such as distribution channels, marketing, quality of control of mass production, after-sales service, so on and so forth. Even the slightest mistake would not only stop us from earning a lot of money, there is a pretty big chance that we would not even be able to earn back the cost price!

"Our Zephyr Guild sincerely want to get the patent of the Demon Beast Detector. 10 million is already our limit, and I believe no one else would offer such a high price.

"Not to mention that the utility patents are ensured for only three years. After three years, everyone else could follow the design of Demon Beast Detector and produce similar magical equipment!

"You will only get a one shot and you must grasp it!"

This statement of Gao Guanyu's could not be counted as completely deceptive.

Ten million to buy the R&D rights for a utility patent from a university student was indeed pretty price.

However, Li Yao had other plans in his mind.

Having stood up, Li Yao slightly bent his body, "I am truly sorry! Mister Gao, I'm afraid we cannot agree on this issue. If we have the opportunity in the future, let's cooperate again."

Li Yao turned around and left.

Since both parties could not agree on the core issue, there was no meaning in continuing on discussing the details.

Li Yao's time was rather precious, he still had to study and cultivate a lot more.

Watching the disappearing silhouette of Li Yao at the entrance of tea house, the smile on Gao Guanyu's face turned incomparably gloomy in a second.

This fat fox squeezed out seven words from his clenched teeth, "He doesn't know what's good for himself!"

Chapter 207: The Best Partner

Chapter 207: The Best Partner

Li Yao wasn't perturbed in the least by the breakdown in negotiations with the Zephyr Guild.

In the case of commercial negotiations, when both parties didn't come to an agreement, it was quite normal.

However, Gao Guanyu's words woke him.

The utility patents were only valid for three years.

After three years, the Demon Beast Detector's design would no longer be protected by patent laws, giving anyone an open invitation to craft similar magical equipment.

If he wanted to commercialize, then the sooner the better.

However, meticulously crafting and polishing a Demon Beast Detector with his own hands in a few days' time was one thing while using a production line to mass produce the detector another.

Not to mention the fact that he simply didn't have a 'Mystic Laser Micro-Engraving Machine'-like equipment for mass production. He also needed to consider advertising and marketing, distribution channels, after-sales services, starting capital, so on and so forth which would be required after the production.

None of these problems could be solved by him alone.

Having wracked his brain and still without a solution, Li Yao could only seek advice from Yuan Manqiu.

Yuan Manqiu was someone who had been in the refining community for a couple of decades and was a Big Sis in name and in fact. She had applied for hundreds of patents and thereby had long been adept at commercializing a patent. The first sentence that just came out of her mouth was enough to amaze Li Yao.

"First, you can set up your own sect.

"Don't look at me like that, is founding a sect so amazing? Nowadays, the federation, in order to inspire the young to be creative, is very supportive of young cultivators starting their own businesses.

"Nowadays, establishing your own sect in university is a trend.

"Many of your seniors in the institute have partnered up with each other and have created their own sects. The institute also wholeheartedly supports it.

"Moreover, you are not only an undergraduate but also a Class 1 Federation Disabled Soldier. If you were to establish your own clan, you will get a preferential treatment in regards to tax, bank loans, and other similar stuff.

"After founding your own clan, you can mass-produce Demon Beast Detectors. Of course, you will need a large investment during the early stages for which you can take a loan from the bank or go to some youth entrepreneurship expo to find someone to invest in you.

"Nowadays, many large sects are very happy to discover small sects with good potential at youth entrepreneurship expos and invest in them.

"In my opinion, the Demon Beast Detector does have very good potential. A small sect with it as the core product would be very popular in the youth entrepreneurship expo.

"If you're lucky, maybe a big sect would ready to spend a huge sum to directly buy your small sect.

"That way, not only can you get a lot of money, you can also directly become an elder like figure in a large sect. You could reach the dazzling heights in a single bound!"

Yuan Manqiu's advice made Li Yao's heart beat like crazy.

Establishing one's own sect?

It sounded quite amazing.

However, having thought of it carefully, he still gave up on this notion.

Setting up a clan wasn't as simple as it sounded. Whether it was going to the bank to apply for a loan or finding some investors in a youth entrepreneurship expo, very tedious things would need to be dealt with.

This was precisely the domain of admin-type cultivators.

And Li Yao wasn't an admin-type cultivator, not to mention the fact that he only liked two things, one was to indulge himself in the complex and profound world of magical equipment and the other was to slaughter in a blood-soaked battlefield.

These two things already took up most of his time and energy.

Meanwhile, he would also pay a great deal of time and effort for the upcoming Refiners' Registration Examination.

Even if he passed the test, he still had Project Mystic Skeleton to focus on.

He really had no extra time or energy to operate a sect.

Seeing Li Yao reject the first proposition, Yuan Manqiu wasn't surprised. She continued, "If you don't want to create your own sect to produce Demon Beast Detector, you can only work with another sect.

"However, the cooperation depends on what kind of sect it is.

"Although big sects on the scale of Zephyr Guild are quite experienced in producing such equipment and have complete marketing networks, they are too big. It would be very difficult for them to treat you as an equal. Quite often, they want to buy and sell in one shot; they would directly buy your patent rather than cooperating with you.

"If you want to keep the patent, your only choice is to work with a second or third-grade sect. Sects like those don't have the powerful technology or have the capability for further research and development. Therefore, they don't need your patent, all they need from you are exclusive production rights, that's all.

"Of course, this way, the price needs to be a bit lower, moreover, small sects don't have complete marketing networks like Zephyr Guild. Also, there is the problem of quality control with the mass production of magical equipment.

"Because of this, choosing a small sect that knows what they are doing is equally important.

"Li Yao, what do you think of Mountain Sea Sect?"

Apparently, Yuan Manqiu had figured more than the plan. Since Li Yao had asked, she threw him the best plan she could think off.

"Mountain Sea Sect?" Li Yao briefly pondered.

He had a very good impression of Mountain Sea Sect.

Not only the logistics supervisor of Mountain Sea Sect, Jiang Wenbo, is the guest professor of Refining Department whom Li Yao thinks of as a teacher.

The Building Foundation Stage cultivator of Mountain Sea Sect, Guan Xiang was his savior who also vouched for him when Li Yao became a cultivator.

Li Yao had met Jiang Wenbo and Guan Xiong a couple of times over the past year. He had a pretty good relationship with both of them. Also, the Mountain Sea Sect was a sponsor of Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department. Now that a student of the Refining Department had shown some results, cooperating with the Mountain Sea Sect was only proper.

"I hear that the Mountain Sea Sect has been operating in the red for the past two years?"

"Yes."

Yuan Manqiu didn't hide it before she continued in natural, poised manner, "For over a century, the Mountain Sea Sect had been a second or third-grade weak sect which didn't even have a Core Formation Stage powerhouse. And in the last few decades, their luck hasn't been so great. First, their former elder had failed to advance to the Core Formation Stage and was seriously injured, which resulted in a big drop in their share prices; the Mountain Sea Sect suffered a heavy loss. Afterward, another of their experts, Guan Xiong had been poisoned by demonic energy during a beast tide, as a result of which, he fell to the intermediate level of Building Foundation Stage from his previous high-level.

"Having lost their two high-level experts who could hunt high-level demon beasts, venture deep into the Wasteland, and explore mines, the Mountain Sea Sect was unable to expand their high-profit business like military contracts from the federation, which made it difficult for them to operate.

"However, the Mountain Sea Sect has survived in the Wasteland for over a century, they are well-established and have marketing network across various cities in the Wasteland, and also have a certain reputation.

"The main market of the Demon Beast Detector is the Wasteland. Even if the inland cultivators had to venture deep into the Wasteland to hunt demon beasts, they would have to first rest at the forward bases. With the advertising and distribution capabilities of the Mountain Sea Sect, it would be a piece of cake to fully cover these important sites.

"Another most crucial point is in their production capabilities.

"Originally, the Mountain Sea Sect wasn't a sect based on refining, but for the sake of a complete transformation, they spent a great deal of money to import a production line comprising of a Mystic Laser Micro-Engraving Machine and various mini-components.

"This production line is very advanced and can be used for refining spirit watches. Although the components of Demon Beast Detector are quite ingenious, in terms of sophistication, there is still a certain difference with the spirit watch.

"In other words, the Mountain Sea Sect is completely capable of mass producing the Demon Beast Detector.

"On another note, the Mountain Sea Sect's technical abilities aren't that great whether it is their newly established R&D center or their elders. The head of their R&D center is Old Jiang who is a Refiner from the grassroots faction and doesn't specialize in crafting precision magical equipment. For technical stuff, they'd still have to rely on your support.

"As a result, you have the technology while the Mountain Sea Sect have the labor, money, production equipment, and marketing network. Both sides are highly complementary to each other. In terms of cooperation, you seem quite compatible."

Having heard Yuan Manqiu's analysis, Li Yao nodded again and again.

The Mountain Sea Sect was indeed the best partner considering his current situation.

After hesitating for a moment, Li Yao asked, "However, would the Mountain Sea Sect be willing to work with me, or would I have to talk with Teacher Jiang first?"

Yuan Manqiu slightly smiled, "What is there to talk about?! Just take the initiative to talk with him and then you just have to wait for him to come and visit!

"I have already sent your combat videos of Thunderbolt Cup and some of your fights in the Wasteland to Old Jiang and also told him that you'd got a patent as well.

"With his insight, he should be able to see the prospects of this patent.

"Furthermore, with the current plight of Mountain Sea Sect, this piece of magical equipment is simply tailored for them.

"All you have to do is think about the terms and conditions you would propose to the Mountain Sea Sect!"

Having explained all that, Yuan Manqiu said nothing else.

Li Yao didn't have to wait for the next day. On that very night, having finished watching Li Yao's combat videos and carefully reading the detailed description of Demon Beast Detector, Jiang Wenbo sent a spiritual crane message to Li Yao rather excitedly.

The Demon Beast Detector was quite appetizing to the Mountain Sea Sect!

Right now, the Mountain Sea Sect was in a very awkward situation.

Taking a bank loan and spending a great deal of money to set up a production line to mass produce spirit watches had all been a waste for the Mountain Sea Sect. All of the spirit watches were stored in their warehouse; each piece they refined was nothing but loss.

Having been unable to produce anything, the production line was just idling. The monthly interest alone on the bank loans was an astronomical figure.

They wanted to sell the entire production line but finding a right buyer was easier said than done. Not to mention that the selling price was also quite low. As the matter stood, the losses they'd suffered were simply shocking.

What's more, what would the Mountain Sea Sect do after selling their assembly line?

With the appearance of the Demon Beast Detector, the Mountain Sea Sect, from top to bottom, was quite excited.

With Guan Xiong acting as the leading battle-type cultivator who often hunted the demon beasts in the Wasteland, they were quite confident with the market prospects of the Demon Beast Detector.

More importantly, the production line imported for crafting the spirit watches could be used to mass produce the Demon Beast Detectors with just a few modifications and without any technical difficulties.

Instead of competing in a competitive and mature market of spirit watches with traditional giants like Zephyr Guild, they might as well try to step into a new market!

Even if the sales aren't high, as long as they could repay the bank loan's interest every month, it would be better than keeping the production line idle!

With such calculations and after a fierce day and night discussion, the upper and lower management of Mountain Sea Sect finally reached an agreement and decided to fully cooperate with Li Yao to produce the Demon Beast Detector!

Chapter 208: The Most Special Examination Hall

Chapter 208: The Most Special Examination Hall

A month later.

Someplace among the high mountains in the western hemisphere of the Star Glory Federation.

A Killer Whale-Class carrier, which was trailed with by colorful streams of light and a long tail of flames, gradually made its way across the clear, blue skies as it plunged into a forest of hundreds and thousands of tall mountains.

Inside the carrier, Li Yao whistled in relief as he happily looked through the contract.

Finally, the contract was finalized.

Producing a magical equipment on a large-scale wasn't trivial. Although both sides really wanted to cooperate, there were still many tedious tasks to deal with when it came to specific issues.

For the next two weeks, Li Yao made some minor changes to the Demon Beast Detector's components and array glyphs, mainly from the perspective of cost reduction.

There were many array glyphs and algorithms that had only recently been invented in the last one or two decades and were still in the patent protection period.

Using the algorithms and array glyphs for learning and research was nothing, but if one wanted to use them in mass production for profit, they had to negotiate with the inventor to pay a certain amount to obtain the patent rights.

The best way to resolve this issue was to find algorithms and array glyphs that were invented thirty to fifty years ago.

The patent protection period of those array glyphs and algorithms was over and anyone could use them.

Of course, not all array glyphs and algorithms could be replaced. For some irreplaceable and crucial array glyphs and algorithms, it was up to the Mountain Sea Sect's business staff to negotiate with the inventor.

In addition to mass producing Demon Beast Detector, the crystal eye was an integral component and, for Mountain Sea Sect, it was far more cost-effective to buy them in from others than making it themselves.

Although the Mountain Sea Sect was unable to craft crystal eyes on their own, they still had some partner refining sects that had the ability to produce crystal eye at a high level.

They had reached a strategic cooperation agreement with one of their partners from whom they would purchase relatively cheap crystal eyes basically at cost.

All that Li Yao had to do was to fine-tune the production process and replace the Super Falcon-Class crystal eye from the Holy Light Sect, which Li Yao had previously used, with the new model crystal eye.

After having finished all this, Li Yao personally went to the Mountain Sea Sect.

On one hand, he wanted to check the crafting technology and production scale of the Mountain Sea Sect, on the other hand, he also wanted to work with Jiang Wenbo to revamp the production line which was originally designed to produce spirit watches.

Having seen the renovation project of 1st Generation Tai'e Crafting Furnace, Jiang Wenbo was completely confident in Li Yao's "devilish modification" abilities. Thus, the responsibility of revamping many of the crucial sites was handed over to Li Yao.

Whereas the Mountain Sea Sect, from the upper echelons to lowly workers, was still a bit dubious of Li Yao's capabilities, but after having seen his insane refining techniques and modification ideas, they were all rendered speechless and became completely confident in the Demon Beast Detector project!

After being up to their ears in work for one month during which all obstacles in regard to the crafting process were finally solved, both sides went through a series of haggling. Following which, the contract was eventually finalized. A few of the crucial terms and conditions were:

First, Li Yao would grant the Mountain Sea Sect the exclusive rights to mass produce the Demon Beast Detector, and promised that no other sect would be authorized for the next three years.

Second, Li Yao would still retain the patent rights of the Demon Beast Detector and could produce them on small-scale for research or distribution, as long as his output didn't exceed one per day. Furthermore, he would have to engrave a unique symbol on the Demon Beast Detector so as to distinguish it from the Demon Beast Detectors sold by the Mountain Sea Sect.

Third, the Mountain Sea Sect promised to produce at least 50,000 units of Demon Beast Detector during the next three years. And the profit from the sales of each unit of Demon Beast Detector would be split in a 30-70 ratio, where Li Yao would be entitled to 30% and Mountain Sea Sect to 70%.

Fourth, Li Yao would provide technical support and, once he invented subsequent models, the Mountain Sea Sect would get the priority under the same conditions of cooperation.

Li Yao was very satisfied with this contract.

He also researched the market. Generally, for a similar type of contract where the patent rights were still held by the owner and exclusive production rights were granted, the patent owner would at most receive 20% of the profit.

Although the technology was his, the cultivation sect was providing money, production equipment, marketing network, and labor consisting of hundreds and thousands of people who were only working on this project. Also, the cultivation sect would still have to bear the risk of loss; so, giving them a share of 70 to 80% of the profit wasn't actually very much.

Moreover, according to Li Yao's plan, his ambitions couldn't be stopped by fighting over a small amount of money. What would be the point of haggling with the Mountain Sea Sect for one or two percent?

The 1st Generation Demon Beast Detector was just the start. Later, he would develop many, much more advanced detectors that would have a wide range of abilities.

If the 1st Generation Demon Beast Detector sold well, then they could discuss slowly.

Li Yao's gaze fell to the bottom of the contract, at a very strange symbol under the signature part, which was as flamboyant as flying dragons and dancing phoenixes.

It was a tiny pentagram with a long grinning smile whereas the corners of the smile were slightly curved, giving the impression of a sinister smile.

This was the exclusive insignia designed by Li Yao himself.

Every Refiner had his own unique insignia that was engraved upon the magical equipment crafted by him, which acted as the identification as well as a special advertisement.

Even a magical equipment with ordinary functions had its price hiked by hundredfold as long as it was personally crafted by a master refiner and had his exclusive insignia branded upon it. It would be treated as an extreme treasure for which the buyers would swarm like flies.

This small star with an evil smile was named as "Fiend Star" by Li Yao.

He decided that, from now on, if he was on a battlefield where blood was being spilled and bodies kept falling, he would use the nickname "Vulture".

The battlefield, a place where everyone competed to see who was tougher, fiercer, and most fearless.

The Vulture, this nickname sounded like it belonged to a ruthless figure. Someday, even the Demon Kings and Demon

Emperors of Blood Demon Sector would tremble upon hearing this name!

But in the refiners' community, using an ominous nickname like "Vulture" wasn't suitable, it sounded as though it didn't belong to someone who was good and honest!

Ergo, in the refiners' community, he would go by the name of "Fiend Star", hahaha, "Grandmaster Fiend Star", this name wasn't bad!

"Hum!"

The Killer Whale-Class carrier lightly shook as it began to slow down.

The passengers inside broke into a series of nervous discussions.

Li Yao stopped smiling and put away the hologram. In the blink of an eye, everything pertaining to the Demon Beast Detector was thrown to the back of his mind.

At present, he had more important things to deal with—the Refiners' Registration Examination!

Li Yao peered through the porthole as he turned his gaze towards the distance.

Where he saw lush and verdant high mountains and lofty peaks surrounded by a couple of huge basins.

Inside the basin, countless silver-white towns and cities glittered under the illumination of bright sunlight.

These were the towns and cities located within the hundreds and thousands of mountains in the western hemisphere of the federation. All of them were military cities comprising of series of munition factories, army bases, and research institutes of war type magical equipment, which formed the last line of defense of mankind.

At the beginning of the establishment of Star Glory Federation, the situation was nowhere near as stable as it was now. The eastern hemisphere of the federation was oppressed by the Eastern Demon Empire, whereas the Wasteland in the northern hemisphere was a paradise for demon beasts. At that time, the beast tides truly blotted the sky and the earth, destroying everything in their wake!

Many people were worried that the beast tide in the Wasteland would gather into a sea of demon beasts which would break through mankind's line of defense with an armageddon-like momentum and directly head towards the south, ravaging the fertile lands in the southeast.

The high mountains and lofty peaks in the western hemisphere of the federation became the last base from which mankind could counterattack.

As a result, the Star Glory Federation spent hundreds of years to continuously develop the hundreds and thousands of mountains in the western hemisphere.

Countless mountains were hollowed out and transformed into large-scale arsenals. Tens of thousands of underground stalactite caves were continuously developed, dug deeper and were connected to transform them into complex, underground shelters. Countless soldiers and their families lived here. Generation after generation, the soldier families flourished into military families, awaiting the final battle!

The registration of refiners was divided into a dozen different categories. Li Yao had applied for Class C, which was focused in a small-scale military direction.

The refiners of this class mainly focused on crafting individual-type swords and sabers, firearms, and auxiliary-class magical equipment. The peak of their class was being able to craft crystal suits, or, in other words, become an "Armadominus"!

As the Refiners' Registration Examination involved the designing and the subsequent trials of a large number of weapons, the small-scale military-type Refiners' Registration Examination would be conducted in various army bases annually.

After drawing the lottery, Li Yao had to go to No.19 examination hall which was set up at military base 8734.

"Wow, it is truly spectacular!"

As the carrier flew over a mountain, the military base 8734 came in sight.

It was a huge military base. Multitudes of super heavy-class magical equipment were installed around the base. There were many crystal railguns were as high as several floors, while the spiritual energy rail was as thick as Li Yao's waist.

The destruction caused by every round fired was hard to imagine.

Before the carrier even landed, Li Yao was completely dazzled by the hundreds of crystal tanks arranged orderly on the ground.

Even though they were older models, when they moved in astonishing number, mounting a charge, they still appeared prestigious. They had a noble air around them that soared to the high heavens, even from a few kilometers away, Li Yao could sense the killing intent lingering around them.

As the carrier gradually landed, examinees from various towns in the Wasteland filed out before they were escorted by a team of soldiers which lead them to the front of a silver-white, dome-like mega-building.

After verifying their identity, everyone's private crystal processor was handed over to the soldiers temporarily in exchange for a crystal processor that would be specially used for the Refiners' Registration Examination.

Li Yao walked into the silver-white dome.

He felt as though the sky had been covered by a metallic shell, and yet it was grand and imposing, and its lobby was enough to accommodate tens of thousands of people.

At the center was a red box which was completely sealed by defensive array glyphs.

It was the primary examination room.

The Refiners' Registration Examination was divided into a primary exam, second exam, and final exam.

The primary examination was a written test which assessed their knowledge of various theories. It was extremely difficult. Over half of the examinees would be eliminated in the primary examination.

Over a thousand examinees from a few dozen towns were gathered in the lobby.

And there were still many examinees continuing to come in, one after another.

Because it was a national exam, the boarding time for everyone wasn't allocated well. Many of the examinees had been waiting for a few hours.

Therefore, there were many special waiting rooms and cafeterias installed in the lobby.

And the crystal processor specially provided for the exam also had mock papers.

The examinees could both eat and drink in the waiting area, to recharge their batteries. Or they could make a last-minute effort by doing some last minute cramming.

Looking at the time, there was still half an hour left for the primary examination to begin.

Li Yao walked towards the waiting area leisurely to recuperate after the tiring journey.

Unexpectedly, before he could even sit down, he heard his name from the two examinees behind him as they discussed in low voices.

"Do you know our No. 19 examination hall is the most special one among all examination halls? There are two unique examinees who are taking the exam here.

"One is Jiang Shaoyang, the talented freshman of Deep Sea University, also known as the 'Tenth Star'.

"Another one is Li Yao!"

Chapter 209: The Tenth Star, Jiang Shaoyang!

Chapter 209: The Tenth Star, Jiang Shaoyang!

While Li Yao stretched his body, he took a glance behind him out the corner of his eye.

Not far away from him sat two teenagers, one fat and one thin, no more than three to four years older than him.

The thin teenager had droopy eyes which subtly drifted from here and there; he appeared very shrewd. Just a moment ago, it was him who was speaking about Li Yao.

The slightly fat teenager, on the other hand, looked ignorant, like a bookish nerd who didn't care what was going on in the outside world.

On the chest of the two was the emblem of Star Nebula University.

The level of Star Nebula University's Refining Department wasn't low. Every year, many refiners from Star Nebula University would apply for registration.

Touching the back of his head, the slightly fat teenager foolishly replied, "I've heard of Jiang Shaoyang. Isn't he the guy who came to our university for the seminar representing the Deep Sea University just last month, during which the arrogant guys in our department were completely knocked out?! However, why do they call him the 'Tenth Star'? Isn't he just a freshman? Didn't he entered the university just last year, how come he is taking the Refiners' Registration Examination this year? Even a year hasn't gone by, ah!"

The thin teenager said in a natural manner, "He is called as such because he is a genius, otherwise, what would a genius be called?

"As for why he is called the Tenth Star, it's pretty simple. Have you ever heard of the group in the Deep Sea University's Refining Department called 'Novem Stellae'?" [1]

The slightly fat teenager nodded, "Of course, it's an academic group created by the nine True Disciples taught by Jiang Sheng of Deep Sea University's Refining Department. It almost represents the highest level among the new generation in the refiners' community!"

The lean teenager smiled and said, "You still don't get it, do you? Jiang Shaoyang had only entered the university for a year, but he had been personally taught by the Supernova Jiang Sheng. He is almost as good as the nine True Disciples. Therefore, he is called the 'Tenth Star', but at present, he is still young. Many people say that after ten years, he will definitely surpass the 'Novem Stellae' and become the best True Disciple of Supernova Jiang Sheng!"

The slightly fat teenager was caught by surprise as a look of astonishment covered his face before he said, "He's been personally taught by Supernova Jiang Sheng for just one year and he is almost as good as the 'Novem Stellae'? Damn, he is too good!"

After thinking for a moment, the lean fellow shook his head and said, "Strictly speaking, it's not just one year.

"Jian Shaoyang is the nephew of Jiang Sheng. He had followed Jiang Sheng since childhood and had been imperceptibly influenced. So, it is quite natural for him to begin refining already, and along with being taught in a systematic method for one year, it's nothing strange for him suddenly show some excellent results."

The fat fellow wiped his sweat as he said with a stupid smile on his face, "Fortunately, you explained this or I would have been unable to think straight and would think that these geniuses are ten times better than us, they only had to study for one year and they could match with us who have studied for three to four years; if you hadn't explained why, I'd have developed an inferiority complex! Hahaha!

"Oh, yea, you also spoke of another guy, is he someone who is on par with Tenth Star, Jiang Shaoyang?

"Li Yao, was it?"

"That's right, how come it sounds so familiar, let me think..."

"Li Yao, ah, that clown, right!"

Remembering something, the slightly fat teenager slapped his thick thigh as a shine covered his face, "That guy is considered as a unique piece of work in the refiners' circle. He actually wants to lead the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department to challenge the Deep Sea University's Refining Department?! Hahahaha! Even our Star Nebula University's Refining Department that has invented the Spirit Particle Collider wouldn't dare to be so presumptuous as to challenge them."

"The ignorance is truly a bliss!"

"However, such hype has truly made him famous, and now, everyone in the academic circle of Nine Elite Universities knows that there is a character like him. I say, did he do it intentionally?

"However, as I recall, that clown made a fool of himself just last year, he should be just a freshman and has only been learning for almost a year, and yet he wants to take the Refiners' Registration Examination?

"If it's the Tenth Star, Jiang Shaoyang, taking the Refiners' Registration Examination is nothing as he is a nephew of Supernova Jiang Sheng and has been following him since childhood.

"But this guy has been in the worst Refining Department among the Nine Elite Universities for a year and he thinks he is on the level of the Tenth Star? Isn't he just making trouble?"

The Refiners' Registration Examination was extremely difficult. Generally, it was taken by senior undergraduates of the Refining Departments or those who had been pursuing the refining line of work for a few years to a decade; only after amassing a vast experience would they take the exam.

Like both of them, they had been studying refining in the Star Nebula University's Refining Department for four years. And only after having been thoroughly assessed by the university did they get the recommendation letter from the university.

Inside the examination hall, the examinees in their thirties and forties were large in number, there were even middle-aged examinees with white hair growing on their temples, apparently, some were even in their seventies and eighties.

"The Grand Desolate War Institute should be a university like ours. They should also use a recommendation letter system too. And only when the student reaches a certain level could he or she have the qualifications to take the examination, right? So, how could this guy take the exam?"

The fat teenager caressed his shiny face as he doubtfully asked.

The lean fellow mischievously smiled, "Others may not know but I know a senior grad studying in the Grand Desolate War Institution. According to him, it is because Li Yao can fight."

The fat fellow almost spurted out as he spoke in astonishment, "Can fight?"

The lean fellow nodded, "That's right, not only can he fight, he can beat the hell out of a couple dozen or even a hundred of his fellow students. In short, he is invincible in the same grade, he could even beat the hell out of the students of their Combat Department; he is an absolutely fierce fellow."

The fat teenager didn't know whether to laugh or cry as he repeatedly shook his head before speaking, "The Grand Desolate War Institution is worthy of being called the craziest among the Nine Elite Universities. This is too ridiculous, right? What does being able to fight have to do with refining? Just became he can fight, he can get the recommendation letter to take the Refiners' Registration Examination? He must be kidding!"

The lean fellow shrugged his shoulder, "Who knows? However, it is consistent with the style of Grand Desolate War Institution where the one who has the bigger fists gets more privileges."

"I'm curious, if Student Li Yao isn't able to do anything in the examination room, will he become crazy and ruthlessly punch the crafting furnace?"

They two gradually lowered their voice before suddenly bursting into a laughter after a short while.

Following which, the fat fellow, with a completely flushed face, stood up in excitement. Along the way, when he was passing by a food table with steaming dishes, casually picked up a piece of bread.

While eating, he set down next to another group of examinees from Star Nebular University and enthusiastically said, "Hey, do you know that our No. 19 examination hall is the most special examination hall this year? There are two unique examinees taking the examination here..."

Li Yao narrowed his eyes as he scratched his somewhat disheveled head. From the bottom of his heart, he was burning with eagerness.

Tenth Star?

Jiang Shaoyang?

Supernova Jiang Sheng's nephew, the best freshman of the Deep Sea University's Refining Department who could go head to head with "Novem Stellae"?

Li Yao truly wanted to have a bout or two with this genius!

Just as he was wondering, he suddenly heard noises coming from the entrance of the lobby.

A powerful, imposing aura like a big wave surging from the deep sea, spread everywhere, engulfing and submerging everything in its wake.

Hundreds of teenagers, wearing deep blue uniforms and Deep Sea University's emblems walked into the examination hall with their heads held high.

With every step they took, light shone on the creases of uniform which was reflected as hundreds of small, blue beams of light, making the lobby appear as though it was in the deep sea, bringing a strange yet calm and peaceful air to the lobby.

The lobby, which had been hustling and bustling, instantly quieted down.

Every examinee's gaze carried awe and envy as they looked at the marching blue team.

As though they were the protagonists of the day and the remaining people were just here to accompany them in the exam, nothing more nothing less.

"Just an examination hall has hundreds of examinees. I am afraid the Deep Sea University's students taking the exam in all the examination halls are numbered in thousands!"

"It is truly the holy land of refiners in name and in fact!"

Li Yao sucked in a mouthful of cold air. Despite being aware that the Deep Sea University's Refining Department was colossal, only now did he get a clear understanding.

These examinees were just the students of Deep Sea University, that's all.

There were still many graduates of Deep Sea University who failed to become a registered refiner and were also taking the examination.

When they saw students of their alma mater arriving, these graduated, one by one, went up to welcome and greet their juniors who they were acquainted with.

The lobby which was completely silent a moment ago, once again, became lively. However, this time, the hubbub was coming from the group of Deep Sea University.

Everyone seemed to have been suppressed by their imposing manner and even didn't dare to raise their voices.

Li Yao took a glance around and immediately came to notice that a quarter of the examinees were from Deep Sea University.

An overwhelming blue tide quickly spread through the entire lobby before the No. 19 examination hall turned into the turf of Deep Sea University.

The deep blue tide broke into a dozen small tides that moved towards the various waiting areas.

A long-haired, red-eyed teenager, surrounded by a couple dozen guys walked past Li Yao.

Originally, the long-haired teenager had arms crossed over his chest, but apparently, he seemed to have thought of something before he thoughtlessly raised his wrist to take a glance at the crystal processor.

Having seen all this, Li Yao's pupils suddenly constricted. All of a sudden, he sat right up, whereas his spine burst forth with faint "cracking" sounds.

As though a satiated, lazy cat, suddenly became hungry tiger that was ready to go down the hill to hunt.

Li Yao looked at the left hand of the long-haired teenager.

Seventy percent of any refiner's skill was in his hands. When a refiner trained his hands to the extreme, both hands would have extremely subtle changes depending on the how adept his or her hands were.

At such a close range, Li Yao came to discover that the subtleties of long-haired teenager's fingers were exactly the same as his hands.

"I'll be damned, he is just like me. He must have come into contact with magical equipment components during his early childhood, even before his bones has taken shape.

"So, his finger bones are different from others. He is certainly a super expert with astonishing hand speed, his speed may even surpass my...95%!"

Li Yao's response did not escape the eyes of the long-haired teenager.

The long-haired teenager slightly frowned as he casually took a glance at Li Yao.

When his gaze landed on Li Yao's hands, his pupils, in the blink of an eye, constricted to the needlepoint.

The long-haired teenager suddenly halted his steps, as though he had discovered an extreme treasure. Having observed Li Yao's hands with much attention, he turned his gaze and meet the feverish gaze of Li Yao directly.

When the gazes of the two collided with each other, it seemed as though two lightning bolts collided with each other.

The people behind the long-haired fellow were taken by surprise; they could barely halt their footsteps. Many of them even collided with each other as they exclaimed.

After half a second, the long-haired fellow retracted his gaze and slightly smiled before continuing on.

Li Yao licked his lips; he suddenly felt hungry.

But it was not his stomach that was hungry, it was his hands; his fingers that were suffering were intolerable hunger.

A senior student of Deep Sea University's Refining Department quickly came from behind and asked in a low voice, "Shaoyang, what's the matter?"

"It's nothing."

The slender fingers of Tenth Star, Jiang Shaoyang were just like Li Yao's fingers; they involuntarily twitched.

He calmly said, "Just saw an expert."

Chapter 210: I'm a Genius

Chapter 210: I'm a Genius

"Expert?"

Upon hearing Jiang Shaoyang, everyone became excited as they, one by one, turned their heads; gazing with glittering eyes.

"Where is he, where's the expert?"

They were not to blame for forgetting themselves, as geniuses in Deep Sea University's Refining Department were as numerous as stray dogs. It was a place where terrifying prodigies could be found everywhere. Even so, Jiang Shaoyang, having entered the university for just one year, had already been publicly recognized as a super genius by all the geniuses and monstrous prodigies. He was the top prodigy.

Let alone finding his rival among the freshmen, even among the senior grads, the students who were of a higher level than him could be counted on one's fingers.

It couldn't be helped. Who asked him to be the nephew of Supernova Jiang Sheng. From childhood, he grew up in Jiang Sheng's refining room. How could he not learn anything if the toys he played with were magical equipment components?

If even Jiang Shaoyang believed someone to be an expert, then he must truly be an expert.

Everyone's gaze wandered, but all they could find were a group of Star Nebula University's students nearby and an extremely ordinary teenager gorging on a plate of dumplings.

His greedy appearance was almost like a country bumpkin who only knew how to use his muscles.

Everyone couldn't help but stare blankly, "Where's the expert?"

The refiners' community was filled with hidden dragons and crouching tigers. Of course, they wouldn't dare to say there weren't any expert refiners other than those from Deep Sea University.

However, many of these experts had been involved in refining for a few decades and in their middle-age after having trained laboriously.

When they looked around, all they could see were their peers who were almost the same age as them.

Among these people, there was actually an expert hidden who could go on par with Jiang Shaoyang?

That was simply inconceivable!

Everyone focused their gazes further ahead.

Jiang Shaoyang didn't stop and continued to move as he lazily said, "Let's go, you will know after a while. Today's exam is gonna be extremely interesting."

"Wow!"

Everyone woke up from their stupor and continued to follow Jiang Shaoyang.

"Shaoyang, you're right indeed. Today's exam is indeed going to be interesting. Apart from you, there is another figure whom everyone in the refining community knows and is taking the exam here."

The senior grad from just a moment ago said with enthusiasm, "It's Li Yao from Grand Desolate War Institution, the biggest clown who is known for challenging us. Wait a minute, I will search the net to find his 3D pictures. I wanna see how big his mouth is, to think that he dared to speak such big words!"

There was no change in Jiang Shaoyang's expression. He calmly said, "Gao Yuanlong, do you know why I, being a freshman and having studied at the university for less than a year, could knock senior grads like you out?"

Gao Yuanlong was surprised for a moment, he could not understand why Jiang Shaoyang threw him such a question.

However, they were already accustomed to Jiang Shaoyang's way of speaking which was no different than Jiang Sheng's. They reined their temper and asked, "Why?"

Slowly, Jiang Shaoyang extended two of his slender fingers. Waving his first finger, "99% is because I am a genius and you're all ordinary people with mediocre aptitudes."

Gao Yuanlong was almost choked to death on his own saliva. In the blink of an eye, his face turned very red from choking.

Everyone knew Jiang Shaoyang didn't know how to speak politely, but this was still too much!

What ordinary people with mediocre aptitudes?

In his hometown, Gao Yuanlong was a one in a million genius, who was like the feathers of a phoenix and horns of a unicorn!

Yet Jiang Shaoyang looked at him blankly, the look in his eyes was of calm as if he was saying, "I just stated one of the most basic facts. Why are you even getting angry, didn't you already know?"

Gao Yuanlong ground his teeth to the point that they even started to ache. Eventually, he helplessly said, "Okay, what about the remaining 1%?"

Jiang Shaoyang waved his second finger, "1% is because I devote every moment of my life to the world of refining unlike you ordinary people who obviously have such mediocre aptitudes yet waste so much of time listening to a joke."

Gao Yuanlong was rendered speechless. Everyone glanced at each other. From the bottom of everyone's heart, everyone had an urge to strangle Jiang Shaoyang to death.

In the depths of the metallic dome, was a control room full of holograms that were displaying the scenes from various parts of the metallic dome. Stood in the control room were three highly reputed, veteran refiners. Each of them had the emblems of refiners' association on their chests. They were all none other than the three examiners who were in charge of the No.19 examination hall.

On the left, stood a stunning middle-aged beauty. She was dressed in the same deep blue uniform as Jiang Shaoyang. However, compared to the uniforms of the students, hers was more beautiful, refined, and luxurious. A faint spiritual energy was lingering around it, bringing a sliver of immortal-like grace.

Only a "professor" level teacher of Deep Sea University held the qualifications to wear such uniform.

She was Professor Zhu Yueqin of Deep Sea University's Refining Department. This year, she was already seventy-nine years old, yet she appeared to be in her forties or fifties.

"Professor Zhu, is that long-haired teenager the nephew of Supernova Jiang Sheng, Jiang Shaoyang? I have heard that his aptitude is just as Jiang Sheng's, when Jiang Sheng was of his age. At such a young age, he is already on par with 'Novem Stellae' and also won the nickname, the 'Tenth Star'. Geniuses keep on emerging from the Deep Sea University one after another, you are truly worthy of being called the holy land of refiners!"

Stood in the middle was a slightly fat but smart looking, middle-aged man, what's more, was that the number of fingers in his hands were surprisingly six. As he spoke, his tone carried a bit of jealousy.

This man was Dong Liuqi, he was born with twelve fingers which made him unsuited to train using normal refining techniques.

However, he was quite gifted as well as had a firm and indomitable temperament. After painstakingly training for a couple of decades, he actually created a set of refining techniques for twelve fingers that was second to none and became a top refining expert in one of ten strongest sects in the federation, the Thousand Sun Sect.

Owing to the fact that in his teens he still had not yet successfully developed a refining technique for twelve fingers, Dong Liuqi wasn't admitted to Deep Sea University and graduated from Star Nebula University's Refining Department.

Having seen his alma mater, Star Nebula University, being completely suppressed, whether it was in terms of the number of examinees or in the imposing aura emanating from the examinees of Deep Sea University, Dong Liuqi's voice inevitably had a hint of jealousy mixed in it.

Dong Liuqi turned to the square-faced military man on his right side and said with a smile, "Director Yan, I noticed there was an interesting kid called Li Yao recommended by the Grand Desolate War Institution on the list of examinees, isn't he the kid who is known for challenging the Deep Sea University? Now that he and Jiang Shaoyang are in the same examination hall, they can also be considered as competing on the same stage, we will have to pay attention to them later."

Even before "Director Yan" could speak a word, Zhu Yueqing couldn't help but coldly scoff and interrupted, "He is just an ignorant, hot-headed kid, who is shooting off his mouth, nothing more nothing less. Elder Dong, you can't be serious?"

"I beg to differ, I feel that he is quite courageous, the young should be just like this, they should have guts to speak and fight!" calmly said the military man, he took a step forwards while looking at Zhu Yueqin.

He was Yan Tianhe, a refiner in the army and also the head of the armament center at military base 8734.

These three examiners represented three different forces.

Professor Zhu Yueqin was from Deep Sea University and there was on behalf of the academies.

Elder Dong Liuqi was from Thousand Sun Sect and there was on behalf of the various major sects.

Needless to say anything about Yan Tianhe, the stars on his shoulders showed that he was a colonel; he was clearly representing the military.

The three examiners were going to invigilate together, mutually checking so as to ensure the fairness of the exam.

In regard to Li Yao's attitude, the opinion of the three had subtle differences.

Zue Yueqin treated Li Yao completely like a crazy kid who didn't know how high the heavens were and how deep the earth was—an idiot clown and it was beneath her to even pay attention to him.

Dong Liuqi was different, in the refiners' community, the Deep Sea University had been in a dominant position for a very long time, and refiners like him who didn't belong to Deep Sea University had been faintly discriminated in the refiners' circle, after a long passage of time, they couldn't help but accumulate tons of resentment in their heart.

Li Yao was presumptuous to challenge, but it could be said that he had spoken their minds. As the saying goes, the spectators aren't afraid of making things big. Dong Liuqi eagerly wished for Li Yao to show spectacular results and render these proud and arrogant teachers and students of Deep Sea University speechless.

However, the possibility of that happening was next to nothing.

As for Yang Tianhe, his thoughts were even more different.

Who was Li Yao? Federation Class 1 Disabled Soldier!

What was the army? It was the organization that best concealed their own mistakes.

Even if anyone in the army was guilty of crimes, he or she would be punished accordingly only in military court.

And Li Yao was just impulsive for a moment, the blood had rushed to his head and said a few words of rhetoric only.

In the eyes of many soldiers, it was nothing, simply nothing. Some even appreciated this little guy.

Meanwhile, the army had been most dissatisfied with the dominant situation of Deep Sea University.

Although both sides are cooperating very closely, a lot R&D and manufacture of armed forces magical equipment fell on the lap of Deep Sea University...

But as far as the army was concerned, they did not wish for the majority of abilities and secrets to be in the hands of the civilians.

Therefore, they had always hoped that the Refining Department of Federation's First Military College could challenge the Deep Sea University's Refining Department.

However, even after challenging them for over a century, they had not been successful.

As for a blabbermouth and ignorant kid like Li Yao, it was even further from his reach.

But it couldn't prevent Yan Tianhe, as an elder brother in the army, from having a slight appreciation for this younger brother.

Noticing the two had the intention of standing up together, Zhu Yueqin didn't continue to struggle anymore. Reading the time on the upper right of the hologram, she changed the topic, "There are twenty minutes left, let's inform the examinees to enter the hall!"

"Alright!"

Dong Liuqi and Yan Tianhe didn't truly believe that Li Yao had the qualifications to compete with Jiang Shaoyang. Seeing Deep Sea University maintain its position for so many years, they were just a bit jealous and were just trying to make up an issue, nothing more nothing less.

Noticing it was time already, they immediately reined in their emotions and returned to the matter at hand.

A melodious female voice echoed in every corner of the lobby, "Examinees, there are only twenty minutes left for the exam, please head to the examination hall and take the seat according to the number displayed on your crystal processor. Please remain silent. It is necessary that you don't bring any non-permissible items in the admission hall. The list of non-permissible items includes..."

"Whoosh!"

The restrictive barriers at the center of the lobby were dispelled and thousands of dome-like cabins emerged from the ground; translucent golden numbers floated above the cabins.

"Tap-tap-tap!"

Thousands of examinees rushed into the examination hall.

Swallowing his last dumpling, Li Yao wiped his hands and searched for his cabin.

Once he was inside, the semicircular crystal cover on the front of the cabin gradually closed tight, isolating the voices from the outside.

The crystal processor for taking the exam launched a hologram before a lot of information, like a cascading waterfall, dropped from above. These were the rules for taking the exam. At the bottom, there was also a small countdown.

"Beep! Beep! Beep!"

Soon, the countdown hit zero.

The first round of the Refiners' Registration Examination officially began!

Chapter 211: Toothpick War!

Chapter 211: Toothpick War!

"First question."

"Among the eleven flying sword blueprints mentioned below, seven of the flying sword blueprints are for the same model, while the remaining four flying sword blueprints are for different models, according to the difference in the design, choose the seven blueprints which are for the same model."

"Of the aforementioned seven blueprints, please answer as to which model of flying sword they belong to as well as the inventor's name and the refining sect of the very same flying sword. Furthermore, please list three exercises which could best unleash the strength of the flying sword."

"There is a total of three errors in the aforementioned seven blueprints, please indicate them separately and correct them as well."

"In accordance with the aforementioned seven sub-blueprints, draw the complete blueprint."

"In accordance with the complete blueprint previously answered, please draw the spiritual energy flow diagram."

"..."

The Refiners' Registration Examination wasn't as simple as the College Entrance Examination. There weren't any multiple choice sections or fill in the blanks questions; each question covered one of the most complex and comprehensive topics.

Having seen the difficulty of the questions, countless examinees drew a lump of cold air at the same time.

Taking a glance at the examination hall, one could see a painful look on faces of thousands of examinees through the transparent eggshells.

However, Li Yao wasn't among them.

Due to "stealing" the time in the Heavenly Refining Tower under the Super Perceptive State, his basics were rock solid, and with the modification of the 1st Generation Tai'e Crafting Furnace as well the development of Demon Beast Detector, he had accumulated a wealth of experience in designs.

As far as he was concerned, whether it was the blueprints or the spiritual energy flow diagrams, it was a piece of cake.

Li Yao's ten fingers bounced like crazy as though they were striking some imaginary zither strings. His speed of answering the questions in the hologram one after another didn't slow down the least bit. It only took, at most, a dozen seconds to answer each question, and quite easily at that.

The Refiners' Registration Examination was known for its difficulty and the astonishing number of questions.

Whereas the time allocated for the entire exam was only five hours; a vast majority of examinees were able to answer only 80% of the questions in this allocated time period.

Li Yao, on the other hand, only took three hours and nine minutes to complete the entire test.

Having double-checked the answers, Li Yao clicked on the submit button and drilled out of the eggshell-like cabin.

He had submitted the paper in advance!

As Li Yao stretched his body, he noticed another cabin gradually opening on the opposite side. The examinee who came out was none other than the long-haired teenager he had previously encountered.

Realizing that Li Yao had actually submitted the paper a few seconds earlier than him, the long-haired teenager was caught by surprise first before he raised the corner of his lips into a smile that carried a sliver of curiosity and delight. His eyes didn't conceal its fiery look.

Li Yao too curiously looked at the long-haired fellow. Especially his slender and delicate hands which were almost the same as his.

Someone who was from Deep Sea University and so young should be the Tenth Star, Jiang Shaoyang.

Li Yao licked his lips as he the veins on the back of his hands bulged.

"Wow, someone submitted the paper in advance!"

The front of the examination cabin was transparent. Many of examinees who were immersed in the sea of questions inadvertently raised their heads. Much to their surprise, two examinees had submitted the paper ahead of the schedule and more than one hour earlier at that. They could not help but feel aghast.

Soon, someone recognized that one of two was none other than the refining genius, Jiang Shaoyang.

The Deep Sea University holds exchange events with major universities every year. Everyone was well aware of Jiang Shaoyang's over the top intelligence, thus, no one was astounded by Jiang Shaoyang's submission in advance.

However, who was the other guy standing opposite to Jiang Shaoyang. Apparently, he had submitted half a minute earlier than Jiang Shaoyang.

The vast majority of the people had only heard of Li Yao; they had never laid eyes upon him.

Only a few examinees who were from the Wasteland recognized Li Yao. They could not help but break into laughter; their first conclusion was, "So it turned out to be him! He must have found the questions too hard and given up!"

In the control room, the three examiners had also noticed that someone had submitted in advance.

The identity of the two soon appeared on the hologram.

Noticing Li Yao's name, Zhu Yueqin exclaimed in surprise before glancing at the two examiners with a faint smile.

Dong Liuqi and Yan Tianhe were extremely embarrassed.

Dong Liuqi coughed forcefully as he caressed his chin with his six fingers.

Yan Tianhe was, even more so, flushed red to his ears. In his heart, he was rather somewhat disappointed by Li Yao, he could help but shout in his heart, 'So much self-confidence and yet so poor.

'So what if your level is poor. At any rate, you should have a correct mindset and stick to the end, no matter what's the result is!

'How can you give up in the middle just because you find the questions difficult?'

"Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!"

The master crystal processor quickly started operating; its computing power soared to limit as it examined the answers of the two.

At the center of the examination hall, Li Yao and Jiang Shaoyang looked at each other for three seconds and respectively noticed the eyes of other party burning with eagerness.

One after another, the two tacitly walked out of the examination hall and came to the back of the waiting area.

"Do you wanna have a bout?"

After being silent for half a minute, the voice of the two with a provocative tone simultaneously rang.

Jiang Shaoyang smiled, straightened his long hair and said in an elegant manner, "How should we compete, you are welcome to use any method."

Generally, if a man had long, shoulder-length hair, rather than appearing feminine, he would appear slightly unkempt.

Very few people were like Jiang Shaoyang, even when they straightened and combed their hair, appeared to be handsome and confident, full of zeal and vigor.

Li Yao replied, "How about each proposes a topic? You first, I will follow your lead."

Jiang Shaoyang nodded. Looking left and right, he got up and brought a box of toothpicks from the cafeteria, placed a coffee table between the two before pulling out two toothpicks and handing one to Li Yao.

Jiang Shaoyang said while waving the crystal processor provided for the exam on his wrist, "First, let's see who can remove more components from the crystal processor with a toothpick in three minutes.

"Second, also with the same toothpick, let's see who can reassemble them in the shortest period of time."

As Li Yao weighed the toothpick a bit, his eyes sparkled.

The toothpicks used in the military bases were naturally far from high-end goods. Maybe they were taken from the soldiers' mess; they were very fragile and would break with the slightest force.

Whereas the crystal processor was a very sophisticated piece of magical equipment. Generally, seven or eight different kinds of tools were needed to disassemble it completely.

Disassembling a crystal processor with a toothpick was tantamount to nonsense.

Nevertheless, Li Yao was extremely excited. His eyes flickered with a fiery gaze as he nodded his head without an ounce of hesitation, "Alright."

The two took their crystal processors off and placed them on the coffee table before they slowly and methodically started exercising their fingers, apparently, warming up. When both saw the incredible flexibility of other party's fingers, both felt a bit aghast.

"Ready?"

"Bring it on."

"Let's start!"

Almost instantly, a storm was set off on the coffee table. Two pairs of hands almost turned into four whirlpools that sucked in the two crystal processors all of a sudden. The movement of their hands was so fast that only vague, trailing afterimages were visible, all one could hear was "Click! Click! Click! Click" subtle sounds coming.

One after another, components that were even smaller than a fingernail jumped out from the whirlpools and accurately fell into a nearby tissue box respectively.

After three minutes.

"Time's up!"

The whirlpools came to standstill before they turned back into two pairs of red hands; apparently, the muscles had become red from heat. The toothpicks in between their fingers had almost been completely worn down, whereas the crystal processors had almost been dismantled into their most basic components.

"Three hundred and thirty-five." Li Yao smiled and said; he simply didn't need to count.

"That's impossible!"

Jiang Shaoyang happened to have his eyebrows raised with a look of surprise plastered on his face. Again and again, he carefully gauged Li Yao from head to toe, as if he was looked at a monster, "I'll be damned, just thirteen less than me? You are good! You're truly good!"

In the blink of an eye, Li Yao's smile froze. He picked up Jiang Shaoyang's tissue box and weighed it a bit before his face became pale. Li Yao clenched his teeth and didn't speak a word while he removed thirteen components from his crystal processor.

"Alright, now everyone has three-hundred-and-forty-eight components, let's assemble!"

"Let's go!"

As Jiang Shaoyang slapped the table, the crystal processor components in the tissue box seemed to have come to life as they gracefully rose and jumped into his hands one by one; meanwhile, the toothpick was like the most exquisite embroidery needle that fluttered up and down like a butterfly. The broken crystal processor at naked-eye speed got a new lease of life.

Li Yao sneered before he began the assembling process, however, his next course of action came as a surprise to Jiang Shaoyang.

Li Yao broke the toothpick into two and held each part in his hands before he poured all the components out of the tissue box, and started assembling with both hands at the same!

After six minutes fifty-four seconds, a "Beep" sound rang from Li Yao's crystal processor before a holographic screen was projected.

Compared to Jiang Shaoyang, Li Yao was nine seconds faster.

This time, the complexion of Jiang Shaoyang was as pale as that of a corpse; he was completely dumbfounded!

Jiang Shaoyang blankly stared at the crystal processor in Li Yao's hands. He was distracted for an entire minute; only then did he awake from the shock; he had never been this shocked in his entire life. His lips parted but he didn't know what he should say and once again became muddle-headed for half a minute before he stuttered, "Next... next is your turn!"

Li Yao thought for a while before he brought a dozen of toothpick boxes from the cafeteria, "First, we will simultaneously throw these toothpicks into the air with our spiritual energy, then grab them and build a tower with them. After three minutes, we will check whose tower is the tallest.

"Second, without using our spiritual energy, we will blow on each other's tower like an ordinary person to check whose tower is stronger."

Jiang Shaoyang rolled his eyes before he repeatedly nodded, "Not bad, it's a bit interesting. On one hand, we can test our hand speed, while on the other hand, we can test who has better mastery over the structure. Very interesting, come on!"

Twelve toothpick boxes, with opened lids, were placed at the center of the coffee table. The two lightly placed their hands on both sides of the table and at the same time, gently infused their spiritual energy.

Ripples began to appear in the water cups placed on the table.

Thousands of toothpicks, with the infusion of spiritual energy, flew into the air, like a goddess scattering flowers from the high heavens.

At the same time, both got up, while four hands transformed into grey shadows that enveloped a majority of the toothpicks.

"Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!"

Along with the deft movements of the fingers, two towers built from toothpicks sprung up like mushrooms after a rain; they rose straight from the ground and constantly reached new heights.

After the three minutes, both came to a stop and held their breath.

Only now did they had the spare energy to marvel each other's work.

The base of the tower built by Li Yao was octagonal in shape, while the middle part had a tic-tac-toe like structure and the top part was in the shape of a triangular pyramid. At the tip, there was also a toothpick pointing at the sky, like a lightning rod; it was used to increase the height.

Counting this "lightning rod", the total height of Li Yao's tower was over fifty centimeters, and its structure was extremely solid.

Had he not run out of the toothpicks, he could've continued building the tower.

On the other hand, Jiang Shaoyang's toothpick tower was like a corn. It was round in shape and had seven irregular holes on its circumference, seemingly air was leaking out from all sides; the tower looked shaky and unsteady.

"My tower is 2.75 centimeters shorter."

Jiang Shaoyang's voice was filled with frustration but also mixed with a subtle excitement.

As if he had finally met an opponent with whom he could use his entire might to battle. A bloodthirsty aura was emanating from the depths of his bones.

"Next, let's check whose tower is sturdier!"

Chapter 212: Contest Between a Monster and Another Monster

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Li Yao made a "bring it on" gesture; his confidence knew no bounds.

Jiang Shaoyang was also confident; he laid his chin on the table, puffed his cheeks with air, and slowly blew air towards Li Yao's toothpick tower.

For the first three seconds, the toothpick tower didn't move the slightest bit.

After three seconds, Jiang Shaoyang's blow became stronger and stronger, however, only the upper portion of Li Yao's toothpick tower shook and that too ever so slightly.

However, the lower portion, the octagonal structure remained extremely stable, due to the extended toothpicks in all directions which acted as "stable supports".

The toothpick tower, with a solid structure, didn't show the slightest sign of collapsing.

"It's useless."

Looking at Jiang Shoayang's face flushed red to ears from blowing, Li Yao slightly smiled and said, "My toothpick tower not only takes the structural stability into account but also some principles of fluid mechanics and aerodynamics.

"The toothpicks aren't arbitrarily arranged. The gap between the toothpicks is precisely calculated to ensure that 90% of the airflow will be diverted outside through the hundreds of gaps no matter from which direction you blow the air.

"Only about 10% of the actual force is acting on the toothpick tower. Considering the lung capacity of a normal person, it is simply impossible for you to destroy it.

"Therefore, you should just give up!"

Jiang Shaoyang's pupils constricted as he carefully observed Li Yao's toothpick tower, in particular, the gaps between the toothpicks.

After ten seconds, he nodded and said, "You are right, the lung capacity of an ordinary person is insufficient to destroy this tower. I give up.

"Now, it's your turn to blow."

Li Yao was surprised for a moment, was it necessary?

His toothpick tower was indestructible and higher than Jiang Shaoyang's as well; wasn't the outcome pretty obvious?

However, Jiang Shaoyang's gaze remained firm and also appeared slightly confident which piqued Li Yao's curiosity.

Li Yao similarly laid his chin on the table, took a deep breath and slowly blew towards Jiang Shaoyang's toothpick tower.

A strange thing happened!

Jiang Shaoyang's toothpick tower seemed damaged and ready to collapse at any moment.

However, along with Li Yao's puff of air, in the blink of an eye, became 'alert and energetic' like a patient who was about to die had just been infused with lifesaving immortal qi!

"Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!"

A couple of toothpicks in the middle of Jiang Shaoyang's toothpick tower madly started rotating.

The external structure, on the other hand, remained firm, it was incomparably stable, solid, and unshakable.

In a trance, the toothpick tower now seemed a lofty, high tower standing on a boundless plain to Li Yao.

No matter how fierce the winds were, they were unable to shake the tower the slightest bit.

"Pffff—"

Now, it was Li Yao's turn to had his face flushed red to ears.

With his chest raised high, his lungs inflated to the limit, Li Yao ruthlessly blew.

However, the toothpick tower remained motionless, and the toothpicks inside started rotating more madly.

"It's useless."

The very same words that Li Yao had spoken a while ago were thrown right back at him by Jiang Shaoyang, "I also designed the toothpick tower while taking fluid dynamics and aerodynamics into account, however, you only thought of diverting the airflow but I thought of using the airflow to strengthen the stability of the tower.

"As you can see, I have designed a unique guiding structure inside the tower, and after precise calculation, the hundreds of gaps in the toothpicks in the tower create a wind guiding band.

"When the air enters the tower, 85% of the power will be converted to create a downward pressure no matter which direction you blow from.

"The pressure acts as an invisible hand which helps me hold the tower more closely and firmly, from top to bottom.

"Therefore, the stronger air you blow, the more stable my tower becomes.

"There is no way to topple my toothpick tower unless you use more power than the average person and air flows from top to bottom."

Jiang Shaoyang's explanation rendered Li Yao speechless. After carefully observing for a while, Li Yao gave a long sigh and said in a reluctant tone which seemed he still wished to continue, "Both games are tied, shall we go for another?"

"But of course, but we don't have much time left, how about the most simple finger-guessing game?"

"Okay, what are the rules?"

"After ten seconds from the start, a round every second, and the hundredth round will be the end?"

"Alright, let's go!"

The game Li Yao and Jiang Shaoyang were playing was a very popular competing method between the refiners.

This game is called "Rock! Paper! Scissors!"

The common people who play rock, paper, scissors relied on luck, cheating, psychology, and perhaps a little bit of probability.

However, when it was between refiners, the contest was all about "who had quick eyes and deft hands!"

The two stretched their right hands simultaneously and, ignoring the other party's scrutinizing gaze, both silently counted in their heart!

"Five...four...three..."

The right hands of the two remained stable and unmoved, yet their fingers started beating like crazy; the ten fingers seemed to have turned into ten flood dragons.

No matter what hand is played, the fingers and the muscles are bound to have subtle changes.

Whoever could capture the changes of his opponent in advance, predict his opponent's hand, and subsequently react in the blink of an eye, would be victorious!

"Three...two...one!"

The grand and quick showdown of rock, paper, scissors, began!

Li Yao's gaze was completely transfixed upon Jiang Shaoyang's right hand!

However, in the blink of an eye, Li Yao had captured Jiang Shaoyang's intentions from the subtle movements in the ring finger of Jiang Shaoyang.

Jiang Shaoyang was going to play the scissors!

Li Yao sneered in his heart, as though it was just a matter of course!

And it was indeed true as in the last moment, Li Yao had subtly controlled the muscles of his hand and gave the impression that he was going to play the "paper".

Sure enough, Jiang Shaoyang was hooked!

Li Yao's right hand turned into a blurry shadow and, in an instant, became a fist or to say "rock" which heavily smashed upon Jiang Shaoyang's...fist!"

"How's that possible?"

At the same time, the smile of victory that was lingering upon both of their lips dissipated.

"He can actually control his muscles to such an extent; he even can make fake movements and set a trap!"

Jiang Shaoyang's heart was in a turmoil.

"He actually saw through my trap at very last moment, and though it was too late to change the scissors into paper, he replaced it with a rock just in time!"

Li Yao too was incessantly surprised.

"Let's go again!"

"Alright!"

The two were like two very sophisticated machines whose hands would change every second, and every time just before the transformation, there would be a large number of observations, fakes, and counter-fakes happening.

In just a short while, the foreheads of the two were drenched in sweat, and from the fingertips to the shoulder blade, everything was faintly aching as if they were on fire.

"Draw! Draw! Another Draw!"

"Both of us had won eleven times and the remaining 78 games are draws!"

"Heh, want to continue? From your panting, forehead drenched in sweat, and the slight twitching right-hand, you must have reached your limit? If you can't continue, we will stop here."

"Are you kidding, I've only used 50% of my energy, I was just warming up, that's all! From the way I see it, you must be exhausted, you have already exceeded your limit? If you can't do it, there is no need to force yourself. Let's just sit down and have a cup of tea, we can chat as well; it's nothing to be embarrassed about!"

"Bullshit, I have only used 40% of my energy, I was tired of doing nothing and was just playing with you; that's all! Do you want to take it seriously? Then, I will let you see how frightening my 120% is!"

"Alright, we can go for another three-hundred rounds!"

Once again, Li Yao extended his right hand as well as his left hand. Spreading his ten fingers apart, Li Yao very provocatively looked at Jiang Shaoyang.

"Forming just one shape per second isn't that much exciting, how about three shapes per second. And let's do it with both our hands, what do you think?'

"That's exactly what I was thinking!"

Jiang Shaoyang slowly exercised his shoulder; suddenly, his bones made a series of "crackling" sounds. His long hair, even in the absence of the wind fluttered; he had a fiery look in his eyes!

The two were sitting the depth of the waiting area which was a dead end for the cameras.

Therefore, all the cameras or the invigilators were focused in the examination hall. Not a single person noticed such a soul-stirring contest between the two.

Inside the control room, the master crystal processor had just completed correcting the papers of the two.

A glittering figure suddenly appeared on the hologram.

"931 points!"

"Jiang Shaoyang scored 931 points!"

Dong Liuqi's voice was filled with a bit of surprise. He took a glance at Zhu Yueqin with envy and jealousy.

Zhu Yueqin faintly smiled. The look on her face was rather calm, but her slightly elevated breath failed to conceal the excitement in her heart.

The written test of Refiner's Registration Examination was out of 1,000 points. As long as anyone scored more than 600, they would pass and could enter the second round.

Generally, even if someone passed the written test, quite often they scored very close to the passing marks. And if someone scored over 700, he or she could be considered as quite outstanding, anyone who could score higher than 800 points would be like feathers of a phoenix and horns of a unicorn.

As for more than 900 points?

In a span of three to five years, it would rather be quite hard to even find one such monstrous candidate!

Not to mention that the difficulty of this year's examination was quite high.

Dong Liuqi reckoned that if it was him who was giving the paper, he would have to wrack his brain and had to be extra careful while answering, and even a bit of luck would also be needed if he wanted to score over 900 points within four hours.

Dong Liuqi took a long, deep breath. He could only accept defeat in regards to the unfathomable strength of Deep Sea University.

"Jiang Shaoyang is truly worthy of the name Tenth Star. Professor Zhu, congratulation to your Deep Sea University's Refining Department for finding such a monster!"

Zhu Yueqin smiled in a reserved manner, "Where—"

Even before she could finish her sentence, her throat seemed to have been ruthlessly slashed by a knife and her final words have been stuck in her throat.

Similarly, the look on her face was as ugly as someone who had been cut by a knife.

All because the results of the second candidate had also appeared on the hologram:

"Grand Desolate War Institution, Li Yao, 901 points!"

Dong Liuqi and Yan Tianhe sat down at once. They both gawked at each other and respectively saw a look of disbelief and shock in the other party's eyes. They furtively sneaked a peek at Zhu Yueqin and discovered that the beautiful woman was completely dumbfounded and didn't know what to do.

Immediately, both pulled up Li Yao's answer sheet and manually started reviewing.

"There is no problem with the first question."

"The answer to the second question is also complete. Every single detail is taken into account; even the trap set up in the subject had failed to fool him. It is simply perfect."

"Correct, correct, and correct!"

"It's really is 901 points, there is no problem with the crystal processor!"

Only at this instance did Yan Tianhe finally feel relieved. He was grinning to his ears, and his eyes were glittering.

Over the years, the number of people who had scored over 900 points could be counted on one's fingers.

Meanwhile, the questions where Li Yao lost points were related to the refining ideologies of the elite faction and those were related to most uncommon and unpopular topics at that.

In Yang Tianhe's opinion, being able to score 901 points in a test which was based on the refining ideologies of the elites faction even while being a grassroots refiner, he was far more valuable than Jiang Shoayang!

"First round, the written test is finished!"

Dong Liuqi looked at the pale Zhu Yueqin and said with a slight smile plastered on his face, "I can not wait for the second round to start. I hope that the second round could begin immediately; it would definitely a fight between a dragon and a tiger!"

Chapter 213: Soaring Will to Fight

Chapter 213: Soaring Will to Fight

In the lobby, melodious music started playing as a faint sandalwood fragrance started to spread, bringing everyone in the vicinity a sense of calmness and serenity.

Thousands of examinees crawled out of their respective cabins with difficulty; their faces were pale with exhaustion.

Many people sighed and groaned, and even repeatedly shook their heads.

Some even moaned as if a weight had been lifted from their shoulders. Thirty to forty percent of the examinees walked towards the waiting area.

"This year's exam was really very hard, I was only able to finish 70% of the paper. I'm afraid I won't make it!"

"That's right, the topics are getting weirder and weirder every year!"

"Lucky for me, there were two topics which I had reviewed just before the exam, maybe I will be able to score more than 600 points."

"Jiang Shaoyang, that monster is truly terrifying, he actually submitted the paper more than an hour earlier. I wonder how many points will he score? Maybe he scored more than 800 points?"

"No matter how many points Jiang Shaoyang scored, it was to be expected, but there was another guy who also submitted the paper at the same time as Jiang Shaoyang, who was he?"

"Shaoyang!"

Several dozen examinees from the Deep Sea University faired pretty well, and naturally, walked towards Jiang Shaoyang. However, when they saw him sitting alone, they were astounded. One by one, they came forward to greet him.

"What—"

When they saw Jiang Shaoyang's hands spread out on the coffee table, all of them let out a shocked gasp.

Jiang Shaoyang's hands were red and swollen. His hands were almost 30% thicker than normal and steam was rising from them, it appeared as though he had placed them inside a steamer and steamed them.

"What happened?"

Everyone was greatly astounded.

"Nothing much, I have not had so much fun in a long time."

Jiang Shaoyang heaved a sigh of reluctance. The sluggish look on his face instantly became as that of intense excitement. His eyes sparkled as if two shining gems had been fitted in his eye sockets.

"Hey, do you know—"

There were still some Deep Sea University's examinees who were totally unaware of everything, all they saw was many of their fellow students gathered here, so, they too swarmed over.

Another guy's face beamed with excitement as he burst into laughter and said, "Do you know there was another guy who submitted the paper at the same time as Jiang Shaoyang? I just learned that it was none other than Li Yao!"

"What?"

At this moment, everyone became cheerful.

Even the older and prudent students could not help but smile, and those whose tempers were relatively frivolous, even more so, shook with laughter, "Oh, really? Isn't Li Yao the guy who's famous for challenging us? What a joke! He could not even last five hours of the written exam and gave up halfway!"

Li Yao, who was carrying a large water bucket, calmly walked over. As for hundreds of Deep Sea University's examinees, he turned a blind eye and drilled into the crowd.

"Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!"

In the blink of an eye, numerous sharp gazes pierced him.

Everyone didn't expect him to actually have so much guts that even after shooting off his mouth, he still dared to enter deep into the crowd of hundreds of 'enemies'.

Although they had heard Li Yao was quite adept at fighting, while everyone present was a refiner, refined, academic men, and couldn't fight...

However, they could, at the very least...use their gazes to despise him, mock him, and tease him, couldn't they?

"What is this guy planning to do?"

"Who knows! What is he even carrying? That looks really cold."

"From what I hear, this guy is very violent. He wouldn't intentionally make trouble and fight with us? Quickly go and call the invigilators!"

Li Yao was like a bloodthirsty shark that was swimming deep in the sea, the small fishes and shrimps gave way to him on their own, no one dared to block him even for half a second.

"Splash!"

Li Yao walked straight to Jiang Shaoyang and poured the large bucket filled with ice cubes on the table before sitting across him. Afterward, he inserted his hands into the heap of ice blocks, a moan filled with relief escaped his mouth.

His hands were also like as that of Jiang Shaoyang, they were red and swollen, and steam was rising from them as well.

Jiang Shaoyang inserted his hands into the heap of ice cubes to cool them down and said while deadly staring at Li Yao, "I have never encountered an expert like you among my contemporaries. I am very happy with today's battle, but even after competing for such a long time, we still ended in a draw. It is truly regrettable.

"Fortunately, the Refiners' Registration Examination has three rounds. We can still see who wins and who loses from the scores."

Having heard this statement, all the examinees of Deep Sea University were flabbergasted; they became dumb as a wooden chicken.

On the outside, they looked stupid and absent-minded, but a tsunami of emotions was raging in their hearts.

"Did—Did I hear it right?"

"So earlier, that expert Jiang Shaoyang mentioned was none other than Li Yao!"

"It sounds like Jiang Shaoyang had a match with him and the two ended up drawing."

"This Li Yao is actually on par with the Tenth Star, Jiang Shaoyang?"

In a moment, the hundreds of gazes peering at Li Yao, that were filled with scorn, contempt, and mockery were now instead filled with surprise, fear, and shock!

At that moment, countless faint bursts of exclamations rang everywhere.

The lobby, which was hustling and bustling a moment ago, suddenly became dead silent in the blink of an eye.

On the semi-arched dome, a huge hologram appeared, projecting the results of thousands of examinees.

The names of examinees who had scored over 600 were displayed in golden, glittering characters.

While the names of examinees who had scored lower than 600 were displayed in slightly dim green characters.

The golden numbers were sparsely scattered among a slew of lush green numbers.

Most of the golden figures stayed in between 600 and 700, only a few were above 700.

Among all the numbers, there were two numbers that began with "9" which immediately stood out; they were especially dazzling.

"Deep Sea University, Jiang Shaoyang, 931 points!"

"Grand Desolate War Institution, Li Yao, 901 points!"

"Wow!"

The lobby was in a deathly silence for about ten seconds, like the calm before a storm, after the strange calmness, the entire lobby burst forth with tempestuous waves of energy!

"Jiang Shaoyang scored 931 points, he is truly worthy of...what? Another guy scored more than 900 points? Li Yao? Impossible!"

"Li Yao! The Li Yao from the Grand Desolate War Institution! That ignorant, crazy guy who doesn't know fear? He actually scored over 900 points!"

"If I remember it correctly, isn't he the guy who submitted the paper at the same time as Jiang Shaoyang, both of them had submitted the paper more than an hour earlier! Who would have thought that he would be so terrifying? No wonder he can shoot his mouth like that!"

"Monster! Both of them are monsters!"

The examinees of the Deep Sea University had, even more so, taken a huge blow.

They looked at their pathetic 600-700 points and then, again and again, looked at shimmering 901 points of Li Yao. They were having a hard time believing it. In their heart, they repeatedly asked themselves if there was something wrong with their eyes or ears?

"You won the first round," Li Yao said calmly; he wasn't surprised by such result.

He was from a non-technical background. No matter how solid his theory was, how could it ever surpass Jiang Shaoyang who was from a family with a history of giving birth to academic geniuses?

Having a difference of 30 points was pretty normal.

"I had an unfair advantage."

Jiang Shaoyang admitted very frankly, "Many of the people who made the paper were from Deep Sea University. I am quite familiar with their style of exams. It is rather natural for me to score over 900 points, but for you, who is from Grand Desolate War Institution which has completely different refining ideologies, to actually score over 900...

"You're good! You're really good!

"I'm anticipating the competition with you in the next two rounds more and more. I'm going to enjoy defeating a monster like you!"

Not much of a break was provided in between the three rounds of Refiners' Registration Examination.

This was not only a test of a refiner's knowledge and skills but also a test of his or her spirit and will.

After the results of the first round, the written test had been announced, the failed candidates were dejectedly escorted out of the lobby to the special guest house prepared by the army.

After the departure of the failed candidates, all that remained were 844 examinees who once again entered the examination hall and sat down inside the egg-shaped cabin.

Following which, the glyphs on the eggshell lit up brightly, before the examination cabin went back under ground and took the examinees to a huge underground base.

In a huge training room, thousands of crafting furnace simulators were arranged in a row.

These simulators weren't connected to any crafting furnace system; they only had a circular control interface composed of a dozen holograms.

The super crystal processor with powerful computing power could simulate various complex situations that could happen in a crafting furnace and even simulate thousands of complex and intricate failures that could occur during the process.

All the candidates had to do was rule out all the failures and complete hundreds of refining tasks.

Every successful task completed would grant a point respectively which would be automatically added. Anyone who could accumulate 1,000 points within five hours would pass the second round and could enter the final round, the "practical exam."

"Beep!"

In front of Li Yao, the circular control interface, like the vibrant wings of a butterfly, gradually spread out.

The second round, the refining simulation test, began!

In the blink of an eye, the light green control interface turned burning red as various performance parameters madly fluctuated, suddenly, the parameters shot through the roof before suddenly falling to zero.

A blood-red message popped out, reminding the user that the "crafting furnace" was on the brink of a meltdown!

In the first test, the examinee had to find the reason why the crafting furnace was about to meltdown and restore the crafting furnace to the normal state by eliminating all the errors through the control interface.

The very first topic at hand was super difficult, many examinees let out a cry of despair.

Li Yao, on the other hand, had his will to fight soar to the high heavens. His slightly red arms seemed to have been wrapped in red-lotus like flames!

In the control room, a dozen of holograms displayed the refining videos of Li Yao and Jiang Shaoyang.

Even though the style and technique of the two were totally different, there was one thing in common.

Fast, they were as fast as sparks from a flint!

The three were veteran refiners, what things they had not seen or experienced? Yet, they were rendered speechless. As they quietly watched the peak showdown between two monster-level examinees, cold sweat dripped down their forehead; for a long time, they were unable to calm their hearts.

After the two entered a crazed state and their hand speeds soared to the limit, Dong Liuqi finally could not hold himself, his six fingers wiped the cold sweat as he said with a sigh, "These kids are truly incredible. Are you sure both of them are in their teens?

"When I was of their age, even ten of me could not compare with them!"

The master crystal processor converted the points of the two into two progress bars which were directly being projected before the three invigilators.

Along with the completion of each task, the progress bars of the two were chasing each other as they progressed at an extremely fast rate!

Finally...

After three hours fifty-two minutes and thirty-seven seconds, Li Yao's progress bar made a jump and reached the endpoint; Li Yao was first to gather 1,000 points!

Two minutes and nine seconds later, Jiang Shaoyang's progress bar reached the endpoint but it was too late.

"You won the second round."

In the simulation training room, countless examinees were immersed in the complex and intricate tasks, unable to extricate themselves. Some had suffered cramp in their arms and legs by moving them too quickly, and some were even foaming at the mouth.

Li Yao and Jiang Shaoyang were, instead, quietly stood facing each other.

"With the previous two rounds, we are once again tied."

"However, you and I, are both very clear that whether it is the written test or refining simulation, they are just boring games, nothing more nothing less!"

"The third round, the practical test, is the real contest!"

Chapter 214: A Test Filled With Traps

Chapter 214: A Test Filled With Traps

After two hours.

342 examinees stepped onto a giant lift and continued to advance deeper into the ground.

The lift was like an enormous metallic disc which relied on anti-gravity array glyphs to silently move in the darkness.

The stabilizing array glyphs at the edge of the disc flickered with weak blue light, illuminating the terribly tired and haggard faces, one after another.

Even if the examinees were powerful cultivators, operating their brains at super high speed continuously for a dozen hours had made them somewhat exhausted.

The examinees were divided into two distinct groups.

340 examinees sat at the edge of the enormous disc, forming a huge ring.

While at the center, there were only two examinees.

They were none other than Li Yao and Jiang Shaoyang.

The monstrous performance of the two had shocked everyone. Everyone could not help but maintain a certain distance from the two unconsciously. They were afraid that they would interrupt the duel between the two monsters.

It was as though two T-rex from billions of years ago stood facing each other, while no other creature dared to stand between the two.

In a moment, a brilliant flash blurred everyone's vision.

Finally, the lift broke through the veil of darkness and sank a kilometer below the ground.

A grand and magnificent scene came into everyone's sight, making everyone hold their breath.

They'd entered an incredibly vast underground stalactite cave.

As they raised their head to look, countless stalactites hanging down the hundreds of meters high roof covered their vision.

When they looked downward, all they saw was pitch black darkness; they simply couldn't see the bottom.

As they looked around them, the cylindrical stalactite cave was over a kilometer in diameter and its walls had been artificially excavated into thousands upon thousands of caves.

It was a hive. This place looked like the interior of a huge steel hive.

And they were but the smallest ants.

Even the enormous lift looked like a lonely boat after having entered the stalactite cave. All around them, countless shiny metallic discs were flying; giving the picture of a busy life.

"This is the strength of our nation!

"Only by mobilizing the strength of tens of billions of citizens of a nation can make it possible to build such a vast and magnificent world under ground!

"Only with this kind of power can we compete with billions of demons and devils in the endless cosmos!"

Li Yao sighed with emotion. While he'd come to experience his own insignificance, he also felt deeply proud for being a citizen of such a powerful country.

The disc slowed down and flew towards the wall shining with a metallic gloss.

Two firefly-like specks of light floated up from deep within the underground and flew next to the disc.

The speck of lights were two soldiers with metallic wings attached to their backs.

The two soldiers each held a magical equipment that released a red light which covered the entire disc.

"Beep! Beep!"

A dazzling red light suddenly turned into a warm green light; the identification of everyone had been verified.

On the walls, the entrances of hundreds of man-made caves were sealed by huge, metallic doors which, at this moment, silently slid open.

The enormous disc rose and fell, all in accordance with the roll number of the examinees; delivering everyone to their corresponding cave.

Li Yao drew a long, deep breath and strode into his own cave before the metallic doors behind him closed slowly.

The final round!

Li Yao looked around the cave with great curiosity. He was quite familiar with the furnishing inside the cave. It was a repair workshop, and at the back, there was also a small refining room as well as a warehouse. It was small, but it had everything.

"Beep! Beep!"

The exam crystal processor displayed a message, displaying the topic's details of the practical exam, according to which the examinees had to repair a puppet warbeast to 90% of its battle force using the facilities in the repair workshop and the raw material from the warehouse within 24 hours.

"A maintenance-type task?"

Li Yao beamed with joy, was the task custom-made for him?

At the corner of the workshop, something small was covered with a tarpaulin. As Li Yao uncovered it, he was dazzled.

"Mystic Wolf?"

The puppet warbeast was quite similar to the "wooden oxen" that Li Yao had repaired in the small mountain village a year ago. It was controlled by artificial intelligence implemented in a crystal processor, giving it the ability to operate autonomously.

The Mystic Wolf was a puppet warbeast that was manufactured by Wolves Valley thirty-three years ago.

And it was purchased by the army in large numbers because of its excellent design and high performance.

This kind of puppet warbeast was created using bionics. It was designed with reference to many wolf-type and leopard-type demon beasts' appearances and characteristics. With its narrow, streamlined, and agile body, it could adapt to multitudes of complex terrains. It was especially suitable for fighting in plains and jungles, even if it was on a steep mountain, it could climb quite easily.

The Mystic Wolf belonged to a light warbeast category, with a length of 1.56 meter and a total weight of 156.33 kilograms. Two light crystal railguns attached to either side of its body. Additionally, a flying sword launcher could also be attached to its abdominal region that could fire twelve mini-flying swords; greatly enhancing its long-range firepower.

In addition, at the end of its limbs, vibro-claws built using a super alloy were respectively installed. Its jaw that was filled with steel teeth had extremely high bite force, and a flamethrower was also installed in its throat which was driven by flame array glyphs and could project a long stream of fire with a temperature of over a thousand degrees; it was capable of reducing the enemies into ashes in the blink of an eye.

The Mystic Wolf had two modes of operations.

It could be remotely controlled by soldiers or cultivators.

One could also enter a general objective beforehand, such as "patrol", "guard", "weapons-free", after which the Mystic Wolf would be controlled by the built-in crystal processor and conduct operations autonomously in accordance with the previous commands.

Once the Mystic Wolf appeared, it immediately replaced the position of many army dog-type spirit beasts. And it was particularly favored by the scouts.

Today, each standard reconnaissance unit of the army consists of two scouts and a Mystic Wolf.

However, the condition of the Mystic Wolf before Li Yao was somewhat worse for wear.

It seemed that the Mystic Wolf had suffered a long-range corrosive attack from a demon beast; its metallic coverings had been eroded and was riddled with holes, even the crystal fibers connecting many of the key points had suffered from corrosion.

And after the corrosive attack, the Mystic Wolf seemed to have fought with the brutal demon beast; its head had a deep dent, at many places the coverings had been broken into pieces, three of its four limbs were broken off, whereas only a few pitiful crystal fibers were keeping the two forelimbs from getting detached from the main body.

Its abdomen had an even more horrifying hole. Many of the engraved crucial array glyphs, crystal chips, and internal parts were missing. As for the rest, they were corroded from some kind of acid and riddled with holes; they were far from any operable standard.

With the exception of its intact spine that was refined from a special alloy, the Mystic Wolf was almost on the verge of getting scrapped.

As far as Li Yao was concerned, such a scene was quite common for him.

Whether it was the Magical Equipment Graveyard or the ruins of the Grand Desolate War Institution's Refining Department, 90% of the magical equipment was either on the verge of getting scrapped or were completely scrapped.

So what?

Couldn't he recover it bit by bit as before, or maybe even stronger than ever.

This Mystic Wolf was still far from the most damaged magical equipment which Li Yao had ever repaired.

Rubbing his hand, Li Yao threw himself into an intensive repair work with rapt attention.

First, he started disassembling all the components of the Mystic Wolf to see which components could be retained, which must be repaired, and which must be discarded. Only then could he start crafting anew.

"What the hell?"

After having spent eleven minutes and completed 80% of the disassembling work, Li Yao suddenly found a deeply hidden problem.

In his hands was the completely intact vertebral column of the Mystic Wolf.

However, from the sounds caused by the friction between the joints between the vertebrae[1], Li Yao sensed a subtle peculiarity.

Without a shred of hesitation, Li Yao pressed his ring finger with his thumb and lightly flicked at the twenty-second vertebra. As he carefully listened to the subsequent vibrations produced in the metal, an intricate cross-sectional diagram was sketched out in his mind.

"The twenty-second vertebra seems to have a problem!

"Although the vertebra column looks completely intact from the outside, after having been hit several times heavily, microscopic cracks which are invisible to the naked eyes have already appeared in the internal structure; the alloy has reached the limits of metal fatigue!

"As long as it suffered another high-speed impact, no, no, no, even without any collision, as long as the Mystic Wolf suddenly came to a stop after moving at a high speed, the vertebra would completely crack!"

Wolves were creatures with a copper head and an iron tail, but an abdominal region like tofu; its abdominal region was its fatal weakness.

The same was true for the puppet warbeast, the Mystic Wolf. In order to pursue incredible speed and flexibility, it had a streamlined body, the abdominal region connecting the anterior and the posterior regions was the most vulnerable region; it was only supported by the vertebral column.

What's more was that the Mystic Wolf was completely different from the wolf-type demon beasts, it also had two crystal railguns attached to its either side; the recoil from the fire would similarly produce a huge pressure on the vertebral column.

The twenty-second vertebra was located in the lumbar region[2] and was the most important vertebra. Once it cracked, it was equivalent to paralysis of the lower body; the Mystic Wolf would lose 95% of its battle force in the blink of an eye!

"It appears that this is a trap!

"At first glance, the Mystic Wolf appeared to be riddled with holes, torn to pieces, and heavily damaged... but these are still minor problems!

"This invisible hidden damage is the true fatal injury!

"If we just repaired the damages on the surface and ignored the damage in the vertebral column, then, it would look brand-new but it will not be able to stand the combat trials. At the test site, just a few high-speed maneuvers would make its vertebral column to crack down!"

Li Yao slightly smiled. Since he had found the problem, the next step was easy to figure out.

Having checked twice again to confirm that this was the only trap, Li Yao walked into the warehouse and looked for the raw materials required for maintenance.

Soon, he discovered a second fatal issue.

"This isn't Purple-Gold Titanium, but an... Purple-Gold Titanium Associate!"[3]

The Purple-Gold Titanium was a rare metal which was used in refining the special alloy that was used for forging the vertebral column of the Mystic Wolf. It was an essential raw material that could greatly enhance the tensile strength of the special alloy.

The Purple-Gold Titanium Associate was a very strange metal associate found in the Purple-Gold Titanite.

Although its appearance, color, texture bore a striking resemblance with the Purple-Gold Titanium, its properties were somewhat different. It was simply unable to elevate the tensile strength of alloys.

In the warehouse, there was some Purple-Gold Titanium Associate, but not even a gram of true Purple-Gold Titanium!

"Is this another trap?

"Do they want to test the examinees' acuity? Want to see whether we could differentiate between the Purple-Gold Titanium and the Purple-Gold Titanium Associate?

"I'm simply unable to refine a new vertebral column without the Purple-Gold Titanium."

Sitting at the center of the warehouse, Li Yao lightly tapped his finger on the ground as he quietly pondered.

In the control room, a strange smile was pasted upon the three examiners' faces as they watched the grimacing and pondering examinees.

"How many people among the three hundred or so examinees do you think would be able to notice the trap in the vertebral column, and even if they noticed it, after how long would they take to realize that we have provided the Purple-Gold Titanium Associate and 'forgot' to provide the real Purple-Gold Titanium?" Dong Liuqi asked with a smile.

Yan Tianhe slightly smiled as well. Just as he was about to open his mouth, a hologram at center suddenly flashed.

Apparently, an examinee had asked a question.

"Excuse me, why is there no Purple-Gold Titanium, which is absolutely necessary to repair the Mystic Wolf, in the warehouse?" In the hologram, Jiang Shaoyang very calmly asked.

TLN:

[1] Vertebra - each of the series of small bones forming the backbone. Plural - Vertebrae.

[2] Lumbar Region - The part of spine in the abdominal region.

[3] Metal or Ore Associate - Minerals will often form in specific environments and be associated with specific minerals. Sometimes a mineral is only associated with a certain suite of minerals which are called metal or ore associate.

Chapter 215: What in the Bloody Hell is That!

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At that moment, since the start of the third round, only thirty-one minutes and forty-two seconds had elapsed.

The three examiners were slightly astounded. It was totally out of their expectations for Jiang Shaoyang to quickly see through the two traps set in the test and also promptly forward his doubt to them.

Such acuity, means, knowledge of the materials, and quick thinking was certainly superb!

Zhu Yueqin was all smiles as she immediately said, "Okay, we'll give you the Purple-Gold Titanium!"

From the get-go, this trap was just there to confuse the examinees. Obviously, it was impossible for them to not provide the Purple-Gold Titanium as it would render the examinees unable to complete the maintenance work.

In accordance with the rule which only the three examiners were aware of, as long as the examinee had the guts to boldly ask them, he or she could get the Purple-Gold Titanium.

All the examinees who could pass through the two exams and enter the final round were all outstanding refiners.

These two traps could not outsmart them at all.

After having carefully examined for more than an hour, many examinees had discovered the hidden damage in the twenty-second vertebra.

However, a majority of the people had fallen into the second trap.

The Purple-Gold Titanium was an extremely rare metal, whereas generally, the refiners, even more so, didn't care about a useless material like the Purple-Gold Titanium Associate.

In the warehouse, the names of the various materials had not been intentionally marked, it was all to mislead the examinees so that they think that it was the real Purple-Gold Titanium.

Of course, after the Purple-Gold Titanium Associate was thrown into the crafting furnace, it would react differently with the subsequent flames and the spiritual energy as compared to the real Purple-Gold Titanium.

A majority of the examinees only came to their senses at this step and realized that there was something wrong with the material before questioning the invigilating staff.

All of these people had gotten the real Purple-Gold Titanium.

However, a lot of time had been wasted in vain.

There were still a certain group of examinees, who still didn't realize the trap in the twenty-second vertebra from beginning to the end. They were all laboriously doing their utmost to solve the obvious problems on the surface. These people were bound to return in disappointment.

The scenes of hundreds of maintenance workshops were being projected in the hologram.

However, there was a hologram in the center, which remain unchanged. It projected the situation in two maintenance workshops that belonged to the most favored examinees.

First was naturally Jiang Shaoyang.

After having acquired the real Purple-Gold Titanium, he, with textbook-like perfect order and techniques, meticulously started refining, polishing, and performing maintenance.

His actions were as fluid as quicksilver flowing on the ground, concise yet natural and smooth.

Watching him refine was as intoxicating as a fine wine; it was pleasing to watch and brought an indescribably wonderful feeling. No one could bear to remove their gazes from even half a second.

The second was Li Yao.

There was no movement, Li Yao just sat at the center of the warehouse; seemingly sitting in contemplation.

Only when the three examiners observed closely did they discovered a faint steam rising from Li Yao's head.

Li Yao's brain was in an extreme state of high-speed calculation.

"What is he actually doing? Why is he not asking for the Purple-Gold Titanium Associate?"

After having watched Li Yao's shocking performance for the first two rounds, even Zhu Yueqin, who disliked Li Yao, had a high evaluation of him.

From the level of intelligence shown by Li Yao in the previous rounds, it was quite obvious that those petty tricks simply would not fool him.

He should have questioned the examiners at the very first instance, so why was he blankly staring for such a long time?

The three examiners glanced at each other; multitudes of questions revolved in their hearts.

However, they failed to realize that Li Yao was an unconventional refiner from the Magical Equipment Graveyard, whose line of thinking differed greatly as compared to a vast majority of normal refiners.

Other refiners, even geniuses like Jiang Shaoyang, had received a school-based, orthodox education since childhood.

For them, it was as just as heaven to begin refining only when they had a complete set of raw materials.

In the environment that they grew up, their teachers, seniors, and staff members would naturally prepare a variety of materials for them. Even if they were lacking just one element, just by moving their fingers, they could order them via Spiritual Nexus.

As far as these normal refiners who grew up in a nurturing environment were concerned, if a material was missing, then the very material should be immediately allocated; there wasn't a second option!

However, Li Yao was different.

The terribly brutal Magical Equipment Graveyard wasn't some calm and peaceful campus. Even for a small lump of strengthened alloy, a fight would break out. How could he collect all the materials and then start repairing?

Whatever he could find, he would use that. Even if he had nothing, he would use a wooden stick to replace the necessary material so that the magical equipment could barely start running. Even if it operated for just three seconds, maybe in those three seconds, he could eliminate an enemy!

That was Li Yao's line of thinking.

Therefore, having discovered the lack of the most important Purple Gold Titanium among the raw materials, and even though he very well knew that it was a trap, he didn't question it.

He presumed that since the third round was a "practical exam", then isn't it just normal to lack various materials in real life scenario?

Suppose he was at a provisional repair station on the frontline which was completely surrounded by demon beasts, and the repair station had just run out of the Purple-Gold Titanium, then what to do?

Are they going to request an armistice with the demon beasts until the Purple-Gold Titanium can be shipped from the back before fighting again?

How could that be possible!

"I understand, the real purpose of the third round is to examine how we are going to react in a stressful situation, want to see how we are going to repair the Mystic Wolf without the Purple-Gold Titanium.

"It sounds quite difficult!

"However, a registered refiner had always been one of the best vocations in the world of cultivation. It is quite normal for the last round to be this difficult!"

Li Yao slapped his forehead, believing himself to have seen through everything.

He no longer hesitated and started thinking with all his concentration.

Without the Purple-Gold Titanium, he was unable to forge the 22nd vertebra. And with the lack of a vertebra, even if the Mystic Wolf could barely be recovered, its flexibility and speed would take a big dive and it would be simply impossible to recover it to 90% of its war force?

It seems that he had to once again display his crazy, devilish skills and hugely change the overall structure of the Mystic Wolf.

Li Yao licked his lips, his eyes, on the other hand, in the blink of an eye, flickered with blazing flames as though he had returned to those decadent days when he was modifying the 1st Generation Tai'e Furnace.

Although the Mystic Wolf was a classic, lightweight warbeast, Li Yao was slightly disappointed by its concept and structure.

Even though according to the data it was quite powerful and could play quite of terrifying strength on the battlefield, too much emphasis was paid on speed and agility, which resulted in it having a vulnerable abdominal region which could not be resolved. If it were bitten by a demon beast at its waist, its vertebral column could quite easily break.

The resulting rate of failure would be high.

At present, huge strategic battles had not erupted between the Heaven Origin Sector and Blood Demon Sector. All the battles fought were either small-scale raids or close encounters. The rate of failure was still within an acceptable range.

However, once a big battle broke out, during which the resources and maintenance staff would be scarce, the shortcomings of the Mystic Wolf would come into light.

Usually, Li Yao liked looking at some classic magical equipment's blueprints and imagine how he would carry out some "crazy modifications" in his free time for amusement.

The Mystic Wolf had already been in production for over three decades; its blueprints were no military secrets and could be found in Grand Desolate War Institution. Li Yao had also thought of several modification plans for the Mystic Wolf. He had never imagined for them to be of use today.

"Which set of modification should I use?

"Forget it! Since it's such an important exam, I should use the safest, most conservative, and most old-fashioned set just to be safe!"

Suddenly, Li Yao stood up, his eyes lit up; he was ready to go all out.

Meanwhile, in the control room, when Li Yao began his crazed performance, each of his actions had been called into question by the three examiners, "What... what is he doing? Why is he drawing so many blueprints and spiritual energy flow diagrams like crazy? He just has to repair the Mystic Wolf, that's all, but why does he need to draw so many diagrams?"

"Hey, he even picked up as many as 142 kinds of raw materials? Obviously, just 97 kinds of raw materials are sufficient to repair the Mystic Wolf!"

"The components he is forging are quite strange. They are not the standard components for the Mystic Wolf. I really want to know what's going on inside his brain."

"He has dismantled the crafting furnace!"

"That's not it, he is actually using many of the crafting furnace's components to strengthen the Mystic Wolf. Even the units of the crafting furnace aren't spared!"

"Is-isn't this violation of the rules? What, it isn't a violation of the rules? The examinees can use everything within the repair workshop?"

"And now he is assembling that thing! What am I looking at, it doesn't look like a Mystic Wolf!"

Finally...

The exam came to an end!

When the exhausted examinees somehow dragged their tired bodies out of their respective caves along with their repaired Mystic Wolves, they were deeply shocked by the amazing masterpiece at the center of the huge disc, one after another.

It was an army-green Mystic Wolf which faintly emanated a cold and murderous aura as though it a newly crafted magical equipment; every detail was simply perfect. Its two sparkling, light-gold crystal eyes overflowed with a king-like, domineering aura.

It was an out-and-out Wolf King!

Next to the Wolf King stood Jiang Shaoyang quietly. His deep as an abyss gaze was transfixed at Li Yao's repair workshop.

Having seen this, the remaining examinees hung their heads as they brought their greasy Mystic Wolves to the edge of the disc and sat down.

The Mystic Wolves for which they had tried their best to repair simply looked like lame dogs as compared to the Mystic Wolf repaired by Jiang Shaoyang. Their wolves were simply unpresentable.

"I'll be damned, the Tenth Star title is not for nothing. I'm genuinely convinced!"

"Presumably, only Li Yao can compete with him. However, I still doubt it. The Mystic Wolf repaired by Jiang Shaoyang is simply perfect. The majestic, domineering aura is released due to the perfect flow of the spiritual energy!"

"That's right, even if it was a newly crafted Mystic Wolf, it may not be debugged so perfectly. It's a work of art! It is simply a work of art!"

"Look, Li Yao is coming out!"

Gradually, the doors of Li Yao's repair workshop opened. However, he had a pale complexion, his hands trembled slightly, and his gait was unsteady.

"Clank! Clank! Clank! Clank!"

Meanwhile, he was accompanied by ear-piercing, mechanical sounds before a hideous warbeast gradually appeared from within the darkness behind Li Yao.

When the completely hideous warbeast appeared before everyone, everyone was flabbergasted, they even forgot to breathe.

"What the f*ck? What in the bloody hell is that?!"

Chapter 216: It's a Tyrant

Chapter 216: It's a Tyrant

This monster didn't bear resemblance to its former counterpart from any angle, its trunk was divided into cephalothorax and abdomen. From its round and bulging cephalothorax, one could find traces of its former appearance, but instead of being supported by four strong mechanical limbs, four slender legs were equally distributed on each side of the body.

Eight legs, while every leg was composed of six joints; allowing it to rotate 360 degrees at its position. It was rather agile as compared to the Mystic Wolf with four limbs.

Although the slender legs were lacking in strength, with twice the number, the pressure could be well distributed.

The end of each leg had a folded sharp blade, which could pop out when necessary and kill or injure an enemy in close combat. Furthermore, the legs seemed to have a "hair" like structure on them, resembling setae of insects.

Only when everyone observed closely did they discover that the legs were covered with sharp nails.

Furthermore, the two forelimbs, as well as the fangs and claws of the Mystic Wolf, had been transformed into a sawtooth-like structure to create a pair of chelae, like a mantis' sickle and fangs of a scorpion. With one glance, everyone knew that they were the most ruthless of close-combat weapons.

This monster didn't seem to have an obvious head. The entire anterior of the cephalothorax was encased in a hard, curved armor. This armor wasn't a standard component of the Mystic Wolf. Only when everyone had wracked their brains for a long while did they suddenly came to realize that it was a part of the crafting furnace!

"I'm not wrong, yeah? He actually dismantled the crafting furnace and used it as an armor?"

The crafting furnace was designed to withstand high temperature and pressure. Its outer covering was extremely hard. Naturally, if it was used as armor, the defense of the warbeast would be greatly improved.

However, the iron shell armor wasn't completely intact. It was an amalgamation of four parts, and between the four pieces of armor, there were two crisscrossed slits in the form of "".

At the intersection of the two slits was a shining crystal eye which could freely rotate, time to time, the crystal eye would slide along the two slits.

"This crisscross crystal eye orbiting system has enhanced the scanning range of the crystal eye. Just one eye covering the front vision is not much worse than the two crystal eyes of the Mystic Wolf!"

"There is another crystal eye? Where?"

As everyone scanned along the armor of the monster, they came to notice a 360-degree rotating turret mounted at the back of the monster. The two crystal railguns which originally had been installed on either side of the Mystic Wolf had been modified into a dual-mount crystal railgun, whereas the other crystal eye was mounted on the turret, monitoring around from above!

"Wow! He actually designed it like this!"

"Unbelievable!"

The Mystic Wolf was most criticized for the two crystal railguns on either side, because it was too close to the body, leading to a smaller range of attack. In addition, apart from the front, it was unable to attack in another direction at the same time.

For instance, if the demon beast was attacking from the right side, the Mystic Wolf had to slightly tilt its body to the right so that the right-side crystal railgun could attack. Whereas the left-side crystal railgun was rendered useless, until and unless the body tilted in the opposite direction completely.

As the matter stood, its firepower was greatly reduced. If during the reconnaissance mission, the Mystic Wolf had to storm the enemy position, the Mystic Wolf was somewhat powerless.

It was not like the refiners of the Wolves Valley had not considered this issue.

A 360-degree rotating turret was the best solution.

However, if the crystal railgun was installed on the back of the Mystic Wolf, the center of gravity would be too high, which would result in the loss of speed and flexibility. Even the slightest mistake during a high-speed maneuver would make the Mystic Wolf fall.

Which, for a lightweight warbeast such as the Mystic Wolf, was undoubtedly fatal.

Because of this, the two crystal railguns had been retained on either side despite having gone through countless upgrades over three decades.

However, this crazy Li Yao, with the support of eight legs had lowered the center of gravity quite lower. Not to mention, dual-mount crystal railgun, even a heavy caliber triple-mount, or even two triple-mount, one above and one below, could be installed. It could withstand a total of six crystal railguns and quite steadily at that; greatly enhancing its firepower and attack range!

Along with cephalothorax that was armed to the teeth, there was a round and fat abdomen, which, much to everyone's surprise, was modified from the cooling tank of the crafting furnace. What was weird about it, no one knew.

The entire body of the monster had dense glyphs engraved which were glittering with dark-red brilliance.

In particular, at the anterior of the cephalothorax, on both side of the crisscross crystal eye structure had hundreds of glyphs engraved.

At first glance, it seemed like a red compound eye of an insect which was emanating an extremely dangerous aura.

That's right, an insect, but to be precise, it was a spider!

The warbeast repaired by Li Yao could no longer be called the Mystic Wolf, it the most fearsome spider among all the spiders, the Tarantula!

"Whoosh!"

The eight legs of the Tarantula bent slightly, lowering its center of gravity, before taking a light leap. The Tarantula very nimbly landed upon the giant disc.

Meanwhile, Li Yao followed it in a neither too fast not too slow manner.

The moment the Tarantula landed upon the giant disc, all the Mystic Wolves trembled for a bit, while their heads emitted weak creaking sounds.

Apparently, they had perceived the arrival of a stronger existence, while the alert telepathic thoughts within the crystal processor were automatically triggered as the crystal processor judged the enemy and themselves.

Whereas the Wolf King's crystal eyes of Jiang Shaoyang, even more so, became lustrous and brilliant. Every glyph across its body started to glitter. Its four claws lightly rubbed against the enormous disc, becoming restless.

The crystal eyes of Li Yao's Tarantula quickly scanned everyone, while its double-mount crystal railgun rotated slightly before finally pointing at Jiang Shaoyang's Wolf King.

The Tarantula vs the Wolf King!

The two warbeast simultaneously became aware that they were facing a strong opponent. In the blink of an eye, the enemy identifying array glyphs also judged the opponent as friendly.

"Swisssh..."

From the interior of the two warbeast came the sound of converging their spiritual energy as though it was heaving a long and deep sigh. Meanwhile, the crystal railguns aimed at each other were lowered, followed by the dimming of the shining array glyphs.

The Tarantula moved its eight legs as it crawled beside the Wolf King.

"These two warbeasts..."

Everyone felt cold as an unspeakable feeling gushed out from their heart.

Jiang Shaoyang's Wolf King was light, elegant, filled with the dignity of a king. One could not notice even the slightest marking that it was repaired, it seemed as though it was crafted by nature itself. It was impeccable.

Whereas Li Yao's Tarantula was just the opposite.

Since it was frantically modified within a span of ten hours, a large number of non-standard components were used.

Therefore, its outer shell was incomparably coarse. Many places still had the traces of manual grinding, its joints were large and scary, and when it moved, they made deafening noises.

With its aggressive appearance, hideous and arrogant style, the wildness of grassroots refiners was most vividly displayed. It was a sharp contrast to the Jiang Shaoyang's Mystic Wolf.

If one said that the Mystic Wolf of Jiang Shaoyang was from a royal family, then Li Yao's Tarantula was an absolute tyrant!

"What do you think, which of the two warbeasts is better?"

"It's quite hard to say, in terms of speed and stealth, Jiang Shaoyang's Wolf King definitely wins. But in terms of stability, defense, and offense, I am more optimistic about Li Yao's Tarantula."

"In a fight, only god knows who would win!"

While everyone burst into a discussion, Li Yao walked next to Jiang Shaoyang and observed the Wolf King with a look of admiration.

Both were experts. For sure, Li Yao could see that Jiang Shaoyang's wolf had reached perfection.

But there was one point Li Yao could not understand.

"Did you have the Purple-Gold Titanium?"

It was hard to believe that Jiang Shaoyang could not see through the two traps.

And since he had repaired the Wolf King, then he had the Purple-Gold Titanium for sure.

Jiang Shaoyang's gaze was transfixed at the Tarantula. After having carefully observed for a long while did he reluctantly withdrew his line of sight and said with a frown, "I got the Purple-Gold Titanium from the invigilators. Why, you didn't get it?"

Li Yao was astounded for a moment before he asked with surprise, "Isn't this a practical test? In combat, how could there be invigilators who would provide us with Purple-Gold Titanium?"

This sentence struck Jiang Shaoyang like a lightning. He was stunned for a long time and even forgot to breathe.

Immediately, from the depths of eyes, blazing flames gushed out.

At this point, three specks of light flew over from the caves above.

They were the three examiners.

According to the normal procedure, they did not have to appear before the examinees as long as they could monitor the examinees' situation through the holograms.

However, Li Yao's unexpected and crazed performance, as well as the incomparably ferocious tyrant modified by Li Yao had forced the three to come out.

The three walked to the middle of Li Yao and Jiang Shaoyang. First, they observed the tarantula before turning their gazes at the Wolf King a moment later.

Following which, the three withdrew their gazes at the same time and said, with a deadpan look while suppressing the astonishment in their heart, "Next, we will be going to the weapon test site. Everyone, please adjust the alert state of your Mystic Wolf!"

The enormous disc gradually started to rise, bringing everyone back to the ground.

After which, they were escorted to a huge weapon test site by a team of armed soldiers.

It was the largest weapon test site at the military base. It had all kinds of facilities, and a hundred warbeasts could simultaneously be tested.

And speed, power, offense, defense, mobility, and other performance parameters could be converted into precise values.

"First round of testing, starts!"

Followed by the order of the invigilator, a hundred Mystic Wolves sped through gunfire and corrosive attacks, towards a target one kilometer away - like arrows shot from a bow.

"Crack! Crack!"

Amid the high-speed running, deafening noises rang from the lumbar region of many Mystic Wolves. Their bodies twisted in a strange manner as they fell limply to the ground.

"How could this be?"

Many examinees' facial features distorted, sweat broke out all over their body like a rain, it seemed as though it was their spine that broke at the lumbar region.

After the completion of the test, all the performance parameters of Mystic Wolves had been transformed into a data, through which the overall battle force would be calculated after being analyzed by a testing crystal processor.

"No. 1 Mystic Wolf, battle force restored to 91%!"

"Awesome!"

An examinee flushed red to the ear and started jumping; apparently, he was extremely excited.

"No. 2 Mystic Wolf, battle force restored to 88%!"

"So close! So close! Dammit!"

The second examinee wanted to cry but had no tears. Clenching his teeth, he smashed his fist.

"No. 3 Mystic Wolf..."

"No. 4 Mystic Wolf..."

One after another, as the battle force of each Mystic Wolf, was announced, some were happy and some were sad. Cries of excitement along with sighs of grief rang throughout the weapon test site.

"Second round of testing, starts!"

"Third round of testing, starts!"

"Look, Jiang Shaoyang's Wolf King is about to be tested!"

Chapter 217: Isn't This Too Brutal?

Chapter 217: Isn't This Too Brutal?

When Jiang Shaoyang's Wolf King whizzed into a green stream of light, everyone's attention had been grabbed by it.

At the beginning, the Wolf King wasn't that fast.

It easily dodged the oncoming streams of acid, stingers, and mystic lasers just by lightly swaying his body, as though it was a proud member of royal family.

Whereas the other Mystic Wolves that were also undergoing the test on nearby test channels were hit one after another and were letting out ear-piercing cries.

And as the frequency of attacks increased, the Wolf King also gradually became faster.

However, even when its speed had exceeded 30% of the other Mystic Wolves, it still maintained its elegant and leisurely demeanor. Its balance was impeccable; its smooth and elegant maneuvers dazzled the eyes of everyone as it dodged the continuous attacks.

"Impossible!"

"So fast, it is just like a lightning bolt!"

"At such high speed, how can it maintain such good balance and maneuverability!? It actually did a dozen maneuvers in such a closed space within one second and dodged all the attacks!?"

"Is-is this truly a Mystic Wolf?"

One after another, everyone marveled.

After having watched the shocking performance of Wolf King, they could not even bear to watch their Mystic Wolves.

Because as compared to Wolf King, their Mystic Wolves looked dead drunk, rolling on the ground.

"Whoosh!"

With just a light tap of its limbs, the Wolf King easily crossed the marsh area within half a second.

"Whoosh!"

Within a second, the Wolf King crossed the rugged rocky terrain, displaying its amazing ability to steer.

"Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!"

During the high-speed run, the Wolf King simply didn't stop; meanwhile, the crystal railguns began to fire at the ten silver white balls floating in the air hundreds of meters away and struck right at the center!

When everyone believed that the Wolf King's speed had reached the limit, the wind-attribute array glyphs engraved across its body burst forth with azure flames, and the Wolf King's speed once again soared before it appeared before the final target in the blink of an eye!

This target was modeled after a liger-type demon beast. On the inside, its skeleton was forged from complex steel, on the outside, it was wrapped in a thick gel. The gel was also inlaid with many power sensors.

"Crack!"

The Wolf King lightly pounced and ripped off a large part of the thick gel covering on the target's right shoulder.

After the gel covering had been torn, the scapula which was forged using complex steel cracked.

Seizing the momentum, the Wolf King came under the target, and jumped from below before ruthlessly biting at the target's throat and firing a sizzling stream of flame from its mouth thereafter. All of a sudden, half of the target's throat had been blown away.

The Wolf King, once again, ruthlessly pulled it until the millstone-sized head came off and fell on the ground where it continued to roll down on the ground for a long while.

At that moment, many of the Mystic Wolves were still struggling in the marsh area and rocky terrain.

The test crystal processor seemed to have been thrown off by the gorgeous performance of the Wolf King; it paused for a moment before a series of data was projected on the hologram.

"Speed limit, improved to 135%!

"Balance, improved to 129%!"

"High-speed shooting accuracy, improved to 121%!"

"Close combat ability, improved to 141!"

"..."

"The overall battle force, elevated to 133%!"

The three examiners, despite having watched Jiang Shaoyang's maintenance from the control room and known that all the components had been greatly strengthened which would certainly improve the Wolf King's performance...

However, their hearts were in turmoil after looking at such a dazzling data; for a long time, they were unable to calm their hearts.

This warbeast was worthy of the title "Wolf King". Its performance had already surpassed all the newly mass-produced Mystic Wolves.

Even if the experts of the Wolves Valley personally crafted the Mystic Wolf, where they didn't use incredible treasures, the subsequent Mystic Wolf crafted would also have a similar battle force.

"The Tenth Star title is too modest!"

Even Dong Liuqi, who was a critic of Deep Sea University, cried with emotions from the bottom of his heart, 'Just in his teens yet he possesses such a strength, I'm afraid that after ten years, even if he was called "First Star", he would be worthy of it!'

When the overall battle force of 133% was made public, the huge weapon test site went into an uproar before sinking into a strange yet heavy silence.

Everyone stared at one guy.

No, it was not Jiang Shaoyang...

It was Li Yao...

And his tyrant!

Even Jiang Shaoyang didn't care about his own performance. He kept on staring at Li Yao as though his gaze would even burn through a steel plate. His teeth deeply bit into his lips, to the point that his lips were about to bleed.

Li Yao was quite familiar with the thick and dense will to fight hidden within his gaze.

Because his eyes were also radiating a blazing will to fight.

At the end of second round, both of them were tied. This last round would decide who was going to win and who was going to lose!

The fourth round of test, began!

This time, whether it was the examinees who had just completed their test a moment ago or the examinees who had yet to finish their test...

Whether it was three examiners or the staff of the weapon test site...

Everyone was watching with their eyes completely wide opened. They were deadly staring at the Tarantula among the among the group of Mystic Wolves; the Tarantula was no different than a crane standing among a flock of chickens.

"What do you think, will the Tarantula display a shocking performance and surpass the Wolf King's?"

"Hush, don't talk, it's moving!"

As the Tarantula waved its eight legs, it started to crawl in an unstoppable manner.

Under the illumination of bright sunlight, the nails mounted upon its legs gleamed like eight slender maces, making everyone drew a lump of cold air; a faint chill ran down their spine.

"Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!"

As the streams of acids, poisonous stingers, and mystic lasers came raining down...

Where the Mystic Wolves on other test channels dodged them one after another...

The Tarantula also made some dodging maneuvers in a lazy manner; each action seemed perfunctory.

After having the outer shell of the crafting furnace installed upon it, its weight had increased by a lot. It was impossible for it to do quick maneuvers like the Mystic Wolf.

A majority of acidic attack, poisonous stingers, and mystic laser fell directly upon the Tarantula!

"Swish! Swish!"

The defensive array glyphs engraved upon the Tarantula's armor suddenly lit up and released a hard spiritual energy barrier; blocking a vast majority of the attacks.

After penetrating the spiritual energy barrier with great difficulty, the remainder of the attacks seemed like an arrow at end of its flight; the attacks were simply insufficient to penetrate the thick armor.

Apart from the acid attack which left a few ugly traces on the armor, the poisonous stingers were simply deflected by the circular armor while the mystic laser beams just transformed into rising smoke; they weren't even able to pierce an inch inside the armor.

"Its defense is so strong!?"

"But of course, that's the outer covering of the crafting furnace, it is designed to resist high temperature and pressure, but also had a very high resistance to corrosion, so of course its defense will be strong!"

"The Wolf King's ability to dodge was improved to the limit, whereas the Tarantula is just dodging lazily and took most of the attack head-on!"

"How can it be compared? How do we tell which is more powerful?"

While the hundreds of people were screaming, the Tarantula took the tempest of attacks head-on and crossed the swamps and rocky terrain swaggeringly. Its slender legs similarly displayed their powerful ability to steer which is no way inferior to the Wolf King's, and maybe one could even say, it was better.

Next was the shooting range.

Ten silver target balls were floating about a couple hundred meters away.

Just a while ago, the Wolf King complete hit right at the center of the target, god knows how the Tarantula would...

"Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!"

As the crystal eye took aim, the turret on the back of the Tarantula rotated flexibly and the dual-mounted mini-caliber crystal railgun started firing and its corresponding sound was even louder than the triple-mounted large-caliber crystal railgun.

The ten targets far away, in the blink of an eye, were covered in smoke.

"No! Way!"

"He actually modified the crystal railguns too and also engraved offensive array glyphs to improve the firepower of the crystal railguns!"

"This is completely unreasonable! The stronger the firepower of the crystal railgun is, the greater the consumption of crystals will be. The Mystic Wolf is a lightweight warbeast, how can it carry so many crystals? Just a round of fire would consume all the crystals; it would not be possible to fight continuously!"

"Idiot, just take a look at the Tarantula, from which angle does it look like a lightweight warbeast? At the very least, it is a middleweight warbeast!"

"Its center of gravity is low, its stability is good, and its design is quite convenient for an ammo storage. Maybe the coolant part at the abdominal region has been modified as an ammo storage!"

"Wow! Its firepower is about three to five time better than an ordinary Mystic Wolf! I wonder how good its accuracy is?"

As the smoke dissipated, everyone could not wait to look towards the target.

However, they didn't see anything.

The ten target balls had been completely blown away by the fearsome firepower of Tarantula.

All that left was some silver bits and pieces fluttering around like the petals scattered by a goddess from high heavens which soon were scattered away by the wind.

"..."

A pin-drop silence enveloped the entire weapon test site.

Everyone was rendered speechless. They didn't know how to describe their complex feelings.

Just a while ago, the Wolf King had taken 1.2 seconds to finish the battle; it was absolutely an instant kill.

How long would the Tarantula take?

The Tarantula once again lowered its center of gravity to the point that its abdomen was almost sticking to the ground, it gave the impression of an assassin moving stealthily in the darkness.

When it stealthily arrived about three meters away from its prey, it suddenly jumped into the air. Whereupon, all the blades at the end of its slender legs popped out and deeply pierced the target!

Suddenly, eight holes had been thrust out in the gel.

Whereas the nails mounted on the legs respectively caught a large part of gel, and when the legs were forcefully pulled out, they ruthlessly ripped a large part of the flesh, leaving behind eight horrifying wounds.

Such swift and fierce action had made many people's eyes twitch.

The next scene that transpired was absolutely shocking.

Unlike the Mystic Wolf, the Tarantula didn't follow up with a most orthodox line of attack and directly bit upon the throat, killing the prey in one attack...

Instead, it adopted an "execution" like mode of attack. First, it tore away the flesh before cutting off the prey's limbs, opened its belly and smashed its spine, afterward it tore the corpse into pieces using its eight legs!

It was an incomparably brutal mode of attack, which made everyone's scalp tingle. Everyone almost felt an intensely bloody stench assaulting their nose. When they looked at Li Yao, they had a strange look in their eyes.

Even Jiang Shaoyang had a very strange look in his eyes when he glanced at Li Yao. He could not help but ask, "Was it necessary?"

"The life force of a demon beast is rather powerful. Many demon beasts will continue to bite even when their heads have been cut off."

Li Yao lightly fiddled with his disheveled hair and explained, "I have carried out multitudes of modifications on the Mystic Wolf; its mode of attack is quite different from the past. Therefore, its attack mode needed to be reprogrammed.

"However, as the time was short, I didn't have the time to use the telepathic thoughts to programme all the modes of attack; I could only programme a 'complete destruction' mode.

"The so-called 'complete destruction' activates all the array glyphs to the limit, and once it encounters an enemy, it will attack with full force regardless of its consumption of crystals. The enemy would be reduced to nothing!"

Jiang Shaoyang was rendered speechless.

His Wolf King also had the "complete destruction" mode.

However, having looked at Li Yao's "complete destruction", he realized that his "complete destruction" was a f*cking "merciful" mode!

After fifteen seconds...

All that was left of the target were a few fist-sized pieces, and the skeleton forged from complex steel which had been completely twisted; it no longer resembled its previous appearance.

Finally, the Tarantula stopped attacking and let out a hissing sound as steam emerged from its body before it lay down and rested in satisfaction.

Looking at the messy test site, everyone was rendered speechless; meanwhile, their backs were completely drenched in sweat.

Many people glanced at each other as a question emerged from the bottom of their hearts at the same time, "Wolf King and Tarantula, both have completed different combat style yet they are equally powerful. Which one is weaker and which one is stronger, how will they compare?"

Chapter 218: The Tarantula vs the Wolf King

Chapter 218: The Tarantula vs the Wolf King

The test crystal processor operated at lightning fast speed before transmitting a series of performance parameters.

The values in the list for the Tarantula were unlike those of the Wolf King, for which all the values in the list were exceedingly high; the values were like a chain of mountains, sometimes high and sometimes low.

Several of the values were as high as a lofty peak that was towering into the clouds, while some of the values fell to the bottom; they were even worse than the average Mystic Wolves.

"Speed limit, reduced to 84%!"

"Balance, improved to 192%!"

"High-speed shooting accuracy, improved to 167%!"

"Stealth, reduced to 67%!"

"Defense, improved to 235%!"

"..."

"Overall battle force, unable to determine!"

After the test crystal processor emitted an ear-piercing noise, it stopped operating. A series of red characters popped out on the holographic screen, underneath which was another line of small text, "The difference between the test subject and the Mystic Wolf is too large, the system is unable to determine the overall battle force using the Mystic Wolf battle force evaluation programme."

The three examiners slightly frowned. They had never expected Li Yao to actually modify the Mystic Wolf to such an extent that even the crystal processor was unable to evaluate it.

After giving it a bit of thought, they realized it was right and proper. After adding multitudes of components from the crafting furnace, the Tarantula had already transformed from lightweight warbeast to middleweight warbeast. Whether it was the firepower or the modes of fighting, everything had been completely turned upside down. Ergo, it was indeed inappropriate to use the Mystic Wolf evaluation programme.

Now the question was, had the battle force of Tarantula reached the 90% of an ordinary Mystic Wolf?

"I think, the Mystic Wolf repaired by Student Li Yao is a failure."

After having paused for a while, Zhu Yueqin spoke first, "As a lightweight warbeast, its main objective is to perform reconnaissance missions, for which the speed and stealth are necessities. Not to mention, Student Li Yao disassembled the crafting furnace and used its component. Regardless of whether this conduct is in line with the norms of the exam or not, at the very least, doing this, Student Li Yao had removed the biggest advantage of the Mystic Wolf.

"It is true that the outer covering of the crafting furnace is strong enough to withstand high temperature and pressure, has a high resistance to corrosion, and is a very good armor material.

"However, why is such a good armor isn't applied to warbeasts and combat suits?

"Because it has a very serious flaw, it is too thick, too heavy, and too inept!

"Using this kind of material as armor would indeed improve the defense, but at the same time, it would increase the weight significantly. The armor would be like a turtle shell forged from iron and steel.

"Even worse is that the Magic Wolf originally was a lightweight warbeast. Its propulsion array glyphs are designed completely in light with the standard requirements of a lightweight warbeast. Even if Student Li Yao fortified the array glyphs, he didn't change the foundation; it is impossible to boost the propulsion force by a large degree.

"Using the propulsion array glyphs of a lightweight warbeast to move a turtle shell is tantamount to move a heavy cart with a pony.

"The end result is as you can see, it was very loud, slow, and although the eight-legged design guarantees stability, its steering isn't flexible at all.

"Such a warbeast is obviously unsuitable for reconnaissance missions. I am also very suspicious of its continuous combat ability.

"To sum it up, my conclusion is that Student Li Yao had failed in proper maintenance and should be judged unqualified.

"What do you both think?"

Zhu Yueqin looked at the two examiners with a calm look on her face.

After all, she was a master refiner with rich experience, a professor-level figure who quickly regained her calmness after having been stunned for a moment. She wasn't confused by the Tarantula's horrifying performance; she could see through the weak points of the Tarantula at first glance.

Her views were well-founded and convincing. If she wanted to make things difficult for Li Yao, at best, she could add some harsh adjectives regarding Li Yao, nothing more.

Li Yao was after all not some great Golden Immortal, it was impossible for him to modify a completely damaged Mystic Wolf into a perfect warbeast using most common materials, and that too within a span of ten hours.

If it was strengthened in some departments, it would obviously be weakened in other departments too. You can't have the cake and eat it too.

The moment he decided to use the components of crafting furnace to fortify the warbeast, Li Yao gave up on speed and stealth. He chose firepower and defense.

In addition, he was pressed for time. There was the issue of incompatibility between two different kinds of components. Under the disguise of the aggressive appearance of the Tarantula, many flaws had been concealed.

Originally, if Li Yao could use the ancient technique of forging, and further process the material, the parameters of Tarantula would be greatly improved too.

However, on one hand, there wasn't an anvil in the repair workshop for him to use the ancient techniques of forging, and he also didn't bring the Dark Star Rock.

On the hand, he wasn't willing to fully expose his own secrets under the public eye.

Therefore, he could not use the ancient techniques of forging and only used the most common forging techniques.

The Tarantula presented in front of everyone was just an incomplete product. It was just a lame giant, so obviously, there were some advantages and disadvantages.

"Professor Zhu, I disagree with your views," Yan Tianhe said.

"In the exam, the examinees were just asked to recover the warbeast, they weren't required to ensure that the warbeast should be a lightweight warbeast after the maintenance, and it should be able to carry out reconnaissance missions.

"The battle force is a comprehensive concept. You cannot look at just one or two parameters.

"After Student Li Yao completed the maintenance, the warbeast had already been modified to middleweight warbeast, it's very normal for it to have its speed and stealth worse than the lightweight warbeast!

"However, look at its attack and defense, especially after being implemented the turret design, the high-speed shooting accuracy, all of these values have substantially improved. They had surpassed the limit of a Mystic Wolf.

"And such good balance means that this warbeast could carry more offensive magical equipment.

"I think the crystal railgun can be changed into two three-mount turrets, one above and one below. And also, four mini-flying sword launchers can be installed, which would significantly improve its firepower. Allowing it to perform attacking missions rather than just reconnaissance missions.

"In my opinion, Student Li Yao made do with whatever was available. He made full use of available resources and successfully completed the maintenance operations. He should be judged qualified!"

Zhu Yueqin and Yan Tianhe, the two veteran refiners' gazes clashed in the air and seemed to be producing invisible sparks.

In the last few decades of Refiners' Registration Examination, disagreement between the examiners and clash of opinions had rarely been seen.

In this kind of situation, the opinion of the third examiner became, even more, important.

Dong Liuqi was rather at a loss.

He had been an examiner for almost a decade and never encountered such a scene.

Zhu Yueqin and Yan Tianhe's conclusions were well-founded.

From head to tail, the Tarantula was a complete freak. Whereas the "battle force" was more of a generalized concept. Except for comparison between the same type of warbeasts, it was difficult to say which was strong and which was weak when it was a comparison between different models, different weight class, and different combat purposes. Even more so, when judging to an accuracy of 90%, it was simply impossible.

The attitude of the two was like tit for tat. If they couldn't come up with convincing conclusions, it would certainly be difficult to make them give up.

Just as he was thinking, his gaze inadvertently fell upon not so far away Jiang Shaoyang and the Wolf King. Suddenly, his eyes lit up as a wonderful idea struck him. He smiled and said, "Hold your horses, you both are very correct. The weight class and combat purpose of Mystic Wolf repaired by Student Li Yao has obviously changed. And obviously, you cannot use ordinary Mystic Wolf battle force evaluation programme to judge its battle force.

"I've just the right way to roughly judge its battle force within a few minutes.

"We should find a Mystic Wolf and have the Tarantula fight with it!

"Of course, an ordinary Mystic Wolf would definitely won't work because many performance parameters, such as stealth, continuous combat ability, and the likes, may not be completely displayed in a fight.

"Not to mention, a middleweight warbeast can carry more crystals, have fierce firepower, and a stronger defense. It is very normal for it to defeat a lightweight warbeast in a frontal confrontation.

"And even if Student Li Yao won against an ordinary Mystic Wolf, I'm afraid neither of you would be convinced, right?"

Zhu Yueqin sneered, showing a dismissive smile.

But Dong Liuqi's next words made her smile froze.

"What about the Wolf King?"

"Don't we have the Wolf King whose overall battle force has reached 133%?

"If Student Li Yao's warbeast is able to beat the Wolf King in a frontal confrontation, there should be no doubt, right?"

This statement made the two examiners ponder for a long time.

"I agree," having repeatedly pondered for a while, Yan Tianhe accepted the offer.

"I object, " Zhu Yueqin said with an indifferent tone and an expressionless look on her face.

The other two examiners looked at her in astonishment.

Zhu Yueqin calmly said, "Don't think that I'm intentionally making things difficult for Student Li Yao. Due to my status, I can't go so far as to make things difficult for a kid; I am judging the matter as it stands, that's all.

"The Wolf King is too strong, the warbeast modified by Student Li Yao is simply unable to compete with the Wolf King. This suggestion is tantamount to bullying him. If this matter spreads, everyone will think that my Deep Sea University is a bully.

"Five minutes!

"Student Li Yao's warbeast would absolutely unable to handle the claws and fangs of Wolf King for five minutes!

"If it survives the five minutes, I will change my opinion and decides that he's passed!"

...

"The Tarantula and Wolf King are going to fight. Heaven and earth are going to collide!"

Just as the news broke out, it was like a lightning had struck the crystal warehouse. In the blink of an eye, the entire audience seemed to have been ignited.

Everyone was super excited. They could not wait to hug the three examiners tightly. They wanted to thank the examiners for being considerate and especially arranging such a highly anticipated battle!

After Li Yao and Jiang Shaoyang came to know of the examiners' decision, they were slightly surprised and in the blink of an eye, their mood had been replaced with that of extreme excitement.

The two of them looked at each other. Their gazes were like iron and steel, completely unshakable.

"By convention, it's time for some fighting talk, right?" asked Li Yao.

"Stop talking rubbish. Quickly fill the crystals and debug the warbeast. You have to unleash the strongest possible battle force!"

Jiang Shaoyang was so excited that even his voice was shaky. He could not wait to go to the prep deck and carry out the final round of debugging and filling of crystals.

Li Yao slightly smiled and also walked to another prep deck.

The remaining examinees distinctly divided into two groups.

Naturally, the examinees from the Deep Sea University clustered around Jiang Shaoyang.

Whereas the remaining examinees gathered around Li Yao's side.

Knowingly or unknowingly, they already came to believe, even if it was slightly, that this young man who was less than twenty years old, had the qualifications to challenge a giant like Deep Sea University.

After five minutes, along with the crisp sound of a crystal explosion, the fight between the Tarantula and the Wolf King began!

Chapter 219: Can't Touch Its Ass

Chapter 219: Can't Touch Its Ass

At a combat test site with a length and breadth of one kilometer was a typical forest landscape, complete with a very complex environment full of rocks, grass, streams, swamps, and ditches.

At the two opposite edges of the battlefield, two monster-level warbeasts motionlessly stood opposite each other with a few hundred meters between them.

Even the spiritual energy particles floating in the air were drawn to the two warbeasts and lingered around them to create faint halos.

During the test a while ago, the Wolf King had not suffered any kind of damage. And due to the green halo in contrast, the Wolf King looked as though it had been chiseled from a crystal clear jade, exuding an aura of arrogance and pride.

Whereas the Tarantula's armor had been eroded by the acid which left multitudes of hideous scars; making it appear aggressive and ruthless.

Everyone in the audience had been deterred by the matchless aura emanating from the two warbeast as though they were watching the fight between two unrivaled demon beasts. One by one, everyone stopped moving. They didn't dare bat their eyes and even when they were discussing, they suppressed their voice to the bare minimum.

"The two warbeasts seemed to be full of energy. What do you think, who is going to win?"

"I'm more optimistic for the Tarantula. It has a huge body, fearsome firepower, powerful defense, and can carry extra crystals. As long as it strikes the Wolf King, the Wolf King would be crushed!"

"If only it strikes the Wolf King, only then!"

"The Wolf King is fast and has a good response time. Although its long-range firepower is worse than Tarantula, when it comes to close combat, it's pretty good. Moreover, its design has been perfected. In all aspects, it is perfectly balanced; unlike Tarantula, which has a heavy head and light feet, it is like a pony pulling a heavy cart. It is simply a lame giant!"

"I'm pretty sure that unless the Tarantula is lucky and blast the Wolf King with its railgun at the very beginning from far away, the Wolf King with its super speed and agility would obliterate the Tarantula!"

Everyone stuck to their own version; each refused to give in to the other.

Just as everyone was about to enter into a heated argument, they suddenly heard another thirty-some-year-old examinee sneer, "You are only considering the external factors and never thought that the tactics are most important!

"The Mystic Wolf was produced over three decades ago, and its experience of countless battles have long been summarized into hundreds and thousands of classic tactics which are stored inside the crystal processor. It is equivalent to Mystic Wolf having hundreds and thousands of powerful 'tricks'!

"Whereas Student Li Yao has modified this Tarantula, its structure and modes of combat have been changed completely. It is unable to utilize a vast number of 'tricks'.

"Even if he could temporarily devise some new tactics incorporating complexity and effectiveness in accordance with the structural characteristics of the Tarantula, they would still be unable to compare with the classic tactics.

"Therefore, in this fight, the Wolf King will win and the Tarantula will lose!

"Fortunately, the Tarantula does not need to win. As long as it can survive for five minutes, it will be considered a tie and then everyone will be happy!"

The words of the older examinee made everyone suddenly understand. Everyone repeatedly nodded.

At this moment, an ear-deafening explosion rang in the combat test site.

The two warbeasts madly poured their firepower at each other while quickly closing the distance.

The dust and stones flew everywhere, steam rose from the swamp, while the spiritual energy in the air undulated as though it was repelling the mist.

From the very first second of the fight, the fight was white-hot.

The Wolf King executed a series of dazzling dodging maneuvers, and simultaneously fired dozens of crystal railgun shots.

While the Tarantula did not dodge, it launched a thick spiritual energy shield in the front and took all the attacks head-on; nothing was able to stop it.

Both sides grew closer and closer, and the crossfire became fiercer. Occasionally, a concentrated round of artillery would collide in the air. Dazzling balls of light would appear one after another before immediately turning into colorful tides of spiritual energy, and into a super hot explosion thereafter, tearing the air apart and bursting forth with round after round of ripples which would span across hundreds of meters. The battlefield seemed like a dream.

The silhouettes of the two warbeasts would also sometimes become vague and sometimes distinct; they were unpredictable like ghosts.

After a couple seconds, the two warbeasts were already within fifty meters away from each other.

At this distance, the long-range firepower was no longer important. Only the close-combat ability would become the decisive factor.

‘The Tarantula is going to be at disadvantage,’ many examinees with keen sight thought one after another.

Some even sighed in their heart, 'Student Li Yao's modification technique is indeed top class, but in case of choosing battle tactics, he seems to have made some mistakes!'

'The advantage of Tarantula lies in its firepower. He should have fought it all out to maintain the distance. He should have circled around the Wolf King at a distance and kept on firing!'

'Now the Wolf King has closed the distance. Once it's in melee range, the Wolf King by virtue of its speed and agility would slowly torture the Tarantula to death for sure!'

In the blink of an eye—

The Wolf King suddenly accelerated and transformed into a green stream of light. Having dodged seven to eight dangerous shots from crystal railguns, it jumped twice in the air and actually landed behind the Tarantula!

The Tarantula desperately tried to turn, while the turret on its back rotated by 180 degrees and fired.

However, its eight-legged design was unsuitable for turning on the spot, while at such a close range, there were blind spots in the turret's range of attack.

The Wolf King always hid in the blind spots. Shrinking its neck as a few rounds from the crystal railgun scrapped its head.

"The Tarantula is finished!"

Many examinees exclaimed.

The Deep Sea University side, even more so, were wild with joy.

Whether it was the warbeast or the crystal tank, their rear part had always been the most vulnerable position.

The Wolf King of Jiang Shaoyang keenly realized the Tarantula's fatal weak point of its inability to turn freely as it launched an attack from behind!

"Whoosh!"

The Wolf King leaped while its claws vibrated at high frequency; their destructive force elevated to the limit.

"Squirt!"

Suddenly, from underneath the belly of the Tarantula, a stream of yellowish liquid gushed out which continuously gave birth to white gas when it came into contact with the air.

In a fraction of a second, the crystal eyes of the Wolf King constricted into two pinholes as it dodged again and again. Eventually, it wasn't able to continue dodging in mid-air, and despite having dodged a majority of the attack, a small amount of liquid still fell upon it which suddenly emitted ear-piercing "chi chi" sounds as yellowish smoke rose into air; its outer armor had been corroded in the blink of an eye and was riddled with holes.

All of a sudden, the proud and elegant Wolf King had become to look like a stray cur with loathsome spots on its skin.

"This—"

Everyone was astounded. Dumbfounded, they looked at Li Yao.

Jiang Shaoyang, even more so, seemed to have been struck by lightning. Only after a long while did he regain his senses.

The Wolf King rolled on the ground before it anxiously fled to a dozen meters away without ever paying attention to how it escaped.

Although its vital points hadn't been breached, its prestige, on the other hand, was dragged through the dirt. The Wolf King carefully circled around the Tarantula, it dared not approach the rear of Tarantula.

"Student Li Yao, what... what was that!?" an examinee from the Star Nebula University boldly asked.

"Venom."

Li Yao replied in a natural manner as though it was as just as the heavens, "Since the warbeast's modification was based on a tarantula, isn't it natural to have venom?"

This answer made everyone collapse. No one could figure out how.

"But... where did you get the venom or such a corrosive acid?"

In the repair workshop, everything complemented the Mystic Wolf. They could not remember if there was such a corrosive acid!

"I synthesized it myself!"

Li Yao explained, "Do you remember that there was Flamerite and Porous Lanthanum in the warehouse, and the coolant of the crafting furnace contained Thousand Star Essence and Snow Essence?

"These four materials are all very stable in nature, they are neither toxic nor corrosive.

"However, as long as powdered the Flamerite and Porous Lanthanum are mixed in a certain ratio and then put into a solution of Thousand Star Essence and Snow Essence, and heated to a temperature between 175 to 216 degrees, it will become extremely corrosive when it comes in contact with the air.

"I inadvertently found this formula in an ancient remnant scroll. In fact, it's of no great use as its production cost is too high, its ingredients are quite expensive. Nowadays, we are fully capable of synthesizing cheaper acids."

"Why... why did you do it?"

"Isn't that obvious? The Tarantula I modified is slow and heavy, especially when it changes direction, it is inflexible. The enemy's first choice would definitely be to attack it from behind!

"So, I would set a trap at the rear end for sure.

"The Tarantula's abdominal section is modified from the cooling tank and is filled with acid. But unfortunately, Jiang Shaoyang's Wolf King is just too fast, it actually dodged. If it was just delayed by half a second, all the acid would have fallen upon its head and the fight would have immediately come to an end. Such a shame!" Li Yao was feeling a bit regretful.

When it fell upon everyone's ear, it made their hearts quiver.

Jiang Shaoyang was eavesdropping with rapt attention, and even more so, was drenched in cold sweat. He secretly sighed for being lucky.

The situation in the field seemed to have taken a new turn.

After suffering a loss, the Wolf King lurked inside the grass. It no longer fired the crystal railgun and skillfully dodged the oncoming rounds of crystal railgun. On one side, it was expending the crystals of its opponent, while on the other, it was observing the opponent's line of attack.

Suddenly, it took a leap and discarded the crystal railguns on its sides at the same time.

Much to everyone's surprise, it took the initiative to give up long-range attacks. It was preparing to risk its life.

Without the burdensome crystal railguns, the Wolf King's speed was raised to a whole new level. It was like a green whirlwind as it ran around the Tarantula at an astonishing speed.

The Tarantula was somewhat at a loss as to what to do. The crystal railgun turret quickly rotated like an electric fan and even fired continuously, but it could only break the green silhouette left behind by the Wolf King.

Even if it continuously fired acid, it was completely ineffective against the Wolf King's precautionary measures.

Its eight slender legs, even more so, became cumbersome. A few number of times its legs had been thrown into confusion and occasionally collided with each other.

"This is the tactical flaw."

Several examinees whispered to each other, "The battle tactics of the Tarantula are too simple and hadn't considered what to do when faced with circling tactics. It can't change the situation and can let its opponent take control of the battle."

"However, it's not Li Yao's fault. After all, he was pressed for time, how could he set all the tactics? They are simply of a different level!"

"Look, the Wolf King is going to launch a second round of attacks!"

Taking advantage of the Tarantula being led around by the nose and staggered, the Wolf King with a flash of green light, jumped high in the air and pounced towards the back of the Tarantula!

The back of the Tarantula was not only the blind spot for the crystal railgun's attack, it was also the blind spot for an acid attack. The eight legs, even more so, were unable to reach!

If the crystal railgun turret got destroyed, the Wolf King would be able to directly rush through the wound, in an unstoppable manner, and directly smash the core!

"Jump up! Jump up!"

"Block it! Block it!"

Countless examinees had their hands clenched to the point that sweat covered their palms.

The Wolf King's first attack ended up in failure as the Tarantula promptly moved its legs and sealed the Wolf King's line of attack.

However, the Wolf King remained patient. It continuously circled around the Tarantula; on one side, it was forcing the Tarantula to rotate, while on the other hand, it slowly lured it to a stream.

Inside the stream, the pebbles were wet and slippery.

The Tarantula was sure to fall into a trap.

After having failed three times in a row, the Tarantula was finally lured to the edge of the stream. As its legs stepped on the pebbles, the Tarantula slipped and staggered, revealing a huge gap.

Taking advantage of the situation, the Wolf King pounced and steadily stood upon Tarantula's back. Just as it dodged the super close range attack from the crystal railgun, it immediately pounced and forcibly tore the entire crystal railgun turret from the back of the Tarantula in a ferocious manner!

Chapter 220: The Gruesome Battle

Chapter 220: The Gruesome Battle

Inside the Tarantula, a large amount of lubricant and crystal stabilizing agent gushed out like blood.

It waved its legs madly yet it simply wasn't able to reach its back.

The Tarantula could only run about wildly, roughly shaking its body, and even ruthlessly colliding with rocks and trees, in an attempt to throw off the Wolf King.

However, since the Wolf King has jumped onto the Tarantula's back, why would the Wolf King let it easily succeed?

The Wolf King's vibro-claws firmly clutched the gaps in the armor of the Tarantula like a leech stuck on the body of a human. Regardless of how the creature struggled, it remained motionless and slowly tore the armor piece by piece; constantly enlarging the wound.

"The match is already decided!"

All the examinees unclenched their fists. Their palms were cold.

The very moment the Wolf King jumped upon the back of the Tarantula, it meant that the horn indicating the end of the incredible and gruesome battle had been blown.

The eight-legged beasts were more afraid of attacks from above because of the restrictions of their structure, turning over for them was a downright disaster!

"Three minutes fifty-five seconds." Zhu Yueqin took a cold glance at the other two examiners and said calmly.

"Shaoyang has won!"

The Deep Sea University's examinees let out cries of jubilation and congratulation toward Jiang Shaoyang.

Jiang Shaoyang, on the other hand, had a slight frown crept up on his forehead. A faint sense of disappointment was clearly visible on his face.

Such victory was a pure tactical victory. He had won by relying on the thousands of battle tactics stored inside the Wolf King's crystal processor.

Whereas the Tarantula was a newly modified warbeast. Li Yao could only programme a few battle tactics.

Once the Tarantula encountered an unexpected situation, it would be at a loss as to what to do and would be unable to cope with the situation.

"I did not win in combat, ah!

"I don't want this kind of victory!"

Jiang Shaoyang lamented in his heart. He heaved a deep, long sigh and muttered to himself, "I truly wish I could give Li Yao a few days of time so that he could gather a lot of battle tactics from arachnoid warbeasts, modify them a bit and store them inside the Tarantula's crystal processor. That would definitely improve the strength of Tarantula.

"At that time, perhaps we could have a good battle!"

He could not help but take a glance at Li Yao.

However, he discovered that even when most of the examinees were lamenting, Li Yao happened to have his arms crossed. There was no sadness or happiness on his face, but the corners of his lips were slightly raised; he looked at ease.

This attitude made a sliver of ominous foreboding arise in Jiang Shaoyang's heart.

As he looked at the field again, the Wolf King had already torn open the location of crystal railgun. The Wolf King had completely torn away the armor on the back of the Tarantula and created a horrifying wound.

Various array glyphs and components were completely exposed to the claws and fangs of the Wolf King!

ROAR!

The Wolf King opened its fierce-looking jaws as a ball of crimson flames quickly began to form deep within its throat. The sound of raging fire attribute spiritual energy sounded like a demon beast's roar.

This was the final strike!

Everyone held their breath, awaiting the destruction of the Tarantula!

At this moment—

"Clank!"

It seemed that during the high-speed confrontation, the metal had gone beyond the limit of metal fatigue and the fat and round abdomen of the Tarantula could not hold on as it disengaged from the cephalothorax and fell on the ground!

"Its quality really was much worse, right?"

All the examinees were extremely shocked.

Although the warbeast was provisionally patched up and modified, its quality was indeed not as good as the original product, an important part could actually fall off during a battle, on its own...

It fell off on its own!

Many smart and thoughtful examinees exclaimed one by one.

Impressively, they caught a whiff of a plot.

The three examiners' eyes were also opened wide. They had noticed that it wasn't some accident but rather the Tarantula took the initiative to discard its abdominal section just as the Wolf King had discarded the crystal railguns.

In a battlefield, this type of proactive detachment meant only one thing—the warbeast was about to go into a new battle mode!

"Damn!"

Jiang Shaoyang looked pale as his hands could not help but shiver. His Adam's apple rolled up and down like he wanted to shout at top of his voice at Wolf King, "Jump down! Quickly, jump down!"

But it was too late.

All of Wolf King's spiritual energy had been utilized in the flame array glyphs engraved at the depth of its throat and was being converted into a blazing stream of flames.

At this moment, its vigilance and defense were at its weakest.

From the back part of the chest and abdominal section of the Tarantula which used to be the location where the abdominal section of the Tarantula was attached, a weapon like the tail of a scorpion fiercely lunged out and flexibly swayed a bit in the air. Following which, it plunged at the Wolf King's rear end and pierced inside deeply.

The rear end had always been the most vulnerable part of the warbeasts.

The scorpion tail glittered with an orange glow as the spiritual energy continuously surged towards the front part of the tail and fired a stream of flame violently inside the Wolf King; incinerating the internal components of the Wolf King completely. Finally, the stream of flames burned through the crystal eyes of the Wolf King and left a pitch black eye sockets, from which the flickering flames were gushing out.

BANG!

The scorpion tail directly lifted up the Wolf King and smashed it upon a boulder, which made an ear-piercing sound.

It was like a giant hammer weighing over a thousand kilogram had ruthlessly bombarded the chest of everyone.

"This... this is—"

In the blink of an eye, the Tarantula switched from being a prey to a hunter. Waving its eight sharp legs, it pounced at the wreckage of the Wolf King. It was a complete slaughter. Components and crystals flew endlessly in the air as the Wolf King was reduced to pieces.

Everyone was completely flabbergasted. They were at a loss.

What kind of material did Li Yao use to forge this weapon to have such strength and flexibility?

How could Li Yao forge such an aggressive and exquisite weapon using the ordinary materials available in the repair workshop in a span of ten hours?

"It's not like I forged a new weapon out of thin air."

Li Yao explained, facing the bewildered gazes of everyone directly, "This is forged from the vertebral column of the Mystic Wolf.

"I redesigned the structure and mimicked the shape of arachnoid demon beasts. There was no need for the vertebral column, so I simply transformed it into a tail which strengthened the defense of upper part of the body.

"In addition, since the Tarantula didn't have an obvious head, the flame array glyphs that were previously installed inside the throat of the Mystic Wolf were also moved to the end of the tail.

"Once the tail pierced the enemy's body, it would attack from inside to outside, incinerating the internal organs directly which would be more lethal than burning from outside to inside."

Li Yao's explanation rendered everyone speechless.

The Deep Sea University's side fell into a deathly silence.

The examiners who were in high spirits a moment ago were now like pinkish roosters whose feathers have been plucked out; they no longer had the slightest bit of brilliance.

All that resounded in the weapon test field was the hair-raising strange sounds coming from the sound amplifying array glyphs.

CRACK! CRACK! CRUNCH! CRUNCH!

They were the sounds of Tarantula eating.

...

At the army guest house during the night.

The fatigue from continuously working for over twenty hours exploded. All the examinees were exhausted physically and mentally; they had consumed a great deal of their spirit.

In addition, their test results and their identity information were also sent to the association for verification in order to issue the certificate and the emblem.

Therefore, the examinees were resting here in the night as they waited for tomorrow morning to obtain the formal emblem of a registered refiner, after which they would return to their cities.

By then, they would be respected registered refiners with unimaginable future prospects.

"Hufff—"

On the green army bed, Li Yao lay flat on his back.

After a day and night of exams, he was feeling exhausted. His body was extremely tired.

His brain, on the other hand, prickled, not from pain but rather excitement.

"I've done it!

"Old man, I've done it. I've become a registered refiner!

"This is just the first step, next I will complete the Project Mystic Skeleton with teacher and craft a Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit that can be mass-produced. Afterward, I will invent even more fearsome magical equipment and crystal suits, and step by step, progress toward the peak of the strongest refiners and defeat the Deep Sea University. I will explore the endless mysteries of vast cosmos!"

Just as he was imagining the wonderful future, a light knock came from the outside.

As he opened the door, it was none other than Jiang Shaoyang.

His hair was disheveled, his skin was pale, and had bloodshot eyes.

When Li Yao first saw Jiang Shaoyang, he had an aloof and prideful temperament which now have been swept away and was replaced by an intense madness.

He had a large pot in his hand which was filled with lemon tea that could be found in any common household. It held approximately 500 liters of lemon tea; almost half of the lemon tea had already been finished. The remaining 150-200 liters of lemon tea was shaking inside the pot.

"You also can't sleep! If I had to guess, you're itching to have a go? Tell me, why did you come!" Li Yao flexed his finger as they made crackling sounds.

Although he was physically tired, it was dual between the refiners, especially with a top peer like Jiang Shaoyang who was almost at the same age as him. Li Yao would not refuse.

Jiang Shaoyang said in a hoarse voice, shaking his head, "There is no need to compete. At least, at this moment, I am not as good as you.

"I only have a couple of questions, I would like to ask Senior Brother Li to guide me a bit."

Jiang Shaoyang's teacher was Jiang Sheng, while Li Yao's teacher was Yuan Manqiu; their teachers were related through a martial siblings relationship. Therefore, between the two of them, they could also use senior brother and junior brother to address each other.

However, Jiang Shaoyang addressed Li Yao as senior brother because he had been convinced sincerely today, and admitted, that Li Yao's skills were better than his.

Li Yao, on the other hand, didn't think so much. He also recognized Jiang Shaoyang's strength. It was difficult to find a well-matched opponent among his peers. Li Yao also had the intention to become friends with Jiang Shaoyang. Inviting Jiang Shaoyang inside, he broke into a grin and said, "It's just giving directions, that's all. We both are equally matched, not to mention, the two warbeast will also have many future versions. If we fought again, it's hard to tell who would emerge victorious.

"If the questions are related to refining techniques, you are more than welcome to study together with me for sure.

"However, first tell me why are you carrying such a big pot of tea?"

Jiang Shaoyang raised the pot of lemon tea and shook the pot as he said, expressionlessly, "Today's war is the most painful failure in my life. I was completely defeated. This defeat is etched in my heart!

"I decided to drown in alcohol to ease my pain, vent all my painful emotions.

"However, as a refiner, I am not allowed to numb my brain and hands with alcohol.

"So, I can only take tea for wine, and get good and drunk."

Li Yao was rendered speechless. After being stupefied for a long while, he said, "Then I will accompany you for two cups. I still have half a bag of peanuts and some ham, do you want some?"

"May as well."

Li Yao brought two disposable paper cups. The two filled the cups, ate some peanuts, and then finish the cup in one go.

"Good wine!"

Jiang Shaoyang's eyes became redder as though he was bleeding from his eyes. He said, ruthlessly biting the ham, "Slightly sour, just like my mood!"

"Great Brother, did you come just to drink lemon tea?" Li Yao silently said in his heart.

"Senior Brother Li, there is one thing I can't understand."

Jiang Shaoyang slammed the paper cup on the table as he said seriously, "How can you carry out so many repairs and modifications in a span of ten hours, and also programme so many battle tactics to deal with my every attack?

"According to the performance of the Tarantula, you have at least installed hundreds of battle tactics which would have taken you one to two hours, only then should the Tarantula be able to cope with such an intense battle.

"This is something even the Building Foundation Stage refiners are unable to do.

"Senior Brother Li, please do tell, how did you do that?"

Chapter 221: Different Roads

Chapter 221: Different Roads

While spreading his hands, Li Yao said, "Of course, it is impossible for me to program a couple hundred battle tactics. From the beginning to the end, there was only one battle tactic, that was to assume the enemy would have misgivings about the powerful firepower of Tarantula and give up shooting, and instead choose to fight at close range.

"In close combat, the enemy's main point of attack would be the rear and upper part areas. Afterward, I preinstall two traps. When the enemy attacks from above, the Tarantula will promptly disengage the abdominal section and use the tail forged from the vertebral column of Mystic Wolf to launch a fatal attack. No more than that."

Jiang Shaoyang's pupils suddenly constricted as the paper cup in his hand was slightly crushed. He said, clenching his teeth, "You mean to say, you led me around by the nose from beginning to end? I unknowingly fell into your trap?"

Li Yao heaved a sigh and said, "The Tarantula is a freak that was hastily modified. Certainly, it will have fatal flaws. As long as it was a refiner with a little bit of insight, they would be able to see that it's clumsy, has slow speed, and very inflexible when turning around on the spot.

"How could I hide those things? They were simply impossible to hide.

"In that case, I did just the opposite and turned the flaws into traps. It's not that I was intentionally aiming for Wolf King but it was the only suitable tactic that I could come up in that moment. That's all.

"However, this tactic was only suitable for sneak attack. It was likely to succeed the very first time. Once the enemy had taken precautionary measures, this trick simply would not work."

Nodding, Jian Shaoyang pondered for a moment and said, "I guess, that's right. It's not that I can't afford to lose, but let's take the matter on its merit; if you let me craft a new Wolf King, and input today's battle data into the crystal processor and also let me program new battle tactics, then the outcome would be different for sure!"

"I believe you."

A smile appeared on Li Yao's face as he pursed his lips and pulled up a couple dozen blueprints from the crystal processor, "However, my Tarantula is incomplete. If you give me ten to fifteen days to craft it completely, then it also wouldn't be as horrid as today. Come, check it yourself!"

A majority of the time, the refiners were bored.

Usually, the refiners would be holed up inside the laboratory and refining workshop, completely immersed in the world of refining, their brains would be full of formulas, algorithms, and data. They would appear a bit cold. Even if others were talking to them, their reaction would be half a beat slow and would give off the impression that they are half-heartedly paying attention.

However, once they crafted a completely new magical equipment, they would be no different to a child who had assembled a new toy, they would always be eager to show it off.

The same was true for Li Yao. He was a guy who was introverted and presumptuous as well.

However, in the Grand Desolate War Institution, he could only show off to Yuan Manqiu and Jiang Wenbo, the veteran refiners.

But they were not from the same generation, there was a big generation gap. Even if they praised him with a few words, he would always feel a sort of distance between them and himself.

And among his peers, there were Ding Lingdang, Zhao Tianchong, and Lu Tieshan with whom he could enjoy, but they were martial arts fanatics. Even if he took out complex blueprints to show off to them, it was tantamount to giving flirtatious glances to the blind; there was little to no sense of accomplishment.

A rare encounter like today where he got to meet Jiang Shaoyang who was a top expert among his peers made Li Yao incredibly excited as he got to meet his match.

Li Yao believed Jiang Shaoyang could definitely see the exquisiteness of these blueprints.

Sure enough, with just two glances, Jiang Shaoyang was deeply attracted and even exclaimed, "Is this the ultimate form of Tarantula? It sure is formidable!

"You are planning on using Thundercloud Rock and Jade Red Gold to create a porous composite and forge a semi-circular armor, which would at least reduce the weight by 25% while ensuring the tensile strength and corrosion resistance of the armor. And you are also going to employ propulsion array glyphs for middleweight warbeast, which will greatly improve the speed and agility!

"And the acid sack in the abdominal section will be divided into four vesicles, which can hold four different kinds of fluids; acid, venom, napalm, and also super sticky saliva extracted from Bullet Dart Frog? Not bad! Once this saliva is shot at an enemy, it would be like stuck in a spider web. It will greatly affect the mobility, and the enemy will be at your mercy!

"The Tarantula with web, that's terrifying, that is truly terrifying!

"However, why is the ammunition cache in your Tarantula designed so big? It's large enough to carry four unit of crystals. Even if you use triple-mount heavy crystal railgun, it would be more than enough!

"Although it would improve the continuous combat ability, it would affect the speed. The loss outweighs the gains!"

Li Yao slightly smiled as he pointed at four array glyphs next to the ammunition cache as well as dozens of components connected to it.

As Jiang Shaoyang carefully observed, he crushed the paper cup in his hands immediately and blurted out, "Self-destruct system!

"You intentionally enlarged the ammunition cache and installed so many crystals, just so you can launch a suicide attack!"

As Jiang Shaoyang closed his eyes, dozens of blueprints, in the blink of an eye, integrated into a mighty Tarantula in a blazing battlefield.

If the design of the blueprints came to fruition, especially so many crystals, once the Tarantula exploded amid a horde of demon beasts...

Goosebumps exploded all over Jiang Shaoyang's body.

"Senior Brother Li, you should enter the Deep Sea University!"

Jiang Shaoyang said with excitement, "I heard, there is a bit of misunderstanding between you and some professors of Deep Sea University, but in my opinion, you are the craziest refiner!

"People like us can give up anything in pursuit of the best road of refining!

"What is a little misunderstanding? If you join Deep Sea University, you could put your talent to better use!

"Now that you are a registered refiner, there are many ways you can join Deep Sea University. You don't necessarily have to be a student.

"You can join Deep Sea University's laboratory as an assistant researcher directly. On one side you can study, on the other, you can research.

"We have a total of twenty-seven main laboratories, running hundreds of projects at the same time. If you applied, you'd be eligible to join any one of them!

"Come on, those students of Deep Sea University are like clay chickens and pottery dogs in my eyes. They don't even stir the slightest bit of fighting spirit in me. If you come over, we can exchange pointers, compete with each other, train with each other, we can advance a thousand li in one day!"

Jiang Shaoyang looked at Li Yao with an anticipating look.

Having remained silent for a long time, Li Yao finally shook his head and said, "You are wrong. Although initially, I refused Deep Sea University, which was also a freak combination of factors, I have persevered in the Grand Desolate War Institution until today and my feelings still haven't changed. And it's not because of a small misunderstanding.

"If it were someone else, I would definitely not say any more. But since it's you, you should be able to understand what I mean.

"It is indeed correct that the Deep Sea University is the best choice for a refiner from the materialistic point of view; floating mountains, teaching ability, academic atmosphere, inheritance... in regard to those things, other universities are unable to match them.

"However, I am more focused spiritually than materially. Or in your words—fighting spirit!

"Only competing against a giant like Deep Sea University can my fighting spirit be aroused to the extreme. Every minute, every second, when I think of my presumptuous declaration, every cell in my body seems to flare up, releasing light and heat. I don't dare have the slightest intention to slack off, which makes me breakthrough my limits again and again!

"Surely, you have experienced this state. You should know, having entered this kind of state with soaring will to fight, how refreshing and wonderful it is!

"By joining Deep Sea University, standing shoulder to shoulder with this giant, I would see farther for sure, but I would inevitably slack some time because I would not be able to find a target and be able to make my will to fight madly burn every minute and every second!"

Jiang Shaoyang could not help but ask, "Why do you think there isn't any target?

"I want to get rid of Novem Stellae, then defeat experts like my uncle Jiang Sheng, Professor Xie Tingxian, Professor Zhu Yueqin. I want to surpass even HoD Chu Xiohong!"

"Someday, I will become the HoD of Deep Sea University's Refining Department!

"I don't have any interest in being the HoD, I just want to prove that I am the strongest at Deep Sea University!

"This is my path; this is my target!

"What do you think? Aren't you interested in walking this road together, we can compete after a few decades and see who can be the HoD of Deep Sea University Refining Department?"

"Not interested."

Li Yao shook his head as his eyes radiated with dazzling starry brilliance, "Deep Sea University was established centuries ago, its Refining Department already had a couple dozen HoDs, and in the future, it will continue to exist for millennials, there will be hundreds of HoDs.

"There are predecessors, and there will be successors as well. Even if you persevere in the end, you will only be repeating the path that others have already taken and do what hundreds of people can and will do.

"What's the fun in that?

"I will take a different road.

"Even if I am not the last one challenging the strongest king with the worst Refining Department in the federation, in the last five centuries, it has never been done!

"Only such a road is worth it for me to persevere till the end. Only such a cause can make me devote myself to it for as long as my life endures. Only such a target can make my will to fight soar to the limit, pay with 1000% of effort, and completely burn myself out!"

Jiang Shaoyang stood up suddenly, the stool tumbled backward as he shouted in a loud voice, "Have you wondered how small the probability of you ever being successful is!?"

Jiang Shaoyang's facial features were completely distorted. He was almost screaming.

"The smaller the probability, the more interesting it is."

Li Yao continued, "Life is a battle. Obviously, only by choosing the strongest enemy will it be exciting. The probability of winning against a three-year-old child is 100%, is that the battle you want?"

This sentence was the last straw, it completely defeated Jiang Shaoyang's spirit.

His face became pale and sat back down, but he had never noticed that the stool had already fallen and he fell flat on the ground.

"Are you ok?"

Li Yao was stunned. He bent over the table to look, but only saw Jiang Shaoyang lying flat on his back, looking towards the sky, with no intention of getting up. Every facial muscle on his face twitched, his eyes turned quickly, he seemed to mumble, like crying while smiling, "I understand, this is your big secret!

"Spirit, fighting spirit, will to fight!

"I grew up in the Deep Sea University's residential area for staff, magical equipment components were my toys, the repair workshop my paradise. Every day, most profound algorithms and theories would ring next to my ear!

"Materially, I am hundred times better than you, but I still suffered a crushing defeat!

"What I lack is the will to fight burning in my soul every second and every minute! You are right, you are totally right!

"Target, damn with this target!

"The target I set myself is much smaller than yours. Yes, yes, the Deep Sea University Refining Department already had twenty-two HoDs, one-hundred-and-thirty-five associate HoDs, even if I became one of them, what's amazing about that!

"No wonder, I am getting more and more bored. So, it was like this, the target I chose is too weak!"

Jiang Shaoyang behaved weirdly for a long time before the paleness on his face became ruddy in excitement as though he was burning.

Like a zombie, he stood right up, took a deep glance at Li Yao before suddenly turning around, flinging his long hair and running out.

Until he reached the end of the hallway, did a frantic shout came, "I have realized, I have finally realized!

"Thank you, Senior Brother Li!

"Tomorrow, tomorrow morning, I will come find you and have a duel!"

Goosebumps exploded all over Li Yao's body.

'Oh God, what in the bloody hell did this guy realized!'

Chapter 222: The Birth of the Sun

Chapter 222: The Birth of the Sun

Next morning, at the military mess hall, thousands of examinees were having breakfast.

The Deep Sea University students occupied a corner. The atmosphere was a bit strange.

"Do you know, Jiang Shaoyang didn't sleep last night, he was just sitting on the roof!?" a student said in a low voice.

"I also saw. Moreover, after midnight, he was running along the roof edge at an amazing speed, like a maniac!"

Another student took over the conversation, shook his head immediately and said, sighing, "Jiang Shaoyang took a big blow. He was thoroughly defeated in public, which for someone as proud as him, who has carried the aura of a genius from childhood, was simply insulting. I am afraid he will never recover from this setback..."

Before he could finish his sentence, many people sensed a mass of burning hot aura approaching gradually. It felt as though they were inside a crafting furnace thousands of degrees hot. They were even unable to breathe.

The first student turned his head and gasped suddenly.

The second student turned his head and his eyes became so wide that they seemed bigger than the egg in his hand.

The third student turned his head and his hands shook, the entire bowl of tofu in his hands fell between his laps. At the beginning, he still didn't feel anything, only after two seconds did he stand up immediately with a shout.

This shout attracted everyone's gaze.

When everyone got to see who was there, they were completely flabbergasted. They became dumb as a wooden chicken.

It was none other than Jiang Shaoyang, but he was completely different from yesterday.

Yesterday, Jiang Shaoyang was like a star hanging high above the sky, he was lonely, cold yet proud, immersed in a world of his own. He didn't bother paying attention to people around him.

Watching his fellow students, the look in his eyes wasn't that of contempt but of complete disregard!

In contrast, at this moment, it seemed the shackles in the depths of his heart were broken, and the seals restricting his soul had been blown away. From inside to outside, every cell in his body was releasing an inexhaustible amount of energy, turning him into a blazing...sun!

That's right, it was the sun, the burning hot sun, incinerating everything in its path and nothing could stop its wild march!

No one among his fellow students dared to stand within a range of two meters of him.

A feeling emerged from the bottom of everyone's hearts, so long as they were within this range of two meters, they would be engulfed by him; even ashes would not be left behind.

Jiang Shaoyang took a glance at his fellow students' faces.

No one dared to look directly at Jiang Shaoyang. Everyone was thrown into panic.

Because they discovered that the look in Jiang Shaoyang's eyes was no longer that of indifference, but his eyes seemed to radiate a savage glint filled with hunger and intense murderous intention.

But the biggest change was undoubtedly...

"Shaoyang, did you actually shave your head?" a student cried out involuntarily.

Under the lights, Jiang Shaoyang's head shone brightly. His shiny, long, and black hair was missing; not a single hair was there to be found.

This fierce style and yesterday's fluttering long hair were simply like two different people.

Jiang Shaoyang dismissively glanced at the student who had just spoken, which forced the student to retreat two steps. Slowly and calmly, Jiang Shaoyang walked to the students who were chatting at the beginning, before stretching out a finger and shaking it, "You are wrong about one thing.

"I never carried the aura of a genius.

"I am a genius!

"This is one of the most basic facts that does not change just because I was defeated in a fight. Dark clouds occasionally cover the sun but the sun exists forever!

"Only those who pretend to be a genius, those ordinary people who only carry the aura of genius, would brood over a defeat in a contest.

"I am a true genius, how could stay down after a single defeat in a fight? The more frustrating it is, the more courageous I will become; I will get stronger and stronger in a fight.

"Because I'm sure, no matter how many times I face failure, I will win in the end for sure!"

Everyone had been deterred by his imposing attitude. A brief silence enshrouded this corner of the mess. Only after a while, someone asked, trembling, "Shaoyang, are you really okay? Did something happen?"

"Of course something did happen."

Jiang pursed his lips as a smile crept upon his face. "I broke through."

"What!"

Everyone stood up.

"Failure is the mother of success, in the past, I never understood this sentence. Because from childhood, I have never truly experienced failure."

Jiang Shaoyang, in a not too fast and nor too slow manner, took out a bunch of small balls of steel from his pocket, each one no more than a millimeter in diameter. It was no different than clutching a handful of rice.

"Yesterday, when I suffered a crushing defeat and had a talk with Senior Brother Li Yao, only then did I realize my own flaws."

Jiang Shaoyang flicked his fingers ever so slightly yet dozens of steel balls nimbly jumped between his fingers and their speed got faster and faster by the minute, they were like dozens of streams of silver light dancing.

"Before, I'd set a few targets for myself, but those targets were too simple, too boring, and too easy to achieve. They simply didn't drive me to release 100% of my strength.

"It was me myself who had sealed my own true strength!"

Dozens of silver streams of light gathered into a silver ball of light, no one could trace their trajectory clearly. All one could hear were faint whizzing sounds, as though a small tornado had formed in the palm of Jiang Shaoyang.

"His hands are faster than yesterday!"

Everyone had only taken a few glances, yet they felt dizzy.

Even if it was someone with better dynamic vision, they were unable to capture the actions of Jiang Shaoyang.

"However, now, I have found a new target, and it is deserving of me to burn myself every minute and every second, and unleash 100% of my strength, no, 1000% of my strength!

"The moment I found this target, I could feel an invisible chain shackling my entire body breaking off. The energy which used to be hidden within the deepest recesses of my cells surged turbulently like the floodwater bursting the dike, and made me breakthrough in the blink of an eye!

"Senior Brother Li didn't lie to me, what he said was indeed true!"

Jiang Shaoyang shouted as the ball of silver light in between his fingers, suddenly broke into dozens of streams of light and shot towards the surroundings at lightning fast speed.

A lot of people were caught off guard. They stepped back instinctively to dodge but still believed the steel balls would hit them.

Unexpectedly, Jiang Shaoyang's right hand disappeared, in the blink of an eye, and transformed into a mass of faint mist that enshrouded dozens of high-speed, shooting steel balls completely.

His hands seemed to be magnetized as dozens of streams of light were sucked into his hand in the blink of an eye.

When he opened his palm, dozens of small balls of steel were revolved around and lightly collided with each other, making "ding ding" sounds.

"God-like hand speed!"

Everyone forgot to breathe as the same sentence circled around their brain.

"In one night, the limit of my hand speed has improved by 11.3%," Jiang Shaoyang said calmly as he put the balls of steel back into his pocket. He took a glance around and locked on to a target before walking towards the other end of the mess hall.

"Shaoyang, where are you going?" a fellow student could not help but ask.

Everyone was completely dumbfounded and amazed by Jiang Shaoyang's transformation in one night.

Jiang Shaoyang raised the corner of his lips, revealing his snow white teeth as he said, smiling, "This breakthrough of mine is all thanks to Senior Brother Li Yao. So of course, I'd better pay my gratitude to him and also while I'm at it...

"Let Senior Brother Li Yao have a taste of crushing defeat!"

Jiang Shaoyang's final words detonated the passion in everyone's heart. Every examinee from the Deep Sea University stood up immediately.

"Tenth Star! He truly deserves to have the name Tenth Star! In one night, he's become a new person; his strength had improved incredibly!"

"Jiang Shaoyang and Li Yao were almost on par with each other. Even the yesterday's defeat was mostly due to Li Yao's insidious tricks."

"Overnight, Jiang Shaoyang's hand speed has improved by 11.3%, how can Li Yao be his opponent? He will definitely be suppressed by Jiang Shaoyang!"

"Let's go and take a look!"

Jiang Shaoyang approached Li Yao step by step and followed him was a long line of optimistic people afar.

The military mess hall was huge. It could easily accommodate over ten thousand people at the same time. The two sides of the mess were separated by a few hundred meters. Li Yao was sitting at the corner of another side where he was thoroughly engrossed in his food. He did not care about the commotion taking place a few hundred meters away.

However, he also happened to be thinking about Jiang Shaoyang.

"Interesting guy. If he and I could compete occasionally, it would really improve our strength greatly!"

While squeezing the soy milk, Li Yao recalled the soul-stirring competition between the two.

The most memorable wasn't the duel between the Wolf King and Tarantula but the toothpick contest between the two instead.

"My assumption at the beginning might've been too conservative. The limit of that guy's hand speed might be more than 97% of mine. If he trained for a few more days, his hand speed could surpass mine!

"Interesting, it is really interesting. I am truly lucky to find such a rival among my peers. I will definitely train more madly than him, my hand speed absolutely cannot be any worse than his!

"But I wonder what's the limit of my hands' speed actually?

"Right, I have not used 'that' way for a long time to test the limit of my ultimate hand speed. Although it has no practical value, at least...

"It would let me feel refreshed a bit!"

Under the stimulation of Jiang Shaoyang, Li Yao's competitive heart was also eager for action.

Taking a deep breath, a huge complex and profound blueprint, dazzling digits, and intricate algorithms appeared in Li Yao's brain.

Which made him enter the Super Perceptive State within a second!

Brain cell activity 150%!

Brain cell activity 200%!

Brain cell activity 220%!

While testing hand speed, for both hands to not get cramped with some casual movements, the hand to eye coordination must be exquisite, only then would a series of actions be completed accurately.

After having entered the Super Perceptive State, the brain cell activity had improved by a tremendous degree, and naturally, his ultimate hand speed also rose.

In actual operations, this ultimate hand speed was of little to no significance.

Because after a few minutes of Super Perceptive State, his brain had to cool down for long period of time for it to return to its normal state. It was pointless for Li Yao to pursue super hand speed for a moment only to have his brain cool down for a few more minutes later.

This was just for fun, nothing more nothing less.

Li Yao controlled his brain cell activity at 220%.

This was the limit at which he could work smoothly.

If he raised it anymore, he would be unable to control at will.

"Smack!"

As Li Yao lightly flicked his little finger on the table, a toothpick jumped out from the jar and in neither fast and nor slow manner rolled between his fingers.

"Whoosh!"

As Li Yao drew a paper napkin and readily tossed it, the paper flew high in the air and fluttered down.

At this moment, Jiang Shaoyang came over. His gaze involuntarily fell upon the paper napkin.

"What does he want to do?" Jiang Shaoyang was confused in his heart.

A starry brilliance brighter than the sun flashed across Li Yao's eyes. When the paper napkin drifted to his side, he suddenly took action, the toothpick, like numerous lightning firing from his fingers, pricked hundreds of orderly holes on the soft paper napkin!

"This—!"

Jiang Shaoyang was completely stupefied.

"This monster's hand speed is at least 20% faster compared to yesterday's!"

Chapter 223: Invisible Peak

Chapter 223: Invisible Peak

Li Yao's actions finished with a flash. What everyone saw from afar was just a lightly fluttering paper napkin. Before the napkin even landed on the table, it was picked up and laid down flat on the table.

As Jiang Shaoyang took two steps forwards, he furtively observed and saw 144 holes pricked by the toothpick at the center of a square napkin that were evenly distributed across twelve vertical and horizontal lines to form a square whose borders ran parallel to that of the napkin. At first glance, it seemed no different than a pre-printed pattern.

Jiang Shaoyang was struck by a lightning, his face devoid of any blood in the blink of an eye.

"144 holes made using a toothpick on an incomparably soft, fluttering paper napkin within a second!? Maybe... I could also do it.

"However, the 144 holes would not be so evenly distributed to the point that the distance between each hole is exactly the same, forming a perfect square.

"This requires amazing computation ability and terrifying hand-to-eye coordination to do it!

"So, this is his true strength!

"Yesterday, this monster was holding back a bit!"

At this point, Li Yao also felt someone hot standing behind him. As he turned his head to look, the shiny bald head of Jiang Shaoyang had scared the hell out of him.

"You change your style? Not bad, quite an attitude! Have you eaten? If not, let's eat together!"

Jiang Shaoyang kept staring at him as he bit his lips to the point he was bleeding. After a long while, he said, stressing each word, "Senior Brother Li Yao, see you later!"

Having finished, he turned around in a rigid manner no different than a robot before retracing his steps back.

"What the hell?" Li Yao scratched his disheveled hair; a puzzled look covered his face.

'Last night, didn't this guy say he'd have a duel with me in the morning? Why does it look like he has taken a big blow?'

Even when he was defeated yesterday, he didn't look so crestfallen.

The gloomy look in his eyes was simply as though Li Yao had taken his girlfriend.

"What the hell!"

The Deep Sea University examinees were a million times more at a loss than Li Yao. One by one, they tugged their hair; they were simply unable to understand what had transpired.

A second ago, Jiang Shaoyang wanted to take revenge, he seemed to have been possessed by the devil; the murderous intention emanating from him clouded the sky and covered the earth.

That indomitable and unstoppable attitude devoid anyone of the slightest bit of doubt that Li Yao wouldn't be steamrolled by him, and it could also be considered as venting the suffocating feeling in their hearts.

After all, because of yesterday's defeat, God knows how many examinees were secretly mocking them. Particularly, the rival examinees from the Star Nebula University and the Federation's First Military College, they, even more so, did not have any intention to conceal their gloating.

They had been waiting for Jiang Shaoyang to use a brilliant victory to slap these people's faces swollen!

Unexpectedly, after having stood behind Li Yao for a few minutes and saying a few words, Jiang Shaoyang's overwhelmingly imposing attitude disappeared like a puff of smoke, and he withdrew dejectedly.

"Shaoyang, what happened? Didn't you wanted to go over and challenge Li Yao?! Why aren't you challenging him?" several Deep Sea University examinees asked, dissatisfied.

Jiang Shaoyang replied, dispiritedly, "The challenge is over."

"Ah?"

"Who won?"

A vacant look appeared in Jiang Shaoyang's eyes, yet there was also some sort of strange excitement too, as he muttered, "I lost again.

"If we say, yesterday's competition also had some element of luck, that Senior Brother Li Yao only won because he had laid some traps for me to walk right into it.

"Then today was completely due to the difference in strength. I was completely steamrolled by him!

"Nevertheless, it's pretty good. Senior Brother Li Yao has shown me clearly that once someone's will to fight has soared to 1,000%, their state can soar terrifyingly high too!

"We have many years ahead of us!"

Having finished speaking, the gloominess and sense of loss on Jiang Shaoyang's face were completely swept away. What replaced them was a resolution so strong it seemed he could kill tigers and dragons, behead gods, and slaughter devils. A power that could crush mountains and rivers in his path from the depths of his every cell emerged, the sun was rekindled!

With his head high and chest out, he walked out of the mess hall in large strides.

Leaving behind hundreds of Deep Sea University examinees who were soon about to go crazy.

"Did I hear it correctly!?

"Jiang Shaoyang has become so frightening overnight that his ultimate hand speed had improved by some 11%!

"Yet he had been defeated by Li Yao?!

"And it took only a second for Jiang Shaoyang to be convinced thoroughly to the point that he even said that he was completely steamrolled!? This is simply—

"Within in a span of one second, how in the bloody hell did they compete!? How did they even compete!?"

These people were outstanding members of the refiners' community, they were crowned with the title of 'genius' in their respective hometowns, yet they were scratching their heads as their faces flushed red to ears; they were on the brink of collapsing.

In their eyes, the quietly sitting Li Yao who was 'slurping' the soy milk and taking a bite of meat bun seemed to have his entire body covered in scales as wings, fangs, and talons emerged, an intense demonic energy was circling around him; he was a monster out and out!

...

After a while...

The message of authentication completion was announced.

All the examinees who had passed received a resplendent emblem, representing that they had officially become a refiner and joined the refiners' circle which is one of the strongest careers in the world of cultivation.

Following which, a couple dozen carriers returned the examinees to their respective cities.

Three of these carriers flew towards the largest city in the eastern hemisphere, the Deep Sea City.

When they landed at the Deep Sea City, it was already midnight.

The Deep Sea University stood toweringly at the corner of Deep Sea City. It occupied a quarter of the city's total area. The brightly illuminated rows upon rows of buildings, a part even extending to under the sea, along with the resplendent reflection on the sea, seemed no different to a paradise.

On a floating mountain dotted with rocks, giant trees, and waterfalls, Supernova Jiang Sheng was wholeheartedly enjoying a battle between two puppet warbeasts.

It was the previous day's duel between Li Yao's Tarantula and Jiang Shaoyang's Wolf King.

Jiang Shaoyang watched quietly with a deadpan look on his face.

Even when the Tarantula's weird tail plunged ruthlessly into the Wolf King, he didn't bat an eye even the slightest bit.

Until when the entire Wolf King had been destroyed into fragments did he turned his head and asked a dark skin girl standing nearby; she didn't even appear to have crossed thirty, "If it were you, how would you deal with this puppet warbeast?"

This lady's name was Yuan Yexue, she was Jiang Sheng's true disciple, and one of the Novem Stellae.

Jiang Sheng had put a lot of effort into developing the Novem Stellae. According to their various characteristics and talents, he trained nine teenaged experts with different methods. Each of them possessed all kinds of marvelous skills.

Among them, Yuan Yexue was a refiner who specialized in puppet warbeasts. Not only was she specialized in crafting them, controlling them was also her forte.

In the battlefield, she alone was capable of controlling ten puppet warbeasts simultaneously and could unleash their battle force to the maximum. She was an out and out warbeast expert.

Yuan Yexue pondered for a moment and said, "Shaoyang underestimated his opponent, since his opponent had such tyrannical ability to modify, there was no reason for such big defects to be left out in clear sight involuntarily. They were definitely traps!

"If it was me, I would have launched attacks from the front, where the Tarantula's armor was thickest! Although the armor was thick, the cross-shaped crystal eye track was its lethal weakness!

"I would have torn down the front armor along the crystal eye tracks, and directly smashed the main crystal processor!

"Of course, even if the tactic was to be successful, I cannot also guarantee I will certainly win. The Tarantula had indeed been modified correctly. Li Yao is really formidable!"

Jiang Shang heaved a sigh and said, "An accomplished disciple owes his accomplishment to his great teacher. Senior Sister Yuan's only disciple is sure to be impressive. I wanted to recruit him from the very beginning, alas, he rejected me. It is really regrettable!"

Yuan Yexue's eyebrows twitched as she said in a rather unconvinced tone, "Teacher, although the terrific skills he had displayed didn't conform with his age, and is far better than an ordinary student's, however, our Deep Sea University has an abundance of geniuses. Many of them are also far better than him! Which one of the Novem Stellae isn't better than him?"

Jiang Sheng said, sneering, "I'm not feeling regretful for the Deep Sea University, I am feeling deeply regretful for him. Such a talented seedling's future has been destroyed just because of his own impulsiveness and capriciousness!

"It is true that he is somewhat talented, however, staying in a place like the Grand Desolate War Institution and taking the wrong path of refining, will slowly destroy his good talent!

"I truly can't understand what both master and apprentice are actually thinking. First, it was Senior Sister Yuan, and now it's Li Yao, why have they not joined the Deep Sea University which has such a good environment!? Why must they plunge themselves into the limitless Wasteland!? They are simply crazy!"

At this moment, heavy footsteps resounded from outside before a travel-worn Jiang Shaoyang appeared.

"Shaoyang!"

Yuan Yexue welcomed him.

She had long received the news; she wasn't surprised by the bald Jiang Shaoyang. She said, smiling, "I heard that this time you have encountered a rare rival. And although you lost, you received enlightenment and your hand speed improved by 11.3% overnight!?"

Jiang Shaoyang nodded slightly and stepped forward. With bright and shiny eyes, he directly gazed at Jiang Sheng as he came straight to the point without the least bit of nonsense, "Uncle, I am already a registered refiner, how should I train now?"

Both uncle and nephew were a pair of fanatics who were obsessed with the road of refining. Even when they spoke, they didn't have the slightest bit of emotions.

Jiang Sheng pulled up a dense schedule on the hologram and said coldly, "Becoming a registered refiner is just the beginning. For the next part, I have arranged twenty-seven projects for you. You can choose one or a few, it's all up to you. You will join them as an assistant researcher and slowly accumulate experience and increase your knowledge.

"However, whichever project you choose, you must accept the test of the project leader. The test will be highly difficult. Even if you are my nephew, there won't be any nepotism, it will only be tougher."

Jiang Shaoyang took a glance at the schedule and showed an as-expected look on his face as he smiled.

He took out an envelope from his chest pocket and handed it over respectfully.

Jiang Sheng took to look and his countenance changed before he said, "An application to withdraw from university? Why!?"

"Because I have seen the peak."

Jiang Shaoyang stated calmly, "Uncle, I've grown up in the Deep Sea University and seen many experts of Refining Department as well as the road they are taking. Now I am also taking the very same road. It's tantamount to conquering a mountain with visible peak. It's not the least bit challenging or delightful."

"So?"

"So, I am preparing to leave the Deep Sea University and look for an invisible peak, towering into the clouds. Even if there is no peak at all, then I will tread upon the high mountains of the endless galaxy and conquer them!"

"Shaoyang, are you crazy!" exclaimed Yuan Yexue.

"How can you leave Deep Sea University? We, Novem Stellae, have been looking forward to you joining us. You are publicly recognized as the Tenth Star!"

Jiang Shaoyang smiled and revealed his sharp teeth as he said, stressing his each and every word, "Senior Sister Yuan, I have always been meaning to tell you something that I have been holding in my heart, I can finally say it to you.

"I never like the title 'Tenth Star', I did not like it at all.

"In the eyes of others, it seems standing side by side with you is a very glorious thing, but as far as I'm concerned, I don't like standing side by side with anyone, more importantly, I don't like those stars which can be found anywhere in the entire sky.

"I am not a star."

Jiang Shaoyang knocked his shiny bald head and said softly, "I am the Sun."

Chapter 224: The Future Road

Chapter 224: The Future Road

While Deep Sea University's Refining Department had been sent into a complete mess by Jiang Shaoyang's insane stunt, the culprit of the whole fiasco, Li Yao, was completely oblivious. He was comfortably sitting in a private compartment on a crystal train which was traveling towards Wild Waves City.

Originally, he could have boarded a military carrier to the Giant Edge Pass.

However, Li Yao came to remember Ding Ying's words and made the same choice as her of embarking a crystal train with the ordinary people while traveling in the Wasteland.

If due to a one in a million chance, the crystal train encountered a beast tide, he could help them resist for a while.

Unconsciously, Li Yao began to strictly follow the standards of a cultivator too.

There was still a day's time before the crystal train would due to arrive at Wild Waves City, which Li Yao had no intention of wasting. He sat with his legs crossed on the floor and started the crystal processor, before initiating the telepathic thoughts of the Heaven Origin Cultivators' Nexus.

A resplendent half-step great illusionary land, in the blink of an eye, enveloped the small compartment.

A middle-aged, beautiful cultivation assistant, that was purely an illusion, looked at him smilingly and congratulated him in arousing tone, "Congratulations, Fellow Daoist Li Yao, for successfully passing the Refiners' Registration Examination and becoming a powerful registered refiner. You have been granted a higher clearance level and the refining forum of the Heaven Origin Cultivators' Nexus is fully open to you!"

At this moment, Li Yao was not only a 6th level Refinement Stage cultivator, he was also a registered refiner. Many sections that used to be gray at the beginning had completely transformed into resplendent, colorful rays of light as he was flooded with information, and their number had increased by a couple dozen times.

Ignoring that information, Li Yao directly entered the refining forum.

"Fellow Daoist Li Yao, as you have entered the refining forum for the first time, let me give you an introduction."

The cultivation assistant continued, "This forum was built by the registered refiners' association and is a specialized platform dedicated for exchange between the refiners. There are multiple sections in here where you can discuss academic issues with the other refiners or browse a large number of job offers, or receive a mission of your choice with huge pay, or improve your own rank. Of course, if you have any missions, or want to recruit like-minded refiners to complete complex projects, you can also post your requests here!"

Li Yao nodded. These things were common sense. He quickly skimmed past them.

"Whoosh!"

Behind the cultivation assistant appeared eight translucent block diagrams, each representing eight sections.

The world of magical equipment was immensely vast. In theory, all non-living entities powered by spiritual energy that could emit spiritual power were all magical equipment.

Such a vast world could not be completely mastered by a single refiner even if they exhausted their entire life. A vast majority of refiners could only master one or few aspects of this immeasurably vast world.

In the Star Glory Federation, the magical equipment is divided into eight ranks by their size.

First rank, mustard-level, also known as nanoscale, means holding Mount Sumeru within a mustard or accommodating the entire universe in a grain of rice.

A single nanoscale magical equipment is even smaller than a cell but once thousands and thousands of units combine together, they could display inconceivable abilities.

The Star Glory Federation has a powerful combat suit called "Nano Suit", it is crafted using nano-scale magical equipment and weighs very little. It flows like a liquid but has the strongest defense. If it is worn together with a crystal suit, it can form a two-tier combat system.

If a cultivator wore a crystal suit over a nano suit, he could simply kill a god if a god blocked the way, kill Buddha if

Buddha blocked the way. He would be invincible and ever victorious.

Second rank, the super small-scale magical equipment.

Super small-scale magical equipment have the size of flies, mosquitoes, or similar sizes. Once they gathered into a group, they could also become terrifying killing weapons.

Third rank, small-scale magical equipment, or also known as individual-type magical equipment.

This level is comprised of most widely used magical equipment. Flying swords, crystal suits, firearms, puppet warbeasts, are all small-scale magical equipment.

There were many refiners who studied small-scale magical equipment. Li Yao, too, was a specialist in this domain.

Fourth rank, middle-scale magical equipment.

The magical equipment of this rank has a length varying from seven-eight meters to twenty-thirty meters and can weigh dozens of tons to hundreds of tons. Crystal tanks commonly used by the military, as well as the flying shuttles that can carry dozens of people, are all middle-scale magical equipment.

Fifth rank, large-scale magical equipment.

Army carriers, patrol crafts, destroyers, are all large-scale magical equipment. When they open fire, their destructive force is comparable to that of a Golden Dan Stage.

Sixth rank, super large-scale magical equipment.

The main force of the army, battleships, flagships, aerial fortresses, are all super large-scale magical equipment. The federation army's eternal flagship, the Distant Expanse that Li Yao had seen above the Far East Ocean, perfectly represents a super large-scale magical equipment!

Seventh rank, giant-scale magical equipment!

Once the magical equipment reached this rank, they tended to become complex, integrated systems that could cover the entire city, such as "Anti-demon beast defense system".

The eighth rank is also the technical force of the Star Glory Federation and can touch the highest rank, the planetary-level! The planetary-level magical equipment's ability can cover the entire mainland.

The "super-fast crystal train system" that ran through the entire Star Glory Federation was an out-and-out planetary-level magical equipment!

This type of magical equipment couldn't be manufactured overnight. Even the super-fast crystal train system was still expanding, new rails were being built, connecting many more cities. Perhaps, it would take centuries to completely finish it.

As for the above planetary-level magical equipment, rumor had it that during the Star Sea Empire, cultivators could craft "star-level magical equipment" that could radiate the entire solar system.

However, in the "Armageddon Rebellion", this technology was lost.

'It's truly regrettable.'

Li Yao heaved a sigh and entered the small-scale magical equipment section.

The background of this section was tens of thousands of classical magical equipment blueprints shining brightly in the pitch black night sky, like countless brilliant stars.

Rows after rows of information once again cascaded down in front of Li Yao. However, this time the information was more targeted, all of which was related to small-scale magical equipment.

A majority of the information was about some cultivator willing to spend a truckload of money to buy a small-scale magical equipment.

It also included specific requirements, such as speed, weight, attributes and so on.

Li Yao browsed for a bit. Much to his surprise, the highest bidder was willing to spend billions to buy a small-scale magical equipment.

Li Yao smacked his lips; no wonder it was said that the refining profession was one of the best careers in the world of cultivation.

So long as the refiner could craft three to five pieces of such magical equipment every year, he could have everything: money, contacts, and resources!

However, the cultivators who were willing to spend billions would naturally seek the best refiners. Li Yao assessed the request for a moment, and realized that he could not achieve the requested performance parameters; he could not even think of achieving them!

In addition, there were recruitment notices posted by major sects, universities, and registered refiner firms.

With Li Yao's phenomenal performance in the Refiners' Registration Examination, he could now be considered as a small rookie with some reputation in the refiners' circle. It would be easy for him to find a good job be good future prospects.

However, Li Yao had already contacted his teacher.

And when Yuan Manqiu came to know that he had successfully become a registered refiner, she was extremely happy. Even when Dean Xiong Baili received this happy news, he was completely satisfied with his performance. He faintly revealed that after he graduated, if he stayed at the institute, he would enjoy the same treatment as Ding Lingdang.

Therefore, Li Yao's gaze did not stay on the recruitment notices for too long and jumped to the rank assessment.

The registered refiners were divided into ten ranks, from one-star to nine-star.

The refiners from one-star to three-star were "elite refiners".

A vast majority of registered refiner will stop at that level for their lifetime.

The refiners from four-star to six-star were "expert refiners".

Refiners of this rank were experts and authorities of a domain. Their words carried irrefutable weight.

Li Yao's teacher Yuan Manqiu, as well Supernova Jiang Shen, were expert refiners.

It was also the limit of ordinary refiners.

The refiners from seven-star to nine-star were "grandmaster refiners". Not only did they have authority over a domain, they could completely establish new domain and sect. The super magical equipment they refined could also be called national treasures. Only they could be awarded such honors.

Even in the entire Star Glory Federation, grandmaster refiners could be counted on one's fingers. Each one of them was in a prominent position; they were great figures whose names resounded throughout the federation!

"I wonder when I will become a grandmaster refiner!" Li Yao let his fallacy run wild.

He was neither an elite nor an expert, let alone a grandmaster. He was nothing but a whiteboard, "starless", the lowest class.

"I want to elevate my rank as soon as possible. At least become an elite! Being a whiteboard is simply shameful!"

Only when he improved his rank could he participate in higher-ranked refining projects, only then could he purchase more heaven and earth treasures from the refining association, only then could he have the qualifications to discuss and compete with higher-level experts, only then could he have the qualifications to contend with Deep Sea University.

The method to improve one's rank was also very simple.

Major universities, sects, loose cultivators, and armies posted many missions at the refining association.

And the association in accordance with the difficulty of the task assess them into different ranks.

As long as one could finish a "one-star refining mission", he or she would automatically have his or her rank upgraded to one-star refiner.

"Soon it will be summer vacation."

Li Yao pondered aloud, "In the summer vacation, on one hand, I can complete some tasks and improve my rank, and also earn some money, while I am it, to buy some heaven and earth treasures and refining tools. On another hand, I can only also temper my skills.

"After all, next semester, teacher will restart the Project Mystic Skeleton. I also want to participate in it and contribute.

"Crystal suit is magical equipment in magical equipment; it is very difficult to craft. My current skills are probably insufficient to play any crucial role.

"Train, I must train madly. I must leave the 'Fiend Star' name on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit!"

...

When the crystal train slipped into the Wild Waves City train station, it was already late night.

Li Yao didn't return to the Refining Department but went to the faculty area with an excited look covering his entire face.

He went looking for Ding Lingdang. He wanted to tell her the great news.

He didn't know why but after he became a registered refiner, the first person that appeared in his mind with whom he wanted to share this happiness was not Professor Yuan Manqiu but Ding Lingdang.

However, he resisted this urge.

It was meaningless to share such great news via the spiritual crane messenger. Of course, it must be face to face. While at it, he wanted to look the stunned expression on Ding Lingdang's face and then listen to her compliments!

While thinking of Ding Lingdang, Li Yao's corners of lips rose into a smile. Even he himself wasn't aware that his eyes were radiating a wily radiance.

He knew Ding Lingdang would not be asleep.

She was a cultivation maniac. As long as it wasn't between two and three in the middle of the night, she would not be asleep.

At the base of the small mountain, amid the sea of bamboos, Li Yao's gait was like he was walking in his own garden as he greeted the parrot and small snake.

Immediately, he raised his eyebrows as the smile on his face stiffened.

As he raised his nose, he got a whiff of a faint intoxicating smell before his pupils constricted suddenly.

"It's the smell of intoxicating immortal vine!"

Chapter 225: Ding Lingdang's Secret

Chapter 225: Ding Lingdang's Secret

Intoxicating Immortal Vine was a demonized plant species and contained special neurotoxins which had extreme anesthetic effects. In the Star Glory Federation, it was one of the main raw ingredients for manufacturing narcotic agents.

For cultivators, the Intoxicating Immortal Vine had another use.

Ordinary liquors could hardly get cultivators intoxicated because of their sturdy body and firm spirit.

But even the cultivators had seven emotions and six desires, they too have the time when they want to get drunk and forget their sorrows or get good and drunk.

At that moment, cultivators would mix the powder of Intoxicating Immortal Vine into their wines and get drunk.

However, Li Yao had never seen Ding Lingdang do so.

She was a pure martial arts maniac. She would absolutely not let anything numb her body or spirit. Usually, she wouldn't even take a drop of alcohol, so how would she mix an intoxicating substance as intense as powdered Intoxicating Immortal Vine in her drinks?

"Is someone drugging her?"

Once this thought crossed his mind, Li Yao could not help but break into laughter.

Not to mention Ding Lingdang herself was a ferocious dragon in human skin, this was the faculty area of the Grand Desolate War Institution and had many Combat Department professors leaving all around. All of them were ruthless characters in or above Foundation Building Stage.

Who would dare come here to drug someone? They would have to be tired of living.

Besides, although the Intoxicating Immortal Vine had intense anesthetic effects, its smell was also strong and unique, which was hard to conceal no matter what methods were used.

Even if someone was drugging someone else, they wouldn't be so stupid as to use Intoxicating Immortal Vine.

"Does she want to get drunk?

"This is weird!"

Li Yao's curiosity was piqued immensely. Having walked around the villa twice, he found an open window.

All around the villa, defensive array glyphs were installed. Even if the door was open, outsiders could forget about ever sneaking inside.

However, Li Yao had frequently entered Ding Lingdang's house, and occasionally when Ding Lingdang wasn't home, but he alone would go to Billowing Star Sea to train.

Ding Lingdang was a careless girl and had long given him the authority so that the defense array glyphs would treat him as one of their own people.

Li Yao stuck his ear to window sea. The room was quiet but a faint crying could be heard coming from far away.

"She- she is crying? Impossible!"

Li Yao was so surprised that the fine body hair that grew on the back of his neck was now all standing on their ends as a scene appeared in his mind: a dozen meter long T-rex with the gap between its fangs still laden with blood was very sad and dejected as it broke into tears, it was simply...

Unimaginable!

Li Yao swallowed a mouthful of saliva before turning his head to look and discovered the parrot and small snake gazing at him with bright and shiny eyes.

"You must act as my witness, I am only going in because I think that something happened to Ding Lingdang!"

He could not resist anymore as he lightly pushed opened the window and rolled inside.

The parrot and small snake took a glance at each other before they too followed him furtively and went in to see the status of their mistress.

The living room was empty but the smell of alcohol and Intoxicating Immortal Vine was even more intense. Under the dim moonlight, Li Yao discovered a dozen bottles randomly lying around on the table and on the ground as well.

He grabbed a bottle to check and it was the most alcoholic Baijiu[1], and some residue of Intoxicating Immortal Vine was still stuck on the inner wall of the bottle.

He grabbed another bottle and it was same for it too.

"She drank so much!"

An inexplicable fire aroused in his heart; even he could not understand why he would be so angry.

Holding his breath, he listened attentively and the intermittent weeping became clearer and clearer in the dark.

And the cries were filled with sadness, grief, and some fear as well, which for Li Yao felt as though a car had lightly scratched his heart.

"What the hell!?"

Li Yao followed the sound and slowly he drew closer and closer to the source. Finally, he came to the back of the stairs, at the entrance of the underground basement.

"Is it here?"

Li Yao hesitated.

Ding Lingdang had given complete access to him, he was even free to enter and exit her bedroom, except the basement whose entrance was always locked with a huge rusty iron lock; it had seemingly never been opened.

Everyone had their own secrets, and perhaps the underground basement was the secret of Ding Lingdang.

At this moment, the door of this secret was completely open.

Through which, flickering mottled lights could be seen, and in addition to the sobbing, voices of a man and a woman laughing and talking intermixed with bell-like laughter could be heard coming.

"Are there other people inside?"

Inexplicable feelings arose in Li Yao's heart as he hastened his footsteps and went down the stairs.

The basement was not too big. There was a faint musty smell in the air. Various bits and bobs were randomly lying around, there were also some children toys as well.

At the center of the basement, there was a hologram projector which was projecting a 3-dimensional image of a middle-aged couple along with a very cute little girl.

Apparently, the voices that Li Yao had heard a moment ago were coming from the hologram projector.

"So it was a video."

Li Yao heaved a sigh of relief. He gazed around and discovered Ding Lingdang huddled in a corner, embracing her knees. A tattered blanket covered her body. She seemed to be in trance, her eyes were blurred as she shivered while she choked with sobs.

Li Yao was stupefied. His heart was like it had been ruthlessly scratched by invisible claws; his eyes twitched with pain.

He had never seen Ding Lingdang in such a weak and helpless position.

She was the very Ding Lingdang, who could smash a demon beast to death with just a punch, who could finish entire five legs of lamb in one sitting. This was the very Ding Lingdang who was the former president of the Iron Fist Club, who had routed countless hulks who were no different than T-rexes in human forms!

"Are...you okay?"

Li Yao gingerly walked over to Ding Lingdang.

Ding Lingdang was already dead drunk. She was completely immersed in her own world and took a long time to distinguish the source of the sound.

When she found that someone had rushed into the basement, a panicked look appeared on her face.

It was as though a ten-year-old girl was facing a cruel demon beast.

However, in the next second, she seemed to have recognized Li Yao before the panic and fragile look in her eye turned into a dazzling aura in the blink of an eye.

It was like a drowning man had discovered a floating piece of wood. Li Yao had turned into her entire hope.

Ding Lingdang immediately rushed up to him!

Although she was dead drunk, at the end of the day, she was still a Foundation Building Stage expert. Li Yao was caught off guard and didn't know how to dodge. She pushed him down on the ground and tightly held him like an octopus.

Suddenly, Li Yao's face was flushed red to his ears.

It wasn't that he was shy or excited, no, no, no, he was completely out of breath.

As she was all alone in her home, Ding Lingdang only had thin pajamas draped over her body, and a lot of her cleavage was wide open on display. She also generally cultivated all year round, as such she had an exquisite body, along with her long and slender legs...

Painted an exceptionally sexy scene.

Nevertheless, not the slightest bit of evil intentions aroused in Li Yao's mind.

It was not that he was abnormal or anything, in fact, Ding Lingdang was too tightly wrapped around him!

As a matter of fact, drunks are a bit stronger than they normally are, not to mention, there are all kinds of strangulation techniques which a martial arts fanatic like Ding Lingdang had learned, she was as tightly wrapped around Li Yao like a beautiful python that was as thick as a bucket. Not only was he out of breath, even his bones were making "crunch, crunch" sounds. Sooner or later Li Yao's body would be minced by her.

"Let me go! Quickly, let me go!" Li Yao wanted to cry but had no tears. The two rolled on the ground. Somehow, Li Yao seized the opportunity and found a gap and retreated two steps, but yet again, his ankle was grabbed by Ding Lingdang and was pulled ruthlessly, dragging him back as she tightly wrapped herself around Li Yao. Apparently, she was not willing to let him go.

If someone who was completely oblivious to the whole situation saw them, he would definitely think that the two had deep-seated hatred and were fighting desperately at close-quarters.

The parrot and the snake hid at the entrance, quietly watching.

"You are leaving me with no choice!"

Realizing that Ding Lingdang was going to hold him tighter and tighter as stars began revolving around his eyes, his ears began ringing, even his heart was soon about to be crushed, Li Yao clenched his teeth as he began to release the spiritual energy as he began increasing his level, bursting forth with the real power of a cultivator!

"2nd level of Refinement Stage!"

"3rd level of Refinement Stage!"

"4th level of Refinement Stage!"

Ding Lingdang didn't use any spiritual energy, she was only hugging Li Yao with pure brute force, so of course, she wasn't his opponent. Soon, Li Yao was about to break free.

Ding Lingdang seemed to have realized that the floating wood was about to drift away as tears gushed out from her eyes and an aggrieved and terrified look appeared on her face. She said, in a quivering voice, "Don't leave me again."

This sentence stupefied Li Yao.

He never knew that Ding Lingdang's voice could be so gentle and fragile that it could give birth to a desire to protect her in anyone's heart.

'You aren't Ding Lingdang, you must be a demon beast in disguise!' Li Yao shouted in his heart.

A word in the Ding Lingdang's words seemed to have aroused the subtle emotions in his heart.

'Don't leave me 'again'? In other words, someone has left her, who could it be? Is it her ex-boyfriend?'

Although Li Yao had not drunk the wine mixed with Intoxicating Immortal Vine, nevertheless, he was feeling somewhat drunk. One after another, ridiculous ideas kept on popping up in his mind.

Before his brain could issue a command, he body had already reacted.

He didn't struggle to escape anymore and let Ding Lingdang tightly wrapped around him as her burning hot cheek tightly stuck to his chest.

He maintained his level at the 1st level of the Refinement Stage and used his spiritual energy to barely ensure his breathing as he gazed at Ding Lingdang's crimson face.

Ding Lingdang narrowed her eyes, as though she was a cat who had returned to her nest as she showed a completely satisfied smile

She had already been crying for a few hours, her spirit had reached the limit. In addition, she had drunk so much when she was alone that she was ready to hug Li Yao in grief and fear as her support.

At that moment, she quickly fell asleep in Li Yao's arms.

She began to snore in an extremely harsh and completely loud voice; she was not the slightest bit like a lady.

"Who the hell are they?!"

Li Yao was rather baffled as tens of thousands of questions marks appeared in his mind.

Having been tightly hugged by Ding Lingdang, Li Yao was completely unable to move and was bored to death. He could only raise his head to look at the middle-aged couple and the little girl in the hologram.

Following which, he discovered that the middle-aged couple's faces somewhat resembled Ding Lingdang, and the little girl was simply a copy of a younger Ding Lingdang.

"So it was Ding Lingdang's family video. This little girl should be about ten years old, and the middle-aged couple must be her parents."

Li Yao didn't know much about Ding Lingdang's family. All he knew was that her parents had departed from this world a long time ago.

Her mother was a professor of the Grand Desolate War Institution and this villa was left to her by her mother. As for what her father did, he didn't know anything.

In the video, Ding Lingdang's father wore a black military uniform; surprisingly, he was a soldier.

The video was playing the scene of a family of three having a picnic on the lawn.

The ten-years-old Ding Lingdang was still a chubby girl. She was chasing the parrot and the snake, her laughter was filled with innocence.

After a while, she ran to her father's side and keenly gave a kiss before speaking in a crisp voice, "Papa, the puppet warbeast refined by you is truly too good!

"In the future, I want to be like papa, I want to become a super powerful refiner!"

"What?"

Li Yao was so scared that he almost bit his own tongue.

Among all the horrors he had experienced tonight, none of it was worse than this.

"The dream of Ding Lingdang, this T-rex in human skin, this martial arts fanatic, this professor of Grand Desolate War Institution Combat Department, was actually to become a refiner?"

Chapter 226: I Will Protect You

Chapter 226: I Will Protect You

Even now, Li Yao could clearly remember that, when they first met, Ding Lingdang looked at the refining profession with contempt.

How could he have ever thought that her father was actually a refiner? And if those two lifelike puppet warbeasts came from her father's hand, then he would have been a refiner of at least the expert-level; he would've been at almost the same level as Yuan Manqiu.

So, how could she dislike the refining profession?

With countless doubts circling around his head, Li Yao continued to watch the video.

The video was very long, spanning for a couple hours. It was a mixture of hundreds of videos, recording the scenes of the life of the three over a span of a few years.

While watching the video, Li Yao gradually came to know of another Ding Lingdang, one that was sometimes lively and sometimes quiet; a girl who would become extremely cute when she burst into laughter, a powerless, and always crying, little girl.

This little girl, under the guidance of her father, could rig up some common civilian magical equipment and become so happy that she would grin from ear to ear and dimples would appear on her chubby little face.

Li Yao took a glance at his surroundings and discovered that a lot of the magical equipment that appeared in the video were piled around, laden with dust.

The video came to an abrupt stop at Ding Lingdang's thirteen birthday.

'After she turned thirteen, why did she completely change into another person? Not only did her temper became fiery, she aspired to become a powerful body practitioner rather than a refiner.'

Li Yao's brain was suddenly struck by a flash as he recalled the words once spoken by Fiend Blade Peng Hai, "I've met another person just like you. At the age of thirteen, she was a super cultivation genius who had a Spiritual Root Development Quotient of 85%, but all of a sudden, her Spiritual Root Development Quotient fell to 11%. She could barely even stand up; she was reduced to a cripple. Everyone believed that she could no longer cultivate and would spend the rest of her life in bed!

"But this person, not only did she stand up again by putting in a hundred times more effort, an amount that no one could imagine. She once again stepped onto the road of cultivation. At the age of twenty-two, she reached the Pinnacle Refinement Stage!

"If I'm not wrong, after a year and a half at most, she will successfully build her foundation and become one of the youngest Building Foundation Stage Cultivator in the Federation. And If you give her thirty to fifty years... she will become the youngest Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator in the Federation!"

The person that Fiend Blade Peng Hai spoke of was none other than Ding Lingdang.

"What happened to you when you were thirteen?"

Lowering his head, Li Yao carefully observed the sleeping face of Ding Lingdang.

Her face was the epitome of overflowing heroic spirit and also had a bit of stubbornness to it. When compared to the chubby, round face from the video, it was almost completely unrecognizable to Li Yao.

Suddenly, God knows what nightmare she was dreaming, a slight frown crept over Ding Lingdang's face and the corner of her lips started quivering; revealing a sliver of panic.

'Don't be afraid, I will protect you,' said Li Yao gently in his heart before he suddenly became muddleheaded.

"Am I going crazy! Protect her? Protect Ding Lingdang? Protect this T-rex in human skin?

"How could I have such weird thoughts?

"I must have been too exhausted from the past two days; my mind must be so tired that I can't put my brain cells to good enough use. That must be it!"

The night went by very slowly. And everything that happened that night was far from normal. Having been hugged by Ding Lingdang, Li Yao's eyes went wide as thousands upon thousands of thoughts frantically circled in his mind yet none of them were related to refining. He kept forcing himself to think about various academic problems or complex and profound blueprints, and yet, after a moment, all of these thoughts would turn into the ever smiling and twinkling face of Ding Lingdang.

As dawn approached, Ding Lingdang's grip loosened a bit; Li Yao, on the other hand, was unable to hold on. His head fell down as he sank into his dreams.

He slept like a log, without a care in the world. Inevitably, he dreamt of innumerable wild fantasies which made him flushed red to his ears.

When he woke up, he found himself alone, lying with his hands and legs crossed on Ding Lingdang's bed.

Li Yao felt lost, nevertheless, "BANG BANG BANG BANG" sounds of something hitting came ringing next to his ears.

He turned his head to take a look, and found Ding Lingdang, dressed in gym shorts and a vest, hitting a sandbag that was crafted from Gray Dragon Crocodile skin which was several inches thick with full force. Each of her punches sank deep into the sandbag.

Her face was glowing with health and radiating vigor, not even the slightest trace of last night's weakness could be found; it was as if it was just a dream.

Shaking his head, Li Yao sat up before forcefully rubbing his face. "Maybe I was too tired and have been dreaming last night!? This is the Ding Lingdang that I know, how could she be weak-looking like last night?"

Just then, a gust of wind brushed his face as Ding Lingdang fiercely rushed onto the bed. Spreading his hands and legs apart, and holding him, she said ruthlessly, with eyes filled with hostility, looking from above, "Don't even think of talking about me crying last night, or I will kill you!"

Li Yao was shaken to the core; it wasn't a dream, she was indeed crying.

Suddenly, Li Yao's eyes were filled with curiosity and complex emotions which even he himself could not understand.

Feeling nervous from his look, Ding Lingdang smacked his forehead. "Don't look at me like that. I drank too much last night and was in a bad state, that's all. Who would have known that you, smelly brat, would silently slip in!"

Li Yao explained himself in a hurry, "I noticed the intense smell of Intoxicating Immortal Vine coming from your house, and I recalled that you never drink, more so getting dead drunk, I was afraid something happened to you, that's why I rushed inside!"

"I know, otherwise you would have already been beaten to a pulp!"

"But last night, you actually..."

Ding Lingdang retreated and sat on the bed, holding the pillow in her arms. After a while, she took a long deep breath and said calmly, "Forget it, I will tell you anyway. Anyhow it's not a big secret, many of the professors in the institute know it already.

"Last night was the death anniversary of my parents."

Li Yao's eyes went wide.

"My mom was a professor of the Grand Desolate War Institution's Combat Department and my dad was an army refiner. I inherited the blood of them both and showed a talent for creativity as well as for combat at an early age.

"However, my mom thought that it would be hard for a girl to take the road of combat. She'd had it hard from an early age; naturally, she didn't want her daughter to suffer like her.

"So, my parents wanted me to be a refiner, and in my childhood, I also liked refining very much.

"The year when I turned thirteen, a new city was being built in the depths of the Wasteland and my dad was also stationed at the military base outside the city.

"When the city was finished, a grand ceremony was held, and my mom and I were invited as well to attend the ceremony.

"Unexpectedly, at the inauguration ceremony, we encountered a massive beast tide outbreak. Countless powerful demon beasts under the command of Demon King encircled the entire city in the blink of an eye!

"Originally, the city would have been able to defend for a while until the reinforcements arrived with the help of its self-defense system in the outer ring of the city as well as by controlling the countless pieces of magical equipment.

"However, the city was built recently and its self-defense system hadn't undergone rigorous debugging, as such, there were many problems with the self-defense system.

"During the highly intense battle, the flaws in the defense system were quickly revealed and the Demon King, taking advantage of the opportunity, ruthlessly bombarded the control center, exploding it to nothing!

"As a result, all of the unmanned magical equipment failed one after another, while the beast tide advanced straight into the city unchecked and wantonly massacred. My mom and dad died in the battle.

"Although I survived, my spiritual roots development quotient fell to the bottom; I became a cripple. I had to start from the beginning.

"Since then, I realized one thing.

"When magical equipment is no longer reliable, we can only rely on ourselves. The strongest fist is the most reliable piece of equipment!

"Therefore, when I once again embarked on the road of cultivation, I did not hesitate to choose to become a body practitioner.

"I firmly believe that only this road can allow me to take revenge!

"The appearance of the Demon King is still etched into my brain, Demon King Night Hail. Even on the 'Ominous Demon List', his notoriety is well-known. He's commanded many beast tides and attacked the Heaven Origin Sector. Every time, before he retreated, he would kill two Golden Core powerhouses. Among the high-level demon clan, he is one of the most problematic figures for the federation.

"However, someday, he will die by my fist. I want to punch him into a patty!"

Li Yao listened to her quietly; he was rendered speechless.

In his heart, he was deeply shocked, so shocked that it could not be described with just words.

He didn't expect that this girl, who would always be radiating light and heat like the sun, would actually have such a dark past.

Although she was playing it down, Li Yao could imagine the scene; a lonely little girl, in a city filled with a demon beast, watching her parents being torn apart by the demon beasts.

'Last night, after she drank until she was dead drunk, she must have returned to the year when she turned thirteen, returned to the time when the demon beasts were everywhere in the town, that must the reason why she so was panic-stricken and so powerless,' Li Yao thought in his heart, which his eyes did not conceal.

Ding Lingdang was completely infuriated by the compassionate and protective look in his eyes. As short-tempered as she was, she said, waving her hand, "I did not tell you these things just so you take pity on me, I was afraid that you would think some nonsense, that's all!

"I don't need any sympathy from anybody. You'd better forget what I have said a moment ago and what happened last night. Forget about everything and what you should do!"

All Li Yao could do was nod.

As he himself was someone from the Magical Equipment Graveyard, he could relate to the delicate mentality of Ding Lingdang as a fellow sufferer.

When he looked at the time, his countenance changed. "It's already 12 PM? Oops!

"I have a meeting with the teacher in the early morning, we decided to discuss restarting the Project Mystic Skeleton!"

Li Yao jumped up and hastily went downstairs. Having bidden her farewell, he anxiously made his way out of the villa.

Closing the door, the extremely calm look on her face collapsed all of a sudden. Her face which was laced with a murderous look, in the blink of an eye, blushed.

"It's over, I don't know how I should act around him anymore!"

As Ding Lingdang leaned on the door, wriggling her graceful body, an embarrassed look appeared her face before she covered her face with her hands, and her mutterings escaping from the gaps between her fingers, "So embarrassing, that stinking brat has completely seen my shameful appearance. How am I going to face him in the future? I have completely lost my prestige as elder sister!

"And you two!"

Ding Lingdang, with one arm on her waist, while the other pointed at the snake and the parrot, said angrily, "Why did you let him come in?"

The snake and the parrot looked at their mistress very innocently. Their crystal eyes became sluggish, completely still.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK!

The knocking on the door rang behind her head.

It completely scared the hell out of Ding Lingdang; her heart was crazily pounding. Having calmed herself down, she opened the door, only to find Li Yao standing there.

"What is it?" Ding Lingdang asked snappily.

"Nothing."

Li Yao looked a bit flustered, "I suddenly remembered one thing: last night you said, 'don't leave me again', you thought I was your parents and asked them not to leave you again, right?"

Chapter 227: Rebirth of the Mystic Bone

Chapter 227: Rebirth of the Mystic Bone

"That's correct. Why?"

Ding Lingdang frowned.

"Nothing particular really. I thought you were talking about your ex-boyfriend at first and I was a little embarrassed. But later I figured out that it was impossible. Haha."

Li Yao scratched his head. For some reason, he felt delighted.

"What do you mean by 'impossible'?! Do I look like someone who has never had a boyfriend?"

Ding Lingdang raised her eyebrow and burst out in anger.

In the spur of the moment, Li Yao asked, "No. No. But, do you have one?"

"I kind of, sort of, maybe had one." Ding Lingdang replied, flushed.

"May I ask what 'kind of, sort of, maybe had one' means?"

Li Yao suddenly turned into a baby of curiosity.

"It was when I just went into college. Everybody was new to each other. You know that guys outnumber girls in our college. Then there was this senior student from the Iron Fist Club who was in hot pursuit of me. Said that he adored my passion for martial arts and hoped to explore the peak of martial arts with me. He was earnest and also handsome. So I said that I would think about it carefully."

Ding Lingdang stammered to get the story through.

"Then what?"

Li Yao felt his throat was dry.

"Then, one afternoon, the Game of Senior Students and Freshmen in the Iron Fist Club took place. He was my opponent after drawing lots. I thought to myself: if you adore my passion for martial arts, of course, I should show you 120% of my capability, shouldn't I? But as it turned out, I should've controlled myself; I broke four of his ribs before kicking him out of the ring into the auditorium.

"That night, he texted me from ICU saying that, although I'm great, he felt we weren't appropriate for each other after full consideration, and that we should just be friends.

"That son of bitch had no manhood at all. He shrank at the first setback he met. Also, I never promised him anything. I just said that I would think about it. What did the latter half of the text message even mean? Who would want to be friends with such a coward?!

"I was in a terrible mood after all that. Two days later, the Iron Fist Club and the Chaotic Blades Hall got into a fight due to an incident. I was too angry to control myself again and sent 15 classmates of the Chaotic Blades Hall to the hospital.

"Ever since then, nobody's dared to ask me out anymore. What a bunch of losers!"

The more Ding Lingdang said, the angrier she became. She raised her head, only to find Li Yao grinning like an idiot. Pissed off, she slapped the door.

"What's that supposed to mean? I told you such a humiliating story because I treat you as a good bro. Other people laugh at me because I don't have a boyfriend, so be it. But why are you smirking, too?"

"I wasn't smirking."

Li Yao was about to laugh again as he said it.

"Still denying!"

Ding Lingdang snatched at Li Yao's face like lightning and pulled it hard. "You mouth is as broad as a trumpet, and you said you were not smirking! I got it. It is because I am mean to you and always bully you that you hope I never find a boyfriend, isn't it? You must feel happy and satisfied now, don't you?"

In pain, Li Yao found his tears swelling. "Ow! It hurts! Hurts! Let me go!"

Ding Lingdang twisted his face hard one last time, and released it in gratification. She slammed the door.

Watching Li Yao walk away while trying to soothe his face through the window, she sat down and sighed heavily.

"What's wrong with me today?"

She scratched her hair, turning it into a scruffy mess. "Why did I reveal such a humiliating story to him the moment he asked? Next time I will be a joke to him!

"Xiao Cai, come over here. Replay what you saw yesterday."

What happened last night had been recorded by the Crystal Eye of the parrot and stored in the Crystal Chip.

The seven-colored parrot bounced towards Ding Lingdang, and when it arrived in front her, it opened its mouth from which a light beam was sent out. The light beam then transformed into a 3D representation of the scenes from the last night.

Li Yao circled the villa. Li Yao crawled through the window. Li Yao checked the wine bottles on the desk. Li Yao moved on to the basement, where he was tugged by her.

Ding Lingdang's lips pouted as she watched all this.

And when she saw Li Yao's desperate expression when she was hugging him like an octopus, she burst out in anger and slapped so heavily on the ground that the wine bottles were flying to the sky.

"Was it so terrible?"

Ding Lingdang said in anger. "A hug won't cost you anything. What is that avoidance and abhorrence supposed to mean?"

…

Li Yao was walking towards the Refining Department lightly on the campus, when the tiny Crystal Processor suddenly buzzed.

"The professor must be impatient!"

Li Yao picked up his pace.

But when he lifted his wrist, he found that it was his newly-added contact, Jiang Shaoyang.

Through Spiritual Energy Crane Link, Jiang Shangyao's bold forehead was shining brightly under the sun. But he was wearing a strange smile.

His personality felt different from two days ago. It was now a combination of extreme madness and unparalleled calmness, like a frozen flame. No one could tell it's cold or hot.

"Anything wrong?"

Li Yao was in a surprise.

"No big deal. I just want to tell you that I have withdrawn from Deep Sea University and I'm about to embark on a brand new path of Artifact Refining."

Jiang Shaoyang said slowly.

"What?!"

Li Yao was shocked. Jiang Shaoyang was definitely a maniac, or was it because he had been influenced by what he'd said previously?

Jiang Shaoyang said in utmost tranquility, "I've put a lot of thought into this. You were right. I was bound by so many things in the past, which prevented me from fulfilling my potential.

"The moment I cut off my hair, I said goodbye to my past, my previous life, and my old self. I am ready to explore a new path that has never been set foot on before.

"So, don't call me the 'Tenth Star' anymore. I am just myself, and I'm no longer related to Deep Sea University, Novem Stellae, or Supernova.

"I remember you said that you are known as the Fiend Star among Artificers. Fiend Star or Supernova, or even Novem Stellae, if we get to the bottom of it, are all miniature stars.

"But I'm different. I will become the sun, with a brightness 10,000 times more glaring than any of you!"

The serenity in his face and arrogance in his declaration made it impossible to distinguish whether he was joking or simply insane.

"But…"

Li Yao frowned.

"You don't believe me?"

Flames of billions of degrees were burning in Jiang Shaoyang's eyes.

"Not that I don't believe you. It's just that technically speaking, the sun is also a star," Li Yao said solemnly.

"…"

Jiang Shaoyang dazed.

"The sun is just the same with all the other stars. In fact, most stars are brighter than the sun. But they may not look so due to the long distance in between. For example, the Fiery Cloud Star which is close to Heaven's Origin Sector, is 17 times brighter than the sun by estimation of astronomers.

Such stars are countless. This is like… common sense. What, you'd never heard of it before?"

"…"

After a long silence, during which time the veins on his forehead seemed to be bumping out, Jiang Shaoyang finally grumbled, "Metaphor! It was just a metaphor! The bottom line is, please try to keep your training up, because I will see you again soon. People will know which one is stronger, the Sun or the Fiend Star.

"Pa."

Jiang Shaoyang hung up in anxiety and anger.

"Why is everybody acting weird today?"

Li Yao touched his nose and carried on walking.

He went directly to Yuan Manqiu's laboratory without any rest after he arrived at Refining Department.

"Professor, sorry I'm late."

Yuan Manqiu was standing in front of a row of 3D light beams and staring at them quietly.

Shining on the light beams were the complicated structure designs of Crystal-powered Mobile Armors.

Tears streamed as she watched.

"Li Yao, thank you. I know of all your struggles and devotion over the past year. Without your dedication, it would've been impossible to restart the Project Mystic Skeleton in such a short time. On behalf of myself, Lao Mo, and all the rest staff and students who've sacrificed things for the plan, I offer you my sincerest gratitude."

Yuan Manqiu moved her body and bowed to Li Yao.

Li Yao had no idea what to do. He hurried to get her professor straight and grinned. "Professor, I'm looking forward to the day when the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is born again and flies in the sky."

"That's right. We must seize every second in every minute so that the armor can be forged faster."

Yuan Manqiu wiped her tears away and took a deep breath. She resumed her calmness and quickly said, "I'll just cut the nonsense and get down to it. Here's a brief introduction to the current status of Refining Department.

"Because of your excellent performance, the university will increase the budget for Refining Department next year. Also, donations from celebrities have risen, too. So, funding is not a problem anymore. Our plan for now is to recruit 60 students in two classes. I believe many students will consider us now that the resources are abundant.

"As for teachers, I've managed to reach out to some experts among the Artificers over the past year. Their major concern before was the funding. Now that it has been fixed, many of them, especially those without any notable status right now, actually don't outright reject the notion of working as a teacher in Grand Desolate War Institution."

Li Yao nodded.

Money, place, methodology, and companionship were four indispensable factors in cultivator's training, among which money always comes first.

A cultivator may be uninterested in everyday life's entertainment. But their research and training also demand large amounts of money.

Now that the funding was plentiful, no wonder many cultivators had changed their minds about teaching here.

"As for teaching facilities, it's unnecessary to rebuild a floating mountain since it will cost too much time and efforts. I've made a deal with a seller and we're going to purchase a second-hand small-scale floating mountain which we can modify. Three months after it's delivered, when it has been entirely upgraded, it will be more than enough to satisfy the need of the two hundred teaching staff and students, as well as the development work of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit."

Chapter 228: You Will Wear the Suit!

Chapter 228: You Will Wear the Suit!

Yuan Manqiu paused and said slowly, "There are three critical problems that are yet to be resolved.

"First, the technical problem.

"Over the past year, I've done a lot of research and thoroughly studied thousands of designs. Everything is fine, except for the Super Compressed Crystal Reactor, which we underestimated before."

"The most distinguished characteristic of Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is its avoidance of using Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. As a result, its stability and durability are greatly undermined. For other parts, this shortcoming can be fixed by enhancing the structure. But that won't do when it comes to Crystal Reactor.

"Condensing violent spirit energy, as destructive as the vast sea, into a head-size Crystal Reactor while asking it to output spirit energy stably according to the battle status was putting too much pressure on the Crystal Reactor.

"It was simply overwhelming for the common alloy materials."

"Last time, it was because the Crystal Reactor had a crack and released the extremely-condensed spirit energy that the tragedy happened.

"I haven't figured out how to address this problem yet. If we turn to Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, our cost will increase a lot because they're essential to the Crystal Reactors for most of the crystal suits. Copying them would be contradictory to our original purpose.

"In the days to come, together with other experts, I will try my best to overcome this barrier.

"Li Yao, take this jade slip. All the documents concerning Project Mystic Skeleton are inside. You can see if there's anything you can do when you're free.

"Although you have only just started your career as a Refiner, you always have amazing ideas that are not restrained by the doctrines we live by. Maybe you'll find a new way and shed some light for us."

Yuan Manqiu then handed over the jade slip with a string of unique 'thought', which is the key to activate the jade slip.

Files of Project Mystic Skeleton were invaluable. Therefore, the jade slip required a special thought to activate it. It also had a self-destruction rune within. Should it be lost, Li Yao could erase all the information easily using telekinesis.

Seeing that his professor trusted him so much as to share all of her top secrets with him, Li Yao felt warm in heart and nodded his head solemnly.

Yuan Manqiu continued.

"The second problem is money.

"When I said that the funding is adequate, I was referring to the rebuilding work for the Refining Department. Actually, the school had different opinions about Project Mystic Skeleton."

She paused and laughed self-deprecatingly. "It is understandable. I'm afraid that no one else in the entire Star Glory Federation is a hundred percent confident that Project Mystic Skeleton will succeed apart from the two of us.

"The budget that the school allocated is for recruitment of experts, purchase and modification of the floating mountain, and the education of students. Very little is at our disposal. However, by my estimation, to complete Project Mystic Skeleton, the money we need ranges from 5 billion to 10 billion."

Li Yao nodded, not surprised by the figure.

Although the cost of a Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had been claimed to be under 100 million, that was only so during mass production. Reinventing the first Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit required much more than that because of the preliminary investments, the experimental cost, and the research funding.

Sometimes it would cost 3 to 5 million, or in some cases even 10 million, to conduct a single experiment.

And dozens of experiments were not unusual to perform optimizations.

On the market, one crystal suit specially designed for Cultivators of Core Formation Stage and Nascent Soul Stage would cost more than 10 billion. It was quite amazing that the entire budget for the research of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was controlled within 10 billion.

Yuan Manqiu continued, "The technical and money problems are directly related. It is because we can't fix the issue regarding the Crystal Reactor that the investors feel inconfident.

"As long as it is fixed, with our current funding, we will be able to build a prototype, even though there's nothing but our bare hands.

"Everything will be easier when we have the prototype. Not only will the school increase our budget, we will also be able to look for investments from celebrities and the military. I'm sure someone will be interested. When that happens, getting 10 billion wouldn't be difficult, even 50 billion would not be a dream either."

Yuan Manqiu stopped again and eyed Li Yao carefully. "The last and most important question is who will wear the prototype of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit?"

Li Yao realized that it was indeed a big problem.

The prototype would have a lot of defects and deeply buried problems. Not everyone would have the capability to wear it. The wearer must be an experienced Exo[1] who was also good at refining in order to detect the problems during the trial.

They were similar to the test pilots in Li Yao's previous life who were a hundred times more skilled than ordinary pilots.

Yuan Manqiu shrugged and smiled bitterly.

"I can't find a suitable candidate to wear the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. After all, the failure last time is already common knowledge to everyone in the entire federation. The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, a cursed crystal suit that is doomed to explode, has killed hundreds of people even before it is fully developed.

"As such, which elite Exo would be willing to risk their life to wear a prototype Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit that might be full of bugs?

"If we increase the reward, some desperados among the ordinary Exos might be interested. But these people would never have received professional training in refining. They wouldn't be able to describe the problem clearly even if they meet one. Also, many things in the prototypes are secrets of Project Mystic Skeleton which I don't want to reveal to outsiders."

"Therefore, Li Yao, do you want to be the wearer of the prototype of Profound Bone Battle Armor?"

Li Yao dazed. He pointed to himself. "Me?"

He was a little overwhelmed.

Yuan Manqiu nodded and said seriously, "I've put a lot of thought into it. You're the best candidate.

"Firstly, Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is designed to be a low-cost crystal suit for mass production, which means its users can only be Refinement Stage Cultivators. Building Foundation Stage Cultivators have far better choices.

"Therefore, we're targeting Refinement Stage Cultivators as our potential users. All the structures and parameters are designed for them.

"So, it will be for the best if its first user is also a Refinement Stage Cultivator.

"Secondly, you are a Hybrid-type Cultivator and you have talents both in battling and refining. If you wear it, not only will the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit's potential be fulfilled, you will definitely discover the majority of the problems during the trial. Our communication after will be easier too, as we'll use terminologies that we are both familiar with.

"Lastly, you are my own disciple. The leaking of secrets will no longer be a concern, and the trials will not just take a day or two. Other Exos might be unwilling to stay at Grand Desolate War Institution for a long period of time. But if it's you, there won't be a problem."

Li Yao's eyes sparkled as he listened.

It's perfect to join Project Mystic Skeleton in such a way!

"But, the thing is, I don't know how to wear a crystal suit," Li Yao said hesitantly.

Different from Battle Armor, a crystal suit was an ultimate weapon condensed by countless magical equipment controlled by the Crystal Processor. It was as difficult to forge as it was to wear. Only those who were formally trained would be able to control it and become an Exo, another awesome profession in the world of cultivation.

"It's no big deal."

Yuan Manqiu clicked softly on the virtual keyboard. Tons of data were displayed on the light beam.

Li Yao scanned it carefully. It was all detailed information about Exo training camps.

Yuan Manqiu said, "There are many ways to become an Exo. The top 10 sects in the federation, Deep Sea University, and

First Military Academy of the federation all have their own crystal suit forging departments and corresponding training systems.

"In the military, there are troops entirely made of elite Exos whose strength can be really intimidating.

"But it's difficult to find a way into such systems.

"Things are different with personal Exos training camps. They welcome anyone who has a decent amount of money."

Exo and Refiner were the two most popular professions in the world of cultivation. Organizations established to train Exos were too many to keep track of.

Most of them only aimed for your purse. They wouldn't teach anything useful.

However, the four personal Exo training camps listed by Yuan Manqiu were the best ones. They had been created by top-tier, expert Exos. Although the tuition fees they charged could make your heart stop beating, their tutors did boast real skills and were not hesitant to teach them.

Yuan Manqiu highlighted the file of one of the four training camps. She said, "Thunder Training Camp is going to start a 3-month preparatory course for middle and high level Cultivators in the Refinement Stage. It's perfect for you.

"Thunder Training Camp, one of the four personal Exo training camps in the federation, was founded by Lei Tingwei, a Cultivator in the Core Formation Stage, and hence have produced thousands of strong Exos. It is best known for its crazy and cruel training style.

"If you are willing to be the test wearer for the prototype of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, the school will pay the tuition fees for you and you will be trained in Thunder Training Camp for three months before becoming a strong Exo!

"But there's one thing you need to know. Lei Tingwei is a harsh and mean man. He values tough training more than anything. The principle of his camp is 'easy to get in, hard to stay in'. You can get into it as long as you have money, but you'll have to pass tests after tests. Only the few that survive until the end will be approved by him.

"Are you confident?"

Li Yao's glanced through the files of the Thunder Training Camp. His mouth spread and a smile appeared on his face.

"Cruel? Harsh? Only few can survive until the end?

"I love it."

…

Five days later, deep down the Grand Desolate Plateau, a well-worn carrier with patterns of thunder splash on both sides was flying at a low altitude.

Over the dull sand hills, a small oasis lay in front.

Around the oasis was a block of silver buildings.

Many firefly-like lights were chasing, charging, and colliding with each other.

But with a careful look, one would discover that they were all Cultivators in crystal suits!

Although it was just a simulation, the Cultivators were not the least bit sluggish. The cracking of spirit energy echoed like thunder hundreds of meters away.

Now and then, a critical part on someone's armor would be hit, dying the sky in glorious colors while they fell to the ground.

This… was the Thunder Training Camp.

Chapter 229: Death Training Camp

Chapter 229: Death Training Camp

At the corner of the carrier, Li Yao focused all his attention on the Crystal Processor's screen, trying to make the best use of whatever time he had left to learn more about the Thunder Training Camp.

The more he read, the more he furrowed his brow.

After a long silence, Li Yao grinned and mumbled, "It's really hard."

Among the four major personal training camps, Thunder Training Camp was the most punitive one. It was also known as 'Death Training Camp'.

'Death' had two meanings. One was that many courses in the training camp were imitations of real battles and thus were extremely dangerous. Chances were that the trainees would get crippled or killed, as was duly written in the contract they had signed before enrollment.

Thunder Training Camp was only open to the brave warriors, not cowards.

The other meaning was the high fallout rate.

Thunder Training Camp could be further divided into Inner Camp and Outer Camp. The Outer Camp was designed for the Cultivators in the Refinement Stage, and for the 100 students that it admitted every time, only ten would remain three months later.

That was a fallout rate of 90%, which was even higher than most of the classes of the Combat Department in the Grand Desolate War Institution.

The cruel training style and the super-high fallout rate, on the other hand, had boosted the cachet of the Thunder Training Camp. Many desperate Cultivators were actually willing to pay a large sum of money just to get a glittering 'Thunder Exo' badge.

Their effortlessness in paying the tuition fee indicated that they wouldn't find it difficult to buy a crystal suit worth billions in the future. As a matter of fact, they were either from the younger generations of noble families or future stars of major cultivation sects. They had both resources and capabilities that far exceeded Li Yao's previous opponents.

"The hundred students are all real experts. They are totally different from freshmen like Zhao Tianchong or Lu Tieshan.

"Many of them must've already worn crystal suits before. Unlike them, I've never touched one before. I'm a complete novice.

"It's going to be troublesome to make it to the top ten."

Li Yao's thought was interrupted by the impact of the carrier landing on the desert beside the oasis.

Li Yao walked down together with a few other students.

It was noon, the hottest time of the day. There was no shade in the bare desert. The sunlight was so strong that their skin constantly felt as if it were going to explode.

The oasis was not very far in front. Yet the students had to wait underneath the scorching sun.

The carrier took off, leaving a small sandstorm where it previously landed. But there was still no sign of a receptionist.

A few other carriers had come and gone. More students joined the crowd in the desert.

Li Yao observed the other students carefully and noticed that most of them were older than 25 and apparently had experienced bloody battles in real life before. The determination on their faces was far different from the green college students.

Although everyone was hiding their capability with the Soul Converging Technique, Li Yao knew that many of them were already at the high-level Refinement Stage seeing that they had no sweat at all after standing under the hot sun for so long.

He might be the weakest among the hundred students.

Most students were wary of those around them, and when they felt that their classmates were of similar level to themselves, they did not hesitate to demonstrate their hostility.

A training camp was different from a school or a sect.

For the students in a school or a sect, they belonged to the same community. No matter how intense their competition with each other was, they had a sense of "collective honor".

For example, although Zhao Tianchong, Lu Tieshan, and Li Yao always challenged each other, they knew that they were all students of the Grand Desolate War Institution. When something serious happened, they would stand together and get it over with first before sorting out the issues among themselves.

But things were totally different in a training camp which was all about money-making. No one was anything to anyone else other than a direct rival.

Only ten out of the hundred students would be able to laugh in the end. Every one of the rest was an enemy-to-be and had to be eliminated at the first chance!

That was what all the students had in mind.

While Li Yao was thinking about it, a shadow covered him as if the sun had been eclipsed by a giant cloud.

Li Yao blinked and took a closer look. It was a tall, young man with grey eyes and a sharp face that looked like it had been carved from a rock.

The young man was wearing a strange smile. His eyes were sparkling, just like those of a cat that had decided to play with the rat it had just caught instead of killing it immediately.

The grey-eyed, young man raised his eyebrow and asked coldly, "Grand Desolate War Institution's Li Yao?"

Li Yao felt a scent of hostility. He stood straight and made eye contact with the young man, "And you are?"

"From Deep Sea University's Battle Suit Department, Yuan Yeshi," the grey-eyed, young man said casually.

Li Yao frowned. The name didn't sound familiar.

"You don't know me. But I know a thing or two about you."

Yuan Yeshi smiled indifferently, "My sister, Yuan Yexue, is a disciple of Jiang Sheng, the Supernova, and one of the Novem Stellae. I accidentally came across your file due to her. I knew you're a genius at magical equipment refining whose popularity has been on the rise and you humiliated Deep Sea University in the Refiners' Registration Examination.

"However, the Thunder Training Camp is the domain of us Exos. Why did you, a Refiner, come such a long way here?"

"To enjoy some sunbathing," Li Yao replied lazily to the aggressive question.

There was lightning in Yuan Yeshi's eyes. He was about to speak again when he felt a disturbance behind him.

It was a shuttle that looked like a scary skeleton.

"Here comes our instructor!" someone called out.

Yuan Yeshi changed his face and said grimly, "The past of you Refiners is none of my business and I don't care.

"However, I don't like the way you talk.

"You may be a genius in magical equipment refining, but it doesn't mean that you can be as arrogant in the world of Exos.

"I've got my eye on you and I'll eliminate you as soon as I have a chance!"

He retreated into the crowd as he stabbed Li Yao with his sharp glare.

At that moment, a strong, middle-aged man jumped out of the shuttle, leaving two deep footprints on the ground before he'd even landed, causing a cloud of smoke. It was as if a 10,000-ton rock just fell from the sky.

"What a grand entrance!"

"He's at least in Building Foundation Stage!"

Many students were whispering.

When the air cleared again, a short, stout, extremely ugly, muscled man appeared in everyone's sight.

The man could almost be called bald, except that he had a cluster of hair in the center of his pate. He also had a forked moustache, which was like two black crescent blades.

His hair and moustache drew so much attention at first glance that everyone failed to see what he really looked like.

Some students almost laughed out aloud.

Yet, when the muscled man looked at them with a glare resembling lightning, they felt that their backs were cold and their throats seemed to have been grabbed, which immediately stopped them from laughing.

"My name is Mao Feng, the manager of Thunder Training Camp's Outer Camp. I will also be your chief instructor for the next three months, and I will become the person that you fear the most, resent the most, and want to cut into pieces the most!"

Mao Feng put his hands behind his back and started to pace around the students.

Whenever he stopped in front of someone, he would stare them in the eyes.

Within five seconds, the student would groan and admit defeat.

Mao Feng would be satisfied and move on to the next student.

His voice was not loud, yet it reached every student's ear clearly despite the wuthering wind.

"I've read all of your files. You're all men of privilege, one-in-ten-thousand, talented Cultivators. Your backgrounds are profound, and so are your own abilities.

"Many of you have touched crystal suits before. Some of you are even students majoring in battle suits at well-known colleges who want to improve themselves in the Thunder Training Camp during the summer vacation.

"However, everyone must start from scratch here.

"I don't care who you are. You might be a badass in school, you might be the pillar of your sect, you might be a battle hero, but it all means nothing here. Your identity, position, and past mean nothing!

"In the Thunder Training Camp, you are just an ordinary student who doesn't even need a name. What you need is just a number, ranging from 1 to 100.

"I will enforce the toughest, harshest, and cruelest training onto you. If you're sluggish or hesitant for even a single second, you will be eliminated without mercy!

"However, in my experience, most students begged to quit long before they were eliminated.

"Remember, a crystal suit is a treasure of treasures. An Exo is the Cultivator of Cultivators!

"An Exo always leads the charge and is always ready to face the enemies' attack. An Exo who isn't killed a couple of times a day is not a real Exo.

"And a real Exo is what the Thunder Training Camp will train you to be. If you're not prepared, get your ass out of here and now!"

While speaking, Mao Feng stopped in front of Li Yao. His lightning-like eyesight pierced into Li Yao's head.

'What a strong spiritual power!'

Li Yao could feel that the spiritual power of his instructor was hundreds of times stronger than the Three-Eyed Ape on the Devil Flood Dragon Island.

Had his soul not been cleansed and strengthened by Ou Yezi, it would've been impossible to even survive half a second.

Li Yao gritted his teeth and stared back.

One second, two seconds, three seconds, five seconds, ten seconds!

Ten seconds later, Mao Feng smiled and asked fiercely, "What's your name?"

Li Yao held his head as high as possible and answered loudly, "Sir, my name is Li Yao!"

"Of course."

Mao Feng grinned and looked around. He remarked, "Like I said, students of this class are all men of privilege with profound background. Even this seemingly Mr. Nobody actually has a long story behind him.

"You may not know of him yet. Let me introduce him to you. He is the youngest and weakest student in this class.

"But he is also a man who's cruel to himself."

Chapter 230: Chief Instructor's Got His Eyes on You

Chapter 230: Chief Instructor's Got His Eyes on You

"Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!"

198 pairs of curious eyes were fixed on Li Yao.

Li Yao frowned and knew it was not good.

It was clear that Mao Feng was trying to teach every student a hard lesson and establish his absolute authority by staring at them and destroy their pride.

But as it turned out, Li Yao's soul was too solid to surrender after ten seconds of direct eye contact, which made him looked bad.

That's why the chief instructor set him up as a target for everyone!

With a fake smile, Mao Feng said, "Li Yao, age 20, in the 6th level of Refinement Stage, also known as 'Vulture', a cruel man of your generation from the Grand Desolate War Institution.

"His cultivation is not very deep, but his records are quite impressive.

"Before his spiritual root was awoken, he defeated a mutant demon beast that was almost as strong as a demon soldier.

The day he awoke his spiritual root, he beat a Cultivator in the 3rd level of Refinement Stage into a heap of blood and bones which barely looked like a human after the fight. Within the next year, he reached the 6th level of Refinement Stage. He was in the battle of Verdant Tarn City too, where he killed a demon general even though he was only in the 5th level of Refinement Stage at that time.

"After that, he was engaged in a fight against 2,000 freshmen from the Combat Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution. Through his smart tactics, he managed to make the opponents attack each other and broke through their encirclement in the end. His name has been rife since then.

"Lastly, he also happens to be a hybrid-type Cultivator, with talents both in fighting and refining, and he's just passed the Refiners' Registration Examination!

"Although he may lack experience in using a crystal suit, he definitely knows a lot about its structure and will quickly learn about its maintenance.

"The reason I'm telling you all this is to let you know that you shouldn't assume you're someone extraordinary here. There are many more extraordinary people in the Thunder Training Camp. This weakest student is already so remarkable, and the rest will only be better!

"And in the following three months, they will be your opponents!

"The only path in front of you is to crush them by training hard.

"Or you will be crushed by them like the ants below their shoes."

What the instructor said turned the curiosity in their eyes into pure hostility; their eyes were aimed at Li Yao as if they were guns.

Some students were indifferent.

However glorious Li Yao's past might be, he was still just a college student in the 6th level of Refinement Stage, while they were all experts of high-rank Refinement Stage Cultivators: in the 10th level or higher.

"Just some random college student."

Many of them were mocking him.

"Little boy, quite arrogant of you, isn't it? Cruel man of the new generation from the Grand Desolate War Institution? And a f*cking 'vulture'? How interesting. We'll eliminate you as soon as we get a chance and teach you a lesson about the difference between school and real life!"

More students grinned hideously while warming themselves up.

Beads of sweat appeared on Li Yao's forehead, and his back was cold, too. He cursed the instructor silently.

'What a petty man this so-called chief instructor is!

'I was simply staring at him for a few seconds longer than the rest. There was no need to put me in the line of fire like this!'

He glanced at Mao Feng, and found Mao Feng looking at him, too.

Mao Feng patted his shoulder, in a malicious smile, and whispered, "Congratulations, Li Yao. You've attracted my attention. My eyes will be on you in the next three months."

Before Li Yao had a chance to reply, Mao Feng suddenly roared, his beard lifting upwards as if two battle blades, "Everyone, gather in the testing field and get your capability measured first!

"The training camp will provide you with a tailor-made training plan based on your capability and fighting style and arrange different instructors for you accordingly.

"Remember, in the three-month training, there will be an elimination test at the end of each month.

"50 people will be left after the first month.

"20 after the second.

"At the end of the third month, a competition among the remaining 20 will take place and no more than 10 winners will make it to the end before receiving their 'Thunder Exo' badges.

"For those who get the badge, after you enter into the Building Foundation Stage, you will be able to be instructed in the Inner Camp by Lei Tingwei who's in the Core Formation Stage!

"What are you waiting for? The testing field is 50 kilometers away. Get your asses moving now!"

Mao Feng jumped onto the skeleton-like shuttle, throwing dust everywhere after a burst of spirit energy.

He screamed while driving the shuttle,

"Faster! Faster! You're all Cultivators yet you can't outrun a shuttle? Those who fail to reach the testing field within half an hour will be eliminated immediately."

In the smoke, the students gazed at each other in confusion. Suddenly, someone dashed forward. Almost simultaneously, various colorful spirit energies burst out from everybody as they started chasing the shuttle like lightning.

And thus, the competition began!

Rushing 50 kilometers in a desert under the boiling sun at a speed close to a shuttle, even the high level Cultivators felt tired and were sweating over.

But they were all men of determination. Pushed by their desire for victory, they stood straight with an indifferent look, showing no weakness at all.

The testing field had a coverage of couple of square kilometers and boasted state-of-the-art magical equipment for testing. Twenty students were allowed to take a test at the same time.

Beside the testing field were a hundred giant dark iron boxes with murderous runes carved on the surface that brought a strong sense of blood.

"Crystal suits!"

"Not training suits. They are real crystal suits!"

"Although they're models from 100 years ago, they're still authentic battlesuits that were worn in battlefields and wielded to kill monsters before!"

"Using real battlesuits at the beginning test, the Thunder Training Camp is really rich. It deserves its name as one of the four top training camps. This trip is definitely worth all the trouble!"

Many students were delighted.

Most of them had received preliminary crystal suits training before. But what they'd worn during training were simple testing crystal suits, which had a huge difference from the real ones.

Seeing the grandeur scene where 100 crystal suits lined up in a row, everyone was passionate and ready for a fight.

Mao Feng roared, "According to your profile, the Thunder Training Camp has prepared a suitable crystal suit for each one of you. You may find your own crystal suit by the names floating above the boxes.

"Remember, this is going to be your last chance to use your name in the Thunder Training Camp. Later, you will be ranked according to your capability from 1 to 100, and your rank will be the only reference to you in the coming three months.

"001 stands for the strongest!

"100 represents the lousiest, weakest, and worst!

"Devote every last bit of your strength into the training if you don't want to be '100'!

"Those of you who have zero experience don't need to worry. These crystal suits have been adjusted and have its sensitivity reduced to 30%, which means the difficulty of using them is only 30% of the difficulty of normal ones. It is the easiest mode designed for beginners.

"If you find yourself unable to rein the crystal suit under the 30% sensitivity, get your ass out of here quickly, because it means you have no talent for using crystal suits whatsoever. I don't want to train losers!

"Alright, that's about enough. Those who have worn crystal suits before come up first. The rest of you, find an empty place and try to get familiar with your suit. There are tutorials in the crystal processor. Warm yourselves up a little."

Hearing that, all the students jumped joyously towards the crystal suit that had their name on it.

Other than Li Yao, the other 99 students had all handled a crystal suit before, more or less.

Even the students most unfamiliar with crystal suits had done perfectly accurate simulations in professional simulators before.

Unlike them, for Li Yao, who had grown up in the magical equipment graveyard, his life was nothing but training and fighting. He had never even played any of the popular crystal suits games, let alone perfectly accurate simulations.

After he went to college, he spent all of his time and energy on refining and combat training.

Even if he had spare time, he would use it to learn about the forging and maintenance of crystal suits.

He knew absolutely nothing about how to wear a crystal suit.

Li Yao was thrilled, like a young man who was going to be on his first secret date with his lover. He swallowed to ease his dry throat and walked towards his suit box.

Sliding his fingers over the coarse runes, he felt a deep breath in the box, as if a dormant monster was waking up.

The breath echoed in Li Yao's brain and resonated with its vibration wave, making him unable to control himself.

The uneven runes put on a crimson color as if soaked in blood.

With a cracking sound, the panel on one side of the box split.

An intense, animalistic scent of death crashed into Li Yao's face like a giant hammer. He shivered.

Although it was a 100-year-old ancient crystal suit, it had reaped the lives of thousands of demon beasts, which endowed it with a bitter cold air completely different from new crystal suits.

When the box was opened, Li Yao even seemed to hear the desperate screams of the demon beasts.

Inside the box, supported by an anti-gravity rune array, a two-meter tall crystal suit was floating in the air.

The suit appeared light and agile, covered by scales made of a special alloy that looked like a grey rock.

The arms of the suit were long enough to reach the knees. Both hands were in the shape of a viper's head.

Four teeth-shaped blades were folded on the back of the hands, lurking in the darkness, deadly.

All in all, this crystal suit felt like a serpent that was hiding in the crevice of a rock and ready for its victim.

"Seven-step Rock Snake!"

Li Yao gasped. An awfully dangerous name occurred to him.

Chapter 231: Crystal Suit First Experience

Chapter 231: Crystal Suit First Experience

"The Seven-Step Rock Snake is a mid-size crystal suit jointly manufactured by the Dipper Society and Star Nebula University. It is 2.07 meters tall and has a total weight of 3.88 ton. It's an armor with a composite structure of demon beast materials and ultra-high-strength alloy, while scales from seven different serpent-type demon beasts covered its vital areas. The ends of its arms have vibro-blades in the shape of snake fangs, which are forged using the heaven and earth material called 'Howling Rock'. When the Howling Rock is waved, it can produce piercing howls that can turn into a spiritual attack and directly harm the soul of demon beasts!

"This crystal suit pays equal attention to both strength and agility and is a perfect fit for those Exos who have a certain power and pursue speed and agility. It's an exact match with my latest data.

"The Thunder Training Camp's reputation is truly well deserved. Even the test-type crystal suit is prepared so thoughtfully!"

Li Yao licked his lips as his eyes radiated with a greedy look. Holding his breath, he lightly caressed the 'Seven-Step Rock Snake' crystal suit!

As the crystal processor began to boot up, the Seven-Step Rock Snake's super-compressed crystal cell reactor also began to operate, thereby releasing a tremendous, powerful spiritual energy and awakening the sleeping array glyphs one after another.

A substantive killing intent was gushing out from every groove of this ultimate weapon which gathered into a ghastly reddish aura, just like proliferating ripples, giving it an even more grim and appalling look.

BEEP!

Above the completely enclosed Seven-Step Rock Snake's helmet, a radiating glyph in the form of a coiling snake was engraved.

The system test was complete!

Li Yao lightly tapped on the activation glyph on the Seven-Step Rock Snake, following which, a slight buzzing of the suit starting up resounded before the ghastly aura lingering around the battle suit was sucked inside. The suit gradually opened up like a blooming Crab Claw Chrysanthemum; revealing a human-shape recess.

Wherein was complex array glyphs outlined by overflowing resplendent lights as well as interlacing crystal fibers; it was incomparably mysterious and wonderful to boot.

A massive telepathic thought uninterruptedly poured into Li Yao neural field from the crystal processor of the Seven-Step Rock Snake.

It was the information relating to the Seven-Step Rock Armor as well as the basic operating tutorial.

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao walked into the suit box and stood close to the Seven-Step Rock Snake.

"Seven-Step Rock Snake, start!"

The petal-like suit components closed one by one; they fit together rather perfectly.

Driven by the array glyphs, the spiritual energy quickly circulated in its entire body as Li Yao and the crystal suit merged into a whole; the crystal fibers and Li Yao's meridians fused together, forming perfect connections.

BOOM

Li Yao's soul felt a burst of an inexplicable wave.

As if his consciousness was leaving his body and reached a whole new state!

The feeling of piloting a crystal suit was completely different from wearing a heavy-armor.

There was not even the slightest bit of burden or restraint. It was like possessing a new body, one that had numerous new, powerful organs.

The fully enclosed helmet had six crystal eyes around it, giving him a 360 degree, omnidirectional vision. Two of which, one in the front and one in the back, were long-range crystal eyes; such long-range vision allowed Li Yao to clearly see the texture of a rock two hundred meters away. In the center was a thermographic crystal eye; observing through which gave him a colorful and magnificent view.

This kind of sensation was truly uncomfortable.

A human's visual nerves and brain had long been accustomed to observing the world in a certain way.

The instant the entire world from multiple angles on multiple screens surged into his brain, the first reaction of Li Yao was that of dizziness; he felt the urge to vomit.

Having closed his eyes, everything went dark, whereas his hearing and other senses were amplified.

He could even hear his breath, the gravel rubbing against each other, his heartbeat, the spiritual energy flowing between the crystal fibers, the rocks getting crushed by the crystal suit, as well as the dust drifting in the wind.

These sounds were intermixed with the buzzing sound made by hundreds of array glyphs operating simultaneously.

Rumor had it that a veteran Exo could distinguish the condition of every array glyphs from these sounds.

But when Li Yao came to hear them, it was like bees dancing in the air; it was a chaotic cacophony.

Meanwhile, his skin became extra sensitive. It was like tens of thousands of feathers were tickling him at the same time; making him quiver continuously.

In such a situation, Li Yao straightened up his neck and stood still for half-a-minute as he slowly adjusted to the extremely sharp five senses.

However, new, complex information flooded his brain.

The information included the operating condition of 655 crucial array glyphs, the spiritual energy output of the reactor, the meticulous details of various magical equipment, as well as, humidity, temperature, pressure, wind speed, wind direction, the distance between the various targets in the surroundings, the subsequent best line of attack...

Li Yao felt as if his brain was going to explode.

Taking two long, deep breaths, Li Yao raised his arm to look carefully, disregarding the information flooding his brain. He slowly moved his fingers with a gasp of praise.

The snakelike palm of Seven-Step Rock Armor moved exactly the same.

Li Yao calmed himself down a bit.

"Apart from the amplified five senses, I also need to deal with a large amount of information. It seems, piloting the crystal suit isn't particularly difficult. Let's try taking two steps!"

Just as the thought of "walking" flashed in his mind, his leg muscles immediately tightened up before Li Yao's whole body rushed out as if someone had ruthlessly kicked his ass, as if someone had pulled an invisible thread wrapped around his leg hard.

"What the hell!" Li Yao screamed.

The instant he rushed out, further pieces of information flooded his mind; the quantity of information swarming his brain was ten times than before. All the information gathered into an agglomeration and flooded his brain in the blink of an eye!

BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM

The propulsion array glyphs engraved on the limbs and the back of the Seven-Step Rock Snake sprayed jets of dazzling flares as the reactor burst forth with a powerful spiritual energy, exerting a strong propulsion on him from various angles.

Li Yao was moving like he was dead-drunk, he tumbled left and right, waved his hands and stamped his feet in the most ludicrous ways, arousing bursts of exclamations and ridicule.

After almost brushing against two nearby crystal suits, Li Yao somehow turned himself around. Realizing that he was going to crash into his suit box, he exerted strength in his legs desperately and leaped high into the air as if a super firework had exploded underneath his ass, and heavily slammed down thereafter with a loud slam. Tossing around seven or eight times, he fell backward with his legs and arms stuck up in the air.

"It's too hard to control!

"This is the basic beginner mode...with sensitivity lowered to 30%...yet it is so difficult!

"If it was the normal mode, just a flash of thought would send the crystal suit flying three hundred to five hundred meters away. Then how would I pilot this thing!"

Li Yao was deeply shocked.

He recalled the theory which he had learned a few days ago.

The relation between the cultivator and his crystal suit was like the relation between a general and his war horse in the ancient times.

In the ancient cold weapon era, a general, no matter how stocky build and imposing manner he had, how great physical strength and courage he had, if fighting on foot, it would be impossible to defeat a hundred to two hundred enemy soldiers.

However, this very same general, once on a horse, would have the speed, power, and momentum of waving over a hundred pound heavy weapon elevated to the extreme by relying on the momentum of the horse.

Not to mention a hundred to two hundred soldiers, even if he were up against a thousand, he could charge at them seven to eight times and finally could withdraw with very few injuries.

A good warhorse could greatly increase the fighting power of a general!

The better the war horse, the more violent nature it had and the better the riding skill a general needed to have to subdue it and ride it!

The same was true for the crystal suit!

A powerful crystal suit was no different than a proud and violent horse; it was extremely difficult to pilot it.

But once you could successfully control it, your battle force would increase exponentially!

Li Yao's performance was an example of an unsuccessful attempt at taming a savage horse and was subsequently flung by this savage horse.

"It doesn't make sense!

"This crystal suit's sensitivity is locked at 30% so that a beginner can control it. And certainly, the increase in battle force will be lowest; it can only elevate my battle force to around 180%.

"Even the basic mode is so hard to control, let alone the high-level mode when the sensitivity is increased to 200% and battle force is increased by 500%!

"This is not alright. I will be unable to pilot Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit with this kind of performance!

"One more time! I can do it!"

Li Yao didn't believe in hearsay. Clenching his teeth, he once again started to control the crystal suit.

"First, I need to be gentle, slow, and steady, stand up bit by bit..."

When Li Yao was busy learning how to stand and walk, the first ten students were already whirring across the field.

Running, dodging, jumping, flying, attacking, sprinting, storming!

These trainees all had a certain amount of experience in piloting the crystal suit. In addition, it was the basic beginner mode. They didn't face any obstruction at all, their maneuvers were completely fluid and they didn't even take half-a-minute to complete the test.

Their magnificent maneuvers and wonderful performances garnered secret praises even from the Chief Instructor Mao Feng and the several instructors watching.

SWISH SWISH SWISH SWISH

The huge hologram floating above the testing site displayed the overall test score of the trainees.

Impressively, Yuan Yeshi had topped the ranking with a score of 88 out of 100; it was a pretty good score.

"This Yuan Yeshi is a student of Deep Sea University Exos Department. He wasn't getting aroused by the university's curriculum and specifically came to our training camp over summer vacations."

A bald instructor told Mao Feng, laughing, "He has a solid foundation and can be trained in accordance with the highest standards. In my opinion, he could very likely become the best among the hundred trainees."

Mao Feng nodded absently. Suddenly, he jerked his chin towards a direction and asked doubtfully, "Who is piloting that staggering Seven-Step Rock Snake? It's already set in beginner mode yet he can't even walk safely! Even though coming to our training camp with such aptitude isn't burning much money, it is still wasting our time!"

The bald instructor glanced at the hologram and quickly replied, "He is Grand Desolate War Institution's Li Yao."

Mao Feng's countenance became extremely weird as he said, frowning, "What happened to him?

"Although this little guy is not very powerful, he has a splendid record and is quite intelligent as well. At the beginning, I was quite looking forward to his performance, but how can he perform so badly!?"

The bald instructor pursed his lips into a smile as he said, "It's quite simple. Some people are inherently unsuitable for piloting crystal suits. No matter how much they train, it's all futile.

"Some Foundation Building Stage experts and even Golden Core Stage powerhouses can control other magical equipment like an arm directing its fingers, but once they enter the crystal suit, they seemed to have been shackled and under a restrictive spell; all of a sudden, they would become stupid and clumsy.

"What I mean to say is, their talent with crystal suit was not fated.

"Although such people are not many, there are still one or two in one hundred. Maybe Li Yao is one of them. He can only blame his bad luck!"

Mao Feng pursed his lips, "Forget it, let him be. After watching him drive the crystal suit like that, I really want to wash my eyes!"

"Ah!"

At this time, the bald instructor suddenly exclaimed. He said, dumbfounded, "93 points!? Someone among the second batch of trainees has actually scored 93 points!? Genius! He is a true genius!"

Chapter 232: Pushed It Too Hard

Chapter 232: Pushed It Too Hard

The surprisingly high score grabbed every student's attention.

All of them turned their eyes to the corner of the testing field, where a white suit in crescent shape stood proudly.

This crystal suit, named "Moon Fox", was best known for its high speed as well as its swiftness. Although the test in which it performed a splendid dance had long ended, everybody seemed to still be dwelling on its bleak, moonlight-like traces.

The wearer's name quickly spread around everyone in the testing field.

"Long Qianyue, age 25, 12th level of the Refinement Stage, second daughter of the Master of Crescent Moon City."

"Crescent Moon City is not a wealthy sect, but it values combat skills more than anything else. Every member from top to bottom is crazy about fighting."

"Long Qianyue is no exception. In the battle of the Iron Eagle Mountain last month, she killed three demon generals by herself and thus gained her fame."

"I'd never have imagined that she's so gifted in crystal suits too. The Crescent Moon City is sure to rise!"

"There are not only battlesuit major students like Yuan Yeshi, but also geniuses like Long Qianyue in our class. These two have reserved two places in the winners' list. The competition will only get fiercer!"

Grinding their teeth, many students were complaining jealously.

While the 99 students and the instructors were talking in a mess, Li Yao did not know a thing that was happening around him, for he had fully immersed himself in the world of crystal suits.

He moved his body and walked the first step, as if he were a rusted machine.

"I MADE IT!"

"I can walk now!"

Although he felt that his body had been slapped by a thorny rope dozens of times, there was still satisfaction on his face.

It was not easy. After falling over 17 times, he finally managed to grasp the delicacy of balance to control the jet direction of the 28 power rune arrays, so that he could make his first step!

"Relax. The key is to relax. Don't try to subdue the crystal suit. Consider the power rune arrays as a new organ. Chill out and let nature take its course. One step, two steps, three steps…"

He was still unsteady and sometimes his arms would be flapping like the wings of a hen. But this time, he didn't fall over and successfully walked more than 10 steps.

Li Yao grinned in satisfaction.

The few students around eyed him with obvious contempt.

"It's just walking, the simplest of all. It took him such a long time to learn, and he's smiling now…"

"Does he not have any shame?"

Li Yao wasn't bother by what other people thought of him. He was like a boy who'd just got a new toy and was eager to find new ways to play with it. His entire body and soul were wrapped up in the world of crystal suits, thirsting to overcome all the difficulties and discover new usages.

"Next, I'm going to learn how to jump."

Compared with walking, jumping was ten times more difficult. Even a hop would require almost a hundred rune arrays to work together.

Li Yao had failed dozens of times, but Li Yao was not the least bit tired of it, nor did he care how other people were looking at him.

After every failure, his understanding grew deeper.

After every attempt, he was better at it than the previous one.

The feeling of getting close to success was really sweet.

Finally!

After falling on his face for the 32nd time, he made a jump of precisely 5 meters.

No more, no less. Exactly onto the place that had been assigned by the crystal processor.

"I've got a new skill now!"

"Next, should I learn running, or consecutive jumping?"

Li Yao found himself addicted to the crystal suit.

Right at this moment, Mao Feng's rough voice boomed in his ear:

"The last group of students, prepare to take the test!"

"Sha Yangwen, Lane No. 1."

"Zhou Qun, Lane No. 2."

"Li Yao, Lane No. 3."

"What?!"

For a moment, Li Yao was confused. Then he realized that he was playing with the crystal suit so devotedly that a full hour already had passed without him knowing.

The other groups of students had already finished their test. Their preliminary test results were almost ready now.

'This is happening too fast.

'The crystal suit is so much fun. The last hour felt like half a minute while I was playing with the suit. I haven't enjoyed enough yet!

'Why are these people so adept at it? We're all beginners, but there is quite an enormous gap between me and them.

No wonder Mao Feng said that I'm the weakest of us all. He wasn't lying.

'My contenders are all geniuses, experts, and professionals!

'But it doesn't matter. In three months' time, I will be more of a genius, expert, and professional than any of you!'

While setting up his big plan, Li Yao hobbled to Lane No. 3 cautiously.

Since he'd just learned how to walk, his hips were wiggling and his posture was extremely ugly, it was like he was trying to hold an egg between his legs.

Everybody almost laughed out aloud when they saw his jitteriness.

They had been anxious after seeing too many geniuses. Many of them were depressed. Now that they noticed someone far worse than themselves, they all felt cheerful.

"Who is this guy? Walking like that under 30% sensitivity rate?"

"Let me check the name sheet. Huh. Isn't he the Li Yao that chief instructor just introduced?"

"Well well well. According to what chief instructor said, he's the 'vulture', a cruel man, a total badass in his college. I thought he would be better than this."

Yuan Yeshi was completely lost. After a long while, he mumbled to himself, "Seriously?

"You dared to join the Thunder Training Camp despite such poor talent?

"I shouldn't have looked for trouble with you. It embarrasses me to set you as a target."

Long Qianyue, ranking No. 1, stood quietly at a corner. She glanced at the folly, too.

Faint laughter came from behind her helmet.

Under everyone's doubtful gazes and mockery, Li Yao moved himself to Lane No. 3, one step after another.

The rest of the test-takers had long gotten into position and viewing him as if he were a 3-year-old child.

Mao Feng roared,

"The test begins now!"

The other 19 students sprinted forward like an arrow!

Li Yao took the first step, but had to open his arms to maintain the balance in a hurry because the strong ejection almost made him fall off.

The fumbling caused another round of laughter.

Seeing his stupid actions, Mao Feng frowned his eyebrows so hard that they almost merged together. He scanned the other instructors and asked, "Who is interested in this fellow and would like to teach him?"

The instructors exchanged a look, took a step back unanimously, and seemed to start enjoying the beautiful sceneries of the desert.

Inside the crystal suit, Li Yao was talking to himself without any stop, "You can make it. Come on!

"Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is waiting for you in the foreseeable future!

"Pass this test. You must pass this test. You can't allow the prototype of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit to fall into somebody else's hands!

"It is destined to be yours."

After a deep breath, Li Yao raised his head. The flame of confidence in his eyes seemed to be burning a hole on the crystal suit.

He took a giant leap.

Despite the same ugly posture and the shaking now and then, Li Yao was moving forward faster and faster, changing from jogging to running, as if there were an invisible string attached to his waist.

"Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!"

20 silver-shining balls charged towards him.

The crystal suit test consisted of five parts: dodging, attacking, agility, charging and critical striking, each of which had a maximum score of 20.

In the dodging part, 1 score would be reduced every time the test-taker was hit by the silver-shining ball.

Grinding his teeth, Li Yao tried his best to avoid 4 balls with every muscle on his body, only to be hit by the rest 16 balls in the end.

He only got 4 points in this part.

Apart from him, even the worst student had managed to dodge 11 balls.

The second part was attacking.

The test-taker needed to hit 20 moving balls within five seconds.

After five seconds, all the silver-shining balls would be gone.

"Biu! Biu! Biu! Biu!"

Li Yao stood on his toes and waved his hands crazily, as if he was being drowned, while he was aiming at the balls.

But in the end, he got 6 points, less than half of those of others.

Part 3 was agility.

In front of the test-takers were 20 red transparent threads that were tangled together.

The test-taker would need to walk through the apertures among the threads in their crystal suits.

1 score would be reduced every time they touch a red thread.

Li Yao got 7 points on this part.

Li Yao's performance was absolutely terrible in the first 3 parts.

Many people had lost their interest in mocking Li Yao and shifted their attention to contenders that were more competitive.

Nobody even noticed that Li Yao's points, although tiny, were improving steadily after each part.

Although the improvement seemed to be insignificant, it did show that Li Yao was getting the hang of it rapidly in the span of dozens of seconds.

Li Yao felt that he had touched upon something real.

The wild horse beneath him was still galloping desperately, trying to get rid of the rider. But he was getting familiar with its temper, and could felt its passion and pride behind its madness.

The last two parts were charging and critical striking.

The test-taker needed to run 500 meters in the shortest time they could and punch the target with the biggest strength they could afford.

"Let's do this..."

Hundreds of dancing wild bees in Li Yao's brain now combined into a cloud of glaring stars and then boomed.

"Now is the time!"

Deep squat, jump, speed up, and charge!

There seemed to be a volcano eruption behind his crystal suit, leaving hundreds of magnificent rays of light!

In a blink of eyes, Li Yao had passed hundreds of meters and outrun many students who were in front of him.

"So fast!"

Many people's contempt now turned into cold sweat.

Li Yao hadn't learnt much about punching yet, so he simply lowered his shoulder and threw himself directly at the target!

"Boom now!"

After a roar, he accelerated again. A white smoke in the shape of an umbrella was formed before him because of his supersonic speed!

However…

The crash that he expected did not happen.

Li Yao was still not good enough at direction controlling, so he missed the target and continued running at an amazing sped!

200 meters ahead, at the end of the lanes, Mao Feng was studying the test results of the last few groups of students.

They were the weakest and least experienced in crystal suits among all. There was nothing particularly interesting about them in their test results.

Mao Feng glanced at their results and decided not to waste his time. Instead, he began considering how to train the few geniuses he had.

Right at this moment, a strong feeling of apprehension grasped him. He felt he was about to be killed, as if a bold demon king was coming at him!

"What a strong scent of killing. What's happening?"

Mao Feng raised his head. His pupils shrank as he saw Li Yao's dashing towards him unstoppably with a distorted face. He bellowed, "What the f*ck is going on?!"

Chapter 233: Astonished Training Planner

Chapter 233: Astonished Training Planner

Two hundred meters were literally nothing when one's going at a supersonic speed.

"BOOM!"

Many people felt that their eyes were blurred. Then they heard an earthshaking noise, as if a meteorite had just landed on the field. The collision was so powerful that there was a small sandstorm spreading a kilometer away.

No one could see anything or hear anything except the aftershock of the impact. It took a long time before they came back to themselves.

When the smoke finally settled down, a dramatic scene unfolded itself before them, and there was indistinguishable murmuring of fear in their mouth.

Not far ahead, a shallow pit appeared, with white gas popping up.

The Seven-step Rock Snake collapsed in the pit. Its right shoulder had been completely shattered. Colorful sparks were dancing everywhere with cracking sounds.

Right beside it… was chief instructor Mao Feng, who was in a coma now!

The testing field was caught in an awkward silence. But it was immediately broken. Dozens of twisted screams reverberated in the sky,

"Not good. Chief instructor passed out!"

"Someone has— knocked chief instructor out!"

…

An hour later.

In a fully-equipped crystal suit warehouse, two refiners were repairing the Seven-step Rock Snake.

The refiner on the left, who had a big mole on his forehead, frowned.

"That was a huge impact. The right shoulder was almost broken into pieces. Why was it so bad?"

The refiner on the right had crooked lips. He said,

"Rushing for hundreds of meters in a supersonic state before reaching the chief instructor… How could it not be bad? The chief instructor was knocked out before he could even defend himself with his Building Foundation Stage abilities. It was nuts…"

He stopped when he noticed that his partner looked terrible. Knowing something was wrong, he turned back rigidly.

Mao Feng was standing right behind them with a grim face.

For a moment, the temperature in the warehouse seemed to have dropped 10 degrees!

"Hello, Instructor Mao!"

The two refiners greeted him hurriedly.

Even an idiot would know that the chief instructor of the Outer Camp had been under super-high pressure and was not in his best mood. It was best not to offend him, in case the volcano suddenly burst out.

But Mao Feng had a weird countenance. Behind the gloomy face was some indistinct confusion.

There was something that nobody else in the training camp knew.

When Li Yao was about to hit him in the Seven-step Rock Snake, he already braced himself for the collision.

He didn't dodge. Instead, he brought himself up to the preliminary level of Building Foundation Stage and condensed a strong spiritual energy shield in front of him.

By his calculation, since Li Yao was merely a Cultivator in the 6th level of the Refinement Stage, the shield would be more than enough to hold him back, even if the crystal suit had empowered him with the supersonic speed and maybe doubled his combat abilities.

But as it turned out, he was blown away in shame!

It was simply impossible!

If Li Yao had not been hiding his true capability, the only explanation will be—

The endowment that this crystal suit offered him was not just doubling the combat abilities, but tripling them, or even more!

Showing no emotion, Mao Feng said coldly, "Leave the damage on the shoulder alone for now. See if there's anything wrong with the drive mode."

The two refiners nodded. They lifted a component below the Seven-step Rock Snake's neck, connected a crystal wire to the processor of the suit, and started checking immediately.

No sooner had they begun than they detected something abnormal. Their faces turned darker and darker and their eyebrows scrunched together.

"What's wrong?"

Mao Feng asked gravely, his eyebrow bouncing.

They looked at each other. The first refiner finally made up his mind and said, "Chief instructor, it is universally known that the crystal suits for new students are all antiques from a hundred years ago. They've endured a lot of battles before and therefore bear a lot of wounds. To fix them, we had to replace some of their components with miscellaneous substitutes, some of which were actually refined by ourselves…"

"Get to the point!" Mao Feng raised his voice.

The second refiner continued. "Do you recall that two days ago, a very rare thunder storm hit our camp? Several warehouses were affected by the weather. I assume that, interfered by the thunder, two crystal wires of the suit had a short cut, causing the chaos of the driving mode.

"The crystal processor shows that the suit is in the beginner mode with 30% sensitivity.

"However, after our double check, we've found that it is actually in the X-mode designed for the real experts. The difficulty for using it is twice that of the normal mode.

"In the X-mode, responses that the rune arrays give to spiritual energy are set at the highest level. Even the slightest movement of muscles, or a minor thought, will trigger a profound reaction in the rune arrays. Therefore, X-mode can significantly enhance the combat abilities of the wearer, making them 500% stronger or even more!"

Mao Feng breathed heavily. His eyes were keen and his throat became dry,

"Why was the problem not discovered previously?"

The first refiner answered reluctantly, "Chief instructor, you also know that the thunder storm two days ago caused great damage. Many middle-level and high-level crystal suits in the Inner Camp were influenced as well. We were all summoned to help fix them, so we only had the time to run the regular tests on the suits of the Outer Camp."

The second refiner added, "Also, this malfunction is too weird. Generally speaking, the drive mode hardly ever goes wrong, and when it does, even the least experienced cultivator will immediately know something is wrong the moment they put on the suit. If they'd reported the issue to us, we could've fixed it within several minutes.

"And reporting to us is the only thing they can do."

The first refiner grinned, "X-mode is devised for qualified, experienced, and proficient Exos. Newbies will find themselves hardly able to stand up in such a mode."

He stopped when he realized what he just said.

Looking at each other, the two refiners both saw the astonishment in the other's eyes.

Sweat started appearing on their foreheads.

"Alright. Your explanation is acceptable. Your reinforcement to the Inner Camp was approved by me, and it was me who agreed to only run regular tests too. I take full responsibility for this accident.

"Now try to repair the crystal suit. And remember, nobody else is to know anything about this incident without my permission."

The two refiners thought that he would be angry and vent his anger to them, but Mao Feng concluded the conversation and left in a hurry.

…

Half an hour later, in an analysis room filled with dozens of screens, Mao Feng bowed to an old man whose face was flushed due to too much drinking and said courteously, "Mister Xu!"

He respected the old man from the bottom of his heart, because the ugly old man, named Xu Tianyou, was a research-type cultivator, who not only was a cultivator at the peak of Building Foundation Stage, but also was a very rare 'Training Planner'.

A skilled Training Planner is adept at pedagogy, psychology, anatomy, and hundreds of other subjects. They can draft and design detailed training plans for different Cultivators based on their own conditions, so that their training efficiency can be maximized and their potentials can be fulfilled at the fast speed they can afford.

The Thunder Training Camp's second-to-none prominence, which could be indicated by the fact that even many battlesuit major students came here for improvement, was partly based on the impressive capabilities of Lei Tingwei, a strong man in the Core Formation Stage, and partly because of the comprehensive case-by-case training plans for the students created by the best Training Planners in the trade.

"Little Feng!"

Mr. Xu smiled, "You should know that I always write training plans for the Cultivators in the Building Foundation Stage in the Inner Camp. Why do you ask me to design a tailor-made training plan for a Refinement State Cultivator in the Outer Camp who barely knows anything about training? Who's this guy? Your cousin? Right, I heard something unbelievable on my way here. Words are that you were knocked out in the testing field?"

Mao Feng dared not to glare at Mr. Xu. Embarrassed, he tried to smile and said, "Mr. Xu, don't be hasty. I'll show you a few video clips. We'll talk about it later after you've evaluated his performance in the test."

Mao Feng waved his hand. All of the screens started playing simultaneously. They were clips from the cameras in the testing field, which had pictured Li Yao's every movement since he put on his crystal suit.

Mr. Xu glanced at the screens and said casually, "This student probably has never touched crystal suits before. Chances are that he has hardly ever done simulations or played crystal suit games. He knows absolutely nothing about crystal suits. A classic beginner.

"However, he is very good at learning from his failures, and he doesn't make the same mistake twice. Therefore, he has been improving fast.

"Look, he may have fallen over dozens of times when he first started, but they were all for different reasons.

"Ostensibly, he could barely stand or walk. But in fact, he was trying different ways of strength manipulation to test the best posture for standing and walking.

"Not bad. Not bad."

The more Mr. Xu watched, the more he started talking. He nodded his head without knowing. "His improvement is indeed magnificent. A moment ago, he was still unable to stand and now he's already jogging?

"However, it's not unusual that a student of no prior knowledge learns very fast at the beginning period.

"Based on these video clips, I can only say that he is a smart, somewhat talented student. Definitely not good enough for me to make a training plan for him."

Before he finished his sentence, Li Yao in the video clip started sprinting and rushed into the supersonic state!

"Huh?"

Mr. Xu raised his eyebrows and looked at Mao Feng suspiciously. He mumbled, "That can't be right. I remember that the tests for new students have been conducted in the beginner mode, which can only double a student's ability in the best-case scenario.

"The reason you come to me is that this boy is a genius at running and you want me to make a training plan that will boost his running potential?"

Mao Feng shook his head, he sighed. "Mr. Xu, you're wrong. The boy is not a genius runner."

"The Seven-step Rock Snake that he's been using was not set in the beginner mode, either. It was in the X-mode that only the top experts can manage."

"What?!"

Mr. Xu was shocked.

Chapter 234: No. 100

Chapter 234: No. 100

The atmosphere at the testing field was weird. All the students gathered together and whispered between each other, and their topic was, no doubt, Li Yao who was so extraordinary that knocked the chief instructor out the first day he entered the camp.

Although they were somewhat startled by Li Yao's amazing speed, they didn't think too much about it and merely regarded Li Yao as a speed-type Cultivator that lopsidedly focused on body moving techniques.

Many of them were already at the high level of the Refinement Stage. With an advanced body moving technique and the enhancement of the crystal suit, it was quite possible to run at supersonic speed and cause a sonic boom.

However, running at a supersonic speed for a moment and controlling the body at ease under it were completely different.

To dive into the supersonic state, a high level Refinement State Cultivator would be good enough.

But to maintain the combat abilities with self-control under the supersonic state, even many Building Foundation State Cultivator found it desirable yet unreachable.

Self-control always came first. A mature Cultivator wouldn't chase after extreme speed or strength that they couldn't manipulate.

Experienced fighters wouldn't allow themselves to stay airborne easily. Their legs wouldn't reach higher than their waist when they were kicking. All of this was to make sure they had absolute control over their body.

"An idiot that forgot all the common sense despite his speed."

Many people had already tagged Li Yao as such.

"It is understandable. A young man in his twenties and also a badass in his college like him must've heard enough praise and compliments to be overconfident about himself.

"Suddenly, it turned out that he had no talent in crystal suits whatsoever, and everybody in the field has witnessed his disgrace. He must've been so angry that he wanted to show off his best skill.

"But everything went wrong and caused such a mess!"

Some other people thought they knew what was on Li Yao's mind.

"He's going to suffer big time. The chief instructor doesn't seem to be a lenient man. He must be grinding his teeth and hoping to cut Li Yao into pieces right now. There won't be a day that goes by without Li Yao regretting what he did in the next three months!"

"Three months? He has zero talent and he just pissed off the chief instructor. I'm sure that his ass will be kicked out of here in a moment!"

Right then, Li Yao returned to everyone's eyesight, causing a commotion.

"What, he's already back from the med bay?"

"He's fully recovered from such a huge impact in such a short time? His body is so strong!"

"But he looks dumb. Is his brain injured?"

Li Yao heard none of it and walked to his own spot, only to be blocked by a tall thin figure.

He raised his head. It was Yuan Yeshi from Deep Sea University.

"Li Yao, I recant my previous declaration."

With faint mockery in his face, Yuan Yeshi smiled, "I just said that I would set you as my target and focus my full attention on you in the next three months in order to eliminate you at the first chance. Now I take it back.

"Because it never occurred to me that your talent could be so 'intimidating' and your performance so 'excellent' that even the chief instructor was put down by you with a single move.

"I can't bear to eliminate a gifted, outstanding freak such as yourself.

"On the contrary, I very much hope that you can stay in the camp for a while longer and make more 'miracles' to broaden my horizon!"

Yuan Yeshi was extremely delighted.

It felt like when he jumped into a swimming pool of cold water after three hours under the sun in a hot summer.

Seven years younger than his sister, Yuan Yeshi had been raised and taught by her.

He adored his sister from the bottom of his heart and regarded his sister as an invincible, inviolable goddess.

And his sister deserved his homage. She became a disciple of Jiang Sheng, the Supernova, before she reached 30. Later, she was admitted as a researcher in the Refining Department of Deep Sea University and became known as one of the Novem Stellae.

Yuan Yeshi was very proud of his sister's achievements.

But a few days ago, his sister brought up the name 'Li Yao' seriously and describe him to be a rare genius in refining who deserved great attention because he might become the biggest competitor of the Novem Stellae within the next couple of years.

Obscure hostility filled his heart.

Right now, this genius, talent, and archenemy of the Novem Stellae in the future that his sister had been talking about could only stand there stupidly and listen to his scornful berating. It felt…

Nice! Nice! Nice!

While Yuan Yeshi was feeling nice, he suddenly noticed that Li Yao's eyes were moving up and down and clearly were not fixed on him. He raised his voice, "Hey! Are you listening?!"

Li Yao's eyelids shivered. A moment later, his unfocused eyes were focused again. He nodded slowly.

"Of course. You were saying that you would recant your previous declaration. Please. I'm all ears."

"You—"

Yuan Yeshi was infuriated. His neck seemed to be thicker than usual and his face was so red that his blood seemed like to be oozing out of his orifices at any moment. Speechless for a while, he ground his teeth, "Anyways, good luck, Li Yao. I'm looking forward to your performance."

Pausing for a moment, he finally resorted to his last move. He tapped his head as if he just remembered it. "Oh, I'm so sorry. I forgot again. I shouldn't have called you 'Li Yao'. Now that the test is over and the ranks are out, I should've addressed you as 'No. 100'!"

"No. 100 means you're the tail ender!"

This remark finally grabbed Li Yao's attention.

The starry brilliance that was burning in his eyes made Yuan Yeshi's heart skip a beat.

"Which number are you?" Li Yao asked seriously.

Energized, Yuan Yeshi seemed to be taller and replied in great satisfaction, "No. 2!"

"What, judging from your look, you want to challenge me? Drop the idea now. You may be a genius in the world of refiners. But in the world of crystal suits, the gap between us is too large for you to confront me."

"Just a No. 2…"

Li Yao was disappointed and didn't catch the latter half of the sentence. He shook his head, "I don't want to challenge a No. 2."

The starry brilliance in his eyes dispersed. He ignored Yuan Yeshi again and retreated to his own thoughts.

What he meant was obvious.

If he were to challenge someone, it could only be No. 1, the best candidate in the field.

He was not interested in the person in second place!

Yuan Yeshi felt his lungs were about to explode out of anger. He didn't understand where this tail ender's confidence came from. He was going to let it out when he noticed that there were more and more people coming close and watching Li Yao and himself like it was a show.

Yuan Yeshi frowned and glared at Li Yao, before he walked away unhappily.

Li Yao was still pondering, not because he wanted to annoy anyone, nor because he had a brain injury as many had expected.

It was because he was still in the euphoria of booming into the supersonic state in the crystal suit just now.

Every one of the pores on the body embracing the outside world, hot blood turning into steam through them, soul melting together with the crystal suit… It seemed like a single blow would destroy the entire world. The feeling was just—

IN-CRE-DI-BLE!

"The crystal suit is really marvelous.

"This the first time I ever wore a crystal suit, and I reached a supersonic speed and knocked a Building Foundation Stage expert out.

"What will I be able to do after I've fully grasped the mysteries of the crystal suit?"

Li Yao was completely hooked by the thought. He replayed the moment of pleasure in his brain time and time again. There was no time to deal with guys like Yuan Yeshi.

No. 100, the tail ender?

It doesn't matter!

What's more important is not who's fastest off the start line, but who's the first to pass the finish line!

At that moment, Mao Feng returned to the testing field furiously, together with some twenty instructors.

All of the students hurried to stand straight as a spear and didn't dare look around.

Mao Feng's eyesight seemed to be filled with electricity. It swept everyone and finally stopped at Li Yao.

And the intensity of electricity increased exponentially.

"Everyone must bear your rank in mind. The training camp has arranged different instructors for you according to your specialties and level.

"Don't be hasty if your rank is relatively low.

"An elimination match will be held one month from today in which you will be given a chance to challenge the students who are above you and assume their rank!

"No. 1, No. 4, and No. 5, you are all aware of the basics and prefer agility and melee. Therefore, the training camp assigned Liu Bingqin to you. Instructor Liu!"

A dry and thin female instructor walked out from Mao Feng's back. She piped, "No. 1, No. 4 and No. 5, come with me!"

Her appearance caused a minor chaos in the field. Many people sighed with jealousy and resentment.

Instructors of the Thunder Training Camp were all renowned strong men in the world of Exos.

The female instructor Liu Bingqin, though only at the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage, was adept at using crystal suits. She once fought a demon king for 300 rounds without any sign of failure, thereby gaining her reputation. She was also the top instructor in the Outer Camp.

In everyone's amazement, the three students walked to Liu Bingqin's back excitedly and stood straighter.

"No. 2, No. 3, No. 6. You will go with Instructor Murong Yuan."

"No. 9, No. 11, No. 15 and No. 17…"

"No. 78, No. 84, No. 86, No. 89, No. 92…"

After a moment, all 99 students were sorted out and standing behind their respective instructors.

Li Yao was the only one left on the field. Everyone looked at him with a peculiar expression.

Mao Feng waved his hand and shouted, "Alright. You all know your instructor now. Go with them and start your training!"

Chapter 235: Training in the Crystal Suits Graveyard

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Led by their instructors, the ninety-nine students vanished into the desert.

Li Yao and Mao Feng were the only two left in the empty testing field now.

Audacious as Li Yao may be, he felt uneasy under the chief instructor's murderous look.

"No. 100!"

Mao Feng shouted, "There's no need to wonder why you don't have an instructor. It's because your performance was so crummy that it has created a new lower limit of the Thunder Training Camp! Over all the years as manager of the Outer Camp, I've never seen a second weirdo such as yourself! You are not half qualified to receive regular training like the rest of them!

"Now, I'm giving you two options.

"Option one, get your ass out of here as fast and far away as you can, and stop wasting my time.

"Option two, stay in the training camp and start learning the most rudimental basics.

"During your training, I will crush you, torture you, suppress you, and spite you without any mercy. When I discover that you make a mistake, small as a needle as it may be, I will let you know what 'being dead is better than living' means and eliminate you ruthlessly!

"You'd better choose option one. If you wait here for a while longer, someone will pick you up and send you home. 95% of your tuition fees will be refunded.

"But if you have completely lost your mind and decide to see if I was joking, then just follow me!"

Mao Feng finished his words without any pause. He jumped on his skeleton shuttle and moved off like lightning, never looking back.

Li Yao dazed. He cursed in his mind, 'This guy is outrageous. It's true that my performance hasn't been very satisfactory. But that's because I've never touched any crystal suits before!

'The reason why I'm here is exactly because I don't know the first thing about crystal suits. If I was already good at it, I'd be applying to be an instructor!

'The more you look down upon me, the more I will prove you completely wrong!

'Want to eliminate me? It's not that easy!'

Li Yao gritted his teeth and followed the skeleton shuttle at the fastest speed he could.

After more than half an hour's running, they'd already covered almost 100 kilometers. Finally, the two of them stopped at a rugged area crowded by a lot of rocks in bizarre shapes.

Under the bare rocks stood a giant, rusted, steel gate which looked like an entrance to a semi-underground warehouse that assumed the place of the original cave.

Mao Feng waved his hand. The rune arrays on the gate lit up dimly. After a long cracking sound, there were sounds of gears grinding and hinges stretching on both sides of the gate.

The gate opened. A strong moldy smell, resembling that in a tomb, hit their face.

Mao Feng looked back with obvious disdain and walked directly into the warehouse.

Li Yao tried to hold back the thought of kicking Mao Feng in his ass and followed.

It was not a big warehouse. One could tell that with a single glance. Metal wreckages that looked like decayed bones were scattered all over the place. They were scarred, battered, and in all kinds of shapes.

It took Li Yao a long time before he recognized that they were all crystal suit leftovers.

Then he realized that this was not a warehouse of crystal suits, but a graveyard for them!

Mao Feng glanced at him and said, "146 crystal suits reside in this place. All of them were too seriously damaged to repair. We could only retrieve the crystal stones and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures from them and declared them to be a total loss.

"Look, most of them have been corroded by the poisons of the demon beasts before they were left in the open air for decades. Therefore, their components have all rusted together.

"Your talent is lousy and you don't know anything about crystal suits. If you've made up your mind to learn about being an Exo, this will be your start point.

"This jade slips contain all the structural designs and maintenance manuals of the crystal suits here. What you're going to do is to dismantle them, clean up their components, and assemble them together.

"The time you have finished your maintenance for all 146 crystal suits lying here with absolutely no rust on them anymore is the time when I will consider assigning an instructor to you for you to receive regular training like everybody else does."

Li Yao was stupefied. "This is the basics?"

Mao Feng replied coldly, "Of course it is. As an Exo, you must have knowledge of how to conduct fundamental maintenance on crystal suits. Such training is best for you to learn the deep structure of crystal suits. Very suitable for an idiotic newbie like yourself!

"However, it is indeed a little bit difficult to do the training on 146 total-loss crystal suits altogether at the same time. You can say no and get out of here now!"

Li Yao blinked. There was sharp light in his eyes.

Mao Feng grinned hideously.

"Your guess is correct. I am purposely making things difficult for you. This is a simple game that I just came up with. It won't get any easier as you walk further down this path. There's no way that you can complete it."

Li Yao looked at him in the eyes and asked carefully, "Will I be able to learn some real crystal suit skills after I tear down all the 146 crystal suits, remove their rust, lubricate them, and make sure they can work again?"

Mao Feng gave an affirmative by a grunt.

"Alright. I'll start now!"

Mao Feng stared at him coldly. He said, "You're going to stay here for some time. Maintenance tools and materials will be sent here in a moment, together with food and water for the next month.

"Contact me again when these crystal suits are as fresh as when they were first produced.

"Naturally, you can also contact me when you feel you can't bear it any longer and wish to give up."

"I won't," Li Yao replied with a thin smile.

"Very good. Let's see how long you can persist."

While saying it, Mao Feng took two pieces of magical equipment that looked like shining shells out of his pocket and handed them over.

"Besides, you'll need to stick these to your temples."

Li Yao accepted the magical equipment. He weighed them in his hand and pinned them in his temples.

The magical equipment seemed to become magnetic all of a sudden. They were attracted to each other and wouldn't let go no matter how hard Li Yao tried to shake them off.

For a moment, the sky and ground were swirling before Li Yao, who completely lost balance and fell to the ground. He felt like vomiting.

"The magical equipment is called 'Balance Breakers'. They're particularly useful in the training of balance control."

Mao Feng smiled, "We Cultivators often need to fly on a sword, or fight in the sky. When you're in a crystal suit, your speed will be greatly enhanced, which makes balance control all the more important.

"Like back when you were in the testing field, you could barely walk after you put on a crystal suit for the first time. Although you moved quickly enough to create a sonic boom, you weren't able to control your direction.

"They're all because of the same reason: you couldn't maintain your balance.

"Balance of a human being depends on their vestibular apparatus.

"Balance Breakers possess a strange magnetic power that can disturb the functioning of your vestibular apparatus, which will put you in a constant state of imbalance.

"And you're going to find the subtle balance in the overwhelming imbalance. During this process, your vestibular apparatus will be stronger and you'll have better balance control, so they'll help prepare you for the high-speed combat to come when you're in a crystal suit.

"Stop fiddling with them. Their switch is in my hands. You'll never dig them out.

"While you maintain the wrecked crystal suits, you'll always be in instability and you will find yourself hardly able to stand.

"How about it? Want to give up yet?"

Li Yao closed his eyes, breathing heavily. He lay on the ground, with all his limbs stretched out. Still, he felt like a chestnut that was being fried in a pan. Just spinning, spinning, and spinning!

"Instructor, I have a question for you."

After a long time of adaption, he finally regained the ability to talk. There was not the slightest hint of blood on his face. His skin was drearily pale. But his eyes were deeper and darker than before.

"Yes?"

"Will I be eliminated if I use profanity to an instructor?"

"Good, that's my boy. However, I hope you are as bold as today in ten days' time, instead of begging me to eliminate you!"

Mao Feng snorted and went out, slamming the gate of the warehouse.

His angry expression disappeared in no time. He hurriedly turned on his crystal processor and reached out to Xu Tianyou, the experienced Training Planner.

"Mr. Xu, the boy has accepted the challenge.

"According to our deal, as long as he can survive 5 days and 5 nights in the scrapped crystal suits' warehouse, you'll design a set of training plans for him. Let's start the countdown now, shall we?"

Mr. Xu nodded. He answered, "Of course. I've already started reading his profile in order to write the best training plans possible for him.

"But whether or not he'll have the opportunity to use it depends on himself.

"Not that I'm being pretentious. It's just that my training plan is harsh enough for even a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator. A Refinement Stage Cultivator will never be able to make it without strong determination and an ultra-solid soul.

"So, 5 days and 5 nights. No less for even a single second."

Mao Feng grinned. "There's something special about the boy. I'm very confident in him. But just to be clear, our deal was meant to test his willpower and persistence, and it is okay as long as he makes it to the end of the fifth day even if he fails to renew a single crystal suit, correct?"

Mr. Xu smiled. "Of course. Those crystal suits are pure scraps. They're nothing but piles of garbage which would demand a hell of a lot of time to be fixed up. What's more, he has the Balance Breakers on him that have basically crippled him. All in all, I don't have any requirements as to the number of the crystal suits that he recovers. Suppose he does recover eight or ten of them miraculously, then he will have earned my true respect."

"I reckon it's going to be more than that."

Mao Feng beamed. "Something tells me that this boy will make miracles. It's possible that he will renew—"

He raised two fingers, then added one after thinking for a moment.

Mao Feng said, completely seriously, "30 of them!"

Chapter 236: Seven Ways to Hide Edge

Chapter 236: Seven Ways to Hide Edge

In the dim light of the crystal suit graveyard, Li Yao was left alone with 146 wrecked crystal suits.

Li Yao felt that his entire world had become a small boat floating in the surging tides of stars and sea.

And he was merely an ant on the boat which was completely stunned by the overwhelming dominance.

He stood up shaking, and tried to keep balance by stretching his two arms.

But he suddenly found that the whole world was tilting leftwards and he was falling to his left beyond his control into the crystal suit ruins.

Just like quicksand, the 146 crystal suits flew towards him and swallowed him.

Li Yao screamed. Then he recognized that all the crystal suits were in their original place.

They didn't fly towards him. Instead, it was him who staggered towards them like a headless fly.

"The balance system of my brain is totally in disorder now. I can't even stand straight, and whenever I sit down, I feel like vomiting. How can I maintain the crystal suits like this?

"No! If things remain unchanged, I'm never going to finish the maintenance work within a month. And even if I do, there will be no time left for me to learn any crystal suit skills. I'm definitely going to be eliminated!

"It might be exactly what the chief instructor hoped for!

"I won't let it go your way, asshole!

"First, stand up and hold on for three seconds!"

Li Yao gritted his teeth. Veins were appearing in his pale face.

He shouted and stood up, and it took less than half a second before he fell down on his face again.

10 minutes later.

Li Yao had tried 79 times. Not once did he successfully remain standing for more than two seconds without falling over. His face was swollen, his body covered in bruises.

Then Li Yao tried to stand up for the 80th time. But this time his body couldn't bear it any longer and he leaned backwards before he kissed the knee of a solid crystal suit with the back of his head.

"BANG!"

The thump echoed in the small graveyard for a long time.

The back of his head was wet. Blood was running out.

But Li Yao opened his eyes with wonder and astonishment.

"What's going on?

"The dizziness was relieved when my head hit the crystal suit?"

He lay there for a while to make sure he wasn't hallucinating. No, he wasn't. The sense of balance had returned to his body. He was able to sit up and take a deep breath.

But before he enjoyed himself enough, the swirling feeling crawled back and devoured him like a giant beast. He was locked up in darkness again.

Li Yao lay down again. He gazed at the ceiling and started pondering.

A moment later, he fumbled around the floor and found a crystal suit component.

He weighed it. It was neither too light nor too heavy and exactly fit for his purpose.

He clutched the component and hit it really hard in his head.

"BANG!"

There seemed to be a giant bell ringing in his brain. Li Yao blinked with a twisted face due to the pain.

But with the sharp pain came the ease of dizziness. He was able to sit up and enjoy his freedom for a couple of seconds again.

What's more, there was joy of insight in his eyes.

He finally understood what had happened.

Even though a small boat was floating in surging tides, an experienced sailor would still be walking with ease on the bumping deck.

Their trick was to anticipate the direction and degree of each bump the moment it happens.

Then they would impose a force of the same degree, but in the opposite direction, to offset the impact of the tides.

Normally, when someone was hit in the head, there would be concussion and dizziness. Sometimes they'd even see stars dancing before their eyes.

But Li Yao was already extremely dizzy before he was hit.

The second wave of dizziness, caused by the knock, offset the first wave of dizziness triggered by the Balance Breakers, resulting in a new subtle balance.

It was exactly the same as the experienced sailors who used their own movement to offset the movement of the sea.

Or rather, it was like two rapid shuttles at the speed of 800km/h, which were in the state of relative rest although they were both moving fast.

"This is why!

"The Balance Breakers has completely overturned the balance system of my brain. There's no way that I can subvert it.

"However, by introducing a second interference, I can activate a second wave of imbalance.

"When the two waves of imbalance confront each other, they will offset, and my balance system will probably be restored to normal again!"

After figuring out the mechanism, Li Yao started trying.

He shook his head at an astonishing speed.

When one shakes his head too fast, he would feel dizzy because there's a lot of liquid contained in his brain which will hit the skull when it's being recklessly shaken.

Just like when the brakes of a shuttle are slammed on, the passengers in it will lean forward uncontrollably even though the vehicle has stopped.

"Ew!"

Li Yao couldn't hold it back any longer and started vomiting.

Since he'd failed to control the intensity, the two waves of dizziness didn't offset. Instead, they combined together as if a stun grenade had detonated in his brain, which immediately put him down.

But Li Yao was not the least frustrated. On the contrary, he was excited.

Because his theory had been proved. An external impact could influence the dizziness inside his brain.

If the dizziness could be strengthened, of course it could be weakened.

"Come on now!

"I've got it!

"Let's see who can stop me now!"

An hour later.

47 new wounds and 209 new bruises were added to Li Yao's body.

He finally grasped the frequency of dizziness, as well as a special skill named brain concussion.

Although it was not enough to extricate him from the swirl of dizziness, he was able to stand and get back to work now.

"Balance training can't be done in a day. I'm already doing well with such recovery in such a short time. Let's improve it later in the days to come!

"Now, start the crystal suit maintenance!"

Li Yao couldn't wait any longer.

Magical equipment maintenance was what he had always been best at!

But after checking the total-loss crystal suits carefully, he found that things were a bit tricky.

What the chief instructor left for him was nothing but scraps that couldn't be scrappier.

Crystal suits, as the top magic equipment, boasted a high level of precision.

Key components in the total-loss crystal suits, such as the Super Compressed Crystal Reactor, had all been torn away. The only thing left on each of them was the bare framework.

Just like a dead body without muscles, arteries, nerves, and organs. A pure skeleton.

But still, it was much more complicated than Li Yao had imagined.

It was not Li Yao's biggest problem, since the jade slips that Mao Feng left for him had all the structure designs and maintenance manuals in them.

He had not been asked to modify or upgrade them. Therefore, he only needed to decompose and assemble them according to the illustrations in the jade slips.

It would take some time, but it was not undoable.

The trickier problem was that those crystal suits had decayed in the open air for so long that their components were all utterly rusted, which were as rotten as bones that had been buried underground for decades.

The garbage that had been overlooked for almost a hundred years would be maintained by him and him alone.

"What a bunch of scrap! They're not crystal suits; they're pure garbage. They're even worse than the rubbish that I used to gather in the magical equipment graveyard!

"Any other refiner would find himself unable to do anything about it.

"But it's me and I have to do my best now!"

Li Yao gritted his teeth and sat cross-legged.

He closed his eyes. His soul returned to the deep down of his brain.

In the middle of the depth of his mind, Ou Yezi's Tree of Memories was flickering brilliantly.

40,000 years ago, the Hundred Smelting Clan was a major sect for refiners. It had considerable expertise on magical equipment maintenance.

In the Hundred Smelting Clan, the novices would serve as workers or assistants to help maintain the magical equipment before they started refining formally.

Even Ou Yezi himself had spent a few years on the onerous job of maintaining magical equipment in his early days.

In ancient times, there weren't many maintenance tools as today. Everything had to be done with their bare hands.

Many of Ou Yezi's memory pieces devoured by Li Yao were related to magical equipment maintenance.

But Li Yao had never studied them before, since he'd never had the chance to use them.

Now, he watched the hundreds of maintenance jobs done by Ou Yezi while fast forwarding. Then he sank his consciousness into Ou Yezi's self and felt the delicacies of the art of magical equipment maintenance in ancient times.

Rolling them over in his mind, Li Yao felt that he was onto something.

He chose another memory piece and went into the first floor of the Heavenly Refining Tower, where he found a book named Seven Ways to Hide Edge and started reading intensively.

Seven Ways to Hide Edge was an introductory book to magical equipment maintenance from the Hundred Smelting Clan.

It contained instructions on how to remove the rust, how to lubricate, how to illuminate an obscure rune array, thousands of ways to mix maintenance oil… Nothing anyone could imagine regarding magical equipment maintenance was not in it.

Most of the tricks in the book had already been forgotten 40,000 years later.

Li Yao absorbed the knowledge in Seven Ways to Hide Edge by telepathic thoughts transmission technology, like a giant whale absorbing water.

Even so, it still took him a day and a night in the Heavenly Refining Tower before he fully grasped the tons of information in the book.

Then he chose Ou Yezi's memory pieces about magical equipment maintenance again and practiced the skills that he'd just learnt a couple of hundred times.

In the end, the miraculous tricks and skills were wholly embedded into his soul.

When Li Yao returned to himself satisficed, the time in reality had passed 24 hours.

He could see something unusual about the rusted scrapped metals now.

In the level that ordinary people couldn't reach or feel, he seemed to hear the steel soldiers roaring astoundingly despite the rust on their body!

"Even though you're dead, I'll bring you the dignity you deserve.

"You should be sitting majestically in war museums and talking to the world about your magnificent history as heroes, instead of rotting silently in this shithole!"

Li Yao inserted the jade slips into the crystal processor. He started warming himself up while reading the maintenance manuals.

Cracking sounds came from the joints of his fingers, which seemed to have become ten hungry dragons lusting for food.

Picking up the tools he needed, Li Yao walked to the first crystal suit solemnly.

Chapter 237: Ecstasy

Chapter 237: Ecstasy

Bloody Blade Battlesuit, developed 124 years ago, was a beginner's crystal suit for the Refinement Stage Cultivators best known for its amazing weight and solid structure.

However, the passage of time had decorated this robust crystal suit with a thick shell of rust.

At first glance, it seemed to be covered in crimson moss.

Ordinary rust-removing techniques were not able to erase such a thick shell in such a short time.

Li Yao bent his fingers and lay them down on the chest of the Bloody Blade Battlesuit.

His fingers danced like a gentle breeze, as if he were playing a delicate piano.

With the dance of his fingers, his countenance changed from austerity to enjoyment.

Each touch sensed the inner structure of the crystal suit and sent it into his brain.

Together with the structural design and maintenance manual he'd just studied, he knew everything about the crystal suit now.

Then, the speed and strength of the finger dance increased by one hundred times, transforming the piano-playing into ruthless striking.

A burst of brisk cracking sounds came from the skin of the suit, as if thousands of pearls were raining upon it.

The Bloody Blade Battlesuit was rattling.

Li Yao condensed all his spiritual energy into his fingers, where strong spiritual energy lightning was triggered and flashing.

The spiritual energy started rippling on the surface of the suit.

Then something amazing happened!

As the waves stretched forward with the movement of his fingers and the excitation of his spiritual energy, the thick dense rust was desquamated and flew away in pieces!

In less than five minutes, the rust shell on the outmost layer had been completely purged.

Although the suit still looked lackluster and a lot of rust remained in the joints and gaps, it was ready to be dismantled for further maintenance.

Li Yao smile and moved his hands as fast as the wind. He tore down the 107 components that made up the head of the suit and dropped them in a giant metal bucket.

While he was meditating, staff of the training camp had brought a lot of maintenance tools and materials, including many kinds of maintenance lubricant used in the modern cultivation world.

The lubricants were either directly extracted from demon beasts or synthetic. Each of them had their special usages.

But Li Yao felt they were not good enough. After analyzing the characteristics of the maintenance lubricants, he mixed dozens of different lubricants according to the ancient formula in Seven Ways to Hide Edge .

He selected seven lubricants and poured them into the bucket in perfect ratio.

Upon shaking, the vibrant colors of the lubricants melted into dark gold, and the blended liquid started emitting an exotic fragrance.

Then, Li Yao pushed the colorless components into the secret lubricant gently.

After that, Li Yao put his hand into it.

With a growl, Li Yao's hands trembled violently.

Weird ripples appeared on the surface of the dark gold lubricant.

Countless bubbles popped up.

At the bottom of the liquid, undercurrents triggered by the shaking of Li Yao's hands were brushing the components of the suit unstoppably.

Li Yao seemed to be still, but he had brought his spiritual energy to its limit. Every muscle, every artery, and every nerve of his was providing power for his hands.

Now and then, he would need to smack his head to resist the scourge of the Balance Breakers.

In no less than three minutes, his clothes were soaked in sweat, which highlighted the shivering of his muscles.

Five minutes later, Li Yao panted with relief and picked up one component from the lubricant. He observed it carefully under light.

After the two rust-removing procedures, the component had been entirely renewed. It was crystal clear without the slightest hint of rust as if it had just been collected from a refining furnace whose warmth had not entirely gone yet.

However, there was a small scratch thinner than a hair on its surface, which was probably consequence of a fierce battle with a demon beast.

Rust-removing, polishing, lubricating, polishing again, lubricating again.

Many of the key components needed repetitive nourishment of the spiritual energy before they could be assembled again.

The tedious and dull procedures might have been a headache to ordinary refiners, but in Li Yao's eyes, they made a most splendid and interesting game to which he dedicated his full attention.

The wrecked crystal suits were all classic magic equipment from a hundred years ago. They could be divided into seven categories with 21 different models in total.

Li Yao had little knowledge about them, except for the simple introductions in the crystal suit journals that he'd read previously, let alone details of their structural designs.

But now, not only was he given an opportunity to read their structural designs and maintenance manuals, he was also allowed to touch, break up, explore, and assemble them at his will.

For a magical equipment maniac like him, he was like a rat in a rice jar.

Both Mao Feng and Mr. Xu had considered maintaining the wrecked crystal suits a dreadful ordeal. It never occurred to them that this was a bonus for Li Yao.

Since the key parts and plates of the suits, which were made of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, had been removed and the framework was the only thing left, Li Yao was able to appreciate the beauty of the core of a crystal suit.

Framework was the foundation of a crystal suit.

A crystal suit without a proper framework was like a man with aberrant bones. It wouldn't help no matter how many Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures one put on it.

And the frameworks of the classic crystal suits were perfect.

Through the scattered rust, Li Yao saw dazzling, soul-stirring sceneries.

Some of the crystal suits were solemn, some vivacious, some violent, and still some were mysterious. The different styles of the frameworks had awed him. He felt as wonderful as when he had just finished a bottle of nice wine.

When he'd just got started, the only thing on his mind was to finish the job as soon as possible so that the chief instructor Mao Feng would be humiliated.

But now, after he'd finished the maintenance of his first crystal suit, the Bloody Blade Battlesuit, he had successfully revived it to its former glory. Seeing it standing like a king in the darkness, he tossed the thought of revenge away immediately.

He had forgotten who Mao Feng was or where he even was.

Every inch of his mind had been occupied by the fantastic crystal suits. There was nothing but crystal suits, crystal suits, and crystal suits!

He almost wished that time could flow more slowly, so that he could stay a few more years in this gold mine. Every second when his fingers crossed over the surface of the crystal suits had brought him unparalleled ecstasy which he hoped to enjoy for a while longer.

It was odd that the more he wanted to freeze the time, the faster the actual time fled.

At first, it took him an hour to complete one job. But after he had absorbed and learnt all of the structural designs and maintenance manuals by heart, it would only take a few minutes for him to dismantle a crystal suit into atom components.

In the endless work, Li Yao grasped extensive knowledge, like a dry leech on the vascular wall of the world of crystal suits which had enjoyed enough blood to be plump.

In the beginning, he was learning the paradigm of crystal suit frameworks, and the way that their joints were connected.

Later, he started to explore the differences of the frameworks between melee crystal suits and long-range ones.

Next, he was fascinated by the different styles of the craftsmen.

Even the same heavy melee crystal suits could have widely divergent styles if they were created by two different craftsmen, who may have contradictory yet feasible theories on how to design a certain part.

In the end, he was attracted by the fatal wounds that led to the retirement of the crystal suits.

Every model of crystal suits had its own weakness. There was no such thing as a perfect crystal suit.

In the battlefield, once the weakness was discovered by a demon beast, the result could be deadly.

Therefore, the fatal wounds of many crystal suits of the same model were often located at the same place.

Li Yao boosted his computational ability to the maximum and inferred what had happened on the battlefield from the subtle differences of the wounds on the crystal suits. He also pondered if he could make any revisions to the framework design to avoid the fatal wounds or at least reduce their aftermath.

The challenging game grabbed his full attention and deprived him of any sense of time.

It was not until he'd finished the maintenance of the last crystal suit that he regrettably found that it was already 4 days, 23 hours, 37 minutes and 55 seconds later.

…

In the analysis room, Mao Feng was pacing to and fro anxiously. He checked the spirit clock on the wall now and then.

His face was brighter every time he found that some ten seconds had passed.

"Mr. Xu, it seems that the boy has succeeded. In another 20 minutes, he will have completed the five-day-five-night seclusion and proved himself qualified for your special overall planning!" Mao Feng said excitedly.

Although he could not see into the warehouse due to lack of crystal cameras, the fact that Li Yao'd stayed long enough without reaching out to him made it evident that he had persevered long enough.

Even though he might have done nothing but crying and rolling over during the five days, he still managed himself to the end.

Mr. Xu was as calm as ever. He said, not without fondness, "Mao Feng, it would seem that you have indeed come across a very distinguished student this time. My efforts on drafting training plans for him days and nights and revising the training equipment with the resources of the Inner Camp turn out to be not useless now."

"Mr. Xu!"

Mao Feng was moved. He never thought that the best Training Planner of the Inner Camp would spend so much time on an unknown Outer Camp student.

Mr. Xu smiled and said, "There's no need to thank me. You and I share the same bad habit. Whenever we meet a promising young man, we can't hold back the temptation to bring out the best of them. I think this is our occupational disease. Haha. It's about time. Only ten minutes left. Let's go there."

"Alright!"

In high spirits, Mao Feng was going to open the door, when the miniature crystal processor on his wrist started buzzing. The message on the crystal processor thrashed him in the face.

"Are you kidding me?!"

Mao Feng's nose was out of shape due to anger, "You've persisted for 4 days, 23 hours and 50 minutes and there are only 10 minutes left now, and you're giving up?"

Having no alternative, he accepted the video chat. Li Yao's corpse-like, pale face and bloodshot eyes gave him a big surprise.

The bigger surprise was what Li Yao said next.

"Reporting to you, instructor. I'm completed my task," Li Yao said, not entirely satisfied.

"You have? How many of them? 20? 30?" Mao Feng asked unconsciously.

"20? 30? Of course I have completed the maintenance work of all 146 crystal suits. Weren't you the one who told me that I shouldn't contact you until I finished all of them?"

Li Yao was confused. His ruby eyes were blinking fast.

Chapter 238: The King of Crystal Suits

Chapter 238: The King of Crystal Suits

After half an hour, Mao Feng and Mr. Xu rushed to the abandoned crystal suit warehouse.

The two glanced at each other before opening the door and noticed a look of surprise in each other's eyes.

Although it usually came across that Mao Feng had a hot-temper and blew a fuse frequently, he did all that just to scare the trainees; he intentionally created that kind of persona.

Having been the chief instructor at the outer camp of the Thunder Training Camp for a decade, Mao Feng had seen all kinds of geniuses and prodigies, but not one of them had moved or surprised him.

However, this time, he had truly been scared.

Furthermore, he could see that even Mr. Xu, the top trainer in the inner camp, was incredibly surprised.

Two outer camp refiners also followed the two and they were somewhat at a loss. They could not understand why the chief instructor and Mr. Xu had called them over to the abandoned crystal suit warehouse.

'Hasn't this warehouse been abandoned for many years?'

But the moment they opened the doors of the warehouse, the air that blew on their faces was no longer lifeless and rusty but had a faint sweet fragrance, gladdening their hearts and refreshing their mind.

The scene before them, even more so, made their eyes focus instantly.

Under the dim lights, one hundred and forty crystal suits were just like one hundred and forty statues of warriors cast from iron and steel that toweringly stood in the warehouse silently, emanating a chilling killing intent.

The suits that used to be laden with rust were now bright as new.

Under the setting sun, the refracted light burst forth with a colorful brilliance, making the group feel like they were standing in a hall filled with crystals; it was as beautiful as a dream.

Surrounded and protected by numerous crystal suits, Li Yao stood alone at the center of the warehouse, inviting them in.

That calm performance and the confident look in his eyes gave off the impression as if he was the ruler of one hundred and forty crystal suits, the king of crystal suits!

Mao Feng and Mr. Xu took a long, deep breath simultaneously as they entered the warehouse.

In contrast, the two refiners weren't as calm as them and started shouting, "These crystal suits that had been scrapped for decades have actually been maintained to this degree?"

"In-incredible!"

Li Yao was somewhat in a trance.

Li Yao had once envisioned how he would retort or ruthlessly slap Mao Feng's face when Mao Feng arrived, venting all the dissatisfaction in his heart.

However, now that the chief instructor had actually arrived before Li Yao, seeing the look of disbelief on the chief instructor's face and listening to the praises from the people next to the chief instructor, Li Yao felt as if...

None of that was important.

Neither Mao Feng's amazement nor the exclamation and praises of others were of any importance, they were not the things he pursued.

The crystal suit in itself was worth it for him to burn his spirit to the extreme, worth it for him to pursue, worth it for him to struggle, worth it for him to get intoxicated. He could have all the fun from the world of crystal suits!

Was it still necessary to care about what others thought of him and how they evaluated him?

No matter whether it was the criticism or the praises.

It didn't matter if they treated him as a rookie or considered him as a freak.

He didn't want to waste even a second on these small things. He just wanted it to be over with as quickly as possible so that he could proceed to the next part, enter deeper into the world of crystal suits and appreciate the endless mysteries to his heart's content!

Mao Feng's expression was very strange.

He was somewhat absent-minded. He went to the front of the Bloody Blade Battlesuit distractedly and traced his stubby fingers over the slightly rough texture, showing an inexplicable expression.

Over a couple decades ago, Mao Feng had also been a trainee in the Thunder Training Camp.

This Bloody Blade Battlesuit was his comrade and partner in the training camp.

Until the last training, when they headed deep into the Wasteland for real combat but encountered a huge beast tide, during which they killed and killed for a day and night.

Although they luckily escaped, the Bloody Blade Battlesuit was completely scrapped and was sent to the crystal suit graveyard.

Mao Feng remembered very clearly that the Bloody Blade Battlesuit had sustained corrosion from seven and eight demon beast acid attacks and had rusted to the point that it was barely recognizable.

However, he had never imagined that its past elegance could still be recovered!

Apart from some holes due to having been completely corroded, a vast majority of the places had a faint bloody hue lingering around, and every array glyph engraved on the crystal suit was so clear that he could feel the minutest details even with the slightest touch. The array glyphs were in such a good condition that the spiritual energy would flow very smoothly for sure!

"I didn't expect that you would see the light of day again!" Mao Feng muttered to himself with a complex mood.

The feelings between Exos and their crystal suits were somewhere between comrades in arms and a pet.

Although this Bloody Blade Battlesuit had not accompanied him for a long time, it had saved his life; its very existence had a very special meaning for him.

While Mao Feng was silently wallowing in emotions, the two refiners were gazing at six crystal suit fragments placed on the ground with a very appreciative gaze at a corner.

These six crystal suits had suffered the most corrosion, and their various components could barely hold together by relying on the rusted layer.

Li Yao had just broken their rusted layer and as such the six crystal suits completely fell apart.

Having lost the most crucial components, it was simply impossible to assemble their scattered components.

All Li Yao could do was place their scattered components on the ground in accordance with their approximate locations, gathering the components to try and give the six crystal suits humanoid appearances.

The problem was that he had arranged the components a bit too accurately!

Whether it was the gap or the angle between the components, it was just as it was denoted in the blueprints; it was as if a complete three-dimensional diagram was spread out meticulously on the ground and scaled up to real life version.

This level was absolutely professional to the extreme in the eyes of the two refiners.

After half a minute, the four had come to a conclusion with an incomparably complex mood.

"These one hundred and forty-six scrapped crystal suits have indeed been maintained fairly well, even their smallest gap has not been let off.

"And this was all completed while wearing that Balance Breaker!

"This kid is a freak, out and out!"

Mao Feng's beard quivered as he looked at Li Yao.

Only to discover Li Yao lying flat on his back at the center of the warehouse, having been fast asleep for some time, even lightly snoring.

Having been up for five days and five nights without so much as an ounce of rest and completely under a high concentration, his spirit had been exhausted to the extreme. This was almost the fiercest 'combustion of the soul' he had undergone since he became a cultivator!

He truly could not hold it back anymore and fell into the wonderland of his dream.

In his dream, a new world made up of thousands upon thousands of crystal suits bloomed slowly just like a flower bud.

"Mr. Xu..."

The chief instructor and the trainer went to a corner and whispered to each other, "Is this freak's potential still insufficient for you to personally create a training plan for him?"

"No!"

Mr. Xu shook his head and said, smiling wryly, "I found that the training plan I drew up for him a few days ago was too conservative, I still need to make it a bit crazier!"

...

When Li Yao woke up from his sweet dreams, the first thing he saw was Chief Instructor Mao Feng with a malicious look covering his face.

"Now, can I take part in the normal training with the other trainees?" Li Yao asked, fidgeting.

"Theoretically, you can!"

Mao Feng burst into a grim laughter, "However, all the instructors have been conducting training for five days; the other trainees have also completed their basic training and begun charging into the higher-level training! If a rookie like you joined them, wouldn't you be dragging everyone down?

"Therefore, count yourself lucky as this instructor has decided to personally train you!

"Of course, if you think that this is just an excuse, and in fact, this instructor wants to take this opportunity to torture you, ravage you, torment you, and look for an opportunity to eliminate you...

"Congratulations, you are right!

"Don't glare me like that, I'm still not finished. Aren't you good at doing maintenance on these crystal suits? So, from now one, you will have to take out extra five hours every night to maintain crystal suits!

"The crystal suits you are going to maintain this time are not the ones that were scrapped a few decades ago, but the crystal suits which are being used by all the trainees in the outer camp. Whether it's their crystal processor, their reactor, or their offensive magical equipment, you have to do maintenance on everything!

"It's ten times more difficult to maintain them than the scrapped crystal suits!

"I have arranged two refiners to oversee you. You have to especially report to them. No matter how messy or tired you are, everything will be left for you to complete!

"If you can't finish it, you have to continue during the day, also there is no need for you learn crystal suit tactics, you won't understand anyway!"

Facing the roars of the chief instructor, Li Yao didn't ever dare to shake his eyelashes and said seriously, nodding, "I understand, let's get started!"

Listening to him, Mao Feng was somewhat shocked as he said, knitting his brows, "You don't have anything to say?"

Li Yao thought for a moment and said, "Actually, I do!"

"Speak!"

"Can the five hours of extra maintenance at night be changed to six hours, and can I also get some extra work as well? I can make do with sleeping one less hour!"

"..."

Just like that, the crazy training began.

During the day, Li Yao was ruthlessly tortured by Mao Feng.

In the evening, he carefully carried out maintenance on all the crystal suits used by the trainees.

Even in his sleep, he would study crystal suit blueprints and maintenance manuals with joy!

The Thunder Training Camp truly followed a completely closed training mode. The trainees could not contact the outside world, all the information sent out had to go through the training camp.

Every three days, Li Yao would give himself five minutes at night and write a bit about his training and sent it to his friend at Grand Desolate War Institution.

This was the only time he relaxed.

And the 'friend at Grand Desolate War Institution' referred to only one person.

Ding Lingdang.

"Sister Ling, today is my eighth day at the camp, it's also the third day since my training began.

"The training camp has specially modified a training crystal suit for me, it has five times more propulsion array glyphs than an ordinary crystal suit, spread front to back, left to right, top to bottom all over the crystal suit.

"The worst thing is that the rights to control these propulsion array glyphs are not on me, they are remotely controlled by a crystal processor and would randomly fire powerful jet stream.

"It's like countless transparent ropes pulling me ruthlessly any time, and I would then tumble to the ground.

"And I have to maintain balance under these random jet streams, and also finished a few set of highly difficult training as well.

"For instance, in the first training, I need to grab a hundred mini puppets the size of a fly that are randomly flying under a minute.

"I am busy for almost all of the day, and my best score is catching nine puppets in one minute.

"My performance has shocked Chief Instructor Mao Feng so much that he stared at me for a long time before he stated that he had never seen a stupid trainee like me. Others could capture twenty to thirty puppet beasts when they first started.

"It does not matter, I pay no heed to his words.

"In any case, I will not give up!"

Chapter 239: Stars Falling on My Head

Chapter 239: Stars Falling on My Head

"Sister Ling, today is my 11th day in the training camp.

"After three days of hard training, I can catch 23 miniature beast puppets in the air in one minute.

"In fact, the game is not as boring as it sounds. Although I'm exhausted and my head feels like exploding after each training session, I consistently catch one more miniature beast puppet than the previous time.

"It feels good knowing that I'm getting the hang of it, one step after another.

"You're crazy at training, too. So, you must know what I'm trying to say, right?

"Then, the chief instructor Mao Feng probably discovered that I was happier than I was miserable after training. Therefore, he increased the difficulty of the game.

"Now, among the hundred miniature beast puppets that I need to capture within one minute, there are 5 different puppets called 'Bombers'. Once I touch them, they will unleash strong electricity that often overpowers me.

"I have to observe and distinguish the five Bombers from the rest of the miniature beast puppets in order to avoid them!

"It's really hard!

"But why am I so excited?"

…

"Sister Ling, today is my 17th day in the camp.

"I finished my first agility training session this afternoon. In a crystal suit with a power system which was in disarray, I caught a hundred fleeing miniature beast puppets and avoided 21 Bombers!

"The feeling of being king of the world couldn't be more fantastic. All the sweats, pains, and passion in the past half month all paid off!

"You must've felt the same when you grasped a new skill due to hard work and perseverance, didn't you?

"So, you definitely understand how I feel.

"This is just the beginning. There are dozens of other training subjects in agility training. Many of them look interesting. The more I learn, the more excited I get. Sometimes, too excited to even sleep.

"Besides agility training, I also started strength training.

"In strength training, I was asked to use a specially modified crystal suit.

"Crystal suits can double the abilities of the Exos, or even enhance them three times.

"But this damn crystal suit for strength training, on the contrary, sealed my strength and suppressed it to 30%.

"Even if I punched with my full strength and soul, I'd only deal 30% percent of the damage that I would've before.

"What's more, many ballast modules were added to this crystal suit, which are basically useless iron balls. They made the weight of the suit to over seven tons.

"Since the anti-gravity rune array and the power rune array are both greatly diminished, I basically need to carry most of the seven tons by myself. It's more like I am wearing a giant, super-heavy battlesuit.

"And I need to complete almost 100 training exercises, including deep squat, dead lift, sprint, and so on, in such a strength training crystal suit.

"It sounds... amazing!"

…

"Sister Ling, today is my 23rd day in the training camp.

"In the day, I train my strength, agility, and speed.

"During my training, video clips of the experts of the Thunder Training Camp fighting demon beasts are played in the crystal processor, which are brilliant!

"I have to multitask. While I'm training, I'll need to understand the combat videos and analyze the tactics employed in them because I need to submit a battle analysis report later.

"At night, I'm summoned to the crystal suit warehouse of the Outer Camp and maintain the hundred or so crystal suits under the guidance of two experienced Refiners.

"Although they're not the latest models, the crystal suits are still functioning well under the discreet maintenance and modification of the Thunder Training Camp. Crystal processors, crystal reactors, core magical equipment… everything's there. The precision of these crystal suits are ten times higher than the wrecked ones that I talked about before.

"In the beginning, I was so dumb that I couldn't even reintegrate a single crystal suit over an entire night. My fingers were worn down so much that I could see my bones.

"But the world of crystal suits is too amazing for me to care the abrasions.

"The Thunder Training Camp has very advanced medical equipment. Together with my secret ointment, the injuries can be completely healed within a couple of minutes.

"When my fingers are worn out, I use the medical equipment and the secret ointment to accelerate the healing. Worn out again, healed again. After about a hundred times of repetition, my speed of reintegrating a crystal suit is getting faster and faster and almost equal to the speed of the two experienced Refiners.

"Right now, they view me as a supernatural.

"I also gained an additional benefit from this incident.

"Since my fingers were broken and fixed so many times, the skin on them is much more tender than before, which has significantly improved my sensitivity.

"With a single touch, I am able to tell whether or not the curve of a component is precise and absolutely smooth. Even a 0.01 millimeter flaw can't escape my attention.

"That's about everything. I'm going to the warehouse now.

"Maybe because my performance during the maintenance of the crystal suits was so crazy and the two experienced refiners were so shocked, they decided to hand over some simple repair work to me.

"Repairing the crystal suits!

"Even though they're antique models from a hundred years ago, even though the problems are the simplest of all, it is still an arduous and challenging job for me!

"My blood is boiling. The path of a future Armadominus commences now!"

…

"Sister Ling, today is my 29th day in the training camp.

"First, I'd like to tell you something super awesome.

"I have advanced to another level!

"At four o'clock this morning, I went out in the training crystal suit to do some overtime because I felt that the training subjects that Mao Feng set up were too easy and not satisfactory enough.

"But the moment I was exhausted and on the verge of crumbling, I sensed something mysterious and fascinating.

"It was the boundary of night and day, the grand finale of the darkness before dawn.

"Over my head, most parts of the sky were black, with galaxies glaring and stars shining. But the horizon to the east were blooming in red.

"For a moment, it seemed that all the stars in the sky were raining upon my head before they crushed my body from the top of my skull.

"In the meantime, the morning glow embraced me like ribbons.

"The sky, the earth, stars, and clouds reverberated with my blood, muscles, nerves, organs, and soul, cheering for me and encouraging me!

"I've finally reached the 7th level of the Refinement Stage!

"Hahaha. But you might not be as glad as I am, because the gap between us is smaller by a little bit now. It won't be long before I surpass you!

"The first elimination match of the Thunder Training Camp will be held tomorrow. Of the hundred students, only fifty will stay.

"Other students have been training crazily, too.

"Although I never saw it with my own eyes, I know that none of them will be easy to deal with, based on the scratches on their crystal suits.

"Besides, their abilities were higher than me before. Many of them are in the 10th level of the Refinement Stage or even higher.

"If we are equally skilled at driving crystal suits which give us equal enhancements, they'll be stronger than me!

"If I want to stay, there is only one way—do the best of my best!"

…

"BANG!"

"BANG! BANG!"

Two crystal suits, one in red and the other in black, were both moving fast, locked in brutal combat over a moor full of toxic smog.

The collision of the spiritual shields triggered strong blast waves that twisted the rays of light within the hundred square meters, making everything look like a scene from a movie.

Suddenly, after an irritating noise of metal being torn apart, the red crystal suit exploded and fell down into the moor with a big splash like a kite whose string had been cut off.

Some instructors who were watching close immediately rushed over in their crystal suits. They rescued the student in the moor and took him to the mobile med bay.

"No. 57 wins!

"No. 39 fails. Eliminated!"

Excited screams came from the black crystal suit.

This was the first elimination match of the Thunder Training Camp.

The hundred students were divided into two groups according to their ranks.

Those whose rank were above fifty would draw lots and select a student whose rank was below fifty randomly. The two of them would fight until one was defeated.

Winners would be able to stay in the Thunder Training Camp, receive more strict training, and learn more about the arts of crystal suits.

Losers would have to pack up and leave.

But before they were dismissed, the training camp would provide a detailed analysis report, compiled by the formidable Training Planners according to their performance over the past month, on their advantages and disadvantages, as well as a future training plan.

The analysis report and the training plan alone were worth the expensive tuition fees.

It was also one of the reasons why the Thunder Training Camp had been popular over the decades and praised by so many Exos.

Underground, in the preparation room.

Before each match, the participants were given a secret room to warm up and adjust themselves.

They could also watch the brilliant performances of other students through screens.

Li Yao was doing push-ups, not on the ground, but on the ceiling.

Like a giant lizard, he attached himself to the few gaps on the ceiling that were thinner than his air with the strength of his fingers and toes, which allowed him to do the unimaginable 'upside-down push-ups'.

"Tick tack. Tick tack."

Li Yao's sweats flowed in the hollows between his sharply cut muscles and congregated on his spine, before they dropped to the ground where a small lake was formed.

"122, 123..."

Li Yao felt he was not enjoying himself enough. He jumped down and looked around. Several dumbbells that weighed a couple of hundred kilograms caught his attention. He bound them to his waist, leaped back to the ceiling, and continued his upside-down push-ups.

"124, 125... 327... 431..."

This was what Mao Feng saw when he entered the room.

He was stupefied for a second, before he retreated quietly.

Outside the room, he took a deep breath and rubbed his face hard to change the surprise on it into fury.

He re-entered the room and screamed at the top of his voice,

"Li Yao, what are you—"

Li Yao jumped down and walked before Mao Feng. He looked at Mao Feng straight in the eyes and asked carefully, "Chief instructor, may I propose a minor revision?"

Chapter 240: Way Too Presumptuous

Chapter 240: Way Too Presumptuous

Mao Feng was dazed and his anger burst out.

"A minor revision?

"For a man with zero talent such as yourself, who has hardly made any progress in training over the last month, what makes you think that you're qualified to propose a revision?

"It'll be your turn very soon. Your opponent is a super strong man. I have no doubt that you will be crushed and driven out of Thunder Training Camp in a minute!

"What revision could possibly help you after that?"

Li Yao pretended that he didn't hear anything. He said calmly, "This is exactly what I'm talking about. Chief Instructor, would you please stop talking such garbage? It's really wasting my time."

Mao Feng's eyes went as wide as those of a bull.

"What?!"

Li Yao answered peacefully, "Chief Instructor, if you have studied my profile before, you should be aware that I hadn't touched a crystal suit until a month ago and I knew nothing about this incredible new world.

"I'm not a moron.

"At first, you were pissed off and declared that I had no talent whatsoever in using crystal suits after you saw my heartbreaking performance, and I bought it.

"But later, as I grew more familiar with crystal suits and knew more about properties of the different models, it occurred to me that there should have been something wrong with the Seven-step Rock Snake I'd driven. Your attitude had been weird after the accident, too.

"So, yesterday afternoon, I specially spared 17 minutes and 24 seconds to analyze the whole thing in retrospect.

"My conclusion was that there's a 97% likelihood that, because of the extraordinary gift that I showed in the crystal suit, you were impressed and decided to impose an unusual training methodology upon me.

"You fire me up perversely and, by making advantage of my indomitable spirit, you devised a series of impossible tasks which accelerated my dramatic growth.

"In fact, I'm not half as lousy as you claimed. On the contrary, I'm very awesome, am I not?"

Mao Feng was rendered speechless for a long time.

Li Yao continued, "Goading someone into action by sarcasm is an old strategy. I should've seen it through long time ago.

"However, the world of crystal suits is too tempting for me to let go. I only wish that I could devote every second that I have to the mysteries of crystal suits.

"That's the reason why, although I have long felt something wasn't right, I never took the time to investigate the matter.

"Until yesterday, when I ran some calculations.

"Over the past 30 days, you've spent 12 minutes and 37 seconds on average each day to verbally abuse me, hoping to evoke my ambition through ridicule.

"The 12 minutes and 37 seconds were a complete waste of time in my eyes.

"My ambition had already arrived at peak without any stimulation.

"So, if I were to spend the 12 minutes and 37 seconds on training, I would've been able to cover two more subjects and increase my ability by up to 0.05%.

"That's why I decided to make it clear to you.

"I'm different from other people. Please don't view me as someone ordinary, and please stop wasting our time with that trash talk.

"If you are really of a mind to torture me, please arrange training subjects that are more difficult, crazier, and more insane for me, instead of just trying to intimidate me with your mouth.

"That's all I have to say. Excuse me, I'm about to go on stage now, Chief Instructor."

Li Yao nodded and walked out of the room.

Mao Feng was completely bewildered. He stood alone in the room for a long time. His face turned from red to purple, purple to black, and in the end his face was so gloomy that it seemed as if some ink would spill out at any moment.

"BOOM!"

Mao Feng stamped on his foot and the floor was immediately shattered.

"Boy, that is way too presumptuous!" the chief instructor Mao Feng screamed horribly.

…

In the long and narrow aisle, Li Yao turned on his crystal processor and read the profile of his opponent while he was walking.

Unluckily, he was paired with the No. 9.

Most of the top 10 students had abundant Exo experience. Many of them were even battlesuit majors from famous universities.

No. 9, whose name was Zhou Zhenghao, had an unknown background. But according to his profile, he was an expert in the 10th level of the Refinement Stage.

Crystal suits could only enhance the user's original combat ability, which was more important than the enhancement.

Now that the opponent was three levels higher than Li Yao, he could crush Li Yao as easy as pie, even if the two of them were equally skilled at operating their battlesuits.

There wouldn't even be a slim chance of winning, unless his skills were far better than those of his opponent.

The strength of his opponent filled Li Yao's eyes with joy.

Li Yao walked towards the crystal suit warehouse as he thought, 'Very good.

'This is my first real battle in a crystal suit.

'It's great that I've been blessed with such a strong opponent.'

Since the latter half of the hundred students were less experienced than the former half, to ensure fairness of the elimination match, they were allowed to wait until their opponent had picked a crystal suit before they got to pick their own. It was believed that such arrangements could somewhat reduce the gap between the two contenders.

Very soon, No. 9's choice was displayed on the crystal processor — Thunder Axe Battlesuit.

Thunder Axe Battlesuit was a super-heavy crystal suit, 2.65 meters tall, weighing 13.21 tons. It was the most titanic and cumbersome crystal suit among all the low-level ones provided by the training camp.

Of course, it boasted a large arsenal, too.

The Honeycomb Flying Sword System on its shoulder had 360 tiny flying swords on board. The four Thunder Axes on the outside of its arms and legs could deal incomparable damage, too.

Thunder Axe Battlesuit was muscular men's all-time favorite. As long as the wearer had enough strength, the crystal suit would become a walking guillotine.

"It seems that No. 9 is going to be a husky fellow.

"A husky man in the 10th level of the Refinement Stage now has the Thunder Axe Battlesuit on him. It's really blood-freezing!

"Which suit should I pick to fight him?"

Li Yao's face was wrapped in a mixture of craziness, obsession, enjoyment, and excitement.

Like a young man going on a date with his girlfriend, an assassin who was prepared to avenge his father, a serpent that had locked onto its prey in some dark woods, and a boy who'd just found a new game and was exploring the rules of it.

Soon, his eyes started shining.

The young man was on bed with his girlfriend, the assassin jumped down from the beam of the house, the serpent charged towards its prey with its glaring poison fangs, and the boy found out the trick of the game and moved on to the next level, grinning in great satisfaction.

Li Yao picked a crystal suit without any hesitation. The exhaust flame of the suit lit up the sky, and he flew towards the arena.

…

Many students were paying close attention to this elimination match, especially the winners from previous matches, who wouldn't let go of such a rare opportunity and gathered together in order to watch the live show from the screen.

They were all here for No. 9.

Although the 99 students except Li Yao had been studying under different instructors, now and then there would be group training sessions in which they would be summoned together. Therefore, they all knew a thing or two about the others' progress.

No. 9, or the former Zhou Zhenghao, was one of the toughest men among all the students.

Not only had he been endowed with great talent, he was also crazy about training. People often noticed that he was doing training at midnight.

One time, when he had an accident during training and broke four of his ribs, he took no rest and resumed training after some simple treatment from the med bay.

Instead of reducing the amount of training, he added another 20%, claiming that he needed to make up for the time he lost in the med bay.

Therefore, No. 9 had received the nickname "steel man"!

He was one of the best Exos among the muscular-type Exos. After he put on a super-heavy crystal suit such as the Thunder Axe Battlesuit, even Long Qianyue and Yuan Yeshi would need to pay full attention knowing they couldn't be too careful.

A match such a tough man was participating in was definitely worth watching!

The only regret was that his opponent was too weak.

Many people clearly remembered what happened on Li Yao's debut, and he had vanished into thin air ever since then.

It was told that his talents were so limited that he had to receive specially designed fundamental training.

Such a newbie would probably be blown away by the 'steel man' with a single punch. They wouldn't have the chance to see the full potential of the steel man at all.

But some people disagreed.

Li Yao's ability was truly lousy, but his speed, on the other hand, was quite impressive.

If he had grasped some basic driving skills to stabilize his speed, with the help of a speed-type crystal suit, there was a good chance that he might be able to dodge the steel man for a while.

After all, as a super-heavy crystal suit, Thunder Axe Battlesuit was at a disadvantage to speed-type crystal suits.

If Li Yao just circled around, he could possibly survive for a few minutes.

Then the topic of the conversation changed to how long Li Yao could survive under the bombardment of the steel man.

After a couple of minutes, the match of No. 9 versus No. 100, or the steel man versus the newbie officially began.

There were eight arenas in the Outer camp that simulated different natural environment. The place of the elimination match would be a random one of them after drawing lots.

Unfortunately, Li Yao drew the desert battlefield.

In the vast desert, there were no shelters or complex territories that could be made use of. It would be the most straightforward competition of combat abilities!

When the two crystal suits flew into the battlefield and landed in the desert with a small sandstorm, everybody gasped in surprise.

They all thought that Li Yao had given up already in desperation.

"Thunder Axe Battlesuits! Two of them!"

"The newbie picked a Thunder Axe Battlesuit, too?"

"Is he insane? Knowing that his specialty is swiftness, yet picking a slow and leaden super-heavy crystal suit, he's giving up his only advantage just like that?"

"Has he decided to do arm wrestling with Zhou Zhenghao, the steel man?"

While they watched in bewilderment and incomprehension, the two Thunder Axe Battlesuits had boosted their spiritual energy to their maximum, releasing splendid colors from their back. They ran towards each other, enshrouded by two clouds of smoke.

Thunder Axe Battlesuit against Thunder Axe Battlesuit, super-heavy against super-heavy, the contest between steel and flesh was about to begin!

Chapter 241: Steel V.S. Steel

Chapter 241 - Steel V.S. Steel

"Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!"

As the prelude to the battle, the two Honeycomb Flying Sword Containers on the shoulders of No. 9's Thunder Axe Battlesuit were fully opened, sending out dozens of rays of lights in the color of lavender which dashed towards Li Yao like a neatly-knitted net, screaming.

Flying swords attack!

The 360 tiny flying swords on the Thunder Axe Battlesuit were all carved with strong thunder-class rune arrays made of violent thunder-class crystals.

Since they were designed for one-time usage and there was no need to collect them, their damage was extremely high.

Once they hit their target, thunder storms would be released. If more than one flying sword hit the same target, the lightning they unleashed would build up and increase the damage to an even higher level.

Even an opponent as strong as a demon general might be torn apart instantly!

Since it was just a match, all the aggressive magical equipment had been suppressed to reduce their damage to one tenth of the original.

Besides, a special program named Identification of Friend or Foe System was installed into the crystal processor, too. Once the system foresaw that a fatal attack would be performed, it would immediately withhold the action.

Even so, when dozens of flying swords, with lightning dancing in between, charged towards him as if they would destroy everything in their way, Li Yao still felt his heart skip a beat.

But then, it only started beating faster!

"Excellent!

"This is the battle I wanted; this is everything I desire!"

Instead of dodging or retreating, he was manic enough to speed up and went directly against the flying swords face to face, the power rune arrays behind his back blazing brilliantly.

"Bait Bugs, activate!"

"Pu! Pu! Pu! Pu!"

Two plates on the outside of his shoulder blades split. From inside, hundreds of firefly-like mini puppets stormed out and hovered around him like shining stars.

But when the flying swords came close, the Bait Bugs hummed and dispersed into all directions.

Tips of the flying swords trembled violently.

More than thirty of them were interfered by the spiritual fluctuation released by the Bait Bugs whom they mistook for their target. Then they rectified their trajectory and went after the Bait Bugs.

Like brave soldiers, the Bait Bugs turned their direction and collided with the flying swords, causing a series of lightning flashes. It was like masses of purple lotuses had blossomed in the sky of the desert.

The remaining twenty flying swords that had not been interfered with continued to speed up towards Li Yao. Within a moment, they were already under his nose.

Li Yao could see vividly the waves released when the flying swords tore the air apart.

He was instantly tied by voltaic arcs.

All the attack rune arrays of the flying swords were triggered, causing a sandstorm that was dozens of meters tall to swallow him like a giant yellow beast.

In the stomach of the beast, Li Yao put everything he'd learned over the past month into practice.

He didn't condense a full-scale spiritual shield, which would consume too much spiritual energy and also affect his senses and swiftness.

Instead, he only formed a thin spiritual shield which covered him in crimson. Then he started dodging with amazing agility and speed in the super-heavy crystal suit that weighed more than ten tons.

The tracks of the flying swords were all transparent. Thousands of pieces of data were collected and analyzed by the crystal processor before it produced the most reasonable dodging plan in his brain.

In a moment, the Thunder Axe Battlesuit blurred and disappeared into hundreds of shadows, just like an elephant dancing in a storm.

All the flying swords missed their target, however close they were.

Several flying swords were able to hit the Thunder Axe Battlesuit, but they were repelled due to inappropriate angles, leaving one voltaic arc after another around as if Li Yao had put on a new galvanizing battlesuit.

"BOOM!"

Li Yao rushed out of the sandstorm.

"Really?"

All the spectators exclaimed in great surprise.

Li Yao's battlesuit seemed to be well-worn, indicated by the glaring scars from explosions and electric shocks on its surface.

But, with a careful look, one would discover that they were actually all scratches and none of them were fatal.

"A lucky dog?"

Many were surprised, for they thought that Li Yao had already been put down by the salvo.

However, the Thunder Axe Battlesuit was not best known for flying sword attacks, which was the specialty of the long-range crystal suits.

For the Thunder Axe Battlesuit, flying swords were merely an approach to minimize the range of activity of its opponent, so that its weakness, its speed, could be overcome and the Thunder Axe Battlesuit would have an opportunity to draw close to its opponent.

And once the Thunder Axe Battlesuit was near, its opponent would be screwed.

Naturally, No. 9 was not disappointed at the failure of the first wave of flying sword attack. He continued onto the second and third wave of attack.

Although Li Yao dodged each and every of them perfectly, their distance was getting smaller and smaller.

No. 9 seemed to have dominated the battlefield. With the consecutive flying sword attacks, he pushed Li Yao to the place he desired.

In the meantime, Li Yao launched two counterattacks by releasing his own flying swords.

No. 9 didn't even bother to dodge.

In the 10th level of the Refinement Stage, with the enhancement of the Thunder Axe Battlesuit, he was able to form such a dense spiritual shield that none of Li Yao's flying swords could break through.

A month ago, in the Refiners' Registration Examination, the Tarantula that Li Yao used was so much heavier than the Wolf King that it just ignored the opponent's remote attacks.

But this time, the roles had been swapped.

This time, it was his opponent who had more weight, more strength, and more spiritual energy!

Very soon, the distance between the two had been reduced to less than a hundred meters, which was the perfect distance for the Thunder Axe Battlesuit to sprint.

No. 9 roared. He threw all the remaining flying swords he had. Then he stomped his feet, under which the power rune arrays seemed to be transformed into two burning suns venting endless light and heat. His speed was brought up to its maximum and he dashed towards Li Yao like a rushing, high-speed crystal-rail train.

Li Yao's Bait Bugs had run out. Facing the intense attack of hundreds of swords, he had to move to one side fast and try to find a gap in the profound sword array.

This was all within No. 9's expectation.

"BOOM!"

Two steel beasts collided. Li Yao was blown up into the sky, his thin spiritual shield shattered.

"What a brutal collision!"

Many watchers felt that their blood was freezing.

No. 9's strength was one of the best among all students. This collision made them feel that they had heard the noise of their own bones being crushed.

Yet No. 9 had no intention of stopping.

He was a ferocious combat lunatic. He didn't care who his opponent was.

Maybe a newbie, maybe a master. Maybe in the 1st level of the Refinement Stage, maybe in the Nascent Soul Stage.

It didn't matter. He had one and only one solution, which was to burn out his soul and push forward unstoppably.

No. 9 stomped his feet again, sending out another round of ripples on the surface of the desert as if a meteorite had just hit the earth. With the counterforce, he accelerated and caught up to Li Yao who was still in the sky.

"Shua!"

The electromagnetic axe on No. 9's right leg hit Li Yao's chest with a dazzling voltaic arc.

That was just the beginning.

The four electromagnetic axes on No. 9's arms and legs bit Li Yao like four fangs and wouldn't let go, causing an intimidating electromagnetic storm while both of them were falling to the ground. A small tornado was triggered.

"No. 100 is doomed."

"Had he chosen a speed-type crystal suit, he might've been able to circle around for a while longer."

"Yet he selected a super-heavy crystal suit. He thought he was good enough to beat the 'steel man'? What an idiot!"

The savage sandstorm had blocked the crystal camera, stopping everyone from seeing what was happening in the tornado.

But they all knew that the match would end within several seconds.

No, it wasn't a match but a predominated slaughter.

However, the two in the tornado didn't think so.

The more he fought, the less confident No. 9 became.

Although he hit his opponent time and time again, the feedback from the axes was different from usual when he hit the target with the burst of his spiritual energy.

On the contrary, it was as if he had hit a swamp, a cluster of mud or a bottle of gel. His spiritual energy went off and just vanished into thin air, as if his opponent were a ghost made of smoke instead of a human being!

"Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!"

Although he seemed to be dominating the match, No. 9 was filled with uncertainty. He roared and waved the four electromagnetic axes, trying to cut his opponent into pieces. Plates and components were flying everywhere in the sky.

In the scarred crystal suit, Li Yao took all the attacks quietly. His face was calm as ever, as if the seemingly unbearable bombardment was nothing but tickling for him.

Every second, his body would move dozens of times in small scale, so that he could avoid No. 9's giant axes before they hit him, or set an appropriate angle for the edge of the axes to slip away on the round plates.

While he dodged, he was observing his opponent's attack and concluding his fighting style and habits. Then he speculated the fatal flaw based on his observation.

In the meantime, thousands of structure designs popped up in his brain.

The structure and weaknesses of the Thunder Axe Battlesuit were all clear now.

"My opponent was stronger than me, his explosive power greater than mine, his spiritual energy denser than mine, and we're equally skilled at driving crystal suits.

"I have to take a risk if I am to win!"

Thousands of lights gathered into a deadly brilliance in Li Yao's eyes.

Chapter 242: Fatal Gap

Chapter 242: Fatal Gap

Li Yao's movements sped up exponentially. Every part of his body left a few blurred afterimages behind, as if a clear reflection in the water was stirred by the intrusion of a stone.

"Shua!"

Li Yao withdrew from No. 9's storm of attacks. He dashed backwards like a slippery loach.

Had he not seen it with his own eyes, No. 9 would have never believed that someone could drive a super-heavy crystal as swiftly as a light one.

Before No. 9 came back to himself from shock, Li Yao had launched his counterattack!

The two Honeycomb Flying Sword Containers on his shoulders were opened, like the mouth of a fierce beast baring its fangs. All the flying swords were unleashed and targeted at… No. 9's outline!

No. 9 sneered. He released all his Bait Bugs and condensed his spiritual shield to its maximum in the meantime.

Since he had much more spiritual energy than Li Yao did, he could resort to a war of attrition without worrying he would run out of resources.

However, the flying swords were not interfered by his Bait Bugs, nor did they hit his spiritual shield. Instead, they found their way down into the desert and boomed underground, causing a sandstorm that was even more violent than the previous tornado.

Most of the crystal cameras on No. 9's suit were blocked. He couldn't see through the dust. His ears were full of the growling of the wind. The enemy's movement had been entirely covered.

Suddenly—

No. 9 felt that a strong wind was coming at his neck, as if a cunning beast decided that it had lurked enough.

He could even feel the sting in his veins.

"This is your plan?"

No. 9 smiled. He raised his right arm. With a boom, electrical sparks were dancing on the suit. One electromagnetic axe was tossed far away into the desert.

"Disturbing my senses with dust before launching a critical attack with a flying axe. It was a good plan. But you underestimated me!"

The four axes on the arms and legs of the Thunder Axe Battlesuit were all designed to be detachable. In critical moments, they could be wielded and thrown away as a weapon, which was more dangerous than the flying swords.

No. 9 had both talent and determination. He had been using the Thunder Axe Battlesuit ever since he entered the camp. How could he not know that?

He'd known that this was Li Yao's only chance the whole time!

"Shua! Shua!"

Another two flying axes came from the dust. No. 9 didn't even bother to look at them. He crossed his arms and cast them away easily. In the meantime, he sprinted 30 meters forward.

"Gotcha!"

Although his senses of vision and hearing were both greatly diminished, he still discovered a vague figure right in front of him by his instinct.

His opponent seemed to be caught off guard. Not expecting him to arrive so fast, his opponent was still waving the last electromagnetic axe.

No. 9 roared and threw himself at his opponent at full strength, who was blown away more than ten meters and lost his last electromagnetic axe.

"Your four electromagnetic axes are all gone. Your tiny flying swords have been used up, too. You're on my chopping block now, boy!" No. 9 screamed and created a steel millstone with his four electromagnetic axes which enveloped Li Yao from head to toe.

"Ka! Ka! Ka! Ka!"

Li Yao had lost the ability to fight back. Fragments of his crystal suit, which No. 9 had completely torn apart, were all over the place.

It seemed that he couldn't stand it any longer. His legs shaking, he fell to the ground.

No. 9 didn't care. He raised his axe and slashed at Li Yao's head.

Everything had come to an end.

The sandstorm had settled down. In the middle of the glorious sunset and the yellow desert, two crystal suits stood still, which was indeed a beautiful picture.

Li Yao's suit had almost been entirely shattered. There was not a single plate that had suffered no damage from the battle. Many parts of the suit were gone, exposing his skin to the air. Half of his helmet was cut away, and the remaining half was sparking nonstop.

As for No. 9's suit, it had been contaminated by dust. Other than that, it was perfect without any damage, except for… a tiny hole under his arm.

"The steel man has won. He beat the newbie really hard!"

"Half of his head has been chopped off. Well well well. That was a little bit too much. Could almost be called a sadist."

"Zhou Zhenghao, the 'steel man', is indeed the top muscular man in the training camp. He's not reserving any of his capability when his opponent is just a green hand."

"But why is he not moving?"

Many students were amazed by No. 9's toughness and Li Yao's suffering.

After a moment, No. 9 moved.

His almost intact crystal suit shivered, before it collapsed slowly.

At first, he was on one of his knees. He tried to raise his right hand and give Li Yao one last shot, only to lean towards one side of his body and fall down to the ground with a cracking sound.

"Pu!"

No. 9 was ejected out of the crystal suit and tossed into the soft sand far away.

"No. 100 wins!"

"No. 9 fails. Eliminated!"

When the cold and indifferent announcement came from the voice rune array, all the students were so shocked that they seemed to be too choked to ask how it happened.

Even Long Qianyue, who had been watching the match emotionlessly, leaped from her seat in admiration.

Yuan Yeshi, who'd made fun of Li Yao before, was pulling his hair and trying to figure out how a newbie such as Li Yao could miraculously win the game.

In the endless desert, No. 9, or Zhou Zhenghao, the 'steel man', was sitting on the ground completely stupefied.

He was eyeing his opponent's crystal suit in such a perplexed way that it might be pierced through by his look at any moment.

"Chi..."

The crystal suit opened like the blossom of a lotus. Li Yao walked out exhaustedly and staggered to Zhou Zhenghao. He sat down beside him.

His dry lips curled, forming what could almost be called a smile.

Zhou Zhenghao understood what the smile meant.

It was his opponent's respect for his performance in the previous battle.

Zhou Zhenghao was 28 years old, 2.1 meters tall, 175 kilograms of weight, with a square face and a beard, who had been crazy about training.

Respect or contempt from his opponent meant nothing to him.

He just wanted to know how he was beaten.

"Why?"

He looked at Li Yao and asked earnestly, "I have almost torn you into pieces, I even cut off half of your head, why on earth could you still attack?"

Li Yao was moved by his pursuing and curious look, which was exactly the same as when he was training crazily.

He explained carefully, "Thunder Axe Battlesuit is not a new model of the super-heavy type crystal suits. It was an extended model based on the 'Thunder Saber Battlesuit', a heavy type crystal suit, with additional attack and defense modules. But its main framework has the same structure as the Thunder Saber Battlesuit.

"What you tore apart was just the attack and defense plug-ins and the plates of the Thunder Axe Battlesuit. You never really damaged the main framework.

"You did cut off half of the head. As a result, I lost most of the crystal cameras and surveillance magical equipment.

"However, the core crystal processor of the Thunder Axe Battlesuit is located at the bottom of the head. You only peeled off its shell. Its computational capability was not affected, so the suit could still function normally."

Zhou Zhenghao was speechless for a while. Then he reluctantly added, "Even though I failed to launch a critical attack, how did you manage to put me down in such a short time?"

"Because of the design defects of the Thunder Axe Battlesuit, or the congenital deficiencies, if you will," Li Yao explained. "Thunder Axe Battlesuit has too many attack and defense modules added to it. It was not perfect in the aspect of coherence of the modules. For example, there is a minuscule gap under the left arm which expands the arm's waving range so that the power of the electromagnetic axe can be maximized.

"Besides, generally speaking, the gap is hardly possible to target.

"The gap is thinner than a hair. It seems inconceivable that the gap can be located during a fierce combat. In the meantime, the gap contributes a lot to the expansion of attack range. Therefore, the Armadominus decided to keep the gap after weighing the advantages and disadvantages.

"I was observing your strategies and habits in order to find out in which of your attacking postures would expose the gap. Then, I changed 13 different defending postures and finally managed to let you expose the gap by attracting you with my head and making you raise your axe with both of your arms."

Zhou Zhenghao was not convinced. He said, "Suppose you did find the gap, how could you penetrate it when your electromagnetic axes and flying swords were all gone?"

Li Yao explained patiently, "Not all of them. When I released the flying swords, I caught one of the swords on the way and hid it in my hands. In the end, when the crucial moment came, I pushed it into the gap.

"Had we been in a real battlefield and the magical equipment not been suppressed, that attack would've hit your heart.

"Therefore, the system determined that you failed."

Zhou Zhenghao was dazed.

"How were you able to 'catch one of the swords on the way'? Is it even possible?"

"It's very simple."

Li Yao frowned, "It is much easier than the training of catching miniature beast puppets, don't you think?"

Zhou Zhenghao had no idea what he was talking about, "What kind of training involves catching miniature beast puppets?"

"The one in which a hundred miniature beast puppets are released and… Okay, never mind."

Li Yao curled his lips, knowing that he was fooled by the chief instructor again.

Nobody except him had ever done that kind of insane training.

"Everything's clear now."

Zhou Zhenghao was not a beginner. He had thought everything through soon after Li Yao explained the key to his victory. He smiled bitterly, "You were passive at the beginning because you were analyzing my attack patterns and styles and also because you wanted me to be less wary. After I took away the attack and defense modules from your suit, your weight was reduced and your speed was higher, making your critical attack easier to launch.

"And I thought I was the one winning the match!

"I'm sincerely convinced by your performance in this combat that you're more qualified to stay in the Thunder Training Camp than I am.

"Thank you for explaining everything to me. No. 100, no, I should call you Li Yao. I really appreciate it. Now I can die without regret."

Zhou Zhenghao stood up and nodded at Li Yao. Then he turned around and walked out of the arena.

"Wait!"

Li Yao suddenly stopped him, "May I ask if your left knee was seriously injured before?"

Zhou Zhenghao came to a halt. He turned his head, shocked, as if he had seen a ghost. He cried, "How did you know?"

Chapter 243: A Training Camp Named Universe

Chapter 243: A Training Camp Named Universe

"I can tell from the abrasions on your battlesuit."

Li Yao explained, "I'm a Refiner. Most of the crystal suits that we use have been maintained by me. Few people choose a super-heavy crystal suit such as the Thunder Axe Battlesuit. Of the two Thunder Axe Battlesuits in the Outer Camp, one was sealed and rarely used, while the other one has been used on a daily basis. I assume it is you who has been wearing it."

Zhou Zhenghao nodded in surprise. He never knew that besides training, Li Yao had been working on the maintenance of all the crystal suits, too.

That was a tremendous workload. Did he not need sleeping?

Li Yao continued,

"While I was maintaining the Thunder Axe Battlesuit, I discovered a problem.

"As a super-heavy crystal suit, it has many elastic gaskets made of the bones of the 'Sanskrit Sun Demon Fish' on its legs as buffers, so that it won't be collapsed due to its own weight.

"However, for this particular Thunder Axe Battlesuit, the elastic gaskets on the right leg are 0.41% more worn than those on the left leg.

"The disparity of abrasion suggests that the Exo who's wearing the suit tends to be lopsided on his right leg, and that even when he's using both of his legs, the force from his right leg is always greater than that from his left leg.

"Generally speaking, Cultivators have perfect control over their bodies. Unless they're using some special skills, their bodies should be absolutely balanced during their training.

"The simple tricks of balance control should be easy for a Cultivator in the 10th level of the Refinement Stage such as yourself. So, I assume that your leg was too seriously injured before to function normally like your right leg."

Indescribable expressions appeared on Zhou Zhenghao's face. He exclaimed, "That's correct. When I was 21, I was engaged in a brutal battle with demon beasts in the depths of the Grand Desolate Plateau in which my left knee was chipped and my left leg was almost entirely melted due to the demon's poison!

"It took me a whole year to fully recover. But, although my body was healed, there has always been some unresolved issue on my mind. I can't use my left leg as fluently as I use my right leg. There's always a tiny difference. It's sort of an 'inner demon' for me.

"But the difference is so small that few people can recognize it. Li Yao, now that you've pointed it out, is there anything you can do about it?"

Zhou Zhenghao knew that Li Yao must've had more to say about the issue.

For years, he had been looking for doctors and experts for his leg. In fact, his leg injury had been cured a long time ago. It was the mental problem that had been haunting him.

But he was a stubborn man and not the type of people who would be easily influenced by interferences. Therefore, although he had many hypnotherapy sessions, they didn't really help.

Seeing that Li Yao could find out about his old ailment based on just a few elastic gaskets, a glimmer hope was rising from the bottom of his heart.

Li Yao thought for a while and nodded, "Now that your injury has become a mental issue, it's definitely not something that I can fix up.

"However, I do have a few suggestions for you as a Refiner.

"Your problem right now is that your speed and reactions in combat are affected because of your imbalanced legs. I'm not sure how the problem can be sorted out in daily life, but I have two ideas if you're in a crystal suit.

"Firstly, change the elastic gaskets in the right leg of the Thunder Axe Battlesuit into something made of softer materials.

"There are many kinds of elastic gaskets. Sanskrit Sun Demon Fish's bones have medium elasticity. You can choose a softer material so that the force from your right leg will be more absorbed than your left leg is. This way, your two legs will remain balanced.

"Secondly, if you don't want to change the elastic gaskets, you can also ask a Refiner to increase the weight of the electromagnetic axe on your right leg, or reduce the weight of that on your left leg.

"All in all, the point is, to restore balance by foreign aids.

"The two approaches can't resolve your mental issue. But at least they will increase your combat abilities in a battlefield.

"As to precisely which kind of elastic gasket you should use, or how to reshape the electromagnetic axes, you'll need to hire an experienced Refiner who will observe your legs and run calculations to figure out the delicate differences before modification."

Zhou Zhenghao beamed and nodded.

Although Li Yao's proposal was only palliative, it did solve his urgent problem and was not difficult to put into practice. In fact, it was much easier than resolving the insubstantial mental issues.

His depression caused by elimination was instantly gone!

Zhou Zhenghao even felt that he was lucky to have met Li Yao in the elimination match.

Eliminated by the Thunder Training Camp, he could still try other training camps, or accumulate experience from real combats. There was still a good chance that one day he could become a strong Exo.

But without Li Yao's enlightenment, the leg injury would've been likely to bother him forever!

"I can't thank you enough!"

Zhou Zhenghao paused for a while. Then he said, "Li Yao, from the way you tossed the axes just now, I can see that your speed and strength were both good enough, albeit not without a lack of subtleness. It appears to me that you haven't done much training with flying axes and you were merely throwing them away with brute force.

"In fact, there are many tricks you can use to flying axes. Once you get to the bottom of it and wield axes with your full abilities, the axes will be ten times more intimidating than the flying swords! I've practiced axes-flying for a while, and I think I have some shallow understandings about how to best use it. If it's not too presumptuous of me, we could discuss this and see if there's any improvement."

He was trying to return the favor and also make friends with Li Yao.

After the soul-stirring combat, Zhou Zhenghao was aware of how strong Li Yao was and thought Li Yao deserved his respect.

Also, Li Yao pointed out his problem without holding back and helped to resolve it, which indicated a good personality.

Moreover, Zhou Zhenghao had long known that Li Yao was a Refiner whose name was on the rise.

Now that he was lucky enough to meet a young, strong, upright, genius Refiner who was destined to be the star of tomorrow in the world of Cultivators, how could he miss such a rare opportunity to make friends of him?

This was also how Cultivators normally made new friends and expanded their social network.

What he said lit up Li Yao's eyes, who leaned forwarded and said earnestly, "Not presumptuous at all. I, for one, admire Brother Zhou's strength very much. A super-heavy crystal suit is not something that some random guy can play with!

"I was only taking advantage of my familiarity with the structure of the crystal suit.

"If we have another fight and you're aware of the weakness under your arm, there is no way that I will defeat you.

"You're correct. I never learnt the art of flying axes. When I tossed the electromagnetic axes, I did feel that something was wrong. My tremendous strength couldn't be transmitted into the axes, and it near suffocated me. Please do enlighten me, Brother Zhou!"

Zhou Zhenghao smiled.

"Your strength is indeed abundant. The explosive power inside your body is disproportional to your tiny figure. What a beast! The key is breathing. Your breath must reverberate with the electromagnetic momentum in a sophisticated way. The following things are of paramount importance…"

Two training maniacs started discussing wholeheartedly.

The breathing method introduced by Zhou Zhenghao gave Li Yao major inspiration, while several of Li Yao's ideas on how to exert one's force caused cold sweat to break out on Zhou Zhenghao's forehead.

The more they talked, the more topics they found themselves both interested in. From the art of flying axes, tricks of super-heavy crystal suits' small-scale movement, ways to minimize the enemy's range of activity by flying swords, to the question how to lure the enemy into the Thunder Axe Battlesuit's sprint distance.

The two of them were chatting with their arms waving up and down. Even after the instructors escorted both of them out of the arena, they were still in high spirits.

"I'm terribly sorry that I eliminated you. I wish we could still learn from each other in the training camp."

Li Yao meant what he said.

"Indeed, it is regretful. But it doesn't matter now."

Zhou Zhenghao scratched his beard and replied cheerfully, "I am now in a new training camp called 'the universe'. Although I've been eliminated by the Thunder Training Camp, I will pursue my training in the 'Universe Training Camp'. There is still a long road ahead. We'll have a lot of opportunities to meet and discuss with each other. Hopefully, one day, we'll be able to fight side by side! 'Vulture Li Yao', this is a name that I'm never going to forget."

Li Yao smiled. "'Vulture' is my nickname for my enemies; if you consider me a friend, call me the 'Fiend Star'!"

Zhou Zhenghao nodded. "I spent almost all of my time on training and don't have many friends. But you're definitely one of them! There's still some time before the end of the elimination match. Would you like to watch the game with me in my preparation room and talk about the crystal suit skills?"

"That's exactly what I want!"

They talked and laughed on their way to the preparation room.

The audience was stupefied and couldn't understand what was going on. Blocked by dust, they couldn't see clearly the actions of the two Thunder Axe Battlesuits. They'd seen that Li Yao had been suppressed by his opponent the whole time and he was on the verge of being cut into pieces. But before they knew it, the system had announced that Li Yao had won the match!

What was more puzzling was that after a little chitchat when they were off their crystal suits, Zhou Zhenghao seemed to be mad with joy in appreciation.

But Li Yao had just eliminated him!

Zhou Zhenghao had struck everyone as a man serious in both speech and manner who cared about nothing but training. He was cold like ice whenever one spoke to him. Definitely not someone with a good temper.

It was also one of the reasons why he was nicknamed the 'steel man'.

But why was he talking with Li Yao so casually and joyfully now?

Everyone was looking at each other, hoping to find an answer from someone. It felt like there was a giant stone stuck in their chest.

What kind of person was Li Yao? A newbie or a murderous vulture?

"What the hell?"

Yuan Yeshi was biting his lips so hard that blood was running out. He clutched his fists, his veins appearing on his face.

Intentionally or unintentionally, he glanced at the No. 1, Long Qianyue.

"Interesting. I'll find the answer myself in the second elimination match one month later."

Long Qianyue smile vaguely. She wrote 'Li Yao' on her palm with her finger.

Then, with a clap, her hands folded, crushing both the air and name in between into pieces.

Chapter 244: Slashing My Way Forward

Chapter 244: Slashing My Way Forward

Ten days later.

"BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!"

It was a sunny day on the desert, yet sounds of thunder echoed.

In the middle of the grey desert, a blood-red figure was burning with a blade flying up and down, triggering waves of wind and tides of thunder.

It was Li Yao who was practicing a saber art!

Of the three months training in the Thunder Training Camp, the first month was meant for rudimental movements and basic crystal suit driving skills, the second month was for embedding the trainee's previous arts into the crystal suit, and in the third month, the trainee would need to improve themselves by hunting down demon beasts in some of the most dangerous zones in the Grand Desolate Plateau together with their instructors.

Li Yao was wearing the Bloody Blade Battlesuit, which was a model even older than Seven-step Rock Snake. Few people in the Outer Camp were fond of it.

Yet, Li Yao loved it, because it was simple, solid and reliable. Besides, there were endless possibilities for it to be modified so that he could fulfil the potential of the saber.

Chief instructor Mao Feng was a big fan of the Bloody Blade Battlesuit, too. He taught Li Yao his experiences about the Bloody Blade Battlesuit without reserve. Li Yao's understanding of the classic crystal suit grew deeper after Mao Feng's teaching.

The standard Bloody Blade Battlesuit carried a 2.01-meter long heavy straight saber.

Li Yao substituted it for a 1.97-meter long crescent saber with air paths on both sides, so that his advantage in swiftness could be maximized.

"BOOM!"

Li Yao stomped on the ground. The burst of spiritual energy from below his feet sent hundreds of pebbles up to the sky in all directions.

"Shua!"

The Bloody Blade Battlesuit turned into dozens of crimson shadows which enveloped most of the pebbles.

Li Yao's movement was too fast to measure. With several cracking sounds, the pebbles were all cut into halves and fell to the ground.

"BANG!"

The last few pebbles exploded into powder because of the spiritual burst.

Li Yao put back his saber. The crystal camera on his suit beamed red rays and scanned the field. Then he sighed grimly.

"Of the 372 pebbles, 364 were cut into two halves, 6 were hit too hard that they were crushed into pieces, and 2 fell to the ground before I reached them.

"I still can't utilize the crystal suit perfectly. I don't have enough control over my strength and I can't manipulate it the way I want.

"Three days. It's been three days since I made any progress. Is this my limit?"

Li Yao was somewhat irritated.

Since he entered the second phase of the training, his progress had been slower. He missed the feeling of joy in the first phase when he was improving every second.

In the last three days, he even came to a halt. However crazily he trained himself, he found himself not improving at all.

Mao Feng told him that was normal. Every training had bottlenecks and limitations.

An adolescent would still grow taller even if he didn't eat much food, but when he became an adult, it would be difficult for him to be even one centimeter taller no matter how much food he ate.

If a man was growing and improving every second, even only by one trillionth each time, he would be formidable.

What Li Yao needed most was a good rest. He had to slow down and chew over what he had learnt.

But Li Yao didn't buy it. He only took half a day's rest. Then he went to the desert to practice the saber art again.

"How long will it take before I can wave the saber as fiercely as Long Wenhui?"

In the Bloody Blade Battlesuit, Li Yao picked up a small stone from the pocket on his waist.

It was the very stone that the Core Formation Stage Cultivator Long Wenhui, vice president of Hundred Saber Alliance, gave to him.

Every facet of the stone had been left with Long Wenhui's saber demonstration. Each demonstration contained endless mysteries.

After repetitively studying it, Li Yao only had a partial understanding of three demonstrations on the stone.

He was like a beginner who was asked to copy a masterpiece painting when he'd only just learnt how to use a brush.

"Long Wenhui is in the Core Formation Stage. His saber demonstrations are not that easy to follow.

"But with the enhancement of the crystal suit, my combat ability is three times stronger than before. I wish I could understand even one of them.

"One move. I just need one move!"

Holding his breathe, Li Yao touched every facet of the stone again.

Although his fingers were covered by the suit, the delicacy of senses were transmitted into his brain perfectly. But the essence of the saber demonstrations was still intangible as if in mist.

Putting the stone back into his pocket, Li Yao resumed the tedious training.

Blade out, speed up, slash, blade back!

The monotonous actions were repeated time and time again. Li Yao lost the sense of time and buried himself in the world of the Bloody Blade and the pebbles.

Centered at the Bloody Blade Battlesuit, thousands of broken pebbles were scattered over the area of half a square kilometer.

He didn't notice that it was already dusk until he was too exhausted to stand up anymore.

Suddenly, he caught some anxious screams behind him.

The crystal camera on the back of the Bloody Blade Battlesuit recorded what was happening.

Countless beasts on the desert had gathered together and were coming at him unstoppably like surging tides.

Common beasts were in the front, demon beasts with bizarre shapes were behind them. Li Yao even detected several strong demon soldiers.

But it's not like they were hunting anything. They seemed to be fleeing from something!

BOOM! BOOM BOOM! BOOM BOOM BOOM BOMM!

Dull quakes came from the horizon, like an iron army had been assembled and ready to conquer the world.

Soon, a gargantuan yellow cloud appeared in the horizon. It drew closer and closer, blocking the sun and the sky.

"Dust storm!"

Li Yao's face turned pale.

Dust storm was one of the most destructive natural disasters in the Grand Desolate Plateau, in which hundreds of tornadoes were aggregated with millions of tons of sand and stones.

The disaster was often caused by the disorder of natural spiritual energies and showed no signs before it took place. According to the damage, it was classified into ten levels.

A level 10 dust storm, which was the least damaging, was already powerful enough to send humans and animals into the sky.

A level 7 dust storm was strong enough to blow away a crystal-rail train.

As for the dust storms of level 5 or above, even many Cultivators would find themselves unwilling to face them.

This particular dust storm was vast, yellow in color, and dark like ink. Thunder and lightning seemed to be brewing in it, too. It was definitely level 5 or higher!

"Run!"

Li Yao ran away instantly.

Behind him, the dust storm devoured everything in its way.

Now and then, screams of demon beasts, who struggled only to be consumed by the dust storm, pierced through the sky and died down, ending up somewhere far, far away.

Li Yao brought his speed to maximum. Many red letters were jumping crazily on the screen, warning him that all the power rune arrays were overloaded. The crystal reactor in the stomach was burning so hard that he felt he was holding a fire ball.

"Run! Run!"

Li Yao didn't care. He ground his teeth and carried on fleeing!

The power of nature far exceeded any human's wildest imagination. After dozens of kilometers of running, he was caught and swallowed by the dust storm.

Inside the dust storm seemed to be a totally new world. Because of the disorder of spiritual energies, a lot of colorful tornadoes were moving and roaring everywhere, as if some prehistoric beasts had come back to life. Thousands of lightning bolts resembling vipers were tangled together. It was more splendid and magnificent than Li Yao could ever have imagined.

Countless stones, beasts, and demon beasts were caught by the mad tornadoes and ended up crushing each other into ashes.

Death was so close to him that he felt like the gates of hell had been opened in all directions.

The Bloody Blade Battlesuit was far from enough to overcome the torture of the tornadoes.

Li Yao tried to turn on the power rune arrays in hope to flee out of the dust storm, only to wreck two power rune arrays instantly.

The solid crystal suit, suffering tearing forces from two different directions, with several cracking sounds, seemed like it could explode at any moment.

"If I can't run away, I might as well not even try!"

With death at the doorstep, Li Yao's heart felt like booming. His mind was clearer than ever. Time became slower for him, allowing him to observe the details of the dust storm.

"Zhou Zhenghao was correct. The universe is a big training camp in which I need to polish myself, train myself, and fight against the universe.

"Even if I must die, I'll kill this damn dust storm first!"

Li Yao's eyes blazed and he roared like a beast.

Instead of running, he boosted the power rune arrays to maximum in the same direction as the swirling of the tornado. At a speed faster than ever, he continued charging forward!

He was not taking the trip passively, but slashing everything aggressively in his way!

"Hu!"

A giant stone was thrown at Li Yao by a tornado.

For a moment, the saber demonstration that Long Wenhui had left woke up in Li Yao's brain and streamed into his limbs and organs like shooting stars after an explosion.

"Shua!"

In the storm of death and the swirl of various colors, Li Yao slashed the giant stone into pieces in the most overwhelming way.

"Ouch! Ouch!"

A flying demon beast was drawn into the swirl, too. It dashed towards him while it was trying to maintain its balance.

Li Yao bellowed. He tilted the power rune arrays to change his direction and rushed towards the beast in wind and thunder.

In an almost perfect arc, his crescent saber slashed the high-level demon soldier into two halves.

"BOOM! BOOM BOOM!"

A violet tornado moved at Li Yao in the most formidable way.

Li Yao roared again. His soul was burning so ferociously that the Bloody Blade Battlesuit was covered in crimson, as if the crystal suit had become a 7-meter tall red giant. The spiritual energy on his saber was extended by more than ten meters and flared devilishly.

"Ho!"

Meaningless, random noises rolled out of Li Yao's mouth.

They were the war cries deeply buried in the blood which had been uttered when ancestors of human beings were faced with natural disasters and animal assaults before they learnt how to speak.

Li Yao went for the tornado.

The crescent saber, in a sky-tearing brilliance, hit in the middle of the tornado.

His violent spiritual energy had ripped a giant hole on the tornado which he dashed right through.

Then, the tornado dissipated into countless clusters of wind, before they were absorbed by other tornadoes and completely vanished.

The tornado was killed by Li Yao!

Chapter 245: Second Match, Begin!

Chapter 245: Second Match, Begin!

Just like that, Li Yao waved and slashed the saber in the dust storm like a devil.

Stones, demon beasts... Whatever stood in his way was immediately cut into pieces.

Time seemed to have stopped. The only thing that could be seen was the crimson twinkles of his saber.

He didn't know how long it had been, but the dust storm eventually came to an end.

In the colorful tornadoes, the lightning bolts as thick as dragons shrank into the size of boas, then the size of earthworms, before they completely vanished.

With the dispersion of tornadoes, billions of tons of sand started falling. The prehistoric beast had died and decayed.

Li Yao regained control over his body. After several bursts from the Bloody Blade Battlesuit, he ripped a small hole in the dust and ran out through it.

"BOOM!"

After he was out of the dust storm, Li Yao finally couldn't bear it any longer. He flew in the sky at a low altitude, then he landed and staggered forward; ultimately, he lost balance and fell over, raking a deep fissure behind him.

At the end of the fissure, he tried to turn his body around. Stretching his arms and legs, he lay on the ground and looked at the sky.

It was late at night. The dust storm had cleared all the clouds, making the starry sky all the more brilliant. Watching through the crystal camera, every star had a different halo, as if many fireflies were dancing and singing.

Li Yao grinned.

Only after one faced the terror of death could one appreciate the beauty of life.

"Shua!"

Li Yao waved his hands casually. Spiritual energy ejected from his palm and formed a light blade of over three meters, which flew forward with the wind and thunder for more than ten meters.

Saber Aura!

It's the real Saber Aura that could destroy the enemy from a long distance away!

"While I was in the dust storm, cutting the tornadoes and slashing the lightning, I was able to blend the Desert Storm Saber Technique with the saber demonstrations from Long Wenhui. Now, I have a basic understanding of Saber Aura.

"But this is just the beginning. There is still a long way to go before I can use Saber Aura in real combat.

"As my very first Saber Aura, it is different from the Desert Storm Saber Technique as well as Long Wenhui's saber art. Moreover, it is endowed with the feeling of tornadoes and thunder from back in the dust storm. I shall call it 'Thunderous Tornado Saber Art'!

"For the next 20 days, my primary task will be to fully embed the Thunderous Tornado Saber Art into the crystal suit, and create my unique crystal suit technique."

Li Yao thought about something. He opened the map that covered 500 square kilometers around the Thunder Training Camp in his crystal processor.

The Grand Desolate Plateau was a place of perils. There were forbidden zones everywhere because of the disorder of natural spiritual energies.

Some of them, due to the special terrains and the fluctuation of natural spiritual energies, were extremely likely to be struck by dust storms. They were also known as the Dust Storm Area, which were specially marked with a skeleton pattern on the map.

Li Yao found a particular Dust Storm Area named Wuthering Canyon.

The place was not far away from the Thunder Training Camp. Since dust storms were blowing there all year around which consumed much of the natural spiritual energy, the intensity of the storms was not very high. Most of them were only level 10 or level 9. It was a very stable Dust Storm Area.

"Wuthering Canyon will be my personal training ground!"

Li Yao had made up his mind.

From that day on, Li Yao went to the Wuthering Canyon to practice his aviation skill as well as his saber art alone after he finished his designated, daily training.

Mao Feng thought that he was out of his mind. However, the training camp did not ban students from training in the way that they deemed most suitable for themselves. After all, since Li Yao escaped from the dust storm, he seemed to have broken through his bottleneck and started climbing towards a higher peak.

Therefore, after discussing with Mr. Xu, Mao Feng didn't reject the plan. Instead, he arranged a modified shuttle to send him to the Wuthering Canyon every day.

A deep sleep capsule was installed to the shuttle, in which Li Yao could take a good rest on his way to the Wuthering Canyon or back, so that he could make use of every minute of the day in training.

The only problem was that the Bloody Blade Battlesuit was breaking down due to the high intensity of training.

Every time, after a crazy training session, the Bloody Blade Battlesuit would be seriously damaged, with some power rune arrays set off and some components distorted.

It was lucky that Li Yao was a refiner himself. He brought the issue to the other two refiners respectfully from whom he learnt many basic crystal suit repairing tricks.

It also happened that the Bloody Blade Battlesuit was a simple and easy-to-modify crystal suit. Based on his modification experiences and the performance of the Bloody Blade Battlesuit in the tornadoes, he made some minor revisions during the repair to make the suit better fit his own combat style.

Technically speaking, the Bloody Blade Battlesuit was the Thunder Training Camp's possession. Li Yao had no right to modify it.

However, the Bloody Blade Battlesuit was so antique that few students ever used it. In fact, it had been idling in the corner all the time before Li Yao wore it. Besides, Li Yao claimed that he was only repairing the suit, and after everything was completed, the performance of the suit was above standard.

Therefore, after consulting with the two refiners, Mao Feng didn't interfere. He was curious, too, as to how far Li Yao could go.

His position was highly dependent on his students. If he could bring up a strong student, his position would be more stable, too.

Days came and went.

Every day, from dawn to afternoon, Li Yao would receive the harshest training in the training camp.

At 3:30 pm, he would go to the Wuthering Canyon in deep sleep in the shuttle, where he would practice the saber art in the dust storm.

At 9:30 pm, after he returned to the Thunder Training Camp, he would head to the crystal suit warehouse and maintain the crystal suits for all the students. Then he would handle his Bloody Blade Battlesuit and learn to repair and modify it.

Every second was fully occupied. The letters to Ding Lingdang were quickly reduced to several lines.

20 days had passed.

In the Wuthering Canyon, the sky was so clear that it seemed to have been washed. Stars were blinking in delight. It was a peaceful night after a dust storm.

Li Yao relieved himself from the Bloody Blade Battlesuit and sat down beside it. He played with the stone that Long Wenhui had left for him in his hands.

Suddenly, Li Yao crumbled the stone with a cracking sound.

All the saber demonstrations on the stone had been learnt by heart. When he closed his eyes, he could see every detail of Long Wenhui's movements with the saber in front of him.

Although he couldn't comprehend all of them, he no longer needed the help of the stone. Every movement of the saber had been carved in his brain. He could study them at any moment.

Li Yao brushed off the stone powder in his palms and took out the second item that Long Wenhui had offered him.

The mysterious card.

Now that his spiritual energy was stronger than before, he could 'summon' the stars in the card at his will.

A starry sky in the card.

A starry sky over the head.

The two skies flickered against each other. They were equally splendid, magnificent and quiet.

Li Yao held his breath and appreciated the beauty of the universe in silence.

Hundreds of spiritual threads from his spiritual root crowded towards the mysterious card.

Ripples appeared on the surface of the card. All the spiritual threads were absorbed in.

Li Yao had long discovered that the card seemed to be a two-dimensional thin paper. But inside the card, there was a vast, complicated, three-dimensional labyrinth.

His hundreds of spiritual threads were at the entrances of the labyrinth. But no matter how he tried to extend his spiritual threads, he never reached the end of the labyrinth. His spiritual threads were not even able to meet one another in the labyrinth.

The labyrinth in the thin card was boundless. It was indicative of a professional space folding technique, as shown in the proverb 'hide the world in a seed' and 'in a small sand contains three thousand universes'. It far exceeded the limitation of all the techniques in the Heaven's Origin Sector as well as Li Yao's imagination.

"It's really a vast world.

"There are countless mysterious worlds waiting to be explored beyond the Heaven's Origin Sector. There is countless magical equipment waiting to be studied!"

Li Yao sank all his attention into the card labyrinth.

He was satisfied, for he explored the labyrinth further than he did yesterday.

He believed that he would unravel the labyrinth and reveal the secret behind the card one day with persistence.

But his priority currently was the 20-out-of-50 elimination match the next day.

The 20 students who passed the match and entered the third phase of training, led by their instructors, would embark on a journey to the depths of the Grand Desolate Plateau, a real battlefield!

Strong demon beasts would be waiting for them there!

There would be invaluable Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. An inconspicuous flower might be worth billions!

If anyone was fortunate enough to discover a new mother lode, their fame would soar and they would be a powerful person in the world of Cultivators!

Li Yao rose, put on the Bloody Blade Battlesuit, and strode out of the Wuthering Canyon.

…

"Swoosh! Boom!"

A firecracker exploded in the sky, dyeing it into various colors.

The second round of the elimination match would commence in five minutes.

The 20-out-of-50 elimination match was to be held in a special world fragment.

This world fragment had a coverage of around 50 square kilometers. Tall trees over a hundred meters tall were all over the place. Even if one entered the fragment in a crystal suit, one could still feel freezing chills blowing nonstop.

Therefore, this world fragment was named "Dark Wood World"!

Deep in the gloomy, creepy forest, two hundred light spots were randomly scattered, which were all miniature beast puppets that would sent out special spiritual energy waves.

The light spots that looked like fireflies were the targets for every student.

Everyone who collected more than ten light spots and held them for more than ten minutes would be considered a winner.

The more light spots one student had, the more waves would be sent out from them.

Other students could detect the waves easily and attacked the student to grab their light spots.

There were two hundred light spots in total, which meant there would be only twenty winners at most. As the match went on, the unclaimed light spots would be fewer and fewer, and the competition would be fiercer and fiercer!

Chapter 246: Double Hunting

Chapter 246: Double Hunting

In the Dark Wood World, there were no demon beasts. But there were many demoniac plants.

The most notorious one of them was the 'Dry Snake Vine' that often clung to the trees, which could be as long as hundreds of meters and as thick as a python. The bumps on its skin contained corrosive sap, too. It could be really tricky if one was caught.

Fifty students were all in their crystal suits now. They were doing final checks on their suits.

Li Yao observed his opponents carefully.

After two months of hard training, everyone had advanced greatly. They were riding their crystal suits so naturally that the suits seemed to be part of their bodies.

Most of the students were already in the high levels of the Refinement Stage. With the enhancement of the crystal suits, the air around them indicated that they were as powerful as the Building Foundation Stage Cultivators.

It was going to be a brutal battle!

While Li Yao was observing the others, he was being observed, too.

He'd chosen the Bloody Blade Battlesuit that he was familiar with, with camouflage patterns painted on the skin. It was striped with yellowish and greenish colors and did not look very attractive.

But no one dared to look down upon it.

If someone could take down Zhou Zhenghao, the 'steel man', they would be definitely stronger than they currently looked.

Long Qianyue and Yuan Yeshi were scanning and detecting the characteristics of Li Yao's crystal suit carefully. They each had their own plans on how to deal with him.

After a moment, the screen inside everyone's crystal suit displayed a countdown.

Three, two, one!

The second round of the elimination match had begun!

50 crystal suits, unleashing intensive exhaust flames, dashed into the dark, primitive forest from all directions.

The moment he entered the forest, Li Yao turned the power rune arrays down to minimum and switched to stealth mode. He moved in the forest quietly.

Instead of searching for the light spots scattered in the forest immediately, he decided to get familiar with the territory and figure out a forest combat strategy first.

"Swish!"

A Dry Snake Vine lunged at him ruthlessly.

"Shua!"

After a flash of the saber, the vine was cut into two slices.

The corrosive sap from the fracture almost reached Li Yao when he shunned it hurriedly. The sap fell to the ground and emitted terrible smell.

Li Yao observed his surroundings carefully. All the plants in the Dark Wood World were larger than normal. The thorns were thicker than his thigh. None of the trees here were lower than a hundred meters, forming a cage that locked everything inside.

He stayed in the forest for quite a while, and it was not until cries and explosions were echoing not far from him that he shifted his attention to the map.

Two hundred light spots were glimmering in the map.

Some of the light spots had been gathered together, releasing a brightness that was even more distinctive than fireflies at night.

They were the ones that were already claimed by some students. There were not many unclaimed light spots now.

Under the guidance of the map, he leaped forward from tree to tree like an agile ape.

Very soon, he found a light spot floating in the air among twigs.

The shining miniature beast puppet flew upwards the moment it felt a crystal suit was drawing near.

Li Yao stomped on the tree and followed it like an arrow just unleashed from the bow. He caught the light spot in his hand.

His spiritual threads crowded into the miniature beast puppet and activated the control program.

The miniature beast puppet stopped moving and stayed over his head.

The first light spot had been collected!

Soon, the second and third light spots were dancing over Li Yao's head, too.

However, just like he could see the light spots on the map, so could everybody else.

As more and more light spots were claimed, there was too little meat for so many wolves. Conflicts were brewing.

Under the fourth light spot, Li Yao came across another student, who already had four light spots over his head.

The two of them stood and stared at each other quietly.

All added together, there were only eight light spots here in total, which was not enough for either of them to win.

Therefore, they didn't start fighting immediately.

After a moment, Li Yao slowly retreated to darkness.

The other student was relieved. He thought that Li Yao feared his capability and didn't want to fight over a single light spot.

However, the relief didn't last long. Li Yao dashed out of darkness at him like a giant serpent!

His retreat was only meant to increase the distance between them so that he could sprint!

Fast!

Li Yao was too fast!

The student was aware that Li Yao was not a newbie, but it never occurred to him that Li Yao would be so strong!

There was no time to dodge. He waved his chainsword by instinct.

Li Yao felt great danger, but he still went directly for his opponent.

He lowered his body, allowing the chainsword to leave deep damage on his left shoulder. Then, in a flash of moonlight from down to top, he broke through the other student's spiritual shield and slashed his saber at his opponent's neck, the weakest part of the crystal suit.

Dazzling spiritual energy sparks burst out from the other student's crystal suit. He was immediately determined to be 'dead' by the system and fell to the ground, unable to move anymore.

The light spots on his head were freed and pulled over by Li Yao's spiritual threads.

Now, Li Yao was in possession of eight light spots, which made him extremely bright in the map.

He could feel that several crystal suits were coming close at a high speed even without the help of the crystal suit.

He moved his shoulder, and found that although its defense capability had been greatly diminished, the shoulder could still function normally.

Li Yao licked his lips. Then he began carrying out his plans.

Half a minute later.

After a rattling sound, a crystal suit charged out of the bushes towards the target it just locked.

When he reached it, he found that his target was rigid and had no light spots over his head because he was already determined to be 'dead'.

Above his head, two Dry Snake Vines snuck down toward him.

He waved his blades and cut the two vines into pieces. But before he caught his breath, a chainsword pierced into his chest from inside the tree in front him and eliminated him instantly!

Li Yao had dug a hole in the middle of the tree, put the chainsword in it, and pasted the bark back.

With the burst of his spiritual energies, the chainsword was boosted and hit the newcomer instantly!

The student collapsed, completely stupefied.

Two light spots were floating slowly.

Li Yao smiled and stretched his spiritual threads to catch them.

He had gathered ten light spots, which met the first requirement.

Now, the countdown began. He needed to keep the light spots for ten minutes.

Since he had ten light spots already, his mark on the map turned into dangerously red, making him a target for everyone

Li Yao started running without any hesitation.

In less than two seconds, the place where he had been stood was pierced by more than 10 flying swords.

Soon, he noticed that he had several pursuers. He put the body movement technique he'd learnt in the dust storms into practice, turning himself into an erratic leaf in high winds.

For a time, he was on the top of the hundreds-of-meter tall trees; for a while, he was among the branches that were tangled together; for a moment, he was diving to the ground like he was committing suicide and didn't turn his direction until he was only half a meter away from the ground.

The followers found it difficult to chase him. Two of them even crashed into each other because of Li Yao's delicate, small-scale movements.

The distance between Li Yao and his followers grew larger and larger.

Right then, ahead of Li Yao, the bark of a giant tree twisted weirdly. A faint brightness shined and disappeared.

Li Yao felt that his heart had been pricked by a needle. He knew a great danger was coming. But there was no time for him to react except to lift his left arm in the hope to hold it back.

"Shua!"

He felt that his left arm was on fire. Dozens of warnings appeared on the screen of the crystal suit, indicating that his left arm had lost all functions.

If it were in a real battle field, his left arm would've been cut off already.

A crystal suit in an exotic shape revealed itself in the trunk. It was tall, thin, and green in color. Two sickles were installed at the ends of its arms. All in all, it looked like a metal mantis.

"Green Sickle Battlesuit, one of the most dangerous melee crystal suits, has four mimesis rune arrays on its skin, which gives it with the ability of imitation. The crescent chainswords on its arms can even tear apart the shells of a demon general!"

Li Yao remembered that the wearer of the Green Sickle Battlesuit was Yuan Yeshi.

"Li Yao, it never occurred to me that you could avoid my critical attack after only two months of training. That's tremendous progress. Good for you!"

Seven light spots were floating over Yuan Yeshi's head. He rubbed his crescent chainswords that looked like two giant sickles. Sparks were dancing as he said, "I really would like to figure out how you defeated Zhou Zhenghao one month ago. Please, do tell me everything about it with your true abilities!"

Li Yao took a deep breath and crouched. Two dust storms with wind and thunder were forming in his eyes.

Suddenly, he blinked. All his killing scent was gone. He turned around and went on fleeing to the deep forest.

Yuan Yeshi was stunned for a moment. He didn't understand why Li Yao would choose to run away when he had brought up his killing scent and was ready for a desperate fight.

Half a second later, a crystal suit that looked like a silver fox in moonlight showed up beside Yuan Yeshi.

It was the Moon Fox Battlesuit driven by Long Qianyue, who had nine light spots over her head.

The other four pursuers were there, too, only to find that the top two experts of the training camp had already come.

They looked at each other in discontent. Knowing that they could do nothing about it, they retreated silently.

Yuan Yeshi's face turned pale. Faced with the greatest enemy in the camp, he crossed the crescent chainswords before his chest.

Long Qianyue glanced at him and shook her head. She said, not without contempt, "I'm well aware of your capability, which does not interest me."

After that, she dashed toward the direction in which Li Yao had fled like a silver laser.

Yuan Yeshi felt that his face was burning. He roared, "Long Qianyue, you can't be certain of victory if we were to fight in real combat! Don't be so outrageous!"

Gritting his teeth, he circled and followed up from a different angle.

Long Qianyue and Yuan Yeshi, the two best candidates in the training camp, were closer and closer to Li Yao, like two fangs of a beast, or a pair of pliers, that were ready to press him into pieces.

Chapter 247: Perish Together?

Chapter 247: Perish Together?

Li Yao fled like a scared rabbit. While he was running, he tossed countless black shining metal balls from the pouch on the waist of the Bloody Blade Battlesuit.

The metal balls exploded the moment they hit the trees and released clusters of dark smoke, blocking the vision of the two hunters and even interfering with their thoughts.

However, the two hunters were experienced Exos. They were not really troubled by the smoke grenades that had interference rune arrays on them.

Besides, even without the scanning of crystal cameras, Li Yao had been bright enough in the map after he'd collected ten light spots.

Now up high, now down low, breaking through the smoke, the two of them entered the center of the forest where trees were densest while chasing after Li Yao.

Suddenly, Long Qianyue came to a halt and crouched as if she were whipped in the face. She hid herself among the branches.

She felt a strong sense of danger.

But Yuan Yeshi felt nothing. He continued his way and soon discovered that Li Yao was trapped in a clump of Red Ring Thorn which he was struggling to get rid of.

Red Ring Thorn was another type of demoniac plants. It was thicker than a human's thigh. Normally, it would lurk in bushes in mimesis. At first glance, it was the same as any weeds.

However, should anyone accidentally step on it, it would immediately take off its imitation and tie the prey up with pricks and zigzags which looked like red rings. Once the prey was killed, it would dissolve and swallow the prey.

Although Li Yao was in his crystal suit, he was still delayed a few seconds by the Red Ring Thorn.

Yuan Yeshi sneered. He sprinted, the sickle-like crescent chainswords in hand.

Suddenly, he heard something over his head. A giant clump of Red Ring Thorn was falling to him.

Li Yao, who was trapped and struggling in the Red Ring Thorn, instantly freed himself and came at him.

"I knew it was a trap!"

Yuan Yeshi had been prepared for this. He changed his direction suddenly and dodged the Red Ring Thorn above his head. His speed was not affected. In fact, he seemed to have accelerated when he slashed one of his chainswords at Li Yao's neck and the other at Li Yao's stomach.

Yuan Yeshi's quick reaction seemed to be beyond Li Yao's expectation. Li Yao twisted himself in the air dumbly.

Although he avoided attacks of the two chainswords, his chest was stomped on by Yuan Yeshi and he fell to the ground like a rock off a cliff.

"You're done!"'

Yuan Yeshi grinned hideously. He crossed his arms. Thousands of sparks were dancing in his chainswords. He stomped on the trunk of a tree and was ready to dive down.

However, the touch from the bottom of his feet was empty and not solid at all.

The tree which he stomped on leaned backwards.

Yuan Yeshi immediately understood what had happened. The tree had already been cut into two halves by Li Yao. But his slashing was so fast that the tree was still standing.

Now that he stomped on the tree, the formidable force from the crystal suit instantly pushed the tree down.

He didn't get the counterforce that he had expected and lost balance; he suddenly felt short of breath.

This was just the beginning.

The moment he stepped on the tree, dozens of other trees around exploded at the same time and collapsed towards the middle.

The trunk of those trees had all been slashed by Li Yao, who also set up crystal bombs at the bottom of the trees.

Yuan Yeshi knew that it was not good.

This was the battlefield that Li Yao had chosen.

Long Qianyue and he hadn't chased Li Yao to this place. It was Li Yao who'd lured them to the place on purpose.

The Red Ring Thorn was not a trap, but the pretense of a trap.

The trees that seemed to be perfectly normal were Li Yao's real traps.

Right at this moment, he heard the sound of thunder.

All the crystal cameras on his crystal suit detected a cloud of dust storm with wind and thunder arriving from below to top.

Thunderous Tornado Saber Art!

For a moment, the deepest fear grasped Yuan Yeshi as if he were faced with a calamitous dust storm on a desert naked.

A moment was more than enough to decide the winner of two experts in a combat.

Yuan Yeshi failed to receive any counterforce and lost balance at first.

Then he was intimidated by the fallen trees and spent half a second calculating how to avoid the impact.

Before he finished his calculations, flashes of Li Yao's saber had enveloped him.

The vigor in Li Yao's attack was beyond his imagination!

But as a battlesuit major student from Deep Sea University, Yuan Yeshi calmed down at the face of death.

He was aware that Li Yao's attack was accumulative. The more he tried to avoid it, the fiercer Li Yao's attack would become.

What's more, dozens of trees were falling upon him from above. In order to not run into them accidentally, he would have to spare some computational ability to calculate a safe route, whereas Li Yao must've already calculated the speed and direction of the falling trees. Chances were that Li Yao had even already sorted out the safe route in which he would dodge the trees.

If he went on dodging, Li Yao would dominate this combat. Before the trees reached the ground, he would be annihilated!

A brutal light burned in Yuan Yeshi's eyes. With a grim face, he gave up on his defenses and charged towards Li Yao, ready to die together with him.

"Li Yao!

"Suppose your plan goes well and you kill me, I will still be able to heavily wound you before I die!

"Long Qianyue, the top expert in the training camp, is waiting outside the trees. Let's perish together for her to enjoy the fruit!"

Yuan Yeshi spoke fast. His words dashed to Li Yao like flying swords.

Li Yao had spent so much time and effort to make this trap and was on the verge of success. Apparently, he wouldn't choose to die together with him. He would definitely retreat!

As long as Li Yao retreated, or stopped his current actions, there would be flaw in his attacks. He would have a thousand ways to make a comeback!

However—

Li Yao seemed to have heard none of it. His speed increased to limit.

Yuan Yeshi's sneer changed into desperation. In confusion and fury, he screamed, "Then, let Long Qianyue take advantage of us!"

Two crystal suits collided. The spiritual shields sprayed out dazzling sparks and scattered into pieces.

Broken chainswords flew to the sky and fell to the branches of a tree. Li Yao's crescent saber was blown away, too.

In half a second, Yuan Yeshi was 'dead', Li Yao 'seriously wounded'!

The crystal suits fell to the ground without support, because most of the power rune arrays on them had already blasted and lost the aviation ability.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The trees finally collapsed to the ground and buried the two of them, forming a giant tomb.

"Why?"

To this moment, Yuan Yeshi still couldn't figure out why Li Yao chose to die together with him.

Yes, he was eliminated. But before his 'death', he'd also wounded Li Yao badly. Any random Exo could come and kill Li Yao right now.

Li Yao didn't say anything. He lay in the mud with four limbs stretched out, waiting in the darkness silently.

Noticing the trees tangled together above them, Yuan Yeshi suddenly understood everything.

'Asshole!

'Blowing up the trees was not just meant to interfere my thoughts. More importantly, the trees are being used to cover him and buy him some time!'

Outside Li Yao's trap, Long Qianyue was staring at the fallen trees, not knowing what to do.

She knew that Li Yao was hiding somewhere under the trees. But to get inside the heap of trees was indeed tricky.

Every tree weighed hundreds of tons. It was not difficult to cut each of them in half, but to move them away would be quite a different story.

Long Qianyue thought for a moment. A silver light appeared in her palm and she dashed towards the tree on the top of the heap.

After a crack, the tree was broken into two parts. But the two parts, after rolling for a while, stopped at the top of the heap.

Long Qianyue frowned. A sense of powerlessness gripped her.

There was no way that she could slash all the trees into pieces within several minutes.

Eventually, she gave up slicing them and tried to reach the bottom of the heap through the gaps between trees.

"BOOM!"

Right then, a dull explosion echoed under one of the trees, indicating the existence of yet another crystal bomb.

"He installed crystal bombs on the trunks, too?"

Long Qianyue felt like her blood was freezing.

She did not know how many crystal bombs had been installed. If they exploded as she passed by and Li Yao was nearby, the situation would be terrible.

Long Qianyue didn't know how seriously Li Yao was wounded. But she did know that Yuan Yeshi was sure to have been taken down.

It would not be a wise decision to fight against such a formidable opponent in a battlefield with such complicated terrain and in his favor.

However…

After a moment, Long Qianyue blinked coldly and squeezed into a gap between trunks.

"Li Yao, if you think you could scare me off with a single crystal bomb, you are terribly mistaken!

"You only had a limited time to set up such an arduous trap for Yuan Yeshi. There's no way that you could set up so many crystal bombs inside the trunks, too.

"Otherwise, you would've set all of them off together after I came inside, which would be better for your purpose, instead of setting off one before I'd even entered!"

Long Qianyue calculated a route inside the heap and jumped up and down through the trunk gaps.

Despite Li Yao's futile struggle to attract her to the areas which were full of Dry Snake Vines and Red Ring Thorns, Long Qianyue caught up to Li Yao several minutes later.

Li Yao gave up resistance. He sat down exhaustedly, his back against a tree.

Every rune array on his crystal suit was spurting spiritual energy sparks in various colors.

Without saying anything, Long Qianyue locked her target with all her attack magical equipment.

However, the moment she was ready to launch her attack, the target vanished from her map.

The IFFS 1 had determined Li Yao to be 'unassailable' because Li Yao had survived for ten minutes!

He'd become the first student to pass the second elimination match!

Chapter 248: Dark Desolate Domain

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Three days later, at a frontier base of the federal army located north of the Grand Desolate Plateau and hundreds of kilometers away from the nearest town.

In a well-guarded military base where crystal railguns could be seen everywhere, 25 Exos were doing last minute checks for their journey.

They were the twenty winners of the second elimination match of the Thunder Training Camp and five top instructors in the camp who were going on a field trip to the depths of the Grand Desolate Plateau.

"The northern defense line, consisted of thousands of military bases, is the furthest frontier of the Star Glory Federation. The territory beyond this defense line, although claimed to be the federation's domain, has a harsh natural environment with a lot of unexpected dangers and strong demon beasts. No humans could ever live there, nor could any ordinary armies station the area. We Cultivators are in charge of cleaning the place regularly."

Mao Feng paced to and fro. His eyes were wide while he roared, "Make sure everything's in working order with your crystal suit. Once we're into the depths of the Grand Desolate Plateau, there will be no supplies or reinforcements. If something happens to your crystal suit, you will be in serious trouble!"

Li Yao tested in his crystal suit. He activated every rune array on the suit and check the data reports on the screen.

This would be the first time that he left the northern defense line to train in the lonely wilderness.

He was both anxious and excited.

He'd chosen the Bloody Blade Battlesuit as before.

After one month of maintenance and modification, the parameters of the Bloody Blade Battlesuit couldn't be a better fit for his physique and combat style.

In light of the real battle to come that was bound to be different from the elimination matches, he'd added a lot of attack magical equipment modules to the suit which was now armed to teeth.

The Shattered Star Bombarder specially designed for crystal suits was wrapped in a chill air of blood. It could destroy high-level demon soldiers with a single blow.

"Check!"

"Check!"

"Check!"

25 crystal suits were standing dazzlingly in the middle of the military base. Five hundred soldiers of the base formed two rows beside them.

"Salute!"

The five hundred soldiers stood at attention and performed a perfect military salute.

The Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars, the national flag of the Star Glory Federation, was fluttering on the flagpole dozens of meters tall.

Soldiers of the federal army were mostly ordinary people. They could only station in the military base and defend their country in shelters.

The task of attack could only be shouldered by Cultivators.

Therefore, the soldiers paid their sincerest homage to the Cultivators.

Under their warm stares, the 25 Cultivators got on four heavy-type crystal tanks and embarked on their quest together with four wagons which contained enough crystal stones and supplies for half a month's use.

One of the wagons could be transformed into a battlefield workshop where simple crystal suit maintenance could be performed.

Besides the 25 full-armed crystal suits, they also carried more than fifty beast puppets with strong firepower.

More than half an hour later, a glittering and translucent high tower appeared in front of them, which was the first man-made architecture they'd come across during their ride to the north.

Led by Mao Feng, all the students jumped down from the crystal tanks and stood around the tower in a circle.

The tower had been carved out of luminous crystals with hundreds of rune arrays on them. Eight small round towers stood around the tower in the middle, bringing a strong sense of mystery.

When they closed their eyes and observed through their spiritual roots, they discovered that countless colorful spiritual threads were embroiled around the high tower and stretched forwards in all directions to the end of horizon.

They were like a big net with rainbows weaved in, expanding around the entire world.

The high tower was a Spiritual Beacon which could send telepathic thoughts as a cell unit of the Spiritual Nexus. Only when one was in the coverage of a Spiritual Beacon and had signal could he use the Spiritual Nexus normally to receive or send telepathic thoughts.

"This is the last Spiritual Beacon you'll see, which marks the boundary of human civilization. Later, we'll enter the world of darkness where there is no network at all.

"I'll give you five minutes. Whatever you want to say to your family or friends, say it now while there's still network!"

Mao Feng's words caused a minor turbulence.

Spiritual Beacons were THE greatest magical equipment in history.

The boundless spiritual network that allowed people worldwide to communicate with each other instantly was the foundation of the prosperous modern cultivation civilization.

For the students, they'd always been in the coverage of the Spiritual Nexus, even when they were fighting on the Grand Desolate Plateau.

Although the signal was sometimes intermittent, it was usable to communicate with the outside world, and if they came across danger, they could ask the Cultivators nearby or the military for help.

However, they'd met the last Spiritual Beacon at the edge of the human world. Further ahead, there would be no network at all. They wouldn't be able to ask for help when they were in trouble.

Indescribable loneliness suddenly grasped them.

"We're about to lose signal."

"We're going to be out of network for an entire month. That's terrible!"

Everyone hurriedly contacted their family and friends while they still could.

Li Yao thought for a while. He took a selfie with the splendid view of the Grand Desolate Plateau as background and sent it to Ding Lingdang with a message that read,

"Before I enter the Dark Desolate Domain."

Dark Desolate Domain was the collective name for the dangerous zones beyond the northern defense line that were never touched by human civilization.

This was the end of the world, the closest spot in the Heaven Origin Sector to the Blood Demon Sector, a chaotic land where spiritual energies were unfathomably fierce, home to countless strong demon beasts, as well as a place that boasted infinite Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and mother crystal lodes.

"BOOM! CRACK!"

Inside the Dark Desolate Domain, the spiritual energies fluctuated like surging tides, which had no pattern at all.

For a moment, it was sunny without the slightest hint of cloud. The next moment, lightning was already brewing behind heavy clouds and the rain was pouring down at any moment.

The lightning was rolling over in the clouds like vigorous dragons, which snapped at the ground every once in a while.

The power of Cultivators was completely overwhelmed by the rage of nature.

Mao Feng's face turned pale as he screamed, "Disperse! Disperse now! Raise your spiritual shield output to maximum!"

The other experienced instructors had already dragged the students almost 100 meters away.

The moment they ran in all directions, a thunder resembling a golden dragon dashed down from the clouds and went directly for the Spiritual Beacon.

The defense rune arrays on the eight small round towers around the Spiritual Beacon were instantly activated, which formed a transparent shield over the Spiritual Beacon.

But it was not strong enough to withhold the frenzy of nature. A moment later, the eight towers exploded and the shield was gone. The thunder went on without stop and ripped the Spiritual Beacon into pieces.

Shattered crystals, accelerated by the lightning, was thrown to every direction like screaming bullets.

Luckily, everyone had already activated their spiritual shields, which stopped the shattered crystals and crushed them into ashes. Nobody was hurt, albeit truly shocked.

"Spiritual waves from the Spiritual Beacon are too intense. Once the natural spiritual energies are on a rampage, the Spiritual Beacon will always be the first thing to be destroyed! It's like the lightning rod which is always hit first during a thunderstorm."

Mao Feng added, "Building a Spiritual Beacon requires huge amounts of money and effort, not to mention the cost of many precious crystals. But it is quite easy for it to be damaged. Besides the lightning which can tear them apart easily, many strong demon beasts will also be attracted by the spiritual waves from the Spiritual Beacon and are willing to destroy it no matter what!

"Therefore, although Spiritual Beacons, as the core of the Spiritual Nexus, are of paramount importance to us, we can't build them unlimitedly. Establishing one at this place is already the best we can do.

"In front of us is the Dark Desolate Domain, a dreary world without network that only the bravest dare to walk in!

"Cultivators, move forward!"

Against thunder and lightning, the squad dashed to the horizon.

Weather in the Dark Desolate Domain was never tranquil. The storm didn't die down until one night later.

The world when everything was peaceful again was different from the outside, too.

The sky was red like blood. Clouds were twisted into colorful swirls. Many of them had giant holes through which one could see stars clearly.

Day and night was indistinctive here.

The land around was no longer barren. On the continuous hills grew demoniac plants that none of them had ever seen before, which were extremely large due to the nourishment of abundant spiritual energy. Weeds that had razor-sharp edges were taller than any of them, which were shining weirdly under the violet sun.

In the dense forest, screams of demon beasts echoed; as if crystal bombs had exploded around the tanks they were in, every one of them felt a chill down their spines.

"Dark Desolate Domain is the closest spot in the Heaven's Origin Sector to the Blood Demon Sector. Due to the universal gravitation, the two worlds were attracted to each other."

All the students sat down around Mao Feng and listened to the rules of the Dark Desolate Domain.

Mao Feng had two big demon beast eggs in his hands. He lifted them up, "Let's say this egg represents the Heaven's Origin Sector, and the other egg represents the Blood Demon Sector."

He put the two eggs together and knocked them gently,

The eggshell was thick. There were many cracks on the surface; the eggs didn't break, but they were pinned together.

"The Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector are like two crushed eggs. The Dark Desolate Domain is the point of impact. The sky on the Grand Desolate Plateau is like the cracks on the eggshell.

"Why do wormholes often appear on the Grand Desolate Plateau? Because there are many cracks due to the impact of the two worlds.

"As for the inland of the federation, the sky there is as intact as a smooth eggshell without a single crack. Naturally, no wormholes will ever show up. It is through these cracks that the demon beasts find their way into our world.

"Observe the two eggs. Isn't the point of impact most crowded with cracks and most likely to crumble?

"It is also the case with the real worlds. The Dark Desolate Domain is the most fragile and perilous place in the entire Heaven's Origin Sector!"

Chapter 249: Vast Universe and Silver-blood Demons

Chapter 249: Vast Universe and Silver-blood Demons

Many of the students had read Introduction to Cosmology before and had a basic understanding about the distribution of parallel worlds. They nodded in agreement.

But some of them didn't know much about the universe. Although they were aware of the existence of parallel worlds, they didn't understand why two worlds would collide.

Outside the Heaven's Origin Sector were boundless stars and an endless vacuum. Even the closest galaxy was thousands of light years away. They couldn't imagine how the collision took place.

Seeing the confusion in their faces, Mao Feng further explained, "Yes, from a three-dimensional point of view, all the different worlds are located in the same universe in their respective galaxies.

"The Heaven's Origin Sector is in one of the galaxies, while the Blood Demon Sector is in another.

"Theoretically speaking, there are no barriers between the parallel worlds. We can sail anywhere we want freely. The only thing that stops us is the long distance.

"With the current level of technology in the Heaven's Origin Sector, if we refine a crystal warship that can sail in the universe, it might take us millions of years to reach our neighboring galaxy. Or the parallel world next to us, if you will.

"In the three-dimensional level, the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector are at two ends of the universe with a very long distance in between. There's no way that the two of them will ever be related.

"But if you were to jump out of the three-dimension and move on to a higher level, everything would be different.

"In a higher dimension, every parallel world is a sealed egg that is placed next to each other in a way that we can't comprehend. If two eggs are too close, there will be attraction between them which may lead to collision and even fusion of a brand new parallel world.

"The Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector is exactly such a double-world system.

Noticing that many students were still confused, Mao Feng took out a piece of white paper and drew one circle on either side of the paper.

"See? Let's say this piece of paper is a two-dimensional universe, and the two remote circles stand for the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector respectively.

"In the two-dimensional level, the two worlds are far from each other. There is no way for one of the worlds to reach the other one, let alone crushing.

"However—"

Mao Feng folded the paper. The two circles that had been on opposites sides now overlapped.

"If a strong power can break the two-dimensional rules and understand this fictional universe in the three-dimensional level, it will find that the two worlds are right beside each other.

"This is the relationship between the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, too

"As two galaxies, we are at different areas of the universe with trillions of light years in between.

"But as two parallel worlds in a higher dimension, we're very close to each other like the two circles on the paper. That's why there is attraction between the two worlds that eventually leads to the collision.

"Chances are that, one day, the two circles will merge into one!

"Alright, as battle-type Cultivators, you've learnt enough already.

"The more profound theories will be explored by the research-type Cultivators.

"Anyways, just remember this: The Dark Desolate Domain is the point of impact between the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector. Spiritual energies from both worlds intersect here, making this place the most abundant, furious and chaotic in either of the worlds."

This argument was very simple. Everybody understood it immediately.

It was like the intersection of two seas where the resources carried by undercurrents congregated.

Mao Feng continued, "The rich spiritual energy here consolidated into all kinds of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and mother crystal lodes. They also provide nourishment for the intimidating mutant demon beasts and demonic plants. This is a treasury that boasts inexhaustible resources.

"However…

"Despite the ample natural resources, the place is too far away from the federation. Besides, the spiritual fluctuations here are too fierce for large-scale crystal fleets to sail.

"If our main troops were deployed here, they might get caught by the spiritual energy swirls and be torn into pieces by accident!"

The students were reminded of the thunderstorm last night.

It was not a common thunderstorm, but a violent tide caused by the clash of the spiritual energies from two worlds.

The crystal warships that the Heaven's Origin Sector could produce at present were not capable of sailing against such spiritual energy tides.

A war in reality was not a game. It was a money-burning task.

Countless crystals and resources would be consumed for a single quest of a large-scale fleet.

If the fleet were to be scattered by the tides after a long march, the huge military expenditure would be for nothing.

And this was not counting the loss of soldiers.

It was also the reason why the Star Glory Federation, after five hundred years of bloody battles, still failed to conquer the Dark Desolate Domain.

Their biggest adversary was not the demon clan but nature itself.

"Listen up, everyone. Strong as the crystal warships may be, they cannot cruise in the Dark Desolate Domain. Here, Cultivators, especially us Exos, are the boss. We are the main forces in the war!"

Mao Feng's words ignited everyone's passion. They all couldn't wait to start hunting demon beasts, plundering Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, and increasing their own ability right now.

Mao Feng pressed his hands down and eased everyone. He continued, "This is about everything related to the Dark Desolate Domain. For the next month, you will be fighting and training here. A fifth of the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures that you collect will go to the training camp, of which half will cover the repair fee of your crystal suits and half will be the instructors' payment. Is that okay with everybody?"

Everyone nodded.

Their crystal suits were all provided by the training camp. It would be costly to fix them if they were damaged. The repair fee seemed reasonable.

The instructors' payment was even fairer.

The five instructors were all above middle-level of the Building Foundation Stage. With the enhancement of the crystal suits of the latest models, they could wield the strength of the Core Formation Stage.

It was under the protection of the five Cultivators that the students dared to fight and train in the Dark Desolate Domain at ease.

Otherwise, they would be committing suicide if they decided to train here, considering that they were all merely in the Refinement Stage.

A tenth of their harvest as payment for the instructors was a deal that couldn't be fairer.

Mao Feng nodded his head, then he brought up something else.

"Alright, since there is no objection, we'll start our training now. But before that, I need to remind you of something very important.

"The Dark Desolate Domain is full of dangers. Thunderstorm zones and dust storm zones are ten times more frequent and stronger than those outside.

"There are also strong mutant demon beasts lurking in darkness waiting for their prey.

"However, none of the above are the most appalling thing.

"The most appalling thing here is the infiltration squad of the demon clan, which is made of the elite soldiers in the demon army. Some of the squads are even made up of silver-blood demons exclusively!"

Everyone gasped at Mao Feng's words.

Li Yao recalled the composition of the demon clan.

Different from mankind, the demon clan was not a unique species, but a collective name for the unification of countless kinds of demon beasts.

Sometimes, the difference between two demon beasts was even bigger than that between a demon beast and a human being.

For example, some mammal demon beasts, especially the primate ones such as demon monkeys or demon apes, looked very similar to human beings, but entirely different from the arthropod demon beasts such as the Gold Armored Saber Mantis.

Why would a monkey consider a mantic to be its own kind, even if the latter had wisdom?

Moreover, many demon beasts were natural enemies and on different parts of the food chain. They had been attacking each other for billions of years. The hatred had melted into their blood.

Therefore, since the Demon Beast Empire 40,000 years ago, strong demons had been oppressing weak demons by ruthless coercion, who then enslaved and shackled the weaker demons.

After 30,000 years of development, four classes had been formed in the Demon Beast Empire.

In the bottom were the black-blood demons, who served as food, peasants and cannon fodder.

Black Armored Saber Mantis was a typical black-blood demon.

They were the main force for the invasion to the Heaven's Origin Sector and also inexhaustible cannon fodder. Even if they were to go extinct, high classes of the Blood Demon Sector wouldn't feel the least bit sorry about it.

Above the black-blood demons were bronze-blood demons, which was a class of warriors.

The Six-Armed Naga that Li Yao came across in the Verdant Tarn City was a bronze-blood demon.

On the top of the bronze-blood demons were silver-blood demons, who were the aristocrats and governors of the world of demon beasts, as well as the main contributors of the demon clan civilization.

One could say that only the demon beasts equal to or higher than silver-blood were the real demons. The black-blood and bronze-blood demon beasts were nothing but slaves or food in their eyes which were no different from human beings, if not worse.

After all, human beings had established a great civilization. Many of their creations were popular among the demon clan, too.

As for the gold-blood demons, also known as sacred-blood demons, were the royals of the world.

During the Demon Beast Empire's 30,000-year reign over the cosmos, more than ten dynasties had replaced one another. Royals of the dynasties all spent boundless resources to improve the quality of their blood, thereby increasing their strength. That's why they were called 'sacred-blood'.

However, during the substitution of dynasties, the sacred-blood demons often turned against each other.

After the Star Ocean Imperium was founded, the Supreme Emperor commanded the annihilation of the sacred-blood demons which almost exterminated them.

Now, the sacred-blood demons only lived among legends. There might not be a single sacred-blood demon in the entire Blood Demon Sector.

The current Blood Demon Sector was made up of hundreds of demon cities created by silver-blood demons. The cities were fighting and merging in conflicts.

An infiltration squad entirely made up by silver-blood demons was like 'the Imperial Guards' of the ancient kingdom. One couldn't think too highly of them.

Chapter 250: Crazy Digestion

Chapter 250: Crazy Digestion

One student raised his hand and asked, "What's an infiltration squad of silver-blood demons doing in the Heaven's Origin Sector?"

Mao Feng glanced at him and explained the reason.

The principle of the demon clan was utterly different from that of human society. There was no warmth at all. The one creed that they cherished most was 'survival of the fittest'. They were extremely harsh both to others and to themselves.

The competition among the silver-blood demons was fierce, too. If a young demon wanted to rise up in the demon world, not only did they need to go through hard training to increase their strength, they would also need to recruit their own subordinates.

For the demons, the fastest way to improve their abilities was to fight against humans by sneaking into the Heaven's Origin Sector.

What's more, most of the relatively stronger bronze-blood and black-blood demons in the Blood Demon Sector already had their masters and wouldn't change to a different one easily.

In comparison, there were many wild demon beasts in the Dark Desolate Domain.

Most of the beasts were never enlightened by any civilization. Although their brains had as much potential wisdom as any human being or silver-blood demon, their way of life was simple and muddled.

In the meantime, under the nourishment of the furious spiritual energies, there were many mutant demon beasts in the wilderness which were far stronger than the common ones and almost equal to high-level demon generals and even general kings.

Such strong-bodied and simple-minded demon beasts were naturally the best subordinates for a young and inexperienced demon.

Therefore, many silver-blood demons would risk going to the Heaven's Origin Sector, partly because they would receive good training here, and partly because they wanted to tame some strong demon beasts and turn the beasts into servants which would help them in their rise to power in the Blood Demon Sector.

So, the Dark Desolate Domain was the human beings and demon clan's mutual training field and arena.

Although neither of the two parties were able to commit a large number of troops to the place, it was possible for them to establish a small teleportation array which could send around twenty soldiers to the other's world.

Not only silver-blood demons would sneak into the Dark Desolate Domain in pairs, strong men of the Star Glory Federation sometimes would crawl into the Blood Demon

Sector that was on the opposite side of the Dark Desolate Domain, too.

Infiltration and anti-infiltration, assassination, ambush, guerrilla warfare… were constant in this brutal battlefield.

"However, don't freak out. We're going to do our training on the outskirts of the Dark Desolate Domain. Normally, silver-blood demons would never come here."

Mao Feng smiled confidently, "Besides, with the enhancement of the crystal suits, of the 25 people here, twenty students are beyond the peak of the Refinement Stage and on the verge of the Building Foundation Stage, and the five instructors are close to the Core Formation Stage.

"With our combat ability, even if we meet an infiltration squad of the silver-blood demons, there is no need to fear them. Just fight and see who gets the last laugh!

"Alright, let's start out training now!"

…

After a final check of the crystal suit, each student carried enough crystals, flying swords, and ammo. They dispersed and started searching in groups of five with one instructor in each.

Although there was no Spiritual Nexus in the Dark Desolate Domain, short-distance communication was still available when the weather was tranquil.

In every group, the four students would always stay in the communication range of their instructor, so that the instructor could come to their rescue the moment they called for help.

Four distinguished students, including Li Yao and Long Qianyue, went to an azure lake led by Mao Feng.

The lake seemed to be peaceful, but the piles of bones around suggested otherwise.

Water was the source of life. Even the strongest demon beast needed water, too. Therefore, countless demon beasts lurked around the lake, making it a concealed slaughterhouse.

The arrival of five strangers was immediately detected. After a clattering sound, many logs appeared in the middle of the lake and submerged after floating for a while quietly.

Rustling noises came from the two-meter tall demonic plants that resembled bulrushes which bent down instantly. Within a moment, heavy panting could be heard.

In the sky, many strange grey birds were hovering overhead maliciously; they looked like a combination of eagles and bats. Their wings spanned more than ten meters with sharp edges like blades that were shining coldly in the air.

They were not strong enough to hunt. So, they could only hope that the strong hunters hiding around the lake would leave some leftovers after they enjoyed the humans in the iron tanks.

Soon, on the left side of the team, three rhino-like, giant demon beasts, with big bone hammers at the end of their extremely thick tails, known as 'Blood Mallet Rhino', appeared from the demonic bulrushes.

On the team's right, two giant crocodiles that were more than ten meters long with bronze bone armors all over their bodies opened their hideous, smelly mouths.

"Hee! Hee!"

The strange birds in the sky cried like children chillingly.

"Li Yao, Long Qianyue, the strength of the five demon beasts are between that of high-level demon soldiers and low-level demon generals, which is perfect for your practice. Who wants to go first?"

Li Yao and Long Qianyue looked at each other and rushed out simultaneously.

Crazy killing ensued!

…

As the days went by, the lake turned from azure to crimson, and there were more and more demon beast bones around the lake. Li Yao was improving at an amazing speed!

On the third day of the field trip…

"Shua!"

Li Yao crouched on the ground. He dashed below a Blood Mallet Rhino like a cunning viper with a twist of his body and subtle manipulation of the power rune arrays. After he flashed to the back of the demon beast, the crystal camera on the back of his head immediately locked onto the target. He slashed the crescent saber backwards deep into the abdomen of the demon beast without turning around.

The Blood Mallet Rhino weighed more than 20 tons and had solid armor all over its body. When it was running, it was like a crystal tank. Its only weakness was a soft spot on its abdomen.

Li Yao pulled heavily. The brightness formed by his spiritual energy was more than three meters long, which cut all the inner organs of the Blood Mallet Rhino into pieces.

Then he squatted and dodged the demon beast's dying counterattack. At last, he dashed forward dozens of meters away.

The whole attack was so fluid that it only took less than two seconds.

The Blood Mallet Rhino roared. It tried to turn around and rush to Li Yao, only to collapse after several steps.

In the sky, many hovering scavengers called 'Chuckling Baby Bird' dived down, hoping to steal the fresh food.

"Shua!"

The Shattered Star Bombarder on the back of the Bloody Blade Battlesuit flipped up to the left shoulder and fired. Four masses of red air swelled out and hit the four Chuckling Baby Birds in the lead precisely.

The four masses of air were like four lumps of magma which could not be rid of once it was touched.

Soon, with ear-piercing screeches, the four Chuckling Baby Birds were burnt to ashes and fell to the ground.

The other birds all dispersed and didn't regather for a long time. When they came back, their chuckles turned into low curses.

Not knowing what to do, they could only float hundreds of meters above Li Yao's head and pooped on him to vent their anger. But, of course, could such beasts hit the nimble Li Yao?

…

On the seventh day of the field trip…

Li Yao stood still, his saber hidden on his back like a serpent in a crevice. He was confronting a Blood Mallet Rhino.

"BOOM!"

The Blood Mallet Rhino lowered its head and started charging at full speed.

It was not until the horn of the demon beast nearly pierced into his chest that Li Yao dodged to the side in his Bloody Blade Battlesuit.

Simultaneously, his saber moved like lightning and slashed at the neck of the rhino with the frightful speed of lightning and thunder.

The neck of the Blood Mallet Rhino was covered in dense armor, too. One slash, even if boosted by spiritual energy, was not enough to cut it open.

However, it was not Li Yao's first slash.

During the time of the seemingly single slash, Li Yao had already attacked eight times at the same spot, which left a clear trace on the armor of the Blood Mallet Rhino.

The ninth attack finally surpassed the limit of the armor. The bone armor was ripped open and the saber pierced through. A surge of spiritual energy then cut off all the arteries and organs inside the demon beast.

"Puff!"

When the saber left the demon beast's body, a cluster of blood was squeezed out.

The Blood Mallet Rhino collapsed, not even able to give a dying scream.

As for the Chuckling Baby Birds, none of them dared to steal food from this formidable human being anymore.

…

On the twentieth day of the field trip, Li Yao sat alone with his legs crossed on one side of the lake.

Below him was a strange gold snake that was more than thirty meters long with two small spikes on its head.

Critical part of the snake had almost been slashed into two pieces. The only reason that it remained intact was its skin. Blood of the snake flowed along the ground, emitting a weird fragrance.

Li Yao put the big gallbladder of the snake over a leaf, then he took out a piece of square-shaped magical equipment named 'Fiery Wave Box' and aimed at the gallbladder.

"Shua!"

The Fiery Wave Box shot out a green light which enveloped the gallbladder. A one-minute countdown was displayed on the box.

One minute later, the green light disappeared automatically, and the snake gallbladder was already cooked and ready to eat.

Li Yao was desperately hungry. He grabbed the gallbladder and finished it in several bites.

Not satisfied, he chopped off a slice of the snake flesh and cooked it together with the snake heart.

The mutant demon beasts in the Dark Desolate Domain, nourished by the spiritual energies of both worlds, contained far more spiritual energy than those on the outside, which made them the best food ingredients.

However, most Cultivators only had a limited stomach. For a Building Foundation Stage expert such as Mao Feng, his meal was no more than that of the lower-level Cultivators.

The wagons that they brought would need to load the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures as well as precious materials from demon beasts. There was no way that they would carry a lot of beast meat back.

Except for the part they ate while they were here, most of the meat would be taken advantage of by the scavenger demon beasts such as the Chuckling Baby Birds.

But Li Yao was different.

The most important art that he learnt from the Hundred Smelting Clan 40,000 years ago was the Art of the Swallowing Whale, a food-eating technique.

Back when he was an ordinary man, he had already been able to devour dozens of cans of the Giant Creatures of Starry Skies meat.

Now that he was already at the 7th level of the Refinement Stage, his stomach was much bigger than before, which could almost be called a bottomless hole.

Endless invaluable demon beast meat was sent into his belly and absorbed by him.

During the past half a month, he'd eaten so much good stuff that it was enough to feed a common Cultivator for years.

Chapter 251: Arrival of Enemies

Chapter 251: Arrival of Enemies

With the nourishment of the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, although his level hadn't advanced yet, Li Yao's understanding of the Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining technique, the strongest quenching body exercise of the Hundred Smelting Clan, had reached a whole new level.

When he stretched the spiritual energy inside his body and brought the Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining technique to maximum, his body no longer was the color of brass. The essence of the technique had sunk deeper into his body. Except for the deep gold color on his body that was occasionally visible, he looked exactly the same as any other person.

But his resistance had more than doubled.

Body strength of a body practitioner, magical equipment control of a refiner, and combat skills of an Exo had integrated perfectly in Li Yao.

...

On the 25th day of the field trip, Li Yao had become the focus of the other 19 students.

He was the weakest among all the students.

All the students who passed the first two rounds of the elimination match were in the high level of the Refinement

Stage, except for him who was only in the middle level of the Refinement Stage.

But once he put on the crystal suit, his combat ability was almost equal to Long Qianyue, the top expert of all the students, if not better in some regards.

None of the students who had seen Li Yao's combat in his crystal suit were not astonished and shocked at his tough style.

In their eyes, Li Yao was playing with fire, and he risked being seriously wounded by demon beasts at any moment.

The combat style was what they desired yet could not learn, because it was based on Li Yao's profound understanding of the structure of the crystal suit as well as the robustness of his body.

As the days went by, Li Yao's trophy collection grew larger and larger.

"Did you hear it? Li Yao killed a Frost Triangle Chimera and got two precious soft scales for chest protection from it!

"Plus, the tailbone from the Green Paw Dragon Snake! Damn, he's already earned roughly a million in the past two days!"

The twenty students were all proud of themselves and competed with each other secretly. They observed other people's collections every day.

But most of them soon discovered to their dismay that two students gathered much more than any of the rest of them, who, moneywise, earned more than double of what any other students did.

One of the two students was Li Yao, and the other was Long Qianyue.

They were the well-deserved strongest students of this batch!

...

Thirtieth day of the field trip.

"Today is the last day of your field trip, which means that the three months of Exo training has come to an end!"

The twenty students sat in a circle. Mao Feng was standing in the middle and said, "Three months ago, many of you were ignorant beginners; some were even super newbies who had never touched crystal suits before.

"But after three months of training, as qualified Exos, you are all able to go hunting in the Dark Desolate Domain in middle-level and low-level crystal suits now.

"However, in order to be formally acknowledged by the Thunder Training Camp and to get the 'Thunder Exo' badge, you have one last conquest to complete.

"Tonight, everybody will take a good rest. Starting from 5 o'clock tomorrow morning to 5 o'clock the day after, the 24 hours will be your free hunting time.

"During the day and the night, you will try your best to hunt down demon beasts that are most valuable in your eyes. At the end of the match, the worth of your trophies will be the criterion to determine the final winners.

"The top ten will receive the title of 'Thunder Exo', and when they reach the Building Foundation Stage, they will have the opportunity to be instructed by Lei Tingwei, the Core Formation Stage strong man, in person!"

Mao Feng's words set the crowd in ablaze.

Every student was so excited that their faces were flushed and veins were appearing on the backs of their clenched hands.

As one of the four major training camps, the Thunder Training Camp was even better recognized than many battlesuit majors of the famous universities.

'Thunder Exo' not only meant that they could be personally taught by a Core Formation Stage Cultivator, but also proved that they were competent enough in the new generation of the world of Exos. Major sects would hire them with decent payment, and their future career paths would be unhindered. Chances were that they might even be able to marry a daughter of the leader of their sects and thus inherit it one day. They would arrive at the peak of their life easily.

Li Yao was anxious, too, and couldn't wait for the dawn to come.

During the three-month training, besides crystal suit driving skills, he also grasped much knowledge about crystal suit maintenance and modification.

He was hoping to conclude the training satisfactorily and return to the Grand Desolate War Institution to refine the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit together with his professor.

Right then, a delicate, blade-like figure came close to him.

It was Long Qianyue.

Long Qianyue had a long face. Her chin stood out a little bit, making her less pretty than she was supposed to be. But she had a fair skin through which one could see her veins.

Her eyeballs, which seemed to have been carved out of two crystals, were translucent.

"Li Yao, it's a pity that we haven't had a chance to confront each other over the last month since the second elimination match.

"I hope that we're both lucky tomorrow to reap enough booty to decide who the winner is between us."

Long Qianyue's eyes were glittering. She continued, "People say that we're the top students in this class. It's hilarious. How can there be two top students?

"I would rather be defeated and stay in the second place temporarily than share the first place with someone else.

"I believe that you are the same as me, aren't you?"

Li Yao stared at her in the eyes and grinned a moment later.

He rose up, feeling that every artery in his body was inching and every cell expanding.

Unable to control it any longer, he decided to practice the Thunderous Tornado Saber Art while the night was still young.

…

There was no moon in the sky. Many giant swirls made of stars were spinning in the sky, crushing and swallowing each other.

Endless natural spiritual energies flooded out towards the ground of the Dark Desolate Domain from the center of the swirls like volcano eruptions.

"Swoosh!"

Under the mad starry sky, a rainbow-like laser flashed in the darkness, which was caught up with and hit heavily by two faster lightness.

The rainbow-like laser came to a halt and revealed its true self, a dreadful demon beast that looked like a hybrid of a lion and a dragon.

It had a lion head, but its body was long and narrow which was covered by deep gold scales like the body of a dragon.

It had legs as strong as those of a lion and paws as sharp as those of a dragon. Silver blood could be found on the tip of the paws.

On two sides of its body grew two wings that looked like those on a bat. However, they were folded close to the body, indicating that they could only be used for sprinting but not flying.

The most attractive part of the demon beast was its caltrop-like dragon tail that was galvanizing in darkness like clusters of crystals condensed together.

A lion dragon, a hybrid of a liger demon beast, and a dragon demon beast!

And it was not just a common lion dragon. Judging from its bizarre shape, it must've been mutated by the intense spiritual energies somewhere in the Dark Desolate Domain.

Its capability was almost equal to that of a demon king!

However, the demon-king level mutant lion dragon was not in its best state.

It quickly rose up after it was knocked over. Roaring back to something in darkness behind, it accelerated and disappeared into the murky forest.

A moment later, more than twenty figures showed up where the mutant lion dragon just fell over.

They looked very similar to human beings, with distinguishable limbs and face, albeit not devoid of characteristics of beasts.

They were in a glorious panoply. Besides cold weapons such as swords and saber, they were also carrying heretical thermal weapons.

It was an infiltration squad from the demon clan!

A young demon, with a strong air of leadership, stood in the middle of the circle of demons. Few features of beasts could be found on his body. At first look, he looked just like a tall, handsome young man.

He had gold curly hair and gold eyes. Even his neatly-trimmed beard was completely gold, too. He was wearing bright gold battle armor decorated by crystals that formed the head of a roaring lion. His countenance was also as majestic as that of a lion.

A wicked, tongue-wagging demon walked out of the circle and crouched to the ground with four limbs. The tip of his nose was bouncing hard as he tried to smell something from the ground. A moment later, he found a blood spot.

"Young master, this mutant lion beast has been wounded and its blood is flowing out. It will be easier next time!

"We can definitely track it by its blood so that we can tame it and make it your subordinate!" the demon dog said in a high pitch.

The demon clan was created by human beings. Many of their training technique were actually based on the Cultivation arts of the human beings. Therefore, they spoke the human language, too.

"Very good!"

The voice of the 'young master' was hoarse, yet with a strange attractiveness. He observed, "I never expected that I would discover a demon-king level mutant lion dragon on this trip to the Heaven's Origin Sector. My influence will grow much stronger once I subdue it. You will all be rewarded according to your contribution when everything is done!

"Let's follow the mutant lion beast from a greater distance so that it won't come at us. It is in the demon-king level and far stronger than any of us. But as long as we stalk it, my two teachers here will find an opportunity to deal with it!"

Two invisible demons covered in mysterious black mist snorted in agreement.

Wild demon beasts, especially strong ones such as the mutant lion dragon, were proud animals to the bone and unwilling to listen to any commands easily.

To tame them, the best way was to beat them into a grievous state and let someone treat it, during which time manipulation shackles would be enforced to their brains.

Only with both stick and carrot, as well as the manipulation shackle, could a wild demon beast be tamed.

"Hurry! I want this mutant lion dragon sitting at my feet like a cat before dawn!"

The young master waved his hands. The demons vanished into the forest.

Chapter 252: Blood Hand and Night Owl

Chapter 252: Blood Hand and Night Owl

The next day at dawn, on the Thunderous Sound Mountain at the corner of the Dark Desolate Domain…

It was the most intimidating mountain in the southeast part of the Dark Desolate Domain. Shrouded by demonic plants, the world inside the mountain was gloomy and drab even if the purple sun was shining brightly outside.

Li Yao hid himself inside a clump of crimson bushes. He withdrew his spiritual energy as much as he could with the Soul Converging Technique. Not only did he smear a layer of mud on his crystal suit, he also wrapped it up with camouflage cloth with stealth rune arrays.

He had completely melted into the dark forest.

A red bird with sharp teeth stopped over his head, only to be tied up by a spider thread from the trunk hole nearby and dragged into the hole without a dying scream. The sound of cracking of bones came from inside the hole.

A thin scent of blood could be smelled.

Neither the predator nor the prey detected Li Yao's existence.

Li Yao was a bit irritated. These second-rate demon beasts were not the trophies that he was looking forward to.

Demon beasts around the anonymous lake had almost all been eradicated by him. Due to his desire for victory, Li Yao risked entering into the Thunderous Sound Mountain. But more than half a day had been gone and not even one valuable demon beast had come by.

Had he known it previously, he would've stayed in the plateau and gone hunting there.

"Come on, big fellows! Otherwise, I would have to be a rogue hunter."

A rogue hunter in the Thunderous Sound Mountain would be in much more peril than ambushing would.

Many predators were lurking in darkness waiting for the audacious preys to fall into their trap.

After careful consideration, Li Yao finally dropped the thought.

He was not strong enough for the task. Ambushing in the outskirts of the Thunderous Sound Mountain was already the best he could do. Besides, this place was still within the range of communication. He could call for the instructor if anything should happen.

But if he were deep into the Thunderous Sound Mountain, he would not be able to reach out to the instructors, and if he were surrounded by strong demon beasts, there would be no one that could save him.

Li Yao had always been a patient man. But after wasting more than an hour in the bush, he felt that he couldn't bear it any longer. The weather was muggier and muggier, too.

"BOOM! CRACK!"

Right then, a furious thunder boomed from high above.

Within a moment, countless thunders echoed with one another as if a bloody battle was going on in the sky.

Clouds rolling, purple lightning dancing, rain pouring.

The forest became a world of swelling water.

Many giant purple trees in the forest were reverberating with the thunder. Some even attracted the lightning toward them and sent them out from the branches, forming an intensely knotted electric net above the forest.

The trees were a special kind of demonic plants in the Dark Desolate Domain known as 'Thunder Echo Plant'. Naturally endowed with thunder attributes, they tended to attract thunder and lightning during a storm before forming an electric net above the forest and sending out thunder roars.

This was also how the Thunderous Sound Mountain got its name.

"Damn weather."

Li Yao frowned and cursed. He heard background noise in the communication channel, which had been jammed by the thunder.

Hesitating no more, Li Yao jumped out of the bush and decided to return to the plateau where he could still hunt down some low-level demon beasts under the protection of the instructors.

But the moment he stepped out, he detected surging spiritual waves like tides coming from deep down the forest.

Then, hundreds of demon beasts appeared from darkness and dashed towards him.

"What the hell?!"

Li Yao's heart skipped a beat.

The scents on the demon beasts were all very strong, indicating that many of them were high-level demon soldiers and some were even demon generals. But they were all fleeing in such a desperate hurry that there was not time for them to bother an intruder like Li Yao.

Li Yao's blood was freezing.

What kind of hunter could frighten hundreds of demon beasts like this?

Run!

Li Yao made the decision instantly.

However, before he was able to turn around, an iron, cold feeling pricked his heart. His pores were sealed unconsciously in response. Spiritual energy was flowing all over his body. Spiritual shield was brought to maximum.

"Shua!"

A rainbow laser flashed beside him. It was a hideous mutant lion dragon!

Somehow disturbed by his presence, the lion dragon waved its paws impatiently.

It was not meant to be an attack, but more like a human being who was waving his arms to drive away the flies.

"BOOM!"

Li Yao felt that a thunder had directly hit his spiritual shield and left many cracks on it through which demon power penetrated into his limbs and organs.

In a dull grunt, Li Yao was blown away. He tried to change his direction more than ten times while he was airborne, but none of it succeeded and he ended up crashing into a tall tree.

With a cracking sound, the tree was broken into two pieces and hurtled to the ground.

'What a formidable demon beast!' Li Yao screamed in his mind. Never had he been so shocked before.

Thankfully, he had triggered the spiritual shield in time and brought his defense to his best with the Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining technique.

Also, the mutant lion dragon wasn't aiming at him. All it did was wave its paws at him.

His body wasn't injured, but he was agitated from the bottom of his heart.

'Demon king level!

'This mutant lion dragon is definitely a king-level demon beast!

'Judging from the wounds and blood on its body, it seems to be on the run, too, which means that something stronger was chasing after it.'

The conclusion gave Li Yao goosebumps all over his body.

After a moment's rest, the mutant lion dragon dashed into darkness in rainbow laser again.

Li Yao didn't dare to stay. He rose up and fled in the opposite direction of the mutant lion dragon in the stealth mode.

Three minutes later.

"Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!"

The demon squad showed up where Li Yao and the mutant lion dragon had just stood.

After days and nights of hunting, all the demons looked weary.

The young master, who had gold hair and gold eyes, was apparently more irked than before.

"Wait!"

Before the demons continued on their hunting, the black mist enveloping one of the demons split and revealed a snake face. His thin pupils blinked as he croaked, "I seem to sense the scent of a human being."

The demon was solemn. He twisted to and fro in the place where the mutant lion dragon just stood, then he found the bush where Li Yao had hidden himself, and he traced back to the tree crushed by Li Yao eventually.

His snake eyes blinked. His bifurcated tongue rolled up and down as he mumbled something unclear. In the end, he opened his mouth and exhaled a green mist.

The mist flowed in the air and consolidated into a cluster of shadows, which was the blurred picture of a Bloody Blade

Battlesuit dancing and crushing into the tree.

"Not an expert. Peak of the Refinement Stage, at best. The crystal suit is the Bloody Blade Battlesuit from a hundred years ago," the demon said in relief.

The young master pondered for a while and said, "Following the mutant lion dragon, we've already reached the edge of the Dark Desolate Domain. Many low-level Cultivators have been training around here. This Refinement Stage Cultivator in Bloody Blade Battlesuit must be one of them, which means he has companions outside of the forest.

"If he escapes and informs them of the existence of our prey, it will be a nuisance.

"However, with the thunderstorm and chaotic spiritual energy fluctuations in the forest, we might lose the mutant lion dragon's tracks if we are delayed for a while.

"We've been hunting it for such a long time. There's no way that we're giving it up at the doorstep of victory.

"Blood Hand! Night Owl!"

Two demons stepped forward.

The demon on the left looked like a hybrid of a human and a wolf. There was crimson fur on his both hands, which seemed to be soaked in blood.

The demon on the right had dense feathers all over his body. He had two big eyes that were glittering brutally like two dim lights, but there were no pupils in the eyes.

The young master continued, "You are both low-level demon generals adept at jungle hunting. You should be more than enough to deal with the Cultivator, who, at best, is only at the peak of the Refinement Stage.

"Now, after you follow up and kill this ignorant Cultivator who doesn't know what he's doing, contact us through our secret technique. I'll tell you the rendezvous then.

"Remember, if you find other Cultivators, give up the hunt immediately and report to me.

"The rest of us will continue chasing the mutant lion dragon until we completely take control of it under the lead of my teachers."

"Yes, sir!"

Blood Hand and Night Owl nodded at the same time.

Night Owl, who had feathers all over his body, grinned hideously.

"What can a Refinement Stage Cultivator in a Bloody Blade Battlesuit from a hundred years ago do? We will not let him walk out of this forest alive. Before dark, he'll be ripped into pieces!"

Blood Hand added, "That's right. Rest assured while you continue with the hunt, young master. Maybe by the time we tear this Cultivator apart, you will have already tamed the mutant lion dragon. After that, with the increase of your power, we'll need to address you as 'prince'!"

These words were exactly what the young master had been hoping for. He beamed in satisfaction and waved his hands.

"Let's move out!"

The demons were divided into two teams.

Most of them followed the mutant lion dragon by tracing of its blood, whereas Blood Hand and Night Owl, the two demon generals best at jungle hunting, pursued Li Yao by whatever inconspicuous marks he had left behind.

Ten minutes later, Li Yao, who was rushing in the forest, was alerted of something behind him and noticed the two haunting 'tails'.

Chapter 253: Two Demon Generals? Die Now!

Chapter 253: Two Demon Generals? Die Now!

"Someone's following me!"

Li Yao bit his lips so hard that blood was flowing out.

The pain refreshed him and calmed him down.

"This is the edge of the Dark Desolate Domain. Neither a general-king level mutant lion dragon nor demons that are even stronger than it should appear in this place.

"The only reasonable explanation is that a powerful infiltration squad was hunting the mutant lion dragon, which led the squad to this place when the squad discovered me.

"They're afraid that I might expose them when I get out of the forest. So, some of them were sent out to kill me.

"But their main force must be still chasing the mutant lion dragon.

"In such a savage thunderstorm, a king-level demon beast such as the mutant lion dragon is not that easy to capture. It's not likely that they're giving up the hunting just for me."

"Therefore, my pursuers won't be numerous."

"Unfortunately, with the electric net formed by the Thunder Echo Wood, there's no way to fly in the sky. The communications have been jammed, too.

"At my current speed, it will take at least thirty minutes for me to get out of the forest, which is more than enough for them to catch up with me.

"Only by killing them can I avoid being killed."

There was coldness in Li Yao's eyes. He recalled the days when he was hunted by the gangsters in the magical equipment graveyard.

With death at his doorstep, he felt like his body was burning. Glancing around, he noticed a thorny bush and hid himself in it before covering it with camouflage cloth.

"Swoosh! Swoosh!"

One minute later, two figures flashed dozens of meters away from the bush and continued searching to the foot of the mountain.

The intense air of demon on their bodies alarmed Li Yao. Neither was the information displayed on the Demon Beast Detector very pleasing.

"Two demon generals? Good for you!"

Li Yao knew that the two pursuers wouldn't be delayed for long by his ploy. They must be experts in jungle hunting, and the only reason that they didn't discover him just now was because they thought he would try everything he can to get out of the mountain and didn't bother to check the place where his scent stopped.

But it wouldn't take long before they found out that he was hiding somewhere instead of running.

Li Yao was going to make best use of the time when they were stuck by their error.

Jumping out of the bush, he dashed in the direction where the two demon generals just came and went back into the depths of the mountain.

While he was rushing in the forest, he checked the magical equipment that he carried.

Thankfully, besides the crescent saber and the portable crystal railgun, he had brought a lot of miscellaneous escape magical equipment, in case there were any emergencies in the Thunderous Sound Mountain.

Moreover, out of the instinct of a lunatic bomber, he had also carried 50 Thunder Palms that were specially designed to work with crystal suits, as well as 10 Hellfire-Lightnings.

Ever since he killed that low-level demon general with a Hellfire-Lightning in the battle of Verdant Tarn City, Li Yao had developed a 'bad' habit. He couldn't enjoy his food or sleep tight at night without several Hellfire-Lightnings in his pocket during real battles.

"Come on, jerks. Let's do this."

Li Yao sneered. He scanned every plant in the forest looking for the perfect spot for an ambush while he was on the run.

Soon, he stopped at a place where there were more Thunder Echo Woods than any other place that he'd come by.

"Shua!"

A shivering Iron Anteater hiding in a tree hollow was dragged out.

This demon beast looked like a small-size boar with an extremely long nose. It lived on the Iron Ants in the tree holes and had an amazing speed.

"Puff!"

Li Yao pierced his saber into the bottom of the Iron Anteater.

The demon beast's long nose turned rigid and purple, and it started whining.

Li Yao took out a crystal box which used to be the container of the crystal railgun. He pressed it hard, and the shell of the crystal box was cracked. Then he tied the box to the back of the Iron Anteater.

Spurred by the pain from its bottom, the Iron Anteater fled deep into the forest the moment it was relieved to the ground, leaving a trace of blood and spiritual waves.

Li Yao glanced through trees, branches and bushes and drafted a deadly trap in his brain.

Ten minutes later, the two demon generals appeared from the darkness quietly.

They'd never expected that their prey would suddenly go backwards. However, there was no frustration in their eyes, but excitement, as if they had discovered an interesting toy.

Blood Hand sniffed. "He went to the left. I can sense the scent of blood vaguely, as well as some distant spiritual waves."

Night Owl blinked his dimly yellow eyes and shook his feathers. He remarked, "That can't be right. This human being, although weak, is very shrewd. He got away from our perception just now, and it doesn't make sense that he exposes himself so easily right now. The scent of blood is superfluous, too. He is in a crystal suit, why on earth would he be bleeding?"

Blood Hand nodded. He squinted and sniffed more carefully. Then he concluded, "It's not human blood."

Night Owl grinned frighteningly.

"That means this human being wanted to give us a wrong impression that he was fleeing into the forest in this direction. But he should be aware that the ruse wouldn't fool us long and we would catch up with him eventually.

"Therefore, it's quite possible that his true purpose is not to run away, but to set up traps on this route and kill us."

The two demon generals looked at each other and sped up to the direction where the Iran Anteater had fled.

Passing by a place where the Thunder Echo Woods were extremely dense, Blood Hand smelled something and twisted his body weirdly to the above of a Thunder Echo Wood. He roared, "This is the place!"

Night Owl screamed and came to a halt. He shook his arms, unleashing almost a hundred grey feathers from his body, which flew into the woods like bullets.

"BOOM!"

"BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!"

The twenty Thunder-Palms deployed in the woods were triggered by the feathers and exploded at the same time.

They melted into a giant fire ball and floated to the sky. The ball then was torn into pieces by the electric net over the forest.

At the same time, a scarlet figure dashed out of branches and ran away, only to be caught up with by the two demon generals who had been long prepared for his appearance.

It was exactly Li Yao!

Blood Hand howled horrifyingly. The red fur on his paws stood up like venomous iron needles. With a strong scent of demonic energy, he punched the back of the Bloody Blade Battlesuit hard.

The demonic energy, flowing through the needle-like furs, pierced Li Yao's spiritual shield and left deep traces on the battlesuit.

Night Owl shrieked, too. His dim eyes suddenly turned brighter than ever with a freezing coldness, which directly launched a soul attack penetrating through the crystal suit.

The prey in the Bloody Blade Battlesuit seemed to have been overwhelmed by terror from the soul attack and couldn't defend Blood Hand's attacks. In less than 10 seconds, the crystal suit was already on the verge of falling into pieces.

"Swoosh!"

The prey seemed to be too scared to fight anymore and started running away in desperation, only to leave his back wide open for the two demon generals.

Blood Hand and Night Owl both grinned and sprinted.

However, right before their paws were able to push into the back of the Bloody Blade Battlesuit, the ancient crystal suit accelerated and miraculously dodged the deadly attacks with a perfect small-scale movement.

Blood Hand, Night Owl and Li Yao landed simultaneously.

It was not until they reached the ground that the two demon generals discovered that they had fallen into a swamp.

The swamp had used to be a muddy area and only became a temporary swamp due to the pouring rain. It had the same appearance as the ground nearby. One could never tell that it was a swamp without careful examination.

And as it happened, their prey was outside of the swamp.

Such a small swamp was far from enough to trap two demon generals. The best thing it could do was to delay them for about a second.

But during the one second when they were stuck in the swamp—

"Ahhhhhh!"

Night Owl wailed and jumped out of the swamp up into the sky!

Blood Hand was slower than him. He didn't notice anything wrong until the volcano eruption in the swamp took place. His eyes were blinking in fear, but it was already too late.

"BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!"

This was Li Yao's real trap. He deployed thirty Thunder-Palms plus five Hellfire-Lightnings in the bottom of the swamp.

The ferocious spiritual energy surged in spasm and swallowed Blood Hand in a dazzling light ball.

The power of crystal bombs could be maximized in a swamp because of the limited space. Sturdy as Blood Hand may be, the bottom half of his body had been shattered and the upper half tossed away by the blast before falling to the ground. There was no indication of vital signs on him anymore.

Night Owl's legs were damaged, too.

But he had detected the danger faster and flown to the sky. Also, legs were not that important to him since he was a bird-type demon. He was ready to tear the sordid Refinement Stage Cultivator into pieces.

"Pa!

"Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa!"

Right then, countless flash bangs with blaze rune arrays on them exploded among the branches around Night Owl, illuminating the place as if it were a bright day.

Night Owl's big yellow eyes turned grey like light bulbs that just cracked.

"BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!"

The portable Shattered Star Bombarder on the Bloody Blade Battlesuit fired dozens of heat streams instantly.

Night Owl roared. Although he couldn't see anything, he dodged the heat streams flexibly like a ghost and moved higher and higher.

"Wicked human! Don't count on that crystal railgun of yours too much!

"Once my vision is restored, I will tear you apart! I will—"

Before he could finish his word—

"BOOM! CRACK!"

A lightning split the sky and thundered down. The Thunder Echo Woods reverberated and a brilliant electric net was formed.

Unconscious of his whereabouts, Night Owl stopped on a branch of the woods, which happened to be the center of the electric net.

Night Owl was electrocuted.

This was Li Yao's true purpose.

Use flash bangs to blind the demon general temporarily, fire the crystal railgun to disturb his senses of spiritual energy, then lure him to a higher place among the branches.

This way, even if he wasn't killed immediately, he would've been shocked by the electricity, and Li Yao would've seized the opportunity and performed the Thunderous Tornado Saber Art on him to cut him into pieces.

But Li Yao didn't need to act anymore since he'd died from electrocution instantly.

Chapter 254: Strong Desire to Survive

Chapter 254: Strong Desire to Survive

"Pa da!"

The fried carcass hit the ground and broke into pieces.

Li Yao walked to the dying wolf demon calmly.

The lower half of the wolf demon's body had been already shattered by the explosion in the swamp. He leaned the upper half of his body against a tree, shaking in great pain.

Never did he expect that two demon generals would be killed by a Refinement Stage Cultivator!

"You're dead for sure!

"Young Master Wang Ji won't let you go, wretched monkey!

"Young Master Wang Ji will kill you and all your companions after he tames the mutant lion dragon!"

Knowing that death was drawing near, the wolf demon declared in anguish.

Li Yao said nothing and stood ten meters away from the wolf demon. He fired the Shattered Star Bombarder nonstop, raining shells upon him.

"Shua!"

The fur on Blood Hand's body stood up. Together with a thin shield formed by the remaining half of his battle armor, he was able to hold back the first few attacks.

A moment later, the shield exploded. The cannonballs reached him unstoppably and blew him into the trunk. After dozens of strikes, the wolf demon was no more.

Li Yao found himself too tired to go on any longer. At first, he was on one knees. Then he leaned forward uncontrollably. He felt that his body did not belong to him anymore. There was no strength at all. Hundreds of crystal bombs seemed to have detonated in his brain, making him unable to think.

This battle was truly dangerous.

Although he'd successfully killed the two demon soldiers with a series of traps and power of thunder, he had paid a high price, too.

Attacks from demon generals were not that easy to defend. Demonic energy of the wolf demon's strikes at the beginning had permeated into his body and caused inner injuries.

Had his body not been strengthened by the Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining technique, which made his defense ability much higher than common Refinement Stage Cultivators, his bones and organs would've already been broken into pieces.

The soul attack launched by the bird demon was also a hundred times more dangerous than the soul attack by the large-eyed ape in the Devil Flood Dragon Island.

Had his soul not been cleansed by Ou Yezi, whose remaining strength was protecting his brain, he would've become mentally deficient!

Although he won the battle in the end, he felt awful. An unknown fire seemed to be burning inside his body, making his mouth dry and his head dizzy. Deep down his throat, blood was trying to flood out one wave after another.

"No. I can't stay here for long."

Li Yao activated the healing rune arrays inside the crystal suit. A gentle green light flowed all over his body. Then he felt a prick on his spine, through which a lot of medical liquid was injected into his body.

Like a long-expected rain after a drought, the medical liquid was absorbed by his cells greedily.

Li Yao waited patiently.

As much as he wanted to rush off immediately, he had to wait for the medicines to suppress his injuries so that his combat ability could be partially restored.

Otherwise, there would be no chance that he could walk out of the Thunderous Sound Mountain alive.

Countless strong demon beasts were waiting to rip apart his crystal suit and devour him.

This place had the remaining scent of two demon generals. Common demon beasts wouldn't dare to come close.

Ten minutes later, preliminary treatment was completed.

Li Yao's brain was clearer. He struggled to rise up and checked the status of his crystal suit.

Thankfully, since he had always kept the critical parts of the crystal suit in mind, the wolf demon only managed to destroy the plug-in modules. Key components of the crystal suit were not affected.

However, some ancillary magical equipment had malfunctioned due to the corrosion of demonic energy and the intense impact.

"Young Master Wang Ji? He sounds like a big shot from the demon clan. Leading an infiltration squad to hunt a demon-king level wild beast in the Heaven's Origin Sector, he must be really strong.

"I need to find an instructor as soon as possible. We may be able to intercept this infiltration squad."

Despite the sharp pain, Li Yao didn't dare to stay any longer and rushed to the outside of the forest in the healing mode.

Three hours later…

"Puff! Puff! Puff! Puff!"

Li Yao was breathing heavily after running for a long time. He felt his heart was going to burst out through the crystal suit at any time.

Shortly after he stood beside a Thunder Echo Wood and covered himself in camouflage with stealth rune arrays, a bunch of Inferno Fenrirs, whose tails were burning in purple flames, passed by and leaped into darkness with scary howls.

Li Yao knew it was not good.

He had lost the way.

With the compass rune array inside his crystal processor, he could get out of the forest as long as he stuck to south.

However, the direction that the rune array guided was completely wrong, maybe because of the spiritual energy chaos under the extreme weather, or maybe because it had been interfered by the demonic energy in the previous fight.

Thunderous Sound Mountain was not a single mountain. It was the collective name for the hundreds of mountains that were very close to each other in the area.

While Li Yao thought he was coming close to the foot of the mountain, he was, in fact, moving towards the deep inside of the mountain and ended up in another highland.

There was no way to turn back now. Many strong demon beasts in the Thunderous Sound Mountain had got their eyes on him.

Under the pursuit of the demon beasts, he had absolutely no chance to change his direction. After getting rid of seven or eight waves of demon beasts, he was completely lost and arrived at the center of the Thunderous Sound Mountain where barely any human being had ever set foot in.

"These demon beasts have been stimulated by my blood and gone mad. They won't let me go easily!"

After a two minutes rest, Li Yao started running desperately again.

His body was exhausted, but his head was clearer than ever, like a burning torch, although running of fuel, was brighter towards the end.

To avoid being followed by the demon beasts, he even took a risk by moving forward by leaping between the branches of the Thunder Echo Woods. The electric net was literally at his fingertips as he went on.

Right then—

"Ho!"

An earthshaking roar echoed on a peak far away, as if a thunder had brewed on the ground and hit the sky.

Thunder in the sky were eclipsed and went silent for over half a second.

Li Yao was so astounded that he almost fell off the branches. He scanned the source of the roar with his crystal camera immediately.

The place where he was at was in a relatively higher altitude. Therefore, he discovered without difficulty that on the top of the mountain over there, giant trees were falling and clusters of lights were colliding with earsplitting noises.

"It must be the infiltration squad of the demon clan led by Wang Ji and the mutant lion dragon."

Bitterness grasped him. He didn't expect them to be so close to himself.

A combat that involved demon-king level beasts was too intense for a Refinement Stage Cultivator such as himself to meddle in.

He only wanted to run away.

But he was in the middle of hundreds of mountains, all of which looked exactly the same in a long distance. It was still raining cats and dogs with thunders and lightning. There was no way to tell which direction was which direction.

There was nowhere to run even if he wanted to.

While he was hesitating about what to do next, he heard several wolf howls. Looking down, he found dozens of purple lanterns glimmering dimly in darkness.

"Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!"

Several Inferno Fenrirs climbed up the tree at an amazing speed.

Deep inside the forest, many other demon beasts also sensed the scent of his blood and were coming close.

Having no place to hide or run away to anymore, Li Yao felt that the brutality in his blood had been triggered. He drew his crescent saber out of the sheath and went for the wolf pack.

Right then, lightning struck the ground, illuminating the electric net over the Thunder Sound Woods. With the terror of wind and thunder, Li Yao performed Thunderous Tornado Saber Art at its maximum capacity. Dozens of saber flashes slashed at the Inferno Fenrir.

Wind blowing, thunder echoing, rain pouring, crescent saber crushing flesh and bones… composed a battle hymn of destruction that played for a long time in the forest.

Li Yao didn't know how many times he had waved his saber, nor did he know how many times the healing rune arrays had been activated, although the medical liquid was already running out.

He even lost track of time, like he was back to the day when he was trapped by the dust storms, when his soul was burning crazily and his saber art was advancing remarkably, and when he was determined that he could slash anything in front of him into pieces.

Suddenly, there was nothing in his surroundings anymore. He had killed all the demon beasts around him, leaving a bunch of scattered, dead bodies.

But not very far away, another batch of demon beasts were closing in fast.

Li Yao turned around and start running without hesitation.

Hundreds of demon beasts that were after him gathered into a furious tide, ready to drown him.

The distance between them was shorter and shorter. Li Yao could even smell the foul stink of many of the demon beasts.

His spiritual energy had been brought to maximum. If it continued to be consumed at such a crazy rate, he might be able to avoid the fate of ending up in the stomach of a demon beast, but his brain would surely be burned to ash due to being overloaded.

Li Yao had never felt so close to death before.

"Argh!"

A pure white leopard, with purple electric arcs between its paws, jumped at him and tumbled down the hill with him, only to be stabbed in the heart in the end.

Li Yao coughed. Blood swelled in Li Yao's throat, but he managed to force it back.

The blood was so sweet that it was almost bitter.

On the brink of death, for some reason, he thought of Ding Lingdang.

"I wonder what Sister Ling is doing right now. Training crazily, I suppose.

"I shouldn't have just left a selfie for her that day. There was so much more that I should've said but didn't.

"But, what should I say to her?"

The thought floated round in his mind for a while, but soon it was replaced by a strong desire to survive. Li Yao struggled to rise up and kicked the body of the leopard away. After a flash of saber, it was cut into two halves!

"The 'Vulture' is not going to be killed so easily!

"Whoever feels that he has lived long enough, be it the so-called Young Master Wang Ji or beasts like you, come on now!"

Right then, Li Yao noticed that a vague rainbow laser flashed in a hill and vanished into underground.

"Underground?"

Li Yao felt that he was onto something. He rushed to the place where the rainbow laser disappeared.

As he expected, there was an unobtrusive crevice on the back of a rock covered by green moss.

"Shua!"

Li Yao gritted his teeth and went into the crevice.

Chapter 255: The Soul Stealer and the Lion Dragon Demon

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The inside of the crevice was like a world of its own. It was a huge underground karst cave, full of winding passages and endless darkness; God only knows where they led to.

The cave was terribly cold, the water that was supposed to be dripping down the stalactites over his head was even frozen. In the surroundings, there were grayish vines that were squirming strangely, as if a den of snakes was dancing.

As soon as Li Yao drilled his way into the cave, he activated the stealth mode, thereby restricting his spiritual energy as much as possible. At the same time, he also covered himself up with a camouflage net and clung close to the cave walls, letting the vines wrapped around him.

BANG! BANG!

After a moment, from the entrance of the cave came the thunderous sounds of beasts ramming into the cave, closely followed by an obnoxious smell that was capable of driving someone crazy. Whereupon, over a hundred demon beasts, squeezed their way into the cave!

In the darkness, the hundred or so demon beasts' eyes were particularly bright and scary.

The demon beasts seemed to understand that Li Yao was at the end of the rope and couldn't escape. Therefore, they were in no hurry to catch their prey. They sharpened their claws and fangs as they searched the cave inch by inch. Their eyes were filled with a bit of ragging and playful intent.

Nevertheless, Li Yao remained completely still, his heart burning with anxiety. Just when the claws of an Inferno Wolf was about to come in contact with him, a disastrous bout of killing intent that could tear everything apart finally surged out from the depths of the cave before a raging rainbow gradually appeared in his peripheral vision.

The Mutant Lion Dragon took the stage once again!

Li Yao heaved a sigh of relief, but in the next moment, his heart once again started palpitating.

Under the siege of over a hundred demon beasts, he was doomed for sure. And now the reason he escaped to the underground was that he wanted to lure the third power, the Mutant Lion Dragon to disrupt the current scenario and strive for a slim chance of survival.

However, would the Mutant Lion Dragon really do as he wished and have a conflict with these demon beasts?

Perhaps, the Mutant Lion Dragon's strength with his tyrannical would instantly kill these demon beasts, which numbered over a hundred, and then crush him to death like a little worm.

'The wild demon beasts are extremely territorial, they will annihilate every intruder unless there is not too big of a gap between both sides' strength!

'And this Mutant Lion Dragon was seriously injured during the battle earlier. Its strength has decreased a lot. Otherwise, it would not have fled underground in a flurry!

'As long as the difference between the strength of both sides hasn't reached the point so that the situation can be turned around, the Mutant Dragon Lion may clash with the wild demon beasts!'

At this point, Li Yao was filled with anticipation.

Taking a cursory glance at the Mutant Lion Dragon, Li Yao discovered that the Mutant Lion Dragon was somewhat smaller than the time when he saw the Mutant Lion Dragon for the first time, its body was covered in bruises, wings riddled with thousands of holes, its bright and shiny tail was also a bit dimmer. It had no trace of a Demon King's majesty.

Furthermore, there was also an extremely weird and devilish Kris 1 nailed right at the center of its forehead. The Kris kept on squirming as if it was a living thing, as if it was a small snake that wanted to drill into the brain of the Mutant Lion Dragon.

The strength of the Mutant Lion Dragon seemed to have been sealed by this Kris. Every time the Kris twisted, the Mutant Lion Dragon would feel a sharp heart-wrenching pain so that the Mutant Lion Dragon could not help but twitch continuously.

"Soul Stealer?"

Li You clucked his tongue secretly. The shape of this Kris, as well as the peculiar aura emanating from it, was somewhat similar to an evil weapon mentioned in the Hundred Smelting Clan records called 'Soul Stealer'. Once it drilled into the Mutant Lion Dragon, it could quite possibly steal its soul, and thence, the Mutant Lion Dragon could only obediently follow the command of the Soul Stealer's master.

"There is also an expert refiner in the demon clan!"

Under the attack of the Soul Stealer, the Mutant Lion Dragon was a lot weaker than Li Yao had imagined.

The Mutant Lion Dragon and the group of over a hundred wild demon beasts discovered each other at the same time.

At first, the wild demon beasts were shocked; their instinct was to turn around and flee immediately.

However, the extremely weak, unimposing manner of the Mutant Lion Dragon once again made them greatly confused. Soon after, they immediately discovered the peculiarity after looking carefully.

The wild demon beasts glanced at each other, their eyes flickering with fierce gleams, as they silently communicated with each other and came to a tacit understanding.

The Mutant Lion Dragon's flesh had stronger demonic energy stored inside, then there was also the dragon blood, dragon marrow, demon core, all of which were incredibly rare heaven and earth treasures; far more precious and rare than the flesh of a Refinement Stage cultivator like Li Yao.

They weren't hunting for Li Yao so that they could elevate their strength by devouring Li Yao. No, their strength would improve by bare minimum only, it was just to vent their anger, that's all.

If they could drink the demon blood from the heart of Mutant Lion Dragon, or swallow the demon core, it would be greatly beneficial to them; just maybe, they could evolve as well.

In a flash, these wild demon beasts were halted between two choices, whether they should immediately retreat or put their lives on the line to launch an attack, try their luck.

ROAR!

While they were still making a decision, a colorful beam of light rushed into the horde of demon beasts before a claw exploded the brain of an Iron-Armored Mountain Pig, gauged its heart out and started chewing.

The Mutant Lion Dragon had taken the initiative to attack!

One could even say that these wild demon beasts had run out of luck. The Mutant Lion Dragon had been hunted by an infiltration squad of demon clan lead by Young Master Wang Ji for days and nights continuously. And as such, had amassed a lot of anger in its belly. At this time, the Mutant Lion Dragon was tyrannical to the extreme.

Furthermore, it had suffered grievous injuries, its strength had regressed, not to mention, the Soul Stealer had drilled into its forehead as well, sealing half of its power and corroding its soul; it was hurting so much that it hardly wished to live anymore.

Then, the wild demon beasts had simply delivered themselves into its jaws for it to have a delicious meal. As long as it could devour them one after another, some of its strength could be restored, allowing it to continue escaping or even launch a counterattack.

After all, the experts of the demon clan infiltration squad had also been injured by it. Their condition was no better than its own.

ROAR!

AOOOO!

HISS!

The wild demon beasts had gone mad completely!

All of them could see that the Mutant Lion Dragon wasn't planning on letting them off. Although the Mutant Lion Dragon was displaying its might, it was only strong from outside, that's all!

If they retreated, it would pick them off one by one!

However, they just might be able to acquire the demon blood and demon core if they fought!

Just as this thought flashed in wild demon beasts' mind who were born just for fighting, their beast blood started to seethe just as if a raging fire had been lit in their bodies as they rushed forward!

TEAR!

A centipede that was thicker than a python was torn to pieces under the Mutant Lion Dragon's claw before the centipede was ruthlessly thrown to the cave wall.

Nonetheless, just before it succumbed to death, the centipede sprayed a mass of yellow-brown mist that covered the eyes of the Mutant Lion Dragon.

CRACK!

A giant bear that was as majestic as a small hill and had its white fur at its chest form a ghost face diagram was ruthlessly hit by the Mutant Lion Dragon, breaking its bones into pieces.

But the giant bear's paw also heavily landed upon the ears of Mutant Lion Dragon, bursting forth with a thunderous bang, so loud that Li Yao who was hiding not too far away trembled with fear, and a buzzing noise rang in his ear.

Li Yao had completely covered himself with a camouflage net; as the saying goes, something is better than nothing. However, whether it was Mutant Lion Beast or the wild demon beasts, if they wholeheartedly searched for him, he would be discovered for sure.

However, both sides were engrossed in a bloody battle. All they could think of consuming the flesh and blood of opposite side, where did they have the time to take care of a Refinement Stage cultivator shrimp like Li Yao?

Li Yao, with light steps and softest movements of his hands, pushed the vines apart and made his way towards the cave entrance, sticking close to the walls.

As Li Yao raised his head to look, he secretly groaned.

Originally, a few wild demon beasts were worried that he would escape, therefore, they had blocked the cave entrance tightly.

Li Yao was helpless; all he could do was obediently curl up in a corner of the cave.

While he was pulling back, the battle had taken a strange turn.

The Mutant Lion Dragon and the wild demon beasts were surprisingly well-matched; both sides had sustained great loses!

In the blink of an eye, half of the wild demon beasts had actually been massacred by the Mutant Lion Dragon.

However, the demonic energy circling around the Mutant Lion Dragon also appeared to be dwindling, as if it was being squashed by a mighty storm.

The Mutant Lion Dragon was covered in bruises, bleeding from numerous wounds. A lot of wounds were also being corroded by poison which continued to seep into its body.

The remaining wild demon beasts became even crazier; they lunged towards the Mutant Lion Dragon without an ounce of fear of death, only trying to tear off a chunk of Mutant Lion Dragon's flesh.

'The strength of Mutant Lion Dragon has already fallen to lower than a middle-rank Demon General, and continues to fall at that!

'I've still got a chance!' shouted Li Yao in his heart as he carefully observed the weak points of Mutant Lion Dragon, while quietly recalling the saber technique cast by the Golden Core powerhouse, Long Wenhui in his brain.

He only had one chance, and he only had one card left as well. He must grasp the opportunity!

Eventually…

The Mutant Lion Dragon had also caught up with the last remaining Inferno Fenrir and was just about to tear it to death.

The Mutant Lion Dragon's strength had also fallen to unprecedented weakness, leaving it only at the level of a low-rank Demon General.

Whereas more than half of the Kris had penetrated its forehead as well, leaving only a bit of the handle outside. At first glance, it looked like a fiendish red dot.

The Mutant Lion Dragon's strength, stamina, perception, demonic power, all fell to rock bottom.

Li Yao took a deep breath as his brain cell activity jumped to 180%!

230%!

280%!

331%!

Super perceptive state, activated!

In the blink of an eye, the Bloody Blade Battlesuit was adorned with a crimson cloak, emitting a dazzling bloody brilliance.

Immediately after, Li Yao jumped out from the camouflage net and charged at the extreme limit of his speed. Every part of the crystal suit was making crackling sounds as if the suit was under a tremendous strain and could explode at any minute.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

Six bloody beams of light shot out of the crystal railgun, flying straight towards the vital points of the Mutant Lion Dragon. At the same time, the saber cut through the air!

Immediately after, a white fog silently bloomed in the cave. After a brief moment, the sound of saber cutting through the air rang out!

This strike had surprisingly transcended the speed of sound!

Even though the Mutant Lion Dragon's strength had fallen to the level of a low-rank Demon General, the crystal railgun was unable to make the Mutant Lion Dragon pay heed to it. However, plunging towards the left side instinctively, the Mutant Lion Dragon landed right where Li Yao wanted; evidently, Li Yao had long calculated the position and angle accurately!

The saber strike which had been tearing through the air, thrust straight towards the heart of the Mutant Lion Dragon!

The entire scene felt as if the Mutant Lion Dragon was ruthlessly charging straight towards Li Yao's piercing saber which had broken through the sound barrier!

PUFF!

The saber pierced right into Mutant Lion Dragon, tearing its heart directly!

The Mutant Lion Dragon's eyes went wide. Just as it wanted to launch an attack, the Soul Stealer on its forehead drilled into its brain completely with a "whoosh".

In the blink of an eye, the Mutant Lion Dragon was struck with a chill; standing completely still, transfixed.

Its soul was in a fierce struggle with the Soul Stealer for the control of its body.

Taking advantage of this opportunity, Li Yao pulled the saber out and back off.

After a moment, the Mutant Lion Dragon burst into howling in anger as it waved its claws madly, setting off winds that swept Li Yao before Li Yao was ruthlessly smashed into the cave wall.

Unfortunately, it was seriously injured; its strength had fallen, the wind was already like an arrow at the end of its flight.

Even then, this strike made Li Yao vomit blood and cracked his sternum, but it wasn't fatal.

The Mutant Lion Dragon was like a drunk dancing, it wobbled in the cave for a few steps before finally falling to the ground.

The rainbow-like gloss in its eyes dimmed gradually before they turn completely gray.

"I killed a King-level demon?"

Li Yao felt dream-like euphoria.

First, the Mutant Lion Dragon had been seriously injured by the demon clan infiltration squad and its strength had regressed to the level of a Demon General.

Then it fought a bloody battle with over a hundred wild demon beasts, as a result of which, its body was laden with wounds, losing a lot of blood quickly, and its strength fell once again.

Furthermore, half of its demonic power was being used to deal with the Soul Stealer nailed to its forehead. Even before its death, it was struggling with the Soul Stealer to gain control of its body, and as such, was unable to complete its final attack.

Only due to various coincidences could Li Yao get off so easily even before meeting Young Master Wang Ji.

"I wonder when Young Master Wang Ji discovers that the King-level great demon he so anxiously wanted to tame had been killed by an insignificant Refinement Stage cultivator and all of this happened because of his own plans, won't he go crazy?"

Li Yao pursed his lips as a smile crept across his lips.

Li Yao wasn't some broad-minded Buddhist practitioner. Since that Young Master Wang Ji wanted his little life, he would not act all polite for sure; either Li Yao would die or Wang Ji would die, there was no other way!

"Killing the Mutant Lion Dragon was the first step, now I have to escape from the hands of Young Master Wang Ji's infiltration squad!"

Chapter 256: Hidden Dragon Bombards the Sky

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Li Yao sat down and pondered calmly. Now that the infiltration squad led by young master Wang Ji had beaten a king-level demon beast into such serious injuries, it was clear that the squad had a king-level expert, too. Maybe there was more than one of them.

With himself heavily wounded and his crystal suit greatly damaged, there was no way that he could get rid of Wang Ji's squad.

The Shattered Star Bombarder, after being fired hundreds of times, had used up all its spiritual energy. Besides a few smoke grenades and flash bangs, the only thing he had left were five Hellfire-Lightnings.

Hellfire-Lightnings were powerful, but they were far from enough to deal with middle-level demon generals or above. In front of a demon king, they would be as useless as firecrackers that children play with.

"What do I do?"

Li Yao glanced through every corner of the underground cave. Countless thoughts popped up in his head.

When his eyesight moved from the dead body of the mutant lion dragon to the darkness in the end of the cave, he suddenly came up with a risky plan.

Holding back the sharp pain, Li Yao jumped over to the body and took out a dagger from a pocket on his right leg, which was for the use of dissecting bodies and retrieving materials from them.

The most precious part inside a demon king's body was the demon core.

Demon core, just like the golden core in the Core Formation Stage Cultivators, contained the essence of the demon king's decades and even hundreds of years of Cultivation. It was invaluable.

Besides the demon core, as a descendant of dragon-type demon beasts, the mutant lion dragon had forbidden scales 1 in the back of its neck.

The forbidden scale was both pliable and tough. When it was used to carve rune arrays on, the performance of the rune arrays would be greatly enhanced. It was a perfect material for refining shields or plates, too.

The blood in the heart of the mutant lion dragon was the essence of its blood. It would take years of time before the lion dragon could form one drop of such blood.

One drop of such blood was the perfect nourishment for low-level Cultivators. Sometimes it could help them to overcome their barrier and advance their level immediately.

Li Yao waved his dagger and started working on the abdomen of the dead body without hesitation.

He had butchered countless demon beasts over the past month and gained much experience in retrieving useful materials from them. After searching for a while, he cut off a fist-size, grey stone from the end of the spine of the mutant lion dragon.

At first look, it looked like any other stones. But when Li Yao tried to spread his spiritual threads into the stone, he felt demonic energy as enormous as ocean inside it.

This was the demon core.

There was hesitation in Li Yao's face for a while, which was replaced by determination a moment later.

Invaluable as the demon core may be, his own life was much more precious!

He got out of the Bloody Blade Battlesuit. Then, he took out the five remaining Hellfire-Lightnings and three flash bangs. After that, he tore the Shattered Star Bombarder off his crystal suit. In the end, his hands swung up and down and built a piece of strange magical equipment with the demon core of the mutant lion dragon at the center, the five Hellfire-Lightnings on the periphery, and the three flashbangs as triggers.

Cold sweat was dripping down Li Yao's forehead. He put his self-made, strange magical equipment aside in the most gentle way possible.

Then, he fumbled along the spine of the mutant lion dragon with his dagger and found three forbidden scales which he chopped off immediately.

The heart of the demon beast was pulled out in the same way. He squeezed the heart with the secret technique of the Hundred Smelting Clan. Eight bright gold drops of blood flowed out from the deep inside of the heart and spun around the tip of the dagger.

Turning the dagger, Li Yao dropped the blood into a bottle that he had prepared.

He got in the crystal suit after storing the forbidden scales and the blood. Then, he expanded the incision on the abdomen of the mutant lion dragon, through which he stuffed the strange magical equipment inside its stomach while holding his breath. Later, he closed the incision and covered the mutant lion dragon with a few other dead bodies.

He was exhausted when everything was done, but it was not time to rest yet.

Biting the tip of his tongue hard, Li Yao walked towards the inside of the cave.

The cave was quite spacious. Deep crevices that led to who knows where were all over the place.

After more than ten turns, Li Yao finally reached the end of the cave.

There was no path in front of him anymore, but a small pond.

Li Yao jumped into the pond and waited in patience while staring at the star-like brightness over his head.

…

Almost at exactly the same moment when he jumped into the pond, the infiltration squad, which had been chasing the mutant lion dragon, appeared outside of the cave.

After the brutal battles, especially the desperate strikes from the mutant lion dragon when it sensed that there was nowhere to run, the squad was in a much poorer state than previously. Every demon had deep-to-bone wounds on them.

The two mysterious demons covered in black mist now had to reveal themselves due to lack of demonic energy.

The infiltration squad consisted of more than twenty demon generals and two demon kings, which could almost be called a splendid team.

However, their purpose was not to remove the mutant lion dragon, but to tame it. Therefore, they were not able to use their deadly moves on the demon beast for fear that it might be killed.

In comparison, the mutant lion dragon didn't have such concerns. It resorted to all the brutal attacks it could when it went mad.

Therefore, although the infiltration was on the winning side, they paid high price.

Two demon generals had been torn apart by the mutant lion dragon. The two demon kings, who had been leading the charge, were seriously wounded and had fallen to the demon-general level temporarily.

However, the mutant lion dragon was much more wounded than they were, which had also been hit by the Soul Stealer.

It was a rat in the hole now and ready to be captured at any moment.

Young Master Wang Ji had never felt happier.

He couldn't care less about the two demon kings' injuries, because they were not his subordinates but his father's.

They were here only because his father asked them to help him in the mission, and they had been spying on him.

Once tamed and recruited, the mutant lion dragon would be his loyal war slave driven by his secret art.

"As an ignorant wild demon beast, it was already able to injure two demon kings by its combat instinct.

"After I tame it and teach it the methods of cultivation, maybe he will be able to advance into a middle-level demon king or even a high-level demon king.

"With a high-level demon king as my subordinate, I will be destined to beat all the other rivals and win the 'prince' title!"

The competition in the Blood Demon Sector was extremely fierce. Despite the royal blood in his veins, he would have to compete with his brothers to get the 'prince' title in order to become the ruler one day.

Adventure to the Heaven's Origin Sector was a form of competition, too. Whoever brought the most valuable trophies back would be able to command thousands of strong demons.

The losers, on the other hand, would be more than miserable.

Wang Ji had already started picturing how he would torment his brothers who had been holding grudge against him after he returned to the Blood Demon Sector and assumed the title of prince with the mutant lion dragon.

Right then, an intense smell of blood found its way into Wang Ji's nose, who was immediately alarmed.

Beside him, the snake demon, who had been heavily wounded, screamed, "Not good. The Soul Stealer is not responding."

Wang Ji roared and cast his gold spear to the entrance of the underground cave in a yellow light, which blew the stone blocking the entrance into pieces.

"Get inside and check it out!"

Wang Ji's voice sounded like that of a crazy man.

The demons crowded in, only to be shocked by the bloody scene before them.

When they saw the breathless mutant lion dragon lying in the middle of the cave, they felt that a bucket of cold water had been tossed upon their head.

The result of days of hunting at tremendous risk was that the mutant lion dragon died together with a bunch of wild demon beasts?

Every muscle on Wang Ji's face was shivering in anger. His gold hair had exploded into burning fire. There seemed to be two crystal bombs in his hands that were going to burst out at any time.

"It's not that simple. I sensed the scent of crystal railgun's firing. Some of the heat stream from it are still wandering in this place," the snake demon squinted and said coldly.

"The Refinement Stage worm!"

Wang Ji was grinding his teeth, "There's been no news from Blood Hand and Night Owl. They must've been killed by this worm. Then he came to this place by accident and wrecked my excellent plan! Ba Zan, please use your secret art to find where this worm is. I'm going to cut him to pieces!"

"I can in five minutes."

The snake demon explained, "I've used the secret art multiple times today, which consumed too much of my energy. Now that I've fallen into the level of demon general, I can't use it as easily as before. I need five minutes of preparation."

"Alright. Thanks for your trouble."

Wang Ji's face was gloomy. Then something occurred to him and he exclaimed, "Not good. The worm must've stolen the demon core, the forbidden scale and the blood in its heart. Go and check it out!"

Three demons rushed to the mutant lion dragon and pulled the dead bodies above it aside, which revealed the incision on the abdomen of the beast.

One of the demons split the incision on one of his knees.

All the rest demons, including Wang Ji and the two heavily wounded demon kings, drew near to get a closer look at what had been left inside.

Right then—

The two demon kings felt a strong sense of danger. They screamed and fled to the entrance of the cave in the fastest way they could.

For a moment, Wang Ji seemed to have smelled the scent of death, too. His reactions were slower than the two demon kings, but the gold armor on his body shined brightly and released a shadow in the form of a roaring lion out of his chest.

The rest of the demons didn't know what was coming at all.

The magical equipment inside the mutant lion dragon's stomach had been triggered!

Generally speaking, the demon core was an inert substance. Although it contained huge amount of demonic energy, its state was very stable, unless its master decided to bombard it with the soul. After all, demon beasts, unintelligent as they may be, wouldn't put a bomb that was likely to explode at any time inside their stomach.

Therefore, Li Yao chose to set off the demon core with five Hellfire-Lightnings!

Guided by the magical equipment that he built up with the components of the Shattered Star Bombarder, more than ninety percent of the blast from the explosion of the Hellfire-Lightnings was transmitted to the demon core.

Like an extraordinary detonator, the Hellfire-Lightnings activated a chain reaction inside the demon core and unleashed an unstoppable, cataclysmic outbreak of demonic energy.

Chapter 257: Super Pressure, Brand New Self!

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"BOOM!"

A ball of lightning in seven colors swelled out of the cave and expanded crazily like a newborn sun. Its blast pushed forward, turning trees and flowers on its way into pure ash. An orange and red mushroom cloud rose up from the place of explosion.

The cloudy sky was ripped a giant hole by the burst of the demonic energy, exposing the stars that were hiding behind the clouds.

An explosion of the demon core was equal to the self-destruction of a demon king or a Core Formation Stage Cultivator. It was dreadful!

When the ball of lightning was on a rampage, three figures rushed out like three drowning rats, only to be blown away almost a hundred meters.

They were exactly Young Master Wang Ji and the two demon kings.

Other than them, the rest of the demons had all been killed on the spot!

The two demon kings had suffered a lot of injuries in the previous battles. With the earthshaking blast of the demon core explosion, new wounds had been added to their body.

Their reactions and senses had fallen to rock bottom, and they were shouting in anger and anxiety.

As for the young master Wang Ji, the gold armor on him absorbed most of the blast and was broken into pieces, but his body, on the other hand, was not the least affected.

In Wang Ji's face, there was...

Bewilderment! Fury! Insanity!

He never expected that a Refinement Stage Cultivator, which was nothing but a worm in his eyes, would have so many tricks!

Not only did the worm get away from two demon generals' hunting, he also managed to set off the demon core before burying it inside the stomach of the mutant lion dragon insidiously!

Wang Ji felt that his heart was bleeding.

He could do without the mutant lion dragon. But the twenty demons were all his loyal subjects that he had gone through a terrible amount of trouble to recruit. He was counting on them to fight for the position of prince.

Now, all of them were gone. What did he have to compete with his atrocious brothers?

In the Heaven's Origin Sector, the most common practice to deal with losers in a game of thrones was to let them invade heavily-guarded human towns leading a bunch of black-blood and bronze-blood demons.

The only outcome was, no doubt, death!

"I'm going to cut you into pieces! I'm going to find out who you are and cut you into pieces, one piece after another!"

In rage, Wang Ji didn't forget who was guilty of all this.

But neither did he know that Li Yao was so bold to hide in the deep underground, near the catastrophic bomb he set up himself, instead of running away.

"We can't stay here any longer. Let's go now!"

The two demon kings were both in bad temper. The snake demon said, "Our levels have all hit rock bottom now. Even several Cultivators at the peak of the Refinement Stage will be enough the kill the three of us. Let's head back to the Blood Demon Sector now!"

"Wang Ji!"

The other demon king, who looked like a giant meat ball with green fur, was furious too. He snapped at Wang Ji, "We're very disappointed at your performance in your quest this time. You didn't show the slightest hint of leadership. You allowed more than twenty demons to be fooled by a Refinement Stage worm! When we return to the Blood Demon Sector, we shall report exactly what has happened to the master. A great war of the two Sectors is coming soon. Your performance proved that you're unqualified for the position of prince. When the war comes, you'll lead the charge in the van!"

Wang Ji was silent. There was no telling what his mood was. After a moment, he said in regret, "Well said, my teachers. But right now, let's figure out how to get out of the Heaven's Origin Sector first. Our teleportation rune array is hundreds of kilometers away. We need to plan our route carefully to avoid the human hunters."

The green-fur demon snorted. He turned around and discussed with the snake demon.

A moment later, both of them smelled a weird fragrance. Their head, although a bit dizzy, sensed an alert that something even more dangerous than the previous explosion was coming,

"Not good. We've been poisoned!"

Before the two demon kings were able to react, a bloody battle spear pierced through the green-fur demon's chest!

"Shua!"

The snake demon retreated fast. His tail flipped up and shielded his chest, only to be chopped off within a moment by a shadow attack.

"Wang Ji, how dare you!"

The two demon kings were so shocked that their voices had changed.

Wang Ji laughed madly, his gold hair dancing in the air.

"With everything that's happened, what's there to be scared of?

"If I walk back with you and let you tell the truth, I'll lose the opportunity to be the prince forever. When the war of the two sectors breaks out, I'll be the cannon fodder leading the invasion!

"But now, your strength has been greatly undermined. I'm far stronger than either of you now.

"After I kill you and absorb your demon cores, I'll find a place in the Blood Demon Sector to digest them, then I'll tell my father that we come across a hunting team of five Core Formation Stage Cultivators and that you were killed by them despite your valor. Isn't it much better than going home right now?

"What, you want to self-destruct? You can't! You had already fallen to the level of demon general before you were poisoned. There's no way that you can detonate your demon core now!

"Now, behave and let me absorb you, old fellas!"

The two heavily-wounded demons were almost choked. They looked at each other and ran to two opposite directions of the forest.

"Want to run away? Not so fast!"

In a hideous smile, Wang Ji looked back at the half-collapsed cave grimly. Gritting his teeth, Wang Ji swore, "Worm, you can't get away, either. I'll find you and cut you into pieces one day!"

…

Deep underground.

Li Yao was not aware that infighting was taking place a hundred meter above his head, because he was in peril himself.

The explosion of the demon core was so powerful that when it reached Li Yao's shelter after countless turns, it was still rushing at him like a raging tide or a furious demon!

The pond that Li Yao had been hiding in was boiling.

He condensed whatever left of the spiritual energy in the Bloody Blade Battlesuit into a shield above his head, and he covered his face with the forbidden scales of the mutant lion dragon.

Still, it didn't help!

In a moment, his skin dehisced and blood was streaming all over his body.

"If it goes on like this, I'll be dead for sure in half a minute!"

The current situation was within Li Yao's expectation. Only by hiding in this dead-for-sure place could he get away from the search of the infiltration squad.

"Pa!"

Li Yao opened the bottle that contained the blood in the heart of the lion dragon and drank all of it.

The blood in the heart of the demon beasts, despite the intensive spiritual energy, was not readily drinkable, because it contained a lot of impurities as well as demonic energy. One could only drink it carefully after multiple refining procedures.

If low-level Cultivators were to drink it without refining, they would either be blown into pieces because of the overwhelming power, or turn into a bloodthirsty killer because of the mental corruption.

Li Yao had no time to bother about any of that now. The blood of the mutant lion dragon was all he had to defend himself against the bulldozing of the demon core explosion now.

The blood slipped into his mouth. He felt he had drunk six hot coals, which was burning their way from his throat to his stomach where they exploded.

A string of demonic energy full of desire for killing and destruction flowed along his spine towards his brain.

"Art of the Swallowing Whale, activate!"

Li Yao almost grinded his teeth into pieces. With the Art of the Swallowing brought to maximum, his stomach turned into a steel millstone that squashed, disintegrated, and absorbed the blood of the lion dragon.

Inside his brain, the tree of memories left by Ou Yezi was glowing in brilliance and purged all the intrusive demonic energy.

On the surface of his body, his bones, strengthened by the Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining technique, was trying to withhold the magnificent blast.

Stomach!

Brain!

Body!

Li Yao was engaged in three battlefields simultaneously, which were equally dangerous. If he was defeated in any of them, this dark cave would be the place where his life ended.

In dizziness, Li Yao seemed to have returned to the dust storm where he was slashing his way forward among thunder and lightning.

His soul calmed down. With the sharp edge that once slayed a tornado, it roared more astoundingly than any thunders ever did.

After he didn't know how long, everything became peaceful again.

Li Yao came back to himself from a lengthy nightmare and found that the pond had already evaporated. The only thing left was a clump of stinky mud on the bottom of the pond.

His body's state… couldn't have been better!

"The blood from the heart of the mutant lion dragon has been fully absorbed by me.

"To defend myself against the explosion, I have been performing the Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining technique all the time, which had brought my body sturdiness to a whole new level!

"And my Cultivation level…"

Li Yao felt that there was inexhaustible spiritual energy inside his body flowing through his veins and arteries.

He triggered a thought. Spiritual energy popped out from his pores and consolidated into two dark gold wings around his body.

Soaring Into Heaven in One Leap 1 , his Soul Igniting Law, was enlightened by the imposing vibe when the king of eagles flew freely in the vast sky. Therefore, the presence of his spiritual energy was also in the form of wings.

Compared with before, the spiritual wings had added the majesty of the lion dragon. There was even a vague rainbow in the periphery of the wings, too.

Li Yao focused all his attention and started burning his soul. The spiritual wings were brighter and brighter, illuminating the dark cave as if it were in broad daylight.

"Such dominance! Such brightness!

"I advanced four levels to the 11th level of the Refinement Stage while my life was in peril. How could it be?

"I understand now! This is the end of the cave. When the blast of the explosion swallowed me, it pushed the blood of the lion dragon, which had nowhere to run, into my own flesh and blood like a pressure cooker.

"Common Cultivators can't absorb the entire Heavenly Material and Earthly Treasure even if they find one. The best they can do will be sixty or seventy percent, which is decided by their body's limit.

"However, I managed to absorb a hundred percent of the blood of the lion dragon. Not only did it help me reach the 11th level of the Refinement Stage, my future training will benefit a lot from it, too!" Li Yao yelled in great satisfaction and happiness.

The 11th level meant that he belonged to the high level of the Refinement Stage now, which was completely different from the levels equal to or below the 10th level.

Many Cultivators had spent their entire lives circling around in the middle level of the Refinement Stage and couldn't break through the barrier to a higher altitude, however thin the barrier seemed to be.

With the capability of the high-level of the Refinement Stage and the enhancement of a well-chosen crystal suit, he could fight several generals face to face without resorting to traps now.

Chapter 258: Home with Windfalls

Chapter 258: Home with Windfalls

The Bloody Blade Battlesuit was completely ruined. Its crystal processor had lost most of its functions, but the time module was working, which showed that a day and a night had passed.

"The infiltration squad must've left by now."

Li Yao pulled the crystal processor of the Bloody Blade Battlesuit out and packed it up with the three forbidden scales in what was left of his clothes. He picked up his crescent saber and scrambled out.

Very soon, he came across fallen rocks that blocked his way.

After he advanced to the 11th level of the Refinement Stage, Li Yao's senses became much more acute than before. He unleashed hundreds of spiritual threads which found their way into the crevices of the rocks. The feedback indicated that the blockage was not thick and it was empty outside without any sign of the demons.

Li Yao pressed both of his hands against the rocks. Taking a deep breath, Li Yao jerked and pushed them. It looked like a spiritual eagle with lion paws and dragon tail flew out of his body, which razed everything in its way. An corridor was immediately created.

"This is the strength of the high level of the Refinement Stage? Nice!"

Li Yao jumped out of the dust and reached the center of the cave.

"The power of the explosion is indeed formidable."

Watching the messed-up cave that was beyond all recognition, Li Yao was startled.

There was an intense scent of blood in the air. The demons had all been blown into pieces and melted into rocks. Many of them were deprived of their pretension, revealing their true selves which were ghastly demon beasts.

"So many valuable trophies!"

Li Yao's heart was beating fast. There was greed in his eyes.

Among the remnants of the demon beasts, he didn't sense the existence of the demon kings, neither did he know whether or not the young master, Wang Ji, had been killed.

But why did they leave the bodies of their companions to rot in open air instead of burying them?

They were demon generals from the Blood Demon Sector, elite warriors of the demon civilization. Their bones, essence, and scales were of much higher quality than those of the wild demon beasts. Some of them even carried magical equipment of the Blood Demon Sector, which, although mostly damaged, was still very valuable in Li Yao's eyes.

"Huh?"

Li Yao's eyebrows twisted a bit, because he felt an eccentric scent from under the piles of rocks. He dug down and found a snake-shape dagger with crooked runes that looked like a distorted ghost face, which was blood-freezing at first glance.

"A Soul Stealer!"

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. He knew that something must've happened to the infiltration squad, otherwise there was no way that they would abandon magical equipment as precious as a Soul Stealer.

The Soul Stealer had been covered by a layer of dust due to the explosion. There were several cracks on it from which black smoke was popping up.

However, Li Yao didn't dare to underestimate it. He bit the tip of his tongue and spit the blood out into a mist. Waving his right hand through the mist in a particular posture, he guided the blood mist into the Soul Stealer.

A crimson light dashed from his fingers to the Soul Stealer.

What he had just performed was the unique probe technique of the Hundred Smelting Clan for taking over magical equipment.

For evil magical equipment such as the Soul Stealer, it was possible that its master had set security constraints on it. If one touched it without preparation, they might be devoured by the magical equipment. It would be best to run a test first.

But there was nothing abnormal about the crimson light after it flowed around the Soul Stealer for an entire circle; there was not even the slightest reaction of spiritual energy.

"It means that the former master of the Soul Stealer has died. It is currently unowned.

"Weird. The master of the Soul Stealer can only be either Wang Ji or the demon kings. None of them are likely to have been killed by the blast."

Li Yao put the Soul Stealer into his pocket and decided to study how to refine it after he returned.

Turning back, he found it troublesome to deal with the twenty demon bodies.

"There are so many precious items here. How can I take them all?"

After pondering for a while, he decided to check the situation outside the cave first. Maybe he could knit some ropes with the fiber from the demonic plants and weave a large baggage with beast hide.

His loading capability was amazing anyway. If he couldn't take all of them, he could always pick out the more precious ones.

Li Yao crawled out of the cave carefully.

It was a peaceful night outside with a bright moon and few stars, as if the thunderstorm yesterday were just a nightmare.

The time of rendezvous had long passed. It was possible that Mao Feng and the other instructors had started searching. But since he was deep inside the Thunder Sound Mountain, the spiritual signals were blocked by the mountains.

Li Yao tried a few times. There was nothing but background noise in the communication channel. He still couldn't contact the outside world.

Right then, he smelled a thin scent of demonic energy, which caused goose flesh all over his body.

After searching carefully for 10 minutes, he found a snake tail at the turn of a stream.

"It's just a small tail, and it already contained so much demonic energy. Maybe it belonged to a king-level demon. How on earth did it end up here?"

He weighed it in his hand and felt something wrong. Scrutinizing the tail, Li Yao soon discovered the reason.

After tearing off a layer of scales, Li Yao found a black iron ring gripping the flesh of the tail.

The iron ring seemed plain and was deeply embedded in the snake tail.

"Why would a demon king wear you for decades if you are an ordinary ring?"

Li Yao sneered. He dug the ring out of the tail with his dagger.

Since the flesh of the tail had already shrunk after it was cut off from the body, Li Yao separated the iron ring without much trouble.

Li Yao spit out another blood mist to test the iron ring and found it as irresponsive to spiritual energy as the Soul Stealer. Relieved, he held it in his hands to further investigate.

A moment later, Li Yao's eyes were sparkling in amazement.

He put the ring between two giant stones, pushed the stones into the stream and started rubbing them.

The stream turned dirty with bubbles popping up as if it was boiling.

Three minutes later, he raised the iron ring and aimed it at the moon. In moonlight, the iron ring looked like jade, spreading a mysterious aura, like a frozen ocean or a vast universe.

"Cosmos Ring! It is a Cosmos Ring!"

Li Yao felt he was going to pass out in happiness. There was indeed a silver lining behind each cloud. He'd got a treasure!

Cosmos Rings, together with Mustard Seed Bags, Object Containers, and Space Rings were all common storage magical equipment in the ancient Cultivation world.

But the refining procedures for such magical equipment were extremely complex and involved many rare materials that had been used up after thousands of years of consumption.

Back in the era of the Star Ocean Imperium, the storage magical equipment had been far more precious than ordinary magical equipment.

Right now in the Heaven's Origin Sector, all the storage magical equipment were all smuggled or exported from elsewhere by accident, since the technology for refining it had been lost after generations. Its value was too high for someone like Li Yao to afford.

A piece of storage magical equipment that contained a space of several cubic meters was more expensive than a common crystal suit.

Li Yao had never expected that he would own a Cosmos Ring even in his wildest dream.

"The Cosmos Ring looked dignified. The spiritual energy in it is not aggressive, but the runes carved on it do not lack the scent of killing and blood either. Judging from its style, it should be a piece of magical equipment refined in the era of the Star Ocean Imperium.

"At some point thousands of years later, a snake king grabbed it and wore it on its tail. But his tail was cut off and he was killed, allowing me to take all the benefits."

Li Yao's heart was beating like a drum. He sneaked back to the underground cave and sat cross-legged, with the Cosmos Ring in front of him.

Then, he rubbed his fingers and squeezed ten drops of blood from the tips of his finger.

As the saying goes, fingers are connected to the heart. There was spirituality in the fingertip blood of the Cultivators that was only inferior to the blood in their heart.

The blood from Li Yao's fingertip was transformed into ten long and narrow strings which tied the Cosmos Ring and penetrated in.

He was offering sacrifice to the Cosmos Ring by the ancient technique of the Hundred Smelting Clan.

Unlike evil equipment such as the Soul Stealer, the Cosmos Ring was peaceful in nature and utterly devoid of aggressiveness. As a product of the Star Ocean Imperium, its former owners had been mostly human beings. Therefore, it didn't reject Li Yao as its new master.

An hour later, Li Yao had basically gained control over the Cosmos Ring. He could see the operation menu of the ring in his brain right now.

The Cosmos Ring was divided into two zones by its former owner. One of them was sealed by a secret art, making it impossible to detect what was contained inside, let alone retrieving the items inside.

The other zone was empty, with a space of more than ten cubic meters.

"The space is enough for me right now. As for the sealed zone, I'll attack it with the most advanced, large-scale crystal processor after I return to the Grand Desolate War Institution. Such a small seal will be decrypted in no time!"

Li Yao was satisfied. Then he used the processing technique of the Hundred Smelting Clan to make the ring look even duller than previously, before he put the ring on his finger in relief.

Over the next day and night, Li Yao searched the cave carefully and stored the magical equipment and materials that the demons carried into the Cosmos Ring.

He was also surprised to find a lot of bones and paws of the mutant lion dragon, which were tough enough to survive the demon core explosion without being damaged at all. They would be perfect as raw materials to refine attack magical equipment.

Five days later, Li Yao was striding through the Thunderous Sound Mountain.

Since the weather was clear, he could distinguish directions by the location of the sun.

He had the crescent saber in hand, a demon beast detector in his ear, the crystal processor of the crystal suit behind his back and three forbidden scales in front of his chest.

The rest of the stuff had all been placed in the Cosmos Ring.

When he met a small number of demon beasts, he would slay them as training.

When he met a large number of demon beasts, he would took out the demon bones and demon core from the Cosmos Ring, which often immediately scared the beasts off.

Li Yao decided to keep what happened here a secret after much deliberation.

Not because he distrusted other people. It's just that he would be unable to explain why he remained sober after over-drinking the blood of the mutant lion dragon instead of being mentally corrupted and turning into a killing machine.

If he were to explain everything, he might have to bring Ou Yezi up.

This was Li Yao's biggest secret, which was also related to the source of his soul. He would rather no one know anything about it.

Since he was on foot and engaged in combat with demon beasts now and then, he was much slower than when he was in the crystal suit. It took three extra days before he walked out of the mountains and saw the splendid plateau again.

"Beep! Beep! Beep!"

Dozens of emergent calls crowded in the communication channel.

Li Yao turned back and looked at the dark and inky forest for one last time.

He had a feeling that Wang Ji was not dead yet.

"Next time we meet each other, it's going to be me who does the hunting, Wang Ji!"

Chapter 259: Magnificent Era to Come

Chapter 259: Magnificent Era to Come

"I'm finally back!"

Three days later, looking at the Wild Waves City not far ahead, Li Yao sighed.

Although he didn't get the title of 'Thunder Exo' at the end of the journey to the Thunder Training Camp, he had grasped enough knowledge about crystal suits to drive the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit in the future. Also, he made a great fortune in the Thunderous Sound Mountain. This trip was definitely worth every penny.

Li Yao was surprised when he got out of the train station.

In the square before the train station, besides Yuan Manqiu, there were some fifty young men carrying the burning gear flag of the Starfire Union, who painted a giant banner with the mystic ray that read,

"Welcome Home, Senior Brother of the Starfire Union!"

Li Yao noticed a few familiar faces in the crowd. They were the bad boys, including Li Sanhao, of the Empyrean Terminus Central High School.

"These bad boys have really been admitted by the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution?"

Since the competition between Li Yao with the I-type Tai'e crafting furnace and the refiner from the Empyrean Terminus Sect took place, students of the Empyrean Terminus Central High School had been impressed by Li Yao's professional performance and they had kept in touch.

For the students who had better grades, their target was, of course, the Refining Department of Deep Sea University. But for the bad boys, of whom Li Sanhao was a good example, their GPA was far from enough to meet the requirement of the Deep Sea University. Therefore, they decided to give up the thought and come to seek the shelter of their 'Senior Brother Li Yao' instead.

Besides the bad boys stood distinctively another bunch of gloomy, indifferent young men who looked more like assassins than refiners.

Li Yao muttered something to himself. He had no idea who they were.

"Welcome home!"

In a big smile, Yuan Manqiu greeted him and gave him a bearhug. Li Yao felt that if he had not advanced many levels in the training camp, he would surely have been choked now.

"Senior Brother!"

"Senior Brother!"

The freshmen stood in two rows and started shouting.

The bad boys, led by Li Sanhao, and the gloomy 'young assassins' appeared to be competing. They were trying to shout louder than their counterpart, and even when they were out of breath with flushed faces, they were still looking at Li Yao with such obvious adoration that Li Yao felt the back of his neck was prickling. It was not until Yuan Manqiu explained to him that he finally understood everything.

The Refining Department successfully recruited two classes of students as planned. The bad boys from Empyrean Terminus Central High School made up a large part, but the majority of the new students came from Verdant Tarn City.

Verdant Tarn City was almost obliterated in the beast tide outbreak more than half a year ago, of which many parents of the freshmen were victims. Their studies and training had been severely affected because of the accident.

Therefore, the federal government had issued an act, allowing the students of the Verdant Tarn City taking the university entrance exam this year to be admitted at a lower score.

The students, especially those who lost their parents in the accident, naturally preferred the Grand Desolate War Institution, the local academy.

The Grand Desolate War Institution made a great contribution in the battle of the Verdant Tarn City. The performance of its staff and students left a deep impression on them, who hoped that they could become strong Cultivators in the Grand Desolate War Institution so that they could avenge their parents one day.

The number one goal for most of the students was the Combat Department.

But beyond everyone's expectation, the Refining Department received the second most applications, which was even more than the Medical Department and the Liberal Arts Department did.

The reason was simple. Li Yao's accomplishment was too brilliant in the battle of the Verdant Tarn City.

With ten Hellfire-Lightnings, Li Yao killed a preliminary-level demon general despite the fact that he was only at the middle level of the Refinement Stage. After details of the battle were revealed, many young men considered Li Yao to be their role model from whom they learnt the strength of magical equipment.

"If I go to the Combat Department, I don't know how long it will take before I can break through the barrier of the Building Foundation Stage. Maybe it will take the rest of my life.

"But with strong magical equipment, even a Refinement Stage Cultivator can be capable enough to blow a demon general into pieces!"

For the young men who were desperate for revenge, joining the Refining Department might be a more direct and suitable path for their vengeance.

Li Yao's recent achievements were more astonishing.

Although he didn't receive the title of 'Thunder Exo', he did survive the three months' training in the Thunder Training Camp. Moreover, he travelled for ten days far and deep inside of the Thunderous Sound Mountain in the Dark Desolate Domain and returned safe and sound.

Born and raised in the Grand Desolate Plateau, the young men knew exactly how intimidating the Dark Desolate Domain was. The fact that Li Yao could explore, fight, and cultivate in the place for ten days was evident enough that he was a man worthy of respect.

Therefore, before he returned, he had already become a legend among the freshmen.

Now that they'd seen him in person today, of course they would shout as loudly as they could to express their excitement.

During the hundred days, the Refining Department had undergone dramatic changes.

Not only had the students been recruited successfully, many teachers and researchers were in position as well.

The modification of the floating mountain for the refinement of crystal suits was finished a month in advance. It had been towed to the above of the Refining Department.

The Project Mystic Skeleton had been officially restarted. Many refiners had started working on it.

Supported by Xiong Baili, principal of the institution, Yuan Manqiu filed an application to the Refiners' Association and the Ministry of Education, hoping that, in light of the special situation of the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution, the stipulation that there shall be at least one student passing the Refiners' Registration Examination annually could be waived for the next three years.

After all, Li Yao had proved irrefutably the teaching quality of the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution to be excellent enough with his unparalleled performance. The staff had to focus on teaching for a few more years. It would be unreasonable to ask the freshmen to pass the Refiners' Registration Examination every year.

The application was still pending approval. Xiong Baili was also taking part in the issue actively with his connections. It was unlikely that there would be a problem.

The shuttle that drove the students to the station was also upgraded. The wrecked, decrepit vehicle had been replaced by a sharp-lined, green, large-scale shuttle of the latest model that was as light as a dragonfly.

"This is just the beginning."

Noticing Li Yao's astonishment, Yuan Manqiu smiled, "This is just the beginning of the glory of the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution."

When the dragonfly shuttle carried them back to the Refining Department, Li Yao almost failed to recognize the shambles where he had been training crazily for the past year.

Most of the ruins had been carefully cleaned. Useless garbage had been cleared, whereas useful magical equipment components were transferred to a few temporary warehouses where they were piled up neatly.

Surrounding the ruins, a few simple teaching buildings and dormitory buildings were under construction, many of which were half complete. A lot of semi-automatic construction magical equipment were floating around them. An impressive scene of rebirth from devastation.

In the sky, a delicate floating mountain was spinning silently. It was round and looked like a silver waterdrop.

The freshmen who came to greet Li Yao were dismissed. Yuan Manqiu brought him to the front of the silver waterdrop, which sucked them in with a mystic ray.

The designing purpose of this floating mountain was to refine crystal suits. Although it was not large in size, its layout was much more scientific than the previous one. Strong defense rune arrays and alarm systems were installed, which would send out warnings once they detected an abnormal spiritual tide.

Yuan Manqiu and Li Yao toured the floating mountain floor by floor.

Inside the spacious laboratories and refining workshops, a lot of refiners were focusing all their attention to the work at hand.

The white hair on their heads and the intense spiritual waves around their bodies, as well as the hundreds of magical equipment components flying in air at their disposal, suggested their seniority in the trade.

Li Yao even recognized a few faces that he had seen in the magical equipment magazines he used to read. They were all famous masters.

After a hundred days of insane training in the Thunder Training Camp, Li Yao was no longer a crystal suit newbie. It didn't take much time before he realized that many refiners were making great progress in their research and the framework of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was beginning to take shape.

He felt his blood was boiling and his hands were itchy. He couldn't wait to join in with such an amazing team.

Seeing through what was on his mind, Yuan Manqiu handed over a jade slip.

"Li Yao, this is my formal invitation to ask you to join Project Mystic Skeleton as a researcher associate.

"I'll give you a few research fields that you can work on. But your primary job is to explore all the possibilities in designing. There's no need to worry about whether or not they can be implemented. The crazier, the better. We hope that you can broaden the horizon of the project team.

"After the crystal suit is refined, you'll be in charge of the testing as its very first driver.

"Your name will be on the list of participants of the Project Mystic Skeleton. All the future revenues of the Project Mystic Skeleton will be shared by all participants in proportion to their contribution.

"The detailed progress of the project, possible research fields and the job contract are all in the jade slip. You can think it over before you make the decision."

Holding back his excitement, Li Yao took the jade slip and shook his head.

"I don't need to think it over. I accept it!

"However, the progress of the Project Mystic Skeleton is much faster than I expected. There are more researchers than we planned, aren't there? Is our department rich enough to attract so many experts to this place now?"

Li Yao was a little confused.

Yuan Manqiu thought for a moment and said, "You have been secluded in the Thunder Training Camp for the past hundred days. It's understandable that you are not familiar with the latest news outside. Over the past three months, a lot of things have happened. Come on, let's go to my office and talk about it.

"In short, a magnificent era is coming!"

After an hour of chat with Yuan Manqiu, Li Yao finally understood everything now.

Three months ago, the capital market was the first to respond. The stock price of the sects that focused on combat or combat magical equipment refining soared. The medical board and spiritual beast board also experienced rapid growth.

Then, the federal government announced that the military budget for the next year will be increased by 50%, and that it would be increased by three times in three years.

The unprecedented military budget indicated that the giant war machine of the Star Glory Federation, after laying low for decades, was speeding up and ready to unleash ferocious power again.

After that, the federal government implemented a series of measures, including repairing underground fortresses, honoring the disabled veterans, promoting Cultivation techniques in schools and communities, and increasing the subsidies for the sects that worked on new models of war-related magical equipment.

A rising wind forebodes a coming storm. Even the most inert citizen could hear the footsteps of war drawing near.

In the Cultivation world, intelligence that the well-informed Cultivators gathered was much more appalling.

Chapter 260: Main Battlesuit Calls for Bids

Chapter 260: Main Battlesuit Calls for Bids

Over the last decade, there had been more wormholes between the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector appearing in larger scales than any time before. Many parts of the sky that used to be very stable without any wormholes for hundreds of years had been ripped open, ushering terrible beast tides in.

According to the collaborative work of the research-type Cultivators from several major universities, the coverage of the Dark Desolate Domain had expanded by two thirds and there was no sign of stopping.

All the clues indicated that the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector were merging beyond the three-dimensional level.

Maybe one day, parts of the two worlds would overlap each other, which would shorten the long distance between the two civilizations to zero!

Demon civilization of the Blood Demon Sector might have long been aware of that. In the beast tide outbreaks over the last ten years, many demon kings and demon generals had been assigned to suicidal missions.

The demon civilization was trying to delve into the Heaven's Origin Sector at any cost.

By sacrificing a few demon generals and demon kings, a lot of intelligence about human civilization had been collected.

Once the demon civilization gathered enough information, and the two worlds really started melding, an unprecedented war would break out, which would be the most large-scale collision of the two civilizations in the past five hundred years.

"The Heaven's Origin Sector is entering a state of war. The military have undergone a paradigm shift regarding how the war should be fought. The crystal suit advocates are winning the warship advocates over. This is going to be our chance."

Li Yao nodded.

In the military, and also among the Cultivators, debates had always remained unabated as to whether warships or crystal suits should be the main force in a war.

Crystal warships had obvious advantages. They had long attack range and fierce firepower. If they were faced with a large number of low-level demon beasts, it would be a one-sided slaughter.

Their disadvantages were clear as well. Their size was too large to be usable outside of specific situations. They could not cruise in the areas where spiritual fluctuations were intense such as the Dark Desolate Domain, they could not be transmitted through middle-size and small-size wormholes or teleportation rune arrays, and they could not drill into underground and fight the demon beasts in the mother lodes where resources were most abundant.

When confronting strong, high-level demons, they risked being infiltrated by the enemy. If the enemy was inside the warships, the defense of the warships would be reduced to minimum, turning them into flying coffins.

Therefore, many military leaders and Cultivators had changed their thought and believed that conquering the Blood Demon Sector would require face-to-face combat by Cultivators in crystal suits, instead of the cumbersome warships.

Since the crystal suit had more advocates than the warship did, most of the future military budget would go to the research and refinement of crystal suits.

Yuan Manqiu continued, "The military has notified the Nine Elite Universities and the top five hundred Cultivation sects that the army will purchase a model of crystal suit on a large scale in the coming three to five years. The research and refinement of this particular model will be put out to be outsourced and the Nine Elite Universities and the top five hundred Cultivation sects will bid for the qualification! Each university and sect can come up with their own design.

"We'll have one year to prepare for that.

"In one year, the model that beats all the rivals in the competition will be fielded to the soldiers of the federal army and become the main equipment!"

Li Yao's heart was beating fast. The news was amazing.

Since the foundation of the Star Glory Federation five hundred years ago, it had persevered with the strategy of homeland defense. Crystal warships were enough to deal with the beast tides. Crystal suits had never been mass-equipped.

Although some elite troops had been armed with crystal suits, the crystal suits they wore were of different models. There had been no uniform standard.

Right now, the military wanted a mass-produced crystal suit as the standard crystal suit for the army.

Everyone could see the value of the project. Whatever won the bid would undoubtedly be the king of crystal suits.

"However, why has the military decided to determine the model of the crystal suit this way instead of refining one themselves?" Li Yao mumbled.

"The reason is simple. The military and the Cultivation sects are the two wings of the federation. With a great war coming close, the two wings must cooperate in order to unleash the full power of the Star Glory Federation," Yuan Manqiu explained.

Li Yao nodded in agreement.

The military and the Cultivation sects had always been in a subtle relationship.

Before the federation, it had been the era of sects. There was neither government nor military.

All human beings relied on the Cultivators in the sects to fight against the demon beasts.

Conflicts were brewing among the countless sects, which eventually turned against each other.

Also, many Cultivators considered themselves to be saviors of the world and lived an extravagant life by exploiting the ordinary people. The folks were not as supportive as before after suffering a lot.

Therefore, in light of the defects of the sect system, the Star Glory Federation adopted a series of hypercorrect policies during the time known as 'Red Dragon Legion Era'.

During the thirty years of the Red Dragon Legion Era, the old sect system was smashed into pieces, and the power was highly centralized to the federal government. All the Cultivators were enlisted into the Red Dragon Legion and fought as soldiers of the army.

When the Red Dragon Legion was first established, it contributed a lot to the banishment of the demon clan with its amazing strength.

But as time went by, the main drawback of the new system, its rigidness, was revealed.

Creativity and epiphany were of paramount importance in Cultivation. A 'eureka' moment had been what all the Cultivators looked forward to.

Besides, due to their domineering strength, the Cultivators often preferred freedom to restraints. They might go wherever for training whenever they wanted to.

However, the top principle for soldiers was obedience. They didn't need to think. All they needed to do was to play their part in the war machine.

When organized in the form of an army, the Cultivators immediately lost vitality.

The Cultivators who were willing to research new techniques or new magical equipment grew fewer and fewer. Many of them turned into submissive nerds who focused all the attention to the stern military training rules, which distorted their mind and transformed them into utter killing machines. Some even set on the path of devil Cultivators.

Just like that, thirty years after the Red Dragon Legion was established, its battle capability plunged. All kinds of riots were taking place in the legion. There were even cases where the entire troop turned into devil Cultivators.

The Cultivators who dwelled on the sect era were also conspiring to tear the Star Glory Federation apart.

Thankfully, the dark time finally passed without insurrection against the regime.

Based on the lessons learnt from the sect era and the Red Dragon Legion Era, the Star Glory Federation imposed a mixed system that combined characteristics of the two.

The military and the sects co-existed. The military represented stability, the sects represented creativity; the military had a large number of soldiers who had dominative strength in a battlefield, whereas the sects were famous for their advanced technology and magical equipment. With the checks and balances of the two sides, the world of Cultivation and the Star Glory Federation both witnessed peaceful and rapid growth.

At this time, the military's outsourcing for the main force battlesuit was clearly a signal that even if a war were to break out, the time that the military controlled everything such as the Red Dragon Legion Era wouldn't come back. All sects should rest assured and work together against the common foe.

Li Yao finally understood why so many more refiners had joined the Project Mystic Skeleton.

Yuan Manqiu said, "The Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution has been working on crystal suits for mass-production since more than ten years ago. Although we haven't make many achievements, we did have collected a lot of data and documents. Therefore, many experts decided to join us, especially those who believe in the grassroot ideologies.

"However, we have formidable competitors, too.

"The moment the military's decision of outsourcing was announced, the universities and sects that had the ability all started their own mass-production crystal suit refinement projects.

"They may lack experience, but they have a long history of crystal suit refinement.

"Some sects are even refining low-cost crystal suits by simplifying the crystal suits that they already have. Naturally, their research speed is much faster.

"The Refining Department of Deep Sea University is working with the Golden Armor Sect for a new model of crystal suit for mass-production, too.

"The Golden Armor Sect ranks among the top twenty in the federation. It is the strongest sect in battle armor refining and has refined crystal suits independently before. Their work is best known for the sturdiness.

"Now, the best university and the best sect have formed a coalition. The billions-worth order is almost sure to fall into their hands. It's indeed difficult for us to steal the food from a tiger's mouth.

"However, if we want the 'Holy Land for Refiners' to refer to us and us alone, we have to win the competition!"

Li Yao clenched his hands. His voice was shaking in excitement.

"Professor, do you really believe that we can beat the Refining Department of Deep Sea University and take the title of 'Holy Land for Refiners'?"

In a faint smile, Yuan Manqiu said, "I'll tell you a secret, Li Yao.

"Ever since the day I went separate ways with Chu Xiuhong, my professor, and walked out of Deep Sea University, there hasn't been a day going by over the past decades without me yearning to beat the Refining Department of Deep Sea University and assume their title 'Holy Land for Refiners'!"

Li Yao gasped at the determination in her words.

Yuan Manqiu laughed and patted Li Yao on his shoulder. She continued, "Alright. You must be exhausted after your adventure to the Dark Desolate Domain. Take a decent rest before you get back to work again.

"Right, remember to check on your girlfriend, too. Days ago, when she heard you had went missing in the Thunderous Sound Mountain, she was jumping up and down in worry. She even decided to go to rescue you in the Dark Desolate Domain. Thankfully, President Xiong stopped her from doing that. What a silly girl."

"Got it."

Li Yao was so focused on the announcement of the military that he didn't even realize what his professor was talking about. A moment later, his eyes grew wide as he said in bewilderment, "My girlfriend? Who's my girlfriend?"

Yuan Manqiu glanced at him strangely.

"Isn't Ms. Ding, who stayed at the institute after graduation, your girlfriend? You always go to and leave her place at midnight. Everybody in the faculty neighborhood knows that. I've even seen it with my own eyes a couple of times. Is there a problem?"

Chapter 261: Godlike Man

Chapter 261: Godlike Man

Li Yao's cheeks were flushed in embarrassment. He faltered and failed to give an answer.

Yuan Manqiu misunderstood his awkwardness. She said in a comforting voice, "Students of the Grand Desolate War Institution are all grown-ups. The institution does not forbid students and teachers being in a relationship. Your situation is special, too. You've been more than qualified for graduation based on the facts that you passed the Refiners' Registration Examination and the three months' training in the Thunder Training Camp. Now, you are already a research associate of the institution. So, there is no need to worry about the code of conduct."

"It's not like that, professor."

Li Yao tried to explain, vaguely, "Ding Lingdang and I are only training partners."

After saying that, Li Yao felt somewhat both jealous and lost.

He was dazed. He didn't understand why he felt that way.

Yuan Manqiu was surprised. She stared at him for a long time before she said, "Li Yao, I've read the report from the Thunder Training Camp which concluded your advantages and disadvantages that were observed during your three-month training. The Thunder Training Camp gave you a high score in every regard. There was only one shortcoming: you are too crazy about training."

Li Yao didn't understand, "What's wrong with training crazily?"

Yuan Manqiu was quiet for some time. Then she continued, not without sadness, "Li Yao, do you know the one thing that I regret most in my entire life?

"One year ago, the night before what we thought would be the day of the Project Mystic Skeleton's success, Old Mo told me that he made a reservation in a nice restaurant and he wanted us to go to dinner alone to celebrate it in advance.

"When the refinement of the super-compressed crystal reactor succeeded the next day, the entire Refining Department would definitely celebrate together in great joy. There wouldn't be private space for us.

"However, I turned him down, because of an unimportant data assessment task.

"Over the years before that, we had fully devoted ourselves to the Project Mystic Skeleton like two fanatics. We barely expressed our feelings to each other. Our meals were either eaten in the school cafeteria or were takeaways that a lot of people gathered together to eat. I could hardly remember when was the last time that Old Mo and I went out for a serious dinner.

"At that time, I always thought that it was not important. Training and research were what mattered most.

"Also, after the Project Mystic Skeleton succeeded, we would have the rest of our lives to share with each other.

"I was wrong.

"You know what happened the next day.

"I don't regret that I left Deep Sea University; I don't regret that I walked on the path of the grassroot refinement ideology. Even Old Mo's accident by itself never shook my perseverance in Cultivation.

"But I deeply, deeply regret that I didn't go out to dinner with him that night.

"Even if one day the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is successfully refined and the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution becomes famous all over the world, I'll never have the opportunity to talk with Old Mo about our sufferings in the past decades and share the happiness of success with each other at a dinner table anymore."

Li Yao sniffed. He felt that something deep down his heart was touched.

Yuan Manqiu sighed and said solemnly, "Crazily training is good. Greatness cannot be achieved without obsession. How can you break the barrier of Cultivation without a bit of craziness? But bear in mind that the purpose of Cultivation is to become a genuine human being, instead of a training machine.

"Refinement, Building Foundation, Core Formation, Nascent Soul, Spirit Transformation… the path of Cultivation never ends.

"There are countless worlds in the boundless cosmos.

"But the precious things in your life are likely to be gone forever before you can appreciate them.

"And once they're gone, you can't find them again even if you become the best Cultivator in the entire universe.

"Remember, you are, first and foremost, a human being and then a Cultivator. Training is important, but it's more important to be a human being first.

"Therefore, I want you to withdraw from your crazy training for a moment and examine the beautiful things in your life.

"Only after you've tasted the beauty of life can you face brutal battles valiantly; only after you found the things that you cherish most can you understand the true meaning of Cultivation."

Li Yao bit his lips. He was breathing hard. His eyes beamed out two thin lights.

He felt his brain was in a mess.

Many memory pieces that looked like glittering glass surged in his brain and gathered into a giant smile, a smile so contagious that anyone who saw it would immediately start smiling, too.

Ding Lingdang…

Yuan Manqiu said seriously, "Ms. Ding's mother was also a faculty member of the Grand Desolate War Institution. She was a colleague of mine for decades. Although our research fields were different, and we didn't communicate a lot, I have been very familiar with her daughter ever since she was a little girl. Ms. Ding is a good girl. But her parents' accident was too much for her. She has been somewhat stuck in the mire of Cultivation.

"For years, she has been a lunatic in training like yourself. There is nothing but training, training and training in her head.

"You are the first one to have ever disrupted her training and let her forget it temporarily."

Li Yao opened his mouth, but he didn't know what to say.

Yuan Manqiu glared.

"Don't you dare say again that the purpose of you meeting each other alone at midnight is for training! Why don't you come to me for training at midnight?"

Failing to come up with any rebuttal, Li Yao shut his mouth.

Yuan Manqiu glanced at him and told him one last shocking message, "The day before you reached out to the outside world again, when everyone thought that you were dead, Ding Lingdang was the only one determined to go to search for you in the Dark Desolate Domain. She even cried in front of the principal."

Li Yao's head went blank. The world seemed to have turned into a giant cloud on which he was standing dizzily.

He jumped up and dashed out.

"I'm going to find her now!"

…

Li Yao was running through the campus.

It was a cool autumn day. Red leaves that looked like fire were everywhere on the ground, burning Li Yao's feet and pushing him to be faster and faster.

Ding Lingdang and he were back in touch several days ago. But during their talk via the spiritual crane messenger, she was talking and laughing as usual and never mentioned anything about her rescue plan.

"Why didn't she tell me?

"Did she really cry?"

Every moment since they first met each other popped up in Li Yao's head. It was not until now that Li Yao realized he remembered everything so clearly, as if he had a crystal processor inside his body that recorded Ding Lingdang's every smile.

Ba bump! Ba bump! Ba bump!

Li Yao's heart was beating like drumming and his sweat was pouring from his forehead. He felt more anxious than when he was faced with the two demon general hunters.

Rushing all his way, and by a lift in the end, Li Yao finally arrived at the floating mountain of the Combat Department.

Yuan Manqiu told him that Ding Lingdang would be teaching the physical exercise class for the freshmen of the Combat Department.

Although there was still a long way head, Li Yao was already able to see Ding Lingdang dashing like wind and fire kicking dozens of freshmen down before she roared that they needed to do long-distance running while carrying plates of hundreds of kilograms.

Li Yao couldn't help but smile.

She was just like the old days, a phoenix flying in fire that would never stop on the ground.

Li Yao sat cross-legged beside the playground, leaning on one of his elbows while waiting for the class to be over.

Or rather, he was waiting for the class not to be over. It felt good to watch her dancing cheerfully so far away.

Soon, Ding Lingdang noticed him and put on a big smile.

"Look over there!"

"Ms. Ding is smiling! So gently!"

"Are my eyes deceiving me? I never saw such an expression on Ms. Ding's face before. What's going on? Has she been possessed by a devil?"

The freshmen were all stupefied. Many of them, not realizing that their plates had fallen on their feet, didn't even scream out in pain. The playground was caught in a weird vibe.

Their school had started only a few days ago, but they had all learned the toughness of Ding Lingdang already. Ms. Ding was truly a devil in training. Her crazy training methodology had put the most enthusiastic students in tears.

After consulting the sophomore students, they learnt more history about this human-shape tyrannosaurus.

Apart from everything else, the fact that she was the sole female president of the Iron Fist Club was evident enough of her resolution.

Never would they ever believe that Ding Lingdang had such a personality that could almost be called 'sexy', which fascinated all of them.

"Who's this guy? He has an air of sharpness around him, like a wild beast that just came out of the forest!"

"He seems to be coming for Ms. Ding. Look! Ms. Ding's eyesight has never been away from him for even a single second ever since he came here. Wow! She smiled again! Did you see that? A smile with so much femininity! Ms. Ding must've been put under a spell!"

"Ms. Ding walked to him. Ms. Ding opened her arms. Wow! They hugged! Hugging, not tugging!"

"Could he be the 'Vulture', Li Yao, the legendary strongest man of the new generation of the Grand Desolate War Institution?"

"That's right. It must be him. But the reason why he is the well-acknowledged strongest man of the new generation is not because of his credits or his achievement in the Limit Challenge Competition, but, according to sources, because he is very likely to be Ms. Ding's boyfriend!"

"What?"

Countless eyes gazed at Li Yao in admiration.

To think that he could tame a human-shaped tyrannosaurus! No wonder he was the new legend of the Grand Desolate War Institution! What a godlike man!

…

At night.

The roof of Ding Lingdang's house was surrounded by bamboos. Lying on the roof, one would feel like sailing in a sea of bamboos with nature as the helmsman. It was quiet and peaceful.

Stars were dancing in the sky. Their brilliance gathered and formed a big smile.

Li Yao shook his head to get rid of the illusion. He rubbed his face hard.

Ding Lingdang came out through the skylight. She laughed when she saw Li Yao's grimace, "What are you doing?"

Chapter 262: Tale of Time

Chapter 262: Tale of Time

For some reason, Li Yao felt guilty and didn't dare to look at her in the eyes, fearing that she might see through the unsaid feelings in his heart.

"Why are you acting all weird? Not recovered from the protracted stay at Thunderous Sound Mountain yet?"

Ding Lingdang walked to Li Yao on the tips of her toes and lay down beside him. After stretching herself, she patted Li Yao on his back heavily as she said, "Good for you. Surviving ten days by yourself in the Thunderous Sound Mountain without being eaten by a demon beast. That's my boy!

"Are you done resting? Let's go down and start training if you are.

"During the three months while you were gone, I've been training by myself in the Billowing Star Sea. There was no one to practice boxing with. It was so boring that my bones were itchy, my meals were dull, and I couldn't sleep well. Haha. If you were delayed for a few days longer, I might've gone to the Dark Desolate Domain to find you."

Ding Lingdang said casually, showing no sign that she had cried in front of anyone.

Blinking his eyes, Li Yao said hesitatingly, "Sister Ling, why don't we just sit and talk here while we enjoy the beautiful view instead of going to the Billowing Star Sea?"

"Huh?"

Ding Lingdang stared at him from head to toe for over half a minute, before she said in amusement, "That's not something the 'Vulture' often says. I remember that we used to spend every second we're together on training. Why are you changed after only three months?"

Li Yao scratched his hair. He smiled.

"I just thought that we never really had the chance to sit down and get to know each other although we've met for such a long time."

Ding Lingdang's mouth twitched.

"There isn't so much time for chitchatting! We can get to know each other by our fists. My fist, for one, knows your body pretty well."

She turned him down. But seeing Li Yao's disappointed face, she felt her heart was somewhat hurt. She blurted, "Alright, alright. You are totally absent-minded today. It will be no fun beating you up. Might as well gossip for a while. What do you want to talk about? Martial arts or magical equipment?"

Li Yao almost laughed.

"Can we talk about something else? For example, like, your parents? I'm curious about how a refiner of the military and a university teacher fell in love with each other."

Li Yao wanted to bite his tongue off the moment he let those words out.

There couldn't possibly be a worse topic! Where was his computational ability that he was so proud of?

But since the Pandora's box was already opened, Li Yao had no choice but to stare at Ding Lingdang waiting for an answer.

Li Yao felt sorry about the accident of Ding Lingdang's parents. But he also knew that it would be better to dig out and deal with the emotional trauma than to bury it deep down in her heart for the rest of their life.

Ding Lingdang's smile was frozen, before it melt half a minute later under Li Yao's enthusiastic look.

She took a long breath. Memories of long time ago came back to her. Her lips curled as she thought of something interesting.

After a while, she smiled.

"They met each other during a co-operation of the Grand Desolate War Institution and the military. My mother and I share the same temper. Straightforward and aggressive. She liked to travel to the depths of the Grand Desolate Plateau and fight the demon beasts there.

"Men around her often found her unbearable.

"My father was a mild, somewhat mundane, man. He was a typical refiner dwelling in the world of magical equipment all the time who had zero combat ability.

"At the beginning of the co-operation, they came across a very strong demon beast. My father was almost killed because of his lack of combat skills. My mother saved his life multiple times from the paws and teeth of the demon beast. But as a result, their mission was delayed.

"My mother was mad and got even madder seeing my father's dumb actions.

"Therefore, she went to my father whenever they were not occupied during the mission and taught him basic self-defense skills, in case he dragged the team down again.

"But according to my father, my mother was simply looking for more opportunities to pick on him.

"Anyways, that was how my mother and my father met. After the co-operation was over, my father came to the Grand Desolate War Institution for my mother whenever he had free time, claiming that he needed to learn more about the self-defense skills my mother taught him which he found extremely useful.

"My mother was innocent enough to believe that my father was really trying to learn the martial arts, so she taught him without being guarded against him. My father finally got a chance. Later, he even filed an application to the military to study martial arts in the Grand Desolate War Institution for half a year.

"Just like that, during the learning and teaching, my mother fell in love with my father as well. Haha!

"They loved each other very much. You've seen the two delicate puppets in my house, haven't you?

"Those are my father's masterpieces.

"Born in the Grand Desolate Plateau and serving in the military all the time, my father was kind of a grassroots refiner. He wasn't good enough to refine such exquisite magical equipment.

"But he spent all his spare time polishing one crystal stone after another and refining one component after another. Finally, he created those two wonderful puppets as a gift to my mother on their tenth wedding anniversary.

"He said that my mother was the high and mighty seven-colored parrot and he would be the little snake staying by her side and protecting her.

"But my mother laughed and said that he was too weak to protect her and that he should just stay at home and let his wife protect him."

No one had been bold enough to talk with Ding Lingdang about her parents.

She never had the opportunity to share their stories with other people either. Now that she started talking, she found herself hardly able to stop.

Lying with her head on her hands, she told Li Yao everything about her parents as stars shined warmly in the sky.

From the funny stories when her parents just fell in love, to the happy moments after she was born, and how her father taught her refining when she was just little girl.

Without her knowing, she was leaning close to Li Yao. Nor did she, who was excited by all the beautiful memories, notice Li Yao's weird face.

After talking forever, Ding Lingdang finally stopped, when her body was right next to Li Yao's. She licked her lips and said, "Hey, I've talked so much about myself. Don't just listen. Say something about yourself, too. Let me see… Why don't you tell me how you became a refiner?"

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. The warmth in his eyes dispersed and didn't return until a while later. With a childish smile, he murmured, "When I was four or five, I was still struggling in the magical equipment graveyard.

"One day, I came across a Flying Music Box by accident.

"You know what a Flying Music Box is, don't you? It's like a little bamboo dragonfly that can float in the air and play beautiful music.

"The more advanced models could unleash a three-dimensional light beam that displayed music videos.

"To this day, I still remember clearly that the Flying Music Box I picked up could play four music clips with four different light beams, which were the sceneries of a peaceful forest in four seasons.

"Every night, I would listen to the music box and enjoy the seasonal change of the forest. That was my happiest moment in a day.

"At that time, I truly believed that there were gods in this world. Who else could create such amazing magical equipment other than gods?

"Later, I learnt that such magical equipment was crafted by 'refiners'. That's when I decided that I would be a refiner one day and make the best Flying Music Box in the world."

Li Yao laughed vainly. "But after I became a refiner, I never once refined civil magical equipment such as a Flying Music Box. What I refined has been nothing but weapons for battles and combat.

"Under the guidance of my father, I did try to refine a Flying Music Box before. But it was ugly and had imbalanced wings, which caused it to fall every time it flew for a while.

Ding Lingdang leaned close. "I never knew that small talk could be so much fun. Let me see what else I've got for you…"

The two of them chatted and laughed, until stars over their head quenched one after another.

They both fell to sleep on the roof after they didn't know how long.

Li Yao was made of flesh and bones like anybody else. Three months of over-training in the Thunder Training Camp and ten days on the run in the Thunderous Sound Mountain had drained him.

During the days after he was rescued, he found his brain too excited to sleep however his body tried to even when he was placed in a deep sleep capsule.

Right now, lying beside Ding Lingdang and smelling her perfume, Li Yao felt that the burden on his mind had been removed and fell asleep easily.

When he woke up again, broad daylight was already shining on his face. The autumn sun was comfortable and cozy.

Coldness of the night couldn't do any harm to the Cultivators. Li Yao felt refreshed and vigorous as he could ever be. Even the world had become more beautiful in his eyes.

His left hand was numb. Then he realized that Ding Lingdang was taking his left arm as her pillow.

He swallowed and moved his hand.

Ding Lingdang seemed to have felt something. She frowned and crawled into Li Yao's arms, like a kitty scrambling to a warm shelter in coldness.

She moaned and muttered something.

Li Yao's heart was beating fast. He turned his ear to listen carefully, his earlobe almost kissing Ding Lingdang's burning lips.

Ding Lingdang repeated what she just said. This time, Li Yao got it loud and clear. It was—

"Damn, you wusses. Faster! Faster! Run faster!"

Li Yao was stiffened.

With a shivering of her eyelashes, Ding Lingdang opened her eyes.

The dumb look on her face indicated that she was not fully awake yet. She stayed still for a long time, unwilling to get rid of the warmth around her.

It was not until half a minute later that her eyes went clear again. She jumped and stretched her arms. Then she combed her hair with her fingers, only to make it messier than before.

"Ho-hum."

Ding Lingdang yawned comfortably. She was smacking her lips as she said, "That was a short night. It will be fun just chatting casually every once in a while. It's officially decided then. Let's spare one night for chitchatting every month, no, every fortnight, no, every week, what do you think?"

Chapter 263: Fiend Star Refining Workshop

Chapter 263: Fiend Star Refining Workshop

"Works fine for me!"

Li Yao smiled. "But you haven't answered the last question I asked you yesterday."

"I haven't?"

Ding Lingdang's big eyes were blinking in confusion, "I forget it. What was the question again?"

"Your future plans. Like, what you will do in the future, what kind of boyfriend you're looking for, etc."

Li Yao's eyes were unsteady.

"We talked about that last night? I don't remember any of it."

With puffy cheeks, Ding Lingdang thought for a while. Then she said, "About the future, I probably won't be a college teacher forever.

"The reason I stayed at school after graduation was partly because of my mother, and partly because I wanted to learn some more stuff in the Grand Desolate War Institution so that I could be stronger and avenge my parents one day.

"However, after I truly became a teacher, I found the job completely unsuitable for me. The weak-ass freshmen really dispirit me. I don't even have the passion to abuse them anymore.

"Maybe the free-hunting-in-wilderness lifestyle is more my cup of tea.

"One day, when I'm strong enough, I might become a demon beast hunter. It will be awesome, won't it?"

"Well—"

Li Yao was actually more interested in the latter half of the question.

"As for boyfriend, I haven't given it much thought. It doesn't matter what I think anyway. You know my personality best. However hard I try to pretend to be an elegant lady, I'll end up betraying myself within half a day. Any normal guy who sees me burping after eating five grilled gigots for a single meal will surely be scared off, won't they?"

"I think so, yes. However, there are many guys that are not so normal in this world. Let's just say there is an abnormal guy who can tolerate your quirks. What would you expect him to be like?"

Li Yao swallowed nervously.

"What kind of question is this?"

Ding Lingdang glanced at him in suspicion. She thought for a moment and replied, "First, he must be handsome. I love polite, gentle, handsome, scholarly-looking guys best!

"Second, he must be weak. Definitely not a battle-type Cultivator. Culture-type Cultivator and research-type Cultivator will be best.

"Third, he must listen to whatever I say, because I'm going to be the master of my family. Hahahaha!"

"Polite, gentle, handsome, scholarly-looking?"

Li Yao was dazed for a long time, "I thought you'd prefer tougher guys and your criteria would include things like 'higher combat ability' and 'slaying a certain number of demon beasts'. Your requirements sounds a little sissy, don't you think? Haven't you always hated sissies?"

"I hate sissies to be my bros. Only tough men such as the 'Vulture' deserve to be my bros. I despise soft, weak crybabies most."

Ding Lingdang punched Li Yao in his chest and laughed. "But it's different when it comes to husband or boyfriend.

"My husband or boyfriend only needs to look after our baby at home. I will protect him if anything happens. Why do I want a tough guy for that?"

Li Yao was speechless for quite a long time. His face was trebling hard, his expressions altering nonstop. In the end, dogged determination appeared in his eyes.

The moment Ding Lingdang was going to stand up, Li Yao rolled over and pushed himself above Ding Lingdang, locking her between his arms.

"What are you doing?"

Ding Lingdang was surprised. She felt Li Yao was not himself.

"I—"

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao said with all his courage, "I would very much like to refine a piece of magical equipment for you, one that is going to be more exquisite than your Seven Star Silver-Ringed Horned Snake and Seven-colored Parrot!"

Ding Lingdang's eyes looked like a lake that was just unfrozen in spring with ripples floating one after another.

Pushed by Li Yao's yearning look, she was breathing heavily. A drop of sweat was flowing down the tip of her nose.

Right then, her mini crystal processors buzzed.

With an exclamation, Ding Lingdang jumped up and, failing to control her strength, hit Li Yao's chin with her head. Li Yao was knocked over, and his tongue was bitten by his teeth, making him unable to say anything because of pain.

"I—I have a class this morning. I'm running late!"

Ding Lingdang stuttered as she tried to comb her hair again. She jumped off the roof without going through the skylight.

After a moment, she leaped out while her toothbrush was still in her mouth.

It was not until she was out of the bamboo woods that she finally shouted,

"There are many delicious foods in my home. They're all in their old places. You must've been starved after the long journey to the Dark Desolate Domain. Cook them and try to get some nourishment!"

Li Yao rolled his tongue for a long time before he regained the ability to talk.

At a long distance, Ding Lingdang looked like a bolting rabbit that was being chased by a wolf. She was nearly tripped over several times.

"She ran away—just like that?"

Li Yao couldn't believe his eyes.

This was the first time that he had ever seen Ding Lingdang running away from anything.

…

In the training room on the floating mountain of the Combat Department.

The freshmen were whispering to each other and eyeing Ding Lingdang strangely. The room had an odd vibe.

"Why are you guys acting so weird today? Do you want me to increase the difficulty of your training because you didn't enjoy yourself enough yesterday? Class monitor, come here and talk!" Ding Lingdang screamed and shouted like a devil.

Trembling in fear, the class monitor stood up. He summoned whatever left of his guts and said, "No. Not like that, Ms. Ding. We just feel that you might be distracted; we were simply expressing our concerns."

"I am distracted?"

Raising her eyebrows in anger, Ding Lingdang snarled, "How did you come to that conclusion? Do tell me!"

The class monitor was almost in tears. He was shaking as he said, "Because of your clothes, Ms. Ding…"

Ding Lingdang looked down and realized that she was wearing her blue pajamas with teddy bears on it.

She had left home in such a hurry that she even forgot to change her clothes.

Ding Lingdang's cheeks was flushed. For a moment, the 'feminine' countenance that had once stupefied all of the freshmen was back.

But soon, the human-shaped tyrannosaurus restored control over her body. She raised her voice and shouted, "I'm relieved to find that you've recovered well from yesterday's training, since you are all energetic enough to care about what clothes I'm wearing today. Excellent. Everyone's training amount today shall be increased by thirty percent!"

…

Li Yao returned to the Refining Department in a good mood.

Despite the major transformation of the Refining Department and the ongoing infrastructural construction, the second laboratory was reserved for him, which was also his dormitory.

The moment he unsealed the barriers and walked into the laboratory, the Black Wing already dashed out from a corner and circled round him.

It hummed while it was flying, like a dog that was wagging its tail because it had seen its master again after a long time of departure.

"Little Black, I'm back!"

Seeing the Black Wing, Li Yao finally felt he'd truly returned home.

He had worried that there would be too many eyes and mouths in the training camp. Therefore, he didn't take the Black Wing during the three months of training, which was a decision that he couldn't regret more.

If Little Black had been with him in the Thunderous Sound Mountain, he would've got out of the place much more easily.

Li Yao decided that he would try to bring the Black Wing with him next time wherever he was going to.

"Haha. Stop whining like that. I've brought you some good stuff!"

Li Yao extended his spiritual threads into the Cosmos Ring and tossed out a scattered bone of the mutant lion dragon.

The Black Wing screamed. Hundreds of black spiritual threads crowded out and tied the bone up like a hungry tiger plunging onto a goat. The spiritual energy contained in the bone was absorbed at a crazy speed.

"It's amazing that you've improved so much only after three months! The crystals that I traded with my credits have all been absorbed by you! Wow! Good job!"

Li Yao took out a leg bone of the mutant lion dragon, which was long enough for Little Black to chew for a while.

Then he sat before the large-scale crystal processor and started pondering about his future plan.

Of course, the Project Mystic Skeleton would be his main focus for the next year.

After a hundred days in the Thunder Training Camp, Li Yao had developed his own ideas about crystal suit refinement and modification, which, together with the refinement methodologies of the Hundred Smelting Clan, would surely shed new lights to the experienced refiners that had been working on the project.

However, the Project Mystic Skeleton was a collaborative work.

Li Yao had ambitions for himself.

The stronger he became, the more memory pieces of Ou Yezi he could absorb. The ancient books that he'd been learning were getting arcane, too.

Many of the secret arts were not meant to be set to public.

Therefore, Li Yao needed a personal workshop where he could refine magical equipment at his will without worrying about others' snooping.

To build such a workshop, the best way would be to buy a world fragment and add barriers to the teleportation array so that no one else would be able to break in.

It was a common practice among the refiners.

Many master refiners had their own world fragments as their personal refining rooms.

However, it would cost a huge amount money to buy a world fragment.

A world fragment used for refining didn't need to be as large as the Billowing Star Sea. But since it was necessary to buy the freehold of the world fragment, the price could still be as high as one billion.

Together with the cost to build a refining workshop inside the world fragment, Li Yao estimated that he needed at least 1.5 billion to finish everything.

Li Yao had made a great fortune in the Thunderous Sound Mountain. There were abundant Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures in his Cosmos Ring. The forbidden scales of the mutant lion dragon alone were valuable enough, let alone the exotic magical equipment left by the demon infiltration squad.

Li Yao kept some of the magical equipment and the precious materials for further studies, and he needed to sell off the rest of the stuff so that he could fulfil his dream of building the 'Fiend Star Refining Workshop'.

However, the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures were all shady. If he were to sell them through the official channel, there would be a good chance that his secret was discovered.

"It seems that I'll need to ask for several days' leave and make a trip to the Serpent Mountain Village."

The Serpent Mountain Village was the biggest congregation of outlaws in the south of the federation. It was also where the biggest black market of the federation was located.

Many Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures of unknown backgrounds could only be sold off in the Serpent Mountain Village.

Naturally, the price was often lower than they should be. But the good thing was that no one would look into where they came from, or who the seller was.

Chapter 264: Three Magical Equipment Magazines

Chapter 264: Three Magical Equipment Magazines

The other reason why Li Yao needed to go to Serpent Mountain Village was to uncover the secrets of his Cosmos Ring.

On his way back to the Grand Desolate War Institution, he had tried cracking the encryptions in the Cosmos Ring with his mini crystal processor.

But it didn't take long before he discovered that there was a double-encryption inside the Cosmos Ring. It seemed that two zones, one larger and the other smaller, had been sealed in it at the same time.

Li Yao inferred that the larger zone must be the snake demon's storage space, whereas the smaller zone was probably the storage space of one of the ring's former masters.

The ring's previous owner had set up a strong encryption inside the Cosmos Ring that the snake demon failed to unseal. Therefore, the demon simply added another encryption over the old one.

According to Li Yao's calculations, it wouldn't be difficult to crack the snake demon's encryption. With a suitable algorithm, the large-scale crystal processor could decrypt it within several days.

However, if the snake demon's encryption were to be cracked by brute force, the other encryption within it might be triggered and blow up the space inside the Cosmos Ring, which would definitely ruin everything contained inside.

To thoroughly crack the double-encryption was too difficult for Li Yao at present. Besides, he didn't have special crystal processors that were designed to crack encryptions, either.

However, in the world of Cultivation, there was an occupation in a grey area called 'Cryptohacker'.

Every Cryptohacker was both a crystal processor maniac and an expert in manipulating telepathic thoughts. Many of them were eccentric geniuses who sought no fame or fortune, but only the pleasure of deciphering an encryption.

The Serpent Mountain Village had a few such Cryptohackers. Even the large-scale encryption that the federal government set up on the Spiritual Nexus failed to block their methods.

They were the only people who possibly had the ability to crack the double-encryption in the Cosmos Ring and unravel the secrets inside for him.

"It's decided then!

"I'll get familiar with the progress of the Project Mystic Skeleton in the next couple of days. Then I'll ask for a leave to the Serpent Mountain Village. If everything goes well, it will be a three-day trip at most. I'll make best use of the weekend. Not many things will have to be postponed."

Li Yao activated the spiritual crane messenger for work.

"The Mountain Sea Sect sent me so many messages?"

Li Yao was refreshed. He rubbed his hands together.

Three months ago, he had made a deal with the Mountain Sea Sect. According to their plan, the manufacturing process should've already begun. He was curious about the sales.

The Demon Beast Detector was Li Yao's first self-refined magical equipment on which he had spared no efforts. He had hoped to make some money out of it. But more importantly, he wanted his work to be appreciated by fellow Cultivators.

Li Yao opened the messenger and started browsing in excitement.

The more he read, the more dazed he became. He was speechless for a long time before he mumbled, "Only 693 sold after an entire month?

"Bad reviews are all over the magical equipment magazines and the Spiritual Nexus forums?

"Many dealers are terminating cooperation with us?"

Li Yao scratched his head, confused.

The performance of the Demon Beast Detector had been tested by him in real battles. It was definitely not a laboratory toy.

The Mountain Sea Sect had done thorough market research and project feasibility analysis, both of which indicated a very promising prospect.

Besides, the Demon Beast Detector was the Mountain Sea Sect's last hope. The entire sect from top to bottom had been paying great attention to it.

Their assembly line was modified under Li Yao's personal supervision with consideration of every detail. The product quality was as good as those refined by Li Yao himself.

To expand the market share, the product was set at a relatively low price. It was meant to be a sales campaign to build up the brand image of the Mountain Sea Sect and the Fiend Star.

Although Li Yao didn't have high hopes for his first try, the sales of below 700 for a whole month were still too horrible to look at.

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao logged in the Spiritual Nexus and bought a few virtual magical equipment magazines of the latest releases. Then he searched reviews about the Demon Beast Detector on the magazines.

There were three most famous magical equipment magazines in the Star Glory Federation, which were 'Magical Equipment World', 'Refiners' Home' and 'Flying Sword and Battle Armor'.

Many new articles would be updated in the three magazines, commenting on the newest magical equipment and making a lot of rankings. There were good lists such as Golden List, Most Popular List, and Most Creative List, as well bad lists such as Black List, Rotten Eggs List, and Most Superficial List.

Countless new models of magical equipment appeared in the world of Cultivation every day, which was too much for any Cultivator to test in person. Therefore, the reviews of the magical equipment magazines played an important role in helping them decide what to buy and what not to.

It was acknowledged that if a piece of magical equipment received unanimous approval from all the three magazines, its sales would be sure to soar.

On the contrary, if all the three magazines criticized a piece of magical equipment at the same time, it would be gone from the market very soon.

The Demon Beast Detector, as a beginner's work, didn't attract much attention in the Cultivation world. There were only several articles written by some mediocre critics in the magazines.

Li Yao opened the review posted in the 'Magical Equipment World' and started reading patiently.

At the beginning, the article listed some of the advantages of the Demon Beast Detector casually, such as handiness, precision, quick reaction, and so on.

Then, the article changed its style with a big 'however'.

"However, since the Demon Beast Detector has been refined in the form of a monocle, the popping of information will surely block the wear's vision. Besides, since it is designed to be worn on one side of the head, it risks bringing lopsidedness and thus imbalance to the body.

"Under extreme circumstances where the crystal glass was broken, it is very likely to fly into the wear's eye and affect their combat ability.

"Moreover…"

The article, in a seemingly candid tone, listed more than ten defects, before it was eventually concluded with "All in all, as an interesting plaything created by a college student in his spare time, this piece of magical equipment is good enough in regard of completeness."

Li Yao's nose was almost put out of joint because of anger.

Perfect magical equipment did not exist. The Demon Beast Detector had its own defects and limitations just as any other magical equipment did.

But the article was simply nitpicking the Demon Beast Detector based on criteria so harsh that were bordering on absurdness.

It could be compared to criticizing a chainsword for lack of long-range attack abilities and decrying a crystal railgun because it was unsuitable for melee combat; it was utter BS!

It was correct that putting on a Demon Beast Detector on one of the ears would affect the body balance, but so would a chainsword or any other magical equipment carried by a Cultivator. Never would any Cultivator carry a chainsword on the middle of their back for the sake of balance control!

It was also true that the crystal glass might stab the eyes when it was broken. But any battle armor and crystal suit would have the potential danger of stabbing the wearer's body when they were broken. Criticizing magical equipment for that was just like giving up eating for fear of choking.

Li Yao cursed the writer of the article in mind and opened the review in 'Refiners' Home'.

This article didn't talk much about the shining points and shortcomings of the Demon Beast Detector itself. Instead, the main topic of the article was Li Yao and the Mountain Sea Sect.

It didn't vilify them. On the contrary, there were words of praises between the lines all over the article.

But after reading the entire article, one would recognize that Li Yao was a beginner in the trade of refiners, and that the Mountain Sea Sect was a combat sect without much experience in refining precise magical equipment whose last product, the Hunting Watch, was a brutal failure. They were brave enough to refine precise magical equipment. But the performance and quality of their product would be a big question mark.

Li Yao was so infuriated that he nostril grew even wider.

This article was even more sordid than the previous one. Everything in the article so true that there was not much to pick on.

'Flying Sword and Battle Armor' had used to be a professional magazine that focused on flying-sword-type magical equipment and battle-armor-type magical equipment exclusively. Later, it began to expand its repertoire and post reviews on other military magical equipment.

It had the most proficiency and authority of all the three magical equipment magazines.

The article in Flying Sword and Battle Armor was the shortest.

It did not note the advantages and disadvantages of the product, nor did it cling to Li Yao or the Mountain Sea Sect's background. Instead, it pointed out the problem of the Demon Beast Detector succinctly.

Judging from its designing purpose, the Demon Beast Detector was a piece of ancillary magical equipment for the solo hunters on the Grand Desolate Plateau.

But such solo hunters often boasted extraordinary perceptiveness and computational ability, as well as personal strength. They were already able to memorize features and skills of many demon beast without the help of the Demon Beast Detector.

Those who needed the Demon Beast Detector most were actually low-level Cultivators and ordinary soldiers.

But they often went on missions in groups with large-scale probe magical equipment. The Demon Beast Detector was redundant for them.

"A product of mixed-up orientation with uninspiring functions."

This was the conclusion in 'Flying Sword and Battle Armor'.

Li Yao was sincerely convinced by the article.

He had been thinking of the target customer and function limitations lately and was preparing to add communication and map functions to the new version of Demon Beast Detector.

But the problems alone were obviously not enough to pull the sales down to only 600.

Li Yao thought for a while and entered a forum named 'Blood and Slaughter'.

It was a famous forum among demon beast hunters with a lot of Cultivator users who'd share their experiences in the Grand Desolate with other people.

There was a board in the forum that was especially for posting the personal experiences with a particular piece of magical equipment, which was quite popular among middle-level and low-level Cultivators.

Li Yao found 57 threads that were related to the Demon Beast Detector, none of which were positive.

"This is absolutely garbage. It worked fine at first but was entirely broken after I was tripped over one time during the battle. Later, it couldn't even distinguish low-level demon soldiers from middle-level ones, which almost killed me!"

"Poor design. Very uncomfortable when pinned to ear. Feels like the ear is stuffed if you're sweating."

"Don't ever try it. It is just a scam concocted by a college student and some third-rate sect!"

Reading the threads, Li Yao squinted. Sharp glint was shining in his eyes.

Only six hundred pieces had been sold off. Yet, some 50 users were already posting negative reviews in a small forum at a time and date that was extremely close to the Demon Beast Detector's debut.

It was just like they bought one copy immediately after the Demon Beast Detector was released, went straight on fighting in the depths of the Grand Desolate Plateau, and returned to condemn it on the Nexus the very next day.

One or two cases were possible. But more than twenty similar threads…

Together with the biased reviews in the three magical equipment magazines, Li Yao seemed to have sensed the scent of a conspiracy.

Chapter 265: Fight a Shark

Chapter 265: Fight a Shark

The last message sent by Jiang Wenbo made Li Yao jump out of his chair.

"What? The Mountain Sea Sect is going to be bought out?"

He couldn't bear it any longer and contacted Jiang Wenbo through the spiritual crane messenger.

Two lackluster faces appeared in the light beam. It was Jiang Wenbo and Guan Xiong who were discussing the sect affairs.

"Mr. Jiang, Brother Xiong, what's going on?

"Reviews on the 'Flying Sword and Battle Armor' could be called fair, but those on the 'Magical Equipment World' and 'Refiners' Home' were downright outrageous. There are a lot of negative comments in the major forums too. It's unreasonable!

"It's also unreasonable, according to your letters, that many dealers are terminating cooperation with us!

"The Demon Beast Detector has only been set to public for a month. Without major quality flaws, the dealers wouldn't terminate their cooperation even though the sales are not looking good at present.

"Now, you're also saying that the Mountain Sea Sect is going to be bought out by some other sect. What's happening exactly?"

Li Yao posed all his questions fast and straightforward.

Jiang Wenbo looked at Guan Xiong and sighed.

"Li Yao, your guess is correct. We were ambushed. Somebody's had their eyes on the Demon Beast Detector since before it was on sale.

"There's something wrong with the reviews in the three magical equipment magazines; someone has been behind the negative threads on the forums too; according to our secret investigation, many of the dealers terminated the cooperation because of intense pressure from outside.

"However, none of that is our biggest problem.

"The Demon Beast Detector is a finely-made piece of magical equipment. According to the feedback we collected from the real customers, most of them are very satisfied and willing to recommend it to their friends. As long as we persist, the sales will definitely boom with the word of mouth.

"But right now, our biggest problem is—"

Jiang Wenbo paused for a moment. Then he said in a self-mocking smile, "It doesn't matter now. Might as well just tell you the truth. It's been spreading all over the Cultivation world anyway. The Mountain Sea Sect's going to have a capital chain rupture!"

"What?!"

Li Yao was shocked.

The capital status of a sect is the secret of all secrets. Once the capital chain rupture is known by the public, the following chain reactions will destroy a sect easily!

The fact that Jiang Wenbo was telling him the top secret meant that it was not a secret anymore.

Jiang Wenbo smiled bitterly.

"A few reviews on the magazines or forums are not fatal; even though many dealers have terminated cooperation, I still have a lot of life-long friends supporting us; also, we can always sell them on the Nexus.

"But right now, it was the crystal camera supplier that set us up.

"Our crystal camera supplier, after providing the first batch of crystal cameras, had been delaying the delivery of goods with all kinds of excuses. When we communicated with them, they guaranteed that everything was alright. The postponement was due to force majeure, specifically, short of raw materials. They promised that they would deliver the rest of the goods before the deadline and compensate for our loss because of the delay.

"There had been a deep trust between us after many years of cooperation. So, we believed what they said.

"Before we received the crystal cameras, we had semi-refined thousands of Demon Beast Detectors and even presold them.

"But, in the end, after postponing for three times, the crystal camera supplier scrapped the contract and terminated the cooperation!

"As a result, we had to recall all our presold orders and double-refunded our customers' advance payment. It had a bad influence on our brand image, too.

"Even worse, the thousands of semi-manufactured Demon Beast Detectors had all been refined based on the parameters of their crystal camera model. It was difficult to find substitution."

Li Yao nodded.

As a refiner, he was well aware that the parameters of crystal cameras refined by different sects varied significantly. In refining, a one-millimeter divergence would be more than enough to stop the component from being universal.

But there was one other thing he didn't understand.

"Mr. Jiang, when you signed the contract with this crystal camera supplier, there must be breach clauses on it, wasn't there? The liquidated damages must be a lot more than your loss, aren't they?"

Jiang Wenbo said, "Li Yao, you're not an admin-type Cultivator. You don't understand.

"Yes, there are breach clauses on the contract. But now, they refuse to acknowledge the contract. So, we'll have to file a lawsuit and sort everything out in a federal court. The trial might take one year or even two years. Of course, we will win the case in the end, but it's going to be three to five years later when we really get the liquidated damages!"

Li Yao thought for a moment. But he was still puzzled.

"But what can they gain from all this? They're losing both their money and their credit. Have they decided to commit suicide while dragging the Mountain Sea Sect down with them?"

Jiang Wenbo shook his head.

"You're wrong. The Mountain Sea Sect will die before them. Two of our loans will be due by the end of next month. We lost a fortune because of this accident. There's no way we can pay the loans now.

"What is even weirder is that the capital status of the Mountain Sea Sect was somehow leaked. The entire Cultivation world now all know of the Mountain Sea Sect is going to go bankrupt at any moment. No one dares to lend any money to us right now."

Li Yao frowned. A moment later, he asked, "Mr. Jiang, can you tell me how much the capital gap is for the Mountain Sea Sect?"

Jiang Wenbo was dazed for a second. Guan Xiong, who'd been sitting beside him with a grave face, said, "With everything going to this far, there's nothing worth hiding now! Even our financial statement has been set to public! Besides, the Demon Beast Detector is our mutual project. Li Yao is our partner. He deserves to know our actual status.

"Now, the entire sect, from top to bottom, is trying everything we can and pulling all kinds of strings. We estimate that there will be a three hundred to five hundred million funding gap next month. If we can't work it out, the Mountain Sea Sect will be doomed when the capital chain rupture occurs!"

Li Yao nodded in agreement.

A three hundred to five hundred million gap might not seem very much for a sect, but the actual situation was a lot worse than it sounded.

A chain is a serial assembly of links that are closely connected to one another.

The Mountain Sea Sect had been in debt due to ill-management for many years. To embark on the Demon Beast Detector project, it borrowed a lot of loans from banks and other sects. The total loans were as high as several billion.

All the investors had been paying close attention to the sales of the Demon Beast Detector as well as the capital status of the Mountain Sea Sect.

If the Demon Beast Detector became an instant hit with amazing sales, the banks and sects definitely wouldn't try to recover their money in a hurry. Instead, they might even lend more money to the Mountain Sea Sect in order to accumulate more interest.

But as it turned out, the Demon Beast Detector was a bummer in the market. With the cash flow of the Mountain Sea Sect running out, there would be chain reactions that may lead to bankruptcy. No bank or sect would agree to lend loans under such circumstances. They would only demand the Mountain Sea Sect pay their debts as soon as possible.

The Mountain Sea Sect would be hopeless if so!

Li Yao had a vague feeling that this whole incident had been a serial trap from the very beginning.

"Somebody must be behind all this. Do you have any theory who might be targeting the Mountain Sea Sect and our Demon Beast Detector?" Li Yao asked coldly. Dangerous brilliance was beaming in his eyes.

Before Jiang Wenbo opened his mouth, Guan Xiong said furiously,

"I don't have any valid evidence. But ten days ago, the Zephyr Guild spoke boldly that it was going to acquire the Mountain Sea Sect and make us a sub-branch of the Zephyr Guild!"

"The Zephyr Guild!"

It immediately occurred to Li Yao that the Zephyr Guild had reached out to him when he just got the patent of the Demon Beast Detector, which wanted to buy out his patent at a very cheap price and was turned down by him.

Jiang Wenbo said, "The Zephyr Guild is a traditional conglomerate in the field of precise magical equipment refining, which has been shifting to the probe magical equipment in recent years. Their advertising expense has been astronomical.

"However, the Zephyr Guild was first known by the watches they refined. Their probe magical equipment is all worn on wrists.

"I bought several of their products before. The design and precision are indeed much better than those of our Demon Beast Detector.

"But I still think the Demon Beast Detector will work better in real battles."

Li Yao squinted and said, "You mean, if the Demon Beast Detector goes popular, the market of the Zephyr Guild's probe magical equipment might shrink and cause them great losses?"

"Of course!"

Jiang Wenbo added, "Also, the foul moves that we've been suffering from recently are exactly the style of the 'shark'."

Li Yao didn't know the name, "Who is this 'shark'?"

"He is the nickname of the young master of the Zephyr Guild, Qiu Guanyu, a talented admin-type Cultivator. Although he's only 29 years old, he has led several mergers and helped the Zephyr Guild swallow many sects that are of smaller size."

Jiang Wenbo continued, "Qiu Guanyu is both meticulous and merciless. He is best known for his style of killing without spilling blood. If he wants to take over a sect, he will try everything he can to suffocate the sect until it has no choice but to be devoured by the Zephyr Guild, with furs, skins, bones, and all!

"In the seven years since he started his career, he has taken over eleven sects in such way. Every year, one or two sects will become his new sacrifice. Therefore, he has been nicknamed the 'shark'!"

"So, this is the case. I understand it now."

Li Yao asked again, "Mr. Jiang, Brother Xiong, what are the opinions inside the Mountain Sea Sect about the takeover?"

"Of course we hate it!"

Guan Xiong shouted, "If it were months ago when the Mountain Sea Sect was in desperation, we might've agreed to their terms if the Zephyr Guild wanted to buy us out, however unwillingly.

"But right now, with such an excellent product, the Demon Beast Detector, when we're ready for something big, this sleazy shark jumped on us and wanted us to bear the insult without complaints? Whoever wants to go there can go, but I definitely won't! To think that I might call the shark 'master' one day in the future is enough to kill me!

"Anyways, if the Mountain Sea Sect is to be taken over, I'll just resign and be a free Cultivator!"

Jiang Wenbo said, "Few in the Mountain Sea Sect are looking forward to the merger. But is there anything we can do about it?"

Li Yao didn't give an answer. He observed, "The bottom line is, if you have three to five billion by the end of next month, you'll be able to survive the trouble temporarily, correct?"

Jiang Wenbo nodded. Then his eyes grew wide as he shouted, failing to control his voice,

"Li Yao, what do you want?"

Pausing after each word, Li Yao said, "I want to go to the Zephyr Guild and meet this so-called shark."

Jiang Wenbo blurted out, "You know nothing about business and you are definitely no match for the shark. What's more, even if we can fix the loan issue temporarily, there are still bigger capital gaps in the future if the sales of the Demon Beast Detector remain at the current level. This will be a bottomless hole. There's no need to jump into it! Besides, it is just our speculation. We don't our any solid evidence to pin the whole scheme on the Zephyr Guild!"

"You'll figure out how to solve the funding problem later! As long as Mr. Jiang, Brother Xiong and the rest of the Mountain

Sea Sect stick together until the end, there will definitely be a way out! As for evidence—"

Li Yao smiled. His sharp teeth were glaring as he said, "Do you think the vulture needs 'solid evidence' to launch a counterattack when it is offended?"

Chapter 266: Laws of the Outlaws

Chapter 266: Laws of the Outlaws

Spiritual Wind City was located hundreds of kilometers away, a prosperous metropolis in the middle of the federation.

In the center of the city stood a jade-like, rosily-shining skyscraper, which was the headquarters of the Zephyr Guild, one of the top hundred sects in the federation.

Wind was blowing hard on the rooftop. A handsome man whose hair was long enough to reach his waist had a greedy expression, his face aglow from the lights of the city below him.

His long, silver hair was motionless in the blowing wind.

Suddenly—

The man took a deep, deep breath that seemed to be absorbing all the opulence of the city into his stomach like a giant whale which was sucking water.

Weirdly, his chest did not inflate despite the deep breath.

After more than a minute of inhaling, his cheeks were finally flushed in satisfaction. But there was no sign of exhaling. He turned around.

"Young master, the Mountain Sea Sect firmly declined our merger proposal yet again."

Respectfully, a subordinate handed over a crystal processor to him.

Qiu Guanyu, the young master of the Zephyr Guild, known as the 'shark', replied calmly with a cruel smile, "Just another futile, dying struggle. A prey that has been bitten in the middle of their body by me can never get away, right?"

He liked the feeling when his prey rolled over and over in his mouth, only to be shredded, chewed, and swallowed in the end.

Qiu Guanyu was an admin-type Cultivator. His path of Cultivation had been building up the Zephyr Guild by leading it to swallow other sects.

Every time the Zephyr Guild took in a sect and became bigger than before, boundless power would be absorbed by him and improve his capability significantly.

Business was war!

For Qiu Guanyu, swallowing other sects in business was a way of Cultivation, just like fighting the demon beasts was for the battle-type Cultivators.

Eyes closed, he seemed to have heard the cries in the Mountain Sea Sect whose every method had come to a dead end. Countless power was crowding in his blood and soul.

When the Mountain Sea Sect was fully embedded, his strength would arrive at a new peak!

"Young master, right now, we still have the chance to negotiate with the patent owner of the Demon Beast Detector and make a new deal with him. There's no need to waste so many resources buying out the Mountain Sea Sect."

He was Qiu Guanyu's trusted subordinate. That's why he was bold enough to propose a different plan.

"You mean, that guy 'Li Yao'?"

Qiu Guanyu squinted and said, "He is not a nearsighted guy. Quite on the contrary, he is very shrewd. He must've already realized that his Demon Beast Detector has tremendous value. If we go to him right now, he will know that it is probably more valuable than he thought and thus quote an unacceptable price for us.

"Besides—

"I like to give other people opportunities. But only once. It depends on them whether or not they grab it.

"Last time, I gave him an opportunity by sending someone to talk with him, but he turned me down.

"He wants a second chance? Come and beg me!"

…

Seven days later, on a spiritual airship to Serpent Mountain Village located in the south frontier which had been known as 'the most chaotic city of the federation'.

Serpent Mountain Village was formally known as 'Serpent City'. It had been a small fishing village on the south border of the federation. But over a hundred years, it became a super city with a population of over ten million.

Serpent City was a very special city that claimed to be 'a place without laws'. It boasted the largest black market, casino, and grey industries that verged on the illegal in the entire Star Glory Federation.

With enough money in pocket, one could buy strengthening drugs with amazing performance and yet of instable quality; one could buy all kinds of attack magical equipment that had been banned by the government due to their uncontrollable might; one could even buy Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures of unknown backgrounds here.

If one did not have enough money on hand, one could fight and gain fame in the thrilling fight clubs with one's own hands.

In short, Serpent City was just like the 'underground ghost city' in every city of the federation, only a hundred times bigger and more extravagant. One could say that it was a 'super underground ghost city' at service of all Cultivators.

The federal government, if determined, of course had the power to demolish the city. But as the ancient saying put, 'he who is mighty tends to break the rules'. The Cultivators were too strong to be bound by government's rules on everything, and they hoped that there was a space where they could do whatever they wanted.

Many Cultivators were in a lot of stress due to years of fighting in the wilderness and wandering on the edge of death. They needed a place to let out their pressure too.

It wouldn't be difficult to get rid of the Serpent City in reality. But it would be another thing to demolish the Serpent City in every Cultivator's mind.

This was how humanity worked. Cultivators were human beings, too, who had their bright side and their dark side. Suppressing darkness did not mean that it would be gone; it would only lead to greater trouble once it was accumulated.

Therefore, the government might as well designate a special area for their catharsis.

For example, Li Yao, who had got a batch of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and did not wish their background to be known, could go to the black market of the Serpent City to sell them off.

However, he would still have to find a place to sell them if there were no Serpent City, in which case he'd need to make secret transactions with the potential buyer which might lead to a gang fight due to mutual distrust.

In light of this, Serpent City was kept as a sanctuary for the darkness and lawlessness of the Cultivators, as depicted in the saying 'when the water is too clear, there will be no fish living in it'.

Right now, the government had two, and only two, ironclad rules for Serpent City:

Firstly, the affairs inside the Serpent City should be handled within Serpent City. Any matter that was out of the range of Serpent City should be left alone.

Secondly, the conflicts among Cultivators should be settled among Cultivators and wouldn't be investigated unless either party asked to, even if there were murder cases. Moreover, it was strictly forbidden for Cultivators to harm the interests of ordinary people, and if anyone did, the guilty Cultivator would be sentenced with much severer punishments than outside.

The two iron rules had been well carried out.

Right now, the daily cash flow of the Serpent City was at the scale of billions. Major forces of the city were all endorsed by top sects of the federation, who worked together to maintain the order of the city and would never allow any psycho to interfere with their business.

For the ordinary people, not only were they safe under the current system, they could also benefit from the affluent Cultivators who were not hesitant to give them tips as much as 30,000 or even 50,000 after winning a fortune in a casino.

Therefore, the ordinary people approved of Serpent City as well.

Five hours later, the spiritual airship landed on the suburb of the Serpent City.

Li Yao took the spiritual subway to downtown.

Walking on the street with palms and coconut trees on both sides while the sea breeze brushed his face gently, Li Yao felt nice and cozy when he saw the citizens walking and talking in laughter.

It never occurred to him that the most chaotic city of the federation, a place without laws, could be as peaceful as other metropolises and so much more elegant that the underground ghost city of Floating Spear City.

However, Li Yao was not going to let down his alert so fast.

He had pinned two 'Face Twisters' inside his mouth, which was a kind of special magical equipment that could twist the user's facial muscles by unleashing special bioelectricity.

Wearing them, it seemed that Li Yao had done a plastic surgery.

Through spiritual energy manipulation, his height had also shrunk by a large degree.

Right now, Li Yao seemed to be a ten-year-older low-level Cultivator who was ready to enjoy himself a little bit after brutal battles on the Grand Desolate Plateau.

People like him were everywhere in the Serpent City.

He was carrying a grey military backpack which contained some Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures of little value. A chainsword was swinging on his waist to add to his disguise.

His trump cards were all inside his Cosmos Ring. The reason why he was delayed for seven days was to refine more attack magical equipment.

Other than the regular stuff, he'd also brought fifty Hellfire-Lightnings.

This time, he didn't forget to bring Little Black and also hid it in the Cosmos Ring.

It would be best if everybody just left him alone. If he was pissed off, he could just throw the fifty Hellfire-Lightnings to their base and fly away on the Black Wing. Nobody would ever be able to catch him.

While thinking about that, Li Yao reached a building under a sign that read 'Bountiful Treasures Pavilion' and walked inside.

The Bountiful Treasures Pavilion was one of the largest black market in Serpent City. Although it was called a 'black market', it was most famous for good service and thorough safety measures.

Trading with the Bountiful Treasures Pavilion might be a little bit less profitable, but the process would always be fair and square.

The Bountiful Treasures Pavilion even offered security guards that could escort their customers until they were out of Serpent City.

Should anything happen to the customer who traded with the Bountiful Treasures Pavilion, its endorser would find out the suspect drastically and eliminate him in a way that was much crueler than the secret police.

The first floor of the Bountiful Treasures Pavilion was a hall for the exchange of common materials, where dozens of Cultivators in similar clothes to Li Yao's were doing their business busily.

They all looked up in amazement, as a beautiful, elegant lady walked out and greeted the newcomer, "Mr. Fang, nice to meet you. This pavilion is honored by your presence. This way, please. Our manager, Mr. Lin, has been waiting for you."

Fang Ping was a pseudonym that Li Yao made up for himself.

It was an ordinary, almost boring, name that couldn't possibly be related to his identity or his past.

While he was on his way, he already reached out to the Bountiful Treasures Pavilion and sent a hologram of the forbidden scales of the mutant lion dragon to them.

The precious material instantly made him a VIP of the Bountiful Treasures Pavilion, which even assigned a senior client manager for him.

The Bountiful Treasures Pavilion even offered to pick him up from the station. But Li Yao rejected because he didn't want to flaunt his possessions.

"That guy must have got something really valuable!"

"A fortune! A great fortune for sure!"

"I hope that I will be invited to the VIP room and talk to a special client manager face to face one day!"

Many low-level Cultivators were looking at Li Yao with pure jealousy.

Chapter 267: First Bucket of Gold

Chapter 267: First Bucket of Gold

In the luxurious lift for VIPs, Li Yao ascended to the VIP reception room on the 22nd floor.

The room was decorated in an ancient style, with many Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures placed on the display racks around.

Li Yao glimpsed at them and was surprised.

The Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures were rare and costly, many of which were as valuable as his forbidden scales, if not more.

Such precious Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures were just lying on the display racks working as ornaments! The Bountiful Treasures Pavilion was indeed wealthy!

Then Li Yao realized that this was a way to show the Bountiful Treasures Pavilion's stock, as well as a way to strike the customer's confidence.

If a customer walked into the room and saw so many precious materials, he would subconsciously believe that the items he was going to sell were not as valuable as they should be and thus give a lower quote for them.

"Mr. Fang, hello!"

A scholarly-looking middle-aged man with glossy hair walked to Li Yao, "I am Lin Cheng, the VIP client manager of the Bountiful Treasures Pavilion. Please sit down."

Li Yao nodded to him. Then he patted his backpack, indicating that he did not want to waste his time in small talk and would rather get down to business directly.

Smiling, Mr. Lin showed Li Yao to a giant crystal table.

The crystal table had been carved out of an intact, flawless crystal. Data and information were jumping nonstop inside the table, suggesting that it was an embedded crystal processor with amazing computational ability.

An ivory mist enveloped the crystal table.

"A hybrid of the liger-type demon beast and the dragon-type demon beast is very rare in the market. Also, according to the hologram that you sent to us, it is a mutated one, which makes the materials from it all the more valuable! Please rest assured, Mr. Fang. They will be worth a fortune, if they're truly authentic."

Mr. Lin talked straightforwardly, as if he were really on Li Yao's side. Li Yao, although aware that the manager would try to slash the price later, still felt that what he said was genuine and warm.

This was what a real business man should look like.

Li Yao took out two forbidden scales from his backpack and put them on the crystal table.

The ivory mist blinked, then it swelled and crowed to the forbidden scales which were carefully examined without any detail being left out.

Hundreds of pieces of data popped up inside the crystal table.

Typing fast on the virtual keyboard for a moment, Mr. Lin raised his eyebrows and said hesitatingly,

"Mr. Fang, not that I intentionally quote you at a low price, but things are complicated here. The two forbidden scales of a mutant lion dragon that you offered contain the power of both lineages. What's more, mutation has made their sturdiness much better than the scales on common dragon-type demon beasts. They're excellent materials indeed.

"However, their state of preservation is not very good, which seems to be a result of an intensive collision. They look good on the surface, but there are cracks everywhere inside them.

"Mr. Fang, you should know that materials like forbidden scales are best for the refinement of shields or armors. However, given that the two forbidden scales are full of inner cracks, the defense ability that they can provide is questionable. Therefore, their worth may not be as high as you expected."

Mr. Lin continued typing on the virtual keyboard for a while. Then he looked up and said, "Mr. Fang, this is your first time to do business with us. Forbidden scales of the mutant lion dragon are rare too. In light of our future cooperation, I'll quote you 50 million for the two forbidden scales. How does it sound?"

Li Yao didn't give an answer. He was very well aware that the two forbidden scales were in bad condition, otherwise he wouldn't decide to trade them in the first place.

Back when he was in the Thunderous Sound Mountain, in order to resist the scourge of the demon core explosion, he had raised all the three forbidden scales above his head as a shield, two of which were so seriously damaged that he could tell it with his bare hands.

The third forbidden scale was relatively intact. He couldn't bear to sell it and planned to refine an ancient-style light armor with the secret technique from 40,000 years ago as well as some other materials.

However, a quote of 50 million…

Li Yao didn't show any sign of approval or disapproval. He took out from his backpack a lot of neatly-conserved demon tendons, demon bones, demon paws and demon teeth which all came from the mutant lion dragon.

Mr. Lin was sort of surprised. He glanced at Li Yao quickly and then focused on the new materials wholeheartedly. A moment later, he nodded in satisfaction.

"Good. Good. All of the materials are from the same mutant lion dragon. Although they are all damaged more or less due to what seems to be a big explosion, they can help improve the defense ability of the forbidden scales if they're refined together."

Li Yao didn't stop. He continued bringing out the trophies he got from the infiltration squad of the demon clan, which finally caused Mr. Lin's eyes to light up with astonishment.

Although members of the infiltration squad were only at the demon general level, a lot of them had carried magical equipment of the Blood Demon Sector.

Strong magical equipment such as the Soul Stealer and the materials that were relatively unblemished were too valuable for Li Yao to sell.

But the poorer items that he brought out were enough to dazzle Mr. Lin.

Mr. Lin stopped talking. He picked up a pair of glasses which was in a bizarre shape and looked like an ivory mini-sized telescope from the bottom of the crystal table and put it on his nose. Two silver lights beamed out from the glasses. He scrutinized the items on the table.

After a long time, he exhaled and said, "Despite the bad state of preservation, there are really a whole lot of them. Together with the two forbidden scales, well…

"The two forbidden scales have 11 cracks and 14 cracks inside, resulting to a defense loss of 22% and 37% respectively. But since you've brought a lot of demon bones that are of the same origin with the forbidden scales, we can grind them and insert the powder into the forbidden scales to fill the cracks."

Before he was able to propose his new quote, Li Yao interrupted him, "After repairing, sturdiness of the two forbidden scales should be able to be recovered to above 85%, which is similar to another precious defense material named "Ink Snake's Seven-inch Skin". But Ink Snake's Seven-inch Skin can rarely be so large. Usually, it has to be stitched together to make it larger, and the joints are its fatal weakness!

"At market, an Ink Snake's Seven-inch Skin of such size is worth more than 70 million, and you may not have the chance to buy it even if you have the money.

"Although the Bountiful Treasures Pavilion is a black market, a quote of only 50 million for the two forbidden scales of the mutant lion dragon is still too unfrank. I think we can stop here if you insist on your quote."

Mr. Link was truly shocked by what he said. He changed his attitude from superficial hospitality to sincere respect.

He wiped the cold sweat on his forehead. Calculating in silence for a moment, he said, "Mr. Fang, you are an expert of the trade. Let's just call a spade a spade. It's correct that the two forbidden scales, once repaired, could be as sturdy as the Ink Snake's Seven-inch Skin. But they have been damaged in battle after all in the first place. Many rich Cultivators wouldn't like to spend a fortune on a battle armor made of renovated materials, however perfectly it has been renewed.

"Therefore, the price of the Ink Snake's Seven-inch Skin does not fit in this scenario.

"100 million.

"100 million for the two forbidden scales.

"And another 100 million for the rest of the stuff combined.

"Mr. Fang, this is the best that the Bountiful Treasures Pavilion can offer. As an expert, you should know that the quote is about their true worth. After all, we need to make profit, too."

Li Yao nodded slightly. 200 million was quite close to his estimation.

Through official channel, he could sell them at a price 30 to 50 million higher, but there would be traces of the transaction. The black market, on the other hand, was much more direct and straightforward.

"Okay. I want twenty soul-marked cards with face value of 10 million."

A soul-marked card was a special, anonymous gold transfer card provided by banks for the exchanges of significant size among Cultivators.

Although the card was anonymous, a Cultivator could leave a unique soul mark inside the card and bind the soul mark with other bank cards.

Once the card was stolen, the Cultivator could feel it immediately and transfer the money in the card to other cards telepathically. The soul mark could also be used to locate where the card was.

Since it was anonymous and theft-proof, the soul-marked card was quite popular among Cultivators.

It didn't take much time before twenty violet soul-marked cards were delivered to Li Yao.

Splitting twenty telepathic thoughts, binding the soul-marked cards one by one, and sensing the '10,000,000' in each and every of them, Li Yao was so dizzy that he felt he was standing on a pile of cotton.

A lot of feelings were rolling over in his mind.

A year and a half ago, he was still a boy of no fame or fortune among the Common Class students on the playground of Crimson Nimbus Second High School watching the prestigious Fiend Blade Peng Hai flying in the sky, saliva hanging on his lips.

At that time, he was told that Cultivators such as Fiend Blade Peng Hai were all billionaires. They seemed to be an unreachable dream for him.

But now, he had become a billionaire, too?

Taking in a deep breath, Li Yao found that among other feelings, there was not much excitement.

Because he was a Cultivator.

To be a billionaire might be a life-long dream for an ordinary man, but it was just the start line in the Cultivation world.

What's more, what he was pursuing could not be bought by money.

Mr. Lin smiled and said, "Mr. Fang, this is your first time here and you've already brought us such a big deal. I am personally benefited from you, too, with the brokerage that I'm going to get. Thank you very much, Mr. Fang. If there's anything else that you need, feel free to ask me. Although the Bountiful Treasures Pavilion is just a marketplace, we have a lot of connections in the Serpent City, and it is our top principle to serve the customers until they're satisfied."

Li Yao thought of something. He asked, "Besides purchasing materials, I believe you sell them, too?"

Mr. Lin nodded. He pushed a crystal processor over and smiled politely.

"Of course. The Bountiful Treasures Pavilion is one of the largest material exchange centers in the south of the federation. We provide whatever materials you're interested in. This is the latest inventory of materials we offer. Please take a look, Mr. Fang."

The crystal processor had an amazing performance. The moment Li Yao opened the inventory, he entered a Half-step Great Illusionary Land. Countless streams of information flowed into his brain, which were introductions to thousands of materials. It was just the table of contents. If going to details, there were millions of materials on the list.

Li Yao glanced through them and sighed. Whatever excitement he had when he just got the 200 million was completely gone now.

These materials were too expensive!

'It seems that 200 million for a Cultivators is no different than 20 thousand for an ordinary man. In the blink of an eye, it'll all be gone!'

Chapter 268: The Unknown and the Defective

Chapter 268: The Unknown and the Defective

'Essence of the Sand Orchid, 40 million for one piece? Tiger-soul Ice Stripes Egg, 66 million for one piece? What, there's even the demon core of a Heavenly Thunder Wolf? Modifying the Hellfire-Lightnings with that can improve their power by dozens of times. But its price is insane, too. 250 million for one!'

Li Yao browsed through the inventory greedily.

As a magical equipment maniac, he was dazzled by the rare Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures in the inventory and was of half a mind to buy all of them.

But looking at his pocket, he noticed, sadly, that there were only twenty soul-marked cards inside, which were not even enough to buy five different kinds of the materials.

Li Yao seemed to have gone back to the day when he was staring at the roasted duck worthy of a few hundred bulks through the shop window hungrily with only a few coins in his pocket.

'Cultivation is indeed a money-burning job!

'I used to do refining with ordinary materials and didn't understand it. But now that I want to refine some strong magical equipment based on Heavenly Materials and Earthly

Treasures, I finally know that money is indeed a precious thing!

'Based on the secret refining techniques from Ou Yezi's memory pieces, I can refine some magical equipment that is suitable for me and can significantly improve my combat ability. But according to this inventory, the raw materials alone would cost me one billion!

'And that was not counting the cost of the Fiend Start Refining Workshop.

'Even if I buy a world fragment with a mortgage, I'll still have to make a 30% down payment. Considering that I'm only a Refinement Stage Cultivator and a college student with no stable income, the banks might not agree to the down payment rate. If they ask for a higher rate, the money that I need to pay will greatly increase!

'Besides, there's still the cost of the modification of the world fragment.

'Since I'm going to build my personal refining workshop, naturally, everything should be done according to the highest standards, which will presumably cost me several hundred million.

'These expenses, counted together, almost reach two billion.

'Besides, I still want to wrestle with this shark, Qiu Guanyu, of the Zephyr Guild.

'Which means I need another three to five hundred million.'

Li Yao was gritting his teeth without him knowing.

He wasn't a man who was willing to bend his knee to the powerful. Besides, Guan Xiong of the Mountain Sea Sect had saved his life before.

The Zephyr Guild browbeat the Mountain Sea Guild into surrendering the Demon Beast Detector by foul play, which had truly infuriated Li Yao.

As a refiner, he treated the magical equipment refined by him as his children.

Now that the Zephyr Guild had been slandering his 'children', he was ready to make a serious comeback.

'Should I sell some more materials?'

Li Yao couldn't make up his mind.

The materials left in the Cosmos Ring had been carefully selected by him. They hadn't been affected by the explosion and were all in good condition.

He was preparing to refine them into magical equipment. That way, he would gain a much bigger profit.

Seeing through his hesitation, Mr. Lin brought out a second inventory of materials without saying anything.

Materials on the second inventory were much cheaper than those on the previous one. Most of their prices were at the level of millions. Some of the materials were even only a few hundred thousand a piece.

However, after a quick glance, Li Yao discovered that he barely knew any stuff on the inventory, and the few Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures that he knew were much cheaper than the market price.

Li Yao looked at Mr. Lin in suspicion.

Mr. Lin explained, "They're all unknown materials and defective materials, which is why their price is lower than normal."

The cosmos was so enormous that there were many materials that the Cultivators of the Heaven's Origin Sector never saw, never knew, and failed to perceive their characteristics when they found one.

Some of the materials were retrieved from world fragments; some were brought to the Heaven's Origin Sector by falling stars; some were discovered in the deep underground of the Heaven's Origin Sector.

Since their backgrounds and attributes were obscure, it was difficult to refine them into magical equipment. Therefore, their prices were relatively low.

However, if someone was smart enough to see the value of an unknown material and its possible usage, he would be able to buy a real bargain.

As for the defective materials, they were like the forbidden scales that Li Yao brought, only hundreds of times more seriously damaged, bordering on the irreparable. Therefore, their prices were much lower than their normal counterparts. Sometimes it was only one tenth of the original price.

If a refiner had a secret technique to fix the materials, or simply chose to use them for auxiliary purposes, it would be a good bargain, too, to buy some of the defective materials back.

Li Yao's eyes were glaring in delight.

There were some secret techniques in the Hundred Smelting Clan to fix the defective materials. Although it was impossible to entirely renew the materials, the utility rate of them could be considerably improved.

Now that he was not rich enough to buy the first-class materials, he might as well buy some defective ones.

"How can I buy the unknown materials and the defective materials?"

Mr. Lin smiled.

"The trading procedure for unknown materials and defective materials is different from that for ordinary materials.

"Since the quality and performance of the ordinary materials are relatively stable, the Bountiful Treasures Pavilion guarantee that all of them are exactly fit to their descriptions on the inventory. Our customers can buy whatever they want by shopping through the inventory. If they are not satisfied at their purchase when it is delivered, whatever they've bought can be refunded or replaced at their will.

"But the Bountiful Treasures Pavilion cannot confirm the value of the unknown materials and defective materials. For some materials, we don't even know what they are. Therefore, the customers are allowed to examine the materials in person before placing an order.

"Such materials are indeed cheap. But they cannot be returned once they're purchased. So, let's get one thing straight. The Bountiful Treasures Pavilion does not endorse any of the materials. Chances are that one might spend a few million on what one thought to be precious, only to find out that it is a bizarre stone in the end. The Bountiful

Treasures Pavilion will not take any responsibility in such cases."

Mr. Lin paused and said, "This is not a rule invented by the Bountiful Treasures Pavilion, but a common practice of all the material exchange centers in and beyond Serpent City."

Mr. Lin smiled and continued, "It is indeed risky to buy unknown materials and defective materials. But the yield can be amazing too, if you've picked the right stuff. Somebody became a magnate overnight, yet somebody was so addicted to the activity that they paid a few billion for loads of garbage. It is interesting that many Cultivators call buying unknown materials and defective materials 'treasure gambling', which is even more attractive to them than purchasing ordinary materials.

"It just so happens—"

Mr. Lin took out an emerald card made of green jade from his pocket and said, "If Mr. Fang wishes to buy unknown materials and defective materials, I can take you to the warehouse right now. However, a new batch of materials will be delivered tomorrow, which is said to contain several unknown materials from other worlds. Many Cultivators have expressed their interest. Therefore, the Bountiful Treasures Pavilion is going to hold a large trade fair for unknown materials and defective materials in two days' time. Since Mr. Fang apparently is an expert of the business, I assume you are interested too. This is a VIP invitation card for you. Please keep it. If you're not occupied in two days, feel free to drop by."

Li Yao was instantly attracted. Unknown materials from other worlds?

It was going to be an eye-opener!

There were other affairs that he needed to attend to in the Serpent City, which would cost him another two days anyway. Therefore, he accepted the card and replied without hesitation, "Sure. I'll be at the trade fair in two days."

After thinking for a moment, he asked, "Mr. Lin, I'm looking for a powerful Cryptohacker. Do you have any idea whom I can turn to?"

Mr. Lin answered, "There are several skilled, experienced Cryptohackers within the Bountiful Treasures Pavilion. Please wait a moment, Mr. Fang."

He typed fast on the keyboard for a while and exclaimed in joy, "Master Qin is free at present. I've made an appointment. I'll show you the way, Mr. Fang."

…

Master Qin was an obese, bald, middle-aged man who probably weighed more than 150 kilograms.

His office was brimming with crystal processor components. Crystal wires were everywhere, like a thickly dotted spider net.

Dozens of mini crystal processors were flying among the crystal wires, humming like the busy bees in flowers.

"Impressive!"

Li Yao was also a crystal processor fan. He immediately recognized that this Master Qin had assembled a super crystal processor of insane computation ability by dismantling seven different kinds of mainframe crystal processors and modifying them.

The room was the shell of the crystal processor. They were standing inside it right now.

Of course, Li Yao was smart enough not to give him the Cosmos Ring directly.

He had parsed the double encryption in the Cosmos Ring and input it into a mini crystal processor.

As long as the Cryptohacker showed him how to resolve it, he would be able to take care of the rest of the stuff.

Li Yao handed over the mini crystal processor

Master Qin did not pay much attention to it at the beginning. He kept cramming dry fruits and cakes in front of him into his mouth, while a few crystal wires connected the mini crystal processor to the super crystal processer automatically.

"Shua!"

Four light beams appeared in front him. Rows of data poured down like a green storm.

Half a minute later, Master Qin stopped eating snacks. Greasy sweat was flowing down his forehead.

A minute later, Master Qin sat up straight. Eight light beams were blinking in front of him. His thick and short fingers were crushing the virtual keyboard.

Two minutes later, Master Qin's eyes were beaming in crimson. Oinking noises were coming from his throat, showing that he was taking it more seriously than ever. There were more than fifty crystal wires connected to the mini crystal processor, and twelve light beams were floating in front of Master Qin.

Five minutes later, Master Qin stopped all actions. His facial muscles were wrinkled together as he was thinking hard.

Ten minutes later, after a long sigh, Master Qin collapsed like a rice bag that had just been emptied.

"This double encryption is very weird and does not seem to come from one person. Rather, there seem to be a gap of hundreds of years between the two encryptions.

"Also, the two encryptions are both in odd styles. The first one is eccentric, the second one ruthless and aggressive. If I crack it by brute force, chances are that my crystal processor will be set off!"

Chapter 269: Invisible Bug

Chapter 269: Invisible Bug

Pondering for a moment, Master Qin shook his head and said, "The second encryption is obviously consistent with the style of ancient encryptions from the Star Ocean Imperium, of which I'm no expert. If I'm given another month, I might be able to create a new algorithm to bypass it. But the chances of success are not very promising. 30% tops, I estimate."

Li Yao frowned. He didn't expect the encryption in the Cosmos Ring to be so complicated.

But it was reasonable on second thought. If the encryption was simple, the snake demon would've cracked it already, and he wouldn't be the one taking the advantage now.

Li Yao said, "I could give you one month. But the 30% success rate is too low for me. Thank you for your effort, Master Qin."

While he was talking, he took back the mini crystal processor.

Master Qin sent the mini crystal processor into his chest by manipulating the crystal wires. He thought for a moment and said, "Ancient encryptions of the Star Ocean Imperium are a very special research field. Not many Cryptohackers in the Serpent City are familiar with it. Let me see… You can try and see if Yuan Qi, the 'Invisible Bug', could do something about it. He's a wizard of the field."

"Invisible Bug?"

Li Yao squinted. He started to wonder what this nickname stood for.

…

An hour later, Li Yao marched to the underground of Serpent City and stepped onto a giant lift.

Every major city of the federation had an underground ghost city. Serpent City was no exception.

Or rather, the underground world ten times larger than the one on the ground was the main body of Serpent City.

Li Yao recalled what Master Qin told him.

Yuan Qi, the Invisible Bug, didn't belong to any organization. He was an unaffiliated cultivator.

As a research-type Cultivator as well as a genius Cryptohacker, he had cracked countless encryptions and broken into the mainframe crystal processors of many major sects. He was like a small, shapeless bug that no barrier could stop.

He had been wanted by the federal government due to the illegal intrusions. Later, he somehow made a deal with the federal government, or maybe the federal government valued his talent too much. Whatever the reason was, his name disappeared from the wanted list, and he moved to Serpent City; he had caused no more trouble ever since then.

Or rather, he stopped causing trouble under the name 'Invisible Bug'.

Even if he caused trouble, no one could relate him to the name 'Invisible Bug' anymore.

He was exactly the kind of person Li Yao was looking for.

"BAM!"

The lift stopped at the minus 37th level underground Serpent City.

The moment Li Yao walked out, a familiar scent of rust and hot waves hit his face.

What came next was the sound of booming vehicles, hoarse shouting of the crowds, and screaming of the overloaded power rune arrays.

Even the air was burning.

In front of Li Yao was dozens of giant, dilapidated metal buildings which looked like bird nests made of steel.

Among the gaps of the bird nests were tangled race tracks that weaved high and low.

Almost a hundred shuttles were rushing on the race tracks, none of which were willing to slow down a little bit.

There were also many auditoriums inside the bird nests, in which many spectators were cheering in excitement. When a shuttle passed by them at a close distance, there would always be a round of crazy screams.

The dome of the underground city displayed a lot of light beams, each standing for a different world fragment.

The conditions of the world fragments were extremely bad. Some were raining hard; some had volcano eruptions; some were deprived of gravity and rugged stones were flying in the air.

Countless shuttles were rushing like lightning in the world fragments.

This level was the 'Super Shuttles Racing Arena' in the underground of the Serpent City.

Super shuttle was a special kind of shuttle.

Armed shuttles such as the Mystic Bird Battle Shuttle and the Crimson Flame Battle Shuttle, despite their remarkable price, focused more on combat ability. Therefore, they often carried a lot of attack magical equipment. Their shape designs had taken battle needs into consideration too. All in all, their speed was not the fastest.

The super shuttle was a kind of shuttle refined with speed as the priority.

All unnecessary components were removed to minimize the weight. Comfortability, attack ability, and defense ability were all put aside, just in order to improve the shuttle's top speed.

Shuttle racing was a popular sport in the Cultivation world.

When they boomed into supersonic speed, even the Cultivators could feel their heart beating fast and their blood swelling.

Therefore, many Cultivators loved shuttle racing very much. Yuan Qi, the Invisible Bug, was one of them. He was passionate about the sport, if not addicted.

Standing outside of one of shuttle racing arenas, Li Yao was in a trance.

Memories from nowhere flooded in and drowned him like rising tides.

The strange dream that had been haunting him since he was a little kid, in which Li Yao, an earthling, was the best racing automobile mechanic and the most skilled underground racing driver in his city, crept back.

Li Yao had buried the dream deep into his brain. He barely touched anything related to shuttle racing in his entire life.

Over the past a year and a half, after he'd absorbed Ou Yezi's memories, it was the Hundred Smelting Clan 40,000 years ago that often showed up in his dreams. The earthling Li Yao hadn't visited him for a long time.

He even thought that the dream was already gone.

But when he was standing outside the shuttle racing arena listening to the roaring, booming, cracking and shouting, he suddenly realized…

An intangible seal deep inside his head had been torn apart instantly, like a fierce animal that just broke out of the cage in which it had been locked for years. Irritating power flowed through his veins. His every finger and every toe started itching and jittering uncontrollably.

"Pfff…"

Li Yao exhaled a long breath.

Of all things in the world, this Invisible Bug Yuan Qi happened to like shuttle racing best!

Li Yao had planned to wait for Yuan Qi outside of the arena, but somebody seemed to have cast a spell to his legs which brought him into it.

Li Yao used a lift to reach a gap on the top of the bird nest and sat down in a random seat.

In the middle of the bird nest, a shuttle race was coming to an end.

The eight shuttles in the game had all dashed into supersonic speed. The earsplitting noises from them were transformed by rune arrays into blood-boiling roars, which brought an authentic feeling of momentum for the audiences.

"Swoosh!"

"Swoosh!"

"Swoosh!"

The race tracks in the bird nest were all three-dimensional. They were embroiled together, and there were cliffs and high walls here and there. Sometimes the shuttles on them needed to move vertically or even do a 360 degree rotation.

In the last spurt, three shuttles, due to slow reactions, crashed into the guardrail.

Fortunately, there were defense rune arrays on the race tracks and rosy gelatin for protection of drivers inside the shuttles. The drivers were all uninjured after the accident, although their shuttles were nothing but piles of garbage now.

The rest of the five shuttles continued chasing one another. A black shuttle was in the lead, followed by an orange one, which was trying to surpass the black shuttle ahead of it. But the black shuttle was suppressing the orange one the whole time. At the last turn, the orange shuttle almost hit the wall due to over-acceleration. While it was readjusting its direction and speed, two other shuttles exceeded it, making it a fourth place in the end.

"Swoosh!"

The black shuttle was the first to pass the finish line. The race was won!

A moment later, the five shuttles all arrived in the maintenance area under the bird nest.

The hatch of the orange shuttle, which had a flying, two-winged bug in it, was opened. A young man, who had dark circles under his eyes and pale skin that were indicative of an all-year-around indoor life, jumped out of the shuttle and cursed while slapping its hatch.

"Yuan Qi. You lost yet another three million to me after this game!"

A tall young man crawled out of the black shuttle which was painted with a demon pattern and laughed.

Yuan Qi's face was flushed with shame, the veins on his neck bulging. He stomped on his feet and exclaimed, "Gao Rong, don't overestimate yourself! I was a little bit sluggish at the last turn, otherwise I would've surpassed you for sure! I'm going to modify my shuttle right now. Let's race again, I dare you!"

Gao Rong, the tall young man, smiled and replied casually, "Anytime. We can play however many games you want as long as you've still got the money to lose."

The shuttle racing arena offered super shuttles for rent to visitors. But most of its profits came from the sales and modification of super shuttles.

A super shuttle was even more expensive than armed shuttles such as the Mystic Bird Battle Shuttle or the Crimson Flame Battle Shuttle by itself. The cost of upgrading and modifying them was a bottomless hole.

Fans of the super shuttles were mostly rich Cultivators. It was not unusual for two competitors, when in a quarrel, to spend millions on upgrading their shuttles on the spot.

Yuan Qi was a regular customer of this super shuttle racing arena. The moment he declared war on his opponent, many staff members dragged his super shuttle to the modification workshop. An old, grey-haired, seemingly professional man held a crystal processor and asked Yuan Qi to select an upgrade plan.

Cost of the plans were, naturally, astronomical.

Li Yao stepped forward.

"Master Yuan, Master Qin of the Bountiful Treasures Pavilion has referred me to you. I have a double encryption that, according to him, you are the only one in the entire Serpent City capable of cracking."

Yuan Qi heard none of it. In bloody redness, his eyes were fixed on a resplendent upgrade plan as he gnashed, "Good. Good. Good. I want this power module of the latest model as well as the sprint system. Haha. My top speed will be increased by three percent. That boy Gao Rong is dead for sure!"

Li Yao frowned. He raised his voice,

"Master Yuan?"

Yuan Qi didn't even bother to look at him. Waving his hand, he said unconcernedly, "Wait until I beat Gao Rong in the next game!"

Li Yao glanced at the upgrade plan and his eyebrows were even tighter. He didn't want to waste his time, so he said straightforwardly, "But you'll only be slower under this new plan. You wouldn't defeat him even if you play another ten games with him."

"What?"

This time, Yuan Qi finally looked up. His triangular eyes were glaring, "What did you say?"

The old man who had been promoting the upgrade plans to Yuan Qi looked at Li Yao in dissatisfaction and said, "Dear sir, the Aurora Autos is a renowned shuttle dealership that has operated for decades in the Serpent City. The quality of our goods and service has won universal praise. The upgrade plan consists of super shuttle components of the latest model. Although they are a bit costly, they'll definitely enhance the performance of the vehicle. Based on what did you say such vilification?"

Li Yao said, "Make no mistake. I'm not saying that the upgrade plan is not good. I'm just saying that Master Yuan is… too weak!"

Chapter 270: Black Worm

Chapter 270: Black Worm

Yuan Qi waved his arms and jumped about like a monkey whose bottom was being burned. Pointing at his flushed nose, he shouted, "I am too weak?"

"You are."

There was no expression on Li Yao's face. He explained, "Considering that you are just an amateur, you are reasonably skilled. Your linear acceleration and spinning at turns are pretty impressive. But an amateur is just an amateur. You lack a lot of basic training. When everything is fine, you're fine; but when there are emergencies such as the three super shuttles hitting the guardrail previously, you are seriously affected.

"Also, you were not calm enough when you fall behind. You were even provoked by your opponent and made a terrible last turn, which caused you to fall from second place to fourth place in the end. Is there a problem calling you too weak?"

Yuan Qi's swinging arms suddenly lost momentum.

He was a famous amateur racing driver in the Serpent City. The Aurora Autos, in order to attract him to spend more money, often flattered him as best as it could. He had never heard such sharp observations before.

The grey-haired old man of the Aurora Autos was also fascinated. He examined Li Yao carefully.

Yuan Qi was puzzled for a while. Then he shouted again, "You just said that the more I upgrade my super shuttle, the slower it will become. Why is that?"

Li Yao said, "You made a mistake that is common among amateurs. The faster, the better; the lighter, the better. This is a well-accepted misconception, because you never thought about whether or not you are capable of harnessing it.

"Your lack of training results in your unstable racing style. The faster and lighter your super shuttle gets, the more difficult it will be for you to drive.

"If you drove it alone, or you were always in the lead without interference, that would be fine.

"But when you are rivaling with somebody and get distracted, or when your shuttle was scraped against, you will be all hurry-scurry not knowing what to do.

"According to what I saw in your last lap, you were already hardly able to control that speed. It was lucky for you not to hit anything on the spot.

"But the upgrade plan you just chose imitates the bones of eagle-type dragon beasts, which will decrease the weight of your super shuttle by 2% and increase the speed by 3%. It's definitely not something that you can handle.

"If you pick this plan, your shuttle will shake like a candle being blown in wind within two laps."

The confusion on Yuan Qi's face turned into frustration. He murmured,

"Do you mean I'm going to lose anyway?"

"Not exactly."

Li Yao thought for a moment and said, "You're equally skilled as the driver of the black shuttle. He is only slightly better than you.

"He made the same mistake that you did. He also paid too much attention to weight and speed and overlooked stability. He could barely control his vehicle at that speed.

"In my opinion, you should switch to a less powerful rune array system and cut down the power output by 5% to 6%.

"As for the shell, you don't need biomimetic materials for it. Any ordinary alloy material will be good. It will be better if your shuttle is 7% to 9% heavier than it currently is.

"Right, you have a habit of leaning leftward during your acceleration. You might want to take that into consideration when you're configuring the balance system of the vehicle. Make a minor adjustment to the stabilizer fins and you will be good to go.

"After such modification, you should be able to find the balance between speed and usability.

"Moreover, I think your opponent is not best at the vertical parts of the race tracks, especially the vertical drops. His movement was rigid during those parts. I assume he might be a victim of acrophobia.

"You can try to attack him on the vertical drop racing tracks and break his rhythm. It will be even better if you can trouble his mind.

"As to precisely what upgrade plan to choose, you might want to listen to the opinions of this gentleman here."

Scratching his face, Yuan Qi nodded in agreement. He turned to the grey-haired old man.

Cold sweat was appearing on the man's forehead as he knew he had met a true expert today.

Li Yao's upgrade plan was all based on ordinary materials. There wouldn't be much profit in it.

However, he did not dare to assert his upgrade plan. Suppose the upgrade plan he recommended was too much for Yuan Qi and the modified shuttle hit the wall in the end, the credit of the Aurora Autos would be undermined, because Li Yao had forewarned them and yet they insisted on it.

Since Yuan Qi was an old customer, Aurora Autos wouldn't kill the goose that laid the golden eggs. Pondering for a moment, the old smiled and said sincerely, "This gentleman does have a point. It's my fault that I failed to look at it in the big picture. I can draw a new upgrade plan according to his ideas. This way, please, Mr. Yuan."

Yuan Qi was too hasty to stay any longer. He gestured for Li Yao to wait a moment and followed the grey-haired old man away.

However, Li Yao didn't feel too confident about his remarks.

Victory or failure of the super shuttle racing could be determined within a single second. There were too many factors that could affect the outcome during the second. A better super shuttle couldn't guarantee a victory in the end. It was the on-the-spot performance that mattered most.

If Yuan Qi was not in his best state and lost the game, he'd definitely blame Li Yao for his failure. It would be bad.

But one couldn't unsay what one had already said. Li Yao could only sit down and watch other racing games while waiting patiently.

The drivers in the races were all amateurs. Li Yao lost interest in them after watching several laps.

Bored, he shut his eyes and displayed the structure design of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit in his brain. Burying himself inside the suit, Li Yao started studying.

It was not until two hours later when he was contemplating an amazing idea that he was interrupted by a wild, joyful scream.

"I won the game!"

Li Yao opened his eyes. Yuan Qi was laughing with his mouth spreading wide open in front him. He shouted, "Hey, over the two years I've been competing with Gao Rong, I've never experienced a game as exhilarating as today. I pushed him into a corner and his shuttle got overturned. My friend, you truly know what you're talking about!"

While he was talking, Yuan Qi stretched out his hand and said, "You said you have an encryption that you want me to crack? Let me take a look at it."

Li Yao smiled and handed over the mini crystal processor before activating the double-encryption.

"Without your enlightenment, I would've gone further down the path of over-modification, never to come back. There wouldn't be a chance for me to defeat Gao Rong anymore. Lucky for me! Lucky for me!"

Yuan Qi browsed the encryption casually while he was talking nonstop, stilling dwelling in the world of super shuttles and his victory.

A moment later, he gasped and seemed to become a different person. The easiness on his face was replaced by solemnness. There were two deep lakes in his eyes. He murmured, "Beautiful! So beautiful! The double-encryption is dazzlingly beautiful!"

Yuan Qi gazed at the light beam of the crystal processor as he walked forward, forgetting the existence of Li Yao. It was not until he was at the exit of the super shuttle racing arena that he remembered that the owner of the double-encryption was beside him. He exclaimed, "Come on! Let's go to my place."

…

Yuan Qi lived on the minus 45th floor of Serpent City, which was full of shuttle workshops and second-hand crystal processor dealers.

"Super shuttle is my love, crystal processor is my life. I can get them both here."

Bypassing a mountain of crystal processor waste, Yuan Qi led Li Yao to the door of a shabby warehouse.

Li Yao scanned the environment with his spiritual threads and was shocked.

Outside of the seemingly ramshackle building, there were some twenty complicated barriers that guarded its door like invisible devils.

If a burglar unaware of their existence broke into it, he would definitely be trapped or even killed by them!

Yuan Qi waved his hands. All the barriers vanished instantly, and the door of the warehouse opened slowly.

"You're back, master!"

Two virtual figures greeted them the moment they entered the warehouse.

One of them was a beautiful, mature woman in her thirties, while the other was an alluring girl who barely reached adulthood. They were so vivid that one can see their breasts bouncing as they bowed to their master.

Coughing, Li Yao was embarrassed.

With a cunning smile, Yuan Qi boasted, "Little Left and Little Right are two telepathic thoughts written by me. Their computational ability is so strong that they might as well be called artificial souls. They're much more useful than real-life girls, not to mention that they talk much less. I can write one for you, too, if you want. You can store it in your mini crystal processor and carry it with you wherever you go. This way, you can summon it whenever you want and do whatever you want on it. It is so much fun that I guarantee you will lose interest in ordinary girls."

Li Yao showed no expression. He said, "Thank you, Master Yuan. I'm more interested in the double encryption at present."

Yuan Qi's lips curled. Pitying Li Yao's lack of sense of romance, he tossed the mini crystal processor up above.

More than ten crystal wires dashed out of darkness and shrouded the mini crystal processor.

Some forty stereoscopic light beams fell down from the roof and formed a golden, glittering throne in which Yuan Qi sat down.

"Shua!"

A colorful, virtual keyboard full of mysterious runes that was five times larger than common keyboards was deployed in front of Yuan Qi.

Right now, Yuan Qi was like an emperor who had reassumed his crown, or a general who was going to inspect a parade of thousands of soldiers!

The weasel was gone. Standing before Li Yao right now was a strong man with an intensive scent of spiritual fluctuation around him. Countless crystal wires were dancing behind him as if they were his hair.

"Is this the true strength of the 'invisible bug', the super encryption hacker?"

Li Yao complimented him in his mind. The invisible bug was indeed much more impressive than Master Qin of the Bountiful Treasures Pavilion.

"Awesome, Master!"

"You are cracking yet another encryption, Master! You are so handsome when you're cracking an encryption, Master!"

The two artificial souls were singing and dancing around Yuan Qi. Now and then they would lean down to Yuan Qi's ear and moan in a way that was very sexually unsettling.

"…Okay, I thought too highly to him."

Li Yao was stunned and didn't dare to look at them.

A moment later, the crystal wires behind Yuan Qi were all stretched straight. With the flooding of spiritual energy, they seemed to have expanded in size multiple times.

In the meantime, countless figures and data streams appeared on the stereoscopic light beams which were then transformed into a weird pattern by Yuan Qi's slow yet firm operations.

Thousands of small bubbles in red and white appeared on the light beams. Some black worms were wandering and looking for gaps in the bubbles.

Once the worms found a gap, they would penetrate into the bubble through the gap and contaminate it. The bubble then turned black and withered quickly.

"This is an encryption cracking technique of my own invention."

There was pride in Yuan Qi's voice. "The red-and-white bubbles you see are the encryption that has been double-parsed and double-simulated. The worms are a corrosive, contagious telepathic thought that I wrote the other day based on 37 different algorithms.

"And I have named the telepathic thought—'Black Worm'!"

Chapter 271: Long Time No See, Old Friend

Chapter 271: Long Time No See, Old Friend

While they were talking, the red-and-white bubbles were inflated again, which looked exactly the same as before, except for the black spot at the center.

"You can picture the encryption as the immune system of a human being and Black Worm as a virus."

Yuan Qi explained, "Since the double encryption is too complicated to be broken through all at once, the worms I deployed would compromise parts of the encryption first and take in their forms so that the trigger system of the encryption would be fooled. When 90% of the encryption has been replace by the worms, it will be the time for the general offensive."

Yuan Qi stopped and looked at Li Yao in a very strange way.

Li Yao didn't understand what was going on. He stared back at Yuan Qi.

Half a minute later, Yuan Qi sighed and said, "The reason why I explained so much to you and even translated the arcane arts of encryption hacking into a simple and easy metaphor is because I want to tell you that this is an extremely complicated, awesome, and troublesome technique that I've been working on for many years, which means—

"It's very expensive!"

Li Yao was dazed. His face was flushed.

"I'm sorry, Master Yuan. I wonder, how much will it cost to crack such a double encryption?"

Yuan Qi replied, "Usually my customers have all consulted with other encryption hackers who can't solve their problems. That's why they come to me. So, my charge is relatively high. Generally speaking, a hundred million for my service."

"A hundred million?!"

Li Yao trembled in shock.

He was not used to the prices of the Cultivation world yet, which seemed to him to be in a state of apocalyptic currency inflation.

"Of course. How else do you think I can pay for my super shuttles?"

Yuan Qi rolled his eyes. Then he changed his tone and said in a smile, "However, here's something I'm very curious about. Based on the few words you told me, I was already able to beat Gao Rong's ass and improve my personal record by 7%.

"What will happen if you help me modify a super shuttle, one that is best fit for my own driving style?"

It was a very reasonable requirement. Li Yao thought for a moment and said, "But I can't do anything without a workshop and modification modules."

Yuan Qi spoke fast, "I'm an old customer of the few super shuttle workshops nearby. There won't be a problem to borrow one room and a few mechanics to help you for a while. Their module list is very thorough, too. If they don't have the module that you need, they can ask the dealers to ship the module to them easily. Money won't be a problem, either. Whatever you need, just pick 'em!"

Li Yao pondered for a moment and then said, "I also need footage of you in super shuttle races from various perspectives. The more, the better. I need to analyze your driving pattern and capability."

Yuan Qi nodded his head,

"No problem. I always save the footage of every race I'm in. They will be given to you in a moment. Is there anything else you need?"

"There is."

Li Yao said seriously, "Show me a set of martial arts."

Yuan Qi was dazed.

"Quadrilateral coordination is very important for drivers. I need to see how good you are."

Deeply frowned, Yuan Qi made a funny noise. He seemed to be suddenly caught by chondropathy and performed crookedly what could almost be called 'Thirteen Forces of War Beasts'.

"Awesome, Master!"

"Master is as handsome as ever whatever you're doing. Little Right can't hold myself anymore!"

The two artificial souls were singing, dancing, moaning again around him.

Yuan Qi gnashed his teeth and asked, "Now, is everything good?"

"Yes, everything is good."

Li Yao smiled. Cracking sounds came from his fingers as he crossed his fingers and pressed them.

An intimidating aura of mastership enveloped Li Yao, the same as Yuan Qi back when he was behind the virtual keyboard.

…

Half an hour later, in a super shuttle workshop not far from the warehouse…

"Mr. Sun, this is Master Fang, an expert that I hired recently. Master Fang is going to modify the ' ALKAID 1 ' that I sent for maintenance here the other day. He is going to need one of your rooms as well a few mechanics to help him. Is there any problem?"

Yuan Qi was very familiar with the boss of the workshop. He grinned as they spoke.

"Of course not. I'm sure that Master Fang must be a top expert of the trade. We're grateful that we have the opportunity the learn from Master Fang. No problem at all."

Mr. Sun showed them the way into his workshop with a big smile while he was sneering in his mind wondering how much money this so-called 'expert' had swindled out of Yuan Qi.

This was not the first time that Yuan Qi had introduced an 'expert' to him, who was entrusted by Yuan Qi to modify his super shuttles. Expert or not, the fees they charged were all shockingly high.

But of course, Mr. Sun wouldn't say it out, because just like the 'experts', he was also counting on Yuan Qi's money to feed his own family.

Anyway, Yuan Qi was a well-off encryption hacker. The expenses were nothing in his eyes.

In Mr. Sun's eyes, the top principle of the Cultivation world was that friendliness was the harbinger of wealth. It was best to flatter one another and make money together. Why should he tell the truth and scare the big client away?

Therefore, the moment Li Yao entered his door, Mr. Sun had started adulating him.

According to the five minutes of speech that he gave, Li Yao had become the best super shuttle modifier in the entire Star Glory Federation.

"The 'ALKAID' is all yours now. She is my most beloved super shuttle. I've had to keep her here for maintenance because of a minor accident the other day. That's why I had to use a substitute for the race today."

Yuan Qi smiled, "It's quite time-consuming to crack a double encryption. I expect that there will be another day and night before it is done. I need to keep an eye on the process. In the meantime, I hope you can give ALKAID a new life."

Yuan Qi left the workshop. Mr. Sun and a few mechanics came close and grinned.

"I don't think we've met before, have we?"

Li Yao nodded his head. He said, "I don't participate in super shuttle races. I'm just an amateur, modifying shuttles for fun, that's all."

Mr. Sun and his mechanics looked at each other in amazement. 'Impressive! An amateur has earned Yuan Qi's trust. He must know what he is doing.

'Watch and learn how he does the job!'

Mr. Sun gestured to the mechanics with his eyes.

Yuan Qi was not a newbie who knew nothing about super shuttles. Yet, he was not an expert of it, either. Such snobs were the easiest to trick. But it required true knowledge to fool them too.

Mr. Sun and his lot was wondering how Li Yao was respected as 'master' by Yuan Qi.

Li Yao was indifferent to their reactions. He buried himself in his own world.

Pondering for a moment, he inserted the jade slips that Yuan Qi offered to the mini crystal processor.

"Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!"

More than ten feeds of Yuan Qi's races were opened simultaneously. He concentrated his attention on them and started studying.

Three hours later, he was still studying.

Li Yao was frozen solid. Even his eyelids seemed to have been glued. The three hundred or so video clips had been played for seven times, yet they were replayed in slow motion for another time.

One mechanic couldn't help but ask, "Is he asleep?"

Everybody was impatient after long-time watching. Many of them were yawning. Even Mr. Sun was feeling drowsy.

An hour later, Li Yao rose up and woke Mr. Sun who was taking a nap.

"Where's the ALKAID? I need to see the shuttle."

Inside the garage, in the deep darkness were seven parked shuttles, including a few armed shuttles that worth tens of millions.

Yet their brightness was all eclipsed by the super shuttle in the middle that was black and red.

The super shuttle had been designed with an aggressive style. Its sharp edges brought the feeling of a black dagger in blood that was ready to pierce through the heavens and tear the stars apart.

Closing his eyes, Li Yao could picture the super shuttle storming in a beast tide crumbling everything in its way with nothing but the shocking speed.

No wonder it was named 'ALKAID'. It seemed to be capable of slashing an entire army from head to toe without any interruption.

The hatch of the shuttle slid open. Li Yao sat inside and stretched his spiritual threads to every corner of the super shuttle. He felt that the super shuttle and him had melded into one which shared the same blood and soul.

"Lup dub! Lup dub! Lup dub! Lup dub!"

The hatch was closed. The whole world disappeared in silence. The only thing that could be heard was his own heartbeat that was faster and faster.

"Lup dub! Lup dub! Lup dub! Lup dub! Lup dub! Lup dub! Lup dub!"

How long had it been since he last felt his heart beating so fast?

The dashboard was filled with spiritual energy. By telepathic thoughts, one control rune array after another was lit up.

"BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!"

The anti-gravity rune arrays of ALKAID started working. It floated from the body of the shuttle, shivering with heavy breath, like an excited fierce beast who was ready to lunge at its prey after a life-long wait.

"Let me see how good this ALKAID is… or how good I am!"

Deep inside his brain lurked countless memories of racing games. He was born into this world with these memories, which were much more profound than Ou Yezi's.

Car racing was almost his instinct.

Three months of crystal suit training had endowed him with a lot of driving skills—driving a crystal suit was quite similar to driving a super shuttle, if not hundreds of times more difficult.

If he could handle a crystal suit, he could certainly handle a super shuttle.

The seemingly complicated dashboard of the super shuttle was as clear as a drop-down menu in Li Yao's eyes.

With a telepathic though, ALKAID rushed out like a laser!

...

Next day in the morning, Yuan Qi, who had been busy all night, returned to the workshop.

Although his eyes were full of blood streak, he was really excited.

However, to his confusion, Mr. Sun and his mechanics looked awful in the workshop.

Seeing their terrified faces, one might have thought a majestic, prehistoric animal had ensconced itself in the room behind them.

Chapter 272: A Track Worth Over a Hundred Million

Chapter 272: A Track Worth Over a Hundred Million

Yuan Qi's focus was strongly attracted by some kind of strange things floating in the air just as he entered the workshop.

Under the illumination of lights, floating golden threads whose diameter did not exceed one-tenth of a hair in the air glimmered.

Occasionally, one could also see some extremely thin and almost transparent golden foil fluttering, transforming the workshop into a dream-like ocean.

"This is..."

The golden threads and the golden foils seemed to have been possessed by some demonic spirit as they danced around Yuan Qi.

Yuan Qi could not help but stretch out his hand, but the golden threads and the golden foils were too light and too soft just like a gentle breeze, just like flowing water, quietly slipping away from the gap between his fingers, leaving only a faint velvety sensation on the fingers behind.

Prior to this, Yuan Qi never knew that touching a metal could ever cause such a wonderful feeling.

And parked quietly on the modifying bridge was ALKAID...

Yuan Qi could not stop blinking as his lips parted, but he didn't know what to say.

If Li Yao had modified the ALKAID to the point that it was completely unrecognizable, added some seventeen or eighteen wing stabilizers, some glittering propulsion kits, and even replaced all the anti-gravity array glyphs, Yuan Qi would not have been confused...

As it was what all the previous experts whom he had invited before had done.

However, the ALKAID modified by Li Yao was almost the same as before; at first glance, no could say it had been modified at all.

But subtle differences that could only be sensed but not conveyed be found with rapt concentration and calm observation.

The ALKAID became sharper and fiercer, even filled with an irresistible momentum and a sharp killing intent that could destroy the world and blast the stars under the shimmering lights.

After pondering for a while, Yuan Qi was finally able to describe his own mood.

It was like what he had seen in the past was a copied painting by a student, and what he saw today was the one that had been personally painted by the grandmaster himself. Although each and every stroke was almost the same, the final combination was completely different; one was the heaven and the other was the earth!

It was like, what he saw in the past was a demon beast that was in a cage and had a binding spell cast upon it.

And at this moment, he seemed to have come face to face with that very same demon beast on a narrow desolate mountain ridge, whereas this demon beast now could release its aura hidden deep within its bone marrow unscrupulously.

Essence! Energy! Spirit!

At this moment, the ALKAID possessed the essence, energy, and spirit; it had a soul!

"Grandmaster Fang, what exactly is this..."

Yuan Qi's heart was in a turmoil; he kept gawking for a long while like he was intoxicated, only then did he notice Li Yao who was meditating in the darkness; Li Yao was completely still like a Buddha. Yuan Qi could not help but ask in a low voice.

When Yuan Qi said "Grandmaster Fang", his voice was completely different from yesterday, like it had "essence, energy, and spirit"; Yuan Qi was now truly treating Li Yao as a super expert, a grandmaster level figure.

SHHH

In the darkness, Li Yao's eyes glittered with a bright gleam as he put his finger upon his lips.

All of a sudden, not only Yuan Qi dared not utter a word, even Boss Sun and the maintenance crew dared not breathe loudly.

After having meditating for a moment, Li Yao suddenly stood up and walked up to the ALKAID in large strides.

The very first thing he did was lightly caressed the left side of ALKAID, which was followed by a cold light in between his fingers as an extremely thin white blade appeared.

This blade was only the size of a fingernail; it was forged from a tailbone fragment of the Mutant Lion Dragon. It was extremely hard yet somewhat flexible too, it also had a bit of vitality to it as well and could be one with its user. Nothing was better than this blade to finely engrave the magical equipment components.

Without the slightest bit of hesitation whatsoever, a sharp white aura frantically appeared like a lightning bolt shot out from the ends of his fingers as he scraped the ALKAID's body at an extreme speed before a golden thread thinner than a hair was pulled out immediately.

Yuan Qi sucked in a lump of cold air.

Only now did he come to realize that the golden threads and golden foils fluttering in the air were Li Yao's pure handiwork from polishing the ALKAID's body.

No wonder the ALKAID didn't seem to have changed but it suddenly possessed essence, energy, and spirit. Moreover...

After Li Yao's scraping when just this extremely fine golden thread was pulled out, it seemed as if a painted dragon had come to life by putting in the pupils of its eyes. All of a sudden, the ALKAID had come to life, turning into a ferocious beast that opened its bloody mouth as it pounced towards Yuan Qi fiercely.

AHHHH

Yuan Qi could not help but take a half-step back.

However, when he focused his eyes, only then did he discovered that the ALKAID was staying honestly where it was. But an anxious aura was emanating from it.

Giving the impression that it was an anxious, wild horse that desired to storm and break the enemy positions on a battlefield; waiting for him to conquer and ride it.

With a snap of Li Yao's fingers, the lightning transformed into a white bone blade, and with another snap, the bone blade disappeared.

Lightly blowing on the ALKAID and half squinting his eyes, Li Yao perceived every slight change in the air flowing over the surface of the shuttle.

Li Yao contentedly nodded after ten seconds before he spoke, "Is there some problem with your heart?"

"Ah?" Yuan Qi was caught by surprise for a moment before he replied, shaking his head, "No."

"Then go, fly it!" said Li Yao, patting Yuan Qi's shoulder with a grin.

...

Aurora Autos was in an uproar!

This deafening and blood-seething morning was destined to belong to Yuan Qi and ALKAID!

In Serpent City's amateur super shuttle racing community, Yuan Qi was also considered as a first-class expert. He also had a group of friends who were similarly enthusiastic about super shuttle racing like him.

After Yuan Qi got his brand-new ALKAID, he couldn't hold himself and called all his rider friends at night to the Aurora Autos. After which-----

They were slaughtered, butchered, massacred one after another!

"What in the bloody strengthening agent did Yuan Qi eat that he became so fierce overnight!?"

"That's insane, Gao Yan was once again forced to hit the wall!"

"Wow, he actually completed the lap in 3 minutes 49.31 seconds. He has broken his own best record by 12 seconds, 12 freaking seconds!"

One after another, the first-class experts of the amateur super shuttle racing community fell completely like dominos facing Yuan Qi who was so brave that it seemed he was possessed by some god or devil before they could even scream.

A contest between amateurs was greatly affected by the state of one's mind. As Yuan Qi became more and more excited, he became more relaxed; his body seemed to have turned into drops of water as they completely fused with the ALKAID. He displayed difficult maneuvers that he thought were impossible generally so easily like passing clouds and flowing water, garnering everyone's exclamations again and again.

"Impossible, he performed four sidewinder rolls in one deep breath!"

"My god, he actually accelerated doing a nose dive and only pulled up when he was just three meters away from the ground. For this maneuver, there is a very strict requirement for both driver and the super shuttle. This maneuver can only be performed by a professional player!"

Everyone, including the Aurora Autos' staff, was scared to the point where their scalp tingled watching the insane performance of Yuan Qi.

Such an abnormal performance could not be explained by just having in a wonderful state of mind. Finally, many recalled Yuan Qi say that his ALKAID had been modified by a super expert.

At the beginning, no one paid heed to it.

Although they noticed that the ALKAID was somewhat different than the normal with their amateur level insight, they still could not say where it was different. It was just a normal super shuttle that was simply a bit 'shabby' compared to the modified super shuttles they rode that had been undergone all kinds of modification, to the point where they were completely unrecognizable.

Only now, when this shabby ALKAID had completely routed their strengthened super shuttles, did they recalled that Yuan Qi had mentioned "Grandmaster Fang" a while ago.

"Did Yuan Qi really become lucky and meet a master super shuttle modifier?"

While the numerous super shuttle fans were greatly puzzled in the Aurora Autos, Li Yao sat quietly in the metal bird nest.

Half-squinting his eyes, he listened to the deafening roars like he was listening to the music as he pondered about the future plans.

Modifying super shuttles was just a hobby.

His main focus was still crafting the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, as well as building the fiend star refining workshop.

Of course, he still had to do some "in-depth investigation" on the problem of the demon beast detector with the Zephyr Guild's Shark Chou Guanyu before everything.

All this required a generous start-up capital support.

Looking closely at the value of heaven and earth treasures as well as the decrypting cost of Yuan Qi, Li Yao was deeply aware of how much money cultivation burned.

No wonder a vast majority of the cultivators were stuck in the Refinement Stage for their entire lifetimes. Indeed, they earned more, but their spending was also quite a lot!

"Is there a way to earn a lot quickly?" Li Yao lightly scratched his chin as he started pondering.

If he wanted to get rich, he needed to take the risk. The fastest way to make money in the Serpent City was gambling for sure.

There was a total of seven super-large casinos in the Serpent City, especially dedicated to the cultivators. Tens of billions moved up and down in minutes and seconds!

However, Li Yao knew his limitations.

Although he had sinister insight and his hands were extremely fast due to training them with the "Thousand

Fingers Supple Bone Exercise" derived from ancient stealing technique day and night which could naturally be employed in gambling...

However, at the end of the day, he was just an insignificant Refinement Stage cultivator.

The big casinos in Serpent City were overseen by Building Foundation Stage cultivators or even Core Formation Stage powerhouses. A half-baked gambler like him gambled, he would only be seeking death quicker.

"What if I help Yuan Qi's friends modified their super shuttles and earn a bit of money?"

Just as this notion flashed his mind, it was summarily rejected.

He knew very well that the cost of modifying the super shuttles and the cost of decrypting of Yuan Qi was actually incomparable.

It was only because Yuan Qi was crazy about shuttles that he put forward such conditions.

In the market, modifying an amateur level super shuttle was, at most, a few million or so.

Furthermore, modifying a shuttle was extremely taxing.

Last night, he did not make any major modifications to the internal structure of the ALKAID and mainly did some optimization to the body, and yet he was feeling faintly drawn.

It was seriously exhausting; he could do no more than a few modifications in a week.

It was a really slow way of making money.

He did not have a lot of time to waste in Serpent City. Everything needed to be finished in three days.

While Li Yao was having a headache, Yuan Qi, like a monkey mounting the clouds and riding the mists, came over shaking his arms.

Followed his footsteps were many people who were staring at Li Yao with a hungry look in their eyes.

"Satisfied?"

Li Yao stood up.

"Grandmaster Fang, wait! Help me once more, I need to challenge the Hell Storm Racetrack!" shouted Yuan Qi, which made everyone suck a cold lump of air as a look of astonishment as well as excitement appeared on their faces.

Li Yao could guess that the Hell Storm Racetrack was certainly extraordinary from their expressions. His eyebrows twitched as he looked at Yuan Qi with a look of uncertainty in his eyes.

Having won battle after battle, Yuan Qi's confidence had shot through the roof. He could not help but rub his hands as he spoke, "Hell Storm Racetrack is the most difficult, the most dangerous, and the most unpredictable track of the Aurora Autos. Nine out of ten racers cannot even finish the lap. And now the best record for completing the lap is 11 minutes and 47.35 seconds!

"Furthermore, the Aurora Autos has also offered a reward to attract more experts!"

"The Aurora Autos will pay a million as long as one can beat the best time for every 0.1 seconds!

"Ten million for one second!

"A hundred million for ten seconds!"

Chapter 273: Sweeping Stones

Chapter 273: Sweeping Stones

The Hell Storm Racetrack was a legendary racing track for amateur super shuttle racers. It was of some renown among the professional super shuttle drivers, too.

The racing track was set in a world fragment named "Hell Storm Domain", which was a world of billowing winds full of furious spiritual energy.

The gravity in the Hell Storm Domain was only two thirds of that in the Heaven's Origin Sector. Many giant stones were floating up in the sky and formed unpredictable floating stone belts.

A super shuttle that was running in the Hell Storm Domain would need to worry about both the ferocious wind that was everywhere and the floating stone belt that might come from nowhere.

Once consumed by the floating stone belt, the super shuttle would be like a rat that fell into a meat mincer, ready to be ruined at any moment.

The reason why the Aurora Autos offered such a high bonus was partly because it wanted to attract more super shuttle fans, and partly because it was a good way of marketing.

Every driver that had finished the Hell Storm Racetrack, whatever their result was, would need to overhaul their super shuttles or even entirely renew them.

The repair and modification fees alone were profitable enough for the Aurora Autos.

In some cases, a pissed-off driver would directly buy a brand new super shuttle from the Aurora Autos when his old one was crashed in the Hell Storm Racetrack, only to crash it again on the racetrack half a day later.

With the expenses of the drivers, the bonus could be earned back easily.

0.1 second for one million, 1 second for ten million, 10 seconds for a hundred million.

It sounded like a shockingly high bonus.

However, anyone who had touched super shuttle racing would know that when the record had reached its limitation, it would be extremely difficult to be improved by even a 0.1 second.

When the Hell Storm Racetrack was just built, the record was being broken all the time and when it happened, it would be brought down by half a second or an entire second.

But as more and more people were drawn to the Hell Storm Racetrack, many professional drivers joined the competition, too. The more times the record was broken, the trickier it was to break it again in the future.

The latest record of Hell Storm Racetrack, 11'47''35, was created by a professional driver and had stay unbroken for three months.

Even so, countless super shuttle fans were still passionate about the Hell Storm Racetrack. One of their major motivations was that there were a lot of uncertainties on this racing track.

On a normal racetrack, the gap between amateur drivers and professional drivers was transparent. There was absolutely no way that an amateur driver could break a record set by a professional driver.

In comparison, the Hell Storm Racetrack reduced the gap between professionals and amateurs to the minimum.

Theoretically speaking, if an amateur driver was lucky enough to race under a peaceful weather without being hindered by the floating stone belt, there would be a good chance that he might beat the record of a professional.

Although it was just a theoretical possibility, it was still better than nothing.

As time went by, it was not the bonus that the super shuttle fans were chasing after. They were too rich to take the small change seriously.

"I've beaten the professional driver blablabla on the Hell Storm Racetrack!"

Such winning declarations were what they were going after.

Therefore, although it was an extremely difficult racetrack, the challengers still came and had a go, which exactly fitted the purpose of the boss of the Aurora Autos.

"I don't care about the bonus!"

Yuan Qi's eyes were beaming in redness. He shouted fiercely, "I just want to know what my limit is!"

Li Yao stared at the bird nest. A moment later, he asked, "Is there any requirement for the driver or the vehicle to challenge the Hell Storm Racetrack?"

Yuan Qi shook his head.

"Nothing special. There're just two.

"Firstly, the driver can only use the strength of the Refinement Stage. Using the strength of the Building Foundation Stage or above is strictly forbidden. It's for the fairness of the game, which was supposed to be a pure competition of driving skills.

"Secondly, the super shuttle can be modified any way the driver deems fit, except that the spiritual shield of the vehicle must be kept below a given amount and that no aggressive weapons should be installed to the vehicle. Otherwise, someone might decide to blow the floating stone belt into pieces before moving on, which would be a foul play."

Li Yao pondered for a moment. He said, "Let's go and maintain your ALKAID first. I'm very interested in this Hell Storm Racetrack, too!"

…

An hour later.

Through a large-scale teleportation array, Yuan Qi drove ALKAID to the Hell Storm Domain.

Almost a hundred crystal cameras captured what was happening inside the Hell Storm Domain and sent the pictures to a giant light beam outside of the bird nest.

Some of the pictures were taken from the perspective of Yuan Qi, which made the audience feel that they were also in the super shuttle ready for the challenge.

With the booming of power rune arrays and the explosive music, everyone felt that their hearts were beating fast and their blood was boiling.

Encouraged by the passionate vibe, many of the spectators were preparing to take their chance on the Hell Storm Racetrack when Yuan Qi was done.

Li Yao couldn't help but laughed when he saw the picture of the Hell Storm Domain.

Howling winds, drifting sand, stirring earth... The environment of the Hell Storm Domain was almost exactly the same as the Dust Storm Area where he had been training day and night back when he was in the Thunder Training Camp.

The only difference was that the intensity of the wind in the Hell Storm Domain was much weaker than in the Dust Storm Area. If it were exactly the same as the Dust Storm Area, no driver would be able to drive a super shuttle through.

Moreover, because of the low gravity, the floating stone belts that was wandering in the sky were much denser than those in the Dust Storm Area. They were like giant beasts made up of rocks lurking in the driver's way waiting for their prey.

The scenery of the Hell Storm Domain reminded Li Yao of the days when he slayed the tornadoes one after another. His fingers danced up and down without him knowing.

The racetrack in the Hell Storm Domain was marked out by two mystic lights and extended deep into the wind and sand.

ALKAID roared and thrusted into the sandstorm, like a mighty warrior who was charging at the formation of a hostile army alone.

Li Yao focused all his attention on Yuan Qi, not missing even a minor movement he made during the race.

Having challenged the Hell Storm Racetrack multiple times, Yuan Qi was quite familiar with the raging wind. ALKAID was like a sharp scalpel, finding the gaps between winds and cutting into them in sweeping curves.

His performance, although unprofessional in Li Yao's eyes, was good enough to drive the super shuttle fans crazy.

Everybody was pulling out their hair and couldn't believe their eyes.

"Amazing, Yuan Qi is truly amazing today!"

"He hasn't been interfered by the wind for an entire minute. Every gap between the gusts of wind has been detected. His movement has been precise, too."

Li Yao smiled. It was true that getting through the wind through the gaps could avoid the interference of the wind. However, it also meant that the super shuttle wouldn't be able to be stimulated by the power of the wind. It was acceptable, but only acceptable.

As the saying went, 'Let the wind guide the ship when you're sailing', only with the boost of the wind could one expect to break the limit of all limitations.

This was Li Yao had learnt that in the Dust Storm Area.

Very soon, Yuan Qi encountered the first floating stone belt.

Countless scattered stones, under the savage wind, was colliding and crushing each other, dashing in various directions without any pattern. It was like a remorseless battlefield.

Yuan Qi slowed down, yet his vehicle was more blurred than before, like a candle which was being attacked by wind yet managed to keep burning, however unstably.

"Swoosh!"

Yuan Qi rushed out of the first floating stone belt. He accelerated again.

Soon, his super shuttle had passed four floating stone belts without being damaged.

But he was caught by an extraordinary floating stone belt when he was arriving at the finish line.

ALKAID's shell crackled as the scattered stone hit it like bullets, resulting to countless scrapes and rupture.

"Crap! Yuan Qi has been tangled up!"

"No shuttle could survive such intensive impacts!"

"He's going to have to quit the game!"

In everybody's shocking scream, Yuan Qi persisted like a butterfly in a thunderstorm. With a dive, he accelerated and broke out of the floating stone belt from its below in a long arc, before he finally reached the finish line.

…

"Nice!"

Yuan Qi exclaimed in great joy, although his legs were still shivering when he crawled out of ALKAID which was no better than a pile of garbage with the deep wounds.

"12'12''38. A half-minute improvement of my personal record!

"Had I not unluckily met the damn floating stone belt towards the end, I might've been able to break the professional lap record!

"Master Fang, is there any possibility to further enhance the performance of ALKAID? Can you specially adapt it to the Hell Storm Racetrack?"

Yuan Qi was screaming and shouting due to over-excitement.

Li Yao glanced at him and said seriously,

"Of course it can be further strengthened. And yes, I can make it a model specially for the Hell Storm Racetrack. The problem is, will you be able to drive it?"

"Huh?"

Yuan Qi was dazed. He was just asking the questions out of thrill and didn't expect an affirmative answer.

According to him, ALKAID was already perfect. To further boost its performance, the only way would be to replace the entire impetus system.

But on the Hell Storm Racetrack, a strong impetus system could not help very much because of the various of barriers.

Yuan Qi couldn't help but asked,

"What does a special model for the Hell Storm Racetrack look like? And does it demand unique driving skills?"

Li Yao smiled and said, "How about this, let's make another deal.

"ALKAID has been ravaged now and requires major maintenance anyway. I can help you repair it and upgrade it from inside to outside into a special model for the Hell Storm Racetrack for free.

"As my reward, I get to drive your ALKAID on the Hell Storm Racetrack once tomorrow."

…

At night, in Mr. Sun's super shuttle workshop.

"Swoosh!"

"Swoosh!"

"BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!"

The dull noises had lasted for an entire day.

Li Yao had been watching the video clips of experts racing in the Hell Storm Domain on more than twenty light beams simultaneously.

He paid special attention to the few professional drivers who had broken the records. Their video clips were scrutinized second by second with no detail being ignored.

"A professional is indeed a professional. So impressive!"

Li Yao rubbed his sore eyes and sighed.

On a racetrack that was full of uncertainties, such as the one in the Hell Storm Domain, the results of professionals might be only ten to twenty seconds better than those of amateurs.

However, in Li Yao's eyes, the ten to twenty seconds meant that every cut-in, every acceleration, and every back-end whip of the professional players was much better than those of amateurs.

In the flying sand and rolling pebbles, every perfect movement could only bring an advantage of 0.1 second. It was a lot of 0.1 seconds accumulated together that caused the final gap of ten to twenty seconds.

Yuan Qi said that he might have been able to break the professional record with better luck.

But in Li Yao's opinion, he had been unbelievably lucky today.

"I thought too little of the professionals before. Amateurs such as Yuan Qi are far from the best of the super shuttle racing players.

"I never thought that the professional drivers could be so strong!

"Their super shuttles are all masterpieces of experienced refiners that have been specially adjusted for the sandy environment.

"In the best-case scenario, I will only be faster than them by one or two seconds. It's still too close.

"What should I do?"

Li Yao gazed at the light beams, as if he were a Buddha statue made of mud, paying no attention to Mr. Sun and his mechanics' whispers.

When a super shuttle was crashed by scattered stones and falling to the ground in the picture, Li Yao felt he was onto something.

Deep inside his brain, although still not clear, a crazy modification plan and a set of out-of-mind racing strategies that had never been used before popped up.

Chapter 274: Solar Eclipse

Chapter 274: Solar Eclipse

Another sleepless night had passed, yet Li Yao didn't feel the least tired.

He felt that there was a tornado of thunder and lightning blowing inside his brain. Every one of his brain cells was screaming in the wind!

With the coming of dawn, the illumination rune arrays on the wall and the dome of the underground world were gradually lit up, unleashing a brilliance as blazing as the sun.

Li Yao drove the ALKAID that had been given a rebirth one lap after another on an empty track. After every lap he drove, he felt that his soul was burning brighter than the previous one. Fervor and passion seemed to have become thousands of ants that were tearing his body apart setting off on the journey to infinity.

At ten o'clock in the morning, Li Yao was bursting with eagerness and ready for the match.

Together with Yuan Qi and Mr. Sun, he had the ALKAID transported to Aurora Autos by a special super shuttle truck.

However, he was truly shocked by the lively crowds outside the Aurora Autos.

The steel bird nest was glittering invitingly with lanterns and lights. Almost a hundred giant light beams were floating in the sky playing the fantastic scenes of super shuttle racing games. There were even several stereoscopic light beams which caused rounds of exclamations when they covered the crowds as if many super shuttles were diving down from the sky and hitting the crowds.

The super shuttle fans that came to the Aurora Autos today were tens of times more than those of the previous day.

There was anticipation in everyone's face.

Several commentators were shouting desperately and firing up the audience, adding to the jollification of the scene.

"They're here! They're here!"

Many enthusiastic super shuttle fans moved at Li Yao and his companions while their eyes were beaming in joy.

Li Yao looked at Yuan Qi in dissatisfaction.

Although he was not crazy about keeping a low profile and did not object to showing off every once in a while, he did not intend to attract much unnecessary attention right now, considering that he was on a secret trip in Serpent City under a pseudonym after all. All he wanted was to earn some money and leave quietly.

He thought to himself, 'What is wrong with this guy Yuan Qi? Does he have to invite so many people to watch my game and make such a fuss?'

Li Yao frowned and said unhappily, "To be honest, isn't it—"

"They're here! The master's here!"

Screaming and shouting, the crowds flooded to Li Yao. Yet they ignored Li Yao as if he didn't even exist and went on running to his back.

Not very far away behind Li Yao, two giant super shuttle trucks were landing slowly.

Two groups of people, with similarly impressive auras, walked out of the trucks as if they were two invincible armies.

"What's the matter, Master Fang? There are so many people today. Some big shot must've come!"

Yuan Qi was standing on his toe in excitement trying to find someone he knew from the crowds.

"…Never mind."

Li Yao scratched his nose and replied, not without embarrassment, "I was meaning to ask you, which big shot has come today?"

"I don't know. I've been cracking your double encryption since I got home yesterday all day and night. I don't have any time for gossip. Wait a moment. Let me see if there's someone that can enlighten us here."

Yuan Qi looked here and there. Suddenly he snatched a young man from the crowds, "Gao Rong, what's going on? Is anyone special here?"

"You haven't heard yet? Four top experts contending on the Hell Storm Racetrack. It's definitely not something that you want to miss!"

Gao Rong was screaming in thrill, "I texted you, like, twenty times last night and I didn't get a single reply. This is the real summit confrontation! The super shuttle drivers and fans in the entire Serpent City have gone wild with joy!"

"Four top experts? Who are they?"

Yuan Qi was excited, too. He stood up on his toes and craned up his head, trying to see who was walking up in the front.

"It's 'Fiend Fire' Lu Feng and 'Battle Axe' Guan Dong, the two best professional super shuttle drivers and two rivals with a deep grudge for over ten years. They're going to challenge each other again on the Hell Storm Racetrack!"

Yuan Qi gasped.

"Fiend Fire and Battle Axe are both here?"

After a protracted, messy explanation while they danced waving their hands up and down, Li Yao finally understood everything.

Fiend Fire Lu Feng and Battle Axe Guan Dong were two first-class experts among the professional super shuttle drivers.

They were classmates when they were little, and their driving talent was discovered at the same time. When they grew up, they became both friends and rivals.

Not only did they compete in the professional championships of various levels, they also liked to travel in the federation together and find interesting amateur racetracks to ride on.

The Hell Storm Racetrack was their favorite amateur racetrack.

The lap record of the Hell Storm Racetrack was set by Fiend Fire Lu Feng three months ago.

That time, Battle Axe Guan Dong was one step slower. He was beaten by 1.7 seconds.

Today, he had come for revenge.

"Wait, you just said that 'four top experts contending on the Hell Storm Racetrack'. Who are the other two drivers besides Fiend Fire Lu Feng and Battle Axe Guan Dong, the two life-long rivals?"

Li Yao couldn't help but asked when he heard this part.

"That's why I said that this is not something that any super shuttle fan wants to miss."

Gao Rong slapped his legs and exclaimed, "What we're going to see is a dual competition. It is a match of both two best drivers and two best super shuttle modification masters. Well well well. I'm thrilled just thinking about it!"

The outcome of super shuttle racing was partly based on the driver's driving skills and on-the-spot performance, and partly dependent on the incredible modifications by the refiners according to the different conditions of different environments.

In the world of super shuttle racing, a super shuttle modification master often enjoyed higher fame and status than a professional driver. They were respected as people who could manipulate time.

Yuan Qi asked hurriedly, "Who are the two refiners?"

"One of them is 'Void Wing' Mei Ze, who has been hired by Fiend Fire Lu Feng as his personal modifier."

Gao Rong explained, "Mei Ze is one of the Novem Stellae of the Deep Sea University who specializes in super shuttle refinement and modification. It is said he was best at refining armed shuttles. Modifying super shuttles is just one of his hobbies.

"Even so, he has become one of the best super shuttle modification masters in the federation within several years.

"Fiend Fire Lu Feng's achievements couldn't have been accomplished without Mei Ze's modifications."

Li Yao felt his heart was beating fast when he heard what Gao Rong just said.

His eyes were filled with bloodthirst immediately. His hostility was so dense that it seemed be consolidating into burning waterdrops.

"Void Wing Mei Ze, one of the Novem Stellae?

"One of the best super shuttle modification masters?

"How interesting!"

"As for the last one—"

Gao Rong intentionally paused for a second before revealing the mystery.

"He is the 'Solar Eclispe'!"

"What?"

Yuan Qi shouted at the highest pitch he could uncontrollably, "Solar Eclipse? Solar Eclipse has come?"

Right then, the crowds were also enchanting the name 'Solar Eclipse', which made his hysteria less shameful than it should be.

However, Li Yao was dazed for a moment.

He knew the names of most of the renowned refiners in the federation, but 'Solar Eclipse' did not sound familiar.

It was not until he asked curiously that he learnt the story of 'Solar Eclipse', who had been one of the most popular and influential celebrities in Serpent City over the past three months.

Three months ago, when he entered Serpent City by himself empty-handed, no one knew his background, nor did anyone bother to.

He then visited the most respected refiners in Serpent City and challenged them in the fields where they were most adept at.

In the first month, he hardly secured any victories.

During his worst day, he was on an eight-match losing streak. Everybody thought of him as a joke or a lunatic.

But he didn't care. He simply challenged them time and time again, and he had been growing at an inconceivable speed.

In the second month, he was already able to draw with some refiners in competitions at their specialized fields.

In the third month, he started crushing the refiners of Serpent City one after another like a massacre.

'Solar Eclipse' rose to fame like a volcano eruption. He became one of the best refiners in the Serpent City after only three months.

Considering his challenging frequency, it was believed that the 'one of' could be dropped and he would become THE best refiner in the Serpent City within the next year.

His nickname 'Solar Eclipse' came from his insane declaration.

He claimed that he would become a burning star even brighter than the sun in the sky, and that when he showed up, his brilliance would be everything that could be seen. Even the sun would be overshadowed by him.

That was why he was called 'Solar Eclipse'.

Although many people questioned his mental health, no one ever doubted his capability.

On the contrary, the name 'Solar Eclipse', which carried a vibe of lunacy, couldn't be more fit for a wild, chaotic place such as Serpent City.

When his story was known, he quickly became of the idol of many young men in Serpent City.

"Wait a minute…"

Li Yao was deep in thought. "This guy 'Solar Eclipse', the best refiner of the Serpent City, doesn't happen to have a bald, shining head, does he?"

"How did you know?"

Gao Rong nodded his head, "Solar Eclipse is indeed bald. But his head does not shine. When the name 'Solar Eclipse' spread out, he asked a spiritual tattooist to tattoo a vivid picture of annular eclipse on his forehead, which looks like a collapsar that absorbs all the lights around."

That was the one!

Li Yao grinned. As it happened, old friends had met each other again.

"Yuan Qi, hadn't you been wondering where Solar Eclipse comes from? It's been revealed now!"

Gao Rong continued, "Solar Eclipse's true name is Jiang Shaoyang. He comes from the Refining Department of the Deep Sea University and is known as the 'Tenth Star', the top refiner apart from the Novem Stellae. He is also the nephew of Jiang Sheng, the Supernova."

"What?"

Yuan Qi was shocked and shook his head, "Solar Eclipse is not the kind of person willing to be below somebody. 'The top refiner apart from the Novem Stellae'? It's like slapping his face!"

"True that."

Gao Rong was grimacing, "Why do you think they are holding a match today? Jiang Shaoyang, the Solar Eclipse, is declaring war on the Novem Stellae with the Hell Storm Racetrack as the battlefield. He is going to take out Mei Ze, the super shuttle modification master of the Novem Stellae, in his first battle!"

"He is?"

Yuan Qi was so elated that he felt dizzy now, "It is indeed a dual competition! Fiend Fire Lu Feng versus Battle Axe Guan Dong, Void Wing Mei Ze versus Solar Eclipse Jiang Shaoyang. How marvelous it's going to be!"

Gao Rong and Li Yao tried to squeeze themselves through the crowd.

A moment later, he realized something. Then he walked a few steps back and said to Li Yao while scratching his hair, "Master Fang, it seems that today is not your lucky day.

"Jiang Shaoyang and Mei Ze, two experts in refining, must've racked their brains and modified two perfect super shuttles for this confrontation.

"Fiend Fire Lu Feng and Battle Axe Guan Dong, two ace drivers, will try their best in the upcoming game in their best state.

"Whoever wins will definitely set a whole new lap record for the Hell Storm Racetrack!

"You won't stand a chance to compete with these guys!"

Chapter 275: Brutal ALKAID

Chapter 275: Brutal ALKAID

"Lu Feng! Lu Feng!"

"Guan Dong! Guan Dong!"

With the desperate cheers of the crowds, two ace drivers walked out onto the truck, which immediately set the super shuttle fans on fire.

Fiend Fire Lu Feng was thin, with a pair of smart eyes. He looked like an unpredictable breeze.

Battle Axe Guan Dong, on the other hand, was tall and strong with a body size that was much bigger than ordinary professional super shuttle drivers. He had bushy eyebrows, scary eyes, and a square face, releasing an intimidating scent from him. He was truly like an unstoppable battle axe.

The match was about to begin. Yet the two of them were still chatting and laughing in comfort.

"Lu Dong, I didn't expect that you would challenge me again after only three months. Are you sure you're ready? If it turns out that you are slower than me by that much again, it will be quite shameful." Fiend Fire grinned.

"Neither did I."

Battle Axe Guan Dong smiled and said confidently, "Half a month ago, I was told that there was this super shuttle modifier in Serpent City that was super awesome. Therefore, I paid a visit to him hoping that he could help upgrade my shuttle, only to find that he was biting the ground in a match with Jiang Shaoyang, the 'Solar Eclipse'. I had the honor to invite Master Jiang to redesign a super shuttle specially for the Hell Storm Racetrack for me. That's why I decided to challenge you again. Be very careful when the match begins. Master Fang is far more skilled than you will have expected."

"Isn't Jiang Shaoyang, the 'Solar Eclipse', originally the 'Tenth Star' of Deep Sea University?"

Fiend Fire Lu Feng said very proudly, "My modifier is Master Mei Ze, the 'Void Wing' of the Novem Stellae. I believe he is sort of Jiang Shaoyang's senior brother, if we get to the bottom of it. This time, when he heard that Jiang Shaoyang was your modifier, he did a comprehensive upgrade to my super shuttle. You'll know what I mean a moment later."

While they were debating, Jiang Shaoyang and Mei Ze were also confronting each other behind them.

"Shaoyang, you have disappointed the entire Refining Department of the Deep Sea University!"

'Void Wing' Mei Ze was a serious man in his thirties. Although he was not very old, he had several deep wrinkles on his forehead that seemed to be carved by a knife.

Mei Ze had been a student of Jiang Sheng when Jiang Shaoyang was only seven or eight. He had witnessed Jiang Shaoyang's growth from a child to a young man, and he didn't hesitate to teach him a lesson when he thought a lesson should be taught, "Never have we thought that you would end up in a lawless, chaotic place such as Serpent City and be corrupted like this!"

Jiang Shaoyao was quiet.

He used to be a radiating man that was the center of attention wherever he went.

But right now, all his brilliance had been absorbed by the annular eclipse tattoo on his forehead, making him more eccentric than ever.

He was speechless for over half a minute after Mei Ze finished his sarcastic speech. Then he slowly said, "I've been thinking of a question lately.

"If the Refining Department of the Deep Sea University represents the peak of the elite refining ideology and the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution represents the peak of the grassroot refining ideology, what path and ideology should I pursue in order to beat them both?

"I had contemplated the question for a long time without any answer, until I accidentally came to Serpent City."

Mei Ze squinted.

"Did you find a third ideology in this place?"

Jiang Shaoyang smiled, his white teeth glaring.

"No.

"As you said, Serpent City is a lawless, chaotic place. Refiners here do not care for styles or ideologies. There is only one thing that they care about.

"Victory!

"Victory at any cost!

"I realized that Serpent City would be a very suitable place for me. So, I stayed.

"All the refiners in Serpent City are my teachers. You will see their 'tireless' teaching in a moment, Senior Brother Mei."

Mei Zei didn't say anything for a moment. Then he sighed.

"Shaoyang, there's still a chance for you to turn back. Let's make a deal. Come back with me if you fail today. How about it?"

Jiang Shaoyang's eyes bulged. He couldn't help but laughed.

"Senior Brother Mei, why are you academics always so childish?

"What is failure? Failure only means that victory has not come yet. That's all!

"I'm no longer the 'Tenth Star', the guy who had never failed a single time since childhood and therefore couldn't bear the thought of failure!

"I have failed thousands of times in the past three months. Many a time I was beaten like a stray dog!

"It was not until then that I discovered that failure could teach you so much more than success!

"It doesn't matter if you defeat me this time. In fact, it's quite possible. But I will rise up again and challenge you for another hundred, another thousand, another ten thousand times until I finally beat you!"

Mei Ze was rendered speechless for a while. He was shocked by Jiang Shaoyang's eyesight and starting to feel that the guy standing in front of him was not the junior brother that he knew at all.

Jiang Shaoyang smiled.

"That's about enough, Senior Brother Mei. Let's take the chance and see who's the better one between us."

Two super shuttles drove slowly out onto the track, catching all the attention of the field.

The super shuttle that Mei Ze modified for Fiend Fire Lu Feng had a weird name, which was a KALLIMA 1 .

It was a super shuttle most distinguished for its lightness, which was extremely slim, like a dancing butterfly, or a leaf that was flowing with wind.

Lightness was Mei Ze's refining style.

His nickname 'Void Wing' was based on his masterpieces that were as light as the hollow feathers of birds.

As for the super shuttle that Jiang Shaoyang modified for Battle Axe Guan Dong, it was an…

"ALKAID!"

Li Yao lost control and screamed out. He didn't know what to feel.

Never had he expected that Jiang Shaoyang would design a vehicle based on an ALKAID, too. The universe must enjoy the show when Jiang Shaoyang and himself were put together.

Jiang Shaoyang's ALKAID was full of spirit, like an irritated fierce beast. Li Yao could smell the scent of the irresistible force from it even though it was almost a hundred meters away.

On the shell, besides the hundred or so air paths which could stabilize and thrust the vehicle in the wind, the super shuttle was also installed with more than a hundred auxiliary fins that resembled the fins of sharks.

The sharp-edged auxiliary fins added to the toughness of the ALKAID, making it look like an unstoppable battering ram.

The modification was almost exactly the same as Li Yao's first plan.

No, not exactly the same. It was much better than that!

In a fair distribution, the shark fins were embedded perfectly into the shell of the vehicle without the slightest trace of joints. The whole super shuttle seemed to be refined all at once in a large-scale furnace without any post-modification at all!

"Jiang Shaoyang is stronger than three months ago. No. He has undergone a qualitative change and has become a whole new person!"

His heart beating fast, Li Yao felt so thirsty that he couldn't wait to jump on Jiang Shaoyang's ALKAID and feel it with his own hands.

But before he was able to take action, the two super shuttles, as well as the drivers and the modifiers, were escorted out of the place under the protection of the staff of the Aurora Autos.

The time of ace drivers and top modifiers was very precious.

It was just a personal competition today and not a formal match which usually sold tickets.

Therefore, only a moment later, the two ace drivers, in their KALLIMA and ALKAID, appeared at the start line of the Hell Storm Racetrack.

The audience were instantly ignited. The site was already on fire before the super shuttles were launched.

Countless super shuttle fans were craning their head up outside of the Aurora Autos, trying to jostle into the stereoscopic light beams.

The Hell Storm Domain seemed to be even more furious than usual, with smoke blowing and wind growling like ghost.

Fiend Fire Lu Feng versus Battle Axe Guan Dong!

Void Wing Mei Ze versus Solar Eclipse Jiang Shaoyang!

As the last of the three red lights floating on the sky turned green, the dual competition officially began!

In a moment, the booming of the two super shuttles overwhelmed the passionate commentary and the enthusiastic exclamation of the audience, crushing all the other noises into pieces, while the two super shuttles turned into two thin light belts.

Half a second later, the light belt changed into a series of blurred shadows, which didn't disperse until another half a second later.

Right then, the roars of the super shuttles tearing the air apart finally reached the ears of the audience, indicating that the two super shuttles were already beyond the supersonic speed when they were just initiated.

Fiend Fire Lu Feng and Battle Axe Guan Dong were both among the best super shuttle drivers, yet their driving styles were completely different.

Steered by Lu Feng, the KALLIMA was like a small boat on a surging sea. Although it seemed to be sailing hopelessly and ready to be overturned at any moment, the super shuttle continued on the racetrack in strange curves and cut into the gap of wind from various oblique angels. Not only had it avoided the assault of the wind, it even managed to be boosted by them.

The ferocious wind seemed to have become a giant hand carrying the KALLIMA forward.

In the meantime, the ALKAID, steered by Battle Axe Guan Dong, directly slashed into the wind as if it were a heavy battle axe, not bothering the wind at all.

The ALKAID that had been fully strengthened by Jiang Shaoyang boasted brand new air paths and stabilizer fins, which transformed the blowing wind that supposed to be an interference into impetus that boosted the vehicle forward!

The KALLIMA was looking for the gaps of wind in a curve, whereas ALKAID was going in a straight line.

A straight line is, of course, always shorter than a curve. Together with the boost of the wind, ALKAID was suppressing KALLIMA the whole time in the first two minutes.

"Solar Eclipse Jiang Shaoyang is indeed impressive! The air paths and stabilizer fins are so delicate!

"It seems that the record will surely be broken this time. Might be an improvement of—an entire second!"

"Solar Eclipse! Solar Eclipse! Solar Eclipse!"

Jiang Shaoyang was more or less considered as a local refiner of Serpent City right now. Many young man looked up to him as their idol.

Seeing that ALKAID modified by him was so remarkable in the game, his fans all shouted in excitement.

Inside the Hell Storm Domain, the two super shuttles had entered a floating stone belt.

KALLIMA made best use of its lightness and swiftness. It danced countless small arcs in the limited space, as if it were drawing pictures of fish scales in the air. By the dancing, it avoided the randomly moving stones that were everywhere.

Such dodging skill was known as "Fish Scale Dance". It was a very professional technique in super shuttle racing.

The audience had recognized the technique, and all applauded for Fiend Fire Lu Feng's amazing 'Fish Scale Dance'.

In the meantime, slowing down a little bit, the ALKAID crashed into the floating stone belt at a subsonic speed with vague greenness around its body.

"Guan Dong is crazy to ride into the floating stone belt at a subsonic speed! How daring!"

"Look at his auxiliary fins!"

The stabilizer fins of ALKAID started vibrating at a high speed the moment the super shuttle entered the floating stone belt.

The scattered stones that luckily broke through the spiritual shield of ALKAID were all minced into powder by the auxiliary fins.

It was then that everyone realized the auxiliary fins of ALKAID was only partly for the guidance of wind. More importantly, they were meant to crumble the stones!

How many rune arrays had been carved inside the auxiliary fins to make them capable of both?

Solar Eclipse Jiang Shaoyang's design was truly inspiring!

Chapter 276: Windchaser

Chapter 276: Windchaser

The rest of the game was very entertaining, although there was no suspense anymore.

Watching the KALLIMA was like watching a spectacular Fish Scale Dance show, in which it swept exotic, elegant curves time and time again to cut in the gaps of the wind and stones trying to catch up with the ALKAID.

However, the ALKAID looked like an unreasonable general who could not be talked sense to when on the winning side. The super shuttle kept the subsonic speed and suppressed its opponent all the time.

The two drivers both showed their best driving skills. The two vehicles they were in also displayed the limit of super shuttle performance which dazzled all of the audience. The unfathomable movements, even if played at the 1/10 of actual speed, still impressed everyone with the true meaning of 'greased lightning'.

Towards the end, ALKAID never gave KALLIMA any chance to surpass it, not even once. It dominated the entire game and rushed past the finish line first.

The narrator was silent for five seconds before he cried,"11'44''31!

"Driving his ALKAID, Battle Axe Guan Dong has given us a magnificent presentation that has never been done before and created a new lap record of the Hell Storm Racetrack!

"He is 3 seconds faster than Fiend Fire Lu Feng's record from three months ago!

"Let's all cheer for Battle Axe Guan Dong, who is the unquestionable king of the Hell Storm today!"

The super shuttle fans were dazed in the beginning. A moment later, screams that were ten times crazier than previously burst out from the crowds!

3 seconds!

On a racetrack that had been challenged by countless experts, countless times, it was difficult enough to improve the record by 0.3 second. A 3-second breakthrough could be called a miracle!

Fiend Fire Lu Feng and Battle Axe Guan Dong drove their super shuttles to the safe area where defense arrays had been deployed.

Fiend Fire Lu Feng jumped out of his KALLIMA. Looking at the ALKAID which had been seriously damaged and yet was still firm, he complimented sincerely, "Good shuttle!"

He wasn't complimenting Battle Axe Guan Dong's driving skills, as the two of them knew each other's driving skills too well after competing on professional racetracks all the time.

The difference of their driving skills couldn't possibly lead to the 3-second breakthrough.

The only explanation was that ALKAID had been modified too well!

"After this battle, Solar Eclipse Jiang Shaoyang's name will be known by all super shuttle drivers and fans. He will be acknowledged as a first-rate modification master now."

Fiend Fire Lu Feng observed with mixed feelings.

Soon, the two super shuttles were transported to the workshop by staff of the Aurora Autos, where they would be fully maintained by Jiang Shaoyang and Mei Ze personally.

The Hell Storm Racetrack was empty now.

Although the game was over, the super shuttle fans crowding at the Aurora Autos didn't intend to leave.

Many of them were preparing themselves to drive on the Hell Storm Racetrack. They were hoping that the two professional drivers could kindly offer some advice to them.

"Master Fang, what do you think of the dual competition today? Wasn't it phenomenal?"

Yuan Qi's face was flushed out of excitement as if he had drunk a lot of wine.

"Indeed it was. The ace drivers deserve their names. Their driving skills are much better than mine. As for the two super shuttle modification masters, especially Solar Eclipse, Jiang Shaoyang…"

Li Yao closed his eyes and reminisced about the breathtaking super shuttle match. He thought for a long time before he continued seriously, "Speaking of this particular modification plan, his ideas and designs are much better than mine!"

Yuan Qi asked, "And you're still going to challenge the racetrack today?"

"Of course!"

Li Yao smiled, "Let's go. Let me show you the ALKAID modified by me."

Yuan Qi couldn't believe his eyes when Li Yao drove ALKAID out of the large-scale truck slowly.

Looming before him was a gargantuan metal monster whose layers of plate armor were welded together in the crudest way, making the super shuttle look like an aerolite wearing several layers of steel clothes.

The size of this metal monster was almost ten times larger than that of an ordinary super shuttle. One could never tell that its prototype was an ALKAID from its outlook.

"What…what is this?"

Yuan Qi was stupefied.

Bigger size meant higher spiritual energy consumption. Besides, it would be more easily affected by the chaotic wind in the wretched Hell Storm Domain. The odds of it being hit by scattered stones were hundreds of times higher, too.

Yuan Qi couldn't help but shouted, "What kind of super shuttle is this?!"

"It is not exactly correct to call it a super shuttle."

Li Yao said, "Battle Axe Guan Dong and Solar Eclipse Jiang Shaoyang optimized the performance, driving skills, modification, and everything else possible about their ALKAID. There is no way that I can defeat them on the Hell Storm Racetrack with a super shuttle. Therefore, I didn't plan to modify it in the way that a super shuttle is usually modified."

"Not a super shuttle?"

Yuan Qi didn't understand, "Then what is it?"

"Crystal suit."

Li Yao smiled. "You may consider it to be a crystal suit without four limbs."

Since too many amateurs had signed up to challenge the Hell Storm Racetrack today, it had been decided, according to the convention, that the match would be held in groups of eight contenders.

Yuan Qi was a VIP of Aurora Autos. He was a somewhat famous expert among the amateur super shuttle drivers, and the performance he gave yesterday was absolutely amazing. Therefore, he signed Li Yao up for the first group without too much trouble.

And when Li Yao drove his ALKAID to the start line of the Hell Storm Racetrack neither too fast nor too slowly, every audience had the same reaction that Yuan Qi just did: they rubbed their eyes which they thought were deceiving them.

The ALKAID, which was huge, ugly and clumsy, looked like a silly truck compared with the other seven soft, light and elegant super shuttles.

Judging from the outlook, even 'Heaven Uproar', a spiritual beast that was often used to carry heavy loads, could run faster than it.

"What… what is this thing?"

"It's just a pile of scrap iron and copper. Is it even drivable in the blowing wind and sweeping stones of the Hell Storm Domain?"

"The shape design is the exact opposite of aerodynamic."

"Let's put super shuttles aside. Even an ordinary shuttle wouldn't be devised like this. This is just a big iron lump, is all!"

Laughter, boos, doubts were shouted out continuously from the crowds.

Fiend Fire Lu Feng and Battle Axe Guan Dong, after an exhausting match, were resting in the VIP room of the Aurora Autos waiting for their super shuttles to be maintained. Out of pure boredom, they turned on the light beam and started watching the competition of amateurs.

Both of them laughed out aloud when they saw the grotesque super shuttle.

"It's actually a lot of fun to watch the amateurs' games now and then. There's never going to be a freak like this in a professional championship in a thousand years."

Inside the ALKAID, eyes closed, Li Yao was sensing the palpitation of every rune array in ALKAID, as if he were placed in a special crystal suit. The feeling was both familiar and strange.

"Beep… Beep… Beep!"

Three red lights turned green one by one.

Li Yao opened his eyes suddenly. The brilliance in his eyes seemed to be piercing through the heavy plate armor and cutting the wind and stones in front into pieces.

The ALKAID roared and dashed out like an enraged rhino.

Another round of laughter burst out from the crowds, because the ALKAID was the slowest to run off. The other seven super shuttles had long marched forward like arrows just freed from bows.

However, the two ace drivers in the VIP room both changed their face when they heard the boosting noise of ALKAID.

As real experts, they immediately recognized the potential of the super shuttle's power rune array from the noise.

The super shuttle was definitely not as boorish as it appeared. On the contrary, it was a super super shuttle!

"ALKAID?"

Battle Axe Guan Dong even stood up in concern.

He realized through the booming that, behind the hideous heavy plate armor, the super shuttle was also an ALKAID whose power system had been as well adjusted as the one that Jiang Shaoyang modified for him!

"Huh?"

Jiang Shaoyang and Mei Ze, who were maintaining the two super shuttles in the workshop, heard the noise of the shuttles, too. They both stood up straight and listened attentively.

"Shua!"

With the roaring of power rune arrays, Li Yao charged into the blowing wind. The outmost plates of the ALKAID perked up, which, like forty or so fan-shaped sails, shivered briskly in the air and caught the wind around, increasing the speed of the ALKAID exponentially.

One, two, three…

The other seven super shuttle that had been struggling in the chaotic wind were all surpassed by Li Yao within several seconds, unable to do anything about it.

"How could it be?"

All the audience felt that their eyes were deceiving them again.

The wind in the Hell Storm Domain was strong, chaotic and utterly unpredictable.

The amateurs usually chose to dodge the wind. The professionals usually chose to slide through the wind from its gaps while borrowing part of its power.

However, this mysterious driver played with the biting wind with the forty sails as if it were a toy.

Such technique was far beyond the category of super shuttle racing. After all, even the craziest super shuttle drivers wouldn't practice their driving skills in tornadoes if there was any sanity in their head.

"His sense of control and anticipation of wind was so impressive!"

"How did he learn such skill?"

"However, even if he can catch wind now, how is he going to deal with the floating stone belts with such a huge size and so many sails?"

In the exclamations, Li Yao rushed into the first floating stone belt.

"Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa!"

Countless scattered stones hit the giant shell of ALKAID savagely.

"Bo! Bo! Bo! Bo!"

The outmost layer of the plate armor that covered the ALKAID, after several cracks, suddenly broke up and formed an unconsolidated iron shield outside of the spiritual shield of the ALKAID.

The iron shield held back 90% of the scattered stones.

After letting go of the first layer of its plate armor, the ALKAID was much smaller in size like a cicada that just sloughed. It accelerated and dashed out of the first floating stone belt.

"Shua!"

Another thirty sails turned erect and, after subtle adjustment of angles, caught the wind around, boosting the speed of the super shuttle again.

The audience finally stopped talking.

They finally understood why this super shuttle was so huge.

It was quite possible that there were three to four layers of plate armor each covering one another outside the super shuttle.

In the chaotic wind, the plate armor could be raised as sails; in the floating belt, the plate armor would be dropped layer by layer as iron shields to defend the stones.

Li Yao had passed five floating stone belts with the same method. The originally ragged super shuttle was slimmer and sharper every time it took off a layer of plate armor.

None of the audience had ever seen such a driving technique.

There could be one possible word to describe Li Yao:

Windchaser!

Chapter 277: Unbreakable Record

Chapter 277: Unbreakable Record

After passing through five floating stone belts, the plate armor of ALKAID had all dropped off, revealing the perfect, streamlined shell.

It was not until then that much of the audience realized that this mysterious driver was driving the same model of super shuttle as Battle Axe Guan Dong had, the ALKAID!

What's more, the shell of this ALKAID also had an inlay of auxiliary fins that looked like shark fins.

However, the fins were much fewer than those on the previous ALKAID. Also, they looked somewhat awry on the shell of the vehicle.

At first glance, they unmistakably brought the feeling that not only would they fail to stabilize the super shuttle, they would also stir the chaotic wind into a more chaotic one.

As it turned out, ALKAID lost the smoothness that it'd had in the beginning and started trembling.

"What's the meaning of this?"

"Even as a layman, I can tell that the distribution of the auxiliary fins is completely against aerodynamics. They're messed up!"

"The previous modification was so brilliant. Why would he modify his super shuttle in such a way towards the end? It will do better without these auxiliary fins!"

All the super shuttle fans were gazing at the light beams with their full attention while pondering the reason.

Even Fiend Fire Lu Feng and Battle Axe Guan Dong were looking at each other in confusion.

They'd been in countless super shuttle races. Never once had they seen such bizarre modification. They had no clue what its purpose was at all.

Jiang Shaoyang and Mei Ze, who were in the maintenance workshop, both dropped their work and rushed out to study Li Yao's ALKAID.

Li Yao's performance in the beginning was already shocking enough for them, especially for Jiang Shaoyang, who thought he had explored all possibilities in the optimization of the ALKAID. He'd never expected that someone could modify an ALKAID that was even more crazy and brutal than his.

Manipulating forty sails at the same time in tornadoes to borrow the power of wind was not a skill that every super shuttle driver could handle.

Therefore, no modification master had ever realized that a super shuttle could be modified in such a way!

But the crooked, disordered auxiliary fins caused them greater confusion.

Mei Ze opened his mouth and asked, "Shaoyang, can you tell the function of the auxiliary fins?"

Him speaking first was a sign that he had admitted that Jiang Shaoyang was better than him in the field of super shuttle modification.

The corners of Jiang Shaoyang's eyes twitched violently. The annular eclipse tattoo on his forehead seemed to be enlivened and turned into a swirl that was too deep to measure.

After pondering for a moment, his eyes bulged wide, as he realized what was going on. He couldn't help but shout, "No! It's impossible!"

Right then, Li Yao encountered the sixth floating stone belt.

"Bad luck!"

The super shuttle fans all sighed for him.

Luck played an important role on the Hell Storm Racetrack.

If a driver was lucky and just came across three or four sparse floating stone belts, it would be very easy to get a good result.

However, if a driver was unlucky and ran into five or six floating stone belts, he might be caught by the scattered stones by accident even if he was a professional driver.

Today, it seemed that Li Yao was the unlucky driver.

The stones in the sixth floating stone belt were dense and sharp. They were colliding with each other and splitting into smaller stones without any pattern all the time.

The ALKAID had run out of the plate armor. Its spiritual shield was much duller than before after the tremendous consumption.

Its defense ability had hit rock bottom.

A scattered stone the size of a fist would be enough to crash it.

A large-scale ambulance airship was already standing by and ready to move out.

Everyone was anxious for what was to come.

Right then—

Inside the ALKAID, every one of Li Yao's brain cell started roaring together with the power rune array that had been boosted to maximum.

Flow of wind, point of impact of the stones, parameters of every component of the super shuttle...

Every factor was taken into account inside his brain and turned into a series of obscure figures and formulas.

Like a volcano eruption, Li Yao's brain went into the super perceptive state!

Brain cell activity, 300%!

The ALKAID trembled so violently that it started revolving in the end.

With the high-speed rotation of more than a hundred circles per second, the ALKAID seemed to have become a screaming bullet, or a drill that was going to dig into the sky. The scattered stones were blown away by the centrifugal force the moment they hit the shell of the ALKAID.

It was not until then that the audience discovered the true use of the auxiliary fins.

In a normal state, the auxiliary fins were indeed crooked and messed-up and would be a nuisance in the racing.

However, in the state of high-speed rotation, the auxiliary fins turned into propeller blades that could not only help stabilize the trajectory of ALKAID, but also knock off the smaller stones that had come close to the super shuttle.

"The modifier had all this in mind?"

"It's impossible! Rotating at such a high speed while adjusting the course of the super shuttle at a subsonic speed, even a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator wouldn't be able to do that!"

"Who is he?"

Every audience was asking the same question.

"Who is he?"

The two ace drivers clenched their hands, their faces flushed due to anxiety.

They couldn't figure out which super shuttle driver could be freakish like this.

Judging from his driving style in the beginning, he seemed to be a professional player. However, no professional player would ever waste their time practicing such a weird skill as high-speed rotation.

It was a skill only suitable for flying in tornadoes. On a professional racetrack, it would be completely useless!

"Where is this weirdo from?"

The two ace drivers looked at each other and smiled bitterly.

They thought they were the protagonists of the day. Now, they had become stepping stones for somebody else.

"Who is he?" Mei Ze was murmuring at the same time.

Jiang Shaoyang squinted, his mouth shivering,

"Such out-of-mind modification style reminds me of a certain someone. However, where on earth did he find such an insane driver to drive for him?

"No, not a driver.

"The driving skills the guy showed are far beyond the scope of super shuttle racing. He must be more than a professional super shuttle driver.

"He is an Exo, and not just any Exo. A first-rate one!

"What he has been using are the brilliant acrobatic skills of a crystal suit!"

In everyone's bewilderment and exclamation, Li Yao drilled through the sky like a bullet from a sniper rifle and crushed the record just created by Battle Axe Guan Dong into pieces.

Seeing the blood-like timer slowly appearing on the light beam, nobody was able to calm themselves down for a long time. They found what had happened dramatic and inconceivable.

The commentator had lost the ability to talk, too. There was a long silence on the spot.

10'32''55!

Li Yao had broken the lap record of the Hell Storm Racetrack by an earthshattering 1 minute and 11 seconds!

...

After the game, Li Yao didn't let anybody know his name. He didn't even talk with the four experts under the identity of 'Fang Ping'.

He left the arena the moment the match was completed.

One of the reasons was that he feared Jiang Shaoyang might've found out who he was. But more importantly, he felt that his victory was kind of cheating.

The methodologies in his modification of ALKAID lay far beyond the studies of the super shuttle. The helical acceleration that he employed towards the end of the game was not a super shuttle driving skill at all.

Such modification and such a technique were suitable for himself and for the Hell Storm Domain exclusively.

If it were on a different racetrack or a different Exo, the result would've been the complete opposite of the current one.

There was not a second Exo in the entire Heaven's Origin Sector who had been slashing tornadoes in dust storms crazily like himself.

He was confident to beat any enemy, even a Building Foundation expert, in a tornado.

But on the other hand, Jiang Shaoyang's modification ideas were the rightful paths that were universally applicable to any super shuttle driver and any racetrack.

Therefore, in the field of the super shuttle modification, he had lost a battle.

"Solar Eclipse Jiang Shaoyang? Good for you!

"After only three months, you've made such enormous progress! Given another few years, you might actually be able to eclipse the Novem Stellae!

"No. The Novem Stellae, the Supernova, these experts are all mine!

"I will beat them faster than you do!"

Stimulated by Jiang Shaoyang, Li Yao competitiveness was burning brighter and brighter like a fire that had just had oil added onto it.

His disappearance without saying goodbye made the super shuttle fans of Serpent City even crazier about him.

Within a few hours, the news had spread to every corner of the city.

"A mysterious driver savaged the Hell Storm Racetrack with a crazily modified ALKAID!"

"Fiend Fire Lu Feng and Battle Axe Guan Dong, two well-known drivers, have been defeated shamefully!"

"1 minute and 11 seconds! This is a lap record that is never going to be broken again!"

"Who is he exactly? Is he one of the top five super shuttle drivers of the federation who joined the competition in disguise?"

The fact that he had become a center of public attention caused a minor trouble for him.

He was now in the Bountiful Treasures Pavilion's trade fair of unknown materials and defective materials.

In case anyone recognized him, he wore a glittering silver mask besides his previous pretense.

It was not something unusual in Serpent City.

Most of participants of the trade fair did not intend for other people to learn of their real identities. Therefore, the trade fair had pretty much become a masquerade.

Those without masks might not be showing their true faces, either.

For example, although Li Yao had been with Yuan Qi for three days, he was not sure that the Yuan Qi he saw and heard was Yuan Qi's true face and voice.

There was nothing special about the trade fair itself.

Before he went to the trade fair, he'd fantasized about picking up some Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures by chance that were overlooked by other people.

As it turned out, he had been thinking too much.

The Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures allegedly from other worlds were all weird and beyond recognition of attributes or usage. Li Yao found no useful material even with the help of the probe technique of the Hundred Smelting Clan from 40,000 years ago.

However, he did find several useful ingredients from the defective materials. Although they had been damaged due to various reasons and wouldn't be of much use to other refiners, he might be able to revive them with the secret technique of the Hundred Smelting Clan.

Therefore, Li Yao spent a fortune on a batch of defective materials and quite enjoyed the feeling of being rich, however briefly.

Besides that, two other interesting things happened in the trade fair, which educated Li Yao on the craziness of 'treasure gambling'.

Chapter 278: Secret Treasure and Marrow Crystal

Chapter 278: Secret Treasure and Marrow Crystal

At first, a plain-looking, middle-aged man paid 11 million for a fist-size aerolite.

The aerolite, which was particularly angular, had also caught Li Yao's attention.

According to the Bountiful Treasures Pavilion, the aerolite had been shining in seven different colors when it fell into the Heaven's Origin Sector. There was even a video clip to prove it.

But other than that, it seemed to be a perfectly normal stone.

Examinations suggested that 99% of the stone was made of regular metals and only 1% of it contained the unknown materials that had never appeared in the Heaven's Origin Sector before.

In the end, the middle-aged man, after spending a fortune on the mysterious aerolite, took out a syringe of grey liquid which he poured on the stone.

Then, the aerolite started shining in various mystic colors, which was exactly the scene where it first entered the aerosphere. The shining didn't stop until three minutes later.

Everyone on the spot was amazed, knowing that the middle-aged man had bought a bargain.

Although it was still unclear what materials were contained in the aerolite, the mystic colors alone were evident enough that its worth was far more than 11 million. Its true worth might be tens of times higher than that.

The middle-aged man's bargain kicked off a good start for the trade fair.

The unknown materials that followed the aerolite were all bought at a high price.

A few of them were put up for auction when several guests were interested in them at the same time.

Not everyone was as lucky as the middle-aged man.

A man who was wearing a black mask, after a fierce competition, won the bid of an oval stone with green streaks which allegedly could have been a fossil egg of a prehistoric beast at the cost of 35 million.

The green-streak stone was discovered by an expedition team in underground relics of the Heaven's Origin Sector.

During the expedition, several Cultivators had been injured or killed, including two Building Foundation experts.

Therefore, the price of the stone was set at 20 million in the beginning.

Bountiful Treasures Pavilion guaranteed that the expedition did take place. Some of the buyers were familiar with the Cultivators of the expedition team, too.

However, as to whether or not the green-streak stone was a fossil egg of a prehistoric beast, the bidders would need to make a judgement themselves.

The eggshell of prehistoric beasts was mostly made of rare materials that could defend the scanning of telepathic thoughts. Besides, the billions of years of time had transformed the egg into a fossil, making it even harder to determine what was stored inside.

If the oval stone really turned out be a fossil egg of a prehistoric beast, its worth would far exceed 20 million and could border on the billion level.

Therefore, after buying the stone for 35 million, the man in the black mask drilled into the stone with destructive tools and extended his telepathic thoughts through the hole.

However, there was nothing.

Inside the stone was still stone.

The 35 million he'd just spent proved to be all for nothing.

Li Yao was truly shocked at a gamble of such a high level of risk, even though he just got a large sum of bonus from the Aurora Autos.

But the man in black mask and the rest of the guests seemed to be used to it. After a few sighs, they shifted their attention to the gamble of the next Heavenly Material and Earthly Treasure in high spirits, as if nothing had happened.

According to Mr. Lin of the Bountiful Treasures Pavilion, the trade fair of unknown materials and defective materials hosted here was only at the amateur level.

The Bountiful Treasures Pavilion's main focus was the materials that had been authenticated. The unknown materials that it sold were only meant to be an entertainment.

The guests who came to the trade fair mostly considered the activity as a recreation.

In some places, there were professional trade fairs for unknown materials and magical equipment that were more mysterious, more expensive, and auctioned to more experienced customers.

These were the real treasure gambles!

The professional trade fairs had a special name, which was 'Secret Treasure Exchange'.

Li Yao was quite interested in Mr. Lin's introduction. He wrote down the addresses and registration methods of several Secret Treasure Exchanges and decided to take a tour there when he had time.

He was not planning to get rich by treasure gambles. But he did have irresistible curiosity about unknown materials and magical equipment as a refiner and he simply wanted to see more of them.

However, right now, he had other priorities at hand.

Yuan Qi had fully deciphered the double encryption and found out the keys. He'd taught Li Yao the correct way to open the two seals.

Therefore, his primary task right now was to find a safe place and dig out the secrets inside the Cosmos Ring!

…

One day later, in the upper eastern district of Floating Spear City.

Inside a business suite of a splendid skyscraper, Li Yao was standing before the giant windows watching myriads of twinkling lights glittering below him. Mixed feelings were turning over and over in his mind.

Two years ago, when he stared at the building from a corner of the slum yearningly, he had believed that the greatest happiness in the world was a night of sleep and a nice meal in this hotel.

However, when the dream came true, he found that delicate cuisines, expensive clothes, extravagant rooms… all the materialistic gratification didn't give him as much pleasure as he had imagined, because his ambition had grown much greater than before.

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao snapped his fingers. The curtains closed automatically without any noise.

He took out four fawn diamond-shaped crystals and put each of them to one corner of the room.

With a telepathic thought, the crystals started spinning at a high speed like four gyroscopes, which unleashed a strange wave that filled the entire room.

They were the barriers that he'd bought from Yuan Qi.

As a top Cryptohacker, Yuan Qi was naturally a first-rate barrier designer. With the cover of the four gyroscopic crystals, Li Yao wouldn't be noticed even if he was to burn the room to the ground.

Li Yao connected his mini crystal processor to the Cosmos Ring and entered the encryption keys.

The Cosmos Ring shivered. Two spiritual waves flooded out of the Cosmos Ring one after the other, like two ripples in a pond when two stones were dropped in tandem.

Li Yao was so anxious that he felt he was going to freak out.

He spread a spiritual thread into the Cosmos Ring and discovered that two additional storage zones had appeared beside the main storage zone.

The feedback was weird. The three zones were like three bubbles each pressing against one another.

Li Yao extended all his spiritual threads into one of the smaller bubbles and pulled everything out.

"Marrow crystals?"

More than twenty translucent, shining crystals were placed on the bed, dazzling Li Yao who found it hard to breathe.

They were the real Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures!

Cultivators could increase their Cultivation by inhaling and exhaling spiritual energy, which was usually in the form of gas, liquid, or solid. There were other two special forms, namely plasma state and super solid state. But they could only appear under extreme conditions, and therefore were not of much use for Cultivation.

Spiritual gas was most common. It was everywhere between the sky and the ground. Li Yao had 'seen' countless light spots in the air when his spiritual root was just awakened, which he swallowed a lot of with his spiritual threads. The light spots were the spiritual gas.

Although it was widely distributed and readily absorbable, the density of spiritual energy inside it was too low for Cultivation.

When the spiritual gas consolidated, it would become spiritual liquid.

All the strengthening drugs, healing drugs, and even demon beast blood could all be counted as spiritual fluid. The spiritual energy contained inside spiritual liquid was hundreds of times more concentrated than inside spiritual gas.

When spiritual energy invaded metals and rocks and changed their essence slowly over billions of years of evolution, they would be transformed into crystals, which was the spiritual energy in the solid state. Crystals were the main source of spiritual energy for Cultivators.

Crystals had a lot of application fields. Not only could they be absorbed by Cultivators, they could also be refined to provide power for magical equipment.

One could say that crystals were the foundation of the modern Cultivation civilization.

Marrow crystals were a special kind of crystal that was the essence of a mother crystal lode formed under billions of years of high temperature and pressure.

Spiritual energy contained in a marrow crystal was thousands of times more than that in a normal crystal of the same size, with an amazing purity of more than 99%.

Marrow crystals were not something you can buy in the market, because no Cultivator would ever sell it even if they'd found one. They would use it for their own Cultivation, or to refine powerful magical equipment or maybe life-saving medications.

However, marrow crystals were not something that could be easily utilized either, because too much spiritual energy was stored inside which could lead to dire consequences if handled incautiously.

For example, if Li Yao didn't recognize the marrow crystal and decided to absorb it like ordinary crystals, his body would explode because of the intense spiritual energy.

Different marrow crystal required different refining procedures which involved different catalysts.

Some catalysts were relatively common, and some were Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures themselves. But some catalysts were even more difficult to find than the marrow crystals.

Books of the Hundred Smelting Clan recorded many secret arts for distinguishing and refining marrow crystals.

With further investigation, Li Yao frowned. The excitement on his faced turned into bitterness.

"Blood Jade Marrow, Flowing Silver Aurelia, Divine Dissolving Stone, Sea Orchid…

"The rarest marrow crystals?"

Li Yao realized that the marrow crystals he'd discovered were the most bizarre, the least commonly seen ones in the world.

Many of them could only be found in the books of the Hundred Smelting Clan and had become extinct a long time ago. There wouldn't be a second refiner other than himself that could make anything out of it.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao patted his head and realized why.

"Of course they're rare!

"The snake demon would've long absorbed them if they weren't, and I wouldn't even've had the chance to see them!"

Li Yao estimated that the marrow crystals had been collected by the snake demon for a long time, who did not know how to refine them due to their scarcity.

Even if the snake demon knew, he might still not be able to do anything because of lack of catalysts, yet he didn't make up his mind to sell them either.

Therefore, the snake demon separated a private zone in the Cosmos Ring to store the marrow crystals hoping to refine them when he found the catalysts he needed.

However, the snake demon could never have anticipated that a human being would take all the advantages!

Different from the snake demon, Li Yao knew the refining procedures of each and every one of the marrow crystals.

Although complicated catalysts were required, with the advanced technology of modern life, he could always put some notice on the Nexus looking for potential sellers. As long as he waited patiently, he definitely could purchase one or two.

"In the worst-case scenario, I could make the marrow crystals into big bombs. Hehe. I believe their power is going to be at least ten times more impressive than the demon core bomb!

"Let me put the marrow crystals aside for now and see what's in the other storage zone."

Li Yao extended his spiritual threads into the second bubble. But what he retrieved was something very odd.

Chapter 279: Mutation of Little Black

Chapter 279: Mutation of Little Black

The fist-size stone felt neither like gold nor like wood. It was tangled by rings of hard lines, making it look like a pupa carved out of a rock. It was extremely heavy too.

Li Yao tried to spread his spiritual threads into the stone, only to be completely blocked by the shell.

He took out the dagger that he used to dissect demon beasts. Yet the dagger couldn't cut a single hole in the shell. The only thing it left was a shallow scratch.

Half a minute later, even the shallow scratch was gone, like a wound that healed itself.

Li Yao thought hard for a moment. Still, he didn't recall any material that had such odd characteristics.

He didn't have many tools at hand. Besides, he was not at a refining workshop after all. It might cause trouble if he caught too much attention. Therefore, Li Yao simply dropped the marrow stones and the pupa-like stone into the Cosmos Ring and decided to study them when he was back at the Grand Desolate War Institution.

His main purpose in Floating Spear City was to visit his senior brother, Fiend Blade Peng Hai.

Since Peng Hai separated from the Crimson Nimbus Guild, he had been trying to break the barrier to the Core

Formation Stage as an unaffiliated Cultivator.

Although he hadn't succeeded yet, he was already one of the strongest Cultivators at the peak of the Building Foundation Stage and had an immense influence on Cultivators in the federation.

Besides, Peng Hai was not a pure battle-type Cultivator. Back when he was in the Crimson Nimbus Guild, he had been managing the marketing department and was in charge of finding new markets for the Crimson Nimbus Guild.

Finding new markets required much more than personal combat ability. Connections and administrative skills were necessary.

Li Yao and Fiend Blade Peng Hai had known each other for a long time. He knew Peng Hai's ambition well, which was to create his own sect besides being a strong Cultivator.

Li Yao was not an admin-type Cultivator. He didn't have too many theories on how to promote the Demon Beast Detector and rival against the Zephyr Guild.

It also happened that Fiend Blade Peng Hai had just returned to Floating Spear City from a training session in the Dark Desolate Domain. Since Floating Spear City was not far from Serpent City, Li Yao had decided to pay a visit to him hoping to get some enlightenment.

He made an appointment with Fiend Blade Peng Hai at 9 a.m. the next day.

He had been modifying and racing shuttles day and night over the past few days. Although he quite enjoyed himself, he was exhausted, too. After storing the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures inside his Cosmos Ring, Li Yao went to bed and fell asleep.

The next morning when he woke up, he felt that he was refreshed and vigorous. There was no part of his body that was not at ease.

Li Yao opened the curtain and got an eyeful of crimson leaves, which looked like a wild fire that dyed the sky into redness.

This was the upper eastern district, a place where Cultivators congregated.

It was still early in the morning, yet many Cultivators had flown to the sky to absorb the spiritual energy in the air while the day was replacing the night.

"Two years ago, I could only stand on the ground and crane my head watching the Cultivators shining in the sky.

"But now, I am one of them too."

Li Yao was itching to fly to the sky and join them in the morning exercise to fulfill his vanity, when the Cosmos Ring trembled and started getting hotter and hotter. The dull surface was sending out dangerously reddish orange color.

"What's going on?"

Li Yao was alarmed. Spreading his spiritual threads into the Cosmos Ring, he discovered that the storage space inside seemed to have experienced a hurricane. All the materials were misplaced.

What's more, three of the marrow crystals that he put inside the previous night were gone.

"Swoosh! Swoosh!"

A black shadow was raging in the limited storage space and hitting the walls every now and then, causing earsplitting explosions and furious spiritual tides.

The storage space was like a shaking cottage in a thunderstorm which was tearing it down at any moment.

"Little Black!"

Li Yao suddenly realized that there was a glutton named Black Wing inside the Cosmos Ring!

That guy was a piece of magical equipment that could self-cultivate. The crystals eaten by it had been almost as many as those absorbed by himself. Besides, it had been quite picky on the purity of crystals.

Little Black must've thought the marrow crystals as ordinary crystals and devoured three of them in a row!

But purity of the 'ordinary crystals' was too high and the spiritual energy contained in them was too furious. It couldn't digest them, so it was rolling over in pain in the Cosmos Ring!

Li Yao was very anxious.

Eating three marrow crystals without any catalysts… even a Building Foundation Cultivator might self-explode!

Besides, the Cosmos Ring was an extremely unstable man-made space. If Little Black continued on a rampage in it, the barrier of the Cosmos Ring might collapse, which would transform Little Black and all the other materials inside the ring into two-dimensional or four-dimensional objects and dismiss them from the three-dimensional world. They would be gone forever!

Li Yao gritted his teeth. He extended all his spiritual threads into the Cosmos Ring and dragged out Little Black who had gone mad.

"Swoosh!"

With a series of blurred shadows, the Black Wing charged at a wall like an infuriated black dragon.

"Bo!"

A yellow ripple appeared on the wall, as if it were made of liquid instead of bricks.

Li Yao was somewhat relieved to see this.

Thankfully, he had installed barriers inside the room, otherwise the entire building would've been demolished by Little Black.

After consuming three marrow crystals, the Black Wing had undergone a drastic change. The black gas around it was denser than before and consolidating into liquid, as if countless black waterdrops were flying around it.

"This is—"

Li Yao was dazed.

Liquefaction of spiritual gas was a sign of the Building Foundation Stage.

Could it be that Little Black was entering the Building Foundation Stage?

On second thought, it was not entirely unlikely. If one could absorb the spiritual energy contained in three marrow stones, it was quite possible that one would soar into the Building Foundation Stage without any trouble.

Li Yao felt weird.

A flying sword that could self-cultivate was already crazy enough. A flying sword at the Building Foundation Stage would be something that had never been heard of in the entire Heaven's Origin Sector.

"Little Black, come on!"

Li Yao clenched his hands and cheered for the Black Wing.

"Swoosh!"

"Swoosh!"

"Swoosh!"

The Black Wing was three times faster than it used to be. Dashing in all directions inside the room, its blurred shadows knitted a giant, airtight net that lingered on and on.

"Pa!"

After hundreds of collisions, the barrier crystal on the southeast corner cracked.

"Pa! Pa!"

The barrier crystals on the northeast corner and northwest corner cracked within the next second.

The last intact barrier crystal was also on the verge of rupture.

The Black Wing seemed to realize that the barrier would be wrecked after another few collisions and its secret would be exposed to the public.

It screamed and braked sharply, surrounded by hundreds of black waterdrops that were spinning fast.

"Crack!"

Suddenly, a sharp noise came from the Black Wing.

A snake-shape crack appeared on the body of the sword.

Li Yao was truly shocked.

The Black Wing used to look crappy, but it was mainly because of the rust. There had never been such huge structural damage before!

As a refiner, he immediately recognized that the crack all through the body of the sword would significantly diminish the sturdiness of the Black Wing, which was almost similar to the vertebral fracture of a human being.

"Little Black!"

Li Yao dashed forward to the sword.

However, after the crack, the Black Wing did not show any sign of pain. Instead, it seemed to have vented its anger out and floated in the air exhaustedly.

Dazed, Li Yao stared at the snake-shape crack on the Black Wing, pondering why.

The spiritual waterdrops had vaporized and were absorbed by it again. Dozens of thick black spiritual threads were released.

Although the Black Wing failed to enter the Building Foundation Stage, it had already landed at the peak of the Refinement Stage.

"Attaboy. I thought I was improving fast enough with all the lucky encounters in the past year. But you've improved much faster than I did!"

Seeing that the Black Wing was still safe and sound, Li Yao was finally relieved. He extended several spiritual threads from his spiritual root and connected them to those of the Black Wing's.

The moment they were linked, Li Yao felt that something was different.

Although the Black Wing failed to break into the Building Foundation Stage, the nourishment of the three marrow crystals had made it grow a lot over the past night.

More specifically, the flooding spiritual energy had awakened something inside the Black Wing.

A lot of broken memory pieces appeared in Li Yao's brain.

"No wonder you can only fly but not attack, although you are a flying sword.

"This flying sword is not your true self at all.

"Or rather, this is not a flying sword at all. It is a barrier that constrains your true self.

"Who are you exactly?"

The Black Wing had no idea what the answer was.

It hovered in confusion for a while, and wrote four words with the sword tip in the air:

"I am Little Black."

Li Yao was amused and laughed.

That was true. Whatever the Black Wing's background was, it would always be Little Black, a friend who had grown together with him since he was a child.

"Rest assured. I'll find a way to break the barrier and free you!"

Li Yao knew that the Black Wing must be from a world beyond the Heaven's Origin Sector that was much more enormous and mysterious.

The barrier set in that world was not something that a Cryptohacker like Yuan Qi could resolve.

Li Yao made up his mind that he would bring Little Black to the center of the cosmos one day and explore the gorgeous worlds out there.

"The things I put in the Cosmos Ring are called marrow crystals. You must keep yourself away from them because they're not digestible. Next time, you probably won't be as lucky!

"When I am back to the Grand Desolate War Institution and find enough catalysts, I'll refine the marrow crystals into usable ingredients. Rest assured. You will be able to enjoy them in good time!"

Li Yao had formed a plan. The remaining marrow crystals would be divided into four parts. One for himself, one for

Little Black, one for Ding Lingdang and the last one would be refined into strengthening drugs and healing drugs which would be reserved for future uses or helping friends.

Brother Guan Xiong of the Mountain Sea Sect suffered serious injuries when he rescued the ordinary people, including Li Yao himself, from a train during the beast tide a year and a half ago. He had saved Li Yao's life. The medication made of marrow crystals would help him regain his capability.

While thinking of future plans, Li Yao started to clear the mess inside the Cosmos Ring.

"Huh?"

When he took out the pupa-like stone, he found that one end of the stone had been cut off, which must've been the work of Little Black when it was storming inside the Cosmos Ring after swallowing three marrow crystals.

The stone was hollow and full of half-solid liquid that was thicker than glue. Turning the stone upside down was not enough to pour the liquid out.

Li Yao went through a lot of trouble and finally emptied the liquid. He found a finger-size sword-shape object inside the liquid.

With a closer look, he discovered that it was actually an intimidating warship model.

Chapter 280: Neltharion

Chapter 280: Neltharion

The warship looked like a dragon whose scales were all erect; it was surrounded by the strong stench of death.

Although the model was only the size of a little finger, Li Yao had the feeling that it was unstoppable, as if the warship alone was enough to conquer a planet.

It was just a model, but there were many delicate details on it which were indistinguishable by plain sight.

It was not until Li Yao groped his way through the warship with his spiritual threads that he had a general picture of what it actually looked like.

The erect 'scales' were, in fact, numerous turrets, which were in a completely different style from those of the crystal warships in the Heaven's Origin Sector.

From his instinct as a refiner, Li Yao felt that, in regards of layout and firepower, the warship should be much more advanced than any crystal warship in the Heaven's Origin Sector.

In the front of the warship was a long cylinder that looked like a dragon which was craning its head. Judging from the appearance, it should be the main gun of the warship.

But after a prolonged observation, Li Yao didn't even figure out what kind of weapon it was.

"This warship model must be a product crafted by one of the Guilds of Provenance back in the era of the Star Ocean Imperium."

The era of the Star Ocean Imperium had been the peak of Cultivation technology. Under the leadership of the Supreme Emperor, all the twenty Guilds of Provenance had the power to cruise across galaxies. They each developed magical equipment and training systems of their own distinguishing styles.

But after the Armageddon Rebellion, the magical equipment and training systems had been mostly lost.

This warship model was probably a remnant of that era.

However, was it just a model?

Blinking his eyes, Li Yao held the warship model in his palm and pondered.

If it were only a handicraft, there would be no need to carefully store it inside the Cosmos Ring before sealing it with an encryption.

There must be something more about it!

Pausing for a moment, Li Yao bit his finger and squeezed a drop of blood on the warship model.

He was going to unveil the secret of the warship model by the Blood Baptism of the Hundred Smelting Guild.

"Shua!"

The warship model sucked his blood in as if it were alive and shivered in a vague red light.

"It worked!"

Li Yao was excited.

The Blood Baptism did not mean that a piece of magical equipment could be submitted by a single drop of blood. It required a serious of complicated procedures.

But at least, given that the warship model did not reject his blood, it was very likely to be a product of Cultivators.

If its creator were a demon, a devil cultivator or other species in the cosmos, it would've never accepted the blood of a Cultivator so easily.

Faced with a piece of magical equipment from the Star Ocean Imperium, Li Yao did not dare to underestimate it. He squeezed ten drops of blood from his fingertips and three drops of blood from the tip of his tongue.

The blood was blended together and turned into a mist.

Manipulated by Li Yao's spell, the blood mist seemed to be alive. It was knitted into a red net and covered the warship model, which absorbed it leaving no trace behind.

Li Yao instantly felt that a weak spiritual connection had been established between himself and the warship model.

He had the same feeling when he first wore a crystal suit.

Li Yao felt his heart was beating fast. He extended dozens of spiritual threads and pierced them into the warship model.

His spiritual threads went on without any trouble. The warship model didn't resist them at all. Instead, an intense attraction force was brewing inside it which seemed to be pulling Li Yao's entire soul in.

When Li Yao discovered that it was not good, it was already late.

There seemed to be a terrible swirl inside the warship model which had sucked part of his soul in.

"Shua!"

Li Yao felt that he was in a Half-step Great Illusionary Land that was just opened, or like his soul had been split into two halves, because he could see two worlds unfolding in front of his eyes at the same time.

In one of the two worlds, he was still inside the suite, with the warship model at his hand.

In the other world, he was confined in a limited space that was surrounded by grey mist, unable to go anywhere.

In front of him was a panoramic light beam, where obscure control menus that were hundreds of times more complicated than those of a refining furnace or a crystal suit were popping up.

What was even more dazzling for Li Yao was that there was a 'giant' that looked silly inside the panoramic light beam, who, with a closer look, was exactly himself.

The weird ratio and perspective reminded Li Yao of a possibility.

"Could it be that part of my soul is in the cockpit of the warship?

"The panoramic light beam is the actual control system of the warship model?

"Is this warship model flyable?"

The moment he thought of that, the control menus blazed. Countless complicated rows of data streamed into the light beam.

Runes of the Star Ocean Imperium and those of the Heaven's Origin Sector were quite different.

Li Yao couldn't even understand most of the instructions, let alone how to drive the warship model.

"Swoosh!"

While he was all hurry-scurry, the warship model was flying staggeringly in the air with brilliant colors and twinkles of runes. There was even a mini spiritual shield!

In the meantime, Li Yao felt that he had been hammered heavily on the head.

Although his soul was quite solid, it was still not enough to steer this warship model.

Besides, the warship model was swallowing spiritual energy from him as its power source in a way that he couldn't comprehend.

"Swoosh!"

"Swoosh!"

"Swoosh!"

The warship model was dashing here and there in the suite like a headless fly and almost hit Li Yao a couple of times.

"Little Black, stop it!"

Li Yao's cold sweat broke out. He tried everything he could to withdraw his soul from the warship model.

Thankfully, the warship model seemed to have realized that the pilot was a newbie. It hovered for a while and eventually stopped.

Li Yao was finally able to pull back his soul. The brilliance on the warship model dispersed and resumed the unremarkable silver-grey color.

Li Yao's face was pale, and he was breathing heavily.

As it turned out, he had been too reckless.

If the warship model were malicious, or one of its former owners had implanted some vicious traps inside it, Li Yao's spiritual energy might've been drained.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao came to the conclusion that the warship model could be a piece of magical equipment to train crystal warship pilots in the era of the Star Ocean Imperium.

Its control system must be a duplicate of a real crystal warship.

If a trainer could control the warship model proficiently, he would prove to be a qualified pilot to drive a real-life warship to cross galaxies and destroy planets.

The conclusion made Li Yao somewhat lost for words.

A piece of training magical equipment of the ancient time was of little value to him!

Suppose he had grasped the skills to steer a crystal warship of the Star Ocean Imperium, what then?

Thousands of years had passed. There was no way that he could find such a warship in real life to put what he learnt into practice.

However, on second thought, it was not necessarily true.

"The control pattern of the warship model is complicated enough for me to do the spiritual exercises. Besides, I can improve my crystal suit skills and super shuttle skills by driving this warship model.

"Moreover, the warship model is made of a rare and yet extremely tensile material, and it could be controlled by a telepathic thought. It will be a piece of great magical equipment for scouting!

"Also, once accelerated to maximum, it can also be used as a bullet!

"A bullet that is at the full control of my spiritual will be a great help in combat!"

Coming up with several possible usages of the warship model, Li Yao felt happy again. He decided to practice the art of a warship pilot when he returned to the Grand Desolate War Institution.

During intense combat, the warship model would be his secret weapon!

"Nice! Nice! Not only did I retrieve so many marrow crystals in the Cosmos Ring which triggered the mutation of Little Black, I was also lucky enough to discover this warship model of the Star Ocean Imperium.

"This trip to the Dark Desolate Domain has been truly rewarding

"Although you are just a warship model, I might as well give you a name. You looked like a fierce dragon… I'll just call you 'Neltharion'!"

…

Li Yao and Peng Hai met again in Peng Hai's personal training room.

Over a year ago, Li Yao had received a month of special training in this place, which was the biggest reason why he had won the title of Floating Spear City's Champion of College Entrance Examination.

He had been missing Peng Hai's personal training room.

"Senior Brother Peng!"

After one year away from each other, Li Yao found that Peng Hai was more complex than before, who, at first look, looked like a successful businessman instead of a strong Cultivator that fought in the depths of the Grand Desolate Plateau all the time.

Peng Hai had been Li Yao's role model when Li Yao was in high school. He offered generous help to Li Yao unhesitatingly when Li Yao was most in trouble.

Besides, both of them had been set on the path of cultivation by Sun Biao.

There couldn't be a closer senior-junior brother relationship in the world.

"Good boy! I've been hearing your name all the time over the past year. You even broke my credits record in the Grand Desolate War Institution. That's impressive!"

Fiend Blade Peng Hai was glad, too.

He was planning to create his own sect. A strong junior brother would be really helpful when he started to recruit his own men.

"Do you know that 'Vulture Li Yao' is quite famous in the world of Cultivators now? When I was training in the Grand Desolate Plateau, many Cultivators were asking me about you. You've been putting a lot of pressure on your Senior Brother's shoulders, Li Yao!"

Peng Hai smiled.

"I got the 40,000 credits mostly because of luck. At first, I came across a large-scale beast tide outbreak in downtown. Then I managed to let the Iron Fist Club and the Chaos Edge Hall turn against each other in the Thunderbolt Cup. That's how I earned the most crucial 10,000 credits."

Li Yao was not very confident about his achievement.

"It's all insignificant. 40,000 credits, or the Thunderbolt Cup, are nothing but campus games. Experts of the Cultivation world won't bother any of that."

Peng Hai shook his head and said, "I'm afraid you are not aware of it yet, but the true reason why you got famous is that you wandered in the Thunderous Sound Mountain for more than ten days and walked out safe and sound.

"Everyone in the Cultivation world knows what kind of place the Thunderous Sound Mountain is. Even many Building Foundation Stage experts have walked inside never to be seen again. As a Refinement Stage Cultivator, you survived more than ten days inside the Thunderous Mountain and retreated without being crippled. It was truly a miracle!

"It is because of this accomplishment that 'Vulture Li Yao' has become known by everyone on the Grand Desolate Plateau!"

Li Yao thought of something. He took out a brand-new Demon Beast Detector from his backpack and said, "Senior Brother Peng, the reason why I could survive so many days in the Thunderous Sound Mountain is partly because I was lucky, and partly, because of this magical equipment refined by myself!"

Chapter 281: Shareholder

Chapter 281: Shareholder

"This is the Demon Beast Detector?"

Fiend Blade Peng Hai had been paying close attention to Li Yao's work. He knew that Li Yao's patent had been approved and that he was cooperating with the Mountain Sea Sect to manufacture it. However, there had been some trouble during the promotion.

While Li Yao was on his way here, Li Yao had briefly introduced the recent events that happened to the Mountain Sea Sect, too.

The commercialized Demon Beast Detector included a body and an introduction jade.

Peng Hai inserted the introduction jade to his mini crystal processor and browsed through the document. He nodded his head while he was reading.

"Good. If its actual performance could fit the description, no, if the actual performance could be above 80% of what it is depicted, the Demon Beast Detector will be a piece of very competitive magical equipment."

"Senior Brother Peng, are you questioning the quality of the magical equipment refined by myself?"

Li Yao smiled. He never lacked confidence when it came to magical equipment.

Peng Hai smiled, too. He put the Demon Beast Detector on his left ear.

As Peng Hai's telepathic thoughts flooded in, the Demon Beast Detector emitted a faint red light, making him look ten times stronger than he already had looked.

Peng Hai shook his head hard, but the Demon Beast Detector was absolutely still.

"Such a work pattern indeed makes it much more convenient than the traditional probe magical equipment that is usually worn on the wrist. Besides, it is very light, too. Not half as cumbersome as what the three magical equipment magazines exaggerated. They say that it will influence the body balance? The target users of the Demon Beast Detector are middle-level and low-level Cultivators, whose speed will be too low to be affected by the Demon Beast Detector," Peng Hai said unapprovingly.

He took off the Demon Beast Detector and thought for a while before he said, "Your assumption makes sense. The Zephyr Guild must be stirring things up behind your back.

"Back when I was in the Crimson Nimbus Guild, I reached out to the Zephyr Guild due to business affairs several times. Their young master, Qiu Guanyu, was indeed brutal and merciless. No wonder everybody calls him 'the shark'!

"The Zephyr Guild is a major refining sect that has survived for over a hundred years. It is particularly good at refining precise magical equipment.

"However, the crystal processor technologies have greatly advanced in recent years. The functions of many kinds of traditional precise magical equipment can be replaced by a small crystal processor now, resulting to a significant loss of market for the Zephyr Guild.

"The Zephyr Guild still seems to be thriving at present. But when a boat is too large, it is very difficult to turn its direction. If it goes on like this, chances are that it will collapse within the next ten years.

"That's why the vigorous and resolute young master Qiu Guanyu has, in effect, become the true leader now. He is working hard on the transformation of the Zephyr Guild and shifting it to a bigger market.

"This year, the Zephyr Guild has released miscellaneous detectors, hoping to dominate the market of the probe magical equipment.

"However, the detectors that they put out to market are all meant to worn on the wrist. However precise the detectors may be, they're congenitally defective compared with your Demon Beast Detector.

"Stopping others from making money is like killing their patents. The Zephyr Guild has been a powerful sect for a hundred years. It can do anything in order to survive when it is pushed too far. The business tricks that you've seen are only the beginning.

"In its long history, the Zephyr Guild has been in a good relationship with the three magical equipment magazines. There won't be any trouble for it to find some second-rate critics to post several negative reviews.

"The crystal camera supplier's violation of contract is easy to explain, too. The Zephyr Guild has a high demand of crystal cameras every year. I assume that it placed a tremendous order to the crystal camera supplier in order to let the supplier breach the agreement with the Mountain Sea Sect. This way, even if the supplier has to pay a penalty to the Mountain Sea Sect, it can still gain a much higher profit from the Zephyr Guild.

"It is even possible that the crystal camera supplier has been bought out by the Zephyr Guild. Yet the Mountain Sea Sect didn't know anything about it.

"According to your description, financial information of the Mountain Sea Sect, which should be a top secret, was leaked out. The upcoming rupture of capital chain is known by the entire Cultivation world. There must be a mole in the Mountain Sea Sect."

Li Yao nodded in agreement. He knew that he was right to visit Peng Hai.

From the little information that Li Yao had given to him, Fiend Blade Peng Hai had inferred the causes and the possible outcomes of the whole event. He was truly one of the most brilliant Cultivators of his generation.

Li Yao sighed and said, "I've managed to get a sum of money that can get the Mountain Sea Sect through the trouble temporarily. But a few hundred million is far from enough to fight against a conglomerate such as the Zephyr Guild.

Peng Hai pondered a while. Eyes glaring sharply, he said, "It's not completely undoable to compete against the Zephyr Guild. But I need to confirm something with you first. Is this personal? If you are only angry because you have been humiliated by the Zephyr Guild, I suggest you just put it down and let it go. The road of Cultivation is long and hard. It's best if you can save the time and effort for training, isn't it?"

Li Yao was silent for half a minute. He looked at Peng Hai in the eyes and said, "It's not personal that I want to defeat the Zephyr Guild.

"First of all, as a refiner, every piece of magical equipment created by me has undergone painstaking procedures. They're like my children. If I don't counterattack when my magical equipment is being smeared, I will feel guilty whenever I see my own work and I won't be able to refine better magical equipment in the future.

"Secondly, Brother Guan Xiong of the Mountain Sea Sect saved my life before. I have to return the favor.

"Thirdly, my dream goes far beyond just being a random refiner. I am going to be the best refiner in the Heaven's Origin Sector!

"Daily work of a refiner costs much more than the training of a battle-type Cultivator does.

"For a battle-type Cultivator, as long as he has enough strength, he could just go to the Dark Desolate Domain where, by any luck, he would improve significantly after just one trip.

"Things are different for a refiner. In order to be the best refiner in the Heaven's Origin Sector, I'll need to build the most advanced refining workshop, not to mention the amount of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures that I need to purchase, which could be a waste of money if I chose the wrong ones.

"Cultivation is a money-burning job. Cultivation of a refiner is a tremendously money-burning job!

"I need money. A lot of money!

"The Demon Beast Detector has very bright market prospects. I'm confident that it will bring me huge returns which can resolve my shortness of money and allow me to be fully dedicated to refining.

"Those are my reasons why my struggle against the Zephyr Guild is not personal, but because of a fundamental contradiction of interests."

The seriousness in his junior brother's words touched Peng Hai, who, to him, did not look like a college student, but more like a master of a sect.

Li Yao had grown a lot during the last year!

Peng Hai was more optimistic about Li Yao's future now.

He smiled and said, "Alright. Since it is not personal and is related to your fundamental interests, it is reasonable to try to beat the Zephyr Guild with all the resources at your hand!

"It's true that the Zephyr Guild is a conglomerate in the field of magical equipment refining, where it can deploy much more resources than you and the Mountain Sea Sect can.

"But don't underestimate yourself. The resources at your disposal are not insignificant.

"However, before you put the resources into use, there is a critical question that needs to be answered, which is about your position. Where exactly is your position in the competition between the Zephyr Guild and the Mountain Sea Sect?

"You are just a partner of the Mountain Sea Sect. Ostensibly speaking, the Zephyr Guild has not been targeting you. How would you justify your undertaking to summon your resources to fight against the Zephyr Guild?"

Li Yao was dazed for a moment.

"Senior Brother Peng, I don't understand. Why do I need to justify myself? And what resources do I have?"

Peng Hai smiled. He pointed at himself.

"Am I not one of your resources? However, I am not going to help you that easily. It's true that you are my junior brother. But the Mountain Sea Sect has nothing to do with me. Why would I help the Mountain Sea Sect?"

Li Yao felt he was getting what Peng Hai was trying to say,

"Senior Brother Peng, do you mean—"

Peng Hai interrupted him.

"You said just now that you have a sum of money at hand. What was your original plan to solve the capital chain problem of the Mountain Sea Sect?"

Li Yao answered honestly, "I was planning to lend the money to the Mountain Sea Sect."

Peng Hai smiled and said, "If you lend the money to the Mountain Sea Sect, the only profit you can get will be the interest. But if the Demon Beast Detector project is really as promising as you described, the Mountain Sea Sect is definitely going to flourish once it defeats the Zephyr Guild, and when that happens, the Mountain Sea Sect will gain astronomical revenues from the Demon Beast Detector.

"In that case, why don't you buy its shares now?"

Li Yao was dazed.

"Buy the shares of the Mountain Sea Sect?"

Peng Hai answered, "Correct.

"Right now, the Mountain Sea Sect is at a dead end. Nobody has hopes in them. I think it will be open to negotiations if anyone wants to buy part of its shares, provided that the majority of the shares is still under control. This way, when the Mountain Sea Sect rises in the future, you'll be able to receive a lot of dividends as a big shareholder. Isn't it much better than relying on the interest?"

Li Yao was tempted. But he felt it was too complicated for him to handle.

Things like shares and holdings were too far away from him. He didn't even know where to start.

Besides, it was going to be embarrassing for him to talk to his old friends such as Guan Xiong and Jiang Wenbo about buying their shares.

Peng Hai saw through his hesitation. He smiled and said, "It does not work as you're imagining right now.

"I have a proposal that I would like you to hear.

"First, I'll invest part of my assets and register a new sect, and you will buy the shares of the new sect to be its second largest shareholder.

"Then, we'll negotiate with the Mountain Sea Sect in the name of the new sect about the investment that we just discussed."

Li Yao's eyes opened wide in excitement. He exclaimed, "Senior Brother Peng, you're finally creating your own sect!"

If Peng Hai were to invest the Mountain Sea Sect in a big way under the name of his own sect, the potential benefits would be much more than the money itself.

It was well believed that Peng Hai would be the youngest Cultivator of the Heaven's Origin Sector to enter the Core Formation Stage someday. His fame and influence were intangible assets. Once he became a shareholder of the Mountain Sea Sect, or even an honorary board member, it would be a life line for the Mountain Sea Sect.

Chapter 282: Operations Director

Chapter 282: Operations Director

Peng Hai smiled and shook his head.

"Of course, I won't give my all to the project. This is meant to be a trial. After all, I only managed one department before when I was in the Crimson Nimbus Guild. I don't have any experience in creating or operating a big sect.

"I've been thinking lately that I should invest in a project first. I'll be more experienced in business affairs whether it succeeds or fails.

"You've come at the right time. Although I haven't read the feasibility analysis report of the project, I know that the Demon Beast Detector must be very promising, seeing that the Zephyr Guild has been so anxious and is moving so many resources against it.

"The cooperation is good for me, for you, and for the Mountain Sea Sect. I'm more than happy to join it."

Li Yao was moved.

Although Peng Hai talked that way, he knew that the main reason why Peng Hai was doing this was to help him.

While Peng Hai was talking, Peng Hai turned on the spiritual crane messenger and typed in a message.

"Junior Brother Li, you know that, previously, I was mainly in charge of finding safe routes for business, which required more muscles than brain. I don't know much about magical equipment promotion, either. Wait a moment. I'll introduce an expert to you."

Within a moment, a solemn, professional woman who was in her thirties appeared quietly in the training room through the teleportation array over the roof.

She was surrounded by more than ten light beams where countless data streams were pouring down.

The information was being absorbed at an amazing speed.

Li Yao felt that the beautiful woman looked familiar. He thought he had met her somewhere, and probably more than once.

Peng Hai said, "Li Yao, come and meet Shang Tianling. You can call her Sister Shang."

Then it occurred to Li Yao that he had seen Shang Tianling multiple times both on the Nexus and in the news report.

She was a genius admin-type Cultivator, and she had been in important positions in several major cultivation sects after she graduated from college.

Three years ago, she was appointed as the operations director of the Bright Valiant Tower, a cultivation sect. Through audacious and radical reforms, the rank of the comprehensive capability of the Bright Valiant Tower rose up by more than a hundred and made it into the top five hundred sects of the federation.

Senior Brother Peng was not wrong. She was truly an expert.

But wasn't she the operations director of the Bright Valiant Tower? How did she end up here?

Shang Tianling glanced at Li Yao and smiled.

"Peng Hai, I made the right choice to come here. Board members of the Bright Valiant Tower are too unambitious. They're so satisfied at the current status of the Bright Valiant Tower that they're frightened to make any change. Every operation proposal that entails the slightest risk has been disapproved by them.

"You are good. Not even owning a sect yet, you are already trying to declare war against the Zephyr Guild. Interesting!"

She nodded at Li Yao. "I am Shang Tianling, personal assets and brand consultant for Peng Hai. I'm in charge of operating Peng Hai's assets, and also marketing the brand of 'Fiend Blade Peng Hai' in the cultivation world."

Knowing that he was talking to someone who used to be the operations director of a top five hundred sect, Li Yao didn't dare to underestimate her. He said with utmost respect, "Sister Shang, nice to meet you. I am Li Yao, Peng Hai's junior brother."

Shang Tianling smiled.

"Vulture Li Yao. Your name has been quite popular recently. Many people believe that your achievements will be as good as Peng Hai's in the future. I think so, too.

"So, do you have a personal assets and brand consultant yet? If not, consider me. I can handle both of your affairs simultaneously."

Li Yao didn't understand.

"What exactly is a personal assets and brand consultant?"

Shang Tianling answered, "It's simple. Most of the non-admin-type Cultivators are not good at making money; they have to try and earn their money by instinct.

"Battle-type Cultivators often go hunting demon beasts on the Grand Desolate Plateau; creation-type Cultivators such as you will refine magical equipment and sell it.

"But money-making is a tedious task.

"For example, if you have refined a piece of magical equipment and decide to sell it by yourself, it will take you quite a lot of time, not to mention the risk that you might not be able to find the most suitable buyer and sell it at the highest price.

"Let's say you've sold your magical equipment at the highest price. How will you make the best use of your income? By depositing it into a bank and enjoying the interest?

"This is the time when admin-type Cultivators such as me get useful.

"As a personal assets and brand consultant, I can help you draft thorough promotion and marketing plans for your magical equipment. After you've made money, I can help you find the most suitable investments. When other sects want to cooperate with you, I'll be responsible for investigating the backgrounds and true purposes of those sects and choosing the best partner for you.

"In short, my job is to help my clients arrange their assets in their best interests so that they can devote themselves to cultivation without being distracted.

"As for brand, it's easier to understand.

"A man's name is like a tree's shadow. Every Cultivator has their own brand. Fiend Blade Peng Hai is a brand; Vulture Li Yao is a brand; Fiend Star Li Yao is yet another brand.

"If your brand is operated well, it will leave a positive impression on the public, which will bring you great benefits. Apart from everything else, if you can pick up a few commercials every year, the money you gain will be enough to buy loads of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures.

"But if your brand is badly operated, you risk being considered to be an unsocial and eccentric freak despite your capabilities, which would be a shame.

"For example, your nickname is 'Vulture', and you were born in a magical equipment graveyard. If somebody fans the flames in secret, you'll be easily depicted into a brutal, bloodthirsty fanatic.

"Once your image is fixed, it will be troublesome to reshape it. How are you going to play around in the cultivation world if everyone regards you as a supervillain?

"But if I were to operate the brand 'Vulture Li Yao', I would highlight your struggle, determination, and persistency and build you into an anti-hero that lives in darkness, which is a quite popular image among juveniles."

Li Yao finally got everything straight.

He had used to be a cash-strapped, low-level Cultivator and there was no need to worry about his assets and brand.

But as his strength increased, the everyday stuff was starting to trouble him. Since he had entered a higher level of the world, it seemed that he could really use a personal consultant.

Peng Hai smiled.

"Tianling, it's rare for you to be so interested in my junior brother. However, let's focus on the Demon Beast Detector for now. You must've read the files already on your way here. How about it? Do you think it's worth investing?"

"It is."

Shang Tianling nodded her head. "And I think your proposal is very good. Create a new sect funded by both of you and let the new sect invest in the Mountain Sea Sect.

"It doesn't matter whether or not the new sect can make money. It's more about building up the brands of 'Fiend Blade Peng Hai' and 'Vulture Li Yao'.

"Peng Hai, although you are very likely going to be the youngest Core Formation Cultivator of the federation, it is only indicative of your combat ability. The cultivation world is still not confident about your ability to manage a big sect yet.

"Li Yao is the same. You have made remarkable accomplishments in the Refiners' Registration Examination. But whether or not the very first piece of magical equipment refined by you can be commercially successful is still not certain; the outcome of this will have a huge impact on your future development.

"As long as the Zephyr Guild is beaten, both of the two brands will be established."

Li Yao frowned.

"But, the Zephyr Guild is very influential in the trade of magical equipment refining and selling. Many suppliers and dealers of the Mountain Sea Sect have been under the pressure from it. What can we do?"

Shang Tianling smiled.

"It is true that the Zephyr Guild has a huge influence on the magical equipment providers and sellers. However, if you are to look at it in the big picture, you'll notice that you two have as many resources as the Zephyr Guild does. Especially you, Vulture Li Yao."

"Me?"

Li Yao pointed at himself in confusion. He was just a college student. What resources did he have?

Shang Tianling said, "You alone are of little significance.

"But behind you is a giant named the Grand Desolate War Institution.

"You were the first student to earn more than 40,000 credits within one year in the Grand Desolate War Institution. Right now, you are a celebrity of the institution.

"Also, I'm told that the Grand Desolate War Institution has allotted a lot of its budget to the Refining Department, planning to make the Refining Department the fifth 'distinguished major' of the institution.

"Besides, many combat sects on the Grand Desolate Plateau have been sponsoring the Refining Department, too.

"You happen to be the Senior Brother of the Refining Department, as well as the president of the Star Fire Union, don't you?"

Li Yao nodded his head. His eyes were glittering, as he was beginning to understand where this conversation was going.

Shang Tianling continued, "I assume that you're probably in a good relationship with the leaders of the Grand Desolate War Institution, which has been raising you as a future star. They would definitely consider a few requests from you should you ask anything of them.

"So, if you can't promote the Demon Beast Detector in the market, why don't you promote it within the Grand Desolate War Institution first?

"You don't need to worry about the payoff of your promotion. Even if you are selling it below cost, as long as the staff and students of the Grand Desolate War Institution are willing to use it, our purpose will be fulfilled."

"Right!"

Li Yao felt like a bolt of lightning had struck his head, illuminating everything.

The key to the problem was himself.

The Grand Desolate War Institution had the best Combat Department of the federation. The staff and students that went to fight on the Grand Desolate Plateau outnumbered those of any other university.

Besides, many combat sects, as well as the military, had been sending candidates to study in the Grand Desolate War Institution or for co-op missions.

If the staff and students of the Grand Desolate War Institution were to equip the Demon Beast Detector on a large scale, wouldn't it be the best advertisement?

If soldiers and the students of the combat sects who studied in the Grand Desolate War Institution brought the Demon Beast Detectors back to the military or their cultivation sects, the Demon Beast Detector would surely spread like a virus unstoppably.

There wouldn't be too much difficulty promoting it in the campus, either.

Now that the Grand Desolate War Institution was supporting the Refining Department, the Demon Beast Detector, as a piece of magical equipment refined by a student of the Refining Department, would bring a lot of honor to the school if it turned out to be successful on the market.

What's more, during the one-versus-two-thousand competition of the Thunderbolt Cup, he had been wearing the Demon Beast Detector, which had caught much attention already.

Ding Lingdang, Zhao Tiange, Lu Tianshan… They were all his friends. He wouldn't meet too much trouble either among the teachers or among the students.

With an acceptable price, it was even possible that the Demon Beast Detector would become the designated magical equipment for the students of the Grand Desolate War Institution. It would be purchased in bulk by the school, and when the students went to the wilderness, each of them would be asked to wear one.

In that case, promotion wouldn't be a problem at all.

Seeing his 'ah ha!' face, Shang Tianling smiled and continued, "I'm also told that you returned from the Thunderous Sound Mountain safe and sound after staying ten days and ten nights inside. It's definitely worth hyping, too."

Chapter 283: Mountain Sea Sect's Choice

Chapter 283: Mountain Sea Sect's Choice

"As for dealers, we don't need to go by the traditional selling pattern. The target users of the Demon Beast Detector are middle-level and low-level Cultivators. They shouldn't be too old and probably are most enthusiastic about new things. I have a friend who's working in the Moon Splitting Sword Guild as the marketing director. He mentioned that the Moon Splitting Sword Guild was preparing to establish a unique marketing and shipping network. Maybe we'll be able to cooperate in the future.

"In short, since the Zephyr Guild has dominating advantages in the field of magical equipment refining and selling, we have to jump out of their home field and guide the war into a bigger battlefield."

Li Yao nodded his head quickly. But there was something bothering him.

"I've heard of the Moon Splitting Sword Guild before. It is a top 500 sect specialized in the art of flying sword. I don't see the relationship between flying swords and logistics…"

With a mysterious smile, Shang Tianling said, "This is a business secret. You'll know it when you know it."

…

At the same time, in the headquarters of the Mountain Sea Sect.

"BAM!"

A fist punched into the office desk that was made of iron mood, leaving a deep hole inside of it.

The tea cup, files, and the crystal processor on the desk were all jumping to the air because of the punch.

"The Zephyr Guild is outrageous!"

Shangguan Jia's face was flushed with anger. The veins on his neck were bulging. His eyes were full of blood streaks, making him look like a crazy devil.

Shangguan Jia was just over thirty years old. He was the leader of the Mountain Sea Sect and an admin-type Cultivator at the early level of the Building Foundation Stage.

He hadn't been feeling very comfortable as the leader.

Two years ago, Shangguan Yu, his father and the previous leader of the Mountain Sea Sect, failed to break into the Core Formation Stage and suffered serious internal injuries during his attempt, which stopped him from being able to lead the sect anymore.

However, there was no other admin-type Cultivator in the Mountain Sea Sect.

'Professional managers' were getting popular in many of the southern sects, who were hired with a high salary for the daily operation of a sect. But as a conservative sect, the

Mountain Sea Sect still preferred to determine its leader from its members.

The Shangguan family was the largest shareholder of the Mountain Sea Sect. Therefore, as the son of the previous leader and also the highest admin-type Cultivator in his sect, supported by the elders including Jiang Wenbo and Guan Xiong, Shangguan Jia became the youngest leader in the history of the Mountain Sea Sect.

When he'd just become the leader, Shangguan Jia had been ambitious, too, hoping to build the Mountain Sea Sect into a first-rate sect of the federation.

However, he was soon taught a lesson by reality. The management courses he took in college were too theoretical to be put into use.

To run a large sect such as the Mountain Sea Sect, there were countless issues that needed to be handled.

Apart from everything else, the medical fees for the almost one hundred retired Cultivators of the sect were enough to give him a headache every day.

The hundred Cultivators were all creditable seniors who had fought blood battles and made great contributions to the Mountain Sea Sect in the past hundreds of years. Many of them suffered serious injuries for the Mountain Sea Sect and were only able to live on with the help of the expensive medications. His own father Shangguan Yu was one of them, too. There was no way that he could leave them alone.

However, the vitality of the Cultivators was impressive, and they could live an extremely long life. Some of the seniors were more than 200 years old, who, although couldn't go to a battlefield anymore because of disability, seemed promising enough to live another hundred years with the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and the medication that they took every day.

Naturally, they would count on the Mountain Sea Sect for the rest of their lives. It was not like that the Mountain Sea Sect could simply kick them out of its door. In that case, no one would be willing to fight for the Mountain Sea Sect anymore.

As the saying went: it never rains; it pours. Before he was able to implement any measures as the new leader, the bad news came that Guan Xiong, the top expert of the Mountain Sea Sect, suffered heavy injuries and strength loss while he was on a patrol task commissioned by the military.

The news slapped Shangguan Jia into pure dumbness.

The Mountain Sea Sect was a half-combat sect with two lines of business. The more important one was to undertake quasi-military missions from the federal government, or to hunt down demon beasts and probe for mother lodes in the depths of the Grand Desolate Plateau, which had been usually led by Guan Xiong and the combat-type Cultivators in the sect.

Guan Xiong being heavily wounded was equivalent to one of the Mountain Sea Sect's legs being crippled, the thicker one.

The silver lining was that the Mountain Sea Sect received a few fat orders and a large sum of cheap loans from the federal government for Guan Xiong's gallantry.

Shangguan Jia made up his mind and introduced a precise magical equipment assembly line with the loans, planning to transform the Mountain Sea Sect.

However, transformation was not as easy as he had imagined. Precise magical equipment refined by the Mountain Sea Sect was silly and dumb. It met tremendous failure in the market.

Right when he did not know what to do, he met the Demon Beast Detector project which was full of potentials.

This time, the Mountain Sea Sect really put all of the eggs it had left into the basket of the Demon Beast Detector project.

The market research was quite satisfactory. After the upgrade of the assembly line under Li Yao's supervision, the product quality had significantly improved too.

When Shangguan Jia thought the Mountain Sea Sect was finally going to have its day, a huge monster named the Zephyr Guild came from nowhere, which not only wanted to beat the Mountain Sea Sect in the market, but also intended to swallow the Mountain Sea Sect as a whole.

The paper in Shangguan Jia's hands felt like a fire that was burning through his palm into his heart.

Shangguan Jia almost lost control and teared the paper into pieces. Calming himself down for half a minute, he tried to hold back his anger and read on,

"Another twelve dealers of three cities have terminated cooperation with us?

"No substitute crystal camera supplier has been found yet? The Falling Stars Mansion is willing to cooperate with us, on the condition of a 30% increase of price?

"They're only trying to take advantage of our trouble!

"The Zephyr Guild has proposed an acquisition plan again, with harsher requirements?"

Shangguan Jia closed his eyes and took a deep breath. He felt that he had smelled the scent of sulfur. The fire in his chest was burning more and more fiercely.

As an admin-type Cultivator, he understood the principle of business too well. Anything could be traded at a suitable price.

However, deep in his bones, Shangguan Jia was a man born and raised on the Grand Desolate Plateau. He was as stubborn as the poplar in the desert.

Apart from the fact that the Mountain Sea Sect was an ancient sect that had lasted for hundreds of years and had its own history and pride, apart from the sordid tricks that the Zephyr Guild employed in competition including infiltrating the Mountain Sea Sect by espionage, the acquisition plan that the Zephyr Guild proposed alone was enough to let Shangguan Jia say no.

According to the acquisition plan, the Zephyr Guild was only going to buy out the assets of the Mountain Sea Sect. As for the members of the Mountain Sea Sect, they would have to be tested by the Zephyr Guild to determine whether or not they were eligible to stay in the 'Mountain Sea Branch of the Zephyr Guild'.

It was not difficult to guess that the disabled and the retired members who had made huge contributions to the Mountain Sea Sect wouldn't be eligible. They would probably be swept out like rubbish with a severance package.

Although Shangguan Jia had been complaining about the disabled and the retired Cultivators and thought they put a huge burden on him as the new leader of the sect, he couldn't bear to just drive them away.

Other than everything else, he would fight against the 'shark' Qiu Guanyu until the end just for the disabled and the retired members of his sect.

Shangguan Jia bit his lip and read on,

"Three allies who have been cooperating with us for decades all rejected our request of more loans? It's understandable. With everything escalating to this point, nobody is confident enough to lend their money to us.

"What?

"Another three shareholders have expressed their intention to transfer their shares to the Zephyr Guild? What—"

Like a fish struggling in a basket, Shangguan Jia's chest puffed out, and then collapsed in helplessness. He fell to his chair, unable to move anymore.

Right then, somebody knocked at his door. It was his secretary's voice,

"Elder Guan and Elder Jiang are here."

The Mountain Sea Sect had been uneasy recently. Many shareholders agreed to be acquired by the Zephyr Guild. After all, the Mountain Sea Sect was on its way to bankruptcy if things remained unchanged.

But Guan Xiong and Jiang Wenbo were the two toughest anti-acquisition advocates. They were also Shangguan Jia's most trusted seniors.

"Please, let them in."

Shangguan Jia cleared up his clothes and emotions and greeted the two elders. He was surprised at the delight on their faces.

"Pa!"

Guan Xiong launched a Sound Killer, which was a barrier that could prevent anyone outside of the barrier from hearing what was being said inside.

"Pa!"

Jiang Wenbo launched a rune, too. A yellow light scanned through everything inside the barrier, making sure that there was not eavesdropper magical equipment inside the room.

Seeing their seriousness, Shangguan Jia was even more surprised. He asked, "My elders, is there anything wrong?"

Jiang Wenbo looked at Guan Xiong and said in a smile, "Leader, have you ever heard of Fiend Blade Peng Hai?"

Shangguan Jia nodded.

"Of course I have. He is the youngest expert to arrive at the peak of the Building Foundation Stage. He hunted down two strong demon beasts consecutively last year, which was big news back then. It is said that he is going to be the youngest Core Formation Cultivator of the federation.

"He used to be a marketing manager of the Crimson Nimbus Guild. With his work, the Crimson Nimbus Guild has been growing rapidly in recent years. The rank of its comprehensive capability improved by more than seventy in the list of the top 500 sects of the federation in just two years.

"But I heard that he has withdrawn from the Crimson Nimbus Guild in order to break into the Core Formation Stage. He is now an unaffiliated Cultivator.

"Why do you mention Fiend Blade Peng Hai out of nowhere?"

Guan Xiong grinned.

"Leader, you're correct. But Fiend Blade Peng Hai has another identity. He is Li Yao's senior brother."

Shangguan Jia's eyes shined, then they were gloomy again. He said, "I remember now. Peng Hai and Li Yao both come from the Grand Desolate War Institution. Of course he is Li Yao's senior brother. However, thousands of students graduate from the Grand Desolate War Institution every year. He might not know Li Yao at all, since he is much older than Li Yao. I doubt we can pull that string."

Jiang Wenbo shook his head.

"Leader, you're wrong. Li Yao and Peng Hai are not just both students of the Grand Desolate War Institution. They're both from Floating Spear City and they have the same Enlightenment Master. Theirs is the closest junior-senior brother relationship.

"What?!"

Shangguan Jia stood up unconsciously. His heart was beating fast.

All Cultivators respected their Enlightenment Master very much. They might have many teachers in their life, but there would only be one Enlightenment Master.

Such a junior-senior brother relationship was indeed extraordinary.

Jiang Wenbo continued, "Li Yao has reached out to Fiend Blade Peng Hai and talked him into buying shares and investing the Demon Beast Detector project. Besides money, Peng Hai has influential connections and a marketing network in the south of the federation. What do you think, leader?"

Shangguan Jia rubbed his face hard, trying to calm himself down,

"Did Fiend Blade Peng Hai say that he wanted to take over the Mountain Sea Sect?"

Jiang Wenbo shook his head and said, "No. Fiend Blade Peng Hai is not interested in controlling the Mountain Sea Sect, nor will he interfere with the daily operations. He has put it very straightforwardly. Firstly, at his Junior Brother Li Yao's request, he decided to give the Mountain Sea Sect a hand; secondly, he was very interested in the Demon Beast Detector project itself and hoped to make the pie bigger with our joint cooperation."

Shangguan Jia smiled bitterly. He knew he had thought too much.

The Mountain Sea Sect had been a second-rate sect since the beginning. Now that it was mired in trouble, Fiend Blade Peng Hai definitely wouldn't want to take it over even if he wanted to control a sect.

"Good!"

Shangguan Jia slapped his table, "We're open to any negotiations as long as we can still fight the Zephyr Guild!"

Chapter 284: On Fire!

Chapter 284: On Fire!

Li Yao finally agreed to Fiend Blade Peng Hai's plan. They co-created a new sect with each of them providing part of the capital.

This way, Li Yao and Peng Hai would be tied to the same boat.

With mutual interests, their relationship would be closer, which was good for both of them.

Fiend Blade Peng Hai was the leader of the new sect in name. The actual daily operations were run by Shang Tianling.

In fact, there weren't too many affairs that needed to be handled, since it was an investment sect without many members. The bulk of its revenue was generated by investing other sects.

The main target of the investments at present was, naturally, the Mountain Sea Sect.

Li Yao devoted most of the money he earned in Serpent City to the new sect, which made him the second largest shareholder.

Other than that, he left two sums of money to Grandpa Wang and his Enlightenment Master, Sun Biao.

He also asked Shang Tianling to set up a trust fund with part of his money to help improve the teaching quality of

Floating Spear City's Mining Clan High School, as well as the students who were gifted and in need.

It took Li Yao an entire day to settle everything before he returned to the Grand Desolate War Institution as fast as he could.

Li Yao was quite occupied for the next couple of days.

On one hand, he needed to familiarize himself with the experts and researchers that just came to the Refining Department, each of whom had a unique personality and refining style.

While Li Yao was getting to know them, he also learnt a lot from them and found it very helpful.

His lightning-like hand movement, natural instincts about magical equipment, and fantastic ideas about modification were praised by the experts.

On the other hand, Li Yao proposed a series of plans to promote the Demon Beast Detector to the leaders of the school through Yuan Manqiu.

Since the Grand Desolate War Institution had invested huge amount of money into the Refining Department, naturally, it wanted the Refining Department to make a difference.

As the first commercially valuable magical equipment crafted by a student of the Refining Department, the Demon Beast Detector didn't find much trouble getting support from the school.

Just like that. When the Zephyr Guild was tightening the noose around the Mountain Sea Sect's neck with the capital chain and the dealers, a bigger storm was brewing in the seemingly quietness.

Three days later, the first lightning of the storm flashed.

"Li Yao, nice to meet you. I am Gao Xueman, a journalist of 'Predator' hosted by the Demon Hunters' Association. Thank you for your time to take this interview."

Seeing the short-haired girl in neat hunting clothes standing in front of him, Li Yao felt somewhat shocked.

He knew that Fiend Blade Peng Hai and Shang Tianling were going to do something, but he didn't expect them to be so powerful.

Demon Hunter was a very special career in the Cultivation world. They were professional demon beast hunters.

They might not be the strongest, but they boasted the most experience in hunting and wilderness survival. They could hunt down demon beasts in a much more efficient way than ordinary Cultivators.

For Cultivators such as Li Yao, Ding Lingdang, or Guan Xiong, hunting down demon beasts was a way of training and accumulating wealth.

But for a professional Demon Hunter, the hunting was a fulfilling process and ultimate gratification in itself.

The Demon Hunters' Association, as its name suggested, was a partnership of the fierce Demon Hunters.

'Predator', hosted by the Demon Hunters' Association, was a very professional and influential magazine in the Cultivation world. It posted the updates of the Grand Desolate Plateau and tips against demon beasts, as well as magical equipment introductions every day.

Many Cultivators read 'Predator' to learn how to fight demon beasts and how to save their lives in the wilderness.

Sales of 'Predator' were not as high as the three magical equipment magazines. But it was more authoritative than them in regards of wilderness combat and survival.

Critics of the three magical equipment magazines were all experts. But they might not be very familiar with the wilderness, which sometimes made their reviews impractical.

However, the journalists and critics of 'Predator' were renowned professional Demon Hunters who wrote their reviews based on the bloody lessons they learnt in real battles.

If the Demon Beast Detector were to be endorsed by 'Predator', the negative influences caused by the three magical equipment magazines would be greatly assuaged.

"Li Yao, I'm told that you survived ten days and ten nights deep inside the Thunderous Sound Mountain in the Dark Desolate Domain and returned home safely, which has been confirmed by the Thunder Training Camp. Also, from what I know, your crystal suit had been seriously damaged before it started, and you passed the ten days with nothing but your saber."

Gao Xueman had done her homework before the interview. She smiled and said, "Your remarkable achievement has become well-known now. Many of the readers of 'Predator' are curious about one question. How did you persist until the end without your crystal suit when you are just a Refinement Stage Cultivator?"

Li Yao cleared his throat. He took out a well-worn Demon Beast Detector from his pocket and said, "When I lost my way in the depths of the Thunderous Sound Mountain, I nearly gave up all my hope. Thankfully, I had brought a piece of magical equipment refined by myself, which was the biggest reason why I could run away from the Dark Desolate Domain that was full of perils although I was only a Refinement Stage Cultivator!"

Li Yao only partly meant what he said.

He had swallowed ten drops of lion dragon heart blood in the Thunderous Sound Mountain, and undergone a super pressure caused by the demon core explosion that was similar to the environment when the Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining technique was created, which led to a major breakthrough of his body.

Not only did he advance to the 11th level of the Refinement Stage, his body was even sturdier than any other body practitioner of the same level. Together with the daunting scent of the mutant lion dragon and the help of the Cosmos Ring, he eventually managed to get out of the Thunderous Sound Mountain alive.

However, he was not telling a lie when he said that the Demon Beast Detector played its part too.

Li Yao had long been informed that he was going to be interviewed. He had written a lot of scripts with interesting excerpts from his adventure and memorized them. Now that he started talking, his eloquence made Gao Xueman nod her head frequently.

As a journalist of the 'Predator', Gao Xueman was an expert in wilderness combat and survival too. She raised questions now and then.

Li Yao was telling the truth, although only partly, so he was not scared by her questions. He simply described him to be a reasonably good Cultivator at the 7th level of the Refinement Stage and highlighted the importance of the Demon Beast Detector.

"So, you're saying that the Demon Beast Detector is really a marvelous tool in wilderness survival?"

Gao Xueman was hooked, too. Based on her abundant battle experience, she sensed the value of the Demon Beast Detector immediately.

"You can have a try yourself, Ms. Gao, if you want."

Li Yao had been prepared for this. He led Gao Xueman to the field teaching zone of the Combat Department, which was a simulation of the wild environment where hundreds of different kinds of demon beasts were farmed.

Gao Xueman put on a Demon Beast Detector and ran tests for an hour excitedly. The efficiency of the magical equipment was far better than she had expected. She felt that she hadn't enjoyed it enough yet when the tests were over.

Seeing this, Li Yao brought out five Demon Beast Detectors and intend to give them as gifts to the staff of the 'Predator'.

But Gao Xueman rejected his offer and paid for them.

Letting them keep several Demon Beast Detectors was exactly what Li Yao had been hoping for.

Gao Xueman was quite efficient. The very next day, 'Predator' posted an article titled with 'Ten Days in the Demon Mountain', which emphasized the fact that Li Yao was only at the 7th level of the Refinement Stage and the great usages of the Demon Beast Detector.

In the end of the article were some reviews written by Gao Xueman and some other critics of the 'Predator'.

Their conclusion was far different from those of the three magical equipment magazines.

"As the very first commercialized magical equipment of a new refiner, the Demon Beast Detector has a lot of shortcomings that could be improved. However, the ingenious idea to refine it into a monocle is a major breakthrough of probe magical equipment, whose significance has not been fully recognized by the Cultivation world yet.

"For a high-level Cultivator with amazing computational ability, the Demon Beast Detector matters little.

"For low-level Cultivators who mostly go on missions in teams, it seems redundant for each team member to wear a Demon Beast Detector.

"However, in the cases where a low-level Cultivator is unfortunately left alone in the wilderness due to an accident, a Demon Beast Detector would no doubt elevate his likelihood of survival."

Although the article was posted on a secondary page, the lavish praises still caught much attention.

The wilderness of the Grand Desolate Plateau was a place where anything could happen. Nobody could grantee that they could be safe all the time.

A team being scattered by a strong beast, leaving a team member in wilderness waiting for rescue… It was not unusual during a hunting task.

Who would say no to a piece of magical equipment that was both convenient and able to raise their odds of survival?

Li Yao continued to develop the cooperation with the Grand Desolate War Institution.

The Combat Department was no doubt the most influential and in the most need of the Demon Beast Detector inside the Grand Desolate War Institution.

For the two student organizations of the Combat Department, Ding Lingdang was the previous president as well as the incumbent instructor of the Iron Fist Club, and Fiend Blade Peng Hai used to be the legend of the Chaos Edge Hall who led it to its peak by beating the Iron Fist Club.

Supported by Ding Lingdang and Peng Hai, the Demon Beast Detector project met absolutely no trouble in the campus. Also, many students still remembered Li Yao's fascinating performance and soaring credits in the last semester and were curious about the red magical equipment that he had been wearing all the time.

The first five hundred Demon Beast Detectors were sold to the Grand Desolate War Institution at a price 20% below cost, which were then redeemed by the students with their credits.

There was no telling the actual performance yet. But five hundred students walking indifferently and intimidatingly in the campus wearing a scarlet monocle was already an impressive scene.

A few days later, when the students were back from their field trips to the wilderness, most of their trophies had significantly increased.

Thereafter, the Demon Beast Detector was on fire inside the Grand Desolate War Institution!

Chapter 285: Advertisement

Chapter 285: Advertisement

"Li Yao's Demon Beast Detector is truly good. It identifies demon beasts quickly and precisely. Today, I came across a Fiery Sparrow Rabbit in the wilderness which I would've mistaken for a Fiery Sparrow without the Demon Beast Detector. Thankfully, I was wearing one and I've made a fortune!"

"Yes. The demon beasts that I hunted down on this field trip are ten percent more than usual. No wonder Li Yao's credits were soaring last semester. This piece of magical equipment must've been a lot of help!"

"Haha. Did you notice that you are embraced by an aura of mystery when you put on a Demon Beast Detector? I'm going to stroll around the Medical Department and the Liberal Arts Department tomorrow with my Demon Beast Detector. I bet a lot of girls will find me very attractive!"

"Man, you're embarrassing yourself. The Demon Beast Detector is a piece of marvelous magical equipment designed to help you improve your hunting efficiency, and all you're thinking about is hitting on girls with it? I have but four words to comment on such irresponsible and selfish behavior—Bring me with you!"

"I have but three words for you two scumbags—Let's go together!"

A lot of such observations were appearing on the BBS of the Wasteland Battle Network.

Over the next couple of days, many students of the Combat Department were indeed wandering in the floating mountains of the Medical Department and the Liberal Arts Department wearing their Demon Beast Detectors.

As it turned out, students who were wearing their Demon Beast Detectors truly looked sharp and confident.

One of the students, who had been in an ambiguous relationship with a girl of the Medical Department although they were in love with each other, decided to tell her his true feelings with the Demon Beast Detector boosting his confidence.

Not that the Demon Beast Detector should take the credit. It was just a natural development of their relationship.

However, half a day later, the news that some ugly guy of the Combat Department stole the heart of a girl of the Medical Department had become a heated topic on the Wasteland Battle Network.

For the Combat Department which was almost exclusively dudes, such a by-effect of the Demon Beast Detector was even more important than the improvement of hunting efficiency. Their demand for the Demon Beast Detector soared overnight. The Mountain Sea Sect failed to satisfy them although it tried to ship more Demon Beast Detectors to the campus.

The students who got a Demon Beast Detector took selfies and posted them on the Nexus, inviting admiration and jealousy from their friends.

Those who didn't were not content with the situation. They asked for more and nearly caused a riot.

The fashion quickly spread across the entire Grand Desolate Plateau from the Grand Desolate War Institution.

Many combats sects were cooperating with the Grand Desolate War Institution. The military had sent many soldiers to study there, too.

The candidates received a lot of Demon Beast Detectors from various channels.

Compared with the frenzy of students, the Cultivation sects were more cautious about the new magical equipment.

Many of them compared the Demon Beast Detector with the probe magical equipment that was popular in the market.

A lot of differential analysis was posted on professional forums written by experienced Cultivators, who, although might not be magical equipment experts, were quite believable because of their expertise.

Their conclusions varied.

Some of them had got used to the probe magical equipment that was worn on the wrist and already built up a set of tactics based on that position. It was not easy for them to switch to something new.

Even so, they had to admit that the Demon Beast Detector had a groundbreaking design which entailed the possibility that it might stand up to the on-the-wrist probe magical equipment as an equal someday.

As a piece of brand new magical equipment refined by a fledgling, the Demon Beast Detector had won enough praises, which were disseminated at an exponential speed like a contagious virus in the Cultivation world.

Qiu Guanyu, the 'shark' of the Zephyr Guild, noticed the trend and immediately fought back.

He poured countless resources and promised many benefits to the dealers and the crystal camera suppliers in order to asphyxiate the Mountain Sea Sect, to the extent that it seemed that he was willing to perish together with his opponent.

If he had the dealers under control, the marketing network for the Demon Beast Detector wouldn't be able to develop.

If he had the crystal camera suppliers under control, the productivity of the Demon Beast Detector would be kept at minimum.

The high praises alone were not enough to be transformed into sales and profit.

As time went by, the Mountain Sea Sect's cash flow would run dry, which would be the harbinger of its doom.

This was Qiu Guanyu's plan.

However, there was one thing that was beyond his expectations.

…

Ten days later, in Ding Lingdang's home…

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang were sitting in the living room, their eyes focused on a vivid, life-like 3D advertisement that was being played in the Hologram Projector.

The first scene of the advertisement was the raging black clouds with lightning and thunder. The astonishing picture and music indicated that this advertisement had been made possible by large investment and that it boasted extraordinary ambitions.

The camera ripped through the clouds. Inside the picture was now a series of grand and marvelous mountains looming in darkness that was covered by glaring lightning bolts.

Savage roars of demon beasts reverberated with the earsplitting thunders.

Caption appeared in the bottom of the picture that read: 'Thunderous Sound Mountain, a land of perils and dominated by strong demon beasts.'

"Swoosh!"

An eagle-type demon beast with sharp feathers cut in the picture on the top right corner and dove down at the Thunderous Sound Mountain.

The camera followed. After a thrilling freefall, it entered the forest.

Then, the picture went black. Rustling noises came from the background, which were the sound of demon beasts fighting, chewing, and screaming.

Suddenly, the noises vanished. Heavy breathing filled the background, which sounded as if something appalling was happening behind the audience.

Captions showed up again on the black screen: 'A weak Refinement Stage Cultivator has lost his way in the Thunderous Sound Mountain. He is about to become the dinner of a demon beast.'

The picture blinked. A foot stepped into a pit of water, splattering the mud out.

A panicked man was running desperately in the forest.

Half a second later, a maddened boar rushed into the picture and charged at the man.

The next few scenes were switched very quickly, alternating between three or four perspectives every second. The full face of the man was never revealed. But one could feel the intense atmosphere by his anxious expression, his seeping wounds, his puffing chest, and the bloody tusks of the boar.

After a few scenes of running, it seemed that the man had gotten rid of the boar. Hiding in a bush, he unsheathed his saber and took out a Demon Beast Detector from his pocket.

The caption read: 'A saber and a Demon Beast Detector.'

The man put the Demon Beast Detector on his ear.

There was still not his full face in the picture. But his pressed lips indicated that he had recovered from panic and was ready to fight at his full strength.

Then, the camera was kept from the perspective of the Demon Beast Detector. All kinds of information was displayed in the Demon Beast Detector, showing its professionalism.

It seemed that the man turned from a fleeing prey into a predator that had everything under his control.

"Beep! Beep!"

Through the dark forest, the Demon Beast Detector easily discovered the boar that was hiding in the bush and displayed detailed information about it.

"Red Copper Boar, a middle-level demon soldier, had solid bone plates all around its body. The gap between the bone plates near its eyes is its only weakness. Meanwhile, just like all the other boar-type demon beasts, it cannot raise its head, which limits its view of above. It is recommended to attack from above!"

The camera descended. The man squatted, ready for the critical attack.

One second later, he dashed out like an arrow and jumped up. His saber slashed down like a lightning bolt.

"Shua!"

The picture turned crimson. The screams of the boar could be heard.

The caption appeared again: 'Bathing in blood.'

The picture blinked. More than ten different kinds of demon beasts appeared in the forest, which were all identified by the Demon Beast Detector. Data poured down like a waterfall, elaborating the specialty and weakness of the newcomers.

Then, the camera zoomed in. A few slaughter scenes where the saber flashed up and down proceeded.

The caption read: 'Ten days later.'

It was the darkness before dawn. Everything was unclear. But the Demon Beast Detector was still working dutifully and discovered many snake-type Demon Beasts and insect-type Demon Beasts which were all avoided by the man.

Then the caption read: 'Escaped!'

Outside of the forest, a ragged Cultivator full of bruises and scratches knelt down, raised his arms, and screamed at the sky with joyful tears.

An armed shuttle cut in from the top right corner of the picture and flew towards him, a long train of exhaust smoke trailing behind.

The Cultivator had not been featured from the beginning to the end.

To this moment, his face was still obscure.

Only the Demon Beast Detector was glittering very distinctively.

In the end, the picture dimmed and turned to black.

The red light of the Demon Beast Detector kept shining, which became a red spot in the middle of the picture.

Then there were two lines of captions:

'This is a true story. Learn more by scanning the rune in below.

'Demon Beast Detector, guardian of your life.'

"Pfff—"

Li Yao finally let out a long breath when it was finished.

There were no lines in the entire advertisement except for the captions.

Few scenes were shot from the third person perspective. Most of the story was told in the first-person narrative.

With the enhancement of the 3D manifestation, the audience would feel that it was themselves who were trapped in the Thunderous Sound Mountain and had to fight the demon beasts.

The performance of the Demon Beast Detector was well presented in the advertisement.

Although Li Yao had been in the Thunderous Sound Mountain in person, he still felt that his heart was beating fast as he watched the advertisement.

He turned around and asked Ding Lingdang in a smile, "How was it?"

"I feel that my blood is boiling, and I want to go to Thunderous Sound Mountain right now."

Ding Lingdang licked her lips and said.

Three days later, the advertisement was released all over the federation.

The real battle of the Demon Beast Detector had finally begun.

Chapter 286: Demon Beast Detector, Young Pioneer Version

Chapter 286: Demon Beast Detector, Young Pioneer Version

In the corners of famous websites, on the walls of the skyscrapers in major cities of the federation, and before popular entertainment shows were aired, this advertisement named 'Ten Days Among Demons' was played and replayed.

At first, many took it as just a random advertisement.

But soon, the delicate quality, the soul-stirring content, and especially, the fighting scenes from the first-person perspective of the Demon Beast Detector quickly distinguished 'Ten Days Among Demons' from cliché commercials.

Many people watched the advertisement more than once since it was so breathtaking.

'Ten Days Among Demons' was shot in a very skilled way. The protagonist never showed his face from beginning to end. The fighting scenes were controlled at the level of cold weapon. There were no dramatic, over-exaggerating scenes. The functions of the Demon Beast Detector were highlighted.

After watching the advertisement, the audience would feel that if they had a Demon Beast Detector, they could do exactly the same.

When they learnt that the advertisement was adapted from a true story, naturally, they felt more interested and scanned the rune with their mini crystal processor which led them to a website on the Nexus.

In the website, there was a brief introduction to Li Yao, as well as the interviews of several instructors of the Thunder Training Camp done by 'Predator', confirming the authenticity of the whole event.

Other than that, Li Yao provided a series of preliminary sketches of the Demon Beast Detector. Shang Tianling also hired several artists to decorate the website with highly distinctive concept paintings, which were handsome guys and beautiful girls fighting demon beasts in Thunderous Sound Mountain.

An interactive game was installed to the website, too. Once the audience uploaded their photos, the website would automatically generate pictures of the audience hunting down demon beasts in the Thunderous Sound Mountain wearing the Demon Beast Detector.

Every time they refreshed the website, there would be a different demon beast that they were fighting.

Many users on the site refreshed hundreds of times in order to find the most satisfactory photo of them wearing a Demon Beast Detector.

Through the aggressive marketing campaigns, the Demon Beast Detector became popular among ordinary people. The slogan 'Demon Beast Detector, guardian of your life' quickly became a catchphrase.

…

For Qiu Guanyu, the young master of the Zephyr Guild, and better known as the 'shark', the past month had been pretty rough.

To suppress the Demon Beast Detector, the Zephyr Guild had invested countless resources.

Once the measures failed, not only would the resources be completely wasted, similar magical equipment refined by the Zephyr Guild would risk losing a large portion of their market share, which was the fatal problem that was facing the Zephyr Guild.

Qiu Guanyu didn't have the slightest clue how the Mountain Sea Sect raised so much money and why it was spending the money in such a crazy way.

An advertising war was costly.

Qiu Guanyu had watched 'Ten Days Among Demons' dozens of times without leaving out any details.

He was certain that the advertisement was created by the most professional culture-type Cultivators. The production of the advertisement alone could cost several hundred million.

Now that the advertisement had been released to all the major media in the federation, the advertising expense of the Mountain Sea Sect this month would be astronomical.

Even Qiu Guanyu felt a little shocked at the money-burning rate and the Mountain Sea Sect's bravery, if not somewhat confused, too.

"The eligible crystal camera suppliers of reasonable scale have all been closely monitored, none of which had any plan to cooperate with the Mountain Sea Sect in the foreseeable future.

"The major magical equipment dealers haven't received any message from the Mountain Sea Sect to sell its product yet.

"Which meant that it's impossible for the Mountain Sea Sect to refine enough Demon Beast Detectors, nor can it sell the products to the terminal market.

"Then, why is the Mountain Sea Sect spending such a large amount of money on promoting a piece of magical equipment that it can't manufacture and sell?

"Based on the current speed, the Mountain Sea Sect is going to bankrupt within the next fortnight without me doing anything because of the huge advertising expenses."

Qiu Guanyu had thought that the Mountain Sea Sect might be able to find a new investor and raise another sum of money. But he had expected the Mountain Sea Sect to look for alternative suppliers to provide crystal cameras for the Demon Beast Detector to resolve the critical problem at hand. Then, it would need to renegotiate with several influential dealers to reestablish the distribution network.

Qiu Guanyu had stationed heavy troops on both paths. He had made sure that the Mountain Sea Sect couldn't find a single qualified crystal camera supplier, or a single magical equipment store that was willing to sell the Demon Beast Detector.

However, it didn't occur to him that the Mountain Sea Sect just bypassed his impregnable lines of defense.

Naturally, Qiu Guanyu felt uneasy, as if he had stepped off a step onto nothing.

The uneasiness soon turned into reality.

"The Mountain Sea Sect has found Jade Tripod Tower, Frostbite Valley, and Phoenix Union to provide the crystal cameras?

"What the hell?!"

Reading the latest investigation report in his crystal processor, Qiu Guanyu was stupefied.

The three suppliers that the Mountain Sea Sect found were all insignificant sects that never appeared on the list of the top 500 sects of the federation. They were not even professional refining sects.

The crystal cameras they refined were of low resolution and lousy quality, which had nothing special at all.

If the Demon Beast Detector utilized the inferior crystal cameras as its core component, its precision would be greatly diminished. Which Cultivator would buy that?

Is the Mountain Sea Sect committing suicide?

Qiu Guanyu was puzzled.

But the remaining part of the report dazzled him even more.

"What?

"The Mountain Sea Sect is releasing a cheap version of Demon Beast Detector targeting ordinary people?"

There seemed to be a lightning flashing in his head.

All the time, he had been trapped in the mindset that the war between the Mountain Sea Sect and the Zephyr Guild would burst out in the premium market for the Cultivators.

It never occurred to him that the Mountain Sea Sect would retreat and turn to the lower end of the market aiming at the ordinary people!

Countless ordinary people lived on the Grand Desolate Plateau.

Some of them were miners working for the major mining groups, some were the residents of the cities and towns, and some were the military soldiers and their families.

The number of ordinary people was hundreds of times larger than that of the Cultivators.

At a time when demon beasts went rampant, they needed to identify demon beasts, too.

A cheap version of Demon Beast Detector with a low-resolution crystal camera might not be able to meet the needs of the Cultivators. But for ordinary people, it was good enough to help them identify the type of the demon beasts, the toxicity of the demon beasts, the ways the demon beasts attack, or simply distinguish the demon beasts from regular beasts.

The Demon Beast Detector's price had not been high in the first place. The price of the cheap version was even lower. After all, the most valuable component of a Demon Beast Detector was its crystal camera. A loss of resolution by half could result to a reduction of price by three quarters.

Qiu Guanyu finally understood why the Mountain Sea Sect was spending so much money on advertising.

It was trying to impress the ordinary people with the extraordinary functions of the Demon Beast Detector.

Cold sweat was appearing on Qiu Guanyu's nose. He took a deep breath and asked his subordinate as calmly as he could, "What's the share price of the Mountain Sea Sect right now?"

"The Mountain Sea Sect has been suspended on the stock market. It is holding a press conference. A new shareholder is joining the Mountain Sea Sect," his personal assistant answered nervously.

"Excellent. We'll know who's backing the Mountain Sea Sect now."

Qiu Guanyu gnashed his teeth. The news was within his expectations.

Without strong reinforcement, the capital chain of the Mountain Sea Sect would've broken down long time ago, and the advertising war wouldn't have happened in the first place.

The press conference that was being streamed on the Nexus soon began.

"'Twin Dragons Union', a new sect led by Fiend Blade Peng Hai who is the youngest expert to arrive at the peak of the Building Foundation Stage in the federation, has agreed to buy shares of the Mountain Sea Sect, to the extent that the Twin Dragons Union will be the third largest shareholder of the Mountain Sea Sect!

"Fiend Blade Peng Hai also gladly accepted the invitation from Shangguan Jia, leader of the Mountain Sea Sect, to be the honorary chairman of board!

"Li Yao, inventor of the Demon Beast Detector which is the star product of the Mountain Sea Sect at present, is Fiend Blade Peng Hai's junior brother and a shareholder of the Twin Dragons Union.

"After the admission, the collaboration between the two parties will be closer. It is also a sign that they are both confident about the future of the Demon Beast Detector project!"

With a darkened face, Qiu Guanyu watched as Shangguan Jia, Jiang Wenbo, Guan Xiong, Fiend Blade Peng Hai, and the rest merrily entered the conference hall surrounded by countless journalists.

Fiend Blade Peng Hai picked the crystal microphone and said with a smile, "Friends of the news industry and financial industry, the press conference today has three purposes.

"Firstly, we would like to disclose the partnership between the Mountain Sea Sect and myself.

"Secondly, we'd like to take this opportunity to introduce to you the 'Young Pioneer Version of the Demon Beast Detector', the latest magical equipment refined by the Mountain Sea Sect.

"It is designed to be a piece of affordable magical equipment for the people who live and work on the Grand Desolate Plateau. While most of the functions of the original Demon Beast Detector are maintained, our new product's price has been set to a much lower price. The speed and manner of information presentation has been specially optimized for ordinary people.

"I believe most of you have watched an advertisement called 'Ten Days Among Demons'. In real life, the narrow escape of Li Yao, my junior brother, was based on the magical equipment of the same type.

"But before I dive into the details, allow me to introduce another distinguished guest to you. Ladies and gentlemen, I give you—"

"Shua!"

The curtain behind Fiend Blade Peng Hai was opened, revealing a banner that read: 'New Product Launch Conference. Co-hosted by the Mountain Sea Sect and the Moon Splitting Sword Guild.'

Fiend Blade Peng Hai intentionally uttered very slowly, "Bu Changfeng, deputy leader of the Moon Splitting Sword Guild!"

As a short, stout man with a glowing face walked to the front, whispers of attendees grew louder and louder.

Everybody had heard a thing or two about Fiend Blade Peng Hai buying shares of the Mountain Sea Sect. But how was the Mountain Sea Sect related to the Moon Splitting Sword Guild?

Besides, wasn't the Demon Beast Detector solely refined by the Mountain Sea Sect? Why was the Moon Splitting Sword Guild co-hosting the conference?

"What?!"

Qiu Guanyu's face changed. He stood up uncontrollably.

The Moon Splitting Sword Guild was among the top 500 sects of the federations, which boasted a lot of potential.

However, for a long time, the Moon Splitting Sword Guild had been a pure sword-training sect which was adept at the refinement and utilization of flying swords. It had nothing to do whatsoever with either the Zephyr Guild or the Mountain Sea Sect.

Never had he heard that the Moon Splitting Sword Guild intended to march into the business of precise magical equipment refining.

The shadow of uneasiness inside Qiu Guanyu's mind quickly expanded.

"Flying sword and Demon Beast Detector are two kinds magical equipment that can't be more distant. What's the deputy leader of the Moon Splitting Sword Guild doing here?"

Chapter 287: Unstoppable

Chapter 287: Unstoppable

Many journalists shared the same question with Qiu Guanyu.

Bu Changfeng, deputy leader of the Moon Splitting Sword Guild, took over the crystal microphone.

"Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!"

Almost twenty 3D light beams appeared behind him and started playing video clips of flying swords moving in the sky.

With a closer look, one would notice that the flying swords were pure white and looked like a long tube with green fluorescence. Four crystal cameras were evenly distributed on the body of each sword. There were no blade or tip. They were more like mini, self-driving shuttles than flying swords.

Right then, the flying swords were rushing in the sky of the Grand Desolate Plateau and approaching towns, mines, military bases, and fieldwork spots.

Bu Changfeng smiled brightly and said, "Friends of the news industry and the financial industry, you might be surprised to see me here. But today, the Demon Beast Detector is the star of the show.

"The Demon Beast Detector is a piece of magical equipment of astounding innovation, which naturally requires a correspondingly groundbreaking sales pattern.

"With the close collaboration of the Mountain Sea Sect and the Moon Splitting Sword Guild, the Demon Beast Detector will be sold on the Nexus and shipped by the flying sword.

"Behold, everyone—"

The picture on the light beam changed. A plain-looking customer was visiting the Demon Beast Detector's website.

"I believe most of you have watched 'Ten Days Among Demons' and logged in the website of the Demon Beast Detector before.

"At noon today, the online shopping module will be officially added to the website. By then, you will be able to place an order with your telepathic thought when you're at the website."

The light beam continued playing. The customer was muttering to himself, "Demon Beast Detector? Sounds interesting. It is not expensive anyway and could possibly save my life in an emergency. I might as well buy one.

"However, I work in a remote mine. There's no towns or stores nearby. The delivery of the online shopping sites is slow, and the cost is astonishingly high.

"Huh. I can buy a Demon Beast Detector from the website directly without any shipping fee? Guaranteed to arrive within one day? Is that even possible?"

The customer typed fast on the virtual keyboard and placed an order on the website of the Demon Beast Detector.

Then the picture switched to a large logistics center.

Many workers in the uniform of the Moon Splitting Sword Guild were busy at work.

Some of them were processing the orders on crystal processors. Some of them were opening the trunk of the flying swords and putting the Demon Beast Detectors inside gently.

In light of the limited space of the flying swords, the outer packaging of the Young Pioneer Version of the Demon Beast Detector was restructured into the shape of a cylinder with a minimalistic design, which was also very environment-friendly.

One flying sword could carry ten Demon Beast Detectors.

In another room, hundreds of light beams were floating in the air. Almost a hundred sword Cultivators of the Moon Splitting Sword Guild were focusing their rapt attention on the flying swords.

"Shua!"

"Shua!"

"Shua!"

Controlled by them, hundreds of flying swords took off and staggered to the distance with mystic colors behind, soon disappearing into the clouds.

The picture switched to a mine that was in the middle of nowhere.

It was too far away from any towns. Demon beasts appeared every now and then. Ordinary couriers hardly ever came to this place. Often, they would only deliver goods when there were a lot of orders and under the protection of Cultivators whom they paid a high reward to.

So, the goods might be delayed for a long time. Besides, the bewildering salary of the Cultivators resulted to the soaring shipping fees. For certain regular goods, their shipping fee was sometimes even higher than their actual value.

The four crystal cameras on a flying sword scanned the environment and went to the neighborhood beside the mine.

The customer who bought the Demon Beast Detector on the Nexus had received a notification and walked out of the door.

The flying sword stopped before him quietly. The trunk opened, revealing the Demon Beast Detector contained inside.

The customer was overwhelmed with joy. He hurriedly unpacked the Demon Beast Detector and put it on his nose with a smile of satisfaction.

The journalists, although aware that it was only a commercial, were still thrilled and started talking about it with each other.

Shopping online was not something new in the Star Glory Federation.

However, the Star Glory Federation had a vast and complex territory. The traffic of many cities was very complicated, too. Not only were there skyscrapers on the ground, there were also underground ghost cities that could be dozens of levels deep and sophisticated like a honeycomb.

All these factors added to the headache of the logistics industry. Home delivery service was too costly.

Therefore, most of the time, the couriers would simply transport the goods to designated pickup spots from which the customers needed to collect their goods themselves.

The situation was even worse in the Grand Desolate Plateau.

The Grand Desolate Plateau was a scarcely populated area under the scourge of demon beasts. Not many shuttles and airships dared to cruise in the sky of the Grand Desolate Plateau. To make things worse, the crystal trains only had a limited cargo capacity.

It was not unusual for the customers in the far-off mines, military camps, or newly developed towns to wait for half a month after they ordered some items on the Nexus before the items were finally delivered to their hands even though they had paid a shipping fee that was even higher than the cost of the goods.

If the shipping could be done by remote-controlled flying swords, there would be no concern of courier casualties. The shipping cost would be greatly diminished, whereas the flexibility and punctuality could be better guaranteed. The actual performance of the new shipping system might still be a question in the inland of the federation, but it was certainly going to nail the Grand Desolate Plateau!

The quick-minded journalists had already realized the business potential of the new shipping system.

Bu Changfeng was relieved to see others so interested in the new product.

Among all the sword-training sects of the Star Glory Federation, the Moon Splitting Sword Guild was not famous for the swiftness of their flying swords, or the powerfulness, or the skillfulness.

The only shining point of its flying swords was the technological advantage in remote-control and self-navigation because of their amazing crystal cameras.

Recent years, as the arms race of the sword-training sects took place, more advanced power rune arrays and attack rune arrays had been developed thanks to the large investment, which increased the speed and damage of the flying swords significantly.

As a result, not only had the sects that mainly focused on defense magical equipment such as the Gold Armor Sect been seriously undermined, the Moon Splitting Sword Guild, which only had a limited arsenal of technologies, was caught in a dilemma, too.

If it were to join the arms race, the preliminary cost would be huge with no guarantee of any yield.

If it were to stay the same, its technology would fall behind its peers. No one would buy its flying swords in the future, not even the guards of the mines.

To deal with the dilemma, the Moon Splitting Sword Guild had been undergoing a transformation. It had tried to march into the logistics industry by building a flying sword shipping network based on its advantage in the field of remote-controlled and self-navigating flying swords.

After a few years of secret preparations, the flying sword shipping network began to take shape. However, a lot of endogenous defects were disclosed, too.

Firstly, the cargo capability of the flying sword was inadequate. It could not carry goods beyond one ton however it was modified, which meant that it could only transport light and small goods.

Secondly, the robustness of remote-controlled flying swords and self-navigating flying swords was unsatisfactory. A sword trainer had to manipulate a flying sword over the Spiritual Nexus when it was several kilometers away, which would result to lagging.

This also meant that the flying sword was not suitable to carry goods that were too valuable.

Suppose a flying sword was to be used to carry Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures worthy of several billion, what if the flying sword lost control halfway and damaged the goods inside? Who would be to blame?

Thirdly, there were already a lot of sects that were good at swiftness and wind-reining skills with a lot of affiliates in the federation.

Wind Runners Clan, Wind Riders Clan, Wind Roarers Clan, and Unified Net Sect, known as 'Three Winds and One Net", had a market share of more than 90% of the logistics market.

If the Moon Splitting Sword Guild were to compete with them, there would a bloody battle with too many costs and probably little return.

Therefore, although the flying sword shipping network was ready to use, it had been bothering the Moon Splitting Sword Guilt from managers to workers as to what goods it should carry in the beginning phase so that it could be known by the world.

It was possible to deliver daily necessities such as sugar and salt with the flying sword shipping network. However, the brand image of the sect would suffer a disastrous decline, not to mention that the actual profit would probably be small. There would be no way for the Moon Splitting Sword Guild to turn to the premium market in the future.

The goods that the Moon Splitting Sword Guild desired should not be too valuable, not too large, and full of innovation, with technological advantage and certain publicity.

Only such goods could maximize the advantage of the flying sword shipping network.

However, it was not easy to find a suitable candidate.

When the Moon Splitting Sword Guild met the Demon Beast Detector, it was like a fatigued man who met a pillow. They were perfect for each other.

Not only did the magical equipment refined by Li Yao meet the Moon Splitting Sword Guild's every need, what made the Moon Splitting Sword Guild more exciting was that the target customers of them were almost the same.

The Young Pioneer Version of the Demon Beast Detector was aimed at the ordinary people living on the Grand Desolate Plateau, who were also the potential clients of the flying sword shipping network.

Most of the local agencies of the Moon Splitting Sword Guild were scattered on the Grand Desolate Plateau. It was planning to take over a market share of more than 50% on the Grand Desolate Plateau before marching to the inland.

To the Mountain Sea Sect which was worrying about the sales of the Demon Beast Detector, the Moon Splitting Sword Guild had solved their urgent problem too.

When the two parties communicated, they found themselves immediately attracted to each other, hence the co-hosting conference that had amazed everyone.

"Well..."

Qiu Guanyu's back was full of cold sweat.

Although he hadn't figured out the reasons yet, he had realized the potential of the Demon Beast Detector plus the flying sword shipping network with the instinct of a strong admin-type Cultivator.

He had invested huge amounts of money and even resorted to self-destruction in order to monopolize the traditional sales channels. But he'd never expected that a small flying sword was enough to make his preparations futile.

Right now, the Demon Beast Detector was unstoppable.

"Young master, since the press conference of the Mountain Sea Sect started, our share price has witnessed unusual decline," his secretory mumbled.

Qiu Guanyu fell to his chair helplessly. He clenched and unclenched his hands, unable to say anything for a long time.

Chapter 288: Heavy Bomb

Chapter 288: Heavy Bomb

The news of the Mountain Sea Sect and the Moon Splitting Sword Guild's cooperation was like a stone tossed into a quiet pond; it immediately caught much attention of people in the trade.

Many sword-training sects were regretting that they were not the ones to come up with this amazing idea.

If the flying sword shipping network of the Moon Splitting Sword Guild really got on track, the logistics and transport industry of the federation might be entirely reshaped. The business opportunities that it could create were tremendous.

But some sects were not optimistic about the new paradigm. They thought that the cooperation of the Mountain Sea Sect and the Moon Splitting Sword Guild was because neither of them had any other choice. The new magical equipment with the new marketing pattern would be destined to meet brutal failure in the market.

However, the soaring sales of the Demon Beast Detector had slapped the faces of the conservatives hard.

The Grand Desolate Plateau was full of treasures. Although the ordinary people who worked there were at a greater risk than those inland were, they earned much more money than their inland counterparts.

Those who worked at remote mines and fieldwork spots had an even higher purchasing power. They just never had a method to buy anything.

The shipping network that could deliver the goods to their doorstep within one day ignited their passion of shopping immediately.

Li Yao optimized the Demon Beast Detector to better meet the needs of the lower end customers.

Other than reducing the cost by simplifying the structure, he also adjusted the profiles of the demon beasts stored in the memory crystal card.

Ordinary people did not need to know the strong demon beasts above the level of demon soldier. They were more interested in distinguishing common demon beasts such as snake-type, insect-type, and mouse-type ones. They were also in need of telling the venomous snakes or scorpions from the non-venomous ones.

Therefore, the cheap version of the Demon Beast Detector significantly increased the data of these aspects. It listed the dodging strategies and suitable antidotes behind descriptions of the venomous insects and snakes that were commonly seen in the wild and the mother lodes. The users were also allowed to input the contact information of the local hospital, military base, or Cultivation sects in advance, so that the Demon Beast Detector would automatically send out distress calls in case of a demon beast scourge as long as it was connected to the Nexus.

The functions made the Demon Beast Detector more practical. The customers felt that the Young Pioneer Version of the Demon Beast Detector was indeed a piece of magical equipment that was tailor-made for ordinary people.

Three days later, the online sales of the Demon Beast Detector surpassed 10,000.

Five days later, sales surpassed 20,000.

Ten days later, 47,000 Demon Beast Detectors had been ordered.

As a piece of magical equipment whose design purpose was wilderness survival, the sales were already remarkable, and it was only counting personal customers.

With the growing influence of the Demon Beast Detector, many mines, farms, expedition teams, and construction companies had expressed their intent to bulk purchase to the Mountain Sea Sect, hoping to buy the Demon Beast Detector as a labor protection appliance.

Judging from the trend, it was quite possible that the sales of the Demon Beast Detector would exceed 100,000 within the next month.

At this point, the three magical equipment magazines all changed their attitudes.

When the Demon Beast Detector was first released, under the clout of the Zephyr Guild, they had arranged several mediocre critics to post some ambiguous articles on the secondary pages.

But right now, the sales of the Demon Beast Detector were soaring, and the users' feedback was mostly positive, too. If they continued on lying through their teeth, their professionalism would be questioned.

Therefore, two weeks after the press conference was held, the Demon Beast Detector made it to the Heated New

Magical Equipment List and the Best-seller List of the three magical equipment magazines, raising another round of passionate discussion.

One's joy might be another's sorrow. In this case, the Zephyr Guild hadn't felt particularly happy about the success of the Demon Beast Detector.

Objectively speaking, as the first commercialized magical equipment of a college student, the Demon Beast Detector had many unsatisfactory points.

The so-called 'Young Pioneer Version of the Demon Beast Detector' was put together by Li Yao only because the Mountain Sea Sect couldn't buy the qualified high-resolution crystal cameras.

If one was to look for drawbacks of the Demon Beast Detector, there would be too many to count.

But the problem was not how bad the Demon Beast Detector was. The problem was that, after comparing the Demon Beast Detector with the traditional probe magical equipment, many people had found that wearing a piece of probe magical equipment on the wrist was stupid and awful.

"The Demon Beast Detector is just a toy refined by some random college student. Of course we won't use that.

"However, the probe magical equipment refined by the Zephyr Guild is all worn the wrist, which is not very convenient to use. Do you think you can present the information directly in front of the eyes, too?"

Many regular clients of the Zephyr Guild had expressed their complaints.

As a result, sales of several kinds of magical equipment that used to be popular in the market had stagnated or even dropped in the past month. The share price of the Zephyr Guild in the stock market was dropping, too, indicating that the market was not as confident in the Zephyr Guild as before.

The Demon Beast Detector alone was far from enough to beat a giant monster such as the Zephyr Guild. But it had stabbed into the critical part of the Zephyr Guild like a sharp sword. From a retrospective point of view, this might be the prelude of the Zephyr Guild's epilogue.

Li Yao personally gained two additional benefits that he did not expect from the business war against the Zephyr Guild.

Firstly, his name 'Fiend Star Li Yao' rose to fame in the world of the refiners. Even many ordinary people had heard of him. This was partly because of the sweeping commercials nationwide which told Li Yao's story of survival in the Thunderous Sound Mountain, and partly because he had carved a grimacing little star on every Demon Beast Detector as a signature of the Fiend Star.

Secondly, his collaboration with the Mountain Sea Sect had become even closer. Moreover, he had reached out to the Moon Splitting Sword Guild, with whom he had signed a loose contract promising to sell the magical equipment in the same manner next time he refined something new.

Coincidently, the Moon Splitting Sword Guild, best known for their self-navigating flying swords, boasted proficient capability in refining crystal cameras. "Planetesimal" series and "Alioth" series were two renowned crystal camera models in the trade.

Now that the high-resolution crystal cameras were available, it was possible to march at the higher end of the market now.

Li Yao was ambitious and took the opportunity to make a full upgrade to the Demon Beast Detector for a high-end version. He almost entirely redesigned the product by adding communication function and automatic navigation and direction calibration function.

The latter function was usable even if the Demon Beast Detector was off the Nexus. It was based on the lessons he'd learnt in Thunderous Sound Mountain.

The mechanism behind the function was that the Demon Beast Detector would constantly scan the surroundings and mark them according to their features. Once the Demon Beast Detector lost connection to the Nexus and couldn't find the direction, virtual arrows leading to the start point of the trip would be displayed on the Demon Beast Detector when the user activated the 'Backtrack' function.

This more powerful model of the Demon Beast Detector was named by Li Yao as 'Valiant Warrior Version of the Demon Beast Detector', aiming at the middle-level and low-level Cultivators who needed to train or fight in the wilderness. The 'Backtrack' function was the biggest selling point.

As for the manufacture, marketing, and promotion work, Li Yao entrusted Shang Tianling and the professionals of the Mountain Sea Sect and the Moon Splitting Guild to take care of them.

The issues with the Demon Beast Detector were concluded. Li Yao had no energy and interest to develop the next-generation products for now.

Because he was devoted to Project Mystic Skeleton.

The Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution was indeed a galaxy of talents now.

The few grassroots experts had almost all been gathered here.

The fields that they were good at were different from one another. Some were experts of power rune arrays, and some were adept at refining swords and sabers. There were also firearms experts, crystal processor experts, professional aerodynamicists, and so on.

They were participants of the Project Mystic Skeleton as well as professors of the Refining Department. The medium and advanced courses that they taught had only one student right now, which was, naturally, Li Yao.

Therefore, they decided to do the teaching sessions in the laboratory. Usually the professors would sit down in a circle and pave the crystal suit designs in the middle before they were engaged in violent quarrels regarding a technological issue and a permutation of certain arrays, sometimes forgetting where they were. Li Yao would stand by, take notes, watch and learn as an assistant.

The teaching methodology couldn't be more suitable for Li Yao.

He was like a voracious octopus clinging on his professors absorbing knowledge from them as crazily as he could.

With the collaborative work of everyone, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was getting plumper day after day, from which a thin air of bloodthirst could be felt now.

However…

On the second day of the Valiant Warrior Version of the Demon Beast Detector's release, a shocking news hit the Cultivation world like a heavy bomb, blowing everyone who heard of it away.

The MP 1 crystal suit co-developed by Deep Sea University and the Gold Armor Sect had overcome the critical technical problem. The first prototype had been produced!

Inside the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution, all the members of the Project Mystic Skeleton sat together and watched the giant light beam solemnly, which was playing the press conference of Deep Sea University and the Gold Armor Sect.

The scale of this press conference was tens of times larger than that of the Demon Beast Detector's.

The auditorium was crowded by journalists. Li Yao had a feeling that the entire press industry and all the people who called themselves a journalist had gather here.

Their hungry faces resembled those of dogs who had been starved for three days and saw a bone hanging on the ceiling.

"What a huge difference!"

Li Yao sighed silently.

He had been satisfied at the press conference of last month and pleased by the sales and reviews of the Demon Beast Detector when he 'accidentally' saw them.

However, the press conference today had taught him a lesson on what the overlord of refining looked like and what being known by the entire federation actually was.

Just an announcement. No picture. No specifications. Yet, all the magical equipment BBS and media had gone into a frenzy. Everyone was talking about the new crystal suit crazily.

The terrifying tides easily drowned topics regarding the Demon Beast Detector.

"My magical equipment will be as resounding as this one day!

"However, Deep Sea University is indeed capable. It's only been a few months, and their prototype of MP crystal suit is already out of the furnace, which is even faster than us. It's completely illogical!"

Soon, leaders of the Refining Department of Deep Sea University, including President Chu Xiuhong and Supernova Jiang Sheng, and the managers of the Gold Armor Clan walked onto the platform in joy.

However, the crystal microphone was handed to a young man who apparently hadn't reached his thirties.

Chapter 289: Invincible Opponent

Chapter 289: Invincible Opponent

The young man's eyes were long and narrow. He was wearing a sunny smile all the time. His two dimples made him look more approachable. However, when he was not smiling, there was an air of relentlessness about him, and his thin eyes seemed to turn into two lancets.

Li Yao sat up straight the moment he saw him.

Although they were thousands of kilometers away from each other, Li Yao felt a strong sense of danger.

It was like a tiger met another tiger in a forest, or a serpent met another serpent in a crevice.

The man was intimidating!

"Professor, who is he?" Li Yao asked Yuan Manqiu in a low voice.

"He is Zuo Feijing, true disciple of Supernova Jiang Sheng, ranking second in the Novem Stellae."

Yuan Manqiu said solemnly, "He has another identity. He is the son of Zuo Hongyi, who is the Chief Armadominus of the Gold Armor Clan. Growing up in the Crystal Suit Refining Center of the Gold Armor Clan and studying in Deep Sea University, he has grasped the essence of the sect refining techniques and academic refining techniques. He is adept at researching and refining crystal suits. It is believed that he will become one of the youngest Armadominus of the federation.

"Zuo Feijing made a great contribution to the collaboration of Deep Sea University and the Gold Armor Clan."

Li Yao took a deep breath.

The Gold Armor Clan was a real cartel in magical equipment refining whose comprehensive capability was much higher than that of the Zephyr Guild. It was most famous for its battle armors. Over the past decades, it had also invented several classic crystal suit models best known for their sturdiness.

Although the Gold Armor Clan was somewhat in trouble under the pressure of the more advanced flying swords refined by the sword-training sects, hundreds of years of accumulated experience still made it a giant of the trade.

Born in the Gold Armor Clan and taught by Supernova Jiang Sheng in person, Zuo Feijing must be a top expert.

No wonder Li Yao felt that he was getting goosebumps all over his body.

Yuan Manqiu glanced at him and hesitatingly continued, "Not just that. Same as you, Zuo Feijing is a hybrid-type Cultivator who is talented both in combat and in creation.

"He has been passionate about crystal suits since he was a little kid. Not only does he love refining them, he also enjoys wearing them. He is the most excellent graduate of the Ember Training Camp, one of the four training personal training camps of the federation, which makes him a distinguished Exo.

"You should know that there is a Battlesuit Department in Deep Sea University which is meant to bring up future Exos.

"However, Zuo Feijing has defeated contenders of the Battlesuit Department in the School Exo Championship of Deep Sea University for three years in a row, shaming the entire Battlesuit Department.

"Zuo Feijing must be the test pilot of the new crystal suit model co-developed by Deep Sea University and the Gold Armor Clan. That's why he is doing the introduction today.

"That is to say, if our crystal suit and theirs are going to fight for the fat order of the military, Zuo Feijing will be your toughest opponent!"

Li Yao's heart was beating fast. He couldn't calm himself down.

He had come across Yuan Yeshi, a student of the Battlesuit Department of Deep Sea University, in the Thunder Training Camp, who had caused major trouble for him.

But apparently, Yuan Yeshi was not the best student where he came from.

As a student of the Refining Department, Zuo Feijing could suppress the Battlesuit Department for three years?

While he was pondering, the press conference had begun.

The giant light beam behind the platform started blinking. Basking in dark gold lights, an intimidating crystal suit that looked like a grey rock revealed itself.

"Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to present you with the next-generation crystal suit and, possibly, the future standard crystal suit for the federal army, which has been co-developed by Deep Sea University and the Gold Armor Clan, the Tiger King Battlesuit!"

Zuo Feijing rose up.

He was very tall. When he stood up, he was like a tiger ready to lunge at his prey.

In the light beam, the virtual Tiger King Battlesuit started spinning, while the specifications were displayed beside. The startling data raised a round of exclamation.

The Tiger King Battlesuit was an all-weather, all-territory, medium crystal suit that could withstand the scourge of intense demonic energy.

The crystal cannons on the chest was in the shape of the head of a roaring tiger, radiating a strong scent of killing.

With the Gold Armor Clan's participation, the framework of the Tiger King Battlesuit had been thoroughly tempered. As a medium crystal suit, its defensive ability had surpassed that of many heavy crystal suits. It could resist short-distance strikes of a demon general for multiple times even without the spiritual shield.

Also, thanks to the state-of-the-art crystal processors provided by Deep Sea University, the computational ability of the Tiger King Battlesuit was amazing, too. It could automatically launch counterattacks before the wearer was able to react.

"Tiger King is invincible among crystal suits of the same level," Zuo Feijing declared confidently.

Yet Li Yao felt that there was something wrong about it.

He thought hard for a moment. Then he finally remembered.

"Professor, the overall outlook of the Tiger King Battlesuit is very similar to the 'Tiger Assassin Battlesuit' refined by Deep Sea University several years ago.

"The plate armor and the style of the bottom half of the body leave me the same impression as did the 'Mystic Turtle Battlesuit', a classic crystal suit of the Gold Armor Clan.

"This new model is like a combination of the two prior models. No wonder they could produce a prototype within several months.

"But, here's the question.

"As I recall, both the Tiger Assassin Battlesuit and the Mystic Turtle Battlesuit require a lot of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, so, both of them are very expensive, aren't they?

"The vertebral column of the Tiger Assassin Battlesuit is made of the spine of a liger-type demon beast, which must be intact without a single crack.

"Such a spine is not readily available.

"The Mystic Turtle Battlesuit is the same. A single Mystic Turtle Battlesuit uses more than 50 shells of turtle-type demon beasts.

"Now that the two models have been merged together, there's no doubt that the combat ability will be extraordinary. But the cost will be enormous, too. Besides, where can they find so many spines of the liger-type demon beasts and shells of the turtle-type demon beasts?

"How will they mass-produce such a crystal suit?"

Yuan Manqiu was confused, too. She shook her head and said, "It is indeed a crucial question. Let's see what Zuo Feijing has to say. Somebody is definitely going to ask."

As it turned out, an impatient journalist raised the question the moment Zuo Feijing finished the introduction of specifications.

Most of the journalists taking part in the press conference had been focusing on crystal suit news. Some of them were crystal suit specialists themselves. It was not hard for them to find out that the Tiger King Battlesuit was a renovation of old models which would cost too many Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures to meet the military's requirement.

Faced with the sharp question, Zuo Feijing was not the least panicked. He smiled and said, "It is true that the Tiger King Battlesuit has been developed from the Tiger Assassin Battlesuit and the Mystic Turtle Battlesuit, and that a lot of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures are mandatory in the manufacturing process. However, of the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures that the Tiger King Battlesuit needs, 90% can be synthesized!"

"What?!"

Every one of the Project Mystic Skeleton team, including Li Yao, stood up.

The press conference was overwhelmed by whispers, too.

As the Cultivation civilization progressed, more and more Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures could be synthesized.

The Building Foundation Pill that all the Cultivators had scrambled for 40,000 years ago could be synthesized into the form of strengthening drug nowadays. One could have as many as one wanted.

However, the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures for the refinement of crystal suit were mostly demon cores and demon bones. Their hardness, tenacity and attributes were highly restricted. The development of synthesized materials in this regard had been poor.

Therefore, everybody was shocked that the Refining Department of Deep Sea University could be so strong as to refine a crystal suit with 90% synthesized materials.

"Since the military's announcement of outsourcing the standard crystal suit, many sects have initiated MP crystal suit research projects.

"But most of them had the same misconception. To lower the lost for mass-production, they've been cutting out redundant Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures which are supposed to be indispensable. Therefore, the sturdiness, strength, attack ability, defense ability, cruising ability… have all been significantly undermined!"

Zuo Feijing announced proudly, "That is not the path Deep Sea University is going to take.

"In our opinion, a MP crystal suit, however cheap it may be, should still maintain strong attack ability and defense ability to be the absolute star of the battlefield stressing the demon beasts out the moment they see one.

"Therefore, instead of reducing the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, we've been dedicated to speeding up the research of synthesized substitutes for the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures.

"In fact, Deep Sea University has been working on the subject for over a hundred years. Infinite resources, sweat and blood have been poured into the garden, so that we can see the blossom of flowers today!

"Take the vertebral column of the Tiger Assassin Battlesuit for example. In the traditional refining procedure, the natural spine of liger-type demon beasts is compulsory. There can't be even a single crack.

"But right now, based on bismuth tungsten alloy and certain special materials, as well as several secret techniques, we've refined an alloy spine whose hardness and tenacity were above 85% of those of the natural ones. It has met the requirements of the MP crystal suit!

"The same goes for the plate armor. The shells of the turtle-type demon beasts have been replaced by alloy materials made possible by our secret techniques.

"In the Tiger King Battlesuit, we've utilized 42 kinds of synthesized materials as replacement of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. If the production volume is 3,000 or more, the average cost will be 390 million.

"It is true that our cost will probably be the highest of all MP crystal suit models. Its price might be twice of that of our competitor's model.

"However, we have every faith in the Tiger King Battlesuit. Three crystal suits of the same level teamed together will still be no match for the Tiger King!"

Hearing this part, Li Yao was finally relieved and wipe the sweat on his forehead.

Deep Sea University was full of believers of elite refining ideology after all. Although it was a MP crystal suit, the total cost was close to 400 million.

In comparison, according to estimation, the cost of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit would be around 100 million, and absolutely no more than 150 million, when the production volume was more than 1,000 pieces.

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had a lot of advantages in regard to cost.

But the actual combat ability of the Tiger King Battlesuit was unknown yet.

While he was pondering, the press conference was in a mess again.

Four giant light beams flowed down on the four directions of the spot, which were playing the shocking scenes of the Tiger King Battlesuit in real battles piloted by Zuo Feijing.

Chapter 290: Total Disregard

Chapter 290: Total Disregard

The first scene was Zuo Feijing fighting an Iron Paw Rock Bear in the Tiger King Battlesuit.

The Iron Paw Rock Bear was a high-level demon soldier. It was three meters tall and boasted extraordinary physical strength; its body was covered in rock armor. It was born with a secret Cultivation technique to absorb the minerals from rocks and transform them into metal chemicals which would build up on its paws.

After tens of years of Cultivation, the paws of an adult Iron Paw Rock Bear would be entirely metalized. When it was infuriated, its paws would be sharp enough to tear apart a common battle armor with a single strike.

But right now, Zuo Feijing was confronting the fierce beast face to face, with absolutely no sign of failure.

His hands and the front paws of the Iron Paw Rock Bear were tangled together, making them look like two solid statues.

But with the hint of the Iron Paw Rock Bear painful expression, one could tell the brutal force contained in Zuo Feijing's hands.

"Crack!"

After ten seconds of silent confrontation, the paws of the Iron Paw Rock Bear were squeezed into a pulp and blood exploded everywhere.

The arms of the Iron Paw Rock Bear were broken, too. The fractured bones were exposed to the air.

The Iron Paw Rock Bear roared like thunder and dashed forward unstoppably with its mouth wide open.

Zuo Feijing did not duck. He squatted and, lowering his shoulder, crashed into the Iron Paw Rock Bear.

"BOOM!"

He didn't seem to exert much strength. Yet, there was a blast spreading from the center of collision with an earthshaking noise.

It was like two high-speed crystal trains had crashed. The rock armor of the bear was entirely shattered. An invisible spiritual wave had pierced through its body and left a giant hole on its back.

After the clash, the Iron Paw Rock Bear was blown back almost a hundred meters. It was lying on the ground, with four limbs stretching out, unable to move anymore. Its chest had collapsed.

With a closer look, one would notice that inside the chest, the bones, flesh, and guts had been transformed into mixed bloody fluid.

In the second scene, Zuo Feijing was faced with a vast crimson spider net.

The spider net had been knitted by a Fire Spitting Spider. Not only was it extremely sticky, it was also light enough to dance in the wind and move up and down like a tentacle.

Once it captured a prey, it would tighten itself. The corrosive venom that it released could impair more than a hundred kinds of alloys. Tough as Cultivators' bodies may be, their skin would immediately be darkened when the spider net touched them as if they had been scorched.

That's how the Fire Spitting Spider got its name.

Wind was blowing in the testing field. A vast spider net was swinging in the air. The gaps among the spider threads were fickle and unpredictable.

Zuo Feijing crouched. Nine clusters of orange steam boomed out from the back of the Tiger King Battlesuit, pushing him into the spider net as if he were a laser.

With fast and skillful small-scale movements, he went through the erratic spider net that was almost one hundred square meters in only three seconds.

There was no trace of corrosion on the crystal suit. The spider net behind him was intact, too. Not a single spider thread was cut off by his sprint.

The crystal suit was a prototype with no weapons or magical equipment. Therefore, the demo only showed its performance in strength, speed, and agility.

The grassroots refiners of the Grand Desolate War Institution had put on a grave face after watching the two real-battle scenes.

As experts of the trade, they could easily tell the excellence of the Tiger King Battlesuit.

Li Yao clutched his hands, his fingernails stabbing into his palm.

The Tiger King Battlesuit was indeed impressive. But the aura of domination around Zuo Feijing when he was in the crystal suit aroused Li Yao's competitiveness more.

This was an opponent ten times stronger than Long Qianyue or Yuan Yeshi who deserved his undivided attention; his soul burned with passion.

Since the Tiger King Battlesuit was still in the experimental period, much of the core data was confidential. After a few scenes of the refining process of the prototype, the press conference came to the last part, which was Q&A session for the journalists.

The journalists who were never afraid of causing trouble soon came up with a malicious question.

"In order to be the provider of the first standard crystal suits of the military, many sects and universities are working on MP crystal suits. Deep Sea University and the Gold Armor Clan are the first to produce a prototype. According to you, who is most likely to be your competitor in the future?"

It was a tricky question. Leaders of both parties hesitated to give an answer because they were too influential and did not want to provoke anyone.

In the end, Zuo Feijing took the crystal microphone and replied in a smile, "The Tiger King Battlesuit is a one-of-a-kind crystal suit. We have never considered any sect or university to be our competitor. When we run differential analysis, we always compare the Tiger King Battlesuit with the higher-level, non-MP crystal suit models.

"However, we noticed the craze of MP crystal suit research in major sects and universities, too, and we've studied a few of their models, some of which were quite impressive.

"For example, the Star Nebula University is working on a MP crystal suit model that boasts unparalleled swiftness. It has traded heavy weapon and plate armor for unlimited speed and agility. If it is successfully refined, it will be a perfect supplement to the Tiger King Battlesuit. Although it does not meet the needs of the main troops, it will do a great job for our scouts.

"Also, the Shadowy Phantom Sword Guild, the Giant Sword Union, and the Flying Swallow Sword Sect, three major sword-training sects of the federation, are cooperating on a MP crystal suit model that has given up the melee combat ability for the exceptional improvement of long-range combat ability, which is more like a walking arsenal of flying swords than a crystal suit. It is a very remarkable and creative design whose potential in the battlefield is unmeasurable if it can be successfully refined.

"We'll focus our attention on those two models for now."

Another journalist raised his hand and asked, "The Grand Desolate War Institution was the first college in the federation to start the research of MP crystal suit, which can be dated back to more than ten years ago. Although they met a critical failure last year, there is no denying that the Grand Desolate War Institution has a rich heritage. Rumors have it that they're going to release a MP crystal suit model with extremely low cost. Do you think their model will be a rival of the Tiger King Battlesuit?"

"Grand Desolate War Institution?"

Zuo Feijing was dazed for a moment. He answered in amusement, "I'm sorry, but we only have limited time and energy. We don't know much about the details of their progress. No comment here."

While the journalists were eager to raise more questions, Supernova Jiang Sheng took over the crystal microphone and said, "Friends of the news industry, the first press conference of the Tiger King Battlesuit will conclude now. We need to focus our attention on the experiments of the next phase. There will be a briefing about the latest progress of the Tiger King Battlesuit every month. So, if you have any questions, please save them until the next meeting. Thank you."

In hustle and bustle, the press conference ended.

Long after the light beam turned black, the members of the Project Mystic Skeleton, including Li Yao, were still dwelling on the gap between them, unable to do anything.

They were shocked, ashamed, and lost.

Shocked at the majesty of the Tiger King Battlesuit; ashamed at the slow progress of the Project Mystic Skeleton; lost at the disregard from Deep Sea University, who didn't even bother to care about them.

"Everyone."

Yuan Manqiu was an exception. She looked like a stern general. The casualness that had been always on her face was replaced by seriousness. Determination was glowing in her eyes. She knocked the desk and said calmly, "We've watched all the videos. Have you noticed the two shortcomings of the Tiger King Battlesuit?"

Two shortcomings?

Everyone else looked at other in amazement.

They were still in awe of the Tiger King Battlesuit, and Yuan Manqiu had already found its two shortcomings?

An expert who was in charge of cost accounting replied, "Director Yuan, the Tiger King Battlesuit has an obvious shortcoming. It is too expensive.

"However, if its final performance is as good as what has been shown in the demo, the price is not unacceptable. Should a great war between the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector take place, the military will definitely spare no expense when it comes to equipment."

"That's correct."

Another professor nodded, "As long as it can be mass-manufactured, money won't be a problem. If the only shining point of our Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is the cheap price and it is beaten to the ground by the Tiger King Battlesuit in real battles, there is no way that the military will choose us over them."

Yuan Manqiu sneered. She said, "This is the second shortcoming of the Tiger King Battlesuit.

"We all know that every university and every sect has been working on synthesized substitutes for natural Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. Zuo Feijing was not lying when he said that Deep Sea University has poured infinite resources and hard work into the subject.

"When I was in Deep Sea University, I was personally involved in several projects that were related to synthesized materials, too.

"But here's the question. With barely no achievement for over a hundred years, they've already been able to synthesize some forty Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures that are critical for crystal suits within half a year? Isn't it too coincidental?"

The other professors were shocked.

"Director Yuan, do you mean that Deep Sea University is lying and there are no synthesized Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures at all?"

"That would be too much."

Yuan Manqiu shook her head. "Such a lie is of little significance. The crystal suit is going to be mass-produced anyway. If Deep Sea University can't provide enough raw materials, it would be a huge scandal. Their title as 'Refiners' Holy Land' would be torn apart without us doing anything.

"According to my estimation, the statement about the synthesized Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures should be true, but the technique must be immature. There might be a lot of unresolved issues which require further experiments. That's why Deep Sea University kept it a secret until today.

"But right now, there is no time for any further researches. They have to make do with whatever technologies they have at present, however immature the technologies are.

"To glue so many immaturely synthesized Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures together into a crystal suit, its performance might be amazing, but the robustness and the fault rate will be appalling!"

Chapter 291: Crucial Question

Chapter 291: Crucial Question

"What I'm saying is that we should not be affected by interferences. On the surface, the Tiger King Battlesuit does look great. However, our Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit has its own advantages.

"Firstly, the main framework of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is based on technology dating back to the era of the Star Ocean Imperium. They have been tested in battlefield countless times and are well beyond the perception level of the Heaven's Origin Sector at present, which is also why we haven't been able to fully comprehend it although we devoted most of our time to it.

"Secondly, everyone here is an expert in grassroots refining. We all have abundant experience in MP magical equipment. Maybe our work is not as glamorous as that of the elite ideology believers and the specifications of our crystal suit might be boring, but we are definitely the best in the regards of production stability and fault rate!

"Thirdly, although pricing is not the decisive factor, a crystal suit with similar performance to theirs but only half cost is still very attractive.

"I believe you've all heard a thing or two about this over the past month. The spiritual tides in the Dark Desolate Domain are more frequent and intense than before.

"Just as the sea tide is the rise and fall of sea levels caused by gravitational forces, the intense spiritual tides indicate that our world is being attracted to another world, now more than ever.

"Which means that the distance between the Blood Demon Sector and us has been shortened.

"Maybe in the next few years, a semi-permanent wormhole will appear between the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector which will allow a large number of troops to pass through.

"It is the most important reason why the military is purchasing standard crystal suits in such a hurry.

"At the cost of the same war budget, five crystal suit legions can be built up if the military choose to buy the Tiger King Battlesuit; but if they buy the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, ten or even fifteen crystal suit legions will be able to be established. This is our advantage!

"So, let's work together!

"Hadn't we already anticipated that Deep Sea University and the Gold Armor Clan would bring out a crystal suit with second-to-none performance? But as it turns out, it's only just so-so. My confidence is stronger now than before. The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is definitely going to beat the Tiger King Battlesuit!"

Yuan Manqiu's remarks ignited everyone's passion.

The grassroots refining ideology had been suppressed by the elite refining ideology for decades.

For no other reasons, they had to forge the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit just to prove that the path they had embarked on was the right one.

"Ms. Yuan is right. The most distinguished characteristic about the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is that its mainframe employed technology from the Star Ocean Imperium which is far more advanced than our current ones. Its likelihood of survival is much higher in a battlefield!"

"We've made great progress in the power system…"

"The preliminary distribution of the probe magical equipment has been sorted out…"

The professors and the experts started a heated discussion.

The only exceptions were several experts of materials and experts of the crystal reactor, who hid themselves in the corner silently and didn't open their mouths until others had finished talking.

"There are still some problems concerning the Super Compressed Crystal Reactor. We've tried to refine it with almost a hundred different kinds of materials. However, their hardness did not meet our demand. Although it won't explode again in the laboratory like the previous accident, it will still risk being wrecked or even set off in a real battlefield when it suffered corrosion or a major strike."

The words tossed a bucket of cold water on the participants of the project.

But they were aware that the crystal reactor was the most troublesome component to refine in a crystal suit after all.

There had been no crystal reactor in the Star Glory Federation that was devoid of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures.

90% of the Tiger King Battlesuit was made of synthesized materials, but it still required authentic Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures for its crystal reactor.

That was because the crystal reactor had a high requirement for hardness and tenacity.

Was the Grand Desolate War Institution able to do what Deep Sea University couldn't?

"It is not a problem!"

Yuan Manqiu knocked the desk and said firmly, "We still have half a year and we are going to find a way out. Let's call it a day here.

…

The sun set, and night fell.

Sitting below the statue of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and watching the stars over his head lighting up one after another, Li Yao meditated.

With the reconstruction of the Refining Department, most of the ruins had been cleared away. More than ten tall trees were implanted around the statue from other places, transforming the place into a small park.

The gentle wind was breezing coolly.

Li Yao liked to contemplate beside the statue of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

Every time he came here, he felt his head was clear and sharp with a lot of amazing ideas popping up.

He had a feeling that the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was connected to him in a way he can't comprehend and that it was destined to be born in his hands and cruise in the cosmos with him gloriously.

"The Tiger King Battlesuit is indeed marvelous!"

On his crystal processor, Li Yao played and replayed the press conference of Deep Sea University, especially the demos of the Tiger King Battlesuit.

The more he watched, the more he felt that there was a fire burning in his heart.

It was not easy to defeat such a formidable enemy. Although the professor mentioned that there were many hidden problems about the Tiger King Battlesuit, Deep Sea University would certainly try to fix them in the half year to come.

However, for the Grand Desolate War Institution, the most crucial problem about the crystal reactor was like a mountain standing in the path of everyone and blocking all hope.

Leaning against the wreck of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Li Yao closed his eyes and started pondering.

"A crystal reactor has two critical parameters. One is the hardness. Only with enough hardness could it withstand the super pressure from inside and the intense impacts from outside.

"The other is the tightness of spiritual energy. By no means should the spiritual energy be leaked through the tiny gaps in the material that makes up the shell.

"The second point is easy to fix. It is true that the density of ordinary materials is often unsatisfactory. However, there are certain special dyes and rune arrays that can help lock the spiritual energy.

"But as for how to improve the hardness of materials…

The Hundred Smelting Clan from 40,000 years ago had several secret techniques that could bring up the hardness of the ordinary materials to the extent of the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures by repetitive tempering.

But the secret techniques all required manual work which could take an extraordinarily long time with a very low success rate.

With Li Yao's current ability, it might take him several months to forge a highly precise component such as the crystal reactor with ordinary materials, and there would be a lot of defects in the final product.

Such a low efficiency was far from enough to meet the demand of mass-production.

Therefore, Li Yao only noted a few refining methods and rune arrays that could strengthen the ordinary materials and planned to discuss with the professors and experts about them.

As for the manually-made component, he could only use them on his own crystal suits. It was not applicable to the MP crystal suit model.

Pondering for a long time with little yield, Li Yao was irritated.

He turned back unintentionally and suddenly felt something.

The remnants of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had been standing here for over a year and were weather-beaten. Although it was made of metal, it looked somewhat lackluster now.

"It's not like I can figure it out within a moment. I might as well maintain whatever's left of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit to better learn its inner structure.

After the spiritual tide explosion, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had been shattered. The framework had been twisted, and many of the components had been melded together.

Few refiners in the entire Star Glory Federation could maintain such a crystal suit.

But for Li Yao, it was not a problem, because he had maintained crystal suits that were in much lousier conditions in the Thunder Training Camp.

Now was as good as any time. Li Yao took out almost ten delicate maintenance tools from his Cosmos Ring. He played them in his hands and they danced among his fingers like butterflies.

After he returned to the Grand Desolate War Institution, the first thing he did was to refine a set of maintenance tools of 325 different kinds with the materials he'd retrieved from the Dark Desolate Domain.

Take tweezers for example. For different usages, Li Yao refined 12 different pairs.

The tools were all crafted by hard work with consideration of his father's teachings and the lessons from Ou Yezi's memory fragments.

There wouldn't be a second set of such tools in the Heaven's Origin Sector.

As the saying went, 'he who does his work well, first sharpens his tools'. With such a set of maintenance tools, Li Yao was like a tiger who'd grown two wings.

Climbing up the pedestal, he clutched the left shoulder of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit with his left hand, while he tore down the components of the crystal suit with his right hand at an amazing speed.

After a moment, the crystal reactor on the back of the crystal suit was revealed.

Thinking for a second, Li Yao tore the crystal reactor down. He held it in his arms like a watermelon and sat down cross-legged. Under the bright moonlight, he started observing the crystal reactor.

The hardness of the material that constituted the crystal reactor was higher than that of the materials of other components. Therefore, the crystal reactor was not broken but only deformed in the spiritual tide explosion.

Almost a thousand runes were engraved on the top of the crystal reactor. Connected together, they were a rune array that covered the entire surface of the crystal reactor.

A long and narrow hole was ripped open on one side of the crystal reactor; it looked like a black eye.

Li Yao knew that it was the reason for the spiritual tide explosion.

The super compressed spiritual energy had been furious enough to rip open the shell of the crystal reactor, through which it surged out and breached another several walls until it reached the warehouse of crystals where a tremendous explosion was triggered because of the chain reaction.

Staring at the crystal reactor, Li Yao suddenly felt that a cold wind blew through his heart, which caused numbness all over his body. He sensed that something was eyeing him in the void.

Li Yao blinked his eyes. For some reason, he felt that the 'something' was not malicious. On the contrary, it was warm and friendly, as if it were a companion going to the same destination as Li Yao.

Searching for a long time, Li Yao's eyesight stopped at the hole of the crystal reactor.

A weird light glimmered in the hole, making it look like a winking eye.

Chapter 292: Phantom Entities

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Greenish light blinked like a spark dying in the winter wind and then vanished into thin air.

Holding his breath, Li Yao extended one of his spiritual threads into the crystal reactor.

However, when it was entering through the hole, it was weirdly blocked by what seemed to be a thin film.

"Bo!"

He seemed to have punctured a soap bubble. A long and deep sigh came from inside the hole, followed by an eruption of greenly shining spots that looked like flickering dandelion seeds which danced to the rhythm of the wind under the night sky.

Li Yao was dazed. He had never seen anything as weird before.

They were like translucent fireflies, bunches of flying roses, and ember spirits that had been awaken.

They danced around Li Yao in an unpredictable pattern, sending out mysterious messages.

Li Yao extended more spiritual threads from his spiritual root and pierced into the green fires.

"BOOM!"

In a moment, hundreds of fireballs of information exploded inside his brain, making him 'see' and 'hear' countless stuff.

He seemed to have been surrounded by thousands of pictures at the same time.

Most of them are obscure and complicated experiments and refining procedures. A few of them were some people exclaiming wildly with joyful tears.

"The Project Mystic Skeleton is finally going to be completed!"

The sentence echoed and echoed in Li Yao's brain, which was followed by rounds of gleeful laughter.

He could even feel intense pride, excitement, and relief himself.

"This is—"

It was not until Li Yao stood still for over an hour to read and absorb all the information that he discovered that a lot of experimental data and refining processes related to Project Mystic Skeleton had been added to his memories.

The concepts and conjectures that had been fuzzy to him were all obvious now. All the details of the Project Mystic Skeleton had been circuited together and formed a coruscating skyscraper inside his brain.

It was as if inspiration from hundreds of people had exploded in his head like brilliant fireworks.

The fireflies in the sky had disappeared without him knowing.

Li Yao rubbed his face hard to ensure that he was not hallucinating.

He extended his spiritual threads into the crystal reactor again.

The light of the translucent fireflies was extremely weak now. The silence of the grave had taken over the place. Li Yao could even feel that the spiritual energy contained in them were dispersing fast.

It wouldn't be long before the fireflies were gone with the wind.

Li Yao's heart was beating fast. He felt that he might be onto a big secret. So, he reached out to his professor hurriedly via the mini crystal processor.

Ten minutes later, Yuan Manqiu arrived.

She took the crystal reactor and sank her telepathic thoughts into it with her eyes closed while she listened to Li Yao talking about everything that had happened.

"I've been fond of meditating beside the statue of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit since more than half a year ago, because I felt that my brain was extremely sharp and my thoughts were well-organized when I was here. Sometimes, the ideas popping up in my head even shocked myself. I felt like countless experts of refining were communicating with me in this place.

"As time went by, the feeling grew more and more intense. I even had the illusion that the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit here was not a statue or a pile of wreckage, but a – no – hundreds of living human beings!

"In the meeting today, I found that we were stuck on the refinement of the crystal reactor.

"So, while I was sitting here, pondering how to solve the problem, I thought I might as well dismantle the old crystal reactor and study its structure in case I could found something. As it turned out—"

Li Yao told her his amazing experience just now.

To his surprise, there was no amazement, delight, or confusion in his professor's face, but only vague grief, as if someone had torn away her scab and freed her painful past that had been caged for a long time.

Li Yao hardly ever saw such an expression on his professor's face.

Yuan Manqiu was always energetic at whatever she was doing. When something unexpected happened, she was always calm enough to cope with it. She never lacked determination, either.

Therefore, although her expertise was not the greatest, many grassroots refiners were still willing to push forward the Project Mystic Skeleton under her leadership.

He had only seen the expression once before, when the floating mountain of the Refining Department exploded, and Professor Mo Xuan sacrificed himself.

"Professor, do you feel it?"

Li Yao was somewhat anxious.

Yuan Manqiu shook her head and replied bitterly, "No."

"You don't?"

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. Then he took the crystal reactor over and closed his eyes again.

Although their light was very weak now, the fireflies was still gleaming in the darkness.

If he could sense them as a Refinement Stage Cultivator, there was no reason why his professor, a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator, could not.

"I believe in your feelings. They're not your hallucination. I assume they're Phantom Entities."

Yuan Manqiu's voice was somewhat lonely.

"Phantom Entities?"

Li Yao blinked.

He had heard about the term before, but he did not know much about it, nor had he ever come across any in his prior Cultivation.

Yuan Manqiu seemed to have lost her strength. Holding the pedestal of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, she sat down slowly and said, "Have you ever seen ghosts?"

Li Yao nodded his head.

"Of course I have. I have several good ghost friends. Besides, aren't there quite a few spectral Cultivators in our school?"

By good ghost friends, he was referring to Ding Yin and Wei Qingqing.

A year and a half ago, on his way to the Grand Desolate War Institution, the crystal train that he was on met a beast tide outbreak. Seven Cultivators sacrificed themselves to protect the ordinary people on the train. Only two of their souls were able to survive and turned into spectral Cultivators, who were Ding Yin and Wei Qingqing.

While Li Yao was studying in the Grand Desolate War Institution, the two of them went to the Undead Academy that the federal government specially established for the spectral Cultivators to learn how to live as ghosts.

They'd kept in touch all that time. Li Yao had been discussing with Ding Yin about the art of refining. Sometimes he read Ding Qingqing's latest literary works too. Their friendship had been growing.

One year after joining the Undead Academy, Ding Yin and Wei Qingqing had graduated and gone their separate ways.

Ding Yin joined the 'Ghost Legion' of the federal army which was a special troop of spectral Cultivators. He became a military refiner and helped the spectral Cultivators of the Ghost Legion maintain their bodies.

Ding Qingqing also realized her dream of being an elementary school teacher.

It was not an ordinary elementary school. All the students of the school were children who had passed away.

When one died, it was like a light that had been shut off. Not everyone had the opportunity to become a ghost.

The Cultivators whose souls were stronger were most likely to turn into ghosts after they died. For ordinary people, their odds of turning into ghosts were little to none.

However, there were certain kinds of ordinary people that were more likely to become ghosts than others were.

For example, those who were born or passed away at a certain time and location; those who were in red when they died; those who were dogged or had a lot of hatred.

Another kind of such people would be children who died too young.

Children's fire of life only just started burning. Their souls were less worn and purer than those of the adults, so it was more likely for their souls to stay intact when they passed away.

In the ancient Cultivation world, souls of the children who died too young had been the best materials for Cultivation.

Some crazy Cultivators even tormented and killed children brutally on purpose to get souls of hatred which they would refine into malicious magical equipment.

Things were completely different in the modern Cultivation world.

The Star Glory Federation had paid as much attention to ghost rights as it did to human rights, if not more.

For the protection of young ghosts who had died before the age of eighteen, the Star Glory Federation issued 'Juvenile Ghosts Protection Act', stating that all adolescents, be they humans or ghosts, had equal rights and obligations to receive education.

The elementary school that Wei Qingqing went to was a special one for the little ghosts.

She had sent a group picture of her students and herself to Li Yao before.

Of course, it was not a picture of hollow clothes. The picture had been taken in a darkroom with the help of phenotypic rune arrays by special crystal cameras.

In the picture, Wei Qingqing and the children looked like diamond statues. They were life-like and smiling happily.

Li Yao felt happy for her from the bottom of his heart.

With two such friends, Li Yao was not a stranger to ghosts, nor did he reject them.

But the translucent fireflies inside the crystal reactor did not look like ghosts from whichever angle.

"Phantom Entities are not normal ghosts. You may understand them as ghosts in a lower dimension, specifically, ghosts that are in the two-dimensional state," Yuan Manqiu said.

"Two-dimensional ghosts?"

Li Yao found himself hardly able to process the information.

"That's correct. Ghosts are not bound by bodies. They still possess their self-awareness. So, they know who they are and most of what happened in their life.

"However, such status can't last long.

"If they can't find a suitable body to reincarnate, or can't digitalize themselves to hide in metal puppets, or don't know any Cultivation techniques of ghosts, they will break down, melt, and collapse like snow under the sun.

"During the process, their self-awareness will be the first thing to disappear. They'll no longer know who they are.

"Then, they'll lose their memories of the past.

"Eventually, they'll lose their perseverance, the thing that they thought to be unforgettable.

"When the perseverance is gone, the force that pushes them to linger on will be no more, and they'll be gone forever."

Chapter 293: Let's Fight Side by Side!

Chapter 293: Let's Fight Side by Side!

Pausing for a moment, Yuan Manqiu said thoughtfully, "No wonder we never found any ghosts after the big explosion. The staff and students at the time were all at the high level of the Refinement Stage or even the Building Foundation Stage. Some of their souls should've been strong enough to survive the explosion.

"Based on your discovery, I assume that the blast was so intense that most of the souls were vaporized instantly. But some of them were too obsessed and thus turned into Phantom Entities.

"At that time, the spiritual energy inside the crystal reactor had all leaked out. The center of the explosion was the warehouse of crystals nearby.

"The crystal reactor itself was meant for the storage of spiritual energy. It was very solid, which made it the best shelter after the explosion.

"So, the Phantom Entities hid themselves inside, until they're discovered by you today."

Li Yao said in great joy, "Professor, do you mean that the professors and my senior brothers are still alive in a different form, even including Professor Mo Xuan?"

With a bitter smile, Yuan Manqiu answered, "Li Yao, Phantom Entities are different from ghosts.

"Although ghosts have lost their bodies, their self-awareness and memories are well kept. They know where they come from and where they're going to. They can be observed and perceived by us in various ways. They can interact with us, too.

"Once a ghost enters a metal puppet, they will be like humans who have artificial head, artificial torso, artificial limbs, and all the other artificial body parts. In that case, they will be no different from any other disabled person.

"Therefore, in the modern Cultivation world, we acknowledge the fundamental rights of ghosts and view them as humans of a different form, or a special kind of disabled people.

"But Phantom Entities are different.

"Their memories lost, their consciousness withered, their thinking ability gone, the Phantom Entities are just scraps of souls or even reflections of souls.

"If we get to the bottom of it, Phantom Entities are just a kind of mental existence.

"If a ghost can be compared to a bonfire burning in the middle of darkness, then a Phantom Entity is nothing but a sparkle which floats out of the bonfire.

"Most Phantom Entities are short-lived. No matter how determined they are, without the support of a body and a soul, they will disappear gradually within several months.

"It is already a miracle that these Phantom Entities could be perceived by you after hiding here for over a year.

"But as you said, their light is getting duller now. Maybe it won't be long before they're completely gone.

"So, don't understand Phantom Entities to be living in a different form. They're just the last radiance of a perished life.

"It's like you and your photo. However similar a 3D photo of you looks, it is not you after all."

Li Yao was quiet. He was starting to understand why his professor looked so lonely.

He thought that he had found Professor Mo Xuan's soul. But in the end, it was only a 'photo' of it.

Of course his professor felt sad seeing the image of old times.

"More importantly, Phantom Entities can't be perceived by everyone."

Taking a deep breath, Yuan Manqiu spoke, her voice shivering, "Phantom Entities are pure mental beings resulting from strong obsessions. 99.99% people can't feel their existence.

"For people who shared the same obsession with them, it still requires a lot of time to stay close to the Phantom Entities before they rhyme with the spiritual palpitation of the Phantom Entities and perceive their existence."

Li Yao felt he had understood something.

He touched the cold shell of the crystal reactor with his fingers.

There was a sharp pain coming from his fingertip, as if the crystal reactor had been boiled by an ineffaceable mental power.

"Is this the reason why you are lingering on in this world?

"You don't want to see the fall of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, but its rise and glory?

"Even without your bodies, even without your souls, your spirit has still been burning, shining, and waiting. You tried your best to talk to me and teach me your insights and ideas so that the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit could be reborn from ashes!"

Li Yao finally understood everything.

Phantom Entities were the fruits of human spirits and willpower, the dogged determination that even death couldn't not obliterate.

And the dogged determination of the staff and students of the Refining Department would be the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

Since he had been pondering about the Refining Department and the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit beside the statue, his passion had reverberated with the spiritual palpitation of the Phantom Entities.

It probably had something to do with the fact that his brain had been possessed twice, too.

His brain was unique in the entire Heaven's Origin Sector.

Today, awed by the Tiger King Battlesuit, his eagerness for victory had been set alight. His obsession and hope for the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit were stronger than ever. Also, he happened to have made the decision to dismantle the crystal reactor and study its inner structure.

All the coincidences combined together resulted in his startling discovery of such vivid Phantom Entities.

Although Yuan Manqiu was equally determined for the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit to succeed and her Cultivation was much deeper than Li Yao's, she did not have the habit of contemplating beside the statue, nor had her brain been weirdly developed by a double possession. Therefore, she wasn't able to feel the existence of the Phantom Entities.

Seeing Li Yao's enlightened face, Yuan Manqiu said, "It seems that you've got it. Those who can see Phantom Entities are called 'Observers' in the Cultivation world.

"You are the Observer of the hundred Phantom Entities here.

"According to your description, you can see their visualization, hear their sighs, and even perceive their past and learn from them.

"It means that your observation level is very high; you are a strong Observer.

"Such a strong Observer is rarely seen. I'm afraid you might be the only one in the world that can feel their existence now."

Li Yao finally understood Yuan Manqiu's lonely expression.

Even though they were just pieces of their previous souls, it would still be a great comfort if she could feel their existence.

However, failing to perceive the last bit of Professor Mo Xuan's spirit, his professor had to learn everything by Li Yao's paraphrase knowing that it was there.

It wouldn't feel good.

Li Yao clenched his fists. In the quietness of the park, his bones were cracking loudly, as if two crystal bombs had been crushed in his hands.

"Professor, you said that Phantom Entities are ghosts who lost themselves in a lower dimension. Then, is there any way that we can..."

Li Yao pause, then continued to ask carefully, "...let them return to the higher dimension and find the memories that they lost so that they can be restored to who they were?"

Yuan Manqiu was dazed for a moment. She found herself hardly able to keep her eyes open under the invisible flames burning in Li Yao. A while later, she said, "It would be very difficult.

"In the history of the Star Glory Federation and the books of the Star Sea Imperium, thousands of Phantom Entities have been observed. But most of them sank into oblivion within one year after they were observed.

"Odds are low that Phantom Entities will be able to regain their memories and self-awareness and return to the ghost state.

"According to the experts in Phantom Entities, it has to do with both the Phantom Entities themselves and their Observers.

"If the Phantom Entities wander in wilderness for too long and gradually lose their consciousness and memories under the effect of electromagnetic storms and cosmic radiation, they will be unrecoverable because their past has been erased for good."

Li Yao couldn't help but interrupt her. "Professor, the Phantom Entities of our Refining Department should be different. They were transformed by the intense spiritual tides into Phantom Entities instantly after the big explosion, and since then, they've been hiding in the crystal reactor, which should be thick enough to hold back the electromagnetic interference and cosmic radiation.

"Therefore, there's a good chance that their memories have not been wiped out but live on in a manner than we can't comprehend!"

Yuan Manqiu hesitated for a moment, but she nodded her head.

"What you said is possible. After the big explosion, all the high-level Cultivators of our school were engaged in searching for survivors, but not a single ghost was found, which indicated that they were evaporated into Phantom Entities momentarily.

"However, it's extremely difficult to bring back their past even if it still exists. Actually, we don't know how to do it at all.

"Based on previous cases, there are only two things that we know about.

"Firstly, by keeping in touch with the Phantom Entities, the Observers can slow down the speed of their extinction.

"Secondly, by following the Phantom Entities' will, fighting in their spirit and finishing what they've been longing for, there will be harmony between the Observers and the Phantom Entities, which could increase the power of the Phantom Entities significantly.

"Chances are that they might be able to find their memories and self-awareness again and return to the three-dimension if their power is strong enough."

Li Yao's eyes were beaming keenly in the darkness.

Holding the crystal reactor closely in his arms, he felt that a wildfire was burning its way from his stomach up through his throat to the top of his head where it broke out and pierced into the sky!

"Do you mean that if we can successfully refine the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and make it the best MP crystal suit of the Star Glory Federation, the professors and my senior brothers might be able to return to themselves?"

Li Yao muttered to himself, "Good.

"When I first came to the Refining Department, there were nothing but ruins here. I dug out many ragged jade slips of the professors and my senior brothers from the ruins, which has been a great help to me in my studies.

"I've always respected them very much and feel sorry that I can't learn with my senior brothers from the professors.

"Now, we have an opportunity to fight side by side and let the world to be impressed by the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. The mediocre crystal suits such as the Tiger King Battlesuit will be beaten to ashes!"

"One day, you will wake up from the nightmare of chaos and witness your triumph and glory with your own eyes!"

He then turned to Yuan Manqiu. "Professor—"

He lit up an empty light beam with his crystal processor and drew a blueprint on it quickly with his telepathic thought. Then he said, "While I was communicating with the professors and my senior brothers, an inspiration that could possibly solve our current problem about the crystal reactor occurred to me."

Chapter 294: Amazing Idea

Chapter 294: Amazing Idea

Half an hour later, in the conference room of the Refining Department.

The remaining grassroots professors and experts were in a heated discussion.

Most of them were fond of Li Yao, whom they thought was a promising young man of the grassroots refining ideology.

Not only had he learnt the basics of refining well, he was also familiar with the elite refining ideology and its secret techniques. Moreover, he was a self-taught expert in ancient refining techniques in which he had showed great talent.

What's more, since he had grown up in the magical equipment graveyard, he had a natural instinct for the maintenance and modification of magical equipment.

Although he was not good enough in the advanced theories of refining compared with the experienced experts of the trade, his manual ability was as good as the skilled refiners who had been doing their job for years, if not better.

Many professors and experts were willing to let Li Yao be their assistant and help with the refinement and polish of the key components.

His crazy, sometimes even insane, modification plans and conceptual designs were always big eye-openers for the grassroots refiners who had been somehow calcified because of decades of routine work.

For example, a week ago, Li Yao had proposed a plan named 'Modular Architecture', which meant developing the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit into two kinds of sub-models: the primary model and the derivative models.

The primary model was just a framework and the simplest plate armor, together with a Spiritual Storm Bolter and a chainsword. By doing so, its general cost could be reduced to below 80 million. Its operations were much simpler, too, so that it could be handled by the main troops and the low-level Cultivators who had never received formal crystal suit training without any trouble.

With three to five days of urgent training, most of them would be able to wear such a crystal suit.

Based on the primary model, all kinds of extensions could be developed, such as the melee extension, the heavy firepower extension, the sniper extension, the special extension for underground use, the special extension for undersea use, the special extension for the demonic-energy-corrupted environment, and so on.

In a battlefield, the soldiers could replace the extensions of the battlesuit at their will according to different conditions and purposes.

Not only had such a design significantly improved the combat ability and survival ability of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, it also allowed more flexible tactics to be carried out.

In Li Yao's plan, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit should be the most adaptable crystal suit in the Star Glory Federation. Or rather, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit would be a platform on which every Cultivator was free to use whatever they wanted.

One day, all the interfaces of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit would be opened to public. Every Cultivator would be able to plug their own magical equipment in, and the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit could be integrated with every piece of self-made magical equipment without any discordance.

If the wearer was really rich, he could add extensions that were far more expensive than the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit itself, so that the comprehensive ability of the new crystal suit would be greatly improved.

In an intense fight, the plug-ins and the plate armor would be the first to be damaged. With quick maintenance, they could be replaced by another set of extensions, and the combat ability of the crystal suit would be resumed immediately.

The crazy idea had sparked many debates within the project team.

But after careful consideration, most of the team members thought that it was quite feasible and were running tests to see the performance.

It was also one of the reasons why Project Mystic Skeleton came to a halt without any prototypes.

What's more, after only one year of formal study, Li Yao had passed the Refiners' Registration Examination. Now, the Demon Beast Detector that he had refined was one piece of the most popular magical equipment.

Therefore, all the professors and experts felt that Li Yao was indeed extraordinary and had been paying great attention to his ideas and proposals.

However, the suggestions that Li Yao made were mostly about the structure designs of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

The crystal reactor was quite different. Little could be done to improve the performance of a crystal reactor by revising its structure. It was the materials that mattered most.

Only with a major breakthrough of materials could a crystal reactor be refined that was lighter, smaller, and stronger against high temperatures and pressure with a higher capacity for spiritual energy.

The science of materials had no shortcuts. It could only be learnt by long-time hard work. Petty tricks wouldn't help much.

Li Yao had never shown much talent in the materials science before, yet now he claimed that he could solve the problem of the crystal reactor. It was no wonder that the professors and experts were doubting him.

"Li Yao, you can't joke about the crystal reactor. If something is wrong with other components, there are always remedies, but malfunction of the crystal reactor will lead to dire consequences, which we all understand too well," a thin, grey-haired refiner said solemnly.

His name was Bai Yede, an expert in materials science as well as crystal reactors. He was also the chief refiner in charge of the crystal reactor and the related components in Project Mystic Skeleton.

Since he hadn't made much progress, Bai Yede had been pulling a long face every day. His long brows were furrowed to such a point that one might think there were two brooms over his eyes.

Li Yao smiled.

"Don't worry, Professor Bai. When the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is successfully refined, I will be the first pilot to wear it to go through tests under extreme conditions, and I don't intend to get myself killed.

"It's true that I don't know much about the materials science, nor do I have any secret techniques that can improve the hardness of ordinary materials to the extent of the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. However, my idea does not involve the materials science. It is just a minor structural revision. Please take a look, professors—"

The light beam around the conference room displayed a series of structure designs.

The clearest one was the crystal reactor that had a crack on its shell after the big explosion.

"The problem bothering us right now is that we can't find a suitable material to refine the shell of the crystal reactor to ensure that the super-compressed spiritual energy stays inside without being leaked.

"It's not doable no matter what we try.

"However, why don't we simply change our mindset?

"Spiritual energy stored in a crystal reactor is ample, which is tens of times more than that inside the body of a Cultivator.

"Only with such abundance can the crystal suit support the wearer in battles that can last for days.

"Since there is plentiful spiritual energy, what harm is there if some of it is leaked?

"Please take a look, everybody. This is the crystal reactor that was damaged in the previous explosion. It is worth noting that the body of the crystal reactor was not too damaged except for the hole.

"In fact, the main reason for the explosion was that the rampageous spiritual energy hit the warehouse of crystals and triggered a chain reaction.

"If the crystal reactor were the only thing that exploded at that time, the blast would've been far from enough to blow the entire floating mountain apart.

"As the saying goes, it's better to guide than to block. If we can't refine a shell that is firm enough, why don't we just leave an aperture on the crystal reactor?"

Everyone was shocked at what Li Yao had just said.

Bai Yede was deep in thought. Another power system expert asked subconsciously, "But wouldn't all the spiritual energy escape through the aperture?"

Li Yao tapped on his mini crystal processor. A second structure design was displayed.

It was an intact crystal reactor with an additional gadget that looked like a gyro.

"We can install a valve to the aperture. When the spiritual energy inside the crystal reactor is burning too intensely and the pressure exceeds the warning level, the valve will be pushed open to release the redundant spiritual energy; a few seconds later, when the pressure returns to the normal level, the valve will fall back automatically and seal the shell of the crystal reactor as before."

Bai Yede shook his head.

"The valve design is indeed impressive. But the spiritual energy escaping through the valve will make the crystal suit a very obvious target. It's possible that the crystal suit will be detected dozes of kilometers away. The disguise and stealth abilities of the crystal suit will be greatly undermined."

"So what?"

Li Yao said calmly, "There has never been a real MP crystal suit in the history of the Heaven's Origin Sector. Disguise and stealth abilities are always a top priority for all the crystal suits, because the crystal suits will be worn by high-level Cultivators who will fight high-level demons in the forests of the Dark Desolate Domain or even sneak into the Blood Demon Sector for spy missions. Therefore, stealth, disguise, and assassination abilities have always been highlighted.

"As a result, although very simple, the valve design has been neglected the whole time, because it will expose the locations of the wearers in a battlefield.

"However, the situation is different right now. What we're expecting is an unprecedented face-to-face confrontation, a dual of armies versus armies, a collision of hurricane against hurricane and tides against tides.

"So, when a panoply of ten thousand Cultivators in the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit show up in the battlefield, there is no need for they to hide their existence.

"On the very contrary, they shall declare their arrival to the world with the roars of thunder.

"When they're entering the Blood Demon Sector, they will not sneak into it, but crush into it in an unstoppable formation with their suits glittering in the sunlight.

"Besides—"

Seeing that everyone had been attracted by his speech, Li Yao displayed a different structure design. He continued, "Don't forget that this is just the primary model. If the military need crystal suits for sneaking or ambushing missions, they can always choose a derivative model that has a better crystal reactor, or simple pick a whole new crystal suit model.

"Excellent as the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit may be, it will not be the sole model equipped by the army, will it?

"Compared with the loss of stealth and disguise ability, I feel that the loss of spiritual energy is more pitiful. Here's an idea that I'd like you to consider.

"We can connect the valve system of the crystal reactor to other magical equipment units. The attack magical equipment and the spiritual shield need to be refilled on a regular basis. Why don't we supplement them with the spiritual energy that escapes through the valve?

"Or even better, we can design an active valve system that can be controlled by the telepathic thoughts of a Cultivator.

"When the Cultivator wishes, he can open the valve and charge the spiritual shield and the flying swords, while the pressure of the crystal reactor will be kept at a low level in the meantime.

"By doing so, there's no way that any accidents will occur.

"This is all I have to say. It is still a very immature plan which definitely includes a lot of drawbacks that need to be fixed. Please feel free to speak your opinions, professors!"

Chapter 295: Mournful Mist and Sword Torrent

Chapter 295: Mournful Mist and Sword Torrent

After Li Yao finished his talk, the refiners didn't start discussing immediately. They were staring blankly ahead with their eyebrows knitted together.

A weird silence was hanging over the conference room.

Li Yao's plan was very simple. Valve design was a mature technique in the Star Glory Federation too. However, since all the previous crystal suits had highlighted the importance of stealth and disguise, the professors and experts had never thought that they could be refined otherwise.

Now that the old doctrine was broken, everyone felt that they had entered a new world.

"That's a good idea. Although a valve system will bring additional costs, the total cost will still be significantly reduced compared with refining the crystal reactor with Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. I estimate that the cost of the new plan will be less than one fifth of that of the previous one. Besides, since the new plan will not be bound by raw materials, we can refine however many crystal suits we want with a magical equipment factory that is large enough."

"We don't need to worry too much about stealth and disguise. After the accident, we have redesigned the crystal reactor and reduced its likelihood of explosion in the normal state to minimum. Only when it suffered intense impact and corrosion in a battlefield from concentrated shellfire and raging spiritual energy will it risk exploding."

"However, since it is a battlefield of face-to-face confrontation, stealth and disguise abilities will not be that important."

"More importantly, with the new plan, we don't need to change too much about our previous designs. The project will be able to be pushed forward at a faster speed. We might be even able to produce a prototype within a month!"

"Guiding the escaping spiritual energy of the crystal reactor into the magical equipment that needs to be refilled is an amazing idea. We can even design a crystal cannon that uses the escaping spiritual energy as the power source. It's going to be formidable!"

Li Yao's proposal was like a window for the refiners. The professors and experts had much more expertise than Li Yao did. Enlightened, they came up with countless complicated follow-up plans.

Several impatient refiners even activated the light beam and started drawing blueprints while they were arguing with their faces flushed.

The discussion remained unabated for more than three hours until it was midnight, but all the refiners were still in the highest spirits.

Eventually, Yuan Manqiu had to stand up and concluded the meeting with a smile.

"It seems that Li Yao's idea has indeed shed a lot of new lights for us. However, it's not likely that the final plan can be settled in such a short time. Let's just go home now and examine thoroughly the part of the project that each of us is in charge of. We'll continue the meeting tomorrow!"

Bai Yede smiled as he was drawing and comparing the new designs of the crystal reactor with pressure valves and asked Li Yao, "Li Yao, how exactly did you come up with such an idea? It's brilliant!"

Li Yao exchanged an eye look with Yuan Manqiu. Pondering for a moment, he said frankly, "Actually, the idea is not my own creation, but the collaborative work of my professors and senior brothers."

"Professors? Senior Brothers?"

Bai Yede and the other refiners were all dazed.

All the professors of the Refining Department were here, and apparently, none of them had ever seen such a design before.

As for Senior Brother, Li Yao was the only student in the Refining Department that was not in the freshman year. How come he had senior brothers?

Li Yao smiled and continued, "Professors, I need to tell you something—"

…

Three days later, early in the morning, inside Li Yao's No. 2 Laboratory.

After a long discussion, Li Yao and Yuan Manqiu decided to tell everyone about the discovery of the Phantom Entities.

Whatever the result was, Professor Mo Xuan and the other staff and students who passed away in the big explosion were all heroes worthy of their names and martyrs who had died for a great cause.

Their bodies were gone, but their work was not lost, nor were their fighting will and spirit.

Even if they were going to vanish one day, at least they deserved to let the world know of their hard work.

However, observation of Phantom Entities had always been a tricky problem in the Cultivation world.

Everyone else, including Yuan Manqiu, had been trying to adjust the frequency of their brain waves in order to perceive the existence of the Phantom Entities but to no avail.

Li Yao remained their sole Observer.

And the intensity of his observation had been weakening.

It was like there were two mountains thousands of meters away from each other looming in darkness and fog, with thunderstorms pouring down, and Li Yao was climbing on one of the mountains, holding a perishing torch in his hands, while Professor Mo Xuan and the other Phantom Entities were climbing on the other mountain with a few perishing torches, too.

Blocked by darkness, fog, thunderbolts and storm, it was extremely difficult for them to communicate.

However, as long as he knew that they were still there climbing the peak of infinity, it would be enough!

After the problem of the crystal reactor was fixed, Project Mystic Skeleton rapidly advanced. All the participants of the project were working day and night and had made major breakthroughs in a few critical magical equipment units.

As for Li Yao, he went to the No. 1 Refining Room where the Type-I crafting furnace was located and spent three days and three nights refining a piece of ancient magical equipment.

The innermost layer of the magical equipment was made of Flowing Silver Powder and Ice Soul Grass, which could reflect most of the spiritual waves like a mirror.

The medium layer was Smoke Mica, a kind of marrow crystal that Li Yao found in the Cosmos Ring. It was soft and mild with the special ability of nourishing souls. Scratching some powder off it was more than enough to mix a dose of mind-settling medication.

Li Yao didn't hesitate. He took out half a piece of Smoke Mica and almost emptied it.

As for the shell, he used an ordinary material named 'Star Eye Lead', which could block part of the spiritual waves. In the meantime, it looked like a beautiful black jade embedded with pentagrams. It was most common to be used as raw materials of jewelries.

Melding the three layers of materials together, with hundreds of spirit-stabilizing rune arrays in between, Li Yao had successfully refined a Soul Condensing Pendant.

It was a piece of magical equipment in the books of the Hundred Smelting Clan that could nourish the soul and spirit.

Solid as the shell of the crystal reactor may be, it was not the perfect shelter for the safekeeping of Phantom Entities after all.

Besides, there was a crack on the shell, through which electromagnetic storms and cosmic radiation could still affect the Phantom Entities inside.

Therefore, Li Yao specially refined the Soul Condensing Pendant to be the Phantom Entities' new home.

With a telepathic thought, a small hole appeared on the surface of the pendant. Li Yao pressed the hole to the crack of the crystal reactor and started calling.

His communication with the Phantom Entities had always been intermittent. He hadn't found a reliable way to reach out to them, except for trying his luck time and time again.

More than half an hour later, when he felt that he was in a trance, he saw many translucent fireflies flying out through the crack.

Compared with three days ago, the size of the fireflies had all shrunk by more than a half. The green light that wreathed them had become much duller, too.

It must have been because the Phantom Entities spent too much energy on transmitting the message to Li Yao three days ago.

Li Yao started enchanting the formula of the Soul Condensing Pendant in his brain.

A moment later, a gentle wind seemed to be breezing in the room, pushing the shaking Phantom Entities into the pendant in a neat line one by one.

Li Yao carefully locked the Soul Condensing Pendant with a barrier and only left a tiny hole which was large enough for one of his spiritual threads to pierce in.

Hanging the pendant on his neck, Li Yao touched it and immediately felt that his palm was being burnt, through which a weak yet firm power flowed into his limbs and organs.

"Now, professors and Senior Brothers, let's make a miracle together."

…

It was 1:00 a.m., yet the floating mountain of the Refining Department was still ablaze with lights.

Everyone was doing their work in high spirits.

But when Li Yao walked into the floating mountain, he felt the atmosphere was different from usual.

It was like a bucket of boiling oil had been added to a burning fire.

"Professor, is there anything wrong?" Li Yao asked Yuan Manqiu curiously.

He had been focusing on refining the Soul Condensing Pendant and wasn't aware of what was going on outside.

"Probably because of the stimulation of Deep Sea University, the Star Nebula University and the three major sword-training sects have held their own press conferences and showed the world their MP crystal suit models."

While she was talking, Yuan Manqiu turned on the crystal processor and played two video clips.

"The Star Nebula University and the three major sword-training sects are the two potential competitors that Zuo Feijing mentioned in his press conferences, aren't they?"

Li Yao felt refreshed.

"According to the introductions on the press conferences about the crystal suits' performance and designing purposes, they indeed have their own specialties and are no worse than the Tiger King!" Yuan Manqiu said.

Li Yao was delighted to hear that. He studied the profiles of the two crystal suit carefully.

The MP crystal suit model provided by the Star Nebula University was named 'Mournful Mist'.

He had thought that it was going to be a light crystal suit that gave up all the heavy equipment in exchange for extreme agility.

But now that he'd read the instructions, he noticed that besides speed and agility, the most distinguished characteristic of the crystal suit was that it employed a lot of jamming, decoy, and tampering magical equipment, which allowed it to interfere with the demon beasts' brain and launch mental attacks from thousands of meters away.

It was a rarely-seen crystal suit that specialized in mental attacks and brain interference.

"When faced with the Star Nebula University's crystal suit, the enemies will feel that they are trapped in a dense fog, not knowing where they are or whom they can turn to.

Therefore, we have named the crystal suit as 'Mournful Mist'!" the spokesman of the Star Nebula University declared proudly.

The crystal suit co-developed by the three major sword-training sects was very different.

Li Yao had known that they would make best use of their advantage in flying sword refining, but he still underestimated their craziness. There were so many flying swords on the crystal suit that it looked like a giant iron hedgehog.

The name of the crystal suit was straightforward, too; it was 'Sword Torrent'.

"Our enemies are impressive!"

After watching the two video clips, Li Yao felt energized just like the rest of his companions.

The Soul Condensing Pendant hanging in front of his chest seemed to have turned into a burning soldering iron that was going to pierce into his heart.

He seemed to have heard the roars of the Phantom Entities. He felt he was on fire.

"Tiger King? Mournful Mist? Sword Torrent?

"Very good.

"I can't wait for it any longer!"

Chapter 296: Birth of the Mystic Skeleton

Chapter 296: Birth of the Mystic Skeleton

The release of Tiger King, Mournful Mist, and Sword Torrent shocked the entire Cultivation world.

Over the following month, things changed drastically in the Cultivation world. More than ten sects and five universities declared the success of their MP crystal suit models.

For a moment, the MP crystal suits became the hottest topic in the Cultivation world. The three magical equipment magazines almost became monographs on crystal suits. Another magazine, 'Crystal Suit Vista', which focused on crystal suits, had experienced a four-time sales increase in a single month.

Of course, it was not difficult to notice that most of the MP crystal suit models had been produced in too much of a hurry. In pursuit of lower cost, many necessary Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures were cut down. As a result, they could only be called strong battle armors, not crystal suits.

One month after the Tiger King Battlesuit was released, the MP crystal suit models that were relatively more competitive were still just Tiger King, Mournful Mist, Sword Torrent and a few others.

Right then, Deep Sea University and the Gold Armor Clan called the second press conference for the Tiger King

Battlesuit, in which new real-combat videos, more structure designs, and detailed specifications were presented to the public.

After a month of testing, the Tiger King Battlesuit had been equipped with a set of attack magical equipment named 'Flashing Paws', which significantly improved its melee combat ability.

In the demo, Zuo Feijing, wearing the Tiger King Battlesuit, tore apart three turtle-type demon beasts, which were high-level demon soldiers, in only ten seconds.

The simplicity and easiness impressed every reporter that came to the scene.

The three magical equipment magazines and 'Crystal Suit Vista' were full of complimentary articles.

Compared with the seething world outside, the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution seemed to have become a black hole where absolutely no news would be let out. It even declined interview requests from several magazines.

All of the grassroots refiners stayed mysterious. No one had sent out any message through their personal channels.

Such a weird reaction had raised suspicions and questions.

Most people thought that the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution must've come across an unresolvable problem which hindered the progress of the project, and therefore had chosen to quit the military's bid.

In an overview posted on the 'Crystal Suit Vista', after summarizing the progress of the MP crystal suit models of

Deep Sea University, Star Nebula University, the three major sword-training sects and other influential parties, the writer concluded the article, not without pity as such:

'The Grand Desolate War Institution was the first organization of the federation to work on the MP crystal suit. However, after the catastrophic accident last year in which most of the participants passed away, the project has been sluggish.

'Although Professor Yuan Manqiu has gathered the remaining grassroots experts and restarted the Project Mystic Skeleton this year, they obviously met the same problem that hamstringed them before, which is that ordinary materials can't be refined into a qualified crystal reactor.

'With so many sects and universities announcing the success of their MP crystal suit inventions, the Grand Desolate War Institution remains silent and refuses interviews, unwilling to reveal any detail of their progress. All the signs indicate that the Grand Desolate War Institution has probably already given up.'

But in the floating mountain of the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution…

The place seemed to have become an active volcano for the past month. Passion and mania could be felt everywhere.

Everyone was surrounded by invisible flames. Their eyes were as firm as sharp swords which splashed sparkles when there was a clash. They seemed to have been hypnotized by something unknown into devoting their full heart into Project Mystic Skeleton. Other than the furious arguments in the daily briefing every day, they always kept their mouth tight to save every valuable second.

The reason why they declined interviews was not to keep a low profile but to dedicate all the time they had in order to finish the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit sooner.

On Oct. 30, the basic framework of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was determined, and the first vertebral column was successfully refined.

On Nov. 4, the power system was successfully refined. The power system of the primary model had only eight power rune arrays. Its performance might not be the best, but a lot of interfaces had been left open, which entailed the possibility of infinite power rune arrays and anti-gravity rune arrays.

On Nov. 11, the long-range attack system made of 400 super-mini flying swords was successfully refined.

On Nov. 22, all of the pieces of plate armor and defense magical equipment were successfully refined.

On Nov. 24, the military crystal processor 'Type-VII Super Saint' carried by the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was successfully connected to other magical equipment units. Debugging work was initiated.

On Dec. 1, although it was a cloudy day, the Project Mystic Skeleton was in full swing.

Every fist had been tightened, every chest was fluctuating, every dry lip was shivering, and every eye was filled with thrills. All the participants of the project were waiting anxiously.

Li Yao was one of them.

In the past month, Li Yao had done more hard work than any professor or expert did.

The professors and experts were adept at a certain field of refining. Some of them were in charge of the power system, some of them were responsible for the defense magical equipment system, and some of them were best at debugging on crystal processors.

Li Yao was different.

As the test pilot, he needed to propose suggestions and complaints regarding every part of the crystal suit from the perspective of a terminal user.

In the meantime, he was the assistant of refining for all the experts.

As his talent in refining was gradually discovered by everyone, many experts had asked him to be involved in the refining process of key components. Sometimes they even entrusted the whole work to him.

Li Yao was almost working 24 hours a day. He wished that he could divide himself into eight selves so that he could be at several places at the same time.

In the end, Yuan Manqiu was somewhat intimidated by his craziness. She escorted him to the deep sleep capsule to take a break many times. But he would always sneak out after no more than half an hour.

He couldn't help it. The opportunity was too rare to be missed out.

Project Mystic Skeleton was the glory of every grassroots refiner. The professors and experts had exerted the best of their skills, which were dazzling eye-openers for Li Yao.

Helping them as an assistant for half a day was more useful than reading books for an entire week. Li Yao was a man who was going to be the strongest refiner of the federation. There was no way that he would let go of such an opportunity.

As the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was taking shape, Li Yao's understanding in the art of refining grew deeper and deeper. The professors and experts were proficient at their respective fields, but Li Yao had learnt a thing or two about every field of crystal suit refining.

With the first-hand knowledge, Li Yao found that many incomprehensible books of the Hundred Smelting Clan from 40,000 years ago were clear and straightforward now.

Many esoteric theories brought up by the professors and experts could often be traced back to the classics of the Hundred Smelting Clan as well.

Therefore, the unity of knowing and doing had been achieved.

Finally—

When Li Yao had almost learnt everything that the professors and experts had to teach, the prototype of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was finally out!

Placed before everyone was a giant utensil made of tempered glass that was filled with a scarlet antirust fluid in which a human-shaped object was standing.

"Ci… Ci… Ci… Ci…"

As the antirust fluid was emptied, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit revealed its true self.

Li Yao was breathing heavily. He felt that his eyes were sour and swollen. The Soul Condensing Pendant was shivering vigorously, too.

Compared with the impressiveness of the Tiger King Battlesuit, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit looked somewhat shabby.

The primary model was only 2.11 meters tall, shorter than most of medium crystal suits.

The plate armor was made of ordinary alloy. The performance of the military crystal processor was nothing special, either.

The only shining point was the two crystal cannons on the two sides of the crystal reactor, which could be directly charged by the escaping spiritual energy from the crystal reactor. As a result, the working time of the crystal suit was shortened, but the long-range combat ability was greatly enhanced.

There was also a melee magical equipment rack on the waist of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit which could carry many kinds of heavy chainswords and anti-ship sabers.

Other than that, there were two knuckles on the arms that could be put on for boxing.

At first glance, the equipment that the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit carried was barely enough for a real-life battle.

Compared with the Tiger King Battlesuit, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was like a child's toy.

But behind the uninteresting specifications, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit boasted unique advantages, too.

First of all, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit employed the framework design of the Star Sea Imperium.

The project itself had been inspired by the scrap of an ancient jade slip. Mo Xuan and Yuan Manqiu had spent more than ten years studying the structure blueprint until they finally understood everything. In regard to the main framework, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was definitely among the best crystal suits!

Brilliant framework design meant higher survival ability.

The defense strategy of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was completely different from that of the Tiger King Battlesuit.

With the technical support of the Gold Armor Clan, the Tiger King Battlesuit was equipped with the most advanced plate armor and defense magical equipment, which were extremely difficult to be broken through in a battlefield.

However, the defense system of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit might seem weak. But according to the experimental results, the combat ability of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit still partly remained even though 70% of its plate armor had been destroyed, like a cockroach that couldn't be killed. That was all because of the remarkable framework design.

Secondly, with the cooperation of the grassroots refiners, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was only made of 13,998 components, which was less than two thirds of the crystal suits in the same level and only half of the Tiger King Battlesuit.

The more simple, the more stable. Should any problem occur, it would be easy to fix.

Thirdly, the enormous potential for adaptation.

Because of the modular design, all the magical equipment units were replaceable. During the refining process, all the refiners, including Li Yao himself, had already come up with almost twenty modification plans.

The potential of adaptation meant that when the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was on a battlefield, dozens of derivative models could be created freely to meet the needs of different tactics. It was also great news to the Exo trainers and the logistics department of the military.

With the three advantages, as well as the unbelievably low price, everybody of the Refining Department was very confident about the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

"First test of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit begins now!"

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao strode forward, while everyone was looking at him eagerly.

Chapter 297: Extreme Tests

Chapter 297: Extreme Tests

"Mustard suit, ready!"

Li Yao opened his arms. Four artificial hands put a suit as thin as the wing of a cicada on him.

With a telepathic thought, spiritual energy was triggered. The mustard suit started glimmering slowly as if it were a layer of silver-grey liquid and stuck close to every inch of his body, highlighting the lines of muscles.

A mustard suit was made of countless pieces of super-mini magical equipment the size of mustard seeds. Although it was very thin, it could significantly increase the defense ability and enhance the spiritual energy of the wearer, with a performance that could be compared to the best battle armor.

Mustard suit inside and crystal suit outside made the best magical equipment match for the Cultivators of the Star Glory Federation.

"Crystal suit, ready!"

Four artificial hands picked up the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit from the container and moved it before Li Yao.

The front side of the crystal suit opened like the blossom of a flower. Crimson colors were gleaming from inside of the suit, which were dangerously attractive.

Li Yao lifted one of his fingers and touched the inside of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. He immediately felt a vague pulse of spiritual energy.

As if alive, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit enveloped him in the gentlest way.

Countless data streams poured down in Li Yao's brain.

"Ding!"

With a humming sound, his brain was connected to the crystal processor. He felt that he now had a whole new body.

"Dressing completed. Connection stable. No stinging or discordance."

While he was speaking, he tried walking a few steps. The feedback from his feet was timely, clear, and precise. Even the slightest bump on the ground could be felt, as if he were walking on pebbles without shoes.

"Swoosh! Swoosh!"

He punched twice casually. There were immediately blurred shadows and noises of the air being torn apart.

He was not using half of his strength, yet the punches had almost reached sonic speed!

He felt extremely delighted. Taking a deep breath, his eyes bulged as he set off his spiritual energy that had been suppressed for a long time with 'Soaring into Heaven in One Leap', his Soul Igniting Law.

5th level of the Refinement Stage! 6th level of the Refinement Stage! 7th level of the Refinement Stage!

Li Yao's strength kept improving!

After absorbing the six drops of blood of the mutant lion dragon, Li Yao's spiritual energy had turned into light grey with a bit of dark gold, which was then intensified by several times by the enhancement rune arrays on the crystal suit. It flowed all over Li Yao's body and formed two spiritual energy wings that were almost ten meters long in his back. In the end, a ferocious eagle flew out of his body and landed on the top of his head, shrieking to declare its existence.

Spiritual energy flowing out of the body and taking form of other objects was a sign of the Cultivators at the peak of the Refinement Stage!

Some time ago, Fiend Blade Peng Hai and Ding Lingdang had fought against each other in Small Grayfield with the strength of the peak of the Refinement Stage. Such a splendor had appeared at that time too, which had amazed Li Yao.

Now, two years later, with the enhancement of the crystal suit, he finally reached the level where Fiend Blade Peng Hai and Ding Lingdang had once been!

"Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!"

Li Yao's body turned into a grey mist, as he was doing a hundred small-scale dodging movements

Then he dashed forward to the front of a test target like a ghost, squatted, and punched into the target hard!

"Shua!"

The power rune arrays on his back burst out dark red colors. The spiritual energy eagle over his head was absorbed by Li

Yao's right arm and turned into swirling and roaring tornado, before it hit into the test target like a giant drill.

"Bo!"

A scaring big hole appeared on the back of the test target, through which countless magical equipment components erupted and fell to the ground with cracking sounds.

Everyone was dazzled by Li Yao's action, including Yuan Manqiu.

"The vertebral column is too tight. It felt unsmooth when I was doing sharp turns. We can make some adjustment there.

"Or, we can set up two modes. For those who are good at long-range combats with flying swords, the vertebral column can be tighter; for those who are good at melee combats, the vertebral column can be looser, so that their body movements will be easier."

Li Yao shook his arms and examined the fist that he punched with. He continued, "Strength feedback and enhancement are good. However, the fists felt sloppy when approaching sonic speed. The plate armor of the arms should be redesigned by adding a few air paths to stabilize the fist and increase its speed.

"Besides, this test target is too unsolid. I barely touched it and it has already broken. How can the ultimate strength of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit be tested out by that? Let's get some better targets!"

Nobody answered him; there was just silence. Everybody at the scene was looking at each other in bewilderment.

They had been aware that besides being a refiner, Li Yao was also a reasonably good battle-type Cultivation.

But during their months of cooperation, Li Yao had only demonstrated his talent in refining. He had never shown his performance in a fight.

So, as time went by, all the refiners had forgotten how brutal Li Yao was, until today!

Some of them had doubted whether or not Li Yao was capable enough as a test pilot and insisted that they should hire a professional and experienced Exo for the testing.

But now that they saw Li Yao's performance, their doubts were no more.

"Li Yao!"

Yuan Manqiu's voice was shaking. "Aren't you at the 8th level of the Refinement Stage? Even with the enhancement of the crystal suit, you should still be below the 12th level. The test target can withstand a full-strength strike of a Cultivator at the 13th level. How on earth did you blow it apart? Which level are you at right now?"

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. He didn't know that he accidentally wielded such strength out of excitement.

However, it had been months since the trip to the Dark Desolate Domain. Even though he showed extraordinary strength, he could still claim that it was because he had trained and advanced a lot during the past months.

Figuring out an excuse, Li Yao said, "11th level of the Refinement Stage."

Everyone on the spot gasped.

11th level of the Refinement Stage was often the criterion to determine the best graduates. Hua Tianxiong, president of the Iron Fist Club, and Xu Ge, president of the Chaos Edge Hall, arrived at the 11th level of the Refinement Stage after five years of hard work in the Grand Desolate War Institution.

Li Yao was only a sophomore, and he'd already reached the level of graduates? Incredible!

However, it was not very unacceptable, considering that he had earned 40,000 credits within one year, which none of the students in the history of the Grand Desolate War Institution had ever achieved.

Seeing everyone's shocked face, Li Yao said 'sorry' in his mind.

He was lying.

He was not at the 11th level of the Refinement Stage.

He had been already at the 11th level of the Refinement Stage when he returned from the Dark Desolate Domain. Since then, he had been training crazily and recalling the brutal battles in the Dark Desolate Domain. What's more, he'd found some catalysts to refine a marrow crystal and absorbed all the spiritual energy contained inside. Finally, he advanced yet another time in a moonlit evening to the 12th level of the Refinement Stage.

However, he hadn't fully digested the spirit energy contained in the marrow crystal yet, most of which was still hiding in his limbs and organs. He felt that he was improving greatly every day after his training. It was quite possible that he would break into the 13th level of the Refinement Stage at any time!

The marrow crystal was also one of the reasons why he could do training and refining day and night with barely any rest. He would've collapsed a long time ago without it.

Yuan Manqiu was dazed for a moment. Then she smiled.

"Excellent. I was worrying that you might not be capable of several extreme tests. But as it turns out, we can add a few more tests for you now."

Li Yao clenched his fists, enjoying the amazing feeling of strength in his palms.

"No problem!"

…

Dec. 3, Freezing Frost Realm, 12th test of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

It was a world fragment dominated by ice, snow, and piercing wind. The temperature was well below -100°C. Frigid clouds were floating in the air like dangerous demon beasts which would turn everything that they touched into an ice cube.

In the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Li Yao was running at a high speed on the ice sheet.

Under the attraction of spiritual energy surging out of his suit, dozens of frigid clouds flowed to him and casted a thick ice shell on the crystal suit.

Many rune arrays on the surface of the crystal suit were frozen. The dark red brilliance of the power rune arrays became intermittent.

"Swoosh!"

Li Yao didn't bother with any of it. He sped up again. Running, punching, dodging, he turned into a grey blurred shadow bouncing up and down in the snow world, leaving a series of valuable data for future improvement.

"In the environment of -100°C. the general performance of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was undermined by 17%, which was fairly good compared with the crystal suits of the same level. However, I feel that an ice piton is drilling my spine. It's probably because the gap of the plate armor in the back of the suit is too large to block the cold wind. This is something that needs to be improved!" Li Yao shouted, his lips blue.

…

Dec. 7, Fire Stream Realm, 37th test of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

This was a world fragment made by magma and steam with air that was full of poisonous gas. The temperature here was above 500°C all year around. No Cultivator could survive long in this place.

"BAM BAM! BAM BAM BAM BAM!"

In the middle of the Fire Stream Realm, there was a lone island surrounded by flowing magma.

Heated air was billowing in the space. Every now and then, a large cluster of magma would splash to the island due to collision of currents.

While dodging the magma, Li Yao was also punching a special heat-resistant test target. Sweat was pouring down from his forehead, but he felt extremely delighted.

Every micro adjustment of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had been made according to his combat style, making him feel that the crystal suit and his body was melting into one.

Beside the magma lake, in a special heat-proof room, Yuan Manqiu spoke to Bai Yede and other refiners, after a long silence, "I have discovered that it was wrong to ask Li Yao to be the test pilot."

Bai Yede smiled bitterly.

"You mean Li Yao is so excellent that we can't tell whether his amazing performance is boosted by the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit or based on his own insane body strength, right?"

"Indeed."

Yuan Manqiu said unemotionally, "I have no doubt that he could survive in the Freezing Frost Realm and the Fire Stream Realm without the crystal suit and perhaps live a good life!"

Chapter 298: Fight Lingdang

Chapter 298: Fight Lingdang

In a short month, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had experienced extreme tests that even many high-level crystal suits never did.

Not only were they great challenges to the crystal suit, they were challenges for the Exo, too.

For example, extreme defense tests required the crystal suit to be struck in the front for an entire hour.

The super pressure test required the crystal suit to punch and kick for several hours in gravity ten-times stronger than usual and ten-times the usual atmospheric pressure.

In other sects and universities, most of the extreme tests were done through special testing magical equipment, or by several test pilots in turns.

But in the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution, all the extreme tests were done by Li Yao alone.

He was wearing the crystal suit day and night like a metal puppet and would do every extreme test in person however difficult it may be.

As the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was being revised, Li Yao's capabilities had greatly improved, too.

The first marrow crystal had been fully digested by him. Through the art of 'Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining', the hours of training in extreme environments such the Freezing Frost Realm, Fire Stream Field, ten-time gravity, ten-time barometric pressure, hundreds of meters below the sea, and so on had brought up the sturdiness of his body to an unfathomable level.

Even Master Tiemu, the senior that created the art of 'Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining' in the Hundred Smelting Clan 40,000 years ago, might not have been as strong as Li Yao when he was at Li Yao's level.

Ostensibly speaking, Li Yao was merely at the 12th level of the Refinement Stage.

However, even if encountered with Cultivators at the peak of the Refinement Stage, Li Yao was still confident that he could confront them face to face because of his body's amazing hardness.

With the help of a crystal suit, he could even fight a Cultivator at the Building Foundation Stage.

…

Dec. 31, final test of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

After a month of testing and revising, the flaws of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had all been fixed. It was almost perfect now.

The final test was also the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit's debut to the outside world.

Other than the staff and students of the Refining Department, leaders of the school also joined the show, including Xiong Baili, the principal.

At 2 p.m., the No.1 test field was hustling and bustling.

The test field was full of testing magical equipment. A giant light beam was floating in the air playing Li Yao's testing of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit in the ice and fire.

Many leaders of the school were nodding approvingly while they were watching.

The reliability and the combat ability under extreme conditions of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had far exceeded their expectations.

Li Sanhao and other freshmen of the Refining Department were screaming and shouting in wild joy.

"Director Yuan, is it true that the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is utterly devoid of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures?"

Leaders of the school were earnestly questioning Yuan Manqiu.

"From the demo, we noticed that it is very solid, and its combat ability under extreme conditions is satisfactory, too. But we wonder about its performance is in real combats."

Some of them were not very confident.

Smiling, Yuan Manqiu answered, "Absolutely no Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures have been used in the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. Its performance in real battles will be as good as what was demonstrated in the tests, if not better. A Refinement Stage Cultivator in the Mystic Skeleton

Battlesuit will be capable of confronting a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator!

"I know you wouldn't buy it. So, we'll invite a Building Foundation Cultivator to fight a Refinement Stage Cultivator in the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

"You may be doubting right now. But I believe that your concerns will all be gone after the competition."

"Shua!"

In the center of the test field, a ring more than a hundred meters in diameter rose up slowly. The ring was wreathed by a layer of amber defensive barriers like an eggshell.

Li Yao walked onto the ring and did some warm-up exercises. The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was enchanting with the rhythm of his body movements.

On the other side of the ring, the one who was walking onto the ring was…

"Ding Lingdang?"

Li Yao was dazed. A drop of cold sweat appeared on his forehead.

He had been told by Yuan Manqiu that a Building Foundation Cultivator would be arranged to fight against him today, but he'd never expected that it was going to be Ding Lingdang.

"I heard that the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had been successfully refined, and you were as good as a Building Foundation Cultivator in it. How could I miss such a fun fight with you? Therefore, I have filed an application to the principal and Director Yuan to let my fists run the final test for the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. How about it? Are you up for it?"

Ding Lingdang bumped her fists and said in a smile. She was wearing a ruby mustard suit. Flames were flowing around her body mysteriously and highlighted the graceful curve of her body.

Ding Lingdang's appearance caused a minor riot.

She was a famous figure in the school. Everyone knew that she was close to the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage. Her natural, animal-like combat instinct made her combat ability even better than many middle-level and high-level Building Foundation Cultivators'.

Ding Lingdang as the examiner would be truly convincing.

As a high-level Refinement Stage Cultivator, how long could Li Yao with the enhancement of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit survive under Ding Lingdang's fierce fists?

Everybody was eager to learn the answer, including Li Yao himself.

Li Yao's lips curled. His heart was beating faster and faster. He felt that it was not blood that was flowing in his veins but melted marrow crystal.

Of all the Building Foundation Cultivators, Ding Lingdang was the one that he wanted to defeat most.

Although he was shocked in the beginning, he realized that she was the best opponent possible on second thought.

"Excellent. Let's do it."

Li Yao's soul started burning intimidatingly. Strings of spiritual energy streamed out through the gaps of the crystal suit and formed countless gold feathers around him, which were spinning faster and faster as if they were being blown by an invisible wind.

"You've made so much progress in just one month! What a lunatic!"

Ding Lingdang's eyes were beaming with joy. "But I like it!"

"Hu!"

Searing flames were burning around her, which were then condensed into a fire snake.

Compared with the fire snake that Li Yao had seen in Small Grayfield previously, the fire snake right now was smaller in size, but much more detailed. Besides, it was whiter than the previous one, indicating that its temperature was much higher, too.

"Ding! Ding! Ding! Ding!"

The jingle bells on Ding Lingdang's ankle started shaking without any sign. The fire snake lunged forward at Li Yao, its mouth wide open.

With a deafening roar, Li Yao lowered his right arm to his waist where it swallowed all the light gold feathers that were flying around him like a black hole.

Then, from the heel upward, all the way through the vertebral column, the power rune arrays emitted dark red colors one by one and unleashed infinite strength.

Li Yao lifted his arm and punched at the fire snake, intending to kill it with one strike. His spiritual energy was bursting out like volcano eruption. The gold feathers around his right arm turned into a tornado charging at the fire snake.

"Si!"

The fire snake seemed to be a living creature. It dashed upward and dodged Li Yao's unstoppable fist closely. However, it was injured by the gold feathers which left a few cracks on its stomach.

Although Li Yao missed the target, leaders of the school were still nodding in approval.

The several battle-type Cultivators of the Combat Department were surprised to see that Li Yao showed no sign of losing at all.

Fascinated by Li Yao's performance, Li Sanhao and his lot were cheering for Li Yao at the top of their voices.

"Defeating my fire snake? Impressive!"

After a cry, Ding Lingdang flashed to the front of Li Yao as if she were a ghost, following up with a brutal kick full of intense fiery spiritual energy.

Li Yao was caught off guard and failed to dodge. In fact, he didn't want to dodge.

"Pa!"

Ding Lingdang's kick hit the chest of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, resulting in several cracks on the surface.

At the same time, Li Yao's knee also hit Ding Lingdang's abdomen where a crystal bomb seemed to have exploded.

Both of them muttered a dull grunt, but neither of them was willing to dodge or block.

Hardly had Ding Lingdang pulled back her leg when she struck Li Yao's head with her right elbow.

As a countermeasure, Li Yao bashed into Ding Lingdang's head with his own head.

Their savage fighting style had flabbergasted everyone on the spot, even including the battle-type Cultivators.

The more they fought, the more brutal and comfortable they became. At first, a grey figure and a red one were distinguishable, but as they approached the sonic speed, all that the audience could see were blurred shadows that were tangled together, as if hundreds of people were fighting inside the ring at the same time. The air was torn apart with earsplitting booms.

Then—

After a half minute of high-speed collisions, the two of them stopped at two sides of the ring. It was then that everyone was able to tell how much damage had been done during the previous short yet fierce combat.

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit that Li Yao was in was on the verge of total loss. The plate armor on the front was almost entirely shattered, revealing the black mustard suit behind it.

Even so, the crystal camera on the helmet was still glittering, indicating that the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was not broken yet.

The tensile mustard suit that Ding Lingdang was wearing was ripped with a few shocking tears. There was blood at the corner of her mouth. Her forehead was full of sweat. Her chest fell and swelled as she was breathing heavily.

Her fists were shivering, which startled everyone who was familiar with her.

"Ding Lingdang has indeed tried her best. It's been a long time since I last saw her fists shivering," Xia Yan, Dean of the Combat Department, observed.

"Indeed. Although Ding Lingdang hasn't used her Spiritual Tattoo yet, Li Yao never used the attack magical equipment, neither did he use the Spiritual Storm Bolter nor the chainsword. He has been fighting an opponent levels higher than himself with nothing but the enhancement of the crystal suit."

Xiong Baili, the principal, sighed and remarked with mixed feelings, "This is evident enough to prove the capability of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. Let's stop them now. Director Yuan, our Grand Desolate War Institution finally has our own self-made crystal suit now. Thank you for your arduous work!"

"Thank you, principal. We're relieved to hear your compliment."

Yuan Manqiu's voice was shaking. Taking a deep breath, she shouted, "Li Yao, Ding Lingdang—"

But it was too late!

Before she was able to finish her sentence, Li Yao and Ding Lingdang had run off at the same time. The ground where they stood was stomped into pieces. They crashed into each other at a supersonic speed like two crystal trains which were rushing face to face!

Chapter 299: I Love You

Chapter 299: I Love You

Midnight, at Ding Lingdang's home.

"Ouch! Ouch ouch ouch ouch ouch ouch ouch!"

Li Yao's body was full of bruises, his face swollen. He was waving his arms and struggling, but Ding Lingdang was sitting on the top of him, making him unable to move at all.

Ding Lingdang was holding a yellow jade egg in her hands. She squeezed some green ointment out and smeared it over Li Yao's face roughly.

"Do you know what pain is now? Not so cocky anymore? You should've known it better when we were fighting!" Ding Lingdang said angrily.

She pressed the jade egg against Li Yao's face and gnashed, "I was publicly humiliated by you today. I was knocked into coma for five seconds. It's embarrassing!"

Li Yao gasped and said hurriedly, "Slow down, slow down. You passed out for five seconds, but I was knocked out for ten minutes. Not to mention the three hours I spent in the med bay. And I'm still looking like garbage right now. I'm way worse than you!"

"That's different!"

Ding Lingdang took another kind of translucent ointment. She smeared it on her hands as she said, "Try to deal with it. This secret medication of us body practitioners might cause some minor pain. However, it will heal your body extremely fast."

While she was talking, she put her hands on Li Yao's face and spread the ointment on it.

Li Yao grunted. Almost bursting into tears due to the sharp pain, he shouted, "An eye for an eye is not cool!"

Ding Lingdang laughed.

"So what? If your body is strong enough to withstand my true spirit fire snake, you can certainly deal with a little sting. I really wonder how you've been training. A few months ago, you were absolutely no match for me. It would've been a miracle if you stood against me without being beaten to the ground for several minutes. But right now, with an MP crystal suit, you almost drew with me?"

While grimacing in pain, Li Yao hurriedly said, "That's because Sister Ling was not trying her best. I know that you have several ultimate skills that you didn't show."

Ding Lingdang's mouth twitched.

"Of course, I didn't try my best. But you didn't, either. I'm aware that you are best at saber arts. I watched a few video clips of you training with a Heavy Vibrosaber in the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. Your saber arts reminded me of the verve of Long Wenhui, vice president of the Hundred Saber Alliance. But they were added with the violence of the mysterious swirls of rampaging tornadoes. That's very impressive!

"Besides, you and I are both meant for real battles. We can only show our true strength in a battlefield. I'm afraid you were as unfulfilled as me inside the ring.

"If we were in complicated territories such as a forest, an underground mine or city ruins, and you were carrying your saber, we would be able to start a match with no rules and restraints. Well well well. I'm thrilled just thinking of it!"

Li Yao smiled.

"When I'm done with the work at hand, I'll definitely spend more time training with you and let you enjoy yourself!"

Ding Lingdang sniffed.

"I'm not a child. I was just joking. I know you'll be quite occupied in the next couple of weeks. You'll need to call press conferences and introduce the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit to the world, and you need to compete with other MP crystal suit models such as Tiger King, Mournful Mist, and Sword Torrent for the military order. But I have every faith in you. You're going to take down all the opponents!"

Li Yao grinned.

"We're confident that we'll secure the military order. However, we do not intend to hold any press conference.

"The main reason is that almost twenty organizations have announced their MP crystal suit models, most of which, honestly speaking, are crude and shoddy. If we are to release our model now, we risk being considered to be just like them."

Ding Lingdang asked curiously, "Then how are you going to promote your product?"

Li Yao said, "In a month's time, the biennial 'Magical Equipment Exposition of the Star Glory Federation' will be held, which is the most popular gala for the Cultivators of the Heaven's Origin Sector, especially the refiners.

"This year, since MP crystal suits are on fire, the Magical Equipment Exposition designated a special exhibition zone for crystal suits. The exhibition zone will mostly display MP crystal suit models.

"By then, all the MP crystal suit models of the federation will show themselves at the exposition.

"The military will announce their bidding plan and accept applications at the exposition, too

"When we don't speak, we stay quiet; but when we do, the world shall hear our voice. It won't be much use to advertise now. Besides, our school has never produced crystal suits before. Other people won't believe our propaganda easily.

"Therefore, we might as well debut the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit at the Magical Equipment Exposition. The audience will witness its excellence with their own eyes. I believe it will raise a riot at that time!"

Ding Lingdang stopped rubbing unconsciously.

When Li Yao was talking about the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, his eyes were beaming with charisma, which made her lost for words for a moment.

Li Yao's face suddenly changed. His voice was turned down.

"Sister Ling, I'm sorry."

Ding Lingdang was confused,

"For what?"

Li Yao said carefully, "When the semester began, I promised to you that I would come and chat with you every week. But I've been too occupied in the Project Mystic Skeleton to talk to you and to train with you in the Billowing Star Sea. So, I want to tell you that I'm sorry."

Ding Lingdang sniffed. Her lips curled up into a smirk.

"You only realized just now?

"It's really boring training alone. Weird, though. I had been training by myself for three days in a row without feeling the least bored before I met you. But after I'm used to training with you, I always feel that something is lacking when I'm training alone. My training efficiency has plunged, too."

Ding Lingdang didn't realize that her voice was full of sorrow. "You barely came in the past month. I was starting to feel that you'd forgotten about me."

"How could I?"

Li Yao smiled. "It's my bad not coming here because I was occupied in refining the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. But now that it has been successfully refined, I won't be as busy as before. I promise—"

He stared at Ding Lingdang in the eyes and said seriously, "I'll come by every night and train with you in the Billowing Star Sea in the future if I'm free. Is that okay?"

"Of course it is." Ding Lingdang grinned. "It's a deal then! Don't go back on your word."

"I won't."

Li Yao smiled, "Besides, in the past months, my capabilities have improved a lot, especially my body sturdiness. You won't be able to beat me down easily even if I'm not in a crystal suit. But maybe I can use a teaching saber to fight you. Do you think it's okay?"

"Yes, of course. That's exactly what I want." Ding Lingdang's eyes were beaming with joy.

Li Yao continued, "Besides training, I also feel that we should spend more time in getting to know each other better, considering that you are the closest person to me in the world now. Do you think it's okay?"

Ding Lingdang nodded her head.

"That's fine by me. You know everything about my parents. I don't have any other relatives in the world. You are the closest person to me in the world, too."

"Then, will you be my girlfriend?"

Li Yao put it straightforwardly.

"Okay!"

With a slip of the tongue, Ding Lingdang nodded her head habitually. She realized something was wrong the moment she let the words out. Suddenly sitting straight, she stammered, "What—what did you say?"

"You heard me. You heard me loud and clear."

Li Yao said solemnly, "But I'm ready to say the sentence a thousand times and even ten thousand times more. Will you be my girlfriend, Sister Ling?"

"You—you must be kidding!"

Like a rabbit sitting on the stomach of a wolf, Ding Lingdang tried to jump up in a flurry, only to be snatched by Li Yao.

Her strength was far greater than Li Yao's. But she couldn't get herself away as if she had been sandwiched by a pair of tongs.

"First, you heard me loud and clear; second, you know that I'm not kidding."

Li Yao said patiently, "You know my personality best, Sister Ling. When I come across a problem, I always try to solve it in the most simple and straightforward way.

"Although I don't know when exactly I fell in love with you, I will not allow our relationship to be kept at the sister-brother status when I'm sure that I'm in love with you.

"I don't like ambiguities. I don't want you to be my sister anymore. I want you to be my girlfriend."

"That's too… out of the blue! We were only talking about crystal suits and training. I didn't expect you to change the topic so fast!"

Ding Lingdang had lost her cool. She tried to veer off.

"It is not out of the blue at all. I expressed my love subtly three months ago. Just because you are a maniac in martial arts doesn't mean you are a moron in daily life. I don't believe that you felt none of it. You've been playing dumb the whole time!

"The reason why I hardly came by in the past months is partly because I was too busy refining, and partly, also more importantly, because I don't want to hang out with you in the sister-brother pattern and I don't want to give you too many opportunities to play dumb.

"So, I set a deadline for myself. I've been refining the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit desperately and testing it like a lunatic, so that I can cut the knot and say my love to you sincerely the day it is completed!

"That's the style of me, 'Vulture Li Yao'!"

Li Yao's expression of love was not romantic at all, but as sharp as his saber blade.

The thick shell that had been covering Ding Lingdang's heart was almost shattered by the sharp words.

She stammered, "I—I've never thought about it before. I've always considered you as my brother…"

Li Yao said, "Then you can start thinking now. I'll wait for as long as you need.

"Nevertheless, I need to remind you that as a refiner, I can melt the tantalum tungsten alloys whose fusing points are above 7000°C. So, whatever you think, I'll definitely melt your heart!"

Ding Lingdang was rendered speechless. She glared at Li Yao with rosy, puffy cheeks.

Chapter 300: Magical Equipment Exposition

Chapter 300: Magical Equipment Exposition

"Don't look at me like that. What's wrong with being my girlfriend?"

Li Yao said assertively, "Just think about it. If my girlfriend, or your boyfriend, was someone else, we would have to go on dates, go shopping, go to dinners, etc. How troublesome would that be? Our training time would be greatly diminished.

"Besides, it wouldn't be convenient for me to come by and fight with you in the middle of a night, would it?

"But everything would be different if we are together. You are an utter maniac in training, and I don't have much interest in anything other than training, either. If we're together, we can go on our dates by fighting against each other. Killing two birds with one stone. Isn't it super efficient?"

"Who says we're going on dates?"

Ding Lingdang's cheeks were so flushed that even her ears were red now. She pinched Li Yao's waist hard.

"If my girlfriend is someone else, you won't get to pinch me anymore," Li Yao said, trying not to scream out of pain.

Ding Lingdang's hand backed off as if it had met an electric shock. Thinking for a while with her lips bitten, she said, "What you said does make a little sense. However, I still feel that something is not right. When other guys are pursuing girls, there are always flowers, gifts and such. They don't come straight to the point like you!"

Although Ding Lingdang was crazy about martial arts, she was a girl in her twenties after all. When she saw other girls receiving gifts from their boyfriends, she sometimes felt excited, too.

Li Yao smiled. He took out a ruby box from his pocket and handed it over.

"I didn't prepare any flowers, but I do have a gift. See if you like it!"

Holding her breath, Ding Lingdang opened the box and found a crimson, sparkling ring lying on the velvet.

The ring looked ancient and simple, without any redundant features. But it was apparently made of the best materials. When the box was opened, faint redness was all over the room.

In the middle of the ring, red crystal liquid was flowing slowly like clotting magma.

Ding Lingdang was somewhat dazed. She raised her eyebrows.

"A ring?

"It looks beautiful. But you know that I'm not a fan of jewelry, which will affect my combat ability. It seems so fragile that if I wear it and punch anything, it will break into pieces immediately."

"Wrong!

"We've known each other long enough for me to learn of your habits. How could I offer you a ring as a gift? This is not a ring, but a lethal weapon refined by me which I've named 'Red Lotus Knuckle'."

Li Yao picked up the ring gently and held it in his palm as he explained, "On the surface, it looks like an ordinary jade ring. But, in fact, it is a piece of ultimate magical equipment with 'Bloody Shooting Star', a marrow crystal, as the main material together with four other marrow crystals as ancillary materials. It took me 36 days to refine it. What's more, I tried the best I can and carved almost 100 attack rune arrays inside the ring.

"Come on, put it on and use your telepathic thoughts to trigger it."

While he was talking, he slipped the ring into Ding Lingdang's fourth finger.

Ding Lingdang was dwelling on what Li Yao had just said and was too curious about the effects of the 'Red Lotus Knuckle' to stop him.

The Bloody Shooting Star was mild and smooth. Wearing a ring made of it felt very comfortable, as if the ring were part of her flesh.

With a telepathic thought, Ding Lingdang unleashed her spiritual energy. The hundred rune arrays on the Red Lotus Knuckle were lit up one by one with bright red colors, forming a vivid lotus in the color of blood which blossomed and wreathed her fists.

Almost a hundred pedals with sharp edges were protruding from the blood lotus.

Fierce fiery spiritual energy was spilling among the pedals, which instantly brought up the room temperature by ten degrees.

"Beautiful! Formidable! Ruthless!"

Ding Lingdang was immediately attracted. Her two eyes were full of eagerness.

Li Yao smiled and said, "You are best with fiery spiritual energy. The Bloody Shooting Star is a marrow crystal that belongs to the fire class and contains a lot of pure fiery spiritual energy.

"Wearing the Red Lotus Knuckle is like adding oil to a fire. I estimate that your punch will be at least three times fiercer than before!

"How about it? Is this gift fit for you?"

Ding Lingdang heard none of it, because she had been bewitched by the Red Lotus Knuckle. She rose up suddenly, her right arm burning in flames. The fire snake flowed out of her body again. With the enhancement of the Red Lotus Knuckle, the head of the snake split into three, making it a ferocious triple-headed fire snake.

"The Bloody Shooting Star is a rare Heavenly Material and Earthly Treasure of the fire class. I've been told that it can greatly enhance the performance of fiery spiritual energy. But I didn't know it could be so good!"

Thrilled, Ding Lingdang was waving her arms up and down, without knowing where she was anymore.

Body practitioners usually did not carry any weapons. But other than the fundamentalists, the ordinary body practitioners generally did not reject handy and helpful magical equipment.

Ding Lingdang's father had been a refiner. Due to the accident that happened to her parents, she had hated magical equipment for a long time.

But the knot had been resolved by Li Yao a long time ago.

After putting on the Red Lotus Knuckle, she was as happy as a little girl who just got the clothes that she had been longing for a long time.

Dancing in fire for a long time, she finally withdrew her spiritual energy, not entirely satisfied. She eyed Li Yao in a different way from just now, as if she had thought something through.

Her countenance alarmed Li Yao, who started to feel that Ding Lingdang was going to take over the situation.

"Come to think of it, it's very true what you just said. Why did I never think of that before?

"I'm never interested in boyfriends because dating and such is too much of a waste of time.

"Nothing will be better than a date of fighting, which will be so much more fun than dinners or shopping."

Ding Lingdang muttered thoughtfully, "Besides, you were correct that I would be too embarrassed to train with you at midnight if you had another girlfriend. I know better than that. I'm afraid we'd drift apart and forget each other then."

"I wouldn't be able to find a second sturdy guy who's crazy about training such as yourself in another hundred years. No. There's no way that I let you go so easily.

"Let's go!"

She strode towards Li Yao, fierce flames beaming in her eyes.

Li Yao suddenly felt that he had got enmeshed in a web of his own schemes. Dazed, Li Yao said, "To where?"

"Billowing Star Sea, of course."

Ding Lingdang shook her ring finger. "I have decided to accept you as my boyfriend. Now, hurry up. Let's start our first date!"

…

A month later, in the east of the Star Glory Federation, outside Deep Sea City.

A crystal airship carved with 'Fist of Fury', the emblem of the Grand Desolate War Institution, rushed to the city from the north with a long exhaust flame, tearing apart the clouds in its way.

Li Yao was standing on the front deck of the crystal airship, enjoying the view of the spectacular metropolis before him.

Deep Sea City, located on the east seashore, was unquestionably the largest city of the federation. It was more than ten times bigger than Floating Spear City, Li Yao's hometown.

It was a dramatic three-dimensional city. Countless building spread to the undersea like the tentacles of an octopus which occupied a large area near the seashore.

When the night came, the myriad of lights from the undersea buildings made them look like a palace made of diamonds.

Deep Sea City was a legendary city that made the best use of floating mountains, which were so vast that an entire block could reside on one of them.

The countless floating mountains were connected to each other by long, narrow and translucent tubes which were built with the mechanism of communicating vessels. The traffic among the floating mountains was even faster than riding on flying swords.

As the biggest city of the federation, Deep Sea City was headquartered by plentiful Cultivation conglomerates. It was also where Deep Sea University was located, as well as the center of the magical equipment manufacturing industry. Therefore, it was also known as—

The City of Magical Equipment!

In the southwest corner of the City of Magical Equipment stood a colossal nine-level pyramid.

The bottom level had a coverage of more than 1500 acres. Even the top level still had almost 300 acres.

It was the largest convention center of the federation known as 'Heaven's Path'.

The Magical Equipment Exposition, a biennial gala of the Star Glory Federation, would be held here!

The Magical Equipment Exposition represented the peak of the Star Glory Federation's Cultivation technologies. It was also indicative of human civilization's future in the Heaven's Origin Sector. Therefore, it was not just a festival for the Cultivators. Many ordinary people would come to the carnival and enjoy themselves, too.

Billions of people often spent a fortune attending the exposition from far away to feel the essence of the Cultivation civilization.

As a magical equipment fan, Li Yao had been craving to join the Magical Equipment Exposition since he was a little boy.

However, he had been struggling all day to survive back then. He could barely pay for the travelling expenses, let alone the ticket.

Today, his dream was coming true!

Holding back her excitement, Yuan Manqiu walked to Li Yao's back and said calmly, "Li Yao, we're here."

This was not the first time that Yuan Manqiu had attended the Magical Equipment Exposition.

However, the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution had been weak and focused much of its attention on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit before.

Other than the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, there was no other magical equipment they could show to impress everyone.

Therefore, even when it was participating in the exposition, in most cases it would stay in a corner and keep a low profile.

But today would be different…

Taking a deep breath, Yuan Manqiu recalled the day when she left Deep Sea University proudly.

The memory was as fresh as yesterday. The hot blood at that time was still boiling in her chest right now.

But within the blink of an eye, thirty years had passed.

This time, she had come back dignifiedly and imposingly with the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, after thirty years of blood and sweat, to the City of Magical Equipment.

"Shua!"

The crystal airship slowly moved through a giant virtual light beam, which had a slogan on it that read: 'Welcome to the 139th Magical Equipment Exposition of the Star Glory Federation, Fellow Daoists!'

Li Yao and Yuan Manqiu looked at each other and noticed the ineffaceable determination in the other's eyes at the same time.

This time, they were not just participating the Magical Equipment Exposition.

They were also going to raise a riot of amazement in the gala that was the center of the public attention.

…

As a gala for the entire federation and for every human being, the Magical Equipment Exposition was divided into the civil section and the military section.

The exhibitions in the civil section had started three days prior to their arrival and would last for a month, whose target audience were ordinary people.

The exhibitions in the military section would officially kick off three days later, which would be frequented by the military and the Cultivators. It was considered to be a trade fair, too. If one saw a piece of magical equipment to one's liking, one could place an order and purchase it on the spot. Bulk purchases or negotiations were of course available as well.

The ordinary people could watch the exhibitions of the military magical equipment, too. The tickets were not very expensive. But they would need to rent a whole suit of defense magical equipment for their own protection.

After all, the exhibitions of the military magical equipment could be somewhat dangerous.

This year, the Grand Desolate War Institution had rented a good exhibition booth, costing them a small fortune.

The upcoming three days would be mainly used to the decorate the booth.

However, Li Yao didn't need to bother about that.

Having nothing to do, he wandered around the Magical Equipment Exposition as an ordinary magical equipment fan.

Chapter 301: Twenty Years Later

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"Wow! Brother Yao, what's that? A fat panda with three pairs of wings hovering in the sky?"

"It's Bei Bei, the official mascot of the Magical Equipment Exposition this year. It is a very smart crystal beast. Inside its tummy there's a super super awesome crystal chip. If you can't find your mom again like just now, all you need to do is wave your hands at it, and it will fly to you and help you find your mom!"

"Ah, so many flying swords are flying in the sky! So beautiful! Even more beautiful than the fireworks in the Spring Festival! Huh? The flying swords flew into the clouds and tore them apart!"

"Those are meteorological flying swords that are used for weather adjustment. If a place has been raining for such a long time that a flood is coming, those flying swords will drill into the clouds and break them, so that the sky can be cleared up."

"Brother Yao, there are so many people here. I don't think that our entire county has this many people."

"That's why you need to hold your mom's hand tight. Didn't that auntie stamp a seal on you and your mom's hands? The seal is a special rune that can trigger a strong attraction force between you and your mom. You won't be lost again if you and your mom's hands are pinned together, Little Ying."

In the massive crowds at the entrance of the exposition, Li Yao said to a little girl no more than ten years old in a smile while he created an invisible spiritual shield which covered the three of them, so that the mother and the daughter wouldn't be tripped over by the crowds.

The little girl was very thin, with dark skin, big eyes and yellowish hair. She was curious about everything that she saw and was jumping up and down like a naughty monkey.

Her name was Ai Zhiying. She came from the Serene Mountain Province in the south of the federation and lived in a small village deep inside the mountains. She and her mother had come a long way to visit her father who was working in Deep Sea City, and it happened to be the time when the Magical Equipment Exposition was held.

The family had planned to visit the Magical Equipment Exposition together.

However, the father was caught by something urgent and had to ask his wife and daughter to go on ahead.

However, the mother and the daughter had been living in the village for their entire lives. The biggest, liveliest place that they'd ever been to was the county town which had a population of no more than fifty thousand.

When they came to a place as crowded as the Magical Equipment Exposition, they were completely overwhelmed.

With the moving and pushing of other people, the girl and her mother were separated.

Li Yao had just finished his breakfast and was ready to explore the Magical Equipment Exposition joyfully, when he noticed that the little girl was crying in a corner.

Two mascot pandas and several other tourists were trying to help her, but they only made her more upset; she simply shrank back and refused to say anything.

Seeing this, Li Yao hurried up and set a mind-settling rune on the little girl to calm her down. Then, with the help of the staff, he finally found her mother, Zhou Xiulan.

Judging from their plain clothing and somewhat confused faces, Li Yao knew that they'd probably never experienced such hustle and bustle before.

The Magical Equipment Exposition was extremely large with complicated booths and stands that made it look like a labyrinth. Besides, the place was packed and messy. If he were to leave them alone, the two of them would never be able to enjoy the exposition, not to mention that the little girl might get lost again.

Having nothing to do, and to better take care of them, Li Yao decided to accompany them and volunteered to interpret the magical equipment for them.

"Mr. Li, thank you so much. We would've had absolutely no idea what to do if it weren't for you. We never expected that there would be so many people. We were actually planning to go back just now."

Zhou Xiulan was a simple, sincere village woman. She was so anxious that she didn't know where to put her hands while she was expressing gratitude to Li Yao.

"You're most welcome. It would be boring to tour the exposition by myself anyway. With a few companions, we can talk to and look after each other. Isn't it much better? Also, don't call me 'mister'. 'Little Li' will be good."

Li Yao grinned.

"That will be too presumptuous. You are a Cultivator. I'm told that my mad daughter was cooled down by a rune that you casually drew. How can I call you Little Li?" Zhou Xiulan answered hurriedly.

Ai Zhiying was jumping up and down as she merrily said, "Yes, yes. Brother Yao is so awesome. I was so desperate that I felt my head was dizzy and my ears were humming. I couldn't see, hear, or say anything. But after Brother Yao touched my forehead, it was like a bucket of cold water over my head. I was immediately able to see and hear things again, and I could speak too."

"That's alright. Just call me Little Li. It's more comfortable for me that way. Cultivator or not, you are my senior anyway. Just because I am a Cultivator doesn't mean I'm older than I'm supposed to be."

With a big smile, Li Yao said, "Alright. Let's go and start our adventure. Little Ying, didn't you say that your dad is a construction worker and used to work in this convention center? Maybe one of the windows here was installed by your dad himself. Hurry up. Let's explore the battlefield where your dad once fought."

"Let's go!"

Ai Zhiying was not a shy girl. She had been famous for her naughtiness back in her village. She was just overwhelmed by the large crowds that were beyond her imagination. Now that Li Yao was there to back her up, her restless nature had returned. She opened her arms and uttered "Swoosh! Swoosh!" as if she were riding a nonexistent flying sword.

Talking and laughing, the three of them walked into the first gallery with the crowds.

Every Magical Equipment Exposition had a theme. The theme of this year was 'Twenty Years Later'.

The exhibitions in the first gallery were mostly the state-of-the-art magical equipment related to the everyday life of ordinary people.

"Wow. Beautiful clothes!"

In front of the colorful and splendid stand, Ai Zhiying started at a brilliantly shining dress with her cheeks puffed and shouted in excitement.

Li Yao raised his head and noticed that it was the Heavenly Apparel Guild's stand.

The Heavenly Apparel Guild's main business was robes, costumes, uniforms, and battle clothing. The school uniform of the Grand Desolate War Institution had been outsourced to the Heavenly Apparel Guild.

Other than the battle clothing for soldiers, the Heavenly Apparel Guild had been trying to expand its market in civil clothing.

"Shua!"

Rolling her eyeballs, Ai Zhiying lifted her finger, planning to touch the dress while no one was watching her, when the brilliance on the dress suddenly vanished. The long dress turned into a silver-grey clothing that covered the model tightly, then it turned into a red-and-yellow sportswear after flashing in redness.

"I didn't touch it! It changed by itself!"

Ai Zhiying thought that she was to blame for the ruined clothes. She pulled back her hands hurriedly.

Li Yao read the introduction and smiled.

"Don't be scared, Little Ying. The garment is a piece of magical equipment refined by the Heavenly Apparel Guild whose name is 'Capricious Costume'. It is made of luminescent materials mixed with the traditional silk. It is a piece of clothing as well as a walking light beam.

"Its prototype is the silver-grey clothing that you saw just now. However, you can set it into different themes which you can download from the Nexus. Short skirt, long skirt, sportswear, business wear. Red, blue, yellow. It can be changed to whatever you want."

"Wow!"

Ai Zhiying's eyes were shinning. She bit her fingernails as she said, "Whatever I want? Does it mean that if I buy it, it's like I've bought a hundred pieces of clothing?"

"More than that!"

Li Yao said in a smile, "The clothes can also detect your mood and adjust itself accordingly. For example, by customizing several settings, when you are in high spirits, the front of the clothes will display a shining sun, and your friends will know that they can come and play with you happily when they see that. If you come across anything sad, a crescent moon will be displayed in the front of the clothes, and your friends will know that it's time to comfort you."

"Impressive!"

Ai Zhiying was amazed. She swallowed and said, "I'm going to buy one!"

"Not now."

Li Yao said, "The theme of the Magical Equipment Exposition is 'Twenty Years Later'. Most of the magical equipment exhibited here is still experimental. It will take another ten to twenty years before such magical equipment can be manufactured and made available for ordinary people.

"Take the 'Capricious Costume' for example. It requires a lot of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures to be refined, which means its cost will be unbelievably high. Also, its lifespan is not very long. Therefore, it is only equipped by the special forces of the military. Ordinary people have no access to it right now."

"Twenty years later!"

Ai Zhiying blinked her eyes. "That sounds like a long, long distance away. But it's fine. Such a nice costume must be very expensive. My dad has been working in construction sites. It is a very exhausting job. I wouldn't bear to let him buy such an expensive item anyway. In twenty years' time, I'll be independent. I'll save money and buy it by myself and I'll buy three pieces. One for myself, one of my dad, and one for my mom."

Thinking for a while, she added, "No. I shall buy four pieces. Brother Yao should get one, too."

Li Yao couldn't help but laugh. He led the mother and the daughter on.

The stands here were all exhibitions of clothing magical equipment. Li Yao introduced them one by one, "The silver-glittering costume which seemed to be made of flowing resin is called 'Mustard Costume'. It is actually constituted by billions of pieces of magical equipment as tiny as mustard seeds. It is mainly used in battlefields as 'mustard suits'. However, take a look. Its provider 'Twinkling Star Home' is trying to promote the Mustard Costume to the civil market. They will first refine all kinds of work clothes that will be able to endure high temperature, high pressure, and intense impacts.

"Firefighters, aquanauts, miners… Many people will find such work clothes very useful.

"For example, if the firefighters wear Mustard Costumes with frost rune arrays carved inside as work clothes, they will no longer be afraid of fire and it will be easier for them to rescue those who are trapped.

"Another example. Your dad works in construction sites. Sometimes he will need to work high above the ground. With the Mustard Costume as work clothes, the special enhancement rune array inside the clothes can increase your dad's strength a lot. He'll find it easier to do his normal work. Daily bruises can be avoided, too."

Ai Zhiying was listening carefully. Her eyes were shining. She bit her mouth and nodded her head.

"It will be great if the Mustard Costume as work clothes can be refined sooner. My dad hurt his finger several days ago. I would rather buy a Mustard Costume for my dad than getting a Capricious Costume for myself."

Li Yao smiled.

"Rest assured. The uncles and aunties in the Twinkling Star Home are working on it. Maybe in the next few years, the Mustard Costumes will be popularized!

"Check this one out. This piece of clothing is named 'Health Costume'. Not only can it examine your health, it can also trigger weak electricity to stimulate the activity of your muscles, veins, and organs to build up your health. It is best to be used as school uniform and sportswear for teenagers to help with the growth of their bodies. If you wear it, you will be tall and beautiful in the future.

"This is an Anti-collision Lifesaving Costume designed to be worn when taking crystal trains or crystal airships. In the case of an accident, it will expand into a giant balloon and lock you inside, so that nothing will happen to you.

"As for this one..."

Chapter 302: Better Life

Chapter 302: Better Life

The clothing magical equipment refined by the major sects dazzled Ai Zhiying. She watched and played for more than an hour before she moved on hesitatingly.

However, she was soon attracted by the special smells coming from the front.

Many cultivation sects were displaying magical equipment for food and cooking there. Some of them were even making food on the spot for the tourists to taste for free.

"This piece of magical equipment is called 'Dehydrating Crisper'. When you put the food that you just cook inside it, 99.9% of the water in the food will be extracted instantly. Then the food will shrink in size and be sealed inside. The food can be preserved for as long as an entire year. When you want to eat the food, just open it and pour some hot water onto it, the food inside will be refreshed and taste exactly as it did when it was first cooked.

"That's a pair of 'Bone-cracking Chopsticks'. It is specially designed for the old and the children who like eating fish but cannot get rid of the fish bones. With the mechanism of high frequency oscillation, the fish bones will be shattered into dust the moment they pick up part of the fish with the chopsticks. Not only will the fish bones no longer be a risk to their throats, the nutrition in the fish bones is good for their body, too.

"This plate looks normal. But look, it has the ability of automatic analysis. Once food is put on the plate, it will automatically detect the ingredients of the food and their respective calories. It is a great piece of health-maintaining tableware for people who are losing weight, diabetes patients, and other victims of chronical diseases."

Li Yao pointed to the pieces of magical equipment and introduced them to the mother and the daughter one by one.

But Ai Zhiying was unable to reply, because her mouth was filled by a large delicious meatball which a female Cultivator had just slipped inside.

Li Yao smiled.

"Little Ying, the meatball that you're eating right now was made one year ago by the chef of the 'Moon-picking Hotel', a renowned restaurant of Sunny Harvest City thousands of kilometers away, and it has just had hot water poured on to be refreshed. How about it? Does it taste like it was just cooked?"

Ai Zhiying was enjoying the delicious food and there was no time for her to speak. She had to nod her head quickly with her eyes wide open to show approval. After a long while, she finally swallowed all the meatball. Then she smacked her lips and observed, "The meatball is so wonderful. If the Dehydrating Crisper can be mass-produced, everyone will be able to eat hot food wherever they go to. My mom and I can make a delicious meal at home for my dad and send it to him even though we're thousands of kilometers away!"

Li Yao nodded his head.

"Yes. Shipping is a lot easier nowadays. I know a guy who uses flying swords to ship things for other people. In the future, you and your mom can make a table of hometown dishes, put them in a Dehydrating Crisper, and send a message via the spiritual crane messenger. A flying sword will come to your home quickly and bring the dishes to your dad within the next day. Your dad will be so happy to eat the food cooked by you!"

'Clothing, food, residence, and transportation' was the theme of this gallery. It took them almost four hours to just finish the clothing part and the food part.

Fortunately, the little girl's mouth was really sweet. By greeting the Cultivators at the stands with 'uncles and aunties', she enjoyed a lot of cuisine cooked by their magical equipment for free, and therefore was not very hungry.

Then, the little girl was amazed by all kinds of smart-home magical equipment that she saw.

One of them was named 'Scouring Fatty'. It was round and plump, like a large cluster of translucent jelly.

Under the control of the crystal chip, it could automatically roll over and over at home and glue the dirty things on the ground and the walls away.

Since it was half-liquid, it could change itself into different shapes. The corners between walls, the space below the bed, and unreachable area between two pieces of furniture were no problem for it at all.

When it had swallowed enough dirty items, it would search for a dustbin and disgorge all of the waste.

It could even connect itself to a water faucet and drink a lot of clean water to sanitize itself.

There was another piece of magical equipment named 'Showering Fatty'. It was basically the same as the Scouring Fatty, except that it was for showers.

During a shower, it would roll over on the body of the shower-taker, clean up their pores, and massage them. It was truly comfortable!

There was also 'Random Window', a piece of magical equipment designed for the residents who lived in the underground world.

When it was hanged on a wall, it would be like a real window. People would be able to see beautiful sceneries that could be customized through the window.

The most distinguished characteristic about the Random Window was that the scenes were real-time videos shot from other places in the Heaven's Origin Sector, which meant that they were 100% authentic and very fickle.

For the residents that lived in the underground world, it could be a good comfort.

After visiting smart-home magical equipment, the three of them went to enjoy the transportation magical equipment.

The dozens of stands here were dominated by shuttles.

Most shuttles being exhibited had achieved self-navigation. There was also a kind of foldable personal shuttle, which, with a snap, could fold itself into the size of a briefcase. With the assistance of the anti-gravity rune array, even the weakest woman and little kid could carry them easily.

Once it was manufactured and promoted, the difficulty in finding a parking space in a metropolis could be solved immediately.

All of the state-of-the-art magical equipment in regards of clothing, food, smart-home, and transportation painted a dramatic and charming picture of the twenty-years-later life for the three of them.

The exit of the gallery was surrounded by more than ten giant 3D light beams which were playing the lifestyles of ordinary people twenty years later in the vision of Cultivators.

In twenty years' time, with a mind-settling rune, one would have a nice sleep on the inflatable king-size bed which could adjust itself according to the body size of the sleeper. In the morning, before one opened one's eyes, with a telepathic thought, the Showering Fatty would fill itself with water, climb up the bed, and clean the sleeper from inside to outside.

When one was ready to get off the bed, the slippers with reactive rune arrays would automatically come to the bed, saving the trouble of looking for slippers below the bed with the eyes that were still fogged from sleep.

After using the bathroom, one would pick out from the Dehydrating Crisper the breakfast that had been bulk purchased. With a little hot water, there would be a roomful of mouth-watering aromas. Bread, milk, biscuits… all were as fresh as those that were just made.

The temperature-controlling tableware would maintain the food at the most suitable degree, neither too hot, nor too cold.

After having breakfast and putting on the Capricious Costume, which had been set to the most fashionable theme according to the Nexus, one would go to the helipad over the roof through the short-distance teleportation array at home. Then, one would take out the shuttle from the garage nearby that had been minimized. With a snap, the shuttle would quickly expand and send its master to factories, schools, offices by self-navigation.

This was just one video clip.

There were a lot of other video clips showing scenes of ordinary people working, studying, entertaining with the help of all kinds of advanced magical equipment.

Every video clip was concluded by the same sentence that read: 'Better Cultivation, Better Life.'

The declaration made Li Yao feel somewhat proud.

"Wow!"

Ai Zhiying's eyes were focused on the videos. She exclaimed, "Twenty years from now, we'll be living like celestials!"

"Indeed!"

Li Yao smiled. "As long as students like you study carefully, workers like your mom and dad work hard, Cultivators like me cultivate wholeheartedly, then with all our collective effort, all human beings, be they Cultivators or ordinary people, will all live a celestial-like life."

Leaving the gallery of 'Clothing, Food, Residence and Transportation', they arrived at the next gallery whose name was 'Future City'.

It mainly depicted all kinds of bizarre cities that were to be built twenty or even more years later with the help of different magical equipment.

Li Yao thought that the theme was too abstract and wouldn't be as attractive as the previous galleries to the little girl.

However, Ai Zhiying was not the least bored. She watched the exhibitions curiously.

She told Li Yao, "My family lives in a village deep inside the mountains. Not only is the traffic very difficult, sometimes the earthquakes will violently shake the houses in my hometown. So, I'm studying what the city twenty years from now looks like, and I'm going to build my hometown that way."

Together with Li Yao, she saw many future cities that were constructed by magical equipment.

One of the future cities was built inside a mountain which had been emptied by a giant excavating magical equipment. But looking inside, it was a perfectly normal city, with hills, waters, singing birds and blossoming flowers. No one would be able to tell that there was anything wrong with it.

There was another future city that looked like a lot of water bubbles tangling together. They were sometimes floating on the sea and sometimes diving down into the undersea.

The undersea cities that the federation had right now were mere extensions of seashore cities, which could only be built on the continental shelf that was not far from the main land.

Once such bubbles were successfully refined, a city in the sea would really be possible. Humans would be able to march into the abysmal seas and conquer all the oceans of the Heaven's Origin Sector.

There was another future city that looked like Lego but billions of times larger. All the buildings were square and attached to thick metal cylinders.

According to the cultivation sect of the stand, it was called 'Combinatorial City'. All the buildings were created according to certain criteria in factories and could be assembled together very quickly upon order.

Once needed, a city that could accommodate 100,000 people could be built within several days. If movement was needed, the city could be dismantled and transported to somewhere else where it could be restored exactly the same as it had been. Even the house number would remain unchanged.

Another cultivation sect had been seriously considering the possibility of launching the floating mountains beyond the aerosphere.

According to the 'Space Flight Guild', it was planning to launch a hundred floating mountains to the near-earth orbit outside of the aerosphere where they would be connected to each other by high-tensile traffic tubes. This way, an unprecedented metropolitan circle would be created.

With the development of the metropolitan circle, billions of people would be able to live in space, and the overpopulation problem that had been bothering the human race could be resolved once and for all.

The little girl was truly astonished by the motley exhibition of future cities.

Her mother was also eyeing Li Yao with admiration and bewilderment, her eyes bulging wide.

She took Li Yao for one of the Cultivators that were going to build a city beyond the aerosphere, people she thought to be omnipotent gods.

Chapter 303: Sea of Stars

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When they left the Future City Gallery, it was already nightfall.

Outside of the gallery was large artificial turf. There were streams flowing and bird singing not very far away.

Countless tourists were sitting on the turf and enjoying their picnics. Mortal life and crystal beasts formed a delightful contrast, peaceful and comforting.

Ai Zhiying was not satisfied yet. But her mother was a little tired.

Thankfully, there was a rest stop nearby where several Cultivators were providing sprays that could assuage fatigue.

After spraying her back and her legs, Zhou Xiulan felt that her strength was back.

Then, the three of them visited a few other galleries quickly.

In the Life and Health Gallery, they saw artificial flesh that was refined out of crystal gel.

Once it was covered on a metal puppet, not only could the life-span of the puppets be prolonged, the outlook and texture of the real skin could be simulated, too.

If it was used to make artificial limbs, the appearance of the artificial limbs could be greatly improved and so would the quality of life of the disabled and spectral Cultivators.

In the New Energy Gallery, they saw submarine mining equipment that could work 10,000 meters below the sea level. They also witnessed an advanced technology which could transform the energy contained in coal and oil into spiritual energy.

In the Robotization Gallery, they saw hundreds of fully automated machines that could walk through the entire process from sowing to harvest by themselves, thus freeing human beings from the tedious peasant work.

In the end, they reached the Universe Gallery.

The moment they stepped inside, they felt like that they had entered a sea of stars. The entire cosmos was spinning around them, full of mysteries and vastness.

In the boundless Universe Gallery, Ai Zhiying, who had been vivacious all the way, shut her mouth and walked behind Li Yao quietly.

The first thing to be seen was a piece of obscure, unattractive magical equipment flying alone in the universe.

The surface of the magical equipment was full of bumps and hollows, which indicated that it had been hit multiple times.

"This is a 'flying star telescope' which was launched by 'Seven Stars Alliance', a top 10 sect of the federation, 299 years ago. In its three hundred years of voyage in the cosmos, it has sent everything it saw back, which provides precious data for the study of universe."

Li Yao was very solemn. He said in a low voice, "During the past three hundred years, the federal government, as well as many Cultivation sects, has sent almost a hundred flying star telescopes with more advanced technologies to explore the more distant universe.

"However, the very first flying star telescope has been retained and controlled by a Nascent Soul Stage expert of the Seven Stars Alliance as a symbol of the expedition to the universe of the humans of the Heaven's Origin Sector."

"Awesome."

Ai Zhiying asked, "What are we looking for with so many flying star telescopes?"

"New worlds."

Li Yao replied, "The Heaven's Origin Sector only has limited resources, which will run dry as our civilization develops. So, we must find new worlds as alternatives.

"If we meet a world fragment, we can collect the resources inside.

"If we meet an intact world, we will consider building a stable, inter-world wormhole for large-scale migration.

"Anyway, our destiny is the end of cosmos, and we will not be bound by such a small place as Heaven's Origin Sector."

"I understand it now. It's the same reason why my dad left our hometown to work in the big city. I didn't know what was good about the big city and cried to persuade my dad not to go. But now that I've seen it with my own eyes, I finally know that the big city is a really lively place with so many delicious foods and so many beautiful and interesting things. So, I have decided that I will go to the big city just like my dad in the future.

"The Heaven's Origin Sector is a small village, too. Other worlds in the cosmos are big cities like Deep Sea City. We the people of the Heaven's Origin Sector can't stay in our village forever. The cosmos is too great a place to be missed out," Ai Zhiying said.

"Correct." Li Yao nodded his head. "That's why the Star Glory Federation is working hard on the aeronautical and astronautical technology and trying to find safe passage between worlds.

"See? This is a crystal starship model named 'Serenity', which is built by the 'Thousand Sails Guild' with the technologies found in the Star Ocean Imperium relics.

"The real Serenity starship boasts a complete ecosystem and a self-circulation system. It can accommodate 100,000 people on board and carry a large amount of materials for the construction of stable wormholes.

"This is a crystal starship even larger than 'Serenity', whose name is 'Prestige'. A million people can live inside it for hundreds of years. But it is still experimental and not successfully refined yet.

"This is 'Quick Ghost', the latest model of automated flying star telescope. It is fifty times faster than the first-generation flying star telescopes. It can detect abnormal spiritual waves that are often the sign of a new world.

"Maybe in the foreseeable future, we can refine hundreds of crystal starships and light the fire of our civilization in other worlds!"

Ai Zhiying was excited by Li Yao's words. She muttered, "Me too. If Deep Sea City is already so interesting, I bet there will be much more fun in other worlds!"

When they left the Universe Gallery, it was already 10 p.m.

Since it was impossible to finish visiting the Magical Equipment Exposition within a day, the ticket covered the hotel fees. Li Yao escorted the mother and the daughter to the hotel on the third floor of the convention center. Then they said goodbye to each other, however reluctantly.

Tomorrow, the military magical equipment exhibitions would start. Li Yao would be too occupied to accompany the lovely little girl anymore.

Besides, her father had sent a message through spiritual crane messenger, saying that he would ask for leave and come to reunite with his wife and his daughter tomorrow. It was a relief for Li Yao.

Li Yao offered Ai Zhiying three tickets for the military magical equipment exhibitions as a gift.

Since the Grand Desolate War Institution was one of the exhibitors, every staff of the school had received quite a few complimentary tickets. Having no one else to give them to, Li Yao decided that he might as well give them to the little girl, who apparently was very interested in magical equipment.

"I'll definitely show up!"

Ai Zhiying was overjoyed. She waved her little fists and said, "Besides, I've set you as my role model and I'll be a Cultivator one day!"

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. He asked in a smile, "Why?"

Ai Zhiying stood straight and answered briskly, "Because Cultivators are so awesome! With the marvelous magical equipment that they refine, everybody will be able to live a celestial-like life. So, I'm going to be a Cultivator one day, so that my mom and dad, my uncles and aunts at home, and everyone else in our village will live a peaceful and happy life.

"Maybe one day, I can refine a giant crystal starship, and bring everyone in our village to travel deep into the cosmos. The grandpas and grandmas that have never been out of our village in their entire life will be able to see what the other end of the universe looks like!"

"Good for you, Little Ying!"

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao took out a grey, small stone which had a hole in one end. He had slipped a red string into the hole and made it into a pendant.

It seemed uninteresting, but the stone was actually made of the powder of three marrow stones.

When a marrow stone was being polished, it was unavoidable that some powder would drop off. Li Yao made best use of the leftover and refined them into more than ten pendants together with some other Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures.

They were of little use to Cultivators. But for the growing adolescents, the pendants could build up their body heath and accelerate their brain development, which was similar to the effect of strengthening drugs.

Li Yao was planning to send the pendants to the Principal Mao of the Floating Spear City's Mining Clan High School for the students whose families were too poor to buy strengthening drugs.

Now that fate had arranged Ai Zhiying and him to meet, he might as well give her one first.

But he could only help her that far. It still depended on herself whether or not her spiritual root could be awakened so that she could be a Cultivator.

The pendant had been covered up by Li Yao with the ancient techniques of the Hundred Smelting Clan. Whoever examined the pendant would only feel that it was just a normal stone. Therefore, there would be no danger of robbery.

Li Yao hang the marrow crystal pendant on the little girl's neck. They exchanged their contact information. Then Li Yao returned to the residence of the delegates of the Grand Desolate War Institution.

"What's wrong? You look quite thoughtful. What did you get today?"

Yuan Manqiu saw him and greeted him in a smile.

"A lot. I never realized until today that civil magical equipment could be so amazing. It is a life-changer for the ordinary people, who can live such a happy life that was unimaginable in the old days. Just like what the slogan says, 'Better Cultivation, Better Life'!"

Scratching his hair, Li Yao remarked, "I thought that I was a strong refiner who could refine all kinds of powerful military magical equipment, and I sometimes despised the refiners who worked on the civil magical equipment because I thought they were boring. But the trip today has taught me a good lesson. For the ordinary people, the civil magical equipment has indeed improved the quality of their life and is much more important for them."

"It's great that you can appreciate the significance of the civil magical equipment. However, there is no need to go too far."

Yuan Manqiu added, "There is no paradise in or beyond the Heaven's Origin Sector. Every place is full of blood and slaughter.

"Today, you saw the happy and peaceful life of the ordinary people made possible by the civil magical equipment.

"However, without countless Cultivators and soldiers guarding our civilization with military magical equipment, how long would the peace and happiness last?

"Right now, the Blood Demon Sector is coveting us maliciously. Each beast tide is fiercer than the previous one. The more military magical equipment we refine, the better protected the life of the ordinary people will be!

"Besides, the boundary between military magical equipment and civil magical equipment is really blurred. Much civil magical equipment has been transformed from military magical equipment.

"The Demon Beast Detector that you refined was a piece of military magical equipment in the beginning. But it has been modified into a civil one which has possibly saved many lives already.

"Inheriting the past, defending the present, and creating the future are the three duties of us Cultivators. They are equally important. Cultivators who can fulfill one of the duties will be enough to be worthy of their names.

"If you are good at refining military magical equipment, then just try your best to defend what you saw just now!"

"I got it."

Li Yao was enlightened by what Yuan Manqiu had just said. He felt relieved again.

"Alright, just take it easy. Tomorrow is the first day of the military magical equipment exhibitions. Whether or not the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit can kick off a good start will be revealed after tonight."

Yuan Manqiu stressed, "Recently, not only have the beast tides been arriving more frequently, the local demon beasts of the Heaven's Origin Sector have also been seething with bloodlust. The mines and settlements of many Cultivation sects in the depths of the Grand Desolate Plateau are being threatened.

"Therefore, many sects are planning to purchase crystal suits for better defense.

"If we can secure a few orders from them before we get the big military order, it will ease the burden of the tremendous preliminary cost right now. On the other hand, it will be a great advertisement for us, too.

"How about it? Are you confident?"

"Of course!"

When talking about the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Li Yao immediately turned sharp again. He declared assuredly, "In the previous month, I wasted no time in preparing several secret weapons just for the big show tomorrow!"

Chapter 304: Foggy Booth

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The following morning, the world was greeted by a brightly shining sun.

Leading the delegates of the Grand Desolate War Institution, Yuan Manqiu walked into the hall.

Under the pressure of war all year around, the military magical equipment of the Heaven's Origin Sector was much more advanced than the civil magical equipment.

In the blue sky, countless supersonic flying swords were dashing everywhere, knitting an impenetrable sword net with beautiful patterns.

It looked splendid, but a demon beast which was stupid enough to breach inside would definitely be caught by the sword net and minced into pieces.

On the ground, all kinds of beast puppets, crystal tanks, and even self-moving war fortresses constituted an iron army and patrolled inside the hall. The entire tower seemed to be trembling at their might.

Earthshaking explosions, booms of spiritual tide collisions, ting-tings of swords crashing sabers… All kinds of noises were echoing nonstop.

Holding his breath, Li Yao was gazing at all the exhibitions.

This was the first time that he had joined an exposition of such a large scale and at such a high level. His horizon was broadened so fast that he felt somewhat dizzy.

The Grand Desolate War Institution had rented a booth of more than 1,000 square meters. Li Yao had thought that it was enormous.

However, now that he saw it with his own eyes, he realized that it was below average and dwarfed by the real bit shots.

Many powerful sects had rented booths as big as 10,000 square meters where hundreds of pieces of their magical equipment would be exhibited.

As for Deep Sea University, its booth was more than 30,000 square meters and took up three floors. Technically speaking, it was not a booth anymore, but a special and independent gallery. More than 5,000 pieces of magical equipment would be displayed in the place, making it the unquestionable kingdom of magical equipment.

Walking past the gate of Deep Sea University's booth, all the delegates of the Grand Desolate War Institution were solemn and saw the deepest desire in each other's eyes.

Although not as outspoken as Li Yao, every one of them had been dreaming to oust Deep Sea University and take its place.

The Tiger King Battlesuit, as Deep Sea University's star magical equipment of the year, was placed in the most conspicuous spot over an artificial rock, where it was crouching and ready to lunge down at any moment.

The majestic mighty of the Tiger King Battlesuit made Li Yao's fingers twitch uncontrollably. He was of a mind to clench his fists and punch it into pieces.

"Let's go. We'll have a lot of opportunities to challenge it in the future." Yuan Manqiu patted his shoulder.

Li Yao nodded his head. Smiling viciously, he lowered his eyes and moved on.

According to the marketing plan that they'd discussed, the delegates of the Grand Desolate War Institution didn't stay in their booth. Instead, they toured the hall and visited the booths of their competitors.

The colorful, brilliant, premium crystal suits indeed amazed them. In the meantime, the MP crystal suit models provided by the major sects of the federation let them understand how fierce the competition was.

"How about it?"

Quickly circling the hall for a round, which took them more than two hours, everyone was somewhat gloomy. Yuan Manqiu asked Li Yao, "We've seen all the latest crystal suit models of the federation. What do you think?"

"Deep Sea University, Star Nebula University, Gold Armor Sect… These traditional giants have been working on the refinement of crystal suits for hundreds of years. The premium crystal suits that they refine are indeed delicate inventions with powerful abilities, which could be called ultimate magical equipment. I'm afraid we'll not be able to catch up with them in a short time."

Li Yao pondered for a while and continued, "But an MP crystal suit is something entirely different. I studied several popular MP crystal suit models just now. Judging from the outlook and structure, they are basically the same as the premium crystal suit models that these organizations refined before, except that the Heavenly Materials and Earthly

Treasures have been replaced by ordinary materials and that some components have even been canceled.

"If we get to the bottom of it, these sects are not presenting a new crystal suit model. What they are presenting is a 'jerry-built' version of the premium crystal suit models.

"That explains a lot. It hasn't even been a year since the military announced that the standard military crystal suit would be outsourced. It's impossible for them to design and refine a crystal suit model with brand new structure in such a short time. Therefore, they had to revise their previous designs and hope that luck is on their side.

"From what I've seen, Tiger King, Mournful Mist, Sword Torrent are the only three models that are somewhat refreshing.

"But in my opinion, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is better than any of them.

"Because they are designed more or less in accordance with the ideologies of the high-end crystal suits. Their creators refuse to demean themselves and do not know what the key is to a MP crystal suit.

"However, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit has prioritized low-cost, mass-production, and durability since the very beginning.

"Speaking of the three points, no one has more experience than the refiners of the Grand Desolate War Institution do.

"All in all, my conclusion is that the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is the only true MP crystal suit model.

"Other crystal suits, including the Tiger King Battlesuit, are just bluffing that they are MP crystal suit models.

"However impressive their specifications may be, there are bound to be a lot of flaws and defects in them.

"And what I'm going to do is to find their shortcomings and beat 'em all to the ground!"

His words cheered up his companions again.

"Well said!"

Yuan Manqiu waved her hands and declared in high spirits, "Alright, let's go and teach the believers of the elite refining ideology a lesson about what a real MP crystal suit should look like!"

Talking and laughing, they strode forward.

While they were spying on their competitors, many other Cultivators noticed their existence, too.

The successful refinement of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had never been known by the public. Besides, the exhibition had started for quite a long time, yet the delegates of the Grand Desolate War Institution were still wandering in the hall.

Many Cultivators inevitably had the misunderstanding that they were not here to exhibit their magical equipment, but to purchase magical equipment from other exhibitors.

"Is the Project Mystic Skeleton still ongoing or what? I don't seem to see their booth."

"True that. They suffered a great failure last year. There's no way that they can work it out so fast. I assume that they've given it up already."

"I think it is a smart choice. Refining is not the Grand Desolate War Institution's strong point. Besides, crystal suits are pieces of super magical equipment that is too precise and complicated for them to handle. If they are really in need of crystal suits, the best and easiest thing to do is to buy some from other providers. It is both safe and trouble-saving."

The military magical equipment exhibition had attracted the attention of many reporters, especially those from the three magical equipment magazines and 'Crystal Suit Vista'. They had been here early waiting before the booths of the major exhibitors.

Delegates of the Grand Desolate War Institution roaming in the hall instead of staying in their booth intrigued many reporters.

The noses of the reporters were much sharper than the common Cultivators. They had heard through various channels that the Grand Desolate War Institution was an exhibitor of the Magical Equipment Exposition which was going to show some interesting stuff.

However, they had looked around and didn't find the Grand Desolate War Institution's booth.

Now that they saw the refiners of the Grand Desolate War Institution strolling in the hall at ease with a mysterious smile on their faces as if they had everything under their control, the reports were naturally very curious about it.

"Director Yuan, greetings. I am Gao Yongjie, a journalist from 'Crystal Suit Vista'. I was told that the Grand Desolate War Institution is an exhibitor of the Magical Equipment Exposition. But I didn't find your booth after searching. Can you explain what is going on? Is the Grand Desolate War Institution really participating in the exposition? What kind of magical equipment are you going to display? Is it the rumored cheapest crystal suit of the federation?"

"Director Yuan, nice to meet you. I am Bian Yun, a journalist from 'Gossip Cultivators'. Thirty years ago, you were the 'Deep Sea Goddess', yet you went separate ways with your instructor and exiled yourself to the Grand Desolate War Institution because of different beliefs. It's been thirty years since you last came to Deep Sea City. Are you planning to challenge Deep Sea University on your trip here?"

"Excuse me, you must be Mr. Li Yao, the promising new refiner whose name has been on the rise. The Demon Beast Detector has been quite a hit over the past several months. I remember that you declared war against the Refining Department of Deep Sea University a long time ago. Are you confident that the magical equipment of the Grand Desolate War Institution can beat the magical equipment of the same type from the Deep Sea University?"

Many reporters crowded to them.

This was exactly Yuan Manqiu and Li Yao had been hoping for.

So many people wearing the same uniform walking in the hall round after round was an effective way to advertise and draw everyone's attention.

Yuan Manqiu and Li Yao exchanged an eye look. She smiled and said. "Ladies and gentlemen, what you've been told is true. The Grand Desolate War Institution is taking part in the Magical Equipment Exposition as an exhibitor, not a buyer. What we are going to exhibit and sell is, to quote what you just said, the cheapest crystal suit of the federation!

"However, there is so much more about it other than merely low cost. You will be astonished at its performance!

"If you are interested, please follow us. Let's unveil the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit together!"

Yuan Manqiu's words immediately ignited the crowd.

Now that the cheapest crystal suit of the federation had been successfully refined, they were definitely going to check it out despite its doubtful performance.

So, the reporters all followed the delegates of the Grand Desolate War Institution.

This was the time when keeping a low profile in the beginning paid off.

Other than the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, all the MP crystal suit models had called press conferences the moment they were successfully refined. The specifications and demos of them had been known by the entire world and, without the feeling of freshness anymore, they sometimes bored people who got in touch with them.

But the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had been hiding itself in darkness the whole time. Besides, many people still remembered the big explosion last year.

Not just the reporters, most of the Cultivators were also curious about what a crystal suit allegedly with a cost of around a hundred million actually looked like.

Therefore, the crowd grew larger and larger as it moved on like a snowball, until it reached the northwest corner of the fifth level of the convention center.

The booth in this place had been shrouded by grey fog since three days ago, with a glittering countdown in the middle of the fog that was changing every second.

Behind the countdown was a giant question mark.

Right now, many tourists had already gathered around the foggy booth before the crowd arrived, because the countdown that had been running for three days would return to zero in ten minutes, and the question mark behind it suddenly bounced into an even larger, even more brilliant exclamation mark.

As the shrink of the countdown, the exclamation mark was glimmering accordingly, like passionate heartbeat.

The ever-growing suspense had aroused everyone's interest about the exhibition to be held inside the foggy booth.

"Shua!"

In the last ten minutes, Fist of Fury, emblem of the Grand Desolate War Institution, gradually revealed itself in the boundary of the dense fog.

Inside the fog echoed gunfire, explosions of spiritual energy, screams of demon beasts, as well as the mighty, incessant roars of human beings.

Chapter 305: Grand Entrance

Chapter 305: Grand Entrance

If one listened carefully, one would easily notice that the noises inside the fog were not chaotic but well organized into a thrilling narrative.

It sounded like a large batch of demon beasts were attacking a human town inside the fog.

At first, there were the noises of the beast tide surging and the alarms of the human's defense rune arrays ringing.

Then, there were the noises of the demon beasts breaching the defense and fighting the human soldiers face to face.

In the beginning, the two parties were evenly matched. One could hear the human captains commanding the troops calmly.

But soon, the roars of the demon beasts grew larger and echoed on all directions.

The intense gunfire and rubbing of chainsword were soon replaced by screams.

"For the human race!"

"For the federation!"

Inside the fog, the dying shouts occurred once in a while, followed by earthshaking explosions.

Although they didn't see it with their own eyes, with the surround sound, the audience was able to picture a heartbreaking scene: in a lone town besieged by countless demon beasts, the soldiers and Cultivators stuffed themselves with crystal bombs and rushed against the beast tide in their last battle hymn, dying a martyr's death unflinchingly.

Women's screams, children's cries, civilians' wails… came from the slaughter house vaguely, too.

The complicated noises boiled for almost five minutes, until the clamor of demon beasts completely overwhelmed the barrage of the human troops. Everybody in the audience could tell that the town would fall in no time.

Right then, distant yet terrifying thunders echoed far away, as if countless giants were marching in a neat formation at the town in war fire.

"BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!"

Iron feet rose up and stomped down in the same rhythm.

The reinforcements were not moving at a fast speed, yet their footsteps were surrounded by an intimidating aura which seemed ready to crush everything in their way.

Joyful, hopeful, and somewhat twisted cries came from the center of the fog.

"It's a crystal suit legion!"

"The crystal suit legion of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit!"

"BANG! BANG! BANG! BAM BAM BAM BAM!"

The savage footsteps were denser, louder and more furious as they approached near.

Every audience could picture the same scene in their mind: Thousands of Cultivators, wearing glittering silver crystal suits, congregated into an iron cascade and crashed into the beast tide!

The aching noises of the following onslaught put sweat on everyone's forehead, who was more curious about the belated Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit than ever.

"It seems that the Grand Desolate War Institution has been fully prepared for their exhibition. The advertisement alone is evident enough of their ambition!"

"The Grand Desolate War Institution is indeed good at keeping secrets. They didn't leak anything beforehand, waiting to pour everything out in the Magical Equipment Exposition today. I'm going to see whether or not their crystal suit is as good as they claimed in the advertisement!"

All of the audience was engrossed in the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

However, most of the believers of the elite refining ideology, especially those who were the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit's competitors, were eyeing the booth suspiciously.

"The Grand Desolate War Institution does not have such competence. They're just bluffing."

"They claim that they have successfully refined it. Who knows what kind of garbage they're going to bring out? Don't think that a battle armor plus a crystal processor equals a crystal suit!"

"Even if they have refined one, it's going to be uninteresting."

"Uninteresting or not, I'm more concerned about the stability. Who knows whether or not it will explode again like last year? I suggest we all put on our spiritual shields. Visiting the booth of the Grand Desolate War Institution might endanger your life!"

As for the reporters from the three magical equipment magazines and 'Crystal Suit Vista', they were relatively more objective. Gathering together, they discussed the advertisement in whispers.

"This audio advertisement has indeed been finely made. It seems to be suggesting that the Grand Desolate War Institution's crystal suit will highlight the low cost and the mass-manufacturing possibility."

"Think about it. If a thousand warriors put on crystal suits and make up a full-crystal-suit legion, as long as the performance of the crystal suit is acceptable, such a legion will be indeed unstoppable."

"We just don't know yet how far away the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is from other crystal suits as the cheapest crystal suit of the federation."

"Look, the countdown is coming to an end. The secret will be revealed now."

"The last five seconds!"

"Five…four…three…two…one…zero!"

As the countdown reached zero, the fog inside the booth dissipated. The smoke of war fire had been cleared by breeze.

Unfolding in front of thousands of pairs of eyes were vivid city ruins scattered by collapsed buildings that were still burning in fume.

On the ground closer to the audience, there were dead bodies of humans and demon beasts, corroded crystal railguns, burning crystal tanks.

Some of them were mock-ups. Some were holograms projected by mystic lights. Tangled together, they made a life-like post-war wasteland.

Even the air was filled with the intense odor of blood, the stink of demon beasts, and the pungent smell of spiritual energy explosions.

The booth only had a coverage of 1,000 square kilometers. But with the delicate stage setting and the 3D projections, one would be under the illusion that the boundary of the booth extended to the horizon, making the booth ten times larger than it actually was.

In the most eye-catching position and the center of everyone's attention, a Cultivator in a crystal suit was breathing heavily on one of his knees.

He seemed to have experienced a brutal fight. Many parts of his crystal suit had been destroyed. Whatever remained was full of rust due to corrosion of the venom from demon beasts, to the extent that the crystal suit seemed to be breaking up at any moment.

After taking a rest, the Cultivators stood up difficultly.

All the other items were dimed. Several mystic lights focused on him, highlighting the terrible conditions of his gear.

The crystal suit that he was wearing couldn't be worse.

The weird opening immediately raised a round of exclamations.

Neither did everyone expect the Grand Desolate War Institution to transform their booth into a battlefield, nor were they ready to watch the debut of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit in such an awful state.

In the ragged Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, the Cultivator peered at the audience coldly.

Although the face of the Cultivator had been covered by the rusted helmet, the intense scent of killing from the crimson crystal cameras still made a lot audience shiver. Some of them even took a step back in fear.

Then, the Cultivator turned around and walked into the burning city, one step after another.

"Fellow Daoists, my journalist friends, what you've just seen is the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, the latest crystal suit refined by the Grand Desolate War Institution. Allow me to introduce the general performance and the refining process to you."

Yuan Manqiu, together with the rest of the delegates, walked out of the city ruins and smiled.

Then, more than ten giant light beams appeared in the air, displaying the blueprints, specifications, and pictures of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

Two key points were stressed.

First, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was the cheapest crystal suit of the federation, with a price lower than those of the competitive products by more than a quarter.

Second, the fundamental framework of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was based on technology from the Star Ocean Imperium, which the Grand Desolate War Institution had been working on for twenty years to fully digest it. Therefore, the quality of the suit is guaranteed despite the low cost. It is almost as good as the standard crystal suit of the imperial army of the Star Ocean Imperium.

However, most of the audience didn't quite catch what Yuan Manqiu said, because their attention was fixed on the Cultivator in the battered Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit who had walked onto a platform in the back of the booth.

A dynamometer for crystal suit rose up from below the platform, with a ten-minute countdown hanging above.

The Cultivator squatted, lowered his shoulder, and clenched his right fist beside his waist where it seemed to be burning in flames.

"He is going to demonstrate the strength of the crystal suit?"

"The crystal suit is as good as rubbish right now. What can it do?"

"I get it. The Grand Desolate War Institution wants the world to know that their crystal suit is sturdy enough to deal impressive damage under such lousy conditions!"

"But I wonder how good it can be. Five tons? Ten tons? Fifteen tons?"

"Pa!"

In everyone's earnest eyes, the Cultivator kept his feet still, while he punched the dynamometer after a twitch of his back like a dragon jumping out of water. The dynamometer shook violently, before a row of numbers popped up.

"999.99 kg!"

The figure immediately set the spot in riot.

Everyone was wearing a weird expression.

It was not too strong. It was too weak.

"What? Not even one ton!"

"Are you kidding me? I can punch more than one ton even without any help. Why do I want to wear such a crystal suit?"

"Although it is seriously damaged now, it provides absolutely no enhancement to the wearer. There's nothing worth to show off about the crystal suit. What is the Grand Desolate War Institution doing here?"

The Cultivator seemed to hear none of it. He punched the dynamometer with his left fist the moment he retreated his right fist.

This time, the number was even smaller. It was…

"888.88 kg!"

Complaints grew louder and louder.

But Yuan Manqiu continued smiling and introducing the specifications of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

The Cultivator turned a deaf ear to the boos from the audience. Dwelling in his own world, he punched the dynamometer with his right fist again.

"999.99 kg!"

The left fist continued.

"888.88 kg!"

Right and left again.

"999.99 kg!"

"888.88 kg!"

The Cultivator was like a precise machine. The gaps between two punches were exactly the same, and so was the damage dealt by each punch. 999.99 kg from the right fist, and 888.88 kg from the left fist.

One minute later, the whispers weakened.

Two minutes later, the whispers were gone.

Three minutes later, the Cultivator was still savaging the dynamometer leisurely. He had punched hundreds of times, and the reading of the dynamometer was either 999.99 or 888.88.

Cold sweat was appearing on the audience's forehead.

Four minutes later, the whispers were up again. This time with amazement!

Everyone understood that what the Grand Desolate War Institution was trying to demonstrate was not the limit of strength, but the unbelievable stability.

"This…this crystal suit is formidable. It is almost shattered, yet it can maintain exactly the same strength in hundreds of punches!"

"In my opinion, it is the guy who's wearing the crystal suit that is formidable."

"The enhancement of the crystal suit is truly important. But his manipulation of his own strength is astonishingly precise, too."

"Indeed. The guy is definitely a top Exo. I wonder where the Grand Desolate War Institution found such an expert!"

Chapter 306: Seafood Fried Rice and Egg Fried Rice

Chapter 306: Seafood Fried Rice and Egg Fried Rice

Five minutes later… Six minutes later…

The precise punches were still on.

As the whispers grew louder than ever, Yuan Manqiu smiled.

"Ladies and gentlemen, our booth, the Burning Town, is of course make believe. Everything is made up by mock-ups and holograms.

"However, the damage to the crystal suit which is receiving the stability test right now are a hundred percent authentic.

"Before the exhibition, we conducted a series of destruction experiments for three days on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. Please see the light beam for the detailed recordings of the experiment.

"At first, the front side of the crystal suit was crushed by a force of 20 tons ten times in a row, which was to simulate the high-speed collision of the heavily-armored demon beasts.

"Secondly, a Hellfire-Lightning was set off five meters away from the crystal suit, which was to simulate the blast and bombardment of the bomber demon beasts.

"Then, natural venom of demon beasts, which was as corrosive as the body fluid of demon generals, was sprayed to the surface of the crystal suit, and wasn't cleaned up by water until five hours later.

"Eventually, the crystal suit was poured upon with flammable liquid and set ablaze. After burning for ten minutes, the fire was put off by the staff who shoveled sand on it.

"After the four destruction experiments, the crystal suit has become as crappy as you are seeing right now.

"As you've all witnessed, although it has suffered various impairments, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is still highly stable and precise.

"I'd like to point out that this prototype is utterly devoid of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, and nor has it employed any special techniques or tricks. It was refined according to the industrialization standard, which means any future Mystic Skeleton Battlesuits will be as excellent as this one!

"If you have any doubts about the videos, or what I said just now, you are welcome to examine the suit closely later. I've noticed that we have a lot of experts here who will be able to tell whether or not the damage to the suit is real with their own eyes."

Yuan Manqiu's words caused another round of chaos. The crowds whispered to one another like sparrows in a spring.

Right then, the ten-minute countdown came to an end.

As the countdown returned to zero, the Cultivator on the platform punched the dynamometer for the last time with his left fist.

The reading was still 888.88 kg, exactly the same as the very first punch of his left fist.

What was more shocking was that according to the counter beside the dynamometer, he had punched a thousand times in total, five hundred times with his left fist and five hundred times with his right fist!

Punching a thousand times in an exactly fixed rhythm for ten minutes and keeping the force of each punch at exactly the same level!

Such terrifying precision was remarkable enough both for the crystal suit and for the Exo who had been wearing it.

Everyone was eyeing the Exo in astonishment.

After the Exo finished the test smoothly and went off the platform, his body weirdly blinked as he made the first step on the ground.

"Don't worry, everyone. There is nothing wrong with the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. It was caused by the difference of gravity."

Yuan Manqiu said unhurriedly, as she tossed another heavy bomb to the crowds, "Did I mention that the platform has been built inside a rune array where the gravity is ten times larger than usual?"

"What?!"

Everyone was truly shocked.

The amazing performance that had conquered all of them was actually completed in ten-time gravity?

What kind of crystal suit was this?

Who was the Exo that had been wearing it?

Finally, the mysterious Exo walked back to the spotlight in front of the audience.

"Shua!"

The helmet split, unveiling a face that was almost too young for an ace Exo which most audience had imagined him to be.

Several well-informed reporters recognized him and gasped.

"Li Yao?"

As the star of his generation in the Grand Desolate War Institution, Li Yao had been known by his nicknames 'Vulture' and 'Fiend Star'.

However, most people never knew that he was also such a skilled Exo!

"Hello, everyone!"

Li Yao smiled. "I am Li Yao, a sophomore student of the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution. I first got in touch with crystal suits last year and studied in the Thunder Training Camp for three months, but I was unfortunately eliminated in the end.

"All in all, I am not a professional Exo. I am just a refiner who likes wearing crystal suits as a hobby. It was because of the stability and precision of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit that I luckily completed the test just now.

"Seeing that an amateur Exo such as myself could complete such a difficult test, you must have a deeper understanding how excellent the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is now, right?"

His words caused another round of exclamations.

The ordinary people and the Cultivators who were not familiar with Li Yao's background were astounded by the dramatic enhancement of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, which had boosted a sophomore refiner that barely knew about crystal suits before to such an inconceivable level.

But for those who knew the truth, especially the refiners from the competitors, they were cursing Li Yao's shamelessness in their mind. It was true that he was a sophomore, but everyone knew that 'Vulture Li Yao' was one of the best students of the Grand Desolate War Institution who boasted amazing capabilities!

It was also true that he had been eliminated in the Thunder Training Camp towards the end of his training, but that was because he had been trapped in Thunderous Sound Mountain.

In the regard of riding a crystal suit, Li Yao was definitely the top of the class of students who were enrolled in the Thunder Training Camp at the same time with him. He was definitely able to stand equal to Long Qianyue, whose fame had been on the rise among Exos.

Such a genius was pretending to be someone common. Wasn't it a little over-modest, jerk?

Before they were able to speak out aloud, the reporters had already crowded forward.

Almost twenty crystal microphones were waving up and down, jabbing at Li Yao's face as if they were swords and sabers.

"Mr. Li Yao, I've long heard your crazy performance in the Thunder Training Camp, which has left a deep impression on many of your classmates. Even such an expert as Long Qianyue has expressed her regret that she didn't find the opportunity to challenge you in the final elimination match and her intention that she would like to challenge you again in good time. I never expected that you are so skilled at driving a crystal suit!"

"Mr. Li Yao, since you are the test pilot of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, you must know its advantages and disadvantages very clearly. Can you elaborate them from the perspective of an Exo?"

"Mr. Li Yao, you guys have visited a lot of MP crystal suit models provided by your competitors. What do you have to say about their products, especially Tiger King, Mournful Mist, and Sword Torrent? Although their costs are much higher than the cost of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, their specifications seem to be much better than that of your crystal suit. Is the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit good enough to compete against them?"

Li Yao was never a prudent man. He smiled and said, "In my opinion, the relationship between the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and the products of our competitors can be compared to the relationship between egg fried rice and seafood fried rice."

His remark silenced the entire spot.

Even the most knowledgeable reporters were looking at each other in confusion.

Some of them rubbed their ears uncontrollably which they thought had deceived them.

Crystal suit and fried rice? How in the world were they related?

Li Yao explained unhurriedly, "We visited a lot of booths just now and we have no doubt, but only admiration for the experience and capability that the major universities and sects of the federation have in the refinement of crystal suits.

"As a crystal suit fan, I have listed many of their classic crystal suit models as objects that I need to study and targets that I must reach. I dream of buying several of their masterpieces, even if that might bankrupt me.

"However, the classic crystal suit models have utilized a lot of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures without any exception.

"A refiner who is good at crafting high-end crystal suits equals to a chef of an expensive restaurant who is good at making seafood fried rice with the best lobsters, scallops and abalones.

"I'm afraid that such a dish of seafood fried rice won't be affordable for everyone. Two to three thousand a serving, I imagine.

"However, the chef is now asked to make a dish of ordinary fried rice with a cost below a hundred.

"I admit that the culinary skills of the chef are definitely top of the trade. However, the cost limits his options. How can he put in the tasteful seafood that he is most familiar with when he only has a budget of a hundred bucks?

"The Grand Desolate War Institution is different. As the well-acknowledged citadel of grassroots refining ideology, the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution has gained abundant experience in the refinement of low-end magical equipment for a long time. We are like ordinary cooks specializing in egg fried rice.

"If we were to produce a dish of seafood fried rice that sells two to three thousand, our product would certainly be beaten to the ground.

"However, if the target of the competition is a dish of ordinary fried rice, no one will have more professional expertise than we do.

"We have never considered whether or not we should add seafood since the very beginning. Instead, we have carefully picked the perfect eggs, hams, onions and rice and cooked them into impeccable ham-and-egg fried rice in the way that we are most familiar with and good at.

"Let me ask you, if you have a hundred bucks, would you prefer a bowl of seafood fried rice without any seafood, or a bowl of supreme ham-and-egg fried rice with authentic and well-picked ingredients?

"I have every faith in the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, and I believe that you will enjoy our 'supreme ham-and-egg fried rice'!

"Action speak louder than words. Crystal suits are the stars of the Magical Equipment Exposition this year. The organizer has specially set up many contests for crystal suits. I'll participate in some of the important ones with the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. By that time, you will be able to observe the collision of different types of 'fried rice'!"

The unexpected metaphor had prompted the reporters to write it down quickly; Li Yao's aggressive declaration made many of them enjoy themselves, too.

Right then, an unharmonious shriek came from the crowd.

"Mr. Li Yao, your performance just now is too unbelievable for a beginner with a cheap crystal suit to achieve. The dynamometer..."

Chapter 307: Face Slapping!

Chapter 307: Face Slapping!

The shriek stopped suddenly, intentionally cutting off the latter half of the sentence.

But it was enough for everyone to understand what he was trying to say. He was implying that the Grand Desolate War Institution had cheated on the dynamometer, otherwise Li Yao's fists would've never been so stable.

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao stared at the crowds with eyes as sharp as saber, as he asked calmly, "May I ask who you are?"

"I am Xu You, a journalist from 'Magical Equipment World'. I believe many others share the same doubts as mine after witnessing Mr. Li Yao's shocking performance; I'm speaking for all of us.

"However, I can't help but notice that the dynamometer has been lowered down. I doubt if there's any significance examining it now."

A sly reporter in his thirties talked slowly in a high voice with a fake smile.

He was insinuating that even if the dynamometer turned out to be fine after examination, it was still not enough to prove their innocence, because the Grand Desolate War Institution must've removed the tricks on the dynamometer in the past several minutes.

Xu You was indeed good at framing other people. There seemed to be no evidence to falsify his theory.

"Magical Equipment World?"

"Xu You?"

The name alarmed Li Yao greatly. Brutal brightness beamed out from his eyes, as his lips curled in cruelness.

He remembered who the guy was.

When the Demon Beast Detector was first released, the three magical equipment magazines had all posted several implicit reviews.

The reviews on 'Refiners' Home' and 'Flying Sword and Battle Armor', although showed no confidence in the Demon Beast Detector, were actually elaborated from the perspective of its creator, who was only a college student with barely any experience, and the perspective of its orientation, which was mixed and unclear.

The perspectives indicated that they didn't find much useful materials to attack the Demon Beast Detector per se.

The review on 'Magical Equipment World' was the only one that lambasted the Demon Beast Detector.

Li Yao was never a lenient man. He had been pissed off by the review upon reading it. How could he let go of someone who had vilified his dear magical equipment?

He remembered clearly that the author of the review was Xu You!

The two of them stared at each other in the eyes and noticed the viciousness in the other's eyes at the same time.

Xu You was pissed off by Li Yao's panache, too.

Xu You had graduated from the Refining Department of Deep Sea University. He majored in History of Refining and Comparative Refining.

He had been working at 'Magical Equipment World' all the time after graduation.

After more than ten years of hard work, he finally gained enough expertise and connections to establish a column in 'Magical Equipment World'.

Right then, a college classmate who had been working in the Zephyr Guild reached out to him, subtly asking him to write a 'just', 'objective', and 'professional' review regarding the Demon Beast Detector.

It was not unusual for reporters.

Although 'Magical Equipment World' had strict rules banning him from openly accepting commercial bribes, his friend had arranged parties and dinners where he really enjoyed himself and had been providing a strengthening drug for him to 'evaluate' for a very long time.

Besides, the Zephyr Guild was a giant in the business of refining. It would do him good for his future development if he could make some friends there.

As for Li Yao, the refiner of the Demon Beast Detector, who was that guy?

No one!

He felt that there was no need to think twice. The moment he went back home, he wrote an article slamming the Demon Beast Detector fiercely.

He thought that was it. He was only a second-rate critic of 'Magical Equipment World', and his column was on an unimportant page. The Demon Beast Detector was a piece of magical equipment that hardly anyone knew about, too.

Never did he anticipate that a few months later, Twin Dragons Union, of which Li Yao was a shareholder, would invest in the Mountain Sea Sect, which then cooperated with the Moon Splitting Sword Guild. With the nationwide commercials and the brand-new distribution network made up by flying swords, the Demon Beast Detector was on fire!

Inevitably, the review that Xu You had written was dug out again.

As the Demon Beast Detector became a fashion and many people had tested it themselves, they naturally discovered that the review was over-exaggerated, or rather, utter BS, if put more straightforwardly.

Many netizens had left comments in his column decrying him to be a blind idiot who knew absolutely nothing about magical equipment.

Even worse, many colleagues inside 'Magical Equipment World' complained about him, too, accusing him of undermining the professionalism of 'Magical Equipment World'.

It was true that every reporter had friends and connections, and that the articles they wrote were not always neutral. But it was wrong of him to have been so obvious!

"Xu You is still too young and immature. He needs more practice."

If anything were to move on smoothly, Xu You would've been promoted to host a renowned column of 'Magical Equipment World' shortly.

However, due to the incident, he was remarked as above when vetted by the leaders of the magazine. Not only did he blow the opportunity of hosting the renowned column, he even lost his personal column and was relegated to be a field reporter who had to travel busily all the time.

Xu You had never been more furious. He was not angry at the Zephyr Guild, nor at his old friend, nor at the review that he had been fooled into writing. Instead, he was bent out of the shape when he thought of Li Yao, the refiner of the Demon Beast Detector.

If Li Yao had not invented this wretched Demon Beast Detector in the first place, how would he have ended up like this with all his hard work in the past decade gone forever?

When enemies meet, there is bound to be blood. Xu Yu hated Li Yao and was not particularly fond of the Grand Desolate War Institution where Li Yao came from, either. He had been nitpicking the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit the whole time in the crowd. Now that he saw it was Li Yao who had been driving the suit, he was overwhelmed by madness and blurted these words out.

However, he hit an iron plate this time, one that was barbed, poisonous, and heated.

Li Yao smiled and replied, "I was wondering which experienced journalist could come up with such a brilliant satire, and I immediately thought of Mr. Xu You. And when I turned around, there you were!

"The 18,744th issue of your magazine, on which a review entitled with 'Demon Beast Detector: A Crab that Does Not Taste Good', is still fresh in my memories.

"In the article, you proposed a lot of marvelous and mysterious insights. For example, wearing the Demon Beast Detector on one side of the head would lead to body imbalance; the pieces of the Demon Beast Detector would stab into the eyes if it was accidentally broken… Those sharp observation and extraordinary deductions proved that you are a well-deserved top expert of magical equipment."

Li Yao's words triggered a round of whispers.

The audience at the spot were experienced experts of the trade and magical equipment fans. Many of them had heard of the Demon Beast Detector before and knew that the criticism of 'body imbalance' was cavil.

"What's going on? The two of them are targeting each other. Is there grudge between them?"

"Of course there is. You didn't know anything about it? Come on, let me tell you…"

Most of the audience had heard of the background of the Demon Beast Detector. Now, with the introduction of the reporters who were never afraid of stirring up trouble, everyone had put on an 'ah ha!' face and were looking at Xu You in disgust.

The reporters from 'Refiners' Home' and 'Flying Sword and Battle Armor' were gloating over Xu You's disgrace and glad that they did not catch much attention. Otherwise, it would be them who were being bashed by the public.

Xu You did not expect that Li Yao knew who he was and remembered the article he wrote, and he did not expect that Li Yao's tongue was so sharp that it slapped his face like a thorny whip.

He was rendered speechless for a long time with his face flushed and his neck bulging.

Li Yao's eyes left him as if he were already a dead dog and then glanced at the crowds,

"The test just now can be repeated at any time. If you have any suspicion, we can rerun the test on a dynamometer provided by the organizer or any party that is willing to offer, except…

Li Yao sneered and said, "Except 'Magical Equipment World'. I personally have doubts about the position and professionalism of 'Magical Equipment World'. Until I'm fully convinced, I'm not taking any interview or review from 'Magical Equipment World'!"

Everyone gasped at what Li Yao just said, which was like a Hellfire-Lightning that blew the crowds away.

A typical refiner would always try to make friends with the three magical equipment magazines, which made Li Yao, who had fallen out openly with 'Magical Equipment World', a unique and eccentric one.

No wonder he was 'Vulture Li Yao'!

"Crack! Crack!"

For a moment, countless flash rune arrays were lit up in front of Li Yao's face. Many photos that were going to be popular on newspapers, magazines, and Nexus were taken.

In the meantime, Xu You seemed to be caught by a raging fever. His body was shivering, and his teeth were chattering. The flames in his eyes seemed to be burning Li Yao to ash.

He knew that he was in even bigger trouble now.

Li Yao scoffed.

Elite refining ideology was the mainstream among refiners. The three magical equipment magazines were dominated by the elite refiners, too.

As a grassroots refiner, he wouldn't be welcomed by them even if he were to bow and kneel humbly. They were not going to judge the magical equipment of the grassroots refiners objectively, either.

In light of that, he might as well go at loggerheads with the three magazines. That way, there would be a good chance that he would attract a lot of attention in the Cultivation world.

Meanwhile, the three magical equipment magazines would be taught a lesson that Vulture Li Yao, as well as the Grand Desolate War Institution behind him, was not a push-over.

Right then, Yuan Manqiu walked forward and said with a smile, "Everyone, the booth of the Grand Desolate War Institution is officially opened now. Please enjoy yourselves inside. You can examine the broken Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit with your own hands. Also, we have an intact Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit here which is ready to be tested by fellow Daoists who have experience in wearing a crystal suit!"

Li Yao took a step back and spoke to Yuan Manqiu in a low voice, "How about it, professor? Did I do my job well?"

"Yes, marvelously. You have outdone yourself."

Yuan Manqiu winked at him, "We have set off a firecracker that is loud enough. I'm pretty sure that all the media will report the news about the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit later. Maybe we'll even be able to kick Deep Sea University out of the headlines!"

Chapter 308: Magical Equipment Purchaser

Chapter 308: Magical Equipment Purchaser

"I'm afraid I was too outspoken towards the end and ridiculed 'Magical Equipment World' to their bones. Will they write something bad about us if they feel insulted?"

Li Yao was a little ill at ease.

"If we didn't ridicule them, would they write something good for us?"

Yuan Manqiu patted his shoulder. "Rest assured. I picked you as our spokesman today because you are a student and it is not a big deal what you say. We'll be able to clean up the mess however you castigate them.

"Also, you didn't overstep any line just now. You just said that you would decline interviews and reviews of 'Magical Equipment World' personally. Young men are always rash. Everyone understands that. Besides, there are still 'Refiners' Home' and 'Flying Sword and Battle Armor'.

"Even if the three magical equipment magazines are all against us, it is still unimportant. The Grand Desolate War Institution has its own media channels, too!"

The Grand Desolate War Institution was relatively weaker in regard to refining. However, as one of the Nine Elite Universities, it boasted great comprehensive capability and had a lot of connections both in the military and in the news industry. It was also in a good relationship with the Demon Hunters' Association, whose magazine 'Predator' had crystal suit sections, too.

Besides, now that Li Yao had pointed out the conflict between 'Magical Equipment World' and himself to the public, it would be questionable whether the three magical equipment magazines were bold enough to continue posting negative reviews about the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

Chances were that they might have to return to a relatively neutral position due to the pressure.

As it turned out, the news of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had appeared on the live stream of dozens of media outlets within the next hour, informing the entire federation of its arrival.

The mysterious promotional audio, the intimidating stage setting, the amazing stability and durability of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, the startling strength control of Li Yao, who had been engaged in a violent quarrel with a reporter from 'Magical Equipment World'…

All of these made the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and Li Yao a focus of public attention.

"The decorations of the Grand Desolate War Institution's booth are so unique! Their battle-scarred crystal suit is very interesting, too. They seem to be very confident about the quality of their crystal suit."

"The Cultivator who was wearing the crystal suit was awesome! His subtle control over his fists is unbelievable! We've never heard that the Grand Desolate War Institution has such an ace Exo before, have we?"

"Wow! Publicly snubbing 'Magical Equipment World'? That's so impressive!"

Such discussions were all over the Nexus.

Grand Desolate War Institution, Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Vulture Li Yao… became trending words of the day on many major forums.

Back in the Magical Equipment Exposition, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit attracted more and more eyes, too.

Visitors crowded to the Grand Desolate War Institution's booth. Every staff member was cornered by enthusiastic reporters. Li Yao didn't avoid his fate of being besieged, either. All those who came touched the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit in person to examine whether or not the damages were real.

The competitors of the Grand Desolate War Institution felt great pressure.

After watching Li Yao's astounding performance, the visitors had questioned the stability and the durability of other MP crystal suit models.

This time, many sects were dripping cold sweat.

Even the Mournful Mist Battlesuit of the Star Nebula University and the Sword Torrent Battlesuit of the three major sword-training sects were not good enough for a performance of precision like Li Yao's due to different designing purposes, let alone the rest of the MP crystal suit models which were basically pieces of previous models patched up together.

…

Below Deep Sea University's booth, deep inside the Kingdom of Magical Equipment, in an enclosed testing room.

"Pa! Pa Pa Pa Pa!"

Zuo Feijing was punching a dynamometer wearing the Tiger King Battlesuit one time after another. The dynamometer was shaking violently.

The light beam beside showed the reading of his strength,

"999.99 kg!"

"888.88 kg!"

"999.99 kg!"

"888.87 kg!"

Zuo Feijing stopped.

The helmet split, revealing a gloomy face, whose owner was deep in thought looking at the glittering reading in front of him.

Behind him, Jiang Sheng, the Supernova, remarked calmly, "Feijing, don't let it bother you too much.

"In order to be an instant hit, the Grand Desolate War Institution must've put a lot of thought into it before they finally figured out a test that could best demonstrate the characteristics of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

"The test pilot must've practiced it many times, too. It's even possible that he did nothing but practice precisely punching over the past month.

"Besides, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit on the stage must've been adjusted to strengthen its stability and precision.

"This is your first try. It's perfectly normal that you didn't achieve the result you wanted, and it doesn't mean that Tiger King is worse than Mystic Skeleton, or that you are worse than the test pilot.

"You've read the specifications of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, which are poles apart from ours. This is just a gimmick. In a real battle, stability and precision are indeed important. But how will a ten-minute punching with a constant velocity help a soldier? God knows!

"So, we don't need to be distracted by the Grand Desolate War Institution and dance to their rhythm.

"There are a thousand tests that the Tiger King Battlesuit can do and the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit can't. Why do you cling on this particular test which is utterly absurd?"

Zuo Feijing was quiet for a while. Then he said, "Professor, I heard that the name of the Grand Desolate War Institution's test pilot was Li Yao. Is he the same Li Yao who defeated Jiang Shaoyang before?"

Jiang Sheng nodded his head and sighed.

"Correct. That's him. I'm not optimistic about the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. However, this 'Vulture Li Yao' is indeed a good disciple of my beloved Senior Sister Yuan's. An exemplary young man of his age."

Zuo Feijing continued, "Is it true that he never touched crystal suits until last year in the Thunder Training Camp?"

Jiang Sheng paused for a moment. Then he replied, "I have arranged someone to check it out. But I don't think they would lie about that. Besides, Li Yao was born in a magical equipment graveyard, which is not a decent place for anyone to grow up in. It's not unusual that he never touched crystal suits before."

"I got it."

Zuo Feijing nodded. His furrowed brows suddenly loosened as he put on a sunny smile, "I was regretting that Mournful Mist and Sword Torrent were not enough to fulfil my hungry stomach.

"But with Vulture Li Yao joining the game, I think I might be able to enjoy a nice meal with Mystic Skeleton, Mournful Mist, and Sword Torrent on my tray."

"Shua!"

The helmet wrapped up again.

A hurricane suddenly appeared in front of Zuo Feijing, who was punching at a much faster speed than Li Yao did. Hundreds of punches were completed within ten seconds.

"999.99 kg!"

"888.88 kg!"

"999.99 kg!"

"888.88 kg!"

This time, the readings were identical without the slightest flaw.

…

Luo Jingang, leader of Thunderbolt Hall, was a high-level Cultivator at the Building Foundation Stage and a tough man who had gained his expertise through mountains of dead bodies and seas of blood.

His soul was extremely solid. He didn't even wince when he fell into a trap made by more than ten high-level demon generals.

But as he went into the booth of Red Serpent Sect, he felt so dizzy that he was falling to the ground at any moment, partly because the advanced and splendid crystal suits inside dazzled him, and partly because he was shocked by the price tag below them.

"Dammit, why are crystal suits so expensive nowadays?"

Cold sweat was appearing on the forehead of Luo Jingang, who had never raised his eyebrow even when surging beast tide was coming at him. He was starting to realize that this shopping trip was not going to be as smooth as he had thought.

Luo Jingang used to be an unaffiliated Cultivator who often went to the depths of the Grand Desolate Plateau with his brothers to hunt down demon beasts. Slashing the sharpest saber, drinking the strongest liquor, slaughtering the brutalist demon beasts… It had been quite an enjoyable life back then.

However, as they grew older, they all started their own families and recruited many disciples. More and more mouths were counting on them to feed.

Hunting demon beasts was a dangerous job. After decades in the wilderness, many of his friends had been seriously wounded. Some even perished, leaving broken families behind them.

Wounds of the living had to be treated. Families of the deceased had to be attended to. As the team grew larger and larger, money became a top priority. It seemed irresponsible to be a free unaffiliated Cultivator anymore.

It happened that Luo Jingang discovered a mother lode of rare crystals while he was hunting demon beasts. According to the federal law, the exploitation right fell into their hands after they paid a huge amount of tax.

After discussing with his brothers, Luo Jingang registered his own sect, Thunderbolt Hall, based on the mother lode.

He had thought that with such a precious mother lode, they would be able to live a comfortable life for several years.

However, development of the mother lode was not as easy as it sounded. What Luo Jingang discovered was a deep mother lode. The valuable resources were buried thousands of meters down in the ground, which required special mining magical equipment to dig out. The initial costs would be very high. But the yield when the resources were retrieved was promising, too.

Luo Jingang's ambition was burning brighter than ever. He gritted his teeth and borrowed a large sum of money from the bank with the mother lode as the collateral. With the loan, he purchased the latest mining magical equipment and hired a research-type Cultivator who was adept at earth-class and metal-class spiritual energy as the technical director of Thunderbolt Hall.

His brothers and he had invested all their savings into the new sect. According to the estimation of the technical director, as long as the mother lode was mined normally, their initial input would be redeemed within five years. The mother lode had enough resources for the use of a hundred years, which was long enough for the Thunderbolt Hall to develop into a middle-size sect with around a hundred Cultivators.

The promising project plan had elated both Luo Jingang and his brothers.

However, fortune is always fickle. Since last year, the demon beasts on the Grand Desolate Plateau grew more and more irritated. The mother lode of the Thunderbolt Hall had been frequented by them.

The demon beasts murdered the miners and destroyed the mining magical equipment, resulting to a tremendous loss for the Thunderbolt Hall. The miners were panicked and refused to go down the wells anymore.

Luo Jingang's life savings had been poured into the enterprise. Every day when he opened his eyes, the first thing that occurred to him was always the astronomical interest that he need to pay to the bank. He was counting on the mother lode to get rich someday.

The miners' strike nearly choked his friends and him.

As an old Demon Hunter, Luo Jingang bothered little about the demon beasts before which had been jeopardizing his endeavor because they were not strong at all.

However, the demon beasts were locals of the underground world. They were good at stealth and sneaking, as well as employing guerilla warfare tactics. Luo Jingang cleared the mother lode up twice, and even found two nests of the demon beasts deep in the underground which he demolished. However, it didn't help at all. The demon beasts crept back again, angrier and crazier than before.

The only solution was to set up a patrol team in the mother lode 24 hours a day for the protection of the labors.

However, Thunderbolt Hall was a newly established sect. Only Luo Jingang and several of his old friends were at the Building Foundation Stage. Their disciples and children were mostly beginners who'd just arrived at the Refinement Stage. In the underground world which was dominated by darkness, their chances of winning were slim.

After careful consideration, Leader Luo had decided to bulk purchase a batch of magical equipment for his subordinates to better defend his sect.

Chapter 309: Shopping Around

Chapter 309: Shopping Around

The initial costs to develop the mine were enormous and had nearly drained all the capital of Thunderbolt Hall.

Due to recent demon beast invasions, not only had the Thunderbolt Hall suffered a tremendous loss from the worker strike, it needed to pay a huge amount of compensation to the miners who were killed, too.

Right now, Thunderbolt Hall's cash flow was running dry.

Luo Jingang and a few elders of Thunderbolt Hall did their best and managed to raise almost two billion.

But when they arrived at the exposition and looked around, they noticed that it was enough to buy common magical equipment such as chainsword, storm bolters, or Hellfire-Lightnings. But the crystal suits, the kings of magical equipment, were too expensive for them.

A disciple of Red Serpent Sect came up to them and greeted them with a smile. He quickly introduced himself.

"Hello. I am Cao Huorong, a disciple of the Red Serpent Sect. We are a renowned sect in refining and our history can be dated back to hundreds of years ago. In regard to magical equipment of fire attributes, we are definitely top of the federation. May I know what you're looking for?"

Seeing that Luo Jingang and his companions were gazing at a crystal suit, he continued, "You've picked a good one. This crystal suit is called 'Bursting Flame Battlesuit XVII'. It is the latest model of a classic crystal suit of our sect. It is mainly made of Thousand Flames Scale, Hundred Crimson Stones, and Phoenix Dance Gold and is most suitable for the Cultivators who are good at manipulating fiery spiritual energy, or the environments that were extremely hot.

"The Fire Dragon Saber that it carries can automatically absorb the fiery spiritual energy floating in the air and transform it into unstoppable saber attack. Our super crystal processor, which boasts amazing computational ability, can store five ultimate skills beforehand. With a telepathic thought, the skills can be performed without the Exo doing anything.

"The God Slayer Cannon on the crystal suit is even more powerful. It has two working modes. In the maximum mode, it takes three minutes for it to charge up with spiritual energy, and then it will perform a deadly attack like a volcano eruption that is equal to a full-strength strike of a Core Formation Stage Cultivator!"

"Full-strength strike of a Core Formation Stage Cultivator…"

Luo Jingang swallowed. He looked at Ge Feipeng, an elder of Thunderbolt Hall, and noticed that his companion was as tempted as himself.

More than thirty different kinds of fiery crystals were buried in the mother lode of Thunderbolt Hall. The temperature of the underground mines was extremely high. Sometimes it could be hundreds of degrees.

Meanwhile, the demon beasts that lived on the fiery crystals nearby mostly belonged to the fire class, too. Their burning attack could have a temperature as high as a thousand degrees.

Therefore, the purpose of their trip was to purchase a batch of magical equipment of fire attributes that was suitable for the high temperature and sweltering environment.

Red Serpent Sect was best known for its fire-class magical equipment. Its classic crystal suit 'Bursting Flame Battlesuit' was a heat-resistant heavy crystal suit specially designed to fight fiery demon beasts. The elegant outline and the intimidating plate armor, which seemed to be made of thousands of solidified flames, were indeed enticing.

However, its price burned Leader Luo's heart like a fire of thousands of degrees, too.

"The price for a standard 'Bursting Flame Battlesuit XVII' is 1.55 billion. With the latest attack modules, its price will be just over 2 billion. Every time it is used, the spiritual energy consumption and the erosion of magical equipment components will result to a cost of several million. If it is damaged in a battle, the repair fee..."

Cold sweat was dripping from Luo Jingang's forehead as he was running the calculations.

"Actually, we are planning to purchase some magical equipment for the juniors of our sect. Do you have any crystal suit that is more suitable for Refinement Stage Cultivators?"

Cao Huorong's face remained unchanged. He continued smiling as he replied, "That's no problem. Bursting Flame Battlesuit is indeed too advanced for Refinement Stage Cultivators. It would be wasteful.

"Here, we have an MP crystal suit model named Flying Flame Battlesuit which is the simplified version of the Bursting Flame Battlesuit. It is specially designed for the Refinement Stage Cultivators. Please follow me."

Cao Huorong led the two Cultivators of the Thunderbolt Hall to a crystal suit that was smaller in size.

The crystal suit looked alike to the Bursting Flame Battlesuit. It was also shining in incandescent brilliance which was indicative of its supreme quality.

But, of course, its specifications were far from those of the Bursting Flame Battlesuit.

On the bright side, its price was much lower, too. The naked version without any additional magical equipment would cost 230 million. The fully equipped version was about 300 million apiece.

"Well, the price…"

Luo Jingang stroke his beard.

Cao Huorong was smiling brightly as he said, "Mister, judging from your outlook, I can tell that you must be a seasoned warrior from the Grand Desolate Plateau who knows a lot about the cost and performance of different crystal suits.

"The Flying Flame Battlesuit refined by us might not be the strongest of all MP crystal suit models. But it's definitely one of the best in regard of price-performance ratio. Also, it is particularly suitable for high-temperature environments where the fiery spiritual energy is abundant. In such cases, no crystal suit will be match for the Flying Flame Battlesuit!"

Luo Jingang nodded his head. As a Demon Hunter, he had worn a lot of crystal suits in his decades of hunting life. He knew very well the price of a decent crystal suit.

In fact, he was quite surprised to see that the price for a fully equipped crystal suit was below 500 million, and he was embarrassed to negotiate over the price.

According to the information that he gathered before he came, most of the MP crystal suit models provided by the major sects were of similar price. Few of them were cheaper than this one.

Although there were several other renowned MP crystal suit models such as Tiger King, Sword Torrent, and Mournful Mist, they were much more expensive and not suitable for battles in the underground mines. Therefore, Luo Jingang had never taken them into consideration since the beginning.

The Flying Flame Battlesuit seemed to be their best choice right now.

"Big Peng, what about it?" Luo Jingang asked Ge Feipeng, elder of Thunderbolt Hall and also his lifelong brother, in a low voice.

"We've visited a lot of booths. It seems that this model fits us best, doesn't it?"

"It's still a little too expensive."

Ge Feipeng frowned. "300 million apiece. Even if we put all our money into it, we can only buy five to six, which would only be enough for one tactical squad."

"But we have five working sites and more than thirty mines being exploited in our mother lode. How can one tactical squad defend all of them at the same time?"

"I guess we the old men have to do more work then. What other choices do we have? The king of magical equipment is always expensive!"

Luo Jingang sighed and said, "If we want cheaper ones, we'll have to look for second-hand crystal suits."

As experienced Demon Hunters, the two of them knew too well how messy the market of second-hand crystal suits was.

A well-maintained second-hand crystal suit was less expensive than a new one, but its price could still be as high as 200 million. There were other second-hand crystal suits which had been used for more than a hundred years with deep-buried problems due to battlefield damages.

Sometimes the latter pretended to be the former.

Such second-hand crystal suits looked splendid, but they might crack up any moment when the wearers were using them, which might lead to dire consequences. So, they were also known as 'walking coffins'.

There was no way that Luo Jingang and Ge Feipeng would endanger the lives of their own disciples with such counterfeits.

Having no other solution, Luo Jingang had to negotiate with Cao Huorong reluctantly.

However, Cao Huorong had seen through that they didn't have alternative choices. Not only did he refuse to lower the price, he also came up with a series of rigorous conditions, including that they had to buy designated attack magical equipment and that the crystal suits they bought must be maintained by the refiners of Red Serpent Sect.

As a battle-type Cultivator, Luo Jingang always hated detailed and boring negotiations. While he was talking gloomily, a sharp voice shouted from behind him, "Dad, check the booth of the Grand Desolate War Institution out!"

Luo Jingang raised his eyebrow.

"Ah Ling, where did you go? Come and see this crystal suit. Haven't you and your senior brothers been asking to go down the mines and hunt the demon beasts? Your Uncle Ge and I are planning to purchase crystal suits for you so that we'll be able to fight together in the mines."

Luo Ling, Luo Jingang's daughter, stared at the crystal suit up and down. Then her lips twitched as she remarked, "The performance is not bad. But isn't it a little too expensive? We have more than ten candidates in Thunderbolt Hall who are capable enough to wear the crystal suit. But we'll only be able to buy five or so back according to the price tag. The underground mines are too complicated. I'm afraid that the few crystal suits won't help much."

"We're in the middle of a financial crisis right now and we have to grit our teeth through it. Let's figure out what to do when the financial state is better next year," Luo Jingang replied hesitantly.

"But we don't have to buy it here. Dad, Uncle Ge, the Grand Desolate War Institution's booth is exhibiting a crystal suit that is only 100 million apiece. Its price is below 150 million even if it is fully equipped. If we choose their crystal suit, we'll be able to buy ten of them, which should be enough for two tactical squads. It will be much easier to deal with the underground situation with two squads," Luo Ling exclaimed.

"100 million apiece?"

Luo Jingang's face changed. "Are you serious? Wait. Grand Desolate War Institution? That sounds familiar. I remember that it had an accident last year?"

"Last year and today are different. From what I've seen, the crystal suit they provide is quite acceptable, at least in regard of stability and precision. What harm is there to check it out? This is only the first day of the military magical equipment exhibition. We don't need to place an order now. Let's just shop around first," Luo Ling replied disapprovingly.

"That's true."

Luo Jingang pondered for a moment. Then he waved his hand and said, "Let's go and see what drama the Grand Desolate War Institution is playing this year!"

While they were talking, they walked out of the booth of Red Serpent Sect.

Cao Huorong was about to complete the deal, when the Grand Desolate War Institution jumped out of nowhere and wrecked his business. The cooked duck flew away!

…

The Grand Desolate War Institution's booth was as lively as ever.

Li Yao was as busy as bee. The moment he finished interpreting the specifications for a few visitors, he hurriedly put on the brand new Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit to take a picture with a little girl at her request. Then he heard someone calling him, "Mr. Li Yao, I've brought my dad here. Please repeat what you just said to him. Thunderbolt Hall is really interested in the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit!"

Turning back, he found Luo Ling who was smiling brightly, followed by two Cultivators with scarred faces which indicated their seniority in the trade.

Before Li Yao was able to say anything, Luo Jingang raised his eyebrow, "Li Yao? The name sounds familiar."

"Of course it does."

Luo Ling said, "Dad, do you remember that we purchased a batch of magical equipment named Demon Beast Detector some time ago as labor protection appliances which proved to be very useful? Li Yao is its inventor!"

Chapter 310: First Deal

Chapter 310: First Deal

"Oh?"

Luo Jingang eyed Li Yao in a different way now.

The Grand Desolate Plateau had become less and less peaceful over the past year. Not only were many strong demon beasts scourging the mother lode, even the ordinary pests were appearing more often than before, too.

From he didn't know where, the miners heard of the magical equipment named Demon Beast Detector and demanded that Thunderbolt Hall provide it for them.

Luo Jingang had not been very interested in this daring, new magical equipment. However, the mines had been an unsettling place because of the various demon beast attacks. Since the Demon Beast Detector was not expensive anyway, he decided to purchase a batch, for nothing other than to increase the sense of security for the miners.

As it turned out, the Demon Beast Detector was much more efficient than he thought. Snakes, insects, and rats that were hiding in the darkness were mostly discovered. The bites cases in the mines were reduced by two thirds.

One other time, a miner was bitten by a rare Nine-Colored Cardiac Corrosion Scorpion in a tunnel 1,300 meters below the ground and it would have taken half an hour for the paramedic to arrive.

If it were in the old days, the miner would have died for sure.

However, with the Demon Beast Detector, first aid procedures were immediately presented after the accident.

The miner's workmates did everything according to the instructions. They pierced the earlobe of the miner and squeeze the poisoned blood out, which was enough for him to survive the upcoming half hour for the medical staff to come.

The incident left a deep impression on Luo Jingang.

Besides, he was also a member of the Demon Hunters' Association and a subscriber of 'Predator'. He had read the article about Li Yao and remembered the name clearly.

"Mr. Li Yao, nice to meet you. I am Luo Jingang, leader of Thunderbolt Hall. We've been focusing on the mining industry. Your Demon Beast Detector has been a great help for us."

Luo Jingang smiled. His impression of Li Yao was good.

However, as the leader of his sect, he was not going to purchase the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit just because of a good impression.

After all, he had noticed that this was the first time that the Grand Desolate War Institution had refined a crystal suit. Although the place was lively, most people were only here for fun. Up until now, no order had been placed yet. It appeared that no one was willing to be the first person to taste the crab.

"While we were on our way here, Ah Ling briefed me on the basic specifications of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. I saw a few video clips of Mr. Li Yao's amazing performance, too.

"However, Thunderbolt Hall is just a start-up. I'm afraid the younger generation of our sect is not as good as you.

"Although the other MP crystal suit models are a little more expensive, their specifications are much better.

"Take the Flying Flame Battlesuit for example. It has been specially adjusted for high temperatures and scorching flames and is very suitable for us.

"The crystal suits I buy will be put into fierce battles immediately after I'm back. I need to be responsible for the juniors of my sect, as well as the safety of the miners, don't I?"

Li Yao listened carefully until Luo Jingang finished his speech. Then he smiled and replied, "Leader Luo, what you said does make sense. The crystal suit is the king of magical equipment and the main force on a battlefield; countless lives are dependent on it.

"The top priority when picking a crystal suit is not the price but the performance.

"But I wonder whether or not you've thought about this.

"The average price of the MP crystal suit models in the exposition here is around 260 million apiece.

"But will their performance be as good as they are claimed to be with such a low price?

"A seafood fried rice is being sold a hundred bucks per bowl. Guaranteed that it is full of the best lobsters, abalones, shark fins, etc. Beautiful promotional pictures, too.

"Do you think it's possible?

"With such a budget, if I indeed bring out a bowl of seafood fried rice that seems to be made of seafood, there are only two possibilities.

"First, the seafood was made from dead fish and lobsters, or counterfeits that are actually ordinary ingredients.

"Second, although the bowl of seafood fried rice is being sold at a hundred bucks, there will be expensive service and miscellaneous fees that follow.

"All in all, business is always business. It's always about making money.

"I'm told that Leader Luo and Elder Ge used to be Demon Hunters. You must've worn crystal suits of various sorts before.

"So, why don't you recall the price and performance of those models and compare them with the MP models, and see if what you were told is plausible?"

Li Yao's words immediately dazzled Luo Jingang and Luo Jingang, who looked at each other in deep thought.

After Li Yao pointed it out, they felt that it was odd, too. The performance of the MP crystal suit models seemed to be too good for their prices.

Li Yao said solemnly, "I'm not implying that these sects are lying. I am trying to say that to achieve such a high performance in such a short refining period with such a low cost, they might've employed a lot of radical technology that has not been tested yet.

"And no one can guarantee that this technology will function normally in a fierce battle.

"The Grand Desolate War Institution is different. Our MP crystal suit project was not started just now but twenty years ago. What we employed in the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is mature technology that has been well tested. Although its general performance might not seem as charming as that of other MP crystal suit models, we guarantee that what you see here is what it will be like in a real battlefield, if not better.

"Leader Luo, you just mentioned that you are purchasing crystal suits for the juniors in your sect.

"In my opinion, for young Cultivators who lack experience and skills, a solid, reliable crystal suit is much better than a defective, over-exaggerated one, isn't it?"

Luo Jingang and Ge Feipeng nodded their heads approvingly.

Luo Jingang said, "Alright, Mr. Li Yao. Ah Ling has told you our needs and the combat environment we're going to be in. Then, according to you, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is enough for our purpose?"

"Absolutely."

Li Yao answered unhesitatingly, "As a basic MP crystal suit model, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is designed for middle-level and low-level Cultivators. Its durability and stability in high-temperature environments have been tested multiple times. We have a lot of experiment videos for your reference.

"Ms. Luo Ling just mentioned that Thunderbolt Hall is exploiting a mother lode of fiery crystals. The temperature in the mines can be well above 300°C. The place has been harassed by demon beasts of the fire class, too.

"Therefore, in my opinion, besides the standard components, you should add a set of heat-resistant plate armor which contain twenty frost rune arrays. Such a set of plate armor is not expensive. 10 million each, I believe.

"What's more, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit has been refined with a modular architecture. By adding different extensions, different tactical purposes can be achieved.

"For example, if you are building up a tactical squad of five people, you can choose a commander extension which significantly enhances the computational ability of the suit, a heavy armor extension which brings up the defense ability exponentially, and a scout extension that contains high-speed power rune arrays. The other two Cultivators of the squad will wear the standard Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

"That way, you need only 700 to 800 million to establish a tactical squad of five Refinement Stage Cultivators.

"Two or three such squads should be enough to defend the mines. With nothing to worry about anymore, Leader Luo and other high-level Cultivators in your sect will be able to explore the depths of the underground world and demolish the dens of the demon beasts."

Luo Jingang's eyes were beaming with joy.

With the same money, he could build up one squad according to Red Serpent Sect, but two according to the Grand Desolate War Institution.

Besides, with the modular design, the specifications of the crystal suit for commander, scout, striker, and ordinary members were different from one another, which would be better for teamwork.

It sounded a lot better than buying five of the same Flying Flame Battlesuits!

Luo Jingang continued asking, "Does the price include all the attack magical equipment? Do we need to buy additional magical equipment components? Who will maintain the suits in the future?"

Li Yao replied, "The price has already included the basic attack magical equipment. There are better attack modules and extensions, but they're not mandatory.

"According to your description, the crystal suits that you buy will mostly be used in zigzagged underground mines. I doubt that the powerful long-range attack magical equipment will be of much use.

"Besides, our Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is most distinguished for its universal compatibility. The magical equipment that you refine by yourself or purchase from elsewhere can easily be integrated into the suit.

"If it's okay with you, I can help you plug in the additional modules, too. I am a registered refiner of the federation and I'm qualified for refining services.

"As for maintenance, we suggest you send them back to the Grand Desolate War Institution for maintenance in the next three years. But, as you know, the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution has always been the center of grassroots refiners. We value simplicity and directness more than anything else. If you have suitable candidates, you can send them to the Grand Desolate War Institution for a few weeks of training, and you will be good to maintain the crystal suits by yourself. We don't have any strict requirements in that regard."

The more Luo Jingang listened, the more tempted he became. He was going to inquire more about the details, when a chilly voice called out from behind him, "Mr. Li Yao, in light of the terrible accident that happened to your dear crystal suit last year, the crystal reactor of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is not satisfactory enough, isn't it?

"The crystal suits that Leader Luo is buying will be worn in the surroundings where the temperature can be hundreds of degrees. When confronted with a demon beast, they might be heated to more than a thousand degrees.

"Is your crystal reactor good enough for such harsh environments? Your crystal suits will not explode again like they did last year, will they?

"Because if they do, it's going to be a nasty scene in the mines hundreds of meters below the ground!"

Luo Jingang and Ge Feipeng's expressions both changed as they heard the words.

Cold brightness shined in Li Yao's eyes. He raised his head and looked at the newcomer.

There was an emblem on the chest of the man's clothes, which was a hissing serpent condensed by flames whose forked tongue darted out greedily, indicating that the man came from Red Serpent Sect, the top sect in the refinement of fiery magical equipment.

Chapter 311: Deadly Flaw

Chapter 311: Deadly Flaw

Li Yao was aware that Red Serpent Sect had also invented an MP crystal suit model and therefore was a competitor of his. Since Luo Jingang mentioned the name 'Flying Flame Battlesuit' in the conversation before, it was quite possible that his first customer had been to the Red Serpent Sect's booth just now.

The disciple of Red Serpent Sect apparently had been irritated, since he had come and spoken so rudely.

Li Yao explained patiently, "Fellow Daoist, it's true that our Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit has not been built up by Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. However, with the brand new high-pressure valve design and pressure system, the valve of the suit will automatically open and release the redundant spiritual energy when the spiritual energy pressure inside is too intense and surpasses the warning level.

"In the case of Leader Luo, we can add a set of large cooling system to the suit which is driven by the overflowing spiritual energy from the crystal reactor. It will be totally safe."

Cao Huorong, disciple of Red Serpent Sect, sneered and said, "But wouldn't that reduce the working time of the crystal suit?"

Li Yao nodded his head and admitted honestly, "Correct. In the worst-case scenario, the working time of the crystal suit might be reduced by half. However, we believe it's a price that we have to pay. There is no perfect crystal suit in the world. With such a low budget, we must abandon something to ensure the performance of the critical parts of the suit."

"Hehe. It's because this is the first time that the Grand Desolate War Institution has ever refined any crystal suit that you're talking about 'a price you have to pay'."

Cao Huorong smiled and proudly continued, "Red Serpent Sect boasts hundreds of years of experience in the refinement of crystal suits and has produced more than ten exceptional models. Take 'Flying Flame Battlesuit', our latest MP crystal suit model, for example. It is most suitable for scorching hot environments. Its specification in every regard is way better than that of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, not to mention that its working time is twice the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit's. We won't say that our crystal suit is perfect, but we never abandon anything!"

He intentionally raised his voice. Many visitors nearby saw the drama and came close to watch.

Li Yao's eyes were twitching fast.

Competition between magical equipment providers, especially those whose products are of the same type, was not unusual. There was nothing wrong with bragging about one's own magical equipment and belittling that of one's competitor's in one's own booth.

Li Yao himself was comparing the crystal suits of 'certain sects' to be 'seafood fried rice made from dead fish and lobster', too.

But such words were best to be kept within one's own territory.

'You came to the Grand Desolate War Institution's booth and nitpick the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and crow over your own crystal suit? Do you want some face slapping?'

Brutality shined in Li Yao's eyes.

'You are seeking your own death. Not my fault!'

"Fellow Daoist from Red Serpent Sect, we've visited your booth just now. Both 'Bursting Flame Battlesuit XVII' and 'Flying Flame Battlesuit' are modern classics that we need to learn from."

Li Yao squinted with a fake smile. "Especially the Flying Flame Battlesuit. It employs the same framework and spiritual energy flowing system as those of the Bursting Flame Battlesuit XVII. Most of the characteristics of Bursting Flame Battlesuit XVII can be found on it, too, which basically makes it a smaller-scale Bursting Flame Battlesuit XVII. But its price is only 300 million, a fifth of the price of Bursting Flame Battlesuit XVII. The price-performance ratio is really impressive.

"However, there is one thing that has been bothering me and I hope the fellow Daoist from Red Serpent Sect can enlighten me.

"As far as I know, the long working time of Bursting Flame Battlesuit XVII in extremely hot environments boils down to the countless Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures that it uses, including Heavenly Sun Stone and Phantom Snow Crystal, and is not because there is anything special about its structure design.

"Heavenly Sun Stone can absorb heat and transform it into the purest spiritual energy; Phantom Snow Crystal is a natural heat-resistant material that can block hot waves if it is smeared out of a magical equipment component.

"The two Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures are very useful and very expensive. If we're going to cover a medium crystal suit with Heavenly Sun Stone and Phantom Snow Crystal from head to toe, the total weight of the materials to be used can be hundreds of kilograms, the cost of which alone will be well above 500 million.

"It's certainly fine to decorate the Bursting Flame Battlesuit XVII this way.

"However, the price of the Flying Flame Battlesuit is 300 million. Its cost will only be lower than that. May I ask how many Heavenly Sun Stones and Phantom Snow Crystals are used on the Flying Flame Battlesuit?"

In a cold smile, Cao Huorong's chin was protruding further and further as he heard Li Yao complimenting the Bursting Flame Battlesuit XVII.

He didn't expect that Li Yao had dug a big pit in the end waiting for him to jump in.

"Are you playing dumb? As a cheap MP crystal suit model, of course the Flying Flame Battlesuit does not use as many Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures as the Bursting Flame Battlesuit XVII."

Li Yao smiled.

"Are you indicating that there is no Heavenly Sun Stone and Phantom Snow Crystal on the Flying Flame Battlesuit?"

Cao Huorong blushed.

"Although we didn't use Heavenly Sun Stone or Phantom Snow Crystal, we have employed a new cooling technology by melting the powder of Heavenly Sun Stone and Phantom Snow Crystal into the icy moisture made of special materials which circulates among key magical equipment components. It is a very efficient way to reduce heat and bring down the temperature of the suit!"

"So, icy moisture," Li Yao drawled, with a brutal smile.

When he was visiting Red Serpent Sect's booth, he had watched the Flying Flame Battlesuit closely and guessed that it was made possible by a cooling liquid circulating system.

Icy moisture was a very rare liquid material that was barely used in the modern Cultivation world.

However, it shared the same drawback as many other liquid materials recorded in the books of the Hundred Smelting Clan, which was…

"A special cooling liquid by melting the powder of Heavenly Sun Stone and Phantom Snow Crystal into icy moisture can bring down the cost as well as maintaining the normal functions of the suit in high-temperature environments, which is indeed a marvelous design."

Li Yao smiled.

"However, have you sorted out the biggest problem of the icy moisture, which is that it becomes extremely volatile?

"The Flying Flame Battlesuit of yours is designed according to the Bursting Flame Battlesuit XVII, which uses Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures to cool down and therefore is not distinguished for its airtightness.

"Now that the icy moisture needs to flow through all the circulation tubes in order to cool down the suit, the rate at which the icy moisture is used will increase.

"The Flying Flame Battlesuit that you are demonstrating does not carry a pot to store the icy moisture, which means its entire cooling system is based on the little icy moisture inside the circulation tubes. I wonder, how long can the icy moisture work before it is completely gone? Three to five days, isn't it?

"Icy moisture is not expensive. But if you are going to refill it every three to five days, the long-term cost can be quite startling after a few years, which will not be much less than buying the Bursting Flame Battlesuit right now.

"Besides, if the crystal suit is to be used for a mission that lasts for more than five days, you'll have to carry a pot filled with icy moisture. Not only will it be a huge nuisance, it will also cause major trouble if it is blown apart by the enemy in a battle, won't it?

"If we take that into consideration, the working time of the Flying Flame Battlesuit might not be much longer than that of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. In fact, it could be even shorter!"

Everyone watching the scene nodded their heads approvingly and looked at Cao Huorong suspiciously.

Confused, Luo Jingang asked, "Fellow Daoist Cao, if the Flying Flame Battlesuit is to be used to patrol and fight in underground mines that are a thousand meters deep at a temperature of hundreds of degrees, how often will the suit need to be refilled with icy moisture and how much will it cost?

"Well…"

Cold sweat was dripping off Cao Huorong's head. He felt his head was dizzy and his ears were humming, which made him unable to say anything.

Li Yao's words had hit his critical part.

It was true that the rate of the icy moisture consumption was extremely fast. Otherwise, the Bursting Flame Battlesuit would've made use of it a long time ago, and they wouldn't have waited until right now to put it into the Flying Flame Battlesuit.

Meanwhile, in order to compete with other MP crystal suit models, the price of the Flying Flame Battlesuit had been reduced to minimum, to the extent that there was barely any profit.

Red Serpent Sect had been planning to promote its product with a low initial price before making profits through post-sales services.

According to the plan, Red Serpent Sect would monopolize the components and the maintenance service of the Flying Flame Battlesuit.

For example, Red Serpent Sect could sell the icy moisture at a high price and gain income from it over time.

There wouldn't be an option if the buyer wanted to switch to another kind of icy moisture provided by other sects, since Red Serpent Sect had added almost twenty micro-constituents into its own icy moisture.

Only with this particular icy moisture could the crystal suit function normally. Faults would occur if a different kind of icy moisture was to be used.

The repair fee would be a huge source of income, too.

Not just Red Serpent Sect. Quite a few other sects who had invented their own MP crystal suit models were actually planning the same thing.

Otherwise, it would be a miracle that almost twenty different MP crystal suit models could be produced within one year.

Cao Huorong never expected that Li Yao would be able to point out the biggest problem of the Flying Flame Battlesuit straight from the start.

'How can the boy know the details of such a scarce material as the icy moisture?'

He was startled and knew that he had been caught in a dilemma.

If he was to go back just like that, when the news spread out, there was no chance that the Flying Flame Battlesuit would be sold, let alone the military order that his sect was trying to bid for.

His leader would tear him apart and eat him alive!

Hearing the louder and louder discussions around and seeing many other Cultivators shaking their heads, Cao Huorong's face was flushed in embarrassment and anger as he gnashed, "Talk is cheap. If you are so confident in your crystal suit, I challenge you to a duel to see which one is more suitable for high-temperature combats, Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit or Flying Flame Battlesuit!"

The crowds gasped at his words.

A duel between two pieces of magical equipment was always in the repertoire of the Magical Equipment Exposition and often the most amazing part of it.

Generally speaking, if one party challenged someone else to a duel, the other party wouldn't say no, because it concerned the pride of the refiner as well as the honor of the sect or university behind him.

Everybody was aware that the military was going to reveal the bidding plan at the Magical Equipment Exposition. At that time, more than twenty MP crystal suit models would be engaged in a tremendous fight!

But they did not anticipate that the first duel would take place so fast!

Li Yao looked back at Yuan Manqiu.

With a solemn expression, Yuan Manqiu bit her lips and nodded her head vigorously.

Chapter 312: 700°C Battleground

Chapter 312: 700°C Battleground

Mystic Skeleton versus Flying Flame, the duel was about to begin!

The news quickly spread to every corner of the convention center.

Although all the MP crystal suit models would take part in the performance tests hosted by the organizers of the exposition in which there would be battle simulation tests, such one vs. one duels were apparently more intriguing for Cultivators who desired conflicts more than anything else.

Everyone was crowding to the top floor of the convention center where the arena was located. The reporters were all jumping up and down as if they were on drugs.

Seeing that he had caused a lot of trouble, Cao Huorong had to report the whole issue to the elders of Red Serpent Sect, and was, no doubt, berated by them, partly for his recklessness, and partly because they thought he had chosen the wrong opponent.

"Competition of the MP crystal suit models is so intense. Everyone is trying to promote their own product in order to gain a larger market share. It is not unacceptable to challenge someone to increase our popularity.

"But what kind of opponent have you picked? Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit of the Grand Desolate War Institution? Isn't it the well-known metal scraps? Even if we tear it into pieces, it won't be enough to prove anything at all!"

Elders of Red Serpent Sect bashed him as above.

But now that the challenge had been accepted, there was no way that they were taking it back.

Red Serpent Sect had done a lot of preparation for the Magical Equipment Exposition. Ruan Honglie, test pilot of the Flying Flame Battlesuit, was a Cultivator at the peak of the Refinement Stage, as well as an Exo with more than ten years of experience.

At 3 p.m., in the arena on the top floor of the convention center…

The arena was 300 meters long and 300 meters wide. It was surrounded by countless rune arrays and magical equipment which could simulate all kinds of extreme environments.

It could switch from a snow world of -100°C to a sizzling inferno of 500°C in a flash.

There were no empty seats in the auditorium. More people in the lower levels of the convention center were watching at the giant light beams floating in the air waiting for the fierce battle to begin.

The ordinary tourists in the ground floor visiting the civil magical equipment exhibitions were also craning their heads eagerly.

Before the match began, the auditorium was already humming with whispers.

"Flying Flame versus Mystic Skeleton. The former is the latest magical equipment of a major refining sect, while the latter has shown great durability and stability just now. Which side do you think will win?"

"Flying Flame Battlesuit, of course. Flying Flame Battlesuit is a crystal suit most suitable for high-temperature environments. Besides, it is twice as expensive as its opponent, with abundant Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. It's impossible that it will lose!"

"Correct. According to the brochure of Red Serpent Sect, the Flying Flame Battlesuit is basically a Bursting Flame Battlesuit in a smaller scale. Its specifications and parameters are much better than the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit's. Besides, the battlefield is a scorching one that is most favorable for it. This battle is going to be a one-sided slaughter!"

"Their test pilot Ruan Honglie is a renowned Exo who knows what he's doing. Although he is only at the peak of the Refinement Stage, he has been in real battlefields for more than ten years. His experience is much more than a sophomore student's."

"All the circumstances are in support of Red Serpent Sect. I would say that the Grand Desolate War Institution will prove themselves capable enough if their crystal suit can survive five minutes!"

"Five minutes? I think three minutes will be miraculous enough!"

In the highest place of the auditorium, a tall and thin figure was standing straight like a spear. He was gazing at the arena.

His name was Feng Kai, an Exo from the Battlesuit Department of Star Nebula University. He was the test pilot for the Mournful Mist Battlesuit.

"Feng Kai, I didn't expect that you would be attracted by such a boring game."

A teasing voice came from his back, as a smiling face gradually appeared in the darkness. A man that was not very tall but had two extremely long arms walked out slowly.

"Sha Yucheng?"

Feng Kai's pupils constricted violently.

Although the newcomer seemed to be nice and friendly, he was the best sword trainer of the younger generation in the Rising Tide Sword Guild, as well as an ace Exo who boasted a lot of potential.

The Sword Torrent Battlesuit that had been co-developed by the three major sword-training sects would be driven by him.

Sha Yucheng of Rising Tide Sword Guild and Zuo Feijing of Deep Sea University were two formidable enemies that Feng Kai had been preparing to deal with before the Magical Equipment Exposition began.

However, he couldn't help but notice that a new enemy needed to be added to the list.

Feng Kai said casually, "Since the military announced that the standard crystal suit of the army would be outsourced, 21 organizations have released their own MP crystal suit models. However, until this day, no MP crystal suit models have ever been engaged in a real fight. I would definitely come and enjoy such a show. Not just me. Someone came even earlier."

Feng Kai nodded his head to a direction.

Sha Yucheng narrowed his eyes. Green lights beamed out of his eyes as his pupils shrank to the size of the tip of a sword. Then he saw a guy standing in the darkness far away.

It was Zuo Feijing, test pilot of the Tiger King Battlesuit as well as one of the Novem Stellae.

Zuo Feijing saw the two of them, too. But he didn't show any sign that he did, as if greeting them was a complete waste of time.

"What an arrogant guy!"

Sha Yucheng's lips twitched.

"He has every reason to be. Both the performance of the Tiger King Battlesuit and his skills of driving a crystal suit are extraordinary!"

Feng Kai's expression remained unchanged.

"Huh. We're going to find out whether or not the Tiger King Battlesuit is as invincible as it claims to be tomorrow!"

Sha Yucheng licked his lips and said in confusion, "Back to this match. I have fought with Ruan Honglie several times before, and I know he is quite an experienced expert. But who is this guy Li Yao? I understand that he is a refiner who invented a piece of magical equipment named Demon Beast Detector that has been quite popular. What, is he also an Exo?"

"For old time's sake, I'll offer you a kind reminder. Don't look down upon Li Yao because you don't know him. You will regret it one day."

Feng Kai continued with a vague smile, "Same as Zuo Feijing, the guy is a hybrid-type Cultivator that is both talented in fighting and in creating. He has a nickname 'Vulture', which is a hint of his brutality and cruelty.

"Rumors have it that he had never touched crystal suits until he studied in the Thunder Training Camp last year. But don't consider him some random newbie just because of that. There is a young rising star in the world of Exos named Long Qianyue. Have you ever heard of her name before?"

"Of course I have. She defeated seven experts who had more than ten years of experience in crystal suits last year and hence has become known as the strongest Exo below the age of 30."

Sha Yucheng frowned. "Does she have something to do with Li Yao?"

"She and Li Yao were in the same class when they were in the Thunder Training Camp. According to Long Qianyue, Li Yao's skills in driving a crystal suit were as good as hers, if not better, and the reason why she is challenging expert Exos crazily right now is because she wants to duel with Li Yao and see which of them is stronger someday."

"Is that so?"

Sha Yucheng was a little shocked. "Then I'll have to watch this match closely."

"You should."

Feng Kai said carefully, "Vulture Li Yao is the biggest uncertainty in this Magical Equipment Exposition. He is also the trickiest opponent other than Zuo Feijing to cope with for you and me."

While they were talking, two crystal suits had risen up from the below of the arena.

The arena simulated the environment of an underground mine. Under the heating of flame rune arrays, the temperature inside the arena had shockingly reached 700℃.

Giant stone pillars were scattered all over the arena which would spurt super-hot fire as a simulation of underground magma.

The Flying Flame Battlesuit was standing on one side of the arena. In the background of boundless flames, it looked more majestic than ever, as if it were the king of the magma world.

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had just added a layer of heat-resistant plate armor with a lot of frost rune arrays plugged in that looked like patches. It looked plain and shabby.

Judging from the outlook, the Flying Flame Battlesuit was definitely the winner!

"Swoosh!"

Frost rune arrays of both crystal suits started fully functioning to withstand the unbearable high temperature.

The two crystal suits were immediately covered in a thin, white mist, which blocked the vision of the audience.

"Shua!"

When the match began, the brightness of the Flying Flame Battlesuit was ten times more startling than before. It shot dazzling orange lasers which surged at the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit like burning feathers.

For a moment, the sky seemed to have rained fire!

The Flying Flame Battlesuit didn't stop. Upon shooting, it squatted and sprinted, following closely behind the fire wave that it just sent out.

"Impressive!"

"The high temperature has significantly increased the performance of the Flying Flame Battlesuit. Ruan Honglie is an expert adept at fiery spiritual energy too. In such an environment, he is as good as a Building Foundation Cultivator!"

"The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, on the other hand, seems a little sluggish. Maybe that's because of the heat-resistant plate armor. There's no time for it to react!"

In everyone's exclamation, Li Yao seemed too unprepared to do anything, except to turn his crystal cannon to two stone pillars in front of him and blow them into pieces.

"BOOM!"

Pieces of the stone pillars were enough to block most of the fiery bullets. But the Flying Flame Battlesuit was still charging at it like a mad bull.

"BAM!"

The Flying Flame Battlesuit crushed into Li Yao as if it were a crystal train at the maximum speed.

In the simulated underground mines, the space was restricted. Most of the long-range attack magical equipment was not of much use.

Ruan Honglie did not want to tangle with Li Yao whom he thought to be no one for long. He intended to crush the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit into pieces like a relentless lightning strike in order to better demonstrate the excellence of the Flying Flame Battlesuit.

Since he was the one taking the initiative, the high-speed collision was in his favor, too.

Moreover, his opponent was wearing a layer of heat-resistant plate armor which was mostly made of ceramics. It was too weak to withstand a major strike.

"Boy, let me show you today what a real crystal suit should look like!"

Ruan Honglie was grinning hideously, until the collision took place, because an ever-lasting cracking noise came from his crystal suit. Countless magical equipment components had broken into pieces!

He felt that he didn't crush into a layer of weak heat-resistant plate armor, but a steel wall that was embedded with long spikes!

Chapter 313: Explosion-reacting Plate Armor

Chapter 313: Explosion-reacting Plate Armor

His head was like a giant bell being hit by a heavy hammer. He felt that surging tides were savaging inside his brain and he could not see nor hear a single thing, except for the shocking exclamations from the auditorium.

He knew that the exclamations were not for him.

All the audience had enjoyed an amazing scene.

When the Flying Flame Battlesuit crashed into the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, everybody had thought that the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit would be blown away. Even if it could survive the hit and continue the match, the Flying Flame Battlesuit would definitely dominate the game until it was over.

After all, heat-resistant plate armor was best known for its weakness.

But as it turned out, the plate armor of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was indeed shattered because of the explosion. However, from the broken armor burst out intensive spiritual waves which exploded around the Flying Flame Battlesuit like 100 Hellfire-Lightnings.

The Flying Flame Battlesuit was immediately caught in fire and thunderbolts.

Although the Flying Flame Battlesuit was remarkably heat-proof, its defense against explosions of thunder attributes was nothing special. It was unable to move for a long time due to the intensified electric shock.

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit took the opportunity to counterattack.

After being kneed in the chest once, the body of the Flying Flame Battlesuit was bent like a shrimp.

Then, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit waved its two arms and slashed down as if they were two axes, which put the Flying Flame Battlesuit to the ground immediately. Then the crystal cannon on the back flipped up quickly and fired at the ground.

The moment the spiritual energy inside the crystal cannon burst out, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit put its hands on its waist where its fists took on a pair of boxing gloves that was full of three-edged needles. Electrical sparkles were dancing on the two gloves.

Ruan Honglie fell into a passive position due to one reckless move. He gritted his teeth and tried to scramble to his feet against the cannon fire, only to be knocked over by Li Yao. The two of them rolled around on the ground for a while. Then Li Yao's heavy punches rained on Ruan Honglie's face like a thunderstorm.

This time, the punches were not 888.88 kg and 999.99 kg. Two of them were enough to blow a lot of the components of the Flying Flame Battlesuit away. Judging from the fierce attacks, the strength in each punch must be at least ten times larger!

"Brutal!"

Looking at Li Yao sitting on the top of Ruan Honglie's chest and mauling his opponent's face one punch after another, every spectator felt astounded.

"The guy's melee combat ability is impressive. His defense ability is even stronger. Ruan Honglie has punched him in the face several times, but he didn't even flinch as if they were mosquito stings. The speed of his own attacks was not the least affected.

"Ruan Honglie is at a major disadvantage in such a combat!

"Where is this monster from? How come his defense ability is so strong? Feng Kai, what would you do if you were engaged in close-combat with him?"

Smiles in Sha Yucheng's face were gradually gone. He patted his thigh somewhat anxiously.

"I won't give him the opportunity to get close to me," Feng Kai said firmly one word after another.

It sounded like a confident declaration. However, Sha Yucheng understood Feng Kai's meaning between the lines: if 'Vulture Li Yao' got close to him, he did not have an effective solution, either.

Sha Yucheng looked at Zuo Feijing who was far away.

Zuo Feijing's face was hidden in the darkness. There was no telling what his expression was.

But the veins on the back of his hands which were holding a handrail were bulging, like dragons that were ready to jump out of the water and pierce through the sky.

"Shhhhhh!"

A long, high-pitched shriek occurred inside the arena.

Much greenish steam surged out of the Flying Flame Battlesuit, as Li Yao had located its cooling tubes which he destroyed with a dagger.

The icy moisture spurted out and immediately vaporized, forming a greenish, transparent smoke over the arena.

"End of the match!"

A high-level Cultivator wearing a glamourous crystal suit rushed into the arena and separated the two of them.

"Winner of this match, Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit of the Grand Desolate War Institution!"

The auditorium was caught in a weird silence, which was broken by thunder-like applauses a moment later.

Since the price of the Flying Flame Battlesuit was twice that of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, everybody had thought that the game would be its demonstration match and that the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was going to be butchered ruthlessly.

However, a ruthless butchering did take place, with the expected winner and the expected loser switching positions.

In the end, the one standing in the middle of the arena accepting applauses and cheers from all the audience turned out to be the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, whose price was only half of its opponent.

"How did he do it?"

"Why did his crystal suit explode in the first place? It was the key to his victory. If the Flying Flame Battlesuit wasn't caught off guard, the battle would've been much longer than this."

Everyone was confused.

Five minutes later, the Exos were brought up to the arena by lifts.

Despite the double protection of crystal suit and mustard suit, Ruan Honglie's face was still black and blue after the combat.

Seething in anger, he pointed at Li Yao's nose and shouted, "You cheated! That was not heat-resistant plate armor at all!"

Li Yao eyed him with his face unchanged for a long time, before he said after a sigh, "It's true that while you were present, I complained to the judge that the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was not a special model designed for super-hot environments and, for the sake of fairness, I asked to add a layer of plate armor.

"You said casually that I could add however many layers of plate armor I wanted. One or ten would be the same for you because you would tear them apart one layer after another.

"Eventually, the judge granted my request to add a layer of plate armor.

"But I never said that it would be heat-resistant plate armor from the beginning to the end.

"I merely said that I wanted to add a layer of 'plate armor'. If you don't believe me, you can check the surveillance video.

I definitely never said 'heat-resistant'.

"Besides, all kinds of plate armor are permitted in such matches, aren't they? Plate armor can increase the defense ability, but it will also bring down the speed and agility. So, it's more of a personal choice whether or not to add plate armor and how many layers to add. I've never heard anyone blame their failure on the plate armor of their opponents before!

"What I added was of course not the heat-resistant plate armor, but the explosion-reacting plate armor for the defense of flying swords and long-range attacks from demon beasts. There are countless one-way mini crystal bombs inside the plate armor which will explode when it is crushed to offset the blast from the attack.

"However, as it turned out, you simply thrusted yourself into the plate armor, which almost equaled to you thrusting yourself into a pile of crystal bombs. Of course they blew the hell out of you.

"In fact, the explosion-reacting plate armor is quite easy to deal with. If you had just shot your gun at a long distance with your fire waves, you would've noticed that there was something wrong with my plate armor and you could've set off the mini crystal bombs in the armor before you reached me.

"But since your crystal suit is much more expensive than mine and you were in a super-hot environment that was most suitable for you, you felt that it would be embarrassing if you couldn't beat me to a pulp within one minute, didn't you?

"That's why you dashed at me at the earliest chance you found. It's not my fault that you fell into the trap so easily."

Li Yao's words froze Ruan Honglie to the ground as if they were superglue. He was dazed for a long time, before he screamed desperately, "That's not what explosion-reacting plate armor looks like! It had the coating of heat-resistant plate armor! And all those frost rune arrays!"

Li Yao smiled.

"Just now, I spent half an hour redecorating the plate armor and repainting it."

Ruan Honglie was about to weep. He was speechless for a long time.

Their conversation was transmitted to every corner of the arena through crystal microphones.

Everyone was looking at each other in astonishment, failing to find a suitable word to express what was in their minds.

Disguising explosion-reacting plate armor as heat-resistant plate armor, wasn't that a little… sordid?

However, it did reflect the excellence of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, which had worked for such a long time in a battleground of 700°C and even managed to put down a Flying Flame Battlesuit.

It was indeed sturdy and reliable!

"Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is indeed impressive."

Above the arena, Sha Yucheng took a long breath. "I never believed that a crystal suit at a cost of only a hundred million and without any Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures could perform normally in a 700°C environment without the heat-resistant plate armor."

"It's not entirely the crystal suit's credit."

Feng Kai squinted. "The body hardiness of this 'Vulture Li Yao' is far beyond the Refinement Stage. Even many Building Foundation Stage Cultivators may not be as sturdy as him. I even have the feeling that this monster can fight in a 700°C environment without a crystal suit!"

The two of them looked at each other and noticed the fighting will in the other's eyes, before they walked out simultaneously.

'I'm going to fight the monster tomorrow. No. I need to start warming up right now!'

Below the arena, Yuan Manqiu and Luo Jingang, leader of Thunderbolt Hall, were shaking hands.

"Leader Luo, thank you for your trust in the Grand Desolate War Institution. We'll dedicate ten best Mystic Skeleton Battlesuits for your two squads. Please rest assured. We won't let the first client of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit down!"

Yuan Manqiu seemed to be smiling at ease, but the drop of sweat on her forehead exposed her thrill.

"After watching the combat just now, I'm pretty sure that the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is what Thunderbolt Hall needs."

Luo Jingang grinned. "However, the younger generation of Thunderbolt Hall is not as skilled as Mr. Li Yao. I'm afraid we'll have to ask for several instructors from the Grand Desolate War Institution to train them in order to maximize the performance of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit."

"That's not a problem!"

Yuan Manqiu replied without any hesitation, "The Grand Desolate War Institution is a place that is never short of teachers and instructors. The school has been strongly supporting the Project Mystic Skeleton, too. There will be training programs for the clients who purchase the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. Their disciples can be sent to study in the Grand Desolate War Institution for free. In the case of Thunderbolt Hall, we can offer you several complimentary fire-class martial arts and arrange the best experts and professors to teach you until the young disciples in your sect learn all of them."

"That would be wonderful!"

Luo Jingang's eyes were beaming in joy. He said hurriedly, "Let's sign the contract now."

Chapter 314: Men of the Military

Chapter 314: Men of the Military

The contract between the Grand Desolate War Institution and Thunderbolt Hall caused a major riot in the Magical Equipment Exposition.

Of the 21 MP crystal suit models provided by major organizations in the federation, none had been sold so far, including the formidable Tiger King Battlesuit.

After all, most Cultivators were still suspicious about MP crystal suits.

As it turned out, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, which had been hiding in darkness and received few compliments before the exposition, was the first MP crystal suit model to secure an order of ten pieces.

Although the ten Mystic Skeleton Battlesuits combined together were still cheaper than one high-end crystal suit and their purchaser Thunderbolt Hall was a small sect that barely anyone knew, it was still the first official acknowledgement from Cultivators for the MP crystal suits.

For a moment, the booth of the Grand Desolate War Institution which just went quiet was crowded by reporters again.

Since the booth was not very large, it easily brought the feeling that all the reporters in the Magical Equipment

Exposition were here.

In comparison, the vast booth of Deep Sea University seemed to be much more scarce and unfrequented.

The video in which Li Yao took down Ruan Honglie briskly in an arena quickly spread among Exos.

Although his victory was based on the trap that he had set up in advance, the terrifying attacks in the latter half of the video were enough to prove his brutality and toughness.

The Exos who had watched the video all agreed that a young expert had entered into the world of crystal suits.

If Li Yao had showed such combat ability before he arrived at the Building Foundation Stage, he would certainly only be stronger later. The name 'Vulture' was destined to resound in the world one day!

Li Yao didn't know any of this, nor did he bother with it.

After he got out of the arena, he headed directly to his personal training chamber.

…

At 8 p.m.

"Hu! Hu!"

Wearing the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Li Yao was doing muscle training inside the personal chamber.

He had been punching the dynamometer for an entire hour.

Surprisingly, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit did not shed any light. The power rune arrays were quiet. The crystal reactor was in a dull silence, too.

The crystal suit had not been activated at all. It was burdening Li Yao like a normal battle armor.

Li Yao had been punching the target with tons of additional weight on his body for an hour without any pause or rest.

His sweat gathered into a small pool on the ground, which soon evaporated due to the heat from his body, leaving nothing but a shallow trace.

Aggravated by the sweat, Li Yao's eyes were bloody red. He found it hard to keep them open.

Irritated, he shut his eyes. Then he continued punching in the darkness until his every muscle was exhausted.

This was just his recovery training.

Since there would be tests tomorrow, he was only doing the easiest exercises today.

His usual training was ten times more difficult.

A three-minute wonderful performance was based on countless three-hour training sessions.

"Your opponent tomorrow won't be as weak as the Flying Flame Battlesuit.

"Besides, your amazing performance must've alerted everyone who didn't know your actual ability before.

"All of them will target you tomorrow."

Yuan Manqiu entered the chamber. She watched quietly for a while and observed.

"BOOM!"

Li Yao exerted his strength, leaving a clear footprint on the super-alloy ground. The dynamometer leaned backwards and almost kissed the ground. The reading in the light beam was ten times bigger than before!

"I don't like winning a match by disguises.

"Hiding the real ability and ambush the opponents when they're unprepared cannot prove the excellence of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, either."

Li Yao wiped the sweat on his face. But more sweat appeared again only half a second later.

"It's better to be the target of everyone. If I can survive twenty minutes under the collective attack of twenty crystal suits, I bet I will leave a deep impression on the military!"

"I know you will."

"Thunderbolt Hall has officially signed a contract with us. They will purchase ten Mystic Skeleton Battlesuits to build up two tactical squads.

"We've kicked off a good start."

Yuan Manqiu continued, "But the real game is tomorrow. Tomorrow, the delegates of the military will come to the exposition and inspect the latest development of magical equipment. The most important part of their inspection is of course MP crystal suits.

"According to what I've heard, of the 21 MP crystal suit models, the military will only choose four to five for the final bidding.

"Whether or not we are noticed by the military will depend on your performance tomorrow."

Li Yao nodded his head. Taking a deep breath, he felt that the Soul Condensing Pendant which sealed the Phantom Entities was emitting infinite heat and seemed to be leaving a mark on his chest.

That was the spiritual palpitation of his professors and senior brothers of the Refining Department who had felt the intense atmosphere before the final battle.

"BAM! BAM! BAM BAM BAM BAM!"

Li Yao stopped talking. He returned to the dull and boring training.

…

The following morning was the second day of the military magical equipment exposition; the exhibitors all went out their own booths to the testing field that the organizers had set up for real-battle tests.

Flying swords, guns, bombs… All kinds of military magical equipment took turns to display their performance. The spiritual explosions resulted to undying smoke, which was indeed a lively scene.

However, the most crowded place was still the crystal suit testing zone.

Many Cultivators had gathered here even before the sunrise waiting for the tests to begin.

The left side of the auditorium was occupied by the delegates of the military who were wearing black military uniform.

Among the hundreds of delegates, a grey-haired, hideous old man who had scars all over his face attracted everyone's eyesight.

No one had expected that the military would pay so much attention to the bidding of the MP crystal suit models that Shangguan Ce would come in person!

Shangguan Ce, a lieutenant general of the federal army and a Cultivator at the peak of the Core Formation Stage, was one of the strongest men in the military. He was also a hardline hawk.

He had joined the army when he was seventeen. As an ordinary soldier, he met a beast tide when he was stationed at the northernmost fortress of the federation. He was the only one in his legion who survived the beast tide. But his face was ruined by the corrosive venom from the demon beasts, which was unrecoverable even with the use of strengthening drugs.

From that day on, he seemed to have turned into a tireless paladin who had returned from the valley of death. He gained his unparalleled capabilities through mountains of bodies and seas of blood.

He was especially good at special operations. He had established 'Red Lightning', one of the best special operation forces of the military and led it deep into the Blood Demon Sector for scouting and assassination missions multiple times.

Shangguan Ce was most well-known for slaying Peng Xuan, a demon king, 47 years ago.

47 years ago, Peng Xuan, commanding a large beast tide, invaded the Heaven's Origin Sector and butchered a mining center where seven thousand people were killed.

When he was retreating, Shangguan Ce caught up with him and chased him all the way from the Grand Desolate Plateau to the Dark Desolate Domain, and from the Dark Desolate Domain to the Blood Demon Sector.

In the end, surrounded by countless beasts, Shangguan Ce slayed Peng Xuan easily and brought his head back to the Heaven's Origin Sector.

The morale of the federal army was greatly boosted because of Shangguan Ce's valiant behavior. He was respected as a hero of the federation when he came back. Since then, his rank had soared, until he became one of the most influential officials in the military.

Shangguan Ce had been the most fanatic hawk in the military who firmly believed that a great war between the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector would take place within the next thirty years. His theory was that the Cultivation technology of human beings was developing at an exponential speed, which meant that the limit of current technologies would be broken in no time. By then, the Heaven's Origin Sector would have an overwhelming advantage over the Blood Demon Sector.

The wise leaders of the Blood Demon Sector would not let that happen. So, they would definitely launch the attack sooner.

Therefore, human beings had to abandon the illusion that the demons would just sit around and wait for them to develop more advanced Cultivation technologies.

The only sensible choice was to enter the state of war immediately with whatever technology human beings had at hand and build up an iron army with all the resources available. Then, march into the Blood Demon Sector and burn the war fire in the enemy's territory.

It was better to attack aggressively than to defend passively. When thousands of beast tides were to surge into the human's world, it would be a disaster for the Heaven's Origin Sector even if they were defeated eventually.

The military and the federal government had not been very interested in the theories of the hawks and thought there was plenty of time for the human civilization to develop, until recent years when the unusual expansion of the Dark Desolate Domain and the intelligence from the Blood Demon Sector suggested otherwise. The hawks had been winning more advocates since then.

As an ordinary soldier in his early days and an ace Exo at present, Shangguan Ce knew the significance of crystal suits in a war all too well. Rumors had it that he was the biggest endorser of building up crystal suit legions with standard military crystal suits.

Beside Shangguan Ce sat a plain-looking, middle-aged man, who seemed to be a military consultant at first look.

But the glaring electric sparks in his eyes indicated that the man was much more than what he looked.

Guan Chao, a Cultivator at the start of the Core Formation Stage, was the second captain of 'Red Lightning', as well as a strong Exo. He was known as 'King of Lightning' in the world of Cultivators.

With these two strong Cultivators of the military joining the exhibition, a grave scent of war was immediately brought into the field. The air seemed to be filled with smokes of battlefield.

"BAM! BAM! BAM!"

21 crystal suits in various outlooks walked into the testing field slowly yet firmly.

The tests today were designed for MP crystal suit models. All the crystal suits that took part in the competition had to meet three requirements.

First, the total value of the crystal suit, including all the magical equipment that it carried, must be no higher than 500 million.

Second, more than 90% of the components and the magical equipment of the crystal suit must be able to be mass-produced.

Third, the Exo of the crystal suit must be below the Building Foundation Stage.

Tiger King, Mournful Mist, Sword Torrent, Mystic Skeleton. The four crystal suits were standing in the center, surrounded by the other 17 crystal suits.

After the match yesterday, most of the Exos had come to the conclusion that the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit driven by Li Yao was as dangerous an opponent as Tiger King, Mournful Mist, and Sword Torrent were.

"Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!"

Dozens of light beams lit up in the sky of the testing field, displaying the basic introduction and the specifications of the 21 crystal suits which were to be engaged in the tests.

The tests for the MP crystal suit models had officially begun!

Chapter 315: One-on-one Clash

Chapter 315: One-on-one Clash

"Swoosh!"

A firecracker shot up into the sky and exploded, causing a crimson smoke the color of blood.

Below the bloody smoke, the competition of the 21 crystal suits had begun.

"Tiger King! Tiger King! Tiger King!"

Deep Sea City was the home field for Deep Sea University.

For the game today, the Refining Department of Deep Sea University had gathered thousands of students who wore the same uniform to cheer up for their team.

Their thunder-like roars were almost as impressive as the solemnness of the military delegates.

The Tiger King Battlesuit didn't let them down.

The moment it got its turn, it easily put down three beast puppets with an astonishing advantage and secured an unbelievably high score in the melee combat test.

Zuo Feijing seemed to have been stimulated by Li Yao's performance yesterday. He was extremely vigorous right now.

Immediately after the melee combat test, he walked on the platform for the long-range attack test and hit 999 targets without a single miss in less than 10 minutes, before he went on to the agility test without any rest.

The rarely-seen high scores lit up one after another on the light beam, triggering rounds of exclamations.

The Tiger King Battlesuit was like a majestic king and a rising sun; its glaring brilliance eclipsed all the other crystal suits and made them its background.

The scores of the Tiger King Battlesuit were almost the highest in every test, except for the long-range attack test and the stealth test, in which the Sword Torrent Battlesuit and the Mournful Mist Battlesuit got the highest score respectively, but only with a tiny advantage.

The glamorous performance of the Tiger King Battlesuit made every member of the audience at the scene its fan. The students from Deep Sea University were shouting so excitedly that their throats were going dry.

"Tiger King! Tiger King! Tiger King!"

In the overwhelming atmosphere that was as hot as fire, Li Yao stayed calm without being the least disturbed. He looked up at the light beam when he completed the long-range attack test.

The 21 crystal suits had all finished the long-range attack test. The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit ranked 8th, neither very good nor very bad.

Li Yao was greatly relieved.

The long-range attack was what he had been worst at. He was quite satisfied at the 8th place in a test that was most likely to drag him down.

In other tests, his performance was very stable, and he was ranked among the top five in each of them.

The Mournful Mist Battlesuit and the Sword Torrent Battlesuit, on the other hand, were terribly lopsided. They could score the first in the long-range attack test or in the stealth test, but their rank sometimes fell beyond 10th in other tests.

Li Yao believed that the military wouldn't choose a crippled duck as the main force of a major war.

What came next was...

Resistance test!

"BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!"

In the testing field, thousands of crimson crystals with sharp spikes dashed at Li Yao like solidified fireballs and didn't explode until they reached Li Yao's face.

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was hardly able to stay stable. The intense blasts hit Li Yao's stomach one wave after another like giant hammers.

Li Yao gritted his teeth and walked forward slowly yet firmly.

"Shhhhhhh!"

Greenish corrosive venom rained upon the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. A giant cluster of greenish mist rose up from its surface. But Li Yao continued walking on.

"Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa!"

Dozens of alloy bullets hit the critical parts of the crystal suit at the sonic speed. The crystal suit was almost ripped open under the attack.

But Li Yao took them for mosquito bites. He ran faster and faster against the stormy attacks until he passed the finish line.

"Shua!"

The rank of the resistance test was displayed on the light beam. 'Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Grand Desolate War Institution' appeared like ghost sitting on the top of 'Tiger King Battlesuit, Deep Sea University'.

There was a double-digit gap between the two scores.

This was the first time that the Tiger King Battlesuit had been exceeded by such a huge difference.

Cheers from the students of Deep Sea University stopped abruptly.

Li Yao opened his ragged helmet, clenched his fists and started roaring.

The thousands of students of Deep Sea University were looking at each other in dead silence, their confidence suppressed by Li Yao's astounding shouts.

All the other Exos forgot their own tests and gazed at the light beam in bewilderment.

They knew previously that the defense ability of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was amazing, but they didn't expect it to be so good.

Subconsciously, they glanced at the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit's other test results.

They were shocked to discover that in all the other tests except the resistance test, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was never the best, but it never fell beyond top five, either. It seemed that the crystal suit had no shortcomings.

Taking all the test results into consideration, in the perspective of comprehensive capability, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit seemed to be even better than Mournful Mist and Sword Torrent and was closely behind the Tiger King Battlesuit.

Considering the difference of price of the two crystal suits, it was not hard to say whose price-performance ratio was better!

The delegates of the military were discussing its performance amongst themselves.

"Who's the wearer of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit of the Grand Desolate War Institution? I never heard that there's such an excellent Refinement Stage Exo. Li Yao? Who's that? I want all of his files!" Shangguan Ce said to a staff officer beside him. Then he turned to Guan Chao, the incumbent captain of 'Red Lightning', and smiled.

"Which crystal suit do you think better meets the demand of the federal army?"

Red Lightning had been established by Shangguan Ce. Guan Chao was his favorite soldier when he was the captain. They had saved each other's lives multiple times in the battlefield, and they trusted each other more than anybody else.

Guan Chao observed, "If we are choosing a crystal suit for Red Lightning, Mournful Mist and Sword Torrent both have their advantages. I would say we need to purchase several sets of both of them.

"However, if we're going to equip every Cultivator in the main troops with a crystal suit, I think Tiger King and Mystic Skeleton would be a better option. Honestly speaking, I didn't expect that the sword that the Grand Desolate War Institution had been whetting for twenty years could be so sharp and perfect.

"In the aspect of price-performance ratio, I'm more in favor of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. After all, we only have a limited budget.

"Many people in the government and in the military are still insisting on the route of railguns and warships. They maintain that more advanced crystal warships are the key to victory and have been criticizing crystal suits. If the crystal suits we purchase are too expensive, they're definitely going to kick up a fuss about it."

"Exactly."

Shangguan Ce sighed. "Everything about the Tiger King Battlesuit is perfect, except that it is a little bit expensive. You've seen the report, too. The final battle is likely to happen earlier than we expected. Before the day comes, we have to equip every Cultivator in the military with a crystal suit, otherwise…"

"I understand."

Guan Chao nodded his head, "However, such tests can only partly demonstrate their performance.

"Maybe the more intense competitive test later can better reveal their actual performances."

At 2 p.m., the 21 crystal suits finished all the tests.

The comprehensive performance of Tiger King was unquestionably the best. Mystic Skeleton, Sword Torrent and Mournful Mist followed closely behind, with an almost indistinguishable gap amongst themselves.

Other crystal suits were far away from them.

However, in the eyes of real experts, such rigid tests could only be used as a reference for the performance of the crystal suits. They could not really prove that a crystal suit was good or bad.

The competitive test coming next was the more convincing one!

The 21 Exos were in too much a hurry to have lunch. They each had a high-energy nutrition dose in order to refresh themselves faster.

After the series of tests in the morning, especially the resistance test, their crystal suits were scarred with holes here and there, and therefore had to be maintained immediately.

The organizer gave the Exos half an hour for the maintenance of their crystal suits.

19 crystal suits were sent down to the workshops below the testing field.

But two crystal suits remained on the testing field, the Tiger King and Mystic Skeleton.

Li Yao and Zuo Feijing stared at each other. Their equally sharp eyes clashed in the middle of the air with invisible sparkles.

It was the tranquility before an earthshaking hurricane.

"Shua!"

Li Yao took out a silver-grey glove and put it on his left hand.

The glove was made of seven different marrow crystals and took him an entire month to refine. It could magnify the sensitivity of fingers by up to ten times, allowing the wearer to better perceive the problem in the magical equipment and the direction of the spiritual energy flow inside it.

In the meantime, a dagger that had been refined out of the bones of the mutant lion dragon was already dancing in his right hand.

Zuo Feijing had put on a pair of bizarrely shaped gloves which were emitting intense spiritual waves, suggesting that it was also a piece of marvelous magical equipment.

Both of their hands waved up and down like butterflies and started maintaining their crystal suits.

Guan Chao was amazed and said in a low voice, "In a real battle, a workshop and a mechanic are not always readily available. When faults occur, it sometimes counts on the Exo to solve the problems.

"The two Exos know the logic very clearly. They are very confident in their crystal suits, too."

The vast testing field went into an odd silence. Everyone held their breath, fearing that they might disturb the fluent and professional actions of the two Exos below them.

The students of Deep Sea University put on an affectionate expression.

They knew very well about Zuo Feijing's amazingly fast hand movement and super professional maintenance skills. But when they saw it with their own eyes again, they still felt that it was dramatic and incredible.

But when they glanced at Li Yao who was standing in the opposite side of Zuo Feijing, they noticed that not only were Li Yao's hands as fast as Zuo Feijing's, his knowledge and maintenance skills of the crystal suit were also as good as Zuo Feijing's.

"Where is this monster from?"

"No wonder he could drive Jiang Shaoyang, the Tenth Star, away and was bold enough to challenge the Refining Department of Deep Sea University."

"He is indeed arrogant. But he is truly strong, too!"

Half an hour passed in no time.

The two crystal suits were reborn in the hands of Li Yao and Zuo Feijing.

Although their surfaces were still well-worn with bumps and hollows, they looked brutally charming on the other hand.

Meanwhile, the other 19 crystal suits rose up slowly from below the testing field.

'I'm going to beat you all with an indisputable performance in the final competitive test!'

All the Exos gritted their teeth and clenched their fists.

Chapter 316: Flying Crystal Racing

Chapter 316: Flying Crystal Racing

The competitive test was a popular game in the world of Exos called 'Flying Crystal Racing'.

A Flying Crystal was a piece of magical equipment that was a bit larger than a watermelon with a smooth surface which was carved with a lot of power rune arrays. The spiritual energy contained inside it was abundant, too.

The Flying Crystal could drive the power rune arrays and flee in various directions with the surge of spiritual waves.

It could also trigger violent electric shocks when touched.

All in all, the sole purpose of a Flying Crystal was to escape control at an amazingly high speed.

Even when it was caught by someone, it would always try to flee with arc blowout and high-frequency oscillation.

The Flying Crystal used to be a piece of training magical equipment for battle-type Cultivators when they were alone.

For some strong Cultivators, they could release five to six Flying Crystals and catch all of them at the same time.

In the world of Exos, since most of the training was tedious, the game of 'Flying Crystal Racing' had been invented.

In a Flying Crystal race, a frolicking Flying Crystal would be released on a designated racetrack, which would dash forward unpredictably under the control of the pre-input telepathic thoughts.

All the crystal suits in the game would chase the Flying Crystal.

While they were chasing, they were allowed to attack each other.

Every once in a while, the crystal suit at the tail end of all the participants would be eliminated.

Flying Crystal Racing was much more about speed and agility.

The fast and agile crystal suits were naturally capable of catching the Flying Crystal before everyone else could.

However, after grasping the target, they would turn into targets themselves whose back would be attacked by every other participant.

Besides, the Flying Crystal was born with the ability to struggle violently and give out crazy electric shocks, which meant that no crystal suit would be able to contain the Flying Crystal for long.

If their attention was focused on controlling the Flying Crystal, their combat ability would be greatly undermined.

Their competitors would definitely seize the opportunity and launch their attacks.

The winner of a Flying Crystal race was not the one who passed by the finish line with the Flying Crystal, but the one who was the first to keep the Flying Crystal for a designated length of time.

For example, in the upcoming Flying Crystal race which would be joined by the 21 crystal suits, all the participants would be teleported into a world fragment where a giant racetrack had been built.

The circuit racetrack was 100 meters wide and 10,000 meters long, with traps of various types all the way to the end.

The participants were allowed to use their weapons at their will.

Every minute, the last participant in the line would be eliminated, until there were only five participants in the field.

The participant that held the Flying Crystal for a hundred seconds in total would be deemed to be the final winner.

Flying Crystal racing and super shuttle racing were the two most famous racing games in the federation, both of which were popular among Cultivators and among the ordinary people.

The tricky rules made the game full of changes.

Even the strongest crystal suit would be greatly impaired when it controlled the Flying Crystal, and those weaker crystal suits might find the opportunity to take it down easily.

No one could guarantee that they would be the winner until the last second of the game.

Such uncertainty had made all the Exos crazy about Flying Crystal Racing.

When there were more than three Exos who wanted to challenge each other, a Flying Crystal race would always be their first choice.

At 3 p.m., the convention center was devoid of any sound even though hundreds of thousands of people were inside of it. The magical equipment booths that had been jam-packed were entirely empty now. All the Cultivators and tourists went to the outdoors and gazed at the giant light beam in the sky anxiously with their mouths wide open.

In the testing field, all the audience fell into silence, too.

The students of Deep Sea University had sunk into a serene, bottomless ocean, which was even more appalling than the billowing roars in the morning.

On the opposite side of them were the delegates of the Grand Desolate War Institution who were apparently outnumbered.

But the burning fire in Yuan Manqiu alone seemed enough to vaporize all the water of Deep Sea University.

She didn't hide her sharpness at all. Her eyes stared at the direction of Deep Sea University as if they were two flying swords.

Then, she noticed that Supernova Jiang Sheng was looking at herself at the same time.

'Junior Brother, the war between the Grand Desolate War Institution and Deep Sea University has now begun!'

'Senior Sister, Deep Sea University is invincible. Give it up already!'

Invisible blast that seemed to be tearing the air apart spread from where their eyes met.

On the racetrack inside the world fragment, the atmosphere was thousands of times more intense than outside.

The 100-meter wide and 10,000-meter long racetrack was almost too large to fathom. Standing on it, humans were like ants that had fallen into a giant bowl. Their size was completely dwarfed by that of the sky and the earth.

However, the fighting will of the 21 Exos seemed to be blocking the enormous racetrack!

One minute before the match, all of the Exos were adjusting their mood and warming themselves up.

Li Yao touched the Soul Condensing Pendant.

Although the armor was too thick for him to actually sense the pendant, he still felt a fire burning inside his palm.

The heat of the fire did not seem to be physical. It seemed to be mental existence that was burning directly inside his brain.

Since the birth of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, he had noticed that the Phantom Entities in the Soul Condensing Pendant seemed to have awoken from the protracted nightmare and were getting more and more active.

Although they were still not able to communicate with each other freely, he could feel the hopeful, irresistible force, like a soft grass which had pierced through the stone pressing on it.

Maybe, with a little more hard work, the Phantom Entities would be able to find their self-awareness and become spectral Cultivators!

"Professors, Senior Brothers, I believe that the day we are actually fighting side by side is not far away!"

Half a minute before the match, all the Exos stood in the starting points that were decided by drawing lots.

Coincidentally, Zuo Feijing was next to Li Yao.

However, the two of them just exchanged glances without saying anything.

Everything that needed to be said had been said with that.

For two dangerous Exos such as themselves, trash talk before a game was of little significance.

Whatever they had to say in their mind, just say them out with flying swords, Thunder-Palms, and crystal cannons!

Ten seconds before the match, the 21 Exos were all in position like 21 solid statues.

The air was so intense that it seemed to be exploding at any moment.

A Flying Crystal landed before the start line slowly. It was emitting colorful brilliance and surging spiritual energy while it was bouncing without any pattern.

Three seconds before the match.

Activated by the telepathic thought of a high-level Cultivator, the Flying Crystal rushed forward like lightning while it was jumping up and down.

One second before the match, all the Exos had brought the performance of their crystal reactors to maximum. Earsplitting noises were echoing in every crystal suit, their backs unleashing glaring rainbows.

The match began!

"Swoosh! Swoosh swoosh!"

The 21 crystal suits dashed forward like arrows just released from bows and lunged at the playful Flying Crystal one after another.

The crystal suit leading the charge was not Tiger King, or Mystic Skeleton, or Sword Torrent, or Mournful Mist. It was a super-light crystal suit named 'Wild Skylark'.

The Wild Skylark Battlesuit treaded gently on the racetrack like a dragonfly touching a river, then it accelerated as if it were a soft smoke and caught the Flying Crystal in the blink of an eye.

"Shhhh!"

The brightness on the Flying Crystal grew much more intense. The electric arcs which looked like serpents whipped the Wild Skylark Battlesuit, making it stop briefly.

In the meantime, more than ten glaring lasers were coming at its back, which were the attacks of the crystal suits behind it when they noticed that the Wild Skylark was hamstrung by the Flying Crystal.

The Wild Skylark Battlesuit was immediately caught in a storm of spiritual energy.

The Flying Crystal took the chance to free itself and bounded forward.

When the spiritual energy dispersed, the Wild Skylark Battlesuit was almost shattered. The spiritual waves behind its back became intermittent, like the dying coughs of an old man.

Its speed was amazing, but its defense ability was too unsatisfactory. Under the interferences of the Flying Crystal, it suffered great damage from the collective attack of more than ten opponents, which crippled it on the spot.

Whoever snatched the Flying Crystal would be attacked by everyone.

However, it wouldn't help if one just stood by and watched. The longer someone else held the Flying Crystal, the closer to victory they would be. Following behind others would mean that there was no chance of winning at all.

The contradiction was also why Flying Crystal Racing was so interesting.

'That guy was too rash!'

As Li Yao was passing by the Wild Skylark Battlesuit, he glanced at it and noticed that it struggled to stand on its feet several times, only to collapse to the ground in the end.

But on second thought, Li Yao realized that the Wild Skylark Battlesuit had no advantage whatsoever other than its speed. If it hadn't tried its luck in the beginning period when everyone else was still prudent, it would've had barely any chance to touch the Flying Crystal in the remaining part of the game.

At least now, the Wild Skylark Battlesuit had held the Flying Crystal for… one second!

Right then, the crystal suits in the lead were suddenly broken into a mess because they had entered the first trap.

In the sky of the racetrack, almost a hundred winged mines were waiting for them patiently.

They were magical equipment that had been designed based on landmines. Basically, they were Thunder-Palms that could fly. They could sense the heat and vibration nearby and flew close to the source before setting themselves off.

The explosion of the hundred winged mines immediately scattered the 21 crystal suits which had been very close to each other.

However, as the explosion took place, thousands of flying swords were unleashed from a crystal suit.

It was the Sword Torrent Battlesuit!

The crystal suit co-developed by the three major sword-training sects was like a steel hedgehog with flying swords all over its body. When everyone else was avoiding the explosion of the winged mines in a flurry, it suddenly attacked them without any hesitation.

Many of the other crystal suits were caught unprepared and slowed down as their spiritual shields were blocking the incoming flying swords.

The Sword Torrent Battlesuit accelerated at this moment and dashed to the Flying Crystal which it locked in its chest easily.

Chapter 317: Match in Lightning

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In the moment of mess, only five crystal suits were not interfered with by the winged mines and flying swords. They caught up from various directions.

Sha Yucheng, Exo of the Sword Torrent Battlesuit, grinned hideously. With a telepathic thought, dozens of flying swords dashed out and hovered around him at an amazing speed with deep blue electric arcs dancing here and there, which looked like a mincing machine.

The first two crystal suits were not prepared for this. They stopped abruptly, only to be caught by the sword net and nearly cut into pieces.

The following three crystal suits bothered little about it. They rushed into the sword net as if it were nothing.

"Chi!"

Several grey spiritual waves were released from the Mournful Mist Battlesuit, wreathing it like a grey mist without any gap.

It was weird that when the flying swords hit the grey mist, they started shaking violently as if they were drunk and missed their target. Not a single flying sword was able to hit the Mournful Mist Battlesuit.

The spiritual shield of the Tiger King Battlesuit was suddenly brighter than ever. It didn't do anything while the flying swords hit the spiritual shield with glaring sparkles, but its speed was not the least affected.

It had resisted the mincing of the sword net with nothing but its spiritual shield.

"Swoosh!"

Driven by Li Yao, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit which seemed to be heavy and clumsy was like a tyrannosaur dancing gracefully on the tip of a sword. It shunned dozens of flying swords by twisting its body into inconceivable angles.

The few flying swords that it failed to dodge passed by the armor without dealing any damage because of fast small-scale body movements.

The three crystal suits cut into the middle of the sword net in different ways.

"Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!"

The Mournful Mist Battlesuit launched mysterious and unpredictable soul attacks.

The Devil Destroyer Cannon on the chest of the Tiger King Battlesuit roared.

Two crystal cannons flipped up on the shoulder of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, too, unleashing furious spiritual energy.

Sha Yucheng, Exo of the Sword Torrent Battlesuit, was caught by the soul attack from the Mournful Mist Battlesuit and was dazed for 0.1 seconds.

Then, he felt scorching, almost unbearable heat in his back.

There was not enough time for him to jump away. He had to bring the spiritual shield of his suit to maximum, hoping to block the attacks.

"BOOM!"

The collective attack knocked Sha Yucheng over. The Sword Torrent Battlesuit leaned forward and fell on its face.

The Flying Crystal immediately took off and bounced forward like a lightning.

Li Yao was going to catch up with it, when an earsplitting shriek boomed in his ears, as if a Hellfire-Lightning had exploded right beside his ears.

He immediately felt a strong headache, with all kinds of hallucinations appearing before his eyes.

"Soul attack!"

Li Yao shouted in his mind. The Mournful Mist Battlesuit must've launched soul attack on Zuo Feijing and him when they were too busy attacking the Sword Torrent Battlesuit to notice anything else.

However, since his soul had been cleansed by Ou Yezi for multiple times, his soul was far more solid than any other Refinement Stage Cultivator's.

Shaking his head and taking a deep breath, he was back to himself again.

The Mournful Mist Battlesuit was hundreds of meters ahead of him, with the Flying Crystal in its hand.

With a cold smile, Li Yao stomped on the race track, ran off, and sped up crazily. Within a moment, the distance between them was shortened to twenty meters.

It was his favorite distance to launch an attack!

Almost at the same time, a gold laser caught up and dashed forward in parallel with him, even though it had set off much later.

It was the Tiger King Battlesuit!

Right then, the Mournful Mist was in the lead with the Flying Crystal under its control.

Mystic Skeleton and Tiger King were following closely.

The Sword Torrent Battlesuit had recovered from the previous strike. Retrieving all the flying swords it had sent out, it turned into an invulnerable iron hedgehog again.

The four crystal suits were at the vanguard.

All the other crystal suits were chasing them furiously from far behind.

Li Yao and Zuo Feijing looked at each other and were about to attack the Mournful Mist Battlesuit in front of them simultaneously, when it suddenly twisted weirdly in a dense smoke and…

And split into seven!

Seven identical Mournful Mist Battlesuits, each of them holding a Flying Crystal, rushed forward in the same posture.

"Impressive hallucination skills!"

Hallucinations skills were not complicated. They were just vivid shadows formed by optical camouflage and 3D projections.

But the hallucination skills performed by the Mournful Mist Battlesuit were not simply shadows.

In Li Yao's probe magical equipment, seven light spots were blinking clearly.

"Even spiritual waves can be simulated? The jamming magical equipment inside the Mournful Mist Battlesuit is indeed marvelous!

"However—"

Three bolts of lightning interrupted his thought. He squatted and accelerated into a vague smoke, dashing through the gaps between the lightning.

The four crystal suits had entered the second trap of the racetrack, the lightning zone!

The air in this zone would unleash high-intensity lightning unpredictably. If a crystal suit was to be accidentally hit by the lightning, it would risk being wrecked and eliminated out of the match immediately.

In order to avoid the lightning, Mystic Skeleton, Tiger King, and Mournful Mist all performed wonderful small-scale movements.

Of the seven Mournful Mist Battlesuits, only the real one was doing the movements, while the other six were simply mimicking it, which made them odd and easy to distinguish.

"Second from the left!"

Li Yao certainly wouldn't let go of such an opportunity. He located his target without any trouble and accelerated again. More than ten lightning bolts were dancing around him, yet all of them missed him as if he were insulated.

Zuo Feijing had identified the target at the same time.

The Tiger King Battlesuit lunged at its prey like a hungry tiger. The full-speed charge of itself was as intimidating as the march of an entire legion.

In the blink of an eye, the two of them were already behind the Mournful Mist Battlesuit.

Their craziness seemed to be enough to tear Mournful Mist apart without them doing anything.

Feng Kai, driver of the Mournful Mist Battlesuit, was an experienced Exo. Now that he was aware that his opponents had seen through the disguises, he made up his mind and threw the Flying Crystal to the front with his full strength.

Li Yao and Zuo Feijing launched their attack simultaneously, not at Feng Kai, but at each other!

They were only five meters away from each other. Flying swords and crystal cannons were of little significance at such a short distance.

Li Yao suddenly kicked at Zuo Feijing's abdomen.

With the enhancement of the power rune arrays on the leg, the kick had almost reached the sonic speed.

A coldly shining spike stuck out from the tip of his foot.

It seemed that if the kick was to arrive at its destination, not only would the crystal suit that Zuo Feijing was wearing be broken through, Zuo Feijing's stomach would be ripped open, too.

Right then, two claws that were vibrating violently protruded on the back of Zuo Feijing's hand.

Zuo Feijing waved his arms and snatched at Li Yao's ankle.

Li Yao's kick seemed to be going to a dead end. Before it was to pierce through Zuo Feijing's abdomen, Zuo Feijing's tiger claws would mince his foot into pieces.

Li Yao scoffed. The crystal reactor on his back was burning furiously. Every power run array was brought to maximum. His leg folded miraculously like a switchblade and avoided the attack of the tiger claws. Then, at the same speed, he kept his legs bent and kneed Zuo Feijing's chest brutally.

Zuo Feijing roared and took the blow. In the meantime, the two tiger claws struck at Li Yao's ribs unstoppably.

"BOOM!"

The two crystal suits clashed.

Cracking noises were ringing in the waist of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, whose components were flying everywhere.

"Li Yao, how arrogant of you!

"Tiger King Battlesuit of Deep Sea University has been co-developed with Gold Armor Clan. Much of its design is based on the Mystic Turtle Battlesuit. Its defense ability is far beyond your expectation!

"You think you're tough? Idiot!"

After being hit by Li Yao, a shallow hollow had appeared the armor on Zuo Feijing's chest. But it did not affect the normal functions of the crystal suit. The fact that he was laughing right now seemed to be evident enough that his crystal suit suffered much less damage than his opponent's had.

With the counterforce of the collision, Zuo Feijing accelerated again and caught the Flying Crystal in less than five seconds.

Right then, he heard the sound of wind.

More exactly, the sound of tornadoes.

Desperate alarms were ringing inside the Tiger King Battlesuit. All the information in front of Zuo Feijing was bloody red.

The audience all exclaimed in bewilderment because they had seen something that was impossible to happen.

Hit by the tiger claws, the most distinguished melee magical equipment of the Tiger King Battlesuit, right in the critical part, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit regained balance only one second later and caught up with Tiger King, as if nothing had happened.

The destruction of so many magical equipment components seemed to have had no effect on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit at all.

At this moment, several expert Cultivators realized what Li Yao was trying to do.

The reason why he attacked Zuo Feijing aggressively just now was to reduce Zuo Feijing's attention and to enlarge the distance between them, so that he could perform what he was best at…

The saber art!

In lightning and thunder, Li Yao was only ten meters away from his opponent.

With the enhancement of the power of lightning in the air, Li Yao spun, unsheathed his saber, and slashed forward!

The heavy battle saber, which he'd spent half a month refining and could bring the speed to maximum by the air paths on its surface that were as delicate as flowers, turned into a shocking flash and tore the sky apart.

The Thunderous Tornado Saber Art!

The saber art that absorbed the mysteries of the martial arts of Long Wenhui, a Core Formation Cultivator, that had been created and improved in savaging dust storms, and that had slain tornadoes once before, first revealed itself ferociously in front of the world!

"So fast!"

"So intimidating!"

"So brutal!"

Those who witnessed the slash all shuddered in horror.

Although they were in two different worlds, they felt their hearts nearly stop beating, as if the slash could break through the boundary of worlds out of the light beams and land at their own necks.

Zuo Feijing didn't expect Li Yao's defense ability to be so good as to be able to take his attack and still launch such an unstoppable slash as if the damage on his crystal suit was nothing.

Li Yao had calculated his speed, strength, and angle too well. He chose the timing when Zuo Feijing just caught the Flying Crystal.

Zuo Feijing's attention was all focused on the Flying Crystal. He had nowhere to run and could only bring the spiritual shield of the crystal suit to the maximum for defense.

In the meantime, he thought of dozens of counterattack plans.

As long as he could take the slash, there were hundreds of ways he could turn around and cut Li Yao into pieces!

"Bo!"

Li Yao's saber slashed into the spiritual shield of the Tiger King Battlesuit.

The seemingly solid spiritual shield was shattered into pieces like an eggshell, which had been broken through by the heavy saber without any trouble.

Astounded, Zuo Feijing gritted his teeth and, having no time to consider his demeanor anymore, leaned forwards until his body reached the ground. Then he dashed forward like a giant lizard.

The saber missed the target.

But the saber aura that had been condensed by the dancing lightning nearby followed him and hit his back like a haunting ghost.

Chapter 318: Rush Hour!

Chapter 318: Rush Hour!

"Crack!"

The plate armor on the back of the Tiger King Battlesuit which looked like a giant turtle shell was slashed into two halves by Li Yao's saber.

Everybody seemed to be able to hear Zuo Feijing's grunts.

But a dead enemy is better than a wounded enemy!

Li Yao didn't chase the Flying Crystal. Instead, he turned around, intending to kill the Tiger King Battlesuit while he had the chance.

But right then, hundreds of flying swords launched by the Sword Torrent Battlesuit rained down upon him.

The Mournful Mist Battlesuit sneaked by him and reached the Flying Crystal without bothering the two of them.

The other 16 crystal suits were also coming close rapidly.

Li Yao sniffed. The moment before the flying swords tangled him, he pulled back his saber and rushed at the Flying Crystal, leaving Zuo Feijing behind.

The auditorium was filled with dead silence in the beginning, which was then broken by louder and louder whispers that resembled the sound of a pot of boiling oil in which a block of ice was tossed.

Students of Deep Sea University pulled their hair in bewilderment. Someone was repeatedly blinking their eyes in shock, trying to wake themselves up from the nightmare.

They could not believe that Zuo Feijing had been hit by Li Yao and wounded so badly.

Supernova Jiang Sheng was still inscrutable.

But the metal ring that had been on his nose all the time suddenly turned brighter than ever.

His eyes were ten times sharper than before as he looked at Yuan Manqiu, his senior sister, who was sitting among the delegates of the Grand Desolate War Institution.

Yuan Manqiu bit her lips and waved at him.

"Interesting."

In the zone of the military delegates, Guan Chao, captain of 'Red Lightning', took over a crystal processor from General Shangguan Ce and browsed through Li Yao's files. "It's indeed marvelous that a boy no higher than the peak of the Refinement Stage was able to perform such a deadly slash, harnessing an air of the destructive dust storms and thunderbolts in the depths of the Grand Desolate Plateau.

"If he hits the critical part of an enemy with the same slash just now, he might even be able to put down a middle-level demon general instantly.

"Oh? He killed a demon general when he just entered the Refinement Stage?

"The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is tough enough, too. After a huge impact against the Tiger King Battlesuit, not only did it remain intact, it even allowed its Exo to perform such a splendid slash.

"This is going to be an interesting match."

While they were talking, the situation on the racetrack was changing drastically.

Li Yao dashed forward from the right. His saber slashed the Flying Crystal like a hurricane, which came to a halt.

Li Yao took the opportunity to sheathe his saber before holding the Flying Crystal in his arms.

"Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!"

The Flying Crystal was violently shaking in Li Yao's chest like a Hellfire-Lightning that was going to explode.

Meanwhile, deep blue electric arts pierced into his body through the gaps in the crystal suit.

"Shhhhhh!"

Li Yao was grimacing because of the electric shock. Every one of his body cells were itching in pain, and he couldn't focus at all.

He finally understood why Zuo Feijing had taken the blow from him without counterattacking immediately just now.

One second!

Two seconds!

The longer he held it, the more violent the Flying Crystal became. The electric shocks it sent out were getting more and more intense, too.

Li Yao almost gritted his teeth to pieces. He dashed forward, having no time to bother anything.

Behind him, 19 crystal suits had crowded and launched their long-range attacks.

Hundreds of flying swords, dozens of mystic lights and almost a hundred Thunder-Palms were flying at him unstoppably.

It was a tricky multiple-choice question.

If he gave it up too early, his time of control over the Flying Crystal would not be long, and such a rare opportunity would be wasted.

If he gave it up too late, he would have little time to prepare to defend himself, and he might be eliminated on the spot.

Li Yao's pupils shrank to the size of the tip of a burning needle, as he had brought his computational ability to maximum. The crystal camera on the back of the helmet scrutinized every upcoming attack, before he analyzed the frequency, speed and trace of the weapons and the tiny gap between flying swords, mystic lights and Thunder-Palms.

It was not until a flying sword exploded in the right corner of his spiritual shield that he thrusted the Flying Crystal away…

Not forward, but backward!

"BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!"

Flying swords, mystic lights and Thunder-Palms enveloped the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit immediately. Bloody lotuses were blossoming one after another. But the stamens of the flowers were cut open by a flashing saber, through which the burning Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit jumped out of the sea of flames.

Up until now, Li Yao had kept the Flying Crystal for 5.3 seconds.

Feng Kai, in the Mournful Mist Battlesuit, was behind him. He had kept it for 3.7 seconds.

Sha Yucheng, Exo of the Sword Torrent Battlesuit, had kept the target for 3.5 seconds.

To everyone's surprise, Zuo Feijing, who had been driving the Tiger King Battlesuit that had been deemed as the best of all the MP crystal suit models, had only kept the Flying Crystal for 0.1 seconds.

"Ho!"

The crystal reactor of the Tiger King Battlesuit was engaged in the full-fire mode. It roared astoundingly like a dangerous tiger that had just come down the mountain.

Thrown back by Li Yao, the Flying Crystal was in the middle of the other 16 crystal suits, which immediately caused major chaos.

Colorful blasts occurred one wave after another. All kinds of magical equipment components were flying everywhere in the air. Explosions and screams were echoing nonstop.

Right then, the Tiger King Battlesuit finally caught up with the crowd. It charged at the other crystal suits as though they were goats and was not blocked by any of them at all. Then it snatched the Flying Crystal and held it in its arms.

Li Yao, Feng Kai, and Sha Yucheng looked at each other.

The three of them were like a squad that had been cooperating for a long time. They cornered the Tiger King Battlesuit in a triangle with tacit mutual understanding.

The remaining part of the match turned into a demonstration match for Tiger King, Mystic Skeleton, Sword Torrent, and Mournful Mist.

For 90% of the time, the Flying Crystal was handed over amongst themselves. Hardly anybody else was able to touch the Flying Crystal.

When another crystal suit was bold enough to seize the Flying Crystal, it would be crushed by all of them instantly.

Even if the crystal suit did not explode immediately, it would suffer enough damage to get itself eliminated in the next minute because it would not be able to catch up with other crystal suits anymore.

Meanwhile, whenever one of the four crystal suits had the Flying Crystal under control, it would be attacked by the other three crystal suits directly.

Strong as the Tiger King Battlesuit may be, it was not good enough to resist the collective attack from the other three crystal suits under the interferences of the Flying Crystal.

One lap… Two laps… Three laps…

The match was so intense that people had lost the sense of time.

Although the racetrack was 10,000 meters long, every lap seemed to be as short as a 100-meter sprint.

After five laps, most of the other crystal suits had been blown to pieces or had to withdraw from the match because of malfunctions.

The time length that each of the four crystal suits gained in every hand-over had significantly increased, too.

The advantages of the Tiger King Battlesuit, which were that it had no major shortcomings and that its defense ability was remarkable, were gradually made best use of in the match.

Sword Torrent and Mournful Mist, on the other hand, were terribly lopsided and therefore found it more and more difficult to keep up with the game.

The Sword Torrent Battlesuit was most distinguished for its flying swords and long-range attacks. But in the intense combat, most of its flying swords had been sent out, of which few were able to be retrieved. As a result, its attack ability was greatly undermined.

The Mournful Mist Battlesuit, although adept at stealth and soul attack, was not famous for its defense ability. After several collective attacks from the other three crystal suits, sparks were bursting out from all the critical parts of the crystal suit. The hallucinations that it created became fuzzy and shabby, too.

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was the only one that could keep up with the Tiger King Battlesuit.

Ostensibly speaking, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was the most miserable crystal suit on the spot.

It looked as if it had been soaked in the corrosive venom of demon beasts for a day and a night before being roasted on a fire.

At first glance, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit seemed to be a pile of garbage. There was no charisma of 'King of Magical Equipment' in it whatsoever.

But such a pile of garbage had tangled with the Tiger King Battlesuit like an undying cockroach.

They clashed and separated, again and again!

The tornado-like saber was as bright as the very beginning.

However…

'There is something wrong with the spiritual waves on the back of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.'

Many experienced Exos raised their eyebrows.

Generally speaking, if a crystal suit was in a normal state, the transition of the colors of the spiritual waves would always be natural and smooth. There shouldn't be any abrupt changes.

But right now, the surging spiritual waves behind the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit were fluctuating high and low, bright and dark.

For a while, it was glaring in brilliance; a moment later, it turned into dull green; then, it turned as red as blood; suddenly, it was orange with purple sparkles dancing here and there.

Such a phenomenon was often indicative of a problem with the crystal reactor, which was mostly because the telepathic thoughts of the Exo were obstructed and were not able to trigger the spiritual energy in the crystal reactor normally.

Could it be...

The experienced Exos and refiners looked at one another. Cold sweat was appearing on their forehead.

No matter what the case was, they could see that the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had reached its limit.

"Beep!"

Right then, a brisk shriek rang in the sky of the racetrack.

The Tiger King Battlesuit's total time of keeping the Flying Crystal had surpassed 95 seconds.

Five more seconds, and the Tiger King Battlesuit would be the final winner.

At this moment, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit ranked the second, with a total time of 92 seconds.

But the Flying Crystal fell into the hands of the Mournful Mist Battlesuit.

Zuo Feijing roared. He charged at the Mournful Mist Battlesuit with his tiger claws shinning unnervingly.

Li Yao and Sha Yucheng looked at each other. They made the sensible choice at the same time. Instead of attacking the Mournful Mist Battlesuit with Zuo Feijing, they attacked Zuo Feijing from his left and his right.

If the Tiger King Battlesuit got the Flying Crystal, they would be doomed to fail.

The Mournful Mist Battlesuit, which had been seriously damaged in the previous fighting, ranked fourth among the four crystal suits, with a total time of 72 seconds.

Their biggest threat right now was Tiger King!

"You two are not enough to stop me!"

Without the interferences of the Flying Crystal, Zuo Feijing was not afraid of their assault at all.

His tiger claws scattered the last cluster of flying swords from the Sword Torrent Battlesuit into pieces. In the meantime, the Devil Destroyer Cannon on his chest fired and blew Li Yao away like a volcano eruption. Then, he kicked the back of the Mournful Mist Battlesuit and knocked his opponent more than thirty meters away. The Flying Crystal was freed again and jumped into the sky.

One versus three, as easy as pie. The Tiger King Battlesuit couldn't be more magnificent!

Zuo Feijing smiled and seized the Flying Crystal.

But his attention was entirely focused on Li Yao whom he had locked onto with the hidden crystal cameras on his back.

He had set up a trap waiting for Li Yao to jump in. Before the final victory, he would blow the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit into pieces!

But Li Yao... simply squatted.

Four stabilizer fins suddenly protruded from the back of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, like a butterfly which had just grown out of the caterpillar.

Chapter 319: Rise From Ashes!

Chapter 319: Rise From Ashes!

Everything had been covered in grey mist in his eyes, except for the Tiger King Battlesuit and the Flying Crystal. But they soon turned into a series of figures, lines and angles in his insane calculations, too.

The real world vanished. A pure computational world assumed its place.

Brain cell activity, 200%!

Brain cell activity, 300%!

Super perceptive state, activated!

"Chi!"

Unimaginable brilliance burst out of the back of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, which seemed to have grown two fiery wings that were dozens of meters long. At its peak speed, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit sprinted at the Tiger King Battlesuit like a shooting star.

"How can it be?"

Zuo Feijing didn't expect that Li Yao could still accelerate at the end of the game. He also realized that Li Yao was not going for the Flying Crystal, but for him.

The traps that he had been preparing for were in vain. Li Yao crashed into him heavily.

"Crack!"

The Tiger King Battlesuit was knocked more than ten meters away. Its components were flying in the air like the petals of a flower being blown by raging wind.

For Zuo Feijing, the slash in the beginning only worked out because he wasn't paying much attention to it. This was the first time that the Tiger King Battlesuit had been so severely damaged in a face-to-face confrontation.

"Are you crazy?!"

Zuo Feijing gritted his teeth and couldn't figure out why.

In regard of structure hardiness, the Tiger King Battlesuit, which had employed many synthesized Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, should be much better than the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

Li Yao would definitely suffer much more damage from the clash than he would.

But why was this monster…

Before he was able to finish his thought, Li Yao had dashed up to him once again like a psycho. The burning flames behind Li Yao's back was like a dragon who just jumped out of an abyss.

The intense pressure twisted Zuo Feijing's face. He had to give up thinking. With a surge of spiritual energy, his tiger claws were ten times its previous size with reckless electric arcs dancing nonstop. They took the blow from Li Yao's heavy battle saber.

"BOOM!"

"BOOM!"

"BOOM!"

The earthshaking and heaven-splitting sound seemed to be suggesting that this was not a match between two crystal suits, but an accident where two crystal warships crashed into each other.

The auditorium was quiet. The convention center was quiet. Every spectator watching the live stream was quiet.

The fists of the audience were clenched so hard that sweat on their palms seemed to be being pressed back into the skin.

Their hearts were burning and exploding, unleashing enough heat to boil all their blood.

The performance of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was beyond the wildest imaginations of the audience.

Anyone with even a little knowledge of magical equipment would know that there was a huge gap between the specifications of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and those of the Tiger King Battlesuit, since the price of Mystic Skeleton was only one third of that of Tiger King. Theoretically speaking, the result of the match had been predestined even before the match began.

But as it turned out, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was the only crystal suit that challenged Tiger King in a face-to-face confrontation and persisted for more than ten seconds on the racetrack.

Despite the most excellent framework design, the hardiness of ordinary materials was still far from that of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, even though the latter had been synthesized.

After every clash, large clusters of sparks and multiple components would burst out from the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, as if it had been blown by a large-scale crystal railgun.

Ten seconds later, there was no Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit anymore. There were only fragments of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

But Li Yao gritted his teeth and continued on the match wearing what was no better than a pile of garbage.

Every time the audience felt that he was never going to stand up again, more intense spiritual energy than the previous time would burst out inside the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, allowing him to sprint and charge at his opponent once more.

'Just stop. Such combat is evident enough of the performance of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit!'

Many people who were watching the game, even including the students of the Refining Department of Deep Sea University, couldn't bear to watch it anymore and thought to themselves.

'Stop now. The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit has exceeded its limit. Something bad is going to happen if you go on like this!'

Supernova Jiang Sheng's face was not as tranquil as just now. The corner of his mouth twitched violently without him knowing.

"You are out of your mind! You really are!"

Under Li Yao's ferocious and endless attack, Zuo Feijing shouted, "Your exhaust flame is abnormal. There must be something wrong with your crystal reactor. The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit cannot handle such intense collisions at all. You're playing with fire!"

"BOOM!"

To better prove what he just said, a power rune array on the back of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit exploded in a blaze due to overloading.

Affected by the explosion, the crystal reactor of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit stopped functioning briefly. Then, after strange cracking noises, colorful and weird smoke popped up from the inside of it.

Everyone's blood almost froze.

All the Exos knew that it was an ominous sign which indicated that the crystal reactor had entered an extremely unstable state and it had to be stopped immediately!

But, in a frenzy, Li Yao roared, "The name of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit shall be known by the entire world even if I am to be blown into pieces!"

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit squatted, while its crystal reactor was overloading to the limit of its limit. The surging exhaust flame, together with dense smoke, was spurted almost a hundred meters away.

Li Yao was entirely melted into the flame, as he slashed forward as if he were going to cut the racetrack into two halves.

"BAM!"

Radiance brighter than the glowing sun burst out between the heavy battle saber and the tiger claws.

The two pieces of ultra-solid magical equipment broke into pieces at the same time.

Despite the overwhelming blast, Li Yao lowered his shoulder and dashed forward at the Tiger King Battlesuit again.

After the collision, another three power rune arrays exploded on the back of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. The right side of plate armor was almost entirely shattered.

But the Tiger King Battlesuit was pushed away for more than ten meters.

Li Yao took the opportunity and snatched the Flying Crystal. He was going to accelerate again, when a colorful swirl appeared behind him which was expanding rapidly.

It was the ultimate omen that massive spiritual energy had been leaked and there was about to be an explosion.

Everyone's eyes bulged as they exclaimed.

"Not good. Something's wrong with the crystal reactor of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit!"

"Doesn't it claim that it has a high-pressure valve system? Now's the time to release the redundant spiritual energy!"

"The match must be stopped! You wouldn't want to see what's to come next!"

"High-pressure valve system?"

Among the students of Deep Sea University, Supernova Jiang Sheng sighed. He shook his head and muttered to himself, "A high-pressure valve is likely to malfunction, or even to be blown into pieces, any time in an intense combat!

"Gambling the safety of a crystal suit entirely on a small valve. Only the grassroots refiners are crazy enough to come with such an insane solution!"

Tiger King, Mournful Mist, and Sword Torrent all noticed the anomaly of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

The three Exos felt short of breath because of anxiety. They brought their spiritual shield to maximum without any hesitation.

But it was too late to blow the whistle.

Amidst everyone's exclamations, Li Yao accelerated again, again and again while his crystal reactor was overloading.

At first, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit broke into the supersonic speed and rushed for almost a thousand meters like a laser.

Then, another eight of its power rune arrays exploded at the same time, which bashed it to the ground like a giant hammer.

Before Li Yao was able to stand up, a blazing, man-made sun rose from the middle of the racetrack and consumed him.

The sun quickly turned into a giant orange fireball which was expanding exponentially, before a pale mushroom cloud popped up. There seemed to be a hideously grinning face of a devil in the smoke.

As the fireball was expanding, the blast rippled to the far-away distance slowly like a giant swirl.

The entire convention center was filled with gasps.

No one had foreseen such a tragedy.

The crystal reactor of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had exploded yet another time!

Both the serene Deep Sea University delegates and the tough military delegates were overwhelmed by whispers.

"It really puzzles me sometimes why those grassroots are trying so hard to prove themselves when they refuse to recant their wrong belief."

Supernova Jiang Sheng mumbled to himself, "Defeat Deep Sea University? That's a lofty ideal. But doesn't an ant who wants to shake a tree and a mantis who tries to stop a shuttle by its forelegs have a lofty ideal, too?"

"In fact, his performance was good enough already."

Guan Chao, captain of 'Red Lightning', was in grief. "His files suggest that he is a Class 1 Federation Disabled Soldier. At first, I didn't understand how a young college student was able to earn such an honor.

"But now I get it.

"The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit might not be the best crystal suit.

"But 'Vulture Li Yao' deserves the title of Class 1 Federation Disabled Soldier. He is one of the best Cultivators!"

"Li Yao!"

"Vulture Li Yao!"

Countless voices were sighing for the same name.

Yuan Manqiu fell back to her chair uncontrollably. The zone of the Grand Desolate War Institution was gravely quiet.

Zuo Feijing, Sha Yucheng, and Feng Kai were astounded by the shocking scene, too, and were not back to themselves for a long time.

Although they were competitors, Li Yao's idiotic insanity still aroused complicated feelings in their heart.

Vulture Li Yao was going to be a name that would not be forgotten easily.

However…

"It's not right."

Zuo Feijing was the first to realize that something was not right. A drop of cold sweat appeared on the tip of his nose. "My spiritual shield remains as intact as before, which means I was not affected by the blast of the explosion!"

"An explosion of a crystal reactor equals to an explosion of at least a hundred Hellfire-Lightnings. Although I'm hundreds of meters away from the center of the explosion, my spiritual shield should've been undermined by at least a quarter. How come it is still intact?"

"Look over there!"

Sha Yucheng shouted, pointing at the giant light beam floating in the sky which had been displaying each player's total time of keeping the Flying Crystal.

The number behind 'Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Grand Desolate War Institution', in other words, Li Yao, was still bouncing vigorously.

'99 seconds!'

'99.5 seconds!'

'End of the race.'

'Winner: Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Li Yao, Grand Desolate War Institution.'

"What?!"

Tiger King, Sword Torrent and Mournful Mist seemed to have been cast upon a spell which turned them into frozen statues.

The three Exos inside of them were not even able to lift their finger anymore. They could only shout in bafflement, "Li Yao won? The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit won? What's going on exactly?"

After a short silence, the convention center was in a much more chaotic mess than before.

A large question mark and an even larger exclamation mark was jumping in everyone's eyes.

They looked at each in utmost bewilderment.

"Why? The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit exploded just now and Li Yao was blown to pieces. Why did the pre-input telepathic thought inside the Flying Crystal determine that he was the final winner?"

"Speaking of which, where is the Flying Crystal?"

"The Flying Crystal is refined out of the solidest and firmest Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. The previous explosion should not be powerful enough to damage it. It should've flown out already!"

"Crack, crack."

From the gargantuan fireball, a black figure walked out slowly.

Flames were still flowing through the gaps of the plate armor, as if a hundred red roses that were blossoming at the same time.

Since the match had ended, the abilities of the Flying Crystal were automatically turned off. It was nothing more than an ordinary metal ball now.

"Swoosh! Swoosh swoosh!"

The black figure lifted his index finger. The Flying Crystal was revolving fast on his fingertip meekly.

Dazed, Zuo Feijing, Feng Kai and Sha Yucheng gazed at the guy walking out of the fire who should've been blown to pieces ten seconds ago – Vulture Li Yao!

Chapter 320: Your Opponent Is a Warship!

Chapter 320: Your Opponent Is a Warship!

Li Yao was like a ghost who had returned from the deepest level in the hell. The ragged crystal suit he was wearing did not seem lackluster, but full of deadly mysteries.

"Crack! Crack!"

Li Yao tore off his helmet which had become too twisted to be opened automatically. He grimaced happily with his lips curled.

To this moment, Zuo Feijing finally understood everything. His face was so gloomy that one might have thought it was going to rain at any moment. He gnashed his teeth. "There was nothing wrong with the crystal reactor of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. It was just a pretense, wasn't it?"

Li Yao narrowed his eyes, which looked like two sharp sabers.

"Correct. Before I took part in the Magical Equipment Exposition, I spent one month refining some gadgets which I added to the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. There's nothing special about them, except that they can block the spiritual waves coming out of the crystal reactor and make it look like that the crystal reactor is burning incompletely.

"Besides, I've carved a lot of radiance rune arrays on the surface of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit which can unleash dazzling brilliance and an intimidating fireball in a very short time. But in fact, they're nothing but visual effects without any damage at all."

"So…" Zuo Feijing bit his lips so hard that blood was flowing down from the corner of his mouth. "You clashing with me so many times just now like a lunatic and your nonsense like 'the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit shall be known by the world even if I'm to be blown to pieces' was all to mislead us into thinking you'd lost your mind?"

"Fighting with you the hard way was partly to demonstrate the performance of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, and partly because I need a reasonable explanation for the ostensible overloading of the crystal reactor."

Li Yao grinned. "But of course, I was joking about the 'blown to pieces' part. This is just a game. We really shouldn't go that far."

"You!"

Speechless, Zuo Feijing, Sha Yucheng and Feng Kai was clenching their fists and gaping at Li Yao.

This was also the only thing they could do at the moment.

…

The dialogue between Li Yao and Zuo Feijing was transmitted to every corner of the convention center by the broadcasting power runes, which immediately raised a riot.

"So unscrupulous! So shameless! No one pretends that they have self-destructed."

"Cheating! This is definitely cheating!"

Students of Deep Sea University were all shouting excitedly. Whatever sympathy and admiration they had had felt for Li Yao were completely gone now. Everyone was jumping to their feet.

Gritting their teeth, many guys were rolling up their sleeves and planning to have a nice talk with Li Yao.

Some girls even shed resentful tears for Zuo Feijing's failure.

"Shaoyang, I am starting to know what you were feeling back then."

Supernova Jiang Sheng was sitting peacefully. The metal ring before his eyes lost all its brightness. After a long time, vague greenish color crept out.

His lips curled, he couldn't help but put on a self-mocking smile.

"Since the very beginning, Li Yao has successfully deluded everyone into thinking that he was on a furious rampage. Zuo Feijing, Sha Yucheng, and Feng Kai all fell into his trap and danced to his rhythm, only to be led to a ditch by him in the end.

"Everything has been within his calculation. 'Vulture' deserves his name."

Many experienced Exos were also talking to each with their faces flushed red in embarrassment.

Before Li Yao walked out of the fireball, they had been fooled and failed to recognize that the self-explosion was but an act.

"Li Yao…"

Exhaling a long breath in relief, Yuan Manqiu lost all her strength and leaned against the back of the chair. She covered her face with his hand. Joyful tears flowed out from the gaps of her fingers, as her plump body was shivering.

"What happened? What on earth has happened?"

Many ordinary tourists did not understand the situation. They looked at each other in confusion and dragged those around them asking for explanation.

"Breaking news! In the competitive test of the 21 MP crystal suit models, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, the cheapest of all, defeated the high and mighty Tiger King Battlesuit of Deep Sea University and laughed last!"

"With his dumbfounding performance, Vulture Li Yao has blown the horn in the war against the Refining Department of Deep Sea University."

"After this Flying Crystal race, no one will dare to look down upon the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution anymore!"

The reporters were thrilled, too. Countless articles were written on their light beams with telepathic thoughts and spread through the Spiritual Nexus out to every corner of the Star Glory Federation and the Cultivation world.

…

Half of an hour later, inside a med bay, Li Yao was soaking in a pool that had been filled with bright green recovery liquid.

Wounds and bruises could be found in every part of his body.

The game just now had not been as easy as he showed everyone to be.

Out of pursuit of a lower cost, the buffer and defense systems of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit were far from those of Tiger King, Sword Torrent, and Mournful Mist.

The high-intensity collision left many wounds that were deep to the bones.

However, as he recalled the moment when he returned from the inferno to the racetrack and accepted the homage that the audience on the spot paid to him, he felt from the bottom of his heart that the pain was worth it.

The Soul Condensing Pendant before his chest shivered with his breath.

Li Yao sensed that the power inside the Soul Condensing Pendant was significantly greater than before the Flying Crystal race.

Maybe, it wouldn't take long before the Phantom Entities hiding in it broke out of the cocoon and returned to reality.

Right then, a middle-aged man, wearing a colonel shoulder board, strode into the med bay.

He was wearing a badge on his chest. It was made of a cracked skull with crossed red lightning bolts in the background, which looked cold and cruel.

The middle-aged man stopped beside the pool.

The dreadful injuries on Li Yao's body made the corner of his eyes twitch. Shock and appreciation appeared in his eyes.

"It seems that the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit does not protect the Exo as well as it should," Colonel Guan Chao, captain of 'Red Lightning', observed unemotionally.

Although unaware of who he was, Li Yao had guessed that he must have something to do with the military order. He stated, "Maybe. But I stood to the end and I won."

Guan Chao squinted and said, "Your performance in the Flying Crystal race was indeed an eye-opener. However, the key to your victory was not free of cunning tricks.

"In a match, you can pretend that your crystal reactor has exploded by taking advantage of the inattentive blindness of your opponents, which can buy you the most crucial ten seconds for your victory. It's completely understandable.

"But what significance does this approach have in a real battle?

"What the military need is not a crystal suit that can win a Flying Crystal race with fancy disguises, but a killing machine that can slaughter the enemies in a battlefield!"

Li Yao smiled, his sharp teeth glaring. He tried to lift one of his fingers as he said, "Firstly, since the high-level demons are as intelligent as human beings, if Zuo Feijing and the other two Exos are fooled, the high-level demons might be fooled by the trick, too. In a real battle, if a high-level demon gets distracted by the idea that the crystal reactor of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is going to explode, maybe for a single second, it will be the opportunity for the Exo to reverse victory and failure, or even life and death!"

Guan Chao remarked coldly, "Such deception can only be used once. You won't fool anyone a second time."

Li Yao slowly lifted a second finger.

"The second point, and also the more important point, which I didn't tell Zuo Feijing just now because he might be scared, is that this is not deception.

"The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit can truly set itself off if I really want to."

Guan Chao's pupils constricted violently. "What did you say?"

Li Yao said, "The crystal reactor of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is devoid of any Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, which makes it the most unstable crystal reactor of all the crystal reactors in the federation.

"The high-pressure valve is far from enough to fix the issue thoroughly.

"After all, the valve might malfunction or even break down in a ferocious battlefield.

"My ability is too limited for me to change that. So, on second thought, I added a detonator power rune array on the crystal reactor.

"With a telepathic thought, the crystal reactor can be turned into a massive crystal bomb and unleash the power that equals to the explosion of a hundred Hellfire-Lightnings.

"So, don't presume that I was deceiving them just now.

"If I wanted, I had countless opportunities to die with Tiger King just now.

"In front of a world-shaking big bang, the performance gap between the two crystal suits is negligible.

"Of course, it's just my personal modification.

"But the modification process is not complicated and does not require any Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. The self-destruction system can be added to the standard Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit easily."

Guan Chao was dazed for a long time. He stared at Li Yao in a perplex way, before he opened his mouth after a long time. "Do you think it's necessary to include the self-destruction system in the standard Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit?"

Li Yao nodded.

"If a final war between human beings and the demon clan is to break out, I believe a self-destruction system is of paramount importance for every crystal suit.

"I don't know about other people, but for me, I would prefer dying with my enemies than being captured by the demons and tortured to death."

Guan Chao didn't reply. He stared at Li Yao deeply before he walked out of the room without saying anything.

Li Yao was ill at ease, wondering whether or not his answers had satisfied the mysterious colonel.

Five minutes later, Yuan Manqiu walked inside, her eyes reddish.

"We've received the official invitation from the military to join with Tiger King, Sword Torrent, and Mournful Mist in a special bidding meeting for the order of standard crystal suits."

Yuan Manqiu briefly paused after every word, trying to calm herself down.

But Li Yao was able to hear the passion that his professor had been burying under the tranquility for twenty years.

"The military thinks highly of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. The final competition will be between Mystic Skeleton and Tiger King. Mournful Mist and Sword Torrent would serve as supplementary equipment because they are too lopsided in their performance. The military will most likely buy some of them for special forces. But they will not be purchased as the standard crystal suit to equip the federal army."

Yuan Manqiu couldn't control herself anymore. Her voice was shaking in anxiety and excitement.

"However, the challenge that you will be faced with in the bidding meeting will be hundreds of times more difficult than the Flying Crystal racing.

"Your opponents are not just the Tiger King, Sword Torrent, and Mournful Mist.

"A crystal warship on active service in the federal army will be your enemy, too!"

Chapter 321: Evening Glow Warship

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Half a month later and the unprecedentedly splendid Magical Equipment Exposition was still underway.

The Flying Crystal race, in which Li Yao exceled, was played and replayed to hundreds of thousands of visitors every day on the giant light beam floating in the air.

Discussions as to whether Mystic Skeleton was stronger than Tiger King or the other way around continued unabated on the Nexus, too.

Many people insisted that Tiger King was the best MP crystal suit model whose specifications were far higher than any of its competitor's. Li Yao's victory in the Flying Crystal race boiled down to his cheating. If the race were to be held one more time, the Tiger King Battlesuit, driven by Zuo Feijing, would certainly beat it to ash.

But more people believed that since one of the two crystal suits was three times as expensive as the other one, it would be too unfair to simply compare their specifications.

Li Yao may have resorted to tricks in the final period of the Flying Crystal race. But before that, Mystic Skeleton and Tiger King had confronted each other face-to-face multiple times. It even blew Tiger King to the ground twice, which was evident enough of its toughness.

After all, moneywise, three Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit equaled one Tiger King Battlesuit.

What would the outcome be if three Mystic Skeleton Battlesuits had fought the Tiger King Battlesuit in the race just now?

Every netizen, especially those who were interested in crystal suits, took part in the furious quarrels regarding these trending topics.

But Li Yao, the center of the discussion, had vanished yet again from public attention.

Right now, he was on an unmarked crystal airship which was flying to the base of the Fifth Fleet of the federal army deep inside the mountains.

"Your Refining Department finally got its day. I'm told that you've received almost a hundred orders of Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit from major sects of the federation in the past ten days. Well well well. After all of them are refined and shipped out, the profit will be more than ten billion. Such a big fortune!"

Ding Lingdang exclaimed joyfully in the spiritual crane messenger.

"Not that much."

Li Yao counted his fingers as he was running the calculations. "As you know, our Refining Department does not have a magical equipment factory. We can refine three to five pieces by ourselves. But the hundred orders are too much a workload for us and will have to be outsourced to eligible sects. Our profit will plunge because of that.

"Besides, to increase our sales, we quoted a low price for the hundred orders with a lot of complimentary post-sales service. Taking that into consideration, there's barely any profit now."

"But it's great that the brand is finally out. You're not in the school these days. But the Refining Department has been getting more and more attention. Every corner of the school is discussing the news about the Refining Department. I also heard that leaders of the school were planning to further increase the budget for the Refining Department to build it into a special major of our school. There was a floating mountain that was supposed to belong to the Combat Department upon refinement, but it is going to be transferred to the Refining Department after modification. Our dean Old Xia nearly choked himself out of anger."

Ding Lingdang smiled. "Besides, you were quite bold in the Flying Crystal race. Many girls in the school regard you as their idol now. They know that we are very close to each other and you've been calling me sister. A few days ago, a lovely girl even came to me asking whether or not you had a girlfriend."

Li Yao raised his eyebrow. "Then what did you say to her?"

"I was quite in a dilemma, since I'd never been in such a situation before. After pondering for a long time—"

Ding Lingdang said, as if it were nothing, "I brought all of the girls that were interested in you to the front of a giant rock, blew the rock into pieces with a single punch, and told them that you are, in fact, my boyfriend and whoever hits on you will end like that rock."

"Okay."

Li Yao scratched his head. It was truly as expected of a tyrannosaur.

While they were talking, the crystal airship slowed down after a bump.

Brightness shined in Li Yao's eyes. He stood up suddenly.

"I've arrived!"

"Go for it! Be they crystal warships or star fortresses, blow 'em to pieces!"

Ding Lingdang waved her fists and cheered for him.

Li Yao smiled. He turned off the spiritual crane messenger and walked out of the cabin to the front deck.

The scenery in front of him stopped him from breathing for a moment.

In the middle of the lofty mountains, against the bloody sunset, dozens of ragged warships were floating in the air. They did not seem to be made of metal, but rather looked like pupas billions of times larger. Bones and flesh could be found through the holes on their surface which was full of dreadful warts and scars.

They were the remnants of the devil warships of the demon clan.

Different from the crystal warship of the human beings, every devil warship was a gargantuan living creature and an ultimate biological weapon that came into being after thousands of years of crazy evolution.

Such warship creatures possessed enormous brains whose computational ability was as good as the mainframe crystal processor of human beings.

By telekinesis, they could be connected to the brain of the high-level demons who then could control them at will and make best use of their firepower.

The devil warships had been wrecked by the federal army and towed to this airborne graveyard as a presentation of the might of human beings.

Passing by the devil warship graveyard, there were dozens of crystal warships in the front that were equally dilapidated and full of rust.

They were the retired warships of the Fifth Fleet of the federal army during the five hundred years of bloody battles. Floating in the air, they were ineffaceable monuments.

Behind the monuments were two steep mountains which pierced into the sky like two sharp swords. A narrow and thin valley lay between the two mountains.

This place was named Monument Valley, which was where the Fifth Fleet of the federal army was stationed.

The Fifth Fleet was one of the best troops in the federal army.

Against the spectacular sunset, dozens of crystal warships were emitting blazing brilliance that was hundreds of meters long. But they were as agile as shuttles while they danced in the sky knitting nets in sophisticated and unpredictable patterns.

Above the Monument Valley, a titanic floating fortress the size of a small city was floating in the air. Countless armed shuttles were flying in and out, humming like busy bees.

Enjoying the view in front him, Li Yao's understanding of 'war machine' grew much deeper.

He felt very proud that he belonged to such a great species.

However, when he realized that his opponent might be one of the crystal warships flying over his head, Li Yao's head immediately started aching.

"Crystal warships have been the main forces of the federal army all the time."

Yuan Manqiu walked to his side and watched the magnificent parade of the crystal warships for a while with her hands behind her back. Then she observed, "For five hundred years, the military has been focusing on warship technology and has developed countless formidable crystal warships. When a beast tide breaks out, the crystal warships will be deployed to extinguish it.

"As for high-level demons and the scattered demons hiding in forests, underground, or city ruins, they will be dealt with by Cultivators whose individual combat ability is much higher.

"The military are in charge of clearing the 'sphere', while the Cultivators are responsible for clearing the 'spot'. That's how battles have been fought in the Star Glory Federation traditionally.

"Therefore, there are many warship advocates in the military who insist that railguns and warships can solve all our problems.

"If the problems can't be fixed, that's because the railguns and the warships are not large enough.

"Now that the military is planning to endorse standard crystal suits in the federal army, the resources of the warship advocates will, of course, be greatly diminished. The budget that goes to warships will shrink, too.

"So, it's easy to conceive how much pressure there will be.

"That's also exactly why this special bidding meeting is being held. Frankly speaking, this is more about the debate of war methodologies in the military and the quarrels between crystal suit advocates and warship advocates.

"In the bidding meeting, not only do we need to prove that the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is the best MP crystal suit model, we also need to prove that crystal suits boast irreplaceable advantages compared with crystal warships.

"How about it? Are you confident?

"According to the bidding rules provided by the military, Exos of the crystal suits in the bidding meeting are not necessarily our own candidates. The military can arrange skilled and experienced Exos to drive the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit for the final test. If you feel that there's too much pressure, we can still change you to someone else."

Li Yao turned to the side and looked at Yuan Manqiu. Then he smiled.

"Professor, that's a very strange way of encouragement."

Yuan Manqiu smiled, too. She handed over a jade slip to Li Yao.

"The military came by this morning, stating that they can arrange a super Exo who has been wearing crystal suits for more than thirty years for the final test of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. But we declined it right then.

"All the participants of the Project Mystic Skeleton agreed unanimously that you will always be the priority Exo for the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

"We believe in you no matter what.

"This jade slip contains detailed documents regarding the final test. There is still some time before we land. You'd better take a look at it carefully. The test will be different from what we imagined.

"This time, the military is getting serious!"

Li Yao took over the jade slip and took a deep breath when he noticed that his nose had been clogged.

This was going to be the final test!

Passing the test, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit would be able to secure the big order of the military and become the standard crystal suit for thousands of soldiers of the federal army. Maybe it would even become the most manufactured crystal suit model!

One day, thousands of soldiers and Cultivators would congregate into an impregnable steel torrent which would rage through the wormholes into the Blood Demon Sector and crush everything inside into pieces.

For the day to come sooner, not just one crystal warship, even if he were to be faced with the entire Fifth Fleet, he would still break out of the siege and tread over them all like a deadly vulture.

...

Inside the cabin, Li Yao connected the jade slip to the mini crystal processor, which immediately projected a vivid 3D warship model.

'Evening Glow' was a medium crystal warship model refined 80 years ago by the federal army.

It was 214 meters long and 36 meters wide. The main gun of the warship model, 'Heaven Splitters', after charging for half an hour, could fire spiritual energy as furious as a full-strength attack of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator.

The sub-cannons below the body of the warship model that were used to attack the targets on the ground had been upgraded to 12 Taiyi Lightning Railguns five years ago.

Li Yao was no stranger to such heavy magical equipment.

Two years ago, on the train north to Wild Waves City, it was with a Taiyi Lightning Railgun that Li Yao managed to cope with the beast tide.

One Taiyi Lightning Railgun had attracted enough thunderstorms to annihilate half of the Ghost Jellyfish beast tide.

But right now, Li Yao was going to be faced with twelve of them.

Chapter 322: Railguns and Warships, Invincible Partners!

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Other than that, a hundred 'Earthshaking Ordnance Penetrators' were installed on the Evening Glow warship.

They were special explosive magical equipment that had a large drill in the front which allowed them to dig down the ground for dozens of meters before booming. They were extremely useful when used against demons who were good at stealth below the earth.

This was only counting the magical equipment embedded in the warship.

The scariest part of the Evening Glow warship was that it could accommodate ten squads and up to eighty armed shuttles inside its large body.

According to the files, the armed shuttles that the Evening Glow warship had on board right now was known as 'Vicious Bee'.

Compared with the Mystic Bird Armed Shuttle and the Crimson Flame Armed Shuttle, the Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle was neither distinguished for its speed nor for its firepower.

However, there was a spacious cabin inside the Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle which could carry five small beast puppets. Once they were released, a three-dimensional hunting network that both involved air forces and ground troops could be established immediately.

One Evening Glow warship equaled to a pair of 'Heaven Splitters', 12 Taiyi Lightning Railguns, 100 Earthshaking Ordnance Penetrators, 80 Vicious Bees, and 400 beast puppets.

They were what Li Yao was going to face.

The so-called final test was actually a sham battle.

The place of the sham battle was set to the mountains near the station of the Fifth Fleet.

Mystic Skeleton, Tiger King, Sword Torrent, and Mournful Mist would sneak into the mountains at midnight and hide themselves the way they wanted.

An hour later, a fully armed Evening Glow warship would set off, search, and try to capture them.

Of course, it might destroy them on the spot too.

They would need to try to flee into the wilderness with the best of what they and their crystal suits could do.

Four MP crystal suit models were naturally no match for an Evening Glow.

So, their task was just to run away.

The crystal suit that lasted till the end would most likely become the standard crystal suit of the military.

Their performance in the sham battle would influence the attitude of the military, too.

If their performance was so outstanding that, say, one of the four crystal suits survived 24 hours without being captured or destroyed by the crystal warship, the military might actually be convinced and change their attitude. Maybe dozens of crystal suit legions would be established and every Cultivator in the federal army would be equipped with a crystal suit.

If their performance was terrible and they were all caught within several hours, the military definitely wouldn't put all the eggs into this basket. They might purchase a few hundred crystal suits as a signal of friendliness, but that would be all the military was going to do. Most of the military budget would still go to the refinement of crystal warships.

"The Evening Glow warship has been refined for the purpose of suppressing the strong demon beasts on and below the ground.

"Taiyi Lightning Railguns, Earthshaking Ordnance Penetrators, Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles, and beast puppets all boast superb air-to-ground attack capabilities.

"Not to mention the bombardment of 'Heaven Splitters', which can be as powerful as a strike from a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, every half an hour.

"Even with the cover of the mountainous territory, it is still an impossible mission to persist for more than 24 hours under the pursuit of an Evening Glow.

"Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is not a crystal suit good at stealth. Faced with such a challenge, Tiger King and

Mournful Mist are in a much more advantageous position!

"What do I do?"

Li Yao took a deep breath.

Invisible pressure wreathed and suffocated him like the water in the Billowing Star Sea which was ten times heavier than usual.

However, he liked the feeling.

He liked the feeling when every last bit of potential inside his cells were squeezed out and his entire life and soul were blossoming and burning.

Rubbing his hand, Li Yao picked out the detailed map of the battle zone and the exhaustive data regarding the Evening Glow warship from the jade slip.

There were a few hours to go.

He need to memorize the direction of every stream in the battle zone and the location and function of every cabin on an Evening Glow warship.

…

At 8 p.m, Ren Xingbei stood at the highest place in the control tower and stared at the horizon.

Under the deep, dark night sky, the exhaust flames from the crystal warships dispersed into colorful mystic colors which looked like giant flying swords that tore the sky apart.

Every night, Ren Xingbei would stand here quietly and enjoy the magnificent scenery.

It was both relaxing and entertaining.

Feeble as human beings may be, they could refine such a giant crystal warship in which they could cruise and conquer the cosmos.

It was an out-and-out miracle.

As the commander of the Fifth Fleet of the federal army, Lieutenant General Ren Xingbei was the toughest warship advocate and believed in nothing else other than railguns and warships. He had been asserting that crystal warships were the strongest magical equipment in the universe.

The iron beasts which were flying slowly unleashed earthshaking noises that shivered the glasses.

Even they were thousands of meters away, with three layers of glass in between, Ren Xingbei still heard the roars of the power rune arrays inside the crystal warships.

His own heart was also beating fast, like when he first met the crystal warship decades ago. His blood seemed to be boiling.

Steel torrent?

This was the real steel torrent!

Tonight, he was going to prove the point one more time.

Right then, Shangguan Ce walked into the control tower slowly.

The control tower of the base of the Fifth Fleet had been modified to serve as the commanding center of this sham battle.

Ren Xingbei squinted and noticed the newcomer.

Sparks erupted between the two grey-haired generals who had equally long experience in bloody wars, equally remarkable achievements, and equally tough personalities. Two pairs of eyes clashed. An invisible blast seemed to be blowing the entire control tower into pieces.

"Crack! Crack!"

The two of them hugged each other without saying anything.

But it was hard to tell from their gritted teeth and bulging eyes whether they were hugging or wrestling.

The cracking noises of their bones seemed to be suggesting that they were mortal enemies rather than lifelong friends.

Ten seconds later, the two of them released each other at the same time. With their face flushed and their backs itching in sweat, they stared at each other and laughed out aloud.

"Shangguan!"

"Old Bei!"

The two of them hugged again.

This time, it was a sincere, welcoming hug.

Shangguan Ce and Ren Xingbei were two influential officers of the military. They varied differently in their doctrines. One of them was a hardcore crystal suit advocate, while the other was an avid believer of railguns and warships.

But they shared astonishingly similar backgrounds. They both had been ordinary soldiers in the beginning and earned their accomplishments and positions through bloody battles and hard work.

When they were young, they had cooperated and saved each other's lives in the hell-like battlegrounds more times than anyone could count. They were the real Damon and Pythias.

Although they disagreed with each other fundamentally on the future path of the federal army, their close relationship was not affected at all.

"Shangguan, how dare you convene a meeting regarding crystal suits in the territory of the Fifth Fleet and propose such a hilarious sham battle plan?

"Ask an Evening Glow warship to hunt down four MP crystal suits?

"Did you know that the soldiers of the Fifth Fleet were all seething in anger when they heard the plan? They thought that you the crystal suit advocates were simply too outrageous!"

Ren Xingbei glared at him. "So, don't think I'll go easy on you because we've been friends for decades. Tonight, I shall show no mercy. The four crystal suits will not see the sunrise tomorrow!"

Shangguan Ce smiled.

"Old Bei, you are truly a stone in a latrine, which is both smelly and stubborn. Why do you despise crystal suits so much?"

"The super crystal suits worth billions driven by Core Formation State Cultivators or Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators are of course as formidable as crystal warships."

Ren Xingbei sniffed. "However, how many such strong Cultivators are there in the federation? And how many such super crystal suits can be produced?

"As for the four MP crystal suits that you are giving me to test today, their total worth is less than one billion. Besides, the four Exos are merely Refinement Stage Cultivators. And you think I would believe that they can run away from the bombardment of a crystal warship? Of course I don't! Ten hours should be more than enough for me to take 'em all down!"

"That's exactly why we decided to do the sham battle with the Fifth Fleet."

Shangguan Ce replied, his face unchanged, "I know that although the strategy has been settled that crystal suits will serve as the main force and crystal warships will serve as supplements, many warship advocates in the military have kept complaining…"

Ren Xingbei interrupted him, "Not complaining. Cursing and condemning is what you should call it. We were completely dumbfounded. But obedience is the top priority for soldiers. We have to grit our teeth and swallow the anger!"

Shangguan Ce patted his old friend's shoulder.

"Hence this special bidding meeting.

"A Core Formation State Cultivator in a super crystal suit naturally boasts unparalleled combat ability. It won't be very persuasive.

"But if an ordinary Cultivator no higher than the peak of the Refinement Stage wearing a MP crystal suit whose value is less than 300 million can survive the hunting of a crystal warship for 24 hours or even longer, it will be much more convincing for inflexible conservatives such as yourself, won't it?"

"24 hours?"

Ren Xingbei grinned and extended all his fingers. "Ten hours!

"If any one of them could survive for more than ten hours, then I'll cut the crap once and for all!

"However, if all of them are taken down by my men within ten hours, don't blame me if I report the outcome of this sham battle to the higher officials! I am planning to cut down a few of your crystal suit legions and use the budget to refine a few main force warships for the Fifth Fleet!"

Shangguan Ce smiled.

"It's a deal then!

"However, Old Bei, have you decided whom your representative will be?"

Ren Xingbei grinned and said, "Ning Feng and his 'Tide Berserker'. The warship has been under maintenance for two months because of serious damages from a previous mission and just returned from the dockyard. This sham battle is going to be a chance to check that Tide Berserker has fully recovered. Is that okay?"

Shangguan Ce's pupils suddenly shrank. His smile turned deeper as he said, "Old Brother, you're not as contemptuous of crystal suits as you seem to be. Just to deal with four 'insignificant' MP crystal suits, you have sent out your toughest warrior."

Chapter 323: Magnificent Warship Connoisseur

Chapter 323: Magnificent Warship Connoisseur

Shangguan Ce understood his old brother Ren Xingbei's personnel very clearly.

Ning Feng, captain of Tide Berserker, was one of the youngest commanding officers of a crystal warship in the federal army. He was only 37 years old and a Building Foundation Cultivator. But he also happened to be a 'Warship Connoisseur' with a lot of potential.

Warship Connoisseur was a special career for admin-type Cultivators who boasted magnificent soul power as well as superb computational, analytical, and collaborating capabilities.

When they entered into the cockpit of a crystal warship and extended their telepathic thoughts into the mainframe crystal processor, their will would be transmitted to every corner of the warship by the enhancement of the crystal processor. The gargantuan steel beast would be at their disposal like their own arms and legs.

There would be a huge difference between the combat ability of a crystal warship with a Warship Connoisseur and that of a crystal warship without one.

A strong Warship Connoisseur could even control hundreds of railguns and thousands of power rune arrays on a crystal warship simultaneously and do perfect dodging and attacking movements. The warship seemed to be part of their body. The most complicated movements were as easy as the blinking of eyes for them.

In the era of the Star Ocean Imperium, countless outstanding Warship Connoisseurs had emerged.

The legendary Warship Connoisseurs who had arrived at the peak of Cultivation could maneuver a star fortress that was even larger than a planet by themselves and fight the Demon Emperor with hundreds of thousands of railguns firing at the same time.

Warship Connoisseurs of the Star Glory Federation were of course far from their fabulous predecessors. But they had been playing a crucial part in the five hundred years of bloody war against the demon clan.

Take Ning Feng for example. Although he was just at the Building Foundation Stage, his strength would be as intimidating as that of a Core Formation Stage Cultivator when he entered Tide Berserker and joined with the warship.

Three months ago, the Fifth Fleet encountered a beast tide commanded by two demon kings.

Ning Feng's Tide Berserker was the first to respond and lead the charge.

Although it was seriously damaged, the beast tide was torn into two halves by its unstoppable thrust, which created a good opportunity for the siege and attack later.

In the battle later, Ning Feng blew one of the two demon kings with 'Heaven Splitters', the main gun of the warship, into pieces, which made him a distinguished figure in the military.

Picking such an ace captain to deal with four insignificant MP crystal suits… It seemed that Ren Xingbei regarded the sham battle as a summit confrontation between warship advocates and crystal suit advocates, too.

Lightnings and sparks were dancing in Shangguan Ce's eyes.

The purpose of the sham battle as a bidding procedure was to show the power of crystal suits for warship advocates.

If the candidate challenging the crystal suits was too weak, the warship advocates might not be persuaded by the outcome, and there was bound to be further quarrels in the future.

But if a skilled captain such as Ning Feng came to examine the quality of the MP crystal suits, no one would have any doubts about the test's validity.

But how far could the four MP crystal suits go?

Suddenly, Li Yao's dangerous smile popped up in Shangguan Ce's brain.

'I can guess a thing or two about the tactics and limits about the other three crystal suits.

'However, Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Vulture Li Yao, where are your limits?'

…

At 9:05 p.m. Cultivators of Deep Sea University, Star Nebula University and Grand Desolate War Institution, as well as the Cultivators from the three major sword-training sects walked into the command center.

After they learned the details of the sham battle, especially when they knew that the crystal warship taking part in the battle would be Tide Berserker steered by Ning Feng, the faces of all the Cultivators couldn't look more awful.

Although they were competitors, they felt a subtle sense of camaraderie now.

If all the four crystal suits were to be captured by the crystal warship within several hours, there wouldn't be a winner even if you were the last to be seized.

The military hadn't revealed to them as to how many crystal suits they would purchase. If the performance of the test-takers was too unsatisfactory and the military decided that they would only purchase a few hundred pieces, it would hardly be a victory for them.

Then again, if one of the crystal suits was amazing enough to play hide-and-seek with the crystal warship for more than ten hours, or even a day and a night, the potential of crystal suits would definitely be proved. Crystal suits would definitely be able to win more favor in the military, which would be a great help for the promotion of other MP crystal suit models, too.

More importantly, for Sword Torrent and Mournful Mist, their designing purposes were different from Tiger King's and Mystic Skeleton's from their conception, which could be compared to the relationship between assault rifles and sniper rifles.

Since their purposes were different, their competition with the other two crystal suits was not fierce. Their chances of winning were slim, but as long as they could do their best in the sham battle and leave a deep impression on the audience by showing their own specialties thoroughly, it would be enough.

Supernova Jiang Sheng and Yuan Manqiu were still at loggerheads.

However, when Ren Xingbei appeared in front of them, the flames in their eyes changed direction and aimed at the commander of the Fifth Fleet at the same time.

The temperature inside the commanding center immediately rose by twenty degrees.

Other than those in the commanding center, top military officers in the military bases all over the Star Glory Federation, as well as high-level Cultivators from Deep Sea University, Star Nebula University, Grand Desolate War Institution, and all other important sects, were all paying close attention to the match, the ultimate confrontation between crystal suits and crystal warships.

It was destined to be a sleepless night.

…

At 10:11 p.m. in the station of the Fifth Fleet, Tide Berserker was doing last-minute checks before taking off.

"Captain Ning, let's show them who we are! These brats are too outrageous! Nothing but four MP crystal suits, and they want to swagger around and poop on our head?"

"Brother Feng, we have every faith in you. You'll definitely capture all of them within ten hours."

"Old Ning, I've bet Old Xing and his lot that you will seize all the four running rabbits in less than ten hours! I'm going to be in serious trouble if you fail me!"

Almost a hundred soldiers of the Fifth Fleet, including captains, vice captains, experienced mechanics and ordinary marines, surrounded an officer whose uniform was full of creases.

The officer's hair was in such a mess that it seemed that it hadn't been washed for at least three months. His chin was bristly. His eyes were drowsy, as if he were in a constant trance. Even in such a thrilling atmosphere, he still yawned one time after another.

He was Colonel Ning Feng, a Warship Connoisseur, one of the best captains in the military and the commanding officer of Tide Berserker.

Faced with the excited soldiers of the Fifth Fleet, Ning Feng scratched his ear and smacked his lips. But without saying anything, he walked onto his warship lazily.

The moment he went on the bridge of the warship, he seemed to turn into someone else. With a quiver, he was entirely awakened.

His sleepy eyes just now were brimming with radiating vigor, like those of a cat which was hunting at night.

In the federal army, Ning Feng had been given the nickname 'Drunk Cat'.

Even a demon king would have to run away like a rat when faced with the Drunk Cat.

Inside the cockpit in the middle of the warship, there was a translucent controlling capsule in which Ning Feng lay in and closed his eyes.

Crimson liquid flowed out from the bottom of the capsule and rose up rapidly, before it filled up the capsule and drowned him shortly.

Right then, Ning Feng's eyes were opened suddenly, from which black brightness was beaming out, making his eyes as deep and vast as the night sky.

With the enhancement of the mainframe crystal processor, his soul expanded to every corner of the warship.

Countless information, data, and images surged into his mind.

Every power rune array, every Taiyi Lightning Railgun, and every armed shuttle, seemed to have turned into his limbs and teeth. The power rune arrays shivered briefly, blinking with the rhythm of his heartbeat and breath.

He was no longer a trivial human being. He was Tide Berserker, a steel beast that was hundreds of meters long.

"Boom! Boom! Boom!"

With a telepathic thought, the anti-gravity power rune arrays started functioning, roaring like a cascading waterfall.

After a shiver, Tide Berserker took off amidst the applause of the soldiers below. Colorful brilliance was dancing around the warship, making it look like a ferocious dragon.

"Ten hours?"

Ning Feng squinted and scoffed, "Five hours, tops. The four rabbits will never be able to run out of my palm!"

…

At 11:45 p.m. a small carrier was staggering in the sky above the mountains.

It was a thunderstorm weather. One could not even distinguish one's own fingers with the hand right in front of the eyes. Only when the lightning occurred could the steep hills and dark forests be seen.

This was the biggest mountainous zone in the west of the federation. Hills, cliffs, streams, caves, and underground rivers together constituted a complicated territory.

The fifty square kilometers would the battleground for the match to come.

For the sake of fairness, the military had arranged an artificial thunderstorm in the battleground.

Thunder, lightning, and heavy rain would twist the spiritual waves from the crystal suits and block the detection of the crystal warship so that they could run away more easily.

However, the thunderstorm would only last five hours.

The weather would clear before dawn.

Inside the carrier, the four Exos had put on their crystal suits, each with a kit behind him which had a space of around two cubic meters.

The kit was the latest transportation magical equipment developed by the military named 'Floating Supplier'.

It was carved with anti-gravity rune arrays and power rune arrays and was maneuvered by a mini crystal processor. It would fly closely behind a soldier in peacetime. When the soldier was engaged in a combat, the kit would dash away until it was safe to return.

Floating Supplier was designed to be a replacement of marching backpacks. It would neither burden the soldiers when they were walking nor affect the agility of the soldiers when they were fighting. The military was planning to make it a piece of standard magical equipment for the federal army in the future.

Today, the four Exos were provided with four prototypes of such magical equipment in which they could store any supplies and magical equipment that they deemed necessary.

"Hoooo!"

At 11:59 p.m., the airdrop platform on the bottom of the carrier opened slowly. Raging wind immediately crashed into the cabin, growling and howling.

"Last minute check. Prepare to land!"

Chapter 324: Narrow Escape

Chapter 324: Narrow Escape

The four crystal suits glittered, outlining four figures clearly in the darkness, which looked like solidified lights.

"Hey, guys. Don't be so aggressive. In the sham battle today, just because we are competitors does not mean we are not companions in a different form."

Sha Yucheng, Exo of the Sword Torrent Battlesuit, smiled and said, "Our opponent is one crystal warship. Whoever attracts its attention will give the rest of us more opportunities to run away!

"Taking that into consideration, I hope we can all show what our crystal suits are capable of today and teach those zealots of railguns and warships a lesson on the awesomeness of the Exos!"

"Well said!"

Sha Yucheng's words eased the intense atmosphere a little bit. Feng Kai, Exo of the Mournful Mist Battlesuit, added, "Li Yao, you gave us all a big surprise in the Flying Crystal race half a month ago. I hope you can give an equally shocking surprise to the captain of the crystal warship today."

Li Yao nodded his head and took a deep breath. He was walking to the airdrop platform, when Zuo Feijing suddenly cut in front of him.

The Tiger King Battlesuit today had put on a layer of dense jungle camouflage. It looked inconspicuous, and all its deadly scent had been hidden in the gaps of the crystal suit.

Standing next to it, Li Yao was the only one who could feel the dangerous aura that seemed to be a living thing.

"Li Yao, I'm rather curious. Faced with a crystal warship that is hundreds of meters long and has a main gun whose power equals to a full-strength strike of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, what cunning plans do you have in mind to deal with it? You can't even leave a trace on its surface even if you are to play the self-destruction move again, can you?"

Zuo Feijing paused after every word. He gritted his teeth as he said, "Over the past half month, I've spent every second crazily training. The half month has been as long and miserable as ten years for me, just because I need to prepare myself so that I can defeat you today!

"I hope your performance is even more splendid today. Don't be captured or killed by the crystal warship after only several hours!

"Because if you do, I will be very disappointed!"

A dull synthesized voice suddenly echoed inside the cabin.

"The battle is now begun. Please finish your landing within one minute."

Zuo Feijing opened his arms and jumped down.

The Tiger King Battlesuit rushed into the raging storm. It glimmered in the darkness, before it completely vanished inside the deep, dark forest.

Li Yao was next. He waved at Sha Yucheng and Feng Kai, and jumped out of the carrier, too.

"Swoosh!"

Four stabilizer fins stuck out from the back of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. Dazzling brightness surged out from the power rune arrays, as it flew above the forests in the pouring rain.

His Floating Supplier followed him closely, which contained all kinds of magical equipment and tools that Li Yao had prepared for his escape.

But Zuo Feijing was right about one thing.

No matter how formidable the enemy was, running away was never Li Yao's style.

Even if the opponent was a crystal warship hundreds of meters long with a pair of 'Heaven Splitters' and twelve Taiyi Lightning Railguns, Li Yao had never planned to just run away without counterattacking.

Whoever wanted to capture him would have to pay a high price!

"Chi——"

Li Yao landed slowly on Sun Flame Summit, which was the highest mountain in the battle zone.

Li Yao strained his eyes to look at the distance. The crystal cameras with super-high resolution captured all the surroundings down and analyzed the features of the territories, before Li Yao compared them with the pre-input map inside the crystal processor.

Li Yao's computational ability was brought to maximum. He began to evaluate the current situation.

Three light spots were shooting at the northwest fast, which were the other three crystal suits.

By Li Yao's estimation, they were planning to hide in the rocky area which was located in the northwest of the battle zone.

Li Yao had studied the map before and was aware that the northwest corner of the battle zone was rugged and full of intersected underground caves, which made it a perfect shelter.

However, Li Yao was not planning to go there.

His opponent Ning Feng, an ace captain of the federal army known as 'Drunk Cat', would certainly concentrate much of his attention on the rocky area.

There were many kinds of probe magical equipment on Tide Berserker that could explore the environment hundreds of meters under the ground easily.

The 500 beast puppets were able to sneak underground and search the place, too.

Once his trace was discovered, the 100 Earthshaking Ordnance Penetrators would definitely not be funny.

Since it was a sham battle, the power of all magical equipment was adjusted to one third of their original. The 'Heaven Splitters' were even adjusted to one tenth of its original power. But still, Li Yao did not intend to know what it felt like to be hit by them.

Once the underground cave in which one was hiding collapsed because of attacks from Earthshaking Ordnance Penetrators and Heaven Splitters, one might be buried inside with nowhere to run to and could only wait to be captured.

"Beep!"

The crystal camera soon discovered a place that fitted the features that he had inputted into the crystal processor previously.

That was the battleground that Li Yao had selected after hours of thorough consideration.

Li Yao took two steps back and then accelerated. He jumped down from the Sun Flame Summit which was thousands of meters high and did not activate the power rune arrays until he almost kissed the ground.

Colorful brilliance surged out from the back of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, pushing it to the southeast as fast as a laser.

At this moment, there were fifty minutes before Tide Berserker was to arrive.

Ten minutes later, Li Yao appeared in the southeast corner of the battle zone, which was also the place where the crystal warship would enter the battle zone.

Compared with the rugged, rocky area in the northwest corner, the territory here was much flatter. There were only several mountains and cliffs which were not very high. The underground caves were shallow and short, too.

However, the water system here was quite sophisticated. Several rivers and streams interconnected in this area.

Because of the heavy rain, their water level had all soared. Their water current was much more turbulent than before.

"This is the place!"

Li Yao compared the actual territory with the map in his crystal processor. Then he opened his Floating Supplier, took out all kinds of magical equipment that were glittering inside and started setting up some camouflage.

At 00:58, Li Yao finished all the disguising work.

At one o'clock sharp, the southeast night sky was torn apart by a resplendent brightness.

Even the earsplitting thunders could not suppress the roars from the crystal warship.

Tide Berserker flew into the battle zone awe-inspiringly.

At 01:02, Li Yao hid himself in a muddy pond below a cliff.

He turned off all the power rune arrays on his crystal suit and his Floating Supplier, which made him no different than a black, iron lump that had been buried inside the mud for its entire life. He opened his eyes that were full of blood streaks and stared at the sky where rainwater was falling down upon his face like needles.

At 01:05, Tide Berserker passed by the place where Li Yao was hiding against the dense clouds slowly.

Maybe it was just his imagination, but Li Yao felt that the air around him was shaking violently, which made his heart beating faster and faster.

A hostile steel beast hundreds of meters long flying above one's head unhurriedly. It was not a pressure that just anyone could withstand.

"Shua! Shua!"

Almost ten ivory lights beamed out from the crystal warship. They were knitted into a light net which scanned through the mountains and forests from above.

Li Yao knew that the mystic lights were meant to detect enemies, and once they found a target, it would be impossible for the target to run away.

However, the thunderstorm weather was a major interference for the mystic lights. Not only were they much dimmer than they should be, they also became intermittent when lightning occurred.

The supposedly impregnable dragnet was ripped open by the power of nature.

Besides, the location that Li Yao had picked was not the best place to hide in inside the battle zone.

Most of Ning Feng's attention had been fixed on the rocky area to the northwest. Therefore, after scanning the below roughly once, Tide Berserker moved on to the northwest without any hesitation.

"Hu..."

Li Yao was greatly relieved. His fiercely beating heart was finally soothed.

The most difficult part had passed.

He had bought at least a few hours of time for himself.

Before the weather was cleared up, it was hardly likely that the crystal warship would come back and search the place once again.

He could hide in this place comfortably and wait until the crystal suits hiding in the northwest rocky area were captured or 'killed'.

Right then, Li Yao's eyelids bounced uncontrollably. Dangerous alarms rang inside his brain.

Ten firefly-like light spots were released from Tide Berserker. They kept a similar distance between each other and were interwoven into a loose net which was marching at the place where he was hiding.

Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles!

Li Yao cursed silently. He licked his lips, only to notice that he had pierced them some time ago because of anxiety.

Although the crystal warship had left the area, ten Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles each carrying five beast puppets, which meant fifty beast puppets in total, had been deployed to continue searching.

Li Yao didn't understand how he had given himself away. The battle zone was a fairly large place. It was impossible to send ten Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles to search every area in the zone.

The place that he had been hiding in was definitely not one that deserved such attention.

Or, maybe he didn't leave any traces. It was just the instinct of an expert that made Ning Feng feel that there was something wrong with the area and prompted him to release the armed shuttles to continue searching.

"Hum! Hum!"

Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles, which looked like fat bees, were extremely large for armed shuttles because they needed to carry five beast puppets. Their power rune arrays were specially revised, too, in order to provide more impetus. As a result, there would be irritating humming noise when they were working.

Three Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles passed by Li Yao's head.

Spotlights from them were shooting the ground and nearly cut into the pond where Li Yao was hiding several times.

Li Yao gritted his teeth and remained still.

Right now, the crystal warship was not far away. Once he was exposed, it could immediately turn back and take him down. He didn't intend to become the first target to be locked onto.

Five minutes, ten minutes, half an hour.

The Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles had come and gone above Li Yao's head almost five times. But because of the interferences from lightning and storms, they were unable to utilize more probe magical equipment and could only resort to the intermittent mystic rays for scanning. So, he was luckily undiscovered.

The crystal warship had vanished into the northwest horizon. Even its exhaust flames were completely out of sight now.

Right then—

"Huala! Huala!"

Li Yao heard weird clattering noises from the forest, which were utterly different from the noise of trees being shaken by wind.

Ten Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles were hovering in the sky nearby with their stomachs wide open, from which fifty beast puppets were flooding out.

Chapter 325: Imposing Demonstration

Chapter 325: Imposing Demonstration

There were three different kinds of beast puppets on the Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles.

One of them was the Mystic Wolf, which Li Yao had come across before back in the Refiners' Registration Examination.

It was a high-speed, scout-type beast puppet. Although it had a lot of drawbacks such as the weakness of the spine, limited attack range of the crystal cannons on two sides of the body, etc., it would still be a formidable enemy when the number was up to, say, a wolf pack of dozens of Mystic Wolves.

Another kind was the Electric Whip Teethed Viper.

This strangely-named beast puppet was about three meters long. It did not have any limbs. Like a serpent, it was best at searching caves and crevices.

Once they discovered an enemy, they would lash at the enemy like a whip. In the meantime, the needle-like teeth made of super alloy hiding inside their body would pierce into the enemy and bite them hard.

Then, electric current of ultra-high voltage would be unleashed, which would paralyze or even kill the enemy instantly.

As a whip full of sharp teeth and intense electricity, the Electric Whip Teethed Viper was the most suitable beast puppet for jungle combat.

The last kind was the Shrieking Bat.

This kind of beast puppet was very small in size. They could roam in narrow gaps and small caves like mice. They could also open their wings which were covered by membrane and glide for a short distance.

The most distinguished skill that it had was that it could utter a special kind of acoustic waves.

The acoustic waves were soul attacks, which could make whomever heard it irked or even dizzy.

On the other hand, the acoustic waves were a clever way of searching, too. Once they met an enemy who was releasing spiritual waves, they would bring special feedback signals to the Shrieking Bat. When the distance was short, they were much more useful than mystic lights.

Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles, Mystic Wolves, Electric Whip Teethed Vipers, and Shrieking Bats combined together made up an impenetrable dragnet which combed the forest time and time again.

"Zhi! Zhi!"

Several Shrieking Bats screamed, like iron nails scraping a metal board, as they jumped down from the trees that were more than ten meters tall and glided in the wind and rain skillfully.

"Hiss! Hiss!"

In the grass, Electric Whip Teethed Vipers were darting here and there. Their tongues protruded now and then, measuring the temperature of the air.

The tongues of the Electric Whip Teethed Vipers were refined out of special Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures with acute temperature-measuring rune arrays carved on them, which enabled them to detect creatures whose temperature was different from the surroundings. It was a piece of quite advanced probe magical equipment.

"Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!"

The Mystic Wolves were nodding their heads and wagging their tails. The crystal cannons on the two sides of their bodies were glittering, indicating that they'd been fully charged with spiritual energy and ready to be launched at any moment.

The encirclement was getting smaller and smaller.

Under the search of Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles, Mystic Wolves, Electric Whip Teethed Vipers, and Shrieking Bats, the smallest tree hollows and the most inconspicuous crevice had been dug open and scrutinized.

It was impossible that they would ignore the pond where Li Yao had been hiding in.

Li Yao remained absolutely still. He didn't even dare to blink his eyes. Staring at the Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles flying to and fro in the sky, he calculated their speed, angle, and trajectory crazily inside his brain.

He was waiting for something.

Just when the searchers were only a hundred meters away from him, the pond suddenly shivered.

Broken ripples appeared on the surface of the muddy water. Two dull noises came from far away, as if two crystal bombs had exploded deep under the sea, which were blunt and very unsettling.

Then, after a cracking sound, the hills tottered and the earth quaked, as if a lightning had struck inside one of the mountains over there.

"It has begun!"

Li Yao was refreshed.

Tide Berserker finally opened fire!

The first two dull noises were the sound of explosions of the Earthshaking Ordnance Penetrators deep under the ground.

The louder noise that followed must be the roars from the Heaven Splitters.

Despite their amazing attack ability which could be as good as a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, it required half an hour before the Heaven Splitters were fully charged with spiritual energy, which meant that they could only be fired twice an hour.

Now that the Heaven Splitters had been engaged, it was evident enough that the attacks were not reconnaissance by fire. Tide Berserker must've locked onto a target and had started the hunting game.

'It's my chance!

'The crystal warship has located at least one crystal suit and will be too occupied to bother with me before it captures or suppresses the crystal suit.'

Li Yao smiled and looked at the Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles in the sky coldly.

'Now it's the time to let you know who the hunter is and who the prey is!'

…

At the commanding center of the Fifth Fleet, military officials, including Shangguan Ce and Ren Xingbei, and representatives from the Cultivation world, including Yuan Manqiu and Jiang Sheng, were gazing at the giant light beam which had been segmented into hundreds of smaller parts.

Each part was displaying the real-time first-person images captured by the crystal cameras on the crystal warship, Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles, Mystic Wolves, Electric Whip Teethed Vipers, and Shrieking Bats.

All of the audience on the spot were high-level Cultivators who were capable enough to monitor the hundreds of pictures at the same time and sketch the overall situation on the battlefield inside their brain easily.

However, there were not first-person pictures from the four crystal suits.

It was because in order to transmit the real-time image signals, there would be feeble spiritual waves from the crystal suits, which were quite easy to be detected and thus would give the Exos away.

Therefore, the four crystal suits and the commanding center were not connected via the Spiritual Nexus.

All the data would be stored in the main crystal processor of the crystal suits and analyzed later after the battle.

That was to say, all the Cultivators inside the commanding center were only able to side with the crystal warship and see what Ning Feng was seeing.

They had no idea where the four crystal suits were hiding, or what they were doing at present, which added more suspense to the battle that was already intense and thrilling enough.

Hundreds of pictures were blinking nonstop, mountains, forests and rivers each replacing one another.

Suddenly, one of the pictures started flashing violently.

As if it were contagious, dozens of pictures nearby started glittering crazily, too.

After a short while, all the pictures were focused on the same crevice, where a blurred, but still very distinctive, figure had been outlined.

"The first crystal suit has been discovered!"

"The Sword Torrent Battlesuit!"

Right now, only 2 hours, 27 minutes and 36 seconds had passed after the arrival of the crystal warship.

Cultivators from the three sword-training sects sighed and buried their heads in their hands helplessly at the same time.

Cultivators from other organizations, on the other hand, looked at each other and were somewhat relieved.

Shangguan Ce's eyelids twitched. Although he did not say anything, his rolling Adam's apple was indicative enough of the uneasiness on his mind.

The corner of Ren Xingbei's mouth was twitching, too. His eyes were completely bloodshot immediately. The rapidly shivering lips seemed to be suggesting that he was cursing someone silently.

The Sword Torrent Battlesuit had been hiding in a cave which had been filled with rainwater because of the thunderstorm. It had decorated a thick layer of vines and weeds outside of the cave as camouflage, too.

But Sha Yucheng was not aware that the seemingly perfect disguise in fact had given himself away easily.

A large quantity of data regarding field vegetation had been stored in the control chip of the Electric Whip Teethed Vipers and Shrieking Bats, which allowed them to roughly analyze whether a certain environment was natural or man-made.

Although the result may not be very accurate, they could always perform more thorough searches on the suspicious areas.

In this case, the different temperatures between the Sword Torrent Battlesuit and its surroundings were detected immediately.

By their acoustic waves, the Shrieking Bats sensed that a giant metal object was using the waterlogged cave as a shelter, too.

Within the next 0.1 seconds, the information that the beast puppets had gathered was transmitted to the Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles.

After another 0.1 seconds, the information had been delivered to the cockpit of the crystal warship.

Ning Feng immediately issued a command. Twelve flying swords darted out from four Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles at the waterlogged cave.

The Taiyi Lightning Railguns, which had been long prepared, were activated, too. One lightning ball after another thrashed the cave magnificently.

"Swoosh! Swoosh!"

Two Earthshaking Ordnance Penetrators, driven by the power rune arrays, drilled into the cave at an amazingly high speed with colorful brightness behind them.

When Ning Feng was quiet, the world was peaceful. But when Ning Feng took action, the world seemed to be overturned.

It was not until this moment that Sha Yucheng realized he had made an unforgivable mistake. The cave that he'd been hiding in only had one entrance. It was a dead end inside!

So, he could do nothing but roar and rush out against the lightning balls and the Earthshaking Ordnance Penetrators!

"Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!"

Hundreds of flying swords were summoned out. They spun around his body and wove a tight sword net. Together with the spiritual shield, his defense ability was brought to maximum and shattered the twelve incoming, hostile flying swords into pieces. Then he charged at where the Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles and beast puppets were densest.

Sha Yucheng was hoping that he could march into the middle of enemies and use the enemies as his own cover, so that the crystal warship would hesitate to bombard its allies.

However, it was like quenching thirst with poison.

Once he was engaged with the Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles and the beast puppets, it would be hardly possible to run away from them anyway.

"BOOM! BOOM!"

Lightning balls exploded one after another behind him. The hot air almost pushed him over, who looked like a butterfly in a heavy storm.

"BOOM! BOOM!"

Two dull noises came from deep under the ground, as if the magma there was bursting out.

They were the results of the two Earthshaking Ordnance Penetrators that had exploded deep inside the mountains. Their blast had crushed all the caves and crevices inside the mountain!

"Zi… Zi…"

A weird clattering noise almost scared Sha Yucheng out of wits.

He knew that it was the sound when the Heaven Splitters were being launched.

A moment later, an ivory light beam illuminated the dark night and turned it into broad daylight briefly.

But the attack was not aiming at the Sword Torrent Battlesuit, but at the other side of the mountain.

Sha Yucheng was hardly back to himself when he realized something.

"A second crystal suit has been discovered!"

The second crystal suit to be discovered was the Mournful Mist Battlesuit.

The Sword Torrent Battlesuit was to blame for the Mournful Mist Battlesuit's misfortune.

As a high-speed stealth crystal suit that was best at disguises, the Mournful Mist Battlesuit had chosen an open cave which had five entrances in different directions as well as an underground river that was connected to the outside world.

The Mournful Mist Battlesuit hid deep inside the cave. The stealth ability that it entailed covered up all of the traces and cut off metal and spiritual reactions. Its temperature was lowered to exactly the same degree as the surroundings.

Even the Electric Whip Teethed Vipers and the Shrieking Bats came right front of the crystal suit, they might not be able to notice its existence.

However, it was unluckily hiding in the same mountain as the Sword Torrent Battlesuit was.

After the two Earthshaking Ordnance Penetrators drilled into the underground and boomed, most of the caves inside the mountain collapsed, including the one that the Mournful Mist Battlesuit had been hiding in.

Seeing that the stalactites over his head were falling upon him and the cave he'd been hiding in were shaking violently, Feng Kai, Exo of the Mournful Mist Battlesuit, had no choice but to open up his spiritual shield for defense.

A Shrieking Bat that happened to be flying outside the cave immediately discovered him.

Since there were not many Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles nearby, there was a good chance that the Mournful Mist Battlesuit could run away again.

Therefore, without any hesitation, Ning Feng had launched the Heaven Splitters.

At this moment, the crystal warship had been out for only 2 hours, 31 minutes and 59 seconds.

Chapter 326: Merciless Counterattack

Chapter 326: Merciless Counterattack

Although it was only one tenth of what supposed to a full-strength strike of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, the attack of the Heaven Splitters still caused the entire mountain to tremble.

A bright glow rose up to the sky like a volcano eruption. Thousands of sparks danced out of the giant tree of flames and dyed the foggy clouds into rosy dawn.

A cage between the sky and the earth with nowhere to run to.

Having no other choice, the two crystal suits had to do whatever they could. They dashed here and there and prepared for their last moves desperately.

The Sword Torrent Battlesuit seemed to be really drowned in a cascade of swords. Countless flying swords were drifting around the crystal suit, weaving a sword net that would mince everything it caught into pieces.

The Mournful Mist Battlesuit, on the other hand, turned into ten phantoms, which melted into the air simultaneously and turned into ten vague waves transmitting to various directions.

Ning Feng was not uneasy at all.

Like the most skilled fisherman, he did not hurry to draw back the fishing line the moment a fierce fish bit the bait. Instead, he played with the fish slowly and patiently, waiting for his prey to be exhausted at some time.

All the Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles flew close to the two crystal suits and formed a dragnet that was neither too tight nor too loose.

Their main purpose was not to destroy the two crystal suits, but to hinder them together with the beast puppets.

They would lock onto the two crystal suits and limit their space of activity with their attacks. Then, the Taiyi Lightning Railguns and Earthshaking Ordnance Penetrators would finish the two of them once and for all.

Under the calculation supported by Ning Feng's intimidating computational ability, every firing point on the crystal warship, every Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle, and every beast puppet together constituted a delicate killing machine which crushed towards the two crystal suits slowly yet firmly.

"Bad luck. Two crystal suits chose the same mountain to hide in and were snatched up by a single blow from the enemy at the same time."

Inside the commanding center, Cultivators from Star Nebula University looked horrible.

Since stealth and disguise were the Mournful Mist Battlesuit's specialties, they had had high hopes for its performance and thought that it would at least be able to survive ten hours.

But as it turned out, their crystal suit had been discovered after such a short amount of time.

Although the two crystal suits were fighting desperately and the Mournful Mist Battlesuit was not entirely exposed yet, the crystal warship had besieged the entire area, with the beast puppets and dozens of Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles obstructing every inch of space inside. Even a breeze wouldn't be able to get through.

However skilled the Exos were, it was hardly possible to break out of such an invulnerable blockade.

"Shangguan, these MP crystal suits were indeed well-crafted. They've survived three minutes under the bombardment of the crystal warship without being captured. Honestly, it is already beyond my expectations."

Ren Xingbei grinned.

It had been less than three hours, and two crystal suits were already a sure catch. His cheeks finally reddened a little bit.

The other officers of the Fifth Fleet were beaming with joy. Without the restriction of military rules, they would've burst out into laughter a long time ago.

Shangguan Ce's face was as solemn as usual. He remained still as if a statue.

Suddenly, a cold brightness shined in his eyes, as he sensed something and turned his head to the few pictures on the left bottom corner of the light beam.

The pictures there had been captured by the ten Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles that had been searching in the southeast area.

Abrupt changes were happening in the pictures!

In the depth of the forest, a gigantic fireball rose up slowly with earsplitting noises.

All the pictures shivered with the explosion. Twisted streaks appeared on them.

"Jamming magical equipment!"

Everyone in the commanding center exclaimed. They immediately shifted their attention to this previously unremarkable area.

At first, they did not understand why Ning Feng had deployed ten Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles to search the place.

Now, they realized that Ning Feng's instincts were truly astonishing!

Jamming magical equipment mostly released special metal powder after it exploded, which would corrupt the control chip of other magical equipment and impair it briefly.

All the pictures were full of streaks and flakes.

Actions of the Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle and the beast puppets were immediately dragged down.

"Huala!"

One of the pictures captured the scene of a black, hideous crystal suit rising up from a muddy pond.

The magical equipment that the crystal suit was holding in hand startled everyone.

"What is that?"

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao locked onto a Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle that was charging at him with his burning soul.

Its speed, angle and trace had all been taken into consideration, before he calculated the best direction of shooting.

Two crystal cannons had flipped up on his shoulder, ready to fire at any moment.

The steel animal in his arms were roaring in a low voice out of bloodthirst.

Triple-headed Heavy Six-Barrel Vulcan Machine Gun!

It was Li Yao's self-made magical equipment for remote attacks!

Six-Barrel Vulcan Machine Gun was a common long-range attack magical equipment for crystal suits, armed shuttles, and crystal tanks.

Heavy Six-Barrel Vulcan Machine Gun was a deadly weapon refined based on the common Six-Barrel Vulcan Machine Guns, but with a wider caliber, a longer barrel and a more advanced and fully upgraded attack rune array.

Generally speaking, only heavy crystal suits, siege artilleries, or crystal warships would have the Heavy Six-Barrel Vulcan Machine Gun installed.

But Li Yao felt that it was not good enough. He refined three Heavy Six-Barrel Vulcan Machine Guns into one, and then nurtured it repetitively for several months by Blood Baptism. In the end, he finally crafted this Triple-headed Heavy Six-

Barrel Vulcan Machine Gun which was directly linked with his blood and soul.

Remote shooting had always been Li Yao's weakness.

Now, with the furious firepower of the super Vulcan Machine Gun, he could make up for his deficiency as much as possible.

"BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!"

After months of Blood Baptism, the super Vulcan Machine Gun was almost part of his body now.

With a telepathic thought, three lines of bullets darted out from the machine gun and formed a net of destruction together with the ferocious spiritual energy fired from the crystal cannons.

The Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle never expected that Li Yao would dare to attack aggressively.

Besides, the flight system of the shuttle had been under inference, which limited its dodging ability.

Li Yao had been waiting for the perfect moment to shoot for too long to let it run away so easily.

"Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa!"

Bullets and spiritual energy rained upon the spiritual shield of the Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle.

Under the savage attack of the super Vulcan Machine Gun, the spiritual shield of the shuttle broke up half a second later like an eggshell being hit by a giant hammer.

The humming sound from the Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle was louder than ever. It turned around and tried to run away, only to be bitten by the haunting fiery snake behind.

Several anti-gravity rune arrays and power rune arrays were blown to pieces immediately. The shuttle fell into the forest with a long exhaust flame.

Many trees inside the forest crumpled. Black smoke billowed everywhere.

This was the first Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle to be shot down since the beginning of the battle.

As a result, Li Yao was completely exposed and had been locked onto by the enemies.

"Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!"

The remaining nine Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles sent out flying swords which turned into dozens of colorful lasers in the pouring storm and charged at him with deafening noises.

Li Yao bit his lips hard. The brilliance inside his eyes was even brighter than the lightning in the sky.

The super Vulcan Machine Gun roared nonstop. Almost twenty flying swords were blown to pieces before they were able to reach their target. The rest of the flying swords were interfered with by the bullets from the gun and missed their target, booming violently around him and splashing pebbles and mud to dozens of meters high.

Li Yao didn't even bother to look back. He continued on firing like a crazy devil.

Nine Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles dispersed smartly and drove the beast puppets to surround Li Yao from the flanks.

Two Mystic Wolves appeared above the waterfall over Li Yao's head.

Three Electric Whip Teethed Vipers sneaked close under the soil quietly like earthworms.

Two Shrieking Bats were fluttering frantically in the sky, unleashing harsh acoustic waves that were meant to distract Li Yao's attention from his target.

"Chi—"

As the Mystic Wolves and the Electric Whip Teethed Snake lunged at Li Yao at the same time, they were all caught by weird electric arcs that appeared in the air out of nowhere and shocked into dizziness.

Li Yao had set up a circle of Silk Landmines.

Such magical equipment was a metal thread that was even thinner than hair, which was barely distinguishable when floating in the air under the cover of dark night and raging storm.

But with a telepathic thought, it could unleash high-voltage electric current momentarily. Even if it could not wreck the beast puppets instantly, they would still be paralyzed for a very short time.

That was enough.

Triple-headed Heavy Six-Barrel Vulcan Machine Gun firing at fixed targets at a close distance was a complete one-sided slaughter.

One second later, all of the beast puppets were blown into metal scraps that were smaller than fingernails.

Li Yao put the Vulcan Machine Gun on his back hurriedly, jumped out and ran away.

"Hum! Hum!"

The other nine Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles were too awed by his brutal behavior just now to come close. They hovered above his head and released more flying swords.

Dozens of beast puppets flooded in from all directions.

Controlling the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Li Yao performed small-scale dodging movements.

After a series of dazzling actions, all the flying swords passed by him without hitting their target. The naturalness made it impossible to tell that it was the cheapest MP crystal suit in the federation.

In complete silence, everyone in the command center held their breath and watched Li Yao's show.

Ren Xingbei's relieved face was tightened once again.

A Mystic Wolf flashed out from the bushes and charged at Li Yao while the crystal cannons on its body were firing nonstop.

Li Yao kept the same speed without dodging. His spiritual shield took all the cannon fire, while his battle saber was unsheathed and cut the Mystic Wolf in half from head to tail.

"Hiss! Hiss!"

Two Electric Whip Teethed Vipers dashed out from darkness and tied his ankles insidiously.

Although they were stomped into pieces the moment they were discovered, the high-voltage electric current that they unleashed before their death still decimated the power rune arrays on the legs of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

Li Yao's speed plummeted immediately.

The encirclement made up by Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles and beast puppets drew closer and closer.

Li Yao's body suddenly blinked, before it vanished into thin air.

Three Mystic Wolves rushed to the place where he disappeared, only to discover a hole behind a rock where dense moss had grown.

Dozens of beast puppets immediately crammed into the cave and followed the traces of Li Yao closely.

The nine Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles hovered in the high above, monitoring the changes in the thousands of square meters nearby.

In the meantime, the information of the previous combat had been sent to Tide Berserker.

"The third rabbit's teeth are rather sharp!"

Ning Feng smiled and triggered his telepathic thought.

Two Taiyi Lightning Railguns turned their directions and aimed at southeast.

Four fully-charged Earthshaking Ordnance Penetrators were about to be launched, too!

Chapter 327: Unexpected Return

Chapter 327: Unexpected Return

"BOOM!"

A big explosion erupted inside the cave that Li Yao had just entered.

Furious flames surged out of the cave and rose up to the sky.

Then, the ground collapsed. The entrance part of the cave sank.

The dozens of beast puppets were not prepared for this. Most of them had been blown to pieces on the spot. The rest of them were paralyzed and deeply buried under the ground.

In the command center, one picture after another turned to black.

The crystal bombs that Li Yao had installed in the entrance of the cave had finished a large batch of beast puppets very easily.

As for himself, he had gone down a branch inside the cave and reached the other side of the mountain.

This underground cave extended to all directions and had seven exits in total, which was also why Li Yao had decided to set up traps here.

On Tide Berserker, Ning Feng squinted. Dangerous brightness was shining in his eyes.

Four Earthshaking Ordnance Penetrators roared and rushed southeast almost at the speed of sound.

Although it was at a subsonic speed, the dozens of kilometers of distance in between were still covered swiftly.

"Sha! Sha! Sha! Sha! Sha! Sha! Sha!"

The Earthshaking Ordnance Penetrators revolved rapidly and drilled to the depth of the mountain.

The sound of rocks crumbling and drill getting deep reached Li Yao's ears clearly, which made his head dizzy and his heart beating fast.

He didn't expect for Ning Feng's counterattack to be as fast and precise. The routes and angles of the four Earthshaking Ordnance Penetrators had been carefully adjusted, so that they were caging him from all directions.

Li Yao roared and accelerated. He sprinted down the narrow and rugged cave to the closest exit.

His crystal suit hit rocks heavily, with sparks dancing nonstop. But Li Yao had no time to bother with that.

"BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!"

Four dull explosions seemed to have taken place in the back of his head. Hot waves flooded in like a tsunami.

The caves behind him collapsed one section after another.

The blast finally reached and swallowed him.

Li Yao felt as if a top expert in martial arts had kicked him in the back brutally.

Despite the double protection from the crystal suit and the mustard suit, he still vomited blood. His spine was in such pain that he felt it had fractured.

"Ahhhhh!"

Li Yao's eyes bulged. He opened his mouth to clear his lung in case the blast would damage his inner organs. Finally, before the caves were completely ash, he rushed out of the exit.

"Pooof!"

A large cluster of dust flowed out together with him.

It looked as if the mountain had farted him out.

The Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles hovering in the sky immediately discovered him.

Nine Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles harassed him at a distance neither too far away nor too close. They sent out their flying swords while they transmitted the image to Tide Berserker.

This time, Ning Feng added another two Taiyi Lightning Railguns.

Together with the previous two, four Taiyi Lighting Railguns in total were aimed at Li Yao simultaneously.

Although they were dozens of kilometers away from each other, Li Yao felt that he was tangled by static electricity. His body was numb, his hair was standing up, and his fingernails were emitting cracking noises.

"Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!"

Four lightning balls flashed through the sky after dozens of kilometers and exploded near him one after another, like four purple, upside-down bowls that covered the forest, establishing four terrible forbidden zones of destruction.

Ning Feng truly deserved his title as a formidable Warship Connoisseur. Although he was dozens of kilometers away, the first salvo he commanded had hit within a hundred meters of the target.

Li Yao didn't look at any of it. He brought his speed to maximum and zigzagged in the forest like a black laser.

Flying swords, crystal cannons, Taiyi Lightning Railguns… All kinds of powerful magical equipment blasted colorful fireballs around him.

The mountain was shaking. The forest was burning.

Many a time, the cracking lightning balls nearly brushed past him.

The scorching fireballs even covered him several times.

But still, Li Yao waved his battle saber and slashed the fireballs into halves, treading a path of blood and fire!

The gripping hunting and escaping silenced the entire command center.

Cold sweat was appearing on everyone's forehead. Their eyes were stinging, but they were too focused to blink.

At this moment, many people finally realized that Li Yao's victory in the Flying Crystal race half a month ago was not entirely based on luck, and that the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was indeed a strong crystal suit that was reliable, trustworthy, and field-tested.

"Shangguan, is the Exo of this crystal suit really a Refinement Stage Cultivator?

"You didn't ask an ace Exo in the Building Foundation Stage to wear it, did you?"

Ren Xingbei frowned and glared at Shangguan Ce.

Shangguan Ce's face remained unchanged. He picked up the teacup and drank the tea nice and easily.

But Li Yao was not as comfortable as he seemed to be.

If there were only the nine Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles chasing him, he would be confident enough to fly into the sky and blow them up one by one.

However, the haunting Taiyi Lightning Railguns were his biggest threat. If they shot him precisely, the spiritual shield of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit would be shattered immediately. His overall combat ability would be undermined by at least thirty percent.

Moreover, inching ever closer, the Heaven Splitters would be fully charged after ten minutes or so and ready to be launched once again.

Li Yao knew that the Heaven Splitters had two attack modes.

One of the two modes was to focus the spiritual energy on one point and pierce it.

The other mode was suppressive fire. The spiritual energy would cover an area of around one square kilometers and demolish everything inside.

If he could not get rid of his pursuers before the Heaven Splitters were fully charged, he would be screwed!

Li Yao roared and accelerated to the peak of a mountain.

Nine Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles followed him closely. Lightning balls drilled into the ground behind him and exploded where his feet had been just a moment ago, making him feel that he was driving a boat on a savaging sea.

Finally, Li Yao arrived at the peak of the mountain.

In the front was a giant waterfall that was thousands of meters high. The dragon-like waterfall was brushing the rocks below with earsplitting noises that were even louder than the thunders in the sky.

"Crack!"

A soul-stirring lighting dashed down from the sky.

Over the cliff, dozens of black balls floating on the water suddenly exploded, releasing black fog as thick as glue which covered the hundreds of meters of area nearby.

"It's the Black Venom Smoke!"

The Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles pulled themselves up hurriedly.

Black Venom Smoke Grenade was a kind of magical equipment similar to ordinary smoke grenades, only much more dangerous and unpredictable. Not only would its smoke last much longer, it would corrupt other magical equipment to some extent too.

Li Yao had selected this waterfall as part of his escape route long time ago. He had buried a lot of Black Venom Smoke Grenades here.

"Shua!"

While the vision of the Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles was blocked by the Black Venom Smoke, Li Yao jumped off the cliff down to the turbulent river hundreds of meters below him.

When the nine Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles finally broke out of the interferences of the Black Venom Smoke, they no longer had visual on Li Yao.

"Ding! Ding! Ding!"

The nine Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles immediately activated all the probe magical equipment on board.

Soon, they discovered that deep down in the river almost a thousand meters away, a metal object whose temperature was slightly higher than the river's temperature was sneaking forward at a high speed.

The river was the trunk stream of the water system in the southeast corner of the battle zone. A few hundred meters ahead, there would be countless tributaries leading to various directions.

On Tide Berserker, Ning Feng's face couldn't look more awful. Two hooks seemed to be flying out of his eyes to dozens of kilometers away and snatching up Li Yao from the depth of the river.

Although he was a Warship Connoisseur, his computational ability was still limited.

Just now, he focused much of his attention on controlling Taiyi Lightning Railguns and Earthshaking Ordnance Penetrators to attack Li Yao. Therefore, the pressure that he imposed on the Mournful Mist Battlesuit and the Sword Torrent Battlesuit was somewhat undermined.

As a result, the two close-at-hand rabbits which had been surrounded a long time ago were still jumping naughtily, which seemed to be mocking him.

Ning Feng immediately made up his mind.

"Fourth Vicious Bee squad, continue searching the water system in the southeast corner and try to locate him.

"Remember not to come too close. The enemy has certain counterattack abilities. Don't let him shoot down a second armed shuttle!

"The pilot of the Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle that was down is not injured. Repair the vehicle immediately. Stand by if you cannot bring the damaged armed shuttle back to the sky. We have no further hands to spare at present.

"Seventh Vicious Bee squad, go to the southeast water system, too. Search every river and every stream.

"Remember, temperature and metal reaction can be disguised. Don't worry about the consumption of crystals. Use large-scale continuous reconnaissance by firing to drive him out of wherever the hell he's hiding right now.

"Other Vicious Bee squads, follow me. Let's stick together and take down these two rabbits first!"

"Fourth squad, copy that."

"Seventh squad, understood."

The nine Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles hovered in the sky for a moment, before they locked onto the blinking light spot on their probe magical equipment and chased after it.

Five minutes after they left…

"Huala!"

A wet crystal suit crawled out of the raving waterfall.

It was Li Yao!

The moment he jumped off the waterfall, he forced himself back into the waterfall with a small-scale movement, grabbed the slippery stone behind the waterfall with all his four limbs, and turned off all the power rune arrays on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

If he were another Exo, it would've been impossible to resist the furious sweeping of the waterfall without the support of his crystal suit.

Only a monster of such colossal strength as Li Yao with steel-like muscles and bones could grit his teeth through the pressure.

Then he activated a piece of magical equipment that he had hidden previously below the waterfall.

There was nothing special about this particular magical equipment. There were a few power rune arrays on it which could drive it anywhere under Li Yao's control. It had weak metal and temperature reactions too.

It was some sort of shabby 'shadow' for himself.

He had refined several such 'shadows' to be his secret weapons for his escape.

This shadow, for example, had at least bought him an hour of time.

However, he didn't intend to run away in the next hour.

The reason why he set up so many fancy, delicate traps and exposed himself to the heavy bombardment from the crystal warship whose Taiyi Lightning Railguns nearly gave him an electrocution was not to hide in some gloomy corner trembling in anxiety.

His natural instinct was to hunt, to attack!

Li Yao smiled and licked the blood on his lips. Then he climbed up the waterfall and entered into the stealth mode before he marched back toward the forest where he had been hiding in the beginning.

The Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle that he'd shot down had performed an emergency landing over there.

Chapter 328: Capture a Crystal Warship!

Chapter 328: Capture a Crystal Warship!

Five minutes later, Li Yao retrieved his Floating Supplier from the pond where he had been hiding in the beginning.

Dense black smoke was flowing out of the Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle that he had shot down previously hundreds of meters away, which was as plain as daylight although the night was deep and dark.

Li Yao held his breath and sneaked closer.

His crystal camera with a super-high resolution penetrated through bushes and branches and locked onto the burning hot shuttle without any trouble.

There was also a human-shaped object working on the shuttle busily.

It seemed that he was the pilot of the armed shuttle who was doing the maintenance job.

Li Yao was very confident in his attack. He was certain that the power system of the Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle must've been blown to pieces.

It would be hardly possible to repair the vehicle without brand new components as replacement.

Li Yao opened his palms. A spider-like beast puppet crawled amongst the grass towards the pilot quietly.

Inside the body of the spider, there was a reservoir in which powerful anesthetic was stored.

By shooting it with high-pressure, it could narcotize a target three to five meters away without skin contact with the victim.

A moment later, Li Yao heard a dull grunt inside the forest. The pilot of the armed shuttle had fallen over.

Li Yao whistled. He dashed among tree branches like a creamy monkey until he reached the shuttle.

He opened the Floating Supplier and took out all kinds of brilliantly shining magical equipment and maintenance tools, ready to make it big.

However, he heard a feeble moan nearby. The pilot of the armed shuttle, who seemed to be a lieutenant judging from his uniform, must be a Cultivator, too. The powerful anesthetic that could put down an elephant only kept him asleep for half a minute.

Li Yao raised his eyebrow. He took out a metal ring and put it on the neck of the lieutenant. With a cracking sound, the metal ring locked up.

The lieutenant groaned. His limbs were out of his control, as if he had been paralyzed.

But his eyes were glaring at Li Yao, from which confusion and fury were beaming out.

This was the latest restraint magical equipment. By unleashing special bioelectricity, it could stimulate the central nervous system directly and lock the movements of the victim's limbs. Only the body parts above the victim's neck were free.

It was terrifically useful for Cultivators below the Building Foundation Stage.

Li Yao took out a metal scrap and pinned it on the Adam's apple of the lieutenant. Then he said coldly, "Although this is only a sham battle, I don't intend to show you any mercy. I have a thousand ways to let you taste the most bitter pain in the world without leaving any injury or sequela to your body.

"Repeat after me, if you don't want to suffer.

"Shuttle 405 reporting. No. 2, No. 5, and No. 7 anti-gravity rune arrays and the main power system are seriously damaged. The efficiency of spiritual energy transformation is on a continuous fall. The crystals are running out. Further flight or combat is not affordable. Requesting to return for full maintenance.

"Read now!"

The lieutenant was dazed for a moment. His eyeballs rolled crazily as he put on an extremely shocked expression.

A moment later, he realized the situation he was in. His eyes were firm again. Then he gnashed his teeth and snarled, "Don't even think about it!

"Whatever you are planning to do, I will not cooperate!"

Li Yao sneered, "Don't presume that I will not do anything to you because this is a sham battle."

The lieutenant laughed aloud.

"Whether this is a sham battle or a real one, I am always ready to be sacrificed as a soldier of the federal army. Even if I were to fall into hands of demon beasts and about to torn into pieces, I would not be pushed around!

"You want to torture me? Then come on! I'll show you what a true soldier should look like!

"However, I suggest you hurry up. I'm not aware what tricks you've implemented to get rid of our men, but it won't be long before they realize what is actually going on!

"You want to waste your time on me? Very good. I'm always here!"

Li Yao stared at the lieutenant.

Although the lieutenant was only a Cultivator at the beginning of the Refinement Stage who had been confined by magical equipment, he stared back without any fear.

Li Yao suddenly smiled. He took the metal scrap off the Adam's apple of the lieutenant and pinned it on his own.

"That's very brave of you."

Li Yao said, "Not so smart, though."

The lieutenant was shocked.

The one standing in front of him was talking in a tone and rhythm that were very similar to his.

"This is 'Sound Simulator', latest magical equipment that was displayed on the Magical Equipment Exposition. It was still in the experimental phase. But I thought it was interesting and pulled some strings to get one.

"As long as it collects enough sound information, it can simulate everyone's voice.

"So, really, you shouldn't have talked so much."

With the help of the Sound Simulator, Li Yao talked in the voice of the lieutenant. As the conversation proceeded, Li Yao's voice became more and more like the lieutenant's, until they were completely undistinguishable in the end.

Li Yao patted the lieutenant's shoulder. Then he walked to the Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle.

He paced around the shuttle. Watching its shell which was riddled with holes and the power system which was burning in intense flames, he was deep in thought.

The lieutenant was dazed for a long time, before he finally came back to himself and burst out in laughter.

"Suppose you can simulate my voice, so what?

"This Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle was shot down by yourself. The power system has been mostly wrecked. It won't fly again without suitable replacements!"

"Correct."

Li Yao put on a maintenance glove on his left hand, while the dagger as thin as a feather danced in his right hand.

He picked up a huge amount of armed shuttle components from the Floating Supplier, including four small jet engine units.

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao's brain was fully activated. His computational ability was brought to maximum. His soul entered the mysterious world of refining. In his vision, the shattered Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle was dismantled into the most fundamental components which were spinning slowly under the night sky and gradually melted with the components that he brought.

Half a minute later, dazzling brightness shined in Li Yao's eyes. His hands turned into a cluster of grey mist. After several screeches of metal, the armed shuttle was completely pulled to pieces.

The repair of the power system and the anti-gravity rune arrays was not complicated.

The real problem was how to fit himself into the cockpit of the Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle.

The space of the cockpit of the armed shuttle was quite limited, which had already been replete with all kinds of magical equipment and operation panels. There was no way that he could cram in while he was wearing the crystal suit.

Of course, he could place the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit in the roomy cabin which was in the middle part of the Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle.

The place was supposed to store five beast puppets. So, it was more than enough to put one crystal suit inside.

However, without the enhancement of the crystal suit, his reactions would be much slower.

If the opponents were to suddenly attack him, there would be a good chance that he would have no time to put on the crystal suit.

Li Yao had to consider the possibility that he might be found out half way through his plan.

So, he concentrated his attention on modifying the shuttle.

At first, he quickly repaired two anti-gravity rune arrays, embedded new power units to the shuttle, and reconstructed the transmission tubes of spiritual energy.

Then, he expanded the cockpit by ripping off the shell on two sides and tearing away the pilot seat. Finally, he was able to enter the cockpit in his crystal suit.

But, as a result, the center of gravity of the shuttle had been changed, because the front end of the shuttle was apparently too heavy with his crystal suit.

However, there was no time for Li Yao to readjust the center of gravity now. He was preparing to make up for that with his professional skills.

The Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle after full modification looked a little bit different from a real one.

However, during the night of such a heavy storm, with most of the enemies' attention focused on the escaping crystal suits, they would barely notice the somewhat weird outlook of a friendly armed shuttle, right?

The lieutenant was truly dumbfounded by Li Yao's astonishing maintenance skills.

He had never seen anyone who could repair such a seriously damaged Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle within half an hour, let alone the modification of the cockpit afterward.

When he noticed that there were so many armed shuttle components, even some power units, inside Li Yao's Floating Supplier, his firm eyes were suddenly put in a trance.

The deepest dread flowed out from his heart and reached every corner of his body.

He realized that this was not a spur-of-the-moment thing.

Before the battle had taken place, his opponent had decided that he would shoot down a Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle, repair it, and drive it into the crystal warship in disguise.

"What… what are you planning to do?" the lieutenant stammered.

"What am I planning to do?"

Li Yao waved his swollen, chapped hands where hot air was still rising up and said casually, "To capture a crystal warship, of course."

…

At 4:47 a.m., the darkest moment before dawn, Ning Feng's face was tranquil as ever onboard the Tide Berserker. But his heart was truly relieved.

The toughness of the MP crystal suits was beyond his expectation. Not only did the crystal suit hiding in the southeast water system launch an amazing counterattack, the two crystal suits that he had locked onto since the very beginning, knowing there was no way that they could get away, fought back desperately with amazing abilities, too, which cost him almost a hundred beast puppets and five Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles.

However, everything was finally back on track now.

Three minutes ago, the Mournful Mist Battlesuit was hit by the Heaven Splitters in the front. The command center had determined it to be 'Exploded'.

As for the Sword Torrent Battlesuit, after it used up all the flying swords and shot down three Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles, he was able to capture it alive.

It had been less than four hours since his arrival, and two crystal suits were already suppressed by him.

Very soon, the weather would be clear again. The detection mystic rays would perform at full strength. Even an ant would not be able to get away from their searching.

"405 has tried to repair three power rune arrays. But there's still something wrong with the anti-gravity rune arrays and the main power system. Spiritual energy is leaking. Crystals are running out. Requesting to return for major maintenance."

Right then, the captain of the fourth Vicious Bee squad sent out a request.

There were two fully-equipped workshops on the Tide Berserker designed for the maintenance of armed shuttles and beast puppets.

Many damaged Vicious Armed Shuttles in the previous fights had flown back to the crystal warship with black smoke trailing behind them.

Therefore, the request did not even go to Captain Ning Feng. It was passed by the vice-captain who was in charge of the squad teams.

"Home return granted, 405. Please enter the mother ship through the sixth deck."

Chapter 329: Let's Burn, Phoenix!

Chapter 329: Let's Burn, Phoenix!

The thunderstorm that had been raging throughout the entire night finally came to an end. The heavily pouring rain became intermittent.

Two crystal suits were tied up from head to toe by electromagnetic shackles and sucked into the crystal warship by anti-gravity, mystical lights.

The sun was about to rise. There were cheers all over the warship. The nerves of all the solders on board which had been tightened all night were finally relieved a little bit before dawn.

Right then, a ragged Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle flew towards Tide Berserker staggeringly.

It seemed that the shuttle had just passed a thick, floating stone belt. Its shell was full of hollows and bumps, as well as all kinds of holes, which couldn't look more terrible.

There was intense black smoke wafting up from its body. Its exhaust flame was extremely pale. While it was flying, cracking sounds were echoing nonstop. Now and then, a power rune array or an anti-gravity rune array seemed to explode, unleashing colorful sparks.

The speed of the shuttle was extremely low, like an old man who had one foot in the grave.

It seemed that, if the shuttle sped up a little bit, it would break up in midair at any time.

Five kilometers… Four kilometers… Three kilometers…

It finally came close to the crystal warship and reached the spiritual shield of the crystal warship.

"Beep!"

It passed the authentication of the IFFS 1 . The spiritual shield did not block the shuttle, nor did it attack the shuttle.

But in the cockpit of Tide Berserker, Ning Feng, who was soaking in crimson liquid, suddenly felt such an intense palpitation that his heart seemed to be being pricked by needles.

He felt that a flying sword out of nowhere had pierced into his heart!

"Not good!"

Ning Feng lost his tranquility.

His instincts told him that something must be wrong!

This instinct was based on more than ten years of experience in bloody, slaughterhouse-like battlefields, as well as his natural gift.

Back when he first entered the battle zone, he'd had a fuzzy, strange feeling. That was why he released ten Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles to search the area even though there was nothing suspicious in his sight.

But right now, the feeling of danger was hundreds of times more intense!

'Someone wants to kill me!'

Inside the capsule where Ning Feng was lying, countless bubbles popped up from the red liquid. His head was burningly hot. Every brain cell was overloading. Thousands of pictures unfolded in front of his eyes simultaneously, as he was searching for any anomaly on and around the crystal warship.

"Crack!"

Right then, a lightning that resembled a raging dragon tore the sky apart, illuminating the night as if it were daylight.

It was probably the swan song of the dying thunderstorm.

Illuminated by the lightning, Shuttle 405, which was flying slowly towards the crystal warship concealed in dirty smoke, seemed to have grown scales and claws in Ning Feng's vision.

For a moment, Ning Feng's heart was as cold as a hard rock. Veins were bulging from his temples to his entire face.

There was no time for him to inform the soldiers on board. With an expansion of his soul, his telepathic thoughts reached every corner of the warship and took over all the weapon and alarm systems temporarily. Then he cut into the communication network and bellowed, "405, this is 001. Stop where you are and stand by. Wait to be towed back!

"Everyone on board, change your IFFS from automatic mode to manual mode and lock onto 405!

"I repeat, lock onto 405!

"All Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles, surround 405 right now and prepare to attack!

"Close the sixth deck immediately. Activate the barriers and lock it up!"

The series of commands brought the anxious atmosphere on Tide Berserker to a new height. After half a second of dead silence, all soldiers started carrying out the orders crazily.

However, Shuttle 405, after a tiny bump, burst out even more exhaust flame. It accelerated instead of slowing down and drew closer to the crystal warship.

"405 failed to halt. No. 2 power units have exploded. Impossible to slow down. Requesting to be picked up by barricade net and towed back."

A voice that was familiar to everyone came from the communicate channel.

Ning Feng smiled and said, "405, please maintain your current trajectory. Barricade net is to be released in 2.7 seconds."

Before he finished his sentence, his telepathic thought had cut in the control chip of two Taiyi Lightning Railguns and fired. Two electromagnetic lightning balls were thrusted at Shuttle 405.

"Everyone on board, aim at 405 and fire!"

For a moment, Tide Berserker seemed to turn into a hedgehog with lights and flames as its thorns.

Countless lights, flames, and lasers twisted into blossoming flowers which transformed the dark night sky before dawn as bright as midday!

The sudden change raised a round of exclamations in the commanding center.

Shangguan Ce and Ren Xingbei, as two seasoned warriors, seemed to have realized something. Their faces were more solemn than ever, if not somewhat angry.

Other officers were still deep in thought, pondering the reason.

The Cultivators were even more baffled by the situation. Why would Ning Feng attack a friendly armed shuttle which was already on the verge of destruction so furiously?

But the next second, their bafflement was replaced by bewilderment.

All the light beams displayed the same incredible scene.

Exhaust flames that were ten times brighter than common Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles burst out from Shuttle 405 which had been more dead than alive a moment ago at the same time with Ning Feng's command.

The speed and agility of the vehicle were ten times higher than before, too.

Taiyi Lightning Railguns, crystal cannons, flying swords… All together constituted an impenetrable dragnet.

But the Vicious Bee Armed Shuttled seemed to have turned into a water droplet which was zigzagging skillfully in the gaps of the net and dashing forward!

The unimaginable sharp turns and weird routes made everyone have the same illusion: it was not a fat, clumsy Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle flying in front of their eyes, but a super shuttle which had been born for the purpose of breaking the speed limit.

"Who's flying the shuttle?"

Everybody in the commanding center was looking at each other in astonishment, realizing that an abrupt change had taken place.

Starting from this moment, the sham battle veered off the preset track to a new direction that none of them had anticipated.

"Hoooo—"

On Shuttle 405, despite the double protection from the crystal suit and the mustard suit, Li Yao's face was still utterly twisted.

The movements beyond the limits of the shuttle and human body had imposed more than 50 times gravity on him. His eyes were bloodshot, and he was suffering from hallucinations.

He wanted to scream in joy, but what came out of his mouth was only a heavy breath.

Every drop of his blood was boiling. Every cell was shouting. All his hair turned into soft feathers. He seemed to have turned into a burning phoenix!

"Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!"

Dozens of flying swords brushed past the shuttle. The aura of the swords ripped more holes on the shuttle which was already riddled with holes.

"BOOM! CRACK!"

One electromagnetic lightning ball after another exploded nearby. Although they did not hit him directly, the purple electric arcs still squeezed into the cockpit and pierced into his body through the gaps on the crystal suit, making him grimace in pain.

But his soul was like a fire that had oil added on. He was more excited than ever!

"We can!

"We can do this!

"We can definitely reach our destination!"

Li Yao roared. His hands turned into a gray blur, as he smashed the operation panels of the armed shuttle and performed dazzling, high-speed dodging movements one after another.

"Crack! Crack! Crack!"

The Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle was not born for speed. Although it had been modified by him, the continuous extreme movements were still too much for it. The noises of fatigue crack were ringing nonstop like the moans of skeletons.

It was the omen that the shuttle was going to break up in the sky!

Another four Taiyi Lightning Railguns that had been silent previously now locked onto him and fired at the same time.

Four electromagnetic lightning balls collided with each other and burst out into a splendid lightning storm which blocked the space in front of the shuttle.

"Come on!"

Li Yao's eyes were entirely occupied by the lightning storm. Two intense waves surged out simultaneously from the Soul Condensing Pendant and the deepest depths of his brain, which flowed all over his body through his veins and nerves, interweaving, before they protruded from his back where they formed two bright gold wings ferociously flapping in the sky.

"BOOM!"

The Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle crashed into the lightning storm and exploded, turning into a blossoming lotus of blood and fire!

In the middle of the lotus, an intimidating figure jumped out like a phoenix that had just been reborn.

Brilliant flames of spiritual energy were dancing around Li Yao. Under the enhancement of the crystal suit, they were ten times more dazzling than usual. The two bright gold wings that were almost ten meters long made him look like a mighty god who had come to earth.

"Break, now!"

His batter saber was surrounded by furious spiritual energy, too, which extended the brightness of his saber to more than five meters away. He activated the Thunderous Tornado

Saber Art to maximum as he pushed himself forward. Two hurricanes seemed to have crashed.

The lightning storm was ripped open.

"Swoosh!"

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit accelerated suddenly through the lighting storm and was arriving at the crystal warship.

Another three electromagnetic lightning balls were coming at him in a triangle.

More Taiyi Lightning Railguns and crystal cannons were readjusting their angles quickly to lock onto him again.

Dozens of Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles were all flying at him without fear, as if they were ready to perish together with him.

The incoming savage attacks turned into a series of data and lines inside Li Yao's brain.

Since the crystal suit was far more agile than the armed shuttle, he was 70% sure that he could avoid the three lighting balls in the lead.

However, the consistency of his sprint would be interrupted.

More Taiyi Lightning Railguns and flying swords would be able to lock onto him again.

The second wave of attack would be too dense for him to come close to the crystal warship ever again.

"Victory or failure shall be decided now. Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, keep it up!"

Li Yao gritted his teeth. The Soul Condensing Pendant seemed to be melting into his flesh and blood like liquid metal.

Feeling the cheers of countless professors and senior brothers, Li Yao's soul expanded to maximum. The bright gold wings folded in around him and covered his body. His spiritual shield was also brought to maximum.

He was going to take the blow from the three electromagnetic lightning balls!

Chapter 330: Close Combat

Chapter 330: Close Combat

"Ka! Ka! Ka! Ka!"

Before the three electromagnetic lightning balls reached their destination, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit suddenly started revolving and turned into a crazy drill, crawling through the tiny gap between them!

"BOOM! CRACK!"

Three electromagnetic lightning balls passed by Li Yao without hitting him, and then exploded almost a hundred meters away behind him. The electric arcs spluttered like gold snakes and caught up with him quickly, tearing his spiritual shield into pieces.

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was tied by ten thousand vipers made of electric arcs. Every rune array on the suit was cracking. Black smoke was popping up from every gap of the suit.

But it was still sprinting!

There were only two hundred meters away from the sixth deck now!

Li Yao had entered into the blind side of the Taiyi Lightning Railguns.

More than ten electromagnetic lightning balls exploded far away from Li Yao. But the raging electric arcs were not able to catch him anymore.

The flying swords and crystal cannons were the only weapons that could hit him now.

But for Li Yao and the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, they were too sturdy to be blocked by such insignificant attacks, not even for several seconds.

The gate on the sixth deck closed. The barriers on the entrance were fully activated.

"Ca!"

Two crystal cannons flipped up on Li Yao's shoulders, ready to attack.

The Triple-headed Heavy Six-barrel Vulcan Machine Gun had been picked up and aimed at the gate which was locked up.

"Break now! Break now! Break now!"

Crimson, azure, and emerald bullets were shooting out in three lines from the Vulcan Machine Gun.

They were the bullets that Li Yao had specially chosen to dig open the solid shell of a crystal warship.

The crimson line was the flame bullets. Special explosion rune arrays had been carved on the bullets. Unstable fiery crystals were stored inside the bullets.

The azure line was the frost bullets, which had frost rune arrays on the surface and liquid crystals of an extremely low temperature inside them. Once they hit anything, they would freeze everything nearby including the air.

One of them was scorching while the other was frigid. When the two kinds of bullets hit the same point, even the most tensile metal would be as weak as glass because of thermal expansion and contraction.

The emerald line was corrosive bullets. High-intensity corrosive liquid, which was synthesized by simulating the subtle constituents of the body liquid of five different demon beasts, had been stored inside the bullets.

The moment such bullets hit their target, the corrosive liquid would be transformed into super-corrosive mist by the pulverization rune arrays on the surface of the bullets and corrupt the target from outside to inside.

Under the savage of the three different kinds of bullets, the defense rune arrays outside the sixth gate were immediately devastated. The gate itself, although half a meter thick, was brimming with holes and full of rust now.

Then—

Two man-made suns rose up from Li Yao's shoulders, whose glaring brilliance swallowed the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit entirely.

After two earsplitting noises, the brilliance spurted out, blowing the gate which had already been on the verge of destruction into pieces mercilessly!

These were not ordinary crystal cannon attacks, but two critical strikes that were based on the furious spiritual energy from the crystal reactor which had been accumulating for a long time!

The two attacks consumed almost half of the spiritual energy contained in the crystal reactor!

Because of the overloading of spiritual energy, the two crystal cannons dangled from his shoulders like over-soaked, swollen noodles after firing for only one time.

The shoulders of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit were torn to pieces because of the counterforce.

Li Yao even felt like his arms had been ripped off, too.

But, luckily, the sixth deck was finally open now!

Li Yao roared and tossed away the crystal cannons on his shoulders and the Vulcan Machine Gun. He dashed forward with nothing but a battle saber at the top of his speed into Tide Berserker!

The sixth deck was in chaos!

Most of the Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles had been sent out. There were only four inside the sixth cabin.

Two of them had been damaged in previous combat and were waiting to be repaired.

Besides, the space inside the cabin was very limited, which was not suitable for Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles to act.

The two intact Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles released their beast puppets hurriedly and tried to take off.

But one of the pilots was so anxious that his shuttle hit the ceiling before crashing into the other shuttle. The two shuttles fell to the ground uncontrollably.

The soldiers near the deck all picked up their storm bolters and resisted in vain.

Most of the soldiers were ordinary people. Several officers were Cultivators, but only at the beginning phase of the Refinement Stage.

Right now, Li Yao was close to the peak of the Refinement Stage. With the enhancement of the crystal suit, he could fight a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator face-to-face.

Now that he had infiltrated the warship, he was like a hungry tiger in a sheep farm. The marines on board were no match for him at all!

"Chi! Chi!"

The moment Li Yao got aboard on the sixth deck, he released the last few Black Venom Smoke Grenades he had.

A few seconds later, the entire deck was enveloped by dark fog.

Inside the dark fog, which was too thick for anyone to see anything, moans of soldiers, screams of beast puppets, and clattering noise of spiritual shields echoed nonstop.

Five minutes later, the dark fog dispersed.

The place was in an utter mess. But Li Yao had vanished.

The commanding center was filled with dead silence, like a graveyard in the cold winter when the bodies of both the living and the dead had been frozen.

Before the beginning of the sham battle, everybody had thought that the theme of the sham battle was hide and seek.

Strong as the Tiger King Battlesuit may be, it would still have to flee like a mouse into the wilderness under the threat of the Heaven Splitters and twelve Taiyi Lightning Railguns.

Some had guessed that Li Yao might do some crazy things.

Since he was adept at jungle hunting and guerrilla warfare, he might set up a few traps inside the forest, circle around with the hunter and destroy dozens of Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles and hundreds of beast puppets.

This was the best that anyone could imagine.

Even Yuan Manqiu had never expected that Li Yao would be so bold as to hijack a Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle and pierce into the crystal warship with it.

"The guy is too crazy!"

"How can a Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle be so agile? It is even more agile than a super shuttle!"

"The performance of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is indeed impressive. After so many attacks, including explosions of three electromagnetic lightning balls only a hundred meters away, it was still functioning normally without being torn to pieces by the blast."

Whispers gathered and grew louder and louder, until everyone in the commanding center was shouting at each other in disbelief.

In the heated discussion, Shangguan Ce glanced at his old friend unemotionally.

"This is not included in the plan of the sham battle. If the battle goes on, the crystal warship might be seriously damaged. Shall we abort it?"

Ren Xingbei turned his neck aside slowly, as if it had been rusted. Brightness was beaming out of his eyes like bullets, as he said, one word after another, "No. I believe in Ning Feng."

"However, Shangguan, where did you find such a… monster?"

…

Inside the cockpit of Tide Berserker, Ning Feng's eyes were not sloppy like a drunk cat anymore but bulging wider than anyone else on his warship. His brow was furrowed so much that a third eye seemed to be gazing at the front.

The drunk cat had turned into a ferocious tiger!

"Don't presume that you can turn the crystal warship upside down even if you're inside it right now!

"This is my territory, where I am the king!"

The biggest weakness of crystal warships had always been the astonishingly weak internal defense. Once a strong enemy breached its strong exterior, they would be in a passive position.

It was also the reason why the military had been reluctant to send crystal warships into the Dark Desolate Domain and fight the strong demons at a closer distance.

However, as one of the best captains of the Fifth Fleet, Ning Feng had long prepared contingency plans for hostile infiltration.

There was an assault team of three hundred soldiers on Tide Berserker, including twenty battle-type Cultivators armed with powerful melee magical equipment.

Usually, they would be sent out for airborne operations and assault tasks. In the case of an emergence, they would be deployed to defend the warship.

Such an assault team may not be enough to stop a Cultivator at the high level of the Refinement Stage who was wearing a crystal suit.

But together with a hundred Electric Whip Teethed Vipers, there would be no risk at all.

'Taking the blow of the attacks of Taiyi Lightning Railguns and so many flying swords, your spiritual shield has already broken completely. Your crystal suit itself must've been seriously damaged, too, which means your combat ability is at a low point right now. You are biting the bullet and running out of your momentum!

'This is my warship. Crystal cameras and probe magical equipment are everywhere. Wherever you're hiding right now, you will be discovered by me in no time!

'With so many soldiers and beast puppets, you will be flattened to death if they each step on you once!'

Countless thoughts were swirling in Ning Feng's brain. One order after another was issued neatly and systematically.

The assault team and the beast puppets gathered in the middle of the warship.

All the crystal cameras and probe magical equipment were scanning every pathway nonstop.

But half a minute later, Ning Feng still failed to detect the crystal suit.

"He must've snuck into the ventilating ducts or the maintenance ducts!"

Since the gargantuan crystal warship had been designed to be engaged in complicated environments where venomous or corrosive mist might be prevailing, a closed structure had been employed in most of the crystal warships with an advanced air circulation system made of sophisticated ventilation ducts, which enabled them to fight in the exosphere.

Although crystal cameras had been installed to such ducts, too, the number of them was much smaller than outside. They were not enough to monitor every corner inside ducts.

Besides, to maneuver such a large crystal warship, thousands of spiritual energy tubes were scattered on the crystal warship.

For the sake of easier maintenance and heat dissipation, the diameters of these tubes were often larger than two meters. Few cameras could cover them as well.

"Where is he going?"

Ning Feng's head was very clear. The strength of Tide Berserker depended on the Heaven Splitters and the Taiyi Lightning Railguns. There were not many strong experts among the marines.

The only Building Foundation Cultivator on board was himself. But he was an admin-type Cultivator who was not good at combat. It would be difficult for him to beat an experienced battle-type Cultivator at the peak of the Refinement Stage.

Faced with such a formidable enemy, three to five low-level Refinement Stage Cultivators would be committing suicide if they were to challenge him. Ning Feng would not divide his forces and let them be crushed by Li Yao one by one.

The assault team and beast puppets had to stick together and suppress the enemy with an overwhelming advantage in numbers!

"Purpose? What is the purpose of this guy? With nothing but a ragged crystal suit and a broken saber, how can he destroy such a giant crystal warship?"

Cold sweat was appearing on Ning Feng's forehead.

The cunningness of the intruder was beyond his expectation.

He knew that the intruder must've made a deadly plan, and he only had one chance to send the assault team and beast puppets to the right place to stop him!

The information on the intruder, which he skimmed over the previous afternoon, popped up in Ning Feng's brain.

"Vulture Li Yao, grew up in the most dangerous magical equipment graveyard, cruel and brutal. Adept at stealth, ambushing, and assassination. Also an excellent refiner who has been particularly interested in explosive magical equipment and interlinked bombing traps.

"In the Devil Flood Dragon Island, with the decapitation strategy, he…

"In the battle of Verdant Tarn City, he gathered ten Hellfire-Lightnings and…

"In the Refiners' Registration Examination, he…

"In the Flying Crystal race of the Magical Equipment Exposition not long ago, he feigned his self-destruction…"

Ning Feng narrowed his eyes.

He knew what this fanatic bomber wanted to do now.

"Vulture Li Yao, you want to sneak into the cockpit and play the 'decapitation' move on me, don't you?

"Then come on and try!"

Chapter 331: Gotcha!

Chapter 331: Gotcha!

With a telepathic thought, ten Electric Whip Teethed Vipers crawled into the ventilation ducts and maintenance ducts between the sixth deck and the cockpit.

In the meantime, the perception range of the probe magical equipment near the cockpit was heightened to their maximum.

Such probe magical equipment was supposed to monitor whether or not the crystal warship was functioning normally.

Although it could not transmit image signals, it could monitor subtle temperature changes and special waves from metal objects very precisely.

No more than half a minute later, Ning Feng discovered that a metal object whose temperature was slightly higher than the surroundings was moving fast in the ventilation duct from the sixth deck to the cockpit.

"Gotcha!"

Ning Feng sniffed. He was going to summon the assault team to besiege the ventilation duct, when he had a palpitation and his instincts alarmed him one more time.

The intruder seemed to have exposed himself too easily.

Considering that the enemy had gone through all the trouble sneaking into the warship, there was no reason why he wouldn't cover the basic heat contrast and metal reaction. Such a straightforward plan was like he was purposefully revealing himself.

Pondering for a moment, Ning Feng's telepathic thoughts flooded to the back of the warship where he activated the alarm system around the engine compartment to maximum.

Soon, he discovered another metal object which was moving at a high speed with a temperature slightly higher than the environment in the maintenance duct in the rear of the warship.

"Is his target the engine compartment?

"The engine compartment provides spiritual energy for all the power rune arrays and anti-gravity rune arrays on Tide Berserker. A lot of crystals are stored inside. In light of the style of this fanatic bomber, he might be selling me a dummy. It appears like he is sneaking to the cockpit for a decapitation operation, but in fact, he is going to the engine compartment secretly!

"As a refiner, he might've already prepared certain special explosive magical equipment that can detonate all the crystals inside the engine compartment.

"If he occupies the engine compartment and coerces me using the bombs he sets up there, claiming that he will die together with the crystal warship, I will be defeated!

"However—"

The cockpit, the engine compartment. Two metal objects were moving at the two locations respectively fast.

"Which one of the two is real?

"If the one going to the engine compartment is his disguise and his real target is still the cockpit, what do I do?"

The time was limited. It was impossible to check the situation in the front and in the rear simultaneously unless he was to divide the assault team and the beast puppets into two squads.

However, faced with such a formidable enemy as Vulture Li Yao, Ning Feng had no confidence that half an assault team would be enough to take him down.

After careful consideration, Ning Feng made a risky decision.

He decided to send seventy percent of the assault team and puppet beasts to the engine compartment at the rear of the warship and assemble the remaining thirty percent to the cockpit to protect himself.

The decision did not calm himself down. Instead, he felt his heart was heavier and heavier, as if he had stepped off onto nothing and fell into an abyss.

For some reason, he felt that he had neglected something.

After a shiver, Ning Feng quickly started replaying the footage that the Vicious Bee Shuttles had captured just now.

The video was shot the moment before Li Yao broke into the warship.

Zoom in, zoom in, and zoom in!

When the picture was enlarged by 17 times, Ning Feng found that there were two giant metal balls hanging on the waist of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, which were full of power rune arrays and flame spouts.

The files that he had read about the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit did not mention any of such things.

He did not see any function of the two pieces of magical equipment in the previous fight, either.

From an aerodynamic point of view, there shouldn't've been two such metal balls on a crystal suit in the first place.

What was that?

'My enemy has played such a trick before. By hiding a piece of magical equipment that can emit heat and metal reaction below the waterfall, he allured the chasers after him away.

'The two balls must be the same thing. They're his 'shadows'!

'Which means—

'The two metal objects that are moving at the cockpit and the engine compartment are both fakes!'

Ning Feng's hair was all pricking.

Although he had seen through his enemy's disguise, he did not feel at ease at all, because he hadn't found out where exactly Vulture Li Yao's destination was yet.

'On a crystal warship, besides the cockpit and the engine compartment, what critical target can be destroyed by a crystal suit in a very short time?

'He has only one chance, and he definitely wouldn't act recklessly. It's not like he can just split my warship in his suit alone.

'Split?

'Heaven Splitters!'

Had he not been confined inside the capsule, he would've jumped to his feet already.

The attack of the Heaven Splitters could be as powerful as a strike of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. Their energy consumption was, of course, enormous.

Therefore, below the Heaven Splitters, a large chamber had been set up where super-compressed crystals were stored.

Such crystals were meant for demolishing and destruction. They were much more furious and unstable than the crystals inside the engine compartments.

Setting off such a crystal chamber was a hundred times more convenient than setting off the engine compartment, but the damage would be no less.

The Heaven Splitters were above the middle of the warship. Once its crystal chamber was set off, the entire warship might be split into two halves from the middle.

To this moment, the command center remained silent without interfering with this sham battle.

But Ning Feng was well aware that thousands of eyes were fixed on Tide Berserker at present.

If his enemy really sneaked into the crystal chamber of the Heaven Splitters and set up explosive magical equipment there, the command center would definitely call the sham battle to an end.

When that happened, he would meet an unprecedented failure!

"Shut off the ventilation ducts from No. 394 to No. 423!

"Shut off the ventilation ducts from No. 224 to No. 278!

"Assault team, go to the Heaven Splitters right now. Pay close attention to the ducts near the crystal chamber!

"Electric Whip Teethed Vipers, search the ducts that I shut off just now and leave no stone unturned!

"All Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles, retrieve the beast puppets on the ground and reinforce Tide Berserker!"

One command after another was issued.

In the meantime, Ning Feng did not forget to deploy ten Electric Whip Teethed Vipers to trace the two metal signals that had been discovered in the beginning.

Although he was pretty sure that they were his enemy's decoys, what if his enemy had stored something dangerous inside them?

Right now, Ning Feng had regarded Vulture Li Yao as the most sly and sordid opponent he had ever met. He even felt that he was facing a cunning demon beast instead of a human being.

Soon, abnormal spiritual waves came from the maintenance ducts leading to the Heaven Splitters.

Someone had blown up the gate locking the ducts, which had released a lot of light and heat.

In the moment of the explosion, a crystal camera in a turn of the ducts clearly captured burning flames and a blurred figure inside the flames.

After analysis and comparison by his crystal processor, it was the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit!

"Finally, you're here!"

At this moment, Ning Feng felt like crying out in joy!

Although this was only a sham battle, he had been more anxious in this battle than any other battle that he had fought before.

His enemy seemed to have realized that his plan had been seen through and started breaking through the maintenance ducts faster.

But the maintenance ducts were narrow and zigzagged with a lot of branches like a labyrinth.

So, the enemy's pace was rather slow.

The assault team and the beast puppets had gathered around the Heaven Splitters in advance.

All the Electric Whip Teethed Vipers crawled into the ducts.

News came from the ducts at the front and the rear, too.

Electric Whip Teethed Vipers there captured two pieces of ball-shaped magical equipment, which were exactly the items that the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had been carrying on its waist when it broke in.

They were the sources of heat abnormality and metal reactions that the probe magical equipment had detected.

However, when the Electric Whip Teethed Vipers tied them up, the two 'shadows' suddenly exploded; dense smoke and furious flames burst out.

Their round bellies had been filled with smoke grenades and napalm bombs.

Smoke and heat flowed through the ventilation ducts to every corner on the warship.

For a moment, black smoke and venomous gas spread to every cabin.

But the game was over. The fancy tricks were not of much use to reverse the situation now.

Ning Feng commanded the fire control team to enter the ventilation ducts to put out the fire. Then he focused his attention on the assault team who were getting closer and closer to the real target.

Five minutes later, an Electric Whip Teethed Viper discovered the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit which was hiding behind a large cluster of messy spiritual energy tubes.

The combat was much easier than he had expected.

Dozens of Electric Whip Teethed Vipers lunged at their target at the same time and unleashed high-voltage electric arcs which immediately tangled the intruder.

In a narrow duct that was only two meters wide, the crystal suit was more of a burden than a help. Strong as his enemy may be, his enemy couldn't even stand straight inside the duct, let alone deal with so many Electric Whip Teethed Vipers simultaneously.

Besides, almost a hundred soldiers of the assault team were keeping a close watch outside the duct with their storm bolters at hand.

Should there be any abrupt changes, they could blow the entire duct into pieces.

The brutal fight to break into the crystal warship consumed much of the spiritual energy of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. The after effect of taking the attacks from three Taiyi Lightning Railguns the hard way finally burst out.

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit did not resist. It was tied up without being able to move at all.

It was not until four soldiers imposed electromagnetic shackles on his enemy and he saw the full image of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit through a crystal camera on an Electric Whip Teethed Viper that Ning Feng was greatly relieved and lost all his strength in the capsule inside the cockpit.

He had finally captured the third crystal suit.

Vulture Li Yao was indeed a formidable opponent.

Was he really a sophomore student? Incredible!

"Fire control team, put out the fire on the warship as soon as possible; damage accounting team, report the losses of the warship right now. We'll have a half-hour rest. There's still the last crystal suit on the run. Let's work harder and try to seize him before sunrise!"

The moment he let those words out, Ning Feng felt that there was something wrong. He raised his head and saw bloody sunlight beaming into the cockpit through the window. The floor seemed to be burning in mysterious flames.

The sun had been up for a long time.

With a self-mocking smile, Ning Feng continued, "Check whether or not the Exo of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is injured and send him to the med bay immediately if he is. But don't loosen the shackles on him. Assault team, stay alert. The guy might still have other evil plans."

Chapter 332: Cicada Out of Ecdysis

Chapter 332: Cicada Out of Ecdysis

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, which had lost all of its momentum, was still very solid. The joints between each piece of the place armor stuck close to each other. The assault team tried several times, but they failed to open the crystal suit by force.

Luckily, by the scanning of probe magical equipment, they found that the Exo inside the crystal suit had stable breathing and heart rate; he was just in a coma.

Presumably, the previous high-intensity combats had drained not only the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit but also the Exo, who, like a cracked bow, had been stretched beyond his limit.

Faced with such an opponent who fought until the last moment, Ning Feng sighed in respect.

Since the physical condition of the Exo was not too bad, Ning Feng asked the assault team to carry him to the workshop where there were delicate tools that could dismantle the crystal suit and dig him out.

In the meantime, the electromagnetic shackles were of course still on. Ning Feng wouldn't leave out details like that.

Right then—

"Chi!"

A loud shriek burst out from the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

Then, a cluster of black fog as dense and thick as ink flooded into the cabin and swallowed more than half of the assault team.

The pathway they were in was quite narrow. The assault team had nowhere to run at all. Even the soldiers furthest away from the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit could do nothing but watch the black fog surge closer like an unstoppable tide.

However, the weird smoke did no damage to them, which only dyed them black. It didn't have any unusual smell, either.

After a moment, almost a hundred 'black men' blinked their eyes in confusion, whose teeth were whiter than ever because of the contrast. They looked at each other in bewilderment, not knowing what was going on.

The scene was transmitted to Ning Feng's brain by the crystal camera on the soldiers' helmets.

However, one crystal camera after another broke down after being contaminated by the black fog. The number of pictures inside Ning Feng's brain was continuously reducing.

At the same time, more devastating news was reported by the fire control team.

One of the firefighters had been knocked out and hidden in a tool room inside the maintenance duct. His uniform had been taken off!

Ning Feng was immediately alarmed. He focused his attention on the ventilating duct over his head.

In the beginning, Vulture Li Yao had placed a decoy in the ventilating duct, which had exploded when it approached the cockpit and release a lot of flames and smoke.

Therefore, three minutes ago, Ning Feng didn't pay much attention to several firefighters who went into the ventilating duct to put out the fire.

But right now, after he gathered all the information and calculated all the possibilities crazily, he suddenly realized…

"BOOM!"

The exit of the ventilating duct above the cockpit was blown to pieces by large fireball!

A man that was wearing silver firefighter uniform and a closed helmet whose ruby glass blocked his undistinguishable face jumped down from the exit like a crazy devil and appeared in the middle of the cockpit!

Before he reached the ground, dozens of round Thunder-Palms had been tossed away by him, which were rolling to every corner of the cockpit.

Cockpit was the brain for a crystal warship. Most of the important officers and warship operators congregated here.

Of course, there were a lot of Cultivators among them. But most of them were admin-type Cultivators. Some of them were creation-type and research-type Cultivators.

There were several battle-type Cultivators as guards here. However, they did have any way to deal with the rolling

Thunder-Palms other than to gaze at them in bewilderment.

The Thunder-Palms did not detonate.

But they were already a deadly surprise to the officers on Tide Berserker.

"Si la!"

The firefighter uniform was torn into shreds which were dancing in a storm of terror like thousands of silver butterflies.

Li Yao was wearing a tactical vest where another dozens of Thunder-Palms were hanging, with a battle saber in his left hand, a burning axe in his right hand, and a storm bolter on his back. He appeared in front of Ning Feng, as if he had been possessed by a devil.

He glanced around coldly, and then turned his eyes back to Ning Feng.

Li Yao smiled, his sharp teeth glaring. He said, "Had the last wave of Thunder-Palms exploded, more than half of the officers and operators here would've been injured and killed instantly. The cockpit would've been in a mess. The operation panels would've been hardly likely to function anymore. Shall we continue?"

Ning Feng gritted his teeth.

The crimson liquid was quickly extracted. The capsule opened slowly. He stood straight and glared at Li Yao with bloody eyes as he said coldly,

"I thought this was a sham battle to test the performance of crystal suits."

"Indeed it is."

Li Yao replied, "The fact that the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit could rip open the shell of your crystal warship against the salvo of twelve Taiyi Lightning Railguns and so many Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles is evident enough of its toughness already.

"However, a moment ago, it played an even more important role.

"If you've read my files, you should know that I've added a set of detonator magical equipment near the crystal reactor of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

"Over the past half month, I've made a series of improvement. Not only is the explosion much more powerful now, the detonator can also be remotely controlled or set on a timer.

"After I got out of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and knocked out a soldier, I stuffed him inside the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and set a timer to detonate the crystal suit in five minutes.

"Of course, this is only a sham battle, and I was not using real bombs. Therefore, your assault team has only been blackened. That's all.

"If this were a real battle, I believe your assault team would've been annihilated already.

"At least the elites in it. The battle-type Cultivators would've suffered most.

"By my estimation, out of precaution, you must've asked the strongest experts to surround the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, didn't you?

"If you don't believe me, you and everyone in the command center can study the detonator magical equipment I refined together and check whether or not the explosion that it triggers is powerful enough to demolish a few hundred soldiers nearby."

Ning Feng was speechless for a long time, before he opened his mouth again with a hoarse voice.

"The two shadows of you were your first decoy. They were also in charge of igniting the fire, so that the fire control team would be deployed. As long as you were in firefighter's clothing, no one would bother to look at you even if you're openly moving about inside a ventilating duct.

"The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was your second decoy. You lured the assault team to the Heaven Splitters with your crystal suit which you then triggered and crushed the entire assault team.

"When everyone's attention was focused on the authentic Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit near the Heaven Splitters, you crawled through the ventilating duct to the cockpit without raising any suspicions.

"But there is one point that I don't understand.

"Why were you so certain that the cockpit would not be guarded? What would you have done if I had stationed dozens of Electric Whip Teethed Vipers and soldiers from the assault team here?"

"It was not very likely. After all, the crystal chamber below the Heaven Splitters is too important, and you couldn't bear the consequences if it was occupied by me. Therefore, you definitely would send most of your soldiers there."

Li Yao continued, "It wouldn't matter whether or not the cockpit was heavily guarded.

"Most of the Cultivators on board should've been killed by the self-explosion of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit already. How many soldiers can you spare to protect the cockpit?

"But let's say you are well protected by the guards and I have no opportunity to assassinate you. At least I can activate all the Thunder-Palms I have, which will lead to major chaos and blow many officers and operators here up. The controls systems of the warship would be wrecked. It's unlikely that your warship would still function normally.

"Then, I would run away while everything was messy.

"Without my crystal suit, I'm still a battle-type Cultivator at the high level of the Refinement Stage. I don't think ordinary marines can stop me when everything is in disarray.

"Then, I would sneak into the survival cabin and launch a lifeboat, pretending that I'd fled out of the warship.

"After that, I would sneak into the med bay.

"While I was flying the Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle to Tide Berserker, I saw that two crystal suits were being sucked into your warship by anti-gravity mystic colors. One of them was not seriously damaged. I assume that you captured him alive.

"So, I would search the med bay for the uninjured Exo and rescue him.

"That way, two saboteurs will sabotage your warship together.

"By any luck, we'd even be able to find his crystal suit which was stored by you. I believe that in such chaos, you wouldn't have many soldiers to keep an eye on his crystal suit.

"After that, I would make an unexpected return again.

"This time, not at the cockpit, but at the Heaven Splitters.

"As long as I occupied the crystal chamber of the Heaven Splitters, I would have, in effect, taken over the entire warship.

"Of course, there are always unanticipated changes. The plans can be adjusted according to the actual situation at any moment.

"The cockpit, the crystal chamber of the Heaven Splitters, the engine compartment, and even the anti-gravity system are all my targets.

"If I had no other choice, I could destroy the anti-gravity system of your warship and force it to land so that I can run away. Without the fire support of your warship in the sky, I don't think that your soldiers and beast puppets are capable enough of hunting a Cultivator at the high level of the Refinement Stage in a jungle.

"All in all, the one thing that worried me most was your assault team.

"Therefore, my top priority is not to destroy the cockpit, nor the Heaven Splitters, nor the engine compartment, but to try everything I can to eliminate your assault team.

"As long as the assault team is eliminated, I'd be able to take the initiative of the battle, and I would be much more comfortable regardless of whether I decide to persist on fighting or simply run away.

"The plans that I proposed just now are not just wild imaginations. The success rate is at least 50%.

"So, I think the sham battle should be concluded now. Do you concur?"

All the officers and operators in the cockpit were speechless.

The command center of the Fifth Fleet was mired in an indescribable silence, too.

Ning Feng seemed to have thought of something, but his rebuttal was overruled by himself before he opened his mouth. He crashed down like an empty bag and sighed, before muttering unwillingly, "I concur."

Chapter 333: Jiang Sheng's Expectation

Chapter 333: Jiang Sheng's Expectation

Zuo Feijing was hiding in the depths of a dense forest. Countless blurred colors were replacing one another on the surface of the Tiger King Battlesuit. The stealth camouflage that was continuously changing melded him with the forest. The concealment rune array extended an invisible spiritual cover which blocked all the temperature changes and metal reactions.

Unless a mystic color hit him in the face, Zuo Feijing was confident that he could escape the scanning of any probe magical equipment.

This was the third shelter that he chose.

He had set up another eight shelters that were exactly the same as this one.

He had also selected five interlinked underground caves that extended into various directions. There were two underground rivers through which he could go miles away without being noticed.

In all the shelters and underground caves, he had set up serial traps to tackle the beast puppets.

Many pieces of surface-to-air magical equipment had also been deployed, which could shoot down the Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles with his telepathic thoughts.

From midnight to right now, Zuo Feijing had been busy working without a moment of rest for five hours before he was able to complete such a large battleground for guerrilla warfare.

He was waiting for the crystal warship patiently, like the most skilled hunter who was lurking in the darkness seeing the brutal prey coming close to the long-prepared traps one step after another.

He would wash away the disgrace from the Flying Crystal race half a month ago with the most eye-catching battle ever so that everyone would know who had been wearing the best crystal suit!

Prolonged explosions echoed in the distance.

Tide Berserker stayed in the horizon for a long time.

Judging from the fierce engagement, more than one crystal suit had been detected. Maybe the other crystal suits had all been suppressed.

But had Li Yao really been captured?

Zuo Feijing felt irritated the moment he thought of the vulture who had been wearing the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

"Just wait for it. Last time, you were lucky. This time, I will crush over you with overwhelming capability!"

Right then, noises came from the communication channel.

Zuo Feijing was stunned.

For better disguising, the communication channel had been kept in the silent mode, so that the crystal warship would not detect the spiritual waves from it.

Now that the communication was reopened, it only meant one thing.

The sham battle was over!

As he expected, Supernova Jiang Sheng's tired voice was the one to speak.

"Feijing, come on out. It's over."

Zuo Feijing was dazed. Then he exclaimed in joy, "The battle's over? Have the other three crystal suits all been suppressed?"

The communication channel was silent for such a long time that Zuo Feijing thought the communication had been cut off, but then Supernova Jiang Sheng said softly, "No. Tide Berserker… has lost combat capability."

"What?!"

Zuo Feijing was dumbfounded. His facial muscles were twitching so violently that there was no telling what his expression was.

Supernova Jiang Sheng sighed and explained, "A crystal suit hijacked a Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle and sneaked into the crystal warship pretending that he was a pilot. Then he broke into the cockpit and performed the decapitation strategy.

"According to the calculation of the commanding center, there was a 61% likelihood that he would have successfully assassinated Ning Feng, captain and the highest commanding officer of the crystal warship.

"Even if the assassination failed, there was still a 93% likelihood that he would have demolished most of the officers and operators, destroyed the operation panels and deprived the crystal warship of combat capability.

"Therefore, the sham battle is over. You can get out now."

Zuo Feijing was rendered speechless. Somebody seemed to have tossed a bowl of hot water on his face, where all kinds of countenances were replacing one another.

After a moment, he gnashed his teeth and said, one word after another, "It was Li Yao, wasn't it?"

Jiang Sheng replied, "Yes. Vulture Li Yao."

Right then, a red sun rose up from the valley, finally getting rid of the arms of the horizon. It tore the gloomy clouds apart with thousands of rays of light and charged at the boundless sky.

…

As if a cold front of -100°C had just passed, the air in the commanding center was entirely frozen. Everyone was solidified by the invisible frigid wind, not even able to blink their eyes.

But deep down their heart, a volcano was erupting. Astonishment, confusion, anger, shame, and appreciation… were all bursting out.

Complicated emotions were flowing in their hearts like magma.

It was not unprecedented for a crystal warship to be broken into by the enemy.

Otherwise, the federal army would have marched into the Dark Desolate Domain a long time ago instead of stationing themselves in the southernmost Grand Desolate Plateau.

However, throughout history, the enemies who had broken in and destroyed crystal warships were all at the level of demon kings or even higher.

Never had anyone imagined that a Cultivator at the high level of Refinement Stage, plus the cheapest MP crystal suit of the federation which had been considered by some people to be nothing more than a pile of garbage, would be able to conquer such a three-hundred-meter steel beast which was armed with a pair of Heaven Splitters and twelve Taiyi Lightning Railguns!

Every part of the light beam was playing the video clips of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit's fighting.

In the beginning, it blew a Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle into pieces within half a second with a Triple-headed Heavy Six-barrel Vulcan Machine Gun.

Then, it broke through the cross-fire of twelve Taiyi Lightning Railguns, innumerable flying swords, and countless crystal cannons, before it breached the shell of the warship with half of the spiritual energy contained in its crystal reactor.

Eventually, with a time bomb, the assault team, which consisted the strongest soldiers on board, was eliminated.

The scenes were seared into everyone's brains and wouldn't be forgotten for a long time.

Their impression grew deeper still after the refiners and the bomb experts of the military studied the detonation system of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit carefully and came to a conclusion.

According to the analysis of the professionals, the detonation system, even if made up by ordinary crystals, could still trigger an explosion that could affect at least ten cabins nearby because the intense blast from the explosion was restrained in the limited space.

Since the assault team was too crowded back then, they might've been blown to pieces with no survivors at all.

As for the Cultivators inside the assault team, they were closest to the crystal suit and would have suffered from the blast the most. It wouldn't help even if they had opened their spiritual shields in time.

The analysis report changed everyone's expressions. Their burning eyes aimed at the delegates of the Grand Desolate War Institution.

"Congratulations."

After a long time, a Cultivator from Star Nebula University applauded Yuan Manqiu first.

"Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is indeed an excellent MP crystal suit model which can enable the craziest Exo to achieve the most incredible accomplishment."

Cultivators from the three major sword-training sects, after a long sigh, offered their compliments to the Grand Desolate War Institution, too.

But the delegates from Deep Sea University stood in absolute silence, as if they were being suppressed by an ocean weighing tons.

Before the Tiger King Battlesuit was able to demonstrate its full strength, the crazy Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had ended the sham battle with his insane actions. It was truly… vexing!

Everyone turned their furious and indignant gazes to Supernova Jiang Sheng.

Taking a deep breath, Jiang Sheng walked to Yuan Manqiu and said solemnly, "Senior Sister Yuan, I was wrong.

"At the wake of Professor Zheng Xuan, I declared that the Project Mystic Skeleton would never succeed.

"But the reality has proven my declaration to be more than wrong. The Project Mystic Skeleton has succeeded. Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is a very competent MP crystal suit model.

"One must admit his wrongdoings. I sincerely apologize to Senior Sister Yuan, to Professor Zheng Xuan, and to all the staff and students of the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution.

"When you meet Li Yao, please forward my apologies to him, too. I once said that he would achieve nothing in the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution. But as it turns out, he has grown into an exceptional refiner.

"The detonation system that he designed and refined is one of the best pieces of explosive magical equipment I've ever seen.

"However—

"MP crystal suit is only one kind of magical equipment. This victory means that the Refining Department of Grand Desolate War Institution stands equal to the Refining Department of Deep Sea University now.

"If you really want to beat us, please bring out new, stronger magical equipment!

"I'm looking forward, very much, to compete with Senior Sister Yuan and outstanding young men such as Li Yao in the marvelous world of magical equipment!"

…

In front of the blinking light beam, Ren Xingbei stood still and straight, like a crashed warship which had completely lost momentum.

Shangguan Ce patted his shoulder and said, "Old Bei, don't let it bother you too much. You should know that it's hardly likely that a crystal warship would charge at the enemy line alone. Crystal warships are always in formation.

"Once the enemy approaches, several, or even dozens of crystal warships will shoot together and blow the potential intruder to pieces.

"Therefore, it's impossible that such a thing would ever happen in a real battle. Stop brooding on it."

Ren Xingbei glanced at him and sniffed.

"Shangguan, we've been friends for decades, and we've suffered much more brutal failures together than this. Do I look like someone who can't bear the consequences of a failure?

"I just..."

He paused for a long time. Then he waved his hand and said in annoyance, "Alright, forget it. Let's check this lad who has just created a miracle.

"Vulture Li Yao? Interesting!"

...

At the medical center of the Fifth Fleet.

Li Yao was soaking in the dark green recovery liquids. His body was bobbing up and down, his eyes closed.

The wounds and injuries on his body were too many to count. There was not one inch of his skin that was intact. His muscles were dry, his arteries were bulging, and he looked as thin as a skeleton now.

He had used up all his spirit, determination, and physical strength in the previous battle.

He suffered most from the attacks of the Taiyi Lightning Railguns and countless flying swords when he was breaking into Tide Berserker.

Although his body had been built up by the Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining technique, it was still seriously damaged.

According to the doctors, the severity of the wounds almost equaled to him being crashed into by a full-speed, charging crystal warship.

"Art of the Swallowing Whale, activate!"

Li Yao opened his mouth and started drinking the recovery liquids.

The pores all over his body were also unlocked, absorbing the nutrients contained in the nutrition liquids crazily to repair the drained and damaged veins and nerves.

"The concentration of the recovery liquids is dropping fast!"

"The strength of his bones, muscles, and arteries is improving fast. His heartbeat and breathing are stable now, too."

"He's absorbed enough recovery liquids for three people to use over a day and a night in only ten minutes!

"Such an absorption rate is far beyond the ability of ordinary Refinement Stage Cultivators. The Cultivators from the Grand Desolate War Institution are indeed formidable."

The crazily bouncing figures and the quickly recovering body amazed the doctors and nurses of the Fifth Fleet.

Chapter 334: Unrestricted Warfare

Chapter 334: Unrestricted Warfare

After absorbing twenty standard units of nutrition liquids, Li Yao finished his preliminary treatment. His body's injuries were mostly recovered now.

But when he got out of his ward, he was surprised to see that, instead of the delegates of the Grand Desolate War Institution, two lieutenant generals as well as a lot of officers whose attitudes were far from friendly were waiting for him.

The officers of the Fifth Fleet were eyeing Li Yao half angrily and half cautiously, as if he were a high-level demon beast which had disguised itself as a human being.

Li Yao's heart was beating like a drum after he learnt of the identities of the two lieutenant generals.

For heaven's sake, it was the commanding officer of the Fifth Fleet! Definitely one of the highest officers and toughest warriors in the military!

The Fifth Fleet was the best fleet of the Star Glory Federation where countless war heroes had emerged from.

Back when Li Yao was a little boy, he had watched avidly clips of the Fifth Fleet's bloody battles on the ragged light beam projector of his.

Never had he expected that he would successfully infiltrate a warship of the Fifth Fleet one day and perform the decapitation strategy. Life was truly amazing.

Currently, Li Yao was no longer the ordinary young man that he had been before he went to college two years ago.

After life-and-death battles and training sessions, his soul was as solid as a super alloy now.

Under the glaring eyes of two lieutenant generals and so many unfriendly officers, he was still able to stand straight and stay calm.

His calmness somewhat surprised the two lieutenant generals.

Ren Xingbei stared at him for a long time, before he opened his mouth and said, "Mr. Li Yao, your performance today was really an eye-opener. What's your opinion about this battle?

"Do you think that once crystal suits can be mass-produced, or the abilities of the high-end crystal suits can be greatly improved, the crystal warships should serve as secondary forces, or simply retire once and for all?"

The sharp question made Li Yao's eyes twitched. He shook his head as he said, "I don't think there is any weapon that can secure the victory of a war by itself, not even the crystal suit, even though it is known as the 'king of magical equipment'.

"In the battle just now, the critical part of my intrusion was that I fooled the spiritual shield of the crystal warship with a modified Vicious Bee Armed Shuttle before I sprinted to the blind side of the Taiyi Lightning Railguns. That's why I could successfully land on the warship.

"But in a real battlefield, the spiritual shield of a warship will definitely not be deceived so easily. As long as authentication strategies such as passwords or biological detection are employed, it will be as easy as pie to find out whether the pilot is a human being or a demon. There's no way that the enemy would get aboard in disguise.

"Suppose the enemy successfully enters the spiritual shield in disguise, in reality, dozens of warships will team together for a battle instead of a lone warship going on a mission by itself like in the sham battle, which means their blind side is very limited. Once the enemy is recognized, they will be faced with a hundred or even more Taiyi Lightning Railguns instead of just twelve of them.

"Compared with crystal suits, crystal warships have their own irreplaceable advantages.

"For example, when faced with an overwhelming beast tide exclusively made of low-level demon beasts, Cultivators would be helpless even if they are wearing crystal suits. They can only kill a few demon beasts before their souls are burnt up.

"But a crystal warship can annihilate the demon beasts dozens of kilometers away unhurriedly with the Heaven Splitters and Taiyi Lightning Railguns.

"An ordinary soldier can launch deadly attacks and kill dozens of demon beasts just by pressing a button.

"He might even have time for a cup of tea during that.

"Therefore, although I did break into Tide Berserker today, I don't think that crystal suits alone are enough to win a war. There are many things that crystal warships can do that crystal suits can't.

"Besides, in my opinion, crystal suits and crystal warships are perfect partners for each other. The invention of MP crystal suits will not reduce the significance of crystal warships. Instead, crystal warships will be all the more important in the future!"

"Oh?"

Officers of the Fifth Fleet nodded at Li Yao's words approvingly.

The last sentence, on the other hand, particularly aroused Ren Xingbei's interest. He pursued, "How so?"

Li Yao explained carefully, "In the history, the fleets of the federal army are always deployed behind the Northern Defense Line and are not willing to break into the Dark Desolate Domain. It is partly because the climate in the Dark Desolate Domain is extremely harsh. In the case of a spiritual tide, crystal warships may be wrecked, and soldiers may be killed.

"It is also partly because there are a lot of strong demons inside the Dark Desolate Domain. Since the internal defense of crystal warships is too weak, some of them might break into a crystal warship and sabotage the warship like I did this time. It would be a terrible disaster."

Ren Xingbei acknowledged frankly, "Correct. It is universally known that the federal army is in charge of defense while the Cultivators are in charge of attack. That's mainly because there are too many ordinary soldiers in the military. Even on a crystal warship, most of the marines are still ordinary people. So, it would be a major headache if strong demons broke into the warship."

Li Yao continued, "Just like this time. There are only dozens of battle-type Cultivators on Tide Berserker, who are no higher than the middle level of the Refinement Stage. A few demon generals sneaking onto the crystal warship is enough to cause serious trouble.

"However, what if the dozens of Cultivators are all wearing crystal suits? Wouldn't the internal defense of the warship be greatly strengthened?"

Ren Xingbei was dazed. Then he fell into deep thought.

Li Yao smiled.

"The reason why marines are not armed with crystal suits is because crystal suits are too expensive. The cost of one crystal suit alone equals the cost of more than ten Vicious Bee Armed Shuttles with all the beast puppets that they carry.

"But if the crystal suit in question is the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, your expenses will be significantly reduced. Dozens of sets of such crystal suits are not unaffordable as long you make up your mind.

"That way, the internal defense of crystal warships will be significantly improved. The crystal warships will be able to take part in the aggressive missions, won't they?

"On the other hand, although crystal suits boast a lot of advantages, they are very precise magical equipment after all. The odds that they're damaged in a battlefield can be quite stunning.

"Besides, there is one prevailing problem bothering all the MP crystal suits, which is that their working time is too short.

They are all short-legged and can only carry out missions in a fairly small range.

"So, they're also in dire need of a crystal warship which can serve as their base for maintenance and supply.

"Therefore, in my opinion, even if the MP crystal suits are to be promoted in the entire federal army, crystal warships will definitely not serve as secondary forces.

"Future crystal warships will probably serve as a platform with three functions: legions projection, remote firepower support, and maintenance and supply. That way, crystal warships will be really engaged in the attack missions!"

This time, Ren Xingbei was truly shocked. He gazed at Li Yao for a long time, before he opened his mouth and said, "Mr. Li Yao, did you come up with the theories you said just now by yourself?"

Li Yao blushed. He shook his head rapidly and said, "No. They are the collective work of the Project Mystic Skeleton team and the experienced staff and students of the Combat Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution.

"Project Mystic Skeleton is the golden project of the Grand Desolate War Institution. Everyone is hoping that the military can purchase more Mystic Skeleton Battlesuits. We often hold meetings to discuss the crystal suit tactics and how they can collaborate with other units.

"Besides the ground forces, all the fleets are our potential clients, too. We're hoping to sell a crystal suit to the commanding officer yourself. Of course, we need to study how crystal suits and crystal warships can cooperate in a battle."

Ren Xingbei couldn't help but smiled.

Of the Nine Elite Universities, the Grand Desolate War Institution was closest to the military except the First Military Academy of the Federation. The two parties often had joint missions.

Graduates of the Combat Department and Medical Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution most often went to the federal army, too.

As for the graduates of the Refining Department, they were not welcomed elsewhere because they were brought up with grassroots refining ideologies. Therefore, they often chose to work as military refiners.

Since the Grand Desolate War Institution and the military were deeply connected with each other, it was not unusual that they could present such insights with their collective wisdom.

"Mr. Li Yao, I have to say that both you and your Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit have left a deep impression on me. I will consider your suggestion seriously. Maybe one day, crystal warships of the Fifth Fleet will be loaded with Mystic Skeleton Battlesuits. Warships and crystal suits will fight side by side against a common foe!"

After giving the promise, Ren Xingbei and officers of the Fifth Fleet left.

Li Yao and Shangguan Ce, the other lieutenant general, were left alone.

Shangguan Ce was much friendlier to him.

He had been the toughest advocate of crystal suits in the military. Li Yao's performance today was truly marvelous. After the process and outcome of the sham battle were reported to the higher officials, he might be granted enough funds to establish another ten crystal suit legions.

He observed Li Yao with a smile while he pondered about the young man who had risen up like a fiend star.

Li Yao was studying his title, too.

'Commanding Officer of Special Forces Center, Director of Unrestricted Warfare Research Center?

'Unrestricted Warfare? What's that?'

Seeing through the confusion on his face, Shangguan Ce smiled and explained, "Unrestricted warfare means attacking the enemy in every way possible by ignoring all the rules and exceeding all limits. It is also known as asymmetric warfare.

"Just now, you fought a gargantuan crystal warship with a small crystal suit. It is one form of asymmetric warfare. The decapitation strategy that you employed is the most typical method in the unrestricted warfare.

"The wars between the federal army and the beast tides fall into the category of regular warfare.

"But the battles between Cultivators and high-level demons, especially those higher than Building Foundation Stage and demon general, cannot be bound by the methodologies of regular warfare. All the shackles confining our imagination must be broken into pieces!

"For example, will the demon clan teleport a demon king, or even a demon emperor, through mini wormholes to the front of the Speaker of Parliaments and decapitate him?

"Will the demon clan release so many 'Wave Jamming Bugs', which can malfunction the Spiritual Nexus, that the entire network will be wrecked and the economic and social order of the Star Glory Federation are in disarray?

"Have some strong demons sneaked into the Heaven's Origin Sector pretending to be human beings and even become high officials in the federal government?

"What limitless approaches can we undertake to infiltrate, unsettle and attack the Blood Demon Sector? Is it possible to mask a human being so that he can sneak into the Blood Demon Sector?

"These are all research fields of unrestricted warfare.

"Don't think I'm exaggerating to scare you. In fact, the things I mentioned just now have happened before, are happening, and will happen again."

Li Yao was shocked.

Were there really strong demons who had assassinated the Speaker of Parliaments through mini wormholes?

Were there countless demon spies living as human beings, some of whom even gained important positions in the federal government?

Unrestricted warfare sounded more much thrilling than a head-on battle!

Chapter 335: Occult Orbs Fellowship

Chapter 335: Occult Orbs Fellowship

Seeing Li Yao's interested face, Shangguan Ce smiled and said, "Mr. Li Yao, I've carefully studied your files. I didn't expect that such a young man like yourself would have so many experiences. You are even a Federation's 1st Class Disabled Servicemen. So, you are more than qualified for my offer. Have you ever considered rejoining the military and working in the Unrestricted Warfare Research Center?"

Li Yao was dazed. He didn't anticipate that a lieutenant general would come and try to recruit a college student in person.

Pondering for a moment, he was caught in a dilemma.

The Grand Desolate War Institution went by the credits system. Any student would be eligible to graduate as long as they earned enough credits.

Li Yao had earned 40,000 credits in the freshman year. Now that Project Mystic Skeleton had triumphed, as the only student in the project team and the test pilot of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, he had earned astronomical credits which were more than enough for him to graduate.

However, he felt that it would be a shame to graduate right now. He was planning to redeem some of his credits for a few courses from the Combat Department.

Considering the amount of his credits, he could easily pick up a course taught by a Core Formation Cultivator.

Yuan Manqiu had talked with him about his future career after graduation, too.

The leaders of the school were sincerely hoping that he could stay at school after graduation, and if he did, his benefits would equal to those of Ding Lingdang's.

However, the Heaven's Origin Sector was too large a place to be missed out. In his heart, Li Yao was planning to travel around for a few years and gain more experience before returning to the Grand Desolate War Institution and starting to work.

As for joining the military…

If it was an ordinary troop stationing behind a defense line waiting for the emergence of beast tides, Li Yao was of course not willing to.

But joining the Unrestricted Warfare Research Center and fighting the strong demons in an indiscernible battleground?

It sounded very interesting!

Li Yao hesitated.

Shangguan Ce glanced at him and said casually, "It's an important decision and I can give you more time to think about it. Even if you are willing to, it's not easy to join the Unrestricted Warfare Research Center. There will be all kinds of tests that you need to pass.

"However, if you decide not to return to the military, your capability in refining and your eye-opening ideas are truly valuable nonetheless.

"The Unrestricted Warfare Research Center is often in need of bizarre magical equipment. Sometimes it doesn't have to be powerful but requires creativity or even insane imagination.

"If we come across a problem concerning magical equipment, we might contact you, or we might ask you to refine magical equipment for the Unrestricted Warfare Research Center. Is that okay with you?"

Li Yao nodded his head quickly.

"Of course it is, as long as you don't blame me for my lack of experience."

Shangguan Ce smiled.

"Your lack of experience is precisely why I want you.

"The ways of refining of the experienced refiners are all fixed and easy to be seen through by the strong demons who can make up counteracting plans effortlessly.

"In comparison, it's quite possible that beginners like you can refine some magical equipment that is beyond the expectation of the strong demons!

"But the main purpose of my visit today is not to invite you to join the military."

As he was speaking, Shangguan Ce took out a glitteringly silver card from his pocket and handed it over solemnly.

"Mr. Li Yao, please keep the card. When you're free, you can explore it with your telepathic thoughts. This is an invitation as well as a test."

Li Yao was truly stunned.

He was too familiar with the card.

A year ago, Long Wenhui, vice president of Hundred Saber Alliance and a Core Formation Cultivator, had offered him the exact same card to him, telling him that the card came from an organization hundreds of times stronger than the Hundred Saber Alliance.

On the surface of the card were written four words, which were 'When Stars Are Shining'. It seemed as thin as the edge of his saber, but it actually employed a space folding technique named 'hiding a world in a mustard seed' and sealed an enormous three-dimensional labyrinth inside of it.

After he finished his training sessions every day, Li Yao would extend his spiritual threads into the labyrinth and explore its destiny.

But after almost an entire year, he had never touched the boundary of the labyrinth yet.

As a result, his spiritual threads were much thicker and longer, and his spiritual root was far more tensile than those of other common Refinement Stage Cultivators.

He didn't expect that Shangguan Ce would give him an identical card.

Did it mean that General Shangguan Ce was also a member of this mysterious organization?

Shangguan Ce was too smart to ignore Li Yao's bewilderment. He realized what was going on and smiled.

"Huh? Judging from your face, you've been given the quasi-membership card of 'Occult Orbs Fellowship', haven't you?

"Makes sense. How could an excellent young man such as yourself who has made extraordinary achievements in the Grand Desolate War Institution be overlooked by strong Cultivators? I wasn't thinking about it thoroughly.

"Haha. Since you're already a quasi-member of Occult Orbs Fellowship, try your best to Cultivate and break into the Building Foundation Stage so that you will be a true member of Occult Orbs Fellowship. We'll fight side by side and conquer the cosmos!"

Li Yao couldn't help but asked, "General Shangguan, what kind of organization is this so-called Occult Orbs Fellowship? The Cultivator who gave me the 'quasi-membership' card only told me that it is an influential organization that is stronger than any sect and didn't give me any more information. Can you tell a bit more about Occult Orbs Fellowship?"

Shangguan Ce pondered for a moment and replied frankly, "Alright. Occult Orbs Fellowship is not an illegal organization anyway. As the Blood Demon Sector draws close, more and more secrets will be revealed to the world, including those about Occult Orbs Fellowship.

"It doesn't matter if I tell you something about it in advance.

"Li Yao, during your Cultivation, you must've been into many world fragments already, haven't you?"

Li Yao nodded, to which Shangguan Ce smiled.

"But the world fragments that you entered are not large in size. Their diameters are no larger than 500 kilometers. The environments there are exotic, and there are not many relics in them, at least not many significant ones that you find interesting, are there?"

Li Yao nodded his head again.

There were some relics both in Peng Hai's Small Grayfield and in Ding Lingdang's Billowing Star Sea. But they'd melted into the natural environment long ago and did not have anything special.

Shangguan Ce said, "As I expected. The world fragments that have been released to the public and are known by low-level Cultivators are the world fragments at the bottom level.

"As a matter of fact, we've discovered more world fragments than you can imagine. They are much more powerful and dangerous!"

Li Yao was breathing heavily.

"More powerful? More dangerous?"

Shangguan Ce nodded.

"What is a world fragment? As its name suggests, a world fragment is a fragment of a world which was torn apart during the brutal, bloody wars over the past 40,000 years by inconceivable forces and weapons.

"Are you curious about why the world fragments you came across have no trace of such wars?

"In fact, among all the world fragments, many were the ancient battlefields of those wars.

"There are mainly three kinds of ancient battlefields.

"Firstly, the world fragments created during the civil wars of the demon clan in the era of the Demon Beast Empire.

"In the 30,000-year-long Great Dark Age, the 'saint-blood demons' ruling over the Demon Beast Empire changed for more than ten times. Every change of dynasties means blood and vengeance. Many demons were mortal enemies. For them, killing their own kind was no less difficult than killing human beings. Therefore, a lot of fragmented ancient battlefields we have now can be traced back to that time.

"Secondly, the ancient battlefields created 10,000 years ago in the renaissance war of human beings between the Star Sea Imperium and the Demon Beast Empire when the Supreme Emperor rose up.

"The horror of such ancient battlefields is beyond the description of any words.

"Thirdly, the ancient battlefields created during the Armageddon Rebellion when the Blood God was possessed by the invading demons and transformed into Mad Armageddon.

"The Armageddon Rebellion destroyed the Star Sea Imperium. The human world was scattered again. The Heaven's Origin Sector ended up as a lone world floating in the edge of the cosmos.

"Such battlefields are also too cruel and brutal to be elaborated on, too.

"Other than the ancient battlefields, some world fragments were created on purpose.

"Of such world fragments, some are the cemeteries or the havens of legendary Cultivators; some are the research centers of mysterious projects; some are the last bases of other species, forces and troops; some are even the relics of the prehistoric civilizations from billions of years ago before the human civilization came into being.

"Li Yao, can you understand the value of such world fragments?"

Li Yao was deep in thought.

The longer he pondered, the brighter his eyes became.

The advanced world fragments were thousands of times more valuable than ordinary world fragments.

Shangguan Ce nodded his head and said, "It seems that you've got it.

"If a world fragment is an ancient battlefield, dead bodies of ancient soldiers, as well as their magical equipment, weapons, and rune arrays, are possible to be retrieved.

"If a world fragment is the cemetery or the haven of a legendary Cultivator, it will be even better. It's very likely that his lifelong collections are stored inside.

"If a world fragment is the research center of certain mysterious projects, or the last base of certain ancient forces, we may even get a complete Cultivation system out of it!

"Moreover, some world fragments are not of much value per se, but they are not entirely cut off from the mother world. We can use those world fragments as platforms to enter into another world!

"You should be aware of the significance of the world fragments for human beings of the Heaven's Origin Sector right now.

"The Star Glory Federation barely had any advantage 500 years ago and could only wait to be attacked passively. But 500 years later, a brilliant Cultivation civilization has flourished. We're even starting to refine starships, ready to break the limit of the Heaven's Origin Sector and cruise in the universe.

"Is it possible to learn all the technologies without inheriting knowledge of the past? Definitely not!

"Many parts of our Cultivation system, Cultivation arts, and magical equipment technologies are rooted in the discoveries in the world fragments!

"The world fragments that contain the relics of the civilizations over the past 40,000 years are called as 'Occult Orbs'.

"Occult Orbs are both mysterious and valuable.

"Countless treasures are buried inside Occult Orbs waiting for the valiant warriors to conquer!"

Li Yao finally understood everything,

"Occult Orbs Fellowship is an organization that explores and develops Occult Orbs?"

"Correct!"

Shangguan Ce stopped smiling and looked at Li Yao with a solemn expression.

"The Occult Orbs are of paramount importance to the human beings of the Heaven's Origin Sector. However, the immeasurable value of the treasures hidden in them is enough to incite the greed of any organization or person, which might lead to a civil war among Cultivators. Therefore, 392 years ago, all the sects of the Cultivation world and representatives of the ordinary people gathered together and established Occult Orbs Fellowship with strict rules.

"Occult Orbs Fellowship is the top organization beyond all sects and forces in the Cultivation world of the Heaven's Origin Sector. It has two missions.

"Firstly, explore and conquer Occult Orbs to absorb and digest the Cultivation system, Cultivation arts, and magical equipment technology buried in them.

"By making best use of them, the Cultivation civilization of the Heaven's Origin Sector will strive for a better future.

"Secondly, ensure that the secret arts and treasures retrieved from the Occult Orbs do not become the property of a certain sect or person but are used for the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people. All the Cultivators and ordinary people should benefit from the Occult Orbs!"

Chapter 336: Children of Occult Orbs

Chapter 336: Children of Occult Orbs

Shangguan Ce paused for a moment with a grave face. His voice sounded hoarse, too.

"The two rules were established by the Cultivators of the Heaven's Origin Sector at the cost of thousands of people's blood.

"Hundreds of years ago, when the human beings of the Heaven's Origin Sector first started exploring the Occult Orbs on a large scale, the federation nearly collapsed because of the looting of the secret treasures.

"The flourishing and doom of Red Dragon Legion had a lot do with the Occult Orbs, too.

"So, we decided not to reveal all the information of the Occult Orbs to the public. Even many Cultivators knew little about them.

"Occult Orbs, secret treasures, ancient arts… They can be catalysts to push our civilization forward, and they can also be tinder that burns our civilization to the ground."

Li Yao knew exactly what Shangguan Ce was talking about.

Legends about 'treasures' were the most alluring stories among human beings all the time.

However, every legend of a treasure had always been concerned with bloody fights.

Li Yao could imagine how his predecessors were grasped by desire and greed and ended up being killing machines after they entered the Occult Orbs and discovered powerful secret treasures.

It might not be a bad idea to let Occult Orbs Fellowship stay on the top of everything.

Shangguan Ce sighed and continued, "It's exactly because the Occult Orbs are so addictive that Occult Orbs Fellowship has a very high standard for its members.

"But it's not the sole reason why Occult Orbs Fellowship is unwilling to set the Occult Orbs to the public and permit all the Cultivators and even ordinary people to explore and excavate them. There are another two reasons.

"Firstly, it is very difficult to send someone into an Occult Orb.

"Different from ordinary world fragments, Occult Orbs often have enormous barriers or blockades. Some of them are far from the Heaven's Origin Sector, with countless turbulent spiritual tides in between.

"To teleport a Cultivator to an Occult Orb and bring them back safely, the cost can be astronomical.

"For the Occult Orb furthest away from us with the strongest barriers, the cost to teleport someone into it is enough to build up a crystal warship!

"Because of the huge cost, it's understandable that we can't teleport a random Cultivator to the Occult Orbs easily."

Li Yao nodded his head.

It was quite acceptable. The same rule applied to the selection of astronauts. Since the journey was too expensive, it was not very likely that an ordinary person would be picked as a candidate.

Shangguan Ce continued, "Secondly, the Occult Orbs are full of perils, with a very high death rate. Common Cultivators would merely be committing suicide if they were to enter them."

Li Yao asked in surprise, "What are the dangers in the Occult Orbs?"

Shangguan Ce explained, "There are three dangers in the Occult Orbs.

"The first danger is that the natural laws the Occult Orbs abide by can be on the opposite of those in the Heaven's Origin Sector.

"The gravity of some Occult Orbs is dozens of times more powerful than here; some randomly switch from a frigid hell of minus a few hundred degrees to a blistering furnace of thousands of degrees; some have strongly corrosive raging wind which can tear your flesh and blood off your bones effortlessly; some look peaceful, but there are mysterious soul swirls on them which will consume you and lock you in the most horrible nightmare forever once you step inside.

"These are just the differences of natural laws, which are easier to cope with.

"But as I mentioned just now, many Occult Orbs are ancient battlefields from bloody wars over the past 40,000 years. Naturally, a lot of magical equipment, rune arrays, and weapons have been left on them. Such items might still be in an active state even though tens of thousands of years have passed.

"If one enters an ancient battlefield recklessly, the ancient magical equipment may take them for its enemy and annihilate them in no time!

"If the Occult Orb in question is the ancient research center of secret arts, or the cemetery of a legendary Cultivator, or the last shelter of some ancient forces, there will be even more barriers, snares and traps.

"Even the most cautious explorer risks stepping into one of them, and if so, not only will his body be blown to pieces, his soul might also be ripped apart. He will be doomed forever with no way to turn back!

"But the two dangers above are not the most frightening ones.

"The scariest danger is the risk of meeting other species who are exploring the Occult Orbs just like us.

"Besides demons and demonic Cultivators, human Cultivators from other worlds must be paid close attention to.

"Under the savage of harsh environment and the temptation of powerful secret treasures, even blood brothers may turn against each other. Cultivators from other worlds might be the brutalist enemies!"

Li Yao was somewhat shocked. He blurted out, "There are other species in the Occult Orbs?"

Shangguan Ce nodded.

"Occult Orbs are the legacies of all civilizations over the past 40,000 years. Of course, all the species in the cosmos are interested in them.

"You should know that the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector are very close to each other from the four-dimensional point of view. We're 'twins' and a 'dual world system'. The development level of the two civilizations are very close.

"Therefore, the Occult Orbs that we find are mostly in the Blood Demon Sector's eyesight, too.

"Besides, many Occult Orbs are the remnants of battlefields of the Blood Demon Sector after more than ten times of alternation of dynasties, or the tombs of the strong demons. There are many secret arts in the Blood Demon Sector that allow them to detect, discover, and reach those Occult Orbs.

"Therefore, it's perfectly normal that you come across strong demons in the Occult Orbs."

Li Yao was surprised.

"Then what do we do if we meet experts of the demon clan in the Occult Orbs?"

Shangguan Ce smiled in response.

"We do what we must. Should we come across demons or demonic Cultivators, just kill them all! It is also the biggest battleground between the Blood Demon Sector and us. Whoever discovers more Occult Orbs and retrieves more secret treasures, secret arts and Cultivation systems will be more likely to evolve into a stronger civilization and win the war between the two Sectors!

"But it's a pity when it comes to the human beings from other worlds.

"Over the hundreds of years of exploration, we've met humans from other worlds a couple of times. But every single time, we failed to trust each other. Even if we were forced to cooperate under the outside pressure, we always went against each other after the secret treasures were dug out. The human civilizations of different worlds have never truly cooperated so far.

"It seems that not every human civilization values the ethics of human beings, nor do they want to enlighten the cosmos with the wisdom of human beings.

"Maybe, during the thousands of years of bloody battles after the Armageddon Rebellion, such human civilizations have developed a whole different set of survival strategies."

Li Yao thought for a moment and asked, "Does the quasi-membership card mean that I'm a candidate of Occult Orbs Fellowship now, and that I will become an eligible member to enter the Occult Orbs to retrieve secret treasures and inherit the ancient knowledge after I break into the Building Foundation Stage?"

Shangguan Ce said, "Correct.

"Sometimes, when the actual situation of an Occult Orb or the purpose of a mission dictates, Occult Orbs Fellowship will invite non-member Cultivators to the world fragment.

"That's because the natural laws of the Occult Orbs can be really weird. In some Occult Orbs, all the magical equipment will lose functionality because of the barriers on them.

"In such cases, we'll invite strong body practitioners to explore them bare-handed.

"In some other Occult Orbs, it requires music to crack the barriers enclosing them. This will be the time when culture-type Cultivators get useful.

"However, such non-member Cultivators are only allowed to enter certain kinds of Occult Orbs. For the sake of their own safety, we do not recommend them to explore more Occult Orbs.

"Only after one passes the tests of the 'Occult Orbs Card' and becomes an official member of Occult Orbs Fellowship can one cruise among stars freely and explore the myths of Occult Orbs!

"By the way, Occult Orbs Cards are themselves secret treasures excavated from Occult Orbs. I believe you've discovered the mysteries of it."

Li Yao's eyes were beaming in eagerness. He clenched his fists and said, "After I break into the Building Foundation Stage and unveil the mysteries regarding the Occult Orbs Card, I will be permitted to join Occult Orbs Fellowship?"

Shangguan nodded.

"Cracking the mysteries of the Occult Orbs Card is just a beginning. After you join Occult Orbs Fellowship, you'll be allowed to enter some low-level Occult Orbs where you can travel or Cultivate. Your Cultivation speed when you're inside of them will be more than ten times higher than outside!

"However, I need to remind you that even the Occult Orbs at the bottom level still entails all kinds of hazards that may have been overlooked or not fully resolved yet. You may encounter strong demons and demonic Cultivators at any time.

"So, it eventually depends on you, whether or not to enter the Occult Orbs."

Li Yao licked his lips. Flames seemed to be bursting out of his eyes and he muttered, "Ancient battlefields of the past 40,000 years? Cemeteries and research centers of legendary Cultivators? You bet I'm interested in visiting such places!"

Shangguan Ce squinted and put on a mysterious smile.

"If you really think so, please try harder to Cultivate in the coming year, Li Yao.

"Gauged in the standard of the Heaven's Origin Sector, you are an outstanding, or even exceptional, Cultivator of the younger generation.

"However, the essence of the Cultivators of the Heaven's Origin Sector lies not in the Heaven's Origin Sector, but in the Occult Orbs!

"Many geniuses who are naturally gifted in Cultivating have been sent to Occult Orbs Fellowship to educate.

"Their parents are often high-level Cultivators. They are born with unparalleled, powerful veins and nerves. Some of them even boast mutated spiritual roots that are entirely different from those of the ordinary Cultivators!

"Not only are they talented, they are also nurtured by all kinds of secret arts and treasures. When they are three to five years old, they'll be teleported to some special Occult Orbs and grow up in the challenging environment there.

"They are the super elites brought up by Cultivators of the Heaven's Origin Sector for the purpose of exploring more Occult Orbs, known as 'Children of the Occult Orbs'!

"When you are lucky, or unlucky, enough to encounter a Child of the Occult Orbs, you will know that the brilliant, extraordinary experts that you've met before are merely mediocre Cultivators."

His words fully triggered Li Yao's competitiveness.

"Super elites, Children of the Occult Orbs?

"Strong Cultivators as parents, with unparalleled veins and nerves?

"Nurtured by secret arts and treasures since young, growing up in special Occult Orbs?

"Interesting. Very interesting!"

Even though a lieutenant general of the federal army was standing in front of him, Li Yao did not suppress his defiance at all.

As a result, in Shangguan Ce's vision, a brutal vulture seemed to be taking shape in Li Yao's shadow, which opened its dark gold wings wreathed in black fog and sprang to the sky in a heaven-splitting shriek!

Shangguan Ce smiled.

He had met several Children of the Occult Orbs before.

Growing up in an enclosed environment, the geniuses were all haughty and eccentric. They dwelled in their own world and considered themselves to be the hopes of the Heaven's

Origin Sector. Cultivators of the outside world were nothing but jokes for them.

If this 'Vulture Li Yao' were to encounter a Child of the Occult Orbs one day, what kind of dazzling sparkles would burst out?

Chapter 337: Let's Do It!

Chapter 337: Let's Do It!

While he was thinking, Shangguan Ce added, "This is everything that I can tell you right now. Anyway, try harder to Cultivate, Li Yao.

"Threats of the Blood Demon Sector are drawing closer and closer. It is only a matter of time before the two worlds finally collide.

"Put in the words of the ancient Cultivation world, this is the time when dragons and tigers leave their caves and fight in winds and clouds.

"According the theories of the modern Cultivation world, a collision of two worlds will raise intimidating spiritual tides. Many Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures that have been buried underground for their entire lives will be exposed to the public. The Cultivation speed of Cultivators who are drowned in the surging spiritual tides will be hundreds of times higher than normal.

"In a time of tranquility, no matter how gifted and fortunate a Cultivator is, it requires dozens of years or even hundreds of years for him to break into the Building Foundation Stage and the Core Formation Stage.

"But in a magnificent era of iron and blood such as right now, with enough courage, one may be able to rise from an insignificant Refinement Stage Cultivator to be a world-shaking Core Formation Cultivator within ten years' time with any luck.

"The same logic applies for the human beings in the Heaven's Origin Sector as a whole.

"After five hundred years of rapid development, we've created a brilliant Cultivation civilization which nearly drained all the resources in the Heaven's Origin Sector. Still, we are confined to the lone island in the edge of the sea of stars, failing to establish a great route to the center of the cosmos.

"If it goes on like this, we may still be unable to find a destination for our civilization when all the spiritual energy in the Heaven's Origin Sector is exhausted. Our civilization will culminate in the brilliant peak and slowly decay in the barren pebble that we are standing on right now.

"The war with the Blood Demon Sector is our last chance.

"If we fail, there will be no need to say anything. Human beings of the Heaven's Origin Sector will end in doom after five hundred years of struggling.

"However, if we defeat the Blood Demon Sector, we'll be able to combine the resources of the two Sectors and, maybe, make a leap to the center of the cosmos. The Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars Flag will fly in the middle of the sea of stars!

"Cultivators are the battle sabers of the human civilization. The destiny of the human beings of the Heaven's Origin Sector lies in our hands.

"Whether we end up in the stomach of demon beasts or beyond billions of stars slashing our way forward depends on our endeavor!"

Hearing his words, Li Yao was breathing heavily. His throat felt completely dry.

Shangguan Ce finished his speech. He patted Li Yao's shoulder and walked out.

When he was almost out of the door, Li Yao suddenly asked, "General Shangguan, can you tell me if there is any secret art in the Occult Orbs that can restore Phantom Entities to ghosts with self-awareness?"

Shangguan Ce stopped. He pondered for a moment and shook his head,

"Not that I know of.

"However, the Occult Orbs that we've explore so far are only a tiny portion of all the Occult Orbs out there.

"There are many Occult Orbs that we detected but did not dare set foot in because of the perils they entailed.

"Some of such Occult Orbs are closely related to ghosts, souls, and the like.

"The sea of stars is boundless. Billions of civilizations have billions of different technologies and arts. Who knows how many secrets have been buried among them? Everything you want to know lies in the depths of the cosmos. Try your best to unveil them!"

As he was talking, Shangguan Ce walked out of the door.

Li Yao sighed gravely. He touched the Soul Condensing Pendant on his neck.

The Phantom Entities inside were emitting much stronger waves than before.

They were like the fireflies at dusk who were releasing greenish brightness in a bloody mist.

Every now and then, Li Yao could even perceive some of their thoughts, but moments like that were as brief as lightning.

The professors and senior brothers of the Refining Department were feeling proud of the success of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

However, it was not enough!

"Occult Orbs... I'm definitely going there!"

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao strode out of the room.

The moment he stepped out of the door, he met every one of the delegates of the Grand Desolate War Institution.

The meticulous, serious-looking professors and experts were all smiling with their mouths wide open like kids who had just won a football match.

"Professor!"

Li Yao grinned uncontrollably. He was going to hug Yuan Manqiu, when she and the rest of the project team crowded forward, lifted him up and threw him to the air.

"We won!"

"Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution has won!"

…

Three days later, the delegates of the Grand Desolate War Institution who had returned with honors held a victory party of the highest standard in the campus.

Although the military hadn't announced how many Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit would be purchased, according to sources, the sham battle had significantly improved the influence of the crystal suit advocates in the military.

In the meantime, warship advocates had also started studying how to attack aggressively in collaboration with crystal suits when a crystal suit legion was on board.

Every clue indicated that the number purchased would be more than expected. Maybe it would exceed 5,000 and even reach 10,000!

After the presentation at the Magical Equipment Exposition and the sham battle, the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution quickly rose to fame. All of the grassroots refiners got their day.

The share prices of the sects that had been sponsoring the Refining Department had witnessed rapid growth, too.

As a result, more sponsors joined in.

Twenty years of hard work finally produced the sweetest fruit in the world. Everyone dropped their manners and turned the victory party into a gathering of alcoholics. Even Yuan Manqiu was drinking the delicious wine which was made of Drunk God Vines. Her face was wet. There was no telling if it was wine or her tears.

It was not even 10 p.m. yet, and Li Yao was already wasted. Ding Lingdang snatched his collar and pulled him to her place.

"I never knew that you are so bad at drinking. Three cups of wine made of Drunk God Vines and you're drunk like this?" Ding Lingdang said caringly and frowned. However, Li Yao, whose eyes had been drowsy because of over-drinking a moment ago, was blinking soberly and looked at her in a smile.

Ding Lingdang's eyes bulged,

"You pretended to be drunk?"

Li Yao smiled.

"I'm indeed a little drunk. But not seriously. There have been enough celebrations with everyone over the past days. Right now, I want to celebrate with you alone."

Ding Lingdang's breath stopped for a moment. She suddenly felt her head was dizzy even though she didn't drink much.

Li Yao lay down with her smooth, flawless leg as his pillow comfortably and picked up her hand. Then he said, "Do you know the biggest significance of the Project Mystic Skeleton for me?"

Ding Lingdang was a little confused. She shook her head.

Li Yao said solemnly, "I know you've been feeling guilty that you hamstrung my growth, and that if it weren't for you, I would've chosen the Refining Department of Deep Sea University and grown into a successful refiner much more easily.

"But because I met you, I picked the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution.

"As it turned out, a terrible accident took place on the very first day of my college life. The entire Refining Department was almost ruined. My dream of becoming a refiner suffered a tremendous setback.

"You must've thought you were responsible for my misfortunes, right?

"But right now, Project Mystic Skeleton has succeeded. Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution regained its fame in the world of refiners. I've even defeated several guys of the Novem Stellae personally.

"For me, the biggest significance of all this is to rip apart the shadow in your heart and stop you from feeling guilty ever again.

"Two years ago, you made a right choice, and so did I!"

Ding Lingdang was dazed. Her eyes were filled with ripples, like a lake which had been stirred by spring breeze.

They stopped talking. Their eyes intertwined like four little snakes.

Quietness took over the place. It was a night with great moonlight.

Right now, actions indeed spoke louder than words.

Three minutes later…

"Wait!"

"Are you kidding me? What the hell are you doing?!"

"Stop your hand! And your mouth! Give me—two minutes!"

Li Yao almost gritted his teeth to pieces. He forced himself out of Ding Lingdang's octopus-like entanglement by inhuman determination, and, taking a deep breath to soothe himself, rushed out of the door as fast as he could.

Li Yao's speed was brought to maximum.

He had never run as fast before in his entire life.

Even when he encountered two demon generals in the Thunderous Sound Mountain, or when he was competing with twenty crystal suits in the Flying Crystal race, he had not been this fast.

After only 27 seconds, Li Yao stopped in front of the vending machine beside the gate of the neighborhood.

The vending machine of the Grand Desolate War Institution was clearly much more advanced than that in the underground ghost market of Floating Spear City. There was even a Puji Critter on the top of it as a shopping guide.

"What kind of civil magical equipment do you want, mister?"

The Puji Critter flew to the air and asked joyfully.

Li Yao didn't answer. He glanced through the closet and soon found the item that he was looking for.

However, there were so many kinds of it that his eyes were dazzled.

Seeing Li Yao's eyes which were exploding at any moment and the burning desire in his body, the Puji Critter analyzed him demand automatically.

"Why don't you try this one? This is the lightest, thinnest model in the entire federation that is refined out of the intestinal membrane of 'Nine-section Lantern Fish' with 49 working procedures.

"More importantly, it is luminous!

"As for this model, although it is refined out of natural rubber, it has more than ten tiny bladders in which almost a hundred super-tine rune arrays are stored. The rune arrays can trigger hot and cold feelings at the same time. Perfect sky-diving experience guaranteed.

"This is an ultra-solid model specially designed for Cultivators, especially battle-type Cultivators. It is ten times more stable and tensile than ordinary models. Even if you fail to control yourself at the critical moment and exert your full strength, it will still remain intact.

"Which model do you want, mister?"

Veins were bulging in Li Yao's forehead as he exclaimed, "Okay. I'll have one box of each!"

1 minute and 49 seconds later, he returned to Ding Lingdang's home.

His shoes had been grinded out of shape.

The invisible flames of hunger and irritation from Ding Lingdang seemed to be burning the entire house to the ground.

The aura of the two of them crashed in the middle of the air with cracking sounds.

Skulls of the demon beasts which had been placed on the desks, closets, and walls were all shivering.

Li Yao strode to the control rune arrays of the building and activated the muting rune array to maximum.

Whatever noises inside the room would not be heard by the outside world.

Li Yao seemed to have turned into a deadly animal. He was going to lunge at Ding Lingdang, when she made a leap forward and knocked him to the ground.

The two of them melded together like two clusters of magma.

"Let's do it!"

Chapter 338: Peak of Refinement Stage

Chapter 338: Peak of Refinement Stage

Half a year later, hundreds of meters below the sea level in the middle of the thick and heavy water of the Billowing Star Sea, Li Yao extended his arms with his eyes half-closed. He was not wearing any clothes, nor was he activating his spiritual energy. He was merely resisting the deadly pressure from the seawater with the iron muscles and bones built up by the Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining technique.

Suddenly—

His half-closed eyes opened widely. Brightness beamed out of his eyes through hundreds of meters of dark seawater to the sky like a laser.

Soaring Into Heaven in One Leap, his Soul Igniting Law, was fully triggered!

The pores all over Li Yao's body were opened up fully. A huge amount of spiritual energy was unleashed, which stirred up thousands of bubbles deep down in the sea.

3rd level of the Refinement Stage!

5th level of the Refinement Stage!

7th level of the Refinement Stage!

Li Yao's strength was rising crazily. His spiritual energy was condensed into an impregnable barrier around him, which pushed the seawater around him away one inch after another.

A lot of bubbles popped up in the surface of the sea which had been peaceful previously. Then they turned into continuous spoondrift, until they evolved into surging tides in the end.

One water pillar after another erupted and exploded into giant swirls, like the crazy devils who had opened their bloody mouth wide.

An undersea volcano seemed to be waking up in roars!

11th level of the Refinement Stage!

12th level of the Refinement Stage!

13th level of the Refinement Stage!

The spiritual energy floating around Li Yao had expanded to maximum, forming a round zone ten meters in diameter.

All the seawater inside the zone had been pushed out. There was not a single drop of liquid.

Li Yao's body was dried, too. His skin was whitened to the extent that it seemed to be made of jade. His messy long hair was emitting feeble brightness, which was spluttering in the air although there was no wind.

"BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!"

The undercurrent hit the shell of spiritual energy heavily. The round zone was full of hollows and bumps. For a moment, it collapsed inwardly; in the next moment, it held back the pressure and returned to normal, sometimes even expanding slightly.

Li Yao gritted his teeth. Every vein and every nerve inside his body were convulsing as if they were living things. Like dragons deep buried in his flesh and blood, they transmitted his strength into the deepest depths of his brain unstoppably.

A slowly-revolving swirl was formed in the middle of his two eyebrows.

"Hoooooo!"

Thunderous roars echoed in Li Yao's throat, as the swirl between his eyebrows suddenly protruded.

An inconceivably brutal force was exerted out of his body.

It was the most powerful spiritual energy beyond the 13th level of the Refinement Stage, as well as the ultimate spiritual gas that any Cultivator could shape.

Peak of the Refinement Stage!

On the surface of the sea, seawater was boiling. The tides solidified into all kinds of fierce beasts, before they crashed with each other, broke up, and returned to the sea.

Deep down in the sea, the round zone around Li Yao was shaped by him into a giant figure of more than ten meters tall, with a face, limbs, and everything. It looked identical to himself, with not even the tiniest detail being left out.

He seemed to have expanded several times in that moment.

"Huala! Huala! Huala!"

Following Li Yao's movements, the formidable giant of spiritual energy started boxing in the bottom of the Billowing Star Sea!

Although it was 'Thirteen Forces of War Beasts', the simplest martial art of all, it was still intimidating enough in the bottom of the Billowing Star Sea where undercurrents prevailed, as if it were going to cut the world fragment into two halves.

The longer he continued, the crazier he became. After a single punch, a wave of almost a thousand meters wide was blown outward and didn't disperse for a long time.

After finishing the Thirteen Forces of War Beasts, Li Yao felt that he couldn't be more comfortable. With a telepathic thought, the giant of spiritual energy suddenly collapsed and turned into a large bird, which triggered a tsunami under the sea with a flap of wings. Ten seconds later, it flew out of the surface of the seawater from the hundreds-of-meter deep bottom to the sky, followed by sea spray that was dozens of meters high.

Li Yao stood in the air hundreds of meters to the ground. Countless feelings were rolling over in his heart as he stared at the sea which didn't go quiet after a long time.

"Over the past six months, the school has offered me a lot of resources to help me Cultivate. I've bought a lot of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, strengthening drugs, and Cultivation appliances myself.

"After days and nights of fighting and training with Ding Lingdang gruesomely, I've finally reached the peak of the Refinement Stage with perfect control over spiritual gas now.

"Right now, I'll need a 'eureka' moment to understand the transformation of spiritual energy from the gas state to the liquid state. When the spiritual energy in my body is condensed to such an extent that spiritual liquid is flowing all over, I will successfully break into the Building Foundation Stage!"

Li Yao landed on the island in the middle of the Billowing Star Sea slowly.

The island had been rocky and rugged with all kinds of stones. It was the training ground for Li Yao and Ding Lingdang.

Two years ago, when Li Yao first entered the Billowing Star Sea, he had been terribly beaten by Ding Lingdang in this place.

After two years of hard training and countless bloody battles, all the stones on the island had been crushed and flattened.

The place which used to be full of rocks was now entirely empty, except for the hollows from punching and stomping and the spider-net-like cracks that were everywhere.

They were the traces of their fierce battles.

Li Yao at present was no longer the rookie that Ding Lingdang could finish in less than one minute.

With the understanding of spiritual gas at the peak of the Refinement Stage and the sturdy body built up by the Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining technique, he was not completely on the losing side even faced with such a combat maniac at the Building Foundation Stage like Ding Lingdang.

Over the past month, the battles between them often lasted more than ten minutes.

Then, they would start another battle.

In such battles, it often took more than thirty, sometimes even fifty, minutes before they were over.

But today Ding Lingdang was not present.

Recently, she often left the Grand Desolate War Institution mysteriously without telling anyone where she was going to.

When Li Yao asked her, she said that she would tell him everything after he entered the Building Foundation Stage.

The two of them were both crazy about training, which often required outdoor travelling and exploration. Therefore, Li Yao didn't ask much and simply trained by himself in the Billowing Star Sea.

It was a good opportunity for him to test his secret weapons and new tactics anyway.

With a telepathic thought, two shrieks rang far away.

From the corner of the island, two lasers, one black and the other silver, darted to him and spun around him like two unstoppable hurricanes.

The black laser was, of course, the flying sword Black Wing.

Right now, Li Yao was no longer the cash-strapped scavenger but, more or less, a rich guy. He spent a fortune on a huge amount of crystals and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures for Black Wing to eat.

Black Wing was not picky at all. It had an appetite for the most eccentric Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures as long as there was abundant spiritual energy in them.

Over the past half a year, the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures that it absorbed were even more than those consumed by Li Yao during his Cultivation.

Its speed and range of spiritual threads had significantly improved, too. It could perform all kinds of incredible movements when it was moving at supersonic speed.

However, the deficiency that it couldn't be used to attack remained. Li Yao studied for a long time trying to figure out why but to no avail. He still had to consider Black Wing as the best shield and the most trustworthy means of escape.

Attacks could be carried out by the silver laser.

The laser was, no less, 'Neltharion', the warship model of the Star Sea Imperium that he retrieved from his Cosmos Ring.

After Project Mystic Skeleton was completed, Li Yao finally had enough time to explore the mysteries of Neltharion.

Neltharion was not a toy for fun. It required complicated procedures to operate.

Li Yao had estimated that it was a piece of training magical equipment in the Star Sea Imperium that had been used to train warship captains for the imperial fleets.

Once he sank part of his soul into it, his consciousness would be split into two halves.

The half that maneuvered Neltharion was faced with an extremely sophisticated control menu.

In the beginning, Li Yao didn't know where to start at all. He could barely fly Neltharion for half a minute without crashing the wall or the ground.

Learning how to steer the warship model was also a soul burning process. Without the solid soul that had been cleansed by Ou Yezi, his spirit would've been drained after only several seconds after he entered it.

Following half a year of exploration, he was finally able to maneuver Neltharion in a range of no more than a hundred meters.

He had also discovered two great advantages of Neltharion.

Firstly, stealth.

Neltharion boasted special stealth ability. Once it was activated, Neltharion would vanish from this world, yet it could still observe this world from where it was in a way that he couldn't comprehend.

Li Yao had tested it in front of Ding Lingdang several times. Ding Lingdang had never noticed anything wrong, which was evident that such stealth was beyond the recognition of Building Foundation Stage Cultivators.

There were several Core Formation Stage Cultivators in the Grand Desolate War Institution. Li Yao had flown Neltharion to three hundred meters away from them, and they had no reactions to it whatsoever either.

But Li Yao did not dare to go any closer.

The observation in stealth meant that he had an invisible and indestructible crystal camera in a battleground.

It would be a huge advantage.

Secondly, collision.

Just like any crystal warship, Neltharion had a spiritual shield as defense, which was extremely steady.

Although it was not as fast as Black Wing, the damage of its collision was no less intimidating. With a telepathic thought, it could crash into the enemy from an unimaginable angle.

Together with its stealth ability, it would be an inconspicuous yet deadly weapon!

Black Wing and Neltharion, a black light and a silver one, with the former in charge of defense and the latter responsible for attack. Considering that he was already at the peak of the Refinement Stage, Li Yao was confident in fighting three to five demon generals at the same time when he met them!

His trump cards were more than those two.

"Shua!"

Li Yao exited the Billowing Star Sea and returned to Ding Lingdang's bedroom.

The teleportation array to the Billowing Star Sea had been modified. It was larger and more complicated, with an additional operation panel now.

Li Yao quickly typed on the operation panel. The light beam beside him blinked. The destination on it changed from 'Billow Star Sea' to 'Diminutive Dust Domain'.

The Diminutive Dust Domain was a world fragment he bought for himself and also where his personal 'Fiend Star Refining Workshop' was located.

Li Yao stood on the teleportation array again. Brilliant brightness spurted out. He was consumed and brought to the Diminutive Dust Domain.

It was a super-mini world fragment with a diameter of no more than one kilometer.

The natural laws here were identical to those of the Heaven's Origin Sector, except for the large swirl in the blue sky which would absorb all the dust and particles in the air, so that the place would be turned into a natural cleanroom.

It was a perfect place for refining. Li Yao had built it into a quaint refining workshop in the traditional ways of the Hundred Smelting Clan.

Chapter 339: First-degree State of War

Chapter 339: First-degree State of War

In the middle of the refining workshop was an advanced refining furnace, which was 'Vulcan III', the latest model that Empyrean Terminus Sect developed one year ago.

The fact this particular model had been named after the god of fire was evident enough of Empyrean Terminus Sect's ambition and confidence.

Around Vulcan III, the iron mat, heater, and polishing pool were distributed according to the traditional styles of Hundred Smelting Clan, together with a few other refining furnaces that Li Yao crafted by himself using the ancient techniques.

At first, he would refine the components with the modern technology. Then, he would polish and furbish them delicately with the secret arts of Hundred Smelting Clan. This was the unique refining style of Li Yao.

In such a way, Li Yao upgraded the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit from head to toe.

As a MP crystal suit model for the federal army on a large scale, the performance of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was acceptable.

However, as his personal crystal suit which he would wear for life-and-death combats and maybe to the Occult Orbs one day, it was far from satisfactory.

As his own strength improved, especially after he reached the peak of the Refinement Stage, Li Yao had always felt that he couldn't enjoy him enough when he was wearing the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

It sort of felt like a tall, muscular man who was waving a bulrush as his weapon. Not only was he unable to exert his full strength, he was also afraid that the bulrush might break up at any moment.

Therefore, over the past half year, Li Yao had purchased a lot of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and modified the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit crazily.

After his modifications, other than the classical framework design which had been retained, all the parts of the crystal suit had undergone tremendous changes.

The key components had been replaced by Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, which had been further strengthened by many secret arts including 'Dragon Scales Tossing', 'Seven Levels of Heaven', 'Invisible Seals', etc.

The crystal reactor had been changed to the most advanced model refined out of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, too. But the valve design was kept. When necessary, the spiritual energy inside the crystal reactor could be used to launch a critical attack easily.

At first glance, the new Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit seemed no different from ordinary ones. If anything, it seemed more shabby and straightforward, with an air that it could crush anything in its way with nothing but its speed and steadiness.

But in fact, the combat ability of the new Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had been improved by multiple times!

Beside the new Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit stood a red crystal suit that looked like burning fire.

It was 'Crimson Phantom', a crystal suit specially designed for body practitioners. After Li Yao bought it, he had been modifying the crystal suit intensively according to Ding Lingdang's body shape and combat habits.

Body practitioners had different demands for crystal suits compared to common Cultivators.

They usually did not like too many weapons or pieces of magical equipment as accessories on their crystal suits. Instead, they were more interested in the enhancement of crystal suits to improve their sensitivity to the outside world.

Most importantly, since body practitioners often had powerful spiritual tattoos on their body, the crystal suits they wore could not hinder the flow of their spiritual tattoos. It would be best if the crystal suits could magnify the spiritual tattoos, so that the combat ability of the body practitioner would be significantly improved.

This 'Crimson Phantom' was one of the best crystal suits for body practitioners. It had won several important prizes in crystal suit design matches. Besides, a lot of fiery crystals were embedded into the crystal suit, which was perfect for a body practitioner whose spiritual root was of the fire attribute such as Ding Lingdang.

With Li Yao's current knowledge, it was hardly possible for him to refine a crystal suit from scratch.

However, Li Yao was already an experienced expert in upgrading an existing crystal suit with his insane imagination.

The purchase of Diminutive Dust Domain, Crimson Phantom Battlesuit, and the huge amount of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, as well as the modification fees that he had spent on the two crystal suits with absolutely no consideration of budgets whatsoever, had cost him a great fortune.

Although Li Yao had made quite a decent amount of money through Project Mystic Skeleton and the Demon Beast Detector, he had used up all the money and even borrowed a large sum of loans from the bank. He was a cash-strapped poor man again now.

However, compared with ordinary people, money was not that important for Cultivators, who always valued the improvement of their strength more than anything else.

Besides, in the past half a year, the news was more and more troubling. An unprecedented storm seemed to be brewing.

Over the past six months, beast tides had been breaking out much more frequently. Small-scale beast tides were taking place every day. The federal army had been busy as bees putting out fire here and there.

More and more high-level demons were joining the beast tides, too. Every three to five days, strong demons at the level of demon king would trespass into the Heaven's Origin Sector through wormholes and sabotage the human towns and cities.

Even the regular demon army had come several times.

The regular demon army was similar to human beings in appearance with equally high intelligence. Their devil weapons were as powerful as the magical equipment of human beings. They would charge and retreat according to commands. As well-trained soldiers, they boasted a far stronger fighting will than ordinary demon beasts did.

Even when they were besieged by the federal army and Cultivators, they were still able to handle the situation. When they were retreating, they always left a series of tricky traps that often lead to major casualties.

Some small-scale devil warships were teleported to the Heaven's Origin Sector through wormholes and reinforced the demons on the ground with fire support.

They'd surprised the federal army many times, who had been taught a hard lesson by them.

The Grand Desolate Plateau had become a battlefield that was full of perils.

Even the most inert inland citizens were aware that a bloodier war than any of the past 500 years was going to break out in no time.

In response to the new situation, both the federal government and the Cultivators were taking actions promptly. Top secret projects were revealed to the public one after another, unveiling powerful magical equipment that had never been seen before, in order to show the muscles of the Heaven's Origin Sector and pacify the people.

News about Occult Orbs Fellowship was one of them.

Before, the citizens had heard a thing or two about the fact that the federal government and the Cultivators were exploring world fragments, but they didn't know the details or the progress.

This time, not only did Occult Orbs Fellowship show a lot of secret treasures and arts from the world fragments to the public, it also revealed a lot of video clips of the bases of the federation in the Occult Orbs and the large-scale exploitation on them.

Several strong Cultivators that had been Cultivating in the Occult Orbs for their entire lives returned to the Heaven's Origin Sector. After they challenged the rampant beast tides with their extraordinary performances, they immediately became center of public attention and were considered as new heroes of the federation.

In such a magnificent era when big shots emerged like rising storms, whatever influence Li Yao had had half a year ago was soon drowned under the surging tides.

Li Yao did not care about it very much.

His life was simple. Training, refining, and fighting with Ding Lingdang.

He had also gone to the military and several sects which had purchased Mystic Skeleton Battlesuits to provide technical support as a technician of the Grand Desolate War Institution.

Today, the two fully upgraded crystal suits were finally completed.

"When is Ding Lingdang coming back? I cannot even reach out to her via spiritual crane messenger. Did she go to the depths of the Dark Desolate Domain?" Li Yao muttered to himself, as he carved the mark of 'Fiend Star' carefully on the bottom of the feet of the Crimson Phantom Battlesuit.

Before, Ding Lingdang had always told him her destination when she was going to the Dark Desolate Domain.

But this time, she was quite mysterious. She told him that she was going to bring him a present when she came back, but there had been no message of her whatsoever for more than half a month. He could not help but start wondering what she was doing.

When she was back, she would be happy to see the Crimson Phantom Battlesuit tailor-made for her, wouldn't she?

Li Yao was thinking to himself joyfully, when his mini crystal processor started buzzing crazily.

It was not a message from spiritual crane messenger, but the emergency ringtone of the Grand Desolate War Institution.

Judging from the pitch and frequency, it was an alarm at the top level.

Something important must've happened.

Li Yao squinted. He waved his hand and released two mystic colors, which scanned the two crystal suits and absorbed them into his Cosmos Ring.

Since Yuan Qi, known as 'Invisible Bug', cracked the two barriers on his Cosmos Ring for him, the space inside had been greatly expanded. Not only was there enough space to store the two crystal suits, more supplies and additional magical equipment were able to be kept inside, too.

It was indeed convenient. However, the Cosmos Ring was a money-burning machine, which required a lot of crystals to nurture and polish every day. The spiritual energy consumption when it was triggered every time had been a major headache for Li Yao, too.

Thankfully, Li Yao had stable revenues every month through the Demon Beast Detector, otherwise the Cosmos Ring would've been barely affordable for him.

'Cultivation requires investment.

'After I step into the Building Foundation Stage, I'll need stronger magical equipment, which will not only be much more expensive, but also consumes astronomical spiritual energy when it is triggered or maintained.

'The Demon Beast Detector alone will not be enough to cover my expense when I'm in the Building Foundation Stage. I'll need to find more sources of income.'

While he was thinking, Li Yao left the Diminutive Dust Domain in a hurry.

The emergency ringtones were echoing nonstop in the outside world.

Many high-level Cultivators lived in the neighborhood that Ding Lingdang and he lived. All kinds of sword aura were rising up to the sky, as countless professors and experts rushed to the square in front of the main teaching building on their flying swords.

Li Yao whistled and summoned Black Wing. Adjusting it to a subsonic speed, Li Yao stepped on it and followed the other flying swords.

Many staff and student had already gathered in the square. Li Yao glanced around and found Yuan Manqiu and some other people of the Refining Department. He immediately landed with a telepathic thought and joined them.

Li Yao asked, "Professor, what's happening? Why has the highest alarm been issued?"

Yuan Manqiu's face was solemn, but there was a hint of frenzy deep inside her eyes. She said, "Beast tide outbreak. Blood Demon Sector has invaded!"

Li Yao was dazed for a moment.

"Isn't a beast tide breaking out every day? What's strange about that?"

Yuan Manqiu shook her head.

"This time, it is different. Seven towns, mining centers, and military bases in the north had beast tide outbreaks at the same time and were mired into chaotic battles simultaneously.

"Besides, a demon king is commanding each of the beast tides. Even traces of demon emperors have been found in several battlegrounds!"

Li Yao gasped.

"Demon emperors?"

Strong demons such as demon emperors were equivalent to the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the human world. They were the top warriors of the Blood Demon Sector, just as the latter were the elites of the Heaven's Origin Sector.

Now that demon emperors had been sent out, these beast tides were definitely the biggest threat over the past hundred years.

Yuan Manqiu nodded her head, as she said seriously, "Just now, the three parliaments have passed a bill unanimously. The Star Glory Federation has entered the first-degree state of war. We are now at war!"

Li Yao blinked his eyes. His face was as solemn as Yuan Manqiu's but with much more eagerness.

The day had finally come.

Parliamentarism was the political system of the Star Glory Federation. There were three parliaments, namely Parliament of Cultivators, Parliament of Commons, and Parliament of Warriors, made up by representatives of Cultivators, ordinary people, and the military respectively.

The three parliaments supported the federation like a tripod.

First-degree state of war was the highest warring level in the federation. Since the Eastern Demon Empire was annihilated, the federation had never entered such a state.

In the first-degree state of war, Cultivators, ordinary people, and the military would unite as one and transform the Star Glory Federation into a killing machine, releasing the most brutal force of the human civilization!

Chapter 340: Against the Current

Chapter 340: Against the Current

The enormous square was crowded with people. All the teachers and students had assembled here.

Many of them had learnt that the federation had enter the first-degree state of war. Heated discussions were everywhere on the battleground.

A large giant beam unfolded, slowly enclosing the square, which started playing video clips from the frontline.

The flourishing and lively cities were now enveloped in smoke and explosions.

Black fog consumed the settlements, rising up like ferocious demon beasts and tearing the sky apart.

The 3D pictures made everyone feel as if they were at the scenes.

The noisy square soon went quiet. The only sound was the undying explosions inside the light beam which were thundering above their heads.

Everyone's teeth had pierced through their lips without them knowing.

Then, the light beam switched to the scenes inside the congress of the Star Glory Federation.

Representatives of Cultivators, ordinary people, and the military had passed a bill declaring that the Star Glory Federation would enter the first-degree state of war again after 500 years, with 722 votes in favor, 114 votes against, and 163 abstentions.

Then, Xu Haorao, the Speaker of Parliaments, stepped up and announced the declaration.

As a Cultivator, Li Yao had learnt more information on the Nexus with his telepathic thought.

The simultaneous beast tide outbreaks in seven towns in the north of the Grand Desolate Plateau were not a coincidence, but a long-prepared scheme of the Blood Demon Sector.

The seven cities, towns, and mining centers were located on the same mother lode which boasted abundant crystals.

The mother lode was also one of the largest mother lodes with the highest reserves in the Star Glory Federation.

Once they occupied the mother lode, not only would the resource collection of the Star Glory Federation be disrupted, they could also made best use of the tremendous crystals inside the mother lode to build up larger wormholes through which devil warships and super-large demon beasts would be able to invade the Heaven's Origin Sector.

The first-degree state of war differed with the peacetime in that battle credits mattered more than anything else.

Or rather, in the first-degree state of war, battle credits were everything!

By fighting bravely and accumulate more battle credits, one could redeem them through the federal government or the

Nexus for magical equipment, martial arts, medications or even exploitation rights of mother lodes.

The military purchase, post-war reconstruction, and even the loans of the banks would be determined with consideration of the applicant's battle credits.

Since the Star Glory Federation had always valued valiancy and worshipped heroes, the sects and individuals who had extraordinary battle credits were popular everywhere. They could easily get the support and resources they needed.

In comparison, if some sects or individuals hid in their bases without getting any battle credits while other Cultivators were fighting bravely in the frontline, they would find it hard to hang around in society anymore. All their partners and clients would terminate their cooperation with them. They would also be lambasted by the media. One day, their disciples might feel too embarrassed to stay any longer and leave them for somewhere else.

This time, the three parliaments even came up with another incentive.

The battle credits could be redeemed for the resources and land in the Dark Desolate Domain and the Blood Demon Sector!

After five hundred years of profound construction, most of the land and resources of the Heaven's Origin Sector had been claimed, except for the depths of the Grand Desolate Plateau and the Dark Desolate Domain which were still empty areas. The social strata had been becoming less flexible, too.

Ordinary people may find such an environment peaceful, comfortable, and enjoyable.

But for young, ambitious Cultivators without well-respected background, the reality was often terribly unsatisfactory.

Now was the time to change their fate!

Once the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector melded into one stable world, it would mean that there would be double the land and resources available.

At that time, the Dark Desolate Domain would no longer be torn by the two worlds, which meant that it would become an arable, habitable place.

After the demon clan was beaten, the land and resources would be unowned. They could be built into resorts, bases, or even personal towns.

And the property rights of them would have to be redeemed by battle credits.

Naturally, the encouragement of such an incentive was enormous.

Possessing a land of a thousand square kilometers where mother lodes of crystals prevailed and building up one's own town there. Even Li Yao found the idea so tempting that his blood was boiling.

With Ou Yezi's memories, he knew Ou Yezi's entire life. How could he not hope to establish his own sect to promote the ancient refining methodologies and be a star of the era with everyone's admiration?

But to achieve that, astronomical resources were required.

A crystal suit could be refined single-handedly, but it was impossible him to become a master refiner who could cruise in the sea of stars and refine magical equipment the size of a planet without the support of powerful sects behind him.

As for the accounting of battle credits…

Li Yao devoured a huge amount of information with his telepathic thoughts.

He discovered that an instant interactive war mission system had been added to the Nexus.

It was an advanced system supported by countless admin-type Cultivators, which fixed once and for all the issues as to how Cultivators should be engaged in large-scale wars.

It had always been a tricky problem for Cultivators who had tremendous combat ability as individuals to participate in a war.

Most Cultivators found the federal army, which was full of military rules and entirely devoid of freedom, unacceptable.

Enlisting all Cultivators into the army and training them in the military standard was an approach that had proved to be a dead end back in the time of the Red Dragon Legion.

As a result, there were not many high-level Cultivators in the military.

Most Cultivators still preferred to join a sect, or simply became an unaffiliated Cultivator, because they would be bound by fewer restrictions and they could Cultivate or fight the way they wanted.

However, for such Cultivators who were not neatly organized, they could solve problems with their formidable combat ability when the scale of the battle was small, say, a battle of a few hundred people.

When the war grew in size, the free Cultivators would not be able to collaborate with each other effectively in battles when thousands of, or even millions of, people were involved. They often collapsed in quarrels before they were engaged with the enemy.

Hence, the war mission system was established.

It was based on the collective work of countless admin-type Cultivators and the most advanced super-large crystal processors of the Star Glory Federation, which would analyze the purpose of a battle with its unparalleled computational ability and break down the battle from top to bottom into step-by-step strategical missions with clear targets.

All the files of Cultivators would be analyzed by the crystal processor, so that every Cultivator would be recommended with one mission that was most suitable and had highest success rate for them through the Nexus.

For example, a culture-type Cultivator would be assigned to boost the morale of the soldiers in the frontline, or to soothe the patients in a field hospital.

A body practitioner who was adept at close combat would be assigned to battlegrounds of limited space where their specialties would be most useful.

Every Cultivator was allowed to update their files in the mission system to improve the matching ratio of missions.

Every mission had a reward of some battle credits, which would be balanced to the mission-taker after the mission was completed.

Cultivators could trade the battle credits for other things, or simply deposit them in order to redeem the land and resources of the Blood Demon Sector when the war was over.

Through such an approach, the free Cultivators would be able to be organized and fight like a regular army.

There was only one rule.

Cultivators could reject the missions recommended to them. They were also allowed to pick up missions that were not recommended to them. But they had to finish a mission to the best of their ability once they accepted one.

Deserters would be sent to the Court of Cultivators and despised by all Cultivators.

In the light beam, Xu Haoran's vehement war declaration had almost come to an end.

He pressed the desk hard with his two hands. He was talking slowly with a low voice, which did not sound passionate at all, but touching and ineffaceable.

"If the Blood Demon Sector wants a war, then we'll give them one. Until the skull of the last demon beast is stomped into the ground by the boots of our soldiers, the war will not be over!"

"Speaker Xu Haoran's only son joined the army last year and was sent to the northernmost defense line as an ordinary officer," Yuan Manqiu said softly.

"Their station is beside Riverstone City. It was the first town to be swallowed by the beast tides."

…

Half a day later, a crystal airship painted with 'Fist of Fury', the emblem of the Grand Desolate War Institution, was on its way to the battleground in the north of the Grand Desolate Plateau.

This was the first batch of warriors that the Grand Desolate War Institution sent for the war. They were strong Cultivators at the high level of the Refinement Stage or even higher. Most of them were teachers of the Combat Department and the Medical Department. Li Yao was one of the few students on the crystal airship.

The crystal airship was rushing in the sky. Its power rune arrays had been fully activated, to the extent that the shell of the airship was shivering.

After half a day's journey, Li Yao finally saw a burning city on the horizon.

It was their destination, Red Lotus City.

Right now, Red Lotus City had truly turned into a blossoming bloody lotus.

The intense smoke, blending with the blood-dyed sunset, seemed to be becoming a giant beast whose feet were on the ground while its head was craning to the sky with its bloody mouth wide open, roaring to the crystal warship silently. It was indeed an awe-inspiring demonstration of horror.

Although they were still dozens of kilometers away, Li Yao was already able to clearly sense the pricking of his skin and the pungent scent of sulfur.

The ever-expanding smoke had covered all the fifty square kilometers nearby in vague dust-grey.

Countless pieces of ash were flying in the air, like billions of dancing black butterflies.

The doomsday-like scenes rendered everyone speechless.

On the ground, almost a hundred black lines were crawling slowly to the south.

They were the refugees of Red Lotus City.

Most of them had been blackened by the smoke. Their clothes were ragged, their bodies covered in bruises. Dragging one another and holding their last belongings in their arms tight, they were retreating to the south in a trance under the protection of the federal army.

Against the crowds who were marching south, one crystal airship after another, carrying countless Cultivators, were on their way to the center of doom with colorful exhaust flames.

The world seemed to have turned monochrome, which made the exhaust flames from the crystal airship all the more dazzling.

Many citizens and soldiers who were walking with their heads down noticed the crystal warships coming from the south nonstop.

They soon learnt that those who were charging at the fire against the current of crowds were Cultivators.

Cultivators would help them take back their homes and avenge their deceased family and friends.

A silent horn seemed to be blown up in the hot air. Everyone stopped walking.

Amidst the pieces of dancing ash, in the mud that was sometimes deep and sometimes shallow, people who had just lost their home gritted their teeth and held back their tears, while they lifted their fists up and waved at the crystal airships in the sky with their full strength.

They were paying homage to the Cultivators in their own way.

The soldiers that were protecting the refugees were refreshed, too. They stood straight and saluted to the burning sky solemnly.

Chapter 341: Mission

Chapter 341: Mission

Leaning against the window, Li Yao gazed at the scenes on the ground. An indescribable feeling suddenly surfaced in his heart.

Since they were arriving at Red Lotus City and the spiritual shield and plate armor of the crystal airship were too weak for the demon clan's surface-to-ground attacks, the crystal airship was flying at a very low altitude in order to avoid the detection of the demons.

The eyesight of the Cultivators was far better than that of the ordinary people. Li Yao was able to clearly see old men, women, children, wounded soldiers, nurses, and teachers who were leading a bunch of kids like a hen which was protecting the chicken.

Everyone's blackened faces, ragged clothes, and scaring injuries were as heartbreaking as his own in his eyes.

There was a little girl in the crowds whose right arm was covered in thick bandages while her left arm was holding a burnt teddy bear tightly.

Mimicking the grown-ups around her, she bulged his eyes as wide as she could, her cheeks puffed up. The teddy bear was lifted up and waved high and hard.

Li Yao's eyes narrowed.

Thousands of thoughts were congregating and condensing inside his brain, turning into something entirely fresh and extremely firm.

The little girl's figure gradually shrank. She melted into the long, black line and was indistinguishable anymore.

But in every line, a redness that appeared once in a while still glittered in his eyes stubbornly.

It was Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars, the national flag of Star Glory Federation, which was flying in the surging hot waves.

Li Yao retreated his eyesight and looked at his hands.

Two spiritual fires took shape in his palms and were clenched deep inside his fists, to the extent that they were almost frozen.

He had never felt luckier that he was a Cultivator, and that he hadn't wasted a single second in the past three years but dedicated all the time he had to fighting, training and refining, for nothing else other than to break his own limits with all he could and arrive at his own peak.

During countless exhausting, sometimes miserable, nights, he had many a time questioned himself about the significance of Cultivation and why he was torturing himself so crazily.

Before he became a Cultivator, the reason was simple.

For fortune, for fame, for the fondness of thousands of people, for the fulfillment of his adopted father's last wish to become the strongest refiner in the world.

However, after he did become a Cultivator and somewhat a celebrity with more wealth than any ordinary person could earn for their entire life, he was lost again.

Maybe, the ultimate significance of Cultivators had to be sought out in the depths of the infinite sea of stars.

But, at least at this moment, as a strong Cultivator, his fists could punch the head of a demon beast into pieces easily.

This was enough for now.

Inside Li Yao's brain, his new perception turned into transparent crystals, which exploded into immeasurable black holes unleashing intense desires to all his body parts.

Peak of the Refinement Stage was still too weak!

Stronger, stronger. He wanted nothing other than to be a stronger Cultivator with even more dazzling brilliance.

His body was hotter and hotter. The spiritual gas inside his body parts was absorbed by the black hole inside his brain and gradually compressed into an utterly different energy form.

It was the sign of the Building Foundation Stage.

Building Foundation, building the foundation to embark on the journey to the middle of the sea of stars.

Only after one stepped into the Building Foundation Stage could one expect to open the mysterious gate to the starry sky.

Li Yao had a vague feeling that he would arrived at the Building Foundation Stage perfectly in the battle to come.

"Come on!"

Li Yao mumbled to himself, "My hard training over the past half a year shall be tested by the flesh and blood of the demon beasts in the seven fallen cities, before I march into the Building Foundation Stage!

"After I entered the Building Foundation Stage, I will have the opportunity to explore secret treasures and arts on the Occult Orbs and prepare myself for the sea of stars with a faster Cultivation speed!

"Even if I'm to be sacrificed, I shall leave the name 'Vulture Li Yao' in the sky of both the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector!"

Right now, the crystal airship of the Grand Desolate War Institution was less than 15 kilometers from Red Lotus City.

Three other crystal airships were coming close, which belonged to three combat sects of the Grand Desolate Plateau.

Dozens of crystal airships were following closely behind them, with even more coming from the horizon.

In what seemed to be a response for the respect that the ordinary people and the soldiers paid for them, the four crystal airships in the lead, after a shiver, turned their spiritual shields to maximum. The emblems on the shell of the crystal warships gradually vanished.

Fist of Fury, the emblem of the Grand Desolate War Institution, disappeared, and so did the green fire emblem of Emerald Sun Hall, the crystal heart emblem of Spirit Resonance Union, and the triple-headed dragon emblem of Mystic Dragon Sect.

Half a second later, in the same place where the emblems vanished, a crimson color deep like blood spread out and formed a new pattern.

The Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars Flag!

In the sky, on the ground, countless Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars Flags fluttered in the wind.

At this moment, Grand Desolate War Institution, Emerald Sun Hall, Spirit Resonance Union and Mystic Dragon Sect were no more.

All of the people on board had but one identity right now.

Cultivators of the Heaven's Origin Sector!

"We will be entering the battleground in five minutes!"

In the cabin, Xiong Baili, principal of the Grand Desolate War Institution, roared in a voice of metal, rock, and blood.

Xiong Baili had suffered serious injuries in the early years of his Cultivation and changed from a battle-type Cultivator to an admin-type Cultivator. He was not obliged to come to the frontlines in person.

But he came anyway.

Red Lotus City was within ten kilometers.

The full picture of the city was very clear now.

The entire Red Lotus City was enveloped in a large cluster of dense black fog. One mushroom cloud after another was expanding crazily like a malformed monster which was growing at an inconceivable speed.

The black fog was partly because of the explosions, and partly because the demon clan had released it on purpose. It could jam and even block the Spiritual Nexus of human beings, as well as the detection of Nine-by-Nine Mystic Rays, so that the long-range magical equipment would not be able to lock onto targets.

In the middle of the black fog, many ivory, bright pillars were shooting into the sky and piercing through the clouds. A splendid temple seemed to have been built between Heaven and Earth.

Xiong Baili bellowed, "The bright pillars are the teleportation arrays that the demon clan constructed with the abundant spiritual energy in the mother lode under the ground.

"The space barrier between the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector was already full of holes and on the verge of breakdown. It tends to be ripped open by the bright pillars when they focus on one point, and if so, more wormholes will come into being, through which more demons will crowd into the Heaven's Origin Sector.

"The current situation is like a beach landing in ancient wars.

"The purpose of the demon clan to occupy the seven cities and build them into beachheads, while they create more wormholes and let in more reinforcements of the demon clan.

"Our purpose is simple, then. Kill every demon within our sight. But more importantly, we need to destroy their teleportation arrays!

"Behind us, it's our family, compatriots, and home.

"Before us, it's the vast Dark Desolate Domain and Blood Demon Sector waiting to be conquered!

"Let's fight and show our enemies the true strength of the Cultivators of the Heaven's Origin Sector!"

"Beep!"

Li Yao turned on his mini crystal processor, logged in the Nexus, and opened the war mission system.

Some of his files were already saved in the system, including his performance in the Devil Flood Dragon Island, Verdant Tarn City, the Thunderbolt Cup Competition, and the Flying Crystal race in the Magical Equipment Exposition.

As for the sham battle of the military bidding meeting, it had not been input into the system because it was classified as 'confidential'.

The war mission system summarized Li Yao as followed, "Li Yao, junior year student of the Grand Desolate War Institution, nicknamed as 'Vulture', a hybrid-type Cultivator who is talented both in battle and creation, one of the youngest Cultivators at the high level of the Refinement Stage in the Star Glory Federation, and one of the youngest registered refiners in the Star Glory Federation.

"Adept at maintenance and modification of magical equipment, especially the refinement and usage of explosive magical equipment.

"Adept at wearing and modifying crystal suits.

"Adept at attacking and ambushing in complicated territories single-handedly. Personal combat ability exceptional. Collaboration and command skills inadequate.

'Infiltration', 'Assassination', 'Maintenance', and 'Sabotage' missions recommended."

Li Yao hesitated, before he gritted his teeth and typed something on his mini crystal processor.

A moment later, a reminder popped up.

"Revised!

"Li Yao of the Grand Desolate War Institution has arrived at the peak of the Refinement Stage and thus becomes one of the youngest Cultivators at the peak of the Refinement Stage in the Star Glory Federation!"

The strength of the applicant would determine the missions that were recommended to them.

Missions for the Cultivators at the peak of the Refinement Stage were definitely much more dangerous than those for the Cultivators at the high level of the Refinement Stage.

But Li Yao didn't care. If anything, he desired more danger.

His battle saber was moaning inside the sheath; it couldn't wait any longer to drink the enemies' blood.

…

In a heavily guarded military camp a hundred kilometers from Red Lotus City.

More than ten magnificent crystal warships were floating in the air. Defense rune arrays and large-scale flying sword zones were deployed everywhere around the military camp.

Other than them, the most eye-catching buildings here were the enhanced Spiritual Beacons circling the military camp.

Spiritual Beacons were the core of the Spiritual Nexus.

This was the command center for the battle of Red Lotus City.

Many advanced large crystal processors surrounded a spacious room, in the middle of which 521 admin-type Cultivators were seated. Countless crystal wires extended from the crystal processors all the way to the specially-designed crystal helmets on their heads.

The computational ability of the 521 admin-type Cultivators and the 37 super crystal processors was fully activated.

The enhanced Spiritual Beacons, like tentacles, transmitted spiritual waves into the black fog doggedly to ensure that every corner of Red Lotus City was covered in the network.

The soldiers, Cultivators, and beast puppets would then send the real-time battle images to the command center through the Spiritual Nexus with the help of the crystal cameras that they carried.

Based on the images taken by thousands of crystal cameras, as well as the reports that countless soldiers and Cultivators submitted via the communication channel, the command center would draw the details into a big picture and draft a strategic goal, before breaking the strategic goal down into tactical operations.

Then, it would send the tactical operations to the most suitable soldiers or Cultivators nearby for them to carry out.

It was basically how the war mission system worked.

Soon, Li Yao received three missions recommended by the system, which were the most suitable ones for him according to the five hundred admin-type Cultivators in the command center in light of the latest progress of the battle.

In the Western District of Red Lotus City, a Taiyi Lightning Railgun that had been deployed in the artillery positions was serious damaged in the furious combat.

Li Yao's mission was to break into the Western District, repair the Taiyi Lightning Railgun, and destroy a teleportation array of the demon clan one block away!

Chapter 342: Assault

Chapter 342: Assault

"Three kilometers to the battleground!"

The previously dull explosions were ear-splitting now. The continuous hot waves and blasts seemed to have put the crystal airship on a raging sea.

All the Cultivators started doing final checks on their magical equipment. Li Yao, as well as the professors who were expert Exos, walked to the landing platform at the rear of the crystal airship.

"Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!"

Dozens of bright balls ejected from the tail of the crystal warship, before they let out even more dazzling brilliance and pierced into the black fog like shining swords.

The black fog seemed to be made of billions of weird creatures the size of mosquitoes, which swarmed around Li Yao staggeringly.

Li Yao felt that he was in the stomach of a giant demon beast and that he was going to suffocate at any moment.

"Beep! Beep!"

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit sent out warnings. The demonic energy here was intense, which could corrupt the crystal suit as well the human body and incur serious damage.

Li Yao sniffed. His spiritual gas surged out of his body and formed a thin protective layer on the surface of the plate armor which pushed away the demonic fog.

Then, with a spurt of spiritual energy, Li Yao rushed forward!

While his crystal processor was still in the coverage of the Spiritual Nexus, he quickly downloaded the relative information about his mission.

The holograms of the buildings in the Western District of Red Lotus City both on and under the ground, the 3D structure graphs of the buildings, structure graph of the Taiyi Lightning Railgun, and the flow chart of its spiritual energy…

A huge amount of information was downloaded to his crystal processor, before he absorbed and digested the new knowledge by telepathic thought transmission.

"Poo! Poo! Poo!"

In the dense fog, from the ground dozens of meters below him, three waves of thick, green liquids darted at Li Yao's chest.

They were the surface-to-air attacks of the demons on the ground who had sensed the spiritual waves in the sky.

Li Yao didn't speed up, nor did he strengthen his spiritual shield. Brilliant flames of light burst out from the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, which intertwined and formed a net of splendor.

In the meantime, he had revolved dozens of times in the sky and avoided the three waves of corrosive acids at a close distance.

Li Yao blinked his eyes. The crystal cameras on his helmet had located the enemy by the trajectory of the three waves of acids.

He extended his right arm and opened his palm, in which a hexagonal crystal suddenly glittered, before it was hurled at the enemy's position in a streak of brightness.

The spiritual energy launching the attack did not come from the crystal reactor. It was a critical strike of spiritual gas by condensing the spiritual gas to the limit and spurting it out at a speed three times higher than that of sound with the enhancement and acceleration of the rune arrays inside crystal.

Although the streak of brightness seemed as wide as a bowl, the spiritual gas in the middle was only the size of a needle. The halo around the spiritual gas was actually a result of the particles in the air being vibrated and excited by the kinetic energy.

It was not hard to fathom the power of the turbulent spiritual gas when it was compressed to the size of a needle and spurted out at three times the speed of sound.

That was the true strength of a Cultivator at the peak of the Refinement Stage!

Intensive explosions occurred in the fog, followed by a dying scream.

Yet, Li Yao had no time to check the result of his attack, as if he had done nothing but swat a fly. He focused his attention and moved forward.

The closer he got to the downtown, the fiercer the firepower he met became.

Demon beasts were killing machines born for war.

In the 30,000 years of conquests and conflicts of the Demon Beast Empire, their bloodthirst instinct had evolved to the sharpest.

The bodies of many demon beasts were powerful weapons. Some of them were even able to devour crystals directly and launch electric, flame, acid, corrosive liquid, blast, or even mental attacks.

A heated pan seemed to have been put upside down on Red Lotus City. Every target in the air, be they demons or Cultivators, would be destroyed indistinctively.

Li Yao had to lower his altitude and leaped between the skyscrapers in the downtown to his destination.

"Hang in there!"

With two bloodshot eyes, Li Yao gritted his teeth and stomped. Three floors of the building that he was on collapsed because of the counterforce.

…

In the Western District of Red Lotus City, what used to a populated business district was nothing but ruins now.

Dilapidated walls, bumpy streets, and burning shuttles, together with the traces of dried blood, painted a picture of post-war desolation.

In front of a collapsed skyscraper, a semi-underground street barricade with steady defense rune array and two fixed flying sword formations had been deployed.

Red Lotus City was one of the northernmost cities of the federation. The possibility of street combat had been taken into consideration when it was established, which was why it employed a paramilitary building pattern.

Street barricades like this one were everywhere in the city. It had been hidden under the ground during peacetime. When a beast tide broke out and surged into the city, they would flip up and constitute defense lines.

A crystal tank carrying a Taiyi Lightning Railgun was ambushed by the demon beasts when it was marching. In a fluster, it fled to this place and resisted their scourge together with the soldiers in the barricade based on the defense rune array.

In front of them was an army of demon beasts which were coming at them like rising tides.

The most terrible nightmare had become reality for the soldiers.

Double-headed giant serpents as thick as a bucket were winking at them evilly with faces that seemed to be a mix of a human's and a snake's.

Beetles that were even larger than the crystal tanks were waving their sickle-like forelegs which were more than three meters long rapidly in the air.

Snails who had thorns all over their shells were charging. At the end of their necks, which were more than two meters long, were giant heads with two prolonged antennas where electric arcs were spluttering nonstop with cracking noises.

Although flying swords had minced countless demon beasts into pieces, still more were crowding forward as if they were endless.

The defense rune array was trembling under their strikes, like a dry leaf in the blowing autumn wind, which was ready to be ripped apart and obliterated at any moment.

"Pa!"

A loud noise echoed from a storm bolter, whose barrel had been seriously deformed because the rune arrays had been triggered for too many times in a row and the spiritual energy overloaded.

The owner of the storm bolter spat. He groped in his backpack with bloodshot eyes, only to find nothing usable.

"Ammo is running out!"

"Flying swords have all been launched!"

"The steadiness of the defense rune array is dropping fast. It will be compromised in three minutes!"

Bad news continuously found its way into the ears of the soldiers. The flames in their eyes were burning more crazily than ever, as they put on a never-to-look-back expression.

"Prepare your chainsword!"

The captain wiped the oily mud on his face and gnashed.

However, the beast tide in front of them was split by an invisible force.

An intimidating figure swam towards them neither too fast nor too slowly. He was still dozens of meters away, yet the demonic energy from him had crushed over and squeezed the defense rune array like imperceptible giant hands.

The defense rune array groaned. One rune after another was extinguished silently after briefly intensified brightness.

All the soldiers were grasped by hopelessness.

They felt that they were placed in an old, ragged submarine thousands of meters under the sea and could do nothing except to hear the sea devastating the shell of the submarine like a naughty kid squeezing an orange.

"A… demon general," someone mumbled desperately with a pale face.

Faced with ordinary demon beasts, or even low-level demon soldiers, perhaps they would still be able to defend the honor of the federal army for the last time with their chainsword.

However, when engaged with a demon general, all their efforts would be as meaningless as a mantis which was challenging a crystal tank.

This demon general looked like a hybrid of a human and a snake. The upper half of his body was the shape of a human, with scattering scales here and there. The lower half of his body was six narrow, long limbs. In the blurred mist, he looked like a giant spider.

"Ka!"

A purple ball the size of a date pit was spat out from the mouth of the demon general. It flew to the defense rune array slowly, and when it reached the end, thousands of dancing electric arcs were triggered which tore the defense rune array into pieces!

Right now, the only thing remaining between the barricade and the beast tide was fifty meters of distance, and—

"Swoosh!"

A crystal suit fell into the middle of the barricade and the beast like a meteorite.

Vague gold colors were flowing on the surface of the dark grey plate armor. Despite the seemingly shabby and crude appearance, scraps of scales could be found in the deepest layer of the plate armor with a careful look, which decorated the crystal suit with a constant halo.

"Chi!"

A huge amount of spiritual gas spouted out through the air paths of the crystal suit, forming a vivid, life-like, bright gold eagle over his head which shrieked to the sky with an air of invincibility.

"A Cultivator!"

"Our Cultivator is finally here!"

"So intimidating! Is it the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit? I recall that Mystic Skeleton Battlesuits are special crystal suits designed for low-level Cultivators. Why does he look so powerful?"

Awed by the crystal suit, the beast tide ebbed uncontrollably as if it had been crushed into pieces by a giant stone on the seashore.

The demon general narrowed his dirty eyes. The scales on his body were rattling, and his six limbs were shivering uneasily.

"Six-Armed Naga?"

Li Yao smiled in the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

In the Battle of Verdant Tarn City, the hunting team including Li Yao and Zhao Tianchong had been engaged with a seriously wounded Six-Armed Naga.

That time, everybody had tried their best. Eventually, it was with the explosion of ten Hellfire-Lightnings that they managed to kill the demon beast, which nearly cost them their own lives.

The terror of a demon general had been carved in Li Yao's heart since then.

Li Yao had met another two demon generals back when he was in the Thunderous Sound Mountain. Still, they were not as impressive to him as the previous time.

After two years, he encountered a Six-Armed Naga for a second time. But this time, everything was different.

"Demon general? So what? Die now!"

Magnificent flames spurted out from the back of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. More than fifty power rune arrays were activated at the same time. After minor adjustment of angles, the instantaneous speed of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was even higher than that of a super shuttle.

His battle saber, which had been redesigned with four marrow crystals embedded inside, was unsheathed. The eagle made of spiritual gas flew to the edge of the saber and wreathed it after a shriek, extending the aura of the saber to more than seven meters away.

"BOOM!"

"CRACK!"

A thunderstorm seemed to be echoing in the tip of the saber.

No more traps. No more tricks. His was the purest strength in the world.

Before the Six-Armed Naga was able to blink his eyes, Li Yao had slashed down at his throat with a saber enveloped by wind and thunder!

Chapter 343: Intensified Spiritual Blast!

Chapter 343: Intensified Spiritual Blast!

"Hiss!"

The Six-Armed Naga was an adult demon who was at the peak of his life. He had been enlightened by the master demons with the secret arts of the Blood Demon Sector. Now, he was almost a middle-level demon general with amazing combat ability.

Faced with Li Yao's world-shaking slash, his eyeballs almost bulged out. The two limbs in the above crossed two sabers in front of his chest, hoping to resist Li Yao's attack. The two limbs in the middle formed a demonic shield where electric arcs were spluttering with the defensive demonic equipment, which was his second defense line. The two short and small limbs in the bottom, which were just appendages to help stabilize him while he was crawling, now picked up two coldly shining daggers and stabbed at Li Yao's abdomen silently.

"BAM!"

The sabers crashed.

Both the humans and the demon beasts watching the fight heard an earsplitting explosion, as if someone had hammered them hard in the back of their head.

The Six-Armed Naga's sabers broke into pieces without any resistance. However, it did manage to block Li Yao's unstoppable saber briefly.

But the aura of wind and thunder on the edge of the saber was not stopped. It roared and charged forward at the neck of the Six-Armed Naga, tearing a twisted trace in the air.

The upper half of the Six-Armed Naga's body quickly folded backward like a switchblade. In the meantime, the demonic shield was raised.

The aura from Li Yao's saber rubbed against his demonic shield which seemed have been hit by lightning. Every scale on his body was standing up. He felt an overwhelming sense of pain all over his body.

The two poisoned daggers, which had been soaked in seven deadly poisons of the Blood Demon Sector that would melt the flesh and blood of human beings when they encountered the skin, hit the target precisely!

The Six-Armed Naga was overjoyed.

But the smile on the corner of his mouth was frozen to ice of horror before it was able to spread to his face.

The feedback from his daggers was very weird. He felt as if he had pierced into a cluster of fluffy cotton or a swirl that was too deep to measure.

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit in front of him blurred, twisted and popped up like smoke.

"A... shadow!"

The Six-Armed Naga felt dizzy. His tail was rattling and patting the ground uncontrollably while all the scales on it were shivering.

It was a sign that he was grasped by the utmost terror.

His two eyes narrowed into two slim lines, which were then filled with by a giant black figure.

The figure appeared in front of him abruptly, as if it had crawled out of thin air.

When he noticed it, the two hands of the black figure had opened and reached his abdomen where the human body and the snake body were connected.

"Intensified Spiritual Blast!"

Spiritual energy burst out from Li Yao's body.

The crazily expanding spiritual gas spurted out from the 64 spouts on the arms and the back of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and formed two giant wings that were more than ten meters long behind him.

After a moment, the dark gold wings of spiritual gas turned into thousands of streaks of brightness and tangled his two arms, where they revolved and transformed the two arms into giant, invincible drills.

The drills pierced into the abdomen of the Six-Armed Naga as easily as two heated iron chopsticks stabbing a piece of tofu.

"EXPLODE!"

Li Yao roared so loudly that the corners of his mouth were nearly torn. The spiritual gas which was burning in the extreme state revolved hundreds of times inside the body of the Six-Armed Naga and crushed every organ inside to a pulp, before it exploded in the back of the demon beast where it swept out in the shape of a sector.

Looking from the front, there were only two holes the size of fingers in the abdomen of the Six-Armed Naga. But when looking from the back, its entire back had been blown into pieces, and all the organs inside the body were nothing but a mix of meat and blood now.

It was an unparalleled spiritual gas manipulation skill named Intensified Spiritual Blast, one of the brutalist martial arts of the Combat Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution which could only be wielded by Cultivators who were no lower than the peak of the Refinement Stage.

The Six-Armed Naga's eyes were still bulging wide. The toughness of its body sustained him from being killed immediately. But there was nothing else he could do other than watching Li Yao picking up the battle saber which was falling to the ground.

Then he saw tornadoes rising up from the tip of the saber.

That was the last thing he saw before he fell into the abyss of nothingness.

One second later, the high and mighty Six-Armed Naga from a moment ago turned into burning fireflies, fleeing, struggling, dispersing, and disappearing in the tornadoes raised up by Li Yao's battle saber, as if it had never been born before.

Through the ashes of the Six-Armed Naga, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit walked forward slowly yet firmly. The ground was stomped into spider-net like cracks with his every footstep.

The beast tide was frozen like an ocean of minus a hundred degrees.

All the demon beasts were caught by a dead silence.

Even the antennas on the head of Electric Starry Snails were tightened to the extent that they were like two bones, unable to release any electricity at all.

As walking killing machines, the sole purpose of the low-level demon soldiers and the cannon-fodder demon beasts was to fight.

However, as living creatures, their instinct for survival had perceived how formidable the enemy was easily.

Purpose and instinct were pushing and pulling in their brains. Every demon beast had a confused expression on their face.

Li Yao didn't keep them in a dilemma for too long.

Above his head, four clusters of air suddenly twisted. From invisible swirls emerged four murderous steel demon beasts.

Triple-headed Heavy Six-barrel Vulcan Machine Guns, four of them. The shadowed tattoos on the barrels looked like the furs of a ferocious animal. The anti-gravity components and power rune arrays around them allowed them to float in the air and fire at the control of Li Yao's spiritual gas and telepathic thoughts with a full cover range of 360 degrees.

The expansion of the storage space inside the Cosmos Ring enabled Li Yao to carry four pieces of such simple yet violent magical equipment with a huge amount of ammunition.

By the delicate manipulation of spiritual gas at the peak of the Refinement Stage, he was able to control the four floating Vulcan Machine Guns as if they were his own limbs.

Hence a slaughter began.

Every Triple-headed Heavy Six-barrel Vulcan Machine Gun spurted out three torrents of bullets in different colors, which crushed the beast tide into pieces without any trouble.

Frost, flame, and acid.

At first, through thermal expansion and contraction, the defense and structure hardiness of the target would be undermined to minimum by the first two kinds of bullets. Then, the acid bullets would corrode the target to a deeper level. Not to mention the blast and explosion of the bullets which were themselves destructive enough.

It was the best long-range attack pattern that Li Yao had tested out on Tide Berserker.

Even the thick and solid shell of a crystal warship was not enough to withstand the salvo, let alone the flesh and blood of the low-level demon beasts.

Li Yao at present was no longer the rookie he had been in Verdant Tarn City two years ago.

Although he was not an expert in gun-fighting, the strength of the peak of the Refinement Stage still allowed him to maintain the ballistic trajectory of the floating Vulcan Machine Gun in a straight line despite the enormous recoil.

Almost all the bullets hit into the same point when they reached their destination.

Many demon beasts had been blown into pieces before they even had time to think.

A storm of blood rained upon the long street.

Three minutes later, there was not a single living demon beast anymore.

The soldiers of the federal army were all stunned.

They'd seen stronger Cultivators before. But this was the first time they saw such a cruel, brutal one.

"Where is the Taiyi Lightning Railgun?"

Li Yao retreated the Vulcan Machine Guns and walked back to the soldiers.

This area had been under the interference of the demonic fog. The signal of the Spiritual Nexus was intermittent.

According to the intelligence sent through the Spiritual Nexus half a minute ago, there was no large troops of demon beasts nearby.

However, the teleportation array of the demon clan one block away had started functioning. It was estimated that a large batch of demon beasts would be transmitted over in no time.

Therefore, it had to be destroyed before that!

Same as fortresses of the human beings, teleportation arrays of the demon clan had solid defense outside of them, too.

With Li Yao's current strength, it was hardly possible to destroy the teleportation array, even with the enhancement of the crystal suit.

Only by a critical attack of the Taiyi Lightning Railguns which equaled to the full-strength strike of a Core Formation Stage Cultivator would he be blessed with a chance to blow it into pieces.

"The crystal tank carrying the Taiyi Lightning Railgun was hit in the face by a giant fireball which burnt a big hole on it. There are backup components. But the maintenance job is too challenging. I'm the only Cultivator here and I'm just at the beginning phase of the Refinement Stage. The rest of the soldiers here are all ordinary people. Repairing such complicated magical equipment is beyond our ability."

The captain, whose face had been blackened by smoke, said hesitatingly, "I'm afraid we need a refiner to fix it up."

Li Yao smiled, "As it happens, I'm a refiner."

Amidst the shock and disbelief of all the soldiers, he strode inside the barricade and started studying the Taiyi Lightning Railgun.

It was a Taiyi III model.

This model was different from the one that he met on the crystal train. It was the latest model developed five years ago.

The most groundbreaking point about this new model was that it lightened and minimized all its components, which improved the mobility of the weaponry and enabled it to be deployed on ordinary crystal tanks while keeping the same firepower as the older ones.

Since the components in the magical equipment were smaller in size, they were much more delicate than those in Taiyi II which was often loaded on crystal trains and crystal warships.

Looking through the broken shell, many components were as thin as hair. It seemed extremely tricky to repair them.

"Is he truly a refiner?"

"He can't be. How on earth can there be such a brutal refiner who can kill a demon general in a second before blowing the demon beasts on the entire street into pieces?"

The soldiers were all whispering to each other.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao took off his helmet.

Obviously, such a young face startled the soldiers once more.

Li Yao's eyes paused on the backup components of the Taiyi Lightning Railgun briefly, before he glanced around and looked for everything that he could make use of.

Then, he whistled and summoned Neltharion from the Cosmos Ring.

One of his telepathic thoughts was attached to Neltharion, when it rose up to the sky and observed the battleground silently and stealthily in the demonic fog.

A thousand meters away from them, an ivory pillar pierced into the sky, which was fluctuating in a fixed rhythm as if it were breathing.

It was the teleportation array that they needed to destroy.

The teleportation array was surrounded by demon beasts that were apparently much stronger than those who were attacking the barricade.

A few even more intimidating scents were hiding in the ruins nearby.

They must've sensed the battle in the barricade here just now. But since their top priority was to defend the teleportation array, they didn't reinforce their compatriots.

It seemed that the demon that was going to be sent over by the teleportation array would be a big shot in the demon clan. Otherwise, they wouldn't have gone through so much trouble protecting it.

What should he do now?

Li Yao frowned.

It was not difficult to repair the Taiyi Lighting Railgun. The real problem was how to draw it close to the teleportation array.

If it were within 500 meters from the teleportation array, it would definitely be attacked by the demon clan. Of course, he could avoid the attacks easily, but the soldiers would not be so lucky and the Taiyi Lightning Railgun on the crystal train risked being wrecked.

It seemed necessary to modify the Taiyi Lightning Railgun a little bit.

Chapter 344: Expert Demon? Fire In Your Face!

Chapter 344: Expert Demon? Fire In Your Face!

Li Yao wasn't planning to pull the Taiyi Lightning Railgun closer to the teleportation array of the demon clan. He was planning to launch the Taiyi Lightning Railgun at a distance of a thousand meters and annihilate the target like a sniper!

He was faced with two problems.

Firstly, there were quite a lot of ruins and skyscrapers in between the Taiyi Lightning Railgun and the teleportation array.

As a piece of sensitive magical equipment, the Taiyi Lightning Railgun was very prone to the changes of environment. Even a mosquito could trigger the electromagnetic lightning balls that it shot out.

Suppose the electromagnetic lightning balls were lucky enough to reach the target, their strength would be greatly undermined because of the overly long distance in between. The teleportation array might not be demolished at all.

At present, the demons defending the teleportation array regarded the barricade as a common one. They were not aware that a Taiyi Lightning Railgun was lurking in this place.

Once they noticed its existence, they would definitely not allow it to be fired for a second time.

Deep in thought, Li Yao calculated the current situation crazily.

The Taiyi Lightning Railgun hadn't been fired yet. Thirty super-compressed crystal cells were carried, which allowed it to be fired for ninety times.

The defense array and the flying sword formations, although all running of supply, still had a lot of magical equipment components that could be made use of.

"Shua!"

Dozens of sharp thorns stuck out from the right hand of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

With a closer look, one would discover that they were actually dozens of extremely delicate maintenance tools.

Half a minute a later, Li Yao retrieved a lot of magical equipment components from the defense rune array and the flying sword formations.

Then, he gathered everyone's storm bolter and dismantled them into a hill of components.

There were several other magical equipment components inside his Cosmos Ring that he often used during modifications, including the components to assemble explosive magical equipment.

He took them all out, together five Hellfire-Lightnings, which were his all-time favorite both in training and in battles.

All the soldiers were dumbfounded, wondering what he was going to do with all the scraps.

Especially those Hellfire-Lightnings. How were them related to the maintenance of the Taiyi Lightning Railgun?

Li Yao pondered with his eyes closed. Bright gold structure graphs popped up translucently one after another in his brain and formed more complicated patterns.

Not just an enhanced Taiyi Lightning Railgun. There was also a neat explosive trap.

Half a second later, he opened his eyes suddenly. Two small explosions seemed to have taken place in his eyes, while his two hands turned into a cluster of gray mist.

With the enhancement of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, the speed of his hands was higher than ever.

His spiritual gas spurted out again from the 64 spouts of the crystal suit, condensing not two wings, but 64 tentacles helping his hands with the maintenance and modification of the magical equipment.

The magical equipment components as thin as hairs were lifted up by the spiritual gas like feathers and reassembled at an amazingly rapid speed.

Li Yao had seen Ding Yin, a master of refining, maintain magical equipment with spiritual gas before, which was a dazzling eye-opener for him.

This time, he had reached the same level as Ding Yin didhad

Maybe his actions were not as natural and fluent as Ding Yin's yet, but they had an additional air of brutality and confidence.

What the demon clan had wrecked was the aiming and targeting system of the Taiyi Lightning Railgun.

But Li Yao had pulled the Taiyi Lightning Railguns into pieces and reassembled them crazily. Ten minutes later, a hideous, abnormal animal was born.

With the huge number of components from the defense rune array and the crystal tank, Li Yao managed to build eight brackets and transformed the mobile Taiyi Lightning Railgun into a fixed one, with major improvements on the rail and the barrel.

Then, he changed the enclosed chamber which stored the crystal cells into an open one.

After that, he conjoined ten super-compressed crystal cells and refined them into an integral one with rune arrays.

Such crystal cells had been specially designed for Taiyi Lightning Railguns. They were several times larger than the crystal cells for ordinary railguns and storm bolters.

One crystal cell would be enough to trigger the Taiyi Lightning Railgun three times.

But right now, Li Yao had connected ten crystal cells together. What was going on in his mind?

"No worries."

Li Yao wasn't done yet. He was still busy working in the ruins nearby. He even dug out a few deep pits in some of the ruins. Nobody knew what he was doing under the pits.

Li Yao continued, "According to my calculation, after my enhancement and stabilization, the Taiyi Lightning Railgun will be strong enough to withstand the simultaneous explosion of the ten crystal cells.

"But naturally, the Taiyi Lightning Railgun would only be able to be triggered once. It will explode shortly after it is activated. In the meantime, since a lot of spiritual energy will disperse from the gaps, the power of the attack will be no higher than twice of the original.

"Therefore, I've changed the launch system into a remote-control one. You'd better find a shelter behind the ruins and bring your spiritual shield to maximum before you hear the signal to launch the attack.

"Retreat immediately after you do. You'll be safe when you're back to the West Ring Road. We've established a base there with a high-level Building Foundation Cultivator in charge.

"As for the ruins and building standing in the middle of the Taiyi Lightning Railgun's attack, don't bother them. I'll clear them away soon!"

Ten minutes later, Li Yao finished all the preparations. He whistled in exhaustion.

The bright pillar that the teleportation array sent to the sky was turning from ivory to pink. Blood streaks were appearing on it.

Slowly, the blood streaks intertwined and condensed into bloody shadows one by one.

The bloody shadows wriggled. Then they waved their arms and dashed out of the pink pillar.

"Huala!"

"Huala!"

One demon after another broke out of the pillar and leaped to the ground with intensive demonic energy.

These demons were obviously different from the demon beasts which had invaded in the city previously.

Their body size was very close to that of the human beings. Not many features of beasts could be found on them. Their countenance and eyes were filled with utmost cruelness that only belonged to the intelligent creatures.

They were wearing splendid armors and combat uniforms made of demonic plants. Compared with the battle armors of human beings, their clothes had much sharper edges, with piercing spikes everywhere. A chilly air of terror could be sensed from each and every one of them. It was evident enough that they came from an equally highly developed civilization.

Almost all the demons had opened up shields made of demonic energy to protect themselves. Many of them were carrying demonic guns that resembled storm bolters. Some of them were wearing demonic equipment in their ears which looked like communication magical equipment.

Li Yao could see that they belonged to the regular army of the demon clan who were far stronger than the loosely organized beast tides.

The newcomers didn't disperse immediately. Instead, they glanced at the surroundings on full alert.

Many demons were whispering spells and summoning all kinds of probe equipment.

Thankfully, the stealth ability of Neltharion was too advanced for them to discover its trace.

Li Yao shivered and knew that a big shot of the demon clan would be teleported by the teleportation array!

As he expected, blood streaks appeared in the bright pillar again a moment later, which tangled together and weaved into a crimson shadow.

But this time, the speed of the consolidation of the shadow was much lower.

Hundreds of blood streaks melted together. The color of the shadow was deeper and deeper. However, in the center of the shadow, silver brightness was beaming out, revealing the strong power of the blood of the shadow.

"Such a slow teleportation? He must be a real expert!"

Li Yao's head was dizzy, and his heart was beating fast.

The scale of the teleportation array and the strength of the one being teleported determined the speed of teleportation.

To put it simply, the larger a teleportation array was, the higher the energy consumption was; the weaker the one being teleported was, the faster the teleportation would be.

It was sort of like a hole one meter in diameter which could allow hundreds of mice to pass through in a very short amount of time.

But if a boar that weighed hundreds of kilograms wanted to cram in, it would be quite troublesome, and it was simply impossible for an elephant or a dinosaur to squeeze into the hole.

This was the reason why the super experts of the Blood Demon Sector, namely the demon emperors, had hardly ever invaded the Blood Demon Sector.

Since the 'holes' between the two Sectors were usually not large enough, they would need to pay a high price if they wanted to squeeze themselves in.

The teleportation array in front of Li Yao had a diameter no larger than two meters. It was one of the smallest teleportation arrays that the demon clan could create and was not suitable to teleport experts who had intensive demonic energy.

However, the giant teleportation arrays which were good enough to teleport them were often the priority targets of the Cultivators of the Blood Demon Sector. The experts of the Star Glory Federation had almost all gathered around the giant teleportation arrays and fought the experts of the demon clans there.

The demon being teleported in front him must've thought through the logic and decided that he would rather spend more time squeezing himself through the small teleportation array than face the fury of countless Core Formation Cultivators or even Nascent Soul Cultivators the moment he stepped into the Heaven's Origin Sector.

"Come on, scumbag!"

Li Yao had figured out the reason and couldn't wait any longer. Every cell inside his body was extremely excited. His bloodshot eyes fixed on the teleportation array through Neltharion.

The crimson shadow inside the bright pillar was denser and denser, as if it had become red ink. Finally, its four limbs protruded from the body like a fetus in the womb which was stretching.

"Shoot, now!"

Inside Li Yao's brain, the angles, positions and trajectories which had been calculated for hundreds of times were suddenly brighter than ever.

Four floating Vulcan Machine Guns appeared out of thin air again.

Two crystal cannons flipped up on his shoulder, too.

He crossed his fingers and rubbed his hands before opening them up, where a lotus seemed to have blossomed. A super-compressed brilliant ball was revolving inside his palms crazily.

"BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!"

Vulcan Machine Guns, crystal cannons, and Intensified Spiritual Blast were activated at the same time.

The rays of light from them mingled into an unstoppable drill which pierced into the ruins and skyscrapers before they revolved and ripped apart everything in their way. A straight tunnel of a thousand kilometers long was created between the Taiyi Lightning Railgun and the teleportation array!

Almost simultaneously, ten super-compressed crystal cells exploded. Their dazzling brilliance covered the Taiyi Lightning Railgun like an upside-down azure bowl. A small blue sun rushed out of the barrel with cracking noises and turned into a streak of blueness which embarked on the tunnel just created by Li Yao.

The magnificent scene looked like a super high-speed crystal train made of blue crystals which was roaring and charging through tunnels between mountains.

The Taiyi Lightning Railgun had fulfilled its duty. It exploded into pieces after a boom. Burningly hot scraps of steel were spluttering everywhere.

Fortunately, all the soldiers had kept distance from it and were prepared to retreat.

The quickly expanding electromagnetic lightning ball, on the other hand, hit the pink pillar heavily in the shocking exclamations of the demons on the ground.

At this moment, the demon inside the pillar had just extended one of his gold, shaggy arms out of the teleportation array.

Chapter 345: Blood Saber!

Chapter 345: Blood Saber!

The spiritual energy stored in the ten super-compress crystal cells had been condensed into one electromagnetic lightning ball whose explosion dyed the bloody sunset into a summer midday like a supernova outburst.

There was nothing but shades of whiteness in the world now!

The blanching blast covered an area of around a hundred square meters and savaged everything inside.

Hit by an attack equaling to a full-strength strike of a Core Formation Stage Cultivator, the low-level demon soldiers and demon beasts were eradicated without even being able to let out a dying scream.

Even the stronger demons fully equipped with the demonic plate armor who had just came through the teleportation array were also seriously damaged by the earsplitting thunder. Many of them collapsed with blood flowing all over their faces.

The demons at the periphery were lucky to survive the disaster. But they were greatly shocked. There were bruises on their bodies, too.

As for the one who suffered the most wounds, naturally, it would be—

"Prince!"

"Your highness!"

"Prince Ji!"

The survivors didn't have time to check their body status. They all gazed at the center of the supernova outburst in confusion and bewilderment.

The bright pillar there had warped and scattered into thousands of burning moths.

A pure while mushroom cloud assumed its place, which was surrounded by mysterious blue and deep purple electric arcs and rose up to the sky fluctuating in and out like a deadly, venomous jellyfish.

"Hooooo!"

A grieving wail burst out in the middle of the smoke. The mushroom cloud shrank rapidly, until it was the size of a human and exploded.

Knowing that their leader was not dead yet, the surviving demons were greatly relieved.

The army of the Blood Demon Sector had relentless rules and was organized hierarchically.

Leader of a demon army was obliged to lead the charge. When the leader was killed, all his subordinates would have to continue on fighting until they died or the mission was completed. Otherwise, everyone would be sentenced to death as deserters.

These soldiers of the regular army of the Blood Demon Sector were as intelligent as human beings.

There were even several silver-blood demons in the crowd, whose computational ability was as good as that of many Cultivators and far better than the idiocy of the ordinary demon beasts.

Of course, they feared death much more than the ordinary demon beasts, too.

They quickly reacted and looked at the direction where the attack of the Taiyi Lightning Railgun came from.

Five black figures out in the smoke and, covering the distance of a thousand meters in the blink of an eye, reached in front of Li Yao aggressively.

"Mystic Skeleton?"

Two blurred words came from a creamy demon who had parotid glands growing on his neck.

Mocking smiles appeared on the face of all the five demons.

By the beast tide outbreaks and the infiltration through various channels, the Blood Demon Sector had learnt a lot about the news of the Heaven's Origin Sector.

Naturally, Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, which had been quite a hit recently, was within their eyesight.

The demons were well aware that the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was a MP crystal suit model designed for low-level Cultivators whose performances were just mediocre.

Those who were wearing Mystic Skeleton Battlesuits were mostly Cultivators at the Refinement Stage.

Li Yao turned around and ran away without any hesitation.

His reaction further supported the judgements of the five demons, who turned into five black shadows and surrounded Li Yao.

They were soon lured to the place where the Taiyi Lightning Railgun had just exploded.

The Taiyi Lightning Railgun was no more. The only thing that remained was an oval pit where hot smoke was bubbling up as if the place had just been hit by a falling star.

It was a common illusion that two cannonballs would not hit the same location, and that the place where an explosion just took place wouldn't explode a second time.

The demons never expected that Li Yao would set up a trap in this place.

That was why they were dumbfounded for a moment when the five Hellfire-Lightnings detonated in brilliant sparks.

The five Hellfire-Lightnings were not enough to deal too much damage to them. The best the bombs could do was to buy Li Yao one second.

One second was enough.

The noise of growling wind roared beside the ears of all the five demons.

All their hair and scales were erect in alarm.

The lizard that they'd been chasing seemed to have turned into a barbarous dinosaur in a moment!

The spiritual gas around Li Yao was condensed to the extreme; its color turned from bright gold into dense, deep gold, while Li Yao's speed broke its limit.

It was not entirely the power rune arrays' credit. Black Wing played its part, too.

Black Wing had been sealed by mysterious barriers which disabled it from attacking. After prolonged consideration, Li Yao finally figured out how he should make best use of Black Wing's crazy speed.

He had modified the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and added a fixed alloy sheath on its back with air paths and stabilizer fins on both sides. Then, he put Black Wing inside the sheath.

With his telepathic thought, Black Wing would be fully activated and sped up, which would push the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit forward like a powerful booster, making the crystal suit much faster than any ordinary MP crystal suit, or rather, any ordinary crystal suit!

"Swoosh!"

It was not until a gold laser passed by each and every of the five demons and hundreds of overlapped blurred shadows consolidated into the entity of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit that earsplitting noises ripped apart the air and rippled to the around.

The eyes of the five demons were dull, their tusks trembling. They attempted to activate their demonic equipment but failed no matter how hard they tried.

Half a second later, five heads flew up to the sky. Blood was spurting out of their necks like fountains.

Five dead bodies fell into the large pit resulting from the explosion of the Hellfire-Lightnings.

Before Li Yao was able to take a breath to relive himself, his heart started palpitating.

Pressure hundreds of times heavier than that in the bottom of the Billowing Star Sea wreathed him. Invisible tongs bit his limbs and his neck.

The only thing that he was free to move was Neltharion in the sky.

By his telepathic thought in Neltharion, Li Yao discovered that the moment when he killed the five demons, a red brightness rushed out from the mushroom cloud created by the previous attack of the Taiyi Lightning Railgun and reached him in no time.

He wanted to drive Black Wing and the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit to run away, but the invisible force in the air jammed his magical equipment and his spiritual gas, making him unable to wield them fluently as he could.

He had been locked onto by the enemy.

'The expert demon still made his way here!

'What's this weird force?'

Li Yao was shocked and observed the new enemy through Neltharion.

Most parts of his body were enveloped in a thick mist of blood. His left hand was even made of the blood mist.

The head which was exposed to the air looked like a hybrid of a human head and a lion's. Yet there were several deep cracks on it. There was no nose on his face, but a black, enormous hole.

The shining gold hair had all stood up like needles. His face was twisted to such an extent that there was no telling it was agony or fury.

'So this is the case! The teleportation was disrupted before his body was completely sent over.

'His left hand has not been teleported at all, which amounted to that I slashed it off!

'His internal organs can't have been all teleported successfully, either, which means that he is in the state of seriously injuries. His strength must be at the minimum!

'I still have a chance!'

The new findings immediately refreshed Li Yao.

The expert demon was seething with anger. He pointed his bloody saber at Li Yao and roared, "Never has anyone injured me, Wang Ji, like this! You will die, after I cut off the flesh on your body one piece after another!"

The name of the expert demon startled Li Yao.

'Wang Ji?

'Sounds very familiar!'

Li Yao didn't know many strong demons. After thinking for a moment, his eyes glittered.

He realized who his enemy was.

Back when he was in the Thunderous Sound Mountain more than one year ago, he had been engaged with an infiltration squad of the demon clan, which was mostly demolished by the explosion of the demon core of a mutant lion dragon that he set off. Not only did he make a great fortune thereafter, he also retrieved such an invaluable treasure, a Cosmos Ring.

It had been his first bucket of gold.

At that time, a dying demon general cursed him and told him that 'Young Master Wang Ji' would avenge him one day.

All things considered, the two Wang Jis might be the same person.

Li Yao smiled.

'Excellent. Let's conclude the unfinished hunting in the Thunderous Sound Mountain here!

'However, what's with his saber? It seems so ferocious!'

The blood saber in Wang Ji's hands seemed to be made of countless clean, transparent red crystals, yet it had a vibe of a living creature which was likely to lunge out at any moment, unleashing evil scents nonstop.

'This blood saber is definitely a piece of top-tier demonic equipment!'

Li Yao licked his lips.

There were many secret arts inside the Heavenly Refining Tower on how to identify magical equipment. Through staying in the Super Perception Cabin, Li Yao had extended his time spent in the Heavenly Refining Tower, to the extent that it would be many years in reality.

The classics on the ground floor had all been turned over and over by him. Naturally, his observation was keen and sharp.

This Wang Ji should've been a high-level demon general and very close to a demon king.

However, part of his body was left in the Blood Demon Sector. His strength had dropped significantly because of the serious injuries. The gap between them was not unacceptable.

But with this weird blood saber, Wang Ji had suppressed him overwhelmingly and locked onto him so precisely that he wasn't even able to run away.

'I want this blood saber!'

Li Yao was roaring crazily in his mind.

Ever since he'd become a Cultivator, he had always been using sabers as his weapon. In the recent half a year, he had fully grasped the saber art that Long Wenhui, a Core Formation Stage Cultivator, taught him previously. He had also selected a few courses in saber arts in the Grand Desolate War Institution. His own Thunderous Tornado Saber Art perceived in the dust storms was more than proficient right now.

The only thing that he lacked was a good saber.

Although he had embedded all kinds of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures into his battle saber, he always felt that it was missing something.

It was the shortage that kept his battle saber in the tier of ordinary magical equipment and stopped it from being first-rate magical equipment.

If he could make a Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber out of the blood saber and his battle saber, his understanding of saber arts would be able to be best performed!

'Come on!'

Li Yao's brain seemed to have been filled with magma which was burning furiously. Without bothering anything, he charged aggressively at Wang Ji from down to top!

"Ant in the Refinement Stage, you don't know what you are doing!"

Young Master Wang Ji was grinning hideously. The nose of the Lion Clan had been large in the first place. Now that it was gone, the only thing that remained in the middle of his face was a deep hole, making him uglier than anything Li Yao had ever seen.

The blood saber was slashed down. A crimson brightness went at him rapidly.

The blood all over Li Yao's body seemed to turn into thousands of small bugs which were nibbling on his veins, making him unable to move at all.

"The blood saber can actually manipulate blood?"

Chapter 346: Dangerous Blood Saber Stealing

Chapter 346: Dangerous Blood Saber Stealing

Two sabers turned into a red brightness and a blue one, which collided in the midair at a high speed, weirdly, without any sound.

Yet, the blood aura on Wang Ji's saber penetrated through the tornadoes and lightning caused by Li Yao's and continued slashing at him. The vague mist of blood was like a mirage which was utterly unpredictable. But its speed was higher than anyone could imagine.

The moment Li Yao lifted up his spiritual shield, he had been hit!

"Pa!"

The blood saber which seemed to be unreal bashed him to the ground like a giant hand swatting a moth that was darting into the fire.

Thousands of tiny holes appeared on the surface of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, where dirty bubbles were popping up as the crystal suit was being corroded by the blood mist.

Every drop of blood seemed to grow thorns. Every capillary seemed to have turned into the sharpest knife. Li Yao was in such agony that he was tempted to tear his chest apart and squeeze all his blood out.

"BOOM!"

He fell into the giant pit of the previous Hellfire-Lightning explosion heavily. More than half of his body was buried in the ground. He gritted his teeth and vomited, only to come up with nothing but sharp pain because a large cluster of burning bushes seemed to have stuffed his throat.

"Invisible and indefensible, attacking the blood directly. What a weird blood saber!"

The outcome of a fight between an expert Cultivator and an expert demon could be decided within one second.

Streams of extremely exotic force surged from the blood saber and looked for the gaps on the crystal suit like vipers.

Li Yao's heart shrank to the size of a date pit. For the first time, he felt that death was drawing near. The cracked land around him was as thick and dense as a moor, trying to swallow him into the abyss of hell.

The threat of death made his brain clearer than ever. His computational ability was activated to a new, unprecedented height.

With a telepathic thought, four Vulcan Machine Guns appeared and floated to the middle of Wang Ji and himself, before they fired at Wang Ji brutally. Twelve lines of bullets interweaved into a dense net of fire and went at Wang Ji's head.

Disdain beamed out from Wang Ji's bright yellow eyes.

"You want to stop me by bullets? Hilarious!"

The blood mist that enveloped him suddenly expanded, which devoured the twelve bullet lines and corrupted them rapidly.

Most of the bullets strengthened by spiritual energy exploded three to four meters away from him, their blaze entirely absorbed by the blood mist.

Some bullets made their way to the front of Wang Ji, but they were blown into pieces by Wang Ji's dense demonic shield before their rune arrays were able to function.

Taking the storm of bullets the hard away, Wang Ji stomped in the air, leaving a large area of cracks of the void. Then he lunged at Li Yao from above with the ferocious blood mist like a tiger attacking a sheep and a falcon snatching a rabbit.

Almost at the same time—

The last trap that Li Yao deployed in the ruins was fully triggered!

The Taiyi Lightning Railgun carried thirty super-compressed crystal cells with it. He used ten of them just now to blow up the teleportation array of the demon clan.

Li Yao was too thrifty to simply throw away the remaining twenty crystal cells.

The explosion of the five Hellfire-Lightnings was just a cover for the twenty crystal cells.

No one had anticipated that Li Yao would set up a second bomb trap below an existent one. This was actually his real deadly move!

When he was preparing for the serial bomb trap, Li Yao didn't foresee that Wang Ji was coming.

However, in this battleground which was full of perils, large batches of demon generals or demon kings could appear at any time. He couldn't be more careful.

For the vulture who had grown up in a magical equipment graveyard, setting up a trap was as natural as breathing and drinking water were for him.

The angle of the twenty interconnected super-compressed crystal cells had been carefully adjusted, so that 90% of the spiritual energy contained inside would burst out to the sky when triggered.

This was also the reason why Li Yao charged at enemy in the sky aggressively.

He was well aware that his strength was not enough to take the blow of Wang Ji and he would likely be smashed to the ground. After that, it was possible that his enemy would attack him from a high stance.

Everything was within his expectations, except for the toughness of the blood saber.

Twenty glaring brilliances darted up and slashed the sky like twenty sabers made of lightning, whose blue electric arcs mingled into a deadly net of blades.

Although most of the spiritual energy escaped in the air, the attack assembled by the remaining spiritual energy was still as powerful as an attack of a Core Formation Cultivator.

Never had Wang Ji expected that such a sordid, dirty trap was buried under exactly the same place where an explosion just took place.

He was fully focused on his attack and wasn't prepared for defense. Caught off guard, he had to condense the blood mist to protect himself.

"Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!"

For a moment, the electric arcs were dancing merrily in the air more brightly than ever, which immediately ripped the blood mist apart!

"Swoosh!"

At exactly the same time, Neltharion, which had been lurking for a long time, sneaked to Wang Ji's back and revealed itself while it crashed at the back of his head brutally.

Wang Ji was from the Kingdom of Lion Butchers in the Blood Demon Sector. His bloodline could be traced back to the ancient lion demons. But, the same as human beings, the back of his head was a critical part for him.

The acute pricking pain spread from the back of his head all the way to his spine. For the first time, Wang Ji felt that the situation was not under his control.

Gritting his teeth and risking his body being torn apart, Wang Ji broke the limit of speed and dodged the attack at the back of head closely.

For Cultivators and demons who were all made of flesh and blood, sometimes their strength was enough to allow them to reach a higher speed, but it was often too much for their body which was not sturdy enough.

Wang Ji suddenly activated and forced his body which was sprinting downwards to move to the left horizontally. As a result, a cluster of vaguely silver blood burst out from his body with cracking noises. Countless bones, veins and nerves had fractured in the super high-speed dodging movement!

Wang Ji grunted. He gritted his teeth and, holding back his pain, groped in his back, trying to clutch the weapon that had just attacked him.

But Neltharion simply released clusters of tiny electric arcs which stung his hand like needles before it ran away and vanished into thin air.

Wang Ji's full attention was fixed on the fleeing assassin. He didn't bother with the storm of bullets which were fired at his face for a second time.

Bullets were too slow and weak to deal much damage to an expert demon such as himself.

He was wrong.

"Swoosh!"

In the middle of the storm of bullets, a silver bullet which was more than five times faster than the ordinary ones beside it pierced into his chest without him even recognizing what was going on.

"What's this?!"

Wang Ji's pupils constricted violently. A strange flower of blood blossomed where his heart was. More than half of his heart was nearly blown to pieces by the blast!

It was a special bullet refined entirely out of marrow crystals. It had been divided into four layers. The three layers in the back could boost the head of the bullet three times after they exploded one by one, so that the speed of the bullet would be maximized!

Marrow crystals were the essence of crystals.

After billions of years of tectonic movement under high temperature and pressure, thousands of crystals might be able to be condensed into one small marrow crystal. The spiritual energy stored inside of it was immeasurable.

Li Yao had refined nine bullets out of marrow crystals, before he carved 137 attack rune arrays on each bullet in the most delicate refining arts of the ancient times.

After that, he cleansed the bullets by melding the blood from his fingertip, the tip of his tongue, and that of his heart with them through Blood Baptism. Finally, they were deeply connected to him like the 'aura balls' in the ancient Cultivation world and were at his disposal like his own arms.

This was Li Yao's real killing move!

He was too smart not to know ordinary bullets would be far from enough to break Wang Ji's defense.

The reason why he was firing randomly was partly to reduce his enemy's vigilance, and partly to cover the existence of the marrow crystal bullet.

To hide a tree, the best place would be a forest.

To hide a bullet, the best place would be the storm of bullets incurred by four Triple-headed Heavy Six-barrel Vulcan Machine Guns!

The two explosion traps made by Hellfire-Lightnings and super-compressed crystal cells, the bullet storm from the Vulcan Machine Guns, the abrupt assault of Neltharion…

All was meant to distract Wang Ji's attention for a moment so that he wouldn't notice that the marrow crystal bullet was coming at him!

His heart was not the only part that had been mostly blown up. Many of his other internal organs had been seriously wrecked, too. After a moment, Wang Ji's back boomed like a volcano eruption, where blood together with the flames resulting from the marrow crystal's explosion spurted out magnificently.

Such serious injuries were too much for him, although he was an expert demon of the Blood Demon Sector. Wang Ji's face was pale, where silver blood was flowing out from all holes.

A dead enemy is always better than a wounded enemy!

Li Yao roared. The ballistic trajectories of the four Vulcan Machine Guns were adjusted and focused on one point, before bullets raged out from them and slashed at Wang Ji's right hand like four heated lancets.

Wang Ji dodged out of instinct.

However, Li Yao was so fast that he reached Wang Ji's back after only one second. His battle saber drew an almost perfect arc from down to top savagely in the air.

More than half of Wang Ji's right hand was chopped off. His blood saber flew to the sky!

Wang Ji screamed miserably, as if his soul was going to be extinguished.

He didn't sound so wretched even when his heart was blown to pieces just now.

It looked like that the blood saber was an organ that was of paramount importance to him and was much more precious than his heart and his head.

After a shriek, Wang Ji exploded into a blood mist where black gas was popping up.

In the middle of the mist, a yellow brightness dashed to the far distance at an amazingly high speed, before it vanished into the derelict buildings in the ruins after a short moment.

Li Yao was going to chase after him, when the blood mist blocked his way as if it were a living creature.

In the middle of the blood mist, a blurred face slowly appeared, which belonged to, no less, Wang Ji who was on the run.

A hideous grin that even the ghosts at the deepest level of the hell couldn't possibly make appeared on the giant face, as it gnashed its teeth.

"You dare to steal my Red Jade Mist Mirage Saber? You are seeking your own death!

"Just wait for it!

"Very soon, I will find out who you are, before I skin you, mince you into pieces, and take back what's mine stepping on your corpse!

"At that time, your soul will be extracted and locked into the Blood Soul Pearl by me, and I will savage you to the extent that you will think killing yourself right now is a better—"

Before he finished his speech, Li Yao had triggered the four floating Vulcan Machine Guns and fired at the middle of the face in the blood mist.

"BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!"

"Enough trash talk," Li Yao scoffed. Then he looked at the so-called Red Jade Mist Mirage Saber.

Although it had lost connection to its master, it was still flying naughtily in the air. Now and then, blood aura would be released, indicating that it was still a fatal weapon.

Li Yao's hands quickly made a lot of gestures in the air with his unimaginably flexible fingers.

Many brilliant, octagonal runes appeared in the air.

For Cultivators at the peak of the Refinement Stage, they were already able to create runes with nothing but their own bare hands.

"Hoooo!"

64 runes made of spiritual gas rushed at the blood saber.

Like the most cunning demon beast, Red Jade Mist Mirage Saber knew that something bad was happening. The edge of the saber shivered, and it was going to flee, when it was crashed by a black laser darting from the back of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit heavily.

It was Black Wing!

Not only did the crash make Red Jade Mist Mirage Saber dizzy and disoriented, the spiritual threads on Black Wing also took the opportunity to tangle it.

64 spiritual runes crowded in and suppressed the blood aura on the saber.

Li Yao waved his hand and triggered his Cosmos Ring. He had finally got this weird, exotic blood saber!

Chapter 347: Nascent Soul and Black Ocean

Chapter 347: Nascent Soul and Black Ocean

"Poooo!"

As he stored the Red Jade Mist Mirage Saber into his Cosmos Ring, Li Yao finally couldn't help it any longer. A lot of black blood was vomited out as he collapsed on the ground on one of his knees and breathed heavily.

The pain deep down in his flesh and bones was throbbing over the endings of his nerves. He felt that his strength was pouring out together with his cold sweat.

From Wang Ji appearing on the top of his head to his enemy fleeing in a cluster of blood mist, it took less than twenty seconds.

But it was the most dangerous combat that Li Yao had ever been engaged in since his spiritual root was awakened.

Although Wang Ji had not reached the level of demon king yet, he was definitely one of the best high-level demon generals, which equaled to a Cultivator at the peak of the Building Foundation Stage.

Luckily, Li Yao had blown up the teleportation array in advance, which had seriously wounded him since part of his body was not sent over. But with the enhancement of the blood saber, his demonic energy was still too powerful for Li Yao to resist.

The blood aura from the saber would've invaded his body and melted his organs if Li Yao's body was not far sturdier than that of common Cultivators' and the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had not been significantly strengthened.

Li Yao had been gritting his teeth and suppressing his injuries.

Now that he had successfully grasped the blood saber, he was less focused than before. The internal injuries finally burst out.

The cold sweat on his skin turned from transparent to pink, and ended up being bright red.

This weird Red Jade Mist Mirage Saber seemed to be able to attack the hemopoietic system and make his body reject his own blood. Eventually, his blood would be all pushed out by his own body, resulting in massive loss of blood.

'If it goes on like this, I will die of loss of blood shortly!'

Gold and black brightness were swinging before his eyes. The sky and the earth were both swirling fast, which was a sign that his brain was in lack of oxygen because of too much loss of blood.

Gritting his teeth, Li Yao activated his spiritual energy and sealed his veins forcefully to prevent his blood from leaking out. In the meantime, he turned on the war mission system and tried to send distress calls to the command center and the Cultivators nearby.

However, before he was able to deliver his status and location, the light beam collapsed into pieces after weird vibrations.

'The Spiritual Nexus is jammed?

'The interference is intense, like a solar storm has burst out in this exact place. All the signals of the Spiritual Nexus have been cut off!

'What's happening?'

Li Yao was alerted. He felt vaguely that two immense powers were rising up from two sides of the horizon, whose overwhelming pressure was sweeping over inch by inch.

At present, the bloodshed sunset had passed. A deep, dark, starless night had fallen.

But two diagonal giant swirls that looked like two nebulas illuminated the sky, like two giants in the sea of stars who had opened their only eye.

Two swirls revolved slowly, whose brilliant flames of light beamed out and dyed the half of the night sky into furious, twisted streaks of various colors like thousands of burning tentacles.

Despite the dense demonic fog, Li Yao was still able to see every detail of the two swirls.

Not because his eyes were sharp. It was because the two swirls were unleashing energy, intent, and pressure wantonly. Several of their telepathic thoughts even exploded directly inside his brain.

Li Yao seemed to be capable of seeing two figures standing in the center of the two swirls respectively.

The human figure in the south gave him a feeling of arrogance, stubbornness, and frenzy.

The phantom in the north, on the other hand, was a bizarre-shaped black sketch, which left an impression of nothing but cruelness, bloodthirst, and destruction!

'What strong telepathic thoughts!

'There must be hundreds of kilometers of distance between us, and their telepathic thoughts and intent are so clear that I feel that they are next to me. How powerful their soul power must be!

'They must be—

'A Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator and a demon emperor!'

Li Yao's every nerve was twitching violently, not out of fear, but out of excitement.

Such powerful telepathic thoughts were too much even for Core Formation Stage Cultivators and demon kings. They must be the works of the best warriors of the two Sectors, Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors!

In the sky, the combat between the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator and the demon emperor had begun!

Hundreds of brilliant colors beamed out from the two giant swirls which tore the sky apart and swept at the other side.

Silent and slow, they wriggled in the sky like thousands of colorful caterpillars.

But Li Yao was well aware that the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator and the demon emperor were at two sides of the sky and there was a distance of hundreds of kilometers between them.

The seemingly wriggling caterpillars were actually the intensive waves when their attacks broke the sonic barrier and tore the air apart.

Several seconds later, the thousands of caterpillars crashed and boomed into dazzling lightning balls in the background of the night sky.

In the place where the lightning balls vanished, a giant hole was ripped apart on the night sky, revealing the shining stars behind it.

It was not until thousands of holes congregated and connected the stars together that the sound of air being torn apart in the beginning reached Li Yao's ears, which was closely followed by the explosion of the lightning balls.

The whole world started trembling.

Bullet shells, scraps of flying swords, dead bodies of demon beasts, and bricks, sand, and rebars in the rundown building... Everything was bouncing and dancing high in the sky with the continuous booms.

Li Yao opened his mouth, in case the sonic burst injured his internal organs.

Yet, he was gazing at the sky crazily. The fire in his eyes seemed to be burning a hole in the heaven.

'This is the power of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator? How marvelous it is!

'When can I enter the Nascent Soul Stage and wield such strength?'

Li Yao was somewhat lost. He gritted his teeth, while there was a hint of confusion behind the fire in his eyes.

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator and the demon emperor were colliding like two wild elephants, while he was nothing but a rat beside their feet.

He was reluctant to accept the fact. A strong desire was triggered in his heart.

Cheered up by the appearance of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator and the demon emperor, all the human beings and demons on the battleground went crazy.

The explosions, roars, and screams were ten times louder than before. Red Lotus City was completely enshrouded in fire and death.

An endless beast tide appeared in Li Yao's eyesight.

Those low demon beasts were all spurred by the demonic energy from the demon emperor and turned mad. Their eyes were bloodshot, their skins cracking and unveiling the quickly expanding flesh below. Dense sharp thorns were growing up on the shells of many insect-type demon beasts.

Had Li Yao not been injured, he wouldn't even bother to look at those demon beasts.

But right now, he was seriously wounded. Almost half of his blood had been lost. Faced with the overwhelming beast tide, Li Yao felt that the corner of his eyes were twitching.

He was planning to drive Black Wing to fly away, when a silver mist suddenly appeared over his head and covered the sky and stars. A hand that was more than ten meters long extended from the silver mist and slapped at him.

"Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes!"

Li Yao was greatly alarmed.

He had met such kind of demon beast on the crystal train north to the Grand Desolate Plateau. To deal with them, seven Cultivators even sacrificed their own lives.

One Ghost Face Silver Mosquito was the weakest demon beast of all.

But when tens of thousands of Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes congregated, they would form a bigger creature with some sort of intelligence through telekinesis.

"Die now!"

Li Yao's eyes bulged. The moment the giant hand reached his face, a brightness of saber flashed and slashed it into two halves. Then, two crystal cannons flipped up on his shoulders and fired nonstop, blowing the Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes which shaped the giant hand all into ashes.

But their numbers were endless. After a short moment, another eight murderous, hideous talons were formed and blocked Li Yao's every route of escape.

The boundless beast tide was also arriving at him.

"Come on!"

Dozens of blue electric arcs spluttered from his batter saber to almost ten meters away, before they tangled into a long saber of lightning which was surrounded by sparks and tornadoes.

For a moment, Li Yao had the same feeling of satisfaction that Guan Xiong must've had when he charged at the rising beast tide by himself.

It was indeed… refreshing!

"Even though I'm not as strong as a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, I will still unleash the most dazzling brilliance that I can!

"You want to kill me? Let's see who dies first!"

Li Yao laughed. He clenched his battle saber so hard that it almost shattered. Every rune array on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was fully activated.

Li Yao waved his saber and was ready to fight his last battle, when earsplitting noises boomed behind him.

The beast tide in front him seemed to be devoured by an invisible giant beast. Almost ten holes appeared in the middle of it, making it seem much crappier than before.

In the meantime, the talons made by Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes started burning, before they break up in cracking noises.

Li Yao blinked his eyes. The crystal camera on his back had shot what happened behind him without him turning around.

The first thing to be seen was a Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars Flag, which was still flying in the raging wind like an undying torch despite the excessive corrosion from acids and venomous fog.

Then, countless soldiers of the federal army who were wearing black combat uniform and carrying chainswords and storm bolters surged in like a black ocean under the cover of crystal tanks.

The captain who had been in charge of the Taiyi Lightning Railgun that Li Yao repaired was grinning at Li Yao on one of the crystal tanks with two storm bolters in hand. His white teeth were glittering in the smoke.

Mediocre demon beasts could constitute an overwhelming beast tide that even Cultivators such as Li Yao may find challenging.

On the other hand, ordinary people who did not know the first thing about Cultivation could form an invincible ocean of iron and blood with devotion, courage and strong magical equipment.

A new, lightning-like understanding suddenly struck on Li Yao's mind.

As a Cultivator, he could manipulate powerful spiritual energy. Yet, it was with the assistance of thousands of ordinary people that he was able to deal with the overwhelming beast tide.

Strong as the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator in the sky may be, he wouldn't be able to twist the situation of the war single-handedly without thousands of common Cultivators such as himself, would he?

Ordinary people, common Cultivators such as himself, Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators… Everyone had pushed themselves to their limits, so that the human civilization could be shining more brightly than ever.

"My compatriots stronger than me and weaker than me are all fighting side by side with me.

"I am in need of them as much as they are in need of me.

"We are... not alone!"

The new understanding refilled scorching strength in Li Yao's veins which had almost run dry.

Gold brightness scattered by blood flowed out of the gaps of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and consolidated into sharp wings and feathers, as Li Yao dashed into the beast tide and led the charge.

Behind him, the roaring black ocean rushed close and crashed into the beast tide which was already on the verge of collapse.

Chapter 348: Building Foundation!

Chapter 348: Building Foundation!

The fierce battle didn't come to an end until midnight. The burning city cast redness to the entire sky.

After the endeavors of the valiant Cultivators and the federal army, the downtown area which the demon clan occupied had been taken back. Many teleportation arrays had been destroyed.

However, the remaining demons were still resisting desperately in the business district where there were a lot of skyscrapers. The interconnected underground became a sea of demon beasts, too.

Li Yao kept fighting into the late night. It was not until an earthshaking boom echoed in the sky of the north, as if the space had been ripped open where melted lightning flowed out, that Li Yao retreated from the battleground after the protracted urges of the war mission system.

Later, he learnt more facts about the two experts fighting in the sky. The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was Luo Wunian, Honorary Chairman of Violet Glow Sect which was one of the top five sects in the federation, who was known as the best sword master of the entire federation; the demon emperor, on the other hand, was Ming Xinyi, who ranked eighth on the 'Deadliest Demons List'.

Both of them were first-rate experts in their respective worlds.

For experts at such a high level, they were usually hesitant to confront each other face-to-face.

Once they full activated their strength and fought in their ultimate forms, their strikes, such as the hundreds of attacks breaking the sonic barrier simultaneously not long ago, could be too draining both for their bodies and for their souls. They risked being seriously wounded by each other at the same time.

In the meantime, enemies might set up traps nearby and assault the hostile expert with strong demonic equipment or magical equipment when the expert in question was at the weakest moment when their soul may have entirely burnt up.

This was exactly the case of today's battle.

The fight of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator versus the demon general had been a trap for Ming Xinyi in the first place.

The federal army deployed 19 Heaven Splitters out of Red Lotus City, as well as more than twenty pieces of the best magical equipment from various sects.

When the fight between Luo Wunian and Ming Xinyi reached the most intense moment, all the magical equipment was activated at the same time.

Although Ming Xinyi was not killed on the spot, it created a great opportunity for Luo Wunian, who slashed off the Gold Blood Demon Horn on Ming Xinyi's head and forced him to flee back to the Blood Demon Sector.

The earthshaking sound that Li Yao heard previously was the consequence of the salvo.

Although the demon emperor was seriously wounded, Luo Wunian's soul almost dried up because he stayed in the level of the Nascent Soul Stage for too long and triggered excessive telepathic thoughts. He wouldn't be able to return to the Nascent Soul Stage for a long time.

The two parties engaged in the war both lost an elite warrior. But the brutality of the war was not the least undermined. On the contrary, it got crueler and crueler.

In the coming seven days, together with many other Cultivators and the federal army, Li Yao fought street by street and alley by alley in Red Lotus City. He even charged into the underground with a batch of Building Foundation Stage Cultivators with the help of his excellent crystal suit.

As days went by, Li Yao's battle credits soared. His name rose to fame after furious battles.

Not only did the federal army and other Cultivators learn of the existence of such a fearless Cultivator who was at the peak of the Refinement Stage, many demons also knew that there was a different Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit which could release spiritual gas in the shape of wings with a bright gold color and was far better than common MP crystal suits.

After days and nights of walking between life and death and meditating after bloody combats, Li Yao felt that, like a seed which had been buried under the ground for a long time, his spiritual root was ascending and would break out of the soil at any moment.

In the morning ten days later, when he woke up from a ditch in the city ruins and saw the morning star eclipsing and the red sun rising up slowly over the shambles, an irresistible desire suddenly burst out in his heart.

It was a moment of eureka.

He knew that the time to enter the Building Foundation Stage had come!

Through the war mission system, Li Yao sent an application to the command center.

Soon, he received a reply from the command center. After handing his position over to a Cultivator from Star Nebula University, Li Yao left Red Lotus City and reached the military base fifty kilometers away on a carrier.

The most important facility in the military base, other than the command center and the Spiritual Beacons, would be the training rooms specially for soldiers and Cultivators.

A war was always the best time to improve the strength for the warriors.

A breakthrough that did not happen after five years of Cultivation in peacetime may be achieved within several seconds after seeing one's close comrades being slain by hideously-grinning demons right in front of oneself in a bloody fight.

In a battleground full of demonic fog, spiritual gas, venomous liquids, acids, explosions, and blasts, countless people may die. But there were always a few lucky dogs whose bodies mutated and whose Actualization Quotient erupted, allowing them to smash the shackles they'd been born with and embark on the path of Cultivation!

The hundred independent training rooms were prepared for the people who were in the middle of a breakthrough or foresaw that they were going to have one.

According to the strength and the battle credits of the applicant, training rooms of different specifications would be allocated to them.

The battle credits that Li Yao earned over the past ten days were enough for him to redeem an advanced training room with the most extravagant amenities.

Then, he redeemed a perfect plan for Building Foundation with the battle credits he had left.

When the Cultivators in the ancient times were breaking into the Building Foundation Stage, the only assistance they could get was the crude Building Foundation Pills which contained a lot of impurities. Then, they often sat and meditated in empty caves. Therefore, their success rate was very poor. No higher than 5% of them could enter the Building Foundation Stage the first time they tried.

Honestly speaking, those Cultivators were just lucky.

To make things worse, the body of the Cultivator would acquire resistance if they failed the first time. It would be tricky for them to enter the Building Foundation Stage ever again.

In the modern Cultivation world, the mechanism and process of Building Foundation had been thoroughly studied. Many effective plans for Building Foundation had been developed, which were safe, fast, and utterly devoid of side-effects. Today you entered the Building Foundation Stage, tomorrow you would be able to continue fighting. The success rate of one-time Building Foundation had been brought up by more than five times.

Even if you were unlucky and failed at the first try, the plans could be trimmed and adjusted for your next try when you were ready after resting for some time.

The perfect plan for Building Foundation that Li Yao picked could definitely help him break into the Building Foundation Stage perfectly!

"Mr. Li Yao, we look forward to seeing you at the Building Foundation Stage and thus becoming one of the youngest Building Foundation Stage Cultivators in the Star Glory Federation!" The security officer of the training rooms said to him earnestly.

Li Yao smiled. He nodded at the officer softly as acknowledgment. Then he strode into the training room.

He wanted to succeed in one try, too.

If he were to fail this time, he would have to wait for at least one month before his next try. By then, the eureka and eagerness that he had right now might be gone.

The training room had a round space of around five square kilometers. The ivory walls enclosing the room was full of holes. A control light beam was floating in the air.

Li Yao typed softly and set the plan for Building Foundation. His heart and soul calmed down gradually, as he muttered to himself, "Now begins Building Foundation!"

"Chi!"

A huge amount of greenish gas spurted out from the holes on the walls and spread in the air.

Within a moment, the entire room was filled with the bright green mist, which had a vaguely sweet smell that seemed to come from a grassland which had just been nurtured by rain.

This was the drug for Building Foundation.

In the ancient Cultivation world, this drug was always made into Building Foundation Pills which would be absorbed by swallowing.

The absorption rate of the human's gastrointestinal system was not very efficient. For all the useful ingredients in a Building Foundation Pill, no higher than 30% could be absorbed by the human body. The rest of the precious nutrition was all wasted.

Things were entirely different in the modern Cultivation world. The Building Foundation drug was completely pulverized before it was penetrated into the Cultivator's skin by high-pressure. That way, it could stimulate the Cultivator's flesh, bones, blood, veins, and nerves directly. The absorption efficiency was close to one hundred percent.

Li Yao immediately felt the changes inside his body where thousands of icy threads seemed to be extending, weaving, and spreading.

"BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM!"

Soul-stirring drumming began.

It was 'Breaking the Enemy's Formation', a battle hymn composed by a culture-type Cultivator in the Core Formation

Stage five hundred years ago, which had the ability to motivate the fighting will of the listeners.

Countless Cultivators and soldiers of the federal army had been trampling beast tides and protecting their homeland with their battle sabers and flying swords held high under the encouragement of 'Breaking the Enemy's Formation'.

Right now, 'Breaking the Enemy's Formation' was a military song for the federal army. Someone even suggested that it should be the national anthem for the Star Glory Federation.

For Cultivators, 'Breaking the Enemy's Formation' had another amazing ability.

Since generations of human beings had been charging at the enemy line cheered up by 'Breaking the Enemy's Formation', its calling had melted into their genes after hundreds of years, which endowed the song with an unbelievable ability that it could significantly improve the odds of success of Building Foundation.

According to the calculation of experts, when Building Foundation under the encouragement of 'Breaking the Enemy's Formation', the success rate could be improved by 5% to 8%!

The very 'Breaking the Enemy's Formation' that Li Yao was listening to at present had been played by a large choir made of more than 300 culture-type Cultivators from 'Magical Melody Temple', one of the best cultural sects in the federation, who were adept at music.

It was not a recording, but a replay of the concert including the emotion, sweat, and thoughts on the spot which had been sealed by special barriers close to the choir.

Now that they were released, Li Yao seemed to be back to the time when it was first played. The effects that it triggered were certainly much stronger than an ordinary recording would.

The drumbeat sounded like the parade of an iron army. Noises of swords and sabers clashing against each other and the explosions of spiritual energy echoed nonstop. An invisible battleground rose up slowly around Li Yao, who was able to envision a bloodshed battle and even felt the weapons brushing past his skin.

'Breaking the Enemy's Formation' had no lyrics, nor did it need any. The roars of men, women, the young, and the old were already the most powerful stanzas.

Every drum, every roar, and every clash between swords and bones were bombarding Li Yao's heart like a Taiyi Lightning Railgun.

Prompted by the Building Foundation drug and 'Breaking the Enemy's Formation', Li Yao's spiritual root was stirring.

Thousands of tentacles seemed to have extended out of his spiritual root and spread to the depths of his brain as well as all his other body parts, forming a third network besides veins and nerves.

"Shua! Shua! Shua!"

A circular light beam appeared in the training room, where nine paintings were displayed.

The paintings were in dissimilar styles. The scenes and figures in them were different, too.

The one thing in common, though, was that all the paintings contained extremely immense spiritual waves.

This set of paintings was named 'Meditations on Building Foundation', which had been created by nine of the best culture-type Cultivators in the federation with 'Building Foundation' as the theme, including their experience, understanding and reflection about the topic.

Chapter 349: Breakthrough and Harvest!

Chapter 349: Breakthrough and Harvest!

In one of the paintings was depicted a mountain piercing the sky which was surrounded by strong wind. It ripped open the sky like an unparalleled sharp saber, where a sea of stars flowed out and formed a giant eye.

In another painting, a boundless desert was presented. A dust storm was sweeping across it. But a small figure was above the sand fighting the heaven and the earth until they breathed their last breath.

Several other paintings also included bloody battlegrounds, misty mountains, and bottomless valleys.

Two of the paintings were full of brilliant colors and shadows, as if the painter had knocked off the ink bottle during the creation. There was no telling what was on the paintings at all.

All the paintings stored immense soul power. After a quick look, Li Yao had been deep attracted to them, which were absorbing his soul like nine swirls.

For a moment, he was on a high mountain, climbing up to the infinite sea of stars against the raging wind.

In the next moment, he was in the depths of a desert. Billions of tons of sand were savaging his head. He gritted his teeth and fought it desperately with his body tightened.

Then, he appeared in a small bamboo boat on a limpid stream which was flowing between mountains, while his soul melted with the lovely nature contentedly and comfortably, all his lusts gone.

He even found himself in the two paintings of brilliant colors, where he was observing the mystery of all mysteries in absolute tranquility without entity.

However…

The painting that he stared at for the longest was the ninth one.

Completely different from the previous eight paintings, it was a scene of an ordinary, commonly-seen vegetable market with the most exquisite details.

A vegetable market with noises, ditches, and crowds, where cabbages, onions, fish, ribs, and beef were sold.

Li Yao's soul entered the painting. He smelt the freshness of cabbages, the sweetness of fruits, and the intense scent from fish; he heard bargaining and bickering, pounding when meat was being chopped off, and laughter from the chitchatting neighbors; he saw beaming, satisfied faces everywhere.

Li Yao had no idea why the understanding on 'Building Foundation' of this painter was a random vegetable market. However, he did feel that the painting was resonating with something in his mind vaguely.

The painting dimmed. The smiling faces of the people changed to ones that had been blackened by smoke and burned by fire, which belonged to the soldiers who had been fighting side by side with him over the past ten days.

Among them, there were veterans who had been on active service for more than ten years; there were rookies who'd enlisted half a year ago and had just finished the basic training and didn't know the first thing about a war.

There were Core Formation Stage Cultivators who could blow up a skyscraper casually; there were also Cultivators at the beginning phase of the Refinement Stage whose spiritual root had awakened not long ago addressing him respectfully as 'Senior Brother'.

All the faces, including those of the ordinary people, soldiers and Cultivators, blended together, as they squinted and curled their lips. Their pure white teeth glared, and they beamed with the brightest smile in the world.

"LUM DUM! LUM DUM! LUM DUM!"

Li Yao's heart was beating faster and faster. The circulation of his blood was ten times rapider than before!

Driven my something mysterious, his spiritual root started beating like his second heart!

Absorption! Absorption! All his spiritual gas was swallowed by his spiritual root, without anything being left.

"Ahhhhh!"

Li Yao's eyes bulged. Two streams of blood dripped down from the corners of his eyes, as his spiritual root continued expanding until it occupied his entire brain.

Invisible spiritual tentacles slowly tangled his nerves and his veins, integrating with his body and forming an inseparable network.

"CRACK!"

When he couldn't bear it any longer and thought his skull was going to be pierced through by his spiritual root, lightning suddenly struck inside his brain, before his spiritual root started constricting violently. All the spiritual gas contained inside the spiritual root was condensed into liquid state and, through invisible spiritual tentacles, reached all his limbs and internal organs like an elixir.

Thousands of rivers seemed to be raging inside his body and crushing all his nerves and cells to pieces.

Yet, the infinite vitality buried deep inside the rivers reconstructed his broken cells and nerves and made them stronger and more vibrant than before.

The nine paintings of 'Meditations on Building Foundation' blinked one by one in front of his face. 'Breaking the Enemy's Formation' was played and replayed, attacking his internal organs through his ears. More than twenty years of memories flushed into his brain and created a coruscating skyscraper three-dimensionally.

Every cluster of nerve endings had been stuffed by the rivers of spiritual liquid. Li Yao floated in the air and cramped, his arms and legs all stretching out. Cracking noises were echoing inside his bones, while surging tides were crushing the seashore of his veins. The rhythm of his heartbeat and the palpitation of his spiritual root finally resonated and produced a unique, powerful note!

A long time passed.

"Hoooo..."

Li Yao woke up from the amazing, extraordinary scenes inside of his body and found himself lying on the ground exhausted. His limbs were as dry and thin as wood. Lackluster mud was everywhere on his skin, which was the waste of the metabolic process just now.

He had been reborn and made a great leap forward in the path of Cultivation.

By his perception, more than one year had passed. But looking at the spiritual clock on the wall, it was only half an hour after he had first entered the training room.

"I made it!

"The spiritual gas inside my body has all been transformed to liquid state, which is circulating in the newly formed spiritual arteries slowly. My spiritual root has evolved, too. It can transform spiritual gas into spiritual liquid continuously now!"

Li Yao wanted to smile, but he didn't even have the strength to curl his lips.

"Zi! Zi!"

From the holes on the walls of the training room, deep blue thick liquid flowed out, which was the super nutrition liquids specially prepared for Cultivators who had just entered the Building Foundation Stage.

After a moment, Li Yao was drowned inside the deep-blue nutrition liquids. He opened all his pores and started devouring spiritual energy crazily as if he had been starved for years.

Centered around him, a swirl was revolving slowly inside the training room.

While he was refilling his spiritual energy, Li Yao's soul flew to the depths of his brain to the tree of memory of Ou Yezi.

As he expected!

After he entered the Building Foundation Stage, Ou Yezi's tree of memory had been further unlocked.

The crown of the tree of memory was glitteringly gold, illuminating his brain in a dazzling glamour.

"The huge number of memories after Ou Yezi entered the Building Foundation Stage can be absorbed by me now!"

Li Yao was more than excited.

Back in the Hundred Smelting Clan 40,000 years ago, a lot of events had taken place during the dozens of years when Ou Yezi was at the Building Foundation Stage.

Firstly, Ou Yezi was qualified to enter the second level of the Heavenly Refining Tower where he would study more advanced secret arts on refining.

Secondly, demonic Cultivators invaded and caused bloody wars. Ou Yezi upgraded the 108 Hands Chaos Gale Hammer Technique to 189 moves, which worked out effectively on the battleground allowing him to punch 24 demonic Cultivators at the Building Foundation Stage into pieces at the same time.

Thirdly, Ou Yezi was recruited by Daoist Yu Chang, an Elder of the Hundred Smelting Clan, as his student and became one of the core disciples of the Hundred Smelting Clan.

It was a piece of memory when Ou Yezi first got in touch with the vital secret arts of the Hundred Smelting Clan.

Now, they were all Li Yao's and ready to be absorbed by Li Yao at his will.

"Excellent!

"As long as I can absorb the memory pieces from when Ou Yezi was at the Building Foundation Stage, I will be able to grasp the real secret arts of the Hundred Smelting Clan and refine the legendary weapons that have not been seen for millenniums!

"Moreover, I will be able to train myself with most brutal ways of fighting on the battleground of the demonic Cultivators' invasion 40,000 years ago!

"After that, even I'm to be faced with a demon king, I will not be entirely on the losing side!"

Sparkling memory pieces aroused Li Yao's vehement greediness, who almost couldn't wait to start studying them without anything bothering him.

But he knew that now was not the time yet.

He withdrew from Ou Yezi's memory pieces hesitantly and returned to reality. The deep-blue nutrition liquids, which had been thick a moment ago, were now transparent and tasteless.

The spiritual energy contained inside had all been absorbed by Li Yao's body, which was filled up again and full of vigor, like a new-born baby.

The effluent was soon extracted by the sinkhole on the ground of the training room. After a while of humming sounds, even the air was extremely dry.

Ten round dynameters dropped down from the ceiling, which were spinning swiftly in midair, driven by power rune arrays.

Li Yao smiled.

This was a test that he had preset in order to find out how strong he was after he entered the Building Foundation Stage.

"Not fast enough… Triple the speed!"

"Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!"

Ten dynameters were revolving fast, at thirty revolutions per second, while they were flying at random directions in the air.

Every dynameter was the size of a watermelon, but the sensitive area on it was only the size of a fist. Only by hitting the sensitive area precisely would the punch be counted and the strength of the punch be recorded. Otherwise, the punch would be deemed as a failure.

It was not easy to hit such a small sensitive area on a dynameter which was revolving this fast.

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao squatted. A dense aura suddenly burst out from his body.

At first glance, it was more modest and restrained, and fast less eye-catching compared with that when he was at the Refinement Stage. But in fact, it was more firm, steady, and inexhaustible. There were absolutely no weak points.

Li Yao turned into a laser. The small training room was filled with hundreds of his blurred shadows. The light beams around displayed a series of readings. It was not until a moment later that the sound of the dynameters being punched echoed.

Half a minute later, all the blurred shadows gathered in the center of the training room where they consolidated into Li Yao's real body. The ten dynameters were quivering over his head, which seemed like they could fall to the ground at any moment.

A drop of sweat appeared on Li Yao's forehead, as he watched at the light beams around him in satisfaction.

The reading on the first light beam was 111.11 kg.

The reading on the second light beam was 222.22 kg.

And so on. Until the tenth light beam where the reading stopped at 1111.11 kg.

In half a second, he had punched each dynameter one hundred times with exactly the same strength which rose up according to the number of the dynameters. There was no error whatsoever.

This was the true power of a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator!

Chapter 350: Hope and Vigor!

Chapter 350: Hope and Vigor!

The door of the training room slowly opened, from which Li Yao walked out.

Watery brightness was curving around him, cladding him in a translucent battle armor which was glittering in the sunlight.

Yuan Manqiu, Xiong Baili, as well as many teachers and soldiers in the military base recognized what had happened when they saw his grand appearance.

"Building Foundation Stage! A Cultivator has entered the Building Foundation Stage!"

"Who is it? Let me through! Who broke into the Building Foundation Stage?"

"Li Yao! Li Yao of the Grand Desolate War Institution!"

"Vulture Li Yao has successfully entered the Building Foundation Stage!"

Exclamations came from the crowd nonstop. More people ran to the spot upon hearing the news, as they gazed at Li Yao in admiration.

Neither Xiong Baili nor Yuan Manqiu were combat-type Cultivators. Naturally, they would not be involved in the battles inside Red Lotus City directly but were fulfilling their duties in different positions inside the military base.

As a knowledgeable admin-type Cultivator, Xiong Baili was in charge of analyzing the identity, features, and specialties of the expert demons and store their detailed files into databases for future references.

As a refiner, Yuan Manqiu, leading the refiners from the Grand Desolate War Institution, was responsible for maintaining the damaged magical equipment in the fierce battles.

The moment they heard that Li Yao was breaking into the Building Foundation Stage, they hurried to his training room and happened to run into Li Yao who was just walking out of the training room dazzlingly.

Yuan Manqiu's thrill was apparent from her expression. Xiong Baili was nodding his head approvingly, too. Other teachers were also smiling with their mouths wide open.

In this fierce battle unseen for over the past hundred years, breakthroughs were not unusual. During the past ten days, the spiritual roots of many ordinary soldiers had undergone mutations, making them become Cultivators. There were also several Refinement Stage Cultivators who perceived the true destiny of Cultivation and embarked on the Building Foundation Stage.

Li Yao was not the first of them. But he was definitely the youngest.

Stepping into the Building Foundation Stage before 25 years old. He was even one year younger than Ding Lingdang when she entered the Building Foundation Stage. It was a remarkable achievement, not just locally but nationwide!

Xiong Baili and Yuan Manqiu exchanged glances with mixed feelings.

In recent years, the Grand Desolate War Institution had been quite fortunate. At first, Ding Lingdang distinguished herself as one of the youngest Building Foundation Cultivators in the federation; then, the Refining Department rose to fame; now, Li Yao had entered the Building Foundation Stage as a student.

Without anyone knowing, the Grand Desolate War Institution was no longer the tail-ender among the Nine Elite Universities in regard of the comprehensive capability. It was almost as good as the influential colleges such as Star Nebula University and First Military Academy of the Federation.

"Professor, Principal, I've entered the Building Foundation Stage!"

Li Yao withdrew the liquefied spiritual gas and enjoyed the amazing feeling when every vein and nerve of his was being nurtured by the elixir with complicated thoughts.

He had finally caught up to where Ding Lingdang had been more than one year ago, through arduousness and troubles that only he knew.

There was still a long way to go ahead.

But, with the support of so many people, he was confident to finish the journey one step after another.

"Beep!"

Li Yao turned on the mini crystal processor, opened the war mission system, and upgraded his files with his latest progress.

"Li Yao of the Grand Desolate War Institution has entered the Building Foundation Stage. Applying for missions that befit his current strength."

Li Yao nodded at Xiong Baili and Yuan Manqiu in apology.

"Sorry, Professor, Principal. My Cultivation is not stable at this moment since I just stepped into the Building Foundation Stage and I need to be engaged in massive fierce battles to consolidate it!"

"That's alright. Go now."

Yuan Manqiu smiled. She and Xiong Baili were too experienced not to know the criticalness of the period when one just entered the Building Foundation Stage. Naturally, they wouldn't hamstring him.

Xiong Baili patted his shoulder and said solemnly, "Li Yao, remember, the Grand Desolate War Institution will always be proud of you!"

Li Yao was stunned for a moment. He had never expected the serious, meticulous principal to be so emotional.

After a while, Li Yao's lips curled, as he put on a sunny smile on his face.

"Principle, professor, I'm always proud of the Grand Desolate War Institution, too!"

"Shua!"

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit enclosed him again.

Different from when he was at the Refinement Stage, Li Yao did not feel the least hindering from the equipment. The suit had melted into his flesh and blood, while the crystal processor and his brain had integrated into one.

Li Yao turned into a gold laser and darted towards Red Lotus City.

The fifty kilometers of distance were covered in no time. He appeared in the sky of the battleground which had been enshrouded in cannon fire and smoke.

"Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!"

Four arrows of acids, three streams of venomous liquid and an invisible blast interweaved into a deadly net and thrusted at him.

"It feels... good!"

Li Yao sensed his brand-new body of the Building Foundation Stage, while his soul rippled away and located eight bizarre-shaped figures in a dark corner by tracing back the furious attacks.

"Shua!"

The eight attacks hit him, or rather, his blurred shadow, simultaneously. Li Yao himself was not at the place anymore. He turned into raging wind as he lunged at a collapsed building.

"Now commences my first battle in the Building Foundation Stage!"

...

Starting from that day, the intensity of the battles that Li Yao was engaged in within Red Lotus City had reached a whole new height.

As a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator, with the enhancement of his crystal suit, Li Yao was already one of the super elites on the battleground now. His appearance often meant the victory of his side in a battle.

He had also marched into the underground together with many other Building Foundation Cultivators and demolished dozens of the demon beasts' dens. He even slayed a seriously wounded high-level demon general in person.

Day by day, his strength had been on the rise in the bloody battles. He finally stabilized himself in the Building Foundation Stage.

In the meantime, the War of Seven Cities had almost come to end.

The brutal war lasted only some twenty days, which was even shorter than large-scale beast tide outbreaks.

However, the toughness of the regular army of the demon clan was fully demonstrated nonetheless.

Until the last moment, the regular demon army was still well-disciplined. It retreated silently overnight, leaving mediocre demon beasts behind as cannon fodder.

They also left a lot of deadly traps in the underground.

Red Lotus City was fine. But in Sunlit Cloud City, more than half of the underground ghost market was blown up by the demon clan at the same time. Caught off guard, one Core Formation Stage Cultivator was killed, and another seriously wounded, not counting the many more missing Refinement Stage Cultivators and Building Foundation Stage Cultivators who were buried hundreds of meters under the ground.

The tragedy cast haze to the joy of victory.

...

In the morning, the first ray of sunlight reached the battle-scarred city.

Li Yao and Yuan Manqiu were walking on an uneven street.

"During the war, you've earned enough battle credits to meet the criterion of graduation.

"Besides, it seems inappropriate for you to keep being a student now that you're in the Building Foundation Stage."

Yuan Manqiu smiled. "You should prepare to graduate when we're back. What's your future plan?"

Before Li Yao was able to answer, she continued, "The demon invasion this time was quite abrupt. Thankfully, two legions of the federal army have been equipped with the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuits, making them the first two crystal suit legions in the world.

"The performance of the two legions was quite remarkable. Stationed in Eastern Stone City and Eternal Mountain City, they managed to resist the surging beast tide without much help from high-level Cultivators and killed a huge portion of the regular army of the demon clan, like two millstones of blood and flesh.

"They were also one of the reasons why the demon clan suddenly retreated.

"The military is very satisfied with the performance of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. They have expressed their interest in increasing the amount of purchase to build up at least twenty crystal suit legions within the next three years.

"Therefore, we'll be quite busy for a long time to come. How about staying in school after graduation as a researcher?

"This is a formal invitation from me on behalf of Principal Xiong.

"As for your benefits, you will be offered a package according to the highest standard. It will be even higher than Ding Lingdang's when she first started her career.

"You will still be able to enjoy the subsequent profits of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, too.

"If you want to better your martial arts, you can always communicate with the teachers of the school. Nobody will hold anything back from you."

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and stared at the rising sun. Pondering for a long time, he shook his head.

"Professor, I've made plans for what I will do in the next couple of years.

"Project Mystic Skeleton has succeeded. Many people in the military and in the Cultivation world who are skilled Exos wear the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit professionally now. I'm just a test pilot who would not be of much significance even if I stayed. I believe that the professors and experts are excellent enough for the revision and improvement work.

"There's something that I haven't told you yet.

"I have an invitation card from Occult Orbs Fellowship.

"Speaking of my future plans, I will dedicate myself to training, before I join Occult Orbs Fellowship and explore the relics and secret treasures that were buried during the 40,000 years of blood wars."

Over the past half a year, the federal government had unveiled to the public a lot of secret projects and plans. Occult Orbs Fellowship gradually revealed itself to the public, too.

Besides, for an extraordinary figure such as Yuan Manqiu, she had heard of the existence of Occult Orbs Fellowship back when she was in Deep Sea University. She had also been invited to several magical equipment seminars to study the secret treasures recovered from the Occult Orbs.

Therefore, she was not surprised when she heard the name of Occult Orbs Fellowship. Raising her eyebrow, she commented, "Exploring the Occult Orbs can be dangerous."

Li Yao nodded his head.

"It is indeed. The casualty rate of the explorers is stunningly high. That's why I can't accept the offer of the school right now.

"However, exploring and training in the Occult Orbs will boost my speed of Cultivation, too!

"Professor, we both know that the War of Seven Cities was just a beginning. There will be even more fierce battles where more expert demons will show up.

"I don't… want to be a spectator on the ground craning my head dumbly watching the engagement of the elites.

"I crave for the strength which can enable me to fight with them.

"I also hope that I can dig out unfathomably ferocious magical equipment from the Occult Orbs which is powerful enough to blow a demon emperor into pieces with one shot!

"Therefore, I have to go to the Occult Orbs!"

Yuan Manqiu was amused.

"Don't be childish. Even if there are prehistoric treasures inside the Occult Orbs, they will be protected by all kinds of barriers, which will be too much for a beginner Building Foundation Stage Cultivator such as yourself to excavate or manipulate.

"But you're right about one thing. A great war is coming. We all have to try our best to Cultivate. You have the full support from both me and Principal Xiong.

"The Grand Desolate War Institution will always welcome you. Please come back any time!"

"Of course I will!"

Li Yao smiled. "I'm definitely coming back. Don't forget that I'm going to knock the Refining Department of Deep Sea University to the ground, and the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution will take their place!"

The two of them looked at each other and laughed. Then they stared at the heated scenes of infrastructure rebuilding which was soaking in morning glow.

In the depths of the underground, battles were still breaking out now and then.

But on the ground, the reconstruction work had already begun.

Thousands of soldiers of the federal army were driving large-scale bulldozers and excavators. Some of them were even clearing away the ruins with spades that had been carved with rune arrays.

Red Lotus City was on a mother lode of a huge reserve. There was no way that the federal government was giving up such a precious place.

The old Red Lotus City had been devastated by the warfare. But with the help of the advanced magical equipment of the modern Cultivation civilization, a new, larger Red Lotus City would rise up from the ashes in no time, this time with higher city walls, stronger defense, denser street barricades, more flying sword formations, more automatic security systems, and keener underground monitoring systems.

More valiant soldiers and Cultivators who had been educated by the war would stay and guard the place.

Besides a dilapidated building, Li Yao suddenly stopped.

His eyes were attracted by a fresh greenness.

A blade of grass popped up from the blackened messes and danced in the morning breeze.

It didn't know what had happened to the city; it only stretched in the warm sunlight and sprayed hope and vigor.

Chapter 351: It Was You, Li Yao!

Chapter 351: It Was You, Li Yao!

In the meantime, the Red Tide Moss was also growing crazily in the blood-like moonlight.

There were three moons in the Blood Demon Sector. The furthest one was very dreary, and looked like a dim, fuzzy spot of light. But the other two moons were very close and large, resembling two devil eyes that were never shut, out of which crimson light beamed out and dyed the entire world red.

Hence the name of the Blood Demon Sector.

The Red Tide Moss was a very weird life form that seemed to be a mix of an animal, a plant, and a fungus. Under the shining blood moon, it could surge out like a red tide and cover an entire mountain overnight with a thickness of several meters.

Countless demonic plants pierced their roots into the Red Tide Moss and sucked the demonic energy of the Blood Moons contained in it.

Innumerable mediocre demon beasts would feast upon the demonic plants, which then ended up being food for higher-level demons.

It was with the amazing ecosystem made by the Blood Moons and the Red Tide Moss that the energy provided by the stars was utilized to the greatest extent, which was also the reason why the Blood Demon Sector could produce so many expert demons and beast tides despite the unfavorable environment.

Right now, on a rugged, rocky mountain road, a long team whose head and tail couldn't be seen at the same time was marching on.

It was the regular army which had retreated from the Heaven's Origin Sector carrying a lot of dead bodies of the demons.

In the bottom of the valley, deep holes more than ten meters in diameter which were deep and enshrouded in black fog were everywhere.

Grunts could be heard from the bottom of the holes now and then, indicating that some gargantuan demon beasts were taking the place as their home.

Almost a hundred warlocks were standing beside the burrows wearing seven-colored feather clothes with devilish rings and staffs. Earsplitting shrieks were uttered from their mouths and echoed in the valley, before they congregated into the most soul-stirring music of the demons.

"Huala! Huala!"

The demon bodies were thrown into the black burrows.

From deep down the burrows, chewing noises immediately came out, which were indeed blood-freezing.

But the demons of the regular army carrying the bodies were all overjoyed and danced in great happiness. Many of them were watching the scene in admiration.

The warlocks bellowed, "Souls of the warriors of the saint clan now return to the Pantheon of Demons and will live forever as demon spirits!

In the team carrying the dead bodies, there were some demons who were too seriously wounded to be cured. When they passed by the burrows, flames suddenly burst out in their eyes as they screamed out.

"Long live the demon spirits!"

"Pantheon of Demons, embrace me!"

While they were screaming, they leaped forward and jumped into the burrows.

Feeble screams seemed to be coming from in the chewing sounds, but they were mostly blocked by the black fog.

The valley was now a sea of cheers.

Not far away from the valley, there was an enormous mountain which pierced through the sky like a tusk. It had almost been emptied and was riddled with tunnels and caves.

Thousands of giant, red crystals were embedded on two sides of the pathways. Each crystal was breeding a bizarre-shaped demon, many of whom were grimacing in pain as their flesh and blood were being torn apart and granulation tissue was growing crazily.

The countless tunnels zigzagged and gathered in the depths of the tusk-like mountain, leading to a vast mansion.

On a corner of the mansion, there was a blood pool about three meters in diameter. Intense stenches were being emitted from the thick, red liquids which were bubbling with hot steam.

It seemed like both blood and magma!

Wang Ji was soaked in the blood pool. His head was the only part that was exposed to the air. But the raging spoondrift hit his face now and then, and after every hit, a large cluster of skin and flesh would be ripped off, revealing the pale bones below. But after the next hit, his flesh and skin were reconstructed.

Wang Ji had been soaking in the 'Rebirth Pool' for nine days and nine nights.

It was both a treatment and a cruel punishment.

For nine days and nine nights, his flesh was corroded, filled up, re-corroded, and refilled up, and so on. He felt that thousands of ants were nibbling on his heart and couldn't be more miserable.

But Wang Ji dared not show the slightest pain or discontent. Even his moans had to be suffocated within his own throat, because he did not wish to disturb the one who had been contemplating inside the mansion.

It was Elder Blood Robe, his teacher and master, as well as a formidable demon emperor!

The form of society of the Blood Demon Sector was different from that of the Star Glory Federation. It could be divided into countless demon tribes. When several tribes collaborated, they would call themselves a kingdom. Dozens of demon kingdoms large and small had always been at war with each other. The Kingdom of Lion Butchers, in which Wang Ji was born, was one of the stronger ones.

Above the demon kingdoms, there were demon emperors, who claimed to be the spokespersons for the Pantheon of Demons in the Blood Demon Sector with their immense powers allowing them to communicate with billions of demon spirits in the infinite sea of stars.

It was under the leadership of the demon emperors that dozens of demon kingdoms in conflict could unite and attack the Heaven's Origin Sector together.

Wang Ji was the 21st son of the Lord of Lion Butchers. In an attempt to assume the title 'prince' to be the rightful heir, he gathered a few subordinates and sneaked into the Thunderous Sound Mountain trying to tame the mutated lion dragon.

However, when he was one step close to victory, somebody interrupted. Not only did the guy murder the mutated lion dragon, he also set up a trap with the demon core of the mutated lion dragon which blew all his loyal subjects to pieces.

But Wang Ji was not fated to doom yet. After the big explosion, the two demon kings that his father sent to support and supervise him were also seriously wounded.

On the other hand, he was almost entirely free from any injury with a piece of demonic equipment that his mother gave him.

Wang Ji made up his mind quickly. He ambushed the two demon kings and slayed them, before digging out their demon cores.

Then, he escaped to the Blood Demon Sector and found a peaceful place to digest the demon cores in order to improve his strength.

When he was out on a hunting trip, he met Elder Blood Robe.

After absorbing two demon cores, Wang Ji had been completely transformed and his blood had been cleansed. Elder Blood Robe thought highly of him and recruited him as a disciple.

After that, Wang Ji returned to the Kingdom of Lion Butchers with the support of Elder Blood Robe and cleaned up his dozens of brothers as fast as a lightning. Not only did he ascend on the seat of prince, he was even able to stand equal to his father now, if not planning to oust his father at some point.

However, this was as far as his luck went.

This invasion to the Heaven's Origin Sector was only meant to be a test battle for the larger-scale conquest later. But Wang Ji took it for an opportunity to make remarkable achievements. Not only did he make thorough plans for the battle, he even begged Elder Blood Robe over and over for the Red Jade Mist Mirage Saber.

He had thought that he would be able to slay dozens of Building Foundation Stage Cultivators with the help of the saber. With any luck, he could even ambush several lone and wounded Core Formation Stage Cultivators!

The one rule that applied for the Blood Demon Sector was survival of the fittest. The winner took it all; the loser had to fall. Capability and credits mattered more than anything else.

If he could really kill a Core Formation Stage Cultivator, thousands of warriors in the Kingdom of Lion Butchers would gather behind his blood saber and listen to his command after he was back. His old father would definitely lose popularity.

It was a pity that… he failed!

Not only was his physical body completely ruined, he even lost the Red Jade Mist Mirage Saber that he had borrowed from Elder Blood Robe when he was going to the Heaven's Origin Sector.

"I hate it!"

The moment he thought of the Cultivator who sabotaged his endeavor, Wang Ji's head was dizzy because of fury. The teeth that just grew out were grinded into pieces again.

That Cultivator was not even in the Building Foundation Stage yet, and he was wearing nothing but an MP crystal suit. But Wang Ji suffered a crushing defeat because of all his dirty tricks.

"Sordid Cultivator, I will find you and kill you, your family, your friends, your lover, and your teachers, leaving no one behind. I will mince you all!"

Wang Ji finally grumbled in the excruciating pain.

A moment later, his grumble suddenly stopped, as if a sharp blade had cut open his neck.

Deep inside the mansion, a crimson figure drifted over slowly.

It was a handsome, almost 'flawless', man. There was not the slightest hint of demon beast on his body. His skin was smooth and fair, like that of a new-born baby. His face looked like that of a naïve child of seven to eight years old.

But his eyes were full of age, gloom, and darkness, which seemed to belong to a 300-year-old senior.

A red robe was on his body, flowing slowly like blood.

He was Elder Blood Robe, a demon emperor!

After Elder Blood Robe appeared, the intensity of the blood pool was ten times higher. Thousands of sprouts of blood emerged from the liquids and pulled Wang Ji's face desperately like thousands of tiny hands.

Wang Ji was in such agony that tears were coming down. But he didn't not dare to complain.

With a smile, Elder Blood Robe enjoyed Wang Ji's suffering for a moment, before he opened his mouth in a low voice,

"Wang Ji, do you acknowledge your fault?"

Wang Ji almost passed out because of horror. He kept himself up while he stammered, "Master, I do acknowledge my fault. I know that the Red Jade Mist Mirage Saber is refined out of the rarely-seen marrow blood crystals thousands of meters underground which are extremely precious. But I have lost it…

"I will not weasel out from my responsibility.

"I swear to all the demon spirits in the Pantheon of Demons that I will take back the Red Jade Mist Mirage Saber within the next year. Otherwise, I'm willing to be punished by death sentence and leave my body in the wilderness instead of sending it to the Pantheon of Demons."

Elder Blood Robe glanced at him. A round, balloon-like, bright yellow demon beast suddenly appeared in his hand, which was tossed into the blood pool softly by him.

"You mentioned that it was a very tough Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit that stole the Red Jade Mist Mirage Saber. This 'Information Bug' has deciphered almost a hundred crystal processors of human beings and retrieved a lot of information regarding the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit in question. Analyze it by yourself and find out the answer!"

The appearance of the Information Bug made Wang Ji's face change color.

He had not been as terrified when he was told that he would be soaked in the blood pool for nine days and nine nights.

However, under Elder Blood Robe's glaring eyes, he had to grit his teeth and pick up the Information Bug, before pinning it to his forehead.

"Chi!"

More than ten meat sprouts darted out from the Information Bug and pierced into his head like sharp arrows.

The meat sprouts expanded, constricted, twisted and wriggled.

"Ahhhhh!"

The whites of Wang Ji's eyes were out while he screamed desperately. He struggled and stirred thousands of splashes in the blood pool.

Pictures, roars, and data crushed into his brain like a volcano eruption.

Grand Desolate War Institution, Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit!

Military bidding meeting!

Flying Crystal racing!

A Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit versus a crystal warship!

Li Yao, student of the Grand Desolate War Institution, test pilot for the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, one of the best Exos of Mystic Skeleton Battlesuits in the Heaven's Origin Sector, and also a refiner who was adept at modifying crystal suits and establishing explosive traps.

Wait a moment…

Li Yao had been taking courses for crystal suits in the Thunder Training Camp a year and a half ago, during which time he went missing in the Thunderous Sound Mountain for ten days.

Thunderous Sound Mountain?

Thunderous Sound Mountain!

The boiling blood pool suddenly froze.

Although a sharp pain was still savaging his head, Wang Ji stopped struggling and turned into a cold statue all of a sudden.

The huge amount of information in the crystal processors of human beings was connected together, making him understand everything that had happened.

Li Yao was the one that killed all his subordinates and sabotaged his attempt in the Thunderous Sound Mountain.

He was also the one who disrupted his teleportation in Red Lotus City, seriously wounded him, and stole his Red Jade

Mist Mirage Saber.

"Vulture Li Yao..."

A cruel smile appeared on Wang Ji's face, as he muttered through his broken teeth, one word after another, "It was you!"

Translator's Thoughts

flycrane01 flycrane01

Bonus Chapter (1/4)

Bonus chapters will be released on 09:00 (UTC+8) every day.

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Incentive Plan:

Power Ranking 16-20 --> 11 chapters/week (7 basic + 4 bonus)

Power Ranking 11-15 --> 13 chapters/week (7 basic + 6 bonus)

Power Ranking 4-10 --> double release

Power Ranking 1-3 --> triple release

Chapter 352: Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber

Chapter 352: Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber

"Well well well. You are quite something. Building Foundation in your junior year. It's even one year earlier than me. You truly deserve to be my boyfriend!"

In the shadowed hologram, Ding Lingdang was standing in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by countless eccentric rocks. Her fire-like combat suit was somewhat ragged, but she was in high spirits. Her hands rested on her hips, as she burst into laughter. "However, if you want to defeat me, you might as well continue training for another hundred years!

"I'm going to tell you a piece of good news. No. For you, it is probably a terribly bad one. Your sister, me, has successfully ascended to the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage! Hahahahahaha!

"Over the past few months, I've been training in a special place where I couldn't reach the outside world in order to break into the middle level. As it turns out, my efforts were not wasted. I made a breakthrough without much trouble!

"Right now, I need to stabilize myself in here for some time. I will probably be back by the end of next month. I've even got a gift for you!

"Don't be sloppy in training while I'm away. I'm very looking forward to fighting you in the Building Foundation Stage for three hundred rounds!

"Right. Now that you're in the Building Foundation Stage, don't forget to eat your Foundation Building Egg. However, don't eat it by yourself either. Wait until I'm back. You ate part of my Foundation Building Egg when I reached the Building Foundation Stage. You owe me that one!"

Ding Lingdang was talking and dancing joyfully, leaving no chance for Li Yao to interrupt.

It was not a real-time conversation, but a pre-recorded video clip.

Knowing that Ding Lingdang was safe and sound, Li Yao was greatly relieved.

He was very well aware of the personality of his human-shaped tyrannosaur girlfriend, who was a lunatic in martial arts and considered fighting as the greatest fun in her life.

There could only be one reason why Ding Lingdang didn't participate in the War of Seven Cities, which was that the training sessions she'd been engaged in were not as comfortable as they appeared to be. They could be hundreds of times more perilous than the War of Seven Cities.

Ding Lingdang must've deliberately kept the place of her training a secret to prevent him from worrying.

Maybe she was fighting in an unseen frontline in the depths of the Dark Desolate Domain!

'After just one year, she has ascended from the beginning level of the Building Foundation Stage to the middle level. It is quite amazing of her.

'I thought that I had already surpassed her. But she is always one step ahead of me.

'However, I am not a body practitioner. The gap between our capability can be made up by magical equipment!

'Anyway, I'm qualified to fight side by side with Ding Lingdang without dragging her down now!'

Li Yao smiled and turned off the video clip that he had watched countless times each day over the past few days. He focused his attention on the refining furnace and sensed the temperature change inside of it.

He was at his personal refining workshop in the Diminutive Dust Domain. It had already been one month since the War of Seven Cities.

During the one month of time, with the help of Super Perception Cabin, he dwelled in the depths of his brain and absorbed Ou Yezi's memory pieces crazily.

He had absorbed Ou Yezi's two-year-long memory pieces in the month and read a lot of the classics on refining on the second floor of the Heavenly Refining Tower. He even got in touch with a lot of core secret arts of the Hundred Smelting Clan.

Seven days ago, he was finally fully prepared and was ready to refine the Red Jade Mist Mirage Saber.

The Red Jade Mist Mirage Saber was a piece of demonic equipment designed to be wielded by demons. The energy flow as well as the working pattern was not very suitable for Cultivators to grasp.

What Li Yao wanted was not the Red Jade Mist Mirage Saber per se, but the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures contained inside.

He had separated the precious marrow blood crystals from the Red Jade Mist Mirage Saber with the secret arts of the Hundred Smelting Clan after seven days of hard work.

Then he divided the marrow blood crystals into two portions, one larger and the other smaller.

He melded the larger portion, what was left of the marrow crystals inside his Cosmos Ring, and a huge amount of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures that he spent a vast fortune on into his battler saber.

Today was the day of the melding's completion!

"Swoosh!"

Sensing the abrupt temperature changes inside the refining furnace, Li Yao felt that an irritated deadly animal was going to break out of its cage. He hurried to extend his telepathic thoughts into the refining furnace, while he quickly typed on the light beam to adjust the temperature, pressure, and direction of flames in the refining furnace.

Ten minutes later, the hole above the furnace opened, from which a red-and-blue laser dashed out with electric arcs.

Wind and thunder seemed to be echoing in the peaceful Diminutive Dust Domain.

"Freeze!"

Li Yao was fully focused. His spiritual energy surged out to the sky, as his hands was drawing hundreds of spiritual runes which snatched the laser and pulled it back to the long-prepared cooling liquids.

"Chi!"

Raging, colorful steams were popping up from the cooling pool.

After the temperature cooled a bit, Li Yao put the blade on an iron mat which had been crafted out of a meteorite.

Immense spiritual energy burst out of Li Yao's body. A giant, who was more than three meters tall, appeared in his back.

Mimicking his gesture, the giant bashed the iron mat together with him.

Two noises of forging echoed closely one after another.

After forging for a moment, the blade was thrown back to the refining furnace again, before they were polished and furbished by more than ten different cooling liquids.

The process was repeated for nineteen times until dawn arrived, and the upgrading of his battle saber was finally completed!

"Excellent!"

Sweat was all over Li Yao's back. But he was in high spirits. Spiritual energy was burning around him like flowing flames.

He touched the new-born battle saber gently and affectionately.

The battle saber that he was holding right now was 2.15 meters long and weighed 137.4 kilograms. The body of the saber was gracefully curved. The back of the saber was full of vein-like crimson streaks, which were tangled by countless violet lightning patterns, making the saber more than splendid.

Li Yao picked up the saber and waved it. Humming sounds echoed inside his brain, as he began to feel the new abilities of the saber.

The new battle saber, which had been embedded with multiple kinds of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, could not only trigger lightning and tornadoes but was also endowed with a new ability, the activation of blood aura.

Once Li Yao's spiritual energy was fully functioning, a blood aura as long as ten meters could be summoned.

When the enemy was hit by the blood aura, there would be no external injuries. But the hematopoietic system of the enemy's body would be wrecked, to the point that the body would mistake the enemy's own blood for foreign matter and resist it, eventually leading to a continuous loss of blood.

If the enemy was insignificant, second-rate demon beasts or low-level demon soldiers, they would bleed to death when they were swept by the blood aura.

Even if the enemy was an expert demon, they would still have to spare part of their demonic energy to suppress the injuries or simply flee for better treatment when they were hit.

In life-and-death combat, if the opponent continued bleeding, the situation would of course be in Li Yao's favor.

"What a marvelous, rarely-seen weapon. It is perfect even by the standards of the Hundred Smelting Clan 40,000 years ago!

"With your brand-new abilities, it's inappropriate that you don't have a proper name yet.

"I'll call you… Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber, then!"

Taking the Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber, Li Yao felt that thousands of clouds and lightning were roiling in his chest, making him more confident than ever.

As for the smaller portion of the marrow blood crystals, Li Yao was planning to refine them into the remaining eight marrow crystal bullets.

Marrow crystal bullets were Li Yao's life-saving contingencies.

In the battle against Wang Ji in Red Lotus City, it was with a marrow crystal bullet that Li Yao reversed the situation and secured the final victory.

Marrow crystal bullets were themselves powerful enough. How much further could they go if the marrow blood crystals were added in?

With the new marrow crystal bullets, as well as his Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber, even a demon king would have to pay a good price if they wanted to take him down.

"Now that I have a decent saber and new powerful bullets, with the protection of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, it should be enough for me to explore the Occult Orbs, shouldn't it?"

Li Yao played with his battle saber in ecstasy for a while. Then he took a deep breath and calmed himself down, as he picked out the Occult Orbs Card.

Over the past month, other than devouring Ou Yezi's memory pieces inside his brain, Li Yao dedicated the rest of his time into cracking the boundless labyrinth inside the Occult Orbs Card.

He had a feeling that he was close to success.

Touching the surface of the card softly, Li Yao saw those same four words again.

'When Stars Are Shining'.

Li Yao shut his eyes and started meditating. All the body cell activities were suppressed to minimum. But his telepathic thoughts kept expanding.

A huge amount of liquefied spiritual energy flowed out of his spiritual root into the labyrinth inside the Occult Orbs Card like thousands of rivers.

Even the most complicated maze couldn't stop promptly-changing water. Li Yao's telepathic thoughts gradually entered deeper, deeper and deeper inside the labyrinth flowing together with the spiritual liquid.

He seemed to have heard… the calling of stars!

BOOM!

Lightning struck inside his brain. He suddenly saw scenes of bizarre yet magnificent wars.

In prosperous and populated metropolises, below deep and rugged valleys, on ever-surging oceans, billions of soldiers of the human army and the demon army were colliding.

Even the most ordinary soldier in the human army was wearing glamorous crystals suit and wielding weapons whose auras could be dozens of meters long.

In the meantime, the vanguard of the demon army was exclusively made of demon kings!

In the sky, crystal warships of the human beings and devil warships of the demon clan had blocked the sun, making the broad daylight almost look like midnight.

Out of the atmosphere, in the background of the starry sky, a Babel Battle Star, which was known as 'stellar magical equipment' that was even larger than some satellite planets, was enshrouded in thousands of mystic colors, fighting against an endless beast tide in space.

Suddenly, an uncanny wind blew over. Everything that Li Yao saw, both the formidable troops of human beings and those of the demon clan, turned into lackluster rocks and stood still on the desolate battlegrounds like billions of statues.

Then, the entire world collapsed, turning into countless pieces which flew in the dark void before sinking into nothingness in the end.

"Hoooo…"

Li Yao let out a long breath. He blinked and found himself exhausted and covered in sweat, although he was still in the Diminutive Dust Domain.

The starry sky and the words on the Occult Orbs Card were all gone. What replaced them was a picture of a vast orbital system whose one end pierced into the sky and vanished into the cosmos.

It looked like a launch base for some sort of warships.

However, the anti-gravity technology of the Star Glory Federation was quite advanced, with which crystal warships could fly out of the atmosphere directly. What use was there in such an orbital system?

Li Yao was quite confused.

But there was one thing that he was certain about.

He had passed the first test. Occult Orbs Fellowship was now open to him!

Chapter 353: Live Short and Prosper

Chapter 353: Live Short and Prosper

Very soon, colorful ripples appeared on the surface of the Occult Orbs Card, which seemed to have been washed by invisible rain. The pattern on the card blurred, until it turned into two lines of runes in the end.

The first line was an address on the Nexus, while the second line was a key written in spiritual tattoo.

Li Yao turned on his crystal processor. He thought of something and didn't enter the address of Occult Orbs Fellowship immediately. Instead, he logged in the Cultivators' network of the Heaven's Origin Sector.

Wars are always the fastest way of communication between civilizations.

In the War of Seven Cities, a lot of members of the regular army of the demon clan were captured alive by the Star Glory Federation, including many silver-blood demons who knew confidential information about the Blood Demon Sector.

Cultivators of the Heaven's Origin Sector naturally had countless methods to make the silver-blood demons open their mouths, or even retrieve information from their heads directly.

Right now, the federation had a much deeper understanding of its enemy.

The files regarding the social form of the Blood Demon Sector, its technology, demonic skills, names of the elite demons, and so on were hundreds of times more abundant than previously.

Most of the files, after being classified and labelled, were uploaded to the Cultivators' network.

At present, Li Yao was one of the Building Foundation Stage Cultivators who were the nuclei of the Cultivation world. His authorization on the Cultivators' network was significantly upgraded, allowing him to read the files freely.

Triggering the searching ability, Li Yao first pictured 'Wang Ji', the expert demon, in his mind, before he typed in his opponent's name on his mini crystal processor.

A search was conducted based on the two conditions. The system soon located a lot of information for him.

"Wang Ji, prince of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers, disciple of Elder Blood Robe who is one of the strongest demons in the Blood Demon Sector?"

A cruel smile appeared on Li Yao's face, while coldness resembling the brightness of his saber flashed in his eyes.

He had been keeping his enemy's last curse in his mind and dared not to forget it for even a single second.

He hadn't expected for Wang Ji to have such an impressive background.

Li Yao was aware that in the War of Seven Cities, a lot of Cultivators went missing, many of whom must've been seized by the demon clan.

Besides, according to the post-war analysis, the priority target after the demons took down each of the seven cities was always the super crystal processor center.

Dozens of mainframe crystal processors which had remarkable computational ability had been stolen by the demon clan.

It was not hard to guess that they were also trying to learn more about the Heaven's Origin Sector by gathering the data stored in the crystal processors.

Li Yao didn't like to keep a low profile and hardly hid his identity and capability on purpose. His own Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was conspicuously different from other Mystic Skeleton Battlesuits, too.

Moreover, his deeds in the Thunderous Sound Mountain and in the Magical Equipment Exposition, especially his performance in the Flying Crystal race, had been detailed in quite a few magazines, newspapers and forums.

After collecting and sorting out the information, it would not be difficult to find out who he was.

Since 'Wang Ji' was a prince of a demon kingdom as well as a disciple of a demon emperor, the resources at his disposal must be enormous. It was quite possible that the guy had already found out who Li Yao was and wouldn't let him go easily.

But, so what?

"You want to kill me, but you don't know that I'm also planning to kill you. Let's see whose neck is harder!

"As the saying goes, nothing should be repeated more than three times. In the previous two times fought, no one died. Next time I run into you, I will definitely slay you!"

Li Yao activated the tracing ability of the Cultivators' network.

Any updates about Wang Ji would be sent to the mailbox of his spiritual crane messenger automatically and remind him to read.

Finishing everything, Li Yao finally left the Cultivators' network and entered the address of Occult Orbs Fellowship.

A quickly spinning nebula unfolded in front of his eyes as if it were a dream.

Li Yao immediately reacted. His two hands turned into a cluster of gold as he typed in the key in the gap of the nebula.

After a hum, the spinning nebula slowed down.

Soon, the brightness of the stars consolidated into a gold, translucent figure whose face was as vivid as that of a real person. Li Yao felt that the man was somewhat familiar.

"Mr. Li Yao, greetings!

"I didn't expect you to pass the test of the Occult Orbs Card so quickly. You have the opportunity to become an official member of Occult Orbs Fellowship now.

"I am Gao Tieyi, a Secondary Deacon of Occult Orbs Fellowship. I will answer all your questions about Occult Orbs Fellowship and lead you to us!"

His name immediately reminded Li Yao of something.

Gao Tieyi was a Cultivator at the peak of the Building Foundation Stage, but he was not fifty yet, which made him the youngest Elder of Purple Cloud Temple. He was best at administration and analysis. Last year, he made it to the 'Top 100 Celebrities of the Cultivation World', a list proposed by a weekly magazine named 'Young Cultivators' annually.

A Secondary Deacon who was in charge of such a trivial affair like guiding newcomers was such an influential figure. Occult Orbs Fellowship was indeed powerful.

Gao Tieyi read his face well. He smiled.

"Occult Orbs Fellowship is an organization beyond all the sects and forces in the federation. You may compare it to loose organizations such as the 'Refiners' Association' or 'Demon Hunters' Association'.

"Joining Occult Orbs Fellowship does not mean you have to quit the sect that you are in at present. In fact, most Cultivation sects encourage their disciples to join Occult Orbs Fellowship and explore the endless mysteries of the sea of stars!

"Of course, the Occult Orbs are perilous places. Even those which have been explored many times can still entail fatal dangers. The casualty rate of the explorers is very high!

"Besides, many of their injuries were caused by the ancient magical equipment and secret arts. The Cultivation technology we have right now may not be enough to treat them at all.

"Therefore, whether or not you join Occult Orbs Fellowship, and if you do, whether or not you explore the Occult Orbs in person, will all be decided by you. No one will force you to do anything.

"However, Mr. Li Yao, you are one of the youngest Building Foundation Cultivators of the federation, as well as a rarely-seen hybrid-type Cultivator. Personally, I look forward to your participation very much. At least, you can visit the headquarters of Occult Orbs Fellowship before you make your final decision. How about it?"

"Sounds good!" Li Yao nodded his head unhesitatingly.

…

Three days later, a blue, clear crystal airship which seemed to be carved out of a giant intact crystal was rushing under the blue sky, leaving circular exhaust flames while raising the exclamations of passengers on other crystal airships nearby.

The spacious cabin was designed into a luxury suite. Seven quiet, low-key Cultivators were seated at the corners of the cabin, while they eyed each other in respect, if not with a slight hint of competitiveness.

Sending someone into the Occult Orbs would consume a lot of resources, not to mention that the Occult Orbs themselves were full of dangers.

Those qualified to enter the Occult Orbs were all one-in-ten-thousand geniuses and elites of elites.

The seven of them were all given an opportunity to join Occult Orbs Fellowship, which apparently made them competitors.

However, if they all passed the tests, it was quite possible that they would become companions and explore the Occult Orbs together.

'Zhao Mo from Ten Ultimacies Union, a Cultivator in the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage who slayed more than thirty demon generals in the War of Seven Cities. His spiritual root was a strangely mutated one. The more seriously he is injured, the higher his combat ability becomes. He is a lunatic that gets madder and stronger as the battle proceeds.

'Cao Tongtian from Leopard Valley, a rarely-seen hybrid-type Cultivator in the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage. Other than combat, he is also talented in researching and is best at taming and reining crystal beasts.

'Nie Junxia from Heavenly Essence Village, known as the fastest swordsman of the younger generation. In a sword match hosted by the five major sword-training sects, he defeated twelve disciples from the five sword-training sects in a row as a disciple from a non-sword-training sect!

'Well well well. They're all the best Cultivators of the younger generation who have enormous potential!'

Sitting in a corner, Li Yao was quite amazed.

It was not a lie that Occult Orbs was the top organization for the Cultivators of the Heaven's Origin Sector. The guys who'd been invited were all well-known celebrities, none of whom were easy to deal with.

But of course, the other young experts were also eyeing him with astonishment and appreciation.

As one of the youngest Building Foundation Cultivators of the federation and an important contributor to Project Mystic Skeleton, Li Yao had spread his name to every corner of the Cultivation world.

Without searching on the Nexus, the young experts had all recognized who he was and considered him to be one of the most dangerous competitors.

'Is that Vulture Li Yao? I'm told that he is one of the best refiners of the younger generation. The crystal reactor of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was designed by him.'

'His combat ability is amazing, too. In the Battle of Red Lotus City, not only did he disrupt the teleportation of a demon prince by brute force, he even managed to seriously wound the enemy later!'

'Occult Orbs Fellowship is indeed a place of geniuses. Even such a remarkable person has been tempted!'

The other six young experts were talking to each other with their expressions.

A bright, grey ball which was full of holes flew to the middle of the cabin and emitted lights. A gold figure was consolidated by the brilliance. Gao Tieyi, the Secondary Deacon of Occult Orbs Fellowship, appeared. He smiled and said, "Please be prepared, everyone. We're almost here."

Li Yao looked through the window. It was a desolate desert outside.

They were still on the Grand Desolate Plateau.

"Deacon Gao, I have a question."

Cao Tongtian from Leopard Valley suddenly asked, "Why is Occult Orbs Fellowship headquartered on the Grand Desolate Plateau? Wouldn't it be under the harassment and scourge of the demon clan?"

"Good question!"

Gao Tieyi nodded his head approvingly. "It has to do with the key technology that enables us to explore the Occult Orbs.

"If possible, we would have preferred to establish the headquarters and launch bases further inland. But the space barrier of the inland is too stable, which blocks the sky like an invisible yet extremely thick wall and makes it very difficult to break the entanglement of our world.

"In comparison, the space barrier above the Grand Desolate Plateau is very weak, riddled with holes large and small.

"As the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven's Origin Sector draw closer to each other, the attractive force between the two worlds is getting stronger and stronger. We can transform it into impetus, which can boost us to break the limit of our world like wind pushing a ship and set us off into the infinite sea of stars!

"Therefore, although it is dangerous, we had to set up the headquarters and launch bases of Occult Orbs Fellowship on the Grand Desolate Plateau!

"Of course, the demon clan discovered the place a long time ago. But, so what?

"You must've realized that most of the elite Cultivators of the Heaven's Origin Sector have been gathered here. If the demon clan was capable enough of breaching this place, there would be no safe place in the entire Heaven's Origin Sector at all, not even the capital city. What's the point of hiding Occult Orbs Fellowship then?"

Everyone was amused by his witty words.

Cao Tongtian scratched his head and grinned in pride.

There was no doubt that the strongest experts of the Cultivation world of the Heaven's Origin Sector had congregated in this place. If this place was compromised, it meant that the Heaven's Origin Sector had totally lost. How was that possible?

Soon, the crystal warship lowered its altitude.

In the front was a black, giant, half-circular stone which had been embedded with billions of crystals. They were glittering in the warm sunlight like blinking stars.

The stone was like a lonely gate on the desert. Its diameter was more than five-hundred meters, dwarfing the crystal airship as if it were an ant.

On the top part of the gate, nine gallant words were carved.

'THIS PLACE FOREVER BANS YOU FROM A LONG LIFE!'

The words silenced the seven Cultivators, who were deep in thought, pondering what they meant.

Gao Tieyi said, "Passing through the 'Gate of Stars', we'll reach the headquarters and launch bases of Occult Orbs Fellowship.

"The nine words on the gate were left by Changkong Wuji, the legendary Cultivator three hundred years ago as well as the first chairman of Occult Orbs Fellowship.

"Everyone has a different understanding as to what they mean. Please figure it out on your own."

Translator's Thoughts

flycrane01 flycrane01

Bonus Chapter (2/4)

Bonus chapters will be released on 09:00 (UTC＋8) every day.

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Incentive Plan:

Power Ranking 16-20 --> 11 chapters/week (7 basic＋ 4 bonus)

Power Ranking 11-15 --> 13 chapters/week (7 basic＋ 6 bonus)

Power Ranking 4-10 --> double release

Power Ranking 1-3 --> triple release

Chapter 354: My Experts from the Star

Chapter 354: My Experts from the Star

The crystal airship flew below 'THIS PLACE FOREVER BANS YOU FROM A LONG LIFE' into the gate slowly. A brand-new world seemed to be unfolding before them. Grass was scattered on the ground in between several zigzagging rivers. Even the air was moister than before.

Looking up front, there were seven mountains on the horizon in the shape of cones without the slightest error. They were not steep, but they were of various colors and seemed to be made of rainbows.

Everyone gasped when they were closer. Even Li Yao's eyes were wide open.

The seven mountains were actually made up by seven spiraling crystal rails. As they got closer, they looked like seven gargantuan mosquito coils.

They were all hollow. Inside them were seven translucent rune towers on which thousands of rune arrays were carved. The rune arrays were shinning glamorously from inside to outside, while the runes enshrouded in octagonal brightness emitted infinite magical power like a surging tide.

'Have they really piled up seven mountains of rails hundreds of meters high with pure crystals? The highest one is almost a thousand meters. How wealthy they are!'

Li Yao felt his head was dizzy.

As a refiner, his eyes were much keener than the other six Cultivators' in regard of identification of crystals. Without much trouble, he had recognized that the crystal making up the mountains of rails included Heavenly Net Stone, Moon Reflection Crystal, Silk Spot Sand, Empyrean Morning Steel… They were all best of the best materials. The price of a small portion of them was already astronomical.

Even the top three Cultivation sects of the federation combined together might not be enough to afford the seven mountains.

Only by gathering the resources and manpower of the entire federation could such a miraculous splendor be established!

For a moment, Li Yao was feeling proud that he belonged to the Cultivators of the Heaven's Origin Sector more than ever.

At the top of each mountain, the rails were all piercing at the sky vertically like javelins.

At the foot of the mountains, the rails were much smoother, where a few transparent, weirdly-shaped vehicles that looked like a combination of crystal trains and crystal warships were parked.

"They're 'star shuttles', vehicles that transport us between the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Occult Orbs through the sea of stars," Gao Tieyi explained.

Right then, one of the mountains suddenly shined brilliantly. Various colors surged out like flames. Runes glittered one by one, releasing immense energy.

Although it was thousands of meters away, the crystal airship that Li Yao was on was also shivering in the spiritual tide.

In the bottom the rail, pure white brightness spurted out from the back of one star shuttle and propelled it forward and upward on the mountain of rails.

After each circle, the altitude of the star shuttle was a bit higher and so was its speed. It was closer and closer to the end of the rail which pierced at the sky.

Shrieks from the high-speed movement turned into roaring of the stars in Li Yao's ears.

Dark clouds with thunders and lightning suddenly enveloped the end of the rail, in the middle of which the broken void was revealed. A giant, deep eye seemed to be opened in the sky, with innumerable stars in its center!

"Swoosh!"

The speed of the star shuttle was boosted to maximum when it reached the end of the rail. Then it charged into the center of the eye of stars precisely!

The clouds, thunder, and lightning were all gone. Blue sky was back again. But the star shuttle had vanished.

The seven young Building Foundation Cultivators were truly dumbfounded.

Gao Tieyi seemed to be used to the astonishment of newcomers. He said with a smile, "This is a launch base of Occult Orbs Fellowship. What you saw just now is how we usually break the barrier between worlds and send star shuttles into the Occult Orbs that are in the depths of the universe.

"You may consider the seven mountains of rails as seven super teleportation arrays.

"As the best Cultivators of the younger generation, you must've used teleportation arrays in your everyday training, with which you can reach a world fragment momentarily.

"However, the world fragments that you are familiar with are all very close to the Heaven's Origin Sector and within its gravity sphere. They can be compared to the satellites near a planet which can be reached with an effortless jump.

"Therefore, ordinary teleportation arrays are enough for them.

"But the Occult Orbs are different.

"Even the closest Occult Orbs are hundreds of lightyears away from us, with horrendous star turbulences and cosmic swirls in between. Ordinary teleportation arrays are useless in such cases.

"If the ordinary teleportation arrays were to be employed, it's 99% likely that the object being teleported would be torn apart and burnt to a crisp during the process.

"By the same logic, since the energy entailed in the ordinary teleportation arrays is insignificant, you can just stand on them and be transported in no time.

"However, the energy of the super teleportation arrays is too immense, and the spiritual tide that they trigger is too violent. Human bodies risk being ripped apart by the formidable force if standing on them without protection.

Even Core Formation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soult Stage Cultivators find it challenging and prefer to take a star shuttle for the journey."

Li Yao nodded his head. It was quite easy to understand.

The higher the speed is, the stronger the obstruction will be. For example, although he was a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator, he did not dare enter the state of ten times the speed of sound easily. It was not because his strength was not enough, but because there was a high chance that his body would be torn apart during the process. Chances were that he might be disassembled in the air and turned into a cluster of meat and blood.

His body was relatively sturdier because of the Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining technique that he had been training with. Common Cultivators at the Building Foundation hardly ever rushed at above five times the speed of sound for the same concern.

The super teleportation arrays could send people to hundreds of lightyears away instantly. It was not hard to imagine how powerful the resistance would be.

Gao Tieyi sighed.

"Although the star shuttles were refined out of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and worth no less than crystal warships, they become total-losses after being used for three to five times.

"What I'm telling you is that the cost of exploring the Occult Orbs is astonishingly high. Every launch equals to burning half a crystal warship down.

"Therefore, it is not that we want to keep the Occult Orbs a secret and disallow all the Cultivators to explore the places. It's just that, because of the high cost, we have to select the elites of elites to cross the sea of stars on star shuttles to seek a brighter and more prosperous future for the Heaven's Origin Sector!"

The seven Building Foundation Cultivators nodded their heads simultaneously.

Eagerness beamed out of everyone's eyes. Li Yao was no exception.

While they were talking, the crystal airship landed slowly on a square near the launch base.

At this moment, Li Yao noticed through the window that a mountain on his left had started shining. Clouds and electric arcs appeared in the sky again. But there was no star shuttle in the bottom of this particular mountain. Instead, translucent threads popped up in the rails weaved into what seemed to be a giant spider's web.

"Swoosh!"

The air exploded. A deep, dark eye opened in the blue sky abruptly, from the middle of which rushed out a star shuttle. It landed on the rail precisely and started charging downward rapidly!

"Poo!"

The first spiritual net was ripped apart, which brought down the speed of the star shuttle a bit.

"Pooo! Pooo!"

The second… the third… The spiritual nets were torn open one by one, but at a constantly decreasing rate. They were stretching was further and further, too.

Eventually, after destroying dozens of spiritual nets, the star shuttle was dragged by the third to last spiritual net when it almost kissed the ground. Although the spiritual net was pulled for more than fifty meters, it gradually retreated and stabilized the star shuttle on the track.

Countless Cultivators ran to the star shuttle as exclamations echoed around the area.

This star shuttle was utterly different from the previous one. It seemed to have just been picked up from magma. Scorching steam was rising up nonstop. Cracks and holes covered its shell.

It seemed to be rained upon by meteorites before being devoured by a giant animal. If someone blew at it, it might explode into pieces in no time.

The cabin was too twisted to be opened. Several officers cut it open with flying swords and rescued the crew.

Cultivators inside the star shuttle were all in crystal suits, if they could be called as such. They were ragged, lackluster, and stained with suspicious blood; the suits could barely cover the Exos' bodies.

They were staggering in a post-apocalyptic way.

Li Yao was shocked.

The Cultivator in the lead was wearing the Thunder Soul Battlesuit which was best known for its defense ability. With a selling price higher than three billion, it was definitely one of the best crystal suits in the world.

But right now, the crystal suit in front of Li Yao seemed to have been made of paper. It was shattered and corrupted by blood.

"Battlegrounds in the Occult Orbs are indeed terrifying. Even the Thunder Soul Battlesuit has been wrecked to this point!"

The Cultivator in the Thunder Soul Battlesuit took off his ragged helmet. He was a young, handsome man with long hair. There was a deep scar through his left eye which almost reached his bones. As a result, his left eye was bulging wide open, unleashing an air of brutality.

His companions took off their helmets and facial covers. They were very young, but their faces were filled with the indifference to life which clearly resulted from being engaged in too many bloody battles.

Feeling that they were being observed, the Cultivators who just returned from the Occult Orbs glanced at the crystal airship in scornful smiles. They exchanged a few words with each other and looked at the Li Yao and the arrivals with obvious contempt.

'What strong soul power!'

When the eyes of the scarred young man in the lead passed by him, Li Yao felt like two needles pierced into his own eyes. His tears flowed out, and he was forced to take a step back uncontrollably. He was truly stunned.

The man's soul power was strong enough to intimidate him at such a long distance!

Li Yao noticed that his companions also clenched their fists. They must've sensed their contempt and mockery, too.

Zhao Mo from Ten Ultimacies Union had slain more than 30 demon generals on the battleground. He was the center of attention wherever he went.

Even Li Yao had talked with him warmly when they first met. Apparently, they both thought highly of each other.

But now, they were equally despised by those people; their expressions and smiles indicated that those people considered them to be idiotic rookies. He couldn't hold it back any longer and scoffed, "Who are these people? They look very unfamiliar. Why are they so haughty?"

Gao Tieyi said, "Have you ever heard of 'Children of Occult Orbs' before?

"This is an initiative that the military and a few major Cultivation sects launched fifty years ago.

"According to the plan, the infants whose parents were Cultivators and who were talented with extraordinary genes were sent to be educated and Cultivate in special Occult Orbs.

"When they grew up, they would travel and fight in the Occult Orbs.

"Since their main battlegrounds are the Occult Orbs, they are not well known in the Heaven's Origin Sector.

"But it doesn't mean you should underestimate their toughness. Most of them have arrived at the middle level or even high level before they are thirty."

Zhao Mo frowned.

"But they don't need to be so arrogant."

Gao Tieyi sighed.

"The Occult Orbs are full of dangers. Many things inside are unimaginable for the people who never see them with their own eyes. When one lives on the Occult Orbs for too long, it is unavoidable that their personalities are prone to the influence of the foreign environment.

"Besides, Children of Occult Orbs have been living in the Occult Orbs and don't have much experience in communicating with other people. It's natural that they are a bit odd and eccentric.

"They are actually not hostile to you.

"It's just that… they don't believe in your capability, and they fear that you might drag them down or even get them killed."

Chapter 355: Stellar Magical Equipment

Chapter 355: Stellar Magical Equipment

"Drag them down?"

The words truly dumbfounded the seven young experts.

Zhao Mo was so pissed off that he almost laughed out loud. His eyebrows were furrowed, and he shrieked in a twisted voice, "The seven of us may not be the top experts of the Cultivation world. However, we are definitely among the best of our generation. Every one of us has experienced dozens of life-and-death battles. How can these so-called 'Children of Occult Orbs' despise us so much? Scared of us dragging them down? Interesting. How interesting!"

Gao Tieyi said, "The fighting style of the Children of Occult Orbs is entirely different from that of common Cultivators. The two parties have found it challenging to collaborate since the very beginning.

"A few years ago, something terrible happened. A team of Children of Occult Orbs and a team of outside-world Cultivators cooperated to explore an Occult Orb. However, one of the outsiders didn't follow the command and acted recklessly. The barriers deep inside the Occult Orb were triggered. Of the seventeen people who went there, only three came back.

"Did you see the angry-looking guy who has a deep scar through his left eye? He is Yan Jun, a Cultivator in the high level of the Building Foundation Stage, as well as one of the leading experts of the Children of Occult Orbs.

"He witnessed the tragedy a few years ago in person. Although he escaped luckily, an ineffaceable scar was left on his face, which is the result of a kind of weird acid that corrodes his flesh whenever and wherever. He has to resist it all the time without any rest. Otherwise, his brain will be corrupted by the acid to a point beyond any treatment."

Zhao Mo was rendered speechless. The fury on his face gradually disappeared.

Li Yao was somewhat shocked, too.

An incurable scar where acid was corroding the flesh all the time? Such agony was indeed terrifying just thinking of it!

No wonder the guy was so disdainful and cold.

Gao Tieyi continued, "Besides, Yan Jun's only blood sister also participated in the battle. She died in the Occult Orb unfortunately.

"Ever since then, Children of Occult Orbs have always been hostile and scornful to the outsiders. Instead of contributors to victory, the outsiders are deemed to be saboteurs of their endeavors who are in no way worthy of cooperating with them.

"Besides, the opportunities to enter the Occult Orbs are limited. Competition is everywhere inside Occult Orbs Fellowship. Sometimes, a team of Children of Occult Orbs and a team of outsiders plan to enter the same Occult Orb. But if the number of participants is limited, a match will be held to determine which side is more qualified for the mission.

"When there are more and more such matches, they only add more tension between the two parties."

Nie Junxia, a sword expert from Heavenly Essence Village who had been silent the whole time, opened his mouth and said slowly, "Mr. Gao, you mentioned that Yan Jun is merely in the high level of the Building Foundation Stage. Then why is he one of the leading experts of the Children of Occult Orbs? What about the stronger Cultivators at the Core Formation Stage and the Nascent Soul Stage? Are they not engaged in the exploration of the Occult Orbs?"

The gold phantom which was Gao Tieyi nodded its head approvingly.

"Excellent. You are truly elites of the elites. Your observation is sharp.

"It's true that Building Foundation Stage Cultivators are the main force to explore the Occult Orbs. Experts at the Core Formation Stage or the Nascent Soul Stage seldom set foot on the Occult Orbs unless it is absolutely necessary."

Everyone was dazed by what he just said. Humming whispers immediately filled the cabin.

Gao Tieyi explained, "There are two main reasons why Core Formation Stage and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators do not participant in the exploration of the Occult Orbs.

"Firstly, the souls of Core Formation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators are too enormous. The cost is unimaginably high to transport them hundreds of lightyears away.

"The same logic applies for the demons of the Blood Demon Sector. The mediocre demon beasts can trespass into the

Heaven's Origin Sector easily through wormholes, but to transport expert demons, it requires large-scale teleportation arrays with a great consumption of energy.

"If you find it hard to understand, you may think about it as follows.

"For a stone the size of a fist which weighs three kilograms, you can throw it thousands of meters away without any trouble.

"But if it is a stone ten meters in diameter which weights three tons, you will only be able to throw it dozens of meters away even if you try your very best.

"At present, our purpose is to throw 'the stone' as far away as possible with as little strength as possible. Of course, we will select the stones that are smaller in size and lighter in weight, which are the Building Foundation Cultivators such as yourselves.

"If we were to choose the Refinement Stage Cultivators, we could teleport even more people in one trip. But Cultivators at such a stage are too weak to handle all kinds of crises inside the Occult Orbs. We would actually be killing them by teleporting them there.

"Therefore, the Building Foundation Cultivators are the main force on the battleground of the Occult Orbs!"

It was quite a simple metaphor.

The Building Foundation Cultivators were pebbles, whereas Core Formation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were stones weighing thousands of tons. Of course, the former would be easier to be tossed away.

Everyone in the cabin was smart enough to get what Gao Tieyi meant. They all nodded their heads.

Gao Tieyi continued, "The concern of cost is just a secondary reason. If it is really necessary, teleporting a batch of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators to the Occult Orbs without bothering the budget is not completely undoable.

"The problem is, though, that all kinds of strong magical equipment left during the bloody battles over the past 40,000 years can be found on most of the Occult Orbs. Although their masters have mostly perished, many of them have been set into the automatic detect and attack mode. Once they're triggered, they will start hunting and slaughtering until the spiritual energy contained inside is used up.

"When Core Formation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators enter an Occult Orb, it's very likely that they will trigger such magical equipment and be chased by it. How can they explore the Occult Orb if so?"

Pondering for a moment, Nie Junxia shook his head lightly.

"Mr. Gao, if Core Formation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators will be haunted, wouldn't it be even more dangerous for us Building Foundation Cultivators? Once the barriers are activated, I'm afraid we'll be blown into pieces instantly."

He asked the question that the others all wanted to ask.

Although they were not scared of death, they did not intend to die for no good reason.

Gao Tieyi smiled and said, "Let's say you have a pair of Heaven Splitters which can automatically aim and attack. It has limited cannonballs and spiritual energy. If an insignificant demon beast appeared in your fire range, would you want to fire or not?"

Nie Junxia was dazed for a moment. Deep in thought, he shook his head.

Listening by his side, Li Yao knew what Gao Tieyi was trying to say immediately.

The attack of Heaven Splitters equaled to the full-strength strike of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. But the spiritual energy consumption for each attack was astronomical. The cost for every shot amounted to that of a few crystal tanks being burnt to the ground. Besides, the barrels, body, and rune arrays of Heaven Splitters will suffer erosion during each attack.

If it were to fire at any random demon beast, thirty or fifty low-level demon beasts would be more than enough to let it overload and be completed wrecked.

Therefore, most of automatic magical equipment had been set with a threshold. Only when it sensed that the power of the enemy was above the threshold would it perform an attack.

Gao Tieyi said casually, "I believe you better understand now why the federation launched the Children of Occult Orbs Initiative and why it picked so many elites such as yourselves from millions of Cultivators, don't you?

"Frankly speaking, although you are merely at the Building Foundation Stage and your comprehensive ability is far from that of Core Formation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, in my opinion, the future of the federation lies in your hands!

"It is universally known that the distance between the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector is getting smaller and smaller. The two worlds are very likely to merge within the next fifty years.

"War between the two Sectors has already commenced.

"However, the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector are almost on par with each other. Otherwise, we wouldn't have been engaged in conflict for five hundred years without a winner.

"If we were to fight each other the hard way, in a head to head battle, neither side could be sure that it would win. Even if the opponent were defeated, the winning side would have to pay a terrible price.

"Half a year ago, Deep Sea University, Star Nebula University, First Military Academy of the Federation, as well as the admin-type Cultivators and research-type Cultivators in the General Staff, gathered together and ran an enormous simulation taking all kinds of variables into account. Their conclusion was that—

"If the two Sectors really merge and a regular war between the two worlds is started, even if the federation defeats the Blood Demon Sector, two thirds of the cities will be demolished, half of the population will be wiped out, and three quarters of Cultivators will perish!

"It is the same for the Blood Demon Sector. The federation will definitely fight until the last of its warriors die. Even if the Heaven's Origin Sector is occupied in the end, the demon kings and demon emperors are likely to be mostly killed.

"So, unless there is no other choice, neither of the two parties wish to perish together with the enemy through regular warfare.

"In fact, both parties have high hopes for the Occult Orbs.

"Countless secret arts, skills, magical equipment, and weapons that are far more advanced than the Heaven's Origin Sector's and the Blood Demon Sector's are buried in the Occult Orbs.

"Let's say one of you is lucky enough to dig out an arsenal, a starship of the Star Ocean Imperium, or even a piece of destructive stellar magical equipment. Then we'll be able to suppress the Blood Demon Sector with zero casualties, won't we?

"On the other hand, the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector are very close to each other in the four-dimensional level. We are almost twins. The Occult Orbs we discovered can be discovered by the Blood Demon Sector, too.

"In some of the Occult Orbs, there are no arsenals or fleets that are of use to us. But there are demonization dens, which, if controlled by the Blood Demon Sector, will be able to procreate existences that may even be stronger than demon emperors!

"If such a nightmare comes true, the Heaven's Origin Sector will be doomed to extinction."

His words ignited everyone's passion.

Everybody had felt, more or less, that more powerful people were supporting the world. Core Formation and Nascent Soul were the decisive forces of the war between the two Sectors.

Building Foundation Cultivators like them were far from significant in the big picture. All they had to do was to fight to the best of their ability without worries.

Hearing what Gao Tieyi just said, they suddenly recognized that they actually would have the opportunity to change the destiny of the Heaven's Origin Sector.

"Stellar magical equipment..." Li Yao muttered.

His blood started burning.

Hadn't a piece of stellar magical equipment the size of a satellite or even a planet whose rays radiates beyond an entire galaxy always been an ultimate dream for refiners such as himself?

If he was given a chance to touch a piece of stellar magical equipment with his own hands, study its structure, and even perhaps steer it in person to conquer the Blood Demon Sector...

It would be worthwhile even if he had to die the next day!

But Nie Junxia was an extremely calm person. Taking a deep breath, he said, "Mr. Gao, I'll save the loyalty-pledging talks. Everyone setting off on the path of Cultivation has been prepared to be sacrificed when we must be!

"I only want to know this: what concrete benefits are there for us to risk entering the battleground of the Occult Orbs as individuals?

"Are they really able to enable us to break our limits and be reborn?"

Chapter 356: Incomparable Benefits

Chapter 356: Incomparable Benefits

Hearing his words, the other six Cultivators started breathing faster. There was desire in their eyes too.

As Cultivators, they might not crave for longevity. But they definitely hungered to be stronger beyond their limits and illuminate the entire world!

Improving, evolving, and advancing!

Those were the natural instincts of a Cultivator!

Gao Tieyi's bright gold phantom nodded its head solemnly and declared unhesitatingly, "Of course!

"The Star Glory Federation never treats any hero unfairly who has made contributions to mankind!

"Exploration in the Occult Orbs can place the participants in deadly dangers which may even lead to irreversible injuries or even death!

"If you are courageous enough to be heroes of the federation, you will be able to be blessed with incomparable benefits!

"Firstly, in some Occult Orbs, a lot of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures exist, including many that are hardly seen in the Heaven's Origin Sector and can only be found in the ancient books. As long as you are capable of excavating them, you will be entitled to absorb or refine them first.

"Some other Occult Orbs are natural paradises in which one day of your training equals to ten days or even a fortnight in the Heaven's Origin Sector!

"However, most of the Occult Orbs cannot bring you benefits directly.

"Let's say during one of your discoveries, you find an arsenal of the Star Ocean Imperium, or a fleet of starships. The powerful weapons and vehicles, of course, will not be your property.

"Another example. If you are asked to lay waste to the caves of an ancient legendary demon in an Occult Orb which can be traced back to the era of the Demon Beast Empire, you can hardly gain anything even though you will have to risk your lives in the mission, too.

"No worries. The founding fathers of Occult Orbs Fellowship have thought of the problem.

"To better motivate everyone to accept the missions of exploring the Occult Orbs, there is a critical concept in Occult Orbs Fellowship called 'contribution points'.

"Your every operation will be converted into contribution points according to the difficulty of the task, outcome of the task, casualty rate, and other criteria.

"Contribution points are extremely useful in Occult Orbs Fellowship.

"To say the very least, Occult Orbs Fellowship has dug out a lot of magical equipment and weapons which are too advanced and sophisticated for us, the Cultivators from the Heaven's Origin Sector, to comprehend. We don't know how to replicate or manufacture them at all.

"Which means that almost every artifact in the Occult Orbs is unique.

"Such artifacts hardly appear in the outside world except for necessary purposes such as researching. They can only be redeemed by your contribution points here!

"Besides, the precious, rarely-seen Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures in the Heaven's Origin Sector can be redeemed by your contribution points, too!

"Above Deacons, there are Nine Councilors in Occult Orbs Fellowship who are all peak experts at the Nascent Soul Stage. They stop by the headquarters and supervise everything in turn.

"For this month, Senior Yan Ba, the 'Iron God', is staying with us.

"You can even redeem your contribution points for some time to talk with the Nascent Soul State Cultivator face-to-face and be enlightened by them."

"Hiss...."

Everyone gasped.

Li Yao's heart was boiling.

The Nine Councilors were all at the Nascent Soul Stage. The best Cultivators of the Star Glory Federation were almost entirely gathered here.

As for Iron God Yan Ban, he was a legend in the world of Cultivators himself.

He had been an Elder of the Marvelous Fist Sect generations ago. But he withdrew from the affairs of his sect and focused his attention on Cultivation a hundred years ago.

Marvelous Fist Sect was a sect for body practitioners. Senior Yuan was a weird one among his fellows, because he was a rarely-seen 'body fundamentalist'.

Most body practitioners, although claiming that their body was their weapon, did not reject ancillary magical equipment in a combat such as power knuckles and crystal suits designed for body practitioners.

After all, times had changed. Magical equipment nowadays was getting more and more advanced and easier to carry, which could significantly boost their potential.

But according to the conservative body practitioners, such a behavior was an out-and-out betrayal of the ideals of the body practitioners.

Among the conservative body practitioners, the most rigid ones never relied on any magical equipment. They fought by triggering the ultimate power hiding in the deepest depths of the human body.

Such people were the monks of the body practitioners. They were known as 'body fundamentalists'.

Yan Ba was the best body fundamentalist in the world!

Using his bare hands, without any help of any magical equipment, he was enough to wield the strength of the

Nascent Soul Stage. It was not hard to imagine how powerful his body was.

'Contribution points can be traded for some quality time together with a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator? They're so much more useful than the credits of the Grand Desolate War Institution!'

Li Yao was deep in thought.

With the Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining technique that he'd been training in, his body sturdiness was better than most people. Thanks to the tedious refining work every day, his physical strength was enormous, too. He was almost half a body practitioner.

If he could be given a chance to talk with Iron God Yan Ba and accept his enlightenment, wouldn't that be awesome?

When he returned to the Grand Desolate War Institution, he could share Yan Ba's words with Ding Lingdang. His girlfriend might be able to advance yet another level!

Seeing that the seven of them were all seething with desire, Gao Tieyi decided to add more oil to the fire. He waved his hand. Almost a hundred light beams flowed out of the bright gold figure.

They were the picture and introduction of all kinds of weapons, magical equipment, and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. Enshrouded in dazzling glamor, they were spinning in the small cabin slowly.

"They're all treasures from the Occult Orbs. Just take a look. With enough contribution points, it's possible that you can get any of them!"

"Wow!"

"Ahhhh!"

"Hiss!"

Li Yao's six companions were all exclaiming in astonishment.

Li Yao's own pupils were widened, too, while he felt like drooling.

'This 'Ultimate Void Obliterator' can blow up the space directly and constitute a space gap without a sound. The enemy's body will be torn apart in silence!

'This 'Hounding Soul Tracer' has tracking abilities. As long as the features of the enemy, such as their scent, soul wave, voice frequency, etc., are input into it, it will be automatically triggered when the enemy is fifty kilometers nearby and fly to the enemy before it is detonated!

'And this is 'Shadow Fiend Ring'. Put on the forehead, it can be activated with a telepathic thought. Not only does it boast stealth ability, it can also launch powerful metal attacks which can interfere with the brain of the enemy by blocking the information transmission between the retina and the optic nerves, so that the enemy will not know that they see something when they see something.

'More importantly, it can function on enemies who are way stronger than the wearer!

'Magical equipment from the era of the Star Ocean Imperium is indeed powerful, mysterious, and immeasurable. It is indeed the culmination of the Cultivation civilization. Even artifacts from 40,000 years ago can't be any better than that!

'I can't wait any longer to dismantle the magical equipment into pieces right now and study them carefully!'

"Huh. What's this?

"Shredded Fire Lotus, Silver Cup Flower, Burning Phoenix Crystal, Gold Cicada Fruit… So many extinct Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures!"

Li Yao finally couldn't contain himself any longer. He started exclaiming in disbelief together with the other six Cultivators.

The inventory of the treasures listed many Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures that had never been seen in the Heaven's Origin Sector. Even the Hundred Smelting Clan 40,000 years ago had classified them as 'Extremely Rare'.

Li Yao had lost hope and thought that there was no way that he could find such materials. He never expected that he would ever see them in reality.

For a moment, Li Yao's mind was greatly stirred.

'I'm going to get those materials!

'Many marvelous weapons recorded in Ou Yezi's memory pieces cannot be refined without them!

'With such materials, I will be able to further strengthen the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, the Vulcan Machine Guns and the Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber. They will be more powerful, majestic, and dominating!'

Brightness that was so dense that it seemed to be a real existence beamed out of their eyes.

"It seems that you've all made up your mind." Gao Tieyi smiled.

The seven of them looked at each other and nodded their heads solemnly together like seven slashing sabers.

"Then just sign the contract now."

Gao Tieyi waved his hand. Seven brilliantly shining virtual contracts flowed out of his bright gold image.

Activating the spiritual energy, Li Yao pulled one of the contracts to him and read it carefully with his telepathic thoughts.

There was not anything special about the clauses. They merely stated that the signees had decided to join Occult Orbs Fellowship of their own will, that they fully acknowledged the perils and crises which exploring the Occult Orbs entailed, and that they were prepared for any accident, including their own death.

However, according to the subsequent terms, Occult Orbs Fellowship had brought a huge amount of catastrophic insurance for all its members.

The three insurance companies were all affiliates of top 10 sects of the federation, whose credibility was quite reliable.

The policies were detailed and covered almost everything.

If Li Yao was seriously wounded in the Occult Orbs, he could live the rest of his life comfortably with the insurance indemnity.

If he was killed, not only would a large sum of compensation be payed to the beneficiary, one or two of his kids designated by him would also be sent to the sects that the insurance companies belong to and taught by the top experts there. They might even have the opportunity to join the sects and become core disciples.

Many experts did not care much about money. They merely hoped that their descendants would flourish.

The insurance had solved their problem perfectly.

There were also detailed formulas to distribute the benefits gained in the Occult Star Orbs fairly in the contract.

Firstly, the cost to launch the star shuttle would be deducted. A small proportion of the benefits would go to a particular fund for the future development of Occult Orbs Fellowship.

Then, a large proportion of the benefits would be used for charity work, including infrastructure construction, public education, subsidies for the disabled, etc.

What was left of the benefits would be converted to contribution points and go to the explorers, which they could trade for secret treasures or meetings with the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator at their will.

It was a very reasonable contract that protected the interest of the explorers, boosted their enthusiasm, and ensured the sustainable development of Occult Orbs Fellowship so that larger and more star shuttles and launch bases could be built in the future.

In the meantime, the ordinary people of the Star Glory Federation would benefit from their endeavor, too.

Li Yao was very satisfied. He stamped his spiritual seal on the contract without any hesitation.

As for the beneficiary of the policies, Li Yao wrote two names after consideration.

Half of the compensation would be used to establish a fund and help the poor children of Floating Spear City, his hometown, to Cultivate.

The other half of the compensation would be left to Ding Lingdang. She was going to need a lot of money if she wanted to reach a higher level.

Gao Tieyi glanced at the contract when Li Yao sent it back. There was a hint of bewilderment in his eyes when he looked at Li Yao again in a strange way.

Chapter 357: Orb Patrollers, Empyreal Star City

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Being stared at in such a way, Li Yao felt weird. He frowned and asked, "Is there a problem?"

"No."

Gao Tieyi cleared his throat and regained his calmness. Collecting the virtual contracts of the other six Cultivators, he said solemnly, "Alright. Now that you've all signed the contract, congratulations on becoming official members of Occult Orbs Fellowship. In Occult Orbs Fellowship, we call you… the Orb Patrollers!

"However, becoming an Orb Patroller does not mean you can explore the Occult Orbs right now.

"Every adventure to the Occult Orbs costs a huge amount of hard work and resources, not to mention that these places are full of dangers themselves.

"We do not want to send some rookies to hundreds of lightyears away and get them killed with a cost of more than half of a crystal warship!

"Therefore, the competition inside Occult Orbs Fellowship is very fierce. Unfortunately, some people are eliminated every month. Some have persisted for more than one year yet still failed to get an opportunity to enter an Occult Orb.

"Are you ready to face the challenges?"

The seven of them glanced at each other, while confident smiles appeared on their faces at the same time.

As Cultivators who were qualified to come to this place and signed the contracts to become Orb Patrollers, they were never scared of any challenge. On the contrary, they considered challenges to be the greatest pleasure in their lives.

"Then come with me."

The phantom of Gao Tieyi flowed out of the crystal airship.

Li Yao and the rest of them followed him in a line.

In front of them was a boundless desert, which was completely empty except for the several scarce oases. Not far away, a giant pillar rose up to the sky. It was translucent with various colors. Dozens of meters high and five meters in diameter, it was quite an eye-catcher in the desert.

On the surface of the giant pillar, many lines of words in great size were carved deep inside.

The words were just as colorful as the pillar that they were engraved on. Normally speaking, it would be hard to tell what they were.

However, Li Yao read them clearly although he was still dozens of meters away, as if something mysterious had transmitted the information contained in the words directly into his brain.

Besides…

The words deeply carved inside the pillar were flowing and changing, as if they were virtual runes in a light beam.

Li Yao's curiosity was greatly aroused. He gazed at it, only to find three splendid words enshrouded in surging spiritual energy on the top part of the pillar.

"Rank of Stars!"

Below the three words were lines of names followed by a series of numbers.

"Team Thunder Soul!"

"Team Phantom Sea!"

"Team Heavenly Feather!"

A hundred team names filled the giant pillar.

"Senior Gao, what does this Rank of Stars mean? Is this a rank for the top experts in Occult Orbs Fellowship? But why are there only team names but no names of individuals?" Li Yao asked.

"Rank of Stars is indeed a rank of capability inside Occult Orbs Fellowship. It does not list individuals because Occult Orb explorations are never carried out single-handedly. They are always team operations.

Gao Tieyi further explained, "After hundreds of years of trials, we have come to the conclusion that an expedition team is best made up by four to six people.

"If the team members are too few, unexpected crises may not be handled easily; if the team members are too many, more barriers might be triggered, which may lead to chaos where the weak members will be the burden of the team.

"A Cultivator at the Building Foundation Stage is hardly able to survive the Occult Orbs by themselves anyway.

"Therefore, the Orb Patrollers setting off to the Occult Orbs are usually organized into 'Star Teams', each made up by four to six members. If the situation is special and more, or less, members are required, the mission will be much more dangerous.

"The 'Rank of Stars' are the rank of the 'Star Teams' based on their capability. Only when the team is among the top 100 will it be possible to enter the Occult Orbs.

"Note that it is just a possibility. If two teams want to explore the same Occult Orb and the conditions don't allow, usually, a match will be held to determine which of the two teams are more qualified for the mission.

"By 'capability', I mean a number which is calculated by taking the teams' previous achievements, the combat ability of team members, and the odds of winning against other teams, among other factors, into account.

"The Occult Orbs are full of dangers. The casualty rate of the teams is very high.

"Some Orb Patrollers choose to quit because of the overwhelming pressure.

"Due to various reasons as above, the teams often have a lot of vacancies which need to be filled by newcomers. So, it's a two-way selection between you and the teams. Once you are picked by a team, you'll be able to explore the Occult Orbs."

Li Yao nodded his head and pondered for a moment. Then he asked, "Only after I join a team will I be allowed to enter the Occult Orbs. But what if none of the top 100 teams are to my liking? Does that mean I will have no chance?"

Gao Tieyi smiled and said, "Many confident young men have asked exactly the same question before.

"If you think you are strong enough, you can form a team of your own.

"In the last three days of each month, the last ten teams in the Rank of Stars will be challenged by teams that are not in the list. If you can defeat one of them, you will be able to take their place and have the privilege of exploring the Occult Orbs.

"A kind warning, though. Don't waste your time. The teams that have been training in the Occult Orbs are all too strong for you to deal with. I suggest you just wait patiently to be recruited."

Li Yao thought of something and asked, "The scarred young man, Yan Jun, and the other Children of Occult Orbs with him, which team do they belong to?"

Gao Tieyi answered, "The team system only applies for Cultivators at the Building Foundation Stage. It is not suitable for Core Formation and Nascent Soul. Therefore, teams in the Rank of Stars are all made of Building Foundation Stage Cultivators.

"Although Yan Jun is just in the high level of the Building Foundation Stage, he is decisive, determined and daring. His survival ability in foreign environments is amazing. Team Thunder Soul, led by him, is the first in the Rank of Stars."

First in the Rank of Stars!

Team Thunder Soul!

Li Yao's eyes seemed to have been pricked. He squinted and craned his neck to look at the highest place of the Rank of Stars solemnly.

"Let's head to the downtown now."

Passing by the Rank of Stars, Li Yao found a vast teleportation array on the empty ground in front of him; it was sophisticated and flamboyant. It seemed much more advanced than the general teleportation arrays in the Heaven's Origin Sector.

The seven of them stood on the teleportation array. They felt a gentle breeze brushing their face, and, before they knew it, lively noise found its way into their ears.

They ended up in an enormous square in the middle of a prosperous, splendid metropolis!

"This is..."

Looking at the skyscrapers nearby, everyone felt dazzled.

But Li Yao was deep in thought. He raised his head and noticed that the blue sky and the white clouds were too vivid to be natural. They were more likely to be presented by a light beam with a super-high resolution.

It should be a man-made dome.

They should be underneath the launch bases.

The place is an underground ghost city.

But the facilities here were hundreds of times more advanced than those in the ordinary underground ghost cities. To say the very least, Li Yao could smell the fresh air with the scent of the earth, sense the moist wind brushing his skin, and feel gentle breeze combing his hair.

"We are a thousand meters under the ground of the Grand Desolate Plateau at present. This is Empyreal Star City, built up by technology from the Occult Orbs, which makes it the leading-edge city in the entire federation!"

Gao Tieyi declared proudly, "In this place, you can taste the best seafood in the world that has been delivered here through multiple teleportation arrays after it was caught just now; you can enjoy the delicious wine that has been preserved for decades, which even the Speaker of the Parliaments may not have the chance to drink. All kinds of extravagant needs can be satisfied here.

"For Cultivators, we have training rooms built up by the magical equipment in the Occult Orbs, some of which have been dismantled and transported to this place from crystal warships in the era of the Star Ocean Imperium directly!

"Anyways, you can get anything you want here. Whether you want to enjoy yourself or train crazily, you will be fully fulfilled!

"Expeditions in the Occult Orbs is life-risking. The pressure on the shoulders of the Orb Patrollers is enormous, often making them crazy or bewildered by the demons.

"To help them blow off the stress and recover faster, Occult Orbs Fellowship spent hundreds of years establishing Empyreal Star City.

"On the other hand, this is also an experiment base. The civil magical equipment and technology retrieved from the Occult Orbs are tested in this place first before they are promoted to other towns on a large scale when the conditions are favorable.

"Much of the technology that you've witnessed in your respective homes can be traced back to Empyreal Star City."

Li Yao observed the citizens on the street with his full attention for a moment. In surprise, he said, "The scent of the residents of this place is so intimidating."

Cultivators were almost as numerous as ordinary people in Empyreal Star City, which was unimaginable in other cities.

Gao Tieyi smiled.

"Residents of Empyreal Star City are partly the family members of the staff of Occult Orbs Fellowship, partly the descendants of the Orb Patrollers from over the past hundreds of years, and partly — well, mostly — the Orb Patrollers themselves.

"You will be living in this place for the time being."

While he was talking, Gao Tieyi pointed at the giant ball of lights in the center of the square where countless light beams were blinking.

"In the center of the square, you can find the mainframe crystal processor of Empyreal Star City which boasts amazing computational ability. You can ask it for help should you come across any problems in the future.

"There are countless training rooms and arenas in Empyreal Star City. Your current task is to find a place to crash at.

Then, you can train yourself or participate in matches at your will, before inputting the most satisfactory videos into the mainframe crystal processor.

"Teams short of hands will look for new members through the mainframe crystal processor. If they are interested in you, they will send an invitation to you.

"In such cases, you will be able to check the basic information and mission videos of the teams which have invited you. If you think their style is not fit for you, you can turn them down.

"One thing I need to remind you is that the key facilities in Empyreal Star City such as training rooms and arenas do not accept the legal tender of the federation. They only accept 'contribution points'.

"Since you are all newcomers, the mainframe crystal processor will allocate some complimentary contribution points to you according to your past accomplishments and your current strength, which should be enough for your daily training in Empyreal Star City for the next month.

"Train yourselves well in the coming month and prove your capability to the top 100 teams!

"Of course, you can also choose to form a team among the seven of you and challenge the last ten teams in the Rank of Stars at the end of this month.

"If you run out of contribution points and none of the top 100 teams are willing to accept you, you will be eliminated immediately.

"Anyways, good luck to you all!"

Chapter 358: Inexplicable Hostility

Chapter 358: Inexplicable Hostility

The bright gold phantom of Gao Tieyi gradually dispersed, leaving the round ball at the center spinning and humming, which eventually flew into the sky and vanished behind the skyscrapers.

The seven new Orb Patrollers looked at each other in astonishment. They had thought that bloody tests were waiting for them inside. They didn't expect the environment here to be so lax that they were free to do whatever they wanted.

Li Yao thought of the advantages of such a design.

Exploring the Occult Orbs was a dangerous undertaking after all.

As Cultivators who valued freedom more than anything else and hated restraints most, if they were forced, even though just slightly, to enter the Occult Orbs, they would definitely find the system repulsive.

That was why Occult Orbs Fellowship tried the best to create such a liberating atmosphere in which they were their own masters.

But the liberating atmosphere was not as comfortable as it sounded. They had to try everything they could to let the top 100 teams realize their worth.

"Now that we've met each other by the arrangement of fate, how about we seven forming a team to challenge one of the top 100 teams to win a ticket to the Occult Orbs?" suggested Cao Tongting, a disciple from Leopard Valley.

Nie Junxia, disciple from Heavenly Essen Village, shook his head and said coldly, "I stand by what Senior Gao just said. The seven of us didn't know each other before, nor have we ever cooperated. We would just be like a mob if we were to team up.

"For a Star Team who has been fighting bloody battles through life and death in the Occult Orbs together, it will not be something that we can deal with even if it ranks among the last ten in the list."

"Correct."

Zhao Mo, disciple of Ten Ultimacies Union, said calmly, "Besides, none of us have ever been into an Occult Orb before. Even if we won the qualification miraculously, we'd still be committing suicide to explore the Occult Orbs on our own. I'd prefer to team with the experienced Orb Patrollers. That way, my likelihood of survival will be relatively higher."

Li Yao did not think it was a good idea, either. He shook his head.

Cao Tongtian was not a bad-tempered man. He said with a smile, "Alright. If you are not willing to, I think it's time we bid farewell and go our separate ways.

"However, before that, I suggest we go to the mainframe crystal processor together first to find out guidelines for newcomers as well as more information about our contribution points, so that we won't be lost like headless flies!"

It was a rather practical suggestion. They all walked to the center of the square.

In the center of the square, thousands of gold electric arcs mingled and weaved into an oval about six meters in length, which was full of bumps and hollows. At first look, it seemed to be a translucent electromagnetic brain.

On the surface of the 'brain', countless light beams were flickering.

Several Cultivators were standing near the electromagnetic brain, busily looking up information and communicating with the mainframe crystal processor.

Seeing seven obvious rookies coming close, there was curiosity in some of their eyes, while a few others were staring at them with contempt and hostility.

Li Yao walked to the electromagnetic brain. An electric arc immediately darted out and stopped one meter away from him where a translucent light beam was opened up.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao typed in the first question with his telepathic thought.

"I am Li Yao from the Grand Desolate War Institution. Please display my current contribution points and the prices for the key facilities in Empyreal Star City such as training rooms of all levels."

"Beep!"

Lines of information were quickly manifested on the light beam.

"Orb Patroller Li Yao has 1,244 contribution points at this moment.

"There are 1,643 training rooms in Empyreal Star City. The specific information and their respective price are as follows..."

Li Yao skimmed through them quickly. Compared with the price of middle-level training rooms, he had quite a decent amount of contribution points, which should be enough for him to train in Empyrean Star City for about two months.

But of course, considering that the nutrition liquids, Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, medical equipment, etc. would also need to be redeemed by contribution points, he wouldn't be able to make two months with his current contributions.

"Second question. Please download an inventory of all the secret treasures that can be redeemed by contribution points to my mini crystal processor."

"Sorry. For confidentiality, all the files can only be read in this place and are unavailable for personal crystal processors. We apologize for the inconvenience."

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. They he realized that it did make sense. Suppose someone downloaded confidential files to their crystal processor, it would be a terrible disaster if the crystal processor was lost or stolen by the demons.

No wonder so many Cultivators would rather gather in the square for the mainframe crystal processor than use their own mini crystal processor.

Li Yao was patient enough to browse over the inventory of the secret treasures on the light beam of the mainframe crystal processor, only to find that the all the secret treasures were remarkably expensive. His contribution points were far from enough for the cheapest secret treasure.

It seemed that his contribution points were indeed 'complimentary', only enough for him to survive in Empyreal Star City. That was the best they could do.

But his fellows seemed to be even poorer than him.

Li Yao 'accidentally' noticed that Zhao Mo and Nie Junxia had no higher than 800 complimentary contribution points.

Cao Tongtian, on the other hand, had almost 1,100 complimentary contribution points.

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao figured out the reason. It appeared that hybrid-type Cultivators were more popular for the missions in the Occult Orbs. They had received additional contribution points because of their multiple talents.

It was quite reasonable. For a team of less than six members, of course, Jack of two or even more trades would be better appreciated.

"Third question. Do you have any suggestions for newcomers such as myself?"

"For the Cultivators who are new to Empyreal Star City, the one thing that is of paramount importance is to train and to participate in matches, so that the Star Teams will be able to discover you after you upload the videos of your performance to the mainframe crystal processor.

"Of course, you can also choose to gamble in the casino to win more contribution points in order to stay longer in Empyreal Star City."

The mainframe crystal processor answered quickly, "However, you are a hybrid-type Cultivator who has talents in both combat and creation, which are two most popular talents in Occult Orbs Fellowship.

"With talents in combat, you won't drag the team down too much.

"With talents in creation, and also as a registered refiner, you will be very useful in the exploration of many Occult Orbs.

"According to my records, you've met the conditions of seven Star Teams which are open to new members. I can help you contact them and ask for an interview."

"You may also find a refining workshop and record several videos of your refining and modification work in order to attract attention from more teams."

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao shook his head.

"Not so fast. I want to see the basic information of all the teams and their most distinctive mission videos."

Now that the mainframe crystal processor had described hybrid-type Cultivators to be honeypots, he was not in a hurry to send out resumes now.

There was still plenty of time. He could select a team that fit his appetite most after cogitation.

Right then, a feminine voice called out to him from behind.

"Excuse me, are you Mr. Li Yao from the Grand Desolate War Institution?"

Li Yao raised his eyebrows. He took a step to the left front before turning around.

Two men and a woman in silver combat suits were in his back, who were all good-looking without the least flaw. They were looking at him with a smile.

But Li Yao somehow felt that some sort of coldness was hiding behind the warm smiles.

Back when he was in the magical equipment graveyard, he had seen too many guys who were talking and laughing while they stabbed a knife into the chest of their friend.

The three of them gave Li Yao the same feeling that those friendly-look villains in the magical equipment graveyard did.

Li Yao was surprised. He was pretty sure that he did not know the three Cultivators.

"Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Guo Yu, and I'm a member of Team Lingering Wind which ranks the 83rd in the Rank of Stars this month. This is Long Chengde, our deputy captain. This is Wan Feihe, the best warrior in our team."

The feminine young man smiled and continued after a brief pause.

"Mr. Li Yao, I'm told that you are a hybrid-type Cultivator talented both in combat and creation, which is what Team Lingering Wind desperately needs. If you're interested, how about we going for a test in an arena? As long as your combat ability is reasonably acceptable, you will be a member of Team Lingering Wind!

"Our team has ordered a trip to the Occult Orbs next week. If you are willing to join us, this trip will be focused on you in order to help you improve your strength. How does it sound?

"Although the rank of our team is not very high, we are offering you our invitation sincerely. We hope you can think about it."

Li Yao blinked his eyes and glanced at the light beam which were displaying the names of the seven teams that were hiring combat-type refiners.

As he expected, Team Lingering Wind was not on it.

It was all the more confusing for him what these people wanted.

He was about to turn down their offer, when a fat figure crammed in between Guo Yu and him and shrieked in an extremely unpleasant voice, "I'm sorry, Guo Yu. Mr. Li Yao is my close friend, Bi Ran. He promised to join Team Chosen Ones long ago. Stop wasting your time here!"

While he was talking, the fat man turned around and winked at Li Yao.

His face was also a stranger's to Li Yao.

Besides, Team Chosen Ones was not among the seven teams hiring refiners, either.

Things were getting more and more interesting.

Li Yao didn't see much hostility in Bi Ran's eyes. So, he simply smiled and continued watching the show.

"You—"

Bi Ran's appearance interrupted Guo Yu's neat plan. The two parties probably had been holding a grudge for a long time. Right now, all the four faces suddenly turned gloomy in a vibe of intension.

Guo Yu almost lost control over his pretended courtesy. His fists were clenched and loosened. Finally, he took a deep breath and spoke to Li Yao.

"Mr. Li Yao, Team Lingering Wind is really interested in you. If you feel the same way, please contact us later. We look forward to hearing from you any time."

Then, he glared at Bi Ran, before all the three members of Team Lingering Wind turned around and left.

Watching them walk out of the square, Bi Ran exhaled a long sigh of relief. He then turned around and smiled at Li Yao.

"Mr. Li Yao, had I not intervened, you would have been beaten up terribly, to the extent that you might have to spend a few days in bed because of bone fractures and internal organ injuries. You would be humiliated by them. You would be a loser from inside to outside!

"I risked my life doing you such a great favor. Now it is only fair that I ask you to return a favor that is far less difficult, isn't it?"

Chapter 359: Really Not Your Fault

Chapter 359: Really Not Your Fault

Li Yao smiled, his sharp teeth glaring. He glanced over Bi Ran casually as he said, "So, Team Chosen Ones is not interested in me?"

Bi Ran shook his hands and answered casually, "Indeed it is not. Although I think highly of your personal ability myself, Team Chosen Ones is full; we have six members at this moment. A new member would be a burden for the team. Many classic tactical operations will be not able to be carried out. It's not like that we can kick out any team member. So, sorry, we can't take you in.

"However, I first heard of your name a long time ago. Vulture Li Yao, a rising star on the Grand Desolate Plateau. I even bought one of your Demon Beast Detectors before. Haha!

"Allow me to reintroduce myself. Besides a member of Team Chosen Ones, I'm also a mediocre disciple of the Hundred Saber Alliance, which has a lot of connections with the Grand Desolate War Institution. So, there is no need for you to be so hostile, is there?"

Bi Ran was the kind of person who could emit endless warmth when he was smiling. He seemed straightforward and not much of a threat to anyone.

His identity was a greater relief for Li Yao.

The Hundred Saber Alliance was one of the biggest sponsors of the Grand Desolate War Institution. The Refining Department had received a lot of patronage from the Hundred Saber Alliance, too.

Even his Occult Orbs Card had been offered by Long Wenhui, vice president of the Hundred Saber Alliance as well as a Core Formation Stage Cultivator, who was in effect his introducer to Occult Orbs Fellowship.

A disciple of the Hundred Saber Alliance who had no conflict of interest with him shouldn't have any reason to trick him.

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao asked, "What kind of favor are you asking for?"

Bi Ran's eyes beamed. He unsheathed a battle saber which was about 2.25 meters long with a sawtooth tip and handed it over. He said,

"Mr. Li Yao, I went through a lot of trouble to get this saber. It is supposed to be a good one, but I've always felt that something is wrong when I exert my strength. I sent it for maintenance to several refiners, who all failed to see any fault in it. Can you help me take a look at it?"

"Good saber!"

Hearing that the man wanted to have his saber repaired, Li Yao was greatly interested. Without bothering with anything else, he took out a silk, smooth handkerchief from his pocket and cleaned his two hands thoroughly with it, before he took the saber over solemnly in the end.

He played with it carefully in his hands for a moment. Then he tested its barycenter. After that, he patted the back of the saber with his finger and listened to the sound that was triggered by his movements. Pondering for a moment, Li Yao said slowly, "This battle saber is an 'Ultimate Phantom Battle Saber' developed by Blood Phantom Valley seven years ago. However, it is not a random one made through the assembly line. It should be one of the limited editions crafted by one or even more experts no lower than Elders of Blood Phantom Valley.

"Then, in a fierce battle, the tip of the sword broke off. So, the saber was repaired in the southern refiners' style. The edge of the saber was added with sawteeth to increase its power of cutting.

"The repairer of the saber is an expert. His work does not have the slightest flaw. The excellence of the battle saber was not affected at all. Instead, more brutality and cruelness were added. You seemed to be a muscled man. Your strength will be perfectly good for this battle saber.

"Therefore, there is not a problem with the battle saber per se. Of course, those refiners failed to find anything wrong. It is you who has a problem."

Bi Ran was dazed. He pointed at himself with his short and thick finger.

"What problem do I have?"

"You are too stout."

Li Yao explained, "This Ultimate Phantom Battle Saber is 2.25 meters long. Its barycenter leans forward to the front in the first place. With its sawtooth edge, its barycenter is further to the head. It is most suitable for people whose height is between 1.79 meters and 1.82 meters. You are, on the other hand, 1.71 meters high at most. Besides, your upper body is disproportionally long. All these factors together lead to the imbalance of your body when you're waving the sword. That's why you find it difficult to exert your strength.

"The problem is very easy to address. You can either redesign the shape of the saber and re-forge it, or, if you want a simpler way, dig a hole on the back of the saber to reduce its weight and adjust its barycenter.

"But as to how the hole should be dug in order to move the barycenter to the perfect location without affecting the hardiness of the saber, and how the hole can leave more possibilities for your future advancements, they are all very complicated issues.

"I've already done you a favor by pointing the problem out to you. If you want me to refine it for you, you will have to tell me why Team Lingering Wind asked for my trouble without a good reason.

"Even if they were merely bullying newcomers for fun, I have six companions who joined Occult Orbs Fellowship with me. Why did they come to me directly? Do people hate to see me?"

Bi Ran was deep in thought hearing Li Yao's words. But Li Yao's last sentence made him laugh out aloud. He said, "Mr. Li Yao, this is what one might call 'undue disaster'. You are not to blame. You were merely being tricked because of someone else's wrongdoings.

Li Yao raised his eyebrow. "How so?"

"You will know."

Bi Ran smiled. "Everyone in the Hundred Saber Alliance knows that I like to make friends best. Now that I've encountered such a superstar as Vulture Li Yao, of course I need to foster a good relationship with you, don't I?

"Although Team Chosen Ones is full at present, I have a lot of friends in quite a few other teams who can refer you to their captains. However, we need to get out of this place right now, or we'll be in trouble."

It was when he gestured that Li Yao noticed that many Cultivators nearby were eyeing them with a hint of hostility.

Bi Ran led Li Yao into an alley and slowed down.

Li Yao couldn't be more curious.

"What's with those people? Why do they look so unfriendly?"

Bi Ran sighed and said somewhat helplessly, "Mr. Li Yao, I believe you've already heard of the conflicts between the Children of Occult Orbs and the outsiders, haven't you? Those people you saw just now are Children of Occult Orbs who have been raised up in the Occult Orbs. Of course, they are not particularly fond of us outsiders.

"Although the two parties are cold to each other, we always keep away from them, and so do they. But you've come at a bad time. Recently, the relationship between two parties has been quite intense. Quite a few matches have been held in the arenas."

Li Yao asked, "Why?"

Bi Ran replied, "Because a super awesome big shot emerged among the outsiders!

"You may not know this, but the Children of Occult Orbs have been dominating the top 100 teams all the time. Not only are the top 5 teams all made of Children of Occult Orbs, they even make up sixty percent of all the team members.

"The Orb Patrollers from the outside, such as you and me, have always been suppressed by the Children of Occult Orbs. They are arrogant, but they do have every reason to be!

"It all started three months ago, when a super awesome big shot appeared among the newly recruited Orb Patrollers.

"It is said that the parents of this big shot died young. So, the big shot grew up as an orphan. With the natural gift and all kinds of lucky coincidences, the big shot became one of the youngest Cultivators to enter the Building Foundation Stage. At that time, the big shot was not even thirty yet.

"After the big shot joined Occult Orbs Fellowship, it was the usual one month of training and presentation time. Unfortunately, a big-headed Child of Occult Orbs thought that the big shot was young and decided to make some fun. Naturally, a conflict burst out. In the end, the big shot beat the Child of Occult Orbs to such an extent that even his own parents wouldn't be able to recognize him.

"As a result, the big brother of the said Child of Occult Orbs, was pissed off.

"His big brother is Guo Yu, whom you've met just now.

"The conflict continued, and then, one thing led to another, Guo Yu and the big shot organized a deal to duel in an arena to settle everything once and for all.

"Guo Yu and the big shot were both in the beginning level of the Building Foundation Stage. But Guo Yu had been training in the Occult Orbs for years and grasped several ultimate arts from the Occult Orbs. He thought himself to be a sure winner.

"But he didn't know that the big shot joined a Star Team and went to explore an Occult Orb. With unbelievable luck, the big shot discovered an ancient inheritance which had been overlooked by the previous explorers all the time. Not only did the big shot break into the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage, an incomparably brutal martial art of the fire class was discovered, too.

"So, the big shot had a match with Guo Yu as per the deal after returning from the Occult Orb.

"Naturally, Guo Yu, who thought that there was no way he could lose, was terribly beaten from the beginning to the end with absolutely no way to fight back.

"Perhaps out of fury, Guo Yu broke the unspoken rule of the arena and launched fatal attacks insidiously.

"This pushed the big shot to fully perform the secret martial art of the fire class retrieved from the Occult Orb.

"Eventually, the audience witnessed Guo Yu's bones be entirely broken to pieces and his flesh burnt like a dead, stray dog. He barely recovered after lying for more than half a month in the most advanced med bay.

"Since Guo Yu was not available, Team Lingering Wind lost two good opportunities to enter the Occult Orbs. The teams that took their place returned with enormous trophies and contribution points without much trouble.

"Since then, Team Lingering Wind has hated the big shot's guts, which leads to the tension between the Children of Occult Orbs and the outside-world Orb Patrollers."

Li Yao frowned. He scratched his hair and said, "This story sounds very familiar!

"But does it have anything to do with me? Why do I have to take the blame?"

Bi Ran sighed.

"As I said, they were merely trying to vent their anger out on you. The only reason is that both this big shot and you come from the Grand Desolate War Institution!

"After beating Guo Yu to the ground, the big shot went to train in the Occult Orbs again. It's been half a month. Tomorrow is going to be the day of the big shot's return.

"Since Guo Yu recovered, he has looked for several experts, planning to challenge the big shot for another few rounds. When he learnt that a newcomer from the Grand Desolate War Institution had just joined Occult Orbs Fellowship, he was too narrow-minded to let go of you.

"Team Lingering Wind's invitation was clearly up to no good. They were probably planning to fool you into the area under the pretext of recruitment testing so that they could teach you a lesson and embarrass the Grand Desolate War Institution.

"Punishing you is a warning to others!

"It's very unfortunate of you to be from the same school and of similar age to the big shot.

"Therefore, do you agree that I saved your life by interfering just now?"

Li Yao was dumbfounded. He blinked his eyes for a long time, only to recall no one of the Grand Desolate War Institution who was of similar age to him and fitted the description of this super big shot.

Such a brutal personality did not seem to belong to someone meek and low-key. How come he did not have any clue of whom it might be?

Wait a moment…

Li Yao scratched his head hard. He swallowed uncontrollably, before he stammered, "If I may ask, the name of this super big shot… doesn't happen to be Ding Lingdang, does it?"

"It is exactly this insanely tough woman!"

Bi Ran slapped his thigh as he exclaimed, "But she is a celebrity of Occult Orbs Fellowship right now. The Orb Patrollers from the outside world address her as 'Queen of Fire', while the Children of Orbs call her 'Inferno Witch'."

Chapter 360: Appetizer

Chapter 360: Appetizer

Li Yao didn't know what to say, nor did he know what kind of expression he should put on to embrace such a 'surprise'.

He should've realized it long ago.

Where else could Ding Lingdang rush into the middle of the Building Foundation Stage in just a few months other than the Occult Orbs?

Bi Ran rubbed his hands and asked curiously, "Mr. Li Yao. You and the Queen of Fire are both influential figures from the Grand Desolate War Institution. You must've fought her on your campus, right? Are her martial arts really as brutal as they are said to be? What does it feel like to fight her in a match? I only saw several video clips of her fighting, which were indeed incredibly insane and overwhelming!"

Scratching his nose, Li Yao mumbled, "We did more than that… Right, which team is Ding Lingdang in?"

Bi Ran said, "Team Blue Bronze! It is indeed a lucky team. It was on the verge of being kicked out of the top 100 teams, yet out of the depths of misfortune comes bliss. With a strong new member, the Queen of Fire, it has been completely reborn now!

"Recently, they've been training in the Occult Orbs together. I'm told that they are building a new set of tactics with the Queen of Fire as the attack damage carry. But they're coming back tomorrow.

"Mr. Li Yao, I suggest you find a place to stay in first. If members of Team Lingering Wind run into you again, you might still be in trouble. When Team Blue Bronze, their real opponent, returns from the Occult Orbs tomorrow, Team Lingering Wind will definitely trouble them and leave you alone."

Li Yao raised his eyebrow.

"Wait, is street fighting allowed in Empyreal Star City?"

Bi Ran shook his head hard.

"Of course it is not. However, if somebody asks you for a duel, generally speaking, no one will say no, because it concerns the honor and pride of an Orb Patroller. If you turn down the duel invitations from other people too many times, you risk being considered a coward. Who's willing to go to the Occult Orbs with you then?

"It is especially the case for newcomers such as you. This is the time when you should demonstrate your best performance. Declining the duels is not going to help you find a suitable team."

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao smiled and said, "I understand. Thanks for your kind suggestions. This is the number of my spiritual crane messenger. After I settle in and get more familiar with Empyreal Star City, I'll definitely help you revise your battle saber. As for which team to choose, I don't want to rush into anything right now. I'll come to you if needed."

"That's alright. I hope you can help with the modification work of Team Chosen Ones as an expert refiner in the future. The fees are not going to be a problem. We can make the transaction by contribution points!" Bi Ran said unhesitatingly while he exchanged his number with Li Yao.

After they parted, Li Yao didn't hurry to find a residence. Instead, he roamed back to the Central Square nice and easily with his hands in his pockets.

He contacted the mainframe crystal processor again and searched for information regarding Team Blue Bronze carefully.

Streams of information poured down from the top of the light beam.

Out of Li Yao's expectation, Team Blue Bronze was actually not just a random team. On the contrary, it was the only team entirely made of outside-world Ord Patrollers that once ranked among the top 5!

The former captain of the team was Yin Qingfeng, who was a Cultivator in the high level of the Building Foundation Stage as well as the soul of his team. More importantly, he was an extremely rare triple-talented hybrid-type Cultivator who had talents in combat, administration, and research at the same time!

With barely any help and nothing but his own bare hands, he built Team Blue Bronze from an unknown third-rate team into one of the best, most influential teams in Occult Orbs Fellowship.

However, three months ago, Team Blue Bronze accidentally triggered a powerful barrier when they were exploring an Occult Orb. To protect his teammates, Yin Qingfeng covered the rear and tried to resist the crazy attack of the barrier.

After the battle, Yin Qingfeng and Gao Peng, another expert in the team, perished.

Team Blue Bronze turned from a full team of six members into one that had only four members. Its position in the Rank of Stars plunged from 3rd to 91st and risked dropping out of the top 100 at any time.

Right then, the vacant Team Blue Bronze recruited a newcomer named Ding Lingdang.

Li Yao already knew the rest of the story.

After Ding Lingdang joined Team Blue Bronze, she discovered an ancient inheritance which belonged to an expert in the era of the Star Ocean Imperium during her first adventure. Her Cultivation surged and so did the comprehensive capability of Team Blue Bronze.

Right now, this team of five members was 79th in the Rank of Stars.

Team Blue Bronze didn't post any recruitment advertisements. The old team members and Ding Lingdang were still bettering their cooperation. It seemed that the team was trying to build her into the next soul of the team.

While he was reading, Li Yao smiled quietly.

When he first saw Ding Lingdang, he had felt that the girl was like a sun which emitted dazzling radiance wherever she went.

Even in Occult Orbs Fellowship that was never lacking elites and stars, Ding Lingdang was still so brilliant and distinguished herself so easily.

Seeing that Ding Lingdang was rushing and soaring in her path of Cultivation, Li Yao felt very happy, as if he had been put in a honeypot.

Pondering for a moment, he asked the mainframe crystal processor to play the video of Ding Lingdang and Guo Yu's match.

He had learnt from the guidelines for newcomers from the mainframe crystal processor that the competition inside Occult Orbs Fellowship was indeed fierce. There were countless matches every day, and normally speaking, no one would ever reject the request of a duel.

After all, the attraction of the Occult Orbs was too enormous.

Every journey to the Occult Orbs was a treasure hunting trip. Who could bear to let go of such rare opportunities?

The cost of entering the Occult Orbs was stunningly high, and the opportunities were limited. Who were allowed to go and who were not? The conflict of interest was too intense for any scheme that was absolutely fair to be implemented.

So, eventually, it boiled down to the simplest way—the criterion of strength! Quarrels should be settled by matches. Those qualified to go to the Occult Orbs were those whose fists were tougher!

The leadership of Occult Orbs Fellowship, namely the Core Formation Stage Cultivators and the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, were very well aware of the situation.

However, since the purpose of Occult Orbs Fellowship was to bring out the elites of the best elites. They simply acquiesced to such a system.

If anything, losers in the matches in Empyreal Star City would only suffer a terrible beating. But if incapable candidates entered the Occult Orbs by chance, they were doomed to be blown to smithereens at any moment.

There was only one rule: no street fighting. All the conflicts and arguments should be resolved in an arena.

A Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was supervising Empyreal Star City all the time. Once a street fight was detected, the guilty persons would be forbidden to set foot in the Occult Orbs ever again.

For the Orb Patrollers, it was a penalty that was even crueler than death.

By such a system, Occult Orbs Fellowship managed to maintain the order of Empyreal Star City while ensuring the competitiveness of the Orb Patrollers.

There were hundreds of arenas of various scales inside Empyreal Star City. From rings for personal duels, stadiums for matches between two teams, to vast battlegrounds where a match between dozens of Star Teams could be held, everybody could find what they needed.

Every day, countless Star Teams and Orb Patrollers fought against each other fiercely in the arenas, with contribution points or tickets to the Occult Orbs as wagers.

Li Yao played the video of the match between Ding Lingdang and Guo Yu and watched with his full attention.

The match was conducted in a rocky area where super-hot steam was ejecting from the cracks on the ground all the time.

It was completely a one-sided slaughter.

After only three minutes, Guo Yu was already beaten out of shape. He lay on the ground twitching uncontrollably with all his limbs stretched out.

Ding Lingdang sniffed and walked to the exit of the arena.

However, Guo Yu was partly faking his afflictions. Gritting his teeth with a hideous face, he picked himself up silently, while streaks of black aura tangled his right arm. Then he charged into Ding Lingdang like a black laser and attacked the back of her head.

Li Yao's eyes suddenly narrowed to the extent that they looked like two vipers. He clenched his fists so hard that the bones inside were cracking.

Half a second later, with a desperate scream, Guo Yu was blown backwards by hundreds of meters, before he crashed into a hill, resulting in a hollow greater than three meters in diameter. Pebbles were spluttering, and dust was surging.

Three giant serpents enshrouded in burning flames tied him up, which almost squeezed all his bones into pieces. His blackened skin was split, and his burnt flesh broke forth.

It was not until this moment that Ding Lingdang turned around and smacked her lips.

Li Yao was familiar with her enough to know that it was her sign of boredom when she felt that her opponent was too weak.

"You filthy bitch, just wait for it, I won't let you get away!"

Being burnt by the furious flames, Guo Yu was shrieking in excruciating pain.

Ding Lingdang yawned slightly. Then she glanced around and found a stalagmite almost two meters in diameter. She opened her arms and blared her eyes, as she exerted her strength and uprooted the stalagmite.

Then...

She spun the stalagmite for several rounds, before she smashed it at the direction of Guo Yu.

"BOOM!"

Buried by a stalagmite that weighed dozens of tons, Guo Yu's profanities immediately stopped.

At first, all his bones were fractured; then, his entire body was roasted; in the end, a stalagmite weighing dozens of tons fell from the sky right into his face.

No wonder Guo Yu had to stay in the ICU for more than half a month, even though he was at the Building Foundation Stage.

Li Yao couldn't help but grin. He smiled without a sound, his white teeth gleaming.

It was indeed as expected of Ding Lingdang.

He was looking forward to meeting Ding Lingdang tomorrow more than ever.

However, before that...

Li Yao's grinning gradually turned malicious.

He dug out all the information about Team Lingering Wind, especially the combat videos where Guo Yu appeared, and studied carefully.

He was going to understand Guo Yu in every way possible, including his strength, his specialties, his combat habits, in order to find a deadly flaw.

"You want to humiliate me to show off in front of Ding Lingdang?

"You are asking for your own death. That's really not my fault!"

…

Two hours later, in the training room of the Children of Occult Orbs in the southern district of Empyreal Star City…

"The newbie from the Grand Desolate War Institution was this close to being lured to the arena by me. He would've been tortured by me in the name of testing, so that I could warm myself up from being confined in the med bay for such a long time, and the Inferno Witch would know the consequences of provoking Team Lingering Wind!

"If only the old fart from Team Chosen Ones hadn't interrupted at the critical moment! I'm so pissed!"

While he gnashed his teeth, Guo Yu was working out on a strength training machine whose load was ten tons.

The courtesy in him was completely gone. Right now, he was surrounded by evilness and hatred.

As a Child of Occult Orbs, he had never been disgraced so much as to be terribly beaten by a young girl from the outside world and end up in hospital for more than half a month. He was a joke among the Children of Occult Orbs now!

He hated it! He hated it so much!

Not only did he hate Ding Lingdang, he had started hating everyone from the Grand Desolate War Institution.

"Don't be so hasty!"

Long Chengde, deputy captain of Team Lingering Wind, scoffed, "Eminent as this so-called Vulture Li Yao may be in the outside world, he is no one in Occult Orbs Fellowship.

"For us, he is just an appetizer. It is of little significance whether to eat it or not.

"The Inferno Witch Ding Lingdang has been on fire lately and has attracted the attention of many experts. She is our main dish!

"Anyways..."

Before he was able to finish his talk, Wan Feihe, their female teammate, came close with a weird expression and said, "Deputy captain, that new guy Li Yao has sent a message to us saying that he is very interested in Team Lingering Wind and he wants to know how to take the recruitment tests."

Chapter 361: Duel of Dignity

Chapter 361: Duel of Dignity

"Did he really?" Long Chengde, deputy captain of the team, turned around and looked at Guo Yu. "How about it? Should we challenge him to a duel or not?"

"Of course!"

Guo Yu's twitching face was filled with cruelty.

This was much more than humiliating the opponent and venting the anger. More importantly, this was about his own reputation.

To hang around with other Orb Patrollers, the most important things were reputation and achievements!

If an Orb Patroller was a well-acknowledged, strong person with a reputable past, other people wouldn't dare to challenge them easily. Many teams would invite them to explore the Occult Orbs together.

Even if the team fell out for various reasons, or they simply wanted to leave, it would be very easy for them to find a new team.

Despite the fact that he was only in the beginning level of the Building Foundation Stage, he had been training in the Occult Orbs for enough years to grasp many brutal secret skills. He used to be a celebrity among the Orb Patrollers;

they all knew that he was a hardcore fighter and not someone easy to deal with.

As it turned out, a girl in her twenties beat him to the ground in just three minutes, and he had to stay in the most advanced med bay for more than half a month before his full recovery.

His body recovered, but his reputation did not. He became the biggest joke for all the Orb Patrollers.

Other than anything else, everybody considered him to be a docile sheep which could do nothing when it was bullied. Many impatient Orb Patrollers had started challenging him.

How much time would he have to waste on these people?

Therefore, right now, Guo Yu's top priority was to restore his reputation as a 'tough man'.

Li Yao was his best choice for this purpose.

Since the Occult Children spent most of their time in the Occult Orbs or Empyreal Star City, they did not know much about what was going on in the outside world.

However, they did read news or browse through the Nexus once in a while, and they knew that two people of the younger generation in the Grand Desolate War Institution were quite famous, Li Yao and Ding Lingdang.

More importantly, this 'Vulture Li Yao' seemed even more well-known than Ding Lingdang in the outside world.

Guo Yu was not a fool. Now that Ding Lingdang had advanced into the middle level of the Building Foundation

Stage, he would be no match for her for a long time. Of course, he didn't dare to challenge her easily right now.

As for Vulture Li Yao, despite his fame, he had just entered the Building Foundation Stage two months ago, which meant he was totally a green hand for Building Foundation Stage Cultivators. Naturally, Guo Yu could beat him up without any trouble!

Since the guy was equally renowned as Ding Lingdang, teaching him a good lesson equaled to slapping Ding Lingdang in the face, didn't it?

Fascinated by the idea, he grinned hideously and said, "Alright. Let me duel with the guy in the arena tomorrow, so that I can tell this Vulture Li Yao in person the difference between Occult Orbs Fellowship and the outside world!"

"Guo Yu, are you sure?"

Long Chengde said suspiciously, "I've read news and some posts from online forums. Vulture Li Yao is also one of the youngest Building Foundation Stage Cultivators in the federation. He is even more popular than Ding Lingdang in the outside world. Don't… fall into the same ditch again."

The last few words were uttered in a very low voice, so that they were the only two who could hear them.

Guo Yu's face changed. His eyes suddenly turned bloodshot.

"Deputy captain, rest assured. I've studied the file of this Vulture Li Yao. He is a hybrid-type Cultivator. His first career is as a refiner. His major in college is also refining. Most of his popularity comes from the magical equipment he crafted.

"In combat, the guy is a big fan of tricks and traps. He is a good Exo. But his personal strength is not that impressive.

"Besides, he just entered the Building Foundation Stage one month ago. I mean, after such a short time, how strong can he be? I've been in the Building Foundation Stage for four years! Even Ding Lingdang has been in the Building Foundation Stage for two years!

"In terms of popularity, he is much more popular than Ding Lingdang.

"In terms of strength, he is far from Ding Lingdang's level!

"Now that the delicious meat has been fed to my mouth, how can I not enjoy it?

"I don't believe that everyone in the Grand Desolate War Institution is as crazy as Inferno Witch Ding Lingdang. That would be nuts!"

The more he thought about it, the more excited he got. His voice grew louder and louder. Several Orb Patrollers nearby heard his declaration.

This was a fairly large training room, with a lot of advanced training facilities from the Occult Orbs, which was why many Star Teams liked to train in this place.

Hearing the conversation of these two people, many Orb Patrollers gathered around.

"Another newcomer from the Grand Desolate War Institution has joined Occult Orbs Fellowship?"

"He is even more famous than Inferno Witch Ding Lingdang in the outside world?"

"It's time to enjoy a good show!"

…

At the same time, in a shabby, low-level training in the west of Empyreal Star City.

"Hooo…"

Standing below a squat rack, with a 30-ton barbell which had been made by the high-density rocks in the Occult Orbs on his back, Li Yao crouched and exerted his strength. His thigh expanded immediately. Veins bulged under his jade-like skin like furious dragons jumping out of the sea.

Two ripples of air spread out from his feet. He stood straight again and took a long breath.

The reading on the light beam nearby was '99'.

The gravity here was five times the standard gravity of the Heaven's Origin Sector.

In front of Li Yao stood ten training machines that looked like ten cannons. With the electric arcs dancing and rune arrays triggered, clusters of twisted air were fired from them and dashed at Li Yao.

These were air cannons, which could absorb the air into their bores through electromagnetic forces and rune arrays before condensing it into one thousandth of its original volume and firing it out at a speed close to that of sound.

At a short distance, it amounted to the full-strength strike of a Refinement Stage Cultivator.

Once it hit anything, the cannonballs of air would disperse automatically without any trace, which made the machine a very clean and convenient training facility.

Normally, Cultivators would use air cannons to train their dodging ability.

But here, Li Yao had lined ten air cannons, aimed them at himself, and set the firing speed to the highest, which was one shot per second.

Every second, ten air cannonballs would hit body heavily.

Yet, he didn't even bother to activate his spiritual shield. He was merely withstanding the attacks with his flesh which had been built up by the Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining technique.

In such a way, he was training his ability of resistance. Yet, he was not entirely satisfied.

He was used to Ding Lingdang's heavy punches. Attacks in the level of the Refinement Stage were nothing but scratches for him.

Under the bombardment of the ten air cannons, Li Yao went on with the dull strength training. Soon, his sweat gathered into a sparkling pond near his feet, which was then blown away when he exerted his strength, turning into mysterious mist circling him.

Suddenly—

"Beep!"

Team Lingering Wind had texted him back, inviting him to take a 'simple test' in the arena tomorrow where Guo Yu would duel with him. Nothing would cross the line. It would be all about friend-making.

Li Yao smiled and tossed his mini crystal processor away. He resumed his tedious training by smashing a training machine.

It seemed that Bi Ran was right. Team Lingering Wind was indeed up to no good. They were planning to fool him over and teach him a good lesson.

However, it was also a good opportunity for him!

Although the mainframe crystal processor of Empyreal Star City had told him that many teams were recruiting new members, Li Yao couldn't help but notice that they were mostly tail-enders in the Rank of Stars.

Even if he were to join such second-tier teams, they would never dare to explore the more dangerous Occult Orbs anyway.

Li Yao's target was a stronger team that ranked among the top 50, or even better, the top 30.

It was not easy to join such teams.

A team was always made of four to six members, which meant that there were no higher than six hundred people calculating all the top 100 teams. In comparison, there were almost 1,500 Orb Patrollers in the entire Empyreal Star City.

The remaining thousand or so Orb Patrollers were benchwarmers. They had to gain reputation by dedicating their best performance in order to prove their value to the Star Teams and be recruited by them.

For newcomers, it was even more difficult to attract the attention of the Star Teams, because their time was limited by the daily consumption of contribution points.

Although Li Yao was sort of a celebrity in the outside world, people in Empyreal Star City did not care much about the fame and achievements in his past. They believed more in what they saw with their own eyes.

Therefore, although Guo Yu's invitation was ill-intended, Li Yao still said yes to it.

Guo Yu wanted to gain reputation, and so did Li Yao!

"In order to impress the best teams of Empyreal Star City with a grandeur presentation within the shortest time possible, Guo Yu will be my perfect stepping stone!

"Besides—

"How dare you ambush my woman from behind?

"Ding Lingdang was lenient and merciful enough to let you stay in the ICU for only half a month after beating and burning you.

"But don't presume that you'll get away so easily when you are snatched by the vulture!"

…

The following morning, in the No. 17 arena in the east of Empyreal Star City…

As the most popular training facilities among Orb Patrollers, there were dozens of arenas in Empyreal Star City. The one of the largest scale was even an entire Occult Orb which had been modified after being full developed.

Although Orb Patrollers could also participate in 100% life-like simulated combat in the Great Illusionary Land, they often preferred to enjoy the feeling of hitting and being hit in the real world.

Duels in the arenas were all conducted according to the standard of real-life combat. Everyone would carry real weapons. Their safety would be ensured by the Judge Ball floating in the air.

The Judge Ball was a kind of ancillary magical equipment in the era of the Star Ocean Imperium. It had dozens of crystal cameras on its shell, as well as a crystal processor with amazingly high computational ability inside its body. During a duel, it would float in the air and monitor the progress of the duel.

When its crystal processor calculated that the battle was getting out of control and there was a 99% likelihood that either party would die, a spiritual shield would immediately appear and block the fatal attack.

As for the attacks that were not fatal, the Judge Ball would simply ignore them.

As a result, although few had been killed in an arena, it was not unusual for somebody to get terribly wounded.

Such extremity and excitement were also what Orb Patrollers liked most.

After all, the medical facilities in Empyreal Star City were far more advanced than those of the outside world. Even the most severe injuries could be cured within one month after lying in a med bay.

When Li Yao walked into the No. 17 arena, a lot of people had already gathered in the place.

Not just the members of Team Lingering Wind, many people from other Star Teams and many on the waiting list had also crowded into the arena.

Most of them knew a thing or two about his accomplishments in the outside world which seemed to be even impressive than Ding Lingdang's. Therefore, they couldn't hold back their curiosity and came to watch his duel with Guo Yu.

Chapter 362: Return of the Witch

Chapter 362: Return of the Witch

"Is he Vulture Li Yao? He seems rather plain. But I'm told he's quite something in the outside world. He is a brutal man as famous as Ding Lingdang in the younger generation of the Grand Desolate War Institution!"

"He is indeed quite popular. But his popularity is mostly based on refining. He once developed a piece of magical equipment named 'Demon Beast Detector' which has become a best-seller. He also participated in the Project Mystic Skeleton. It is said that he is an excellent Exo."

"But I doubt his own strength."

"After all, he's only just past twenties and entered the Building Foundation Stage only two months ago. Talented as he may be, he is still too young and inexperienced to be a match for Guo Yu."

"Then why did he agree to duel with Guo Yu?"

"Hehe. I'm guessing that it is because he is new to this place and he doesn't have the slightest idea how deep the water here is. Even though he has been forewarned, such a guy must've enjoyed a peaceful growth the whole time without suffering any major failure. He has no idea how tough Occult Orbs Fellowship is. I'm afraid that he considers the duel to be a chance for him to rise to fame."

Fixed on by the curious eyes of many Orb Patrollers, Li Yao walked toward the members of Team Lingering Wind neither too fast nor too slowly.

"Mr. Li Yao, you're here!

"I picked this arena in your favor. There are all kinds of magical equipment debris and weapon scraps inside. The arena will provide standard mustard suits. No personal magical equipment is allowed. Ten free-of-harm minutes will be granted for both parties to prepare items that they deem to be of use. Such a place is best for a talented refiner like yourself."

Guo Yu grinned happily. "We'll stop when we need to. This is all about friend-making. Many Star Teams are paying close attention to the duel. With a marvelous performance, you'll definitely become one of the most desired newcomers in Empyreal Star City!"

Li Yao had studied the No. 17 arena carefully last night.

It was a medium-size arena whose name was 'Burning Tank'. The place was a simulation of a post-war battleground which was scattered with fragments of magical equipment and dead bodies of demon beasts.

The most distinctive part of this arena was that nine burning crystal tanks were placed loosely on the battleground which were likely to explode at any time. They were the biggest variables of the arena.

Ostensibly speaking, Guo Yu had indeed picked a battleground in his favor, where his advantages in maintenance and modification could be best made use of.

However, after studying multiple combat videos of Guo Yu's, Li Yao discovered that he was actually a jack-of-all-trades who was adept at many different kinds of weapons and familiar with both guns and melee armaments.

Burning Tank was a battleground where his specialties could be best carried out, too.

Li Yao nodded his head and smiled. "Cool. Let's start."

…

At the same time, in the star shuttle launch base on the ground.

"BOOM! CRACK!"

In the sky, dark clouds were rolling, and gold arcs were dancing. A giant swirl formed, which constricted violently and spat out a round star shuttle. The star shuttle rushed downward on the track rapidly, until it was blocked in the end after breaking through dozens of spiritual nets.

The star shuttle was originally made of colorful crystals. But right now, there was nothing but blackness on its shell where white smoke was popping up. It seemed to have just been picked up from magma.

"CRACK! CRACK!"

In an earsplitting shriek, the shell of the round shuttle opened slowly, unveiling an oval cabin door.

"Star Shuttle No. 23 has been recovered successfully. Team Blue Bronze is back!"

Dozens of workers and doctors hurried to the star shuttle carrying medical magical equipment.

From the oval door, a girl no taller than 1.5 meters whose hair was in the color of emerald crawled out swiftly, followed by a hideous-looking yet extremely tall, muscular man. The third team member and the forth held each other up while they were getting out, both of whom were carrying a lot of guns and heavy magical equipment.

The fifth team member was wearing a crimson mustard suit. Her messy short hair seemed to have been gnawed by dogs. Yet, her eyes were sparkling, and there was unfulfillment in her face. She immediately attracted everyone's attention when she appeared.

"Ding Lingdang, Queen of Fire!"

"Why is her scent so much more intimidating than the day when she left? It's been only several days; yet her Cultivation seems to have improved significantly. She looks like a tyrannosaur which is growing at an exponential speed. How terrifying!"

Listening to people discussing themselves, the ugly muscled man turned around and smiled at Ding Lingdang.

"Lingdang, your surprisingly fast growth has scared everyone!

"I wonder why Team Blue Bronze was so fortunate as to be joined by such a genius like yourself. Perhaps the soul of our deceased captain is indeed watching over us from the heavens.

"In this trip to the Occult Orbs, Yan Zi might've been killed without your excellent performance."

Ding Lingdang smiled and said, "The honor is mine to join Team Blue Bronze. Everyone wouldn't be entering the Occult Orbs so frequently in the first place if I weren't here. Of course, I had to do my best. Thankfully, the trophies of this trip are quite satisfactory. The nine Fire Ganodermas that I devoured are mostly digested now. The remaining Fire Ganodermas can be exchanged for contribution points. They should be enough for the rank of Team Blue Bronze to ascend more than ten."

The ugly man nodded his head.

"The cooperation of our team is almost perfect now. The most important thing next is to recruit a new member to make us a full team again. Only a full team has a chance to squeeze into the top 10 in the Rank of Stars, so that we'll be able to explore 'the place' in half a year.

"However, we can't be too prudent in the selection of the new teammate. I would rather keep the team in the size of five than recruit a useless crap that will be a burden for the team.

"Thankfully, you are a superstar right now. There are many people who are willing to join Team Blue Bronze. Let's sort out their resumes when we're back to Empyreal Star City."

The doctors examined them and found no anomaly in their bodies. Considering that they'd also brought back a lot of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, this was an extraordinarily fruitful trip to the Occult Orbs.

Talking and laughing, the five of them walked out of the launch base. Yet, a conversation between two workers caught their attention.

"What? A newcomer from the Grand Desolate War Institution is dueling with Guo Yu?"

Ding Lingdang suddenly stopped. Smalls snakes of fire were flowing around her body. There was anger in her eyes, as she rubbed her fists and said, "Guo Yu doesn't know what he is doing. What's the meaning of this? Finding a random guy from the Grand Desolate War Institution to vent his anger on because he can't find me?"

The ugly, tall, muscled man, who was the incumbent captain of the team named Hong Tong, replied, "Guo Yu suffered a tremendous failure because of you. Of course, he needs to make up for it. Otherwise, he would never be able to hang around with other Orb Patrollers anymore. Since you were not present, and he would be no match for you even if you were, it was apparently a good idea to challenge another newcomer from the Grand Desolate War Institution to a duel!"

"Of all dates, Guo Yu picked the day when we return from the Occult Orbs to duel with the new guy of the Grand Desolate War Institution. It's obvious that he is trying to humiliate us. Let's go there and check it out!"

The female teammate who had emerald hair sniffed.

Her name was Yan Yangtian. She was the scout in Team Blue Bronze.

"According to the two workers, the newcomer dueling with Guo Yu is a famous guy in the Grand Desolate War Institution in the recent years who is known as Vulture Li Yao. Lingdang, you must know this guy from school. What do you think of him?" Captain Hong Tong asked.

Ding Lingdang's faced was immediately brimming with bewilderment.

Her reaction was almost identical to that of Li Yao when he first heard of 'Inferno Witch Ding Lingdang'.

Then, she beamed with great pleasure, which spread out from the corner of her mouth like the ripple of a lake that had just unfrozen in the spring.

All her four teammates were greatly shocked.

The staff and doctors nearby were completely dumbfounded, too.

Ding Lingdang, Queen of Fire, had always been a human-shaped tyrannosaur in their minds, a maniac in martial arts and a psycho in training.

But why was she smiling so charmingly? She wasn't possessed by anything, was she?

…

In the No. 17 arena…

Burning Tank was less than three hundred meters in both length and width. Considering the sight, speed, and damage of Cultivators, it was one of the smallest rings of all. Within a breath, they would be able to run a lap inside of it.

Li Yao and Guo Yu stood at two ends of the battleground which had been enclosed by electromagnetic rails and defense rune arrays.

For the audience, they could watch the 3D live stream of the match through the head-worn light beam projector.

In the battleground of Burning Tank, a great war seemed to have just taken place. The air was filled with the stink of blood and the scent of metals being burnt. Damaged magical equipment and weapons were scattered all over the ground. There were even quite a lot of broken limbs of the demon beasts, which were scattered and in bizarre shapes.

Nine crystal tanks were burning fiercely, like nine bombs which were likely to detonate at any moment.

As the three Judge Balls floating in the air turned from green to yellow, the match official began!

The initial ten minutes were preparation time. They were not allowed to attack each other and had to assemble their own weapons with the debris of magical equipment on the battleground.

Li Yao glanced around and noticed something. He immediately rushed at a battle saber that was basically intact, while picking up a lot of fragments of magical equipment and wrecked weapons along the way.

Then, he found a place far away from the burning crystal tanks, before he started maintaining and modifying the battle saber at an astonishing speed.

He glanced at Guo Yu in the middle of his work.

Guo Yu's hands were moving like flying butterflies, too. Several pieces of magical equipment had been repaired and put beside him.

All the weapons on the battleground of Burning Tank were MP magical equipment. Their structures were relatively simple.

As an experienced Orb Patroller and a weapon expert, Guo Yu was of course familiar with the basic maintenance and assembling skills.

In regard to the maintenance of such simple magical equipment, he was not much slower than Li Yao.

Li Yao focused his attention back on his own weapon.

His plan was different from Guo Yu's.

Guo Yu had tried his best to repair as many weapons as possible, and he'd got almost twenty weapons. In the meantime, Li Yao had embedded all the magical equipment components he found useful into the one saber, transforming it into a giant, grotesque saber.

The new saber was 2.37 meters long and weighed 425 kilograms. Its two edges were juxtaposed and looked like the tusks of demon beasts. As the crystals and rune arrays on the body of the saber were triggered, electric arcs started dancing and colliding between the two edges with cracking noises, while the saber was vibrating and turning the tip of the saber into blurred shadows.

Chapter 363: Burning Tank

Chapter 363: Burning Tank

This two-edged vibrating battle saber had reached the limit of damage for all MP battle sabers.

His natural and fluent modification skills impressed many spectators who were watching from the outside.

Most of them were experts of the trade. Despite their different positions, their eyes were keen enough to tell that aside from Vulture Li Yao's personal strength, his modification skills alone would be excellent enough to earn him a place in the teams whose ranks were not very high.

Right then, Guo Yu finished his preparation too.

Compared to Li Yao, he was armed to the teeth. Two translucent daggers beside the waist, one storm bolter in his hands which had been attached with a giant Thunder-Palm launcher, a chainsword and a battle saber crossed on his back, and a few sharp broken blades hidden in his boots.

"Beep!"

The indicator lights on the three Judge Balls turned dangerously red at the same time.

Safe time had passed. The real combat had begun!

"BOOM!"

Before the two of them were able to do anything, a crystal tank on the verge of being melted in the center of the arena exploded without a sign.

The twisted turret soared to the sky. Scorching pieces were flying everywhere in a rain of fire, covering an area of almost a hundred square meters. The blast reached every corner in the arena, which made the pupils of the two participants shrink simultaneously.

"Swoosh! Swoosh!"

Guo Yu had dueled in the arena of Burning Tank several times. He was quite familiar with the unexpected explosions, which was also one of the reasons why he had chosen the No. 17 arena.

At the same time as the crystal tank's explosion, he launched his attacks in advance. Bullets filled with spiritual energy darted at Li Yao furiously!

The understanding of weapons of ordinary soldiers was completely different from that of Building Foundation Stage Cultivators, who could attach their telepathic thoughts to every bullet that they triggered, allowing them to control the bullets at a short distance fully at their will.

Guo Yu had triggered 72 bullets instantly, and he had split 72 telepathic thoughts to adjust the speed, direction and angle of each bullet. Covering the hundreds of meters of distance in between, all the bullets together formed an impregnable net which blocked every route of Li Yao's retreat at the same time, stopping him from going anywhere.

'This is a good one. No wonder he dared to challenge Ding Lingdang!'

This was the first time that Li Yao had ever been engaged with a gun expert at the Building Foundation Stage.

His opponent's precise manipulation of bullets was a big eye-opener for him.

His spiritual energy rippled out, and he sensed that the spiritual energy contained in every bullet was different.

It appeared that every bullet had its unique ability.

In such a limited time, Li Yao failed to find a perfect dodging plan even though he had maximized his computational ability.

Even in the plan bordering on perfection, he would still have to take the blow of two bullets the hard way.

'Despite the fact that he is merely in the beginning level of the Building Foundation Stage, Guo Yu has grasped formidable combat skills because of the long-time training in the Occult Orbs. His real personal strength, if fully exerted, might be even more enormous than many outside-world Cultivators in the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage!

'How much can I grow if I can have the opportunity to train in the Occult Orbs for one or two years?'

Gritting his teeth, Li Yao sprinted and slashed his saber.

His target was not the heads of the bullets, but the bodies of them on which he imposed force by brushing past the heads and hitting the cases with the vibration of the saber.

The trajectories of seventeen bullets were affected as a result. He ripped open a crack in the storm of bullets.

"BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM!"

Guo Yu was a decisive man. Seeing that all his bullets were going to miss the target, he immediately triggered the attack rune arrays in all the bullets with his telepathic thought in order to interfere with Li Yao's rhythm.

At the same time, he launched three Thunder-Palms nearby Li Yao, before he tossed away his storm bolter and picked the saber and sword from his back. Then he rushed forward in an astonishing speed at his opponent!

"BOOM!"

Another crystal tank exploded near him. Guo Yu didn't dodge at all. Instead, he condensed a spiritual shield between the crystal tank and himself, thereby boosting himself to a supersonic speed by the power of the blast.

"Ding!"

"Ding! Ding! Ding! Ding! Ding! Ding! Ding!"

Hardly had Li Yao freed himself from the maze of fire caused by the bullets when he was caught in a hurricane of metal made by a saber and a sword!

He was completely enveloped in Guo Yu's overwhelming attacks, which burdened him with so much pressure that he found it hard to breathe.

An experienced, field-tested Orb Patroller could be so intimidating!

The audience in the outside, with the help of the head-worn 3D light beam projector, appeared in the arena like ghosts, while they observed the combat at the closest distance possible.

All of them could tell that Guo Yu had maintained a dominating advantage since the beginning, and the rhythm of the combat was completely under his control.

In comparison, Li Yao was only striving to survive with no way to fight back at all.

"Guo Yu's strength has significantly improved compared with one month ago. The speed of his sword attacks is at least 9% higher. The interchange of his saber and his sword is amazing, too. The man has brought out the best a Cultivator in the beginning level of the Building Foundation Stage can do!"

"It seems that the brutal failure against Ding Lingdang has prompted him to reflect on himself. If he were in such a state when he was faced with Ding Lingdang, he wouldn't have failed so miserably!"

"Vulture Li Yao is just a beginner who has just entered the Building Foundation Stage. Once he is suppressed and falls into the opponent's pace, it's hardly likely that he could make a comeback!"

"Not so fast. Li Yao is best known for his tricks and cunningness. That's why he is nicknamed 'Vulture' in the outside world. I don't believe that he isn't concocting something in his mind."

"CRACK!"

In the middle of the heated discussion, an unexpected change suddenly broke out!

Both of the two Orb Patrollers had carried out the best of the beginning level of the Building Foundation Stage. But the weapons in their hands belonged to the shabbiest MP magical equipment, which had only undergone a simple, ten-minute maintenance and modification before the combat. How good could they be?

Within the past half a minute, their weapons had collided profoundly more than a thousand times, which far exceeded the limits of the metals. Crushed and savaged by the powerful spiritual energy, they finally couldn't bear it any longer and, after the last furious crash, exploded into thousands of pieces!

Almost at the same time—

Everyone's eyes were filled with blankness for half a second, as if a small sun had burst out in the battleground without any sign!

"Flash rune arrays!"

"Vulture Li Yao indeed had plans! I noticed just now that he picked up two flash bangs when he was preparing to repair his magical equipment. It turns out that he had dismantled the flash bangs and embedded their key components into his battle saber!"

"Once the battler saber is broken, the flash rune arrays will be automatically triggered!"

"He knew that the hardness of the magical equipment was not good enough and that it tended to break up in the fierce combat. That's why he prepared such a deadly move!"

Holding their breath, all the audience watched the game anxiously.

But the members of Team Lingering Wind were as calm as before, if not with additional contempt.

Guo Yu had studied enough video clips of his enemy's performances to know that he was an insidious man who was particularly fond of deceptions and disguises.

'You wanted an experienced Orb Patroller to fall for a few flash bangs? Hilarious!'

As it turned out, before everyone's visual was restored, they had heard Guo Yu's hideous laughter.

When they were able to see what was going in the battleground, they found that Guo Yu was lunging at Li Yao unhesitatingly with two daggers in each hand. He seemed to be not in the least affected by the flash bangs!

It was Li Yao who was dazed for a moment, who must've failed to foresee that Guo Yu would see through his traps and close his eyes at the critical moment.

"CRACK!"

When he came back to himself, Li Yao tried to stretch out his broken saber and blocked the incoming daggers.

But Guo Yu's elbow had hit Li Yao's chest brutally like an enormous cannonball.

Even the audience outside of the arena could hear the cracking of bones loud and clear.

In a grunt, Li Yao was blown backwards like a broken baggage.

Guo Yu's face was filled with cruelness. He seemed to have completely forgotten the 'nothing would cross the line' promise. Instead, he dashed forward like a hungry tiger chasing a goat.

But the moment before he caught up to Li Yao, his face suddenly turned extremely weird, as he missed a step like a drunk cripple.

Life and death could be determined within one second during the competition of the Building Foundation Stage Cultivators. Such a loss of balance was an unforgivable and deadly mistake.

Li Yao, whose ribs should've been shattered, suddenly widened his eyes. The brutality beaming out of his eyes made everyone understand that—

Firstly, the flash bangs were just a pretension. The inexplicable trick that made his opponent lose balance was his real deadly move.

Secondly, he was definitely not a common refiner. His remarkable ability of resistance was even better than that of many middle-level Building Foundation Stage Cultivators. He suffered a full-strength strike in his chest from Guo Yu and he was totally fine!

Thirdly, and most importantly, Li Yao had been well aware that this was not going to be a match of friendship where 'nothing would cross the line' at all!

He had prepared to beat Guo Yu to a pulp since the very beginning!

When Guo Yu was knocked away by dozens of meters and lay on the ground like a cluster of mud, members of Team Lingering Wind finally lost their tranquility.

"What the hell? Why did Guo Yu lose balance all of a sudden? And what kept him from standing up for such a long time?"

As members of Team Lingering Wind were looking for an answer in anxiety and desperation, Li Yao did another thing that was completely insane, which pressed their curses back to their throats.

Li Yao's battle saber was broken. He was bare-handed right now.

Instead of picking up a new weapon, he clenched the turret of a burning crystal tank, lifted it up and threw it away.

"You've got to be kidding me!"

Everyone was completely dumbfounded.

His head dizzy, Guo Yu was still struggling to his feet on one of his knees, when he suddenly sensed that a burning shadow of fire was falling upon him. He was stunned when he raised his head.

"No…"

Before the astounded Guo Yu was able to finish his sentence, he was already blown away by the crystal tank for almost a hundred meters and crashed into a second crystal tank.

"BOOM!"

The crystal tank that Li Yao threw away didn't explode. But the second crystal tank turned into a giant fireball to Li Yao's satisfaction.

The only thing that Guo Yu could do was open up his spiritual shield to the maximum when the flames burst out, before he was completely devoured by the swirl of furious fire and intense spiritual energy.

When the three Judge Balls pulled him out with electromagnetic beams, many scraps of metal had already melted into his flesh and blood.

Judging from his injuries, it would take at least fifty days before he could leave the ICU again.

"Hiss…"

All the audience outside of the arena gasped.

They had thought that Inferno Witch Ding Lingdang was brutal enough. Never did they anticipate that Vulture Li Yao was ten times more ruthless than her!

Monsters from the Grand Desolate War Institution were indeed unbelievable!

Chapter 364: Team Blue Bronze's Invitation

Chapter 364: Team Blue Bronze's Invitation

When Li Yao walked out of the arena calmly, he saw the Orb Patrollers in the outside wearing different and complicated expressions.

Some of them were still bewildered.

Some of them were blinking their eyes, apparently thinking of hiring Li Yao.

Some of them were deeply confused, wondering how Li Yao managed to make Guo Yu lose balance.

Of course, there were also many Orb Patrollers who were glaring at him, especially those from Team Lingering Wind. Their eyes had pierced him hundreds of times like lightning.

Li Yao was bothered by none of it. He continued walking easily and comfortably.

Street fighting was not allowed in Empyreal Star City. All the grudges had to be resolved by formal duels.

If his opponent was sending Cultivators in the beginning level of the Building Foundation Stage to challenge him, then they could just bring it on. He was not scared of anyone that was at the same level with him.

What about middle-level and high-level Building Foundation Stage Cultivators?

Normally speaking, they would not disgrace themselves by challenging a Cultivator in the beginning level of the Building Foundation Stage.

Cultivators valued forward-looking and advancement most. It was a highly inappropriate behavior to bully the weak. Therefore, the weak could always challenge the strong at their will. But if the strong decided to challenge the weak, they would be a laughing stock even if they won the game.

So, when Cultivators beyond his level challenged him, he could always turn them down, which would do no harm to his reputation. After all, it wouldn't be a fair game if the two parties weren't of the same level. Other people might even consider him to be a sensible man and think more highly of him.

Moreover…

The toughest members of Team Lingering Wind were merely in the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage, all of whom Li Yao had carefully studied. Suppose he agreed to duel with any of them and the match got too intense, the chance of him winning was not slim at all.

Therefore, Li Yao couldn't care less about the members of Team Lingering Wind who seemed like they might explode out of fury at any moment.

Right then, a hot wave swept over. All the audience found it hard to breathe.

Everyone of Team Lingering Wind narrowed their eyes and looked at the distance in alert.

"Team Blue Bronze! Inferno Witch Ding Lingdang is back!"

Outside of the arena, the five members of Team Lingering Wind were all surprised to see the replay of the match on the giant light beam.

They had thought that they would be able to catch the last part of the match. They didn't anticipate that it would be so short that it was concluded after only one minute and thirteen seconds.

Besides...

Vulture Li Yao's performance was even more brutal than Ding Lingdang's!

"What's the background of this Li Yao? He's pretty impressive! The time it took him to finish Guo Yu was even ten seconds shorter than it took you!"

"His methods were a little bit crazy, weren't they? To think that he waved a crystal tank like a giant hammer! Lingdang, why is the Grand Desolate War Institution full of lunatics like yourself?"

"How did he make Guo Yu lose balance? Why isn't there anything wrong with him? How perplexing!"

"Lingdang..."

Deep in thought, Hong Tong, captain of Team Blue Bronze, scratched his beard and said, "The personal strength of this Vulture Li Yao is indeed impressive. I'm told that he's also a gifted refiner, right? Even better!

"How about his integrity? Are you familiar with him? What do you think of his personality? Is he good enough to join Team Blue Bronze?"

Ding Lingdang grinned while she watched the video of Li Yao's match. Then she strode to Li Yao with a beaming face.

"Inferno Witch Ding Lingdang is back. Dear lord! The air around her is even more intimidating than one month ago. That peculiar 'Nona-colored Fire' of hers must be stronger than before!"

Surrounded by the enthusiastic Orb Patrollers, Li Yao and Ding Lingdang simply stared at each other.

The somewhat weird vibe confused everyone, who immediately started discussing.

"What's going on? It doesn't seem about right. Aren't these two from the same school? Why are they acting all weird?"

"Hard to say. As the saying goes, there can only be one tiger in its territory. The two of them are both distinctive figures that rose to fame in the recent years from the Grand Desolate War Institution. Maybe their competition was fierce when they were in school, which resulted to their bad relationship!"

"Just think about it. Vulture Li Yao is even better known than Ding Lingdang in the outside world. We all know that 'Inferno Witch' is too eager for excellence to stand anyone else suppressing her! Maybe there have been conflicts between them since long ago."

"Makes sense. They—"

Team Blue Bronze, Team Lingering Wind, and dozens of Orb Patrollers from other Star Teams all lost their words and thought their eyes were deceiving them, because Li Yao and Ding Lingdang suddenly moved and hugged each other.

"Why didn't you tell me earlier that you joined Occult Orbs Fellowship?" Li Yao asked in a low voice.

"At first, it was because I didn't want to worry you, but later it was because I wanted to give you a surprise. I was planning to go back to the school sometime in the next month. I didn't know that you would be coming to this place, too!

"But it is pretty reasonable. Right now, the development of Occult Orbs is at a much faster pace. There are more and more Star Teams. Geniuses like you are born for the Occult Orbs!" Ding Lingdang replied in a smile.

The closeness between them rendered every bystander speechless.

The two of them stopped talking, because their lips and tongues were totally occupied.

…

An hour later, in Team Blue Bronze's base inside Empyreal Star City…

They were on the top floor of a luxury hotel. Team Blue Bronze had rented the entire floor for a long time. Not only were there extravagant suites with all kinds of amenities, there was also a complimentary training room which could accommodate ten Building Foundation Stage Cultivators, as well as a combat room with exceptional safety measures.

At this moment, the other four members of Team Blue Bronze were all gazing at Li Yao, in a way that there seemed to be something invisible yet indestructible attaching their eyes to him.

Li Yao scratched his nose and frowned, "Why are you all looking at me like this?"

Hong Tong grinned.

"Nothing. It's just that we find it difficult to accept the fact that a girl like Ding Lingdang has a boyfriend.

"We've all seen her crazy training over the past few months, which almost convinced us that she was an ascetic monk who's not interested in anything other than martial arts.

"But it's quite understandable now that we've seen how you fought. If Ding Lingdang has a boyfriend, it can be no one but you!"

"Let's put the gossip aside for a while, shall we? I'm curious about one thing, Li Yao."

Ding Lingdang waved her hands and interrupted them from staring at Li Yao. Then she asked, with her eyes wide open, "In the fight just now, you were suppressed by Guo Yu the whole time in the beginning. Even your flash bangs failed to work out. However, Guo Yu suddenly lost his balance toward the end of the match, which eventually led to your comeback. How did you do it?"

"It's very simple."

Li Yao explained, "Although Guo Yu is only in the beginning level of the Building Foundation Stage, he has been exploring the Occult Orbs for a long time, which means that he must be a cautious man and he must've studied my past to learn of my fighting style.

"Besides, the arena of Burning Tanks is a fairly small place. He is a weaponry expert, who could see through the simple modifications easily.

"As I expected, while he was pretending that he was picking weapons in the beginning, he was actually observing me all the time trying to find out what moves I would resort to.

"Therefore, I purposefully let him discover that I added flash rune arrays to the battle saber during my modification.

"In fact, my real killing move was the two vibrating edges of the saber which could trigger sound waves in a special frequency. As a result, the vestibulum and the semicircular canal in the ear would resonate violently!

"The vestibulum and the semicircular canal are both key organs inside the ear that manage the balance of the body. Once they're shaking, one will feel dizzy and eventually lose balance.

"Although Building Foundation Stage Cultivators can build up their body hardness to the extent of that of the steel, it is still quite difficult for them to improve the hardness of the soft organs inside their ears.

"Once they start shaking because of the resonance, the dizziness of the body won't go away for at least one minute, which was enough for me to do many things."

"So, that was the case."

Everyone finally understood what had happened.

But Captain Hong Tong, after pondering for a moment, questioned him further. "That's not right. If it were flash rune arrays, you could reduce their effect by closing your eyes or turning away your head in advance, but sound waves are not that easy to defend. When the ears of your enemy were being savaged, wouldn't your ears be under the influence, too? You two should've lost balance at the same time."

"I didn't see you protect your ears with anything. Why were you not affected by the resonance?"

Li Yao smiled.

"Of course I didn't. Otherwise, Guo Yu would've known that there was going to be a sound attack.

"My ears were savaged, too. And since I was closer to the source of the sound than Guo Yu was, I'm afraid my ears suffered even more damage than his.

"However, I've received a special training session before. During the one week, the balance system of my body was entirely wrecked. I became quite used to training and fighting in a swirling world a long time ago."

Everyone was quiet, failing to come up with any comment.

The four members other than Ding Lingdang were all astonished.

They were well aware what it felt like when the organs in the ears malfunctioned. The guy could actually fight like normal when the balance system was completely in a mess?

He truly deserved to be the Queen of Fire's man!

Speechless for a while, Hong Tong took a deep breath and said solemnly, "Mr. Li Yao, allow us to formally introduce ourselves. My name is Hong Tong, and I'm the second captain of Team Blue Bronze. I'm a battle-type Cultivator that just stepped into the high level of the Building Foundation Stage. I'm best at the spiritual energy of the metal class and of the earth class. I have some basic understanding on the manipulation of gravity, too. In our team, I'm mainly in charge of defense."

"My name is Yan Yangtian, but everyone prefers to call me Yan Zi. I'm the scout in the team, and I'm in the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage. My senses are extraordinarily sharp. My sight, hearing, and sense of danger are ten times keener than those of common Cultivators. Li Yao, your performance was indeed remarkable!" the short girl with emerald hair said with a bright smile.

A tall, thin, male teammate, who had a black birthmark in the middle of his forehead, said confidently, "I am Leng Ziming from First Military Academy of the Federation. I'm the sniper and the gun expert of the team. I'm in the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage and I'm adept at gun-fighting. People call me 'Shell', because in my hand, a bullet shell can be as destructive as a flying sword!"

Beside 'Shell' Leng Ziming, a stout young man grinned.

"My name is Ba Weiqi. People call me 'Dummy', because they've been complaining that I talk too much and would rather I be muted. Hahahaha. But it's impossible to stop me from talking! I'm sort of a jack of all trades in the team. I know something about medical skills, something about fighting, and something about the identification of traps and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. I'm also aware of a few skills about mental attack and defense.

"You should know that many demon experts love mental attacks. The ancient cemeteries and battlegrounds left over the past thousands of years are full of mental traps, too. So, an expert in mental attacks is necessary in a team!"

"These are our respective jobs in Team Blue Bronze. In regard to scouting, assassination, defense and mental attacks, the team is fully prepared. Now that Ding Lingdang has joined us as the center of attacking, our personnel are almost perfect now, except that we're lacking a professional refiner. Mr. Li Yao, are you interested in joining Team Blue Bronze?"

Captain Hong Tong extended his invitation solemnly.

Chapter 365: Monsters

Chapter 365: Monsters

Li Yao hesitated.

He had been planning to join a first-rate team, preferably with a rank among the top 30. The rank of Team Blue Bronze, on the other hand, was much lower than he expected.

But Ding Lingdang was in Team Blue Bronze. He craved to fight side by side with her, too.

Seeing through his concerns, Ding Lingdang walked forward and said, "Just because Team Blue Bronze ranks in the seventies right now doesn't mean we are a mediocre team.

"If you have studied the files of Team Blue Bronze, you should know that Team Blue Bronze was a super team ranking in the top five, just three months ago. It was because of the loss of Yin Qingfeng, the former captain as well as soul of the team, and Gao Peng, another expert of the team, that the comprehensive capability of the team plunged.

"However, the remaining four teammates all boast exceptional personal abilities. Their knowledge about the Occult Orbs is abundant after years of training there.

"If we work with them together, Team Blue Bronze will definitely return to the top 10 of the Rank of Stars!"

Ding Lingdang's words made Li Yao's heart race. Returning to the top 10 of the Rank of Stars? It did sound like something particularly fit for his appetite.

Hong Tong smiled and said, "Mr. Li Yao, you don't have to make a decision right now. Selection of a team often involves the arrangement of fate. But more importantly, you need to check whether or not the style of the team works for you.

"If you think ours doesn't, you don't need to force yourself to join us. Although Ding Lingdang is part of Team Blue Bronze, it's perfectly normal for husband and wife, older brother and younger brother, or father and son to be in two different teams.

"There are advantages and disadvantages when you have a family member in the team. The advantages are that you know each other well and your cooperation can be flawless; the disadvantages are that you may care too much about each other, and when a crisis takes place, your personal feelings will hinder you from making sensible choices.

"Therefore, don't let anything bother you. Just take your time and think about it carefully.

"Even if you decide to join Team Blue Bronze, we'll need to ask you to take several tests, not because we don't believe in your ability, but because we need to make sure that your ability is what Team Blue Bronze needs right now.

"However, while you are considering, you can see a presentation of Team Blue first."

As he was talking, Hong Tong took a small step forward.

The distance between them barely changed. But Li Yao felt that a mountain had been put on his head and that his body was ten times heavier than before, as if he was being absorbed by hardening cement.

"The ability that I'm best at is manipulation of gravity. If I burn my soul to maximum, I can put the enemy in thirty times gravity at most; they will be suppressed by an invisible mountain, unable to move at all.

"Therefore, in Occult Orbs Fellowship, many people call me 'Mountain Monster'!"

Hong Tong burst out into laughter. He suddenly sped up and ran almost a hundred laps around Li Yao at an astonishing speed which was disproportional to his height and weight.

"Not only can I increase the gravity of the ground where the enemy is standing, I can also decrease the gravity of the ground near myself instantly to one tenth of the standard gravity. Naturally, I can run much faster than most people.

"Besides, since most of the hostile attacks are under the influence of gravity, as long as I control the gravity around me neatly, I can interfere with the trajectories of the attacks and disable the flying swords, venomous liquids, sharp spikes, narcotic mist, and even powerful blasts, if not stopping their attacks from being launched in the first place.

"Therefore, I'm mainly in charge of defense of the team."

Barely had he finished his sentence when Yan Yangtian jumped to Li Yao and smiled.

"I'm the scout of the team; I'm adept at swiftness and stealth skills."

While she was talking, she winked mysteriously. Her body suddenly turned transparent, before it vanished into thin air like an ice tube which was thrown into boiling water.

Li Yao's telepathic thoughts rippled out but failed to detect Yan Yangtian's existence at all.

What a remarkable stealth ability!

Then, someone suddenly giggled behind him.

He turned around, only to find two identical Ding Lingdangs smiling at him at the same time.

The Ding Lingdang on the left grimaced. In a blur, it turned into Li Yao and then Hong Tong. It even put on the appearance of a purple-haired demon with two horns on the forehead, before it returned to Yan Yangtian, who retreated behind Hong Tong with a smile.

"My ability is not so fancy. It's just shooting guns."

'Shell' Leng Ziming smiled casually. Then his hands turned into two blurred shadows, picked up two gold glittering pistols, and shot more than twenty brilliantly shining bullets of spiritual energy in a breath.

What was weird was that after the bullets spurted out and dispersed in the air like blossoming, they took a sharp turn at the same time and congregated in midair where they formed an impenetrable cage.

"Zi! Zi!"

After a noise, the rune arrays carved on the bullets were activated at the same time. Gold electric arcs rushed crazily between them, interweaving to create a three-dimensional net about one meter in diameter.

"This is an aggressive array of my own invention named 'Gold Cage' which is formed by my bullets. According to the reaction of the enemy, there are 36 different follow-up plans!"

Leng Ziming whistled. His bullets immediately pierced inwards simultaneously. More than a hundred gold electric arcs exploded at the same time after a boom. But the damage was entirely restricted to a small zone no more than one foot in diameter. Li Yao didn't feel any spiritual waves even though he was only several meters away, which was indicative enough of a precise and professional control over spiritual energy.

The demonstrations of Hong Tong, Yan Yangtian, and Leng Ziming were big eye-openers for Li Yao.

"The three of you have done such marvelous performances. What do I do?"

Grinning, 'Dummy' Ba Weiyi patted Li Yao's shoulder and said, "Should I show you my medical skills?"

Li Yao showed neither approval nor disapproval. He was going to nod his head, when he suddenly felt a weird wind blowing.

He blinked his eyes, only to find himself somehow placed on an enormous, desolate planet which was surrounded by the boundless sea of stars and a deep, dark universe, dwarfing him and making him feel more isolated than ever.

Then, he noticed that the planet he was on was charging at a giant star.

Very soon, Li Yao's eyes were entirely occupied by the star. The scorching storm of fire ripped off his flesh from his bones like a burning butcher's knife.

"Hooo!"

From the overwhelming star, a furiously burning paw which was thousands of times than Li Yao extended all its fingers and slapped at Li Yao.

Li Yao gritted his teeth, roared, unsheathed his saber, and leaped forward!

The planet burst into pieces under his feet, while he waved his Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber and slashed at the star brutally in a streak of gold.

"BOOM!"

With the tolling a giant bell, Li Yao found himself back in the training room on the top floor of the luxury hotel in Empyreal Star City.

His combat suit had been soaked in sweat, which was sticky and very uncomfortable.

But desolation of the planet, vastness of the universe, fury of the star, and desperation in the everlasting darkness were still occupying his thoughts.

Li Yao took a deep breath, but his pounding heart would not be soothed easily.

This was the most brilliant mental attack that he had ever met.

'Dummy' Ba Weiqi was astounded and exclaimed, "It's impossible. You got away from the 'Vairocana Illusion' after only 1.7 seconds? You are truly a mons—"

Before he was able to finish his sentence, he felt that his throat was cold.

Li Yao had reached in front of him. Something in his hand flashed and cut open Ba Weiqi's throat.

Ba Weiqi's head was nearly chopped off, but there was not a single drop of blood.

The remaining four people put on a weird, rigid countenance that resembled the puppets whose strings had been cut off.

The world suddenly collapsed like a tower of sand in a storm into thousands of pieces, which then danced like butterflies in various colors before they congregated and consolidated.

Li Yao was still in the training room. But 'Dummy' Ba Weiqi was on one of his knees. His face was pale, and he was pressing his throat hard, with sweat dripping off from his forehead.

Although his neck was intact, there was hissing sound coming from the depths of his throat, as if it had leaked. He seemed to be more than debilitated.

It was clear that he had undergone a backfire because his mental attack had been seen through.

This time, his four teammates, except Ding Lingdang, were truly stunned.

Ba Weiqi was more astonished than any of them. He managed to open his mouth and a hoarse voice came out.

"How did you know that the training room just now was an illusion that I set up? Even many high-level Building Foundation Stage Cultivators have fallen for the 'Double

Illusion' technique, and it would often take several minutes before they noticed that something was wrong. Yet, you saw through it in less than five seconds? How?"

Li Yao smiled, but he didn't answer.

Ba Weiqi was indeed an expert in metal attacks. The illusion that he created was the most life-like one that Li Yao had ever seen.

However, Li Yao had been mired in the dreams of the legendary Cultivator Ou Yezi. He also trained himself in Ou Yezi's memory fragments regularly. His sense in distinguishing hallucinations from reality was probably one of the keenest in the world.

How could an illusion made by a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator trap him?

Witnessing the remarkable performance of the four members of Team Blue Bronze, Li Yao was greatly convinced.

Now that he'd made up his mind, he stopped hesitating and asked frankly, "Captain Hong, I'm willing to join Team Blue Bronze. I wonder, what kind of tests do I need to take?"

Hong Tong replied, "First of all, combat ability. It is the foundation of everything. After all, the Occult Orbs are full of dangers. We are not demanding on our team member's combat ability. But at the very least, one should be able protect oneself.

"Secondly, irreplaceable professional skills. I'm mainly in charge of defense, Dummy is for mental attacks, Shell is for gun fights and long-range attacks, and Yan Zi is for scouting, disguising, and hiding.

"We've all seen your combat ability just now, and none of us have any complaints about it. Why don't you show us your maintenance and modification skills, so that we'll know how good you are?"

Li Yao was going to nod his head, when Ding Lingdang suddenly strode forward. Her nose almost crashed into his, while she interrupted Li Yao with her eyes filled with provocation.

"Wait. Li Yao resorted to tricks to secure his victory just now. But in the Occult Orbs, you don't get to use your tricks all the time. Therefore, I think it will be better if we can know his true personal strength before jumping to any decision.

"Alright, let's go to the combat room. You will know my improvement in the Occult Orbs over the past few months soon!"

Li Yao smiled, his black eyes beaming,

"Fine by me. I would very much like you to know how strong I am right now after I broke into the Building Foundation Stage!"

In the combat room, Li Yao and Ding Lingdang stayed at two corners and stared at each other.

One, two, three… Three snakes of fire which were different colors but equally furious craned from her back.

In front of Li Yao, on the other hand, was a super-heavy war hammer weighing 972 kilograms with abilities both in vibration and in thunder.

In between them, the air was cracking, while clusters of sparks were bursting out.

Both of their mouths curled. Dangerous temptation was appearing in their eyes.

Ba Weiqi, who was watching the game in the outside, finally couldn't bear it any longer and asked, "Are they… really a couple?"

Chapter 366: Terrifying Couple

Chapter 366: Terrifying Couple

"Two months ago, I discovered an ancient inheritance in an Occult Orb through the soul of a deceased Cultivator who was killed in a war 7,400 years ago. I learnt a brutal martial art named 'Nona-colored Fire' which is a skill to manipulate the spiritual energy of the fire class. When the martial art reaches the top level, nine fire snakes of different attributes can be summoned. But at present, I can only grasp three of them," Ding Lingdang said slowly. The three fire snakes on her back were getting more and more vivid, as if their resolution had been adjusted to a higher degree. They turned from phantoms to reality and blared their fangs at Li Yao.

"Over the past three months, not only have I broken into the Building Foundation Stage, I've been also enlightened with a unique skill in heavy weapon manipulation. I suggest you be careful of it."

Li Yao was talking about the '179 Hands Chaos Gale Hammer Technique'.

The Chaos Gale Hammer Technique was originally one of the most rudimental martial arts that the servants and low-level disciples of the Hundred Smelting Clan learnt to build up their bodies and veins.

But Ou Yezi was talented enough to upgrade it to 179 moves which he made best use of in the battleground against the invasion of the demonic Cultivators.

The 71 additional moves were all brutal skills of killing.

Li Yao spent about one month absorbing Ou Yezi's memory pieces, during which time he had already touched the memory pieces of the beginning of the demonic Cultivator invasion. He had also grasped the first 13 moves of the martial art.

His purpose was to blend the '179 Hands Chaos Gale Hammer Technique' and 'Thunderous Tornado Saber Art' into one, so that he could invent a saber art that solely belonged to himself.

Although he was not even close to success yet, the first several moves that he tested out were already formidable enough.

The power of the martial art would be five times bigger if it was to be carried out by his Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber. But since he was practicing with Ding Lingdang, he chose a war hammer which was in fact much safer despite its frightening appearance.

"Come on!" Ding Lingdang roared.

The three snakes charged toward Li Yao from three directions, but Ding Lingdang was even faster than them. She had appeared in the front of Li Yao in the blink of an eye, while her Red Lotus Knuckle burst out in flames on her fist where a sharp-edged crimson lotus fully blossomed!

"BOOM!"

Li Yao had no time to pick up his war hammer at all. He lifted his left fist and punched back the hard way, only to be blown backwards like a kite whose string was cut off.

But there seemed to be nothing wrong with him. He stomped on the wall of the combat room when he reached it, leaving two deep footprints, before he flew back like a cannonball with the counterforce. Then he picked up the war hammer and smashed down without any mercy.

"BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!"

It sounded like two tyrannosaurs were on a rampage inside a small cage.

Although multiple layers of barriers had been implemented outside the combat room, the four spectators still felt slight shaking, as if an earthquake was taking place deep beneath the ground.

The high-density barbells on the training machines that weighed tons were all shivering in fear, with ringing sounds coming from them.

"Seriously? They're fighting for real?"

"Are they a couple or archenemies? This is crazy!"

The four members of Team Blue Bronze felt that their teeth were sore, because they'd been biting them too hard and for too long.

They had thought that Ding Lingdang would definitely go easy on her boyfriend whom she hadn't seen for such a long time.

Never could they have foreseen that Ding Lingdang would be even more furious than when she was training with them. Her burning fighting will was raging unstoppably like a dammed lake which was flooding out after being blocked for months.

In the meantime, Li Yao had also redefined the term 'training maniac' for them; he didn't even blink after being punched so many times. If anything, his smile was even broader than before. He was waving the war hammer in such an intimidating way that it seemed that he was ready to perish together with his opponent at the same time.

"I finally understand why Ding Lingdang always complained that she was unfulfilled after she practiced with us!" Leng Ziming muttered to himself, somewhat lost.

"Captain, this Vulture Li Yao's ability of resistance seems to be as excellent as yours!" Ba Weiqi exclaimed, too.

"Not exactly. My defense ability is based on intervening in and undermining the enemy's attacks by manipulating gravity."

As the 'Main Tank' of the team, Hong Tong had a much deep understanding about defense than his fellows.

His three teammates were just enjoying a good show. But he had read so much more from Li Yao's movements, as if he were appreciating a great masterpiece of a renowned artist.

"In regard of body hardness, I think Li Yao might even be better than me. Although his spiritual energy is not as abundant as that of middle-level Building Foundation Stage Cultivators, his spiritual shield has been condensed in a special bubble structure. At the cost of the same amount of spiritual energy, its protection for his body is at least three times better than the protection of common spiritual shields!"

"Unbelievable! Really unbelievable! His combat ability alone is good enough to earn him a place in many Star Teams."

"Moreover, according to the files, he does not like hardcore combats on a battleground. He is better at crystal suit fighting, magical equipment fighting, trap deployment, and maintenance and modification."

"This time, Team Blue Bronze has indeed got a talent!"

"We'll definitely be able to return to the top 10 of the Rank of Stars within half a year, which means we will have the chance to participate in the 'big operation' at the end of the year!"

Three minutes later, Li Yao and Ding Lingdang, who were covered in bruises and yet looked completely refreshed, walked out of the combat room with their heads held high.

"It's been a long time since I last enjoyed myself that much!" Li Yao observed, not very satisfied.

The 'Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining' technique that he had been training with was originally a very brilliant skill of defense, which could condense a spiritual shield in the form of bubbles during combat. Not only could the spiritual shield absorb the ferocious attacks of the enemy, it could also stimulate the acupoints over his body by the force of the attacks, so that his body could be further built up and his strength further improved.

The stronger his training partner was, the faster he would grow.

It was a skill that could better his body most when he suffered most beating.

When Ding Lingdang was away, it was difficult for him to find a second person that was as strong and intimate as her to train with him for as long. He hadn't been feeling fulfilled for a long time, either. Now that he finally had the opportunity to let it out, he couldn't feel better!

Ding Lingdang was equally excited. Among the other four members of Team Blue Bronze, Captain Hong Tong was the only one who could train with her long enough. But the defense of the captain was based on the alternation of gravity, which made her punches extremely uncomfortable, as if she had hit soft cotton. There was no gratification from hitting the target with all her might at all.

Finally, at this moment, she found the familiar feeling from Li Yao again.

The two of them looked at each other and smiled.

"It feels strange that we haven't fought against each other for several months. I didn't dare release my full strength, but only used 70% of it. I suppose you are more or less the same. Why don't we fight again after we have supper?"

The four members of Team Blue Bronze were completely speechless. They eyed Li Yao and Ding Lingdang as if they were two demon beasts wearing human skin.

"Captain Hong, what did you think of my performance just now?" Li Yao asked with a smile.

"Very remarkable!"

Hong Tong commented, "Team Blue Bronze already has an 'MT' which is myself. If it were a different team that was lacking an expert in defense, your amazing body hardness and monstrous strength would be enough to get you a nice position! After all, in the Occult Orbs, Cosmos Rings might not be readily usable. Many gears have to be carried by the team members in person!

"However, since you are a refiner, we would like to know your limits regarding magical equipment, too, which could potentially influence the methodology of our team in the future!

"We don't need to run many complicated tests. You are already a famous refiner. I'm told that several of the Novem Stellae of the Refining Department of Deep Sea University have been defeated by you. 'Solar Eclipse' Jiang Shaoyang, who has become quite a celebrity in the south recently, also lost in competition against you before."

"How about a little match with 'Shell'?"

Li Yao nodded his head.

Exploration in the Occult Orbs could be extremely dangerous. Every companion must know their fellows well. As the captain of the team, it was only fair that he proposed such a request.

"No problem. What kind of match?"

'Shell' Leng Ziming walked close and glanced through his teammates. Then he smiled and said, "Even when our old captain Yin Qingfeng was here, there was no excellent magical equipment expert in the team. So, the simple maintenance and modification work has always been done me. I think that makes me a half expert in magical equipment.

"I believe in your skills in refining. There's no need for us to go to a refining workshop. Let's just work it out in this place."

Like a magician, he picked up two gold, shining pistols, which were then dismantled into a pile of components in cracking noises. He snapped his fingers and the components flew to every corner of the room.

Then, he put his hands to his back, where he took out two storm bolters. Very soon, they were pulled into pieces and thrown everywhere, too.

What followed were two heavy machine guns, two snipers, two Thunder-Palm launchers and even an electromagnetic cannon for personal use.

His body was like a black hole which had absorbed all kinds of deadly weapons. Now, they were all pouring out.

Li Yao was eyeing him in appreciation, knowing that Leng Ziming must have a Cosmos Ring, too.

Even so, the speed of him retrieving objects from his Cosmos Ring was still quite amazing.

"Captain?"

Leng Ziming gestured at Hong Tong.

Hong Tong nodded his head. Narrowing his eyes, he started casting his spell.

The thousands of components that Leng Ziming had just thrown away now floated and staggered in the air.

"Chi…"

Four pieces of round magical equipment suddenly appeared in Leng Ziming's hands and were tossed to the walls of room, where they exploded and released dense black smoke filling the entire room.

"These are not ordinary smoke grenades. They contain substances from the body liquid of demon beasts which can impose intensive interference on the senses of the Cultivators in the smoke. They are very common in the Occult Orbs. We often fight in such environments.

"Do you still remember the two gold pistols that I disassembled in the beginning?

"Let's see who's faster to find out their components, reassemble them into an intact pistol and press it against the other's forehead in such an environment, shall we?"

Translator's Thoughts

flycrane01 flycrane01

Bonus Chapter #1

Chapter 367: Key to Victory

Chapter 367: Key to Victory

Leng Ziming was not really an expert in magical equipment. However, as an experienced gunfighter who valued his guns as much as his own life, he was even more familiar with the two pistols than the refiner who made them was.

Besides, Leng Ziming had done major modifications on the two gold pistols. It was quite a tricky challenge even if Li Yao had seen the original magical equipment before.

From within the intense, black smoke came Li Yao's calm-as-usual voice.

"Fine by me."

The rest of the four teammates retreated to the corners of the room and held their breath, waiting.

"Ding!"

Hong Tong clashed two disks with a brisk sound by manipulating the gravity.

The match had officially begun!

Not only did the black smoke hinder the four bystanders' sight, their telepathic thoughts were severely jammed, too.

For a moment, the four of them couldn't see clearly what was happening inside the black smoke. They could only hear a series of sounds.

At first, there was the sound of wind, as if two storms were raging furiously inside the black smoke.

The two contenders were probably picking up necessary components in the darkness.

Then, there were sounds of things being thrown away.

At this moment, the two of them were tossing unneeded components to each other in order to disrupt the other's collection.

About half a minute later, cracking sounds dominated the smoke, as if two giant animals were feasting upon metals.

They'd started reassembling the pistols!

Although unable to see their faces, Ding Lingdang and the rest of the team could all picture their solemn and fully-focused faces.

The four of them were so anxious that their hearts nearly skipped a beat, while they were too concentrated to ignore the feeblest sound inside the smoke.

1 minute and 43 seconds later, something clicked in a corner of the darkness.

Then, all the sounds in the smoke suddenly stopped. The only thing left was Leng Ziming's heavy breathing.

As for Li Yao, he seemed to have become a ghost who had melted into the smoke. There was no way to sense his existence at all.

Leng Ziming spoke, somewhat hoarsely, in the darkness.

"You can't be faster than me.

"The two gold pistols modified by me each have 327 components. 272 of them are fundamental for the pistol to be triggered. The other opponents are to enlarge the shooting range and to ensure the stability.

"I have assembled 265 components, with only 7 to go. There's no way you could have been faster than me!

"More importantly, I've picked up all the bullets of the pistols in my hand, which is also why I was 5.4 seconds slower than you during the collection of components. There are no bullets in your pistol. What can you do even if you are pressing it against my head?"

There was a brief silence in the smoke, which was broken by Li Yao's calm voice.

"Firstly, the two pistols of yours are 'Tsunami VII' developed seventeen years ago by 'Blowing Wind Hall'. The model has a long shooting range, an impressive power system, and an ultra-solid structure. It also entails the possibility for the user to carve various rune arrays for the purpose of modification. It is indeed a piece of classic gun magical equipment, which you have upgraded with 27 special components of your own.

"However, this gun model does not require 272 components to be triggered. In the extreme conditions, 231 components will be enough.

"Of course, under such circumstances, the pistol has no precision whatsoever. Its effective shooting range may be well below 20 meters. Due to lack of rune arrays, its inner structure is not stable, which could potentially lead to explosion in the bore.

"But since I'm pressing the gun against your head, precision and shooting range are highly unimportant. So, I simply ignored all the components in these regards.

"Secondly, you did take away all the bullets of the pistols. That why I had changed the barrel of the pistol in my hand into the barrel of a storm bolter, which allowed me to use bullets for storm bolters. At such a short distance, I can blow apart your head easily even if you are at the Building Foundation Stage."

Leng Ziming's voice indicated that he was not convinced.

"Although Tsunami VII is a heavy pistol model, its components are not appropriate for the barrel of storm bolters. If you are using the bullets of storm bolters, the odds of explosion in bore are at least fifty percent!"

Li Yao's voice remained tranquil.

"Not fifty percent, but eighty percent. To be precisely, there is an 84% likelihood that after I pull off the trigger, the overloading spiritual energy will raise an explosion immediately due to lack of stabilization rune arrays.

"But I'm very confident in my modification. The bullet will be shot out before the explosion!

"For a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator such as myself, an explosion in the bore would possibly seriously damage my hand. But with timely treatment, it is very likely that it can be recovered to normal.

"In the worst-case scenario, I can put on artificial limb if my entire hand is blown to pieces.

"But if your head is blown to pieces, you can't come back to life even if we install a crystal processor into your brain.

"Therefore, in my opinion, a risk of my hand being detonated in exchange for a certainty of a headshot is a good bargain."

Hong Tong activated the ventilating system of the room. The black smoke was soon extracted.

In a corner of the room, Leng Ziming was holding a gold pistol in his hand which was sparkling and ready to be completed. Yet, there was nothing he could do, because a thick barrel was pressed against one of his temples.

Behind the thick barrel was a messy eye-sore that could not be called a gun at all.

But no one doubted that fatal bullets could be shot out from the thing.

"Captain."

Leng Ziming's eyeball were rolling, while he managed to put on a smile. "I think that Mr. Li Yao is more than qualified to join Team Blue Bronze. With him as our teammate, we will never run out of magical equipment on the battleground. I have a feeling that he could produce a piece of deadly magical equipment even if he were given nothing but a frying pan."

"Indeed."

Li Yao nodded his head and slowly pulled the gun that he had cobbled together away from Leng Ziming's head. Then he continued. "I've devised certain crystal bombs which use frying pans and cooking pots as disguises. They are perfect indoor traps."

Hong Tong and his other three teammates looked at each other.

Yan Yangtian whistled. Ba Weiqi grinned. Everyone was beaming with delight.

"Welcome to Team Blue Bronze!"

Hong Tong laughed in satisfaction and hugged Li Yao.

Then, they went through the standard procedures.

Li Yao and Team Blue Bronze signed a contract. He received a lot of personal combat videos of his teammates. In return, he offered his detailed files, including the abilities that he was good at.

In the Occult Orbs, tacit cooperation between teammates was always of paramount importance.

"Adept at ancient rune arrays…"

"Adept at the identification of ancient spiritual beasts and exotic treasures…"

"Adept at ancient puppets…"

"Adept at the identification and repair of ancient magical equipment…"

"Adept at the identification and usage of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures…"

Reading all this, Hong Tong couldn't have been more excited. He exclaimed, "Excellent. If you are indeed an expert in the identification of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and the study of ancient magical equipment, we may be able to try our luck in the 'secret treasure exchange'!"

Li Yao raised his eyebrow.

"Secret treasure exchange?"

He had heard the name before in the Bountiful Treasures Pavilion of Serpent City. It was supposed to be a trade fair for defective or unknown materials.

At that time, the manager of the Bountiful Treasures Pavilion also told him that the trade fair there was not even close to the largest of the federation.

The largest secret treasure exchange was always held in Killua City on the Grand Desolate Plateau.

Hong Tong smiled.

"As a refiner, you have probably heard of secret treasure exchanges before. Maybe you even joined some of them in person.

"However, even the secret treasure exchange in Killua City is boring. They're only trading things that we're not interested in.

"The secret treasures that they deem precious were mostly excavated from the Occult Orbs by us. Of course, we get to choose what we want first.

"A large-scale secret treasure exchange will be held every month in Empyreal Star City. The Orb Patrollers will be given a big discount if they want to buy any of them. Only those secret treasures which we leave behind are given to the outside world.

"In the past, there was no expert at identifying Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures in Team Blue Bronze. Therefore, we hardly took part in the secret treasure exchanges. Even if we did, our purpose was mainly for fun.

"Right now, we've got an expert in our team. We're definitely going to purchase something big!"

While Hong Tong was talking, he led Li Yao to a meeting room.

In the center of the meeting room was a fixed crystal processor which was connected to the mainframe crystal processor of Empyreal Star City in the minimum level, allowing it to retrieve information whose confidentiality level was not high.

"Shua!"

An astounding scene unfolded itself in the light beam.

In the depths of the deep, dark, desolate sea of stars, a nebula was swirling slowly.

What was weird was that in the center of the nebula, there seemed to be a gigantic eye which was blinking and unleashing soul-stirring disturbance through the light beam.

In the center of the eye was a grey planet.

Although it was just a few seconds, Li Yao had the feeling that someone was peeping at him. His heart was racing, and he felt a strong killing intent.

Hong Tong explained, "This is an Occult Orb more than nine thousand lightyears away from the Heaven's Origin Sector which was discovered by a 'Phantom Traveler'."

The Phantom Traveler was a kind of special magical equipment that represented the peak of the probe technologies of the Heaven's Origin Sector. It could send back everything that it saw back to Heaven's Origin Sector momentarily.

Over the past hundred years, the astronomic technology of the Star Glory Federation had developed exponentially. Countless Phantom Travelers had been sent in every direction to explore the endless sea of stars.

The cost to launch a Phantom Traveler was one tenth of that to launch a star shuttle. They could be sent to more distant places than the star shuttles could, too.

Therefore, Phantom Travelers inevitably became the vanguard of exploration of Occult Orbs.

Only after a Phantom Traveler detected the existence of an Occult Orb and determined that it was of acceptable value would star shuttles carrying Orb Patrollers be deployed for further research.

"This is the farthest, largest Occult Orb that the Star Glory Federation had ever seen. It is also the one with the most intensive spiritual waves. According to the estimation of the experts, it could be a key battleground in the renaissance war of human beings 10,000 years ago, or an important military base of the Star Ocean Imperium, or an extremely rarely-seen natural paradise for Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures.

"The experts have asserted that this particular Occult Orb is hundreds of times more valuable than any of the Occult Orbs we've discovered so far. It may be the key to the great war between the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector!"

Chapter 368: Heaven's Artillery

Chapter 368: Heaven's Artillery

Hong Tong stared at Li Yao in the eyes and said solemnly, "The Star Glory Federation has been exploring the Occult Orbs for hundreds of years. The Occult Orbs several thousand lightyears away from us are mostly discovered already. There are some Occult Orbs that we haven't set foot in, but their size is far from that of 'Ultimacy', nor are their spiritual waves as intensive as those from 'Ultimacy'.

"Right, Occult Orbs Fellowship has named this particular Occult Orb 'Ultimacy'.

"Beyond ten thousand lightyears, there might be even bigger Occult Orbs, or even other worlds which have their own civilization. But reaching them exceeds our technology level at present. Without new magical equipment or knowledge, and just based on the natural development of our civilization, we won't be able to explore and exploit them within the next fifty years even if we are lucky enough to discover any.

"But in the next fifty years, maybe thirty, the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector will meld into one.

"Which means 'Ultimacy' is our last hope for the war between the two Sectors!"

"By the experts' calculation, since it is emitting such strong spiritual waves after thousands of years, Ultimacy must have several pieces of planetary magical equipment or something of the same level, if not stellar magical equipment."

The power of stellar magical equipment could reach every corner in a stellar system.

Planetary magical equipment was relatively weaker, but it could still suppress a planet easily.

Neither the Star Glory Federation nor any of the kingdoms in the Blood Demon Sector were beyond the limitation of the ground. The foundation of the two civilizations was the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector respectively. They hadn't really been able to drift into the sea of stars.

A piece of 'planetary magical equipment' which could suppress a planet easily was indeed a game-changer for the situation. There was even the possibility of waging a genocidal war without taking any casualties.

But if their opponents got the planetary magical equipment first…

Li Yao tremored. He blurted out, "The Blood Demon Sector has found Ultimacy, too.

Not a question, but a statement.

Had the Blood Demon Sector not found Ultimacy, the news wouldn't have been set to the public and it wouldn't have been possible for a random Star Team to get access to the files so easily.

Hong Tong nodded his head.

"In fact, the Blood Demon Sector discovered Ultimacy earlier than we did. It was by stalking an 'Octa-eyed Goblin' of the Blood Demon Sector that one of our Phantom Travelers located Ultimacy."

The Blood Demon Sector had plans to explore the Occult Orbs, too.

Although they didn't have powerful magical equipment, they had bred a special type of demon beast named 'Octa-eyed Goblin' which was particularly suitable for survival and flight in the vacuum of the cosmos. When necessary, they could enter the state of hibernation and flow in the universe for hundreds of years like an asteroid, until it was woken up by any spiritual waves it encountered and continued their journey in the exploration of the universe.

Octa-eyed Goblins and Phantom Travelers were the pioneers of the demon clan and the human beings in the conquest of the sea of stars.

Hong Tong added, "However, the Phantom Traveler didn't find any trace that the demon clan was exploiting Ultimacy on a large scale. It has been assumed that they made their discovery not very long ago. Since the comprehensive capability of the Blood Demon Sector is of similar level to ours, such an Occult Orb that we find difficult to deal with must be tricky for them, too."

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao basically understood the situation now.

"The concept of time in an astronomic sense is always calculated in the unit of billions of years. From that point of view, the two worlds will meld into one like two bubbles in no time. But for us trivial human beings, which are but plankton in the sea of stars, the process can be as long as fifty years.

"During the fifty years, neither of the two worlds will be capable of projecting all the available troops into the other world at their will.

"Besides, even if the projection succeeds and a bloody war is carried out, the most likely outcome is that the two parties will suffer equally great losses. Most of the elites of the two worlds will perish. It is hard to say whether or not the final winner will be able to recover from the war."

In Li Yao's previous life, there was an idea known as 'nuclear winter'. When two countries both with nuclear weapons were at war, it was quite likely that the world would end up in dozens of years of darkness and coldness. There would be no winner. It would be just that some people died later than other people did.

Although nuclear weapons were not invented by the Heaven's Origin Sector or the Blood Demon Sector, the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the demon emperors were capable enough of overturning the world with absolutely no help, just themselves.

In a war where dozens of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors were engaged, it was not unlikely that the natural spiritual energy of the two worlds would be in disorder, which might cause all kinds of extreme phenomena, including earthquakes, hurricanes, drought, flood, volcano eruption, and maybe even another Ice Age.

Neither humans nor demons would like to see that happen.

So, it would be a perfect solution if some planetary magical equipment which could deal irrecoverable damage to the opponent within a moment could be retrieved from the Occult Orbs.

No wonder Occult Orbs Fellowship was keeping such a high profile recently. Not only had it been revealing a lot of secrets to the public in order to get their support, it was also recruiting talents crazily among Cultivators. Almost all the excellent Cultivators in the Building Foundation Stage had been gathered.

Exploration in the Occult Orbs could indeed potentially decide the destiny of the human beings in the Heaven's Origin Sector.

Li Yao asked, "Has any Star Team explored Ultimacy?"

Hong Tong shook his head.

"It's still too early. Ultimacy is too far from the Heaven's Origin Sector. To cover the nine thousand lightyears in between, our launch bases can only send out Phantom Travelers. It is impossible to launch star shuttles which are larger in size while ensuring that the crew on board are alive and that the vehicle can return."

Phantom Travelers were smaller, lighter, and relatively simpler in structure. Therefore, it was easier to launch them. They could be boosted with the maximum amount of spiritual energy possible, and it didn't matter very much even if a launch failed.

But it was a whole different thing to launch a manned star shuttle through the four-dimensional space to nine thousand lightyears away instantly.

In an awful tragedy where the star shuttle was successfully sent and yet the Orb Patrollers inside were all killed during the process, it would not help the situation at all.

Hong Tong continued, "Occult Orbs Fellowship has two launch bases and twelve launch platforms. But even the biggest one can only guarantee that the vehicle can be safely recovered within 5,700 lightyears.

"When Ultimacy was discovered, Occult Orbs Fellowship immediately contacted the leaders of the federation as well as the influential Cultivators, who reached a consensus very quickly that all the resources available in the Heaven's Origin Sector would be immediately allocated to build the newest, largest, super teleportation array which would boast the longest launching range.

"We've named the teleportation array… Heaven's Artillery!

"Only with the help of the Heaven's Artillery can we rip open the boundary between the three-dimensional space and the four-dimensional space and land on Ultimacy.

"However, even the Heaven's Artillery cannot teleport many people at the same time. Those to be teleported can't be in the very high levels, either. I believe you've heard of the metaphor regarding the difference between a pebble and a rock before."

Li Yao nodded his head.

Core Formation and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were giant rocks tons of weight.

On the other hand, Refinement and Building Foundation Stage Cultivators were small pebbles weighing dozens of kilograms.

To throw a stone as far away possible with an extremely crude catapult, of course, pebbles would be better choices.

If a giant rock were to be selected, not only might it fail to be thrown away, it also risked wrecking the catapult.

It meant that only Cultivators at the Refinement Stage and the Building Foundation Stage would be able to explore Ultimacy which was nine thousand lightyears away from the Heaven's Origin Sector and possibly had planetary magical equipment buried inside!

Li Yao finally understood why everyone was so thrilled watching the video that even their fingers were twitching.

Thinking for a moment, he further asked, "What is the estimated time of the first launch? And how many people will be teleported?"

Hong Tong replied, "The construction spot and progress are both top secrets. But all things considered, it won't be slow. By the end of this year, it will certainly have been completed!

"Because not just us, the Blood Demon Sector must be building super teleportation arrays, too. It is now just a matter of speed!

"For the construction work, three teleportation arrays in the No. 2 launch base have been dismantled. The crystal rails and all kinds of magical equipment from them have been filled into the Heaven's Artillery, just in order to be faster than the Blood Demon Sector!

"There won't be many candidates to be teleported. Impressive as the Heaven's Artillery may be, six or seven Star Teams, with dozens of members in total, tops."

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao felt that his blood was surging like tides.

"Which means we have to ascend into the top 10 of the Rank of Stars before the end of this year, right?"

"Correct!"

Hong Tong nodded his head seriously. "Elites are always the first to explore a new Occult Orb. For an Occult Orb like Ultimacy where planetary magical equipment might be preserved, nepotism and adulation will not work at all. Who's eligible and who's not will be entirely based on capability!

"Ranking in the top 10 will prove that we are the best Cultivators at the Building Foundation Stage and that we are qualified for the mission to explore Ultimacy!"

Li Yao's eyes were beaming with eagerness as he asked, "But I wonder how many secret treasures are stored in Ultimacy, and how many benefits we can gain from it?"

Hong Tong smiled and said, "Since it is unexplored, everything we talked about is just speculation. Even if planetary magical equipment does exist, it is quite likely to be well beyond our ability to manipulate and maneuver since we are merely at the Building Foundation Stage. Besides, chances are that we might be engaged with the elites of the demon clan. Although it's not possible for the demon emperors to be teleported due to the restriction of the long distance, the best silver-blood demons must be able to land on Ultimacy. Maybe, the princes of the dozens of demon kingdoms will join together.

"Therefore, although it has not been officially announced yet, the benefits of exploring Ultimacy are quite enormous.

"According to my sources, not only are the contribution points as the reward of the mission astronomical, the participants will be given a lot of Cultivation arts and magical equipment. They can even receive the personal enlightenment of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators!

"I'm not talking about a lecture of several hours. I'm talking about a training session of ten to fifteen days during which time you will eat and live together. The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators will teach you like teaching their own disciples!"

Li Yao raised his eyebrows. His breath suddenly turned extremely ragged.

Fifteen days of wholehearted teaching as if you were one of their disciples?

Was that even possible?

Li Yao's first reaction was that it must be a lie.

But on second thought, he realized that it did make sense.

Exploration of Ultimacy concerned the fate of all human beings in the Heaven's Origin Sector.

As the saying went, when the skin is gone, there will be no place for the hair. Strong as the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators may be, they wouldn't be able to survive by themselves if the Star Glory Federation was destroyed.

Besides, their family, descendants, and disciples were also here!

Now that the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators could not explore the Occult Orb in person, naturally, they would hope that those embarking on the trip could be as strong as possible.

For the future of the human beings of the Heaven's Origin Sector, for themselves, for their family and disciples, they wouldn't be stingy when it came to one or two Cultivation arts.

Hardly had he thought everything through when he was greatly shocked again by what Hong Tong said next.

"Not just that. It is said that before setting off to Ultimacy, all the Orb Patrollers for the mission will be blessed with a 'spiritual seed' by the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators!"

Translator's Thoughts

flycrane01 flycrane01

Bonus Chapter＃2

Chapter 369: Seed Explosion State

Chapter 369: Seed Explosion State

"Nas—Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators' spiritual seed?"

Li Yao faltered, his voice shivering.

'Spiritual seed condensing' was a very rarely-seen secret art which would consume both the soul and the body's vitality a lot. Generally speaking, only those Cultivators who were equal to or above the Nascent Soul Stage were able to use it.

The so-called spiritual seed was actually part of the soul, the telepathic thoughts, and the Cultivation arts of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator who condensed them to such an extent that they crystalized into something resembling a seed. The seed could then be planted into the brain of another Cultivator that was relatively weaker.

The entire process was very similar to the 'pouring knowledge into one's head' technology in the ancient Cultivation world.

The relatively weaker Cultivator, after accepting the spiritual seed of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, could burn their soul and ignite the spiritual seed in the case of an emergency, thus entering a state known as 'seed explosion'.

According to the degree of the seed explosion, they could be blessed with 60%, or even slightly more, of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator's capability, and they could fully perform the ultimate skills that the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator sealed within the seed.

Although the state wouldn't last long, it could be a life-saver for the weak Cultivator at a critical moment. It was also a deadly move that no opponent could see coming.

In the seed explosion state, 60% or even more of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator's capability could be wielded by the Cultivator. It was totally different from the attack of some magical equipment which equaled to the full-strength strike of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator.

For example, the attack of Taiyi Lightning Railguns was as powerful as the full-strength strike of a Core Formation Stage Cultivator, but only so in regard to the possible damage.

In fact, the precision, range, stability, and reaction speed of Taiyi Lightning Railguns were far from those of real Core Formation Stage Cultivators.

Li Yao could face twelve Taiyi Lightning Railguns on a crystal warship without the least fear, because powerful as they may be, they still required manual or mechanical aiming. Those controlling the Taiyi Lightning Railguns were likely to be Refinement Stage Cultivators or even ordinary people.

The Taiyi Lightning Railguns were totally useless if they couldn't hit their target.

But if he had faced a real Core Formation Cultivator, Li Yao would have been suppressed by the accurate movements, thorough plans, and perfect rhythm of his opponent who wouldn't even have to perform a full-strength strike at all.

Therefore, even if Li Yao and his companions were to take magical equipment whose damage equaled to the full-strength strike of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, it wouldn't be of much help to them, unless they were trying to attack a fixed target.

It was not likely that their enemy would just stand idly and let them fire freely. There was a good chance that their enemy could run, fly, or even sneak underground.

'Seed explosion state' was entirely different. In the seed explosion state, not only would the Cultivator's power be raised, the observation, computational ability, reaction, limit of speed, and everything else would also reach 60% of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator's or even higher.

There was still more!

In Cultivation, real-life experience and understanding mattered more than anything else.

Some weaker Cultivators sensed a whole new level which allowed their Cultivation to soar, through nothing but watching a match between two stronger Cultivators.

When a weak Cultivator was in the seed explosion state, that part of the experience and understanding of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator would be transferred to the weak Cultivator instantly.

When the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator's immense spiritual energy raged inside the weak Cultivator's body, their bones, veins, and organs would be cleansed and strengthened, to the point that their body would be entirely reborn.

Therefore, the Cultivation speed of the Cultivators who received a spiritual seed from a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator and went through the seed explosion state was often ten times higher than that of a common Cultivator. It was like the difference between a normal train and a high-speed crystal train.

In the ancient legends, a senior and a junior could sit face-to-face and press their palms against each other's. After a brief moment, dozens of years of Cultivation of the senior could be transferred into the junior's body.

It was utter nonsense that ignorant people made up for fun. Cultivation and spiritual energy were not like one's bank balance; it was impossible to just transfer them from one body to another one.

But the usage of a spiritual seed, through which a senior Cultivator could enlighten a junior Cultivator with their experience and understanding and also provide a life-saving tool for the junior Cultivator, might be the closest thing to the Cultivation transfer between two bodies.

Despite the remarkableness of spiritual seeds, there were two critical questions concerning them.

Firstly, for a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, it was very difficult to condense a spiritual seed. Since they had to split their soul by brute force in order to condense it, they would often suffer tremendous damage during the process. It would usually take a long time before they fully recovered. As the number of spiritual seeds they bestowed increased, their body and soul would deteriorate at an exponential speed. Therefore, a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator could only produce limited spiritual seeds in their entire life.

Only their closest descendant, or the disciple that was going to succeed themselves, might have the opportunity to enjoy one. Their other disciples wouldn't get the chance at all.

Secondly, for the Cultivators who received the spiritual seeds, entering the seed explosion state could be extremely dangerous.

If a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator were to wield the strength of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, however briefly, there was a good price that they had to pay.

There were too many tales in the history of Cultivation where the Building Foundation Stage Cultivators simply self-detonated after bringing out the ultimate skill of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator in the seed explosion state.

For those who were lucky enough to not get killed, they were mostly seriously wounded and had to take all kinds of medication for a very long time, before they could enjoy the benefit of the brand-new knowledge and the body which had been reborn.

Therefore, unless it was absolutely necessary, Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were usually reluctant to condense spiritual seeds.

The Cultivators who received the spiritual seeds did not dare to enter the seed explosion state easily, either.

"It appears that there is far more valuable stuff on Ultimacy," Li Yao muttered to himself.

The announcement that Occult Orbs Fellowship revealed to the public was clearly not everything. It was quite possible that there were more important discoveries which had been kept secret.

"We've told you everything that we know. Over the next month, we will try to improve the team cooperation. Then, we will try to march into the top 10 of the Rank of Stars, so that we can get a chance to land on Ultimacy!"

There was desire in Hong Tong's voice as he continued, "Dangers are great. But gains are greater. Maybe after we return from Ultimacy, every one of us will be able to… advance into the Core Formation Stage!"

He stared at Li Yao, full of passion.

The other five of them had long reached an agreement on this. Li Yao, as the newly recruited teammate, was the only one that was new to the declaration.

To cram into the top ten of the Rank of Stars, all the six team members had to stick together. It was not going to work out if any of them hid anything.

Li Yao smiled widely, his teeth showing.

Licking his teeth and sensing the stinging from the tip of his tongue, Li Yao felt that his mouth was extremely dry. Something that resembled burning thorns filled his stomach, which was raging furiously to all his veins, organs and limbs.

It was his ambition.

Hong Tong was not exaggerating. Aside from whatever there was on Ultimacy, the wholehearted enlightenment from a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator for half a month, a spiritual seed from them, and the secret treasures and Cultivation arts in Occult Orbs Fellowship which had been accumulated for hundreds of years together were enough for anyone to break into the Core Formation Stage within three to five years.

Core Formation Stage Cultivators were definitely among the most influential people in the Heaven's Origin Sector.

The Elders and even leaders of the top 100 sects of the federation, the principals and deans of the Nine Elite Universities, and the best warriors of a military region were mostly no higher than the Core Formation Stage.

Xiong Baili, the incumbent president of the Grand Desolate War Institution, who was known as 'Volcano' in the world of Cultivators, was at the Core Formation Stage, too.

If it were in peacetime, talented as Li Yao may be, he wouldn't be able to cross the chasm between Building Foundation Stage and Core Formation Stage in ten years, even with the advantage of absorbing Ou Yezi's memory pieces every day.

If anything, he would be highly praised if he could reach the Core Formation Stage after twenty or even thirty years.

But right now, the discovery of Ultimacy had offered him a once-a-thousand-years opportunity for him to breach the barrier in just one leap. There was a good chance that he could become the youngest Core Formation Stage Cultivator before he was thirty, or even twenty-five.

If he were to let go of such a chance, he would be too ashamed to call himself a Cultivator.

To be stronger was the most primitive and the most fundamental desire at the bottom of every Cultivator's heart.

It didn't require any special reason. The reason to be stronger was to be stronger.

Just like a mountain climber who risked his life climbing a mountain thousands of meters high with no reason except 'because it's there', Cultivators did not need any reason to yearn to be stronger every second and to lead the human beings as a species to break the shackles enforced by nature, just so that they could reach new peaks and enjoy the more beautiful landscape.

If the summit of humanity's evolution was there, Cultivators would climb up the mountain and pierce a hole in the sky!

"I have no opinion about that."

Taking a deep breath, the corners of Li Yao's mouth curled up, his eyes full of hope. "An Occult Orb nine thousand lightyears away where no Cultivator from the Heaven's Origin Sector has ever set foot in?

"If I can reach a place so far away in person and fly the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars Flag on Ultimacy, I will be content as a Cultivator even if I can't reach the Core Formation Stage!"

…

After they reached a consensus, the team had a heated discussion on the new tactical plans with Li Yao on board and settled the training schedule for the next month.

Then, it was one day of vacation time.

After all, they'd just returned from an Occult Orb. Many of them were desperate to have fun in Empyreal Star City to forget the shadows from the Occult Orbs.

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang stayed in her room.

Ding Lingdang's room was similar to her house in the Grand Desolate War Institution, both of which were littered with training machines. There was no telling that the room belonged to a girl at all.

However, Li Yao did find a toy model of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

The Star Glory Federation valued valiance and gallantry. Children started receiving military education at a very early age. Therefore, the toy models of weapons and magical equipment sold very well.

Even the toys made for girls included the models of crystal warships, crystal tanks, crystal suits, and flying swords, besides the commonly-seen dolls.

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had risen to be one of the most popular crystal suit model over the recent half a year, as well as the standard crystal suit equipped for the soldiers of the federal army on a large scale. Naturally, many toy factories had been authorized by the Grand Desolate War Institution to produce toys based on it.

Many children actually got interested in magical equipment and set on the path of Cultivation because of the toy models they played with.

When Li Yao made up his mind to become a master of refining, one of his biggest motivations was the broken toy that he had picked up from the garbage heap.

But Ding Lingdang didn't seemed to be a fan of toy models. He had never seen any in her house before.

It seemed that she placed a toy model of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit here as a replacement for Li Yao.

Thinking about that, Li Yao looked at Ding Lingdang adoringly.

Chapter 370: Obliterating

Chapter 370: Obliterating

"Why are you looking at me in such a way? Are you not content because you were defeated? Hahahaha. I'll give you an opportunity for revenge later. However, I need to remind you that I'm at a whole new level right now. You wouldn't stand a chance even if I gave you a hundred opportunities!"

Her arms akimbo, Ding Lingdang burst out in laughter, in a way that was inappropriate for a lady, before she took out a piece of magical equipment and handed it over. "Here, this is my gift for you. It nearly drained my contribution points. Take a look and see if it works well for you!"

Li Yao scratched his head.

Alright. He should've known better than to expect Ding Lingdang to notice his affectionate stare, which was no different from winking at a blind person.

But soon, his attention was attracted by the magical equipment that Ding Lingdang had given him.

It was a bright silver metal ball and looked somewhat lackluster. At first look, it seemed to be a toy for children.

However, Li Yao soon noticed that neat, arcane, and complicated runes had been carved on the surface of the ball. He failed to recognize what they were for despite the observation and computational ability of the Building Foundation Stage.

In the middle of the runes was an emblem. A crimson dragon was raving in the sky, with its two front claws snatching the sun and the moon respectively, its body surrounded by clouds, and its mouth in front of an exaggerated blackhole.

Although the emblem was only the size of a fingernail, it emanated boundless might, as if the entire universe was at the mercy of this crimson dragon.

"Red Dragon Swallowing the Sun!"

Li Yao's eyes suddenly widened.

The Red Dragon Swallowing the Sun Emblem was the military emblem of the Star Ocean Imperium.

Li Yao took the metal ball and felt that it was as smooth as jade. Instead of coldness, it brought a slight sense of warmth.

Li Yao extended his telepathic thoughts to the metal ball.

He immediately felt the metal ball shiver in his palm. Something deep inside it seemed to have been triggered.

As if a drifting breeze, a large batch of information streams and images flowed into his brain.

Li Yao clenched his fist as countless streaks of silver gushed out of the gap between his fingers and went upward along his arm, reaching his elbow in the end. He had a silver glove on his hand which was flowing slowly like sap.

At the front end of the glove…

Changing every half a second, the flowing silver jumped and consolidated into almost a hundred extremely delicate maintenance tools under the control of Li Yao's telepathic thoughts.

Li Yao had never seen many of the tools, not to mention how to use them.

"This is awesome!"

Li Yao was excited.

This piece of magical equipment might've been called 'the Changeable Glove'. It should have been the property of a maintenance expert in the regular army of the Star Ocean Imperium.

Although Li Yao had yet to comprehend all its mysteries yet, he could sense that it was far more advanced than any kind of magical equipment for maintenance or modification in the Heaven's Origin Sector.

Most importantly, it was portable. The glove equaled to almost half of the tools in his workshop. Basically, all the maintenance and modification work that did not require a furnace could be carried out by the glove.

Right now, Li Yao had totally forgotten his previous libido. He turned it over and over as he studied in delight, and it was not until ten minutes had passed that he realized where he was again. He raised his eyes, only to notice that Ding Lingdang was observing him with a smile.

Li Yao blushed and said, "I got you a little something, too."

He lifted his hand, trying to retrieve the Crimson Phantom Battlesuit.

Cosmos Rings might be precious items in the outside world, but they were really not a big deal in Occult Orbs Fellowship.

Li Yao had noticed that many people were wearing a Cosmos Ring, some even wearing two. Even Ding Lingdang had one, too. There was no need for him to keep it a secret now.

However, the room was quite a mess with the training machines scattering everywhere. After several attempts, the Cosmos Ring sent the same message into his brain.

"Insufficient space. Unable to comply. Conflict of space may occur."

The Crimson Phantom Battlesuit was just slightly more than two meters tall. But together with the box accommodating it, it took up quite a lot of space. Li Yao's Cosmos Ring was almost filled up with two crystal suit boxes.

After moving away several training machines with Ding Lingdang, Li Yao was finally able to take out the box of the Crimson Phantom Battlesuit.

The Crimson Phantom Battlesuit looked like a torch with frozen flames, which was Ding Lingdang's all-time favorite. Li Yao was greatly satisfied seeing the enthusiasm in her eyes. He smiled while he thought to himself, 'Ding Lingdang must've felt the same when she looked at me playing with the Changeable Glove, didn't she?'

Putting on the Crimson Phantom Battlesuit, Ding Lingdang turned into a streak of red rushing about the room. Yet, there was no sound of collision, nor did she knock over anything, which were indicative enough of her precision and control over the suit.

After five minutes, Ding Lingdang finally stopped, having not fully enjoyed herself. When she took off the crystal suit, her cheeks were already flushed, and several strands of her hair were stuck to her ear, drenched in sweat. She was smiling so delightedly that her eyes were in the shape of a crescent moon,

"Great! Great! I feel that the crystal suit was tailor-made for me. It is way better than the crystal suit that I've been wearing!"

Li Yao smiled.

"It was indeed tailor-made for you. But when I was doing the modification, I wasn't aware that you'd learnt such a brutal martial art as 'Nona-colored Fire', nor did I know that there would be so many precious Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures in Occult Orbs Fellowship. I'll further study it in the next couple of days and see if there's any possibility of additional modification that can help you maximize the power of Nona-colored Fire!

"Team Blue Bronze used to be in the top 10 of the Rank of Stars, and it definitely will be back there again with our joint work!

"By that time, we'll be able to receive the enlightenment of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator and even their spiritual seeds!

"Hasn't Iron God Yan Ba always been your idol? I remember you were talking about him all the time. He is one of the Nine Councilors of Occult Orbs Fellowship. There's a good chance that you will be able to seek his teaching!"

Ding Lingdang shook her head with a smile.

"Iron God Yan Ba is a monk of body practitioners. He is the purest 'body fundamentalist'. On principle, he won't touch any magical equipment. However, influenced by you, I'm already used to bettering my performance with the help of magical equipment, and I'm not planning to continue on the path of body fundamentalists.

"Therefore, my training ideologies are different from Iron God Yan Ba's. There's a subtle contradiction between our beliefs.

"I'm preparing to walk on the path of body practitioners, and perhaps create a path of my own in the end. That's why I can't seek enlightenment from him. His spiritual seed wouldn't work for me, either. Once I accept it, it might be a serious interference for the philosophies that I've been firmly believing in.

"But you are different. You are not a body practitioner. You don't care about the conflict of the path of Cultivation among the body practitioners. In the meantime, your body strength is amazing enough for you to accept the enlightenment of Iron God Yan Ba if you have the chance to."

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. Then he said, "Then what about you?"

Ding Lingdang smiled.

"Among the Nine Councilors of Occult Orbs Fellowship, there is the strongest culture-type Cultivator of the Heaven's Origin Sector whose name is Xie Ling, better known as 'Miraculous Marker'. She is also the best spiritual tattoo artist in the federation.

"You know that I don't have any fixed spiritual tattoos on my body, because the work of common spiritual tattoo artists is too lousy.

"If I had the chance, I would love to ask Senior Xie to make a spiritual tattoo for me."

Body practitioners and spiritual tattoo artists were two professions that were closely linked to each other. Only with the help of spiritual tattoos could the potential of a body made of flesh and flood be fully unlocked.

However, there were skilled spiritual tattoo artists and there were mediocre ones. Ding Lingdang was too proud to just ask a random spiritual tattoo artist to work on her body.

Miraculous Marker Xie Ling was a culture-type Cultivator at the Nascent Soul Stage and the best spiritual tattoo artist in the federation. She wouldn't come and make spiritual tattoos for a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator without a good reason.

This trip to Ultimacy was her best opportunity. If she was qualified to explore Ultimacy, Xie Ling would definitely make an exception for her.

"Alright. Let's strive together with Core Formation Stage as our target and see which of us gets there faster!"

The two of them suddenly went quiet. Looking at each other, they both smiled.

"Strange thing. Before I saw you, I'd prepared a lot of topics that we could talk about. But why are we talking about Cultivation again?"

"Indeed. Let's make a rule then. In the next hour, neither of us will talk about anything regarding Cultivation. Let's talk about something else."

"Like what?"

"Like, I've already set up barriers in the four corners of the room. Even if we were to turn the room upside down, our next-door neighbor wouldn't notice anything wrong."

"That's not enough. Right now, we are both at the Building Foundation Stage. We're not going to just turn the room upside down; we're going to obliterate it!"

…

From that day on, Li Yao was officially a member of Team Blue Bronze. The first thing he did was to analyze the mission videos of Team Blue Bronze in order to familiarize himself with the capability and styles of his every teammate as well as the surroundings and possible dangers in the Occult Orbs.

Most of the videos were shot from a first-person perspective by the crystal cameras embedded inside their crystal suits, which brought a strong sense of reality. Li Yao greatly enjoyed himself. He also learned more about the tactics of Team Blue Bronze.

Team Blue Bronze used to boast two points of attack, a long-range one and a melee one.

The long-range attack was carried out by 'Shell' Leng Ziming, while Yin Qingfeng, the captain, core, and soul of the team, was second-to-none in regard to melee combat.

Besides, Guo Peng, another important member of the team, also had amazing combat ability. Together with Hong Tong's gravity manipulation, Ba Weiqi's metal attacks, and Yan Yangtian's scouting skill, which were all the best in Occult Orbs Fellowship, Team Blue Bronze was perfect both in attack and in defense.

It was also the biggest reason why Team Blue Bronze could rank in the top 5 although it was made exclusively of outside-world Cultivators.

After Yin Qingfeng and Guo Peng perished, Team Blue Bronze was crippled by their lack of melee fighters.

Leng Ziming's guns were not enough to cope with the formidable enemies too close to them.

They must've been desperate when they recruited Ding Lingdang, a pure fighter, as their teammate, because normally speaking, Orb Patrollers going to the Occult Orbs had to possess more than one skill other than their main profession since only a limited number of Orb Patrollers were allowed to enter the Occult Orbs at the same time.

Pure combat-type Cultivators such as Ding Lingdang were not very popular.

As it turned out, Ding Lingdang was amazing enough to break into the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage and retrieve the rare inheritance 'Nona-colored Fire' after only one trip.

According to Ding Lingdang, such a Cultivation art was one of the toughest even taking all the Cultivation arts that Occult Orbs Fellowship discovered over the past hundreds of years into account. She had also accepted the inheritance directly through the soul of its master. After she had fully grasped it, there was a good chance that she would jump into the high level of the Building Foundation Stage.

Therefore, the shortage of Team Blue Bronze was fully fixed now, not to mention that it had recruited another impressive member, Li Yao.

Li Yao was more suitable for aggressive missions. But in regard to defense, he could also give Hong Tong a hand based on his unbelievable body hardness.

His skills in maintenance and modification, which were as good as any refiner at the Building Foundation Stage, were also distinctive among the Orb Patrollers.

Therefore, Li Yao had every faith in Team Blue Bronze, which, although might not be as dominating at the old days at present, was quite promising to return to the top 10 of the Rank of Stars. By then, he would be able to receive the teachings and spiritual seeds of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator!

Chapter 371: End Of Practice, Ready For Battle!

Chapter 371: End Of Practice, Ready For Battle!

Five days later, in an advanced refining workshop within Empyreal Star City…

It was a refining workshop for rent, which had been furnished with many kinds of magical equipment from the Occult Orbs that could be dated back to the era of the Star Ocean Imperium. It was as impressive as the professional workshops of the Refining Department of Deep Sea University, if not better.

Li Yao had spent most of his time in this place happily after he discovered that there was such a gold mine in Empyreal Star City. His complimentary contribution points had been used up for everything he'd done here.

However, his gains were enormous.

"Try it."

Li Yao smiled, while he polished the last piece of the plate armor with the fur from the stomach of a crocodile before reassembling the crystal suit.

The five crystal suits in a corner of the workshop were the personal crystal suits of the five members of Team Blue Bronze, which had been worn for missions in the Occult Orbs multiple times, with both obvious external damages and hidden internal ones which were even more deadly.

After Li Yao's maintenance and revision, they had put on a whole new appearance, as if they'd been reborn.

"Is it my illusion, or does the crystal suit work more smoothly now? The feedback is clearer, and the soul consumption is reduced, too."

Putting on the crystal suit, Captain Hong Tong punched in the air, where vague ripples immediate spread out.

"It is not your imagination. The performance of our crystal suits has truly improved. The range of my mental attack has expanded by 5%. Its duration has been extended by 4%. It's truly unbelievable. Li Yao, how did you do it? I didn't notice you doing anything special to the crystal suits!"

'Dummy' Ba Weiqi was quite amazed.

His crystal suit was 'Fiend Apparition Battlesuit', which was specially designed to enhance the brain waves for mental attacks. It had an enormous helmet that almost covered his entire upper body, making him look like a lopsided fat-headed fish.

Li Yao smiled and replied, "I didn't do any major modification to your crystal suits. I only polished and adjusted them according to your height, body shape, and fighting style, so that they could better fit each of you."

"Does that mean they've been tailor-made for us?"

Ba Weiqi joyously exclaimed, "I didn't know that I would be able to wear a crystal suit that was tailor-made for me one day!"

Building Foundation Stage Cultivators such as them were actually in an awkward situation when it came to selecting a crystal suit.

For Core Formation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who had higher personal ability and much more resources, they could purchase a large batch of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and hire an Armadominus as well as a professional team of refiners with high salaries, so that they could get a tailor-made crystal suit which was a perfect match for their size, level, and habits.

There wouldn't be another of the crystal suit that they were wearing; it would be unique. Their crystal suits were born for them, which could help them reach the edge of their limits, if not surpassing them.

As for the Refinement Stage Cultivators, they were often content with whatever crystal suit was offered to them, which in most cases would be an MP crystal suit. They were usually not picky about the crystal suit.

But for the Cultivators at the Building Foundation Stage, although their crystal suits were manually made by experienced Armadominuses, they'd produced the crystal suits in large batches of ten to twenty pieces, according to the amount of the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures available.

The crystal suit could automatically adjust the gaps in a range to better fit the body of the Exo, but it was far from perfect.

If a crystal suit was larger, or smaller, in size, the Exo would find it hard to carry out their best in it.

Normally speaking, it was not a big issue. Most Building Foundation Stage Cultivators simply chose to deal with it.

But after trying the crystal suits which Li Yao had carefully attuned and furbished according to their own body features, the members of Team Blue Bronze finally understood what 'as light as a feather' meant and how it felt to be fully embedded with their crystal suit.

Although the crystal suits that they were wearing all weighed several tons, they all felt that the crystal suits were like the wings of a cicada over their body, which were light, thin, and could barely be felt.

"The adjustment of the crystal suits alone is enough to bring up the comprehensive capability of Team Blue Bronze by at least 10%. Our hope to get into the top ten is much higher now! Li Yao, good for you!" Ba Weiqi cried out in ecstasy. Then he thought of something and asked, "Right. What kind of crystal suit are you using right now? Ding Lingdang told me that you've been using an MP Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. Isn't it very unsatisfactory? Do you need a better one?"

"Indeed, Li Yao. Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit might not be suitable to be worn in the Occult Orbs."

Hong Tong continued caringly, "Every model of crystal suit can be bought in Empyreal Star City with enough contribution points. They're at least thirty percent cheaper than outside. This is sort of a privilege that Occult Orbs Fellowship gives to us, the Orb Patrollers, as a reward for participating in the life-and-death missions. You're probably running out of contribution points since you are a newcomer. But that's alright. Team Blue Bronze has quite a few group contribution points which we can allot to you. Then, if the rest of us each lend you some contribution points, you should be able to buy a decent crystal suit."

Li Yao was touched, but he shook his head and smiled.

"That will be unnecessary, captain.

"The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit that I've been wearing was not an MP one.

"The framework design of Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit comes from the era of the Star Ocean Imperium. After more than twenty years of improvement by the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution, it has become a very classic model that is apt for my refining and fighting principles, even though it is not entirely flawless. Besides, it entails endless possibilities for modification.

"I've upgraded this particular Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit that I wear from head to toe with tremendous Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures at a cost of more than one billion.

"Its performance is as good as the advanced crystal suits which are being sold at a price of three to four billion, if not better."

"Besides, I've been wearing the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit for a long time and I'm quite used to it. It won't be a good thing if I switch to a new crystal suit right now, since I'd have to adapt to it in a very short time.

"There are actually better modification plans available. I've prepared a few lists here which have included all the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and the estimated specifications after the modification on them for your reference."

"Excellent. Let's do it according to your lists."

Hong Tong replied without any hesitation, "I'll transfer 50,000 contribution points to you in a moment. You can purchase the materials you need through the mainframe crystal processor of Empyreal Star City directly. Just buy whatever you think is of use to improve the combat ability of Team Blue Bronze!"

Once a Star Team entered an Occult Orb, the team members would only have each other to rely on. The reinforcements from the Heaven's Origin Sector wouldn't be able to arrive until days later even if they sent out distress calls, while in fact, an expert demon could turn them into piles of bones in several minutes.

Therefore, each team member had to absolutely trust each of their teammates. The stronger their teammates were, the safer their own life would be.

…

Twelve days later, in a desolate world fragment, broken rocks dominated the land. Brown steam was surging out from the gaps. The air was filled with the pungent smell of sulfur. Yellowish clouds in the sky were fleeting. Now and then, explosions would take place, dying part of them grey and black.

This place was a training ground which was a simulation of the territories and harsh environments in some Occult Orbs.

Team Blue Bronze was doing their seventh training session for team cooperation here.

"CRACK! CRACK! CRACK! CRACK!"

From the gaps where brown steam was spurting out, more than twenty surreal reptiles which were thicker than boas and had lumps of rock all over their bodies crawled out.

The front end of the reptiles opened up as if blossoming, revealing a bloody mouthpart with sharp, crisscrossing teeth. Their saliva as thick as acid liquids dropped to the ground and immediately ignited it.

"HE!"

Hong Tong bellowed. Ripples of air spread out from him and lunged at the rock retiles as if they were ghosts brought back to life.

The rock reptiles squeaked, because they were slowed down as if an invisible mountain out of nowhere had buried them.

"Pa! Pa!"

Leng Ziming opened fire with one pistol in each hand. The furious bullets raged out and blew the rock reptiles into pieces, causing the rocks and blood in their bodies to splutter everywhere.

Ba Weiqi mumbled something to himself. He took no action, but the twenty rock reptiles were apparently grasped by anxiety, their tails twisting as if they were being chased by predators.

"At least another thirty rock reptiles are coming up from the crevice on your right. Shell, blow the rock on your right into pieces to block them!

"Not good. A big fellow is coming from the left. Judging from the noise, it is a hundred-legged rock reptile! The guys in Empyreal Star City must be crazy! This is just a training ground, and they're letting in such an intimidating demon beast like a hundred-legged reptile rock!"

Yan Yangtian was crouching, with her ear against the ground. It took her less than a second for her to report the location, scale, and type of the incoming enemy.

Half a minute later, a hill suddenly rose up from the ground, which was soon riddled with cracks, before it finally exploded like a volcano eruption.

A giant demon beast that looked like a centipede, only thousands of times larger in size, dashed out from the underground, enshrouded in dense venomous fog. Its fangs were even thicker than Li Yao's thigh.

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang looked at each other.

Despite the heavy helmet, the two of them seemed to have seen the eagerness in the each other's expressions, as well as the sparkles that were dancing to the same rhythm in their eyes, at the same time.

Li Yao unsheathed the Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber. An aura of blood that was almost six meters long was triggered and pierced toward the sky.

Ding Lingdang was surrounded by three serpents of fire that were unimaginably thick, while two lotuses of flames were blossoming on her fists.

The two of them shouted simultaneously, "Go to hell, scumbag!"

…

The cooperation practice of Team Blue Bronze lasted for almost a month, with a rather satisfactory outcome.

According to Captain Hong Tong, although the absolute combat ability of the new Team Blue Bronze was still not as good as the old one, Li Yao's participation and his modifications on all their crystal suits allowed a greater range of tactical options for Team Blue Bronze, which significantly improved everybody's upper limit.

Traces of the past gradually wore off. New tactical styles were brewing in the team.

But in the meantime, other Star Teams weren't idling around, either.

There was no telling if Occult Orbs Fellowship and the leadership of the federation had done it on purpose or not, but news of the discovery of Ultimacy and the construction of the Heaven's Artillery was quickly spreading to the ears of every Orb Patroller, as if someone had been leaking it on purpose.

Almost all the Orb Patrollers were aware that by no later than the end of this year, the first batch of Star Teams would be chosen and teleported to explore Ultimacy, and that these Star Teams were likely to receive the enlightenment and spiritual seeds of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

For Building Foundation Stage Cultivators, there couldn't be a more alluring reward.

Therefore, over the past month, all the Star Teams had been going out to explore the Occult Orbs crazily, in order to improve their teamwork as well as to earn more credits.

Since Team Blue Bronze stayed in Empyreal Star City for an entire month without setting foot in any Occult Orb, its position in the Rank of Stars had been on a continuous slump. Right now, it was ranking in the eighties.

Once the team fell into the nineties, they would need to face the challenge from the teams that were not in the Rank of Stars.

Although it wouldn't be difficult to defeat them, it was quite a nuisance and a waste of time anyway.

Therefore, one month after Li Yao officially joined Team Blue Bronze, his first trip in his entire life to leave the Heaven's Origin Sector for an Occult Orb was about to begin!

Chapter 372: Target: Mystic Glacier

Chapter 372: Target: Mystic Glacier

In the meeting room, the six members of Team Blue Bronze gathered together and turned on the mission selection system of Occult Orbs Fellowship, while they discussed what mission they were going to take.

The mission selection system was very similar to the war mission system in the Cultivator's network of the Heaven's Origin Sector not long ago.

In fact, the war mission system had been based on the mission selection system of Occult Orbs Fellowship.

Exploration of the Occult Orbs was never free at will.

Sometimes, cosmos storms, space turbulence, or asteroids would occur between an Occult Orb and the Heaven's Origin Sector, making it unreachable until everything went tranquil again.

Some Occult Orbs spun around the Heaven's Origin Sector like comets. They would only come close to the Heaven's Origin Sector every few dozen years or so.

Some Occult Orbs grew rarely-seen Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures which could only be harvested every hundred years or even longer. It would be a complete waste of time to explore them when the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures were immature.

Therefore, the most excellent research-type Cultivators and admin-type Cultivators of the Star Glory Federation had been summoned by Occult Orbs Fellowship to be in charge of monitoring the trajectories of the Occult Orbs, calculating their time windows, and assessing the possible spiritual energy consumption and the odds of success. Then, they could pick out the Occult Orbs that were most suitable to be explored at that time and put them on the system together with a general plan for each operation and their respective contribution points, so that every Star Team would be able to choose the most acceptable missions for them.

According to the latest capability evaluation of Team Blue Bronze and the outcomes of their previous trips, the system recommended three missions for them.

The first one was to protect a research-type Cultivator in an Occult Orb where a weird temple had been discovered with esoteric runes covering its walls. No magical equipment was able to record anything about the temple. Therefore, the specialist had to study it on the spot.

"I don't think this is a good one for us. Expert protection missions are the worst. We are a new team that is more suitable for aggressive missions. Such a mission is definitely not our best option."

Hong Tong looked around. The other teammates, including Li Yao, all nodded their heads in agreement.

Expert protection was a kind of very common mission. Since many relics and mysteries buried in the Occult Orbs were incomprehensible for common Cultivators, and sometimes it was impossible to bring the items back to the Heaven's Origin Sector, the specialists of the Heaven's Origin Sector often had to go to the Occult Orbs to check them out in person.

But unfortunately, the specialists were mostly research-type and culture-type Cultivators, whose combat abilities were only better than those of ordinary people. They were the burden of a team in the Occult Orbs. In the case of an emergency, the whole team might be dragged down.

Therefore, even though such missions often promised enormous contribution points, most Star Teams were not willing to accept them, unless there were absolutely no better options.

"The second mission is a big one. The target of the mission is to demolish a breeding base of the demon clan in an Occult Orb. Huh. According to the intelligence, the demon clan is trying to raise a kind of demon beast named 'Gold Furred Spiritual Cat', which went extinct twenty thousand years ago, with the natural blood pool in the Occult Orb. It promises a lot of contribution points, too. How about it?"

All of them studied the details for a moment. Then, Ba Weiqi shook his head and said, "Let's check out the third mission first. Although this mission promises quite a lot of contribution points, they will be distributed in proportion to the credits of each team. The other two teams participating in the mission both rank in the top 20. We are still new to each other, and we might not be able to gain a fair share."

"Sounds reasonable. Let's see the third one.

"The third mission is to collect the Nine-holed Stones and the accompanying Spirit Melting Crystals on Mystic Glacier. In the meantime, explore Mystic Glacier and clean up the ancient battleground."

Everyone was greatly interested. Such collection and exploration missions had no strict requirements. There would be a lot of room for them to do whatever they liked. It was perfect as the first mission for a team which had just started to collaborate.

Li Yao focused his attention on the mission of Mystic Glacier.

Mystic Glacier was an Occult Orb that came close to the Heaven's Origin Sector every 32 years. Every time it drew near, there would be a time window of around one month to send star shuttles to the place.

This was a frigid Occult Orb. Yet it boasted two kinds precious Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures in large reserve, which were Nine-holed Stones and Spirit Melting Crystals.

Nine-holed Stones were not very useful per se. But they were excellent catalysts that could bring up the hardness of 37 super alloys of the Heaven's Origin Sector by 0.7%.

Spirit Melting Crystals, on the other hand, could be used to refine the Building Foundation Liquids, which could bring up the success rate of breaking through to the Building Foundation by another 0.3%.

The Heaven's Origin Sector had its own mines of Nine-holed Stones and Spirit Melting Crystals. But they were of a very low purity. The cost to separate the useful ingredients out was extremely high. The volume of production was not very satisfactory, either. Therefore, the mines were never exploited on a large scale.

Mystic Glacier was one of the few Occult Orbs that preserved high-purity Nine-holes Stones and Spirit Melting Crystals. In fact, their purity was so high that a few collection trips would gather enough to fulfill the Heaven's Origin Sector's needs for several years.

On the other hand, since such precious mother lodes were buried in Mystic Glacier, human beings had been developing it on a large scale and established mining bases there early on in the time of the Star Ocean Imperium.

But as a result, it had become a major military target for the demon race. The two parties had been engaged in countless fierce battles for the control over Mystic Glacier.

Therefore, Mystic Glacier was also an ancient battleground, where ancient treasures and secret arts might be buried.

Mystic Glacier was discovered by Occult Orbs Fellowship more than a hundred years ago. So far, three teams had explored it. A preliminary understanding about its environment and specialties had been achieved. Part of the Occult Orb was drawn into the map, too, but only with a coverage of 9%.

Therefore, there were three targets for the mission on Mystic Glacier.

Firstly, to collect as many Nine-holed Stones and Spirit Melting Crystals as possible.

Secondly, to explore Mystic Glacier. Every square meter of previously untraveled area equal to a lot of contribution points.

Thirdly, to clean up the ancient battleground and see if there were any pieces of ancient magical equipment or secret arts that were worth bringing back to the Heaven's Origin Sector.

It was impossible to fail such a mission. The worst-case scenario would only be that they would not get as many contribution points as they wanted. It was perfect for Team Blue Bronze right now.

"If you have no objection, Mystic Glacier will be our destination!"

Hong Tong glanced around the room.

"Seconded!"

"Seconded!"

"Seconded!"

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang looked at each other and then nodded their heads at the same time. ""Seconded!"

…

The following morning, Team Blue Bronze was full prepared. They reached the 'Occult Orbs Observation Center' fifty meters below the launch base through the subway.

They were very lucky. No other team was trying to compete with them for the mission to Mystic Glacier. Therefore, their request was approved overnight, and they were offered a lot of files and videos of the previous missions to Mystic Glacier.

After a night of study and thorough analysis, they were all full of hope for the mission and almost couldn't wait any longer.

Passing through a pathway with ivory walls, Li Yao was somewhat stunned by what he saw.

Along the pathway, there was a piece of tempered glass five meters in width and fifty meters in length on one side of the wall, through which one could see a spacious room that was almost as enormous as an arena. The room was filled with super-large crystal processors that Li Yao was practically drooling over from just looking at them.

He recognized several models of the super-large crystal processors. They were all his dreams. He would be excited for several days if he could lay his hand on one of them.

However, the super-large crystal processors were only the juniors in this place. The mainframe crystal processor in the center of the big room was two floors tall.

Although Li Yao claimed to be a fan of crystal processors, he had never seen, or even heard of, one like that before.

Inside the room, hundreds of experts who were wearing silver robes and brain wave enhancers were working diligently.

The spiritual waves from them congregated into a surging tide. Although there was thick glass in between, Li Yao still felt that his heart was pounding with the solemnness being imposed on him.

"Hundreds of research-type Cultivators?" Li Yao murmured.

"Correct. This is the Occult Orbs Observation Center. It is the place where we discover the Occult Orbs, calculate their trajectories and draft interstellar routes, and where we design the super teleportation array.

"What you've seen is merely the tip of the iceberg. In places you can't see, more research-type and admin-type Cultivators are trying everything they can to build a bridge to the center of the cosmos for the human beings of the Heaven's Origin Sector," Hong Tong said in admiration.

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao stared at the slogan on the wall at the end of the room.

Two sentences that were the color of blood burned his eyes.

'For the destiny of Human Beings. For the future of the Star Glory Federation.'

"Right."

Li Yao exhaled and smiled. His eyes were clearer than previously, as he said, "The human beings in the Heaven's Origin Sector cannot be locked in this small world forever. Let us Cultivators find a new destination for everyone!"

He started to realize why Occult Orbs Fellowship set up the Observation Center in this place where every passing-by Orb Patroller would see what was being done inside.

He felt that an invisible burden had been put on his back. But his footsteps were firmer and faster.

Soon, they reached the end of the pathway, which split off into two directions, one for males and the other for females.

Li Yao, Hong Tong, and the other two guys went into the chamber on the left, while Ding Lingdang and Yan Yangtian went to the right.

In the chamber whose walls were full of holes, everyone took off their clothes. First, they were sanitized. Then, a special strengthening drug was injected into their bodies with high pressure after it was atomized, which would keep their nerves in a super active state for the next three days. The efficiency of their spiritual energy would be a lot higher, too, so that it would be easier for them to bring out their best performance with little to no consequences.

After that, four artificial arms imprinted quite a few marks all over their bodies.

Li Yao lowered his eyes and noticed that his body was covered in colorful tattoos which were flowing like flames. They were so vivid that they seemed to have been carved on his body.

"These are spiritual stamps," Hong Tong explained, "although they are not as effective as the real spiritual tattoos, and they can only last for three to five days, it is quite convenient to use them. Once you have them imprinted to your body, it will immediately take effect. You can also choose different spiritual stamps according to the different conditions of the Occult Orbs.

"For example, Mystic Glacier, where we're going to right now, is quite a cold place. With the help of the spiritual stamps of flame, the circulation of our blood will be faster, and the pores on our body will be locked up in order to maintain the body temperature. When they are fully triggered, you can survive for dozens of minutes on Mystic Glacier even if you are naked, while waiting for aid.

"Don't underestimate these spiritual stamps. This is the work of Xie Ling, the 'Miraculous Marker'. Although it is just a stamp, it is even more powerful than the spiritual tattoos that common spiritual tattoo artists spend days making!"

Chapter 373: Shattering the Void

Chapter 373: Shattering the Void

Before he'd explained anything, Li Yao had already felt a stream of warmth flowing all over his body, as if he were wearing a piece of clothing made of fire.

Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were indeed extraordinary. It was just a spiritual stamp, and it already had such an amazing effect.

No wonder Ding Lingdang had been hoping that Xie Ling could make a spiritual tattoo for her someday.

Putting on their mustard suits and crystal suits, they walked out of the preparation chamber. Team Blue Bronze was all set. Hong Tong took six Cosmos Rings from one of the staff and gave each of his teammates one.

These Cosmos Rings were all Occult Orbs Fellowship's property. They were much more advanced than Li Yao's.

The space inside the Cosmos Ring was about the size of a train car, which was enough to store abundant Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and ancient magical equipment.

Li Yao opened the plate armor covering his fist and put on the new Cosmos Ring beside his old one.

Hong Tong glanced at him and said in a low voice, "Li Yao, I know you are a smart guy. But since this is the first time you're entering an Occult Orb, there's still something I need to talk to you about: the rules.

"In the Occult Orbs, the most dangerous thing is not the demon clan, nor the ancient traps, but your own greediness.

"Remember, everything we discover and retrieve from the Occult Orbs must be turned in to Occult Orbs Fellowship first, before they are redistributed according to the ratio noted in the contract. No one should keep anything to themselves.

"Star Teams are not the only people who are contributing to the exploration of the Occult Orbs.

"To build up such a big launch base, almost all the resources of the federation have been used up, which are supposed to belong to all the citizens of the federation, including the ordinary people.

"Moreover, so many research-type Cultivators are working day in and day out. The price that they pay is no less than ours. Sometimes, when calculating the trajectories of certain Occult Orbs which are extremely complicated, some of them have even gone crazy, got seriously injured, or even killed. It is not unusual.

"Therefore, all the trophies we get from the Occult Orbs first and foremost belong to the federation. Then, we can get our share according to our contribution. That's the significance of the 'contribution points'.

"Besides, there are too many Core Formation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators here who are adept at reading souls.

"Our crystal suits will record everything we do, too.

"No one will be able to get away with any dirty tricks.

"In Occult Orbs Fellowship, as Orb Patrollers, we are entitled to buy Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and crystal suits at a very low price, and we also have the chance to be enlightened by super experts. These are all benefits for Orb Patrollers and Orb Patrollers alone.

"Only a fool would be beguiled by the treasures in the Occult Orbs and end up in a court with all their reputation lost. That's what we might call missing the forest for the trees, which is idiotic. Don't you agree?"

Li Yao nodded.

"Captain, rest assured. I'm not that kind of person who is blinded by greed. I'm well aware what to do and what not to do."

Hong Tong patted his shoulder and said, "Very good, then. Don't overthink it. This is just routine.

"Before Occult Orbs Fellowship was established, in order to get the secret treasures in the Occult Orbs, Cultivators had been doing whatever they could against their brethren. All kinds of plots were formulated. The world of Cultivators nearly fell apart. It is also one of the reasons why Occult Orbs Fellowship was set up to develop the Occult Orbs in a cooperative way.

"Therefore, before every newcomer's first mission to the Occult Orbs, their captain has to remind them of the importance of collaboration, lest they make mistakes after they reach the destination.

"However, although it is strictly forbidden to take anything away secretly, training with the Heavenly Materials and

Earthly Treasures in the Occult Orbs while one is there is allowed. This is known as 'you can eat but you cannot take'.

"On the other hand, if you encounter an exploration team of the demon clan, their belongings will all be yours after you defeat them. You can take whatever you like!

"If everything's clear, let's head off now!"

The six members of Team Blue Bronze were checked one last time by the staff and scanned thoroughly by two mild mystic rays, before they entered a giant platform where a star shuttle was floating.

On the top of the platform, the glittering words caught Li Yao's attention again.

'For the Destiny of Human Beings. For the Future of the Star Glory Federation!'

"Let's go!"

This was an oval star shuttle that looked like a melon, with bright green streaks on its shell.

When they walked to the underside of the star shuttle, the stomach of the star shuttle glided open without making any noise. They felt that they were suddenly lighter, and before they knew it, they'd already been absorbed into the star shuttle.

The star shuttle did not require a pilot. Its interior was quite simple, too. There was nothing except six seats which seemed to have been made of foam. It was impossible to tell what they were made of.

The moment he sat on one of them, Li Yao felt that he had fallen into some sort of mud. Half of his body together with his crystal suit sank down into the seat.

The 'foam' seemed to be alive. It extended almost a hundred tentacles and fixed him to the seat neither too tightly nor too loosely.

When everyone was in their seat, the star shuttle started trembling. One rune after another started shimmering on the walls of the cabin.

Li Yao was somewhat nervous.

Ding Lingdang was sitting right beside him. She noticed Li Yao's anxiety and extended her hand to him.

Li Yao felt warm in his heart. He stretched his hand, too.

But as it turned out, Ding Lingdang did not mean to hold his hand. Instead, she slapped his thigh heavily and burst into laughter.

"Li Yao, you're not scared, are you? Your crystal suit is shaking! I've never seen the 'Vulture' so panicky before! Now strike a pose and let me take a picture!"

Although he was wearing a crystal suit, Li Yao still grimaced out of pain. He drew back his hand quietly.

"Don't be afraid. Just follow my lead after we're there. Believe in your sister's capability!"

Before Li Yao took his hand back, Ding Lingdang snatched it and pulled it to her leg, in a way that not many people would call gentle.

"Thirty seconds until take-off! Everyone, hold on to your seat!" Hong Tong bellowed.

Through the narrow cabin window, Li Yao noticed that the star shuttle was floating up from the ground. Two Cultivators were dragging it to the rail with spells.

The star shuttle trembled more and more violently. The runes on the walls of the cabin started spinning, and they turned into colorful streaks of brightness.

As the star shuttle went upward along the rail in a spiral, its speed was higher and higher, until it turned into a rapidly-revolving drill in the end.

The intense centrifugal force was tearing Li Yao's body and his soul. Only with the protection of the foam seat was he able to stay where he was instead of crashing into anything.

His heart was beating at an unprecedented speed, but then he heard Captain Hong Tong's shout and his other teammates' laughter.

"If Cultivators are the battle saber of the human civilization, we Orb Patrollers will be the most dazzling brilliance on the tip of the saber! Go! Go! Let's get out of the Heaven's Origin Sector and march into the center of the sea of stars!"

Swoosh!

Wildly-dancing electric arcs were accompanying them outside the cabin window, when the captain's shout and everyone's crazy laughter arrived at their peak.

A shrill sound exploded inside Li Yao's brain. The centrifugal force suddenly vanished. The trembling came to a halt, too.

The scenery outside the cabin window switched from the blue sky, white clouds, yellow desert, and green oasis to an infinite darkness.

Where the darkness was densest, a trivial light spot was flickering feebly.

Then, the light spot grew larger and larger. It jumped, dispersed, and expanded into an ocean of light which was gushing at Li Yao.

The surging sea of stars, which was made up of countless shining galaxies, swallowed the star shuttle instantly!

Li Yao had never seen anything as weird before.

The star shuttle seemed to be flying in a kaleidoscope made of stars, each of which was springing madly like irritated fish. Some stars were extended to a line of brightness. Countless such lines interweaved into a glittering, splendid, complicated painting, which inevitably aroused the desire of the spectator to jump into the sea of stars.

"Captain…"

Li Yao turned back, only to be shocked by what he saw in the cabin.

The space of the cabin was only about five square kilometers, but he felt that it had been somehow 'unfolded'. It was almost as large as a Flying Crystal Race arena in his vision.

In the meantime, although Hong Tong, Ding Lingdang and the rest of teammates were wearing crystal suits which enclosed them tightly, Li Yao was able to see the crystal suits, the components of the crystal suits, and the people inside the crystal suits simultaneously in a weird way that he couldn't understand.

Moreover, his voice had been changed, too. It was extremely odd and in a totally different language.

Li Yao 'saw' that Captain Hong Tong smiled inside his crystal suit and opened his mouth only for a bizarre sound to pour out.

Li Yao did not understand the language at all. Yet, he knew exactly what Captain Tong was trying to say.

"Don't worry. It's completely normal. We've broken through the barrier of the three-dimensional universe and are travelling in a higher dimension.

"In the ancient Cultivation world, there are many records where Cultivators shattered the void and vanished into thin air. The so-called 'shattering the void' was actually breaking the limitations of the three-dimensional universe.

"Which means we are all shattering the void at this moment!"

Li Yao swallowed unconsciously. He was able to 'see' the entire process of his saliva sliding through the throat into his stomach.

He looked far ahead and 'saw' the inner walls and the outer shell of the star shuttle at the same time.

Li Yao mumbled, "Shattering the void? It's incredible!"

Captain Hong Tong continued, "Mystic Glacier is not far away from the Heaven's Origin Sector. We won't stay too long in the higher dimension. Be prepared, everybody! We're almost there!"

He had barely finished his sentence when the star shuttle started trembling again.

This time, it was ten times more violent than when the star shuttle was being launched. The cabin window was enveloped in a layer of purple fire. All kinds of earsplitting noises were crashing into the cabin, making Li Yao start to doubt whether or not the star shuttle was going to break up in the next second.

Suddenly, the trembling completely stopped, as if it had never appeared.

All the strange phenomena that Li Yao had just observed were gone, too. He raised his head and noticed that everyone was covered up by their crystal suits again.

His heart turned tranquil, like a drop of water melting into a pool.

But a strong feeling of nausea grabbed him.

"Dummy!" Hong Tong shouted.

Ba Weiqi rose up from his seat and rushed to Li Yao, before he pressed his fingers against Li Yao's temples.

Other than an expert in mental attack, he was also the doctor in the team.

"This is the side-effect of 'shattering the void'. Everybody experiences it after their first time. In mine, I failed to hold it back and vomited inside the crystal suit. Hahahaha. It did not feel good.

"But it doesn't matter. A few more trips and you'll get used to it in no time!"

Chapter 374: Ancient Battleground

Chapter 374: Ancient Battleground

Li Yao smacked his lips and was quite shocked.

Shattering the void and vanishing into thin air was the ultimate level that ancient Cultivators had longed for.

However, most of the ancient Cultivators, after burning their life to the extremity, failed to shatter the void. Or rather, they were shattered by the void and perished without the slightest trace.

Even when some of them were lucky enough to enter a universe of a higher dimension, they might not have been able to find a way to return to the three-dimensional universe and were sometimes lost between the dimensions. There was no way for them to go back, either. It was even worse than being killed instantly.

But right now, despite the fact that the six of them were merely at the Building Foundation Stage, they were able to shatter the void and cruise through the sea of stars time and time again with the support of their star shuttle.

This went to show how far the modern Cultivation civilization had progressed.

"Our star shuttle has checked the surroundings of Mystic Glacier. Mystic Glacier has a thin atmosphere. The gravity and environment are relatively stable. The current temperature is -72°C. The estimated extreme temperature is -134°C. It is warmer than we expected.

"There is a small portion of oxygen in the air of Mystic Glacier. But other than oxygen, there are all kinds of corrosive gases. Besides, invisible swirls that can corrupt the organs and suppress the functioning of spiritual energy are everywhere on the ground, like tornadoes that we can't see.

"In the ancient Cultivation world, such a phenomenon was known as 'gale from hell'. Rumors have it that they could blow the flesh off the bones, which can be quite frightening. We can't be too careful about it. Activate the internal circulation system, breath the air that has been filtered, and never take off your crystal suit. Are we clear? Good.

"Now, let's get to work!"

At Hong Tong's command, everyone stepped onto the dull and cold land of Mystic Glacier in a line.

This was the first time that Li Yao had ever left the Heaven's Origin Sector. He was curious about everything he saw.

Mystic Glacier was a gray world. Looking at the horizon, there was no obvious distinction between the sky and the earth.

Perhaps due to lack of water, there was not very much ice on the ground. But gray rocks filled the place, making them feel like they were standing in the middle of a forest of mushrooms.

In the crevices of each rock, countless sprouts were growing. At the ends of the sprouts were buds which were fluctuating as if they were about to blossom, emitting alluring violet colors that were brightening and dimming repeatedly.

They were the unique fungi of Mystic Glacier called 'Sole-eyed Giant Mushroom', which were not very aggressive, with certain narcotic abilities. They could be refined into ingredients for food in the case of an emergency because of the huge amount of water contained within.

The gravity of Mystic Glacier was 1.35 times that of the Heaven's Origin Sector. For Cultivators at the Building Foundation Stage, it was not a big deal. Captain Hong Tong was saved the trouble of altering the gravity.

Turning back, Li Yao sensed that an invisible rope of spiritual energy was tied to the back of the star shuttle, which disappeared more than ten meters away and seemed to be extending to a different world.

It was the link connecting the star shuttle to the Heaven's Origin Sector.

If a stone was tied with a rope of infinite length and elasticity, then the stone could be pulled back to its original position at any time, no matter how far away it was thrown.

Of course, it was only a shallow metaphor. Li Yao couldn't understand the real mechanism yet. Such a technique had been discovered in the relics of the Star Ocean Imperium. It was still too advanced for the Cultivators of the Heaven's Origin Sector to fully comprehend.

Maybe only the Cultivators beyond the Nascent Soul Stage would be able to appreciate its mysteries.

Li Yao only knew that such a 'hauling rope' could work for five days.

In five days, as long as they returned to the star shuttle and activated the rune array, they would be immediately pulled back to the Heaven's Origin Sector.

But if they stayed for more than five days, or they were engaged in battles and their star shuttle was destroyed, they would not be able to go back anymore.

However, Occult Orbs Fellowship had prepared plans for such emergencies. Dozens of research-type Cultivators were monitoring their status, and when they sensed that the star shuttle was destroyed, or the 'hauling rope' was cut off, an empty star shuttle would immediately be sent to Mystic Glacier. Since most of the cost for a launch was to ensure that the passengers inside were safe, the cost of sending an empty shuttle there was negligible.

When they found the empty star shuttle, they would be able to get back to the Heaven's Origin Sector again.

"Let's check our time. From now on, we have four and a half days for collection and exploration. More exactly, we have 108 hours, 35 minutes, and 42 seconds!

"Let's hurry up and make every second count. Yan Zi, check our surroundings; Vulture, look for the star torch and repair it; Lingdang and I will cover up our star shuttle; Shell and Dummy, stay in alert!"

Hong Tong waved his hand, and everybody immediately started working.

They were in luck. Li Yao discovered the star torch on a hill a hundred meters away very soon.

A star torch was a kind of magical equipment that looked like a giant torch carved out of red crystals. The undying flames at one end of it would emit intense spiritual waves while they danced glamorously.

As its name suggested, a star torch was a torch on a star. It was the lighthouse in the sea of stars which guided the way for star shuttles and starships.

This particular star torch was built up by the first Star Team to land on Mystic Glacier more than a hundred years ago, so that the following Star Teams would find it easier to locate the planet.

Every Star Team that came to the planet later had been teleported near the star torch and asked to maintain it before they were to start their mission.

Mystic Glacier had an extremely vast territory, most of which had not been explored yet. Dangers that no one could foresee might be lurking in the darkness.

Without the star torch, they could be teleported to anywhere in Mystic Glacier.

As a refiner, maintaining and strengthening the star torch was naturally his job.

Although he did not understand the mechanism of the star torch yet, his predecessors had left him with a detailed maintenance manual. It was not difficult just doing what was told in the book.

After being buffeted by the harsh winds for thirty years, the shell of the star torch had been weathered. The spiritual energy of the defense rune array was running dry, too.

Li Yao took off three pieces on the shell. Then he pulled out all the components inside and polished them, before he inserted new high-purity crystals into the star torch. In the end, he returned each piece back to its original position. Everything was successfully done.

In the meantime, his other teammates had finished their job, too.

'Dummy' Ba Weiqi and 'Shell' Leng Ziming stayed in alert and scanned the territory around them, while they marked their current location in the map.

However, there was only a very small part in the map that had been illuminated. Most of the map was still covered in fog, waiting to be explored.

Yan Yangtian sent out more than ten beast puppets that were as swift as swallows from her crystal suit, which flew to the sky and scrutinized the environment. Then she came to a conclusion and said, "The environment right now is not much different from thirty years ago. Our map is still usable. Preliminary scouting has detected no traces of enemies. Alert to the third degree should be fine for us.

"However, the tunnel that the Star Team thirty years ago entered through has collapsed because of the furious wind. The geologic structure of this area is extremely weak. Frigorific cyclones might be brewing in the underground. It is quite risky to blow up the entrance of the tunnel by force."

The so-called 'frigorific cyclone' was the unstable, freezing air mass buried deeply below the ground which could be well below -250°C.

Once it was triggered, it would burst out of the ground like a volcanic eruption and turn into cold, gloomy mist that could turn everything within its reach into an ice block.

A frigorific cyclone was as dangerous as a volcanic eruption. Since it could penetrate into any place, it had a much greater effective range than the magma.

Yan Yangtian continued, "Since this place was a mining base of the Star Ocean Imperium, it is not likely that there is just this one tunnel leading to the center of the mother lode. I sensed that the spiritual gas in the southwest direction is relatively dense. I suggest we explore that area.

"According to the blueprint of the mining base, there should be more tunnels in the southwest.

"Even if we fail to find any, we will at least be able to explore more unmarked areas, which will earn us enough contribution points."

"Alright then!"

Hong Tong commanded, "Line up. Stay alert to the third degree. Move southwest in stealth mode!"

In the air of Mystic Glacier, which contained various kinds of corrosive impurities, the exhaust flames from the six crystal suits were in dreary grayness. They jumped forward in the desolate and barren land like six moths.

Each of them bounded forward, dozens of meters at a time. Very soon, they'd reached more than a hundred kilometers away.

They were moving in a zigzag. Along the way, they'd visited a large previously unexplored area, but they didn't find any creature except the Sole-eyed Giant Mushrooms.

It was not until they climbed a hill more than 170 kilometers away from the star shuttle that they finally saw something new.

It was a forest of ice, made by the debris of human beings, magical equipment, and demon beasts.

There were Cultivators in crystal suits with their chainswords and storm bolters raised, shouting despite the bitter cold, even though their helmets were already broken; there were metal puppets that were riddled with holes and on the verge of destruction; flying swords which had been ripped apart and lost their sharpness were scattered all around, as well as many unknown bizarre-shaped demon beasts that Li Yao could never imagine in his worst nightmare.

Everything had turned into translucent sculptures of ice on the splendid and yet silent ancient battleground.

"It's likely that, when the demon clan was attacking the mining base, the battle was so intense that a frigorific cyclone was triggered. As a result, everyone on the spot was instantly frozen by the icy mist that was close to absolute zero."

Yan Yangtian continued analyzing, "If that was the case, there must be an entrance to the mines nearby. Besides, since the frigorific cyclone has burst out once before, the geologic structure in this place is relatively stable, and it will be safer for us to collect the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures.

"But we should still be very careful. Many kinds of demon beasts could live in hibernation for thousands of years. Despite the frigorific cyclone's destruction, it is possible that some of them are still alive and have not woken up yet.

"Thousands of years have passed. The effects of the frigorific cyclone have mostly disappeared already. The demon beasts which weren't killed will likely wake up again soon."

Almost at exactly the same time when she finished her sentence, a frozen metal puppet on the ancient battleground, whose internal components had been eroded by the billowing wind for thousands of years, suddenly exploded into countless pieces because of the turbulent spiritual waves from the six crystal suits nearby.

Chapter 375: Lonely Flying Sword

Chapter 375: Lonely Flying Sword

The explosion immediately triggered a chain reaction. Centering at the metal puppet, ripples of destruction spread out, turning the ancient battleground into an ocean of broken diamonds. Cracking noises were echoing nonstop in the vast, cold expanse.

Even the most powerful magical equipment and creatures would find it difficult to withstand the corrosion of time for thousands of years. Like a castle made of sand on a beach, the splendid ancient battleground soon fell into nothingness when crushed by the surging tide.

Yet, on the edge of the battleground, clusters of weird smells were popping up.

"That is..."

Li Yao set the resolution of the crystal camera to maximum and activated the full potential of the nerves of his retina by stimulating them with his spiritual energy, so that his sight was improved by five times temporarily.

On the edge of the battleground, he saw that several demon beasts which also looked like ice sculptures did not explode into pieces like the other demon beasts did. The only thing that was broken was their ice shell, revealing their black bodies which resembled countless dried octopuses.

They were gradually expanding.

These demon beasts had been in the periphery of the frigorific cyclone's reach. They must've entered the hibernation stage in time, which allowed them to survive the disaster.

The demonic energy from their bodies was burning more and more fiercely like a wild fire.

Soon, the dozens of demon beasts had been enlarged to an unimaginable level, which looked like balloons that had been fully pumped up.

Every demon beast was three to five meters in diameter. They were floating in the midair, each with hundreds of messy tentacles full of thorns dangling to the ground.

Such balloon-shaped demon beasts did not have eyes. Their airbag-like bodies were full of wrinkles and holes. Their tentacles wriggled forward and interweaved into a grey net hundreds of meters in diameter.

"Judging from the appearance of those demon beasts, they should be sort of like the 'Floating Jellyfish' from ancient times.

"Such demon beasts can absorb the air around them, condense it to minimum, and spurt it out through the holes and wrinkles over their bodies. Their bullets of air can be very intimidating.

"Especially here in Mystic Glacier where the air contains corrosive gas. It's a perfect slaughterhouse for them," Yan Yangtian blurted out.

"Don't be nervous, everybody. Those demon beasts are not at very high levels. Middle-level or high-level demon general, tops. Besides, after thousands of years of hibernation, their body tissue must've been significantly undermined. Although they've woken up again, they are far less effective than thousands of years ago."

Hong Tong's words were mostly meant to ease Li Yao.

Although the demonic waves from them were not intense and they were probably still very weak after thousands of years of hibernation, it was hard to tell whether or not they had any hidden moves, considering that they were demon beasts from thousands of years ago after all.

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao tried to calm himself down. He moved his right hand inch by inch, until he eventually grabbed the Boiled Blood Wind Slash Saber quietly.

His other teammates dispersed silently according to the tactics that they had practiced countless times during training.

The giant net of tentacles from the dozens of demon beasts drifted in the air like a weird grey cloud, until they sensed the existence of human beings and quickly moved toward them.

They were moving in the same way as Heaven's Roar did. The intense air spurting from the holes on the back of their bodies was boosting them forward at an astonishing speed.

A fierce battle was about to break out.

In the blink of an eye, the closest demon beast was only fifty meters from Li Yao.

Li Yao was able to vividly see every thorn on every tentacle right now. The Boiled Blood Wind Slash Saber was shivering violently inside the sheath, eager to jump out.

Suddenly, a shriek burst out from his left, as a streak of brightness passed by him and pierced into the body of the demon beast!

A flying sword!

The Floating Jellyfish were all filled with air inside their body. Now that a flying sword left a long, narrow cut on it, a high-pitched noise of air being leaked immediately echoed and didn't stop until the demon beast withered again.

The other Floating Jellyfish were apparently greatly shocked. They waved their tentacles and formed a dense line of defense.

Li Yao was dazed, too. The flying sword didn't come from him, but from the northeast corner of the ancient battleground.

"BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!"

The earth was shaking.

Appearing in front of his eyes were dozens of triplet crystal cameras in the shape of triangle, which were emitting brutality and toughness as their owners march forward in the grey fog.

Soon, it was clearer. Dozens of metal puppets walked into his eyesight rigidly yet firmly.

Their arms had been modified into chainswords and sabers, and they had dull and burdensome honeycomb launchers affixed to their shoulders which were ejecting flying swords unstoppably as they marched on.

Many puppets had been greatly undermined by the blowing wind after such a long time. Their ankles or knees exploded as they were walking, making them fall to the ground, unable to stand up again.

But the remaining puppets never bothered to even glance at them. They stepped over their companions' bodies and marched on.

For the fallen puppets, as long as their crystal processors were still working, they would wave their hands and move their bodies forward with their arms, continuing on their charge at the demon beasts.

"They're the metal puppets from the Star Ocean Imperium.

"In extreme conditions, some puppets will also enter the hibernation state. Only when they detect intense demonic waves will they awaken again to destroy the targets," Hong Tong explained.

While they were talking, the army of metal puppets rushed into the grey net of the demon beasts. A bloody battle with no blood being spilt broke out!

At first, the metal puppets sent out massive flying swords from their honeycomb launchers and separated the demon beasts, before they wielded their chainswords and sabers and slashed the demon beasts as well as their tentacles into pieces.

The demon beasts were not easy to deal with. Countless bullets of air erupted out from the wrinkles and holes covering their bodies and blew the limbs of the metal puppets to pieces.

Both parties had been sleeping in the extreme coldness for thousands of years. Their bodies were unbelievably weak because of the weathering of the wind. Often, after several clashes, the two opponents fell into pieces at the same time.

But neither the demon beasts nor the metal puppets knew what fear was. They were simply carried out what they had been told to do.

Ten minutes later, the protracted war that had been delayed for thousands of years ended.

All the demon beasts and metal puppets had become broken pieces. Their limbs and components drew a painting of destruction on the grey land.

The only thing left was a flying sword in the sky, which was spinning in the air, somewhat lost, because it could not find a target. Eventually, it came at Li Yao.

Li Yao swallowed. His right hand held his saber even tighter.

"Don't be anxious. The flying sword should have the identification system installed. We are all human beings. It wouldn't attack us," Hong Tong explained.

The flying sword flew over the heads of each of them. Li Yao saw clearly the dented edge, the thick rust which was work of the acids of the demon beasts, and also the Red Dragon Swallowing the Sun emblem on the body of the sword.

It used to be the pride of human beings, flying in every corner of the sea of stars.

The tip of the sword shivered for a long time, like a hound which was sniffing to find its prey. After recognizing that they were all human beings, the flying sword went westward into the grey fog, until it completely vanished beyond the horizon later.

"Where is it going?" Li Yao asked.

"Although we are not demon beasts, we don't have the identification spiritual tattoo of the soldiers of the Star Ocean Imperium, either. It has perhaps considered us to be civilians," Hong Tong replied.

"It is going to find a troop of the imperial army, or a demon beast to attack."

Li Yao was dazed for a moment and further questioned, "What if it can't find either?"

Hong Tong answered, "If it can't, it will continue searching until it runs out of spiritual energy."

Li Yao inevitably pictured the following scene.

A lonely flying sword had been flying on the godforsaken land for no one knew how long, without being able to find any comrade or enemy. It was flying more and more slowly. The rust on its body grew thicker and thicker. Sometimes, it even fell down from the sky. But it did not know what fatigue was, nor would it ever abandon its mission. It would only carry on flying and flying until the last bit of its spiritual energy ran dry.

"Little Black, are you looking for a companion or an enemy like that flying sword?" Li Yao asked Black Wing on his back with a telepathic thought.

Black Wing shivered. Li Yao immediately understood what it meant.

"I've already found a companion."

"Alright. Everybody, keep it up! Battles between ancient demon beasts and metal puppets are not unusual in the Occult Orbs!"

Hong Tong bellowed, "Vulture and Dummy, clean up the battleground, and see if there's any trophies that are worth bringing back. Yan Zi and Lingdang, form a scout team and search the mountain nearby. Since this is a battleground, it is very likely that a tunnel is somewhere around here. Shell and I will be on guard!"

Leng Ziming picked an excellent position where he set up his sniper rifle, monitoring the situation of the battleground.

Li Yao and Ba Weiqi jumped down into the ancient battleground which was now covered in shards of ice.

Most of the ancient flying swords, crystal suits, and metal puppets had turned into powder. Although some of them looked intact, they would break into pieces the moment one laid a hand on them.

Li Yao could only scan their appearances with the mystic rays and save them to his crystal processor, hoping that it could be of some help to the designers of magical equipment in the Heaven's Origin Sector.

On the other hand, many of the components of the metal puppets which were engaged in the fierce battle just now were still undamaged.

Li Yao studied carefully. The artificial limbs and the honeycomb launcher were no more advanced than their counterparts in the Heaven's Origin Sector, and therefore were useless to take back.

In the meantime, the hibernation system that kept the puppets alive for thousands of years was quite delicate. Li Yao had never seen anything similar in the Heaven's Origin Sector.

After the Floating Jellyfish fully released the air inside their body, they were not very large in size. Li Yao picked the smallest one, which he soaked in 'Corpse Solidifying Liquid' before throwing it into his Cosmos Ring together with the core of the hibernation system.

He was quite lucky. In the first trip to the Occult Orbs, he had discovered a piece of new magical equipment and a demon beast species which had been thought extinct for a long time. A lot of contribution points had been secured!

Good news came from the scout team, too. Yan Zi and Ding Lingdang had found the entrance of a tunnel which was still open five kilometers west of the ancient battleground.

Five seconds later, the six of them gathered in the entrance of the tunnel.

This place was below cracked rocks. After the long time, the crevices of the rocks were full of Sole-eyed Giant Mushrooms, which were swinging in the wind and emitting a feeble glow.

A steep cave more than three meters in diameter pierced down into the ground, leading to a complete darkness.

The cave was apparently man-made, yet the passage of time had almost ruined all traces of the workers.

Li Yao picked up a piece of round magical equipment and knocked it to his helmet. The ball immediately started cracking.

Then, he threw the ball into the depths of the cave.

After a dull noise, a greenish mystic ray flashed deep down the cave, scanning every direction thoroughly.

The light beam of the six crystal suits displayed a 3D map of the cave which was quite spacious and extended to various directions.

Such a piece of magical equipment was known as 'Light Wave Grenade', which could send out spiritual waves that were similar to sound waves to scan the unknown environment before drawing a 3D map and feeding the conclusion back to the crystal processor. It was very useful in wilderness survival.

Li Yao rubbed his hands and said excitedly, "This tunnel goes 430 meters below the surface, where there are twelve operation platforms. It appears that there will be quite a lot of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures in this place!"

Chapter 376: Devastating Icy Revenants

Chapter 376: Devastating Icy Revenants

The beast puppets on the back of Yan Yangtian were freed again; they flew into the cave according to the routes that Li Yao had provided just now. The puppets examined the environment carefully and sent back a lot of images.

"No dens or traps discovered yet. But still, be careful, everyone! Let's go down."

Not far away from them, there was a railway leading to the underground. But it had been well worn after thousands of years of time.

Li Yao checked it and discovered that although it was not difficult to repair, the work could take at least an entire day to collect all the materials required.

Therefore, they abandoned the cart and gathered around. Captain Hong Tong activated his gravity controlling ability and set the gravity five square meters nearby into one fifth of the standard gravity, which equaled to one third of the gravity of the Heaven's Origin Sector.

Under the effect of the new gravity, everybody felt that they were as light as swallows. Controlling their crystal suits with the delicate power rune arrays on them, they floated down into the cave like six feathers. Now and then, they would step on the wall of the tunnel to stop them from dropping too fast.

"Bo! Bo! Bo!"

While he was descending, Li Yao released more Light Wave Grenades, which scanned every crack in the underground world and every operation platform and added more details to the map of the mine.

Very soon, the steep tunnel became flat. Side tunnels appeared in the left and right. They also saw debris of abandoned carts, which were evidence that they were reaching the end of the tunnel.

Illuminated by the feeble brightness from the crystal suits, the walls around them reflected thousands of colors, as if they were solidified rainbows. Rocks that looked like crystals made the cave feel like a splendid palace.

In many crevices of the rocks, Sole-eyed Giant Mushrooms also existed.

Different from their cousins on the ground, the Sole-eyed Giant Mushrooms here were taller and thinner, with green adornments and clouds of vague purple mist surrounding them. They were dancing merrily in the mild breeze.

More than thirty different kinds of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures could be found on Mystic Glacier, including Variously Colored Stones and Thunder Spirit Diamonds.

The brightness they saw came from those minerals.

But most of them could be found in the Heaven's Origin Sector, too. They were too large in size to be excavated and brought back.

What they needed was the Nine-holed Stones and Spirit Melting Crystals that were of a much smaller size and higher value.

"Continue moving. Pay attention to the mushroom here. If there are red streaks inside the green spots on them, it means Nine-holed Stones and Soul Melting Crystals are nearby. Also, stay safe and keep the internal circulation system of your crystal suit functioning normally. The narcotics of the mushrooms here are ten timers more effective than the mushrooms on the ground. Even Building Foundation Stage Cultivators might fall for the illusions easily!"

Before Hong Tong finished his talk, thousands of streams of brightness flooded out of the cracks of the rocks and floated in the air with freezing coldness like a hundred translucent hairtails.

The temperature of the mine immediately dropped by more than ten degrees.

Despite the double protection of the crystal suit and the spiritual stamp, Li Yao still felt chilled to the bone.

Such formless hairtails seemed to be intelligent. Two deep blue lights beamed out from the holes in front of them and soon locked unto the six Orb Patrollers.

"Do you see that?" Li Yao asked in a low voice, trying to make sure that he was not hallucinating.

"We do. It's not an illusion. They are known as 'Devastating Icy Revenants'."

Yan Yangtian quickly explained, "It is very common to see such devastating souls lingering around ancient battleground, which are the last bit of awareness of killing and destruction of the deceased combined with the environment of the ancient battleground. They are not ghosts, but they are more aggressive than ghosts.

"The underground of Mystic Glacier is full of frigorific cyclones. Part of their energy may leak out and blend with the remaining consciousness of the dead soldiers. After thousands of years, an incredible number of Devastating Icy Revenants have been created!"

Right then, almost a hundred Devastating Icy Revenants had gathered in front of them, painting the underground ground blue.

They were shrieking silently, yet Li Yao could hear the sound of steel pins rubbing the glass.

The Devastating Icy Revenants crouched and charged at Team Blue Bronze like arrows!

"Plan 6 for ghost-type enemies, activate!" Hong Tong roared. He punched two sides of the tunnel. A huge amount of stones fell down, which were then pulled in front of him by manipulation of gravity and formed a loose defense line of stones.

Many Devastating Icy Revenants crashed into the stones and froze the minerals into ice blocks, which cracked into pieces and fell to the ground immediately.

But during the process, a lot of the spiritual energy of the Devastating Icy Revenants had been wasted. The despair and coldness that they brought quickly dispersed.

Ding Lingdang took the opportunity and led the counterattack. Scorching redness burst out from her Crimson

Phantom Battlesuit in the darkness, while her arms turned into two dragons of fire which rushed out and consumed the Devastating Icy Revenants in the front.

The Devastating Icy Revenants screamed in the flames, melting into blue liquid.

A few Devastating Icy Revenants broke through the fire and continued marching forward, only to be blown away by 'Shell' Leng Ziming's explosive bullets which had been carved with flame rune arrays.

In the end, only two Devastating Icy Revenants managed to reach them. Li Yao slashed them into pieces with his Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber effortlessly.

No more than ten minutes later, the tunnel was cleaned up again. There was not a single Devastating Icy Revenant any more.

"It's possible that no expert of the ancient times participated in the battle on this ancient battleground. What the frigorific cyclones swallowed was the fighting will of the common soldiers, so the Devastating Icy Revenants that were created were not very tough.

"If the fighting will of an ancient expert was able to combine with a giant frigorific cyclone deep under the ground, the Devastating Icy Revenant that came into being would be much more frightening!"

Hong Tong was greatly relieved. After cleaning up debris quickly, everybody continued walking.

Beyond the remnants of the car was the main platform of the underground mine.

Quite a lot of ruined crystal suits were lying in a corner. Li Yao checked them up and noticed that there was no weapon on any of the crystal suits. Their structure was also different from that of the common battlesuits. It was quite possible that they were for the miners. They were also extremely feeble after such a long time. Before Li Yao was able to study them more carefully, they'd already broken into sparkling powder.

Li Yao was quite amazed.

'I'm told that in the era of the Star Ocean Imperium, Cultivators brought the technology of crystal suits to an unimaginable altitude, making them everyday tools. Not just the Cultivators, ordinary people also had their own crystal suits.

'The story is very true judging by what I've seen today. Even the miners were equipped with crystal suits. If that was the case, ordinary people would be able to work in environments whose conditions were supposed to be unfavorable for them. The efficiency of resource collection and the utility rate of resources for the entire civilization would be greatly improved.

'No wonder the Star Ocean Imperium could dominate the cosmos for thousands of years as the largest empire in the history of human beings!

'There's still a long way to go for the Star Glory Federation!'

While he was pondering, he heard Ding Lingdang's joyful exclamation in the communication channel.

"I got one!"

She had found a Nine-holed Stone near a Sole-eyed Giant Mushroom.

Nine-hole Stone was a kind of mineral the size of thumb. Each Nine-holed Stones had eight or nine small holes in a weird distribution, which made it look like a tiny face with three to four eyes, nose, mouth, ears, and everything.

When some of the Nine-holed Stones were being collected, grey liquid would flow out of the holes, which would consolidate within five seconds after it met the air. The liquid would be 'Soul Melting Crystal'.

"Excellent. We've discovered a Nine-holed Stone in such a short time. It seems that Lady Luck is smiling on us this trip. Let's rest for ten minutes before we start collecting!"

Hong Tong waved his hand. Li Yao picked out six round barriers from his Cosmos Ring and placed them in a corner of the tunnel which was relatively flat.

He opened the barrier. The air inside was immediately blocked from the outside.

Then, he picked out a sanitizing rune which could purify the air enclosed by the barrier into something clean and breathable. After that, all the team members took off their crystal suits in turn, before they each drank two doses of high nutrition drug.

Although it was not a big deal for Building Foundation Stage Cultivators to eat and drink nothing for several days, it was still best for them to restore their spiritual energy reserve while they could, because they might be engaged in fierce combat at any time.

After a brief rest, Team Blue Bronze explored all the operation platforms, cleaned up four waves of Devastating Icy Revenants, and established six defense rune arrays, before they finally started the collection work.

The team was divided into two squads. Yan Yangtian and Shen Ziming formed a scout squad and went back to the ground where they would explore the area near the entrance of the tunnel.

This was partly to discover more of Mystic Glacier, and partly to ensure the safety of the tunnel.

The rest of the four team members began to search for the Nine-holed Stones and Soul Melting Crystals near the red-streaked Sole-eyed Giant Mushroom.

Although Li Yao was quite new to the collection work in Occult Orbs, he had grasped quite a few secret arts of the Hundred Smelting Clan on the collection and utilization of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures by absorbing Ou Yezi's memory pieces.

Therefore, the speed of Li Yao's collection soared soon after he got familiar with the work, even though he was somewhat clumsy when he first started. By the next morning, he was already collecting faster than his captain.

By the evening of the second day, Li Yao had filled up an entire Cosmos Ring. He had to resort to his personal Cosmos Ring to store the additional trophies. The amount of his own collection was even larger than that of Hong Tong's and Ba Weiqi's combined together.

Ba Weiqi did not buy it at first. He thought of Li Yao as a green hand who had picked up the irrelevant minerals which were close to the Nine-holed Stones.

But later at night, when everybody gathered inside the barrier and sorted out their work, he couldn't help but notice that not only did Li Yao have the most Nine-holed Stones, the purity of his Nine-holed Stones was also the highest. They were barely contaminated, and more than 90% of them were rich with Soul Melting Crystals.

"Vulture, how come your eyes are so sharp when it comes to distinguishing all the best Nine-holed Stones?"

Ba Weiqi scratched his big helmet in confusion, failing to come up with any reason.

"Maybe, it is because I am naturally connected to the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures!"

Li Yao was excited, too. The skills of collecting Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures were only theories to him in the past. He had learnt and improved a lot on this trip to Mystic Glacier by putting them into practice.

Nine-holed Stones and Soul Melting Crystals were not the rarest Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures.

When he met really valuable Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures in the future, the collection skills that he practiced here would prove to be very helpful.

While everyone was talking and laughing, 'Shell' Leng Ziming returned to the tunnel with a gloomy face and a message that extinguished everyone's happiness.

The scout squad had detected activity from the demon clan 324 kilometers away.

Chapter 377: Assault in Firn

Chapter 377: Assault in Firn

The vast, desolate mountain pierced into the sky like a grey saber, and five members of Team Blue Bronze were hiding behind that saber.

Yan Yangtian, on the other hand, had melted into the cold air. She was monitoring the situation in the valley from the very tip of the saber.

From the images she sent back, Li Yao was able to see clearly that there were thirteen demons who were wearing white furs all over their bodies and crimson crystals that were emitting heat in their joints. They were like thirteen polar bears which had learnt to stand up.

It was unlikely that the white furs were their real skin. It was perhaps a biochemical shell that they formed in order to resist the extreme coldness.

Their faces were all exposed to the air. Their facial organs were quite distinguishable, which were quite similar to a human being's, except that there was a cluster of additional flesh on their nose that was probably some sort of mini air-cleaning demon insect.

The more a demon looked similar to a human, the higher they'd evolved and the higher their capability would be. There was a good chance that they were silver-blood demons.

The civilization level of the Blood Demon Sector was on a par with that of the Heaven's Origin Sector. It would consume a lot of demonic energy to teleport demon kings and demon emperors to hundreds of lightyears away, not to mention that the odds of success were very low.

Unless it was necessary, demon kings and demon emperors wouldn't risk being torn apart by the cosmic turbulence in order to be teleported to the Occult Orbs.

The main force exploring the Occult Orbs were all demon generals.

Normally speaking, after Building Foundation Stage Cultivators put on crystal suits, their personal ability would be greatly enhanced. Demon generals of the same level were no match for them.

However, the bodies of the demons were born to be tougher than the human body, which allowed them to overcome the by-effects of the interstellar teleportation more easily.

Therefore, the vehicles of the same level as star shuttles could carry more demons.

As a result, in the Occult Orbs, it was often the case that Cultivators boasted higher combat capability while the demons had an overwhelming advantage in numbers.

It was especially so today.

Yan Zi quickly summarized the intelligence collected so far.

"I discovered a star shuttle of the demon clan 37 kilometers away. It was not large in size. The thirteen demons and the two guards over the ridge there should be all of them.

"According to my observation, the fifteen demons are all no higher than high-level demon generals. There is no demon king. It is reasonable considering the scale of the star shuttle.

"For a star shuttle of that level, it would definitely not be able to accommodate a demon king after stuffing fifteen demon generals inside, unless they are willing to be torn to pieces during their teleportation."

While listening, Li Yao observed the situation himself.

Those white-furred demons had built up a bizarre building inside the valley. At first glance, it seemed to be a high tower. A giant pillar was standing in the middle of the tower; countless crystals were surrounding it and were spreading eccentric demonic energy.

"Vulture, you are a refiner. Can you tell what they're working on? A camp? An altar?" Hong Tong asked in a low voice.

Li Yao narrowed his eyes. Hundreds of similar buildings popped up in his head. He compared each of them with the one in front of his eyes, only to get no match, until in the end, he suddenly realized something and said confidently, "It is neither a camp nor an altar. It is a pile driver, or a drill, if you will."

"A pile driver? Drill?" Hong Tong was somewhat confused.

"Correct."

Li Yao added, "The giant pillar in the middle should be some sort of magical equipment that can drill deep into the ground by vibration and revolution. Generally speaking, it is often used when a mother lode has yet to be detected.

"But according to our files, of the dozens of kinds of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures in Mystic Glacier, Nine-holed Stones and Soul Melting Crystals are the only two that are worthy of collecting. It is the same for the Blood Demon Sector.

"Also, their way of advancement is different from that of Cultivators, and they do not have the concept of Building Foundation at all, which means Soul-melting Crystals are completely useless for them!

"If they are collecting the Nine-holed Stones, the most convenient way would be to make use of the tunnels of the ancient mine thousands of years ago. Re-prospecting and rebuilding a tunnel? It is too difficult. Also, it is highly unnecessary.

"Therefore, my conclusion is that there is something much more precious than Nine-holed Stones and Soul Melting Crystals buried under the valley!"

While Li Yao was talking, the drilling machine in the valley suddenly started glowing. The giant pillar in its middle started revolving rapidly while it dug into the underground.

"What are these scumbags doing? Don't they know that frigorific cyclones are everywhere under the surface of Mystic Glacier? What if some of them are triggered by the drilling?" Hong Tong gnashed his teeth. "This team of demons outnumbers us, but none of them are very strong. Whatever they're doing, let's just catch them unprepared and take them down. Fifteen demons are a lot of contribution points. Their belongings will all be ours. How about it?"

"Let's do it!"

"Kill those lousy bastards! They are just some ten demons. Team Blue Bronze used to slay more than twenty demons without any trouble!"

All the teammates, including Li Yao, were rubbing their hands, too eager to make a move.

But 'Shell' Leng Ziming was more cautious. He said, "Do we need to send the message to the Heaven's Origin Sector and ask another Star Team to reinforce us? Not that I think we can't beat them. I'm just worrying that some of them might be able to run away and cause trouble in the future."

Hong Tong shook his head and said, "No. To send the message back, we will have to return to the Star Shuttle. This place is hundreds of kilometers from our star shuttle. By the time we go there and come back, these scumbags will probably have already dug out what they need from the underground. Besides, we will be more likely to expose ourselves. The risks are too high."

Leng Ziming thought for a while and nodded his head.

"Fair enough. Let's do it."

"Good!"

Hong Tong's voice suddenly turned extremely calm. "Last minute check. Yan Zi will take out the guard on the left; Shell will deal with the one on the right. Dummy will launch mental interference to reduce the alertness of the demons to the minimum.

"Vulture and Lingdang, be prepared. Later, I will establish a channel in front of you where there is zero gravity, so that your speed will be boosted!

"Then, carry out Plan 19. Free fire and kill everything you see!"

"Understood!"

"Understood!"

"Understood!"

The five teammates dispersed silently. A giant animal had opened its bloody mouth, ready to enjoy the delicious food.

The demons in the valley were fully focused on the drilling machine, not having the slightest idea that the wings of death had passed by their heads.

Mental interference from 'Dummy' Ba Weiqi further strengthened their illusion that the mission was about to be completed.

Last ten seconds.

'Shell' Leng Ziming was in position. His telepathic thoughts had locked onto a demon guard 735 meters away who had disguised himself as a rock.

Yan Yangtian had turned utterly invisible. She snuck to the back of the other guard.

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang had checked all their power rune arrays and attack magical equipment. Their spiritual energy was rejoicing, flooding out of the pores on their skin at any time.

"Five, four, three, two, one!"

In one corner of the ridge, a scarlet star blinked. A bullet which had been carved with sophisticated runes all over its body, covering the more than seven hundred meters silently and speedily, pierced through the demonic shield of the guard and into his head without any trouble.

Yan Yangtian appeared out of thin air. The other demon guard was completely suppressed by her spiritual energy, while she severed the spine of the guard with a glittering sharp knife and stabbed his heart with another.

"BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!"

The other four Cultivators all opened fire. More than a hundred flying swords dashed down into the valley.

"Now is the time!" Hong Tong roared and raised his hands up abruptly.

On the mountain path before Li Yao and Ding Lingdang, countless rocks were rolling while producing cracking noises. Some pebbles were even floating in the air.

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang immediately activated their spiritual energy to the maximum. Dazzling brilliance burst out from their crystal suits, while the power rune arrays were all screaming. They stomped on the ground, causing earsplitting thunder to echo through the valley, and rushed down.

On the path where there was zero gravity, their speed was brought up to an unimaginable level. They reached the foot of the mountain before everyone was able to realize what was going on, like two burning blades.

"Pa! Pa! Pa!"

Flowers of blood were blossoming among the demons who were now in utter chaos.

'Shell' Leng Ziming, after taking care of the guard, had aimed at the commander-like demon in the group.

Although the bullet didn't kill him, the crowd was thrown into greater confusion.

A hundred meters to the demons.

For Cultivators, the distance was like the width of a hair.

Li Yao extended his telepathic thoughts and summoned four floating Vulcan Machine Guns which knitted a net of flame and death in front of him.

In the meantime, he unsheathed the Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber. The blood aura piercing out of the saber almost reached nine meters away. He wielded the saber, raising a hurricane of destruction.

The demons in the range of his attack all lifted their weapons to block his saber. But the arm of one of the demon generals was shot by the sniper just now, which made his reaction slower than it should have been. His giant head flew up to the sky, his shocked face frozen in the cold hair.

First blood, secured!

For the other demons, although they were not hit by the body of the saber, the aura of the blood had penetrated through their demonic shield into their body weirdly.

The demons that were relatively weaker immediately started bleeding.

Li Yao's soul was connected to his saber in a mysterious way. He recognized the weakness of the demons easily. Sneering, he charged at the demon whose bleeding was fastest and slashed down at his head!

In the meantime, Ding Lingdang had rushed into the crowd of the demons with her three serpents of fire.

She was already at the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage. With the enhancement of the Crimson Phantom Battlesuit tailor-made for her by Li Yao, her strength was even greater than that of many high-level demon generals. Besides, she had inherited the ancient Cultivation art 'Nano-colored Fire'. Therefore, she was fighting against five demon generals at the same time, single-handedly.

By the time Yan Yangtian, Hong Tong, and Ba Weiqi reached the battleground, Li Yao and Ding Lingdang had slain three demon generals, while another three demon generals were in a state of extreme weakness due to critical blood loss.

As the saying goes, fortune always favors the bold. The victory here was already guaranteed!

Hong Tong did not expect that Li Yao would be so tough in his first battle in the Occult Orbs. He was planning to let Li Yao and Ding Lingdang disrupt the formation of the demons first, so that the three of them could clean up the remaining demons together. As it turned out, Li Yao and Ding Lingdang had almost wiped out all the demons on their own. He was overjoyed and shouted, "Well done, Li Yao! Don't kill all of them! Leave someone alive!"

Silver-blood demons were as intelligent as human beings. The two parties could understand each other. Cultivators of the Heaven's Origin Sector had a lot of secret arts to interrogate the demons. 'Dummy' Ba Weiqi of Team Blue Bronze was an expert in this aspect.

The few demons who were still resisting knew that they were destined to lose. After looking at each other, one of the demons whose fur was more glamourous than others' gritted his teeth and crumbled something round in his hand while brutality was burning in his eyes.

"BOOM!"

The drilling machine suddenly started working dozens of times faster. A weird, teeth-twisting noise broke out in the depths of the underground!

Chapter 378: Deadly Fog

Chapter 378: Deadly Fog

As if thousands of thunder shocks were bursting out under the ground, the earth was shaking violently. The drilling machine that the demon clan built up rose up a little bit at first, before it was pulled down and exploded in cracking noises.

Then, a cluster of high-pressure fog erupted from the hole and broke out in the sky into thousands of pieces of ice.

"Not good. A frigorific cyclone!"

Hong Tong's voice was somewhat hoarse.

They did not know that the demons were drilling in this place just to get a frigorific cyclone out.

They'd witnessed the power of frigorific cyclones with their own eyes the other day. A battleground of more than ten square kilometers could be entirely frozen by one of them. It was extremely tricky for Building Foundation Stage Cultivators such as themselves to cope with them.

The question now was how big the incoming frigorific cyclone would be.

Li Yao's pupils constricted violently as he thought of something. He said in a hurry, "It's not simple as that. It's impossible that the demons came such a long way here just to pick up a cluster of frigorific cyclone!"

Before he was able to finish his sentence, the frigorific cyclone seemed to have woken up from a prolonged dream. It cycled through various forms in the sky, before it twisted and condensed into a cerulean cloud of ice dozens of meters in diameter with bright blue streaks.

Although its size was smaller than they had imagined, its temperature was much lower. Everyone's crystal suit was beeping with warnings even though they were all dozens of meters away, strongly suggesting that they get out of there as soon as possible.

The blue streaks stared at everyone like long, narrow eyes.

They were all grasped by fear.

"It's a Devastating Icy Revenant! One with such a tremendous size!" Yan Yangtian murmured to herself.

Everyone's hearts were frozen like an ice tube.

Devastating Icy Revenants were the last bit of the fighting will of the deceased combined with the energy leaked from the frigorific cyclones that could only come into being after hundreds of years.

Li Yao and his teammates had run into several Devastating Icy Revenants yesterday in the underground tunnels, which were like translucent hairtails. Even the largest of them was only the length of an arm.

But this Devastating Icy Revenant was hundreds of times larger, which seemed to be capable of devouring all of them at the same time.

It appeared that someone strong must've participated in the war on the ancient battleground and left an intense sense of slaughtering at the last moment of their life. By accident, his mental power infiltrated into the main conduit of the frigorific cyclones and, after thousands of years of melting, created such a gargantuan Devastating Icy Revenant.

The demons might've discovered it dozens of years ago. Now that the conditions were just right, they were planning to dig it out and save it for their use. But Team Blue Bronze had appeared out of nowhere and disrupted their plan. Having no other choice, they were forced to release the Devastating Icy Revenant earlier, hoping to die together with their opponents.

All the demons that were still alive were dancing in wild joy upon seeing the appearance of the Devastating Icy Revenant, while they shouted with twisted faces, "Embrace me, Pantheon of Demons!"

"Hooo!"

Like puffing cheeks, the Devastating Icy Revenant expanded suddenly, before it suddenly shrank and blew out a stream of ice that was visible to everyone. The demons, standing in the middle of the stream of ice, were immediately solidified into transparent sculptures in their dancing postures. The limbs of two demons who were moving too quickly dropped down the moment of the solidification. But the fracture was neat and clean like mirror, without the slightest hint of blood.

The natural instinct of Devastating Icy Revenants was to freeze everything they saw, especially the living creatures.

After freezing all the remaining demons, the cerulean cloud of ice drifted to Team Blue Bronze without pause.

"Let me!"

Ding Lingdang stepped forward and crossed her arms. The fire serpents were twisted into a helix and thrown at the Devastating Icy Revenant.

Like boiling oil pouring into snow, cracking noises burst out inside the cloud of ice.

The bright blue streaks twitched violently, as if thousands of eyes which were squinting out of sharp pain.

Then, five blue ice balls were ejected from the Devastating Icy Revenant.

"Watch out!"

Li Yao reacted quickly enough to push Ding Lingdang away. The two of them rolled on the ground, and five thick ice spears were standing in the exact place where Ding Lingdang had been standing.

Had Li Yao not taken action promptly, Ding Lingdang would've definitely been injured by the ice spears, if not frozen by them.

The Devastating Icy Revenant, on the other hand, chewed the fire serpents before freezing them, and continued drifting at Team Blue Bronze.

"Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!"

Four flowers of flame blossomed on the right side of the Devastating Icy Revenant, which were soon turned into frosty flowers.

They were the incendiary bullets that 'Shell' Leng Ziming shot out!

A hissing sound like that of gas leaking out could be heard from the inside of the Devastating Icy Revenant. It seemed to be in great pain. Suddenly, four ice cones darted out to where the bullets had come from, leaving four vague traces of ice in the air.

A moment later, clusters of ice grew out on the ridge where Leng Ziming had been hiding.

"Shell!" Hong Tong shouted.

"I'm fine. The plate armor of the right leg has been damaged with a performance reduction of 52%. Moving on to the second shooting position."

Leng Ziming's voice was as calm as ever.

"Alright, cover us in the second shooting position. Let's fall back!"

The appearance of this super-large Devastating Icy Revenant was beyond everyone's expectations. Now that neither the long-range point of attack nor the melee one had any solution to deal with it, Hong Tong immediately made the call to retreat to the Heaven's Origin Sector as soon as possible.

His manipulation of gravity couldn't be more useful at this moment. He lifted up giant stones and placed them between Team Blue Bronze and the Devastating Icy Revenant, while he lowered the gravity around them to one third of the standard gravity.

All members of Team Blue Bronze covered each other up with furious firepower according to the retreat plans that they'd practiced during training.

Yet, the Devastating Icy Revenant was staying close behind them. Floating in the sky like a cloud, it was astonishingly fast, and since it was so high, it was very easy to locate their route.

Now and then, it would spit out clusters of high-pressure ice fog like arrows so powerful that as soon as they touched one corner of the plate armor, the whole part of the plate armor would immediately be frozen and lose all functionality.

Everyone activated their power rune arrays and sprinted across the ice-covered world. After taking several turns through ridges and caves, they finally managed to get rid of the Devastating Icy Revenant.

"Let's go back to the star shuttle!" Hong Tong said hurriedly. Sweat was appearing on their forehead, which was instantly frozen into ice drops. The spiritual stamps of flame on their bodies were barely of any use now.

However, when they finally reached the valley where their star shuttle was hidden and were ready to board it, an arrow of ice darted close from the sky and froze the star shuttle into a giant ice block!

The Devastating Icy Revenant that they thought they'd escaped from was eyeing them in the sky among other ordinary clouds.

Everyone's faces were drawn and couldn't look more awful.

To shatter the void in such a star shuttle would be like committing suicide; the components of the star shuttle were, most likely, seriously damaged by the frost and their hardiness greatly undermined. And that was assuming the star shuttle could be unfrozen at all.

Their only hope was ruined. There was no help in Mystic Glacier that they could count on to cope with the Devastating Icy Revenant.

Even if the Heaven's Origin Sector sent out a second star shuttle, the Devastating Icy Revenant could destroy it easily.

There was but silence in the communication channel, as if it had been frozen by the Devastating Icy Revenant, too.

Shortly after, Li Yao's voice struggled in the channel, like flickering embers in the darkest cave.

"Let's go back!

"The demon generals that we encountered just now were weaker than us. They should be scared of the Devastating Icy Revenant as much as we are. It's not like they were trying to kill themselves here.

"If they knew that such a strong Devastating Icy Revenant was hiding underground and were planning to release it, they were definitely carrying something that could suppress it!

"But since they ran into us, they never had the opportunity to use it!"

As if awoken from their dreams, everyone came back to themselves. Hong Tong gritted his teeth and said, "Li Yao, Lingdang, you two go back and look for that something. The four of us will try to lure the Devastating Icy Revenant away. But make it fast. The Devastating Icy Revenant seems to be absorbing the coldness in Mystic Glacier and getting larger and larger. We won't be able to hold it for long!"

"Understood!"

The six members of Team Blue Bronze rushed for a while, before they suddenly split into two squads and ran off in different directions.

The Devastating Icy Revenant hesitated for a moment, then chased after the squad which had more people as they expected.

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang rushed back to the battleground hundreds of kilometers away as quickly as possible without bothering about their consumption of spiritual energy.

Glancing around, Li Yao immediately discovered the corpse of the demon in glamourous clothes. He kicked it into pieces of ice.

As he expected, there was a piece of magical equipment the shape of a sea snail in the middle of the ice.

Since the magical equipment was supposed to be used to suppress the Devastating Icy Revenant, it was quite possible that it was cold-proof. Therefore, Li Yao had decided to find it out in the simplest way.

However…

Li Yao had never seen such a kind of magical equipment before; he had no idea how to use it at all.

In the communication channel, Hong Tong and his other teammates were breathing heavily. Ba Weiqi was even screaming crazily. Every sign indicated that they wouldn't be able to hold out for long.

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao took out the maintenance glove that Ding Lingdang had given him. He crumbled it in his palm. Silver liquid instantly flowed out from the gaps of the finger of the crystal suit and formed a silver glove enveloping his hand, while dozens of disassembling and maintaining tools appeared in his fingertips.

Li Yao's right hand turned into a streak of silver and dismantled the sea-snail-shaped magical equipment into the most fundamental components.

Demon Beast Empire was based on the ancient Cultivation world. Much of its technology and secret arts were similar to those of the ancient times.

Therefore, the methods through which the demon clan refined magical equipment and demonic equipment were greatly influenced by the ancient refining arts which Li Yao was quite familiar with.

Li Yao's eyes were shaking back and forth dozens of times per second, as he was identifying the components of this particular magical equipment while picturing the design and spiritual energy flowchart in his brain.

"So, this is the case. The key component of this magical equipment is a Cosmos Ring that was made to suppress unrested souls. It has undergone major modifications so that it is functional in the frigid temperature of less than minus two hundred degrees. The special spiral vibration that it triggers can raise a massive attraction force for souls and icy fog…

"This magical equipment can only be activated by the blood of silver-blood demons. But it doesn't matter. I can totally design a new triggering component and cut it in to activate the magical equipment by force!"

Li Yao was fascinated by the idea, his eyes shining.

"Vulture, we can't delay it any longer. Have you found anything that can tame it?" Hong Tong bellowed exhaustedly.

"I have."

Li Yao licked his lips and crossed his fingers. Every joint in his hand was shivering rapidly, as he declared confidently, "Get it here. I need… 4 minutes and 38 seconds!"

Chapter 379: Harvest

Chapter 379: Harvest

When Hong Tong and the other three teammates drew the Devastating Icy Revenant to the camp of the demons in their broken crystal suits, Li Yao was still waving his hand up and down as quickly as lightning.

The general components that he had brought with him were polished, reshaped, and modified, before they were piled on the sea-snail-shaped magical equipment until it was entirely enclosed.

Although the Devastating Icy Revenant was rampaging overhead, Li Yao didn't have time to blink because his full attention was focused on the complicated crystal wires and rune arrays.

The triggering component was not hard to assemble per se. The real tricky part was to deceive the authorization system of the magical equipment to fool it into thinking that this was a normal activation.

Dazzling brilliance was beaming out from Li Yao's eyes, while he mumbled to himself, "4 minutes and 17 seconds, 4 minutes and 18 seconds, 4 minutes and 19 seconds..."

Walls made of rocks rose up in front of Hong Tong one after another, only to be ripped apart by the Devastating Icy Revenant again and again.

The Devastating Icy Revenant turned into thousands of torrents of ice flowing through the holes and regathered in the air with hisses, as if it were sneering.

"CRACK!"

The plate armor on Hong Tong's shoulder was hit by the ice arrow, which immediately turned into a blue tube. As he continued moving his arm, the plate armor gradually broke up, exposing his shoulder to the coldness of below minus two hundred degrees. Despite the double protection of the mustard suit and the spiritual stamps, his movements still turned extremely rigid.

His other three teammates were in much worse states than himself. Their crystal suits were so crappy that they seemed as if they could break up at any point. There was not any part on them that was intact.

"Li Yao, we can't take it any longer!" Hong Tong roared.

"Nine seconds to go. Give it to me."

Li Yao's voice was calmer than ever, with a confidence of victory.

Hong Tong gnashed his teeth.

"Are you sure?"

"Trust me!" Li Yao responded decisively.

Hong Tong was dazed for a moment. Then he roared and led his other three teammates past Li Yao and Ding Lingdang, before they all fell to the ground because their spiritual energy had run out.

In the center of the Devastating Icy Revenant, shrieks were echoing like growling wind. All the bright blue streaks were suddenly more brilliant than ever, as it swept at Li Yao.

"Three... Two... One..."

Li Yao ignored it. He even somehow slowed down his movements as he inserted a crystal chip carved with triggering rune arrays into the sea-snail-shaped magical equipment gently and pressed it.

"Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum!"

The sea-snail-shaped magical equipment immediately started shinning and vibrating. A cluster of grey mist was released and charged at the Devastating Icy Revenant.

The Devastating Icy Revenant which was domineering a moment ago seemed to have felt that a predator was coming. It wriggled and hissed while it tried to run away, only to be caught up by the grey mist and melted with it.

Corrupted by the grey mist, the Devastating Icy Revenant turned into a giant swirl revolving in the sky from inward to outward. One stream of ice after another was thrown out from the swirl and absorbed by the sea-snail-shaped magical equipment.

In less than three minutes, the ice cloud—dozens of meters in diameter—was entirely swallowed by the sea-snail-shaped magical equipment.

In the meantime, the shell of the sea-snail-shaped magical equipment turned into deep blue, with bright blue streaks here and there, which was quite beautiful.

At this moment, Li Yao was finally relieved. He sat on the ground and exhaled a long breath.

The six Orb Patrollers of Team Blue Bronze sat on the grey, barren, desolate land for a long time in silence, until someone burst into laughter in the communication channel. A few seconds later, all of them lost control and started laughing crazily.

…

A day later, in the launch base of Occult Orbs Fellowship in the Heaven's Origin Sector.

"Chi!"

A star shuttle, which had been frozen to the color of grey-white and was emitting icy steam, stopped at the end of the rail precisely. The six members of Team Blue Bronze crawled out of it on all fours.

The first thing Li Yao did was open up his helmet and take a deep breath of the fresh and warm air of the Heaven's Origin Sector.

"Home sweet home, right?" Hong Tong asked with a smile.

"Indeed." Li Yao said with quite complicated feelings.

He was born with foreign memories from a different time and space, which made him less troubled by nostalgia than other children were.

However, after this trip to Mystic Glacier, he had truly come to understand the preciousness of the Heaven's Origin Sector.

Hometown…

Yes. There might be thousands of worlds in the boundless sea of stars, but only one of them was his hometown: the Heaven's Origin Sector!

He wouldn't let his hometown ruined by the demon beasts at any cost!

Because of the fierce battles that they were engaged in in Mystic Glacier, Team Blue Bronze underwent thorough physical examinations to ensure that no sequela remained. It was not until more than half a day later that they finally got everything done and entered the base where they turned in the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and had their contribution points balanced.

They met several 'old friends' by accident in the base, the members from Team Lingering Wind.

Guo Yu of Team Lingering Wind was seriously wounded by Li Yao in the duel more than one month ago. It had taken him more than twenty days before he was half recovered.

They had just completed an exploration mission, too. But they were much luckier than Team Blue Bronze. They had not been harassed by the demon clan and successfully collected a lot of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures without much trouble.

"This time, not only did we gather a huge amount of Blood Swallow Stones, we also collected a special plant, Moon Tear Flower, not to mention, we explored more than a half of Mysterious Moon's map. I believe we will earn more than twenty thousand contribution points, won't we?"

"Haha. The result is out. 27,520 contribution points! Our rank has risen by two!"

Guo Yu stared at Li Yao who was not far away from him and scoffed, "After trading the contribution points for new magical equipment and secret arts, the capability of Team Linger Wind will definitely reach a whole new level and break into the top 50 of the Rank of Stars in no time!

"As for Team Blue Bronze, I'm told that they encountered major chaos during their mission to Mystic Glacier. They even wasted a star shuttle, which means a huge reduction of contribution points!"

"Ha. Newbies are newbies anyway. However remarkable they are in the Heaven's Origin Sector, they will reveal what they really are the moment they set foot on an Occult Orb. They are totally useless garbage that will only drag the entire team down!"

"Just wait for it, Vulture Li Yao. I will challenge you to a duel soon!"

Yet, Li Yao and his teammates completely ignored Guo Yu's resentment. They left in a hurry after balancing their contribution points in the mainframe crystal processor.

Guo Yu was gritting his teeth, but his shoulder was pressed by the captain of Team Lingering Wind.

The captain did not seem to be in a good mood. He said in a low voice, "Guo Yu, don't be rash. Members of Team Blue Bronze have beaten you twice in duels, which is a disgrace for Team Lingering Wind, too. We are definitely going to set everything straight! Just wait until we get a few more train sessions in the Occult Orbs, then I will challenge Team Blue Bronze in the name of Team Lingering Wind!"

"Captain, are you sure?" Guo Yu was overjoyed.

Duels between teams were more formal than personal duels. They were more intense, too.

"Of course! Team Blue Bronze has wounded you twice. We've wasted months of times because of not being able to explore the Occult Orbs. Our losses are astronomical. If we don't fight back, we will always be the biggest joke among the Children of Occult Orbs!" The captain of Team Lingering Wind said toughly. Then he raised his eyebrow, "Strange. Why are so many people crowding at the mainframe crystal processor? Is something going on?"

Members of Team Lingering Wind were confused. They moved closer and noticed that everybody was talking and pointing at the Rank of Stars.

Glancing at it, the countenance of everyone in Team Lingering Wind changed.

"What? Team Blue Bronze earned more than 114 thousand contribution points for the exploration of Mystic Ice? That is five times ours!"

"How can that be?"

"Didn't they wreck a star shuttle? Almost ten thousand contributions are supposed to be deducted!"

"Mystic Ice is just a mining base. There shouldn't have been any treasure that is of significant value in that place. What on earth did they find that is worth so many contribution points?"

"Their rank has soared by more than twenty. They are the 46th now!"

The members of Team Lingering Wind were all dumbfounded. They didn't have the vaguest clue as to how Team Blue Bronze was able to earn more than a hundred thousand contribution points.

Even the super teams ranking in the top 10 were not always capable of getting such a huge amount of contribution points for one mission. It was truly a great fortune!

Some of the bystanders had talked with Team Blue Bronze just now. They were whispering to each other, "Did you know that Li Yao was the MVP for the more than a hundred thousand contribution points?"

"Vulture Li Yao will be able to get thousands of contribution points after his first official visit to the Occult Orbs. His own income will be even more than many teams'! He's a rich guy now!"

"Team Blue Bronze is indeed unbelievably lucky! A few months ago, Queen of Fire Ding Lingdang joined the team. A few months later, through Ding Lingdang, an even stronger new guy, Li Yao, was recruited, too!"

"Judging from the trend, it won't be long before Team Blue Bronze returns to its peak state, just like when its former captain Yin Qingfeng was still alive, and reclaims its title as a super team by breaking into the top 10 of the Rank of Stars!"

Members of Team Lingering Wind retreated out of the crowd silently.

According to the tradition of the star teams, contribution points would be evenly distributed among the members. But if one of the members played an irreplaceable role for the success of the mission and reversed the situation single-handedly, the member would be credited as 'MVP' and would get additional contribution points.

Team Lingering Wind had been collecting Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures for days and nights in Mysterious Moon and also picked up a special plant by luck, all of which together only amounted to some twenty thousand contribution points.

How was it possible that Vulture Li Yao, an utter green hand, who had never been to an Occult Orb before, could earn almost fifty thousand contributions by himself, which was even more than the revenue of their entire team?

How did he accomplish it?

Guo Yu was scratching his head so hard that he was almost bleeding.

"Well, Guo Yu…"

The captain of Team Lingering Wind was dazed for a long time, before he finally opened his mouth hesitantly. "About you going to challenge Li Yao for a duel, and the match between Team Lingering Wind and Team Blue Bronze…"

"What about them, captain?" Guo Yu was about to cry.

"Let's just not rush into anything, shall we?"

The captain took a long breath and, containing his envy, made the most sensible choice.

Chapter 380: Center of Attention

Chapter 380: Center of Attention

While Team Lingering Wind was caught in their misery, Team Blue Bronze was rejoicing in their base on the top floor of the luxury hotel.

"Li Yao, had you not cracked the magical equipment left by the demons at the critical moment on our trip to Mystic Glacier, I'm afraid we would've all been buried under that planet's snow. You saved all our lives!" Hong Tong said cheerfully.

The other three members, except Ding Lingdang, had also changed their attitude toward Li Yao.

When they were training together, they had learnt of Li Yao's capability. However, since he was a newcomer, they had always feared that he might be a burden to the team in the Occult Orbs.

They'd even prepared quite a few contingency plans in case something went wrong with Li Yao.

As it turned out, not only was Li Yao tough enough to send the demons into chaos with Ding Lingdang, he was also courageous enough to unlock the magical equipment that the demons left in such a short time despite the threat of the Devastating Icy Revenant.

After going through life and death together, Team Blue Bronze had truly become united. The mutual trust among teammates was much stronger than before.

"Li Yao, you played a decisive role on the trip to Mystic Glacier. Therefore, when I was balancing the contribution points, I listed you as the MVP. According to tradition, you will get one third of the contribution points we earned, and the rest of us will divide the remaining contribution points evenly. You can take a look at your account now. There should be 37,000 contributions already," Captain Hong Tong announced.

Their contribution points did not just come from the Nine-holed Stones and the Soul Melting Crystals that they collected but had more to do with the Devastating Icy Revenant as well as the magical equipment that tamed it.

According to the rules of Occult Orbs Fellowship, since the demon clan summoned the Devastating Icy Revenant while they were alive, it was considered to be the property of the demon clan.

Then, Team Blue Bronze had taken over the Devastating Icy Revenant from the demons, which meant that it was their trophy and belonged to them without having to be shared with Occult Orbs Fellowship.

The target of such a rule was to encourage the Star Teams to attack the demon squad actively.

Otherwise, everyone would only be willing to carry out the collection missions which were easy and safe instead of missions that involved fighting and killing. That would go against the core purpose of Occult Orbs Fellowship.

Since it was a trophy, Team Blue Bronze could've kept the Devastating Icy Revenant and the magical equipment for themselves.

However, after discussion, they had realized that the Devastating Icy Revenant was too dangerous and out of their control. Once it was released, it would attack everything it met indiscriminately.

Besides, no one in Team Blue Bronze was good at controlling spiritual energy of the ice class. It was hardly likely that the power of the Devastating Icy Revenant would be best utilized with them.

Therefore, it was decided that it would be a better choice to sell them to Occult Orbs Fellowship for contribution points which could be used to purchase more practical magical equipment and Cultivation arts for the preparation of the big event in several months' time.

As a result, the Devastating Icy Revenant and the corresponding magical equipment was traded for more than a hundred thousand contribution points. Together with the reward of the Nine-hold Stones and the Soul Melting Crystals, and deducting the loss of a star shuttle, they earned about 110 thousand contribution points.

It was quite a large fortune for them. Even during the time when their former captain Yin Qingfeng had still been alive, such a large number of contribution points were still a remarkable achievement.

Li Yao scratched his head and said, somewhat embarrassed, "Captain, I think we should divide our revenue evenly. Everybody tried their best to make sure all of us survived the disaster. I wouldn't have been able to take the Devastating Icy Revenant down if I had been alone."

Li Yao meant what he said.

After the trip of Mystic Glacier, the importance of teamwork was clearer to him than ever before.

Scout, sniper, defense, attack, mental interference… Every Orb Patroller was irreplaceable for the mission to be completed.

If he had been there by himself, he would've barely been able to collect any resources, if he survived at all.

Hong Tong waved his hand and said frankly, "No need to hesitate. This is the tradition of Team Blue Bronze. We've all agreed to this decision.

"Besides, we all have our savings, more or less. But you've already run out of contribution points since you are a newcomer. With the thirty thousand contribution points, you will be able to purchase things that you need for your Cultivation, which will be of great help for the team and our future missions, too!"

Pausing for a moment, he rubbed his hands in excitement. "I didn't expect you to be so capable. It appears that we can adjust our plan and apply for missions that are more dangerous but reward more contribution points!"

Li Yao thought for a moment and realized that it did make sense. Whatever remarkable performance he had offered, he was still at the beginning level of the Building Foundation Stage, the lowest in the team, after all. It would be for the best if he could improve his strength fast in case he became a burden for the team.

Making up his mind, he nodded his head and said unhesitatingly, "Alright. I will try to raise my Cultivation as soon as I can, so that Team Blue Bronze can be stronger and return to the top 10 of the Star of Ranks sooner!"

Li Yao was grinning while he was talking.

That was more than thirty thousand contribution points! It was a huge fortune for anybody. Many kinds of powerful magical equipment that he had been dreaming about were all affordable to him right now.

"Great."

Hong Tong continued, "Do you have anything that you want to buy yet? Do you need our advice?"

Li Yao licked his lips and nodded with a smile.

"There are indeed a few kinds of magical equipment that I'm interested in. Firstly, 'Seven Star Fire Dragon Grenade', which is a kind of powerful explosive magical equipment from the Star Ocean Imperium. Once it was triggered, it could fly to almost a thousand meters away and turn into seven explosive spots. In each spot, dragon-shaped fire will burst out, which are powerful enough to directly burn the souls of the demons into ashes!

"Secondly, 'Frigid Prison Grenade', another kind of explosive magical equipment. Similar to the Devastating Icy Revenant that we met, it will freeze almost a hundred square meters to below minus two hundred degrees while releasing a weird wind that can seal the internal organs of the demons directly!

"Thirdly, 'Illusive Venomous Grenade', still another kind of explosive magical equipment which can launch attack to the brain of Cultivators and demons. After they explode, the enemy will be put in the worst nightmare. However solid the soul of the enemy is, they will lose their consciousness briefly!"

"Fourth..."

Li Yao talked about almost ten different kinds of explosive magical equipment in a row, all of which had been retrieved from the Occult Orbs and were still too advanced for the Heaven's Origin Sector to provide.

Everyone was stunned. 'Dummy' Ba Weiqi muttered to himself, "Well well well. If we can gather enough of them, our firepower will be multiple times greater than it is right now. We might be even to invade the Blood Demon Sector!"

Li Yao smiled and said, "I'm not just buying the magical equipment because I want to use them. I'm more interested in dismantling them, study their design and structure, and see if there is any possibility for us to replicate them or mass-produce them.

"If the magical equipment inherited from the Star Ocean Imperium can be manufactured, the power of the federal army will be greatly improved!"

Everyone's faces turned even more pale, while they were eyeing Li Yao as if he was a lunatic. Ba Weiqi clicked his tongue and said, "You dare to disassemble and study the explosive magical equipment from the Star Ocean Imperium? That's crazy enough! But please don't do it in our home here. Our contribution points won't suffice if you blow this building up!"

Everybody laughed.

Hong Tong continued, "Li Yao, whatever you need to buy, just buy it. I can help you contact the refining workshop that has the most advanced facilities here. But I suggest you spare some contribution points. In a few days, a 'secret treasure exchange' will be held. This time, we've got plenty of contribution points in our pockets. We can go there and take a tour!"

"Secret treasure exchange?"

Li Yao's curiosity was immediately aroused. As a refiner, he wouldn't miss the opportunity to visit the largest secret treasure exchange in the federation for the world.

…

Two days later, in the secret treasure exchange held in the biggest convention center in Empyreal Star City.

Almost all the Orb Patrollers who were not out on missions had gathered in this place, partly to choose items that fit their need, and partly to get to know more people, make more friends, and strike more deals with potential partners.

"It's Team Blue Bronze!"

"I'm told that they've made a fortune! They earned 110 thousand contribution points out of a simple exploration and collection mission."

"I've seen the video clips. The new Team Blue Bronze had complementary personnel and professional tactics. They took down the demon squad made of more than ten demons without any trouble. Very impressive!"

"Indeed. Inferno Witch Ding Lingdang and Vulture Li Yao are only in their twenties, but they do not look like newcomers at all. Their attacks are brutal, and they are very confident!"

"True that. Vulture Li Yao dismantled and cracked a piece of magical equipment from the demon clan in less than five minutes!"

"This was the first time that they've ever cooperated, and they've already made such remarkable achievements. It seems that Team Blue Bronze is very likely to return to the top ten of the Rank of Stars!"

As the only team exclusively made of outside-world Orb Patrollers that had been in the top 5 of the Rank of Stars, Team Blue Bronze had always been paid close attention to by many teams.

Li Yao was not someone who liked to keep a low profile, either. No sooner had he entered Empyreal Star City than he beat Guo Yu up terribly, which was quite shocking news at the time and made him the focus of public attention.

Ding Lingdang and he were both under twenty-five. Although they were not the strongest of all the Orb Patrollers right now, their potentials were definitely among the top.

Many well-informed Orb Patrollers came close and greeted Team Blue Bronze, trying to become acquainted with them.

Many missions in the exploration of the Occult Orbs required several Star Teams to work together. A powerful and dependable team was definitely worth befriending.

Even the Star Teams made of Children of Occult Orbs were also eyeing them in amazement.

In the Occult Orbs, capability was everything. Children of Occult Orbs worshipped the strong more than common Cultivators did.

The accomplishments and capability of Team Blue Bronze had been appreciated by them, if not somewhat with respect.

Chapter 381: Eggs and Fossils

Chapter 381: Eggs and Fossils

As a refiner, Li Yao paid great attention to other Orb Patrollers, too, because helping them maintain or modify magical equipment could earn him a lot of contribution points without any risk.

His feat in cracking a piece of magical equipment from the demon race in Mystic Glacier in a very short time had become known by a lot of people. If he behaved friendlily right now, he expected that many people would seek out his service very soon.

Many stronger refiners could call on a lot of Cultivators when they needed to. Most of the time, their friendship originated from the simple relationship of a refiner and a customer.

Hong Tong and his other teammates found a few old acquaintances and started chitchatting enthusiastically, planning to work with several other Star Teams for some difficult missions that demanded cooperation.

Soon, the lights in the hall dimmed. Many ivory, translucent crystals appeared out of thin air, emitting mild brightness that illuminated the room like a warm spring morning but was not in the least dazzling.

Almost a hundred booths rose up from the ground of the hall.

As for the plants, minerals, fossils, and remnants of magical equipment which were too large to be showed in a booth, they were displayed in front of everyone via holograms. Anyone interested in them could go to the warehouse below the convention center to study them more closely.

Ba Weiqi jabbed Li Yao with his elbow and said, smiling, "What do you think? A real eye-opener, isn't it?"

"It truly is; it really is incredible."

Li Yao's eyes were glowing, like those of a wolf which had been offered with a fat, roasted lamb after having nothing to eat for three days. He was so excited that he almost forgot where he was.

All the showpieces in the secret treasure exchange of Empyreal Star City were treasures that Star Teams had retrieved from the Occult Orbs. Not only was the scale of the secret treasure exchange ten times large than what Li Yao experienced in Serpent City, the exhibited items were also significantly more elegant.

Although Li Yao failed to recognize the background and attributes of most secret treasures, he was still deeply impressed by the intense spiritual waves that they released which swept over him like surging tides.

Any refiner would find it hard to control themselves in such a soul-stirring place.

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao started to study each item with his eyes wide open.

99% of the secret treasures were unknown to him, but the 1% that he had recognized were all invaluable and once-in-a-hundred-years rare treasures in the Heaven's Origin Sector.

'This is the egg of a 'Gold Spirit Ice Boa' infiltrated by a 'Phantom Thread Venomous Bee' which has injected its own eggs into the host. Then, the egg of 'Gold Spirit Ice Boa' provides nutrition for them. When it breaks out of the shell, it will become a 'Gold Thread Venomous Bee' that has attributes of both spiritual beasts. It is the king of insect-type spiritual beasts!

'Although the egg is lifeless after being buried in the underground for almost a thousand years, there is still a 1% likelihood that the Gold Thread Venomous Bee could be revived after thorough treatment. Even if the endeavor proves to be in vain, I can still retrieve more than ten constituents from the egg for other magical equipment. Part of the power of 'Gold Thread Venomous Bee' can be carried out, too!

'I can even refine a batch of beast puppets in the form of bees with this egg. They will be perfect for scouting and attacking lone soldiers!'

Li Yao's heart was pounding.

Triggering the vitality of this strange egg was not something that he was good at. But it was his specialty to get the useful constituents out of the egg as ingredients to refine other pieces of magical equipment.

On the second floor of the Heavenly Refining Tower, there were almost twenty books on the subject of refining magical equipment with the eggs and bones of spiritual beasts.

Looking at the price tag, Li Yao almost laughed out aloud. Such a precious secret treasure was only selling at 800 contribution points!

It was possible that except himself who had seen the Gold Spirit Ice Boa Egg in the 'Gallery of the World' on the second floor of the Heavenly Refining Tower, other people might know nothing about the item at all. Even if they knew a thing or two about its usage, they had no idea how to get the useful constituents out. That was why it had been set at such a low price.

This was the charm of the secret treasure exchange.

In this place, knowledge was money!

In the eyes of those who were ignorant, these items were garbage; in the eyes of those who were informed, they were the real treasures!

Cultivators usually did not like other people idling around when they were studying Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. Therefore, every booth was surrounded by several crystal processors whose light beams hid the excavation process and the preliminary conclusion of the experts.

If they saw eye to eye with the item, they could place an order on the crystal processors directly.

Li Yao typed on the virtual rune keyboards and search for relevant information. This strange egg was discovered in an Occult Orb named 'Endless Frost'.

Endless Frost was home to Gold Spirit Ice Boas. The purpose of the mission had been to hunt down a Gold Spirit Ice Boa King. The team discovered the strange egg accidentally after they finished the hunting.

Li Yao's judgement was further supported.

He stopped hesitating and bought it instantly. As the contribution points in his account were deducted, a string of words appeared on the strange egg: Li Yao, Team Blue Bronze.

Then, the booth containing the strange egg gradually sank to the underground.

After the secret treasure exchange was over, all the things that he bought would be packed up together. There was no need to take it with him right now.

After buying a bargain such as the egg of the Gold Spirit Ice Boa, which was far beyond his expectations, Li Yao was greatly satisfied. He strolled in the hall, only to notice that Ding Lingdang was standing in front of a giant slate, tempted and hesitating.

A few other Cultivators were also pointing at the slate.

Li Yao stepped close to look at it more carefully. The slate was more than ten meters both in length and width. It was made up by more than ten smaller slates, which were full of bumps and hollows. Countless traces were interweaving on them.

Li Yao squinted. From the bottom of the hollows, he saw uneven stripes that looked like two extremely long bones, together with dozens of paw marks.

It was a fossil of two dragons.

The two dragons tangled each other tightly. After millions of years of time, their flesh and blood had turned into dust. The only things remaining were the scattered bones, which were still releasing an intimidating scent nonetheless.

Closing his eyes, Li Yao seemed to be able to see two dragons fighting each other in a prehistoric world where volcanoes were erupting and land was collapsing.

"Hiss!"

While Li Yao was dwelling in it, one of the dragons suddenly dashed at him and slapped his forehead, which chilled him and forced him to take a step back. Li Yao didn't come back to himself after he retreated from the hallucination for a long time.

What tremendous mental power! What a marvelous fossil!

The two dragons were dozens of meters long. This fossil was only part of their bodies. If the fossil of their entire bodies was gathered together, the mental power contained within would be enough to slay a low-level Cultivator directly.

"Do you want to buy the fossil?"

Li Yao was somewhat astonished. Ding Lingdang was the purest battle-type Cultivator. Since when had she started studying fossils?

"Yes."

Ding Lingdang's passionate eyes were fully focused on the fossil, unable to be moved to anywhere else at all. She mumbled to herself, "I don't know what's happening, but the moment I got here, my whole self was attracted to the fossil, and I pictured two fighting dragons which were shaking the sky and the earth. I felt enlightened!

"You know that I'm practicing 'Nona-colored Fire' as my main Cultivation art right now. But when my spiritual energy bursts out, it is always in the form of dragons! If I can buy the fossil and feel the spirit and soul of the ancient beasts restrained in it, it will be useful for me when condensing my spiritual energy, which will definitely improve my combat ability!"

"That's why you've been standing here."

Li Yao nodded his head. Feeling the spirit and soul of the deceased beasts through fossils was an advanced art in Cultivation. He didn't know that Ding Lingdang had grasped such an incredible skill after only several months of training.

"Then what are you waiting for? If you can't walk away from the fossil, it means you are connected to it. Just buy it already!"

Ding Lingdang was somewhat embarrassed. She grimaced and said in a low voice, "But it is too expensive."

Different from the egg of Gold Spirit Ice Boa that Li Yao picked up just now, the fossil was quite easy to see through. Anybody who was not blind could tell that it was a dragon-type fossil which boasted quite a long history, even if they couldn't feel the calling from it. Therefore, it was much costlier, with a price of nine thousand contribution points.

Although Ding Lingdang joined Occult Orbs Fellowship a few months earlier than Li Yao, it was quite possible that she did not have too many points saved, since she had never been thrifty. After the trip to Mystic Glacier, she only got some ten thousand contribution points. Naturally, she was hesitating to pour all of them into this one fossil.

Li Yao couldn't help but smile,

"Money is no problem. I'm here for you. Just buy it if you want it. There are quite a lot of dragon bones inside the fossil. After the demeanor of the dragons is fully appreciated by you, I can dig them out as materials for refining. Killing two birds with one stone. It's a good bargain!"

Shopping was a girl's natural instinct. Hearing Li Yao's gallant declaration, Ding Lingdang was eyeing Li Yao in a much gentler way, forgetting briefly that she was a human-shaped tyrannosaur.

The moment they bought the dragon fossil, a tall, thin, gloomy middle-aged man reached the booth hurriedly, only to witness the dragon fossil sinking down. He was dazed and smiled bitterly.

After chitchatting for a while, they learnt that the man was an Elder from 'Divine Serpent Hall', a famous combat sect in the southwest of the federation.

Many Cultivation arts of Divine Serpent Hall required the trainees to feel the actions of real-life dragons. Therefore, when he was told that there was such a dragon fossil to be exhibited in the secret treasure exchange, he came as fast as possible. Yet, he was still one step late.

Ding Lingdang was a maniac in martial arts. Her spiritual energy was always in the form of dragons. She had been longing to make friends with Divine Serpent Hall, yet there had never been an opportunity.

After talking with the Elder of Divine Serpent Hall, the two parties reached a deal to the satisfaction of both of them.

Ding Lingdang would take out the dragon fossil for the disciples of Divine Serpent Hall to appreciate and study for three days every month.

In exchange, Divine Serpent Hall would provide several of their sect's top Cultivation arts for Ding Lingdang.

This was a common way for Cultivators to make friends and get to know more people.

Chapter 382: Top of the Rank of Stars!

Chapter 382: Top of the Rank of Stars!

Awed by the dragon fossil, Li Yao was of a mind to look for an eagle fossil to help with his training, since his spiritual energy had always been in the form of an eagle when it was condensed.

However, since eagles were always flying in the sky, there were hardly any fossils that were made of eagles. Besides, Li Yao had not reached the level where he could gain a lot just by observing a fossil. Taking a gander for a while, he found nothing and had to give up the thought temporarily.

Yet, an inconspicuous booth at a corner of the all attracted his attention, which was displaying the magical equipment scraps retrieved from the Occult Orbs. Most of them were chainswords, battle sabers, and melee magical equipment that were well damaged.

Those melee weapons were on the verge of destruction because of the fierce battles. Now, after thousands of years of time, their basic structure was all crumbling. They were just piles of garbage that had no value whatsoever either in studying or replicating.

If possible, no Orb Patroller would ever bring such rubbish back to the Heaven's Origin Sector.

However, sometimes they were terribly unlucky and found absolutely nothing useful in the Occult Orb where they were working, and, unwilling to go home empty-handed, they had to pack up some remnants of magical equipment and bring them back, no matter how discontent they were.

The scraps were uninteresting both in Empyreal Star City and in the outside world. Few people were willing to purchase them. After a long time of accumulation, they'd been piled up into a hill. What Li Yao saw was just the tip of the iceberg. There were a lot more in the underground warehouse.

Li Yao thought of something and was fascinated by the idea.

The scraps were too ruined to be repaired even by him.

However, by the fractures on the scraps, it was possible to infer the causes of the damages, just like autopsies.

Back in the Battle of Veteran Tarn City, Li Yao had comprehended quite a number of mysteries about the saber art by maintaining the broken magical equipment on the battleground.

The damage on the scraps was all left thousands of years ago. If he could perceive a hint of the saber art at that time, it would be a great benefit!

Looking at the price tag, Li Yao discovered that the contribution points required for the scraps were few to none. They were almost being sold for free.

Seeing this, Li Yao decided to take the lift down to the underground warehouse.

All the scraps of the magical equipment were piled up in a corner of the warehouse. A scent of death, which almost felt like it was coming from a living thing, was being released nonstop, twisting at Li Yao's internal organs like thousands of sharp, bloody knives.

Li Yao licked his lips and, squatting in front of the hill, started picking.

His main Cultivation art was the saber art. Therefore, he mainly singled out the scraps that seemed to have been broken by battle sabers.

It was not an easy task, but since Li Yao had always been crazy about magical equipment, he didn't find it too tedious. After more than two hours of searching, he dug out nine scraps that were relatively intact. It was impossible to tell what they had originally been, but there were slights traces of sabers on each of them.

Li Yao vaguely felt that the saber art demonstrated by the traces was as impressive as that on the stone that Long Wenhui had offered him before.

By studying the stone that Long Wenhui gave him, he invented his own 'Thunderous Tornado Saber Art'.

What would he be able to grasp after he fully understood the remaining traces on the nine scraps?

Li Yao was greatly satisfied and ready to leave, when something glinting in the hill caught his attention.

He fumbled and found that it was a piece of weird magical equipment that looked like a watch, only with an exceptionally long watchband.

If it were really a watch, its owner must've had an extremely thick wrist which presumably belonged to a giant three to five meters tall.

But its dial was even smaller than that of common watches, which was utterly disproportionate to the watchband.

Li Yao pondered for a long time, before he finally realized that it was not a watch, but some sort of hair clasp that was worn on one's head.

The magical equipment was not damaged by weapons. But it had been completely corrupted by acid. There was blue and purple rust from inside to outside, like a layer of weird moss.

But looking through the moss, Li Yao noticed that a large number of delicate components were still intact.

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao took the magical equipment as well.

The biggest problem about the magical equipment was the rust on its shell, and in regard to rust removing, he was probably one of the most proficient experts in the Heaven's Origin Sector.

Even if he failed to repair it, he could still practice his maintenance skills with the delicate components. Considering that it wouldn't cost him much at all, there was nothing to lose.

After paying for them, Li Yao returned to the exhibition hall in delight.

At this moment, the secret treasure exchange had almost come to an end. The number of the Orb Patrollers in the hall had greatly declined.

Li Yao immediately noticed that Hong Tong and Ding Lingdang were talking with three other intimidating Orb

Patrollers. The leader of them seemed familiar. Thinking for a moment, he soon recognized that it was 'Yan Jun', the arrogant young man he saw when he first arrived at the headquarters of Occult Orbs Fellowship.

That guy was one of the leading figures for the Children of Occult Orbs. Team Thunder Soul, of which he was the captain, rested at the top in the Rank of Stars!

Li Yao's eyes twitched. He strode forward and stood behind Ding Lingdang.

On Yan Jun's left eye, there was an incurable scar that was deep to the bones, making his face awfully appalling. It was said that the wound was a result of the chaos caused by the sloppy outside-world Orb Patrollers. Yan Jun's blood sister perished in the Occult Orb because of the accident, too.

Therefore, Yan Jun had never liked Orb Patrollers from the outside world.

Glancing at Li Yao, Yan Jun quickly focused his eyes on Hong Tong again as he said casually, "Hong Tong, your former captain Yin Qingfeng was the only one of the outside-world Orb Patrollers that I've ever admired. It's too bad he passed away in the accident.

"Despite the two newcomers that you recruited recently, I don't think that you are half as close to what you were when Yin Qingfeng was alive.

"If you really want to fight side by side with me in Ultimacy, then just cultivate and kill crazily!

"However, do bear in mind that you only have three months to prove your capability!"

Finishing his piece, Yan Jun and his companions left, never to look back.

Confused, Li Yao blinked, having no idea what was going on at all. He turned to the side and asked, "What's the meaning of this, captain?"

Hong Tong showed no expression. He scratched his red nose and said calmly, "Occult Orbs Fellowship has released a piece of breaking news just now. In a hundred days' time, five teams from the top 10 of the Rank of Stars will be designated to execute a plan that is of paramount importance."

Li Yao's heart was beating fast. He said, "The exploration of Ultimacy!"

Hong Tong nodded and observed, "Correct. The news has been a public topic for a long time. Now, it has been officially confirmed. But it is much earlier than we expected. We must break into the top 10 of the Rank of Stars within the next 100 days in order to be qualified to compete for the mission to Ultimacy!

"Although we earned more than 110 thousand contribution points and our position improved a lot, the competition will get more and more intense as we ascend to higher places. None of the first-rate teams ranking in the top 20 are easy to deal with. It will be quite challenging to bypass them!"

Looking at the captain in the eyes, Li Yao found that there was no frustration or hesitation at all, but passion that was burning brighter and brighter, even though he was saying 'it will be quite challenging'.

Li Yao smirked.

"If it's so difficult and coming so soon, then what are we waiting for? Let's head back and start training right now, so that we can return to our best state and get ready for the next mission!"

…

In Li Yao personal chamber inside Team Blue Bronze's base…

In front of Li Yao was a giant basin which was filled with boiling violet liquid. Bubbles and pungent steam were popping up nonstop.

Gritting his teeth, Li Yao put his hands into it. The bubbles immediately began popping ten times faster than before, while crackling noises came out.

Due to the excruciating pain, veins were bulging on his face, making him more hideous than ever. Two tears even flowed out of his eyes uncontrollably.

This was the secret art recorded in a book on the second floor of the Heavenly Refining Tower named 'Thousand Fingers Soft Bone'. By soaking his hands in the boiling liquid which had been refined out of 21 kinds of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, the bones of the hand would be destroyed and reborn.

The procedure was extremely dreadful. But once it succeeded, the speed of his hand movement could be improved by 10%!

The 21 kinds of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures that the procedure required were all rare ingredients even in the ancient Cultivation world 40,000 years ago. Li Yao failed to find any of them in the outside world. It was not until he joined Occult Orbs Fellowship that he finally gathered all the necessary materials at the cost of a great fortune of contribution points and cooked this mysterious purple liquid.

Every drop of the liquid was worth a billion. Therefore, although Li Yao was in agony, he didn't dare pass out. He quickly drew several seals in the scorching liquid while he held back the pain.

As the seals were completed, all the purple liquid was kept within the basin no matter furiously it was raging inside, as if it was bound by an invisible force.

Half an hour later, the previously dirty liquid was as clear as clean water now.

Li Yao's clothes had been soaked in sweat. Exhaling a long breath in relief, he took his hands out of the basin.

At this moment, not only were his hands smooth and warm like jade, they were also endowed with a vague layer of purple color.

"Wonderful!"

Moving his fingers, Li Yao quickly drew almost a hundred runes in the midair, both naturally and gracefully.

"Thousand Fingers Soft Bone has been perfectly performed by me. My hands are much faster than before. Not only will the efficiency of the maintenance work be greatly improved, it will also be of great help when I need to draw runes empty-handed and when I am in a combat!"

Li Yao started planning.

He had been used to his Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber, which was more than mighty but not delicate enough.

Now that his hand movements were much faster than Cultivators of the same level, could he make the best use of that and refine a new weapon in order to make up for the shortcomings of his saber?

While he was contemplating, his mini crystal processor started buzzing. After reading the message, Li Yao rose up and smiled, his white teeth gleaming.

A new mission had been approved. This time, it was a pure hunting mission. Although it was more dangerous, the contribution points that it rewarded were much greater, not to mention the trophies that they might be able to get from the demons.

"Top 10 of the Rank of Stars?

"No, my target is the top of the Rank of Stars!"

Waving his hands, the purple color vanished into his flesh and blood. Li Yao strode out of the room.

Chapter 383: Flash Claw, New Treasure

Chapter 383: Flash Claw, New Treasure

A secret operation was to begin in a hundred days!

It equaled to a public declaration that exploration of Ultimacy was beginning soon, and that only the most brilliant Cultivators of the Heaven's Origin Sector would set foot in the mysterious place that had never been visited before.

Empyreal Star City was on fire.

All the Star Teams had gone crazy, busily applying for all kinds of difficult tasks.

The star rails of Occult Orbs Fellowship's launch base were working day and night. There were star shuttles rushing out through the sea of stars every hour.

The thunder in the sky never died down. The reddish clouds never faded.

In the moment when all the Star Teams were desperate to show themselves, Team Blue Bronze announced its grand return by the dazzling and awe-inspiring achievements that they accomplished.

Each team who returned from Occult Orbs full-loaded and balanced their contribution points in satisfaction would hear Team Blue Bronze's much more flabbergasting news, which spread to every corner of Empyreal Star City easily.

"On March 15th, Team Blue Bronze went to Secret Mirage where they picked up a rarely-seen plant 'Shocking Thunder Flower'. It is of great use to Cultivators whose spiritual energy is of the lightning class when they are entering the Core Formation Stage.

"In the meantime, they slew the atrocious spiritual beast guarding the flower, a Thunder Spirit Leopard!"

"On March 21st, Team Blue Bronze went deep into Burning Flame. Not only did they find a vast ancient battleground where a lot of well-preserved weapons were dug out, 'Vulture Li Yao' also unearthed an armed shuttle that was basically intact!

"Some of the technology employed in the armed shuttle are at least thirty years more advanced than the existent ones in the Heaven's Origin Sector. If they are fully decrypted, they will be a great help for the development of the next-generation armed shuttles of the federal army!

"On March 27th, Team Blue Bronze and another three Star Teams started an expedition to Burning Inferno. A blood pool that the demon clan built up to breed special demon beasts was demolished. More than fifty demon generals were killed. Inferno Witch Ding Lingdang slayed three high-level demon generals personally and was credited as the MVP!

"On April 6th, in competition for the right to carry out a mission that was extremely dangerous, Team Blue Bronze challenged Team Eternal Phoenix which ranked the 29th to a duel and finished the battle in only 21 minutes and 37 seconds!

"Over the past one month, Team Blue Bronze has been unstoppable. Its rank has improved by more than thirty places and has reached 27th place!"

Breaking news regarding the latest progress of Team Blue Bronze was shocking the Orb Patrollers every day.

As for the two newcomers, Vulture Li Yao and Inferno Witch Ding Lingdang, their personal strength had been continuously soaring after every mission. Their unbelievable mission videos were great eye-openers for a lot of people, making them two of the best-known celebrities of Empyreal Star City right now.

…

On April 27th, in an advanced refining workshop with the most facilities…

As the number of the contribution points in his account increased crazily, Li Yao could afford better services now. This particular refining workshop was modified based on a maintenance workshop of a starship from the Star Ocean Imperium. It was the top refining workshop even in the entire Heaven's Origin Sector. Naturally, the hourly fee to rent it was also astronomical. Li Yao gritted his teeth and rented the workshop for three hours every day.

After training for over a month in the Occult Orbs and going through life and death in frost, flame, and blood pools of the demon clan, Li Yao's demeanor had greatly changed.

Before, although he had been engaged in several big events such as the Battle of Verdant Tart City and the War of Seven Cities, Li Yao had spent most of his time in the Grand Desolate War Institution. Inevitably, a vibe of immatureness that belonged to the college students who had never experienced real life always lingered around him.

But after fighting and killing in the foreign lands far away from the Heaven's Origin Sector, he was like a saber whose sharpness was all hidden deep inside the edge because it had been burnished hundreds of times. He was much more peaceful and sophisticated than before.

However, a bright blue scar that looked like a tear could be found right below his right eye, which destroyed the overall serenity in his face and made him looked somewhat brutal.

The scar had been left by the splashing corrosive acid when they were uprooting the blood pool of the demon clan. Although he had smeared medical ointment, it would take at least two months before new flesh could grow out.

Li Yao couldn't care less about it. On the contrary, he quite enjoyed his new appearance which was endowed with an air of cruelness.

Li Yao warmed up his fingers slowly. After two months of soaking and regenerating that were as miserable as hell, the 'Thousand Fingers Soft Bone' technique had been fully carried out. Purple colors were spreading out of his fingers and spinning around them, as if he were holding two torches of purple flames in his hands.

After a shiver of his fingers, all the purple flames were absorbed by his hands, which now seemed to be carved out of flawless and sparkling purple jade.

"Ka!"

In the next second, bones and joints bulged out from his two hands which were as warm and smooth as jade a moment ago. In his flesh, ten sharp knives of bones seemed to be buried. He opened his hands, and they immediately ejected out with an intense smell of blood. Dozens of electric arcs flickering with blue and purple spluttered among his fingers.

In front of Li Yao, a rock that was extremely hard was placed.

This kind of rock was harder than most metals, and it was naturally resistant against spiritual energy. It was almost as good as the rock in Li Yao's own refining workshop on which he hammered his magical equipment.

Sniffing, Li Yao waved his hands which were wreathed in blue and purple electric arcs and scratched the rock. Cracking noises echoed nonstop, as if a giant animal was chewing its prey's skin and bones. The rock crumbled and shrank in size like it was a piece of rotten wood. Half a minute later, it was only half its previous size.

Li Yao was greatly satisfied. He examined the traces of his claws and mumbled to himself, "As expected of an ultimate martial art that cost me 32,000 contribution points. This 'Purple Electric Blue Hell Claw Art' is indeed marvelous!"

After he was done with 'Thousand Fingers Soft Bone', he had been thinking to learn a new martial art that could make best use of his fast hand movement and monstrous finger strength.

After considering for a long time, he decided to learn a claw art.

After all, his spiritual energy was in the form of an eagle when solidified.

The most common way for an eagle to attack was snatching the prey with its claws. By learning a claw attack martial art, it would be easier to resonate with his spiritual energy.

Therefore, after he had accumulated enough contribution points, he redeemed them for one of the best claw arts in the Heaven's Origin Sector without any hesitation.

Although he hadn't fully grasped it since he'd only bought it half a month ago, Li Yao was very satisfied with his progress.

"In the Cultivation world, there is a kind of unusual magical equipment named 'Flash Claw' which can unleash high-voltage electricity when it tears the enemy apart. I could totally add a Flash Claw to the left hand of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, with additional high-frequency vibration abilities.

"With the electric shock and the high-frequency vibration, even the demon beasts with the thickest skin wouldn't be able to suffer one of my strikes!

"Then, I will have Floating Vulcan Machine Guns as my long-range weapons, Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber as my melee weapon, Vibrating Flash Claw during a close combat, together with the forty mini beast puppets that I refined out of the egg of the Gold Thread Venomous Bee. I am already armed to teeth. Who knows? I think I'm ready for Ultimacy right now!"

Licking his sharp teeth, Li Yao smiled and returned to peace. He washed his hands carefully and walked into the dust-free room on the right side of the refining workshop.

The practice of 'Purple Electric Blue Hell Claw Art' was just meant to warm up his fingers.

What he was going to do next was more important.

Over the past month, he had been carrying the nine scraps that he bought from the secret treasure exchange with him all the time and studied the damage on them whenever he was free. He had perceived several of the saber actions from them, which made his Thunderous Tornado Saber Art all the more intimidating.

However, what brought him the most benefits was the rusted, watch-like magical equipment.

This piece of magical equipment looked shabby and not worth repairing at all. But after Li Yao removed the dust with the secret technique of the Hundred Smelting Clan and cleaned all of its components, he discovered that it was far less ruined than he had expected.

The delicacy of the magical equipment was beyond his expectation, too. He estimated that it was even more precise than the most advanced hunter's watch of the Zephyr Guild.

Studying in the Grand Desolate War Institution all the time, Li Yao was not familiar with precise magical equipment. This was a good opportunity for him to practice.

Out of pure curiosity, Li Yao dismantled the magical equipment and got countless components than were smaller than millet and narrower than a hair, before he studied the usage of each component and the purpose of this magical equipment as a whole.

At first, he was only doing it for fun. But soon, he was deeply attracted to the magical equipment.

After spreading out all the components, it would only take up an area of a desk.

But for him, it was like a vast ocean that he couldn't see the boundary of.

Li Yao was addicted to it. Except for the days on the Occult Orbs, he was completely devoted to the polishing and maintenance of this mysterious magical equipment.

Today, he finally understood the attributes of all the components and devised a few new tiny components according to the intention of the designer of the magical equipment. Everything was set.

"The technology employed in the magical equipment is too complicated for me. It's impossible for me to fully repair it at present.

"However, I can bypass the trickiest part and fix the peripheral components only. By connecting an outlet unit with the peripheral components, I can make it work with the minimum functions. I estimate that thirty percent of its functions can be triggered!

"Thirty percent is good enough!"

To deal with the components that were tinier than millet, Li Yao had undertaken a new method to assemble them: refining with spiritual threads!

He closed his eyes, while his spiritual energy rippled out and lifted thousands of miniature components which were floating up and down in the air like invisible hands.

Then, he extended innumerous spiritual threads out of his spiritual root, each of which tied up one component gently.

Muttering spells to himself, Li Yao quickly waved his hands in the air, drawing not runes, but a translucent, bright gold holograph that appeared to be the internal structure of something.

After that, his ten fingers trembled at a speed that was too high for the human eyes to catch, as he guided his spiritual threads to drag the components to the corresponding location on the holograph.

When the thousands of components were all in position, Li Yao's half-closed eyes suddenly opened. Then he crossed his fingers and bellowed, "Freeze!"

The bright gold holograph instantly condensed into a ball, before it exploded and unveiled a brand-new artifact inside.

The thousands of components that were tinier than millet had been assembled momentarily!

Chapter 384: Stars to Destroy List

Chapter 384: Stars to Destroy List

"Does it work?"

Li Yao's forehead was covered in sweat, his cheeks puffing, while he stared at the watch-like magical equipment with a racing heart.

He was both nervous and excited.

This was the first time he'd ever repaired a piece of magical equipment from the Star Ocean Imperium. If it succeeded, it meant that he had made a great leap forward in the path of refining.

Although it looked perfect and the spiritual energy flowed smoothly, whether or not it was fully functional depended on what would happen after it was triggered.

Holding his breath, Li Yao picked out a red crystal the size of grain. The moment it came close to the watch-like magical equipment, a hexagonal hole was opened in its back where three metal threads stuck out and snatched the red crystal, dragging it inside.

The red crystal was part of a marrow crystal.

Although the watch was not large in size, the spiritual energy that it consumed to function was astronomical. Ordinary crystals and crystal cells were not satisfactory at all. Only marrow crystals could meet its need.

"Hum!"

After absorbing the marrow crystal, something shivered inside the watch-like magical equipment. All the components were resonating as if they had been brought back to life by Li Yao again. The dial was also shining like a starry night sky.

"It works!"

Li Yao was fascinated. He put the magical equipment on his head and aimed the dial at his spiritual root. The watchband seemed to be able to automatically adjust its length, which fastened the magical equipment to his head comfortably. There was no feeling of coldness or hindrances at all. It seemed to have melded with his flesh and blood.

Calming himself down, Li Yao extended one of his telepathic thoughts into the magical equipment.

Almost a hundred streams of information flooded into his head as feedback. They scanned through his brain and, after making sure that he was a human being and that he had never used such a piece of magical equipment before, transmitted detailed instructions and user manuals.

This magical equipment was weirdly known as 'Slaughterhouse of Demons', which had been used by the imperial army of the Star Ocean Imperium as a training facility.

However, not all the soldiers were qualified to train with the 'Slaughterhouse of Demons'.

It had been specially designed for the special forces of the imperial army, as well as the elites in the ordinary troops who had enormous physical strength and ultra-solid souls with remarkable accomplishments.

Those who were entitled to use the 'Slaughterhouse of Demons' were all the best warriors of the Star Ocean Imperium!

The reason was that the 'Slaughterhouse of Demons' was extremely dangerous as a tool for training. Only those with strong mental power and a solid soul would be able to exercise with it at their will.

If a random soldier were to use it carelessly, they would possibly be killed by it instantly!

Li Yao read the documents carefully. The Slaughterhouse of Demons was divided into 100 levels, with Level 1 being the easiest and Level 100 being the most difficult.

However, since many of the key components had been broken and Li Yao failed to repair them, it was only opened until Level 37, with a few missing levels in between. There were only 29 levels in total that he could make use of.

"Is it really as scary as it claims? Let me set it to Level 1 and have a try."

Slaughterhouse of Demons projected dozens of complicated operation menus inside Li Yao's brain. The way of using it was different from any kind of magical equipment in the Star Glory Federation.

However, Li Yao had been playing with another piece of magical equipment from the Star Ocean Imperium named 'Neltharion', whose operation system was hundreds of times more complicated than the Slaughterhouse of Demons'.

Therefore, it didn't take long before he figured out the options of the Slaughterhouse of Demons, set it to the easiest level, and initiated the magical equipment.

"Shua!"

Li Yao felt an ivory ray of light beam out of his forehead and condense into a transparent hologram not far away from him.

A moment later, the hologram became more solid. A dry, thin, greenish-skinned demon who had sharp teeth and protruding cheeks was eyeing him coldly from three meters away.

"An illusion?"

Before Li Yao was able to take any action, the demon grinned hideously, displaying its brown tusks, before it suddenly turned into a streak of brightness and passed by Li Yao.

Unimaginable, unpredictable and unstoppable!

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. He felt that his throat was itching, cold and uncomfortable; then he heard large swishing noise; it was not until several seconds later that he realized it was the sound of blood spurting out of the ruptured carotid artery.

He scratched his neck, only to find that his hand was covered in blood.

Li Yao was greatly shocked. At this moment, an acute pain finally grabbed him, while a black swirl started revolving in front of his eyes, swallowing his soul.

He told himself repetitively that it was just an illusion. But it took him ten seconds before he finally got himself away from the pressure of death. He touched his neck again, and he did find a drop of blood there.

This time, it was not an illusion, but the body reaction after the brain cells were seriously stimulated.

Many experts of mental attacks could hypnotize and fool other people into thinking that their hand had been cut by a knife. It was often the case that injuries would appear on their hand even though nobody hurt them.

This was a world where mental power could change reality after all.

No wonder only the most determined experts were allowed to train with the Slaughterhouse of Demons.

For the ordinary soldiers who were not resolute enough, their brains might be wrecked when they were killed in the illusion!

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao calmed himself down, yet his eyes caught a hint of greenness again.

The mysterious, greenish-skinned demon was not gone yet. It was grinning hideously at him behind him, to the left. Before he knew it, it turned into a streak of brightness and darted at his neck again.

Li Yao's eyes were twitching violently. His pupils constricted to the size of two needles. There was no time for him to defend himself. He simply ignited the purple flames in his hands and snatched at the chest of the green demon.

"Swoosh!"

The artery on Li Yao's neck was cut open again.

In the meantime, the guts of the demon were minced into pieces by Li Yao's Purple Electric Blue Hell Claw Art.

After a scream, the green demon burst into thousands of pieces of brightness and vanished.

"Interesting!"

Li Yao finally woke up from the illusion. He scratched his neck which was still aching and licked his lips excitedly.

He was beginning to understand how the Slaughterhouse of Demons worked.

When it was put on his head, it would stimulate his brain cells and generate all kinds of illusions of strong demons in front him. His nerves would be kept in a highly active state while he was completely devoted to the fierce combat, so that he could break his own limits and improve himself under the menace of death all the time.

"Shua!"

This time, two green demons appeared in front of his eyes, both of which carrying coldly-shining poisoned daggers in their hands.

It seemed that the Slaughterhouse of Demons would automatically adjust the difficulty of the training according to the approaches undertaken by the trainee.

"Come on!"

Every one of Li Yao's brain cells were burning furiously. His eyes were so bright that fire seemed to be popping out.

Before the two green demons could launch their attack, Li Yao had already charged at them!

From the afternoon to the next morning, Li Yao played with his new toy for more than fifteen hours without any sleep or rest, dwelling in the new world and forgetting where he was.

From Level 1 to Level 7, he was 'killed' 372 times and 'killed' 631 demons in total.

At first, his opponent was the simplest greenish-skinned demons; but after Level 5, he was faced with enemies with greater strength than a middle-level demon general, many of whom were new to him but not any less formidable. By his estimation, they must be the strong ancient demons who had gone extinct thousands of years ago.

Li Yao's combat skills continued on the rise after each 'death' and each execution.

He was planning to practice another three days and three nights, but Ding Lingdang suddenly appeared and disrupted his nice plan.

Ding Lingdang's eyes were wide open. Staring at the refining workshop which was in a mess, she exclaimed in astonishment, "What are you doing here? Why is it so messed up here? You didn't have an accident in one of your crazy experiments with explosive magical equipment, did you?"

Ding Lingdang strode close and examined Li Yao's body carefully. She was greatly relieved when she noticed that there were no wounds on Li Yao's body.

Li Yao smiled.

"I'm fine. Why are you here? Aren't we on a five-day vacation because the captain said we needed a good rest after a month of frequent visits to Occult Orbs? What, anything wrong?"

Ding Lingdang grimaced. She waved her wrist where her mini crystal processor was worn and said airily, "Good news, or maybe bad news. You made it to the list. You are now the 2998th on the Stars to Destroy List."

"What?!"

Li Yao was dazed. He repeated, "I made it to the 2998th on the Stars to Destroy List?"

The Star Glory Federation, to tackle the powerful enemies in the Blood Demon Sector, resorted to every method possible to track down the demon kings, demon emperors, and other influential figures and proposed a 'Deadly Demons List', where the names of three thousand expert demons that were most threatening to the Star Glory Federation, as well as their respective bounties, were written.

It was one of the highest honors for a Cultivator of the Heaven's Origin Sector to slay a major demon who was on the Deadly Demons List.

At the same time, some demons of the Blood Demon Sector were designated to gather and analyze the intelligence from the Heaven's Origin Sector, too, and they offered the names of three thousand Cultivators who were most threatening to the Blood Demon Sector, which was known as the 'Stars to Destroy List'.

One might say that the three thousand expert demons on the Deadly Demons List and the three thousand Cultivators on the Stars to Destroy List were the most influential figures in their respective worlds for the war to come.

They were the well-deserved celebrities in their worlds!

One year ago, Li Yao could only look up to the three thousand Cultivators on the Stars to Destroy List in admiration.

Never had he anticipated that his name would appear on the list one day!

Although he was only the 2998th, it was already a remarkable achievement.

Speaking of influence and importance to the federation, the leaders, as well as many Elders, of the top 500 sects in the federation were all more than qualified to appear on the Stars to Destroy List, not to mention the presidents of the Nine Elite Universities, renowned professors, generals of the major military regions, senior Cultivators who had been fighting against the demons for hundreds of years…

There were few places left for beginners.

There were even fewer experts who had become a center of hatred for the demons and made it to the Stars to Destroy List before thirty.

Not quite fully convinced, with her hands resting on her hip, Ding Lingdang exclaimed, "I never expected that you could rise to fame so fast. I'm been training day and night dreaming to squeeze into the Stars to Destroy List, and yet you still arrived earlier than me!"

Li Yao grinned and was well aware that his appearance in the Stars to Destroy List was not just based on his excellent performance in the Occult Orbs over the past two months. It had more to do with his ability in refining, or more specifically, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

Although the demon clan didn't launch massive attacks over the past several months, the warfare never ceased in the northernmost of the Grand Desolate Plateau.

As more and more troops were equipped with Mystic Skeleton Battlesuits, the defense of the federal army significantly improved. In dangerous areas which were too risky for crystal warships, legions armed with Mystic Skeleton Battlesuits could be deployed to confront the demons in head-on battles.

To some extent, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit brought as much trouble to the demon clan in the war as a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator would.

As the youngest participant of Project Mystic Skeleton, Li Yao also boasted amazing personal combat ability. More importantly, considering his young age, his potential was enormous, which was the primary reason why his name appeared on the Stars to Destroy List.

The fact that he was discovered so soon and registered as one of the three thousand most threatening Cultivators for the Blood Demon Sector also proved the effectiveness of the demon clan's espionage work. It was evident enough that their infiltration into the Heaven's Origin Sector was quite productive.

"From now on, I'm no longer a Mr. Nobody. I can put myself on the scale of victory now. Even if I only weigh one gram, I still have the chance to change the balance of the war!"

Chapter 385: Ghost Ocean, Fearsome Kraken

Chapter 385: Ghost Ocean, Fearsome Kraken

"Appearing on the Stars to Destroy List might not be a good thing. It means that you will be a target for everybody. In a battlefield, the demons always attack the Cultivators whose names are on the Stars to Destroy List. For those whose ranks are at the top, sometimes the demons even teleport assassins through the void in order to kill them!" Ding Lingdang said with a smile, not in the least worried.

She was quite proud that her boyfriend had appeared on the Stars to Destroy List, although she was discontent that she hadn't made it to the list.

Stars to Destroy List and Deadly Demons List had been established for the purpose of hunting the important figures of the hostile world more easily.

Once someone's name was on one of the lists, their enemy would search for their files at any cost and offer a high bounty, all so they could be extinguished sooner.

Killing an expert on the Stars to Destroy List or the Deadly Demons List would not only undermine the enemy's war potential, but also significantly damage the morale of their army.

After Li Yao entered Empyreal Star City, he had heard of many confidential events in the federation.

For example, Xu Haoran, the Speaker of Parliaments, who ranked third in the Stars to Destroy List, had been the victim of many attempted assassinations every year.

In the meantime, many Core Formation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were also trying to sneak into the Blood Demon Sector to hunt down the super demons ranking in the top 100 on the Deadly Demons List.

The demise of any expert at that level would be shocking news.

Li Yao sniffed and then smiled.

"Assassinate me? Come and try. I feel that my rank in the Stars to Destroy List is too low anyway."

Thinking for a moment, he took off the Slaughterhouse of Demons and put it on Ding Lingdang's head. Then he activated it and said, "Try it. This is a piece of magical equipment for training from the Star Ocean Imperium that I just repaired."

Ding Lingdang was quite amazed.

"You were able to repair the magical equipment from the Star Ocean Imp—Hiss…"

She was lost for a moment. Sweat was dropping from her forehead, while her body was trebling. A moment later, she came back to herself in a shiver. Pressing her chest, she exclaimed passionately, "This thing is interesting!"

Li Yao smiled and saw that Ding Lingdang was apparently hooked on it. Her eyes were bulging, her teeth clicking, while she was fighting against the invisible enemies in her illusion. Therefore, he took a step back, brought out the nine scraps, and, closing his eyes, touched them with his hypersensitive fingertips, observing the saber art from thousands of years ago.

He had multiple methods of training. It was unlikely that he would use the Slaughterhouse of Demons 24 hours a day. Sharing it with Ding Lingdang was a much better idea, so that it wouldn't be left idle.

Li Yao hoped that Ding Lingdang would enter the Stars to Destroy List, too, and that the two of them could march forward hand in hand.

A journey by himself would be too lonely.

In the next couple of days, they took turns to undergo the extreme training sessions of the Slaughterhouse of Demons. When the vacation was over and Team Blue Bronze gathered together again, their sharp and unstoppable vibe surprised everyone.

In the next month, Team Blue Bronze applied for several missions of unimaginable risks and completed all of them perfectly. Their position in the Rank of Stars rose to the top 15. Li Yao and Ding Lingdang distinguished themselves more and more. Their brilliant mission videos were spread to every corner of Empyreal Star City, and later, into the entire Cultivation world.

Nobody considered them to be newcomers anymore. They'd become the most proficient Orb Patrollers.

…

On June 2nd, in Ghost Ocean…

This was an Occult Orb covered by a raging ocean. Except for the sharp rocks that popped out from the black ocean once in a while, there was no land that one could set foot on at all.

Blowing wind dominated the sky of Ghost Sea. Giant swirls were everywhere in the ocean. The waves raised by the ferocious undercurrent could jump to hundreds of meters high while uttering weird sounds that resembled screams of the unrested souls.

Looking from above, it seemed that countless ghosts were wandering under the ocean, hence the name 'Ghost Ocean'.

At this moment, among the tusk-like ocean waves each higher than another, a crystal suit was dodging and flying fast with gold exhaust flames behind it.

After being strengthened and polished by countless Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures from Occult Orbs Fellowship, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit right now had undergone tremendous changes compared with three months ago.

With the Swallow Shadow Stones, Heavenly Tiger Core Copper, Red Glow Liquid, and many other rare materials, the color of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had turned from bright grey into deep black, with a streak of blood red outlining the edge of every piece of the plate armor.

Against the background of the black ocean, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit seemed to have vanished. What was left in the air was a red, translucent holograph, around which gold brightness was shimmering occasionally. It was full of mysteries and coldness, like… the vast starry sky!

"BOOM!"

Behind the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, which was fleeing at full speed, a tremendous lump about fifty meters in diameter rose up from the surface of the ocean, before it exploded, producing earsplitting booms.

What was unveiled after the explosion was a strong demon beast more than thirty meters in diameter that looked like an enlarged squid.

Every tentacle of the kraken was as thick and long as a crystal train. Not only was it covered in suckers which could absorb seawater and air and also interrupt the spiritual waves nearby, there were also many caruncles among the suckers that could spurt seawater, thereby forming many 'high-pressure water swords'.

Without the protection of a crystal suit, even a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator might be sliced in two by the water sword easily.

Lifted by the eight copious tentacles was a giant head that was almost as large as a floating mountain, which was affixed with countless colorful seaweeds and shells that seemed to be its armor in the form of weird, round stripes.

In the middle of the round stripes, a crimson eye, which was more than two meters in diameter and naturally blessed with the ability to perform mental attacks, was glaring. One glance from it was enough to rip the souls of low-level Cultivators apart.

Behind the eye, there were eight wrinkles surrounding the body through which the prey would be devoured.

Every wrinkle was filled with coldly-shining bones that were as sharp as teeth, leaving no doubt that if Li Yao was bitten, both his crystal suit and himself would be chewed into pieces without the slightest traces remaining.

"Ho! Ho! Ho!"

The kraken was more than furious. Liquid as thick as blood flowed out of the crimson eye. Spurting water from the spouts behind its head, it boosted itself forward with the counterforce and stayed close behind Li Yao.

"Pu! Pu! Pu!"

While it was chasing, it shot out liquid that was as black as ink from sixteen spouts on its head, which exploded near Li Yao and formed clusters of stinky venomous fog.

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit at this moment was no longer the MP crystal suit from half a year ago. After every mission, Li Yao would spend a fortune of contribution points on Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures to further modify it. All the way to this day, his crystal suit was no worse than the super crystal suits worth billions that the Core Formation Stage Cultivators wore.

Li Yao's skill at controlling the crystal suit was becoming more and more fluid after countless life-and-death battles.

The venomous fog was about to wreathe the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, when the battlesuit suddenly turned into countless blurred shadows and dashed out of the enclosing fog at an unimaginable angle, before it rushed forward under the cover of the rampageous waves.

Sometimes, the waves and the water swords of the kraken were only the width of a hair away from the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

But the width of a hair seemed to have been fixed by superglue. However furious the kraken was, it was not able to cut off any part of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, not even the corner of a piece of plate armor.

Suddenly…

Hundreds of blurred shadows melted into one. The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit came to a halt abruptly.

In front was the place where currents congregated. A giant water wall that was fifty meters tall and almost a thousand meters long was blocking his way.

The kraken was squeaking in excitement. Eight giant swirls were stirred up by its tentacles, while it charged toward him at full speed.

Too bad that as large as its eyeball was, its sight was not good enough, otherwise it would've seen the cruel smile on Li Yao's face.

"Ka!"

Sixteen noises echoed at the same time, as sixteen explosions took place on the surface of the ocean surrounding the kraken. Sixteen bright blue blasts swept over, freezing the savaging waves into solid sculptures.

Together with the kraken, the entire ocean in the hundred square meters was consolidated into a giant iceberg!

"Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!"

The kraken was quite tough. The 'Frigid Prison Grenades' from the Star Ocean Imperium that were supposed to be able to freeze everything within its range only stopped its movement briefly.

Soon, the frozen ocean broke. The crimson eye which had been rigid for a moment started rolling crazily again, unleashing a vicious, red light.

But for Li Yao, a moment of rigidness was more than enough.

Li Yao stomped in the air, leaving two giant holes more than ten meters in diameter on the wall of seawater that was dozens of meters high. Then he took a weirdly sharp turn and blinked in front of the giant eye of the kraken.

Three sharp knives unfolded from his left arm, turning his left arm into a metal claw. Each of the talons were carved with complicated rune arrays. An invaluable marrow crystal was embedded in between the talons. Purple electric arcs and blue fire were dancing on the claw, tearing the air apart with cracking sounds.

Compared with the mainstream melee weapons such as chainswords and vibrating sabers, Flash Claws were much less popular.

It was because grasping a claw art was often a painful process. Besides, they could only be carried out by keeping close to the enemy during a combat. Therefore, most Cultivators who preferred poise and elegancy were not interested in them.

Li Yao was different. His hands had endured the torture of the 'Thousand Fingers Soft Bone' technique. The miserable training process was like living in hell.

Compared to the 'Thousand Fingers Soft Bone' technique, no claw art was cruel anymore.

Besides, the 'Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining' technique had endowed him with extraordinary body sturdiness, making him must suited to close combat.

A melee weapon such as the Flash Claw fit his every need.

This particular Flash Claw he was using had been refined by an Elder of 'Falcon Strike Sect' which was renowned for its claw arts. It had been marked by his soul seal, distinguishing it as one of the limited editions from the mass-produced ones made for the ordinary disciples.

Li Yao had further burnished it with more than three different kinds of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, as well as abundant marrow crystals without considering the cost, through the ancient techniques of the Hundred Smelting Clan. It was definitely one of the best Flash Claws in the world!

Therefore, although he had only been training with the 'Purple Electric Blue Hell Claw Art' for only a little more than one month, this ultimate Flash Paw still raised a blue-and-purple lightning that was almost one meter long while it snatched at the crimson sole eye of the kraken!

Chapter 386: Slaying a Deadly Demon

Chapter 386: Slaying a Deadly Demon

"Ting!"

The sharp claw enveloped in purple electric arcs and blue fire raised crackling sounds like a piece of metal crashing into a stone. It had failed to pierce through!

The eyeball of the kraken was large and soft, which was its biggest weakness. How could it not prepare for it?

The moment before the Flash Claw fell down, the surface of the eyeball was covered in a layer of transparent membrane that protected the eyeball as if it were tempering glass.

The membrane seemed to boast extraordinary resistance against spiritual energy. No matter how furiously powerful the lightning and the fire were, they were not able to breach the defense at all and simply vanished after they reached it.

In the meantime, the frozen ocean was cracking under the kraken's brute force. Jagged, giant gaps appeared on the surface!

The kraken was breaking free in no time. The crimson eye was filled with disdain and abhorrence. Its mental attack stirred chaos within Li Yao's brain like burning iron needles.

Gritting his teeth, Li Yao turned his claw into thousands of blurred shadows, which were humming and appeared fuzzy.

It was vibrating at almost ten thousand times per second!

After the high-frequency vibrations, the first crack appeared in the membrane covering the crimson eye.

The interconnecting gaps on the frozen ocean were also expanding. In many places, the ice fell down into craters where seawater jumped up dozens of meters like fountains.

One of the kraken's tentacles had been freed from the ice. It was beating the ice crazily, hoping to break up more.

Right now, it was just a matter of speed!

The eye of the kraken was filled with contempt, while another two of its tentacles got out of the ice and joined with the first tentacle in ripping open the ice. The frozen ocean was shaking and would crumble in no time.

Yet, the confidence in Li Yao's eyes was not in the least diminished. He roared and poured all his spiritual energy into his left arm. Two gold rings at the front end of his right arm suddenly started revolving in opposite directions. The claw between them started swirling, too.

The Flash Claw immediately turned into a mincing machine that was vibrating rapidly.

Purple electric arcs, the blue fire, high-frequency vibration, and rapid revolution!

Under the effect of these four abilities, the defensive membrane outside of the crimson eye finally couldn't bear it any longer and broke into pieces after a cracking sound.

The Flash Claw pierced into the eyeball unstoppably. A balloon made of blood exploded over him.

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was showered by the strongly corrosive red liquid, which was eroding the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. But it had no influence on the highly strengthened shell and the anti-corrosive layer whatsoever.

In less than one second, the crimson eye had been cut into pieces by the Flash Claw and collapsed.

The electric arcs and the blue fire even penetrated through the bottom of its eye into its brain.

The kraken was squeaking in desperation, while it extended its three tentacles to maximum and smashed the ice, spluttering the pieces of ice to everywhere.

With a cold smile, Li Yao pulled black his Flash Claw and folded it up, revealing his left hand.

Simultaneously, his right hand picked up the Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber. Then, his left hand joined with his right hand to draw the saber out and stab into the crimson eye of the kraken which had already been shattered.

Although the Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber was only two meters long, the blood aura from the saber flushed out into the surrounding ten meters, boosted by Li Yao's high spirit and fully activated spiritual energy, protruding directly into the depths of the kraken's soft brain.

Li Yao didn't just stop there. He twisted his saber brutally, as if he was trying to churn the brain of the kraken into a mess.

It was not until the fourth tentacle of the kraken, which was the closest one to him, was freed from the ice and slashed at him in blowing wind that he pulled his saber out and leaped three meters away.

Then he immediately summoned four Floating Vulcan Machine Guns from his Cosmos Ring, aimed at the giant blood hole more than one meter in diameter, and opened fire!

Frost bullets, flames bullets, corrosive bullets, explosive bullets… All kinds of bullets that had been carved with powerful attack rune arrays and cleansed by a Blood Baptism rained upon the kraken, which was shaking under the attack nonstop.

Translucent, white liquid was flowing out of the holes in its body.

This was its real blood. The red liquid inside the crimson eye previously was only a medium to trigger the mental attack.

The kraken finally set itself free from the ice, but its head had already been blown to smithereens by Li Yao.

The soft body of the kraken turned rigid. The tentacles which had been waving crazily lost their momentum.

The kraken was on the brink of death, but a weird flame was burning brighter and brighter in the core part of the giant body.

"Swoosh!"

One of the wrinkles on the head of the kraken suddenly split, from which a grey figure spurted out and floated in the air, while it eyed Li Yao with utmost odium.

This figure was more than two meters tall, with four limbs and one head. The facial features, although warped, was still distinguishable. There was no hair whatsoever around its body, only a layer of scarce scales.

"Beep! Beep!"

The crystal processor of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit immediately retrieved information about the demon.

"Sang Hang, the 2722nd on the Deadly Demons List!"

He was good at mental attacks and possessed remarkable skills to escape through water. More importantly, he was good at breeding biochemical beasts based on all kinds of strong sea animals.

To breed the so-called biochemical beasts, the fetus of strong demons, and sometimes even demon kings, would be chosen and modified through all kinds of secret arts.

After the biochemical beasts grew up, they would possess enormous physical strength as well as a powerful brain, but with little self-awareness. The only thing that they were born with were the natural instincts to hunt and survive that were no different than ordinary animals'.

For the intelligent silver-blood demons, they could enter the biochemical beasts and connect their brains together so that the biochemical beasts would become their weapons in a battle, and their capability would be greatly enhanced.

Such a method would not only endow them with tremendous physical strength, but it entailed no risk of the backlash when the demon beasts were tamed by mental attacks.

Biochemical beasts were to silver-blood demons what crystal suits were to Cultivators.

It was much more difficult to breed a biochemical beast. But once it succeeded, the product was often much more powerful than common crystal suits.

Sang Hang was an expert in breeding sea biochemical beasts whose name was on the Deadly Demons List. Naturally, he was wise enough to look for information on his opponent with the two information bugs which were wriggling beside his earholes.

Sang Hai's three round pupils suddenly constricted, as he gasped, "Vulture Li Yao, the 2833rd on the Stars to Destroy List!"

Sang Hai turned around and jumped at the ocean without any hesitation.

Although both of them were on each other's must-kill list and ranked in similar places, he had remained in the position for quite a long time, since his capability had more or less reached its limit.

On the other hand, Vulture Li Yao was a brutal guy who had just entered the list a few months ago. He had slain quite a few renowned experts of the Blood Demon Sector in the competitions in Occult Orbs.

Besides, most of his capability hinged on his biochemical beast. Right now, his sharpest weapon had been broken off. The battle would not be in his favor if it were to continue.

Within a moment, Sang Hai was only ten meters away from the ocean.

As long as he entered the ocean, with his brilliant skills of water escaping, he was confident that even a Core Formation Stage Cultivator wouldn't be unable to catch him.

But right at this moment, he suddenly felt that his body was lighter, and that he was about to lose balance.

All kinds of hallucinations were appearing in front of his eyes. He seemed to have become a small octopus which had been pinned to a chopping board and exposed to the scorching sun. The acute pain was beyond the description of any words.

Before he was able to get rid of the hallucinations, his body felt 72 dull pains caused by 72 deadly bullets which were rushing close from unpredictable angles.

Sang Hai deserved his name as a respected demon on the Deadly Demons List. Explosive sound waves were uttered from his mouth, which set all the bullets away off course momentarily.

His eyes suddenly blinked with intimidating brilliance. The illusions were torn to pieces immediately. 'Dummy' Ba Weiqi, who was hiding in the bottom of the ocean, vomited blood because of the intense mental counterforce.

In the meantime, his body twisted weirdly as if it was swimming in the sea even though it was in the midair. Then, he turned around and fled out of the area in which gravity had been changed by Hong Tong.

In only several seconds, the fatal attacks from three enemies had been resolved by him easily.

Yet, before he was able to feel proud of himself, he fainted and almost fell off from the sky.

"What's going on? I am... bleeding!"

Sang Hai was greatly shocked.

He had been lurking in the center of the brain of the kraken. Although Li Yao's saber was too short to reach him, the blood aura had swept over his body.

Sang Hai had been complacent about his defenses. He wouldn't be bothered by it even if a real saber cut his body. Therefore, he didn't care about the sweeping blood aura at all.

But he didn't know that the blood aura of the Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber could trigger internal bleeding. Any living creature with a blood circulation system, be they human beings or demons, would be its victim!

He didn't feel anything wrong just now. But the dodging movements in order to avoid the three formidable enemies' attacks had almost exhausted his physical strength and mental power. The consequences of the previous injury were finally revealed!

0.1 seconds later, Sang Hai held back the bleeding by force and suppressed his dizziness.

But what he saw when his eyes were clear again were three dragon flames endowed with primitive, barbarian, and aggressive scents as if they'd crossed time and space from billions of years ago!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Running out of his strength, Sang Hai was hit by Ding Lingdang's 'Nona-colored Fire' precisely.

After appreciating the dragon fossil day and night and training in the extreme battles through the Demon Slaughterhouse, Ding Lingdang had decorated her 'Nona-colored Fire' with an intense prehistoric scent that was nothing like how it had been several months ago.

After the attack hit its enemy, the spiritual energy raged out unstoppably like a torrent.

"Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!"

The 72 bullets that had been affected by Sang Hai's sound waves detoured and hit their target under the control of 'Shell' Leng Ziming's telepathic thoughts.

These bullets had been refined by Li Yao whom he had made the request of after buying a large batch of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. With his proficient gunfighting skills, the bullets were ten times powerful more than previously.

"Gold Dissection!" 'Shell' Leng Ziming bellowed. Gold electric arcs were spluttering among the bullets, before they were suddenly lengthened and pierced into Sang Hai's body like hundreds of sharp swords.

Sang Hai's struggling body suddenly turned stiff.

There was no time for him to take any preventative actions. The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had blinked behind his back. Exhaust flames as intimidating as tsunamis were gushing out from the power rune arrays. His speed and strength at maximum, the Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber drew an almost perfect red arc, passing by Sang Hai's neck in the blink of an eye!

The movement was so fast that the head stayed on the neck even though it had been cut off, which stopped the blood from spurting out. The brutality in the three eyes was completely gone.

The renowned demon Sang Hai on the Deadly Demons List had been killed by Li Yao and his teammates!

Chapter 387: Temple of Fallen Stars

Chapter 387: Temple of Fallen Stars

"Huala!"

'Dummy' Ba Weiqi jumped out of the ocean. Nine antennas covered in rings stood out from the disproportionately large head of his crystal suit, which projected his mental power that had been enhanced by dozens of times to the sky where it formed an impregnable dragnet.

A moment later, a translucent shadow appeared in the sky, dancing and dashing, only to be blocked by the vast, invisible net, before returning to Sang Hai's head helplessly.

"Sang Hai's soul has been pressed back to his dead body!" Ba Weiqi yelled.

Yan Yangtian, who had been hiding nearby all the time, leaped forward and slapped Sang Hai's head, which was immediately frozen with frost flowers flourishing.

Emotionlessly, Yan Yangtian picked the frozen head, put it into a container, and placed it in her Cosmos Ring.

Since Sang Hai was one of the three thousand deadly demons, he must be aware of much confidential information about the Blood Demon Sector. The secret arts that he employed to breed biochemical beasts would also be a great help to the study of life science in the Heaven's Origin Sector.

He had been executed neatly. His brain cells were all intact; his demon soul failed to run away. After the team returned to the Heaven's Origin Sector, many research-type Cultivators would be able to make him confess every secret buried inside his brain.

"BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!"

At this moment, more than ten earthshaking explosions took place deep down the ocean in the far ahead. The fireball soared to the sky and dyed the gloom into redness.

The sea biochemical beasts breeding base that the Blood Demon Sector had established deep under the ocean had been detonated by four Star Teams.

Letting out a long sigh of relief, Li Yao watched the kraken's dead body floating up and down in the dark swirls moving toward the depths of the ocean, knowing that a potential hazard had been removed successfully.

Had Occult Orbs Fellowship not discovered the secret base in time, the demon clan would've been able to throw the eggs of the biochemical beasts into the sea of the Heaven's Origin Sector where they would have grown up over ten to twenty years without anybody noticing anything wrong. At the right timing, a demon squad could've snuck into the Heaven's Origin Sector and appeared in the seashore of the Star Glory Federation reining those biochemical beasts, locking the ports and cutting off transportation… The consequences would've been calamitous.

"Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!"

More than ten streaks of brightness dashed toward them, which were the other Orb Patrollers taking part in this collaborative mission.

Seeing the twitching dead body in the air which was still surrounded by intense demonic energy even though it had lost it head, all the Orb Patrollers were dumbfounded, and it was not until five seconds later that then finally gasped in disbelief.

They might have demolished the breeding base of the demon clan, but Team Blue Bronze had slain a well-known expert on the Deadly Demons List!

It seemed that Team Blue Bronze would receive the most contribution points again!

But no one had any complaints.

They were a hundred percent sure that they could destroy the breeding base of sea biochemical beasts, but they had no faith whatsoever that they could kill Sang Hai and were not even willing to give it a try.

Team Blue Bronze had become the best team of the outside-world Orb Patrollers!

…

"Chi!"

Four seriously damaged star shuttles stopped at the end of the star rails.

Members of Team Blue Bronze walked out of their star shuttle with their heads held high, surrounded by staff that were almost five times as many as before.

Many research-type Cultivators had learnt of the news in advance. They were waiting outside to get the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures retrieved from the Occult

Orb and the head of the deadly demon, so that they could begin their study sooner.

Right now, Team Blue Bronze had been well acknowledged as a first-tier team.

Other than Li Yao, Ding Lingdang and Captain Hong Tong had appeared on the Deadly Demons List, too, which meant that they were considered by the demon clan to belong to the three thousand most dangerous people of the Star Glory Federation which had a population of almost ten billion.

Captain Hong Tong ranked the 2321st, while Ding Lingdang ranked the 2904th.

Three members of a team were on the Stars to Destroy List. It indicated that the personnel of the team were neatly organized. There was no significant drawback. Even if the team suffered great damage in a battle, in which one or two main members perished, the capability of the team wouldn't be entirely lost.

After handing in the trophies obtained from the mission in Ghost Ocean and submitting the mission videos, they asked the mainframe crystal processor to reevaluate the capability of the team.

According to the accomplishments and the personal strength of the team members, the system soon calculated their rank.

11th on the Rank of Stars!

Seeing their new rank, all the members of Team Blue Bronze had complicated feelings, especially the four old members including Captain Hong Tong.

"After Captain Yin perished, we never expected that we could return to the top 20 of the Rank of Stars within a year after the pillar of the team had died. Our comprehensive score is only one step away from 10th!"

Staring at the light beam, Hong Tong's eyes turned reddish while tears were brewing. He remarked, "Li Yao, Lingdang, thanks to you, Team Blue Bronze has been revived!"

"Captain, we've been through life and death together enough times to drop the civilities."

Li Yao smiled and said, "Ding Lingdang and I always feel lucky that we chose Team Blue Bronze, too, because this is the place where we can bring out the best of what we are! It's needless to say anything else. There are ten days to go before the candidate teams eligible for the secret operation are to be announced by Occult Orbs. We must reach the top ten by then!"

"Correct!"

Hong Tong calmed himself down. His eyes regained sharpness, while he said in a low voice, "Everything is in vain if we cannot arrive in the top ten of the Rank of Stars. We've been pushing ourselves for three months. There are only ten days to go. We must overcome the barrier in front of us, no matter how hard it seems!

"Only after we enter the top ten of the Rank of Stars will we qualify to receive the enlightenment of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and accept their spiritual seeds.

"Of the six of us, Li Yao and Ding Lingdang are still young and full of potentials, while the rest of us are almost fixed, our potential running dry, although we are at the middle level and high level of the Building Foundation Stage.

"Without undergoing fortuitous events and just by training normally, Li Yao and Ding Lingdang may need dozens of years in order to break into the Core Formation Stage, if they are unbelievably lucky.

"As for the four of us, we don't stand a chance at all.

"But, spiritual seeds! With the help of the spiritual seeds of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, we will be bestowed an opportunity to experience the higher level and form our cores! Li Yao and Ding Lingdang's training time will be greatly saved. It will take less than ten years for them to form their cores!

"Not to mention that exploring the unseen Ultimacy is the highest honor for us Cultivators. If we set off on the expedition, our names will be left in the history books of the Star Glory Federation!

"Even if I have to die, I will stab my bones deeply into the earth of Ultimacy!"

Hong Tong's speech triggered countless thoughts in everyone's hearts.

From the ancient time to nowadays, millions of Cultivators had been seeking the path to immortality, but none of them had ever succeeded.

For some of them, not only were their bodies rotten, the innocent also fell victim to their attempts. Even the world had once been on the verge of dilapidation. They and their descendants were doomed and cursed for all eternity.

However, although bodies may cease to exist, spirits could live forever. The names of all the Cultivators would be indelible in the magnificent history of the Star Glory Federation.

As long as the Star Glory Federation lived on, these Cultivators would be immortal!

When the Star Glory Federation expanded into the universe, their names would be spread to every corner of the sea of stars!

As modern Cultivators, this was the supreme immortality that they were pursuing and willing to die for!

"I suggest that we take a three-day rest, and that 80% of the contribution points be allocated to Li Yao, who then will purchase secret treasures for all of us, so that our magical equipment can be fully upgraded again. After that, we will carry out the most risky and difficult mission in order to reach the top ten of the Rank of Stars!"

Captain Hong Tong waved his hand fervently.

Yet, his teammates didn't answer to his declaration as enthusiastically as he'd expected, because they were gazing at the light beam behind him in bewilderment.

Hong Tong was surprised and turned back, only to notice that the Rank of Stars was changing violently while Team Blue Bronze jumped upward to…

10th of the Rank of Stars!

Then, they heard shocking exclamations from the chitchatting Orb Patrollers nearby.

Soon, the latest news popped up at the bottom of the light beam. Everybody's eyes were stung by the blood red.

"Team Dragon Slayers, originally 6th in the Rank of Stars, was ambushed by the demon clan during a mission in Forest Sea; there were no survivors. All six members, including the captain who ranked 2441st on the Stars to Destroy List, have perished!"

…

Ten days later, in the Temple of Fallen Stars, a building of solemnity and reverence in front of the central square of Empyreal Star City.

During the ten days, Team Blue Bronze had poured all the resources available to purchase a large batch of secret treasures. They had also completed another mission, securing tenth place on the Rank of Stars to this day and leaving no chance for the Star Teams behind to catch up to them.

Explorations of the Occult Orbs were extremely perilous endeavors. Orb Patrollers died every month.

In the middle of each month, all the Orb Patrollers in Empyreal Star City would congregate in the Temple of Fallen Stars to pay their respects to the Orb Patrollers who were gone.

Over the past few months, the resource competition between the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector had gotten fiercer and fiercer.

Many names on the Deadly Demons List had been eradicated.

On the other hand, thirty-one Orb Patrollers had fallen, including Team Dragon Slayers which had been eliminated as a team. It was a great loss for Occult Orbs Fellowship.

Therefore, the Temple of Fallen Stars was extraordinarily grave today.

In the temple, Li Yao bowed to the 3D portraits of the Cultivators who'd passed away over the last month deferentially three times, left the line, and mourned silently, with mixed feelings rolling over in his heart.

Although the accident of Team Dragon Slayers had emptied room for Team Blue Bronze to return to the top 10 of the Ranks of Stars effortlessly, it was not a result that Li Yao desired.

On one hand, reaching the top ten in such a way felt like cheating.

On the other hand, although Team Dragon Slayers was exclusively made of Children of Occult Orbs and they'd never seen eye to eye with Team Blue Bronze, they were Cultivators of the Heaven's Origin Sector after all. The conflicts between them seemed trivial when a war concerning the future of the human race was drawing near.

Li Yao couldn't help but feel sad for the demise of so many fellow Orb Patrollers.

Seeing from the 3D portraits the vivid figures, some of whom had been training with him, some of whom had been on the same mission as him, and still some of whom had asked him to modify magical equipment for them, Li Yao was clenching his fists tighter and tighter.

Chapter 388: Best Warriors, Three Nascent Souls!

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"Today is the day when the secret operation will be revealed. The top ten teams on the Rank of Stars are all here!" Captain Hong Tong said softly.

Li Yao retreated his gaze and glanced around.

The super teams ranking in top ten usually wouldn't stay too long in Empyreal Star City. They were either in an Occult Orb or on their way to one. So, Team Blue Bronze had barely seen them in reality before.

However, Li Yao had watched their mission videos hundreds of times to learn lessons from them. Therefore, he recognized them without any trouble.

Team Nine Cauldrons, whose six members were all above the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage. Their melee combat ability was the best in Occult Orbs Fellowship.

Team Permanent Apparition. Four out of its six members were adept at mental attacks; they could make their enemy's brain crumble without drawing their weapons.

Team White Fang. All six of its members were gun experts who were best at gunfighting. Once their fire net took form, even a demon king might be minced instantly.

Of course, there was also Team Thunder Soul led by Yan Jun, the first on the Rank of Stars for an entire year and the unquestionable king of Occult Orbs Fellowship.

While Li Yao was eyeing the other nine teams, they were also observing him quietly.

Team Blue Bronze was once a top 5 team. Its return was not very surprising. The old members such as Hong Tong and Ba Weiqi were all skilled Orb Patrollers whose capabilities were well acknowledged.

On the other hand, the eye-opening performance of the two newcomers, namely Vulture Li Yao and Inferno Witch Ding Lingdang, had attracted the attention of quite a few Orb Patrollers and Cultivation sects.

It was going to take a long time before two worlds were fully merged. According to the astronomers, the process could be as protracted as twenty or even thirty years.

Since the development levels of the two worlds were similar to each other, there was a good chance that neither of them would be able to defeat its nemesis before the final war, not without some extremely lucky accidents.

Which meant that this war could linger on for decades.

The young Cultivators who were full of potential such as Li Yao and Ding Lingdang might still be at the beginning level or middle level of the Building Foundation Stage at present. But after twenty to thirty years of training and killing, they would likely become first-rate experts as long as they were lucky enough to not get killed.

While the two parties were spotting each other, a breeze without any sign started drifting inside the temple.

In the blink of an eye, three shadows appeared in front of the temple before they consolidated, as if they'd been standing there the whole time.

Li Yao was entirely refreshed. The real experts were here!

On the left, it was a bald, athletic man more than two meters tall. His bulging muscles left the illusion that his black tuxedo was one size too slim and that it was going to be torn apart at any time. There was an extremely tiny flying sword on his back, which was so small that it looked like a child's toy.

For a muscular man of his height and weight, it was only reasonable that he wielded chainswords that were two meters or even three meters long. Yet, his weapon was a flying sword that had a length of no more than twenty centimeters, which was like an iron toothpick compared to his appearance. The contrast was somewhat hilarious.

The one in the middle was a plain-looking old man who was wearing ordinary clothes. The drowsy countenance and the messy grey hair could be found everywhere in a town on the retired old men who were idling around every day.

On the right, it was a graceful, middle-aged lady. Since they were here to pay respect to the sacrificed warriors, she was wearing a white dress, naturally bringing an air that she was an angle who did not belong to this world.

The auras of the three experts were locked into their body without any bit being leaked out. But still, one could feel the overwhelming dominance from them. This must be what the poets called 'traceless suppression'.

"Nascent Soul! Three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators!"

Li Yao's eyes were full of passion. He was thinking of holding up his eyelids with his fingers, so that he wouldn't miss anything that the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators said or did.

In the entire Heaven's Origin Sector, there were only a few dozen Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, and less than a thousand Core Formation Stage Cultivators.

Among the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, there were fewer than ten battle-type Cultivators. Most of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were admin-type and research-type Cultivators.

After all, the advancement of battle-type Cultivators often required fierce combat. Their death rate was far higher than the death rate of Cultivators of other types.

The three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were all Councilors of Occult Orbs Fellowship. Li Yao had paid a great many contribution points for their tutorial videos before. Therefore, he recognized them instantly.

They were all battle-type Cultivators!

A third of the best warriors of the Heaven's Origin Sector were standing right in front of him!

In veneration and deference, Li Yao held his breath and recalled the stories about the three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

The inconspicuous messy old man in the middle was 'Iron God' Yan Ba, known as the best body practitioner in the Heaven's Origin Sector, who was the former leader of Marvelous Fist Sect and also a 'body fundamentalist' that despised all sorts of magical equipment and resorted to nothing but his own fists during combat.

Li Yao had studied one of his combat videos before, in which he beat a demon king to death bare-handed in less than five seconds. Li Yao had to admit that his fists were the most formidable weapons in the world, sharper than any magical equipment could ever be.

The middle-aged lady on the right was 'Sevenfold Dreams' Meng Weiyang, a hybrid-type Cultivator both talented in combat and culture.

She was a Grand Illusionist, one of the most mysterious professions in the world of Cultivators. She was best at creating an illusionary wonderland with her pen in which her enemy would be trapped in endless scenes dominated by the rules written by her.

The bald, muscular man on the left who was using a weapon that was the very opposite of his size had a nickname that was equally in discordance to his stature—'Sand'.

'Sand' Sha Tianqing, 192 years old, founder of 'School of Sand'.

'School of Sand' was also known as 'Quicksand'. It was not a real sect but a regularly-held seminar where Cultivators of different sects with similar beliefs gathered together and exchanged their ideas and thoughts.

Cultivators participating in the School of Sand maintained that speed was the decisive factor for strength. As long as the speed was high enough, a grain of sand was enough to kill a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator!

Therefore, magical equipment, mystic rays, and all other trivial technologies were all unnecessary. There was one and only one thing that School of Sand studied, which was how to accelerate an ordinary item to a super-high speed beyond limits.

As a result, School of Sand was also known as 'School of Acceleration'. Some of the believers even held that, when its momentum broke the ultimate limit, a grain of sand could blow a planet into pieces effortlessly, let alone Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

Of course, it was a different matter entirely to keep the sand intact at such high speeds.

Although countless Cultivators had openly declared that the principles of School of Sand were nothing but a joke, none of them ever dared to look down upon Sha Tianqing himself. In quarrels as to what 'the right path of Cultivation' was, Sha Tianqing had proved his theories time and time again with the extraordinary speed of the ordinary-looking flying sword on his back.

The appearance of the three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators cast the entire temple into an odd silence. Everyone was staring at them with passion and admiration like Li Yao.

The three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators paid respect to the sacrificed Orb Patrollers solemnly first. After mourning in silence for one minute, they turned around and glanced over the crowd with sharp eyes.

Meng Weiyang said seriously, "Three months ago, Occult Orbs Fellowship proclaimed a secret operation which required ten candidate teams. The teams we choose will receive the unreserved enlightenment of the Nine Councilors of Occult Orbs Fellowship as well as Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the Heaven's Origin Sector.

"I believe most of you have heard of a thing or two about the secret operation. We're about to commence the exploration of Ultimacy!

"According to our latest intelligence, the Blood Demon Sector is also pouring all the resources they have into the construction of an unprecedented super teleportation array named 'Eye of Blood Demon'. In the meantime, they have been winnowing out the promising princes and nobles from all the demon kingdoms, building up the candidates' bodies with the cruelest, bloodiest methods, and preparing to send them to Ultimacy.

"What I'm saying is that the Orb Patrollers taking part in the mission to Ultimacy will most likely be engaged with the most formidable enemies in history.

"The opportunities and dangers have been stated clearly to you. If any of you wishes to withdraw, please step back so that the subsequent teams can fill up your place. If you've made up your mind, the mission to Ultimacy will officially begin now!"

…

One day later, in a rocky valley three hundred kilometers away from Empyreal Star City…

Six military bases were in the periphery, with countless flying sword positions and surface-to-air defense rune arrays. There were even more than a hundred crystal warships stationed in this area.

Inside the valley, there was a giant crater almost five hundred meters in diameters. The inner wall of the crater was as smooth as a mirror, as if it had been made of glass.

The entire pit seemed to be a result of a gargantuan meteorite.

Passing multiple checkpoints, a few crystal airships flew toward the crater.

With his nose pressed firmly against the cabin window, Li Yao observed the crater carefully.

The closer he got, the more he was impressed by the splendor of the crater. It gave the feeling that he was an ant crawling in an enormous pan.

When he was five hundred meters from it, he noticed that the wall of the crater was covered in runes the size of a palm.

To cover such a giant crater with such small runes, what a marvelous project it was!

In the middle of the crater was a hole more than ten meters in diameter leading to the deep underground, which made the crater look somewhat like a funnel.

Li Yao could vaguely feel the furious spiritual waves of the fire class being emitted from the depths of the funnel.

"This is the super teleportation array that can send Cultivators to Ultimacy nearly ten thousand lightyears away, our Heaven's Artillery."

Standing at the front of the cabin, Meng Weiyang said proudly, "Since the scale of the teleportation array was too large and the star rails demanded are too long, it is impossible to fix the problem regarding the hardness of star rails and the spiritual energy supply on the ground.

Therefore, the Heaven's Artillery has been established under the ground.

"The pit you can see right now is the silo of the Heaven's Artillery.

"We chose this valley because there is a very active magma belt underground. It is filled with intense spiritual energy and is desperate to rush to the surface.

"Transformed by tens of thousands of rune arrays, the furious fiery spiritual energy has become pure and stable which will be used to activate the Heaven's Artillery. When the time comes, the star shuttle will be launched by a volcanic eruption!"

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"However, the underground magma belt does not explode every day. According to the specialists, it goes into its medium eruptive state every half month and its super eruptive state every half a year.

"The next super eruptive state is coming in one and a half months from now. Only with the energy released from the big magma explosion can the Heaven's Artillery be full activated to fire five star shuttles to Ultimacy."

Meng Weiyang went into even greater detail.

The federal government was planning to select five out of the top ten Star Teams as the first batch of explorers. They would cruise through the sea of stars in one and a half months' time, travelling a distance of almost ten thousand lightyears for the first time ever in history.

But since Ultimacy was too far away from the Heaven's Origin Sector, the spiritual connection between the star shuttles and their homeland would be quite feeble after they were launched. In no more than 24 hours, the connection would be lost.

Therefore, the five star shuttles setting off on the journey were not recoverable. The thirty Orb Patrollers would have to persist by themselves for one month in Ultimacy.

One month later, with the energy of a medium magma explosion, the Heaven's Artillery could be activated to 50%, which was not enough to launch manned star shuttles but more than capable of sending five empty star shuttles over.

The thirty Orb Patrollers would have to locate the five empty star shuttles within the next day and return to the Heaven's Origin Sector through them.

As for the five eliminated Star Teams, they would be second-tier candidates to explore Ultimacy again half a year later when the magma belt entered the super eruptive state again.

Listening to the briefing from Meng Weiyang, everyone in the cabin put on impatient, aggressive expressions. Orb Patrollers from different Star Teams were eyeing each other with unmistakable hostility.

"Five out of ten. It's going to be a fierce competition."

Ding Lingdang spoke to Li Yao in a low voice, full of eagerness.

Li Yao was not as light-hearted as her.

None of the top ten teams would be easy to cope with. Everybody was fighting for the supreme honor with all they had.

They were currently at the tenth place. It was almost their limit. Any step upward would be extremely difficult.

An Orb Patroller from Team White Fang raised his hand and asked, "Councilor Meng, I would like to ask, what kind of training will we receive in the coming month, and how will the final examination be conducted?"

Meng Weiyang answered emotionlessly, "In order to give you the abilities needed to survive at least one month in Ultimacy against the best elites of the Blood Demon Sector, Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators will teach you in person for the coming month.

"However, the capability of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators is often unfathomable. Even their true disciples may not be able to learn much from them in a year, not to mention that you only have one month of time.

"If possible, we would like very much to give you another half year and keep you studying until then.

"But times waits for no one. 'Eye of Blood Demon', the super teleportation array of the Blood Demon Sector, is almost completed. It is estimated that the first teleportation will be performed very soon.

"If we wait until the next year, the demon clan will have stolen all the treasures in Ultimacy by then.

"Therefore, we have to make do with whatever we have.

"To improve your strength as much as possible and as shortly as possible for you to become the strongest Building Foundation Stage Cultivators in the history of the Star Glory Federation, Occult Orbs Fellowship has specially initiated a special training facility from the Star Ocean Imperium.

"This training facility can retrieve the most impressive memory pieces from the brains of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, transform them into oceans of information, and inject them into your brains, while keeping all the telepathic thoughts inside intact.

"As long as you are able to digest and absorb the knowledge, you will be blessed with a short memory fragment of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. You will be able to feel what they felt and experience what they have experienced!

"But I need to remind you that memory fragments of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators are made of extremely fierce mental power which is too dangerous for Building Foundation Stage Cultivators such as yourselves, even with the protection of the training facility.

"It is almost like feeding a three-year-old with roasted beef. The child is very likely to be killed by the tasteful food.

"Of course, the most proficient doctors of the Star Glory Federation have been summoned here. All kinds of strengthening drugs cooked by Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures will be at your disposal. But the odds are still high that you will be seriously damaged by the foreign intrusion. In better-case scenarios, your brain might be injured, and your Cultivation will drop a lot; in worse-case scenarios, your brain cells could be entirely destroyed, and you will fall into a vegetative state!

"So, I'm going to repeat my words. It's still not too late to go back right now. If you are not determined to make it to the end, you'd better not waste the resources of Occult Orbs Fellowship as well as your own life!

"This is both a training session and a match. In one month, the first batch of Star Teams to go on the expedition to Ultimacy will be nominated according to the progress of your memory absorption and your comprehensive capability!"

Meng Weiyang's words immediately raised whispers inside the cabin.

Grasping the combat experience and teachings of a higher-level Cultivator by transmitting memories between brains and reading the memories of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators directly…

This unbelievable method of training was indeed risky, but the potential gains were enormous, too.

Everyone was half worried and half delighted, worried that their brains might be damaged to the point of loss of consciousness, and delighted at Meng Weiyang's declaration about them becoming the strong Building Foundation Stage Cultivators in the history of the Star Glory Federation.

Li Yao was the only exception. His face was so outlandish that he seemed to have stuffed an egg into his mouth. He was not sure about what to feel.

'Training by absorbing memories? Are you serious?

'Just my cup of tea!'

The rest of Team Blue Bronze, on the other hand, were quite grave. Hong Tong frowned and said, "Memory transmission? It seems that the giants of the Heaven's Origin Sector are indeed trying to do their best for the trip to Ultimacy!"

It was not hard to understand that the memories of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, which were their most precious property, might only be available for their blood descendants. Even their true disciples might not have the privilege of enjoying them.

If it were in a different scenario, the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators wouldn't bother to think about it even if someone offered tens of billions for them.

Captain Hong Tong had heard a thing or two about the memory transmission facility from the Star Ocean Imperium before.

It was said that the facility was one of Occult Orbs Fellowship's greatest treasures ever retrieved, and it took ten years to transport the facility from an Occult Orb back to the Heaven's Origin Sector.

Every time it was to be used, it would require a huge amount of precious Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and an astronomical number of crystals.

It was not an exaggeration to say that, every minute it was functioning, the cost was equivalent to a crystal tank being burnt to the ground.

The Cultivators and the federal government were indeed generous this time.

"It is said that the process of memory transmission through the facility can be so excruciating that even Cultivators find it hard to resist. Many of them withdraw half way through it. Not to mention that the procedure can be quite dangerous anyway.

"Li Yao, the top ten Star Teams are mostly middle-level and high-level Building Foundation Stage Cultivators. Very few of their members are at the beginning level of the Building Foundation Stage. Your Cultivation is the lowest of all.

"Although your battle experience is quite abundant, and you are an excellent Exo, which allows you to stand up to opponents at the middle level or even high level of the Building Foundation Stage, memory transmission depends more on the solidness of your soul and the hardness and broadness of your brain. It is a hardcore battle devoid of any tricks. Don't be too greedy.

"Over the next month, you should try your best to digest and absorb one memory piece of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator.

"If you have extra time and vigor, you may consider absorbing a second piece. But don't go any further than that. Otherwise, I'm afraid it will be too much for your brain, and you might lose your mind because of that!"

Hong Tong spoke solemnly.

Li Yao was the most irreplaceable member in the team right now. Many tactics wouldn't work without him. If he went crazy, Team Blue Bronze would lose all hope.

Li Yao's lips moved, as he was planning to defend himself. But on second thought, he realized that cheap talk wouldn't mean anything, and that it would be best if he could try this 'memory transmission facility' first before making any empty promises.

Li Yao smiled and replied sincerely, "I will do what I can, no more and no less, captain. I will eat until my stomach is full and stop there. I won't be greedy."

Three hours later, 61 Orb Patrollers, including Li Yao, arrived at the depths of the facility after thorough physical examinations.

What they saw was a vast training base that could almost be called an underground palace. It had been constructed for the mission to Ultimacy.

Other than fully-equipped training rooms, a few Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators had also set up their villas nearby, where they had been living for a long time in preparation for the likely assaults that the demon clan would launch against the Heaven's Artillery.

Li Yao walked into a training room which was decorated in pure white. The door closed quietly behind him, leaving no trace on the wall at all. The room seemed to be an enclosed eggshell right now.

For the next month, he would be training in this place.

In the middle of the training room was a capsule that looked like a giant cocoon. It was filled with bright green liquid with a vague, cheesy aroma.

Taking off his clothes, Li Yao stepped into the capsule in his mustard suit that was as thin as the wings of a cicada. He slowly lowered himself into the strengthening drug. It flowed through his nasal cavity into his body, but his breathing was not blocked at all. If anything, it was more permeable and comfortable than before.

Thousands of silver threads crowded around him from various directions and covered him gently.

Over his head, the silver threads formed complicated patterns.

On Li Yao's retina, almost a hundred pictures appeared weirdly, each with a large introductory paragraph beside it.

There were almost a hundred memory fragments from Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. The trainees were allowed to pick them according to their specialties, interests, and personal strength.

For the memory pieces of daily training, they contained relatively less information, and their shock to the brain would be less.

But for the memory pieces which included fierce combats, the information contained inside could be as rampageous as raging flood. They would cause severe shock to the brain.

Holding his breath, Li Yao glanced over all the pictures and selected the first memory piece shortly after.

It was a memory piece that recorded a dangerous combat that 'Iron God' Yan Ba was engaged in when he'd just broken into the Nascent Soul Stage. The data contained inside was tremendous. It was extremely difficult and risky to absorb!

Something hummed inside Li Yao's brain, while a line of white words popped up on his retina.

"Orb Patroller Li Yao, you are now at the beginning level of the Building Foundation Stage. Absorbing a combat memory piece with vast information streams such as the one you are picking can pose a serious threat to your brain and may even lead to mental derangement. Are you sure you want to take this memory piece?"

"I am!"

Chapter 390: Astonished Nascent Souls

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In the center of the underground training base, there was a gigantic control center where almost ten thousand blinking light beams were floating in the air.

Meng Weiyang, Sha Tianqing, and Yan Ba, three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, were observing the constantly-changing pictures solemnly.

In some of the light beams, the 61 Orb Patrollers were soaking in the strengthening drugs, holding their breath, and meditating.

The light beams around those ones displayed the status of their muscles, nerves, veins, and bones layer by layer as if the scenes had been shot using a fluoroscope.

Complicated data was pouring on still other light beams, which displayed the vital signs of the Orb Patrollers. They even included the change of hardness of the Orb Patrollers' cells.

If anyone went senseless, they would be treated within the next half second.

After all, transmitting memory pieces of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators into the brains of Building Foundation Stage Cultivators could be really unsafe.

The process almost equaled to inputting the bloody battle memories of a seasoned special forces soldier into the brain of an infant.

The most likely outcome was not that the infant would be given abundant experiences, but that the infant would go insane on the spot!

Therefore, behind the three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, dozens of Core Formation Stage Cultivators were working busily. Quite a few research-type Core Formation Stage Cultivators were paying close attention to the body status and the brain cell activities of the Orb Patrollers. A large batch of doctors, nutritionists, and training planners were also standing by.

Standing behind them was the higher-ups of the military and dozens of members of parliament, who were all experienced experts too.

Almost one fifth of all the troops of the Star Glory Federation had been deployed in this place.

The mission to Ultimacy concerned the destiny of the federation as well as the entire sector. If the Blood Demon Sector retrieved any planetary magical equipment, or even stellar magical equipment, everyone here would be screwed.

The dire consequences had prompted the federal government to invest all the resources available into the edification of the strongest Building Foundation Stage Cultivators in history.

"Dangerous. It's too dangerous. After one month of training, I'm afraid many of them will go crazy. The souls of some of them may be broken and get them killed instantly," Iron God

Yan Ba said in a low voice, not expressing his emotions, but stating a fact.

Sha Tianqing, the bald, muscular man, replied calmly, "But the real elites will have an opportunity to truly distinguish themselves, too. There's no second way other than this that can improve the capability of a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator up to a peak that is unreachable in history.

"The exploration of Ultimacy is a risky mission in itself that will probably have an unimaginably high death rate. If they go crazy here, they can be given the best treatment quickly, but if they are incapable when they are engaged with the elite demons in Ultimacy, they will possibly be killed without leaving any traces."

"Old Sha is correct. As long as half of them can pass the test and devour three to five of our memory pieces, the odds of success of the mission will be increased by at least 17%," Meng Weiyang said factually. "As for the top experts at the Building Foundation Stage such as Yan Jun, they may even be able to absorb more than ten memory pieces. If so, they will be the key to victory in Ultimacy!"

Yan Ba nodded. The Building Foundation Stage Cultivators in the high level or at the peak, including Yan Jun, were their priority targets.

At this moment, 61 Orb Patrollers started selecting the memory piece that they wanted to read.

"Beep! Beep!"

Dozens of light beams were suddenly in red.

A Cultivator in the beginning level of the Building Foundation Stage was applying for a Level 2 battle-related memory fragment.

In order to produce the best Building Foundation Stage Cultivators for the mission to Ultimacy, the Cultivators of the Heaven's Origin Sector spared no effort. 24 Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators provided more than two hundred memory fragments in total.

Some of them were their daily training or research, while some others were battles that they had been engaged in.

But the memory fragments that involved battles were of different danger levels. Some of them were just scenes of them slaughtering low-level demon beasts like a lion hunting rabbits, which were relatively easier to take in. But some of them were the memories of them struggling on the verge of death after being besieged by formidable enemies.

According to the amount of information and the potential danger, the memory pieces were classified into ten levels.

Level-2 memory pieces were already hazardous enough.

The three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator looked at each other, but they didn't stop the Cultivator's reckless choice. They simply asked the doctors and the research-type Core Formation Stage Cultivators to focus more attention on the guy.

The mission of Ultimacy was the largest strategic gamble in the history of the Star Glory Federation. It was filled with uncertainties by itself.

If the Building Foundation Stage Cultivator wished to make a bold attempt, of course, they would fully support it. The choice was indeed a dangerous one, but if everyone retreated when they were faced with danger, how could they ever sail through the sea of stars and fight their way forward ten thousand lightyears away?

"Breathing, normal. Heartbeat, normal. Intensity of brain waves, normal. Functioning of spiritual energy, normal. Loading the memory piece!"

"Progress: 33%... 46%... 77%..."

"Not good. The intensity of brain waves is growing way too fast. It's soaring out of the normal range!"

"His spiritual energy is too violent. It's a sign of loss of control over the body!"

"Breathing in disorder! Cardiac arrest! Nerve reactions partly lost! The brain has been damaged. We're losing him!"

"Hurry up, stop the memory transmission of Orb Patroller No. 33 and implement the No. 9 treatment plan! Prepare first aid!"

Everyone saw from the light beam that water was splashing from the capsule inside the No. 33 training room. Someone was cramping inside. Two arms whose veins were bulging waved crazily in the air for a moment, before they fell into the liquid helplessly.

The hundred light beams monitoring the status of this Orb Patroller all turned red, while a blood red line popped up in the main light beam.

"Memory transmission, failed!"

Weak sighs could be heard all around the control center.

The special training had started for less than ten minutes, and an Orb Patroller had gone crazy. It was certainly not a good omen.

Yet, the three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were entirely emotionless. Even their eyelashes did not move at all. They stared at other light beams without any expression.

"Beep! Beep!"

Another hundred light beams were glittering in dangerous redness, in a frequency that was twice than previously.

Another Building Foundation Stage Cultivator had selected a memory piece that was supposed to be unbearable for him.

What he selected was a Level-1 battle-related memory piece which was the riskiest of all!

Everyone in the control center gasped. All the doctors and research-type Cultivators started taking reactions according to the rehearsal.

"Focus on the No. 59 training room!"

"Attention, everyone! A memory transmission with an estimated failure rate of 95% is about to commence. Be prepared for possible brain injuries!"

"Memory transmission begins. Progress: 25%… 59%… 74%…"

"Heartbeat rate, 338% of normal. Brain cell activity, 453% of normal. Both are still on the rise! Major fluctuations of spiritual energy! He is about to lost consciousness!"

"Brain cell activity, 588%! 689%! Growing, still growing!"

"Dear lord!"

"What… Check the monitoring equipment right now and see if there's anything wrong with it. The data does not fit his vital signs at all!"

"According to the figures, Orb Patroller No. 59 should've gone into the vegetative state long ago! His brain should've been burnt to ash already!"

"His brain cell activity has been upgraded to 758%. Even many Core Formation Stage Cultivators would not be able to do that. But he is only a Cultivator in the beginning level of the Building Foundation Stage."

"Judging from the twitching of his nerve endings, he is in excruciating pain right now. But his breath and heartbeat are both stabilized at the 500% level and working in a normal state!"

"Memory transmission progress, 84%… 95%… The velocity is steady!"

"Memory transmission completed!"

"How could that be!"

"Every piece of data about the Cultivator indicates that he should be in a state of insanity. But he didn't go crazy. He entered the Level-1 battle-related memory piece and is absorbing it rapidly!"

The unimaginable figures changed the color on everyone's face. The doctors and specialists, who seemed to have everything under their control a moment ago, were in a flurry now.

The three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators stared at the light beam with their full attention. The series of data was hopping and glistening in the depths of their pupils.

"What's the name of Orb Patroller No. 59? Which sect is he from? Who are his parents?"

Soon, all the files on Orb Patroller No. 59 were filtered and projected to a new light beam, which was then enlarged by ten times so that everyone could see it clearly.

"Parents of Orb Patroller No. 59 are not Cultivators. He is an orphan, and he comes from the Grand Desolate War Institution!"

"His name is Li Yao!"

…

Li Yao was not aware that many people had been greatly shocked by his insane brain cell activity and his monster-like nervous system and that even a few Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were interested in him, because he had entered the memory piece of 'Iron God' Yan Ba's fiercest battle.

He had selected Yan Ba after thorough consideration.

Yan Ba had never used any kind of magical equipment. As the most obstinate 'body fundamentalist', he was the very opposite of Li Yao who was a skilled refiner and utilized magical equipment to secure victories.

Many of the memory fragments available for Li Yao included experts wielding their powerful magical equipment in battles. Several of them were even the scenes of the best refiners at the Nascent Soul Stage refining marvelous magical equipment.

However, Li Yao had been walking on the path of combining ancient methodologies with modern ones. A huge bunch of memory pieces from Ou Yezi had already been stored inside his brain. He did not intend to introduce memory pieces from someone else in case there were conflicts.

As a refiner who had crafted many kinds of powerful magical equipment before, he knew best the feeling when his magical equipment that he relied on turned unusable.

Ultimacy was an Occult Orb that no one had ever stepped on before. No one could foresee what kind of danger was lurking there. In those extreme conditions, he might lose all the magical equipment that he deemed necessary. He did not intend to just wait to be killed in such a scenario.

Therefore, he might as well swallow some memory pieces from the body fundamentalists based on his amazing body toughness and learn how to fight his battles without the help of any magical equipment!

The environment was blurred, all the details gone. He lost his body, while part of his soul was attached to Iron God Yan Ba. He could feel clearly Yan Ba's thoughts, tactical plans, and even his anxiety.

Torrents of information were on a rampage inside his brain.

Li Yao's brain had been expanded by the ocean of memory fragments from Ou Yezi. Absorbing memory pieces had become a daily routine for him, like eating and drinking.

The memory of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator pricked his brain. But he got used to it very quickly.

In front of him, or rather, in front of Iron God Yan Ba, was a hideous behemoth hundreds of meters long that looked like a huge mountain!

Chapter 391: Primeval Force!

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The appearance of the mountain-like beast was between that of a living creature and that of an enormous rock. Rugged stones were everywhere on its black body. The shell between the rocks was scattered with crossing ravines, from which scorching venom was flowing. At first look, they seemed like magma from the underground.

What was more terrible was the ten or so black lumps growing on the two sides of the spine of the beast. They were fluctuating and spurting red venom with a temperature of thousands of degrees, as if dozens of volcanoes were erupting at the same time.

The hundreds of square meters nearby were a burning hell enshrouded in black smoke and pungent smell of sulfur.

This mountainous beast was a volcano beast!

It was impossible for such an appalling demon beast to be born naturally.

It was actually a biochemical beast that the demon scientists procreated based on dozens of strong demon beasts after thousands of years of evolution, mutation and metamorphosis.

Since the metabolism of their body was too fast and their life was burning too fast, a volcano beast could only live two to three years. Their brains shrank in size, too, resulting to their low intelligence. It was impossible for them to ever evolve into intelligent beings. They were nothing but destructive killing machines.

Destructive killing machines were the purpose of the human beings when they created demon beasts.

But what was ironic was that the almost perfect biochemical weapons were never successfully made until the demon race restarted the project.

"HOOOO!"

The volcano beast roared astoundingly. The dozens of venomous lumps on its back sprayed poisoned magma. For a moment, the sky rained fire. Furious flames were burning everywhere on the ground while crackling, adding liveliness to the dead silent battleground.

Iron God Yan Ba, bare-handed, was confronting an opponent hundreds of times larger than himself.

Part of Li Yao's soul tangled Yan Ba and seemed to merge with him into one. Not only could he smell the stinky, hot air, feel the skin being burnt, and sense the spiritual energy careening unstoppably inside every nerve and every vein, he also knew Yan Ba's mental state, thoughts, and his undying fighting will.

Li Yao discovered that, faced with such a gargantuan beast, Yan Ba was actually absent-minded!

The thoughts of Yan Ba penetrated through the depths of the brain and traced back to the primeval point of life and even beyond, where he triggered the power of the bloodline that his parents, grandparents, great grandparents, and all earlier ancestors had passed on generation after generation to all the human beings, including himself.

Mankind did not appear out of thin air, nor was it a creature of any supernatural existences.

From monads at the beginning, to trilobites and nautili, to draconic sharks and Sarcosuchus, to Smilodon, mammoths, and oriental apes…

On the path of evolution, human beings had broken limits time and time again, struggled against the ever-changing environment, and survived the apocalypse of thousands of falling stars which was supposed to wipe out all the living creatures. Only by doing so was the greatest species in the sea of stars crowned!

Draconic sharks, Sarcosuchus, Hydras, Tyrannosaurs… The once unparalleled kings in the history of evolution were all the ancestors of the human race!

Just because human beings embarked on a new path of evolution by developing their brains, burning their spiritual energy, and creating all kinds of magical equipment and stopped resorting to brute force in a fight due to diminishing body size and physical strength, didn't mean their bloodline, which could be dated back to the prehistoric era, was gone.

The terrible force that once split the sky and earth against natural disasters was hidden in the deepest part of every cell inside the human body. It had been bequeathed to every human being and was never lost.

The so-called 'body fundamentalists' would trigger the deepest memories inside the cells and thus place themselves into the atavistic state. Then, they could blow out the primitive force that once belonged to Draconic sharks, Sarcosuchus, Hydras, and Tyrannosaurs.

"HOOOOO!"

Li Yao couldn't tell whether it was himself or Yan Ba, but the guy roared more wildly and violently than the volcano beast did with the seemingly delicate throat!

The world was collapsing before Li Yao. He seemed to have travelled back in time to millions, no, billions of years ago!

The desolate battleground was no more. He was placed in a hot, muggy antediluvian continent. Unfolding in front of his eyes was a giant ape more than ten meters tall whose hair was sticking up.

The ape was roaring to the dim moon and waving to the sky savagely.

After every punch, a cluster of gold brightness would be blown into the sky, stirring the air and shattering the clouds. Wind and thunder were echoing nonstop. The entire world was seething.

The land around it was all frozen, with dead bodies and ruins everywhere.

This was the ancestor of human beings challenging nature after surviving an apocalypse.

Then, Li Yao went further back to history. The gold-haired ape turned into a colossal tyrannosaur which had bloody horns on its head like a crown of thorns.

The tyrannosaur, together with its thousands of brethren, was gazing at the sky with their tiny eyes wide open inside a valley.

Thousands of meteorites poured down from the sky, riddling the sky with burning holes.

It was a level-2 apocalypse, and also one of the most disastrous catastrophes during the evolution of life.

Once the meteorites hit the earth, the surface of the planet would be flattened, all forms of life gone.

"HOOOO!"

The tyrannosaur wearing the thorny crown opened its bloody mouth and spurted out clusters of colorful, shining balls which collided with the meteorites and crushed them into pieces.

Most of the pieces of the meteorites dissipated in the atmosphere. Few of them were able to land on the earth and the ocean.

Outside of this valley, in and on thousands of other valleys, plateaus and oceans, countless dinosaurs were aiming at the meteorites in the sky and resisting the apocalypse with all they could.

Even if the apocalypse was supposed to destroy the planet, they would fight until their last breaths!

In the end, the level-2 apocalypse which could've disrupted the evolution of life was undermined by the dinosaurs, the dominators of the planet at the time, to a level-5 one. The natural environment was entirely reshaped, the climate got warmer, and all plants started mutating crazily.

The expert dinosaurs mostly perished in the disaster. The entire species gradually disappeared over the following millions of years.

But there were other creatures who survived the apocalypse and lived on.

The memory of the immense strength of the dinosaur race, however, was buried deep inside the cells and passed on to this day.

The picture changed again. Memories of the ancient times broke out continuously. Shadows of Draconic sharks, Sarcosuchus, Hydra Serpents and so on appeared in front of Li Yao's eyes one after another.

All the shadows were glittering with a gold brightness, unleashing incomparable supremacy from the long-gone past.

The dozens of intimidating shadows stood behind Yan Ba silently. After a moment, they turned into streaks of gold brightness and were absorbed by the pores all over his body.

Then, brilliance that eclipsed the sun beamed out from Yan Ba's eyes. The brute force kept in the depths of each cell was fully activated. His body suddenly expanded from an old man one and a half meters tall into a muscular giant more than three meters tall. The dark skin which was full of wrinkles seemed to be made of steel, but upon closer inspection, one would notice that it was actually the tensile skin resembling that on dinosaurs and Sarcosuchus.

The roots of human beings were in all extinct creatures. As primeval kings, the dinosaur race could be considered to be one of the earliest ancestors of the human race!

Right now, the power of the ancient bloodline took its full form inside the body of Yan Ba, an extraordinary body fundamentalist.

He crouched and jumped, leaving a giant pit more than thirty meters in diameter on the solid ground. The stones were compressed to such an extent that the bottom of the pit was as smooth as glass!

"Swoosh!"

Yan Ba charged at the volcano beast at seven times the speed of sound!

Despite the appalling size, the volcano beast was not in the least sluggish. It waved its giant paw brutally downwards.

"BOOM!"

…

Inside the capsule in the training room, Li Yao's body convulsed violently. After a crack in his chest, blood flowed out of the corner of his mouth, while his eyeballs were flickering crazily.

In the control center, another two hundred light beams were manifesting Li Yao's body status. The anomaly was immediately discovered by someone, who exclaimed in shock, "Orb Patroller No. 59 is successfully docked with the memory piece. He has entered the 'deep dock' state. The brain cells are affecting the body construction!"

"He seems to have experienced a heavy blow in the memory. His ribs are broken. His internal organs are bleeding, too. The injuries are too severe for a Cultivator at the beginning level of the Building Foundation Stage!"

"Hurry up, medical team! Prepare to inject liquefied Great Revelation Pill, liquefied Dragon Scale Grass, liquefied Nine Turns Soul Reviving Pills! Watch his body status and prepare to forcefully wake him up. And brace for his insanity!"

Vivid imagination could alter reality; vivid imagination was reality.

This was a world where mental power could change and decide real beings.

Expert Cultivators in the ancient times, after finding a secret book of martial arts, often looked for a perfect residence in a natural paradise, where they would seclude themselves for as long as twenty years, doing nothing but sitting cross-legged on the ground and meditating every day.

When they appeared in public again, their capability would be greatly improved beyond everyone's expectations.

It seemed pretty unreasonable. If an ordinary person were to keep the same posture for several hours, their body would be paralyzed. They could barely stand up again, not to mention building up their strength.

Why on earth could Cultivators sit for twenty years and be entirely renewed during the process?

This was an instance where mental power altered reality.

When meditating, Cultivators might seem still, but their brain cell activity was 500%, 1000% and even more higher than normal. They cleansed their body with their mental power and excited their every cell into a super active state that was even more intense than when they were doing vigorous exercise.

Vigorous exercise required rest. But stimulating the cells with mental power could be done for decades without pause.

Together with the spiritual energy in the natural paradises, it was no wonder that their capability could be significantly improved.

It was exactly so for Li Yao's current state.

Although he was lying inside the capsule quietly, his brain cells were more active than those of many Core Formation Stage Cultivators when they were engaged in fierce battles.

Yan Ba's memory piece that he read had been treated as a real-life experience by his body.

His body was far less sturdy than that of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. Therefore, he suffered tremendous injury from the impact.

However, Li Yao's body was still robust enough. With the Art of the Swallowing Whale, a basic Cultivation art of the Hundred Smelting Clan from 40,000 years ago, it devoured all the food and spiritual energy particulates near him mercilessly like a black hole.

"The concentration of the recovery drugs is dropping fast. 68% of the liquefied Great Revelation Pill has been used up. Most of the ingredients have been absorbed by him!"

"The guy's breath and heartbeat are still stable despite the serious injuries. Even his brain waves show no fluctuations at all, as if the injury is nothing unusual!"

"His body seems quite hungry. Hurry up, inject elixirs in double dosage!"

"Hiss… The broken bones and veins have started recovering!"

"What kind of monster is this guy?!"

Translator's Thoughts

flycrane01 flycrane01

Our Discord server:

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Come on and discuss the story with the translator and editor~

Chapter 392: A Month of Absorption!

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Astonishing brilliance burst out from the eyes of the three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

Being wounded was not a bad thing. On the contrary, it was a good omen that Li Yao had been immersed in the memory piece and that his mental power had started affecting his flesh and blood.

Memory transmission was a very advanced training method. His body was bound to be stronger when it recovered.

However, the speed of his recovery was indeed amazing…

"Vulture Li Yao? Interesting. I've heard of the name before, but I didn't pay much heed to it. It appears that a son of no one who awakened his spiritual root and marched into the Building Foundation Stage on his own has indeed got something to him. Old Yan, congratulations! Another super genius from the Grand Desolate Plateau has emerged!" Sha Tianqing said with a smile.

Iron God Yan Ba only nodded his head slightly, but there was delight in his eyes.

As a Cultivator from the Marvelous Fist Sect, he was a native of the Grand Desolate Plateau.

The Marvelous Fist Sect was also one of the largest sponsors of the Grand Desolate War Institution. The two parties were closely in touch.

Many Hall Leaders and Elders of Marvelous Fist Sect were graduates of the Grand Desolate War Institution. Some of them were even its visiting professors.

Since Li Yao came from the Grand Desolate War Institution, he could be considered a native of the Grand Desolate Plateau, too. Now that he had picked Yan Ba's memory piece as his first choice and become immersed in it perfectly, Yan Ba was quite pleased.

Although Cultivators of the Heaven's Origin Sector had always stuck together under the tremendous pressure from the Blood Demon Sector, there was always competition among them.

Born and raised in the Grand Desolate Plateau, Yan Ba naturally hoped that Cultivators from his hometown could be as strong as possible. That way, the voice of the Marvelous Fist Sect would be louder in the world of Cultivators.

Yan Ba spoke to an assistant in a low voice.

"Call President Xiong Baili of the Grand Desolate War Institution for me. I want to know more about this Vulture Li Yao."

"Look! Yan Jun and a few other high-level Building Foundation Stage Cultivators have entered a 'deep dock' state. Injuries are appearing on their bodies."

Everyone was refreshed and resumed their work.

Speak of geniuses, all the 61 Orb Patrollers here were one-in-ten-thousand super geniuses.

Whether or not Li Yao could distinguish himself depended on the thirty days of training's outcome!

…

In the memory piece, the three-minute fierce battle had come to an end.

The volcano beast had collapsed to the ground, like a water container which had leaked everything inside because it had been stabbed hundreds of times. Red venom was flowing everywhere on the ground. Since the body of the beast had lost the enhancement of demonic energy, its venom started eroding its own body.

But the volcano beast had lost the strength to scream. It was not until quite a while later that it moaned feebly.

From a gap on its head, a silver-blood demon with red hair was spat out. It was the master of this volcano beast.

There was a hole the size of a bowl on his abdomen, through which one could see that his internal organs had been minced. His eyes were wide open, but there was no light in them whatsoever.

Iron God Yan Ba was standing on the horn of the volcano beast. Bloody wounds were everywhere on his body. His flesh and blood were being corroded by the venom, causing excruciating pain.

Li Yao felt everything.

Despite his tough body and sturdy nerves, it was so agonizing that Li Yao almost wanted to kill himself.

But he knew that this was the most critical moment. If he couldn't bear it and withdrew from the memory piece, all his previous effort would have been in vain.

He carefully recalled the changes of Yan Ba's every muscle, every vein, and every nerve. He analyzed Yan Ba's every tactical choice. He studied how Yan Ba exerted the most force in each punch and how he dissolved the heavy blows he suffered by the coordination of spiritual energy and body movement.

Although the battle only lasted three minutes, it was like an encyclopedia with information as vast as an ocean. Li Yao was fascinated by it and started reading it crazily.

After he didn't know how long, Li Yao felt that he was in a trance. Knowing that his mental power was running dry, he had to exit the memory piece unwillingly.

His consciousness returned to his own brain. Ou Yezi's memory tree was still flourishing. All the memory pieces were glittering like golden leaves.

Something weird happened!

Many streaks of light crowded toward the tree from various directions and condensed into a whole new leaf on one of the branches.

It was the memory piece of Iron God Yan Ba versus the volcano beast!

Li Yao immediately thought of something.

According to the staff of Occult Orbs Fellowship, only with the training facility from the Star Ocean Imperium at the cost of countless Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures could the Orb Patrollers read the memory pieces of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators deeply in a 100%-real simulated world.

Otherwise, a memory would be just a memory.

A common Cultivator wouldn't be able to re-enter their own memory years ago without the help of magical equipment.

For most people, they would forget most of the details of what had happened yesterday after a night's sleep.

But it was apparently different for Li Yao.

Before Ou Yezi's soul perished, his immense soul power had planted this memory tree in the depths of Li Yao's brain.

It was his biggest secret as well as his greatest treasure.

Was it possible that the memory tree could absorb new memory pieces even though they didn't belong to Ou Yezi?

'Does that mean I can train with the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators' memory pieces whenever and wherever?'

Li Yao was greatly amazed.

For other Orb Patrollers, this special one month of 'seclusion' might be the most precious days in their Cultivation life, because in one month, they wouldn't be able to make use of the memories of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators without the support of the training facility from the Star Ocean Imperium.

But for Li Yao, he could utilize them repetitively in the future as long as he read them once now.

'It's officially decided then. I will try to absorb as many memory pieces as possible in the coming month!'

Li Yao opened his eyes and regained control over his body. He noticed his injuries but was not in the least bothered.

When fighting against Ding Lingdang, he had suffered much more serious injuries every few days.

Sometimes, when he was reading Ou Yezi's memory pieces, the mental power would feed the experience back to the body, too, leading to severe wounds even though nothing touched him.

He had gotten used to everything.

Li Yao jumped out of the capsule, wiped his body casually, and walked to the back of the training room.

Reading Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators' memory pieces would consume a lot of mental power for Building Foundation Stage Cultivators. They wouldn't be able to do it 24 hours a day.

Therefore, behind every training room, there were fully-equipped rehabilitation rooms, gravity rooms, meditation rooms, and gym rooms. The Orb Patrollers could take a rest and regain their mental power however they wanted.

Li Yao strode into the gravity room.

…

"Orb Patroller No. 59 had activated five times, no, seven… eight times gravity even though his body had not fully recovered!"

"Hiss… Does the guy not know what pain is? Other beginning-level Building Foundation Stage Cultivators would hardly be able to stand up with such serious injuries, and it would take them quite a few hours in the med bay before they could walk again!"

"His breathing and heartbeat are still stable. The broken ribs seem to have no effect on him at all!"

…

After exercising for two hours in the gravity room, Li Yao felt that he was mostly refreshed. He gobbled up a huge amount of high-nutrition food and drowned himself in the capsule again.

This time, he selected a new memory piece.

It still belonged to Iron God Yan Ba. But it was not a battle; it was reflection and meditation.

"Shua!"

The world twisted in front of Li Yao's eyes again. Lights were changing rapidly while his consciousness sank to the deepest part of his brain through an immeasurable black hole into a brave new world.

He found himself in an extremely spacious underground cave. Almost a hundred giant fossils were scattering in the place, which were all primeval beasts of the antediluvian era.

Draconic sharks, Sarcosuchus, Hydras, Tyrannosaurs…

The intimidating fossils hundreds of meters tall dwarfed the insignificant human being nearby.

Iron God Yan Ba sat cross-legged in the center of all the fossils, extending his telepathic thoughts like light smoke to the bones, claws, and teeth, while he sensed the primeval force of the ancient times.

Holding his breath, Li Yao started reflecting and meditating, too.

Days passed.

Li Yao devoured the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators' memory pieces gruesomely like a hungry tiger chasing lambs.

Sometimes, he entered the memory of Iron God Yan Ba and fought fearsome enemies bare-handed with nothing but the primeval force buried inside his cells.

Sometimes, he entered 'Sand' Sha Ziming's memory, where he learnt that a grass or a branch could kill everything when its speed broke all limits.

Sometimes, he visited Meng Weiyang's memory. The battles between mental attack experts that seemed tranquil but not any less dangerous were demonstrated to him.

There were still more memory pieces. Li Yao spared none of them, especially when they belonged to Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who were best at swords or sabers.

Half a month later, most Orb Patrollers absorbed no higher than five memory pieces, of which only one or two were battle-related.

After all, the information inside the battle-related memory pieces was too enormous for them digest easily.

Strong as Yan Jun may be, he had just absorbed 21 memory pieces.

In the meantime, Li Yao had already absorbed 49.

Even though he couldn't comprehend them all at once, he could store them on Ou Yezi's memory tree and study them later on.

One month later, it was the final day of the memory training.

Li Yao seized the last few minutes to work out in the gravity room.

Compared with one month ago, he was much thinner. His skin was pale, and his muscles were flattened. All his strength had been buried deep inside the cells.

Judging from his appearance, he looked somewhat like a scholarly, professional refiner.

But the number on the control menu gave his toughness away.

'Current setting: 20 times standard gravity!'

"Shua! Shua shua!"

Li Yao seemed to be standing still in the middle of the gravity room, but there were earsplitting sounds of air being torn apart.

Only the most advanced crystal cameras could capture his super-fast movements.

He was fighting against invisible demon beasts with the Demon Slaughterhouse.

After a short month, he had arrived at Level 33.

He was no longer faced with several demon beasts, but a boundless, ever-raging ocean of them!

Translator's Thoughts

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Chapter 393: Final Competition

Chapter 393: Final Competition

"Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!"

Despite the twenty times gravity, the sounds of air being torn apart grew more and more intense, as if an invisible storm was raging inside the small room.

Li Yao's chest was fluctuating fast. Arrow-like breaths were rushing out of his nose. The misty air inside the room twisted and blurred his figure.

It was his sweat which had been vibrated and atomized by his muscles.

Suddenly, the mustard suit on Li Yao's body, which was supposed to be elastic enough to be stretched to ten times its origin length, exploded into shreds the size of a fingernail and spluttered in the room. More than ten deep footprints appeared on the super-alloy floor. Every toe was distinguishable!

A moment later, the stomping noise echoed from the ground like thunder.

A mild synthesized voice came from the walls.

"Beep! Beep! Your time is up!"

"Phew…"

Taking a long breath, Li Yao walked out of the gravity room. One of the walls had glided open to two sides. Three pairs of artificial arms picked up a brand-new mustard suit and put it on him.

Black as the background, with red lines on the edges which gathered into jumping fire on his chest, the mustard suit highlighted his muscles and make him look sharper than ever.

He stretched his arms, and staring at the capsule for the last time, Li Yao strode out of the training room, never to look back.

A small teleportation array was waiting for him outside.

The last test was going to be held.

Of the ten Star Teams, only five could enter Ultimacy as the first echelon.

Everybody knew that the first echelon would be very likely to experience unexpected adventures.

As for the second echelon setting off half a year later, there might not even be leftovers for them.

Nobody would give up such a once-in-a-thousand-years opportunity.

Then, just let your capability do the talk!

Li Yao smiled confidently and stepped into the small teleportation array.

In the blink of an eye, he appeared in a world fragment.

This was a world of rocks. Clouds the color of lead were floating in the sky, as if they'd all been stuck together. The environment gave a feeling of gloom and mugginess.

Hills dozens of meters tall standing in the middle of nowhere like giant maze-like city walls.

Between some of the hills, there were pits and cracks dozens of meters deep where steams were popping up nonstop.

From the underground came suspicious noises that did not resemble the screams of demon beasts but sounded more like the roars of the earth itself.

Beside the teleportation array was a solid mini crystal processor as well as a vest refined from gold threads as thin as a cicada's wings and embedded with countless crystals.

Li Yao put both of them on. With a telepathic thought, the vest uttered a 'Bo' sound and enveloped him in a bright gold spiritual shield.

"Beep!"

The mini crystal processor was activated automatically, from which a fervent voice came out.

"Elites of the Orb Patrollers, your one month of special training has ended today!

"Over the past month, you've all experienced perilous tests and passed by the shadow of death more times than anyone could count. But you are also blessed with incomparable Cultivation knowledge.

"First of all, I'm sorry to tell you that, during the last month, five Orb Patrollers went deranged during their training and their brains were seriously damaged. Their lives were saved miraculously with attentive care. But their spiritual roots have been destroyed, and they will never be able to Cultivate again.

"There are another two Orb Patrollers who suffered even more injuries than them. They perished on the spot before any treatment could be applied!

"They've all sacrificed for the Star Glory Federation and for all Cultivators in the Heaven's Origin Sector. Let's have a one-minute silence in honor of the heroes!"

Li Yao was startled.

For him, absorbing memories were as simple as eating and drinking. He'd never realized that the process was so dangerous for other Cultivators.

Supported by the training facility from the Star Ocean Imperium, monitored and protected by so many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Core Formation Stage Cultivators, many of them still failed to make it. The result was beyond his expectation.

There were 61 Orb Patrollers in total. Seven of them had accidents. The casualty rate was approximately one ninth!

It was a stunningly high failure rate, and the consequences of failure were too dreadful!

Did Ding Lingdang and the other members of Team Blue Bronze completed the training successfully?

All of them had been secluded for the past month. Everybody was too busy minding their own business to communicate with other people.

To this moment, Li Yao had never learnt of Ding Lingdang's progress. He became somewhat anxious.

After a minute of silence, the passionate voice was heard again.

"But for those who have succeeded, your gains are tremendous.

"Some of you have absorbed dozens of memory pieces and retrieved valuable combat experiences.

"Some of you have taken in the spiritual energy contained in the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. Your capability has soared and even lead to your breakthroughs.

"In fact, four high-level Building Foundation Stage Cultivators have climbed to the peak of the Building Foundation Stage.

"In the meantime, there are almost twenty Cultivators who broke into the high level from middle level or broke into the middle level from the low level.

"It is not an exaggeration to say that you've already become the best Building Foundation Stage Cultivators ever in the history of the Star Glory Federation!

"You've all done your best. So, it will be decided by yourselves as to who is eligible to go to Ultimacy and who is not in this final test!

"Rules are simple. All the 54 Orb Patrollers have been randomly placed in this world fragment named 'Thousand Mountains Domain'.

"The mini crystal processor that you carry has communication and positioning functions. It can help you find your teammates.

"The spiritual shield covering you will be broken every time you encounter a fatal attack and absorb 90% of the damage for you.

"Every time it is shattered, you will be given ten seconds for rest and adjustment, during which time you cannot attack or be attacked. You can try to escape during the ten seconds or shift to a different tactic.

"After your spiritual shield is broken ten times, you will be forced to leave the fragment.

"Your task will be to destroy the spiritual shield of other Orb Patrollers that are not your teammates as many times as possible. You will get one score after you break a spiritual shield once.

"The scores of the Orb Patrollers that belong to the same team will be summed. In one hour, the five teams with the highest scores will be acknowledged as candidates for the mission to Ultimacy!

"Please note that one of the Star Teams has lost too many members to maintain the original tactical system. Therefore, according to the study and analysis of the experts of Occult Orbs Fellowship, the remaining members of the team have been regrouped into other Star Teams that have vacancies.

"I'll end with three reminders for you all.

"Firstly, it is suggested that you find your teammates as soon you can and work as a team.

"Secondly, you are all on the border of Thousand Mountains Domain. You have no equipment except for your mustard suit. But in the center of Thousand Mountains Domain, a lot of magical equipment has been randomly strewn.

"Thirdly, the tectonic structure of Thousand Mountains Domain is extremely unstable. Earthquakes might take place any time!

"Now begins the final test!"

Hardly had the announcer finished his talk when the shrieks in the underground turned into roars.

The earth was shaking. The rocks were rolling. The hills that were dozens of meters high suddenly sank into the underground, while a lot of other hills that were as sharp as tusks rose up and pierced the sky abruptly.

The land had been shattered and turned into an ocean of rocks in which stones were surging and splashing.

Li Yao turned into a streak of black light, dodging the raging stones swiftly, and picked up two of the stones.

After cracking sounds, one of the two stones was crushed into dozens of sharp stone blades which he hid all over his suit, whereas the other was crumbled into stone powder by his spiritual energy.

It was not until he had finished doing everything that he turned on the communication and positioning system.

The six light spots on the map and the names beside made him greatly relieved.

All the members of Team Blue Bronze were safe and sound.

'Dummy' Ba Weiqi's cheerful laughter immediately echoed in the communication channel.

"Excellent! We are all here!

"Over the past month, I've been being tormented in the deepest level of hell. Thankfully, everybody has made it!

"I've absorbed nine memory fragments. Most of them belonged to the Grand Illusionist Meng Weiyang. I tried all her methods of mental power training. They are indeed mysterious and marvelous!

"Right now, I'm almost twice as strong as one month ago!"

"Don't be overjoyed yet. There are 54 Orb Patrollers, which equals to nine Star Teams. Four of them will be eliminated. Let's pass this test first!"

"Yes, I survived the hell-like training and absorbed twelve memory pieces not to be substitutes!" Yan Yangtian shrieked.

"We should group up as soon as possible. It is tricky for me now that I don't have any guns in hand. Other Orb Patrollers are appearing nearby already!" 'Shell' Leng Ziming said, somewhat anxiously.

"Alright!"

Captain Hong Tong commanded, "Let's scan the territory around and make clear where we are and what the environment is. Then, join everyone's map and congregate to Shell immediately.

"Lingdang, Vulture, Yan Zi, your personal strengths are relatively better. Try to collect some magical equipment from the center of the map.

"If you are engaged with a formidable enemy, don't be held up by them for too long. It's our top priority to gather together!"

"Understood!"

"Let's move out!"

Among the rocks that were rising and collapsing, the six members of Team Blue Bronze acted quickly. Li Yao and his other two teammates rushed to the center of the map, in case other people took away all the magical equipment and they had to fight bare-handed.

'Look, it's Vulture Li Yao of Team Blue Bronze!'

'He is just at the beginning level of the Building Foundation Stage. As a refiner, he is best at fighting with magical equipment and in crystal suits. Right now, he has nothing at his disposal. This is his weakest moment!"

The two Orb Patrollers had been confronting each other fiercely.

Now that Li Yao appeared out of nowhere, the two of them immediately thought that this was a good opportunity to secure one score from a push-over. They glanced at each other and, crushing the stones below their feet into pieces, charged at Li Yao simultaneously with one on the left and one on the right!

Translator's Thoughts

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Weekend Bonus Chapter #1

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Chapter 394: Central Zone

Chapter 394: Central Zone

Li Yao grinned hideously. Instead of running away in a flurry as they had expected, he rushed toward them, crushing rocks to dust with every step he took.

After each step, his momentum and dominance rose a lot!

The two Orb Patrollers felt that a quickly accelerating tyrannosaur was charging at their face.

Although the earthquake was continuing, Li Yao's blowing stones to pieces with his feet apparently gave them more shock.

'He has no weapon in his hands. Why is he so confident? Does he have any other trump cards?'

'Over the past month, whose memory fragments has he been absorbing? And what kind of new skill has he learnt?'

If there were only of them here, they would certainly grit their teeth and attack Li Yao anyway.

But since the two Orb Patrollers belonged to different Teams, they were in competition themselves. Subconsciously, they hoped that the other one would test Li Yao's capability first. As a result, they both slowed down and spared most of their computational ability calculating hundreds of defense plans against the potential opponent.

Li Yao's speed remained on the rise. The rocks that he stepped on exploded into pieces, leaving a trail of smoke behind him, as if a crystal train made of sandstorm were sweeping over.

Seeing that the two of them were intending to back off, Li Yao sneered, "Get out of the way if you don't want to die!"

"Swoosh!"

Li Yao penetrated through between the two Orb Patrollers in a streak of black light. When he passed by them, he sprayed the rock powder and the scattered stones all over the two Orb Patrollers' faces.

They were not expecting this, and there was no time to distinguish what he was spraying. Therefore, they chose the safest plan simultaneously by leaping backwards!

The dragon of smoke passed them and, after a few turns, continued marching toward the central zone of Thousand Mountains Domain.

Li Yao's evil laughter could be heard from the front of the smoke.

"Thank you for clearing the way!"

The two Orb Patrollers were dazed for a moment. Then they realized that they'd been fooled by Li Yao, who was just bluffing and trying to run away without any intention of fighting at all.

"Asshole!"

They blushed in embarrassment and fury, before they sped up again and followed Li Yao's tracks.

Yet, the trail of smoke was moving at an amazingly fast speed. The two Orb Patrollers only managed to catch up to it by fully activating their swiftness skills. The anger of being conned had made them lose their minds. One of them knocked off a cone-shaped rock and kicked it away, which darted to the path in front of Li Yao where he was rushing.

Regardless of whether Li Yao decided to bypass it or to crush it, he would be hindered briefly.

Delighted, the Orb Patroller charged into the smoke like a hungry tiger seeking a lamb.

Yet, there was nothing in front of his eyes. Their prey had vanished into thin air.

Suddenly, a sharp coldness pricked his back. Li Yao no longer seemed to be as bigheaded and dominating as just now. He was enveloped in an air of bleakness and darkness, while he dashed out quietly like a shark in the undersea.

"BAM!"

The spiritual shield protecting the Orb Patroller was broken into smithereens immediately. Then, it was quickly regenerated and put on a mild green color.

He entered in the short protective period, during which time he could not attack or be attacked.

But his mind was in chaos.

"When did Li Yao run to my back?

"He was apparently bare-handed. Yet, he blew up my spiritual shield in one punch and killed me once?

"Isn't he a refiner who is best at explosive magical equipment and battle saber techniques? Why?!"

The other Orb Patroller was much more prudent. He had sensed that something was wrong inside the smoke that Li Yao created, and therefore he didn't enter it at all.

As it turned out, half a second later, it was Li Yao who walked out of the smoke slowly.

He was as thin as before. But every muscle on his arms were bulging, like clusters of rebar tangled together. His hands were emitting gold brightness. Purple electric arcs and blue fire were jumping and dancing on his fingertips in brilliant balls of light as if they were spirits brought back to life.

The Orb Patroller gasped. Finding it hard to believe his eyes, he screamed, "You are just at the beginning level of the Building Foundation Stage, and you can bring 'Purple Electric Blue Fire Claw Art' out to such an extent?"

Li Yao smiled, squatted, and sprinted!

"Not the beginning level, the middle level!"

After a month of crazy training, with the absorption of abundant memory fragments from Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, Li Yao finally broke his limits and reached the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage!

Arriving at the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage from the beginning level in half a year, Li Yao had performed a miracle that no one had ever achieved in the history of the Star Glory Federation!

"Shua!"

A moment later, Li Yao's kills reached two.

The total kills of Team Blue Bronze had reached eight, ranking the second of all teams.

Hong Tong and Yan Yangtian each had killed a competitor, while Ding Lingdang had blown up the spiritual shields of four opponents by herself.

Since she was a body practitioner, the unarmed combat couldn't be more in her favor. It was the best to kill as many people as she could right now. After most people had found some useful magical equipment, it would be much more difficult for her to perform.

The only exception was 'Shell' Leng Ziming. As a gun expert, he was not good at close combat. Therefore, his main task was to run away. But he had been killed once during his escape.

"Li Yao, you've already reached the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage? Does that mean you are on par with me right now? You've got to be kidding me!"

Ding Lingdang's loud voice came through the communication channel, mingled with the screams of other Orb Patrollers.

While she continued her slaughter, Ding Lingdang shouted in disbelief, "It took you only half a year to reach the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage from the beginning level. You are three times faster than I was! Other people say that I'm a monster. In my opinion, you are the real monster!

"But thankfully, I didn't waste my time over the past month, either. I've absorbed nineteen memory pieces of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, and most of them are battle-related!

"Hahahaha! My capability has soared, too. When the final competition is over, let's have another practice spar and I'll show you what I've become right now!

"Right, how many memory pieces have you absorbed? Five? Eight?"

Before, none of the team had much hopes in Li Yao. After all, he had been at the very beginning level of the Building Foundation Stage. It would be quite a fruitful training session if he could absorb two or three memory pieces smoothly.

However, now that they learnt that he had experienced a breakthrough, naturally, their expectations of him grew higher.

Li Yao rushed into the central zone of Thousand Mountains Domain so fast that his feet barely touched the ground.

Looking at the front, he found that countless bright gold balls were floating in the air, enshrouded in glittering octagonal runes.

There was a piece of magical equipment in each of the balls.

"Swoosh!"

Li Yao kicked a giant rock to the sky, hitting one of the balls precisely.

A crimson saber whose edge was full of tusks fell from the sky, which was fetched by him easily.

Li Yao was greatly relieved now that he had a saber in his hand.

Although he had absorbed much of Iron God Yan Ba's memory pieces regarding bare-handed combat, the knowledge and experience could not be translated into his own skills in such a short period of time.

To fully understand the insights and embed them with his own flesh, blood, bones, and veins, he needed the whetting of countless of real-life battles.

At this moment, a battle saber was still Li Yao's favorite weapon.

Licking his lips, Li Yao rushed toward the next bright gold ball, and at the same time, he dismantled the saber into the tiniest components and reassembled them by spinning them fast around his arms.

But there were a few remaining components in his hands.

The components were used to stabilize the frequency of vibration and ensure the steady, continuous output of spiritual energy.

If these components were removed, the vibration frequency of the saber would be extremely unstable. The maximum spiritual energy output would be increased by 30%, allowing the damage of the saber to be improved by more than 15%.

As a result, the longevity of the saber would be greatly undermined. It would most likely become a total loss after one battle. Even during the battle, odds of it malfunctioning or even exploding were not low.

While he was modifying the saber, Li Yao spoke in the communication channel briefly.

"Sixty-eight."

The communication channel went silent for a long time. After a while, Ding Lingdang asked in confusion, "Sixty-eight what?"

Li Yao furrowed his brows. He slashed at the sky. A crimson saber aura was triggered off the edge, rushing toward the second bright gold ball, which ripped it in half with blood red ripples.

A double-edged chainsword dropped from the sky.

"Weren't you asking me how many memory pieces I've absorbed? Sixty-eight. I absorbed sixty-eight memory pieces."

There was nothing but silence in the communication channel. The only thing that could be heard was everyone's heavy breath.

It was not until ten seconds later that Ding Lingdang shouted, "Damn! I was distracted and got killed once!"

Very soon, all the magical equipment within hundreds of square meters nearby was looted by Li Yao.

He started marching closer to the center of the world fragment.

More Orb Patrollers were appearing nearby.

But they were rational enough to not start a fight at this moment. Everyone was collecting every piece of magical equipment available in a rush without wasting any time.

Sometimes, two Orb Patrollers got their eyes on the same magical equipment. But there was still no fight. The two parties would run calculations fast. The Orb Patroller who found that the likelihood of their success was relatively lower would simply retreat and look for other magical equipment.

Five minutes later, every piece of magical equipment had been claimed.

Everyone's faces turned excessively hostile at this moment.

Each of them had at least four to five pieces of magical equipment in their hands. If they could kill an opponent, not only would they get points, they would also be able to snatch the loser's magical equipment.

Almost ten pairs of eyes were fixed on Li Yao immediately.

Thanks to his sharp eyes and fast movement, he had picked up nine pieces of magical equipment. Right now, he was carrying a saber in his left hand and a sword in his right hand, with a battle axe on his back and a pair of power knuckles bound to his waist. He was no doubt a rich man at this point.

"BOOM! CRACK!"

The earth trembled violently again. The uneven ground was shattered. Many people rose high above together on the rock that they were standing on, while some others fell into pits dozens of meters deep.

The battlefield turned from an uneven plane to a fractured mess.

Li Yao was standing on a giant rock more than forty meters high, which was the peak of this three-dimensional battlefield.

The raging smoke took the form of fuzzy, blurred giant beasts behind him.

Five Orb Patrollers were impatient and leapt forward at him.

Li Yao squinted, and a dangerous smile crept onto his face.

The saber in his left hand was vibrating violently like a roaring hungry tiger, while the tusk-like sawtooth of the chainsword in his right hand started revolving crazily!

Translator's Thoughts

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Chapter 395: Who's the Best?

Chapter 395: Who's the Best?

Inside the control center, thousands of light beams were radiating at the same time, capturing every corner of Thousand Mountains Domain.

The light beams displaying intense battles would be enlarged so that the details could be demonstrated more clearly.

The light beams that were showing combat Li Yao was engaged in were among the largest ones.

Six light beams were displaying his every movement from all possible directions.

On the summary light beam nearby, Li Yao's personal kills were soaring.

Three... Four... Six... Seven...

In half a minute, Li Yao had secured seven kills. The spiritual shields of many other middle-level Building Foundation Stage Cultivators were shattered to pieces after a single blow.

Even many high-level Building Foundation Stage Cultivators failed to resist against his rampageous attacks for longer than five seconds.

"Vulture Li Yao has absorbed sixty-eight memory pieces of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. It appears that he has understood them all. His combat ability has improved a lot!"

Knowing is totally different from doing.

Pouring the battle-related memories of a soldier from the special forces into the brain of a three-year-old does not mean that the three-year-old is qualified as a special agent.

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators had been worrying that Li Yao's crazy absorption was because of a mutation in his brain and that he would not be able to comprehend the essence of the memories.

But as it turned out, Li Yao's growth was beyond their wildest imagination!

Beaming with a smile, Meng Weiyang continued to say, "Old Sha, Li Yao's straight, piercing attack is clearly blended with the distinctive features of Quicksand. It is both brutal and savaging. All the spiritual energy is used to bring up the speed. There are no fancy tricks at all! Yet, the saber in his right hand brings me the same feeling as 'Moon Fiend' Qiu Xinghe once did. Senseless and bloodthirsty. He is trading his life for the enemy's life. It appears that he has analyzed and fully digested the memory pieces from both of you!"

'Sand' Sha Ziming nodded his head. Glancing at the data to the side, he smiled, too.

"Indeed. His combat efficiency is quite amazing, which even exceeds many high-level Building Foundation Stage Cultivators. His combat consciousness and tactical plans are very clear. The young man is quite smart!"

A high combat efficiency meant that one could slay the most enemies in the shortest amount of time with the least movements at the cost of minimum spiritual energy.

Cultivators often had to pay a high price by burning their spiritual energy. The longer they stayed at their peak state, the severer the consequences would be.

Therefore, the middle-level and high-level Cultivators always attached great importance to combat efficiency. If a battle could be finished in one second, they would never spend 1.1 seconds on it.

When a Cultivator reached the Core Formation Stage or the Nascent Soul Stage, if their combat efficiency was 1% higher than their opponent's, they might be able to stay in the best state for 0.1 seconds longer, and the 0.1 seconds would be enough to determine their life and death!

Therefore, if a Cultivator was relatively weak, he was not entirely unpromising as long as he boasted acute combat consciousness and high combat efficiency.

With the support of enough resources and the enlightenment of mentors, it was always possible for them to advance to a higher level.

However, if the combat efficiency of someone was really low, who simply squandered his spiritual energy and physical strength, their prospects were quite dim, regardless of how intimidating they seemed to be right now. It was very unlikely that they would become a real super expert.

Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators wouldn't waste their time and effort on such people.

Currently, Li Yao was just in the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage, but his combat consciousness was the most distinctive among the fifty-four Orb Patrollers.

His combat efficiency was just a bit lower than that of Yan Jun who was well acknowledged as one of the strongest Orb Patrollers at the peak of the Building Foundation Stage!

While the two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were talking, Li Yao's kills reached nineteen.

But there were more and more Orb Patrollers charging at him.

It was not because everyone hated him or was targeting him, but because the Orb Patrollers 'killed' by him would often drop a lot of magical equipment.

The Orb Patrollers came after the magical equipment like sharks which had smelled the stink of blood. When they noticed that Li Yao was bathing in the brilliant exhaust flames of various kinds of magical equipment, they naturally considered him to be a fat, delicious prey.

It was not until Li Yao slashed their spiritual shields to pieces that they realized that the prey was not fat, but fatal!

Twenty-one… Twenty-three… Twenty-seven…

Li Yao's kills continued to rise, whereas his combat efficiency was as stable as ever.

However, the number of the times he got killed was growing, too.

In less than ten seconds, he had been killed six times.

When other Orb Patrollers were killed and entered the protective state, most of them would flee from the place of chaos.

But Li Yao simply roamed around the edge of the battlefield. The moment the protective state was over, he would rejoin the battle with a roar.

Frowning, 'Sand' Sha Ziming watched it for a while and shook his head disapprovingly.

"Li Yao's attacks are absolutely amazing. In comparison, his defense is not very satisfactory. There were several deadly attacks that he could've avoided, but they hit him precisely.

"Besides, instead of escaping the battlefield as quickly as possible while he was in the protective state, he returned to battles again, which seems a little reckless to me. It is also inconsistent with his fighting style according to his files."

Iron God Yan Ba, on the other hand, was eyeing the light beams in appreciation. He smiled and said slowly, "He's doing it on purpose."

"On purpose?"

As a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, Sha Tianqing immediately drew a lot of conclusions after being reminded by Yan Ba. His eyes were gleaming, too, as he asked, "Do you mean he has been perishing together with his opponents after accurate calculations just in order to increase his kills by as many as possible?"

"The rules we set up dictate that the five teams with the most kills after an hour will win. One's death count does not matter as long as it does not surpass ten.

"It means that being killed once and being killed nine times are exactly the same.

"Right now, so many Orb Patrollers have gathered in the center of the world fragment. Even a random slash might hit several people.

"Li Yao has thought that through, and even at the cost of his own 'lives', he will slaughter as many people as he can.

"He must be aware that, after everyone retreats to the edge of the world fragment and reunites with their respective teams, it will be extremely difficult for him to continue butchering as smoothly as right now!

"Therefore, it is quite a bargain to trade his own 'lives' for kills. The most favorable outcome will be that all the six members of a team are killed nine times in exchange for triple or even quadruple scores!"

Iron God Yan Ba nodded his head.

"That should be it. Li Yao has understood the most critical part of the competition precisely, which is how to barter one's deaths for more valuable things at the highest efficiency!

"Remarkable. He is indeed remarkable!

"If Yan Jun was the biggest hope for the mission to Ultimacy in our plan, this Vulture Li Yao is the biggest surprise that we didn't anticipate!

"Although he is just in the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage, a meticulous mind can be as useful as powerful personal strength in Ultimacy."

Sha Ziming interrupted him. "Old Yan, look, your 'biggest hope' and your 'biggest surprise' are confronting each other!"

Yan Ba raised his eyebrow.

"Huh?"

…

On two bizarre-shaped rocks in the center of Thousand Mountains Domain, where hot steam was still billowing up, Li Yao and Yan Jun, the best of all Orb Patrollers, were gazing at each other with a long distance in between.

After he killed two members of Team Thunder Soul momentarily, his on-fire performance finally attracted Yan Jun's attention.

Different from Li Yao who was armed to the teeth with a saber in his left hand and a sword in his right hand, there was nothing but a dagger in Yan Jun's hand, which was orbited by eight black, octagonal, iron blades with coldly-shining sharpness.

"Vulture Li Yao, I didn't know—"

The scar on Yan Jun's face resulted in the constant jerking of his facial muscles, making him look cruel and hideous.

His voice was like a frozen iron block, both cold and tough.

"There are too many things that you don't know. Let's just get down to it. Time is precious!"

He had been informed that Yan Jun had advanced into the peak of the Building Foundation Stage.

In the junior year of his high school, he had witnessed Fiend Blade Peng Hai, his senior brother, burning his soul and marching to the peak of the Building Foundation Stage.

The dreadful scene where spiritual energy was raging like a tsunami had been etched into the depths of his brain.

At that time, Cultivators had been gods in his eyes.

God of war! God of killing! God of destruction!

Peak of the Building Foundation Stage had been an unimaginable level for him. Fiend Blade Peng Hai could've turned him into minced meat with nothing but his hair easily.

But today, he had captured the attention of another Cultivator at the peak of the Building Foundation Stage, and he was even capable enough to fight him with his best!

It was indeed intriguing and intoxicating!

"BOOM!"

Li Yao rushed forward like a black shooting star, only to fly backwards half a second later, barging into multiple rocks.

Yan Jun sniffed, not even bothering to look at him.

Suddenly, his eyelids twitched, while a narrow, long, red line appeared below his cheek. A drop of blood had zigzagged to the corner of his mouth like an earthworm.

Li Yao jumped out of the broken stones. Spitting out a mouthful of black blood uncaringly, he grinned.

Yan Jun licked the blood stain on the corner of his mouth slowly. His expression suddenly turned livid.

The blue scar through his left eye was glittering, as if a dragon was dancing on the right side of his face.

"Shua!"

Yan Jun suddenly vanished into thin air, and in the next second, he had appeared behind Li Yao.

The brightness of his dagger cut Li Yao into pieces. But it was just Li Yao's gradually dispersing blurred shadow.

The real Li Yao had moved twenty meters away.

Before Li Yao was able to take a breath, the back of his head was prickling. He waved his saber and sword into a white, shining ball. Cracking noises echoed nonstop, while sparks danced to everywhere, as if his weapons were on fire.

Yan Jun's first appearance was a blurred shadow, too, just to make him relax.

In the meantime, the real Yan Jun had moved below him and locked onto him precisely!

Translator's Thoughts

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Weekend Bonus Chapter #2

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Chapter 396: Success!

Chapter 396: Success!

The two of them collided heavily. A large cloud of dust immediately wreathed them. It was not due to the crash, but from both of them breaking the sonic barrier multiple times within 0.1 seconds!

After a moment, dozens of shadows flew out of the dust clouds, which were the blurred shadows of the two parties due to their astonishingly fast speed.

All the blurred shadows were fighting savagely in midair.

But Li Yao's real body was fleeing out of the battlefield as quickly as possible.

It was not until he was engaged with Yan Jun that he truly felt the dominance of the peak of Building Foundation Stage in person. Although his speed broke its limits time and time again, Yan Jun had blocked his every route of escape like an impregnable dragnet.

Li Yao had to do his best to breach through it!

BOOM! BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM!

Explosions rang out ahead of him all the time, as if multiple volcanoes were erupting, or the crystal bombs deployed previously had been detonated. They were nothing but the sword auras created by Yan Jun's dagger, yet they were already so formidable.

The eight octagonal iron blades circling Yan Jun, on the other hand, were even more dreadful. Manipulated by his telepathic thoughts, they reached Li Yao's next position from unimaginable curves at more than twice the speed of sound, even faster than bullets!

Faced with such a frightening enemy, Li Yao realized that the memory pieces which he'd absorbed over the past month were taking effect. He was like a veteran that had endured hundreds of bloody wars without getting killed. Dangers were all foreseen by him before they were able to deal any damage!

Just now, when everyone was fighting for the magical equipment, he was fighting aggressively and even trading his own life for others'.

But at this moment, he couldn't be more cowardly.

Now, he was running away with his hands covering his head; the next moment, he was crawling forward on all fours like a lizard. He narrowly escaped all the deadly attacks, as if he were an undying cockroach!

Yan Jun's sword aura had left scratches on his body which was all covered in blood now. The mustard suit had been dyed in red.

However, the spiritual shield would only break when suffering a 'fatal attack'. Li Yao's injuries were mostly superficial and did not affect his speed. In fact, he even looked for several opportunities to counterattack!

"Ting! Ting! Ting! Ting! Ting! Ting! Ting!"

Brilliant sparks burst out around Yan Jun. Three of his octagonal iron blades had been slashed into pieces by Li

Yao!

Even his chest had been kicked heavily by Li Yao once!

Yan Jun sneered in derision. The broken blades did not fall to the ground. Instead, they sped up and passed by Li Yao quickly!

With a shiver, Li Yao managed to block Yan Jun's dagger attack with the chainsword in his right hand. But there was no way he could stop Yan Jun's fist from cutting-in. His stomach was punched so brutally that he felt that he had been hit by a falling star. Agony and paralysis grabbed him like an octopus, making him unable to control himself at all. He was blown hundreds of meters away and crushed into piles of rocks. The blood that he spat out dyed the surrounding smoke red.

"Shua! Shua! Shua!"

Almost ten streams of blood spurted out from Li Yao's body, which were the result of the sharp iron blades.

"CRACK! CRACK!"

The skin on Li Yao's hands was almost entirely torn to shreds. The flesh and blood were barely distinguishable. Yet, he was still gripping his chainsword and battle saber, unwilling to let them go.

But the constant, massive spiritual input and the intensity of the combat were apparently too much for the two pieces of mass-produced magical equipment.

The chainsword broke in the middle. The sawtooth dangled down like a dead snake.

In the meantime, the battle saber had cracked into pieces, its components flying everywhere.

Gritting his teeth, Li Yao tried to draw the battle axe from his back, only to find that he could hardly move his finger because of the excruciating pain.

Staring at him coldly, Yan Jun folded his dagger in his palm and walked toward him one step after another.

Li Yao smiled miserably. His left hand moved toward the battle axe on his back inch by inch, while he unsheathed a dagger from his waist awkwardly with an ever-trembling wrist.

They were only fifty meters apart.

The number of the black iron blades spinning around Yan Jun had increased to almost twenty. They were amazingly fast and enveloped in streaks of blackness, as if they were satellites orbiting a planet.

Yan Jun took another step forward, but then his pupils constricted violently. He immediately backed off like a ghost in the same posture.

It was not until he was more than a hundred meters away from Li Yao that he stared at Li Yao deeply and left, never to look back.

"Hu…"

Watching Yan Jun disappear behind the majestic rocks, Li Yao was greatly relieved, albeit not without dissatisfaction.

He was so close to victory!

Yan Jun was indeed a super elite raised up in the Occult Orbs. His instincts for noticing incoming dangers were really keen.

"Shua! Shua! Shua!"

Ding Lingdang, Hong Tong, Yan Yangtian, Ba Weiqi, and Leng Ziming crawled out from the crevices nearby.

Li Yao jumped out of the rocks. He breathed on his palms, rubbed his hands, and started repairing the seriously damaged chainsword and battle saber. The wounded, wretched appearance was entirely gone.

The spurting blood was also stopped as he wriggled his muscles.

The terrible body conditions where he could barely hold his dagger tight turned out to be just an act!

This place was Team Blue Bronze's rendezvous point as well as the location where they planned to ambush Yan Jun.

If Yan Jun had taken a few steps forward, within 47 meters of Li Yao, the rest of the team except Leng Ziming would've launch attacks immediately.

Even though he was at the peak of the Building Foundation Stage, there was no way that he could escape.

It was a pity that he somehow saw through it and simply left in advance.

"Ding Lingdang, these are your power knuckles; Shell, these two guns are for you. Sorry that there's no sniper rifle; there was only one of them in total. The competition was too fierce, so I didn't participant. But other than the two assault rifles, I snatched a third gun and dismantled it. After modification, the two guns should be able to achieve 60% of the precision and power of a sniper rifle.

"Dummy, this is your brain wave enhancer. Your mental power will be increased by at least 10% if you put it on your head.

"Captain, your physical strength is excellent. This battle axe is perfect for you. This dagger is for Yan Zi!"

While he was maintaining the two broken weapons, Li Yao distributed all his belongings.

Everyone was dazed to see that his hands were rolling up and down swiftly despite the injuries all over his body.

A moment later, 'Dummy' Ba Weiqi mumbled, "Just now in the communication channel, you said that you absorbed 68 memory fragments of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, but I didn't quite believe it.

"Well, I do now.

"You are only in the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage. However, not only did you persist for so long under the bombardment of Yan Jun, a Cultivator at the peak of the Building Foundation Stage, you were even close to lure him into our trap…

"You are an undeniable monster!"

…

Five kilometers away, Yan Jun seemed to be roaming. Now and then, he would tread on the rocks lightly. Yet, his speed was astonishingly high.

'Vulture Li Yao, you've improved so much in only a few months. Even I failed to finish you quickly while trying my best. Interesting.

'It seems that there are indeed experts among the Orb Patrollers from the outside world.

'If I had walked forward another three steps, your teammates hiding in the crevices would've launched deadly attacks, wouldn't they?

'But although you'd been preparing to ambush me, you were all bare-handed, while I still had my dagger. You wouldn't have been able to take down me easily even if I fell into your trap!

'It was just that I didn't want to be delayed by you for too long. Don't ever presume that I was scared of you!'

At this very moment, Yan Jun heard a feeble cracking noise.

Stunned, Yan Jun lifted his dagger in disbelief, while his face suddenly turned extremely awful.

On his dagger, a crack that was even tinier than hair was spreading out like divaricating fungus.

Crack!

After a gentle swing, the dagger exploded into pieces. The only thing left in his hands was the hilt.

The scar on Yan Jun's fact twisted like a snake that had been shocked. A drop of cold sweat dripped off from his forehead, while he murmured, "What…

"When was my weapon damaged?

"Vulture Li Yao is best known as a refiner. Could it be that his knowledge regarding weapons is profound enough to let him wreck my weapon without me knowing it, even at the cost of his own weapons being broken?"

If so, other than the black iron blades surrounding him, he would've been bare-handed, too.

Under the attacks of four Orb Patrollers, including Ding Lingdang who was best at close combat as a body practitioner, chances were slim that he could run away!

Yan Jun squinted. The scar on his face trembled for a long time before it finally stopped. Taking a long breath, he put on a mysterious smile.

"Thankfully, this Vulture Li Yao is on our side.

"If there were such a formidable figure in the demon race, the trip to Ultimacy would be really perilous!"

In relief, Yan Jun threw away the shattered dagger casually. He slapped his hands, and sensing the spiritual waves nearby, he marched toward the spiritual waves which were the most intense with his hands behind his back.

Very soon, cries and screams echoed behind the rocks over there.

…

After Team Blue Bronze assembled and acquired abundant magical equipment, they didn't make any mistakes.

They were one of the fastest-regrouping Star Teams.

The six of them swept across the margin of Thousand Mountains Domain anticlockwise. None of the lone Orb Patrollers could withstand one blow from them.

When all the Star Teams had regrouped, their kills were already high in the rankings.

Later, they had a few fights with several other Star Teams, with more victories than failures.

When the one-hour final competition was over, the total kills of Team Blue Bronze surprisingly ranked the second among the nine teams, only below Team Thunder Soul led by Yan Jun.

In the meantime, Li Yao and Ding Lingdang, with 71 kills and 67 kills respectively, ranked the fourth and the sixth among all the Orb Patrollers, which made them the two most distinctive dark horses after the one-month special training.

Therefore, Team Blue Bronze had successfully distinguished itself from the top 10 Star Teams and won the qualification to be one of the five teams setting off to Ultimacy in the first echelon.

Translator's Thoughts

flycrane01 flycrane01

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Chapter 397: Last Defense Line

Chapter 397: Last Defense Line

It was midnight, and the sky of the desert were extremely clear. The giant stars dangled down from the blue-black sky like countless glittering diamonds, giving the feeling that one could pluck them out of the sky if they stood up on their tiptoes.

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang walked to the depths of the desert, hand in hand.

Their palms were somewhat wet, indicating the anxiety on their mind.

It was because they were paying a visit to Iron God Yan Ba, a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator as well as one of the strongest men in the Heaven's Origin Sector.

The previous morning, after they successfully won the final competition, they went through thorough physical examinations and treatment to further consolidate the fruits of their training.

Then, they refreshed themselves in the deep sleep capsule and took in a lot of high-nutrition drugs.

After that, the time had come to select the spiritual seeds of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, the most alluring benefit of the trip to Ultimacy.

Threatened by the Blood Demon Sector, the Cultivators of the Heaven's Origin Sector were more united than ever. Almost every Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator had provided a spiritual seed. Many battle-type Cultivators even condensed more than one, trying to bring the Building Foundation Stage Cultivators to the best state, even at the risk of injuring themselves.

The spiritual seeds of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators had different abilities and triggering conditions. Not only did they depend on the level of the user, the ideology of the user would also need to befit the provider's. At least, their understandings about the path of Cultivation couldn't be contradictory.

Otherwise, the success rate of spiritual seed explosion would be greatly undermined, and the odds of derangement would soar.

Therefore, one had to think very carefully about which spiritual seeds to select, because their choice concerned their own life.

The selection of spiritual seeds would proceed according to the rank of kills in the final competition. Li Yao and Ding Lingdang were both in the top 10. Their range of choices were fairly large. Yet, they studied them for a long time, only to be notified by a worker that Iron God Yan Ba, the king of body fundamentalists, would like to meet them.

Naturally, they dared not to hesitate now that a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator wanted to see them. Guided by their mini crystal processors, they returned to the ground and reached the desert outside of the valley.

On the sandhill in front of them, a man was sitting there alone. Brilliant stars were shining around him, casting a gentle halo above him.

There was not the tiniest spiritual energy leaking out of Iron God Yan Ba. He had become one with the stars over his head and sand beneath his feet, as if he were part of the splendid nature.

Exchanging a look, Li Yao and Ding Lingdang strode forward with their heads held high.

"For the trip to Ultimacy, I spent a lot of time and efforts over the past year condensing two spiritual seeds."

Iron God Yan Ba didn't act mysteriously. Hearing their breaths, he turned around slowly and smiled at them like a friendly next-door neighbor. "Li Yao, Ding Lingdang, are you interested in my spiritual seeds?"

Although knowing that the purpose of Yan Ba's invitation would probably be about spiritual seeds, Li Yao was still somewhat surprised to hear it with his own ears. He raised his eyebrow and hesitated.

"Senior Yuan, it is reasonable for Ding Lingdang to accept your spiritual seed since she is a body practitioner. But I'm a refiner who's strongest using magical equipment. May I ask why you turned to me even though you are a body fundamentalist?"

He had been considering Yan Ba's spiritual seed for a long time, but he didn't understand why Yan Ba would talk to him in person.

Yan Ba smiled, seeming somewhat lonely.

"Body fundamentalists are the living fossils among the Cultivators. Not just body fundamentalists, even the total number of body practitioners has plunged in recent years. Except for the Combat Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution which has been raising body practitioners, they are rarely seen elsewhere.

"Of the thirty eligible Orb Patrollers that are chosen through all the trouble, there are only two body practitioners. As for a pure body fundamentalist who doesn't resort to any magical equipment, there is not one.

"Although the two of you are not disciples of the Marvelous Fist Sect, the Grand Desolate War Institution has always been a close friend to the Marvelous Fist Sect, as they are both natives of the Grand Desolate Plateau. If I have to make a choice, naturally, I want to bequeath my spiritual seeds to Cultivators from the Grand Desolate Plateau.

"We all know Ding Lingdang. She is the best body practitioner among the thirty Orb Patrollers. But you, Vulture Li Yao, have an equally sturdy body despite the fact that you are a refiner, which is even more impressive than the bodies of many common body practitioners. I do wonder how you built up your body like this.

"Triggering my spiritual seed is an agonizing, dangerous process. Only those with strong bodies, such as Ding Lingdang and yourself, have a chance at handling the pain."

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. He didn't anticipate that the reason Yan Ba picked him was because of his endurance of pain. His face turned quite odd.

Thinking for a moment, he replied frankly, "Senior Yan, I considered taking your spiritual seeds before. But I am a refiner, and magical equipment always comes at the top in my path of Cultivation!

"I've absorbed quite a few of your memory pieces and admired the enormous primordial strength that you activated. But I cannot acknowledge the idea that 'bare-handed is better than fully-armed'. This might be what we call a disagreement about the right path of Cultivation.

"I don't know if it is suitable or not for me to accept your spiritual seeds because of our different beliefs.

"It is the same for Ding Lingdang. Although she is a body practitioner, she does not reject magical equipment. If she has the chance to fight in a crystal suit, she won't do it bare-handed.

"Please be aware of that, Senior Yan."

"Correct," agreed Ding Lingdang, who then continued solemnly. "Senior Yan, you are the king of body fundamentalists, and you've been my idol since I was a kid. I hesitated a long time when I was deciding which spiritual seed I was going to take, because I doubted that I could accept the principle of zero reliance on magical equipment. So, I don't know whether or not I'm qualified to accept your spiritual seed.

Iron God Yan Ba smiled and said, "So, you think magical equipment is better than empty hands… Everybody knows that!"

"What?!"

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang were both dumbfounded.

Yan Ban eyed them as if they were two idiots, before he opened his mouth again.

"Even a three-year-old knows that magical equipment is better than empty hands! The transition between apes to human beings cannot be completed without the usage of tools, can it? There is no reason why we should abandon tools which have changed from the simple stoneware to delicate magical equipment and just resort to two empty hands."

"But—"

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang failed to understand what was going on.

Yan Ba's words would have been more than convincing, if they were from someone else's mouth.

But Yan Ba was a body practitioner monk who discarded all kinds of magical equipment and weapons. As a body fundamentalist, he would fight against an overwhelming beast tide with absolutely nothing but his bare hands!

"Are you curious as to why I would say that even though I'm a body practitioner, and why I never resorted to any magical equipment if I felt that it was better than empty hands?

"The truth is, the principle of the body fundamentalists is not what you've considered it to be.

"Body fundamentalist is the most ancient profession in the modern Cultivation world. Not 'one of'.

"During the Great Dark Age forty thousand years ago, the demon race dominated the sea of stars and established a giant, hierarchical Demon Beast Empire. They slew the Cultivators and suppressed the ordinary humans in tyranny, eliminating any possibility of the usage of magical equipment.

"During the thirty thousand years of darkness, we had no jade chips to store Cultivation arts, no flying swords to fight against the oppressors, and no Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures to build up our bodies. If someone was discovered to have been secretly hiding a piece of magical equipment, their family and friends would all be murdered mercilessly by the demon race!

"But even faced with such tremendous pressure, we never gave up our hopes of cultivating. Without jade chips, flying swords, and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, the only thing that we could count on was this."

Yan Ban lifted his thumb and pointed at his somewhat dry chest, then he continued speaking calmly. "The only thing that mankind could count on was our own flesh and blood, our veins, nerves, muscles, heart, cells, as well as the power hidden deep inside us that had been passed on by our ancestors and predecessors during times of great trouble after countless apocalypses.

"The power was sealed in the deepest part of our cells. Once we tore off the seals and released the power, it was the start of the rebellion against the reign of the demon race.

"Hence the oldest profession in the modern Cultivation world, the body fundamentalists.

"Body fundamentalists are never too obstinate to learn the advantages of magical equipment and weapons. We never use them because none of the human beings had any access to magical equipment when the profession was created!

"But even without magical equipment, we would fight against the demon race until the last breath with our fists, fingernails, and teeth!"

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang were greatly touched.

Li Yao couldn't help but ask, "But it was thirty thousand years ago. Right now, the human race has regained control over the sea of stars. Magical equipment is more useful than ever, why…"

Yan Ba smiled.

"Although the human race is divided and scattered in different worlds, there is no doubt that we are the dominators of our respective worlds, and it's quite convenient to get a piece of magical equipment.

"But, what if the demon race comes back again? What if demonic Cultivators, or even foreign species that are stronger than all others, or an unprecedented apocalypse, come knocking at our door?

"If the threats wipe out the mankind's ability to refine and use magical equipment and we are forced to fight bare-handed again, body fundamentalists will have to step up and lead the rebellion. They will show everyone how to fight a battle with nothing but their hands, feet, and teeth!

"Yes, everybody knows that it is very unlikely that such events will ever occur. But the sea of stars is boundless; who knows what kinds of dangers are lurking in the darkness?

"Therefore, body fundamentalists are never insignificant. We are like a tiny fuse.

"If one day, humanity falls into darkness again and loses all the magical equipment, we—the body fundamentalists—will be the last defense line of our civilization!

"This is the reason why I chose to become a body fundamentalist.

"Maybe my spiritual seeds are not as impressive as others' will be when they explode. But no one can say for sure what will happen in Ultimacy. In the worst-case scenario where your magical equipment is all damaged and your weapons lost, my spiritual seeds might be able to save your lives, and also… rekindle the fire of hope for the federation and the Heaven's Origin Sector!"

Chapter 398: Blazing Hydra, Immortal Phoenix

Chapter 398: Blazing Hydra, Immortal Phoenix

Under the brilliant night sky, in the middle of the quiet dessert, Iron God's every word struck Li Yao and Ding Lingdang like a falling star, raising countless thoughts in their minds.

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang, exchanging a quick glance, said honestly, "We're sorry, Senior Yuan. We never truly understood the beliefs of the body fundamentalists until this moment."

"Beliefs..."

Yan Ba sighed. Then he said slowly, "I'm 264 years old right now. Most of the Nascent Souls are around the same age as me. Even Sha Tianqing, the youngest Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator in the federation, is almost two hundred years old. That's why people call us 'old monsters'. Monsters we might be not, but old we really are.

"Two hundred years ago, I was born in a small village in the depths of the Grand Desolate Plateau. The villagers made a living by exploiting a mother lode nearby. My parents were the guardians that the Marvelous Fist Sect sent to protect the village.

"At that time, the demon race in the Heaven's Origin Sector hadn't been cleared up yet. The Grand Desolate Plateau was riddled with great demons' dens and even demon kingdoms. Fierce battles would break out every day.

"Since the human race wasn't able to control the entire Grand Desolate Plateau, the invasion of beast tides from the Blood Demon Sector was much more convenient than right now. They could congregate in unhabituated areas unhurriedly until their army was unfathomably large, before they paved a way of destruction and swallowed everything in their way.

"Before I was ten, I'd experienced dozens of beast tide outbreaks, more times than many Cultivators at present have seen in their entire lives.

"When I was eleven, I witnessed a beast tide devouring the blue sky, the vast earth, and also my hometown.

"My parents were not very talented, but they were both passionate about training. After they were stationed to the village, they'd trained hard every day. They were already in the high level of the Building Foundation Stage at that time. But so what?

"To cover the villagers' retreat, they charged into the beast tide unhesitatingly, only to be drowned in less than ten minutes.

"Because of their sacrifice, twelve children, including myself, were rescued by the reinforcements of the Marvelous Fist Sect in time. But the rest of the villagers, the homes, and the livestock were all consumed.

"After the beast tide ebbed and we returned to where the village used to be, there was no sign whatsoever that a village had been in this place. There were not even blood stains. Everything had been eaten up without leaving the slightest trace.

"For Cultivators who have been born in the recent hundred years, including your generation, you happen to be living in an era when the Star Glory Federation is thriving. In your eyes, a peaceful environment is a matter of course.

"But we the Nascent Souls were mostly born in the wartime. We've seen more tragedies than one can count. When we were young, none of us were certain before we went to sleep at night that the federation would still be there when we opened eyes again the next morning.

"Therefore, it goes without saying for us that if we do not stick together and try our best, the Star Glory Federation and the human civilization in the Heaven's Origin Sector are very likely to be wiped out. We know that after we are wiped out, there won't be monuments left in memory of us, but manure of the demon beasts.

"Beliefs? Conflicts about the right path of Cultivation?

"Is a saber better than a sword, or is it the other way around? Is spiritual energy particles or waves? In the eyes of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who have experienced true darkness in person, these conflicts are not conflicts at all.

"In my opinion, there is one—and only one—conflict that is worthy of noting, the conflict of the living space between mankind and foreign species in the sea of stars!

"In our case, the conflict is the life-and-death war between the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector!

"To build the Star Glory Federation into a stronger nation, to illuminate the universe with the torch of humanity. This is my beliefs and my path of Cultivation.

"If a saber can protect our nation and our civilization, I will use a saber.

"If a fist can do everything, I will use a fist.

"If guns are required, I don't mind blowing up the heads of the demon kings and demon emperors with roaring bullets.

"Most Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators share the same beliefs as me. That's why we were willing to burn our life and soul to condense precious spiritual seeds for Building Foundation Stage Cultivators such as you two.

"How about it? Do you still feel that there are contradictions in the beliefs you and I hold?"

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang were silent for a long time. Nothing could be heard in the dark desert except their heavy breathing. Looking at each other, they replied at the same time, "Senior Yuan, we are willing to accept your spiritual seeds!"

…

At five o'clock in the morning, in the bottom level of the underground training base, Li Yao was lying on a metal bed, his arms and legs stretched out, tied up by countless spiritual wires, with six artificial arms moving rapidly nearby.

The silver wall glided open silently. The artificial arms picked out a cold crystal cylinder in which a dazzling light spot was jumping and struggling like a transparent hedgehog.

It was a spiritual seed of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator.

An artificial arm placed the crystal cylinder on Li Yao's forehead, while others took out quite a few metal rings and bound them together.

In the end, a piece of magical equipment which could release high-pressure air current was placed behind the cylinder.

"Li Yao, are you ready? There might be a little pain," a gentle voice said.

Taking a long breath, Li Yao made an 'OK' gesture.

"Acknowledged. Spiritual seed injection engaged in five, four, three, two, one. Activate!"

"Chi!"

After a feeble sound, the spiritual seed inside the crystal cylinder was gone.

Li Yao screamed desperately. Veins all over his body were bulging out. His bloodshot eyes were wide open. His two hands left ten deep scratches on the metal bed below him!

…

At ten o'clock in the morning, in a gravity room of the underground training base…

The gravity was adjusted to one tenth of the standard gravity. A mild breeze was blowing.

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang were almost naked, except for the simple cloth covering their private parts. Their hands open, they were floating in midair.

Countless colorful jade spiders were crawling over their bodies.

While the spiders were crawling, they were also pricking Li Yao's and Ding Lingdang's skin, resulting in many miniature flecks. The miniature flecks were gradually connected and constituted two arcane patterns.

Sitting in front of them in the air was a plump, beautiful, middle-aged lady whose skin was covered in brilliant tattoos with barely any blank space. With a close look, even her pupils were filled with complicated spiritual tattoos, which were dancing in her eyes like countless spirits.

The middle-aged lady was drawing seals rapidly with her hands while casting spells with her mouth. Innumerable octagonal, shining runes were circling her.

Her hands seemed to be attached to thousands of spiritual threads, each linked to one jade spider which was painting on their bodies like pens.

Li Yao's and Ding Lingdang's eyelids were trembling violently. Biting their lips hard, they were not even able to grunt.

The spiritual seed injection just now was painful enough. They'd never expected that the pain of tattooing would be no less excruciating.

However, they were not in the least discontented. In fact, they were quite excited, because the 'middle-aged lady' in front of them was actually 'Miraculous Marker' Xie Ling, widely regarded as the best spiritual tattooist in the Star Glory Federation, who was more than 250 years old.

After watching the files and combat videos of all the Orb Patrollers, Xie Ling decided to draw spiritual tattoos on five of them, including Li Yao and Ding Lingdang!

The powerful spiritual tattoos created by spiritual tattooists were not bearable for every Cultivator.

It was especially so in the case of the spiritual tattoos produced by a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator such as Xie Ling. Common Cultivators would find it impossible to withstand her work at all.

It was also one of the most important reasons why body practitioners continued to exist.

Many incredible spiritual tattoos were only useful for and could only be utilized by body practitioners.

Li Yao's astonishing defense ability and unparalleled body toughness had earned him a spiritual tattoo to be crafted by Xie Ling herself.

As for other Orb Patrollers who were not qualified to get the spiritual tattoos, they were allowed to pick one or two invaluable treasures at their will from Occult Orbs Fellowship's treasury.

As Xie Ling's hands moved faster and faster, the jade spiders' movement speed increased. Two ultimate spiritual tattoos whose ink was refined out of thousands of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures gradually took shape.

Ding Lingdang's body was covered in a nine-headed dragon condensed in flames from her chest to her back. As she breathed, the dragon seemed to be rushing and roaring in clouds.

On Li Yao's body, it was a vintage crimson phoenix which was extending its wings, ready to chase wind and lightning. Its extremely long tails spread to his four limbs like nine chains of blood.

"Cha!" Xie Ling bellowed. All the jade spiders jumped off their bodies and returned to her Cosmos Ring.

The grand spiritual tattoos, after glittering momentarily, vanished and sank into their flesh and blood.

At first look, their skin was as smooth and clean as before. There were no traces of the tattoos at all.

This was due to the 'Ink Burying' skill. The spiritual tattoos would be hidden inside the flesh and blood normally, which would neither affect their daily training nor be seen through by the enemy easily.

Only during fierce combat, when the spiritual energy was bursting out, would the spiritual tattoos reveal themselves.

The two tattoos were tailor-made by Xie Ling after studying their files and combat videos repetitively according to their respective specialties. There wouldn't be a second tattoo like them in the entire world.

Ding Lingdang's spiritual tattoo was called 'Blazing Hydra'. It would be triggered based on her rage. The angrier she became, the more it would bring up the efficiency of her fiery spiritual energy.

In her most furious state, the spiritual tattoo could improve her combat ability by more than 30%.

Li Yao's spiritual tattoo was named 'Immortal Phoenix', which would be triggered by his blood. The more he bled, the better his spiritual tattoo would work, and the higher his combat ability would become.

In other words, with this spiritual tattoo, he would be the strongest when he was the most seriously wounded.

Of course, both 'Blazing Hydra' and 'Immortal Phoenix' boiled down to the stimulation of central nerves and brain cells in order to activate the body's hidden potential. It equaled to burning their own life.

But as Cultivators, was their purpose not to ignite themselves and illuminate the entire universe?

It was 1:32 p.m. at this moment.

There were five days until the first launch of Heaven's Artillery.

Chapter 399: Hometown

Chapter 399: Hometown

The following morning, at a Special Waste Treatment Plant near Lake Rusty in Floating Spear City known as the magical equipment graveyard…

Li Yao had grown up in this place.

During the three years that he was away, countless scavengers were still making their living by recycling the abandoned magical equipment.

Although it was merely dawn, countless scavengers were already searching every piece of magical equipment that was still usable on the shaking garbage hill while holding back the pungent smells.

On the eastside of the magical equipment graveyard, two gangs were confronting each other.

Each gang had around fifty people. Some of them were clenching iron tubes wreathed in steel thorns, while some others were waving coldly-shining, sharp blades.

The leader of one of the gangs was thin and somewhat hunched with a brown skin. Cunningness and cruelness beamed out from his triangular eyes, making him look like a hungry hellion.

The other leader, in comparison, was tall and brawny. His muscles were tearing his clothes apart. His eyes were bloodshot, and he looked a furious bear.

The triangular-eyed man said coldly, a dagger folded in his hand, "Fatty Leung, we all make our living in the magical equipment graveyard. Conflict is inevitable. But you didn't have to be so brutal. Just for a wrecked shuttle, you beat up two of my brothers terribly. Do you think that my temper has died down now that I'm older?"

Fatty Leung was brawny, but it did not mean that he lacked brains. He rebutted unnervingly as he laughed peculiarly.

"Wild Wolf, don't presume that I do not know what you did. Last week, when three of my brothers were doing their job, the garbage hill collapsed suddenly. Four broken legs. That was all your doing!"

Wild Wolf and Fatty Leung were representatives of the two largest scavenger gangs in the magical equipment graveyard. As their gangs flourished more and more, unrest continued to grow. A fight seemed to be unavoidable.

The vibe grew more and more intense. A tiny spark could set the scene ablaze.

Somebody was tying their wrists with cloth quietly in case their hands slipped during the upcoming fight because of sticky blood; somebody was preparing exhilarant drugs to stimulate them.

Suddenly, an earsplitting shriek burst out in the sky, as if a falling star was coming, or a giant bird was diving down.

Shocked by the shriek, everyone flinched. An earthquake seemed to be taking place.

Many scraps of magical equipment were rolling down from the garbage hills nearby.

The color of Fatty Leung's and Ye Long's faces changed. They were unable to command their subordinates anymore, because their shouts were dwarfed by the overwhelming noise.

Every scavenger gazed at the sky, stunned, as if they had been frozen by some spell.

A round, jade-like shuttle, which one could tell was as lavish as any shuttle could be, flew past the sky of the magical equipment graveyard while glittering brightly.

It appeared that the extravagant shuttle was arriving at its destination, because it was slowing down and preparing to land. Spiritual waves rippled in the air, spreading out and diminishing, until they broke into thousands of butterfly-like light spots and vanished in the air.

"This is…"

As scavengers, Fatty Leung and Wild Wolf had never taken real extravagant shuttles in person. But they'd both seen them a lot in magazines and on the Nexus. They could tell whether a piece of magical equipment was valuable or not when they saw it.

Although Wild Wolf always considered himself to be a knowledgeable man, he had never seen a shuttle as beautiful before. It was so shockingly splendid that it did not even seem to belong to the Heaven's Origin Sector.

"There is nothing but scum and low-rent residential areas around the Lake Rusty except for the magical equipment graveyard. Why would such an advanced shuttle land here?"

"Is this really happening? I've seen the vehicles of the mayor of Floating Spear City and the leaders of the major sects in the city. Even their shuttles are not as good as this one!"

"Who's on the shuttle? What is it doing in this place?"

An unimaginable big shot appearing unexpectedly could not mean anything good. These scavengers that had been working in the grey area of the law were the most sensitive to danger.

Exchanging a look, Fatty Leung and Wild Wolf both put the upcoming fight aside.

"Look, the shuttle is landing in 'Morning Sun Village'!"

"Morning Sun Village? Does that mean the guy on the shuttle is... Vulture Li Yao?"

Everyone was greatly shocked.

Morning Sun Village was the cheapest and the least frequented low-rent residential community. Even scavengers such as themselves wouldn't live there as long as they had a few coins in their pockets. Nothing interesting had happened in that place since it was built dozens of years ago.

Until three years ago, a celebrity from that place rose to fame, Vulture Li Yao!

As an orphan growing up in the magical equipment graveyard, he had become a Cultivator at the Building Foundation Stage before he was 25. Even in the five hundred years the Star Glory Federation's history, he was also one of the few legends who achieved that!

Fiend Blade Peng Hai, who had been quite a superstar in Floating Spear City a few years ago, was eclipsed by Vulture

Li Yao's brilliance.

Cultivation in the Heaven's Origin Sector was never easy. A Cultivator at the Building Foundation Stage was qualified to be a professor in a university, an Elder in a sect, or a commander of a military legion. In the eyes of the insignificant scavengers, he was one of the super big shots living in a different world.

"Vulture Li Yao has his days now! He could buy the magical equipment graveyard with part of the shell of such an extravagant shuttle!"

"In the old days, I even fought him before. It's really scaring to think that I used to fight against a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator!"

"I was even kicked by him once! Well well well. My life is fulfilled now, knowing that I had such an encounter with a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator!"

Scavengers such as Fatty Leung and Wild Wolf were not in much of a friendly relationship with Li Yao, who might not even bother to sort everything out with them now that he was a high and mighty Cultivator. But if they continued on fighting and caused a riot, who could say for sure that it would not trigger some bad memories for Li Yao?

Fatty Leung and Wild Wolf looked at each other and retreated with their respective gang silently, thinking jealousy and complicated thoughts.

Seeing Vulture Li Yao who used to be searching for abandoned magical equipment in garbage hills like themselves turning into an influential Cultivator and owning such an expensive shuttle, they somehow lost all drive to fight anymore.

Fate was such an erratic thing!

In Morning Sun Village, Li Yao could have parked the shuttle that he borrowed from Occult Orbs Fellowship in midair beside the window, so that he would be able to enter his room directly.

Yet, he still chose to land the shuttle on the ground and walk slowly into his room through the dark and muggy stairs.

There were four days left before the trip to Ultimacy.

An expedition to ten thousand lightyears away was hundreds of times more dangerous than adventures in common Occult Orbs.

Many of the thirty Orb Patrollers of the first echelon were core disciples of major families and sects, or descendants of renowned Cultivators. They had to take care of their personal affairs first.

Therefore, for the last few days, Occult Orbs Fellowship didn't arrange further training missions for them but gave them some time to reunite with their family and friends and bid farewell to them properly.

Li Yao had no family now. But Floating Spear City was the place where he grew up after all. He felt he was somewhat rooted in this place.

He didn't feel that his hometown was anything unusual before. But when he realized that he was going ten thousand lightyears away through the sea of stars, he suddenly had the impetus to take a tour around Floating Spear City.

Just now, he lowered the altitude of the shuttle and slowed it down on purpose, just in order to see the place he grew up in one more time.

Although that part of his life was filled with difficulty, suffering, and street fights, he found that what he remembered most were the warmth and wonders.

The spotted walls of Morning Sun Village as well as the colorful graffiti suddenly pulled himself back to years ago.

"It's been three years since I last came to this place. Last time I returned to Floating Spear City, I left in a hurry after meeting Senior Brother Peng Hai, and there was no time for me to come back.

"Now that I'm finally here, everything is exactly the same as when I left.

"The only thing that has changed is myself!

"From a little scavenger struggling in the ditch and garbage hills of the magical equipment graveyard, to a middle-level Building Foundation Stage Cultivator who is about to fight for my nation and for myself ten thousand lightyears away!"

Li Yao stopped in front of the door of his home.

The blemished iron door was covered entirely in spider nets. The lock was rusted over, too.

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao pressed his hands on the lock and knocked it off with his spiritual energy. Then he pushed the door open and walked in.

Most of the precious files that his adoptive father left for him had been packed up and sent to the Grand Desolate War

Institution a long time ago.

But many magical equipment scraps were still in the corners of the room.

There were also many antique crystal processors dangling from the ceiling, which were shaken by the breeze and pealed like wind-chimes.

This place was very close to the magical equipment graveyard, and therefore had an extremely low rent. But few people still resided here. After Li Yao went to college, he kept renewing the lease on the house which he considered to be his home.

On his way to the Grand Desolate War Institution, his spiritual root was awakened, allowing him to become a Cultivator. When the news reached Floating Spear City, everybody was greatly shocked. The magical equipment graveyard was never short of thieves, but none of them dared to trespass on his household when they learned that it belonged to a Cultivator.

Therefore, three years later, except for a thick layer of dust on everything, there was barely anything different about his home.

Li Yao glanced over every corner of the room and was somewhat surprised that his home was much smaller than he remembered it to be. It was like two pigeon cages.

But in his memories, this room had been his entire world where so many beautiful things happened.

Old scenes flooded back one by one.

It was in these very rooms that his adoptive father taught him the skills of magical equipment maintenance as well as all kinds of eccentric knowledge.

From the repulse at the beginning, to the ecstasy of reading a maintenance manual of a crystal warship in the end. Too many traces of his growth had been left in these two rooms.

Li Yao sighed slightly. He was planning to pack everything away with his Cosmos Ring, but on second thought, he decided to keep them where they were. In the end, he merely picked up a 'Ghost Fire IV', a crystal processor refined by Blue Flame Sect 124 years ago, from the antique crystal processor collection.

The performance of the crystal processor was mediocre. Yet, it was weirdly designed into the form of a skeleton head, which added to its value as a collectable.

Li Yao stored it inside his Cosmos Ring as a memento of his past.

Closing the door gently, he jumped out of the window. The extravagant shuttle was already waiting for him outside.

Li Yao set off to Floating Spear City's downtown area!

Chapter 400: New Generation

Chapter 400: New Generation

Early in the morning, in Floating Spear City's Mining Clan High School, the spacious playground was packed with people.

Floating Spear City's Mining Clan High School was quite different from three years ago.

After making a fortune through the Demon Beast Detector, he had invested a large sum of money into his hometown's school. Dormitories were refurbished, the playground was enlarged, a new lab building was built, and a lot of new training facilities were added.

Right now, Floating Spear City's Mining Clan High School not only accepted the miners' children from the Limestone District, but also admitted students of no significant background citywide. The school was twice as large right now.

At this moment, thousands of students had assembled on the playground. Everybody was talking and laughing, making the place livelier than ever.

"Tang Xiao, you're not awake yet? Cheer up! A big shot is coming!"

In a corner of the crowd, a yellow-haired student tapped a drowsy, chubby classmate nearby with his elbow.

The chubby boy named Tang Xiao yawned and said with disdain, "What's so special about this big shot that they have to summon all the students here? It can't be the mayor, can it? I was practicing Thirteen Forces of War Beast until three o'clock in the morning. I don't have time for those douchebags."

The yellow-haired boy, on the other hand, was beaming with joy. He was so thrilled that even his voice had changed.

"What are you talking about? It's Li Yao. Vulture Li Yao!"

Tang Xiao's sleepy eyes had been as narrow as a line, only to be widened open by the shocking news. He almost jumped to the sky in astonishment.

"What? You mean the super genius, Vulture Li Yao?"

Li Yao was the biggest idol for the thousands of students in the Floating Spear City's Mining Clan High School. All the children from slums considered him as their role model. Besides, many of the buildings and training facilities inside their school were sponsored by Li Yao. They were very proud of him.

Almost every child had watched Li Yao's videos hundreds of times over. They even formed an association named 'Vulture Squad' which collected news about Li Yao.

Tang Xiao and the yellow-haired boy were no exceptions. They were hardcore members of Vulture Squad!

At that moment, they both shivered, feeling that their backs were cold as if someone had soaked their spine in cold water.

Looking up to the sky, an extravagant shuttle enshrouded in silver brightness had stopped overhead quietly without them noticing.

From the perfect shell spread out a dominating aura which enveloped all the students on the spot like an invisible giant net.

"Wow. What is this shuttle? I've never seen one like it before! Judging from the appearance, it is even more advanced than the Mystic Bird Armed Shuttle that is worth hundreds of millions!"

"Vulture Li Yao is so intimidating! I can barely breathe right now. Is he really only five years older than us?"

"Cultivators are really rich… and awesome!"

"I'm going to try my best to Cultivate, too, and one day I will be a Cultivator as strong as Li Yao!"

Students were all dazzled. They gazed at the sky in a trance with their mouths wide open.

The silver brightness in the sky blinked, unveiling a tall, thin man who was wearing a white robe. The belts of the robe moved without being affected by the wind, while its owner flew to the platform in the air slowly and elegantly.

It was Li Yao!

"President Mao, Grandpa Wang!"

Li Yao hugged the two old men on the platform warmly.

Although he'd only stayed for a few months in Floating Spear City's Mining Clan High School, he'd never forgotten that President Mao accepted him against pressure when he was at the lowest point of his life.

Grandpa Wang helped him even more. When he was in high school, he wouldn't have been able to pay the tuition fees without the support of Grandpa Wang.

If he'd dropped out of school back then, his life would've been very different.

Therefore, Li Yao had always considered Floating Spear City's Mining Clan High School as his mother school and the two old men as his own family.

"The main purpose of my return this time is to see whether or not we can build another training stadium in our school. I am planning to get it done according to the highest standard. It will be as good as any training stadium in the federation. Of course, as the intensity of training increases, the trainees' bodies are more prone to injuries. Therefore, we will also need to build a brand-new school hospital. It will be completed according to the standard of the field hospitals in the military frontline, which should be enough to fix all the injuries resulting from training," Li Yao said unhurriedly.

Over the past few months in Occult Orbs Fellowship, he had gained a lot of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and secret reserves. The invaluable items were all sellable.

Even contribution points could be exchanged for money, too, as a reward for each mission.

This time, he had accepted the extremely dangerous mission to Ultimacy. As a result, he had been prepaid with a large sum. Since he had no home to settle in, and neither himself nor Ding Lingdang lacked money, he decided to invest the money into his school.

Li Yao's ambition was not just his own success.

He was hoping to build Floating Spear City's Mining Clan High School into a first-rate super school of the federation where all the underprivileged students with talent for Cultivating could be raised to be Cultivators.

"Li Yao, you've offered tremendous help to our school over the past two years. Now you are spending a huge fortune again in constructing two advanced facilities. I really… I really don't know how I can thank you."

President Mao felt a plethora of emotions welling up in his chest. "Years ago, I was just doing Old Wang a favor. I did nothing but lift my finger. I never expected that you would make it this far to be one of the youngest Building Foundation Stage Cultivators in the federation!"

Li Yao smiled.

"President, it was just a lift of your finger for you years ago, and it is a lift of my finger for me right now. The money on the training stadium and the school hospital is no big deal. I have talked with Chairman Zhao, the leader of the Disabled Servicemen Association. Later, the Disabled Servicemen Association will send a batch of skilled veterans to work as tutors in our school, who will teach students martial arts and arts of war. All the relevant fees will be paid by me.

"You know that the federation has entered the first-degree state of war. A soldier is the most respected profession. It will do no harm to the students if they can learn some battle skills!"

Li Yao had figured everything out. If he could return from Ultimacy safe and sound, naturally, money was not going to be a problem. Not just a few retired veterans, he would have enough capital to hire a special force troop.

If he failed to come back, the insurance companies endorsed by the top 10 sects of the federation would pay a large sum of compensation, which should be enough to support the construction and operation of the Floating Spear City's Mining Clan High School.

President Mao nodded his head quickly.

"Li Yao, for the students here, I won't be polite; I'll accept gratefully. It will be marvelous if tutors with military background could teach in our school!

"You know that students in our school are mostly from miner families born and raised in slums. Their talents are limited. Their education in the early years is not decent, either. It is quite difficult for them to awaken their spiritual roots and become Cultivators like you. In fact, it will be a miracle if even one of them makes it.

"However, since you started sponsoring our school, every student has been training crazily setting you as their example. Their bodies are much stronger than before. Last year, 174 students passed the test of the military and became soldiers of the federal army!"

Li Yao was amazed.

"174 of them? That's impressive!"

The Star Glory Federation honored valiance more than anything else. The social status of the federal army was very high and almost stood equal to that of Cultivators. It was quite challenging to be enlisted by the army.

For underprivileged kids, joining the army was a very sensible choice. They could learn many skills in the army for free, receive abundant nutrition drugs and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures for free, and get a job easily when they retired from the army. They would be respected by other citizens, too. Once they ran into any trouble, the Retired Servicemen Association and Disabled Servicemen Association would stand up for them.

For ordinary people, becoming a Cultivator might be an unreachable dream. But becoming soldiers was an achievable goal with hard work!

In the old days, only a few graduates of the Floating Spear City's Mining Clan High School would be successfully enrolled by the federal army every year. This time, the number had increase manifold, all thanks to Li Yao's previous investment!

"Say something to the students. You are the hero of everyone here. They've been jumping up and down like restless monkeys since they heard that you were coming."

President Mao grinned.

Li Yao glanced around. The crowds below the platform fell quiet, while thousands of eyes were fixed on him hungrily. He couldn't help but smile.

He suddenly recalled that, in the playground of the Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School three years ago, his old friend Meng Jiang and he used to gaze at Fiend Blade Peng Hai in jealousy and admiration from the far edges of the crowds.

The scene was so familiar. Yet, three years had passed. How time flies!

While he was pondering, Li Yao took a step forward.

There was nothing in front of him, except the ground which was two meters below him.

But he was stepping on invisible stairs ascending to the sky slowly.

Cultivators at the Building Foundation Stage were already able to fly slowly in the air by manipulating the air with the fluctuation of spiritual energy.

It was not very useful in a combat. The Cultivator would become a conspicuous target for the enemy if they just swaggered to the sky.

But right now, all the students were deeply impressed by Li Yao's performance.

Li Yao remembered the grandeur scene where Fiend Blade Peng Hai showed his strength at the peak of Building Foundation Stage. Taking a deep breath, he spread his spiritual energy out slowly.

His hair was dancing crazily. Violet purple electric arcs and bright blue fire were circling him, flying and colliding while making cracking noises.

Spiritual waves rippled out to every corner of the playground in silver rings.

"He!" Li Yao bellowed. A hurricane out of nowhere seemed to be blowing. None of the students was able to keep their eyes open. Their school uniforms were fluttering in the wind.

"Is this the dominance of Cultivators? So formidable, so terrifying!"

"I'm going to be a Cultivator like this. I'm going to fly freely in the sky, too!"

"We are all from slums. If Vulture Li Yao can do this, so can I!"

Shouts and screams from the students were caught clearly by Li Yao.

He smiled and roared, "You want to be like me?

"Then just try your best to train yourself!"

Chapter 401: Best Friend

Chapter 401: Best Friend

At night, in the gourmet street in the underground ghost city of Floating Spear City, a cozy restaurant was filled with flavorful cuisine, lively chitchatting, and colliding sounds of pans and knives. Everyone's faces were beaming with delight.

This was what one might call the joy of life.

Clink!

Two cups filled with chilled fruit wine clicked. Li Yao and Meng Jiang, his old friend from back when he was in high school, drank up the wine and smacked their lips, enjoying it very much. They looked each other in the eyes and smiled.

"It's been three years since I last came here. The mulberry wine of Old Du Barbecue is just as scrumptious as the old days!"

Li Yao licked his lip, dwelling on his past.

In the day, after he left Mining Clan High School, he'd gone to see Peng Hai, his Senior Brother. Then, the two of them paid a visit to their Enlightenment Master Sun.

Mister Sun had been just a Cultivator at the Refinement Stage with no exceptional abilities in his early years. However, his eyes were sharp enough to discover Fiend Blade Peng Hai and Vulture Li Yao when he was old. As a result, his position in the Crimson Nimbus Sect had soared.

In order to make friends with Peng Hai and Li Yao, the Crimson Nimbus Sect had been taking care of Mister Sun devotedly over the past few years. It had even arranged an excellent villa in a suburb for the old man to enjoy his retired life.

Yet, Mister Sun had always remembered that Crimson Nimbus Second Senior High School had kicked Li Yao out before. He was never keen about the affairs of Crimson Nimbus Sect. Instead, one of his greatest hobbies was to wander around in slums, hoping to find the next talented kid.

Li Yao had dinner with Peng Hai and Mister Sun together. He entrusted Peng Hai to handle his shares in Dual Dragon Union. After sorting everything out, it was already nine o'clock in the evening.

He happened to hear that his old friend Meng Jiang had graduated from the vocational school after three years of study and successfully acquired the medium credential of beautician. He was idle at present.

Li Yao hadn't seen Meng Jiang for three years. They took the opportunity and met each other again in their favorite underground gourmet street.

The Goat Oil Fried Noodles with hot steam billowing up, skewers with meat that was even thicker than arms, clams which were so spicy that their tears were dripping, and the extremely fat drumsticks. All the delicious cuisines that they dreamed about in their high school were served on the table.

"I never expected that we would ever meet again. Good for you! Reaching the Building Foundation Stage after only three years. You are as famous as Fiend Blade Peng Hai now!"

With a broad smile, Meng Jiang poured wine into Li Yao's cup, while he observed, "I'm just an ordinary man, and I doubt I will achieve anything special in my entire life. The only thing that I'm proud of is that I have such a good friend like you! I didn't expect that you would still remember me as your old friend now that you are a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator, and that you are willing to meet and have dinner with me in such an unattractive place! I'm so happy!"

"Meng Jiang, you will always be my best friend! How can I forget you? Years ago, when I was seriously wounded on Devil Flood Dragon Island during the hunting trip, everybody said that it was impossible for me to wake up again. It was you who had been defending me in the campus. You even had quite a few fights with other people. I never forgot that, not even for a second!"

Holding his cup tightly, Li Yao said, somewhat embarrassedly, "But you know that once you set off on the path of Cultivation, you can only try your best to move forward. I've been spending almost 24 hours a day in training. Sometimes, I have been summoned to various battlegrounds where I engage in furious battles that can last for months. There really has been no time for me to reunite with my old friend!"

"I totally understand. The situation is quite intense nowadays. Cultivators are busier than ever! Now that you've embarked on this path, just dedicate yourself to it and climb upward! I'm waiting to drink with you again when you reach the Nascent Soul Stage!"

Meng Jiang grinned. "But don't keep me waiting for too long! If I am already an ugly old man when you become a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, it will be too embarrassing for me to take a picture with you!"

Li Yao grinned, too. "Rest assured! I won't keep you waiting for that long!

"Right, what about you?

"I know that your dream is to become the best beautician in the federation. You've been working hard enough to acquire the medium credential that many experienced beauticians find difficult to get. What are your plans next? Go job hunting or start your own business?"

Meng Jiang smiled and said proudly, "I'm going to join the army."

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. "Join the army?"

"Yes."

Meng Jiang nodded. "Of course, I want to start my salon. But you know my family's condition. There is barely any money for that. My father has never been supportive about my career, either.

"Now that the federation is in the first-degree state of war, the benefits of the soldiers have significantly improved. The standard of enrollment has been lowered, too. After three years of service, I will be able to apply for a sum of loans to realize my dream!

"I'll let you in on a secret. I took the military test a few days ago and passed it. As long as the vetting of my files is fine, I will become a glorious soldier of the federation!

"Haha. Even my father doesn't know it yet. He will be so furious when he hears the news!"

"So, that was the case…"

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao took out a black, dull polish Gold Transfer Card from his pocket, put it on the oily desk, and pushed it over.

Meng Jiang was dazed for a moment. There was hesitation in his eyes. Drinking up the wine in his cup, he pushed the card back after a deep breath.

Li Yao frowned and said, "Meng Jiang, we are best friends. You don't have to be courteous with me. The money inside should be enough for you to start a medium-size salon. You will be able to save yourself the trouble of serving in the army. It's really dangerous to be a soldier right now!"

Glancing at the Gold Transfer Card, Meng Jiang seemed somewhat regretful. But his eyes turned determined again, as he smiled and said, "Li Yao, I know you mean well, and the money matters little to you.

"However, I have always considered us to be best friends. Our friendship can be traced back to our high school. It's the purest of all and I value it more than anything else!

"Therefore, I can't take your money to run my business. If so, our friendship will not be pure anymore, but flawed and sour.

"What's more, compared to an effortless success, I'd prefer to build a business of my own with my own hands!

"Only in such a way can I feel confident about myself when I look back at my past after I establish a splendid empire from nothing!

"When you become a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator one day, I will still be able to eat and drink with you confidently with my head held high!"

Li Yao pondered for a long time. Then he scratched his head and smiled.

"Well said, Meng Jiang. You've improved a lot over the past three years!"

"Of course!"

Meng Jiang grinned, his eyes beaming with pride. "With such a super genius like you as my best friend, I'm under a lot of pressure. Of course, I need to try my best to improve myself, so that the distance between us won't be too big!

"Since my talents are limited, I will remain an ordinary man for my entire life because it's very likely that I will never awaken my spiritual root. I told you when we parted last time that ordinary people can made their own achievements, too, which will be no less impressive than those of Cultivators'!

"Maybe, I cannot become a Cultivator in everyone's eyes and shock the entire federation with my name. But at the very least, I can be a Cultivator of my own life and steer my own fate!"

Li Yao was greatly touched.

Illuminated by the burning furnace, his old friend Meng Jiang's face was gleaming, full of hope for a beautiful life in the future, determination to achieve it with everything he could, and confidence to break the shackles of life.

Li Yao was very delighted to see his old friend's new change. He raised his cup again.

"Remarkable, Meng Jiang. We are all Cultivators of our own life. Now that we've set off on the path of our own will, we should spare no effort in walking forward one step after another, never to give up no matter how bitter, no matter how hard, no matter how exhausting the journey is!"

"Cheers!"

"Cheers!"

…

Three days later, at the location of the Heaven's Artillery on a vast desert in the northwest part of the Star Glory Federation…

The federal army had sealed off five hundred square kilometers nearby. More than five Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were monitoring the sky and the underground carefully.

In the control center, more than ten research-type Cultivators at the Core Formation Stage, leading almost a hundred Building Foundation Stage experts and hundreds of Refinement Stage ones, were busy operating the facilities.

There were five minutes left before the first launch of the Heaven's Artillery.

On the wall of the giant hollow on the ground that Li Yao had seen once before, hundreds of thousands of runes were shining. A red sun seemed to be rising up.

Although it was a cloudless day, the brightness triggered by the spiritual waves still eclipsed the radiating sunlight.

In the middle of the round pit, deep down in the silo which lead underground, a cluster of redness was accumulating and roaring like the sound of wind and thunder, as if a behemoth made of magma that had been locked for a long time was ready to break out of its cage.

Bolstered by tectonic movements and fluctuations of spiritual energy, the volcano which had been tranquil for half a year was about to burst out in an unprecedentedly shocking way!

Inside the control center, the Cultivators were calculating the angle and trajectory of the eruption, trying to pour more oil onto it.

"Three minutes to go!"

"108 crystal bomb positions have been triggered simultaneously!"

"Earth fire enhancing array, activate!"

"BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!"

Feeble quakes came from deep underground. Ripples were appearing inside the glasses of water on the desks.

The faces of every Cultivator, including those of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, were also shivering.

The stratum that blocked the volcano before had been blown to pieces by the crystal bombs. The enhancement array could trigger the enormous energy contained inside the earth fire momentarily.

The launch procedure had been started. Nothing could interrupt it right now. The only thing that they could do was wait.

Modern Cultivators were natural atheists.

They might believe that there were some godly or devilish species which boasted incomparable strength to crumble or create planets.

But they would never believe that there was an unperceivable, unobservable, and unfalsifiable god manipulating everything behind them.

However, in the three minutes that seemed to forever long, many of the firmest atheists started mumbling prayers to nonexistent gods like the ancient Cultivators did forty thousand years ago.

The earth was trembling more and more violently. The redness inside the silo was becoming increasingly bright. Scorching steams were surging up from the cracks on the ground almost a hundred kilometers around, which condensed into wildly-dancing white mist that brought the temperature of the environment up by more than ten degrees.

Heaven's Artillery was a perfect name that explained the structure of the super teleportation array. The star rails formed a helix inside the silo like rifling in a gun barrel.

Five star shuttles, with a hundred meters in between, were parked at the bottom of the silo.

In one of the star shuttles, the Orb Patrollers were singing aloud. Noisy national anthems and military songs echoed in the shabby cabin.

In another shuttle, the Orb Patrollers were telling ribald jokes to each other, trying to ease their anxiety.

In two of the other star shuttles, every Orb Patroller closed their eyes, while they listened to the roaring of the earth fire under their feet quietly.

One minute to go before the launch!

Translator's Thoughts

flycrane01 flycrane01

The most thrilling arc and the finale of Volume I is about to begin!

https://discordapp.com/invite/WqFxTZx

Type the link in the browser and chat with the translator and the editor.

Chapter 402: Heaven's Artillery, Launch!

Chapter 402: Heaven's Artillery, Launch!

"Heaven's Artillery, third-degree preparation!"

Millions of octagonal runes carved on the inner wall of the silo started glittering, floating in the air like glowing jellyfish in the deep sea, and were extending their tentacles forming a giant spiritual net.

The star rails that spiraled upwards like the rifling of a gun barrel were also emitting dazzling brilliance piercing up to the sky!

"Heaven's Artillery, second-degree preparation!"

Thousands of meters underground, the furious earth fire was on an uncontrollable rampage. The redness had been condensed into a half-solid state, ready to jump out of the silo at any moment, only to be blocked by an invisible barrier. There was nothing it could do except savage the thick rock stratum.

The ground was shaking violently. Every pebble on the desert was bouncing.

Inside the silo, the star shuttles which had been fixed on the star rails were also trembling crazily. The Orb Patrollers felt that they were on the back of an infuriated demon beast and their bones were breaking up because of the forceful movements.

"Heaven's Artillery, first-degree preparation!"

The raging earth fire had gone completely mad. The noises in the underground seemed to be suggesting that ten thousand volcanoes were erupting at the same time. Dozens of kilometers away, the soldiers of the federal army could feel the intermittent hot waves despite the block of the crystal tanks, as if a lot of fiery demon beasts were roaming just outside their vehicles.

Although the roaring earth fire had diminished all other sounds, everyone in the control center was still too anxious to utter any sound. The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, as well as every other worker on the spot, were clenching their fists tightly, as they murmured the same thing in their minds.

'Make it!'

'Make it. You must make it!'

"Heaven's Artillery, launch!"

As a Core Formation Stage Cultivator shattered a virtual rune inside the control center, the last barrier sealing the earth fire was wrecked. The earth fire which had been suppressed for a long time soared upwards through the silo in a destructive frenzy.

The millions of runes carved on the inner wall of the silo were shinning more brightly than ever. They transformed the furious earth fire into the purest spiritual energy and transmitted it to the star rails.

Boosted by the tremendous spiritual energy, the five star shuttles started gliding.

In the No. 3 star shuttle, Li Yao found himself falling into the foam seat as if someone had kicked him right in his chest.

He had gone cruising through the sea of stars in star shuttles over ten times. But not once had the acceleration been so immense!

Despite the thick super-alloy shell and the seven barriers to ease the heat and quakes, the roaring of the earth fire was still breaking out right beside their ears.

This was the most primitive and ferocious power hidden in the deepest underground of the Heaven's Origin Sector. There was no way that he could hold it back at all. He had no other choice except to open his mouth as wide as possible and laugh wildly like Captain Hong Tong and his other teammates in order to offset the blast.

"BOOM!"

A pillar of red brightness almost a hundred meters in diameter rose up to the sky from the silo.

All the magical equipment in the one kilometer nearby was seriously jammed. Some of them even lost all functionality.

Snowflake-like streaks appeared on the tens of thousands of light beams inside the control center simultaneously.

Swallowed by the red pillar, the five star shuttles were marching upward inside it at a higher and higher speed, until in the end, they turned into five rapidly-revolving silver threads which interweaved into a giant gyro tearing the clouds apart darting into the heavens.

The five star shuttles were about to break through the atmosphere. At such a distance, even the crystal camera with the highest resolution was not able to capture a clear image. Everyone could only see a giant, white drill inside the red pillar moving upward, upward, and upward!

"Make it! You must make it!"

The atmosphere inside the control center was more intense than ever. The room was like a barrel of gunpowder; a single spark would be enough to make it explode.

"Huala!"

Ten thousand bolts of lightning seemed to have burst out at the same time. Every light beam was blank for a moment, displaying nothing but dazzling brilliance.

Simulated by the flash, Cultivators whose levels were relatively lower were shedding tears.

When they opened their eyes again, the red pillar and the five star shuttles were all gone.

In the middle of the blue sky, an enormous hole more than a hundred kilometers in diameter had appeared, through which one could see the boundless universe and blinking stars.

The hole was healing at an astonishing speed, and ten seconds later, it completely vanished.

The first expedition to ten thousand lightyears away in the history of the Star Glory Federation had official begun!

…

Almost at the same time, in the Blood Demon Sector, pale lightning was exploding in the gloomy, black-and-purple clouds. The shrieking wind sounded like ghosts crying in the sky.

In the middle of the steep mountains was a round lake about ten kilometers in diameter, which used to be a meteor crater.

Because of the minerals contained in the meteor, and after billions of years of decomposition, the lake was blood red in color, making it the biggest blood pool in history.

Right now, the dirty waves inside the blood pool were surging, raising giant swirls one after another. Several crimson tornadoes were blowing on it, as if some giant demon under the lake was extending all its fingers and snatching at the sky.

The shore of the blood lake was occupied by a circle of very weird demon beasts that were more than ten meters in diameter. At first glance, they seemed to be heads, only countless times larger. They were wreathed in transparent soft bones, but they had no faces, bodies, or limbs.

Some of the 'heads' were carried to and fro by the insects below them that looked like cockroaches.

Some of the 'heads' had organs that could spurt out air. By utilizing the air spurts, they were floating in the sky.

Some of the 'heads' were connected to bizarre birds, eagles, and bats with tentacles and were pulled around by them.

The 'brains' were actually biochemical brains that the demon race experimented on and optimized over forty thousand years of evolution.

After generations of optimization, their bodies, limbs and internal organs had all retrograded. The brain tissues in charge of self-awareness had been damaged on purpose, too. The brain tissues in charge of computation, on the other hand, proliferated.

Their computational ability was as good as that of the crystal processor refined by mankind.

Some of the biochemical brains maintained part of the sense organs. Their capability was even more impressive.

Connecting thousands of biochemical brains together, with the enormous blood pool created by a meteorite, the demon race had created their super teleportation array—'Eye of Blood Demon'!

On a sharp mountain close to Eye of Blood Demon, five mysterious figures were standing, observing the situation below. They were the demon emperors, the real masters of the Blood Demon Sector and the representatives of the Pantheon of Demons!

Including Elder Blood Robe, all the demon emperors were watching the rolling waves and savaging swirls as they grinned hideously.

"Eye of Blood Demon has been activated!"

"All the secrets buried in Boneyard shall be uncovered by us in no time!"

"Pathetic human beings of the Heaven's Origin Sector. They don't even know the real name of Boneyard. They call it 'Ultimacy'? They are ignorant enough to tread in the forbidden zone!"

"The moment we dig out all the secrets in Boneyard is the moment we conquer the Heaven's Origin Sector once and for all!"

Accompanied by the terrifying laughter from the demon emperors, the tides inside the blood pool became more frantic than ever. Thousands of small swirls melted into a super swirl several thousand meters in diameter which was still expanding!

In the sky, almost a hundred flying demon beasts were flapping their wings, while they pulled ten giant balls of flesh with lumps, veins, and nerves above the blood pool.

"Release!"

The tentacles were all cut off. The balls which were more than thirty meters in diameter dropped into the blood pool one after another and span inside the swirl.

At this time, the tide on the edge of the swirl had not died down yet. A giant wave dozens of meters high hit one of the balls as well as the ten flying demon beasts carrying it.

The poor flying demon beasts screamed desperately as if they'd been corroded by the most terrible acids in the world, before they fell into the blood pool quickly.

They struggled inside the blood pool but failed to free themselves. Very soon, they were swallowed by the swirl, appearing and disappearing on the surface of the blood pool.

Five seconds later, they turned into piles of bones, which were then torn to pieces and vanished after another five seconds.

The ten balls of flesh were absorbed by the swirl and dragged toward the deepest part of the blood pool while they were spinning rapidly.

Each ball held the nobles and princes of various demon kingdoms, who were silver-blood demons with the purest bloodlines and the most brilliant demon generals in the Blood Demon Sector!

After Building Foundation Stage Cultivators put on crystal suits, common demon generals were no match for them.

Therefore, the silver-blood demons carried a lot of biochemical beasts which could confront crystal suits face-to-face!

They had been promised innumerable rewards by the demon emperors once the exploration of Boneyard succeeded. They were even promised that, after the Heaven's Origin Sector was conquered, they would be entitled to establish their own kingdoms in the human towns!

What's more, they were clearer than the humans about the frightening secrets hidden in the depths of Boneyard which could improve their strength to an unimaginable level.

Therefore, although 'Eye of Blood Demon' was much more dangerous than Heaven's Artillery, the silver-blood demons inside the balls were still shouting and screaming excitedly, releasing their built-up tension and anxiety.

But in one of the balls, Wang Ji, prince of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers and the youngest disciple of Elder Blood Robe, was gritting his teeth with a tranquil face.

He was fixed tightly to the inner wall of the ball by countless tentacles, as if he were part of the ball.

Eyeing the hysterical silver-blood demons near him calmly, Wang Ji was much more agitated than he appeared to be. However, his previous failures had taught him a good lesson on hiding his feelings. He was biting his lips so hard that he was drinking his own blood. Yet, the hatred inside his heart was not in the least moderated.

'The Heaven's Origin Sector is also sending a large batch of Orb Patrollers to Boneyard.

'Vulture Li Yao... You've been quite active in Occult Orbs Fellowship over the past few months. Your position in the Rank of Stars has been on the rise, too. You are going to Boneyard, too, aren't you?

'Then, let's settle our grudge ten thousand lightyears away from home!'

BOOM!

Before Wang Ji knew it, noises resembling those of a tsunami echoed in his ears. The ball he was in seemed to have been compressed into a marble. His eyes were filled with redness, and then he passed out.

Eye of Blood Demon blinked. A crimson tide soared into the sky almost a kilometer above ground-level from the bottom of the swirl that was thousands of meters deep.

When everything went peaceful again, the ten balls were gone.

Eighty of the best demon generals of the Blood Demon Sector had been teleported to Boneyard ten thousand lightyears away!

Translator's Thoughts

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Chapter 403: Interstellar

Chapter 403: Interstellar

Li Yao felt like he had fallen into an endless dream. He was a drop of water which had plunged into a boundless ocean. The crystal suit and star shuttle that covered him gradually collapsed. In the end, even his body had entirely disappeared.

The only thing left was his soul. It turned into a brilliant star joining the swirl of galaxies constituted by billions of other stars and dived to the depths of the universe.

He had completely forgotten his past and his destiny. He was fascinated by the raging sea of stars.

When he finally reached the center of the swirl and passed through a long, dark channel, he saw a splendid battlefield unfolding in front of him.

Against the dark background, billions of stars were burning furiously. Streaks of redness and streaks of blueness formed two legions that were engaged in a fierce war.

Every nebula was a soldier. The ferocious clouds of stars were the horses that they were riding, the burning brightness was their gunfire, and the spiral arms were their swords and sabers. Every spark resulting from the clashes was a new star!

The fierce war seemed to have lasted millions of years, or perhaps it had only started a moment ago. The legions of redness and blueness perished together and melted into a cluster of chaotic cosmic dust.

Li Yao's soul was still diving into the cluster of dust deeper and deeper.

After he didn't know how long, he finally realized that he was not diving, but falling.

But his heart was more tranquil than ever. It seemed to have become part of the universe.

"Li Yao!"

Somebody was calling him. The voice seemed to be from the other end of the galaxy, but it did wake up his soul which had been on the brink of being lost.

Like someone who had just died, his soul was split in two halves. Part of his soul was still inside his body, locked in his crystal suit and bound to the foam seat of the star shuttle.

But the other part of his soul had been tossed lightyears away because of the inertia of the momentum before it was pulled back brutally.

Just like a spring which had been extended fully and suddenly let go, his soul bounced back and forth many times until it finally settled again inside his body.

"Phew..."

Not knowing what was going on, Li Yao was dazed for a long time with his eyes half open. In the end, he remembered everything again. He opened his mouth and found his tongue blurred, because there was a large cluster of sour and bitter liquid inside his mouth, and he couldn't tell the difference between his blood and saliva.

He cleaned the liquid with the hygiene system of the helmet and rolled his tongue. Then he opened his mouth again. "Have we really crossed ten thousand lightyears?"

"Yes. But we're not there yet."

Captain Hong Tong freed himself from his foam seat by force and treated Yan Yangtian together with 'Dummy' Ba Weiqi.

A distance of ten thousand lightyears was too much of a burden for both the body and the brain. Yan Yangtian's soul had been shocked, resulting in minor injuries to her brain.

Li Yao shook his head to refresh himself. Besides a strong sense of nausea, he also felt numbness all over his body now that he regained control over his internal organs, limbs, and fingers.

He turned back and noticed that Ding Lingdang was waking up too. She was extending and folding her fingers one by one to warm herself up.

Li Yao barely had chance to feel relieved as the star shuttle started trembling violently as if someone had punched it right in the face. Ominous red lights were blinking inside the cabin.

Hong Tong and Ba Weiqi both fell over because of the unexpected impact.

Fortunately, after the mental guidance from Ba Weiqi, Yan Yangtian had awoken. Li Yao heard her gasping for almost ten seconds in the communication channel and her desperate cough as if she had just returned from the worst nightmare.

Hong Tong and Ba Weiqi hurried back to their seats and buried themselves in the buffer foam again. The captain bellowed, "Careful! We've been captured by the gravity of Ultimacy. But we are passing through a debris belt!"

Li Yao looked at the outside through the cabin window. From his angle, he could only see a deep, dark universe, with no sign of any stars, let alone Ultimacy.

But he did notice that many tiny metal scraps were brushing past the star shuttle.

Li Yao felt like somebody had grabbed him by his neck.

They were not teleported to the surface of Ultimacy directly, but the middle of the atmosphere and the gravity boundary.

Without any guidance of star beacons, this was already a very favorable outcome.

To teleport a star shuttle precisely to the surface of a planet ten thousand lightyears away was as difficult as hitting the wing of a fly hundreds of kilometers away with a needle.

Frankly speaking, it was already a miracle that they weren't teleported into the mantle of Ultimacy, or a galaxy nearby.

To be prepared for the expedition to ten thousand lightyears away, the five star shuttles for the mission had all been installed with a simple power system which could calculate the best route and landing spot automatically with the advanced crystal processor on board.

But this was as far as their luck went.

They'd been teleported to a debris belt occupied by space garbage in the periphery of the gravity zone of Ultimacy.

The seventy-eight crystal cameras on the outside of the star shuttle scanned the surrounding and sent the image to them.

Therefore, they all saw a space battleground that probably dated back to thousands of years ago.

Scraps of weapons and magical equipment, as well as bodies of Cultivators and demons in all kinds of bizarre shapes, were all around them.

Not far ahead were several starship remnants that were riddled with holes. There was also a lumpy star fortress of the demon race which looked like a super large hermit crab.

"Judging from the scale of the debris here, it seems that humans and demons had a fierce battle in the space around Ultimacy before, which means there must be something very important on Ultimacy!"

While he was talking, Hong Tong turned to Li Yao.

Li Yao observed for a while and commented as the magical equipment expert of the team, "Correct. Although the broken starships ahead are not very clear at this distance, it is not hard to tell from the distribution of cannons and cabins that they should be more powerful than the 'Tiger Shark' starships that we excavated before!

"The 'Tiger Shark' starships require at least five Core Formation Stage Cultivators to steer. If I had to guess, the starships in front of us can only be driven by Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators!

"Given the amount of debris, there are presumably dozens of such starships nearby. Far ahead, I can see starships of even higher levels!

"Which means, the battle here involved dozens of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and even stronger Cultivators!

"Although the Star Ocean Imperium was the peak of the Cultivation civilization and there were countless brilliant Cultivators, a battle including so many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators was still a rarely-seen one!

"It is the same for the demon race. I've never seen a star fortress of such a shape before. But it should be no weaker than the star fortresses recorded in our database. Based on its enormous size, I think it is safe to conclude that it was also a high-level, or even a main force, weapon of the Demon Beast Empire!

"There must be something precious on Ultimacy that led to this great war."

Hong Tong pondered for a moment and asked, "Are the starships and the star shuttles valuable enough to be retrieved?"

Li Yao thought for a while and shook his head.

"They are not, I'm afraid. They perished together at the end of the battle after using up their spiritual energy. Also, judging from their appearance, they were detonated on purpose, too. After floating in the sea of stars for thousands of years under the scourge of cosmic dust and radiation, even perfect magical equipment turns into garbage, not to mention that they were garbage in the first place.

"I suggest that we focus on the exploration of Ultimacy for now. If we find nothing of value on Ultimacy, we can always come back and clean up this ancient battleground.

"To be honest, they are just a nuisance at the moment!"

Before Li Yao could finish his sentence, another two metal scraps hit the star shuttle heavily, making it tremble like in a storm.

The debris in front of them was becoming denser and denser. The noises of impact turned from the sound of a breeze to that of a gale.

The spiritual shield of the star shuttle was dropping down fast. The 3D model on the light beam turned from green that represented absolute safety to bright yellow that indicated the vehicle was under attack, until in the end it lit up in a dangerously orange color.

In another dozen or so seconds, it turned into desperate crimson!

The mainframe crystal processor was calculating the best dodging route. But since they were tossed into the middle of the debris zone by the inertia of the space teleportation, they were wreathed by debris with no way to escape at all.

The only solution was to accelerate downwards and breach into the atmosphere of Ultimacy as soon as possible!

"BAM!"

Li Yao saw half of the corpse of a hideous demon crashing into the shell of the star shuttle.

The corpse had been weathered by cosmic radiation to the brink of disintegrating in the first place and only managed to maintain the basic appearance. Now after the heavy clash, it immediately broke into smithereens.

"Ahhhhhhh!"

But his teammates were all screaming.

Li Yao turned around, only to find that the almost ten light beams inside the cabin were showing the same picture, which was a wrecked star shuttle more than three thousand meters in length floating in the path of their descent.

The star shuttle continued diving, trying to pass the barricade through the gaps in the middle of the starship.

Although the route calculated by the crystal processor should be precise, the scraps around them had been stirred by their movement and were flying everywhere. Who knew whether or not new scraps would fill in the gaps because of the new collisions?

The defense ability of the spiritual shield had been reduced to minimum. A minor impact would be deadly for them.

"Beep!"

All the lights inside the star shuttle were turned off. The only feeble brightness was from a light beam. All the spiritual energy was transmitted to the mainframe crystal processor for it to overclock.

Holding their breath and keeping their eyes wide open, everyone watched the wrecked starship growing larger and larger in front of them in silence.

The star shuttle was like a small firefly dancing into the bloody mouth of a tyrannosaur.

The sharp bumps inside the starship was like the interconnecting teeth of the tyrannosaur.

The ten seconds passing through the 'teeth' felt even longer than the duration of the space teleportation to Li Yao.

It was not until the lights inside the cabin were turned on and the cabin was bathed in brightness again that everyone finally exhaled a mouthful of air in relief. They fell into their foam seats, not even having the strength to cheer.

The debris belt was left behind. In front of them was a mottled planet, half blue and half red.

The star shuttle proceeded toward the atmosphere of Ultimacy.

The atmosphere of Ultimacy was thinner than that of the Heaven's Origin Sector. Something unknown in the air cast icy flames on the cabin window, as if thousands of flowers of frost were blossoming.

"BOOM!"

After a shiver, the star shuttle broke through the atmosphere.

The mysterious Ultimacy finally revealed itself to the guests from ten thousand lightyears away!

Translator's Thoughts

flycrane01 flycrane01

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Come on and discuss the story with the translator and editor~

Chapter 404: Natural Paradise?

Chapter 404: Natural Paradise?

This was a planet covered in blue and red. Different from the Heaven's Origin Sector, the earth here was bright blue, and the ocean was deep red.

The blue continent was devoid of any traces of living creatures. The tectonic movements of Ultimacy were apparently hundreds of times more intense than those of the Heaven's Origin Sector. The ground seemed to have been torn apart and sewed together countless times. Hills, mountains and valleys were everywhere.

Based on the pictures captured by the crystal cameras, the crystal processor had discovered more than a hundred mountains that were more than ten thousand meters high and dozens of gorges that were thousands of meters below the sea level.

This was a rocky planet.

The territories were too complicated to have naturally formed. They could've been the result of a salvo from a piece of 'planetary magical equipment'.

Maybe ten thousand years ago, this place had been a heaven for animals and plants like the Heaven's Origin Sector. However, savaged by warfare, glory of the past turned into scattered sand, gone in the passage of time until nothing existed.

Since the land were too unfavorable for landing, the star shuttle searched for a new landing point toward the crimson ocean with brilliant exhaust flames spurting out of the power rune arrays.

They were preparing to land on the ocean.

The surface of the ocean was quite flat. The seawater could serve as a buffer, too. The odds of success would be much higher.

The shell on the stomach of the star shuttle opened quietly, sending out five metal sensors analyzing the components of the air quickly.

In the meantime, another metal ball carved with countless runes was ejected from the star shuttle into the ocean in advance to assess the substituents of the ocean.

Soon, a report was displayed on the light beam.

Except for a very small proportion of demonic energy and impurities, the air of Ultimacy was rather clean. The oxygen percentage here was 5% higher than that in the Heaven's Origin Sector. Building Foundation Stage Cultivators could breathe the air with no aid.

There were more than 550 kinds of minerals and microelements in the seawater, which was almost as remarkable as the most famous hot spring in the Heaven's Origin Sector.

Or rather, the ocean was itself a vast 'hot spring'.

The average temperature of the seawater was 72 degrees.

By preliminary evaluation, many spiritual lodes with amazing reserves were underneath the surface of Ultimacy. Due to the intense crustal movements, the spiritual lodes clashed into one another, forming volcanoes at the bottom of the sea. A huge amount of marrow crystals and ores erupted together with magma and melted into the seawater, until in the end the ocean turned red. The temperature of the seawater was brought up during the process as well.

The conclusion excited all the six of them.

Since there were so many spiritual lodes on Ultimacy, it was quite possible that a lot of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures had been conceived. Perhaps, the battle between the Star Ocean Imperium and the Demon Beast Empire beyond the atmosphere of Ultimacy was to compete for the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures on Ultimacy.

This trip was definitely worthwhile!

"1,200 meters to the surface!"

Everyone stopped staring at Ultimacy and sank into their foam seats. The foam twisted and enveloped them all.

"800 meters to the surface!"

Their heads were their only body part left out of the foam.

"300 meters to the surface!"

At this moment, even their heads were covered by the foam, making them look like six giant cocoons.

"Three seconds left. Prepare to land!"

The plate armor of the star shuttle exploded into pieces after a cracking sound, unveiling a layer of dense, bright-silver runes which were shining dazzlingly. Streaks of silver flowed and formed a translucent white spiritual energy shell which covered the star shuttle.

"BOOM!"

Roaring, the star shuttle crashed into the crimson ocean heavily, stirring up splashes hundreds of meters high with earsplitting noises.

The translucent spiritual energy shell was quite elastic and took most of the force of the collision. After bouncing on the surface of the ocean dozens of times, the star shuttle finally stopped.

The spiritual energy shell vanished. What was left was a broken star shuttle from which black smoke was popping up nonstop.

"We've made it!"

After a long while, the cabin door was opened. The six Orb Patrollers of Team Blue Bronze crawled out slowly. They stood on the surface of the ocean, took off their helmets and breathed the air which was even fresher than that of the Heaven's Origin Sector.

"The air here has a flavor of sweetness. I feel that my spiritual energy flows more fluently after I take a long breath! Amazing!"

"Of course. A lot of spiritual lodes are buried under the surface of Ultimacy with much higher reserve of spiritual energy than those in the Heaven's Origin Sector. Now that the volcano eruptions have sent them into the air, the particle concentration of spiritual energy in the air is multiple times higher than that of the Heaven's Origin Sector. Naturally, we'll find it more comfortable to breathe here!

"This place must be what is known as a 'natural paradise'. Training here for one day will be more fruitful than training for ten days in the Heaven's Origin Sector!

"In the Heaven's Origin Sector, there are natural paradises, too. But the area is quite limited. Only the headquarters of the top 100 sects of the federation, or the personal training clubs of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, have the privilege to establish residences on such places!

"While in this place… Well well well. The entire ocean, or rather, the entire planet, is a giant natural paradise!

"If one day the technology of teleportation arrays allows, we will be able to build a permanent wormhole between Ultimacy and the Heaven's Origin Sector, saving us the trouble of travelling here through star shuttles. A giant gate to the starry sky will be constructed; Ultimacy will be conquered; the resources on Ultimacy will be exploited…

"Then the Heaven's Origin Sector will be hundreds of times stronger than right now!"

Standing on Ultimacy enjoying the inexhaustible spiritual energy, everybody was greatly amazed by the promising future.

Captain Hong Tong was more practical than his teammates. He waved his hands and said, "Alright, let's focus on the job at hand for now. As the first explorers of Ultimacy, it is our responsibility to bring back as many precious Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures as possible, or a few pieces of magical equipment and Cultivation arts that are far more advanced than what we have in the Heaven's Origin Sector!

"Let's get down to business. Vulture, set up the first star beacon!"

They were in the middle of the ocean, about hundreds of kilometers from the seashore. It was quite tranquil nearby. The only thing that could be seen was the endless mountains in the horizon, which were distinguishable although there were hundreds of kilometers in between because of their remarkable height of almost ten thousand meters.

Li Yao scanned the environment through his crystal cameras and found no anomalies.

He retrieved a lot of magical equipment components from his Cosmos Ring, preparing to build the first star beacon.

Star beacons were the lighthouses in the sea of stars. They could broadcast their coordinates in the universe and their specific location to the Heaven's Origin Sector.

Once a star beacon started burning, it would be much easier to launch a second star shuttle, which would be teleported nearby the star beacon instead of the outside of the atmosphere, provided they were not thwarted by accidents like cosmic storms.

Star beacons were the most important magical equipment for mankind to conquer the sea of stars.

Back in the era of the Star Ocean Imperium, human beings had established gargantuan, permanent star beacons in every corner of the universe, many of which remained active despite the countless wars by absorbing the natural spiritual energy automatically.

Finding the ancient star beacons was also one of the goals of Occult Orbs Fellowship.

It was with the guidance of countless such ancient star beacons that the Heaven's Origin Sector was able to locate so many Occult Orbs, even though it was still underdeveloped.

The star shuttle which Team Blue Bronze had taken, after the intense collisions in the debris belt and the high-temperature friction while breaking through the atmosphere, was already on the verge of destruction and impossible to bring them back to the Heaven's Origin Sector.

Therefore, their priority was to deploy a star beacon.

In one month, the Heaven's Artillery would send five new unmanned star shuttles to Ultimacy. As long as they waited near the star beacon, they would be able to get a new star shuttle.

Since the vehicles had no passengers, they would be filled with abundant crystals, which would provide enough energy for the initial boost to 'pull' the vehicles back to the Heaven's Origin Sector.

While thinking, Li Yao unfolded the units of the star beacon on the surface of the ocean deftly.

To survive in extreme environments, star beacons had a solid fixation system and defense rune arrays that were remarkably strong.

Li Yao adjusted the pedestal to the ocean mode. After a "Chi" sound, the pedestal quickly absorbed air and expanded into sixteen giant airbags floating on the ocean.

In the ocean mode, the star beacon could resist tenth-level strong wind, which should be enough to survive one month without being damaged.

Li Yao's hands danced up and down, connecting one component to another. An octagonal metal tower about five meters tall with various branches was taking shape.

Li Yao extended four spiritual threads through the gaps in the hand of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and connected them to the mainframe crystal processor of the star beacon. Then he started setting the coordinates and the environment information on the tiny light beam that had been projected to his retina.

At this moment, he felt that something was shaking the ocean.

The antennas on the star beacon were also trembling.

"Huala! Huala!"

From the crimson ocean jumped up countless weird fish with sharp horns in front of their heads. While uttering eccentric noises in their mouths, they opened their fins into membranes almost one meter long, which allowed them to glide in the air for a long time before they fell into the ocean eventually. Then they sprang and glided again anxiously. They were fleeing in such a flurry that they didn't even have time to bother the weird-looking intruders that were Li Yao and his teammates.

Li Yao suddenly had a bad feeling. He asked, "Captain, is one of the undersea volcanoes erupting?"

Captain Hong Tong was even more confused than him.

"We have sunk quite a few probe balls undersea. The mountains below are peaceful within a hundred square kilometers with no sign of volcano eruption at all. There's no undercurrent, either. The shaking seems to be from the seashore. Could it be an earthquake?

"Wait!

"It doesn't sound right. According to the map drawn by the crystal cameras, the land… should be on the other side!"

Li Yao was greatly alarmed.

The land was on the other side?

Then, what were the continuous mountains almost ten thousand meters high that they saw on the 'seashore'?

Li Yao's eyes were twitching violently while he turned around. He didn't know if it was his imagination or not, but the mountains at the end of the ocean were even higher and more majestic than before. They were swallowing almost half of the sky.

The shaking was becoming more and more intense. Thousands of sharp-horned, gliding fish leapt and cried in desperation passing by them like a group of deserters.

Li Yao blinked his eyes to make sure that what he saw was really happening.

The red mountains at the horizon grew taller still. Two thirds of the sky had been devoured. Destructive roars finally swept over, too.

It was clear now that the sky-blocking existences ten thousand meters high and hundreds of kilometers long were not mountains but a tsunami!

Chapter 405: Tide Rises Like Spears

Chapter 405: Tide Rises Like Spears

The dominating tide that was almost ten thousand meters high almost ripped the atmosphere of Ultimacy open. Its tip was reflecting the dazzling brilliance from the stars, while it pushed forward unstoppably like thousands of galloping horses.

The crimson waves formed an all-consuming wall that blocked the sky and eclipsed the sun. It seemed still, but it was enlarging rapidly, consuming the clouds at an unimaginable speed.

This time, not just the gliding fish, but all kinds of weird sea beasts were fleeing to the other side of the ocean crazily. Many of them popped up from the ocean and screamed desperately looking at the overwhelming tide.

"The peak of the wave is around 8,700 meters, and still rising!"

"Ultimacy must have one or two giant satellites that are very close to it. They are the reason for such a frightening tide! Maybe the folds we saw on the land were shaped by the enormous pull of the satellites, too!

"The good news is that the speed of the tide is less than half the speed of sound!

"Bad news is that the spiritual energy around us has been stirred into a chaotic state. Invisible spiritual energy turbulence is swirling in the air. Our crystal suits may not be able to reach full speed!

"I have sent the preliminary map to your crystal processors. Run toward the real land now!"

Yan Yangtian, who had been scouting the environment around, shouted in the communication channel as loudly as she could.

Despite the protection of their crystal suits, the roaring tide that sounded like ten thousand cannons shooting at the same time suppressed her voice without any trouble.

"Don't bother with the star shuttle. The important assets are all in our Cosmos Rings. Let's leave now!

"Although the tide may not be able to catch up to us, it will be a terrible disaster if our crystal suits lose momentum because of the spiritual energy turbulence!"

Brilliant exhaust flames spurted out from the back of five crystal suits, while they rose up to the sky and fled in the direction of the land hurriedly, leaving ten lines of splashes on the surface of the ocean.

But Li Yao was still on the pedestal of the star beacon on one of his knees. He was dismantling the star beacon into separate units that he had just assembled.

"Vulture, what are you doing?" Captain Hong Tong yelled in the communication channel.

Li Yao glanced at the surging tide which was drawing near and said tranquilly, despite his pale face, "I'm going to recycle the star beacon."

"Are you out of your mind? We brought three star beacons in total. There are still two of them even if this one is damaged! Just go now!"

Hong Tong was shouting furiously.

"Although we have three star beacons, the natural environment of Ultimacy is too harsh, not to mention that we might be engaged with the exploration squads of the demon race who will also sabotage our star beacon should they come across one! The more star beacons we have, the more likely we can go back successfully!"

Li Yao's speed was higher and higher. The hundreds of blurred shadows caused by the deft movements of his hands were almost transparent. It seemed like the star beacon was being corroded by invisible acids, because its components disappeared into thin air one by one.

"Then just stuff the star beacon in your Cosmos Ring already! The tide is only five thousand meters away from you!"

Hong Tong and the other teammates were almost going mad.

"I can't. My Cosmos Ring has been filled with assets and components. The star beacon is too large with too many branches. If I absorb it into the Cosmos Ring by force, the space inside the Cosmos Ring may overlap, which will damage the magical equipment. I have to dismantle the star beacon into the most basic components before putting them back!"

While he was talking, Li Yao pulled the last component apart from the star beacon.

What was left was a giant pedestal of airbags which was no longer needed.

The pedestal was only of use in the ocean anyway, while Li Yao had made up his mind to not build up a star beacon on the ocean again.

At this moment, the raging tide was less than a thousand meters away from him. A prehistoric beast seemed to have opened its bloody mouth. The intersecting tips of waves were like the sharp tusks of the beast.

BOOM! BOOM BOOM! BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM!

The exhaust flame of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit left a giant swirl on the surface of the ocean.

Li Yao looked at the tide one last time.

In the middle of the crimson tsunami, many hundreds-of-meters-long sea beasts, which were definitely dominators of the ocean during peacetime, were swimming, struggling and screaming with the current just like fries and shrimps.

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit flew up to the sky!

"Swoosh!"

Li Yao turned into a streak of blackness. He rushed forward and left a parting almost a hundred meters deep in the ocean, getting ahead of the tide.

800 meters… 900 meters… 1,000 meters… He was getting further and further away from the wave.

Suddenly!

Li Yao felt that his body was light, as if he had stepped onto nothing. The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was pulled by something unknown and fell down to the ocean.

This was a spiritual energy turbulence, the last thing that Cultivators would like to experience when they were flying!

Li Yao widened his eyes and entered the super perspective state. His brain cell activity was brought up to 500%, and his computation ability was maximized!

While his body was moving, the invisible turbulence gradually unveiled its traces in front of him.

After dozens of modification procedures, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit right now insanely had 354 power rune arrays with six spiritual gas acceleration gadgets. It was truly a monster of speed.

The tide left behind a moment ago was catching up fast. The distance between them was shortened to 1,000 meters… 800 meters… 500 meters…

"Vulture!"

Captain Hong Tong's voice had been twisted by the roars of the tide.

"Li Yao!!!"

Ding Lingdang was shouting three times louder than Hong Tong. She flew close without bothering about anything. Spiritual energy burst out of her body like a volcano eruption. A small sun seemed to be rising up from the ocean.

Much seawater was vaporized by the flames on her body, forming a mushroom cloud in the sky!

It appeared that she was planning to fly to Li Yao and blow the thousands-of-meters-high tides into pieces with her fists!

At this critical moment, Li Yao rumbled and sped up, freeing himself from the turbulence. With his own acceleration and the effect of the centrifugal force, he managed to run away from the tide again.

"I'm fine! I was caught by a turbulence by accident, but I'm out of it now!" shouted Li Yao.

"You are not fine! Next time you act recklessly like this, I will punch your head into pieces personally if the tide doesn't!" Ding Lingdang was more than angry.

After the harmless yet scary incident, Li Yao did not dare to fly as fast as he could anymore. He kept his speed a bit higher than that of the tide, while he detected and dodged the spiritual energy turbulences in his way.

After ten minutes of fearful flight, they finally saw a broken land.

Countless giant stone pillars were standing on the seashore. Brushed by the waves for thousands of years, they were extremely smooth and looked like a natural bulwark.

Li Yao and his teammates passed by it roaringly. Half a minute later, the tide almost ten thousand meters high smashed down brutally.

Thousands of falling stars seemed to have hit the continent at the same time, raising an enormous blast like a super hurricane with deafening noises. The six of them were shaking in midair like headless flies.

Gritting their teeth, they moved another hundred or so kilometers inland. When they looked back again, they discovered that the seashore had been drowned. The mountains thousands of meters high had turned into lone islands in the middle of the ocean.

The foundation of many mountains had been crushed to smithereens by the tide. Therefore, many of the lone islands sild into the seawater after violent trembles, triggering another round of soaring waves.

The apocalypse-like scene startled the members of Team Blue Bronze.

Naturally paradises where spiritual energy was abundant tended to have extreme crustal movements and climate changes. This was the inevitable side effect of the overactive spiritual energy.

To conquer the natural paradises required the hard work of human beings to alter the environment and build it into a place that was favorable for the living and thriving of mankind.

"It seems that neither the ocean nor the shore are good places for star beacons. The relics and ancient battlefields of the Star Ocean Empire and the demon race will not be here even if they do exist. Let's march further inland."

Captain Hong Tong commanded, "Yan Zi, analyze the spiritual waves nearby, so that we can move toward where the spiritual energy is the most intense; Vulture, look for a suitable location to establish star beacons; Dummy, try to contact the other Star Teams; the rest of us will stay on guard! Since the spiritual energy is more than lavish in this place, dangerous spiritual beasts might be roaming around, not to mention the demon squads that we might encounter!"

Team Blue Bronze flew hundreds of kilometers westward. The land was still uneven. One moment, it was mountains piercing into the clouds; the next moment, it was canyons that were too deep to see the bottom.

Many of the territories had traces of the scourge of tides.

It seemed that the giant tide that they'd just experienced was not even close to the largest one ever taking place on Ultimacy.

Maybe, the mountains and the canyons were all the work of the super tsunamis.

It was not until they moved more than a thousand kilometers into the land that the traces of tides gradually disappeared. Shallow basins could be found in the middle of the interconnecting mountains.

In one of the basins, Li Yao set up the first star beacon.

With the activation of the runes, the star beacon hummed. A transparent octagonal glass tower appeared, sending a streak of bright gold up to the sky until it dispersed beyond the atmosphere.

It meant that Ultimacy had been 'illuminated' on the star map in the control center of Occult Orbs Fellowship in the Heaven's Origin Sector.

They could've moved closer to the center of the land where spiritual energy was more copious and established a star beacon there, but considering that the demon squads might appear at any time, there wouldn't be enough time to build a second one if the first star beacon was destroyed. Therefore, it was safer to build a star beacon in this place although it was relatively barren.

After assembling the first star beacon, Li Yao established four stealth rune arrays, blending the star beacon in with the surroundings.

Although it was definitely not enough to fool the expert demons at a short distance, the star beacon would be unrecognizable hundreds of kilometers away.

At this moment, Yan Yangtian reported some good news, too.

The spiritual waves in the southwest were extremely intense with a patterned frequency, indicating that their source was not a natural marvel, but relics of certain civilizations.

Taking a brief rest, the six of them feasted upon the high-nutrition food and drugs from their Cosmos Rings and refilled their crystal suits with spiritual energy. Then they continued on their journey westwards.

After a flight of an entire day and night, they finally found a vestige that was apparently the work of intellectual creatures!

Chapter 406: What a Formidable Being!

Chapter 406: What a Formidable Being!

"Good lord, what is this—"

The six Orb Patrollers all thought that they'd seen a lot of things, but what they saw right now still dumbfounded them. Their hearts seemed to be tossed into the middle of the surging tide, bouncing up and down with no way to calm down.

After passing through the steep mountains, they'd found a vast, black plateau, on which countless absolutely vertical black lines were standing while they pierced into the sky and protruded out of the atmosphere.

As they drew close, they finally realized that the 'black lines' were actually giant pillars more than a hundred meters in diameter.

The cylinders were more than a hundred meters in diameter and dozens of kilometers long without the slightest error. There was no telling what the cylinders were made of. They didn't collapse because of their own weight, nor were they weathered or worn by thousands of years of climate changes and crustal movements; they just stood silently on the rugged land of Ultimacy.

The indifference of the black pillars indicated the formidability of their creator!

Everybody held their breath faced with such an unbelievable splendor. They circled around the black pillars time and time again, only to become more confused than before.

Li Yao drew his dagger and scratched the pillar, trying to retrieve some powder for future research.

But he failed to leave any trace on the black pillar even though he exerted all his strength. The material and the technology making up the giant pillars were indeed too advanced to fathom.

Li Yao clicked his tongue. Whatever those black pillars were made of, it was much solider than many super metals recorded in the classics of the Hundred Smelting Clan. Flying swords, armor, and starships would be indestructible if they were refined out of such materials!

If he could figure out the distribution of the materials and learn the method of refining, the war potential of the Star Glory Federation would be upgraded by many levels.

Ultimacy was indeed a place full of treasure!

Right then, he heard Yan Yangtian's cry in the communication channel.

Li Yao was greatly alarmed. He quickly moved to where Yan Yangtian was, only to find that she was not in any danger but was floating in front of one of the black pillars in a daze.

Li Yao raised his eyebrow and looked at the black pillar. His eyes immediately widened, and his pupils dilated in shock.

Three scratches that were several meters deep had been left on this particular black pillar which was indestructible in Li

Yao's understanding. A claw more than ten meters in diameter must've snatched down from the sky and torn the black pillar apart easily!

"What kind of magnificent being could leave scratch marks like this?!"

Greatly amazed, Li Yao flew toward to the depths of the black pillars.

He noticed that the distribution of the black pillars was apparently in a pattern. They seemed to form a giant array. The closer he got to the center, the more scratches he found on the black pillars.

After their surfaces were broken, the black pillars were not able to withstand the weathering of time despite their unparalleled hardness. Small granules could be found on the edge of the scratches. Li Yao finally gathered some powder.

By preliminary analysis, the powder was neither metal nor stone, but it was emitting intense spiritual waves, indicating that its raw materials were among the best Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures.

As for what the raw materials were specifically, it could only be found out when they were back in the Heaven's Origin Sector's labs.

Li Yao even found a broken claw inside the hole of one of the scratch marks.

Technically speaking, it was just a talon, but it was already as long as an adult. It was bright gold, somewhat curved, and extremely sharp.

It took them an hour of hard work to pull the talon out of the black pillar.

Li Yao swung the talon gently. Like the most excellent saber, the talon roared and raised immense spiritual waves, unleashing an aura that was almost fifteen meters long.

"Good heavens! This is definitely one of the best Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures! It can enhance my spiritual energy by 200% without being refined. It will definitely be a marvelous saber if it is refined properly!"

Li Yao's eyes were beaming with joy. He was almost drooling.

His Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber was refined out of rarely-seen marrow blood crystals from the Blood Demon Sector and dozens of other marrow crystals and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures based on the ancient refining technology of the Hundred Smelting Clan. But the blood aura triggered by the saber was no longer than ten meters.

The talon could unleash a fifteen-meters-long aura without being refined whatsoever!

Besides, its shape and weight were very similar to those of a heavy saber, and it felt comfortable in his hands.

If he could refine the talon together with his Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber, the strength of his weapon would at least be doubled.

Li Yao stored the talon inside his Cosmos Ring without any hesitation.

As the refiner and the expert in saber arts in the team, he was naturally the most suitable guardian of such a saber-shaped Heavenly Material and Earthly Treasure. Should it be needed, its strength would be maximized in his hands.

Li Yao had made up his mind that he would redeem this talon no matter how many contribution points he had to pay.

As one of the explorers of the item, he had the priority of redemption. Even Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators could not compete with him.

While he was drawing dozens of refining plans in his mind, his teammates made more shocking discoveries.

Among the dozens of black pillars in the center of the giant array, they found countless thick chains, each of which was more than one meter in diameter brimming with runes that were smaller than grain. They were releasing weird dark purple light.

Li Yao scanned all the runes and compared them with the multiple powerful arrays of the Hundred Smelting Clan. Then he mumbled, "Although I don't understand the specific functioning mechanism of the runes, they should be part of an ancient barrier!

"If my guess is correct, the black pillars do not just protrude out of the atmosphere, but they also extend deep into the underground!

"Beyond the atmosphere, they absorb the violent spiritual energy in the cosmos; in the middle of the atmosphere, they absorb the power of thunder; deep underground, they absorb the energy unbridled from volcano eruptions and crustal movements!

"All the energy has been transmitted to the black pillars in the center of the array in a mysterious way that I cannot comprehend in order to trigger the barrier on the chains!

"What kind of thing was such a splendid barrier trying to contain?"

Soon, they found the answer to their question.

In the center of the black array, they found dozens of bones.

Several of them looked like ribs but were more than three hundred meters long, as if they were the pillars of a splendid temple.

Some other bones seemed to belong to a short and thick arm, if two hundred meters could be called short.

The color of the bones was almost identical to the talon that Li Yao had collected previously. However, they were riddled with holes after thousands of years of savaging from the barrier.

"What is this beast that has ribs more than three hundred meters long and requires such an enormous barrier to suppress?"

"Why is there only such a small proportion of bones? Where are the rest of them? Have they been chewed by the spiritual beasts on Ultimacy or excavated by the adventurers of the Star Ocean Imperium and the demon race?

"Or maybe… the beast tore off its own arm and ran away?"

Everybody looked at each other in bewilderment, while they pictured the same thing in their mind:

Locked by countless black pillars and manacles, curbed by thunder, fire, and interstellar storms, a bright gold beast several kilometers long was roaring, struggling, leaving deep scratches on the black pillars effortlessly.

Eventually, it exerted its strength and freed itself from the shackles at the cost of one of its limbs. Then it hollered and soared to the sky, vanishing in the boundless cosmos.

The picture made all six of them sweat in tremble.

Li Yao flew around the broken bones a few times, trying to store the bright gold bones into his Cosmos Ring.

But the storage technology of the Heaven's Origin Sector was still quite shabby. Cosmos Rings and Storage Bags were not able to be manufactured.

The Cosmos Rings and the Storage Bags they used were all pickups from the Occult Orbs.

The Cosmos Rings and the Storage Bags were all of low levels with limited space. Even the biggest of them had room no larger than that of a train car.

For the expedition to Ultimacy, the Heaven's Origin Sector had poured all the resources available. Every Orb Patroller was carrying more than ten Cosmos Rings and Storage Bags.

But they were all helpless when faced with such super large Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures more than a hundred meters long. Unless the items were cut into fragments, there would be no way to take them back in the Cosmos Rings.

Therefore, Li Yao could do nothing except sigh in discontent.

Thankfully, he found several broken rune chains near the bright gold bones. The dark purple chains were like boas in hibernation. Intense spiritual energy could be felt inside them, indicating that they were rarely-seen secret treasures, too.

Li Yao searched and searched. He didn't stop collecting until one of his Cosmos Rings was full.

At this moment, 'Dummy' Ba Weiqi had finally reached out of another Star Team.

It was not a direction communication. He simply received a telepathic thought from the Star Team.

The source of the telepathic thought was 1,500 kilometers away from them to their northwest.

Out of concern for the possible block and detection of the demon squads, the telepathic thought was brief and encrypted.

It was a targeted telepathic thought, indicating that the Star Team had a major discovery and would like other Star Teams to join them as soon as possible.

Everyone was refreshed. After scanning the surroundings and making sure of their coordinates, they rushed northwest without any delay.

The northwest was a mountainous zone with enormous folds here and there. One moment, mountains concealed by clouds blocked their way; the next thing they knew, uncanny gales surged up from the gorges thousands of meters of deep, with an immense force pulling them downwards by their ankles like formless hands.

Due to the extremely complicated territories, they had to tread lightly although they were Cultivators. It took them almost twenty hours to reach the source of the telepathic thought.

In front of them was a giant valley more than 5,700 meters deep.

The valley was too dark to see the bottom. Raging wind was charging to and fro inside the valley like a flood which was finding its way out of a canal.

Countless scattered stones were floating in midair, forming a very special stone belt.

The signal had been sent from the bottom of the valley.

The odd environment seemed too unfavorable for the demon race to set up any traps without a good reason. After discussing for a while, Team Blue Bronze decided to march inside.

"Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!"

Like six torches tossed into an abyss, the six crystal suits roared and broke into the rampant wind and the scattering stones!

Chapter 407: 6,600 Meters Underground

Chapter 407: 6,600 Meters Underground

"Huuu!"

BOOM! CRACK!

The furious wind blowing through the entire canyon was carrying countless impurities and invisible spiritual energy turbulences. It used to be known as 'destructive wind' to the ancient Cultivators.

Savaged by the destructive winds for hundreds of years, many rocks on the walls of the canyon had fallen down and floated in midair, before crashing into one another and forming a scattering stone belt that was as thick as several kilometers.

The six crystal suits passed through the scattering stone belt carefully, taking care of both the rampant wind and the flying stones.

Some stones, boosted by the spiritual energy turbulences, were almost at the speed of sound. With the exotic crystals inside the rocks, they could break through the spiritual shields easily. It wouldn't be fun if anyone was smashed by them.

Thankfully, Captain Hong Tong was an expert in gravity manipulation. Controlled by his surging spiritual energy, an invisible defense shell seemed to have formed around the six of them. The stones rushing close to them all took a turn and brushed past them regardless of how short the distance was.

Looking from the ground, the six crystal suits of Team Blue Bronze were glimmering like six light spots, gradually disappearing in the depths of the scattering stone belt.

Ten minutes later, they were finally out of the stone belt.

Other than 'Dummy' Ba Weiqi who was burdened by the clumsy crystal suit and had a few scratches on it, everyone was totally safe.

The wind was still blowing hard. They glided downwards on a slant toward the endless, bottomless abyss.

When they looked up, they noticed that the long and narrow sky was entirely blocked by the scattering stones. The last ray of light had already disappeared. They seemed to be in the stomach of a behemoth.

As Building Foundation Stage Cultivators, they were all able to scan the environment with their spiritual threads. Loss of light did not influence them very much. But they did feel a little nervous about what was to come.

The rocks in some places were as smooth as a mirror, whereas some other places were full of crevices. The crags were covered with bumps and hollows that had clearly been made on purpose.

It was almost like some splendid buildings or even towns that once prospered on Ultimacy had been buried thousands of meters underground before being torn apart by crustal movements. That was why the faults was multi-layered.

Li Yao even discovered the faults that contained several giant bone fossils

However, since the wind was too ferocious in this place, they didn't have the opportunity to stop and survey it thoroughly. They could only take photos of the weird faults with special feedback crystal cameras for future research.

After gliding downward for almost twenty minutes, they still failed to see the bottom of the crevasse. They were now in the middle of a queer black smoke which swallowed the telepathic thoughts silently.

The telepathic thought that the other Star Team sent out was from one side of the wall.

After flying close and checking it out carefully, they discovered that the wall was full of crevices long and short leading deep underground.

Beside the longest crevice, there was a man-made platform several thousand meters both in length and width, emitting a vague metallic aura. The platform was apparently supported by extremely solid metal structures. Judging from the scale, it could allow several small-scale crystal warships or dozens of crystal tanks to land at the same time.

They had descended to more than 6,600 meters underground. To build a platform as enormous as a flying crystal arena was obviously too large a task for any of the other Star Teams to accomplish.

Even the exploration squads from the Blood Demon Sector wouldn't be able to make such a miracle.

The only possible explanation was that it was the masterpiece of the previous adventurers.

They landed on the platform. Li Yao took off the plate armor on his hand and touched the ground with his fingers. It was smooth like silk with barely any friction. The technology employed in the platform was far more advanced than he had imagined.

The crevice in front of them was more than ten meters wide at the narrowest part, with traces of human modification. It had been reconstructed into an irregular cylinder with certain arcs, making it look like a tunnel leading to the center of the planet.

Very soon, Li Yao found a telepathic thought ball that had been disguised as a stone and left on the edge of the platform by another Star Team.

A telepathic thought ball was a piece of round magical equipment the size of an apple. Similar to jade chips, it could read and output a huge amount of telepathic thoughts and information very quickly, ten times faster than the jade chips did. It could be deemed as an upgraded version of jade chips.

Li Yao activated the ball with his spiritual energy. Hundreds of intersecting lines appeared on the surface of the telepathic thought ball and constituted a complicated pattern.

It was a barrier which would destroy the information that it stored and send a warning to its master who set it up if it was not decrypted within five seconds.

Li Yao's hands moved up and down. Like a tangram, the pattern on the telepathic thought ball was adjusted to a different one that all the Star Teams had agreed on before.

After a 'Bo' sound, the telepathic thought split into two halves from the middle. A sector of greenness scanned over the platform and connected to the crystal processors of the six of them.

In a moment, a lot of information flooded into their crystal processors.

The telepathic thought ball had been left by Team Tiger Deity, who was very fortunate to be teleported into the atmosphere of Ultimacy with abundant spiritual energy left. Therefore, they were able to condense a thick spiritual shield to protect their star shuttle, allowing them to land in the rugged land of mountains and valleys.

Team Tiger Deity was the first of the five Star Teams to start the exploration. But their attention had been attracted by the crags on the two sides of the valley, and they had spent a lot of time studying the different faults on the crags. Therefore, they didn't discover the black pillars and the bones of the strange beast. Instead, they found the platform and the tunnel leading deep underground where intense spiritual energy was popping up.

Probing with spiritual waves, they had come to the conclusion that there was a spacious hollow concealed under Ultimacy's surface. Towns and relics were hiding in the boundless dark world.

The discovery corresponded to the environment on the surface of Ultimacy.

81% of the surface of Ultimacy was ocean, where tsunamis thousands of meters high could form out of nowhere at any time. It was hardly possible to survive on land. Even the strong sea beasts must be not particularly fond of the raging tides.

Compared to the surface, the underground world was apparently much safer and more stable.

Therefore, Team Tiger Deity had entered the underground area for exploration in advance.

"Shua!"

A lot of maps and new information were added to their crystal processors, which were the preliminary findings of Team Tiger Deity. There was also a sophisticated map of the cave resembling the root of a tree.

They were currently at the top of the cave, like six ants which were faced with a giant banyan covering dozens of square kilometers.

Yet, it was still only the tip of the iceberg. More unknown areas were still waiting to be explored.

Other than that, Team Tiger Deity brought a piece of bad news.

When they were still exploring the ground, they had received an intermittent telepathic thought from another Star Team named Shadow Moon.

According to the incomplete telepathic thought, Team Shadow Moon was quite unlucky.

They had been teleported to the middle of a space battlefield beyond the atmosphere of Ultimacy, too. But the soul of one of their teammates was seriously shocked during the teleportation, resulting in his derangement.

To make matters worse, the space battlefield that they were in was hundreds of times more tempestuous than the one

Team Blue Bronze had arrived at.

The star shuttle was blown to smithereens by the scraps very soon. The crystal suits of several Orb Patrollers were seriously damaged when they were trying to protect their wounded companion.

After breaking into the atmosphere in their crystal suits, they saw a vast ocean.

Because of the serious injuries of their companion, they landed on the ocean directly instead of looking for a land and prepared to treat their companion and repair their crystal suits first.

Then, they encountered a tsunami.

The interference of the furious spiritual energy outbreak jammed the transmission of the telepathic thought. Therefore, Team Tiger Deity were not aware of the final outcome of Team Shadow Moon, nor were they able to locate the ill-fated Orb Patrollers precisely. They could only grit their teeth and carry on with their own exploration.

"This is why five Star Teams have been dispatched in separate ways.

"Let's double check our crystal suits and have one minute of silence for our comrades.

"After that one minute, we will start the journey to the underground world!

"Only by excavating more Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures from the underground world and building the Star Glory Federation into a stronger nation can we honor the souls of the warriors who have sacrificed themselves ten thousand lightyears away from their home!"

6,600 meters under the ground, six members of Team Blue Bronze fell quiet. They unmasked their helmets. Roaring wind was freezing their faces, but there was not the slightest hint of discomfort.

The flames in the depths of their eyes seemed to be illuminating the entire underground.

A minute later, Li Yao inputted Team Blue Bronze's discoveries into the telepathic thought ball and reset the barrier, before disguising it as a stone and tossing it into a corner again.

Team Blue Bronze marched toward the depths of the underground!

The crevice gradually turned into wide pathway. There was a circle of lackluster blueish crystals on the wall of the cave every thousand meters.

The crystals were also left by the previous adventurers. Judging from their brightness, they must've been established more than five thousand years ago.

The pathway had been built based on a natural cave with additional manual tunnels. Therefore, straight lines occurred every once in a while. It was quite convenient for their journey.

After walking more than seventy kilometers, they finally reached the end of the pathway. In front of them was an enormous cave!

No. It was inappropriate to call a space the size of several flying crystal arenas a 'cave'. The place itself was a world!

Thousands of meters above their heads, countless bright silver crystal stalagmites were growing and emitting endless light and heat. Looking from afar, they looked like blurry stars.

On the wall and the ground of the underground world, all kinds of creatures were thriving.

Li Yao noticed a lot of giant, bright grey fungi and ferns which looked like an odd primitive forest.

Many vines were wriggling slowly on the walls. Hearing the noise of the newcomers, they were moving faster than before. Almost a hundred lumps protruded from the messy vines and blossomed like a flower, revealing sharp teeth that looked like the fangs of a brutalist serpent.

The underground world had its own unique biological system.

The weirdest thing was the lake in the center of the underground world, which was bright silver and perfectly round.

Chapter 408: Frightening Silver Lake

Chapter 408: Frightening Silver Lake

The silver lake was about a hundred meters in diameter. It was transparent, and its edge was absolutely smooth without any flaws, as if a splendid silver gem had been embedded in the dark world 7,000 meters underground, enshrouded in an enticing air.

Suddenly, a drop of silver liquid fell from the 'sky' into the lake, raising layered ripples which spread out into dazzling stripes and didn't die down until half a minute later.

Li Yao adjusted the resolution of a crystal camera for long-distance detection in the middle of his helmet at the cost of a huge amount of spiritual energy. He observed the dome and discovered that the silver stalagmites hanging from the dome all had drops of liquid on their tips.

Although the speed of the gathering was quite slow, there were tens of thousands of stalagmites in this place.

Therefore, a drop of liquid would fall down thousands of meters about every half a minute.

In the underground world's air, a weird wind out of nowhere was raging, forming an invisible swirl in the shape of funnel.

The silver liquid dripping from the stalagmites in the periphery was also sent precisely to the center of the lake in a helix. There was not a single drop on the shore.

"The lake was made up by the silver liquid after billions of years of accumulation? Natural paradises are indeed marvelous places!"

Li Yao was greatly amazed.

He had never seen such a marvel in the Heaven's Origin Sector. The mysterious world of Cultivation had just been revealed to him even more.

"By preliminary analysis, the silver lake contains abundant spiritual energy, with a concentration higher than that of the most advanced strengthening drug produced in the Heaven's Origin Sector. This is actually a lake of strengthening drug!

"I estimate that there are one or even more spiritual lodes with an amazing reserve of high-purity crystals that are rarely seen in the Heaven's Origin Sector on the top of the dome. The silver liquid is a result of the chemical reaction. Under high pressure, it is naturally trying to find a way out. Over time, it gradually leaked out and formed this silver lake!

"As for the specific components of the lake water, I need to analyze the sample of the water.

"Wait a moment, the plants surrounding the lake, they are..."

Yan Yangtian, the scout of the team, was wearing a crystal suit similar to the Mournful Mist Battlesuit, which had been specially installed with the most advanced probe and stealth magical equipment in all the six crystal suits here.

Almost ten sensors extended from the gaps of her crystal suit, allowing her to examine the status of the silver lake even if she was just under a thousand meters away.

At this moment, she was taking pictures of the plants near the silver lake and comparing them with the files stored in the database of the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures.

"Hiss!"

Very soon, Yan Yangtian's voice in the communication channel was so thrilled that it almost sounded like someone else. "Two kinds of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures have been detected. One of them has features 99.8% identical to those of the Flowing Brightness Grass, while the other is 99.9% similar to the Heart Locking Flower!

"It is safe to conclude that they are the rarely-seen special Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures in the Heaven's Origin Sector, Flowing Brightness Grass and Heart Locking Flower!

"This trip is already very rewarding!"

Yan Yangtian was talking loudly and rapidly. Every word was like a sparkle igniting the passion in everyone's eyes.

Li Yao swallowed uncontrollably.

Flowing Brightness Grass and Heart Locking Flower were both super Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures that ranked in the top 100 of the Heaven's Origin Sector's rarest.

Flowing Brightness Grass was not valuable by itself. But it was often rooted in a kind of super marrow crystal named 'Flowing Brightness Stone'.

Flowing Brightness Stone was known as a marrow crystal of marrow crystals. The spiritual energy stored inside them was ten times more powerful than that from common marrow crystals. The most distinguishing part was that the spiritual energy was extremely mild, making it one of the few marrow crystals that could be absorbed by the Cultivators directly!

Heart Locking Flower, as its name suggested, could free the mind of a Cultivator from foreign disturbances. It was very useful when the Cultivator was practicing a tricky martial art or trying to make a major breakthrough.

According to the calculation, after drinking the Heart Locking Liquid refined out of Heart Locking Flower, the odds of derangement of the Cultivator over the following 72 hours would be reduced by more than 80%.

For low-level Cultivators, it might not be of much value. But for Core Formation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who were approaching their limits and on the verge of derangement whenever they wanted to move further, Heart Locking Flower was even more valuable than Flowing Brightness Crystal.

Priceless was not a proper word to describe the two Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. There was nowhere to buy them even if someone had offered a price!

In the largest auctions of the Heaven's Origin Sector, a Flowing Brightness Crystal of mediocre quality or a broken Heart Locking Flower was already enough to serve as the ultimate treasure for bidding!

Li Yao once saw the records of Occult Orbs Fellowship. In one of the Occult Orbs, to fight for three Heart Locking Flowers, two Star Teams were engaged with the exploration squad of the demon race in a fierce battle. Eventually, two Orb

Patrollers perished in order to bring the Heart Locking Flowers back to the Heaven's Origin Sector.

Right now, there were more than thirty Heart Locking Flowers in this place and as much Flowing Brightness Grass.

This whole area was really tremendously valuable!

"Calm down, we must calm down. There's no reason such precious Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures would just grow here and wait to be picked so vulnerably. That's illogical!"

Li Yao bit his lips hard and refreshed his mind with the sharp pain.

Captain Hong Tong said in the communication channel, "Don't be hasty, guys. I feel that something is wrong with the underground world.

"Look, there is a biological system on Ultimacy with multiple kinds of creatures.

"Even the ancient Cultivators knew that Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures were often guarded by strong spiritual beasts. Those who are bewildered by the treasures will only end up as their food."

Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures were guarded by strong spiritual beasts. It was not a superstition but a very simple fact.

Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures were usually grown in the natural paradises where spiritual energy was abundant, which were often home to strong spiritual beasts, too.

Even if the spiritual beasts were not strong, their body and blood would be significantly improved after feeding on Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures for generations or even hundreds of generations, even though their absorption efficiency may not be very impressive.

The concentration of spiritual energy in the silver lake was higher than anyone could imagine. Even a flock of pigs would become war boars after drinking the lake water for hundreds of years.

But right now, the underground world was entirely silent, except for the dripping sound of silver liquid. There was no trace of any strong spiritual beasts. It was so quiet that it was almost scary.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao said, "Let me have a try. The silver lake shouldn't be too dangerous.

"We were led to this place by Team Tiger Deity. If this place is unsafe, there would definitely be traces of a fight. They would've left messages for us even if they were forced to run away.

"But right now, there is nothing informative here, which means Team Tiger Deity passed by the lake without causing trouble. We should a safe distance from the lake."

While he was talking, two bumps on the back of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit opened slowly, releasing ten beast puppets that were no larger than bees toward the silver lake.

Everyone adjusted the resolution of their crystal cameras to the highest and unlocked the safeties of their remote magical equipment. Then, the attack rune arrays were set to the super sensitive state and locked onto the silver lake, ready to be activated at any time.

The ten beast puppets flapped their transparent wings made up of crystals and reached the silver lake quickly.

At first, they flew around the silver lake for a circle, and finding nothing abnormal, they moved toward the Heart Locking Flowers.

The mini crystal cameras on the heads of the beast puppets captured ten different pictures from different angels. Everything was peaceful.

"There seemed to be nothing…" Ba Weiqi couldn't help but comment.

Half way through his sentence, abrupt changes took place!

Of the fifty or so Heart Locking Flowers, twenty were trembling violently, while more than twenty black shadows dashed out from the earth under the Heart Locking Flowers.

The black shadows were moving at a surprisingly high speed. They almost reached the speed of sound within a moment. Most crystal cameras were only displaying blurred shadows.

Only several of the best crystal cameras were able to capture the image of the black shadows!

They were spiritual reptiles that had bright grey skin much like the color of the earth. Covered by layered scales, they looked like six-legged lizards.

What Team Blue Bronze thought to be 'Heart Locking Flowers' were actually the tongues of the six-legged lizards.

The six-legged lizards were moving fast, but their tongues were rolling even faster. The 'Heart Locking Flowers' on the tip of their tongues fragmented into four pieces momentarily, each piece with a sharp thorn protruding out. In the middle was an azure spicule!

If the tongue were to lick the body of a living creature, a large part of the flesh would definitely be sliced away!

"Crack!"

Li Yao sent out telepathic thoughts immediately. But there was no time. The ten beast puppets were pierced through by the tongues of the lizards and swallowed by them!

It was indeed a trap!

The lizard spiritual beasts living together with the Heart Locking Flowers had tongues duplicating the appearance of the flowers after thousands of years of evolution. Even the high-resolution crystal cameras had been deceived!

Lying in wait among the real Heart Locking Flowers, they had been hiding themselves under the cover of the spiritual energy released by the flowers. Countless underground creatures must've been attracted by the false Heart Locking Flowers and killed by their sharp tongues miserably, even if they were just trying to drink some water from the lake.

But it was not the end yet.

Hardly had the six-legged lizards appeared when bubbles started popping up in the silver lake as if it were boiling.

More than ten limbs riddled with holes that looked both like tentacles and vines whipped at the lizards brutally, producing earsplitting noises.

The lizards shrieked and fled to the underground hurriedly.

Two of them were not fast enough and were snatched by the tentacles from the lake.

A huge amount of green liquid was immediately sprayed out from the holes on the tentacles, which corroded the shells of the six-legged lizards quickly. It seemed to be narcotic, too. The lizards that were struggling desperately a moment ago collapsed like two clusters of mud.

Before the tentacles were able to pull the two preys back to the bottom of the lake, a third accident took place!

An almost transparent silver brightness blinked in the midair. A tentacle was cut off and dragged to the sky by an invisible object.

In the air above the silver lake, unseen predators were still lurking in the darkness!

Chapter 409: All Looted!

Chapter 409: All Looted!

Cold sweat was trickling down Li Yao's back.

It was within his expectations that strong predators might be hiding on the shore and inside the lake. But he didn't anticipate that there were invisible creatures in the air, too.

A lot of green liquid spurted out from the fracture of the broken tentacle of the strange beast inside the lake. The broken tentacle quickly withered into something like a snake.

Li Yao hurriedly activated all his probe magical equipment and released his telepathic thoughts which rippled out and sensed what was there.

Just now, his attention had been focused on the silver lake and its surroundings. The area above the lake had been overlooked by him. Since the beasts were floating in the air without any action, he hadn't noticed their existence at all.

Now that the transparent beasts had launched their attacks, naturally, there were biological reactions in their bodies. The circulation of body liquid, the rhythm of muscle movement, and their breathing all left traces.

Therefore, almost ten shadows that looked like giant bats appeared on the light beams of the six crystal suits.

The long, soft tails behind them were sucking the tentacle of the beast in the lake like a straw, while they spat silver lasers from their mouths which seemed as sharp as the swords and sabers of the Cultivators.

The strange beast in the lake had lost one of its tentacles, but it had secured one of the six-legged lizard, too. It seemed to be in no mood to deal with the transparent bats, because its tentacles retreated to the bottom of the lake quickly. After a long series of bubbles, the lake went quiet again.

After hovering for a while, the transparent bats flew to the crags and vanished among the vines.

The six-legged lizards were even faster them. They had camouflaged themselves and lurked under the earth again.

At first glance, the underground world was as peaceful as half a minute ago. The vague stink of blood and acid in the air was the only proof that a soul-stirring hunt had taken place a moment ago.

To hunt and to be hunted. Life underground seemed rather cruel.

Captain Hong Tong frowned and said, "Let's just bypass the lake. The spiritual beasts here seemed to only be interested in the creatures coming close to the silver lake. There shouldn't be a problem if we keep a distance from them.

"Team Tiger Deity must've circumvented the place, too. More secret treasures are buried deep underground. We ought not waste our spiritual energy in this place.

"If we have no gains, we can always excavate the Flowing Brightness Crystals and the Heart Locking Flowers on our way back."

The proposal was very practical, but Li Yao disagreed.

"I think we should excavate the Flowing Brightness Crystals and the Heart Locking Flowers right now.

"First of all, the creatures in this underground world aren't morons. If faked Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures were everything in this place, there wouldn't be too many prey falling into their traps. Their trick would be seen through very quickly.

"The fact that the six-legged lizards have tongues almost identical to the Heart Locking Flowers is evident enough that most of the Flying Brightness Grass and Heart Locking Flowers here are real. It is the only motivation for the prey to risk coming to the lake, even if they know there might be ambushes.

"Therefore, there's no need to fear that we will get nothing after a fierce battle.

"In the meantime, the attack pattern and the damage of the three spiritual beasts that we saw just now, although weird, are still comprehensible. They can be blocked and resolved, too.

"Their intelligence seems not very high, either, otherwise they wouldn't have gobbled up the beast puppets that I sent out without examining what they were.

"I feel that they are just spiritual beasts with strong instincts in hunting, but they haven't evolved to the level of demon beasts yet. Besides, in a monotonous biological system of an underground world, their methods of attack won't be very diversified. We should've seen most of their skills already.

"Considering the mess that they caused right now, stronger predators would've appeared if they existed, but they didn't. So, I assume that the spiritual beasts we saw were the strongest predators themselves.

"One bird in the hand is better than two in the bush. Our exploration has only just begun. Who knows what kind of weird situation we will be mired in later? Flowing Brightness Crystals can be absorbed directly to improve our strength; Heart Locking Flowers can be taken at critical moments to soothe the soul and prevent us from derangement. They might be very useful for our journey to come!

"Right now, we can collect the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures unhurriedly at our own pace, because the demons are not messing around. But if we are engaged with them in fierce battles, there is no guarantee that we can come back to this place and collect the Flowing Brightness Flowers and the Heart Locking Flowers!

"Therefore, I suggest we clean up the underground spiritual beasts and take the treasures while we can!"

Li Yao's proposal was seconded by most people.

The duller a biological system was, the fewer the attack skills of the spiritual beasts would be, because they would only have to deal with limited types of enemies.

If they hadn't seen 'Cultivators' in their entire life, there would be no way that they would have a special skill to cope with Cultivators.

Everyone gathered around and studied the battle footage taken just now carefully by stopping at each frame. Very soon, they came up with a tactical plan.

"Vulture, your hands are the fastest of all, and you are more familiar with Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures than anyone else. You will be in charge of the collection; the rest of us will cover you up with firepower!"

Under the command of Captain Hong Tong, everyone activated their Cosmos Rings and summoned dozens of beast puppets from them.

For this mission, every Orb Patroller had brought more than ten beast puppets. Now that they were rallied, they seemed to have made a battalion.

"Let's move out!"

Covered by the dozens of beast puppets, the six crystal suits turned into six streaks of brilliance darting toward the silver lake.

The beast puppets that they had most were Tarantulas that Li Yao modified based on 'Mystic Wolves', a high-speed scouting beast.

After being strengthened by multiple Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, the Tarantulas at this moment were much scarier and were particularly suitable for combat in underground environments.

Before the two parties clashed, Ba Weiqi, who was at the end of the team, launched his first wave of mental attacks.

The intense spiritual waves assaulted the invisible bats on the crags directly, forcing them to activate their brains to counteract.

As a result, their strong brain waves exposed themselves like burning torches in the darkness. Their remarkable stealth abilities didn't work anymore.

"Zhi Zhi!"

Six-legged lizards had never seen enemies who were wearing metal all over their bodies from which flames were jetting out. They fled out of the earth in consternation.

What embraced them in the outside was a storm of bullets!

Two areas of the lizards' heads exploded into translucent clouds of blood.

These critical parts had been found out by the six Cultivators through studying the battle video. They had noticed that the six-legged lizards had been protecting these parts judiciously, which should be their important sense organs.

The light was extremely dim in the underground world. Their eyes were definitely not of much use despite the enormous size.

However, in a world of quietness, even the weakest sound could carry a lot of information. Therefore, the hearing organs on the two sides of their heads that looked like ears were their biggest weakness!

As it turned out, after their 'ears' were blown to pieces by the shocking bullets, the six-legged lizards started circling around like headless flies.

In the meantime, the transparent bats had sprung from the crags and flew up toward the top of the cave in a panic.

Faced with the mysterious enemies, the transparent bats which had been entirely confused decided to simply run away.

But the silver lake was boiling again, with bubbles popping up nonstop. Dozens of tentacles protruded out and whipped at the six of them roaringly.

"The silver lake is only about a hundred meters in diameter. It's impossible for super-large spiritual beasts to grow in this small pond. The combat ability of this strange beast is limited however formidable it seems! Let's block it now so that Vulture can gather the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures!" Captain Hong Tong bellowed and charged at four tentacles.

Ding Lingdang followed him closely. Three dragons of flames in different colors craned up from her back and stabbed at the depths of the silver lake.

She was brutal enough to attack the body of the strange beast inside the lake without bothering with the tentacles!

Li Yao had no time to notice what everyone else was doing. The aura on his Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber was extended to more than five meters and slashed a six-legged lizard which was running dizzily into two halves. Then, it was lengthened further and chopped off one of the tentacles of the strange beast!

In the next second, he set the Tarantulas that he carried into the automatic mode to protect himself, before he sprayed out almost a hundred beast puppets the size of a palm which looked like spiders.

He didn't treat the spiders casually as he did with the Tarantulas. Instead, he extended almost a hundred spiritual threads out of his spiritual root and connected them to the crystal processors of the little spiders. With the calculation of the crystal processors and his own computational ability, he would be able to control the spiders directly!

The little spiders had no combat ability, but they were of tremendous help for his gathering work.

Li Yao's hands were moving as fast as the wind. Translucent blades as thin as the wings of a cicada stuck out from his fingertips to help him cut off the Heart Locking Flowers.

The little spiders were not as fast as himself. But there were a whole lot of them. His collection efficiency was more than doubled with their help!

Many six-legged lizards nearby lunged at him, shrieking. Li Yao sent out a telepathic thought. Their bellies exploded one after another, before they collapsed to the ground, unable to move anymore.

Li Yao was a lunatic bomber. How could they eat his magical equipment thoughtlessly?

"One… Two… Eighteen… Nineteen… Twenty-one Flowing Brightness Grasses in total!

"And twenty Heart Locking Flowers!"

Five minutes later, all the Flowing Brightness Grasses and the Heart Locking Flowers had been looted by Li Yao.

"Nice!"

Li Yao was more exhilarated than ever from collecting so many precious Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures all at once.

But in the meantime, Team Blue Bronze had lost some twenty beast puppets. There were traces of corrosion on all their crystal suits.

The main reason was that the strange beast inside the lake had a very unusual way of attacking. It had several different types of tentacles which could spurt acids and venom of different attributes. Some of the tentacles would even expand and explode when attacked, spewing super corrosive liquids.

Gudu! Gudu! Gudu! Gudu!

The number of bubbles covering the lake was increasing, as if a volcano under the lake was erupting. An intense spiritual wave soared up to the sky. It appeared that the strange beast inside the lake was ready to reveal itself and play with them for real!

"Let's go now!"

Since the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures had all been accumulated, no one was interested in fighting this strange beast any longer. After a roar from Captain Hong Tong, the six of them activated all their remote magical equipment and bombarded the silver lake, while they fled quickly to the deeper part of the cave that had been marked on their map without looking back.

Chapter 410: Skeleton Dragon!

Chapter 410: Skeleton Dragon!

"BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!"

Savaged and brutalized by countless kinds of magical equipment, the underground world was wreathed in undying smoke. The temperature hundreds of degrees high vaporized a huge amount of lake water, raising clusters of silver mist above the lake.

The strange beast inside the lake was squeaking angrily. Water pillars rose up and hit the crags. A lot of rocks were falling down. For a moment, the ground was trembling as if an earthquake was occurring.

Li Yao and his teammates moved as quickly as they could as they dashed into a new crevice. The roars of the strange beast didn't die down until they were thousands of meters away from the silver lake.

"It's great that Vulture was fast enough to finish the collection of the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures before the strange beast inside the lake revealed its true self!

"It's possible that the beast was seriously wounded or was shackled by some kind of barrier. That's why it didn't float up to fight us in the first place. Now that it has been irked and decided to swim up by force, it must've paid a terrible price. Our bombardment in the end only added to its injuries. If we come back the same way, we may even be able to try hunting it down!"

Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures of immeasurable worth had been secured. The six of them were all very excited.

"Team Tiger Deity has left another telepathic thought ball!"

Their crystal processors picked up traces of a faint telepathic thought at the same time. According to the map, it was from an inconspicuous gap about four kilometers ahead of them.

They were all refreshed. Li Yao performed some quick maintenance on everyone's crystal suits and replaced the plate armor that had been too seriously corroded. Then the team marched forward to the source of the telepathic thought.

Half an hour later, they found themselves in a shabby cave that was devoid of any light.

After scanning with mystic rays and telepathic thoughts, they discovered a skeleton at the end of the cave. It was two meters tall, with bright gold bones. Complicated round stripes could be seen on its arms.

"A body practitioner!"

Ding Lingdang was greatly interested. "Spiritual tattoos into the bones, bright gold body. This is a very advanced body practitioner. It must be no lower than the middle level of the Core Formation Stage. How did it end up in this place? Why did Team Tiger Deity not bury it when they found it?"

Li Yao took a step forward and scanned the skeleton with mystic rays inch by inch. Soft cloths were scattering around the bright gold skeleton, which appeared to be some sort of protective clothing like a mustard suit. But the passage of time had rendered them ragged beyond recognition.

From one of the scraps of cloth, a small part of 'Red Dragon Swallowing the Sun', the emblem of the Star Ocean Imperium, could be distinguished.

It seemed that this was a Cultivator from the Star Ocean Imperium.

Li Yao withdrew his gaze and pondered for a while. Then he realized why Team Blue Bronze had left the skeleton in the open air.

If the skeleton used to be a Cultivator of the Star Ocean Imperium, it meant that the dead body had been decaying in this place for more than seven thousand years. Core Formation Stage Cultivators had not reached the level of immortality. Even body practitioners who boasted amazing physical strength and body hardness would rot soon after they died.

The skeleton in this place was already on the verge of dismemberment. With any foreign force, it would definitely crumble into powder. There was no way to absorb it into a Cosmos Ring.

In a corner of the cave, Team Tiger Deity had left the second telepathic thought ball.

The information contained in this ball was ten times more detailed than the previous one.

As it turned out, there had been a lot of magical equipment that was not entirely putrid near the dead body of the Cultivator of the Star Ocean Imperium, including several jade chips. Team Tiger Deity had taken away all the functional items.

But before they left, experts of Team Tiger Deity had decrypted the barrier of the jade chips and translated a lot of information contained inside.

The Star Glory Federation was a succession of the Star Ocean Imperium. Although thousands of years had passed, their languages, cultures, and social forms were very similar.

Team Tiger Deity had a rarely-seen hybrid-type Cultivator talented in both battle and research. Besides an Orb Patroller, he was also an anthropologist who specialized in the history of the Star Ocean Imperium, especially the barriers and encryption systems of the army at that time.

A huge amount of information that he decrypted flooded into the crystal processors of Team Blue Bronze.

The key words of the information stunned each and every one of them.

"What? The real name of Ultimacy is 'Boneyard', the residence of Skeleton Dragon who was one of the nineteen strongest demons in the early years of the Great Dark Age?"

The six of them were truly shocked.

"Skeleton Dragon?"

"Search your crystal processors and your own brain and share all the information you find regarding Skeleton Dragon!" ordered Captain Hong Tong hurriedly.

Early years of the Great Dark Age meant almost forty thousand years ago. It was too far away from right now. Most of the files had been lost in the sea of stars as time went by. Most of them had buried the information deep inside their brains even if they had read any books concerning it, and they definitely wouldn't waste their precious computational ability recalling it every once in a while.

Everyone tried their best to dig out their memories. Finally, they found a thing or two about the monster. Together with the information provided by Team Tiger Deity, they had a basic understanding about what Skeleton Dragon was now.

In the early years of the Great Dark Age, or rather, the twilight of the Ancient Cultivation Civilization, Cultivators had bred billions of demon beasts to attack one another.

After thousands of years of fierce battles, countless strong species had emerged among the demon beasts.

In the strong species, many top experts were born.

Led by the elite demon beasts, the demon race fought against the Cultivators and liberated themselves.

However, the demon race consisted of merely man-made creatures. The disparity within the race was far more severe than that of mankind. Many demons were natural nemeses themselves, and there was no way that they would listen to their enemy's command.

Therefore, although the 'Demon Union', an alliance formed by the nineteen strongest demon species, waged war against the ancient Cultivators and pioneered the Great Dark Age where the ancient world of Cultivation fell apart and human civilization became subservient to the demon civilization, the alliance quickly collapsed when they lost the mutual adversary.

Leaders of the nineteen demon species all hoped to be the sole emperor reigning over the entire sea of stars. Hence, cruel civil wars began!

Skeleton Dragon was one of the leaders.

As of now, the files depicting the wars in the early years of the Great Dark Age were mostly lost. But one thing that everybody knew was that Skeleton Dragon was not the winner who laughed to the end.

Considering the cruelty and brutality of the demon race, it was not hard to fathom what became of the losers!

And the very planet that they were standing on was Skeleton Dragon's residence…

As the saying went, 'clever hares have multiple burrows'. Top ancient demons such as Skeleton Dragon apparently wouldn't have only one place to live in.

This might be a base for the preparation of his counterattack or maybe a villa of seclusion to treat his injuries.

But one way or another, abundant secrets must've been buried in this place!

Pondering for a while, Li Yao realized something.

In the early years of the Great Dark Age, expert demons such as Skeleton Dragon must've annihilated countless ancient sects while leading their army of billions of demon beasts.

The demon race did not have its own civilization. The training pattern in its beginning phase was rooted in the same paradigm as the ancient world of Cultivation.

Therefore, Skeleton Dragon must've looted a lot of Cultivation arts and secret treasures in order to improve his own species and strengthen his relatives and descendants.

These treasures might've been buried somewhere in Skeleton Dragon's residence!

The logic was quite simple. Therefore, when the Star Ocean Imperium thrived, and the last demon beast dynasty was on the verge of destruction at the epilogue of the Great Dark Age, the two parties both sent an expedition team when they discovered Boneyard by accident.

The Cultivator who had bright gold bones and spiritual tattoos on his arms must've been a member of the expedition team back then.

The enormous platform that Li Yao saw at the bottom of the canyon and the channel almost ten thousand meters long leading to the center of the planet were apparently the work of their predecessors from the Star Ocean Imperium.

According to the journal left in the ancient jade chips, the expedition team of the Star Ocean Imperium had slain countless spiritual beasts while they were marching forward. There had been four strong spiritual beasts inside the silver lake, but they had been wiped out by the expedition team!

"No wonder our trip so far has been easy and smooth, and the spiritual beasts near the Heart Locking Flowers and the Flowing Brightness Grasses are so weak.

"It is because the real strong guardians were killed a long time ago!"

That was almost everything useful contained inside the ancient jade chips. There was much more additional information that had been locked behind sophisticated barriers. The expert from Team Tiger Deity had failed to crack it due to the lack of time.

According to the journal, the expedition team of the Star Ocean Imperium had come across several exploration teams of the Demon Beast Empire. They'd fought several times, with casualties on both sides.

The bones of the body practitioner were intact without being damaged at all. There was no sign that the ancient Cultivator had been killed by an expert demon.

No one could tell what kind of accidents occurred to the expedition team later, or the outcome of the competition between it and the exploration teams of the Demon Beast Empire.

However, it did not matter who had won and who had lost.

Thousands of years had passed. Both the Demon Beast Empire and the Star Ocean Imperium were long gone like dry leaves shattered in a storm.

"This place is the residence of one of the top demons from forty thousand years ago. Even if it is just a temporary house, countless treasures must be lying under the ground. We're definitely going to get rich!

"It is very fortunate of us. Our capability is not enough to allow us to explore the residence of the ancient demon seven thousand meters under the ground. But the predecessors of the Star Ocean Imperium have already paved a way for us!

"Maybe, this is a blessing for the human civilization!"

The six members of Team Blue Bronze stood up straight and paid homage to the ancient Cultivators seven thousand years ago as followers from the Star Glory Federation.

Right then, their crystal processors received a signal from an independent communication network at the same time.

Perhaps blocked by the underground stratums, the signal was sporadic. They tried many times but still failed to connect the signal to their communication channel. However, they did hear somebody shouting, "MAYDAY!"

"A distress call from Team Tiger Deity!"

Their faces all paled instantly. They took action without delay.

Yan Yangtian activated the probe magical equipment on her crystal suit to search for the source of the signal. Half a minute later, she locked onto something 9,500 meters below them!

"Let's go!"

To rescue their companions, and for the residence of Skeleton Dragon, they would march downwards even if it was ten thousand meters below the ground!

Chapter 411: Underground Ocean, Undersea Town!

Chapter 411: Underground Ocean, Undersea Town!

The deeper they went, the more rugged the tunnel became. Most of the tunnel had been blocked by rubble. Team Tiger Deity had dug out holes that allowed one person to pass through with all fours at a time.

In the endless darkness, the feeble brightness leaked out from the tiny gaps near the tunnel now and then, as if thousands of narrow and long eyes were observing the intruders without blinking.

Li Yao and his teammates rapidly proceeded through the tunnel. Half an hour later, they arrived at the end of the tunnel 9,500 meters below the ground.

Although they'd been prepared for unusual things to happen, the splendid scene they were welcomed by still shocked them. At the end of the narrow tunnel was a boundless underground world that was at least a hundred times larger than the previous one they had been in. They could not see the end of it. Everything was enveloped in darkness.

The fact that there was such a large hollow almost ten thousand meters underground had surpassed the limits of their imaginations.

They even doubted that they might've arrived at a new world fragment without them knowing anything.

What was most startling was that the bottom of the underground hollow was filled with silver liquid which had gathered to form an enormous ocean.

Yes. An ocean!

It was a lake about one hundred meters in diameter in the first underground world, and it was a boundless silver ocean in front of them right now.

Raging wind was blowing from the darkness nearby, raising surging waves on the surface of the 'ocean'. It even led to unique microclimates above the ocean where clusters of silver mist resembling clouds had formed.

But there was no hint of any living creatures at all. No Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, no spiritual beasts, and no fungi. Nothing interesting at all.

A surging ocean ten thousand meters below the ground!

The scene was already mind-blowing just thinking of it.

Team Tiger Deity's distress call had come from the depths of the silver ocean.

Everyone looked at one another. They could feel their companions' uneasiness despite the thick helmets covering their faces.

"The spiritual waves here are hundreds of times more intense what we sensed on the ground. This should be one of the places where spiritual energy is the most abundant on this planet!

"If there is a residence of Skeleton Dragon here, it is very likely to be in the depths of the silver ocean.

"But look, the silver lake from earlier is much smaller, yet Flowing Brightness Grasses, Heart Locking Flowers, and spiritual beasts have been living around it.

"The silver ocean we are seeing right now is hundreds of times larger. But we can't feel the existence of any Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures at all.

"There are only two possibilities. Either someone arrived earlier and took all the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures away, or some formidable being in the depths of the ocean consumed all the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and spiritual beasts nearby."

Yan Yangtian's analysis made everyone put on a grave expression.

Captain Hong Tong said calmly, "There are no other choices. We have to go down and find out what is hiding inside the ocean, not to mention that we need to rescue Team Tiger Deity.

"Otherwise, if the exploration squads of the Blood Demon Sector get access to the residence of Skeleton Dragon and receive the ancient demon heritage, the capability of the Blood Demon Sector will definitely soar. The Heaven's Origin Sector will be doomed forever!

"With valiance comes victory. The federation spent all the resources available to send us here not to let us go back empty-handed as losers!

"Even if strong spiritual beasts are lurking in the silver ocean, we will just slay 'em all!

"Vulture, it's your time!"

Li Yao nodded his head. He took out hundreds of components from his Cosmos Ring and started modifying his teammates' crystal suits.

Soon, the arms, legs and backs of the six crystal suits had undersea combat accessories that looked like fins affixed to them.

In the meantime, Yan Yangtian had collected sample liquid from the silver ocean and run a preliminary analysis, concluding that the ocean water was not just harmless but also beneficial for human bodies.

Data regarding the silver liquid was transmitted to everyone's crystal processor.

"Let's move out!"

Under the command of Captain Hong Tong, all the six Orb Patrollers dived into the underground silver ocean!

The density of the silver liquid was higher than that of common sea water. Swimming inside it was like swimming in sticky glue.

Crystal cameras almost lost all functionality in the silver liquid. They could only send out telepathic thoughts and sound waves and picture the territories with the feedback in their minds.

"Beep… Beep… Beep… Beep…"

The telepathic thought and sound wave probe system was letting out dull sounds while they were inspecting the undersea terrain.

The six of them dived deeper and deeper. Very soon, they had descended to more than ten thousand meters below the ground.

Yet, the bottom of the ocean was still thousands of meters away. The undersea terrain that their crystal processors drew dazed everyone.

In the middle of the continuous mountains, there were quite a few vast undersea basins. Countless vintage houses and pavilions were standing in some of the basins. There were even several splendid buildings that looked like ancient castles.

The tallest one of all looked like a cone-shaped tower that looked to be more than a thousand meters tall.

An ocean ten thousand meters below the ground!

A city thousands of meters below the ocean!

But had the city been originally built in the underground ocean, or was the city drowned by the ocean due to crustal movements?

"The architecture style of the underground town has distinctive features of the Ancient Cultivation Civilization forty thousand years ago, if not with additional barbarianism and bloodthirst. There are also several giant buildings whose purposes are unknown to us. This doesn't seem like a place the ancient Cultivators dwelled.

"The only explanation is that these are the remnants of the city where Skeleton Dragon and his tribe once lived."

The demon civilization was a man-made civilization. In the early years of the Great Dark Age, it did not have its own culture and history at all. Therefore, the cities that the demon race built in the beginning were all duplicates of the counterparts in the human world. Sometimes they simply pulled the headquarters and buildings of Cultivation sects apart and transported them to their own dens.

After thirty thousand years of development, demon culture with idiosyncratic characteristics had thrived. The style of the demons' buildings, weapons, and magical equipment was entirely different from that of the Cultivators'.

Therefore, by studying the architecture design of the demon households, it was not hard to infer the period when the ancient town had been established.

"The cone tower in the center is more than 1,700 meters tall, with a pedestal more than 500 meters in diameter. It must be the core of the city, if not the residence of Skeleton Dragon!

"Wait… The spiritual waves above the undersea city are quite chaotic. A fierce battle seems to be taking place… It's Team Tiger Deity!"

Yan Yangtian had located the position of Team Tiger Deity.

However, the other team seemed to be in a bad condition. Their crystal suits were seriously damaged. Together with the interference of the mysterious silver liquid, Team Blue Bronze failed to connect to their communication channel after multiple tries.

"Let's go there!"

The metal fins on their hands and feet waved gently while they marched close to the undersea city like six swift sharks.

Beep… Beep… Beep Beep… Beep beep beep beep!

The feedback that their probe magical equipment received was getting more and more intense, indicating that there was one or even more beings in front of them that contained enormous spiritual energy.

Their spiritual threads depicted the outlines of the objects quickly.

There were three beasts in total. They looked very similar to the strange beast inside the lake that Team Blue Bronze had met previously, because every one of them had hundreds of tentacles that resembled serpents. But they were at least five times larger than the previous one. Their tentacles were more than half a meter in diameter, even thicker than Li Yao's thigh!

The undersea beasts were more than a hundred meters long. Their tentacles were connected to a giant cone-shaped shell that looked like freshwater snail. The shell was riddled with holes, from which they could absorb or squirt water to move themselves.

Although their bodies were quite slow, their tentacles were extremely deft, which were waving and whacking like hundreds of sea snakes, stirring the undersea world into utter chaos.

Li Yao searched for a long time, before he finally sensed the five Orb Patrollers of Team Tiger Deity through the gaps of the hundreds of tentacles.

They seemed to have been seriously wounded. Their spiritual waves were quite weak while they were struggling.

"Help them!"

Faced with the net of tentacles constituted by three unknown undersea beasts, Team Blue Bronze sprang forward without any hesitation.

Li Yao was charging at the beast on the left. The Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber had an aura of more than ten meters, while Li Yao slashed it down and hit one of the tentacles.

The tentacle of this beast was apparently much more tensile than that of the beast in the lake. It was extremely slippery, with nowhere that one could exert strength on.

Li Yao clutched the handle of his saber. With all his might, and the assistance of the crystal suit, he dragged the saber brutally and chopped off the tentacle. A large cluster of acid spurted out and spread into a green mist in the seawater.

In the meantime, he was hit by another tentacle. Almost a hundred tiny holes the size of the tips of needles appeared on the surface of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

The tentacle that had been chopped off didn't die immediately. Instead, it wriggled forward and lunged at him like an earthworm.

Li Yao raised his eyebrow and was greatly surprised.

"The tentacles of the beast can still attack when they are disconnected to the body?

"It appears that this is the ultimate form of the beast. The one living inside the silver lake must've been undernourished due to the limited growing environment!

"Then let's see if you can still attack after I mince you into pieces!"

Gritting his teeth, Li Yao waved his saber and raised an unstoppable swirl against the hindrance of the silver liquid, which tore the squirming tentacle apart momentarily.

Then, he rushed forward, passing through the gaps of four tentacles at a close distance, before he charged at the body of the undersea beast.

Five brilliant talon auras were formed by the Purple Electric Blue Fire Claw Art, which hit the shell of the undersea beast precisely together with unstoppable, primordial strength.

CRACK!

Dozens of miniature cracks appeared on the shell of the undersea beast.

But very soon, ivory gel leaked out of the cracks and cured the shell like glue!

"What a remarkable self-recovery ability. These beasts are indeed impressive."

Li Yao frowned, having no idea how to deal with them.

His five teammates were also engaged in fierce fights.

The attack ability and defense ability of the three undersea beasts were both incredibly high. Their tentacles were still aggressive even if they were chopped off. It was going to take forever to clean up the mess.

But in the meantime, countless pairs of bloodthirsty eyes were focused on the battle in the depths of the silver ocean.

"Idiotic Cultivators, how dare you trespass onto Boneyard when you don't know the first thing about it?

"For three years, the Blood Demon Sector has studied the heritage of an ancient demon who once travelled to Boneyard before we made up our mind to explore and excavate in this place!

"Fine then. Boneyard will be your tomb where the so-called strongest Building Foundation Stage Cultivators will be buried ten thousand lightyears away from your home!"

Chapter 412: Super Green Acid Cannon!

Chapter 412: Super Green Acid Cannon!

In the bed of the underground silver ocean, under the cover of mud and sand, the gargantuan body of a beast was hiding.

The beast was more than three thousand meters long and looked like a mix of a blue whale and a plesiosaur, with countless lumps and wrinkles on its surface and a row of bone spurs protruding out of its back. There couldn't be a creature scarier than it.

Inside the body of the beast was a row of spacious chambers. The biggest chamber was in the middle front part of the body, like the cockpit of a warship.

At this moment, a demon squad from the Blood Demon Sector was hiding inside the chamber and observing the fierce battle in the silver ocean coldly.

The one leading the squad was none other than Wang Ji, the prince of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers!

Wang Ji was floating in the midair. Several bloody tentacles extended out of the walls of the chamber and connected to the back of his head.

In such a way, he would be able to monitor the entire battlefield with the demonic warship refined out of the corpse of an enormous beast.

"Huh. The traces of a Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit have been detected?

"There is only one Orb Patroller who wears the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

"As I expected, Vulture Li Yao, you really are here.

"But you've come for your own death. You just don't know it yet.

"The Blood Demon Sector has been planning the exploration of Boneyard for three years. From the heritage of the ancient demon, we got a detailed map of the world underneath Boneyard's surface and the locations of several secret teleportation arrays that could transport us from the surface of the planet into the underground world. We even found a wrecked demonic warship!

"This demonic warship was a super weapon crafted at the end of the Demon Beast Empire ten thousand years ago, filled with amazing demonic technology!

"Even though it is a terrible state of disrepair, it is still not something that you can deal with!

"Everything is within my control. Let's see what you can do this time!"

Right then, two demons floated over to Wang Ji and respectfully said, "Super Green Acid Cannon is ready!"

"Biochemical beasts are ready!"

Strength meant everything in the Blood Demon Sector. The Kingdom of Lion Butchers was among the most powerful nations, and Elder Blood Robe, Wang Ji's master, was one of the strongest demon emperors. Therefore, Wang Ji had been chosen to lead the demon squad.

"Excellent!"

Wang Ji smiled hideously. "I didn't expect that the underground silver ocean would boast such abundant spiritual energy. The demonic warship from thousands of years ago is not entirely rotten yet. A Super Green Acid Cannon and powerful biochemical beasts breeding pools are still functional!"

Wang Ji, together with another fifteen demons, walked to another giant chamber. Some twenty meat balls more than ten meters in diameter were dangling from the ceiling. Glistening nerves and veins could be found on the surfaces of the meat balls. Liquid was flowing in the veins. The membrane was stretched out to the extent that it seemed to be transparent, revealing more than ten extremely ugly beasts in the shape of fetuses inside.

Huala!

After a tremble, the meat balls all split in half from the middle. Stinky liquid was running everywhere. The eccentric beasts fell off and woke up one after another.

Some of the beasts were wearing solid plate armor with sharp bone spurs on it.

Some of the beasts were like lizards but countless times larger, with bloody stripes covering them.

Still some other beasts were completely indistinguishable. They looked like a mix of the most terrible body parts of the most horrible creatures in the worst nightmares. Even the deepest level of hell wouldn't bear such nasty beings!

All the beasts were alive, but they were entirely still except for their breathing. For the beasts with eyes, their eyeballs seemed to be mere decoration; they were stiff and had no hint of wisdom that belonged to intellectual creatures.

They were like machines, a bunch of killing machines fleshed out with hide and blood!

"As expected of the biochemical beasts created by the Demon Beast Empire ten thousand years ago. They are formidable!"

"Compared to them, the biochemical beasts that we brought are nothing but crabs and shrimps!"

"The biochemical beasts will improve our strength by two or even three levels. Destroying the crystal suits of the Cultivators will be more than easy!"

All the demons were exultant while they danced and laughed.

Glancing around, Wang Ji's eyes stopped on a black beast.

The beast was relatively smaller in size, less than six meters in length. Its body was slippery, like a mix of black metal and flesh. Its head was disproportionally long and covered by a curved shell which blocked its eyes. A mouthpart with sharp, helical teeth could be seen through the half-open bloody mouth.

The limbs were long and slim, with black bone spurs all around. In the back of the beast was a bone tail ten meters long, concluded by a three-edged sharp blade embedded with thorns.

Wang Ji felt enormous strength, and even more enormous lust for killing, from the beast.

CRACK! CRACK! CRACK! CRACK!

Below the stomach of the beast, the black ribs opened one by one, unveiling a giant empty chamber inside.

Wang Ji strode forward and crawled into the beast. Then, the ribs closed without leaving the tiniest gap.

Hiss!

The black beast stood up!

The rigid robot a moment ago seemed to have turned into the most brutal predator. The air in front of it was torn apart and twisted after a casual snatch.

Acids more corrosive than vitriol were streaming out of its mouth, which dribbled to the ground and produced burning noises.

Transformed by the beast, Wang Ji's voice was extremely twisted and high.

"Haha. Hahahaha. Such invincible strength! With this biochemical beast, I can wield the strength of a demon king!

"Hurry up and pick a biochemical beast most suitable for you!

"Prepare the Super Green Acid Cannon!

"Let the hunting begin!"

…

Deep inside the silver ocean, the fierce battle was ongoing.

Li Yao roared and slashed off a 26th tentacle. But his left hand felt off for a moment, causing him to temporarily halt the Purple Electric Blue Fire Claw Art. The tentacle was not smashed into pieces. It hit himself heavily.

Despite the protection of his crystal processor, he felt that somebody had hammered him right in the chest after a dull thunder-like noise.

Thankfully, Ding Lingdang came in time and burnt the tentacle to a crisp with a blazing dragon.

Under the pressure of the silver seawater, her Nona-colored Fire was suppressed. Her capability was seriously undermined. After fighting for such a long time, she was breathing heavily, too.

'Something is not right!'

For some reason, Li Yao felt uneasy, as if somebody was peeping at him in the bottom of the ocean.

'The undersea beasts are not trying to eliminate us; they are trying to keep us here!'

Li Yao noticed that, pressed by the hundreds of vigorous tentacles of the undersea beasts, the six members of Team Blue Bronze were drawing closer and closer, and the remaining Orb Patrollers of Team Tiger Deity were assembling, too.

Li Yao couldn't help but ask in the communication channel, "Yan Zi, do you feel that something odd is watching us from the bottom of the ocean?"

As a scout, Yan Yangtian's senses were the sharpest of all.

"Something is indeed not right. I have goosebumps all over my back!"

Yan Yangtian gnashed her teeth.

"I feel the same way, too. Take care, everybody. Brace for new enemies!"

Before Captain Hong Tong finished his sentence, abrupt changes took place!

A streak of greenness was shot from the depths of the silver ocean, darted at Team Tiger Deity, and suddenly exploded into a cluster of green fog when it was dozens of meters away from Team Tiger Deity.

The cluster of green fog seemed to be alive. It danced, expanded, and lunged at Team Tiger Deity!

The five Orb Patrollers of Team Tiger Deity sensed that a great danger was coming and prepared to run away, but they were delayed for a second by the tentacles of the undersea beasts.

In that one second, the cluster of green fog tangled the five Orb Patrollers!

The green fog split into many green lines which crawled into gaps of the crystal suits like miniature worms.

A lot of bubbles appeared on the surface of the crystal suits while they were corroded and decomposed. Eventually, shocking holes were taking shape!

Through the holes, the green lines crowded into the inside of the crystal suits and started corroding the bodies of the Orb Patrollers!

The Orb Patrollers struggled to resist the deterioration of their spiritual energy. But they could spare no attention to deal with the undersea beasts now, which snatched them easily with their tentacles one by one.

Team Blue Bronze was completely dumbfounded, especially Li Yao, who was more shocked than everyone else.

He was quite familiar with the crystal suits that Team Tiger Deity wore. They were the most advanced models of the Heaven's Origin Sector, manually strengthened by the most experienced Armadominuses.

In the war against the Heaven's Origin Sector, the crystal suits had often survived hours in a battlefield without being damaged by anything.

But right now, the acids in the shape of green lines that looked like weird worms had ruined the crystal suits within several seconds!

'What kind of acid is this?'

Before Li Yao was back to himself, he had a terrible feeling. Without input from his brain, his body had swum up toward the surface of the ocean!

"There's no time! Hide behind the undersea beasts!" roared Li Yao.

The six members of Team Blue Bronze dashed behind an undersea beast.

The second streak of greenness appeared and exploded a hundred meters below them, but it hit the monolithic undersea beast first.

The undersea beast seemed to be shrieking desperately, indicated by the violently jumping oscillograph, although they didn't hear anything. Its tentacles were cramping crazily, before turning into ichor one by one.

The undersea beasts could spurt out acid themselves, which meant that their bodies should have had resistance against acids. But it was utterly pointless faced with the weird green acid.

The solid cone-shaped shell didn't last long, either. Despite the ivory, sticky serum, it turned mottled after a short moment. Much ichor that used to be the body tissue jetted out!

Half a minute later, the hundred-meters-long undersea beast became an empty, broken shell floating and soaking in the seawater.

The other two undersea beasts were greatly appalled. They fled without a moment's delay.

Li Yao and his teammates took the opportunity to dash hundreds of meters upward during the precious half a minute.

However—

The streak of greenness transmitted extremely fast inside the seawater when it exploded. Although the six of them used the undersea beast as a shield, a bit of the green fog still splashed on their bodies.

The bits of acid turned into green lines, which tied up everyone's crystal suits and looked for the gaps in the crystal suits madly.

"Not good. My leg joint has been corroded!"

"What kind of acid are they? The anti-corrosion layer on our crystal suits is completely useless against them!"

"They seem to be living creatures under manipulation of someone. Ah! They've dug a hole on my crystal suit and are crawling into my body!"

Exclamations echoed nonstop in the communication channel.

Chapter 413: Formidable Beasts!

Chapter 413: Formidable Beasts!

Cold sweat was appearing on Li Yao's forehead. His Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was smeared by several 'green lines', too, which were corroding the surface of the crystal suit at a crazy speed.

Furbished and polished by him repetitively, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was extremely solid. Its speed of corrosion was much lower than that of other crystal suits.

But if he were to simply leave it alone, the weird green lines were bound to drill several holes on his crystal suit eventually.

Once the green lines entered his body, he would have to resist them with his spiritual energy, which would be a terrible nuisance.

Ten ultra-thin blades stuck out of Li Yao's fingertips. His hands moved as fast as wind and cut a layer of metal off the surface of his crystal suit. Then he threw it away into the deep ocean together with the green lines on it.

Twelve green lines were cleaned up quickly.

But two of the green lines had dug into the crystal suit deeply. Li Yao simply pulled off the entire piece of plate armor and tossed it away.

After all, with the amazing framework of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, the loss of one or two pieces of plate armor did not affect its functionality very much.

But his teammates were not as quick as him. In a flurry, many of them dismantled too many corroded components to maintain the performance of their crystal suits.

But Weiqi and Leng Ziming both grunted in the communication channel. Two green lines had penetrated through their crystal suits and crawled into their bodies.

"The green line is like a weird worm. Not only does it corrupt my flesh and blood, it is also crawling deeper into my body through my spiritual veins. My spiritual energy circulation has been seriously jammed!"

Ba Weiqi rasped, "I have to activate my spiritual energy to maximum just in order to resist it. But as a result, 40% of my spiritual energy will be wasted. My combat ability will be greatly undermined!"

"My situation is even worse."

Leng Ziming said quickly, "The green line is crawling into my brain. I have to focus more than half of my attention to cope with it. I can't carry out my gunfighting skills as I should!"

"We can't stay here. Let's go!"

Captain Hong Tong made the decision immediately. Ding Lingdang and Yan Yangtian swam over and seized the two wounded companions. But as they were going to flee to the surface of the ocean, a huge amount of bubbles popped up around them as if the seawater was boiling. Almost twenty invisible killing scents had locked onto the six of them hard and sure.

"Team Tiger Deity is staying in this place. Why are you in such a hurry to go, Team Blue Bronze?"

It was difficult to hear voice clearly in the rolling seawater. But they all heard a weird soundwave from the depths of the ocean.

Almost twenty black shadows swam up rapidly from the bottom of the ocean at an unimaginable speed. They surpassed the six of them very soon and stopped ahead of them.

"Biochemical beasts!"

"What kind of biochemical beasts are these? They are only less than twenty meters long, yet their terrifying oppression is multiple times stronger than the kraken we killed last time!"

"Since when did the Blood Demon Sector procreate such formidable biochemical beasts? And why have we never seen them before?"

Li Yao's pupils constricted violently as he stared at the hideous, rampant biochemical beasts carefully.

Five of the biochemical beasts were carrying five Cultivators whose crystal suits were on the verge of destruction. They were the five Orb Patrollers from Team Tiger Deity.

A black beast in the lead had a sharp bone tail which pierced through the back of a Cultivator out of his chest. Dozens of thorns extended from the bone tail and stabbed into the acupoints all around the Cultivator's body, making him struggle in agony and unable to summon his spiritual energy.

"Vulture Li Yao, we meet for the third time!"

Satisfied laughter burst out from the black beast, while it waved its tail and pushed forward the thorns on the tail. The Cultivator of Team Tiger Deity was torn to pieces immediately. A mist of blood was flowing in the silver ocean.

CRACK!

Li Yao's eyes were bulging so much and he was biting his teeth so hard that it seemed like they might break apart at any moment.

He had recognized the voice of the demon inside the black beast. It belonged to Wang Ji, the disciple of Elder Blood Robe and the crown prince of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers!

At the same time, the other four Orb Patrollers of Team Tiger Deity were slain mercilessly by the biochemical beasts one after another.

Team Tiger Deity was wiped out!

"Swoosh!"

Without further ado, Wang Ji reined the black beast and charged at Li Yao in a streak of brightness!

The high-intensity silver water had no hindrance on the black beast at all. It appeared right in front of Li Yao's face within a moment. The bone tail which was stained with blood speared forward faster than many flying swords. The intense killing scent was almost a real thing and penetrated into Li Yao's heart like a needle!

Li Yao's eyelids twitched uncontrollably. He dashed backwards while he slashed up with his Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber brutally.

Yet, the boil tail grabbed his saber precisely and would've snatched it away if he hadn't reacted quickly enough.

'So fast! So dominating! Wang Ji is at least five times stronger than when I last met him now that he has entered this biochemical beast!'

Li Yao cursed silently. He had been no match for Wang Ji in the first place. Last time the two of them encountered, he was lucky enough to disrupt Wang Ji's teleportation half way through it. That was why he could defeat Wang Ji.

But right now, Wang Ji's capability seemed to have fully recovered. He had even found so many formidable biochemical beasts somewhere. Li Yao had no chance of winning at all!

The primary color of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was also black. Therefore, two streaks of blackness were colliding brutally against each other inside the silver ocean.

The match seemed to be even. But the crystal processor of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was sending out warnings crazily. More and more units were overloading. Several components were bordering on fatigue fracture.

In another three to five minutes, the crystal suit would collapse!

Wang Ji was clearly at ease. His scorn penetrated through the seawater and rubbed the soundwave perception unit of the crystal suit like sharp blades.

"Vulture Li Yao, it was you who sabotaged my endeavor in the Thunderous Sound Mountain, it was you who disrupted my teleportation in Red Lotus City, and it was still you who stole my blood saber. As a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator, you are remarkable. Too remarkable!"

Wang Ji laughed. "It will be a shame to kill such a remarkable Cultivator as yourself easily, won't it? I will dig out your brain and transplant it into the dirtiest swine. Yours shall be the most wretched soul in the world!

"Then, I will capture all the family and friends you have and torture them to death right in front of your face!

"I have all your files. I know everything about your family and friends, too. The girl running the Nona-colored Fire behind you is Ding Lingdang, your girlfriend, isn't she?

"She will be a start!

"This is your inevitable destiny when you chose to be my enemy! I will make you a pig crouching beside my feet, screaming, cry—Ahhh!"

Li Yao chewed his lips so hard that they were bleeding. His life fire was burning furiously. His spiritual energy cast flames in the color of blood that were almost real out of his Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber. At the cost of a heavy blow in his chest, he separated two talons of the black beast from its claw!

After Wang Ji entered the biochemical beast, their senses had melted into one. The excruciating pain of his fingers being cut off made him scream desperately.

Li Yao roared. His fighting will had never been higher.

Every word that Wang Ji said was a bucket of hot oil that had been poured into his wrathfully burning brain, making his each and every brain cell expand and explode!

"You threaten me with my family and friends? Good!

"I will not allow you to step out of Boneyard even if I have to be blown to pieces!

"This place... will be your grave!"

Wang Ji didn't expect Li Yao to advance so much within several months. He was so pissed off that he was actually laughing.

"Remarkable, truly remarkable. As expected of the strongest newcomer of Occult Orbs Fellowship, Vulture Li Yao!

"But how much can your own remarkableness do? Look behind you!"

Li Yao didn't need to turn back to know that the situation there must be bad.

With the enhancement of the powerful biochemical beasts, every silver-blood demon had overwhelming strength against the Cultivators, not to mention that the number was in their favor, too. There were sixteen of them in total.

For Team Blue Bronze, Ba Weiqi and Leng Ziming couldn't carry out their full strength because of the scourge of the weird green lines. There were in effect only four and a half of them!

Wang Ji kept Li Yao occupied. The remaining fifteen demons were challenging his teammates, which meant every three of them versus one Cultivator. The advantage couldn't be more obvious.

As the maintainer of the team, the information from the six crystal suits was all transmitted to the crystal processor of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit via the local area Spiritual Nexus.

In the 3D light beam, the six translucent figures that represented the status of the six crystal suits turned from green to yellow, from yellow to red, and from red to black eventually one piece after another.

It meant that more and more units of the crystal suits had been completely wrecked.

The specifications of the crystal suits were all unstable and dropping.

"Three of my main power rune arrays are having problems. One is out of control!"

"The joint on my left leg has been hit. 12% of agility lost!"

"I have run out of my flying swords!"

"Bastards, you think you can annihilate Team Blue Bronze so easily? Enjoy this!"

'Dummy' Ba Weiqi and 'Shell' Leng Ziming bellowed in the communication channel at the same time.

Their unstoppable posture immediately informed Li Yao of what they were going to do.

A moment later, the crystal processor of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit acknowledged two extremely intense spiritual waves which were bursting out like volcano eruptions.

"Bo!"

The silver ocean was raging. Wind and thunder were thriving.

Ba Weiqi and Leng Ziming, two Building Foundation Stage Cultivators, entered the seed explosion state without bothering with anything else and fully activated the spiritual seeds that the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators had bestowed upon them.

In a moment—

Hundreds of gold stripes spurted out of Leng Ziming's body. The biochemical beast closest to him was minced into pieces together with the demon inside of it!

Ba Weiqi was holding the enormous helmet of his crystal suit with both of his hands. His mental attack formed real circular waves in the seawater which charged at a biochemical beast in front of him that was the largest of all with a body length of almost twenty meters.

The head of the biochemical beast quickly expanded and exploded!

Out of the chamber jumped a demon. But he struggled on his feet for a long time as if he were drunk. Suddenly, his eyes bulged, and blood flooded out from all the holes on his face. He couldn't be more dead!

Within a moment, two expert demons had been slain!

It was not the end of it.

The hundreds of gold bullets triggered by Leng Ziming, after blowing a biochemical beast and the demon inside into pieces, spread out in unexpected arcs.

Ba Weiqi's mental attack also dispersed and rippled out in full coverage of the battlefield.

"This is… seed explosion!"

Chapter 414: Left For Dead!

Chapter 414: Left For Dead!

"Get out of their way! These Cultivators are in the seed explosion state!"

Through the vibration organs on the throat of the biochemical beast, Wang Ji sent out weird soundwaves which were transmitted clearly to every demon's hearing organ despite the high-density seawater.

The demons were all experienced fighters. Without him saying anything, they had already realized that something was not right. They ran away quickly, shrieking, at almost the exact same time as the two demons were slain just a moment ago.

The gold bullets turned into lasers and hit three demons. Their biochemical beasts exploded in a blood red mist.

The circular mental waves caught up to four demons, too, who screamed miserably with their heads in their hands.

However, seed explosion state faded away quickly like the shining falling star in a night sky.

Ba Weiqi and Leng Ziming activated their spiritual seeds when they were seriously wounded by the corrosion of the weird green lines, and therefore failed to enter the perfect seed explosion state.

They carried out only 30% of the capability of a Nascent Soul State Cultivator for merely one second!

In the meantime, the biochemical beasts maneuvered by the demon race were unimaginably sturdy. Under the strike that was almost 30% the strength of a Nascent Soul State Cultivator, they were only seriously injured and didn't get killed!

Ba Weiqi and Leng Ziming, on the other hand, couldn't bear the spiritual energy consumption of the Nascent Soul State because of their over-exhausted vitality. After a moment of brilliance, they both vomited blood and became lethargic.

Li Yao's heart suddenly turned heavy.

Seed explosion state was a double-edged sword. It could endow a Cultivator with dominating damage for a moment, but the recovery after over-exhaustion could be very long and hard.

Ba Weiqi and Leng Ziming would have barely any combat ability for the time being.

Before they set off for the mission, they had run a lot of simulations. In the seed explosion state, they had killed three to five demons with one attack even if the demons were inside biochemical beasts.

But right now, the invincibility of the real-life biochemical beasts was beyond their expectation. Two exploded seeds in exchange for two kills. It was hardly a good deal!

Wang Ji and the other demons fled hundreds of meters away. Several biochemical beasts unleashed an extremely brutal scent, seemingly so brutal that it pushed the silver seawater away. A lot of bubbles were popping up!

"Demon blood boiling!"

There was a technique among the demons similar to the seed explosion of the Cultivators named demon blood boiling. It was performed by melting the blood of the great demons no lower than demon emperors into the body of the low-level demons with secret arts. Once the foreign blood was triggered, it could improve the strength of the acceptant briefly, too.

Compared with spiritual seed explosion, the levels that demon blood boiling could upgrade were much fewer, but its duration was much longer. In most cases, demon blood boiling could last more than thirty seconds.

Unprecedentedly strong biochemical beasts, with thirty seconds of demon blood boiling, were too much for Team Blue Bronze to deal with at this moment.

"Let's go!"

"Let's go!"

Li Yao and Captain Hong Tong exclaimed almost simultaneously in the communication channel.

"Shua!"

Li Yao waved his hands and threw out almost twenty Frigid Prison Grenades which froze the seawater between Team Blue Bronze and the demon squad into a silver wall!

He dragged 'Shell' Leng Ziming, Ding Lingdang dragged 'Dummy' Ba Weiqi, and Captain Hong Tong altered the gravity nearby constantly. The team ran away to the depths of the silver ocean.

BOOM! CRACK!

The Frigid Prison Grenades didn't stop the demons for long. Earsplitting noises burst out behind them very soon.

The ice wall had been broken through!

But what followed was a second weird wave that froze the seawater hundreds of square meters around again!

His lips curling, Li Yao sniffed.

He had launched twelve Frigid Prison Grenades in total. Only six of them exploded in the beginning. The triggering condition of the remaining six had been reset and they would only explode when they were heavily shaken.

As a result, when the demon squad blew the first ice wall up, they were immediately sealed by the second wave of Frigid Prison Grenades on the spot!

But even the double freezing didn't hold back the demon squad for long. A moment later, Wang Ji and the other fourteen demons rushed close and caught up to Team Blue Bronze who had been burdened by the wounded companions.

However…

When attacked by them, the six members of Team Blue Bronze turned into six smoke-like phantoms which gradually twisted and dispersed. What was left were six pieces of shining, round magical equipment in the cores of the phantoms.

"Fakes? We've been fooled!"

"They didn't go up to the surface of the ocean!"

In the meantime, Team Blue Bronze was rushing to the depths of the ocean.

"At our current speed, there's no way that we can escape from the hunting of the demons if we run to the surface of the ocean. Moreover, this place is apparently a long-prepared trap. Maybe there are even more dangerous set-ups waiting for us on the surface of the ocean!

"Therefore, it's a better choice to run to the bottom of the ocean!

"The bottom of the ocean is boundless. I don't believe that the demons have explored every inch of it. Let's run to the ocean floor before we find a way to ascend and contact the other Star Teams!"

"Hurry up, everyone! Scan the terrain and look for a suitable place to hide!"

"Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!"

The six members of Team Blue Bronze dived to the bottom of the ocean thousands of meters deep. Invisible mystic rays scanned the bed of the ocean nonstop, unveiling undersea mountains and trenches one after another.

The pressure in this place was enormous. Their crystal suits had been ragged in the first place, and now with the heavy pressure, screeching, blood-freezing noises were coming from them, as if they would explode at any second.

"Hiss… This is—" Yan Yangtian cried out in the communication channel.

In front of them was a bottomless trench that looked like an abyss leading to the center of the planet. A huge centripetal force was taking effect and pulling them in.

Even their mystic rays couldn't reach the bottom of the trench.

Behind them, the demon squad was drawing close. Countless blood red light spots were raging on their light beams.

They had no other choice except to dive into the abyss.

Pulled by the absorption force of the abyss, their speed was even higher. It was as if they had jumped off n cliff.

Creak… Creak…

The seawater pressure was huger and huger.

On Li Yao's light beam, the translucent phantoms that represented the status of the six crystal suits had almost all turned into deep red now.

In a moment, they would be pressed into a meat sandwich.

"We can't go down any further! Check the two sides of the trench and see if there's any crevice that we can hide in!" Captain Hong Tong shouted.

The crags on the two sides of the trench were not intact, but full of cracks through which countless undersea spiritual beasts were crawling in and out while they gazed at the unannounced guests in a daze with their big yet useless eyes.

"This crevice is zigzagged and has a lot of branches. It's a perfect place to hide in!"

"Huh. Weird, weird. I sensed a vague spiritual wave coming from the depths of the crevice, and positive metal reaction!

"The feedback of the metal is quite strange. It seems not a natural mother lode, but some sort of man-made alloy!" Yan Yangtian exclaimed.

"Then this crevice it is. Let's go inside!" roared Captain Hong Tong.

At this moment, the demons were less than a kilometer from them!

The crevice on the crags of the trench was more than thirty meters wide and four meters tall. It looked like a long, deep, narrow eye, or a half-open mouth through which one could see the interconnecting fangs.

Li Yao and his teammates entered the crevice one by one and swam forward. A moment later, they noticed that something was wrong. Glancing around, they saw no trace of Captain Hong Tong.

Their captain was still outside the crevice!

"Captain!"

Li Yao, Ding Lingdang, Yan Yangtian, Ba Weiqi and Leng Ziming shouted at the same time.

They knew what their captain was going to do.

Captain Hong Tong didn't say anything. There was nothing but his heavy breath in the communication channel.

He merely waved his hands toward everyone and gestured them to run forward faster.

Then, he exerted his strength and punched the entrance of the crevice.

For a moment, the earth was shaking, and the rocks were falling. The entrance of the crevice was entirely blocked, and so was the communication between Captain Hong Tong and them.

In the last second before the communication was cut off, everyone heard Captain Hong Tong's furious roars when he detonated his spiritual seed, as if he was incarnated by a god.

His life was burning to maximum like the eruption of an undersea volcano. Seawater billions of tons was not enough to extinguish it.

No gallant words. The roars were the swan song of 'Mountain Monster' Hong Tong, the second captain of Team Blue Bronze.

"Captain…"

The eyes of Li Yao and the rest of the team were red. They bit their lips so hard that blood was streaming out. But they did not waste any time swimming to the depths of the crevice.

The shaking inside the crevice, however, got more and more violent, as if an undersea earthquake was taking place.

Cracks were appearing on the crags around them. Bizarre stones with sharp edges were falling down nonstop, brushing past them narrowly.

"It's been more than half a minute. Captain's seed explosion state should've ended long ago. There is no way that he can persist so long. Maybe… he has perished already!"

"But why is the shaking continuing and getting more intense?"

"Not good!"

"The demons are savaging the rock stratum in the outside. They are trying to collapse the rock stratum and bury us inside alive!"

Li Yao's blood was almost frozen when he realized what the demons were doing.

If it were hundreds of meters below the ground, being buried alive was not a big deal. They could dig their way up in their crystal suits easily.

But they were now ten thousand meters below the ground and thousands of meters below an ocean. The pressure they were faced with was tremendous!

If a Cultivator at the Refinement Stage were to appear in this place without a crystal suit, he would've been crushed into a piece of paper immediately.

Their crystal suits were all seriously damaged and nearing their limits. If they were buried here alive, the odds that they would survive were less than 1%!

Huala! Huala!

More and more stones were falling down over their heads. They seemed to be in the middle of a storm.

The space inside the crevice was too limited for any dodging movements. However hard they tried to avoid the rocks, some of the big ones still hit them precisely.

Their spiritual shields were functioning crazily, mincing the giant rocks into pieces.

But the hardness of their spiritual shields was dropping rapidly, too.

"Hurry up and look for the positive metal reaction that Yan Zi talked about!"

"It's our only chance!"

The crystal processor automatically scanned the surroundings and generated a map, guiding them the way. Li Yao and Ding Lingdang was in the lead blowing the rocks in their way into smithereens, while Yan Yangtian was gritting her teeth dragging the two wounded teammates.

Behind them, the undercurrent was raging, and the crevice was collapsing. The sea sand and tiny stones were chasing them closely like a ferocious animal.

Half a minute later, they finally arrived at the source of the metal reaction.

But in front of them, there was nothing but an undersea rock stratum that was as smooth as a mirror.

It was a dead end!

Chapter 415: Soaring Killing Scent!

Chapter 415: Soaring Killing Scent!

"I sensed very strong spiritual waves and intense metal reactions. Something has got to be hiding inside the rock stratum!" Yan Yangtian shouted in the communication channel.

Li Yao also felt a very familiar wave behind the rock stratum which was as smooth as a mirror.

It was itself a very odd phenomenon that such a flawless rock stratum should appear in a canyon in the deep ocean.

"Hurry and blow up this rock stratum! We cannot give up hope, no matter how slim it is!"

Gritting his teeth, Li Yao summoned Floating Vulcan Machine Guns and crystal cannons. Almost ten lines of burning bullets rained upon the rock stratum.

Deep purple flames surged out of Ding Lingdang's body, which pushed away seawater and hit the rock stratum.

Yan Yangtian, Ba Weiqi and Leng Ziming all exerted whatever was left of their spiritual energy and bombarded the rock stratum.

CRACK! CRACK!

The rock stratum was not thick. Very soon, cracks resembling spider nets were appearing on it, making it look like a dam that was going to collapse.

However, the rocks falling off above everyone's heads were more numerous and larger, too.

One of the rocks would've hit Yan Yangtian precisely if Ding Lingdang hadn't pulled her away in time.

"Our attack has accelerated the collapse of the crevice. According to my calculation, this undersea crevice is going to collapse and bury us completely within one minute!

"We have no other choice except to increase our firepower and dig out the metal object hiding inside the rock stratum!"

With rocks falling on their heads from above and more than ten demons lurking outside, Team Blue Bronze barraged with all their might. Ten seconds later, the thin rock stratum finally exploded. A lackluster silver brightness glittered in the darkness.

"This is—"

In front of everyone was a remnant of a crystal warship which was riddled with holes but not plagued by rust. Silver brightness was flowing all over its body.

The crystal warship was not very large. It was less than two hundred meters and streamlined. One could describe its style as 'unrestrained'. It gave the feeling that it came from an ancient painting drawn with ink in freestyle.

On the ragged shell of the warship was engraved with a Red Dragon Swallowing the Sun emblem, indicating that this was a crystal warship from the Star Ocean Imperium.

Maybe it had been left by the previous expedition team who explored Boneyard thousands of years ago.

Everyone was overjoyed with hope at first, but later, their hope turned into endless desperation while their hearts became heavier than ever.

They had found a crystal warship. But how could they enter it?

A crystal warship from the Star Ocean Imperium wouldn't be opened easily. Half a minute later, they would be buried forever, ten thousand meters below the surface of Boneyard together with the warship!

The only exception was Li Yao. His eyes were bulging, and his mouth was stretched wide, because he found it hard to acknowledge what was happening.

No wonder he had felt a familiar wave just now.

The crystal warship in front of his eyes, despite the crap-like appearance, was exactly the same as his Neltharion.

Neltharion was a piece of training magical equipment from the Star Ocean Imperium which he had retrieved together with his Cosmos Ring.

He had speculated that the item was meant to train warship pilots.

Over the past year, he had been training with Neltharion all the time and learnt the basic driving skills. He was not familiar with every detail of the warship yet, but he could fly it without much trouble.

As for the operation pattern, internal structure, weapon system… He had learnt a thing or two about them, too.

If the training magical equipment that was Neltharion corresponded to the very crystal warship in front of his eyes, it meant…

"Don't give up yet! There's still hope!

"Lingdang, help me block the rocks. Give me… thirty seconds!"

Li Yao turned into a streak of blackness and dashed at the crystal warship. He twisted and dodged countless raging rocks like a loach. Stomping on a giant stone, he accelerated again and landed on the shell of the crystal warship.

Behind him, Ding Lingdang grunted. Thousands of shackles seemed to be broken at the same time, as she entered the seed explosion state!

"BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!"

One, two, three… Seven dragons of flame in different colors roared and rushed out of her body. They circled her and chased each other. All the falling rocks coming close were blown to pieces immediately!

Li Yao's speed was extremely high, but his mind was more tranquil than ever. His eyes turned into the most precise crystal cameras. Stable, effective, and utterly devoid of feelings.

He had dashed to the back of the remnant crystal warship.

He was well aware of Neltharion's complicated structure. There were four doors for the crew and six projection platforms for crystal suits, but they were all heavily protected without the slightest gap. It would be impossible to open them without the pertinent spiritual passwords.

Besides, these entrances were all controlled by rune arrays. It was doubtful that the rune arrays were still functional after thousands of years of deterioration.

However, on the left side of the end of the warship, there was an entrance for maintenance staff that could be opened from the outside, so that it would be easier for the staff to get their job done.

The most exciting point about the entrance was that it was controlled by complicated mechanical structure. Since the crystal warship had been forged by more than five thousand kinds of different alloys, and the silver seawater seemed not very corrosive, it could still be working!

Soon, Li Yao found the maintenance entrance.

Beside the round control panel, there were seven holes in different shapes. The panel could only be opened by inserting seven different tools together at the same time.

A silver metal ball appeared in Li Yao's right hand, which flowed slowly like glue, crawled into the seven holes and coagulated at his telepathic thought.

"CRACK!"

The control panel was opened, revealing a sophisticated, spider-net like mechanical structure.

Li Yao's brain was functioning fast. The silver metal ball inside his palm turned into four different tools, while he handled the delicate mechanical structure quickly.

Just like a pianist who was fully focused on the instrument in front of him, Li Yao dwelled in his world, forgetting that he was in a cave that was about to collapse.

In the communication channel, Ding Lingdang's breathing was becoming heavier and heavier. Yet, she didn't urge him at all, because she totally believed in Li Yao, and if Li Yao said he needed thirty seconds, he would definitely give everyone a miracle thirty seconds later!

24 seconds... 25 seconds...

"BOOM!"

The flame dragons surrounding Ding Lingdang had almost lost all color. But they were as stubborn as their master; they roared out and smashed incoming rocks time and time again.

However, the overwhelming storm of rocks was beyond the capability of any human being. Her actions were slower and slower. Countless smaller rocks escaped the hunting and hit her body heavily.

28 seconds... 29 seconds...

"CRACK!"

Beside Li Yao, the seemingly intact shell suddenly glided open. A cabin door that could allow one person to come through at a time appeared and opened!

Inside the cabin door, there was an ivory brightness that stopped the seawater from flooding in!

"I made it! Come in now!"

Li Yao roared, but he didn't crawl into the cabin immediately. Instead, he stomped on the shell of the boat and rushed backwards to Ding Lingdang like a shooting arrow.

Ding Lingdang stayed in the seed explosion state for more than ten seconds. Her soul and spiritual energy were almost drained. She was merely carrying on with the last bit of perseverance inside her body.

Li Yao's arrival eased her. She collapsed in Li Yao's arms in great relief.

"Thirty seconds. Nailed it!"

Ding Lingdang wanted to laugh, but what came through the communication channel were chesty coughs. Li Yao could feel that her body was shaking even with the block of the thick crystal suits.

"Of course. You are a human-shaped tyrannosaur. What can those pebbles do to you?"

Li Yao smiled drily. He dragged Ding Lingdang toward the crystal warship. One rock after another bashed his back, but he bit his lips and didn't utter any sound.

The five of them entered into the maintenance channel, half rolling and half crawling. When Li Yao was shutting the cabin door, a giant rock weighing almost a hundred tons knocked the shell of the warship, raising such a loud yet dull noise that their eardrums were almost torn apart.

"BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!"

The world seemed to be swirling. The undersea crevice finally collapsed.

Team Blue Bronze had been locked into an iron coffin ten thousand meters underground.

…

Out of the crevice, in the bottomless trench, fourteen demons were cruising inside the pervading sea sand. But they couldn't sense the existence of any Cultivators.

"Smashed by billions of tons of rocks, the five Building Foundation Stage Cultivators are dead for sure!" One of the demons grinned hideously.

Yet, Wang Ji's face was gloomy. The voice that he gnashed through his teeth spread out clearly,

"Vulture Li Yao, such a way of death is too much of a bargain for you.

"My hatred won't be gone until I skin you, burn you, crush your bones and throw away your ashes!

"Alright. Let me get down to my business for now. I will look for you dead body later after I dig out the secret treasures left by Skeleton Dragon!"

Wang Ji waved his bone tail. The fourteen demons turned around at the same time toward the undersea town relics that belonged to Skeleton Dragon's tribe.

…

In the darkness, Ding Lingdang, Ba Weiqi, and Leng Ziming were over-exhausted after entering the seed explosion state. They were moaning in excruciating agony.

Li Yao took out three Flowing Brightness Grasses and three Heart Locking Flowers from his Cosmos Ring.

"Yan Zi, the three of them have run out of strength. Separate the Flowing Brightness Crystals from the roots of the Flowing Brightness Grasses, crumble them into powder, mix the No. 14 strengthening drug and the No. 21 recovery drug with a ratio of three to one, and then pour the power into the mixed drug with half a minute of stirring.

"Half will be taken orally, and half will be injected into their veins.

"As for the Heart Locking Flowers, squeeze out its sap and mix it with the No. 6 strengthening drug. Smear some of it on their temples and below their nose. The remaining part should be taken orally, too.

"The Flowing Brightness Crystal can help them recover their spiritual energy. The Heart Locking Flowers will prevent them from becoming deranged. You know the rest of the treating procedures.

"Don't take off your crystal suits right now. The air here is terrible and unsuitable for the wounded."

While he was talking, Li Yao crawled deeper into the maintenance duct.

"Wait, where are you going?"

The question was posed by Ding Lingdang and Yan Yangtian at the same time.

Li Yao's heart suddenly shrank. Ding Lingdang's voice was extremely frail due to her bad body conditions. The scared little girl in the city besieged by demon beasts seemed to be back.

He crawled back and groped for Ding Lingdang's hand. He held it tight and said, "Believe in me!

"I will be back soon.

"I'm going to find a way of survival for us, and a way to hell for the scumbags of the demon race."

While he was talking, he turned around again and crawled into the darkness, never to look back.

Li Yao put away all irrelevant thoughts. Translucent, complicated structure designs popped up inside his brain, which had all been learnt from his Neltharion.

He was going to the cockpit and control center of the warship.

Although he didn't know whether the crystal warship which had hibernated in the depths of Boneyard for thousands of years was functional or not, the fact that the seawater-resistance rune arrays on the cabin door were still working gave him a sliver of hope.

Even the chance was only 1%, he would not give up; he would make it happen with 10000% of his effort!

"Wang Ji…"

Li Yao's eyes were cold, his killing scent soaring!

Chapter 416: Spectral Cultivator from 7,000 Years Ago!

Chapter 416: Spectral Cultivator from 7,000 Years Ago!

At the end of the maintenance duct, Li Yao opened a cover below his body and jumped down.

The cabin was entirely dark, without the vaguest ray of light. But inside his brain, countless structure designs overlapped and constituted a complicated 3D map.

Li Yao's eyes were gleaming. He saw everything around him clearly as if his eyes were penetrative.

"If this crystal warship is indeed the training target of Neltharion, their internal structures shouldn't be very different. Maybe it has undergone modification, but key facilities such as the cockpit must still be in their original place.

"My current location… should be the engine compartment!"

Li Yao's spiritual waves rippled out in the air and touched every inch of the cabin wall. As he expected, he found a lot of magical equipment that could only be found in the engine compartment.

Like a silent cannonball, Li Yao rushed at his full speed in the darkness.

The cabin door which was driven by spiritual energy had been locked, but there was a mechanical device nearby for emergency. After ten seconds of trying, the cabin door squeaked and partly opened slowly.

"Shua!"

Three glimmering green lights suddenly jumped out in front of him. There seemed to be three invisible rays that pierced through his brain and his body and scanned everything inside.

Li Yao suddenly felt extremely terrified. Countless pieces of attack magical equipment seemed ready to fire upon him in the darkness.

The glimmering green lights blinked for a moment. Then a green glow as mild as water appeared on the walls, outlining a narrow and long path and showing him the way.

Li Yao was overjoyed and thought to himself, 'This must be the screening magical equipment of the crystal warship. It is now automatically opened to me after making sure that I'm a human being!

'It seems that the crystal warship is not entirely broken yet despite the shabby appearance. Many key components are still functional.

'Besides, the previous master of the crystal warship must've hoped that a human being could find the crystal warship someday. That's why he set the defense rune arrays to be fully friendly upon the detection of a human being before he left or passed away.

'If a demon snuck inside, it would've been killed already!'

Li Yao moved forward without any hesitation. Through the med bay, crew living area, cafeteria, arsenal, crystal chamber, and two training rooms, he finally arrived at the cockpit, the control center of the warship!

He didn't find any corpses on his way. There was not much debris or scraps, either. Somebody seemed to have cleaned everything up.

Chi!

The Red Dragon Swallowing the Sun emblem carved on the cabin door stretched out like a blossoming flower. The cabin door glided open quietly, unleashing an intense smell of metal that could only belong to the large-scale crystal processors.

Li Yao swallowed and tiptoed in lightly while holding his breath.

The surroundings of the cockpit were almost identical to the simulation of Neltharion when his telepathic thoughts crowded into it. The operation dashboard was right in front of him.

Suddenly, a "beep" sound came from the corner of the darkness. A strong wind was blowing at him!

Li Yao felt a shiver run down his spine. He retreated immediately and crouched, his right hand grabbing the handle of his Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber while activating the Flash Vibration Claw on his left hand at the same time.

In the darkness, two clusters of dim, dying redness were blinking nonstop. A hoarse and sluggish voice was uttered. It took almost ten seconds for a single word to be spoken. The same dull syllables were repeated.

"Trap… Trap… Trap… Trap… Trap…"

Li Yao finally made clear that it was a hunched metal puppet in front of him that looked like a deformed skeleton because of the huge loss of components. Many units had been exposed to the air and seriously rusted.

It had only one arm. Its legs were intact, but one of them was longer and the other shorter. It stumbled close while its only arm was trembling,

"Trap… Trap… Trap… Trap… Trap…"

Its crystal processor seemed to have been wrecked, with 99.9% of its computational ability lost. The word was the only thing that it could articulate.

While it was talking, it moved its sole remaining arm and dug into its own chest, as if it was trying to take something out of its chest.

Li Yao observed for a while and then exclaimed in bewilderment after a shiver.

He realized something unbelievable—that the object in front of him was not a metal puppet but a spectral Cultivator!

Although both of them relied on mechanical structures as their bodies, metal puppets were non-living creatures driven by crystal processors, while spectral Cultivators were Cultivators in a different life form. The latter were alive, and the former were not!

Their structures, as well as the metal materials that made up their bodies, was not exactly the same.

Li Yao could even sense a fading yet still flickering soul inside the incomplete metal skull, just like a candle which was burning up in the middle of a heavy storm.

"How could it be!

"The era of Star Ocean Imperium was more than seven thousand years ago.

"Even this crystal warship belonged to the last batch of imperial fleets after the Armageddon Rebellion, it was still six thousand years ago.

"No spectral Cultivator could live such a long time. What kind of formidable being was this Cultivator?"

CRACK! CRACK!

However formidable the spectral Cultivator had been when he was alive, his thinking ability had deteriorated after thousands of years. He was merely pulling the metal cover on his chest.

"Something seems to be buried inside his chest, and he is planning to give it to me!"

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao tried to extend his hand.

The spectral Cultivator didn't object; he pushed out his chest.

Li Yao found a gap on his chest and pressed it. A green line suddenly appeared and spread out into a square hollow, lifting up a jade chip inside the chest.

"Hu..."

An exhausted and yet fulfilled moan sounded in the metal throat of the spectral Cultivator. Just like a soldier who had accomplished his mission, he fell to the ground with the heavy burden on his shoulders relieved. The red glow from his eyes gradually dimmed and was entirely gone three seconds later.

The spectral Cultivator had perished.

Li Yao was stunned.

"The fire of life of the spectral Cultivator has no reason to burn for thousands of years. He should've died a long time ago, but he simply persisted with some sort of secret art to wait for the arrival of a human being and pass the jade chip on!"

An eternal life might not be a bliss.

Living for thousands of years inside a metal body in a lightless crystal warship buried by billions of tons of rocks ten thousand meters below the ground?

Li Yao was frightened just thinking of the idea.

Life was totally more miserable than death in such an environment!

"The senior spectral Cultivator endured the sufferings in the darkness for thousands of years in order to pass the jade chip on to a human being.

"What kind of things are recorded inside?

"He had lost all his memories. Even his self-awareness was gone. But he kept repeating 'trap'. What exactly is this trap and who is it targeting?"

Although he didn't know what had happened to the deceased spectral Cultivator, the guy's doings gave him a very strong sentimental feeling.

He laid the metal body of the spectral Cultivator in a corner, posed it properly, and paid his respect, before he finally got down to the jade chip.

Jade chips were universally applicable in the military of the Star Ocean Imperium. They were also one of the most solid artifacts. Therefore, many of them had been found in the Heaven's Origin Sector.

The jade chip scrap that Yuan Manqiu found, which contained the files about the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, was of the same type as the one in Li Yao's hand.

Therefore, although the interface of the jade chip wad different from the standard interface of the Star Glory Federation's jade chips, Li Yao managed to build up a small commutator with the materials inside his Cosmos Ring.

He inserted the jade chip to the commutator, and then connected the commutator to a port on the back of his helmet. The crystal processor immediately hummed and started working, but it was not until five minutes later that the scanning was completed.

Li Yao was quite surprised. The crystal processor of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had been modified multiple times by him with the most advanced components. It was even installed with a cooling system retrieved from an Occult Orb.

Although it was only the size of a fist, its computational ability was as good as many large-scale crystal processors.

But it had taken the crystal processor five minutes to scan the jade chip. The information stored inside the jade chip must be tremendous!

Finally, the scanning was over!

But his crystal processor reminded him that most of the files recorded in the jade chip had been saved in a very mysterious structure and were unavailable at this moment, and that only a small proportion of data and images could be read.

What appeared first on his light beam was a giant Red Dragon Swallowing the Sun emblem. It gradually faded away, replaced slowly by the information of the owner of the jade chip.

Li Yao finally knew that the owner of the jade chip was named Gao Xingce, who had been a Core Formation Stage Cultivator as well as the chief gunner of the crystal warship.

Also, the name of the crystal warship was 'Sparkle'!

What followed was Gao Xingce's personal combat and training journal.

Information streams flooded into Li Yao's brain one wave after another, telling a tear-triggering story of valiance and sacrifice that happened thousands of years ago, ten thousand meters below the surface of Boneyard.

"July 23, year 899 in the Star Ocean Calendar.

"We just finished clearing Phantom Moon Constellation. There are no organized demon troops in this area anymore. Only demon bandits are still running away.

"I'm told that we have secured many victories in the frontline, too. Three major fleets of the demon race had been annihilated. Our expedition army is marching toward 'Demons' Realm', the last base of the demon race. The Demon Beast Empire will be demolished in no time!"

Li Yao suddenly thought of something.

Year 899 in the Star Ocean Calendar was already toward the end of the Star Ocean Imperium. Later when 'Hundred-Million Lightyear Expedition' was about to succeed, the notorious event of 'Armageddon Rebellion' took place. The Blood God, supreme commander of the expedition army was corrupted by the extraterrestrial devils and turned into 'Mad Armageddon', a demonic Cultivator. The second war of the Cultivation world began soon after, which eventually led to the collapse of the Star Ocean Imperium.

No wonder the crystal warship had been buried in this place without being found by anyone.

It was most likely that, when the universe was caught in a chaotic civil war, the military of the Star Ocean Imperium had been too occupied to look for it.

"July 29, year 899 in the Star Ocean Calendar.

"Today, our captain has brought us a piece of good news. We're going to carry out a new mission and explore a planet named Boneyard. It is said that the demon race has been secretly active on the planet.

"Our target is to find out the truth and destroy the demons!

"Clearing Phantom Moon Constellation was too boring a task. I feel that my bones are getting rusty. It is said that the new mission will be extremely dangerous. How marvelous!"

Chapter 417: This Is a Trap!

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"Aug. 12, year 899 of the Star Ocean Calendar.

"Since this mission dictates that we enter into the depths of Boneyard, Sparkle has to receive tremendous modification in the maintenance base orbiting the planet of Hazy God. Stealth modules for underground engagement and strengthened shell against high temperature and high pressure are going to be added.

"But the most irritating part is that the Sky Dragon, the main gun of Sparkle, is going to be transformed into a super-large optical rock mincer, or a big drill made of mystic rays, if you will.

"Sparkle will dig into the underground with the drill of mystic rays that has been transformed from the main gun.

"Sparkle is the most advanced multipurpose assault warship and entails the possibility of endless modifications. Many warships of the same model have been modified into a mess before. I used to laugh at the comrades on those warships. Never did I expect that I would be a joke myself someday.

"Before, I was an awesome chief main gunner. With a full-strength strike from the Sky Dragon, I can blow a demon emperor into pieces if I'm lucky.

"But today, I have to learn how to maneuver a drill to make the warship wriggle in the underground like an earthworm. I would've rooted for staying in the Phantom Star Constellation if I had seen this coming.

"Aug. 15, year 899 in the Star Ocean Calendar.

"This mission is very urgent. We just finished the modifications and didn't even run a full test yet. But now we have performed a space jump and reached the gravity sphere of Boneyard.

"The great expedition has claimed the best refiners of the imperium. Those left behind are all rookies, who have modified Sparkle into a pile of garbage. The few underground stealth modules that they added are in serious conflict with the space jump system.

"Many crew members are suffering from the sequela of space jump. They are troubled by nausea and diarrhea. More serious patients are even mentally deranged.

"Thankfully, such a sequela is a common disease in a battlefield, and there are standard procedures to treat it. After staying in orbit for half a day, our combat ability has all been restored.

"According to our intelligence, the planet in front of us could be one of the residences of Skeleton Dragon, the top demon in the early years of the Great Dark Age thirty thousand years ago.

"It appears that, since the demon remnants have run into a dead end, they are of a mind to dig out treasures from their ancestor.

"But how can we allow them to do what they want?

"Aug. 16, year 899 in the Star Ocean Calendar.

"We encountered an unprecedented tsunami on Boneyard. A previously unseen terrifying spiritual beast almost a thousand meters long is living inside the ocean. It seems to be a hybrid of a crustacean and a mollusk. Even their huge tentacles are covered by thick armor.

"Our main gun has been transformed into a drill with zero firepower now. The attacks of the secondary cannons were merely scratching the beast.

"The tide out there was too furious. We only had limited members on board. The captain didn't want to release the crystal suits to fight the beast face to face. The big operation later might be jeopardized if several Exos were injured or killed.

"In the end, I figured out a way. The captain steered Sparkle toward the bastard, while I activated the drill of mystic rays the moment of the collision, which dug a giant hole more than fifty meters in diameter on the body of the bastard. Then we fired the secondary guns upon its internal organs. It was put down very quickly.

"Ha. The Sky Dragon is just as dominating as before even if it is now just a drill. Nice!

"We cut off samples of the body tissues of the giant sea beast for analysis. Its cell structure and the flowing route of the demonic energy are quite different from those of the demons nowadays, but similar to those of the ancient demons thirty thousand years ago.

"According to our analysis, it should be an instance of a demon species that Skeleton Dragon brought back to the planet thirty thousand years ago. When Skeleton Dragon perished, its wisdom declined, and it became a spiritual beast with nothing but survival instincts.

"If so, the likelihood that the residence of Skeleton Dragon exists on this planet has greatly increased.

"Aug. 17, year 899 in the Star Ocean Calendar.

"We have found a tremendous relic, in which a gargantuan corpse of a demon beast was bound to countless high pillars that almost reached the sky. It should be an ancient barrier. Perhaps it was the place where Skeleton Dragon's tribe tortured their enemy and traitors.

"Not far away from the relic, there is a great canyon leading to ten thousand meters below the ground. In order to save the spiritual energy, we flew Sparkle to the bottom of the canyon. Then we built a temporary platform on the crags and started digging down in a slope from there.

"The surface of Boneyard is sterile. But the underground world is unimaginably fertile. The spiritual lodes of the planet are mostly in the form of liquid. They formed undercurrents and even oceans in the underground, where countless exotic beasts and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures are flourishing.

"In the afternoon, we were engaged with a demon squad and we captured a fugitive after a brief battle.

"After hundreds of years of war, the demons nowadays are far less proud and ruthless than their compatriots living in the peak of the Demon Beast Empire. We elicited a lot of intelligence from their mouth without too much trouble.

"Our analysis is correct. They were the lucky dogs who got away from the battle in the Phantom Moon Constellation.

Discovering the residence inside Boneyard by accident, and because all the constellations nearby are stationed with nowhere to run to, they made up their minds to take a chance in this place.

"Aug. 18, year 899 in the Star Ocean Calendar.

"The demon remnants have almost lost all their fighting will. We crushed them very easily. Their last demonic warship was wrecked and sank down, too.

"We also discovered an extremely spacious underground world, and an undersea ocean that boasts limitless spiritual energy!

"The vastness of the underground world is beyond the limits of any tectonic structure. It should've been supported by some sort of ancient secret art.

"The world of Cultivation is indeed intriguing. So many secret arts and technologies from the ancient times are waiting to be excavated by us.

"I kind of like the feeling of driving a huge drill forward in the underground now.

"The den of Skeleton Dragon is in the center of the underground ocean. A vintage town is lying there. The giant cone-shaped building in the middle must be Skeleton Dragon's residence.

"We are voyaging toward it and ready to conduct the most thorough research.

"Aug. 19, year 899 in the Star Ocean Calendar.

"We are totally wrong! This is a trap! A lethal trap!

"Aug. 23, year 899 in the Star Ocean Calendar.

"We are doomed.

"The total damage of Sparkle has increased to 83%. Most of the key components have been worn-out in the fierce battles. Right now, it is no better than an empty shell.

"95% of the mainframe crystal processor has been damaged, 91% for the space jump system, and 93% for the interstellar communication system. 22 of the 24 main power rune arrays have exploded. We are now stranded on a seabed, utterly trapped in the depths of Boneyard.

"We can't even send a signal to the nearest base, let alone shattering the void to perform a space jump.

"Seven crew members have died. The survivors are all seriously wounded, including me. There's no way that we can escape by ourselves without the crystal warship.

"The captain, the chief mate, and the stargazer, three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, have all perished.

"Even if we manage to repair the steering system miraculously, no one will be able to fly it without three to six months of training in the 'Tiny Spiritual Ship'.

"The crystal processor is almost destroyed. We've lost the stargazer, too. There's no way that we can locate the star beacons precisely.

"If we repair the space jump system and carry out a space jump aimlessly, God knows where we will be teleported to.

"However, without the sacrifices of the three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, I'm afraid we would've been killed long ago, or come to an even more miserable ending.

"Of the survivors, I'm the highest in Cultivation and military rank. According to the rules of the imperial armed forces, I am the acting captain now.

"Thankfully, we made a deal with our base previously that we would communicate with each other every five days. If the base fails to receive our signal twice, new crystal warships will be deployed to search for us.

"The deal somehow makes me less nervous. I sent more men to repair Sparkle and reflected on our adventure.

"There's no doubt now that the so-called residence inside Boneyard is an out-and-out scam. This is not a residence of Skeleton Dragon, but… his tomb!

"No. This is the place of his resurrection, a home in which he has been sleeping for tens of thousands of years waiting to be woken up.

"Based on the intelligence we gathered and everything we've been through, the following is the whole story that I have inferred.

"Thirty thousand years ago, in the last years of the Great Dark Age, more than ten top elites of the demon race had fought against each other in order to unite and reign the sea of stars alone. Skeleton Dragon's tribe was among the losers. Skeleton Dragon himself must've been seriously injured and bordering on death.

"He did not wish to die just like that. Therefore, he placed himself into the mors putativa state with his secret art and treated himself with the abundant spiritual energy contained in the underground ocean slowly for tens of thousands of years.

"But it was a long time ago after all. A lot of files are missing, and we are not sure about the details of Skeleton Dragon.

"Maybe he can only be resurrected to revisit the sea of stars by possessing some intelligent creatures.

"Soul possession was a very popular technique in the ancient Cultivation world. Since Skeleton Demon was one of the top experts in that era, he must've been very familiar with the evil art.

"Anyways, he has been locked underground and is unable to break free with his own strength. So, he could only resort to foreign forces to crash the barrier.

"The demon remnants, and we the fools, have all been lured to this place on purpose!

"Although the demon remnants were cleaned up in time, we have fractured the barrier in our idiocy and freed Skeleton Dragon!"

Chapter 418: Underground Stories!

Chapter 418: Underground Stories!

"If the fearsome demon thirty thousand years ago returns to his peak state, it may eventually lead to dire consequences. Right now, more than seventy percent of the imperial armed forces are engaged in the Hundred-Million Lightyears Expedition. The troops left behind are all mediocre reserves.

"If Skeleton Dragon were to roam for a year and half in the dozens of constellations within the imperium, how much chaos and casualty will be caused? We don't even dare to think about it!

"Thankfully, the captain discovered the strange phenomenon inside the residence in time and launched deadly attacks with his all might half way through Skeleton Dragon's escape.

"The demon has been hibernating for thirty thousand years after all. His capability might be only 1% of what it was supposed to be. He was beaten up with serious wounds and bound by the barriers again.

"This time, it will take at least another ten thousand years before he could stir trouble again.

"But he won't have a second chance. The time when the rescue team comes is the time of his doom!

"Aug. 26, year 899 in the Star Ocean Calendar.

"We are now caught in the worst situation!

"The fierce battle between Sparkle and Skeleton Dragon might have disturbed the spiritual energy balance underground. An appalling undersea volcano eruption took place in the depths of the silver ocean.

"The rock stratum in the bottom of the ocean was torn apart. A super trench tens of thousands of meters deep that seems to be leading to the center of the planet has been created!

"Our Sparkle was stranded right beside the trench and was under the influence of the great undersea volcano eruption!

"Magma, swirls, earthquake, undercurrents... They are coming at us like thousands of ferocious animals!

"Magma thousands of degrees high mixed with all kinds of corrosive impurities surrounded Sparkle. Crazy spiritual waves and radiation pierced through the shell of the warship and went on a rampage inside the cabins and pathways!

"Most of the survivors were killed instantly. Only those who were above the high level of the Building Foundation Stage narrowly escaped death. But our capability hit rock bottom, too!

"My spiritual root and veins have been seriously wounded. The best I can do right now is to summon spiritual energy that befits the Cultivators in the beginning level of the Building Foundation Stage.

"But my conditions are the best of all the remaining five survivors.

"Sparkle has been seriously damaged in the undersea volcanic eruption, and we've lost almost all supplies and maintenance materials. It is buried in the deeper undersea rock stratums by the movement of magma and rocks right now.

"The silver lining is that we didn't fall into the trench directly. Otherwise, we would've been crushed long ago.

"The five of us are all seriously wounded, with no food or medication. I don't know how long we can persist.

"But we can't waste a single second, and we won't give up hope when it is still out there!

"In the imperial armed forces, Sparkle is a multipurpose quick exploration warship. Its designing purpose is to allow a tactical squad to explore an unfamiliar constellation. Therefore, although its firepower is not very impressive, its survival limits and self-recovery abilities are even better than those of many main force starships.

"In the shell of Sparkle are countless pieces of mustard-level maintainers that are only a thousandth the size of a grain. With enough spiritual energy, they can absorb the materials nearby and transform them into useful ingredients for maintenance automatically.

"Other than them, two automatic maintenance puppets are still functional.

"However, our spiritual energy has run dry. Blocked by the rock stratums, it is hard to absorb the necessary spiritual energy from the silver ocean. According to the current speed of repair, it will take at least a thousand years before Sparkle returns to the minimum usable state.

"We don't have too much time to bother about any of that. Setting Sparkle into automatic maintenance mode, we wait for the arrival of the rescue team patiently.

"Sep. 26, year 899 in the Star Ocean Calendar.

"Odd. It is just too odd! We've been trapped in the undersea rock stratums for a month, but there is no sign of the rescue teams at all. This is absolutely impossible!

"Unless the military bases in the few constellations around have been demolished at the same time, how could they forget their comrades on Boneyard?

"Is there something terrible happening outside?

"The thought is haunting every survivor like a wraith inside the bleak cabin.

"Over the past month, our physical injuries have been getting better, but due to the lack of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and source of spiritual energy, our Cultivation levels have failed to recover, if not dropping constantly.

"With our current capability, it is impossible for us to escape.

"During the last month, we have modified the only piece of probe magical equipment on Sparkle that is not too damaged into a large pinger. It can send out special spiritual waves to the outside world penetrating through the rock stratums. I hope someone outside can pick up the signal soon.

"Nov. 15, year 899 in the Star Ocean Calendar.

"I'm already dead.

"The undersea volcano erupted again. Maybe it was just an aftershock of the previous earthquake, but Sparkle was too ragged to resist the rampant spiritual waves at all.

"Although the shell was intact, the spiritual waves swept over like a storm. Not only did they completely wreck the mainframe crystal processor, all the remaining survivors were murdered, too.

"Of course, we were likely to die very soon even without the volcano eruption.

"We'd used up all the food one day earlier.

"As Cultivators, we can wield the strength hundreds of times larger than that of ordinary people, but we have to absorb hundreds of times more food and energy too.

"Without sufficient spiritual energy and food, we will retrograde into ordinary beings quickly, or even worse.

"After all, our brains, body tissues, and cells are used to running rapidly due to abundant spiritual energy. If the brakes are slammed down abruptly, it is very likely that they will collapse all of a sudden.

"Compared with starvation, being killed by a volcano eruption is clean and comfortable. I only hope that the volcano eruption can be even more furious and perhaps destroy Skeleton Dragon's undersea residence once and for all.

"But surprisingly, my fire of life didn't die out, even though every cell inside my body stopped functioning, and it turned into a weird, different form.

"I became a spectral Cultivator.

"It is not unusual that Cultivators turn into spectral Cultivators in a battlefield that is often packed with victims. There are ten puppets on Sparkle for spectral Cultivators in case some crew members die and turn into one.

"Luckily, although nine of the puppets were broken, the tenth one was still usable. Controlling my fire of life for a leap of faith, I was back to life again.

"I pondered the situation I was in, sitting in the darkness.

"It was unquestionable that some unexpected changes which involved a large number of troops had taken place in the outside world. That was why the military didn't send any starships over.

"Ghost is an extremely unstable form of life. Besides, the puppet body that I resided myself in had been damaged in the first place. Therefore, I can only complete the most basic movements, like walking, sitting, or lying. But there is no way that I can get out of Sparkle with this wretched body.

"What I can do is to collect the spiritual energy leaking through the gaps between the rocks and try to recover Sparkle with it. Also, I keep sending warnings to the outside world for the possible new explorers that have come to the underground ocean.

"I really hope that the mess outside can be cleaned up and somebody is sent to pick me up soon.

"Dec. 30, year 999 in the Star Ocean Calendar.

"A hundred years have passed.

"It is quite odd that, when I was trapped in an iron coffin ten thousand meters below the ground faced with a future of darkness, every second was as miserable as hell. I was almost mentally deranged several times and nearly killed myself.

"But when I reminisce about my past, I feel that time is flying and the past hundred years have gone in the blink of an eye.

"Since my only source of spiritual energy is the seawater from the silver ocean that leaks inside through the gaps between the rocks, and most of the little spiritual energy has to be used to supply the mustard-level maintainers, the leftovers for me are far from enough to drive the puppet body to do any activity too intense.

"Therefore, over the past hundred years, the one thing that I have done most was to meditate in a corner quietly.

"Out of pure boredom, I have contemplated and calculated a lot of things. Gunfighting skills was one of them.

"In the military, I was sort of a gunfighting expert among the Core Formation Stage Cultivators, otherwise I wouldn't have been chosen to serve as the chief gunner of Sparkle.

"However, I am only mediocre compared with the real gunfighting experts who were participating in the Hundred-Million Lightyears Expedition.

"In the past, I was never fully convinced and thought that they were just luckier than me.

"But over the hundred years, I have reflected on every battle that I was ever engaged in and every mission video of the experts that I ever watched billions of times. I have even calculated the trajectory of every bullet that was shot. The gap between them and me is all clear to me now.

"After billions of calculations, my gunfighting theories are getting more and more thorough and delicate. I can declare positively that even the gunfighting experts at the Nascent Soul Stage in the imperial armed forces may not have as deep an understanding about the art of gunfighting as I do.

"Because it is impossible for them to do nothing but to explore the mysteries of gunfighting wholeheartedly for a hundred years uninterruptedly.

"But what's the use of that? Theories are just theories. I don't have enough spiritual energy or a powerful body to put the theories into practice.

"Moreover, since the rescue team hasn't arrived after such a long time, I have come to a heartbreaking conclusion.

"A world-overturning event that involved countless constellations must've happened outside. It is even doubtful that the Star Ocean Imperium exists anymore.

"The idea made me lose all hope.

"I was preparing to end my own life and the infinite desperation tomorrow, on January 1 of year 1000 in the Star Ocean Calendar.

"But as a soldier, my last mission hasn't been completed yet.

"Skeleton Dragon is still hibernating outside. Maybe soon enough, he will wake up again and send temptations to the outside world.

"If new exploration teams come, I have to warn them!

"Therefore, I can't die for now, because I need to keep the normal functioning of Sparkle and the signal pinger, while hoping that the new exploration teams notice the odd spiritual waves undersea first instead of the residence of Skeleton Dragon.

"Then, I will tell them the truth and destroy Skeleton Dragon together with them!"

Chapter 419: What Is Dead May Never Die!

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"May 5, year 1121 in the Star Ocean Calendar.

"I've lived alone in the darkness for another hundred years.

"This time, my life is really coming to an end; the fire of life will fade out very soon.

"A spectral Cultivator as a life form is extremely fragile in the first place and is prone to the scourge of radiations and spiritual waves. It is not unusual for a spectral Cultivator to die abruptly without a good reason.

"I've already reached my limit after struggling to stay alive for more than two hundred years under the protection of the underground silver ocean.

"I'm not scare of death.

"After living by myself for more than two hundred years in complete darkness ten thousand meters below an uninhabited planet, even hell looks as bright and splendid as heaven for me.

"I'm wandering on the border of mental derangement every second, planning to end my own life.

"For years, I've been very, very, very jealous of the repair puppet.

"Because it will sleep forever as long as its rune arrays are turned off.

"But my fire of life can only stay calm for several hours, before it resumes restlessly dancing once again.

"Under the fury that was very close to mental derangement, I smashed the repair puppet into smithereens.

"Right now, the mustard-level maintainers are all there is to fix Sparkle, and I'm afraid it will take ten thousand years for the work to complete.

"After I pass away, who will inform the next explorers of the truth and stop them from opening the residence of Skeleton Dragon recklessly?

"Is there any way that I can keep my fire of life burning for ten thousand years together with Sparkle?

"May 10, year 1121 in the Star Ocean Calendar.

"Immortality is the hilarious pursuit of the idiotic, selfish ancient Cultivators thirty thousand years ago.

"For us the modern Cultivators, we believe in the sufficient burning of a short life. One can die peacefully at dusk if he has learnt the great Dao in the morning.

"But right now, I'm starting to chase an eternal life like those ludicrous ancient Cultivators once did.

"For five days, I've been pondering how I can live longer, until a moment ago something stuck me.

"As a Cultivator, my fire of life burns too intensely. It is impossible for my current soul power to support my fire of life to burn 100% for a couple of more years.

"But what if I keep it crackling slowly in 1%, or even 0.1% efficiency?

"In such cases, my remaining soul can provide enough fuel for it to burn for a long time.

"After all, it is only a message that I want to pass on. With 0.01% of my fire of life, and a tiny bit of computational ability, I will be able to achieve the purpose and accomplish my final mission, which doesn't even require my thinking ability or self-awareness!

"Feelings, memories, computational ability, thinking ability… They are all redundant. I can erase them all so that the consumption of my fire of life will be reduced to minimum.

"Yes, this is my choice. I'm going to destroy my own spiritual root and erase myself!

"May 20, year 1121 in the Star Ocean Calendar.

"I spent ten days taking care of everything on the warship. I switched Sparkle into the hibernation mode. The mustard-level maintainers are the only part of the warship that is functioning normally now.

"In the next thousands of years, it will absorb the spiritual energy leaked in through the gaps and turn the rocks into useful materials that can repair the damage to the warship, perhaps at the speed of a snail.

"In the end, I issued a command as the acting captain of the warship to the mainframe crystal processor whose repair progress has reached 1%. The first human Cultivator to enter Sparkle will be granted all permissions.

"Right now, I will summon my spiritual energy and prepare to expunge myself with my fire of life.

"I will completely obliterate my memories, thinking ability, and self-awareness, so that they will no longer consume the power of my soul.

"The first thing to be deleted are the memories related to Cultivation.

"Growing up in a shadowy, stinky gutter, adopted by an expert of the rebellion army and embarking on the path of Cultivation… Slaying a demon for the first time… Defection and destruction… Escape and counterattack… Everything will be erased once and for all!

"The memories and telepathic thoughts to be erased have been copied in advance to the jade chip. If someone gets it in the future, just consider it to be a special gift of mine.

"May 21, year 1121 in the Star Ocean Calendar.

"After an entire day of erasing yesterday, my computational ability has been suppressed to 70%. My mind is much slower than before. My head feels dizzy and I can't seem to recall anything. It also feels that somebody has stuck a lot of sticky stuff inside. Everything is a total mess.

"Oh, I almost forgot. I don't have a head at all.

"Today, I'm going to erase most of my memories, including those about the imperium and the military.

"More than two hundred years have passed. No one has visited Boneyard. Maybe the Star Ocean Imperium is really gone. But it still hurts so much to remove the memories about it as well as the pride as a human being.

"I was born in the Coiling Mountain Sector. My homeland was ruled by the demon race before I was 12. Soldiers of the rebellion army who stood against the tyranny were hiding everywhere like rats.

"There was a time when I hadn't seen the sun for a whole year.

"It was not until the Cultivators of the Star Ocean Imperium appeared and liberated the Coiling Mountain Sector that I learnt the power of the human civilization and the glory of mankind!

"After joining the imperial armed forces, I finally realized that human beings were not supposed to be rats living in the darkness. We are the best warriors in the entire universe. None shall stop us from marching forward!

"Maybe, the Star Ocean Imperium has perished. But I believe that the flames of the human civilization will dance forever! A thousand years, ten thousand years later, a second or a third Star Ocean Imperium is definitely going to arise!

"Let me cheer one last time as a Cultivator and a guardian of the human civilization.

"Long live humanity! Long live the human civilization!

"Neverber 36, year 11211 in the Star Ocean Calendar.

"compute ability and think ability loss forgets me a lot of things. A day has I spent write these words. I revised hundreds of times, but I still felt something was wrong.

"Memories and self-awareness are deleted basic. The only thing left consuming my power soul be my feelings."

What came next was no longer words, but a twisted image.

In a beautiful maple forest, gold leaves had covered the paths inside. A short, plain-looking officer and a plump woman in pure white nurse uniform were holding their hands and walking slowly.

The officer was holding a greenish orange in his other hand. Tossing it up and down, he and the woman talked and laughed and drew close to the camera.

Two lovely children, a boy and a girl, were following them. Their hands were covered in mud, indicating that they must've been playing in the forest for a while. They bounded toward their parents, shouting about something.

Too bad that it was only a picture without any sound, like a dreamy mummery.

Below the picture, words reappeared.

"Darling, Xiao Guo, Pang Pang, I love you… I love you… I wuv you… lvyou…"

The words that followed turned into a cluster of messy twisted lines and breakpoints.

In the chaotic graffiti, a new word gradually revealed and repeated itself.

"Trap… Trap… Trap… Trap… Trap… Trap… Trap… Trap…"

And the journal came to an end.

There were a lot of telepathic thoughts and other information, including the activation methods of the key components on Sparkle with their corresponding spiritual codes, the summary of this officer 'Gao Xingce's' life of war, and tremendous notes on gunfighting that he came up with during the long, dull two hundred years.

Yet, Li Yao didn't even glimpse at them, because he had been truly shocked by Gao Xingce's journal.

"So, the reason we could sense the weird metal reaction and spiritual waves was because Gao Xingce had been sending the signal out actively!

"In order to keep sending out the signal and the warning, Senior Gao Xingce chose to erase his own computational ability, thinking ability, and even all his feelings, turning himself into a 'living dead', just so that his flickering fire of life could burn a tiny bit longer, and a tiny bit longer…"

The broken puppet lying in the corner was thin and small. But in Li Yao's eyes, it was high and mighty like a god.

"The Star Ocean Imperium is truly the peak of the modern Cultivation civilization. Even an officer in the rear that didn't join the expedition army already boasted such resolution, courage, and perseverance. I wonder how marvelous the heroes of the expedition army were!

"They are the role models of the Cultivators in our time!"

Li Yao was greatly touched. He walked to Gao Xingce's body again and bowed three times respectfully.

The senior's actions had truly earned his admiration.

But the words in his journal got Li Yao thinking.

Before Gao Xingce erased himself, he had reset the mainframe crystal processor of Sparkle, which would be fully open to the next Cultivator to enter it.

Did that mean he would have the opportunity to pilot a real warship from the Star Ocean Imperium?

The thought stirred tides thousands of meters high in Li Yao's heart. A drop of sweat was appearing on the tip of his nose.

"That's right. Only after we repair Sparkle and make use of the giant drills of mystic rays can we expect to dig a hole to the surface.

"It's been almost ten thousand years since Sparkle was stranded here. Skeleton Dragon has hibernated for the same time. Maybe it has regained its destructive ability!

"The demon race discovered Boneyard not early, not late, but precisely at a time when Skeleton Dragon is most likely to be refreshed. Besides, neither us nor the demon exploration squads encountered too many obstacles on our way here, despite the unexpected accidents. Both parties located his residence effortlessly!"

"The smooth progress feels very odd.

"Maybe, this is all the scheme of Skeleton Dragon. Both us and the demons such as Wang Ji are chess pieces that have been led here by Skeleton Dragon!

"No. Senior Gao Xingce paid such a great price just to pass on the message and Sparkle to me. I have to honor his last wish and destroy Skeleton Dragon completely!"

Li Yao was well aware that the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector were the two worlds closest to Boneyard. Many creatures from the two worlds were wandering on Boneyard at this very moment. In one month, star shuttles from the Heaven's Origin Sector would show up.

If Skeleton Dragon truly freed himself from the barrier and was desperate to restore his strength, he would definitely go to the Heaven's Origin Sector!

The Heaven's Origin Sector would become a living hell. The outcome would be even more horrible than the invasion of the Blood Demon Sector!

"Sparkle is our only chance!"

Li Yao took a deep breath, his eyes brighter than ever. He spoke to the broken puppet in the corner softly.

"Senior Gao Xingce, although I'm not a citizen of the Star Ocean Imperium, I'm part of the human civilization. The Star Glory Federation has always deemed itself as a successor of the Star Ocean Imperium, too.

"Therefore, your glory is my glory, and your destiny is my destiny!

"If your soul is watching over me, then let's just fight side by side!"

While he was talking, he extended his spiritual thread into the hollowed chest of the broken puppet. Soon, he pulled out a cylinder that was as transparent as a crystal but with a spark dancing vigorously in the middle, emitting endless redness.

The mainframe crystal processor could be activated with this piece of magical equipment!

Chapter 420: New Captain, Li Yao of the Heaven's Origin

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Li Yao focused his full attention while he recalled the simulations inside Neltharion. He walked to the dashboard and groped below it for a panel carved with the runes. After transmitting a telepathic thought into it, Li Yao found the panel gliding open, revealing a round hollow.

Then, Li Yao inserted the red crystal-like cylinder into it.

Beep. Beep beep!

Weak noises of spiritual energy flowing around could be heard inside the dashboard. Although the lights were still off, Li Yao still sensed that a mysterious power was gradually waking up inside the mainframe crystal processor.

His fingertip suddenly ached. The end of the cylinder had released a scarlet mystic ray and pierced his fingertip, through which it absorbed a drop of his blood.

In the meantime, he felt that his brain was itching, as if a feather was sweeping past his every brain cell gently.

He knew that the mainframe crystal processor of Sparkle was identifying him and making sure that he was a human being.

A moment later, crimson mystic rays were shot out from the 108 holes on the dashboard. They formed scattered sparks in the midair. Then the sparks were connected together, constituting a large light beam that seemed to be both right in front of him and embedded on his retina and brain.

It was the operation menu of Sparkle, manifested in the way of Half-step Great Illusionary Land.

Li Yao had seen it countless times in the training sessions with Neltharion. He did not find it strange at all.

Shua!

The intimidating Red Dragon Swallowing the Sun appeared again, which immediately turned into thousands of lasers each representing an information stream and flooded into Li Yao's brain.

"Human being identified. Cultivator identified.

"Granting full permissions of Sparkle. Progress: 24%… 53%… 87%…"

"According to 'Wartime Regulations No. 17 of the Star Ocean Imperium', the military is entitled to enlist all human beings, especially Cultivators, to defend our civilization in emergencies. As per the rule, the ownership of Sparkle, 'Lone Star' level multipurpose exploration ship No. 24434552, is now temporarily transferred to you. You will be the acting captain of Sparkle, and you shall transfer the ownership of the warship to the regular army after the crisis is resolved!

"Please enter your identification information and your spiritual fingerprint!"

Li Yao hurriedly typed in his identification information with his telepathic thoughts, including several videos that recorded his battles against the demons, in order to prove his stance and strength.

However, Li Yao hesitated for a while about the field of 'Sect'.

In the Star Ocean Imperium, all the Cultivators belonged to the twenty Guilds of Provenance. There were few unaffiliated Cultivators.

But Li Yao did not belong to any sect at this moment. The Grand Desolate Institute was not a sect in a traditional sense. He was sort of an unaffiliated Cultivator.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao finally made up his mind and inputted the sect name as:

"Heaven's Origin, Li Yao!"

The redness surged. Streams of enormous information turned into thousands of swirls with a higher and higher speed.

"Identification information saved. Cell feature saved. Spiritual fingerprint locked."

"Li Yao of the Heaven's Origin, you are now the new captain of Sparkle. Please strive forward!"

Li Yao was biting his teeth so hard that they were squeaking. His blood was seething in exultation. He almost lost control and danced in the darkness.

Captain!

This was not a training model like Neltharion but an authentic warship from the Star Ocean Imperium and one of the greatest inventions in the history of mankind!

Li Yao wasn't bothered by the fact that he was merely the acting captain of the warship. According to the mainframe crystal processor, he did not have to hand out the ownership of the warship until he met a regular troop of the Star Ocean Imperium.

But the Star Ocean Imperium had been demolished for thousands of years. Where could he possibly run into a regular troop from it?

Therefore, this warship would be his for all eternity!

As a crazy fan of magical equipment, Li Yao felt that his entire body seemed to be melding with Sparkle into one!

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

The streams of information were still crowding into his brain, including the basic introductions to Sparkle.

For the warships of the Star Ocean Imperium, Sparkle was one of the smallest. But it played a very important role.

It was an instance of 'Lone Star' level multipurpose exploration warship, a model co-produced by 'Star Wolf Sect' and 'High Peak Pavilion', two of the Guilds of Provenance, with consideration of the usages of orbital assault warships, extreme exploration warships and even the science study starships.

It was designed with the exploration of unfamiliar constellations in mind. When necessary, it could also be deployed for missions behind enemy lines. Its performances in scouting, guerilla warfare, and bandit-clearing were quite satisfactory, too.

It boasted amazing self-recovery ability, survival-in-isolation ability, and research analysis ability, with a very low demand on the captain as well the crew. It could travel by itself in a foreign constellation for a long time while supplying itself with the spiritual energy and materials from other planets. Therefore, it was known as a 'Lone Star' level warship.

In short, this was a model born for adventures.

"I'm really a lucky dog!" Li Yao mumbled to himself. Sparkle was perhaps the best warship for him possible.

If it were a super warship tens of thousands of meters long, naturally, it would boast much more advanced technology and fierce firepower. But the difficult of steering would definitely soar, too. Chances were that it would require Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators or even Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators as captains to make it work normally, not to mention a large dock as a base to ensure the logistics and countless well-training Cultivators as back-up crew.

What good could such a warship do to him even if he had one?

But Sparkle was different. As a multipurpose exploration warship designed for adventures in foreign planets, it had taken into consideration the harshest, the most unfavorable environments. Not only was it ultra-solid and able to repair itself, the difficulty of steering was very low, too.

Li Yao was just a Cultivator at the Building Foundation Stage. But he was already able to get it moving after training with

Neltharion for a year and a half!

More importantly, for the exploration of unknown areas, Sparkle had been installed with a space jump system made up by 64 magical equipment units that far exceeded its level.

It was almost like a super teleportation array had been set up inside the warship.

With enough spiritual energy, it could shatter the void and cruise the sea of stars at any time!

"Does that mean I can jump to the center of the universe and explore other worlds with the help of Sparkle?"

Li Yao's interest was greatly aroused.

The Heaven's Origin Sector was at the periphery of the sea of stars. It was a world that was relatively bleak and barren. The strongest Cultivators were merely at the Nascent Soul Stage. The Cultivation civilization here was still underdeveloped.

In the center of the cosmos, billions of stars were burning furiously, constituting a surging nebula of stars in which countless worlds with abundant spiritual energy and resources existed.

These worlds were the inland and the most prosperous parts of the Star Ocean Imperium and the Demon Beast Empire.

Although many worlds had been bulldozed by protracted warfare over thousands of years, the remaining worlds must have much more advanced Cultivation civilizations than the Heaven's Origin Sector had right now, with much more powerful magical equipment and Cultivation arts...

If he could reach those worlds and retrieve several treasures, the scumbags of the Blood Demon Sector would certainly be cleared in no time after he returned to the Heaven's Origin Sector.

Li Yao was in delirium. He envisioned coming back from the center of the cosmos together with an invincible interstellar fleet, leading countless top experts in supreme crystal suits, and crushing the Blood Demon Sector brutally.

Shaking his head, Li Yao bit the tip of his tongue and kicked away the alluring idea.

The picture was immaculate, if not imaginary.

Li Yao did not have a star map, or a stargazer on board, which meant he couldn't locate any star beacons. Not to mention that the space jump system had been completely wrecked. Where could he possibly jump to?

The universe was a large place, 99.99% of which was endless void and darkness.

Of thousands of the constellations that had been discovered, few had enough spiritual energy and materials that were mandatory for the survival of life and the training of Cultivators.

Most of the space in the universe was occupied by dangerous radiation, stardust storms, and spiritual energy turbulences. The safe routes were limited.

Also, many other worlds were still reigned by demons, demonic Cultivators, and other species in the sea of stars.

A reckless space jump without a star map was like voyaging through a surging, perilous ocean on a sampan without a compass or experienced sailors.

Those who tried to find an island where there was food and water without a compass on a boundless ocean were not adventurous but suicidal!

"It appears that I'll have to figure out a way to drag it back to the Heaven's Origin Sector."

"Although Sparkle is not a planetary weapon, the magical equipment and the technology that it carries are very powerful, too. If they can be fully analyzed, our trip to Boneyard won't have been a waste of time.

Li Yao sighed and held back the desire to march into the depths of the sea of stars.

"First of all, I need to overcome the crisis at hand.

"Let me examine the status of Sparkle first!"

One of Li Yao's telepathic thoughts was extended to the mainframe crystal processor, which analyzed and enhanced it to every corner of Sparkle, testing all the units available.

It was a very mysterious feeling, similar to the feeling when he put on a crystal suit for the first time.

He was added with countless extra organs, and he seemed to have become Sparkle itself. He was caught in a special 'inward-looking' state. Endless information was pouring down.

"The situation is bad.

"The spiritual energy leaking through the rock stratum is too weak, resulting to the slow repair progress of the mustard-level maintainers. The warship hasn't been fully fixed although thousands of years have passed.

"The drill of mystic rays is mostly fixed up; the power rune arrays are restored by 29%; the space jump system, 55%, only enough for one or two jumps; as for the weapon system, only a secondary cannon is ready to use."

The ecstasy of owning a warship was gone. Li Yao frowned.

The damage that Sparkle had suffered was beyond his expectations. After self-recovering for thousands of years, it was still barely functional with obvious deficiencies.

"Spiritual energy. Spiritual energy. All is because of lack of spiritual energy.

"Both the drill of mystic rays and Sparkle itself require a huge amount of spiritual energy even if they are to be triggered at the minimum level.

"Without spiritual energy, we will still be trapped in this place despite the marvelous vehicle!"

Chapter 421: Sparkle, Awakened!

Chapter 421: Sparkle, Awakened!

Team Blue Bronze had planned to stay for one month on Boneyard, or even three to five months should the mission demand. Therefore, they'd all carried a lot of crystals inside their Cosmos Rings.

But they were far from enough to provide impetus for a warship from the Star Ocean Imperium, let alone the drill of mystic rays, the cannons, and the space jump system.

Li Yao thought hard for a long time. Then he suddenly realized something and bumped his fists in joy.

Of course! There were the Flowing Brightness Crystals inside his Cosmos Ring!

The marrow crystals that came into being after billions of years of high temperature and high pressure in the underground were captured by the roots of the Flowing Brightness Grasses, and through esoteric chemical reactions, such super marrow crystals which contained enormous spiritual energy were born!

Even in the notes of the predecessors of the Hundred Smelting Clan, Flowing Brightness Crystals had been treated with great importance and deemed as one of the ultimate treasures.

"As a multipurpose exploration warship, Sparkle must have a very adaptive crystal reactor which can absorb crystals of various kinds as its energy source. Also, Flowing Brightness Crystals are extremely condensed and stable with barely any impurities. Even a human body can absorb it directly, so a crystal reactor should be fine!

"Yes, the Flowing Brightness Crystals shall be the source of spiritual energy!"

Although Flowing Brightness Crystals were invaluable items in the Heaven's Origin Sector, Li Yao had made up his mind that he wouldn't hesitate to pour all the Flowing Brightness Crystals he had found into the warship if it was a must to survive and to kill Skeleton Dragon.

"Haha. Skeleton Dragon has fallen victim to his own scheme this time," sneered Li Yao.

According to his estimation, the abundant Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures in the first underground world they saw should be part of the evil plan of Skeleton Dragon, who had somehow spread a bit of his strength and manipulated the underground creatures to modify the environment into one that was more favorable for the invaluable treasures.

The purpose of the plan was simple: to lure the explorers deeper underground.

The explorers would naturally conclude from the fact that there were so many treasures in the periphery that more precious Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures must be buried in Skeleton Dragon's residence in the depths of the endless underground ocean.

In such a way, the explorers would be too greedy to notice the anomalies on their way forward, until they opened Skeleton Dragon's residence in the end!

But right now, Li Yao had received Gao Xingce's warning. He could use the Flowing Brightness Crystals, the bait of Skeleton Dragon, to destroy the small fries such as Wang Ji and the unparalleled deadly beast that was Skeleton Dragon himself!

Li Yao extended his telepathic thoughts through the crystal wires, toward the engine compartment in the rear of Sparkle, and into the main crystal reactor.

The crystal reactor on a warship was much larger than that used in a crystal suit. Its structure was hundreds of times more complicated, too. Li Yao's telepathic thought wandered inside the delicately-made crystal reactor and studied its design meticulously.

As he expected, although the efficiency of the crystal reactor was not very impressive, it could accept spiritual energy from extensive sources. Four magical equipment units inside of it could automatically refine the raw crystals with more than 70% of impurities before they were transformed into spiritual energy; super marrow crystals such as Flowing Brightness Crystals would definitely work well enough.

The crystal reactor was the heart of a warship. It was the most heavily protected component. It had suffered the least damage from the fierce battles and was the first item that the mustard-level maintainers repaired.

After thousands of years of maintenance, it was almost brand new. 85% of it had been fully fixed, guaranteeing normal functions.

"Excellent. With a few Flowing Brightness Crystals, the crystal reactor will be able to generate sufficient spiritual energy to wake up Sparkle and improve the speed of the mustard-level maintainers by hundreds of times.

"Many simple components can even be manually repaired by me. In a couple of days, Sparkle will be able to voyage again!"

While thinking to himself, Li Yao scanned the weapon system of Sparkle with his telepathic thought.

The main gun of Sparkle had been modified into a drill of mystic rays. All the secondary cannons and air defense cannons were too seriously damaged in the fierce battles thousands of years ago to be renewed. After such a long time, only an air defense cannon was close to completion.

Li Yao laughed out aloud the moment he saw the holograph of the air defense cannon.

The air defense cannon, named 'Rogue Meteorite', had an axis surrounded by eight cylindrical crystal rails. At first glance, it was a Six-barreled Vulcan Machine Gun enlarged dozens of times. The trigger and manipulation methods were very similar, too.

"This is a weapon that is destined for me!"

Li Yao's blood was boiling into scorching steam surging out from his nostrils.

His hands were shivering, as he couldn't wait to control the 'Rogue Meteorite' in person!

For him, an air defense cannon was a weapon even better than the main gun.

The main gun of the warship was designed to deal with the hostile warships, star fortresses, and orbital defense. Its speed of reloading was slow, its spiritual energy consumption extremely high, and it had a high demanding on the user.

Gao Xingce was a Core Formation Stage Cultivator. It was his qualification as the chief gunner of Sparkle to wield the Sky Dragon, the main gun.

On the other hand, air defense cannons targeted the hostile experts who were approaching the warship. It had a high shooting frequency, with remarkable precision and a low requirement for the expertise of the user. Building Foundation Stage Cultivators were more than capable for the task.

What Li Yao was going to deal with were the demons such as Wang Ji. Air defense cannons would serve the purpose better than the main gun.

"The Rogue Meteorite will consume the spiritual energy very quickly. Let me deeply modify it so that it can directly utilize the Flowing Brightness Crystals as a source of spiritual energy. One attack will be enough to blow the biochemical beasts together with the demons inside into smithereens!"

Other than the Rogue Meteorite, there were no other usable weapons on board. Most of them had been dismantled into maintenance materials.

In a corner of the arsenal, however, Li Yao found a metal statue that had been sealed by barriers and protected carefully.

"This is… a whole set of strengthening plug-ins, the Ares Extension!" Li Yao exclaimed in disbelief.

The sea of stars was an unpredictable place. The conditions of many worlds were the opposite of each other. A crystal suit wouldn't be applicable for all battlefields.

Therefore, it was not unusual for a crystal suit to be added with a lot of strengthening plug-ins before it was deployed to a battlefield.

For example, before Team Blue Bronze dived into the silver ocean, Li Yao had installed undersea combat plug-ins that resembled fins to all the crystal suits in the team.

Some of the strengthening plug-ins had been manufactured as sets, with a lot of powerful yet high-consumption rune arrays which would also impose heavy blast upon the materials and the human body.

The activation of the rune arrays could improve one's combat ability instantly, but it would also result in the serious erosion of the materials and the immense backfire to the body and soul of the Exo. Therefore, it was not suitable to carve the rune arrays on a crystal suit.

Such strengthening plug-ins manufactured as sets were like an intensified shell covering the crystal suit. Since erosion was no longer an issue, all kinds of crazy, detrimental rune arrays could be carved on it as far as one's imagination went.

The strengthening plug-ins produced as set were known as 'Ares Extensions'.

Ares Extensions were the top confidential magical equipment of the Star Ocean Imperium. Since they would become total loss after being used for once, the Heaven's Origin Sector had never discovered any of them before, except for some scraps.

Even Li Yao had only read files about them before.

Right now, a legendary Ares Extension was standing right in front of him. Li Yao's eyes were beaming with joy, his heart pounding.

"Rogue Meteorite, plus an Ares Extension. I'm definitely going to have a nice talk with the scumbags of the demon race such as Wang Ji!"

Li Yao scanned Sparkle from head to tail again. Then he jumped up and ran off to the engine compartment at the rear of the warship.

In the engine compartment, Li Yao retrieved ten Flowing Brightness Grasses from his Cosmos Ring. His hands were moving so fast that they turned into a cluster of grey mist, while he sorted out the thousands of roots tangling the Flowing Brightness Crystals and separated them.

The roots were like the veins of the Flowing Brightness Crystals. They couldn't be torn off by force or the quality of the Flowing Brightness Crystals would be undermined.

Ten minutes later, pure round crystals that looked like pearls were rolling inside his palm. The intriguing aura was flowing around him like water, putting his mind more at ease than ever. Two brooks were running through his palm into his body and circulated slowly among his internal organs.

A moment later, Li Yao was wreathed in a small cloud cluster. Brilliance was being emitted from the center of the cloud cluster.

"No wonder it is called Flowing Brightness Crystals. The brilliance it unleashed is in the liquid state like water. The

Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures in the Cultivation world are truly unbelievable!

"Phew. There are bound to be even more exotic and entertaining Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures in the center of the universe where there are the most shining stars. It's a shame that I don't have an opportunity to go there this time.

"If I can dig out a detailed star map in the future, I'm definitely going to explore the depths of the sea of stars!"

While he was thinking, Li Yao tossed the Flowing Brightness Crystals into the crystal reactor and set the operation pattern of the crystal reactor on the mainframe crystal processor with his telepathic thoughts remotely.

At his command, spiritual energy surged out, and the crystal reactor was successfully activated!

Hum!

Centered at the crystal reactor, rounds of scarlet brightness rippled out and evolved into a raging sea. In the blink of an eye, it had turned into an unstoppable, boundless ocean!

Countless runes were illuminated one by one. Virtual runes enveloped in gold, octagonal brightness appeared in midair and surrounded Li Yao, dancing to the brisk sounds of metal.

The crystal reactor was like a ferocious animal which had been starved for thousands of years. It was working at the highest efficiency and gulped the Flowing Brightness Crystals hungrily. They were transformed into the purest spiritual energy by countless rune arrays, which was then transmitted to every corner of Sparkle through the spiritual energy tubes.

Innumerable pieces of magical equipment were woken up simultaneously. Their hums didn't die down for quite a long time.

Outside, on the smooth shell of Sparkle, thousands of gold lines suddenly popped up. They connected and extended, and very soon, the entire body of the warship was caught in a net of gold brightness.

Then, the shell of the warship split and stood up, like a dragon whose scales had gone erect. Brutality and bloodthirstiness were added to the originally meek-looking warship!

The information flooding into Li Yao's brain was ten times as much as before. He involuntarily grunted even though he had been training with Neltharion for a long time.

Inside his brain, the lackluster holograph of Sparkle suddenly bounced, before it was lit from the back to the front gradually, until it was bathing in splendid radiance in the end.

Sparkle had been fully awakened!

Chapter 422: You Can Even Sail a Starship?

Chapter 422: You Can Even Sail a Starship?

Inside the maintenance duct, Ding Lingdang and the other two wounded teammates were sitting cross-legged. A water-like mist of brightness flowed slowly from their ears, eyes, nostrils, and mouths and surrounded their bodies at a stable speed, until in the end, it penetrated into their bodies again through the pores, nourished their internal organs, and reached the skull again, finishing the entire circulation.

They had all absorbed a lot of Flowing Brightness Crystals. With the immense spiritual energy stored inside, their injuries were finally suppressed.

Right then, the warship shivered, and they were suddenly enveloped in brightness. Ivory lights on the walls of the maintenance duct were turned on, illuminating the previously dark duct.

"You can get down now."

Li Yao's calm voice came through the communication channel, while a map of the maintenance duct was sent to their crystal processors.

…

"What is going on exactly? Is this a warship from the Star Ocean Imperium?"

Standing in the middle of the engine compartment, the four of them observed their surroundings for a long time and finally realized something.

"Correct."

Li Yao smiled. "This multipurpose exploration warship is named 'Sparkle'. It's our salvation today!"

But 'Dummy' Ba Weiqi shook his head and said worriedly, "Not necessarily. The skills required to steer a starship can be very complicated, and they are by no means readily learnable. The starship is to us what a shuttle is to the primitive barbarians. We are equally unintelligent in this regard.

"Vulture, you've been in Occult Orbs Fellowship for too short a time to know this.

"Before, Occult Orbs Fellowship has excavated a lot of magical equipment, armed shuttles, and even remnants of small starships of the Star Ocean Imperium.

"However, most of the items were so delicate that it took the experts and researchers several years to study them before the mechanism was grasped, and it took another several years to learn how to activate and manipulate them.

"Even though this starship is intact, where can we find a qualified pilot to maneuver it?

"I'm afraid nobody in the entire Heaven's Origin Sector is able to do that. Even the Core Formation Stage Cultivators and the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators can't do anything about it!

"Now that we are trapped in this place, it's barely possible to get out even though we are lucky enough not to have been squashed by the giant rocks."

"True that!"

Leng Ziming and Yan Yangtian both nodded and sighed.

They were all experienced Orb Patrollers and had excavated countless kinds of magical equipment. They knew better than anyone else the difficulty of controlling a piece of magical equipment from the Star Ocean Imperium.

But Ding Lingdang was still staring at Li Yao in delight.

For some reason, she saw very strong confidence on Li Yao's face.

Li Yao scratched his hair and said casually, "That is not going to be a problem. I've spent a whole year studying how to maneuver starships of this particular model."

"What?!"

The three of them who were sighing gloomily were all dumbfounded as if they'd been hit by lightning. They gazed at Li Yao in such a strange way that he seemed to be a demon beast with three heads and six arms instead of a human being.

Spending an entire year studying how to maneuver a starship?

That couldn't be right!

Controlling a starship was not controlling a flying sword. Even if he wanted to learn it, who would teach him that, and how would he train himself?

Besides, who would be so foolish as to study such a powerful yet utterly useless skill?

What had you been doing before you join Occult Orbs Fellowship, Vulture Li Yao?

Staring at Li Yao for a long time, they turned their suspicious and surprised eyes to Ding Lingdang.

Hey, what was the background of your boyfriend? Why was he able to steer a starship from the Star Ocean Imperium? It was just unbelievable!

Ding Lingdang took a breath and said with a smile, "Don't look at me. We never poked around in regard to each other's Cultivation. I don't know how many skills he has, either.

"However, even if he told me that he could manipulate a piece of stellar magical equipment, I would believe him without the slightest doubt.

"Because that's what my man, Vulture Li Yao, does!"

Everyone was rendered speechless. But very soon, they were excited again.

Correct. It didn't matter how Li Yao grasped such a skill. What mattered was that they had hope now!

Led by Li Yao, the five of them went to the cockpit.

On the way, Li Yao told them of Gao Xingce's last words and his theories about the current situation.

It was not until then that everyone learnt that such a scandalous scheme was brewing in Boneyard and that a vexing struggle had been going on in the silver ocean ten thousand meters below the ground for thousands of years.

"Senior Gao Xingce was indeed a role model of all Cultivators. From his doings, I understand why the Star Ocean Imperium could overthrow the demon race's thirty-thousand-year reign within a thousand years and become the dominators of the sea of stars."

Inside the cockpit, Ding Lingdang, Ba Weiqi, Leng Ziming, and Yan Yangtian were all greatly moved. They bowed to Gao Xing's body three times in respect.

"If that is the case, something that has been haunting me is solved now."

Leng Ziming observed calmly, "Since we landed on Boneyard, I've always been ill at ease and felt that things were going too well.

"Hardly had we reached the underground when we discovered so many Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. Also, Skeleton Dragon's residence was not protected by any traps or barriers. Even Cultivators at the Refinement Stage wouldn't find it troublesome at all to get inside, let alone us. It did not look like the base of an ancient deadly demon at all, did it?

"Skeleton Dragon has lured us to this place on purpose just so that we can break the barrier and let him loose!

"Not good!

"The demon exploration squad is still out there. They are definitely going to break the barrier at any cost!

"We have to get out of here and stop them as soon as possible!

"Vulture, how long will it take for Sparkle to be fully activated!"

Li Yao's telepathic thoughts had been docked to the mainframe crystal processor of Sparkle. A huge amount of data and graphs were flooding into his brain every second.

Li Yao brought his computational ability to maximum. His eyeballs were twitching violently, his face flushed, while steam was popping up nonstop from his messy hair.

Breathing heavily for a moment, he replied, "We need to repair at least ten groups of power rune arrays and four groups of anti-gravity rune arrays in order to carry out operations in the lowest standard. Other than that, the drill of mystic rays has to be further maintained to dig through the rock stratum burying us. The Rogue Meteorite has to be modified and strengthened, too. We won't be able to fight the demons without a proper weapon.

"Moreover, our crystal suits are mostly damaged right now. We have to spare some time to fix them.

"All things considered, it will take at least 65 hours and 48 minutes!"

Leng Ziming frowned.

"65 hours. That's almost three days. It's too long. There will be many new changes during the time!"

Yan Yangtian commented, "There indeed will be. But three days is not entirely unacceptable. Don't forget that two other Star Teams are still travelling outside, including Team Thunder Soul which has the highest combat ability of all!

"If I were to walk in the demon's shoes, I would certainly not risk opening Skeleton Dragon's residence when the Star Teams are not cleared up yet.

"By common sense, a lot of traps and barriers must be installed inside the residence of the ancient deadly demon. Chances are that one has to pay a bloody price in order to retrieve the secret treasures stored inside. There will be a lot of casualties.

"If I were to open the residence when my enemy had not been annihilated, it's very likely that my enemy would claim the fruits when my team suffered setbacks. Why would the selfish demons do something stupid like this?

"Therefore, I estimate that the demons will explore the undersea town and clean up the periphery first while setting up tons of pitfalls, waiting for the Star Teams to step in. They will not open the residence until all the threats are removed!

"In three days, we will still have an opportunity!"

Li Yao said, "I agree with you. Besides, the three of you have not recovered from your injuries yet. We won't be able to do anything even if we rush out right now. It's better that you treat your wounds first for three days. I wonder, how are you doing right now?"

"The three of us activated our spiritual seeds by force. Although we unleashed the strength of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, our bodies were also seriously wounded and are still extremely weak right now.

"But thankfully, none of us were mentally deranged. Also, after the blast of the spiritual seeds, our veins and internal organs have been greatly widened. Now that we are taking the Flowing Brightness Crystals as nourishments, our Cultivation will definitely soar after we are recovered!

"A phoenix does not die but rises from ashes again. As long as Team Blue Bronze can make it to the end, I'm confident that we will all enter into the Core Formation Stage in ten, or even five, years!

"However, we are only certain that we can try our best to return to the Building Foundation Stage within three days. It's impossible for us to resume our peak capability," said Ding Lingdang.

In the seed explosion state, the potential of a Cultivator was triggered infinitely. The immense strength that was levels beyond their own was often unbearable for their body. The side effects were inevitable.

Ding Lingdang and her teammates were just weakened and in the middle of a temporary capability decline. Neither were they mentally deranged nor did they suffer irreversible internal injuries. They were already unbelievably lucky.

It would be too harsh to ask them to return to the peak state within several days.

"Alright. If so, the Ares Extension and the Rogue Meteorite will be in my custody. You will try to Cultivate for the time being and restore your capability as much as possible.

"Three days later, we shall avenge our captain!"

…

65 hours to let the starship that had hibernated for thousands of years bare its fangs again!

The intense maintenance work was begun!

In order to save time, Li Yao fully scanned Sparkle, dismantled most of the magical equipment and components that were not of use at this moment, and used them to fill the places in desperate need of repairing with the help of the mustard-level maintainers.

After all, he didn't need Sparkle to sail for ten thousand years.

He only required it to burst out the most dazzling brilliance one time, three days later.

His attitude toward the Rogue Meteorite was the same.

There were some twenty other cannons large and small on board. Although they were wrecked, some of their components were still functional. Li Yao tore them all down and added them to the Rogue Meteorite after modifying and upgrading within the maintenance cabin on Sparkle.

The air defense cannon was not very advanced. The technology it employed was essentially the same as what the crystal cannons of the Heaven's Origin Sector had been using, only much more precise and delicate.

Li Yao did not have any requirements as to longevity or stability. He just ensured that the cannon was good enough to survive one battle. Therefore, many parts of the cannon were completely overlooked when he was modifying it insanely. He even forced the weapon to work by utilizing the ancient refining methods of the Hundred Smelting Clan forty thousand years ago.

After a day of modification, a bizarre-shaped Six-barreled Revolving Crystal Cannon, added with countless accessories and tangled in hundreds of thick crystal wires, which looked like a ferocious animal whose arteries were bulging, was born!

Chapter 423: Vulture Unchained!

Chapter 423: Vulture Unchained!

This Rogue Meteorite was not particularly special. The only thing unusual about it was that its crystal barrels and activation arrays had been strengthened with the Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining technique, because it was probably the sole crystal cannon in the entire universe that took Flowing Brightness Crystals as its spiritual energy source.

Flowing Brightness Crystal, the invaluable super marrow crystal that other Cultivators would be crazy about, became one-time ammunition.

Firing a cannon with Flowing Brightness Crystals was like slapping someone with cash. It was simple, vulgar, and completely irrational!

"If the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the Heaven's Origin Sector learn that I'm firing a cannon with Flowing Brightness Crystals, they might pass out in shock. It's too extravagant!

"But this is the only enjoyable way!"

As his telepathic thoughts slowly traversed the six crystal barrels of the Rogue Meteorite, Li Yao was greatly satisfied. The pores all over his body were constricting beyond his control.

Then, there were still the drill of mystic rays and the power system.

Other than that, he would need to repair the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and connect the Ares Extension to it.

After a day of high-intensity modification work, Li Yao's fire of life had been burning so brightly that his soul power reached its limit, and he was somewhat tired.

But he had his 'secret weapon'.

Li Yao raised his hand. A dose of strengthening drug appeared in his palm, in which the powder of half a Flowing Brightness Crystal in the coagulation state was stored. It looked like a transparent jelly unleashing the enjoyable aroma of grass. One would feel that their mind was soothed just by smelling it.

In the Heaven's Origin Sector, even the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators would find it extremely difficult to get a Flowing Brightness Crystal; when they did get one, they would certainly make thorough plans in order to refine it in the most scientific way, so that they would be able to absorb a hundred percent of the spiritual energy contained inside.

In comparison, Li Yao was like the wasteful son of a rich family. He simply crumbled it into powder, melded it into the strengthening drug, and chugged all the liquid!

The absorption efficiency was definitely not as high. But the good point was that it was straightforward and would take effect immediately.

"Hu..."

Hardly had Li Yao licked the last drop of the Flowing Brightness Crystal liquid on his lips when his eyes suddenly bulged with indescribable brilliance beaming out.

Flowing Brightness Crystal was much more miraculous than any Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and strengthening drugs that he had ever taken before. Immense spiritual energy was contained inside, yet it did not bring any feeling of uneasiness or repulsion.

He felt that a fountain that was spurting spiritual liquid unstoppably had appeared in his stomach. Coolness was spreading from there to all his internal organs and limbs.

It was like his every cell was being soaked in a refreshing stream; he couldn't be more comfortable.

Li Yao moaned in great contentment.

When the coolness crowded into his brain, the brain cells that had somewhat shrunk before quickly expanded like dry tea leaves which were put into hot water.

The brilliance in Li Yao's eyes grew more and more intense. Streams of brightness flowed out of his nostrils, ears, and mouth and were then absorbed by the pores on his body, forming an immaculate circulation.

"Flowing Brightness Crystal is indeed a super marrow crystal. My every cell has been refilled like pomegranate seeds that are full of juice!

"I feel that I've touched the boundary of the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage. Maybe after a couple days of training with a few more Flowing Brightness Crystals, I will be able to advance into the high level of the Building Foundation Stage!"

CRACK! CRACK!

A series of clattering noises burst out from Li Yao's bones and ankles as he stretched out. After each noise, warm brightness would blink on his skin like the reflection of the jade. After thousands of cracks, although he was as tall as he used to be, the spiritual waves surrounding him were ten times stronger than before, casting a halo around him.

The air was twisted by the surging spiritual energy. The figure that was enveloped in the halo became unpredictable and mysterious.

It was the best example of what the ancient Cultivators described a great Daoist to be like.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

The mainframe crystal processor projected thousands of complicated structure designs and spiritual energy flowcharts in front of Li Yao momentarily, many of which were even overlapping.

Nourished by the Flowing Brightness Crystal, Li Yao's brain had an exponentially increasing computational ability. He split hundreds of spiritual threads from his spiritual root and operated on the structure designs as fast as lightning, while he contemplated different maintenance plans…

Li Yao dwelled in the world of magical equipment maintenance, and without him knowing anything, two days had passed.

…

Two days later, inside the cockpit, Ding Lingdang, Ba Weiqi and the other two teammates were staring at Li Yao anxiously.

In the middle of the cockpit was a round cover two meters in diameter. Thousands of stripes were carved on it, making it like the most complex maze.

Shua!

The round cover split open like a blossoming flower. From the opening, a seat on which countless calligraphic rune arrays had been engraved was raised up.

It was the captain's seat, as well as the core of the entire starship.

Li Yao took a deep breath. Unfaltering belief gleamed out of his eyes. He strode forward and sat down without any hesitation.

"Senior Gao Xingce, you've passed on the position to me, and I will certainly not disappoint you!

"Someday, the name of Sparkle will reverberate in the entire sea of stars!

"Now get back to work, Sparkle!"

In a moment, all the rune arrays on the captain sea were illuminated. Colorful electric arcs danced among the rune arrays and flooded into Li Yao body, before they sprang to his brain along his veins and nerves and tangled with his very soul!

Almost a hundred overlapping light beams appeared in front of them. Spinning and blinking, they displayed every detail of Sparkle.

"Crystal reaction is being activated at Lv. 2 efficiency.

"Power rune arrays are being activated. One, two, five successes!

"Drill of mystic rays, launch!"

Li Yao's telepathic thoughts were spread in countless directions. But the thickest of all crowded into the Sky Dragon which was in the front of the warship.

The immense spiritual energy transformed from the Flowing Brightness Crystals was transmitted into the cannon like a raging ocean. Spurred by his telepathic thought, the cannon uttered a soul-stirring roar, releasing an overwhelming electromagnetic blast!

Because of the full modification that the Sky Dragon had received, the electromagnetic blast was not pushed out of the barrel; it was restrained by rune arrays at the front end of the barrel and spread out into nine boa-like streams of brightness.

The streams of brightness revolved rapidly in midair and intertwined with each other. The front half of Sparkle was wreathed in their brilliance. Then, they suddenly expanded and condensed into an extremely splendid drill of mystic rays.

The high-intensity drill of mystic rays was almost a real existence and as transparent as jade. Emitting endless warmth and light, it stared revolving.

The ultra-solid rock stratums were shattered immediately.

Li Yao gritted his teeth. His eyes were bulging so wide that his eyeballs seemed to be squeezed out. The corners of his eyes were torn apart. Two lines of blood were dripping down like tears.

He was merely at the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage after all. Steering Sparkle and the drill of mystic rays was still too much a burden for him.

But according to the reminder on the light beam, the specifications of Sparkle right now was only 9% of its limits!

However, Li Yao was already at his limits!

"Hiss!"

Li Yao raised his head and chugged another dose of strengthening drug that had been mixed with Flowing Brightness Crystal. Real flames seemed to be surging out of Li Yao's body. The temperature of the cockpit increased by more than five degrees.

Ding Lingdang and the rest of the teammates seemed able to hear the cells inside Li Yao's body exploding one after another.

"Move forward, Sparkle!"

Li Yao smashed his fists down. Countless telepathic thoughts were let loose from the depths of his brain. The data and information on the light beams in front of him were altering at an unbelievable speed, while figures and runes were dancing crazily!

After a hum, the cockpit shivered. The four of them could feel that the floor had turned into a slope.

Sparkle was perforating the rocks and moving forward and upward!

"We made it!"

"The drill of mystic rays is working well. Two power rune arrays are too hot. Activate the cooling units right now!

"We detected a 'Black Gold Rock' area that is extremely solid ahead of us. Resetting the route and bypassing it!

"Maintain the current speed. Pay attention to the spiritual energy supply of the drill! We must keep it stable!

"Forward! Forward! Forward!"

Finally—

After half an hour of thrilling drilling, everyone suddenly felt that their body was light, because the obstruction blocking them was gone.

The seabed that had just been stabilized for a while sprayed out a lot of mud at first. Then countless scattered stones jetted up like a volcanic eruption, forming countless furious swirls of stones.

BOOM!

Like a hidden dragon in an abyss which broke free from the manacles, seals, and barriers that had been constraining it for a lifetime, Sparkle jumped out from the bottom of the ocean and soared into the sky!

…

Dozens of kilometers away, above the undersea town of Skeleton Dragon, savaging spiritual energy formed countless swirls and turbulences.

A group of Cultivators and a group of demons were confronting each other.

There were only eight Cultivators, in crystal suits that were ragged, riddled with holes, and ready to be shattered. They were like the anxious animals that had fallen into a trap.

They were surrounded by forty demons, most of whom were reining biochemical beasts.

Some of the biochemical beasts were more than ten meters long with bizarre, hideous appearances, further reinforcing the desperation and helplessness of the Cultivators.

Although some of the demons were obviously injured, the few elite demons at the edge of the circle were totally fine. They were clearly on the winning side.

The situation was extremely unfavorable for the Cultivators.

Large areas of blood were floating in the seawater nearby. The dead bodies of two Cultivators and more than ten demons and their broken limbs were the best interpreters of the gory battle.

Yan Jun, captain of Team Thunder Soul, the best Star Team in Occult Orbs Fellowship, was breathing heavily. His skin was sweltering as if it were being scorched, but his eyes were as indifferent as ice.

However, there was a hint of fury and vulnerability in the depths of the frozen eyes, leaking the nervousness in his heart.

"Captain, this is a trap!

"We only launched an attack because we thought that the demons had opened Skeleton Dragon's residence recklessly and suffered tremendous losses because they triggered the barriers inside.

"But as it turned out, they didn't open the residence at all. The dead bodies we saw were all faked just in order to fool us!

"Wang Ji, prince of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers; Yu Liekong, young master of Castle Grey Falcon; Chi Mingzhu, young leader of Jade Cicada Island… As well-known elite demons on the Deadly Demons List, they are all beyond the high level of demon general and are very close to the level of demon king!

"More than half of the two teams have detonated our spiritual seeds. But the defense ability of the weird biochemical beasts is inconceivable. Only less than twenty of the demons have been killed!

"We are too outnumbered. They can simply swarm and crush us!"

The members of Team Thunder Soul were exclaiming in the communication channel.

Yan Jun was speechless. The scar on his left eye was bouncing and almost torn apart by his fury.

But faced with the siege of dozens of demons, there was nothing he could do except gnash his teeth.

The proud Child of Occult Orbs, the strongest Cultivator in the Occult Orbs Fellowship that never admitted failure, was finally grabbed by desperation!

Chapter 424: Begin the Slaughter!

Chapter 424: Begin the Slaughter!

Sensing the declining fighting will on the Cultivators' side, the demons grew more and more excited.

"The strongest Star Teams of Occult Orbs Fellowship, and the eminent Children of Occult Orbs including Yan Jun, have been all fished up by this prince!

"Hahahaha. Such tremendous credits, such remarkable achievements. Fabulous. It is indeed fabulous!

"Wait until I tear all the Cultivators into pieces and receive the heritage of the great demon from thirty thousand years ago in the residence of Skeleton Dragon.

"By then, I will be the strongest of the younger generation in the Blood Demon Sector.

"Not just the Kingdom of Lion Butchers, the few demon kingdoms, demon valleys, and demon islands nearby will all have to listen to my command!

"If I'm lucky enough to accept the true enlightenment of Skeleton Dragon in his residence, Elder Blood Robe and the rest of the old farts will be nothing at all!

"Today, I bow to you in courtesy; tomorrow, I will be the ruler of the entire Blood Demon Sector. Those pretentious demon emperors will be my dogs. Haha. Hahahaha!"

Wang Ji burst out in laughter. The biochemical beast in the form of black mantis twitched accordingly. Its bone tail suddenly slashed forward like a guillotine that had been dropped down.

"Kill 'em all!

"After all the Cultivators are cleared, we will open the residence and excavate the treasures of Skeleton Dragon!"

Stimulated by his words, the auras of the demons became multiple times more bloodthirsty than before. Their biochemical beasts expanded in size, while vicious laughter and screams resounded in them.

The undersea would become a hell. The slaughter would begin in five seconds!

Right then—

Twenty kilometers away, the seawater was boiling, and the undercurrent was surging. Sparkle was marching forward at the top speed like a silent killer whale, followed by a brilliant dragon of water that was several kilometers long.

Sitting in the captain's seat, Li Yao was fully concentrating. The spiritual waves and the dancing electric arcs made his messy hair all stand up. Deep purple brightness mixed with cruelness was beaming out of his eyes, too.

The other four Orb Patrollers, including Ding Lingdang, had been armed to the teeth with the brand-new, fully-upgraded crystal suits, waiting in the assault cabin ready to act.

Li Yao's telepathic thoughts were extended into the mainframe crystal processor and projected to tens of kilometers away with the enhancement of the probe magical equipment. The battlefield above the undersea town was scanned clearly by him.

"Excellent. Skeleton Dragon's residence hasn't been opened yet!

"We've come right in time!

"Two star teams are fighting the demons. They seem to be besieged and in a terrible situation!"

Li Yao scowled. The killing scent inside his eyes was savaging like a cold front.

"The Rogue Meteorite, lock! lock! lock!"

In the attack magical equipment platform protruding in the front of Sparkle, an asterisk-shaped hollow was opened, spitting countless bubbles.

Then, a dominating Six-barreled Revolving Crystal Cannon was pushed out straightforwardly.

In the bottoms of the six barrels, a small ball of light appeared at the same time. They were wreathed in dazzling electric arcs and expanding constantly in crazy revolutions. Very soon, they were even bigger than a skull.

The raging seawater was vaporized momentarily into countless bubbles, which floated to the surface of the ocean like a series of balloons.

The probe magical equipment of Sparkle was activated to its maximum. Countless streams of information were fed back. The outlines and positions of the dozens of demons immediately appeared inside Li Yao's brain.

Possible trajectories, weapon specifications, dodging odds, best shooting routes, and other information popped up, which were analyzed and combined with his amazing computational ability.

"Super Perceptive State. Brain cell activity, 300%!"

Li Yao squinted to the extent that his eyes became two narrow lines. But the surging brightness inside the two narrow lines were like two Milky Ways. He had entered the Super Perceptive State!

Within three seconds, he had calculated the best shooting trajectory and attack plan.

More than ten targets were locked onto by him at the same time.

"Nasty pests, embrace your death!"

Li Yao smiled cruelly. His lips curled, revealing his sharp teeth, while he issued the decree!

The Rogue Meteorite was driven by five Flowing Brightness Crystals in total. It was an unprecedented expenditure in the history of the Heaven's Origin Sector!

Spurred by such a crazy amount of spiritual energy, the Rogue Meteorite was reloaded very soon. It had far exceeded the standard of the cannon and was bordering on the limits of the components inside.

In the reminder light beam of the mainframe crystal processor, the holograph representing the Rogue Meteorite had become dangerously red, indicating that the magical equipment had been filled with too much spiritual energy and that it could turn into a total wreck at any moment because of the plummeting stability if it was kept in the state for too long.

Li Yao was yearning to kill too much to bother with any of that. He opened his palm and waved it in the air as if it were a saber, while his telepathic thoughts crowded into the triggering rune arrays and exploded there.

"Now begins the slaughter!"

The Rouge Meteorite was activated!

Sparkle trembled violently. Tremendous spiritual waves that were the recoil of the attack crashed toward the back of the warship. The force was so immense that even the hundreds of light beams that the mainframe crystal processor displayed were blinking.

At the same time, ten light balls that were nearly transparent slid out of the crystal barrels. The countless airy electric arcs and runes contained in them were pushing them forward glamorously and crazily. The obstruction of the seawater seemed to be nonexistent, because they surpassed three times the speed of sound instantly and roared toward their respective targets some twenty kilometers way!

The first batch of light balls had barely been shot out when new brightness was brewing at the bottom of the crystal barrels. Half a second later, the new batch of light balls were already as large as tires and were fired again!

In ten seconds, more than a hundred light balls had constituted a turbulence of destruction in the depths of the silver ocean like a shoal of glittering fish.

…

At three times the speed of sound, the distance in between was covered in no time.

The demons who didn't know what was coming were still wearing cruel and malicious smiles, yet their hearts were suddenly grabbed by freezing coldness at the same time.

All the demons couldn't help but shiver.

Some high-level demon generals who were relatively stronger had already started dodging or preparing defenses due to their natural instincts, although their consciousness was not able to react yet.

Many of the demons were princes of a kingdom or young masters of the demon congregations in the Blood Demon Sector. They'd all come from noble backgrounds and carried a lot of life-saving treasures with them. Now, many of the treasures were automatically triggered, some forming protective halos or blood fog around them and some stimulating their nerves directly to increase their speed by multiple times instantly!

However, the efforts of the treasures proved in vain faced with a Rogue Meteorite from the Star Ocean Imperium!

"Incoming attack!"

"There are still more ambushes. Not good! Not good!"

The demons, who had thought themselves to be sure winners a moment ago, all freaked out in panic upon sensing that a catastrophic attack beyond their imagination was coming at them.

"Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!"

There was no need for Wang Ji to issue any command. All the demons dispersed and fled in various directions!

"You want to get away from my locking? Not that easy!

"Today, you are all going to die!"

Li Yao's eyes were like ice pitons. The brightness beaming out from them crossed more than ten kilometers and pinned the escaping demons on the light beam one by one.

At this time, the six light balls that were fired in the beginning had reached the battlefield. But instead of attacking any demons, they simply stopped on the different directions of the battlefield.

Triggered by his telepathic thought, the six light balls exploded abruptly, raising chaotic waves and thousands of streams of brightness that darted toward the demons like a storm of arrows.

The demons who were running away crazily were either pushed back by the blast or blocked by the storm of brightness.

The six light balls had gridlocked the routes of escape for most demons!

"Explode! Explode! Explode!"

The ice pitons in Li Yao's eyes suddenly exploded into thousands of stars, all of which were burning furiously, dying his eyes into passionate crimson!

The light balls that followed rushed into the crowd of the demons in the blink of an eye and exploded one after another. Thousands of streams of brightness interweaved into a giant net and countless splendid arrows rained down upon the demons ruthlessly.

"Nooooo!" a high-level demon general reining a biochemical beast in the form of a giant crab cried desperately. Hit precisely by one of the light balls, the seemingly solid bright gold shell was as vulnerable as crust. A hole more than one meter in diameter appeared on the abdomen of the biochemical beast.

The upper body of the high-level demon generals that had been hiding inside was blown into a bloody mist immediately. The despairing screams came to an abrupt end.

"Ahhhhh!"

A high-level demon general controlling a biochemical beast in the form of a seven-starred sea snake was dodging swiftly through the gaps of the giant net, only to be swept over by a stream of brightness. As if it had been slashed by the sharpest blade in the universe, the seven-starred sea snake was cut in half down the middle, resulting in its plunging speed. It was soon hit by the arrows and rendered into a sieve together with the demon residing inside.

"What is this magical equipment and why is it so formidable?"

"Has some Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator arrived in person?"

"Ah damn. My heart has been blown up. Five seconds until I die!"

"My lower half—my lower half body is gone! It has been wrecked! Help me! I'm too valuable to die in this place!"

"Yu Liekong, young master of Castle Grey Falcon, has been shot in the head! Deceased!"

"Chi Mingzhu, young leader of Jade Cicada Island, has lost his four arms. His upper body has been deformed, too. He won't last long!"

"Wang Ji! Wang Ji!"

"It was you who said that this is a risk-free, fatal trap, and that as long as we took down the two Star Teams, we would be able to open Skeleton Dragon's residence with nobody messing around.

"But why are we being butchered like pigs? Why?!

"Who is it that is attacking us? Who is it?!"

The remaining demons had lost all formations; they were fleeing and struggling under the barrage of the rain of arrows. Now and then, a demon would be captured by the arrows and, after a brief moment of the blood-stirring noise of fleshing being minced, die on the spot!

Colorful mists of blood were slowly drifting above the undersea town.

Cries, screams, heavy breaths, and callous berating drowned Wang Ji.

Wang Ji was completely lost and had no idea what had happened. He was biting his teeth so hard that they were cracking, but he failed to utter any words, just like Yan Jun a moment ago.

Controlling the black biochemical beast, Wang Ji was dodging hastily in the middle of the arrows. But his mind was a mess, and he was about to burst out a cry.

"How? How did everything come to this?

"My assumption can't be wrong. The Heaven's Origin Sector is absolutely incapable of projecting so many Core Formation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators to Boneyard!

"If they were going to teleport the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, there would be no need to plant the spiritual seeds into the bodies of those Building Foundation Stage Cultivators in the first place!

"I was so close to victory. Again!

"Who is it that sabotaged my business? I'm going to cut out your living guts!"

While Wang Ji was rushing here and there in hatred and confusion, a starship that looked like a ferocious dragon from the abyss suddenly dashed out from the depths of the ocean!

"This is—"

Wang Ji pupils shrank to the size of needles. Every one of his nerve endings was twitching uncontrollably, because he couldn't believe his eyes!

Chapter 425: Ares Reincarnated!

Chapter 425: Ares Reincarnated!

Awesome, dominating, brutal, bloodthirsty, and unstoppable!

Faced with such a powerful starship beyond his wildest imagination, Wang Ji, although maintaining a furious face, had a frozen heart. Every one of his cells started trembling uncontrollably.

"Why is there such a powerful starship hiding in the depths of the silver ocean? Judging from the appearance, it looks like a warship from the era of the Star Ocean Imperium.

"But why on earth would a warship thousands of years ago end up here, and why is it still drivable?!

"And who is it that is steering it?!"

Both shocked and exasperated, Wang Ji couldn't help but scream to suppress the deepest fear in his heart.

In the meantime, the eight surviving Orb Patrollers, including Yan Jun, were also stunned at the starship that had come from nowhere and were speechless for quite a long time.

They had thought that they would be dead for sure today. No one had anticipated a fortuitous twist at the end of the episode. The moment the powerful yet mysterious starship appeared, almost twenty demons were already blown to smithereens, their blood dying the silver ocean red.

"Incredible! Incredible! The bombardment is even more destructive than the triplicate main gun of the main force warships of the federal army!

"Who is the captain of the starship? Is there a senior Cultivator living a hermit life in the underground of Boneyard?

"It is approaching!"

The demons freaked out, while the Cultivators were exuberant. All their eyes were glued to Sparkle. Holding their breath, the dozens of creatures here waited for its arrival silently.

Right then, an intense explosion suddenly took place on the above of Sparkle. A cluster of orange brightness pushed away seawater and expanded while it flowed toward the surface of the ocean.

The rain of arrows came to an abrupt halt.

A moment later, the assault cabin at the bottom of Sparkle was opened, from which four streamlined thick 'cannonballs' were ejected and tossed into the battlefield in a moment while slashing the seawater in their way.

The 'cannonballs' exploded, unveiling four impressive crystal suits!

The four Orb Patrollers of Team Blue Bronze joined the battlefield!

"So, it was you, the ants!"

Wang Ji was dazed for a moment. He glanced over the four of them while his dim, yellow eyeballs rolled over and over. His eyes turned from hesitation to ecstasy and eventually brutality.

The horror in his heart was entirely gone. Confidence was flowing crazily inside his veins again. Wang Ji burst out in laughter, because he had figured out what had happened.

"I didn't expect that you would be as robust as cockroaches. Not only did the collapsing rocks fail to bury you, you even discovered a warship from the Star Ocean Imperium. Your vitality is really impressive!

"However, I'm afraid that you haven't got through all the technologies on the warship, and you are merely swaggering around just based on the only useable cannon on board.

"A warship from the Star Ocean Imperium can't be readily drivable. The only cannon has been wrecked by you. That's why you can only rush out and fight face to face!

"You have taken down almost twenty demons of our side in a breath, but so what? We still have more than twenty left. You are still totally outnumbered. And we have the assistance of powerful biochemical beasts.

"There are only twelve Cultivators in total. We will have backup even if we are to attack each of you with two of us. You are doomed to die after all!"

Wang Ji was greatly reassured.

As powerful as the warship was, it must be unavailable for the moment. Otherwise, the Orb Patrollers of Team Blue Bronze wouldn't have any reason to go out and fight them in person.

The logic was simple.

He even began to secretly feel happy about it.

Of all the demons teleported to Boneyard, he was among the noblest ones. But there were quite a few other princes and young masters who were of similar position and capability to him.

It was because he concocted the trap plan and proposed it that everyone listened to his command temporarily.

Once the residence of Skeleton Dragon was opened, those demons would be too selfish to allow him to loot everything inside first.

But right now, after the bombardment a moment ago, many princes and young masters had been blown to pieces. On the other hand, he was barely injured with the help of the weird black biochemical beast.

He was almost the one who boasted the highest capability from the noblest background among the surviving demons now!

"Nice kill! Really nice killing! After you take down each and every one of them, Skeleton Dragon's heritage will all be mine!

"Team Blue Bronze, I cannot thank you enough! Haha, hahahaha!"

Wang Ji grinned hideously. His eyes were brimming with cruelness. A weird soundwave spread out quickly in the seawater through the throat of the biochemical beast.

"Don't panic!

"Their cannon has gone dead. They have to come and fight us in person! Twelve badly injured Cultivators versus thirty demons, what's there to be scared of?

"Au contraire, this is a tremendous windfall!

"Not only are we getting a residence of Skeleton Dragon, we are also getting a warship from the Star Ocean Imperium!

"Kill! Kill! Kill!"

The demons were not all slow-witted. Seeing the explosion on Sparkle, the sudden dumb fire of the cannon and Team Blue Bronze which was charging close, they realized what was going on without too much trouble.

Their morale which had hit rock bottom a moment ago was immediately boosted to its maximum. The bloodthirst in their bones was entirely triggered. Their fright a moment ago turned into savageness and viciousness, while they bared their fangs, waved their claws, and screamed horrifyingly.

Yan Jun and his teammates had only just felt relieved when their hearts skipped a beat again. They were both dumbfounded and frustrated.

"The starship is being steered by Team Blue Bronze? Where did they find such a powerful vehicle? And how did they activate it?"

"Not good. The only piece of attack magical equipment on the starship seems to be broken now. They have to come out and fight face to face!"

"Twelve of us against almost thirty of them. We barely stand any chance!"

"However, the outside-world Orb Patrollers of Team Blue Bronze… indeed have guts. They are charging close to reinforce us, knowing that they are terribly outnumbered…"

Starry brilliance was consolidating again in the bottom of Yan Jun's eyes. The scar through his left eye was glittering, like a dragon which was stretching its wings.

"Good. Good. Team Blue Bronze, if you are audacious enough to fight until the last breath, Team Thunder Soul and the rest of the Children of Occult Orbs will not shy away, either!

"What's the big deal with death? Let's see who slays more demon scumbags before we die!"

On Sparkle, Li Yao's telepathic thoughts were switching at the top speed among hundreds of light beams, while he operated rapidly to set Spark into automatic cruise mode.

The breakdown of the Rogue Meteorite was within his expectations.

Such an air defense cannon was not designed to provide tremendous damage after all. The side effect of bringing up its damage with the Flowing Brightness Crystals by force was that the components inside the weapon would degrade hundreds of times faster. As it turned out, the crystal barrels twisted and fractured in the end, leading to the big explosion.

But he didn't have an issue with that.

If he hadn't brought up its damage by force, he wouldn't have been able to blow more than ten demons into smithereens as if they were chickens within a breath.

The Rogue Meteorite had fulfilled its destiny. There were only some twenty demons left now. The capability difference between the two sides was not irreversible now.

"You think we're going to just wait to be killed now that we've lost the cannon?" Li Yao scoffed. Finishing the cruise mode set-up, he leapt up and retrieved the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit from his Cosmos Ring.

In the meantime, inside the magical equipment warehouse, a giant metal box was sliding quickly on the rails, too.

"Ares Extension, prepared!"

A moment later, Li Yao reached the assault cabin and dived out of Sparkle in the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

A silver, streamlined 'cannonball' that looked like a dolphin glided at the top speed for several kilometers, before it exploded and revealed Li Yao, who stood on the above the battlefield and stared at the demons below him coldly from a high stance.

"It was you!"

Wang Ji was more than enraged. He finally realized that it was the dangerous Vulture who had sabotaged his endeavor again when he was one step away from victory.

"I hate you! I hate you! I hate you! In the Thunderous Sound Mountain, in Red Lotus City, and on Boneyard, you have meddled with my affairs time and time again, rat!

"This time, I'm going to capture you and soak you in the blood pool. I'm going to skin you, pull out your nerves, and cut your flesh off your bones three times a day, and when you are cured, I will do that to you again! Ten years, a hundred years later, you will beg me to kill you!"

The black biochemical beast that Wang Ji was reining, simulated by his fury, had bloody stripes on the mantis-like shell, making it appear more terrifying than ever!

The bone tail of the biochemical beast waved, as Wang Ji was preparing to lunge forward. But he suddenly felt that something was wrong and came to a sudden halt, while he gazed at Li Yao's back in suspicion.

A new 'cannonball' was rushing close toward Li Yao's back. It was more thick and brilliant than the previous manned cannonballs. Surrounded by rounds of runes, it was wreathed in a dazzling splendor.

BOOM!

The streamlined cannonball exploded, releasing countless glamourous runes which were emitting octagonal brightness at first. Then, a myriad of strengthening components appeared around the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

Hand strengthening component!

Chest strengthening component!

Helmet strengthening component and spiritual energy enhancing system!

Leg strengthening component and brand-new power rune system!

Unbelievably powerful one-time remote attack system and fully upgraded melee combat system!

And also, more than three hundred ancillary components to increase manipulability!

All the strengthening components were bright green. Countless interweaving gold threads were covering their surface. At first look, they were the most awe-inspiring dragon scales!

Hiss. Hiss.

Bright green electric arcs were triggered by the strengthening components. Attracted and pulled by the electric arcs, they drew close quickly, assembled and combined, and stuck to the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit one by one!

Ka! Ka! Ka! Ka!

While the strengthening components were loaded one after another, the size of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit grew larger and larger. The intimidating aura that it let out soared exponentially, too.

A moment later, all the strengthening components had been pinned to the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit by the electric arcs and magnetic field.

The crystal suit which had been strengthened was almost four meters tall, with stabbing horns and unparalleled dominance, like a ferocious green dragon. Unfathomably sharp-edged fins stood erect on the arms and legs and behind the back. Bone spurs refined out of super alloys were beaming out bloodthirsty brilliance.

The most eye-catching part was the chest, where a strike cannon in the shape of a dragon head was crouching. Its bloody mouth was wide open, keeping a dazzling, rapidly revolving, green light ball surrounded by dancing electric arcs inside. A scent of extreme danger could be felt from it.

The Ares Extension had been fully loaded!

This was an Ares Extension designed for undersea usage named 'Dragon Scale'!

With the Dragon Scale Extension added, Li Yao was standing in the water like an unstoppable God of War!

Chapter 426: Killing Spree!

Chapter 426: Killing Spree!

Shua!

Every auxiliary fin on the Dragon Scale Extension was trembling rapidly, while Li Yao turned into a streak of greenness and pierced toward the demons!

"What is this crystal suit? Why is it so intimidating?!"

"Beware!"

All the demons felt unprecedented pressure. The seawater seemed hundreds of times thicker. Despite the assistance of the biochemical beasts, they still found it hard to breathe.

The demons were all frightened and shunned away.

But two demons were in Li Yao's path and had been locked onto by Li Yao's sharp killing intent. All the cells inside their bodies seemed to have been frozen into ice, making them rigid for a moment. The time window for running away had passed, and they had no choice except to grit their teeth and fight the incoming enemy the hard way.

One of the two demons was reining a biochemical beast in the shape of shark that was more than four meters long, with three sharp headbutting horns on its head.

The other demon was hiding inside a biochemical beast that resembled a giant lobster that was more than five meters long. Its two claws opened and closed in clattering noises.

The two demons charged at Li Yao, one from the left and the other from the right!

BOOM!

The furiously burning greenness crashed into the two demons. Thousands of green streams flowed out and wreathed the shark-shaped biochemical beast within a moment, before they were stirred brutally!

"Ahhhhh!"

The middle-level demon general inside the shark-shaped biochemical beast could do nothing but cry out before he was minced into pieces together with the flesh and blood of the biochemical beast. A cluster of bloody mist suddenly exploded in a boom.

A middle-level demon general had been slain by Li Yao within a second!

"The horror. Oh, the horror!"

The other high-level demon general was so panicked that he completely lost his fighting will. While his companion was being pulverized, he hurried to run away!

"Run away, now! Such a monster is too much for me to deal with!"

Rushing forward more than a hundred meters in a breath, the high-level demon general was greatly relieved sensing that Li Yao didn't come after him.

But when he turned back his head, he found that everybody was looking at him in a daze.

The high-level demon general was finally grabbed by an ominous feeling, as if he had stepped onto nothing into an abyss. The pores all over his body shrank at the same time!

Behind his back, a weird green shadow had appeared without him knowing. The proudly-standing strike cannon on the chest of the Dragon Scale Extension was adorned with splendid stripes of blood. The light ball in the mouth of the dragon was more and more dazzling and, before he was able to react, exploded abruptly!

A pillar of brightness as wide as a bowl jetted out of the mouth of the dragon and pierced through the solid shell of the biochemical beast, similar to a chopstick stabbing through a cooked egg.

Luminescent blood flowed out of the gap of the shell. After a 'BAM', the two eyes of the giant lobster exploded simultaneously. It struggled for a moment and dropped dead.

The high-level demon general hiding inside of it was pierced through by the pillar of brightness without even being able to grunt. His internal organs were all vaporized, resulting in his instantaneous death!

After several seconds, two elite demons had been slain by Li Yao as if they were harmless chickens!

"Vulture Li Yao has become so formidable now that he's put on such a weird crystal suit!"

"We are no match for him!"

"We are all going to die here!"

Witnessing Li Yao's invincibility, the demons were terrified again and sent into chaos.

"Li Yao, where did you find such a powerful crystal suit?!"

Wang Ji's eyes were blood red. His fury was almost burning his pupils through. He couldn't hate it more!

"This is… an Ares Extension! The most formidable one-off strengthening plug-ins in the era of the Star Ocean Imperium!"

"Li Yao has miraculously found an Ares Extension. No wonder he is so brutal today!"

"We are saved!"

The Cultivators were overjoyed; their morale couldn't be higher.

Staring at the glamourous Dragon Scale Extension covering Li Yao, Yan Jun was caught in mixed feelings.

A few months ago, when he first met Li Yao, Li Yao was merely a rookie who had just ascended to the Building Foundation Stage. He didn't bother to look at him after all and thought that he would hamstring the Children of Occult Orbs in the missions like the rest of the outside-world Orb Patrollers did.

He didn't expect that the guy would make so much progress in several months and even save his own life someday.

Right then, a telepathic thought was sent to him. His crystal processor received a request to share the communication channels. Team Blue Bronze had docked their communication channel to Team Thunder Soul's.

"Yan Jun! The Ares Extension that I am wearing is a one-off expendable, and it won't last long! Crush them while the demons are in a mess right now!" Li Yao bellowed in the communication channel.

Yan Jun was dazed for a moment. He took a deep breath. The complicated expressions on his face were replaced by fervent fighting will. His eyes glittered while he laughed.

"Alright! Let's talk later!

"Right now, let's just kill!"

Thirteen Cultivators, from three Star Teams, charged into the crowd of demons like thirteen sabers, slashing everything in their way apart.

The demons still outnumbered them in the field. But Li Yao was the sharpest blade edge wherever he went. He led the attack and stirred the formation of the demons into further chaos.

Barely any demons could survive one strike from him. Once they were engaged with him, their biochemical beasts were often seriously injured and had to be abandoned, if they were not killed instantly on the spot.

The other thirteen Cultivators were greatly encouraged by Li Yao's valiance. They exerted all their might and followed him closely.

For a moment, the silver ocean turned red. More than ten demons had been slaughtered mercilessly one by one!

"Li Yao!"

Wang Ji was furious. Demonic energy surged out of his body and condensed into countless bubbles around him before they all exploded suddenly!

The bone tail waved. He dashed forward and reached Li Yao in the blink of an eye.

"Go to hell!"

Almost a hundred sharp bone spurs protruded out of the bone tail, and it slapped at Li Yao at more than three times the speed of sound, tearing the seawater in between apart.

Li Yao squinted. Every muscle on his body was constricted as much as possible, making him seem smaller than he actually was. Then, like an elastic spring that had been compressed to minimum, it bounced back all of a sudden. All the strength inside his muscles flooded into his right arm like thousands of rivers gathering into an ocean, providing spiral explosive power, before he punched the tip of the bone tail!

The Dragon Scale Extension had enveloped Li Yao's fists in a thick layer of green plate armor that was covered in scales and sharp thorns. After the punch, the seawater around was pushed away, and a spacious waterless chamber was formed, like an invisible fist more than one meter in diameter had punched in advance.

BOOM!

The iron fist and the bone tail collided brutally. The immense blast caused a giant swirl in the seawater.

Li Yao barely moved, while Wang Ji was blown backward more than ten meters with a scream!

Tiny cracks were appearing on the fist part of the Dragon Scale Extension.

But half of the bone tail of Wang Ji's biochemical beast had been blown off. The remaining half of the tail was smooth without any bone spurs anymore, cramping.

His nerves had been connected to the brain of the biochemical beast. The pain of the tail being cut off was excruciating, but he was so astounded that he almost ignored it.

"His strength is even higher than mine!

"How can that be! How is it possible?!"

Two years ago, when they encountered in the Thunderous Sound Mountain, Li Yao was but a Cultivator at the Refinement Stage. Under the pressure of the prince of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers, he could only hide here and there like a rat in a ditch, and only got away because of luck.

One year ago, when the two of them met again in Red Lotus City, Li Yao was merely at the peak of the Refinement Stage and wouldn't have defeated him without the sordid tricks.

But right now, Li Yao had completely suppressed him in a face-to-face confrontation!

Regretful!

Wang Ji couldn't be more regretful!

Had he foreseen what was going to happen today, he would have cut Li Yao into pieces at whatever cost, even letting go of the Mutated Lion Dragon in the Thunderous Sound Mountain two years ago!

But it was a pity that the past could not be altered. Who could've anticipated that a Mr. Nobody as humble as an ant before would soar to the sky and overturn the world one day?

"Wang Ji, I'm going to avenge Captain Hong!" Li Yao roared and sprinted again.

Gritting his teeth, Wang Ji turned into a cluster of blackness and dashed forward, too.

The two clusters of brightness crashed into each other heavily, raising a blast that resembled an overwhelming tsunami.

The Ares Extension that Li Yao carried was one-off magical equipment in the first place. Therefore, he was not afraid of the impact at all. The plate armor on his shoulder was shattered, but a large part of flesh was torn off from Wang Ji's biochemical beast, too.

"Ahhhhh!"

Wang Ji felt that he was going to be killed by the agony. The biochemical beast suddenly spat out a cluster of black mist, which quickly spread out in the silver ocean like ink.

Run! Run! Run!

Wang Ji fled without bothering with anything else.

Shua!

Li Yao broke through the black smoke, only to find that Wang Ji was escaping in a rush toward the undersea town.

"You want to run away?"

Li Yao sniffed. The power rune arrays of the Dragon Scale Extension spurted out streams of water, pushing him into a streak of greenness again closely behind the enemy.

One was running and the other was pursuing. The two of them left the battlefield quickly and both dived into the undersea town.

The pavilions and buildings in this place were extremely delicate. However, there was no sign of any creature wherever they went. No fish, no coral, and no shellfish, as if they were too intimidated by Skeleton Dragon to come close to his old home.

Even the undercurrents did not dare to intrude into the town. The seawater here was absolutely still, but the environment was extremely creepy. It seemed to be a town of ghosts in the deepest level of the hell.

In the middle of the town stood a conical, splendid building in a completely different style to the rest of the architectures in the town. It appeared to be both a den of a great demon beast and a dead volcano.

It was Skeleton Dragon's residence.

Wang Ji swam toward the residence like a stray dog.

In the middle of his pursuit, Li Yao suddenly had a palpitation. He sensed that a great danger was coming and halted all of a sudden.

An abrupt change took place right at this moment!

Almost a hundred giant clusters of brightness burst out from the entire undersea town, including Skeleton Dragon's residence.

The intense blast demolished more than half of the undersea town like a volcanic eruption and swallowed Li Yao momentarily.

"This is—"

Li Yao was caught in the middle of the blast and the turbulences. Although the Dragon Scale Extension absorbed most of the blast, his head was still quite dizzy.

On his light beam, redness was blinking nonstop. The durability of the Dragon Scale Extension was dropping fast. Many components had been blown into pieces!

As it turned out, Wang Ji had planted a huge amount of crystal bombs in the undersea town!

Chapter 427: Ancient Demon

Chapter 427: Ancient Demon

Li Yao's head was dizzy, his throat filled with blood. But he was not sure whether he should laugh or cry.

The scenario was quite familiar, albeit with the bomber and the bombed swapping their roles.

Before, he was the one who had set up a myriad of traps in order to survive when he was hunted by strong enemies; today, he was the one doing the hunting, while Wang Ji, a renowned demon, had been forced to flee like a rat with his head in hands and resort to bomb traps to struggle against him.

'I was too careless. I thought that I was invincible with the Ares Extension. But Wang Ji is much more cunning than before!

'As a bomb expert, I was negligent and fell for the trap. This is really a terrible mistake!'

Li Yao frowned. By analyzing the situation, he reached the conclusion momentarily that the explosion was a quite powerful one. If the bombs had been planted in the right locations, the entire undersea town might've been demolished.

The Ares Extension was a one-off expendable after all. Affected by the blast, one component after another lost its functionality and detached from the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, sinking to the bottom of the ocean.

Li Yao's crystal suit was immediately shabby again, the previous splendor gone.

But he was more concerned about the situation inside Skeleton Dragon's residence.

'This moron… Don't play with the bombs when you don't know how to use them properly!'

Gnashing his teeth, Li Yao furrowed his brow. He had anticipated a lot of things, but never did he expect that Wang Ji would be so crazy as to open Skeleton Dragon's residence in such a violent way.

"Haha. Vulture Li Yao, you didn't see this coming, did you? I learned a lot of things from you after the tremendous failures I suffered against you. Explosive magical equipment is your favorite. How does it taste?"

Wang Ji's cocky laughter came over from a dirty undercurrent. "You've lost your Ares Extension. What can you rely on to fight against me right now?"

Li Yao's eyes were glittering. He completely ignored Wang Ji's provocation and extended his telepathic thoughts to the undersea town.

More than half of the undersea town had been utterly demolished. The seabed was full of craters as if it had been bombarded by a meteor shower for three days and three nights.

Wang Ji stood right in front of Skeleton Dragon's residence, more arrogant than ever.

Li Yao was greatly alarmed. He stared at Skeleton Dragon's residence carefully.

The cone-shape architecture was carved with dense rune arrays, but in two completely opposite styles.

Some of the rune arrays were crude, simple, and askew, as if a wild animal had engraved them with its claws and teeth forcefully. They were brimming with viciousness and bloodthirst. One would feel terrified just looking at them.

But the other runes were square and upright, full of astounding dignity.

The rune arrays in two different styles were engaged in a fierce battle like two formidable armies.

However, because of the intense explosion, a lot of stones were blown off the cone-shaped architecture. The rune arrays were all mottled. Many of them were even completely destroyed.

'Not good!'

Li Yao's heart was pounding. He found a crack that was more than half a meter long but thinner than a hair on the surface of the building!

'Was this crack originally in this place, or was it caused by the explosion just now? Does it affect the inside of Skeleton Dragon's residence?'

Cold sweat was appearing on Li Yao's forehead. He gazed at the crack, not even blinking, only to discover that the crack thinner than hair was growing, splitting and spreading as if it were a living fungus. Very soon, it covered more than ten square meters. A spider net of cracks had formed on the surface of Skeleton Dragon's residence!

"Go away!

"Leave Skeleton Dragon's residence right now!"

Li Yao summoned his spiritual energy and shouted. His voice turned into intense vibration in the seawater and crushed over toward Wang Ji like wind and thunder.

Wang Ji's face color changed. He was so furious that he laughed, while he gnashed his teeth.

"Vulture Li Yao, without the Ares Extension, we are very alike to each other in capability. Do you still think you are the sure winner right now?

"I have sworn in the Pantheon of Demons to all the demon spirits that I will not stop hunting you until I die. You will beg me more mercy, but I will—"

Before Wang Ji was able to complete his sentence, a weird aura leaked out through the spider-net gaps on the surface of Skeleton Dragon's residence, which interrupted Wang Ji's egotistical declaration.

LUM DUM!

Li Yao suddenly heard a clear heartbeat in the depths of his brain.

The feeling was extremely strange. The sound seemed to be from Skeleton Dragon's residence, but it exploded directly inside Li Yao's brain, completely overlooking the distance in between.

At the same time, somebody seemed to clench his heart, press it hard, and let it go abruptly. He felt extremely uncomfortable.

LUM DUM! LUM DUM!

Heartbeats echoed like dull drumming neither too fast nor too slowly. But the frequency and the pitch were becoming higher and higher.

LUM DUM LUM DUM LUM DUM LUM DUM LUM DUM LUM DUM LUM DUM!

In several seconds, the beating heart already turned into a raging storm, raising a chaotic tsunami in Li Yao's brain and chest.

Li Yao felt like his head was exploding. His eyes were crimson. The bloodiest scenes were unfolding in front him.

He saw countless Cultivators and ordinary people crying in burning flames, tens of thousands of years ago.

Many other Cultivators were fighting the demons on flying swords.

But after a weirdly drifting breeze, the blood and flesh of the ordinary people, the Cultivators, and the demons were all corrupted, turning them into bare bones.

A moment later, the bones stood up robotically and constituted countless hideous killing machines. Then, they spread out in various directions like a swarm of locusts.

'This is—'

Li Yao bit the tip of his tongue and shook his head hard, freeing himself from the illusion. He found himself soaked in sweat. His brain seemed to have been emptied, and he had never been more exhausted.

Wang Ji's declaration came to an abrupt end. Like a puppet whose string had been cut off, he floated in the seawater numbly. Suddenly, cracking noises burst out from the inside of the biochemical beast. All its joints had exploded. Its head, limbs, and broken tails were each twisted in a different direction, while it dashed toward Skeleton Dragon's residence in an extremely awkward posture, cramping.

BOOM!

Wang Ji crashed into Skeleton Dragon's residence and hit the spider-net-like cracks precisely!

The cracks quickly expanded, revealing the darkness inside.

For some reason, Li Yao felt that thousands of pairs of eyes were staring at him in the dark residence penetrating through his crystal suit and his flesh and blood into the deepest part of his bone marrow.

It was at this moment that Wang Ji was back to himself because of the excruciating pain. He waved his hands and legs, struggling crazily and screamed in despair.

He seemed to be fighting an invisible enemy. He tried his best to run away, only to be pulled back time and time again and smashed against the cracks.

Li Yao activated his crystal camera on full power. He could vaguely see that countless transparent tentacles were wrapped around the black biochemical beast, pulling and corrupting it. The shell and flesh of the beast was torn apart, through which the tentacles crammed in and attacked Wang Ji himself directly!

Finally—

After almost ten clashes, the widest part of the cracks was more than two meters wide. Like a wide-open bloody mouth, Skeleton Dragon's residence sucked in Wang Ji together with his biochemical beast brutally.

CRACK! CRACK!

"Chiliu! Chiliu!"

"Squeak! Squeak"

Blood-freezing, leg-souring noises reverberated inside the dark gaps. Thousands of sweltering steel needles seemed to be stinging Li Yao's brain.

Wang Ji screamed desperately, not befitting an eminent demon; he was more like a pig which had been skinned and was ready to be butchered!

The desperate wailing gradually turned into helpless screaming, and then intermittent moaning, until it became feeble muttering in the end.

But another aura that was much more dangerous was getting more and more dense. Li Yao felt that an invisible demon was talking in a low voice right behind his ears.

Shua!

Li Yao's heart seemed to have been stabbed by a spike. All of his hair stood up, while he turned around abruptly and slashed out his Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber.

There seemed to be nothing in the seawater, yet he had hit something extremely tensile.

Li Yao extended all his telepathic thoughts and detected the surroundings as best he could, only to find that it was a weird creature that looked like a tentacle of a jellyfish, but multiple times thicker, which was swimming swiftly.

It seemed as soft as gel, but it was much harder than it appeared to be. Li Yao had extended the aura on his saber to some twenty meters long, but he could barely cut into the tentacle. The tentacle was not affected at all; it even crawled upwards along the body of the saber.

Wang Ji's scream was still ringing inside his ears. Li Yao did not dare fight the weird tentacle the hard away. He quickly withdrew his saber and leapt backward.

The tentacle didn't chase after him and simply retreated to the cracks. Then, a shrilling roar exploded in the deep inside of Skeleton Dragon's residence, as if countless crystal bombs had been detonated in everyone's brains at the same time!

The Cultivators and demons which were fighting in the battlefield not far away were all shocked by the shrilling roar and rendered dumb like puppets for a moment.

"What is it?"

"Such a terrifying aura!"

"It's demonic energy! Unparalleled demonic energy!"

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The piercing roar represented the final awakening of the ancient deadly demon from forty thousand years ago.

Earsplitting collisions occurred in the depths of the residence, triggering chaotic turbulences in the silver ocean. The seawater was raging, and the ground was shaking!

The other twelve Cultivators sensed that a great demon was going to appear, too, and all swooped above Skeleton Dragon's residence.

BOOM!

After an ear-splitting crash, the upper half of the cone-shape architecture was demolished to smithereens.

The muddy seawater gradually dispersed, revealing a frightening figure more than thirty meters long which was slowly stretching its body.

Skeleton Dragon was exactly what its name suggested. Its arms were made up by countless bones which were emitting a bright silver glow. Its body was like a gargantuan egg, but the bones supporting the body were quite messy. With a careful look, one would notice that they had the characteristics of various creatures, as if the body had been piled up by the bones from countless species.

Nine arms made of bones extended out of the egg-shaped torso. The front end of each arm was a skull of a different species with its bloody mouth wide open, making the body look like a prehistoric hydra, only much more hideous and vicious.

In the middle of the empty chest was soft flesh that looked like jelly, which was heavily protected by the bones, emitting glamorous, translucent brightness.

The jelly was in the coagulation state. Watery liquid flowed slowly toward the nine arms, controlling each and every bone on them delicately.

In the center of the jelly, a cluster of crimson brightness was glistening wetly, expanding and shrinking like the beating heart of a human being.

Skeleton Dragon, an ancient deadly beast which had hibernated for forty thousand years, had finally broken free from the barriers and returned to reality again!

Chapter 428: Preternatural Horror!

Chapter 428: Preternatural Horror!

Other than the giant skulls at the ends of the nine arms, Skeleton Dragon did not seem to have its own head. But on the top of the round torso, dozens of transparent tentacles lifted a bruised, swollen, and twisted face that everyone could see clearly.

It was Wang Ji!

Wang Ji's face was expanded to almost ten times its normal size. It was limp like a cake which had been stomped on. Somebody seemed to have smashed all the bones in his face and reassembled them in a hurry, making his countenance unfathomably weird.

The misery beaming out of the hollow eyes indicated that the owner of the face would be better off dead. But Wang Ji's mouth curled. Some uncanny power seemed to be forcing him to put on a smile that was even more ugly than crying.

His body was entirely gone. The only thing left was his face, which was laughing according to the rhythm of the fluctuation of the tentacles.

"Wang Ji!"

Almost ten demons had survived the previous battle. Seeing that 'Wang Ji' had put on a brand-new appearance, they were not sure what had happening, but they did sense overwhelming demonic energy from Skeleton Dragon. Therefore, they were all overjoyed and came close.

When they were a hundred meters away from Skeleton Dragon, their hands and legs were all twisted weirdly just like Wang Ji a moment earlier, before they were tied up by the transparent tentacles and absorbed into Skeleton Dragon's body without even being able to cry out.

The most disgusting scene took place!

Skeleton Dragon's body seemed to be extremely corrosive. The flesh and blood of the eight demons, together with the biochemical beast they were in, were sucked up completely within a moment, while the shell and bones gradually floated to the surface of its body, making the bone armor covering its body more complete and bloodthirsty!

Devouring the meat of the eight demons, 'Wang Ji' moaned in great satisfaction. The size of Skeleton Dragon expanded noticeably. The dominating aura surrounding it was even more intense!

Li Yao felt cold sweat trickling down his forehead. He started to realize that Skeleton Dragon was not a dragon-type demon beast, but some sort of weird demon mollusk or demon plankton, like a venomous super jellyfish or an enormous octopus!

No wonder its residence was hidden in an underground silver ocean!

Its most distinguishing ability should be that it could swallow other creatures and transform their bones into weird plate armor to protect its soft body.

There was a large skull at the end of every one of the nine bone arms. They must've belonged to nine powerful demon beasts which had fallen victim to it.

If that was the case, the eccentric barrier on the surface of Boneyard and the enormous corpse of the dragon-type demon beast would be very easy to explain.

The dragon-type demon beast hundreds of meters long must've been one of the victims captured by Skeleton Dragon. But it had been too large to be absorbed directly. Therefore, Skeleton Dragon had locked it in the barrier to weaken it first.

Or maybe, Skeleton Dragon was refining its bones with secret arts and would absorb the bones into its own body when the bones were indestructible!

'This life form is indeed terrifying. No wonder Skeleton Dragon had been one of the ancient demons who were knocked out of the game in the very beginning.

'It was not necessarily because Skeleton Dragon was not good enough. Chances were that the other demons were all in fear of its terrible ability and suppressed it joint-handedly!

'Right now, it has just woken up from tens of thousands of years of dormancy. It is currently the weakest it will ever be!

'We have to destroy it immediately, or we may never be able to!

'If it devours a huge number of spiritual beasts and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures on Boneyard and resumes its peak capability, no, if it resumes 10% of its peak capability, it will be a catastrophe for the Heaven's Origin Sector!'

Li Yao made up his mind quickly. His gaze turned sharp again.

Skeleton Dragon's soft body wriggled nonstop. Manipulated by transparent tentacles, Wang Ji's twisted face unleashed queer brightness. The strange laughter gradually stopped, until it turned into an ancient dialect in the end, and Skeleton Dragon muttered to itself, "Forty thousand years… I have slept for forty thousand years!

"The Demon Beast Empire has been destroyed? Hahahaha. Well done! Well done! But I wonder, have the bloodlines of the demons who fought for the reign of the cosmos against me gone extinct or not?

"Oh? Cultivators reappeared, and mankind thrived again and took over most of the worlds? Excellent! Excellent! Human beings are the most delicious cuisine! To think that such a small body contains such a powerful soul! It is even more enjoyable than the demon beasts hundreds of meters long!

"Crystal suit? What is that? They are using strengthened external-skeletons to improve their combat ability?"

The more Li Yao heard, the more he was petrified.

He had been planning to deal with Skeleton Dragon by taking advantage of its ignorance, an inevitable result from forty thousand years of seclusion. But judging from the current situation, it could suck knowledge and memories directly from the brain of the creatures that it devoured!

Right now, it knew exactly as much as Wang Ji and the rest of the demons did.

A moment later, the smile on the big face of 'Wang Ji' was even more cheerful. Sharp brilliance was being condensed in the bottom of the hollow eyes, while it stared at Li Yao and the other Cultivators.

Everyone felt that their heart were pierced through by its eyes instantly.

"Blood Demon Sector? Heaven's Origin Sector?

"A single planet accommodates thousands of Cultivators and billions of creatures! After I absorb all of them, at least thirty percent of my capability can be restored!"

Li Yao's heart almost skipped a beat. The most horrible thing had happened.

Skeleton Dragon had learnt the information regarding the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector from the memories of Wang Ji and the other demons.

They were the two worlds that were closest to Boneyard.

In twenty days or so, the Heaven's Origin Sector would launch a new star shuttle to Boneyard.

As long as Skeleton Dragon absorbed a Cultivator, it would be able to acquire his memory, learn how to pilot a star shuttle, and thus embark on his journey to the Heaven's Origin Sector!

"Ahhhhh!"

Right then, abrupt changes took place. An Orb Patroller of Team Thunder Soul suddenly cried out, while he trembled violently beyond his control.

He was tangled by Skeleton Dragon's transparent tentacles!

"Be careful!"

It was not until this moment that Li Yao realized that countless transparent tentacles interweaved into an impregnable dragnet which was about to enclose them without anybody knowing anything.

"We were fooled!

"Skeleton Dragon is not a moron. There is no need for it to mutter to himself and tell us what it is going to do!

"It was merely trying to attract our attention so that it could spread all its tentacles around us!"

Li Yao gritted his teeth and dashed forward into a streak of brightness toward the Cultivator who was dancing uncontrollably. He bellowed and ignited his soul. The handle of the Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber was clutched so hard that it was almost broken.

Enhanced by the last proportion of the Ares Extension, the aura of the blade was extended to unprecedentedly twenty meters long, making it as unstoppably as a solar storm!

Shua!

In an upward motion, a perfect bloody curve was drawn. A transparent tentacle had been cut into two halves down the middle!

Skeleton had just woken up. It was at the weakest moment of its life. Due to the sharp pain of the chopped-off tentacle, it shrank suddenly, delaying its attack for about half a second.

Awed by its eccentric appearance, the Cultivators had been greatly alarmed. They discovered the transparent tentacles surrounding them instantly after Li Yao's reminder and all got away in time before the tentacles were able to bind them.

Team Blue Bronze sent a lot of information to the crystal processors of the other two Star Teams.

"Skeleton Dragon has been awakened!"

"He wants to swallow our home to regain his strength!"

"He must be stopped!"

All the Cultivators realized at the same time that Skeleton Dragon was the most dreadful demon they'd ever seen.

Right now, it had just woken up from a prolonged sleep and was at its lowest point. The only opportunity to destroy it would be this moment.

If it was not cleared in time, the Heaven's Origin Sector would be doomed!

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

'Shell' Leng Ziming was the first to launch an attack. Countless gold lasers rushed out from every corner of his body and darted toward Skeleton Dragon while altering their trajectories in graceful curves nonstop!

The rest of the Cultivators summoned their strongest remote magical equipment, too. Flying swords, mystic rays, crystal cannons rained upon Skeleton Dragon like thousands of rainbows without any spot left.

Skeleton Dragon burst out into laughter in the bombardment. Silver waves were triggered on the surface on the bone armor, which offset most of the damage. In the meantime, the jelly-like body pulled the magical equipment into it with a weird attraction force. Once the magical equipment penetrated into Skeleton Dragon's body through the gaps between bones, the magical equipment would be like a statue made of mud sinking into the ocean. The masters of the magical equipment were not able to reach out to their equipment at all.

Bullets, flying sabers and flying swords were all taken away!

Li Yao was dumbfounded. He realized only then that another several dozen pieces of magical equipment were hiding in Skeleton Dragon's translucent body.

According to their vintage style, they were all ancient magical equipment from forty thousand years ago.

Skeleton Dragon's body was a walking magical equipment arsenal!

"Are you kidding me? The monster can devour magical equipment, too?"

"The silver bone armor covering its body is clearly refined with secret arts. Most of the damage has been offset."

"Even if the damage is too intense and the bone fractures, it is not a big deal for him. It can just move a bone from other body parts to replace the broken bone!"

"But the body of Skeleton Dragon is made of soft flesh with extremely high elasticity. However powerful an attack is, most of the damage will simply be absorbed by it, without causing any real harm at all."

"How can we fight such a thing?!"

Li Yao was not a man who would give up easily. Although he was also shocked by the formidability of Skeleton Dragon, he still squinted and observed carefully.

The corner of his mouth suddenly twitched, as he suddenly realized something.

Skeleton Dragon seemed to be arrogant enough to just let everybody fire upon itself freely and absorb one item after another.

However, although it paid no attention when the bone armor covering other body parts was shattered, it would quickly wriggle and transport new bones to fill up the bone armor in the center of the round torso once the bone armor in this particular region was broken. It seemed to be fearful of the attacks at the center of its body very much.

In the center of its body, the cluster of red brightness that was fluctuating like a beating heart was blinking nonstop.

For the flying swords and bullets that had penetrated into Skeleton Dragon's body, even though they were quite far away, the red brightness would shrink suddenly in a defensive posture as if great enemies were coming.

Li Yao immediately realized something. The cluster of red brightness was Skeleton Dragon's weakness!

"Don't disperse your attack! The bones are not its true body. It is useless even if we blow the bones into pieces! The cluster of red brightness at the center of its body is its actual fatal weakness!

"Focus our firepower on one part and dig a hole on its body so that we can smash the cluster of red brightness!"

Chapter 429: Desperate? Definitely Not!

Chapter 429: Desperate? Definitely Not!

As if they had been woken up from a dream, every Cultivator changed their attack strategy after hearing Li Yao's words. The crystal cannons and the mystic ray cannons all fired upon the center of Skeleton Dragon's body.

As for bullets and flying swords which were real entities, they were all aimed at the nine bone arms surrounding Skeleton Dragon's body.

In a moment, the colorful mystic rays were blossoming, dust was blown off the silver bones, and a deep hollow was pressed into Skeleton Dragon's soft body by the collective brute force!

Skeleton Dragon's laughter came to an abrupt end. It was replaced by murderous roars.

Li Yao raised his head and bellowed. Previously-unseen craziness beamed out of his bloodshot eyes, while endless desire for killing surged out of his pores and created dancing and crackling flames around him.

BOOM!

The last bit of the remnant of the Ares Extension on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was blown away by his spiritual energy, revealing his true body like a black falcon. The blood-dyed outline of his crystal suit was glittering.

Although it was much smaller in size, its speed had soared exponentially as it turned into a streak of blackness and sprinted toward Skeleton Dragon!

The transparent tentacles of Skeleton Dragon had been entirely seen through by Li Yao, who brought his brain cell activity to more than 600% and calculated the tiny gaps among the tentacles crazily.

In hundreds of blurred shadows, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit cut through the gaps among the tentacles from unimaginable angles and approached Skeleton Dragon!

Meanwhile, behind Li Yao—

"Wait for me!"

Ding Lingdang rushed close like a furious mammoth!

Her style was the opposite of Li Yao's. Five dragons of spiritual energy in different colors surrounded her and would lunge at the transparent tentacles brutally when any of them came close. Even though the transparent tentacles were too hard to be bitten or burnt through, they were always pushed away without being able to reach Ding Lingdang.

Yan Jun, captain of Team Thunder Soul and the top expert of Occult Orbs Fellowship, also dashed near like a flash in a deep blue, magnificent crystal suit!

Thousands of electric arcs danced around him and formed a dazzling, crazily-revolving ball which secluded him from the outside world.

Any transparent tentacles which dared to draw close would be attacked by dozens of electric arcs simultaneously.

"Li Yao, we will fight side by side!"

Ding Lingdang and Yan Jun came later than Li Yao, but they caught up with him quickly and marched forward, one to his left and the other to his right.

Li Yao's nose suddenly itched. He felt warmth bursting out from the bottom of his heart and he was more impassioned than ever.

'You may be Skeleton Dragon, an ancient deadly demon from forty thousand years ago, but so what?

'Today, you shall be split in two halves!'

Within a moment, the three of them were only thirty meters away from Skeleton Dragon.

Skeleton Dragon seemed to have been suppressed by the remote attacks from the other Cultivators and was not able to move at all. It was merely trying its best to gather the bones from its other body parts into its chest.

Two crystal cannons on Li Yao's back flipped up to his shoulders. Four strengthened Triple-headed Six-barreled Vulcan Machine Guns were also summoned. The six pieces of remote magical equipment snarled at the same time and rained spiritual energy upon Skeleton Dragon.

The endless desire to kill coursed in his veins and was finally condensed in his hands. The Flash Claw on his left hand and the Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber in his right hand both extended auras that were more than ten meters long. The auras were then consolidated, compressed and perfected, until in the end they were only three meters long, but with such a dazzling brilliance that nobody was able to look at them in the eyes!

Swoosh!

Swoosh!

The auras from the claw and the saber rushed out and stabbed at the hollow in the center of Skeleton Dragon's body!

"Nona-colored Fire, Chain of Five Flames, Fury of the Dragon!"

Ding Lingdang crossed her arms with the backs of her hands against each other. Her palms were opened like a deadly rose. The dragons of flames in different colors spiraled around her arms and briefly stopped in her palms, before they were jetted out like a spring that had bounced up after being fully compressed!

"Thunder Supreme Spear, Lighting Soul Arrow. Explode! Explode! Explode!"

The electric arcs that had been covering Yan Jun were constantly lengthened, until they became a spear of electric arcs almost twenty meters long, which gave the feeling that a thunderstorm was imminent, even though the three of them were at the bottom of an ocean.

His body bent in a weird way, like a resilient bow that had been stretched to the limit. Then he suddenly stood straight again, hurling the electric spear unstoppably with an earsplitting boom, as if the entire ocean would collapse because of the attack!

BOOM!

BOOM!

BOOM!

Li Yao, Ding Lingdang, and Yan Jun, three tops experts of Occult Orbs Fellowship, had hit Skeleton Dragon's true body precisely with their ultimate attacks.

Countless silver bones were shattered. Thousands of waves were rippling on the jelly-like soft body and spread out to the peripheral bones, a lot of which were shaking and colliding in cracking noises.

Skeleton Dragon's true body was torn open with a shocking wound. But the rampant spiritual energy was still savaging and charging at the cluster of redness which was beating like a heart.

Five meters to the redness!

The ancient secret treasures previously swallowed by Skeleton Dragon, however, squirmed over at this moment. A few pieces of shield-like magical equipment blocked the path of the attacks just in time.

Huala!

The three pieces of shield-like magical equipment emanated colorful brilliance and took the attacks completely.

On one of the three pieces of shield-like magical equipment, a tiny crack appeared, but the other two were intact without suffering the least damage. The only difference was that the brilliance on them was somewhat dimmer than before.

Li Yao was shocked and distraught.

Those ancient treasures must've been the loot from when Skeleton Dragon slayed countless ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago. It had kept them inside its own body for the protection of its essential core in emergencies!

After breaching the silver bones and marching into Skeleton Dragon's body for so long, their spiritual energy had run out of momentum and was not enough to smash the ancient magical equipment at all!

Their full-strength strike was resolved easily just like that. In consternation, Li Yao lost control over his brain, which was immediately invaded by a demonic force. He seemed to hear a low chuckle.

"Kicking against the pricks. You don't know what you are doing!"

Scenes of bloodshed were unfolding in front of his eyes. In the vintage towns, many humans in traditional robes were crying and screaming, as they were faced Skeleton Dragon which had expanded to the size of the sky. Countless Cultivators were trying their best to deal with the monster on their flying swords, but they were as insignificant as ants in front of the gargantuan demon.

Soon, the picture changed. The ancient towns turned into the coruscating skyscrapers of the Heaven's Origin Sector. But just as their ancient counterparts, the buildings fell into an ocean of fire and became the most miserable hell under Skeleton Dragon's intrusion.

"Li Yao!"

Wang Ji's grinning face suddenly spoke. "The power of Skeleton Dragon is not something that you can stop. Come and join me in the arms of Skeleton Dragon and be part of the great demon!

"Skeleton Dragon may be lenient enough to spare some of your self-awareness. You will live for hundreds or thousands of years or even for all eternity in the form of a telepathic thought!

"Come on. Don't resist. Embrace it and be immortal. Be immortal!"

"Get out of my brain!"

Li Yao's brain seemed to be scraped by thousands of knives at the same time. Holding back the excruciating pain, he summoned the power of his soul and finally drove the weird mental intruder out of his brain.

Before he was able to catch his breath, he suddenly felt a wind was blowing at his face.

One of Skeleton Dragon's nine arms was suddenly lengthened and pierced at him like a spear!

Each of the nine bone arms had been connected by the extremely tensile transparent tentacles. When they were compressed together, the arm was only some twenty meters long. But when they were stretched out, the arm could easily reach fifty, or even a hundred, meters long.

The area of a hundred square meters was Skeleton Dragon's hunting ground!

BOOM!

Li Yao had just escaped the scourge of Skeleton Dragon's mental attack. He did not have any time to dodge and could only trigger his spiritual shield as best as possible. He had barely crossed his arms when he was blown away heavily!

His spiritual shield exploded suddenly, its scraps dispersing everywhere. Scary cracks appeared on the shoulders and the chest of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. Li Yao felt like ten thousand electric currents more powerful than thunderbolts had penetrated into his body through the gaps of his crystal suit and crushed all his veins and nerves.

The attack blew Li Yao more than a hundred meters away. He couldn't help but spurt out blood which dyed his helmet red.

Ding Lingdang and Yan Jun grunted in the communication channel, too. They were also blown hundreds of meters away by Skeleton Dragon. Hot blood was gradually spilling out of their bodies!

Skeleton Dragon ejected a powerful water current below its body, which pushed it upwards from the demolished town slowly. Its nine arms were all stretched to dozens of meters long and launched attacks at an eye-dazzling speed!

The Cultivators were immediately mired in a fierce battle, like a pack of cheetahs and tigers which were haunted by nine extremely thick boas.

"You've got to be kidding me!"

Skeleton Dragon was like a slug in a turtle shell, an oily and tensile soft body which was defended by powerful ancient magical equipment, and nine arms that could be stretched to a hundred meters away and even more agile and ferocious than the most daunting dragon-type demon beasts. It could even launch mental attacks!

"It's indeed powerful!"

Li Yao finally realized the formidability of an ancient deadly demon who had been qualified to fight for the sovereignty over the universe.

Even though it had been wounded multiple times, even though it had hibernated for tens of thousands of years, even though its capability was only 1% of the peak, it was Skeleton Dragon after all!

Li Yao felt cold to the bone.

For the first time, he realized that the Heaven's Origin Sector was only one millimeter from doom.

Cities, villages, valleys, and plateaus. The old, the young, men, and women. Cultivators and ordinary people. Magnates and hobos. Teachers and soldiers…

None would survive when doom befell the sector.

"The attack speed of Skeleton Dragon is increasing, and so is its strength. Its demonic energy is not spreading out outrageously anymore but being contained and condensed to be purer.

"We Building Foundation Stage Cultivators are no match for it at all. It played with us for such a long time because it was merely warming up!"

"Yes, warming up! It has just woken up from forty thousand years of stillness. Its body's reflexes are not as quick as before, nor is it familiar with the ways that the modern Cultivators fight. Therefore, it decided to play with us while it slowly regained its strength!"

Desperation!

For the first time in his life, Li Yao was grasped by hopeless desperation!

But in the very next second, the desperation was smashed into smithereens by his never-give-up attitude.

'No, I can't give up now. If I do, Senior Gao Xingce's thousands of years of pain and persistence will have been in vain!

'I am not alone. Behind me is the entire Heaven's Origin Sector. If I fall here, I will not be the only one who dies. The entire Heaven's Origin Sector will be destroyed soon!

'What do we do? All our magical equipment is not powerful enough to drill into Skeleton Dragon's body. Even if it does, the ancient magical equipment will simply block it!

'Wait, drill?!'

Li Yao suddenly thought of something. It had been mentioned in Senior Gao Xingce's journal that he had once drilled a giant demon beast hundreds of meters long to death with the drill of mystic rays on Sparkle.

'Right, the drill of mystic rays!

'The drill that can dig through the most solid rocks and metal mother lodes ten thousand meters below the ground!'

Chapter 430: One Minute!

Chapter 430: One Minute!

The formidable, even suffocating, Skeleton Dragon's might caused the communication channel to fall dead silent. The only things that could be heard were painful grunts and heavy breathing.

A Cultivator suffered too many wounds to maintain the defense line of his soul. He was swallowed by Skeleton Dragon's mental attack and screamed uncontrollably as if he was stuck in an endless nightmare.

"What do we do?"

Gritting her teeth, Ding Lingdang jumped above of one of Skeleton Dragon's arms and crashed into the skull at the end. One of the tusks in the skull was blown off, but yet another new crack was added to her already fragmented crystal suit!

"What do we do?"

Yan Jun stretched his bow and shot arrows again. The long bow condensed by spiritual energy let out a rain of hundreds of arrows, but in a much more lackluster hue than before.

The shooting seemed to have consumed most of his soul power. His body shivered beyond his control.

"What do we do?"

Leng Ziming was firing upon the demon crazily, when he suddenly heard an ominous reminder from his crystal processor. The Cosmos Ring fully loaded with ammunition was running out of supplies. There was only 10% left!

"What do we do?!"

Everybody was shouting crazily in their hearts.

Right then, Li Yao rumbled in the communication channel, "Ding Lingdang, Yan Jun, Leng Ziming, and everyone else, please hang in there and stall it for one minute. I've figured out how to deal with it!"

Li Yao activated his power rune arrays to maximum and also triggered Black Wing. His speed was ten times faster than before, as he withdrew from the battlefield and turned into a streak of blackness, dashing toward Sparkle.

"One minute?"

Seeing Li Yao running away desperately, there was suspicion in many Cultivators' eyes.

"Alright, one minute!"

The first one to respond to him was not Ding Lingdang, but Yan Jun!

Determination was beaming out of the best Child of the Occult Orbs. He gritted his teeth so hard that his molars were almost ground to dust. "One more time. Let's gamble one more time! Vulture Li Yao, I will give you one minute, but don't you disappoint me!"

While he was talking, Yan Jun consolidated a giant bow of spiritual energy right in front of him. But this time, he put himself on the bow and was shot toward Skeleton Dragon unstoppably like a flash arrow!

"Li Yao, you've never let me down before. I know you won't this time!"

Ding Lingdang burst into laughter like a volcanic eruption. The flames surging out of her body were in terrifying seven colors now!

At the critical moment, she had brought Nona-colored Fire, the dominating Cultivation art of the fire class, to the seventh level by activating her spiritual energy beyond her limits!

A hundred, ten thousand, a hundred thousand rainbows were dancing crazily around her body, while Ding Lingdang charged at two of Skeleton Dragon's unfathomably thick arms head-on like a Valkyrie reborn!

"Okay. We will try our best to buy you one minute!"

The other ten Cultivators roared frantically, too. The exhaust flames behind their crystal suits vented brilliant colors, pushing them forward into streaks of brightness, tackling the nine arms of Skeleton Dragon!

Even the Cultivator who had fallen into hallucinations because of the breakdown of his soul had stopped screaming.

Although he was still trapped in the nightmare, he sensed vaguely a familiar, vigorous, and passionate power!

It was the hymn of battle, echoing in the nightmare!

He ceased crying and cramping, and thundered like an animal, while he attacked the empty seawater restlessly.

Even in the nightmare, he had remembered that he was a Cultivator and started fighting the invisible enemies!

Hearing everyone's roars and seeing that they were fighting Skeleton Dragon without caring about their own lives, Li Yao felt that his eyes seemed to have turned into two volcanoes that were about to erupt. Something even hotter than magma was about to burst out!

He sniffed his nose nonstop. "I will not fail you. One minute. One minute is all I need!"

Shua!

Li Yao swept into Sparkle like a tornado and zigzagged in the narrow pathways until he rushed into the cockpit.

At this moment, eleven seconds had passed.

There were only forty-nine seconds left!

Li Yao's eyes were glittering like the morning star. Even the rising sun could not eclipse its dazzling brilliance.

He extended his right hand, where three glamourous pearls in an air of divinity appeared. They were the last three Flowing Brightness Crystals.

CRACK!

The three Flowing Brightness Crystal were crumbed into cluster of scraps large and small and powders in his palm.

In the meantime, he retrieved a large bottle of strengthening drug concentrate from his Cosmos Ring.

The concentrate was meant for the convenience of carrying for the Cultivators who were going to train in the wilderness.

Its concentration was dozens of times higher than the common strengthening drug, and it could only be taken after being diluted by a great amount of nutrition liquids, pure water, and neutralization drug.

This bottle of concentrate was enough for one month of training for a common Building Foundation Stage Cultivator.

Li Yao poured the scraps and powders that used to be the three Flowing Brightness Crystals into the concentrate and sealed the bottle without the tiniest gap. They, he held it with both his hands and shook it at a frequency of hundreds of times per second!

His two hands immediately turned into a cluster of humming grey mist.

Two seconds later, he opened the cap. Spiritual gas as intense as steam immediately soared to the ceiling and condensed into splendid clouds there in hissing sounds.

Inside the bottle, the liquid was in various colors. Bubbles were popping up nonstop as if it was boiling.

Three Flowing Brightness Crystal, with the highly-purified strengthening drug concentrate and the high-frequency vibration, led to drastic chemical reactions, even though Flowing Brightness Crystals were known to be extremely mild and stable Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures.

The corner of Li Yao's eyes twitched violently. Gritting his teeth, he craned his neck and drank the bottle of concentrate in three mouthfuls.

BOOM!

He felt that ten thousand crystal bombs had exploded in his stomach at the same time, or that a giant tree was rooting and sprouting in his gastrointestinal system. The roots pierced through his gastric wall, mingled with his veins and nerves and spread to his limbs. Poisonous thorns seemed to be growing from the roots which tore his internal organs apart and ripped open his every cell!

"Art of the Swallowing Whale, activate!"

Like a crazy devil, Li Yao held back the excruciating pain while his gastrointestinal system melted the magma-like spiritual energy flowing out of the Flowing Brightness Crystals with his soul. His flesh and blood were not able to withstand the raging spiritual energy and there were holes all over his body, but he couldn't care less about it!

Strength. It was strength that he needed!

At this moment, there was thirty-nine seconds to go.

Meeeeee!

In an earsplitting roar, Li Yao rushed to the captain seat and sat on it majestically. Thousands of light beams appeared in front of his eyes again, while the telepathic thoughts overly-triggered by the Flowing Brightness Crystals and the strengthening drug concentrate were transmitted to every corner of Sparkle through his hundreds of spiritual threads.

Sparkle was bathed in brilliance all of a sudden. The scale-like plate armor on its shell all stood up high like that of an infuriated dragon. Every magical equipment unit was roaring and yearning for blood and killing!

"Excellent! The manipulability of Sparkle is more than 10% for me right now. Sparkle will be even more powerful than before!"

Li Yao's lips curled. His teeth were like dozens of interconnecting battle sabers, while his hair was standing up like needles tousled by spiritual energy. The tip of his hair was as red as blood!

It was the ultimate sign that a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator had reached their limits in undying fighting will!

At the tail of Sparkle, the eight power rune arrays in a circle sent out astounding exhaust flames in earsplitting noises, driving Sparkle several kilometers away almost instantly at a speed bordering on its maximum!

Li Yao's consciousness, soul, and senses were all minced to pieces by the unexperienced power. The hideous expression on his face would terrify even the most daring devil. There was only one thought in his head that he knew: to rush over and drill through it!

At this moment, more than half a minute had gone.

There were only twenty-one seconds left.

"Drill of mystic rays, activate!"

A third of Li Yao's hair had turned blood red. His skin was chapping, his veins bulging. Countless round steel pebbles seemed to be rolling inside his veins toward his brain.

The thousands of light beams in front of him were blinking. Information was flooding down rampantly as if a dam had been breached.

Nine mystic colors suddenly surged out in front of Sparkle and interweaved into a cone-shaped cluster of brightness that looked like a giant drill. It grew brighter and brighter and eventually became eye-dazzling, while its rapid revolutions stirred up the seawater with awe-inspiring roars!

Seventeen seconds to go!

A thousand meters away from Skeleton Dragon!

Skeleton Demon also sensed that a great danger was coming. Its nine arms were waving at a much higher speed than before, and the water streams that it ejected from its bottom were getting more and more forceful. Its body was still like a monolithic mountain, but it was somewhat unpredictable now, as if it was overlapped by countless blurred shadows.

"It is trying to dodge. Stop it now!"

"We must hold it there for the full minute!"

"Seed explosion! Seed explosion! Seed explosion! Whoever still hasn't detonated your spiritual seed, now is the time!"

BOOM!

BOOM!

BOOM!

Three Cultivators suddenly turned into light balls that were even more blazing than the sun, while they exerted strength almost equal to the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators' and crashed into Skeleton Dragon's three arms brutally like three sprinting falling stars.

The giant skulls at the front ends of the three arms exploded at the same time!

Nine seconds to go!

Sparkle was five hundred meters away from Skeleton Dragon!

"Ho! Ho! Ho!"

Skeleton Dragon groaned in shock and anger. Its nine arms turned into thousands of phantoms, whipping, striking and biting!

The mental attack unleashed by its true body was brought to maximum, too. The brains of all the Cultivators were filled up with squeaking noises and plagued by invisible tides!

"One minute!"

The crystal suit on one of the Cultivators had almost been entirely battered. The plate armor in the chest fell off, revealing the ragged mustard suit inside.

Blood was spurting out of his chest like a fountain.

But he still roared and rushed toward the giant skull that was apparently too fearsome to be coped with by him.

"One minute!"

A Cultivator's flying swords and sabers were all broken. His crystal cannon had run out of spiritual energy. But he simply climbed up a giant skull with all fours and fought against the tusks inside barehanded!

"One minute!"

Ding Lingdang and Yan Jun had cut in above Skeleton Dragon's body and attacked its true self at the risk of being tied up by its transparent tentacles!

Three seconds to go!

Sparkle was only eighty meters away from Skeleton Dragon!

Li Yao's telepathic thoughts almost compacted into a real, visible thing. They crowded into the mainframe crystal processor in thousands of lasers. The mainframe crystal processor was functioning at the maximum, while the drill of mystic rays expanded yet again. Thousands of runes appeared on the surface of the drill and revolved as well, vaporizing the seawater nearby into an overwhelming smoke of brightness!

Three seconds, two seconds, one second!

Fifty meters, thirty meters, the last ten meters!

There was nothing that could stop it now.

Even if a god or Buddha were to appear in Sparkle's way, Li Yao would drill them through easily!

In soul-stirring screams, Skeleton Dragon mustered all its silver bones to the center of its body where the strongest defense was constructed.

Li Yao had no time to adjust the course, nor did he plan to.

In the very last second of the minute, he roared with all his might and drove Sparkle into Skeleton Dragon's thickest defense brutally!

Chapter 431: Spiral Thrusting!

Chapter 431: Spiral Thrusting!

The underground ocean was raging, raising waves that were about to consume the sky. The blast spread out in white halos. All the Cultivators were blown hundreds of meters away!

In the middle of Skeleton Dragon's chest, silver brightness burst out. Its monolithic body was moved dozens of meters backward.

However, the unstoppable strike of Sparkle finally came to a stop because of the piled-up silver bones.

"Didn't drill into it?"

All the Cultivators were upset, with desperation brimming in their eyes.

Inside the cockpit of Sparkle, Li Yao stood with his head held high. There was no sadness or delight in his face. His messy hair was suddenly prolonged and covered his shoulders. Two thirds of it turned blood red, drifting in the air although there was no wind and burning like furious fire!

Deep inside his brain, his spiritual energy condensed into countless transparent pearls which bombarded the glittering light spot in the center of his brain.

Spiritual seed!

It was the spiritual seed of Iron God Yan Ba, a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator!

BOOM—

Under hundreds of collisions per second, the glittering light spot suddenly shrank, and then unleashed endless brightness and heat, as if a supernova had exploded inside Li Yao's brain. The dominating storm of spiritual energy swept over his body instantly and swallowed all his cells!

The power that originated from the primordial creatures in the beginning of evolution and buried in the deepest parts of the cells was awakened!

Li Yao's every cell seemed to have undergone a lightning-like evolution from plankton to trilobite, to shark, to sarcosuchus, and to tyrannosaurs.

The ancient gate that had been sealed for millions of years was pushed open. The primeval force was set free!

"Hoooo!"

Li Yao raised his head and roared to the sky. His soundwaves seemed to have consolidated into a real thing, as if he had just spat out a cluster of black ink. His body size grew suddenly, and dark gold stripes appeared on his skin. Gold brilliance was also appearing in his bloodshot eyes.

His brain cell activity rushed beyond 1000% as soon as he entered the seed explosion state!

Countless dark gold giant creatures, draconic sharks, sarcosuchus, hydras, tyrannosaurs… The once ruthless dominators in the history of evolution appeared behind Li Yao, overlapping one another!

Hua! Hua!

Around the cockpit, the crystal wires that were as thick as boas suddenly ridded themselves of the fixation shelves and danced crazily around Li Yao!

The dark gold giant shadows behind Li Yao turned into thousands of streaks of gold and span around the crystal wires. At the command of the mainframe crystal processor, they lunged at the mystic ray drill.

Gold spirals suddenly appeared on the surface of the drill, whose speed was higher than it had ever been!

"EXPLODE!" roared Li Yao.

BOOM!

After an earthshaking explosion, the mystic ray drill battered the silver bone armor on Skeleton Dragon's chest into smithereens with the enhancement of the primeval force and dug into the hole!

"Stab! Strike! Through!"

The mystic ray drill was marching forward continuously, irrespective of how the tensile and weird soft body tried to block it. The redness in the center of Skeleton Demon's body seemed to realize that it was in peril. It shrank and shivered like a candle in the blowing wind.

At the critical moment, Skeleton Dragon's nine arms retreated suddenly and smashed Sparkle's shell brutally without bothering about the rest of the Cultivators.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The shell of Sparkle hadn't been entirely repaired from the erosion of thousands of years. Against Skeleton Dragon's full-strength strikes, it was soon full of breaches. Cracks, and even giant holes, were appearing in many places!

Skeleton Dragon's arms pierced into the interior of Sparkle like a dragon diving into the sea.

Gritting his teeth, Li Yao sealed all the compromised cabins and abandoned them on the crystal processor.

Skeleton Dragon's arms couldn't breach into the cockpit for a moment. Therefore, they simply pushed Sparkle away.

Forward and backward!

The two unimaginable forces were at an impasse. Sparkle was under so much pressure that its structure was uttering blood-freezing screeching noises as if it was going to break up any second!

Li Yao opened his arms. His heart was pounding like a drum, while his fire of life was burning more furiously than ever and drove the mystic ray drill forward without bothering about anything else!

Five meters! Seven meters! Ten meters!

The drill of mystic rays penetrated deep in and was only five meters away from the red core!

The dozens of ancient magical equipment stored inside Skeleton Dragon's body were all triggered crazily.

Four pieces of shield-like magical equipment stood in the path of the mystic ray drill quickly.

Seven flying swords scraped the drill of mystic rays brutally, producing colorful brilliance.

Two pieces of gourd-shaped magical equipment, on the other hand, was spurting purple and crimson venomous gas nonstop.

The other magical equipment simply crashed into the drill like moths darting into flames!

The drill of mystic rays continued marching forward!

The shield-like magical equipment exploded!

The seven flying swords were broken!

The both pieces gourd-shaped magical equipment were shattered to pieces!

Four meters! Three meters! Two meters!

"Sprint! Sprint!"

The Cultivators who were observing the situation in the periphery all launched attacks again now that Skeleton Dragon's nine arms were occupied by Sparkle.

But they were well aware that their attacks were merely scratches to Skeleton Dragon.

The key to the victory depended on Li Yao!

At this moment, there was only one meter between the drill of mystic rays and Skeleton Dragon's red core!

However, blocked by the nine arms of bones and countless pieces of ancient magical equipment, Sparkle was moving more and more slowly.

Inside the cockpit, Li Yao was breathing heavily; his eyes appeared hollow. Black blood was leaking out of every pore on his body.

He stumbled and fell to one knee. Craning his head, Li Yao gazed at the weird redness in the middle of the light beam and ushered the last bit of his fire of life and the remaining momentum of the power rune arrays to push Sparkle forward, forward and forward!

Two meters, one meters, half a meter!

Every centimeter forward meant hundreds of collisions with the ancient magical equipment. The drill of mystic rays was finally dampened. The speed of Sparkle was lower and lower, until it was stuck by more than ten scraps of a broken shield and came to a halt when it was only half a meter away from the red core of Skeleton Dragon.

"S—Stopped!"

All the Cultivators felt that their blood was freezing.

Too shocked to restrain himself, a seriously wounded Cultivator was invaded by Skeleton Dragon's mental power and exclaimed desperately in the communication channel, "All in vain! Our endeavors were all in vain! Skeleton Dragon is an ancient deadly demon from forty thousand years ago. We Building Foundation Stage Cultivators stand no chance against it at all! Absolutely no chance!"

As if to prove what he had said, Sparkle was pushed back inch by inch after trembling crazily for a minute in the competition of the two formidable forces.

The drill of mystic rays was still revolving rapidly, but the power rune arrays of Sparkle had exploded one by one. The remaining rune arrays were far from enough to provide sufficient impetus. Therefore, Skeleton Dragon was pushing it back slowly but surely!

Inside the cockpit, components and units exploded one after another, and more and more light beams fell into complete darkness.

The overall structure of Sparkle had been under tremendous pressure, too. It would crumble in less than five minutes.

Doggedness was beaming out of Li Yao's eyes as he tried to stand up. But he still fell to the ground after shivering for a moment and vomited a mouthful of black blood.

"Limit. This is… my limit!

"I can't defeat it. It was an unparalleled deadly demon forty thousand years ago and must've been far stronger than Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators when it was at its peak. I can't defeat it even though it has only several percent of its original capability!"

Li Yao was in a trance. His self-doubt was immediately detected by Skeleton Dragon, who launched immense mental waves scourging his brain.

Once again, Li Yao was faced with a hell on the earth.

Floating Spear City, his hometown, and the Grand Desolate War Institution, his mother school, were mountains of corpses and seas of blood.

All his family and friends and everybody he knew, Ding Lingdang, Yuan Manqiu, Peng Hai, Guan Xiong, Meng Jiang, Jiang Shaoyang, Principal Mao, Grandpa Wang, and so on were all crying and screaming in the seas of blood, before they turned into piles of bones.

An irresistible thunder rumbled inside his brain over and over again.

"You are just an ant at the Building Foundation Stage, and you dare to hurt me like this? Very soon, these scenes will become reality to your world, your home, you family and your friends!

"In the meantime, you will be melted and become part of me. The great chaos and slaughter will be started by you in person! Haha. Hahahaha!"

"Hu… Hu…"

Li Yao was breathing heavily. Two streams of blood were dribbling from his eyes.

The cruel scenes did not terrorize him but triggered the remaining fighting will in the deepest parts of his body.

It was all he had left right now.

'No…

'I will not let it go your way. I will not allow you to ruin my home, my family, my friends, my compatriots, and my civilization!

'What do I do? The impetus of the power rune arrays is not sufficient. My seed explosion state is about come to an end. The spiritual energy of the warship is running out. The hardness and revolution speed of the drill is diminishing. There are no other weapons on Sparkle. I can't even self-detonate and perish together with it!

'What do I do?! What do I do?!'

Li Yao buried his head in his hands painfully. He resisted Skeleton Dragon's mental attack while he quickly searched the inventory of magical equipment on Sparkle, hoping vaguely in the overwhelming desperation to find a hidden fatal weapon!

Suddenly, his body was frozen as if he had been hit by a lightning.

Ecstasy burst out of his eyes.

In a moment, Li Yao turned tranquil, somewhat frighteningly.

Sparkle was still being pushed away by Skeleton inch after inch. Another power rune array had exploded, resulting to a loss of impetus of 7%. The warship was obviously lopsided now.

But Li Yao had already put on a cruel smile. Taking a deep breath, he turned his two hands into hundreds of blurred shadows and raised a storm of information on the light beams.

"Ding Lingdang."

While Li Yao operated quickly to shut down and turn on certain components and units and to reconfigure the route of spiritual energy circulation, he said softly in the communication channel, "And everyone else. Please cease fire and keep a distance of at least two hundred meters from Sparkle."

Maybe because his voice was unusually calm, Ding Lingdang, who had been living with him side by side, sensed that something was wrong. She shrieked, "Li Yao, What—

What do you want? You are not going to play the self-detonation move, are you?"

Li Yao smiled and replied, "Don't be silly. Self-detonation is too much a cliché for me. Besides, the spiritual energy reserve on Sparkle is insufficient. I can't detonate anything even if I want to. Detonating a Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit alone is not enough to blow Skeleton Dragon up."

"Cut the nonsense! I know you too well! You are definitely concocting some sordid tricks!"

Ding Lingdang bellowed, "Come on and speak up! What are you planning to do?!"

Li Yao gritted his teeth and remained silent. He spared thirty percent of his computational ability to maintain the normal functioning of the mystic ray drill and the power rune arrays, while he constructed a brand new and even more complicated spiritual energy circulation model with the remaining seventy percent of his computational ability.

A group of components and units that had never been used in the previous fierce battle were activated!

"Li Yao, Li Yao!"

Hearing no reply for a long time, Ding Lingdang was almost crying, but her words were as stubborn as before. "I've never stopped you from doing anything. Whatever you do, I always believe in you and support you!

"However, listen to me carefully!

"Whatever you do, just don't die!

"Don't you ever die!

"If you dare to die casually without informing me, I swear that, even if you soul falls to the deepest level of hell, I will simply kick open its gate, drag back your wretched soul, stuff you into a puppet, and blow up your stupid head again!"

Chapter 432: Li Yao's Choice

Chapter 432: Li Yao's Choice

"I won't die," said Li Yao softly.

It was both like a promise to Ding Lingdang and a murmur to himself.

The faster his hands were moving, the more tranquil his face became. His firm voice was transmitted to everyone's ears like unstoppable falling stars.

"I promise you that I definitely won't die. I will just… be away for a while!

"But I will come back again very soon. I will return to the Heaven's Origin Sector and fight with you and everyone with stellar magical equipment under my feet!"

"Away?"

Everyone was dazed.

Ding Lingdang was somehow confused. Then, she realized what was going on as if lightning had struck her mind. She lost control and burst out, "Li Yao, you—"

Li Yao licked his dry lips and connected the last crystal wire. A new spiritual energy circulation started functioning!

Whatever was left of the spiritual reserve on the warship surged crazily toward the 'space jump system'!

The large teleportation array in the center of Sparkle suddenly glittered. Spiritual patterns and rune arrays spurted out colorful brilliance which rippled out like rainbows!

As a multipurpose exploration warship, the space jump system loaded on Sparkle far exceeded its scale; it was supposed to be installed on the main force warships more than three thousand meters long.

Usually, Sparkle and all the materials five kilometers nearby could be transported thousands of lightyears away with the teleportation range locked in 50%.

When Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures too large to be stored or dissected were detected in a foreign constellation, they could be bound to the shell of Sparkle and be teleported back to a base by upgrading the teleportation range to 60% or even higher.

But right now, Li Yao had overridden the warnings and set the teleportation range at 120% by force without care for himself!

As a result, everything within a hundred cubic meters of Sparkle would cruise the sea of stars by shattering the void!

Shattering the void meant going into the four-dimensional universe from the three-dimensional one before being compressed back. It was an extremely dangerous process.

Even the Cultivators who boasted abundant spiritual energy in a starship whose shell was intact might suffer serious consequences because of breaking through the void after a space jump.

It was inevitable for any creatures undergoing the process!

Right now, Skeleton Dragon was weaker than ever. In order to counterattack the drill of mystic rays, it must've used up most of its strength. Li Yao didn't believe that it could keep itself safe and sound with nothing but its body in a crazy space jump!

The odds were ten to one that its body would be torn apart by the endless cosmic storms!

Also, Li Yao didn't input the coordination of his destination because of the lack of a star map. Even if Skeleton Dragon was lucky enough to survive the disaster, since Sparkle could be transported to any random point in the furthest space jump distance, both of them would be far away from the Heaven's Origin Sector wherever they ended up in the boundless universe.

This was the ultimate plan that Li Yao came up with now that he was caught in a hopeless situation!

Since most of the spiritual energy was supplied to the space jump system, the drill and the power rune arrays slowed down all of a sudden. Skeleton Dragon was under much less pressure and pushed Sparkle out of its body at a higher and higher speed.

At first, it was exuberant and thought that Li Yao had already given up resistance due to exhaustion.

But a moment later, it sensed that a calamitous danger was coming!

On Sparkle, the mustard-level maintainers that resembled liquid metal were crowding to the damaged places resulting from the intrusion of its arms and filled up the holes at any cost.

In the meantime, a huge amount of super sticky foam that was meant to seal cracks temporarily in emergences was sprayed out into the cabins.

As a formidable demon forty thousand years ago, Skeleton Dragon boasted amazing computational ability, too. Based on these insignificant clues, it formulated a deadly possibility instantly!

In a moment, Skeleton Dragon shrieked in bewilderment and fury. Its mental waves penetrated the shell of the warship like countless ice pitons into the deepest part of Li Yao's brain where they captured a few crazily bouncing telepathic thoughts.

A tenth of a second later, Skeleton Dragon knew Li Yao's plan as clearly as Li Yao did.

"What are you doing?!

"Your warship is already riddled with holes. There is no way that it can support a space jump. It is definitely going to be ripped apart!

"Even if you are lucky enough to make it, we both might be teleported to a barren area in the universe far away from stars, planets, and world fragments because you don't have a star map at all. We won't be able to retrieve any materials or energy and will be starved to death in the darkness!

"Stop! Stop there!"

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. Then, his face was gleaming with amusement.

"So, you are scared of death, too."

Li Yao spat a mouthful of saliva mixed with blood. He shook his head violently to refresh his vision which had gone blurry. His hands maintained the same high speed and his fingers were almost broken off. Finally, all the parameters were set, and all the operations were completed!

"No. The teleportation array must not be activated!" Skeleton Dragon bellowed.

The red core at the center of its body shrank into an egg-shaped cluster of brightness the size of a human heart, before it suddenly bounced and released tens of thousands of red threads!

The red threads pierced forward rapidly like electric arcs. They avoided the drill of mystic rays and penetrated through the cockpit into Li Yao's brain as if the solid shell of the warship was nothing.

"Ahhhh!"

Li Yao's eyes were bulging wide. His feet had left the floor, because the red electric arcs were grabbing him by his neck. His eyes had rolled back and were filled with the whites. His limbs were all cramping crazily!

Skeleton Dragon had burnt its demonic soul madly despite the seriously wounded body and unleashed the most formidable mental attack, trying to take over the control of Li Yao's body.

CRACK! CRACK! CRACK!

Li Yao's joints were uttering blood-freezing squeaking noises. His arms were twisted in an unnatural way. No matter how he tried to resist, his arms were approaching the operation menu and about to cancel the space jump parameters that he'd just set.

Li Yao's brain was occupied by a surging ocean of blood. From the deepest part of the crimson swirls came countless voices.

"Stop!"

"Stop now!"

"You will die!"

Some of the voices were coarse, some high-pitched, some naïve and childish, some elderly and blended with coughs… All the voices gathered together, emanating alluring, soul-stirring temptation.

"Yes. That's my boy. Cancel the teleportation and join the arms of Skeleton Dragon with me…"

Wang Ji's extremely-twisted big face was floating in front of Li Yao again and grinning hideously.

Li Yao was breathing heavily like a bull. Every joint of his was trembling. His hands touched the light beam completely beyond his control.

Skeleton Dragon's soul was hundreds of times more powerful than Li Yao's. It was not something that a minor Building Foundation Stage Cultivator could deal with.

A dialogue popped up in the light beam: do you want to cancel the random space jump?

Right then, the mental power of Skeleton Dragon had descended to the deepest part of Li Yao's brain.

But a glimmering gold giant tree then released an enormous, unconquerable power!

It was the tremendous soul left by Ou Yezi that Li Yao hadn't digested and absorbed yet!

Skeleton Dragon's mental power was immediately dissipated like ice pitons being inserted into burning flames!

"What is this?!"

Skeleton Demon gasped in disbelief and bafflement, having no idea why the brain of a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator should contain a soul power than was even more immense than the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators'!

In Li Yao's head, the billions of enticing voices turned into billions of screams, and then vanished into thin air like vampires meeting the sunlight!

With a shiver, Li Yao was back to himself again.

Skeleton Dragon recovered from its shock, too, and launched the mental attack once more, but it didn't get a second opportunity.

Li Yao's eyes were as clear as water, where many high and mighty figures were floating.

He recalled Ding Yin, Wei Qingqing, and the other five Cultivators who had charged against the demon giant formed by the Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes gallantly for the protection of all the ordinary people on the crystal train, including himself.

He recalled all the Cultivators and soldiers who had fought valiantly in the bloody battles of Verdant Tarn City and the

War of Seven Cities.

He also recalled Senior Gao Xingce who had erased his identity, his past, his wife and children, everything but his last mission, just in order to fulfil his responsibility.

Every one of them seemed to be standing at his back and smiling at him, while they held back Skeleton Dragon's mental bombardment for him.

Li Yao smiled and said softly in the communication channel, "Ding Lingdang, I feel that I have never fully awakened as a Cultivator… until this moment."

"Li Yao, I will wait for you. Ten years, fifty years, a hundred years, I will be waiting for you! Even if you are teleported to the end of the cosmos, I will still be waiting for you! You must come back! You will come back!"

Ding Lingdang sobbed and screamed in her loudest voice.

"Don't you dare! How dare you! No! Nooo!"

Skeleton Dragon twisted and struggled to break away from Sparkle. But its nine arms had pierced into Sparkle too deeply to be withdrawn quickly. Under the diligent work of the mustard-level maintainers, they had melded with Sparkle.

How could it free itself quickly?

On the contrary, Li Yao took the opportunity of the shock of Skeleton Dragon's soul and drove Sparkle further ahead. The drill of mystic rays pierced in brutally once again. Skeleton Dragon's previous efforts proved to have been futile!

CRACK!

In the competition over the control of his body, Li Yao's phalange, forearm, and scapula on the right side of his body had all fractured. His entire arm dangled down freely.

But he did regain control over his left hand, which darted out and pointed softly on the light beam like a lightning.

The space jump system was successfully activated!

For a moment, Sparkle, as well as the entangled Skeleton Dragon, was became a phantom, as if dozens of their shadows were overlapping in their original places, before they turned into streaks of smoke and dispersed continuously.

"Ahhhhh!"

Skeleton Dragon had never been more scared. Under its inconceivable brute force, three of its arms were broken off from their roots, while it screamed miserably in excruciating pain.

But there was no time.

The front half of Sparkle had almost entirely crawled into his body. Billions of stars were shining and spreading from the teleportation array, wreathing Skeleton Dragon in a rapidly-revolving crystal ball more than a hundred meters in diameter.

The splendid scene awed all the Cultivators watching it.

They could both hear Skeleton Dragon's poignant yelling and growling and eventually begging, and Li Yao's violent coughs and heavy breaths in the communication channel.

In a few seconds, the crystal ball was already revolving so fast that nobody could see it clearly. Its brightness was hundreds of times more dazzling than previously.

The Cultivators' eyes were then filled with pure whiteness, making them unable to see anything.

They could only hear an earsplitting boom, as if the universe had been drilled through by Li Yao!

When they opened their eyes again, both Sparkle and Skeleton Dragon were gone.

The only thing left were the scraps of the torn-apart crystal ball, which were floating in the seawater like thousands of brilliant feathers of a vulture, until they dispersed gradually.

The scene was etched on the hearts of all the Cultivators present for all eternity.

Chapter 433: Resounding Hero

Chapter 433: Resounding Hero

One month later, in the Heaven's Origin Sector, all the important figures of the Star Glory Federation and the ultimate Cultivators of the sector had made their way to Empyreal Star City and gathered in the Temple of Fallen Stars in the center of the city that had been built in honor of the sacrificed heroes.

More than half of the members of parliament, the commanders-in-chief of several military bases, the commanders of the first, the fourth, and the seventh fleet, the leaders and elders of the top hundred sects, the principals, deans, and professors of the Nine Elite Universities, the chairman of the Demon Hunters' Association, the councilors of the Refiners' Association, the top experts among the unaffiliated Cultivators, together with the journalists from the most influential media and websites of the federation, all fixed their eyes on the Temple of the Fallen Stars.

Everyone showing up to this place was a renowned leader in their respective field, whose coughing was enough to trigger an earthquake in their trade.

But right now, the eminent celebrities were all standing straight in solemnness.

The national anthem was played. The Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars Flag gradually rose up in front of the Temple of

Fallen Stars and fluttered in the wind.

The martyrs of the Star Glory Federation had perished like falling stars, but their sacrifices had earned the flying, bloodshed flag in the blowing wind. The great dragon stopping in the highest sky stepping on all the stars was raging with its mouth and claws wide open!

Inside the Temple of Fallen Stars, the perished Orb Patrollers were represented by holographs, as well as the intense, sparking battle videos.

Xu Haoran, the Speaker of Parliament and a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, walked to the front with heavy steps, and glancing around as if his eyes were lightning, opened his mouth to speak.

"Today, I would like to reveal a top-secret operation to all the citizens of the Star Glory Federation as the Speaker of Parliament.

"In the meantime, I would also like to pay my utmost respect to all the Cultivators who have perished in the secret operation together with all of the citizens of the Star Glory Federation.

"Because they have saved the entire federation!

"A month ago, we sent out five Star Teams with thirty Orb Patrollers to explore an Occult Orb named 'Ultimacy'.

"It was not until we reached Ultimacy that we learnt that the true name of the planet was 'Boneyard', and that a gruesome demon was lurking ten thousand meters below the ground..."

Every town, mine, and farm in the Star Glory Federation, and all the other places that were connected to the Spiritual Nexus and had light beam facilities, were streaming the unprecedented memorial ceremony.

Men and women. The young and the old. Everyone dropped their work and listened carefully to Speaker Xu Haoran's speech wholeheartedly.

In the more than ten minutes of speech, there was not a single sentence of propaganda rhetoric. Xu Haoran told a soul-stirring, blood-boiling story slowly and touchingly.

"Other than the martyrs that have died for the federation, there is a special Cultivator who sacrificed himself at the critical moment with wisdom and courage and teleported Skeleton Dragon to somewhere else in the boundless universe. He saved the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Star Glory Federation!

"He is a real hero of the federation, a Cultivator who deserves his name to be known!

"Currently, his status is unknown. It is very possible that he is still drifting in the depths of the sea of stars.

"However, every one of us believe that he is alive and not lost in the cosmic turbulences. He has taken the first step of conquering the universe on behalf of the Star Glory Federation and the human civilization of the Heaven's Origin Sector!

"His name is Li Yao!"

From this moment, Vulture Li Yao's name was known by everyone in the Star Glory Federation.

…

2,600 kilometers away, in No. 1899 boot camp, hundreds of newly-recruited soldiers whose heads had been shaved clean were gazing at the light beam.

Hearing the name of 'Li Yao', one of the soldiers was dazed for a moment. He gritted his teeth, trying to contain himself, but eventually failed. His nose was twitching, his eyes red with tears brewing inside.

"Meng Jiang, what's wrong?" his companion beside him asked in a low voice.

"It's alright. I'm fine."

Meng Jiang, Li Yao's best friend in high school, took a heavy breath and gnashed his teeth.

His clenched fists were gripping his trousers so hard that the veins on the backs of his hands were bulging. The extremely elastic military suit was about to be torn open by him.

'Li Yao, never did I expect you to accomplish something so extraordinary!

'As your best friend, I can't be left behind by you by too much!

'Although I'm just an ordinary person and cannot awaken my spiritual root to be a majestic Cultivator, I'm officially a soldier of the federal army right now.

'Who says ordinary people can't fight demon beasts?

'Just wait for it. I will train as crazily as you do. By the time you come back, I may have already slain… a thousand demon beasts!'

...

On the playground of Floating Spear City's Mining Clan High School of Floating Spear City, all the students were weeping.

The training facilities of Floating Spear City's Mining Clan High School had all been sponsored by Li Yao. Many underprivileged students wouldn't have been able to go to school and train themselves without Li Yao's help.

Li Yao had even established a special fund to maintain the normal operation of Floating Spear City's Mining Clan High School.

Therefore, the students here all admired Li Yao and considered themselves to be Li Yao's young junior brothers. They had established an interest group named 'Vulture Squad' to collect all the news in which Li Yao appeared.

They had never expected that they would hear the news that Li Yao had gone missing in the sea of stars from the Speaker of Parliament one day.

The students were too young to have the basic concepts about the universe and other worlds. They only knew that Senior Brother Li Yao had gone to a place far, far away with no way of knowing if he was dead or alive. Inevitably, they all shed tears.

"Don't cry. We can't cry!"

A tall, thin boy who looked like a reed suddenly jumped up. He wiped his tears and announced, "Senior Brother Li Yao is a big hero from Floating Spear City. He will be fine! One day, he will come back as he promised. He will return splendidly with stellar magical equipment under his feet and blow the venomous pests of the Blood Demon Sector into smithereens!

"Until then, we, as his junior brothers, must not disgrace him!

"Senior Brother Li Yao is nicknamed as 'Vulture', which is the reason we created 'Vulture Squad'.

"Before he comes back, we will try our best to train ourselves and let the name of 'Vulture' resound on behalf of our senior brother!"

…

In the floating mountain of the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution, there was nothing but dead silence.

Surrounded by more than ten Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit of different models, Yuan Manqiu and a lot of other professors were watching the live stream quietly.

Yuan Manqiu's eyes were red. Two lines of dirty tears were flowing on her plump face.

"Li Yao, Li Yao…"

She sighed softly.

"Hahahaha. Senior Brother Li Yao, you must rest in peace! From today on, the banner of the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution shall be flown by me, the legendary super awesome lightning-hand, the rising superstar in the world of refiners, the puncher of Jiang Sheng and the kicker of Li Yao, sorry, the kicker of… Jiang Shaoyang. Yes, that's what I, Li Sanhao, will do!"

A young fatty was dancing merrily and declaring confidently in a classroom of freshmen and sophomores, only to be kicked to a corner after a cry.

…

In Serpent City in the south of the federation, Jiang Shaoyang was faced with a giant mountain of rusted magical equipment components.

But there was nothing except easiness in his face. Whistling a song out of tune, he was moving his hands so fast that thinking appeared to be redundant for him. Hundreds of his spiritual threads pulled almost a thousand components, removed dust from them, scraped them to the proper size, polished and reassembled them as quickly as a lightning.

Brand new magical equipment was born one piece after another in his hands which seemed to be an assembly line.

Occasionally, Jiang Shaoyang would raise his eyebrow and glanced at the light beam beside him.

"Li Yao, there is not really a winner between us yet. You don't want to run away just like that, do you?

"I hope you can train yourself to be a stronger, and even greater, person in the depths of the sea of stars!

"Only in such a way can I be granted a supreme sense of accomplishment after I defeat the invincible you!"

…

In the Dark Desolate Domain deep inside the Grand Desolate Plateau, thunder was rumbling, lightning was striking, and a storm was raging.

A somewhat lonely girl was traveling by herself in the wilderness. The occasional lightning illuminated the world and cast a narrow, long, and sharp shadow that looked like a saber behind her.

"Puff. Puff. Puff."

Dozens of hungry demon wolves approached the lone girl stealthily in the heavy rain.

Before the wolves were about to lunge forward, their leader suddenly had a sense of great danger. A ferociously flame seemed to be burning its heart into ash.

The girl was wearing a blood-red ring on her middle finger, which blossomed momentarily like a lotus of fire. It was sharp-edged and brimming with brutality; it had turned into an intimidating knuckle!

The girl walked toward the wolf pack with a smile and stretched to warm herself up. Explosive noises could be heard from the joints all over her body.

"My man is a hero of the federation.

"One day, he will come back with stellar magical equipment under his feet.

"I need to make use of every minute in training, too, in order to be the strongest person in the Heaven's Origin Sector before he returns!"

…

In the Blood Demon Sector, more than ten demon emperors in different yet equally hideous appearances gathered beside the raging, dark blood pool.

Countless demon kings and demon generals were kneeling humbly in panic beside their feet, waiting for the murderous fury to be rained upon them.

The intelligence from the Heaven's Origin Sector had been sent back.

The mission videos from Boneyard were all stored in the information bugs which were flying around them.

Elder Blood Robe waved his hand. Some ten information bugs were swallowed by the redness released and exploded into mists of blood after cracking sounds.

The mists of blood twisted and turned into life-like 3D videos, which were enough for the demon emperors to learn what had happened on Boneyard, even though the videos were mottled with blood.

In the videos, Li Yao steered Sparkle and activated the Rogue Meteorite at first, blowing countless demon generals into smithereens.

Then, with the enhancement of the Dragon Scale Extension, he turned into a God of War and slew everything standing in his way, causing immeasurable casualties.

One demon after another was slaughtered and cut into pieces as easy as pie amid their dying screams!

"Ughhhh!"

While he was watching, one of the demon emperors was too angry to contain himself anymore. His body quickly expanded and revealed his true self, an enormous crocodile with fearsome horns!

He slapped his tail hard, smashing the solidest rock into powder that was even finer than sand, as he exclaimed, "My grandson! My most excellent descendant with the most amazing power of bloodline whom I've bred wholeheartedly for twenty years has been slashed in two by Vulture Li Yao! Just one slash!"

Another demon emperor roared, too, "One of my true disciples was blown into pieces by him! This particular disciple had just accepted a tenth of my demonic blood. It seems it was a waste now!"

"And also my youngest son!"

"And also my disciple who has followed me for thirty years. The disciple that I'd spent so many Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures on modifying was killed! All my previous endeavors are in vain now!"

"Kill him! Kill Vulture Li Yao, pull his soul of his body, soak it into the blood pool, make him a pet of the Blood Demon Sector, and torture him for a thousand, no, ten thousand years!"

The anger of so many demon emperors congregated and triggered a surging tsunami inside the blood pool. Even the purple sky had been stabbed through, through which countless stars peered through.

Intimidated by their daunting aura, the demon kings and demon generals were all shaking in fear. Some of the weak demon soldiers in the periphery even passed out.

"What?"

"Li Yao has been teleported to the depths of the sea of stars together with Skeleton Dragon?"

"Damn it! Damn it!"

"Vulture Li Yao, you can't get away, not even if you hide in the other shores of the sea of stars. All the demon emperors of the Blood Demon Sector will join hands to find you and let you taste the fury of the Blood Demons!"

Chapter 434: Challenge the Storm

Chapter 434: Challenge the Storm

The central constellations in the sea of stars were often the ancient battlefields of the wars between the Demon Beast Empire and the Star Ocean Imperium, or the Cultivators and the demonic Cultivators.

Here, many worlds had been entirely shattered and broken into billions of world fragments.

Even the intact worlds were sometimes plagued by furious cosmic storms, spiritual tides, space turbulences, and even aggressive magical equipment left by past Cultivators, demonic Cultivators, or demons.

These places were places of perils.

One of these places was an exceptionally unfertile world, without a planet or a fragmented continent that was suitable for the survival of intellectual creatures. Even the star of this particular world had become dim and lackluster due to countless brutal, bloody wars over the past forty thousand years. It was emitting its last bit of brightness exhaustedly.

The edge of this world was a frozen hell. There were no planets, satellites, comets, or world fragments.

As far as one's eyes could reach, there was nothing but an overwhelming purple-red cosmic storm, which was raging and rushing in its orbit like a giant animal that was about to consume everything in its way.

The cosmic storm which was as vast as an ocean was mixed with a lot of meteorites. The smaller ones were only the size of fingernails or fists, but the bigger ones were more than a hundred meters in diameter. All the meteorites were shaped bizarrely with sharp edges, emanating brilliance of weirdness.

Maybe a long time ago, they had all belonged to the same planet. But the planet had been unfortunately captured by the cosmic storm, making its fragments the teeth of the cosmic storm.

Right then, a peculiar black swirl appeared in the way of the cosmic storm, like an invisible giant beast had opened its bloody mouth, spurting out dazzling brightness.

In the center of the brightness was something that couldn't be more ragged and twisted.

It was Sparkle and Skeleton Dragon!

Sparkle seemed to have been crumpled by a devil and then straightened carelessly. The previously streamlined shell was riddled with folds, fractures, and holes, from which air currents of red, orange, green and various other colors were spraying out nonstop.

Many metal scraps had broken up and exploded, like parasites which were desperate to run away from a dying host.

Skeleton Dragon was in an even worse state.

Sparkle had the last bit of its spiritual shield as well as its metal shell for defense, but Skeleton Dragon held back the tearing force of the space jump with nothing but its flesh-made body which had already fallen to its weakest point before the incident.

The majority of its silver bones had been battered. Seven out of its nine arms were broken. Two of the nines arms had been entirely blown to smithereens. There was only one last functional arm floating poorly in the vast space, trembling violently like the tail of a tadpole.

Its transparent body was now dirtier than ever. The strength that supported its body had been drained.

Crimson liquid flowed out of the red core in the center of its body which looked like a rotten apple right now.

The wounds were too heavy for Skeleton Dragon despite its amazing vitality. While it was struggling, it sensed the cosmic storm behind which was rushing close. Desperate mental waves burst out from its body.

"Die! We are all going to die!

"This cosmic storm is going to swallow us both! We can't run away! We can't!"

The lights inside the cockpit of Sparkle were all blinking. Most of the light beams were gone. Some ten crystal wires had cracked. Large clusters of sparks were bursting out from the mainframe crystal processor every once in a while.

The blood beside Li Yao's feet had gathered into a lake. His eyes were deeply hollowed and looked like two burning coals embedded in his head. With a smile of craziness, he ushered the remaining four power rune arrays to fully speed up without caring about Sparkle's extremely fragile state. Stunning brilliance burst out from the drill of mystic rays again!

There was no gravity in the space. Pushing Skeleton Dragon forward, Sparkle reached the limit of its speed in the blink of an eye and charged at the cosmic storm which had been blended with a cascade of meteorites.

"For the last time!

"SPIRIAL THURSTING!"

With Skeleton Dragon in its front, Sparkle crashed into a seven-colored meteorite almost a hundred meters in diameter like a lightning!

BOOM!

The meteorite exploded!

Skeleton Dragon let out a dying scream. It was drilled through by Sparkle from the center of its body. The red core shaking in fear in the beginning was punctured and split into multiple parts, dispersing into the universe!

Swoosh!

Sparkle turned into a streak of gold and continued drilling through Skeleton Dragon's body and into the meteorite until that was dug through, too!

Losing the enhancement of the red core, Skeleton Dragon's body parts finally couldn't stay together any longer. It collapsed magnificently like a tower built by sand being blown by savaging wind.

The silver bones with extraordinary defense ability which had been created based on the bones of countless strong demon beasts exploded!

Many pieces of the ancient magical equipment exploded!

The body tissue of Skeleton Dragon which was almost transparent exploded!

The remaining demonic energy that Skeleton Dragon had turned into intense demonic gas which spread out to form a blood-red cloud due to the loss of the demonic soul.

Skeleton Dragon, the ancient deadly demon from forty thousand years ago, had finally been slain by Li Yao and gave away a lot of precious Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures!

The silver bones, the scraps of the ancient magical equipment, its body tissues, and even the giant cluster of demonic energy were all ultimate treasures that every Cultivator craved for.

However, Li Yao had no time to collect all that stuff, because he was in the middle of a great crisis!

Sparkle had been completely devoured by the cosmic storm.

The purple-red cosmic storm was a result of the collision, absorption, and division of countless spiritual tides. It could invade the spiritual energy network of a warship easily and sabotage the spiritual energy circulation system, not to mention that the swarm of meteorites in it was at its top speed, the potential damage of which was no less than the full-strength strike of a Core Formation Stage Cultivator!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Sparkle's spiritual shield, which was already as thin as paper, was torn apart by the cosmic storm instantly. Most spiritual energy routes had been jammed or entirely cut off. Three of the four power rune arrays had broken down. The one that was still functioning seemed like it could join them at any moment.

The cascade of meteorites tore open Sparkle's weathered shell effortlessly and mauled the cabins and paths to its heart's content.

Li Yao's legs suddenly lost strength. He collapsed to the ground and gazed at the blinking ceiling in a trance.

"The damage of Sparkle has reached 62%, and is still soaring.

"The last bit of spiritual energy has been used up. The mustard-level maintainers are the only magical equipment that work right now. The spiritual shield and the power rune arrays are all unusable at this moment, let alone another space jump!

"The structure of Sparkle is in the worst state, too, and is not enough to support a second space jump. Even if there is enough spiritual energy, I will probably be ripped apart in the four-dimensional space and end up being a speck of dust in the universe if I perform a space jump recklessly!

"My own situation is much worse. The sequela of detonating the spiritual seed is attacking. My soul is dry, my body heavily wounded, and I need to summon all my strength just to lift one of my fingers. There is no way that I can repair Sparkle right now.

"What can I do even if I miraculously fix it up?

"Based on the lackluster sun of this world, I am certain that no habitable planet or world fragment can be supported by such a star, let alone one that is suitable for Cultivators!

"I am hopeless now.

"Even if I'm lucky enough to survive the cosmic storm, I can't repair Sparkle or embark on a new journey just by myself.

"I have fought the good fight; I have finished the race; I have kept faith… There's really nothing I can do now except to listen to the call of fate now."

Li Yao took a long breath. His eyes dimmed. Like a dying drowning person, he stopped struggling and simply stretched out his arms, allowing his body and soul to be consumed by the warm water, while he sank to the deep, dark bottom of the ocean…

The moment he was about to close his eyes, Ding Lingdang's vigorous roars suddenly rumbled beside his ears.

"Promise me that you won't die!"

Li Yao's eyes bulged open again. He gnashed his teeth.

"I can't die!

"I promised Ding Lingdang that I won't leave her in any case. I have to return to the Heaven's Origin Sector splendidly with stellar magical equipment under my feet one day!

"I can't give up. I can't give up as long as my heart is still beating! One more second of life means another second of hope!"

By this point, Sparkle had entered the zone where the meteorites were densest. It seemed to have been tossed into the bloody mouth of a space beast which was chewing it thoroughly.

Most of the cabins had been pierced through by the meteorites. Even the cockpit had been hit by one. The temperature inside was plummeting, and a huge amount of air was escaping.

If it were an ordinary people in such a harsh environment, they would've died instantly with their blood being forced out of their body a long time ago.

Li Yao found it hard to breathe even though he was a Cultivator. He felt that somebody was scraping his body with tiny knives, and he couldn't have been in more pain.

Thankfully, the meteorite which breached through the cockpit didn't hit him directly. Otherwise, nobody in the entire universe would have been able to save him.

Li Yao gritted his teeth and summoned the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit with whatever strength he had left.

He put on the crystal suit, activated the internal circulation system, and injected a dose of strengthening drug that could stimulate the central nerves. Taking a moment of breath, Li Yao started making his last attempts!

With the remaining functional modules of the mainframe crystal processor, Li Yao moved all the mustard-level maintainers to the cockpit.

From the outside, mustard-level maintainers looked like clusters of slowly-flowing silver liquid metal. They wriggled and covered the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, quickly mending the cracks on the surface of the crystal suit.

Sparkle was too large, and the mustard-level maintainers were too few. It was impossible to fix it up in such a short amount of time.

Therefore, it might be a better idea to focus them on his own body to repair the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit first.

Once the crystal suit was damaged by a meteorite, they would crowd over and fix the cracks.

The odds of survival would be relatively higher this way.

As for how he could survive in a barren, desolate vacuum with nothing but a crystal suit after Sparkle was shattered, Li Yao hadn't really considered the question yet.

He concentrated his full attention on the crisis at hand and tried his best to make himself live one second longer… and another second longer…

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

The crystal processor of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and the mainframe crystal processor of Sparkle both sent out warnings.

Both of them had detected that intense spiritual waves and a meteorite shower were coming at Sparkle unstoppably from the front.

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao rested for a moment on one of his knees. Then he struggled to his feet stubbornly. His right arm was dangling from his shoulder softly because of the bone fractures, but his left arm had been placed beside his waist; it was the preparation posture of the Chaos Gale Hammer Technique.

He was waiting patiently to fight the last battle with the cosmic storm!

Chapter 435: No Longer Alone

Chapter 435: No Longer Alone

After God knows how long, Li Yao felt that he had turned into a drill pushing forward helically in the sticky darkness.

After each rotation, he would move forward one centimeter; another rotation, he'd move another centimeter. He kept moving forward, forward, and forward, until the thick darkness was broken through and he saw vague brightness in front of him again.

His consciousness hadn't regained control over his brain yet, but he heard whispers beside his ears, as if many mice were talking,

"The technology of the Star Ocean Imperium is indeed impressive! 95% of the power rune arrays are no strangers to us. But look at their construction model! With the same spiritual runes and energy intensity, the impetus that their power rune arrays can provide is dozens of times greater than ours!

"The mustard-level maintainers are amazing, too! The Heaven's Origin Sector has only just started studying the mysteries of the mustard-level world. Although we can also manufacture mustard-level magical equipment that is one billionth the size of sand, we are not capable of carving so many rune arrays to endow it with such amazing repairing ability!"

"Treasury! Sparkle is truly a boundless treasury! If we can scrutinize everything on board, the development level of the refining techniques of the Heaven's Origin Sector will leap forward by at least thirty years!"

The voices turned into earsplitting noises in Li Yao's muddled brain, giving him a headache instead of actual meanings.

Li Yao blinked his eyes hard. After each blink, the blurry picture in front of his eyes became somewhat clearer. After hundreds of blinks, he finally realized that it was the cracking ceiling in the cockpit that he had been staring at the whole time.

Sparkle still existed!

'I'm not dead? I'm still in the cockpit? Sparkle didn't explode, either?'

Pictures popped up in Li Yao's brain like fist jumping out of the water. Li Yao remembered everything.

He remembered that more and more meteorites hit through the cockpit and brushed past him, whacking the mainframe crystal processor into garbage.

He punched at the cosmic storm and the cascade of meteorites, but the vacuum took all his attacks.

Until in the end, a gold meteorite the size of a fist rushed close and hit his chest brutally…

Li Yao was great alarmed. He lowered his head and examined his chest in a hurry.

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was already on the verge of destruction. But there was a lot of silver brightness on the cracks in its chest. The mustard-level maintainers seemed to have mended it in time.

His ribs were still aching, many of which must've broken. There was also a large area of bruising on his chest, as if it had been burnt by purple fire.

Li Yao was baffled. The gold meteorite had been travelling at an incredibly high a speed yet dealt such little damage. It didn't even pierce through his body?

How uncanny!

Quite a lot of silver powders were left on the skin of his chest. Several silver scraps even stabbed into his chest, but not very deeply. Therefore, he didn't feel much pain.

It appeared that some silver metal object had exploded in front of his chest and resisted the catastrophe for him.

"It was my Soul Condensing Pendant! My Soul Condensing Pendant is gone!"

Li Yao felt that his neck was empty. Extending one of his spiritual threads to sense the situation, he found that the pendant hanging on his neck had disappeared.

Three years ago, on the very first day of his life in the Grand Desolate War Institution, the test of the super-compressed crystal reactor had failed, leading to a calamitous explosion in which almost all of the professors and students of the Refining Department perished. But there was not a single spectral Cultivator that survived the disaster. The only thing left on the spot was the remnant of a half-melted Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

However, a year and a half later, Li Yao had perceived weird spiritual waves from the remnant of the crystal suit. It was then that he'd learnt that not everyone in the accident had been burnt into nothingness. Some professors and students had fled to the interior of the crystal reactor at the critical moment, but only ended up being Phantom Entities, a life form that was even more queer than regular ghosts!

Phantom Entities were scraps of ghosts in the two-dimensional universe. They had no self-awareness and no memories. The only thing that they possessed was the last bit of the perseverance that motivated them to never give up!

That day, Li Yao had vowed to the Phantom Entities that he would let them resume their past and consciousness, let them remember who they were and where they were going to, and let them be unfolded from the two-dimension to the three-dimension, so that they would turn from Phantom Entities to spectral Cultivators that could Cultivate again!

The source of these particular Phantom Entities' perseverance was the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

Therefore, Li Yao had refined a Soul Condensing Pendant and hidden all the Phantom Entities within. He had been wearing the pendant through all the fierce battles that he had been engaged in with the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

Although the reactions from the Phantom Entities were more and more intense, the crucial leap never happened.

When one died, one would be gone for all eternity. It was an arduous task to regather the souls when they had already dispersed.

Never did he expect that the Soul Condensing Pendant would block a meteorite and save his life one day.

However, the Phantom Entities residing inside the pendant, his professors and Senior Brothers, were probably truly gone this time without the slightest race left, were they not?

Li Yao sighed and extended his arm, trying to touch his chest where the pendant had been hanging, only to tear one of his wounds open. The pain was so excruciating that he gasped.

The whispers which sounded like mice drifted into his ears again.

"Excellent! Li Yao has woken up!"

"Great! How long till the med bay is ready?"

"65% has been repaired. But I haven't figured out the mechanism of many rune arrays yet. I need more time!"

This time, Li Yao heard them loud and clear, which creeped the hell out of him.

In a supposedly empty warship floating in the depths of the sea of stars, so many weird voices were speaking, some of which even sounded familiar.

What was even creepier was that the owners of these voices even knew his name!

Cold sweat immediately drenched Li Yao. He bellowed in a low voice, "Who? Who's there?!"

Shua!

The cockpit was illuminated. Five clusters of round liquid metal wriggled close like five lovely newborn animals. Four of them were relatively smaller, surrounding the bigger one in the center.

They had previously been the mustard-level maintainers on Sparkle. But right now, they seemed to be blessed with their own will.

The five clusters of liquid metal flowed slowly. One bump protruded out on each of them and was stretched out until it became a metal membrane that was almost transparent.

The metal membrane vibrated at a high frequency, creating soundwaves that were audible to human.

The biggest cluster of liquid metal started 'talking', somewhat in delight. "Mr. Li Yao, you've finally woken up! We were afraid that moving you might aggravate your injuries and therefore simply left you there. How about it? If you feel that you are able to walk, let's head over to the med bay!"

The more he listened, the more he found the voice familiar. Despite the shrill, metallic sound, he was certain that he had heard the same coarse voice somewhere else.

The liquid metal then continued speaking. "Although we can communicate with you telepathically, it would be great burden for us to do so. Our souls have just been unfolded from the two-dimension and can't suffer too much fatigue yet. Therefore, we'd prefer to talk with you in such a way. Are we good? Can you understand me?"

Unfolded from the two-dimension… Unfolded from the two-dimension…

Li Yao's eyes were bulging wider and wider. Thousands of lightning bolts were brewing in his eyes, while he felt like shouting to the sky in joy.

He finally remembered whom the voice belonged to!

Once upon a time, in so many days and nights, he had been receiving the enlightenment of the master of the voice through the teaching videos and learnt so much invaluable knowledge from him!

A messy-haired, red-eyed figure who was dancing with glee as if he were a patient of epilepsy seemed to have appeared above the cluster of metal liquid!

It was Professor Mo Xuan, the unquestionable leader of the grassroots refiners of the Heaven's Origin Sector, and the previous dean of the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution known as 'lunatic' who had challenged the elite refiners alone, led his department to pioneer the Project Mystic Skeleton, and eventually sacrificed himself for what he believed in!

"Professor…"

Li Yao's eyes were red. He was more thrilled than ever as he asked, "You—You finally unfolded yourself from the state of Phantom Entity and turned into a spectral Cultivator? Great! This is just great!"

"And me! And me!"

The four clusters of liquid metal that were relatively smaller all vibrated violently one after another.

"My name is Shi Tengfei. I was a final year student, and I'm best at the refining and research of power rune arrays!"

"My name is Gao Yang. I was in my final year, too. I like the magical equipment and technology related to teleportation arrays best!"

"I am Hua Yuanjia. My research field is defense rune arrays and spiritual shields. My dream is to build the strongest spiritual shield in the Heaven's Origin Sector!"

"I am Xiong Qili. Material science and structural planning are my specialties. To put it more simply, I study how to finish the manufacturing and assembling of super-large magical equipment with the most suitable materials in the most delicate architecture!"

"Hohohoho. We were the legendary four top experts of the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution. We are the 'Four Kings' of the grassroots refiners!"

Li Yao couldn't help but grin.

He had read a thing or two about the combination of 'Four Kings' in some notes and files of the Refining Department before. They were indeed four remarkable students before he'd arrived there. Although their research fields were very broad, they were the best experts in their respective research fields.

It was with their collective work that Project Mystic Skeleton was nearly accomplished.

But it was a pity that there were no experts in crystal reactors among them. Therefore, no one had been able to foresee the tragedy.

However, as it turned out, they'd all survived the disaster as Phantom Entities and now restored their self-awareness and memories!

Although he was in the middle of nowhere, he felt good knowing that his professors and senior brothers were with him and that he wouldn't be walking down the path alone.

It was a marvelous feeling!

"Mr. Li Yao, thank you very much. I do appreciate everything you've done for us and the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution!"

Professor Mo Xuan's metal membrane vibrated and spoke solemnly.

Then, the 'Four Kings' each spoke one after another.

"Senior Brother Li Yao, thank you very much!"

"Although our senses were very weird when we were Phantom Entities and we couldn't perceive much except for some information pieces, we could feel a hundred percent the furiously-burning fighting will of yours when you were in the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit every time."

"It was the fighting will that nourished and protected us so that we didn't disperse over the passage of time, but instead became stronger and clearer!"

"Just now, your fighting will suddenly increased to five times what it had ever been before. It was like the detonation of a giant bomb and helped us unfold instantly!"

Chapter 436: Star Spirits

Chapter 436: Star Spirits

Somewhat embarrassed, Li Yao scratched his hair and changed the topic.

"Are your memories and self-awareness fully back? I remember that there were more Phantom Entities than yourselves. Have the other Phantom Entities… disappeared?"

Mo Xuan sighed and said, "Spectral Cultivators are already a very mysterious life form that is entirely made up of spiritual energy; Phantom Entities are hundreds of times more mysterious than them. From humans to ghosts, from ghosts to Phantom Entities, and from Phantom Entities to spectral Cultivators. What happened to us is too implausible. Even we find it hard to describe our current status.

"Our self-awareness has been restored. But our memories stop at the moment of the crystal reactor's explosion. The prolonged time we spent as Phantom Entities is like smoke in the wind for us. The memories of that period are mottled and fragmented. It's hard to get through all of them.

"After we became Phantom Entities, our consciousness and memories were both lost. The only thing left for us was the thinking and computational ability, as well as the connection to magical equipment.

"Maybe it was the persistence and the thinking and computational ability that kept our souls from completely dispersing.

"But, I'm afraid that we are not technically spectral Cultivators yet, because real ghosts are able to leave the puppets and float in the air freely as long as the environment is favorable."

Li Yao nodded. Back when he had been searching for Wei Qingqing's broken soul in the battlefield, he had discovered her floating in midair.

Metal bodies were but clothes for spectral Cultivators. They could be changed to new ones at any time.

Later, Wei Qingqing had chosen a crystal green bird as her shell.

Mo Xuan mumbled, "I remember vaguely that I was floating in the black ocean where a lot of transparent numbers, lines, runes, and structure maps were glittering in octagonal gold brightness. They were spinning, bouncing, and colliding quickly, and I subconsciously calculated, contemplated, and created new structure maps with all my computational ability.

"I had no idea why I needed to calculate these stuff, nor did I know what it was that I'd been calculating. I only had a vague feeling that it was my most important mission, and that if I stopped calculating, I would collapse and be gone forever!"

"Me, too!" the Four Kings agreed.

Professor Mo Xuan continued speaking. "Then, the black sky was torn by something, through which countless gold rays beamed in. Bathed in the brightness, I immediately remembered who I was.

"My soul was consolidated, but my head was still in a mess. I didn't have any clue where I was. I merely swam toward the gold rays out of instinct.

"These gold rays seemed to boast endless attraction force; they pulled me into the hole in the sky effortlessly.

"Later, my soul suddenly felt heavier than before, as if it had been stuffed into a new body. Abundant spiritual energy and electromagnetic waves of weird attributes were dashing and dancing from my soul to my new shell.

"After a long time, I finally realized that I had melded with the mustard-level maintainers, or rather, the warship, into one!

"Gao Yang and the rest of them had similar experiences.

"We discussed it for a long time. Based on the mottled memories pieces, we inferred that we'd been existing as Phantom Entities over the past few years, until we were discovered and brought away by you. In the end, for reasons we didn't know, we were caught in the middle of an overwhelming cosmic storm and meteor shower.

"With the boost of your soaring fighting will and the countless kinds of foreign electromagnetic waves inside the cosmic storm, our self-awareness was restored, but with additional qualities that are not present in common ghosts.

"It may sound unbelievable, but the unfolding of Phantom Entities is an extremely rare event that might only happen once in a thousand years due to billions of favorable coincidences.

"Maybe, some sort of special energy contained inside the cosmic storm and the meteor shower made us what we are right now. Haha. Maybe we shouldn't call ourselves spectral Cultivators, but 'Star Spirits'; we are the spirits wandering among the stars!

"At first, we had almost a hundred companions. But most of them have dissipated due to corrosion of time. Many of them didn't survive the great outbreak of the cosmic storm and were obliterated in the dark sea of stars.

"However, the way that Phantom Entities exist is quite different from that of humans or ghosts. The most precious thing for us is the computational ability and the thinking patterns.

"Before other Phantom Entities perished, they copied their computational and thinking ability to our thinking models in a way that we can't comprehend.

"You may understand that they have handed over their ember of wisdom to us so that their will and mission could be passed on in such a way!"

"Yes, indeed. I feel that my computational ability is dozens of times higher than before. Many complicated problems can be solved easily. The optimized solution of many algorithms that I used to spend hours thinking about can be calculated within several seconds right now!"

Gao Yang condensed two arms that looked like matches with the liquid metal and danced airily.

"Me too, me too! Before I turned into a Phantom Entity, I'd been reflecting on the optimization of the structure of 253 commonly-seen power rune arrays. But just now, ha, I devised more than 325 brand new optimization plans for 74 of them in only ten minutes!"

Shi Tengfei twisted in excitement, too.

Li Yao took a long breath in relief. He finally realized what had happened. "So, it was you who repaired Sparkle?"

The cosmic storm had passed. It was peaceful outside. Although the cockpit was still riddled with holes, at least it had stopped trembling and was sealed again. The temperature and oxygen concentration were in an acceptable range, too.

Countless runes were jumping on several light beams, indicating that more than fifty components and units were being examined at the same time.

Sparkle had stabilized, however dangerously.

Mo Xuan smiled. "Correct. Death is indeed scary. But when we discovered that we had been melded with a powerful starship from the Star Ocean Imperium and had become its 'soul', we were immediately grabbed by excitement. As a refiner, you must understand the feeling as well!

"We wasted no time investigating every corner of the starship and discovered that it was on the verge of collapse. Therefore, crazy maintenance work was immediately initiated. Based on the amazing computational ability that we accumulated when we were Phantom Entities, we managed to make it survive the cosmic storm and the bombardment of the meteor shower!

"Right, we have been very curious. What exactly happened to the Heaven's Origin Sector after we 'died'? Where did you find the starship? Why are you steering the empty starship without a second crew member?

"You are a refiner and an Exo of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. But in any case, you shouldn't be the one that is piloting a starship. Aren't there a lot of seasoned Warship Connoisseurs in the military?

"Where are we right now? A new world?

"Although we don't know how far away we have moved, our observation is that the star here is ten times dimmer than the sun of the Heaven's Origin Sector, which is far from enough to support a world of Cultivators. Therefore, this area should be a barren wasteland. What are we doing in a wasteland?"

The senses of Phantom Entities were quite different from those of human beings. When Mo Xuan and the rest of them were in the state of Phantom Entities, they could only perceive Li Yao's intense spiritual waves and his calculations, creations, and questions concerning the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

They had no idea what was happening in the outside world just as much as Li Yao had no idea what was happening to them.

Li Yao thought for a while and told them the most important events after the explosion of the Refining Department as briefly as possible, including the invasion of the Blood Demon Sector, the competition of MP crystal suits, Occult Orbs Fellowship, and the exploration of Boneyard.

Although he had left many enticing details, the five spectral Cultivators were still greatly impressed.

Xiong Qili, one of the 'Four Kings', extended one narrow, long arm of liquid metal and patted Li Yao's shoulder. "In order to extinguish Skeleton Dragon, you decided to jump into the depths of the sea of stars? Mr. Li Yao, that was awesome!"

Hua Yuanjia also smiled. "When I was told that a freshman set up his goal as challenging the Refining Department of Deep Sea University and taking their title of 'Holy Land of Refiners', I thought that he must've been another big-mouthed idiot. But as it turns out, he was a… real hero!"

Li Yao coughed in embarrassment.

A hero?

He had no idea that he would be connected with the word one day.

But it felt truly incredible thinking about the changes that had happened to him over the past few years.

When he was in high school, Fiend Blade Peng Hai's visit to the No. 2 Crimson Nimbus High School taught him the first lesson about the formidability of Cultivators.

At that time, he had wanted to be Cultivators. But his biggest motivation had been the rumors that Cultivators such as Peng Hai all lived in villas, drove limos, and earned tens of millions every year easily.

Then, on the crystal train north to the Grand Desolate Plateau, the picture of the seven Cultivators who fought side by side and sacrificed themselves without hesitation had been etched in his memory and allowed him to awaken his spiritual root the next day and embark on the path of Cultivation.

Later, he'd trained himself continuously with the success of Project Mystic Skeleton as his target. But his ultimate desire had still been fame. He had never planned to be a hero one day.

Nevertheless, after the Battle of Verdant Tarn City, the War of Seven Cities, and the countless missions in Occult Orbs Fellowship, after witnessing Cultivators and ordinary people who had dedicated themselves to the bloodshed battlefields together and their choices between life and death, his personality had been gradually altered.

Then, on Boneyard…

Reading Senior Gao Xingce's journal and envisioning the future catastrophe descending upon the Heaven's Origin Sector due to Skeleton Dragon's mental attack, he didn't have a second thought.

Li Yao was sure that he was not a hero, and he didn't want to become any hero.

He simply wanted to be what he had always tried to be, a Cultivator!

A Cultivator just like Ding Yin, Wei Qingqing, Guan Xiong, Gao Xingce, and so on. Nothing else!

Li Yao's eyes glittered. He said, "Now you have learnt everything: the six of us are floating god knows where in the sea of stars in a boat that is close to garbage.

"What can we do to find our way home?"

Chapter 437: Stride Forward!

Chapter 437: Stride Forward!

The five spectral Cultivators, including Mo Xuan, were silent for a long time. The liquid metal was rolling with bubbles popping up nonstop as if it were boiling, indicating that they were in the middle of high-intensity thinking and computation.

Ten minutes later, Professor Mo Xuan finally spoke again.

"No matter where we are right now, the most important issue at hand is to repair Sparkle and make it able to perform space jumps once or twice.

"This is a gaunt wasteland. We will be hopeless if we are stuck here."

Li Yao nodded his head and said somewhat worriedly, "What is the situation of Sparkle?"

"Very terrible."

Professor Mo Xuan added, "According to what you said just now, Sparkle suffered serious damage seven thousand years ago and was locked in an undersea rock stratum until recently. Although the mustard-level maintainers have been repairing the warship slowly, they are only able to fix the external components and units that are relatively simple in structure. As for the core magical equipment that is more precise, such as the mainframe crystal processor, they can't fix it without the manipulation of a refiner.

"After thousands of years, Sparkle was finally fixed to the extent that it was functional. But then, it was engaged in a fierce battle against Skeleton Dragon, before it performed an insane, aimless space jump. 99% of the units on board were already on the verge of collapse at that time.

"After that, Sparkle encountered a cosmic storm and a meteor shower. Even its shell is battered now.

"Had we not woken up in time, I'm afraid Sparkle would've broken down and ended up as dust in the universe.

"Although we maintained the warship as quickly and thoroughly as possible, we only ensured that its structure remained intact. Right now, Sparkle has lost most of the impetus and abilities; it is no better than an empty shell!

"Therefore, whatever our future plan is, we need to fix up Sparkle first.

"The refining level of Sparkle is far beyond the knowledge of the Heaven's Origin Sector. It's impossible to restore it to one hundred percent with just the few of us.

"Thankfully, the Heaven's Origin Sector has abundant experience in refining crystal warships, too. We can modify Sparkle, however primitively, and make it regain thirty percent of its abilities. That shouldn't be a problem. Then, we will be able to perform one to two space jumps and leap out of this doomed wasteland.

"The biggest problem we are faced with right now is the lack of materials and spiritual energy. A cook cannot make food without ingredients, however skilled they are. Without sufficient Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and spiritual energy, we will not be able to conduct the maintenance work."

It was indeed a tricky problem. Li Yao started pondering.

Since they were in a wasteland, there were not too many Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures or spiritual energy available for them.

Even if there were, the desired items were most likely to be buried in the planets and stone belts that were close to the star.

With Sparkle's current status, it was impossible to fly to the nearby of a star. When they came too close, they might be consumed by a stellar storm instantly because of the debilitated spiritual shield.

After remaining silent for a while, Li Yao suddenly thought of something and exclaimed excitedly, "Wait, how are we lacking Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and spiritual energy? Isn't Skeleton Dragon's dead body scattered around us? We can make the best use of whatever's left of it, even though most of it has been swept away from the cosmic storm and the meteorite cascade!

"Skeleton Dragon's strengthened bones were all created through secret arts forty thousand years ago based on the bones of the most formidable demon beasts at that time. They are extremely hard!

"Although most of the ancient magical equipment inside its body has been drilled to dust with their abilities gone, the scraps can be used to fill up the cracks and holes of Sparkle!

"Its transparent flesh is extremely elastic; it can be stretched from ten meters to a hundred meters momentarily. It can also offset the enemy's attack like jelly. Such an excellent material is bound to improve the defensive ability and agility when it is applied to the key structure of Sparkle after we fully grasped its mysteries!

"When its demonic soul was annihilated, a lot of demonic energy was left, which can be transformed into spiritual energy that Sparkle can use through purification procedures. The spiritual energy can be used for our training, too!

"Anyway, Skeleton Dragon has offered us an enormous treasury. With its body's remnants, it's definitely possible to repair Sparkle and restore its space jump ability!"

Li Yao's words excited Mo Xuan and the others. Their membranes were pulsating quickly.

"Correct. Building magical equipment with the flesh and bones of demon beasts is a regular method in the art of refining. We are all experienced at this. The odds of success are not slim at all!

"As long as Sparkle is repaired, we will be able to perform a space jump again and land in a new world. So long as it is not as barren as this one, we will definitely be able to collect new materials and spiritual energy.

"Space jump after space jump, we will definitely meet other Cultivators in other human civilizations in the sea of stars one day!"

"A new world of Cultivators…"

Li Yao was fascinated by the idea. Confidence and determination brewed in his chest, as he mumbled to himself, "Yes. The Heaven's Origin Sector is on the edge of the sea of stars. Since we arrived at this place randomly, it's very unlikely we'll be teleported back with just one space jump.

"Now that we are not going to find the way home any time soon, we might as well stride forward confidently!

"To the new world of Cultivators! To the center of universe! To the end of the infinite stars!

"The worlds in the center of the universe are very likely to possess technology, magical equipment, and secret arts that are more advanced than those of the Heaven's Origin Sector. I can learn from them and train myself crazily so that I can be stronger!

"I'm still too weak at this moment. Middle level of the Building Foundation Stage is absolutely nothing in front of the real experts! Skeleton Dragon would've slain me effortlessly if it had regained 5% of its peak capability when I faced it!

"The previous captain of Sparkle was a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, too. Sparkle could function at the 100% level in his hands.

"But the acting captain right now is only in the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage, who can only bring out 10% of Sparkle's potential. Senior Gao Xingce would be ashamed of me if he knew this!

"It's officially decided then. I will traverse the sea of stars and advance into at least the Core Formation Stage in the coming few years. In the meantime, I will try to collect a few pieces of planetary magical equipment, if not stellar magical equipment, along the way. Then I will return to the Heaven's Origin Sector!"

According to the astrologists of the Star Glory Federation, the final melding of the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector would take place in twenty to thirty years.

Until then, neither of the two worlds had an overwhelming advantage against the other one.

Therefore, Li Yao set a ten-year limit for himself.

In the next ten years, he would try to build up himself, excavate powerful magical equipment, and then announce his grand return!

Mo Xuan and the other spectral Cultivators agreed unanimously.

Professor Mo Xuan chuckled in satisfaction.

"Cultivators of the Heaven's Origin Sector have always yearned to reach out to other Cultivators in the center of the sea of stars. But our starships are still too underdeveloped. Even the stars around the Heaven's Origin Sector are not entirely clear to us yet.

"Now that we have jumped out of the Heaven's Origin Sector by accident, of course we need to make best use of the opportunity to travel, train, and take in as much knowledge as possible. We will not go home empty-handed, but with a huge amount of magical equipment and Cultivation arts!"

Xiong Qili was a war maniac. He shouted, "In my opinion, we should establish our own forces in the sea of stars and bring a fleet of starships home with us!"

Everybody was amused.

Professor Mo Xuan then said, "Establishing our own forces may be unnecessary. But since Sparkle, as a multipurpose exploration starship, boasts a lot of labs, refining workshops, and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures analysis chambers, I think it is quite feasible that we can establish a 'Space Branch of the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution' on this ship!

"Mr. Li Yao, hasn't your dream always been to defeat the Refining Department of Deep Sea University and take over their title of 'Holy Land of Refiners'?

"It is also a dream of mine, as well as the rest of the professors and students in our department, which has never to been forgotten.

"However, to be completely honest, it's hardly likely for us to realize the dream within the Star Glory Federation.

"But now, everything is different!

"Right now, we are in possession of a multipurpose exploration starship from the Star Ocean Imperium. With its amazing space jump system, we are blessed with the opportunity to get in touch with hundreds of new constellations, other human civilizations and worlds of Cultivators, and previously-unseen magical equipment, Cultivation arts, and refining techniques!

"Let's make Sparkle our base as we will explore, research, and study the best magical equipment in the universe. We can even recruit the prodigies with potential in refining from other worlds in the name of the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution!

"If so, when we return to the Heaven's Origin Sector in ten years, our capability in refining will definitely be hundreds of times higher than Deep Sea University's; our department will be the well-deserved Holy Land of Refiners!"

Li Yao's blood was boiling while he was listening.

Beating the Refining Department of Deep Sea University had been his dream even before he took the College Entrance Examination.

However, as he walked further down the path of refining and climbed higher and higher, the formidability of the Refining Department of Deep Sea University was clearer and clearer to him.

It was true that the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit suppressed the Tiger King Battlesuit and became the most renowned MP crystal suit model in the federation.

However, the MP crystal suit project was just one of the dozens of projects of the same level for the Refining Department of Deep Sea University.

The behemoth known as 'Deep Sea' was too huge, too strong, and had lived for too many years. The failure of an MP crystal suit project was but a scratch for it.

Therefore, the dream hadn't occurred to Li Yao for a very long time. He didn't forget it, but he failed to find a way to achieve it.

But right now, Professor Mo Xuan's words ignited his passion once again.

Li Yao's eyes were glittering, his fists clenched. He seemed to be able to see the brilliant future in ten years' time.

Professor Mo Xuan's voice was coarse, but it was getting louder and more impassioned.

"Haven't you always planned to bring back a piece of stellar magical equipment?

"In my opinion, since the Star Ocean Imperium has been gone for thousands of years, it is an impossible task to find a piece of intact yet unowned stellar magical equipment.

"However, aren't we all refiners?

"Why don't we create our own stellar magical equipment with Sparkle as the core?"

Professor Mo Xuan's bold proposal almost made Li Yao's eyes and nostrils spurt fire.

He finally realized why Professor Mo Xuan was known as 'lunatic' in the world of refiners.

It was because he was indeed a lunatic, even more insane than Li Yao himself!

Assembling each component, carving each rune, and refining a piece of stellar magical equipment that could suppress an entire galaxy with one's own hands?

Li Yao was so ecstatic and enthusiastic that he was dancing, despite the sharp pain all over his body.

"Then what are we waiting for? Hurry up. Let's have a brainstorm and discuss the general modification plan for Sparkle now!"

Chapter 438: Go Forth, Sparkle! (End of Volume I)

Chapter 438: Go Forth, Sparkle! (End of Volume I)

One month later, in the edge of a cold, bleak wasteland, a sliver-glittering scrap from a piece of ancient magical equipment was spinning and floating.

Sparkle snuck close from behind without making a sound. Two ropes that had been refined out of Skeleton's skins and veins extended from the front of the starship, and when they arrived at the scrap, the ropes snatched at it quickly with the two metal claws at their ends.

Several rune arrays on the scrap were still intact, with feeble spiritual energy left. Sensing a threat, it immediately formed two bright gold shields.

However, the blue and purple electric arcs on the two metal claws crumbled the defense of the scrap instantly, before they pinned the scrap and took it back to Sparkle.

"Another scrap of ancient magical equipment has been retrieved. ID number, 14734. Preliminary analysis suggests that it belongs to an ancient shield of which 79% has been collected. If we combine them into our defense system, the defense ability of Sparkle will be improved by 3.2%!"

Sparkle today was entirely different from a month ago.

The Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and demonic energy that had burst out from Skeleton Dragon had almost all been gathered by them, who immediately made a great fortune.

Most parts of the shell too damaged to be repaired were ripped off, refined into raw materials, and replaced by silver bones, scraps of ancient magical equipment, and Skeleton Dragon's flesh.

Since time was of the essence, all the maintenance work was done in the most practical way without the least consideration of aesthetics. All the bones and scraps were piled up in a what looked like a careless mess, making Sparkle look like a ragged remnant of a starship, if not a heap of garbage that had been floating in the cosmos for thousands of years.

But on the mainframe crystal processor inside Sparkle, the specifications in various aspects had been greatly improved.

Strengthened by the silver bones and the body tissues of Skeleton Dragon, many parts of Sparkle had an overall hardness that was even higher than previously!

Inside the maintenance workshop at the rear of the starship…

"Based on the seven spiritual runes that we just analyzed, and with the remaining Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, I can totally improve the eight power rune arrays in the most classic Eight Trigrams distribution, which will make Sparkle's ability of instantaneous acceleration at least 80% higher than before!

"If so, the power of the mystic ray drill will be able to be fully demonstrated. However formidable my enemy is, I can just give 'em a spiral thrusting and simply drill a hole in their heart!"

Li Yao's face was flushed as he slapped the desk hard with his hands wide open.

"Instantaneous acceleration is just nonsense! The Eight Trigrams distribution is indeed classic. But the power rune arrays in such a distribution can only maximize the impetus when the vehicle is moving linearly! You want to move in a straight line when we are engaged with strong enemies in new worlds? We will only wind up being walking targets!

"In my opinion, we should think more carefully and refine twelve power rune arrays with less impetus. The Twelve Stars Chain distribution is the plan that we ought to adopt!

"Although the distribution guarantees less instantaneous acceleration and overall impetus, the agility of the vehicle will be greatly enhanced. Our course will be mysterious and unpredictable. It is best for small-scale dodging movements and will significantly improve our odds of survival when we are attacked by unknown enemies!"

Shi Tengfei, the expert in power rune arrays, was waving his two liquid-metal arms in the air crazily. To express that he was also 'flushed', the surface of the liquid metal was covered in a layer of redness.

Li Yao chuckled.

"Of course, it is a well-known disadvantage of the Eight Trigrams distribution that direction changes are awkward and linear acceleration is what it's best at.

"But I have analyzed more than ninety-five kinds of similar rune arrays from the ancient Cultivation world and come up with seven upgrade plans inspired by the control rune arrays of fifteen ancient flying swords. By revising the traditional Eight Trigrams distribution, the powerful linear acceleration is kept, and the agility in turning and dodging is greatly improved to the extent of the Twelve Stars Chain's, if not higher.

Shi Tengfei couldn't help but sneer.

"What a coincidence. I've made a lot of revisions to the Twelve Star Chain, too. The essence of the Seven Stars Asymmetric distribution, the Sweeping Wind distribution, and the other seven classic power rune array distributions have been melded into it now!

"Not only does the Twelve Stars Chain distribution perfected by me boast extraordinary dodging and mobilizing ability, its instantaneous acceleration is also as good as the Eight Trigram distribution's!"

Li Yao was suspicious.

"Are you exaggerating? Show me your distribution design!"

Shi Tengfei smiled assuredly.

"Of course. I would very much like to see how far you can go with the obsolete Eight Trigrams distribution!"

The hundreds of light beams floating around them all started blinking, where countless complicated structure designs manifested.

With his cheeks puffed up, Li Yao stared at the light beams and studied them carefully.

Shi Tengfei fell silent, too. The body of liquid metal was trembling violently as he was analyzing Li Yao's distribution plan.

A moment later, both of them were too astounded to say anything.

This was a regular scene that had been happening every day over the past month.

Professor Mo Xuan, Shi Tengfei, and the rest of the 'Four Kings' of the Refining Department had represented the top of the grassroots refining methodologies in the first place.

In the years when they were Phantom Entities, they were troubled by no trivia and only maintained their lives with their computational ability.

At the critical moment, they inherited the computational ability of other Phantom Entities.

It was not overstating it to say that they were the best experts of the Heaven's Origin Sector in the arts of refining right now.

In comparison, Li Yao was a professional in ancient refining techniques. Brilliant sparks immediately burst out when the two parties collided.

They were having furious arguments every day, as if two meteor showers crashing into each other.

Li Yao was often awed by their unbelievably amazing modern refining techniques.

They too were often so shocked by Li Yao's insane notions that their computational ability was almost frozen.

Together, they were like six top experts in martial arts who were practicing with each other every day. Greatly enlightened by the different ideologies, they found that their training efficiencies were hundreds of times higher than when they were alone.

It was because of these sparking collisions that Sparkle was being repaired at an inconceivable speed and renovated toward a monster-like starship blended with bones, flesh, and scraps which boasted unparalleled performance despite its grotesque appearance.

While Li Yao was scratching his head in great admiration, Professor Mo Xuan's unusually excited voice echoed in the broadcasting rune array in a corner of the cabin.

"Li Yao, I've made new discoveries. Come to the cockpit now!"

Inside the cockpit, Professor Mo Xuan was glittering at a high frequency, indicating that he couldn't be more thrilled.

Over the past few days, the maintenance and modification of the shell had been close to completion. Professor Mo Xuan was occupied by the recovery of the mainframe crystal processor.

"I've found a crystal chip deep inside the mainframe crystal processor which had been burnt before being smashed into pieces by a meteorite. After three days and three nights of maintenance and reverse engineering in the mustard level, I've finally decoded some information pieces, including the coordinates of a star beacon!"

Professor Mo Xuan's words raised tides thousands of meters high in Li Yao's heart.

The coordinates of a star beacon marked the location of a teleportation array. As long as they typed the coordination into the space jump system, it was very likely that they would be transported to somewhere near this particular star beacon!

Since star beacons were clearly man-made establishments, it was very likely that other worlds of Cultivators might be around this particular star beacon!

Professor Mo Xuan continued saying, "I cross-checked the coordinates of the star beacon with other information pieces that I gathered from the mainframe crystal processor. My conclusion is that the coordinates probably represent an interstellar dockyard of the Star Ocean Imperium.

"According to Senior Gao Xingce's journal, Sparkle underwent tremendous modification during their last stop, in which the main gun of the starship was replaced by a drill of mystic rays.

"Therefore, it is safe to infer that the interstellar dockyard must be a large-scale fleet base with abundant maintenance and refining facilities that can allow such an advanced starship like Sparkle to be modified and transformed.

"What do you think we can get from such a base?"

Li Yao was greatly interested. But he shook his head after thinking for a while. "Senior Gao Xingce said in his journal that they lost contact with their base after they reached Boneyard. It's very likely that the base was demolished in the 'Armageddon Rebellion'."

"It doesn't matter."

Professor Mo Xuan added, "For a base with extraordinary repairing and modifying abilities such as this one, it must've been built in a place where there were abundant spiritual energy and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. Even if the military has been destroyed, the world where the star beacon is located must still be very richly endowed. At the very least, we can definitely acquire much more resources there than we can in this wasteland. After we teleport there, we will be able to acquire ample spiritual energy and materials!"

Considering the situation carefully for a moment, Li Yao realized that it was a very reasonable assumption.

With any luck, he might be able to visit a logistic base of the Star Ocean Imperium. He was sure that he could dig out something useful there!

…

Ten days later…

"Chi…"

The door of the training room was wide open, spurting out bitter cold wind.

Inside the room, gravity was increased to twenty times normal and the temperature was minus a hundred and fifty degrees.

Li Yao was practically naked, wearing nothing but boxer shorts. He strode out of the room. There was not the tiniest speck of frost on his skin; it was red, shining, and elastic.

"My strength has fully recovered."

Clenching his fists and sensing the majestic strength flooding inside his flesh and blood, Li Yao smiled in satisfaction.

The sequela that he'd suffered from the fierce battle against Skeleton Dragon was completely gone now.

Because of the detonation of the spiritual seed, his limbs, veins, nerves, and internal organs had all been cleansed to the extent of being entirely reborn. During the seed explosion state, he had experienced the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators' feeling of dominating the entire world with nothing but their own hands.

The large quantity of Flowing Brightness Crystals he had consumed in a hurry were not entirely digested yet. Some of the leftovers which also contained immense spiritual energy were stored inside his body, which would certainly be of great help in his future training.

Although he was only at the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage, Li Yao was very confident about his future path of Cultivation, because he had seen clearly what he was pursuing instead of running around like a headless fly.

"Let's go!"

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao strode to the cockpit in high spirits.

Inside the cockpit, all preparations for the space jump had been completed. The five spectral Cultivators had manipulated the liquid metal and melted into the key units of Sparkle, monitoring the functioning of all the magical equipment on board.

Inside the operation menu, the coordination of the star beacon had been typed in.

There was still an important thing to do.

Sitting on the captain seat, Li Yao dabbed his fingers on the operation menu swiftly.

On the brand-new shell of Sparkle, an ensign as red as blood, as airy as fire and as brilliant as star replaced the Red Dragon Swallowing the Sun emblem of the Star Ocean Imperium. It gradually revealed itself and was clearer and clearer until it was shining.

A scary dragon was crouching on a giant pearl in which there were nine glittering pentagrams.

It was Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars, the national flag of the Star Glory Federation and the battle emblem for the Cultivators of the Heaven's Origin Sector!

Gazing at the dark universe in front of him that looked like a night sky, Li Yao smiled and put his hand on a sliding spiritual rune on the light beam. Then he pushed it forward and bellowed, "Go forth, Sparkle!"

=====Translator's Thought=====

Hi, guys. Welcome to the grand finale of Forty Millenniums of Cultivation. Li Yao was lost in the space and never heard again. End of story.

...

Haha. Just kidding. But this chapter does mark the end of Volume I of FMC. For me personally, it is also a 200-chapter (give or take) milestone. I was reluctant at first to pick up a novel that had already been translated (by multiple persons, lol), because it involved a lot of additional work of familiarization with the pervious plots and terminologies. But as it turned out, I began to fall in love with the novel as more and more chapters are translated (although collaboration with another translator could be indeed exhausting, if you know what I mean).

Admittedly, many plots in the book may be a bit incondite, and there are quite a few "filler" chapters that you might regret buying. But generally speaking, I think most characters in the book have been making sensible choices based on their background knowledge and current situation, which makes the story more logical and convincing.

The "filler" chapters actually help a lot in the world-building and make the book feel less like an "EXP-level up, EXP-level up" game but more like a real-life experience. The male protagonist is smart and strong but not overly so; the female protagonist plays her own role instead of just being a decorative vase. Also, the theme of the novel is devotion and sacrifice(in my opinion). Most characters in the book (at least the good ones) actually bear their companions and compatriots in mind, unlike many other Cultivation novels where the insignificant lackeys will simply die for the protagonist's cause without a good reason. I quite like that.

Chapter 439: Splendid Universe

Chapter 439: Splendid Universe

This was a glamorous constellation.

As far as one's eyes could see, colorful cosmic dust and world fragments were everywhere. Vigorous spiritual tides were surging like flooding rivers and collided with each other, raising ripples that looked like rainbows which spread out to the distance.

At the edge of the constellation, a super-large star beacon more than a thousand meters in diameter was floating silently.

The star beacon was oval shaped and looked like a monolithic olive. After almost ten thousand years of drifting, its surface had become riddled with hollows and bumps due to the meteors. Many sharp-edged meteorites had even stabbed into it.

Even the Red Dragon Swallowing the Sun emblem was somewhat faded right now.

Eight enormous nets were extended out of the star beacon.

Four of the nets had been sewn with metal pieces and membranes carved with countless runes, allowing the nets to absorb the precious spiritual energy from stars, cosmic storms, and spiritual tides.

The holes of the other four nets were miniature. They were designed to capture the meteorites and dust passing by and transport them inside the star beacon where the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures inside the material would be purified for the purpose of self-maintenance.

Just like that, the star beacon revolved slowly. On a level that was invisible to human eyes, it emitted mystic rays in thousands of different colors, broadcasting its location for all the worlds that could receive the signal.

Right then, a rune array inside the star beacon was triggered by a strange power. As if a sleeping animal had been woken up, many runes on the star beacon were illuminated in the chain reaction.

Countless metal antennas hundreds of meters long protruded out of the star beacon, making its size multiple times what it had been.

Its oval body split in two. Ripples spread out from its center to the far, far away, covering tens of thousands of square kilometers momentarily.

As the star beacon revolved slowly, the constellation within the tens of thousands of square kilometers was bathed in mild gold brightness. Then, the runes blinked. The gold brightness seemed to be boiling. A lot of tiny bubbles were popping up.

One of the 'bubbles' suddenly twisted and blurred, before it constricted into the shape of a starship.

The bubble broke. A starship appeared abruptly in the space out of nowhere.

After the prolonged interstellar teleportation, the shell of the starship was damaged again, making it look somewhat haggard.

But the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars emblem on the front of the starship was still shining brilliantly.

The star beacon had finished its guidance. The gold mystic rays were absorbed back into its body; the guidance antennas retreated. The body which had been split in two reassembled into one and fell silent again, waiting for the arrival of a new interstellar guest.

"We've made it!"

The cockpit of Sparkle was now a sea of cheers.

The probe system of Sparkle had scanned the appearance of the star beacon clearly. Even the mottled Red Dragon Swallowing the Sun emblem was detailed in the picture.

According to the ancient books, the larger a star beacon was, the higher its level would be and the more constellations and worlds it would be able to cover.

The star beacon that Li Yao had established on Boneyard was of the lowest level, which could only radiate out to less than ten thousand lightyears away.

But this star beacon in front was more than a thousand meters in diameter. It must've been a piece of high-level super-large magical equipment even in the era of the Star Ocean Imperium. To complete such giant architecture required a huge amount of spiritual energy and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures.

Since the Star Ocean Imperium had established such an advanced star beacon in this place, the very world here must've been of great significance!

As a multipurpose exploration starship, Sparkle boasted a lot of different probe magical equipment. Li Yao's spiritual threads extended into the mainframe crystal processor and started sensing the basic conditions of the world.

"Ho!"

After wandering in an infertile wasteland for over a month, Li Yao felt like a mouse which had fallen into a tank of rice now that he'd arrived in a new world.

This was indeed a prosperous world. Although Sparkle was quite a distance away from the star, the spiritual waves nearby were still very intense.

Sparkle had hardly begun searching when it detected several clusters of cosmic dusts and cosmic storms with abundant spiritual energy.

However…

The spiritual energy of this particular world was too abundant, to the extent that one might say it was chaotic.

Yes, chaotic!

Something must've happened to the world before. Sparkle failed to detect many stable planets but had found a lot of stone belts, garbage belts, and world fragments.

It appeared that more than half the worlds here had been blown to pieces a long time ago.

Half a day later, steering Sparkle, Li Yao flew toward some coordinates where metal reactions were extraordinarily intense.

After flying for five days and five nights, he finally arrived at the coordinates, only to find that it was a boundless ancient battleground.

This ancient battleground was thousands of times larger than the ancient battleground remnants in orbit around Boneyard. Li Yao couldn't see the edge of the battleground despite his remarkable sight. It was like an ocean of remnants.

Warship remnants that were riddled with holes, battered star fortresses, broken limbs of crystal suits and Cultivators, and countless lackluster metals and bone scraps were all floating in the dark space, silently displaying the results of the bloody, violent war thousands of years ago.

But this was just one of the ancient battlegrounds in this world.

The probe magical equipment of Sparkle had detected another dozen locations closer to the center of the constellation which were sending out similar metal reactions. Judging from the distance and the intensity of reactions, those remnants were of similar scale to the one that he was in.

"It seems that our deduction was correct. This world used to be an important military base of the Star Ocean Imperium. But during the 'Armageddon Rebellion', an unprecedented battle broke out. Billions of Cultivators and rebelling demonic Cultivators were engaged in furious combat nearby. Maybe, the few worlds nearby were involved, too. The constellation we are in right now was entirely blown up and stirred into chaos," Li Yao mumbled.

Then he was excited again. Rubbing his fits, he exclaimed, "But it couldn't be better for us! With so many ancient battleground relics, we can always find materials that are of use to us, even though most of the magical equipment and starships have been wrecked! Together with the abundant spiritual energy, it should be enough for us to further modify and strengthen Sparkle!"

Before Mo Xuan and the others could respond, red lights were suddenly blinking inside the cockpit. Broadcasting rune arrays were sending out urgent warnings.

"Intense spiritual waves detected!"

"Activities of intellectual creatures detected!"

Li Yao's eyes were immediately shining. The speed of his hands was brought up to a whole new level as he triggered the probe magical equipment.

He found that the center of the relic was wreathed in a cluster of vague grey mist, which made it looked like a round eggshell.

Around the grey mist, there were a lot of traces that looked like capillaries, a clear sign that the solidarity of the grey mist was being disturbed by many objects which had been flying in and out.

"It's a world fragment. A fairly large one!"

Li Yao was greatly interested.

A world fragment was originally part of an intact world. They only came into being because of the collapse of the mother world they were in. The natural laws that made them exist were completely different from those of the intact worlds. They could stay stable even though they were only dozens of kilometers in diameter, with air, sunlight, water, and everything necessary for the survival of human beings.

"Excellent!"

Li Yao licked his lips and swallowed.

Although he had a much stronger body than ordinary people as a Cultivator, he still couldn't wait to enjoy some fresh air after breathing the recycled air inside Sparkle for such a long time.

However, one could never be too prudent. As a 'vulture' born and raised in a magical equipment graveyard, Li Yao wouldn't overestimate the integrity of certain human beings.

The chaotic environment of the world should be enough to prove that the surviving human beings here wouldn't be the most lenient persons in the universe.

For a moment, a familiar feeling suddenly occurred to Li Yao.

"This world is crumbled and chaotic, messed up with large areas of ancient battleground relics and countless invaluable garbage. Isn't this a universe-level 'magical equipment graveyard'?

"Let's see what kind of treasure we can dig out in this place!"

Li Yao smiled confidently and said to Mo Xuan, "Now that signs of living creatures have been detected, let's carry out the 'infiltration' plan!"

Li Yao raised his right hand and pressed his index finger and middle finger to his forehead above his spiritual root. He muttered spells as his Cosmos Ring glittered.

"Shua!"

A weird scene took place!

His body was suddenly enveloped in a black and red glow. The flowing brightness span and tied him up. One third of a second later, the brightness had been entirely consolidated.

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit covered him!

This was a secret art to retrieve a crystal suit from a Cosmos Ring in the era of the Star Ocean Imperium.

In the past, after Li Yao had retrieved his crystal suit, he would have to open it with his telepathic thoughts, turn around, and walk into it; the entire process would take more than five seconds.

If he was engaged with a super expert, he would've been blown to pieces before he was able to put on his crystal suit.

But if he were to wear his crystal suit all the time, not only would it consume a lot of spiritual energy, the likelihood of him being exposed would also greatly increase, not to mention that he wouldn't be able to fit in many tight spaces such as the cockpit of an armed shuttle.

However, with the secret art of the Star Ocean Imperium, he would be able to put on his crystal suit within one tenth second when he was more familiar with it.

It was only one of the twenty or so secret arts recorded in Senior Gao Xingce's journal.

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit at this moment had undergone tremendous changes compared with previously, too.

Large quantities of silver bones, ancient magical equipment scraps, and flesh and blood harvested from Skeleton Dragon had been integrated into the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

Together with Mo Xuan and the 'Four Kings' who had spent their entire lives studying the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, a lot of strengthening and modification plans had been formulated after the sparking collisions of their wisdom.

Right now, the surface of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had been strengthened by a lot of silver bones, which had significantly improved its defense ability.

Li Yao had also torn off a lot of tusks from the giant skulls on Skeleton Dragon's arms. After mixing them with the scraps of ancient magical equipment, he'd refined them into headbutting horns and combat thorns and added them to the elbows, knees, helmet, and shoulders of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

As for Skeleton Dragon's flesh and blood, which were surprisingly tensile, they had been used to fill the gaps of joints and the interior of the crystal suit.

The materials were the best buffer that could even dissipate the enemy's strike to every part of the body.

With the 'Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining' technique which endowed Li Yao with impressive defense ability, Li Yao was confident that he could grit his teeth and hold back a

Core Formation Stage Cultivator's full-strength strike should he suffer one!

Chapter 440: First Contact

Chapter 440: First Contact

Crack! Crack!

Five sharp talons stuck out of the left arm, which had been refined out of silver bones and scraps of the ancient magical equipment. It had an air of the brutality and bloodthirst of the demon beasts as well as a vintage and ancient aura.

Their hardness, strength, flexibility, and spiritual energy conductivity were dozens of times higher than those of common super alloys.

With a telepathic thought from Li Yao, the sharp talons started vibrating at a high frequency, triggering purple electric arcs and blue fire, whose brightness consolidated into almost a real thing. The damage of his attack would be five times stronger than before when he performed the Purple Electric Blue Fire Claw Art.

He unsheathed the Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber with his right hand. The crimson body of the saber seemed very similar to before. But there were rounds of ripples caused by runes on it right now.

Li Yao waved his saber. After a 'shua' sound, the body of the saber split into dozens of sections like a spine. Each section was connected to the next one by Skeleton Dragon's transparent flesh that was as thin as a hair. Under the surging spiritual energy, the saber extended to almost a hundred meters long, dancing and circling him like a bizarre boa that was baring its fangs.

The attack range of the strengthened Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber had been expanded to a hundred square meters. Multiple attack modes were added, and the attack angles were much more unpredictable!

As for Li Yao's favorite Triple-headed Six-barrel Vulcan Machine Gun, its barrels had been significantly improved, too. More importantly, since many silver bones and scraps of ancient magical equipment had been too broken to be reorganized, Li Yao had refined them into special silver bullets and sealed Skeleton Dragon's intense demonic energy into them, before performing the Blood Baptism by mixing the blood from his fingertip, the tip of his tongue, and from his heart with his telepathic thought!

Once the bullets were triggered, he would be able to control them fully at his will. They were like countless tiny flying swords that would go anywhere that he wanted.

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit which had been comprehensively upgraded was both gruesome and murderous, and in every way intimidating. If it were in the Heaven's Origin Sector, its specifications would be as good as those of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators' super crystal suits, if not better.

Other than that, Mo Xuan had also conducted a lot of modifications on the crystal processor of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and remotely docked it to the mainframe crystal processor of Sparkle.

Within a certain range, Li Yao could control Sparkle with his telepathic thoughts even if he was not in it.

Even though Li Yao was distances away from Sparkle, as long as they were on the same world without too much interference, they would be able to construct a communication channel and contact each other.

A silver brightness was flowing slowly among the gaps of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit which was part of the mustard-level maintainers. Li Yao carried them with him for the simple maintenance work.

Li Yao also stored a lot of silver bones, scraps of ancient magical equipment, and Skeleton Dragon's flesh inside his Cosmos Ring. He would be able to complete more complicated modifications when the actual situation demanded.

Li Yao, at this moment, was truly armed to the teeth.

Yet, he was not satisfied yet. He touched his forehead with his two fingers again. A lot of additional components appeared on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

These were the plug-ins that they had refined based on the mechanism of the Ares Extension, but they didn't provide any extra abilities at all; they were just a layer of camouflage.

In a moment, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was covered in a layer of ragged, broken plate armor. Many parts of it were rusted as if they had been deeply corroded by something.

Whoever saw the crystal suit would be given the impression that it would crumble in the very next second.

Li Yao scanned his appearance with crystal cameras and nodded in satisfaction. Then, he reached a cabin in the center of the starship.

A long-prepared oval escape capsule was waiting patiently. Its shell was full of dints that were clearly the result of a shower of small meteorites, indicating that it had gone through a protracted, perilous journey.

"After I take off, you just hide in the depths of the ancient battleground and cover the surface of Sparkle with the ragged remnants nearby. Try to conceal Sparkle and yourselves!

"There are thousands of remnants of starships in this place. Hiding here is like placing a pebble in a riverbed. Nobody will notice anything abnormal at all.

"You can also explore the ancient relics and search for valuable remnants, but take care of yourselves. Safety first!

"If there's anything wrong on my side, I will reach out to you and you can reinforce me as soon as possible."

Li Yao crawled into the escape capsule after issuing his instructions to Mo Xuan and the rest of them.

It was a plan they'd settled on after lengthy discussions. When they came across a new world of Cultivators, Li Yao and Sparkle would part with each other and start their respective operations until the details of the new world had been figured out.

Sparkle was too large in size, after all. The starship was two hundred meters long. It was but millet compared to the vast universe. However, it would be quite a conspicuous target within the atmosphere. Somebody would definitely notice it.

If strong forces that boasted one or even more Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators resided in the planet, Sparkle would be like walking right into a trap.

If Li Yao were alone, the target would be much smaller, and he would be able to do whatever he wanted freely.

Once he was caught in any danger, Sparkle would be his trump card to reverse the situation.

"Rest assured. We'll definitely make Sparkle stronger than now while you're away!"

Professor Mo Xuan grinned.

Li Yao smiled. Triggering his telepathic thoughts, he activated his escape capsule, which slid out of Sparkle and dived into the world fragment enveloped in the grey fog.

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

The sixteen miniature power rune arrays around the escape capsule spurted thin air currents. Steering the vehicle delicately, Li Yao avoided the remnants by a close margin.

However, he would crash into a remnant or two on purpose, leaving new hollows on the shell of the escape capsule to make it more like an authentic one.

When he approached the grey fog, he even crashed into an extremely sharp remnant, which produced a giant hole on the escape capsule and caused all the air to leak outside.

Therefore, he had a perfect reason to be wearing a crystal suit.

The escape capsule dashed into the grey fog and landed toward the world fragment.

…

Mu Ping grunted. He swallowed many times but finally failed to hold it in. A mouthful of black blood was vomited out.

His helmet was immediately filled with an intense stink of blood.

"We are screwed. Even the mercenary Exos that we hired have been killed miserably. What can the shrimps in town do?"

Mu Peng was desperate.

He was in his sixties. The interconnected scars on his haggard face were scary, but they also made apparent his seniority on the battlefield.

But right now, it was not the flames of determination that were burning in Mu Ping's eyes, but the deepest fear.

In front of him, in a continuous plateau of metal, more than ten Exos were besieging a big fellow dozens of meters long, launching futile attacks nonstop.

A few other Exos were crying wretchedly amongst the heap of garbage in broken crystal suits.

Several other Exos were dead quiet. Blood was flowing out of their crystal suits. There was no telling whether they were alive or dead.

The big fellow… looked like a crab, only countless times larger and completely made of rocks. Many key body parts were emitting dull, metallic lights.

Spiral stripes were growing on its shell. Traces of weird runes could still be found in the stripes.

It was even carrying a double-headed crystal cannons on its back.

The giant crab looked like a hybrid of a demon beast and a machine. It seemed to be a devil from the bloody hell appearing in the human world!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The crystal cannon on the back of the giant crab was apparently much more life-threatening than the long-range magical equipment of the Exos. Every time it opened fire, three to five people would be blown away.

In a flurry, many other Exos were snatched by the fearsome pincers of the craw. After cracking sounds, some of their body parts would be cut off from their bodies!

The town is doomed! Mu Ping thought painfully. But he opened his eyes wide and roared. Holding his chainsword which had run out of spiritual energy, he charged forward again.

Right then, a thunder rumbled in the sky. A cluster of brightness that was hundreds of times more dazzling than falling stars precisely hit the center of the battleground, resulting in a crater several meters deep and raising countless broken stones and metal scraps like blossom. The battlefield was immediately shrouded in smoke.

The Exos and the demon beast were all taken aback. The bloody battlefield was immediately caught in an awkward silence.

"What is this?"

"A broken escape capsule?"

Li Yao kicked open the door of the capsule which was already deformed. His crystal camera immediately captured the demon crab which was waving its enormous pincers. He frowned.

To pretend that he had been drifting in the sea of stars and only fell into the world fragment by accident, Li Yao gave up the control of power rune arrays after he broke into the grey fog and simply allowed the escape capsule to fall freely, driven by gravity.

He had not expected that he would end up in the center of a battleground.

The crystal camera of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit glanced over everyone on the spot.

Li Yao studied the crystal suits that the Exos were wearing with the eyes of a professional.

He discovered that, although the crystal suits were all different models, they were in an equally clumsy style. They were more than 2.5 meters, with too thick plate armor and too crudely-connected joints. They did not look like crystal suits specialized for combat, but suits that had been meddled with to add engineering magical equipment.

Are you kidding me? This world is so luxury as to equip the engineering workers with crystal suits?

Also, why can I not feel the tiniest hint of spiritual energy from those Exos? They can cover up their spiritual energy so skillfully that they are alike to ordinary people?

That can't be right. Quite a few of them are lying on the ground. This is the critical moment of a battle. It's time to burn one's soul and detonate one's spiritual seed. Who would conceal their capability at such time?

The demon beast behind him gave him a big surprise, too.

It was not because the demonic energy of the crab was too immense, but because of the double-headed crystal cannon on its back!

The crystal cannon had been refined in a style that was different to any piece of magical equipment Li Yao had ever seen. The barrel was narrow and long, surrounded by countless sharp thorns, giving out an air of doubtless evilness. One look at it was enough to filled one's heart with fear.

A hybrid of a demon beast and a piece of magical equipment? What is this?

Li Yao had been thinking of concealing his capability before he figured out what was going on.

But right now, it seemed impossible because the giant crab was greatly shocked by the suddenly appearance of the escape capsule. Apparently infuriated by the intruder, it charged at Li Yao and stabbed Li Yao with its pincers covered in sharp thorns, while layers of wave-like redness appeared on its iron shell!

Chapter 441: Flying Star Sector

Chapter 441: Flying Star Sector

Before the pincers reached him, an invisible wave of air stirred up Li Yao's surroundings. The turbulence covered Li Yao like an impregnable net.

In the meantime, the double-head crystal cannon on the back of the giant crab emitted weird redness, too. Spiritual waves were condensing in the depths of the barrels. The frequency and wavelength were totally different from the hundreds of spiritual energy condensing methods that Li Yao had seen before; the spiritual waves he was witnessing at this moment were much more shrill, furious, and unstable.

After a single glance, Li Yao's mind was already greatly disturbed. All kinds of dark feelings were popping up inside his brain weirdly.

Li Yao showed no expression. His eyeballs were rolling at a high speed as he captured every movement of the giant crab.

This was his very first battle in a foreign constellation, and he didn't want to end it so quickly. Instead, he was planning to analyze the crab to get more information about this particular constellation.

"The guy is doomed!"

Mu Ping and the other Exos were back to themselves. Seeing that the unfamiliar Exo in tatty armor standing dumbly in front of a demon beast doing nothing but watching its pincers waving at him, they all thought that he was a rookie or that he had a brain concussion because of the huge impact when the escape capsule hit the land, and therefore exclaimed in shock.

They had no doubt that the blundering Exo would be cut in half by the crab's pincers in the very next second!

Swoosh!

Li Yao retreated quickly, leaving grey blurred shadows behind him. The seemingly broken crystal suit was actually performing small-scale dodging movements at an unbelievable speed. Although the pincers of the crab were smashing crazily, they couldn't touch the swiftly jumping Li Yao.

"Such impressive speed!"

"The movements are so delicate! No gap is wasted, not even a millimeter!"

"The guy is not influenced by the air turbulence at all. How skilled he must be at manipulating the power rune arrays!"

"He must be a Cultivator, and a very strong one! Chances are that—he is in the high level of the Refinement Stage!"

"You must be kidding. His capability is apparently even higher than the experts that we hired. He can't be just in the high level of the Refinement Stage. At the very least, he must be in the peak of the Refinement Stage!"

Everyone's eyes were bulging wide, including Mu Ping's. They had seen experts before, but none of the self-proclaimed experts who were obviously more talkers than doers had such unpredictable movements and delicate dodging abilities!

"Hiss!"

The crab's dozens of smashes all missed their target, which made it more infuriated than ever. Its entire shell turned crimson. The double-headed crystal cannon on its back blew out two clusters of raging redness which split into some twenty streaks and darted at Li Yao from different angles in weird curves.

"Is this everything you can do?

"Not as good as I expected!

"Although you look intimidating and even carry a piece of magical equipment on your back, your attack pattern is too monotonous. Every one of your attacks has been in fixed routes as if they were following a set pattern. You are even more useless than the demon beasts of the Heaven's Origin Sector!"

Coldness blinked in Li Yao's eyes. He put on a cruel smile casually and sprinted through four streaks of redness. The Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber was extended abruptly, circling him and withstanding another seven streaks. Eventually, he dodged the siege of the two incoming pincers at a close distance and reached the front of the crab.

CRACK!

The Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber stabbed deep into the crab's eyes. Li Yao burnt the power of his soul furiously.

Spiritual energy in bright gold was dancing around his body like flames. The aura on his saber was instantly triggered to twenty meters long, which pierced through the crab's body out of its back and minced all its weak internal organs hiding behind the solid shell into pieces!

Shua!

Li Yao withdrew his saber and danced in the air to dodge the last three streaks of redness. Landing softly, he shook off the blood stain on his saber. Then he sheathed his saber and walked to the bystanders without looking back.

BOOM!

Behind him, the crab was still trying to wave its pincers. Struggling for three seconds, it finally collapsed to the ground. The pincers were twitching, and the crystal cannon dangled helplessly.

The Exos were so shocked that their jaws were nearly touching the ground.

One attack!

One attack was enough to slay the demon beast which was about to destroy the entire town!

The erratic movements, the ghost-like dodging, and the ferocious saber art were actually performed by a battered crystal suit which could break any second!

Who exactly was this super Exo that had fallen from the sky with such brutal skills?

Cold sweat was dripping off everyone's foreheads. They were frozen and didn't even dare to blink their eyes.

This mysterious Exo walked to the middle of them. A bright gold hexagon appeared on the helmet of the crystal suit, before the facial cover split into six petals and retreated, unveiling a face that was almost too young.

There were low exclamations in the crowed, which were immediately shut by biting their lips. Deep reverence appeared in their eyes.

Mu Ping's heart was not peaceful, either. However, he had no other choice except to walk forward and bow respectfully. "Master, if I may ask…"

Beyond his expectation, the face of this 'master' was twitching violently with a baffled expression. The eyes of the newcomer seemed to be covered in two clusters of grey mist, and there was no telling what he was actually thinking about.

Then he mumbled, "What… is this place?

"Who… am I?"

"Huh?"

Everybody looked at each other in bewilderment.

…

Half a day later, in Black Iron Town at the other end of the garbage plateau…

This was a town with a population of several thousand. It was located in the center of dozens of endless garbage hills that were hundreds of meters high. There was nothing but glittering metal wreckages as far as one's eyes could see.

Black Iron Town was itself almost exclusively built on debris.

All the houses had been constructed using the remnants of starships. Fleet emblems and numbers that were all mottled could be found on the walls of many buildings.

The streets of the town were made of starships' floors, too. They were all different colors as if patches piled up together.

On the two sides of the streets grew a lot of tall trees. But with a closer look, one would notice that the so-called 'trees' were actually vines which were climbing on the rebar, crystal tubes, and crystal wires on the starships. They brought greenness to the desolate town.

At this moment, almost every household was working out of the town, dissecting the great crab dozens of meters long merrily.

A simple examination had suggested that the big fellow had no poison whatsoever and contained enough spiritual energy and nutrition to fill a lot of people's stomachs.

For the residents who lived in an austere world fragment and always tricked their mouths with recycled food, this was rarely-seen delicious food worthy of feasting upon.

They were also particularly excellent food ingredients for the few brawny fighters and Cultivators to help them with their training.

On the street, a few children with running noses and naked bottoms were wearing thin steel clothing connected by crystal wires and pretended it to be a crystal suit as they brayed and played with each other with abandoned air transmission tubes.

"Ho. 'Lightning Man' Zhao Xiaobao, the best Exo of the Flying Star Sector, is here! Take my Lightning Sword!"

"Hehe. I, Wang Tiehu, am the best Exo of the Flying Star Sector, and I am wearing the most awesome 'Angry God Battlesuit'. Your sword won't be able to break through it in a thousand years… Ah, no, no, I'm bleeding, I'm bleeding!"

More children, on the other hand, had gathered outside of Mayor Mu Ping's house and peeped into it in great interest through the fence that had been built up by metal tubes.

"An awesome uncle fell from the sky!"

"He had only just landed on the ground when he put down an enormous crab!"

"Is he from the Heavenly Saints Alliance? My dad said the most brilliant Exos of the Flying Star Sector are all from the Heavenly Saints Alliance!"

Sitting below the roof, Li Yao accepted the respect of the little children somewhat embarrassedly.

There was a fully-automatic spiritual energy water cleaner that had been dismantled from a starship. It could put twenty-one flavors into the water by adjusting the vibration frequency.

Right now, it was set to the green tea flavor. The air was filled with a vague scent of freshness.

Amnesia was his best disguise. On one hand, he was saved the trouble of explaining his identity; on the other hand, if he was engaged with formidable enemies, there would be more room for him to act.

Therefore, Li Yao 'forgot everything' except for his own name.

But the actual situation seemed to indicate that he had worried too much.

This world fragment was at the edge of the constellation. Although it was fairly large, there was only one town with a population of several thousand. There were no strong experts here. Even Mu Ping, mayor of the town, was only in the middle level of the Refinement Stage.

Li Yao left a deep impression on everybody by slaying the giant crab with one slash. Therefore, he didn't meet too much trouble in getting along with them.

Despite his suspicious claim that he couldn't remember anything, Mu Ping and the rest of the folks did not dare to make light of him. They invited him into town respectfully and explained the basic situation of this constellation for him at his request.

Li Yao's speculation proved to be correct. The world here was named 'Flying Star Sector'. Since the environment here used to be very favorable for a lot of rare metals and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, this place had been an important base of the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago. Quite a few crystal suit refining centers, research institutes, and universities had been established here.

In order to protect the crystal suit manufacturers as well as the experts and specialists, a large fleet of starships had been based in the Flying Star Sector, too.

After the 'Hundred-Million Lightyears Expedition' took away seventy percent of the troops of the Star Ocean Imperium, the Flying Star Sector had in effect become one of the most important strategical establishments in the rear.

Therefore, after the outbreak of 'Armageddon Rebellion', the army of demonic Cultivators corrupted by the extraterrestrial devils and the remnant demons collaborated to assault the Flying Star Sector without warning.

The alliance of the demonic Cultivators and the demons was engaged in a protracted fierce battle with the army of Cultivators who were loyal to the Supreme Emperor and mankind. The Flying Sector was turned upside down during the battle. More than half of the world collapsed and broke into smithereens.

After thousands of years of recovery, the Flying Star Sector was still an unstable place, plagued by cosmic storms, cosmic turbulence, and space garbage. The few planets that were left intact had harsh natural environments that were not suitable for the survival of mass human beings despite their atmosphere.

Therefore, different from the human civilization of the Heaven's Origin Sector, the human civilization of the Flying Star Sector was actually not rooted on a planet, or a fairly-large and even boundless world fragment; mankind in the Flying Star Sector lived in small world fragments, starships, and star fortresses and roamed the sea of stars. Theirs was a brand-new space civilization!

Chapter 442：Chaotic Constellation

Chapter 442: Chaotic Constellation

"This is the basic situation of the Flying Star Sector. The planets relatively larger all have extremely harsh environments. Either boundless deserts, surging oceans, or highlands with ragged mountains more than five thousand meters tall.

"The air of such planets often contains all kinds of impurities, if they have air at all. Ordinary people and low-level Cultivators find it barely possible to survive. Some ordinary people decided to live and procreate in such planets, only to experience various mutations and end up nothing like humans. We space residents call them the barbarians.

"Only the high-level Cultivators land on the planets occasionally to obtain rare materials or hunt demon beasts.

"Most people prefer to live in the sea of stars.

"Take us for example. Our town is in the periphery of the Flying Star Sector and based in this small fragment. Although I wouldn't say it is prosperous, there are quite a lot of ancient battlegrounds nearby where we can excavate valuable items to trade for food and other daily necessities with other towns. Life here is not the most comfortable, but we can make do with it.

"Cultivation sects, on the other hand, prefer to live in starships. The headquarters of a sect are often located in a giant starship carrier. A large batch of cruisers and destroyers that are less aggressive will be their branches. When all the starships go out together, it can be quite a splendid scene.

"What I was talking about is the sects that are relatively smaller in size. For the top ten sects of the Flying Star Sector, their headquarters are often a super-large star fortress!

"Such star fortresses were originally the ultimate weapons of the Star Ocean Imperium. After the sects retrieved them, they spent thousands of years gathering new usable debris and materials which they affixed to their star fortresses to enlarge them. Eventually, the star fortresses have become colossal cities in space that can accommodate millions of people and even more!

"Several ultra-strong super sects simply emptied some smaller planets and their satellites before carving extraordinarily large power rune arrays that can be hundreds of square kilometers on their surfaces. Then, such sects built the planets and satellites into their headquarters and all their disciples have been living inside!"

Mu Ping said with a smile, "Master Li Yao, I don't think that your remarkable combat skills are self-taught. You must be a disciple from one of the major sects. Something went wrong, perchance an assault of the space pirates. You escaped the disaster and somehow ended up here.

"You might as well settle yourself in Black Iron Town first. Then, you can try to recover your memories while you train yourself. When there is a chance, we will ask around to see if any Cultivation sects' transportation teams have passed by us recently. It's very likely that you belong to the sect."

Li Yao nodded his head, showing neither approval nor disapproval. However, something Mu Ping said aroused his interest and he pursued further, "What are space pirates? Thieves in the sea of stars?"

Mu Ping did not doubt Li Yao's authenticity. In his eyes, Li Yao was way above himself and had absolutely no need to cheat country folks such as them. He replied frankly, "Space pirates are one of the three hazards of the Flying Star Sector.

"Our Flying Star Sector was a crucial battleground ten thousand years ago. Therefore, the entire constellation is brimming with war wreckages.

"Those wreckages are inexhaustible treasuries for us.

"What's more, most people live in world fragments, starships, and star fortresses which are, in effect, lone islands in a vast ocean.

"All factors considered, free trade in space is of paramount importance for us.

"Some star fortresses can't produce food, some world fragments are in lack of certain Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, and some starships need to change their air circulation system regularly… The demands have encouraged very prosperous space trade. There are countless trade routes.

"Take Black Iron Town for example. Although we are far from the center of the sector, we still have to go out and participate in several fairs to exchange for things we need every year.

"As the scale of the trade grew, naturally, some bad, strong guys decided that killing and stealing were more suitable for them.

"At first, they might have had good reasons. For example, a starship of a certain sect encountered a meteorite cascade and cosmic storm and was almost blown to pieces. Perhaps it was in desperate need of certain goods, but it had lost all its resources to trade for them. In the emergency, they might have been grabbed by devastation and decided to rob someone else of what they needed.

"But later, those people tasted the fun in it. They turned from amateurs into professional space pirates. After all, the conditions of the Flying Star Sector couldn't be more suitable for them. They could simply hide in a random stone belt after each job and nobody would ever be able to find them!

"And now, the influence of the space pirates is growing stronger and stronger. The several kitties in the beginning have now evolved into more than ten infamous gangs.

"As for the smaller space pirate gangs and the space pirates who prefer to run solo, there are simply too many of them to count!

"Even some business caravans which are made of conspicuously legal merchants and behave obediently in the trade spots garrisoned by strong Cultivators will often cut off the communication of a starship much weaker than theirs when they run into one in the desolate sea of stars and loot whatever is on the captured starship secretly. It is not unusual at all."

Li Yao's face turned extremely weird as he listened to Mu Ping's words.

Cultivation sects could disgrace themselves so much as to live on robbery?

It was something inconceivable in the Heaven's Origin Sector.

The most scandalous Cultivators might play dirty moves on other Cultivators for their own interest. But would they ever rob ordinary people?

They would kill themselves before they did that because it was considered a public humiliation.

The Flying Star Sector was indeed a world of chaos!

"You just mentioned 'one of the three hazards'. What are the other two hazards other than space pirates?" Asked Li Yao calmly.

Although the spiritual energy in the Flying Star Sector was much more abundant than that in the Heaven's Origin Sector, the situation here was much more messed-up. It was best to get a big picture of everything so that he could be prepared for whatever was to come.

Mu Ping counted his fingers and said, "The second hazard is the demon beasts.

"There are no powerful demon forces in the Flying Star Sector except for the occasionally-seen demon beasts. However, those demon beasts are all offspring of the alliance of the demon race and the demonic Cultivators. They have inherited some secret arts of their ancestors which allow them to meld their bodies with the magical equipment left by the demonic Cultivators!

"The big crab that you killed is precisely one such demon beast.

"As to how they are melded with the magical equipment, we don't have the slightest clue. We only know that the beasts will lurk in meteorites and drift in the sea of stars looking for the scent of human beings.

"Black Iron Town was unfortunate to have been detected by the beast when we were collecting the remnants of the starships. It then followed our scent and made its way here. Thankfully, Master Li Yao came in time. Otherwise, the entire town would've been slaughtered."

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. He didn't know that the eccentric double-headed crystal cannon was made by the demonic Cultivators. No wonder the way that its spiritual energy took shape was completely different to the appearance of spiritual energy from Cultivators' magical equipment; it was much more brutal, ferocious, and malevolent.

He would definitely spend some time studying it when he had a spare minute!

Mu Ping paused briefly and then continued.

"The third hazard is, obviously, the demonic Cultivators!

"The Flying Star Sector was one of the main battlegrounds of the 'Armageddon Rebellion'. Countless corpses of the demonic Cultivators were left in this place. Perhaps that's the reason demonic Cultivators have a special interest in our sector.

"Also, because of the disordered environment, many wavering Cultivators are often tempted by the extraterrestrial devils and transformed into demonic Cultivators.

"There are even cases where the Cultivators of an entire starship were turned into demonic Cultivators and the vehicle they were taking became a 'satanic warship'.

"For ordinary people and low-level Cultivators such as myself, if we are caught by the 'befallen fiends', there would be absolutely nothing we can do except to close our eyes and wait for our death.

"But thankfully, the appearance of demon beasts or demonic Cultivators is highly unlikely. It is extremely improbable for us to run into one. In comparison, the likelihood of the space pirates' visits is much higher. That's why space pirates are listed first and foremost on the list of hazards in the Flying Star Sector!"

Deep in thought, Li Yao nodded his head. But excitement was beaming out of his eyes.

Demonic Cultivators…

They were brand new enemies for him.

The biggest threat to the Heaven's Origin Sector was the Blood Demon Sector. News about demonic Cultivators was rare. Li Yao had once run into a mediocre demonic Cultivator named Zheng Dongming. However, the guy had to wag his tail and did not dare to reveal his true identity.

But as it turned out, demonic Cultivators were one of the major hazards in the Flying Star Sector. How interesting!

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao asked, "If the three hazards are causing so much damage, how has the government been handling them?"

Mu Ping was startled. He blurted out, "Government? What government?"

Li Yao was startled, too. He scratched his head and frowned.

"The national government. The army. Are they taking any measures against the three hazards?"

Mu Ping stared at him for a long time, as if he had said the most hilarious thing in the world. After a long while, he shook his head and said, "There hasn't been a nation in the Flying Star Sector for thousands of years! A starship represents a Cultivation sect. The Cultivation sects are scattered everywhere in the constellation and rely on the debris of ancient battlegrounds and the world fragments to provide supplies. The concept of a nation is highly redundant."

Li Yao raised his eyebrows.

He had read in the text books that, before the Star Glory Federation was established, the Heaven's Origin Sector was in an anarchistic state where all the sects minded their own business in a disorganized manner.

He didn't expect for the Flying Star Sector to be still in such a state right now.

However, it seemed to be pretty plausible on second thought.

After all, most of the spiritual energy and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures in the Heaven's Origin Sector congregated in one planet which only had one main continent.

In such a case, the Cultivation sects tended to bond and form a nation when they were faced with the threat of a common foe.

In comparison, the Cultivation sects of the Flying Star Sector were scattered in the sea of stars. Each of them could get their own supplies from the ancient debris. It was pretty understandable that a unified nation and a central government did not exist.

After Mu Ping's explanations, Li Yao finally learnt that most people living in the Flying Star Sector paid taxes to and did business with selected Cultivation sects in exchange for their protection. When they were threatened by the three hazards such as a space pirate assault, they could send distress calls to the Cultivation sect they had chosen and ask for their help.

In order to suppress the space pirates and ensure the safety of the trade routes between different sects, a lot of high bounties had been declared, resulting in the ever-appearing unaffiliated Cultivators and hunters who chased and preyed on space pirates, demon beasts, and demonic Cultivators in the sea of stars for the generous rewards.

Chapter 443: Heavenly Saints City

Chapter 443: Heavenly Saints City

Generally speaking, the Flying Star Sector was more chaotic than the Heaven's Origin Sector, but it was freer. The Cultivation sects here had more power, too. They were in effect the miniature governments in this world.

Li Yao thought of something and asked, "Then, which sect does Black Iron Town belong to?"

Mu Ping smiled, somewhat embarrassedly, and said, "Black Iron Town does not belong to any sect."

As it turned out, Black Iron Domain, the world fragment that Black Iron Town was located in, was at the edge of the Flying Star Sector, surrounded by dangerous stone belts and cosmic storms and haunted by spiritual tides. Sailing in this area would consume a lot of resources.

Although there was an ancient battleground here, it was one of the relics that had been developed in the earliest years. After thousands of years of exploitation, the key components and precious Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures had been drained a long time ago. What was left were nothing but broken remnants riddled with holes or empty starship shells. For high-level Cultivators, they were not of much value.

This was a typical backward village. None of the big sects thought highly of the place. Even sending a large starship to establish a 'branch' here was a waste of time and resources in their eyes.

Previously, a small sect named 'Trinity Sect' had been stationed in this place. But it was quite unlucky that a cosmic storm struck them when their leader was advancing to a higher level in seclusion. Two of the three starships of the sect had been blown into smithereens. The leader of the sect had been so irked that his breakthrough was disturbed, leading to his mental derangement and eventually his death.

The survivors of the disaster were far from enough to run a sect. They decided to join other big sects in the center of the constellation flying their last starship.

As a result, the dozens of world fragments and starship towns became unprotected by the sects.

Thankfully, this place was too remote and infertile. Not just the Cultivators, even the space pirates barely had any interest in it. Also, since the residents living in such harsh environments, be they low-level Cultivators or ordinary people, were all equipped with crystal suits, they were capable of protecting themselves during the assaults of small demon beasts. As long as large batches of space pirates did not invade, they would be relatively safe.

The benefit of having zero protection from Cultivation sects was that the residents did not have to pay taxes and fulfil the labor duties. The dozens of towns here traded with each other and supplied themselves with whatever they needed. Their life had been peaceful and comfortable.

The enormous crab that Li Yao had slayed had drifted to this place on a meteor. It was not a local demon beast. That was why they'd found it so tricky to deal with it.

Li Yao nodded and realized that it was very fortunate of him to land in this place.

Since there were no Cultivation sects, nobody would investigate his identity. Later, he would be able to travel in the Flying Star Sector as a resident of Black Iron Town. Unless somebody was suspicious and decided to pursue it further, his faked identity would be seamless.

However, the fact that there were no Cultivation sects meant the general knowledge of Cultivation remained insufficient in this area, which could be inferred from how everyone was addressing him.

He was merely in the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage, and yet everyone was calling him 'Master', as if he were one of the top Cultivators in the universe.

Although it was not unusual for Cultivators in the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage, who were considered to be the most promising persons among all Cultivators, to work as the key personnel of Cultivation sects or university professors, the gap between them and the real 'masters' was not negligible.

He had to get out of here as soon as possible and find the real Cultivation sects in the center of the Flying Star Sector which were more prosperous.

If he could join one of the Cultivation sects and learn the advanced Cultivation arts of the Flying Star Sector, it would be best.

Thinking about this part, Li Yao continued posing questions. "Mayor Mu, which sect is the most influential one in the Flying Star Sector?"

Hopeful brilliance beamed out of Mu Ping's eyes as he replied with a smile, "There are almost a hundred well-known sects in the Flying Star Sector. But the biggest one of all is unquestionably the 'Heavenly Saints Alliance'!

"The Heavenly Saints Alliance is not one sect, but the coalition of the six strongest sects of the Flying Star Sector.

"A thousand years ago, they bridged their main starships and star fortresses and built a grand, magnificent super metropolis in space named 'Heavenly Saints City'! After a thousand years of development, Heavenly Saints City has grown larger and larger like an enormous animal devouring new starships and star fortresses.

"I'm told that Heavenly Saints City is the biggest man-made structure in the Flying Star Sector; it can accommodate tens of millions of people!

"Heavenly Saints City is not only the place where the six strongest sects of the Flying Star Sector are headquartered, but also boasts the best universities, the most advanced crystal suit refining centers, the biggest and most extravagant arenas, and the most Exo associations…

"Anyways, although the Flying Star Sector does not have a capital, Heavenly Saints City is the well-deserved center of the Flying Star Sector!

"What's more, it is said that the high-level Cultivators have modified the interior of Heavenly Saints City tremendously, to the extent that the residents inside the city do not feel that they are floating in space at all.

"What they see are white clouds and blue sky. What they smell is fresh air. They can enjoy the beautiful landscapes such as man-made lakes, rivers, mountains, and even oceans. It is truly heaven on earth. Everyone in the Flying Star Sector yearns to live in Heavenly Saints City, even for just a month!"

Mu Ping's face was gleaming. The interconnecting scars on his face started twitching, suggesting his intense desire.

Li Yao was quite shocked, too.

A city in space that boasted man-made oceans?

What a marvelous splendor it must be!

Heavenly Saints City! It would appear that he had his goal now.

When he arrived in Heavenly Saints City, he would be able to join the strongest Cultivation sects where he could learn the most sophisticated skills and the most advanced technologies!

Even if these Cultivation sects rejected him, according to Mu Ping, there were still universities, arenas, crystal suit refining centers, and Exo associations in Heavenly Saints City. It seemed that information regarding the magical equipment and technology of this Sector was not too confidential, and there were public forums where people could study and communicate.

If so, he could learn many things as long as he could reach Heavenly Saints City!

Li Yao swallowed so as to suppress the desire in his heart. Then he asked casually, "How far is it from here to Heavenly Saints City? What kind of procedures are there to live and study in Heavenly Saints City and even join a Cultivation sect?"

Mu Ping coughed and said, somewhat embarrassedly, "Nobody can say for sure the distance between us and Heavenly Saints City. The Flying Star Sector is a fairly large place and a very chaotic one. Many routes are often cut off by stone belts and cosmic storms. Dangerous space turbulence and swirls are not uncommon either. If a starship sails into the seemingly peaceful area, they'll fall into the four-dimensional universe and be teleported to god knows where. In the worst cases, they might be torn apart directly.

"The point is, our starships may not be able to reach Heavenly Saints City in several years.

"Besides, Heavenly Saints City is not fixed in one place but a moving metropolis floating in the sea of stars, searching for the areas with the most abundant spiritual energy; it will fly to any place that has more resources.

"Sure, there are star beacons. But they are not prepared for country folks such as us.

"Heavenly Saints City is the holy land for all the people in the Flying Star Sector. Everyone craves to be a resident of Heavenly Saints City and will head there at whatever cost.

"Even though Heavenly Saints City is being enlarged every year, there are still too many people crowding into it.

"Five hundred years ago, orbital rings started to be built on the periphery of Heavenly Saints City to accommodate more residents. They are known as 'star rings'.

"At first, there was one ring. Then, two rings. Currently, even the ninth ring has been filled. The tenth ring is under construction!

"Therefore, since three hundred years ago, Heavenly Saints City stopped opening to the general outsiders.

"Every year, Heavenly Saints City will propose a certain quota of population and issue corresponding residential certificates to the outsiders. To apply for a residential certificate, one must first prove that one is a qualified talent for Heavenly Saints City."

Li Yao frowned. "And how can one prove oneself?"

Mu Ping extended two of his fingers and said, "There are two ways. The first one is to participate in the various matches hosted by Heavenly Saints City, such as Exo championships and refining competitions. The winners of the games will be entitled to enter Heavenly Saints City.

"The matches are not necessarily for Cultivators. Many of them are for ordinary people, too. For example, last year, the management of Heavenly Saints City discovered after prolonged calculations that the city was short of three hundred chefs. Therefore, a match of cooking skills was held, and the top three hundred winners were authorized to live in Heavenly Saints City even though they were just cooks.

"The second way is to accomplish certain special tasks.

"For example, a space pirate has fled to the depths of the sea of stars after committing felonies in Heavenly Saints City. The guardians of Heavenly Saints City are not able to catch him for the time being. Therefore, they may propose a bounty with additional rewards, say, the permission to live in Heavenly Saints City, besides the monetary benefits.

"However, either the matches hosted by Heavenly Saints City or the bounty tasks are usually only open to other major sects and the ordinary people under their protection. Small places like ours do not have the ticket to take part in such matches at all. On the other hand, we often miss the latest news, because we are not covered in the Spiritual Nexus. We can only learn what is going on in the outside world when we are attending kermises. It is hard for us to hear of the bounties in time.

"Therefore, although Heavenly Saints City is heaven on earth, it is but a daydream for us. Haha."

Mu Ping smiled, bitterly and regretfully.

Li Yao scratched his hair. Kermises?

In a place filled with remnants of starships where giant light beams were hanging on the walls, kermis sounded like a pretty odd word.

But he didn't pursue it further. Pondering for a moment, he reflected on what Mu Ping had just said.

It seemed that entering Heavenly Saints City would not be an easy job. But first of all, he had to move to the center of the Flying Star Sector where the news was more frequently updated. Or, he could join a random sect first in order to be qualified to participate in the matches of Heavenly Saints City.

As for what kind of matches to take part in…

In either the competitions of crystal suits or those of refining, Li Yao was confident that, even though he might not be the best in the Flying Star Sector, his skills were more than enough to earn him a place in Heavenly Saints City.

Ten of millions of people lived in Heavenly Saints City. A vast majority of them must be ordinary people. Li Yao didn't believe that he would be worse than them.

Suddenly, Li Yao thought of something that Mu Ping just mentioned. Confusion clear on his face, he asked, "Mayor Mu, you just said that every household in this area has crystal suits… But from what I've seen, there are not many Cultivators in the town. Then, who are the people wearing the crystal suits?"

Chapter 444: Skill Card

Chapter 444: Skill Card

Confused, Mu Ping blinked his eyes and asked, "What do you mean, Master Li? Our crystal suits are not specialized combat suits but are modified based on engineering suits and farming suits. They don't require Cultivators to wear. It is our country folks who have been using them.

"There are only four Cultivators in Black Iron Town. I am the strongest one of all, although I am merely in the middle level of the Refinement Stage. That's why I was elected as the mayor.

"This place is poor and underdeveloped, not something that young people with talent in Cultivation are particularly fond of. Most of them leave their hometown and make their living in bigger world fragments or starship towns. Young people want what is best for themselves. It's hard for us to say no. Therefore, the only Cultivators in town are the few old fellows like me, who have endured a lot of setbacks and haven't accomplished anything remarkable over the dozens of years of travelling outside. Now that we are old and our capability is unlikely to grow, retiring and resuming our old lives in our hometown is a better option for us. We quite enjoy it."

Li Yao was confused and startled. He could guess a thing or two about engineering crystal suits, but what were farming crystal suits? Did farmers in this place till the land in crystal suits?

It must be a joke!

Besides, ordinary people could wear crystal suits?

Li Yao's mindset was completely reshaped.

Crystal suits were magical equipment of magical equipment. They were the ultimate weapons in the Heaven's Origin Sector. Not just random fighters, not many low-level Cultivators had even been equipped with crystal suits before MP crystal suits were promoted.

It was partly because crystal suits were unaffordable, and partly because wearing a crystal suit required high personal abilities.

First of all, through the high-sensitivity crystal cameras and ears, a crystal suit could gather a huge amount of information within a moment and pour it down into the brain of the Exo. The computational ability of the ordinary people was far from enough to handle it.

Secondly, combat with a crystal suit was a great burden for the body of the Exo. The backlash against the body resulting from accelerating to sub-sonic or even super-sonic speed instantly and halting, turning or spinning in the very next second almost equaled to a free fall from dozens of floors high.

If an ordinary person were to wear such a crystal suit, it was quite likely that, after an instantaneous acceleration, a suddenly halt, and a zigzag, their internal organs would all explode.

Not to mention that the blast of spiritual energy when the formidable attacks were carried out in a crystal suit would definitely be enough to batter the soul of an ordinary person and turn them mentally retarded.

Therefore, in the Heaven's Origin Sector, even Li Yao as a Cultivator had to learn crazily in a special Exo training camp for quite a few months in order to familiarize himself with the skills of how to manipulate a crystal suit, let alone ordinary people.

But Mu Ping seemed to be implying that every household in the Flying Star Sector had a crystal suit and they were at full disposal of ordinary people without causing any injuries.

That was indeed incredible!

If I can learn such technology and equip every soldier of the Star Glory Federation with a crystal suit, a steel torrent of billions of crystal suits will be created. It will be as easy as pie to crush the Blood Demon Sector!

Li Yao was greatly interested.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao realized that he wouldn't know what the crystal suits in this place were exactly until he saw them with his own eyes. Therefore, he asked Mu Ping to bring him to check them out.

Mu Ping gladly agreed. Surrounded by dozens of children, he brought Li Yao to the outside of the town where the giant crab was being dissected.

The residents of Black Iron Town lived on the relics of an ancient battleground. They occasionally hunted down intruding demon beasts, too. Therefore, they were quite familiar with the job.

Dozens of muscled men were waving chainswords and battle axes in somewhat clumsy engineering crystal suits to cut open the solid shells. The scraps of the solid shell were then cleaned up, sanitized, put through anti-corrosive procedures, and stacked orderly.

The solid shell was one of the best materials that could be used to trade with other towns.

As for the crab meat contained inside, it was rough and hard, not readily edible. It would have to be minced and mixed with other meat and a nutrition drug, but it did have a special flavor with it. For the residents, it could almost be called delicious.

Seeing that Li Yao had arrived, everyone stopped what they were doing and looked at him in reverence.

Mu Ping called down a hefty, brawny guy from the back of the giant crab. Together with his thick and black crystal suit, he was almost three meters tall.

"This is Zhang Heiniu. Twenty-five years old. His Spirit Actualization Quotient has reached 85%. It's very likely that his spiritual root will be awakened soon. His fighting skills with a crystal suit are among the best in the few towns nearby!" said Mu Ping with a smile.

Zhang Heiniu held his head high and grinned innocently, too.

"Heiniu, this master wants to see your capability. You must try your best!" informed Mu Ping.

As a remote village, Black Iron Town was not frequented by crystal suit masters. Zhang Heiniu was in high spirits the moment he heard the news. He rubbed his fists and asked the bystanders to clear the area.

Suddenly, he stomped on the ground and sprinted forward dozens of meters like a black tornado. Then he came to an abrupt halt and punched the air in front of him twice. Waves were rippling out in the air, producing rumbling thunder-like noises.

Li Yao was somewhat startled.

Zhang Heiniu's attack was, of course, not very impressive, but it had far exceeded the limits of an ordinary person. By logic, the bones throughout his body should've been shattered into pieces by the immense blast.

Right then, Zhang Heiniu bellowed. His body span weirdly, bringing out an intimidating aura around him as if he were a different person. Two clusters of black air circled his arms, which were pushed forward forcefully. The black air drilled forward like a helix and blew two giant holes on a metal remnant some twenty meters away.

"This is—"

Li Yao's eyes were almost frozen, and his mind was greatly shocked.

Such a remote attack must have a high demand on the control of the shape and trajectory of the spiritual energy, not to mention the huge cost of spiritual energy and computational ability. It was clearly a move that only Cultivators could manage. How could Zhang Heiniu carry it out as an ordinary person?

Zhang Heiniu seemed exhausted after performing the attack. He bent his body and took a moment to rest before he came back to Li Yao and said respectfully, "Master, my previous attack, 'Black Tiger Explosion', is supposed to hit a target at least twenty meters away. But the best I can do is reach fifteen meters however hard I train myself. I don't know if there is something wrong with my posture or the way I exert my strength. Please do enlighten me, Master!"

Holding back the surprise in his heart, Li Yao asked Zhang Heiniu to take off his crystal suit.

Since the main livelihood of Black Iron Town came from dismantling, recycling, and modifying the remnants, there were quite a few maintenance platforms in the town. Li Yao examined this particular engineering crystal suit on an open-air maintenance platform.

"The crystal suit is not made of precious materials, just regular strengthened alloys. No wonder the crystal suit is refined in such a clumsy style. Otherwise, the demand in hardness wouldn't be satisfied.

"The framework is quite impressive, in distinctive grassroots fashions. Simple, practical, highly-replaceable, and easy to fix. Very low requirement in maintenance skills.

"The joints of the crystal suit are quite unusual… Brilliant, truly brilliant. Even the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit can learn many things from the brand-new design of the joints!

"This is just an engineering crystal suit, and it already has so many extraordinary designs and structures. I wonder, how fabulous will the real combat crystal suits of the Flying Star Sector be?

"Huh. What are these?"

Li Yao discovered almost a hundred of rune arrays on the interior of the crystal suit that he had never seen before. Judging from the constitution and the circulation model of the rune arrays, their purpose was to buffer the blast and enhance the strength of the Exo.

It appeared that these rune arrays provided perfect protection and tremendous aid to the Exo so that the body of an ordinary person was enough to support the crystal suit.

As for information processing, Li Yao paid special attention to the crystal processor of the engineering crystal suit.

He discovered that, not only was the crystal processor added with quite a few miniature units that were new to him, there were even two small slots on it. One of them was empty, while the other one had a card inserted in it.

Li Yao took out the card with a pair of forceps.

It was a card no larger than a fingernail and less than a millimeter thick. But there were countless crystal wires on the edge of the card. It appeared that the card had been piled up by layers of extremely thin crystal membranes.

The surface of the crystal card was carved with more than twenty miniature rune arrays, which were bathed in glamourous brightness, with spiritual energy flowing vaguely.

Such a sophisticated steric rune arrays building technique!

The crystal card is only one millimeter thick, but it is actually a set of at least a hundred crystal membranes. If each of the membranes has been carved with twenty miniature rune arrays, there will be so much things that this fingernail-like crystal card can do!

Li Yao secretly paid his compliments. Then he frowned as if he were deep in thought and asked Mu Ping, "What's the name of this? It looks rather familiar, but I can't remember what it is called."

"This is a skill card. I believe Master Li must've been using them all the time before. Of course it looks familiar."

Mu Ping explained, "For us the low-level Cultivators and ordinary fighters, although we can complete the simple attack and defense movements in a crystal suit, the more complicated skills and the ultimate ones are tantalizing yet unachievable for us.

"But a skill card can store the ultimate moves of the high-level Cultivators. When they are inserted into a crystal suit, they will be automatically triggered. All the skills stored inside will be ready. With a telepathic thought, the crystal suit will take control of our body and let us perform the ultimate skill that we chose!"

Li Yao's eyes bulged wide open. The Flying Star Sector was indeed a place of marvels. There were even such amazing things!

Cultivators could seal their own moves in a crystal card and let someone else to use them?

Mu Ping grinned. "The Flying Star Sector is too large a place, and the residents are scattered everywhere in the sea of stars. There are bound to be places Cultivators may not be able to attend to. Therefore, the skill cards were invented to equip the ordinary people and low-level Cultivators with their remarkable moves. The capability of the recipients is able to soar instantly.

"This skill card has been sealed with 'Peak Fighters Luxury Bundle' provided by 'Ferocious Tiger Sect'. It is designed for the super experts among the regular fights and includes twenty uses of 'Black Tiger Explosion', five uses of 'Tiger Devil Slash', and one use of the extraordinarily fearsome 'Tiger Satan Heart Piercing Barrage'. The moves have all been sealed into the cards by the elites in Ferocious Tiger Sect who spent a huge amount of their soul power sealing their telepathic thoughts. More importantly, such a skill card sells at only five thousand Flying Star dollars apiece. A marvelous item with a decent price. It is one of the most popular skill cards for Exos nearby."

Chapter 445: Kermis Visiting

Chapter 445: Kermis Visiting

Li Yao was almost baffled. Even skills could be mass produced and sold?

Pondering for a while, he decided to insert the skill card back to the slot of the crystal processor and reactivated the engineering crystal suit named "Rockman".

The crystal suit had been designed for the purpose of dismantling and maintaining large starships in the vacuum of space. But the residents of Black Iron Town had added alloy plate armor and chainswords to it to make it a usable tool in a combat.

Since it could be manipulated by an ordinary fighter, Li Yao had no trouble wearing it at all as an expert Exo.

After reading the tutorials of the Rockman in three minutes, Li Yao took a few steps forward stumblingly.

The Rockman seemed no different from the crystal suits that he used to wear, but it felt much more soft and gentle. Li Yao felt like he was soaked in a hot spring and couldn't tell that he was wearing a large crystal suit weighing more than ten tons.

The buffer system and the assisting system are smartly designed. I barely need to exert my own strength. Every movement can be performed by the suit.

The comprehensive information processing system is quite advanced, too. Most of the information has been preprocessed by the crystal suit. Only the final outcome and the most crucial information are displayed. Together with the simple and straightforward operation menu, even ordinary people will know what situation they are in and what they should do to cope with it.

Although such a design may lead to monotonous tactics due to the lack of changes, it is something not unacceptable for ordinary fighters and low-level Cultivators.

Li Yao secretly compared Rockman with other crystal suits that he had worn and discovered that the operation pattern of Rockman was even easier than the 'beginner mode' in many crystal suits. It could almost be called 'auto mode'.

The Exo could choose from several combat styles, including 'assault', 'guerilla warfare', 'stall', 'remote attack', 'strength saving', and so on. Then, the crystal suit would act accordingly and automatically adjust the power rune arrays, defense shield, and the crystal reactor.

The Exo could also input simple instructions such as 'attack to the left' or 'defend on the right'. Their crystal suit would immediately complete the instructions.

Such a mode significantly improved the independency of a crystal suit and diminished the importance of the Exo. It had both disadvantages and advantages.

For experts such as Li Yao, he disliked the dull, boring combat style where the crystal processor took care of everything; he preferred to handle all the information he needed personally.

From the wind and direction of a breeze a hundred meters away, to the activation level of one of the runes on one of the thirty-two power rune arrays on his back… Everything must be under his control so that he could pick one of the thousands of possible combat plans at his will.

Such an 'auto' crystal suit was like a puppet with strings. Most of its movements had been preset. All the Exo had to do was to cooperate and do what the crystal suit asked to.

It may not be a big deal if the Exo was faced with a mediocre enemy. But the experts were likely to notice the pattern in the attacks and eventually locate loopholes.

But Li Yao had to admit that, for ordinary fighters and low-level Cultivators, such an 'auto mode' might be their best choice.

After all, not everyone had the talent required to be an expert Exo. They were hardly likely to encounter the real formidable enemies, too.

Even if they were engaged with a real formidable enemy, they could simply crush the enemy with their advantage in numbers!

Therefore, although he was not particularly fond of the crystal suit himself, Li Yao still paid his respect to the designer of such a crystal suit.

At this time, Li Yao noticed that, right beside the attack and defense instructions, there was another row of brilliantly shining buttons surrounded by right gold lines.

The words on them were the three moves comprised in the 'Peak Fighters Luxury Bundle'.

Black Tiger Explosion, Tiger Devil Slash, and Tiger Satan Heart Piercing Barrage!

Li Yao was greatly interested. He locked onto 'Black Tiger Explosion' with one of his telepathic thoughts and triggered it softly.

In a moment, a transparent phantom seemed to break apart in front of his eyes. Intense spiritual waves and telepathic thoughts were ringing around him. The Rockman produced a shrill sound, with an intimidating aura surrounding him. New reminders appeared on the light beam, asking him to carry out certain movements with his arms and torso.

Li Yao crossed his arms and pushed forward. He had barely exerted any of his strength when two streaks of immense spiritual energy blew out of the crystal reactor furiously like Zhang Heiniu just did, except that the black swirl of spiritual energy reached more than thirty meters away!

As I expected, not only does the 'skill card' store the instructions of a certain move, it also contains one of the telepathic thoughts of the Cultivator who produced it. The Cultivator must have spent a lot of time and effort on it. It is as authentic as their own attack. Quite impressive!

Greatly satisfied, Li Yao took off his crystal suit. He said to Zhang Heiniu, after thinking for a moment, "The most important thing about Black Tiger Explosion is not how much force you exert to push it out, but the inward helical strength when you are punching. You should 'swing' your strength instead of 'pushing' it out. Try to understand it. The damage of your attack should be able to be increased by 10% after you do."

"Thank you very much, Master!" yelled Zhang Heiniu in excitement.

Li Yao smiled. Pondering for a moment, he said to Mu Ping, "Mayor Mu, I would like to make a deal with Black Iron Town."

…

In the next half month, Li Yao stayed in Black Iron Town, partly to collect all the useful information about the Flying Star Sector, and partly to study the 'auto' crystal suits of the Flying Star Sector more carefully.

In order to deal with the giant crab, several Exos suffered tremendous wounds, and two of them had perished on the spot. Almost all the crystal suits had been seriously damaged.

Some of the minor damage could be maintained by themselves. But the crystal suits with more damage had to be sent to a bigger town named 'Star Lord Temple' for examination.

Li Yao had proposed to maintain and also strengthen the broken crystal suits in exchange for one of them.

The style of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was different from the crystal suits in the Flying Star Sector after all. Also, it had been affixed with a lot of materials from Skeleton Dragon.

Skeleton Dragon had been an ancient deadly demon forty thousand years ago. Its body materials and the scraps of the ancient magical equipment it collected were definitely treasures that were not seen every day.

Although Li Yao had covered them up and nobody had noticed anything wrong in Black Iron Town, Li Yao was certain that, since this world boasted such advanced technology in crystal suits, it was quite possible that somebody would see through the secrets of his crystal suit after he reached the more prosperous places and encountered the real specialists of the trade.

If so, he might be blamed even if he did nothing wrong just because he had an unparalleled treasure. Somebody might covet the body materials of Skeleton Dragon and decide to hunt him down. It would be a great nuisance for him.

Therefore, Li Yao had made up his mind that the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit would be his secret weapon which wouldn't be used unless it was absolutely necessary.

And when the secret weapon was to be used, all the enemies who saw it would have to be eliminated!

So, he needed a common crystal suit of the Flying Star Sector for his daily use.

Right now, he could make do with an engineering crystal suit. After all, he could always upgrade the crystal suit after he arrived in the more prosperous places.

Li Yao spent ten days maintaining all the engineering crystal suits and farming crystal suits. He had basically grasped the refining style of the preliminary crystal suits of the Flying Star Sector.

Although he hadn't completely figured out the complicated rune arrays inside the crystal suits yet, he found no major trouble performing the rudimental repair work.

Then, he started to modify his own Rockman.

Since it was an engineering crystal suit and wouldn't boast enough combat ability no matter how it was modified, Li Yao decided to go exactly the opposite way. He fully restored the characteristics of an engineering crystal suit for Rockman and added two extra multipurpose arms that were filled with all kinds of maintenance and refining tools.

The Rockman right now had four arms, with an enormous storage bag on its back which could carry bountiful magical equipment units and components. It looked somewhat clumsy and eccentric.

Purposefully, Li Yao didn't polish or strengthen the surface of his new crystal suit. He even left a few meteorite scratches and patches of rust undealt with, making the crystal suit look heavy, stupid, and utterly harmless.

In a battleground, it would fit every description of a standard logistic crystal suit for maintenance.

In accordance to the Rockman was the new identity that Li Yao set for himself.

Li Yao, twenty-three years old, born and raised in a minor relic at the periphery of the Flying Star Sector. Because of the poor transportation, he had never gotten in touch with the outside world, except for the stories that he had been told and the knowledge he'd learnt from books.

Since he had been living with the garbage in the relic since he was a kid, his talent for magical equipment maintenance was discovered very early. He was especially good at the maintenance and modification of beginner-level crystal suits.

Half a year ago, his hometown was destroyed by an unexpected rain of meteorites; only a few survived. He had since been wandering in several other space towns and eventually learnt more about the outside world, especially the information regarding Heavenly Saints City.

As a young man who desired to be a master in crystal suit refining, he was now striving to reach Heavenly Saints City.

There were more young men in the Flying Star Sector that had shared similar life experiences than specks of dust here.

Making their way to Heavenly Saints City was almost a ubiquitous dream for everyone in the Flying Star Sector.

Such an identity was both inconspicuous and hard to falsify. It offered a fairly plausible explanation for his maintenance and modification skills, too.

After he left Black Iron Town and marched into the depths of the sea of stars, no one would doubt his background.

Mayor Mu had told him that there would be a kermis in a bigger town nearby named Star Lord Temple during the last five days in each month. At that time, the fleets of dozens of towns and villages in this place would all take part in the kermis, exchanging news and bartering goods.

There was cargo that set off to the more prosperous places regularly in Star Lord Temple, too. The young men who wanted to make a living in the outside world often chose to take the cargo ships because of the fairly reasonable ticket prices. For those who were adept at certain skills and could work as sailors or mechanics, they could even take the cargo ships for free.

Black Iron Town had suffered tremendous losses. Not only were some of their own residents killed or injured in the battle, the professional guards that they had hired from Star Lord Temple had passed away, too. It was expected that they sent the dead bodies back.

Besides, the precious materials they retrieved from the giant crab could only be sold in Star Lord Temple.

Therefore, the kermis this month was something that they had to attend.

Li Yao offered to go with them. Mu Ping was worried about the safety issue since they would be carrying so many demon beast materials and therefore agreed happily.

Chapter 446: News Store

Chapter 446: News Store

Six days later, on a shabby carrier, Mu Ping bowed to the light beam and said to Li Yao solemnly, "In front of us is the Temple of Lord Sea Stomper."

Inside the light beam was the remnant of a cruiser more than three thousand meters long with defense rings around it. The head and the tail of it were both shattered, a clear sign that the cruiser wouldn't be able to cruise anymore. The middle part of the cruiser was still intact and emitting seven-colored faint mystic rays.

Mu Ping explained, "Lord Sea Stomper used to be a 'Sea Stomper'-level cruiser of the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago. Right now, most of its structure is too damaged to repair. But many living quarters in the middle part of the starship are still functioning. Also, since defense is highlighted in the design of the starship of this particular model, the protective rings around it are still working and can release solid spiritual shields.

"Five hundred years ago, a fleet which was blown off course by a cosmic storm found the place accidentally and survived the disaster by hiding inside the protective rings. Since then, the place has become well known.

"Everybody says that the soul of the starship has become a divinity, guarding the residents in this area from the unseen world. This place is the best port around.

"As time's gone by, the starship has become known as 'Lord Sea Stomper' and the place in general is called 'Star Lord Temple'. It is the trading center of the dozens of space towns nearby. Many other people have moved into the living quarters of the starship, gradually turning it into a teeming town itself."

"Fourth brother, offer incense to our Lord!"

A stout man answered and rubbed his hands on his linen trousers. Then, he typed quickly on the light beam. The carrier shivered and sent out three ivory light beams from its head to the front end of Lord Sea Stomper.

The three mystic rays were not aggressive at all; they carried the purest and most stable spiritual energy. After they pierced into the front end of Lord Sea Stomper, the hundreds of holes there all started glittering like countless blinking eyes, bringing out a sense of mystery.

Mu Ping and the townsfolk all shut their eyes and prayed.

"May Lord Sea Stomper watch over Black Iron Town and see that it is not disturbed by demon beasts, space pirates, or cosmic storms. It will be better if we can find more precious treasures in the ancient relic. If we make a fortune this year thanks to your help, we will definitely deliver you a water circulation system next year!"

Li Yao found it very amusing. As a determined modern Cultivator, he did not believe in the supernatural powers whose existences were hard to prove. He reached out to Mo Xuan during the time being.

Mo Xuan and the rest of the crew hadn't idled around while Li Yao was staying in Black Iron Town. They had collected a lot of warship remnants in the ancient battlegrounds and covered Sparkle with them in a messy manner.

Right now, even if Mo Xuan were to park Sparkle right in front of Li Yao, he wouldn't be able to recognize it.

Then, after riveting a bunch of other starship remnants, Mo Xuan drifted after Li Yao.

Battlegrounds were everywhere in the Flying Star Sector. Stirred by cosmic storms, countless remnants were floating in the sea of stars. Nobody would pay attention to them at all.

Li Yao exchanged the latest progress with Mu Xuan and his lot. Mu Xuan was quite interested in the refining style of the Flying Star Sector's crystal suits, too. They agreed that they would start a large-scale telepathic thought transmission session to send the detailed information over when they arrived at a relatively safe location.

Right then, the carrier drew close to Star Lord Temple.

Li Yao could see that dozens of small carriers were docked in the port at the tail of Lord Sea Stomper. Another few carriers were entering the port slowly.

They all detected the carrier of Black Iron Town and emitted mystic rays in a fixed rhythm one after another, broadcasting their identity to the newcomer.

The carrier of Black Iron Town followed them and sent out its spiritual authorizations, before it entered the port slowly, too.

…

"Supreme Scorpion Sword Art, simple yet scaring! Remote learning through telepathic thoughts. Organized in small classes. One month of concentrated learning will be enough for you to learn the first three levels. The tuition fee is only 15,000 bucks. The first fifty students to sign up, for an additional 5,000 bucks, will receive a complimentary well-tempered Supreme Scorpion Sword which is 2.4 meters long with three venomous thorns embedded on the tip. A hundred percent true and authentic. Our headcount is limited. Come on and sign up if you are interested!"

"Skill cards. New skill cards have arrived!"

"Super skill cards produced by elders of Cheetah Teeth Sect, all Core Formation Stage Cultivators, containing an entire set of seventy-two deadly serial moves, are now available! Once you start the first move, you won't be able to stop the following three minutes of storm-like attacks at all! Look. There are signatures of the elders of Cheetah Teeth Sect. They are totally authentic. Everybody is welcome to check them out in the branches of Cheetah Teeth Sect!"

"Do you want to be an unparalleled expert in the world? Are you eager to let your name resound in the Flying Star Sector? Do you want to fully appreciate the mysteries of the Cultivation world? Join Rumbling Thunder Union!

"Rumbling Thunder Union boasts both a long history and an immense capability right now! We have experience in the transportation industry, the mining industry, and the crystal suit refining industry. Right now, we have thirty-five starships in total, thirteen large-scale mines, and refining centers on four planets. Our comprehensive capability always ranks in the top twenty in the Flying Star Sector!

"Rumbling Thunder Union is headquartered on the super starship 'Rumbling Thunder'. Not only does the starship have unimaginable firepower and an amazingly high speed, it is also installed with a one-hundred percent real simulation of the natural environment. There are many attractions in the living quarters, including lakes, beaches, and hills. You will feel that you are standing in a natural paradise instead of floating in the sea of stars!

"Right now, we sincerely invite promising young men below the age of eighteen with a Spirit Actualization Quotient higher than 80% as our intern disciples. The length of internship will be three years, during which time your living expenses will be covered, and you will be enlightened by the real masters. Once your spiritual root is awakened, you will be registered as an official disciple! Even if your spiritual root isn't awakened in three years, you will still have the opportunity to work in the Rumbling Thunder Group with a decent salary!"

Half a day later, as Li Yao walked through the packed streets of Star Lord Temple, watching the colorfully blinking light beams in the air, hearing the tempting commercials, and even smelling the vague scent of the delicious food, his lips curled up without him knowing.

The feeling… was so familiar.

It was the time of the monthly kermis. A lot of visitors had come to this place. At least ten thousand people were roaming on the street.

Outside of the starship, it was cold, lonely space. Inside Star Lord Temple, it was a lively world of laughter and happiness.

In a trance, Li Yao felt like he was back to a certain underground city of the Heaven's Origin Sector.

They were both raucous, noisy, and chaotic. But they were equally vigorous, too.

At this moment, Li Yao bade farewell to the folks of Black Iron Town.

As a gesture of gratitude, Mayor Mu Ping had given him a large sum of money after the shell of the giant crab had been sold.

Li Yao was a newcomer to the world and literally cash-strapped. Therefore, he'd accepted Mu Ping's generosity, which had met his urgent need.

Firstly, he bought an old wrist crystal processor in a second-hand crystal processor store.

The Flying Star Sector was much more advanced than the Heaven's Origin Sector in minimalizing the crystal processor. The wrist crystal processor was very light and thin, just like a watch.

Then, Li Yao visited a store named 'Know-All', a special shop that did not sell concrete goods but the latest news.

Since the area of Star Lord Temple was too far away from the central zone of the Flying Star Sector, it often lost connection to the Spiritual Nexus. Therefore, such news stores were opened in many remote villages and towns which were often short of information.

The residents in such places could go to a news store and browse the latest news in the outside world at the cost of a tiny bit of money.

The news would usually be fully updated on a monthly or bimonthly basis. Considering the vastness of the Flying Star

Sector, it could almost be called timely.

Sitting in a corner of the news store, Li Yao turned on four light beams in front him and skimmed the news at a speed that wouldn't shock the fellow readers around him.

The news from the central zone of the constellation gave him a much deeper understanding of the Flying Star Sector.

Most of the news contained briefs about cosmic storms or meteorite cascades in certain coordinates or about the newly found space swirls in certain other coordinates.

It appeared that the anomalies in space were of paramount importance for the human civilization of the Flying Star Sector which lived on sailing through the sea of stars.

Li Yao also saw a lot of news about the assaults of space pirates, the latest rank of pirate gangs, and the most wanted list with their respective bounties.

The most wanted list was brimming with names, each of which represented loads of appalling murders. The perils of cruising through the sea of stars couldn't be clearer.

There wasn't much news about the scourge of demon beasts and the demonic Cultivators, suggesting that these two hazards only appeared sporadically and that they were less threatening than space pirates.

But what Li Yao was most concerned about was the general capability of the Cultivators in the Flying Star Sector and that of the top ones.

If this was a world where there were too many Core Formation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Cultivators, he would have to tuck his tail between his legs and behave nicely however ambitious he was.

Thankfully, after browsing through all the news, he didn't find enough evidence to support the hypothesis. Several names of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were brought up in the news, but in a very respectful tone. The leaders and elders of many famous sects seemed to be only at the Core Formation Stage, too.

As for the Divine Transformation Stage Cultivators that were even stronger than the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, Li Yao read about none of them in the recent news.

This is rather odd. The spiritual energy of the Flying Star Sector is clearly much more abundant than that of the Heaven's Origin Sector. Why are the number and capability of the top Cultivators of the two worlds so similar?

Li Yao pondered the question while he continued reading the news.

Half an hour later, he came to an uncertain conclusion.

It was true that the spiritual energy of the Flying Star Sector was more abundant. But since this place was an ancient battleground where a large number of relics of starships and magical equipment had been left, the Cultivators of this sector attached more importance to the creation and utilization of magical equipment.

After dedicating most of its manpower, resources, and time to the refinement of magical equipment, the Flying Star Sector was blessed with an extraordinarily advanced and popularized crystal suit system. This was a world where crystal suits mattered most. Most of their training and combat theories featured crystal suits as the core.

In comparison, the Heaven's Origin Sector did not have enough resources nor were there enough ancient relics to excavate. Therefore, crystal suits were never promoted on a large scale. Most Cultivators still highlighted the training of themselves and considered crystal suits to be auxiliary tools.

As a result, although the resources of the two Sectors were not even, the top experts of them were of similar level.

However, it was also possible that the stronger experts of the Flying Star Sector had been training in seclusion recently and therefore did not appear in the news that Li Yao read.

Chapter 447: Incoming Space Pirates!

Chapter 447: Incoming Space Pirates!

Other than that, the most viewed news was that about Heavenly Saints City. There were even some paid Great Illusionary Land programs which could simulate the splendid experience inside Heavenly Saints City.

Li Yao tried a few of them himself. It was indeed quite impressive.

The living quarters of Heavenly Saints City included not only lakes and oceans, but also continuous highlands and canyons that were hundreds of meters deep. Many floating mountains were moving in midair, from which thousands of waterfalls rushed down and turned into fuzzy drizzle half way. Rainbows were forming among them.

The working and studying quarters of Heavenly Saints City were spread across several districts. Numerous skyscrapers were connected to each other by vacuum tubes and teleportation arrays. Packs of people were coming and going on the bridges that were almost transparent as if they were strolling on the sky. Shuttles in all kinds of weird shapes were commuting among the bridges, producing colorful exhaust flames behind them at an amazingly high speed, but they never ran into one another. An invisible hand seemed to be manipulating everything behind the scenes.

Li Yao found it hard to accept that such a grand, prosperous city was built in space instead of on a planet. No wonder all the residents of the Flying Star Sector were captivated by Heavenly Saints City.

However, what interested him more were the training facilities of Heavenly Saints City.

As the training center of the Flying Star Sector, not only were the six largest Cultivation sects headquartered there, they had also established all kinds of institutions such as elementary, middle, and high schools, training camps, crystal suit refining clubs, and so on.

The most renowned crystal suit refining centers of the Flying Star Sector were based in Heavenly Saints City, too.

Li Yao discovered the promotion video of one of the crystal suit refining centers in the database.

What was shown in the promotion video was a super large training laboratory of more than eighty acres, an endless assembly line of magical equipment, and an automatic loading and distribution system utilizing countless mechanical arms driven by spiritual energy.

A common engineering crystal suit or a farming one could be manufactured unceasingly by dozens of low-level Cultivators and hundreds of ordinary workers supervised by only a few real refiners.

This was the true sense of mass-production!

Such advanced production facilities and technology had reduced the cost of a crystal suit to as low as possible, which was why they were so popular in the Flying Star Sector. Just like the shuttles of the Heaven's Origin Sector, crystal suits were affordable to every household here, even if they might not be considered low-priced, either.

As for battlesuits, although Li Yao failed to find their refining process, he did find a commercial of 'Nine Cauldron Arena', a place where crystal suits specialized in combat competed against each other.

Since crystal suits were popular in the Flying Star Sector, it was almost every Cultivator's dream to be a formidable Exo. Therefore, crystal suit competitions were a trendy activity.

The Flying Crystal Racing game in the Heaven's Origin Sector was but a daily routine in this world. There were more thrilling ways of competition in other forms.

All kinds of crystal suit arenas had thus been built everywhere in the Flying Star Sector like mushrooms after a spring rain. Not only did Cultivators like to practice with their peers inside, ordinary people enjoyed entertaining themselves by crashing into each other while wearing engineering and farming crystal suits. The satisfying scent of rust and sweat was the best reward for them.

Crystal suit competitions and championships, open and underground gambling games… An enormous chain of interest had been formed. Together with crystal suit refining, modification, and maintenance as well as the training of Exos, the industry of crystal suits was the unquestionable pillar of the Flying Star Sector.

The Exos who secured victories in the top arenas were seen as celebrities and big heroes to everyone. They often earned an abundance of admiration from young boys and girls and offers from big sects. Plentiful training resources were available for them at any time.

While he was watching the commercial of the arena which was displayed in the form of the Great Illusionary Land, Li

Yao felt that he was seated in the vast ball-shaped arena and attracted to his seat by electromagnetic force, spinning.

Two crystal suits, one red and the other white, were floating in the middle of the arena. They turned into two streaks of brightness and bombarded each other with the most eye-catching attacks.

Sometimes, their attacks were only the width of a hair away from the audience, but the defense rune arrays managed to block them all the time. However, the hair of the audience was often tousled by the blowing wind, making them exclaim in satisfaction while their hearts was pounding.

The amateurs were enjoying the visual show, but the specialists were examining the skills. The more Li Yao watched, the more shocked he became.

According to the introduction, the two Exos in the commercial were only in the middle level and high level of the Building Foundation Stage state, but he was impressed by their speed, strength, small-scale movements in combat as Cultivators at the peak of the Building Foundation Stage, if not the Core Formation Stage!

Li Yao observed and remembered their every action. Then, he closed his eyes. Two translucent figures popped up in his brain while he started computing quickly.

A moment later, he came to the conclusion that, without the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit which had been added with the strengthening materials from Skeleton Dragon, it was very likely that he wouldn't be able to defeat the two Exos if he were wearing the same crystal suit they did!

To think that the two Exos were far from the best ones of the 'Nine Cauldron Arena'.

This is incredible. The appearance, structure, and firepower of the battlesuits of the Flying Star Sector are all at least a hundred years more advanced than those of the Heaven's Origin Sector!

Besides, the Exos here have multiple special techniques to drive their crystal suits which allows them to meld themselves with the crystal suits. Their combat ability is improved by more than five times!

I really can't wait any longer. I have to go to Heavenly Saints City and learn the secret arts of crystal suit refining and the techniques to drive them!

Watching the fierce battle of the two Exos in the Great Illusionary Land again, as a maniac of magical equipment, Li Yao was rubbing his fists in exhilaration, his drool almost dribbling down.

The news store also provided a lot of information for young men who wished to visit Heavenly Saints City such as himself.

A travelling agency had proposed a package to Heavenly Saints City. Not only would tourists be able to spend their vacation in the living quarters of Heavenly Saints City, they could also go to the top arenas and watch the competitions of the real expert Exos in person. The package had a duration of one month. Purely for recreation. No shopping detours included. Hand-written autographs of the real expert Exos were available if the tourists were in luck.

However, such a package was extremely costly, too. Even the cheapest package required tens of thousands.

There were also some other obscure messages which were channels through which one could smuggle themselves into

Heavenly Saints City.

However, even if the smuggling succeeded, they could only live beyond the sixth ring of Heavenly Saints City secretly because they did not have residential certificates; it was impossible to enter the real training centers.

The messages that were much clearer were the notices of matches.

Different from what Li Yao had expected, the notices were issued not in the name of Heavenly Saints Alliance, but by the different organizations inside Heavenly Saints City.

For example, if Heavenly Saints Alliance gave fifty slots to a certain crystal suit refining center, this refining center would host refining matches publicly. The top fifty winners would be entitled to enter Heavenly Saints City and work as employees of the refining center.

As a result of such a policy, there were all kinds of matches taking place everywhere.

It was a pity that most of the matches were held in the relatively more prosperous zones. Underdeveloped areas such as Star Lord Temple and Black Iron Town, naturally, had none.

It seems that I'd better go to a more developed area before making any further plans.

Li Yao searched for cargo ships that were going to pass by Star Lord Temple soon and found that two cargo ships were coming to the place in three days. After simple maintenance and refilling of supplies, they would set off on a long journey to the Triple Lights Zone that was quite close to Heavenly Saints City.

Triple Lights Zone boasted a space spiritual lode which mostly contained spiritual energy of the fire class. If starships were docked in such a space spiritual lode, it would be a great help for those who majored in Cultivation arts of the fire class. Therefore, several medium-sized sects had headquartered in this area, making it one of the wealthier zones in the Flying Star Sector.

Then, I shall head off to the Triple Lights Zone first!

Cargo ships were the first choice for most of the residents of Star Lord Temple and nearby when they wanted to travel in the outside world. Therefore, the procedures to board a cargo ship were pretty standard now.

Through an agency, Li Yao reserved a seat on one of the ships.

Later, the agency asked a Meditation Healer at the Refinement Stage to hypnotize him and check out his identity.

Li Yao's soul power was too immense for him to be hypnotized for a Cultivator at the Refinement Stage. After the examination, the guy was convinced of his faked identity. He got his ticket without any trouble.

For the next three days, Li Yao stayed in the news store, absorbing information like a sponge sucking water.

…

In the morning, three days later, Li Yao was still huddling in a corner of the news store. His eyes were even more fresh than three days ago, even though he hadn't slept at all during the time. While others were taking a nap with their eyes closed, Li Yao secretly sped up his reading.

There was half a day to go before the cargo ship took off. He was planning to get more knowledge about the Flying Star Sector before he boarded the starship.

Right then, his seat suddenly shivered before it jumped abruptly. Several glasses on the desk nearby fell to the ground and shattered. Many readers were woken from their dreams and mumbled unclearly.

Beep—Beep—Beep

The hasty alarms shattered everyone's drowsiness.

"Space pirates! Space pirates are here!"

Residents of Star Lord Temple immediately recognized the alarms. Their faces turned pale as they cried uncontrollably.

The earth was shaking more and more violently. Many people were helplessly waving their arms and legs as if dancing. Some were so scared that they hid below the desks, but more people swarmed to the street.

Li Yao frowned and cursed in a low voice. He followed the crowds to the street, too.

Today was the second to last day of the kermis. Although most of the visitors had left Star Lord Temple, several thousand of them were still lingering. The street was a mess, congested by people who were running about like headless chickens. The blue sky and white clouds in the sky which were simulated by giant full-coverage light beams died down one after another under the intense impacts, revealing a bleak, cold dome of steel.

Dark red light beams were gradually condensed in midair, displaying a fierce battle in space.

A somewhat coarse voice said solemnly, "Please don't panic, everybody. We are engaged in a battle with intruding space pirates!

"Star Lord Temple boasts an extremely advanced defense system which is impossible for the space pirates to breach through. Lord Sea Stomper is with us!

"I believe every one of us knows the cruelty of space pirates.

"Perhaps, they might've spared our lives after looting everything of value in Star Lord Temple, if we had decided to surrender in the beginning.

"But now, the two parties have both opened fire, and we have slain multiple space pirates. There's no way that they will let go of us!

"If the space pirates break into Star Lord Temple, we will all be dead for sure!

"Therefore, please keep calm, everyone. Those of you who have crystal suits, please put them on; those of you who don't, please go to the shelter according to the guidance of the signal arrows. We will possibly be in a vacuum if the shell of the starship is compromised!

"Exos who have received space combat training before, please gather at the closest deck to you out of No. 1, No. 4, and No. 6. You and the Guardians of Star Lord Temple will work together to defeat the space pirates!"

Chapter 448: Storm Prison

Chapter 448: Storm Prison

BOOM!

As the speech was concluded, another earthquake took place in Star Lord Temple. The steel dome screeched while its metal constituents fractured one after another. Some ten iron tubes couldn't bear the pressure any longer and smashed down.

Li Yao's pupils shrank to the size of two needles. The muscles all over his body tensed, making him, for a moment, appear smaller than his actual size. But his clothes puffed up as if they had been filled with air, with noises indicating that they were going to torn open at any moment.

Li Yao stomped on the ground. The workers' shoes he was wearing had no obvious changes on the surface, but the bottom of the shoes made of strengthened rubber had been pressed into powder. The ends of his trousers suffered collateral damage and were torn into ragged cloth, too. Then, Li Yao turned into a streak of brightness, darting toward where the iron tubes were falling.

Shua!

Li Yao's arms turned into more than ten blurred shadows and swallowed fourteen iron tubes like whips. The last iron tube hit the ground where nobody was standing with an earsplitting noise.

Although no one was hurt by the iron tubes, they were truly shocked. The crowds that just went tranquil were seething again. The old, the young, the disabled were falling over due to the intense pushing. Helpless cries of a little girl could be heard not far head.

CRACK!

Li Yao clenched the iron tubes so hard that imprints of his hands were left on them.

Li Yao's face was emotionless, but flames of fury were bursting out of his eyes.

He squinted and observed the situation of the battle through the light beams in the air.

Appearing abruptly in space was a hideous starship more than a thousand meters long that looked like a crocodile. The giant turrets on the back of the crocodile were spurting dazzling clusters of spiritual energy nonstop, bombarding Star Lord Temple.

However, the defense of Star Lord Temple was apparently beyond the expectations of the space pirates.

The defense ring of Star Lord Temple quickly spun. The spiritual shield it released absorbed all the energy of the attack. Its gravity interference system caused all the incoming attacks with real entities to deviate from their flight path; the rushing bullets and cannonballs all brushed past Star Lord Temple and darted elsewhere into the dark depths of space.

A moment later, the space pirates reduced the frequency of the bombardment. Instead, a lot of crystal suits jetted out from the stomach of the warship, trying to breach the defenses themselves.

The guardians of Star Lord Temple flew into space, too. Hundreds of Exos were engaged together. The cold sea of stars seemed to be boiling. Spiritual energy rippled out crazily like floods.

The space pirates did not have the advantage in numbers.

Since the local area was too remote to be protected by any Cultivation sects, the men of almost every family knew how to wear a crystal suit and the simple combat skills.

However, most of the residents in this place were ordinary people after all. Even of the guardians of Star Lord Temple, there were only several Refinement Stage Cultivators, who had retired to their hometown because of old age or disability.

In comparison, the space pirates were all ruthlessly desperadoes, most of whom were in the high level of the Refinement Stage or even the Building Foundation Stage. They were experienced in fighting and equipped with specialized battlesuits that had armed themselves to teeth. It was as easy as chopping wood when they were engaged with the amateurs.

The guardians of Star Lord Temple could only struggle to stall the enemies with the help of the powerful defense ring.

Everybody could tell that it was only a matter of time before the defense ring was broken.

But Li Yao was somewhat confused. He narrowed his eyes and scanned the crocodile-shaped warship.

Two enormous words were engraved on the head of the warship: 'Storm Prison'!

Li Yao quickly searched the latest information he collected for the name.

Storm Prison was a large space pirate gang ranking in the top twenty in the Flying Star Sector. It was unpredictable and merciless, known as one of the most notorious criminal organizations in this world.

Fengyu Zhong, the leader of the gang, was a Cultivator at the Core Formation Stage. He was both smart and quick-minded. The Heavenly Saints Alliance had convened several sieges against Storm Prison and even summoned a Cultivator at the peak of the Core Formation Stage once.

Members of Storm Prison were all wiped out after each siege. But Fengyu Zhong somehow survived each hunt, and before they knew it, he would have gathered another bunch of outlaws and rise again, with even more lackeys and even nastier reprisals!

It was possible that, when the management of Star Lord Temple saw the name of Storm Prison whose destination was clear to them, they immediately started preparing active defense without even considering surrendering at all.

This is odd. Why is a space pirate gang ranking the top twenty in the Flying Star Sector wandering in such a poor area?

Studying the light beams carefully, Li Yao was deep in thought.

He found that, despite the intimidating appearance of the crocodile-shaped warship, many damages and fractures could be found on it. Several turrets had been already blown apart, too. The exhaust flames on its back were blinking intermittently, suggesting that there was something seriously wrong with the power rune arrays of the warship.

The space pirates fighting were clumsy and hasty, and they seemed to be lacking spiritual energy and ammo, evidenced by the fact that they hardly performed remote attacks and preferred head-on combat.

In short, the guardians of Star Lord Temple were, of course, no better than the meat on a chopping block. But the space pirates of Storm Prison were swinging rather blunt cleavers, and it would be quite troublesome for them to mince the meat even if they could cut it.

They must've experienced a fierce battle just now and are running out of supplies.

Li Yao came to that conclusion. The Guardians of Star Lord Temple are but mobs made of ordinary people and low-level Cultivators. In other words, farmers with armor.

With Storm Prison's expertise, by logic, they should've settled the battle easily a long time ago, even if they are affected by the defense ring. How come they have been caught in a stalemate?

The Core Formation Stage Cultivator Fengyu Zhong, the boss of the gang, must either be away from the warship or have suffered such serious injuries that he couldn't even stand up. Otherwise, with the strength of a Core Formation Stage Cultivator, he could've broken the defense effortlessly with just one leg and one foot.

The Flying Star Sector is indeed an interesting place. Not only do the supposedly upright Cultivators refuse to protect the ordinary people, they even turn into space pirates and butcher those weaker than themselves?

Li Yao recalled the crimes and felonies of Storm Prison recorded in the database. Brilliance sharper and colder than icy pitons beamed out of his eyes as he dashed forward to No. 1 deck.

No. 1 deck was in an utter mess.

Without the protection and guidance of Cultivation sects, the ordinary people and the low-level unaffiliated Cultivators were but loose sand. They simply roared, put on their crystal suits, and charged into space with their hot blood.

Li Yao found himself in a dilemma.

If somebody were to quantify his abilities and set his combat ability as 60, then his commanding ability… was approximately zero. He had no idea how to organize the headstrong fighters at all.

Li Yao sighed. Having no alternative, he summoned the Rockman and leapt into space, too.

But instead of roaring and rushing into the battlefield like everybody else, Li Yao observed the situation carefully and soon discovered that several space pirates seemed to know what they were doing. He estimated that they were at least at the Building Foundation Stage.

He might have been able to cope with two of three of them. But if five or more of them came at him together, he would definitely be stalled.

The turrets on their crocodile-shaped warship, on the other hand, were definitely not decorative. They might not be powerful enough to blow up the defense ring of Star Lord Temple, but it wouldn't be a different task for them to blow himself up at all.

"Li Yao, what is going on there? We sensed immense spiritual waves from Star Lord Temple and nearby. Do you need us to come over to you?"

Mo Xuan's anxious voice came through the communication channel.

"Not for now."

Li Yao pondered a moment and said, "We are now under the attack of space pirates who have a warship with tremendous firepower. Sparkle is a multipurpose exploration starship with only a few auxiliary cannons repaired right now. It would be completely disadvantaged against the warship.

"It is a total mess here right now. I don't know whether or not they have backup. Sparkle is not to be exposed yet.

"You guys keep drifting in disguise and mute the spiritual communication channel. When we are safe again, I will contact you from my side.

"As for this particular warship… Let me take care of it!"

Until today, Li Yao had hardly fought in the space with zero gravity; he was used to the ubiquitous restriction of the earth.

He slowly warmed up the power rune arrays as well as his own limbs as he watched and thought of possible combat plans one after another.

It would be hard to break into the crocodile-shaped warship from the outside even for the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, let alone the Rockman that I'm wearing. I have to find a way to sneak inside.

What do I do?

Although the warship's shell is full of holes, the space pirates are apparently well aware of that, too. All the open areas were specially attended to by the air defense cannons. Whoever gets too close will be greeted by a dense barrage.

Even if the barrage can be breached through, the enemies inside the warship will definitely notice the intruder. The whole point of stealth will be meaningless.

Where can I sneak into the warship without anybody noticing?

The starry brilliance inside Li Yao's eyes was trembling violently as he had brought his computational ability to its peak, thinking hard for a solution. Suddenly, he noticed a weird phenomenon. His face was immediately filled with joy.

At the tail of the crocodile-shaped warship, there were ten groups of spurts in two rows from which scorching exhaust flames were spraying out providing incessant impetus for the warship.

However, due to the unknown serious injuries, the flames from four groups of the spurts were sporadic.

The group with the longest gap spewed flames every nineteen seconds for a duration of five seconds.

By his preliminary estimation, the tubes in each group of spurts were all more than three meters in diameter.

"I should be able to make use of that."

Although Li Yao had never seen a warship in such a shape before, its inner structure shouldn't be very different from other crystal warships whose engine systems were located in the rear.

The tubes transmitting exhaust flames were often extended to the bottom of the engine compartment in the middle-rear part of the warship. To better dissipate the heat, a lot of room would be spared near the tubes. Sometimes, there were even cooling pools filled with special cooling liquid around the tubes.

The engine compartment was often heavily guarded. But nobody would watch over the cooling pools as long as they did not malfunction.

This is the spot!

Storm Prison has come to such a poor area without a good reason and launched attacks against a town which is apparently the opposite of wealthy, and yet they failed to take it down after such a long time. For them, it must be a great shame.

If they had additional forces, they would have already sent them out to join the raid of the defense ring.

Therefore, those in battle right now should be most of their manpower.

There shouldn't be too many experts within the warship!

Inside Li Yao brain's, everything he saw turned into translucent phantoms, and then billions of numbers. He calculated the distances, speeds and angels crazily. A moment later, the Rockman waved its four arms and charged into the battlefield, somewhat clumsily!

Chapter 449: Sneaking In

Chapter 449: Sneaking In

Just like a newbie taking part in his first battle, he completely lost control over the power rune arrays perhaps because of panic and dashed at a space pirate awkwardly like a dancing crab.

The space pirate was wearing a crimson crystal suit shaped like a lobster whose two arms were attached to giant pincers. He was fighting two Exos of Star Lord Temple and seemed to be unaware that Li Yao was coming.

But when Li Yao reached his back, the space pirate suddenly turned around and kicked him with explosive spiritual energy right in his chest. More than ten high-frequency vibrating thorns stuck out from his shoes, too!

In a moment, the plate armor on the chest of the Rockman broke apart, before it was blown away like a cannonball. Li Yao struggled for a while and gradually turned rigid, unable to move anymore.

Other space pirates who saw the scene would naturally think that an idiotic bumpkin had tried to ambush a seasoned bandit only to be discovered by the enemy who had set up a trap and killed him without any trouble.

Judging from the quick movement and the brutal kick, the bandit was at least in the high level of the Refinement Stage, not something that a bumpkin wearing a Rockman could deal with!

Flowers of death were blossoming in the battlefield. No one paid any additional attention to the Rockman whose chest had been shattered, including the space pirate who made it so.

Inside the destructed Rockman, Li Yao's lips curled cruelly.

For his monster-like body built up by the Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining technique, the strike from a Refinement Stage Cultivator dealt absolutely no damage to him except to make his heart beat a bit faster for a moment.

Like a hibernating animal, he kept his arms and legs still and drifted through space silently.

However, a lot of steam was popping up from his forehead. His sweat was vaporized before it came into being.

His soaring computational ability allowed him to see thousands of interrelated rays of light in front of his eyes. The course of the crocodile-shaped warship, the direction to which he was drifting, and all the interferences standing in his route had all been taken into consideration.

Chi… Chi…

Li Yao adjusted the power rune array to the minimum level. Only when his body was not in anybody's sight would the crystal suit spurt out a wave of lackluster exhaust flames occasionally to change course slightly.

Sometimes, he crashed into other Exos who were still fighting or the remnant crystal suits which had been torn into pieces. His direction would be changed again.

There were quite a lot of other corpses and remnants floating in the battleground just like himself.

Nobody seemed to notice that, impact after impact, he was gradually drifting to the tail of the crocodile-shaped warship.

Last five hundred meters.

Li Yao stared at the crimson flames jetting out of the back of the crocodile-shaped warship like volcanic eruptions. His eyelids were shivering as he swallowed uncontrollably.

He was well aware that the power rune arrays to drive a crystal warship more than a thousand meters long would be enormous and that the exhaust flames they let out had a scarily high temperature mixed with intense, furious spiritual energy.

The Rockman sent out warnings. Such an engineering crystal suit could barely withstand the high temperature of the exhaust flames. As it drew close, some units and components that were not well-sealed had already started melting.

Last three hundred meters.

Li Yao felt that he was in the middle of a furnace. His hair was burning and his mouth dry.

On the Rockman's light beam, the specifications of many units had hit rock bottom, suggesting that they had lost their functions.

Li Yao gritted his teeth and continued dashing toward the exhaust flames.

Last hundred meters!

If the trajectory of his movement remained unchanged, a giant exhaust flame would sweep over and obliterate him in three seconds.

This was the most critical hundred meters!

When the exhaust flame erupted, Li Yao activated all the working power rune arrays on his crystal suit which was shining crazily as if it had been hit by a lightning. The Rockman sprinted instantly at a speed that almost tore itself apart, making it brush past the exhaust flame at a close distance and stop above a group of intermittent spurts!

Even if somebody in the battlefield was observing this, their eyes would be attracted by the suddenly bursting exhaust flame and fail to notice that a crystal suit was moving unbelievably fast below the surging, scorching fire.

They would have naturally thought that the Rockman was swallowed by the exhaust flames and melted tragically.

Huchi… Huchi… Huchi…

Li Yao breathed heavily. But the air circulation system of the Rockman had been wrecked by the high temperature. The air he was inhaling felt like sweltering magma, making him moan briefly.

The next step was the most difficult one.

The group of spurts below Li Yao was only activated every nineteen seconds. So, the temperature around here was relatively lower than elsewhere.

However, 'low' was still almost a thousand degrees!

"Hu…"

A flare reminiscent of one tossed out of the sun was ejected from the tail of the ship.

Li Yao suddenly gritted his teeth and freed himself from the Rockman!

Right then, the only thing standing between him and the heat of a thousand degrees was a thin mustard suit!

In a moment, Li Yao was on fire, his skin chapping and his eyes red.

Shua!

In the very next moment, a weird, black crystal suit appeared on his body. Streaks of redness were flowing slowly among the gaps of the suit. Deep silver brightness could be found on many of its critical parts.

Li Yao had put on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit!

With the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit which had been strengthened by the body tissue of Skeleton Dragon and the scraps of ancient magical equipment, the heat of a thousand degrees was not entirely irresistible. Li Yao crouched above the spurt holding back the hotness like a black ghost. The crazy operation he was going to carry out made his heart race and his blood boil!

"HU—"

After another round of brilliant exhaust flame eruption, Li Yao roared and charged into the spurt like a black laser even though the flames hadn't died down yet.

The countdown now began. Nineteen seconds left!

Inside the spurt was a high temperature of thousands of degrees, which was not something that the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit could entirely overlook.

Li Yao's eyes had been seared. He moved forward almost thirty meters in just one second and continued marching toward the interior of the crocodile-shaped warship.

The tubes in the front were narrower and narrower, bifurcating into various directions. It was impossible to go forward any longer.

Shua!

The Purple Electric Blue Fire Claw on the left arm of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit suddenly stuck out. Then, its talons joined together and formed a rapidly-revolving drill.

Purple electric arcs and blue fire surged out continuously and decorated the drill with a layer of helical mystic rays, which was revolving crazily, too!

Drill of mystic rays!

Impressed by the powerfulness of Sparkle's drill of mystic rays in the battle against Skeleton Dragon, Li Yao had thoroughly studied the rune arrays and technologies that it entailed together with Mo Xuan and the rest of the crew. More than three hundred brand new rune arrays had been discovered and analyzed, as well as the complicated spiritual energy circulation pattern. The new findings had all been applied to the modification of the Purple Electric Blue Fire Claw.

Right now, the front end of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit's left arm was made up of five sharp talon blades strengthened by the silver bones and ancient scraps. When they were opened, they would form a deadly, treacherous claw; when they were folded away, they could revolve rapidly and turned into an unstoppable mini drill of mystic rays with the immense spiritual energy provided.

It was not enough.

Li Yao was clear that the hardness of the materials making up the tubes must be extremely high since they were supposed to function normally in an environment of thousands of degrees. Even a drill of mystic rays might not be able to dig a hole in it shortly.

Shua!

Li Yao raised his right hand and pinned several cylindrical crystal bombs on the tubes.

After several gentle explosions, the tube nearby was rendered into a mysterious bluish color, its temperature plummeting.

They were Frigid Prison Grenades, the most powerful freezing bombs that the Heaven's Origin Sector had ever excavated!

Li Yao had been fully armed when he went to explore Boneyard. As a frantic bomber, naturally, he had taken hundreds of various kinds of bombs with him.

However, the bombs had never gotten to play their parts on Boneyard. It wasn't their show time until right now.

The materials of the tubes boasted supreme resistance against high temperature. But the designers of the tubes hardly considered the scenario of an extremely low one.

Under the thermodynamic effects, the tubes were much more fragile than before.

At this time, five seconds had passed.

Li Yao roared and struck the drill of mystic rays at the wall of the tubs.

One second, two seconds, three seconds…

The next exhaust flame eruption was drawing closer and closer.

Li Yao attention was so focused that his eyes didn't move or blink. He didn't consider that he might not have enough time at all, but instead, he burnt his soul and unleash all his spiritual energy. Dazzling brilliance bloomed on the drill of mystic rays as it pushed forward, forward, and forward!

Finally!

The wall of the tube couldn't stand it any longer. The drill of mystic rays blew out a giant hole on it.

Li Yao dashed into the hole without bothering anything.

Inside the hole was a spacious hollow with a forest of tubes. They were dense, interconnected, and seemed to be various different models.

Gusts of wind swept over and left, carrying away the heat.

This is the air cooling chamber.

As it turns out, this crystal warship is using an air cooling system. The entire engine system is encircled by a large rune array of the wind class. There seem to be several freezing rune arrays, too. Together, they produce cold wind to cool down the power rune arrays and the transmission tubes.

Li Yao was thinking fast, but he was moving faster. Like a giant ape, he climbed and leapt among the tubes, fleeing toward the depths of the darkness. The broken hole that he'd dug out was getting further and further away from him.

BOOM!

The exhaust flames erupted again. A fraction of the flames charged into the hole and raged like a giant animal of fire.

But Li Yao had long run out of its savaging range and reached a corner of the chamber.

In the darkness, he gazed at the labyrinth-like forest of tubes above his head and speculated the distribution of cabins in the rear part of the warship and, more importantly, the location of the engine compartment.

Judging from where the tubes are going, the engine compartment should be in the top left corner, and it's most likely that the bottom right corner is an unattended zone.

Li Yao groped for the cold steel blocks and smiled. The drill of mystic rays appeared again in his hand.

Ten minutes later, at the tail of the crystal warship, in a cooling pool where nobody was watching, below a cover that was used to inject cooling liquids, squeaking noises came out, followed by a series of small, intense sparks which were bursting out through the gap between the cover and the cooling pool.

The cover was opened slowly. A black ghost gradually emerged from the cooling pool.

Without anybody knowing, Li Yao had breached to the inside of Storm Prison's starship.

Chapter 450: Rabid Dogs

Chapter 450: Rabid Dogs

In a dim, narrow pathway at the end of the warship…

This warship seemed to have undergone protracted head-on battles. The internal structure was on the verge of destruction. Cracks, dislocations, and broken cabins that had been sealed by strengthened foams were everywhere. In general, it was like a complicated maze which had been smashed to pieces by a giant.

Through the tiny gaps between steel beams and tubes, Li Yao slithered silently from one cabin to another like a hungry boa which had just woken up from its hibernation.

Occasionally, several space pirates would come by the pathway below him. But Li Yao didn't attack them. Instead, he listened to what they were talking about carefully.

From the space pirates' conversation, Li Yao discovered that the warship was actually in a very bad condition, with serious internal damage everywhere that could possibly lead to explosions. The spiritual energy of the warship was running dry, too.

Most of the soldiers had been deployed to attack Star Lord Temple. Those left on board were mostly operators and mechanics.

Finally, when a space pirate was rushing close from the pathway in front and Li Yao's telepathic thoughts didn't sense a second heartbeat in the surrounding dozen or so square meters, he moved out!

Like a lurking boa lunging at its prey, Li Yao darted out from the gaps among the tubes, stomping on a wall. He reached the space pirate momentarily, and his two arms slapped down like the sharpest whips, producing earsplitting noises.

Before the space pirate knew what was going on, his shoulder blades had been blown into powder as tiny as sand!

The sense of pain hadn't yet travelled to his brain. There was still confusion in his eyes, but Li Yao had already locked his neck and kicked brutally right in his chest. His mustard suit proved to be utterly useless. His internal organs were shattered and his ribs broken. The sharp fractured bones brushed past his heart narrowly!

The space pirate finally felt the excruciating pain, but his mouth was being strangled by Li Yao so hard that his teeth were all clattering against each other.

The boa had caught a sheep. Unable to struggle, the space pirate was dragged to a long-prepared tool cabin by Li Yao, who then stickered a muting rune on the door of the cabin casually before he threw his captive to a corner.

The space pirate was cramping and vomiting in agony. Yet, he had lost the strength to scream. His eyes were darting around rapidly, which soon noticed the black crystal suit with blood-red spiritual stripes. Then, he was consumed by fear!

Li Yao took out a dose of a highly-condensed drug, flipped its cap away with his thumb, and tilted the utensil.

The thick, translucent drug with alluring aroma immediately flowed out and dripped to the ground silently.

Li Yao said calmly, "Your shoulders and ribs are all broken. Your internal organs are bleeding seriously. Depending on your capability, you will die in five to eight minutes.

"If you ingest this medication, your internal bleeding should be stopped temporarily, long enough for you to make it to the med bay.

"Now, you have three minutes to tell me the reason why you people are here, the status and personnel of your starship, and the identity and capability of your highest commander.

"Confess everything that you consider useful. I will be the one to judge whether or not your information is valuable.

"If I'm convinced that listening to you is worthwhile, I will give you the medication drug. You are not my target. I won't waste my time on a shrimp such as yourself.

"However, make it fast. The medicinal drug will continue to pour to the floor over the three minutes. If the remaining drug is not enough for you, don't blame me."

While he was talking, Li Yao projected a light beam in front of him, on which a blood-red countdown in a gruesome font was manifested.

Three minutes. The countdown began!

Two minutes and fifty-nine seconds to go!

The space pirate was cramping and grimacing in the sharp pain like a loach which had been pinned to a chopper block.

He was mumbling something, but there was no telling whether he was cursing or begging.

Li Yao was as peaceful as before. The countdown continued, as did the flowing medication drug.

After ten seconds, the space pirate finally realized the situation that he was in. Like a drowning man grasping the last straw, he held back his pain and moved to Li Yao's feet, telling Li Yao everything that he knew of.

The reality was similar to what Li Yao had guessed. This starship of Storm Prison was not commanded by Fengyu Zhong, the brutal bandit in the Core Formation Stage, personally, but by his only son Fengyu Ming.

Fengyu Ming was 27 years old and in the high level of the Building Foundation Stage. But he was quite a Mr. Nobody in the 'Spider Den', a planet where space pirates congregated. In order to succeed his father's enterprise, he would have to show his ruthlessness to everyone first.

This was actually Fengyu Ming's first hunting trip by himself.

At first, everything had gone quite well. He'd captured two business starships and looted a lot of useful resources.

But very soon, during his next assault, he was noticed by the passing-by 'Great Horn Exo Society'.

The Great Horn Exo Society were not the guards of the business starship being savaged by him nor were there any grudges between the two parties before. Their comprehensive capabilities were on par. Fengyu Ming's side even had slight edge. Once they were engaged in a battle, there would be two losers and zero winners.

However, the Great Horn Exo Society bit Fengyu Ming like a bunch of rabid dogs and wouldn't let him go no matter what. They drifted and fought in the sea of stars for over two months, with significant losses on both sides. Their starships were all riddled with holes and on the verge of destruction now.

Fengyu Ming had never seen such a fearless Exo Society before. He ran far away and eventually reached this far-flung area.

At this moment, his starship was collapsing. Now that he'd detected Star Lord Temple, he had planned to steal some supplies from the place.

He had thought that, after one or two barrages, the country folk down there would surrender nicely. But the defense of Star Lord Temple was much tougher than he had expected. Having no other choice, he had been forced to command the bandits to launch frontal attacks. Li Yao already knew the rest of the story.

After two months of battles, Fengyu Ming had lost most of his elite subordinates. The surviving space pirates were all exhausted if not injured, with little ammunition and spiritual energy left. That was why his attack on a small town had lasted almost an hour with little progress.

"I—I've told you everything. Give me the medication drug, give me…"

The space pirate's face was pale. Blood was gurgling inside his throat. He begged anxiously and desperately.

Li Yao was deep in thought.

Great Horn Exo Society?

Exo Societies were unique organizations of Cultivators in the Flying Star Sector.

Compared with Cultivation sects, Exo Societies were burdened with less rules. The Exos with a clean history and acceptable skills could join or leave any of them free at their will.

Such loose organizations were very popular among the unaffiliated Cultivators who hated to be bounded by restrictions. Many young men from Cultivation sects preferred to join an Exo Society when they were travelling in the outside world away from their sects to gain more battle experience, make more prominent friends, and enjoy the more splendid scenery of the vast world.

Exo Societies mainly had two sources of income: to serve as guards for large business fleets or mining bases, and to hunt down space pirates and demon beasts to claim their bounties.

However, Li Yao didn't find 'Great Horn' among the names of the most famous Exo Societies in the Flying Star Sector. It seemed to be a mediocre one.

Then, why would a mediocre Exo Society with no impressive capabilities haunt the space pirates of Storm Prison for more than two months without any rest? Were the bounties of the space pirates that high?

"Why have the Great Horn Exo Society been chasing you for the last two months?"

Li Yao lowered his wrist. The medication drug inside was pouring out at a higher speed. Almost half dose was about to be emptied.

Two hands seemed to be popping out from the hollowed eyes of the space pirate. Smelling the exhilarating flavor, he felt that his internal organs were all the more painful and insufferable. His lips tremored for a moment, before he finally spoke the truth.

"When Master Ming was pillaging the second business starship, to— to better spread his name, he—killed everyone from the starship after they surrendered."

Several blood vessels inside Li Yao's eyes suddenly burst. He nodded and handed over the medication drug. "Very good. The information you've provided is very valuable."

The space pirate took a long breath in relief and picked the medication drug, shivering. Before he was able to swallow it, he suddenly felt that his chest was aching as if ten thousand iron needles had stabbed into it at the same time with tens of thousands of electric arcs. After an intense spasm, his eyes widened and froze.

Li Yao took back the medication drug and vanished in the gaps among tubes on the ceiling of the tool cabin.

…

Like a wolf who was locked in an iron cage with a broken leg, Fengyu Ming paced to and fro stumblingly, with a hideous and desperate, if not somewhat wronged, expression on his face.

"Son of a gun. When are the rabid dogs of the Great Horn Exo Society going to stop?

"It was not the cargo that you were protecting that I robbed anyway!

"This is just my first hunting trip. The bounty on my head is not even enough to pay for the fuel of your starship!

"Why? Can somebody tell me why?!"

Fengyu Ming yelled at the top of his voice and pulled on his hair incredibly violently.

The past two months had been a terrible memory for a bandit who had just started his career.

The comprehensive capability of the Great Horn Exo Society was not very impressive at all; it was even weaker than his starship.

But 'give up' seemed to be an entry that was missed from their dictionary. Each time he got rid of them, they would simply come back again. There was absolutely no way to ditch them!

Every time they were engaged, the Great Horn Exo Society was always determined to perish together with him. His enemy would park their starship an inch away from his own starship despite the fierce bombardment and then open fire at him. It was just like two burly thugs stabbing each other with daggers, not having the slightest fear about what might become of themselves.

Faced with such an insane foe, even the brutal bandits of Storm Prison had no other choice but to run away.

He had thought that, reaching the periphery of the Flying Star Sector after more than half a month of cruising through stone belts and cosmic storms, the rabid dogs must've been left behind.

But as it turned out, half a day ago, the telepathic thoughts of the Great Horn Exo Society had still been detected, which carried a piece of arrogant information written in plaintext without the shallowest disguise.

"It is the most important thing for Cultivators to keep our word. When we say we will take you down, we will take you down, even if you flee to the end of the sea of stars!"

A bunch of rabid dogs!

It never rains; it pours. The small space town in front of him was quite eccentric, too. Its powerful defense rings made him fail to conquer the settlement after almost two hours.

Fengyu Ming had a vague feeling that he was not going to be able to get supplies from this place.

Even though he could take over the town right now, there wouldn't be enough time for them to transport the supplies to their starship, since the rabid dogs of the Great Horn Exo Society could arrive at any time.

Fengyu Ming's facial muscles were twitching violently. He gritted his teeth and decided to abandon the fat meat right below his mouth and continue his escape as soon as possible.

Right then, the warship shivered. The giant light beam on the top of the dashboard was in ominous red, while hasty alarms were echoing nonstop.

The engine compartment had a serious explosion. 15% of the impetus was lost, and the number only continued to rise.

Fengyu Ming's face suddenly turned taut and grave.

Chapter 451: Spare My Life, Senior!

Chapter 451: Spare My Life, Senior!

For the space pirates of Storm Prison right now, an impetus loss of 15% was almost deadly.

Even though the power rune arrays could not be restored in time, the explosions had to be controlled so that it wouldn't affect other areas of the warship.

If they were to lose 30% or more impetus, they would be sitting ducks, having nowhere to run.

Static noises came through the communication channel. The contact between the cockpit and the engine compartment had been cut off by the explosions.

Fengyu Ming rushed toward the engine compartment without any hesitation.

He raised his hand. A streak of redness surrounded him and gradually consolidated into a raging crystal suit.

The crystal suit named 'Dark Fire' was a trophy from an expert at the peak of the Building Foundation Stage that his father had killed. It had been modified by the specialists of 'Spider Den', the base planet of the space pirates, with additional plate armor and attack rune arrays. The formidable crystal suit was his biggest reliance on this solo hunting trip.

Despite his young age, Fengyu Ming was truly his father's son; they were both sordid and cunning. Even though he was moving inside his own starship, he still put the crystal suit on.

Rushing through the pathway, Fengyu Ming issued commands in the communication channel, ordering the mechanics to go to the engine compartment as soon as possible.

When he was dozens of meters away from the engine compartment, he was already able to smell the burning scent. Black smoke was floating in the above of the pathway, rolling and pressing down.

At this moment, a minor explosion occurred ahead of him. A lot of smoke was coming right at him.

Fengyu Ming frowned. He was going to charge into the smoke when he suddenly had a palpitation and his brain almost froze!

Fengyu Ming screamed like an animal which was falling into a trap. He burned his soul and leaped forward, while the saber with the tusks of a demon beast in his hand drew an insidious upward curve behind him!

Inside the intense smoke behind him, an intimidating figure was rushing close, as if it were trying to collide into the tip of his saber.

Fengyu Ming's every pore was constricting violently. The surging killing intent behind him was too immense, like an icy piton filled with magma. Sharp, fast, and rampant!

Fengyu Ming felt that he was a dead body that a vulture had got its eyes on. Even his bone marrows were freezing!

Waiting to be killed was not his style. There was no time to dodge when he sensed the incoming attack. Therefore, he simply returned an equally brutal attack so as to die together with his enemy, and he roared to send warnings through the communication channel.

But beyond his expectations—

The master of the rampant killing scent neither dodged nor backed off, but accelerated and crashed right into him!

His tusk saber cut in his opponent's body effortlessly.

In the meantime, his internal organs were savaged by a hot stream that felt like magma, too!

Fengyu Ming's facial expressions were completely frozen. He lowered his head in disbelief and shock, only to find that the plate armor covering his stomach had been dug through by a drill of mystic rays which was still revolving rapidly there, dragging all his internal organs into the throes of agony.

The first thing to be wrecked was his spine. Waves of spiritual energy spread out from the drill of mystic rays and tangled every part of his neural network like parasites harassing their host, making him lose control over his lower half body. The circulation of his spiritual energy was disrupted, too!

What terrified him more was that, although his saber had hit the enemy hard and sure, he did not receive the delightful feedback of a crystal suit and the flesh and blood inside of it being cut through; his saber was like a statue made of mud sinking into a deep ocean.

The spiritual energy blowing out of his saber, which was supposed to have minced the internal organs of his opponent into pieces, also vanished into thin air, as if it had been swallowed by an immeasurable swamp.

What is this guy? Why on earth is he on my starship?

What is his crystal suit made of? Why is it so eccentric that it can absorb not only the physical attack but also my spiritual energy?

It hurts! It hurts so much!

Behind Fengyu Ming, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit gradually appeared, like a wraith wandering in the human world from the deepest level of hell. His glittering tusk saber was caught in the soft defense layer refined out of the transparent body tissue of Skeleton Dragon in the middle of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit's chest.

Li Yao had retrieved a lot of materials from Skeleton Dragon. The most precious ones had all been refined and added to the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit!

Speaking of refining techniques and framework design, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit might be well below the standard of the Flying Star Sector, but in regards of the utilization and coverage rate of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was definitely one of the most extravagant crystal suits!

With the flesh and bones of an ancient deadly demon from forty thousand years ago covering his body, Li Yao simply crushed his enemy by the overwhelming specifications without bothering to consider any tricks at all.

With the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Li Yao was invincible against the opponents of the same level!

BOOM!

Li Yao burnt his soul. The exhaust flames of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit surged out. The drill of mystic rays was suddenly revolving much faster than before. Fengyu Ming was crying and screaming due to the excruciating pain.

It was a pity that, before he had been able to fully draw out the capability of a Cultivator in the high level of the Building Foundation Stage, he had been dominated by the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and had completely lost the ability to fight. Li Yao had got him under control.

Li Yao sneered and turned the drill into the claw. Snatching Fengyu Ming's body, he dragged his captive into the engine compartment which was concealed by the smoke.

Li Yao waved his hand casually. Explosions took place behind him at locations that he had carefully calculated. After a moment, the pathway was blocked, the tubes dislocated, and the cabin door twisted.

The transportation between the engine compartment and the outside world had been cut off temporarily and wouldn't be able to be broken through again for another ten to twenty minutes.

Fengyu Ming was finally back to himself from the sharp pain, only to discover that the joints all over his body had been smashed and that he was tied up by countless crystal wires and stuffed on the top of a thick tube like a rice dumpling.

Compared with the weird things that had happened to him, the agitating pain was not a big deal anymore.

In front of him was a crimson light beam, jumping nonstop like a queer lantern, on which a countdown was displayed.

The number on the light beam was 59 seconds, 58 seconds, 57 seconds…

A black crystal suit was eyeing him coldly within a gory aura that looked like black smoke, as if it were an envoy from the depths of hell.

Although the entire face had been disguised by the facial cover, it was not hard for Fengyu Ming to imagine the brutal and cruel face behind the black metal.

The stranger placed one finger on the light beam softly.

The countdown immediately stopped at 55 seconds.

"Let me explain something for you. Right now, you are sitting on the top of a tube that is used to refill the fuel of one of your crystal reactors. There are four large rune arrays of the wind class inside the tube which can generate immense attraction force to pull the fuel and catalysts into it easily."

From the gap of the black crystal suit came a coarse, high-pitched voice, coldly and emotionlessly, as if it had been produced by scraping metal.

"Although the crystal reactor is malfunctioning somewhat, the temperature inside is still well above two thousand degrees.

"Right now, the connection between the rune arrays of the wind class and your mainframe crystal processor has been cut off by me after they were switched to the dormancy state. Instead, they have been docked to this countdown system of mine.

"When my finger is touching the light beam, the countdown will pause temporarily.

"But when my finger leaves, like this—"

Li Yao released his finger. The display shivered and continued counting. 54 seconds, 53 seconds, 52 seconds…

"The countdown will continue, and when it reaches zero, the rune arrays of the wind class will be automatically triggered, and you will be swallowed by the crystal reactor.

"As a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator, together with your ragged crystal suit, a temperature of two thousand degrees may not be able to kill you instantly. I estimate that it will take you at least fifteen seconds for you to be burnt to ashes. You must try to enjoy yourself by then."

Li Yao words made the color of Fengyu Ming's face change abruptly.

The quickly counting and changing countdown was stabbing at him like a death sentence.

Fengyu Ming's mental defense line completely collapsed. He roared at the highest of his voice anxiously, "No, No! I can give you whatever you want! I can tell you everything you want to know! Just don't kick me in! Don't kick me in!"

Li Yao remained motionless, and despite his captive's desperate screams, it was not until the countdown showed '40 seconds' that he put his finger on the light beam again.

The countdown came to a pause.

But Fengyu Ming was not in the least relieved. His head felt like exploding, his tears and snot almost jetting out.

"The first question."

Li Yao bent over and gnashed his teeth. "Are you the scumbag who lured an Exo Society to this place?"

Fengyu Ming was dumbfounded, not having the vaguest clue what that meant.

The Purple Electric Blue Fire Claw on Li Yao's left hand dug in his stomach again and gave him another spasm, before he cursed hatefully, "You bastard. Do you have any idea how much time I spent slaying the dogs sent by Heavenly Saints Alliance just in order to run away to such a remote place where they wouldn't find me?

"I was intending to treat my wounds for a few months here before heading back and treating my 'old friends'!

"But you son of a bit*h, you have attracted an Exo Society to this place!

"Let me ask you, do you think I ought to throw you into the crystal reactor and refresh you a little bit?"

Fengyu Ming trembled and suddenly realized what was going on.

Damn. He had run into a fellow pirate, and a senior one!

The guy must have been a notorious outlaw who had committed major felonies, perhaps serial murders, in Heavenly Saints City. After that, the guy had escaped and made all his way to here. But unfortunately, hardly had he taken a breath of rest when Fengyu Ming himself brought the Great Horn Exo Society to this place, which could potentially endanger the fugitive.

No wonder the guy was so pissed-off and looked for his trouble!

But since the guy didn't kill him immediately, there was still room to negotiate. Fengyu Ming started considering the situation and making up possible plans of his survival.

"Senior, this whole thing is a misunderstanding! I'm the young master of Storm Prison. My father is Fengyu Zhong! If Senior spares my life, my father will definitely reward you!"

Li Yao scoffed and lifted his finger. The countdown started bouncing scarily again.

39 seconds... 38 seconds…

"Do you think I'm a fu*king three-year-old?"

Fengyu Ming was so frightened that his heart was palpitating. His tears and snot were all rushing out as he said hurriedly, "Senior, you can't kill me! The Great Horn Exo Society is right behind us. If you kill me, the space pirates on board will be a heap of loose sand without a leader, and there's no way that they will be able to resist our enemy! If so, you will be burdened by them during your runaway!

"If you can spare my life, since I'm going to fight the Great Horn Exo Society either way, you will have more time to escape during the time being!

"Of course, my father is not the most lenient man in the world, but since you didn't reveal who you are, my father won't be able to identify you even if he wants to avenge me!

"However angry you are about me bringing an Exo Society to this place, we are on the same boat right now. The longer

I live and stall the Exo Society, the more likely you will be able to get away from here!

"Naturally, I believe you can take down the Great Horn Exo Society easily. But if your location is exposed and the elites of Heavenly Saints City track you down, your seclusion and treatment will definitely be disturbed, which won't be in your favor. Therefore, it's best that you avoid contact with the Exo Society if you have the option to.

"The bottom line is, sparing my life is the most beneficial option for you right now. Such a renowned hero like yourself will surely make the sensible judgement without being distracted by rage. Please do take that into consideration. Spare my life!"

Li Yao sniffed and put his finger on the light beam. The countdown was interrupted again.

At this moment, there were 33 seconds to go before Fengyu Ming was to be thrown into the crystal reactor.

Chapter 452: Ten Seconds To Go!

Chapter 452: Ten Seconds To Go!

"You are a smart one. I'm going to ask three things of you. If you are as smart as you just were, I will be gone in five minutes."

Li Yao asked indifferently, "Firstly, why is the Great Horn Exo Society chasing you? Is it really because you've slain hundreds of pigs, or is it because you killed someone you shouldn't have killed and looted something that you shouldn't have looted?"

"No. It was the plainest starship that I robbed!"

Fengyu Ming felt that he was wronged and exclaimed in defense, "It was an old 'Fast Fish'-level carrier. The crew members were the most mundane farmers. Inside the cabin, there were rice and farming magical equipment and nothing much of value. It was far less rewarding than our first job!

"We didn't kill hundreds of people. There were only ninety-eight crew members on board. At first, I only killed some ten of them in order to frighten the rest. But an old woman rushed out and tried to bite me, cursing me for killing her grandson. My crystal suit was contaminated by her saliva. That is why I killed them all!"

Li Yao's eyes were suddenly extremely cold. "Just because of that, the Great Horn Exo Society chased you for two months?"

"Yes, indeed! Those rabid dogs!"

Fengyu Ming's face was twisted when he talked about the Great Horn Exo Society. He said with the utmost hatred, "I did nothing except kill dozens of ordinary people who weren't even the employers of the Great Horn Exo Society. They were just passing by the wreckage of the cargo ship. A guy seemed to still be breathing and told them everything.

"Then, they signed the contract with the fellow with a bag of rice as the price. They've chased and hunted me through more than ten space zones for more two months!

"Over the past two months, hundreds of Exos have been killed on both sides, including dozens of Cultivators!

"A bag of rice!

"No more than a hundred ordinary people!

"Just because of that, dozens of Cultivators have been killed!

"On our way, I sent telepathic thoughts to the Great Horn Exo Society stating that there are no grudges between our two parties and nobody would win anything if the situation went on like this. Even if they manage to kill me in the end, my father will definitely not let go of them!

"I was even willing to offer them a large sum of money, as long as they agreed to leave us and go separate ways.

"However, those rabid dogs replied that the contract had been made with a bag of rice as the price, and the bag of rice had already been cooked, eaten, digested and excreted. Even the defecation had been flushed away!

"Therefore, the contract was irretractable. They will never let go of me even if they have to pursue me to the end of the sea of stars!

"Rabid dogs! They are a bunch of out-and-out rabid dogs! You must take care, senior. You might get into trouble if you are chased by them despite your amazing abilities!"

Li Yao nodded.

"Good. Your first answer is very satisfactory. Then, the second thing. I know your father Fengyu Zhong to be one of the toughest guys in Spider Den. He must have gathered quite a fortune after dozens of years of diligent work as a space pirate.

"You are his only son. He was definitely worried about you on your first solo hunting trip. Although he didn't come personally, he must've given you a huge amount of money, supplies, and magical equipment with you.

"We space pirates, of course, wouldn't deposit money in a bank; we exchange them for the most valuable hard currency and bring them with us.

"Therefore, give me your Cosmos Rings."

Fengyu Ming was dazed for a moment. Rolling his eyes, he gritted his teeth and said, "There is a hidden pocket on the left bottom part of the chest in my mustard suit. The Cosmos Ring is right inside the pocket. Please take it by yourself and consider it a gift from a junior to a senior."

Li Yao smiled.

"I'm not done yet. Here are the rules about the second thing.

"Firstly, although your joints have been crushed by me, as a Cultivator in the high level of the Building Foundation Stage, you can still control your muscles with your telepathic thoughts directly to move your body, as long as you can hold back the sharp pain for a while. Therefore, I won't take it myself. You have to give it to me.

"Secondly, a clever rabbit always has more than one home. I don't believe a guy like you just has one Cosmos Ring.

"Your father is a seasoned bandit. He must've taught you a lot of techniques and secret arts. We are both well aware that there are thousands of ways to hide a Cosmos Ring on one's body which wouldn't be found out in a short amount of time.

"I don't want to waste mine, and I'm not interested in interrogation, either.

"Therefore, I will just assume that you brought three Cosmos Rings with you. In a moment, I will release my finger and resume the countdown, and you will give me your three Cosmos Rings promptly.

"If the countdown reaches zero and you haven't taken out the three Cosmos Rings, you die.

"If you really only brought one or two Cosmos Rings, you die.

"If you have four Cosmos Rings with you, then you are a lucky guy. You can keep the most valuable one to yourself since I won't find out anyway."

While he was talking, Li Yao raised his finger and snapped, freeing Fengyu Ming's right hand.

The countdown began ticking yet again.

33 seconds, 32 seconds, 31 seconds…

Fengyu Ming had concocted a hundred schemes to hide the most important Cosmos Ring of his. But Li Yao's insidiousness was beyond his expectations, and he was truly caught off guard.

The quickly bouncing red figure was stabbing and burning his eyes like the scary flames of the hell. He felt that he was going to be blinded.

Fengyu Ming wriggled desperately and screamed in a voice resembling a pig which was being butchered, "Senior, I really just brought two Cosmos Rings with me. But there are a large quantity of high-purity crystals and the best medication drugs inside. I will gladly offer all of them to you. But I really just have two Cosmos Rings. Just two!"

Li Yao said suspiciously, "You really just have two Cosmos Rings?"

Fengyu Ming nodded vigorously. "Yes. Just two!"

Li Yao sighed and replied, "Then, today is not your lucky day."

The countdown continued. 28 seconds, 27 seconds, 26 seconds…

Fengyu Ming was dumbfounded like a frozen statue. He was absolutely still for three seconds, but it felt like three days and three nights for him.

Suddenly, the frozen statue exploded. He was cramping like a shrimp on a steel sheet in a sushi restaurant and cried out, "Three! I have three Cosmos Rings! I'm giving them to you right now! Stop it! Stop it now!"

Li Yao eyed him calmly and unresponsively.

The countdown went on. There were only 21 seconds left.

Tears and snot were flooding down Fengyu Ming's face. He held back the agony while the muscles over his body rippled like waves. A moment later, three Cosmos Rings appeared in his palm.

Only one of them was in the shape of a ring. The second one looked like a tiny button, while the third one was secretly hidden in a box of medication drug mixed with dozens of capsules.

Even if Li Yao adjusted the resolution of the crystal camera on his crystal suit to the highest setting, he couldn't tell it was any different from a regular capsule.

If he had searched his captive's body in person, he might have been able to locate the first two Cosmos Rings, but the third one would definitely have been overlooked.

Taking the three Cosmos Rings, Li Yao did not pause the countdown, until there were only last 15 seconds left on the light beam.

"The five additional seconds are a little warning to remind you to stop playing any tricks because my patience is limited.

"Right now, you have fifteen seconds to do the last thing that I ask you to. If everything goes well, I will be gone in three minutes, and you will go back to fight the Great Horn Exo Society.

"But if it doesn't go well, you will take a shower in the crystal reactor, and the worst thing for me is just that my identity might be recognized. However, I don't believe that the rabid dogs of the Great Horn Exo Society are capable of blocking me!"

"Everything is definitely going well!"

After submitting the three Cosmos Rings, Fengyu Ming cowered and trembled as if three sections of his spine had been ripped away.

Li Yao said, "I want the highest clearance on the mainframe crystal processor of your starship. I want to know all the information about the starship, especially the star maps that you have stored.

"Therefore, you will tell me the spiritual password of the highest clearance.

"Not so fast. Let me explain to you how this will be done.

"Firstly, you will tell me the spiritual password, and I will reset the countdown to three minutes.

"In the coming three minutes, I will infiltrate the local Spiritual Nexus of your starship and test the password that you are going to offer me.

"If the password you give me is true, naturally, I will have all clearances and get everything I need in three minutes. Then, I will stop the countdown and leave you alone.

"But if the password is a false one and I fail to get all clearances in three minutes, then your outcome will be the same as before. You die!"

Li Yao finished his speech and moved his finger again.

14 seconds, 13 seconds, 12 seconds…

Fengyu Ming gave up the spiritual password without any hesitation.

The three things that Li Yao demanded had been proposed progressively just in order to fully crush his mental defense line.

Now that he had surrendered the most precious Cosmos Rings, it didn't seem a big deal to concede the clearances of the mainframe crystal processor.

After all, the Great Horn Exo Society was coming at any time. Fengyu Ming presumed that his starship was useless for a 'senior space pirate'.

But he didn't know that it was the highest clearance for the mainframe crystal processor that Li Yao had wanted since the very beginning.

When the countdown stopped at 10 seconds, Fengyu Ming fell over exhaustedly like a saddlebag that had been emptied.

"Senior, I've told you everything you want to know and given you whatever you needed. The Great Horn Exo Society is coming anytime. You should at least give me some time to prepare the defense of my starship," Fengyu Ming said, fatigued, like half-dead fish on a dry riverbed.

But inside his brain, malicious thoughts were spinning over and over, as he was considering how to stir up chaos with the unexpected visitor after the 'senior' left.

Perhaps, he could reveal the existence of such a 'senior' to the Great Horn Exo Society directly? Such a bandit was apparently of much higher value than himself.

Or rather, he should make the best use of his time to take down the town in front of him and hold the countryfolk inside hostage?

While he was absent-minded, he heard the 'senior' talking. "Very well. You have been very cooperative. I believe that the spiritual password you've given me is real. I won't waste my time testing it."

Fengyu Ming was overjoyed. He was grinning merrily in his mind, while he put on an obedient expression and said, "Senior, what about—"

Before he was able to complete his sentence, the words were frozen in his throat like ice blocks.

Right in front of his violently shrinking pupils, the facial cover of the senior was being gradually opened!

Fengyu Ming's heart was palpitating so hard that he felt like choking.

He was well aware that unveiling the true face to someone else was definitely not a signal of friendliness among space pirates, but a confident declaration that—

Everyone who saw the face would be killed!

He wants to kill me? Why? What good is there in killing me? Fengyu Ming was held by desperation and bewilderment.

The next second, when he saw Li Yao's face, which was apparently too young for an old space pirate, a spark suddenly burst out his heart and spread to every part of his body. He started shaking beyond his control.

"It seems that you've realized it. I'm not a space pirate. Every word I said just now was a lie."

Li Yao eyes were as deep and dark as ink. He drew close and stared Fengyu Ming in the eyes, enjoying the panic and confusion there, as he said, one word after another, "Your sorry life has ten seconds left."

He gently removed his finger. The countdown of the last ten seconds started.

Chapter 453: Great Horn Exo Society!

Chapter 453: Great Horn Exo Society!

Ten seconds.

Fengyu Ming was struggling like a fish on the chopping block. His fractured bones protruded out of his skin, soaking his body in blood, unbearable to look at.

He cried desperately at the top of his voice, "No! You can't kill me! I can give you whatever you want! Everything you want!"

Nine seconds. Eight seconds.

"I know the coordinates of several treasuries. I have discovered the residences of ancient Cultivators on two planets. I also know three top confidential smuggling routes. I can tell you all of them, as long as you set me free!"

Seven seconds, six seconds.

"Who are you? Who are you exactly? There is no grudge between us. Why do you have to kill me? Why?"

Five seconds. Four seconds. Three seconds.

"Just for those ninety ordinary people? You are crazy. You are a rabid dog, too! My father won't let go of you. Storm Prison won't let you get away with this! All the gangs on Spider Den will not let go of you!"

Two seconds, one second, zero.

The countdown reached zero and made a clicking sound before it suddenly bloomed into thousands of glamorous redness which blinked like fireworks and vanished very soon.

"NOOO! NOOO! NOOO!"

Fengyu Ming had totally gone crazy. He was rolling on the ground and uttering vague screams.

The rune arrays of the wind class hiding in the depths of the fuel transmission tube were provided with sufficient energy. They roared a dull sound and continued to rise.

As a result, a gradually-increasing attraction force came from inside the tube and pulled in Fengyu Ming together with his broken crystal suit.

Like a pig which was about to be sent into a mincer, Fengyu Ming struggled desperately. His right arm, which was his only working limb, clutched the wall of the tube, producing screeching noises, and left five clear traces of fingers. But it didn't help, and he continued to be dragged deeper and deeper.

His screams became higher and higher as he was further swallowed into the tube.

Before he was fully devoured by darkness, he looked at Li Yao one last time.

Misery, desperation, hatred, rage… His countenance was so complicated that it was indescribable.

Li Yao stared back calmly, his eyelids absolutely still.

At the turn of the tube, Fengyu Ming made his last struggle.

The only result was that the immense attraction force dragged his flesh, bones, and internal organs out of his body through his wounds.

Fengyu Ming's scream even dwarfed the roars of the four fully-functioning wind-class rune arrays.

After several seconds of stalemate, he might couldn't hold on any longer. After a plump, his entire body was drawn to the end of the fuel transmission tube and fell into the burning crystal reactor.

The crystal reactor shook violently. Vague, intermittent moans seemed to be echoing inside it. But everything went peaceful again ten seconds later.

Li Yao checked the time.

Right now, only five minutes and thirty-two seconds had passed since he had hauled Fengyu Ming to the engine compartment.

His telepathic thoughts already sensed that a lot of crystal suits were crowding toward where he was and breaking through the blocked pathways at any cost.

Li Yao closed his facial cover. His face was replaced by three crimson crystal cameras in a triangular distribution, and he disappeared into the black smoke in the corner of the engine compartment.

Three minutes later, with an earsplitting explosion, the path to the engine compartment was finally cleared.

A bunch of space pirates immediately flooded in.

"Master Ming! Master Ming!"

"This is—"

The space pirates didn't discover any traces of Fengyu Ming after a futile search. But they noticed that countless pieces of small magical equipment had been stuck to the walls, the floor, and the ceiling of the engine compartment, which were blinking with a vague brightness now that their triggering rune arrays had been activated. It was as if the unrested souls murdered by the space pirates had opened their eyes again and were staring at their killers coldly.

Furious flames burst out of the engine compartment. An explosion ten times more intense than the previous ones crushed the rear part of the starship with the tentacles of fire like a rampant animal.

The starship lost most of its momentum. Not only did it stop moving forward and start spinning, its spiritual shield exploded like soap bubbles under the burning sunlight. Even the internal lights of the starship had stopped functioning correctly.

Countless cabins fell into darkness one by one.

Although the cockpit had its own spiritual energy source, it was also caught in a cluster of dim fluorescence.

Li Yao crouched on the top of the cockpit and blended in with the darkness nearby like a lurking bat.

The cockpit was in a mess. Although operators of the starship were mostly at the Refinement Stage and Building Foundation Stage, they were all research-type Cultivators whose main jobs were to maneuver the starship instead of participating in head-on battles.

With the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Li Yao was confident that he could take all of them down within one minute.

Li Yao was gazing at the center of the cockpit.

Surrounded by a world of darkness, a mainframe crystal processor that looked like a giant tree was standing in the middle of the cockpit, colorful and glittering.

Thick crystal wires extended in various directions like branches and vines, reaching every corner of the starship through the tubes on the ceiling.

It was what Li Yao desired most right now.

More precisely, it was the crystal chips of the mainframe crystal processor he was after.

They must've stored a lot of star maps of the Flying Star Sector, perhaps even including the secret routes and the temporary supply locations that were not known by the authorities.

For the space pirates, it was their biggest reliance to avoid the hunting of the Cultivation sects and raise chaos in the sea of stars.

In Star Lord Temple, the official star map was too shabby. It only marked several major star zones and star fortresses roughly, with a precision far from enough to guide a sailing starship.

If he could steal a secret star map from a seasoned space pirate, Sparkle's range of activity would be greatly expanded, and it would be able to travel in the Flying Star Sector by itself without worrying about getting lost!

Staring at the space pirates below him who were running here and there like headless flies, Li Yao sneered and jumped down!

The blood saber was unsheathed. The sharp claw shined. The Triple-headed Six-barrel Vulcan Machine Guns rumbled like thunder. Li Yao swept through the cockpit like a storm and destroyed everything that he saw.

…

In the depths of the space, a starship bordering on collapse was voyaging stubbornly.

The starship was not just brimming with holes, it was more like a pile of garbage picked up from an ancient battleground and assembled carelessly, after which several immense power rune arrays were stuffed on the back of the garbage without much thought. The engine of the starship was spewing giant crimson fireballs one after another as if it were farting.

Despite its poor condition, the starship was rushing forward in dirty smoke, unconcerned that it could break down any second.

Every starship had a certain style when it was manufactured.

Some of them were elegant, some mysterious; some were aggressive, some simple.

The style of this particular starship was so distinctive that it cast enough visual impressiveness for people to know the word to describe the starship even though it had been damaged to this degree.

The starship was refined in the style of 'fury'!

Anyone who saw the starship would inevitably mistake it for an angry bull.

It seemed safe to infer that the pilot of such a starship must have a pair of angry eyes and two fuming fists!

On two sides of the head of the starship, two great horns almost a hundred meters long stuck out like two sharp bull horns. Illuminated by the dim starlight, they were emitting dark-gold brightness. Rounds of blood stripes were carved on the horns, with complicated runes in between.

There was no telling whether the two giant horns were decorative or a piece of powerful magical equipment themselves.

However, one of the horns had been broken off in the middle with pale fractures. The other horn was also dinted with a lot of bruises, like a battle saber that was full of cracks.

Below the two giant horns, in the center of the cockpit that looked like a crimson sole eye, a middle-aged muscled man over two meters tall was sitting in the captain's seat.

He seemed to have just been pulled out from a trash can. His face was dirty, and his grey coat was full of fractures, holes, corrosion, and dried blood stains.

His eyelids were sticky with gunk, as if he hadn't shut his eyes for ten days and ten nights. Even his pupils looked dreary. But there were two deep dimples on his haggard face, making him appear to be grinning even when his lips were closed, if they were ever closed at all.

"Finally, I've got you filthy sons of bit*hes!"

When Storm Prison's starship reappeared on the top right corner of the radar light beam, a series of data and information poured down like a waterfall, and two clusters of gold brightness beamed out of the giant man's grey eyes.

"Brothers!"

The messy muscled man jumped up from the captain's seat. It was only then that one could notice that below the grey coat were red-and-green beach shorts!

However, the guy seemed to be totally fine with it. He bellowed, his saliva spraying everywhere, "We've been chasing these bastards for more than two months. Finally, they have been pressed to the bed with their trousers torn away. We can do whatever we want right now!

"I know that we are running out of supplies and strength; I know that many of us have been seriously injured and their capability greatly lost.

"But I also know that everybody has been waiting too long for this day, just to tear those human-skinned scumbags to shreds!

"We will be engaged in ten minutes. Prepare for battle!

"Our spiritual energy has been drained. Our turrets have died, too. But these are just unimportant details that we shouldn't worry about.

"Tell those scumbags with your swords, sabers, teeth, and fists—

"that the Great Horn Exo Society has come again!"

The messy muscled man roared and yelled. Bright green flames were flowing around his body and eventually consolidated into a crystal suit the same color. The most eye-catching part about the crystal suit was the giant dent on its right shoulder.

After putting on the heavy crystal suit, the messy muscled man looked like an infuriated rhino!

Five light beams were floating in front him, displaying the scenes in the assault cabin of the starship.

Almost a hundred sturdy, barbaric men were bellowing together with him, producing earthshaking thunders so appalling that one might be suspicious that the starship would be torn open by the soundwaves in the very next second.

Right then, a weird wave came from the radar light beam. Several rows of data bounced abruptly, too.

The messy muscled man was dazed for a moment. He zoomed in on the light beam, only to discover that a dazzling fireball had exploded in the front section of Storm Prison's starship and blossomed gradually like a colorful chrysanthemum.

"What is going on?

"Those son of bit*hes have blown up their own cockpit before I can stab into their asshole?"

Lei Dalu, captain of the Great Horn Exo Society, wiped away a cluster of his eye gunk as he stared at the light beam and exclaimed in disbelief.

Chapter 454: Noodle Man!

Chapter 454: Noodle Man!

It was enjoyable to watch Lei Dalu to have dinner.

Or rather, there was no need to watch; the sounds that he made were enough to trigger everyone's appetite.

He sucked in the noodles. He chewed the cloves. He chugged a large bowl of cold water. Then he burped with great satisfaction and threw the empty bowl to the heap of bowls nearby, before he slapped the table and shouted, "Boss, are you done? I need another bowl of noodles!"

It had only been a little over half an hour since they had gone into the small restaurant located in a corner of Star Lord Temple.

Yet, Lei Dalu had already devoured sixteen super-large bowls of meat noodles and eaten all the cucumbers in the restaurant.

"Old Bai, do you want a bowl of this? The soup here is not half bad!"

Lei Dalu spoke to Bai Kaixin sitting in front of him, grinning.

Bai Kaixin was the opposite of his name; he was not delighted at all.

(Bai Kaixin () can be translated as happy for nothing.)

He seemed to be a guy who hadn't felt delighted for his entire life.

He was tall and skinny. With a height almost equal to Lei Dalu's, he had only one third of his friend's weight. His face was pale and yellow. Two long, white brows dangled loosely like an upside-down 'Y' and covered the corners of his eyes.

His countenance resembled that of the terminal patients who had just received their diagnosis. Even when he was laughing, one couldn't help but worry that he would burst into tears in the next second.

With his melancholy countenance, Bai Kaixin stared at Lei Dalu, who was so bored that he took two garlics for snacks and ate every clove of them. Finally, he couldn't hold it back any longer and asked, "I'm always confused about one thing. Why are you always so happy?

"Just a moment ago, 'Gold Horn', on which you spent your life-savings together with a bunch of loans from banks and three Cultivation sects, turned into a heap of wrecked copper and steel after sailing for only three months. Now, we are trapped in this poor ditch at the corner of the sea of stars.

"What you are eating are the crudest meat noodles. Look. Even the hair on the meat wasn't cleaned up.

"But you give me the feeling that you have arrived at the most extravagant restaurant in Heavenly Saints City, steering a fully-armed brand-new warship, and you are enjoying a seafood dinner worth five hundred thousand Flying Star dollars with two beautiful girls on your laps and fifty billion in your pocket!"

Lei Dalu was not in the least bothered. "What else would you have me do?

"Gold Horn won't come back to life even if I cry my eyes out, will it?

"Old Bai, I'm not judging you. But the most important thing about Cultivation is to take things as they are. Don't pull a long face every day. Before we had Gold Horn, didn't we still march anywhere we wanted even though we had nothing but an armed carrier?

"On the bright side, at least we have accomplished our mission and slain all those motherfu*kers, haven't we?"

Bai Kaixin said coldly, "Don't you talk about missions with me.

"We were preparing to bid for the guardian work of Treacherous Torrent Domain with Gold Horn that had been armed to teeth and filled with crystals cannons and magical equipment. If we'd succeeded, we wouldn't have worried about our finances for the next couple of years.

"But now?

"The starship is almost a total-loss now. The spiritual energy is running dry. Nearly all the magical equipment is wrecked!

"True, Heavenly Saints Alliance has bounties for the space pirates of Storm Prison. But most of them are for Fengyu Zhong. It was his son who we ran into, and he was just a newbie to the business. His bounty is little to none!

"This time, we are so damned!"

Lei Dalu clicked his tongue and smiled. "Don't you stare at me with the 'disappointed' look as if it was me who forced you to be heroes against your will! I remember that when we saw what happened to 'Chicken Feather', our great

Councilor Bai was the first to jump out and declare that the bunch of space pirates must be killed. What a marvelous speech! What a daunting aura! Those who didn't know might have thought that you were the leader of the assault team of this Exo Society. What, now it's finally occurred to you that you are the councilor?

"And you, don't keep silent and pretend to be an icy beauty —"

Lei Dalu turned around and grinned at a corner of the restaurant. "Ye Lingdie, you were on a rampage at the time. You almost stuffed your storm bolter into my nostril, threatening that if I refused the contract of one bag of rice, you would withdraw from the society and fight the space pirates by yourself! Those were the exact words that you said at that time, were they not? My nose is still feeling weird now!"

In a corner of the restaurant, a girl was sitting solemnly and elegantly. She was cold, calm, and utterly unapproachable.

She didn't perform any stealth skills. But for some reason, one tended to neglect her existence. She was like a dry leaf in a forest, easily overlooked even if it was right in front of one's eyes.

The dry-leaf-like girl, Ye Lingdie, was wiping her gun.

Countless components that were as tiny as grains of sand quickly jumped about in her slender hands and assembled into gun parts of various shapes and sizes, before they were dissected momentarily again.

She raised her eyebrow and glanced at him. Then, she lowered her head and dwelled in her own world again.

Lei Dalu's nostrils were widened in anger as he slapped his table and shouted, "What is with your attitude? Are you not even respecting me as your captain? Boss, are the noodles ready or not? Remember, double meat and cilantro!"

Veins were bulging on Bai Kaixin's temples. The corners of his eyes were also twitching. He tried to calm himself down and said, "Alright. The decision was made unanimously. Let's just forget that. The question is, what do we do next?

"Fengyu Zhong only has one son, who has been blown into smithereens by us. There wasn't even a bone of him left. He will definitely be mad when he hears the news!"

Lei Dalu spat and said, "What's the big deal? He is a Core Formation Stage Cultivator, and I'm also a Core Formation Stage Cultivator. We can just have a duel and sort everything out. He ain't got more balls than me!"

"Don't flatter yourself."

Bai Kaixin said coldly, "Fengyu Zhong is a tough bandit who has been hanging around with other space pirates for decades. The Heavenly Saints Alliance has targeted him multiple times and even sent a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator once, but he survived all of that. It is said that he ran into a lot of fortuitous encounters during his escape. Right now, he is probably in the high level of the Core Formation Stage. Such a brutal man is what a true 'Gold Core' Cultivator should look like!

"In comparison, our great Captain Lei is only in the beginning level of the Core Formation Stage. Also, you were beaten up by hundreds of people when you'd just advanced into the Core Formation Stage. You were seriously wounded, and your spiritual root was damaged. It's taken you quite a long time to recover from your injuries, but you've never entirely recuperated. It's very likely that you won't be able to progress a step further than the beginning level of the Core Formation Stage.

"A Cultivator like you is just an 'Iron Core'. What makes you think you are capable enough of fighting a 'Gold Core'?

"Storm Prison is a top-twenty space pirate gang in the Flying Star Sector. Cruel men congregate there, and it boasts immense capability. Fengyu Zhong will definitely try everything he can to garrote us out of fury. We have to be very prudent when we travel in the sea of stars in the future. One step wrong and we may be butchered by the space pirates and die without a grave!"

Lei Dalu rubbed his brows hard and said seriously, "It is of paramount importance for us Cultivators to be smart. A great man can rise to the sky and also lay low when necessary. We can always hide in the protective range of Heavenly Saints City when we are back to the central star zone like a turtle with disguised faces and new identities. Our debts will be ditched, too. That's what we call killing two birds with one stone!

"What's more, lucky guys are always lucky. Maybe the gods are watching over me and Fengyu Zhong will die in an accident tomorrow. Then that would be like a sunny day after a storm again. Everything will be fine. Hahahaha!"

Right then, the door of the restaurant was kicked open, and someone swept in like a tornado.

It was a grey-haired, vigorous old man who had extremely wide shoulders that looked like door planks.

It wouldn't be hard to infer that he was an obstinate, bad-tempered guy. His eyeballs were darting about, indicating that he wouldn't mind fighting a young man to prove that he wasn't old at all.

In front of the old man, Lei Dalu retreated his playful expression and asked politely, "Uncle Xiong, how is Gold Horn doing?"

Xiong Tao was the director of magical equipment and the chief refiner of the Great Horn Exo Society. The items on board—some small like flying swords, others large like crystal suits—were all planned and organized by him.

Xiong Tao sat on a long stool, which was squeaking under the sudden weight. He replied with a grim face, "It is not doing at all. Eighty percent of all units have been seriously damaged. Even the cockpit is riddled with holes. It can never be repaired in this godforsaken area. We'll have to drag it to the orbit of the Thousand Sail Domain and find a factory of a large sect to repair it.

"However, the Thousand Sail Domain is thousands of kilometers from this place. Gold Horn is too wrecked to make use of the space jump system. Otherwise, both the vehicle and the crew members on board will be crushed to a pulp.

"Thankfully, we've captured Storm Prison's starship. We can dismantle a lot of components from the starship for our own use. I estimate we can get going in three days, if we are lucky.

"The most critical problem right now is that we are short of hands.

"During the last exchange of fire, our spiritual shield was blown to pieces. And the barrage hit the main maintenance workshop precisely. More than half of our refiners have been killed!

"A shaking, wrecked starship with a loss of two thirds of its refiners wants to cruise in the surging ocean for more than a month to the Thousand Sail Domain? I highly doubt it."

Lei Dalu eyed Bai Kaixin. "Old Bai, didn't I tell you that we are in desperate need of hands and we should recruit new members right here? What, you didn't hire any refiners?"

Before Bai Kaixin opened his mouth, Xiong Tao said, "Experienced refiners are not that easy to recruit!

"Although the residents of the poor, underdeveloped area live on the ancient relics, they can be called maintainers of the civil-level at the very best. There is still a long way for them to go before they become real refiners!"

Bai Kaixin interrupted, "Besides, you asked us to repeat that we have pissed off Storm Prison and joining the Great Horn Exo Society is a perilous, life-threatening decision. Who would dare sign up after hearing that?"

Lei Dalu said, somewhat embarrassedly, "Of course, we have to make it clear to them. We were feverish and decided to play heroes. It's our own fault, and nobody else is to blame. None of the new members are obliged to be victims of Storm Prison's reprisals. They would definitely feel wronged if that happened to him. The most important thing about Cultivators is that we must be frank, and we shouldn't fool others for our own benefits."

Bai Kaixin sighed and said, "Indeed. But after we explained everything, the only guys still willing to join us are the foolhardy young men and the old who wouldn't be able to find a second job. It will already be exceptional if their physical strength is enough. There are really no lower limits for their skills."

Xiong Tao sniffed. "A so-called 'expert' came to sign up in my place. He was young and wet behind the ears. Yet, he was bragging about himself more impressively than everyone else did, saying that he had been travelling in the remote areas of the sea of stars since he was a little kid and he had been enlightened by an eccentric expert. He went on to say that he was once hit by a falling star and that he once ate a crimson exotic fruit. In short, after countless lucky incidents, he finally awakened his spiritual root and became a super self-taught refiner!

"But when I took out a Space Gyroscope and asked him to repair it, the guy was dumbfounded and said that he hadn't seen such an item before.

"Space Gyroscope, the most commonly-seen navigation magical equipment of the Flying Star Sector! He should've seen one even if he hadn't used one himself! You guys should've seen the boy's startled look. 'Super refiner'? I'll be damned if I believed him!"

Lei Dalu couldn't help but smile. "Then what? Did you kick him away?"

"No."

Xiong Tao was gnashing his teeth in discontent. "The strange boy was not entirely crowing. His spiritual root has indeed been awakened, and he is a Cultivator. The speed of his hand movement is pretty impressive. It appeared that he had truly experienced some adventures. The simple dismantling, polishing, and cleaning work can be trusted to him. Given that we are seriously short of hands, we have to make do with whatever we have!

"What I'm trying to tell you is that such a countryfolk expert was already the most proficient mechanic that we recruited in this place. With our current personnel, it all depends on luck if we want to go back to Thousand Sail Domain without crashing into anything!"

"That will do."

A casual, carefree smile popped up on Lei Dalu's face again, as he scratched his nose and said, "I don't have many remarkable points, except that I'm lucky. I'm always lucky!"

Chapter 455: Joining Great Horn

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Three days later, on the main deck of Great Horn, Li Yao stood silently in a corner behind almost a hundred tall, muscular men and pondered over his next step.

He was still wearing a ragged mustard suit, with patches made of strengthened cloth here and there. There was a glittering gold emblem on his chest in the shape of a blaring bull's head whose nostrils were blowing out hot steam. Two great horns stuck out, indicating that the bull was everything but reasonable.

It was the battle emblem of the Great Horn Exo Society.

Joining the Great Horn Exo Society was the most appropriate plan that Li Yao could think of right now.

When he saw Gold Horn which had been close to a total-loss appearing in front of him, Li Yao had predicated precisely that, given the serious damage to the starship, it was impossible to get it repaired in such a poor town at the far end of the sea of stars. Instead, it had to undergo major maintenance at the professional docks in the central space zone of the Flying Star Sector.

The central space zone was exactly Li Yao's destination.

Besides, the starship was unlikely to perform a space jump due to the shabby conditions. It had to drift slowly in the sea of stars like a snail.

The journey would take one or two months if they were lucky, and three to five months if they were not. Refiners were required during such a long journey to stand by and maintain it when needed.

Joining the Great Horn Exo Society as a refiner meant that he could learn a lot of knowledge about starship maintenance and modification and better familiarize himself with the refining techniques of the Flying Star Sector. He would be able to further modify Sparkle after he got the gist of it.

Right now, distinctive features of Skeleton Dragon were still left on Sparkle, which meant that it had to remain hidden.

Only after fully understanding the style of the Flying Star Sector could Sparkle be disguised as a carrier or a small cruiser and appear in the main routes of the Flying Star Sector like every other starship did.

After all, the main routes were the safest routes. Cosmic storms and meteorite cascades were everywhere away from these routes. Veering off the main routes and drifting randomly in the unknown space could be a perilous adventure.

On the other hand, as an Exo Society, there were bound to be a lot of real experts in the Great Horn Exo Society. The fact that they were headstrong enough to pursue Fengyu Zhong's only son for more than two months made the fact that they had some aces on board evident.

As he expected, after the Great Horn Exo Society ported in Star Lord Temple for half a day, Li Yao heard that their leader was an expert in the Core Formation Stage!

It was definitely not a third-rate Exo Society. It might not be large in scale, but it seemed to boast abundant capability.

Li Yao's current goal was to study the knowledge of refining in every aspect as much as possible now that he was in the Flying Star Sector. The maintenance and modification of starships, the design and refinement of crystal suits, and the brand-new techniques of operating a crystal suit. He wouldn't mind learning any of them, but he just hoped that he could learn more.

The Great Horn Exo Society would be the best school right now.

Very soon, he was informed of the destination of the journey—Thousand Sail Space Zone.

Thousand Sail Space Zone was in the center of the Flying Star Sector, not far away from Heavenly Saints City. There were quite a few world fragments in the space zone that boasted both enjoyable landscapes and abundant spiritual energy. A lot of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures could be found there, too. Some of the world fragments even included hot springs which contained tremendous spiritual energy in liquid form. Soaking inside would be both beneficial for healing and training.

Therefore, Thousand Sail Space Zone was a favorite for the unaffiliated Cultivators and the free Exos. It was also the biggest logistic base for all Exo Societies.

Many Exo Societies liked to take a vacation and relax in the Thousand Sail Space Zone after they finished an arduous task.

During its busiest season, dense starships from various Exo Societies occupied the main route to and from the Thousand

Sail Space Zone as far as one's eyes could reach. They were like thousands of ships cruising on a surging ocean with sunlight reflected by the waves. Hence the name Thousand Sail Space Zone.

Since it was sort of a logistic base for all Exo Societies, naturally, a lot of Cultivation sects had established branches there. Some of them were even headquartered there. They provided various kinds of service for the Exo Societies and helped the Exo Societies communicate with the space towns and exchange information about possible missions. There were also countless starship refining bases, the best maintenance docks, and crystal suit centers.

The Thousand Sail Space Zone was mixed with all kinds of people, some of whom were real experts and some just pretended to be. It was often the first stop for many beginners who had just stepped into the world of Cultivation.

Many vigorous, ambitions young men who had just awakened their spiritual roots and did not have any possessions often travelled in the Thousand Sail Space Zone with nothing but their two fists and their guts. They slew space pirates, demon beasts, and demonic Cultivators, eager to spread their name in the Flying Star Sector and make their own achievements!

In light of the situation, Heavenly Saints City hosted a number of matches in the Thousand Sail Space Zone every year in order to help the six sects of Heavenly Saints Alliance, the major universities, and the renowned crystal suit centers find and recruit new geniuses.

Thousand Sail Space Zone would be a great platform to jump into Heavenly Saints City.

Li Yao planned to stay in the Great Horn Exo Society for a couple of months and train himself with the skills to maintain a starship. In the meantime, he could also secretly learn the crystal suit techniques from the Exos of the Great Horn Exo Society.

After they arrived at the Thousand Sail Space Zone, he would part with the Great Horn Exo Society and try to win a ticket to Heavenly Saints City, the central metropolis of the Flying Star Sector and the ultimate holy land of Cultivation!

After all, Exo Societies valued freedom more than anything else. It was quite convenient to join or quit. Besides, the Great Horn Exo Society had specified when they were recruiting that they were just temporarily in need of some extra hands in order to bring their starship back to the Thousand Sail Space Zone. After they arrived at the Thousand Sail Space Zone, whoever wanted to leave was free to go.

By then, Li Yao's identity would be unfalsifiable with the Great Horn Exo Society endorsing it. Nobody would be suspicious that he was not a native of the Flying Star Sector!

Therefore, Li Yao signed up without any hesitation.

As for his identity, he decided to join the Exo Society as a pure refiner and hide his real capability as a battle-type Cultivator.

It was not because he was fond of laying low. After all, he was in desperate need of resources, and apparently, he would get none if he proved himself to be an incapable man.

The real problem was, if he was to reveal all his strength, somebody would definitely associate him with the uncanny death of Fengyu Ming.

Fengyu Zhong, Fengyu Ming's father, was very likely to be a Cultivator in the high level of the Core Formation Stage and an unparalleled brutal bandit!

Li Yao was not ready to fight a Core Formation Stage Cultivator face-to-face yet.

Moreover, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was also his biggest secret.

He had no doubt that, once the space pirates learned of this crystal suit which had been strengthened by the flesh and blood of a deadly demon and the scraps of the ancient magical equipment from forty thousand years ago, they would definitely rush over like shark who had smelled blood. If so, he wouldn't have a day of peace and would have to be prepared for assassinations even when he was on the toilet.

Therefore, Li Yao had positioned himself to be a self-taught expert in refining who had been born in a desolate world fragment in the corner of the Flying Star Sector, raised up by an eccentric expert, living a nomadic life among the relics of ancient battlegrounds, hit by a falling star, and eaten a crimson exotic fruit which eventually lead to the awakening of his spiritual root. Although he was not familiar with any Cultivation arts, he was talented in refining and had enormous physical strength. He was also a crazy fan of magical equipment maintenance.

After getting to know the world better, he had discovered that, perhaps because of the more abundant spiritual energy, the fortuitous incidents of the Flying Star Sector were much more frequent than those of the Heaven's Origin Sector.

Many Cultivators in this sector had experienced various kinds of fortuitous incidents. Being hit by a meteorite, meeting an old grandpa living inside a ring, a broken crystal suit that could talk, a super skill card mixed in with common skill cards…

His story was quite queer, but it was pretty plausible compared to what had happened to the real lucky dogs. Nobody would be jealous of him.

Keeping a low profile was never his style. Naturally, he would need to show off his skills in maintenance in order to be noticed by the Great Horn Exo Society so that he could be assigned to the real important maintenance work, thereby accumulating experience and improving his capability.

But things went against his will…

When he thought of the interview three days ago, Li Yao's face was somehow red. He scratched his messy hair with a self-mocking smile.

He had thought the refiners of the Great Horn Exo Society would've definitely been greatly impressed by him after he showed a tiny bit of his skills in maintenance and modification.

But as it turned out, the interviewer simply offered him a piece of strange magical equipment that was round and carved with stripes and lines and asked him to repair it.

Judging from the interviewer's countenance, it should be pretty common in the Flying Star Sector.

However, there was no such a thing in the Heaven's Origin Sector, and Li Yao had never seen it before. He was greatly embarrassed, and he could tell that it was definitely not appreciation in the eyes of the interviewer.

He was going to ask the interviewer to give him a second chance by examining a piece of different magical equipment, but the angry old man whose shoulders were as wide as door planks simply waved his hands and gnashed his teeth saying that he had passed the test.

It was quite a bummer for Li Yao.

He had never expected that the Great Horn Exo Society would be in such desperate need of hands that a Mr. Nobody, or even everybody whose limbs were intact, would be recruited as long as they signed up.

Later, he learned that the bad-tempered old man was the director of magical equipment and the chief refiner of the Great Horn Exo Society.

Many a time, Li Yao was of a mind to explain to him that he was indeed an awesome refiner.

However, over the past few days, there had been quite a lot of maintenance tasks. The old man was either busy doing his job or on his way to do his job. He had no chance to talk to him at all.

Besides, Li Yao was taking an orientation for the newly recruited, too. He didn't have much spare time himself.

Alright. Maybe I'll just leave it behind and sort everything through after we set off.

Li Yao had figured it out himself. There was no way that a newcomer such as himself could get in touch with the real essential maintenance work. After all, it concerned the lives of hundreds of people. He had to start from the ground.

I'm only a mechanic right now. As long as I do my job well, they will realize my capability sooner or later. After all, the journey will take at least one to two months. If we are unlucky, or something goes wrong, we might not even be able to reach the Thousand Sail Space Zone in five months.

Right now, the personnel of the Great Horn Exo Society were badly distributed. Two thirds of the refining posts were empty. It wouldn't be enough even if every refiner on board were split in two.

Li Yao believed that he would definitely have the opportunity to surprise everyone.

At this moment, all the members of the Great Horn Exo Society gathered in the ceremony for the take-off.

It was also a memorial for their sacrificed companions over the two-month hunting game.

During the two months, the Great Horn Exo Society and the space pirates of Storm Prison had collided nineteen times. 146 members of the Great Horn Exo Society had perished. It was no doubt a great loss.

Yet, the ambiance in the memorial ceremony was not very solemn. Everybody was quite relaxed. Some of them were even wearing carefree smiles.

Lei Dalu, their captain, was jumping up and down, his hands waving and his legs kicking like a giant dancing monkey.

Seeing that he brayed and sprayed his saliva everywhere without the least concern of his image, Li Yao was greatly baffled.

Is this sloppy, messy uncle really an expert in the Core Formation Stage?

Chapter 456: Rudimental Work

Chapter 456: Rudimental Work

Lei Dalu was talking so loudly that the air could be felt vibrating.

"Sixty-seven days ago, when we set off on the hunting trip, who would've thought we could really annihilate that flock of space pirates on Storm Prison?

"Their starship was larger than ours, their turrets had more firepower than ours, and there were more Exos on their side, too!

"Who could've known at that time that we would chase them for over two months through thirteen space zones and twenty-seven world fragments and eventually slay all the human-skinned scumbags, leaving none behind at a distance edge of the sea of stars?

"Right now, we are going to set off on a new journey, one that is going to be more arduous and dangerous than the previous two months.

"Our enemy is no longer the brutal and hideous space pirates, but the sea of stars itself that is hundreds of times more brutal and hideous than those pirates!

"Our starship was almost entirely destroyed. Our crew members are seriously insufficient. We have barely enough fuel and supplies, and even after they are refilled in this small town, the best they can do is sustain us for thirty to fifty days.

"What we are going to be faced with are cosmic storms, stone belts, raging meteorite cascades, and even the reprisal of Storm Prison. The likelihood of us returning to the Thousand Sail Zone successfully is less than ten percent.

"However, we are definitely going to make it, because we are —"

"GREAT HORN!"

"GREAT HORN!"

Countless muscled men were roaring crazily. Their soundwaves interweaved into a blowing wind which rippled out.

Lei Dalu grinned and pressed his hands. Then he continued, "After two months of fierce battles, 146 brothers have left us early and perished.

"But what's the big deal with death? They are just a step ahead of us to drink with the Heavenly Lord of Primordial Beginning 1 and dine with the Ancestor of the Great Balance!

"Now, please cheer up, everyone! Let's see our brothers off and ask them to pave a brilliant way for us!"

Lei Dalu waved his hands. A giant light beam appeared behind him, in which a universe of darkness that was devoid of the slightest trace of stars was displayed.

BOOM!

After an earsplitting sound, a small light spot appeared in the darkness and exploded into a glamorous rainbow that shined brilliantly like an aurora.

Li Yao was aware that space burial was the most common method of funeral in the Flying Star Sector.

Residents of the Flying Star Sector mostly lived in space towns where room was limited. It was difficult for the deceased to be inhumed. Keeping their cremains under the earth was not easy, either.

After thousands of years, the human beings of the Flying Star Sector had got used to refining the ashes into special cannonballs before launching them into the space. The ceremony had been known as 'space burial'.

Cultivators would often leave a telepathic thought in advance, which would be refined into their ashes when they passed away so that they could burst out the most brilliant colors in the vast darkness at the end of their life.

As cannonballs of ashes were launched one after another, the space in front of Gold Horn was illuminated by mingled rainbows, which looked like a road to the heaven built up by thousands of heroic souls, extending into the endless darkness.

"Gold Horn, set off!"

The beggar-like starship which was riddled with holes and patches glided out of the port and stumbled forward.

Hundreds of ropes made of super alloys ejected out of the rear part of Gold Horn. Spiritual energy was circling the ropes, making them look like hundreds of lasers. They dragged the remnant of Storm Prison's starship. The twin starships moved forward slowly and gradually left Star Lord Temple.

Three days was not enough time to fully dismantle Storm Prison's starship. They could only carry it away in such away.

During the long journey to come, Storm Prison's starship would be dismantled step by step and the materials would be used to repair Gold Horn against the surging tides in the sea of stars.

Li Yao found the frenzy of his fellows hard to understand.

In the Heaven's Origin Sector, Cultivators equally despised death. But when their companions perished, they were always grave and wouldn't be half as merry as the guys he was currently with.

Perhaps, this was also a unique tradition of the Flying Star Sector?

"Do you feel that we seem to be indifferent about the sacrifices of our comrades?"

A tall, thin man walked close with his hands in his back and smiled casually.

But unresolvable sorrow seemed to be behind the sunny smile.

Li Yao recognized that it was Bai Kaixin, councilor and deputy captain of the Exo Society who was in charge of daily operations, as well as an admin-type Cultivator at the peak of the Building Foundation Stage.

"Manager Bai," greeted Li Yao hurriedly.

Watching the quickly dimming and dispersing rainbows like thousands of souls that were gone with the wind on the light beam, Bai Kaixin was silent for a long time before he spoke again. "You have just joined the Society. Although you have taken a simple orientation, you are not familiar with the history of the Great Horn Exo Society yet.

"Different from other Exo Societies, the Great Horn Exo Society has hardly ever recruited outsiders. We would not have recruited any if we weren't in such desperate need of hands and did not have a second choice.

"The Great Horn Exo Society used to be a coalition of several Cultivation sects who had been massacred by space pirates.

"Most of the members of the Society loathe the space pirates.

"For some of them, their hometowns were destroyed by space pirates; for some, their families were slain; some others are orphans and survivors of space pirates' slaughters, who were rescued by us in various operations and grew up in the Exo Society, having nowhere else to go to.

"Our tears dried up a long, long time ago.

"Since the moment we joined the Great Horn Exo Society, we lost the ability to cry. We can only laugh, so hard that our heads fall off.

"If anybody is crying, it is going to be our enemies, those human-skinned scumbags.

"Whenever we run into them, we will make those bastards wonder why they were born into this world in the first place.

They will cry so hard that their blood and urine will spurt out of their eyes!"

Li Yao raised his eyebrow.

No wonder the Great Horn Exo Society was so persistent about the space pirates and hunted them down for nothing but a bag of rice.

Bai Kaixin patted his shoulder and smiled. "But none of the above matters for you.

"I know the reason why young men such as yourself joined the Great Horn Exo Society at the risk of the reprisals of the space pirates is that you want to learn more stuff so that you can make a living in the central space zone one day.

"You should be clear about the situation of our Society now. In regard of money, we won't be able to offer you much.

"However, since you are willing to help us in the time of difficulties, the Great Horn Exo Society will definitely not wrong you.

"There are many public Cultivation arts in the Society. Most of the training facilities are open to all the members of the Society.

"After you finish your daily work, you are free to come by if you want to learn more. I will try to arrange suitable teachers for you. Those gorillas may look fearsome, but they actually aren't bad. Many other young men are studying then, too. You can join the group.

"It will be your reward for your work in the Exo Society.

"After we work together and make it to the Thousand Sail Zone successfully, it's totally fine if you have other plans. I can introduce you to new jobs if you are interested."

Li Yao thought for a moment and asked, "What's my job here?"

Bai Kaixin hesitated. "Master Xiong was supposed to designate work for you. But you know that we have just set off and a lot of faults are still occurring. Master Xiong has been so occupied over the past few days that he's barely slept. He really did not have the time to talk to you and the other newcomers in person. Therefore, I have arranged some rudimental work for you so that you can familiarize yourself with the starship first. After we enter the cruising state and there are fewer problems, he will come in person and tell you what to do."

Li Yao nodded. It was quite understandable.

He actually quite admired Master Xiong Tao.

Within three days, the man had restored the sailing ability of a dilapidated starship. Although the journey was not smooth, it was already a remarkable achievement.

Li Yao had a vague feeling that this Master Xiong Tao might be the real best expert of the Great Horn Exo Society.

Bai Kaixin coughed and continued, "Your job in the coming few days is to enter Storm Prison's starship and clean up the debris inside.

"Storm Prison's starship experienced a serious internal explosion. Most of the magical equipment was seriously wrecked. But there must be components that are still usable.

"We still have a long way ahead of us with barely any supplies. Every usable component that can be recycled is of great value for us.

"Since you've been wandering in the remains of the ancient battlegrounds your entire life, it shouldn't be hard for you to dismantle the debris and locate the functional components, right?

"Of course, if you can't tell if a component is usable or not, just collect them all. The experienced refiners of our Society will examine them later."

Li Yao nodded.

Dismantling the debris of magical equipment and recycling the usable components was indeed a very rudimental job. It was also something that he could even do with his eyes closed because he had been doing since he was a little kid.

He was not bothered that he was handed over such a simple job. He agreed frankly, "Okay."

Bai Kaixin was a little bit surprised at his calmness. He took out a jade chip and said, "I'm told that Master Xiong was not particularly friendly to you a few days ago. But please don't feel offended. He is just a straightforward man. Even Captain Lei and I are sometimes berated by him.

"Considering that you've never received any formal education in refining, it is a remarkable achievement that you awakened your spiritual root and improved your hand movement to such a speed by studying everything on your own in such a remote area!

"This jade chip contains a complete maintenance manual of Gold Horn, as well as the structure designs and spiritual energy flowcharts of more than 1,300 kinds of commonly-seen magical equipment. Master Xiong asked me to give it to you. You can study them if you have spare time after you finish your daily work.

"But please note that there are nine levels from easy to hard. You only need to try the first three levels. It will be best if you can grasp the first level. That way, you will definitely contribute a lot in the voyage to come.

"The fourth level and beyond are not prepared for you. They are extremely esoteric. It will be a waste of your time even if you read them. So, don't.

"Try to settle yourself in, finish your daily work and train yourself. In a few days' time, when Master Xiong has more time, he will hold a new test for you. If you can pass it, he will definitely place you in a more fitting position where you will be responsible for the more important maintenance work."

Chapter 457: Dominator of Darkness

Chapter 457: Dominator of Darkness

Half a day later, in the center of Storm Prison's starship…

This starship named 'Ghost Jail' had indeed become a place of ghosts haunted by cold wind and queer shadows.

Collapsed pathways were everywhere. Twisted tubes, units that were riddled with holes, and some of the corpses of the space pirates together with their shattered crystal suits were lurking in every corner of the darkness.

The center of this starship was originally the training area for the space pirates.

For Cultivators, training was the most important thing of all. Therefore, training areas on starships prepared for Cultivators were definitely the largest, most extravagant places with the most magical equipment.

However, this area had been blown to smithereens after hundreds of explosions, like the debris of a sand-made temple savaged by a hurricane.

The area which looked like a broken maze was in dead silence. The illumination rune arrays emitted flickering greenish glows, as if many fireflies were wandering in the air, making the room all the more dark and creepy.

Standing in the middle of the darkness, Li Yao was very satisfied with his working environment.

Right now, the Great Horn Exo Society was seriously short of hands. Most of the refiners were occupied on Gold Horn. Those who were assigned to Ghost Jail to clear the debris were the ordinary mechanics and the beginners.

Ghost Jail was more than a thousand meters long. Its inside was quite spacious. Therefore, the scavengers had been very widely scattered, with each of them taking charge of a fairly large working area independently. No one would disturb anyone else.

The training area was Li Yao's responsibility.

He was the dominator of this world of darkness.

"Let's begin!"

Li Yao warmed up his fingers neither too quickly nor too slowly. His ten fingers were extending and shrinking weirdly like vipers, with cracking sounds coming from the joints. Eagerness beamed out of his eyes while he mumbled, "I haven't played such a game for a long time. I wonder, have my skills declined or not?"

In front of him was a bucket of detergent for magical equipment that was very commonly seen in the Flying Star Sector.

Such detergent was usually stored in the form of powder. When someone wanted to use it, the only thing that needed to be done was to pour clean water into it and stir the solution. Then, the detergent would become liquid that contained feeble spiritual energy. It was remarkably effective when it came to cleaning the magical equipment and restoring its functions.

Although it was still far from the maintenance oil that Li Yao created with the ancient techniques, it was acceptable for today's work.

Li Yao glanced around. Clusters of starry brilliance burst out of his deep, dark eyes. His computational ability soared like a surging tide, allowing him to analyze every remnant in the corner of the darkness.

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao stabbed his hands into the detergent. His pupils constricted to the size of the tip of a needle, while thousands of veins bulged out of his arms and extended to his fingers like furious serpents, before they pierced into the detergent brutally.

Countless small bubbles were rolling on the surface of the scarlet detergent which looked like a boiling lake. A lot of bright red mist was popping up from the liquid.

With the high-frequency vibration of his hands, Li Yao vaporized the detergent instantly!

Li Yao withdrew his hands, both of which were now wreathed in a ball of bright red mist. He snapped his fingers and unleashed hundreds of spiritual threads, splitting the ball into countless parts and driving them to his surroundings. A huge amount of magical equipment debris was swept over and taken back.

Li Yao brought his computational ability to its maximum while he meditated. He continued unleashing more spiritual threads into the cluster of bright red mist, dissecting, studying, and cleaning each and every piece of wasted magical equipment.

Some of them which were beyond repair were tossed away to a corner on his left precisely.

But for the debris which was of value, Li Yao had polished them carefully with the detergent to remove the impurities and restore their performance and hardness.

Half a minute later, Li Yao waved his hand. The bright red mist vanished.

126 brand new components that looked like they'd just been picked up from a refining furnace were floating in front of him!

"1.4 seconds longer than I expected! The magical equipment components of the Flying Star Sector are indeed subtly different from those of the Heaven's Origin Sector."

Li Yao smiled. "It's not bad. Through this rudimental job, I can get in touch with a lot of the basic components of the Flying Star Sector, which will allow me to be familiar with the magical equipment of this Sector in the shortest amount of time possible."

He snapped his fingers again. The hundred components were classified neatly into seven heaps according to their attributes and purposes, which were then transferred gently to an empty spot at the back of the training area that Li Yao had just cleared up.

Li Yao stabbed his hands into the detergent again. His eyes shined as he said, "The second batch begins now!

"I'm going to finish it within thirty seconds!"

After two hours of high-intensity labor, the entire bucket of detergent had been pulverized and drained. Li Yao's hands were shivering, and his skin was as red as a lobster's, but he was greatly relieved and sat in the middle of the 27,255 components that had just been taken restored.

Like an ambitions king inspecting his unstoppable troops, Li Yao enjoyed the sweet sense of achievement.

He took out a cold bun which had been stickered with a rune of the fire class. The rune was then torn open, immediately triggering a hot spiritual wave. The bun was heated and emanated a delicious aroma.

Li Yao devoured the meat buns while whistling tunes merrily.

Ghost Jail had lost all its impetus. The two starships were bound together with spiritual chains. It was impossible to go back to Gold Horn from Ghost Jail directly.

Therefore, the scavengers such as himself had all brought enough supplies and would stay and work on Ghost Jail for a couple of days in order to bring sufficient assets back.

During the time when they were on the foreign starship, they were quite free.

Cleaning more than two hundred thousand components was a workload that would take a couple of days for a regular mechanic to complete. Li Yao did not hurry to tear down the entire training area. After eating twenty meat buns, he sat on the ground comfortably and took out the jade chip that Bai Kaixin had given him.

Judging from the appearance, the jade chip was quite an old one. It must've witnessed a lot of events.

But its master had kept it in good working order. Even the tiniest stroke on the rune arrays of the jade chip was clear and distinguishable. Vague spiritual energy was flowing slowly on the jade chip, enveloping it in an air of warmth and delicacy.

On the bottom of the jade chip was carved 'Xiong'.

"It appears that the maintenance manual was written by Xiong Tao, chief refiner of the Exo Society, in person. He has been using this jade chip personally for many years, too.

"Such a maintenance manual is definitely much more elaborative than the general maintenance manuals issued by the authorities. He must've put a lot of his own experience into it and wouldn't lend it out easily.

"But since the Exo Society is short of hands and in desperate need to repair the starship, I became the lucky guy to take the advantage of it."

Li Yao inserted the jade chip into the crystal processor and adjusted the reading speed to the highest level.

At this level, the information stored inside the jade chip would surge out like an intimidating tide at the speed of more than fifty-five thousand telepathic thoughts per second. Only the best Cultivators could resort to such a reading pattern.

Beep! Beep!

For a moment, the crystal processor on Li Yao's wrist started shaking violently, as it was overloading and transforming the telepathic thoughts into images and text.

Shua!

The mini crystal processor projected six bright gold light beams which span around Li Yao's head rapidly.

The images inside the light beams changed while they were swirling, displaying the details of the structure designs of the starship at 120 pictures per second.

Li Yao gazed at the light beams and studied them carefully.

Back when he was in the Heaven's Origin Sector, his main research field was personal magical equipment, and the subject that he'd been working on was crystal suits. His dream had been to become an Armadominus who could create a crystal suit independently.

But now that he had arrived in the Flying Star Sector, where most residents and Cultivators lived in the space, starships were definitely something that he had to learn more about.

Everyone's time and energy were limited. Even with the enhancement of Ou Yezi's soul, Li Yao didn't believe that he could become a master both in crystal suits and in starships.

His goal was still to become an Armadominus who could manufacture crystal suits on his own. As for starships, it would be good enough if he could perform the simple maintenance and modification tasks.

In that case, this particular book, 'Maintenance Manual for Gold Horn', was a perfect introduction for him.

"So, this is how it works. The sealing structure of this starship is entirely different from that employed by the crystal warships of the Heaven's Origin Sector. Even when 70% of the cabins are blown up, the starship will still maintain almost half of its combat ability. Impressive! Its likelihood of survival is so much higher than that for the crystal warships of the Heaven's Origin Sector!

"The engine compartment design is remarkable too. Other than the main engine compartment at the rear of the starship, there is also an auxiliary engine compartment at the front of the starship. If so, the starship will be much swifter when executing dodging movements! But how are the two engine compartments coordinated? Huh. The telepathic thoughts are transmitted through this tube? This design…

"The twelve turrets on board, with the computations and assistance of the crystal processors, can be set in seven different attack modes. In the worst-case scenario, even a Refinement Stage Cultivator would be able to maneuver them single-handedly. A lot of manpower can be saved. What an advanced system! Such a firing control system can be implemented to Sparkle someday. We are seriously short of hands, too!"

Li Yao completed buried himself in the maintenance manual, his eyes glittering.

The maintenance manual had indeed been compiled by Xiong Tao based on the documentations when the starship was transferred to them. It included a lot of his personal notes and reflections. Many tricks about magical equipment maintenance written in the manual were very practical.

Studying the maintenance manual carefully, Li Yao felt that he was watching two top experts in martial arts practicing in slow motion. Their every delicate move was captured so that he could see them more clearly. Many questions that had bothered him for a long time were resolved instantly. He couldn't help but exclaim in exhilaration.

Soon, the files that had been marked as Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 had been cleaned up by Li Yao, who felt that he hadn't enjoyed enough of the delicious wine.

What followed was the files marked as Level 4.

According to Bai Kaixin, files marked as Level 4 or beyond were prepared for the real professionals. Green hands such as Li Yao didn't need to study them because they wouldn't comprehend them even if they did and it would only be a waste of their time.

When Xiong Tao tested them a few days later, he wouldn't pick on them with the problems beyond Level 3, either.

But Li Yao grinned and opened the Level 4 files without any hesitation. Another race of reading had begun!

Chapter 458: Appalling Expert!

Chapter 458: Appalling Expert!

While Li Yao was reveling in the vast world of starship maintenance, the top meeting room of Gold Horn was tense. Even Lei Dalu's smile was a bit rigid today.

In front of him and Bai Kaixin were three crystal suits, or whatever was left of them, as well as many components whose purposes no one could tell.

Sitting across them, Xiong Tao said emotionlessly, "When I saw the explosion of the cockpit of Ghost Jail a few days ago, I felt that something was not right. Therefore, other than repairing Gold Horn, I've also spent some time over the past few days searching for and collecting the debris in the critical parts of Ghost Jail.

"And once they are put together, a soul-stirring discovery is revealed.

"Firstly, look at the scrap of a chest-protecting plate refined out of titanium alloys.

"Titanium is a rarely-seen, special-purpose metal that is of high value. Judging from the defense rune arrays carved on the plate, it should've been made by 'Yin Feng', a seasoned Armadominus of Spider Den.

"Although Yin Feng always hangs around with space pirates, his expertise in refining is well acknowledged among the refiners of the Flying Star Sector. He is one of the best in the trade.

"He is a respected man on Spider Den and doesn't have the habit of serving small fries. Only the most brutal and barbaric space pirates have the privilege of wearing one of the crystal suits crafted by Yin Feng.

"As far as I know, among the space pirates of Storm Prison that we pursued, only one of them was wearing a crystal suit that had been installed with a titanium-alloy chest-protecting plate. Fengyu Ming and his 'Dark Fire Battlesuit'!"

Bai Kaixin observed, "The chest-protecting plate is the most important defense magical equipment on a crystal suit. Finding that means finding Fengyu Ming. Uncle Xiong, where did you locate this scrap?"

Xiong Tao replied, still emotionlessly, "Among the residues in the bottom of a crystal reactor."

Bai Kaixin was dazed.

Lei Dalu's brows, which were as thick as brooms, shot up.

Xiong Tao continued, "I found quite a few other scraps that seemed to belong to a crystal suit. But most of them are as undistinguishable as mud. Only the few materials that boasted resistance against extremely high temperatures managed to maintain their basic form. Judging from the number and ratio of the scraps, there should've been a complete Dark Fire Battlesuit."

Bai Kaixin frowned and mumbled, "Did Fengyu Ming throw his own crystal suit into the crystal reactor to destroy it?"

Xiong Tao shook his head. "I also found a fuel transmission tube on which there were clearly traces of struggling and scratching. Many broken bones and a lot of blood stains were found, too."

Bai Kaixin was silent for a moment, but his eyes grew wider and wider. He remarked, "Therefore, Fengyu Ming was stuffed into the fuel transmission tube in his crystal suit by brute force, tossed into the crystal reactor, and burned to ash alive?"

Xiong Tao nodded. "It is the only plausible explanation."

Bai Kaixin and Lei Dalu looked at each other and both noticed the bewilderment in their eyes.

Fengyu Ming was indeed not a renowned expert. But the 'Dark Fire Battlesuit' that he'd been wearing was a powerful crystal suit modified and strengthened multiple times. Who was it that snuck into Ghost Jail without alarming anyone and stuffed him into a crystal reactor?

Xiong Tao said solemnly, "There's more to the story.

"As Fengyu Zhong's only son, Fengyu Ming must've carried a few Cosmos Rings with him on his first solo hunting trip in case he ever needed anything.

"Cosmos Rings are extremely durable. They are often made of materials that are even solider than what jade chips are made of. Generally speaking, even a temperature of almost ten thousand degrees is not enough to obliterate them.

"Besides, most people carry their Cosmos Rings with them. For suspicious space pirates who didn't trust anyone, like Fengyu Ming, it's simply impossible that he kept his Cosmos Rings elsewhere, at least not all of them.

"However, I didn't find a single Cosmos Ring among the residue.

"The only possibility is that the mysterious murderer took his Cosmos Rings away after killing him.

"Fengyu Ming was thrown into the crystal reactor alive. Therefore, his Cosmos Rings were taken away before he was killed. At that time, there was still a horde of space pirates outside. There was definitely not much time for an interrogation. Ten minutes, tops.

"Fengyu Ming should've known that he was dead for sure after he was captured. Then, here comes the billion-dollar question.

"If it were any of us, would we have been confident to make a space pirate who was clear of his fate surrender all his Cosmos Rings nicely?"

Cold sweat was appearing on Bai Kaixin's and Lei Dalu's foreheads. Both of them had slain countless space pirates and were well aware of the difficulty of handling the evil, malicious, and cunning foxes.

It might not be hard to kill them, but it was a whole different matter to make them submit their secrets, magical equipment, and Cosmos Rings.

It was especially so when it came to Cosmos Rings, which were small, hard, and easily concealable. The experienced space pirates had ten thousand ways to hide them.

Moreover, a lot of assets and even magical equipment could be stored inside a Cosmos Ring, which might be the only hope for the space pirate to reverse the situation. There was no way that they could hand it over until they were tortured to an unbearable point.

How did the mysterious man get them within several minutes?

Bai Kaixin and Lei Dalu both felt that a chill run down their spines. They seemed able to envision that, in a dark, gloomy engine compartment, an obscure phantom was tormenting Fengyu Ming in ways that they couldn't fathom and made the guy succumb within several minutes.

"Let's put Fengyu Ming aside for a moment and check these three crystal suits."

Xiong Tao turned to another three wrecked crystal suits. He pointed to the damage on them and said, "Iron Tiger Battlesuits are best known for the plate armor on the front. There are two small launchers that can send out flying swords in its chest. But someone has torn open the crystal suit in one attack with a piece of claw-shaped magical equipment, avoiding all the solid structures. The heart of the Exo inside was ruined on the spot.

"This Gold Eagle Battlesuit was slashed open from the left shoulder to the ribs on the right. All the joints in between have been cut through, even including the plate armor on the back. Of course, the Exo inside couldn't be more dead.

"As for this Phantom Spider Battlesuit, its helmet now looks more like a honeycomb. We found part of a broken shell and yet failed to determine what it was made of after all the thorough analysis!

"Those clean, straightforward wounds give me that feeling that it was not a fight, not even a massacre, but a… dissection!

"Yes. A dissection. Those brutal space pirates were no better than corpses on the slab faced with a sharp scalpel when they confronted the mysterious man!

"My conclusion is—

"Firstly, the mysterious man is particularly good at melee combat. It's likely that he hasn't advanced into the Core Formation Stage yet, but his abundant battle experience made up for that. His attacks were deadly and effective.

"Moreover, he has a far deeper understanding of crystal suits than common Exos do. Or rather, it may be a natural gift of his. Like a shark that can smell blood hundreds of kilometers away, he can perceive the gaps and weaknesses of every crystal suit precisely!

"But the knowledge alone was not enough to inflict such perfect wounds.

"He should also be in possession of several pieces of extremely powerful magical equipment, or even a super crystal suit made of magical equipment that has been refined out of materials beyond our recognition. Even I can't evaluate the level of such a crystal suit.

"If I am to give a summary of the guy, he is… extremely dangerous!"

Bai Kaixin took a long breath and asked, "Anything else?"

"Yes!"

Xiong Tao nodded and projected dozens of holographs from his mini crystal processor. "These are pictures of the explosion scenes on Ghost Jail that I took. I have located thirty-three points of explosion so far.

"Blowing up a starship, even from the inside, is not an easy task. Starships have been built to withstand explosions. The fast-response filling foams can suppress an explosion and the resulting fire, too.

"The points of explosions were not randomly selected but carefully calculated. The most critical places were chosen so that the most damage could be done with the fewest crystal bombs. The guy even took the distribution of crystal tubes into consideration so that more enemies would be affected by the explosions.

"Proficient! He was definitely a proficient explosion expert!"

Bai Kaixin's white eyebrows suddenly moved although there was no wind. He extended three fingers and said calmly, "So, there was an interrogation expert, a melee expert wearing a super crystal suit, and an explosion expert who worked together to take down Fengyu Ming and sabotage Ghost Jail before we were able to do so?"

Lei Dalu grinned and said, half smiling, "Maybe, it was not three of them, but one. The mainframe crystal processor of Ghost Jail must've stored the surveillance footage of the entire starship. Even if it was damaged by the explosions, I believe Uncle Xiong must have methods to recover the information inside. Let's dig it out and there are bound to be traces of this mysterious man."

Xiong Tao squinted and said coldly, "And here comes the most important point."

What appeared in the light beam was the broken mainframe crystal processor of Ghost Jail. It had been cleaned up preliminarily, but there was a shocking hole in the center of it.

Xiong Tao pointed at the hole and said, "Look. The information storage chip group of the mainframe crystal processor is supposed to be in this place. But right now, the place has been messed up. It seems somebody stabbed their hands in and uprooted the entire chip group by force."

Lei Dalu's eyebrows almost flew off, yet he even had the mood to whistle.

Xiong Tao sighed and said, "But that is still not the most surprising part.

"The most surprising part for me is what happened to the alarm system. Nineteen alarm rune arrays, sixteen in plain sight and three hidden, were deployed in the mainframe crystal processor of Ghost Jail.

"The alarm rune arrays are kept in the hibernation state during the peacetime. When somebody attacks the mainframe crystal processor, they automatically trigger and erase all the critical data inside it.

"But as it turns out, although the chip group was uprooted forcefully, none of the rune arrays were activated.

"Do you understand? It's like a crazy, brawny man slashed you two hundred times with a rusted blade recklessly, but none of the attacks reached the critical parts of your body. Not half of your veins or nerves were injured!

"This is a real expert in magical equipment who has a profound understanding of the internal structure of the mainframe crystal processor. Impressive. Very impressive!"

Lei Dalu grinned. "Is he even more skilled than Uncle Xiong?"

Xiong Tao shook his head and said, "It's not comparable.

"The world of magical equipment has too many crossroads, each of which lead to an unknown destination. Even the best refiners can't boast that they are experts in every kind of magical equipment.

"My research field is super large magical equipment, and I've been working on starships. In regard to refinement, maintenance and modification of starships, I'm confident that I'm as good as anyone.

"This mysterious man, on the other hand, must've focused more on personal magical equipment, namely flying swords, battle sabers, firearms, and crystal suits. He is an expert in these regards.

"In our Great Horn Exo Society, Old Jie and Little Mai can both be call crystal suit experts. But sadly, they were both killed in the big explosion last time.

"As for me, I'm truly uncertain whether or not I can beat this guy in the field of crystal suits."

Both Lei Dalu and Bai Kaixin were greatly shocked.

Only those who were well aware of Xiong Tao's background knew what a high evaluation he had just given!

Chapter 459: Stormy Sword, Cut Your Throat!

Chapter 459: Stormy Sword, Cut Your Throat!

After a tiny cracking noise as if a few strings inside his brain broke off, Li Yao's eyes were filled with blood, and the world was swirling around him, giving him a strong sense of nausea.

Not good. My computational ability ran too high. The cerebrovascular vessels were broken again.

And not one of them, but many. I'm going to be paralyzed!

Li Yao hurriedly stopped contemplating. His boiling brain cells gradually calmed down. He quickly picked out a few drugs from the myriad of medications beside him. Half of the drugs were taken orally, while the other half were smeared on his temples.

The drugs spread throughout his brain and fixed his cerebrovascular vessels, which were as wide as a spider's web, together with his thousands of spiritual threads.

Three minutes later, more than ten lackluster pearls of blood popped up on Li Yao's forehead. The internal bleeding inside his brain had been drained.

The blood-red in Li Yao's eyes gradually disappeared. He felt refreshed and took a long, relieved breath.

This was the seventeenth brain bleeding for him in two days.

It could not be helped. A side effect of bringing up his brain activity and computational ability exponentially in the Super Perceptive State was that the burden for the cerebrovascular vessels would greatly increase, too. The blood would be flowing hundreds of times faster inside the brain.

Veins and nerves were the body parts that were the hardest to be trained. When they were functioning at hundreds of times their capacity, naturally, they would explode from time to time.

I have to find a few Cultivation arts that focus on the training of cerebrovascular vessels some day in order to improve the toughness of my cerebrovascular vessels. Without a large enough blood supply, my computational ability can barely do me any good.

Li Yao was gazing at the light beams in the midair on which hundreds of structural designs were still glittering. But due to his plummeting computational ability after exiting the Super Perceptive State, he couldn't even understand any of them.

These were the files whose difficulty had been classified as Level 6.

Over the past two days, Li Yao had grasped the files up to Level 5, but he was somehow stuck in Level 6.

Everyone knows best what they are good at. His research field had been small magical equipment and crystal suits. As for super-large comprehensive systems like a starship, he had hardly touched upon them before, and his knowledge about them was little to none.

The first five levels of the maintenance manual had basically covered all the common faults that may happen to a starship and their corresponding solutions. A lot of articles were on the modifications of a starship for a specified environment. After he understood them, the basic maintenance and modification work would be no trouble for him.

Starting from Level 6, the truly mysterious and sophisticated core units were involved. Many theories that Li Yao had never heard of popped up, too.

Two months, or even two years, of devotion to them without the enlightenment of a master might not be enough to comprehend all of them, not to mention that he only had two days.

Li Yao was well aware of the limitlessness of the world of magical equipment. He had never intended to become a starship specialist, either. Therefore, he simply turned off the light beam and unplugged the jade chip.

The structural designs and spiritual energy flowcharts of hundreds of commonly-seen magical equipment of the Flying Star Sector stored inside the jade chip, on the other hand, had been analyzed and processed without much trouble.

Most of the magical equipment fell into the category of middle- or small-scale magical equipment, which was precisely what Li Yao was good at. Many kinds of magical equipment shared a lot of similarities with their counterparts of the Heaven's Origin Sector. Therefore, it didn't take long before Li Yao grasped all of them.

With the scattered components of the training area, Li Yao assembled twelve inconspicuous alarms to monitor the pathways around him.

Once everyone approached the area, the alarms would not ring out, but send a telepathic thought to an iron scrap that Li Yao wore close to his body. A feeble buzz would be triggered so that he would know somebody was coming.

Over the past two days, Li Yao had examined every corner of the training area and made sure that there was no surveillance magical equipment.

Together with these alarms, the training area would be his own kingdom.

Extending twelve spiritual threads to ensure that the alarms were functioning normally, Li Yao smiled and took out the three Cosmos Rings that he looted from Fengyu Ming.

During the two days, other than cleaning up the debris and studying the starship maintenance manual, Li Yao had also spent some time examining two of the Cosmos Rings.

The first Cosmos Ring contained a lot of high-nutrition food and clean water, both of which were not very worthy. But they had been preserved in the best storage rune arrays and wouldn't go sour even if they were kept in the Cosmos Ring for decades. Even a gluttonous Cultivator would be able to feed themself up for several years with the supplies inside.

Inside the second Cosmos Ring was a huge amount of Flying Star dollars, gold, diamonds, crystals, and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures that were much more valuable than cash and jewelry.

By his preliminary estimation, Li Yao had come to the conclusion that the load of money was enough to buy quite a few decent crystal suits or even a small second-hand carrier with a few crew members who preferred money to life.

As for the third Cosmos Ring, which was the most discreet and had been refined into the appearance of a capsule…

Li Yao casually retrieved all the objects inside the Cosmos Ring and placed them on the ground, before he stared at them in great interest.

Miscellaneous magical equipment of various kinds was lying in front of him. Li Yao tried for a long time to figure out what they were for.

These gadgets were all magical equipment for disguise and escape.

There was a capsule that, once crumbled and smeared on the body, would change one's skin miraculously from a young man of twenty years old to a dry, crappy old man within several seconds.

There was also a piece soft magical equipment made of unknown materials that had the color and feeling of flesh. A muscular man could turn into a young girl with alluring curves after sticking the magical equipment to his body.

Altogether, there were four sets of such camouflage magical equipment, with compatible clothes and identity certifications. One could pretend to be an old man, two young men with one taller and the other short, and a young girl whose face was plain but had an amazing figure very easily.

Every one of them had background files that were tens of thousands of words long. Even the residences and professions of their remote relatives were listed clearly.

These items almost awed Li Yao.

Fengyu Zhong truly deserved to be known as a seasoned space pirate. No wonder he could escape from Heavenly Saints City's siege multiple times. The things that he prepared for his only son were evident enough of his cunningness.

If Fengyu Ming had decided to abandon the starship and sneak into Star Lord Temple with that magical equipment, he really might have been able to get away.

It was a pity that, although Fengyu Zhong had prepared quite a lot of contingency plans, he must've never anticipated that somebody would play a decapitation move on his only son inside his own starship, and that the guy would coerce his son to surrender all the Cosmos Rings with both carrots and sticks.

What is this?

Other than disguise magical equipment, there were quite a lot of sordid, malicious weapons.

For example, a needle launcher that could be hidden below the tongue and would eject poisoned needles when activated.

Li Yao also discovered three blades that were thin, transparent, and barely recognizable unless one were to touch them with one's own hands.

For a Cultivator that had studied 'Thousand Finger Soft Bone Technique' and boasted an amazing hand speed such as himself, the three blades couldn't be more useful.

The last thing that he found was a ragged jade chip.

What kind of files are stored inside the jade chip to make it qualified to be kept together with Fengyu Ming's tools for his last escape?

Li Yao's curiosity was aroused. He inserted the jade chip into the crystal processor.

Appearing on the light beam first was an intimidating declaration. 'Stormy Sword, Cut Your Throat!'.

"This is—"

Just browsing through the table of contents was enough to let Li Yao's eyes bulge wide open and his eyebrows fly over his head. He couldn't help but exclaim in disbelief.

The 'Stormy Sword' was written by the great bandit Fengyu Zhong in person based on his decades of experience as a space pirate. To put it more simply, it was… an introduction to robbery!

This notebook might as well be called 'A Practical Handbook for You To Become A Super Space Pirate in 100 days'!

I understand it now. Fengyu Zhong wrote this for his only son to study in order to prepare him to succeed Storm Prison someday.

This notebook is so detailed. If one could learn all of it, they would definitely be qualified to be a super space pirate.

I'm the captain of Sparkle, which is currently wandering like a lone wolf in the Flying Star Sector. It's hardly likely that I will cooperate with any organizations here.

In that sense, the strategies that Sparkle should employ are quite similar to the space pirates'!

This notebook is definitely worth properly studying!

'Stormy Sword' included all the procedures for a space pirate robbery.

The choice of routes in the sea of stars, the defense against natural disasters, the art of hiding, the tactics of scouting, how to determine the value and the capability of the prey, how to avoid being hunted by the Cultivators who represented justice, how to assault, how to disguise, how to breach onto a hostile starship, how to interrogate the captives… Everything one could imagine was all elaborated on.

Li Yao studied the encyclopedia of bloody hunting as vast as ocean wholeheartedly for a good hour, only to find that he hadn't even finished 1% of it.

Robbery is indeed an art in the sea of stars. Li Yao couldn't help but observe.

It was also true that Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage were all remarkable. Although Fengyu Zhong was a notorious space pirate, he had truly got something in his hands, which must've been the reason why he could be such a famous space pirate for decades without being captured.

Many tactics about camouflage and assault would leave the impression that he had some sort of military background and perhaps was an expert in guerilla warfare in the sea of stars.

But when it came to the psychological knowledge employed in the interrogation of 'prey', one would doubt that he was actually an erudite university professor.

As for the management of subordinate space pirates, the control of morale, and the award and punishment system, it was enough to qualify him to be the leader of a major sect.

In one word, professional!

What Li Yao liked most was the section named 'Architecture of Common Starships'.

This section took up half of the notebook.

During a robbery, it was inevitable for the space pirates to trespass on the preys' starship and fight in close-quarters combat. The decapitation strategy was often utilized, too, which made it all the more important to know the structure of the prey's starship, including the specific locations of crucial cabins such as the engine compartment and the cockpit.

Therefore, 'Stormy Sword' had recorded the approximate structure designs of hundreds of starships.

What almost moved Li Yao to tears was that, in each structure design, very detailed notes and marks had been left to illustrate dozens of ways of infiltrating and attacking as well as hundreds of accidents that might occur during an infiltration and the pertaining emergency plans.

Xiong Tao's maintenance manual taught Li Yao how to protect and repair a starship to maintain its basic functions during a fierce battle, but this 'Stormy Sword' expounded on the simplest, roughest and most effective ways to destroy a starship and cut its throat in the shortest amount of time possible!

Chapter 460: Game of Spear and Shield

Chapter 460: Game of Spear and Shield

It was always easier to destruct than to construct.

'Stormy Sword' was a robbery tutorial that Fengyu Zhong had written for his only son. Naturally, not many sophisticated theories were involved. Just understanding the phenomena and how to act in response would be good enough.

For Li Yao, who had barely any background knowledge about starships, 'Stormy Sword' was apparently much more suitable than Level 6 and beyond of the starship maintenance manual offered by Xiong Tao.

Therefore, in the following few days, after finishing the debris cleaning work during the day, instead of resting, Li Yao dedicated most of his spare time to 'Stormy Sword'.

While he memorized the basic structures of starships of hundreds of models, he also learnt thousands of sneaking and sabotaging strategies to deal with them.

Later, he even came up with a very interesting mind game that combined both mauling and maintenance.

Li Yao split his telepathic thoughts into two sides, both having equal computational ability.

Part of his telepathic thoughts would stand from the perspective of the guardians of a starship and try to defend and maintain it with the knowledge he had learnt from the starship maintenance manual.

The other part of his telepathic thoughts would be intruders trying to breach into the starship and destroy it in the shortest amount of time possible.

Attacking one's shield with one's own spear. Li Yao dwelled in the 'self-brutalizing' mind game and greatly enjoyed it.

Every starship of a different model would be a brand new 'game map'.

In less than five days, Li Yao had played thirty-four such 'maps' in a row.

Most of the time, the 'intruders' won the game and demolished the imaginary starship in his brain successfully.

But as he played more, his understanding of the structures of different starships grew deeper. Gradually, he was able to repair the starship at a crazy speed while under the bombardment of the 'intruders' and defend the starship during the designated time.

Li Yao buried himself in the fascinating game and completely forgot the passage of time.

Without him knowing it, he had stayed in the remnant of Ghost Jail for seven days.

Gold Horn had drifted into the depths of the sea of stars and entered the cruising state.

…

For every refiner on Gold Horn, the past seven days had been more miserable than death.

Master Xiong Tao's mood seemed to be getting worse with every passing second.

His bloodshot eyes were apparently as enlarged as humanly possible. But when he noticed a few minor problems with the magical equipment, they could always be widened even further.

Like two nail guns, his eyes were shooting nails carved with freezing rune arrays and pierced thousands of holes in the refiners and mechanics.

In the beginning, the old man sometimes yelled and burst out in fury several times. No one felt too bad at the time.

But lately, several major problems happened to the starship. Ever since two very important units had been declared total losses, the old man's dry lips had been kept shut. Every day he was thinner than the previous day, as if his vitality had been sucked up by Gold Horn.

Whenever a fault occurred, he would always gaze in utter silence at those responsible with his bull eyes that were almost jumping out of his head.

When the refiners who were gazed at by the old man in such a way gathered and talked, they all agreed that they would rather put on a maintenance crystal suit to repair the broken shell of the starship in the bleak, dark space than to be stared at by the chief refiner.

Xiong Tao was very anxious.

Gold Horn's status was much worse than he had expected.

They had only just set off, and they had already met with serious faults. A lot of standby components had been consumed with barely any left.

There was still a long way ahead. Quite a few parts of the route were very dangerous. Cosmic storms and stone belts were almost inevitable.

The thought of sailing into the most threatening stone belts of the Flying Star Sector in a starship bordering on destruction made Xiong Tao's blood freeze and his back prick.

However, they had no other options.

To return to the central space zone through the safest route meant travelling triple the distance, with seven additional world fragments and five space zones to go through.

Those places were all relatively barren. Some of the world fragments were even uninhabited. They wouldn't be able to get enough supplies.

In order to come back to the center of the Flying Star Sector before their supplies ran out, they had to take the shortcut even though it was much more dangerous.

In devastation, Xiong Tao thought of the newcomers who were working on the remnant of Ghost Jail.

Those newcomers were either young apprentices raised in the Great Horn Exo Society who were still in lacking expertise, or the civil mechanics recruited in Star Lord with unclear backgrounds who knew a thing or two about maintenance but had never received professional training.

Xiong Tao demanded that they clear the debris and collect assets not because he didn't trust them, but because he wanted to know more about their personalities and capabilities.

Xiong Tao always believed that such rudimental work was the best mirror to reflect the characteristics of a refiner.

Rash or sloppy, careless or prudent, and what kind of posts they were most suitable for could all be seen through by how they polished a small component of magical equipment.

One week had passed. The newcomers must've cleaned up enough components for him to inspect.

If some of them did have the potential, Xiong Tao would definitely hand over the more important tasks to them without any hesitation.

After all, Gold Horn had too many vacancies for maintainers!

Thinking of that, Xiong Tao summoned several experienced refiners and asked them to dock the asset transmission tube of Gold Horn to Ghost Jail in order to transport the components.

Half an hour later, a folded soft tube more than ten meters in diameter stuck out from the tail of Gold Horn and gradually expanded to the front end of Ghost Jail. Attracted by the electromagnetic force, it was attached to the head of Ghost Jail like a giant, gaping mouth.

Several refiners walked through the sealed tube in maintenance crystal suits and replaced the shell of Ghost Jail with a trapdoor that could automatically open or close.

The asset transmission tube was thus completed.

An hour later, standard storage boxes were transported to the main maintenance workshop of Gold Horn through the tube one after another.

Xiong Tao and four other experienced refiners opened the boxes of components and started evaluating.

"The first two boxes of components were collected and polished by 'Lan An'. Not bad. He has gathered more than 37,500 components. The quantity is remarkable, the quality is very acceptable, with barely any flawed ones.

"Lan An is an apprentice raised in the Great Horn Exo Society, is he not? I remember that his spiritual root has awakened, too. He is at the third level of the Refinement Stage.

"He is quite talented, but he is a little careless. Look. The corners of the runes are still stained. He didn't finish the job well."

"However, he is good enough to be responsible for the maintenance of the regular magical equipment of the living zones. Let him take charge of the living zones and reassign the previous refiners there to more important posts."

Xiong Tao picked up almost a hundred components from the box and glanced at them shortly before making the conclusion.

The other four refiners had no objections, including the mentor of the apprentice 'Lan An'. Everybody agreed that Master Xiong Tao had made the most appropriate arrangement.

"Miao Fei was a newly-recruited refiner from Star Lord Temple. He is eighty-eight with abundant experience in the trade. The area between the No. 1 turret zone and the No. 4 turret zone of Ghost Jail was cleaned up by him.

"The components collected by him are immaculate without the slightest trace of explosions or flaws. They could be applied to other magical equipment without any further processing. Indeed, not bad.

"However, he only sorted out about 17,300 components in one week. The speed is not very satisfactory. It appears that this refiner is a perfectionist who favors quality over quantity.

"I think that we can ask him to maintain the artificial gravity system. After all, the artificial gravity system is in the center of the starship. Normally, there won't be unexpected accidents. The most important thing about the job is carefulness. It does not demand quick wits."

Half an hour later, Xiong Tao had neatly distributed dozens of newcomers to appropriate posts, so that the skilled, experienced refiners originally doing the jobs could be spared to manage the more important tasks. He was finally greatly relieved.

There were only three newcomers left.

But the components of the next newcomer startled Xiong Tao, whose brush-like eyebrows scrunched up into two clusters.

"Li Yao, who was in charge of cleaning up the training zone of Ghost Jail, has gathered 137,455 components?

"You've got to be kidding me!"

Most of the components were broken after they were dug out from debris. Their strength and hardness were both greatly compromised. Some of them were seriously corroded by acids and explosions and could only be put to use after thorough refurbishment.

One only had limited time and energy. Cleaning a component was an extremely arduous task.

There could only be one explanation for collecting more than one hundred thousand components within one short week: that this guy, Li Yao, had not polished any components judiciously. It was even possible that he didn't even bother to distinguish the damage level of the components and had taken in a lot of scraps that were too twisted to be repaired!

Xiong Tao thought of the young man named 'Li Yao' again.

His first impression of the guy was not very good.

He always believed that the best personality for a refiner was honesty and integrity.

The young man named 'Li Yao' might indeed be somewhat talented and had experienced some fortuitous incidents, but the fact that he didn't recognize the simplest Space Gyroscope despite his claim to be an expert in magical equipment maintenance had given Xiong Tao the feeling that he was a haughty, immodest man.

However, since they were seriously short of hands, and the young man had a pair of extremely fast hands and an awakened spiritual root as a Cultivator, Xiong Tao decided to let him stay anyway.

After that, he specially asked Bai Kaixin to encourage the young man and even lent his own starship maintenance manual to him because he wanted to give the guy a second chance to fully demonstrate his potential.

Maybe he was truly talented in maintenance and had wasted his time in the desolate border of the sea of stars.

If he indeed had the gifts to be a better man, Xiong Tao wouldn't hesitate to give him a hand.

But he didn't anticipate that Li Yao would still be so short-tempered!

Had he thought that, the more components he offered, the better they would think of him?

Xiong Tao sighed and opened Li Yao's storage box while holding back his disappointment.

Chapter 461: Simulated Test

Chapter 461: Simulated Test

Xiong Tao was speechless for half a minute. His eyes were frozen, and weird expressions surfaced on his face.

"What's going on? The old man is dazed?"

"How crappy must Li Yao's components be for the old man to not know what to say?"

The other refiners were whispering to each other.

But they were all stunned and put on weird expressions, too, when Xiong Tao silently opened the storage box fully, the walls of which then collapsed to the ground revealing everything contained inside.

Putting the quality of the components that Li Yao had recycled aside, the way they were stored was different from the usual ones.

Others' components were mostly piled up in a mess. The best thing they could do was to sort the components into several boxes according to their general purpose.

In comparison, Li Yao had built up many three-dimensional districts inside the storage box with thin metal plates, rune arrays of the wind class, and anti-gravity rune arrays, which on one hand increased the utilization efficiency of the storage box, and on the other hand differentiated each and every component clearly.

Now, they were lying neatly inside the box like a well-trained troop waiting to be inspected by their king.

Moreover…

Components of different categories were all placed in different areas with an implicit logic. Generally speaking, the areas that were close to each other had components for a certain kind of magical equipment. Therefore, it was very handy if someone was going to put the components to use.

The few refiners blinked their eyes, which were pricked by the glittering light reflected by the components. They picked up several of them from the shelves inside the box and examined them carefully.

They found that, not only were the components as bright as newly-made ones and even the tiniest rune in the most inconspicuous corner had been polished perfectly without the slightest stain, the components also felt as smooth as silk because they were covered in a protective layer that seemed like an oily membrane so that their longevity in extreme environments could be significantly improved.

Illuminated by the lights, colorful glimmers rippled out on the surface of the components appealingly. Even the most ordinary metals looked like Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and captivated one's eyes, making them unable to look away.

"Hum. Hum. Hum Hum…"

One of the refiners blew onto the components and put them beside his ear to analyze the sound of the vibrations as if he were listening to the most marvelous music. He mumbled, "The hardness inside the components is as good as the brand-new ones. If the hundred thousand components are all as perfect as the samples, it will be too unbelievable!

"The guy's speed is terrifying, too. He has restored more than a hundred components from the debris resulting from serious explosions to such an extent within only seven days! In my opinion, even many experts working in maintenance within Heavenly Saints City are not proficient enough to do that.

"Was everything he said actually true? Did he really grow up in an ancient space battleground and start recycling garbage when his mother was still breastfeeding him?

"If that is case, we have got a real talent!"

The refiners were all excited.

A young man with such fluent hands and solid knowledge about magical equipment was the best assistant that every one of them had dreamed for!

But Xiong Tao was still frowning. He mumbled something to himself as Li Yao's performance was beyond his expectations.

Judging from what had happened, it was very likely that he had been telling the truth.

However, the guy claimed that he wandered in various ancient space battlegrounds for many years and yet he had never seen a Space Gyroscope? That did not sound right.

The young man must've had spent the entire week cleaning the debris trying to prove himself without any rest after being scolded by him.

If that was what had happened, how much time had he devoted to the maintenance manual?

Xiong Tao secretly felt regretful.

Such a talented young man shouldn't be just trained as a magical equipment mechanic or a refiner's assistant. He should be allowed to climb higher mountains!

"Contact this guy Li Yao for me. I have a few questions for him," said Xiong Tao emotionlessly and expressionlessly.

The young man showing up on the light beam somewhat surprised Xiong Tao.

Because of the long time of confinement inside a starship without any contact with lights, Li Yao's skin was apparently fairer than before, but his eyes, in which sparks seemed to be bursting from time to time, were even deeper and darker. No one would be able to tell what kind of things were buried behind the ink-like eyes.

Besides…

Staying inside a starship remnant that was filled with darkness for an entire week was usually an unbearable thing. Many people would cry to return to the company of their companions after one or two days. Even the most determined people would be somewhat agitated after a week of solitude.

But Li Yao was perfectly peaceful without the slightest sign of discomfort; he seemed to be enjoying the loneliness.

Xiong Tao appreciated such a quality.

Refining was an art of loneliness. For most of the time, a refiner had to keep themselves alone in a refining workshop.

In order to find the most suitable materials for a certain kind of magical equipment, they would often have to try thousands of times tirelessly, without any confidence that they could succeed at last.

When the sword Cultivators rode their swords, flying in the air and enjoying the reverence of thousands of people, refiners were walking on the path of turning unknown into known.

Those who could not bear loneliness were definitely not made to be refiners.

Those who could bear loneliness yet couldn't enjoy it would never become excellent refiners.

Only those who found fun in loneliness and even built a world of their own with which they entertained themselves could become the real experts in the art of refining!

Seeing Li Yao's appearance, Xiong Tao had totally believed what he said. The chief refiner asked straightforwardly, "How much of the Level 1 of 'Starship Maintenance Manual' have you grasped? 80%?"

If Li Yao's progress had reached 80%, Xiong Tao would put Li Yao in charge of several unimportant areas by himself for further observation.

Li Yao pondered for a moment about whether or not he should conceal part of his capability.

But very soon, he made up his mind because he had to seize every second and every opportunity to improve his capability in order to learn the best skills in the holy land of Cultivation of the Flying Star Sector, refine the strongest magical equipment, and find his way home!

Even if he could conceal part of capability right now, it would definitely still be exposed later in his training. By that time, his disguise right now would inevitably raise a lot of suspicion.

Therefore, he might as well show them his true abilities from the start!

Figuring the logic out, Li Yao stared Xiong Tao in eye and said, "I've fully grasped the first three levels, and I grasped 79.5% of the first five levels. Level 6, 33.2%. As for the files beyond Level 6, I haven't touched them yet."

Xiong Tao was speechless for three seconds.

The other four refiners were dumbfounded.

Three seconds later, Xiong Tao took a deep breath and replied calmly, "Alright. Please wait a moment."

The communication was cut off. The four refiners' doubtful exclamations echoed nonstop.

"Within only seven days, not only did he finish cleaning up so many components, he also managed to learn half of the 'Starship Maintenance Manual'?

"Impossible. It's simply impossible. At best, he skimmed through it. How on earth could he grasp it?"

"Stop arguing!"

Xiong Tao glared at them and said, "I'm going to prepare a special examination for him, with all the faults that happened to Gold Horn in the past seven days as the questions. Now, let's gather the major malfunctions and the minor ones in your respective areas from over the past week."

"In my area, a spiritual energy transmission tube was jammed once, resulting in a power rune array overloading and eventually exploding. Also, two power rune arrays interfered with each other and the spiritual pressure plunged. This fault is very rare. We spent thirty minutes ruling out all the other possibilities before we finally located the problem," said the refiner who was in charge of the engine compartment.

"In my place, the artificial gravity disappeared abruptly twice, and four kinds of magical equipment whose units were sensitive to gravity were flying everywhere inside them. Because the gravity was only away very briefly, we failed to find the source of the problem until we dug deep."

"It's needless to say too much about the turret zone. Although the few turrets have been repaired for emergencies, small problems are occurring to them every day, and big ones are happening to them every other day! There's not a single hour that it functions without error!"

The four refiners all spoke enthusiastically. Very soon, more than a hundred faults of various sorts were gathered.

Together with the three zones that Xiong Tao himself was in charge of, 182 faults were collected and transmitted to Li Yao's mini crystal processor as a special examination paper.

Looking at the dense, transparent illustrations spinning around his head, Li Yao couldn't be more thrilled. His face was red while he breathed heavily.

The questions on the paper was not in the least pedantic but associated with a lot of real-life situations. They were all comprehensive questions that could potentially affect the entire starship.

The paper is a finely-made one. The questions are very realistic!

For an expert in refining such as Li Yao, nothing excited him more than a finely-made exam.

Li Yao licked his lips. He stuffed almost twenty meat buns into his mouth in a row and washed them down with high-nutrition liquid in order to replenish his energy.

Then, he put a neat iron ring on his head.

The iron ring was a piece of self-made magical equipment of Li Yao's. It was an upgraded version of the 'Freezing Ring' that he had used back in the Grand Desolate War Institution. Other than the freezing rune arrays carved on the ring that could cool down the brain, it could also monitor the circulation of blood inside the head and automatically inject medication drugs.

When the blood inside his head was flowing too fast, the iron ring would promptly inject the medication drugs to bring up the hardness of cerebrovascular vessels and reduce their odds of fracture. If the situation was too bad, it would send warnings so that Li Yao could lower his brain cell activity and avoid the fate of mental derangement.

Let's begin!

Li Yao rubbed his fists and grinned hideously. He lunged at the paper like a hungry wolf charging at a lamb.

Chapter 462: Spiritual Shield Generator

Chapter 462: Spiritual Shield Generator

Xiong Tao looked at his watch when Li Yao's telepathic thoughts that were as vast as ocean were fully transmitted.

It was only 3 hours, 42 minutes and 57 seconds after they sent the paper over.

Li Yao's lightning-like speed caused the maintenance workshop to fall into a weird silence again.

All the refiners looked at each other in bewilderment, but they did not dare jump to any conclusions.

With crisp 'beep' sounds, light beams blossomed one after another like petals. The five refiners divided Li Yao's answers according to the fields they were good at and reviewed the content passionately.

"Correct. Correct. And still correct."

"His ideas about how to cope with the faults are very clear. The measures are resolute, too, without any indecision."

"Huh. He thought of a different solution to the No. 44 fault which employed three new algorithms. Let me see… Hiss. It's workable and 4.8 seconds faster than my solution!"

Exclamations echoed nonstop like the croaking frogs in a pond.

Of the 182 faults, Li Yao perfectly resolved 74 and located the critical parts of the problem of another 38.

As for the remaining 70 questions, they were left completely blank.

Everybody was greatly relieved to see this.

They discovered that all the faults Li Yao had worked out had been provided with clear and simple solutions, some of which were even more practical than what they had employed in reality.

As for the faults that he didn't fully work out, the elaborations about the source of the faults were very neat and precise.

It equaled to saying that the correction rate of the questions he had answered was 100%!

With that in mind, the seasoned refiners would start doubting how this young monster was born and where he came from if he could solve all 182 faults flawlessly!

Thankfully, there were still questions that he didn't understand. Overall… he was still an 'acceptable' genius!

But one thing was bothering them. Based on Li Yao's knowledge, he definitely had something to say about the questions that had been left blank. But why did he choose to not write anything about them?

Xiong Tao pondered for a moment and turned on the communication channel again.

Li Yao appeared in the light beam again, with the thinking iron ring on his head. Under the dual effects of the freezing rune arrays and the medications drugs, a lot of hazy mist popped up from his head and wrapped him, making him look both eccentric and mysterious.

Xiong Tao was briefly dazed because he failed to see what the iron ring was meant for. But he didn't let the details bother him and asked straightforwardly, "I have two questions for you. Firstly, according to your solutions to the No. 14 fault and the No. 45 fault, the maintainer would be kept in an environment with a temperature higher than eight hundred degrees for three minutes. Is there anyone capable of doing that in a real-life scenario?"

"There is." Li Yao nodded.

Seeing his confident face and his unwavering eyes, Xiong Tao was almost convinced.

"The second question. Why did you not propose any solutions to the faults whose origins you had located?"

"Because I don't know any," replied Li Yao in a matter-of-fact way.

Xiong Tao's bull eyes narrowed as he said, "According to your ideas and answers to other questions, you can at least write something about them. The possible plans, for example. Why did you decide to abandon them completely?"

"Because it is a waste of time."

Li Yao answered calmly, "Everyone has the field that they are best at. It's impossible for a refiner to specialize in the maintenance and modification of all kinds of magical equipment. The starship is too large and boasts too many pieces of magical equipment. Everyone should focus on some of them.

"It's unnecessary, and impossible, for me to know all the fields. The only I need to do is to be adept at the field that I work on.

"If I am really faced with faults that are beyond my knowledge, I will ask the specialists of the fields to fix them instead of blindly coming up with ideas.

"Yes. I can try my best and write something on the paper. If I'm really lucky, they might even be correct.

"But it is going to waste a lot of my time and distract me from the field that I'm best at. More often than not, my ill-considered suggestions may even mislead other people and cause greater damage.

"Time is precious. I don't want to waste any of it. That's it."

His reply greatly interested Xiong Tao, whose lips curled in a vague smile.

Li Yao's talent in refining was already surprising enough. But what was more surprising was his awareness of self-control.

He was not like the regular 'geniuses' who did things randomly based on their immense natural gift.

The best steel should be used to craft the edge of a blade. For a Cultivator, the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and the myriad of Cultivation arts were of course good steel, but the most important resource of all for them was 'time'!

A sensible Cultivator would always make the best use of each and every second by calculating carefully in the most frugal way. They understood which area they should devote their time to so that they could improve themselves to the ultimate level of Cultivation after days and years.

Xiong Tao had originally planned to ask Li Yao to take over several unimportant zones. But right now, he changed his mind.

He was of a mind to assign Li Yao to some important areas by himself. But since Li Yao was apparently too young, his backgrounds not entirely clear, and the important zones concerned the fate of the starship, Xiong Tao hesitated to make a decision.

Pondering for a moment, Xiong Tao finally made up his mind and said, "When you joined the Great Horn Exo Society, Manager Bai should've told you that, as long as you proved yourself to be capable enough, you would be responsible for the more important posts.

"Now, I'm thinking of asking you to work as Master Bai Ze's assistant and help him to ensure the normal functioning of the spiritual shield generator. Are you willing to take the offer?"

Li Yao blinked his eyes, but his mind was brimming with ecstasy.

Of course, he was willing to!

The spiritual shield generator was one of the most crucial pieces of magical equipment on a starship. It was even more important than the engine compartment and the mainframe crystal processor!

If the power rune arrays broke down, the starship could always drift slowly in the sea of stars, waiting for them to be repaired.

However, if the spiritual shield generator exploded because of a cosmic storm or the bombardment of a hostile starship, the spiritual shield of the starship would collapse.

If so, the shell of the starship would take the full blow of the enemy's attacks.

Even the most solid shell wouldn't be able to stand for long against such attacks.

Therefore, the spiritual shield was always outside of the shell to absorb the damage when the starship was cruising through a cosmic storm or engaged in a battle.

The spiritual energy generator, on the other hand, was always faced with great pressure. In fierce battles, it was almost certain that some faults would occur in the spiritual shield generator, sometimes even continuously. All the faults had to be quickly identified and attended to!

To master such a spiritual shield generator required sharp senses, fast hands, and resolute decisions, and none of the qualities were optional!

On a starship, the refiner responsible for the spiritual shield generator was usually the most skilled, experienced, and respected one.

Sometimes, they were only secondary to the chief refiner; sometimes, the chief refiner would manage the spiritual shield generator personally.

For the crew members of a starship, they often respected the refiner in charge of the generator even more than the chief refiner, since it was their lives that were in the hands of the refiner.

On Gold Horn, Master Bai Ze, who was in charge of the spiritual shield generator, was an expert in refining only inferior to Xiong Tao in the Great Horn Exo Society, as well as a creation-type Cultivator in the high level of the Building Foundation Stage!

…

Li Yao followed Bai Ze somewhat anxiously into the cabin where the spiritual shield generator was located.

There were bigger spiritual shields and there were smaller ones. A Cultivator could form a natural spiritual shield by triggering their own spiritual energy. Small-scale spiritual shield generators were also core units only lesser to the crystal reactor on crystal suits.

For the most part, the middle- and small-scale spiritual shields could only be expanded to one to two meters away and cover one or two people.

In comparison, the spiritual shield on a starship had to be enlarged to more than a thousand meters in order to protect the entire starship.

It was not hard to imagine the scale and complexity of the spiritual shield generator behind that.

In front of Li Yao were sixteen black metal plates more than five meters long embedded with countless crystals and carved with immeasurable rune arrays.

The metal plates were distributed in a circle and placed in a giant ball-shaped zone more than fifty meters in diameter.

Other than the main maintenance workshop, the engine compartment, and the cockpit, this should be the largest independent space on the starship. It protruded slightly out of the starship. Looking from the outside, it looked like a lump on the back of the starship.

The generator was emitting a huge amount of heat continuously. To better transmit the heat, most of the generator was soaking in special deep-blue cooling liquids. It was revolving slowly around a thick axis.

This super-large system was made of more than a thousand units and hundreds of thousands of components. It was large, majestic, and solemn.

For a refiner such as Li Yao, walking into this place almost equaled to walking into a splendid palace. He found it hard to breathe.

The spiritual shield generator could produce double defenses.

The first defense was one purely made of spiritual energy, which could offset the hostile energy attacks.

The second defense was the twisted force field, which would cause the materials that were rushing close, such as meteorites and cannonballs, to deviate from their trajectories.

Such strong defenses were why it was nearly impossible for a starship to be blown up by remote attacks before it ran out of spiritual energy.

It was also one of the reasons crystal suits were so popular in the Flying Star Sector and were even one of the most important weapons on a space battleground.

This was a world where 'shields' were stronger than 'spears'. Only crystal suits could infiltrate the spiritual shield without being stopped and intrude into the interior of the enemy's defense circle so that the battle could be finished inside the starship.

Over the two months of hunting, the spiritual shield generator of Gold Horn had suffered too many adversities to work normally any longer. It was already on the verge of collapse.

In order to maintain the normal coverage of the spiritual shield, Bai Ze had dedicated all that he had. He was almost planning to jump into the generator and burn his own soul to provide more energy for the spiritual shield.

Li Yao's arrival had come at the right time.

In the following half month, Li Yao learnt to repair Gold Horn's spiritual shield generator with the assets collected from Ghost Jail.

Faced with such a comprehensive, complicated system, even Li Yao felt dizzy and exhausted despite his capability in refining.

He spent almost all his time on the maintenance work; he was so busy that he didn't even have the time to read 'Starship Maintenance Manual' and 'Stormy Sword'.

His understanding of spiritual shields grew deeper and deeper during the crazy maintenance work, too.

He had to make the best use of every second, because three days later, the spiritual shield of Gold Horn would be going through a harsh examination.

They were going to sail through the life-blighting 'Dim Flame Belt', better known as 'Wraiths' Wrath', of the Flying Star Sector!

Chapter 463: Dim Flame Belt

Chapter 463: Dim Flame Belt

"The Dim Flame Belt is not an ordinary stone belt. It was one of the main battlegrounds in the Armageddon Rebellion ten thousand years ago. The battle was so intense that the Flying Star Sector was even torn apart.

"You may think of the Dim Flame Belt as a wound of the Flying Star Sector or an extremely large crack.

"Over the past ten thousand years, countless small planets, meteoroid showers, and world fragments have been attracted into the crack. They collided, crushed, and eventually reassembled. Thousands of streams of spiritual energy gathered together, resulting in countless mysterious reactions. Eventually, the Dim Flame Belt was formed.

"The meteoroids inside the Dim Flame Belt all carry immense spiritual energy of the fire class. They are hundreds of times more damaging than common meteoroids. Some of the wreckages of the war ten thousand years ago still have attack rune arrays that were not activated and are still functioning. They are like ticking time bombs that will set off randomly.

"Entering the Dim Flame Belt is like entering a surging river haunted by infuriated ghosts. Therefore, experienced sailors call the place 'Wraiths' Wrath'. None of them ever enter the Dim Flame Belt unless it is absolutely necessary.

"We have no other choice. The Dim Flame Belt has absorbed the materials and spiritual energy of the few space zones nearby and turned them into bleak, desolate uninhabited areas.

"If we bypass the Dim Flame Belt, we will have to sail for at least two to three months before we can find a depot world fragment.

"With our current supplies and the status of the starship, there is no way that we can go for such a long time. Once the spiritual energy runs dry, even our own training will become a big problem.

"Cruising through the Dim Flame Belt, on the other hand, will take only three days, if the journey is smooth.

"After that, we will arrive in the Angry Serpent Domain within the following ten days. The Angry Serpent Domain is a fairly large world fragment. Many Cultivation sects have established branches in the area. There is also a middle-sized dock where we can take a brief rest and buy a lot of supplies.

"Going forward from the Angry Serpent Domain, we will be entering the center of the Flying Star Sector. There will be more world fragments and space towns that are guarded by Cultivation sects along the way. The transportation is convenient and safe, too. We can get abundant supplies very easily.

"Therefore, it is a necessity that we pass through the Dim Flame Belt."

Bai Ze explained to Li Yao, pointing at the star map on the light beam, "Going through the Dim Flame Belt is a great test for our spiritual shield. Have you completed the task that I entrusted to you yesterday? What is the status of the No. 7 unit now?"

"The spiritual pressure stabilizer had a short circuit, resulting in the abrupt increase of spiritual pressure, which damaged the nineteen defense rune arrays nearby. I've replaced it with a stabilizer of a higher level and carved the nineteen defense rune arrays once again. Besides, I've optimized the alarms, so that they will emit green light when the spiritual pressure reaches 80% of the limit, red when 90%, and they will buzz when it reaches 95% of the limit. With such a system in place, we will know if there's an anomaly with the spiritual pressure in advance," Li Yao replied in a hurry.

He actually quite respected Bai Ze.

Although Bai Ze was merely in the high level of the Building Foundation Stage, similar to himself, and his comprehensive capability in refining might even be higher than Bai Ze's, Bai Ze had dedicated dozens of years' time to the study of defense rune arrays and spiritual shields. He had made remarkable achievements both in theories and in practice and was a well-regarded specialist in spiritual shields.

What Li Yao had learned was rather jumbled. Speaking of the study of defense rune arrays and spiritual shields, he was absolutely no match for Bai Ze.

One could always learn from one's fellows. Li Yao had always respected the real specialists. He would've humbly asked for the enlightenment of a refiner with abundant experience who had spent more than half of his life studying spiritual shields even if the refiner was in the beginning level of the Building Foundation Stage. Now that Bai Ze's Cultivation level was even higher than his, there was no reason he shouldn't learn from him.

Over the past two weeks, Li Yao had indeed learned a lot of things from Bai Ze.

Putting aside everything else, just the nineteen-seven brand new spiritual shield models were more than enough for him to digest for a year and a half. His future would benefit a lot from them.

Li Yao was also greatly inspired by the spiritual shield generator. He had devised quite a few pieces of small-scale magical equipment that he could put into the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit to increase its defense ability when he had the opportunity to.

"Excellent. We have three days to go. During these three days, we will reexamine all the working units. I will also ask Master Xiong to have the useable components of the spiritual shield generator on Ghost Jail delivered to this place.

"A storm is coming!"

…

Three days later, Gold Horn dived into the Dim Flame Belt.

Li Yao observed the magnificent scenes through the panoramic light beam quietly.

Watched from afar, the Dim Flame Belt was a river of magma raging in the boundless space. Countless burning, red meteoroids were creaking, colliding, crumbling, and condensing. The boiling magma tossed up thousands of waves, each of which were even more splendid than the prominence of the sun.

Wraiths' Wrath truly deserved its name. Even the divinities would be frightened if they came to this place.

Li Yao felt that his palms were sweating.

It was not going to be an easy task to break through such a dangerous stone belt.

As Gold Horn fully entered the Dim Flame Belt, the scenes inside the light beam changed.

Most of the red meteoroids were actually still far away from the starship, but the furious light and heat that they emitted blew at Gold Horn like crimson hurricanes.

Half an hour after they entered the Dim Flame Belt, the temperature around Gold Horn had surpassed 1,500 degrees.

The originally bright gold spiritual shield gradually turned a deep shade of red as it was resisting the high temperature nearby.

"Attention! We are entering an extremely hot environment. Set the spiritual shield into anti-heat pattern. Activate the cooling rune arrays to cool down the shell and the engine compartment. Activate the rune arrays of the wind class to blow away the streams of heat!"

Under Bai Ze's command, the light beam in front of Li Yao suddenly changed from the view of the universe to a series of runes the size of the head of a fly, which poured down from the top of the light beam.

Emotionlessly, Li Yao turned his two hands into two clusters of grey mist. The grey mist then surrounded him and started operating on the circular light beam.

With Li Yao's lightning-like movements, countless runes were jumping on the sixteen metal plates that constituted the spiritual shield generator. The brightness they emitted was interweaving into new patterns.

Around the generator, the cooling liquids were roaring. A lot of bubbles were popping up as it was in an extremely high temperature.

"Alright. The temperature of the plate armor of the starship is steady at 850 degrees, which is bearable for us. Keep the general spiritual pressure stable and make sure that the twisted force field is functioning normally in the high temperature. The meteoroids of this area are very chaotic without any distinguishable pattern. Beware of the collision of meteoroids."

Bai Ze had only just finished his sentence when dangerous redness popped up in the light beam.

A burning meteoroid more than five hundred meters in diameter emitting weird redness was rushing at Gold Horn straightforwardly at an unbelievable speed!

According to its trajectory, there were thirteen seconds before it hit Gold Horn!

The chaotic, heated environment of the Dim Flame Belt interfered with the probe magical equipment of the Gold Horn, which was why they failed to detect it earlier.

Bai Ze was greatly alarmed. He was planning to take over the operation panel, when he noticed that Li Yao did not even blink his eyes. Li Yao's previous storm-like movements suddenly turned gentle, as if he were trimming the hair of a sleeping cat. His narrow and long fingers slid on the light beam softly and fluently and finished the adjustment and activation of the twisted force field within five seconds.

"Hu…"

Jammed by the twisted field, the rushing meteoroid altered its trajectory slightly and brushed past Gold Horn.

The shortest distance between them was only 99 meters!

Due to the interference of the spiritual energy contained inside the meteoroid, Gold Horn shivered. Blood red flakes and waves appeared in the light beam.

Bai Ze was so shocked that cold sweat was appearing on his forehead.

On the other hand, Li Yao was still emotionless. However, there was delight in his eyes. He even licked his lips, showing that he had greatly enjoyed himself.

Travelling in the dangerous Dim Flame Belt seemed to be just an interesting game for Li Yao.

Bai Ze took a long breath in relief.

"Job well done. You switched promptly between the 'Twisted Force Field' mode and the 'Energy Mediation' mode. The shell of the starship was not heated much even when the meteoroid was brushing past us. It is indeed very impressive!

"However, the temperature will only get higher, and there will only be more meteoroids. Let's take a look and input several other processing modes!"

Bai Ze had completely forgotten that Li Yao was a newcomer who had only been on board for one month and simply treated him as an equal working partner. The two of them started discussing excitedly.

…

"The No. 337 unit is broken. Change it to a new one!"

"A meteoroid shower is coming at us. There are more than ten meteoroids that are greater than three hundred meters in diameter! Alter their trajectories immediately with the twisted force field now! As for those beyond our influence, ask the pilot to blow them up with the turrets!"

"The plate armor's temperature is more than 1,300 degrees. Part of it is more than 1,900 degrees! No. 16 zone is about to be melted through. Brief the circumstances to the cockpit and inform the crew members in the No. 16 zone to put on their crystal suits. Let the emergency team stand by and prepare to mend the hole!"

Two days later, the cabin of the spiritual shield generator had greatly changed.

The spiritual shield had experienced four minor explosions. The whole cabin was in a mess, with a vague odor of empyema. The units which used to be glittering were now dark like wet paint. Both Li Yao and Bai Ze had topsy-turvy hair, bloodshot eyes, ragged clothes, and faces that had been soaked in oil.

But the two of them couldn't care less about their appearances. They were bellowing at each other every once in a while, like two angry gorillas, before they started operating crazily again.

The same scene was happening in the cockpit, in the engine compartment, and in every other cabin.

With the efforts of all the crew members, they were about to complete an impossible mission: leaping out of the Dim Flame Belt with a dilapidated starship!

"Keep it up, guys! Another three hours, and we will be out of Wraiths' Wrath!"

"By then, we will have performed the biggest miracle of the Flying Star Sector!"

"Abandon all the zones that are beyond repair and wait until we are out of Wraths' Wrath!"

"We made it. We are going to make it!"

Li Yao and Bai Ze were screaming hoarsely, cheering up each other as well as themselves.

Because of the prolonged, high-intensity operations, their souls had been burnt to their limits. They were now over-exhausted and would crumple like a rotten tree if they were to ease themselves for one second.

Right then—

Gold Horn trembled violently. A blood-freezing noise of metal fracturing occurred deep below their feet!

Both of the two fell to the ground.

Countless components were dancing in midair as if blossoming.

It felt like an invisible hand had extended from Wraiths' Wrath, snatched Gold Horn, and pulled it toward the depths of the immense crack brutally!

Chapter 464: True Fusion, Space Swirl!

Chapter 464: True Fusion, Space Swirl!

On the operation light beam, the parameters representing the external and internal temperature of the starship and the performance of the spiritual shield, as if stimulated by strengthening drugs, exceeded the warning line almost instantly and continued soaring!

The sea of stars had put on an entirely different face.

When Gold Horn was about to break out of the Dim Flame Belt, Wraiths' Wrath finally decided to drop its mask and demonstrate its fury by extending thousands of limbs of flames.

Before, the universe, as deep and dark as ink, could still be seen through the gaps of the broken space.

But right now, the light beam had been consumed by thousands of shades of red.

Meteoroids, starship remnants, and even the vacuum of the universe itself all seemed to be on fire!

Behind Gold Horn, countless meteoroids and streams of flames were spinning toward the same location faster and faster, and gradually formed a magnificent crimson swirl that was even more eye-catching than a nebula.

In the deepest part of the funnel-shaped swirl, there was a dazzling light ball that looked like a supernova outbreak.

The nebula-like swirl grew larger and larger like the snowball rolling down a cliff by absorbing the meteoroids and spiritual energy nearby. It was quickly expanding at a macroscopic speed.

Like a bloody mouth opening in the universe, it bared its fangs at Gold Horn; the streams of flames were its saliva!

"True Fusion, Space Swirl!"

The faces of Li Yao and Bai Ze both blanched.

True Fusion was one of the most terrible natural disasters in the universe.

Ever since Cultivators recognized that mysterious 'spiritual energy' existed everywhere, both in the living worlds and in the vast sea of stars, and that it could be used for their own training in various ways, countless wise Cultivators had pondered the essence of spiritual energy.

Even to this day, it had not been confirmed whether spiritual energy was particles or waves.

On the other hand, many Cultivators had shifted the direction and explored different fields.

Some Cultivators reflected on what would happen by splitting a portion of spiritual energy into unbreakable constituents.

Some other Cultivators considered what would happen if countless portions of spiritual energy were collected, compressed and condensed.

Studies in the two directions had been ongoing for ten thousand years. It was one of the most essential questions of the modern Cultivation world.

Although the ultimate answer hadn't been found yet, the wise predecessors had discovered that, once the fission and fusion of spiritual energy reached a certain level, immense damage would be unleashed instantly that could potentially deal much more damage than spiritual energy of the same amount could under normal circumstances!

This discovery also provided a reasonable explanation for the Cultivators' world-shaking strength.

The fission and fusion of spiritual energy could be applied to astronomy to explain many fantastic phenomena.

In places such as the Dim Flame Belt, infinite kinds of furious spiritual energy had been trapped in the small crack. They attracted, crushed, and swallowed each other. During their billions of interactions, once a certain mysterious condition was met, there was a slim chance that 'True Fusion' might occur.

Once a True Fusion took place, there would be a chain reaction allowing more spiritual energy nearby to join the event. In the blink of an eye, the spiritual energy accumulated for hundreds of years would all be consumed, thereby unleashing tremendous damage!

If the spiritual energy and materials nearby passed a certain threshold, a True Fusion could even produce a new star!

If there were not enough spiritual energy and materials, just like what Gold Horn was facing right now, a space swirl with immense attraction force and intimidating damage would be born after a True Fusion!

The center of the swirl was the nucleus of the True Fusion, which was hauling and absorbing all the materials and energy around. It was condensing, condensing, and still condensing, trying to break the threshold and become a star!

It was perhaps one of the most fabulous splendors in the sea of stars.

Just like moths darting into candlelight, billions of furious flames were sprinting toward the swirl and piercing into the cluster of brightness at the deepest part of the swirl crazily.

Each of the flames was hundreds of kilometers long, but after they pierced into the light ball, they could only turn into a long, narrow red thread, before they completely vanished without leaving the slightest trace.

The light ball, in the meantime, would expand a little bit. Its halo dispersed and spread over hundreds of thousands of kilometers, as if it were the best expert in martial arts in the universe.

Of course, it was impossible for anyone inside Gold Horn to hear the sound of the True Fusion.

However, the cracking noises of the shell and the explosions of the units deep below Li Yao's and Bai Ze's feet gave them the feeling that a devil of fire was gloating.

Gold Horn struggled helplessly for a moment before it was captured by the invisible attraction force and pulled backward.

Gold Horn was being dragged into the swirl.

The surging exhaust flames behind Gold Horn was lackluster and insignificant compared with the streams of flames of the True Fusion. They were like the feeble cries of a bleeding lamb which had been mauled by a tiger.

The remnant of Ghost Jail attached to the back of the starship was like a dry leaf in a storm, shaking and scattering.

Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa!

The chains that locked Ghost Jail to Gold Horn were cut off promptly so that the starship would not be burdened to doom together with the remnant.

Ghost Jail was immediately trawled by the swirl.

As if tangled by countless invisible tentacles, it was drawn deep into the swirl.

When it was some ten thousand meters away from the center of the swirl, it was crushed to powder by meteoroids and fire and turned into a spark on one of the raging streams of flames.

Everyone was aghast to see the finale of Ghost Jail.

"Activate the power rune arrays at maximum. We have to try our best to get out of the swirl while we still can!

"If we fall into the swirl, we won't stand a chance. Even if our impetus is strong enough to compete with the attraction force of the True Fusion, the starship will be torn apart because of the insufficient hardness of the shell!"

"Hurry up. Everyone, put on your crystal suit and prepare to enter the vacuum!"

"Hardness of the spiritual shield is dropping fast. Fix it! Fix it right now!"

Exclamations and screams echoed nonstop in the communication channel.

Of all the voices, one was extraordinarily shrill shout. "A meteoroid shower! An unprecedented meteoroid shower is appearing in front of us!"

On the light beam, a storm of dense red light spots were dashing toward Gold Horn.

The meteor shower was originally moving on a trajectory that was far from Gold Horn and wouldn't have collided with the starship.

However, it was also pulled in by the True Fusion and swallowed by the blood mouth.

The speed of the meteoroid shower was much higher than Gold Horn's. The two parties collided heavily.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Ten thousand explosions erupted outside and inside of Gold Horn at the same time.

Just like a tiny boat on a raging ocean, Gold Horn was now tossed into a wave, thousands of meters high, now pressed hundreds of meters beneath the surface.

The crew members were now experiencing ten times gravity, having to move with much effort inside the cabin.

Thankfully, everybody had put on their crystal suits in time. If an ordinary person was standing there without a crystal suit, they probably would have died from brain compression and vessel fractures.

The spiritual shield suddenly shined in hundreds of brilliant colors.

After each color, the hardness of the spiritual shield would drop a little bit.

Continuous explosions were taking place inside the generator. Several metal plates carved with rune arrays had collapsed. The cooling liquids were boiling!

Li Yao and Bai Ze gritted their teeth like two maniacs as they appeared at several places of the cabin at the same time, trying their best to repair the generator with whatever was left of the supply components.

However, the density and intensity of this meteoroid shower were too high. The spiritual shield was not able to bear the bombardment. A few horrendous giant holes appeared in the front of the shield as if melted ice.

The distance was too close, and the speed was too high. The direction of the meteoroid shower could barely be altered even though the twisted force field was operating at maximum.

Many meteoroids had been heated to thousands of degrees because of the friction resulting from the high speed. They hit Gold Horn's shell like fireballs!

The shell of Gold Horn was immediately riddled with holes, resembling a beetle that had been gnawed clean by an army of ants.

Countless cabins were torn open. A huge number of scraps were tossed to the space, forming a drape of glittering scales around Gold Horn.

The cabin Li Yao was in was the first to take the blow.

Because of the mechanism of the spiritual shield generator, this cabin could only be deployed at the outmost layer of the starship.

In less than half a minute, tremendous meteorites had struck the shell brutally. All seven layers of plate armor, together with the defense rune arrays in between, were ripped to pieces!

Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa!

Countless meteorites were on a rampage inside the cabin with deep red flames behind them. Not only did they stab through a lot of the units inside the cabin, one of them even hit Bai Ze precisely!

Fortunately, Bai Ze was wearing a crystal suit. Also, as an expert at spiritual shields, he had condensed three layers of nested spiritual shields around himself as soon as he sensed that something bad was going to happen.

BOOM!

Bai Ze was blown away through a metal wall and ended up in debris with his limbs all stretched out. There was no telling whether he was killed or still alive.

Li Yao was still wearing the maintenance crystal suit 'Rockman'. Illuminated by the dim red lights inside the helmet, he found that cold sweat was popping up on his forehead uncontrollably, despite trying to calm himself down.

Gritting his lips, he jumped forward and activated the automatic repair system to fix the starship's shell. Then he found his way through the gaps of the meteorites to Bai Ze after tedious efforts.

The chest of Bai Ze's crystal suit was shattered, with a clear red round dent. He was cramping and showed no reaction to Li Yao's shouts.

However, Li Yao did sense a very feeble heartbeat and shallow breathing from him, indicating that he should've just passed out because his soul was disturbed by the chaotic spiritual energy mixed with the meteorites.

Li Yao frowned and cursed in a low voice.

Under such circumstances, Bai Ze wouldn't be able to conduct the maintenance work, even if he woke up later, until his damaged was soul recovered.

One minute later, the meteoroid shower finally passed.

But Gold Horn had almost been turned upside down. Many cabins had exploded. A lot of pathways had been blocked. Some crucial units had stopped functioning, too.

What was more fatal was that, due to a disastrous explosion in the engine compartment, two main power rune arrays had completely been wrecked.

In the chaos, Gold Horn had been entirely swallowed by the space swirl and had fallen to the core of the True Fusion.

Chapter 465: Leopard Jumping at the Sun!

Chapter 465: Leopard Jumping at the Sun!

The cockpit had been consumed by the furious flames. Damaged magical equipment was flying everywhere.

Fortunately, those qualified to stay in the cockpit were all seasoned warriors, and they'd experienced quite a lot of scenarios where the cockpit had been hit by hostile firepower directly. Therefore, after a moment of chaos, the fire was put out and the damage was repaired.

"What is our status right now?" bellowed Lei Dalu in the communication channel.

"The mainframe crystal processor lost 5% of its computational ability. An explosion took place inside the engine compartment, and two power rune arrays were wasted. But Master Xiong is working on it right now, and the impetus decline has been halted! The cabin of the spiritual shield generator suffered worst. It was hit by the meteoroid shower directly. The cabins nearby were all torn apart, the pathways to it were blocked, and it is surrounded by severe spiritual energy interference, too!"

Bai Kaixin's face was pale and cold as he spoke fast. "The communication between the spiritual shield generator cabin and us has been cut off. We can't reach out to Bai Ze. Given the blockage of the pathways and the shortness of hands, we need at least half an hour to break our way into it!

"The hardness of our spiritual shield has dropped to 52% and is still declining. If it keeps the current trend, we will completely lose our spiritual shield in the next fifteen minutes. By then, we will have to resist the foreign intrusions by our plate armor. It will be a miracle if we can survive three minutes!

"The most terrible thing is that we have been fully captured by the gravity sphere of the True Fusion!

"Our speed is now too low to compete with its attraction force. We will only gradually fall into its nucleus and end up as a small spark just like Ghost Jail did!

"The force of the True Fusion is too immense. We wouldn't be fast enough to get rid of its attraction even if the power rune arrays were fully functioning, not to mention that two of them have already exploded!"

Bai Kaixin's words cast the communication channel into weird silence. The only thing that could be heard were desperate breaths and stumping heartbeats.

Lei Dalu was quiet for a long time. Then he suddenly started chuckling, in a way that almost frightened his companions who were listening to it, before he commanded, "Go forward."

"What?"

Bai Kaixin's eyes were wide open, as he thought that his ears deceived him.

"I said, go forward! Activate the power rune arrays to maximum and go forward at full speed in the same direction as the swirl of the True Fusion!"

Lei Dalu's voice was shivering, half out of fear and half excitement. "We have barely any spiritual energy left. The structure of the starship is frail, too. We wouldn't stand a chance against the attraction of the True Fusion even if we go back at full speed!

"In that case, our final outcome would either be that the starship is ripped into shreds due to the over-stretching or that it is slowly dragged into the swirl after we run out of spiritual energy and all the power rune arrays break down!

"Now that there is no way that we can turn back, we might just as well take our chances!

"This space swirl must be more than a million kilometers in diameter. Right now, we are still at its edge. Its attraction force is not very strong here and now.

"In the meantime, it is revolving rapidly. All the materials and spiritual energy devoured by it will be accelerated and sent to its center in spirals.

"If we go forward at a full speed, we will be able to draw an arc and accelerated to a higher speed!

"When our speed reaches a point that is enough to fight against the attraction force, we will alter our direction and thus have the opportunity to rush out of the swirl!"

Bai Kaixin was dazed for a moment. The blood all over his body was flowing toward his head. Even his two white eyebrows were vaguely red now. He gritted his teeth and said, "Yes, yes. The space swirl can indeed accelerate us. It might be our only chance!

"However, we have but one time to try!

"While our speed soars as we are moving helically inside the swirl, we will be dragged deeper and deeper in the space swirl and bound by stronger and stronger attraction force!

"Therefore, we must seize the best time window to alter our direction. If it is too early, we won't be able to get enough speed; if it's too late, the attraction force will be too huge even if we have enough speed, and the most likely ending for us is that the starship will be blown to smithereens after a period of deadlock!

"Besides, the plan has an extremely high demand on both the engine compartment and the spiritual shield generator cabin!

"The importance of the engine compartment is self-explanatory.

"Our spiritual shield will be going through harsh tests, too! Its current hardness is far from enough to withstand the tearing force and the collisions of more meteoroid showers deep inside the space swirl!"

Lei Dalu breathed heavily for a moment and said firmly, "I believe in everyone, and I believe we are going to make it!

"Now, stop backing off. Forward, forward! Go forward at full speed toward the core of the space swirl and the True Fusion itself!"

…

Inside the spiritual shield generator cabin, Li Yao fixed Bai Ze and his crystal suit onto a wall with a big magnet and installed a defense rune array around him before he went back and prepared to clean up the mess.

On the dome, the twisted tubes sprayed a lot of foams which consolidated into solid grey matter and managed to block the countless holes in the shell.

The crazily dancing scraps of magical equipment finally went peaceful and fell to the ground with rattling noises.

Seeing the muddle in front of him, Li Yao felt that somebody had stuffed a handful of freezing rune arrays into his groin. Coldness was rising up from his abdomen, flowing all through his body, and calcifying all his nerves.

The sixteen metal plates that constituted the spiritual shield generators were all awry. Many of them had been blown up by the meteoroids. A lot of scorching stones were still embedded in them, damaging the defense rune arrays there.

The few spare components Li Yao had prepared had already been thrown to the vacuum. Whatever was left had also blown into a clutter and scattered in every corner of the cabin.

The main axis in the center of the generator was emitting ominous mystic rays and revolving at a lower and lower speed.

Li Yao cursed silently.

The main axis was the core of the cooling pool. By spinning the sixteen metal plates, it could make them fully cooled down inside the cooling pool.

Once the main axis was broken, the cooling liquids around the sixteen metal plates would boil and vaporize very quickly, which not bring the temperature down.

In a few minutes, the metal plates would start melting, and the stability of the spiritual shield would hit rock bottom!

Li Yao tried to contact the cockpit in the communication channel, only to receive nothing but background noise.

Most of the light beams were either black or showing nonsense.

For the light beams that were still working, their connection to the mainframe crystal processor had been cut off, too.

He had completely lost all forms of communication with the cockpit.

The starship was slowly turning around in the space swirl toward the depths of it.

Doom seemed to be the inevitable outcome.

Li Yao took a deep, deep breath. His lips curled into a crazy smile that was exactly the same as the one that Lei Dalu was wearing right now.

I am still alive at this moment.

Even if I might be destroyed in a second, I'm still alive right now!

To live means to fight! One more second of survival should be one more second of struggling! I must not abandon myself until the last bit of my soul is burnt to ashes!

Ding Lingdang is waiting for me; the Star Glory Federation is waiting for me; the Heaven's Origin Sector is waiting for me! I cannot die from an insignificant True Fusion in such a wretched place!

I have slain lightning, I have executed tornadoes, and it's time that I blow up a space swirl!

Li Yao bit his lips so hard that they were bleeding. His soaring fighting will was almost burning his eyes through.

He took out a lot of strengthening drugs from his Cosmos Ring.

The strengthening drugs had been prepared for Fengyu Ming by his father Fengyu Zhong. The total quantity was enough for several years' use.

Without even blinking, Li Yao chugged a portion of them that was sufficient for a common Cultivator to use for almost half a year.

A series of explosions immediately erupted in his stomach. His skin was chapping, and magma was raging inside his veins!

His spiritual energy had run dry. Right now, he needed power, the most intimidating, furious power!

"Art of the Swallowing Whale, activate!"

Like a crazy devil, Li Yao tried his best to absorb the spiritual energy contained inside the strengthening drugs with Art of the Swallowing Whale, a rudimental Cultivation art of the Hundred Smelting Sect forty thousand years ago.

At the same time, more than ten pleasant-smelling little flowers appeared in his palm.

Heart Locking Flowers, secret treasures retrieved from Boneyard, could stabilize the soul of a Cultivator and maintain the tranquility of their brain. However dangerous the situation was, the Cultivator wouldn't suffer from mental derangement with the help of Heart Locking Flowers.

They were Li Yao's biggest reason for drinking dozens of times of the ordinary dosage of strengthen drugs.

Otherwise, even though his body might be sturdy enough to withstand the effect because of the Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining technique, his brain would definitely be boiled and wrecked under the blast of the overloading spiritual energy. He would become a moron if so!

Without further calculations, Li Yao gulped down the twenty or so Heart Locking Flowers and finally suppressed his burning brain. He entered the Super Perceptive Stage again!

His brain cell activity soared to maximum!

"Hoooo!"

The huge amount of spiritual energy stored inside the strengthening drugs exploded and spread out like dozens of invisible tentacles around Li Yao. They snatched all the useable components inside the debris and turned them into a rampant storm of metal!

Gritting his teeth, Li Yao turned into a streak of greyness and jumped into the cooling pool which was about to boil.

…

Inside the cockpit, all the light beams were displaying the horrifying scenes at the nucleus of the True Fusion.

Gold Horn had entirely shifted its direction. It was accelerating and turning into a leopard that was jumping at the sun!

The performance parameters on the light beams suggested that the hardness of the spiritual shield was still dropping. Many parts of the shell were blown up by the meteoroids again. Countless other areas were sending warnings.

"This is bad. The spiritual shield only has 40% left, but the temperature around us is continuing on the rise! The spiritual energy of the fire class is growing more and more intense! We won't be able to persist for another three minutes!" shouted Bai Kaixin.

Lei Dalu gnashed his teeth. "Keep moving forward. Bai Ze is going to take care of the spiritual shield."

"But there is no time! We only have three minutes left! The hardness of the spiritual shield has dropped to 38%!" Bai Kaixin screamed so hard that his voice was hoarse.

"Forward, keep moving forward, at full speed!"

Lei Dalu closed his eyes and stopped looking at the crazily bouncing figure. Wearing a vague smile, he declared, one word after another, "The most important thing about us Cultivators is trust! The Great Horn Exo Society would never have achieved what we have achieved today without trust!

"I trust each and every one of you. I believe that Uncle Xiong will adjust the power rune arrays to the best state; I believe that Xiong Ze will fix the spiritual shield generator up; I believe that every brother in the cockpit here will calculate the perfect and precise route; I believe that the rest of our crew members will try their best to mend every broken hole on the starship so that Gold Horn is solid enough to crush over all the surging tides!

"And you, you've also trusted me and every crazy decision that I have made.

"Therefore, keep moving forward and charge at the True Fusion. We are either dying or rising from ashes!"

Bai Kaixin was speechless for quite a while, but he suddenly noticed the minor change of a figure on the light beam.

He bulged his eyes and looked at it again. He was not hallucinating!

The hardness of the spiritual shield had been increased by 1%, returning from 38% to 39% stubbornly!

Chapter 466: Quenching Thirst with Poison, Breakthrough in the Space Swirl!

Chapter 466: Quenching Thirst with Poison, Breakthrough in the Space Swirl!

40%!

41%!

45%!

"The durability of the spiritual shield is rebounding. Bai Ze has indeed resolved the faults!" mumbled Bai Kaixin in disbelief.

"Just as I expected. Bai Ze is the best refiner in our society except Uncle Xiong. Of course, he is going to fix everything!" Lei Dalu laughed happily.

"This is good. Enhanced by the space swirl, our velocity is higher and higher and is about to surpass the speed limit of Gold Horn!"

Bai Kaixin regained his professionalism instantly. He quickly operated the circular light beam as he said, "But we are going deeper and deeper into the swirl, too. The attraction force is getting stronger. We have to seize the crucial moment to switch our direction!"

Gold Horn rushed at the center of the space swirl at a higher and higher speed in a graceful arc like an arrow released from a bow, until it turned into a streak of gold brightness!

Tremendous space garbage and meteoroids were striking the spiritual shield of Gold Horn. Terrible ripples were spreading out, as if countless giant hands were trying to tear it open.

The figure representing the hardness of the spiritual shield was unsteady. Now, it was soaring; now, it was plunging. It struggled to stay around 50%.

"Prepare to alter our route. The spiritual shield is not going to stand for long," suggested Bai Kaixin, who swallowed anxiously.

"Wait a moment!"

Lei Dalu's giant face was almost separated into completely opposite parts.

He was still wearing a crazy smile, yet his eyes were bloodshot as they were gazing at the ever-changing data on the light beam without even blinking. He gnashed his teeth. "Our remaining spiritual energy and the frailty of the starship mean that we can only try once. If we cannot escape once, we will never escape!

"Our speed right now is insufficient. We need to be fast, still faster!"

Bai Kaixin said hurriedly, "The faster we are, the higher pressure the spiritual shield will suffer. If it explodes at some point, we will be screwed!"

While they were talking, the hardness of the spiritual shield was improved by 2% and stopped at 53% tediously.

Lei Dalu grinned, his white teeth glimmering. He stopped talking and sat on the captain seat cross-legged, while he fixed his eyes on the light beam without moving as if he were a burning statue.

…

Inside the cabin of spiritual shield generator, Li Yao spat a mouthful of black blood and dived into the cooling pool with abundant components for the ninth time.

His telepathic thoughts spread out like ripples into every rune array and every component. They even flowed to the outside of the starship along the generator, making Li Yao feel that he was the spiritual shield of Gold Horn itself resisting the meteoroid showers and the space garbage.

Every time the spiritual shield took a blow, all the defense rune arrays on the generator would shine abruptly, and Li Yao would feel like somebody had smashed his head with a burning hammer. He was grimacing in the excruciating pain every time.

Zigzagged streams of blood were flowing out his eyes, ears, and nose. Some of them dried, only to be replaced by new ones a moment later. In the end, his face seemed to be covered in an eccentric tattoo.

His skin was breaking and healing time and time again. His muscles had all withered. He was merely struggling with the stimulation from the overdose of strengthening drugs and the Heart Locking Flowers.

Quenching thirst with poison. What Li Yao was doing was truly quenching thirst with poison!

Had his body and soul not been far sturdier than those of the common Cultivators, he would've exploded into nothingness a long time ago!

Under the continuous scourge of the space swirl, Li Yao found it hard to hold on.

His limbs were burning at first, then numb, and beyond any perception eventually. If he couldn't see his limbs with his own eyes, he would start doubting whether or not his soul had been pulled away from his body and captured by the space swirl, which had then stretched it into a spiral, hundreds of thousands of meters long. He kept falling, falling, and falling toward the nucleus of the True Fusion…

It was not pain that he felt. The insufferable ache was replaced by cozy warmth at some point; he didn't know when. A thought was jumping inside his brain like an alluring spark, tempting him to let go of everything and be embraced by the True Fusion.

In a trance, Li Yao saw a vigorous face in front of him.

Ding Lingdang was smiling at him, with obvious contempt on her face, as if she were saying, "You can't get yourself up from such a minor setback? What a loser!"

But her scarlet eyes were emitting brightness that was more glamorous than stars, which seemed to be saying, "Stand up now! I don't believe that you can be put down so easily. Let's fight one more time!"

They were expressions that he had always seen during his competitions with Ding Lingdang.

And every time, however painful and exhausted, he had gritted his teeth and stood up again, turning Ding

Lingdang's pretended disdain into genuine disbelief!

It was the moment that he felt most content.

"One second, one more second! Everything might change in the next second!

"I will definitely return to the Heaven's Origin Sector and to Ding Lingdang's side. Some small space swirl is not going to stop me!"

…

In the north of the Grand Desolate Plateau of the Heaven's Origin Sector, at a starless night, after a fierce battle.

There was nothing but dead bodies on the ground. Blood was flowing like rivers. The once overwhelming beast tides had all turned into broken limbs which had been piled up in horrifying piles.

"She—she is not dead yet!"

"The Inferno Witch is still alive!"

"How could it be! An entire night, and three beast tides, including seven high-level demon generals!"

"She, she—"

A team of soldiers approached the highest hill which was made up by the corpses of several biochemical beasts that were almost twenty meters tall. On the skull of the biochemical beast at the top of the hill was a shattered yet nonetheless intimidating crystal suit, which was enveloped by seven serpents that were as red as blood and as furious as fire!

The arms of this particular crystal suit, after being strengthened on purpose, were even thicker than the waists of commonly-seen crystal suits. Countless stripes of flames were carved on the arms and interweaved into two blossoming red lotuses on the fists.

The soldiers all held their breath and reverently watched the master of the crystal suit, the Inferno Witch, who had risen up to fame miraculously like a volcano eruption and was respected as the craziest Building Foundation Stage Cultivator of the Heaven's Origin Sector!

Huala!

Seeing that reinforcements had arrived, the crimson crystal suit trembled and crumpled.

"Are you alright?"

The soldiers were quite shocked. Two medics hurried to step forward and dismantle the facial cover of the crystal suit while preparing the medication drugs.

Behind the facial cover, Ding Lingdang was pale, her breath feeble. But she was staring at the deep night sky, and, as if noticing a glimmer in the infinite darkness, beamed with a vague smile.

"I'm fine."

Ding Lingdang shut his eyes and grinned. "I am waiting for a certain someone to return from the sea of stars. Until then, I'm always fine!"

…

Inside the cooling pool, Li Yao failed to count how many 'one second's he had persisted through. His crystal suit had been battered a long time ago, yet its scraps were attached to his body by the attraction of his spiritual energy. Some of them were even embedded in his flesh because of the high temperature.

Enough strengthening drugs for a common Cultivator to use for an entire year had been guzzled by him.

The Heart Locking Flowers to stabilize the soul had been eaten up, too.

The muscles all over his body had withered. Thick veins and nerves bulged out of his skin, shrinking and expanding hideously.

At this moment, a stream of flames almost ten thousand kilometers long together with billions of meteoroids extended from the deepest part of the True Fusion and burst out the energy that resembled a solar flare.

Although the stream was thousands of kilometers away from Gold Horn, the flames at the front had already slapped at Gold Horn like an unstoppable giant hand!

BOOM!

For a moment, Gold Horn's spiritual shield was tremoring like soap bubbles under the sunlight and was about to crumble.

Li Yao felt that he had been hit by lightning. His crystal suit exploded abruptly into thousands of glittering pieces, revealing a dry, thin body.

However, deep down the blue and purple veins, streaks of gold brightness were flowing vaguely at a higher and higher speed.

During the battle against Skeleton Dragon, Li Yao had absorbed a huge amount of Flowing Brightness Crystals without caring about the consequences.

Only a small proportion of them were really digested by him on the spot. The majority of the residues had sunk inside his internal organs.

Flowing Brightness Crystals were the marrow crystals of marrows crystals and contained enormous spiritual energy. Through the normal methods of training, he might not be able to completely digest the residues in ten or even twenty years.

Bur right now, under the tremendous pressure of the True Fusion, at the critical moment, Li Yao's every cell was driven by their survival instincts and started biting and chewing the residues of the Flowing Brightness Crystals!

Li Yao seemed to be in the middle of two top experts' attacks, with the furious space swirl in the outside and the continuous exploding Flowing Brightness Crystals inside his body. The two torrents of energy intertwined and savaged his internal organs, stretching, enlarging, and strengthening his veins and nerves. Eventually, they congregated into oceans of spiritual energy in liquid form, flooding upward to his brain.

For a moment, Li Yao's brain seemed to be soaked in a hot spring with abundant spiritual energy. The endless suffering was all gone. His every brain cell was reborn and rejoiced.

Advancement!

I have advanced into the high level of the Building Foundation Stage at such a moment!

Li Yao was overjoyed.

The biggest difference between Building Foundation Stage Cultivators and Refinement Stage Cultivators was that Building Foundation Stage Cultivators could compress their spiritual energy into the liquid form to nourish their own bodies.

In the beginning level of the Building Foundation Stage, the spiritual energy could only be used to nourish the muscles and bones.

In the middle level, the spiritual energy could nourish the veins and nerves, which was also one of the reasons Li Yao was not scared of internal bleeding in his brain.

As for the high level of the Building Foundation Stage, the spiritual energy could be transmitted into the brain and nourish the brain cells directly, making the Cultivator's mind clearer, their senses sharper, and their computational ability stronger, thus laying a solid foundation for their future Cultivation. It was also the true meaning of 'Building Foundation Stage'.

No. No. Not the high level of the Building Foundation Stage, but—

Li Yao felt that the spiritual energy from his body had amazing interactions with his brain cells after it surged into his brain. His every brain cell was revolving slowly like a minor universe. The spiritual energy span around his brain cells, surged out again, and slid downwards along his spine. His coccyx felt itching and lumpy.

It was a sign that he had reached the peak of the Building Foundation Stage!

Under the high pressure of the space swirl and the Flowing Brightness Crystals, not only did Li Yao made an advancement to the high level of the Building Foundation Stage, he had also touched the threshold of the peak of the Building Foundation Stage.

The itching coccyx indicated that a new organ was maturing at the end of his spine. It was the second brain of a human!

Once the second brain started growing, it would mean the legendary Core Formation Stage. The so-called 'Core' was actually the second brain!

After the second brain fully took shape, the primeval force hidden inside the cells of human beings for billions of years would be awakened. It would be the ultimate harbinger of the Nascent Soul Stage!

'Nascent' had two meanings. On one hand, it represented the earliest ancestral force; on the other hand, it meant that, since the second brain had just awakened, the second brain was still not very keen, like that of a new-born baby!

Chapter 467: Cultivator or Immortal Cultivator?

Chapter 467: Cultivator or Immortal Cultivator?

"Hoooo!"

Sensing that the residue of the Flowing Brightness Crystals had mostly turned into the purest spiritual energy absorbed by his every cell, Li Yao had a strong sense of gratification and felt that his body had become a small universe itself.

A mysterious understanding suddenly popped up in Li Yao's mind.

Revolution. Incessant revolution. The sea of stars was a continuum of revolution!

When he slayed a tornado in the depths of a dust storm that day, he had perceived the Thunderous Sound Saber Art inspired by the revolution of the tornadoes.

In the bloody battle against Skeleton Dragon, it was with the high-speed revolution of the drill of mystic rays that he dug through the ancient deadly demon from forty thousand years ago.

Right now, the True Fusion had shown him to a whole new level in the form of a space swirl!

Li Yao's head seemed to have been pierced through by a streak of gold brightness. The space swirl had been devoured by his eyes and created an inexplicable environment inside his body. Newly-arrived spiritual energy interweaved with his powerful soul. They revolved rapidly, like a tornado and an invisible drill, and protruded out along his spiritual root!

BOOM! BOOM BOOM!

Three earth-shaking thunders rumbled inside Li Yao's brain.

His spiritual shield was multiple times thicker than previously, like a mushroom after a rain, with gold, helical stripes mixed onto it.

The spiritual shield of Gold Horn had been on the verge of collapse, but now, it successfully held off the blast, however narrowly, after trembling for a moment.

In the meantime, inside the cockpit…

Lei Dalu jumped up. The blood streaks inside his eyes hit everyone like red lightning as he bellowed, "Alter our trajectory and escape at full speed!"

Dazzling brilliance burst out from the right side of Gold Horn, accelerating it again and leaving a streak of gold brightness hundreds of kilometers long behind.

Countless pieces of strengthened plated armor on the shell of the starship crumbled and formed a scattered, glittering gold scale belt behind the starship.

Gold Horn did not back off. Instead, it moved forward and sprinted, rushing away from the True Fusion's control at a tangent.

Countless streams of flames were unleashed from the space swirl, as if the hungry devil was not willing to let go of the prey that had been fed to its mouth.

However, Gold Horn had been granted enough speed. The final result of the competition between the attraction force and the ship's acceleration was that a portion of the starship on the right at the rear was torn off.

Like a dragon that had broken free from its shackles, Gold Horn tried everything it could to run as high and far away as possible, even at the cost of one of its limbs!

Gold Horn finally got rid of the space swirl and survived!

"We made it!"

"We have run away from the True Fusion!"

"We are alive! We are still alive!"

The cockpit was filled with hoorays, and so was every cabin that had been riddled with holes and every broken, blocked pathway!

Everyone was hugging their companions next to them so hard that their crystal suits were clattering.

Taking a long breath in relief, Lei Dalu collapsed in the captain seat as if somebody had plucked all his nerves. He grinned at Bai Kaixin and said, "What did I say about the most important thing for us Cultivators?"

A smile that indicated the heavy load had been relieved appeared on Bai Kaixin's face, too. "Trust!"

"No. The most important thing for us Cultivators is fu*king luck!"

Lei Dalu laughed so hard that he was almost choking himself. "I know that the Great Horn Exo Society has always been lucky!"

Right then, rattling noises came from the communication channel.

"The pathway to the spiritual shield generator cabin had been broken through!"

"Let's go!"

Both Lei Dalu and Bai Kaixin jumped up. "Bai Ze is the biggest contributor to our victory. He managed to maintain such a battered spiritual shield to this moment. He deserves to be commended!"

Very soon, the light beam manifested the scenes inside the spiritual shield generator cabin.

However, the true view inside the cabin dumbfounded Lei Dalu, Bai Kaixin, Xiong Tao, and everyone else who saw it in person. They wouldn't be able to forget it for the rest of their lives!

…

Ten seconds later, in an old port inside the Angry Serpent Domain.

"Good heavens! What in the world is this?"

Watching the scruffy starship slowly drifting close on the light beam, an experienced Cultivator rubbed his eyes and exclaimed in shock uncontrollably.

Had he not seen the occasional exhaust flames behind the starship, he would've thought that it was a ghost ship in urban tales.

Half an hour later, Gold Horn was docked at the port of the Angry Dragon Domain.

Within half a day, all the Cultivators and ordinary people of the Angry Dragon Domain learned the existence of such an Exo Society and such a starship, who were hired by an ordinary person at the price of a bag of rice and hunted a bunch of cruel and desperate space pirates through dozens of space zones and world fragments until they slaughtered all the outlaws, leaving none alive at the edge of the world.

Then, they broke into Wraiths' Wrath with their ragged starship through winds and tides fighting against a space swirl and a True Fusion. Eventually, the heroes arrived successfully!

Three days later, legends about the Great Horn Exo Society spread to the Flying Star Sector like tides along the Spiritual Nexus.

The originally small, unknown Exo Society rose to fame and surprised the entire Flying Star Sector after the battle!

…

Ten thousand years ago, Spider Den had once been the most resourceful planet in the Flying Star Sector that boasted tremendous Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. It was built into the most important refining center in the Flying Star Sector by the Star Ocean Imperium.

Starships and magical equipment produced in this place had been shipped to the entire Flying Star Sector and other worlds nearby.

After hundreds of years of over-exploitation, everything on Spider Den had been consumed.

High and mighty mountains were cut open. Underground mines were constructed one after another and almost completely emptied the entire planet. The sky was enveloped by furious spiritual storms. The ocean was corrupted by venom and acid, dyed various glamorous colors.

There was not the slightest hint of natural scenery as far as one's eyes could reach. Gargantuan honeycomb-like buildings made of steels were everywhere on the foul planet.

These buildings either pierced up into the sky or deep down into the ground. They eroded the vitality of the planet like cold canner cells. Eventually, the Star Ocean Imperium abandoned the place, leaving it barren, desolate, and uninhabited.

However, ten thousand years after the collapse of the Star Ocean Imperium, the dark side of the planet was reborn.

Over thousands of years, countless space pirates gradually arrived here. The magical equipment refining centers and starship modification bases that used to manufacture the deadliest weapons were put to use again, spraying dense black smoke and venomous fog. The new visitors had also found a lot of heavy weapons left by the predecessors in the warehouses deep below the ground!

If Heavenly Saints City was the center of light in the Flying Star Sector, Spider Den would be the soul of all the shadows of the Flying Star Sector.

It was the home base of most space pirates.

The criminals who had betrayed the doctrines of Cultivators and embraced evilness gathered in this place.

Deep below Spider Den, below the interweaving, labyrinth-like tubes and honeycomb buildings, inside a dark prison cell, Fengyu Zhong walked toward three Cultivators slowly.

The brutal bandit who had been wandering on Spider Den for dozens of years and broken through multiple sieges looked fair, plump, and gentle. He was more like a knowledgeable university professor.

Compared with him, the Cultivators crouching on three rune arrays in front of him, whose spines had been locked, were messy, dirty, and even somewhat obscene.

Wearing a sunny smile, Fengyu Zhong asked slowly, "For the last time, are you willing to be an Immortal Cultivator?"

The first Cultivator took a deep breath and closed his eyes. He shook his head and replied, "I am a Cultivator, and I always will be."

"Alright."

Fengyu Zhong nodded his head. His eyes glimmered. Suddenly, the rune array below the Cultivator spurted out purple flames which burnt him to ash immediately!

"Cultivator or Immortal Cultivator?"

Fengyu Zhong turned to the second Cultivator, his voice equally calm.

The second Cultivator gritted his teeth to stop himself from roaring. Struggling for a while, he gnashed his teeth.

"Cultivator!"

Fengyu Zhong sighed. The second wave of flames was summoned and set ablaze the Cultivator as well as his soul!

"How foolish you are!

"Since the moment our spiritual root is awakened, we have become a totally different species from mankind!

"We have surpassed the creatures that are as humble as ants; we have become omniscient and omnipotent divinities!

"Our path is to seek greater power and longer lives. Our destiny is the endless mysteries of the universe and a far more brilliant civilization!"

Fengyu Zhong looked the last Cultivator in the eyes and extended his chubby hands. He said earnestly, "There is still time for you to turn back. Recognize who you are!

"You are not a human being! Ever since your spiritual root awakened, you have not been a human being! Why would you let yourself be bound by such a ridiculous identity on your way to holiness?

"Come with me and become an Immortal Cultivator. Let's set off on the journey to the heavens and chase after the true Dao and an ultimate, eternal life!"

The third Cultivator was swallowing, his eyeballs shaking fast.

Fengyu Zhong sniffed. "Don't presume that Heavenly Saints City is indestructible.

"When the Immortal Cultivators show our true strength, you will soon realize how vulnerable you idiotic Cultivators are!

"Don't compare the demons to the Immortal Cultivators. The so-called demons are just dogs domesticated by us Immortal Cultivators!

"Let me ask you one last time. Immortal Cultivator or Cultivator?"

The third Cultivator hesitated for a long time.

Two dirty tears even dripped from the corners of his eyes.

He stared at the two heaps of ashes, from which smoke was still billowing up. In the end, he shook his head and said in a feeble voice that resembled the humming of a mosquito, "I am a human. I am... a Cultivator!"

Before the last syllable was uttered, the purple flames had wreathed him.

The Cultivator put on a relieved smile the moment before he became ashes.

Fengyu Zhong's eyes were cold and gloomy. He gazed at the three heaps of ashes silently.

Right then, his mini crystal processor buzzed.

Chapter 468: Fengyu Zhong's Fury

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The gloom inside Fengyu Zhong's eyes turned into delight. He raised his eyebrows and mumbled to himself, "News about Ah Ming!"

He turned on the crystal processor. Appearing in the light beam was a fat, middle-aged woman with a plain face. In the crowd, she was as inconspicuous as a drop of water in the ocean.

The middle-aged woman was Pang Wushuang. She was Fengyu Zhong's wife, as well the daughter of the leader of 'Black Spider Tower', a mysterious organization on Spider.

Black Spider Tower was an evil organization focusing on intelligence and assassination.

To complete a successful robbery, the space pirates had to know every detail of their prey. They would have to know which world fragment was sending valuable goods to which star fortress, at what time, and with how many guards before they started their jobs.

Without enough intelligence, it was very likely that they would kick a steel plank. Suppose a fleet was accompanied by several Core Formation Stage Cultivators, they would never ask for its trouble.

When the space pirates were faced with the massive sieges of the righteous sects, the intelligence work was all the more crucial because it concerned their own lives.

Black Spider Tower was an organization of the space pirates that gradually came into being after thousands of years of life of shadow. Countless spies had been trained and tasked with infiltrating the righteous sects, partly to gather the latest information, and partly to stir chaos within the sects. The assassins had also been deployed to decapitate the active supporters of space pirate clearing.

Although her personal strength was not very impressive, as the daughter of the leader of Black Spider Tower, Pang Wushuang had many people under her command.

It was based on the intelligence of Black Spider Tower that Fengyu Zhong had run away from the sieges of the righteous sects time after time.

At this moment, Pang Wushuang's face was even more horrifying than that of a devil. Every muscle on it was trembling. Black flames seemed to be bursting out from her hollowed eyes.

Fengyu Zhong's smile was frozen. His face color changed as he asked hurriedly, "How is Ah Ming?"

"Ah Ming is dead! Our only son is dead!"

Pang Wushuang screamed desperately, "He was hunted by the Great Horn Exo Society for more than two months and eventually caught at the edge of the sea of stars. They tormented and slayed him!

"He was thrown into the crystal reactor of Ghost Jail and burned alive. Not even a piece of his bones was left! What remained were only scraps of 'Dark Fire'!

"I've watched the video. It was indeed Dark Fire. The scraps of Dark Fire!"

CRACK!

Centered at Fengyu Zhong's feet, the ground of the entire prison cell was shattered. Spider-web-like cracks quickly spread across the around, rose up the walls, and eventually climbed to the ceiling!

Thousands of stripes immediately appeared on the ceiling!

The dim illumination rune arrays exploded one after another.

The prison cell was immediately enveloped in endless darkness. The only thing that could be heard was Fengyu Zhong's heavy breathing that resembled a wounded beast; the only thing that could be seen was a pair of eyes in which a storm was brewing!

"That's impossible! I gave Ah Ming three Cosmos Rings. Even if Ghost Jail was blown into pieces, the items inside the Cosmos Rings should have been enough for him to escape!

"Ah Ming wouldn't be so unwise as to not abandon Ghost Jail when he had to. I've told him again and again that he should not bother about other people and just run at the earliest chance if anything went wrong!

"How come he was stuffed into the crystal reactor of Ghost Jail? How could that happen? How could that happen!"

Fengyu Zhong went crazy. Weird purple flames covered him, attracting the pebbles and stones falling from the ceiling before burning them all to powder!

"It's true! The spies of Black Spider Tower have ascertained that Ah Ming was killed, very miserably!" exclaimed Pang Wushuang who held her chest in agony.

Fengyu Zhong was furious. He gnashed his teeth. "Who exactly was it that killed him? The Great Horn Exo Society? I don't buy it! What kind of bullsh*t is the Great Horn Exo Society? A second-rate Exo Society, with only one starship, a few hundred Exos, of whom barely any can be called experts. How on earth were they capable enough of killing my son!

"Investigate. Start investigating immediately. A true murderer must be hiding behind the Great Horn Exo Society!

"Find him! Find him even if we have to dig the entire Flying Star Sector upside down!

"The Great Horn Exo Society cannot be let go of, either. Ah Ming died because of their pursuit. Now that they've admitted it… they can go to hell, too!"

Pang Wushuang's face was twisted. She said shrilly, "There are indeed a lot of suspicious parts about the matter. I've urged all the manpower of Black Spider Tower to investigate it. When we find the true murderer, he will regret ever being born into this world!

"As for the Great Horn Exo Society, of course, they will be annihilated. They will be sacrifices for our son!"

Taking a deep breath, Fengyu Zhong narrowed his eyes and said, one word after another, "This event must've spread to every corner of the Flying Star Sector. If everybody knows that my only son died because of the Great Horn Exo Society and I don't launch any reprisals, how am I going to walk around on the Spider Den in the future?

"Release the message. Tell everyone on the Spider Den and every assassin of Black Spider Tower that I want the Great Horn Exo Society to be wiped out!

"I will provide a bounty of five million for every member of the Great Horn Exo Society! If they are experts above the Building Foundation Stage, the bounty will be multiplied according to their level!

"Whoever finds the murderer of my son, dead or alive, will be offered a 'Tiger Shark'-level crystal warship!"

Very soon, black torrents flooded to every corner of the Spider Den via the Spiritual Nexus.

All the space pirates were frenzied!

Five million did not seem very much, but it was the price for a single member.

It was impossible that every member of the Exo Society was above the Building Foundation Stage. A lot of them were low-level Cultivators, ordinary fighters, and even logistic workers.

Killing a refiner who was mediocre in fighting would mean being rewarded with five million. It was a bargain that couldn't be more desirable.

And those who found the true murderer of Fengyu Ming would be given a 'Tiger Shark'-level crystal warship?

All the space pirates were trembling in excitement and craziness beyond their control.

'Tiger Shark'-level starships were the most advanced crystal warships that Spider could produce and possessed amazing firepower. More importantly, their power rune arrays could provide extraordinary momentum!

Owning a 'Tiger Shark'-level warship was the ultimate dream of almost every space pirate!

They were not afraid that Fengyu Zhong would take back his words.

There were certain rules that all the space pirates abided by on Spider Den. Publicly-declared promises such as Fengyu Zhong's had hardly ever gone unfulfilled.

This was the home base of most space pirates. If their reputation was ruined in this place, they would have nowhere to run to when they were hunted by the righteous sects and could only wait to be captured.

Countless space pirates, assassins, and brutal bandits who heard the news all started their own investigations.

They were curious, too. What was the real background of the Great Horn Exo Society? Who was it that took down Fengyu Zhong's only son?

…

At the edge of the Flying Star Sector, a cluster of battleground remains were drifting silently and motionlessly.

Suddenly, a large pile of metal garbage shivered and sprayed a wave of feeble brightness through the gaps among the debris, altering the direction of the garbage toward the stone belt ahead.

Soon, the pile of metal garbage entered the stone belt and slowed down, as if it were searching for something.

It searched patiently for seven days, and finally found its target.

Its target was a plain-looking metal remnant, perhaps originating from the surface of a starship. There were not many scratches on the remnant, which appeared to have been left there not long ago.

Two arms extended from the heap of garbage to the remnant. The claws in the front snatched the remnant and pulled it in.

Deep inside the metal garbage, Sparkle was lurking.

In the beginning, they had stalked Gold Horn. But after Gold Horn dived into the Dim Flame Belt, they had stopped at the outside.

After all, none of the crew members of Sparkle were alive. The resources and spiritual energy were abundant, too. There was no need to take the risk. They could bypass the Dim Flame Belt, although it would take a few additional months.

The remnant had been thrown away on purpose when Li Yao was recycling the components on Ghost Jail.

He had left a piece of special magical equipment on the remnant which could release spiritual waves at a certain frequency. Those who received them would only consider them to be part of the spiritual turbulence in the sea of stars.

Only Sparkle was able to decrypt the hidden coordinates contained inside the spiritual waves and locate the remnant.

Li Yao had hidden the information storage chip group of Ghost Jail's mainframe crystal processor within the remnant.

He had also copied 'Gold Horn Maintenance Manual' and 'Stormy Sword', as well as the latest progress about himself, to a jade chip and concealed it inside.

Half a day later, Ghost Jail's chip group was connected the mainframe crystal processor of Sparkle. After the spiritual password of the highest clearance was typed in, enormous information was transmitted over unstoppably.

The most detailed star maps of the Flying Star Sector based on Fengyu Zhong's dozens of years' experience—including the coordinates of many secret supply points, the strategies and the structural designs of the space pirates recorded in 'Stormy Sword', together with 'Gold Horn Maintenance Manual'—gave the five spectral Cultivators on Sparkle a deeper understanding of the starship refinement principles within the Flying Star Sector.

"The starship technology of the Flying Star Sector is indeed much more advanced than that of the Heaven's Origin Sector. They could even create star fortresses on their own!"

"The distribution of this power rune array is new. We can increase Sparkle's speed by another 5% if it is employed!"

"Turrets! We need more, and bigger turrets! I want to install a hundred turrets on Sparkle!"

"Modification! A full upgrade of Sparkle is a necessity! I can't wait for it!"

The Four Kings chatted with each other enthusiastically.

Mo Xuan pondered for a moment and said, "Li Yao said that he went to the central space zone of the Flying Star Sector, and that he might have pissed off the space pirates of Strom Prison whose retaliation is very likely to be on the way.

"We are still too weak at this moment. He said that we don't have to join him in the central space zone any time soon. It would be better if we stay in the periphery, search for materials and spiritual energy, and perform a full upgrade on Sparkle.

"After we finish the upgrades and grasp the strategies recorded in 'Stormy Sword', it will be time we set off to find him in the central space zone.

"He has left twelve ways to contact us. By then, we will be able to connect to the Spiritual Nexus and leave messages for him directly.

"Let's get down to business! Our time is limited, and we have to make every second count!

"With this secret star map, the entire Flying Star Sector will be our oyster. We will examine all the debris on our way, absorb it, and use it for our own modification!

"Like I said before, if we can't find a piece of stellar magical equipment, we will refine Sparkle into one!"

Chapter 469: The Weakest

Chapter 469: The Weakest

"I'm totally recovered now!"

Li Yao jumped up from his sickbed. Within several breaths, the thick medication drugs around his body had been absorbed by his skin. His body was clean and comfortable, his skin as smooth as jade.

It had been an entire month since they had broken out of the Dim Flame Belt. After gathering enough supplies in the Angry Serpent Domain, they continued marching toward the Thousand Sail Space Zone.

When they had learned that it was Li Yao who had repaired the spiritual shield crazily in the space swirl, the entire Exo Society had been shocked.

Li Yao was considered a big hero and a great contributor. He received the best treatment and spent an hour each day on rehabilitation procedures in the med bay. After absorbing abundant expensive medication drugs for a month, he had finally recovered from his wounds!

Right now, Li Yao felt refreshed and energetic. His body was still thin, and his skin somewhat pale. But they had been made so on purpose.

With the sharp senses, Li Yao discovered that the total length of his nerve fibers was five times that of a Refinement Stage Cultivator and more fifty times that of an ordinary fighter!

Veins and nerves constituted an interweaving water system inside his body. Surging spiritual energy was flooding in them.

Li Yao had no doubt that he could attack with the strength of a Cultivator in the high level of the Building Foundation Stage effortlessly. When he burned his life and soul, he was even able to reach the peak of the Building Foundation Stage and stay there briefly!

Besides, the residue of the Flowing Brightness Crystals hadn't been fully digested yet. A lot of them had been blown apart by the force of the True Fusion. They were turning into microconstituents and nourishing his body cells every second, making him feel stronger each minute!

Li Yao believed that it wouldn't be long before he fully absorbed the Flowing Brightness Crystals. By then, not just reaching the peak of the Building Foundation Stage, it was even possible that he could break into the Core Formation Stage!

A year ago, I was just an insignificant Refinement Stage Cultivator. Never did I expect that I would be so close to the Core Formation Stage only one year later! The arrangement of fate is indeed marvelous.

The speed of my advancement has reached the limits. It couldn't be any faster.

Next, I will have to study the skills and abilities that befit my current level. Without sufficient skills, I can't perform at 100% of my combat ability despite my level!

During the struggle against the space swirl of the True Fusion, I came to a vague, mysterious understanding which might be able to inspire me to create a brand-new skill.

However, I need to reflect on it more carefully. The space swirl is too deep and abstruse, after all. I won't be able to fully comprehend it in a short period of time!

Li Yao thought of his future plans and was ready to leave the med bay, when a sinewy and short young man barged in. The intruder was apparently less than twenty and looked rather boyish. To fake his matureness, he had specially kept a moustache around his lips, which was quite hilarious.

"Brother Yao!"

The young man was quite respectful toward Li Yao, if not obsequious.

"Zhao Nuo, you want me to sharpen your blade again?"

Li Yao smiled.

The sinewy young man was named Zhao Nuo. He belonged to the 'Tiger Killer Camp' of the Great Horn Exo Society.

Different from common Exo Societies, the Great Horn Exo Society had been established by avengers whose families had been destroyed by space pirates, and it had adopted a lot of homeless orphans when it was carrying out its missions.

The orphans were raised up and educated in the Great Horn Exo Society. The experts of the Society taught them methods of training. When they grew up, many of them joined the Great Horn Exo Society as official members.

It was also one of the reasons the Great Horn Exo Society could be so united during their two months of hunting in such a long, tedious journey.

If it were another Exo Society, the members might've had second thoughts. Some of them had joined the Society to gain more life experience, while some of them were merely there for money. Of course, they wouldn't have been so persistent about the space pirates.

The orphans had been grouped into 'Tiger Killer Camp', inspired by the idiom 'a new-born calf is fearless of a tiger'. They were considered the reserves of the Great Horn Exo Society.

At the real critical moment, all the members of the Tiger Killer Camp above the age of 16 would join the fight, too. Over the past two months of fierce battles, many of them had shed their blood in the sea of stars just like the official members of the Society had.

After the starship left the Angry Dragon Domain, the route in the front had become peaceful. They had also passed by a lot of space towns and world fragments where they had received enormous supplies. Therefore, the maintenance work of the starship was getting easier and easier.

The refiners in the Society had shifted their attention onto the maintenance of crystal suits.

Right now, they were still short of hands. The first to be maintained were naturally the crystal suits and magical equipment of the official members of the Society.

As for the young warriors of the Tiger Killer Camp, they would have to deal with it and wait in line nicely.

Magical equipment was equivalent to a Cultivator's own life. Some young men in the Tiger Killer Camp had almost reached adulthood and boasted extraordinary abilities. They'd been taught and polished by the bloody battles over the past two months, too. But right now, they could only watch other people whose crystal suits had been repaired doing their daily training, while they had no other choice but to slash their broken swords and sabers. Naturally, they were all eager to get their equipment back in working order.

Before, in light of Li Yao's heavy wounds, Xiong Tao didn't assign any maintenance tasks for him and simply asked him to rest.

As a training maniac, the last thing Li Yao needed was a rest. He met Zhao Nuo by accident when they were in the same med bay.

Zhao Nuo knew that he was an excellent refiner and inquired whether or not he could repair personal magical equipment.

Li Yao definitely wouldn't say no. Maintaining a crystal suit was a big job that required large, professional workshops. But as for regular magical equipment, he could repair anything with nothing but a refining furnace due to his amazing skills.

Less than half a day later, Li Yao had burnished and sharpened Zhao Nuo's battle saber. Not only was it now as good as a new one, Li Yao had also carved two rune arrays of the thunder class according to Zhao Nuo's specialties and thus significantly increased the damage of the saber. Zhao Nuo was so excited that he was almost drooling.

News quickly spread; the entire Tiger Killer Camp was excited. All the young warriors brought their magical equipment to Li Yao for maintenance. Li Yao seemed to have become the designated refiner of the Tiger Killer Camp. Also, his valiant deeds of jumping into a boiling cooling pool and keeping the normal functions of the generator on his own had earned the sincerest respect of the young men.

Zhao Nuo scratched his scruffy moustache and grinned. "No. Uncle Captain asked me to find you. He said that he has something important to discuss with you and wants to meet you in the No. 1 training room."

There was admiration in his eyes when he said the words 'Uncle Captain'.

Li Yao was dazed for a moment, not having the first clue why Lei Dalu wanted to talk to him.

During the one month of his treatment, Lei Dalu had visited him a couple of times and ordered a huge amount of medication drugs for his recovery despite the shortage of funding of the Society. Li Yao was quite moved.

However, he always felt that his captain was hippie and glib and that the guy looked like a monkey wearing a hat when he sat on the captain's seat.

Although many Core Formation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were free-willed fellows who despised social conventions, Lei Dalu's style and character still barely befitted a Cultivator of such a high level.

"There's a question that I've been meaning to ask for a long time. As I can see, the members of the Tiger Killer Camp are definitely not the most obedient young men. Take you, Zhao Nuo, for example. Usually, you are always trying to challenge those who are said to be better than yourself. But why do you admire your captain so much? Although he is a Core Formation Stage Cultivator, he is merely in the beginning level. I don't think his capability is very impressive in the world of Cultivators, which is crammed with experts, is it?"

Li Yao scratched his head, having finally asked the question that had been bothering him.

"What, you've never heard about it before, Brother Yao?"

Zhao Nuo's eyes were shining as he replied excitedly, "You're right. In regard of capability, Uncle Captain is definitely not among the best ones. Or, if we are being completely honest, it's not exaggerating to say that he is the weakest Core Formation Stage Cultivator in the entire Flying Star Sector!

"Besides, his spiritual root was wounded before, which resulted in the stagnation of his Cultivation. It's unlikely that he would ever enter the middle level of the Core Formation Stage in his entire life.

"To be more exact, for any Core Formation Stage Cultivator, their capability will be higher than Uncle Captain's the moment they formed their core!

"However, if you know how Uncle Captain's spiritual root got wounded, you will admire him as much as I do!

"Twenty years, no, about thirty years ago, Uncle Captain was still young back then. Actually, he was one of the youngest Core Formation Stage Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector. Young, promising, and needless to say, handsome!

"The six sects and all the crystal suit centers of Heavenly Saints City were desperate to hire him. His future was nothing but bright. Everybody said that he was very likely to advance into the Nascent Soul Stage within the next thirty years and thus become the youngest Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator of the Flying Star Sector!

"However, half a month after he just formed his core, he was engaged with a bunch of assaulting space pirates by accident when he was passing by a space town.

"At the time, he was with a pack of ordinary people gaining more understanding of life and consolidating his core. Therefore, he was not accompanied by any other Cultivators.

"But on the space pirates' side, there was a Core Formation Stage Cultivator, more than ten Cultivators in the peak of the Building Foundation Stage, hundreds of other fighters, together with a crystal warship!

"With Uncle Captain's Cultivation, it was not a problem at all to either hide or run away quietly.

"However, in order to protect the small town which had a population of several thousand, Uncle Captain charged at a crystal warship and a fully-armed space pirate gang with himself, his crystal suit, his saber, and nothing else!

"The final outcome was that Uncle Captain went on a killing spree on the starship and slaughtered his way in and out for almost ten times. The leader of the space pirates was executed by him in one attack. He delayed the enemies for an entire day and night until the reinforcements arrived and annihilated the rest of the space pirates!

"Uncle Captain was seriously wounded during the battle and was almost disabled. It took him years before he gradually recovered.

"But an unhealable crack appeared on his spiritual root. His Cultivation has been suppressed to the beginning level of the Core Formation Stage forever. He degenerated from a rising new star to 'the weakest Core Formation Stage Cultivator of the Flying Star Sector'!

"It sounds foolish, does it not?

"Uncle Captain has always been such a fool over the past thirty years. Just like this time, he waged a total war against Storm Prison and hunted them for more than two months just for a bag of rice.

"However, it was because of the follies that he made and the survivors that he saved from the space pirates that so many people gathered under his banner and finally created the Great Horn Exo Society!

"Several orphans from the very space town that Uncle Captain wasted his spiritual root on joined the Great Horn Exo Society and are now the pillars of it!

"For our captain, it is absolutely not a big deal that he is the weakest Core Formation Stage Cultivator of the Flying Star Sector. We would still adore him even if he was the weakest Refinement Stage Cultivator!"

Chapter 470: Transfer System

Chapter 470: Transfer System

Sitting on a metal stool cross-legged inside the No. 1 training room, Lei Dalu was clearing his ear in boredom with a green grass in his hand.

Li Yao tried to convince himself for a long time, yet he still failed to associate the guy in front of him with the young warrior who had slayed hundreds of pirates with 'his saber, his crystal suit, himself, and nothing else'.

However, Li Yao's attention was soon attracted to something else.

A brand-new crystal suit was standing right beside Lei Dalu. It was streamlined and glittering in silver brightness. The joints of the suit were decorated with gold stripes, making it both nimble and elegant.

Other than the two normal arms, six auxiliary arms that could be manipulated by telepathic thoughts extended from the back, fitted with various maintenance tools.

" Ah Yao 1 , you are here!"

Lei Dalu put the grass back carefully and then said in a somewhat bragging tone, "How about it? This crystal suit is not half bad, is it? It is called 'Eight Arm', a masterpiece of 'Silver Heart Stream', one of the best crystal suit refining sects in Heavenly Saints City. It is both a professional maintenance crystal suit and one that boasts amazing combat ability!

"I noticed that you've added two artificial arms to your 'Rockman' as maintenance arms. You must be very good at controlling machines with your telepathic thoughts. This 'Eight Arm' is very suitable for you!"

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. "It's a gift for me?"

Lei Dalu nodded his head. His mouth grinned even wider and as he laughed. "Of course!

"You are the biggest contributor to our escape from the Dim Flame Belt, and you should be properly rewarded! Besides, your talent in magical equipment maintenance is really amazing! Uncle Xiong has been complaining to me that you are a monster-level genius he's never seen before, and that you are harassing him every day like an octopus and are about to finish copying whatever there is inside his head!

"A Rockman is beneath a prodigy such as yourself. This 'Eight Arm' is more suitable more you. Come on and try it!"

Li Yao was greatly touched.

With his expertise, he could see the extraordinariness of this eight-armed maintenance crystal suit just from its appearance.

Judging from the colors that it reflected under the light, a lot of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures must've been added when it was refined.

Also, on the six auxiliary arms on the back of the crystal suit, many kinds of advanced maintenance tools could be found.

There were bound to be more that had been embedded inside.

Such a crystal suit was definitely worth a fortune. The Exo Society was short of money at present, and yet they had purchased such an expensive crystal suit as a gift for him?

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao finally said after much consideration, "Captain, as I said when I accepted the offer of the Society, I wouldn't stay here for long.

"My target has always been to enter Heavenly Saints City where I will learn the more mysterious arts of refining and become a master refiner!

"Therefore, after we reach the Thousand Sails Space Zone, I will leave the Great Horn and dedicate myself to my purpose. Please note that, captain."

Lei Dalu scratched his nose and smiled. "I've been aware of that for a long time. It is exactly the reason we are giving you this crystal suit!"

Lei Dalu said, "The Thousand Sails Space Zone has always been the assembly of young heroes of the Flying Star Sector. The major forces of Heavenly Saints City will hold various kinds of matches in that place to recruit new blood.

"It is not difficult for a man of your capability to enter Heavenly Saints City.

"However, I'm afraid that you do not know how magnificent your potential is! It will be too wasteful if you simply join a random second-rate organization in Heavenly Saints City!

"Everyone walking out of our Great Horn should be ambitious. When we are not going to Heavenly Saints City, it's fine; but if we are, we will definitely join the strongest organization and study the most advanced arts of refining!

"It's going to be much more difficult to achieve that. You are doubtlessly a genius, but geniuses are what the Flying Star Sector is never in lack of. I don't know how many hungry monsters are out there in the Thousand Sails Space Zone waiting to crush you to pieces!

"I don't know the first thing about refining, so I can't help you there. What I can do is to offer you a maintenance crystal suit. This is the best I can do!

"Also, I've discussed with Uncle Xiong. Given our tortoise-like speed, it will take quite a few months for us to arrive in the Thousand Sails Space Zone. Your maintenance assignments will be reduced during the time so that you will have more free time to train yourself. Uncle Xiong will try his best to teach you, too!

"When we reach the Thousand Sails Space Zone, you are going to look for the strongest organization and the most challenging matches and win them. You will definitely rise to fame soon. Hahahaha!"

This time, Li Yao was truly dumbfounded. He scratched his head and said, "Captain, you don't mind that I will be leaving you?"

Li Yao had thought that they would definitely persuade him to stay in the Society now that he had shown astonishing talent.

However, not only did the captain see through his determination to leave, he had even made plans for him and seemed to be worrying that he might not be able to fly high enough.

"What is there to mind? It's great that somebody can jump to a higher platform than the Great Horn Exo Society."

Lei Dalu explained with a smile, "Ah Yao, since you've been living in the remote areas of the sea of stars, you might not be familiar with the conventions of the Cultivators.

"A long time ago, there were strict rules and laws about loyalty among Cultivators. Quitting an organization and joining another one was a taboo.

"However, there is a motivation for every decision. If some Cultivators want to switch to a different organization, they must have good reasons for that. For example, their life in their current organization is unpleasant, or they have new ambitions now.

"The outcome of suppressing their will back then was that those Cultivators would often dawdle along, which was a better-case scenario.

"Sometimes, the conflicts went public, and the sect sometimes even split apart. In the more violent cases, some Cultivators even conspired with space pirates and led them to attack the sect. These were real tragedies.

"Even if the uprisings were suppressed successfully, other people in the sect might feel unsafe and became unwilling to contribute.

"After such tragedies repeated themselves for hundreds of years, finally, everyone figured it out. Those who are forced are always the least motivated. What good is there if one's heart is somewhere else even though their body is present?

"Therefore, the transfer system has been established in the world of Cultivators. The process of a Cultivator quitting one organization and joining another one is known as 'transferring'. The organization accepting them must compensate their old sect with a sum of money according to a public standard with consideration of capability, potential, background, etc. In such a way, everybody involved is happy and satisfied!

"Hehe. When the transfer system was first put into use, some fogies didn't believe in the advantages of the system. But after hundreds of years of experimenting, everybody has come to realize that there are greater benefits in the system other than the monetary compensation.

"You also know that most people in our Flying Star Sector live on lone islands in the sea of stars. They are far away from each other and barely ever communicate. It is not uncommon for people to never visit their neighbors a few space zones away.

"But for Cultivators, the last thing they need is solitude. If everybody is hiding their own techniques, their techniques will be passed on to no one. Communication is compulsory!

"Before, people had no channels of communication, nor did they know each other's details. They had to tread lightly and reservedly when they got in touch with other people.

"But after the transfer system was established, the communication between Cultivators significantly increased.

"For example, in the past, if a certain brilliant genius from Sect A decided to quit and join Sect B. The two sects would definitely quarrel, if not waging a war at each other, would they not?

"But under the transfer system, Sect A would receive a large sum of compensation which could be used to train newcomers, purchase Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, and refine more powerful magical equipment. Of course, Sect A's attitude would be different, and they would definitely bid the brilliant genius a warm farewell and welcome him to come back to visit at any time.

"Let's say the brilliant genius grew up in Sect A. Sect A would be his hometown. It is very likely that his family and fellows all stay in the place. If his departure with the old sect is not ugly, he would definitely feel somewhat guilty and cherish his 'mother sect'.

"When the brilliant genius does well and makes his way into the leadership of Sect B, naturally, he wouldn't hesitate to converse with Sect A more. With the more frequent exchange of persons and Cultivation arts, the relationship between the two sects will be all the more intimate.

"It was not until the transfer system was established that Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector, who had used to shut their doors and mind their own business, were truly integrated. It is also the reason our Cultivation civilization soared exponentially!

"Ah Yao, with your talents, if you stay in Great Horn, without the enlightenment of more masters and without seeing a bigger world, the best hope for you is to become a second Xiong Tao.

"But if we help you move a step forward to the crystal suit centers of Heavenly Saints City or other top organizations such as the six major sects, who knows what you will grow into in a few years' time?

"By then, if the organization you are in intends to hire an Exo Society, won't you think of the Great Horn?

"Isn't helping each other how Cultivators should make friends and build new connections?

"Therefore, just take the crystal suit and train with it. There is nothing to be concerned about. Put your endeavors in the Dim Flame Belt aside. Just consider it a favor that can always be returned if you still bear the Great Horn Exo Society in mind when you rise to fame and fortune in the future!"

Lei Dalu's words rendered Li Yao speechless.

Although Lei Dalu was trying to help him, the guy had been talking in a way that it seemed to be a fair deal, if not one where he was talking advantage of Li Yao.

However, he found no solid rebuttals. He felt that his heart was hot and comfortable.

Li Yao finally realized why the defiant young men of the Tiger Killer Camp all supported and worshipped their messy 'Uncle Captain'.

On second thought, the system did make sense. The most thing about Cultivation was indeed communication.

Back in the Heaven's Origin Sector, all the Cultivation sects were on the same continent of the same planet, united against a common enemy. The communication between them had never been a problem.

However, in the Flying Star Sector, everybody drifted in the sea of stars like lonely boats. They wandered in darkness aimlessly. Without sufficient communication, it was not impossible that a sect in isolation would decay and perish within dozens of years.

In such a vast world, the transfer system was a necessity to ensure that the Cultivation civilization as a whole did not retrograde.

"Captain, thank you, thank Uncle Xiong and everyone else in the Society. Wherever I go in the future, I will declare proudly that I come from Great Horn," Li Yao said solemnly.

Li Yao meant what he said.

At first, his sole purpose of staying in the Great Horn Exo Society temporarily was to study secret arts, add credibility to his backstory, and also take a free ride.

However, after sailing together in the same starship for more than a month and surviving the perils of the Dim Flame Belt, Li Yao gradually fell in love with this group of people that were somewhat special.

All the muscular, hideous-looking men were actually kind and frank, despite their intimidating looks.

The refiners in the Society never kept anything to themselves, either. They taught him all their knowledge without keeping anything from him.

The vigorous young men of the Tiger Kill Camp reminded him of his days in the Grand Desolate War Institution, too.

Li Yao felt that he was extremely lucky to make his first step in an alien world with such a unique team.

Lei Dalu patted his shoulder and smiled. "Let's cut the nonsense. The most important thing about us Cultivators is candor! Come and test the 'Eight Arm'!"

Li Yao himself was eager to try it, too. He rubbed his hands and dashed to the Eight Arm Maintenance Suit.

Chapter 471: Different Ideologies

Chapter 471: Different Ideologies

This was the first time that Li Yao had put on an advanced crystal suit made in the Flying Star Sector.

His previous Rockman was just a piece of civil magical equipment aimed at ordinary people that boasted little combat ability despite his strengthening and modification. The Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures it employed and the computational ability it possessed were nothing special, either.

This Eight Arm, on the other hand, was a luxury from Heavenly Saints City. The moment he put on it, he felt that a warm spring was soaking his skin. There was not the slightest hinderance or rigidness. The crystal suit seemed to have become his second skin.

Countless streams of information flooded into his brain. His nerves were completely docked to the wires of the crystal suit.

This is awesome. The advantages of a battle suit and a maintenance suit have been combined into one crystal suit. Not only does it carry sixteen groups of cutter models, there are also seven kinds of spray guns that can spew spiritual energy of various attributes. Together with the crystal microscopes that can enlarge the picture by 120 thousand times and the micro craver made of hard crystals, I can carve a hundred rune arrays in a square inch!

This Eight Arm is indeed an extraordinary maintenance suit. Except for the lack of a refining furnace, almost all the tools required for a maintenance task can be found on it!

It's equal to a walking refining workshop!

The structure design of the crystal suit, the magical equipment it carried, as well as a lot of other information, poured down. Li Yao was fascinated as he read them. His lips curled up in excitement.

However, when he performed the most basic movements inside the training room wearing the Eight Arm Suit, he found that it was extremely odd.

The Eight Arm Suit did not inform him of everything that it had sensed. Instead, the mainframe crystal processor of the suit filtered the enormous and complicated information by itself and calculated dozens of plans according to the actual situation.

All he had to do was to pick the best plan from the list offered.

For example, when he was going to sprint forward, if he was wearing the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, he would have to extend his spiritual thread into every power rune array and control the direction of every spurt, sometimes requiring an angle at the accuracy of two decimal points.

However, now that he was wearing Eight Arm, all he needed to do was to think of 'move forward' and pick one of the ninety-seven patterns of moving forward. The activated level of the power rune arrays and the micro adjustments of the spurts would all be handled by the crystal processor.

In such a case, the operations of the crystal suit would be much more convenient. It would be more agile during combat, too. However, the independency of the Exo was greatly diminished.

Li Yao did not like the feeling. He thought that the crystal suit was taking over duties that it shouldn't.

Li Yao preferred to supervise every rune array and every component on the crystal suit in person. The crystal suit was just a platform of magical equipment and, above all, a tool. He had to be responsible for every detail of the combat personally.

In such a case, there would be much more information that he needed to deal with, but it was much freer, too. He could fight at his will without being bound by anything.

The ideology of the crystal suits of the Flying Star Sector has been on a different path from that of the Heaven's Origin Sector since the very beginning. People here attach much more importance to the performance of the crystal processor. When the crystal processor has enough computational ability, it can promptly assess the information, devise tactic plans, and optimize the movements of the Exo!

As a result, combat becomes easy and straightforward. Everybody will know what they are doing without any trouble. Even ordinary people can wear crystal suits with ease. Together with the 'skill cards' which store the skills of the real experts, the crystal suit will have both common strategies and ultimate ones. Its potential damage can be quite impressive, too!

This must be because of the special environment of the Flying Star Sector.

War debris is everywhere in the Flying Star Sector. There are countless different kinds of advanced magical equipment and crystal processors. Therefore, the Cultivators of this Sector were bestowed with crystal processors possessing amazing computational ability from the very beginning. It's not unusual that they focus their attention on crystal processors!

However, in such a mode, there is barely any room for an Exo to perform at will. They would be like puppets hiding in crystal suits without any creativity. All they need to do is to select different tactics in the proper order and release the skills when the timing is appropriate.

It's indeed convenient. However, the strategies optimized by the crystal processor must have certain patterns. If the opponent sees through the patterns, it will be a disaster!

All roads lead to the heavens. Li Yao wouldn't say that the ideology of the Flying Star Sector was wrong, but he was not particularly fond of it, either.

As a man growing up in a magical equipment graveyard, Li Yao valued versatility more than anything during combat. Even the same skill would be adjusted according to the conditions of different environments and enemies.

Before he came here, Li Yao had hardly used fixed moves.

The 'Thunderous Tornado Saber Art' of his own invention was just a state of mind. As to exactly how the saber should be slashed out at a particular moment, it would be dependent on the actual situation.

Therefore, Li Yao, who was manipulated by 'Eight Arm' in this place, was always going against the crystal suit's choices and tried to walk in the way he thought was the best.

In Lei Dalu's eyes, Li Yao was stumbling unnaturally in the new crystal suit.

Lei Dalu didn't see anything wrong about it. On the contrary, he thought that it was quite normal.

The Eight Arm Suit was an advanced model even in Heavenly Saints City. It was only logical that Li Yao failed to grasp it in such a short amount of time.

Lei Dalu smiled. "Ah Yao, I also bought you three skill cards. They've been inserted into the crystal processor. Have a try!"

Li Yao nodded. He glanced at the bottom-left corner of the light beam and was dazed for a moment. "One gold card and two silver cards?"

Skill cards were classified into regular, silver, gold, and platinum.

Regular cards stored the skills and telepathic thoughts of the Refinement Stage Cultivators and allowed the user to carry out the moves of the Refinement Stage.

Silver cards were made of Building Foundation Stage Cultivators and entailed the abilities of the Building Foundation Stage.

Gold cards were refined by Core Formation Stage Cultivators and contained their moves, which could be quite destructive when they were carried out!

As for the platinum cards, they were the ultimate devices produced by the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. When they were inserted into a crystal suit, the Exo would be able to wield the skills of the Nascent Soul Stage!

Of course, to wield a certain skill card, one's own capability must not be too low. The gap between the Exo and the producer of the skill card could not be too wide.

Ordinary people could only use regular cards; Refinement Stage Cultivators could use silver cards; Building Foundation Stage Cultivators could bring out the damage of the gold cards; only the Core Formation Stage Cultivators were capable enough of utilizing platinum cards at will.

But now, Lei Dalu had prepared three skill cards, one gold and the other two silver!

If the Eight Arm Suit was a reward for Li Yao's contribution to fixing the spiritual shield generator and helping Gold Horn run away from the Dim Flame Belt, the three skill cards would be too big a favor for him to return.

Li Yao selected a move named 'Morning Glow Saber Art' from a silver card and activated it.

The Eight Arm Suit immediately sped up. Hundreds of rune arrays glittered suddenly. Circles of brightness crowded around his right arm in spirals and formed a dazzling saber in front of his fingertip. Then, it rushed out and hit a metal target in front of the room brutally, leaving a deep crack on it.

Li Yao secretly frowned, not very satisfied about the result.

It was for the same reason. As a seasoned Exo who had abundant experience in fighting, he had his own styles and principles and detested the notion of being commanded by a crystal suit. Therefore, when the crystal suit was activated, his body resisted the enforced movements subconsciously, making the movements not as perfect as they were supposed to be.

Li Yao did not see eye to eye with skill cards, either.

In his opinion, to bring out the maximum damage of a skill, one must really comprehend the inspiration and mysteries of the skill, analyze its spiritual energy circulation and triggering models, and reconstruct them in the most suitable way for oneself.

Only by learning a skill in such a way could one really grasp it!

Otherwise, one would only be mimicking the experts. Their movements might be alike, but the true essence of the skills had been lost.

It seems that the fighting pattern of the Flying Star Sector's crystal suits is not agreeable with me.

But it doesn't matter. I'm a refiner myself anyway. I can always modify the crystal suit and redistribute the computation ability of the crystal processor. The filtering procedure can be canceled, too. That way, it will be the same as the crystal suits of the Heaven's Origin Sector.

As for skill cards, I can use them to sense the profoundness of the top experts during my daily training. But in real combat, I think it's still best to rely on myself, Li Yao thought.

In the communication channel came Lei Dalu's voice that seemed to indicate he was having a toothache. "Ah Yao, it seems that you are not gifted at wearing a crystal suit. According to my calculation just now, the sync rate between you and the crystal suit is only 37%. It is… quite low actually."

Sync rate was a very important measurement when it came to Cultivators and crystal suits in the Flying Star Sector.

Since the crystal suits of this Sector all boasted very high independent combat ability, the most determinative factor about the professionalism of an Exo was usually the coordination and cooperation between them and their crystal suits.

A high sync rate suggested that the body of the Exo had melded with the crystal suit and their head had integrated into the crystal processor. Naturally, they could bring out the full potential of the crystal suit.

Li Yao's beliefs were the complete opposite to those of the Flying Star Sector's Cultivators. He was like an unreasonable tyrant who insisted on controlling every detail of the crystal suit. The crystal processor was having conflicts with him all the time. It would be a miracle if his sync rate was high!

A sync rate of 37% could not even be counted as third-rate in the Flying Star Sector. Most of the experts of the Sector had sync rates higher than 60%. Those of the top experts were sometimes even higher than 90%!

Lei Dalu smiled. "Fortunately, your dream is to become a master of refining. Maintenance suits are different from battle suits and do not have a high demand on the sync rate. Do not let it bother you too much."

Li Yao was, of course, not in the least bothered by it. He had his own beliefs and wouldn't care even if his sync rate was 0.1%. He smiled and said earnestly, "Thank you very much, captain!"

Lei Dalu took out a smaller metal box, which had been carved with sophisticated spiritual stripes on its four facets.

Then he continued, "Uncle Xiong told me that it was not the modification and maintenance of large-scale magical equipment that you are best at, but personal magical equipment? You've even repaired a lot of the young ones' magical equipment of the Tiger Killer Camp.

"That brat Zhao Guo even went to challenge Liao Meng of the assault team the other day. When their sabers collided, Liao Meng's weapon was dented by the heavy blow while Zhao Meng's was fine!

"Liao Meng's battle saber was made of Heavenly Stream Steel and Black Gold Rock and had just been polished by a refiner. It was the sharpest of all and he cherished it more than his life. No one had anticipated such an outcome. The fury on his face!

"Even Uncle Xiong was quite surprised when he came and checked it. It seems that everybody still underestimated you when they thought they overestimated you!

"Uncle Xiong said that he was best at the maintenance and modification of starships and that he had little to teach you about personal magical equipment, especially crystal suits. There was not much he could do except to offer you this. Try to put this to good use."

"This is—"

Four giant, blood-freezing words engraved on the metal box made Li Yao's pupils shrink suddenly. "World of Crystal Suits!"

Chapter 472: World of Crystal Suits

Chapter 472: World of Crystal Suits

The human civilization of the Flying Star Sector was based in space. It was troublesome for people to communicate with each other. Therefore, Cultivators of this Sector had focused much attention on the development of the Great Illusionary Land and the Spiritual Nexus.

Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector had refined countless Spiritual Towers that could absorb the spiritual energy in the universe automatically and launched them into the sea of stars over the past thousands of years.

With the Spiritual Towers in space as nodes, the Spiritual Nexus gradually expanded and covered most of the Flying Star Sector. All the people were finally linked.

For the Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector, they had developed countless Great Illusionary Lands on the Spiritual Nexus as platforms where they could talk with each other about training.

Sword Cultivators had their own platforms, and so did Spiritual Tattooists, Grand Illusionists, and any other professions.

The World of Crystal Suits was the largest, most professional Great Illusionary Land of all. It was a platform about crystal suits for high-end users.

From the refinement, maintenance, and modification of crystal suits to the utilization, combat skills, and cooperation tactics, and from civil suits to battle suits, from farming suits to maintenance suits, every topic could be studied and discussed on the platform.

A refiner could chat with fellow refiners in the World of Crystal Suits about technical problems that were baffling them.

An Exo could play simulation games and exchange their experiences with fellow Cultivators dozens of space zones away on the matching platform secondary to the World of Crystal Suits.

The World of Crystal Suits was divided into two zones. The regular zone targeted ordinary fighters and the juveniles. The simulation rate was not very high. It was almost considered a super large video game. The sole purpose of this zone was to promote the products and to arouse the interest of the adolescents.

In the meantime, the professional zone was a perfect simulation of the real world. The virtualized crystal suit in the Great Illusionary Land there had identical components with identical details to those on the real crystal suits.

To achieve such an effect, not only was a powerful, stable interspace Spiritual Nexus required, a special crystal processor was mandatory, too. Otherwise, when the scenes inside the World of Crystal Suits became too hectic, the surging information would definitely collapse the crystal processor that was handling it.

The World of Crystal Suits was the training center of the Flying Star Sector, created by Great Illusionary Groups, a joint company of the six major sects of Heavenly Saints City.

The metal box that Lei Dalu had given Li Yao just now contained a streamlined, bright gold helmet with 'Great Illusionary' carved into the back in a vintage style.

It was the latest version of the special crystal processor for the World of Crystal Suits that Great Illusionary Groups had released. More than three thousand techniques had been embedded into the helmet, which was equivalent to a large simulation cabin despite its small size!

Li Yao had been meaning to experience the World of Crystal Suits since the moment he'd discovered such a thing existed. However, the computational ability of his crystal processor was not high enough to meet the entry standard. Besides, he had been busy performing the maintenance tasks and barely had any time to study anything. Therefore, he'd been postponing it for a long time.

He didn't expect that Lei Dalu would be giving him so many precious gifts in succession today. He was so thrilled that he could barely talk.

"This is Uncle Xiong's gift for you. You should thank him! But in my opinion, the best way to express your gratitude is to train yourself well and to make a big name for yourself among the refiners of the Flying Star Sector! Enjoy yourself. I'm leaving!"

Lei Dalu waved his hand and left the No. 1 training room, grinning.

Li Yao took off 'Eight Arm' and calmed himself down. He read the documents from the jade chip near the helmet and filled in enough crystals according to the instructions before he put on the helmet softly.

With a telepathic thought, coolness crowded into his temples, and silver brightness shined in front of his eyes.

Streams of bright gold liquid flowed out from the bottom of the helmet and covered the skin all over Li Yao's body without leaving the tiniest gap.

From the outside, it looked like that he had been enveloped in a neat, gold cocoon!

His nerves seemed to have been stimulated by something. They extended and integrated with the gold brightness through his pores.

Shua!

A boundless Great Illusionary Land was unfolding in front of Li Yao's eyes. It was the deep sea of stars where countless starships were engaged in a fierce battle. In the distance was a glamorously exploding star fortress.

With them as the background, countless Cultivators were raging and fighting against each other furiously in their crystal suits. The dazzling sparks resulting from the collisions of magical equipment even eclipsed the shining stars.

A crystal suit wreathed in burning flames rushed close like a shooting star covering thousands of kilometers within a breath. It stopped above Li Yao and gazed at him without any movement, with two curved snake-shaped swords in its hands.

Although he was aware that it was a Great Illusionary Land and that the crystal suit was nothing but a virtualized telepathic thought of the crystal processor, Li Yao still felt tremendous oppression.

Streams of information gushed into Li Yao's brain.

The crystal suit opened its mouth and said, "I am Jing, your guide. I will answer all your questions about the World of Crystal Suits."

Li Yao said, "Give me a brief introduction to the World of Crystal Suits."

Behind the crystal suit, dozens of different celestial bodies immediately popped up, including planets, satellites, asteroids, nebulas, world fragments, and stone belts.

Every celestial body was an entrance to a different zone.

According to the introduction of the guide, the World of Crystal Suits was mainly divided into two zones.

One was the refining zone prepared for refiners in which all the questions about the refinement of crystal suits could be discussed.

The other part was naturally the Exo zone. Exos could talk to each other about tactics of crystal suits or fight against each other in virtual arenas.

In either of the zones, there were subdivisions for socializing and for actual operations.

Every Cultivator logging into the World of Crystal Suits would be granted with independent space and was free to turn it into a refining workshop or a training room at their will.

Li Yao thought to himself, It appears that the World of Crystal Suits is similar to the Cultivators' Nexus of the Heaven's Origin Sector. They are both platforms where newcomers can pick up knowledge quickly and the experts can exchange their newest ideas. But this platform looks much more advanced than the Cultivators' Nexus!

The guide also told him that the World of Crystal Suits was constructed by the six major sects to defend the human civilization of the Flying Star Sector in return for the support of the general public. Most of the fees of the operation had been covered by the six major sects. Therefore, except for the expense of the special crystal processors to enter the World of Crystal Suits, most of the fundamental subjects inside were free of charge.

However, if one had certain special demands, such as expanding their independent space or utilizing and studying the latest model of a certain crystal suit, they would have to pay for a designated amount of 'crystal coins'.

Crystal coins were easy to get by contributing one's knowledge and skills.

The World of Crystal Suits was such a place where Cultivators could find a bigger world and exchange others' knowledge, skills, and techniques with their own. Eventually, the civilization as a whole would make progress, and the Flying Star Sector would be a more developed and prosperous place!

"You've logged in for the first time. You can enter the World of Crystal Suits as a visitor, but the clearance for visitors is limited. You will not be able to enter the advanced forums or watch the combat videos of the top experts."

The guide continued, "You may also register your account now with a username. With the most advanced 'Chaos Algorithm' that the Great Illusionary Groups holds, your identity would be kept confidential. Nobody will be able to trace your account back to you through the Spiritual Nexus!"

According to explanations of the guide, many big shots in the real world, such as the elders of the major sects in Heavenly Saints City, the renowned university professors, and the project managers of the crystal suit centers, were all fond of chatting and communicating in the World of Crystal Suits.

Some of them often came up with groundbreaking theories, and some others would argue with them in disagreement. Sometimes, things turned pretty ugly when they were lambasting each other about a theory.

All the users were well-respected celebrities in reality. The opinions they expressed carried a lot of weight. Naturally, they wanted to leave what happened inside the World of Crystal Suits within the World of Crystal Suits.

The 'Chaos Algorithm' developed by the Great Illusionary Groups could fully encrypt every user's address on the Spiritual Nexus via a virtual 'chaotizing pool'. Nobody would be able to find out who the users really were. Therefore, everybody was free to say and do whatever they wanted to in the Great Illusionary Land.

Of course, as the influence of the World of Crystal Suits grew bigger and bigger, many celebrities of the real world decided to appear with their true identities in order to better promote themselves.

Whether or not to expose who they were would be entirely determined by the users.

Li Yao was craving to learn the advanced techniques of the Flying Star Sector's crystal suits. Naturally, he wouldn't select the visitor mode. He registered a new account.

"My username is… Fiend Star."

All the optional fields were left blank. As to what aspects he was best at, Li Yao pondered for a moment and typed in three items:

"Maintenance and modification of battlesuits.

"Refinement of melee magical equipment, especially saber-type equipment.

"Classical refining theories."

The guide continued, "Fiend Star has been successfully registered. Now, a test will be held to determine your level."

All the users in the World of Crystal Suits were divided into six levels. Some advanced forums were only open to users above a certain level. It would be quite a bummer if several outsiders continued jumping in when two university professors were discussing esoteric problems about rune arrays, would it not?

The bottom level was 'Unclassified', which referred to ordinary people and the outsiders of the trade.

The second level was 'Apprentice'. It referred to the students of a certain field.

The third level was 'Elite'. This title meant that the user had profound knowledge about a certain field and was adept at some problems. They were qualified to enlighten the newcomers and the apprentices.

The fourth level was 'Specialist'. It was already a very high standard.

The fifth level was 'Master', and the highest level was 'Grand Master'. As their names suggested, only the most renowned and the unquestionable leaders of a trade could be granted such titles!

Gold streams of information rushed down like a meteor shower.

"Name at least twelve uses of Bitter Heart Grasses according to the classical refining theories."

"What is the relationship between the radian of the blade and its damage? In this illustration, rune arrays of the thunder class have been carved on both sides of the saber. How should the rune arrays be altered if the radian of the blade is one degree more obtuse?"

"Summarize the anti-corrosion procedure for the chest plate of a crystal suit and make a preliminary anti-corrosion coating in the most precise ratio with the seven materials provided here."

"Has aerodynamics been mentioned in the classical refining theories? What are the similarities and differences between ancient flying swords and modern ones in regard of swooping? Propose three reasons why ancient flying swords are better than modern ones."

Chapter 473: Glimmers

Chapter 473: Glimmers

The guide raised hundreds of questions within a breath. Most of them were comprehensive conundrums focusing on the maintenance and modification of crystal suits, the refinement of saber-type magical equipment, and classical refining theories. They were extremely difficult.

Despite the immensity of Li Yao's soul, he still felt exhausted after answering all of them.

The guide was silent for a long time. The gaps in its crystal suit were glittering, suggesting that it was analyzing Li Yao's answers with a lot of computational ability.

In the end, the guide replied in a commending tone, "Your answers are complete and precise, not to mention that your speed was amazingly high, too. It is evident that you have a deep understanding about the three categories in question. You are now classified into the 'Specialist' level.

"Especially regarding classical refining theories, your answers are indeed impressive!

"However, the Great Illusionary Groups do not have deeper studies about classical refining theories, and we can't run an inclusive assessment on your capability in classical ways of refining.

"All in all, you are now classified as 'Specialist'. It is the third level only secondary to Master and Grand Master. Of all the users of the World of Crystal Suits, Specialists are ranked in the top 10%. You are now free to join the forums for professionals where you can communicate with other experts.

"If you want to advance into the Master level, you can try to earn more crystal coins by answering questions, holding open lectures, and publishing videos on the latest theories of refining. Then, you can trade the crystal coins for new skills and theories which you can study to improve your capability. When you think that your capability has surpassed the threshold of 'Master', you can demand a new assessment at any time.

"The system has marked the three fields that you are best at below your username. When other users come up with questions in these categories, reminders will be sent to your virtual independent space. You can reply to them if you think you know the correct answer.

"Enjoy the World of Crystal Suits, Specialist Fiend Star!"

The guide bowed and cleared the path leading to different zones.

Li Yao smiled. The Specialist level was not half bad. It should be enough for him to make use of most of the zones inside the World of Crystal Suits.

However, Li Yao was confident that, when it came to classical refining, he was far beyond the Specialist level.

It was just that there seemed to be barely any real experts adept at classical refining theories in the World of Crystal Suits, or rather, the entire Flying Star Sector.

In other words, the refiners in this place were not qualified to evaluate him at all.

He was the real Master when it came to classical refining!

Li Yao's consciousness turned into a streak of brightness and darted toward a dazzling nebula.

The World of Crystal Suits was divided into different zones including forums, Q&A, lectures, and debates among a few others.

The moment Li Yao's telepathic thoughts arrived, the latest and the most heated information of all zones rushed at him like billions of stars.

The first things that he perceived were the trending questions in the Q&A zone.

"How does it feel to be engaged in a combat wearing a super-fast crystal suit with more than 160 power rune arrays?"

"What are some accessories below fifty thousand Flying Star dollars that can significantly improve the combat ability of a crystal suit when they are installed?"

"I am a Cultivator in the middle of the Refinement Stage, and I'm already 36 years old. My life so far has been a mess. Right now, I want to change myself and become an excellent Exo. Is there any hope for me?"

"What are some skills that are of great help in combat and can be learned within three days?"

"What are some skills that you regret you didn't know earlier and want to recommend to young people?"

"Which newly-refined crystal suits from the past thirty years can be considered state-of-the-art?"

"Of the three major crystal suit centers, what are the differences in styles of 'Ice School' and 'Silver Heart School'? Which of the two is more suitable for the Cultivators who have advantages in physical strength?"

Trending questions, such as the above, all had more than five hundred answers. The most heated answers all had more than a hundred thousand upvotes.

Wow…

Like a mouse that had wandered into a rice shop, Li Yao was thrilled. He opened the first question 'how does it feel to wear a super-fast crystal suit' and started browsing.

The most upvoted answer was written by 'Long Feihu', a user who went by his real-life name.

His personal information indicated that he was a Core Formation Stage Cultivator with more than seventy years of experience in crystal suits and that he was on a 96-match winning streak in the Heavenly Sword Arena.

Li Yao vaguely remembered that he had seen the name of Long Feihu somewhere else.

The most popular form of entertainment and sport in the Flying Star Sector was crystal suit competitions.

Through crystal suit competitions, not only would the young people be encouraged to improve their skills, the professional crystal suit techniques would be disseminated, too. The top experts might become inspired by each other and invent stronger skills and skill cards so that the combat ability of the civilization as whole could be increased.

Therefore, crystal suit competitions were not just about entertainment or sport, but concerned the survival of the entire civilization.

As a result, all the Exos who participated in crystal suit competitions were all highly respected in the Flying Star Sector. The champions of the five major arenas each had millions of fans. Their influence was even higher than that of the leaders of some major sects.

Long Feihu was the champion of the Heavenly Sword Arena, one of the five major arenas. He had been a professional player for more than forty years, and in that time, his win-rate had been kept above 85%. It was said that he had achieved a breakthrough recently. Therefore, he had made a remarkable achievement by securing 96 victories continuously, and the number was still counting!

No wonder his answer was on top and upvoted by so many people!

Speed is a very important factor in my combat strategies, too. Let me see if I can learn anything from Long Feihu, 'King of Heavenly Sword'!

Li Yao focused his attention and continued reading Long Feihu's answer.

"Thanks for the question. I am Long Feihu. I believe many friends here have watched my combat videos and know that agility, speed, and deadliness are my thing. So, I think I'm qualified to offer my opinions on the question..."

Long Feihu elaborated on topics ranging from aerodynamics to illusions, from the commonly-seen crystal suits that focused on speed to the modifications of their respective power rune arrays, and from the training methods that Exos who wanted to improve their speed should adopt to the treatment of common injuries during the training sessions. The article was detailed and included a lot of 3D structure designs and videos. It was solid and convincing.

This expert of the Flying Star Sector deserves his name. It's hardcore knowledge that he's talking about!

If such experts are willing to provide everything they have learned in their lives for the younger generations, I don't know how many newcomers will benefit from his enlightenment, and how many people will be ignited by the spark and embark on the path of Cultivation, taking him as a role model!

This is the most valuable point of the World of Crystal Suits and the secret to the prosperity of the human civilization in the Flying Star Sector!

Li Yao was deep in thought. Although the people of the Flying Star Sector were lost in the sea of stars and far away from each other, their attitude toward Cultivation was much more open and with much less reserve than the Heaven's Origin Sector.

If one was to think about it more carefully, it had a lot to do with their different living environments.

The major sects of the Flying Star Sector were all scattered in the sea of stars. Li Yao could totally imagine that, thousands of years ago, when the fire of war had just died down and the Spiritual Nexus hadn't been established, a Cultivation sect on a starship would have been wandering in the endless darkness for dozens or even hundreds of years. What a lonely journey it must've been.

Yes, loneliness. Mankind was a gregarious species after all. A few starships and a sect with a few hundred thousand people were not going to pass the civilization on.

When a sect drifted in the sea of stars, resisted demon beasts and demonic Cultivators for hundreds of years, and was decaying due to the loss of manpower, suddenly, it ran into another sect that was fighting side by side with it. The feeling of 'I'm not alone in the universe' could easily be translated into the passion of communication.

After all, the universe was too dark a place. Human beings were too insignificant, like a slight glimmer when they were separated. Only when they gathered together could the glimmers be congregated into blazing fire to drive away the darkness and illuminate the sea of stars!

The Cultivation sects who kept everything to themselves and refused to communicate with other sects must have been devoured by the darkness and disappeared in the river of time.

However, why did the humans of the Flying Star Sector not live on the planets?

Li Yao had studied the files of the Flying Star Sector before and was aware that quite a few planets had breathable air. Although the environments on the surface of such planets were not very favorable, considering that the technology in the Sector was advanced enough to empty and rebuild an asteroid, it shouldn't be a problem to reshape some areas on the planets and establish settlements there.

Many files simply said that the planets were inhabited by barbarians who were extremely hostile to the residents of space.

Then, where did the barbarians come from? How come they were hostile to the space residents even though they were both human beings? Were there Cultivators among the barbarians? How was the center of the civilization moved from the planets to space in the first place?

It appeared that there were a lot of buried secrets in the history of the Flying Star Sector that wouldn't be found out easily.

Li Yao concentrated his attention and left his suspicions behind. Then he upvoted Long Feihu's answer.

In the World of Crystal Suits, users could express their opinions about an answer by upvoting or downvoting it.

However, although the first upvoting or downvoting was free, additional upvoting or downvoting cost one crystal coin each time.

In such a way, the more valuable answers would pop to the top very easily. The jibber-jabbers would sink down automatically when there were many downvotes and stop wasting everybody's time.

Li Yao focused his attention and read another dozens of questions. He exclaimed in joy, like a man who was offered a bucket of clean water after struggling in a desert for an entire week.

After he left the Q&A zone, he found that the other zones were quite interesting in their own way as well.

In the lecture zone, the experts were introducing their latest theories. Since Li Yao was already marked as a specialist, he could hold his own lecture regarding the refinement of the saber-type magical equipment or classical refining theories.

Every user joining the lecture would have to pay a crystal coin on entry.

In the debate zone, countless users were accusing and attacking each other. Invisible smoke seemed to be popping up from their battlefield.

The most interesting one was the battle between the debate team of Flying Star University and that of Heavenly Saint Institute on the well-discussed topic of 'is remote magical equipment stronger than melee magical equipment or is it the other way around?'.

Such an impractical question had been argued by countless Cultivators for hundreds of years. It was clear that there was not a right answer. Yet, it was often picked as a topic for the young students in order to build up their critical thinking ability.

Flying Star University and Heavenly Saint Institute were the two best academical establishments of the Flying Star Sector.

Flying Star University mainly recruited the young geniuses from all over the Flying Star Sector and outside of Heavenly Saints City and valued popularization more; Heavenly Saint Institution only recruited the descendants of the Cultivators inside Heavenly Saints City and focused more on meritocracy.

The two colleges had competed against each other for hundreds of years with no obvious winner, but they had left all the other universities hundreds of lightyears behind.

Li Yao glanced at the introduction and noticed that the rules of the debate were quite special. There were two consecutive games.

In the first game, Flying Star University was on the pro side of melee magical equipment.

But after an hour of fierce debating and ten minutes of rest, the same team with the same members would be supporting remote magical equipment in the second game!

The two parties have to expound from both perspectives. Such a rule is indeed tricky, but I like it!

Li Yao was greatly interested and walked in to watch the game.

As a 'Specialist', he was considered sort of an 'inspector' when he came to watch such a debate game among college students, and therefore did not have to pay anything.

Chapter 474: Flying Sword Expert

Chapter 474: Flying Sword Expert

Surrounded by the life-like Grand Illusionary Land, Li Yao felt that he was truly seated in the middle of a splendid hall watching eight college students debating with each other. Although their understanding about many theories was immature, the bold imagination that solely belonged to young men still surprised Li Yao and taught him many new perspectives of thinking.

Flying Star University, Heavenly Saint Institute?

The academic level of the two colleges left a deep impression on Li Yao.

If he was able to enter one of the top two colleges, his future training would definitely benefit a lot.

Of course, with his current position in the high level of the Building Foundation Stage, he wouldn't be joining them as a student.

Li Yao believed that his capability was more than enough to earn him a place as a teacher in either of the two colleges.

However, teachers usually had tedious teaching tasks and might not be able to get in touch with the latest Cultivation philosophies. It would take many years for a teacher to climb up one step after another; Li Yao didn't have the time to dawdle along.

I need to think carefully about what I should do next, Li Yao thought to himself.

Over the following seven days, Li Yao spent all his time in the World of Crystal Suits with barely any rest or sleep and skimmed through all of the top five thousand trending questions and their answers.

Due to the restriction of the Spiritual Nexus, the questions could not go very deep into the details. But for Li Yao, they were enough to give him a general picture of the Flying Star Sector's theories of refining.

Those theories melded with classical refining theories and theories of the Heaven's Origin Sector. Mysterious reactions were triggered. Many problems that had been bugging Li Yao for a long time were now easily resolved with the new mindset.

Now that he had grasped enough fundamental theories, Li Yao was ready to modify his crystal suits.

Right now, he had three crystal suits: Rockman, Eight Arm, and Mystic Skeleton.

Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was the most amazing of all, but it had been added with too much of the Skeleton Dragon's body tissue and the scraps of the ancient magical equipment. It was not a good idea to wear it in broad daylight.

Rockman was convenient to maneuver, but it was too shabby. Also, as a piece of civil magical equipment, its combat ability was too low.

The problem with the Eight Arm Suit was that its crystal processor always meddled in and was incompatible with Li

Yao's combat style.

Therefore, Li Yao prepared to rent a professional workshop for crystal suit modification the moment he arrived in Thousand Sail Space Zone and perform a full upgrade on Eight Arm. It was meant partly to improve its combat ability, and partly to drop its preset fighting patters.

This was the first time that he had ever modified an advanced crystal suit of the Flying Star Sector. To avoid unnecessary risks, he decided to have a simulation in the World of Crystal Suits first.

Since he was classified as a 'Specialist' after the assessment, the system had credited 10,000 crystal coins to him when he entered The World of Crystal Suits. He had spent all of that decorating his independent space into a maintenance workshop as well as purchasing a virtual Eight Arm Suit.

Just as he was about to dismantle the virtual Eight Arm, he received a private message. Somebody was inviting him to answer a question.

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. Although he had been classified as a 'Specialist', he had never answered any questions before. Nobody should even know of his existence. Why would anyone invite him to answer a question?

He opened the question and realize the reason.

The question was as followed: 'Why were the ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago fond of stepping on their flying swords and riding them? Is it not against the principles of aerodynamics? Compared to modern flying swords, what are the shortcomings of the ancient flying swords?'

As it turned out, it was a question that involved classical refining theories.

In the Flying Star Sector, there were not many experts who focused on classical refining theories, and there were ever fewer who revealed their identities in the World of Crystal Suits.

Li Yao's profile showed that he was an expert in classical refining theories approved by the system.

Li Yao assumed that the guy who proposed the question had searched and sent invitations to all the users who were marked as experts in classical refining theories.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao thought that it wouldn't be decent if he lurked and looted the generosities of the Flying Star Sector for seven days without returning anything. He should contribute his ideas and discuss them with his fellows.

Therefore, he opened the question and started reading.

There were already almost a hundred answers below the description of the question. The few answers at the top were all thorough and concrete with a lot of pictures. Their arguments were quite valid, too. Many fellow Cultivators were commenting on these answers in heated discussions. The ambience was quite good.

Li Yao scanned through the answers. Then he frowned, as he thought that some of the answers were too biased.

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao started writing his own answer.

"Thanks for the invitation.

"I am just a fan of classical refining theories, but I have to say that I don't agree with the answer that ranks at the top for the time being.

"When we Cultivators are challenged with a question, we should always make sure that the question is itself a legitimate question before we answer it. For example, this question is apparently a troll. Not all ancient Cultivators 'ride' their flying swords. There were many ways of manipulating a flying sword for ancient Cultivators. Three of them were most common.

"What's more, the ancient flying swords, of course, have disadvantages compared with modern flying swords. However, they have their own advantages, too. I even believe that modern Cultivators are too condescending to dig out the full potential of the traditional magical equipment yet, of which ancient flying swords are a good example. We've been underestimating the wisdom of our predecessors.

"Let's talk about ways to manipulate a flying sword first. Stepping on a flying sword and riding on it is just one of them. Except that, the ancient Cultivators could also embed themselves into their sword. That way, a dazzling sword would be all there was. The best sword Cultivators could even keep themselves and their swords in one place while killing someone thousands of kilometers away with their telepathic thoughts and their sword aura. Their swords were faster than any modern flying sword could ever be.

"Below are a few simple illustrations of the three ways of manipulating a flying sword that I just talked about.

"Let's focus on riding a flying sword for a moment. It seems a little bit silly and completely against the principles of aerodynamics. Its speed is nothing impressive, either.

"However, there are three great benefits to it.

"Firstly, the agility of the Cultivator is tremendously increased. They would be able to perform small-scale dodging movements within a tiny area. Hovering in the middle of furious winds is no longer a problem.

"Secondly, the Cultivator has a keener sense of the spiritual waves in the air when their skin is exposed. It is easier for them to detect traces of their enemy, too.

"Thirdly, the Cultivator can summon their magical equipment conveniently when they are engaged with enemies!

"We are all clear that a difference of 0.1 seconds is enough to determine the life and death between two top experts. With the three advantages, it is not completely unacceptable that the absolute speed of the flying sword is relatively low.

"The techniques employed by the ancient flying swords have actually passed on to this day and evolved into three different kinds of magical equipment.

"Firstly, the shuttles, which replace the flying swords as vehicles.

"Secondly, bullets and one-off mini flying swords, which apparently originated from the ejection of the ancient flying swords.

"Thirdly, handy swords and sabers such as chainsword, which were inspired by the melee techniques and the aura-trigger techniques of the ancient flying swords, too.

"Cultivators today have gone deeper and deeper on the fractionization of magical equipment. The three aspects have been divided and developed respectively. Significant improvements have been made to shuttles, bullets, and melee blades. Complete and thorough industry chains have been established, too.

"But we should never forget that the three industry chains could never have been built without the adequate development of our Cultivation civilization and the logistic, researching, and manufacturing facilities that it entails.

"Contemporary Cultivators can easily buy suitable shuttles, flying swords, guns, and bullets in a magical equipment store. The items can be maintained without any trouble when they are broken. The loss is insignificant even if we just throw them away.

"However, in ancient times, when a Cultivator was walking in wilderness, they had no access to any supplies, nor did they have a place where they can repair their magical equipment.

"If they were driving a shuttle with chainswords and guns in hand, their firepower would definitely have been much higher. But what if they were broken?

"Therefore, the ancient Cultivators could only meld all the useful techniques into one flying sword and try to simplify them to the point that the sword looked crude and shabby. But as long as the flying swords were solid, sturdy, and convenient, it would suffice for an ancient Cultivator who was on a tedious journey in wilderness.

"We modern Cultivators are quite lucky. We have a stable society, open-minded Cultivation sects, fellow Cultivators who share the same beliefs, professional magical equipment manufacturers, and a ubiquitous Spiritual Nexus. Therefore, our flying swords, as well as other magical equipment, can evolve, evolve, and evolve.

"Ancient Cultivators had none of this. Most of the time, they were like the lone sailors on a surging ocean. In order to meet their demand for survival, their flying swords were destined to be more primitive.

"Even so, there are still quite a lot of extraordinary designs in ancient flying swords that call for our attention.

"For example, 'Demon Biter', a sword refined by the Blood Wolf Sect, adopted an interesting three-edged design. I've hardly ever seen a similar design in the modern flying swords. This is a simple illustration of 'Demon Biter'. Take a look at it if you are interested…"

Li Yao's telepathic thoughts raced like galloping stallions. He found it hard to stop when he started writing, and it was not until more than half an hour later, when he had written hundreds of thousands of words describing more than ten ancient flying swords and drawn more than thirty ancient rune arrays, that he finished the task and felt gratified.

He took a long breath in satisfaction and submitted the answer. Then, he put it to the back of his mind and entered his personal space to modify the Eight Arm Suit.

…

"Cao Le, Cao Le! Get up already! Your face has been smacked! Aya, this answer is indeed reasonable and persuasive. You've been berated and burnt! Hahahaha. I feel sorry for your cheeks!"

Inside a dormitory of the Flying Sword Department of Flying Star University, one of the two best colleges of the Flying Star Sector, a fat boy was grimacing at his roommate on the bed.

Cao Le yawned and took off the head-worn special crystal processor. He blinked his bloodshot eyes and replied, not very happily, "Fatty Sun, don't make a fuss. I'm watching a game. Long Feihu has secured a 97th victory. How awesome!"

Cao Le was a model student of Flying Star Sector and considered himself to be an expert in flying swords. Since Long Feihu, champion of the Heavenly Sword Arena, had always used a super-large flying sword as his weapon, he had been a crazy fan of his and wouldn't miss any of his matches.

"You are still in the mood for a live stream?" The fatty winked. "You call yourself a flying sword expert, yet the answer you published on the Nexus yesterday, the one drawing a comparison between ancient flying swords and modern ones, has been beaten to a pulp! Man, I've never seen a more humiliating failure!"

"What?!"

Cao Le's eyes were wide open. The redness inside his eyes was all gone. He jumped up like a flying sword just unsheathed.

Chapter 475: Just Who Might You Be?

Chapter 475: Just Who Might You Be?

Entering the World of Crystal Suits and clicking the questions recently answered by him, Cao Le immediately found that a new answer had surpassed his own, which had boasted the most upvotes and comments previously.

Who wrote this answer? It must be another flubdub. That's why so many people are commenting it.

Let me see what arguments you have!

Cao Le had barely opened the answer when he scorned in disdain; he didn't know that the answer had been written by a traditionalist.

When the modern Cultivation system was just established, many people had worshipped the ancient Cultivation theories. They had held that, the older a theory was, the more classical it would be, and the longer a piece of magical equipment had existed, the more powerful it was. Even a washing cloth forty thousand years ago was far better than a modern armor. Such believers were known as traditionalists.

However, as the modern Cultivation system expanded and consolidated, the landmarks of modern theories grew taller and taller. Together with the remarkable achievements of the Star Ocean Imperium, modern Cultivators were now confident enough to believe that Cultivation progressed as the wheel of time rolled forward. That new was always better was the natural law.

There were barely any traditionalists among the Cultivators nowadays. He didn't anticipate that he would suddenly run into one out of nowhere.

Cao Le opened the profile of this 'Fiend Star' and was surprised that the guy was classified as a 'Specialist' whose aptitude in classical refining theories was endorsed by the system. It seemed that the guy wouldn't be easy to deal with.

Fiend Star, who are you exactly? Are you one of the experts from the three main crystal suit centers or the six major sects?

I don't care who you are. You dared to call my name and criticize me? Now just wait to be slaughtered!

Cao Le sniffed and started reading Fiend Star's answer casually.

His face turned more and more solemn as he went on.

The more lines he read, the paler his face became. The cold smile at the corner of his mouth was gone, but the cold sweat on his forehead was pouring down. In the end, his lips were trembling.

"Cao Le, how about it? The guy is quite interesting and not just any traditionalist, right?" The fat boy grinned.

"He has indeed got some evil tricks with him."

Cao Le's face was grave. The solidness of Fiend Star's theoretical background, the profoundness of his knowledge about classical refining theories, and the naturalness of his combination of ancient refining arts and modern ones all gave him tremendous pressure. He felt that he was faced with an immeasurable ocean. He didn't know where to start even though he wanted to rebut.

"Hurry up and summon all our brothers. We've run into an expert this time. Let's find the loopholes in his answer together!"

Cao Le slapped the desk and gnashed his teeth. "I'm going to sway the guy today anyhow!"

…

Li Yao was concentrating on dismantling the Eight Arm Suit in his independent space.

The maintenance suit deserved to be a masterpiece of 'Silver Heart School', one of the three crystal suit centers of Heavenly Saints City. Not only was it perfect in appearance, its internal designs were even more 'shocking'. Once the shell was pulled apart, one could see nothing but glittering components inside the suit that fit together perfectly like the parts of a watch. It was like the most brilliant artwork. Li Yao was truly fascinated by it.

He dwelled in it for five hours before he came to understand the internal structure of the crystal suit. He was going to draft a modification plan according to his own specifications when he suddenly received a few notifications.

"Somebody had written a long comment about my answer?"

Li Yao smiled. Such a debate was a way of communication between fellow Cultivators and would be very beneficial for training. Of course, he was quite enthusiastic about it.

He clicked his own answer and found that there were already hundreds of comments.

Somebody was calling him 'master' while they asked which sect Li Yao belonged to and how he had learned so much knowledge about classical refining theories.

Somebody pointed out the problems in his illustrations and proved their argument by providing new illustrations.

Of course, some other people simply despised him and accused him of being an obstinate traditionalist, which almost made him laugh out aloud.

Li Yao replied to the comments that were discussing the answer seriously and just ignored the curses.

Then, he noticed that 'Smiley Sword', the author of the answer which had ranked at the top previously, had written another long review of almost ten thousand words to refute his hypothesis.

Li Yao read it carefully and felt that, although the long review was biased, exaggerating and emotional, some points it entailed were worth deliberation after all. After pondering for a moment, he quickly responded to the review while he reflected on the modification plan of 'Eight Arm'.

…

"Replied! Replied! Fiend Star has counterattacked!"

"Open it! This long review is the collective wisdom of 'Six Sword Masters of Flying Star University'. Let's see what the guy has to say!"

Inside the dormitory of Flying Star University, more than ten students had crammed in. Everybody craned their heads and looked at a giant light beam. The six students in the middle blushed in excitement.

But as they read further, cold sweat was appearing on their foreheads just like what had happened to Cao Le earlier, until eventually they seemed to have been soaked up in a pouring rain.

"It can't be! The Jade Cauldron Divinity Algorithm has such variations that can be flawlessly combined with the Sky Diving Gold Inscription rune arrays from forty-five thousand years ago?"

"Thread Binder Sharpening Technique? What is that? It can increase the sharpness of a flying sword by more than 1% instantly?!"

"Are you kidding me? I only read the names of the three ancient flying swords in a jade chip before and I didn't even have the chance to see their pictures, let alone their internal structures. But the guy is talking about it so convincingly that he seems to have used the sword in person!"

"Ha. Not only has he used it in person, he can also refine it? Are you serious?"

The few students who majored in flying swords all looked at each other in bewilderment. Faced with Li Yao's detailed answer, which was full of algorithms, formulas, and structural designs, they turned from cocky roosters to sick hens and completely lost their fighting will. They were truly convinced.

"Hey, is this Fiend Star a professor from a university?"

"Very likely, very likely. There is not such a brilliant expert in either our school or the Flying Sword Department of the Heavenly Saints Institute!"

"The guy is talking about obsolete theories of the traditionalists as if they were still practical. Even I nearly bought it!"

"Send the few articles to our professor!"

…

Han Ziqing was a young professor of the Flying Sword Department of Flying Star University.

He was born and raised up in Black Summit Sword Sect, one of the six major sects of the Flying Star Sector. Receiving the harshest sword training since he was a little kid, he had reached an extraordinary level both in theories and in practical combat. He could've been assigned to important posts in Black Summit Sword Sect, but he pursued nothing but the sword art and eventually joined Flying Star University as a tutor for sword Cultivators.

When he received the students' call for help, Han Ziqing was somewhat startled.

He knew Cao Le to be a proud young man. Yet, today, his student looked frustrated, as if somebody had just savaged him brutally.

Curiously, Han Ziqing clicked the spiritual link the students sent him and logged into the World of Crystal Suits.

…

Li Yao rubbed his hands and whistled.

He had just completed the twelfth modification plan for 'Eight Arm' when he received new notifications. He checked his mailbox and found that hundreds of fellow Cultivators had contacted him. Many of them were proposing arguments against his new answer. Some of them were even raising new questions about classical refining theories and wanted him to answer them.

"How interesting."

Li Yao finally understood why everybody loved the World of Crystal Suits.

Exchanging their opinions on Cultivation theories was of great help for them to improve themselves, regardless of whether the opinions were right or wrong.

Although Li Yao didn't quite agree with certain answers, they were not entirely devoid of shining points. Also, when he was replying to the rebuttals, he was sorting through and honing his theories at the same time. Within only half a day, he felt that his ideas were much clearer and his belief firmer.

"It seems that I should be more of a writer than a reader. By providing more answers and communicating with the fellow Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector more often, I can improve my capability much more quickly!"

Li Yao opened the review ranking at the top. He could easily tell that the review was of a much higher level than the previous reviews. Its stance was more objective, its writing more technical, and its data more exhaustive. The review admitted the advantages about ancient flying swords that he had proposed at first, then it went on to a different perspective and disparaged the foundations on which he had built his theories.

"Another expert!"

Li Yao was thrilled and carefully read the review while he brought up his computational ability to maximum, contemplating on the notions that the review proposed.

…

Han Ziqing was dumbfounded and couldn't believe his eyes.

The cases that he had composed neatly with various references over three hours had been mostly disproved!

And it had been just an hour since he had submitted his review!

It meant that his opponent had written a reply in about half an hour casually and declared his failure with undeniable facts!

The ancient rune arrays and spiritual stripes that his opponent offered had never been heard of before. But after he drew the runes with his spiritual energy and extrapolated, he did find that the spiritual energy was functioning fluently inside the runes and they boasted effects corresponding to what the other party had claimed.

His opponent also suggested a lot of methods of refining a flying sword and the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and rare metals that could be added in, of which he had heard none, either. But the remedies did fix the drawbacks of many ancient flying swords!

Is it possible that he is one of the professors in the department?

Not likely. Han Ziqing thought hard for a long time but failed to figure out which of the professors in the department had such a profound understanding about classical refining theories.

But what was weird was that, although his opponent's knowledge about classical refining theories was incredible, the man seemed to be much less erudite when it came to modern refining theories and was merely on par with him.

It seems that this is an expert who specializes in classical refining theories. Unknown masters are indeed everywhere in the sea of stars!

Han Ziqing was truly impressed. He thought for a while and sent the spiritual link of the question to another renowned professor of the Flying Sword Department respectfully.

Chapter 476: Matching Zone

Chapter 476: Matching Zone

"The Cultivation level of the Flying Star Sector is indeed impressive! Just some random netizens are enough to find so many loopholes in my answer. It seems that I wasn't thinking thoroughly enough after all!"

Li Yao was quite surprised. He didn't have the habit of checking other people's profiles, but if he did, he would have known that the reviews he was currently reading were written by not the normal netizens, not the young university professors, but the real big shots in major academical institutions.

However, in regard to classical refining methodologies, not only did Li Yao boast abundant knowledge, he also had a lot of first-hand experience. No one in the entire universe would be comparable to him. His beliefs had been formed and firmly believed in for a very long time, and it was not like anyone could easily talk him out of them.

This time, Li Yao concentrated his full attention and thought carefully for more than half an hour before he finally began writing a detailed reply to the few questions that his fellow Cultivators had pointed out. The structural designs of various kinds of flying swords, the spiritual energy flowchart, the detailed analysis of certain rune arrays, and so on were so meticulously explained that they were almost enough for Li Yao to publish a book with them as content.

Hardly had he finished one reply when someone else offered a new review. It gave him the feeling that countless experts were surging in like a tide and challenging him one after another, each of whom was stronger than the last. The questions that they asked were trickier and trickier, too. He found himself often taken unprepared.

Gradually, Li Yao felt that it was too much for him. He reflected on himself while he replied. Then he realized that these people were not wrong about certain shortcomings in his theories, which proved to be in need of further filtering and perfecting.

The new experts were not just questioning him. To prove the advantages of the modern flying swords, they also shared a lot of authentic materials and data with Li Yao. From Li Yao's knowledge, he could easily tell that they were all very precious first-hand files and that he would benefit a lot from them.

Such communications made Li Yao overjoyed. He took advantage of the opportunity and responded to each of the reviews and comments. As a result, the total number of the replies below the answer quickly surpassed ten thousand at a growth of thirty to fifty per minute.

In the eyes of the bystanders, it was an intriguing banquet that they wouldn't miss for the world.

"Look, look! 'North Sea' has come to respond! North Sea is a professor of the Flying Sword Department of Flying Star University and also one of the pillars among the sword Cultivators!"

"Wow. Even 'Oblivion' is here! The vice dean of the Flying Department of Heavenly Saints Institute is said to be managing a new project, trying to create the fastest flying sword of the Flying Star Sector!"

"And this one, 'Falling Snow'. She is an elder of Black Summit Sword Sect and a renowned sword Cultivator who has been focusing on real-life combat! Even she couldn't help it any longer and offered her opinions!"

For the fans of flying swords, this was the most exciting day ever!

It was like all the experts in flying swords of the Flying Star Sector had gathered to attack a mysterious man. Under the continuous bombardment of so many experts, despite his inadequacies, the mysterious man was always able to throw out certain previously-unknown theories, rune arrays, or spiritual energy circulation models to prove his point.

This debate quickly rushed into the top five of 'Most Marvelous Questions and Answers of the Day', and therefore became even livelier. Thousands of fans of flying swords joined the debate. But most of them were merely paying respect to the contestants on both sides of the dispute, because amateurs such as themselves had no chance to offer their input in a battle of such a high academic level.

The debate lasted a day and a night. In the end, Fiend Star finally couldn't stand it any longer and admitted that there were still a lot of deficiencies in his theories and that he should learn more from the fellow Cultivators.

The scholars and experts of flying swords all took a long breath in relief. They stopped being at loggerheads with each other and shared a lot of confidential theories, models, and structural designs. It became a real knowledge exchange. The fans of flying swords greatly enjoyed themselves, too, and were more curious about the identity of Fiend Star than ever.

"Who is this Fiend Star exactly?"

In the office of the Flying Sword Department of Flying Star University, several grey-haired professors looked at each other in bewilderment. Their wrinkled faces were full of confusion.

"Who is Fiend Star, and how does he know so much about classical refining theories? Is he one of the academic specialists that Flying Star Sector introduced from other space zones?"

Quite a few old scholars of the Heavenly Saints Institute were pondering similar questions.

In the meantime, countless sword Cultivators who had participated in the debate just now were asking the same thing.

Inside his personal space, Li Yao exclaimed in excitement, "Nice! This is nice!"

His theories were not impeccable after all. It was based on his first-hand experience. Normal people might not be able to notice anything wrong with it, but the real experts could see through the inconsistencies and falsify his statements eventually.

However, Li Yao was not frustrated at all but burning with fighting will.

It was not bad to be proved wrong. One could always locate one's deficiencies when they were pointed out. The real bad thing was that one's opinion was completely ignored after it was proposed, in which case one would not be able to improve oneself at all.

After one day and one night of debating, Li Yao felt that his brain was sharper, and his mind was clearer. His expertise in refining had increased a lot, too.

"I should have more such debate sessions. I bet my Cultivation will soar!"

In the coming seven days, Li Yao answered a few other questions such as 'what does it feel like to refine a classical flying sword in person' and 'what were some of the shocking artifacts in the ancient Cultivation world forty thousand years ago'. He exchanged his opinions with other experts of refining and improved his capability in the fierce arguments. In the meantime, the name of 'Fiend Star' spread afar.

"Fiend Star must be an elder who has been living in the depths of the sea of stars in isolation studying classical refining theories alone all the time. He was a hermit and did not know much about modern refining theories. This time, he only showed up in the Spiritual Nexus and disseminate the ancient arts of refining because of the encouragement of his younger friends."

Many fans speculated as such. They pictured such an image in their mind: linen clothes, grass shoes, long white hair, solemn face, deep eyes, and a vintage bronze long sword hanging from the waist. He walked casually on the street, and when he felt that he was in the mood, he would sit cross-legged in the middle of the crowds and sing a song with his sword as his instrument…

Yes, Master Fiend Star must be exactly like this.

However, from the seventh day, Master Fiend Star appeared much less than before, making many fans scratch their heads, eager to know when he'd next appear.

Li Yao had finished the modification of 'Eight Arm'.

Deep within his bones, Li Yao was still an aggressive and brutal man. Of course, his crystal suit could not just focus on maintenance.

Li Yao performed a major modification on the automating system of Eight Arm's crystal processor and dropped all the units that were used to guide a combat. What replaced them were crystal cameras with higher resolutions and a soundwave perception system, which improved the crystal suit's sensitivity to the outside world by more than three times.

Such a modification would surely triple the information stream crowding into the brain and could prove to be a heavy burden.

However, Li Yao didn't care about it.

Other than that, he had also hidden a lot of aggressive magical equipment inside the six artificial arms of Eight Arm in the most surreptitious ways possible while keeping most of the maintenance magical equipment in their original place.

On the outside, it was still a harmless crystal suit for maintenance work. But when it was engaged in real combat, it would immediately tear off its mask and reveal its brutal true face.

The brand new Eight Arm was decorated with a layer of rock-gray camouflage. Traces of damage were left on it, too. It appeared to a field-tested crystal suit that had never been well maintained. The awesomeness of an advanced crystal suit of Silver Heart School was completely ripped off. It appeared to be nothing but an ordinary civil crystal suit now.

Li Yao was very excited that the job was finally done. What came next should be a test.

The World of Crystal Suits was divided into two parts. Li Yao had always shown himself as a refiner. This time, he was planning to play in the virtual matching platform as an Exo.

To this moment, he hadn't really fought with the expert Exos of the Flying Star Sector yet. Capturing Fengyu Ming on Ghost Jail had solely been based on the unexpected assault and the overwhelming specifications of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. It had lasted only one second and was not enjoyable at all.

The matching zone and refining zone were two completely different areas. A user could choose to keep the same name or apply for a new one.

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao applied for a new identity.

"My name is… Vulture!"

To enter the matching zone required a capability test, too. However, due to the restrictions of the Great Illusionary Land, it was impossible to simulate every user's precise capability. Therefore, the fuzzy regulation theory was adopted, and all the users whose capability was close to a certain level would be rounded to the level.

Li Yao's test result was that his explosive spiritual energy had surpassed the threshold of the Building Foundation Stage. Therefore, he was allowed to enter the dedicated zone for Building Foundation Stage Cultivators and train in the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage. Of course, his opponents would be in the same level, too.

In such virtual competitions, it was impossible that someone's capability would suddenly soar. Techniques and tactics were the factors that mattered.

There were various modes in the matching zone, too. The simplest mode was a duel between two Exos. If there were more Exos, they could also form into groups and start a team competition. Other than that, there were modes in which all the participants would be in the same team to challenge demon beasts or demonic Cultivators automatically generated by the system.

Although the competitions were virtual, the improvement of techniques and tactics was 100% authentic. Therefore, many experts in reality preferred to train in this place, too. Those on the top of the rank were all renowned super experts in the real world.

Li Yao entered the simplest one on one duel zone.

Hundreds of Exos were waiting to be challenged.

But whomever Li Yao shifted his telepathic thoughts to, he failed to enter a battleground with his opponent. With a careful look, he noticed that they all had requirements about the win rate and refused to accept the challenges of the rookies. His win rate was zero, and so was the number of matches he had participated in. Without exception, he was turned down coldly.

"Pretty demanding!"

After a reminder of the system, Li Yao opted to display his name and selected 'Accept All Challenges'. Then he started wandering around the duel zone.

Most of the competitions there were open to everyone who paid enough crystal coins.

For the competitions between common Exos, one crystal coin might be enough. But the ticket for the competitions of the super experts at the top of the rankings might be dozens of crystal coins.

Li Yao had earned quite a lot of crystal coins by answering questions previously. Therefore, he simply picked one of the competitions and started watching in pleasure.

Just when he was enjoying himself, he suddenly heard the sound of a notification. Somebody had challenged him!

Chapter 477: Fighting in Ice Ocean

Chapter 477: Fighting in Ice Ocean

Since Li Yao was still new to it all, he selected 'random' for every setting. The system had automatically picked 'Ice Ocean' as their battlefield.

It was a gray ocean with bitter wind, like the poles of a certain planet. There was nothing but marrow-freezing seawater as far as one's eyes could see, except for some scattering icebergs which were floating on the surface of the ocean, colliding and breaking amid rumbling noises.

Wearing the Eight Arm Suit, Li Yao stood on one tiny piece of floating ice. Hundreds of meters away from him, on another floating ice, an ivory crystal suit was eyeing him. It was elegantly shaped, like a pure white feather.

White Feather Battlesuit, a masterpiece of Red Line School, one of the three main crystal suit centers!

A lot of information immediately popped up in Li Yao's brain.

Of the three main crystal suit centers of the Flying Star Sector, 'Iron School' was best at refining super-heavy suits. Their suits were all sturdy and durable, although sometimes with bizarre appearances.

The crystal suits created by Silver Heart School were more elegant and focused on multiple purposes. This School was adept at combining the crystal suits of different fields and creating a special one. For example, Li Yao's Eight Arm boasted both the abilities of a maintenance suit and those of a battlesuit.

Red Line School, on the other hand, was best known for their light, speed-type crystal suits.

The White Feather Battlesuit was one of the most classic crystal suits invented by Red Line School. With the usage of the light metals and the new framework, the total weight of the crystal suit was only 80% of the weight of similar crystal suits, but the combat ability of White Feather was not diminished at all.

The most impressive presentation of the White Feather Battlesuit was conducted by a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator some time ago. In five seconds, the suit accelerated from stillness to the speed of sound, came to an abrupt halt, and sped up to the sonic speed again three times in a row!

The Ice Ocean Battlefield had a lot of floating ice. Most of the battles would be fought on them, which gave the White Feather Battlesuit a huge advantage.

Li Yao skimmed through his opponent's profile. Lone Walker, a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator, 588 victories, 145 failures, win rate 80.22%, sync rate 81%. He was an experienced top expert!

More than seven hundred duels, with a win rate of more than eighty percent and a sync rate as high as 81%. He must be a real top expert who has slain many people. Then why did he challenge such a rookie like myself?

While Li Yao was confused, his opponent sent a message to him. "My fellow Cultivator, is your sync rate… really 37%?"

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. "Yes. Is there anything wrong about it?"

This time, Lone Walker was truly baffled.

He was quite a somebody in the World of Crystal Suits. Normally, he would never challenge rookies such as Li Yao. But just now, when he had been wandering in the duel zone, he suddenly noticed that the sync rate of 'Vulture' was only 37%, and his interest was aroused.

Sync rate was the most important thing for an Exo. Every Exo always tried their best to improve their sync rate and hoped to reach the 'melded-with-my-suit' level.

This 'Vulture' was apparently a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator. By logic, his capability must be very good. Why did he have such a low sync rate?

Even many excellent middle school students had sync rates higher than 37%!

The test for the sync rate of the Great Illusionary Land could be cheated, of course. But Lone Walker knew that the real number would be within ten percent above or below the test result.

Therefore, even if 'Vulture' had concealed part of his capability, his real sync rate would still be no higher than 50%.

Naturally, Lone Walker was greatly interested in such an eccentric fellow. That was why he went on and challenged him.

But Lone Walker did not expect that his opponent would be wearing an Eight Arm Suit.

Although Eight Arm was an advanced crystal suit produced by Silver Heart School, it was a hybrid maintenance suit and battlesuit after all. In the eyes of an expert such as Lone Walker, it was absolutely no match for a professional battlesuit. He frowned and said, "Do you want to change crystal suit?"

Li Yao scratched his head. "Change crystal suit? Why would I —"

Before he finished his sentence, Li Yao had vanished into thin air. The floating ice below his feet was stomped into a cluster of white powder!

Lone Walker's pupils constricted violently. His crystal processor shrilled at a high pitch. Before his body was able to react, his crystal suit had made the defensive movements. He felt that an enormous strength hit his chest as if he had been fired upon by a giant cannon. The White Feather Battlesuit was blown away by more than a hundred meters and floated in midair, shaking.

Cold sweat immediately appeared on Lone Walker's forehead. He looked down, not entirely recovered from his shock, only to notice that the ugly Eight Arm Suit had appeared in the place where he had been standing. The six artificial arms on its back were waving violently like the claws of a crab, making the crystal suit more hideous than ever.

Interesting!

Lone Walker grinned and roared. The super speed of his White Feather was made the best use of as he turned into a streak of bright light and darted at Li Yao!

Very impressive!

Li Yao instantly felt tremendous pressure.

His enemy seemed to have turned into rushing wind penetrating into his body through every gap on his crystal suit.

Fighting against an expert such as Lone Walker gave Li Yao a deeper understanding of why the Flying Star Sector chose to utilize crystal suits in their way.

By the optimization of the crystal processor, the filtering of tactics, and the automatic responses, the pause and pondering between the attack or defense movements was reduced to minimum. Although the creativity and independence of the Exo was restricted, their attacks were much more seamless. There were barely any gaps between two waves of attacks. It was like the most natural and fluent music without the tiniest flaw.

Swoosh!

Dazzling brilliance burst out from the White Feather Battlesuit. Hundreds of strings of spiritual energy condensed into glittering feathers which swooped at Li Yao, cutting countless wounds on the Eight Arm Suit immediately and even breaking many crucial crystal wires apart!

Skill card!

Li Yao gritted his teeth and backed off. He trod on the surface of the ice ocean lightly and blinked to another floating ice hundreds of meters away.

His opponent had unleashed a deadly skill with the skill card!

Optimization from the crystal processor, automatic implementations of tactics, together with versatile, powerful skill cards. Li Yao had to admit that such a fighting pattern was indeed charming in its own way.

However, there was a different path that he'd been walking on all the time.

Although there were barely any gaps between two waves of attacks, loopholes still existed. Every tactical movement that his opponent carried out was one of the standard movements inputted into the crystal processor previously. Standard meant patterns. As long as he figured out the patterns behind the movements…

Ci… Ci… Ci… Ci…

The six artificial arms on Li Yao's back extended to his front. Various kinds of maintenance magical equipment ejected from the artificial arms and performed an emergency repair on the damages of the crystal suit.

Are you kidding me?

Lone Walker's eyes bulged when he noticed what was happening. He had seen battlefield maintenance before, but he had never seen anyone who could repair themselves within several seconds at such a shocking speed.

Who is this guy, 'Vulture'? I've never heard of such a skilled mechanic among the Exos.

Lone Walker was deep in thought. But he didn't stop; instead, he turned into a streak of light again and lunged at Li Yao.

Outside of the virtual battlefield, many other spectators had noticed the match.

Many fans of crystal suits and low-level Cultivators came to the duel zone not because they wanted to take part in a match, but because they were hoping to watch the matches between the top experts to learn more.

Lone Walker was a somewhat renowned expert in the virtual matching platform. His super-fast continuous striking tactics were textbook for many young people. Therefore, many people had followed him and paid special attention to his matches.

The moment his match started, the system had sent notifications to those spectators.

By default, all match tickets were available to everybody at the cost of one crystal coin. The income would be divided in a ratio of 3:7 and given to the loser and winner respectively. The players of the match could change the setting by themselves to turn off the spectator mode or increase the price of the ticket.

However, it was a rather common practice to leave the spectator mode on, which was considered to be a great method of communication and studying.

Cultivators were responsible for improving the Cultivation level of the entire civilization. Therefore, even the real super experts would sometimes peg the ticket for spectators at one crystal coin symbolically, in order to return the favor and benefit the public.

Countless spectators immediately crowded in to watch the game.

At first, everyone's eyes were fixed upon Lone Walker. But when they read the profile of his opponent, they were all dumbfounded. A Building Foundation Stage Cultivator with a sync rate of only 37%? What had happened? Was there some sort of bug in the system?

Inside the ice ocean, Lone Walker was at a seemingly overwhelming advantage. The super mobility of his crystal suit couldn't be better shown. White Feather seemed to have split into hundreds of shadows which surrounded the Eight Arm Suit in the front and almost suffocated his opponent like a dominating hurricane.

Compared with the naturalness and elegance of the White Feather Battlesuit, the Eight Arm Suit's movements couldn't be more unappealing. One moment, it was on all fours on the surface of the ocean; the next moment, it was rolling over like a donkey; now, it was running away with its head in its hands. Although it narrowly escaped the dense attacks of White Feather every time, the crystal suit was on the brink of destruction. If the Exo hadn't been maintaining the crystal suit with the six artificial arms during the escape to keep its basic functions, it would've collapsed a long time ago.

"This Vulture is clearly no match for Lone Walker!"

"You don't say! His sync rate is only 37%, but Lone Walker's is 81%! They are not of the same level at all! I really wonder how he advanced into the Building Foundation Stage!"

"I understand it now! Vulture can't be a battle-type Cultivator. He must an admin-type, a creation-type, or even a culture-type Cultivator! Although he is in the level of the Building Foundation Stage, he does not have the corresponding combat ability. This is just his entertainment!"

"Yes, yes. It all makes sense now. The guy is just an amateur here to relax. Lone Walker is wasting his time!"

"Are you serious? The guy's maintenance skills are indeed impressive! He fixed up such a long fracture in front of his chest within only half a second!"

"Haha. I understand why he chose the Eight Arm Suit now. This guy must be a professional mechanic for crystal suits and an amateur of fighting in them! The Eight Arm Suit can prolong his life as much as possible so that he can fight the experts for another several minutes!"

"However, under the bombardment of Lone Walker, there is nothing but doom in front of him! Look, Lone Walker's ultimate skill, 'Shadow Dance'!"

The streak of whiteness seemed to have grown two wings. It was even faster than lightning and flashed past the Eight Arm Suit. Blood spurted out, and a giant head flew to the sky!

"For an amateur, to be killed by Shadow Dance is something to be proud of."

"Indeed. This battle lasted six minutes and fifty-four seconds. For Lone Walker, who is best at killing his opponent instantly, this is a long one."

"This Vulture is indeed interesting. Should I go down there and play with him, too?"

The spectators were all whispering to each other, but their voices were suddenly frozen by the cold wind blowing on the ice ocean. The channel for spectators was cast into awkward silence.

It was because all of them had discovered that the one cramping on a floating ice sheet without the head was the White Feather Battlesuit, or in other words, Lone Walker.

In the meantime, the mysterious Vulture, who only had a sync rate of 37%, was still standing magnificently in the frigidness wearing his Eight Arm Suit!

Chapter 478: Is This Possible?

Chapter 478: Is This Possible?

"Why?"

"What exactly happened during that final moment? Why was Lone Walker's head chopped off?"

"Is this real?"

Gasps were echoing nonstop in the spectators' channel. Hundreds of them were watching the game, but none had noticed anything wrong about it.

"Replay the game in slow motion!"

It was not until the battle video was replayed at one tenth of the normal speed that the spectators discovered, with much difficulty, that when Lone Walker activated the ultimate skill 'Shadow Dance', the battered Eight Arm Suit sensed a great danger was coming and backed off awkwardly, only to step into a crack on the floating ice precisely.

As a result, half of the crystal suit fell into the seawater.

The two authentic arms and six artificial arms all waved crazily in the air. One battle saber happened to extend out of one of the artificial arms.

It was not deadly at all, not even poised at Lone Walker.

The problem was, Lone Walker had just taken the opportunity to sprint close at the highest speed. Eventually, he crashed into the edge of the saber at more than five times the speed of sound!

Right at this moment, the saber waved again and cut accurately into the joint between the helmet and the chest of the White Feather Battlesuit.

As a super-fast crystal suit, in order to ensure the smooth turning of the head, the White Feather Battlesuit did not have thick armor protecting its neck. Therefore, after the clash, the battle saber slashed open its neck ruthlessly!

In other words, Lone Walker charged at the edge of a saber at five times the speed of sound and killed himself!

"Is this even possible?"

All the spectators were rendered speechless when they realized what had happened. They were wearing weird expressions, as they did not expect an expert like Lone Walker would be defeated by a newbie in such a ridiculous way.

This Vulture was quite a lucky dog.

"This guy is interesting. Let me play with him!"

Many people were rubbing their fists.

A few space zones away, in the center of a world fragment, on the top floor of a vintage skyscraper, a tidy, handsome young man was crouching in an egg-shaped seat rigidly. He was holding his neck uncontrollably, while cold sweat was dripping off his forehead.

He was Lone Walker.

The pain at the moment was so real that he felt his neck was cold even after he logged off the matching platform. Blood seemed to be still spraying out from there.

The deepest fear filled Lone Walker's eyes.

Was that last slash a coincidence, or—

Lone Walker pondered for a long time and replayed the pictures that he last saw before he fell into darkness. The more he thought about it, the more frightened he became.

It was definitely not a coincidence; it was a lethal trap!

Starting from the fourth minute of the match, although he had been in a seemingly overwhelming advantage, his opponent had been leading the rhythm of the fight. Every attack he made only hit the unimportant or readily repairable parts of his opponent, who had even intentionally left some of the damages unattended to and thereby faked the terrible conditions of his crystal suit!

On second thought, Lone Walker realized that he had never hit his opponent's critical parts at all, not even once!

During his continuous attacks, his tactics and methods of attacking were scrutinized by his opponent. Before he launched the final deadly 'Shadow Dance', he had been lured to the perfect location, with the optimum angle and route, and doubtlessly, the result was that he crashed into the edge of his opponent's saber!

"Horrifying. The guy's capability is indeed too deep to measure. He might be one of the test pilots of the three main crystal suit centers or a leading expert from the five major arenas!

"I'm going to challenge him one more time. This time, he is not going to have it his way!"

It was not the style of a Cultivator of the Flying Star Sector to give in easily. The more they failed, the braver they would be; the longer they fought, they stronger they became!

Long Walker gritted his teeth and challenged Vulture again, only to discover—

"What?

"Are you serious? There are a hundred people waiting in line?"

Lone Walker didn't know what to do. During the brief moment of him reflecting on his failure, a hundred people had challenged Vulture, of whom Vulture had gladly accepted all and refused none.

"Who is this guy exactly? If he were a test pilot of a crystal suit center or one of the leading experts in an arena, he shouldn't have so much time to waste on the mediocre players," Lone Walker mumbled to himself.

Of those who had challenged Vulture, 95% were only amateurs of the sport. They must've thought that Vulture had been merely lucky previously and planned to take their chance.

Only 5% of the challengers were real experts like Lone Walker.

Having no other choices, Lone Walker entered the spectator mode and watched Vulture's match at the cost of one crystal coin.

The second match was held on a randomly selected map, too. It was 'Scattered Stone Sea', a classic map for one-on-one duels.

The two parties would engage in battle in the middle of an extremely unstable stone belt. Other than their opponent, they would have to be prepared for the meteors which might rush close at them at any time.

This was a very tricky map. Newbies often found it hard to cope with.

As it turned out, Li Yao's opponent was such a newbie. Before he came close to Vulture, he had already been caught in a flurry by the raging meteors.

A bunch of idiots. They really think that Lone Walker could be beaten by a rookie because of sheer luck? How naïve!

Lone Walker sniffed and focused his attention on Li Yao.

His eyes immediately narrowed.

Vulture did not seize the opportunity to attack. He seemed to be stumbling and shunning the meteors, too. But in Lone Walker's eyes, the 'stumbling' was apparently too exaggerated.

Lone Walker smelled the stink of a scheme, but he didn't know how Vulture would set up his trap yet.

Finally, just as his opponent regained his balance and avoided most of the meteors, Vulture was hit by a meteor.

One of his power rune arrays was wasted, and he was struggling like someone being drowned.

His opponent was overjoyed; he unsheathed his chainsword and lunged at Vulture.

When the guy was a hundred meters away from Vulture, a few meteorites not very far away suddenly collided. Scraps of the stones flew to everywhere and triggered a chain reaction. A rapid meteorite was hit and veered off at a different trajectory, smashing right into his back!

The strike was so surprising that Vulture's opponent had no time to dodge at all. His spiritual shield was automatically activated, and most of the spiritual energy was transmitted to his back where it formed a dense protective layer.

The momentum of the meteor was enormous. A cluster of brilliance broke out on his back, while the inertia pushed him dozens of meters forward.

Just at that time, Vulture finished altering his position. The vibration claw on his left hand stabbed out and pierced through his opponent's chest!

Vulture won again!

Whispers of disbelief echoed again in the spectators' channel.

In the eyes of most people, Vulture was unbelievably lucky again. He apparently was not well adapted to a battlefield in the vacuum, but his opponent had been ill-fated enough to be hit by a meteor which the guy spent so much of his spiritual energy to defend that the protection of his chest turned extremely feeble. Vulture had taken advantage of his weakness at the critical movement and secured the victory with just one attack.

But Long Walker simply rose up from the seat with an extremely twisted expression on his face.

This is impossible!

Could this guy have calculated the trajectories of hundreds of meteors and their respective alterations during the chain reaction caused by the collisions? Was he adjusting his stance and angle with ostensible clumsy movements which deceived his opponent and lured him to the route of the meteor's abrupt deflection?

What frightening computational ability!

Goosebumps rose up all over Lone Walker's body. He couldn't begin to imagine what kind of monster was hiding behind the identity of 'Vulture' on the other end of the World of Crystal Suits.

He couldn't figure out why such a super expert had come to play with the green hands, either.

I really can't understand what the top exerts are thinking!

Lone Walker sighed and watched the third player to challenge Vulture in pity.

The third opponent was apparently not as polite as the previous two. He dumped a lot of trash talk into the public channel, saying things such as you were merely lucky, and I'm going to cut your throat in ten seconds, blah blah blah.

In Lone Walker's eyes, it was like a flock of bunnies had lined up and challenged a hungry wolf that was wearing the skin of a goat one by one. The more ignorant ones were even bold enough to bare their teeth and provoke the wolf.

He almost found it unbearable to watch on.

As he expected, the dozen competitions that followed ended in the same way. Vulture could've won the games easily, yet every time, he always dawdled along and defeated his opponents with the simplest moves and through lucky coincidences only after his opponents performed all their ultimate skills.

Nobody was a fool. After Vulture secured more than ten victories in a row, they'd more or less all realized that something was wrong and started thinking that it might actually be a super expert making fun of them by pretending to be the weak.

But as the sixteenth match began, everything changed. In only three seconds, Vulture sprinted and thrusted through his opponent's all defense, burning his heart to ashes!

It was a classic sprint-and-thrust that could be recorded in a textbook or saved in a skill card. Devoid of any tricks, there was only brutality, sharpness, speed, and the absolute control of the transient loophole!

Lone Walker was quite impressed by the attack, even though he had been best known for his speed himself.

Pondering for a moment, Lone Walker realized something and shivered.

"The guy… is not pretending to be weak.

"He has been observing, learning, and summarizing the fighting patterns of everybody.

"Right now, he knows everything he needs to know!"

Lone Walker mumbled to himself in disbelief, "Did he just leave seclusion after practicing a powerful Cultivation art for twenty years? What kind of monster did I run into?"

The coming couple of matches were all the same. Vulture seemed to be on drugs and became a maniac possessed by a devil. He beat most of the crystal suit amateurs to the ground like he was chopping woods. Every match took only twelve seconds on average.

It was not until the 36th match that Vulture engaged a strong opponent.

Chapter 479: Where Dreams Come True

Chapter 479: Where Dreams Come True

"Black Chess Player, Building Foundation Stage, 89 victories, 34 failures, sync rate: 79%!"

It seemed to be just another random top expert, but his match with Vulture was quite weird.

Their battlefield was 'Burning Desert'. The temperature of the map was more than five hundred degrees. The quicksand was fluid like a river, dotted all around the field. If anyone stepped into the quicksand, half of their body would immediately by buried in the sand. Power rune arrays were prone to clogging up with dust in midair if one were to fly for too long in a crystal suit.

It seemed peaceful, but it was, in fact, a perilous map.

Black Chess Player and Vulture were both clumsy. They were circling like two cautious roosters. Very occasionally, one of them would make a few steps toward the opponent, but then he would often retreat before his opponent took any countermeasures and continued staying in the safety area.

Only after they'd circled several times, when all the spectators were yawning in boredom, did the two crystal suits suddenly glitter and collide in dazzling brilliance.

But just as everyone held their breath and stared intently, the two of them parted and started drawing circles again insipidly.

The monotonous competition frustrated most of the spectators.

But for a real expert such as Long Walker, this was a duel where one could hear a roaring thunder from the ostensible quietness.

Black Chess Player was just as his name suggested. Like the most brilliant chess player, he played a lethal chess game emotionlessly and expressionlessly. Countless deadly traps had been set up while he was circling around, only to be resolved by Vulture time and time again.

Sometimes, Vulture would pretend that he had fallen for one of the traps that his opponent had laid out, but he was actually setting up his own traps inside his opponent's. Black Chess Player was nearly fooled several times, and only narrowly escaped from the disasters by his sharp senses in the last half second.

Such soul-stirring competition was too thrilling to miss for even one second. An unseen fierce battle was being fought in the tranquility!

Twenty-one minutes later, a terrible hole was broken on the chest of Eight Arm. Vulture had failed for the first time!

But Long Walker only admired Vulture more.

He had been in touch with 'Black Chess Player' before, and from special sources, he had learned that 'Black Chess Player' was actually a secondary account of a player who was one of the champions of the Death Ray Arena, one of the five major arenas of the Flying Star Sector!

It has taken the top Exo from one of the five major arenas more than twenty minutes to put Vulture down?

Lone Walker was greatly astonished. He sighed in disbelief.

...

Li Yao was exuberant.

Fighting at will with experts of various origins and to be killed by their ultimate skills was the greatest entertainment for a crystal suit maniac such as himself.

"This 'Black Chess Player' is really impressive. His scheming ability is as good as mine, and his computational ability might even be higher. He truly makes a great enemy!

"Too bad that this body is too weak. Many special tactical movements could not be supported by it. Somebody just tapped my chest and I was already dead. So unsatisfying!"

Li Yao sniffed.

The virtualized bodies in the World of Crystal Suits were similar to each other. They were simulations of the average body hardness of the Cultivators in the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage.

However, Li Yao's body had been strengthened by the Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining technique. He had also activated the primordial force of the prehistoric beasts concealed inside his body's cells through the heritage of Iron God Yan Ba, a body fundamentalist. To sum up, his body was hundreds of times harder than that of a regular Cultivator!

It was not exaggerating to say that he was a prehistoric beast wearing human skin!

If it were in reality, his speed and strength would've been at least 60% higher than those in the virtual world. The blow that he suffered earlier couldn't have deprived him of his combat ability even if his chest was stabbed through. He had a dozen backup plans that could easily slay 'Black Chess Player'!

However, it was not victory that he sought. He had merely been trying to familiarize himself with the fighting styles of the Flying Star Sector and see what he could learned from them.

Li Yao was not bothered by the failure. He smiled and went on to the next match.

From that day on, Li Yao went on a rampage on the virtual matching platform.

Since he had a winning rate of more than 90% in the first day and defeated Lone Walker, who was a minor celebrity, his challenge requests were much less frequently refused than previously.

However, Li Yao didn't cling to the Eight Arm Suit. He also tried some twenty classic battlesuits of the Flying Star Sector so that he could know the shortcomings of his opponents better.

He had employed the same tactic. At first, he resisted the stormy attacks of the experts of the Flying Star Sector with his amazing defense ability, while he observed their seemingly immaculate movements until he found the brief opening. Then, he made the best use of the environment and lured his opponent to carelessly enlarge their opening. Eventually, he finished his opponent with a regular move in just one attack!

Very soon, the name of 'Vulture' spread out in the virtual matching platform just like 'Fiend Star' did a few days prior.

In the comment section, many people were discussing the mysterious Vulture and speculating about his real identity.

Some other people were wondering why he never resorted to any skill cards but simply secured his victory with the most rudimental moves.

There were even people who considered his attacks as models to study.

The attention that he attracted surprised Li Yao. In the coming few days, he adjusted his capability on purpose. During the matches, he intentionally ignored many deadly openings that he discovered and simply kept them in mind.

Sometimes, he slowed down and was struck by many attacks that he could've avoided in order to build up his resistance ability.

His winning rate was maintained at around 65%. Among the Building Foundation Stage Cultivators, he was among the better ones but definitely not the best. It was enough for him to challenge most of the top experts without causing too much suspicion.

In the meantime, he was still exchanging ideas with his fellow Cultivators in the Q&A zone under the name of 'Fiend Star' with the title of 'Specialist in classical refining theories'.

Over the one month, Li Yao had a great time. His capability in theory and in practical combat both soared exponentially.

Then, the Thousand Sails Space Zone was within their reach.

"We are arriving in the Thousand Sails Space Zone!"

Starting from executing the space pirates of Storm Prison, it had taken them more than three months to cruise through the Dim Flame Belt on the battered Gold Horn all the way to the Thousand Sails Space Zone, the camp for all the free Exos.

Counting from the time when Great Horn Exo Society signed the contract with a bag of rice as payment, it had almost been half a year.

Travelling in the sea of stars could prove to be a long and tedious journey. Now that their destination was drawing near, everyone on board was ecstatic. Even Li Yao felt excited, too.

Before he had the chance to bellow in exhilaration, Zhao Nuo and the other young warriors of the Tiger Killer Camp jumped on him. He was bearhugged by almost ten muscular men!

"Brother Yao, we finally made it!"

"We've reached the Thousand Sails Space Zone!"

"Hahahaha. Hot spring, hard liquor, beautiful girls, I'm coming for you all!"

The room they were in was surrounded by a circular light beam. As if the shell of the starship had melted all of a sudden, everyone was placed in the middle of the sea of stars.

Unfolding in front of everyone's eyes was a space zone that was extremely lively. Starships, star fortresses, and asteroids were everywhere. Silver metal membranes extended from all the man-made celestial bodies. Their coverage was hundreds of times larger than the area of the object they were attached to. Reflecting colorful brilliances, they were like sails made of rainbows.

They were also how the Thousand Sails Space Zone got its name.

Sails were unnecessary during a voyage in the sea of stars. Even if one wanted to make use of the energy stored in the cosmic storms, they usually wouldn't resort to sails because meteoroid showers were often mixed inside the cosmic storms which could wreck the sails of the starship easily.

However, inside the Thousand Sails Space Zone, there were dozens of belts where spiritual energy was extremely dense. They were like rivers of spiritual energy. The magical equipment that opened up like sails was meant to gather spiritual gas from them.

Spiritual gas was not visible to the human eye, but it could be detected by special crystal cameras. The light beam around the room blinked. A few translucent bright belts appeared and floated in the dark space. They were various colors and flowed slowly like brooks in the universe.

Gold Horn had been installed with a set of 'sails' that could gather spiritual energy in the previous supply point. Right now, the device was slowly opened up, too.

Eight silver-white metal membranes that were dozens of kilometers long and carved with complicated rune arrays protruded out of the starship and shivered in a fixed frequency, while the starship dashed into a bluish river of spiritual energy!

Hum! Hum!

The metal membranes fluctuated and started collecting spiritual energy.

The spiritual energy drifting in space was captured by the rune arrays on the metal membranes, transmitted into their veins, transformed in a series of complicated reactions, and drawn into the room through various tubes.

Chi—

The sprinklers on the ceiling of the room was turned on. The purest spiritual energy was condensed and formed into countless beads which sprayed out and bathed everyone in the luminosity of spiritual energy!

"Nice! Nice! Nice!"

Li Yao trembled violently. After the battle against Skeleton Dragon, the leap between two worlds, and the virtual yet fierce competitions that he participated in within the Flying Star Sector, his every cell was exclaiming in joy, and he couldn't feel better with the refreshing shower of spiritual energy.

Everyone nearby was yelling, shouting, and dancing, their fatigue all gone.

"No wonder the Thousand Sails Space Zone has become the camp for all the free Exos. A vacation in such a natural paradise after bloody battles is indeed the most enjoyable thing in the world!

"I'm told that, in the hotels of certain places of interest within the Thousand Sails Space Zone, there are two faucets in each room. One of them gives water, while the other spurts spiritual gas continuously when it is turned on! What a spectacular view it must be!"

A brand-new light beam gradually unfolded in front of everyone, displaying beautiful scenic spots, natural paradises, fully-equipped maintenance workshops, refining rooms, magical equipment stores, and arenas and matching places of various kinds one after another.

All the information eventually gathered into a line of shining gold words:

"Welcome to the Thousand Sails Space Zone, where dreams come true!"

Chapter 480: Skyhill Sword Seminar

Chapter 480: Skyhill Sword Seminar

The Thousand Sails Space Zone was indeed a place where dreams began.

Since the place was a camp for all the free Exos, many Exo Societies, while travelling in the sea of stars, would bring adolescents living in remote areas who had absolutely nothing except ambitions back here.

In this place, the young men could receive offers and work in several Exo Societies while they underwent their training.

When they thought that they were capable enough, they could take part in the various matches held in the Thousand Sails Space Zone or the entrance tests of the Cultivation sects which would immediately recruit them after they passed the exam.

Other than that, a lot of bounty missions were often announced in this place, too.

For those who were able, their future would be the last thing they needed to worry about after they arrived in the Thousand Sails Space Zone. The best of them often considered the Thousand Sails Space Zone as a platform to leap forward to Heavenly Saints City, the holy land of Cultivation in the Flying Star Sector!

It was exactly the path that Li Yao was going to walk on.

After the carnival, he returned to his cabin alone and connected to the local Spiritual Nexus of the Thousand Sails Space Zone with his crystal processor.

He had been informed by Lei Dalu that there was a virtual place named 'Dream Square' in the Spiritual Nexus of the Flying Star Sector. The sector's latest news would always be updated there, including anything from sect transfer to employment, from entrance tests to the registration procedures for matches, and so on.

Shua!

Li Yao activated the Half-Step Great Illusionary Land mode and entered the Dream Square. He immediately appeared in a metropolis that was packed with people and vehicles. There were hundreds of thousands of citizens as far as one's eyes could see, making the city livelier than anyone could imagine.

By scanning the information streams, one could also log in to the Dream Square, with an even higher efficiency in the information processing.

However, the travelers to the place had all drifted alone in the bleak, cold cosmos for a long time. They had been faced with zigzagged pathways, narrow cabins, and hundreds of old faces all day.

Joining a crowd of hundreds of thousands of people gave them the feeling that they were still part of society. It was a psychological need as well as the best comfort after a long journey of solitude.

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao looked around. Dozens of skyscrapers were standing around the square which were displaying advertisements made of mystic rays, including a transfer agency, talents fair, information exchange center, sign-up locations for matches, and registration places for the entrance tests of various sects. There were also a lot of educational institutions such as formal universities, community colleges, vocational schools, and training centers of Cultivators.

Li Yao was almost dazzled by what he had seen. He was having trouble deciding what to do next, when a streak of greenness suddenly darted close from afar and condensed into a sneaky, short man who observed his clothes, especially the badge on his chest. Then, the guy's eyes shined while he said with a smile, "Is my fellow Cultivator from the Great Horn Exo Society?"

Li Yao hadn't changed his clothing when he entered the Dream Square; he was still wearing his real-life clothes. There was an emblem of a gold bull horn on his chest. Therefore, his identity was recognized without much trouble.

Before Li Yao opened his mouth, the short man continued rapidly, "Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Hao Lingtong, and I am a disciple of the Falcon Hunter Sect. As for what I do for a living… Haha. I'm a headhunter. It is my responsibility to help excellent geniuses such as yourself find a suitable sect. Of course, I also have in my pocket the requirements of dozens of Cultivation sects who are all horny, no, hoping to hire more talents. If my fellow Cultivator has a certain sect that you would like to join, I will definitely help you get the best package!"

Headhunter?

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. Then he smiled. "You don't even know who I am, and yet you are sure that I'm an 'excellent genius'?"

Hao Lingtong rolled his eyes and replied, "It's true that I don't have the privilege of knowing your name yet, but the Great Horn Exo Society has become quite famous recently. Travelling through more than ten space zones, slaying space pirates of Storm Prison, breaking into the Dim Flame Belt, and luckily surviving the space swirl caused by a True Fusion in the end. It was an unbelievable miracle!

"The entire Thousand Sails Space Zone, or rather, all the Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector, have heard your name! I'm told that many media outlets are waiting in line to interview you!

"As a member of the Great Horn Exo Society, after all you've been through, you are definitely an experienced warrior regardless of your Cultivation. Many Cultivation sects are in need of seasoned hands such as yourself!

"Don't hurry to turn me down yet. Whatever your reason for coming to the Dream Square is, it won't cost you anything to listen to my introduction for half a minute, will it?"

Hao Lingtong waved his hands. Multiple light beams appeared around him, and countless information streams poured down, as he explained casually, "Look. This one. Dual Poles Island. 27 posts are open for talents of various backgrounds, including tutor for saber arts, public relations officer, accountant, and chef. Even if you are just a cook of the Great Horn Exo Society, you can be sold at a high price with my help!

"Look at this one, Red Glow Sect. It has excavated an asteroid with enormous mother lodes and established a new branch and a new route for it. Right now, it is recruiting guards for the route. As long as you sign the contract, apart from the salary, you will be free to read 70% of the books and Cultivation arts of the Red Glow Sect. It is very suitable for you!"

A plump, middle-aged female Cultivator whose arms were blinking in redness floated close. She glared at him and yelled, "Hey hey hey, Hao Lingtong, you again! We have rules that forbid anybody from opening personal light beams inside the square. Do you not know? So many people are coming and going. You are blocking everybody's way!"

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry, Sister Sun. I've met a true talent and got really excited. Turning it off, I'm turning it off!"

Hao Lingtong reduced the light beam to the size of the palm and handed it to Li Yao's nose. He said, somewhat embarrassedly, "My fellow Cultivator, what do you think…"

Li Yao was amused. He had no opinions about headhunters, but Hao Lingtong did not look like a proper headhunter at all. It was quite likely that the guy was merely a middleman who gathered information and earned money on both sides.

However, such a person must be a native of the Thousand Sails Space Zone and have a lot of connections. Li Yao thought for a while and said, "How about this? I'll pay you five hundred Flying Star dollars for ten minutes of your time. You will give me information that I'm interested in. If the duration of our conversation exceeds the limit, I will pay you a hundred Flying Star dollars for every extra minute."

Hao Lingtong blinked and said, "Deal!"

The two of them moved to the edge of Dream Square, where it was less populated. Li Yao pondered for a moment and asked, "I'm a refiner, and I've completed most of the fundamental training sessions. Now, I want to get in touch with the most up-to-date, state-of-the-art theories and techniques, preferably the more practical ones. I also want to communicate with other experts in Heavenly Saints City more often and improve my capability as soon as possible. Are there any places that I can go to?"

Hao Lingtong quickly tapped his light beam. A lot of new information immediately popped up. He answered, "Of course there are. There is everything in the Thousand Sails Space Zone!

"Speaking of the most up-to-date, state-of-the-art theories and techniques, the best places to go to are, of course, Flying Star University and Heavenly Saints Institute. My fellow Cultivator, you said that you've completed the fundamental training sessions. I assume that you are older than twenty? If you don't want to take the exam, you may consider applying for the graduate schools of the two colleges to be a graduate student of a certain professor!

"The two best colleges are home to some of the sector's greatest Cultivators. Many professors there are Core Formation Stage or even Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. To be their graduate students is like being the 'true disciples' in the ancient Cultivation world! You'll definitely have access to the most advanced theories!

"May I ask what my fellow Cultivator's degree is?"

Li Yao coughed and said, pretending to be cool, "I'm a self-taught student."

"Self-taught? Well, well, it's not a big deal. There are many Cultivators who have undergone fortuitous incidents and become real experts. Many professors do not mind the degree when they are recruiting graduate students! Look, this is a list of the professors related to refining in the two supreme colleges and their respective admittance information.

Li Yao glanced through it and noticed that most avatars on the list were grey, indicating that the professors all had certain demands on the degree.

For those who had no requirements on the degree, their academic level was relatively low, and the fields they worked on were rather unpopular, too.

It was true that fortuitous incidents happened to a lot of Cultivators, but such persons were often less scrupulous during their Cultivation due to the lack of a formal, academic education.

For such Cultivators, it was often suggested that they receive at least two to three years of formal education in a college. If they were really prodigies, they would distinguish themselves very easily.

Li Yao was aware of the importance of a formal education, but his time was too limited. He did not want to waste a few years on the rudimental subjects in a college.

"Anything else?"

"Yes, yes. Other than the two supreme colleges, many schools and agencies also provide opportunities for further training. Moreover, the six major sects of Heavenly Saints City have public entrance tests. If you can join one of the sects, you will be able to get in touch with the latest Cultivation theories for sure! And these…"

Li Yao skimmed through the information and was not satisfied by any of them.

Other schools apart from the two supreme colleges did not deserve his time. Joining one of the six major sects meant that he would be bound by the daily trifles of the sect. Besides, none of the six major sects were particularly famous for refining. They all had too many departments and complicated personnel. It would take him at least a year and a half to figure out the details of the sect.

"What is this?"

Li Yao raised his eyebrow and zoomed in.

It was a piece of information about a match. 'Skyhill Sword Seminar' would be held in a world fragment named 'Skyhill Domain' in one month.

What interested Li Yao was that the match was co-hosted by Iron School, Silver Heart School, and Red Line School, three main crystal suit centers of the Flying Star Sector!

Li Yao knew that the six major sects were the unquestionable kings in regard of manpower.

But when it came to refining crystal suits, the three centers were definitely on top.

The three main crystal suit centers boasted the best refiners of the Flying Star Sector. They also had deep ties with the two supreme colleges and almost monopolized the manufacturing of classic crystal suits in the Flying Star Sector.

Even the six major sects and the five best arenas had outsourced a lot of their crystal suits to the three main crystal suit centers!

Hao Lingtong explained, "Skyhill Sword Seminar is an annual event of the Thousand Sails Space Zone co-hosted by the three main crystal suit centers. It is open to all the young refiners below the age of forty.

"As its name 'Sword Seminar' suggests, the subject of the match is to refine melee magical equipment such as sabers or swords!

"Although contestants of the match are all young refiners, the winners every year often receive special offers from the three main crystal suit centers. The top three even have the opportunity to join the star projects of the three crystal suit centers and work with the renowned pillars of our age!

"Therefore, countless eligible refiners crowd in every year. There are too many geniuses to count. It is a mind-blowing match!"

Chapter 481: Noble Families of Refining

Chapter 481: Noble Families of Refining

Seeing that Li Yao was greatly interested, Hao Lingtong hesitated. "My fellow Cultivator, if you just want to open your eyes, joining the Skyhill Sword Seminar may be a great choice. But if you want to be one of the winners and thus enter one of the three main crystal suit center, then I suggest you give it a second thought.

"Skyhill Sword Seminar is a match of the highest level in regard to melee magical equipment. Every year, there are as many young refiners signing up for the match as the number of hairs on your body, every one of them craving to become famous in one shot!

"Among them, there are many rightful heirs of the ancient refining families who have the knowledge that has been passed on in their family for thousands of years. They hardly call themselves refiners; they prefer to be known as 'Sword Forgers'!"

Li Yao's eyes suddenly shone.

The sword was the ancestor of all weapons. In the ancient Cultivation world, flying swords represented all magical equipment. 'Sword Forger' was a vintage title. It was also indicative of the deep knowledge of the families of refining.

Hao Lingtong continued, "Other than those who were born in the families of refining, the rest of the contestants are not easy to deal with, either. Same as you, most of them have been training in Cultivation sects and Exo Societies for many years. They whetted their sword for ten years so that it could burst out the most dazzling sparks in the Skyhill Sword Seminar!"

Li Yao said, "I only want to know one thing. Are the top ten of the match guaranteed to enter one of the three main crystal suit centers and the top three the core projects?"

Hao Lingtong nodded his head and said, "Of course. The purpose of the Skyhill Sword Seminar is to introduce new blood into the three crystal suit centers. The talented refiners who ranked top three last year were hired by the three centers and became participants of the projects to develop the most advanced crystal suits of the Flying Star Sector!"

Li Yao's lips curled. He was best at refining battle sabers. The Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber and the Purple Electric Blue Fire Claw that he had made were as good as the high-end magical equipment of the Flying Star Sector.

Iron School, Silver Heart School, and Red Line School. The three centers stand for the most up-to-date technologies on crystal suits in the Flying Star Sector. Joining their key projects will not only allow me to get in touch with the most cutting-edge magical equipment of the Flying Star Sector but also give me a great opportunity to improve my skills in refining!

It's decided then. I will participate in the Skyhill Sword Seminar, make it to the top three, and fight my way into Heavenly Saints City!

After offering payment to Hao Lingtong via the Spiritual Nexus, Li Yao walked to the closest teleportation array.

Since it was a virtual world, the teleportation array here was merely symbolic. There were no restrictions on the number of people or the distance.

After inputting his destination, in the blink of an eye, Li Yao appeared in a splendid temple.

Large life-like paintings of fierce battles were drawn on the walls around. Cultivators, demonic Cultivators, and demons were fighting in chaos. One seemed able to hear the cries and the intense stink of blood.

Countless flying swords and battle sabers were floating in midair. They congregated into a steel torrent and flowed slowly.

It was the online registration spot of the Skyhill Sword Seminar.

Inside the temple, almost a hundred young men were idling around, with faces mixed with confusion and excitement. They did not want to sign up in a hurry and preferred to chat with their fellow Cultivators first.

Most of them came from the remote areas just like Li Yao. Having the privilege to come to the lively Thousand Sails Space Zone and take part in an annual event such as the Skyhill Sword Seminar, they felt like everything was new to them.

Several other young men in glamorous clothes, who were much calmer and more elegant, were smiling vaguely. They formed a small group and talked to each other in a low voice. Now and then, chuckles would burst out from there.

They were probably the heirs of the families of refining.

Dozens of receptionists were handling the registration procedures.

Since there were too many people signing up for the match, a screening was necessary to eliminate most refiners that did not meet the lowest standard.

It was a job that could not be done by the crystal processor. Therefore, all the staff here were real people.

Some of them were from the three main crystal suit centers, and some were the college students from the Refining Departments of various universities who were working as volunteers.

Just as Li Yao was planning to sign up, the crowd was suddenly stirred into a riot. The graceful heirs of the families of refining who'd been talking among themselves were all exclaiming in shock like roosters whose necks had been clutched.

Li Yao turned around and found that a handsome young man was stepping out of the teleportation array slowly.

The young man was wearing a pale blue robe. His face was grave. His long hair was bound casually by a thorn branch. On his robe was carved with a somewhat rigid word: 'Mo'.

"Family of Mo! Mo Tianshui!"

"It's been seven years. Finally, an heir from the Family of Mo, the family of refining that has lasted for thousands of years, is taking part in the Skyhill Sword Seminar again! Great news!"

"Seven years ago, Mo Hongxue, the eldest son of the generation, took part in the Skyhill Sword Seminar and secured the victory with a 'Snowy Sky Sword' which broke the blades of all his opponents easily. It was quite a shocking piece of news back then. Right now, he is already a master of melee weapon refinement in the 'Silver Heart School'!"

"But Mo Hongxue has stated many times that he is only the second most talented in the youngest generation of the Family of Mo. Mo Tianshui, his youngest brother, is the greatest pride of their family!"

"I'm told that Huangpu Xiaoya, the most excellent Sword Forger in the younger generation of the Huangpu family, signed up the other day, too. Now that Mo Tianshui has come too, the two sword forging families that have been competing for thousands of years will have yet another drama. Two stars are going to shine in the Skyhill Sword Seminar this year. The competition is going to be fierce!"

"Mo Tianshui and Huangpu Xiaoya are both geniuses of geniuses. Which of the two is going to secure the victory and be honored to be the 'Sword Master' of this Skyhill Sword Seminar?"

All the descendants of the renowned families were bouncing like loaches that had been poured into hot water.

For the young people from the remote areas of the sea of stars, they might not know the names of Mo Tianshui and Huangpu Xiaoya, but they'd all heard too much about the Mo family and the Huangpu family, the two strongest sword forging families of the Flying Star Sector. Therefore, they crowded toward Mo Tianshui in a flurry, too.

Li Yao took the opportunity to walk to the reception desk that had been emptied.

If it were in reality, he might be rushing forward to observe Mo Tianshui, at least Mo Tianshui's hands, too.

However, since he was in a Great Illusionary Land, many details could be concealed easily. He wouldn't be able to find anything anyway. Therefore, he might as well to finish the registration quickly and find a suitable place for his training.

Li Yao stopped in front of a young girl whose hair was in two ponytails.

The girl was craning her head gazing at Mo Tianshui's direction in admiration, while she mumbled, "Senior Brother Mo is just as handsome as the old days. Come on and sign up here. Come on!"

The young girl was named Xie Anan. She was a freshman student of the Refining Department of Flying Star University.

Since it was her holiday, she had been assigned by her professor to work as volunteer in the Skyhill Sword Seminar.

This was a tradition of Flying Star University. In such a way, the freshman students would be able to get in touch with the experts in refining at a close distance, so that they would be able to open their eyes and get more knowledge.

Mo Tianshui was also a student of the Refining Department of Flying Star University. He was a celebrity on campus. The six major sects had been fighting for him before he graduated.

But he picked none of them. Instead, he had chosen to prove his capability through the Skyhill Sword Seminar, hoping to join the core projects of the three main crystal suit centers directly!

Xie Anan had known that Senior Brother Xie would sign up this year. However, more than a hundred thousand contestants applied for the Skyhill Sword Seminar. Therefore, almost a hundred virtual registration spots on the Spiritual Nexus. Once the applicants logged in to the Nexus, they would be channeled to different registration spots.

As it turned out, Senior Brother Mo had indeed shown up at her registration spot. Xie Anan's heart was pounding, and her head was dizzy. She was close to lunging at the handsome and strong senior brother like a cat.

However…

Reality is always far from dream. Standing in front of her was not her handsome Senior Brother Mo, but a young man with a pale skin. His hollowed eyes made him somewhat attractive, but his messy hair and continuous yawning that apparently resulted from lack of sleep had completely wrecked his image.

Xie Anan calmed herself down. The workers there had all received professional training and wouldn't make the mistake of judging other people by their appearances. More importantly, what they saw in the Great Illusionary Land might not be their real faces at all!

Xie Anan put on a warm smile and asked the applicant to fill in the basic information.

"Li Yao, born and raised in the edge of the sea of stars. He has been training alone in the relics of the ancient battlefields since he lost his parents when he was young. He was once enlightened by an exotic master and is now a refiner in the Great Horn Exo Society!"

The profile was indeed quite simple.

However, birth was only a minor factor for Cultivation. Everyone with a clean history was free to go wherever they wanted to. The Great Horn Exo Society had become quite famous recently. It wouldn't be hard to find out whether or not he was really from Great Horn.

Xie Anan smiled. "Fellow Cultivator Li, your profile is good. However, hundreds of thousands of people apply for the Skyhill Sword Seminar every year. We can't invite every one of them to the match in the Skyhill Domain. Therefore, a test has been prearranged. I hope you understand.

"The test is simple. There are test rooms all around the temple. You will enter the No. 11 test room in a moment. Three hundred structure designs of melee magical equipment will fall down from the ceiling.

"Some of the three hundred kinds of magical equipment are stronger than the rest. What you need to do is to pick the strongest ten within one minute.

"If you've found them correctly, you will receive an invitation for the Skyhill Sword Seminar immediately.

"If your final answer is incorrect, it is not a big deal. We will sum up the power of the magical equipment that you picked. As long as your total sum ranks among the top three thousand, you will still receive the invitation later.

"Is there a problem?"

Li Yao shook his head and walked to the No. 11 test room.

Xie Anan cast her affectionate eyes toward Senior Brother Mo again, with butterflies in her stomach. Senior Brother was so handsome. So gentle, so graceful. He looked like an ancient sword forging master from forty thousand years ago who had walked out of a painting!

Right then, she seemed to have been hit by a lightning. Her hair all stood up, and her eyes froze.

"What did I say just now? One minute or ten?

"Crap! I should've said ten minutes. Picking the strongest ten from three hundred structure designs within one minute? How is it possible?

"No biggie. No biggie. There is a countdown inside the test room. Even the most stupid refiner should know that the time for the test is ten minutes!"

While she was mumbling to herself, Li Yao had already walked out of the test room, still yawning nonstop.

Xie Anan immediately put on a bitter face. She looked at the monitoring light beam nearby and discovered that the fool had only used 55 seconds!

"Crap. Allowing the same applicant to take a second test requires clearances of a higher level. I'm going to be scolded by the professor!"

Xie Anan grimaced and was about to apologize, when her face froze over again. Her mouth was opened to such an extent that one might be able to stuff an egg into it.

"Ten pieces of magical equipment have been locked. No. 14, No. 56, No. 9, No. 267…

"Correct answer rate: 100%. Passed!"

Chapter 482: Every Party Has an Ending

Chapter 482: Every Party Has an Ending

Xie Anan blinked hard to ensure that her eyes were not deceiving her. Thousands of thoughts were rolling through her heart.

She was aware that, although the three hundred structure designs were all common magical equipment on the market and the well-trained refiners should've memorized their standard damage long ago, the foxy masters of the three main crystal suit centers had set up minor traps in them!

The examiners had adjusted 28 structure designs subtly by improving the power of 13 of them by ten percent and reducing the power of the other 15 by different levels!

Over the past few days, Xie Anan had seen hundreds of seasoned refiners who had fallen into the traps.

Within one minute, the guy had seen through all the traps and located the ten correct structure designs? How was it possible?

Xie Anan carefully observed Li Yao's test result, only to be all the more dumbfounded than previously.

She discovered that Li Yao's test result was ordered by the adjusted standard damage of the magical equipment from large to small.

The only explanation was that he had calculated the precise power of each piece of magical equipment by just glancing at the structure designs!

How incredible that was!

For a moment, Xie Anan completely forgot Senior Brother Mo's existence. She bulged her eyes and gazed at Li Yao.

Li Yao frowned. "Is there a problem?"

Xie Anan was suddenly back to herself. She blushed and shook her head quickly, "No. No. Li… Senior Brother Li, you've successfully passed the test. This is your invitation card. Please input your personal identification pattern."

Li Yao accepted the invitation card and noticed that it was a tiny bronze sword like the ancient currency. It was in a vintage style and carved with complicated runes.

Li Yao condensed his telepathic thoughts and bound his unique spiritual wave to the invitation card. The tiny bronze sword blinked and emitted green, watery brilliance.

Xie Anan closed her hands. The tiny bronze sword was immediately divided into two halves. She gave one half to Li Yao.

The invitation card actually included a special telepathic thought, dyed with the host's and Li Yao's unique identification information. When the two parts were gathered again, it would be easy to tell whether or not the applicant had come in person.

Then, Xie Anan gave Li Yao a contestant manual carved on bamboo wood. The entire registration procedure was completed.

As Li Yao walked to and vanished in the teleportation array, she craned her head higher and higher, with curiosity inside his eyes.

Xie Anan decided that, other than focusing on Senior Brother Mo in the Skyhill Sword Seminar, she could spare, like, 5% of her time to observe this mysterious Li Yao.

It was possible that he could march into the final competition!

…

Five days later, inside Dual Ring Hall…

Dual Ring Hall was a professional sect that focused on the refinement and maintenance of starships.

It was headquartered inside the Thousand Sails Space Zone on a star fortress like two rings.

Looked at from afar, the star fortress was like two giant wheels that were dozens of kilometers in diameter. They were connected by the spokes and span slowly.

In the middle of the two rings was a dock where almost ten ragged starships were parked.

Countless refiners in maintenance suits were entering and exiting the starships as busy as bees. Thousands of artificial arms also extended out of the two rings and conducted the maintenance work amid dazzling sparks.

It was the place where Gold Horn was being fully maintained and modified.

On a platform that protruded out of the living zone, there was a cabin whose walls were made of Leaf Water Crystals, which were the purest high-intensity materials in the Flying Star Sector as invisible as air. Together with the adjusted gravity, one would feel that they were standing in the middle of the universe when they were inside the cabin.

Looking to the outside from there, one would easily notice that the twisted shell of Gold Horn had been dismantled. The enormous artificial arms were consolidating the keel and the framework of the starship.

Very soon, power rune arrays and crystal railguns with higher performances would be installed. By then, Gold Horn would be back to life again.

"It was not a bad deal after all!"

Li Yao and Lei Dalu stood on the protruding platform and appreciated the rebirth of Gold Horn.

Lei Dalu grinned. "Although Gold Horn was shattered, we've earned our fame in the world of Cultivators. The reporters a few days ago were like hungry dogs! There was absolutely no way to get rid of them.

"It's all good now. We've received a huge amount of patronage and new loans from the banks. Gold Horn has been fully upgraded, with its combat ability doubled. Nice!"

Li Yao smiled. "Captain, there are conditions for the sponsorship. Not only do we have to use designated magical equipment during our modification, we also have to paint their advertisement on the shell of the starship. I've seen the demos of the advertisements. To be honest, they are a little bit too fancy."

"What's wrong with that!" Lei Dalu replied, apparently not taking it seriously, "The commercials are proper magical equipment. Flying swords, crystal suits, and such. None of them are philters. They can paint whatever they want. Then again, if they really want to paint commercials about aphrodisiacs, we are always open to negotiations as long as the price is high enough!"

"I bet we are."

Li Yao smiled. Then it was awkward silence.

He had come to say goodbye to Lei Dalu.

His days in the Great Horn Exo Society were over. The Great Horn Exo Society would stay here for another half month and embark on new quests after Gold Horn was reborn.

Their previous adventure had brought them unimaginable popularity as well as new contracts. This time, the reward was no longer a bag of rice, but boxes of jingling high-purity crystals.

As for Li Yao, he would rent a personal training chamber near the Skyhill Domain and do last-minute preparations in order to distinguish himself in the Skyhill Sword Seminar. All so he could enter Heavenly Saints City and meet the highest Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector.

"Don't idle around here. Go now. Skyhill Sword Seminar is not a regular match. Make best use of your time in training and get a prize! Everyone in the Great Horn Exo Society will watch the live stream if they are not on duty. You must make it at least to the top hundred!"

Lei Dalu patted his shoulder hard.

Li Yao had mixed feelings.

Although he hadn't been with them for very long, he had gone through life and death with them. He could tell that everyone inside the Great Horn Exo Society, including Lei Dalu, Xiong Tao, Zhao Nuo, and the young fellows in the Tiger Killer Camp, really considered him to be a comrade and one of their own.

Sometimes, he was even thinking that, if the Heaven's Origin Sector weren't waiting for him, he would definitely go with the passionate men of the Great Horn Exo Society. Roaming in the sea of stars, drinking the hardest liquor, slashing the fastest saber, slaying the deadliest space pirates… Such a life would indeed be fulfilling!

While he was pondering, he suddenly felt that somebody touched his clothes. Lei Dalu had put something into his pocket and smiled. "Cultivation is costly. Nothing inside the Thousand Sails Space Zone is cheap. There is two hundred grand inside the card. Take it and consider it the salary for your job here. If it is not enough, just talk to me via the Spiritual Nexus at any time!

"Don't be polite. This is a convention of our Society that has been well carried out since it was established."

"Convention?" Li Yao was confused.

Lei Dalu looked at the sea of stars outside the window and said casually, "You might not know why the victims of space pirates gathered and created the Great Horn Exo Society.

"Seeking revenge against the space pirates is just one of our purposes. Revenge can be achieved anywhere. We could've joined a stronger Exo Society, or a Cultivation sect, or even become a solo bounty hunter in the sea of stars.

"No. Our original purpose was to provide a shelter for the orphans who lost their home and family under the scourge of space pirates so that they could have a brighter future. That's all.

"Therefore, we accepted all kinds of contracts. The money we earned has been used to take care of the orphans. The 'Tiger Killer Camp' was established so that the orphans could have a place to train themselves to learn the skills of space survival and even to avenge their own family in person!

"After the orphans gradually grew up, we encouraged them to take part in the matches and the entrance tests of Cultivation sects. We tried to send them out to a vaster world and set them on a more promising path.

"Over the past ten years, we've brought up a lot of prodigies and sent them all out. Right now, they are scattered in the sea of stars living a whole new life in various universities, colleges, and Cultivation sects.

"To be honest, it is not slaying the space pirates that I'm happiest about after all these years.

"What I'm happiest about is that an orphan who might've embraced darkness after the assault of space pirates and the loss of their family has shifted to a brighter world with the help of Great Horn.

"Your case is a bit different, but since it is a convention of the Society, don't refuse it.

"Of course, if one day you earn your fame and fortune and become the well-respected master of refining, I certainly won't say no to your millions or even billions of donations to Great Horn. You won't get one coin back! Haha!

Lei Dalu's words greatly touched Li Yao.

He had been curious for a long time. In the Great Horn Exo Society, Lei Dalu was a Core Formation Stage Cultivator, Xiong Tao and Bai Kaixin both boasted amazing capability, and Ye Lingdie, the chief gunner in charge of all remote magical equipment, was a terrifying expert gunfighter.

With such impressive leadership, plus so many well-trained experienced Exos, how come the Great Horn Exo Society was still a second-rate group after so many years and only had a medium size starship?

As it turned out, Great Horn had devoted most of its resources to the education and training of the orphans and sent all of them for further development after they grew up!

Li Yao felt warm. He touched the gold bull horn emblem on his chest and looked at Lei Dalu in the eyes. "Captain, although I will be away from Great Horn, I will never forget the days I spent with our brothers on Gold Horn. I will gladly accept your generosity and cut the thank-you crap. There is only one thing that I want to say. No matter when and where, if Great Horn is in need of anything, I will definitely do my best!"

"I'm leaving!

"Just watch the live stream on the Spiritual Nexus in a month and a half. I will be participating in the match as 'Li Yao of Great Horn', and I'm going to crush everything standing in my way!"

Chapter 483: Bai Kaixin's Secret

Chapter 483: Bai Kaixin's Secret

Five minutes after Li Yao left, Bai Kaixin walked up to Lei Dalu without a sound, his face even gloomier. A dam seemed to be about to collapse in the middle of his eyebrow.

"It has just been confirmed that Fengyu Zhong has gone mad. He announced astronomical bounties on Spider Den and wants each and every member of the Great Horn Exo Society killed. According to his original words, even a flea on our starship should not be left alive! Also, whoever finds the true murderer of his son, dead or alive, will be rewarded with a starship!

"Right now, the entire Spider Den is seething. Countless space pirates, assassins, thieves, and spies consider us their targets!"

Lei Dalu scratched his messy beard and said slowly, "It's quite understandable. His only son has been killed. If Fengyu Zhong doesn't respond properly, how is he ever going to hang around with other people on Spider Den?

"However, the relationship between the Exo Societies and the space pirates has never been good. The top Exo Societies have all been attacked by space pirates before. Their fame was earned not by showing off, but by fighting in blood!

"Fengyu Zhong wants vengeance, so be it. The most important thing about us Cultivators is the size of our fists and the sharpness of our swords!

"We both know the reason we received so many donations, commercials, and loans and why the experts of the Dual Ring Sect have been working day and night to strengthen Gold Horn. The Great Horn Exo Society's situation is clear to everybody. That's why they've been supporting us so that the combat ability of Gold Horn can be doubled within half a month.

"Fengyu Zhong is a stray dog himself. I don't know how many experts are waiting to chop off his head. This time, he has set us as his target. But in my opinion, he is a mantis at best, which is being chased after by the sparrows!

"Anyway, don't be so nervous. We can't stay in the Thousand Sails Space Zone forever just because somebody is hunting us. If we unfortunately run into Fengyu Zhong, we'll simply fight him; if we unfortunately fail, we'll simply run away; if we are unfortunately captured, we'll simply die!"

Bai Kaixin's lips curled rigidly as he put on an ugly smile. "Everything seems to be extraordinarily simple in your mouth."

Lei Dalu plucked one of his whiskers and flicked it away softly. "I'm not a fan of deliberation; I prefer the simplest solutions to everything.

"However, don't bring the Tiger Killer Camp on our next mission. Send them to the Dual Poles Domain. Quite a few Cultivation sects are headquartered there. Space pirates will never carry out large-scale operations in that area. As for the excuse… Just find a training camp and ask them to train there for a couple of months. They can build up their bodies and wait until everything goes tranquil again."

Bai Kaixin nodded. "Alright. I'll see to it."

But he didn't leave. His eyes were rolling, suggesting that there was something else that he wanted to talk about.

Lei Dalu raised his eyebrow. "Anything else?"

Bai Kaixin was silent for a long time, before he opened his mouth again. "Why didn't you ask him just now?"

"Ask him what?"

"You know it."

"I forgot to."

"You forgot to?"

Bai Kaixin gnashed his teeth, his long white eyebrows shaking. "Do you not think there is something seriously wrong with Li Yao's story? Lived in a far-flung town, trained with a strange master alone, and grasped such terrifying refining skills?

"Moreover, his Cultivation level is too high! Uncle Xiong, Bai Ze, and I had a meeting after the incident. Back when we were in the Dim Flame Belt, to repair the spiritual shield generator so that we could run away from the True Fusion, the guy must've been in the Building Foundation Stage, however incredibly lucky he was!

"I can believe that someone's spiritual root was awakened through fortuitous incidents and turned them into a Refinement Stage Cultivator. But advancing into the

Building Foundation Stage without any tutelage? It's simply impossible!

"Okay, let's just say whatever the guy told us is true. But how do you explain what happened next?

"You offered him an Eight Arm Suit and assessed his sync rate to be 37%. Very soon, in the virtual matching platform in the World of Crystal Suits, a mysterious expert named 'Vulture' with a sync rate below 40% appeared out of nowhere and defeated many top experts in a row. The very first crystal suit that 'Vulture' wore was Eight Arm!"

Lei Dalu said, "So?"

Alertness filled Bai Kaixin's eyes, as he remarked, "So, don't you think that Li Yao might be the terrifying expert who really took Fengyu Ming down?"

"So?" Lei Dalu repeated.

"What else do you want?" Bai Kaixin turned anxious. "If he could sneak into Ghost Jail quietly, elicit the most important information from Fengyu Ming before slaying him, steal the enormous database from Ghost Jail's mainframe crystal processor effortlessly, and blow off half of the starship along the way—he would definitely be the craziest devil in the world!

"But such a devil has stayed on Gold Horn for quite a few months. Who is he exactly? What is his purpose? What changes will his existence bring to the Great Horn Exo Society? Shouldn't we figure all that out?

"When we escaped the Dim Flame Belt narrowly, I told you most of my suspicions, but it seems to me that you haven't done any investigation yet!"

Lei Dalu thought carefully for a while and nodded his head. "I do recall you said such things. But you know that there were too many things to do, and I was preoccupied. I had no time to deal with trivial matters like this. I forgot it!"

"Trivial? A monster of unknown background who could sabotage a starship on his own stayed on Gold Horn for quite a few months, and you think it was trivial?" Bai Kaixin was almost jumping.

"When we were recruiting new crew members, we had only one condition: they must grit their teeth through the surging tides and meteoroid showers and make it to the Thousand Sails Space Zone with us.

"Li Yao has done everything we demanded.

"During the couple of months while he was on board, he has completed every mission assigned to him perfectly. When we were passing through the Dim Flame Belt, all of us would've kicked the bucket without him.

"Now that you've carefully studied what happened inside the generator cabin, you should know that, even for a refiner at the Building Foundation Stage, it was still a perilous task in which he risked his life."

Lei Dalu's eyes suddenly turned extremely clear. He said, calmly but firmly, "We have fought side by side through life and death against the True Fusion and the space swirl, so Li Yao is my brother in my eyes and a real member of the Great Horn Exo Society.

"As for where he came from, who he is exactly, how many skills he is good at, whether he likes rice or buns, whether he likes guys or girls—it's none of my damn business.

"Every traveler in the sea of stars who struggled for a living has stories. If they want to tell us, they already will have; if they haven't, it means that they don't want to tell their story, cannot say it, and if they do, someone's feelings will be hurt.

"I'm a simple and lazy man. I never bothered to ask about Li Yao's past, just like I never bothered to ask why you have the spiritual tattoos of Spider Den on your body."

Bai Kaixin's fury was about to burst out when Lei Dalu's final words suddenly stifled his emotions. His long white eyebrows were entirely frozen.

Rigid for a long time, he collapsed as if an invisible armor around him was just shattered. His dry lips trembled as he said softly, "When did you find out?"

"I forgot."

"I'm not a space pirate."

"I believe you. The tattoo is rather fuzzy and twisted. It should've been made when you were very young, if not when you were just born."

"I had to."

"That's why I never asked to you confess anything. Hey hey hey, don't look like me with such heartbroken eyes, will you? Or is it that you've been wanting to tell us deep down in your heart but were too ashamed to speak? You want me to push you hard so that you can let your tears all out? You are not such an emotional guy, are you?"

Bai Kaixin glared at him and then smiled embarrassedly. "Why today?"

Lei Dalu's clear eyes only lasted briefly. His usual hippie expression returned as he said, "I didn't want to bring it up. I felt that it would be quite awkward to. However, your skills in acting are simply too bad. You were practically wearing a 'I-have-a-big-secret-in-my-heart-but-I-cannot-tell-it-to-you-otherwise-we-may-not-be-friends-anymore-please-do-not-ask-me-I-am-having-a-hard-time-holding-it-back-I-might-say-it-out-loud-if-you-really-ask-me' face every day. To be honest, every time I see your constipation-like countenance, I am always tempted to punch your nose and see if I can make the face even bitterer."

Bai Kaixin took a long, long breath. His face went peaceful again, but the gloom inside his eyes seemed to become much thinner. He nodded. "I understand. We will pursue the truth about Li Yao's background no further and be prepared for Storm Prison's reprisal instead."

"That's right!"

Lei Dalu plucked another whisker and rolled it over between his fingertips. Then he shot it out at the crystal glass, triggering an earsplitting noise. He declared, "Let them come. My fists have been hungered for a long time!"

…

Half a month later, in the Skyhill Domain…

This was a beautiful and splendid world fragment. The rare materials underground leaked into the water system over thousands of years. When they were brought out to the surface of the earth, they dyed the rivers and brooks bright silver. Among the hills, the silver streams were connected into a network; the stunning scenery was known as the 'Broken Silvers'. It was truly magnificent.

Such streams were not drinkable, but they were particularly suitable for sword-forging and refining.

Therefore, the Skyhill Domain was headquartered by many Cultivation sects and sword-forging families.

The magical equipment forged with the silver streams, especially the melee magical equipment such as sabers and swords, was valuable and popular in the Thousand Sails Space Zone.

The Skyhill Domain was not large, but there were almost a hundred enormous floating mountains in the sky, each of which were filled with zigzagged natural caves. People had been expanding the caves and increased the usable area of the Skyhill Domain by dozens of times. A lot of hills in the sky were thus formed. It was also how the Skyhill Domain got its name.

After hundreds of years of development, it had become one of the most important production bases of melee magical equipment in the Flying Star Sector.

It was a world of swords and an ocean of sabers as far as one's eyes could see. In the valleys and beside the rivers, refining furnaces, sword-forging pools, and countless sword tombs were everywhere, surrounded by bizarrely-shaped, coldly-shinning blades.

According to the ancient Cultivators, the sword tombs were established to allow the newly-forged blades to absorb the natural essence so that they could boast much more damage.

According to the theories of modern Cultivators, only by keeping newly-refined blades in a fixed position for some time—which reduced the inner stress before the refurbishment of the next phase—could the most marvelous blades be created after several years!

In the sky, many travelers were flying with glittering wings behind them.

Such a piece of personal magical equipment named 'Airfoil' was much more agile and exciting than shuttles. Many Cultivators preferred to utilize them for the transportation between the floating mountains.

On the side of one floating mountain, five magnificent words were carved into it: "Museum of Sabers and Swords'.

A dusty young man, with hollowed eyes, plain clothes, and a pair of extremely ugly gray gloves, walked into the museum slowly along with the crowd.

Chapter 484: Arriving in Skyhill

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"Welcome to the Skyhill Museum of Sabers and Swords. The Skyhill Domain is the largest refining base of melee magical equipment in the Flying Star Sector. The Skyhill Museum of Sabers and Swords is one of the most professional museums in that regard, too. I am your tour guide, and you can call me 'Sword Lady'!"

Three days before the annual Skyhill Sword Seminar, countless tourists and fans had arrived in the Skyhill Domain.

Most of the lovers of melee magical equipment would all take a tour in the well-known Skyhill Museum of Sabers and Swords. For the real lovers, it was even a sort of pilgrimage for them.

The spacious and bright museum was packed with people. Li Yao was pushed along with the crowd and was somewhat dizzy. Thankfully, there was a lovely girl dressed in red, floating in midair with a long sword on her back. She was the virtual tour guide of the museum.

"It is well known that, starting from the collapse of the ancient Cultivation world and the renaissance of human civilization, the refining of sabers and swords in our modern world has gone through four periods. The Aura Sword Hall that we are in represents the first period.

"Ten thousand years ago, modern Cultivation theories were still brewing. Cultivators' understanding of spiritual energy was still very lacking. Most of the Cultivators were in the Refinement Stage. Therefore, aura swords that were driven by high-pressure air currents were born. Please take a look, the most awesome aura swords at the time could compress one standard unit of spiritual gas to one hundredth its size, and when the spiritual gas was unleashed suddenly, the damage could be very impressive. Also, it could work as a jet and bring the Refinement Stage Cultivators who hadn't learned the mysteries of flying into the sky so that they could add height to their attacks, increasing the repertoire of moves.

"Our next stop, the Mechanical Sword Hall, represents the second period.

"Based on the aura swords, the refiners continued researching and finally combined spiritual energy with machines perfectly. All kinds of incredible blades were invented at the time. Theoretical models of chainswords, vibration sabers, as well as quite a lot other melee magical equipment were invented with during the time before they were successfully manufactured later! The melee magical equipment of this period only used spiritual energy as a source to drive the machines and provide revolution, vibration, cutting, and other effects; the spiritual energy was not part of the attack itself.

"We are going to enter the Hall of Compound Swords and Sabers now. Compound blades are also the most frequently-seen solutions for swords and sabers nowadays.

"Compound melee magical equipment usually boasts mechanical attack abilities like chains and vibrating edges. In the meantime, its spiritual energy could be condensed into an aura and attack the enemies directly. The double-attack pattern increases the range of attack significantly and also makes it much more difficult for the enemies to defend.

"Right now, in the Cultivation world, there are many kinds of melee magical equipment that were solely built up by spiritual energy, such as Light Sword and Spiritual Photon Battle Saber. They are the fourth-generation sabers and swords for us. Although there are still many flaws on the restriction models and trigger designs in such weapons right now, the advantages of blades made of pure spiritual energy are revealing themselves. Maybe soon enough, they will become mainstream in the Cultivation world!

"Other than the renowned sabers and swords of modern times, we are also exhibiting tremendous scraps of ancient flying swords. Now, everyone, please follow me to the 'Ancient Sword Hall'."

Li Yao spent the entire morning wandering around in the museum following the 'Sword Lady' and quite enjoyed himself.

After one month and a half's harsh training, it was a long-due relaxation, too.

Gulu...

Yet, as if trying to humiliate him, his stomach started rumbling, in a quite ear-catching fashion.

Many passers-by glanced at him weirdly, and when they noticed his peasant-like clothes, their eyes were even weirder.

Li Yao was not being pretentious; he was merely faced with an embarrassing problem: that he had run out of money.

A month and a half earlier, he could almost be called a millionaire. With the fortune he had looted from Fengyu Ming and the salary that Lei Dalu had paid him, he could've lived a comfortable life for a couple of years if he were an ordinary person.

However, the way Cultivators spent their money was not imaginable for everybody. It was especially so for Li Yao who had been training at the highest standard in preparation for the Skyhill Sword Seminar.

Putting the rent of his training chamber and refining workshop aside, putting the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures that he used up inside his training chamber aside, putting the strengthening drugs and medications he took every day aside, the specially-made 'Green Water Ointment' alone that he smeared on his hands to improve their sensitivity was costing him almost ten thousand Flying Star dollars on a daily basis!

After pouring millions of Flying Star dollars into it, the final result might be that the sensitivity of his fourth finger was improved by 0.1%.

But he didn't have a second option. One millimeter of difference between two top experts might determine the victory and failure of a match. A 0.1% sensitivity gap might mean the difference between the final 'Sword Master' and someone ranking in the fifties.

Li Yao had carefully studied the videos of the Skyhill Sword Seminars from the previous twenty years. He discovered that every one of the top thirty winners was an experienced refiner; especially those from the renowned sword-forging families, they all had immeasurable skills and were not easy to deal with at all.

The organizers of the Skyhill Sword Seminar did not forbid the previous contestants from joining the match again. Therefore, many of the people he had seen on the videos might be his opponents.

Opportunities were rare to fight against the top experts and the heirs of the noble families. Li Yao had decided to participate in the match in his best state. Thus, he had spent quite a fortune on his training.

It was a respected quality for a Cultivator to spend money fast. If a Cultivator could absorb Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures worth millions within three days without wasting any, then this Cultivator was definitely one of the top experts.

With Li Yao's current capability, he had many ways of earning money. But since the match was drawing near, and also because he had merely been doing rehabilitation training over the last couple of days which did not cost much, he didn't want to waste his time. Instead, he went directly to the Skyhill Domain after making sure that he still had enough money for his daily life.

But since his money was meant to buy Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, he had little funding to care about his appearance. His clothes were all riddled with holes because of the high-intensity training sessions, but he had to make do with them. It was relieving when he learnt that standard uniforms would be dispatched after the match began. He wouldn't need to worry about his comfortableness at that time.

Should I find an auction agency and sell one or two of my collections?

There were bountiful scraps of ancient magical equipment and rare crystals inside his Cosmos Rings. Taking their value into account, Li Yao was definitely still an out-and-out magnate.

However, refiners all had one occupational disease: Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures that fell into their hands were like their additional body parts, and if they were forced to sell them, it would feel as painful as somebody chopping part of their flesh off.

Li Yao hesitated for a long time. He thought of ten thousand usages for this particular scrap and eventually let go of the idea of selling it.

The next day, the organizer would start the reception work. Standard accommodation and food would be provided for all the contestants. He need not waste his scrap when he was one step close to the final competition.

Let me go out and check if there is any cheap food. I will accept any food as long as it can fill my stomach.

Li Yao rubbed his belly while he was making plans.

…

Xie Anan was holding in her hand a bamboo book that depicted sword arts which were automatically changing. It was a souvenir of the museum.

Her eyes were wide open, and her cheeks were puffed. She bounced around like a rabbit. Whenever she saw anything interesting, she would immediately dash to a tall girl and exclaim, "Sister Long! Sister Long! Come and look, it's the Heavenly Dragon Sword! We've seen it before in the textbook. I even made a mistake about its structural design during the last exam when it was tested! And now I'm seeing a real one!"

Long Yunxin frowned. She discreetly pinched her companion's bottom and said, not very happily, "Xie Anan. Would you please keep your voice down? You are a student of the Refining Department of Flying Star University anyway. The Xie family is a well-respected one among all the refiner families. Don't act like a farmer who has never seen anything before, alright?"

"Ou—Ou—Ouch!"

Xie Anan quickly nodded.

She was neither experienced nor capable enough and could only work as a volunteer of the Skyhill Sword Seminar. She was responsible for the registration work in the beginning and the reception work later.

On the other hand, Long Yunxin came from a very impressive refiner family. Her family was only slightly weaker than the Mo family and the Huangpu family, two of the best sword-forging families that had lasted for hundreds of years.

Long Yunxin had taken part in the Skyhill Sword Seminar last year and got the 21st place. She had been swearing that she would make it to the top ten this year.

The Long family and the Xie family had been friends for generations. Xie Anan had been playing with Long Yunxin since she was a little kid and always listened to her.

However, after only two seconds of silence and obedience, Xie Anan's eyes bulged again. "Sister Long! Sister Long! Look over there! It seems to be Zhou Xiaoyu, the young master of Snowy Sword Village! Such an expert has come to the Skyhill Sword Seminar this year! No, let's go there and ask for his autograph!"

"Come back here!"

Long Yunxin gnashed her teeth, yet she didn't know what to do with her sister, who was a crazy fan of swords and yet only had limited talent in that regard. Her mind was not the sharpest, either. It was already the best she could do to be admitted by the Refining Department of Flying Star University. Having no other choice, she had to shift her attention to the famous swords and people. Every time she saw a refiner who was a minor celebrity, she would exclaim in wild joy, distracting everyone passing by.

"It's just a Zhou Xiaoyu. Not a big shot after all. He was only two places higher than me last year. This year, I'm going to cut, cut, and cut him into eighteen pieces!"

"Okay…"

Xie Anan retreated, not entirely happy about it. But her big eyes were still rolling around. Two seconds later, she trembled and almost jumped up. "The mysterious expert!"

Long Yunxin felt that her head was about to explode. She looked at where her confidante was looking at, only to discover that a young man about twenty years old, with messy hair, ragged clothes, and, most eye-catching of all, a pair of big and ridiculous grey gloves, was rubbing his abdomen hard in a way that suggested he might've been starved for years.

Long Yunxin was dazed. "Xie Anan, how could you tell that he is a mysterious expert?"

Before she had even finished her question, Xie Anan had already jumped out!

She had never forgotten the mysterious expert in the virtual registration spot on the Spiritual Nexus a month and a half ago who had passed the test perfectly within only one minute. It never occurred to her that the guy looked exactly the same in reality, only even thinner. She recognized him with just one glance!

She had been one of the staff, and it was inappropriate for her to nose into it back then. But starting tomorrow, she would be one of the receptionists. It would be fairly reasonable for her to know the contestants in advance, wouldn't it?

Chapter 485: Unfamiliar Guest

Chapter 485: Unfamiliar Guest

"Hello, I'm Xie Anan. I'm a student of the Refining Department of the Flying Star University and also one of the staff of the Skyhill Sword Seminar. It was me who helped you sign up at the registration spot. So, I will be responsible for catering to your needs when the reception work begins tomorrow. I didn't know that I would run into you today! Hahahaha. What a coincidence!"

Li Yao stared at the double-ponytailed girl who was like a rabbit; she did look familiar.

Xie Anan's appearance was alike to hers in the virtual world. She was more solemn in the registration spot. But right now, her impishness was fully revealed.

"I am supposed to call you 'master'. But I didn't think you would be so young. Can I call you Senior Brother? You wouldn't mind, would you, Senior Brother Li Yao?

"I know it is kind of aggressive to jump out of nowhere. But I was too excited when I saw you. I have many questions regarding refining that I want to discuss with an expert like you. Please don't refuse me!" Xie Anan said earnestly.

Li Yao scratched his messy hair. 'Refining Department of Flying Star University' made his eyes shine. Since he had nothing better to do anyway, it didn't seem like a bad idea to talk with student who had been receiving the most formal education of the Flying Star Sector.

However, before he opened his mouth, a cold wind swept close.

A tall, beautiful, and indifferent girl pulled Xie Anan behind her, as if fearful that he might gulp her in.

"Long Yunxin, from the Refining Department of Flying Star University, of the Long family of Spiritual Stream. May I know my fellow Cultivator's name?"

"Li Yao, from Great Horn."

There was clearly a misunderstanding, but Li Yao didn't care about it. He scratched his nose and was preparing to leave at any moment.

Long Yunxin had heard the name of the Great Horn Exo Society before and, knowing that he was not an evil man, was somewhat relieved.

But she had never heard that there were any extraordinary sword-forging masters in the Great Horn Exo Society.

Long Yunxin took a step back and asked in a low voice, "Anan, you said that the guy is a mysterious expert? How did you know?"

"Well…"

Although Xie Anan could be incompetent sometimes, she knew what she was doing when it came to the important things. As staff of the Skyhill Sword Seminar, naturally, she was not allowed to leak the details of the contestants. She stammered for a long time but failed to come up with anything. In the end, she jerked and said, "The bottom line is, Senior Brother Li Yao is really an expert. A very awesome one!"

"How awesome? Even more awesome than me?"

"Well..." Xie Anan stammered again.

Her hesitation suggested that, in her opinion, this plain-dressing guy might really be better than Long Yunxin.

Long Yunxin was very curious.

The Flying Star Sector was a large place, but there was only a limited number of top experts in refining. There were only a handful of families that had lasted for more than a thousand years. Even taking the Cultivation sects that were famous for refining into account, the total number of the people who were adept at the job was quite small. Most of them had been in touch with each other since they were very young.

Even though they had never met each other in reality, they must've at least heard a thing or two about them on the Spiritual Nexus if they were real experts.

But Long Yunxin had never seen Li Yao before, nor did she ever know of a 'Li family' that was good at refining.

She was better than judging other people by their appearances, and she knew too well that the last thing many great Cultivators cared about was how they looked.

Although the guy in front of her did not seem to be a great Cultivator, it would be the most foolish decision if she were to take Xie Anan away now. She would be admitting Li Yao's seniority if she left just like that.

Thinking about this part, Long Yunxin smiled and said courteously, "Brother Li, Anan said that you are an expert and that you have been concealing yourself for a long time. I assume that you must be prepared to show your sharpness with your amazing skills at the Skyhill Sword Seminar.

"The annual Skyhill Sword Seminar is not just about competition. More importantly, it is about communication and the overall development of sword-forging technologies of the Flying Star Sector. Don't you agree?

"As it happens, a few friends of mine are gathering in a finely-made cottage behind the museum. We call it 'Sword Tasting Gettogether '. There are not many people, only around ten. However, they are all capable refiners who made it to the top 300 in the Skyhill Sword Seminar last year and have been preparing to fight again this year for a long time.

"Before the match begins, we will meet each other first. We will be enjoying delicious wine and discussing swords and sword-forging techniques. It will be quite a pleasant party.

"The competition of the Skyhill Sword Seminar is extremely fierce. The top 300 all have a chance of securing a place in the top 100. If my fellow Cultivator is free, why don't we go there together, have a nice talk, and make friends with each other? What do you say?"

Li Yao's eyes were shining.

He didn't know, nor did he want to know, Long Yunxin's purpose.

For a maniac in refining such as himself, he wouldn't even blink if he had to pass a mountain of blades and an ocean of flames as long as experienced refiners were waiting on the other side to talk to him.

He felt his hunger disappear. Nodding, he said, "Alright. Lead the way!"

…

Behind the museum was a large area of gold bamboo that looked like interconnecting swords and spears; it was known as 'Sword Forest'.

A cottage had been established in the middle of the bamboo to entertain the honorable guests.

They were mostly the young generation of the noble refining families. With their familial background, their own talent, and their hard work, they had distinguished themselves with people of the same generation and all marched into the top 300 in the Skyhill Sword Seminar last year.

Naturally, the topic of conversation was not gossip but the mysteries and secrets among refiners as well as the latest theories and academic problems.

There was a red stove nearby, in which a bottle of delicious wine was being boiled with the minimum fire.

It differed from normal wine in that there were a few scraps of ancient flying swords inside.

The wine that was boiled in such a way had the flavor of graveness. It was the most suitable beverage for refiners. The activity itself was known as 'Sword Tasting', which was quite a fashion among the refiners.

It was said that the seasoned sword-forging masters could tell the year, make, and story of the scraps in the wine after one sip. It was truly mysterious and remarkable.

"Mo Tianshui and Huangpu Xiaoya, the two most excellent heirs of the two most famous families, who have never participated in the Skyhill Sword Seminars before, are both joining the match this year. Two supernovas are going to collide furiously. It's definitely going to be earth-shaking!"

"Very true. This is going to be the most professional match in years. I'm told that, other than the masters of the three main crystal suit centers, big shots from Proud Sword Vale, Iron Blade Star, and Heavenly Horse Hall, as well as many reputable refiners that have been well-known for decades, are all coming to observe the game. They are all coming for Mo Tianshui and Huangpu Xiaoya!"

"It is said that the organizer even invited Master Fiend Star, the passionate expert of classical refining theories on the Spiritual Nexus recently, to come and comment on the games through the Great Illusionary Groups!

"But Fiend Star turned down the offer saying that he was 'otherwise occupied'. It is really a shame!"

"Speaking of which, this Fiend Star, who has appeared out of nowhere, is indeed a mystifying one! Who do you say he is exactly in the real world? A professor in a university? An elder in a sect? Or a grandpa of a certain noble family of refining? Chances are that he might be your father or mine. Hahahaha!"

"Fiend Star's theories are the new fashion nowadays. Why don't we set that as the topic of our get together today? Come on. Who wants to speak first?"

Everybody joined the conversation. As the debate got more and more intense, the door of the cottage was opened. Long Yunxin and Xie Anan brought Li Yao in.

Long Yunxin was the one of the highest level in the small group. Her appearance refreshed everyone.

However, they were all quite shocked to see Li Yao behind her.

He was like a cocky rooster, stained with blood clearly resulting from its last fight, whose feathers were messed up barging in a flock of elegant cranes; it didn't look right at all.

But the manners of the heirs of the noble families were really good. Although they found it quite odd, they nodded at the three of them in acknowledgement and continued the furious debate.

Long Yunxin guided her companions to sit down among the crowd. Then she chuckled in a low voice. "Brother Li, every Sword Tasting Gettogether has a theme, on which everyone offers their opinions in turn. The topic today is theories of Master Fiend Star, the popular expert in classical refining theories recently. We are finding the loopholes in his theories and proposing rebuttals. The winner is the one whose eyes are keenest.

"Huh?"

Li Yao was stunned.

Long Yunxin continued, "The one talking right now is Luo Dong, heir of the Luo family of East Brightness. He has lambasted the hypothesis that Fiend Star came up with on the fifteen aerodynamic models of the ancient flying swords. Not bad. His observation is sharp and hits the ambiguities precisely!"

Luo Dong was a chubby young man who was wearing a red robe and had a bright red face. He was wagging his head and elaborating. After his long speech, everyone applauded for him.

"Well said! Fiend Star's theories about the aerodynamics of ancient flying swords are indeed incoherent and unsystematic. All his self-contradictions have been located by you!"

"Brother Luo, your speech is evident enough that you've made tremendous progress over the past year. You must be quite ambitious about the Skyhill Sword Seminar this year!"

Luo Dong smiled casually and looked at Long Yunxin and Li Yao.

Long Yunxin rose up and cleared her throat, before she opened her mouth. "May I have your attention, everyone? I would like to introduce a new friend to you. This fellow Cultivator is Li Yao, an expert in refining who has been hiding himself in the Great Horn Exo Society. He is also taking part in the Skyhill Sword Seminar this year. Let's all hear what he has to say, shall we?"

"Expert in refining?"

Long Yunxin was the one of the best refiners there. There wouldn't be anything wrong with someone she endorsed.

For a moment, everyone's eyes were beaming, like those of a leopard who had found its prey.

They were all the most enthusiastic lovers of swords and sabers who welcomed anyone regardless of their identities as long as they were proficient enough.

A tall, slender young man with green eyes stood up and said friendly, "Brother Li, greetings. I am Tu Yongqing, from the Tu family of Upper Woods. I'm also the host of this Sword Tasting Gettogether. We are all refiners here. Please make yourself at home and feel free to say whatever you want!

"Our theme today is finding loopholes in Fiend Star's classical refining theories, which have been quite a hit recently. Everybody is free to expound on his faults and propose a brand-new idea.

"But I'm wondering, have you found any loopholes in Fiend Star's theories, or do you simply object to them all?"

Shua! Shua! Shua!

More than ten pairs of expecting eyes were all fixed on Li Yao.

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Li Yao felt a headache coming on.

He held his head and pondered for a long time, only to come up with nothing. In the end, he admitted honestly, "I don't see any loopholes in Fiend Star's theories, and I totally agree with him."

This time, everyone was dumbfounded.

Fiend Star's classical refining theories were quite popular on the Spiritual Nexus recently. His ideas of combining ancient refining arts with modern ones had opened a new window for many young refiners.

Therefore, Fiend Star's theories had become a fashion for the young refiners of the Flying Star Sector. Whoever knew nothing about Fiend Star would be considered to be outdated!

On the other hand, despite the validness and profoundness of Fiend Star's classical refining theories, his knowledge about modern refining was apparently flawed.

Combining the traditional techniques with the contemporary technologies was a path that no one had walked on previously. Many of his opinions were still immature, with errors that could be fixed. Therefore, the room for observation was quite large.

Young refiners often tried to find loopholes in Fiend Star's theories and would come up with their own remedies based on his ideas.

Young people were supposed to be disobedient. They should have the confidence to challenge everything with a flexible mind, instead of believing in the authorities blindly. Moreover, it was well acknowledged that many parts of Fiend Star's theories were imperfect.

But this guy, Li Yao, completely agreed with Fiend Star's theories without offering any understandings of his own?

At that moment, no one thought highly of Li Yao.

When Li Yao first walked in, those young people from noble families had actually been quite nervous.

Nowadays, many top experts liked to play meek. They wore ragged, lowly clothes and yet they were preparing to give a killing shot at any time despite their hideous appearance.

Just now, when Long Yunxin had brought Li Yao in, they had thought that he was such a low-profile expert and were ready to listen to his discerning observations. It had never occurred to them that he couldn't say anything at all.

Fiend Star had proposed almost a hundred theories and hypotheses. If someone couldn't even find one loophole in them, how much expertise could he possibly have?

Li Yao said, "Please resume your discussion, everybody. I'm only here to listen and learn."

Then, he sat down peacefully.

The young generation of the noble families all had the basic courtesy to not make fun of a strange guest right to his face. Seeing that Li Yao was not going to say anything, they didn't force him to. A short girl in a bright gold refining uniform stood up and smiled at Li Yao. Then she said, "Brother Li Yao is new here and may still not be adapted to our ambience. I am Zhou Yilu from Green Island. I would like to offer my humble opinions on the drawbacks in twelve-chain ancient thunder runes that Fiend Star proposed when they are applied to modern magical equipment. I must say that Master Fiend Star was truly incredible to have excavated the twelve-chain ancient thunder runes and combined them with modern magical equipment. It is indeed fascinating. However, there is still some negligence that can be mended…"

Everybody here was a crazy fan of magical equipment. When they dwelled in the world of magical equipment, they completely forgot the episode of Li Yao's speechlessness. The furious battle continued, with words as weapons. It was quite a turmoil.

Li Yao was truly drawn to it.

Criticizing oneself was always the hardest. Of course, Li Yao did not know what loopholes existed in his theories. If he did, he would've rectified them on the Spiritual Nexus.

He had thought that it was going to be a boring party. However, listening to so many experts in refining diagnosing his theories with the sharpest language that felt like scalpel, Li Yao felt like cold sweat was trickling down his back. He nodded his head nonstop in consent.

Some of the rebuttals were completely unreasonable, but most of the criticisms hit right in the target and solved many problems that had baffled Li Yao for a long time.

One can always learn from the company one keeps. This trip has absolutely been worthwhile!

None of them are very old, but their families have given them a lot of solid teachings. The system of their theories is so concrete and impeccable. The loopholes that they've find are indeed faults now that I think about it!

After I correct my theories according to their amendments, many of my explorations could make another leap forward!

Li Yao was truly enraptured by their debate. He slapped his lap as he enjoyed himself. When he was rivetted by someone's ideas, he was even applauding them.

For the speakers, although the guy was plain and apparently had nothing inside his brain, his attitude was quite sincere, and his applause always came right in time when a criticism reached its most marvelous point. They all felt tickled and delighted. The atmosphere became somewhat friendly, too.

Long Yunxin had been observing Li Yao secretly, only to discover that he had been listening attentively like an elementary school student.

The more she observed, the less comfortable she became. She leaned over to Xie Anan and said in a low voice, "Xie Anan, just tell me the truth. Where did you meet this Li Yao and how are you sure that he is a mysterious expert? Just look at him. Putting the 'expert' part aside, do you think he is 'mysterious' at all?"

Xie Anan was suspicious, too. How could an expert who had passed such a difficult test perfectly in less than one minute have no second opinions about Fiend Star's theories?

Truth be told, even she could offer a few criticisms about Fiend Star's theories!

Thinking for a long time, Xie Anan tried to find an excuse for him. "Senior Brother Li Yao is truly skillful, but since he is from the Great Horn Exo Society, he must be a refiner who is best at the practical tasks. It's quite understandable that he is not familiar with theories."

"Is that so? I guess we'll find out shortly." Long Yunxin was not fully convinced.

The hot debate went on for more than two hours. Other than Li Yao, everyone had pointed out many of Fiend Star's flaws clearly and thoroughly. Even Xie Anan had stood up and talked for five minutes under the encouragement of everybody. She was praised by them, too.

Li Yao was already soaked in sweat; he felt that he had just taken a hot shower.

Right then, a thin, exotic scent spread over them.

"The sword has been boiled!"

Tu Yongqing, host of the gettogether, bulged his eyes. He clapped his hands and smiled. "Everyone, the wine that I brought here is nothing unusual. It's just the 120-year-old 'Drunk Mountain' from the Floating Stream Island! However, the scraps of ancient swords boiled inside today are indeed fabulous. Come on. Just like our convention, whoever identifies the scraps will be deemed the 'Sword Master' today!"

Tu Yongqing brought in three bottles and poured the yellow, honey-like wine into cups. Everyone present took a cup carefully, closed their eyes, and focused their attention on tasting the wine.

"This wine has additional sorrow compared with normal 'Drunk Mountain'. It gives me the same feeling as the 'Broken Heart Sword Sect' from forty-eight thousand years ago. I'm guessing that the scrap came from the Broken Heart Sword Sect!"

"I don't agree with Brother Dongmen. You sense sorrow from the wine, but I also sense a vague killing intent beneath the sorrow. In my opinion, the scrap should be from 'Bloody Thorn', an assassination group from forty-seven thousand years ago. It is even possible that the sword was personally made by Elder Bloody Thorn, leader of the group and also a renowned master in sword forging!"

"You two both have fair points. But in my opinion…"

All the participants expressed their opinions without giving in to anyone.

Tu Yongqing, as the host, was truly a gentleman. He didn't despise Li Yao for not speaking just now. He handed over a cup of 'Drunk Mountain' with both hands and smiled. "Brother Li, since this is a 'Sword Tasting Gettogether', how can we not taste swords?

"Our convention is that the host brings bottles of delicious wine and a scrap from an ancient sword. We boil the sword with the delicious wine, and when the feelings of the sword are melted into the wine, everyone will taste the wine and guess the origins of the scrap. Whoever gets closest to the fact will be the 'Sword Master' of this gettogether and the host for the next one.

"Brother Li, please."

Li Yao blinked and took the cup suspiciously.

Boiling the scrap of an ancient sword in the wine could melt the 'feelings of sword', and the origins of the scrap could be sensed simply by tasting the wine?

What kind of techniques were these? That sounded rather wonderful.

Li Yao supped. The wine was not bad. The spiritual energy contained inside was abundant. But other than that, he didn't sense the slightest hint of sorrow or scent of killing.

Tu Yongqing smiled and said, "Feel free to offer your input, Brother Li. It's not a big deal even if your guess is wrong. In fact, determining a sword through the wine is a very complicated technique. Few Cultivators are even close to grasping it. We are merely taking wild guesses and pretend that we are knowledgeable people!"

"Is there really such a technique?" Li Yao's eyes were glittering, as he was greatly interested, too. If one could learn the feelings of the ancient swords by boiling them, such a technique was definitely worth studying.

"Of course there is."

Tu Yongqing suddenly turned solemn. He said seriously, "This is a mysterious ancient technique, and the top secret of the 'Hundred Smelting Clan', an unparalleled refining sect from forty thousand years ago in the ancient Cultivation world.

"Through such a technique, one can train one's senses in the most efficient way. A refiner would be able to understand the ultimate level of melding the soul with the magical equipment in the half-drunk state!"

Li Yao coughed beyond his control. His face was pure red. 'Drunk Mountain' was all over his body.

"The wine is too strong for me."

Li Yao's eyes were twitching violently, as he said with a weird expression, "But I've never heard such an enigmatic technique before. I really can't taste anything in it. Please do forgive me, Brother Tu."

Feeling that it was time to leave, he continued, "Brother Tu, I've really been enlightened by all of your marvelous insights today. However, there is some other business that I must attend to. I have to take my leave now. See you again in the Skyhill Sword Seminar!"

Tu Yongqing was dazed for a moment. He glanced at Long Yunxin and Xie Anan, uncertain about the relationship between Li Yao and the two of them. But he still smiled and said, "Brother Li, Sword Tasting Gettogethers always have three stages. First is the discussion on theories; second is the sword tasting and guessing; third is the real practice. After all, however talkative a refiner is, it is our hands that matter.

"Since Brother Li is a refiner from a major Exo Society, I believe your hands are going to shock us all. Why don't you wait a moment and finish the last stage before you leave?

"We are not going to fight. We only prepared a few broken blades that everyone can repair and polish. It is just a game, nothing else.

"The first round of the Skyhill Sword Seminar is magical equipment maintenance, too. Just consider it a pre-warmup! Hahahaha!"

Li Yao did have other plans. But after hearing Tu Yongqing's words, he was hooked again. He sat down and warmed up his fingers despite the blockage of the ugly grey gloves.

A competition of refining skills was always his favorite. He had been pretty bored after one and a half months of training in solitude. Now that he had a chance to practice with the experts and warm up his body, of course he wouldn't say no!

Xie Anan glanced at Li Yao and said to Long Yunxin seriously, "Sister Long, just you wait. Senior Brother Li Yao is truly an unknown expert. 'Sword Tasting Via Wine' is a mysterious skill from the Hundred Smelting Clan that has only been passed on in the noble refining families. It's quite normal that he is not familiar with it, but this is going to be an eye-opener for you in a moment!"

A moment later, everybody finished tasting the ancient sword. The guess of Luo Dong from the Luo family of East Brightness was the closest, and he was honored to be the 'Sword Master'. After a while of laughter and chatting, Tu Yongqing led everyone to a clear pond in the middle of the bamboo forest.

Beside the pond, more than twenty rusted, dented battle sabers and giant swords were stabbed into the ground.

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"The twenty-three battle sabers and giant swords have been damaged and corroded according to the standard of the Sky Sword Seminar. Their impairments are similar to each other. You can pick any of them at your will," Tu Yongqing said.

"However, since this is not an official competition, we don't have to be too serious. So, no tools are allowed. We can only repair and polish the magical equipment with the water in the pond and the pebbles nearby. The time limit is ten minutes. Let's see who completes the task in the shortest amount of time with the highest recovery level, shall we?"

Xie Anan was honored to be the judge. Everyone present picked a broken blade.

Li Yao selected a random chainsword, too. However, he did not take off his thick, grey gloves.

Other people were not bothered by it.

Refiners all paid special attention to the protection of their hands. With the big match drawing near, many of the refiners were nourishing their hands with secret arts. Of the people present here, quite a few were wearing gloves with nutritious ointments inside.

However, everybody else's gloves were all too thin to hinder the movement of the hands. They were all invaluable items, if not masterpieces that had been passed on in the refiners' families for generations, and in no way as shabby and stupid as Li Yao's.

"Let the game begin!"

Xie Anan started the countdown.

In a moment, hundreds of cold winds were blowing in the bamboo woods. The leaves were shaking, producing rattling noises, as if blades were colliding.

The broken blades in front of the experts of refining all rose up and span around them.

The refiners were intending to show off their expertise.

Someone snatched dozens of pebbles which they crushed into powder in the midair just with their spiritual threads. They then enshrouded the blade with the green powder that looked like a tornado while they polished the blade at hand.

Someone whistled. Ripples immediately spread out from the pond. Water streams dashed up from the surface of the pond like dragons and flowed into the gaps of the magical equipment.

Someone's hands were extremely fast. They turned their hands into a cluster of grey mist as they dismantled the magical equipment into the most basic components instantly. Then, their hands flew up and down as if they were playing an instrument. The components were dancing as if they were demon spirits that had grown wings.

In everyone's faces, there was concentration, easiness, and joy. The extraordinary aura of the top refiners gradually occupied the bamboo woods.

But Xie Anan focused her eyes on one person.

She believed that Li Yao would definitely provide shocking performances.

However…

Li Yao's brow was furrowed, and his face was so grave that one might think he was gritting his teeth.

Despite the clumsy grey gloves, his movements were extremely strict. He dismantled the magical equipment and cleaned the components up according to the most typical polishing and maintaining procedures.

The most typical meant the most ordinary and the least unexpected.

Compared to normal refiners, his speed was not low.

But now that he was among the top experts, he was apparently the most awkward one and was left behind by other people.

Everybody could tell that it was an extremely difficult task for him to catch up with his fellows. After only two minutes, his face was blue. Cold sweat was popping up. His muscles were twisted. He was short of breath and in obvious agony.

Five minutes later, although his movements were still pertinent to the textbook, his ragged clothes had been soaked in sweat. Veins were jumping out from his neck and forehead.

Even an ordinary person could tell that he had done the best he could and reached his limits.

Xie Anan couldn't be more confused.

Polishing magical equipment is the most fundamental work of a refiner. Considering Senior Brother Li Yao's amazing performance during the registration, why is it so hard for him?

Is he concealing his capability so that he can shock everyone in the Skyhill Sword Seminar?

It doesn't seem so. Judging from his perspiration and his hideous expression, he is apparently trying his best without any reserve!

Seven minutes later, Long Yunxin's smooth actions came to an abrupt end. She snapped her fingers. The dust on her hands was gone with the wind immediately, and her hands were as unblemished as jade again.

A rusty chainsword had been entirely renewed by her shocking maintenance skills. It stabbed into the earth, shallowly. Although there was no wind, it was shivering softly with vague roars of a dragon.

Long Yunxin glanced at Li Yao. Her eyes rolled as she put on a thin smile.

Seven and a half minutes later, all the refiners had completed their work one after another. Auras of sharpness were surging in the middle of the bamboo woods.

The only exception was Li Yao, who was still gritting his teeth with his veins bulging, as he focused his attention on the blade in his hand.

Seeing that he was so concentrated, none of the other refiners were willing to interrupt him; they simply exchanged a thoughtful look with each other.

It was not until the last second of the ten minutes ran its course that Li Yao finished the renovation of the last rune array and handed in his work exhaustedly.

But it was obvious that, although his chainsword was entirely renewed too, it was somewhat lackluster compared to the blades revitalized by other people.

It was especially so when compared to the experts such as Long Yunxin, whose works clearly had additional 'momentum'!

Taking a long breath, Li Yao was silent for ten seconds before he was gradually back to himself. He glanced through everybody's work and smiled wearily. "I failed. Your work is all more brilliant than mine."

Li Yao's humbleness somehow embarrassed the heirs of the noble families, who felt guilty as if they had been bullying a kid.

Yes, they were born in noble families of refining and had received the most professional training since a young age, with their hands soaked in various Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures all through their growth. In comparison, the guy was just a refiner from a second-rate Exo Society who might never have been educated formally about the arts of refining. It was already a remarkable achievement that he could finish the maintenance task with such a pair of thick gloves.

It was only natural that their speed surpassed his. What was there to be proud of?

"Although Brother Li's hands were relatively slower, I can tell that he has taken every detail of the blade into consideration. His meticulousness deserves complimenting!"

"You must be nourishing your hands with the pair of gloves, aren't you, Brother Li? Then this is not your best state yet. In three days after you take off your gloves, I believe that Brother Li's hand speed can be improved by at least 30%. It is not hard for you to march into the top 500!"

"There are barely any flaws in Brother Li's chainsword except for the lack of 'momentum'!"

"Other than anything else, Brother Li is a man who is devoted to the arts of refining, evidenced by your concentration and persistence during your maintenance. With such determination, you will certain become a great refiner one day!"

Li Yao secretly sighed. The young people of the noble families were quite decent other than their proficient refining skills. He could communicate with them more often in the future.

It was too bad that he had other things to do which could not be delayed. He could only take his leave after apologizing to everybody.

Seeing Li Yao leaving the cottage in a hurry, Luo Dong from the Luo family of East Brightness commented, "Speaking of skills, we all have ultimate arts that we inherited from our respective families. But the common refiners of no backgrounds are indeed tenacious. He was on the brink of passing out many times just now, but he simply gritted his teeth through them. His final work is not half bad, either!"

Tu Yongqing nodded his head and said, "Refiners from the Exo Societies travel in the sea of stars all year around. Their knowledge may not be profound, their skills may not be proficient, but they are indeed distinguished in regard to experience and doggedness. Although the guy is not a first-tier expert, he definitely deserves to be the top ones among the second-tier refiners!"

Long Yunxin smiled mildly. "Alright, our guest has left. Let's start the real competition now! The sabers and swords we renewed looked equally sharp. We'll have to find out whose work is the best by testing their real strength!"

"That's right!"

"Okay!"

Everyone's eyes were beaming with excitement.

But Xie Anan rose up and walked to the door.

Long Yunxin was surprised. "Anan, where are you going?"

Xie Anan hesitated for a moment and replied, "Senior Brother Li Yao seemed to be unwell. I'm going to see if he is alright. After all, I'm his host starting from tomorrow. It's not going to be good if anything happens to him."

Before Long Yunxin had chance to respond, Xie Anan had already stormed out.

Li Yao walked very fast. Xie Anan chased after him for almost twenty minutes before she saw Li Yao's back again.

The suspicions in Xie Anan's heart were about to explode like a balloon that had been pumped beyond its limits.

A monster with unbelievable computational ability who knows everything about structural designs of magical equipment turned out to be a guy good at neither theories nor practices? How weird is that!

But judging from his appearance, he was not keeping a low profile on purpose. He was gritting his teeth with veins bulging violently. His sweat must've been enough to fill three buckets!

Could it be that he is only gifted at reading structure designs of magical equipment and has no other specialties whatsoever?

Xie Anan strode forward and was of a mind to catch up with Li Yao, but her target slithered fast in the crowds like a loach.

After another ten minutes of running and chasing, they ended up in an ordinary people's neighborhood in the Skyhill Domain.

Same as other world fragments, the Skyhill Domain was mixed with Cultivators and ordinary people.

Cultivators and ordinary people both needed food.

To provide food, grocery markets were often established near the living areas.

Experienced citizens all knew that the food sold at the stalls of the grocery markets was both fresher and cheaper.

Xie Anan saw that Li Yao bought a large pile of chive pies and a tin of cold, leftover soybean milk from one of the stalls.

Then, he bought half of a raw pig liver from the butcher's and asked the boss to mince it.

What is he doing right now? A refiner qualified to participate in the Skyhill Sword Seminar shouldn't be as poor as this.

Xie Anan got more and more curious. She stalked Li Yao like a tail and entered an old neighborhood after various turns, only to discover that he had sat down on the ground in a deserted small garden and guzzled the chive pies, mouthful after mouthful, without even taking off his gloves.

Li Yao ate fast. He was eating the grungiest pies from the street as if they were the most delicious cuisine in the world without even relying on the soybean milk to wash them down. A moment later, the pile of pies was all wolfed up by him.

Chugging the soybean milk, Li Yao patted his belly in satisfaction. Then he opened the bag in which the minced pig liver was contained.

Is eating raw pig liver helpful for training? Xie Anan hid in a corner, her heart pounding. She thought that everything Li Yao had done did not make any sense.

Li Yao put the pig liver aside and was ready to take off his gloves.

What kind of secrets are hidden behind the grey gloves? Xie Anan had a feeling that she was about to witness a shocking sight.

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Right then, Li Yao raised his head and smiled in her direction.

Xie Anan was suddenly alarmed. For some reason, although his eyes were calm and clear, they effected a much higher pressure on her than Sister Long's.

She couldn't help but walk out to Li Yao. She hesitated for a long time but did not dare to sit down. Instead, she crouched and observed the minced pig liver curiously.

Li Yao had noticed his 'tail' a long time ago, but he didn't sense any hostility from her. Since they were going to meet again the next day, and he was not familiar with the territory of the Skyhill Domain, he didn't want to make a fuss just in order to get rid of her.

Li Yao didn't greet Xie Anan. He took off the grey gloves softly.

His hands didn't look abnormal at first, except for the black stripes around the fingers.

But Xie Anan's eyes were wide open when she took a closer look, because she discovered that the black stripes were actually made of almost a hundred tiny ants.

These ants were attached to the skin of Li Yao's hands which seemed to boast a weird attraction force. They had been hiding behind the grey gloves!

Li Yao placed his hands near the minced pig liver. The moment the ants smelled the stink of blood from the liver, they crawled down his fingertips like two armies and started enjoying the food.

Li Yao explained, "Please do excuse me. I didn't want to leave early, but the ants were too hungry. If I don't feed them, they will go mad soon, and when they do, even I won't be able to resist them."

Xie Anan blinked and observed the ants suspiciously again.

The ants were only a third the size of regular ants. They were a glamorous violet color, as if they'd been carved from purple crystals. They seemed to be wearing glittering battlesuits, which made them extraordinarily beautiful.

Xie Anan felt that the ants looked familiar.

She thought for a moment, before cold sweat suddenly covered her. She was barely able to keep herself from falling down. She lost control and exclaimed, "Purple Ring Sword Ants! They are the Purple Ring Sword Ants!"

Purple Ring Sword Ants were a kind of insect that were aggressive and lustful for meat. They could release a special poison when they bit their prey. The pain was so excruciating that one might feel that they had been stabbed by a flying sword, which was also the reason such insects were known as 'sword ants'.

According to the analysis of the specialists, the pain resulting from a bite of a Purple Ring Sword Ant was five times more intense than the pain caused by a demon lion's or a demon tiger's!

Moreover, the poison took effect on the central nerves directly and could even interact with the spiritual energy inside a Cultivator's body. However high one's Cultivation was, it was impossible to hold back the pain!

Purple Ring Sword Ants definitely ranked among the top 10 of all spiritual insects in regard of terribleness.

Xie Anan's head was dizzy, and she couldn't believe her eyes. Common Cultivators would always try to stay as far away from Purple Ring Sword Ants as possible. Yet, the guy had been keeping so many Purple Ring Sword Ants on his hands?

Xie Anan knew that Purple Ring Sword Ants loathed restrictions and were never to be caged or domesticated. With the limited space inside the gloves, these insects were definitely irritated to the most furious point and would bite everything they ran into!

Was he not scared of the biting?

What's more—

Xie Anan recalled what had happened just now and was suddenly dumbfounded.

This guy, Li Yao, had been competing with so many expert refiners with a pair of hands that were packed with Purple Ring Sword Ants and was only a few minutes slower than them!

It was funny that everybody thought that his capability was hindered a little bit by the thick gloves; they never knew the existence of such terrible Purple Ring Sword Ants!

If there were no ants on his hands, how horrifying would his true capability have been?

Xie Anan's brain went blank as she stammered, "Are you not scared of being bitten?"

Li Yao warmed up his fingers and inspected the tiny injuries on them with the man-made sunlight from the sky. Then he explained, "This is a special way of training to improve the sensitivity of my hands and my control over the muscles on them.

"Scary as Purple Ring Sword Ants are, they always show signs before they bite, just like tigers need to crouch before they lunge forward.

"As long as one senses the signs of attack in advance, one can control the muscles on the hand to collapse the part where they are biting or simply interfere with them through spiritual threads. In such a way, their attacks can be interrupted.

"So, I'm not afraid of their biting."

Xie Anan was dazed. She was speechless for a long time before she opened her mouth again. "But… but there are almost a hundred Purple Ring Sword Ants, which are launching attacks all the time!"

Li Yao said, "Not almost a hundred. There are only 91 of them in total.

"Of course, it is not an easy job to deal with so many Purple Ring Sword Ants. At first, I only put five on either of my hands, and yet I was bitten every other few minutes. But practice makes perfect. After training for a few days, the number of them gradually increased."

Training the sensitivity of the hands with Purple Ring Sword Ants was a real secret technique of the Hundred Smelting Clan.

Li Yao had known the secret art from the classics of the Heavenly Refining Tower. However, back in the Heaven's Origin Sector, there were no Purple Ring Sword Ants that he could use.

Other spiritual insects were either too large or too picky about living environments. Their poison was not intense enough to trigger enough pain, and sometimes there were corrosive contingents inside the poison that could paralyze the nerves on the hands. None of them were suitable for the training with this technique.

After Li Yao arrived in the Flying Star Sector, he had discovered that many world fragments of this Sector were home to Purple Ring Sword Ants.

Li Yao had spent a huge fortune on a batch of Purple Ring Sword Ants online. Then, he'd weaved the pair of gloves with certain Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures that simulated the living environment of the ants so that they could stay inside for long periods without dying.

More than half of his money had actually been spent on these little insects and the things they required.

But the outcome was obvious, too. The sensitivity of Li Yao's hands had soared exponentially. He had reached 'Ninety-Ant level' very quickly. Ninety-one ants crawled all over his hands and continued biting him, yet all the attacks missed because of Li Yao's delicate control over the muscles in his hands.

Xie Anan was truly dumbfounded. She muttered, "So, you were controlling the muscles on your hands to resist the continuous attack of the ninety-one Purple Ring Sword Ants, while you were competing against almost twenty experts of refining, with only a slim disadvantage, during which time you were totally safe from the Purple Ring Sword Ants?"

"Not exactly."

Li Yao sighed and said, "My Cultivation is not good enough. When I'm focused, it's all fine. But I was distracted a moment ago and got bitten by the ants. Six times in total."

"What?"

Xie Anan thought back. Had Li Yao been gritting his teeth and bulging his veins not because the competition was hard but because he was bitten by the Purple Ring Sword Ants?

Was it really so?

According to the legends, being bitten by the Purple Ring Sword Ants was the most agonizing thing in the world. One would feel that one's soul was pierced through. How could he deal with it just by gritting his teeth?

"Can I try… such a method of training?"

Since Li Yao was talking about it like it was nothing unusual, Xie Anan suddenly asked to try it for some unknown reason.

Li Yao nodded his head. During his stay in the Flying Star Sector, he had benefited from the enlightenments of many fellow Cultivators. His old ways of thinking were somewhat changed, too. He didn't mind sharing the basic training arts with people who were interested in them now.

Li Yao picked up one Purple Ring Sword Ant from the ground with his little finger and put it on the back of Xie Anan's hand, before he said, "Release all your senses. Tie your spiritual threads around your arm and let them surge to the back of your hand along your arm like a tidal bore at night…"

He dropped the ant softly.

The Purple Ring Sword Ant, which had behaved quite nicely on his little finger, was utterly revitalized on Xie Anan's hand. As if possessed by an insect devil, it bit Xie Anan's hand hard, mercilessly.

"Ahhhh!" Xie Anan screamed.

She collapsed to the ground as if she had been hit by a lightning, with her limbs cramping and her mouth foaming. Her pupils widened, too.

Li Yao frowned slightly. He removed the Purple Ring Sword Ant and let it resume its pig liver dinner.

As for himself, he exercised his fingers and enjoyed a moment of post-supper pleasure.

It was not until three minutes later that Xie Anan regained the ability to talk. But her hair was messy, and her face was pale and devastated. She looked at Li Yao as if he were a monster.

How terrifying this monster is! Just one bite, and I suffered such excruciating pain that I might've split into two halves. The guy was bitten six times and yet finished such high-difficulty maintenance work?

Xie Anan had an urge to run away immediately.

Li Yao glanced at Xie Anan's hand and observed, "Judging from your performance, I don't think Purple Ring Sword Ants are suitable for your training. Why don't you try butterflies?"

Xie Anan was still in a trance. She mumbled, "Butterflies?"

Li Yao extended his right hand.

A month and a half ago, his hands had been as smooth as jade and as soft as silk. His flesh had seemed to be glowing at that time.

Right now, his hands looked plain and ordinary. They were part of nature like the grass, stones, earthworms, and birds in the garden.

Suddenly, weird things happened!

Inside the small garden, many butterflies were dancing among the flowers. But they were suddenly bound by invisible strings and pulled to Li Yao's right hand. Their colorful wings were waving crazily, but they were still stuck there!

Li Yao said, "Before a butterfly takes off, there are inconspicuous signs, too. As long as you seize the moment and affect it with your spiritual thread, it will stay in your palm forever and can't get away however hard it tries."

He loosened his fingers. The twenty or so butterflies were set free from their shackles and flew out among Li Yao's fingers. They danced merrily above his head.

Li Yao said, "Such a training method is less painful and more suitable for beginners. Of course, you can start with one or two butterfliers."

Xie Anan was surprised. "But, how did you make so many butterflies come to your palm?"

Li Yao said, "My right hand was shaking at a certain frequency just now. It was a special signal that is very appealing to the butterflies. They were attracted to my hand as if it were a flower.

"Such a technique is beyond you right now. So, you can try to smear certain special ointments on your hand to simulate the scent of flowers and attract the butterflies."

The minced pig liver had been cleared by the Purple Ring Sword Ants, without the slightest traces left. Li Yao extended his fingers and placed his hands on the ground again.

His two hands seemed to boast devilish charisma that made the ants form two lines and crawl to his fingers nicely.

Li Yao put the gloves on carefully.

In Xie Anan's eyes, the most gruesome grey gloves in the world had turned into a barrier in which demons were caged!

Li Yao folded the package of the ants' food and tossed it into a dustbin. Then he turned back and smiled. "If you don't have any further questions, I'll see you tomorrow. Also, you'd better not tell Long Yunxin and the rest of them what you saw.

"I'm not concerned about the exposure of such a training method. Whoever wants to use it is free to do so.

"What I'm concerned with is that, if you tell them right now, their confidence will be shaken, which will potentially affect their performances in the match in three days' time."

Xie Anan's head was in chaos. She was startled for a long time and, when Li Yao was about to vanish around the corner, suddenly asked, "Wait, Senior Brother Li Yao, were you hiding your true capability during the competition just now because you didn't want to shake their confidence?"

"Not exactly so."

Li Yao halted and thought for a while. He turned around and replied, "I kept my gloves on not because I disrespect anyone, nor because I was meaning to cheer up anyone.

"The real reason was that, once I took off my gloves, I wouldn't have been able to do my best. Do you understand?

"It would've been a one-sided slaughter, and a completely waste of their time and mine."

After Li Yao finished speaking, he disappeared into the darkness.

Xie Anan was left alone in the small garden, utterly astounded!

Chapter 489: Dumbfounded

Chapter 489: Dumbfounded

Three seconds later, Li Yao returned. His eyebrow was furrowed, as if he were considering a very complicated academic problem.

Xie Anan shivered and asked respectfully, "Master Li Yao, can I help you with anything else?"

After witnessing Li Yao's marvelous training method, she didn't dare to address him as 'Senior Brother' right now.

Li Yao said, "The Skyhill Sword Seminar will start accepting the contestants tomorrow. I wonder, is there any place nearby that I can crash at for the night?"

Xie Anan answered hurriedly, "Yes. There is a 'Pillar Villa'. It is both beautiful and magnificent. Many famous refiners like to stay there. On the other hand, the Mountain Moon Hotel, downtown, is the most luxurious local hotel. The facilities and the service are both pleasing. The transportation is convenient, too. Do you prefer quietness or liveliness? I can help you book a Leader Suite right now!"

Li Yao coughed and replied, expressionlessly, "That won't be necessary. I prefer to keep a low profile. A regular motel will be good."

"Huh?"

"It will be best if the price is decent. Windowless rooms will do for me."

"Huh?"

...

Half an hour later, Xie Anan, who had been seriously shocked, finally returned to the bamboo woods.

The descendants of the noble families had finished their competition. They had moved to the edge of the bamboo woods and were sat near a running river. Delicious food had been placed on the ground. Everybody was toasting, talking, and laughing. The ambience was quite sparkling.

"What took you so long? You missed a splendid great show! The competition just now was very close. I only won by luck in the last subject!"

Long Yunxin dragged Xie Anan over to her side and sat her down. Then she placed two shrimps into her bowl before opening her mouth again reproachingly. "It's not easy to have so many rightful heirs of the noble families gathered together from everywhere in the sea of stars. I brought you here so that you could open your eyes, but you ditched them at the critical moment. How silly of you!"

Xie Anan was still in a trance.

The cuisine that everybody was eating was no doubt the best food. Some of the dishes were seafood delivered from various world fragments, and some were the meat of rarely-seen animals.

However, for some reason, it was Li Yao's chive pies and soybean milk that kept popping up in front of his eyes.

Long Yunxin frowned. She pinched her softly and said, "What happened? Is your 'expert' friend alright?"

She accentuated the 'expert' part.

"Yes, yes."

Xie Anan was back to herself. She calmed herself down and asked curiously, "Sister Long, how do top refiners such as yourself train the sensitivity of your hands?"

"Why are you suddenly interested in that? The Long family does not have any special methods to train the sensitivity of our hands. However—"

Long Yunxin smiled. "Brother Long from the Luo family of East Brightness and our host, Brother Tu here, both inherited the training methods of their family that attached great importance to the sensitivity of the hands. Why don't you ask them to give you an introduction?"

Luo Dong laughed. Not keeping anything to himself, he put his chopsticks down and showed everyone his hands that looked like two giant white jades.

He explained proudly, "The refining style of the Luo family is best known for fast hands and keen sensitivity. Our training method is not a secret. It is known as 'Green Jade Hand'.

"It is a Cultivation art that must be studied from an early age. From the moment a child in my family is born, we must crumble the best jade into powder and smear the powder onto the child's hands before washing and soaking them in secret medicine. Days, years, and decades. There can't be any pause. It is tedious work. Normal people would find it hard to persist for so long.

"We all know that jades are connected to the divinities. This Cultivation art transfers the essence to the jades to the hands of a refiner. When it is performed at the ultimate level, the hands become connected to the divinities, too. Hahahaha!

"The way I train my hands is nothing interesting, except for a little bit of money and effort. The Tu family's training method is the really appalling one. Brother Tu, why don't you explain it to Sister Xie here?"

Tu Yongqing smiled and extended his hands, too.

On his hands, there were countless miniature hollows.

Tu Yongqing said, "The Tu family's method of training hands barely costs any money.

"As everybody knows, there is an eccentric fruit named 'Red Caltrop' in nature which has poisoned thorns on it, and when the thorns touch the skin, it can be quite painful.

"The people of the Tu family have trained with the Red Caltrop since they were little kids. We were asked to clench two Red Caltrops in each hand all the time. Eating, exercising, sleeping. We had to do everything with them. One is pricked if one is sloppy for one second. The pain can be excruciating, but we can never let the Red Caltrop go.

"As we grow older, the number of the Red Caltrops gradually increases. In the end, we will be holding almost ten Red Caltrops in our hands while doing everything normally without being affected by them. This is the start line for us."

While he was talking, Tu Yongqing waved his hands. Almost ten red fruits that looked like hedgehogs appeared in his palm, emitting blood red brightness.

No one knew where he had been hiding the Red Caltrops. A round of exclamations burst out.

Xie Anan's eyes suddenly shined. She blurted out, "Brother Tu, your training method is amazing. But have you ever heard a similar method that relies on Purple Ring Sword Ants instead of Red Caltrops?"

Tu Yongqing was dazed for a moment. Before he could open his mouth, Luo Dong had already burst into laughter. "What kind of method is that? The pain of the Purple Ring Sword Ants' bite is ten times sharper than that of the Red Caltrop. One nibble is enough for one to collapse and cramp. How are they going to train themselves if so?

"Besides, the Purple Ring Sword Ants are aggressive insects. They can't be kept still in the palm and behave nicely like Red Caltrops!

"Moreover, Cultivators all boast tremendous physical strength. When they are bitten by a Purple Ring Sword Ant, they will probably crush the ant to death immediately. How many Purple Ring Sword Ants will they have to capture every day for their daily training?"

Tu Yongqing smiled and added elegantly, "I've heard a thing or two about the training method based on eccentric insects that Sister Xie mentioned just now.

"Many notes of the ancient Cultivators have recorded training methods with insects. Training with the Purple Ring Sword Ants was one of the most advanced techniques.

"However, most of the notes are not very detailed. They are generally legends or urban tales.

"In my opinion, training one's sensitivity with the Purple Ring Sword Ants is too preposterous. What kind of monster could bear such agony?

"There are many similar uncanny stories of the ancient Cultivators. They belong to the ancient times anyway. Although they created a brilliant civilization, their understanding of nature, the universe, and everything in between is quite shallow. Sometimes, to attract more followers and disciples, they tended to overstate things on purpose. Their words were further misinterpreted during the dissemination. Gradually, Cultivation became a groundless business.

"Cultivators today definitely have to learn from the ancient Cultivation world, but we shouldn't blindly follow whatever has been said. We need to keep the essence and dump the garbage.

"Such a training method with the Purple Ring Sword Ants must've been the bluffing of the ancient people; it is undoubtedly garbage that is best thrown away.

"Sister Xie, hear my words. There are no shortcuts on the road of Cultivation. One cannot fly into the sky with just one leap. You must not be fooled by the weird training methods that involved strange insects.

"If you want to train the sensitivity of your hands, I can offer you a few Red Caltrops and teach you some basic skills. You can have a go with them first.

"But I need to remind you first: it won't be the most pleasant experience to be pricked by them!"

Friendly laughter burst out.

Xie Anan's cheeks turned red. Countless thoughts rolled to the tip of her tongue, but she didn't know where to begin. She was lost for a moment and eventually sat back to focus her attention on the shrimps in her bowl.

Since the topic at hand was training, the party turned spirited again. Everybody started talking about how hard their training had been, what kind of suffering they had endured, and such.

Xie Anan was quite upset. She left the party with an excuse and rambled through the bamboo woods.

Without her knowing, she had gone further and further and ended up at the pond where the competition was held a moment ago.

The water in the pond was clear. The rocks were gloomy. Almost ten rusty blades that had been left unattended were still stabbed into the ground. Li Yao's carefully polished chainsword was also standing in the middle of the queer rocks proudly.

The sword was lackluster. Everyone could tell that it was far from everyone else's brilliantly shining swords. Since Li Yao had left early, the sword was left in its original place. No one had bothered to pick it and compare it with the other swords.

Xie Anan was suddenly curious. She uprooted the chainsword and observed it carefully.

She had been born into a noble family of refining. Although her own expertise was not very impressive, she still had the basic sense of appreciation. She could tell that, although the chainsword was entirely renewed with all its components neatly joined and all the rune arrays cleared up, it was indeed somewhat dumb. Satisfactory it was, but extraordinary it was not.

Xie Anan sighed softly. Deep in thought, she touched the body of the sword.

Suddenly, her eyes narrowed.

There was something on the body of the sword.

Although she couldn't see it, she discovered, by feeling with her fingertips, that there were multiple secret stream-like spiritual stripes that interweaved into linked, inconspicuous rune arrays.

This is—

Twelve-chain Thunder Runes!

Master Li Yao has carved Twelve-chain Thunder Runes with the most ordinary pebbles on a chainsword made of super alloys!

How could it be!

So many people were present, and everybody was looking at him in the end. But he carved the ancient runes, which escaped everyone's attention. Sister Long, Brother Tu, Brother Luo… None of them noticed anything wrong!

He… he was right. The skill disparity between them is too huge. Crushing. This was definitely a crushing match!

Xie Anan couldn't help but input a stream of spiritual energy into the chainsword.

In a moment, a series of secret runes suddenly glittered on the chainsword, which then constituted twelve complicated rune arrays. All the patterns seemed to have been drawn in one stroke. There was not the slightest hindrance or disruption.

BOOM! BOOM!

Dull thunder rumbled inside the bamboo woods, as if a storm were coming!

With the Twelve-chain Thunder Runes, the strength of the chainsword is at least doubled! Although the runes are too shallow to be used repetitively, it is still terrifying!

Xie Anan was shocked. She suddenly thought of something else.

In the first round of the sword-tasting get together, one of the refiners proposed objections to Fiend Star's theories with the 'Twelve-chain Thunder Runes' as her argument.

"I believe that the Twelve-chain Thunder Runes are only suitable for ancient blades that are much simpler in structure. For modern sabers and swords that are always made of hundreds of components, adding such ancient runes recklessly will only cause conflicts among the previous rune arrays. The more favorable outcome would be that the spiritual energy is jammed and the rune arrays malfunctioned. But if things took a turn for the worse, the spiritual energy might be chaotic enough to collapse the magical equipment!

"Therefore, Fiend Star's theories sound perfect, but they are just hypotheses in the perfect scenarios. It is impossible to put them into practice in reality!"

The above was exactly what the refiner had said.

Xie Anan shivered.

Could it be that Master Li Yao was not unfamiliar with theories, but he preferred to crumble the opposition of Fiend Star with actions instead of words because he really is a hardcore believer of Fiend Star?

"Hahahaha!"

At the other end of the bamboo woods, airy laughter broke out. There was no telling what marvelous points had just been brought up by the young people of the noble families.

Xie Anan touched the Twelve-chain Thunder Runes, dumbfounded.

Chapter 490: Starved

Chapter 490: Starved

Three days later, in the morning…

"Greetings, everyone. Welcome to the 768th Skyhill Sword Seminar of the Flying Star Sector that is exclusively live streamed by Mystic Ray News. This Skyhill Sword Seminar is solely sponsored by Unified Heaven Sword Sect. Unified Heaven Straight Sword, the bestselling thunder-class flying swords of the Flying Star Sector, has now been fully upgraded with an extravagant gold sheath. Feel free to place an order via the official site. Everyone who purchases during the Skyhill Sword Seminar will not be charged the shipping fee and will receive a complimentary a sword pendent made of the Gold Thread Flowers.

"Alright. We have now arrived at 'Thousand Edges Mountain', the biggest floating mountain of the Skyhill Domain. As the main field for this Skyhill Sword Seminar, this place boasts the largest honeycomb-type refining workshops of the Flying Star Sector and can accommodate thousands of refiners at the same time. It is indeed splendid and magnificent.

"Although it is only seven thirty in the morning, Thousand Edges Mountain is already packed with people. It is well known that Skyhill Sword Seminar is not just a match, but also an annual gala where all refiners congregate and communicate. The noble families of refining and the Cultivation sects often take the opportunity to release their new products or host trade fairs. Many fans of magical equipment have also arrived from various space zones that are quite far away.

"The competition of the Skyhill Sword Seminar is unprecedentedly fierce. The two commentators we have invited here are both well-known celebrities. First of all, I would like to introduce to you Master Dustless from Flying Star University. Master Dustless is an experienced expert in the refinement of sabers and swords, as well as a councilor of the Sword Forgers' Association of the Flying Star Sector. Nice to meet you, Master Dustless."

"Nice to meet you, and all the audience, too."

"You must be very familiar with our second guest. This is Bi Luoling from Red Wind Pavilion. Ms. Bi won third place in the Skyhill Sword Seminar last year. She is already a rising star in Red Line School. It is said that the weapon system of the latest model of Red Line School has been partly developed by Ms. Bi. Greetings, Ms. Bi!"

"Pleased to meet you, Da Peng. Hello to everyone!"

"Alright. Let's get down to our topic today. If I may ask, why is everybody saying that the Skyhill Sword Seminar this year is going to be more marvelous than usual? What kind of highlights do you envision right now? Ms. Bi, can you help explain the two questions to our audience?"

"Alright. It is universally known that there are two noble families of refining, namely the Mo family and the Huangpu family, in the circle of the refiners of the Flying Star Sector whose long histories have been well-acknowledged. They boast thousands of Cultivation techniques and profound knowledge about refining. Their capability completely overpowers that of any other family or sect.

"Over the past thirty years, two extraordinary prodigies have gradually distinguished themselves in the two families, Mo Tianshui and Huangpu Xiaoya.

"Although the two of them never took part in any public matches, they have proved themselves to be far stronger than their brothers, sisters, and cousins in the competitions within their families. Even the experts of older generations have to be very cautious when they are faced with them. They are truly monster-level geniuses that only appear every five hundred years!

"The biggest highlight of this Skyhill Sword Seminar will, of course, be the summit confrontations of the two 'monsters of refining'."

"Allow me to add something else. Other than Mo Tianshui and Huangpu Xiaoya, the other fourteen seed players all have tremendous potential. Zhou Xiaoyu from the Snowy Sword Village and Long Yunxin from the Long family of Spiritual Streams both ranked in the top 32 last year. The line-up is so intriguing that I almost can't wait to watch the match despite my old age!"

…

On the Thousand Edges Mountain, inside a vast preparation area…

It was the last rendezvous point before the competition.

Every player had an independent chamber. They could also consume some simple food to refresh their body and soul in the public area.

Long Yunxin was watching the live stream through her mini crystal processor. Hearing the old professor of Flying Star

University bringing up her name, she was so happy that her cheeks flushed.

Xie Anan was standing behind her in the staff uniform. She was much more anxious and looking at the gate in eagerness.

"Are you waiting for someone?" Long Yunxin frowned.

"No. No."

Xie Anan was apparently not focused. Suddenly, her eyes shined, and she exclaimed.

Long Yunxin looked at where she was looking and was awed, too.

What tremendous pressure!

There was no telling whether it was a coincidence or not, but Mo Tianshui and Huangpu Xiaoya, the two centers of attention of the Skyhill Sword Seminar this year, had walked into the gate simultaneously.

Mo Tianshui was wearing a pair of linen shoes and a thorny branch which bound his hair. He was like an ancient sword that had just been unearthed, with thick dust blocking the spiritual stripes on it. His eyes were long, narrow, and tranquil, through which one seemed to be able to see another world, an incredible realm of sabers and swords!

Huangpu Xiaoya was like a bundle of lightning.

She was not a pretty girl, but definitely one that left a deep impression on whoever saw her. One would inevitably feel that infuriated electric arcs that were going to explode at any time were restricted and condensed into the shape of a human. Volatile pressure was unleashed continuously from her!

The arrival of the two prodigies set the preparation area on fire. Many refiners were crowding forward unconsciously, planning to observe them at a closer distance.

Long Yunxin took a few steps forward, too. She was an acquaintance of Huangpu Xiaoya and intended to greet her, only to discover that Xie Anan had already rushed out like a rabbit that had just seen a carrot.

Long Yunxin slapped her head. This young sister of hers was a crazy fan of swords and could never control her legs and mouth when she saw a celebrity. Long Yunxin only hoped that she wouldn't do anything too unusual and embarrass her in front of her old friend.

Xie Anan dashed forward and reached Huangpu Xiaoya in the blink of an eye. Long Yunxin had a terrible feeling.

However, Xie Anan ignored and passed Huangpu Xiaoya as if she didn't exist. She moved further and stopped in front of a messy-haired, drowsy young man.

If she had a tail, it would be wagging hard right now.

"Master Li Yao, you are here! Did you sleep well last night? The number of your personal chamber is 2588. I'll show you there for last-minute preparations in a moment. But do you want to grab some breakfast first? The porridge this morning is quite refreshing. It has also been added with sixteen Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures that have the effect of calming the soul. It will be very helpful for your performance in a minute. Can I offer you a bowl of it right now?"

Long Yunxin was dazed. What was going on here?

Huangpu Xiaoya was somewhat startled, too.

As the most excellent genius in the new generation of the Huangpu family, she had been used to the blandishment of other people. When she'd seen the young girl trotting close, she had thought that the girl was coming to be at her service. She didn't expect that the girl would simply pass by her!

She turned around and looked. The young man behind looked rather unfamiliar. He did not seem to be a celebrity of the trade.

Huangpu Xiaoya frowned slightly. She moved forward expressionlessly without looking back again.

Long Yunxin didn't know what to say or do. Seeing that Xie Anan and Li Yao walked and laughed to his chamber, she quickly followed and stopped right in front Li Yao.

Li Yao grinned and greeted merrily, "Nice to meet you, Fellow Cultivator Long!"

"You, too… Fellow Cultivator Li," replied Long Yunxin, drily. She glanced suspiciously at Li Yao and then at Xie Anan, not having the vaguest clue what spells the man had cast on Xie Anan that had turned her into a pug.

Li Yao yawned again and took off his gloves slowly.

Xie Anan suddenly cried, giving Long Yunxin yet another tremor.

But there was nothing inside the gloves.

Li Yao blew at his palm and warmed up his fingers. Then he took out a bright green bottle from his pocket. He dug out some white ointment from the bottle and smeared it on his hands carefully.

A refiner's skills hinged on their hands. The protection of hands couldn't be too highly valued.

The Cultivation of a refiner could be inferred from the ointment they used for the protection of their hands.

The Long family of Spiritual Streams was best at refining medicines. Long Yunxin had been familiar with almost a thousand ointments that could be used to nourish the hands. For an ointment that had been mixed with dozens of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, she could easily list all of them after smelling the ointment casually.

However, she could not distinguish what kind of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures had been employed in Li Yao's ointment!

How can that be! Even the secret ointments of the Mo family and the Huangpu family are readily discernable under my nose!

Did this guy make his own secret ultimate ointment that has absorbed the useful contingents of all the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures without leaving the tiniest residue?

So, is this guy really an expert who has been hiding himself?

In Long Yunxin's eyes, the bright green bottle turned mysterious all of a sudden. She intended to ask but was too embarrassed to open her mouth.

But Xie Anan did not have any concerns. She asked in admiration and reverence, "What a strange smell! Master Li Yao, is this your self-made ointment? Does it have special effects for the protection of your hands?"

"It is not."

Li Yao dug out another cluster of ointment from the bottle and smeared it on his hands, while he replied casually, "This is just a bottle of sunblock cream that I bought on the street. It only cost 3.5 dollars. Quite a bargain, I would say."

"Ke! Ke! Ke! Ke!"

Long Yunxin coughed uncontrollably. She couldn't deal with it any longer and said after a long breath, "Excuse me, Fellow Cultivator Li, I'm going to my chamber for some last-minute preparations. I hope... you can fully bring out your potential in the match!"

After that, she stomped on the ground and quickly left with rigid footsteps.

Xie Anan bit her lips and hesitated for a long time. Eventually, she summoned her courage and asked, "Master Li Yao, how can you take care of your hands with the cheapest sunblock?

"We Cultivators may be tolerant of everything else, but we cannot be sloppy about the arts of Cultivation!

"For an expert like you, your hands have been built up after throbbing suffering from the Purple Ring Sword Ants. They are priceless assets and should be nourished with the most advanced ointment made of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. Smearing random sunblock cream is too... inappropriate!

"Even though you might be short of funds for the time being, the organizer is providing basic nourishing ointments for every contestant. I think any of them would be better than sunblock cream, right?"

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. Then he laughed. "What are you thinking? I'm not so poor as to be unable to buy special nurturing ointments. I am not using them on purpose. My hands have been starved for two days."

"Starved for two days?" Xie Anan was confused.

Li Yao said, "Have you ever seen cock fighting or dog fighting? Do you know the secrets of such games?"

Cock fighting? Dog fighting?

Xie Anan shook her heads in bewilderment.

"The secret to winning such games is cutting their meals before the important matches.

"Hunger and thirst are the best exhilarants!

"A fearsome animal is the most brutal when it is the hungriest. It will lunge forward unhesitatingly and tear the prey to pieces even if its opponent is multiple times larger than itself!"

Xie Anan was not sure that she understood, but she was looking at Li Yao's hands in fear.

Li Yao extended his fingers and raised his hands. Then he said casually, "Right now, these hands of mine have been starved."

Chapter 491: Thumbs

Chapter 491: Thumbs

"All the audience in front of the light beam, the Skyhill Sword Seminar that everybody has been looking forward to is about to begin! 3,200 of the best young refiners have gathered together, fully prepared for an ultimate clash!

"In the first round, the contestants will be divided into groups of ten, 320 groups in total. They will compete against each other in refurbishment and maintenance skills!

"There are ten rusted, broken blades in front of each contestant. They will recover the total-loss magical equipment with the most rudimental tools!

"There is a strict standard as to what is considered to be 'recovered'. Only when the damage that the magical equipment can deal surpasses a certain threshold after receiving a designated unit of spiritual energy will the magical equipment be regarded as 'recovered'!

"Of the ten contestants in a group, the fastest to restore the ten blades will be qualified for the next round, while the other nine will be eliminated ruthlessly!

"One in ten. This is how cruel the match is. I can almost smell the scent of fire inside the field!"

…

The honeycomb-like field had been divided into hundreds of independent workshops which were connected to the contestants' personal chambers through short-distance teleportation arrays.

Very soon, colorful brilliance burst out of the teleportation arrays. Contestants of the same group appeared in the workshops one after another.

Li Yao walked out of the teleportation array and eyed his opponents, only to be dazed when he noticed a fatty guy.

He had run into an old friend. It was Luo Dong, heir of the Luo family of East Brightness, whom he had met three days ago in the sword-tasting gettogether.

It was well known that the Luo family's refining style was most distinguished for their hand speed!

Li Yao smiled and said friendlily, "Fellow Cultivator Luo, I didn't expect that we would be classified into the same group."

Luo Dong felt surprised, too. He laughed and scratched his head. "Greetings, Fellow Cultivator Li, I didn't know that we would be competing in the same workshop either. It is indeed a pity.

"In fact, your capability is quite good. Your performance was very stable that day despite your thick gloves. If you try your best today, with any luck, you are almost certain to be a dark horse and make it into top 300!

"However, of the ten contestants, only one can go to the next round. So… don't blame me, but I'm definitely going to do my best!"

Li Yao smiled and stopped talking. He found his seat according to the number he'd been given. Then he sat down, crossed his legs, and placed his hands on his thighs dutifully.

His hands were shaking.

Luo Dong noticed that. He secretly sighed; the guy was a newbie to the Skyhill Sword Seminar after all, and he had lost control over his hands before the match began due to anxiety!

Let the match begin now! Li Yao thought. He felt like his two hands had turned into two ferocious animals that couldn't wait to devour the wasted blades in front of his eyes!

The soft background music was switched to high-pitched shrills, before it came to an abrupt end. The first round of the Skyhill Sword Seminar had officially begun!

Bo! Bo! Bo!

The barriers that had been enveloping all the wasted blades broke apart simultaneously!

There was no other sound in the vast honeycomb-like refining center except the rattling noises that were the result of 3,200 pairs of quickly-moving hands!

…

"The match has begun!"

"The best result of the first around last year was 54'22''! The record of the recent ten years is 51'24''! I wonder, is anybody going to break either of the two records today?

"Let's switch the picture to Mo Tianshui and Huangpu Xiaoya, our top two seed players!"

"Wow. Mo Tianshui is really fast. In less than one minute, he has dismantled the ten wasted blades into the most fundamental components!

"Waves are spreading out of his fingertips, make his hands five times larger than usual. The hundred components are all covered!"

"Ms. Bi, would you please explain what is going on?"

"Of course. Mo Tianshui's hands are shaking at a frequency that is too high for the human eyes to catch. He has placed more than ten metal pieces among his fingers, and when the pieces collide, a special soundwave is triggered, which removes the rust on the blades instantly!

"This method is known as 'supersonic rust eradication'. It is not a secret in the circle of refiners. But there won't be a second refiner younger than forty who can perform it as fluently!

"Alright. Let's move the camera to Huangpu Xiaoya. Hiss… Her hands have turned into two balls lightnings! Countless electric arcs are causing the components to dance crazily in the midair!

"The competitors near her are dumbfounded!"

"It appears that the two monster-level geniuses are both confident about securing the title of 'Sword Master' in the Skyhill Sword Seminar this year! Incredible, truly incredible!"

In the live stream that followed, Mo Tianshui and Huangpu Xiaoya occupied most of the picture.

The two of them did not disappoint anyone. Their unbelievable maintenance skills were dreamy and marvelous!

As time went by, the number of blades they had repaired gradually increased.

"Everyone, it's only been 49 minutes and 33 seconds, and Mo Tianshui and Huangpu Xiaoya are both close to completion right now. Will they break the record and make a miracle today?

"Almost there. Almost there. Ah, Huangpu Xiaoya's last battle saber has passed the test! 49'55''! A new record has been born! Remember this remarkable moment, my friends!

"Mo Tianshui has completed the match. 49'59''! It took him less than 50 minutes, too! I can't believe my eyes! Any other year, this would have been a groundbreaking result! Too bad he met Huangpu Xiaoya this year and has to let her steal his thunder!

"I'm looking forward to the confrontation of the two geniuses in the final round very much!"

"Alright, let's switch the camera to some of the other groups."

After the conclusion of the two geniuses' performances, both the host and the two guests apparently lost their momentum. They continued changing the camera while they chitchatted with each other and commented on the contestants' presentation uninterestedly.

"Not bad. This contestant is cleaning the surface of the magical equipment with 'Fire Melting Technique'. Very creative."

"This contestant's skills are quite fluent, and reasonably good, yes, reasonably good."

"This is Luo Dong from the Luo family of East Brightness. He came 124th in the Skyhill Sword Seminar last year and is famous for his fast hand movements. His performance must be very enjoyable. Let's watch his show for a moment…

"Huh? Luo Dong's actions are quite awkward. He seems to be quite anxious. It does not befit his usual performances!

"Oh? Luo Dong is not the fastest in his group. Another contestant has been suppressing him and going faster than him. The guy has finished the maintenance of nine blades and completely disrupted Luo Dong's pace!"

Inside the picture, Luo Dong was perspiring, his hands shaking violently.

What emphasized his uneasiness was Li Yao's movements, which were as focused and precise as a clock.

His actions were accurate, to the extent that one might call them rigid, and were not in the least enjoyable compared with Mo Tianshui's and Huangpu Xiaoya's eye-catching styles.

However, his speed was as equally shocking as theirs.

The components in front of him were quickly assembled into sharp sabers and swords despite the somewhat warped operations.

1 hour, 2 minutes, and 34 seconds later, Li Yao finished the maintenance of the ten blades first in his group. He passed the first round and marched into the top 320!

Luo Dong grunted. He stared at Li Yao in a daze with a pale face.

His fingers were trembling violently, indicating that he was experiencing cramp in his hands!

"Unbelievable! A previously-unknown young man from the Great Horn Exo Society has defeated the heir of the Luo family of East Brightness. His hands were indeed clumsy, but they were really fast too!

"Although Li Yao's movements do not fit the standards, the procedures of his maintenance were seamless. I barely saw any pause or interruption. He must've received unimaginably cruel training and will likely be the dark horse this year!"

"This is the most interesting part about the Skyhill Sword Seminar. There are more experts living in seclusion in the sea of stars than anyone can count. In the next round of the match, I suggest we focus more on this Li Yao. Everybody should widen your eyes and see how far he can go!"

One or two dark horses appeared in the Skyhill Sword Seminar every year. The host and the two guests had all seen many of them, and therefore, were not very surprised.

Now that the winner of this group had been determined, the camera was soon shifted to other groups.

An hour and a half later, all the groups had completed the match.

A commercial cut in. The host and the guests were all relieved to take a moment of rest.

Master Dustless, the old professor from Flying Star University, frowned and was deep in thought.

After pondering for a moment, Master Dustless asked, "Can you replay Li Yao's performance at one tenth the original speed and zoom in on the picture, preferably with ancillary technologies, so that we can see his hands more clearly?"

The host was surprised. "Master Dustless, why do you—"

Bi Luoling, the rising star in Red Line School which was one of the three main crystal suit centers, raised her eyebrows. "Master Dustless, do you also feel that Li Yao's actions were odd?"

"A little bit."

Master Dustless shook his head and mumbled, "The picture of his performance keeps coming back to me. I sense that there's something wrong about it, and it gives me a weird feeling. Let's watch it first and discuss later!"

"Alright!"

The host projected a light beam immediately and asked the technological department to replay Li Yao's match video. The speed was set in one tenth of the original; the picture was zoomed in with the resolution enhanced. Li Yao's stiff and clumsy hands were focused in the center.

Three heads drew close to the light beam.

After watching for a while, Master Dustless' and Bi Luoling's faces turned solemn, if not appalled. They looked at each other in disbelief.

The host did not understand what had happened at all. He asked, "Is there a problem?"

"Look at his hands, his fingers!" Bi Luoling's voice was coarse.

The host observed the subject carefully for a moment and still failed to notice anything wrong. There were no airwaves nor electric arcs on his fingertips. It was the most ordinary method of polishing. The speed of his hands was amazing, but definitely not something that deserved such attention.

"Didn't you notice that he only used eight fingers from beginning to end?"

Bi Luoling exclaimed, "His two thumbs were kept still while his two hands were moving at an extremely high speed. They never touched a single component and were not part of the maintenance work!"

Chapter 492: Butcher's Cleavers

Chapter 492: Butcher's Cleavers

"What?"

The host was truly stunned.

Although hands were of paramount importance to refiners, a lack of one or two fingers did not necessarily mean that one could not refine anything.

There were many masters of refining who only had nine fingers in the legends.

However, the fingers that were missing were never thumbs!

Without thumbs, one could not even hold a saber or a sword, not to mention the delicate tools that were used in refining!

This guy, Li Yao, had not used his thumbs from the beginning to the end, and yet he had defeated the heir of the Luo family from East Brightness who was best known for his hand speed?

The host had a try himself. He folded his thumbs and picked up items on the desk with the remaining eight fingers. It took him quite a long time before he lifted the water cup with some difficulty. But soon, he faltered and knocked the cup over. His shoes were drenched.

The host was stunned. "How did he do the maintenance work like this?"

Bi Luoling mumbled, "Hiding his fingers was still enough for him to beat Luo Dong easily. If he had tried his best, he definitely could've made it shorter than 55 minutes. With any luck, he could've even—

"However, why is he doing this? Trying to hide his prowess on purpose? It is unnecessary, is it not, Master Dustless?"

Bi Luoling was somewhat confused.

Master Dustless gazed at Li Yao's hands for a long time, before he shook his head and answered solemnly, "He was not hiding his sharpness; he was merely trying to activate his fighting will!"

"To activate his fighting hill?"

"Yes. Luoling, as third place last year, you must've had similar experiences. During the match, one cannot enter their best state at the very beginning. They have to encounter a few competent opponents and fighting against them with all they can. Only in such a way can they turn excited and crazy and be blessed with the strongest fighting will. They enter their best state, in which they forget who and where they are. Only after such intense competitions can they march forward unstoppably!

"If an expert of martial arts is asked to fight a three-year-old, they would certainly be lethargic.

"Maybe, for this Li Yao, Luo Dong was merely like a three-year-old. He could not summon any fighting will when he was trying to defeat him at all!

"If the strongest fighting will came too late, he would have been at a great disadvantage when he meets with the real experts.

"The reason he hid two thumbs on purpose was not to show off but to increase the difficulty of the competition for himself, so that he could trigger the strongest fighting will while he was surpassing his limits!"

The host was dumbfounded. "The real experts? Even the heir of the Luo family of East Brightness was not a 'real expert' in Li Yao's eyes? Then who is his target? Could it be—"

Master Dustless murmured, "I've been studying the art of refining for more than a hundred years, and I have never seen such a weird newbie and such a pair of queer hands… Look at his hands carefully and compare them with other contestants'. Do you see any difference?"

The host projected a few other light beams on which he displayed the pictures of the hands of other experts of refining including Mo Tianshui's and Huangpu Xiaoya's.

Most of the hands were as translucent as jade, as smooth as silk, or as hard as steel. Some of them were even glowing with soul-stirring beauty while the fingers were moving.

Li Yao's hands were the only exception. His were the same as those of the ordinary people at first glance. There were some tiny injuries on the back of the hands and a few callouses on his palms. Even his fingernails were untidy!

The host blinked and said, "His hands seem rather plain. There's nothing unusual about them."

Staring at her own sparkling hands, Bi Luoling replied solemnly, "That is the problem. Watched from whichever angle, this pair of hands should belong be a low-level Cultivator or even an ordinary person. But, in fact, the owner of the hands is an expert refiner who has crushed over Luo Dong effortlessly. I can tell absolutely nothing about his background and expertise from his hands, and I have no idea how he trained himself with such skills!"

"I suggest…" Master Dustless remarked, "we switch the camera to this Li Yao more often besides focusing on Mo Tianshui and Huangpu Xiaoya. I'm going to carefully observe what kind of performance he's going to dedicate later!"

…

"What? You lost… to that Li Yao guy?"

Inside their personal chambers, the 320 contestants who had won the first round were taking a brief rest.

Long Yunxin, who had secured the victory without any trouble, was soaking her hands in the special liquid to refresh them, while she enjoyed the excellent show of the top two seed players, only to be interrupted by Luo Dong's incoming message.

Inside the light beam, Luo Dong's face was so awful that it seemed like he could cry at any moment. Even then, he still didn't know how he had failed.

"It's like ghosts walking in daylight. Ghosts walking in daylight! The guy's actions were the opposite of elegant. His fingers were rigid, too. I was secretly laughing at the beginning and thought that the stupid movements were because of his nervousness and lack of experience.

"But before I knew it, he had completed all the maintenance tasks with the awkward actions and the stiff fingers!

"You didn't see his eyes. The horrifying eyes! They were like two furnaces, two refining furnaces where black fire was burning and swallowing all the blades in front of them!

"Dreadful. It's too dreadful! In the end, I did not dare look at him at all. Whenever there was eye contact, I felt that my soul was being melted in a bottomless refining furnace!

"Disrupted. My pace was completely disrupted, and I lost the match foolishly just like that!"

"Hehe. It's nothing new to see ghosts in daylight. Hundreds of spectral Cultivators are watching the game right now!"

Long Yunxin sniffed and replied straightforwardly, "Maybe the guy has indeed got some petty tricks up his sleeve, but the real problem is that you are too weak. In social occasions, I've been trying to save your face, but since it's just you and me right now, I'm going to be frank. Your life has been too comfortable. I've read too much of news about your affairs over the last year! I think it was on the girls' bodies that your soul was melted."

Instead of waiting for a response, Long Yunxin cut off the call immediately. She took a long breath and continued readying her mind.

It was unimportant.

There were too many fellows who read a few novels and thought that they could play the pigs that could eat tigers.

However, those pigs could only eat tigers that were fat and stupid at best. When they were faced with ferocious dragons, they would be stomped into pork pies instantly!

A giant light beam was floating in front of Long Yunxin, on which the names of the 320 contestants were displayed. They were shining nonstop and were about to be classified into new groups of ten randomly.

The second round was still one out of ten. The elimination process would begin after the top 32 were determined.

Long Yunxin prayed to herself that she would not be put in the same group with monsters such as Mo Tianshui or Huangpu Xiaoya.

She was a seed player. Under the stochastic algorithm, the odds that two seed players would be sorted into the same group were quite low.

However, to make the match more enjoyable and to attract a larger audience, two seed players might still be able to meet before the final round, which would often be quite thrilling.

The second round of the match was the realization of designated structural designs.

Every contestant had an independent refining furnace and an operation platform. Three structural designs—namely a chainsword, a vibration saber, and a heat axe—would be offered to them.

The three kinds of melee magical equipment were the most classic models. They represented the peak of damage from revolution, damage from vibration, and damage from heat. Every refiner should be familiar with all the details on them.

What they needed to do was refine the three pieces of magical equipment from scratch within five hours with the same materials.

The criterion of victory would be the damage of their works. Those who boasted the strongest blades in their group would be qualified to enter the elimination match!

During the elimination match, the top 32 players would be engaged in one-versus-one competitions. That was the real 'Skyhill Sword Seminar'!

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

The 32 groups had been formed.

Long Yunxin's heart was racing. Her eyes sped over the family names of her group's contestants Thankfully, there was neither 'Mo' nor 'Huangpu'!

Relieved, she read on at ease, only to find an unexpected name on it—Zhou Xiaoyu, the young master of Snowy Sword Village!

Zhou Xiaoyu was a seed player, too, who had defeated her in the Skyhill Sword Seminar the previous year.

The unlikely event of two seed players running into each other in advance had happened to her after all.

However, Long Yunxin was not scared of Zhou Xiaoyu.

In fact, she had been hoping that she could meet her old nemesis soon.

Excellent. I'm going to kick you out of the top hundred for what you did to me last year!

Huh?

This guy Li Yao was classified into the same group as us?

Fighting against two seed players. Today is not your lucky today, my little friend who plays the pig!

The time for the second round had come.

Long Yunxin scoffed. She clenched her fists, producing clicking sounds, and she stepped onto the teleportation array with her head held high. She instantly appeared in a new field.

Except for those of the top experts, most competitions of refining were long and dull, without many highlights in the process.

In order to attract more spectators, the organizer had spared no effort in increasing the competitiveness of the match.

In the second round, every refiner had their independent workshop, but the walls of the workshops had been built up by transparent crystals, through which one could see clearly what the other nine competitors in the group were doing.

Besides, the workshops had communication channels connecting each other. When 'old nemeses' ran into each other, they could scorn and disparage one another with trash talk so that they might influence the mental states of their opponents. When that happened, it would be like two colliding comets, thrilling and entertaining!

Hardly had Long Yunxin entered her workshop when she noticed that her old friend Zhou Xiaoyu was her next-door neighbor.

Zhou Xiaoyu was wearing a black refining uniform. He looked gentle and elegant. The corners of his eyes were higher than regular, making him more appealing and endowing him with a weird charisma.

"Yunxin, I didn't know that we were so linked. We met early again this year. Hahahaha!" Zhou Xiaoyu smiled, while he eyed Long Yunxin as if she were an innocent pet.

"Young Master Zhou, please call me 'Fellow Cultivator Long'!" replied Long Yunxin coldly, not cringing at all. She glared at Zhou Xiaoyu.

Visible flames were flowing around them and filled their respective workshops. They were like two deadly animals crouching behind fragile bars and glowering at each other.

"We are doomed! We've been classified into the same group as two seeded players!"

"If there was one, we could try our luck. But there are two of them. This is indeed a group of death!"

"With the two sharks here, we shrimps stand no chance at all!"

"We can only try our best and get to a higher place!"

The other refiners of the same group all sighed upon seeing the murderous faces of those two.

In a workshop across from the two sharks', Li Yao sat cross-legged and stared at his hands with full attention.

More exactly, he was observing his thumbs, the two fingers which didn't participate in the battle earlier and were cramping violently because of hunger.

He bent and raised his thumbs, as if he were lifting two cold butchers' cleavers.

Li Yao opened his hands in midair. The two cleavers were placed on Long Yunxin's and Zhou Xiaoyu's necks.

Pa!

The fingernails on the thumbs couldn't bear the furious fighting will anymore and exploded at the same time. Hot blood dyed the two fingers crimson like magma!

Chapter 493: Hitting the Cow Past the Mountain!

Chapter 493: Hitting the Cow Past the Mountain!

The second round of the Skyhill Sword Seminar was to begin in one minute!

There was nothing but silence on the Thousand Edges Mountain.

Regular tourists and fans of magical equipment were everywhere on the mountain. They craned their necks to look at the giant light beam in the sky.

People of the trade from the noble families of refining and from the Cultivation sects, in the meantime, were analyzing the data nervously in the special spectating rooms inside the Thousand Edges Mountain.

Amateurs watch a game; professionals watch what is behind a game. On the light beams of the experts of the trade, other than the live stream of the match, a series of figures and lines were also displayed so that they could examine the techniques, habits, advantages, and disadvantages of each contestant in great detail.

The super experts of the three main crystal suit centers were even more focused on the top players, while they were making plans to hire qualified talents.

The staff who had been as busy as bees all morning finally got a moment of rest. They gathered in the relaxation room and watched the match via their mini crystal processors.

Most of the staff were volunteers from the two supreme universities of Heavenly Saints City. They were all young people and were chitchatting merrily.

Mo Tianshui and Huangpu Xiaoya were apparently the center of their focus. Xie Anan was the only exception, who had switched her channel to Li Yao and Long Yunxin's group.

"Anan, what are you watching? Why don't you join us?" A plump girl laughed and jumped on her back. Then she exclaimed, "Ah, you are watching the match of Long Yunxin and Zhou Xiaoyu's group? The early confrontation of two seeded players must be very entertaining!"

Xie Anan blushed and said somewhat nervously, "Yes. Yes indeed."

Right then, the match officially began!

Xie Anan had no time to bother about anything else. She focused her attention on the confrontation of the 23rd group!

Long Yunxin and Zhou Xiaoyu deserved to be seeded players. They had entered their best state the moment the match started. The flames flowing out their bodies were much brighter than before, as if they were being burnt. The fire on their hands was so intense that one could not even see their fingers clearly!

Thousands of streaks of brightness darted out of their hands and surged at the materials on the ground like tides.

In the second round of the match, the structural designs were designated and not allowed to be altered. The materials given were all the most regular metals, with barely any special attributes. There were no fancy tricks to resort to at all.

But for the super refiners, they could eliminate the impurities in the ordinary materials by cleansing them with their spiritual energy so that the performance and appearance of the materials could be improved slightly.

The pre-processing procedure for materials was also known as 'spiritualization'.

The magical equipment made of spiritualized materials was much stronger than that made of regular materials. But, of course, there was no agreed paradigm as to how exactly spiritualization should be carried out.

"Seeded players are indeed different from other competitors! Most refiners have turned on their furnaces, thrown in the materials and started the refinement of the components. In the meantime, the seeded players are activating their spiritual energy and spiritualizing the materials. We can zoom in on the picture later and observe the disparities between spiritualized materials and regular materials. I guarantee that they will be very different!

"Alright, other than the groups that Mo Tianshui and Huangpu Xiaoya are in, we will focus more on the 23rd group in which Long Yunxin and Zhou Xiaoyu, two seeded players, are battling it out. There will definitely be sparks!

"Also, I would like to inform you that, according to the analysis of our guests, there is a dark horse in the 23rd group that deserves your attention besides the two seeded players! Please keep your eyes open, everybody. We are now switching the main picture to this mysterious contestant Li Yao! Let's see whether or not he is spiritualizing the materials as the seeded players are? Voila, this is Li Yao. We can see that…

"Well. We can see that…"

Words suddenly failed the host.

Xie Anan was dazed, too. Her mouth gradually widened in surprise.

Li Yao did not spiritualize the materials like the seeded players did, nor did he rush into refining the components like the other refiners.

He had turned on the furnace and kept it functioning at the minimum level. Then, he picked up a random hammer from the toolbox and walked to the furnace. He was now tapping the furnace with the hammer and listening to the sound inside the furnace while he stuck his ears to the surface of it. His face was quite serious, as if he was doing something very important.

What is he doing exactly? Xie Anan was confused.

Li Yao's actions had stumped the host too. "Eh, Li Yao is acting weird here. Is there something wrong with his furnace? It can't be. All the furnaces have undergone the strictest tests before the match. Also, according to our monitoring platform, his furnace is working normally!"

Li Yao turned from tapping to batting, at a higher and higher speed. In the end, he even climbed to the top of the furnace like a giant monkey and bashed it with the hammer stormily. Very soon, there was machine oil all over his body. His face was blackened, too.

A moment later, he jumped off the furnace with a satisfied look and returned to the operation platform. He extended his fingers and shook them. More than ten maintenance tools were immediately rolled up.

BOOM!

Li Yao threw out his hammer, which heavily hit the transmission tube of the furnace, the weakest part of it.

One of the transmission tubes for the transportation of spiritual energy was stooped immediately!

Li Yao licked his lips. His eyes were completely black. His pupils turned into spreading ink and occupied the entire eyes. Taking a long breath, he started operating on the furnace quickly with dazzling movements of his hands.

"Master Dustless, what is Li Yao doing right now?"

The host had been meaning to keep the main picture on Li Yao briefly and give him a short introduction before shifting back to the top two players as soon as possible. However, Li Yao's surprising actions had rendered him speechless. He had no choice but to turn to the old professor.

There was astonishment in Master Dustless' voice, too, as he said, "He is making minor adjustments to the furnace!"

"Minor adjustments?"

"Yes, every skilled refiner has their unique habits in refining. When they are faced with an unfamiliar furnace, the first thing they do is always to make minor adjustments to the furnace in order to make it optimal for their own techniques and styles!"

The host said, "I do know such a practice. However, by operating on the light beam, he could set the parameters and command the crystal processor to do the adjustments if he wanted to create a unique refining environment of his own!"

"Of course, it is so nowadays. But long long ago, when the crystal processors were still underdeveloped, setting the parameters via the machines could not meet many special or extreme needs! Many old-fashioned refiners did not trust crystal processors. They believed what the saw, what they heard, and what they touched. Modifying a furnace with their bare hands was more to their liking.

"However, it was truly an old-fashioned tradition. The crystal processors of the Flying Star Sector are more than enough to carry out such tasks. Personally, I've never heard of any sect that has favored such a custom in the last two hundred years."

"Could it be—"

The host turned excited all of a sudden because he had finally found a highlight, "Alright. Everyone, Li Yao's profile has been presented to all of you. Contestant Li Yao is from the Great Horn Exo Society. But he was born in an ancient battlefield at the edge of the sea of stars. He is said to have been roaming among various relics and studying under an unknown, strange master! Is it a reasonable assumption that he is the sole successor of a school that was lost hundreds of years ago?"

Many spectators were excited.

"The sole successor of a school that was lost hundreds of years ago?"

"Are you kidding me? Hundreds of years ago? The hosts nowadays indeed have no standards at all!"

Some other spectators were sniffing and even protesting to the organizer via the Spiritual Nexus, demanding that the main picture be shifted back to the two geniuses. Why on earth were they watching a Mr. Nobody smashing a furnace with a hammer?

It was not until a good half hour later that Li Yao finished taking care of the furnace. The tubes of the furnace were now completely in disorder. Two units even swapped their places. Many joints of the tubes were spraying hot steams, producing frightening noises.

Although the ventilation rune arrays on the ceiling had been activated to their maximum, they could not drive away the surging mist inside the workshop. Enshrouded by the obscure steam, Li Yao was unpredictable as if he were in the middle of clouds.

Long Yunxin and Zhou Xiaoyu's competition had entered the most intense stage. They had both finished the spiritualization of materials and started the refining process. Continuous data was replacing one another on the light beams, making them too occupied to notice anything else.

Occasionally, Long Yunxin raised her head and noticed that Li Yao's workshop was smoldering as if he were trying to ignite coal.

She couldn't help but snort, before she was dedicated to her own operations again.

Xie Anan was so anxious that her big eyes were jumping out. She was of a mind to dive into the light beam and blow away the steam so that she could see what was going on more clearly.

In the fuzziness, she could only see that Li Yao had picked up dozens of kinds of materials without spiritualizing them.

What is happening? Why are the materials left unspiritualized? This is the boundary between the super experts and the top exerts! With your capability, you should know better than that!

Xie Anan was jumping on her feet impatiently.

Li Yao poured the first batch of materials, 27 kinds in total, into the feed-in tunnel of the furnace one by one. He then pointed casually on the operation menu, as if he were setting the refining environment randomly. In the end, he walked to the furnace, opened his hands, and pinned them to the surface of the furnace.

BOOM!

Suddenly, thunder broke out under his palms and drove away the steam inside the room completely, like two furious hurricanes!

Ci!

The elastic refining uniform of Li Yao's had been elevated up by his muscles that jerked like dragons. Li Yao's size seemed to have doubled within the moment. The muscles on his back interweaved into the brutal face of a roaring tiger!

The rumbling thunder inside the mini crystal processor was too shocking. Xie Anan felt that she was going lightheaded.

All the relaxation room was silent. Her fellow workers were all looking at her in surprise. "Anan, what is that noise?"

Inside the room of the live stream, although the main picture had been switching between Mo Tianshui and Huangpu Xiaoya, the two guests observed Li Yao's progress through a small monitoring light beam nearby.

The earsplitting noise almost scattered Master Dustless' eyebrows. His face color changed while he said, "Hitting the Cow Past the Mountain!

"Li Yao is spiritualizing the materials directly inside the furnace by blowing the spiritual energy into the furnace through the thick wall with the 'Hitting the Cow Past the Mountain' technique!"

Chapter 494: Sweet and Satisfying!

Chapter 494: Sweet and Satisfying!

The host was dazed. "He can do that? Why is he doing that?"

"He is trying to buy himself more time!"

Bi Luoling did not conceal the appreciation in her eyes. She continued, "Li Yao has wasted too much time in modifying the furnace in the traditional way at the beginning.

"We all know that, when it comes to the art of refining, capability does not necessarily equal to speed.

"Take the Iron Vine Flower for example. In order to retrieve its essence, you'll have to bake it in the flames of 3,352 degrees for 55 minutes and 43 seconds. One degree higher won't do, and one second shorter won't do, either!

"Even if a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator arrives and improves the temperature of the fire to five thousand degrees instantly, they cannot reduce the amount of time required by even half a second!

"Li Yao wasted a good half hour earlier. Generally speaking, that means he has abandoned the game on his side!

"In order to make up for the time he has lost, he is employing the method of refining and spiritualizing the materials at the same time!

"Spiritualizing materials against the blockage of the thick-walled furnace and under the high temperature and pressure has a high requirement on the perception, spiritual energy quantity, and the model construction ability of the refiner. Even inside the Red Line School, only a handful of experienced experts can perform such operations. But their failure rate is quite high, too. More importantly, they don't have to do it most of the time."

Master Dustless then continued the explanation. "It appears that Li Yao is quite confident in his skills. He believes that he won't fail and that he can catch up with the other contestants! I'm more curious about him than ever. It is said that he has experienced a lot of fortuitous incidents. I suppose the rumors are true. The world of Cultivators is indeed a vast place where amazing things happen. His performance is truly an eye-opener today!"

Inside the workshop, Li Yao stuck his hands to the furnace. Strings of spiritual energy were unleashed from the depths of his cells and gathered into waves like tidal bores. They surged out and fed back every slight vibration on the wall of the furnace so that Li Yao could sense the changes that were happening to the materials inside it.

For more than an hour, except for the time when he delivered new materials to the furnace, he had maintained the same posture. His muscles rose up time and time again as he exploited his physical strength and the power of his soul.

The high temperature curled his hair. His eyebrow was nearly burnt up. His lips were dry, with cracks on them. But he couldn't care less about all that.

His soul seemed to have penetrated into the dense wall of the furnace. It was compressed by the high temperature and pressure inside the furnace and mixed up with the metal materials.

The materials melded with each other and were rolled over and over, as if they were mud, by the immense pressure released by the hundreds of rune arrays inside the furnace after they were activated. The runes emitted brilliant mystic rays which pierced into the depths of the liquid metals and incurred inexplicable changes to their innermost structures. The core of the metal compounds gradually evolved and turned into new alloys!

The alloys as soft as a swamp were sent to the bottom of the furnace where the temperature was relatively low.

In this place, the shaping rune arrays would crush the alloys into the basic form of components through high pressure according to the patterns preset on the crystal processor.

This was just the beginning.

Later, they would have to experience dozens of procedures, including rapid freezing, quenching, high-pressure forging, rune arrays embedding, and so on. Some of the procedures would even have to be repeated several times before a functional magical equipment component was finally born.

For other people, the process might be tedious and boring.

But for Li Yao, such a job was like organizing a bunch of slovenly mobs and taming them with the harshest martial laws so that they could be trained into obedient and unstoppable soldiers who could crush everything in their way!

He liked it. Eventually, he completely dwelled in the world of refining.

As a young man from a remote town who had never been heard of before, he might not be enough to attract the sight of common audience, but many experts of the trade had noticed his oddness.

"Huh. This guy, Li Yao, his furnace seems different from others'; its efficiency is much higher!"

"Indeed. The temperature limit, pressure limit, and the switch from high temperature and low temperature of his furnace are all better than the performance of other people's furnaces!"

"The overall specifications of this particular furnace are at least 3% higher than other furnaces. What happened? Was the organizer too careless?"

"It has nothing to do with the organizer. The guy made some minor adjustments on his furnace at the beginning. Hurry up and replay the adjustments! Let's study them more carefully!"

Inside many spectators' rooms, the seniors and renowned refiners had all noticed Li Yao.

Many data analysts were quickly operating their light beams in order to scrutinize his actions.

As more and more details were presented, many of the experts were apparently interested in the contestant.

"Who is this Li Yao exactly? The style of his refining is somewhat old-fashioned, with a dash of heartlessness. It is not similar to any mainstream styles."

"He is gambling!"

"Spending fifty-four minutes in adjusting his furnace could, of course, improve its performance, but the time left for the real refining work has been greatly diminished! The creation of many components will take two to three hours anyhow!"

"Producing three pieces of magical equipment in five hours. Does he really have enough time?"

One second passed after another.

After four hours, most of the refiners had finished the refining of the components and entered the last procedure.

For a component that had just been set free from the high temperature and pressure of the furnace, its internal structure was still unstable even though it had gone through cooling liquids, with tiny and chaotic residues of spiritual energy known as 'inner stress'.

In the theories of the ancient Cultivators, there was still 'scent of the smoke' in a newly-made component. Only the mediocre refiners would create a piece of magical equipment with such components.

Placing a component for three to five years without touching it would eliminate the inner stress.

However, most refiners wouldn't wait for so long. Same as the spiritualization process, every sect and school had their own ways to cope with inner stress.

But all the ways required more than half an hour to fully remove the inner stress.

Some of the less capable refiners who did not know any method to eradicate inner stress had already started assembling their components dutifully.

But Li Yao was still refining the components one batch after another.

Another half hour passed. There were only thirty minutes to go!

Almost all the refiners had finished the refinement of components. The top experts had started reducing the inner stress with various techniques.

Li Yao was still busy.

It was not until there were only twenty minutes left that he finished refining the last batch of components.

The fresh components were piled up on the operation platform like a hill, from which hot steam was popping up nonstop.

"Time is running out!"

Many experts who had been focusing on Li Yao shook their heads.

Within less than twenty minutes, it was impossible to completely destroy the inner stress of all the components anyway. If he were to assemble the components without preprocessing them, the slim advantage that he got from optimizing his furnace would be entirely offset.

The crazy refining of almost five hours was a great burden both for the body and for the heart. Li Yao seemed to have turned into a dry wood. His eyelids were sloppy, his face lethargic. The last bit of brilliance deep inside his dark, ink-like eyes was gone. His movements slowed down.

Li Yao raised his hands softly. Deep blue electric arcs broke out from his fingertips which then swept over and absorbed the components that were as high as a hill and…

Span!

Thousands of components seemed to have formed a steel tornado. Bolstered by the electric arcs unleased from Li Yao's fingertips, they were spinning rapidly in midair!

It was quite a popular method of reducing inner stress by spinning. The seasoned refiners were not surprised to see it.

But the very next second, the corners of their eyes were all trebling violently.

The steel tornado in front of Li Yao was spinning faster and faster. Together with the dazzling electric arcs, it formed a large swirl with immense attraction force!

The hammers, clamps, and wasted materials on the desk all bounced and jumped into the swirl!

Ca! Ca! Ca! Ca! Ca! Ca! Ca!

Earsplitting noises immediately echoed within the steel swirl.

Many sharp-edged metal materials were colliding crazily and generating brilliant sparks as if somebody were setting off fireworks!

Countless powder-like objects sprayed from the bottom of the swirl loosely, only to be pulled by the attraction force of the swirl and spun around with the swirl before they spread out like a grey mist!

The steel swirl made of components was like a hungry beast that had swallowed the tools and wasted material and crushed them into the tiniest iron powder!

The inner stress inside the components vanished during the crazy swallowing and crushing.

Ten minutes later, Li Yao's fingers jerked weirdly. Blue electric arcs darted out of his fingers and interweaved into almost a hundred tentacles that connected all the components as if they were pearls on a necklace!

Sparks were bursting, electric arc were overflowing, and dreamy lightning was splashing. The electric currents seemed to be endowing each component with a new life. They congregated—as if they were monads—combined, and expanded!

After five minutes of the glamorous show—

A chainsword, a vibration saber, and a heat axe were born perfectly!

At this moment, the last bit of the fire on the countdown in the middle of the workshop perished.

End of the match!

Li Yao grunted. He stumbled as if somebody had punched him right in his chest. The sparks and lightning immediately vanished.

In front of him, three pieces of black, plain-looking magical equipment were floating. They were chasing and hunting the last bits of wandering electric arcs in the air like three naughty cubs.

Ticktack. Ticktack.

The skin on Li Yao's ten fingers had all broken apart. There was barely any left on his two thumbs. Hot blood dripped to the ground, where vague steam was rising up.

"My blood is burning!"

Li Yao lifted his thumb to his mouth and sucked it.

The blood mixed with the flavor of steel and sweat after a fully-devoted fight was always extraordinarily sweet and satisfying!

Chapter 495: Two Surpassing All!

Chapter 495: Two Surpassing All!

Long Yunxin and Zhou Xiaoyu walked out of their workshops at almost the same time.

Three pieces of glamorously shining magical equipment were floating behind each of them.

When their ruthless eyes crashed into each other, the six blades flew to their middle with their edges pointing at their opponents, as if they were two merciless armies at a war.

The same structural designs and the same materials had been refined into completely different styles because of the unique techniques employed by each refiner.

On the three pieces of magical equipment refined by Long Yunxin, flames that looked like scattered dragon scales were rolling and raging.

Zhou Xiaoyu's magical equipment, on the other hand, was entangled with streaks of purple brightness, as if countless purple vipers were crouching on the edges of the blades, hissing at his opponent. It was quite scary.

The six pieces of magical equipment gradually drew close to each other. The auras were surging, and the brightness was colliding. The air between them was ripped apart. Electric arcs as thin as hair were rushing and shining.

"Yunxin, it seems that you've put in a lot of work over the last year. Even the dragon scale sword aura, the ultimate technique of your family, has been grasped by you!" said Zhou Xiaoyu with a smile, but he was apparently not bothered at all.

Long Yunxin scorned, "Young Master Zhou, let's see in a moment whether my dragon swallows your viper or your viper poisons my dragon!"

While the two of them were talking, Li Yao walked out of his workshop exhaustedly.

His three pieces of magical equipment were not floating in the air; they were held in his arms, lackluster as if they were wasted iron that had just been dug out from the ground.

When he passed by them, Li Yao slowed down and glanced at their works.

His eyes stopped there for just one moment before they were moved away immediately.

The magical equipment in his arms was as quiet as before. All the blades were lying inside his arms lazily.

Long Yunxin's and Zhou Xiaoyu's magical equipment didn't have any reactions. They didn't perceive any danger and felt no threat from Li Yao's magical equipment after all.

Li Yao walked forward without looking at them anymore. His eyes were fixed on the giant light beam not far away.

The ranks of the 320 refiners would soon be listed on the light beam.

Other than the top 32, who were qualified to go to the next round, the ranks of the other contestants would be calculated by the accumulated damage their blades dealt.

For all the refiners who made it to the top 100, they were very likely to receive invitations from the important sects and crystal suit centers.

In the Flying Star Sector, in order to avoid nepotism, it was a custom for the young people of the noble refining families to work in other sects and organizations, instead of staying in their own. This ensured that their skills and experience could be exchanged, and newer, stronger refining techniques could be inspired.

Therefore, the rank meant a lot for the young people of the noble families. Their futures were dependent on it, too.

Li Yao was gazing at the top three on the list.

To this moment, they were still blank.

Since the very beginning, Li Yao's targets had never been Long Yunxin and Zhou Xiaoyu.

His cleavers were not prepared for those two seeds.

The soul-stirring damage examination test soon began!

It was also the most enjoyable procedure in the refining match.

Magical equipment refined by the super experts, when activated at its maximum capacity, could often unleash unimaginable damage in unparalleled dazzling brilliance.

Here, the basic unit to gauge the damage of the magical equipment was 'crystal'.

One crystal of damage equaled to the damage that the energy contained inside one gram of standard crystal could deal.

Inside thirty-two test rooms, artificial arms made of steel and rune arrays were lifting pieces of magical equipment swiftly, sending one standard portion of spiritual energy, and slashing them at the target in the front brutally.

The targets were metal skeletons enveloped in crystal gels. Very sensitive reaction rune arrays had been carved into them. There was also a bright gold spiritual shield on the outside.

With the spiritual energy, the magical equipment all emanated dazzling brightness and shattered the spiritual shield, before it slashed into the crystal gels heavily.

The light beam nearby immediately gave a value for the damage dealt.

"88 crystals!"

"86 crystals!"

"92 crystals!"

The host's excited voice was echoing throughout the field.

"Attention, everyone, the examination procedure has begun! The three structural designs that this Skyhill Sword Seminar adopted are all basic, classic magical equipment, which have been passed on in the Flying Star Sector for hundreds of years.

"In the factories, such magical equipment manufactured via assembly lines usually possesses damage between 30 crystals to 40 crystals! But with the same structure and the same materials, the works delicately made through the hands of refiners mostly possess damage above 80 crystals, more than double the damage of the standard magical equipment!

"In a battlefield, not double, even a gap of 1 crystal might determine the life and death of a Cultivator!

"This is the formidability of refiners!

"My friends, stay tuned. In the No. 1 group and the No. 9 group, the products of Mo Tianshui and Huangpu Xiaoya, two monster-level geniuses that everybody has been looking forward to for a long time, are about to be tested. Let's switch the main camera to them and observe how magnificent their magical equipment is!"

In order to increase the attractiveness of the Skyhill Sword Seminar, the organizer had indeed put a lot of thought into it. The simultaneous tests of Mo Tianshui's and Huangpu Xiaoya's work were apparently arranged on purpose so that more people would be interested in the match.

As it turned out, all the spectators craned their necks and gazed enthusiastically.

Mo Tianshui's magical equipment was just like himself. Antique and austere. A vague hint of wind surrounded both the chainsword and the vibration saber. The two blades had an air of divinity, even though they were the most ordinary magical equipment.

Huangpu Xiaoya's works were alike to her, too, and seemed to have been condensed by bundles of lightning. Electric sparks were spluttering every second.

Shua!

Operated by the artificial arms, their chainswords slashed out almost at the same time.

Mo Tianshui's chainsword seemed to be still, and yet it seemed to be revolving at the maximum speed, too. Before the blade reached its target, a blurred shadow had darted out. No, not a blurred shadow, but the aura of the sword.

Deep inside the chainsword, the vitality and power of soul that the refiner concealed were condensed into an unstoppable sword aura which almost minced space into nothingness. A fuzzy swirl appeared in between the blade and the target!

The distance between the chainsword and the target seemed to have been swallowed by the swirl. The chainsword appeared directly inside of the spiritual shield and cut in the crystal gels softly.

BOOM!

Under the earsplitting noise, a lot of flakes spread out on the light beam, as if it could not bear the overwhelming damage. It was not until a long while later that the final outcome was revealed.

"153 crystals!"

There was nothing but silence.

The number was double that of other contestants and quadruple that of assembly-line magical equipment!

Also, the magical equipment had been made of the most common metal materials. If it were made of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, with a more advanced structural design, what would the ultimate chainsword be like?

The talented heir of a noble family that had lasted for hundreds of years was indeed impressive!

Within the moment, Huangpu Xiaoya's chainsword dashed out, too.

Hardly had the blade was released when the electric currents wreathing the chainsword expanded exponentially. It was originally 1.25 meters long, but the electric currents had enlarged it to almost six meters. The entire test room was enshrouded in raging purple brightness!

The electric arcs tore the spiritual shield into pieces effortlessly like tusks and pierced into the crystal gel ruthlessly!

The attack continued. The reading on the light beam rose. 33 crystals, 45 crystals, 84 crystals, and eventually, 149 crystals!

The unbelievable figure raised another round of exclamations.

"Everyone, Mo Tianshui and Huangpu Xiaoya have completed the test for their chainswords. They truly deserve to be the talented successors of two noble families that have lasted hundreds of years. Such results eclipse the performance of all the other contestants in the Skyhill Sword Seminars over the last thirty years and are only slightly weaker than Huangpu Shiyi's, the crazy sword forger who disappeared as abruptly as he appeared. How incredible!"

The host was crying in such a high voice that one might suspect his lungs were going to burst.

Inside the field and out, cheers and applause burst out like a flood.

On the list, the two of them ranked first and second in regard to the damage of chainswords. But the third place only had a score of 110 crystals. It was far from them, indicating that the contestant was not of the same level as them at all.

Soon, their vibration sabers and heat axes were tested, too.

"My friends! My friends! I cannot believe my eyes! The total damage of Mo Tianshui's three blades is 503 crystals! But Huangpu Xiaoya caught up to him very shortly. Her vibration saber blew out a terrifying damage of 178 crystals! Her total damage is 506 crystals!

"In the second round, Huangpu Xiaoya is currently in the lead, and Mo Tianshui is closely behind her. The two of them make the first echelon. The contestant in the third place has a gap of 108 crystals from them. They are indeed surpassing all!

"Marvelous! Truly marvelous! I cannot wait to see their confrontation in the final elimination round!"

The atmosphere inside the field and out had reached the climax. All of the audience was simmering in excitement. Many experienced refiners rose up from their seats uncontrollably. In the heated atmosphere, everybody's roars rumbled into two deafening names.

"Mo Tianshui! Mo Tianshui! Mo Tianshui!"

"Huangpu Xiaoya! Huangpu Xiaoya! Huangpu Xiaoya!"

Overshadowed by the two monster-level geniuses, the other refiners found it hard to breathe.

Long Yunxin and Zhou Xiaoyu looked at each other and noticed the amazement in the other's eyes.

However, they had not planned to fight for the title of 'Sword Master' in the first place. After they entered the top 32, they would be engaged in one-on-one elimination matches. If they were lucky enough, they wouldn't meet either of the two monsters until semi-finals or even the final match.

Therefore, they just needed to take down the opponent in front of their eyes and enter the elimination match first!

Five refiners in their group had finished the test. Their total damage was all around 300 crystals. None had a score above 350.

"How boring. Just test mine already!"

The two of them were both anxious.

But it was disappointing that Li Yao's magical equipment was the next to be sent into the test room.

Chapter 496: Which Li Family?

Chapter 496: Which Li Family?

"Everyone, at the request of our guests, we are now switching the main camera to the test room for the No. 23 group. Contestant Li Yao's magical equipment is about to be examined. His performance during the refining was indeed an eye-opener for us all! What surprises will his magical equipment offer us?

"Judging from the appearance, Contestant Li Yao's magical equipment is rather plain. There is not the slightest trace of spiritual waves. It does not look like a piece of magical equipment, but a regular sword!

"Now, the artificial arm has transmitted the spiritual energy into the sword!

"Odd. Contestant Li Yao's chainsword has no reaction whatsoever. There are no signs that the rune arrays are activated, either. Did the refining failed?"

Inside the test room, Li Yao's chainsword was raised high and slashed at the target in the front.

During the entire process, there were neither waves nor electric arcs. It seemed to be the most typical heavy blade.

However, when the sword approached the spiritual shield of the target, the tip of the sword quickly shivered, as if it was feeling cold.

After the shiver, the spiritual shield was breached through without counterattacking at all. The sword seemed to have 'blinked' into the spiritual shield.

"Chi!"

The chainsword penetrated into the crystal gel.

The damage jumped out on the light beam: 99 crystals!

"An acceptable result."

The host was clearly disappointed. He commented drily, "Contestant Li Yao's chainsword has dealt a damage of 99 crystals. It is very close to a hundred. Not entirely a bad—"

Before he could finish his observation, abrupt changes took place. A cluster of dazzling brilliance burst out suddenly deep inside the crystal gel. A formless blade had marched forward inside the crystal gel!

On the light beam, the figure changed. It leapt from 99 crystals to 141 crystals instantly!

"Oh!"

Somebody seemed to have kicked the host right in his loins. He exclaimed at the loudest voice, "Not 99 crystals, but 141 crystals! Contestant Li Yao has blown out a damage of 141 crystals! It is only secondary to Mo Tianshui's and Huangpu Xiaoya's, and ranks third in this subject!

"His chainsword has preserved all the spiritual energy in a very delicate way and didn't unleash it until the blade was deep inside the target's body. It would be able to deal much more devastating internal injuries this way!

"Contestant Li Yao is indeed the biggest surprise of the Skyhill Sword Seminar this year! I wonder, will his next two pieces of magical equipment amaze us as well?"

The spectators who were seething with excitement burst into an even messier riot!

"141 crystals? Are you kidding me? So close to the results of the talented heirs?"

"They are the only three who have improved the damage of the chainsword to above 120 crystals. Other people have been left behind far away!"

"Which one is Li Yao? Let me see!"

Long Yunxin and Zhou Xiaoyu, who were at loggerheads with each other, seemed to have been struck by lightning at the same time. They turned around stiffly and stared at Li Yao in dazed disbelief.

They all knew themselves well. Their chainswords wouldn't have a damage higher than 120 crystals, which meant that there was at least a gap of 20 crystals between Li Yao and them. The following subjects would be unnecessary!

What, what was this all about?

The two 'old nemeses' hadn't sorted out their grudges yet, and the Mr. Nobody from a remote area was about to eliminate the two of them. Should they just go home now?

Li Yao was still concentrated. The roars and exclamations inside the field and in the stands, as well as the shocked eyes of the audience, had no influence on him at all. He waited for the results of the last two subjects patiently.

Forging swords was not what he was best at.

What he liked most were sabers.

When Long Yunxin and Zhou Xiaoyu were back to themselves after their astonishment subsided and looking back at the light beam again, the aura of Li Yao's saber was brushing the target of crystal gel like a phantom.

But nothing seemed to have happened to the target. The reading on the light beam was frozen at '0', too.

Black brightness was spreading in the bottom of his eyes. He put on a satisfied smile.

One second later, the target of crystal gel slightly trembled. The upper half of the target leaned leftwards, slid down and fell off to the ground. A section as smooth as mirror was left on the target!

What a fast sword!

It was not until this moment that the reading on the light beam bounced crazily like a rabbit that had just been stabbed.

The damage of Li Yao's vibration saber—201 crystals!

There was nothing but dead silence inside the field. It was even quieter than a grave that had been abandoned for a hundred years.

If the audience was crazy about Li Yao's chainsword's performance, then the terrifying result that outshone the two talented heirs and left everyone else far behind had frozen every spectator's voice, as if the sharp blade had cut into their necks and slashed their vocal cords in half!

It was not until ten seconds later that the host bellowed, "What did I see? What did I see? In the subject of vibration saber, Contestant Li Yao has blown out a damage of more than 200 crystals! Even Mo Tianshui and Huangpu Xiaoya were completely surpassed!

"Saber King!

"The previously-unknown young man from the edge of the sea of stars is definitely the king of sabers of the Skyhill Sword Seminar this year, no, over the last ten years."

His cry completely battered the frozen ambience.

Volcanoes seemed to be erupting inside the field and out. Magma was spurting in the crowds. Both the common audience and the experts were bubbling with excitement. All the students in the two Refining Departments of the two supreme colleges who were working as volunteers jumped to their feet, too, while they were letting out meaningless yet thrilled cries.

Not far away, in the other two workshops, Mo Tianshui and Huangpu Xiaoya stared at the light beam in disbelief. Their faces were frozen for a long time before they gradually melted.

"Li Yao..."

The two talented successors squinted and recited the name.

The heat axe test, which followed, was not as impressive as that for the vibration saber, but Li Yao still secured third place.

Based on the glamorous performance of the vibration saber, the accumulated damage of his three pieces of magical equipment had reached 503 crystals, parallel to Mo Tianshui's score and only 3 crystals fewer than Huangpu Xiaoya's. The three horses constituted the tantalizing first echelon and galloped forward!

Long Yunxin and Zhou Xiaoyu were both dumbfounded.

Although their tests had begun, they were not interested in the result any longer because they had been eliminated!

…

An hour later, all the magical equipment had been tested. The top 32 players of this Skyhill Sword Seminar had been determined and teleported to the central hall of the honeycomb-like refining center!

The top 32 players were almost exclusively heirs of the noble families or well-known celebrities in the circle of refiners. Li Yao was the only stranger there and did not seem to fit the environment.

But everyone was looking at him in shock and fear.

Dozens of crystal cameras were flying in the air, capturing the images of the top 32 players and sending them to the light beams inside the field and out.

Most of the cameras, however, were focused on Li Yao.

"Is he Li Yao?"

"He looks rather plain. There are no signs of him being an expert. Though, his eyes are indeed intimidating!"

"How was he doing his refining a moment ago? The skin on his hands has all broken apart!"

Many spectators grew interested in Li Yao.

For the regular audience, Li Yao, as a mysterious young man from the edge of the sea of stars, was apparently much more eye-catching than the talented heirs of the two noble families of refining.

The experts and scholars were quickly searching files and looking into the schools of refining that had been lost during the last hundreds of years.

However, the universe was too large a place. There were more schools that had gone extinct in the Flying Star Sector than anybody could count. Nobody could say for sure which one Li Yao belonged to.

"Everyone, the top 32 players have been selected after a day of fierce competitions. Tomorrow, the more thrilling elimination matches will be held! Right now, the most exciting procedure of the day is about to begin. The match partners of the top 32 players tomorrow will be settled randomly!

"There is no concept of 'seeded players' among the top 32 players. It is quite possible that Mo Tianshui and Huangpu Xiaoya will run into each other in the very first match!

"Now comes the big moment!"

On the giant light beam, the names of the 32 players turned into streaks of gold brightness instantly and span crazily.

After half a minute of spinning, the streaks were thrown out of the swirl one after another to the two sides of the light beam.

One minute later, the 32 streaks were classified into 16 groups. Two names were placed in a line and paired with each other!

"Hiss!"

All the spectators gasped.

"The match table for the top 32 players is out. An unexpected surprise has indeed happened! Mo Tianshui, one of the two favorites as well as the strongest heir of a noble family of the refining, is about to crash into Li Yao, the mysterious refiner from the periphery of the sea of stars!

"Yes. Mo Tianshui versus Li Yao. It's going to be the first match tomorrow!"

The result stirred the minds of everyone watching the Skyhill Sword Seminar like a hurricane.

One of them was the talented heir of a noble family that had lasted for hundreds of years, while the other was an expert from the countryside who had risen to fame miraculously. What kind of sparks would break out when they collided?

Li Yao and Mo Tianshui, on the other hand, seemed to be in the center of the tornado; they were not affected at all.

Amid the whispers, Mo Tianshui walked over to Li Yao.

He was a man of manners. Despite the high-intensity refining work that had gone on for five hours, he was as graceful as when the matches had begun. He seemed to have just paced out of a mottled ancient painting.

His eyes, which were as deep and vast as an ocean, stopped at Li Yao's bruised hands for a long time, before they were moved to the stranger's face. He looked at him with great interest.

"Mo Tianshui, of the main bloodline of the Mo Family, from Tongye City in the Hidden Mountain Domain. May I have the privilege?" Mo Tianshui smiled and asked about Li Yao's background in the ancient way.

"Li Yao, of the Li family," said Li Yao briefly, who focused his eyes on Mo Tianshui's hands, too.

Mo Tianshui raised an eyebrow. There was a moment of confusion in his eyes.

He had thought of all the noble refining families of the Flying Star Sector quickly and came up with no 'Li family' that was worth mentioning.

He asked unconsciously, "Which Li family?"

Li Yao retreated his gaze and walked past Mo Tianshui to the teleportation array leading to his personal chamber.

As he passed by, he said, "The Li family that has me."

Chapter 497: Behind a Genius

Chapter 497: Behind a Genius

At night, inside the hotel where the top 32 players stayed…

The Skyhill Sword Seminar was not just a match; it was also an important chance for communication within the circle of refiners as well as an opportunity to promote the arts of refining among ordinary people. Therefore, the contact between the contestants and the audience had always been highlighted.

Many ordinary guests were staying in the luxury hotel. A great number of fans of magical equipment had also gathered in the garden outside of the hotel and cheered for their favorite players.

A lot of contestants often chose to leave their rooms and meet with the fans in the garden in order to increase their popularity.

Some of them were already the spokespersons of a certain brand or had companies of their own that were related to magical equipment. They wouldn't hesitate to be known by more people so that their products could be better sold.

Li Yao, on the other hand, stayed in his room and listened to the sounds outside the window.

Most of the roars were dedicated to Mo Tianshui and Huangpu Xiaoya.

But every once in a while, his name could be heard, too.

"Li Yao! Li Yao! Li Yao! Li Yao!"

If one were to turn on the Spiritual Nexus, they would read news about him everywhere, including the videos of his crazy performance in the match. Most of the media had described him as 'a genius rising to fame miraculously'. Even Mo Tianshui and Huangpu Xiao had to share the headlines with him.

In front of Li Yao, Bi Luoling, third place of the Skyhill Sword Seminar last year as well as the rising star inside Red Line School, was smiling at him.

"Fellow Cultivator Li, you've become well-acknowledged after only one battle. All the refiners know you right now. In regard to the refinement of battle sabers, many experienced experts are quite interested in you.

"There is no need for me to boast about the leading position of Red Line School in the trade. The clauses on the contract are quite decent, too. After all, you are just a top 32 player and haven't made it to the top 8 yet. I don't believe that you will be offered a second contract that is as appealing as mine.

"You've read all the clauses. I can explain them to you if you find any parts unclear. You are free to propose extra demands, too. We are always open to negotiation."

Li Yao lowered his head and pushed the jade chip back to Bi Luoling. He said calmly, "I refuse the contract."

Bi Luoling's eyebrow was curled into two crescent moons, as she asked in astonishment, "Why?"

Li Yao replied, "Because it is not the top contract. According to the clauses, I can only join the mediocre groups of Red Line School and can't participate in the core projects. Also, I only have access to 80% of the classics and files collected by Red Line School. The more valuable and essential 20% is not available for my reference or training."

Bi Luoling coughed and frowned. "Fellow Cultivator Li, allow me to explain it. It is not as simple as you imagined for the three main crystal suit centers to recruit new people.

"Yes, you've demonstrated impressive capability, but you are a top 32 player right now after all, and it's very likely that the odds will not be in your favor when you are against Mo Tianshui tomorrow.

"Besides, your techniques are very mysterious, which do not belong to the major schools of refining.

"Excuse me, I am not prying into your background. However, we cannot run a precise assessment on your capability without knowing your background, nor are we certain about the stability of your performance and the ability of your cooperation with other people.

"To create a crystal suit, a platform for super magical equipment, teamwork is mandatory. We have to take many factors into consideration. A pair of phantom-like hands alone won't do.

"For the top crystal suits that Red Line School is working on right now, because of the preferences in designs, we are not preparing to equip them with sabers.

"However, among the crystal suit projects of a lower level, one model has been formulated to use a battle saber as the main weapon.

"It is because of your proficient skills in the refinement of sabers that we drew a contract in advance and invite you in.

"Speaking of the contract, it is truly a sincere one that is favorable for you in terms of salary, benefits, and your future career. You can ask around. It's very rare for a young refiner less than 30 years old to join the groups of Red Line School that are only secondary to the groups for the core projects!

"Besides, there are a lot of matches within Red Line School. The communication among the three main crystal suit centers is frequent, too. If you truly believe in your capability, you can always prove yourself in three to five years and advance into the top group to be part of the core projects!

"Three to five years of studying will do a young man like you no harm."

Li Yao pondered carefully for half a minute and shook his head again. "Thank you for your kindness, but the answer is still no.

"I will defeat Mo Tianshui tomorrow.

"After that, if Huangpu Xiaoya stands in my way, I will defeat her as well.

"Other than the top groups of the three main crystal suit centers, I won't settle for anything else.

"If you bring out the top contract right now, I will sign it immediately.

"If you can't, please go back. I have to train myself. We can talk tomorrow after the battle.

"However, I cannot guarantee that Red Line School will be first to provide a contract."

Bi Luoling's eyes twitched, but she maintained the perfect smile as she nodded her head. "Alright, then I wish Fellow Cultivator Li all the best in the match tomorrow!"

After Bi Luoling left, Li Yao deployed soundproof rune arrays and alarm magical equipment on the walls and the door of his room.

Together, they blocked the roars outside of the room from him.

The battle between Mo Tianshui and him would begin at 11 o'clock sharp the following morning.

Other than an hour of deep sleep, an hour of physical strength preservation, and a half hour of trifles, the time for training was only 10 hours, 32 minutes, and 57 seconds.

Shua!

Li Yao dimmed the lights. He projected dozens of light beams from his crystal processor, which span slowly in the dark room.

The mottled pieces of light and shadow interweaved into pictures of the past.

"Ha. You can't be this weak. You just ate three fat drumsticks! You can't just fall over after one punch. Get up and let's do it again!"

"We made it! We've made it! The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit has been successfully refined!"

"Little monster, you are going to the Grand Desolate War Institution tomorrow, and I'm going to embark on the path of becoming the best hairdresser. In honor of this thrilling moment, why don't we—go and gulp two Red Flame Big Hand egg pies!"

"We are the hungry wolves on the Occult Orbs. We are Team Blue Bronze!"

These videos had been shot by Li Yao with his mini crystal processor. They were the most unforgettable memories of his life.

When he found his first Cosmos Ring, he had copied them to a jade chip, which he stored inside the Cosmos Ring and carried with him. The jade chip accompanied him all the way through the sea of stars to the Flying Star Sector.

In the company of the videos, he felt that his friends in the Heaven's Origin Sector were all talking and laughing around him.

Of course, most of the pictures belonged to vigorously-dancing Ding Lingdang.

"Just wait. I'll be back shortly."

Li Yao smiled at Ding Lingdang, who was laughing so hard that one seemed able to see her tonsils.

The beautiful moments from the Heaven's Origin Sector were the biggest motivation for his crazy training.

"Three to five years of studying? I don't have that much time!

"Revealing my full capability in front of everyone will, of course, trigger a lot of suspicion and investigations. I might be involved in unnecessary trouble too.

"But I don't have a second option.

"Only by showing my sharpness can I enter the center of the circle of refiners of the Flying Star Sector and get in touch with the strongest refining arts in the shortest amount of time possible!

"This is the only way that I can create a piece of powerful magical equipment that can suppress a planet and find my way back to the Heaven's Origin Sector.

"The road to the Heaven's Origin Sector is the road that I'm going to walk on. Nobody can stop me!"

Li Yao's eyes gradually turned hot and crazy. He observed his hands carefully.

The injuries on his hands had been replaced by pink flesh stimulated by the rapid-growth drugs. But the new-born vessels and nerves had not been fully integrated with his soul yet.

"I should make the best use of my time and start training now!"

Li Yao extracted a metal box from his Cosmos Ring that had holes in its four walls and a ventilation system. It was a simulated nest of ants in which hundreds of Purple Ring Sword Ants were crawling.

Subtle changes had happened to many Purple Ring Sword Ants. There was a weird green color mingled in the purple brightness around them.

The Purple Ring Sword Ants had been fed Wormwood Copper, a venomous Heavenly Material and Earthly Treasure.

Wormwood Copper could increase the pain of Purple Ring Sword Ants' biting by more than five times!

Li Yao took a deep breath and extended his hands into the ant home. He shivered his hands. 101 Purple Ring Sword Ants that had eaten Wormwood Copper were attracted to them.

The Purple Ring Sword Ants were forced away from their cozy home and tied by Li Yao's spiritual threads. Infuriated, they opened their mouthparts and bit down brutally!

The tiniest muscles on Li Yao's hands were trembling violently. They collapsed before each mouth gnawed them and dodged the attacks narrowly.

Five seconds later, veins were appearing on Li Yao's neck, and he was soaked in sweat.

His two hands that were brimming with Purple Ring Sword Ants suddenly turned into two clusters of grey mist as he dismantled the most precise probe magical equipment.

Suddenly—

Li Yao grunted; he had been bitten!

The pain that had been increased by five times was too much even for a monster such as himself. He got distracted and was bitten consecutively by another ten ants.

The agony was like a series of lightning striking his head. Li Yao screamed as if somebody was skinning him. He cramped and foamed at the mouth; tears rushed out of his eyes.

"Ouch! Ouch Ouch Ouch Ouch Ouch Ouch Ouch!"

Li Yao crouched like a half-cooked shrimp and rolled on the ground.

In the garden outside the room, countless fans of magical equipment were roaring.

"Li Yao!"

"The star that rises like a miracle! The genius from the edge of the cosmos!"

"Genius! Li Yao! Genius! Li Yao! Genius! Li Yao!"

The roars were all blocked by the soundproof rune arrays. There was nothing except Li Yao's cries in the silent room, like those of a wounded beast.

There was no telling whether it was tears or sweat on his face. His bloodshot eyes looked like two rubies.

"Huchi… Huchi… Huchi…"

He breathed heavily, while he gazed at the pictures in midair.

Ding Lingdang, Meng Jiang, Yuan Manqiu, Fiend Blade Peng Hai… His family and friends in the Heaven's Origin Sector were all smiling at him, encouraging him, and waiting for him!

A crazy smile suddenly beamed out from his troubled face. Stimulated by the excruciating pain, his body cells seemed to have exploded instantly, pushing his hand speed to break its limits and enter a whole new level!

This was the training that Li Yao had been doing eighteen hours a day over the last one and a half months.

"Mo Tianshui… you are no match for me.

"Behind you, it is nothing but the Mo family, the so-called noble family of refining that has lasted for a thousand years.

"But behind me, what has been supporting me to stride on and crush all the thorns and stones in my way is…

"An entire world!"

Chapter 498: Vicious Rules

Chapter 498: Vicious Rules

"The elimination matches of the Skyhill Sword Seminar that everybody looks forward to are about to begin! Just listen to the rumbling cheers inside and out of the Thousand Edges Mountain!

"The very first elimination match is a highly anticipated one. Mo Tianshui, the talented heir of the Mo family from Phoenix Forest, who supposedly would've marched into the final unstoppably without any suspense, is faced with Li Yao, an expert who rose miraculously from the Great Horn Exo Society and calls himself the founder of the 'Li family'!"

Li Yao sat cross-legged in the darkness like a lurking beast. The excited yells of the host and cheers from the crowd were echoing above his head nonstop.

But Li Yao heard none of it because he was focused on the tiny light beam on his crystal processor.

It was Ding Lingdang's delighted face inside the somewhat dim picture.

"You are being lazy again. Come on and fight with me for another three minutes. I'll make noodles for you, with five additional delicious tea eggs!"

"You are not giving up just like that, are you? Hey hey hey, I don't have such a weak brother. How shameful! Just get up already. You still have the strength. I know it. I can see it! Get up!"

"Wow, since when did you become so strong? You are so bad. You must've been training behind my back, haven't you? I know exactly the reason why. You want to be stronger than me soon so that you can beat me and savage me!

"Hahahaha! But I won't let things go your way. Guess what level I am in right now?"

"I will wait for you, Li Yao! No matter how long, no matter how far away, I will be waiting for you!"

Each sentence came from a different time and a different place. Ding Lingdang was wearing different clothes, too.

The only thing unchanged was her face that was always smiling.

It was a video montage that Li Yao had created from countless videos in which Ding Lingdang appeared.

Whenever he was exhausted or about to engage in a fierce battle, it was his greatest comfort.

Li Yao smiled and put the crystal processor back into his Cosmos Ring. He took a deep breath, his eyes glimmering in the darkness.

The darkness above his head was torn apart. The lights pierced down like swords.

He was in a lift that was going up slowly. Very soon, he appeared in the sight of tens of thousands of spectators.

"Li Yao! Li Yao! Li Yao!"

Cheers crushed over everything like tides.

Li Yao looked around and found himself in a fully-equipped refining workshop with transparent crystal walls.

Mo Tianshui was in a workshop identical to his not far away.

"The two contestants have appeared. There are voice-transmitting rune arrays inside the two workshops through which the two of them can talk freely. Will they be engaged in a battle of the tongues before the real competition?"

Li Yao and Mo Tianshui looked at each other in the distance through the two walls. A moment later, Li Yao retreated his gaze and focused on the warm-up of his hands silently.

Mo Tianshui smiled. He grasped the last minute to warm up his hands, too.

Both of them were refiners. Let their hands be the language that they spoke!

"Both of the two contestants chose to say nothing. The match is to be started immediately. It is well known that the rules of the elimination matches vary each year.

"This year, the match is a competition of free refining. The two refiners can pick materials at their will and refine whatever melee magical equipment they want. In the end, their final works will be examined to determine who the winner is!

"However, all the materials must be from the inventory that the organizer provides, and the total value of the materials cannot exceed ten thousand dollars!

"On the inventory, there are natural materials as well as components such as machine-made chips and insertable rune arrays. The two refiners will be given half an hour to pick any of them freely. If the time is up and they haven't used up their quota, the budget unspent will be cancelled!"

"Countdown of thirty minutes, begin!"

In front of Li Yao, an enormous light beam was unfolded, on which the pictures and details of thousands of materials poured down, followed by the prices of the materials.

What was most troublesome was that the materials were not pegged at market prices; they were all given a random price. Some Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures were extremely cheap, while some ordinary and expendable materials were fixed at a shockingly high price.

The chaotic pricing system was a harsh test on one's computational ability to select the advantageous materials and spend all ten thousand dollars!

Li Yao skimmed through the inventory and memorized the names of the materials and their respective prices within five minutes. Then he closed his eyes and started contemplating.

Before the match began, he had made plans about the magical equipment that he could refine.

However, the inventory with messed-up prices had completely shattered his plans because several regular materials in the plans were too costly for his budget.

In the meantime, certain other Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures were as cheap as candy. It would be a shame not to purchase and make the best use of them.

It meant that he had to reconstruct his prepared structural designs according to the inventory given!

This was also what the organizer wanted. It was meant to test their flexibility.

Twenty minutes later, Li Yao took a long breath and gradually opened his eyes. He pointed at the light beam quickly with his fingers.

"I want 231 grams of Blood Divine Stones, 555 grams of Blue Music Feathers, seven Green Fairy Flowers, one 'Iron-Knight-II' control chip, five plug-and-play high-frequency vibration rune arrays…"

Li Yao picked more than three hundred materials and components in a row and spent all his ten thousand dollars.

Almost at the same time, Mo Tianshui finished his purchasing, too. He had also picked hundreds of dazzling materials.

"Let's begin!"

The two of them rubbed their hands and couldn't wait to do their work.

But a happy voice then echoed from the ceiling of their workshops. "Both of you have selected your materials without leaving one dollar. But there is a new rule in the elimination matches this year that I forgot to tell you just now.

"Right now, you are free to choose five materials from your opponent's pick. There are no limits as long as their total value is below a thousand dollars.

"You can either choose materials that can contribute to your design or take away materials that you think are of paramount importance for your opponent!

"In the meantime, you must brace for the possibility that your crucial materials will be stolen by your opponent!

"The time for preparation is still ten minutes. If you don't choose any after ten minutes, you will be abandoning the opportunity. Now, begin!"

Li Yao and Mo Tianshui were dazed for quite some time.

The rule was too sordid!

Li Yao's heart was pounding. Of the three hundred or so materials that he had selected, there were indeed several crucial materials whose value were below a thousand dollars. If his opponent was to take them away, his refining work later would be greatly affected.

However, it was not up to him what materials his opponent was going to take away from him. He'd better figure out what materials he should take away from his opponent first!

Li Yao was never a fan of defense. It was more of his style to attack aggressively.

He immediately decided that he would steal Mo Tianshui's crucial materials.

To determine which of the materials were crucial, he had to guess what magical equipment Mo Tianshui was preparing to make.

After he sorted through the hundreds of materials that his opponent had picked, he would definitely be able to find traces.

Li Yao's computational ability was maximized as he transformed the quantities and qualities of the materials Mo

Tianshui picked into information streams and transmitted them into his brain where he processed the data as fast as possible.

Based on the internal links of the materials, Li Yao came up with twelve possible models. He examined them and disapproved them one by one. In the end, the only two models left were a chainsword and a vibration saber.

Li Yao did not believe that Mo Tianshui would choose to compete against him in regard of saber, which was clearly his own specialty, after witnessing his crazy performance yesterday.

Then, it was going to be a chainsword that Mo Tianshui was making.

Li Yao was secretly amazed. Mo Tianshui truly deserved to be the talented heir of a noble family that had lasted for a thousand years. Based on the materials he had selected, it was a reasonable assumption that his chainsword was very likely to have seven levels of speed that could be altered seamlessly. The transition did not have any patterns and was very bewildering.

The deadliest part of the chainsword was that it could probably trigger three layers of auras, each more fatal than the last!

However…

In order to trigger the triple auras that are closely linked, the division of spiritual energy is very important. Heavenly Silk Threat and Eight God Sulfur, the two inconspicuous materials, are the key to the procedure!

Although the two materials were utterly useless to him, Li Yao took them away without any hesitation.

The total value of the two materials was only slightly higher than 700 dollars. Li Yao selected Red Moon Fruits worth of 244 dollars. The loss of such materials wouldn't mean anything to Mo Tianshui, but they could increase the flexibility of his saber significantly.

He had been debating whether to pick them or not in the beginning and eventually gave up due to lack of funds. Now that he had the opportunity, of course, he took them away for his own use directly.

Right in the bullseye. Now let's see how you are going to refine your precious chainsword! Li Yao smiled vaguely.

A moment later, the materials that he was robbed of were displayed, too. His smile immediately froze.

"What?

"He has stolen my 'Iron-Knight-II' control chip? As the most commonly-seen control chip on the market, it is literally everywhere!

"Did he see through that I was preparing to refine a chainsaber equipped with techniques of both revolution and vibration?"

Cold sweat immediately appeared on Li Yao's forehead.

He had been planning to combine the advantages of the chainsword and those of the vibration saber and create a super blade with two ways of attacking.

The two techniques relied on two entirely different rune array amalgamations and spiritual energy circuits. Therefore, he needed an unimportant 'Iron-Knight-II' control chip to coordinate them.

Although the chip was cheap and obsolete because of its simple structure, it played an irreplaceable role in Li Yao's structural design!

Li Yao's face couldn't have been more awful.

Mo Tianshui was also wearing a weird expression with his brow furrowed.

Their critical materials had all been taken away, and they had both stabbed their opponent in the heart brutally!

Chapter 499: Comeback

Chapter 499: Comeback

In the live stream room, the host was talking excitedly. "Judging from the two contestants' angry faces, they have both lost quite a few critical materials! Master Dustless, what's your opinion?"

There was obvious approval in Master Dustless' voice. "The choices of the two contestants are beyond my expectation.

"All the prices on the inventory provided by the organizer have been shuffled. Many Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures are cheaper than a thousand dollars. If it were an ordinary refiner, they might've selected their opponent's most valuable Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures.

"But in fact, the most valuable does not mean the most important in many situations. It is often the materials that look unattractive that really matter!

"The Heavenly Silk Threat and Eight Gold Sulfur that Li Yao selected and the 'Iron-Knight-II' control chip that Mo Tianshui selected are all related to 'distribution' and 'control'. I assume that they have figured out the magical equipment that their opponent wanted to refine and they both adopted the most aggressive tactics. As a result, both of them suffered a great loss!

"Right now, I don't think they will ever be able to create the magical equipment they envisioned initially!

"They will have to make major adjustments to their plans, but they don't have much time for that."

The host shouted, "Indeed! While the two contestants are eyeing each other coldly, the real match has begun! They have six hours for their refining work. They seem to have more time than they did yesterday, but don't forget that they had received the structural designs in advance before the second round.

"Right now, they have to build everything from scratch!

"Designing the structure of a piece of magical equipment is the most fundamental and the most critical step in refining! Modern magical equipment is always made of dozens of components. Even the simplest of them require tens or even hundreds of structural designs!

"Only by drawing thousands of structural designs and inputting them into the crystal processor of the furnace will the furnace produce corresponding components that the refiner desires.

"If there are any errors in the structural design, the entire batch of components will be wasted!

"Right now, let's see how the two contestants make a comeback!

After a clang, Li Yao and Mo Tianshui's match officially began!

But the two of them were absolutely still. They sat cross-legged with frozen eyes, like two statues that had been covered in dust, meditating.

Beneath their indifferent faces, their thoughts were raging like scorching magma. They were both pondering how to devise a deadly weapon with their remaining materials now that the most crucial ones were gone!

Inside a VIP room close to the field, dozens of elegant refiners were either standing or sitting as they watched the picks of the two contestants' materials. They were deep in thought, too.

They were all celebrities in the circle of refiners of the Flying Star Sector.

Many of them came from the three main crystal suit centers. The strongest crystal suits of the Flying Star Sector had been born in their hands.

There were also pillars of the major noble families, including the members from the Mo family and the Huangpu family.

They were all thinking hard about the problems that Li Yao and Mo Tianshui had caused each other.

The contemplation lasted an hour and ten minutes.

The space around Mo Tianshui was rippling from the center of his head like the surface of a lake into which a pebble had been tossed. The waves were spreading to every corner of the workshop.

Around Li Yao, white mist was popping up from his body.

Since his computational ability had been brought to its maximum, his brain cells were consuming too much energy. He had entered an over-exhausted state, even though he was only sitting!

It had never occurred to the regular audience and the fans of magical equipment that even meditation could be so tiresome. The atmosphere was extremely intense. There was nothing but silence inside the two workshops. The sound of a needle dropping to the ground would be like roaring thunder.

An hour and fifteen minutes after the match began, Li Yao and Mo Tianshui rose up within half a minute of each other.

They were about to devise structural designs!

Shua!

Mo Tianshui's face was graver than ever, like ancient wood that had been soaked in a frozen lake for thousands of years. He opened his palms. Twenty translucent light beams immediately appeared around him.

His telepathic thoughts quickly expanded and galloped on the light beams. Gold lines extended forward like snakes, while more than twenty structural designs were created with the most intricate details!

"Unbelievable!"

"Incredible!"

"I've seen experienced refiners drawing multiple structural designs simultaneously, but Mo Tianshui is drawing twenty of them at the same time! How terrifying his computational ability is!"

"Mo Tianshui's movements are seamless without any pause. Watching him drawing structural designs is like watching the great musicians playing their favorite instruments. It's truly entertaining!"

"It appears that Mo Tianshui has figured out how to break out of the dilemma that Li Yao put him in. He is very confident!"

"Judging from the current speed, he will be able to complete almost a thousand structural designs in less than two hours and start making a marvelous weapon!"

"While Li Yao—"

While Mo Tianshui's inspiration was surging like springs and more and more structural designs were drawn, Li Yao had quickly set the basic parameters of the furnace and spiritualized the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures.

He drew a handful of structural designs quickly and delivered the first batch of the materials into the furnace. His refining had already begun!

Li Yao was serious. Half of the dozens of light beams in front him were the control menus of the furnace, while the other half were empty canvases on which he could draw structural designs.

Li Yao's two hands turned into two clusters of grey mist. His left hand was adjusting the complicated parameters of the furnace, while his right hand was busy devising new structural designs.

"Two jobs at the same time!"

"Li Yao is refining components and drawing new structural designs!"

"Are you kidding me? He is so confident in his designing and coordinating abilities that he is certain he won't make the tiniest mistake?"

"Mo Tianshui's speed of drawing the structural designs can't be any higher. But still, Li Yao has started the refining work much earlier than him. By estimation, Li Yao should finish all the refining work at least half an hour sooner!"

Exclamations echoed nonstop inside the VIP room.

Doing the refining work while drawing structural designs was like writing an essay fluently without an outline. The author must determine what his next sentence would be while he was writing the current one!

The few most experienced refiners looked at each other. A middle-aged man with a long beard couldn't help but take a long breath and murmured, "I feel that I'm back at the Skyhill Sword Seminar that year and watching another 'Huangpu Shiyi'!"

The name 'Huangpu Shiyi' was like a cold front that completely froze the VIP room.

Inside his workshop, Mo Tianshui glanced at his opponent occasionally and was truly shocked by Li Yao's crazy performance.

He could do two jobs at the same time, too. But he could not be certain about the success rate. If there were errors in one of the structural designs, misfit components might be manufactured, and it would be a terrible disaster if the errors were only found during the assembly procedure.

Was Li Yao confident, or had he gone mad?

According to Mo Tianshui's pace, six hours should be more than enough time. There was no need for him to try to beat Li Yao in speed.

However, he felt ill at ease.

Li Yao was apparently trying to buy himself more time by doing two jobs simultaneously.

He should have enough time in this match. What was the purpose of going so fast at such great risk?

Time went on second by second while everybody was watching suspiciously.

Three hours after the match began, Mo Tianshui finished the drawing of all the 3,792 structural designs and immediately devoted himself to the actual refining process.

At this time, Li Yao had completed the refining of almost half his components.

Four hours. The two of them both entered their best state. They were both enshrouded in a layer of vague brightness that blurred their bodies, as if they had stepped into an unknown world.

Five hours after the match had begun, Mo Tianshui was still occupied with the refining work, but Li Yao had finished the refining of all the components he needed in advance!

There was only an hour to go before the end of the match.

With Li Yao's current hand speed, it would take him less than half an hour to assemble all the components and conduct the final debugging.

What was he going to do in the last half hour?

Everyone watching the match bulged their eyes.

"Weird. How weird!"

"According to Li Yao's structural designs, he seems to be planning to refine a compound saber that mixes the techniques of vibration and revolution."

"But such a piece of compound magical equipment will boast two entirely different spiritual energy circuits. A control chip is obligatory, otherwise they will definitely interfere with each other!"

"Li Yao's only control chip, 'Iron-Knight-II', was looted by Mo Tianshui."

"It seems that, although Mo Tianshui has predicted his plan and taken away his crucial materials, Li Yao is stubborn enough to stick to his idea."

"Then, where exactly is he going to find a new control chip?"

Li Yao shook his head to relax his neck. He blew on his burning hands, before he picked a few newly-hatched components and quickly assembled them into a piece of somewhat weird magical equipment.

This magical equipment looked like a short and fat single-tube telescope. There were seven crystal lenses of different sizes in the middle that were fixed by metal rings. Each of the rings had been carved with hundreds of rune arrays that were no larger than millets. They constituted a continuous group of rune arrays.

Under the influence of the rune arrays, six layers of round light beams made of pure spiritual energy were condensed among the seven-crystal lens.

The host was totally confused. "Master Dustless, what is this? It does not seem to be related to a blade!"

Master Dustless' voice was very solemn. "This is a piece of magical equipment similar to a microscope. It can magnify the object under the scopes. This gadget has been finely made. Its precision is very high!"

The host was dazed. "Microscope? Magnifying lens? Why is Li Yao refining such a piece of magical equipment that has zero combat ability?"

Li Yao put the 'microscope' on his right eye with a fixation tool. The crystal lens inside it slightly span. The size of the six layers of light beams in between were altered.

Li Yao's hands shivered. Almost ten pins thinner than hair appeared among his fingers.

On the operation platform was a crystal slip the size of a fingernail that was extremely thin. It was glimmering in silver brightness.

Li Yao lowered his head. Seven-colored mystic rays beamed out of the 'microscope' and enveloped the crystal chip.

The pins were trembling among his fingers, like snakes that were hissing feebly.

This time, even Master Dustless sounded somewhat shocked as he said, "Contestant Li Yao seems to be planning to carve a crystal chip with his hands!"

Chapter 500: Handmade Chip

Chapter 500: Handmade Chip

"How is that possible!" the host exclaimed, as if somebody had stabbed his bottom.

"Master Dustless, although I'm not a refiner, I know that chips are the most essential components of modern magical equipment. At least ten thousand tiny spiritual energy circuits have to be carved on chips only the size of fingernails for more than ten different layers to form a complicated and yet functional framework!

"Carving a chip requires a precision at the micrometer level, or perhaps even the sub-micrometer level, which means a thousandth, or even smaller, the diameter of a hair.

"It was not until the crystal processors evolved exponentially and chip makers controlled by crystal processors such as 'Tiny Ray Etching Machine' appeared that the microchips really thrived!

"But right now, you are telling me that a refiner is attempting to create a chip with his bare hands? Master Dustless, is it not a joke?"

Master Dustless smiled bitterly. "I know the procedure of chip production much better than you. I also believe that every member of the audience who has any common sense about magical equipment knows what a difficult and tedious job making a chip is. In fact, we have been calling the manufacturing of chips the summit of magical equipment refining.

"But facts are facts. There are no other possibilities when you look at what Li Yao has been doing.

"He is truly going to carve a chip with his bare hands!"

The host breathed heavily and scratched his head. "This is insane! This is incredible! Ten thousand spiritual energy circuits on the micrometer level without the tiniest errors. One of them goes wrong, and the entire chip will be wasted!

"Also, he has half an hour at best. Half an hour!

"Can his hands be that stable? Are they even faster than 'Tiny Ray Etching Machines'? Then isn't he even stronger than refiners at the Core Formation Stage?"

Bi Luoling, the other guest and the refiner from Red Line School, explained, "It cannot be compared that way.

"We all know that ancient refiners paid great attention to mini-scale etching with their hands. Many legendary refiners in history, such as Master Ou Yezi of the Hundred Smelting Clan, could even carve tens of thousands of rune arrays on magical equipment the size of millet!

"However, the modern Cultivation civilization developed together with crystal processors. Most modern refiners attached more importance to the utilization of crystal processors.

"You want to carve a chip? Then you can simply do that by operating magical equipment such as 'Tiny Ray Etching Machines' via a crystal processor. That will be both fast and handy.

"With the assistance of crystal processors, no rational refiners would waste their time with training themselves in the techniques of engraving chips with their bare hands. It is only a matter of preference and has nothing to do with capability or level.

"For example, fire is everywhere in modern world. We can buy a lighter that contains two rune arrays of the fire class for just one dollar.

"If so, who would bother to learn how to make fire with woods and stones? Does such a skill mean anything even if someone is adept at it?"

The host was dazed for a long time. Then he said, "Ms. Bi, are you indicating that this technique of Li Yao is like making fire with woods and stones, which is… utterly useless?"

Bi Luoling smiled bitterly. "Generally speaking, yes. But it's a whole different case right now. I really cannot see through Li Yao. What kind of environment and which school is such a weirdo from?"

Li Yao sat straight before the operation platform. His heart was tranquil, and his eyes were scorching. After several long breaths, he had completely forgotten that he was in the middle of a fierce competition. The spectators around seemed to turn into dust. The exclamations of the host and the guests in midair gradually died down, too.

All his concentration was focused on the tiny chip.

Although he was not making a super-complicated, integrated mainframe chip but the simplest single-function control chip, it still entailed 12,330 spiritual energy circuits.

He had to divide the chip, which was as thin as the wing of a cicada, into eleven layers with the etching technique and carve more than twelve thousand circuits evenly among the layers. They could not interfere with each other and had to be connected in certain patterns.

It was like building a maze on grit, which was simply an impossible mission.

If it had been two months prior, Li Yao would've had no confidence that he could do it.

But right now, after the cruel training with the Purple Ring Sword Ants, his hand speed had advanced to a whole new level. The stability of his hands was far higher than that of the most advanced artificial arms, too.

He was about to declare war on the unclimbable peak with his bruised hands!

In the ancient Cultivation world, there was no such thing as a crystal processor. All the magical equipment had to be built up from scratch by refiners in person!

Today, allow me to polish this control chip, an example of the essence of the modern Cultivation civilization, with the ancient refining techniques from forty thousand years ago!

Spiritual energy was surging inside Li Yao's body. His hands were glittering. Seven extremely tiny mystic rays were condensed in front of the seven pins among his fingers.

The mystic rays were only a thousandth the diameter of hair and completely unrecognizable to human eyes. Only through Li Yao's special head-worn microscope could he see the mystic rays that were in the shape of ultimate sabers!

The seven light sabers had different frequencies, which allowed them to enter the different layers of the chip and carve there at the same time!

Li Yao closed his eyes and made a countdown. Three seconds later, his eyelids suddenly opened. Inside his eyes, his pupils were surrounded by bright gold rings that were expanding and shrinking like the crystal cameras with extremely high resolution!

His body was still. But there were explosive sounds coming from his hands.

The audience was immediately in a riot.

Since the match had proceeded for a while, most regular spectators were tired. Some of them were taking a tap, only to be woken up by the continuous explosions. They all stood straight and listened attentively.

The host shouted at his loudest, "What's going on? Li Yao seemed to be frozen before the operation platform, but terrible sounds are coming from him, as if a fearsome animal is chewing its prey there! Let's focus the camera on his hands. Zoom in, and zoom in. Ah, Li Yao's hands have turned into a cluster of white mist where thousands of blurred shadows—"

"Not blurred shadows!"

Bi Luoling's voice cut off the host's scream like the sharpest saber as she continued, "It's the sonic barrier!"

"Every finger on Li Yao's two hands is moving rapidly and breaking the sonic barrier within the tiny distance!

"The roars that we are hearing are made by his hands when they are breaking the sonic barrier!

"His hand speed has surpassed all limits. He is carving a chip at a supersonic speed!"

The host shrieked, "Supersonic hands? Is that really a thing?"

The field was filled with whispers. Many audience members couldn't help but stand up and gaze at the enlarged picture in midair bewilderedly.

Inside the VIP room, the experienced refiners were dumbfounded, too.

Supersonic hands were the privilege of the refiners at the Core Formation Stage by common sense.

However, every sign in Li Yao's performance from the beginning to now suggested that he was merely around the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage. More importantly, he was only in his twenties!

What kind of horrifying training did he receive to raise his hand speed to such an extent?

The managers of the three main crystal suit centers looked at each other and suddenly retreated to a corner at the same time. They were contacting their respective human resources department asking them to draft a fat, attractive contract as soon as possible.

The manager of Red Line School was so regretful that he was almost bashing his head. Last night, they'd had an opportunity to recruit such a talent in advance, but because of a moment of hesitation, they had let the cooked duck fly away!

Seeing the beaming and greedy face of his competitors, he knew that the fight for the talent would be nothing but intense. He would have to spend quite a fortune in order to get him!

Across from Li Yao's workshop, Mo Tianshui subconsciously stopped his actions. He gazed and walked to Li Yao subconsciously and almost hit the wall.

The talented heir of the noble family found his heart pounding and his face pale.

Impossible. It's definitely impossible!

Carving a chip with supersonic hands? That's outrageous!

This is a psychological strategy!

His hands might be really fast, but how can he make an authentic chip with nothing but his bare hands? He must be tricking me!

No, I must calm down. I have crushed my opponent in every competition since the first one. Today shall be no exception!

Right then, an earsplitting warning broke out from the furnace behind him.

Mo Tianshui quickly turned around and gasped.

On the control menu, several figures had turned deep red, and one of them had even gone black!

Not good!

The batch of components that he had refined for last fifteen minutes had been wasted!

Mo Tianshui gnashed his teeth so hard that he almost crushed them.

Li Yao's hands were trembling at the top speed, while they zigzagged and bounced at a supersonic speed within the tiny distance, driving the seven cutters of mystic rays to leave clear spiritual energy circuits on the chip.

Twenty minutes later, the last line was completed. He suddenly felt his head was dizzy and almost fell over.

His hands resumed absolute stillness instantly. But they were suddenly enveloped by burning flames.

Due to the friction with the air, his hands had been heated to a very high temperature, and they were on fire like a falling star that had breached into the atmosphere.

Li Yao took a breath in relief. There was more easiness than exhaustion on his face.

Even without the protection of spiritual energy, the pain of his hands being burnt was less than one tenth the suffering from being bitten by Purple Ring Sword Ants.

He simply let his hands burn, while he stood up and stretched his arms, before he walked to a corner of his workshop slowly.

In the corner, there was a metal bucket that was filled with bright green nutrition liquids.

Since the high-intensity refining work was six hours long, it was expected that the refiners took a moment of rest every once in a while and nourish their hands with the nutrition liquids.

Li Yao stabbed his burning hands into the nutrition liquids. The flames were immediately put out.

Centered around his hands, two swirls appeared in the nutrition liquids and span quickly!

Half a minute later, Li Yao withdrew his hands. The height of the nutrition liquids dropped by one third!

"Almost one third of the nutrition liquids have been devoured by Li Yao's hands! His—his hands are like two hungry animals!"

The host's voice was somewhat coarse.

After witnessing so many unbelievable scenes, he had lost the strength to shout and scream.

Chapter 501: Edgeless Sword, Blood Dragon Tooth!

Chapter 501: Edgeless Sword, Blood Dragon Tooth!

The procedures after carving the spiritual energy circuits were much easier. Li Yao crumbled Purple Soda Leaves and Phoenix Tail Willows into powder and mixed them with Rail Flower Water at a certain ratio. After they were fully blended, he dripped the solution on the chip, which was still burning hot, in order to ensure the robustness of the spiritual energy circuits. In the end, he encapsulated the chip with Grand Heavenly Copper and baked them in the fire of 355 degrees for seventeen minutes. And everything was done!

Twenty minutes later, the prolonged match of six hours finally came to an end.

When the two refiners walked out of their workshops with their marvelous weapons, the air inside the field was rattling like the sound of cloth being torn apart.

Li Yao was carrying a battle saber packed in grey linen on his back. Coldly-shining sawteeth that looked like the tusks of a fearsome animal were on both the back of the saber and its edge. On the body, zigzagging crimson traces seemed to be dragons lurking in an abyss that were about to break free from their shackles and soar to the sky!

The blade was named 'Blood Dragon Tooth'. It was 1.3 meters long and weighed 72.5 kilograms. It could deal a lot of damage with both vibration of the edge and the revolution of the sawtooth!

The dragon-like blood stripes on the body of the saber had been stamped through the 'Blood Baptism' technique with ten drops of blood from Li Yao's fingertips to strengthen the connection between him and the weapon.

The destination of the blood stripes was his manually-made control chip!

Mo Tianshui deserved to be the heir of a major sword-forging family. Although awed by Li Yao's senseless show briefly, he resumed his calmness very soon after. Walking out of his workshop, antique and tranquil, he looked again like a statue that had just been unearthed.

Inside his arms was a vintage long sword enshrouded by green silk.

Although it was delicately-shaped and the rune arrays on it were quite sophisticated, there was no edge on the sword, nor were there any signs of sawtooth.

At first glance, it was just an iron stick that somebody made carelessly!

The sword was named 'Edgeless'. It was 1.51 meters long and weighed 71.44 kilograms. According to Mo Tianshui himself, it was a special model that belonged to the family of chainswords.

The two refiners' eyes collided in the air as if a blade and a saber had crashed. Many regular spectators whose metal power was relatively weak were all hearing clangs and seeing sparks!

At this moment, any words would be redundant.

Even the host, who had kept talking since the beginning, turned quiet while he watched the staff to bring the two pieces of magical equipment into the examination room.

The honeycomb-type refining center, where tens of thousands of people were seated, was now dead silent. The only thing that could be heard was the sound of racing hearts. Every pair of eyes was fixed on the giant light beam that gradually descended from the ceiling. The light beam rippled as if it could not withstand so many enthusiastic eyes.

Some spectators who were less impatient were cursing in a low voice.

The examination of the elimination matches was extremely cruel. The blades of the two players would be engaged in head-on confrontations.

Inside the examination room, their blades would be placed on special attack rune arrays which would transmit the same amount of spiritual energy to them and drive them to attack each other. Each collision would be one round.

After each round, the spiritual energy inputted would be doubled, until one of the two blades was slashed apart or blown to pieces!

In the first round, one standard unit of spiritual energy would be sent in. It equaled to the spiritual energy that a Cultivator in the beginning level of the Refinement Stage could unleash when they were fully burning their soul.

The second round would be two standard units. The third round, four. After several rounds, the spiritual energy transmitted into the blades would reach a shocking extent, and the damage that the blades dealt would be devastating, too.

As the examination proceeded, one of the two blades would give in sooner than the other. It either exploded because of spiritual energy overflow or was shattered by the hostile blade.

It was the cruelest confrontation between refiners!

'Blood Dragon Tooth' versus 'Edgeless'. The examination began!

All the spectators inside the field, the experienced refiners in the VIP room, the volunteers from the two supreme universities, including Xie Anan in the relaxation room… Everyone held their breath.

Inside the spacious examination room, at two ends of a diagonal line, twenty meters away from each other, two large-scale attack rune arrays more than one meter in diameter and as complicated as a maze had been deployed.

The two rune arrays stored the fighting will and the moves of many experts. After the blades were put on them and sufficient spiritual energy was sent in, they would attack each other automatically.

Two rune arrays were now lit up, one green and one red. Edgeless and Blood Dragon Tooth floated above the rune arrays, the auras on them fluctuating.

After a buzz, the two rune arrays glittered at the same time. Dazzling spiritual energy spurted out from every rune and congregated into a raging spiritual wave that swallowed the two marvelous weapons!

In the first round, one standard unit of spiritual energy had been inputted!

Motivated by the surging spiritual energy, Li Yao's Blood Dragon Tooth started vibrating at a high frequency. The sawteeth revolved on the back and the edge of the saber vibrated crazily, producing blood-freezing noises!

Mo Tianshui's Edgeless suddenly glittered, too. Flames of brightness dashed out from the inside of the sword and adorned it with a quickly-spinning sawtooth made of mystic rays!

Swoosh!

Swoosh!

Driven by the attack rune arrays, the saber and the sword turned into two streaks of brightness and crashed into each other brutally!

BOOM!

A visible blast spread out from the center of collision into thousands of waves, which then formed what seemed to be transparent feathers and fell off.

The two marvelous weapons returned to their respective corner, utterly undamaged. They were roaring wildly like two ferocious animals that had been irritated!

They seemed to be bellowing 'Not enough! Gimme more spiritual energy!'

The second round, two standard units of spiritual energy were sent in!

With double spiritual energy, the two blades were much more appalling than before. Crimson auras were raging around Blood Dragon Tooth. The dragon-like blood stripes on the body of the saber were on a rampage, too, as if they were breaking free!

Edgeless was surrounded by green fire. The air near it was compressed to the absolute minimum. A tornado seemed to be savaging inside the examination room!

Two surging waves crashed into each other, head to head. The noises they raised seemed to be enough to knock over the entire field.

The third round. Four standard units of spiritual energy were sent in!

…

It was not until the fifth around, when sixteen standard units of spiritual energy were inputted, that the first dents on the two blades appeared almost at the same time.

The host was immediately refreshed. "Blood Dragon Tooth and Edgeless are both taking damage. Their spiritual energy circulation is not as fluent now, either. It seems that they are reaching their limits! Master Dustless, which side do you think will win eventually?"

"It's hard to say. Mo Tianshui's Edgeless is very creative and not hamstrung by any dogma. But the design was improvised based on his original design because Li Yao took away his crucial materials. There are bound to be a lot of shortcomings and deficiencies. Look, the sawtooth made of mystic rays is showing early signs of collapse already.

"Meanwhile, Li Yao's Blood Dragon Tooth is based on his long-prepared design. Its framework is much more stable. The two forms of damage from revolution and vibration have increased the destructiveness of the blade by multiple times.

"But he, too, has a fatal problem.

"Will the 'Iron-Knight-II' control chip, which he made with his bare hands just now, keep stable after so many insane collisions while being stimulated by more than sixteen standard units of spiritual energy?

"If the control chip loses control, the two spiritual energy circuits inside the blade will start conflicting. The blade will break down by itself."

"Therefore, the key to the confrontation is the 'Iron-Knight-II' control chip.

"If the chip is stable, Edgeless will lose soul!

"If the chip breaks apart, Blood Dragon Tooth will shed blood!"

Hardly had Master Dustless finished his comment when the two weapons that had been injected with sixty-four standard units of spiritual energy collided heavily for the seventh time!

A weird thing happened!

The tremendous momentum did not raise any sound. The saber and the sword were stuck to each other as if they were attracted by something invisible!

The host exclaimed, "Oh! Spiritual entanglement!"

Spiritual entanglement was not an unusual phenomenon during the confrontation of magical equipment. The immense spiritual energy triggered by two pieces of magical equipment sometimes would be attracted and melted, thereby forming an enormous force field of spiritual energy.

In such cases, the confrontation would be entirely dependent on the strength of the blades. Tricks wouldn't matter at all. They would not part again until one of them was broken or battered!

The winner would be revealed in several seconds!

Li Yao and Mo Tianshui clenched their fists at the same time.

The auras surrounding Blood Dragon Tooth and Edgeless diminished compared to a moment earlier, but the intimidating strength unleashed from the inside of the magical equipment was soaring exponentially!

The auras from the saber attacked those from the sword, and the sawtooth of the sword bit that of the saber. Two ferocious animals bit into each other's throat at the same time and couldn't let it go at all. They could only try to keep on mauling each other until one of them died!

Crack!

Crack!

Cracks that looked like spider nets appeared on the saber and the sword and quickly spread out.

But the cracks on Blood Dragon Tooth approached the control chip faster!

Bo!

Under the 'attack' of the cracks, the control chip suddenly glowed, before it exploded. Blood Dragon Tool finally couldn't bear it any longer and broke down into thousands of pieces!

"Master Dustless's prophecy has come true! Blood Dragon Tooth's control chip was seriously affected and lost the ability to coordinate the two spiritual energy circulations, which ended up attacking each other.

"Edgeless took the opportunity and blew up Blood Dragon Tooth!"

"Ha!"

Mo Tianshui, who had always been as calm as dry wood, suddenly turned into someone else. He grinned, his every tooth shining. Ecstasy that solely belonged to young men beamed out of his face, while he jumped high like a monkey and waved his fist in the air!

Inside the VIP room, many experts from the Mo family were dazed.

Were their eyes deceiving him?

Was this guy the Mo Tianshui who they were familiar with?

It was well known that Mo Tianshui had never smiled after a victory ever since he was twelve.

For him, victories were as abundant as air. What was there to be excited about when breathing air?

"Blood Dragon Tooth exploded?"

The spectators were in chaos. Some were shouting.

However, in the very next second, while Mo Tianshui's exultant smile was still spreading on his face, twelve dazzling lightings burst out, one after another, in the center of the thousands of pieces that used to be Blood Dragon Tooth.

Amid rumbling noises, the hundreds of electric arcs blossomed and connected all the pieces of Blood Dragon Tooth into a saber of lighting more than three meters long!

It was as if Edgeless had helped Blood Dragon Tooth break its seal.

This was the true form of Blood Dragon Tooth!

Chapter 502: Critical Strike!

Chapter 502: Critical Strike!

Lightning was crackling. Scraps were flying. Every piece of the saber was like a sharp tooth, which was revolving fast and swallowing 'Edgeless' as if a ferocious animal made of electric arcs had opened its bloody mouth!

Edgeless had been improvised and refined in a hurry in the first place. Its internal structure was not stable. Breaking the first form of Blood Dragon Tooth was already the best it could do. Right now, it had tiny damages inside and out, and was unable to bear the ruthless tearing of the electric arcs and the scraps.

Blood Dragon was gloating; Edgeless was screaming before it broke apart a moment later!

That was not the end of it!

Edgeless' thousands of pieces were captured by the raging electric arcs as well and became part of Blood Dragon Tooth!

It appeared that the sword had been devoured from skin to bones!

After absorbing Edgeless' pieces, Blood Dragon Tooth quickly expanded to more than five meters long. Electric arcs were coiled around it. Scraps from the two blades gathered into an iron tide and crashed into the wall of the examination room brutally!

BOOM!

The transparent wall made of super-hard crystals and engraved with multiple defense rune arrays was added with a deep, terrifying trace by the attack. After an earsplitting sound, thousands of cracks spread across the entire wall!

This attack apparently drained Blood Dragon Tooth. One second later, the lightning and the force field both perished. Thousands of pieces fell down to the ground.

The examination room fell into darkness, as if nothing had happened. But the remaining particles of spiritual energy in the air were still glimmering like fireflies, telling of the shocking turn of events just a moment earlier.

The hearts of all the audience almost stopped beating.

They were truly stunned by the final attack.

Inside the VIP room, refiners from the Mo family fell into their seats helplessly.

Refiners from the Huangpu family, when realizing that Huangpu Xiaoya would most likely be faced with the creator of such an unparalleled deadly saber in a few days, narrowed their eyes.

The college students from the two supreme universities in the relaxation room both exclaimed in disbelief. Xie Anan even jumped to her feet excitedly.

"Master Li Yao won!"

Yes, although Li Yao's weapon collapsed only three seconds after Mo Tianshui's weapon did, the time was more than enough for a Cultivator to do many things.

In a real battle, the Cultivator who carried Blood Dragon Tooth would be able to slay their enemy ten times in the three seconds!

Besides, after taking in Edgeless' pieces, the critical strike of Blood Dragon Tooth was too formidable. Ten times was unnecessary. One attack should be enough to obliterate the enemy!

The host completely lost his calmness and started yelling. "What an unexpected outcome! Although something was wrong with Li Yao's handmade chip, he seemed to have foreseen the situation earlier and modified his saber profoundly! The winner of this match is Li Yao, whose Blood Dragon Tooth has consumed Mo Tianshui's Edgeless!"

The sunny smile was frozen on Mo Tianshui's face. There was not a replacement.

He couldn't remember a suitable expression to wear upon meeting failure at all.

His lips were still curled. But there was a plethora of emotions in his eyes—shock, shame, resent, confusion, and frustration—which made his face extremely weird.

"It—"

His lips trembling for a long time, Mo Tianshui finally regained the ability to speak. He gnashed his teeth. "It was within your expectations that your saber would shatter?"

"Correct."

Reviewing and analyzing a competition was an excellent way of communication. Li Yao didn't mind sharing his experience with Mo Tianshui, the talented genius from a noble family. He quickly sorted through his thoughts and explained it carefully to him.

"Although I tried several times in the Great Illusionary Land, this is the first time I've made a chip with my bare hands in reality.

"Iron-Knight-II control chip is too complicated for me. Therefore, what I carved was actually an 'Iron-Knight-I' that is relatively simpler.

"But even so, a manually-made chip definitely cannot compare to the chips made by magical equipment in regards of stability and resistance.

"Faced with such an expert like you, it's almost a sure thing that the competition would last five or even more rounds. When dozens of standard units of spiritual energy were poured into the blade, my manually-made chip was bound to break down.

"But it was impossible for me to abandon the control chip and switch to a whole different design in the beginning, because all the materials I chose were based on my original scheme. I was more dependent on the crucial materials than you were.

"The unexpected change of rules were much less in my favor. No matter how I changed my design, many materials I selected would be wasted.

"Therefore, I made up my mind to carve a chip that would be relatively unstable and adjusted my design by adding another gadget that I've been thinking about for a long time. It was a gamble."

"And you won it."

Mo Tianshui's eyes were crimson. The frustration of failure gradually disappeared from his face, replaced by infinite enthusiasm about magical equipment.

A refiner could lose or die, but they must know the reason of their failure!

He took a long breath and drove away the last bit of his exasperation. The sense of failure just now had been shattered by him. He then asked earnestly, "You were wagering on the second form of Blood Dragon Tooth?"

"Yes."

Li Yao nodded and said, "The Blood Dragon Tooth I refined has two forms—the regular form and the critical strike form, which was automatically triggered when the blade was sabotaged to the point of destruction.

"In the critical strike form, thousands of electric arcs are unleashed from the inside of Blood Dragon Tooth. All the scraps are restricted, and the damage of the blade is three times higher than in the normal form.

"Besides, when Blood Dragon Tooth is in the critical strike form and tears the enemy's weapon apart, it can devour the pieces of the hostile weapon and further increase its damage to over five times its original!

"But as you saw, the critical strike form can only last for three seconds at best.

"It is like the final roars of a deadly animal when it's fully burning its vitality before its death!"

Mo Tianshui closed his eyes and pondered for a while. He mumbled, "An enemy unfamiliar with the weapon would definitely be relaxed briefly when they break your saber apart.

"But they won't know that Blood Dragon Tooth is at its strongest when it is broken. By tearing their weapons, its strength can be even further improved.

"With such an unparalleled saber, you might be able to kill an enemy who is twice as strong as you with its critical strike.

"I admit my failure today. Fellow Cultivator Li's strategies are indeed incredible. You have my admiration.

"However—

"There is something that is still baffling me. What's the mechanism of the critical strike form? Could Fellow Cultivator Li explain it to me roughly, if it is not related to anything confidential?"

Li Yao smiled and said, "I can only say that the core of the electromagnetic force field is… the Twelve-chain Thunder Runes."

Mo Tianshui was dazed for a moment. He was deep in thought. A moment later, his eyes were shining as he asked, "Are you referring to the hypothesis of Fiend Star, the master of classical refining theories who has become quite popular on the Spiritual Nexus recently?"

"Yes."

Li Yao explained, "Master Fiend Star proposed that the Twelve-chain Thunder Runes could be applied to modern magical equipment, which has raised quite an intense debate on the Spiritual Nexus. I've been following the topic.

"Most people despised Master Fiend Star's idea and thought that it was totally impractical.

"Yes. From the viewpoint of today, the Twelve-chain Thunder Runes are quite primitive and obsolete in regard to their spiritual energy model.

"Such ancient runes' transformation of spiritual energy has a very low efficiency. The enhancement they provide is poor. Not to mention that they are also very unstable and can only last several seconds. It is utterly unsuitable to work as a steady, persistent attack unit of magical equipment.

"There are dozens of rune arrays of the thunder class in the modern Cultivation world that can replace the Twelve-chain Thunder Runes perfectly and deal equal damage.

"Therefore, most people thought that Master Fiend Star's theory was unrealistic.

"But they were all wrong!

"The greatest value of the Twelve-chain Thunder Runes is not entailed in its attacks.

"Despite the primitiveness and unstableness of the runes, they have a very special feature.

"When the Twelve-chain Thunder Runes are triggered, a lot of spiritual energy of the thunder class will escape because of the deficiencies of the spiritual energy model. The spiritual energy will then generate an electromagnetic force field whose form can be shaped at will!

"With a few preset telepathic thoughts, the force field can be modified into whatever shape a Cultivator desires.

"For example, I built the force field into the form of a saber!

"The electromagnetic force field in the form of a saber mixed with abundant metal scraps bursting out all the energy within several seconds. That is the critical strike form of Blood Dragon Tooth!

"And that is how the Twelve-chain Thunder Runes should be properly used."

Mo Tianshui's face color changed. "You agree with Fiend Star's theories?"

Li Yao replied in a smile, "Yes. Master Fiend Star's theories have given me a lot of inspiration. I am an admirer of Master Fiend Star and agree with all his theories. I will try my best to put his theories into practice in the future, too!"

Hearing that, everyone present began whispering again.

Many in audience were uttering meaningless 'Ah Ah' sounds to let out of their extreme shock.

Some of the audience, on the other hand, were confused. They asked their friends, "Who is Fiend Star?"

They immediately sensed contempt from nearby spectators.

Although Fiend Star's classical refining theories had been quite a hit on the Spiritual Nexus and attracted the attention of many refiners, most of the discussions had been contained to the theoretical level. Nobody thought that they could be put into practice.

However, Li Yao had applied one of Fiend Star's theories into a real battle in such a professional match and proved it to be brilliant!

Within the next minute, the queries for 'Fiend Star' on the few main search engines on the Spiritual Nexus increased by dozens of times!

It was an outcome that Li Yao had hoped to achieve.

He had put a lot of thought into it and decided to keep using the alias of 'Fiend Star, Specialist in Classical Refining Theories'.

The capability that he'd been demonstrating recently only confirmed that he was a competent practical refiner. Even if he were to join one of the three main crystal suit centers, he would most likely be engaged in the real, hands-on refining work.

He probably wouldn't be invited to the conferences themed with the cutting-edge theories.

After all, his supersonic hands that carved a chip without any aid were not papers that could be read in a pure academic meeting.

But as long as the popularity of 'Fiend Star' grew until it was acknowledged by everyone to be a master in classical refining theories, he would be able to participate in the discussions about the most advanced theories of refining.

Moreover, his methods of refining had obvious traces of the ancient techniques. It was quite possible that somebody would link him to Fiend Star.

It was a better idea to disguise it first before anybody found out the truth. Hearing his declaration, people would think of him as a worshipper of Fiend Star. Then there would be nothing odd about his methods of refining being mixed with ancient techniques.

Skyhill Sword Seminar was the best opportunity to increase the popularity of 'Fiend Star'. Was there any time better than right now to brag about himself?

Chapter 503: Best Explanation

Chapter 503: Best Explanation

Mo Tianshui seemed to have found a treasure. His face was beaming with excitement as he said, "I've read Fiend Star's theories before, too. But I thought that they were too invalid and impractical. I didn't know that it was because I was too shortsighted to notice the delicacies of his theories!

"It seems that I need to study Master Fiend Star's theories deeper in the future. I hope I can have another match with Fellow Cultivator Li someday!"

"I very much look forward to it," said Li Yao sincerely.

Mo Tianshui was indeed a super expert. Li Yao was uncertain that he could defeat him again in a match with different rules.

Such high-level competition would be of great help to improve the Cultivation of both parties no matter which side won.

Mo Tianshui hesitated for a moment, but he still failed to contain his curiosity and asked, somewhat embarrassedly, "Fellow Cultivator Li, if you don't mind me asking, can you tell me how you trained your hands to achieve such a lightning-like speed?"

Li Yao thought for a moment. Xie Anan had seen his training with Purple Ring Sword Ants previously. Right now, he had exposed his true capability, and Xie Anan was likely to tell her friends now that it was unnecessary to keep it a secret.

Besides, such a training method was not anything confidential. It was recorded in many notes from ancient times. Anyone determined enough could practice it in the first place.

Figuring everything out, Li Yao did not intend to keep it to himself anymore. He said seriously, "Have you ever seen Purple Ring Sword Ants at four o'clock in the morning?"

Mo Tianshui was dazed, not having the slightest clue what the question was about.

Li Yao explained, "Four o'clock in the morning is the period belonging to the tigers according to the ancient Cultivators. It is the time when day and night shift. It is also the darkest moment before dawn.

"Moreover, it is the best time of rest for Purple Ring Sword Ants.

"If you wake up them, the Purple Ring Sword Ants become infuriated into the most rampant state. They become crazy like the most aggressive tigers.

"If you train with the Purple Ring Sword Ants at four o'clock in the morning day after day, your hand speed will surely improve significantly."

Li Yao's words raised chaos in many refiners' minds.

Increasing the perception and the speed of one's hands with the Purple Ring Sword Ants was an 'ancient secret art' that many refiners knew about. But most people scorned it and took it as the jibber-jabber of insane Cultivators.

It had never occurred to them that the method was a real thing!

For a moment, many of them felt that their blood was freezing.

They all knew how painful it was to be bitten by the Purple Ring Sword Ants, and yet this guy chose four o'clock in the morning, when the ants were most furious and brutal, to do his training?

This was truly one mad monster! No wonder his hands had broken the sonic barrier despite merely being at the Building Foundation Stage.

In the auditorium, Tu Yongqing's face was partly red and partly pale.

He had been quite unlucky this year. He had come across a strong enemy in the second round and was eliminated from the game in 101st place. Therefore, he could do nothing but watch as a spectator.

He remembered that, a few days ago in the sword-tasting get together, he had slated 'Purple Ring Sword Ant Training' in public. Ashamed, he was thinking of digging a hole right now so that he could hide himself.

With thousands of pairs of dumbfounded eyes fixed on him, Li Yao left the field through the teleportation array.

He was fatigued. Carving a chip with his bare hands had consumed too much of his energy and soul power. Right now, his hands felt like they were on fire, and yet there was a sense of numbness as if they did not belong to him. He needed to find a place to train and recover them immediately.

At the other end of the teleportation array, in a spacious hall, somebody was waiting for him.

It was Huangpu Xiaoya, another talented heir from a noble family of refining.

In the second round of competition, the total damage of the three pieces of magical equipment that she had refined was even higher than that of Li Yao's works and Mo Tianshui's. She ranked first currently.

Huangpu Xiaoya did not hide her aggressiveness at all. The electric arcs inside her eyes were shining ten times more brightly when she saw Li Yao was coming.

Her hands had been surrounded by lightning since she didn't know when, which were spluttering and breaking her skin apart.

Before the blood flowed out, it was already vaporized into scarlet mist by the lightning.

Li Yao was quite familiar with the phenomenon.

It was not because she wasn't in control of her hands but because her hands were too desperate for a real fight!

Huangpu Xiaoya snapped her fingers. Electric arcs were dancing on her fingertips. They tied up a finely-made jade bottle and sent it to Li Yao.

"This is the special hand-nourishing liquid of the Huangpu family that contains 136 Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. Every drop was made by experts in my family slowly over several years.

"Your hands must have suffered heavy injuries from the supersonic movements just now. They may look fine on the outside, but tiny damage must be all over your veins, nerves, and bones now.

"You won't be able to completely recover them in another five days. Your hand speed will drop by 5%.

"Our Huangpu family is best known for the marvelous nourishing liquid we make. This bottle of liquid should be able to accelerate the healing of your wounds and recover your hand speed to 100% of its original or even higher within three days!"

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. He took the bottle without any hesitation and put on a big smile. "Many thanks."

Her eyes absolutely still, Huangpu Xiaoya gazed at his hands, as if they were a piece of great artwork, and as if she was going to gobble up his hands in one mouthful. She replied, "There is no need. You should know what I want.

"I don't want any regrets in my victory. That's all.

"Try and get yourself well. I'm looking forward to competing with you in your best state!"

…

When Li Yao walked out of his personal chamber, the hundreds of reporters waiting outside went crazy.

Countless camera flashes were blinking. Hundreds of questions flooded at him like a boiling tide.

"Contestant Li Yao, you've risen to fame after one battle today by defeating the talented heir of the Mo family!"

"Contestant Li Yao, can you tell us more about your life? I'm told that you've been under the tutelage of a strange master before. Who was he exactly? Was he really the sole successor of a school from hundreds of years ago?"

"Contestant Li Yao, you said yourself that your training was based on the Purple Ring Sword Ants. As far as I know, such a way of training can be really cruel and excruciating. How did you manage to withstand that unbearable pain?"

Li Yao frowned. He had no opinions about reporters. But now that he had abruptly become famous from an unknown, somebody was definitely going to investigate him. It might be better to spread some of his stories first right now.

Moreover…

Li Yao thought of something. He smiled and said, "My time is limited, and I have to continue my training when I'm back. Therefore, I will answer one of your questions.

"I was roaming, struggling, and training in various relics of ancient battlegrounds in the edge of the sea of stars when I was young. It wasn't the most pleasant experience, and I really don't want to talk much about it.

"It was not until I joined the Great Horn Exo Society that I was completely changed and made a real breakthrough.

"The days I spent in the Great Horn Exo Society were the happiest time for me in this world! I will never forget the event of the entire Great Horn Exo Society fighting side by side against the space swirl caused by a True Fusion.

"I believe that few people here have ever observed a True Fusion at a close distance, much less struggling in the surging tides it raises, have you?

"It was like ten thousand suns exploding in front of your eyes simultaneously. The torrent of light and heat completely melted your cells and your soul!

"After enduring that kind of pain, no pain is insufferable.

"We were lucky enough to survive the catastrophe. The silver lining for me was that I was enlightened through the True Fusion and experienced a major breakthrough!"

It was the best explanation that Li Yao could think of for his capability.

Few Cultivators had ever gotten in touch with a True Fusion. It was impossible for the reporters to check what kind of experience it was. Besides, it was quite usual for a Cultivator to have a major breakthrough when they were on the brink of doom.

Smiling, Li Yao left the center of the Skyhill Sword Seminar before the reporters pursued further.

…

Other elimination matches were held in the following couple of days. They were arranged with a long gap between each other for the convenience of better communication. Therefore, Li Yao finally had the time to take a moment of rest.

When he was not training, he sometimes logged in to The World of Crystal Suits under the name of 'Fiend Star'.

Hardly had he entered the Q&A zone when hundreds of invitations bombarded his face.

After he'd adulated 'Fiend Star' in front of thousands of people in the Skyhill Sword Seminar, Fiend Star's popularity had soared. Those who were willing to discuss with him were of a higher level, too. Most of them were professionals in the circle of refiners now.

The question he was mostly invited to was 'what reviews are there on the competition between Li Yao and Mo Tianshui in the Skyhill Sword Seminar?'

Some people were even sending private messages to him, asking him whether or not he knew Li Yao and his background.

Li Yao secretly chuckled. He considered for a while and left a comment as Fiend Star.

"I've never heard of the name 'Li Yao' before. But after studying the match of him versus Mo Tianshui, I was reminded of a certain someone from his methods and style.

"Many years ago, when I was exploring a small ancient battleground at the edge of Silver Frost Space Zone, I came across a strange guy who only had a left hand.

"We got eyes on the same scrap, and we were engaged in a competition in the arts of refining.

"Although the guy was only one-armed, I experienced a brutal failure that was far beyond my expectations.

"At that time, I was already quite confident in my skills of refining. In great shock, I naturally asked who the guy was.

"But the guy said nothing. He took away the scrap and disappeared in the stone belt. I haven't seen him again ever since.

"At that time, he was already wrinkled and grey-haired. I assume that he was quite old at that time. Two to three hundred years old, maybe.

"Today, I seem to have found traces of my old acquaintance in Li Yao, and I can't help but recall the past…"

After writing the intriguing little story, Li Yao logged off delightedly.

Everything he had said was purely imaginary and utterly unfalsifiable. He wouldn't be bothered by whatever people made out of it.

In such a way, his identity and the origin of his skills would be more valid.

Instead of following the riot that Fiend Star's last comment raised on the Spiritual Nexus, Li Yao was devoted to training and preparing himself for the competition of the next round, until he was notified of a message that made his eyes beam with joy.

It was a congratulatory message from the Great Horn Exo Society!

Chapter 504: Spider's Thorn

Chapter 504: Spider's Thorn

"Li Yao, you are a monster!"

"I knew that you were better than what you'd been showing us, but I never thought that you would be that good! Even the true heir of the Mo family was sliced apart by you!"

In the middle of the light beam, Lei Dalu was as messy and insouciant as the old days. He laughed carefreely. "We were cruising through a very dangerous stone belt a few days ago and couldn't receive any signal from the Spiritual Nexus. Everybody was shocked when we watched the video this morning!

"We didn't bring the young boys of the Tiger Killer Camp for this mission. They are locked in a secret training camp in the Thousand Sails Space Zone for concentrated special training! However, seeing that you were so awesome, I still asked the manager of the camp to play the video for them. They all went crazy! Here, just watch their reactions!"

The picture blinked and turned into a montage. A pack of vigorous young man, who had zits all over their faces, were yelling toward the camera inside a somewhat outdated training room.

"Brother Li Yao, you are so incredible!"

"Brother Yao, you are the greatest idol of everyone in the Tiger Killer Camp!"

"Li Yao, from the Li family. That's so cool! Allow me to be your lackey!"

Zhao Nuo, captain of the Tiger Killer Camp, was also dancing and talking excitedly. "Top 16 is not good enough. Now that Mo Tianshui has been defeated, Huangpu Xiaoya will be the next in line. Brother Yao, hurry up and crush her with your passionate charisma and nimble hands! We're all backing you!"

"Yes, we're backing you! You are the legend of the Great Horn Exo Society!" bellowed a hot-blooded young man.

Li Yao was calm when thousands of spectators cheered for him inside the match field, and his face remained unchanged when countless people admired him and called him a genius on the Spiritual Nexus.

But he couldn't help but smile when he watched and listened to the desperately shouting young people who had fought side by side with him against the True Fusion and the space swirl.

"These guys!"

Li Yao chuckled after he watched the video. Then he said, "Captain, please tell the boys of the Tiger Killer Camp that, when everything is done after the Skyhill Sword Seminar, I will give every one of them a piece of melee magical equipment refined by myself! I can't be their 'Brother Yao' without offering them anything in return."

Lei Dalu whistled and replied, clicking his tongue, "You are truly a lavish one. As the new expert on sabers in the circle of refiners, countless saber wielders are hoping to purchase your masterpieces at whatever cost. How wasteful it will be to build weapons for those boys who don't know the first thing about fighting! Why don't you refine a weapon for me if you insist?"

Refiners enjoyed a high social position in the world of Cultivators because the ultimate magical equipment they created could significantly improve the combat ability of the battle-type Cultivators.

Li Yao's saber-refining skills might still be too shabby for Core Formation Stage Cultivators. But for Cultivators at the Refinement Stage and the Building Foundation Stage, he was definitely somebody worth pleasing and making friends with.

In the world of Cultivators, Building Foundation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were much fewer after all, while Refinement and Building Foundation Stage Cultivators were the mainstream, who made up more than 99% of all Cultivators.

Considering the formidableness of the sabers Li Yao crafted, he could be a guest of whatever sect or family wherever he went in the Flying Star Sector.

Li Yao smiled and said, "My techniques are not good enough for Core Formation Stage Cultivators yet. So, I will build weapons for the Tiger Killer Camp first. Wait until I train myself in the three main crystal suit centers for a year and a half. By that time, I will certainly refine new magical equipment for every one of you, including Captain!"

Lei Dalu had mixed feelings. "Li Yao, you are truly the bringer of fortune for the Great Horn Exo Society. Did you know that the searches for the Great Horn Exo Society increased by hundreds of times on the Spiritual Nexus the day you mentioned your relationship with the Great Horn Exo Society? We even made it into the weekly 'Trending Topics'! Right now, we are a well-acknowledged group in the circle of Exos. Many sects and star fortresses have expressed their interest in cooperating with us. A lot of strong guys are also handing in their applications, hoping to join us!

"Over the past ten years, I have been trying to make the Great Horn Exo Society larger and stronger so that we can rescue more victims of the space pirates.

"But you also knew how we brawny yet brainless barbarians used to run the Great Horn Exo Society. Without the hard work of Bai Kaixin, I'm afraid we would've starved a long time ago!

"This time, thanks to you, we are literally known by everyone in the world. The day of our rising is coming near!"

Lei Dalu plucked his beard and laughed very in satisfaction.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao said, "Captain, I've read some news on the Spiritual Nexus and heard word on the street. It is said the Fengyu Zhong has issued tremendous bounties. Undercurrents are surging on Spider Den! Did you know—"

"No worries."

Lei Dalu grinned, somewhat scarily. "It is not simple as it appears to be. This particular mission that Great Horn Exo Society is carrying out was not selected randomly, either. If Fengyu Zhong doesn't come, then it's fine. But if he does, hehehehe..."

Li Yao quickly thought everything through. He remembered that the Great Horn Exo Society had received a lot of donations the moment it arrived in the Thousand Sails Space Zone and that Gold Horn had been given priority when it was sent to a dock for modification and upgrades. He immediately understood what was going on.

It appeared that the Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector were not as inert as he had imagined.

Fengyu Zhong was a brutal bandit who countless organizations couldn't wait to kill. However, his traces had been a secret over the past ten years. Except for Spider Den, the base for all the space pirates, nobody knew where he would show up.

The experts wouldn't know where to chop off his head even if they were summoned together.

But this time, it was a great opportunity to hunt him down while he was hunting somebody else.

Maybe, when Fengyu Zhong marched toward the Great Horn Exo Society ruthlessly, he would find out in bewilderment that he had fallen into a deadly trap!

Lei Dalu said, "The bottom line is, keep it up in your match. Everything is smooth in the Great Horn Exo Society.

"It is you who should be more carefully. Fengyu Zhong declared quite angrily that he wanted each and every member of the Great Horn Exo Society dead.

"You were just a regular member of Great Horn, and you are barely affiliated to it now. Also, you are in the Thousand Sails Space Zone, the camp for all Exos. Therefore, I wasn't worried about you before.

"But right now, you've risen to fame suddenly and highlighted your relationship with Great Horn in front of so many reporters. I'm afraid that even a dog on Spider Den knows your name now.

"On Spider Den, except for common space pirates, there is also a mysterious organization named 'Black Spider Tower', which is in charge of intelligence, espionage, infiltration and assassination.

"The department in charge of assassinations is known as 'Spider's Thorn'. It is a blood-freezing name for all Cultivators!

"In their most violent days, these assassins even dared to sneak into the headquarters of a sect and assassinate the key persons such as elders!

"Even if you are confident in your own capability, I suggest you hire a few bodyguards. With your identity as a master of saber-refining, I'm sure that, if the saber experts who are willing to be your bodyguards line up in Thousand Sails Space Zone, the last of them will end up in Heavenly Saints City!"

Li Yao felt warm. Although he had other plans, he nodded his head quickly. "Alright. Safety always comes first. I will hire a few body guards."

While they were talking, the light beam suddenly turned fuzzy, with waves and flakes surging out, before it went completely blank.

Three seconds later, the communication was cut off.

The Great Horn Exo Society's current mission had brought them to more than ten space zones away. The communication between them and Li Yao had been established via the dense spiritual towers throughout space.

However, the spiritual towers floating in the sea of stars were prone to the scourge of meteoroids, cosmic dust, space storms, and spiritual tides due to the lack of protection from an atmosphere. The Spiritual Nexus they constituted could be very unstable.

It was especially so when a starship was cruising past some stone belts or world fragments. An intermittent Spiritual Nexus was nothing new.

Li Yao turned off the connection and planned to retry in several minutes.

Right then, somebody knocked on his door softly.

From the monitor, Li Yao could see that it was a greasily-haired, middle-aged, fat man in a delicate robe standing on his doorstep.

He was wearing a sunny smile. His small eyes were narrowed together, which gave him an inexplicable charisma that seemed to be able to stop other people from turning down his request.

The biggest feature of this guy's appearance was that it had no features. Despite Li Yao's amazing computational ability, Li Yao found himself forgetting what the man looked like when he moved his eyes away after gazing at him for three seconds.

Li Yao thought of something. He quickly sorted his room for half a minute, before he cleaned his clothes and opened the door.

"Master Li Yao, greetings. My name is Fei Ming. I'm from the Silver Heart School," said the fat middle-aged man courteously.

Li Yao blocked the door and said coldly, "Your men already came yesterday. The three crystal suit centers have all provided contracts. I need to spend a few days weighing up my options."

Seven-colored brilliance was blinking in Fei Ming's eyes, as he lowered his voice, as if a mosquito was flapping its wings. "The offer yesterday was for the public. Does Master Li Yao not want to hear what extra benefits we can provide you with? Why don't we go inside and have a proper talk?"

Li Yao blinked, his pupils somewhat rigid. He mumbled to himself, "Extra benefits? I suppose we can talk about that."

After the two of them sat down, Fei Ming brought out an octagonal metal box from his pocket in the gentlest way. He then pushed the box to Li Yao, as he said in a mild voice as if feathers were kissing the ground, "Master Li Yao, since your hands are so fast and you are so good at micro-carving, you must be very interested in delicate magical equipment. This metal box is our present for you. Consider it a sign of friendship from the Silver Heart School."

"Delicate magical equipment?"

Brilliance of fascination beamed out of Li Yao's eyes. He touched a crimson rune on the top of the box. After a clicking sound, the box unfolded into a weird Eight Trigram that was engraved with black-and-white helical spiritual stripes.

A small gyro rose up slowly from the center of the Eight Trigram and span silently in midair.

The edge of the gyro was carved with the most beautiful spiritual stripes, whose mystical brightness was flashing in Li Yao's eyes.

Li Yao seemed to have fallen asleep. His eyes were absolutely still, and his breath turned slow and stable.

Fei Ming bent forward, his voice so low that it almost couldn't be heard. "Master Li Yao, we have many other kinds of classic magical equipment, some that are so precise, it is simply impossible to dismantle them after they are assembled. For hundreds of years, none have ever cracked them successfully.

"However, this hotel is quite noisy. Why don't we move our conversation to a less disturbed place where we can enjoy and analyze them more slowly? What do you think?"

"…Of course." Li Yao swallowed. He stood up, holding the gyro carefully in his hands.

Chapter 505: Eleven Fingers

Chapter 505: Eleven Fingers

The air in the hallway was thick and sticky. Time seemed to have been frozen. A weird face suddenly appeared on the colorful carpet. It gazed at Li Yao and Fei Ming, who were stepping over it in silence.

When the two of them disappeared in the emergence exit, the weird face said softly, "Plan A went smoothly. Clean up the traces and fall back in half a minute, every team."

The weird face softly whistled. After a 'Bo' sound, something seemed to break. The hot and damp hallway resumed its usual wind and coolness immediately.

The weird face smiled. It melted into the carpet and vanished.

Li Yao was sitting inside a fully-sealed limo shuttle whose windows had been blocked by light beams to stop him from seeing the outside.

The shuttle was running very steadily, to the extent that it felt stationary.

Li Yao was studying the gyro wholeheartedly, with a satisfied and spellbound face.

But his computational ability surged quietly like a tide at night as he analyzed the route of the shuttle from every slight sign of slope, turn, acceleration, and deceleration, before he overlapped the route with a 3D map of the Thousand Edges Mountain.

He discovered that, although the shuttle was moving fast, it had been circling around. It seemed to have run for more than an hour, but it had returned to the building next to the hotel where he was staying!

Li Yao recalled the building to be a grey, inconspicuous plaza of seven floors.

The shuttle stopped. Ten minutes later, the door of the shuttle was opened slowly, revealing an enclosed pathway made of soft, silver materials.

At the end of the pathway was a gate in an ancient style.

Li Yao sneered. If it were a pure refiner, they would've thought that they had been brought to ten thousand miles away and would have been baffled about where they were now.

Fei Ming knocked on the gate three times. Then he bowed to Li Yao and said, "Master Li Yao, please."

The gate was opened slowly. A faint scent of wood drifted into his nose. The room seemed to be a messy shop of antiques. On the lackluster closets, there was nothing but glittering artifacts, jade ware, and miscellaneous jewels.

Li Yao's eyes didn't stop on any of the items, for his attention was attracted by the one nearby.

Huangpu Xiaoya!

It had apparently been much more troublesome to 'invite' her here. There were bruises on her face and hands. Her clothes were untidy. Her eyes were bloodshot, from which electric sparks were bursting out.

She seemed to have been shackled by a certain barrier. Seeing Li Yao show up, she was beaming with joy at first. But very soon, she was caught in deeper desperation. She opened her mouth and tried to speak, only to let out meaningless hissing sounds.

Fei Ming said with a smile, "Master Li Yao, Miss Huangpu, please do wait patiently for a moment. The host will be here in no time."

Barely had he finished his sentence when a middle-aged, somewhat tired man whose temples were grey haired slowly walked out from behind a screen of bamboo.

His face was nothing unusual. But his eyes were ten times brighter than those of ordinary people. His hands were as dry as rotten rood, and he had six fingers on his left hand.

If anybody else had six fingers, the extra one would certainly be redundant and very weird.

But this middle-aged man's left hand looked natural and perfect. It gave the impression that having six fingers was the norm, that it was not that he had one additional finger but that everybody else was short of a finger.

Such a weird left hand made Li Yao's heart beat fast.

When he looked at the man's face more carefully, lightning seemed to strike his head.

Before Li Yao could open his mouth, Huangpu Xiaoya, whose barrier had been eliminated at some point, exclaimed in shock with a twisted face, as if she had seen the last person she expected to see in the world, "You are… Uncle Shiyi?"

With a closer look, the man's face did share some similarities with that of Huangpu Xiaoya.

Li Yao's pupils constricted violently. His face color changed as he cried, "Huangpu Shiyi 1 ?"

Huangpu Shiyi was an unavoidable figure in discussions about the most distinguished refiners of the past thirty years.

He had been the most talented, the most hard-working, and the most arrogant genius refiner of his generation in the Huangpu family.

In the Skyhill Sword Seminar 29 years ago, Huangpu Shiyi had jumped out of nowhere and won the title of 'Sword Master' effortlessly with unquestionable one-sided competitions. The Skyhill Sword Seminar that year could almost be called his one-man show. The skills and techniques he showed to the world were all as impressive as Li Yao's 'carving a chip with his bare hands', if not more!

When Li Yao was searching for information about the Skyhill Sword Seminar, he had seen videos of Huangpu Shiyi's arts of refining, which had left such a deep impression on him that even he found it hard to believe that such a genius could exist, although he had always considered himself to be sort of a genius!

At that year, Huangpu Shiyi hadn't even reached thirty yet. He was in the prime of his life.

There was no telling whether it was out of arrogance or madness, but Huangpu Shiyi was not satisfied after winning the title of 'Sword Master' easily. He challenged the leader of the Mo family in front of thousands of spectators and all the seniors in the circle of refiners and claimed that he would defeat all the refiners of the Mo family within ten years!

"The thing about noble families of refining is that there are too many of them. One is enough!"

That was what Huangpu Shiyi had said during the ceremony.

After that, he went through the harshest training in the craziest ways.

Li Yao trained with Purple Ring Sword Ants to increase the speed and perception of his hands. But Huangpu Shiyi had found a world fragment with abundant spiritual energy of the thunder class and trained himself in the thunderstorms. He had tried to attract the lightning to his hands to trigger the ultimate potential within them!

But, alas, he was distracted due to an accident, and his hands were wasted.

The best refiner of his generation suddenly turned into the biggest joke. He fell into the abyss of darkness for all eternity before he really rose!

Later, it was said that he went to a space zone at the edge of the Flying Star Sector to look for methods to treat his hands. During his journey, his starship was destroyed in a space storm, and he was killed.

The most brilliant star had shined and perished just like that. The only thing left was the story of an insane and arrogant genius!

Li Yao and Huangpu Xiaoya never expected that the legendary refiner who should've been buried in the sea of stars twenty years ago would appear in the Skyhill Sword Seminar again and right in front of their faces!

A lot of things had apparently happened to Huangpu Shiyi. There was no arrogance nor insanity on his face at all. Like a gentle professor, he smiled and said, "Xiaoya, when I left for the Million Star Space Zone, you had just been born. And now you are a grown woman who is qualified to participate in the Skyhill Sword Seminar representing the Huangpu family! I've studied the videos of your refining a lot. You are almost as good as I was at your age!

"Li Yao, my young friend. You, on the other hand, are the biggest surprise that I found in this Skyhill Sword Seminar! Carving a chip with supersonic hands, enduring the pain unendurable for other Cultivators, and training your hands with Purple Ring Sword Ants. Madness! That is pure madness! I see some of myself from the old days in you! You and I are the same type of person, and the same type of refiner!"

There was deep confusion on Li Yao's face, as he mumbled, "What is going—"

In the middle of his sentence, the aura around Li Yao entirely changed within a moment.

A moment earlier, he seemed to still be unclear of the situation. But now, he leapt forward like a leopard!

With two explosive sounds under his feet, every muscle on Li Yao's body was reduced to minimum. He turned into a streak of brightness and lunged at Huangpu Shiyi like a battle saber unsheathed.

In the meantime, dazzling brilliance appeared on his left arm and wreathed it, which turned out to be a thin and sharp blade!

A paralyzed prude when quiet and a rabid rabbit when active, Li Yao attacked the enemy when he made up his mind without any hesitation!

But Huangpu Shiyi seemed to have expected his unannounced attack. His sunny smile was not affected at all.

Weird waves spread out in front of Huangpu Shiyi. The air seemed to become mud, which slowed down Li Yao's motion a little bit.

Within the moment, two people, one fair and the other dark, appeared abruptly on Huangpu Shiyi's two sides.

On his left was a woman who was extremely slender. Her neck was twice the length of ordinary people's, and her skin was as dark as coal.

On his right was a stout man whose skin was so fair that it was almost transparent.

The two of them roared at the same time. They stood in Li Yao's way and blocked his fatal attack easily.

Li Yao showed no expression, but his eyes were cold. Seeing that his attack had missed, he returned to a corner like a tornado. Then he juxtaposed his right middle finger and index finger and pointed them at his spiritual root on his forehead, while he mumbled spells in his mouth.

Streams of brightness flowed out of his body and formed around him what appeared to be an armor.

He was summoning his crystal suit!

However, he was not fast enough. Before the crystal suit was fully extracted, the long-necked dark woman appeared in front of him and struck his abdomen with her long leg.

BAM!

The dark woman was wearing multiple iron rings on her legs which appeared to be some kind of very aggressive magical equipment. Dazzling brightness surged from them and flooded into Li Yao's chest.

Li Yao's eyes bulged wide. His spell was disrupted. The components that he had already extracted splashed and fell to the ground. They belonged to the 'Eight Arm Suit', created by the Silver Heart School with both combat and maintenance functions!

Li Yao gagged and collapsed helplessly.

The dark woman's killing intent soared like a volcanic eruption. She chuckled like a night owl, while a black, glittering blade ejected from her boot and slashed at Li Yao's neck amid earsplitting noises.

Li Yao was wearing the most terrified expression, but he couldn't react because his legs were no longer his.

Seeing that the blade was about to cut open Li Yao's neck, Huangpu Shiyi coughed slightly.

There was amusement in the dark woman's eyes. The blade was retreated, and she simply kicked Li Yao in his chest.

Li Yao screamed and rolled into the corner.

From Li Yao jumping to attack to him being kicked into the corner, the entire process had lasted only five seconds.

Huangpu Xiaoya was almost dumbfounded to see what had happened.

Her eyes stopped briefly at the dark woman and the fair man. Then she shouted again, her voice trembling, "Black Stone! White Dew! Are you not the most famous free Exos in the Sky Diver Space Zone who were assassinated by Spider's Thorn five years ago?"

The dark woman was not Black Stone; she was White Dew.

The fair and stout man, on the other hand, was Black Stone.

White Dew and Black Stone smiled and returned to Huangpu Shiyi's side, waiting for orders solemnly and quietly.

Li Yao was cramping and breathing like a bull. It was not until he took a rest on his knees and spat a mouthful of blood that he glared at Huangpu Shiyi and asked coarsely, "When did you find out that I was not hypnotized?"

"I knew since the very beginning that you wouldn't be hypnotized."

Huangpu Shiyi smiled. "If you made a major breakthrough in the True Fusion and the space swirl, your mental power must be tremendously strong. An insignificant 'Chaotic Star Gyro' is far from enough to hypnotize you, is it not?"

Chapter 506: Inhuman

Chapter 506: Inhuman

Li Yao's eyelids were trembling violently. He gnashed his teeth and spat, "If you knew that I wouldn't be hypnotized, why did you ask this Meditation Healer specialized in metal attacks to deal with me? How were you so sure that I would come with him instead of killing him immediately on the spot? Also, how did you know that I am not a pure refiner?"

Huangpu Shiyi explained, "Your supersonic hands during the match and your continuous usage of 'Hitting the Cow Past the Mountain' to spiritualize the materials for an entire hour required both enormous physical strength and an extremely sturdy body, neither of which is typical for a pure creation-type Cultivator!

"After carefully studying the videos of your match, especially where the shape of your muscles is displayed, I am very certain that you are definitely not a creation-type Cultivator who cannot even catch a chicken but a hybrid-type Cultivator!

"You are both talented in combat and in refining, and your combat ability must be good!

"It does make sense on second thought. After all, you spent your early years struggling and surviving in the relics of ancient battlefields at the edge of the sea of stars. Considering the perils in such environments, you would've been killed a long time ago if you didn't have the ability to protect yourself!

"Then, the question remains, how good is your combat ability?

"I mean you no harm. This is an authentic and sincere invitation. However, I am just a pure refiner, and my combat ability is not even close to yours, even though my Cultivation is levels above you. You are just like me when I was young. Crazy, reckless, and decisive. I don't want to be slain by you before I manage to say anything! Hahahaha!

"Therefore, I specifically devised this trap in order to test your true capability.

"I, of course, knew that Feng Ming and his Chaotic Star Gyro were not enough to hypnotize you. But I also knew that a young man who travelled in isolation for twenty years such as yourself would believe in nobody but yourself.

"From the style of your refining, I can tell that you are a confident, if not arrogant, man. You are ambitious, and you like to take chances!

"If it were someone else, they might've attacked Fei Ming when they saw through his faked identity.

"But if it was you, you would very likely enter the tiger's cave, pretending to be fooled, driven by your curiosity.

"After all, in your eyes, nobody knew that you were in fact a hybrid-type Cultivator with reasonable combat ability. You were planning to capture the leader of the gang when you reached their base with this trump card. In the worst-case scenario, you could always get away freely with your combat ability."

Li Yao was silent for a long time, before he said drily, "What if I had attacked Fei Ming on the spot?"

"Then I'm afraid we would've been much more impudent," answered Huangpu Shiyi.

"You don't think that Fei Ming was the only one who went to invite you, do you? We have backup plans to test your true combat ability too. But I guarantee that they are less pleasant.

"Black Stone, White Dew, tell me about it. What is the true combat ability of my young friend Li Yao?"

Black Stone, the fair and stout fatty, smiled. "Master Li Yao switched from absolute stillness to precipitous actions at an almost subsonic speed within 0.4 seconds. His skills in battle saber are quite proficient. In my opinion, his combat ability is as good as that of the battle-type Cultivators in the beginning level of the Building Foundation Stage!"

White Dew, the dark woman, spoke up, too. "Master Li Yao's speed in summoning the crystal suit was quite impressive. Within 1.7 seconds, 60% of the crystal suit had been implemented. I estimate that it would've taken him less than 3 seconds to put on the entire suit! It is not slow even in the circle of professional Exos.

"As for the Eight Arm Suit that he summoned, it was a masterpiece by the Silver Heart School, which seemed to have been modified profoundly and added with some decent combat components!"

Amazed, Huangpu Shiyi clicked his tongue in appreciation. "Unbelievable, truly unbelievable! I never expected that my young friend Li Yao's combat ability would be so good, considering his already incredible skills in refining! Combat ability equal to that of a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator, plus an Eight Arm Suit. They make an invincible trump card! Had I not been protected by Black Stone and White Dew, I would have been captured instantly!"

Li Yao's face was as grey as death. He collapsed as if somebody had tugged away his spine.

Huangpu Xiaoya shrieked, "What is going on, Uncle Shiyi? Where have you been in all these years? Why did you show up at this moment? How did Black Stone and White Dew, who were allegedly killed by Spider's Thorn, come back to life? Who are you people exactly?"

Huangpu Shiyi smiled and explained, "My original plan for this trip to the Skyhill Sword Seminar was to pick you up and kill Li Yao as a favor for one of my old friends.

"However, after witnessing young Li Yao's arts of refining, especially his amazing hands, I changed my mind! Such a talented refiner to be killed in this place for a ridiculous reason? It would've been a shame. It was definitely going to be a shame!

"Therefore, don't fret. I truly mean you no harm. I only came here to bring you away."

"Kill me?" Li Yao murmured. He suddenly shivered and shrilled, "Huangpu Shiyi, you are a space pirate, and they—they belong to Spider's Thorn!"

Huangpu Xiaoya's eyes were wide open. She stared at Huangpu Shiyi in disbelief while she stammered, "It's—It's impossible! Uncle Shiyi, you went to Spider Den and became a space pirate?"

Black Stone sneered. He said in a sharp and high-pitched voice, "What kind of bullsh*t are space pirates and Spider's

Thorn? Compared with our organization, Spider Den is but insignificant dust!"

Li Yao sneered, "I don't care whether you are space pirates or not. Huangpu Xiaoya and I are both important figures in the Skyhill Sword Seminar. If we don't show up in a few hours, somebody is definitely coming to check. Do you think you can run away from the Skyhill Domain by then?"

Huangpu Shiyi, Black Stone, White Dew, and Fei Ming seemed to have heard the funniest joke in the world. They burst out into such laughter that tears were pouring down their faces.

While wiping away his tears, Huangpu Shiyi said, "Here, my young friend Li Yao. Please take a look."

He raised his six-fingered left hand. Halos suddenly spread out on the wall on the right side of the shop of antiques. The wall gradually turned transparent and became a glass window.

Outside of the window, it was the boundless sea of stars!

The Skyhill Domain had been left far, far behind!

Li Yao's heart suddenly palpitated. Sweat the size of beans appeared on his forehead, but it froze almost immediately.

How could it be!

He had calculated that he was in a seven-floored plaza next to the hotel he was staying in. How on earth did he end up in a starship that was distances away from the Skyhill Domain?

Why was the starship so stable without the slightest bump or slope?

Huangpu Shiyi said, "Are you curious how a seven-floored plaza turned into a starship?

"It's simple. The shuttle you were on was specially refined by me. A piece of interference magical equipment was installed to the bottom of it, which could simulate all the information that I wanted you to know so that you would make misguided judgements.

"Also, this starship was refined by me personally, too. With the most advanced stabilizing system, it is as stable as stationary even when it is performing a space jump!

"You thought that you were still in the Skyhill Domain. So, you hoped to stall me and wait until other people notice your absence. But you didn't know that I was stalling you, too, so that we can escape from the Skyhill Domain sooner."

Li Yao didn't respond. Every one of his brain cells was shaking violently as he considered the situation he was in.

Huangpu Shiyi was indeed a formidable refiner. The shuttle he'd refined had completely fooled Li Yao.

From this moment, the entire incident finally got out of his control and slid into an unknown abyss.

Huangpu Xiaoya gnashed her teeth. "We might be out of the Skyhill Domain now. But so what? We are still in the Thousand Sails Space Zone, the home camp of all free Exos! As long as somebody finds that we are missing and lets out the message, everyone in the Thousand Sails Space Zone will take action! Since your starship has been ported in the

Skyhill Domain, it must've been disguised as a business ship or a carrier. Its firepower is definitely not strong!

"Where can you run to?"

Huangpu Shiyi nodded. "Xiaoya, you do have a point. When the Skyhill Domain finds that you are missing, we will run into a dead end.

"However, what if they are occupied by something more important and have no time to bother about you two?"

Huangpu Shiyi clapped his hands softly. More than ten light beams appeared beside Li Yao and Huangpu Xiaoya.

Inside the light beams were the pictures of the Skyhill Domain right now.

The first phase of the elimination matches of the Skyhill Sword Seminar had almost come to an end. Audience inside the match field was scarce. Two top 32 players were having their competition.

A few product release conferences, on the other hand, were lively and packed with people.

Quite a lot of tourists were gathered in the Museum of Sabers and Swords, talking and laughing.

There was a bouncing number which appeared to be a countdown on all the pictures.

Three, two, one…

Li Yao's pupils constricted violently. The nerves all over his body were tense!

The countdown reached zero!

BOOM!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The main field of the Skyhill Sword Seminar, the Museum of Sabers and Swords, the product release conferences, fan meetings of the famous refiners, hotels that the top 32 refiners stayed in…

Serial earthshaking explosions took place simultaneously at more than ten important locations in the Skyhill Domain!

The explosions were so powerful that the anti-gravity rune arrays of two floating mountains were completely wrecked. The two mountains weighing billions of tons tilted in midair and smashed at the ground!

The Skyhill Domain had turned into a living hell!

Countless ordinary people and Cultivators were sobbing, screaming, and struggling in the flames, blasts, and earthquakes!

Huangpu Xiaoya was dumbfounded. Her body trembled beyond her control; she couldn't believe what was happening. She cried, "You—you blew up the Skyhill Domain! You've blown up the Skyhill Domain!"

Queer brilliance was reflected on Huangpu Shiyi's face as he was gazing at the inferno in the light beams. He said casually, "For now, nobody will notice that you have gone missing for maybe half a month. There will be enough time for us to perform a space jump and escape from the Thousand Sails Space Zone."

Huangpu Xiaoya yelled. She jumped to her feet, trying to lunge at Huangpu Shiyi. But she was a pure refiner with insufficient combat ability. The barrier around her was triggered and bashed her to the ground. She screamed, "Just in order to capture the two of us, you've slain thousands of people. So many innocent people!"

Huangpu Shiyi said calmly, "It's not just about you two. A lot of elite refiners have gathered for the Skyhill Sword Seminar. If I can blow several of them up, it will be a major strike to the Cultivators."

Huangpu Xiaoya's face was red, her eyes bulging. She shouted, "You—you don't deserve to be a refiner of the Huangpu family. You… you don't deserve to be a human!"

Bizarre brilliance beamed out of Huangpu Shiyi's eyes, as he replied with a smile, "Of course, I'm not a human."

Huangpu Xiaoya was dazed, not knowing what to say next.

Li Yao went tranquil again at the moment of the explosions. His eyes were hollow, his pupils almost purely black.

Taking a deep breath, he asked, one word after another, "Then what are you?"

Huangpu Shiyi's face was glowing. He said softly in a weird voice, "There are billions of paths leading to the pinnacle of Cultivation. I only ask you this, do you want to walk on the immortal one?"

Chapter 507: The Temple of Immortals

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"Our organization is called the 'Temple of Immortals', whose influence far exceeds your imagination. The space pirates on Spider Den are but dogs it has tamed! Without the support of our organization, what makes you think that this bunch of thieves could fight against all the Cultivators and subsist for thousands of years?

"As for members of the Temple of Immortals, we are no longer regular Cultivators. You may call us... Immortal Cultivators!"

Li Yao's eyes stopped at the burning picture on the light beams. They swallowed the raging flames without letting out any as if two blackholes. He replied coldly, "What are Immortal Cultivators?"

Huangpu Shiyi smiled. "Cultivators who recognize how supreme they are without being bound by the ethics of mortals, who pursue the ultimate destination of immortality, and who explore the endless mysteries in the sea of stars. They are Immortal Cultivators!"

Before Li Yao opened his mouth, Huangpu Xiaoya quivered and shouted, "They are Demonic Cultivators! Huangpu Shiyi, you've been enticed by extraterrestrial devils and fallen; you're a Demonic Cultivator!"

Huangpu Shiyi sneered, "What's the difference between immortal and devil? If ants were intelligent enough, their survivors would berate you and call you the most merciless devil in the world after you stomp on dozens of them accidentally, but what would you feel?

"I believe that the only feeling you would experience is—that you simply don't care.

"Immortals or devils, our destination and sole purpose is the pinnacle of Cultivation. Who cares about what ants have to say?"

Li Yao said, "So to speak, this Temple of Immortals is an organization of Demonic Cultivators, or, if you will, Immortal Cultivators? You do seem different from usual Demonic Cultivators."

Huangpu Shiyi observed, "There is a kind of righteous energy in the world called spiritual energy. Those who train themselves with spiritual energy are good people and Cultivators. There is a kind of evil energy called tenebrum energy. Those who train themselves with tenebrum energy are bad people and Demonic Cultivators. They are as horrible as anyone could possibly imagine.

"I thought that such nonsense could only fool three-year-olds and that refiners who have a deep understanding about the essence of spiritual energy would never buy it.

"Energy is just energy. The only thing that differentiates spiritual energy from tenebrum energy is the wave structure and the vibration frequency. How is it possible that one of them is good and the other bad, one of them is righteous and the other evil?

"Of course, compared with spiritual energy that is relatively stable, tenebrum energy is brutal and unsteady. Those who practice tenebrum energy are more likely to suffer from metal derangement. When tenebrum energy surges beyond their control, they may need to resort to blood and slaughter to calm it down. This is why some of the Immortal Cultivators are called Demonic Cultivators.

"However, the Immortal Cultivators who have advanced to a higher level are nothing like that. Look at us. Do you think we are any different from regular Cultivators?"

Li Yao said, "So, your purpose is to invite us to join the Temple of Immortals so that we can be Immortal Cultivators?"

Huangpu Xiaoya nodded. "Don't refuse it hastily. I'm well aware that you must be furious at this moment. Whatever I say to you, you won't hear it at all. But the last thing we lack at present is time. We can talk later. Right now, you should have a good rest first."

Li Yao changed his posture and aimed himself at Huangpu Shiyi, and he asked, "Where are we heading to?"

Huangpu Shiyi smiled. "Aren't you from the Great Horn Exo Society? That's where we are going to."

Li Yao was dazed. His body suddenly relaxed as he asked, "Is that so?"

Huangpu Shiyi's eyes were quite mysterious. He asked in return, "Are you curious about how we infiltrated the Skyhill Domain and planted so many bombs so easily, considering that the safety measures should've been thorough due to the many celebrities in the Cultivation world gathered for the Skyhill Sword Seminar?

"The reason is simple. This Skyhill Sword Seminar has the sloppiest safety measures and the fewest guards in the recent hundred years!

"In the past Skyhill Sword Seminars, dozens of Core Formation Stage Cultivators would come as sentinels. But this year there were only four. The Skyhill Domain is such a vast place. How can four Core Formation Stage Cultivators have every location under control?

"Take a guess. Where did the rest of the experts go?"

Li Yao pondered for a moment and raised his head. "They went to ambush Fengyu Zhong?"

Huangpu Shiyi clapped his hands. "You saw through the whole thing with the first clue. My young friend Li Yao, I like you better and better now!

"Not only did many experts who should've participated in the Skyhill Sword Seminar join the ambush against Fengyu Zhong, many other renowned Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector participated in the battle in different degrees. This time, the Cultivators have made up their mind to have Fengyu Zhong slain!

"But as a result, other than the Skyhill Domain, many important places for the Cultivators have far fewer guards than before.

"Hehe. The death of Fengyu Zhong's only son was purely an accident, but it created a rarely-seen opportunity for the Temple of Immortals!

"Do you really think that Fengyu Zhong, the old and cunning leader of the pirates, would rush out of his home base in rage for revenge just because his only son was killed?

"Right now, the tremendous bounties have spread to every corner of the cosmos. Even a pig in the Cultivation world knew that Fengyu Zhong was coming for the Great Horn Exo Society!

"In the eyes of the Cultivators, they set up a trap that Fengyu Zhong could never avoid.

"But they didn't know that Fengyu Zhong himself was bait; his sole mission was to draw the expert Cultivators away from their homes!

"The Temple of Immortals has been lurking in the darkness for long enough. It was the greatest opportunity for us to reveal ourselves!

"The Flying Star Sector won't be tranquil in the coming days. Much blood will be shed. Many people will die. When everything is over in a few days, you will be awed by the formidability of the Temple of Immortals!"

Huangpu Xiaoya struggled hard and screamed, "Huangpu Shiyi, how insane you are! I don't care what you call yourself, but you will never bend us! I am a Cultivator, and I always will be. I will never be same as devils who consider ordinary people to be ants!"

Huangpu Shiyi sighed. "Xiaoya, don't be overconfident in yourself, especially when we all know what happened in history.

"Battle saber of humanity? Protectors of mankind? Ha. If I didn't know 'that thing', I might have been fooled by you.

"You are the strongest successor of the Huangpu family in your generation. I wonder, did the leader of our family tell you about the event five thousand years ago?"

Huangpu Xiaoya tremored, as if somebody had punched her heavily, and collapsed.

"If you know what happened five thousand years ago, you should understand why we are drifting in the sea of stars, far away from planets, and why we are too ashamed to return to our real homes to this day.

"It's ridiculous that you call yourselves that battle saber of humanity. Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators are ravens and crows!

"Besides, why did so many Cultivators demean themselves to be space pirates in the first place? I believe you must know the reason.

"Is the identity of a Cultivator really something to be proud of?"

Huangpu Xiaoya's face was cold and rigid, yet she failed to respond.

Huangpu Shiyi said, "Alright. You can go and take a rest now. We will talk soon when everything is over in a couple of days.

"Right, you must have Cosmos Rings with you. Maybe you are even hiding some gadgets that might help you escape. As a signal of my sincerity, I will allow you to keep those items. However, try not to let Black Stone or White Dew catch you using them.

"Their sabers are fast.

"You may be unafraid of death. But as a refiner, if your hands end up like mine..."

Huangpu Shiyi waved his two withered hands that looked like dry wood with a self-mocking smile. He continued saying, "… after suffering some irrecoverable injuries, it will be more miserable than killing you, will it not?"

Li Yao stared at Huangpu Shiyi and took a long breath. "I understand it now. At first, you lure the strong Cultivators away from their homes with Fengyu Zhong as the bait. Then, you assault their homes while their guardians are out.

"When the Cultivators receive the message, they will naturally realize that it is a trap and go back to defend their homes.

"After that, you can go back to the Great Horn Exo Society and annihilate it!

"The most important thing is that the Cultivators only know Spider Den. All their evaluations are based on the assumption that the space pirates on Spider Den are their enemies. But they didn't know that, behind Spider Den, a terrible organization of Immortal Cultivators, or Demonic Cultivators, named the Temple of Immortals, has been watching everything!

"Therefore, Cultivators have no chance of winning at all, and the Great Horn Exo Society is doomed to destruction!"

Huangpu Shiyi applauded his analysis. "Very excellent extrapolation. But don't worry about it. I know that you only joined the Great Horn Exo Society in Star Lord Temple. The hunting of Fengyu Ming basically had nothing to do with you. If you are willing to join the Temple of Immortals and become an Immortal Cultivator, I believe that Fengyu Zhong will be lenient enough to let go of you as long as I talk to him."

Li Yao scoffed and stopped talking.

Huangpu Shiyi waved his hands. Black Stone and White Dew walked to him, grinning at them hideously.

Li Yao followed them nicely out of the cabin.

He thought as he walked—

Who was the mysterious expert in the corner?

A moment ago, he had been about to summon the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and put down all four of the Immortal Cultivators.

However, the moment he took action, he suddenly sensed that an invisible expert was lurking in a corner of the cabin!

The man's scent was feeble, but it was terrifying nonetheless. His capability might be as good as his own, if not higher!

Black Stone, White Dew, and Fei Ming were not weak people. Although Huangpu Shiyi was a pure refiner, he would be carrying a lot of defensive magical equipment with him.

Considering that there was still a mysterious expert whose capability almost equaled to his own, Li Yao had no confidence that he could take down all five Immortal Cultivators at once.

Of course, even counting the mysterious expert, there wouldn't be much trouble if he wanted to flee from the starship safely with his skills and the formidable Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

However, now that he had learned that the starship was joining a battle to destroy the Great Horn Exo Society, there was no way that he would simply leave like that.

Moreover—

The picture of countless ordinary people struggling in flames inside Skyhill Domain had been etched into Li Yao's brain and wouldn't be erased forever.

The Temple of Immortals? Immortal Cultivators?

Li Yao's eyes turned deep and dark. He gradually vanished in the dim pathway.

…

After Li Yao and Huangpu Xiaoya were taken away, a cluster of airwaves appeared in a corner behind Huangpu Shiyi and unveiled a short, skinny man.

Huangpu Shiyi put on a different expression and greeted him respectfully.

"Master Su!"

Chapter 508: Secrets After Secrets

Chapter 508: Secrets After Secrets

The skinny, sharp-jawed old man was named Su Jiuzhen. He was an important figure in the Temple of Immortals as well as an ace assassin of Black Spider Tower. Although he was merely at the peak of the Building Foundation Stage, he was adept at disguise, poison, assassination, curses, and various other dark arts.

At least seven Core Formation Stage Cultivators had been killed by him. None of them were battle-type Cultivators, but they had all been elders of major sects who were protected by numerous body guards wherever they went.

It was by no means an easy task for Su Jiuzhen to break through the protection and assassinate them. He had been known as 'Killer of Cores' ever since.

Although Huangpu Shiyi was in the Core Formation Stage, he was a pure refiner with limited combat ability. He was definitely no match for Su Jiuzhen if the two of them were engaged in a fight.

Moreover, the man had spent quite a few years in the Temple of Immortals. Therefore, Huangpu Shiyi was very polite to him. He asked courteously, "Master Su, what is your opinion?"

Su Jiuzhen's voice was annoying to listen to, like iron needles scratching glass. "It won't be difficult to convert Li

Yao.

"He is a young man who was born and raised in the edge of the sector. He has been wandering away from society basically his whole life. How much feeling would he have for ordinary people? Chances are that he has already slain some of them when he was traveling in the sea of stars!

"You saw his performance in the Skyhill Sword Seminar, too. He was brutal, aggressive, and merciless!

"Such a young man must be proud and desire to be acknowledged by other people.

"Also, it's safe to infer from that fact that he trained crazily with Purple Ring Sword Ants that he is a maniac who is interested in nothing but magical equipment!

"As long as you lure him with magical equipment and the arts of refining, with a few lessons, I'm sure that he will recognize who he really is and embark on the path of immortality!"

Pausing for a moment, Su Jiuzhen then continued. "As for Huangpu Xiaoya, she is the tricky one. I fear that she has a deep misunderstanding about Immortal Cultivators. We'd better make preparations for the worst. She is your blood niece, but you won't hesitate when the moment comes, will you?"

Huangpu Shiyi smiled. "Why would I? Now that I've joined the cause of immortality, mortal affairs have nothing to do with me. What can the mundane relationship of the ordinary people do for us? Moreover—"

He looked at his withered hands with mixed feelings and said gloomily, "It's high time that this pair of useless hands are changed!"

...

Inside a well-decorated cabin that was almost similar to the room of a luxury hotel, two single beds were on opposite sides of room. In the middle of the room was a barrier.

At night, when the barrier was triggered, the room would be split into two independent halves. No one could see or hear what was happening on the other side of the room.

In the day, when the barrier was canceled, the room would become a large suite again.

Huangpu Xiaoya had been pacing to and fro ever since she was locked into the room. At one point, she was gritting her teeth angrily, then sobbing in a low voice, and then screaming and yelling. In the end, she couldn't bear it any longer and put a Cosmos Ring on her finger.

Li Yao had been lying on his bed quietly with his hands as the pillow and his eyes closed. He seemed to be sleeping, but he suddenly interrupted before Huangpu Xiaoya took action. "If I were you, I wouldn't touch the Cosmos Ring."

Huangpu Xiaoya was dazed. "Why?"

Li Yao replied, "Why do you think they didn't ask us to submit all our Cosmos Rings? As Cultivators, we have dozens of secret arts that can hide Cosmos Rings everywhere inside our body. Unless they mince us into pieces and dig into our every bone, they can never be certain that we are clean of Cosmos Rings.

"But right now, we are still of use to them, and they cannot resort to such violent methods. So, they could only pretend to be generous.

"I'm sure that there are more crystal cameras and detectaphones in this suite than hairs on my legs. If you are so desperate to reveal your Cosmos Rings, why don't you just speak to Huangpu Shiyi and tell him how many Cosmos Rings you've brought and what kind of items are inside?"

Huangpu Xiaoya was a gifted genius but only in refining. She was quite inexperienced when it came to dealing with people. Realizing that Li Yao's words did make sense, she was at a loss and wept silently on her bed.

Li Yao stopped talking to her and resumed his meditation. He seized every second of every minute to make his cells seethe with fury!

Huangpu Shiyi was right about one thing.

In a few days, many people would die, and much blood would be shed.

Huangpu Xiaoya sobbed for a long while. Seeing that Li Yao was indifferent the whole time, she gnashed her teeth. "Do you have any idea how many people were killed in the explosions of the Skyhill Domain just now? The two fallen floating mountains alone were enough to cause tremendous casualties! Why are you so calm? Do you not feel sorry for them at all?"

Li Yao seemed to be asleep. He didn't reply until a long while later. "I grew up in the relics of the ancient battlegrounds at the edge of the sea of stars. I didn't know who my parents were. It was nothing unusual for me to not see another living soul for a couple of months. The only things that accompanied me were cold scraps of magical equipment and a dead silent universe.

"It was not until I came to the Skyhill Domain that I saw such a large number of people. There were even more than all the people I'd ever met in my entire life.

"Should I feel sorry that these people died? Maybe I should.

"But the thing about sadness is that it cannot be forced. I have no tears. Should I try to squeeze some out?"

"You—"

Huangpu Xiaoya was so angry that she didn't know what to say.

Li Yao's eyes suddenly shone. He rose up, walked to a table, and groped around its edge. With a fascinated face, he leaned down and started operating carefully.

Huangpu Xiaoya was surprised. "What are you doing?"

Li Yao made a 'shh' sound and said, "Don't disturb me. I've found a detectaphone. But it is very delicately embedded into a complicated alarm system. If I make an error, the alarm system will be triggered, and everybody on the starship will hear it!"

Huangpu Xiaoya was dazed. "Didn't you say just now that there are countless crystal cameras and detectaphones inside the room? If so, won't all our actions be monitored by them? What's the point of dismantling it?"

Li Yao chuckled and said, "You don't understand. This is a game that Huangpu Shiyi is playing with us. He, of course, knew that we would discover the crystal cameras and detectaphones. He also set up a labyrinth-like alarm system on purpose. He intends to see how good we are and whether or not we can dismantle the crystal cameras and detectaphones without triggering the alarm system!

"Hehe. Huangpu Shiyi is a genius that you only get to see once in your life. I've always dreamed about competing with experts such as him!

"I didn't expect that my dream would come true today. Let me see with my own eyes how magnificent Huangpu Shiyi's methods are!"

Huangpu Xiaoya was about to go mad. "So many people died right in front of your eyes just now, and a lot more will be involved in the schemes of the Temple of Immortals. And all you're thinking about is a competition with Huangpu Shiyi?"

Li Yao raised his head. He glared at Huangpu Xiaoya like an infuriated animal. She was too scared to continue.

Li Yao scoffed and said, "Huangpu Xiaoya, I'm very disappointed in you.

"As a refiner, magical equipment is the most important thing in the world. No matter how the outside world changes, your belief and determination must not falter!

"Your mind is so easily stirred, and you don't even know better than that. How were you planning to defeat me?

"I was kind of looking forward to the match against you. But right now, it is lucky that we were captured by the Temple of Immortals. I have found an opponent who is more suitable and won't waste my time, unlike a useless person such as you!

"Besides, my trump cards have all been seen through. Even half of my crystal suit has been taken away. I can defeat neither Black Stone nor White Dew, and now there are two of them. What else can I do except study the magical equipment?

"If you are bored, you can come and study it together with me."

Huangpu Xiaoya blurted, "Uninterested!"

Li Yao was still peaceful. "It's fine that you don't want to study the magical equipment. Why don't you tell me the event that took place five thousand years ago, which Huangpu Shiyi mentioned just now? Was the human civilization of the Flying Star Sector based on planets in the beginning? I am not familiar with that part of history."

It was something that had baffled Li Yao for a long time.

In the territory of the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago, the Heaven's Origin Sector was at its edge. It was the poorest and the most undeveloped area in the entire imperium. Therefore, few relics and heritages from the Star Ocean Imperium had been discovered in the Heaven's Origin Sector.

It had taken the Cultivators of the Heaven's Origin Sector ten thousand years to gather and analyze the treasures from various Occult Orbs so that the civilization could be developed to such an extent.

Different from the Heaven's Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector was almost the center of the Star Ocean Imperium. Since an important military base had been established here, a lot of debris of ancient battlegrounds resulting from the war that caused the fall of the Star Ocean Imperium could be found. It would be logical to assume that many relics and heritages could be easily discovered.

By common sense, the humans here should've been able to restore their civilization to the glory of the Star Ocean Imperium after grasping the knowledge of the past. At the vest least, it should have been much more developed than the Heaven's Origin Sector.

However, after staying in the Flying Star Sector for such a long time, Li Yao had realized that the Flying Star Sector was on par with the Heaven's Origin Sector. In regard to crystal processors and crystal suits, the Flying Star Sector had a slim advantage. But the Heaven's Origin Sector had quite a lot of technology that the Flying Star Sector didn't know about, too.

As for the crystal warships and star fortresses of the Flying Star Sector, they were indeed more powerful than their counterparts in the Heaven's Origin Sector. But they were merely larger in size and firepower. Their fundamental technologies were still the same.

What was it that had stagnated the development of the Flying Star Sector and made it as underdeveloped as the Heaven's Origin Sector, which was in a poor and remote constellation?

Li Yao had studied it carefully, only to find that all the records about the events of the Flying Star Sector five thousand years ago were ambiguous. There seemed to be a missing two thousand years in the Flying Star Sector's history.

Files were few about what happened during the time. But after two thousand years of blankness, just like a big bang, countless crystal warships and space towns appeared out of nowhere in the universe!

It seemed that the Flying Star Sector had a major decline five thousand years ago.

According to Huangpu Shiyi, the human civilization of the Flying Star Sector used to be based on planets. So why did they flee into space five thousand years ago? What did it have to do with the decline of the civilization?

Huangpu Shiyi also declared that Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators were ravens and crows, to which Huangpu Xiaoya had no rebuttals. That was quite odd, too.

The history of the Flying Star Sector was indeed full of secrets after secrets!

Chapter 509: Great Era of Chaos

Chapter 509: Great Era of Chaos

Li Yao said, "I know that the few inhabitable planets that have atmospheres generally have harsh environments. They are frequented by demon beasts and barbarians. Where did the barbarians come from?"

Huangpu Xiaoya bit her lips and said softly, "They are not barbarians."

Li Yao raised an eyebrow. "Then what are they?"

Huangpu Xiaoya said, loudly, "They are— qi 1 trainers!"

"Qi trainers?"

Li Yao chewed on the name for a while, and he couldn't be more curious. "I know the difference between regular Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators. But what are 'qi trainers' exactly? Judging from your reaction, I suppose that the Cultivators at that time did something they were not particularly proud of, which you are ashamed of even to this day.

"Why did so many Cultivators degrade themselves and abandon their duties as Cultivators to become 'space pirates' who rage in the sea of stars and raise chaos? According to Huangpu Shiyi, there seems to be more to the story!"

However, Huangpu Xiaoya stopped explaining further. Her eyes were somewhat at a loss. She gazed at the wall, as if she was watching the cold, bleak vacuum of the cosmos outside of the metal cabin.

"Did you know?"

After speechless for a moment, Huangpu Xiaoya said gloomily, "The universe is dark. Too dark."

Having said what she had to say, she lay on her bed, too, and stopped talking, as if all the strength inside her bones had been pumped away.

Li Yao didn't make much of it. He devoted himself to the competition against the detectaphone again.

Half a day later, the floor under their feet quivered. Spluttering sounds of electric currents could be heard. The hair of both of them was floating in the air beyond their control.

The starship had finished preparation and was about to perform a space jump!

Through a space jump, a starship could reach lightyears away within a moment through the four-dimension, but there were a lot of restrictions to it.

In the Heaven's Origin Sector, to teleport a star shuttle less than twenty meters long to hundreds of lightyears away, it already required special rails and would cost a huge amount of spiritual energy.

The civilization of the Flying Star Sector was a bit more developed than that of the Heaven's Origin Sector, and the space jump technologies were more advanced. But the starships here were larger in size and often carried more goods and passengers.

In essence, although the catapult had been upgraded, the stones being sent were larger and heavier. As a result, the distance and precision of the launch were not improved by much.

To shatter the void with such a large starship would consume astronomical spiritual energy, not to mention the preparation procedures that could take hours.

In addition, there could not be serious cracks or damages on the shell of the starship. Otherwise, it might break apart in the four-dimensional space during the space jump. If so, everyone on board would be ripped open.

It was why no starships ever attempted to escape via a space jump when they were engaged with enemies. That would be a suicidal action.

It was also why Gold Horn had spent several months, and even risked passing through the Dim Flame Belt, in order to return to the Thousand Sails Space Zone, instead of being teleported right back. Gold Horn was too seriously damaged to withstand the tearing force when shattering the void.

For space pirates or members of the Temple of Immortals, it was even more complicated.

The sea of stars seemed peaceful, but it was, in fact, full of fatal traps, including swirls and storms. Not every place was suitable for star beacons.

Most of the places tolerable for star beacons had been occupied by various sects, who gradually spread out with the star beacons at the center. The star beacons were intersections of the universal highways.

The so-called 'space zones' were actually settlements that had expanded around the large-scale star beacons.

Since this particular starship belonged to the Temple of Immortals, it was not likely that it would jump to a space beacon of the Cultivators. The starship would be turning itself in if so.

During their thousands of years of hiding and running, space pirates had built many smaller star beacons in secret in the remote, less populated areas, too. However, they were often attacked by the Exo Societies and the Cultivation sects.

Therefore, they were not able to be teleported somewhere near the Great Horn Exo Society directly.

After performing the first space jump, the starship sailed in the sea of stars for several days more.

Li Yao estimated that they'd jumped to the secret star beacon that was closest to the Great Horn Exo Society and they would cruise the rest of the way to the Great Horn Exo Society in stealth mode.

During that time, White Dew and Black Stone brought them food every day, but Huangpu Shiyi never showed up. He seemed to be rather patient.

Li Yao seemed to have really become a maniac of magical equipment. He was completely dedicated to the competition against the hidden crystal cameras and detectaphones that Huangpu Shiyi had set up.

During the three days, he had dismantled 25 crystal cameras and 18 detectaphones, but the alarm system had been triggered nine times, too.

He was completely dwelled in the world of magical equipment. He was more and more enthusiastic about it and didn't feel tired in the least.

Huangpu Xiaoya, on the other hand, was getting increasingly anxious each day.

Every day, besides food, Black Stone and White Dew would bring them a crystal processor that had been denied access to the Spiritual Nexus. There was the latest news that the Temple of Immortals and Black Spider Tower had gathered on it.

According to the information, a lot of important things had happened over the past three days!

During his decades of lawless life as a space pirate, Fengyu Zhong had slaughtered more Cultivators than anybody could count, including disciples of major sects and many family members of Core Formation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

Even the grandson of a Nascent Soul Stage had been killed by him twelve years ago!

Besides, Fengyu Zhong was not alone. From various sources, the Cultivators had gathered that several large-scale gangs on Spider Den had marched at the Great Horn Exo Society with their full strength.

Therefore, all the Cultivators considered the battle to be a great opportunity to strike the space pirates.

Gold Horn seemed to be voyaging in the space alone. But more than eighty heavy starships were hiding in the few space zones and world fragments nearby. More than fifty Core Formation Stage Cultivators and three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, including the one whose grandson had been killed by Fengyu Zhong and the friends that he asked to help with his revenge, had been ready.

As for Building Foundation Stage Cultivators and Refinement Stage Cultivators, there were simply too many of them. They were all the elites of the major sects and had been summoned to this place in secret.

The battle was definitely the biggest operation in the world of Cultivators in the last thirty years.

However, wherever Gold Horn wandered in the sea of stars, the said main force of the space pirates never showed up.

After mobilizing most of their elites, many bases of the sects found themselves unable to protect themselves, especially those who had deep grudges with the space pirates and had sent out all their Core Formation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators!

As it turned out, an important mining base of the Endless Sea Sect was assaulted!

All the stored Gold Tide Stones, which could only be produced in this particular mining base, had been looted. A lot of disciples of Endless Sea Sect as well a few specialists adept at distinguishing raw stones had been captured!

The space pirates had even blown up the entire mining base. The production wouldn't be restored without two to three years of reconstruction!

In the meantime, the base of Red Dragon Union, which had sent its only two Core Formation Stage Cultivators and a large number of battle-type Cultivators to clear the bandits, were ambushed by space pirates. Many disciples were killed, and more were held as hostages!

The only Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator of Destructive Wind Hall went to take care of the bandits. The remaining three non-battle-type elders were assassinated at the same time!

Blood was flowing everywhere in the sea of stars.

For hundreds of years, Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector had considered space pirates to be nothing more than dermatitis.

Although space pirates meant catastrophe for the lone space towns, they could only run away like rats when faced with massive Cultivators and hide themselves in stone belts or behind space storms, hoping in desperation that they would not be caught.

It was not until this moment that the Cultivators realized how powerful the space pirates really were and how enormous their intelligence network was. Every step that the Cultivators made had been predicted by them!

To be fair, the Cultivators were still in an overwhelming advantage in regard to manpower and strength. Not just space pirates, even the Temple of Immortals behind them was not enough to confront the Cultivators head-on.

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were like the pillars of the world of Cultivators. They were invincible and unshakable.

The problem was, one could never know when a thief would come to visit. Not every sect was guarded by Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. Most sects were far away from each other with very bad transportation. Timely assistance was often impossible.

As strong as the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator might be, they were dispersed in the sea of stars and had to stay in the headquarters of their own sects most of the time so as to protect the precious resources and the large number of non-battle-type Cultivators.

This time, a few Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators had seized the initiative to launch an attack, only to find that their homes were invaded while they were away!

To some extent, the Temple of Immortals had fully exploited the potential of 'unrestricted warfare' and 'asymmetric strike'.

The overall peace of the Flying Star Sector that had lasted for hundreds of years was shattered in three days of chaos!

A great era of storm and thunder, when blood and bravery surged and heroes distinguished themselves, had come!

The bad news frustrated Huangpu Xiaoya, who couldn't feel more awful.

But Li Yao completely disregarded the crystal processor. Sometimes, he would glance at it. But he devoted much of his time to the 'competition' between Huangpu Shiyi and himself.

It was not until the fifth day that he managed to dismantle the last detectaphone left by Huangpu Shiyi.

Huangpu Shiyi deserved to be the most talented genius in the circle of refiners for the last thirty years. The detectaphones and crystal cameras he had developed were big eye-openers for Li Yao, who had been inspired a lot by their structure.

After five days of competitive dismantling, Li Yao was soaked in sweat, but his understanding about precise magical equipment had reached a whole new level.

As the last detectaphone was removed, Huangpu Shiyi finally invited Li Yao for a second meeting.

This time, the conversation was located in Huangpu Shiyi's refining workshop.

In the middle of the workshop was an eye-catching platform made of black wood that looked like a giant coffin. Two weird things were placed on the platform.

The first item was some sort of a model of bushes that seemed to be made of certain silver metal. It looked like a maze and gave a weird, blood-freezing feeling of beauty.

The second item was the model of a monkey. It was a regular snub-nosed monkey. Its two eyes had been specially decorated and looked very attractive. The model was as vivid as the real thing, as if it were about to lunge forward at any moment.

Chapter 510: Ants and Monkey

Chapter 510: Ants and Monkey

"It seems you are very interested in my personal collection, aren't you? This is a model of the black spot ants' home. Delicate, like glittering coral, is it not?"

Huangpu Shiyi held the model in his hands carefully and touched it with a fascinated expression, as he explained, "Black spot ants are the architects among ants. They can build up a complicated, labyrinth-like giant home deep underground. Each home can accommodate millions of ants, dozens of times more than regular ant homes can. Such a splendid ant home is a piece of intriguing artwork.

"However, black spot ants prefer to build their homes in the dry and fragile soil, and the pathways inside their home are extremely delicate and feeble, too. The tiniest force from the outside is already enough to make part of the ant nest collapse.

"Do you want to know how the humans studied the black spot ants' homes and how the most perfect model without the slightest flaw was created?

"It's very simple.

"You melt aluminum, you find an entrance of the ant home, and your pour the aluminum down. It will naturally reach every corner of the ant home.

"When the liquid aluminum cools down and turned solid again, you uproot it as one whole piece. It will be what you are witnessing right now. Delicate, immaculate, and brilliant. It will go on for thousands of years without rotting and will be granted the ultimate 'immortality'!

"As for the millions of ants inside the ant home, they were, of course, melted by the aluminum liquid and killed without leaving any traces.

"I bought this model from a female student of Flying Star University through the Spiritual Nexus.

"I investigated the little girl thoroughly and found that she was kind, innocent, and diligent.

"She used to be an ordinary girl in a remote town at the edge of the Flying Star Sector. Her parents were both peasants, and her mother had been ill in bed all year around. With unbelievable determination, she took care of her mother and did part-time jobs to get more income for her family, while she continued reading and training. Despite all the unfavorable conditions, she awakened her spiritual root and was admitted by Flying Star University!

"She was as hard-working as before when she went to college. She got full scholarships every year. Although her family was anything but rich, she always donated much of her scholarship to the people whose lives were even more difficult than hers.

"She sold this particular model online because she was raising money to help a child in her hometown, who suffered from a serious heart disease, secure a new heart for transplanting.

"In her hometown, all the folk said that such a girl was a goddess walking on the earth.

"Li Yao, my young friend, do you think, for the black spot ants, the girl is a divinity or a devil?"

Li Yao was silent.

Huangpu Shiyi leaned forward. His smiling face drew close to Li Yao from the other side of the platform, as he said lightheartedly, "It doesn't matter whether she is a divinity or a devil. The only way that the ants transmit information is through waving their antennas.

"Let's say one of the ants was standing right in front of the girl and shouted—as loud as it could—'You are a crazy devil, you ruined my homeland and you killed my family. I'm not going to let go of you. I'm going to get the most brutal revenge, even at the cost of my life!'

"However, from the girl's point of view, she only saw that an ant was waving its antennas crazily.

"In fact, if the girl wasn't scrutinizing this particular ant with a magnifying lens, she might not know that it was waving its antennas at all!"

Huangpu Xiaoya sat back and stared at Li Yao with a smile.

What disappointed him was that Li Yao was utterly emotionless. He only turned at the model of the monkey and asked, "What is this?"

Huangpu Shiyi put the ant home back and picked up the model of the monkey. He touched the monkey's head and said softly, "This is a brown-tailed snub-nosed monkey, one of the most commonly-seen monkeys. They are everywhere in the Flying Star Sector. You may have seen them in many world fragments, too.

"Early in the days of the Star Ocean Imperium, the research-type Cultivators had already begun to study the mysteries of genes. Do you know what genes are?"

Li Yao nodded. "I do.

"In the legends, the ancestors of human beings were the greatest species in the primordial era, such as tyrannosaurs, Megalodons, Sarcosuchus, Eight-Armed Golden Apes, and so on!

"Despite the amazing techniques that the greatest species had, they were doomed to extinction by the wear and tear of time and the strikes of countless apocalypses.

"Before their extinction, they had condensed the essence of the experience of their entire species into an information stream and sent it into their designated successors.

"Such information is known as 'genetic information'.

"Human beings are the descents of countless primordial species. Our cells contain the genetic information that has been passed on from billions of years ago.

"This genetic information is like mysterious helical chains that interweaved into our life and soul.

"Genetic information is the foundations of our life and the heritage we acquired from our earliest ancestors.

"Therefore, the genetic information hidden in the deepest part of our cells is known as 'Gene Chains'."

Huangpu Shiyi nodded in approval. "Excellent. You know the definition of genes very well! But do you know the latest conclusion of the Flying Star Sector's experts about the difference in genes between humans and monkeys?"

Li Yao raised his eyebrow.

Huangpu Shiyi smiled and extended two of his fingers. "Two percent.

"There are many kinds of monkeys. Some of the monkeys have more different genes compared to humans'. The difference can be above 3%. Some particularly smart monkeys, who can learn how to crack open nuts with simple tools by themselves, only have a genetic difference from humans of 1.7%. By estimation, monkey genes as a whole are only 2% different compared to human beings'!"

Li Yao said, "So?"

Huangpu Shiyi's smile suddenly turned extremely hideous. After a brief pause, he continued, one word after another. "Do you want to know how big the genetic difference between ordinary people and Cultivators is?"

Li Yao narrowed his eyes to such a degree that they became two shining lines.

Huangpu Shiyi didn't tell him the answer. He sniffed and, touching the head of the monkey, remarked, "The most important thing about Cultivation is to find your true self and to realize what a unique existence you are in the dark universe! I placed the two personal collections on this platform. Every day, when I see them while I am working, I can always understand something new from them.

"Li Yao, I'm very happy that you've been dwelling in the game that I carefully prepared.

"The game was meant for Huangpu Xiaoya, but you gave me a bigger surprise by cracking so many crystal cameras and eavesdroppers in half of the time that I expected!

"From your expression, I can tell that you and I are the same type of people. We are born for magical equipment, which is our world, our universe, and our sea of stars!

"Come on. Join the Temple of Immortals and become an Immortal Cultivator. I do think very highly of you, and I'm willing to recruit you as my first, and perhaps last, disciple. You will be able to learn all my expertise!"

Weird brilliance beamed out of Huangpu Shiyi's eyes. He extended his withered hands toward Li Yao.

Li Yao's eyes stopped briefly at his hands, as he suddenly sneered in derision. His face turned crazy and disobedient, as he said, "Huangpu Shiyi, you are right about one thing. I don't care about the difference between Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators. The death of the ordinary people whom I barely knew had nothing to do with me whatsoever.

"My dream is to become the strongest refiner in the universe and to refine the most terrifying, the most violent, and the most dominating magical equipment. Everybody in the sea of stars will hear the name of Li Yao. Every star in the sky will tremor in fear at the brilliance of my magical equipment!

"However, even though you are adept at theories, what makes you think you are qualified to be my master with your useless hands?"

Huangpu Shiyi's pupils suddenly shrank.

Li Yao suddenly changed his tone and said, "Unless, of course, you prove yourself to be capable enough first!"

Huangpu Shiyi burst into laughter. "The shuttle that fooled you was not evident enough?"

"No. That was far from enough."

Li Yao continued, "Besides, you are asking me to change my side and betray the Cultivators. Chances are that I will be hunted by them and have to hide in darkness in the future instead of receiving the cheers and admiration of thousands of people. You'll have to pay me some 'down payment' first.

"I'm not some juvenile whom you can deceive with some metal garbage, a model of a monkey, and some bulls*it.

"In the place where I grew up, even a glass of water recycled from urine or a tin of man-made air had to be traded with real money. Your fancy speech meant absolutely nothing to me!"

Huangpu Shiyi slapped the platform and said, "Very soon, Immortal Cultivators will appear in front of mortals in broad daylight. Billions of people will kneel before us and worship us! You will get however many cheers you want by then!

"But it's reasonable that you don't believe it for now. Tell me, what 'down payment' do you have in mind right now?"

Li Yao licked his lips and put on a greedy face. "You showed Huangpu Xiaoya and me the scenes of the explosions in the Skyhill Domain. From the picture, I could tell that the serial explosions took place in multiple locations at the same time and resulted in tremendous damage!

"Even though there were not many Core Formation Stage Cultivators in the Skyhill Domain, their level of alertness must've been at the maximum, considering that it was the time of Skyhill Sword Seminar after all.

"Although you successfully infiltrated and installed bombs right before their eyes without being discovered, the bombs wouldn't have been too numerous, and their size must've been small.

"My conclusion is that you had bombs whose size is disproportional to their damage.

"In the meantime, you had an expert of explosions on your side who knew how to deploy the bombs to maximize the potential damage by taking advantage of the structural weak points of the environment. The damage of the bombs could be brought up by hundreds of times in such a way. Therefore, you destroyed two floating mountains with just several bombs!

"If my guess is correct, this expert of explosions was yourself?"

Huangpu Shiyi laughed and bragged, "Yes. I've always believed that crystal bombs are the strongest magical equipment. Their power is limitless, and when it is fully and instantly unleashed, even an expert multiple times stronger than you might be slain easily in a single breath!

"Although I am not a battle-type Cultivator, hundreds of renowned Cultivators have been killed by my crystal bombs!"

Eagerness was shining in Li Yao's eyes, as he blurted, "I've always believed so, ever since I was a kid! Crystal bombs are the best magical equipment! So, teach me everything you know about crystal bombs!"

Chapter 511: Super Explosion Expert

Chapter 511: Super Explosion Expert

"Huh?"

Huangpu Shiyi was caught off guard.

He had made thorough plans to deal with Li Yao. He'd invited Li Yao to his workshop because he was going to convince him of the true meaning of the ultimate Daoism.

He was certain that, after a few hours of brainwashing, Li Yao's mental defense line would definitely collapse!

He had never expected the guy to be so 'realistic' as to not bother about the disparity between regular Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators at all as long as the reward was attractive enough.

Huangpu Shiyi had tempted hundreds of Cultivators and turned them into Immortal Cultivators.

But he had never seen such a shameless Cultivator before!

Crystal bombs techniques were what he had always been best at. They had been gathered bit by bit at the cost of lengthy suffering after he joined the Temple of Immortals. The setbacks he had endured and the price he had paid were unimaginable for other people. He wouldn't have been able to grasp them without his extreme craziness!

And this guy was asking for all of them just like that?

Huangpu Shiyi's face immediately turned cloudy. He coughed and said, "We will have a lot of time in the future to discuss the techniques. Why don't we talk about the difference between regular Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators first?"

Li Yao chuckled. "You people of The Temple of Immortals are quite verbose. You talked about immortality and endless mysteries of the universe and the path that nobody had ever set foot on before. But I didn't expect that you would be so petty. Just a few techniques, and you are trying to keep them a secret!

"How can I believe that there will be endless benefits after I join you if you are so mean?

"Bring me back. This is my only condition. Don't talk to me again until you agree to it.

"You can turn it down, but if you agree to it, you'd better offer me something authentic. Truth be told, I'm a bomb expert myself. If I find out that you are giving me fake techniques, I will be even more disappointed in the Temple of Immortals."

Li Yao finished his talk and walked out of the room, not once looking back at Huangpu Shiyi.

Huangpu Shiyi was coughing louder and louder. His graceful manners when enjoying the ant home and the monkey model a moment ago had entirely disappeared.

He pondered for a moment and could do nothing but wave his hands in frustration. Black Stone and White Dew immediately showed up.

Barely had Li Yao left his sight when Huangpu Shiyi slapped the desk hard and bellowed angrily, "Damn. He is not even a Core Formation Stage Cultivator, and he dared to talk to me like that!"

In a corner, Su Jiuzhen gradually appeared out of thin air, before he shrieked, "A young man in his twenties whose refining skills are in the middle-to-high level of the Building Foundation Stage and whose combat ability is in the beginning level of the Building Foundation Stage is indeed qualified to be egotistical."

Huangpu Shiyi gnashed his teeth. "Master Su, do I really have to bring out the best secret arts of mine to satisfy the boy so that he will be willing to join us?"

Su Jiuzhen smirked. "Alternatively, you can look at the whole thing from a different perspective. You are not the only refiner at the Core Formation Stage in the Temple of Immortals. Your techniques are not the only valuable ones, either.

"With the boy's current capability, there are bound to be a lot of other refiners at the Core Formation Stage in the Temple of Immortals who are interested in him. If one of them recruits him as a disciple in the future, what do you think his impression of you will be?"

Huangpu Shiyi was dazed. "About that—"

Su Jiuzhen said with a cold smile, "Competitiveness is a virtue inside the Temple of Immortals. The strong feast upon the weak, and the strongest take all! You wouldn't want an ambitious but also hostile competitor among us in the decades to come, would you?

"Let's put that aside. The few projects of yours all require large amounts of funding, which you must fight for against other people. If another refiner gets him as a disciple and their project produces results sooner than yours, what will you do?"

Huangpu Shiyi hesitated. "Master Su, you do have a point."

Su Jiuzhen continued his analysis. "In my opinion, this is rather a fair deal.

"Although your hands can be temporarily recovered through secret arts, they can only last a very short amount of time. If you are alone, you wouldn't be able to proceed with many large experiments or personal training sessions with your impaired hands.

"But if you have such a strong disciple as your assistant, your project will definitely be accelerated, you will be granted more funds, the speed of your Cultivation will soar, and your position in the Temple of Immortals will be much more solid, too!"

Huangpu Shiyi's eyes were flickering as he thought, before they gradually came to a halt. He thought for a while and was still concerned. "Master Su, you're right. I wasn't thinking thoroughly just now. But is this boy sincere about joining the Temple of Immortals?

"My crystal bombs and my techniques to distinguish the best points of explosion are extraordinary. If the boy learns all of them and yet has other plans, our starship might be seriously sabotaged!"

"You don't need to worry about that."

Su Jiuzhen explained, "Gold Horn has been travelling unpredictably for a while, but we've basically locked the space zone it is in, and we will capture it within half a month! Talented as this Li Yao guy may be, how much can he learn in such a short time?

"As for his sincerity and whether or not he has other trump cards… I'll take care of that and give him another test!

"If he has made up his mind to be an Immortal Cultivator, you have countless methods to tame him in the future as his master.

"If he has other cards and is planning some petty tricks, hehe, I will let him beg to be executed!"

…

Li Yao stayed in his room for only five minutes before Black Stone and White Dew came in and handed a crystal processor to him with a weird expression.

Huangpu Shiyi's helpless face appeared in the picture, as he said, "Are you willing to be my disciple as long as I teach you the crystal bomb techniques?"

Li Yao smiled. "I'll decide after the quality of the goods is determined. I'll practice when you teach for a couple of days. If you are honest and your techniques are genuine, I see no harm in being your disciple."

Huangpu Shiyi stared at him for a long time, before he took a deep breath and said, "Alright. I'm sending you an information stream. You can study it for now. As for the files of a higher level, I'll have to sort through them first. In three hours, Black Stone and White Dew will bring you to my workshop again.

"Remember, what I'm giving you is only half of what I know. Only after you become my disciple will I teach you the other half, which is more complicated."

Li Yao nodded. "I kind of like the notion of being an Immortal Cultivator now."

Li Yao tapped on the light beam and received the information. It was a notebook personally written by Huangpu Shiyi, in which the structural designs and methods of refining of 572 kinds of crystal bombs were recorded.

The crystal bombs varied from the super bombs, which could blow up a planet back in the days of the Star Ocean Imperium, to the 'assault bombs' that could be installed inside fly demon beasts for suicidal attacks, to the 'anti-crystal-suit bombs' that were only the size of fingernails and yet could penetrate through a crystal suit and kill the Cultivator inside as long as they were deployed at the right location.

The frameworks of many of the bombs had been modified, rectified, and perfected by Huangpu Shiyi. Their damage had been significantly improved.

Li Yao felt that he had received a priceless treasure and completely devoted himself to it, his hands tremoring in excitement.

Huangpu Shiyi, hearing his conversation with Huangpu Shiyi and seeing his fascinated face, felt that her hands and feet were cold. She trembled and shouted, "Li Yao, what did Huangpu Shiyi say to you? You didn't make any deals with him, did you?"

Li Yao seemed to have heard none of it.

Huangpu Xiaoya clenched her fists and raised her voice. "Li Yao, don't be fooled! If you take the first wrong step, you will take countless wrong steps! We are Cultivators!"

There was still no response from Li Yao. His eyeballs were shivering rapidly, his hands tapping on the light beam nonstop, his mouth murmuring things that were utterly meaningless; he had apparently gone mad.

Huangpu Xiaoya was almost crying. "Li Yao, don't do that. Please, I—"

She summoned her courage and suddenly lunged at Li Yao, trying to snatch his crystal processor.

This time, Li Yao responded quickly. He raised his crystal processor high and, bending his right leg like a saber, kicked Huangpu Xiaoya right in her abdomen. She was blown away immediately.

Tears were all over Huangpu Xiaoya's face. She was cramping, in too much pain to moan.

As if possessed by a devil, Li Yao strode forward with a hideous face. He clutched Huangpu Xiaoya's hair and pulled her up to his face.

He glared at her gloomily with his bloodshot eyes until Huangpu Xiaoya couldn't bear it any longer and sobbed silently. Then he said, one word after another, "Don't bug me when I'm studying magical equipment!

"Every second in the coming ten days is of paramount importance to me. If you hinder me again, I will slay you before Black Stone and White Dew interrupt. Do you understand?"

Li Yao threw Huangpu Xiaoya away as if she was a ragged bag and did not bother to look at her again. He returned to his crystal processor and concentrated his attention on the structures of hundreds of crystal bombs again.

In a corner of the room, an inconspicuous crystal camera he had never seen before captured everything that had happened dutifully.

In their cabin, Huangpu Shiyi and Su Jiuzhen were monitoring them on the light beam.

"What a brutal and coldhearted young man!"

"A natural-born Immortal Cultivator!"

Huangpu Shiyi and Su Jiuzhen looked at each other and smiled.

"However, the tests we have to run cannot be saved. To this moment, we cannot rule out the possibility that he has been acting."

In the coming few days, Li Yao dedicated himself to the training of the techniques of crystal bomb refining.

To be an explosions expert, techniques in two regards must be studied.

Firstly, the creation of explosion magical equipment.

Not only must the refiner be familiar with the classic crystal bombs in history and their variations, they must also know what natural materials would lead to explosions when they were combined.

The experts of the trade could mix dozens of daily materials that were extremely stable and in no way explosive into powerful bombs.

But if they stopped there, they could only be called top explosions experts.

The really super explosions experts must have deeper understanding about the structure of the object to be bombed.

Every super explosions expert had a pair of sharp eyes that could allow them to see through the surface of an object and perceive the deepest structure of it, so that they could find the balance point of the object.

Once the balance was ruined, the entirely object would collapse!

Huangpu Shiyi was such an expert.

Back in the Skyhill, he had paralyzed twelve anti-gravity rune arrays of a floating mountain with only two regular crystal bombs.

Chapter 512: Great Bargain

Chapter 512: Great Bargain

The technique through which Huangpu Shiyi trained his eyes was named 'Phantom Breaker'. It allowed the user to concentrate the spiritual energy in the eyes and meld one's spiritual threads into one's eyesight. Wherever one's eyes reached, the spiritual threads would penetrate into the target and sense the tiniest structures of the object that were unperceivable to eyes.

When cultivated to the highest level, 'Phantom Breaker' would not only make the user see through the deepest structures of an object but also allow them to sense the weakest part of them instantly.

By that time, with a quick glance, the heavily protected target would become a clear, detailed skeleton, and the weakest part of the 'skeleton' would emit vague red brightness. One would know where to attack without thinking, just by looking at it.

This was only for the deployment of one or two crystal bombs.

When it came to the serial explosions that required three or more bombs, more factors would be involved that would interfere with each other, and the demand on the computational ability of the bomber would soar, too. Countless theories would have to be applied, such as chaos theory, turbulence model, butterfly effect, uncertainty principle… The mysterious and complicated theories dazzled Li Yao and made him greatly enjoy himself.

To study so many theories at the same time required much more than a few days.

Thankfully, there was a mysterious zone of memories inside Li Yao's brain. By staying in the Heaven's Refining Tower, the virtual time could be significantly lengthened.

Li Yao sank his consciousness into the deepest part of his brain and dedicated himself to training hard with the extended time inside the Heaven's Refining Tower.

At first, Huangpu Shiyi was not entirely open-minded.

Although he said that he had given Li Yao half of what he knew, he had only offered less than thirty percent of his knowledge, which also contained the most sophisticated theories.

By Huangpu Shiyi's estimation, with the computational ability of a Building Foundation Cultivator, it would take Li Yao three to five months to memorize all the theories, and much longer to understand and grasp them.

Also, theories couldn't be readily applied to real battles, and they were barely of any help to the improvement of one's capability.

But what he didn't know was that Li Yao was an experienced bomber who wouldn't have defeated enemies multiple times stronger than himself in the dangerous battles without the traps made of crystal bombs!

In the subject of explosions, Li Yao had set up as many bombs as Huangpu Shiyi had. It was just that he had learned everything by himself and was lacking the support of systematic theories.

Therefore, the theories that Huangpu Shiyi had offered him were, to him, what a pillow was to a drowsy man. He couldn't feel more satisfied!

During the prolonged time inside the Heavenly Refining Tower, Li Yao studied the theories that Huangpu Shiyi had given him and compared Huangpu Shiyi's bombs with his self-made crystal bombs in the past.

He made new discoveries almost every second and new understandings every minute. His capability was improving at a higher speed than an exploding crystal bomb!

Only three days had passed in reality. But Li Yao had generally memorized all theories and totally grasped the structural designs of hundreds of Huangpu Shiyi's crystal bombs.

His speed stunned Huangpu Shiyi, who was vigilant and made up his mind not to teach him the rest of his techniques easily. Otherwise, even if the guy was willing to join the Temple of Immortals in the end, he might not enjoy many benefits from it personally. It was not unusual that a master was starved after they taught everything they knew to their disciples in the Temple of Immortals!

But he didn't expect that Li Yao wasn't just a consumer. After getting part of Huangpu Shiyi's knowledge, the guy seemed to be quite satisfied. His attitude toward Huangpu Shiyi had changed significantly. Not only did he often go and discuss esoteric problems about crystal bombs with Huangpu Shiyi, the guy even revealed part of his own techniques and skills of refining!

This time, Huangpu Shiyi was both surprised and amazed.

Ever since his hands had been destroyed by lightning due to his crazy training more than twenty years ago, he had basically abandoned the path of a sword-forger.

Later, on his way to the Million Star Space Zone in search of an elixir to cure his hands, he encountered a space storm and was almost killed. But the accident proved to be a turning point for him. After his narrow escape, he found the heritage of a long-deceased senior by luck, including 'Phantom Breaker' and half of a manual on the craft of crystal bombs.

Since then, Huangpu Shiyi had been mostly focused on the refinement of explosive magical equipment.

In the circle of refiners, this research field was not as popular as melee weapons, guns, or starships. There were not many such experts in the Temple of Immortals, either.

He barely had the opportunity to communicate with specialists who had equal expertise to himself. After a long time of practicing in solitude, he found it hard to improve after he had reached his bottleneck.

The questions that Li Yao raised had precisely hit the points he was unsure about. After several deep discussions, not only was Li Yao greatly enlightened, Huangpu Shiyi had sorted out many problems that had baffled him and made great progress, too.

He had tested Li Yao several times, but Li Yao did not care at all and shared many secret techniques with him nonetheless.

With Huangpu Shiyi's sharp eyes, he could easily tell that much of the information Li Yao had provided was invaluable. Some of it had been lost a long time ago!

If the guy was not determined to join the Temple of Immortals, he would definitely not share such top confidential arts with him!

This time, Huangpu Shiyi was really confused.

"What is this guy, Li Yao, exactly? Is he stupid? But the tricks and responses he took in the beginning were very excellent, and he seized the opportunity to ask for more benefits greedily and right in time, too.

"Is he smart? But he did not keep anything to himself at all and brought out so many ultimate skills promptly and honestly. Even I have never heard of some of the refining methods and tricks. They are definitely top secrets of top secrets. Why did he tell me all of them so easily? Does he really consider me his Master?"

Huangpu Shiyi and Su Jiuzhen had discussed with each other for a long time. Their conclusion was: "Li Yao lived alone in the periphery of the sea of stars for more than twenty years. He was naturally quick to respond due to the suffering of the harsh environment.

"However, the number of people he got in touch with was too limited after all. He is too young, too simple, and sometimes naive.

"For such an arrogant young man who thinks too highly of himself, the only thing we need to give him is flattery and compliments. He is not afraid of sticks, but he cannot resist carrots. With some adulation, he will be so ecstatic that he won't know who or where he is, and he will confess all the secrets that he knows about!"

After he figured out Li Yao's personality, he was even kinder and friendlier toward Li Yao when they were together, and his tutelage gradually turned both thorough and detailed.

But, of course, he had calculated everything through.

He had concluded that, for each technique or skill that he taught Li Yao, Li Yao had returned at least two. Although they were not as good as his, but there was a great number of them!

Huangpu Shiyi was a talented genius, too. After receiving Li Yao's techniques and Cultivation methods, he had been training crazily for several days, and his capability in refining had soared, to the extent that he felt that a breakthrough was coming near. He was so happy that he was almost crying.

At first, he recruited Li Yao as his disciple purely for the purpose of getting more skills. But gradually, he changed his thoughts. Since the boy had a simple mind despite his sharp tongue, he was quite easy to be manipulated as long as one knew how to deal with him, that is to say, how to flatter him and talk to him nicely.

It did not seem a bad idea to really treat the guy as his disciple. He could be asked to perform dangerous experiments in the future so that Huangpu Shiyi wouldn't have to do them personally.

Besides, the guy had indeed got something in his head. He was throwing out tricks that Huangpu Shiyi didn't know about every day. Huangpu Shiyi was completely hooked by them. To maintain the friendship, he had to trade his own techniques for them continuously.

After all, it was quite a fair deal. It couldn't be more in his favor with a ratio of 1:2 during the barters.

Just like that, the relationship between the 'master' and the 'disciple' was getting better day after day. In the end, they really looked like a devoted teacher and a loyal student.

However, Su Jiuzhen didn't let loose of monitoring Li Yao in secret at all.

Li Yao was still living in the same suite as Huangpu Xiaoya. It was partly for the sake of easier surveillance, and partly to set him as an example for Huangpu Xiaoya.

But Huangpu Xiaoya was not influenced at all.

In the first couple of days, she was mired in despair and irritation and couldn't get herself out. But as time went by, she grew more and more silent and indifferent. She seemed to have become the girl made of lightning, like when Li Yao had seen her for the first time.

The only difference was that all the lighting was frozen, not jumping anymore.

Seven days after Li Yao and Huangpu Shiyi made the deal, Huangpu Xiaoya was brought to talk to Huangpu Shiyi, too.

Three hours later, when Huangpu Xiaoya was back, her eyes were hollow, and she was quieter than ever, like the tranquil and depressed ocean before a storm.

She sat cross-legged on her bed and stared at Li Yao across her, who had been carefully studying crystal bombs for an entire hour. Then she suddenly jumped up and looked down upon Li Yao in disgust, as she gnashed her teeth. "I'm not an ant, much less a monkey!"

Li Yao's eyes were still focused on the crystal bombs. He murmured something to himself and completely ignored her.

Huangpu Xiaoya raised her voice, not speaking to Li Yao, but more like speaking to herself, "Ants can only wave their antennas, and monkeys just squeak! But when ordinary people laugh, we know they are happy; when ordinary people cry, we know they are sad! We drink the same water, we breathe same air, we speak the same language, and we sing the same songs!

"We are all ordinary people when we were born! Our parents are likely to be ordinary people, and our descendants may be ordinary people for all eternity!

"No. We are ordinary people, except that our strength may be a bit larger than the rest!

"For your and the other timid scumbags' information, I, Huangpu Xiaoya, will never abandon my identity as an ordinary person, and I would like to fight for that until my last drop of blood is shed!"

Li Yao finally raised his head and glanced at her. He said casually, "You will die."

Huangpu Xiaoya's hair was messy, her face flushed. She suddenly burst into laughter like a crazy witch. She bellowed with her head held high and her face full of pride, "I may die, but Cultivators are destined to live forever! This is the 'immortality' that we pursue, which is totally different from you people without hearts!"

Li Yao sniffed. He stopped listening and resumed his study.

Today, the question at hand was 'seven-star dilemma'. It was a question about which distribution of seven crystal bombs could bring up their damage to maximum when they were circuited.

If he could find out the optimal solution, the damage of the serial explosion would not be just seven times the damage of a single crystal bomb, but more than thirty times it!

Chapter 513: Master Li Yao, We Are Here for You!

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It was seven o'clock in the evening. Li Yao was learning how to assemble crystal bombs in a special training room.

As he got along well with Huangpu Shiyi, he took the opportunity and asked to do real practice.

Huangpu Shiyi agreed to the request after some consideration.

However, all the experiments had to be conducted in this special training room.

The training room had been enclosed by the most advanced defense rune arrays and reflection rune arrays. It was safe from any bombs.

Even though the bombs were powerful enough to damage the cabin, part of the energy they released would be reflected by the wall and kill everyone inside the cabin first.

Therefore, it was impossible for Li Yao to escape by blowing his way out of the starship!

Besides, Li Yao had no doubt that his every action was being observed by the invisible expert hiding in the darkness. As soon as there appeared to be anything wrong with him, the stalker would immediately make his move!

The remarkable stealth ability of the expert suggested that he might be a top assassin in Black Spider Tower who was best at sneaking, hiding, and assassination. Li Yao was not confident that he could defeat such an opponent shortly in a head-on battle.

Moreover, Li Yao did not intend to leave just now. He was earnestly studying crystal bombs at present.

In front of Li Yao was a crystal chip the size of a fingernail. A small pile of luminating powder was on it.

Li Yao opened his hands. Spiritual threads extended out of his fingertips, which lifted almost a hundred thin, shining metal slices and stabbed them into the powder according to a certain pattern. He then covered another crystal chip on it and carefully sealed them together.

The simple movement took him more than twenty minutes. Li Yao's face was solemn and coated in sweat.

Judging from the appearance, it was just a commonly-seen double-chip group that could be applied to crystal suits, shuttles, or even melee magical equipment. But after Li Yao's modification, it was in fact a powerful bomb that, when triggered by Li Yao's telepathic thought, could cast dozens of square meters nearby into flames of fury!

After several days of hard training and communication with the rarely-seen expert Huangpu Shiyi, Li Yao finally made major breakthroughs in crystal bomb refining!

The path he chose was different from Huangpu Shiyi's.

Although Huangpu Shiyi was one of the most brilliant geniuses in refining, his hands had been terribly wounded after all, which prevented him from doing practical operations. Also, he was backed by an enormous organization and had countless subordinates to carry out his commands. Therefore, he was more fond of serial, large-scale explosions.

In comparison, Li Yao was by himself most of the time, and he preferred to travel in the sea of stars alone. Besides, his hands were as nimble as phantoms thanks to the training with the Purple Ring Sword Ants. He had also received the heritage of Ou Yezi and was especially good at carving tiny rune arrays. Therefore, his bombs were smaller and less conspicuous. They might not be very powerful, but they could be easily put into practice in a battle by a single person. He could deploy the bombs and cover them up without anybody knowing anything.

Li Yao blew at his palm. He rubbed his dry hands and pondered the difference of ideologies between Huangpu Shiyi and himself.

Right then, the starship suddenly trembled violently, followed by many intermittent quakes. Slight noises could be heard through the wall, too.

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. He pinned his ear to the cabin wall and analyzed the situation outside.

He could tell that the starship was enduring an intense attack. One of the power rune arrays had exploded. Shrieking noises could be heard next, as if somebody was tearing the starship's shell by brute force.

CRACK!

Three barriers had been imposed to the cabin door. The broadcast rune array on a corner of the ceiling suddenly emanated Fei Ming's somewhat nervous voice. "Master Li

Yao, don't worry. We are under the attack of Cultivators. Black Stone and White Dew are leading the guardians to resist the intruders. For your own safety, please stay in your refining room!"

Li Yao raised his eyebrow and did not respond. He returned to his operation platform as if nothing had happened and continued assembling the next piece of magical equipment.

The only difference was that the speed was upgraded to a much higher level and almost broke the sonic barrier again.

Explosions and shouting were louder and louder. The lights inside the cabin were flashing. For half a minute, even the balance system of the starship was malfunctioning, and the ground slanted to the left side slightly.

But none of that affected Li Yao. He kept practicing meticulously and assembled almost five crystal bombs in a row.

But of course, since Huangpu Shiyi hadn't given him enough materials, the power of the crystal bombs was not very impressive.

Half an hour later, yelling and screaming suddenly occurred outside of the cabin door. After an earsplitting explosion, more than half of the cabin was filled in smoke. A shocking giant hole appeared on the cabin door, through which an Exo in a lead grey crystal suit that was covered in cracks and blood crept in.

There was a sigil of a bear head on the chest of the Exo's crystal suit. The bear, whose mouth was full of tusks, was biting a blood-stained battle saber.

It was the emblem of Furious Bears Union, one of the six major sects of Heavenly Saints City!

"Master Li Yao!"

The severely-injured Exo jumped to Li Yao and said anxiously, "We are from the Furious Bear Exo Society, the armed forces directly under the command of Furious Bear Union! My name is Hu Guohao. We are here to save you and Huangpu Xiaoya. Let's go!"

Dazzling brilliance suddenly blinked in Li Yao's eyes. He said with the utmost surprise, "You've discovered that Huangpu Xiaoya and I went missing so fast? Did you find the alarm magical equipment that I hid in my room? Was it not damaged by the explosions?"

Hu Guohao was dazed for a moment, but he quickly nodded. "The magical equipment was indeed impaired by the explosions. But the experts of the six major sects fixed it up and learned that you were captured! Let's talk more about that later. We are in an urgent situation. Our men cannot hold on for long. Let's go now!"

Li Yao's eyes flickered, and he said hesitantly, "It's a pity that I cannot make up my mind to leave at present. Let me think for a while."

Hu Guohao was stomping the ground in anxiety. "The situation is too urgent for you to consider anything now. You have to go!"

Li Yao's eyes suddenly turned cold. He shouted, "I hate threats more than anything else. What can you do if I don't want to go?"

Hu Guohao yelled and cursed, his crystal suit shaking violently. He pointed at Li Yao's nose. "Master Huangpu was right. You have indeed defected. You are a filthy, craven traitor!"

Li Yao scorned, "Everybody fights for what is best for themselves. I've never said that I would be loyal to Cultivators. What's this talk of defection all about?"

Hu Guohao was more than infuriated. "It's everyone's duty to eliminate the traitors at the first chance. Now that you've chosen the devil's path, just go to hell!"

He waved his right hand. Three sharp flash talons appeared at the front end of his arm; he bellowed and swept at Li Yao brutally!

With the enhancement of his crystal suit, the strike was indeed earthshaking!

Li Yao's Eight Arm Suit had been partly lost the first day he got on board. Besides, he would need another several seconds to summon what remained of it. The time was not enough at all.

Li Yao waved his two hands and threw the five crystal bombs on the platform at Hu Guohao, as he suddenly bent and hid himself below the platform.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Hu Guohao was immediately covered in clusters of orange brightness!

It was a shame that the crystal bombs were not powerful enough. Protected by his crystal suit, Hu Guohao suffered absolutely no damage from them except a moment of dizziness after he took a few steps back.

Taking advantage of his enemy's brief halt, Li Yao leapt out of the platform and rushed toward the cabin door as fast as he could.

Hu Guohao was back to himself very shortly. He shouted, "Traitor, where are you going?"

Colorful exhaust flames burst out of the power rune arrays on the back of his crystal suit. He accelerated to the maximum speed and kicked Li Yao in his back brutally.

Li Yao screamed and, vomiting blood, was kicked into a corner like a kite whose string had been cut off.

Hu Guohao seized the opportunity to move forward. The electric currents on his flash claw were brought to the limits. Dazzling electric arcs were spluttering on it as he aimed the claw at Li Yao's chest and stabbed it!

Li Yao's face was pale. His hands dangled down helplessly. There was the deepest fear in his eyes, as if he could do nothing except wait to be killed.

Two things happened simultaneously in the next half a second!

At first, a black shadow dashed into the broken cabin door and launched a flying sword at Hu Guohao. The flying sword hit Hu Guohao's flash claw precisely and deviated it from its trajectory!

Then, Li Yao, with the strength from nobody knew where, suddenly jerked to the left, only to unfortunately barge in the path of the flying sword.

The flying sword wreathed in crimson flames pierced into his left abdomen and left a terrifying wound there that almost reached his heart!

Li Yao's face was twisted by the pain. He had lost the strength to scream and collapsed to the ground.

The black shadow came to a halt. It was a pure black crystal suit.

The owner of the black crystal suit seemed to be as shocked as Hu Guohao. They were dazed for more than half a second before they began fighting.

However, neither of them seemed to be interested in the battle. After several seconds of fighting, Hu Guohao turned around and ran away, roaring, "Traitor, justice will come soon!"

The black shadow didn't pursue Hu Guohao. He jumped at Li Yao and shouted, "Master Li Yao!"

In a surveillance room not far away, Huangpu Shiyi and Su Jiuzhen both rose up and cried, "Not good! Hurry! Send him to the med bay! Give him the best treatment and the best medicine!

"He is the best disciple candidate that I have finally come across after so many years! Now that he has passed the test, his loyalty is unquestionable now. He cannot die just like that. He cannot!"

Seeing that Li Yao's abdomen had been torn open and he was cramping with blood flooding out, Huangpu Shiyi felt that his heart was aching.

It was not Li Yao himself that he felt sorry for. The greatest pity was that there were many tricks and techniques of refining inside Li Yao's brain that had yet to be dug out. It would be wasteful if he died just like that!

Cold sweat appeared on Su Jiuzhen's forehead, too, as he gnashed his teeth. "Who knew that he would jump up?

"But it's actually not bad. If his performance is only as good as this at the life-and-death moment, it is evident enough that he is really planning to join the Temple of Immortals, and his combat ability is truly at the beginning level of the Building Foundation Stage!"

Chapter 514: Malicious Li Yao

Chapter 514: Malicious Li Yao

Su Jiuzhen cast his eyes to a light beam nearby, which displayed the picture of a shallow cabin.

Inside the picture, Hu Guohao, who had been 'rescuing' Li Yao a moment ago, was standing beside another two Exos wearing crystal suits of the same model. Several other workers were next to them.

"Duan Hu, Duan Xiong, Duan Bao, take off your crystal suits and send them for examination. The standard crystal suits of the Furious Bears Union are not easy to find. We won't get replacements if they are damaged. Take a rest after that. You've completed your mission. Job well done.

"Duan Hu, don't let what happened just now bother you. It was because of an ill-considered plan. If something happens to Li Yao, I will take full responsibility for that. Your performance of the task was flawless."

His words moved Duan Hu, who had pretended to be 'Hu Guohao' a moment ago. The guy shook in excitement and bowed. "Understood, Master Su!"

"Shua!"

The other two Immortal Cultivators had already taken off their crystal suits and handed them over to the workers nearby.

Right then, Duan Hu triggered his telepathic thoughts, too. Gold lines surged out of the crystal suit and gradually dissected it.

At present, none of the six workers and three Exos inside the cabin were protected by crystal suits. Their alarm was at the lowest point…

Duan Hu's crystal suit was about to be taken off, when a piece of magical equipment no larger than a finger suddenly blinked in weird greenness on an inconspicuous spot below two tubes of the crystal reactor!

Huangpu Shiyi was suddenly greatly alarmed, as if thousands of needles were pricking his heart. He quivered and jumped up, while he screamed desperately, "Put on your crystal suit! Now!"

"What?"

Inside the picture, the workers were somewhat slow in reacting. But the faces of the three well-trained Exos all blanched, knowing that there must be a good reason for Huangpu Shiyi's anxiety. They summoned their crystal suits immediately!

However, it would still take the fastest of them 1.1 seconds to finish the implementation of the whole crystal suit.

After the greenness blinked for 0.3 seconds, a narrow line of flames burst out of the magical equipment and penetrated through the crystal reactor of Duan Hu's crystal suit!

The magical equipment was not powerful per se, but it was irritating and unsteady. It unleashed all the spiritual energy inside the crystal reactor and triggered a serial explosion!

BOOM! BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM!

In the Heaven's Origin Sector, the explosion of a super-compressed crystal reactor had once ruined the entire Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution.

Although the biggest reason for the accident was that the warehouse full of crystals was ignited by the explosion, the power of a crystal reactor's explosion was definitely not something to underestimate.

Inside a starship, the explosion of a crystal reactor was more than enough to destroy several cabins!

For a moment, the starship seemed to have hit an invisible iceberg in the sea of stars. The ground was shaking, black smoke was popping up, and flames were dancing everywhere. In the center of the fire, countless Immortal Cultivators were screaming and crying!

The light beam immediately fell into darkness.

Huangpu Shiyi and Su Jiuzhen were both dumbfounded. They looked at each other in bewilderment for more than one minute. Their faces were even paler than those of a zombie, and they didn't know what to say at all.

…

Half an hour later, standing outside the med bay, Huangpu Shiyi and Su Jiuzhen stared at Li Yao gloomily.

They could see that Li Yao was soaked in bright green medication drugs comfortably as if he were taking a hot bath. The guy couldn't be more contented.

"The damage is very serious. Four were killed, including all the Duan triplets. Seven were too badly injured to fight again in the future. Five were crippled, with severe shock to their internal organs and brain. Their capability will be greatly compromised even if they recover from the wounds. Six of them were relatively better, but it will still take them at least two weeks before their combat ability is fully recovered.

"As for the damage to the starship, you should know it better than me as a refiner. I won't waste my time talking about that.

"This… This is truly—"

Su Jiuzhen seemed hoarier than usual. His white hair was all standing up, revealing his bare skin on the top of his head.

Huangpu Shiyi's face was grave, too.

However, he was the refiner on the starship. Most of the people killed or injured were under the command of Su Jiuzhen and not directly affiliated to him. Therefore, he was not as irked as him.

Thinking for a moment, he asked, "How are Li Yao's wounds?"

Holding back his anger, Su Jiuzhen replied, "The guy is indeed unbelievably lucky. The wound he suffered from the sword seemed to be shocking enough, but it actually never reached any of his internal organs. His flesh was torn open, and one of his ribs was broken. That's all. He will be fully recovered after staying inside the med bay for half a day!"

Huangpu Shiyi was surprised. He asked, "Is there any possibility that he feigned his wound to win our trust?"

Su Jiuzhen shook his head. "I've considered such a possibility. But based on what has happened, I would say that it's very unlikely.

"Although his wounds are not serious, they are indeed close to his main organs. If he hit the sword on purpose, he would have to boast precise control over his every muscle, his every artery, and even the small-scale movements of his internal organs.

"Otherwise, the flying sword would have penetrated into his heart if he had been unlucky. He might've survived if the med team got there in time, but an artificial heart would cause a great loss to his capability. The price would've been too great to pay!

"Besides, although his critical parts were not hurt, he has still shed a lot of blood, and the outer injury was bad, too. His combat ability must've hit rock bottom at that time. How would someone place themselves in such a dangerous situation if they had other plans?

"By my analysis, there is only one type of person who could fake such wounds on purpose and maintain more than 90% of their combat ability after the accident."

Huangpu Shiyi asked, "What kind of person is that?"

Su Jiuzhen replied, "Those who reject magical equipment and weapons and build up their bodies to strike the genetic chain in order to unleash the primordial force—the body practitioners!"

Huangpu Shiyi was dazed for a moment. He took a long breath in relief.

Li Yao was a crazy refiner, a lunatic bomber, and a specialist of saber refining. There was no way that he was a body practitioner who hated magical equipment most.

It was obvious and self-explanatory.

Pondering for a moment, he said, "I'm going to ask what that was all about. But the bottom line is, he didn't know that Duan Hu was one of us. Everything is a misunderstanding."

"I, of course, know that it is a misunderstanding, and that he has proved himself determined enough to join us. Otherwise, I would've stabbed the guy's heart long ago!" Su Jiuzhen was seething with anger, yet he couldn't find anybody to vent it on.

He had pinched himself multiple times, because he couldn't figure out how a thoroughly-planned test ended up like this.

Even if the starships of Furious Bears Union had really caught up with them and had a big fight them with them, the damage couldn't have been more than this.

Huangpu Shiyi took a deep breath and walked into the med bay with a smile.

When Li Yao saw him come in, his pale face that was apparently a result of the massive loss of blood was beaming with agitation. He struggled and sneered, "Isn't the Temple of Immortals an awesome organization? You seemed to have everything under your control, but how did all the Cultivators sneak in? Is that how you usually protect people? The guy said, before he left, that he wouldn't let go of me because I was a 'traitor'! What am I going to do in the future? I don't want to live in darkness and hide on Spider Den for the rest of my life!"

"Calm down. The accident was partly on you, too. Why did you leave a piece of alarm magical equipment in your room?" Huangpu Shiyi frowned.

Li Yao sniffed heavily, but he was less elaborate and murmured, "At that time, I didn't know what was coming for me at all. Isn't it normal to leave a piece of alarm magical equipment in case anything goes wrong?

"Right."

Li Yao's eyeballs rolled fast, while he asked earnestly, "After I reached the med bay, I seemed to have heard an earsplitting explosion. The entire starship seemed like it was falling apart. What happened? Were the Cultivators defeated? How about Huangpu Xiaoya?"

"Ke, Ke Ke Ke Ke!"

Huangpu Shiyi coughed uncontrollably. He managed to reply, "Huangpu Xiaoya is still under our control. The Cultivators have been driven away. But before they left, the main gun of their starship bombarded us for one last time. Our starship was somewhat affected by the attack. But it's… not a problem. Yes. Not a problem.

"In another few days, we will meet with Fengyu Zhong. By then, everything will be back on track. There won't be any accidents again!"

Now that Li Yao had proved himself loyal to the Temple of Immortals, Huangpu Shiyi did not mind sharing some confidential information with his 'future disciple' in order to leave a good impression on him. That way, he might be able to squeeze more secret arts of refining out of him.

Li Yao was apparently relieved and cursed, "These bastards ran fast enough!"

While he was talking, he touched the wound on his abdomen, which was healing quickly. He narrowed his eyes and grinned hideously. "The scumbags were indeed brutal enough. I almost kicked the bucket because of them!

"However, they won't be any better than myself right now. Before the Cultivator retreated, I gave him a little something. Hahahaha. I'm pretty sure that they are going to love it!"

Huangpu Shiyi couldn't help but quiver. He asked, "What—what did you give him?"

Li Yao laughed evilly and replied, "Over the past few days, based on the techniques that you taught me and my own experience in crystal bomb refining, I have finally devised a new model of anti-crystal-suit bomb that I have named 'Crystal Suit Killer'!

"Crystal Suit Killer has three distinguished characteristics.

"Firstly, it is extremely small, light, and unobtrusive!

"I developed a deeper understanding about the engravement of tiny rune arrays through my experience of carving a chip with my bare hands in the Skyhill Sword Seminar. The size of many attack and explosion rune arrays can be reduced to one third of their usual size now. Based on that, the crystal bombs that I refine are one third the size of bombs of the same type or even smaller!

"Secondly, since the bombs are small, there is bound to be less gunpowder. But it doesn't matter. I'll simply install

Crystal Suit Killer to the back of the enemy's crystal suit where the crystal reactor is located!

"Once triggered, all the power of Crystal Suit Killer will be condensed into a line of spiritual energy and pierce through the enemy's crystal reactor!

"More exactly, Crystal Suit Killer is in fact just a 'catalyst', whose sole effect is to transform the crystal reactor on the enemy's crystal suit into a real bomb! I believe you understand the nastiness of the explosion of a crystal reactor as clearly as I do."

Li Yao was smiling scarily. "Thirdly, and also the point that I'm most proud of, the trigger system!

"Crystal Suit Killer is not triggered by a countdown, nor by remote telepathic thoughts, but by a condition.

"The triggering condition for Crystal Suit Killer is when around 50% of the crystal suit has been taken off.

"You see, if the enemy is in a crystal suit, most of the explosion will be resisted by the crystal suit. There will be little real damage.

"But if they are not in their crystal suits, they will naturally be much more fragile.

"The billion-dollar question is, when will an Exo take off their crystal suit?

"They will only take off their crystal suit when they feel secure and most relaxed!

"It is possible that many of their companions, refiners, and mechanics will be with them in such scenarios, and they will be equally unalert themselves!

"If an explosion takes place right then, hahahaha, how many of them do you think can put on their crystal suit or summon their spiritual shield in time?"

Li Yao suddenly rose up from the medication drugs. Clutching the edge of the capsule he was in, he craned his head and sent his wet face right in front of Huangpu Shiyi's head. His eyes were as sharp as knives, penetrating deep into Huangpu Shiyi's head, as he said, one word after another, "Revenge is a dish best served cold, and I, Li Yao, happen to be a man with an excellent memory!

"Whoever, or whatever, decides to be my enemy must be ready to pay a good price!

"I wonder, is the guy named Hu Guohao going to take off his crystal suit when he is back on Furious Bears Union's starship surrounded by his senior brothers and junior brothers?

"I get really excited whenever I think about what will become of them! Haha, hahahaha!"

Chapter 515: Natural-born Immortal Cultivator!

Chapter 515: Natural-born Immortal Cultivator!

Huangpu Shiyi's face was pale. Li Yao's laughter seemed to be punching him right his chest, and he felt that he was having a heart attack. Moaning for a moment, he asked, "How did you plant the bomb on the back of the enemy's crystal suit?"

Li Yao answered delightedly, "Did you forget? I threw the crystal bombs on the platform at the enemy in the beginning. Then I snuck below the platform and ran to the front.

"It appeared that I was in too much of a hurry to find a way out. But in fact, I'd dashed to the back of the enemy when the other bombs exploded.

"The small training room was filled with smoke and dust at that time. His vision was limited.

"Was it really difficult for me to pin such a small crystal bomb to the back of his crystal suit with my hands that can reach subsonic speed casually?

"Huh. Huangpu Shiyi, why does your face look so awful? Somebody seemed to have slapped you in the face! What, were you ambushed and wounded by the Cultivators?

"You'd better not die! There are many other things that I'm hoping to learn from you!"

Huangpu Shiyi took quite a few long breaths to recover his face color. Then he gnashed his teeth and said, "I—I am fine. I was merely feeling dizzy due to the previous explosion."

"That's good. That's good. After all, I wouldn't have successfully devised and created Crystal Suit Killer without your tutelage. If some Cultivators are indeed blown to pieces, you should be credited for our accomplishment. Greatly credited!" said Li Yao solemnly.

Huangpu Shiyi felt like vomiting blood. He held his chest and said, difficultly, "As—as long as you are sincere about becoming my disciple, everything—everything is alright."

Li Yao grinned. "Let's talk about that later. Since the Cultivators considered me a traitor and want me killed so much, then as their wish, I will embark on the path to immortality and become an Immortal Cultivator!"

Huangpu Shiyi had been looking forward to Li Yao's renouncement for a long time, but he was not expecting to hear it in such an awkward situation. Pausing for a moment, he replied, "Take a good rest now. When you recover, we might need you for the maintenance work of the starship."

"Is that so?"

Brilliance blinked in Li Yao's eyes, as he nodded quickly. "That's not a problem. Repairing a starship—is my thing!"

…

Leaving the med bay Li Yao was in, Huangpu Shiyi and Su Jiuzhen went to another med bay that was larger in size on the second floor of the starship.

Compared to the cleanness and tranquility of Li Yao's room, this med bay was truly a living hell.

The entire med bay reeked of burnt flesh and blood, which could not be entirely driven away no matter how much the ventilation system worked. The screams of countless Immortal Cultivators consolidated into gloomy clouds that enshrouded them.

Many broken, burnt bodies, whose arms or legs were gone, were in fact still alive because of the tough vitality of the Immortal Cultivators. They were floating inside the medication drugs as if they were chopped meat. Faint breaths could be heard occasionally. It was truly a blood-freezing scene.

Resolute and iron-willed as Su Jiuzhen and Huangpu Shiyi were, they couldn't help but sigh when they saw such tragedies.

"Master Su. This is horrible. Too horrible!" Black Stone and White Dew exclaimed in grief and anger.

They were the captain and deputy captain of the assault team on the starship. The Exos killed in the explosion were mostly their subordinates.

The two of them had not been in the zone of the explosion and therefore had not been affected by it. But they were still more than infuriated seeing that their loyal subordinates whom they had carefully trained for a long time were now disabled or even dropped dead!

White Dew, the dark, long-necked, woman, shouted shrilly, "I'll just leave everybody else alone. The three brothers of the Duan family were triplets whose minds were connected.

They had been trained in Black Spider Tower since they were young!

"Although they were merely in the beginning level of the Building Foundation Stage, they had taken care of a lot of high-level Building Foundation Stage Cultivators with the assassination skills that they were adept at and the seamless cooperation that was based on their bloodline bond.

"Moreover, they were all showing signs of advancement lately. If they could have advanced into the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage; they could even have been assigned to deal with Cultivators in the beginning level of the Core Formation Stage after a few years of training!

"Such triples are indeed rarely-seen! If they had been killed in a real battlefield, so be it. But now, they've been killed absurdly! More than ten years of effort has been wasted. All wasted!"

"Oh?"

Su Jiuzhen replied peacefully, "Are you insinuating that it was wrong of me to have arranged the test?"

White Dew quivered and immediately stopped. Her body was shaking like a sieve, and she dared not say another word.

Su Jiuzhen scoffed and said, "The Duan triplets were indeed useful and hard to come by. But are they really more precious than Li Yao?

"You've all seen that Li Yao is cruel and cunning without any moral standard. He does not care about the righteous path of Cultivation that other Cultivators deem most important, and he simply asks what benefits he can get from joining us.

"Besides, there was not the slightest hesitation when he assaulted Huangpu Xiaoya. Attacking a woman seemed as natural as breathing air for him!

"A guy of no restrictions with profound skills in refining who has crafted such an excellent piece of magical equipment like 'Crystal Suit Killer'!

"He was born to be an Immortal Cultivator, one that only appears once in a hundred years! He is the Immortal Cultivator of Immortal Cultivators!

"Let's me give you a few reminders.

"I don't care if some of you are discontented today and go looking for trouble with him.

"However, you'd better bear in mind that, for a guy like Li Yao, with his expertise and his personality, his position in our organization will definitely shoot up quickly.

"He is definitely not the most lenient man in the world. In fact, he was petty enough to set up a bomb hoping to blow up his enemy and his enemy's companions just because the guy slashed him!

"If you are determined to piss off such a merciless man, just follow your heart! I will not stand in your way if you want to kill yourself!"

His words rendered everybody speechless. A cold wind seemed to be sweeping inside the med bay. Even the moaning and screaming injured Immortal Cultivators lowered their voices subconsciously.

"Li Yao…"

Everybody was reciting the upsetting name. They shivered as if they were tied up by a viper.

…

Half a day later, Li Yao was fully recovered. He was immediately asked to fix the starship.

According to Huangpu Shiyi, the starship had been seriously damaged by Furious Bears Union in the battle yesterday. A lot of refiners had been killed, too.

Li Yao didn't ask any further. He did what he was asked to dutifully without any complaints.

Now that he had gained the trust of Huangpu Shiyi, he was granted with part of the permissions to the crystal processor of the starship, which allowed him to browse and download its structural designs.

After analyzing the structural designs carefully, he discovered that the starship was actually an 'Ox-level' middle-sized carrier. This model of carrier was simple-structured and sturdy and often used for transportation of tremendous goods. It was one of the most commonly-seen business starships of the Flying Star Sector.

Although it had been upgraded with some firearms, they were all regular modifications. Most Cultivation sects often upgraded their starships in similar ways. There was nothing special about this particular starship.

It was exactly as he had speculated.

Li Yao estimated that, as an underground organization, the Temple of Immortals must've considered intelligence collection as one of its top priorities. If so, the majority of their starships were very likely to be such carriers, which wouldn't even raise an eyebrow, unlike armed starships.

It was even possible that this carrier had once been registered to a Cultivation sect before. It would be under the Cultivation's name. Even if it were stopped at certain checkpoints in the sea of stars and searched on the Spiritual Nexus, nobody would be able to find anything wrong about it.

Such a starship had entered the Skyhill Domain in broad daylight because it was completely legal.

If it were a warship that had been armed to teeth, everybody would have noticed it coming distances away.

'Stormy Sword', the manual of robbery for space pirates written by Fengyu Zhong, was stored inside Li Yao's brain. It had detailed descriptions on how to sabotage various kinds of starships.

'Ox-level' carriers, as one of the most popular business starships, were of course taken special care of by Fengyu Zhong.

There were more than a hundred methods recorded in 'Stormy Sword' that could dismantle the 'ox' into several parts like a butcher.

Other than the structural design of the starship, Li Yao had also received part of the simplified information about the space zone they were in and the cruising status of the next few days.

The information was necessary.

Refiners had to foresee what was coming in the future in order to perform the necessary strengthening procedures.

For example, if the starship was passing through a stone belt of the fire class, the refiners would have to cover the shell of the starship with patches of anti-heat rune arrays.

If they were going through a stone belt of the ice class, the refiners would have to do it the other way around.

Before Huangpu Shiyi and Su Jiuzhen set off, they had thought that it would be a simple task to capture two refiners.

Therefore, they had picked a middle-sized carrier and did not bring too many battle-type Immortal Cultivators along.

As for refiners, since there was already a super expert named Huangpu Shiyi, it would be highly redundant to bring too many of them!

As it turned out, quite a few refiners were involved in the gory explosion. Unlike the battle-type Immortal Cultivators who summoned spiritual shields in time, they were mostly killed on the spot. Those who had survived had suffered heavy wounds.

Therefore, Li Yao became the most proficient refiner aboard, other than Huangpu Shiyi. Besides, everybody knew that he was partly in charge of the maintenance of the Great Horn Exo Society's starship and therefore must have a lot of experience.

At this critical moment, who else was more fit for the job other than him?

Two days passed. Rumor had it that they would be meeting Fengyu Zhong's fleet soon.

As time went by, Li Yao's plan gradually took shape.

However, a new situation disrupted his scheme again.

Inside the med bay, Huangpu Xiaoya was locked by a barrier and couldn't move at all. She could only glare at Li Yao with her eyes from which lightning was bursting out.

Black Stone and White Dew were standing behind her. They were emotionless, but their eyes were somewhat weird.

Huangpu Shiyi was standing nearby, smiling. He lifted Huangpu Xiaoya's hands with a metal manacle and fixed them up. Then he said to Li Yao, "Come and help me chop off this pair of hands!"

Chapter 516: Chopping Hands

Chapter 516: Chopping Hands

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and carefully observed Huangpu Xiaoya's hands. He remembered how the pair of hands was wreathed in dazzling lightning in the Skyhill Sword Seminar.

Huangpu Xiaoya tried to spit in his face, but she was unable to move at all. She could only gnash her teeth. "Bastard!"

Li Yao asked peacefully, "Why?"

Huangpu Shiyi replied, emotionlessly, "I paid this trip to the Skyhill Domain in the sincere hope that the best of the younger generation of the Huangpu family could set foot on the path of immortality and be an Immortal Cultivator.

"But after I spent all the time and efforts talking sense into her, she still refused to wake up. Last time, when the Furious Bears Union broke into the starship, she was even trying to run away!

"Ah. She's been on the wrong path for too long to turn back now. It is not going to help anyone if we keep her alive. So, just melt her without leaving a trace like those ants and let her be doomed for all eternity!

"However, before that, her hands could be recycled."

While talking, Huangpu Shiyi extended his hands that were as withered as dry wood. "My hands were destroyed because of crazy training. For dozens of years, I've been looking for methods to treat them, but the best thing I can do right now is recover them briefly and occasionally.

"The doctors in the Temple of Immortals told me that, since my hands have been withered for so many years, the veins, nerves, and cells in them have lost all vitality. If it were an ordinary person, they would've been beyond repair. It is because of the sturdiness of Immortal Cultivators that vitality is transferred from my other body parts to my hands. That is why my hands are still functional, however terribly.

"My hands are already dead, and no medicine is going to bring them back to life. The only possible solution is to transplant a new pair of hands.

"If I were a battle-type Immortal Cultivator, it would not be bad for me to switch to a pair of artificial hands that were embedded with all kinds of magical equipment.

"However, since I am a refiner, the perception of my hands is of paramount importance to me. I cannot use artificial hands.

"The doctor then told me that I can transplant a pair of hands whose owner shared the same blood as mine. He also taught me the secret art of the transplantation in great detail.

"If Huangpu Xiaoya had been smart enough to retreat from the wrong path and be an Immortal Cultivator, I couldn't bear to do that now. However, it's not my fault that she is so obstinate. She is going to be executed anyway. I might as well chop off her hands and replace mine with them. That way I can study the more mysterious and complicated magical equipment!

"This is a great opportunity for her, too. Although her body is going to perish, her hands are going to live with me forever and witness the birth of so much powerful magical equipment. Hahahaha!

"Li Yao, your hands are fast, and you have a deep understanding about precise magical equipment. I believe that the capillary vessels and muscle fibers are not going to trouble you. You don't have to be very precise. All you need to do is chop off the forearms roughly from the elbow at your highest speed. The medication magical equipment will take care of the rest.

"Come on!"

Huangpu Shiyi waved his hands. Black Stone, the fair fatty, immediately presented a tray on which more than ten scalpels in different sizes were shining coldly.

"So, that's the reason you summoned me," Li Yao said casually.

He extended his right hand to the tray. Four scalpels instantly disappeared, only to turn into four streaks of silver brightness and dash among his fingers like silver dragons.

Black Stone was amazed. He smiled and said, "I didn't know that Master Li Yao was good at using sabers besides your expertise at refining them. Although not as good as White Dew and I, you are quite skilled for a refiner. I believe that you will chop off the arms flawlessly."

Huangpu Xiaoya struggled and screamed hard.

She was not scared of death. But it was the natural instinct of any refiner to protect their hands. Chopping of her hands was even more miserable than killing her directly.

Moreover…

Huangpu Xiaoya felt sick when she thought that her hands would end up in Huangpu Shiyi's body and help the devil refine magical equipment that could potentially slaughter countless ordinary people. Her mouth was sour and bitter, and she was about to throw up!

"Bastards. You are all bastards," she mumbled to herself. Helpless tears dripped down her face.

Li Yao didn't move. But the scalpels were dancing in his hands faster and faster. He seemed to be hesitating.

"Huh?"

Huangpu Shiyi's gaze gradually turned sharp. "You cannot make up your mind to do that? I am her blood uncle, and I have slashed off the mortal relationship in pursuit of immortality. She is only a stranger to you, and you are hesitating to do what I told you? It does not befit your personality in the past few days, Li Yao!"

Black Stone and White Dew moved forward, one from left and one from right, and surrounded him silently; they grew somewhat suspicious about him again.

"Shua!"

The four scalpels in Li Yao's hands came to a sudden halt, as he grinned and admitted frankly, "Truth be told, I'm indeed hesitating to chop off her hands, because Huangpu Xiaoya offered me a bottle of the secret nourishment liquids of the Huangpu family without me asking after my battle against Mo Tianshui. It was more or less a favor to me. If I chop off her hands just like that, where will my conscience be?"

"Oh?"

His hands gesturing in his back, Huangpu Shiyi took a step forward, ready to launch his aggressive magical equipment. He smiled. "Then what should we do with your conscience?"

Li Yao chuckled and said, "If I chop off her hands, my conscience will be hurt. Do you think you should at least pay me some 'medical fee'?"

"Huh?"

Huangpu Shiyi was dazed. "What—what do you mean?"

Li Yao licked his lips greedily and opened his right hand. He explained, "It's simple. Compensation for the twinge of my conscience! I don't want gold or treasure. But you haven't told me the fastest ways to calculate the optimal solution to 'seven-star dilemma' yet. Consider the methods as the compensation for my injury!"

Huangpu Shiyi was stunned, and so were Black Stone and White Dew. The three of them looked at each other in bewilderment and failed to respond.

Li Yao continued quickly. "What about it? If you give me the calculation methods right now, I'll immediately heave the blades and chop off her hands. I guarantee that it will be so fast that blood will not flow out of her limbs until five seconds later. There will be enough time for your following procedures!"

Huangpu Shiyi was utterly dumbfounded, not knowing what to say or do.

Black Stone and White Dew took a step back at the same time with disgust in their eyes.

Even for Immortal Cultivators, Li Yao's shamelessness still far exceeded their expectations.

Huangpu Xiaoya shouted, "Li Yao, how sordid and brazen you are! I must've lost my mind to offer nourishment liquids to such a scumbag like you! You are definitely the most shameless person I've ever met! You will die miserably one day!"

Li Yao was not affected. The fingers on his left hand were dancing as he said, "How about it? If you are unwilling to give them to me, you can chop them off yourself!"

Huangpu Shiyi was still unsure about whether or not Li Yao meant what he said. He rolled his eyes and said, "Alright. I'll give you two of the fastest algorithms to calculate the optimal solution to 'seven-star dilemma'. You can chop off her hands after that!"

He turned on a light beam and tapped on it for a while. Then he extended his wrist-worn crystal processor to Li Yao's and tapped on it. Two complicated formulas were immediately transmitted over.

Li Yao opened a light beam and read at ease.

Huangpu Shiyi glared at him and said in dissatisfaction, "I've given you the calculation methods. Why are you still dawdling?"

Li Yao replied, "Of course, I'm examining them for myself. What if I find out that you've given me false methods after I chop off her hands? It's not like I can connect her hands back to her arms."

While he was talking, he even closed his eyes, while he murmured something to himself. His fingers bouncing randomly, he brought his computational ability to maximum in front of everyone!

Three minutes later, when he opened his eyes again, there was a confident brilliance in his eyes.

"They are real."

"Of course they are real. Just chop off the hands already!"

"Alright, I'm doing it now. New, vigorous hands, guaranteed before tonight."

Li Yao grinned hideously. The four scalpels turned into four streaks of silver brightness again and tied his arms. He strode to Huangpu Xiaoya, before he observed her elbow with sharp eyes, as if he was pondering the best point of cutting.

Blood seemed to be spurting out of Huangpu Xiaoya's eyes. She yelled, "Li Yao, I will come back to you after I die!"

Li Yao smiled casually. "Don't blame me. I've received a decent sum of compensation for my conscience. Besides, I want Huangpu Shiyi to have a pair of new hands, too, because—"

Li Yao suddenly stopped. There was a weird expression on his face. He turned around and asked, "Did the doctor tell you how much time it will take for you to return to your original capability or get even better after you transplant a pair of new hands?"

Huangpu Shiyi replied, "Since she is of the same bloodline as me, my body will not reject her hands. In less than three days, my body and the new hands will be joined perfectly, and 70% of my capability will be restored. In ten days, I will be fully recovered. After one month, I will be able to march toward a higher level!"

Li Yao frowned and withdrew the scalpel. He asked again, "Then what about one day? How much can you recover within one day?"

Huangpu Shiyi answered, "Probably 30% to 50%. What about it?"

Li Yao said, "If so, can you transplant the new hands tomorrow? We won't meet Fengyu Zhong until two days later anyway."

Huangpu Shiyi squinted. There was killing intent in his eyes, as he asked, "Why?"

"Because—"

Flames of frenzy were burning on Li Yao's face, as he slowly continued, one word after another. "Tomorrow, I want to challenge you, Huangpu Shiyi, the Sword Master of the Skyhill Sword Seminar thirty years ago and the allegedly strongest heir of the noble families of refining!"

"What? You want to challenge me? Do you know what level you are in and where I am at? How arrogant of you!" Huangpu Shiyi was laughing in disbelief.

"Other people might think that I am too arrogant, but I believe that you must understand me, because you challenged the leader of the Mo family in the Skyhill Sword Seminar thirty years ago just like me today!

"At that time, the gap between you and the leader of the Mo family must've been greater than that between me and you, was it not?

"Besides—"

Li Yao smiled and said slowly, "I'm very curious how formidable my master is when he is doing his best!"

Huangpu Shiyi's pupils suddenly widened. "You finally agree to be my disciple now?"

Li Yao sneered, "If you utterly crush me, and I see the magnificent arts of refining in you, I am, of course, willing to be your disciple.

"However, if I defeat you tomorrow by luck, it's going to be the other way around. You can kneel down and call me your master!"

Chapter 517: Sword Seminar in Space

Chapter 517: Sword Seminar in Space

Huangpu Shiyi was hooked by Li Yao's words. When he was young, he had been as arrogant and flamboyant as Li Yao. He had only learned to be more or less prudent after the suffering caused by his hands being destroyed and the vicissitudes of his life that followed.

But deep in his bones, he was definitely still a proud man!

Furious flames were surging in Huangpu Shiyi's eyes, as he remarked, "For so many days, I've never revealed my real capability to you. It was wrong of me to trigger your thought of challenging me! You want me to call you master? Good boy. I like your self-confidence. But I don't know whether or not you are capable enough for that!"

Li Yao rolled his eyes and said, "About me being your master, that's just an idea. How about this. You and I will bring out ten techniques respectively tomorrow, and we will compete with them as stakes!"

Huangpu Shiyi narrowed his eyes, "Stakes?"

Li Yao licked his lips and said, "Yes. I know you never taught me the real essence of crystal bomb crafting. Also, as the most distinguished person in the Huangpu family thirty years ago, you must have many personal understandings about the refinement of melee magical equipment! You will pick ten techniques from those two fields and save them in a jade chip.

"Of course, I will bring out ten of my techniques and save them in the jade chip, too. Tomorrow, we will hand over the two jade chips to someone else, say, Black Stone or White Dew, as the stakes for our competition!

"Don't look at me as if I am taking advantage of you.

"We are both clear that, although you seem to have been teaching me over these days, we are, in fact, exchanging our techniques. The techniques that you have gotten from me are more valuable!

"But I don't care. Do you know why? Because there are more advanced techniques in my brain than I can count!

"You should know that I was born in the remote area of the sea of stars, and I was taught by a strange master. Also, I experienced some other fortuitous incidents and received the heritage of a lot of other techniques, too.

"It's a shame that, when I was seventeen, I was engaged in a fight for a half tin of fresh air. I lost control and killed the five persons of the family. After the old fart discovered this, he immediately made up his mind to kill me without offering me a chance of explanation. Hehe. Thankfully, I'd been long prepared for that. By the martial arts that I practiced secretly, I slayed the old fart in a counterattack!

"However, without the help from the old fart, I was not able to comprehend the too sophisticated techniques with my wisdom and could only learn them by heart.

"Damn. If I had seen that coming, I wouldn't have killed the old fart so easily. I would've definitely minced him into pieces and sprayed his ashes in the air!"

Li Yao gnashed his teeth with a twisted face.

Huangpu Shiyi sniffed to himself as he listened to Li Yao. If you killed someone on the spot in a fight, it might be because you lost control. But you killed the entire family? That was totally intended murder! You are indeed cruel. No wonder the legendary strange master tried to eliminate him. He must've seen through the boy's personality!

However, the strange master must've been a pure refiner. He was no match for Li Yao, only relying on the aggressive magical equipment he had. As a result, he was the one who got killed!

As for Li Yao, without the enlightenment of a tutor, of course, he found it hard to study the more advanced techniques. He must've participated in the Skyhill Sword Seminar in order to gain fame and attract more attention so that someone else would be willing to give him a hand and help him crack the techniques.

At this moment, the question that had been baffling Huangpu Shiyi was finally solved. He realized that Li Yao had only provided so many techniques generously because there were even advanced techniques inside his brain that the guy couldn't grasp by himself and had to study together with another expert.

Wasn't Huangpu Shiyi a super expert himself?

Huangpu Shiyi gulped. His face beamed with delight as he said, "What techniques do you have?"

Li Yao pondered for a moment and replied, "There are three ancient formulas to calculate the Daoist Mammoth

Algorithm. They are all at least one third faster than the popular methods nowadays. But the three formulas are all broken; I cannot finish all the calculations by myself.

"There's another technique that could transform the Green Cloud Purple Glow Array into seven variations. The strength of the array will be improved by four times at best! But there are two critical points about the technique that I haven't entirely figured out yet.

"I have dozens of other techniques just like them. After studying for five years, I have made zero progress. I could only reach the conclusion that the wisdom of myself is not enough and that I'm in dire need of someone else's input.

"But, naturally, I don't want to share my knowledge with any random refiner. I have two conditions.

"Firstly, they must be both good at theories and practical work. Secondly, they must provide an equal number of techniques for me!

"Only idiots would give away the techniques in their heads for free. Even if I cannot make anything out of the techniques, if I don't get enough benefits from them, I would rather keep them rotting in my brain than let somebody else take advantage of me!

"The reason I've been hesitating to be your disciple is that your hands are completely useless. There's no way that you can train with me for a long time with them.

"However, I didn't know that you had a secret art of hand transplantation. It's no problem anymore, then. If you had told me about such a secret art sooner, I might've agreed to be your disciple long ago!

"How about it? From the techniques that I talked about just now, I'll select ten and save them in the jade chip. Black Stone and White Dew will look after the jade chip. You are free to examine it beforehand, but I guarantee that there won't be anything wrong with the techniques.

"Then, we will have a real competition. If you win, I will be your disciple without further ado. The ten techniques will be my tuition fee.

"If I win, you don't have to call me your master. What I demand is that you give me your ten techniques, and that we be equal partners in the Temple of Immortals!"

Huangpu Shiyi's eyes were flickering. The techniques that Li Yao provided these days were already captivating enough. He didn't expect that there were many more even more advanced techniques inside his brain.

As a frantic refiner, he found absolutely no reason to turn down the offer.

Huangpu Shiyi grinned and replied, "So, you are still planning to take advantage of me. You are not willing to be my disciple, and you want to take away my techniques! However, your chance of winning is slim. If you unfortunately fail, you won't go back on your words, will you?"

Weird brilliance shined in Li Yao's eyes. One of the scalpels suddenly vanished and circled around his fingertip.

Blood immediately spurted out.

Li Yao moved his fingers and quickly drew a complicated rune in the midair with his blood as ink.

While he drew, he said solemnly, "I swear by the blood of my fingertip that I, Li Yao, will have a fight in the arts of refining with Huangpu Shiyi tomorrow, and if I fail, I will kneel down and respect Huangpu Shiyi as my master immediately! Should the oath be broken, my mind shall be haunted for all eternity, my hands shall be shaking forever, and I shall never refine a piece of qualified magical equipment for the rest of my life!

"Blood Oath, now!"

Li Yao finished the last stroke and opened his mouth. The blood rune in the midair immediately turned into a red streak and dashed into his mouth.

Li Yao tremored for a moment. There was hint of blood in his eyes.

The faces of Huangpu Shiyi, Black Stone, and White Dew all blanched.

A 'Blood Oath' was a general method of vowing for all Cultivators.

It was not as effective as recorded in ancient classics, which stated that what the oath taker swore would definitely come back to them when they broke their vow.

A Blood Oath was, in fact, more of a psychological phenomenon. For example, although Li Yao had made such a terrifying oath, his hands would not necessarily tremble all day when he broke it. But the idea would stay in his mind nonetheless. When he thought about it occasionally during his refining, his hands might indeed shake and thus reduce the success rate of the refining a little bit.

The thought might haunt him for a year and a half, or maybe several years. No one could tell how long they would be bothered by their vow-breaking memories.

Huangpu Shiyi believed that, if he were in Li Yao's shoes, he wouldn't bear to see any drop of the success rate of his refining, even if it was as small as one percent.

The foolish boy meant what he said!

Huangpu Shiyi was almost touched hearing Li Yao making such an irreversible oath.

In the eyes of the regular Cultivators, they might find Li Yao's arrogance in the beginning intolerable.

But for Huangpu Shiyi, an Immortal Cultivator, it was nothing unusual.

Selfishness was the greatest virtue among Immortal Cultivators. Cruel competition was everywhere in the Temple of Immortals, too. There was not the slightest warmth between masters and disciples.

Many disciples were loyal and dutiful when they hadn't learned their masters' knowledge. They only hated that they couldn't be a dog barking for their masters.

However, when their wings grew strong and their masters somehow wound up in trouble, it would be considered very nice of them to only ditch their masters immediately.

The more considerate disciples even concocted plans in secret and killed their masters without alarming anyone. Their masters' belongings would all be theirs in such a way!

Huangpu Shiyi would never dare recruit such disciples.

It was also the reason he didn't have any acolytes or assistants even though he had been in the Temple of Immortals for twenty years.

His hands were too useless. He was afraid that, if his disciple became too strong someday, they might have second thoughts.

But things were different about this silly boy, Li Yao. The fact that he was bragging about himself openly suggested that he had no other plans. If the guy were onto something else, he wouldn't have been so arrogant and tried to piss him off at all!

It seemed a better option to recruit an arrogant yet simple-minded boy as his disciple than to recruit a hypocrite whom he had to be wary of all day. Besides, there were so many techniques inside his brain. After he got Huangpu Xiaoya's hands, his capability would definitely soar with Li Yao's helpful techniques. Chances were that he might even be able to march into the high level of the Core Formation Stage and became a renowned Core Formation Stage Refiner!

By that time, he would be appreciated by everyone in the Temple of Immortals. Who should he be scared of then?

Thinking about that, Huangpu Shiyi laughed. "Great! Great! Great! I crushed the Skyhill Sword Seminar thirty years ago, the only one that I ever participated in, without meeting any trouble whatsoever. The matches were even getting boring for me as I proceeded.

"This year, I interrupted your Skyhill Sword Seminar. It's only reasonable that I make up for that.

"Then, tomorrow at this time, the two of us will have a special Skyhill Sword Seminar in the sea of stars!

"It will decide whether I, the dominator of the Skyhill Sword Seminar thirty years ago, or you, the most brilliant star in the Skyhill Sword Seminar thirty years later who outshone all the other contestants, are the real King of Skyhill Sword Seminar!"

"It's a deal then! This time tomorrow, a Skyhill Sword Seminar in space!"

Li Yao took a long breath and walked up to Huangpu Xiaoya. He drew a line on her elbow with the pommel of the scalpel and smiled at her vaguely. "I'll keep these hands of yours for another day."

Huangpu Xiaoya was already exhausted. She gazed at him, not even having the strength to curse anymore.

Chapter 518: As Venomous as Viper

Chapter 518: As Venomous as Viper

An hour later, in their suite…

The manacle that confined Huangpu Xiaoya had been relieved. But she was imposed upon yet another few barriers. It was fine for her to eat or drink, but she could only summon the least spiritual energy. Whenever she had the idea of self-torturing, she would immediately receive an electric shock and be paralyzed to bed.

Therefore, just like a beast that had fallen into a trap, Huangpu Xiaoya could do nothing but glare with her bloodshot eyes at the bed on which Li Yao was reading an ancient book comfortably on the other side of the room. The book was Huangpu Shiyi's personal collection. It was offered to Li Yao without him asking because Huangpu Shiyi felt extremely good today.

Huangpu Xiaoya stared at Li Yao for a long time, only to discover that he was smiling as airily as before. She gnashed her teeth. "Shameless!"

Li Yao laughed and replied, "You think this is shameless? Then I'm afraid that your eyes will be opened today. Do you want to hear it?"

Huangpu Xiaoya was dazed, not knowing what he meant.

Li Yao continued instead of waiting for a reply. "When I reflected on the whole thing, there are several points that have been bothering me. Look, according to Huangpu Shiyi, his sole reason for going to the Skyhill Domain was to invite you to join the Temple of Immortals and become an Immortal Cultivator, was it not? At that time, he was not aware of my capability yet. He merely planned to kill me as a favor for Fengyu Zhong, who is also a member of the Temple of Immortals.

"I was never his focus; you were.

"Then, here comes the question. Do you not think that there should be a step-by-step process to lure in other people, especially hardcore Cultivators who were born in the noble families in the Cultivation world and firmly believe in the ethos of Cultivators?

"For example, he could've elaborated to you about how merciful and beautiful the Temple of Immortals is, or that it was established for the peace of the universe and for the happiness of the people. At the very least, he should've explained that there were good reasons that the Temple of Immortals were killing other people, say, killing some was actually saving more, or that it was not the Immortal Cultivators who were wrong but the other living souls in the multiple worlds, bla bla bla.

"Then, he could've shown you the dark side of the Cultivators and let you realize that Cultivators were actually pretentious people whose actions turned out to be the very opposite of their claims, and so on.

"The process could be repeated until you were brainwashed and gradually accepted their stance. You would've been transformed slowly but surely.

"This should be the standard procedure to get more people to join his organization!

"But what did Huangpu Shiyi do exactly?

"He showed the serial explosions in the Skyhill Domain to you before anything else, as if he was afraid that you could not see through his evilness. He seemed to be trying to trigger your fury and resistance against the Temple of Immortals.

"Right now, we've been held captive for more than half a month, but he's only spoken to you less than three times. By logic, it's perfectly normal that an avid believer of the Cultivators' creeds could not change their mindset in such a short amount of time, is it not? Why doesn't he take you to the headquarters of the Temple of Immortals and ask a few more kindly-looking, preferably middle-aged, nuns to take their time to work together and talk sense into you?

"If the Temple of Immortals really is so bad at recruiting new people, I can only wonder how the organization has existed for such a long time and is even showing signs of thriving.

"The Huangpu family is a noble family of refining and one of the most renowned families in the circle of refiners. You are the most talented genius in the younger generation of such a family. To deal with such an important figure like yourself, it won't be a waste of time even if it has to take several years, will it?

"Thirdly, even if Huangpu Shiyi is in dire need of a pair of new hands, does he really have to be so hasty? The medical staff on this starship are definitely less proficient than the doctors in the headquarters of the Temple of Immortals. Why can't he wait until we reach the headquarters and ask a professional doctor to do the transplantation? Why is he not patient enough to wait for another half a month?

"Those three points have been baffling me for an entire hour. However, I suddenly figured everything out when you called me 'shameless' just now!"

Huangpu Xiaoya was dazed. She pondered for a long time and still failed to get what Li Yao was trying to say. She murmured, "What do you mean?"

Li Yao smiled knowingly. "It's simple. If Huangpu Shiyi's purpose was to tempt you to join the Temple of Immortals, what he has been doing is idiotic and unreasonable.

"So, the fact is, since the very beginning, he had never wanted you to join the Temple of Immortals, and he was even scared that you might decide to join it.

"His one and only purpose at the Skyhill Domain was your hands!"

Taking a deep breath, Huangpu Xiaoya felt that several bolts of lightning were striking inside her head.

After she heard Li Yao's explanation, she found everything clearer and yet more desperate!

"So, this was his scheme all along. He—he is my blood uncle, but he has been coveting my hands!"

Huangpu Xiaoya was trembling beyond her control. "Terrible. You Immortal Cultivators are too terrible! You are not humans. Definitely not humans!"

Li Yao smiled. "Huangpu Shiyi is a super refiner. Since he was in need of a pair of new hands, he definitely wouldn't choose any random person's. Inside the Huangpu family, the hands of his relatives of his generation or senior to him were too old. He wouldn't be able to use them for long even if he transplanted them. So, he could only look for alternatives in the younger generation.

"Who in the younger generation has better hands than you, the talented heir of the Huangpu family?

"As it happened, you were his blood nephew. Your father and him were brothers. You shared the same bloodline. His body wouldn't have a problem to accept organs from you.

"Therefore, these young and vigorous hands of yours were apparently destined for him!

"He played the scenes of the Skyhill Domain's explosions on purpose so that you wouldn't even consider surrendering to the Temple of Immortals. He is so eager to chop off your hands now because he wants to settle everything as soon as possible.

"There will be too many uncertainties when you return to the headquarters of the Temple of Immortals. Let's say you suddenly change your mind and decide to join the Temple of Immortals. If so, there will be absolutely no reason for him to cut off your hands anymore! Haha!"

Huangpu Xiaoya was almost stunned. She stammered, "If—if you have seen everything through, are you still willing to be a disciple of such a venomous viper?"

Li Yao chuckled. "What's wrong with that? I've slain my own master before, haven't I? Huangpu Shiyi and I are merely taking advantage of each other. Now that we are still of value to each other, we will always restrain ourselves and be friendly to one another. A relationship bound by interests is so much more solid than one built on feelings!"

"Indeed."

Huangpu Xiaoya closed her eyes, cold tears dripping down her face. She mumbled, "I almost forgot. You are also a vicious, filthy, cowardly, and selfish Immortal Cultivator!"

…

Inside a dark room near the suite…

Although Li Yao had proved himself to be loyal enough, Huangpu Shiyi and Su Jiuzhen had never let loose of monitoring him.

Three crystal cameras and detectaphones had been hidden in the corners of the room. They were five times more inconspicuous than the previous ones!

It was a smart psychological strategy.

After Li Yao dismantled so many crystal cameras and detectaphones in the beginning, he would inevitably think that Huangpu Shiyi's methods about deploying surveillance equipment were only as good as that.

Therefore, Li Yao had never discovered the last three crystal cameras and detectaphones that were much more discreetly than previous ones.

However, his blunt words, since he thought no one was watching him, cast the dark room into awkward silence.

Su Jiuzhen said coldly, "Is it true, what Li Yao just said?"

Sweat appeared on Huangpu Shiyi's forehead, as he stuttered, "Well, about that..."

Su Jiuzhen snorted. "It's your own business to chop off Huangpu Xiaoya's hands. But you have mobilized so many resources of our organization without telling us your true purpose. Have you notified the Lotus King of your jobbery?"

Huangpu Shiyi was trembling violently. With a bitter face, he replied, "I... I..."

"I suppose that's a no?"

Su Jiuzhen sighed and said, "Rest assured, I will not report the matter. After all, we are both subordinates of the Lotus King. If I were to blab about it, we might have to turn against each other. What benefits can I get from that?

"However, what if someone else learns of the matter and attacks the Lotus King for his lack of control over his subordinates?

"When we return, you have three days to explain yourself to the Lotus King. If you don't tell him everything after three days, I'm afraid that I'll have to brief the Lotus King myself.

"Huangpu Shiyi, I'm not criticizing you, but why didn't you talk to the Lotus King before you did such a thing, which is not entirely forbidden? Why were you so self-willed? How foolish you were!"

Huangpu Shiyi's face was as pale as sand. He murmured, "I thought... I thought..."

Su Jiuzhen looked him in the eye and said, "You didn't think that the Lotus King would help you, did you? Then you couldn't have been more wrong! Now that you have chosen to serve the Lotus King, and you are well aware of the Lotus King's power inside our organization, you should have every faith in him!

"I'm clearer than you about how the Lotus King returns his subordinates' loyalty. If you had talked to the Lotus King in advance, he would've arranged everything perfectly for you. There wouldn't have been the slightest chance that other people might see through the operation.

"Alright. What is done is done. It's needless to say anything else. After your competition with Li Yao tomorrow, just ask him to chop off the hands and replace yours with them as you planned. Then, you'd better be prepared to ask for the Lotus King's pardon. I will try to say something nice for you, too."

Huangpu Shiyi wiped his sweat quickly. "Thank you very much, Master Su! After my body is accustomed to my new hands, I will immediately turn on my furnace and refine a set of the most delicate 'Thirteen Ghost Soul Needles' for you!"

Huangpu Shiyi's promise was apparently what Su Jiuzhen had been waiting for. But he simply grunted, not showing approval or disapproval. He squinted and looked at Li Yao inside the light beam again. "This boy was smart enough to see through your ruse, though.

"However, since he is speaking evil of you, his future master, so patently, it is evident enough that he does not know that there are other bugs inside the room and that we are still supervising him to this moment!

"His declaration about joining the Temple of Immortals for his own benefits seems more valid now.

"Alright, now, I can finally say with a hundred percent certainty that Li Yao is willing to join the Temple of Immortals sincerely and that he is a real Immortal Cultivator!

"Excellent. A great talent has joined the Lotus King's cause. How can the other three expect to compete with the Lotus King now?"

Chapter 519: Sparks in Darkness

Chapter 519: Sparks in Darkness

Watched by the hidden crystal cameras, Huangpu Xiaoya took a deep breath and tried to resume her calmness. She bit her lips so hard that blood was zigzagging out the corners of her mouth like crimson snakes.

She gnashed her teeth. "You are telling me all this because you want me to be more depressed and devastated before I die?"

Li Yao sneered. "I'm telling you this because I want you to clearly see the reality. 'Survival of the fittest' is the only truth in this dark universe. It is also why I decided to embark on the path of immortality to make myself stronger!

"As for weaklings such as you, you will always be the prey of the strong. In the end, your body and your Cultivation will be gone, and you cannot even protect your hands!"

Huangpu Xiaoya was silent. She licked the blood on her lips. It was bitter and unsmooth.

Li Yao suddenly rose up. He walked to her and, looking down upon her, said disdainfully, "You call yourself an unyielding and unchangeable Cultivator, but just think about it. What did you do in the half a month after you were captured by the Temple of Immortals except panicking, cursing, yelling, and crying? Have you made any endeavors that could help free yourself from the current predicament? No. None whatsoever!

"You have even forgotten the daily training of your hands, the most fundamental task of every refiner!

"During the last ten days, you have been lying on bed like a useless bum every day without doing any training. Your hands must have retrograded. I guarantee that your capability is at least 10% lower than before!

"Let's be honest. Even if an opportunity miraculously presents itself to you, are you even qualified to seize it right now? Am I wrong in calling you a useless weakling?"

As if somebody had smacked her in the face, Huangpu Xiaoya was dazed and failed to come up with anything.

Li Yao said coldly, "Yes, your speech is wonderful. You are on the moral high ground, and I'm filthier than a swine. However, words cannot kill anybody! I'm standing right in front of you, torturing and humiliating you. Tomorrow, I'm even going to chop off your hands. But what can you do to me?

"You said that you would come back for revenge after you died, didn't you? For useless crap like you, you will only fall into the Temple of Immortals' control if you really become a spectral Cultivator after you are executed. Chances are that you will be sealed into some magical equipment by Huangpu Shiyi or me. Haha. Let's see how you can seek your revenge then!"

Huangpu Xiaoya was dumbfounded. She suddenly felt cold to the bones.

She was not scared of death. But for Cultivators, death was not necessarily their final destination. If her soul unfortunately lived on after her death and was refined into a devastating soul by the Immortal Cultivators to butcher innocent people, it would be an outcome that she would rather die ten thousand times to avoid!

Huangpu Xiaoya was immediately breathing heavily.

Observing her reaction, Li Yao said casually, "Do you regret it now? It's too late!

"When I was in the Great Horn Exo Society, there was one saying that I heard all the time: if you want to shout, let your weapons be your voice; if you have tears, let your enemies shed them for you!

"I'll forward the words to you now. Although you probably won't get the chance to use them in this life, you can try to bear them in mind in case you are fortunate enough to be reincarnated into a human again!"

Finishing his speech, Li Yao retreated. He waved his hands. The barrier in the middle of the suite gradually moved and divided the suite into two separate rooms.

Before the barrier was fully closed, Li Yao looked at Huangpu Xiaoya, who was deep in thought, through the gap and said, "Sleep tight. Tomorrow, a lot of blood will be shed."

…

The next day, in the early morning…

The suite had no windows. It was dim and hazy. One could not even see their own fingers. Li Yao was woken up by the noise of the relief of the barrier, only to discover that Huangpu Xiaoya had opened the wall that blocked them.

Huangpu Xiaoya did not turn on any lights. There was not the slightest trace of rays. Darkness dominated the entire room.

Occasionally, clusters of spluttering sparks would burst out from Huangpu Xiaoya's direction, which formed elegant yet feeble runes in midair, flashing and vanishing quickly.

Illuminated by the sparks, Huangpu Xiaoya seemed to be very focused. Her tranquil and solemn face appeared and disappeared in the darkness.

Although he could only see her briefly, Li Yao sensed that she was vastly different from the previous day. Her softness, hesitation, and desperation were nowhere to be seen.

"What are you doing?" Li Yao couldn't help but ask.

"Can't you tell? I'm training myself."

Huangpu Xiaoya answered peacefully, "Due to the barriers they planted inside my body, I cannot perform higher level training sessions. I can only summon such weak sparks to practice drawing runes. But it's still beneficial for me to maintain the nimbleness of my fingers."

Li Yao raised his eyebrow. "Why are you training?"

Huangpu Xiaoya said seriously, "Li Yao, although you are an unforgivable scumbag, the final words you said last night do make sense.

"Shouts and tears are the most useless things in the world.

"If I want to shout, my weapons shall be my voice; if I have tears, my enemies shall shed them for me!

"Over the past ten days, I've let out too many useless shouts and cried too many meaningless tears. I thought that I was brave, but after a night of reflection, I realized that it was simply cowardice in a different form.

"I was merely resorting to shouts and tears to avoid the real fight!"

Li Yao blinked his eyes and said, "So?"

Huangpu Xiaoya continued her explanation solemnly. "So, after I realized what I've been doing, I decided that I would stop shouting and crying, and I should dedicate myself to a real fight until my blood runs dry like any righteous Cultivator would.

"As a refiner, I am not good at waving weapons. Thus, I simply consider the training of my hands a special fight!

"You were right about one thing. I wasted too much time after I was captured. My hands are much less deft than before. Thank you for pointing that out. After drawing runes for an entire night, they have recovered a lot."

Li Yao smiled. "You are going to die today. What difference does it make?"

Huangpu Xiaoya said, "If one understands the great Dao in the morning, they can die peacefully at the end of the day. Even if I am going to be killed tonight, I am still alive at this moment.

"And if I am alive, I will have to fight. One more second of life means one more second of fighting.

"If I turn into ghosts after I die, I will continue fighting. If I fail and fall into your hands, and you turn me into a devastating soul, then so be it. At least, I've fought the good fight.

"However, don't expect Huangpu Xiaoya to surrender! Human or ghost, I will always be an outright Cultivator, and I will never demean myself by joining you unscrupulous Immortal Cultivators!"

As if intimidated by her rectitude, Li Yao laughed weirdly and yet failed to respond.

Huangpu Xiaoya kept on training. Tiny sparks were bursting out of her fingertips nonstop.

However, the majority of her spiritual energy had been sealed. After a night of hard training, she was over-exhausted. The sparks on her fingertips were getting weaker and weaker. In the end, they only shone for 0.1 seconds before they were swallowed by darkness.

After breathing heavily for five seconds, she summoned new sparks on her fingertips which blinked stubbornly and vanished into darkness again.

Inside the darkness, Huangpu Xiaoya suddenly asked, "Do you think darkness and darkness are the same?"

This time, Li Yao really failed to understand what she meant. Pondering for a moment, he asked, "Can you explain?"

Huangpu Xiaoya's voice was somewhat enticing, filled with a sense of mystery, as she said, "There are two identical rooms with no windows or doors. Inside the rooms is absolute darkness. Some creatures are locked in the two rooms.

"One of the rooms is always filled by absolute darkness. There has never been any light before, and there will never be any in the future.

"In the other room, a tiny, feeble, and short-lived spark will burst out occasionally after a long time. The spark will illuminate a limited space very briefly and leave a message about brightness in the heads of the creatures inside the room.

"But eventually, the spark will be gone, and the room will be embraced by darkness again. Another tiny spark that can burn for only one second might not show up again until a hundred years or even a thousand years later.

"Do you think the first darkness and the second darkness are the same?"

Li Yao was silent for a long time.

In the darkness, he glanced at the last detectaphone in a corner of the room, while he exhaled and said, "Are they not?"

Huangpu Xiaoya laughed, in great relief and satisfaction, as if she had completely comprehended something. Her belief turned firm, thorough, and unshakable.

"They are not."

She replied confidently, one word after another. "Maybe they are the same for you Immortal Cultivators. But for us, the true Cultivators, the two types of darkness are different!

"Even if this universe is truly nothing more than a brutal, bloody, shadowy forest, we Cultivators will burn all that we have just to give off a single weak flickering spark in the darkness!

"No matter how weak each spark is, how short-lived, how small… As long as the sparks flow unabated, then one day, one of those sparks will light some tinder, and that tinder shall light some fallen branches, and those branches shall set ablaze each and every last tree of the forest!

"In the end, even the smallest sparks will eventually set the shadowy forest ablaze and illuminate the whole world!"

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao said drily, "Igniting the entire forest with a flickering sparkle? What are the odds? One thousandth? One millionth? One billionth?"

Huangpu Xiaoya said softly, "One billionth is still not zero!"

Li Yao was dazed.

The sentence sounded rather familiar. He must've heard it somewhere else.

Pondering for a while, he finally remembered it.

Back when he selected the Grand Desolate War Institution in his hometown Floating Spear City in the Heaven's Origin Sector, he had challenged Deep Sea University, the 'Holy Land of Refiners', in front of everyone.

Xie Tingxian, a professor of Deep Sea University, had asked him whether or not the odds of him defeating Deep Sea University could reach one billionth.

It was exactly what he had said at that time.

"One billionth is still not zero!"

Li Yao stopped talking and turned on the illumination rune arrays in the room.

Dazzling brightness immediately sprayed out and shattered the darkness like countless light swords!

Li Yao warmed up his fingers, his bones uttering cracking noises as if blades were colliding.

Storms and thunder were brewing under his fingernails, which were about to explode!

Taking a deep breath, he smelled the scent of sparks in the air. His every nerve couldn't be more sharp and excited!

The day of the final battle had come!

Chapter 520: Let's Fight!

Chapter 520: Let's Fight!

Eight o'clock in the evening, inside the vast warehouse of the 'Ox-level' carrier…

The business starships of this model were usually used as carriers. Therefore, the Cultivation sects had performed large-scale modifications before they were delivered. In the middle and rear parts of such starships, there were often several vast warehouses that could be hundreds of square meters.

This particular warehouse, on the other hand, had been modified into a refining center for explosive magical equipment.

Huangpu Shiyi was an expert of the trade. This trip to the Skyhill Domain also demanded crystal bombs to help them get rid of the potential pursuers. Therefore, he had made the modifications in advance so that he could refine explosive magical equipment on the way.

The warehouse had three layers of walls made of strengthened alloys. Between each wall were defense rune arrays. On the innermost wall, there were defense, soundproof, and buffer rune arrays. Together with other secret arts, they blocked any sounds or shaking in warehouse from affecting other cabins.

It was safe to say that, even if a heaven-splitting explosion took place inside the warehouse, nobody outside would notice anything wrong.

Inside the warehouse, necessary facilities to create explosive magical equipment had been deployed, including protective devices and damage examination systems that could help Huangpu Shiyi measure the performance of each bomb precisely.

At this time, all the lights inside the warehouse were on. Huangpu Shiyi, Black Stone, White Dew, Fei Ming, and another four gloomy yet brawny men were standing in the middle of the warehouse.

This place would be the battlefield of the 'Sword Seminar in Space'!

Li Yao stood in front of everyone peacefully.

Huangpu Xiaoya, in the meantime, was sitting in a corner. She had been tied up by barriers and crammed into a specially-designed anti-explosive suit.

However, she was quite peaceful too, and she eyed Li Yao and the rest of them as if they were dry bones in a grave or zombies that had come back to life.

Li Yao glanced over everyone and paid special attention to the few brawny men. Two of them still had medication runes on their bodies. They did not look very friendly, but they dare not stare back at him, either, and merely lowered their heads.

Black Stone, the fair fatty, smiled. "Master Li Yao, they are the subordinates of White Dew and mine. They look somewhat haggard right now because they suffered tiny injuries from the Furious Bears Union's assault the other day. But they are usually very trustworthy.

"Now that Master Li Yao has become an Immortal Cultivator, we are all on the same boat. You can ask them to do anything for you. I guarantee that they will treat you just like they treat us!

"You are a refiner, and we are all battle-type Immortal Cultivators. We are complementary in every sense. If you ever need anything to be done, you don't have to it in person. With a hint or a gesture, White Dew and I will immediately see to it. We only hope that Master Li Yao could be kind enough to craft a few tailor-made sabers for us if possible.

"The day we invited Master Li Yao here, White Dew and I had offended you a lot. But everything was different back then, and we were merely carrying out our commands at that time. I hope that Master Li Yao can forgive us. Anyways, we are all serving the Lotus King, and we should fight side by side against the common foe!"

"Lotus King?"

Li Yao blinked and looked at Huangpu Shiyi suspiciously.

Huangpu Shiyi smiled drily. "The Lotus King is a giant in the Temple of Immortals. You won't regret joining the Lotus King's cause! When we're back at our headquarters, I will introduce you to the Lotus King immediately. He will be so happy to see yet another brilliant young man walk on the righteous path. Chances are that he will grant you a lot of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures!"

Li Yao's face was beaming with joy. He said hurriedly, "I can refine sabers for anyone as long as the price is decent. I wonder, where are we right now, and how long will it take us to annihilate the Great Horn Exo Society and meet the Lotus King in the headquarters?"

Huangpu Shiyi had completely let down his defenses. He replied, "We have now arrived at the Iron Plateau Space Zone. However, since transmitting telepathic thoughts over a long distance might be noticed the Cultivators, we have kept silent and dared not reach out to our comrades. But half a day ago, we received a message from Fengyu Zhong that he has stopped Gold Horn!

"But Gold Horn is not alone. It is in the company of another two starships. Therefore, the battle is dragging on for longer than we expected. Fighting and running, it may take two to three days before they are finally defeated. We will catch up with them tomorrow, and it will be the perfect time to join the battle!

"Although it may take longer for us to put down Gold Horn, you don't need to worry about anything. After more than half a month of assaults and ambushes, the Cultivation world has been stabbed multiple times. It is bleeding everywhere. Even those sects that were not attacked are also greatly panicked. The starships and experts from various Cultivation sects lurking not far away from Gold Horn retreated and went to defend their homes long ago! There's no large star beacon near the Iron Plateau Space Zone that can support a space jump, either!

"Therefore, in the next five days, no other forces of Cultivators will be able to reinforce them. We can take our time and enjoy the meal that is the three starships!

"Haha. Hahahaha. After that, the morale of the Cultivation world will definitely be wrecked. Just think about it. They went through all the trouble and made so many plans. Such a great number of experts were dispatched to protect the Great Horn Exo Society. However, with a few tricks of ours, they were split and had to go back to their homes exhaustedly, and the Great Horn Exo Society was destroyed anyway!

"When the news is out, I don't know how many Cultivators will be distressed and how many will be intimidated. By then, many of them will see through the weakness of Cultivators. They will be turned into Immortal Cultivators with only a few words!"

Li Yao racked his brain and soon found the information about the Iron Plateau Space Zone.

It was one of the largest and most ancient space zones of the Flying Star Sector. 'Iron Plateau', the biggest inhabitable planet of the Flying Star Sector, was located in the space zone.

However, this planet was dominated by demon beasts and barbarians, or in Huangpu Xiaoya's words, qi-trainers.

For some reason, the planet was a taboo for the residents, be they Cultivators or ordinary people, of the Flying Star Sector. They barely mentioned anything about the planet.

The Iron Plateau Space Zone was like a strange forbidden area. It was very underdeveloped. No large star beacons were established in this place, either.

As a result, a starship could not be teleported to the Iron Plateau Space Zone directly. It could only cruise slowly and dutifully like them, which took a lot more time.

It was not hard to guess that Fengyu Zhong had spent a lot of effort driving the Great Horn Exo Society to the land of death.

"Alright!"

Li Yao eyes turned cold as he said, "Let's cut the nonsense and begin now! I thought that Mo Tianshui and Huangpu Xiaoya would be the best opponents I got in the Skyhill Sword Seminar, and since I knew I was definitely better than them, I could never summon 100% of my fighting will!

"I didn't expect that the Skyhill Sword Seminar would end up like this, me challenging the 'Sword Master' of thirty years ago!

"How exciting and enjoyable! I can sense that my fighting will is soaring!"

Huangpu Shiyi smiled vaguely. Now that the topic at hand was refining, the king of his era showed an unparalleled dominating aura. He said casually, "What are the rules?"

Li Yao squinted and replied, "I'm a man who likes to challenge the impossible. Since you are adept at explosive magical equipment, and we've been talking about that for many days, let's just have a match of crystal bombs!

"We will refine a crystal bomb respectively and compare their damage. The one with a higher damage output will be the winner. There will be three rounds.

"Don't be hasty. I'm not done yet.

"You've studied explosive magical equipment for twenty years, and you are in the Core Formation Stage. You are better than me in every regard. I don't stand the slightest chance of winning in a normal competition!

"If you are brave enough, why don't you ask me to select the materials, and we will refine crystal bombs with identical materials?

"Also, for the three rounds, only if you win them all will you be the final victor; if you lose any of them, I will be the winner!

"Do you think such rules are fair?"

Huangpu Shiyi considered them carefully for a moment. His eyes suddenly shone as he said in amusement, "Good boy. It seems that you are not as foolish as I thought. You came up with such a way and want to try your luck! Excellent. Such rules indeed make up for the gap between our levels and experience. Very reasonable!

"However, they are still useless. An egg crashing into a stone ten thousand times will only break ten thousand times. It will never be able to leave the tiniest crack on the stone!

"Not just three rounds, even if there are a hundred rounds, I will still crush you effortlessly!

"You may choose materials freely at your will, but they have to be in the inventory that I prepare. After all, I only brought some thirty-six hundred materials for the trip. If you ask for random materials, I may not be able to provide them!"

Li Yao agreed quickly, "It's a deal. If the egg is really broken, I will respect you as my master immediately, and this jade chip will be my tuition fee. You can check it out first!"

Li Yao took out a jade chip from his pocket and threw it over without any hesitation.

Huangpu Shiyi picked the jade chip. He was going to insert it into his crystal processor, when he stopped briefly and tossed back a jade chip, which he had retrieved from his sleeve, as he said, chuckling, "My good disciple, your master won't deceive you, either. Inside this jade chip are the ten best techniques that I spent all the night deliberating over, including the ultimate knowledge about crystal bombs and the delicate tricks of sword-forging from the Huangpu family. You can browse through them first!"

Li Yao was not courteous at all. He took over the jade chip and inserted it into his crystal processor. After reading them for three minutes, he was certain that there was nothing wrong with the techniques.

It was only reasonable that Huangpu Shiyi was giving him authentic techniques right now because the man was trying to dig out more techniques from him. What good could the man get by giving him false techniques and pissing him off?

Meanwhile, Huangpu Shiyi was exclaiming in a low voice, "Such magnificent ancient rune arrays? So many tricks about refurbishment? Where did you get so much good stuff?"

Li Yao smiled and said, "This is just a small proportion of what is inside my brain. It will be great if you can understand it all. You can analyze the techniques first and explain them to me in detail later. When I have grasped all of them, I will give you new ones. It will be a win-win!"

While talking, he threw Huangpu Shiyi's jade chip to Black Stone unhesitatingly. "Fatty, this jade chip will be in your custody for now. I will come back for it myself in a moment."

Huangpu Shiyi swallowed and, managing to suppress his greed, gave Li Yao's jade chip to White Dew slowly.

The ten techniques inside Li Yao's jade chip were even more valuable than those he had picked.

Now, all of Huangpu Shiyi's suspicion had disappeared. After he took a deep breath, his eyes were focused again, and he was wreathed in an unshakable vibe; he had entered the state of a super refiner.

"Thirty years later, a Skyhill Sword Seminar in the sea of stars... Let's begin!"

Chapter 521: Boom!

Chapter 521: Boom!

Half an hour later, hundreds of materials were all set. Li Yao and Huangpu Shiyi each stood on one side of the warehouse with an operation desk in front of them. Below their feet were large defense rune arrays that were emitting gold brilliance. They constituted translucent circular walls around them.

Black Stone, White Dew, and the other spectators all hid themselves in a strengthened room in a corner of the warehouse.

The refinement of crystal bombs was not something to be underestimated. Although both of them were experts, nobody could guarantee that their products would not explode half way through their work.

"The first round, twenty-seven materials, ten minutes. It's just a warm-up!"

"Come on!"

A queer smile popped up on Huangpu Shiyi's face. His eyes suddenly bulged. Wrinkles appeared in the corner of his eyes. Taking a deep breath, he extended his withered hands and opened his palm!

"He!" Huangpu Shiyi roared. Blood spurted out of his pores and quickly span around him!

A weird thing happened!

The flesh, blood, and vigor of his body seemed to have been pumped away instantly. He became dry and shrank in size, turning into a walking skeleton!

His head was just a skull with a thin coating of skin now. However, the veins there were as thick as before. As a result, his face seemed to have been cut with countless wounds and couldn't be more hideous!

All his vitality and strength had been absorbed by his hands, which quickly expanded like a balloon. They were even more flawless than regular hands now, as if they were carved out of white jade. Bizarre brilliance was beaming out of them!

His left hand, which was born with six fingers, was particularly impressive. With a tiny movement, thousands of waves were already raised in the air!

"Hehe. Hehehehe!"

In Huangpu Shiyi's fleshless head, the two bloodshot eyes were more obtrusive than ever. They were focused on his own hands in fascination, while he laughed annoyingly and declared to Li Yao, "Come on!"

Li Yao seemed to be shocked, but he did not respond and simply nodded his head gloomily.

The first round had begun!

Li Yao's hands suddenly vanished into thousands of shadows that swept over the materials on the desk and polished them in midair!

Yet, Huangpu Shiyi was not in a hurry to start at all. With a captivated expression, he gazed at his own immaculate hands narcissistically and mumbled, "What a pair of beautiful, delicate, and unblemished hands!

"If you could consume less of my vitality and last for more than an hour, I would never bear to replace you!

"It's decided then. After I put on Huangpu Xiaoya's hands, I will refine you into magical equipment so that you can accompany me forever…"

Huangpu Shiyi's caressed his dry cheeks with his hands while letting out sensual moans. It was not until he had enjoyed them for five minutes that he suddenly acted!

When he was still, there seemed to be nothing extraordinary about him. But when he acted, earsplitting noises were echoing nonstop. Rumbling thunder burst out in front of him, and white mist the shape of umbrellas appeared and spread out!

Huangpu Shiyi's two hands had entered the supersonic state simultaneously!

"Boy, don't think that breaking the sonic barrier with your hands is something worth being proud of!

"Maybe you are a somebody in the Building Foundation Stage Cultivators. But always remember that there are people stronger than you that you haven't met yet!

"In the world of magical equipment, you are just a frog at the bottom of a well. There is still a long way to go, and there are still a lot of walls to hit! Today, let me help you taste the feeling of being completely crushed. Haha. Hahahaha!"

At that moment, Huangpu Shiyi seemed to become the lunatic from thirty years ago who had dominated the Skyhill Sword Seminar and challenged the leader of the Mo family in front of thousands of spectators!

He laughed crazily. His hands were unpredictable and as fast as lightnings. He had started much later than Li Yao, but he caught up to him quickly and finished the first crystal bomb ten seconds earlier!

"Huchi! Huchi! Huchi!"

Li Yao was like an irritated bull. His eyes were red, his sweat was pouring, and he gazed at his opponent while breathing raggedly.

"Come on. Come on. Let's cut the nonsense and test them!"

Huangpu Shiyi grinned. He marked his own mini crystal bomb and sent it to the examination platform together with Li Yao's work.

The magical equipment to test the power of a crystal bomb was a pair of hemispheric iron shells. When they were combined and sealed by rune arrays, they would make a perfect iron ball.

This hollow iron ball was connected to a spiritual energy metric by a tube.

When the bomb was detonated, the power of the bomb would be transmitted to the metric through the tube. By looking at the reading of the metric, the specific power of a bomb would be calculated.

Two pieces of such magical equipment were placed next to each other. The two metrics were juxtaposed, too. One would be able to tell which of the two bombs was better with a quick glance.

Li Yao was apparently very nervous. He gazed at the metric without even blinking.

Huangpu Shiyi, on the other hand, was apparently quite relieved; a confident smile was plastered on his face.

BOOM!

The two bombs were triggered at the same time!

Outside of the two black, hollow iron balls, hundreds of rune arrays shone at the same time and locked the explosion inside the balls. The power of the explosions, having nowhere else to run to, had to crowd into the metric through the tube before they were transformed and diminished multiple times!

Shua!

Two streaks of redness jerked like two hot springs. But Huangpu Shiyi's reading was apparently soaring faster. It was a third higher than Li Yao's. When Li Yao's reading culminated and plummeted, Huangpu Shiyi's reading still persisted for five more seconds before it gradually fell.

The test result suggested that Huangpu Shiyi's crystal bomb was more powerful and would take less time to be triggered. The power of the explosion sustained for a long time, which meant that the crystal bomb could still deal a lot of damage five seconds after it was detonated!

Li Yao suffered a brutal failure in the first round!

"Do you still want to finish the other two rounds?" Smiled Huangpu Shiyi.

"Why not?"

Li Yao gnashed his teeth, his face gloomy.

The second round, eighty-five materials, twenty minutes. The goal was a small-scale bomb!

"Li Yao, I was merely playing with you, who only has the capability of the peak of the Building Foundation Stage.

"This time, I will be using the true capability of the Core Formation Stage and show you how terrifying a refiner in the Core Formation Stage is when we get serious!"

While talking, Huangpu Shiyi opened his spotless hands. Spiritual energy spread out of the pores bit by bit and enveloped him, making his body somewhat blurred and wreathing him in an aura of divinity and unpredictability.

When Li Yao closed his eyes and perceived the situation with his spiritual root, Li Yao 'saw' that Huangpu Shiyi was like an erupting volcano. Inside his abdomen, tremendous spiritual energy was entangled and transformed into a half-solid thick pool!

Forming the Core! His spiritual energy was becoming solid. It was the sign of the Core Formation Stage!

Huangpu Shiyi burst into laughter. His hands were absolutely still, but hundreds of silver spiritual threads stabbed out of his eleven fingers and tied all the materials.

Huangpu Shiyi's fingers shivered slightly, as if he were controlling puppets by the strings behind them. Under the delicate control of the tiny muscles in his fingers, the hundreds of spiritual threads were operating on the materials swiftly!

It was like Huangpu Shiyi had suddenly grown another hundred fingers.

Li Yao's face suddenly turned extremely awful. He grunted and started his own refining work.

Twenty minutes later, when he completed his work, his hands were bleeding, and holes deep to the bones could be found on his index finger and middle finger, where vague smoke was still popping up!

"Well, well, well. Very hardworking!"

Huangpu Shiyi chuckled. "It's too bad that refining is not all about hard work! Li Yao, let me tell you some experience of a super expert now: when we reach the Core Formation Stage, our hands can break into the supersonic speed any time we want, but normally we wouldn't do that.

"Because the arts of refining are not just about speed. Even 'precision' is not as important as you think!

"The most important thing is to sense, feel, and listen to the materials according to their characteristics before you process them in their unique way!

"Remember, even the same materials will have many variations if they were gathered from different locations at different times!

"Only after you grasp the variations can you really appreciate the arts of refining and become a super expert!

"You are still far away from that!"

In the second round, Huangpu Shiyi was still in the lead. Made of the same materials, his bomb was a third more powerful than Li Yao's!

Li Yao's eyes were bloodshot, as he mumbled, "It's impossible. It's impossible. I'm the best refiner. The best!

"Come on, let's do it again! There's still the third round! I'm going to craft a destructive bomb and blow you up!"

Huangpu Shiyi smiled calmly. "You already failed. Your current metal state is not fit for refining. Let's stop here. I think very highly of you. If you follow me and train yourself, you will be as good as me one day with my guidance."

"Haha. Hahahaha! You are scared. Scared!"

Li Yao laughed crazily. He pointed at Huangpu Shiyi and shouted, "You do not dare to fight the third round because you have reached your limits. You can't persist any longer, can you?"

Huangpu Shiyi glared. There was anger on the skeleton's skull. He sneered, "Alright, in the third round, the crystal bombs I craft will be twice as powerful as yours. Come on!"

The third round, one hundred and seventy-four materials, thirty minutes. The creation of mid-sized crystal bombs began!

This time, Huangpu Shiyi stared at Li Yao's face from the beginning.

He discovered that, maybe because Li Yao had never been defeated before, he was somewhat crazy. The guy was enthusiastic one moment, then frustrated, next he was cramping, before becoming desperate, and later excited.

Li Yao's hand speed was brought to the highest and entered the supersonic speed without bothering about anything. His sweat was vaporized and formed a vague mist around him.

The mist blocked Li Yao's hands and made Huangpu Shiyi unable to determine what bomb Li Yao was working on.

However, judging from his shaking hands and unstable metal state, Huangpu Shiyi did not expect his product to be anything good. Chances were that his result would be even worse than the previous two rounds.

Time went by one second after another.

15 minutes, 20 minutes, 25 minutes, 28 minutes… And finally, in the 29th minute!

Li Yao had completely gone mad. His face was even more hideous than Huangpu Shiyi's skeleton-like face, and he murmured to himself. "No. This is still not powerful enough. It has to be better. I'm going to carve another attack rune array. I'm going to add another…

"Blow you up. I'm going to blow you up!

"I'm not going to fail. I'm the best!"

Right then, Li Yao's body suddenly shivered, as if he'd accidentally pierced the cutter through his finger and exclaimed in pain.

In front of his face, weird spiritual waves flooded out!

Huangpu Shiyi couldn't be more familiar with the situation. His face suddenly turned pale as he shouted, "Not good. The bomb is exploding!"

Hardly had he finished his sentence when a large fireball broke out in front of Li Yao and consumed him!

"Save him!" Huangpu Shiyi shrieked.

The best disciple he could ever get was about to be his. Countless techniques were waiting to be excavated. How could he allow such a guy to be killed without a good reason?

If he survived the explosion but somehow suffered brain injuries, it would still be an unacceptable outcome for him!

Not far away from Li Yao, the air suddenly blurred, and waves spread out!

Su Jiuzhen, the ace assassin who had been lurking behind him and monitoring him for more than half a month, finally revealed himself!

Su Jiuzhen did not want such a promising Immortal Cultivator to be destroyed just like that, either.

The young man was ambitious. His hands were fast, and his brain was faster. With a few years of studying, he will be a great assistant for the Lotus King!

After the multiple tests, Su Jiuzhen had no doubt about Li Yao anymore.

Therefore, he showed up without any hesitation and dashed at Li Yao, trying to pull him out of the sea of flames!

Right then, the defense ring Li Yao was in was filled with fire and smoke. It was impossible to tell what was going on inside!

Chapter 522: Kill When He Must

Chapter 522: Kill When He Must

Su Jiuzhen was as agile as a phantom. He slid forward and rushed into the smoke.

However, the moment he entered the fire, the experienced assassin felt something was wrong.

The glamorously-burning crystal bomb did not cause an intense blast. The only thing it emitted was a dazzling 'fire ball', smoke, and spiritual waves that apparently could block any observation from outside!

It was not a powerful crystal bomb, more of a cross between a smoke grenade, a flash bang, and a jamming grenade!

Su Jiuzhen was greatly alarmed.

Although he didn't know exactly what had happened, he simply shouted and pointed his two fingers at the center of his eyebrows, trying to summon his crystal suit!

But there was no time!

In the middle of the eye-catching firewall and the dense smoke, a furious, dominating aura surged close like a tsunami!

The smoke and dust in its way was slashed apart. The roaring flames outlined what seemed to be a crystal suit!

What a terrifying crystal suit it was!

The crystal suit as black as ink seemed to have been painted with the darkness of night. It seemed to be able to swallow all rays of light.

Reflections of blood were blossoming in the gaps of the crystal suit. They congregated into interconnecting red lines, as if they were muscles and veins, making the crystal suit a living thing.

With a closer look, one could notice that gold brilliance was buried deep under the crystal suit, as if countless stars were brewing and shining inside the suit!

The shoulders, elbows, knees, and toes of the crystal suit had been modified into headbutting thorns with the bones of some horrendous demon beast. Su Jiuzhen had never seen or heard such a dreadful demon beast before!

As for the critical parts, such as the chest and the abdomen, they were covered by a soft material that was almost transparent. It seemed to have been refined out of the flesh and blood of a certain demon beast. The dominating aura it unleashed suggested that it used to belong to a great demon above the level of demon emperor. The defensive ability it boasted was surely extraordinary!

On the facial cover that was as deep and dark as a starless night, six crimson crystal cameras in two rows were glaring. Below the crystal cameras was a giant, grinning mouth painted by materials as red as blood that almost extended to the earlobes, as if the crystal suit was laughing out loud.

It was not a crystal suit; it was a devil!

A devil that devoured devils!

Su Jiuzhen felt that his blood was freezing. He was shouting to himself crazily, "Why?

"Why does he still have such a powerful crystal suit?

"How did he put on his crystal suit so fast? Last time, it was estimated that it would take him at least three seconds to put on a crystal suit. Three seconds!"

Su Jiuzhen did not realize that he had been fooled until this moment.

They had all been fooled!

Li Yao, the evil douchebag, had deceived them all!

He wanted to retreat, but there was not enough time. A queer arc blinked in front of the devil-like crystal suit, as a vicious, cruel saber slashed upwards from Su Jiuzhen's loin!

"Ahhh!"

Su Jiuzhen had only summoned half of his crystal suit to protect his arms and legs, when stinky mist of blood burst out from his abdomen. All his internal organs were exposed to fire and smoke!

If he hadn't been in a hurry to rescue Li Yao, if he had put on the crystal suit in advance, or if he had kept hiding in the air with his stealth ability, he wouldn't have been hit by the crystal suit, no matter how formidable it seemed to be, with his amazing combat ability at the peak of the Building Foundation Stage and his abundant experience in stealth and assassination!

If he had survived the first attack, he could've have circled around with the complicated territory on the starship and summoned his subordinates to attack him together. The situation might've been very different!

Too bad that was only a hypothetical!

The life and death in a fight of two experts could be determined within a millisecond. Su Jiuzhen could tell that the sordid Li Yao's real combat ability was no lower than the high level of the Building Foundation Stage and only slightly worse than his. But with the enhancement of his brutal crystal suit, the guy's combat ability even surpassed his!

In the meantime, he was foolish enough to crash into his saber without wearing his crystal suit!

It could not be helped. His techniques hadn't been practiced to the highest level. If he wanted to hide in the air perfectly, he couldn't wear a crystal suit. Otherwise, the quakes and spiritual waves of his crystal suit would expose his location.

Just then, the accident had not been within his expectations. The explosion was a momentary thing. He was trying to rescue the victim as quickly as possible. Why would he waste one more second putting on his crystal suit?

He had thought that an explosion of such a level could never really hurt him. Rescuing the injured was the priority. But reality proved him foolish!

Could it be that Li Yao had calculated everything?

The idea scared the heck out of Su Jiuzhen.

Like a viper who seemed to be hibernating in the deepest part of a tree hole, Li Yao was harmless when he was peaceful, but when he acted, he instantly bared the sharpest fangs and spurted the deadliest venom!

The upward slash had destroyed all of Su Jiuzhen's internal organs. The aura of the blade even pierced forward into his spine and nerves!

Su Jiuzhen did not feel much pain yet, as that had all happened in only 0.1 seconds. But he did realize that his organs and spine had been locked onto by Li Yao's saber. His speed of summon the remaining crystal suit would be greatly undermined.

After Li Yao drew his saber out of Su Jiuzhen's chest, he raised it high in the air, gripping the handle of the saber so hard that it was almost breaking. He seemed to be ready to slash apart the sea of stars!

The smoke resulting from the explosion was dancing and jumping on the shining edge of the saber, like countless screaming unrested souls!

Su Jiuzhen's face was pale. The cunning, experienced assassin knew very clearly that there was no way he could dodge the unstoppably attack!

In that moment, the only thing he could do was trigger a telepathic thought inside his brain and pierce an information stream at Li Yao.

"You can't kill me!

"I've imposed a protective method on my body with the secret arts of Black Spider Tower!

"My soul will become a Black Spider Evil Spirit and haunt whoever kills me. It will be an endless curse!

"Those who kill me will be cursed by me!

"You can't kill me. You can't!"

In the end, the information stream was almost screaming.

Inside the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Li Yao's eyes were narrowed into two red lines, as if they were butcher's cleavers stained with blood.

He did not doubt Su Jiuzhen's words.

If the guy's stealth skills were so proficient that even he could not locate him precisely during the last ten days before the trap he set up that day, the guy was definitely a top assassin of Black Spider Tower.

Black Spider Tower boasted tremendous evil arts. Such an eccentric curse was actually very normal.

But so what?

Li Yao had been waiting for eighteen days. He had been concealing and preparing for 18 days, 9 hours, 32 minutes, and 44 seconds. Everything he did was to make the assassin, whose capability was higher than his, show a loophole.

This was his best and only chance.

If he failed to kill him instantly right now, the guy wouldn't give him a second opportunity with his remarkable stealth and assassination skills!

In an instant, 41,523 names popped up in Li Yao's brain.

They were the innocent victims in the big explosion of the Skyhill Domain.

Huangpu Xiaoya had thought that he was merely glancing at the news. She didn't know that all the names of the deceased were etched into his brain without missing any.

Right now, the names flowed through Li Yao's arms into his saber and roared in the sound of revenge!

Curse? So be it.

Li Yao's belief surged forward like rushing star cruising through the sea of stars. Nothing could stand in his way!

In that moment, even all the gods in the heavens kneeled down and begged him, they wouldn't be able to stop the slash that had been tied up by countless unrested souls who were desperate for revenge!

Even if thousands of devils in the deepest level of the hell cast the most vicious spell on him at the same time as his attack, the speed of his saber would not be diminished in the least!

A man in space would kill when he must!

"Die!" Li Yao roared.

Two crystal bombs seemed to have exploded under his feet at the same time. He leapt forward, his every muscle and every bone adjusted to the perfect state. The tens of thousands of unrested souls on the edge of his saber resonated with him, as he slashed down ruthlessly!

"Hu!"

The aura of his saber turned into a bloody lightning and cut in the gaps of Su Jiuzhen's crystal suit before it finally enclosed his body. His spiritual energy burst out while he pushed his saber forward!

Su Jiuzhen's body was split into two halves, which flew off in two different directions!

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit passed through the middle of Su Jiuzhen's halves!

Su Jiuzhen, an important figure in the Temple of Immortals, the ace assassin of Black Spider Tower, and the seasoned expert who had killed countless Core Formation Stage Cultivators, had been slain!

The moment Su Jiuzhen lost his breath, a few streams of black mist flowed out of his dead halves and condensed into nine sharp needles, which pierced into Li Yao's body, ignoring the defense of the crystal suit.

It was a curse that ignored the defense of a crystal suit or a spiritual shield!

Li Yao grunted. He felt as if nine vicious snakes had slithered their way into his body and were rushing inside his veins and nerves, looking for his critical parts.

He burnt his spiritual energy to the maximum. A lot of torches were ignited inside his body to drive away the snakes. He held back the excruciating pain and managed to suppress them.

It was not the time to deal with the curse yet.

A lot of killing had to be done first!

From the explosion triggered by Li Yao's 'mistake' to Su Jiuzhen's miserable death, the whole process had only lasted three seconds.

In the meantime, the mixed bomb, which Li Yao had carefully created, had spread intense black smoke to every corner of the warehouse.

Even the furthest place from the explosion was enshrouded in darkness now.

Despite the obscurity, Black Stone, White Dew, and the other Immortal Cultivators were keen enough to sense that something was not right. Including Fei Ming, the Meditation Healer, everyone summoned their crystal suits.

Swoosh!

Swoosh!

Black Stone and White Dew's four subordinates dashed forward first and spread out in battle formation as they moved toward where Li Yao had been.

Black Stone and White Dew, on the other hand, maximized the resolution of their crystal cameras, trying to figure out what was going on inside the smoke with all the probe methods possible.

Finally, a fuzzy figure appeared on their light beam.

The fuzzy figure did not look like a human, but more like some kind of hungry primordial beast. It lunged at their four subordinates at an unbelievable speed!

Chapter 523: I Admit My Failure, Master

Chapter 523: I Admit My Failure, Master

Within a moment, one of their subordinates had already been wreathed by the aura of blood from the deadly beast!

This subordinate was at the peak of the Refinement Stage and had almost advanced into the Building Foundation Stage. He was a skilled, experienced Immortal Cultivator.

The crystal suit he was wearing had been manufactured by one of the three main crystal suit centers and modified by the experts on Spider Den!

However, in front of the ferocious beast, his bones and teeth were broken within half a second, and he seemed to have become a cub at anyone's mercy!

Miserable screams echoed inside the communication channel, only to end abruptly in less than one third of a second.

Black Stone and White Dew, however, could see from their blurred light beam that the four limbs of their subordinate had been chopped off before his head had separated from his body as well!

Although Black Stone and White Dew were seasoned Exos who had witnessed countless battles, they felt their head was dizzy nonetheless. The floor under their feet did not seem solid; it seemed like a dark abyss, at the bottom of which the most terrifying devils were waiting for them!

"Master Su! Master Su!"

Master Su didn't respond to their call. Yet, screams continued.

The speed of the ferocious animal was beyond their imagination. Like a cluster of crimson brightness, it dashed past their four subordinates. The first three of them had time to utter a final scream before their death, but the last one did not even let out any sound. His spine seemed to have been unplugged, turning him into a pile of meat that even his crystal suit couldn't support, before he collapsed to the ground.

Four of them were killed instantly within three seconds!

Black Stone and White Dew looked at each other. Brutality burst out of their eyes at the same time. They roared and unsheathed their sabers, charging forward into the black smoke!

Clang!

Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang!

Inside the black smoke, metal collided, and sparks spluttered. But everything came to a stop three seconds later.

Black Stone and White Dew were in perfect poses. One of them raised the saber high above the head, while the other one hid the sharpness of the saber behind them. They looked like a furious tiger and a sordid leopard. Like two frozen statues, they surrounded Li Yao in the middle.

"I was told that your sabers are fast."

Li Yao waved his saber to clean the last drop of blood on it, before he sheathed his saber and walked out of their siege slowly. He continued casually, "If I were not in a hurry today, I would have definitely liked to witness it."

He didn't even bother to look at them. As if the well-prepared, malicious assassins were nothing but air, he strode away, leaving them behind him.

Clang!

Clang!

Black Stone and White Dew's sabers fell to the ground one after the other. Their facial covers exploded after cracking noises, too, revealing two shocked and baffled faces.

"How did you… launch the attack?"

His hands shaking, Black Stone tried to touch his thick neck. Half way through his movement, a terrible wound that had severed his veins, wind pipe, and spine appeared on his neck. Stimulated by the tremendous pressure inside the body, blood spurted out through the wound like a growing red tree. Half of his head was twisted backward weirdly. His eyes, resembling those of a dead fish, gazed at the wandering smoke near the ceiling.

Inside the smoke, countless restless souls seemed to be grinning hideously at him.

"Hiss… hiss…"

White Dew, the dark woman, was better than him. She covered her neck with her hand in time, but there was no way that she could stop her blood from flooding out through the gaps of her fingers!

She stared at Li Yao with her grey eyes. To this moment, White Dew still found it hard to understand. The first day that guy had gotten aboard, she had kicked him down in one attack. He had been completely useless back then. How come everything ended like this? Why?

Black Stone and White Dew, two Exos who used to be somewhat famous among Cultivators and two experts best known for their fast sabers, kneeled down, collapsed, and died behind Li Yao.

Because of the dense black smoke inside the warehouse and the interference waves Li Yao had added to his crystal bomb, Huangpu Shiyi didn't know exactly what was going on, but he did know that something was happening.

His face pale, he summoned a maintenance suit and put it on. Then he hid several pieces of powerful aggressive magical equipment in his hand. He felt somewhat relieved after doing all that.

With a cruel smile, Li Yao walked toward Huangpu Shiyi, neither too quickly nor too slowly.

"Ma—Ma—Master Li Yao…"

Fei Ming, the Meditation Healer who had 'invited' him onto the ship with hypnosis arts, was in his way, shaking with the utmost fear.

As an expert of mental warfare, Fei Ming was not good at combat with real guns and swords. But Li Yao was apparently not someone he could hypnotize, and his combat ability was strong enough to take down Su Jiuzhen, Black Stone and White Dew!

Faced with such a monster, Fei Ming had completely lost his fighting will. His head was in a mess, but his natural instinct of survival made him kneel down and kowtow before Li Yao.

"Master Li Yao, spare me. Please spare me! They did everything! I'm just a Meditation Healer. I knew nothing about bombs or killing! I did nothing! I was coerced. I was coerced!"

Li Yao frowned and sighed. "Were you really coerced?"

"Yes, yes!"

Fei Ming couldn't be more excited, seeing a slim chance of survival. He looked up and immediately started rambling. "The Temple of Immortals kidnapped my entire family, including my two daughters, one five and the other three! They said that, if I didn't cooperate with them, they would feed my family to demon beasts! I had to do what I was asked to! There were no alternatives!"

Li Yao snorted in acknowledgement and said, "If so, take off your crystal suit and throw it to the ground. Go to the corner and check Huangpu Xiaoya's status. If you dare mess with me, you will definitely regret it!"

"Of course, of course. Thank you, Master Li Yao. I would definitely follow your order. I'm now abandoning darkness for light!"

Fei Ming was so happy that he was almost crying. He rose up from the ground and took off his crystal suit quickly.

Hardly had his helmet split from his chest armor when a silver brightness flashed in Li Yao's right hand. Fei Ming's big head soared to the ceiling, span several rounds in midair, and smashed to the floor heavily. His eyes were still open and beaming with the ecstasy from seeing a chance of survival!

His headless body shook violently. His hands seemed to be groping for his head. After half a second of struggling, it fell beside Li Yao's feet helplessly, cramping.

Li Yao kicked the dead body aside and continued walking toward Huangpu Shiyi.

This warehouse had only one gate. Since it was a laboratory for the study of crystal bombs, the walls of the room had been strengthened. They were solid and soundproof. Therefore, Li Yao was not worried that he might escape from somewhere else at all.

It was also the main reason Li Yao had asked for a competition of crystal bombs with Huangpu Shiyi. This was the best slaughterhouse!

Li Yao finally reached Huangpu Shiyi. He opened his facial cover and stared at his opponent emotionlessly.

To this moment, if Huangpu Shiyi hadn't figured out what had happened on the spot, he wouldn't have deserved to be a Core Formation Stage Cultivator!

However, although he was a Core Formation Stage Cultivator, most of his time and effort had been dedicated to the arts of refining. In regard to combat, his capability was merely in the middle-high level of the Refinement Stage, which was of little help now he was faced with such a formidable enemy!

Huangpu Shiyi's face was grim and pale. His lips shivered for a long time before he finally managed to open his mouth. "You—you were not meaning to join the Temple of Immortals. You didn't plan to become an Immortal Cultivator at all!"

With a wicked smile, Li Yao replied, "You know too much."

Huangpu Shiyi grunted and shouted, "But we tested you, multiple times. Even if you reserved your strength during the first test, how did you see through the Furious Bears Union's assault? Or was it that you were blowing them up regardless of whether or not they were real Cultivators in order to win our trust?

"How sleazy you are!"

Li Yao scorned, "Not as sleazy as you think. Of course I knew that those scumbags were not Cultivators from the Furious Bears Union, because I didn't install any alarm magical equipment in my room when I was captured by you."

Huangpu Shiyi was stunned. It took him a long time to recover. He shouted again, "Then, your conversation with Huangpu Xiaoya was also faked in order to fool us, and you knew that there were still crystal cameras and detectaphones inside your room?

"It's impossible! The remaining three devices were refined with the best of my knowledge. They were utterly unobtrusive and in no way noticeable for you!"

Li Yao replied, "Indeed, I was not sure if there were still crystal cameras, although I did feel a little ill at ease. However, noticeable or not, I simply assumed that there were still crystal cameras and detectaphones in my room. There wouldn't be a problem, then."

Huangpu Shiyi was truly dumbfounded. He finally thought through everything Li Yao had done since he'd gotten aboard and figured out why Li Yao had been so generous as to share all the techniques with him.

It was because he was already a dead person in the man's eyes!

However, the dead person was idiotic enough to teach him so many techniques sincerely and even provided ten authentic and precious techniques today before he died!

He had been exploited by Li Yao, the evil, insidious brat!

Regret! Desperation! Fury! Fear!

Complicated emotions surged on Huangpu Shiyi's skeleton-like face simultaneously.

"Wait!"

As if a drowning man who had found a straw, he suddenly yelled, "Blood Oath! You swore a Blood Oath yesterday! You cannot go back on your vow! Otherwise, you will be haunted forever, and the success rate of your future refining will plummet!"

Li Yao raised his eyebrow in surprise and replied, "When did I say that I would go back on my vow?

"Indeed. I swore a Blood Oath yesterday that I would respect you as my master if I lost the competition today.

"Huangpu Shiyi, you are truly an unparalleled genius and a super expert of refining!

"In this battle, you've shown me the invincibility of a Core Formation Stage refiner. I know my weakness and insignificance much better now. In the profound and magnificent world of magical equipment, I am just a beginner, and I'm not capable enough to be arrogant yet!

"I have lost the Skyhill Sword Seminar in the sea of stars. My failure was brutal, and I have no excuse for that. You've crushed me!

"Therefore, I will honor my words and respect you as my master now!

"Master Huangpu Shiyi, please accept the bow of your disciple Li Yao!"

With a solemn expression, Li Yao bowed toward Huangpu Shiyi in the strictest manner. Then, his saber flashed and cut through the gap in Huangpu Shiyi's crystal suit, chopping off his hands!

Chapter 524: Karma

Chapter 524: Karma

After a 'Clang' sound, two broken hands covered in armor fell to the floor. Several pieces of aggressive magical equipment yet to be triggered splattered and, after emitting dazzling brilliance for a while, lost their sharpness.

Huangpu Shiyi was dazed for a moment. He lifted his arms which had been cut off from the elbows and observed them, his head tilted.

For a second, the section was as smooth as a mirror. Bones, veins, and nerves were clear and distinguishable, as if they were pictures from a textbook.

It was not until one second later that two springs of blood suddenly erupted and dyed his face and head red.

Huangpu Shiyi screamed desperately, "My hands! My hands!"

As a Core Formation Stage Immortal Cultivator, he should've had better self-control than to exclaim so uncouthly just because of the loss of two hands.

But the problem was that he was still in the eruptive phase, and he had poured all his vigor and vitality into his hands!

His body was dry and thin, no better than a skeleton, and he seemed to be on the verge of starvation, all because he was nourishing his hands!

By cutting off his hands, Li Yao had taken away ninety percent of his vitality!

"Hands! My hands!"

Huangpu Shiyi cried dreadfully and lunged at his broken hands without caring about anything, only to be kicked right in the chest by Li Yao!

With Li Yao's surge of spiritual energy, the chest armor on Huangpu Shiyi's maintenance suit exploded into pieces, before he flew backwards by almost ten meters.

There was a grunt inside Huangpu Shiyi's facial cover, which was now stained with blood!

Crack!

Crack!

Li Yao stomped on the two broken hands mercilessly!

The hands of Huangpu Shiyi, the super refiner and unparalleled genius, which had been revitalized by his life and soul, had now turned from a piece of immaculate artwork to a pile of meat under Li Yao's feet!

Huangpu Shiyi's eyeballs nearly bulged out as he saw the devastating scene. He almost passed out in anger.

"You blew up my hands. My perfect hands!"

Li Yao pulverized the hands below him carefully and made sure that every finger had been ground into the tiniest pieces by the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit's iron feet, while he said casually, "One must prepare to lose when one decides to gamble. I have indeed lost the game today. Therefore, I will abide by my promise and respect you as my master. I will always remember you as my master, Huangpu Shiyi. In such a case, the Blood Oath will have zero effect on me!"

Li Yao walked toward Huangpu Shiyi, leaving deep and bloody footprints behind as he moved forward.

Wearing a vulture-like smile, Li Yao continued, "I believe that you must have discovered that I'm a trustworthy man. One of my friends told me that the most important thing about Cultivation was that we must be credible!

"I found the words very true.

"Therefore, if I've said that I will respect you as my master, I will definitely do so.

"However, I also said yesterday that I would chop off a pair of hands after today's competition. I didn't forget that promise, either. If I said that I would chop off some hands, I would definitely do that! Otherwise, how am I going to hang out with Cultivators anymore?

"Master, it might be a little painful in a moment. Please try to hold it back!"

Huangpu Shiyi couldn't be more scared. He waved his broken arms and shouted, "What—what do you want? Stop there! Don't come close!"

Li Yao drew close one step after another.

"You—you can't kill me! Let's make a deal. A deal!"

Huangpu Shiyi quickly continued, "I have many other techniques in my possession, including the secret tricks to craft melee weapons of the Huangpu family and the special skills to refine crystal bombs. I even know something about the techniques to modify crystal suits on Spider Den! All these techniques are inside my brain. You wouldn't be able to get them if you kill me!"

"Okay."

Li Yao continued moving forward. He replied peacefully, "I'm not a smart guy, and I wouldn't be able to comprehend too many techniques. Thanks to your wholehearted tutelage in the past days, I've learned enough techniques for me to digest for a while! I'm not greedy. Also, I'm very loyal and thoughtful. Just consider the remaining techniques as sacrificial offerings for your funeral!"

Huangpu Shiyi was shaking violently. He held his body with two broken arms and slithered like a caterpillar, as he begged, "Don't kill me. I can give you whatever you what. I'm open to any negotiations. Just don't kill me…"

"Negotiations are great. However, why don't you negotiate with the 41,524 innocent victims of your serial explosions in the Skyhill Domain?"

Li Yao suddenly burst out in fury. He shouted and punched at Huangpu Shiyi's chest, as if his fists were two tornadoes!

In a moment, sparks were dancing, metal was twisted, skin was blossoming, and bones were breaking. A magnificent orchestra of fists kissing flesh, bones, and internal organs was playing!

Li Yao's every punch hit Huangpu Shiyi precisely at a speed close to that of sound. They shattered every piece of armor on Huangpu Shiyi and his every bone from head to tone!

"This punch is for Sha Guoan!"

"This punch is for Su Hongzhi!"

"This punch is for Tao Xiaofang!"

"You motherf*cking douchebag, die now!"

Huangpu Shiyi's crystal suit exploded. His body turned soft inch by inch. He was spasming and screaming in the beginning, but later, the only sound left was his breathing. Li Yao punched thousands of times, before he suddenly retreated his right hand. He extended his middle finger and his index finger. Gold brilliance in the form of a helix was brewing on his fingertip like a sharp piton!

"What—what are you doing?"

An expression showing his yearning for death's embrace appeared on Huangpu Shiyi's skeleton-like face, whose left eye had exploded because of the punches. Blood and tears were flowing out, as he moaned feebly.

"I've punched you 4,722 times just now. That's revenge for only four thousand unrested souls, one tenth of the whole!

"Let's avenge the remaining nine tenths with this.

"Scumbags like you don't deserve to utilize spiritual energy. I'm going to help the victims dig out your spiritual root. No. Since you are an Immortal Cultivator, yours will be 'immortal root' then!"

"No. Noooo!"

When a Cultivator's spiritual root was destroyed, they would become useless. Although Huangpu Shiyi was no better than a bag of mud right now, he still screamed with whatever strength he had left.

But how could screams stop the unstoppable Li Yao?

Li Yao grinned hideously and pierced his two fingers into the middle of Huangpu Shiyi's eyebrow where the conarium[1] was!

His spiritual energy surged through his fingers and raged inside Huangpu Shiyi's brain. Finally, he sensed an extremely thick object made of spiritual energy.

Li Yao roared and curled his fingers to dig into it. Then he pulled it up brutally!

A lackluster gold line that constituted what seemed to be a tiny, translucent ginseng was plucked from the middle of Huangpu Shiyi's eyebrows!

It was the spiritual root of a Core Formation Stage Cultivator!

Li Yao opened his hand and held the bright gold spiritual root in his hand, before he squeezed it tightly!

Pa!

After a crisp sound, gold brilliant spots dispersed through Li Yao's fingertips and vanished into thin air.

Dissipated!

Li Yao had dissipated the spiritual root of a Core Formation Stage Cultivator!

Huangpu Shiyi had turned into a disabled man without his spiritual root!

He shouted ten times more miserably than before as if it was his genitalia that had just been ruined!

Even the devils in the deepest depths of hell would shake in fear with their blood freezing when they heard such screams!

"Kill me... kill me..."

His hands lost, his bones broken, his spiritual root crumbled, Huangpu Shiyi had been grasped by desperation and had only this luxury hope.

Li Yao licked the blood on his lips and smiled, "Don't hurry, Master. You still have some value that your disciple can make use of!"

Hardly had he finished his sentence did he punch forward and stabbed his fist into Huangpu Shiyi's mouth, blowing up his teeth, tongue, and the vocal cord deeper inside!

The bottom half of the skeleton face had now turned into a hollow. There was no sign of his mouth at all!

Right now, Huangpu Shiyi had no hands to write and no mouth to speak. He couldn't even crawl because all his bones were broken. Since his spiritual root was crumbled, he was not able to communicate with other people through telepathic thoughts, either.

In short, he had completely lost the ability to send any message to the outside world.

Li Yao's movements were very precise. Even in his fury just now, his attack was still well-controlled so that Huangpu Shiyi wouldn't be killed immediately and could at least make his way to the med bay.

Looking at Huangpu Shiyi, who was wriggling beside his feet like a maggot, Li Yao spat at him. Then he took a long breath and tried to calm himself down.

He then walked toward Huangpu Xiaoya.

When he passed by Black Stone's and White Dew's dead bodies, he stopped briefly and sent dozens of spiritual threads groping inside their pockets. Soon, he discovered two jade chips.

The spiritual threads tied them up and pulled them back into Li Yao's hands. Li Yao whistled and said, "Much obliged, fatty!"

When he finally reached Huangpu Xiaoya, he had already concealed his Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

At this moment, the smoke occupying the warehouse was finally driven away a little bit by the powerful ventilation rune arrays on the ceiling.

Huangpu Xiaoya's mouth was so wide open that one could stuff the biggest duck egg into it.

Most of her spiritual energy had been sealed and therefore could not help her enhance her vision. She only saw that an explosion took pace when Li Yao was refining the last crystal bomb. Then, her eyesight was blocked by smoke, and she could only hear screams, each louder than the previous one.

She could tell that the desperate screams came from multiple Immortal Cultivators, even including Huangpu Shiyi himself!

Huangpu Xiaoya was quite nervous, not knowing what was happening. Had other rescuers arrived?

The last thing she expected was that it was the sordid, shameless traitor Li Yao who stood in front of her in the end.

"You—"

Huangpu Xiaoya's heart was racing when she saw Li Yao, whose killing intent was soaring and whose face was caked with blood. She didn't know what to say next.

When she looked past Li Yao, she was even more shocked!

Black Stone and White Dew were dead, and so were their four subordinates!

Huangpu Shiyi was still alive, but he might be hoping that he was dead. He was squirming and struggling on the floor.

"What—what has happened?"

Huangpu Xiaoya was startled. She murmured to herself, "Who are you exactly?"

Li Yao wiped off the blood on his face and pondered for a while, before he answered seriously, "In fact, I'm a good man."

Chapter 525: New Scheme

Chapter 525: New Scheme

Huangpu Xiaoya was truly shocked. She blurted, "What kind of good man are you?"

Li Yao blinked and remarked, "Our society is witnessing dishonesty and moral decline nowadays. There are too many bad people in the sea of stars who are all surreptitious and unscrupulous. How can good people defeat them without being a hundred times more unscrupulous than them?

"Therefore, you may consider me an unscrupulous good man. That will be enough.

"I'm talking to you because I want to ask you something. Are you capable of steering a 'Wild Butterfly VII' escape capsule?"

An 'Ox-level' carrier would usually bring two midsize escape capsules and more than ten small-scale escape capsules. The small-scale escape capsules were, in fact, shuttles that could cruise in the vacuum and boasted certain self-circulation technologies.

Li Yao had discovered during his maintenance work yesterday that the small-scale escape capsules deployed on this particular carrier were Wild Butterfly VIIs.

Such escape capsules were modified from armed shuttles. Each of them could accommodate three passengers and drift through space for more than a month. Their speed and agility were also very satisfactory. Except that their working time was relatively short, there were no significant drawbacks to them.

It seemed that the Immortal Cultivators were worried that Cultivators might be chasing after them. Therefore, they had brought the best escape capsules with them.

"Unscrupulous good man…"

Huangpu Xiaoya was somewhat lost. She nodded subconsciously. "Yes, of course. Why did you ask that? Did you kill all of them? Isn't your combat ability in the beginning level of the Building Foundation Stage? How did you slay Black Stone and White Dow? If you are really a good man, why are you still keeping my barriers?"

Li Yao turned around and started decorating the warehouse. He dragged the dead bodies to appropriate location first. Then, he retrieved a lot of crystal bombs from his Cosmos Ring.

As a lunatic bomber, these crystal bombs had been prepared long ago and stored inside his Cosmos Ring in case he ever needed. But since Su Jiuzhen had been watching him closely after he got on board, he'd never had the opportunity to access his Cosmos Ring.

Right now, he was finally free to set them up the way he wanted.

While working busily, Li Yao explained, "I cannot set you free right now. If I do, the other people will grow suspicious. Just stay inside for a while longer. Wait until we are engaged with Fengyu Zhong and the Great Horn Exo Society tomorrow."

Huangpu Xiaoya bulged her eyes and exclaimed in shocked, "What? You are going to ask for Fengyu Zhong's trouble and reunite with the Great Horn Exo Society?

"Don't be silly!

"Even if you are strong enough to take down all the enemies here, so what?

"The Great Horn Exo Society is surrounded by at least five ships on which there are not only savage space pirates but also a lot of other mysterious Immortal Cultivators!

"Not to mention that Fengyu Zhong himself is a Cultivator in the middle level, if not high level, of the Core Formation Stage!

"Are you expecting to fight all of them alone? What difference does it make for the outcome of the battle?

"Moreover, do you think that the crew members on this carrier are blind? They will simply ignore the murders here and listen to your command nicely?

"Maybe you are capable of slaying them all, but then what? Without a map, how can you locate Storm Prison in the vast sea of stars?

"Even if you miraculously find it, do you think that they don't have secure words or other safety measures? I'm afraid that you will be bombarded before you even draw close!

"What—what are you thinking exactly?"

Li Yao was not moved. He was as busy as bee for almost twenty minutes and finally finished all the decoration. He dragged whatever was left of Huangpu Shiyi into the anti-explosion room that Black Stone and White Dew were in, before he kicked him to a corner and set the defense rune arrays at the highest level.

"Shua!"

Seven layers of gold shields immediately appeared outside of the anti-explosion room.

"You said something this morning that I like very much."

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and looked outside, as he calculated the locations, angles, and after effects of the explosions that were going to take place. He said softly, "Even if this universe is truly nothing more than a brutal, bloody, shadowy forest, we Cultivators will burn all that we have just to give off a single weak flickering spark in the darkness!

"No matter how weak each spark is, how short-lived, how small… As long as the sparks flow unabated, then one day, one of those sparks will light some tinder, and that tinder shall light some fallen branches, and those branches shall set ablaze each and every last tree of the forest!

"In the end, even the smallest sparks will eventually ignite the shadowy forest and illuminate the whole world!

"Even if the odds are only one billionth, I will still summon ten thousand percent of my courage to bring about the fire!

BOOM!

With a telepathic thought, crystal bombs that had been planted in various locations of the warehouse were triggered at the same time. A series of earsplitting explosions echoed nonstop.

Although she was inside the anti-explosion room, Huangpu Xiaoya still felt that her head was dizzy, and her hearing was temporarily lost.

Huangpu Xiaoya's heart was beating fast.

She had said those exact words in the morning. But it felt totally different when they were spoken from Li Yao's mouth with a low, coarse, male voice.

Her declaration sounded groundless and just something to cheer herself up in her desperation.

However, when Li Yao spoke them, she somewhat felt that he was really going to make it. It was really possible that they could illuminate the entire universe!

"What—what is he exactly?"

Li Yao's outline was the only thing distinguishable in the darkness.

Looking at the outline, Huangpu Xiaoya was somewhat startled.

A moment later, when the fire triggered by the explosion was still sabotaging the warehouse, Li Yao dashed out.

He checked the dead bodies first. They had all been blown to pieces. Nobody would be able to tell the cause of their death without examining them carefully.

He then picked up a battle saber that had almost been melted and carried it on his shoulder. He also collected much dust and ash by the way and dyed his face grey. At last, he strode to a corner, opened the alarm on the wall and smashed it!

Alarms were ringing all over the carrier.

Three minutes later, urgent knocking sounded from the gate of the warehouse.

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao took out another crystal bomb. He weighed it and put it next to himself. Then, he gritted his teeth and triggered it!

BOOM!

He was immediately enveloped in real flames. Half of his body was burning furiously!

"Ah!"

Huangpu Xiaoya cried in shock. She had never seen anybody brutal enough to bomb themself before!

What—what was he going to do?

After a grunt, Li Yao staggered to the gate with his body on fire and opened it, summoning the last bit of his strength!

Immortal Cultivators were crammed on the doorstep. They were all crew members of the carrier. Most of them were not battle-type Immortal Cultivators. They were merely in charge of piloting the starship and analyzing the sailing route.

They were all astounded by the ghastly scene inside the warehouse.

"Ah!"

Li Yao screamed nonstop and rolled on the ground in front of them.

"Hurry up and put out the fire!" yelled the captain of the carrier.

A moment later, clusters of icy fog were sprayed at Li Yao, which soon suppressed the flames over his body.

At first glance, Li Yao was already half cooked. Half of his face was burnt and blackened. He couldn't look more awful.

"What happened? Was there something wrong with the crystal bombs they refined?"

The captain's head was in a mess. He was well aware of the match between Huangpu Shiyi and Li Yao. However, the two of them were both experienced experts of refining. A lot of safety measures had also been implemented inside the warehouse. There shouldn't have been any accident at all!

Judging from the damage of the warehouse, it must have been a result of a serial explosion with dozens of bombs!

"It was not a mistake. It was on purpose! It was betrayal!"

Li Yao shouted desperately, "Huangpu Shiyi betrayed the Temple of Immortals. He installed so many bombs on purpose in order to blow all of us up!"

All the crew members were dumbfounded.

The captain was even more shocked. He took a step back subconsciously and gripped the saber hanging on his waist, while he said resolutely, "That's impossible! Master Huangpu has always been loyal to the Temple of Immortals during his years of service. He has long made up his mind to walk on the path of immortality. There is no way that he would defect from our cause! What has happened? Speak now!"

"Ouch—ouch!"

Li Yao grimaced and cried, "How would I know what happened? Half way through the competition between Huangpu Shiyi and I, an intense explosion suddenly took place. A sharp-jawed old man was blown out of thin air!

"Then, the heavily wounded old man accused Huangpu Shiyi furiously, saying that he was deceiving our organization for his own good!

"After I listened for a long time, I basically figured out the whole story—

"Huangpu Shiyi had brought everyone out ostensibly for the purpose of recruiting new members for our organization. Huangpu Xiaoya was one of the candidates.

"But in fact, what he wanted was merely Huangpu Xiaoya's hands. He was simply hoping to get himself a new pair of hands!

"This trip cost the organization tremendous resources, but it turned out to be for his own benefits, which he had not explained earlier. It was strictly forbidden in our organization!

"But for some reason, the sharp-jawed old man discovered his secret!

"The two of them seemed to have made a certain clandestine deal. The old man covered it up for Huangpu Shiyi, and Huangpu Shiyi was to give him something in return.

"But as it turned out, Huangpu Shiyi was merely tricking and stalling him. He was actually making other plans to shut the old man's mouth once and forever!

"However, the old man was more vigilante than Huangpu Shiyi had expected. This explosion did not kill him but only heavily wounded him!

"In fury and embarrassment, the old man told everybody present what happened. He also said that Huangpu Shiyi was doomed for sure! When they returned to the headquarters and met the Lotus King, the Lotus King would make him beg to be executed!

"Huangpu Shiyi turned extremely terrifying when he heard that. He burst into laughter and said that, if he was doomed, he could use some company on his way to hell!

"In the end, I couldn't see anything for a moment. When I was back to myself again, everything had already become as it is right now."

Chapter 526: Scaring Everyone

Chapter 526: Scaring Everyone

Li Yao's words raised a riot among the crew members.

The captain's face was gloomy, but he wasn't holding his saber as tightly as before.

In fact, he had found this recruiting mission somewhat weird long ago.

The Temple of Immortals had lurked in the shadows of the Flying Star Sector for many years. It had a standard procedure with a success rate was quite satisfactory when it came to converting Cultivators.

But this time, to recruit such an important figure like Huangpu Xiaoya, the entire process had been quite hurried.

Also, the fact that Huangpu Shiyi was in a hurry to chop off Huangpu Xiaoya's hands and take them as him own was also clear to the captain as well as the leadership of the starship.

The captain had been doubting him for a while, but he had chosen to not interfere with the renowned refiner and did not think too much of it.

However, hearing Li Yao's words, he thought through the whole thing and realized that it was probably true that Huangpu Shiyi was taking advantage of the organization's resources for his own good.

But even so, was it really enough to cause internal strife?

The captain was well aware that Su Jiuzhen was very smart and loyal to the Lotus King. Blackmailing Huangpu Shiyi did not seem something that he would do.

Also, the serial explosion was so powerful that everyone was blown up?

This accident reeked of suspicion.

At this moment, one of the crew members who had gone in to check on the situation yelled, "Captain, Master Huangpu is still alive!"

Li Yao paused and took a moment of rest, before he continued. "That sharp-jawed old man beat Huangpu Shiyi to the ground, but Huangpu Shiyi was not killed.

"As far as I can see, the medical equipment on board is not enough to cure him. We need to get back to Fengyu Zhong as soon as possible and treat him with the medical facilities on a large warship. You can interrogate him then, and you will know that I'm telling the truth!"

The captain squinted and hesitated. "This is only your side of the story. There is not enough evidence at all…"

"That's why I said that we must find Fengyu Zhong and treat Huangpu Shiyi in a proper medical facility!"

Li Yao was irked, his fingers trembling and pointing at his blackened body and face, while he cried, "Just look at what the explosion has done to me. Am I feigning all my wounds?"

The captain was a considerate man. He still felt that there was something wrong about the situation. Pondering for a moment, he shook his head and said, "I'm not saying that you are lying. However, the accident does carry a lot of suspicious points. Maybe there is still some backstory that neither of us know about. I suggest we drop anchor for a couple of days and give preliminary treatment to Huangpu Shiyi with whatever we have on board first.

"What's his status now? Huh, all his bones are broken? Then, in a couple of days, some of his bones can definitely be recovered. He will be able to transmit some information out by then!

"If there is nothing wrong with what you've said, we can go and catch up with Fengyu Zhong by then. We won't be late."

"That's not good enough. We will be in too much of a hurry.

"Why don't I brief everything that happened here to Fengyu Zhong and ask him to decide? It will all be fixed."

Li Yao stared at the captain for a long time, before he suddenly burst into fury and lunged at the captain, waving his saber. He shouted like a wild animal, "I joined the Temple of Immortals at the risk of being hunted by Cultivators. I haven't gotten any benefits yet, but I have nearly been blown to pieces, and you motherfu*ckers are doubting me!"

The saber was slashed forward, the aura of the blade raging.

The captain was an admin-type Immortal Cultivator; there was no way that he could resist such an insane attack.

His big head soared into the air. Blood was springing from his neck. He did not put on a shocked expression until his head fell to the ground.

"He—he has murdered the captain!"

All the crew members nearby were soaked in the shower of blood. They were all astounded and intimidated. Retreating, they looked at Li Yao fearfully. Many of them had taken out their aggressive magical equipment.

Li Yao waved the saber to clean the blood stain on it. He was wreathed in an extremely furious vibe that belonged to a Cultivator in the high level of the Building Foundation Stage. With a hideous face, he pointed his fingers at the crew members and yelled, "Where is vice-captain? Come and talk to me!"

Many of the experts on the carrier had been killed by Li Yao's 'Crystal Suit Killer' in the faked ambush of the Furious Bears Union.

Just now, a lot of them had been blown up in the warehouse, too.

Almost all the best experts and the leadership had been executed. Even the captain had died. The remaining crew members were merely small fries.

Everyone looked at one another in bewilderment, not having the first clue what was on Li Yao's mind and whether he was a friend or a foe. However, there was one thing that they were sure about: they were definitely no match for this coldblooded butcher.

For a moment, the two parties reached an impasse.

Li Yao was more than angry. He threw his saber to the floor and pointed at everyone's noses, yelling, "Are you all idiots? If I was lying just now and it was in fact me who slayed everyone inside the warehouse, why wouldn't I clean up all of you once and for all now that I have taken care of the captain?

"If I really was capable enough of finishing Black Stone and White Dew, which of you could possibly resist one of my strikes?

"Useless! Totally useless! How exactly were you trained in the Temple of Immortals? I'm really regretting my choice now!"

The crew members blinked and thought about his words; it made sense. If Li Yao was really an enemy who had slayed Black Stone, White Dew, Huangpu Shiyi, and even Su Jiuzhen, did he have any reason to keep them alive?

It was completely illogical!

Within a moment, a stout, meatball-like man ran close, breathing heavily.

The headless corpse of his captain made him exclaim in shock, anxious.

As a carrier without sufficient firepower, this starship ranked relatively low even in the Temple of Immortals. The captain and vice-captain were naturally not the best experts.

In fact, the vice-captain was merely an admin-type Immortal Cultivator in the beginning level of the Building Foundation Stage. Such a tricky situation had already soaked him in greasy sweat.

"Are you the vice-captain? Do you know who I am?" demanded Li Yao coldly, whose gloom and anger swallowed the vice-captain instantly.

The right half of his face was black and red, with steam popping up nonstop. He couldn't have looked more terrifying. Together with his fury, which seemed to constantly be on the verge of erupting again, the vice-captain was petrified. His legs shaking, he stammered, "Ma—Master Li Yao!"

Of course he knew who Li Yao was.

He had witnessed Li Yao's crazy performance in the Skyhill Sword Seminar in person. He was so astonished that his jaw nearly dropped the ground.

How could he not know such a lunatic who could carve a crystal chip with supersonic hands?

Besides, since Li Yao had been involved in the maintenance work of the starship, his loyalty must've passed the test without any problems.

Li Yao sniffed and looked at the vice-captain down his nose. The aura around him was surging like a volcanic eruption as he did not hide the immensity of the spiritual energy of a Cultivator in the high level of the Building Foundation Stage at all. He bellowed, "My Cultivation in the arts of refining has reached the high level of the Building Foundation Stage! When I eat well and sleep well, it can even soar to the peak of the Building Foundation Stage! I'm an unparalleled genius and totally different from you useless craps!

"Right now, I am the one with the highest Cultivation on board, am I not? If so, you will all listen to my commands from now on!

"Hehe. So many people have been killed in the accident. Even Huangpu Shiyi has become a disabled man. How many proficient refiners does the Lotus King still have right now?

"Tell you what, when I return to the headquarters of the Temple of Immortals, I will definitely be appreciated by the

Lotus King, and I will advance into the Core Formation Stage within several years!

"I may have wrongly killed the captain of a carrier in a spur of the moment, but so what? Listen to me carefully, losers. Right now, my wounds are aching, and I'm not in my best mood. Whoever pisses me off again, I'm going to kill!"

As if a cold front just blew through the pathway, the air was almost frozen. Everyone quivered uncontrollably.

Li Yao was not wrong. With his expertise in the arts of refining, if he became a member of the Temple of Immortals, he would definitely become an important figure in the organization.

Besides, different from other professions, it was particularly easy for refiners to make friends with or seek protection from other experts.

Li Yao was adept at refining sabers. Quite a few experts under the Lotus King's command used sabers as their weapons. If Li Yao spent some time crafting several incomparable sabers for them, he would definitely gain their fondness. Within several months, he would find a lot of connections in the organization and become a powerful, influential man!

The vice-captain and crew members were at the bottom of the hierarchy. Could they afford to mess around with such an irritated and deadly person?

Judging from the arrogance and narrowmindedness of the man, even if he did not slay them right on the spot, there would definitely be reprisals later.

Stared at by Li Yao's ominous eyes for more than half a minute, the vice-captain finally couldn't bear it any longer and asked hesitatingly, "What do you want?"

Li Yao gnashed his teeth. "What do I want? I want to meet Fengyu Zhong as quickly as possible! Also, toss Huangpu Shiyi into the med bay. As long as he is kept alive, it will be fine. When we meet Fengyu Zhong, we can deliver him and see how to treat him!"

The vice-captain was relieved. Li Yao's demands were not outrageous. He was hoping to catch up to Fengyu Zhong as soon as possible, too, so that he could be rid of the hot potato. Therefore, he quickly nodded and replied, "Alright. We'll go at full speed and join Fengyu Zhong!"

"Excellent!"

Li Yao strode forward without looking at him and commanded, "I need several doctors to give me simple treatment. Be quick. I have other things to do."

The vice-captain was dazed. He asked, "What things?"

Li Yao glared at him and raised his voice. "Perform a full examination on the carrier, of course!

"Huangpu Shiyi is a crazy man who used to be the strongest refiner on the carrier. He had in his possession the structural design of the entire starship. Who knows how many crystal bombs he has planted since he was seized by desperation?

"Thankfully, he was already beaten to the brink of death before he had the chance to trigger all the bombs. Otherwise, all of us would've been burnt to ash and become dust in the sea of stars!

"Bring me the detailed structural design of the starship. I've been training with the old bastard for a couple of days and know a thing or two about the style of his crystal bombs. Within half a day, I'm going to find out all the treasures that he hid in the corners of the starship!

"What are you waiting for? Hurry and move out! If Huangpu Shiyi has installed time bombs on the starship, which could be detonated automatically in, say, thirty minutes, we will all be screwed!"

Chapter 527: Bleeding Space

Chapter 527: Bleeding Space

After all the crew members had been dismissed and the vice-captain had returned to the cockpit, having been scolded, Li Yao finally heaved a long sigh of relief with his eyes half closed.

He knew that he had won the gamble, for now.

He was not worried that the vice-captain and the crew members would question his words. After all, his capability was higher than anybody else's, and he was apparently so infuriated that he was going to kill everyone who disobeyed him.

Driven by their survival instincts, they could only believe him to be a real Immortal Cultivator in order to get a chance of escape, however illusionary it was.

The only thing that had concerned Li Yao was that, if there was a surveillance system inside the warehouse, the cockpit would have been able to see what was happening there via the crystal cameras instantly. Then, his carefully composed story would have been seen through before it had even been told.

But the odds were very low.

The warehouse was the place where Huangpu Shiyi refined his crystal bombs. Crystal bombs were what he was best at.

It was very possible that many confidential techniques were employed during the refining, and the structure, formula, and the ratio of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures in many crystal bombs were top secrets.

As a refiner himself, Li Yao was well aware of the taboo when refiners were doing their work. They often hated the spying of other people when they were busy creating magical equipment.

The Skyhill Sword Seminar was a competition for young refiners below the age of forty, and it was already the most professional contest of refining in the Flying Star Sector.

One of the biggest reasons was that the famous, experienced refiners above the age of forty who had more expertise were not willing to expose their best skills in front of everyone.

Communication on the Spiritual Nexus was one thing, but showing their true skills in the real world was another. Even the most open-minded refiners were possibly keeping several secret arts to themselves. It was completely reasonable.

Moreover, Huangpu Shiyi was not a simple Cultivator but a selfish Immortal Cultivator. How could he risk his personal techniques being leaked?

If footage of him refining crystal bombs was copied and sent to other refiners in the Temple of Immortals, they were very likely to extrapolate Huangpu Shiyi's best techniques from said footage!

Therefore, Li Yao estimated that, even if there was a surveillance system inside the warehouse, the picture would only be sent to Huangpu Shiyi's own crystal processor. Other people would have no access to it at all.

That was why he was bold enough to tell such a blatant lie.

At the moment his estimation proved to be correct, Li Yao was greatly relieved. But soon after, he grunted, with dark colors appearing on his face.

The curse that the sharp-jawed old man created after his death was raging and sabotaging Li Yao's body.

Li Yao bit his teeth so hard that they were almost cracking. Cold sweat was dripping off his forehead. He felt that nine black snakes were tearing apart and devouring his veins and nerves. Thousands of arrows seemed to be piercing through his heart, and he couldn't be more agonized.

Li Yao had opened his brain on purpose several times, hoping to attract the nine snakes into his head and deal with them by utilizing Ou Yezi's enormous soul power.

However, the curse seemed to be a living thing and had a strong sense of danger. The snakes wandered at the edge of his brain and, sensing the threat there, returned to his limbs and internal organs without any hesitation, continuing their havoc.

Thankfully, Li Yao had inherited the spiritual seed of 'Iron God' Yan Ba, a body fundamentalist, and had been building up his body with the Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining technique, a secret skill from forty thousand years ago. His body was so sturdy that he could almost be called a half body practitioner. Otherwise, he would have been rolling on the ground due to the excruciating pain.

Black Spider Evil Spirit, death before curse. It was indeed impressive!

Li Yao clenched his fists and punched his own chest and abdomen. His spiritual energy surged out and suppressed the curse temporarily.

He had a lot of work to do next. There was no time to take care of the nasty curse. He could only suppress it temporarily!

After he received the detailed structural design of the entire carrier, Li Yao browsed through it and scrutinized the starship.

When he did 'find' a crystal bomb from a gap between two tubes in a certain cabin, which had been timed to explode fifteen minutes later, the vice-captain and the crew members were all perspiring in fear. They completely let go of their wariness and trusted Li Yao.

Li Yao seized the opportunity and took over the authority of the maintenance of the carrier. He sent the remaining refiners on board to unimportant locations for repair work.

Twenty minutes later, feeble fulmination was heard above the cockpit.

The place had just been examined by Li Yao, who had discovered three powerful crystal bombs there.

"Not good. An explosion took place in the telepathic thought transmission chamber. Our telepathic thought rune arrays have been destroyed. We cannot send messages to the outside world now!"

The vice-captain frowned the moment he read the damage report.

Beside him, Li Yao, as the acting manager of maintenance, received the same report. His face was awful, too, as he gnashed his teeth. "Damn Huangpu Shiyi. I never expected him to be so cunning. One of the crystal bombs he hid must've escaped my attention!"

Hearing that, the vice-captain immediately comforted him. "Master Li Yao, you've discovered so many crystal bombs. It is unavoidable that several of them were overlooked! Without Master Li Yao, the entire cockpit would've been blown away, and not just an insignificant telepathic thought transmission chamber!"

Li Yao snorted and continued. "What's our current status? We cannot send messages to the outside world anymore?"

The vice-captain said, "That's right. We can receive the telepathic thoughts from Storm Prison, but we cannot send detailed telepathic thought messages over such a long distance against the interferences in the sea of stars.

"However, you don't have to worry about it, Master Li Yao. We can turn on a sizable light beam around the carrier. By displaying mystic rays in different colors and in different frequencies, we can send out simple messages.

"This is known as semaphore.

"Through specially-made, super-large crystal cameras, other starships can read our signs as long as they know our specific location even though we are tens of thousands of kilometers away from each other.

"But semaphore is usually very simple. It can only describe dozens of specific states we are in."

Li Yao nodded and asked again, "What are the updates about Fengyu Zhong?"

The vice-captain answered, "We've been receiving Storm Prison's messages nonstop. In a battle half an hour ago, five warships of Storm Prison, including 'Blood Rain', the flagship of the pirate gang commanded by Fengyu Zhong himself, have bitten Gold Horn of the Great Horn Exo Society tightly!

"Gold Horn is not fighting alone. Another two warships from Cultivation sects did not return to defend their bases and formed a small fleet together with Gold Horn. They are still trying to resist.

"However, we've been long prepared for the assault. After an ambush, one of the hostile warships was basically wrecked, and the other two starships were seriously damaged, too. Their power systems have been greatly undermined. They could neither perform a space jump nor increase their speed; there's no way that they can run away.

"We have detected abundant telepathic thoughts being sent to various directions. They must be sending distress signals.

"However, the Cultivators who were lurking near them have all been blindsided by our previous strikes and have returned to defend their mother ports or headquarters. In a hurry to return, they wasted a lot of spiritual energy and fuel.

"Even if these Cultivators turn back right now, they'll have to refill their supplies. It will take at least three days for the first wave of reinforcements to arrive.

"But we will devour the three starships within two days!

"Knowing that they have no alternatives, the Great Horn Exo Society's last strikes were quite intense. Storm Prison has suffered a lot of damage, too. They are hoping for us to join them as quickly as possible so that Huangpu Shiyi can repair the damaged crystal suits and restore their combat ability with his proficient skills. They also planned for Su Jiuzhen to sneak into the hostile starships and assassinate the important figures with his stealth abilities. He could also have sabotaged the key parts of the starships and destroyed the enemy's defense from inside!

"However, as it turns out..."

The vice-captain laughed embarrassedly.

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao closed his eyes, his eyeballs flicking from side to side. He nodded and said, "Understood. Huangpu Shiyi may have been disabled, but there's still me! I can repair crystal suits, too. It will be my show time! How long till we join Fengyu Zhong?"

"Soon. In about ten hours, we will be in touch."

"In fact, the distance between us is already short enough for us to detect feeble spiritual waves from the picture fed back by super-large crystal cameras. Please have a look, Master Li Yao!"

The vice-captain brought Li Yao to the control panel and pointed at a giant light beam.

Perhaps due to the filtering of the crystal camera, the universe demonstrated in the light beam was vaguely red, as if the stars were all bleeding.

In the deepest part of the universe, weak light spots were breaking out every once in a while, bouncing stubbornly like countless sparks.

"Is that our battlefield?" Dazzling brilliance was shining inside Li Yao's deep, dark eyes.

The vice-captain grinned. "Yes, and the graveyard for the Great Horn Exo Society!"

Li Yao was even busier in the following six hours.

He wandered about every corner of the carrier, trying his best to search for the possible crystal bombs left by Huangpu Shiyi.

He paid special attention to the critical parts of the carrier, such as the engine compartment, the chamber that stored crystals, and the arsenal, among other places.

He even drove out the staff working inside the cabins many times, claiming that he was going to conduct full examinations on the cabin with his secret arts, which were not to be witnessed by anyone else.

He had just slain the captain. The killing intent on his body had not entirely dispersed. The ordinary crew members, who were in the Refinement Stage at best, did not dare question him at all even though they were somewhat suspicious.

They discussed secretly and reached the conclusion that, since Storm Prison was not far away, Fengyu Zhong would naturally take care of everything when they joined him. Pawns like themselves really should focus on their own business.

Six hours later, Li Yao locked himself inside Huangpu Shiyi's refining workshop.

He smashed the ant nest and the monkey on the desk and swept the pieces to the ground. Then, he started his own refining work.

Nine and a half hours later, the carrier finally finished its prolonged journey and reached the periphery of the bleeding battlefield!

Chapter 528: Fengyu Zhong's Senses

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Battles in the sea of stars were not like the wars on the oceans in ancient times, where thousands of cannons were shooting at the same time and smoke and fire were soaring.

The two parties engaged in battle were more like two hunters lurking in the corners of a dark abyss.

They held their breath and skulked about cautiously. They trod lightly, without letting out any sound. They treasured every bit of their strength as if it were their life. They considered every opportunity of attack carefully and wouldn't act at full strength unless they were absolutely certain.

It was because the sea of stars was too vast a place. A battlefield could easily be thousands of square kilometers. If the two parties were a few hundred kilometers away from each other, it could almost be called a head-on battle.

In such a large battlefield, the damage of any attack launched by the warships would be greatly diminished because of the long distance in between. The enemy could calculate the trajectory of the attack without any trouble, too.

As the spiritual shield technology and the technology of magnetic interference developed, the defense ability of crystal warships became higher than the attack ability. The 'shield' was stronger than the 'spear'.

For an intense bombardment, if it were attack of pure spiritual energy, it could be offset by the spiritual shield of the warship easily, and if it were a real-entity attack like cannonballs, its trajectory could be altered by twisting the magnetic field so that it would only brush past the warship.

In such a battlefield, ten units of resources to launch an attack could be resolved by one unit of resources.

If the crystal warships of the two parties were on a par, the resources they carried would be roughly the same. Those who attacked would only be wasting their resources and committing suicide.

The enemy warships could maximize their spiritual shields and magnetic interference system and wait until the attackers ran out of spiritual energy, ammunitions, and other resources before they launched their deadly counterattack.

Crystal warships in the sea of stars were like herbivores that had extremely solid shells but blunt, clumsy claws.

Only one thing could breach the solid defense of the 'herbivores'—crystal suits.

Compared to crystal warships, crystal suits were smaller in size and higher in agility. They consumed fewer resources, too.

Invading the enemy's defensive perimeter with a large number of crystal suits was a game-changer for the attacker.

Crystal warships were usually equipped with air defense cannons. But dealing with crystal suits with air defense cannons was like shooting mosquitoes with snipers. It would often take forty units of resources to hit one crystal suit, which would have merely consumed one unit of recourses.

Even though the crystal suit was damaged, as long as the Exo was not killed instantly, they could be pulled back to their motherships. The Exos could be treated in the med bays, and the crystal suits could be repaired in the workshops. Within ten hours, they could be sent to the frontline again.

The defender had only two endings when faced with such a situation.

If the defender chose not to bother about the large batches of crystal suits attacking them, they would tear open the defense time and time again and sneak into the warships to sabotage the internal systems. When the shell of the warship was destroyed and the activity of the warship was limited, the main gun on the attacker's warship would bare its fangs and launch its deadliest attack.

If the defender sent most of their resources to the air defense cannons to clear the attacker's crystal suits, they would still be at the mercy of the attacker when they ran out of their resources in the end.

In the vast sea of stars, when a crystal warship was engaged with crystal suits, these were its only possible endings.

The only exception was that the defender carried a lot of crystal suits, too.

Crystal suits versus crystal suits. They were the critical factors for the wars in the sea of stars.

Crystal suits were the kings in a battle of the cosmic level!

The crystal warships equipped with magnificent cannons were nothing but the supply centers for crystal suits, the bases of rest for Exos, and the vehicles that could perform a long space jump with a great number of crystal suits!

This was a world where crystal suits mattered most.

This was a world where the strongest could rage and roar in the universe with equally strong crystal suits!

Fengyu Zhong was standing inside the cockpit of Blood Rain, the flagship of the fleet. The glass on three sides of the cockpit was translucent, making him seem to be in the middle of the bleeding stars.

The other four crystal warships of Storm Prison and the three hostile crystal warships were all more than a thousand kilometers away from each other. They seemed somewhat lonely, surrounded by bright spiritual shields that looked like dense, solid armor. The main guns of the crystal warships were silent, as if they were bystanders of the battle nearby.

In the middle of the bystanders, with the sea of stars as the battlefield, almost a thousand crystal suits were fighting brutally.

Through the special crystal cameras for cosmic wars with super-high resolutions, the picture of the center of the battlefield was magnified and displayed on the light beam. Flowers of flames blossomed silently one after another, each consuming countless Exos and turning them into dust.

Although the light beam was quiet, Fengyu Zhong seemed able to hear the desperate screams, the crazy roars, and the noise of metal and fists colliding.

The sounds made him flush in excitement. He suddenly experienced a shortness of breath.

Although he had witnessed the black tide of death sweeping across the sea of stars countless times, Fengyu Zhong still felt that he was back to when he stabbed a rusty knife into someone else's heart when he was eleven. The thrill of murder was swirling around in his mind and didn't die down until a long time later.

This were the seventh large-scale clash over the past three days between the two parties.

The Cultivators finally couldn't bear it any longer and showed signs of failure. Before they beat the Exos of Storm Prison back, some of them had already retreated into the defenses of the starship.

Including Gold Horn, the crystal warships of the Cultivators barraged crazily and managed to maintain their formation.

However, in the eyes of an experienced hunter such as Fengyu Zhong, such a decision was merely a waste of resources, indicating that they had no better choices.

As long as the war of attrition continued, the enemy's resources would run out very soon, and barely any crystal suits would be able to be deployed.

By that time, when the final attack was launched, the three starships would be swallowed from skin to bones. There wouldn't be the slightest trace of them left.

"Finally—"

Taking a deep breath, Fengyu Zhong felt that his growing ambition had puffed up his body, giving him unparalleled pleasure.

Annihilating the Great Horn Exo Society would be a perfect full stop for the battle that marked the rise of the Temple of Immortals from darkness.

Although the Great Horn Exo Society was unimportant per se, the symbolic significance of destroying them could not be underestimated.

Half a month ago, crystal warships from dozens of Cultivation sects, a handful of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, and abundant Core Formation Stage Cultivators had surrounded the Great Horn Exo Society, partly hoping to ambush Storm Prison and partly to protect the Great Horn Exo Society so that the Exo Society, which had just completed a legendary crusade, was not reprised.

But right now, by the deceptive plans and careful arrangements of the Temple of Immortals, many Cultivation sects had found their homes on fire and had to return to resolve the crisis immediately.

If the Great Horn Exo Society was eventually demolished, the entire world of Cultivators would be disgraced. More Cultivators would inevitably doubt themselves.

"Even three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and dozens of Core Formation Stage Cultivators failed to protect the Great Horn Exo Society. Are Cultivators as strong as we thought it to be?"

The self-suspicion was exactly what the Temple of Immortals needed.

On the other hand, Fengyu Zhong needed to establish his authority on Spider Den.

Not all the space pirates on Spider Den were Immortal Cultivators.

Some of the space pirates were better than the rest. But most of them were simply mobs.

The Temple of Immortals had been lurking in darkness for hundreds of years and knew the importance of confidentiality better than anything else. If everybody on Spider Den knew about the existence of such an organization, some of them were definitely going to leak it to the public when they were captured and interrogated by Cultivators.

The Temple of Immortals was not ready to walk in broad daylight yet.

Therefore, the Temple of Immortals were even more prudent when recruiting Immortal Cultivators on Spider Den than converting normal Cultivators.

Only the really brutal, experienced space pirates who had bloody grudges against Cultivators would be in the Temple of Immortals' eyesight after they were thoroughly investigated in secret.

Most space pirates, including most of the middle- and low-level space pirates of Storm Prison, did not know about the Temple of Immortals at all.

In the foreseeable future, Spider Den would still be the representative that fought against Cultivators on the surface.

Fengyu Zhong had gathered so many space pirates for the mission under the pretext of avenging his only son.

If he went back in disgrace, it would be a great strike to his prestige. He would find it harder to expand his forces on Spider Den in the future.

Therefore, the Great Horn Exo Society had to be destroyed!

Right then, a slender, pale young man walked up to Fengyu Zhong quickly and said in a low voice, "Behemoth-19 has arrived!"

The young man, who looked innocent but was in fact cold-hearted, was his advisor and also a member of the Temple of Immortals.

Fengyu Zhong was refreshed.

After three days of fierce battles, many crystal suits of Storm Prison had been seriously damaged. Behemoth-19, which carried a master of refining and an expert of assassination, had finally arrived to reinforce them. It would be a great help to finish the enemy sooner.

But the advisor had a weird expression. "But Behemoth-19 seems to have had an accident. Their telepathic thought transmission chamber is down, and they can only communicate with us through semaphore. They claim that they suffered tremendous internal explosions in which several important figures, including Huangpu Shiyi, were seriously wounded. They are hoping to dock to Blood Rain and deliver the wounded for better treatment ASAP."

"Explosions? Huangpu Shiyi was seriously wounded? What happened?" Fengyu Zhong's eyes immediately narrowed, his nose flapping like that of an old dog that had smelt something wrong.

"Semaphore is just for emergency communication. Detailed information cannot be transferred. They want to be docked first and talk about it later," replied the advisor.

Deep in thought, Fengyu Zhong looked at the battlefield and said a moment later, "Tell them that Red Lightning has just been upgraded with the most advanced med bays and maintenance equipment. Ask them to dock at Red Lightning! In the meantime, prepare all the main guns and lock onto Behemoth-19. If Behemoth-19 remains on its current trajectory toward us in three minutes, accept its dock request and, when it reaches the best distance for attack, blow it up!"

Red Lightning was the furthest crystal warship away from Blood Rain, the flagship, on the battlefield.

The advisor was dumbfounded. He stammered, "General Feng. But Huangpu Shiyi is still on Behemoth-19!"

Fengyu Zhong smiled vaguely. "If they don't change their route in three minutes, Huangpu Shiyi is no longer on Behemoth-19!"

Chapter 529: Such a Fool

Chapter 529: Such a Fool

The advisor gasped and mumbled, "Has Behemoth-19 been hijacked? That's impossible! There was nothing wrong with their authentication tokens!"

Authentication tokens were a special method to determine the status among space pirates. Before their every mission, they would change their authentication tokens and mix them into their messages. Outsiders wouldn't notice anything abnormal.

Only the space pirates could discover the authentication tokens from the messages and decide whether the messages were sent under coercion or at free will.

Authentication tokens could be included in the semaphore, too.

The authentication tokens of each starship were different. Only the leadership such as the captains and vice-captains knew what they were. Even if other people hijacked the starship and threatened the captain or vice-captain to send out messages, the hostage could mix an authentication token that represented danger into the message before sending it out. The space pirates who received the message would immediately know what to do.

However, the authentication tokens in the semaphore that Behemoth-19 had transmitted were clear and consistent. There was not the slightest error in them.

Fengyu Zhong said coldly, "It is precisely because their authentication tokens were good that I gave him three minutes. Otherwise, I would've issued the command to blow it up a moment ago!

"Right, give me a detailed file on Behemoth-19. This is a carrier. There are not any fatal weapons on it, is there?"

The advisor quickly retrieved Behemoth-19's files from his crystal processor and shook his head. "No. Behemoth-19 is a legal business starship registered under the Thunder Cloud Sect and has been annually examined in its headquarters. To avoid unnecessary suspicion, it was not deeply modified. There are only a few regular crystal cannons on it. Also, since it was carrying out a recruitment mission in the Skyhill Domain, the starship was naturally kept as normal as possible.

"It is just the most ordinary half-armed carrier with barely any firepower."

Fengyu Zhong pondered for a moment and nodded his head slightly. "That's good. Ask all the soldiers on Red Lightning to put on their crystal suits and be prepared to fight. When Behemoth-19 is docked, scrutinize everyone on board from inside to outside. Remember, their identity must be a hundred percent confirmed!

"I have every reason to doubt that someone has broken into Behemoth-19 and pretended to be wounded in order to sneak into Blood Rain with the carrier as a platform!

"Ask the soldiers to pay special attention to the wounded!

"Also, when everyone is off the ship, with hygiene as an excuse, flood Behemoth-19 with the deadliest venomous gas and the nerve-paralyzing gas that can make Cultivators lose the ability to summon their soul power. The process will last an entire hour and must not be one second short!

"After that, perform a thorough examination of Behemoth-19. Pluck every toilet and see if someone is hiding inside!"

The advisor stood straight, admiration beaming out of his eyes, as he shouted, "Understood! Wise decision, General Feng! After that, it's impossible for even a mouse to sneak into our starship through the carrier!"

…

Inside the cockpit of Behemoth-19, Li Yao was somewhat startled. He looked at the crimson light spot that was still very far away on the light beam in a daze and asked, "Say that again?"

The vice-captain of Behemoth-19 said, "We've received a reply from Blood Rain. The med bay on it was hit in the battle previously and is still unrepaired. The medical treatment that it could provide is limited. In the meantime, Red Lightning has just been upgraded with the most advanced medical devices and bountiful Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures before the operation. Therefore, we have been asked to dock at Red Lightning instead!"

"Where is Red Lightning?"

"Please take a look at the star map. This is Red Lightning!"

Li Yao's pupils suddenly shrank to the size of two needles.

Red Lightning was the furthest crystal warship from the flagship, Blood Rain.

Fengyu Zhong was indeed a cunning fox. No wonder he had survived the ambushes of Core Formation Stage Cultivators so many times. His sense of danger was indeed sharp!

What to do now?

Li Yao had originally planned to draw close to Blood Rain with a pretext. As long as the distance between them was short enough, he would be out of the best attack range and even enter the blind angles of the cannons on the starship.

When he was out of the best attack range, even if the cannons were still able to fire, their firepower would be greatly undermined due to the limited time and distance. The spiritual shield on the carrier should be enough to last dozens of seconds.

Within the dozens of seconds, the carrier would accelerate to the maximum speed and crash into Blood Rain brutally!

With the explosion techniques that Huangpu Shiyi had taught him, Li Yao had planted a great number of bombs on every corner of the carrier, especially the engine compartment and the arsenal.

Once the serial explosion was triggered, the carrier would turn into a terrifying super bomb. The flagship would definitely be seriously damaged, if not blown up on the spot.

Li Yao was aware that the Great Horn Exo Society's distress signals had floated in the sea of stars for a long time.

At this moment, countless crystal warships of Cultivators were coming to the location from various directions.

Fengyu Zhong needed to seize the moment and take down his enemy as quickly as possible.

If his flagship was greatly damaged, he wouldn't be able to destroy the Great Horn Exo Society in a short time. Then, Fengyu Zhong's only choice would be to withdraw from the battlefield as soon as possible.

The longer he delayed, the more likely he would be surrounded by Cultivators instead. If he was unlucky, the scheme that the Cultivators had made in the beginning would become reality!

It was Li Yao's original plan.

But the plan had been seen through before it was implemented.

No, it was not seen through. But Fengyu Zhong, as a sly, seasoned space pirate, smelled the scent of danger from him.

What to do now?

Li Yao pondered whether or not he should pretend that someone important, say, Huangpu Shiyi or Su Jiuzhen, had burst into a rage and dashed at Blood Rain, ignoring the orders.

But in the next second, when he stared at Blood Rain in the sea of stars, which was as tiny as a freckle, he suddenly quivered and abandoned the idea.

Fengyu Zhong would open fire. He definitely would.

Chances were that he would even accept Behemoth-19's obligatory dock request 'helplessly' and, when it reached the best attack range, order a barrage to blow it up ruthlessly!

In this unpredictable war, Fengyu Zhong was at an overwhelming advantage. He had five warships, with countless space pirates under his command, not to mention that he was a Core Formation Stage Cultivator himself!

But Li Yao had a great advantage, too.

He knew Fengyu Zhong.

It was even safe to say that, other than Fengyu Zhong himself, Li Yao was the one who knew him best in this world.

Such a merciless, astute, brutal bandit who had escaped countless pursuits and traps had never revealed his true thoughts to anyone. It was possible that his personality, emotions and fighting style were all faked.

He had opened his heart to only one person, his only son Fengyu Ming.

Fengyu Zhong had written his knowledge of plundering, escaping, and surviving in 'Stormy Sword'. In order to make his only son grow into a distinguished space pirate sooner, he had poured a lot of effort into the notes. His real personality and emotions could be felt in between the lines.

However, 'Stormy Sword' had fallen into Li Yao's hands. While he had learned many space pirate tactics, Li Yao had a much deeper understanding of the infamous bandit now!

Therefore, Li Yao realized that, if he continued marching on without altering the route, Fengyu Zhong's suspicion would be confirmed. He would stand no chance at all!

But what about Red Lightning?

Li Yao studied the data more carefully and realized that, not only was Red Lightning furthest to Blood Rain, it was much smaller than the flagship, too. It was only approximately half the weight of Blood Rain.

Damaging Blood Rain seriously would be able to push the space pirates to stop the battle and retreat.

However, even if Red Lightning was blown up, the situation still wouldn't be reversed.

Currently, three starships on the Great Horn Exo Society's side were half wrecked. The casualties of the Exos were severe, too. Even if Storm Prison only had four crystal warships, they could still finish the battle within one day if they were determined to and retreat into endless darkness comfortably before the reinforcing Cultivators arrived.

Cold sweat appeared on Li Yao's forehead, as he said in a low voice, "What's the battle situation now?"

The vice-captain was ecstatic. "It is definitely in our favor! According to the latest report, the two starships beside the Great Horn Exo Society did not stay to protect it on purpose. It was because they experienced a serious space storm ten days ago. The shells of the starships were torn open by the meteoroids, and they were not able to perform a space jump.

"The headquarters of the sects that the two starships belonged to were both on the other side of the Flying Star Sector. Without a space jump, it would have taken them more than two months to cruise back.

"Since the journey was too long, there was barely any difference whether they went back in a hurry or took their time. They chose to stay with the Great Horn Exo Society and planned to find a port to repair the shells of their starships. But they were blocked half way through!

"The firepower of the starships was not strong enough. The Exos on board are mediocre warriors, too. After being attacked repeatedly, they are now on the verge of collapse!

"Also, it has just been confirmed that Lei Dalu, captain of the Great Horn Exo Society, suffered heavy wounds. He may already be dead right now. Haha!"

"What!"

Li Yao squinted, coldness shining in his eyes, as he asked, "How was it done?"

The vice-captain grinned hideously. "It was his own folly! In the battle just now, the Great Horn Exo Society was not able to resist and prepare to fall back. Some of the injured Exos volunteered to cover the retreat so that the rest of them would be able to run back into the defenses of their starship!

"The injured that stayed would've died for sure.

"However, as the captain of the Great Horn Exo Society and the supreme commander of the three starships, Lei Dalu charged out with a bunch of guys and tried to rescue the soldiers who had stayed!

"Naturally, he was heavily besieged!

"The guy was brutal enough for a Cultivator in the beginning level of the Core Formation Stage. He slayed more than forty space pirates within a breath.

"But when there are enough ants, they can bring down an elephant. Under the consecutive attacks of several Building Foundation Stage Cultivators and Core Formation Stage Cultivators, his crystal suit was almost blown off, and he was seriously wounded!

"The injured who had stayed in the first place were mostly killed. Only one tenth was eventually rescued by him!

"Hehe. General Feng hasn't acted yet, and the commander of our enemies has already nearly killed himself just for several injured persons. He is truly the biggest fool of the Flying Star Sector! I am very curious. How did such a clown end up being a captain of the Exo Society?"

"Indeed."

Li Yao closed his eyes, smiled, and sighed, his head shaking. "It's quite uncanny how such a stupid guy led the Great Horn Exo Society to this day.

"Maybe, fate always favors fools."

Chapter 530: Another Scheme

Chapter 530: Another Scheme

After saying that, Li Yao suddenly opened his eyes. The brilliance in them somehow intimidated the vice-captain, who took a step back uncontrollably.

Li Yao waved his hands and said resolutely, "Reply to Blood Rain in semaphore that we will obey the orders and alter our trajectory to Red Lightning right now."

"Understood!"

The vice-captain returned to the control panel and sent the corresponding message mixed with authentication tokens. Then, he turned on the control menu and changed the sailing route to the direction of Red Lightning.

Watching him from behind for a while quietly, Li Yao suddenly spoke. "Get out of the way. Let me do it."

Before the vice-captain realized what was going on, Li Yao had picked up his collar and put him down aside.

Li Yao's two hands immediately turned into two clusters of grey mist while he operated on the control menu rapidly.

As he proceeded, a simpler, somewhat curved route was set, and so were all the parameters for sailing in the next hour.

The vice-captain was so shocked that his eyes widened. He exclaimed in disbelief, "Master Li Yao, I didn't know that you were able to pilot a starship!"

Li Yao smiled and said, "I've spent a year studying the skills to steer an authentic warship of the Star Ocean Imperium. It was ten times more difficult and complicated than this civil carrier! If I can maneuver a warship, a civil carrier is definitely not going to be a problem!

"Besides, what I did was not complicated. I merely chose the best route to… crash into it straightforwardly!"

The vice-captain did not catch the last part of Li Yao's words.

His attention was fully attracted to the parameters that Li Yao set at last.

According to the parameters, when the carrier was two hundred kilometers away from Red Lightning, it would automatically adjust the spiritual shield to the maximum and accelerate to the highest speed possible!

In such a case, there was no way that the two starships would successfully dock; they would crash into each other in the end!

"Master Li Yao, you—"

Every pore on the vice-captain's body was constricting. He suddenly felt that there was nothing but dead silence behind him. All the crew members inside the room seemed to be holding their breath. It was so quiet that the sound of a needle falling to the ground would be as earsplitting as a thunderclap.

The vice-captain turned around, only to be stiffened by what he saw.

Four coldly-shining, terrifying weapons had appeared out of thin air at some point!

They were four Floating Triple-head Six-barrel Revolving Cannons!

"Da!"

Li Yao inputted the last parameter and finished the setting for destruction!

…

Ten minutes later, the door of the suite where Huangpu Xiaoya was locked was kicked open. Li Yao barged in, his arms tangled by brightly shining spiritual energy, which swept across her body. With a flash of Li Yao's saber, all the barriers that locked her were cut off!

"Warm up your fingers while we are walking. I need your help!"

Without further ado, Li Yao gave Huangpu Xiaoya a hand and took her away.

The killing intent around him and the intense stink of blood made Huangpu Xiaoya swallow all her questions. She followed him quickly.

Li Yao took Huangpu Xiaoya to the rear part of the starship, where the escape capsules were located. Two 'Wild Butterfly' capsules were floating in midair, supported by anti-gravity rune arrays, waiting to be temporarily modified.

Li Yao retrieved a great number of magical equipment units that he refined yesterday from his Cosmos Ring. He then turned on his crystal processor and handed over almost a hundred structural designs to Huangpu Xiaoya, while he asked, "I don't know how proficient you are in the modification of shuttles, but as the most talented heir of the Huangpu family, you must know something other than the refinement of melee weapons, right?

"This kind of escape capsule was modified based on 'Wild Butterfly Shuttle'. Its structure is not complicated. Just further modify them according to the structural designs. Fill in three times more crystals as fuels. The working time of the escape capsules should be doubled after that.

"Remember, you have 32 minutes and 57 seconds to finish your job."

While talking, Li Yao was devoted to his modification work.

The magical equipment units on his side were three times more than what he had offered Huangpu Xiaoya. Thousands of structural designs and blueprints were floating around him.

Huangpu Xiaoya took a deep breath to calm herself down.

The talented heir of the Huangpu family finally showed extraordinary reactions in this moment. She immediately started working while she asked peacefully, "What's your plan?"

Li Yao's hands seemed to be flying. He pondered for a moment and said, "It's simple. The space pirates' biggest advantage is time. Their biggest weakness is also time. They have to finish the battle real quick and eliminate the Great Horn Exo Society completely in one to two days. That's the only way that they can get out of here before the main troops of Cultivators arrive.

"With my capability and such a weaponless carrier, it's impossible for me to change the outcome of the battle directly. The only thing I can do is stall the space pirates!

"As long as they are delayed for one to two days, we will win! Fengyu Zhong is a cunning old dog. His nose for danger is too sharp. He definitely won't dare to gamble! When the Cultivators' reinforcements arrive, he will be a victim of his own scheme and suffer a great loss from it!

"Later, our carrier will crash into one of the crystal warships of Storm Prison. But before the clash, the two of us will be away from the carrier in escape capsules.

"After my modification, the escape capsule should be enough to carry you to drift for ten to fifteen days in the sea of stars. I will give you a large amount of sealed food and water in a moment. Three days later, you can send out distress signals. I believe somebody will hear it by then!"

Huangpu Xiaoya's eyes glittered as she asked, "Which crystal warship are we crashing into? Fengyu Zhong's flagship Blood Rain?"

Li Yao shook his head. "No. Fengyu Zhong was very prudent. I didn't have the opportunity to get close to Blood Rain.

"Anyways, just rest assured. Fengyu Zhong is trying his best to annihilate the Great Horn Exo Society at present. Besides, most of his forces will be chasing the other escape capsule in a moment. He will have neither the interest nor the manpower to hunt down a shrimp like you. It's very likely that you can run away successfully!

"When you're out of here, you must inform all the Cultivators of the existence of the Temple of Immortals. Everybody will know that the demonic Cultivators have evolved into a brand-new form named 'Immortal Cultivators' in the darkness and that they are already strictly organized. The Cultivators will know what a formidable enemy they are faced with!"

Huangpu Xiaoya was dazed for a moment. She asked, "What if I can't run away?"

Li Yao grinned and replied confidently, "That is the least of your concern. I've taken every detail into consideration! Look, after your modification, the escape capsule you are taking will boast the most remarkable self-detonation system of the Flying Star Sector. With a telepathic thought, you will be blown into pieces, your soul shattered. There won't be one cell left intact. You will be as dead as anyone will ever be. The Immortal Cultivators will never have the chance to take advantage of your soul should it still exist. How about it? Not bad, huh?"

Huangpu Xiaoya was speechless for a long time. Then she opened her mouth again. "Your nose, ears, and eyes are all bleeding. The blood is all black."

"I know."

Li Yao wiped off the black blood on his lips and flicked it to the ground. To Huangpu Xiaoya's surprise, white smoke was popping up where the blood hit the ground.

"This is an evil spell. I've been cursed, but I don't have time to deal with such minor affairs right now." Li Yao held back the burning pain inside his veins and dedicated himself to the modification of the escape capsule.

Under his modification, the escape capsule was restored to a shuttle, its original version, before quite a lot of other units were added to it.

Huangpu Xiaoya could tell that all the units were meant to increase the speed and agility of the escape capsule.

The fat, round escape cabin was being transformed into a super shuttle under Li Yao's crazy modification.

A super shuttle that was born for speed and meant to break the limits of limits!

Huangpu Xiaoya mumbled, "What do you want? You said that Fengyu Zhong would summon most of his men to hunt the other escape capsule. What do you mean by that?"

Li Yao answered, "Literally what I said. I'm going to attract Fengyu Zhong's main troops and even Blood Rain itself so that I can buy more time for the Great Horn Exo Society and eventually save it!"

Huangpu Xiaoya's eyes bulged, and she exclaimed in a low voice, "You are crazy! Why do you think that Fengyu Zhong will pursue an unimportant escape capsule while letting go of the Great Horn Exo Society? Just because you blew up one of his crystal warships? Besides, what can you do if he does come after you?"

Li Yao smiled confidently and turned on the star map of the Iron Plateau Space Zone. He explained, "Look. We are now at the edge of the Iron Plateau Space Zone, which is best known for the great number of stone belts in it. As we can see, the stone belts here are already dense enough even though we are not even close to the center of the space zone. The meteoroids nearby are heavy, hard, and often mixed with furious spiritual waves.

"If we go deeper into the space zone, we will find that 'Iron Plateau', the main planet of the space zone, is surrounded by almost a hundred interconnected orbital rings of broken stones. They were almost like the super defense systems made of 'star rings' in the ancient times!

"Fengyu Zhong must've pushed the Great Horn Exo Society into this place in the hope that he could take advantage of the terrain. But right now, the chaotic space zone is the best environment for guerilla warfare and survival for me!

"My escape capsule is very small in size. When I hide in the stone belts, I will be like a blade of grass in a forest. Other people will find it barely possible to locate me in the boundless ocean of stones. It will take them ten to fifteen days to find me!

"Does Fengyu Zhong have so much time? Not to mention that some stone belts are so dense that his crystal warships won't dare to barge through in the first place!

"As long as I can last for three to five days in the stone belts until the reinforcements arrive, I will win!"

Huangpu Xiaoya's face was weird as she said suspiciously, "If you can think of all that, Fengyu Zhong definitely can, too. What makes you think that he will go after you knowing that the odds of his success are only one in ten thousand? It doesn't make any sense!"

Li Yao said, "That's why I said I'm only 30% sure. However, if he does not chase after me, I'm 90% sure that I will leave a giant, irrecoverable wound in his mind. If I'm lucky enough, the Cultivation of this Core Formation Stage Cultivator will stagnate forever! One day, I will come back and pay homage to the heroes of the Great Horn Exo Society with his head as the sacrificial offering!"

Huangpu Xiaoya's lips moved, but she didn't know what to say after seeing the determination and assurance on his face.

She stared at Li Yao and remembered the mysterious, unpredictable man in her heart. Then she said, "If so, you must be very cautious. You're right about one thing. The hundred planet rings surrounding Iron Plateau are not natural stone belts but a super defense system. Many of the 'stones' are actually explosive!"

"What?"

It was Li Yao's turn to be shocked. "A super defense system? Targeting whom?"

With a bitter smile, Huangpu Xiaoya replied somewhat hoarsely, "Iron Plateau used to be the capital planet of mankind in the Flying Star Sector. The super defense system was established to resist 'apocalypses'. But right now, its target is… us!"

Chapter 531: Unbelievable Luck

Chapter 531: Unbelievable Luck

The capital planet was the main planet or the mother planet of a sector or civilization. Generally speaking, it was the place that boasted the largest population, the densest spiritual energy, the most advanced technology, and the greatest number of experts. It was also often where the major Cultivation sects were headquartered.

For example, in the Flying Star Sector, 'Heavenly Saints City', the metropolis in space, was effectively the capital planet.

In comparison, the Iron Plateau Space Zone in front of them was full of stone belts. It was barren and desolate. Nobody could tell that it had once been the capital planet.

"To resist apocalypses? To resist us?"

Li Yao quickly thought of the conversation between Huangpu Xiaoya and Huangpu Shiyi days ago. He couldn't help but ask, "What happened in the Flying Star Sector five thousand years ago? Why did the human beings of the Flying Star Sector run from the planets into space? Did an apocalypse take place here? What are qi-trainers exactly?"

Huangpu Xiaoya was silent for a moment, before she replied, "This is part of the dark story that no Cultivators are willing to talk about. I only learned a thing or two about it from the leader of my family when I became one of the stars of my generation. It's quite understandable that you don't know anything about it since you grew up in a remote town.

"Yes. Five thousand years ago, a destructive apocalypse fell upon the Flying Star Sector, to wit, the Iron Plateau Space Zone, the center of our civilization at the time. It turned the prosperous Iron Plateau Space Zone into what you see right now.

"However, there are many twists and turns to the story…"

Right then, Li Yao's mini crystal processor started beeping.

"Half a minute to go!"

Li Yao plugged the last magical equipment unit into the shell of the escape capsule.

The escape capsule modified crazily by him was now completely different from before. All the units and tubes were exposed to the air and looked ugly and jumbled. Yet, they brought a weird sense of swiftness. Huangpu Xiaoya was somewhat dazed looking at the vehicle!

"Prepare to go now! We will be affected by the explosion if we don't. If we both make it, I will come back and listen to your story later!"

Li Yao patted the solid shell of the escape capsule in satisfaction and grinned at the hideous steel beast.

"Alright. But you must not flee to the center of the Iron Plateau Space Zone if you have a choice. Also, try to keep distance from the gravity sphere of Iron Plateau. If you are captured by the gravity of Iron Plateau and land on its surface…"

Huangpu Xiaoya paused for a moment, looking for the best way to phrase it. "Let's just say that Cultivators are not the qi-trainers' favorites."

"Understood."

Li Yao reflected on the meaning between her lines, while the two of them pushed the escape cabins into the launch rails.

They seated themselves in their respective escape capsules.

"Hey!"

Five seconds before the launch, Huangpu Xiaoya suddenly shouted, "What are you exactly?"

Li Yao shut the cabin door of the super shuttle slowly, his last words rushing out of the gap before it was fully closed.

"A good man!"

…

The cockpit of Gold Horn was a mess.

Thousands of holes had burned through the control panel. Tubes were fracturing on the ceiling. Scorching steam was spurting out. Dozens of crystal wires had been torn apart by explosions, which were dancing crazily, stimulated by the spiritual energy like headless snakes.

It was indeed the picture of doom.

Everyone inside the room seemed to have just climbed out of an underground cave. All their clothes were blackened, with dried blood stains. The only things that were clean were their teeth and eyes, which were emitting cold brilliance.

They were trying their best to repair the starship. Occasionally, one of the crew members would fall to the ground silently during their work, but someone else would immediately take over their position without any surprise.

Lei Dalu's chest was hollowed, his right arm almost entirely shattered. Scraps of his crystal suit had been embedded into his flesh and blood like broken blades.

Although simple medical procedures had been performed, some of the scraps could not be removed at present because they were too deeply embedded in his internal organs and critical nerves.

His face pale, Lei Dalu collapsed in the captain seat and grinned at Bai Kaixin. "Old Bai. Cough cough cough cough. Do you think that I should ask a fortune teller whether or not I'm born to not have brand new starships? When we were steering second-hand starships, our decades of journeying always proceeded smoothly. How come that, when we were driving starships specially made for Great Horn, we have been beaten the s*hit out of twice?"

Before Bai Kaixin opened his mouth, a brawny man who was tied up in bandages was already in tears as he cried, "Captain, why did you come out and rescue us? Everybody could tell that we were already hopeless back then!"

Lei Dalu grinned, and then grunted, as he had accidentally pulled the muscle around one of his wounds. He spat a mouthful of blood and said, "Do you know the most important thing about us Cultivators? That's bravery! Although I'm the captain, I won't be able to catch up with Bai Kaixin in regards of strategies and skills to command even if I study for another eight lives. How am I qualified to be your captain if I am not brave enough?"

"You were not brave. You were brainless! Too brainless!" roared the brawny man.

Lei Dalu coughed and continued speaking. "It's not the first day of my brainlessness. You guys should not feel surprised, either. You are unfortunate enough to have to listen to such an idiotic captain's command! Old Bai, what's our current status?"

"Very terrible."

The Great Horn Exo Society was on the brink of doom, but the sorrow on Bai Kaixin's face was reduced by a lot. What replaced it was madness and solemnness. He was like a brilliant chess player faced with the worst situation in a game, which he was trying to resolve with his maximum computational ability.

"The power rune arrays of the three starships are all more or less damaged. There's no way that we can shake off the pursuing space pirates.

"The Exos on the starships have suffered great casualties. Seventy percent of the manpower has been lost.

"If the space pirates launch another assault with Exos, we can only expect to resist them with the air cannons. If so, our resources will be consumed at an unbelievably high speed. Very soon, all our crystals and fuel will run out.

"If the situation continues, our enemy will initiate the real final attack within one day. We will turn to dust in the sea of stars within several hours after that!

"But it will take at least two and a half days for the nearest reinforcements to arrive!"

Lei Dalu was silent for a long time. He took a long breath and put on a carefree smile again. "The conclusion is that we are dead anyway?"

"Yes."

Bai Kaixin replied calmly, "The only thing I can calculate right now is how to give the space pirates the biggest strike before our eventual doom. We will drag one or two starships to the hell with us anyway!"

The heavily wounded man who had been rescued by Lei Dalu bellowed, "Captain, you were too stupid. If you were not injured, you would have been able to run away with Advisor Bai! This is the Iron Plateau Space Zone with stone belts everywhere. Your chance of escape is not slim!"

Lei Dalu scratched his greasy hair, which was soaked in blood and sweat, and said, "I didn't expect that the space pirates would have so much manpower that, not only did they assault the headquarters of so many Cultivation sects, they also had the entire Storm Prison spare to deal with us!

"This time, I've really fallen into their trap!

"Song Laosi, don't cry here as if I'm already dead! Tell you what, cough cough cough cough, I'm as vigor—cough cough cough cough—ous as I will ever be! I can even slay a few more enemies now! I'm not dead yet! If you want to cry, cry at my funeral!"

Lei Dalu rose up suddenly, not caring that the wounds all over his body were bleeding. He stared at Blood Rain, the flagship of Storm Prison, while he gnashed his teeth. "I've been making a living in the sea of stars for decades. There are more space pirates that want to kill me than I can count. Yet, I'm still standing here!

"Fengyu Zhong, you want to put me down? Then you'd better prepare to pay a good price!

"Old Bai, Song Laosi, ask everyone to be ready for the last battle. We will not give up until our blood runs dry and our last crystal suits are blown up!

"As long as we are breathing, miracles might occur!

"Don't forget that how unbelievably lucky I am! Last time, when we were chasing after Fengyu Ming, you all thought that we wouldn't catch him, and he would run away. But at the crucial moment, his Ghost Jail exploded right in front of our eyes. Hahahaha!

"Chances are that this captain of yours is destiny's son, who was born for a special purpose. With a cough, the starship in front of us will explode! Cough cough cough cough!"

Lei Dalu finished his sentence and coughed loudly. His body bent like a shrimp. The blood was all over the ground. The guy nearly coughed his lung out.

Everything was normal on the light beam. The five starships of Storm Prison were still showing their muscles.

Bai Kaixin and Song Laosi looked at each other and sighed.

Bai Kaixin patted Song Laosi's shoulder and said, "Go and tell our brothers to be prepared. Men of the Great Horn must die an extraordinary death!"

"Understood!"

Hardly had Song Laosi turned around when he suddenly felt that the room was illuminated. Bai Kaixin, who was best known for his serenity, was exclaiming in shock like a wuss who had seen a cockroach!

Song Laosi turned around to check what was going on, only to be dazed by what he saw.

On the light beam, Red Lightning, one of the crystal warships of Storm Prison, suddenly burst into a series of giant light balls, which raged and spread from the engine compartment at the rear of the starship. The entire starship was swallowed within a breath!

A moment later, the crystals inside the engine compartment of Red Lightning were detonated. Even more dazzling brightness broke out!

The bleeding stars were illuminated in that moment. The dark universe was as clear as daylight.

Red Lightning had exploded!

Bai Kaixin and Song Laosi were both dumbfounded. They looked at each other in bewilderment and turned their head toward Lei Dalu although their necks were basically stiffened.

Lei Dalu was staring at the light beam in disbelief. His mouth was opened so wide that an ostrich egg could be stuffed inside. He wasn't back to himself for a long time. In the end, his lips curled as he said casually, "Like I said, I'm destiny's son born with a special purpose. With a cough of mine—"

"Cut the nonsense!"

Bai Kaixin pushed him away and dashed to the control panel, which was still burning. "Check the replay of the explosion. Zoom in the picture and see exactly what was going on!"

Chapter 532: You Will Regret It

Chapter 532: You Will Regret It

The picture on the light beam was rewound to half a minute earlier. After being magnified by ten times, it was somewhat fuzzy.

One could only see four interconnected exhaust flames in the form of helixes that belonged to a carrier that was only one third the size of Red Lightning.

At the beginning, the two starships seemed to be performing the regular docking work. The carrier decelerated at a fixed speed and kept parallel to Red Lightning's route.

But soon, something seemed to be wrong with the power system of the carrier. Its exhaust flames were ten times brighter than before, and it suddenly accelerated!

Red Lightning noticed its abnormality very quickly. A lot of rays of light spurted out and rained upon the carrier.

However, it had missed the best attack range. The carrier had cut inside its defense circle.

At this distance, the carrier was in most cannons' blind spot. The few weapons that could attack it were not able to maximize their damage.

The spiritual shield surrounding the carrier took all the attacks. Some of the attacks that penetrated through the spiritual shield by luck were not enough to deal critical damage.

After a soul-stirring fifteen seconds, the carrier's speed was higher than ever and crashed into Red Lightning brutally!

The point of impact was exactly the engine compartment in the rear of Red Lightning.

Generally speaking, crystal warships all boasted very advanced damage management systems. They rarely exploded even if they collided into anything.

However, the carrier seemed to have been neatly set. It completely broke apart from the rear to the front. The spiritual energy resulting from the explosion congregated into a long needle of flames and penetrated into Red Lightning's engine compartment. The fuel crystals inside the engine compartment were all triggered and detonated!

Judging from the scale of the explosion, the middle to rear parts of Red Lightning near the engine compartment had been burnt to the ground. If Red Lightning was not entirely wrecked already, it would never recover the ability to cruise without major maintenance.

Red Lightning had lost all impetus and become an iron coffin floating in the sea of stars!

"That was not an accident."

Bai Kaixin came to that conclusion. He kept rewinding the video and concentrated all the computational ability of the crystal processor on it in order to improve the quality of the picture.

Finally, when he reached about fifteen minutes ago, he found the carrier again and two light spots, which snuck out of the carrier without anybody knowing.

Lei Dalu's eyes bulged and gazed at the two light spots. He clicked his tongue and observed, "This feeling is very familiar. I seemed to have seen such a scene from somewhere else. It reminds me of a certain someone..."

Bai Kaixin had rarely smiled, but now he was smiling. "I know exactly whom you are referring to. But I'm more curious about something else. What's the expression on Fengyu Zhong's face right now?"

...

Inside the cockpit of Blood Rain, the light beam turned palely white because of the continuous explosions. Its color was almost identical to what was on Fengyu Zhong's face.

The unparalleled bandit who had scourged the sea of stars for decades watched the replay time and time again emotionlessly. Even his eyebrow was entirely still.

But the bulging and twisting veins on his clenched fists leaked the anger in his mind.

"It was my fault."

Fengyu Zhong squinted, his cold voice forced out through gritted teeth. "I guessed that our enemies were lurking on Behemoth-19, but I didn't anticipate that they would be so vicious!

"I had thought that the enemies were trying to sneak into my flagship via Behemoth-19 in order to impair my starship or even assassinate me. Therefore, I pretended that I didn't see through their trick. The enemies might've still felt hopeful, but they would be dealt with mercilessly when they reached Red Lightning!

"I didn't know that the enemies would be so insane and decisive! If they could not damage my flagship, they might as well blow off one of my arms!"

The advisor was sweating hard as he said, "Thankfully, General Feng did not give it the chance to come close to the flagship. If it was the flagship that was seriously damaged, we would've had to retreat from the battle as quickly as possible! The enemy was quite malicious. How did he turn an ordinary carrier into such a terrifying giant bomb?

"General Feng, we have just detected that two escape capsules were launched from Behemoth-19 and went in different directions before it was detonated.

"They must be behind the explosion. Should we hunt them down?"

Fengyu Zhong returned to his usual self after the shock of Red Lightning's explosion very quickly. He studied the video and the star map while he calculated all the parameters involved carefully. Half a minute later, he shook his head and said, "That will be unnecessary.

"Think about it. Experts such as Huangpu Shiyi and Su Jiuzhen were on Behemoth-19. How formidable were our enemies if they could take down such experts without alarming anyone before gaining control over the entire carrier as well as the authentication tokens? They must be at least in the peak of the Building Foundation Stage. Chances are that there was one or even more Core Formation Stage Cultivators.

"To cope with one or even more Core Formation Stage Cultivators, how many people should we send?

"If we send too few, it's very possible that they will become prey instead of predators when they catch up to our enemies, who will slay them effortlessly.

"Therefore, to capture the two escape capsules, we need at least one crystal warship. But right now, they are running in different directions. So, we need two crystal warships for the task.

"It's the worst decision to divide one's troops in a battle. We only have four crystal warships in total. If we send two of them away, how can we expect to annihilate the Great Horn Exo Society?

"I think this is exactly what our enemies want. The detonation of Red Lightning was meant to infuriate me. They were hoping that I would make wrong judgement and change the main direction of attack!

"He. The Iron Plateau Space Zone is such a chaotic place. Stone belts are everywhere. Even multiple crystal warships might not be able to catch an escape capsule. The enemies seemed to be audacious desperadoes. But in fact, they were quite thoughtful and took everything into consideration!

"Don't be affected by our enemy. Our target is the Great Horn Exo Society. We are very close to annihilating them. We cannot be distracted at the critical moment of the battle!

"Most of the Exos on Red Lightning had been sent to fight in space earlier. The destruction of Red Lighting does not have much influence on the overall combat ability of our side. We can still hope to finish the battle within one and a half days.

"These enemies are indeed hateful, but we must not be blinded by hatred. We must keep our minds clear. Just let them go!

"When we return to Spider Den, after we destroy the Great Horn Exo Society, we can ask Black Spider Tower to look into who they are. Then, we can settle our grievances with them!"

There was admiration on the advisor's face. He praised, "How wise of you, General Feng! Clever as our enemies are, they wouldn't expect that General Feng is so iron-willed that you are not affected by the incident at all! In such a case, the enemies' tricks will all be in vain. They can only stand by and watch us blow up the Great Horn Exo Society. It will be revenge for Red Lightning, too!"

Fengyu Zhong smiled vaguely and glanced at the disappearing escape capsules in the deep sea of stars. He commented, "It's been a long time since I last met such an unconventional opponent. I have a feeling that I will be meeting them again in the sea of stars!

"I really want to see how frustrated he is when they discover that I don't bite their bait!"

In the dark and boundless space, Li Yao drove forward in the escape capsule that had been modified crazily by him. He was like a dry leaf floating on a raging ocean and couldn't look more insignificant.

But he was not lonely.

He turned on the video that he had watched countless times from his crystal processor. Ding Lingdang's hologram appeared beside him again. She was glaring at him, her mouth pouting and her fists waving, as if she was going to punch his chest.

"Li Yao, I believe in you. You are going to make it!"

"Of course, I'm going to make it!"

Li Yao punched his own chest and suppressed the excruciating pain of the curse with all his strength. He swallowed a mouthful of black blood back down, feeling that his lungs were burning, as if ten thousand ants were nibbling on it.

The pain, on the other hand, made his soul burn more furiously than ever and his brain clearer than ever.

Focusing his attention, he condensed his telepathic thoughts and wrote all the events from the moment he entered the Skyhill Domain to the appearance of the Temple of Immortals onto a special jade chip.

Then, he released the jade chip into space.

The jade chip was a specially-made gadget that had the ability of automatically detecting the signal of the Spiritual Nexus. When it was in the nexus' coverage, it would send the information it stored to a secret address on the Spiritual Nexus.

It was one of the almost twenty methods for him to communicate with Sparkle.

He had to inform the Cultivators from the Heaven's Origin Sector on Sparkle of the rise of Immoral Cultivators so that they could be better prepared.

After that, Li Yao slightly altered the route and went deep into the Iron Plateau Space Zone.

Blood Rain did not chase after him. It was quite understandable. Fengyu Zhong was too cunning a dog to be irked to easily.

With a cruel smile, Li Yao sent a plain message to Blood Rain.

In order to attract the rescuers' attention, escape capsules all carried very powerful magical equipment to transmit telepathic thoughts. Therefore, the message was delivered to the mainframe crystal processor of Blood Rain within several minutes.

Inside the cockpit of Blood Rain…

"General Feng, one of the escape capsules has sent us a plain message!" the advisor said with a weird expression and displayed the message on the main light beam of the cockpit.

The message was very simple. In fact, it only had two words: 'Catch me!'

Fengyu Zhong was dazed for a long time. He mocked, his head shaking, "I thought that this was a terrifying enemy. I didn't expect him to be so naïve! He doesn't think that he can provoke me with a few words and force me to chase after him without considering the big picture, does he?"

The advisor agreed, "The fact that the guy is playing such childish moves suggests that he has no other options right now!"

Five minutes later, the second message arrived.

"There's still time to pursue me before I run into the stone belts. Really. Come and catch me, or you're going to regret it!"

The advisor was startled. "What's wrong with the guy? One time was not enough, and he just did it again?"

Fengyu Zhong sneered, "Don't bother about him. Ask everyone to take a good rest while we still can. Let the maintenance workshops repair the crystal suits as fast as possible. When 60% of our combat ability is restored, we will launch another attack to drain Great Horn!"

Another five minutes passed. The third message was sent over.

"Don't say that I didn't give you the opportunity. You let loose of it yourself. In another five minutes, you will burst into fury and roll on the ground, Fengyu Zhong!"

The advisor did not know what to say.

He had never seen such an annoying enemy before.

But Fengyu Zhong gazed at the words, deep in thought.

The advisor was shocked. "General Feng, you are not planning to mobilize all the troops to chase after a small escape capsule, are you? Let me see. The man has reached the periphery of the stone belts. It's already too late for us to turn back and go after him. The odds of success are not very high..."

Fengyu Zhong yelled, "Of course I wouldn't do such stupid things! I was just wondering why the enemy was so immature! Ask everyone to be prepared. We will launch a full-scale raid in half an hour!"

Five minutes later, the fourth message was received.

"General Feng, the enemy sent yet another message. This time, it's not text, but… a very large video!" said the advisor with a weird expression.

Chapter 533: Fury of Core Formation

Chapter 533: Fury of Core Formation

"A video?"

For some reason, Fengyu Zhong had a terrible feeling. He quickly thought over everything and yet failed to figure out where the problem was. He waved his hands and said, "Play the video on the main light beam. Let's see what is it that the guy wants to sell!"

Soon, the video was on. A ten-second storm of blood was begun!

The video seemed to have been shot by the crystal camera of a crystal suit from the main perspective inside a dim cabin.

Black smoke was spreading. Intense flames were jumping. The picture was flicking between light and dark, bringing a strong sense of mystery.

The picture was not clear yet, but everybody could hear the screams that resembled those of a pig being butchered alive. The somewhat familiar voice made Fengyu Zhong blanch; the same went for the advisor and everyone else inside the room.

In the very next second, Fengyu Zhong saw… Fengyu Ming, his only son!

Fengyu Ming was crouching inside a broken crystal suit. He seemed to have endured the cruelest suffering. The bones all over his body had been fractured. He had been stuffed into a giant tube by force as if he were a fat worm.

For a moment, Fengyu Zhong did not realize what the tube was for; he only thought that it looked familiar.

In the top right corner of the light beam, there was a countdown as red as blood.

Ten seconds.

Fengyu Ming was struggling desperately like fish on a chopping block. His broken bones pierced through his skin, and his blood was flooding out. He couldn't have looked more miserable.

He was shouting and begging as loud as he could. "No! You can't kill me! I can give you whatever you want! Anything you want!"

Fengyu Zhong exclaimed in shocked. The expression on his face turned from confusion to abhorrence!

Nine seconds, eight seconds.

"I know the coordinates of quite a few other treasures. I've found the residences of ancient Cultivators in two asteroids. I also know three top secret smuggling routes. I can tell you all of them as long as you spare my life!"

Cracking noises were bursting out of Fengyu Zhong's fists, as if several crystal bombs were exploding inside his palms simultaneously!

Seven seconds, six seconds.

"Who are you? Who are you exactly? We have no grudges. Why do you have to kill me? Why?"

CRACK. CRACK.

Below Fengyu Zhong's feet, the floor made of super alloys collapsed. A giant pit almost one meter in diameter appeared! The entire deck was almost stomped through!

Five seconds, four seconds, three seconds.

"Is this for those ninety ordinary people? You are crazy. You are a rabid dog, too! My father will not let go of you. Storm Prison will not let go of you. None of the pirate gangs on Spider Den will let go of you!"

"Ah Ming!"

Fengyu Zhong cried like a wounded animal!

Two seconds, one second, zero seconds.

As the countdown reached zero, it clicked and dispersed into thousands of streaks of redness.

"NOOO! NOOO! NOOO!"

Fengyu Ming completely went mad. He rolled over and over and uttered meaningless screams.

The rune arrays of the wind class deep inside the fuel transmission tube grew louder and louder, motivated by the incoming spiritual energy.

As a result, the attraction force inside the tube grew stronger and stronger, pulling Fengyu Ming, together with his shattered crystal suit, further into it.

It was not until this moment that Fengyu Zhong finally realized what the tube was.

As if somebody had stabbed a knife into his chest brutally, Fengyu Zhong's face did not have the slightest hint of blood. He looked like a dead person who had just climbed out of the deepest level of hell in furious desperation for revenge!

Fengyu Zhong was like a piglet that was about to be sent into a mincer. He struggled vigorously and frantically, his right arm clinging to the wall of the tube. Five clear traces were left on the tube, but they did not help the situation. Fengyu Ming was dragged deeper and deeper into the tube.

His screams were louder and louder, as he was pulled into the bottom of the tube.

Before he was entirely swallowed by darkness, he raised his head and looked at his murderer for one last time.

Misery, desperation, hatred, anger… The expression on his face was so complicated that it was beyond the description of any words.

"Ugh!"

Fengyu Zhong was exasperated!

At the turn of the tube, Fengyu Ming made the last attempt.

It could be seen clearly from the picture that the strong attraction force pulled his flesh, fractured bones, internal organs, and the scraps of his crystal suit through his wounds.

Fengyu Ming's screams were even louder than the fulminations of four fully-functioning rune arrays of the wind class.

After several seconds, he finally couldn't bear it any longer and was pulled to the end of the fuel transmission tube where the burning crystal reactor embraced him.

That was the end of the video.

No… It was not ended yet.

Three bloody words appeared on the dark light beam, as if they were written by the innocent victims of Fengyu Zhong and Fengyu Ming with their blood.

'One more time?'

Fengyu Zhong did not have a choice. The picture jumped to the very beginning when the ten-second countdown had just begun.

Fengyu Ming, at this moment, was still struggling hard. But everything was the past now. Fengyu Zhong could not change anything, even though he was a Core Formation Stage Cultivator. He was not even able to keep the hair of his son and could only watch him be thrown into the crystal reactor helplessly.

Fengyu Zhong did not even know who the true murderer was!

"Ahh! Ahh! Ahh!"

Fengyu Zhong's eyes turned crimson. His hair grew longer and longer until it stood up in the end. Glittering spiritual energy was bursting out at the end of his hair, as if it were burning!

"Zi zi! Zi zi zi zi!"

Centering at Fengyu Zhong, a shining purple light ball appeared out of nowhere and quickly expanded, surrounded by lightning that was almost purely black!

The light ball boasted tremendous attraction force and pulled many small objects inside the room over. When the objects reached the light ball, they were all torn to pieces and crushed to powder by the terrifying force!

BAM! BAM! BAM!

Several illumination rune arrays on the ceiling of the cockpit could not bear the intimidating strength and exploded one after another.

The room was immediately cast into darkness.

The purple light ball was still expanding.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

The mini crystal processors of the crew members inside the room exploded on their wrists due to the unbearable fury from Fengyu Zhong.

However, none of the crew members noticed that their wrists were bleeding in great pain.

Everybody was enshrouded in sheer shock and fear.

In their eyes, Fengyu Zhong was an invincible man who had savaged the sea of stars for decades.

But the mysterious enemy was insane enough to transmit the video of him slaying Fengyu Zhong's only son in a plain message.

Was he not afraid of the wrath of a Core Formation Stage Cultivator?

On the light beam, the video had been played twice and was about to be played for the third time.

Intimidated by Fengyu Zhong's overwhelming anger, everybody secretly retreated to the corners of the room. None of them dared turn off the light beam.

The space pirates had been scared the heck out of!

Finally, the purple light ball and the black electric arcs stopped expanding. They gradually shrank in size, but Fengyu Zhong's aura soared exponentially in the meantime, as if the skin covering his flesh was being torn open, revealing the true identity of a ferocious animal behind it!

"Hehe! Hehehehe!"

Fengyu Zhong grinned hideously. He spat a mouthful of red, burning mist!

The video had made him lose control over his mind and caused him internal injuries. But before he vomited the blood, it had already been vaporized into steam by his fury!

"General Feng!"

The advisor could tell that it was not a good sign. He hesitated for a while. But in the end, he gritted his teeth and dashed forward with his spiritual shield maximized. He concentrated his voice into a narrow thread and pierced it into Fengyu Zhong's ears.

"General Feng, don't be rash. We are going to eliminate the Great Horn Exo Society. If we change our direction now, all our endeavors will have been in vain. The neat scheme that we have prepared for such a long time, the resources that we summoned, and the spies who exposed themselves will all have been wasted!

"General Feng, the enemy is trying to infuriate you on purpose so that we chase after him instead of the Great Horn Exo Society! We cannot be fooled by him!

"General Feng, we are both members of the Temple of Immortals! When we embarked on the path of immortality, we all understood that the feelings of the mortals are just illusions and that immortality is the only reality!

"The relationship of father and son, husband and wife, brothers and sisters are all mortal feelings that we Immortal Cultivators must cut off! General Feng, cut the mortal feelings, strengthen your beliefs, and seek the ultimate immortality. Don't be affected by the mundane affairs, General Feng!

The words 'cut the mortal feelings' struck inside Fengyu Zhong's brain like lightning. His eyes were finally clearer. He breathed heavily and mumbled to himself, "Yes, yes. Cut the mortal feelings. I'm going to cut the mortal feelings. Only ants and monkeys which are driven by their primitive instincts value such feelings. I'm going to cut—cut—"

The video had finished for the third time.

This time, it was not played again. Two lines of text appeared on the light beam instead.

'Fengyu Zhong, like I said, you would regret it.

'Ha—Ha—Ha—'

Hardly had Fengyu Zhong's eyes gone clear when they were wreathed in animalistic brutality again after a painful, prolonged struggle. He kicked his advisor right in the chest and yelled, "The f*ck am I cutting! That's my son you're taking about!"

The advisor was kicked more than ten meters away. But before he hit the ground, he was pulled back by an uncanny attraction force, and his collar was clenched by Fengyu Zhong.

Fengyu Zhong's face was as horrifying as that of the craziest devil. His coarse voice also condensed into a thread and pierced into the advisor's ears.

"Don't forget what banner we initiated the assault under.

"We went out for the revenge of Ah Ming!

"Right now, the man has sent the video of him killing my son to us and every other space pirate of Storm Prison!

"This is like sh*tting on my head! My face is being smacked in front of everyone on Spider Den!

"If I don't capture the guy, skin him, and mince him, how am I going to lead Storm Prison in the future? How am I going to establish my authority on Spider Den?

"Survival of the fittest is the ultimate truth of Spider Den. The winners are kings, and the strongest are emperors! If I don't defend my honor today, none of the space pirates will be awed by me again! Other bandits in the Core Formation

Stage will look down upon me and even make plans to absorb Storm Prison!

"In short, if I don't act, I will become the biggest joke of Spider Den!"

The advisor was smart enough to quickly get what Fengyu Zhong was trying to say. He gasped when he thought everything through.

The enemy was indeed vicious and sordid!

Such provocation was an open trap. Even if Fengyu Zhong was determined enough to cut off the mortal feelings, he would still have to close his eyes and bite the bait, knowing that it was bait, in order to defend his honor!

Chapter 534: Great Horn's Decision

Chapter 534: Great Horn's Decision

Fengyu Zhong took a deep, deep breath.

A tornado seemed to be sweeping inside the room. Many crew members saw two white lines appearing suddenly before they were absorbed into Fengyu Zhong's nostrils.

They felt that the air in the room was thin, as if Fengyu Zhong had inhaled all the air within room.

The breath made Fengyu Zhong's head clear again. Cold brilliance was blinking in his murderous eyes as he asked, "Do we have any chance to catch the enemy now?"

The advisor ran calculations quickly and answered five seconds later. "The enemy is fleeing toward the center of the Iron Plateau Space Domain. Judging from its route, he is planning to run into the circular stone belts around Iron Plateau. It will be tricky if he gets there.

"However, the enemy is on a 'Wild Butterfly' escape capsule whose speed is not very high.

"Red Lightning has just been compromised. Of the other four crystal warships, three have power rune arrays damaged in different levels. Their speed is relatively low, and they are in dire need of maintenance.

"However, the engine compartment of Squid is still intact. Also, as a quick assault starship, it boasts amazing speed. If it goes at full speed, even though the escape capsule is fleeing at its top speed, Squid will still be able to catch up to it in three hours!

"But there are not many experts on Squid. Our enemy is vicious and sordid. He might still have other backup plans. I'm afraid that Squid alone is not enough to capture him!

"Besides, such an extreme chase will consume enormous fuel. Once it changes its direction, there is no way to turn back!"

Steering a crystal warship thousands of meters long was totally different from steering a shuttle. Although cruising at a fixed speed did not cost much fuel, acceleration, deceleration, and alteration of the route would burn a lot of energy.

Decelerating a crystal warship whose speed had reached its maximum to complete stop would cost astronomical fuel.

Therefore, once Squid changed its direction to pursue the escape capsule, it was not likely to come back again to join the battle against the Great Horn Exo Society.

Without any hesitation, Fengyu Zhong commanded, "Not one. All the remaining four crystal warships will go after the new enemy now!

"If Squid is sent away, the remaining three crystal warships might not be able to finish the battle within one day and a half. When the reinforcing Cultivators arrive, we will be caught in an awkward situation.

"In the meantime, Squid is only a quick assault starship which carries no Core Formation Stage Cultivators. I'm very suspicious whether or not it is capable of capturing such a brutal, insane enemy!

"If the enemy sets up another trap and takes down Squid, we will really be doomed.

"If we don't do it, we don't do it; but if we do it, we do it with our best. Ask Squid to go after the escape capsule first. Remember, their task is to harass the enemy and slow him down. If the enemy charges out of the escape capsule in his crystal suit, retreat to the defense circle of the starship immediately. Don't be headstrong!

"I have every reason to believe that the enemy is in the peak of the Building Foundation Stage or even the beginning level of the Core Formation Stage. He might put up a good fight in a crystal suit. Chances are that he is in possession of a super crystal suit. Otherwise, how could he sneak into Ah Ming's Ghost Jail without alarming anyone and murder him?

"The other three starships will clean up the mess here and launch another raid on the Great Horn Exo Society. When the enemy is disrupted, we will retreat from the battlefield and follow Squid!

"Blood Rain will cover the retreat later!

"Carry out the commands!"

…

Two hours later, inside the broken cockpit of Gold Horn.

Lei Dalu, Bai Kaixin, and all the other members of the Great Horn Exo Society were dumbfounded.

The picture inside the light beam was the most unbelievable miracle in the world, which had rendered all of them speechless for a long time.

An hour earlier, they had suffered the most intense attack since the battle started. The enemy had assaulted them belligerently as if determined to finish the battle once and for all. Almost all the hostile Exos were deployed for the assault.

The three starships on the Great Horn Exo Society's side tried their best to hold back the attack. Their blood had almost run dry.

Thankfully, the enemy's final attack was a bit hasty. The defense network of the three starships still boasted abundant firepower and managed to resist the attack eventually.

But before they were back to themselves, they suddenly noticed that the space pirates were retreating from the battlefield in an orderly manner.

Looking at the three starships on their side, which were riddled with holes, the spiritual energy and ammunitions that was all running out, and the countless Exos who had suffered heavy wounds, everyone found it hard to believe their eyes.

It was almost like a hungry tiger that had put down a bull and torn open its throat—the bull was bleeding, and its death was only a matter of time—but the hungry tiger then backed off without a reason.

"What's going on?"

Lei Dalu did not understand at all. He and the other warriors of the Great Horn Exo Society, who had more muscles than brains, looked at each other in bewilderment.

Bai Kaixin pondered for a moment and ran some calculations on the light beam. He made the conclusion half a minute later. "They must be chasing after one of the two escape capsules."

Lei Dalu was even more confused. "Why? Just because the one inside the escape capsule sabotaged one of Storm Prison's starships, Fengyu Zhong went mad and decided to hunt him down and let us go?

"If Fengyu Zhong is such an emotional man, how did he secure his fame on Spider Den for decades?"

Bai Kaixin was baffled, too. He frowned and said, "I find it very odd, too. Logically, we are Fengyu Zhong's sole target at present. For a resolute and cunning man like him, he wouldn't change his target easily, much less forgetting the big picture just because one of his starships was destroyed, unless..."

Bai Kaixin examined the information the starship collected carefully. His eyes suddenly shone as he continued speaking. "Unless the one inside the escape capsule incited Fengyu Zhong in a way that we don't know, or the man gave Fengyu Zhong a good reason to shift his attention to him!

"Captain, look, a few hours ago, the escape capsule had sent four precisely-oriented information streams to Blood Rain. Although we don't know the content yet, Fengyu Zhong did have a short 'conversation' with him. Maybe that is the reason Fengyu Zhong burst into fury."

The room fell into prolonged silence. The only thing that could be heard was the spluttering noises of the sparks.

Lei Dalu suddenly asked, "Old Bai, why do you think the man inside the escape capsule irritated Fengyu Zhong without a reason?"

With a bitter smile, Bai Kaixin replied, "Isn't it obvious? He took down one of Storm Prison's starships at first and then lured all of Fengyu Zhong's troops to go after him. His sole purpose was apparently to rescue us!"

"To rescue us…"

Lei Dalu scratched his blood-stained beard and murmured, "I seem to know who is inside the escape capsule now."

Bai Kaixin squinted, sharpness beaming out of his eyes. He remarked, "It all makes sense now. I've guessed it, too. And if it really is the guy we think it is, I also know how he managed to piss off Fengyu Zhong now.

"Captain, it appears that luck is truly on your side!"

Lei Dalu grinned. He laughed so loud that his tears were flowing on his big, greasy face. He mumbled, "I don't know whether or not luck is on my side. But I do know that my brothers are on my side!

"Old Bai, do you think we can let our good brother fight alone and be pushed to the desolate land when he has come such a long way here to rescue us after hearing that the Great Horn Exo Society was in danger?"

Bai Kaixin blinked quickly and maximized his computational ability. A moment later, his eyes were glittering with confidence again. He replied, "Indeed. I've thought of a plan.

If it works out, our good brother's pressure will be reduced to minimum, and we can even tear a big chunk of flesh off Fengyu Zhong's body!"

Five minutes later, they were connected to the communication channel of the other two starships.

Appearing on the light beam were another two faces that were equally blood-stained and stubborn.

They were Xin Hongde, an elder of the Flying Flower Sect, and Jing Yong, First Deacon of the Swooping Eagle Sect.

Flying Flower Sect and Swooping Eagle Sect were two medium-sized sects at the edge of the constellation. Xin Hongde and Jing Yong were both in the beginning level of the Core Formation Stage, just like Lei Dalu.

They had joined the collective operation of the major sects to ambush the space pirates under the impression that they could cheer for the strong Cultivators and fish for the small fries at the back.

However, they encountered a space storm due to bad luck. The shells of their warships were seriously damaged, and they were not able to perform a space jump.

When the crystal warships of other sects were returning to their homes via space jumps, they could only form a fleet with Gold Horn, hoping to find a port to repair their shells so that they could jump to their homes.

Never did they anticipate that they would be assaulted by large troops of space pirates on the way. They suffered great losses, and their men had nearly all been killed.

Compared to the Great Horn Exo Society, which was the space pirates' main target, these two sects could almost be called 'collateral damage'. Therefore, their anger was so obvious that it was written on their faces.

"Captain Lei, we were meaning to contact you a moment ago. Did the space pirates retreat because our reinforcements are coming?" asked Xin Hongde.

Xin Hongde was in his nineties. For a Core Formation Stage Cultivator, he was in his prime years. His eyes were vigorous, but he was apparently a very prudent man.

Lei Dalu replied, "The reinforcement have not arrived yet. The space pirates have shifted their routes because they are chasing after another Cultivator with their full might!"

"What?"

Xin Hongde couldn't have been more surprised. "Who is this guy? Is he more valuable than three crystal warships that are about to be blown up?"

Lei Dalu said, "Right now, we don't know for sure who the guy is, but it is obvious that he has come to our rescue after a very long journey at the risk of his own life! Now, we have a new plan that can help him and fight side by side with him!

"Please take a look. The engine compartment of the remaining four crystal warships of the space pirates have been damaged to different extents. Their maximum speeds are not the same.

"Fengyu Zhong must've ordered the four crystal warships to chase after the escape capsule at full speed. As a result, the four crystal warships are now in a long line. The one with the most damaged engine compartment has been left far behind.

"Fengyu Zhong thinks that we've been daunted by him and we will only cheer for his retreat. He thinks that, while he is gone, we will stay here to recover and wait for the reinforcements. He thinks, we will never be bold enough to fight against him again!

"But in fact, we are going to take advantage of his assumption. We will follow him quietly and knock down the last starship at an appropriate time!"

Chapter 535: Planetary Rings

Chapter 535: Planetary Rings

Audacious was not enough to describe the plan; it was nuts. Purely nuts!

Xin Hongde and Jing Yong both fell silent.

Jing Yong was only in his sixties. For a Core Formation Stage Cultivator, he was still very young. He couldn't help but ask, "The power rune arrays of the three starships on our side have all been seriously wrecked. We don't have sufficient backup components, and there is no way that we can restore the full speed of the starships in several days. How are we going to catch our enemy?"

Fengyu Zhong had, of course, calculated everything before he summoned all his troops to attack the escape capsule. He was well aware that the three starships on the Great Horn Exo Society's side were all exhausted and damaged. They wouldn't be able to counterattack even if they wanted to.

Bai Kaixin blinked, and with a mysterious smile, he observed, "Of course, we cannot afford to maintain all of the three starships. But what if we gather the usable units and components of the three starships into one starship?

"After all, we don't have so many soldiers at present. Fixing up three starships would be wasteful for us. We can consider dismantling the units and components from your starships and use them to repair Gold Horn.

"If so, we can definitely restore the speed of this starship to an acceptable speed!

"Then, we will leave all the wounded to your starships where they will wait for the reinforcements.

"All the men who can still fight will gather on Gold Horn. We will launch a counterattack and catch them off guard!"

Jing Yong gasped and said, "But the space pirates have four starships, and we will only have one."

Bai Kaixin narrowed his eyes and sneered, "But time is on our side.

"This is the most dangerous gamble, with time as the wager!

"Think about it. Now that Fengyu Zhong is chasing the Cultivator at full speed, his starships must be consuming fuel crazily at the moment.

"When he discovers that the starship left behind has been attacked by us, he will be caught in a dilemma.

"If the starship is to turn back, it has to decelerate from the rushing state slowly and reset the sailing route. Twice as much fuel and time will be wasted!

"By that time, our reinforcements could show up at any moment. Fengyu Zhong must keep enough fuel spare to run away. If he cannot finish us quickly, he will be stalled by us and even fail to get away. Do you think he will risk that?

"Fengyu Zhong values his life more than anything else. He definitely won't dare come back and fight us. His only option will be abandoning the last starship in order to keep himself safe!

"This is our plan. Of course, it is very risky. But we cannot stand by and watch the Cultivator be surrounded by space pirates while doing nothing about it!

"If Flying Flower and Swooping Eagle do not wish to continue the battle, that's alright, too, as long as you can provide the usable components in your engine compartments so that we can repair Gold Horn.

"You are free to stay and treat your wounded. We will take care of the rest!

"Time is of the greatest importance. Please make a decision soon. We are in a hurry to catch up with our brother and fight side by side with him!"

Xin Hongde and Jing Yong both fell silent.

But the surging flames inside their eyes were burning more and more furiously.

The flames were thick and solid. They did not look like flames, but the flowing, boiling blood inside the two Cultivators' bodies!

…

In the middle of the boundless sea of stars, a weird hunt was taking place.

Fleeing quickly in the lead was a tiny escape capsule. Despite the bright exhaust flames exiting its rear, it was nothing but an insignificant speck of dust in the desolate universe.

Four murderous, aggressive starships were closely behind that speck. They were going at full speed in a line. The dazzling brilliance emitted from their power rune arrays tore apart the darkness of the vacuum like the roars of a ferocious animal.

One starship as sharp as an arrowhead was at the front. It getting closer and closer to the escape capsule.

Li Yao lay inside the escape capsule comfortably as he analyzed the speed and various parameters of his pursuers with the scanning of the crystal cameras.

Even though he was being hunted by a Core Formation Stage Cultivator who was leading four starships and more than a thousand Exos, a weird smile appeared on his face, as if he was quite enjoying the thrill and excitement.

Music from the Heaven's Origin Sector was echoing inside the sealed escape capsule. It was a popular song that every household in the Heaven's Origin Sector had listened to named 'Conquering the Universe'.

"Look, the dense clouds cannot stop the running sea of stars.

"Endless darkness will disperse. Lights of life will illuminate the sky.

"When I feel desperate, I always hear a song played in my heart.

"The meaner fate is to you, the tougher you will become!"

The bouncing number on the light beam indicated that the hunters were drawing closer and closer. The giant beast had opened its bloody mouth, ready to launch its fatal attack.

Li Yao smiled and triggered a telepathic thought to activate a gadget.

...

Inside the cockpit of Blood Rain, Fengyu Zhong and his advisor were also observing the situation of the battle through the most advanced probe magical equipment.

After half a day's crazy hunting without bothering about the cost of fuel, the distance between them and the escape capsule had been greatly shortened.

Squid, at the front, could almost catch the tail of the escape capsule now.

"General Feng, one of the enemy's power rune arrays has exploded!"

On the light beam, the fuzzy light spot that represented the escape capsule was suddenly much brighter. The advisor exclaimed in excitement after he improved the quality of the picture by concentrating his computational ability.

Fengyu Zhong sneered, "That's inevitable. It is an escape capsule after all. After rushing for such a long time at full speed, the power rune arrays must have already surpassed their limits. It's only normal that they have exploded now.

"Even if the power rune arrays were fine, he won't have much fuel left. Very soon, he will be in our pocket!

"Ask Squid to deploy the assault team and harass the enemy!"

Almost a hundred crystal suits flew out of the arrowhead-like starship in the front as if it were a honeycomb.

They were riding specially-made cylindrical magical equipment known as 'Assault Rockets'. Bright orange exhaust flames spurted out of their vehicles as they dashed at the escape capsule at the maximum speed!

The main guns around the starship started glittering, too. Spiritual energy was being condensed. Once the escape capsule entered the best attack range, they would immediately open fire.

Right then, at the tail of the escape capsule, which had supposedly run out of spiritual energy and suffered the explosion of multiple power rune arrays, a glamorous flower of spiritual energy suddenly blossomed. Seven-colored mystic rays spurted out. The escape capsule was given an unbelievable speed boost and leapt forward!

The escape capsule ran away again before it entered the best attack range of the starship!

Inside the cockpit, the advisor was dumbfounded. He tapped on the light beam crazily. Sweat was dripping from his nose as he said, "That's impossible. The instantaneous acceleration and the maximum speed of the escape capsule have far exceeded the limits of 'Wild Butterfly'! How could he get such a high speed?"

"Don't you see?"

Fengyu Zhong closed his eyes and took a long breath. He gnashed his teeth. "Our enemy has modified the escape capsule and improved its speed and instantaneous acceleration. But he pretended that it was a normal escape capsule so that we would come after it!

"According to his current speed, it's very likely that he will run into the stone belts around Iron Plateau before we catch up to him!"

The advisor paused for a moment. "Then, should we abort the pursuit?"

Fengyu Zhong grinned hideously. "Such a delicate scheme, so many resources, and the victory so close to us have all been disrupted by the mysterious man!

"Not to mention that he murdered my son and humiliated me in front of everyone!

"We've gone too far to abort anything now! Just keep on chasing! Don't stop even if we have to trespass into the stone belts! Stop him, whatever the cost!

"This time, I'm going to tear off his head myself!"

The advisor was greatly shocked.

Fengyu Zhong, a Core Formation Stage Cultivator, was about to personally act!

The following five hours were just repeating what had happened.

The escape capsule was always in front of Squid, neither too far away nor too close.

Its speed was not very high. When Squid went at full speed, the distance between the two parties would be gradually shortened.

However, when the main guns of Squid refilled spiritual energy and the Exos on board were launched for battle, the escape capsule would suddenly accelerate under the spurt of unbelievable exhaust flames. The distance between them would return to what it had been originally.

One chasing and the other running, the two parties gradually entered the nearby of Iron Plateau in the center of the Iron Plateau Space Zone.

The splendid scenes in front of Li Yao's eyes made him momentarily forget to breath.

Iron Plateau seemed to be a hundred times larger than the planet of Heaven's Origin.

However, with careful observation, one would discover that it was because of the brilliant halos emitted by the hundreds of rings surrounding Iron Plateau.

The rings were made of the tremendous materials spinning around the planet. Generally speaking, only when the planets boasted sufficient gravity could they form rings. One planet usually had only one ring.

The planets with atmosphere and suitable conditions for human beings were usually too small in quality. They did not have a strong enough attraction force to generate rings.

However, Iron Plateau was surrounded by rings on an enormous scale. It was not one, but a super ring system made of hundreds of interconnected rings. It looked like a solid armor for the planet and made the size of the planet a hundred times larger than it should have been!

"Such intense and patterned spiritual waves! They do not seem to be from regular meteoroids!"

Li Yao sensed a mysterious and yet irresistible force from the hundreds of interconnected rings, which made him immediately realize that the rings were not natural-born, but a piece of large defensive magical equipment crafted by the

Cultivators thousands of years ago to protect Iron Plateau based on unfathomable technology!

This was really a piece of planetary-level magical equipment that was bordering on the stellar level!

"A piece of defensive magical equipment made up of hundreds of rings? Magnificent! Splendid! Incredible!

"The Flying Star Sector had an extraordinary Cultivation civilization in the past!

"Was this magical equipment meant to resist what Huangpu Xiaoya described to be 'apocalypses'? It's a pity that the system seemed to fail its job. Iron Plateau was destroyed anyway!"

Li Yao snuck into one of the stone belts without any hesitation.

Chapter 536: Space Steles

Chapter 536: Space Steles

Compared with the vastness of space, human beings couldn't be more insignificant.

The seemingly thin rings turned out to be boundless worlds once one entered them.

Roaring stones and glimmering dust were everywhere. Invisible turbulences and radiation rays were rushing and raging like a flooding river.

Li Yao was floating on such a rampant river. Although he had experienced something similar when he cruised through the Dim Flame Belt, he still felt that his head was dizzy and the scenes were bizarre.

The stones inside the planetary ring were extremely dense. As small as the escape capsule was, he still had to calculate the angles and trajectories of the stones precisely in order to pass through the gaps.

Li Yao also discovered that, among the sweeping, nonuniform stones, there were occasionally rectangular objects that emitted a metallic glow.

These objects were not reflecting the brilliance of the star but emanating brightness by themselves.

Judging from the color of the objects, they were not natural minerals but more like man-made alloys.

These metal objects were space steles.

If one were to adjust the resolution and the observation distance of their crystal camera to the maximum, one would be able to notice that complicated runes had been carved on the steles.

Many steles were hollow. Translucent crystals were floating inside them.

After thousands of years, the crystals were still glittering and releasing spiritual energy.

Li Yao shut his eyes and extended his spiritual threads from his spiritual root, perceiving the steles with his mind.

He could feel clearly that each stele sent out almost a hundred spiritual waves, which tied up the stones nearby and formed a solid shield of stones.

Every stele was the core of such a shield. When thousands of shields of stones were combined, they constituted a planetary ring. Right now, hundreds of planetary rings were interconnected, but there was not the slightest mutual interference.

It was indeed a piece of formidable magical equipment almost bordering on the stellar level!

Li Yao breathed softly and focused his full attention. The escape capsule flew among the stones as if it were a weightless feather.

Although the magical equipment had existed for five thousand years and it had failed to resist the legendary apocalypse five thousand years ago, Li Yao was not sure that it had entirely lost its power, nor was he willing to test it with his life.

However, other people were not as prudent as he was.

Not far behind Li Yao, Squid had finally reached the edge of the planetary ring.

The stones in the area were too dense for a starship of Squid's size to enter. Otherwise, it would be attacked by countless stones.

If it were to resist all the stones, it would have to keep its spiritual shield at the maximum all the time. The spiritual energy cost would be shockingly high.

Therefore, Squid could only float in orbit along the planetary ring and release a lot of crystal suits.

Almost a hundred crystal suits leaked into the planetary ring from different angles in battle formation, trying to surround Li Yao.

"Come on. I've waited for a long time!"

Li Yao smiled and rubbed his burning hands. Then he tapped on the operation light beam.

Instantly after a cracking noise, the escape capsule became a different form again. Four sharp-edged fins made of super alloys extended out of the tail of the escape capsule and formed what seemed to be a cross.

In space, the cross-shaped fins were usually meant to cut apart the tiny stones so that they wouldn't hit the escape capsule directly.

In the middle of the cross-shaped fins, four micro units that could accelerate the spinning, turning, and small-scale movements gradually revealed themselves.

This was the ultimate form of the Wild Butterfly escape capsule after Li Yao's modification!

It was no longer an escape capsule; it was an out-and-out super shuttle, one that could fly freely within the stone belts!

The operation menu in front of Li Yao's eyes gradually changed, too. The number of buttons to control the direction, speed, and angle increased by five times. There were now five operation menus instead of three.

The small cabin was glittering in gold, as if it were the operation platform of the most professional super shuttle.

"Let the game begin!"

Running away was not Li Yao's style. Even though his opponent was a Core Formation Stage Cultivator, he was still trying to make counterattacks, however feeble they were!

This planetary ring was the graveyard that he had chosen for the space pirates!

Li Yao whistled as his hands turned into two clusters of mist on the shining light beam. Torrents suddenly erupted out of the bottom of the escape capsule. As if someone had kicked it from behind, the escape capsule continued fleeing forward in a weird curve.

The space pirates couldn't have been angrier. They didn't expect their enemy to be crazy enough to rush at such a high speed inside a planetary ring where there was nothing but a raging storm of stones!

But Fengyu Zhong had stated in his fury that the enemy must be stopped at all costs. Whoever captured the enemy alive would be granted a crystal warship immediately. Every contributor of the hunt would be given a super crystal suit crafted by the top experts on Spider Den!

Space pirates were all desperadoes in the first place. Now, they were even more motivated by the enticing reward!

Countless space pirates flooded in and sprinted among the stones fearlessly!

The planetary ring seemed still, but it was, in fact, spinning around the planet at an extremely high speed. The stones inside were also running and colliding into each other without any pattern. All the routes and angles had to be calculated on the spot. It was impossible to foresee anything!

In their urgency, more than ten space pirates were smashed by passing stones!

Although they were defended by their spiritual shields, many of them had broken bones. The less fortunate ones were even hit on the back of their head, where the crystal processor was located, or on their spine, where the crystal reactor was. They almost lost all of their combat ability and had to withdraw from the battle.

On the other hand, Li Yao was steering the escape capsule to perform unbelievable small-scale movements unhurriedly. He was like a feather near a swirl. Although he seemed to be swallowed by the stones many times, he always showed up again a moment later. The space pirates couldn't have been madder and cursed loudly.

Some of the more impatient space pirates had even launched attacks at him, triggering their flying swords and crystal cannons without caring for anything else.

Due to the long distance between the two parties and the blockade of the stones in the way, all the attacks missed their target.

Not only did they fail to hit the escape capsule, they even lead to more terrifying consequences!

Li Yao was calculating the position and route of the escape capsule carefully, when he suddenly sensed that an extremely furious spiritual tide was surging toward his back. He was greatly surprised and replayed what had happened while he dodged the spiritual tide.

He saw that, when several space pirates were attacking him wholeheartedly, a glittering stele drew close to them without them noticing. One of the space pirates was hit precisely by the stele when he was launching his flying swords!

The space pirates were immediately heavily injured. But in the meantime, the barrier of the stele seemed to be triggered. The dark green object suddenly emitted dazzling brilliance and became as eye-catching as jade!

The spiritual waves released from the center of the stele was hundreds of times more intense than before. They spread out like nerves and veins and penetrated into all the stones nearby.

The previously loose stones were then concentrated into a giant beast with more than ten tentacles made of stones, which were spinning crazily!

Caught off guard, more than ten space pirates were snatched by the tentacles and torn to shreds before they even had the chance to struggle!

Clouds of blood mist were exploding. The scraps of the space pirates' crystal suits were propelled out by the tentacles to other space pirates in various directions.

The other space pirates all ran far away with their heads in their hands while they screamed and yelled in their communication channel.

Li Yao was greatly alarmed. He felt that he was lucky not to have messed around with the steles.

It appeared that the super defense array five thousand years ago had not entirely lost its power yet and was still fulfilling its duty.

After five thousand years, under the scourge of so many meteoroids, the steles could still unleash such formidable strength. It was not hard to imagine how magnificent they had been when they had just been refined and filled with sufficient spiritual energy!

Li Yao was fascinated by the thought. He looked at the space pirates behind him and noticed that there were less than seventy of them after the outbreak of the stele.

Li Yao grinned and was meaning to accelerate again when he suddenly felt lightheaded and his heart seemed to be bitten by nine snakes at the same time. The pain was truly excruciating!

…

Inside the cockpit of Blood Rain, Fengyu Zhong's face was gloomy.

The Iron Plateau Space Zone was a battlefield of his choosing. Since the space zone was a forbidden area for

Cultivators, there were no large star beacons or ports and bases of the Cultivators. Even the signal of the Spiritual Nexus was extremely weak. One could only hope to be connected to the Spiritual Nexus when they were at the edge of the space zone.

Also, the dense stone belts there would be a great help to him during his escape.

Therefore, he had gone through all the trouble and employed all possible methods to drive the Great Horn Exo Society to the Iron Plateau Space Zone before the final deadly attack.

But at that moment, he felt that he had become a victim of his own scheme.

Although his enemy was merely in an escape capsule, it would be barely possible to destroy it if it snuck into the planetary rings near Iron Plateau. The search would be long and hard and might prove futile later.

Time was what he needed most.

"General Feng, Squid has gotten in touch with the enemy, but the enemy hasn't been stopped yet," said the advisor in a low voice.

Fengyu Zhong didn't respond.

He was faced with a tough decision.

At that moment, Blood Rain was at the back of his fleet. He was covering the rear personally in order to resist the possible counterattack of the Great Horn Exo Society.

By logic, since his enemy had been heavily damaged, their starships almost entirely paralyzed, there was no reason they would catch up to him again.

However, the people of the Great Horn Exo Society were all crazy. They were anything but logical.

But if he did not act in person, his subordinates might not be able to capture the sly enemy in the stone belts at all.

Fengyu Zhong pondered for a long time.

For the whole time, the sea of stars behind him had been tranquil. There was no hint of the Great Horn Exo Society whatsoever.

"Those lunatics must've reached their limits, too. It's not likely that they will come and commit suicide."

Fengyu Zhong finally made up his mind.

Shua!

An extremely hideous crystal suit appeared around him!

Chapter 537: Desperadoes

Chapter 537: Desperadoes

What a terrifying crystal suit it was!

In a lackluster red color, the crystal suit seemed to be made of dried blood. Human faces were everywhere on the surface of the armor, including the chest, shoulder, back, arms, and legs.

Most of the faces were screaming in agony, some of them were angry or grinning hideously, but all of them were life-like. Even the tiniest muscles had been carved out. Countless restless souls seemed to be haunting the crystal suit. One would be able to hear endless screams with a look at it.

What was weirder was that, as Fengyu Zhong burned his soul and spiritual energy, the painful faces were twisting and changing their expressions, as if the faces were really sealed inside the crystal suit!

This crystal suit was named 'Blood Face', made in the Temple of Immortals. A hundred Cultivators had been tossed into the furnace as blood sacrifices before it had finally been forged. It boasted extremely powerful ability in mental attacks!

When the Blood Face Battlesuit appeared, the cockpit was immediately wreathed in gloom and depression. Everyone was gripped in utmost terror.

Even the space pirates of Storm Prison felt that their heads were dizzy and were not willing to look at the twisted faces on the crystal suit.

Many crew members whose mental power was relatively weak were shivering with pale faces. They felt that they were about to throw up.

Ten minutes later, Fengyu Zhong floating in space, outside of Blood Rain.

He was wearing the Blood Face Battlesuit, with a special super assault rocket below his feet.

BOOM!

An extremely furious purple light ball suddenly appeared around him, surrounded by black lighting that seemed able to tear everything apart. It enveloped both him and the assault rocket under his feet!

Motivated by spiritual energy, the spiritual stripes on the assault rocket were glittering, and the exhaust flames in its back surged out!

Although it was merely an assault rocket, the exhaust flames behind it were as brilliant as those in the back of Blood Rain. It was instantly accelerated to the maximum speed, which was ten times higher than that of the assault rockets for ordinary space pirates!

Just like the ancient Cultivators who rode their flying swords, Fengyu Zhong rode his assault rocket and turned into a streak of brightness, darting toward the planetary ring in rage!

…

Exactly when Fengyu Zhong charged at the planetary ring to try to stop and kill Li Yao, a ragged starship was moving in stealth mode behind Storm Prison. Two broken horns pierced out of the two sides of the starship. Undying fighting will could be felt from the coldly-shining factures on them.

Gold Horn had caught up!

Gold Horn at present couldn't look more wretched. It had regained the ability to cruise at high-speed for now after the emergency maintenance with the components and units from the other two starships. But on the surface, it was unattractive, and there were patches everywhere. It was probably the ugliest starship in the universe.

On the main deck of Gold Horn, four hundred silent Cultivators were standing, like four hundred dented, broken, but unbent battle sabers.

What Cultivators they were!

Their faces were all stained with blood. Most of them were tied up in bandages, some of which were still leaking blood. Some of them were even missing limbs!

The crystal suits on their body were also shabby and disintegrated. Almost every crystal suit had been fixed up with a component from other crystal suits. Some of the crystal suits were even piled up by the wreckages of several crystal suits.

Mottled, messy, and multi-colored, the crystal suits seemed to be for beggars.

But right now, the beggar-like soldiers in tatty crystal suits who had just endured brutal failure were all holding their heads high, their killing intent soaring. Their broken crystal suits could not withstand the burning ambiance and were all rattling chaotically.

Lei Dalu stood in front of the four hundred Cultivators and looked around.

His crystal suit might well have been the worst of the four hundred crystal suits there.

But his face was the proudest and most confident, as if he were a great general who had just secured an unparalleled victory.

"Brothers, allow me to briefly repeat what has happened in the past few days!

"At first, we were ambushing the space pirates with quite a bunch of people, only to be fooled by the space pirates, who took the opportunity to break into our homes!

"In the Skyhill Domain alone, more than forty thousand people were killed. Forty thousand people!

"Then, the three starships of ours were ambushed by Fengyu Zhong, who beat us up terribly. Every one of us has suffered miserable wounds. To be honest, we were beaten the s*hit out of!

"In the end, when we were desperate, and the space pirates were going to butcher us like pigs, one person, yes, only one, came after a long journey in the sea of stars and reversed the situation by himself. Not only did he sink one of Storm Prison's starships, he also attracted the attention of the main troops of the space pirates, thereby saving our lives!

"Right now, the man is surrounded by four crystal warships, a thousand brutal bandits, and one Core Formation Stage Cultivator!

"We have only two choices right now!

"We can wait and watch the space pirates on the four crystal warships enfold the man who came to our rescue from distances away and kill him.

"When our reinforcements arrive, and we return to the peaceful land, we will hold a solemn ceremony in memory of the valiant and fearless hero. We will shed tears and swear to avenge him!

"Nobody will blame us. Except for the occasional guilt that we may feel when we are alone late at night, we will be totally fine.

"It is definitely the most regular, rational, and reasonable choice that we should make right now.

"Or, if you don't want to make such a choice, one that seems to be sane but is, in fact, ballless nonetheless, and if you prefer a crazier but more manly choice, you can also charge forward with me and fight side by side with the man who decided to come to our rescue all by himself!

"Yes. Your eyes are not deceiving you. The starship that our enemy deployed to cover their retreat, the one right in front of us, is the flagship of Storm Prison, Blood Rain, which is the largest and possesses the highest combat ability!

"It's very possible that Fengyu Zhong, a Core Formation Stage Cultivator, is on his flagship right now!

"However, it's been four days since we sent out our first distress call!

"I guarantee that countless reinforcements are marching toward the Iron Plateau Space Zone at this very moment. Chances are that some of them will show up in the next second!

"Even though we cannot destroy Blood Rain, as long as we can bite it hard for one day, one hour, one minute, or even as short as one second, we may be able to buy enough time for the reinforcements to reach us. At that time, Fengyu Zhong will be surrounded, and his sorry life will end in this bleak space zone!

"This operation is very dangerous. Maybe after all our blood runs dry, the reinforcements still won't show up. Everybody will die in vain!

"Therefore, it's perfectly normal and reasonable if anybody wants to quit. Just step back now and stay in the starship!

"All the remaining brothers will come with me and crash into Blood Rain!

"Don't forget that a Cultivator is fighting alone at the front!

"Even if we may not be able to save him, at least our hot blood should flow together with our good brother's in this cold universe!"

The four hundred Cultivators, who looked like unbent battle sabers, were all breathing heavily, but it sounded almost metallic, as if the edge of a saber was rubbing against its sheath.

Nobody stepped back.

Instead, many people unconsciously made a step forward.

"Listen to me, Cultivators from Swooping Eagle!"

Jing Yong, First Deacon of the Swooping Eagle Sect, stepped forward and looked at the dozens of Cultivators on the left. He then spoke. "When we started our expedition from our hometown, many of our compatriots bade us farewell and wished that we spread the name of the Swooping Eagle Space Zone in the sea of stars!

"However, we came to this place across dozens of space zones, only to be stomped on and slaughtered like pigs!

"Of the five hundred warriors who set off, three hundred have perished, and a hundred have been heavily wounded. Our starship is on the verge of destruction, too.

"Are we going to return to our hometown like losers?

"By that time, when the folks in our hometown see our devastated appearance and our brothers whose bodies are gone with only their spiritual nameplates left, how will we answer their inquiries?

"What if somebody asks us how many space pirates we have slain and how many warships we destroyed? How are we going to answer that?

"We are the greatest sect of the Swooping Eagle Space Zone!

"Now, we have one last chance to avenge our brothers and show the space pirates what the Cultivators of Swooping Eagle truly are!"

"Ho!"

The dozens of remaining soldiers of Swooping Eagle roared at the same time. Their spiritual energy surged out of their broken crystal suits and formed glamourous wings on their backs, making them look like eagles that were about to soar into the sky!

"Listen to me, disciples of Flowing Flower!"

Xin Hongde, an elder of the Flowing Flower Sect, took a step forward, too. His voice was not loud, but it was resolute and pierced into the deck under everyone's feet like needles. He said, "A month ago, were you not curious why the Great Horn Exo Society could rise to fame like lightning within half a year even though it was a medium-sized Exo Society whose only Core Formation Stage Cultivator was in the beginning level?

"You should know the answer now!

"Our Flowing Flower Sect is just an ordinary second-rate sect in the Flowing Flower Space Zone. Many Cultivators in Heavenly Saints City have never heard our name before!

"However, after today's battle, the name of the Flowing Flower Sect will resound in the sea of stars together with the Great Horn Exo Society and the Swooping Eagle Sect!

"Let my blood be the soil of Flowing Flower!"

"He!"

The dozens of Cultivators on the right side, who were wearing badges in the shape of a red flower, bellowed. The spiritual energy around them burst out into blossoming chrysanthemums.

"Captain Lei!"

Jing Yong and Xin Hongde stared at Lei Dalu with their eyes shining and said simultaneously, "The Great Horn Exo Society are not the only people that get to play heroes today!

"If you want to go crazy today, let's all go crazy!"

Lei Dalu burst into laughter. He slashed his heavy battle saber down. The wound on his shoulder was broken again and blood spurted out. However, he couldn't care less about it and simply rumbled in a louder voice, "Regardless of whether or not Fengyu Zhong is expecting our counterattack and whether or not he has prepared other traps, we have no time to bother him!

"The most important thing about us, the Cultivators, is craziness and boldness!

"Fengyu Zhong, let's see now which side has the more unflinching desperadoes!

"Go forward, Cultivators!"

Chapter 538: Bloody Cloak!

Chapter 538: Bloody Cloak!

"Pu!"

Li Yao vomited a mouthful of black blood, which wriggled around as if it were a living thing. The control panel was corroded amid cracking noises and seemed like it could burst into flames at any moment.

Li Yao's eyes were bloodshot, yet the blood was queerly black, making his face oddly hideous.

He didn't anticipate that the curse lurking inside his body would be so strange as to conceal its true power until this moment. Nine black snakes seemed to have torn open his heart, crawled inside, and bitten each other's tails. They formed a solid shackle that was about to lock his heart!

Black Spider Evil Spirit, death before curse!

Had Li Yao's body not been sturdy enough with the spiritual seed from Iron God Yan Ba, a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, the previous attack would've crushed his heart!

If it were peacetime, Li Yao would naturally have concentrated his attention and dispelled the curse before it broke out with his tough body built up by the spiritual seed from a body fundamentalist and Ou Yezi's immense soul power inside his brain.

It was also the biggest reason Li Yao had slayed Su Jiuzhen unhesitatingly without being bothered by his threat before his death.

However, Li Yao had spent every second making up plans and traps ever since. He could only manage to suppress the curse and did not have the time to dispel it. It never occurred to him that the Black Spider Death Curse would be smart enough to break out at the most critical moment after protracted hiding!

At this moment, Li Yao was calculating the route of his escape every second with his highest computational ability among the gaps of countless stones and space steles in the middle of a planetary ring. His flight seemed to be easy and elegant, but it cost as much of his soul power as a life-and-death battle would.

The attack of the Black Spider Death Curse made his soul shrink suddenly. His computational ability was greatly undermined. He felt that his head was dizzy, and, because of a few wrong calculations, almost five stones scratched past the escape capsule.

The strengthened glass window at the front of the escape capsule was immediately covered in a lot of terrible cracks, as if it were going to explode in the very next second. It was indeed blood-freezing.

The cross-shaped fins at the tail of the escape capsule were broken off by a weird stone.

Li Yao roared. The spiritual energy all over his body turned into hot stream and flooded into his heart, which instantly constricted to the size of a baby's fist. Yet, gold stripes were shining on the surface of his heart. A moment later, his heart expanded violently to three times the size of a regular heart. The left part of his chest was heaved high!

After the absorption and the enlargement, the Black Spider Death Curse screamed deep inside Li Yao's brain as if it had been burnt by the boiling blood and the surging spiritual energy. It was temporarily suppressed again.

However, the pain, as if thousands of ants were gnawing at his heart, still lingered in his chest.

Before Li Yao had time to take a rest, an earsplitting buzz was already echoing inside the escape capsule.

The report on the light beam was redundant. Li Yao only needed to look up to know that an enormous meteoroid, more than thirty meters in diameter, emitting vague metallic colors, with sharp edges all around its body, was crashing toward him precisely and brutally!

It was because he had been harassed and distracted by the Black Spider Death Curse that he had been half a second too slow to calculate the best route!

Li Yao gritted his teeth while his hands operated fast. The small-scale movement performance of the escape capsule was fully carried out. The dozens of power rune arrays on board released intense brilliance one after another, deviating the escape capsule from the trajectory of the giant meteoroid.

However, serious rubbing was unavoidable. One of the sharp, protruding parts on the meteoroid scraped the surface of the escape capsule savagely and tore open its shell without any trouble. The magical equipment units plugged into the vehicle were mostly destroyed. The scraps spread out like a blossoming flower!

The escape capsule immediately started spinning rapidly beyond control, only to be hit by yet another ten meteoroids. It was riddled with holes and about to break part!

The specifications of the escape capsule had hit rock bottom. Ninety percent of the power rune arrays had collapsed.

The space pirates took the opportunity to march forward and surrounded Li Yao.

Although he was not connected in the enemy's communication channel, it was not hard for Li Yao to imagine that the space pirates must be laughing to their hearts' content at that moment.

Li Yao was laughing, too, coldly.

You think this escape capsule is my biggest reliance to challenge Storm Prison by myself?

You want to die? So be it!

BOOM!

Another meteoroid rushed close and darted into the fuel chamber of the escape capsule. It immediately became a large, bright fireball.

The moment before the explosion, a streak of black brightness had dashed out in advance from the escape capsule. With the stones as the steps and space as the stage, a bizarre-shaped crystal suit with a dominating aura revealed itself!

"Hu!"

Before the crystal cameras of the space pirates captured the details of the crystal suit, a cluster of red flames surged out from the shoulder of the crystal suit and zigzagged around its critical parts, before it moved to his back and extended out dozens of meters!

There was no wind in the space, but the red flames seemed to be fluttering flags in a billowing wind. It was waving unpredictably, like a bloody cloak dozens of meters long, and roaring in full spirits, motivated by its master's soaring fighting will!

Black suit, red cloak, the Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber in his right hand, and the Purple Electric Blue Hellfire Claw that could be condensed into a drill of mystic rays any time in his left hand, Li Yao appeared like a God of Killing!

The space pirates had never seen a crystal suit with a cloak of flames dozens of meters long before. They were all dazed for a moment and felt that the cloak seemed to be made of endless blood, which wreathed them in untamable horror.

Li Yao sneered, with killing intent beaming out of his eyes.

The red cloak was a piece of experimental magical equipment based on the ancient techniques of refining forty thousand years ago and the essence of modern refining arts. He had been trying to take the advantage of both the traditional and the modern technology.

His original purpose was to craft a piece of magical equipment to cover the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit so that other people wouldn't be able to see the secret materials on it.

At first, he had thought of the 'flag'-like magical equipment in the ancient Cultivation world, such as the Seven Star Soul

Guidance Flag and the White Bone Dark Ghost Flag.

When the flag-like magical equipment was activated, they would immediately emit a lot of mist or venom to cover the user.

In the meantime, the flag-like magical equipment was often large enough to cover a crystal suit like a cloak.

However, in the modern Cultivation world, flag-like magical equipment had become obsolete. The technology entailed in such magical equipment had been transplanted into battle emblems and the camouflage for weapons and vehicles.

Flag-like magical equipment with a real entity was not easy to be combined with a crystal suit. Also, for a battle in the universe, it seemed rather hilarious and cumbersome to have a flag attached to the back of a crystal suit.

After prolonged studying, by taking into consideration more than thirty kinds of ancient flag-like magical equipment recorded in the classics on the second floor of the Heavenly Refining Tower, together with modern illumination technology, Li Yao had finally crafted such a crimson cloak of light flames after many tests!

The cloak did not have an entity; it was purely initiated by the two light flame generators under the shoulders of the crystal suit.

But a lot of structures of ancient flag-like magical equipment and technology had been applied to the framework of the light flames, which made it a virtual 'blood flag'. It could either be turned invisible or be extended to dozens of meters away to become an intimidating, super-long cloak completely at Li Yao's will.

The biggest function of the cloak was, of course, to cover the critical parts on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit that were made of Skeleton Dragon's body tissue and scraps of ancient magical equipment.

With the coverage of the blood-red cloak, other people could only tell that the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was an extremely powerful crystal suit at best; they would never be able to clearly see its details.

Other than that, the cloak made of light flames boasted a certain mental attack ability. When it was released to its full length, it would be able to rage and flap in the vacuum, even though there was no wind, at Li Yao's command. The soaring fighting will that the cloak demonstrated would be very intimidating to the enemy!

However, Li Yao's current Cultivation was not good enough. The mental attack was only slightly better than nothing.

But Li Yao believed that he would refine the cloak of light flames into an ultimate treasure in mental warfare one day!

With his battle saber and his sharp claw roaring, the blood-red cloak wafting up and down, Li Yao's face was now filled with eagerness, as if he had been looking forward to this moment for a long time!

"Die!"

The space pirates hadn't taken any action yet, but Li Yao had stomped on a meteoroid and launched his attack promptly!

When all the space pirates thought that he was going to flee toward the center of the planetary ring, Li Yao went the opposite way and charged at the edge of the planetary ring where he had come from!

The few space pirates guarding the edge of the planetary ring did not realize what was going on at all. They felt that some sort of redness blinked in front of their eyes before they saw a crimson cloak, which looked like a rampant dragon soaked in blood. The very next second, a murderous crystal suit dashed to their front!

Caught unprepared, the space pirate in the lead hurried to activate his spiritual shield at full power. Three layers of spiritual shields in red, yellow, and azure respectively formed a zone three meters in diameter and enveloped him!

Between the spiritual shields, countless octagonal runes were glittering in a gold brightness!

The Cultivation of this particular space pirate was not very high, but his physique was very good, and his resistance to attacks was impressive. Therefore, the pirate gang had tutored him specially in this regard and equipped him with a crystal suit that boasted remarkable defensive ability. He was meant to be a 'tank' to block the enemy's attack.

Li Yao bellowed and raised his battler saber high. Bloody aura spurted out and dyed all the stones within one hundred square meters crimson. The slash as earsplitting as roaring thunder cut through the three spiritual shields straightforwardly!

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

The three spiritual shields twisted, struggled, cramped, and crumbled!

As if chopping through bamboo, the battle saber continued marching forward and eventually ripped the space pirate together with his crystal suit into two halves, his blood spreading in the sea of stars!

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit passed through the middle of the broken bodies, dispersing the mist of blood in between. Then it stood in the middle of space, looking for its next target.

The dead space pirate's blood seemed to be attracted by Li Yao's red cloak and circled around Li Yao, highlighting his every bit of savage killing intent!

Chapter 539: Slaughterhouse in Space

Chapter 539: Slaughterhouse in Space

All the space pirates gasped, especially those near the unlucky guy, whose dead body almost crashed into them.

They had all received Fengyu Zhong's heads-up and knew that the enemy they were chasing after could prove to be a tricky man.

However, Li Yao had been running away crazily all the time, leaving them the impression that he was merely a cunning man. Also, his unpredictable routes inside the stone belts gave the feeling that he was an oily rat.

No one had anticipated that he would be as crazy and brutal when he suddenly burst out!

However, the members of Storm Prison had been trained by Fengyu Zhong for a long time. They were all bold desperadoes. Blood and death had triggered the ruthlessness deep inside their bones.

Even though some of them were hesitating, their crystal suits had automatically injected strengthening drugs into their spines under the control of their squad leader.

The strengthening drug was named 'Incendiary Strengthening Drug'. It was a battle stimulant specially cooked on Spider Den for the space pirates.

When 'Incendiary Strengthening Drug' was injected before a battle, the space pirates would have a heartbeat five times faster than usual. The hormones inside their bodies would be greatly stirred, too. Not only would their combat ability be doubled, they would also become unwavering and unstoppable!

Motivated by the Incendiary Strengthening Drug, the space pirates shouted and yelled and lunged at Li Yao from various directions.

Li Yao waved his battle saber. His body turned into a streak of black brightness instantly as he leapt among the stones.

The blood-red cloak, dozens of meters long, on his back seemed to turn into a crimson cage that captured all the space pirates after he took a few turns.

Blade auras were surging in the sea of stars. The stone belts that were chaotic enough in the beginning now turned into a boiling ocean of blood!

Li Yao lunged forward and slayed seven space pirates in a row like a tiger attacking sheep. The most unfortunate one was drilled through right in the chest by his claw. At first glance, the guy seemed to have been pierced through by a meteoroid!

But Li Yao was heavily surrounded by the space pirates.

The space pirates had the advantage in numbers after all. Also, their experience in fighting was quite abundant. None of them were easy to deal with.

Even the space pirates in the Refinement Stage were not easy to kill when they were in proper crystal suits and had activated their spiritual shields on full power without caring for the spiritual energy consumption.

The space pirates were all brutal men. Not only were they brutal to their enemy, they were brutal to themselves, too. When Li Yao hit them precisely and they knew they were dead for sure, they would clutch his saber with all their strength while they were still breathing, just in order to make him waste more of his spiritual energy.

The few leaders of the space pirates were all in the Building Foundation Stage. They were very good at collaboration. Two of them were launching remote attacks while hiding behind the stones far away, while the rest of them were distracting him at a close distance.

It would be extremely difficult to kill them once and for all!

Moreover, there was still the meteoroids.

The meteoroids in the planetary ring were like an ever-surging river and treated everybody the same.

Li Yao had spent a lot of his computational ability in the battle against the space pirates. Therefore, his calculations on the trajectories of the meteoroids was often untimely.

As a result, he was hit by multiple meteoroids.

Despite the defense of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Li Yao felt that he was suppressed by the stormy attacks and found it hard to breathe.

Swoosh!

After he slayed the eleventh space pirate, a three-edged flying sword finally penetrated through his spiritual shield and pierced into the gap of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. His first drop of blood in that day's battle flowed out.

The Black Spider Death Curse seemed to know that he was in peril. It was restless again and showed signs of another attack.

Li Yao took a deep breath. Yet, he felt that somebody had stuffed an icy block into his chest. The circulation of his spiritual energy was hindered!

Right at that moment, there was no telling whether or not it was because the Incendiary Strengthening Drug had run its course, but the space pirates were suddenly somehow in a mess.

Li Yao was deeply confused. He studied the tiny movements of the space pirates and looked at the boundless sea of stars ahead. Naturally, he saw nothing.

However, the special crystal camera on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit sensed feeble spiritual waves from thousands of kilometers away.

It was likely a ripple that had reached him after covering the thousands of kilometers of distance in between momentarily.

It was not hard to imagine how intense the surging tides were thousands of kilometers away!

The crystal processor of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was providing details on the abrupt change.

Deep in thought, Li Yao suddenly beamed with joy. He almost cried in joy.

Something had happened in the rear of the space pirates' fleet. A fierce battle was taking place!

At that moment, the only party that could do such a thing was the Great Horn Exo Society!

Lei Dalu, the lunatic, was truly a lunatic!

Li Yao laughed out aloud and raised his saber. He swept across the space pirates like earsplitting thunders while lightning erupted on his saber.

The lightning-like saber cut both space and his own uneasiness apart.

Li Yao's mind was clearer than ever. He seemed to have grasped something in the life-and-death moment among the shining slashes.

One slash!

The left arm of a space pirate was cut off!

For how long have I been unable to enjoy a good killing spree?

One slash!

A spiritual shield was blown into pieces. A terrible wound deep to the bones suddenly appeared in the chest of a space pirate!

In fact, this is what I desire most subconsciously, isn't it?

Just like this time, I could've run faster and gotten rid of the space pirates, and they wouldn't have necessarily come back to ask for the Great Horn Exo Society's trouble again.

However, I still chose to keep a certain distance from them, neither too far nor too close. Secretly, I was even hoping that they would catch me!

One slash!

A space pirate as heavy as a bull, who was almost three meters tall in his crystal suit, was kicked away and crashed into a meteoroid that was rushing close, turning into a pile of meat!

That's because I've been craving for a bloody fight!

I grew up in a magical equipment graveyard. I had to exploit my every muscle and every brain cell as much as I could in order to live one second longer!

When I try my best to calculate everything and defeat an invincible enemy and even death itself, and I get to live another second, another second, and yet another second, the ecstasy is indeed the most exciting entertainment!

Addicted! Yes. I'm already addicted to the duel with death!

Only when I'm going to die in the next second can I full taste the flavor of life in this second. The feeling of walking beside the abyss is marvelous and incredible!

One slash!

A sniper and his gun were both cut in half, but Li Yao's abdomen was hit brutally, too.

Despite the resistance of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, a mouthful of blood surged to his throat, only to be swallowed by him. He felt that he had chugged the most delicious wine. His face was healthily red, and he couldn't have looked more comfortable!

The day my spiritual root was awakened, and I became a Cultivator, I met Brother Guan Xiong of the Mountain Sea Sect. I ask him why he wanted to become a Cultivator. His reply was—

For the euphoria of one against a thousand!

The path of my Cultivation is exactly the same. I spill my blood in the sea of stars and slash a brilliant way to the heaven between the life of this second and the death of the next!

For a moment, he remembered all the pivotal moments in his past, from when he was hunted by five scavenger groups in the magical equipment graveyard when he was seven, to his encounter with the mutated large-eyed ape that was injected with strengthening drugs, to his narrow escape in the Thunderous Sound Mountain under the pursuit of the demon prince Wang Ji, to the desperate fight against Skeleton Dragon, the deadly demon from forty thousand years ago.

In the end, he recalled the terrifying scenes of the True Fusion and the space swirl in the Dim Flame Belt.

The pictures did not intimidate him. Instead, when he reflected on them, he felt that his life was precious, warm, and beautiful.

All the pictures suddenly exploded into the surging swirl deep inside his brain and slightly changed the way he unleashed his spiritual energy without him knowing.

Originally, his blade was purely sharp, fast, and furious.

However, as his attacks continued, Li Yao's eyes became brighter and brighter, and the aura around his saber was gradually endowed with a feeble attraction force, as if a mini True Fusion was brewing on the edge of his weapon!

His saber was not attacking the enemy; it was more like his enemy was crashing into his saber promptly because of the attraction of the True Fusion.

The effect of the Incendiary Strengthening Drug was finally over.

The biggest side effect of such strengthening drugs was that the user would be in temporary low spirits when the duration was over. Also, after each injection, there must be a gap of half an hour to forty minutes before the next injection. Otherwise, the strengthening drug would have no effect at all because of the rejection of the body.

Right now, the spreading mist of blood and the broken limbs finally cast the surviving space pirates in fear.

Devastated shrills were echoing nonstop inside their communication channel.

"He—he is not in the high level of the Building Foundation Stage, but in the peak!"

One of the space pirates was hit in the chest, but he was not killed. His crystal suit spurted a lot of foam and suppressed the wound temporarily.

But his fighting will had been battered by Li Yao's attack. After a scream, he turned around and rushed toward the edge of the planetary ring.

He was lucky enough to avoid the assault of almost a hundred meteoroids.

However, when he was about to get out of the planetary ring, he exploded into powder after a sudden cry, as if he had been hit brutally by an invisible meteoroid!

An overwhelming killing intent ignored the furious stones and pierced into the gaps of all the space pirates' crystal suits, wreathing their hearts.

They felt that their hearts would be ripped apart if they moved slightly.

The feeling couldn't have been more familiar to them. It was because of—

A tall figure in a crystal suit with weird human faces appeared in the periphery of the planetary ring with a giant assault rocket below his feet. He seemed to be surrounded by gloomy wind, which made his body unpredictable and flickering like ghost fire.

The Core Formation Stage Cultivator, Fengyu Zhong, had finally arrived!

Chapter 540: Devil's Cry

Chapter 540: Devil's Cry

The soaring killing intent stirred up the sea of stars. A pair of vicious eyes seemed to be piercing through the stones and Li Yao's crystal suit into his heart brutally.

It was not possible for Fengyu Zhong to hate him more than he did at that moment!

He had received an upsetting report when the fuel of his assault rocket ran dry and he was about to arrive at the planetary ring.

Like a haunting ghost, the Great Horn Exo Society had reappeared!

Blood Rain, which was assigned to cover the retreat, was stalled!

Fengyu Zhong immediately felt his head going dizzy.

He didn't have the faintest clue how the Great Horn Exo Society had done it.

The three starships on their side had all been half-wrecked and would have to take a breath every time they cruised for several thousand kilometers. The Exos on those starships had suffered tremendous casualties, too. Any sensible human being would have chosen to stay where they were, treat their wounds, and wait for reinforcements!

But right now, they had launched a counterattack as if they were trying to kill themselves!

The reports that followed further stunned Fengyu Zhong.

Gold Horn was the only starship that caught up to the space pirates.

Since its appearance, every sign had indicated that it was determined to die together with Blood Rain.

The four hundred Exos on Gold Horn were all deployed to the battlefield. Although the defenses of Blood Rain were still intact, they attacked like tides and slowed down Blood Rain miraculously, as if they had been injected with ten doses of the Incendiary Strengthening Drug.

Most elites on Blood Rain had been summoned by Fengyu Zhong to join him before Gold Horn's invasion. They were in an awkward situation on their assault rockets half way through their journey.

Even so, Blood Rain, which boasted enormous firepower, was not something that could be taken over easily by several hundred exhausted and wounded soldiers.

But when Blood Rain's full computational ability was utilized to maneuver the air defense cannons to attack the four hundred Exos, Gold Horn had accelerated to full speed and launched a savage crash.

The heavy weapons on Blood Rain immediately opened fire on Gold Horn.

However, for a war in space, unless the arsenal or fuel chamber were hit precisely or it suffered an internal explosion, it was barely possible to completely blow up a starship.

Countless starship remnants from the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago were still floating in the sea of stars after so many bloody battles. Most of the remnants were still intact and had left a lot of technologies and magical equipment for the latecomers to study.

Because of the advanced ancient technology, bombarding a starship with a crystal cannon, however large it was, was like stabbing a boiled potato with chopsticks. It was possible that the tomato would be pierced through, but making the potato explode was quite a different matter.

Besides, Gold Horn had made up its mind to perish together with its enemy.

Before the raid, not only had Gold Horn's engine compartment been repaired with the usable units from the other two starships, a lot of plate armor had been dismantled from them and installed to the head of Gold Horn, too.

Under Lei Dalu's command, the air in all the cabins except the engine compartment and several others had been all pumped out so that they were became a vacuum, before a huge amount of inert foam was sprayed into the cabins.

The inert foam was meant to put out fires or mend the shell of a starship temporarily. They were very stable and barely flammable, much less explosive. They were very sticky, too.

As a result, Gold Horn became an iron block full of inert foam. Most of the crew members had charged out in their crystal suits.

How could one hope to blow up such a thing?

The main guns of Blood Rain were indeed powerful. Their precision was remarkable, too. Gold Horn was now riddled with thousands of holes.

If there were still air and crew members inside Gold Horn, a lot of blood would've been spilled.

But at that moment, there was nothing but steel and foam inside the starship.

Although there were countless holes on Gold Horn, its structure was still relatively complete, and it was almost as heavy as before.

The immense mass and the lightning-like speed was destructive enough without resorting to any weapons!

Blood Rain tried to dodge.

However, as the flagship of Storm Prison, it had been the main target for the three starships on the Cultivators' side in the battles of the previous two days. It had suffered a lot of damage, too, and was in the middle of emergency maintenance.

It was also why Fengyu Zhong had ordered Blood Rain to stay at the back to cover the retreat.

Time was too short. Also, four hundred audacious Cultivators were trying to breach the starship's defenses without caring about their own lives. Therefore, Blood Rain could not concentrate its computational ability on dodging movement calculations.

The magnetic interference system was fully functioning, too, trying to deviate Gold Horn from its course.

However, Gold Horn was too heavy. It was hardly possible to entirely change its route. Besides, due to the fierce battles between the Exos of the two parties, several pieces of interference magical equipment on the shell of Blood Rain had been destroyed!

There was not enough time anyway!

Gold Horn crashed into Blood Rain roughly like a crazy bull!

In regard to size, Gold Horn was one third smaller than Blood Rain. The difference was obvious.

However, considering the scale of the collision, the disparity in their sizes could almost be ignored. Gold Horn and Blood Rain had almost melded into one. The two broken horns on the head of Gold Horn stabbed deeply into Blood Rain's body!

Thankfully, due to the crazy measures taken by Gold Horn, its main guns had lost all firepower, and its spiritual energy was running dry. Therefore, no explosions were triggered. The two starships simply collided into one another.

The interference system of Blood Rain finally worked and made Gold Horn miss the critical parts.

As long as the two starships were divided, with a couple of hours of emergency maintenance, Blood Rain would still be able to cruise normally.

However…

Taking advantage of the chaos when Gold Horn crashed into Blood Rain, dozens of members of the Great Horn Exo Society dashed into Blood Rain!

It was indeed terrible news!

Of course, a lot of space pirates were still standing by on Blood Rain. There was nothing but doom waiting for the intruders!

However, just like the rats that had crawled into a gutter, it would be quite a nuisance to find them one by one.

But if they were left alone, they might sabotage the key locations on the starship. Blood Rain would be equally screwed!

Fengyu Zhong hated it so much that he felt that he was having a migraine.

He had known that Lei Dalu was a crazy man, but he had never expected him to be so crazy.

This was the most unreasonable way of fighting. The enemies were determined to die in his starship if they had to!

If Fengyu Zhong had three days' time, he was certain that he would be able to crush the entire Great Horn Exo Society into dust. There wouldn't be a bone of them left.

But he didn't have three days. The reinforcements of the Cultivators could arrive at any moment!

Fengyu Zhong deliberated for a long time. Still, he commanded that the elite Exos who were joining him return to defend Blood Rain, and he continued marching close to finish the hunt by himself.

The one guilty for all the chaos and the awkward situation he was in was right in front of his eyes, the mysterious enemy inside the planetary ring!

"Die!"

Fengyu Zhong's roar seemed to be spreading out even though it was vacuum. The terrifying spiritual energy from his body had swallowed everything in the hundred square meters nearby. All the rushing meteoroids within the range came to a weird halt, as if time near Fengyu Zhong had frozen!

Shua!

A spear three meters long appeared inside Fengyu Zhong's hand. A vivid bronze human head was attached to the front end of the spear, as if the spear had pierced through a head without bothering to shake it off.

Tears and blood were flowing from the bronze head, which was made of liquid metal. It was changing its facial expression all the time. In collaboration with the Blood Face Battlesuit on Fengyu Zhong's body, it launched powerful mental blasts to its surroundings.

When 'Die!' was transmitted inside the communication channel, Fengyu Zhong was still at the edge of the planetary ring.

By the time the sound died down in the communication channel, Fengyu Zhong had already stomped on the assault rocket below his feet and sprinted into the planetary ring like a crimson viper.

The dominating aura of a Core Formation Stage Cultivator affected the trajectories of all the meteoroids. They all drew a weird curve when they approached him and passed by!

Within a breath, Fengyu Zhong had appeared deep inside the planetary ring.

Devil's Cry, the long spear in his hand, thrust forward like an arrow!

Pure black helical spiritual energy was unleashed from the body of the spear. All the meteoroids nearby were attracted and gathered into a spear of stones almost a hundred meters long, which smashed in Li Yao's direction!

Li Yao's heart was beating three times faster than usual from the first second Fengyu Zhong appeared.

The old, cunning, brutal bandit had indeed been infuriated and decided to act personally!

A Core Formation Stage Cultivator's fury was not something that could be underestimated. The very next second after Li Yao sensed the appearance of Fengyu Zhong, a spear of stones almost a hundred meters had already pierced into his face!

The long spear seemed to be emanating the stink of blood, creepy cries, and blood-freezing screams!

Snapping to from his trance, Li Yao found that the spear was gone. The meteoroids in the space nearby seemed to have turned into a hundred extremely painful faces whose miserable memories stabbed into his brain brutally!

Li Yao's hands and feet were cold, his eyes rigid. He felt that he had become the hundred Cultivators simultaneously tortured by the Temple of Immortals, screaming and crying.

"What a terrifying mental attack!"

The very next second, gold brightness was shining inside Li Yao's brain. The brilliance of the tree of memories minced all the picture of pain into pieces.

Li Yao had successfully gotten himself out of the mental attack, but the spear of stones was already next to his eyes. He could only bellow, grip his saber, and slash forward in the spirit of the space swirl!

BOOM!

As if two raging meteoroids had just collided, the light and heat generated from the clash illuminated the surrounding space like broad daylight.

The blast drove away all the meteoroids in the one hundred square kilometers nearby. There was a moment when it became an absolute vacuum without any materials.

Li Yao threw up a mouthful of blood. For 0.1 seconds, he could not feel his arms at all. His Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber nearly flew away. He was blown back dozens of kilometers by the blast and continued falling toward the depths of the planetary ring. Countless broken stones were raining upon him, making it hard for him to even distinguish the directions.

The full-strength strike of a Core Formation Stage Cultivator was truly unbelievable!

Li Yao had thought that, now that he had advanced into the high level of the Building Foundation Stage, it was possible for him to enter the peak of the Building Foundation Stage briefly if he could seize the moment when his fighting willing soared. With the assistance of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, he was not surely on the losing side when faced with a Core Formation Stage Cultivator.

But now, he finally understood that Building Foundation Stage Cultivators and Core Formation Stage Cultivators were vastly different!

The Cultivators in the high level of the Core Formation Stage were much stronger than what he had imagined!

Besides, awesome as his crystal suit might be, a Core Formation Stage Cultivator wouldn't select a random crystal suit, either.

Their crystal suits were equally powerful and endowed with equally special technology!

Without any hesitation, Li Yao turned around and ran away even though he had seemed determined to fight until he died a moment ago!

Chapter 541: A Hundred Times Crazier!

Chapter 541: A Hundred Times Crazier!

The deeper Li Yao went into the planetary ring, the denser and faster the stones became.

The giant meteoroids, dozens of meters in diameter, with immense spiritual energy stored inside, were all rushing toward him.

Despite the sturdy body of Cultivators, it would be a major headache if one of the meteoroids hit them.

Li Yao fled among the meteoroids with incredible agility.

He brushed past a meteoroid at a close distance; the next moment, he stomped on a meteoroid, altering his own direction and triggering a chain reaction behind the meteoroid to affect the hunter not far away; following that, he turned off all the power rune arrays and clutched onto a meteoroid, which carried him deeper inside the planetary ring, and the hunter was not able to locate him even when scanning with mystic rays.

The cloak of light flames dozens of meters long had long been retreated. What was left was a layer of vague scarlet mist that concealed all the critical parts of the crystal suit.

The hide-and-seek inside the planetary ring lasted half an hour.

Without them knowing, the two parties had almost reached the other side of the planetary ring.

On the hunter's side, all the space pirates had been left far behind, except for Fengyu Zhong.

The old dog who had a keen nose had remembered Li Yao's scent clearly. Whatever tricks Li Yao resorted to, he was not able to escape from Fengyu Zhong's tracking.

The distance between them became shorter and shorter. Li Yao was about to enter Fengyu Zhong's attack range.

If it went on like that, Li Yao would be completely locked onto by Fengyu Zhong within five minutes, no matter how he hid himself.

Li Yao seemed to have realized it, too. The cloak of light flames dozens of meters long reappeared and covered all the meteoroids nearby as he blinked backward like a phantom and slashed out, the aura of his blade extending to more than twenty meters away!

Under the pursuit of a Core Formation Stage Cultivator, he had fought back with his full strength!

Fengyu Zhong grinned hideously. He accelerated to his maximum speed. The Blood Face Battlesuit dashed at Li Yao like a crimson viper!

At the moment the blades collided, Li Yao's body suddenly turned fuzzy because of the dazzling brilliance on Devil's Cry. In the meantime, a plain-looking meteoroid behind Fengyu Zhong suddenly exploded, from which a second Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit jumped out of nowhere with its battle saber roaring!

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit with the cloak of light flames stretching dozens of meters that attacked first had merely been a phantom triggered by magical equipment!

"Hahahaha!"

Fengyu Zhong, who should've been caught unprepared, was actually sneering, indicating that he had seen through Li Yao's trap a long time ago. Devil's Cry had been pushed far away, but hundreds of light flames suddenly dashed out of the end of the spear where they revolved and interweaved into a new tip!

His weapon was a double-tipped spear. The two ends were equally destructive!

It was even possible that what seemed to be the back end of the spear was the real tip of the weapon!

Fengyu Zhong had seen through Li Yao's plan long ago. However, he had pretended he hadn't in order to lure his enemy to reveal himself!

The long spear, which seemed to be piercing forward, suddenly bounced back like an arrow that had been released from a bow.

BOOM!

The long spear crashed into the battle saber and broke all of Li Yao's defense without being hindered at all!

Li Yao seemed to have been penetrated through by a rushing stone. A beam of highly-condensed light broke into his chest and burst out of his back!

He only had time to stomp on a meteoroid to kick it at Fengyu Zhong. Then, he activated his power rune arrays to full power as he fell toward Iron Plateau at a high speed.

After only one clash, Li Yao had experienced a brutal failure and suffered heavy wounds. He was truly running like a rabbit now!

Hehe. You think that I dare not trespass into the so-called 'forbidden area for Cultivators'?

Fengyu Zhong quickly understood what was on Li Yao's mind. His enemy was trying to avoid his hunting by escaping to Iron Plateau.

You are not going to have it your way! Fengyu Zhong scorned.

His crystal processor had calculated that, if he accelerated to his maximum speed without bothering about anything else, he would be able to block and kill his enemy before he entered the atmosphere of Iron Plateau!

In the blink of an eye, Fengyu Zhong had accelerated to more than three times the speed of sound. But suddenly, he felt greatly alarmed, as if he had ignored something vital!

For some reason, the picture of Red Lightning being hit by Behemoth-19 and exploding suddenly popped up in Fengyu Zhong's brain.

Not good! The enemy is an explosions expert!

For a moment, the Core Formation Stage Cultivator was drenched in sweat.

He had charged at Li Yao's direction at the highest speed for 0.3 seconds.

But in the next 0.1 seconds, he came to an abrupt halt by brute force, at the cost of torn muscles, fractured bones, and even an internal injury!

Then, he fled in the opposite direction desperately without looking back, as if he had just run into a ghost.

Fengyu Zhong had only just run away in a flurry when almost a hundred giant light balls quickly expanded in the place where Li Yao and him had just fought and along the way of Li Yao's escape!

A hundred crystal bombs that had been hidden in the meteoroids were detonated at the same time!

The phantom just now was merely a disguise for Li Yao's trap. His full-strength strike and wounded escape were bait to attract Fengyu Zhong.

The crystal bombs were the real traps!

The explosion of the crystal bombs was not terrifying per se. As a Core Formation Stage Cultivator, Fengyu Zhong would only find that his search might be somewhat affected by the explosion, but he definitely wouldn't suffer any injuries.

However, this was not a normal stone belt but the planetary ring of Iron Plateau. He was in the middle of a piece of great defensive magical equipment that bordered on the stellar level!

Even though the great magical equipment had lost 99% of its power after five thousand years, the remaining 1% was still too much for a human body made of flesh and blood!

Shua!

Woken up by the explosion of the hundred crystal bombs, the dozens of space steles floating inside the planetary ring suddenly shone. Spiritual energy spurted out and assembled all the stones nearby into dozens of terrifying stone swirls!

The ostensibly peaceful ocean, despite the undercurrents, had now torn off the last bit of its disguise. Crazy tides and waves were surging, revealing the most horrendous appearance of the defensive magical equipment!

With a pale face, Fengyu Zhong did not dare to check his crystal camera until he was almost a thousand meters away, only to discover that the area where he had been moments earlier had become enshrouded in black cosmic dust. Dazzling electric arcs, dozens of kilometers long, were flashing inside the black dust, as if a thunderstorm on a cosmic scale was raging in the place!

The black dust was a result of countless meteoroids crashing and crumbling each other.

If I had chased after him, or if I had hesitated for half a second, I would've fallen into the cluster of black dust…

Fengyu Zhong's eyelids were twitching. At this moment, he finally realized something.

The mysterious enemy he was hunting was a pure lunatic, one that was a hundred times crazier than Lei Dalu!

The mysterious enemy was at the peak of the Building Foundation Stage at best. But the guy had lured him all the way there, not just to distract his attention from the Great Horn Exo Society, but to try to kill him!

Yes. The mysterious enemy who was no higher than the peak of the Building Foundation Stage was not merely taking advantage of the terrifying territory of the planetary ring to run away. He was hoping to take down a Core Formation Stage Cultivator with that!

Who is he? Who is this lunatic!

The Core Formation Stage Cultivator, whose face color had remained unchanged when he was hunted by seven Core Formation Stage Cultivators and hundreds of Building Foundation Stage Cultivators, the brutal bandit who was most infamous for his ruthlessness, finally felt that coldness was surging out of his spine beyond his control!

The planetary ring in front of him was still enveloped in black dust that his crystal camera could not see through.

The chaotic spiritual energy contained inside the black dust rendered other probe methods useless, too.

Fengyu Zhong had completely lost Li Yao.

He stayed where he was for a long time, hesitating over whether or not to continue the hunt or to give up, until a shocking report came in through the communication channel.

"General Feng!"

The advisor sounded a little bit nervous. "The detection crystal cameras we deployed at the edge of the Iron Plateau Space Zone have discovered two Cultivators' starships. They are approaching at a high speed!"

"What?"

Fengyu Zhong suddenly trembled and was almost hit by a meteoroid. "How come they are so fast?"

Then, it suddenly occurred to him that the reinforcements of the Cultivators were not fast. The real reason was that he had wasted too much time on this mysterious enemy!

According to his original plan, he should've blown up the Great Horn Exo Society half a day ago. Then, he would've bypassed the Iron Plateau Space Zone and lurked in the stone belts deeper within the area. After the shells of their starships were repaired, his fleet would return to the secret base of space pirates via space jumps.

However, when his plan was 99% complete, the mysterious enemy appeared and ruined everything!

Fengyu Zhong gnashed his teeth. "What's the situation of Blood Rain now?"

"It's a mess!"

The advisor cried, "General Feng, you also know that, when the enemies are inside a starship and start a street battle, our advantage in numbers and capability is no longer important! The bunch of lunatics are running everywhere on Blood Rain like rats that have been set on fire. An assault team of around ten persons almost breached into the cockpit!

"Affected by them, we cannot even separate the two starships, much less repairing the shell and the power system of Blood Rain!

"General Feng! The only solution right now is to ask the other three starships on our side to stop the two recently-arrived starships!

"The two starships are not large ones. They are not the main warships of major sects, either. It shouldn't be hard to deal with them!

"One day! I've calculated that we will eliminate the Great Horn Exo Society within one day!"

"One day…"

Fengyu Zhong's face was dry and yellow. He said gloomily, "Are you sure that the second wave of reinforcements won't arrive during the day?"

The advisor stammered, "About that—"

Fengyu Zhong continued speaking coldly. "The Great Horn Exo Society's distress signal has been sent for several days. Now that the first batch of reinforcements has arrived, the second, the third, and more must be on their way, too. Who knows when they will show up in the Iron Plateau Space Zone and from which direction?

"Let me ask you, are you confident that we can eliminate all the enemies from Great Horn that have sneaked into Blood Rain in three hours at whatever cost?"

The advisor was dazed for a moment. He calculated for a moment and replied, "Three hours? If we don't care about the cost, at the risk of serious internal damages, the odds of success are fifty percent!"

"Fifty percent…"

Fengyu Zhong's face was cloudy. A moment later, as if somebody had cut off part of his heart, he said, one word after another, with a hideous expression, "Abandon Blood Rain. You and the other key personnel will return to your respective secondary mothership according to Plan D. Also, be prepared to detonate Blood Rain when all the key personnel have evacuated!"

"What!"

The advisor was shocked. He wanted to say more, only to discover that Fengyu Zhong had cut off the communication.

Fengyu Zhong glared taciturnly in the direction Li Yao had vanished. His lips trembled, but he didn't say anything and turned into a streak of brightness, disappearing among the meteoroids.

Chapter 542: Homecoming

Chapter 542: Homecoming

A month of blood and darkness had finally passed.

Over the one month, the Flying Star Sector was like a wide, peaceful river that had fallen off a cliff and turned into a narrow, zigzagging torrent.

Assassinations, plots, traps, and explosions. More than half of the world of Cultivators had been involved in the abrupt changes. Not only had the space pirates demonstrated their immense power in the sea of stars, the Immortal Cultivators and the Temple of Immortals behind the space pirates had shocked all the Cultivators even if they were not struck personally.

For most of the time during the month, the Cultivators' performance had been less than satisfactory. Their biggest weakness had been revealed.

Cultivators who were scattered in the sea of stars and based on starships and star fortresses were too far away from each other. The transportation lines and the supply lines were too long. The fragile sailing routes between space zones and world fragments were like fat lambs. The wolves lurking in darkness could choose to attack the weakest of them any time they wanted.

Even a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator could only yell in anger when they ran here and there exhaustedly and in vain when they were faced with the boundless cosmos and a supply line that could easily be millions of kilometers long.

When the month was about to come to an end, and when countless experts and top-tier organizations, including the six major sects in Heavenly Saints City, were greatly frustrated, a brilliant battle report came from the Iron Plateau Space Zone in a corner of the sector.

The Great Horn Exo Society, the Swooping Eagle Sect, and the Flowing Flower Sect, three second-rate organizations in the Flying Star Sector, had fought an unbelievable battle with their courage and craziness!

In the beginning, their three starships were ambushed by the long-prepared Storm Prison. They should've been demolished at that time.

But in the end, Storm Prison paid a price of two starships, even including Blood Rain, the flagship of the fleet!

Although Fengyu Zhong had gotten away, forcing him to abandon his flagship was like cutting off one of his arms!

The entire Spider Den fell silent, while Cultivators and ordinary citizens of the Flying Star Sector were dancing in joy upon hearing the wonderful news.

The terrible cloud over their heads for the last month had cleared!

Of course, such a victory was at a great cost, too.

Of the four hundred Exos who had joined the suicidal attack in the end, less than one fifth of them had survived, while the rest had all perished in the sea of stars.

Blood Rain's final self-detonation had dragged Gold Horn into the swirl of destruction, too. Both of the two starships were almost torn into pieces simultaneously!

The Swooping Eagle Sect and the Flowing Flower Sect both had their bases and headquarters. Their losses were heavy but acceptable.

However, for the Great Horn Exo Society, Lei Dalu had narrowly escaped death because he had failed to break into Blood Rain after suffering severe wounds when he led the charge at the beginning of the battle. Other than him, Bai Kaixin, the advisor, and the other non-combat staff, as well as other heavily-wounded members, stayed in the starships of the Swooping Eagle Sect and the Flowing Flower Sect and therefore survived the battle.

After the battle, the Great Horn Exo Society had only the old, the weak, the sick, and the disabled left. Even its mothership had been blown up. It was half a step away from its destruction.

But a named related to the Great Horn Exo Society was spreading among the Cultivators of higher levels quickly and secretly.

It was said that the man had been an ordinary mechanic in the Great Horn Exo Society.

It was said that the man distinguished himself in the Skyhill Sword Seminar and might well have become the darkest horse after Huangpu Shiyi. However, he was kidnapped by the space pirates when he was about to reach the peak.

It was said that the man was much more than a simple refiner. He had stirred up the battle all by himself and sabotaged Fengyu Zhong's success when it was close at hand. Fengyu Zhong had suffered heavy wounds and excruciating pain!

It was said that the man had asked Huangpu Xiaoya to deliver a precious message and to inform the Cultivators of the existence of the Temple of Immortals.

It was said that, after the battle, Cultivators had sent multiple starships to search the edge of the Iron Plateau Space Zone and even risked approaching the planetary ring of Iron Plateau, only to find no traces of him whatsoever, as if he had been buried inside the planetary ring and become space dust.

Lei Dalu, Bai Kaixin, Huangpu Xiaoya… Many Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector were asking the same question.

"Li Yao, are you still alive?"

"Where are you exactly?"

…

In the headquarters of the Great Flourishment Sect in the East Continent Space Zone, a heated debate had lasted three hours and reached the most intense moment.

The debate was unavoidable.

To cope with the menace of the space pirates and the Temple of Immortals, all the Cultivation sects had taken actions to prepare themselves for the war to come.

One of the measures they were taking was to bring out the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and the best Cultivation arts that they had been kept secret in their respective sects for hundreds of years in order to better train the young disciples of their sects. They were hoping to bring up the best warriors as soon as possible!

Of course, there was only a limited number of people who could have such privileges.

It was not hard to understand that whoever got chosen and became the core disciples of the sect would have a promising future!

The Great Flourishment Sect had prepared a hundred third-degree positions, thirty second-degree positions, and three first-degree positions. Disciples of each degree would be invested with different amounts of resources and tutored personally by experts of different levels such as elders or even the sect leader.

For the three first-degree positions, they were all the absolutely important future stars of the Great Flourishment Sect and would be mentored by the previous leader of the Great Flourishment Sect, a Cultivator in the peak of the Core Formation Stage bordering on the Nascent Soul Stage!

Therefore, the competition for the three first-degree positions had been extremely intense since the beginning. Every candidate was questioned from various angles, including experience, talents, personality, and credits… Their every aspect was scrutinized and judged. Only after tedious arguments, negotiations, and compromises could one person be determined.

However, when a name appeared on the light beam, the elders, deacons, and executive board members who were all mean and sharp-tongued a moment ago coughed and failed to express any disapproval.

The leader of the Great Flourishment Sect looked around and declared, "Zuo Xiaohu is to become the third 'core disciple' that will receive special education. Is there a problem?"

No.

Zuo Xiaohu was the well-deserved number one of the younger generation of the Great Flourishment Sect in terms of credits, talents, and capability. He was at an overwhelming advantage against the other two 'core disciples'.

There was a long silence. Then, one of the elders hesitatingly said, "But Zuo Xiaohu only signed a ten-year contract with our sect."

The leader smiled. "If he has the opportunity to be the core disciple, he will get the real secret Cultivation arts of our sect as well as abundant resources. There won't be any trouble asking him to sign another contract of thirty to fifty years, will th—"

Before he had completed his sentence, the gate of the meeting room was pushed open softly.

A young man with a pair of sunglasses so large that they were almost hilarious and in a fur coat appeared in front of the elders, who were all staring at him with a weird expression.

The young man whistled and slid across an envelope, which span and stopped in front of the leader.

The leader frowned. He found a continuously changing, paper-like light beam inside the envelop and gasped after glancing at it. "Zuo Xiaohu, you want to cancel the contract and quit the Great Flourishment Sect?"

Zuo Xiaohu took off his sunglasses. Two ultra-clear eyes revealed themselves, as their owner blew at the glasses and wiped them. He replied, "Yes. When I joined the Great

Flourishment Sect, we had made it clear that I would only stay in the Great Flourishment Sect for ten years. During the ten years, you helped me train myself, and I helped you fight your battles. It was a fair deal."

The leader squinted and said, "But it's only been seven years. Besides, we've decided that you will be promoted to a 'core disciple'. You will receive the wholehearted enlightenment of the Cultivators who are close to the Nascent Soul Stage, and you will enjoy resources a hundred times more abundant than before! It's very likely that you will become a Core Formation Stage Cultivator before fifty!

"All that is required of you is to serve the Great Flourishment for another thirty to fifty years. Your payment during the time will be given according to the highest standard!"

Zuo Xiaohu vaguely smiled, his two shallow dimples appearing.

Other than his bizarre clothing, he was indeed a handsome and attractive young man.

"Leader, I remember there is a clause in our contract which states that, whenever the Great Horn Exo Society is in danger or in need, I am free to go as long as I pay a fine."

Shua!

Zuo Xiaohu threw a silver card over. It fell in front of the leader gently, as he continued speaking. "The fine is all inside, with every coin calculated. You can examine it with your crystal processor."

The leader's face color changed. "Zuo Xiaohu, you'd better think about it more carefully. The Great Flourishment is one of the strongest sects in the Flying Star Sector other than those in Heavenly Saints City!

"You've made great accomplishments by slaying demon beasts, space pirates, and Demonic Cultivators since you joined the Great Flourishment Sect!

"Right now, everyone in the East Continent Space Zone knows the name of 'Bright-colored Tiger'. Countless young men consider you their role model. The leaders of two sects have come to propose marriages for you!

"You should be well aware of what a great place the Great Flourishment Sect is and how friendly people here are now that you've spent seven years with us!

"Stay here! Stay in the Great Flourishment Sect, and your future will be nothing but bright! You will have access to the most powerful Cultivation arts. Countless hotblooded men will cross the sea of stars under your lead! One day, you may gain the shares of the Great Flourishment Sect as everyone else does here and become one of the real controllers of our sect!

"I know that you are from the Tiger Camp of the Great Horn Exo Society, and you were one of the orphans rescued by Lei Dalu. But there are more ways to return the favor if you insist!

"I promise you that, as long as you stay in the Great Flourishment Sect, we will try our best to help rebuild the Great Horn Exo Society. How about it?"

Zuo Xiaohu listened quietly the whole time. It was not until the leader finished his speech that he put on his sunglasses again and walked outside.

When he reached the door, he said softly, "I'm sorry, leader. I know that everyone in the Great Flourishment Sect has treated me well. I like everything in the East Continent Space Zone, too, especially the girls here.

"I also believe that you meant what you said. Someday, when the timing is appropriate, you will definitely help rebuild the Great Horn Exo Society.

"However, I can't wait for the 'someday' to come. In fact, I can't even wait for one second right now."

"I'm going home. Leader, elders, farewell."

Chapter 543: White-Haired Gun King

Chapter 543: White-Haired Gun King

Inside the No. 1 Range of Wild Goose Academy in the Long Bow Space Zone...

Although Flying Star University and Heavenly Saints Institute were in the lead in the rank of all the colleges of the Flying Star Sector, the two supreme colleges were both comprehensive colleges with various majors.

There were also many specialized academies in the countless space zones of the Flying Star Sector.

Even though their overall capability was no match for the two supreme colleges, they boasted abundant expertise in their specialized fields after hundreds of years of experience.

Wild Goose Academy was a specialized college that was most famous for its expertise in guns and the 'Gun Cultivators' it had raised. The rank of the academy in regard to shooting was only secondary to the two supreme colleges and always among the top five in the Flying Star Sector.

The No. 1 Range was seething with noises and spiritual energy. Countless bullets were roaring as many students were practicing their shooting skills.

"Is he the 'White-haired Gun King'?"

An innocent girl in the uniform of another college curiously eyed the janitor who was crouching in a corner.

The janitor was mainly responsible for the examination of the guns inside the field and to provide gears and ammunition for the trainers. Occasionally, he was in charge of guiding the green hands.

However, there were not many green hands in a place such as Wild Goose Academy. Most of the trainers carried their own guns, too, and did not need his adjustment.

As for the delivery of gears and ammunition, the crystal processor and artificial arms could take care of the job automatically.

Therefore, the janitor spent most of his time crouching in a corner, wearing an oily, dirty, large coat, with a bottle of the worst alcohol in his hand. He was always untidy and half drunk.

His hands would shake all the time when he was sober, and they shook even more violently when he enjoyed enough alcohol. Often, he was not able to hold anything except the bottle of his alcohol at that time.

"Yes. He is Lu Dian, 'White-haired Gun King', the legendary top expert of Wild Goose Academy. However, that was two years ago!"

Beside the innocent girl, a young man in flamboyant clothes and with a greasy face laughed and commented, "Three years ago, when the guy was just admitted into Wild Goose Academy, he was on a rampage and crushed everyone standing in his way. Even the experts who had trained in the academy for almost ten years were no match for him! Look, on the rank of the No. 1 Range, the record of 'One-minute

Quick Shooting with Obstacles' is 8,345 points. It was created by him!"

The girl exclaimed, "In a One-minute Quick Shooting with Obstacles, one must distinguish a hundred real targets from a hundred fake ones against the interference of spiritual energy and magnetic fields. It is the most difficult subject of quick shooting! My personal record is only 3,322 points. How did he manage to get more than eight thousand points? But his hair is not white. It is dry and yellow. Like a bird nest."

The man sneered, "His hair would only turn white rapidly when his spiritual energy surged out during his wholehearted shooting! But that's all history now! You see what he is right now. His hands were wrecked in the explosion due to an accident in his training two years ago. He has been depressed ever since and has become a drunk cat who knows nothing but drinking! The genius who could shoot more than eight thousand points is not even able to assemble the simplest of guns now. He is totally useless. What a pity!"

The girl looked at Lu Dian sympathetically, only to discover that the 'White-haired Gun King' was gazing at his crystal processor while drinking.

There was no telling what he was reading, but he was apparently in deep sorrow. Tears flowed out of his dirty eyes.

He was drinking faster and faster. It seemed that he was not drinking but trying to cool down his burning heart with the cold alcohol.

Somehow, his grief touched the girl.

She was curious and thought to herself, I wonder what news the genius of the past read just now. It must be distressing and devastating.

The man had finished adjusting his storm bolter. He selected the 'One-Minute Quick Shooting with Obstacles' subject in his shooting spot and looked back, only to find his companion staring at Lu Dian, the useless crap. He couldn't have been more furious.

For a moment, his memory of the brutal failure two years ago when he was savaged, crumbled, and eventually ignored by Lu Dian occurred to him again and crashed his heart.

The man walked forward and clutched his companion. He smiled as he said, "White-haired Gun King, do you still remember me? Two years ago, we had a match. You scored more than two thousand points higher than me at that time. What a loser I was! Hahahaha. But in the past two years, I did not drink and waste my life away. Instead, I've trained myself crazily and dedicated myself to the world of guns and bullets! How about another competition, White-haired Gun King?

"Oh, I'm sorry. I almost forget that the legend of Wild Goose Academy, the renowned White-haired Gun King, has sealed his gun for a long time. Mediocre gunners such as myself are not qualified to challenge you at all, are they? Hahahaha!"

Lu Dian showed no reaction. He burped as he wallowed in his sadness!

The man sniffed and glanced at him in despise. He pulled his companion back and smiled. "Don't bother with that useless crap. Come on. Let me show you how to adjust the gesture of holding your gun. I guarantee that your One-minute Quick Shooting with Obstacles will be improved by at least a thousand points. Look, you need to—"

Before he finished his sentence, he suddenly discovered that the storm bolter in his hand was gone!

A stinky smell suddenly flooded into his nostrils before he realized what was going on!

Lu Dian, who was completely drunk, appeared beside him at God knows when, with the man's storm bolter in his hand.

However, the gun was still shaking violently like his hands.

"Ge!"

Lu Dian burped in satisfaction.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

It was possible that he touched the trigger by accident. He shot out the bullets that were meant to be carefully locked onto the target and shot out throughout one minute within only ten seconds without bothering to aim at all!

The man was dumbfounded. He was about to curse, when Lu Dian threw his storm bolter back to him, smacked his lips, and staggered to the gate of the field.

A moment later, the result was displayed.

That casual One-minute Quick Shooting with Obstacles run turned out to be 16,553 points!

This result was almost double of the record Lu Dian had created himself in the No. 1 Range. It was even better than the performance of many gun tutors in Wild Goose Academy!

The crystal processor saved the result and displayed it on the rankings of the No. 1 Range.

In the meantime, passionate music was played, informing everyone that a record had been broken.

Inside the No. 1 Range, gasps and exclamations were echoing nonstop.

"More than sixteen thousand points? Are you kidding me? Has an elite tutor come here to mess around with us?"

"It is double of Lu Dian's record. How incredible is that!"

"Who—who—who made it?"

The man who challenged Lu Dian just now was more shocked than anyone else. He looked at the storm bolter in his hand that was still burningly hot and noticed that it was adjusted to the 'suppression mode' in which the firepower was fiercest, the shooting speed was the highest, but the precision was the worst, and the backlash was the strongest!

"In the su—suppression mode, his shooting is still so accurate?

"White-haired Gun King, Lu Dian, he—"

The man felt that his legs were like jelly, and he almost collapsed to the ground.

The innocent girl who had come with him was greatly interested. She ran to Lu Dian and asked curiously, "Senior Brother Lu. Nice to meet you. I'm from the Firearm Department of Micro Star University. I've heard your name a long time ago. I'm aware that you are an awesome gunfighter and that you had an accident in which your hands were seriously damaged more than one year ago. But right now, it seems that you are as good as the old days. Why have you been concealing your capability?

Lu Dian's hands were still shivering. He drank his alcohol one mouthful after another nonstop. Now and then, he would pick up an oily peanut from his dirty pocket and toss into his mouth. He glanced at the girl and said, "I came to Wild Goose Academy because I wanted to find a place with infinite guns and bullets, where I could practice shooting quietly.

"But after I accidentally defeated everyone here, they started calling me Gun God. Many people came to my door to challenge me every day. There were many forces and families that tried to recruit me, and when they failed, they even threatened me. All the harassment was annoying."

The girl was somewhat stunned. "However, only by communicating with each other can we improve our capability."

Lu Dian answered calmly, "A match between a tiger and a tiger is communication. A match between a tiger and a cat is only a waste of time. It would only stagnate your capability."

The girl was dazed for a long time. "So, you've been pretending that you were a useless man in order to avoid such nuisances? But, it is said that you are drunk, and your hands shake all day long. You can barely hold a gun. Besides, no one has ever seen you practicing shooting."

Lu Dian tapped his temples with his tremoring fingers and said, "As the janitor here, I see so many targets and so many flying bullets every day. Then, I practice shooting in my head. I meditate and imagine that countless myselves were standing in the shooting ranges. In the end, it was me who was holding the guns and opening fire, revising and rectifying.

"In such a way, although I seem to be lying here drunk, I was in fact training in more than ten shooting spots at the same time. It's very efficient."

The girl was startled, not having the slightest idea what kind of training method it was. Seeing that Lu Dian was about to walk out of the gate, she couldn't help but shout, "Lu Dian, everybody calls you White-haired Gun King. But your hair didn't turn white just now. Why?"

Lu Dian replied, "It was just a game. No need to get serious."

The girl was speechless. Seeing that Lu Dian was about to disappear, she shouted, "Lu Dian, where are you going? Do you have time for dinner? My name is—"

"That will be unnecessary."

A cold voice came from outside and interrupted her, "I'm in a hurry to go home now."

Chapter 544: I Need You!

Chapter 544: I Need You!

Inside the Thousand Springs Space Zone, there was a space town named 'Exhilaration'.

The spiritual energy of the Thousand Springs Space Zone was not very abundant. Therefore, there were not many Cultivation sects in the area, and it was mostly ordinary people who lived there.

Deep inside the town, on a plain-looking street, there was a small restaurant with a signboard saying 'Great Happiness Beef Noodles' on the top of the door and a fat, smiling bull head beside it.

It was not meal time yet. A plump girl in her twenties, who had freckles on the two sides of her nose, was washing cabbages in the back of the restaurant.

She seemed to be venting her anger onto the crisp vegetables and almost washed them into powder.

A young man in plain clothes, who had nothing worth mentioning about him except for his exceptionally long fingers, was standing in front of her silently with a suitcase in his hand. He seemed to be all set to go, if he could figure out how to bid the girl farewell.

"Leave! Leave! Leave now! I've got many vegetables to wash and plenty of beef to chop! Stop being an eyesore here!"

The freckled girl suddenly burst into fury and threw one of the cabbages into the basin hard.

Water splashed out into the young man's red eyes.

The young man was quiet for a long time, before he opened his mouth and said softly, "I'm sorry. Zuo Xiaohu is back. Lu Dian is back. They are my best friends. The Great Horn Exo Society is my home. I must go back, too."

The freckled girl wiped her eyes with the back of her hands. Her eyes must've been wet because of the water on her hands. She shouted, "Xiao Gao, I've listened to you talking about the stories of your past since the first day you worked in this restaurant. How happy your days in the Tiger Killer Camp were, how fast Zuo Xiaohu's saber was, what an amazing gunfighter Lu Dian was… I know that they are your good brothers. But—

"You and they are different!

"They are Cultivators who can soar into the sky or dive down a cliff freely!

"What about you? You are just an ordinary person. You are so weak that you cannot even defeat me. The only thing you can ever do well is cook beef noodles! Why are you joining them? What can you do even if you go back?"

Xiao Gao failed to respond promptly. It was not until a moment later that he replied, "Maybe I'm just an ordinary person who can only make beef noodles and omelets. But I figure that the Great Horn Exo Society can always use some chefs, and not all chefs are Cultivators.

"Zuo Xiaohu and Lu Dian are my brothers. They once said that the beef noodles and chicken wings I made were the most delicious food of the Flying Star Sector. They always found themselves full of spirits and their training efficiency greatly improved after they ate them. A meal of mine was more motivating for them than Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures were!

"Maybe this is the contribution I can make for the Great Horn Exo Society."

The freckled girl finally couldn't hold it any longer and started crying. "They were all lying. The food you make is awful. The worst in the world! Just stay here, alright? In another few years, when my father retires, he will definitely give the restaurant to you…"

Xiao Gao took a deep breath. Then he suddenly threw away his suitcase, strode toward the freckled girl, and hugged her!

The freckled girl was startled. She struggled out of natural instinct, only to find that the usually soft Xiao Gao was as tough as iron that day.

The freckled girl panicked and yelled, "Xiao Gao, what—what do you want?!"

Xiao Gao said, "Firstly, I believe in my brothers. If they say that the beef noodles I make are the most delicious noodles of the Flying Star Sector, my noodles are definitely so.

"Secondly, I am not weak. The three gangsters who harassed our restaurant last time never showed up again because I broke all their bones and kicked them away.

"I was merely being gentle to you."

While talking, Xiao Gao pushed the girl to a wall and kissed her hard.

"Ah! No! No! Xiao Gao, you—"

The freckled girl felt that her head was dizzy, and she lost all her strength. Blushing, she struggled for a moment. She was about to give up and admit her failure when Xiao Gao suddenly released her.

"What's wrong with you?"

The freckled girl was so irritated that she tossed the water together with the vegetables at Xiao Gao.

Xiao Gao was immediately soaked in water. He was wearing a bailer on his head, his face covered by a slice of a cabbage.

"Three years."

Xiao Gao extended three fingers and said, "In three years, if I'm still alive, I will marry you."

The freckled girl became more than angry. "Who says that I'm going to marry you? I'm going to marry my next-door neighbor, Er Niu, tomorrow!"

Xiao Gao picked up his suitcase and walked toward the door without looking back, as he replied, "Er Niu is not interested in you. He likes Bai Guizhi who sells salt fish at the end of the street and thinks that your ass is too big."

"What?!"

"But I like big asses. More exactly, I like your big ass very, very much."

"Excuse me?!"

…

Half a month later, inside a nursing home in the Thousand Sails Space Zone, the home camp of all Exos…

Lei Dalu was lying on the bed exhaustedly. He had lost so much weight that he was like a different person now. Dozens of tubes pierced into his body, through which countless kinds of strengthening drugs were being injected to repair the nerves and veins in the deepest parts.

Although he couldn't look more terrible, Lei Dalu was still glaring at the people in front of him, his eyes as sharp as blades.

More precisely, he was glaring at the one hundred and seventy-nine young men in front of him.

The one hundred and seventy-nine young men stood inside and outside the nursing home like a hundred and seventy-nine young pine trees rooted there.

Although their clothes were different, their Cultivation levels greatly varied, and some of them were simply ordinary people, they all gave other people the same impression.

A new-born calf is not afraid of a tiger. If there is a chance, they can even kill one. All the young men carried the fearlessness of the Tiger Killer Camp!

Lei Dalu was furious, if his eyes were telling the truth.

Zuo Xiaohu, Lu Dian, and Xiao Gao, on the other hand, were all winking at him, with 'what-can-you-do-with-us' written on their faces.

Lei Dalu said coldly, "What are you doing here? I thought I told you long ago that the Great Horn Exo Society was too small a temple to enshrine so many crazy devils and that you should get lost as far away as possible and fly as high as possible. Why have you come back?"

Zuo Xiaohu smiled and replied, "Uncle Captain, we've flown far and long. We experienced a splendid world and encountered many experts. But after a while, we all agree that the Great Horn Exo Society is slightly better than anywhere else. Therefore, we kicked each other's asses to this place to ask you whether or not you are short of hands and if you are willing to hire us."

Lei Dalu gnashed his teeth and cursed, "No and no. Right now, the Great Horn Exo Society does not even have one starship. I don't even have a bag of crystals. Even the fees that the nursing home charges have to paid by someone else. I cannot afford you animals! Just go back to where you came from!"

Lu Dian said calmly, "We are not leaving, unless you beat us away. However, I'm told that you are seriously wounded, and you are at the weakest right now. I don't think that you are capable of beating almost two hundred of us! Right now, you have two options. You can either accept us now, or you can accept us after we beat you up and force you to do so."

Lei Dalu was speechless.

Zuo Xiaohu was beaming with joy as he said, "Uncle Captain, do you know the biggest wish of the orphans in the Tiger Killer Camp such as myself?

"Our biggest wish is to beat you up!

"You're a wretched old man who pushed and savaged us too hard when you asked us to train ourselves. I still having nightmares to this day.

"I've been training myself so hard just so that I can surpass and defeat you one day!

"Although you are a half-dead patient at this moment, and it seems not a justified victory if we join our hands to beat you up, do you think we will be bothered by that?

"Therefore, stop glaring at us like that. Old man, you have to admit that you are too old, and it's time to retire. We are here for the Great Horn Exo Society!"

Lei Dalu seemed to be shivering in anger. He turned his red eyes to Xiao Gao, who had been making his living by selling noodles, and asked solemnly, "Xiao Gao, why did you come here? Why are you horsing around with them?"

Xiao Gao looked at Lei Dalu in the eyes and answered calmly, "I want to come back to the Great Horn Exo Society, too. At least, I should help it survive the toughest years to come. However, I'm just an ordinary person, and I'm capable of nothing except making beef noodles, which I can make in thirty-four different ways.

"I can never defeat you. If you make up your mind to kick me away, I can only go away.

"Captain, I only want to ask you one question, and I hope that you can answer it truthfully. Can I be of any use to the Great Horn Exo Society right now? Does the Great Horn Exo Society need me?

"If I am of no use and the Great Horn Exo Society does not need me, I will leave right now."

Everyone fixed their eyes on Xiao Gao.

Zuo Xiaohu shouted loudly, "Xiao Gao, who dares to say that you are useless to the Great Horn Exo Society? I remember that, whenever I was tortured and exhausted because of Uncle Captain's crazy training, I would always be energetic again after eating the chicken wings you made. I felt that I could do another day and night's training!"

"Indeed!"

Lu Dian said seriously, "I found all the food I had during my years of travelling flavorless compared with Xiao Gao's chicken wings and beef noodles. Even Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures were no match for them. I often felt discouraging due to the lack of nice food! One of the major reasons for my return is to taste your secret 'Super Awesome Luxurious Training Food Package'!"

"But—" Xiao Gao's voice was shaking. "I'm just an ordinary person, and I can only make the most primitive food. I have no idea how to cook the delicious food made of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures."

Zuo Xiaohu consoled him. "Just mince the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures into pieces. I can eat them raw."

Lu Dian observed, "That's highly unnecessary. You can simply bring me an intact one and a cruet."

"Captain!"

All the orphans originating from the Tiger Killer Camp stared at Lei Dalu quietly.

Lei Dalu finally couldn't bear it any longer.

The tough man, whose face color had remained unchanged even when he was faced with Fengyu Zhong, a Core Formation Stage Cultivator, and countless space pirates, finally collapsed. Tears were flowing on his dry face, as he said, "Xiao Gao, Lu Dian, Zuo Xiaohu, and everyone else…

"I—I need you!

"Now is the time when the Great Horn Exo Society needs you most!

"Every one of you, whatever your Cultivation is and regardless of whether you are a Cultivator or an ordinary person, is of use to the Great Horn Exo Society!

"Welcome to the Great Horn Exo Society. Welcome home!"

"Hooray!"

"We are home now. Everybody is together again!"

"Long live Great Horn! Long Live the Tiger Killer Camp!"

Excited exclamations were echoing inside and outside the ward.

Lei Dalu was laughing, too, with tears in his eyes. "Alright. Now that we have so many hands, the next mission for Great Horn can be started immediately!"

Zuo Xiaohu was surprised. "We've got a new mission so shortly? But we don't even have a starship right now. Who hired us?"

Lei Dalu replied, "It's not a contracted mission, but one of our own. We need to go to a place and look for a certain someone."

Lu Dian raised his eyebrow. "What place? Which someone?"

Lei Dalu's smile was gone. His eyes narrowed, his face grave. "The forbidden area for Cultivators. Someone whom you can trust as your brother for your entire life."

Chapter 545: He Is Asking to Be Killed

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Deep down in a ragged space town where spiritual energy had almost run dry, near a raucous vegetable market that was filled with broken sewers, a bald man was sipping and enjoying a bowl of bean curd jelly in a small booth that sold breakfast.

The booth was very close to the booths that sold chicken and fish, and therefore, was corrupted by the fishy stink. The smell was quite unpleasant.

The breakfast hour had long passed. The bean curd jelly was mostly sold out. Whatever was left in the big bucket was cold with too much salt and soy sauce. It was definitely not anything close to tasteful.

But the bald man was enjoying it as if it were the most delicious food in the world. He focused his attention on the bowl and completely dwelled in it.

The bald man looked plain. He was wearing grey, like most of the ordinary people in the market. However, his eyes were long, narrow, and almost extended to his temples. His pupils were the size of needle tips, and if one were to draw close and observe carefully, one would vaguely see that two bloody lotuses seemed to be floating inside the man's eyes.

Fengyu Zhong was sitting across him with a completely different appearance. His face was wrinkled, the hair on his temples spotted. He was wearing rubber shoes and a leather apron. He was acting like a fish dealer and gave every feeling that he was one who seemed to be outspoken and yet would take advantage of the customers at the earliest chance when they didn't notice.

As if sitting on a carpet made of pins, Fengyu Zhong was moving uneasily and finally spoke hesitantly. "Lotus King…"

"Why are you not eating anything? One won't have the strength to work until their stomach is full."

The Lotus King chewed the floating scum and swallowed it, before he continued. "The food here is indeed bad. But for the seekers of the greatest Dao, everything in the mortal world is but fleeting cloud and dust. Bean curd jelly is dust. Lobsters and abalones are dust, too. Is it necessary to be picky about food when they are all dust? Just take it."

Fengyu Zhong swallowed. The brutal bandit who had committed countless murders did not dare defy the Lotus King at all and simply ate the cold, awful bean curd jelly.

The Lotus King played with his spoon and said, "The failure at the end of the battle was not your fault. You carried out the plan perfectly on the tactical level. The problem was that factors out of the picture suddenly meddled in our affairs, which was a mistake in the strategical level. I should take full responsibility for the failure! You don't need to blame yourself. In fact, I owe you an apology. Because of my miscalculation, you lost two starships, and your prestige on Spider Den has plunged."

"Lotus King!"

Fengyu Zhong did not expect the Lotus King to be so benevolent. He was lost for words for a moment.

The two Immortal Cultivators from the Temple of Immortals were discussing world-shaking events near an ordinary vegetable market.

But the other customers beside them, the boss of the breakfast booth, and the passers-by seemed to be hypnotized or in a dream. They were talking and laughing as if they'd heard nothing wrong.

The two red lotuses inside the Lotus King's eyes were bouncing like fire, as he continued speaking. "What bothers me is not the loss of two starships, but the fact that you are still troubled by your only son's murder, and you let your sentiments affect your judgement! When we were preparing, I had thought that you had already cut off all your mortal feelings and that your fury was all faked. As it turned out, that was not the case."

Fengyu Zhong's face was lackluster when he thought of his only son. He replied hoarsely, "Lotus King, it's true that I failed to cut off all the mortal feelings. The decision I made was half rational and half driven by my fury. I lost my mind and—"

"Forget it." The Lotus King sighed. "Everybody knows that immortality will be achieved the moment they cut off all their mortal feelings. But mortal feelings are not that easy to cut off, and the ultimate Dao can only be pursued with hard work!

"We are human beings essentially. Human beings are animals. Animals are prone to the vexation of natural instincts, which are controlled by our cells, our genes, and all the hormones inside our body. They constitute a solid cage that we cannot free ourselves from easily.

"What is the path of immortality?

"The path of immortality is to fight against the natural instincts and shatter the cage!

"Love of entertainment is a natural instinct, and so is the bond between father and son! Only by cutting off the natural instincts completely can we evolve from hairless monkeys into a more advanced life form so as to survive longer in the dark forest and even become the king of it!

"The natural instinct for enjoyment is easy to cut off. But those regarding blood relationships are like parasites. One might find it impossible to cut them off after a thousand or even ten thousand slashes. Even I cannot say for sure that I've successfully cut off all my mortal feelings!

"Therefore, although you were blinded by mortal feelings, I don't think that I'm qualified to blame you for that.

"However, the mortal feeling of father and son is to be cut off eventually. You will not be able to view the true path of immortality until you cut off such a natural instinct!"

Fengyu Zhong was dazed for a moment. He said, "But I only have one son who is already dead. How am I going to cut off such a mortal feeling?"

The Lotus King smiled. "You can always have more sons."

Fengyu Zhong was startled. He pondered for a moment and was awed by the infinite coldness and cruelty within those six words. He was speechless for a long time, before he managed to change the topic.

"About Li Yao..."

The intelligence system of the Temple of Immortals was very sophisticated. Now that Li Yao's name was spreading among the Cultivators, it was only reasonable that the Temple of Immortals had picked up on it.

The Lotus King replied, "Leave the guy alone. You have more important work to do, which is to expand your forces on Spider Den and become the real tyrant of space pirates!"

Fengyu Zhong was stunned. "But right now, my manpower and reputation have hit rock bottom."

The Lotus King explained, "Weakness is strength in disguise. Take Li Yao for example. As a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator, wasn't he weak as hell compared to you? But he caused you a great fiasco and a huge loss of subordinates. Even yourself were almost trapped by him. You behaved better when you were chased by almost ten Core Formation Stage Cultivators before!

"Why? Because you thought that he was weak!

"If he were a Core Formation Stage, or even a Nascent Soul Stage, Cultivator, would you have been fooled?"

Fengyu Zhong was deep in thought.

The Lotus King continued. "Right now, the entire Spider Den is aware that Storm Prison has just endured a storm. You've also released the fake news that you are seriously wounded. Those who have second thoughts should be making plans now, and those who have been lurking in the darkness will show up shortly!

"Your wife is the daughter of the leader of Black Spider Tower. Other people may hesitate to act if she's still on your side. So, the two of you can act like she's betrayed you and make everyone think that you are all by yourself now. When your opponents have shown all their trump cards, we will counterattack and finish them once and for all!

"This is the move we are going to make. You can take your time to settle the details when you're back. Draw up a proposal with the estimated budget in three days. Whatever manpower, money, or magical equipment you need, you will have them.

"In short, make it big and worry about nothing. I'm very confident in you!"

Fengyu Zhong took a deep breath and replied, "Alright. With Lotus King's promise, I'm definitely going to take down Spider Den. However, you can never be too careful about that guy, Li Yao. It's not just because of my personal hatred. The guy is truly cruel, crazy, and cunning. He is even more dangerous than the most brutal bandit! The organization must not regard him as an ordinary Building Foundation Stage Cultivator. I suggest that we mark him as an enemy in the Core Formation Stage level and ask the experts of Black Spider Den to assassinate him as a priority!"

The Lotus King smiled vaguely. "You don't need to worry about that. Do you know why I asked you to choose the Iron Plateau Space Zone as your battlefield?"

Fengyu Zhong was dazed for a moment. The Iron Plateau Space Zone was a forbidden area for Cultivators, where all kinds of perils were looming. Even he had almost fallen into the traps. He had thought that the Lotus King was merely trying to take advantage of the territory there. But now that the Lotus King had brought it up again, could it be—

Fengyu Zhong beamed with joy. He exclaimed in surprise and excitement, "Do we have men on Iron Plateau?"

The Lotus King smiled but gave no replies. He sipped the remaining bean curd jelly and smacked his lips. "Landing on Iron Plateau? He is asking to be killed!"

…

At the periphery of the constellation, an encounter had just ended.

A starship of space pirates discovered a broken 'Ox-level' carrier in a remote route.

Judging from the appearance, it seemed to have been brought there by a severe space storm and had barely any impetus left. The shell of the starship was torn apart; the crystal cannons on the surface were askew. It was unable to move at all, like an animal that was mired in a swamp.

The overjoyed space pirates immediately jumped forward and docked to the starship while threatening it with the fearsome crystal cannons. A lot of space pirates boarded on the unfamiliar starship.

They were surprised that the carrier was empty without a single human being.

Right then, the cabin door was locked. Deadly gas was released nonstop and killed all the intruders instantly.

In the meantime, the shell of the carrier glittered. The peaceful appearance of a carrier was torn apart, revealing almost a hundred dense cannons that made the starship look like a hideous steel hedgehog.

The Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag rose up on the light beam projected by the head of the starship.

Sparkle had revealed itself!

Since the two parties were next to each other and docked by magnetic field, there was no way to avoid the bombardment at all. After twenty minutes of barraging, the starship of the space pirates had completely lost all combat ability.

The remaining space pirates fled in their crystal suits. But the current route was too remote and far away. Without the support of a starship, their crystal suits did not have enough fuel to support themselves to fly to the next supply point. They would become space dust half way through their trip.

It did not take long before the space pirates realized the situation.

Ten minutes later, all the space pirates who had surrendered were shot dead.

The Cultivators from the depths of the Grand Desolate Plateau of the Heaven's Origin Sector who had fought the demon race for five hundred years did not know what 'mercy' was at all.

"The first hunting in disguise has succeeded."

"But it took us too much time. We suppressed a starship of the lowest level in over twenty minutes. The distribution of our cannons is not accurate enough. We need to redesign the positions of the fire points."

"The space pirates that were attracted into our starship were not many, either. The scheme to lure the enemy needs to be further revised."

Inside the empty Sparkle, four clusters of liquid metal shivered and occasionally formed human faces.

The 'Four Kings' of the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution in the old days, four spectral Cultivators today, had grown accustomed to the training of their souls. They could simulate the shape of humans once in a while now.

An even larger cluster of liquid metal rolled inside and bulged into a silver human figure. But it was only half a meter tall and looked like an uncolored statue. It was Professor Mo Xuan, the previous dean of the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution and the founder of Project Mystic Skeleton.

"Li Yao has been found!"

Chapter 546: Rough Iron Plateau

Chapter 546: Rough Iron Plateau

Ten minutes later, the five spectral Cultivators from the Heaven's Origin Sector finished analyzing the information that Li Yao had transmitted to them.

Sparkle fell into a brief silence.

Mo Xuan said, "According to Li Yao's message, and the information we collected from the Spiritual Nexus recently, we have two options right now.

"Firstly, we can stand by and watch because it's none of our business. We can continue hiding in the periphery of the sea of stars and let the Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector fight each other. We won't do anything about it even if the Flying Star Sector might be occupied by the Immortal Cultivators.

"Secondly, we can get us involved and fight against the Immortal Cultivators together with the Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector in some way!"

The 'Four Kings' slightly shivered. The liquid metal was shrinking and expanding, as they began talking enthusiastically,

"It appears that the Temple of Immortals is a very large organization that has been hiding its capability in the shadow for a thousand years. Now that it has decided to act, it definitely has backup plans. This is not the end of everything yet!"

"We have nothing but a tiny Sparkle. The odds of success when fighting against such a giant are not very high. We might be destroyed if we are reckless for a moment!"

"The Heaven's Origin Sector is still waiting for us. We cannot afford to die in this place."

"But Li Yao has already become a sworn enemy of the Temple of Immortals. If the Immortal Cultivators really take over the Flying Star Sector, they will absolutely try everything they can to dig us out!"

"Then we should run. To a different world!"

"Which world? We were already unbelievably lucky to have jumped into a world with abundant resources. Who knows whether or not we can find a similar world in our next jump?"

"Even if we find a new world, who can be certain that it will be a peaceful one? For all we know, it might be even more chaotic than the Flying Star Sector!"

"Fight! We should stay and fight! These so-called Immortal Cultivators are in fact demonic Cultivators, who are our sworn enemies! Don't forget that the demon race that savages the Heaven's Origin Sector nowadays was on the same boat as the demonic Cultivators before!"

Mo Xuan listened to everyone's opinions quietly. In the end, he remarked, "Everybody has made good points. Allow me to make a conclusion.

"Firstly, the Flying Star Sector is a world with bountiful resources and spiritual energy. Besides, the remnants of all kinds of starships can be found in this place, which makes it the best place for us to build up ourselves at this moment. It's highly unlikely that we find a similar world again after another super-long space jump. It's more likely that we will be lost in the four-dimensional space and torn into pieces.

"Therefore, before we find our way home, we can only stay in the Flying Star Sector.

"Secondly, we cannot count on the remnants to strengthen ourselves forever. As Sparkle grows stronger and more advanced, cutting-edge technology and magical equipment will have to be applied to it one day.

"Such things are not available in the ancient battlefield at the periphery of the sea of stars. We can only expect to find them in the central part of the Flying Star Sector.

"The central part of the Flying Star Sector is definitely the place that Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators are going to fight over.

"It means that we will have to get in touch with one of the two sides someday if we keep building up ourselves. We will communicate with them, learn their techniques, receive their assistance, and even form an alliance with them.

"The only question remains, which of the two sides are we going to get in touch with? Cultivators or Immortal Cultivators?

"I think the answer to the question is obvious.

"I said just now that we had two options. But in fact, we have only one. If the Flying Star Sector really turns into a great swirl of war, we will definitely be involved. The only thing we can choose is how to be involved. Do we accept whatever happens to us, or strike our way forward?

"Yes. The Heaven's Origin Sector is waiting for us. But how do you envision our return? Are we coming home alone, with nothing but Sparkle, or with countless allies and thousands of starships?

"I believe that, if the Cultivators of the Heaven's Origin Sector resist the Immortal Cultivators together with the Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector today, the Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector will stand side by side with the Cultivators of the Heaven's Origin Sector and demolish the Blood Demon Sector tomorrow!"

The 'Four Kings' were silent for a moment. Then, they each extended a small metal sprout from the center of the metal balls and shook.

It was a gesture of consent among them.

"Alright. It's decided then. We will cruise slowly toward the Iron Plateau Space Zone now while we explore more ancient battlegrounds on the way in order to further modify Sparkle so that it will boast a higher combat ability within the atmosphere.

"In the meantime, we can disguise ourselves as a business starship and continue hunting space pirates in order to accumulate more battle experience!

"According to the messages from various sources, Li Yao has probably been forced to land on Iron Plateau. When the moment comes, we might have to break into Iron Plateau to rescue him!

"Let's just hope that he is not dead by then!"

…

"I'm going to die!" Li Yao shouted and leaned backwards, his arms waving.

He stomped on the ground and dashed back weirdly like a leaf that was being swept away by furious wind.

The moment he jumped back, a cluster of black, stinky air hit where he had been standing brutally. Countless iron ores were mixed in with the stinky air and blew hundreds of holes in the ground from which blue smoke was popping up.

"HOOO!"

A gargantuan worm that looked like an earthworm, only billions of times larger, was roaring scarily. It was more than ten meters long and one meter in diameter. The front end of its body was a bloody mouthpart where countless sharp, circular teeth were spinning rapidly.

Li Yao turned back and slashed his saber. The aura of his blade spurted out, only to leave a shallow trace on the skin of the bizarre worm, which was emitting a metallic glow, as if the worm was made of super alloys.

Li Yao's attack further infuriated the bizarre worm. The front end of its body blossomed, expanding its mouthpart to more than three meters in diameter. A cluster of even more vicious, venomous gas was being condensed rapidly inside its body!

When the cluster of black gas was compressed to the bare minimum, Li Yao snapped his fingers.

Four Floating Six-barreled Machine Guns appeared weirdly deep inside the bizarre worm's throat and opened fire!

In an instant, more than ten burning lines of bullets barraged and triggered the high-pressure gas inside the bizarre worm's body.

The surface of the bizarre worm was as tough as steel, but the interior of its body was extremely soft and stored a huge amount of water. It was blown into smithereens immediately. The worm was split in two, and yet it was not killed, still struggling crazily, driven by natural instincts, stirring the environment nearby into chaos.

Li Yao fled with his face hidden in his palms.

He did not return until half an hour later, by which time the bizarre worm had turned completely rigid. Then, he dissected the worm prudently and collected the materials that he needed.

"My bullets are running out."

Li Yao sighed and eyed his surroundings helplessly. He finally understood why the residents of the Flying Star Sector would rather live on cold, shallow starships than return to the planets.

Iron Plateau was not a place for human beings at all!

There was nothing but a desert the color of rust all the way to the horizon. Weirdly-shaped plants could be found occasionally, but they were all withered and half-dead.

The environment there was similar to that of the Grand Desolate Plateau in the Heaven's Origin Sector.

However, the Grand Desolate Plateau was a boundless plateau that could be reconstructed manually after all.

But on the surface of Iron Plateau, huge mountains, hundreds and even thousands of meters high, were standing next to each other!

The mountains defied the tectonic laws. They were separate from each other and simply protruded from the ground. Multi-colored and bumpy, they were similar to the commonly-seen meteoroids in the space.

In some places, mountains were replaced by giant pits, hundreds of meters in diameter. Many such pits were enveloped by black fog all the time. If one were to look at them from afar, they were the darkest abysses.

The altitude gap between the mountains and the abysses was extremely large, which made the climate on Iron Plateau disjointed and without any patterns. It was not unusual for a furious thunderstorm to be succeeded by scorching weather just a moment later.

Such an environment was definitely not natural.

Li Yao speculated that an enormous meteor shower had assaulted Iron Plateau thousands of years ago.

The bigger meteorites had landed on the surface of Iron Plateau and turned into the uncanny peaks of stones.

The meteorites that were smaller, on the other hand, were directly vaporized due to the intense impact, the blast of which swept across everything, leaving the bottomless craters on the ground.

The meteorites looked very odd and unnatural. Li Yao had seen many interconnected spiritual stripes on many meteorite mountains that constituted what seemed to be rune arrays.

Li Yao had never seen such circuits before. But he was sure that it was a model that could absorb and utilize spiritual energy.

The meteorites must have been made by certain intellectual creatures on purpose. They were some sort of 'magical equipment'!

The meteorites seemed to boast a strange power that had completely reshaped the environment of Iron Plateau. Not only was the land desolate, the demon beasts there had undergone unbelievable mutations, too.

The giant sand worm that had assaulted Li Yao a while ago was a frequently-seen low-level demon beast that was often used by high-level demon beasts as vehicles.

But on Iron Plateau, it had mutated in a terrifying way. Its skin was thick and weapon-proof, and it could absorb metals and pulverize them into ores inside its body. During a battle, it could spurt out the ores with high-pressure air like a storm of bullets!

However, this giant worm was one of the most 'docile' demon beasts that Li Yao had seen during his one-month stay on Iron Plateau.

"What kind of place is this? It is even rougher than the Dark Desolate Domain in the depths of the Grand Desolate Plateau!"

Looking at the ragged Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit on his body, the Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber, which was riddled with cracks, and the crystals inside his Cosmos Ring, which were about to run dry, Li Yao cursed loudly.

Chapter 547: Path to Core Formation

Chapter 547: Path to Core Formation

An hour later, Li Yao appeared at the foot of a majestic meteorite mountain.

The meteorites from space were apparently of different origins. Some of them contain abundant spiritual energy and resources that were necessary for living creatures. This majestic meteorite mountain was a good example. Although it was surrounded by a bleak desert, a lot of green plants were thriving on the mountain, making it seem like an oasis in the desert.

However, the 'oasis' was not as peaceful as it appeared to be.

Li Yao lunged forward and climbed up to the middle of the mountain. There was an inconspicuous crevice covered by bushes and grass.

The bushes beside the crevice, noticing that a stranger was drawing near, suddenly wriggled as if they were animals. A cluster of bright grey thorns danced like hundreds of vipers. Their front ends blossomed and spewed dirty sap as they hissed like snakes.

Li Yao held his saber tightly and put on a dangerous look. He yelled, "Do you want to die?"

The thorns shook for a moment. There was no telling whether they understood what Li Yao said or they perceived the killing intent from him, but they did not dare get closer to him anymore.

Li Yao raised his hand and tossed a slice of worm meat to the thorns. It was immediately bound up by dozens of thorns and melted by their corrosive sap. Very soon, it became a delicious meal for the thorns.

Li Yao took the opportunity to dash past the thorns into the crevice behind them.

There was quite a spacious cave behind the crevice.

Li Yao had paved the ground with ash and sand. Therefore, the cave was quite clean and dry.

The cave was not the largest one on this meteorite mountain, nor did it boast the most abundant spiritual energy. There were several other caves with better conditions.

But Li Yao had chosen this cave because of the thorns growing outside the cave.

They were greedy carnivores that would not let any intruder past. Also, whenever they were alarmed, they would always make rattling noises, which made them the best watch dogs at present.

Deep inside the cave, where the thorns could not reach, Li Yao took off his Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and lay down, stretching out in relief.

Then, he suddenly jerked up and, unwilling to admit his failure, tried to break his limits with the 'Soul Igniting Law'!

BOOM!

A glittering rune array seemed to have been formed inside the cave. Mysterious rays of light were flowing around Li Yao's body!

"Refinement Stage Level One! Level Four! Level Seven!

"Refinement Stage Level Nine! Level Eleven! Level Thirteen!

"Peak of the Refinement Stage!"

When he reached the peak of the Refinement Stage, the spiritual gas surrounding Li Yao had reached the maximum. The whole cave was soaked in an ocean of gold brightness. Even the most ordinary rock was glittering like the most precious diamond.

However, just when the spiritual gas was about to be compressed and liquefied as he approached the Building Foundation Stage, nine black streaks suddenly popped around Li Yao heart. They bit each other's tails and locked up his heart like a vicious shackle!

Li Yao grunted in pain. Cold sweat was pouring off his forehead, but he could not condense his spiritual gas anyhow.

A moment later, Li Yao let go of his spiritual gas helplessly and maintained his spiritual energy in the third level of the Refinement Stage with the Soul Converging Technique.

"Black Spider Death Curse, what a creepy one!"

Li Yao tore open his mustard-seed battle suit and observed his stomach. Nine black stripes that interweaved into a weird chain of nine snakes were looming on his left chest. It was deep into his skin and flesh and tied up his heart.

Scratching the 'tattoo' softly, Li Yao felt that it was directly connected to his heart. A gentle touch was enough to make his heart race. It was not hard to guess what would happen if it was removed by force.

Li Yao had complicated feelings as he looked at the tattoo, wondering whether or not he should regret joining the battle a month ago.

It was true that, when he had learned that Storm Prison was ambushing the Great Horn Exo Society, an untamable, crazy notion had occurred to him, which was to take down the Core Formation Stage Cultivator Fengyu Zhong!

The reason was simple. Li Yao had never believed that any secret was safe forever.

Although few clues had been left to link him to Fengyu Ming's death, there were still too many coincidences.

Before, he had not been known for his capabilities yet, and other people might not have associated him with the event.

But as he appeared out of nowhere in the Skyhill Sword Seminar, and when he rose to fame in Heavenly Saints City in the future, his capabilities would become known by the world sooner or later.

By then, with Fengyu Zhong's wisdom and Black Spider Tower's intelligence network, some traces would definitely be found.

Li Yao had never been a passive man.

Neither was he willing to bear the thought that a Core Formation Stage Cultivator would be making plans against him in secret someday in the future.

It was to kill or to be killed. It seemed to be a better option to slay the father before he found out the truth about his son's death than to wait for Fengyu Zhong to figure everything out.

Li Yao had not been aware of the existence of the planetary ring before; he only knew that the Iron Plateau Space Zone was full of stone belts.

Therefore, his plan had been to hide inside the stone belts while planting all the crystal bombs he carried during his escape. Then, the environment inside the stone belts would be completely disrupted, and Fengyu Zhong would be stalled.

He was wagering on the hope that the reinforcements of Cultivators would arrive in time and surround Fengyu Zhong. If so, Fengyu Zhong would certainly have died!

The chance was slim. But how could a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator kill a Core Formation Stage Cultivator without taking his chances?

When he'd discovered that the planetary ring around Iron Plateau was a piece of powerful defensive magical equipment, he had changed his plan and decided to activate the defensive magical equipment with the crystal bombs as triggers!

In order to fully convince Fengyu Zhong, he had even fought Fengyu Zhong the hard way once and suffered heavy wounds because of it.

He had taken every detail into consideration.

It had never occurred to him that Fengyu Zhong's nose would be so sharp. There were no loopholes at all, but he had still sensed danger and run away beforehand.

Li Yao had also failed to anticipate that the blast released by the planetary ring when it was triggered to be as strong!

His original plan was to hide in the interior side of the planetary ring while he waited for the reinforcements.

As it turned out, the blast was like a surging tide and easily blew him into the gravitational pull of Iron Plateau. The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had been seriously damaged, too, and lost most of its impetus. He was not able to alter his route and could only perform an emergency landing on Iron Plateau.

After he fell onto the planet that was even harsher than the Grand Desolate Plateau, the trickiest issue Li Yao was faced with was not the brutal demon beasts, but the Black Spider Death Curse, which Su Jiuzhen had cast upon him on his death with the power of his soul.

If the weird curse targeted his brain and tried to kill him, Li Yao could resist it by relying on Ou Yezi's soul power and eliminate it directly.

Yet, the Black Spider Death Curse seemed to be alive and was very adaptive to the environment. It was even able to select the most suitable method of attack.

After the previous outbreak when it was almost banished by him, the curse seemed to know that it was not strong enough to kill him and had been lurking near his heart where it had stabilized into a weird shackle.

The shackle was intangible in peacetime, and it did not affect him during a battle. But every time when he was about to rise into the Building Foundation Stage by liquefying his spiritual gas with the Soul Igniting Law, the vicious power of the curse would be triggered at the critical moment and pierce into his heart!

He was locked in the Refinement Stage by nine invisible chains. Over the past month, however hard he tried and burnt his soul, he had not been able to break this limit.

Li Yao was not depressed at yet another failure. He smacked his lips and leaned against the wall of the cave, meditating.

The stubbornness inside his eyes was as bright as before, not in the least diminished.

It might not be a bad thing now that I'm confined in the Refinement Stage by the Black Spider Death Curse!

From the time when his spiritual root awakened, a mark that he became a Cultivator, to the time when he advanced into the high level of the Building Foundation Stage and boasted combat ability at the peak of the Building Foundation Stage occasionally, it had taken less than five years.

Five years, from an ordinary person to a Cultivator in the high level of the Building Foundation Stage. Such a speed of advancement was appalling in the Heaven's Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, the Star Ocean Imperium, and even the ancient Cultivation world!

Advancing too fast was not necessarily a good thing. Breaking into the next level hastily without consolidating one's current knowledge might prove to be a hinderance in the future training.

Since he had stepped into the high level of the Building Foundation Stage, Li Yao had always been a bit lost as to how to further proceed in his path of Cultivation.

The training of his hands with Purple Ring Sword Ants and the building of his body with the Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining technique were just improvements in specific areas.

As to his overall Cultivation, he hadn't made any progress recently and felt like that he was trapped in a maze.

The advancement from the beginning level of the Building Foundation Stage to the middle level was based on the spiritual seed of Iron God Yan Ba, a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator.

The breakthrough from the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage to the high level was because of the adventure inside the True Fusion and the space swirl.

How was he going to progress further?

The Black Spider Death Curse and the shackle it imposed on him might prove to be of great help.

Li Yao's Soul Igniting Law was known as 'Soaring into Heaven in One Leap'. The main trick of the method was to imagine oneself as a proud king of eagles that had been caged inside a valley from a young age and never tasted the feeling of flying freely. It could only watch countless ordinary birds swooping past itself.

Just like that. Anger, patience, struggle, concealment. Then, one day, the shackle was broken, and the king of sky ascended to its throne!

It was the core of 'Soaring into Heaven in One Leap'.

Wasn't Li Yao an eagle king who was locked up in a deep valley? It was exactly the scenario inside his Soul Igniting Law.

Maybe, this is going to be my turning point.

It took me only four years to advance into the high level of the Building Foundation Stage from an ordinary person. The speed was too high for me to lay a solid foundation.

If I train myself with the regular methods according to traditions, I might have to spend another four years building myself up and consolidating my knowledge. Then, it would take me twenty years to solidify my spiritual energy in order to enter the Core Formation Stage!

To be honest, it was already incredible to form the core in one's forties. For other Cultivators, they can only make such an achievement if they are extremely lucky and everything goes their way.

But I cannot wait that long!

Five years! In five years, I'm going to succeed in forming the core so that I will be qualified to fight for the planetary-level magical equipment, which will be the biggest guarantee for the final war when I return to the Heaven's Origin Sector!

The fight against Fengyu Zhong had taught Li Yao a good lesson about his weakness. Plots, calculations, and schemes were absolutely useless when faced with overwhelming strength.

If one wants to get rich quick, one must take risks. It is not an easy task to form the core in five years!

The Black Spider Death Curse may have shackled me to the Refinement Stage for now, but isn't it a great opportunity for me to form the core?

As long as I attack the Black Spider Death Curse with 'Soaring into Heaven in One Leap' continuously and shatter it one day, I will definitely be able to experience the ultimate feeling of the eagle who soars in the sky. Even if I cannot form the core, I will at least be able to stand firmly at the peak of the Building Foundation Stage and see clearly how I am going to break into the Core Formation Stage!

Chapter 548: Appearance of Qi-trainers!

Chapter 548: Appearance of Qi-trainers!

Now that his belief was firm again and he knew what he was aiming for, Li Yao felt that he was no longer lost, although he was wandering on a perilous, unknown planet all by himself. He retrieved the objects inside his Cosmos Rings and accessed them while he pondered what he was going to do next.

Firstly, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

During the fierce battle with Fengyu Zhong, the breastplate of the crystal suit had been pierced by Fengyu Zhong's spear, which left a terrifying hole there. The two pieces of plate armor had completely lost all functionality.

Then, he was blown brutally by the blast from the outbreak of the planetary ring. Thankfully, Li Yao had not been facing the planetary ring, or the blast might have charged into his body through the hole on his chest and minced him into pieces!

Although his life had been saved, the power rune arrays and the crystal reactor on the back of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had all been seriously damaged and were on the brink of destruction. It would not resume its combat ability without major maintenance.

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was no longer as awesome as it had been in the planetary ring. Shocking traces of claw marks could be found on the surface of the lackluster armor, as if the crystal suit had been savaged brutally by a deadly beast.

Li Yao felt his heart pounding the moment he saw the traces.

They were the result of horrifying demon beasts lurking inside the atmosphere of Iron Plateau when he was falling through it.

The atmosphere of Iron Plateau was like a layer of thin, grey mist. Such demon beasts had been hiding inside the grey mist and blending themselves in with it. Their speed was also too high for Li Yao to see what they looked like clearly. Moreover, more than ten of them had appeared at the same time and hunted the prey collaboratively. They were quite difficult to deal with.

To escape from the demon beasts, Li Yao had exploited the last bit of potential of his Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit at the risk of breaking down in the sky. He was lucky enough to have gotten rid of the predators.

The crystal reactor has to be replaced. More than half of the crystal processor has been blown up, too. I have to find a place to fully maintain the crystal suit and give it a rebirth!

Li Yao scratched his head. Where could he repair his crystal suit on such a desolate, uninhabited planet?

There were no Spiritual Towers in space near Iron Plateau Space Zone, which meant that the area had no network.

The atmosphere of Iron Plateau seemed a bit odd, too. It was extremely difficult to receive the messages of the outside world, not to mention sending signals out.

This planet was like a lone island in the boundless sea of stars that was completely isolated from the rest of the universe.

Li Yao could only rely to himself to repair the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit so that he could rush out of Iron Plateau with no fear of the flying demon beasts living inside the atmosphere.

But even if he rushed out of Iron Plateau, he might not be able to find a starship to board on because there were very few sailing routes in the Iron Plateau Space Zone, which had always known to be a forbidden area for Cultivators.

Crystal suits were perfect for short-distance battles in space, but a long journey from one space zone to another one? That would be a joke!

It meant that he would also need a starship that could at least cruise across space zones. He couldn't help but wonder whether or not there had ever been such a thing on Iron Plateau.

Li Yao sighed and focused his attention on examining the other items.

The good news was that he was not short of food and clean water.

The large quality of supplies he had looted from Fengyu Ming had never been used however hard his life was, even if he had to buy leek pies in a vegetable market. Now, his frugalness had given him a great return. The food was sufficient for him to survive for quite a few years.

A moment ago, he had gone out to hunt the giant worm not because he lacked food, but because he needed the super alloys that the giant worm condensed inside its body.

The giant worms were like natural furnaces. They could swallow all kinds of minerals and transform them into hard super alloys, which looked like pearls, after a series of complicated chemical reactions inside their bodies. When they were attacking, the super alloys would be spurted as bullets.

When Li Yao discovered the habit, he had risked hunting several such giant worms and gathered a lot of alloys, hoping that the materials would be of use to his maintenance work later.

Although he had excessive food and clean water, the tremendous crystals that Fengyu Ming had kept inside his Cosmos Ring had run out a long time ago. Half of them were used for his personal training, and the other half were refined into crystal bombs. There weren't any left.

After the previous consumptions, especially the spendthrift uses in the planetary ring at the end of the battle, his storage of crystal bombs was running low, too. There were only a few of them left now.

As for his weapons, the Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber had suffered the most damage because of the head-on clash with Fengyu Zhong's Devil's cry. Both the surface and the interior of the blade were riddled with small cracks. If it was not examined and repaired in time, the saber would crumble after another few clashes.

There was a tiny dent on his Purple Electric Blue Fire Claw, too. The light flames right now were much feebler when it was condensed into a drill of mystic rays.

"This must be what is called 'no ammo and no food'," muttered Li Yao with a self-mocking smile.

Two streaks of brightness, one black and the other red, flew out of his Cosmos Ring and circled him.

The black one wagged its tail while it was flying in a cocky manner, as if it were saying, "Hey, do you know who the most reliable one is now?"

"Little Black, stop horsing around!"

Li Yao's mood finally got better when he saw Black Wing.

The mysterious flying sword that his foster father had passed on to him had not been of much use after he left the Heaven's Origin Sector. He had merely installed it to the back of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. When necessary, it could provide additional momentum to improve the speed and agility of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

However, the flying sword seemed to be very unsatisfied about Li Yao's arrangement. When he landed on Iron Plateau, his flying sword had been coming out once in a while by itself and hit Li Yao. Yes. It had been hitting Li Yao's head with the handle of the sword. Li Yao was more than pissed!

As for the red streak, it was 'Neltharion', a piece of magical equipment used to train its users to steer a starship.

Neltharion had proved to be extremely useful in such a strange environment like Iron Plateau because it was the perfect probe magical equipment. As long as Li Yao attached part of his soul to Neltharion, he could observe the surroundings from the perspective of Neltharion. Also, the magical equipment boasted certain stealth ability and was very hard to find when it snuck into the air without anybody knowing.

"You are my only company now."

Gripping Black Wing and waving the sword, Li Yao suddenly recalled the life of struggles in the magical equipment graveyard together with Little Black five years ago.

He remembered how ambitious and audacious he had been, even though he had been an unknown middle-school student, and how he had been willing to walk on the seemingly hard and dangerous path. He was immediately cheered up again.

"I've passed through so much wind and storm. The demon prince failed to kill me, and the unparalleled deadly demon from forty thousand years ago was drilled right through by me! How can a small Iron Plateau trap me?

"Come on! I'm going to fix the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, find a starship, and get out of Iron Plateau!"

Right at this moment, the alarm magical equipment deployed in the depths of the cave emitted feeble redness.

"Somebody is here!"

Li Yao was refreshed. He put all the objects back to his Cosmos Rings but let Black Wing and Neltharion follow him. Then he dashed out of the cave.

When he reached the entrance of the cave, Li Yao tossed another slice of worm meat to the corrosive thorns guarding the cave. While the thorns were enjoying the new meal, Li Yao rushed to the peak of the meteorite mountain.

Li Yao crouched inside a cluster of grass and lay low before he extended his telepathic thoughts to Neltharion.

"Neltharion, strike forward!"

After entering a trance, Li Yao's vision completely changed, as if Neltharion became his new eyes!

Swoosh!

Neltharion darted out, leaving red traces behind.

Li Yao did not dare to fly Neltharion too high. Iron Plateau was a place hundreds of times more dangerous than the Grand Desolate Plateau. It would be committing suicide to fly too high here because many demon beasts boasted keen anti-stealth abilities.

Therefore, Li Yao flew Neltharion toward the southeast, at such a low altitude that it almost kissed the ground, until it reached the foot of another meteorite mountain. Then, Li Yao hid it in the crown of a giant tree and kept it still.

Neltharion turned around and peeped at the southwest.

Even if someone in the southwest discovered that they were being observed, they wouldn't be able to trace it back to Li Yao.

One could never be too cautious in a foreign land.

Many vehicles were driving over intimidatingly from the southwest. The sand they raised was like a raging yellow dragon.

Every three days, almost twenty vehicles would show up and go hunting in the desert.

It was almost the most important reason Li Yao had chosen to hide himself in this meteorite mountain.

He was trying to observe the natives of Iron Plateau at a close distance.

Although he did not dare draw too close to the vehicles, as he feared that they might have anti-stealth methods, he had still gathered a lot of information after so many days.

Many files he read stated that the few habitable planets of the Flying Star Sector were occupied by demon beasts and primitive barbarians.

From what he had seen, the place was indeed frequented by demon beasts, but the so-called barbarians were not necessarily savages.

The natives of Iron Plateau were not as civilized as the residents in space, but they knew how to drive tanks, and they employed a lot of magical equipment when they were hunting demon beasts. Besides, they were clear about when to attack and when to retreat. The collaboration of the team members was flawless. They were definitely not barbarians but citizens of a highly developed civilization.

They should be what Huangpu Xiaoya addressed as 'qi-trainers'.

Li Yao was aware that 'qi-trainer' was an alternative name for Cultivators in the ancient Cultivation world forty thousand years ago. Many traditional Cultivators preferred to be called qi-trainers.

The question remained: what kind of people were the qi-trainers on Iron Plateau?

However, the wind on the desert was too furious. Whenever they appeared, they would raise a small sandstorm.

Everything was obscured by the dust, and Li Yao was not able to watch them clearly.

Li Yao did not dare drive Neltharion too close to the vehicles, because he feared that the anti-stealth methods the qi-trainers had might destroy his treasure.

Li Yao stopped looking at the strangers and focused on studying the messages sent back by Neltharion.

They were the parameters of the airwaves that Neltharion detected.

By analyzing the change of the parameters, Li Yao could evaluate the intensity of a battle and the combat ability of the qi-trainers.

It was like inferring the size of a stone that was tossed into the center of a pond from the ripples at the edge of the pond.

These guys are merely in the Refinement Stage.

Li Yao analyzed the data carefully. Then he retrieved the report of the previous investigations and studied them together.

So far, he had observed six battles. However, Neltharion had never sensed the liquefication of spiritual gas in the air, not even once.

From the beginning to end, they had never showed any signs of having any Building Foundation Stage Cultivators, not even when they were in emergencies.

They are simply a bunch of Refinement Stage Cultivators. Although they are all battle-type, they are nothing to be scared of.

After ascertaining his conclusion, Li Yao smiled and was fully relieved.

Chapter 549: First Interaction!

Chapter 549: First Interaction!

He planned to get in touch with the qi-trainers despite the risk involved.

Repairing the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit not only required very advanced furnaces but also a fully-equipped maintenance workshop as well as almost a hundred indispensable strengthened alloys and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures.

In the barren, desolate wilderness, even Ou Yezi would not have been able to fix the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit with stones and twigs if he came back to life.

Besides, Li Yao needed a starship to help him leave the Iron Plateau Space Zone, and it was not like he could pick one up in the wasteland.

Since the hunting team of the qi-trainers had such so many vehicles and used magical equipment frequently during battles, it was safe to assume that they must have facilities to create and maintain the magical equipment in their bases.

If he reached the qi-trainers' town, there was a very good chance he would be able to mend the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and even find a starship.

Of course, Li Yao wouldn't be so reckless as to walk out and greet them like an old friend.

All the files of the Flying Star Sector affirmed that the barbarians living on the planets feasted upon raw meat and blood and loathed the residents in the space.

Some starships had been forced to land on the planets due to space storms, only to never be heard from again. There was no telling whether they ended up in demon beasts' stomachs or were captured by the barbarians.

Huangpu Xiaoya had also said that qi-trainers were not particularly fond of the Cultivators from the outside world.

Therefore, Li Yao had been lurking for an entire month in order to determine the capability of the hunting team of the qi-trainers.

Although most of my capability has been locked by the Black Spider Death Curse, I can easily reach the peak of the Refinement Stage. Moreover, my 'battle awareness' is still in the high level of the Building Foundation Stage!

Therefore, I'm definitely invincible among Refinement Stage Cultivators!

Realistically speaking, it's not like the twenty qi-trainers are all at the peak of the Refinement Stage, is it? Most of them should be in the middle level and high level of the Refinement Stage. Their leader might be the only one at the peak of the Refinement Stage!

Let's say that I'm unlucky enough and that a once-in-a-billion-years event happens to me. If the twenty qi-trainers are all at the peak of the Refinement Stage, I can always run away from them if I can't beat them, can't I?

The odds of such a coincidence were so low that they could always be ignored.

Li Yao thought through the whole plan again and realized that he would have to get in touch with qi-trainers anyway in his current situation.

Right now, the qi-trainers in front of them were not strong enough. The pace of the communication would be within his control. He could decide whether to negotiate or to attack and whether to fight or to flee.

If he did not get in touch with them right now, it would be quite awkward if he ran into qi-trainers that were equal to Building Foundation Stage Cultivators.

Thinking about that, Li Yao carried Black Wing on his back and dashed out like a bolt of lightning.

He did not rush to the qi-trainers directly, but took a large turn around the meteorite mountain and left messy traces around the cave where he had been hiding.

Then, he neatly deployed the last few crystal bombs in a valley that he had chosen a long time ago.

When he was fully prepared, he walked toward the qi-trainers neither too fast nor too slowly.

The qi-trainers seemed very interested in the giant worms that could absorbed metal ores in the desert. They had been chasing the giant worms for more than half a day and eventually slayed six of them.

Li Yao was hoping to borrow the maintenance equipment of the qi-trainers, so he was unwilling to get on bad terms with the natives of Iron Plateau. Thus, he did not hide himself and reached them openly.

While he came close, he was able to observe the strangers more carefully, only to be startled by what he saw.

The qi-trainers were using True Qi 1 magical equipment!

True Qi was condensed by Cultivators through absorbing the natural spiritual gas. Then, the True Qi could be launched to drive the complicated mechanical devices and deal great damage!

As the magical equipment in the exploration phase at the early stage of the modern Cultivation civilization, the True Qi magical equipment was heavy, clumsy, and sophisticated in structure. They were all silly, thick, and stupid steel beasts.

Also, the transformation efficiency when the True Qi was turned into energy and damage was too low with too much loss, not to mention the wasted gas, black smoke, and earsplitting noises!

Therefore, True Qi magical equipment was soon replaced by the next-generation magical equipment, which was smaller, neater, and had a higher efficiency rate of spiritual energy.

Right now, the qi-trainers in front of him were driving single tanks that had two giant wheels, one at the front and the other at the rear, which were embedded with sharp thorns. The two wheels were more than one meter in diameter. The power rune arrays carved on them were askew and disordered. They were like the drawings of a new-born baby!

Rolls of bronze tubes extended from the core of True Qi in the middle of the tank to the front and the rear, covering the entire tank. All the tubes were connected by rivets, but the joints were loose. Dense black smoke was surging out from the gaps of the tubes, as if almost twenty chimneys were stuck in the tanks. Fulminations resembling the noise of a waterfall made Li Yao feel that his ears were numb.

Such a steel beast was more than seven meters long and three meters high. It could only accommodate three knights at best. Compared to the shuttles commonly-seen among Cultivators, it was truly ineffective. But the daunting aura of antiquity couldn't have been better demonstrated!

All the tanks were of a similar style to the single tank.

In short, they were steel structures driven by smoking True Qi, connected by rough rivets, armed with turrets using True Qi as cannonballs, with zero suspension components, so that those on board would feel every bit of the bump and blast and exert all their strength.

"Hoo! Hoo! Hoooooo!"

Every tank of the qi-trainers was like a hungry animal, sending out earsplitting roars!

The qi-trainers discovered Li Yao very soon. The tube of one of the single tanks suddenly spurted two clusters of large and intense black smoke, before it accelerated and rushed toward Li Yao at a high speed!

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and gazed at the single tank, ready to fight.

The single tank was painted a crude red in the shape of burning fire, which seemed to be made of the blood of demon beasts. There was only one knight on it.

The knight was in his twenties, but he was more than two meters tall, mighty and muscular. His shoulders were twice as wide as Li Yao's. He was wearing a fearsome helmet crafted out of the skull of a demon beast, and leather armor and a pair of trousers refined out of the hide of a black demon beast. There were protective pads on his shoulders and wrists.

The pads were embedded with bone spurs more than one inch long, which were emanating a dominating aura!

Two giant rivets protruded out of the knight's chin. They were carved with two round runes, suggesting that they were some sort of magical equipment.

Li Yao was somewhat relieved.

Despite the eccentric clothes, they did not look very different from the residents in space, except that they were taller and more muscular.

Among the space residents, due to the cosmic radiation, tall, brawny men more than two meters tall were not very uncommon.

Even Li Yao could turn into such a giant with the secret arts to trigger the primordial powers in his cells and expand his muscles, which he inherited from the spiritual seed of Iron God Yan Ba, a body fundamentalist.

Li Yao had been worried that the qi-trainers might be a different species with red hair, blue eyebrow, and green teeth. It would have been difficult to communicate with them if so.

Hardly had he taken a breath in relief when he was stunned by the two flags flying at the rear of the tank of the qi-trainer.

Those qi-trainers seemed to be rather ostentatious. Several flags were stabbed at the rear of each tank and were all rattling in the wind.

Before, Li Yao had not been able to see them clearly via Neltharion due to the long distance. It was not until this moment that he discovered that what was drawn on the two flags was an angrily roaring face resembling the sun, which was spraying flames of fury to the surroundings.

That is—the battle emblem of the Burning Sun Alliance!

Li Yao was shocked.

The Burning Sun Alliance was one of the six major sects in Heavenly Saints City and one of the strongest Cultivation sects of the Flying Star Sector!

How come their battle emblem had shown up on the flags of qi-trainers?

While he was pondering, the iron horse of the qi-trainer had sprinted at Li Yao, preparing to crush him directly.

Li Yao sniffed. He lowered his body and was ready to slash the hostile tank into two halves.

The knight roared in fury. The black smoke emitted from his tank soared into the sky together with his killing intent, as if a brutal tornado was brewing!

However, Li Yao remained as solid as a stone in the center of a tornado, except that the coldness in his eyes was becoming brighter and brighter.

He was not scared at all, because he had even slain a real tornado before!

Eventually, the iron knight was awed by Li Yao's serenity and intimidating aura. He came to a sudden halt when he was some ten meters away from Li Yao.

Unpleasant noises echoed inside his tank, as if it were discontent that its master did not charge into the enemy directly.

"Who are you exactly?"

The iron knight was waving a large saber, which was more than three meters long and made of three blocks joined by rivets. The edge of the saber did not look sharp, either.

Li Yao was highly suspicious that the blades were meant to bash the enemy instead of slashing the enemy.

Although the iron knight's voice was extremely hoarse and unclear, it was the same language as the residents in space. He was speaking the standard language passed on from the ancient Cultivators and normalized by the Star Ocean Imperium.

At this time, the rest of the qi-trainers yelled and surrounded him.

Li Yao was not in his crystal suit, but he was wearing his mustard-seed battle suit, which was neat, tidy, and streamlined, not at all similar to the crude black leather clothes of the qi-trainers.

The eyes of the iron knight in the lead were beaming like beacons as he stared at Li Yao's mustard-seed battle suit.

Suddenly, he bellowed, "You are not an Iron Plateau citizen; you are from the space!"

Chapter 550: Invincible in the Refinement Stage

Chapter 550: Invincible in the Refinement Stage

Li Yao opened his hands and showed that he meant no harm to them, before he said calmly, "It's true that I came from space, but I did not come here on purpose; I was forced to land on Iron Plateau due to an accident. I want to leave Iron Plateau as soon as possible, too. Therefore, I would like to make a deal with you.

"I need a maintenance workshop with furnaces. It doesn't matter whether the furnaces are advanced or not, as I will modify them myself.

"Other than that, I need some Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and super alloys. If you don't have alloys, common metals will do. I can purify and merge them myself.

"If you have starships that can sail across space zones, I'm hoping that I can borrow one, too.

"Stop glaring at me so much. Since this is a deal, I will not use your stuff without offering anything in return.

"Truth be told, I'm a refiner with reasonably good skills. If you can provide the resources and facilities that I need, I can help you repair and refine magical equipment in return!

"The weapons and tanks that you are using right now are still at a very low phase in regard to the utilization of spiritual energy. I can help you craft a batch of stronger, more advanced magical equipment.

"As for the category and number of the magical equipment, we can always sit down and negotiate.

"I know that you dislike visitors from space. Honestly speaking, I'm not very used to the environment of Iron Plateau, either. You want me to get my ass out of here, and I want to get my ass out of here, too. Therefore, we all share the same purpose here. Why don't we help each other and work this thing through? How does that sound?"

Li Yao mixed a stream of spiritual energy in his voice. It was not very loudly, but all the qi-trainers heard him clearly.

Whispers immediately spread among the qi-trainers.

The muscular man in the lead, whose chin was embedded with two rivets, eyed Li Yao suspiciously and asked all of a sudden, "You know how to refine magical equipment? So, you must be a Cultivator!"

Li Yao thought for a moment and nodded his head. "Yes, I am."

His reply made the qi-trainers burst into fury as if they were cats whose tails had been stomped on.

"Cultivator! A Cultivator!"

"The traitors are shameless enough to return to Iron Plateau!"

The muscular man waved his saber and shouted, "Did you cowards not run fast as if there's oil beneath your feet? Why are you bold enough to come back to Iron Plateau? We don't buy your spiel. Deal? Damn it! The Burning Sun Tribe will not make any deals with traitors!"

"Slay him! Slay the traitor!"

"We will not negotiate with traitors. Never!"

Li Yao was dumbfounded.

He knew that the relationship between qi-trainers and Cultivators was not good from Huangpu Xiaoya's story, but he had never expected that qi-trainers would hate Cultivators so much.

What did they mean by 'traitors' and 'cowards'?

The muscular man slapped the iron horse under his bottom with his saber, raising a large cluster of sparks, while he bellowed, "Let's go and capture the Cultivator, everyone! Everyone in our tribe will see clearly how evil and ugly the cowards who defected in the old days are!"

The qi-trainers all yelled and roared. Intense black smoke was popping up from the back of their tanks, mixed with vague crimson exhaust flames. The battle was about to begin at any moment.

"Who dares to make a move?"

Li Yao was angry. He bulged his eyes and yelled as his killing intent swept across everyone on the spot.

Although his combat ability was confined to the peak of the Refinement Stage, his battle awareness and killing intent were still in the high level of the Building Foundation Stage. The qi-trainers were all intimidated by his shout.

Li Yao frowned. Unless it was absolutely necessary, he was not willing to fight the qi-trainers.

After all, he would need the maintenance workshop of the qi-trainers and had to ask for their help to gather certain rarely-seen metals and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures.

It was not difficult to beat them, but it would be troublesome to make a deal with them after a huge fight.

"I am not a man who likes to play weak. It's not my style to conceal my capability, either!"

Daunting aura surrounded Li Yao, as he continued speaking. "I don't want to see meaningless blood shed on this land. I have reached the peak of the Refinement Stage. You are definitely no match for me!

"Let me repeat myself. I'm more desperate to get the hell off the planet than you!

"I have no other purpose; I merely want to make a deal with you.

"However many resources I get from you guys, I will craft magical equipment twice as valuable for you!

"If you are not open to negotiations, then let's just go our separate ways. There's no need to quarrel."

Li Yao was aware that those under the banner of the Burning Sun Alliance were not the only qi-trainers on Iron Plateau.

He had observed qi-trainers at a close distance and collected enough information for his next step. It was completely doable to find another tribe that was friendlier to foreigners.

"Peak of the Refinement Stage?"

Li Yao's proud declaration somehow awed the qi-trainers, who were all asking each other, "What is the peak of the Refinement Stage exactly?"

"How strong must he be to have reached the peak of the Refinement Stage?"

"He must be lying!"

"How can anyone advance into the peak of the Refinement Stage? How formidable must the peak of the Refinement Stage be! Such people must be powerful enough to blow up a planet or a divinity with one punch!"

Li Yao took a long breath and tried to hold back his amusement.

It appeared that he had overestimated the qi-trainers. The Cultivation level of this Burning Sun Tribe should not be very high because they had never heard of the peak of the Refinement Stage before!

The muscular man in the lead was surprised, too. A moment later, he suddenly burst into fury and waved his saber. "Nonsense! Peak of the Refinement Stage? Never heard it. Never saw it. He must be lying! Let's go and capture him!"

"What a bunch of short-sighted frogs!"

Li Yao sniffed and activated 'Soaring into Heaven in One Leap', his Soul Igniting Law, to the maximum. Spiritual gas suddenly surged out of his body. In the middle of the bright gold waves, a giant yellow falcon dashed out of his body and flew to the sky with a heaven-splitting shriek!

He had entered the peak of the Refinement Stage!

"Like I said, I don't like to keep a low profile. This is the legendary level of the peak of the Refinement Stage. If you are only willing to talk after a good fight, just bring it on!"

Soaked in bright golden flames, Li Yao warmed up his fingers.

He had seen that manners and politeness meant little to the qi-trainers who lived in the desolate land.

Maybe, he should teach them a lesson by crushing over them with overwhelming capability before he talked about negotiations.

The image of the yellow falcon gradually spread out over Li Yao's head. The unparalleled aura of the peak of the Refinement Stage rendered everyone speechless. Even the noises of the tanks seemed to have been suppressed!

Looking at the light flames dancing around Li Yao, the qi-trainers were stunned, with weird expressions on their faces.

After a moment, the muscular man stammered, "Is—is this the peak of the Refinement Stage?"

Li Yao smiled casually. "Indeed, it is. Now, can we talk nicely?"

The muscular man blinked and looked at his companions in bewilderment, as if he could not believe his eyes. A moment later—

All the qi-trainers burst into the loudest laughter.

They laughed so hard that their faces were all red, and they found it hard to sit straight. One of the qi-trainers almost fell off from his iron horse, with tears dripping off his cheeks.

Li Yao was lost. He felt that a cold wind had just blown past him.

The muscular man looked at Li Yao in the same way one would look at a retard, as he scorned, "The Refinement Stage is boundless and endless! I, Yan Chihuo, have reached the 57th level of the Refinement Stage, and I'm not sure that I've seen the peak of the Refinement Stage yet!

"You're a shrimp, only at the 14th level of the Refinement Stage, and you are boasting that you are at the peak of the Refinement Stage? This is the biggest joke of the year!

"If by peak of the Refinement Stage you meant the 14th level of the Refinement Stage, I have too many people of such a level in my team!"

"Yes. We are all at the peak of the Refinement Stage!"

Behind Yan Chihuo, the muscular man, several qi-trainers of the Burning Sun Tribe screamed. Crazy airwaves spread out instantly, showing that they had reached the peak of the Refinement Stage in such a short amount of time.

Moreover, the airwaves they triggered were much more unsteady and disobedient than what Li Yao knew to be the peak of the Refinement Stage!

"Level 19 of the Refinement Stage!"

"Level 21 of the Refinement Stage!"

The two qi-trainers laughed confidently.

Li Yao was so shocked that his jaw nearly dropped.

What—what the heck?

It was commonly known that the Refinement Stage was classified into fourteen levels, namely thirteen preliminary levels and the ultimate level, which was better known to be the peak of the Refinement Stage.

This was the common sense passed on by the ancient Cultivators. Common sense!

The reason for the classification was that Cultivators in the Refinement Stage were still new to the absorption and utilization of spiritual energy. They could only master the spiritual energy in the gaseous form, which was 'spiritual gas'.

When a Cultivator arrived at the peak of the Refinement Stage, the spiritual gas that they could make use of would reach the limit. It would be useless to absorb more spiritual gas even if they tried. If anything, the excessive spiritual gas might cause harm to their body and mind!

When the volume of spiritual gas reached its limit, the purpose of training would be shifted from absorbing more spiritual gas to the compression of the existent spiritual gas so that it could be transformed into the liquid form, or 'spiritual liquid'.

In the same volume, the damage contained inside the spiritual liquid was more than ten times higher than that contained in the spiritual gas!

A shallow example would be to compare training to the establishment of an army. The Refinement Stage Cultivators were like generals who continued transforming peasants into privates.

But the more the better did not apply to soldiers in an army. When the number of them reached the ceiling, new soldiers would not improve the combat ability of the army, but only make it more difficult for the general to command. They would consume too many supplies, not to mention that there might not be enough military camps to accommodate the unnecessary soldiers!

If faced with tough enemy, loads of untrained green hands would definitely be the greatest disaster on a battlefield!

Therefore, when the number of soldiers passed a certain threshold, the combat ability of the army could only be improved through the harshest training and competitions so that the soldiers would become seasoned warriors.

The experienced generals all knew that ten thousand untrained soldiers were definitely no match for a thousand, or even five hundred, warriors who were obedient and well-trained.

This was also the essential difference between the Refinement Stage and the Building Foundation Stage.

These qi-trainers, on the other hand, apparently had been absorbing spiritual gas without any restriction. They seemed to have stored endless spiritual gas inside their bodies and embarked on a whole different path of Cultivation.

No wonder you are called qi-trainers! Li Yao shouted loudly in his mind.

Have you never considered advancing to 'building foundation' at all and simply run down the path of collecting qi (spiritual gas) without even seeing what is around you?

Chapter 551: Resonation! Resonation!

Chapter 551: Resonation! Resonation!

"Shrimp!"

Yan Chihuo, the muscular man who had rivets on his face, roared, "Let me show you the real invincibility of the Refinement Stage! Die!"

As Yan Chihuo exerted his strength, his leather clothes made of the hide of demon beasts broke apart, revealing his bulging muscles that were as red as fire. His thick veins protruded out of his skin, as if a flood was surging in them.

After a while of yelling and shouting, the spiritual gas around him quickly expanded and swept over the land like invisible flames. Very soon, it reached almost fifty meters away!

The fifty square meters were wreathed in scorching air, as if it were a crater where a volcano eruption was about to occur!

"This is the formidableness of the 57th level of the Refinement Stage! When I break into the 100th and the 1000th level of the Refinement Stage, I will slay the so-called Core Formation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators from space should they come to our place!"

The giant saber in Yan Chihuo's hand was glittering. The joints made of rivets spurted a huge amount of sweltering steam, making the savage saber unprecedently domineering!

The aura of the blade rushed close and crashed into Li Yao's nose, only to shatter into pieces.

Li Yao was truly speechless.

He did not have the faintest clue what the guys were doing.

The peak of the Refinement Stage was known to be 'peak' because additional spiritual gas released by a Cultivator when he surpassed the peak was useless.

The maximum density of spiritual gas in a given space was fixed. The more spiritual gas a Cultivator released, the larger the area it would occupy. This particular area was called one's 'spiritual domain'.

Take this Brother Yan Chihuo for example. He was unleashing the spiritual gas of the 57th level of the Refinement Stage, and his spiritual domain was around fifty meters in diameter.

The real problem was that the perception and manipulability of a Refinement Stage Cultivator were limited. They could only sense and control the spiritual gas within around twenty square meters.

It meant that the maximum size of the spiritual domain for a Refinement Stage Cultivator was twenty square meters. Even if a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was to suppress their capability to the Refinement Stage, their spiritual domain would still be less than twenty square meters!

It was the law of Dao and nature!

Only the spiritual gas within one's spiritual domain was under the command of the Cultivator. The spiritual gas out of the range of the spiritual domain could do nothing except to show off and scare other people away!

Therefore, Li Yao had no idea what the qi-trainers were trying to do by summoning so much spiritual gas that far exceeded their spiritual domain.

Or, was it their fighting style that whoever brought out the most spiritual gas would be the strongest?

Li Yao tilted his head, his eyes wide open. He couldn't have been more curious as to what Yan Chihuo was going to do with the wandering spiritual gas out of the range of his spiritual domain.

A broadcast rune array seemed to have been installed inside Yan Chihuo's chest, as he was screaming louder and louder without any rest, producing a sound not dissimilar to a pig about to be butchered.

The rest of the knights from the Burning Sun Tribe echoed with him. Roars were rumbling nonstop, as if it were a slaughterhouse.

Li Yao felt that his head was dizzy and wondered whether or not it was a special form of sound attack.

As the qi-trainers bellowed and their fighting will soared, the spiritual gas inside their spiritual domain started vibrating crazily.

The vibration quickly rippled out and caused the spiritual gas outside the spiritual domain to vibrate together.

Since they were not far away from each other, most of their spiritual domains actually overlapped. The spiritual gas inside such spiritual domains gradually melded together.

Li Yao felt something was off.

He discovered, to his surprise, that the vibrating spiritual gas of the qi-trainers was gradually adjusted to the same frequency and stimulated mutually. In the end, the overall volume of the spiritual gas was greatly enhanced.

It was… resonation!

Are you kidding me? Resonation of spiritual gas?

Making use of the spiritual gas outside the spiritual domain by way of resonation?

Li Yao quickly thought through the mechanism behind the attack.

But there was no time!

All the spiritual gas within the three hundred square meters was resonating. Not only were the eyes of the qi-trainers blood-red and their body size greatly expanded as if they went berserk, the stability of Li Yao's own spiritual domain was affected, too. Before combat began, his fighting will had been completely suppressed, and he felt palpitations and shortness of breath!

Are you serious? These guys can wield the combat ability of Building Foundation Stage Cultivators simply by the resonation of their spiritual gas?

What kind of technique is this?

Li Yao's face color finally changed.

Yan Chihuo raised his battle saber, which was now enveloped in surging spiritual gas, as if it had become a gargantuan bat, and smashed down at Li Yao's head!

Li Yao cried and fled with his head hidden in his hands, but he was still affected by the aura of the blade. He felt that the peak of the Refinement Stage was completely unable to resist the strike of the 57th level of the Refinement Stage. Before the falcon of spiritual gas shrieked, its feathers had already been plucked out and it had turned into a chicken!

"Little Black, let's run!"

Knowing that it was not good, Li Yao whistled. Black Wing dashed out in a streak of blackness, only to hover and shiver around him as if it were saying, "Am I the most reliable one at critical moments?"

"Yes. Yes. Yes. You are the best!"

Hardly had Li Yao finished his sentence when Yan Chihuo launched his second attack. The guy seemed uninterested in killing Li Yao, because he was attacking with the back of his saber.

However, with such unbelievable strength, the edge of the saber and its back did not really have much of a difference.

Li Yao shrank his neck, his hair dancing crazily in the air.

Black Wing realized that it was not time for fun. It circled around Li Yao and brought him to the sky!

"Fly higher!" Li Yao shouted.

According to his observations, the vehicles of the qi-trainers had been flying close to the ground or even running on the ground. They did not boast much flight ability in the sky.

A large cluster of black brightness spurted out of the grip of Black Wing, which turned into almost ten helical air currents and drove them into the sky.

But he was not even a hundred meters away yet when he heard swooshing noises behind him, only to find that the True Qi cannons on the tanks had opened fire!

The so-called True Qi cannon was actually just a thick, hollow tube with dense, tiny holes in the rear.

The spiritual gas that the qi-trainers unleashed instantly was extremely powerful. When a huge amount of spiritual gas entered the tube through the tiny holes, immense pressure would be caused.

At the front end of the tube was a neatly located crystal bomb. As long as the tube boasted enough airtightness, the pressure, having nowhere to go to, would be transformed into impetus and launch the crystal bombs!

In a moment, dozens of crystal bombs had been launched toward Li Yao.

Crude design, redundant components, and shabby rune arrays. The utilization rate of crystals is too low! Li Yao was not satisfied by the crystal bombs manufactured by the qi-trainers after glancing at them.

However, it did not change the fact that their crystal bombs were much larger in size.

Li Yao's own crystal bombs were usually the size of fists, if not the size of fingers.

But the smallest of the qi-trainers' crystal bombs was as big as his head, with sharp spurs on the shell, which made them look like big caltrops. They were shining coldly and awe-inspiringly!

BOOM! BOOM!

The caltrops exploded one after another in the air. The shell was ripped open, and the pieces with sharp spurs blossomed and occupied the entire area!

Although Li Yao had activated his spiritual shield, he was still penetrated through by almost ten pieces of shrapnel, which stabbed into his body brutally.

Swoosh!

Then, large nets weaved with thorns were launched to the sky. The nets seemed to be influenced by a certain uncanny technique, too. They twisted and opened automatically in the sky even though there was no wind. A few of them even connected each other, ready to swallow Li Yao like a bloody mouth!

"Change the direction! Lower the altitude!" Li Yao shouted.

He hadn't expected the qi-trainers to have such air defense ability. It would be committing suicide to continue flying in the sky right now!

Black Wing shrieked. The tip of the sword was aimed at the ground, and it was not until the sword was half a meter from the ground that it switched its angle and zigzagged forward!

"Go after him! Capture him!"

The iron knights chased after him while launching crystal bombs with the True Qi cannons.

Although Black Wing was faster than the tanks of the Burning Sun Tribe, it had to dodge the crystal bombs.

The bombs were not very powerful, but they would raise intense black smoke after they exploded. The spiritual waves they unleashed caused major interference to Black Wing's normal flight.

One party running and the other chasing, they soon reached the valley that Li Yao had prepared earlier.

The valley seemed to have been slashed by a battle saber. Steep cliffs were on the two sides of the valley, and its bottom was too deep to measure. Occasionally, the rocks on the two sides of the valley collided, thereby forming natural bridges in the sky. From the bottom, they looked like stone gates. The territory of this place was extremely complicated.

Black Wing darted among the bizarre-shaped stones agilely as if it were a black mouse that had grown wings.

The tanks of the qi-trainers, on the other hand, were less swift. Now and then, one of the tanks would hit the rock, infuriating the rider on them.

Yan Chihuo's motor skills were apparently the best among the qi-trainers. He remained close behind the prey. While chasing, he even burst into laughter.

"You want to race with me? I'm a man born for racing! I'm the best racer on Iron Plateau!"

Is that so? Then do excuse me.

After passing through a stone gate, Li Yao mumbled something to himself and triggered an iron chip carved with runes in his pocket.

BOOM!

The rocks on two sides of the valley collapsed like a flood. The stone gate was completely destroyed. The smoke raised by the explosion filled more than half of the valley.

Yan Chihuo's furious curses could be heard inside the smoke.

Li Yao took a long breath in relief. He then dashed out of the valley, accelerating to the highest speed on Black Wing, and ran to the northwest without even looking back.

He did not even stop by the cave where he had been hiding. It was not until dawn the next day that he took a moment of rest.

It turned out to be wise decision.

With the help of Neltharion, Li Yao discovered that more than fifty teams of the Burning Sun Tribe, with almost a thousand soldiers, were searching the desert.

A thousand people!

Li Yao was secretly alarmed. If all one thousand qi-trainers had surpassed the peak of the Refinement Stage and were in the 20th to the 40th level of it, they could prove to be formidable armed forces when they entered the berserk state with the weird technique of resonation with the spiritual gas.

No wonder Iron Plateau became a forbidden area for Cultivators! Even a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator would have a headache if they were faced with a thousand berserk qi-trainers!

Chapter 552: Plan B, Initiated!

Chapter 552: Plan B, Initiated!

Li Yao combed his messy hair. A large cluster of dust fell off his head. He coughed, but his eyes shined as he thought of something.

I've been trying to find a way to break the shackle of the Black Spider Death Curse and return to the high level of the Building Foundation Stage or an even higher one.

But right now, I won't be able to do that with the capability of one at the peak of the Refinement Stage!

What if I surpass the so-called 'peak' just like those qi-trainers had done and advance into the 25th level, 50th level, and even the 100th level of the Refinement Stage?

I will definitely be able to destroy the Black Spider Death Curse completely when I'm in the 100th level of the Refinement Stage!

The idea was like a morning star in the night sky, which illuminated Li Yao's entire brain.

It seemed to be a crazy plan, but not completely undoable on second thought.

Firstly, from the battle against Yan Chihuo yesterday, Li Yao sensed that, although the guy's spiritual gas was more furious than usual, it was essentially the same as the spiritual gas of Refinement Stage Cultivators, except that it was much larger in quantity.

Secondly, judging from the tiny wrinkles on Yan Chihuo's face, he should be no older than 35 years old despite his rough appearance.

Also, the rest of the knights of the Burning Sun Tribe who were around the twentieth level of the Refinement Stage looked rather young and in their twenties, too. A young boy who might not have reached adulthood yet had already almost reach the twentieth level of the Refinement Stage!

It meant that the training after the 14th level of the Refinement Stage was not too difficult. Or, there were certain secret arts on Iron Plateau that could make somebody advance into higher levels of the Refinement Stage quickly.

Since he had already been in the high level of the Building Foundation Stage before, his understanding about spiritual energy and his construction of spiritual energy models were far more sophisticated than common Refinement Stage Cultivators.

If he grasped the tricks of advancement, he should be able to rush upwards at an unbelievable speed!

Before, Li Yao had been in a hurry to leave Iron Plateau at the earliest chance, but now that he had discovered the qi-trainers' secret, he changed his mind and was not so desperate to get away anymore.

He had a vague feeling that whether or not he could make another major breakthrough in his Cultivation would depend on his experience on Iron Plateau.

However, it was not an easy task when Li Yao pondered it more carefully.

The qi-trainers had a strong bias against space residents, especially Cultivators. Whatever conditions he offered, it was unlikely that they would teach him the mysteries of the further collection of spiritual gas, much less the technique of spiritual gas resonation.

The qi-trainer's body, especially their veins and nerves, must've been strengthened in a unique way. Otherwise, they wouldn't be able to bear so much spiritual gas raging inside their body, which would cause mental derangement or even the explosion of their body.

Such strengthening was different from the strengthening of a body fundamentalist.

Even the body fundamentalists had to strictly abide by the law of Cultivation. When they reached the peak of the Refinement Stage, they had to attempt to liquefy their spiritual gas and set off on the path of building foundation.

Li Yao assumed that the qi-trainers had another technique that could broaden their veins and nerves and increase their capacity for spiritual gas.

When such a technique and the method of spiritual gas resonation were combined, the formidable qi-trainers were made!

I must find a way to learn the two techniques!

Plan A has failed. I'm going to initiate Plan B now!

Li Yao smiled. He rubbed his face vigorously for five minutes until he suddenly tore off an extremely thin membrane from his face!

As the membrane was taken off and the muscles on his face wriggled, his appearance changed weirdly, and his true face was revealed!

CRACK! CRACK!

As he resumed his original appearance, a series of cracking noises echoed inside his body. He was much taller than a moment ago, and his shoulders were two fists wider. Cold brightness was radiating from his streamlined muscles, making him look like a leopard whose fur was shining because it had just rolled over in a pond.

This was actually his true appearance!

Before he reached out to the qi-trainers, he had put on an entirely different appearance with the camouflage magical equipment inside Fengyu Ming's Cosmos Ring.

He had made two plans. If the communication with the qi-trainers did not go well, he would still be able to collect more files about them with the close-distance picture captured by Neltharion and carry out Plan B.

"I have no other choice now. It's time to resort to my acting skills again!"

Li Yao commanded Neltharion to enter the stealth mode and observed the surroundings at an altitude of two to three hundred meters as he did not dare fly it too high.

Over the last half month, he had been observing the environment in such a way.

He could clearly see that, other than the east side, large beams of smoke often rose up from the horizons of the other three directions. Some of them were patterned and appeared at a fixed time every day.

The smoke must be man-made, which meant that there was a settlement, or even a town, of qi-trainers below it.

Li Yao did not want to deal with the qi-trainers of the Burning Sun Tribe anymore.

Since those people had just found an 'intruder', they would be on high alert at this moment and wouldn't trust another stranger of unknown backgrounds easily.

But Li Yao estimated that the message of his previous visit might have not spread too far yet because there was no Spiritual Nexus on Iron Plateau. Besides, the message might be misinterpreted during the dissemination.

Therefore, the other tribes of qi-trainers were unlikely to be so alert.

Li Yao took off his mustard-seed battle suit and his underwear, until he was completed naked. He then said sorry to Black Wing and stuffed it as well as the rest of the magical equipment he carried into his Cosmos Ring even though it was struggling hard. In the end, he swallowed the Cosmos Ring into his stomach.

As a half body practitioner, he had a highly precise control over every inch of muscle on his body. The movement of his stomach and his throat was fully under his control. When necessary, he could push his Cosmos Ring out in less than half a second.

From now on, I need to totally forget that I am a Cultivator. I am a native of Iron Plateau, born and raised in this place!

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao remembered the ultimate and mysterious level of a body fundamentalist that Iron God Yan Ba passed on to him.

Think about the ancestors of human beings, the ancient deadly animals that once dominated the sky and the earth, and trigger the genes they left deep in our cells to break the seal and unleash the formidable primordial strength!

"Hoo!"

Li Yao bellowed as if he had become a giant ape. After a series of fulminations from his bones, he was even taller than before, his muscles had expanded like balloons, and his skin was emitting the bronze color of metals!

The Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining technique from forty thousand years ago and the secret arts of the body fundamentalists to explore the primordial strength had built up his new body together!

Li Yao projected a mirror with his mini crystal processor and observed his new appearance.

He had been living an animalistic life for one month after he was forced to land on Iron Plateau. His unshaven hair and beard were longer than ever right now.

Shocking scars were left on his muscular body, which was now bronze-colored. They were all souvenirs of the fierce battles in the last month.

If he were in space, the scars could be treated in the med bay of any hospital.

However, there were no hospitals in this place. At least the scars looked like badges and were not an eyesore to look at.

At first look, his appearance was basically the same as those of Yan Chihuo and his fellows.

Very good.

Li Yao scratched his chin and smiled in satisfaction. I'll spend the next five days studying the way that the qi-trainers talk while moving westwards. I should also make myself wilder and more uncivilized on my way!

At the remotest place on the horizon of the west, almost twenty beams of smoke popped up from morning to night every day, indicating that it was a large town of qi-trainers'.

Li Yao planned to try his luck there.

After making sure with Neltharion that he had really gotten rid of the hunting of the Burning Sun Tribe, Li Yao made his way to the west on foot.

In fact, he was unlikely to be discovered if he were to ride on Black Wing since the desert was unpopulated.

However, Li Yao wanted to eliminate the traces of civilization on him during the following few days.

To achieve that purpose, not only did he keep Black Wing inside his Cosmos Ring, he tried to avoid using other modern magical equipment, too.

When he met a demon beast, he would fight them with the crudest stones and bone blades as well as his fists.

After two days, his body had accumulated countless injuries and bruises, which could be quite ghastly for other people.

But for Li Yao, who had been training with the Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining technique that was designed for the trainer to be savaged, the more seriously he was wounded, the better the results of his training would be.

Since he was already used to the pain resulting from the gnawing of the Purple Ring Sword Ants, his endurance of pain was ten times higher than that of common Cultivators. Therefore, he treated the wounds as if they were nothing.

Two days later, Li Yao was wearing a red-and-green beast hide on his waist, with a giant bone hammer on his shoulder.

The hammer was made from the skull of a tiger-type demon beast. He did not resort to the arts of refining and simply bound the skull of the demon beast to one of its shanks with its veins.

"Hooo!"

"When I break into the 100th level of the Refinement Stage, I will slay the so-called Core Formation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators from space should they come to our place!"

He looked at the mirror and practiced his acting skills.

This won't do. However I pretend to be hideous and brutal, I am still not half as silly and bigheaded as Yan Chihuo was. I feel that I'm missing something.

Four days later, Li Yao was wearing two bone pads on his shoulders, with a bone hammer in one hand and the front leg of a mantis-type demon beast as his saber in the other hand. He had almost twice as many wounds on his body now.

"The path of the strong is to fight their way forward! When I advance into the 10,000th level of the Refinement Stage, I'm going to blow up the sun! Go to hell!"

He jumped and danced in front of the mirror and bashed his own chest like a giant gorilla.

No. This doesn't work. My acting is too superficial and exaggerated. If I don't open my mouth, I seem like one of them, but if I open my mouth, they will immediately see through me. I'm still unlike Yan Chihuo and his lot!

What do I do? It's not like that I can keep quiet. But wait…

Six days later, Li Yao looked at the mirror in silence. His messy hair dangled down and covered most of his face. From the gap of his hair, a pair of animal-like, coldly-blinking eyes were occasionally revealed!

"Shua!"

Drawing a dangerous curve with the battle saber made of the front leg of a mantis-type demon beast, Li Yao grimaced and roared, his sharp teeth glaring.

Chapter 553: Teenager of Furious Bear

Chapter 553: Teenager of Furious Bear

I seem to have overdone it.

His brand-new appearance had been gradually shaped and altered through meditating upon the spiritual seed of Iron God Yan Ba and speculating on the savageness of the ancient deadly beasts day and night.

But he looked like a human-skinned beast right now!

Residents of Iron Plateau were not primitive barbarians; they had their own highly developed civilization. He seemed to be going too far in his acting career.

But on second thought, it might not be a bad idea.

Pretending to be a wildling who had roamed in the desert for years was apparently much better than pretending to be a qi-trainer as that lie would be seen through with a few questions asked.

There were many dangerous plants in the desert that could destroy the vocal cord of a human being, making them unable to talk.

The venom of many demon beasts could also sabotage the nerves of human beings and rid them of their language ability.

It was reasonable that a homeless guy who had struggled for twenty years in a desert alone could not talk.

Of course, there were still many suspicious points about this faked identity. However, it was still much better than impersonating a qi-trainer. After all, he didn't know the first thing about the qi-trainers' conventions, and everybody would know that there was something wrong with him if they asked him a few questions.

As to exactly what to do next, he actually had no idea.

Li Yao planned to go in the direction where the pillar of smoke were relatively narrow and sparse.

He believed that such smoke would be a smaller settlement of the qi-trainers and that there wouldn't be too many experts.

When he arrived at the settlement, he could observe the reactions the qi-trainers had about his faked identity. He could also collect more information about the big town where countless beams of smoke were floating.

After he gathered enough evidence that the qi-trainers in the big town were not as cranky as those from the Burning Sun Tribe, he would be able to make his next plan.

Sorting everything out in his mind, Li Yao turned off the crystal processor and put it back into his Cosmos Ring.

This was the last time he would use his Cosmos Ring.

Tonight, he found a crevice on a meteorite mountain to crash in like an animal would, except that he released Neltharion to a tree on the top of the mountain to monitor the surroundings.

Then, he closed his eyes and perceived the wild strength of the ancient deadly beasts billions of years ago while he was inhaling and exhaling.

Tomorrow, he was going to enter a small village around forty kilometers in the southwest.

According to the scouting of Neltharion in the day, the village was not large in scale and had a population of a few hundred at best. It was unlikely that they were all qi-trainers. He should be safe to go there.

When he was half asleep, he was suddenly woken up by an earsplitting noise.

Neltharion had discovered that a True Qi tank was rushing close from the other side of the meteorite mountain!

"Hunters from the Burning Sun Tribe?"

Li Yao shuddered, the hairs all over his body standing on end. He crouched quietly inside the crevice.

The front leg of the mantis-type demon beast had been polished so many times that it was almost glittering. Its surface was dyed with the venom extracted from the roots of the corrosive thorns, which was emitting vague stink.

Li Yao gripped his saber and carefully watched from the perspective of Neltharion, only to discover that the tank was from the opposite direction of the Burning Sun Tribe and had been made in a completely different style.

This True Qi tank was even rougher and clumsier. A ring of bones and shells of demon beasts was embedded to the body of the tank, and a giant horn, which seemed to have been chopped off from a rhino-type demon beast, protruded out of its front. The paint of the tank was not the red of the Burning Sun Tribe but a dim black.

If the True Qi tank of the Burning Sun Tribe could be compared to a burning leopard, the one in front of Li Yao's eyes was a furious black bear!

Behind the tank, two exhaust pipes more than three meters long rose up to the sky, spurting steam nonstop crazily. The exits of the exhaust pipes seemed to have been installed with noise magical equipment because they were producing thunder-like fulminations. It was only a single tank, but it sounded that an old train was passing by!

The two exhaust pipes were also flagpoles, on which two enormous flags were spluttering in the wind.

On the flag was a hideous bear head, which was biting a blood-stained saber.

"Battle emblem of the Furious Bear Union!" Li Yao mumbled to himself.

Just like the Burning Sun Alliance, the Furious Bears Union was one of the six major sects of Heavenly Saints City. It was even slightly stronger than the Burning Sun Alliance.

Previously, on the carrier of the Temple of Immortals, Huangpu Shiyi had asked their subordinates to pretend to be the Exos from the Furious Bears Union who had come to rescue Li Yao, only to be seen through instantly.

The flag of the Burning Sun Tribe is identical to the battle emblem of the Burning Sun Association, and the battle emblem of the Furious Bear Union has appeared on this True Qi tank right now. This is getting more and more interesting!

Li Yao observed more carefully and found that the one who was riding on the iron beast more than six meters long and spurring it forward with his spiritual gas was only a teenager.

The teenager was a bit slender, but there was ruthlessness on his face. He was wearing a hat made of mottled bear fur and two pads made of bear claws, the talons of which were still shining, on his shoulders.

A saber was held to the left side of the tank, and a hammer even longer than himself was dangling down from the right side of the tank, emitting rattling noises and raising sparks as it hit the ground during the rush.

There were no other qi-trainers behind the teenager. He was riding through the perilous desert late at night all by himself!

Something seemed to be chasing after the teenager in the desert behind him. A dragon of sand was rising up from the ground, and then it collapsed and became a valley several meters deep, as if something was tunneling below the ground.

Chi!

Riding the True Qi tank, the teenager took a large turn in the smoke and suddenly accelerated and sprinted toward where he had come from, directly at the object that was pursuing him!

BOOM!

A black shadow suddenly dashed out of the sand in front of the teenager. Its two pincers were more than one meter long, and its tail was even thicker than Li Yao's waist, with a glittering venomous needle at the tip!

"Emperor Sand Scorpion!"

Li Yao's face color changed.

It was one of the most brutal demon beasts he had met on Iron Plateau.

It had a steel-like armor covering its body that was almost weapon-proof. The venomous sting on the tail could be spurted out. As long as it touched one's skin, one would be entirely paralyzed in less than three seconds.

The opening and closing of the pincers displayed their enormous strength and could block Li Yao's vibration saber easily. Such a demon beast could also sneak below the ground in the stealth mode at an amazing high speed!

Its only weakness was that, the moment it spurted its venomous needles, the joints of its shell would slightly open and reveal its fatal core.

It was a valuable lesson Li Yao had learned after paying the serious damage to his Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit as the tuition fee.

Yet, the teenager had crashed face to face into an Emperor Sand Scorpion, which even Li Yao did not dare to mess around with. After an earsplitting boom, the horn in the front of the tank pierced into the shell of the Emperor Sand Scorpion deeply and instantly knocked it over!

At the moment of the collision, the teenager had jumped high with his saber and hammer in his hands and landed on the abdomen of the Emperor Sand Scorpion softly, his spiritual gas surging out. He then held his saber behind him, waved the hammer with both of his hands, and smashed down at the Emperor Sand Scorpion's abdomen brutally!

Are you kidding me? A teenager above the 10th level of the Refinement Stage? What kind of monster is this!

Li Yao was so startled that his eyes almost bulged out.

The teenager's fluent movements ended with sparks and noises. The shell on the abdomen of the Emperor Sand Scorpion was as solid as its other body parts, like countless overlapping shields that had been melded together. It was not something that a hammer could break.

In the blink of an eye, the Emperor Sand Scorpion had already knocked the teenager to the ground. The fierce battle raised a sandstorm, which wreathed both the human and the beast!

In less than three minutes, the teenager's long hammer was tossed far away from the sandstorm, followed by himself; he was sent flying like a kite that had lost the string. But before he landed, he had already picked up his saber. He glared at his opponent with a pair of ruthless eyes.

The teenager was soaked in blood.

There were wounds all over his body. Not any part of his flesh was intact. The wound on his left shoulder was deep to the bone, indicating that the attack could've chopped off his left arm. Such heavy injuries were unendurable even for many adult Cultivators in the space, but the teenager's face remained unchanged, except that his thick eyebrow had almost dropped off!

Li Yao was secretly surprised. He slithered toward the teenager like a viper sneaking among the crevices.

"I am Wu Mayan of the Furious Bears Tribe, the adopted son of Xiong Wuji, and a true warrior of Iron Plateau! I am not one of the cowards in space! Bring it on, you pest!"

The young man waved his saber, but his voice seemed to be trembling, as if he had been wronged before and was about to burst into tears at any moment.

Li Yao pondered his words carefully. Was the Furious Bears Tribe really related to the Furious Bears Union?

His speed was neither slowed down because of his contemplation nor did he accelerate because of the dangerous situation that the teenager was in.

He kept the same speed because the Emperor Sand Scorpion was extremely wary. Even the slightest traces might be discovered. Once it snuck underground and lurked, Li Yao was not confident that he could even save himself, let alone the teenager.

The teenager's blood zigzagged down the saber and had dyed it almost entirely red. He roared and rushed into the sandstorm again, only to be blown back in less than twenty seconds with a crisp sound resulting from his broken saber!

The Emperor Sand Scorpion dashed out of the sandstorm and lunged at the teenager!

Right when it raised its tail high and launched one of its venomous needles, Li Yao sprinted from the darkness like a lightning!

He threw the mantis leg in his left hand toward the venomous needle, deviating it from its trajectory toward the heart of the teenager. At the same time, he bashed the hammer on the head of the Emperor Sand Scorpion into pieces. The remaining handle of the hammer was the shank of a tiger, which was sharp and looked like a hollow dagger.

Shua!

The 'dagger' pierced precisely through the only gap on the shell of the Emperor Sand Scorpion and into the venom gland in the center of its body.

Chi!

A spring of dark green venom soared up from the gap and sprayed into the air with a stinky smell.

Chapter 554: Defend the Savageness

Chapter 554: Defend the Savageness

Li Yao kicked the teenager away and dodged the incoming venom himself.

The venom hit the ground with screeching noises, leaving deep, shocking holes on the solid rocks.

The Emperor Sand Scorpion in so much pain that it was bashing its tail and writhing on the ground, and yet it failed to remove the hollow shank from back.

The venom gland was like its heart, and the venom was the essence of its life. After three minutes of spraying, it gradually slowed down. The Emperor Sand Scorpion collapsed helplessly and died.

Li Yao jumped forward and removed the shank, half of which had been stained with the venom. It was a good material for refining and shouldn't be wasted.

The teenager sat on the ground and breathed heavily for three minutes, before he finally returned to himself from the shock of near death.

He was looking at Li Yao with appreciation and admiration, if not with a bit confusion, because he did not understand how Li Yao put down the big guy with just half of a bone blade.

Li Yao scratched his nose while he thought of more than ten possible plans to elicit information from the stranger. He then jumped off the back of the Emperor Sand Scorpion.

While he was in midair, he was suddenly greatly alarmed. After an earsplitting explosion, another Emperor Sand Scorpion that was in scarlet and smaller in size dashed out from the sand below him!

Li Yao's pupils constricted violently.

Damn. A pair of Emperor Sand Scorpions, one male and the other female, were in the company of each other!

Emperor Sand Scorpions were solitary demon beasts. They would never go hunting together unless it was their mating season.

It was quite unfortunate of him to have run into two Emperor Sand Scorpions!

Female Emperor Sand Scorpions were smaller, but they were faster, and their venom was deadlier!

Are you kidding me?

Did I use up all my luck during the battle in space? Why do such things keep happening to me?

Seeing that the Emperor Sand Scorpion was wielding its coldly blinking pincers at him, and there being no time to change his direction at this moment, Li Yao could do nothing except to roar and accelerate toward the enemy, waving whatever was left of his bone blade!

…

"Uncle, hang in there. You can't die!"

In a trance, Li Yao felt that he was a small boat on a raging ocean, one whose shell was broken and whose cabin was half filled with water.

The events of the previous few hours had become confused memories. From the intermittent pictures, he recalled that, soaked in blood, he had kicked apart half of the Emperor Sand Scorpion's pincer with brute force and gritted his teeth to take one of its venomous stings while he took the opportunity to pierce the broken pincer into the gap of its shell, thus finishing the pest.

He couldn't remember what happened later very clearly. He seemed to have been dragged into a cave by the teenager named Wu Mayan from the Furious Bears Tribe.

Wu Mayan had collected a lot of plants, rubbed their sap, and smeared it on his wounds. He had also brought out copious amounts of a fragrant drug and poured it into his mouth.

But his wounds were still burning like fire. They were red and swollen, as if a deadly chilopod had crawled on his body.

Li Yao felt amused. When he had faced off with Fengyu Zhong, a Core Formation Stage Cultivator, everything had remained under his control.

Yet, he had been humiliated by two little bugs.

I've been poisoned.

The venomous sting at the tail of the Emperor Sand Scorpion can cause nerve damage. If I were a common Cultivator, it might have taken half a month before I could get out of bed.

Even for me, it will take me an entire day to fully mend all the neural network if I dedicate all my spiritual energy to the job.

But the most important thing is that I survived!

Whatever is coming for me, just bring it on! I'm already the most unfortunate person in the world. I don't believe that I can be any unluckier! Li Yao thought to himself in discontent, anger flowing on his face.

Wu Mayan saw it and exclaimed in wild joy, "Uncle, you're awake? How wonderful! You must hang in there! I set off distress firework. Somebody is going to rescue us in a moment!

"My foster father is Xiong Wuji, the leader of the Furious Bears Tribe and the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau! My mother is the greatest doctor of the Furious Bears Tribe! She'll definitely cure you when we're back in Furious Bears City!"

Li Yao was utterly dumbfounded.

Le—leader of the Furious Bears Tribe, the best warrior of the six tribes on Iron Plateau?

You've got to me kidding me!

The title sounds rather impressive. The man must be unbelievably strong, at least much stronger than that Yan Chihuo!

Furious Bears City? Is it the enormous town of qi-trainers where beams of smoke have been popping up all day long?

Li Yao felt his head going dizzy, and he almost passed out.

He had planned to stop by the villages at the periphery of the desert first and see the qi-trainers' reactions to him.

He was not ready to deal with an opponent that was known to be 'the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau' when he had only just gotten started!

The best warrior! The man must be higher than the 80th level of the Refinement Stage, if not the 100th level. If he were to notice anything wrong about him, he could easily kill him with just a sneeze!

But since the poison from the scorpion had not been cleared yet, he had barely any physical strength right now, and he couldn't even run away at the moment.

Li Yao cursed Wu Mayan with the most profane language in his mind. Why did you come out late at night to hunt demon beasts alone instead of staying in Furious Bears City like a nice kid would?

But it could not be helped right now. He could only force himself to enter the deep sleep state and try to fix his damaged nerves as quickly as possible by summoning the primordial force inside his cells.

Later, he was awakened several times.

The first time, he was woken up by a series of rumbling noises that seemed to indicate that ten thousand iron beasts were gathering on the desert for a concert.

Then, Wu Mayan danced with great joy and shouted, "Father Xiong! Father Xiong! We are here!"

Li Yao sensed that a man with daunting aura crammed into the cave.

The cave was rather spacious, but this particular 'Father Xiong' was like a giant whose head could reach the sky. He gave Li Yao tremendous pressure even when he was still ten meters away.

Li Yao panicked. He was not ready to confront the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau yet. Therefore, he simply forced himself to enter the deep sleep state again and continued healing his wounds in order to avoid talking to 'Father Xiong'!

The second time, he was woken up by bumping.

At that moment, they were moving through the desert, accompanied by the morning star.

What Li Yao was placed on was a big crawling True Qi machine with six feet that looked like a spider but billions of times larger. The six long legs were all crafted with steel, packed with coldly shining rivets on them.

The torso of the machine was two round expansive cabins that could accommodate dozens of people at the same time. On the two sides of the torso were more than twenty turrets that were all heavy True Qi cannons more than half a meter in diameter.

Twenty brawny man, whose muscles were glimmering because of sweat, were standing on the two sides of the cabin. In front of each of them, a hollow iron tube riddled with holes was placed.

The iron tubes were surrounded by two dents in the shape of hands where they could put their hands.

The engine compartment was the destination of all the iron tubes.

The brawny men were like crew members who were rowing a boat. Listening to the drumming of a leader in the front, they echoed "Hee—Hah" in a fixed pattern.

While they shouted, the spiritual gas inside their body surged out through their hands and into the hollow iron tubes!

It appeared that the brawny men were all above the 10th level of the Refinement Stage!

The spiritual gas that the twenty qi-trainers unleashed was transmitted to the engine compartment in the rear through the hollow iron tubes. It was then redistributed, enhanced, and sent to the six long legs of the machine to drive the steel spider forward at a speed that was no lower than that of the True Qi tanks.

Occasionally, the spider would jump up high and cover a distance of almost a hundred meters, passing the rough valleys and hills easily by spurting the air out below it.

Such True Qi machines were totally different from the modern magical equipment that was based on crystals and crystal processors. They were crude and primitive, but they brought an air of resolution and stubbornness with them.

Ten thousand years ago, at the end of the Great Dark Age, when the relics of the ancient Cultivators had just been excavated, such True Qi war beasts were the first to be manufactured. The humans at that time had fought against the demon beasts with them as well as the blades accelerated by spiritual gas, so that humanity could rise again!

Li Yao had thought that he could only see True Qi machines in a museum. He had never expected that he would be lucky enough to lie in one.

For a fan of magical equipment, it could almost be called a nice surprise.

However, despite the high speed of the steel spider, it was not installed with any suspension or deceleration facilities, and its structure could not have been any simpler. Every bump and quake had been precisely fed back to Li Yao's bottom, which was almost shattered into pieces.

The qi-trainers on the steel spider, on the other hand, were like seasoned sailors who had witnessed too many storms. Intense as the bumps might have been, they remained absolutely still, as if they were dozens of rivets that had been stabbed into the ground.

While Li Yao felt that his world was swirling, he vaguely overheard a quarrel at the front of the cabin.

One of the voices was sharp and high-pitched; it seemed to belong to Wu Mayan, who was declaring, "I did not run away secretly! I was out on a hunting trip! I have surpassed the 11th level of the Refinement Stage! I'm not a child, nor one of the pussies from space! I need to prove to everyone that I am an out-and-out warrior of Iron Plateau! I want to join the battle against the apocalypse! I want to fight the apocalypse side by side with Father Xiong!"

The other voice was deep, hoarse, and sounded like a bellowing bear. "You claim that you are not a child, and yet you made other people seriously wounded for you!"

Wu Mayan was totally rendered speechless. He was silent for a long time, before he asked, somewhat guiltily, "Father Xiong, is this uncle alright? He was quite awesome! Although he was merely in the 13th or 14th level of the

Refinement Stage, he put down two Emperor Sand Scorpions barehanded with nothing but a few bones!"

'Father Xiong' replied, "He suffered heavy wounds and was poisoned by the venom of the scorpions. If it were a regular person, they would've died long ago! But he is strong. Really strong. His body is slowly recovering right now! You can tell from the countless old scars on his body that he is not someone to die easily!"

Li Yao was secretly relieved. Judging from the man's tone, he had not found any issues with him yet and was not hostile at all, at least for now.

He entered the deep sleep state again and devoted himself to the recovery of his body.

When he woke up for the third time, they had arrived at the entrance of a splendid city.

The entire city was surrounded by walls dozens of meters high. They were made up of green rocks and extended to the middle of the dense fog, making it impossible to tell how long they were. Li Yao roughly estimated that each side of the walls could be dozens of kilometers long.

Illuminated by the morning sunlight, the city wall was emitting a metallic glow. There was a giant defense rune array every ten meters or so. Countless cracks of different layers had been left on the defense arrays, clear signs that the defense rune arrays had been broken, mended, rebroken, and re-mended many times. Gory battles must have taken place over and over at the city walls.

When they drew closer, Li Yao discovered lots of askew calligraphy among the cracks, which seemed to have been carved with swords and sabers. All of the words were more than one meter in diameter and apparently written by different hands. Some of them were deeper, and some were mottled and unclear because of the erosion of wind and rain, suggesting that they might have existed for hundreds of years.

Li Yao glanced at them and remembered two lines of proud declarations quickly.

The first line was 'Reach the 100th level of the Refinement Stage if you are a man! Damn the Building Foundation! Damn the Core Formation! Damn the Nascent Soul!'

The second line looked rather ancient. It had been corroded into two shallow traces by the passage of time.

'If we cannot defend human civilization, at the very least, we can defend our savageness!'

Chapter 555: Test Passed?

Chapter 555: Test Passed?

Li Yao was chewing on the two lines when the city gate, which was more than fifty meters high and had an enormous bear claw painted in the middle, was gradually pulled open together with earsplitting noises.

This was the big town of the qi-trainers' that Li Yao had seen earlier, Furious Bears City!

Li Yao half lay inside the torso of the steel spider. He pretended to be drowsy, but he was actually peeping at the outside through the gaps on the windows and observing Furious Bears City.

The scale of the city was absolutely beyond his imagination. In the Star Glory Federation, a city of such a scale would be called a metropolis with a population of hundreds of thousands.

Li Yao looked at the horizon and discovered that the city skyline was actually made of countless coruscating skyscrapers.

Those skyscrapers were all elegantly shaped and built with translucent crystals. They were neat and tidy and brought a strong feeling of perfectness. Compared to the qi-trainers' primitive and straightforward style, they were like architecture that should appear hundreds of years later.

It was not until Li Yao observed it more carefully that he noticed that the skyscrapers' shells of crystals had all been broken. Several skyscrapers had been blown into two halves down the middle. Some had even collapsed into messy mountains of garbage.

It seemed that this place was debris of a metropolis.

On the debris, a lot of simple, shabby buildings had been constructed in the same style as when human civilization had just been reborn at the end of the Great Dark Age. They were impractical, thick, dark, and clumsy. A lot of rebar was exposed to the air without any decoration, constituting a continuous forest of iron.

The southwest side of the city seemed to be the factory zone. Countless high towers stood in the area. They were all riddled with holes from which thousands of streams of black smoke were being spurted. The black smoke was the exhaust from when the spiritual gas was utilized. It formed hundreds of pillars piercing into the sky like the paths to the heaven.

Li Yao sensed a feeble spiritual wave of the fire class from there.

He immediately realized that it could be the place where the magical equipment was manufactured in the Furious Bears City. However, there was no telling how advanced their maintenance workshops were and if they were good enough for him to repair the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

Li Yao pondered everything that he had observed carefully and was deep in thought.

The style of the buildings in the debris was very similar to that of the cities of the Star Ocean Imperium during its prime years.

But the buildings had been destroyed by a major disaster.

Many years later, survivors of the disaster had returned and established a whole new city based on the debris.

That had to be why the buildings at present were in two completely different styles, one old and the other modern.

He was going to observe the city in greater detail, but two brawny men in robes made of bear hide lifted him into a fully-sealed True Qi tank, which drove toward the center of Furious Bears City in a hurry.

Half an hour later, Li Yao was carried into a bleached building. A vague aroma of herbs was floating in the air.

It should have been the hospital of Furious Bears City.

"Mom!"

"Yan'er!" 1

Li Yao heard the voices of Wu Mayan and a middle-aged woman, but the middle-aged woman's voice sounded extremely odd and unbefitting.

"Mom. You must save this uncle. He rescued me from two Emperor Sand Scorpions!"

Wu Mayan was almost crying. He seemed to be embarrassed that Li Yao was seriously wounded because of him.

Li Yao secretly glanced around. The room was big, but it was packed with almost twenty people. Wu Mayan and a plump, middle-aged woman were standing on the left. The woman was wearing brown linen clothes. She was neat, tidy, and gave every feeling of comfort. However, she did not seem to be part of the environment.

On her right side stood almost twenty fully-armed muscular men wearing black robes made of bear hide and armed with heavy weapons!

The men's muscles were all bulging, and they were all wearing anxious faces. Even the shortest of them was more than two meters tall. They were walking to and fro in the room like a bunch of bears. Now and then, they yelled impatiently.

"Sister Lan, how is he?"

"Aunt Sha, he is not dying, is he? Although the guy is not very capable, he was brutal enough to have slain two Emperor Sand Scorpions all by himself! A tough man indeed! He should die a hero's death in the battle against the apocalypse if he is to be killed! It will be a shame if he dies now!"

"Sister Lan, you must rescue him. At least keep him breathing! We will carry him to the battlefield of the apocalypse, the most glorious destination for every warrior of Iron Plateau!"

When all the other men were shouting and yelling, the 'shortest' man in the lead was silent, as if he were a statue.

Li Yao's attention was all focused on him.

The eyes of the man were deep. His lead grey beard and scruffy hair were linked. His appearance was identical to everyone else's, except that there was a scar in the shape of a cross in the middle of his chest, as if somebody had torn open his abdomen and sewn him together in a hurry!

The room was rather big, but he seemed to be very cautious, as if fearing that, if he stretched out his arms, the entire building would be demolished by his daunting aura!

The man gave Li Yao a terrifying feeling.

It was he who was the first to rush into the cave, which was immediately occupied.

He was even more horrifying than the other raging men combined!

He was most likely Xiong Wuji, whom Wu Mayan referred to as the leader of the Furious Bears Tribe and the best warrior of the six tribes on Iron Plateau.

The middle-aged woman was apparently used to the raucousness of the qi-trainers. She assured them calmly and walked toward Li Yao.

Li Yao's heart was pounding as he knew that the middle-aged woman was the doctor of the Furious Bears Tribe. There was no choice except to resort to his acting skills now!

Swoosh!

Li Yao jumped up from the bed and crouched in a corner of the bed, while he glared at the woman with a pair of alarmed eyes, his killing intent soaring, as if he was ready to lunge out at any moment!

The human-shaped bears all exclaimed, "Don't attack!"

The middle-aged woman was as tranquil as before. She opened his hands. Two clusters of mild green brightness were released from her palms and floated toward Li Yao like two small lanterns.

Her voice fell into Li Yao's heart like soft feathers. "Don't be scared. You are in Furious Bears City of the Furious Bears Tribe. There are no demon beasts in this place. We are all your compatriots and your friends. My name is Sha Yulan. I am a doctor. The teenager you saved last night is my only son. I cannot thank you enough, and I will definitely not harm you.

"The wounds on your body are terrible. I don't know what you've been through, but you are absolutely safe now that you've arrived in Furious Bears City.

"Just let me examine you, will you?"

Li Yao seemed a bit agitated. He glanced around and uttered animalistic roars deep down his throat.

"Is he a wildling on the desert?" asked one of the qi-trainers in a low voice.

Sha Yulan replied softly, "I don't think so. He seems to be able to understand what I'm talking about. My friend, if you understand me, let me perform a full examination on you. I am just a doctor, and I'm no threat for you."

Li Yao thought of something and realized why he felt that Sha Yulan was not part of the environment.

It was because the way Sha Yulan talked, namely her accent, pitch and stress, was totally different from the rest of the Iron Plateau natives; it was more like the space residents' tone!

Thousands of thoughts filled Li Yao's mind.

In the moment of his hesitation, the two clusters of gentle light flowed into his body. They circulated around his limbs, veins, nerves, and internal organs like two warm streams. Wherever they reached, the dry cells were injected with new energy, and the speed of the recovery of his neural network was three times faster!

Countless questions were still lingering on Li Yao's mind, but he gradually relaxed despite his wariness and allowed Sha Yulan to do the rest of the examination.

"Thank you for your trust, my friend. I will cure you shortly."

Sha Yulan's voice was soft, yet there was a sense of unquestionableness in it. Li Yao felt that he could trust her for some reason.

A spiritual stripe was painted on each of Sha Yulan's fingertips. Spurred by her spiritual energy, ten bright green threads flowed out of her fingers and navigated along Li Yao's muscles and veins as the doctor examined his body carefully.

Suddenly, her fingertip shivered.

Li Yao looked at where she was looking, only to find that she was staring at the tattoo of the Black Spider Death Curse on his chest!

His heart was immediately racing again, and he felt that his lips were dry.

He did not cover up the Black Spider Death Curse because he was scared that somebody might see the camouflage and grow suspicious of him.

He had assumed that nobody on Iron Plateau would be able to tell what it was.

However, Sha Yulan's eyes stopped by the tattoo for a long time. She slightly frowned. There was no telling what she was thinking about.

Who is she exactly? Does she really come from space and happen to know of the Black Spider Death Curse?

It was not until five seconds later, when Li Yao was soaked in sweat, that Sha Yulan retreated her eyes and said slowly, "My friend, do you feel that your head is dizzy, that you cannot remember your past clearly, and that you don't even know what you are?"

Li Yao was dazed and nodded his head somewhat confusedly.

"Due to the poison of the Emperor Sand Scorpion, your brain has been seriously damaged although your body is strong enough to be recovering. Some of your memories were lost. Even your language ability might be away for a while."

Sha Yulan seemed to be explaining to Li Yao as well as the rest of the qi-trainers.

Li Yao was overjoyed. He couldn't believe that he had fooled them with such shabby acting skills.

Wu Mayan exclaimed, "Mom, you mean that the uncle's brain is wounded? Is it treatable?"

Sha Yulan replied, "The wounds on the body can be cured within several days. But the human brain is too sophisticated. I will try the best I can, but how many memories can be recovered, when his memories can be recovered, and if his memories can be recovered, will all depend on himself."

Hearing that, the qi-trainers started shouting and yelling again.

Sha Yulan frowned. She walked to Xiong Wuji and whispered to him for a while.

Xiong Wuji's eyes suddenly shone. He bellowed, "What's all the fuss about? The patient needs peace! Get out of here now! The apocalypse is coming. Go to your posts and prepare for the battle!"

Xiong Wuji was apparently very respected. The obstreperous human-shaped bears acted like they had run into a tamer when they heard him, and they all left the ward nicely.

"Your wounds are heavy, too. Go back and take a rest now. How are you going to participate in the battle of the apocalypse if you are unhealthy? Your father and I are here for him," said Sha Yulan to her son.

Wu Mayan knew that he had done something wrong, and he did not dare disobey his mother's words. Therefore, he nodded and waved. "Uncle, you must hang in there. I'll bring you delicious food for lunch! I guarantee that you will be as strong as you can ever be, and you will distinguish yourself in the battle against the apocalypse!"

After Wu Mayan left, Xiong Wuji locked the door of the ward from the inside.

Li Yao had just calmed down, but Xiong Wuji's action made his heart beat fast again.

Sha Yulan retreated behind Xiong Wuji and asked calmly, "Alright. There are no irrelevant people here anymore. Let's talk frankly now. Who are you exactly?"

Chapter 556: Unnegotiable

Chapter 556: Unnegotiable

Li Yao cursed silently, not knowing whether he should play dumb or tell the truth.

Although Xiong Wuji was standing casually five meters away, the intimidating aura he released was growing exponentially, as if an invisible bear had hugged him!

Sha Yulan said, "Whoever you are, you saved my son, who is also the adopted son of Xiong Wuji, leader of the Furious Bears Tribe. We cannot thank you enough, and we mean you no harm. I wasn't lying to you on purpose, either.

"I have never seen the tattoo on your chest before, but I can sense a unique feeling of evilness from it that is the distinguishing characteristic of the Black Spider Death Curse.

"I'm aware that only those who have killed the best assassins of Black Spider Tower are likely to be harassed by the Black Spider Death Curse.

"If you are really a native of Iron Plateau, then I can't help but wonder why a member of Spider's Thorn has landed on Iron Plateau for no good reason and was killed by you."

Li Yao failed to come up with any response.

It was not entirely because of his bad acting skills. He had never expected that somebody on Iron Plateau could recognize the Black Spider Death Curse!

"My friend."

Xiong Wuji opened his mouth slowly, his voice low and deep like a bear that was rubbing against a tree. "You risked your own life to save my adopted son. I owe you a great favor. You are from the space, Dr. Sha is from the space, and my adopted son Wu Mayan is also from the space. You can see that the Furious Bears Tribe is different from certain other tribes! Who are you, why are you here, and what do you want?"

Li Yao blinked, his mind in a mess.

He didn't know that this Sha Yulan was truly from the space, and it did not seem to be a secret in the Furious Bears Tribe!

Sha Yulan gestured for Xiong Wuji to retreat farther. She then carried a chair and sat down, before she spoke softly. "Judging from the wounds on your body, you've suffered a lot on Iron Plateau. I can totally imagine what kind of life a space resident must've been living after he was forced onto Iron Plateau. It is perfectly normal that you are very alert. How about I tell my story first, and then you tell yours?

Before Li Yao could reply, Sha Yulan had already started. "I'm from a family that specialized in the medicine, born the Horizontal Wind Space Zone. My father was a well-known doctor in the space zone. Once, a patient who suffered from the Black Spider Death Curse and was on the brink of death came to my father.

"Although my father failed to save him, the Black Spider Death Curse left a very deep impression in me. That's why I saw through your tattoo easily a moment ago.

"My husband was a manager of a small sect in the Horizontal Wind Space Zone and was in charge of the logistics.

"When our son Wu Mayan was six months old, the three of us went on a trip to visit my parents, but we encountered space pirates half way through.

"Most of the starships in our fleet were captured. My husband managed to break away from the siege as a skilled pilot, but in our haste, and driven by a cosmic storm, we drifted to the Iron Plateau Space Zone.

"When we arrived here, we had run out of food and ammunitions, and there was barely any fuel left. The telepathic thought transmitter on board was broken, too. We could not reach out to the outside world via the Spiritual Nexus as there was no such thing here.

"Therefore, we could only risk landing on Iron Plateau.

"But we didn't expect for the defense network of Iron Plateau in its atmosphere to be so powerful. Our starship was seriously damaged again when we were breaking through the planetary ring.

"My husband burnt his life and soul without thinking about anything else in order to steer the broken starship. Although we landed successfully in the end, my husband passed away unfortunately because of over-exhaustion."

Sha Yulan sighed. "Wu Mayan, who was only six months old back then, and I were lost in the desert and about to be slain by the demon beasts when qi-trainers of the Furious Bears Tribe appeared and rescued us."

Li Yao lips moved, but he did not dare to open his mouth. He was meaning to ask why the qi-trainers did not ask for her trouble since she was also a Cultivator.

Xiong Wuji seemed to have seen through what was on his mind. He sniffed and remarked, "What do you think we qi-trainers are? Scumbags who bully women and children?"

Sha Yulan managed to make a smile. "I'd read a few confidential files about Iron Plateau before and was aware that, although the natives of Iron Plateau were not primitive barbarians, their impression about the residents in the space, especially Cultivators, was not very good. However, for my son, I couldn't care less about that and thought that they could torture me however they wanted as long as they kept my son alive.

"As it turned out, when those silly bears discovered that there were only the two of us, they did not know how to deal with me at all even though they had noticed that I was a Cultivator.

"At that time, Wu Mayan was still being breastfed. He was just a small meatball. I was merely a non-battle-type Cultivator who could not even catch a chicken. They could neither beat nor condemn us, and we would be dead for sure if they drove us to the desert.

"Therefore, they established a small house in the corner of Furious Bears City where my son and I could stay. It seemed like they were even scared that we might die. Haha.

"Then, the wife of a qi-trainer had trouble during her labor. Both her child and herself were about to be killed. Nobody knew what to do. I happened to drop by and saved the two of them.

"Later, more people gradually came to seek treatment from me. It was mostly women and kids in the beginning. The job I did most often was the midwife.

"However, healthy as the men here may be, it was natural that they broke a bone or two when they were fighting demon beasts outside. Some of their traditional methods were effective, but many wounds could only be treated with the more modern medical knowledge.

"After I saved a few seriously wounded qi-trainers, my name gradually spread afar. They started calling me 'Dr. Sha'. Not only was I known within the Furious Bears Tribe, the qi-trainers of the Silver Moon Tribe and those of the Greedy Wolves Tribe would come to ask for my help if they had no solutions themselves, too.

"In the last twelve years, I've saved more Iron Plateau natives than I can count. The serious wound on Xiong Wuji's chest couldn't have been healed without me.

"With my contribution, the adults of the Furious Bears Tribe mostly have the decency not to speak ill of the space residents when I'm around. But sometimes, little kids say the nastiest things, and don't even realize it, when they are horsing around."

Sha Yulan paused for a moment and the continued speaking, somewhat reluctantly. "Yesterday afternoon, my son was playing with a few other kids. He's a proud and aggressive one, and he beat his three companions down heavily. One of them was pissed off and said something that was not very nice.

"My son did not give a reply there. He secluded himself for half a day when he was back. No one expected that he would run out secretly late at night to hunt demon beasts by himself in order to prove that he was as valiant as any Iron Plateau native even though blood of the space flows in his veins.

"Thankfully, you showed up in time, or it would've been a terrible disaster."

Xiong Wuji said, "Last night, I received a message from the Burning Sun Tribe stating that a Cultivator had landed on Iron Plateau and encountered them. The Cultivator was even trying to make a deal with them, but he didn't know that the Burning Sun Tribe was the tribe that hated Cultivators most among the six tribes of Iron Plateau. In the end, the Cultivator fled desperately and even humiliated the son of the leader of the Burning Sun Tribe. If my guess is correct, the Cultivator was you, right?

"The Furious Bears Tribe and the Burning Sun Tribe are different. Why don't you tell us what the deal was that you tried to make?"

Li Yao was interested. He observed the two of them and discovered that they were as calm as before and showed no signs of lying.

Besides, if Xiong Wuji was really the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, there was no need for him to lie at all.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao kept most details to himself and simply said that he was a member of an Exo Society who had fiercely battled against space pirates in the Iron Plateau Space Zone and that he had been forced to land on the planet eventually.

Xiong Wuji nodded. "According to our observation, it's true that a fierce battle took place in space a month ago. There were also signs that the defense system of the planet was triggered."

Li Yao concealed most of the details, but he elaborated on his performance in the Skyhill Sword Seminar to prove that he was reasonably good at the art of refining and could help the Furious Bears Tribe craft a huge amount of magical equipment.

Xiong Wuji listened attentively. He suddenly interjected when Li Yao was talking about the Skyhill Sword Seminar. "You are a refiner? Then, can you repair starships?"

Li Yao's eyes suddenly shone. He replied, "My specialty is the refinement and maintenance of melee magical equipment, namely swords and sabers. As for starships, I've conducted a few maintenance tasks before, but I'm not adept at it. It will depend on the model of the starship, the extent of damage, and the number of backup components."

He was better at destroying a starship than repairing one.

Xiong Wuji nodded in acknowledgement and hinted for him to continue.

When Li Yao finished his speech, Xiong Wuji concluded, "So, the deal you talked about was that you get resources and maintenance facilities from us and we get a lot of magical equipment crafted by you."

"Correct!"

Fire of hope was ignited in Li Yao's heart, as he nodded and said, "Chief Xiong, I can tell that you are much more rational than the guy from the Burning Sun Tribe. The deal I've proposed is a win-win for us. If you don't believe me, I can refine a few swords and sabers right now. You can test their quality yourself!"

"I believe you… but the deal cannot be made right now."

Xiong Wuji shook his head. "Right now, I don't have enough resources and facilities to make a deal with you."

Li Yao was dazed. "Why?"

Xiong Wuji narrowed his eyes in which two terrifying flames were burning, while he said coldly, "Because an apocalypse is coming. All the resources must be used to forge the large war machines, and all the personnel must be summoned to join the battle of the apocalypse! Your crystal suit should be a piece of very precise magical equipment. To mend it would require a lot of resources and time. However, right now, I don't have enough resources and time to trade with you.

"If both of us are still alive after the apocalypse, let's make a deal then!"

This was the second time that Li Yao heard the phrase 'battle of the apocalypse'.

Seeing the grave expression on the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, Li Yao was grasped by anxiety, too. He asked, "Didn't the apocalypse take place five thousand years ago? What exactly happened at that time? Why are the Iron Plateau natives and space residents so against each other? What is the battle of the apocalypse?"

Chapter 557: Choices Five Thousand Years Ago

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Sha Yulan glanced at Xiong Wuji and, seeing no objection on his face, explained after pondering for a while. "The apocalypse was the greatest change of the Flying Star Sector in the last five thousand years. I had never been told the full story before I was forced to land on Iron Plateau, but I've managed to have a general idea of what happened after investigating and analyzing the information for more than ten years."

Li Yao was beaming with curiosity. He observed, "Since I was born and raised in a remote town in the sea of stars, I'd never heard of this apocalypse before, and I definitely have no grudge with the qi-trainers. But for some reason, the qi-trainers of the Burning Sun Tribe seemed to regard me as their mortal enemy. They started fighting me after only a few words. It was completely unreasonable. I should at least know what I am killed for if I have to be killed. What exactly happened five thousand years ago? What is the so-called apocalypse? A meteor shower?"

Xiong Wuji sniffed and replied, "An apocalypse is the greatest catastrophe for a sector. It is so much more complicated than a simple meteor shower!"

He waved his hands, gesturing for Sha Yulan to continue, while he sat aside with a solemn face, deep in thought.

"I haven't seen a Cultivator from space for more than ten years. Considering that you saved my son's life, and that this is not a big secret on Iron Plateau, it doesn't matter if I tell you about it.

"All those qi-trainers, including those of the Burning Sun Tribe, although rude and reckless, have good reasons to hate Cultivators."

Sha Yulan cleared her throat. "Qi-trainers and Cultivators, from their own perspective, both think that justice was on their side. I'll try to tell the story without bias.

"Brother Li Yao, you should know that the Flying Star Sector used to be an important region for the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago; a lot of space fleets were stationed here, and countless military bases were established. The development level of this area was quite high.

"When the Armageddon Rebellion took place, Blood God, supreme commander of the expedition army of the imperium, revolted and became a demonic Cultivator who called himself the Mad Armageddon. A civil war thus began. Hundreds of years of battles shattered the Flying Star Sector and almost demolished it.

"Even so, a lot of relics in the area could still be made use of, and many damaged starships could be repaired, too. The remaining soldiers of six troops of the imperium as well as their descendants struggled in various planets and world fragments. The six troops gradually evolved into six big sects, which led the people to be united and to pass on the civilization.

"The majority of the six sects were soldiers of the Star Ocean Imperium and their descendants. Naturally, they were much more organized than civilians.

"Also, debris and relics were everywhere in the Flying Star Sector. A lot of knowledge could be analyzed and inherited from them.

"Therefore, the development level of the civilization of the Flying Star Sector recovered very fast. About six thousand years ago, although still relatively small, it had already reached seventy percent of the brilliance of the Star Ocean Imperium when the latter was at its peak.

"The Flying Star Sector, at that time, had developed more than ten space zones and permanently altered the territory and atmosphere of three planets with the energy from almost ten stars. The planets were the new lands for human beings.

"On more than another ten planets, mines were established to collect the precious Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures.

"The entire Flying Star Sector was flourishing.

"Iron Plateau was the capital planet, or mother planet, of the Flying Star Sector. It was where the coalition government of the six big sects was headquartered, as well as the origin of the human civilization of the Flying Star Sector.

"In space, citizens of the Flying Star Sector had repaired a lot of the starships of the Star Ocean Imperium and created newer, bigger, faster crystal warships based on them that could cruise in the universe.

"Those were our golden years. Everybody shared the same goal, which was to explore other constellations and find more brotherly human civilizations. We planned to help them, unite them, and eventually rebuild a great alliance of human beings across the entire universe!

"At that time, everybody firmly believed that the invincible human beings would definitely be able to achieve that!"

Bitterness suddenly appeared on Sha Yulan's hopeful face. "One year before the expedition fleet was to set off, the astronomers of the Flying Star Sector suddenly discovered that a weird wave was crashing right at the Flying Star Sector. After extremely complicated observation and calculation, it was ascertained that three meteoroid showers, one large and the other two small, had been aimed at the only habitable planets of the Flying Star Sector, with the large one targeting Iron Plateau precisely!

"If they were common meteoroid showers, how could they have been aimed at all three habitable planets at the same time?

"There was no doubt that it was not just an astronomical phenomenon, but an apocalypse whose target had been selected neatly!"

Li Yao listened carefully and exclaimed when he heard 'apocalypse'.

Sha Yulan said, "Apocalypses are the most mysterious phenomena in cosmology. When a Cultivator advances to a certain level, or a civilization is developed very fast, an apocalypse might be triggered!

"In the era of the Star Ocean Imperium, mankind encountered many apocalypses. Some of them were resisted by the joint efforts of the Supreme Emperor and the twenty Guilds of Provenance, but some of them couldn't be stopped at all.

"An apocalypse often leads to the complete destruction of one or more worlds!

"The astronomers immediately ran the most precise calculations about the trajectory, scale, and damage of the apocalypse. Their final conclusion was…

"Fifty fifty.

"There was a fifty percent likelihood that the apocalypse could be resisted if all the resources of the Flying Star Sector were summoned.

"There was also a fifty percent likelihood that, however many resources were summoned, and however hard they struggled, they were not going to stop the apocalypse from destroying the three planets!"

Li Yao was dazed. He asked, "Couldn't the estimation be more precise?"

Sha Yulan smiled bitterly. "Apocalypses are the most inexplicable phenomena of the modern Cultivation world.

"Ancient Cultivators believed in divinities or the so-called 'heavens'. Apocalypses were easier to explain for them. They simply perceived such disasters as punishments or tests that were arranged by supernatural powers, and they could survive them with faith and righteousness. The bottom line is, everything was related to religion and thus unfalsifiable for them.

"We modern Cultivators don't believe in superstitions, nor do we accept the existence of divinities.

"For ten thousand years, the superstitions of the ancient Cultivators have been ruled out one by one. The objective laws of nature behind them have been found.

"But apocalypses are as mysterious and incomprehensible as they have ever been. They are the fatal weakness of the modern Cultivation theorems.

"It is said that a Cultivator whose surname was 'Liu' and whose title was 'Master Star Prier' saw through the mysteries of apocalypses during the last years of the Star Ocean Imperium.

"But soon after, he was mentally deranged and got involved in the warfare, never to be seen again.

"Therefore, it was already an unbelievably troublesome task to capture the trajectory and estimate the time of the arrival of such enigmatic phenomena like an apocalypse. Countless astronomers burnt their life and soul while they were calculating the apocalypse until they perished because of fatigue in the end.

"It is said that the estimation of the damage of the apocalypse depended on a fickle, unpredictable value. If it was odd, then the apocalypse would be resistible; if it was even, the apocalypse would not be stopped at all.

"A team of dozens of astronomers sacrificed their lives together, but they still failed to determine whether the value was odd or even!

"The details have been lost in the passage of time. All you need to know is the outcome."

There was mockery and sadness on Sha Yulan's face; telling the story seemed to be draining her. She took a few breaths. "If it was more likely to resist the apocalypse, or if the apocalypse was more likely to be unstoppable, everything would've been easier. But the problem was that each possibility was fifty percent.

"The Flying Star Sector, at that time, had the ability to perform a large-scale space migration and to provide absolute defense for one of the planets. But either choice would consume tremendous resources.

"Faced with the incoming apocalypse, the Cultivators were inevitably divided.

"Some of them call themselves 'homers'. They suggested that all the other planets of the Flying Star Sector should be abandoned and that the population and resources be concentrated on the mother planet Iron Plateau. With all the resources available in the Flying Star Sector, a super stellar-level defense array could have been established outside the mother planet, which could be used to resist the apocalypse.

"According to the advocates of such a notion, the apocalypse was definitely resistible if all the resources of the Flying Star Sector were focused on one planet. As long as the mother planet was saved, the mines and secondary planets in the periphery could have been reestablished within the subsequent hundred years.

"The rest of the Cultivators were known as 'spacers', and they maintained that staying on Iron Plateau could only lead to the doom of the entire civilization.

"Now that a large fleet was already available, and that the technology of universal sailing was quite advanced, they argued to concentrate all the resources of the Flying Star Sector to upgrade the fleet and to refine a large batch of star fortresses.

"Since the target of the apocalypse was the planets, everyone might as well be evacuated from the planets and into space. A civilization in space would be created!"

"The arguments of the two sides had their own pros and cons.

"The proposal of the homers was a gamble. If the apocalypse was successfully resisted, all would be good. But if the stellar-level defense array was broken through, the entire civilization would be destroyed.

"The spacers, on the other hand, were asking everyone living on the planets, from infants in their cribs to seniors over a hundred years old, to move into starships within several decades. It was definitely not an easy job.

"Besides, mankind originated from planets. To move away from planets and live in cold, narrow starships without having the chance to stand on real soil again was too cruel a penalty for a civilization."

Li Yao blurted out, "They could've stayed in space temporarily and moved back to Iron Plateau when the apocalypse passed."

He realized that he was not thinking at all after he heard what he said.

The resources of a sector were limited. If they were devoted to the starships and space towns, building a stellar-level defense array would definitely have been impossible.

Without enough defense, it was quite likely that Iron Plateau would have been blown into smithereens by the apocalypse. How could they move back if that happened?

Chapter 558: God Slaying!

Chapter 558: God Slaying!

"The hardcore advocates of spacers were the members of the Flying Star fleet who had been preparing for the expedition across the universe. The best elites of the Cultivation world had been gathered in the fleet, including many Core Formation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. Most of them were the leadership of the big sects.

"The majority of homers were made of the low-level Cultivators. Although their Cultivation was not very high, they were supported by most ordinary people.

"Space is boundless and perilous. Nobody could anticipate what the Flying Star Sector would be like after the apocalypse. It was possible that all the planets would be destroyed. If so, human beings would be floating in the sea of stars for all eternity and become a nomadic civilization.

"Core Formation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators might be able to live through such crisis. But faced with the endless universe, what were the odds of survival for low-level Cultivators and ordinary people?

"The entire system of Cultivation and way of life would be demolished. Without planets as bases, it would be questionable whether or not such a system could be reestablished.

"The two sides had been at loggerheads with each other since the very beginning. The homers decried spacers to be timid cowards who ran away before a fight. Even if they succeeded in escaping via starships, the torch of civilization would only diminish and eventually die down if there were no planets, no natural paradises, and no Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures.

"But the spacers scorned the homers for being idiotic turtles. It seemed to be a valiant decision to stay and try to resist the apocalypse, but it was only irrational. The homers were the real cowards; they did not have the courage to explore the sea of stars. In the end, if the defense array of the homers could not resist the apocalypse, everyone would be killed in the disaster. In comparison, spacers were the real brave ones who would not only continue their civilization but also lead the human beings of the Flying Star Sector to expand their territory and explore new worlds so that the civilization would be brought to a new height!

"The debate between the two sides continued unabated, and their conflicts grew more and more intense. At the beginning, the argument was merely theoretical. But soon, when resources were going to be mobilized to implement a plan to resist the apocalypse, the theoretical argument was about to turn into blood and fire in reality!

"According to the astronomers, the apocalypse was going to arrive seventy-one years later. But both the planetary defense array and the production of thousands of starships were projects that could potentially take a hundred years. Therefore, they must seize every second and take action immediately.

"Resources of the Flying Star Sector were limited. If one of the two plans got more, the other plan would doubtlessly get less.

"Regarding the distribution of resources, the two sides almost raised a civil war!"

Li Yao couldn't help but interject. "Wasn't there a coalition government at that time? Besides, there were bound to be leaders and elders in the six major sects. Since most of them were spacers, why would the low-level Cultivators under their command not listen to them?"

Sha Yulan smiled bitterly. "The Flying Star government was co-established by the six sects. There was not a well-respected monarch who had enough prestige to win everyone's support. Besides, it was not for personal gain, but for the future of the entire civilization!

"If it were for their own benefit, the low-level Cultivators would naturally follow the arrangements of their masters, elders and leaders.

"But right now, it was the lives of tens of billions of people that were at risk!

"If you were a Refinement Stage Cultivator, and you firmly believed that the planetary defense array could resist the apocalypse and that the progress of the civilization would be disrupted if everyone ran out of the planets and simply let the apocalypse destroy all the habitable planets, would you listen to the Core Formation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators when you believe that only your companions could save everyone, including the crying babies in the cradles?

"Not just the Core Formation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. At that time, a series of shocking crimes had happened.

"In the records of Iron Plateau, these crimes were known to be—god slaying!

"At the time, the Flying Star Sector had a highly developed Cultivation civilization. There were three super experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage, above the Nascent Soul Stage, who were all supporters of the ideology of spacers.

"The three Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were all true gods of war; they had made great contributions through life and death during the development of the civilization of the Flying Star Sector. They were very respected both among the Cultivators and among the ordinary people.

"When the conflicts began, the three Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators spared no efforts in endorsing and preaching the spacers' theories to win the ordinary people's support.

"Under their influence, many ordinary people were convinced and willing to run away from planets together with the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators toward the sea of stars.

"Right then, an attack against one of the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators took place in a congress meeting of the coalition government!

"Yes. An attack against a Divinity Transformation Cultivator!

"The assailant was merely a Refinement Stage Cultivator, and an admin-type one at that. She was the recorder of the meeting!

"A Refinement Stage Cultivator trying to assassinate a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator!

"It was not hard to guess that no sooner had her killing intent been revealed than she was discovered.

"However, her purpose was never the assassination; she was merely taking the opportunity to root for the homers.

"The assassin gave a marvelous speech in the congress meeting in front of thousands of representatives and billions of spectators and rebuked the Divinity Transformation Cultivators for being as timid as rats when they decided to abandon their home and flee without fighting.

"She berated the spacers for leading the human beings of the Flying Star Sector to doom. Although the homers were mostly low-level Cultivators and descendants or disciples of the spacers, they would not lower their heads in front of the truth that would determine the destiny of their civilization.

"This was the greatest Dao for them. Faced with the false Dao, they would not shirk away and would rather fight until their last drop of blood was shed even if their opponents were Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, or even real deities!

"The assailant also stated that, although she had been captured, all the low-level Cultivators of the homers had made up their mind to sacrifice themselves. From that day on, if the three Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were still spreading propaganda for the spacers' theories in public, then…

"Every day, three Refinement Stage Cultivators would assault the three Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators!

"No. It was not an assault; it was suicidal attack!

"At that time, many representatives of the congress meeting were homers. Due to their backing, nobody dared to stop the female assassin from completing her declaration.

"The speech of such a weak girl rendered the entire hall speechless. Even the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator who had been the target of the attempted assassination was shocked at her valor and failed to come up with a response.

"The ordinary people who were watching the live stream of the congress meeting were deeply touched, too.

"After the assassin was taken into custody, she somehow managed to kill herself the following morning despite the various barriers imposed on her. She also wrote a few words with her blood on the wall.

"Born in Iron Plateau, die in Iron Plateau!"

Li Yao was flabbergasted.

He did not know that the Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector had been so unbendable five thousand years ago. An insignificant Refinement Stage Cultivator was bold enough to attack a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator, and when she inevitably failed and was captured, she ended her own life elegantly and decisively!

This was the conflict of the great Dao. It was not about one's capability but the firmness of one's belief!

"Born in Iron Plateau, die in Iron Plateau," Xiong Wuji mumbled.

He listened attentively to the valiant actions of the predecessors of the homers. Although he had heard it all a thousand times before, and he was the one who had told Sha Yulan the stories, he was still breathing fast, with brightness blinking in his eyes, as if this was the first time that he had ever heard such a story.

However, his face was somewhat grave. When he spoke the words 'die in Iron Plateau', there was a hint of depression in his eyes.

Sha Yulan sighed. "From that day on, the homers started fulfilling their promise. Every day, three Refinement Stage Cultivators would attempt to assassinate the three Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators in public.

"Of course, their endeavors all failed.

"But so what? There were too many homers. If the millions of Refinement Stage Cultivators were all willing to die for their decision, it was impossible to kill all of them.

"Besides, the two sides were compatriots in the first place. Many homers were the disciples and descendants of the spacers. How could they expect to clean out all of the homers?

"This was the 'God Slaying Initiative'!

"Moved by the homers' determination, many Cultivators who supported the spacers gradually returned to the homers' side.

"Many low-level Cultivators of the homers were in charge of the rudimental affairs of their sects. Therefore, they had quite a lot of arsenals and magical equipment bases under their control.

"Before the apocalypse consumed them all, a civil war was about to break out!"

Li Yao found it hard to breathe. He tightly clenched his fists.

"If a civil war broke out, the spacers were naturally much stronger. But strength was of little significance, because if the war broke out, a lot of resources and time would be wasted. Even worse, the civilization might be torn apart, and the two sides would completely go against each other. If so, nobody would ever survive the apocalypse!

"Thankfully, the leadership of the two sides retained some rationality. Before the civil war broke out, they reached an agreement to divide all the resources.

"After all, the resources that the planetary defense array required and those the production of starships required were not entirely the same.

"The plan seemed simple and straightforward. But it was actually only the best of the worst choices. Everybody had to carry out the agreement, however unsatisfied they were, in order to not trigger the civil war.

"From that day on, the human beings of the Flying Star Sector were gradually separated into two groups, the homers and the spacers. They are now the Iron Plateau natives and the space residents."

Li Yao thought for a moment and asked, "Since the agreement was reached, shouldn't the two parties live in harmony now? I think it was a reasonable decision to divide the resources. As the saying goes, you should never put all your eggs into one basket. If some of them were staying and some leaving, the civilization would be kept alive in some form as long as either side succeeded!"

Sha Yulan smiled vaguely. She glanced at Xiong Wuji and sighed. "That was exactly what the leadership of the two sides thought when the agreement was signed. If the two plans were implemented at the same time, one of the two sides would carry on the civilization even if the other side failed. But as the agreement was proceeded, and especially when the new generations were born, the chasm between the two parties grew wider and wider, eventually becoming irreparable."

Chapter 559: Born in Iron Plateau, Die in Iron Plateau!

Chapter 559: Born in Iron Plateau, Die in Iron Plateau!

"The civilization of the Flying Star Sector was in its golden years before the apocalypse. Everything was thriving. No difficulties seemed to be stopping us from striding forward.

"However, the news of the apocalypse instantly dragged us from the golden years to the time of desperation.

"The new generation born in such a period had a different understanding of the world from their parents. They were almost born with the hostility against each other."

Li Yao was confused. "If such a catastrophe was coming, everybody should have been more united. Even if they did not look eye to eye, they could have simply avoided interacting with the dissidents. What was the hostility for?"

Sha Yulan explained, "It had been estimated that the apocalypse would occur some seventy years later. But with the development of the observation technology, the trajectory and speed of the apocalypse had been rectified multiple times, and it was determined precisely in the end that the apocalypse would arrive a hundred and one years later.

"A hundred years was enough for several generations to be born.

"Imagine you are a homer who was born in such an era. Your parents tell you, when you are still learning how to talk, that your civilization will suffer a destructive strike in several decades' time and that your only hope is to build an enormous shield to resist it.

"Your parents, your grandparents, and your brothers and sisters are all striving for the purpose. The whole significance of your life is to contribute to such a cause!

"If you are a Cultivator, you may go into space temporarily to construct the planetary defense system.

"If you are an ordinary person, you may be digging holes day and night in order to build underground shelters that can be hundreds of meters deep.

"Everybody is burning their life and soul.

"Countless Cultivators fall while they are building the planetary defense array. Some of them are even crushed to pieces by the rushing meteoroids.

"Equally many ordinary people also sacrifice themselves because of the cave collapses, poisonous gas, and the scourge of demon beasts.

"You've experience everything. When your father dies in the space, when your brother is torn apart by demon beasts, and when you dedicate everything to the construction of the shield, you are suddenly told that some other people are not willing to fight side by side with you; they are going to abandon you and their home and simply run away!

"They do not just run away; they will even take away a lot of resources with them!

"The resources could've been used to enlarge and widen your shield so that more people can be protected!

"But now, because of the cowardice of those people, the shield guarding the entire civilization is smaller, lighter, and thinner.

"What would you think of those people?"

Li Yao was deep in thought.

Sha Yulan continued her explanation. "It is the same for the spacers. The new generation of spacers were informed that their destiny was to create countless crystal warships and sail afar with their civilization.

"During the decades, countless people died on their posts, leaving many touching stories behind. Some refiners were drawing structural designs of starships day and night, only to collapse and never wake up again!

"Every spacer believed that, if they could produce one more starship, more lives would be saved, and their civilization could continue!

"If you were such a spacer, what would you think if you knew that some diehards have stolen a lot of resources to build a big and useless turtle shell because of their foolishness and stubbornness?

"Fewer resources mean fewer starships, and fewer starships mean that tens of thousands of people may not be able to survive!"

Li Yao was silent.

It was indeed an impasse.

"Furthermore, as the strategies of the two sides proceeded, their social forms underwent tremendous changes.

"The society of the homers regarded the underground shelters as the cores. Before the shelters were fully established, they had built countless enclosed cities on the ground simulating the underground environment. They were hoping that they could persist underground even if several meteors breached through the defense array.

"For decades, in order to better prepare the people for the apocalypse, they even manually created a lot of meteor showers with unbelievable technology as rehearsals.

"As for the spacers, to adapt to the lifestyle in space later when each starship would be a small society, all the people were sorted into different towns. The smaller towns had a population of several thousand, and the larger ones had tens of thousands.

"Each such town was going to be a starship society later. The residents of the same town would board on the same starship.

"The Cultivators from the six major sects also took the opportunity to enter every 'starship town' and establish their branches as the leadership of the starship.

"When a starship was successfully produced, one of the towns would be migrated into the starship as a whole.

"After years of preparation, everybody had been used to a society of such a small scale. The immigration was mostly smooth without much trouble.

"It was not hard to guess why the new generations born in the two vastly different social forms found each other alien and hated each other!"

Xiong Wuji was suddenly angry when he listened to this part of the story. He raised his voice and said, "Cut the irrelevant stuff. Tell him about 'Plan Prometheus'!"

Sha Yulan paused for a moment. For the first time, the tranquility on her face was gone. She said gravely, "Although the relationship between the two sides were bad, they were faced with a common threat after all. For the big picture, there were never any real conflicts, until the hundredth year, right before the arrival of the apocalypse.

"At that time, the homers had finally finished their planetary defense array. However, due to the lack of resources, it did not reach the stellar-level, however close it was.

"The spacers had also produced a lot of starships and space towns.

"Because of the restriction of technology, the space towns did not have the ability to sail across space zones, much less constellations.

"But they were distinguished for their large size and their self-circulating biological system. Therefore, a lot of ordinary people could live on them.

"Finally, the time to part had come!

"The two divisions of civilization would embark on different paths of survival shortly.

"If things went just like that, maybe hundreds of years later, the misunderstanding between the two parties could have been eliminated, and they could still have reunited as one.

"But just then, 'Plan Prometheus' was implemented.

"Many spacers were the management and leadership of the six major sects. They had the top confidential training techniques and facilities in their sects under their control.

"Many such assets were inherited from the Star Ocean Imperium. They could only be read or utilized, but not copied or duplicated.

"According to the agreement, the spacers would leave some of the techniques and training facilities before they set off.

"But no one realized that, as the new generations of the spacers had grown up and risen to power, some of them had become the organizers of the final immigration!

"281 spacers of the new generation reached a secret agreement and carried out 'Plan Prometheus'. They stole all the techniques and training facilities that should've been left for the homers!

"When theft was discovered, they had long run away on their starships!"

Li Yao was dumbfounded. "That's highly immoral."

Techniques and training facilities were the essentials for a Cultivation sect. If such assets were stolen, the Cultivation sect would lose all its knowledge!

No wonder there were only 'qi-trainers' on Iron Plateau. Their techniques had all been lost.

It also explained why the qi-trainers loathed the Cultivators so much.

Sha Yulan said grimly, "What is moral and what is immoral when we are talking about the life and death of billions of people and the continuity of a civilization?

"The new generation had no doubts about the spacers' theories and believed that staying on Iron Plateau was a dead end. The techniques and training facilities would only be buried together with the homers.

"If so, they might as well steal all the techniques and training facilities so that the spacers could be stronger and the likelihood of the survival of their civilization could be higher!

"Every technique was a spark of civilization. Everything they did was to pass on the sparks of the human civilization. That was all.

"It was a sordid, cruel, and yet a very realistic decision.

"The homers naturally burst into fury when they discovered everything. However, there was nothing they could do. They did have some starships, but they did not have enough crew members. As the apocalypse drew close, most Cultivators had to stay inside the planetary defense array to ensure that it functioned normally. Therefore, they could only stand by and watch the spacers run away.

"Finally, the apocalypse arrived!"

Li Yao held his breath. Although he knew that human beings of the Flying Star Sector had survived the catastrophe, he still felt that his heart pounding.

Sha Yulan continued to speak bitterly. "Out of everyone's expectation, the supposedly three waves of meteoroid showers gave birth to a fourth wave, which lunged at the main fleet of spacers.

"The main fleet of spacers, caught off guard, was almost entirely demolished.

"The remaining starships were swallowed by space storms and lost in the broken universe. They had to survive on their own in darkness. It was not until four thousand years later that the civilization gradually recovered.

"However, even to this day, the civilization hasn't returned to its former glory!

"The ending of the homers was not any better. Although the strongest wave of the apocalypse was split to strike the fleet of the spacers, its remaining power was still beyond the capacity of a defense array that had failed to reach the stellar-level. A lot of meteoroids broke through the defenses and hit the surface of Iron Plateau. The environment of Iron Plateau was completely reshaped. A disaster of hundreds of years was thus begun!

"During the calamity, all the Cultivators above the Refinement Stage, including the Building Foundation Stage Cultivators, the Core Formation Stage Cultivators, and a few Nascent Soul Stages, did their best to drive the defense array to resist the apocalypse lead by a Divinity Transformation Cultivator. In the end, they all perished when their souls were burnt out!"

Li Yao did not understand. "Wait. Didn't you say just now that all the three Divinity Transformation Cultivators were spacers?"

Sha Yulan sighed. "The Divinity Transformation Cultivator who was the first to be attacked in the 'God Slaying

Initiative' chose to stay on Iron Plateau in the end. He said that he had not changed his mind, and he still believed that space was the only destiny. But it was the duty of a Cultivator to protect mankind. Since so many ordinary people were staying in their homeland, one of the three Divinity Transformation Cultivators should also stay and fulfill their responsibility.

"Born in Iron Plateau, die in Iron Plateau.

"It was what the female assassin had said a hundred years ago.

"When the apocalypse arrived, the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator recited the eight words and died a hero's death together with countless other Cultivators in the battlefield!"

Chapter 560: Eggs of Apocalypse

Chapter 560: Eggs of Apocalypse

"After that—"

When Sha Yulan was about to continue, Xiong Wuji interrupted her, speaking in a hoarse voice. "After that, most of the shelters were demolished by the apocalypse. The bombardment of the meteors cast Iron Plateau in absolute darkness for decades. The territory was entirely changed. The demon beasts that used to lurk underground mutated and became even more brutal and bloodthirsty!

"Only a few of them, who had been hiding in the deepest shelter, survived the catastrophe. But they were barely alive.

"When they returned to the surface, what they saw was a black sun, a desolate land, savage demon beasts, and city debris after city debris.

"All the Cultivators above the Building Foundation Stage had been killed. Only a small portion of Refinement Stage Cultivators, who were responsible for the order and safety of the shelters, were lucky enough to survive.

"However, most of the techniques and training facilities had been stolen by the spacers!

"Without the techniques and the corresponding knowledge, without the enlightenment of masters, and because all the natural paradises had been destroyed, they explored in the darkness for a thousand years and yet failed to find a way to build their foundation!

"But what's the big deal about being unable to build a foundation? They could still slay the demon beasts and defend their homes even if they were merely in the Refinement Stage!

"The Refinement Stage Cultivators fought against the mutated demon beasts and the harsh environment day after day. Gradually, they learned how to broaden their veins and nerves in order to improve their capacity for spiritual gas. They also perceived a brand-new technique from the apocalypse and embarked on an entirely different path of Cultivation from the past.

"These Cultivators—

"No, they stopped calling themselves Cultivators anymore.

"Since 'Cultivators' meant abandoning homes and fleeing without fighting, they should be ashamed of the name forever.

"Because they could only make use of spiritual gas, they simply called themselves 'qi-trainers'!

"The Cultivators all ran away, but the qi-trainers stayed on Iron Plateau and guarded their homeland and the people living in it!"

Sha Yulan stood up. She glared at Xiong Wuji without any concession and spoke in a voice that was low and yet determined. "Cultivators did not run away! We were merely trying to save civilization in a different way!

"In space, the Cultivators shed as much blood as those on Iron Plateau did!

"At that time, most Cultivators were riding crystal warships that were faster, agiler, and sturdier.

"In comparison, most ordinary people were moving in the space towns, which were slow.

"When the apocalypse approached, the crystal warships of the Cultivators could've run away!

"But in order to let more space towns escape from the apocalypse, countless Cultivators waged a suicidal war against it in their crystal warships!

"For most of them, they knew that they would certainly be killed, and yet they charged at the apocalypse anyway, just so that the power of the apocalypse could be diminished and the space towns behind them could be one percent more likely to survive!

"It is true that a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator stayed on Iron Plateau and sacrificed himself, but the other two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were also in the lead when the apocalypse struck the space fleet, and they died protecting their own people!

"The homers built an iron shield on the surface of the planet, but the spacers also built a shield, one made of flesh and blood!

"I don't care how you brag about the valor of your ancestors, but I will not allow you to insult the Cultivators who sacrificed themselves bravely!"

The short doctor held her head high without the slightest fear in front of the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau like an infuriated cat.

Xiong Wuji seemed to be caught off guard by Shu Yulan's refutation and was lost for words for a moment.

Li Yao was dazed briefly, too. He hurried to ease the intensity. "Faced with such a world-destroying catastrophe, I think that homers and spacers both had good reasons for their decisions. But as for the members of 'Plan Prometheus' who stole the techniques and training facilities before the arrival of the apocalypse… I don't know how I should comment on them. I wonder, what was their ending?"

Sha Yulan took a deep breath to calm herself down. "Members of Plan Prometheus had planned to flee to the periphery of the Flying Star Sector after they stole the techniques and training facilities and reunite with the main fleet when the apocalypse passed. They would hand in all the techniques and training facilities by then.

"In the message that they sent to the main fleet, they confessed that their behavior was in violation of the laws of the coalition government and any code of conduct; they admitted that there was no way that they should be pardoned or forgiven.

"But in the meantime, they emphasized that more of their civilization would be saved this way and the humans of the Flying Star Sector who were about to roam through space would have a better chance to thrive again.

"Whatever felonies they were going to be condemned to, they were willing to accept them all, even if they had to go on trial and be sentenced to death. Before the action, they had been prepared to die in dishonor.

"As long as the civilization of the Flying Star Sector could live long and prosper, they would sacrifice everything and be the fuel for the burning torch of humanity!

"However, before they joined the main fleet, the apocalypse had already arrived.

"The entire Flying Star Sector was cast into a havoc. Several planets were torn apart. Many world fragments collided, and even more were separated in that moment.

"In the end, we lost touch with the members of Plan Prometheus. After such a long time, I assume that they have long gone extinct."

Li Yao secretly sighed.

The members of Plan Prometheus had run to the periphery of the Flying Star Sector in advance with abundant training techniques and facilities. If they had still been around, they would be a quite important force. Too bad they had perished.

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao asked again, "The apocalypse happened five thousand years ago. Why are there still 'battles of the apocalypse' today?"

Xiong Wuji slowly exhaled. "Apocalypses are not as simple as you think. The apocalypse that assaulted Iron Plateau was not made of meteors, but 'eggs'!"

"Eggs?" Li Yao was baffled.

Xiong Wuji explained, "In the first hundred years after the apocalypse, the survivors also thought that the apocalypse had passed and went out of their shelters to rebuild their homes. At that time, the land was scarred, and countless enormous meteorites were standing like mountains.

"Very soon, the survivors discovered that they were wrong. Very wrong.

"The meteorites were not simple rock and metal, but 'eggs of apocalypse' in which countless terrifying eccentric beasts were growing. Every few years, several such eggs would mature and give birth to tremendous eccentric beasts that ravaged our land!

"To fight against the beasts, qi-trainers established the six tribes of Iron Plateau according to the organizational structure of the six big sects in the past.

"Each of the six tribes was allocated a certain area to defend. A deal was also made that, when the eggs of apocalypse showed signs of maturing in one tribe's territory, all the other tribes would gather and fight it together!"

Li Yao gasped. He did not know that the meteorite mountains he had seen in the desert were eggs yet to mature.

No wonder so many weird runes were carved on them!

Apocalypses. The mysterious apocalypses!

When Li Yao was in the Heaven's Origin Sector, he had taken courses like 'Nine Levels of Apocalypses' and 'Hypotheses on the Origin of Apocalypses'.

The few apocalypses that the Heaven's Origin Sector had witnessed all targeted certain experts.

In the early years of the Star Glory Federation, several experts had experienced apocalypses when they were trying to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage from the Nascent Soul Stage, too.

The form, duration, and outcome of each strike of the apocalypses were different.

There were normal means of attack such as meteor showers or lightning strikes. There were also less normal ways such as mental attacks when the experts were sleeping.

Whatever the pattern was, the apocalypses all targeted individuals. Even their family members next to them had hardly ever been affected.

According to the textbooks, such apocalypses targeting individuals were known to be 'minor apocalypses'.

In comparison, the destructive strikes targeting a planet or even a constellation were called 'major apocalypses'.

Due to the insufficient development of the Heaven's Origin Sector, its knowledge about major apocalypses was quite limited.

Therefore, this was the first time Li Yao had learned the entire process of a major apocalypse.

He had never thought that it would be so powerful that its effect still lingered on after five thousand years!

Li Yao couldn't help but ask, "What kind of monsters could grow inside the eggs of apocalypse for five thousand years? Couldn't you demolish all the meteorite mountains to destroy them?"

Xiong Wuji replied, "The eccentric beasts were not brought here by the apocalypse; they are all the local demon beasts of Iron Plateau.

"The eggs of apocalypse are like mutation factories. They can absorb the cells and flesh from the demon beasts on Iron Plateau and produce even stronger demon beasts!

"You should've discovered that, different from those of other places, the demon beasts on Iron Plateau had more metal constituents in their bodies, haven't you?"

Li Yao nodded his head.

He had been curious as to why the demon beasts of Iron Plateau were so difficult to deal with. Besides, there was a huge amount of metal in their skin and bones, as if their head, teeth, and claws were made of steel.

Xiong Wuji said, "The demon beasts you saw had only mutated slightly. The eccentric beasts growing inside the eggs of apocalypse are ten times more horrendous than them!

"The meteorite mountains are everywhere on Iron Plateau. With our current capability, we cannot blow all of them up. Besides, once we blow them up, countless eccentric beasts might be freed and attack us!

"Therefore, we can only build high walls and train our troops while we progress further on the path of qi-training. When we discover that an egg of apocalypse is about to mature, we prepare everything in advance and deploy our troops to the battlefield of apocalypse to slay the beasts and blow up the intruders!

"In less than one month, another egg of apocalypse in the territory of the Furious Bears Tribe is going to mature.

"Within the next month, all of our resources must be collected to prepare for the battle. We cannot spare any to make deals with you. In one month, after we suppress this wave of attacks, we can talk about deals then. Maybe at that time, we will be able to make an even better deal!"

Chapter 561: Superlative Height

Chapter 561: Superlative Height

A better deal?

Li Yao quickly remembered that Xiong Wuji had asked whether or not he could repair a starship at the beginning of the conversation. He suddenly felt that he was onto something.

However, the most important question for him was not how to get away from Iron Plateau, but how to resolve the wretched Black Spider Death Curse!

Although the curse brought him absolutely no pain, it was not like he should be confined to the peak of the Refinement Stage for the rest of his life.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao said, "Chief Xiong, in that case, it's all the more reason that we should start making a deal now! You are building war machines. I happen to know something about the production of sabers, swords, and crystal bombs, and I can help you build more powerful weapons! When the apocalypse arrives, I will fight side by side with you!"

Xiong Wuji was somewhat bewildered. "You are going to fight against the apocalypse with us?"

Li Yao answered, "Of course. I'm a Cultivator."

Sha Yulan's eyes suddenly shone with a smile of pride on her face.

Li Yao thought for a moment and decided to speak honestly, even though his following request was a bit outrageous. "However, I am now suffering from the Black Spider Death Curse. Although it does no harm to me, my capability has been curbed to the peak of the Refinement Stage.

"By the peak of the Refinement Stage, I mean the 14th level of the Refinement Stage in your understanding. From what I've seen, it is not a very high level on Iron Plateau, and I doubt that I will make much of a contribution with my current capability even if I join the battle of the apocalypse.

"I wonder, can I learn the techniques of the qi-trainers so that I may have a breakthrough?

"Of course, I won't study your techniques for free. In space, it is very normal to exchange knowledge. I can trade for your techniques with the arts of crafting melee weapons, the practical battle skills of Refinement Stage Cultivators, or even the tricks of building one's foundation."

Li Yao's heart was pounding as he finished his proposal.

Qi-trainers' secret arts were their core techniques after all, and it was naturally questionable whether or not they would be willing to share them, if they were not infuriated by the idea in the first place.

Xiong Wuji did not burst into fury or storm out as Li Yao had feared. Instead, he seemed a bit embarrassed and walked to the window to enjoy the scenery of the outside after a cough. Then, he waved his hands at Sha Yulan and gestured for her to explain.

Sha Yulan smiled and said in a low voice, "Brother Li Yao, the training techniques of the qi-trainers are no secrets on Iron Plateau.

"The environment of Iron Plateau is harsh, the land barren. Life is very difficult here. Not only is everyone faced with mutated demon beasts on a daily basis, bloody wars break out every ten years or so when a batch of eggs of apocalypse are mature!

"Therefore, people here prefer muscles to brains, and they do not keep the ways of training to themselves. On the contrary, everybody is encouraged to train themselves so that there will be more warriors when a war comes!

"At the center of every tribe on Iron Plateau is a splendid temple. The few training techniques that they have are all placed inside. Everybody can read them for free. The experts of each tribe will have open courses regularly. Whoever is interested in them can join them easily.

"Look, everybody knows my son Wu Mayan to be a space resident, but he has never been forbidden from undergoing the training ever since his gifts in training were revealed. This place is in serious shortage of qi-trainers. One more warrior means one more hope for victory in the battle against the apocalypse.

"Therefore, in general, it is not a problem for you to study the qi-trainers' techniques, as long as you stand up and protect the ordinary people when they are in danger."

Li Yao couldn't help but interrupt her. "I would not hide behind the ordinary people when they are in danger even if I don't learn the qi-trainers' techniques."

Sha Yulan nodded in a smile and continued. "However, the qi-trainers' techniques are, in fact, not very suitable for the Cultivators who have made certain accomplishments, because their techniques are really… a little bit weak."

Xiong Wuji coughed loudly and looked back at Sha Yulan in discontent.

Sha Yulan pretended that she did not see it and simply continued her explanation. "When I arrived on Iron Plateau, I was also shocked by their unfathomable levels. The 50th level of the Refinement Stage, the 80th level of the Refinement Stage, and all their talks about beating Core Formation Stage Cultivators and thrashing the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. I thought that they were the strongest people in the world.

"But after I stayed for a while longer, I discovered that it was not the case at all.

"It is true that they have made breakthroughs in the Refinement Stage of the traditional sense, but they never made great breakthroughs. If anything, they created a brand-new level above the peak of the Refinement Stage that I would like to call 'superlative height'."

"The superlative height of the Refinement Stage?" Li Yao chewed on the seven words.

Sha Yulan nodded her head. "When they surpass the peak and reach the superlative height, they are no longer bound by the spiritual domain we know about, and they can expand the range of their spiritual gas outburst unlimitedly. They call the improvement of every meter in the diameter of the range of the outburst the advancement of a level."

"What?"

Li Yao was dumbfounded. A meter wider meant a level higher? That sounded rather straightforward.

Xiong Wuji sniffed heavily and glared at the two of them.

"Eh, such a way of classification is indeed easy to understand and implement, even for the old and the kids. It's very good. It's very good," observed Li Yao as he scratched his nose, not entirely meaning what he said.

Sha Yulan smiled. "Brother Li Yao, since you have reached the Building Foundation Stage before, you must have a deep understanding about the source and structure of spiritual energy. If you really enter the 'superlative height of the Refinement Stage', I believe that your levels will definitely soar. Chances are that you may become an 'expert' in the 60th level of the Refinement within the next month."

Li Yao grinned. It was quite a good possibility. But such a way of training did not touch the essentials of spiritual energy and simply aimed to collect more and burst out more. It might have sounded cool when he told other people that he was in the 60th level of the Refinement Stage, but it wasn't really proof that he was a top expert.

"If one can keep advancing into higher levels until they reach the 300th or the 500th level, it is quite possible that they can truly defeat Core Formation Stage Cultivators and be on par with Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

"However, one only has limited time and energy, and the range of the spiritual gas outburst has its own restrictions.

"Qi-trainers have existed for thousands of years. Neither the legendary experts thousands of years ago nor the contemporary ones have ever broken into the 100th level of the Refinement Stage. Even the best of them come to a halt in the 99th level!

"Therefore, it is believed that the maximum range of spiritual gas is a hundred meters. The 100th level of the Refinement Stage is an unbreakable 'Wall of True Qi'.

"The slogan they wrote on the city walls such as 'Go into the 100th level of the Refinement Stage if you are a man!' is merely meant to cheer everybody up," Sha Yulan said.

Xiong Wuji finally couldn't hold it in any longer and bellowed, "I don't believe in the Wall of True Qi. I will definitely break into the 100th level of the Refinement Stage. I will!"

Sha Yulan lowered her voice and said softly, "Big Xiong, I believe you will. But as of now, no qi-trainers have ever entered the 100th level, have they?"

Xiong Wuji snorted again and turned around.

This might have been the reason he was unwilling to explain it to Li Yao himself.

"The spiritual gas outbursts of the top experts of the six tribes of Iron Plateau can reach more than ninety meters, which means that they are above the 90th level of the Refinement Stage.

"According to my observation, their combat ability is approximately between the high level of the Building Foundation Stage and the peak of it, but nowhere near the Core Formation Stage."

Li Yao was somewhat shocked. He asked, "If their best warriors are only equal to the Cultivators in the peak of the

Building Foundation Stage, how have they managed to resist so many demon beasts and the mutated ones resulting from the apocalypse?"

Sha Yulan explained, "Such a methodology of training cannot produce super experts, but they have another technique: teamwork. When an army of qi-trainers is formed, their spiritual gas will be mutually spurred and eventually congregate into an unstoppable and destructive torrent."

Li Yao thought of the iron knights of the Burning Sun Tribe who had gone berserk when their spiritual gas resonated. That must have been such a teamwork technique.

Sha Yulan said, "Do you see it now? The qi-trainers did not have a second path to walk on due to the special circumstances of Iron Plateau. For us the Cultivators, the best we can do is reach the peak of the Building Foundation Stage if we follow their path. Why bother?

"Moreover—

"The qi-trainers have to suffer excruciating pain when they get started. It is basically plucking their veins and bones and rebuilding them. The requirement on the solidness of the soul is very high.

"When I just joined the Furious Bears Tribe, I tried the secrets arts of the qi-trainers once out of curiosity, only to give up in the first test due to the overwhelming pain.

"The natives of Iron Plateau have been living on this land for thousands of years. They've fought bloody battles, and their bodies are extremely strong. Even so, many of them still quit because they cannot bear the pain.

"You should be able to imagine how horrible the process is now."

Li Yao's curiosity was aroused, too. He asked, "I've suffered some pain during my training. I wonder, how painful can the qi-trainers' training be?"

Sha Yulan said solemnly, "It's totally different from what you've experienced. The way that Cultivators of space train ourselves is gentle and progressive in general, nothing like the wild and barbaric style in this place!

"I can tell from your face that you don't buy it. Let me give you an example. Have you ever heard of a strange insect named 'Purple Ring Sword Ant'?"

Li Yao was dazed. "I know a thing or two about them."

"If so, you must know how agonizing the Purple Ring Sword Ants biting is, don't you?

"The training of the qi-trainers' is like more than ten Purple Ring Sword Ants gnawing you at the same time!"

Li Yao's expression suddenly turned extremely weird. "More than ten Purple Ring Sword Ants gnawing me at the same time? That must be… painful!"

Sha Yulan added, "That is only the first test. More breakthroughs mean more pain. In the end, you will feel that a hundred Purple Ring Sword Ants are nibbling on you at the same time!"

Li Yao's face became even weirder. "A hundred? That will be indeed quite painful."

Sha Yulan nodded. "Do you know how terrifying the process is now? There's even more. During the training, you cannot resist the pain with your spiritual energy, and you must keep your head absolutely clear in order to sense the stretch and expansion of your every vein and nerve. If your head gets muddled because of the pain, it is very possible that you will become mentally deranged!

"Such a terrible training method is pure nuts! It can only exist in such a wasteland like Iron Plateau!"

Chapter 562: Wu Mayan

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Seeing that there was weirdness but no fear in Li Yao's face, Sha Yulan raised her voice. "The physical torment is already agonizing enough. However, the qi-trainers' brain will be put under pressure when they are training with the other technique. It is like… inserting a memory piece that does not belong to you into your brain by brute force!

"Unless your soul is extremely solid, you will find it unbearable!

"If you are careless for even one moment, you might suffer mental derangement and go mad!"

Li Yao's eyes bugled even wider, as he recited, "Inserting a memory piece that does not belong to me into my brain?"

Sha Yulan nodded and continued speaking gravely. "A bloody, horrendous, inhuman memory piece!

"The natives of Iron Plateau begin the qi-trainers' training when they were very young. At that time, their veins and nerves are not fully developed and boast endless potential. Their brains are not mature yet, either, so they can take the relatively big blow.

"Just like that, they pick up the technique bit by bit while the difficulty of their training slowly increases. Some of them will be able to grit their teeth through the entire process and become real qi-trainers!

"For adults like you and me, our veins, nerves, and brains have taken full shape, and we must withstand unparalleled pain if we want to change them!

"Even if you make it through all the tests, the best you can do is to reach the 60th or 70th level of the Refinement Stage, which equals to the beginning of the Building Foundation Stage. What's the point?

"Right now, are you still interested in the qi-trainers' techniques?"

Li Yao nodded. "I have to try them no matter what. This might be the only solution to breaking the Black Spider Death Curse for me!"

Xiong Wuji suddenly rose up and walked to Li Yao. He looked down at him and said solemnly, "When the six tribes of Iron Plateau were established, our ancestors vowed together that no techniques should be kept secret and that everyone's wisdom should be gathered to make best use of the techniques!

"Whoever is willing to learn and ready to endure the pain, we will try our best to teach them!

"If one more person learns the techniques, we will have one more soldier, and we will be more likely to survive the apocalypse!

"Therefore, I can show you the techniques of the qi-trainers without caring about your identity. However, I fear that you will cry and beg to quit during the very first test!

"Listen to me carefully before we start.

"If you don't get in touch with the qi-trainers' techniques, I may consider you to be a civilian. When the apocalypse arrives, you will be allowed to hide in Furious Bears City.

"However, if you persist and learn the qi-trainers' techniques, I will regard you as a qi-trainer!

"When the battle of apocalypse begins, every qi-trainer must be on the frontline. They will be the first to charge, to kill, and to be killed.

"If you hesitate or even desert at that time, I will execute you in person!"

Li Yao did not give in to his intimidating aura, which felt like a giant mountain. He looked at his eyes, which were brimming with passion, and replied, one word after another, "I am not a qi-trainer; I'm a Cultivator. I will let you know what a real Cultivator looks like!"

After Xiong Wuji and Sha Yulan left the ward, Li Yao went into the deep sleep state again.

Before Sha Yulan left, she had smeared a lot of ointment on his body; it was made from the healing herbs the Furious Bears Tribe had gradually discovered during its thousands of years of struggle. She then rubbed and made the ointment penetrate into his flesh.

Therefore, the recovery of this deep sleep was much more efficient than the previous ones.

After the noon, when Li Yao woke up again, the poison of the Emperor Sand Scorpion had been eliminated, and he had regained the prowess of the peak of the Refinement Stage.

Xiong Wuji and Sha Yulan did not show up again. But Wu Mayan, Sha Yulan's only son, had come to Li Yao excitedly.

According to Sha Yulan, her son knew that he had come from space and that space residents were not respected in this place.

Sha Yulan had saved countless lives in the Furious Bears Tribe with her excellent medical skills. The qi-trainers always considered themselves to be gallant and chivalrous, and they were too ashamed to be mean to the widow and her son. On the contrary, the natives tried to make their lives easier.

However, when they were chitchatting about the past, it was natural that they lambasted the Cultivators who fled to space and scorned them as cowardly rats.

Wu Mayan, as a proud young man growing in such an environment, found the humiliation completely unbearable. He planned to wash the dirt from the space residents' name with real actions.

He had entered the temple of Furious Bears City to receive the qi-trainers' training when he was only five years old.

While many local kids of Iron Plateau admitted their failure and abandoned the throbbing training, the dogged young man from space gritted his teeth through it and increased the difficulty of the tests time and time again.

Wu Mayan was only thirteen years old at present, but he had reached the 12th level of the Refinement Stage.

In the history of the Furious Bears Tribe, and even all six tribes of Iron Plateau, it was an unbelievably shocking speed.

In the Heaven's Origin Sector, if a young man could advance into the high level of the Refinement Stage, he would be a super genius among super geniuses.

Even in the Flying Star Sector, where the spiritual energy was denser, it was rare to see a thirteen-year-old who had awoke their spiritual root, let alone one on his way to the peak of the Refinement Stage.

Therefore, when Xiong Wuji, the leader of the Furious Bears Tribe and the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, fostered the young man from space as his son, there was not much objection within his tribe. One of the most important reasons was that Wu Mayan had proved his capability!

Such an identity and experience led to Wu Mayan's obstinacy and aggressiveness. He was always asking for other people's trouble as a little gangster in Furious Bears City. He also had many conflicts with the teenagers from the other tribes nearby, and his name had spread far and wide.

However, in front of Li Yao, who had saved his life, he couldn't have acted more nicely and seemed just like any other normal thirteen-year-old kid would.

He had suffered serious wounds last night, too. However, his body was quite strong, and he had basically recovered after a night of rest. When he heard that Li Yao was also recovering, he had hurried over to visit him.

"Uncle, you are so awesome. You've almost recovered from the brutal sting of an Emperor Sand Scorpion after such a short period of time!

"Here. Uncle, I said that I was going to bring you delicious food. This is the best roasted beef in Furious Bears City. When I told your story to the shopkeeper, he admired your bravery very much and decided to offer it for free. I totally never robbed him. Doesn't it look yummy?

"Uncle, my mom said that you lost part of your memories. But you can understand us, can't you? My name is Wu Mayan. What's your name, uncle?

"Ah, I almost forgot. You don't remember much right now. But calling you uncle all the time seems inappropriate. How about this. I will make a new name for you. You can call yourself that until you remember who you are!

"Since you are awesome enough to take down two Emperor Sand Scorpions in a row, you might as well be called 'Sand Scorpion'!

"In the Furious Bears Tribe, there's a tradition that a new father will go out and hunt down a demon beast when his child is born. The child will be nicknamed after his father's trophy. The stronger the demon beast is, the more awesome the child's nickname will be. Haha!

"Emperor Sand Scorpions are not the top-tier demon beasts, but they can dig holes and release poison to kill their enemy. Therefore, they can be very difficult to cope with. You are just like them. Although your capability is not high, you are equally tough!

"Uncle, after you enjoy the food, I'll bring you to tour around Furious Bears City. My mother said that I'd better show you what the world looks like. Your brain might be stimulated, and you might remember more things.

"Right. Father Xiong also asked me to bring to the weapon factory to pick several blades of your liking. He said that you were going to play your part in the battle of the apocalypse to come!"

Wu Mayan waved his hands nonstop, as he talked enthusiastically.

It was the story that Li Yao, Xiong Wuji, and Sha Yulan had agreed upon.

After all, Sha Yulan was a non-battle-type Cultivator and a doctor, but Li Yao was an out-and-out warrior.

It had taken the Furious Bears Tribe a long time to accept Sha Yulan. Some of the traditionalists were still having doubts about her even to this day.

It was not hard to imagine what the tribe's attitude toward Li Yao, a battle-type Cultivator of unknown backgrounds, would be.

Besides, when the battle against the apocalypse began, the other five tribes would come and reinforce the Furious Bears Tribe.

According to Xiong Wuji, since Sha Yulan joined the Furious Bears Tribe, the six tribes of Iron Plateau had gradually divided into two different attitudes toward the space residents.

Three tribes slowly accepted Sha Yulan; many of their tribesmen had come to ask for her treatment.

But the other three tribes, including the Burning Sun Tribe, were as pigheaded as before and unwilling to reach out to the Cultivator.

The two parties had been in a bad relationship ever since the Furious Bears Tribe accepted Sha Yulan.

Therefore, it would be bad if Li Yao revealed his identity as a Cultivator right now.

In comparison, if Li Yao pretended that his memories were partly lost because of poison, there wouldn't be a problem for the time being now that Xiong Wuji and Sha Yulan had helped cover up everything.

One month later, when the battle of apocalypse passed, they could figure out how to reveal his true identity to everyone.

Thanks to his keen senses, Li Yao felt that the two of them were still concealing something. He was not aware what the 'bigger deal' that Xiong Wuji mentioned was, either.

However, he felt no malevolence from them, so he simply agreed to the proposal.

As for Wu Mayan's words about Xiong Wuji asking him to help Li Yao pick several suitable weapons for him, it had actually been Li Yao's own idea.

Favors must be returned. Since the Furious Bears Tribe was opening the qi-trainers' techniques to him, it was only reasonable that he offered something in return. Only by communicating with each other could the overall development of the civilization be accelerated.

He was planning to study the typical weapons of the qi-trainers and see if he could modify them so that the odds of success in the battle of the apocalypse one month later could be increased.

I should probably walk around under the name of 'Sand Scorpion' in the month to come! Li Yao thought to himself.

He followed Wu Mayan to visit Furious Bears City.

Wu Mayan's single tank had been seriously damaged during the hunting. Therefore, they went out on foot.

The first impression Li Yao had of Furious Bears City was a city of steel wreathed in grey smoke.

On the two sides of the broad street were buildings made of iron structures. Enormous crimson bricks were exposed to the air without any decoration, bringing a strong air of roughness and wildness.

The passers-by on the street were mostly high and mighty. Even the women were all more than 1.8 meters tall, with shining, bulging muscles.

Passing through one of the streets, they entered the downtown district, which was brimming with skyscrapers. Giant iron rails were established in midair, on which black and clumsy True Qi trains were rushing.

The locomotives of the True Qi trains had more than ten chimneys, which were roaring earsplittingly and spurting black smoke and white fog, dragging the body of the train that was dozens of meters long forward. They were not as fast as crystal trains, but they were equally impressive.

"Get on the train, Uncle Sand Scorpion. I'll show you the way to the weapon factory!"

Chapter 563: True Qi Container

Chapter 563: True Qi Container

Five thousand years ago, before the apocalypse, what was currently Furious Bears City had been an enormous metropolis. Furious Bears City had been established on the remains of the metropolis, and the remains were the most important resources for the citizens.

Therefore, Furious Bears City was divided into separate districts, which were built on the most valuable debris and enclosed by a high city wall at the edge.

The distance between different districts was usually very long. Many routes on the ground were blocked by debris. Even the routes that were not blocked were still rough and inconvenient.

Therefore, the True Qi trains in midair became the best vehicles available. Most ordinary people would ride such trains to commute from their homes to their schools or factories.

Wu Mayan had just boarded on one of the trains with Li Yao, when a conductor came to check his ticket. The young man held his head high and announced, "I'm a qi-trainer!"

The conductor immediately changed his attitude and said respectfully, "Please proceed to the special carriage for qi-trainers at the front. This is—"

Wu Mayan said, "This is a friend of mine. He is also a qi-trainer. However, he was wounded recently during a hunting trip. I will provide his spiritual gas later."

Led by the conductor, the two of them passed through two carriages. The passengers on board, seeing that they were moving forward, realized that they were both qi-trainers and all showed admiration and reverence, as if they were heroes and big shots. Li Yao felt slightly awkward being stared at in such a way.

Compared to other carriages, the special carriage for trainers was neither luxurious nor exquisite. The only difference was that there was a big iron shelf on which many black metal balls were placed. Each ball was slightly larger than Li Yao's hand, with holes and valves on the surface. They reminded Li Yao of the super-compressed crystal reactors on crystal suits, except that they were much more unpolished and primitive.

Wu Mayan took two metal balls from the shelf in a natural way. He stopped briefly and took another one. Then, he guided Li Yao to two empty seats and sat down.

Li Yao looked around. There were several qi-trainers in a few other booths. They had two or three metal balls in front of them, too.

Just now, Wu Mayan had said to the conductor that he was going to provide Li Yao's spiritual gas. He started to wonder what that meant.

"Huuuu!"

The train roared. A huge amount of white fog spurted out from not only the locomotive in the lead but also underneath each carriage. All the carriages were enshrouded in grey mist. The train marched forward and was gradually lifted to almost twenty meters off the ground.

Li Yao greatly enjoyed the continuously changing scenery outside the window. He found that five steel towers almost a hundred meters high were standing not far ahead. There was a giant helical iron tube in the middle of each high tower that extended deep underground.

More than ten beams of smoke spurted out of the top of the high towers. Like raging dragons, the iron tubes drilled underground while producing earsplitting noises nonstop.

Wu Mayan followed Li Yao's gaze and explained with a smile, "Uncle Sand Scorpion, they are the 'True Qi Water Dragons' of Furious Bears City that are used to pump the underground water!

"Furious Bears City has many advantages. There are many shallow crystal mines that are readily exploitable. One of the biggest shortcomings of the city is the lack of water sources!

"It was not until the True Qi Water Dragons were established that the clean and delicious water from hundreds of meters underground could be retrieved. The shortage of water in the city was resolved once and for all. After that, the population of Furious Bears City gradually increased, and it finally became one of the biggest cities on Iron Plateau!"

Li Yao stared at the towers with great interest.

When he was in the Heaven's Origin Sector and in the space of the Flying Star Sector, he had seen a lot of drilling magical equipment driven by the spiritual energy from crystals.

However, this was the first time he had seen large magical equipment driven by the spiritual gas from human beings that could dig hundreds of meters into the underground!

The wisdom of mankind awed him. Flames of civilization were like stubborn grass that could always penetrate through the stones on them and embrace the sunlight however unfavorable the environment was!

While he was secretly complimenting the Iron Plateau natives, a few loudly noises broke out in the sky.

Li Yao craned his head out of the window, only to discover that a few grey giant sacks were slowly passing by with lead grey cabins hanging beneath.

Two wide wings extended out of the cabins. Four propellers were installed to the back of the wings and the cabins. They were spinning fast, driven by the spiritual gas and pushing the sacks to fly slowly, leaving white traces in the air that gradually dispersed.

"These are True Qi airships. They are the vehicles used to transport people from Furious Bears City to the towns of the tribe.

"The pilots of such True Qi airships are all expert qi-trainers. Their manipulation of spiritual gas is extremely delicate.

"They can lower the density of their spiritual gas with special techniques to the extent that it weighs even less than air!

"After pouring such 'light spiritual gas' into giant airbags, they make the airbags float. By altering their directions with propellers, they can take us to wherever we want!

"Such True Qi magical equipment was only invented three hundred years ago. With the True Qi airships, Furious Bears City is better linked to the secondary towns.

"However, there are many flying demon beasts in the sky that often attack the True Qi airships. So, many guards are stationed on each True Qi airship and are known as the 'Flying Bears Army'. It is one of the most coveted professions in the Furious Bears Tribe. I used to dream of joining the Flying Bears Army in the past, too!" Wu Mayan said excitedly, holding his head high.

While talking, he picked up one of the metal balls. He then opened a valve on the top of the ball and pressed his hands against the ball. His ten fingers aimed at ten holes, and his palm aimed at the other six. The sixteen holes on the metal ball were all covered by him.

The young man's eyes bulged and suddenly grunted. "Hu!"

His spiritual gas surged out as he fully demonstrated the capability of the 12th level of the Refinement Stage!

Li Yao sensed that the spiritual gas around his companion flooded along his arms and hands into the hollow metal ball nonstop!

The metal ball hissed feebly.

Above the metal ball was a pressure meter crafted out of bronze on which there was a red pointer. As Wu Mayan's spiritual gas poured into the ball, the red pointer staggered and moved clockwise.

There was a circle of numbers from zero to a hundred on the pressure meter.

The pointer came to a halt when it reached sixty. However hard Wu Mayan tried, and even when his face was completely red, the pointer simply shivered and would not move any further.

Wu Mayan released his hands unwillingly, before he closed the valve on the ball and mumbled, "Another middle-level True Qi ball!"

He took a moment of rest and warmed up his hands and legs. He then grasped the second metal ball and took a long breath, saying to himself, "I'm going to make a breakthrough over the 65% mark this time!"

Seeing Li Yao's confusion, Wu Mayan chuckled and explained, "Uncle Sand Scorpion, these are 'True Qi containers', the most important magical equipment for the natives of Iron Plateau!

"As you can see, the civilization of Iron Plateau is one based on spiritual gas. The vehicles in the sky and on the ground, the battles against the demon beasts and the apocalypse, and daily life such as pumping, tilling, and constructing all required spiritual gas.

"However, only the qi-trainers can produce spiritual gas. Even if ordinary people become strong experts in martial arts, there still won't be spiritual gas inside their body. As a result, True Qi magical equipment is supposed to be unavailable for them.

"However, long, long ago, a great qi-trainer invented this magical equipment, the True Qi container, which can store a lot of highly-compressed spiritual gas like a solid pressure cooker!

"Look, we can store our spiritual gas in the True Qi containers and hand them over to ordinary people, who will use them as power sources. In such a way, they will be able to use simple True Qi magical equipment, won't they?"

Wu Mayan smiled. "Therefore, it is not a privilege of ours that we don't need to buy tickets when we take the train. We buy our tickets by paying with spiritual gas instead of money.

"If a qi-trainer is to take a True Qi train, they will have to fill at least one low-level True Qi container.

"Right. True Qi containers are divided into three levels, namely high, middle, and low, depending on how much spiritual gas you transmit into it. The more spiritual gas your pour inside, the higher the pressure will be, and the more difficult it will be to pour more. Right now, I'm in the 12th level of the Refinement Stage, and I can only fill 60% of a True Qi container. I can't get any further than that.

"The more spiritual gas a True Qi container includes, the stronger the power it will release. The best ones can be applied to the more advanced True Qi magical equipment.

"Without sufficient pressure, the spiritual gas that the True Qi container releases will be weak and can only be applied to civil magical equipment. Such containers are low-level True Qi balls.

"These are the rules of the six tribes of Iron Plateau. Ordinary people till the land, weave the clothes, and earn their income by working hard in factories.

"Qi-trainers are supported by ordinary people. We are fortunate to enjoy delicious food and various resources before them. We are not bothered by daily trifles and can dedicate ourselves to training and battles.

"In return for our benefits, we have two duties. The first is to slay the demon beasts and fight against the apocalypse, and the second is to fill True Qi containers continuously, which will serve as the power source of the whole tribe!"

Li Yao nodded. The environment of Iron Plateau was even harsher than that of the Heaven's Origin Sector. Bigger threats were always looming in this place. Ordinary people and qi-trainers had to try their best and fulfill their respective responsibilities in order to keep the torch of civilization burning.

"Our train tickets are supposed to be paid by filling two low-level True Qi containers. But, generally speaking, most qi-trainers will try to fill more True Qi containers whenever they can afford to. We might be exhausted because of the overwork, but our tribe can be greater with each additional True Qi container!"

At this moment, the True Qi train rushed past a neighborhood of skyscrapers. Illuminated by the magnificent sunset, the forest of steel was glittering with brilliant gold brightness, bringing an air of splendidness.

Chapter 564: Sonic Sword, Wolf Fang!

Chapter 564: Sonic Sword, Wolf Fang!

Wu Mayan watched the scenery with Li Yao quietly. A moment later, he remarked, "Beautiful, isn't it? But on Iron Plateau, only six cities boast such splendid views.

"The six cities are established on six extremely vast areas of debris, where many resources and techniques from before the apocalypse were left. They are also protected by high city walls, and the demon beasts cannot break into them.

"However, the towns and villages out of the six major cities are often attacked by demon beasts. When an egg of apocalypse explodes after becoming ripe, the creatures inside can even destroy an entire town!

"Therefore, the development level of the towns and villages vary. Some of them are hundreds of years behind Furious Bears City.

"It can't be helped. Not all people have the privilege of living in Furious Bears City because of the insufficient resources here. Many farms and mines are scattered across the desert and must also be attended to.

"These places are among the luckier ones. Furious Bears City often sends a lot of qi-trainers to these places to protect the ordinary people.

"On the other side of Iron Plateau, there exists a large godforsaken area known as Dark Continent."

Li Yao raised his eyebrow high to show his interest.

Wu Mayan explained, "Dark Continent is the half planet that was the first to take the blow of the asteroids. It is not hard to guess that the place bled most. Chances are that all the shelters were demolished in an instant.

"For thousands of years, the six tribes of Iron Plateau have been struggling, growing, and expanding on this half of the planet. But due to the limitation of resources and technology, we cannot afford to establish towns in the Dark Continent.

"We've sent many an exploration team to the Dark Continent. They reported that it was a desolate world that had been completely destroyed by the apocalypse. There were no cities or towns. Demon beasts were the masters of the place.

"According to the exploration teams, there were human beings in the Dark Continent, too. However, they had absolutely no rules or moral standards. Theirs was a cruel society where the strong feasted upon the weak. Many survivors had even become real barbarians, no different from animals who ate raw meat and drank blood.

"The biggest wish of the qi-trainers is to grow stronger and set foot in the Dark Continent one day to save our compatriots!"

The young man's face was brimming with determination.

While they were talking, the True Qi train slowed down and reached a new stop.

The intense scent of metal that filled the air belied where they were; it was the factory zone.

"We're here. Let's go!"

As the apocalypse was drawing near, all the factories in Furious Bears City were running at the maximum efficiency to manufacture more war machines.

The weapon factory was overloaded. The spiritual gas was threatening to explode, and coolants were splashing all over the floor. Yelling and collisions echoed nonstop. The air was sweltering to the point that it almost felt like one was burning.

Li Yao observed the qi-trainers' magical equipment factory as a professional refiner.

Prototypes of assembly lines could be found in the factory, albeit very primitive and in lack of automation. There were still a lot of workers and blacksmiths doing their hard jobs with sweat dripping off their heads at their posts.

The technology of metal refinement on Iron Plateau was much more underdeveloped than the outside world. Most Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures were barely usable because they were mixed with too many impurities.

Although Li Yao was a brilliant star on the Skyhill Sword Seminar, he was not an omnipotent man. The creation of modern magical equipment included too many details. The enhancement of metals alone involved tens of thousands of techniques. It was impossible for Li Yao to have learned all of them.

With a rough calculation, Li Yao realized that, given the underdevelopment of Iron Plateau, it was impossible to produce the components necessary for the maintenance of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit within several months.

That was leaving the crystal reactor aside. The crystal reactor required dozens of special alloys and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. The facilities were unlikely to produce any of them.

Li Yao sighed and put the maintenance of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit to the back of his mind for a while. He focused his attention on studying the magical equipment in the factory.

As Xiong Wuji's foster son and one of the most distinguished young geniuses in Furious Bears City, Wu Mayan was quite familiar with the manager of the weapon factory.

A fat qi-trainer soon brought the two of them to a warehouse that belonged to the weapon factory.

The manager smiled and said, "Boss Xiong has told us that this brother killed two Emperor Sand Scorpions and rescued you. What a tough man! Boss Xiong said that this brother is free to choose whatever blades and magical equipment he wants and that he will be paying for them later!"

Li Yao was never courteous when it came to magical equipment. He kept his mouth shut, his eyes glittering, while he climbed up and down the big iron shelves inside the warehouse and examined the qi-trainers' magical equipment.

Shua!

He took a black iron sword, which was more than two meters long, from a shelf and touched it, greatly fascinated.

Although it was a sword, it was broad, thick, and weighed more than sixty kilograms. The edge of the sword was not sharp. When it was being wielded, it was like a giant bat and could easily smash the enemy to death if it failed to slash them. Apparently, it was a good weapon to deal with demon beasts that had solid shells.

There were no decorations on the body of the sword, except for the dozens of small holes in rows.

"This is a jet sonic heavy sword. Everybody prefers to call it a 'sonic sword'. It is the favorite weapon for all the qi-trainers of Furious Bears City. Other than that, there are also sonic sabers, sonic bats, and sonic hammers, but they are all designed with the same mechanism."

Wu Mayan explained, "Uncle Sand Scorpion, look, there's a circle of inlet holes on the grip of the sword that lead to the center of the sword. Enhanced by the rune arrays there, the spiritual gas transmitted into the holes will spurt out from one side of the sword and thus accelerate it! As long as you are above the 17th level of the Refinement Stage, it will be more than easy to wield the sword at sonic speed."

Li Yao's eyes suddenly shone. He sensed the sword with his spiritual threads and immediately understood the mechanism of the sword after a few seconds.

He walked to a corner of the warehouse, raised the heavy sword high, and slashed down after pouring his spiritual gas into the body of the sword.

Hiss—

Enhanced by the rune arrays inside the sword, his spiritual gas spurted out in eight streams from the holes on the two sides of the blade, as if a whale spurting water!

The edge of the sword was further accelerated by the enormous force resulting from the spurting spiritual gas. It broke the sonic barrier and surpassed the speed of sound instantly!

Shua!

Two sharp waves spread out from the air in Li Yao's front with an earsplitting sound, as if the air had been wounded by Li Yao's attack and was moaning.

Maximizing the damage by increasing the speed of the blades with a jetting mechanism?

Such True Qi weapons are simple in structure, easy to maintain, and do not require many Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. They are very suitable for the Refinement Stage Cultivators. Indeed, not bad!

Li Yao complimented the inventions secretly.

The Refinement Stage was merely the most basic phase in Cultivation both in the Flying Star Sector and in the Heaven's Origin Sector. It was the starting point of a long journey.

When all Cultivators were devoted to training in the hope of building the foundation or even form the core, they sometimes overlooked the exploration and research of spiritual gas, which was considered to be the lowest form of spiritual energy and not worth studying at all.

But on Iron Plateau, since the qi-trainers were unable to enter the Building Foundation Stage, they had explored the mysteries of spiritual gas far and wide. After thousands of years of development, a brilliant system based on spiritual gas had been created!

The qi-trainers' expertise on spiritual gas was far more sophisticated than that of other places in many aspects!

Li Yao put aside the sonic sword and picked a crystal bomb.

The crystal bomb looked like a bucket. It was half the length of Li Yao's arm. The warhead was even larger than his fist, with sharp thorns occupying its surface.

Wu Mayan explained, "This is a long-grip grenade, but we prefer to call it 'Wolf Fang'!

"The fighting styles of the six tribes on Iron Plateau are not entirely the same. The Furious Bears Tribe likes close-distance combat best.

"When the qi-trainers of the Furious Bears Tribe are about to be engaged in a battle, it is a common practice that we carry a lot of Wolf Fangs with us. If we run into demon beasts, we bombard them first with dozens of grenades and blow the heck out of them before we charge at them, waving our sonic swords and sabers, and slay them all until their blood congregates into a river. That's the most gratifying thing ever!"

Li Yao was deep in thought. No wonder the magical equipment he saw most on the shelves most consisted of swords, sabers, and grenades, and there were barely any firearms.

Since the two kinds of magical equipment were the fundamental weapons for the qi-trainers of the Furious Bears Tribe, Li Yao planned to start with them and see whether or not he could make any improvements.

Based on the knowledge Li Yao had learned from Huangpu Shiyi, Li Yao was almost certain that the 'Wolf Fang' grenades could be upgraded in various ways.

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and was drawing the structural designs of the new version of the grenades in his brain when Wu Mayan suddenly exclaimed in surprise and ecstasy, "What? The Fierce Storm Assault Team and the Iron Bears Detonation Team are running a competitive test with their new magical equipment? Uncle Ma, please show us the way!"

Wu Mayan snatched Li Yao's arm and said excitedly, "Uncle Scorpion, we've chosen a good day to come. The two most awesome combat squads of the Furious Bears Tribe are having a competitive test with their new magical equipment. Let's hurry and check it out!"

Behind the warehouse was a spacious test field. Two teams, both made up of almost twenty qi-trainers, were preparing for the test to come unhurriedly.

Speaking from the standard of Iron Plateau, the qi-trainers of the team on the left were all short. None of them were over two meters tall. More than half of them were females and were relatively slender.

The qi-trainers on the right, on the other hand, were all muscular giants who were around 2.5 meters tall. Their shoulders were as broad and thick as planks, and each of them weighed well over two hundred kilograms. They were the living embodiment of 'furious bears'.

The test had not begun yet. Neither side had summoned their spiritual gas. Therefore, Li Yao couldn't tell what levels they were in.

However, both the lean qi-trainers on the left and the brawny giants on the right gave Li Yao tremendous pressure.

What a strong smell of blood. They are real experts!

Li Yao was greatly interested.

When several pieces of large magical equipment, which looked really weird, were trolleyed to the qi-trainers, Li Yao became even more interested.

Chapter 565: Clash of Thunder and Lightning!

Chapter 565: Clash of Thunder and Lightning!

The qi-trainers of both teams were putting on their armor; the two teams' armor were designed completely differently.

The armor for the thin qi-trainers on the left was smaller and lighter. All the joints were exposed to the air, and the plates were connected by soft tubes, with a lot of the True Qi containers that Li Yao had seen previously on the train added to them.

Attached to everyone's back were pairs of foldable iron wings, which were full of spiritual gas tubes. At the ends of the wings were small holes from which white steam were popping out.

The qi-trainers jumped and warmed up their bodies. As their spiritual gas surged out, their wings opened and closed, and when their wings stretched to the limits, a lot of spiritual gas spurted out and pushed them up more than ten meters into the sky, where they would hover for around five seconds.

When the qi-trainers stopped in midair, the iron wings continued folding and changing the angle of the spurting spiritual gas, allowing them to perform small-scale movements nonstop. They were altering their postures and dashing in the air, showcasing their incredible agility.

Li Yao's eyes suddenly shone. Such jet armor was no less swift than crystal suits!

Wu Mayan explained very proudly, "This is the Fierce Storm Assault Team, an elite squad made of thin, soft-boned qi-trainers. The armor they are wearing is special jet armor. They have been training in the air nimbly since they were very young. With sufficient spiritual gas, they can fight in midair for an entire hour!"

The members of the Fierce Storm Assault Team were all using relatively narrow double swords that were also installed with a jet acceleration system. As their spiritual energy surged out, the swords glittered and produced deafening sonic explosions, as if supersonic armed shuttles were passing by. Their aura was truly dominating.

The muscular giants on the right, in the meantime, had put on thick, heavy black iron armor.

Their armor seemed to be made of several enormous shields and couldn't have looked more magnificent. They were already taller than other people without the armors. But in the armor, they were all more than three meters tall and were literally moving iron towers!

Dozens of True Qi containers were attached to each black iron armor, too. Facilitated by the spiritual gas, the gears between plates continued spinning, which was the only reason they could turn their joints freely and move forward in a set of armor weighing hundreds of kilograms.

The black iron armor focused more on the arms. Spiritual gas tubes were entangled among the layered plates like thick man-made muscle fibers. When their spiritual gas surged out, their iron fists collided into each other brutally, releasing cacophonous noises.

Countless hooks were placed on the rough surface of the armor, where almost a hundred long-grip grenades were hanging. Through the chains driven by spiritual gas, they could be sent into the qi-trainers' hands very easily.

One of the muscular men picked up a 'Wolf Fang' and weighed it in his hand. He then suddenly extended his arm and threw the grenade forward. Dozens of air currents spurted out of the gaps on the arms. Pushed by them, the grenade was tossed thousands of meters away!

Li Yao's eyes were keen enough to see that a row of targets was placed at the end of the test field, thousands of meters away.

The targets were not large in the first place. Observed from thousands of meters away, they were as insignificant as beans. But the grenade hit the bull's eye precisely!

The shell of the grenade was riddled with sharp thorns, which allowed it to pierce deep into the target. In the blink of an eye, the grenade exploded and blew the target into pieces!

"Hooo!"

The muscular man was very satisfied. He bellowed, waving his arm that was even thicker than Li Yao's waist.

Wu Mayan was in awe as he said, "This is the Iron Bears Detonation Team, another elite squad of the Furious Bears Tribe! They are all giants with infinite strength and experts in throwing grenades. When a battle is caught in a stalemate and we cannot make any progress, or when we are faced with super strong demon beasts, the Iron Bears Detonation Team always leads the charge!

"Equipped with the most powerful iron shield armor of the tribe, with hundreds of Wolf Fangs, they can crush any demon beasts when they rush close and bombard them!

"Fierce Storm and Iron Bears are the strongest combat units of the Furious Bears Tribe!

"Every young man in the tribe dreams of being admitted by one of the two elite teams one day!

"I used to dream of becoming a guard on the airships. But when I learned of the existence of such elite squads, I made up my mind that I would join one of them and maybe become a captain one day!

"My foster father Xiong Wuji was once the captain of the Iron Bears Detonation Team. Although he was neither tall nor strong, he was extremely crazy during battles and ran in the front with absolutely no fear of death. He even detonated the grenades right on his armor several times! That was why he was called 'the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau'.

"But I'm even leaner than him, and I doubt that I will ever be taller than 1.8 meters in my life. It seems more likely that I will join the Fierce Wind Assault Team!"

While talking, the two elite squads had finished preparing their equipment. The competitive test soon began!

The rule of the test was very simple. There was a circle in the middle of the spacious test field. In the center of the circle was a red flag. The two sides would sprint at the circle at the same time. Whichever side snatched the red flag and brought it back to the 'home camp' of their side would be the winner.

Swoosh!

The Fierce Storm Assault Team was best known for their speed and agility. Hardly had the test begun when several qi-trainers jumped to the sky and sprinted forward, flapping the iron wings on their jet armor.

Their remaining teammates, while rushing on the ground, were also accelerating with their jet armor in a zigzag pattern that looked like white lightning.

By the time their opponents had gotten started, many of them had already rushed into the circle.

Members of the Iron Bears Detonation Team were all wearing heavy armor. Their speed was low, but they had their own tricks, too.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Dozens of Wolf Fangs darted at the members of the Fierce Storm Assault Team quickly and brutally as if they had eyes!

Some of the members of the Fierce Storm Assault Team dodged the grenades with their jet armor, while some others waved their sonic swords and unleashed high-pressure spiritual gas to blow up the grenades before they approached.

But the Iron Bears Detonation Team indeed excelled at the usage of Wolf Fangs. Some of the grenades hit each other in midair and altered each other's direction, and some of them exploded in advance; the resulting blast not only changed the trajectory of the other Wolf Fangs nearby but also improved their speed!

Several Wolf Fangs broke the defense of the members of the Fierce Storm Assault Team and exploded right beside them.

The team members grunted and fell out of the sky with sharp thorns stabbed into their bodies.

Li Yao's eyes almost bulged out. He did not expect that they would be using real grenades during a test!

The Wolf Fangs were indeed powerful. The broken shrapnel penetrated through the spiritual shields and armor of the members of the Fierce Storm Assault Team. Although they were not seriously wounded, they were still bleeding fast because of the broken shells.

Wu Mayan saw Li Yao's surprise and explained matter-of-factly, "This is typical for the daily training of the Furious Bears Tribe. It can be quite dangerous, but how can you expect to fight the ferocious demon beasts if you cannot stand such training?

"Not just the two elite squads, even the everyday training of the common qi-trainers is extremely painful and perilous. Many people give it up because they've had enough of it every day. Some people grit their teeth through it, only to become mentally deranged and to be forced to quit.

"My mom said that you were going to do the qi-trainer's training tomorrow. You must be very careful about it. It's not a joke!"

While they were talking, the two torrents of steel crashed into each other!

The Fierce Storm Assault Team was swift and nimble like a lightning, and the Iron Bears Detonation Team was heavy and strong like rumbling thunder.

The competition between the lightning and the thunder was heated from the moment it began.

Countless Wolf Fangs exploded brutally. Dozens of sonic swords ripped apart the air simultaneously!

Li Yao greatly enjoyed their performance.

Speaking of the combat ability of the Refinement Stage, the qi-trainers on Iron Plateau had apparently achieved the best of it.

If a hundred qi-trainers of Iron Plateau and a hundred Refinement Stage Cultivators from space were engaged in a match, Li Yao would definitely bet on the former!

While observing the summit confrontation of two elite teams, Li Yao contemplated on the modification plans of sonic swords and Wolf Fangs.

He was dwelling in his own world, when Wu Mayan suddenly exclaimed in shock and he discovered that a black object was coming right at his face!

As it turned out, one grenade was bashed away by a member of the Fierce Storm Assault Team and darted precisely at his head!

BOOM!

Before he realized what was going on, the Wolf Fang had exploded. Hundreds of broken pieces formed a hurricane of metals and swept over!

Li Yao's pupils shrank to the size of needle tips. He entered the super perceptive state instantly and increased his brain cell activity to 500%!

In the super perceptive state, time seemed to have been slowed down to one fifth of its original speed, and the air turned extremely thick. Every broken piece almost came to a halt.

Li Yao could clearly see the trajectory of each piece and calculate their new routes when they crashed into each other, before he figured out the best dodging plan at present.

He moved his left leg and planned to slide backwards three meters, only to run into Wu Mayan heavily.

The young man had noticed the incoming Wolf Fang earlier and tried to jump close and drag him away even though it was equally dangerous for him!

This little guy!

Li Yao was somewhat moved and found it hilarious. The perfect route of dodging had been blocked by his young friend!

He gritted his teeth and further increased his brain cell activity. His eyes immediately became bloodshot, several of his cerebral vessels exploded, and he was soaked in sweat!

When the shrapnel reached them, he slightly moved toward the left and grabbed Wu Mayan's sleeve. In the end, both of them fell to the ground!

The two dodging movements happened really fast. In other people's eyes, he was merely shocked and fell to the ground in fear.

But in Li Yao's precise calculation, it was the safest dodging plan available. His shoulder and right arm would be hit by two broken pieces, but Wu Mayan would be unhurt.

However, just as he fell to the ground hurriedly, a white figure dashed close, with a sword in hand that turned into hundreds of phantom-like shadows and blew away all the broken pieces!

Chapter 566: Temple of Techniques

Chapter 566: Temple of Techniques

The white figure stopped; it was a tall woman in silver jet armor. She looked down at Li Yao with a slight smile of mockery.

The woman was almost 1.9 meters tall, but her four limbs were evenly distributed and brought absolutely no feeling of clumsiness. On the contrary, she gave Li Yao the impression that she was as fast as a swallow. It was quite odd.

Her nose was high, and her eyes were deep. Some of her hair was gold, enshrouding her in an exotic vibe.

Yet, she was eyeing Li Yao with despise and contempt, as if she was scorning his cowardice.

Li Yao did not realize the reason until a moment later.

The dodging movement he had performed just now made it look like he was so scared by the Wolf Fang that he had simply fallen to the ground.

Also, he had brought his brain cell activity to the maximum instantly a moment ago. As a result, several of his cerebral vessels had exploded. His face was pale, his hands were shivering, and he was soaked in sweat. It was exactly what a shocked man looked like.

Qi-trainers valued courage and valiance more than anything else. Given his chicken-like appearance, no wonder he was gazed at in such a way.

Li Yao was unhappy. In the haste just now, he had forgotten that he was merely at the peak of the Refinement Stage and exploited his brain too much.

If he were at the high level of the Building Foundation Stage, he could've perfectly repaired a few broken cerebral vessels within several seconds.

But right now, he only had the capability of the peak of the Refinement Stage. He had to extend his spiritual threads into his brain and connect the broken veins neatly and slowly. It could take quite a few minutes for him to fix the veins and disperse the extravasated blood.

During the several minutes, there was no way that he could stand up. He would look as overwhelmed as he was right now.

The tall and strong woman stared at him for a while and then turned to Wu Mayan. The two of them seemed to be quite familiar with each other. The woman smiled and said, "Wu Mayan, I'm told that you ran into two Emperor Sand Scorpions when you went out hunting secretly all by yourself last night. Thankfully, someone saved you. The man put down the two demon beasts with merely half a shank. You talked as if he was the most marvelous expert in the world. I don't think you were referring to him, were you?"

Wu Mayan was a bit lost for words, too. He did not expect that 'Uncle Sand Scorpion', whose face color had remained unchanged when confronting two Emperor Sand Scorpions simultaneously, would fall to the ground in fear just because of a grenade, with a face paler than paper and a pair of hands that were continuously shuddering.

The young man stammered and failed to come up with any response.

The tall woman grinned. Her canine teeth were thick and strong like those from an animal.

Somebody in the Iron Bears Detonation Team noticed the accident, too. A muscular, dark-skinned man strode forward and, seeing that both of them were alright, were greatly relieved. He spoke loudly, "Wu Mayan, young boy, you've come to watch our practice again? Why didn't you keep your distance?"

The muscular man was dazed at Li Yao who was still sitting and sweating on the ground, too, as if he had never been in such a situation where a guy was horrified. He scratched his head and looked at the tall woman in bewilderment.

"Alright. All good here. Let's continue!"

The tall woman lost all interest in Li Yao and gestured for the muscular man to return to the test field.

Wu Mayan was almost crying. He said in a low voice, "Uncle Sand Scorpion, what happened to you? You were like a God of War when you fought the two Emperor Sand Scorpions yesterday. How come you were so intimidated by a small grenade? Have you never touched crystal bombs before?"

Li Yao rolled his eyes in his mind.

Wu Mayan sighed in hopelessness. "Why were you moving just now? If you stayed where you were, I would've knocked you out of the way!

"It's great now. Both of us fell to the ground. How shameful!

"The woman wearing white jet armor is Xiong Zhenzhen, captain of the Fierce Storm Assault Team and an expert at the 79th level of the Refinement Stage! The black iron tower that followed her is Shi Meng. He is the captain of the Iron Bears Detonation Team and an expert at the 81st level of the Refinement Stage!

"I'm so screwed. They've both witnessed my disgraceful action just now. How can I apply for the two elite teams in the future?"

Li Yao showed no expression, as he was focusing on the mending of his cerebral vessels.

He was never a man who cared about how other people viewed him. Despise from the two experts and Wu Mayan's complaints hardly bothered him.

But he was thinking about the formidability of the jet armors and the shield armors.

Such two kind of armors should be the prototypes of crystal suits. Other than the lack of crystal processors to help the wearer during a fight, they are even more sophisticated than many traditional crystal suits in the usage and enhancement of spiritual gas. They are definitely the best equipment to maximize the combat ability of a Refinement Stage Cultivator!

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is not available at present after all. Maybe I should craft a set of such armor for my temporary use?

Li Yao sat cross-legged on the ground, his hands holding his chin, while he was meditated and completely ignored the grumbling young man next to him.

…

After the test, Li Yao returned to the hospital with several sonic swords and a few Wolf Fangs of various models.

Sha Yulan had prepared a quiet ward for him so that he could do his research without being disturbed.

The light in the ward was on for an entire night.

Next day in the morning, Wu Mayan came to find him again. They went to the central area of Furious Bears City, where the temple of the qi-trainers' techniques was located, on another True Qi train.

What a splendid building! Li Yao craned his neck.

The temple was a black, majestic building, hundreds of meters high. Thousands of years of wind and rain had cast countless giant boa-like cracks on the surface of the temple, which only managed to remain standing with the help of the rebars and iron chains.

In front of the temple was a large square, in which lot of lifts made of gears and hinges that led into the ground were installed.

Judging from the sign before the temple, there were still a large number of buildings underground.

Outside the temple, a bronze statue almost twenty meters tall was standing silently. It was a strong man in beast hide fighting a large mantis-type demon beast barehandedly.

Although a great many details of the statue were lost, one could still doubtlessly sense a strong feeling of bravery and determination from it.

A rusted sign was embedded on the pedestal of the statue. It seemed to have been burnt and was riddled with holes, but a line of words could still be distinguished.

'Training Camp No. 341 of the Flying Star Coalition Government'

According to Wu Mayan, the temple had once been a camp of the coalition government of the six major sects where the new soldiers were trained before the apocalypse. Many advanced training facilities had been installed previously.

The general training of qi-trainers could be done anywhere. However, the enlightenment in the beginning and quick improvement could only be achieved in the special chambers of the temple.

Before they entered the temple, they could already hear miserable screams from the depths of the building and see many tall, brawny man staggering feebly out of the building and leaving in depression and shame.

Wu Mayan said in a low voice, "Since the apocalypse is about to take place, many ordinary people have come to the temple to have another test to determine whether or not they have the potential to be a qi-trainer. However, most of them can't even pass the first test because of the suffering and have to give up!

"The six tribes of Iron Plateau worship the strong and deride the weak. If anybody cries because they are bitten by a demon beast during a hunting trip, other people will definitely laugh and mock them.

"But it's a tradition that none who cannot bear the training of qi-trainers and quit are to be regarded as cowards or ridiculed!

"The reason is that such training is significantly more painful than the biting of a demon beast. It's only natural that normal people cannot bear it!

"Uncle Sand Scorpion, don't be too hard on yourself if you find it difficult to persist. It's nothing to be ashamed of, alright?"

Li Yao did not give any response. He walked upwards along the broad steps made of black stones together Wu Mayan.

A giant board was hanging above of the temple's entrance on which three aggressive and bloody words were written.

'ALL FOR SURVIVAL!'

Thin black smoke filled the temple, making it troublesome to see what was going on clearly.

Li Yao could vaguely tell that hundreds of children less than ten years old were sitting in metal buckets on the left side of the temple with only their heads exposed to the air.

The metal buckets seemed to have been filled with special medical liquid. Tormented by the secret medicine, all the children were in great pain. Some of them were even sobbing.

There was resentfulness on Wu Mayan's face, too, as he remarked, "This is the process to broaden the veins and bones of the children and to lay foundations for their training later. Only by strengthening their organs from the age three to five can they bear the pain of the expansion of their veins later and store the superfluous spiritual gas without exploding!

"I assume that you must've never been cleansed with such secret medicines. If not, the training of spiritual gas will be even more insufferable for you! Let me repeat myself. Don't be too hard on yourself. Just give up if you can't withstand it, otherwise you might be killed!"

Xiong Wuji had already informed the deacons of the temple in advance. Therefore, Wu Mayan directly led him to an advanced training chamber on the third floor below the ground.

It was said that the training chamber was designed for experts above the 40th level of the Refinement Stage.

The chamber seemed no different than the training chambers Li Yao had seen in the outside world. Barbells, iron sticks, and punching targets were in every corner of the chamber.

All the training equipment was made of black iron and seriously oxidized, filling the air with an intense smell of rust.

Li Yao had only just walked into the chamber when was he deeply attracted to the dozens of large colorful pictures hanging on the wall. They were the pictures of the veins and nerves inside the human body, but different from those Li Yao had seen in the outside world, there were hundreds of brand new veins as thin as hairs in the middle of the Twelve Essential Veins and Eight Subsidiary Veins!

It was not very clear in the general picture, but one could clearly see that the tiny veins were all over the body like capillary vessels!

Chapter 567: A Thousand Bridge Veins!

Chapter 567: A Thousand Bridge Veins!

Fu Dong, the manager of the training chamber, was a brawny man over 2.2 meters tall. His two arms had been torn away by demon beasts, and shocking scars could be seen on his chest. He used two giant artificial arms on his bare shoulders and controlled the metal hands with his spiritual threads. When the artificial arms were extended fully, they could be well over two meters long.

Wu Mayan explained to Li Yao in a low voice that Manager Fu Dong was the toughest mentor in the temple and that he knew the guy's teaching too well. The manager was truly a cruel and merciless man.

"This training chamber of mine is reserved for the real tough men. Boss Xiong told me last night that you are an out-and-out one. That's why I decided to keep the training chamber for you today."

Fu Dong waved his iron arms and picked up multiple training tools, which seemed more suitable for interrogation, while he eyed Li Yao coldly and said, "If you are not a hard man, just give up right now. There are a lot of other training champers in the floors above. Let's not waste each other's time!"

While talking, he tossed a pile of metal shackles Li Yao.

"The veins of a human can be divided into the Twelve Essential Veins and Eight Subsidiary Veins. For ordinary fighters, they mainly focus their attention on training the Twelve Essential Veins. When someone enters the Refinement Stage, they start training their Eight Subsidiary Veins."

Fu Dong's right arm was lengthened by the spurting spiritual gas. He pointed at the pictures of veins on the wall and explained, "The Twelve Essential Veins and Eight Subsidiary Veins constitute a circulation where the spiritual gas will loop and trigger the potential in one's cells.

"However, in the middle of the Twelve Essential Veins and Eight Subsidiary Veins, there are a lot of capillary vessels as thin as a hair!

"Cultivators discovered the capillary vessels long ago. But before the apocalypse, no one had attached much importance to the training of capillary vessels, because such training could prove excruciating, and the capillary vessels only had a limited capacity as they could not be expanded too much. It was more rational to consider how to build the foundation and form the core than to devote much time and energy to the training of capillary vessels!

"However, since the apocalypse, we qi-trainers have focused on the utilization of spiritual gas!

"Although each capillary vessel is as insignificant as a hair and can only store a tiny amount of spiritual gas, the total amount when all the capillary vessels are made use of is never to be underestimated. The Twelve Essential Veins and Eight Subsidiary Veins combined are only twenty veins, but there are thousands of capillary vessels inside your body. If the width and hardness of all the capillary vessels are increased by ten times, how much more spiritual gas will you be able to store inside your body?

"This was the principle of training for the qi-trainers in the beginning. After the apocalypse, the land was wreathed in darkness, the demon beasts dominated the planets, and we lost all our heritages. We had absolutely no other options except to concentrate on the training of capillary vessels!

"The trial turned out to be successful, but in a different way from what we imagined. As our ancestors continued training and broadening their capillary vessels, they discovered eventually that the function of the capillary vessels was to connect the Twelve Essential Veins and Eight Subsidiary Veins!

"Before, it was commonly believed that the Twelve Essential Veins and Eight Subsidiary Veins were solely connected by the Two Bridge Veins. That was how the theory of becoming an expert of martial arts by breaking through the Two Bridge Veins originated.

"But right now, as long as the capillary vessels are expanded and strengthened, the Twelve Essential Veins and Eight Subsidiary Veins can better communicate, too!

"When the capillary vessels get stronger, the Twelve Essential Veins and Eight Subsidiary Veins will be improved, too!

"In short, the purpose of this training is to transform all the capillary vessels inside your body into new 'Bridge Veins' so that there will be a hundred or even ten thousand Bridge Veins in you!

"Breaking through two Bridge Veins is enough to make one an expert martial artist. It is not hard to imagine how overwhelmingly strong one will be if they can make ten thousand Bridge Veins in their body!

"This is our path of training!

"Look at the pictures on the wall carefully, especially the distribution of all the capillary vessels. Boss Xiong said that you'd done some training sessions before and you were in the 14th level of the Refinement Stage. If so, remembering the pictures is not going to be a difficult task for you, is it?"

Li Yao shook his head and studied the pictures wholeheartedly.

Transforming the capillary vessels into the Bridge Veins and breaking through all of them? That sounded rather violent!

Five minutes later, Fu Dong picked up the training tools that looked like shackles and put them on Li Yao with Wu Mayan's help.

The set of training tools was made of two handcuffs and two leg cuffs. All the cuffs were black, heavy, and clumsy. There was no telling what they were made of, but each of them weighed more than two hundred and fifty kilograms. Pressure meters, which were full of gears and valves and brought a feeling of messiness and crudeness, had been welded on top of them.

Li Yao stretched out his arms and legs. Although he was carrying a thousand kilograms of weight, it was not a big deal for him, who had become used to loaded training, and his punching was as fast as previously.

Seeing that the trainee took the weight for nothing, Fu Dong was slightly surprised. However, he didn't comment on it. "These tools are known as 'True Qi Locks'. They are the best magical equipment to broaden your capillary vessels! As long as they are activated, the hollow syringes in the interior side of the shackles will pierce into your body shallowly and inject hundreds of streams of compressed spiritual gas into your capillary vessels!

"They will help the expansion of your capillary vessels, and the spiritual gas inside your body will be triggered to launch counterattacks at the intruding spiritual gas!

"Both the expansion of capillary vessels and the war between the local and foreign spiritual gas are extremely painful and unbearable for most people.

"Qi-trainers of the Furious Bears Tribe all start their training when they were little kids. They widened their capillary vessels bit by bit, sometimes only working on several of them in a day. Gradually after days and years of hard work, the more dogged and talented ones would make it in the end and become real qi-trainers!

"Boss Xiong said that you want to participate in the battle against the apocalypse next month and hope to improve your capability as quickly as possible. I don't know whether or not you've received training with True Qi Locks before, but either way, one month is too short!"

Fu Dong mumbled something to himself and brought over almost twenty True Qi containers together with Wu Mayan.

Li Yao noticed that the readings on the pressure meters of all the True Qi containers were above 95%, which indicated that these were all high-level True Qi containers that could be used for real battles!

The True Qi Locks had several holes on them through which the True Qi containers could be docked. However, the airtightness of the gadgets was apparently not very good, as white steam was spurting out nonstop. A moment later, Li Yao was already enveloped in fog.

"There's a pressure setting device on the True Qi Locks. Look, you can adjust the triggering level of the spiritual gas by spinning the gear this way.

"The standard pressure equals to the intensity of a middle-level True Qi container releasing all the spiritual gas evenly in ten minutes.

"I suggest you train at one third of the standard pressure in the beginning. If it is too much for you, you can change it to one fifth.

"When your body is used to the True Qi Locks, you can try to increase the pressure to twice the standard pressure, five times the standard pressure, or even ten times the standard pressure. This set of True Qi Locks is prepared for the experts and supports thirty times the standard pressure at best!

"But remember, don't increase the pressure recklessly. Such a training process is like filling air into your body. You must keep your head in the clearest state and guide the spiritual gas into your veins consciously. If your head turns dizzy because of the pain, the spiritual gas will mess around inside your body. If you are lucky, you might be mentally deranged. If you are unlucky, one of your limbs might explode on the spot!"

Fu Dong reminded him of the risks seriously.

Wu Mayan interjected, "If you can hold back the pain, you can train your physical strength with the equipment on the ground. The training effect will be better if you do them at the same time!"

"Watch your mouth!"

Fu Dong glared at him and said angrily, "That is a very advanced training method that is only suitable for the real experts. Do you think everybody else awoke their spiritual roots when they were ten just like you?"

Li Yao nodded his head, showing that he had fully understood the risk.

Fu Dong extended one of his fingers and said, "For the last time, give me a hint if you can't stand it any longer. I'm going to open the valve now!"

Li Yao lifted his hands and watched him tranquilly.

In the room next to the training chamber, Xiong Wuji and Sha Yulan were observing Li Yao through a one-way mirror.

Beside Sha Yulan was a large box in which various medical drugs were stored.

She glanced at Xiong Wuji and asked, "I'm here to because someone might need to be saved. What are you here for?"

Xiong Wuji replied casually, his hands behind his back, "Observation. One can only reveal their true personality when they are in anguish. Our plan concerns the destiny of Iron Plateau. I cannot trust a shy and weak man without knowing exactly what he is.

"I don't care how much pain he can resist; I only want to see how he resists the pain."

Sha Yulan suddenly tremored. She said softly, "Big Xiong, have you really made up your mind? Once the plan is initiated, it's very likely that you will turn from the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau and the well-respected hero into the biggest traitor of Iron Plateau and a rat that everybody spits on!"

Xiong Wuji was silent for a long time, before he opened his mouth again. "Maybe I haven't made up my mind yet. But now that fate has brought such a guy to me, I can only launch the plan no matter what!"

Sha Yulan asked, "Are you not scared of disdain and even death?"

Xiong Wuji took a long breath. He looked at Li Yao, deep in thought, while he replied briefly, "All for survival."

Sha Yulan smiled bitterly. She lowered her head and said, "Then, let our names rot together!"

Their hands, one large and the other small, and one dark and the other fair, held each other tightly.

On the other side of the one-way mirror, Fu Dong opened the valve on the True Qi Locks brutally.

Earsplitting shrieks burst out from the joints of the True Qi Locks. Spiritual gas spurted more than ten meters away like white arrows!

Spiritual gas less than one third the standard pressure had been blown into Li Yao's body!

Chapter 568: Does It Not Hurt?

Chapter 568: Does It Not Hurt?

Wu Mayan and Fu Dong held their breath as they observed Li Yao's reaction nervously.

For many tall and muscular men in the Furious Bears Tribe, they would already be crying and begging for mercy when one fifth the standard pressure was imposed on them.

There was nothing but indifference on Li Yao's face. He blinked his eyes and looked back peacefully.

Wu Mayan looked at Fu Dong in bewilderment. He then stood on his toes so that he could check the pressure meter on Li Yao's shackles and hear the shrieking spiritual gas from the joints of the tools. He remarked confusedly, "There's nothing wrong. It is one third the standard pressure. What's going on? Uncle Sand Scorpion. Do you not feel anything?"

Li Yao shook his head.

No, that was not entirely true. He felt like ten thousand feathers were brushing his body and making him itch. They were like dragonflies stopping by the surface of a pond and had dispersed before he had enjoyed enough.

Fu Dong made up his mind and span the gear again to change the standard pressure!

Li Yao frowned. He finally sensed clearly that feeble currents were flooding into his body from his wrists and ankles and roaming among his internal organs and his twenty major veins.

However, the air currents were too weak. He felt that somebody was gently tickling him. He was unfulfilled, and the eagerness deep in his blood was aroused.

"Still nothing? Does it not hurt?"

Wu Mayan was dazed. He remembered what had happened to him when he was faced with the standard pressure for the first time. He had felt that he was being skinned and almost jumped up and crashed into the ceiling!

Fu Dong was somewhat surprised, too. "Breathing and heartbeat are normal. Eyes are clear, too. You must've received training with True Qi Locks before, right?"

Li Yao shook his head emotionlessly, showing that he had forgotten everything.

Wu Mayan's eyes suddenly shone. He exclaimed, "That must be the case! Uncle Sand Scorpion is probably an expert of one of the other tribes and has received training with True Qi Locks before. That's why you can hold back the pain!"

Is this pain?

Li Yao did not think so at all.

In Ou Yezi's memory fragments, to practice the ancient arts of refining, he had ruthlessly tortured himself countless times.

The Thousand Fingers Soft Bones Technique alone, which was for the purpose of improving the nimbleness of fingers, required breaking one's fingers repetitively, shattering them and restoring them with secret medicines.

Some of the other training techniques even demanded that he put his hand in boiling medical drugs until they were cooked, and they were boiled again and again after they recovered. Only in such a way could the freshest skin and flesh be created, and the sensation of the hands be maximized.

His Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining technique had also been improved many a time when he was practicing with Ding Lingdang. Ding Lingdang had never showed any mercy when she was in a fight, and it was often terribly painful for him.

To further improve the speed and sensation of the hands, he had even conducted the cruelest training with the Purple Ring Sword Ants!

They would often say that fingers were connected to the heart, but for him, the pain of dozens of Purple Ring Sword Ants biting him simultaneously was something that he could only vaguely feel.

He had thought that such pain was not thrilling enough and fed virulent poison to the Purple Ring Sword Ants in order to increase the pain.

The more pain he was in, the faster he would improve!

The standard pressure felt like stinging from a grass tip for Li Yao. It was absolutely not worth mentioning and felt more like itching than aching.

He did not like itching.

Therefore, he simply extended his hand and span the gear hard. The switch was set to five times the standard pressure immediately.

Hiss—

Wu Mayan and Fu Dong both gasped, but there had been no time for them to stop him. They were beaming with amazement.

Li Yao grunted. He felt that the spiritual gas was crowding into his body like scorching magma and finally caused some pain for him.

He had tasted pain of exactly the same degree every time he was warming up before a training session. The familiar feeling made his lips curl, and he grinned in satisfaction.

Now we're talking.

Li Yao squinted, as if he was enjoying a delicious meal. He continued adjusting the valve and increased the pressure of the spiritual gas to six times, seven times, eight times…

In the observation room next door, Xiong Wuji and Sha Yulan were both dumbfounded. Their faces were almost kissing the glass, and they failed to come up with any remarks for a long time.

Wu Mayan and Fu Dong did not know Li Yao's background. They thought that he had received True Qi Locks training before, and therefore, could still accept everything they saw, however shocked they were.

But Xiong Wuji and Sha Yulan knew clearly that Li Yao was a Cultivator from space. How could he endure such pain on his first try?

Seeing that Li Yao had set the valve to more than ten times the standard pressure, Xiong Wuji was greatly stunned. He glanced at Sha Yulan in confusion and asked, "Didn't you say that the training methods of the Cultivators in space are all very mild and orthodox? But I seriously doubt his training was 'mild and orthodox'. His face seems to suggest that he is quite enjoying the suffering!"

Sha Yulan was as befuddled as him. She mumbled, "I don't understand. I've never seen such a weird Cultivator before!"

Hu—

Li Yao finally stopped at thirteen times the standard pressure. He took a long breath and exhaled in content. A mouthful of white steam dashed out like an arrow that was as swift as the spiritual gas escaping from the joints of the magical equipment!

This was not his limits yet. But since this was only his first try, he would like to take it slowly and progressively.

The muscles all over Li Yao's body protruded out. His thick veins appeared like raging blue dragons. Yet, his countenance was as indifferent as before. Except for the occasional twitching of his eyes, there were absolutely no signs that he was in excruciating pain!

Li Yao reflected on the pictures of capillary vessels that had been etched to his brain just now wholeheartedly. He then observed his body with his soul while his spiritual threads extended and guided the spiritual gas charging into his body precisely toward where the capillary vessels were located.

Increasing the capacity of spiritual gas by building a thousand Bridge Veins!

Wu Mayan was truly shocked.

He was also able to withstand fifteen times the standard pressure now. However, beyond ten times the standard pressure, the agony that felt like ten thousand ants biting his heart was still too much for him. Even if he could concentrate his attention, he would still be grimacing and screaming during his training, his face twisted, and would in no way be nearly as tranquil as Li Yao was right now.

The little monster, who had always considered himself to be a resolute man, shouted in disbelief, "Uncle Sand Scorpion, do you not know what pain is?"

Li Yao was not bothered by him, and he was focused on the thousands of streams of rampant spiritual gas inside his body. He felt that he still hadn't enjoyed enough yet, and therefore simply walked to the corner of the chamber where the training equipment was placed.

He had his own daily work-out plan and did not require the supervision from other people.

He warmed up himself at first with 800-kg barbells casually before he ran at the highest speed for three minutes. When Li Yao felt that his body had been woken up, he started the real training.

Swoosh!

His left arm turned into a grey shadow and thrashed forward like an iron whip, immediately raising the sound of air being ripped apart. A small swirl appeared right in front of the first, before two fulminations echoed on the target, the first being the explosion of the swirl and the second resulting from the actual collision!

Pa! Pa!

The gap between the two noises was very brief, as if two serial Wolf Fangs had been detonated simultaneously. The earsplitting noises resonated inside the spacious training chamber and did not die down for a long time.

My capillary vessels have been filled with spiritual gas. When I punch, I feel that a tide is surging out together with my fist. The feeling is quite marvelous!

Li Yao grinned. He recalled the agonizing days in the outdated training field of the Crimson Nimbus Second High School where he had been sweating and training with the special vest under the guidance of Mister Sun Biao.

The insufferable days in the past were more vivid than ever today. He felt that he was drinking a cup of cold beer that became the most gratifying stream when it entered his stomach!

One punch. One punch. Another punch.

Carrying more than a thousand kilograms of weight, with untamable spiritual gas savaging his body, Li Yao started his daily training.

After each punch, his muscle fibers and capillary vessels were torn apart, but they were quickly mended by the spiritual energy the very next moment. The feeling of getting stronger gave him ultimate pleasure.

Without him knowing anything, the iron target in front of him had been left with two deep traces of fists.

Li Yao took a long breath and finally stopped. His fists had no protection, so they were now soaked in blood and sweat, which were dripping to the ground steadily.

He raised his head to check the time. An hour had passed while he had summoned his spiritual energy and trained crazily.

Wu Mayan had watched him to train for an entire hour with his shocked expression unchanged. He stuttered, "Un—Uncle Sand Scorpion. Are you done with your training?"

Brutal man! Absolutely a super brutal man!

During the expansion of veins with spiritual gas, the pain would grow exponentially as the training process proceeded.

The training sessions of the expansion of veins for normal qi-trainers were usually around half an hour. They would have to take a brief rest between each session. He did not expect that Uncle Sand Scorpion would be so tough that he could persist for an entire hour!

Li Yao shook his head. He waved his hands and said, "The gas has run out."

"What?"

Wu Mayan and Fu Dong were both flabbergasted. "Eight high-level True Qi containers have been used up in only one hour?"

…

Li Yao spent five hours in the training chamber. Except for the half hour when he consumed food crazily, he devoted all his time to training at the highest intensity and sabotaged the barbells and iron blocks, which weighed hundreds of kilograms, to the point that they sounded like were about to break apart.

Eventually, he used up 42 high-level True Qi containers and increased the pressure to seventeen times the standard pressure!

Even Fu Dong, the manager of the training chamber who had always thought that he had seen everything, was extremely shocked, much less Wu Mayan. The young man had completely forgotten what happened in the test field yesterday and almost started worshipping Li Yao as a god!

When the training was done, Li Yao did not return to the hospital with Wu Mayan, because Fu Dong told him that someone else was waiting for him on the fourteenth floor below ground.

It was Xiong Wuji.

The deeper he went, the fewer traces of man-made architecture could be found. The minus fourteenth floor was essentially a natural underground cave, with mysterious and dark pathways leading to everywhere. Giant iron doors were embedded to the crude walls of the cave.

Clang! Clang!

Countless ferocious animals seemed to have been locked in the depths of the cave. They were bashing the heavy and thick iron doors with all their might.

Roars resembling those of primordial beasts leaked out from the gaps under the iron doors and raged in the pathways, making the ears of everyone who heard them sore.

"This is the most special training chamber in the temple of techniques. Only those with distinguished performances in the first test are qualified to enter this place!"

The pathway was almost blocked by the high and mighty Xiong Wuji, who said coldly, "It is even safe to say that this is where the qi-trainers do their real training!"

Chapter 569: Titan Warriors

Chapter 569: Titan Warriors

"The training of souls is different from the expansion of veins; it is much more dangerous. You will not necessarily be able to pass it even though your soul is very solid.

"Do you hear the screams in the secret cells below? They are all the experts of the Furious Bears Tribe. They used to be determined, unwavering tough men, but they all became mentally deranged because of the blast to their souls. They have completely lost themselves and have become animals who know nothing but slaughtering. Therefore, they can only be locked in this place to wait for their eternal peace.

"I did not plan to bring you to the real training place of the qi-trainers in the beginning, but your performance earlier was widely beyond my imagination.

"With everything reaching this point, I have no other alternatives other than to wager on you.

"It's all up to you now. Do you want to go in or not?"

Xiong Wuji's philosophical words raised a lot of questions in Li Yao's mind.

The creepy screams from the depths of the cave almost terrified him, too.

However, expanding the veins with True Qi Locks could only increase the body's spiritual gas capacity. He wouldn't be able to fully control the overflowing spiritual gas when it was unleashed.

Li Yao vaguely sensed that the technique of spiritual gas resonation that Yan Chihuo had performed had something to do with the so-called 'real training' deep underground.

Staring at Xiong Wuji without backing off, Li Yao replied briefly, "I would like to have a try."

Xiong Wuji nodded and pushed open a rusted iron door next to him.

The iron gate was almost one meter thick and looked strong enough to be installed in a vault. The interior side of the gate was riddled with interconnecting scratch marks, as if somebody had mauled the iron frenziedly.

"After you go inside, just follow your heart and try to enter a meditative state. If you are really connected to the 'Titan Warriors', you will be able to enter the 'Titan Illusionary Land'. Do note that the Titan Illusionary Land can be very tempting. It's very easy to dwell in it and fail to return to yourself. You must not forget who you are, or you will be just like the prisoners below."

After finishing the speech, Xiong Wuji locked the door from the outside.

Li Yao observed his surroundings carefully. Behind the iron door was a crude cave whose walls were full of bumps and hollows. With a closer look, Li Yao discovered that they were all traces of fists deep into the rocks. There was no telling how many people had savaged the cave, but the rocks had been pressed so hard that they looked metallic.

In the middle of the cave were countless bizarre-shaped stones that were emanating glamorous colors. They looked the same as those Li Yao had seen on the meteorite mountains.

Li Yao immediately realized something. These are the scraps of the meteorite mountains. They are pieces of the apocalypse!

Some of the meteorites were carved with messy runes; some had shabby pictures, which looked like the wall paining of the primitive barbarians, carved into them. In the pictures, many mighty giants were fighting against ferocious beasts.

Several other meteorites looked like fossils, in which biological remains that had lithified were stored. They were all larger than Li Yao's head and had extended countless tentacles spread out in various directions like octopuses.

LUM DUM! LUM DUM!

While Li Yao was gazing at the fossils, a powerful heartbeat echoed inside his brain.

Li Yao was suddenly alarmed.

He had realized what the objects sealed inside the meteorites were.

They were hearts. Judging from their scale, they were the fossils of hearts that belonged to giants more than three meters tall!

Did all the runes, paint, and heart fossils come to Iron Plateau together with the meteorites during the apocalypse? What are the Titan Warriors that Xiong Wuji mentioned just now?

As the heartbeat inside his brain became faster and faster, the runes and paintings on the meteorites seemed to turn into flowing lines that were spinning slowly deep inside his eyes.

Li Yao vaguely heard roars that were as loud as raging thunder. Thousands of noises congregated into a magnificent battlefield!

Li Yao stared at the largest heart fossil. He narrowed his eyes and entered a meditative state accompanied by the sounds of a beating heart and roaring.

A bottomless hole seemed to appear below his feet. He was falling, falling, and falling, until he heard an earsplitting explosion and found himself in a whole new world!

This was a bleak and vast world, and it seemed to be a planet in the primitive phase. Far ahead were erupting volcanoes whose magma had almost consumed the entire sky.

On the ragged land, tens of thousands of giants were grouping. Their average height was around four meters, and their shoulders were twice as broad as those of human beings. Their heads were the shape of triangles, their chins protruding significantly. Two sharp tusks jutted out like ivories.

Their skin was crimson, as if on fire, on which glamorous flowery stripes were growing. They did not look like tattoos but more like they had been there at birth. The flowery stripes turned into different forms and shades as their masters waved their hands and legs.

All the giants were wearing simple beast hide, some of which was covered with the bones or shells of eccentric beasts.

Contrary to the rest of their primitive getup, they were holding very delicate metal blades that resembled axes and sabers in their hands!

Li Yao felt like he was having a heart attack, but then he suddenly discovered that he had become one of the red giants, too, and that he was charging forward under the command of his leader.

"Ughhhh!"

The red giants were apparently poor at speech. They could only utter several simple syllables, but the glamorous stripes that were continuously changing on their bodies were a unique form of communication for them.

Although Li Yao couldn't understand their language, he could sense the meaning expressed by the roars and the changing stripes.

From beginning to the end, all the crazy roars and the bouncing stripes had but one meaning.

"Let's fight! Let's fight! Let's fight!"

In the continuous mountains ahead of them, countless hollows appeared, making the mountains look like honeycombs. From the hollows crawled out terrifying beasts almost five meters tall that seemed to be hybrids of spiders and mantises. Several bigger holes even produced enormous beasts more than ten meters tall. It was like an exposition of gargantuan creatures.

The ferocious beasts out of one's worst nightmares had in fact triggered the burning fighting will of the red giants, who charged forward without any hesitation. With the sabers flying and the axes dancing, they constituted a steel torrent and savagely crushed over everything in their way!

"Hoo!"

In the beginning, Li Yao still managed to keep his head clear. But as the battle became heated and the red giants beside him continued roaring, unfathomable waves were released from their brains, which bolstered Li Yao's fighting will without him knowing.

He had planned to find a place to hide and observe the battle of the two unknown species as an outsider.

However, when he slashed open the shell of a strange beast and green, thick body fluid splashed all over his body, he suddenly felt that the blood of the beast was even more thrilling than the hardest liquor, which motivated his soaring fighting will. He was devoted to the battle, forgetting where or who he was!

The battle lasted an entire day. It was not until two blood-red moons appeared in the sky that Li Yao sat cross-legged on the battlefield, where blood was flowing like rivers, and gradually came back to himself.

But the scenes of slaughtering had been etched into his brain.

Looking around, he found that there were barely any red giants left now. The lose-lose battle had almost destroyed the two unknown species at the same time.

But the surviving giants couldn't have been more excited. Now and then, they would stab their saber into their enemy's dead body and raise it high, while they danced and roared in triumph.

For some reason, Li Yao felt that his throat was itching. He craved to yell, shout, and even continue fighting in the uncanny world.

The thought suddenly alarmed him. He shuddered, and after a blink of dazzling light, he had returned to the dark cave in reality.

However, he was soaked in sweat and stinky, black mucus. He felt extremely comfortable as if he had just gone through a gratifying fierce battle.

Li Yao took a long breath in relief. He was going to stand up, when he suddenly felt that his leg hurt. He lowered his head and discovered that a shallow wound had appeared on the outer side of his right leg.

Li Yao remembered clearly that, in his illusion, a giant insect had slashed him in exactly the same place.

What is going—

Li Yao was deeply confused. He pulled open the iron door while he pondered on his experience.

He could tell that the red giants in the illusion had been triggering special waves from their brains when they roared in the same way that the qi-trainers' technique of spiritual gas resonation functioned.

Is this the source of the qi-trainers' technique? Did they find the heritage of an unknown species during their struggle against the apocalypse and learn the technique of spiritual gas resonation from them?

The illusions felt similar to Ou Yezi's memory pieces, but they seemed to be more advanced than the memory pieces!

My body has undergone high-intensity training without me knowing while I was fighting in the illusions. Even the wounds that I suffered in the illusions have been fed back to the real world!

But why is such a technique hidden in a destructive apocalypse?

Three minutes later, Xiong Wuji opened the iron gate. Although he was still expressionless, there was astonishment deep inside his eyes.

"You saw it."

Not a question, but a statement. "I'm getting more and more curious now. Who are you exactly? You are definitely not a common Cultivator, at least not one of those Cultivators Sha Yulan has described.

"Normal qi-trainers can only stay in the 'Titan Illusionary Land' for half an hour. But you stayed in it for three hours on your first try, and you are still rational without being mentally deranged."

Li Yao asked in a hurry, "Are Titan Warriors those red giants with skin like fire? What species do they belong to, and why would their heritage appear in an apocalypse?"

Xiong Wuji said, "Titan Warriors are the name we made for the mysterious foreign species because of their large size. Judging from the size of their hearts, they are at least twice as tall as us. Also, they are born with bloodthirst and ruthlessness. In all the illusions, they are always doing the same thing: fighting! Therefore, we've been addressing them as Titan Warriors!"

Chapter 570: Heritage of Fighting Will!

Chapter 570: Heritage of Fighting Will!

"As for why their heritage appeared in an apocalypse, I'd like to know the answer to the question, too."

An indescribable expression surfaced on Xiong Wuji's face, as he mumbled, "For thousands of years, we only knew that, although the eggs of apocalypse often bring about tide-like eccentric beasts over time, we could also receive a huge amount of heritage from the pieces of the meteorites after we defeated them.

"We loath the outbreak of the apocalypse because countless towns and villages will be ruined.

"But we also look forward to the disaster because we will receive more knowledge and be even stronger after each outbreak as long as we are still alive!

"We turned into the Titan Warriors in the Titan Illusionary Land. We learned advanced battle skills after endless combat. Moreover, we learned the techniques to fully release one's fighting will, to control spiritual energy with one's fighting will, and even to reverberate with other people's fighting will!"

It was not until then that Li Yao learned that the so-called spiritual gas resonation was formally known as 'Reverberation of Fighting Will'.

Fighting will was a very hollow concept. One's fighting will might soar in a battle, but fighting will alone was never enough to win the battle however elevated it was. A three-year-old could never defeat a trained soldier from the special forces no matter how determined and resolute he was.

However, the rule seemed to be broken among the Titan Warriors.

They were a species whose capability grew with their fighting will!

Xiong Wuji stared at Li Yao and asked, "The other purpose for which I brought you here is to let a space resident experience everything. Tell me from the perspective of a space resident, what exactly do you think apocalypses are? Are they salvation or destruction?"

Li Yao was deep in thought. He shook his head after a long while and replied in confusion, "I don't know."

He really couldn't tell the answer.

Before, when he witnessed the miserable appearance of Iron Plateau in person and heard the story that Sha Yulan and Xiong Wuji had told him about the arrival of the apocalypse, he had naturally thought that apocalypses were strikes launched by species stronger than mankind.

There were too many species in the sea of stars. The Star Ocean Imperium had destroyed countless alien species during its expansion, too.

However, the civilizations of such alien species were usually very underdeveloped. In most cases, they had never even set foot off their home planets.

But it was still possible that stronger civilizations were thriving in the vast universe where human beings had not set foot in yet.

When those civilizations noticed the potential of mankind, they launched an attack in advance in order to demolish it.

It was a natural and reasonable deduction.

However, after what he had just experienced, Li Yao found the theory ungrounded and questionable.

The first thing to be doubted was the speed of the apocalypse.

According to Sha Yulan, the astronomers of Iron Plateau five thousand years ago had determined that the meteoroids of the apocalypse were travelling toward them on a large scale no faster than one third the speed of light, which was not an impressive speed. Besides, during the hundred years of observation, there were no signs that the meteoroids had the capability to perform space jumps.

Since they could not perform space jumps, they could only pass through various space zones slowly and dutifully, and therefore gave human beings abundant time for the resistance and the escape plans.

But the question was, Iron Plateau had only thrived in the recent ten thousand years.

If there really was an alien species that had a civilization far more developed than that of mankind, their territory must have been very close to what the Star Ocean Imperium's old territory so that they could detect the human beings' existence in such a short amount of time and launch a close-distance attack unhurriedly.

But people in the era of the Star Ocean Imperium had explored their surroundings far and wide, and they never found such a terrifying neighbor beside them.

The only possible explanation was that the 'apocalypse' had been launched ten thousand years ago, or a hundred thousand years ago, or even before the ancient Cultivation world was formed and before the first monkey to walk upright was born.

It was possible that the apocalypse was not aimed at Iron Plateau.

It was just that, during its long journey, when it flew past the Iron Plateau Space Zone, it detected a certain kind of civilization in this place and was triggered.

The eggs of apocalypse outbreaks made even less sense.

To deal with the outbreak of one egg of apocalypse, the six tribes of Iron Plateau had to work and fight together with all their available soldiers.

If the purpose of the apocalypse was destruction, the outbreaks of ten eggs of apocalypse would do the job very easily!

Also, the heritage concealed inside the meteorites of apocalypse was like free knowledge that had been sent on purpose.

Only by learning the battle skills of the Titan Warriors was it possible to live on in the harsh environment shaped by the apocalypse and defeat the brutal, bizarre beasts created by the apocalypse!

Apocalypses. What were the purpose of the mysterious apocalypses?

Li Yao quickly thought of the Grand Blue Planet, a primordial great world where all species originated billions of years ago.

Before mankind appeared, many species on the Grand Blue Planet had grasped Cultivation techniques, and they had encountered apocalypses countless times.

When Li Yao received the spiritual seed of Yan Ba, a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator and a body fundamentalist, he had seen mottled pictures deep inside his cells left by the prehistoric experts.

In the legends, billions of years ago, dinosaurs had dominated the Grand Blue Planet. Among them, the tyrannosaurs discovered the mysteries of Cultivation and grasped powerful techniques!

It was said that the tyrannosaurs had been able to create a new world or clutch the moon in their prime.

They had created a once-flourishing civilization of dinosaurs and called themselves the 'Pangu Clan'!

The ultimate expert of the tyrannosaurs was known as 'Pangu' 1 !

From the research of archeologists of various generations, it was verified that the Pangu Clan had been able to alter the surface and atmosphere of planets on a large scale and collect resources from the satellites of the Grand Blue Planet. Therefore, their claim of 'creating a new world and clutching the moon' was not entirely bragging.

It was the earliest civilization to human beings' knowledge that had been proven. There had been certain experts before the Pangu Clan, but they had only been strong personally, possibly due to fortuitous incidents, and had never led a really developed civilization.

Therefore, human beings regarded the Pangu civilization as the source of the civilization of mankind. Legends of Pangu establishing new worlds had been passed on generation after generation.

However, the Pangu civilization had been overturned by an apocalypse while it was blooming.

After the Pangu civilization, several other civilizations had replaced one another on the Grand Blue Planet. But then the second apocalypse arrived.

This time, it was not meteors, but an Ice Age that lowered the temperature of the entire planet by dozens of degrees for millions of years!

The prolonged Ice Age almost obliterated all civilizations. It was not until tens of millions of years after the Ice Age that mankind gradually rose up and walked out of the Grand Blue Planet and the primordial world. The civilization of mankind had thus branched and blossomed in the boundless cosmos!

When he heard the stories before, Li Yao had simply thought that the two apocalypses destroyed countless species and civilizations.

But now that he reflected on it, he discovered that, although the first apocalypse terminated the Pangu civilization, it had given birth to billions of brand new species in the millions of years to come, many of which had learned the arts of

Cultivation. Countless experts and powerful civilizations had been born!

After the second apocalypse, the species and civilizations were all wiped out, but mankind—the strongest species in the battles amid the sea of stars—was created. They developed a brilliant Cultivation civilization and expanded their territory from a single planet to the entire universe!

It appeared that the civilizations born after each apocalypse were always stronger than their predecessors.

However, in the era of the Star Ocean Imperium, many worlds had failed to resist apocalypses, and their whole planets had been destroyed. In such cases, there would absolutely be no following civilizations.

The contradictory findings cast Li Yao in a maze of thought. He couldn't figure out the logic at all.

Xiong Wuji patted his shoulder firmly and said, "Never mind. It doesn't matter what the apocalypses really are. All for survival, and survival is all. Try your best to train yourself and blow it up brutally!"

From that day on, Li Yao set off on the path of insane training again.

His training sessions were more tiresome than those of any other qi-trainers, even including Xiong Wuji.

During the day, he would put on the True Qi Locks and inject spiritual gas under twenty times the standard pressure into his body, and he would simultaneously improve his physical strength with barbells tons of weight. He was also engaged in speed training, namely sprinting and turning, and combat training, with a weight of almost a ton bound to himself.

Each day, he would do his training for seven to eight hours without any rest.

In order to fill his stomach, Li Yao often devoured an entire bull during two training sessions!

After expanding his veins, Li Yao would go to the secret chamber in the deepest part of the temple of techniques that stored the knowledge of the Titan Warriors and appear in the Titan Illusionary Land in a meditative state.

Every heart fossil of the Titan Warriors represented a different memory piece. The larger a heart was, the higher the position that the Titan Warrior had once been, the stronger they had been, and the gorier and more brutal their memory piece was.

The other qi-trainers could often only bear to meditate for half an hour. They had to quit after half an hour, or it would be too much of a burden for their brains, and they might become mentally deranged. In the worst cases, their own memories would be jumbled with the memories of the Titan Warriors, and they would become monsters who knew nothing except killing.

However, it was different for Li Yao, who had been born with weird, foreign 'earth' memories and had experienced Ou Yezi's memory pieces. The structure of his brain was different from that of a common Cultivator's, and his soul was extremely solid. Naturally, he was not scared that he would be affected by the Titan Warriors' memories.

Each night, he would spent almost ten hours in the secret chamber and learn the battle skills of the Titan Warriors greedily from their heart fossils.

They were a species born for fighting.

They did not have the dazzling Cultivation techniques as mankind did; they focused all their attention on the training of 'fighting will'. They could manipulate and enhance their spiritual energy by increasing their fighting will and transform everything into the purest strength and damage eventually!

All the memory pieces were battles, battles, and more battles!

Most of the time, they were fighting hard against a certain kind of insect. But they were occasionally killing each other until their blood ran dry when they couldn't find an enemy for a long time.

In the beginning, Li Yao had thought that they were fighting the insects to invade or defend their land.

But later, Li Yao realized that the purpose of their fighting was fighting, and that fighting was their everything!

Chapter 571: Li Yao's New Technique

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As the apocalypse was coming, most of the experts of the Furious Bears Tribe had been summoned to the desert to practice their battle formations. The advanced chamber was often empty and almost became Li Yao's personal training room.

Except for the manager, Xiong Wuji, and a few other people, nobody knew that a monster named Li Yao was getting stronger and stronger below the temple of techniques.

Five days after starting his training, a shocking discovery excited the entire Furious Bears City!

It was said that Xiong Wuji had found a relic that was deeply buried in an underground cave by accident while he was training in the desert. It seemed to have been left by an expert a thousand years ago. Most of the expert's belongings had eroded, but the schematics of a sonic sword and one for Wolf Fang remained intact.

The two designs gave the refiners of the weapon factory of Furious Bears City tremendous inspiration and helped them develop faster sonic swords and Wolf Fangs that could deal more damage!

Although it was not possible to upgrade everybody's gear due to the limited time, the elites of the Fierce Storm Assault Team and the Iron Bears Detonation Team were able to switch to stronger magical equipment before the apocalypse!

Everyone in Furious Bears City was seething with exhilaration because of the discovery. They believed that it was a propitious omen!

It was needless to say that they were actually Li Yao's masterpieces.

As an expert in melee magical equipment and crystal bombs, he had come up with more than ten modification plans after he disassembled the old sonic swords and Wolf Fangs and analyzed them carefully.

The only problem was that he had to draft a plan that was not difficult and could be put into use by the weapon factory immediately. That was why he was delayed for a couple of days.

But if he had simply offered his modification plan to the weapon factory, somebody was bound to become suspicious of him. Therefore, he and Xiong Wuji came up with the story.

Calling it 'treasure from a thousand years ago' would not only eliminate the doubt of the refiners of the Furious Bears Tribe who would accept it gladly but also boost the morale of the tribe.

After he demonstrated unparalleled performance during his training and completed the modification blueprints of the two kinds of fundamental magical equipment, Xiong Wuji's attitude toward him changed greatly. He was really considered a negotiable partner right now.

The two of them often chatted and exchanged knowledge with each other. Xiong Wuji brought out a lot of personal understanding about qi-trainers' expertise, while Li Yao presented many secret arts and techniques from the Cultivators. They both learned a lot and quite enjoyed the sharing.

Wu Mayan, who had always considered himself a young genius, was totally awed when he witnessed Li Yao's unbelievably horrifying training process. He was worshipping Li Yao and even asking to become his disciple.

Li Yao found it very funny. He did not want to be too involved, but since the young man was harassing him day and night, he simply gave him a cruel training plan and told him that he would consider the idea if the young man could persist.

He had thought that the young man would give up shortly. But as it turned out, although he was crying and screaming during each training session, he actually made it to the end every time, however disgraceful he looked. Wu Mayan eyed Li Yao as if he were a devil after each training session, but when Li Yao appeared in the training chamber next day in the morning, he always found that Wu Mayan had come in advance and was helping to clean up his training equipment.

The young man's stubbornness during his training reminded Li Yao of himself a couple of years ago. He suddenly felt that it was not a bad idea to recruit a disciple.

Twenty-five days later…

According to the observation of the wizard of the Furious Bears Tribe, who had experienced multiple outbreaks of the apocalypse, the eggs were about to be mature and would explode in the next week.

The battle against the apocalypse was about to commence!

Inside the advanced training chamber deep below the temple of techniques, Li Yao put the heavy barbells back onto the shelf with a huge 'clang'. He felt that his legs were soft and couldn't help but gag with his two hands holding the floor.

But the previous crazy training had completely consumed the residue of food in his stomach. He gagged for a long time, only to throw out some saliva.

Li Yao's face was pale, his body cramping. The sweat almost congregated into a lake, and his hands and legs were shivering softly.

Taking more than ten deep breaths, he finally regained control of his limbs. He gritted his teeth and stood up, before he observed himself through a giant mirror next to him.

One last training procedure. I must carry on!

Inside the bronze mirror, his upper body was naked, with multiple layers of True Qi Locks imposed on it. All the True Qi Locks had been modified and tempered by him. Delicate circuits could be found on their surface.

Since he had been training for a long time underground, which was devoid of sunlight, his skin was much fairer than before, and his body size seemed to have shrunk. The large clusters of muscles on his body were now narrower and more exquisite. Even the female warriors in the tribe seemed to be stronger than him.

However, compared to the angry, sinewy men of the tribe, his muscle fibers were clear and distinguishable. When he exerted his strength, his body seemed to have been decorated with gorgeous stripes that seemed to be flowing and appeared quite beautiful.

Summon my fighting will! Release the soaring fighting will in the form of brain waves and manipulate the spiritual energy with them to strengthen my body!

Li Yao meditated on the Titan Warriors' technique of raising their fighting will. Intense waves were unleashed from the depths of his brain. His muscle fibers spread out like ripples and changed continuously into fuzzy patterns.

On his back, the muscles, shaped like an upside-down triangle, seemed to have formed an angrily roaring face!

This was the brand-new technique that Li Yao perceived in the Titan Illusionary Land!

The skin of the Titan Warriors boasted special colorful stripes that could change into various patterns. Just like the spiritual tattoos on Cultivators, the patterns could enhance one's spiritual energy and increase the combat ability of one's body!

Of course, there were no stripes on Li Yao's skin. Even if he asked somebody to make a tattoo for him, the adornment was still unchangeable and could only perform a single technique.

However, he had realized something after his last discussion with Xiong Wuji.

The qi-trainers of Iron Plateau had evolved, generation after generation, over five thousand years, which had blessed them with such strong bodies. Together with the reverberation of their fighting will, they had definitely reached the limits in regard to the utilization of muscles.

In one short month, he could never be as physically strong as Xiong Wuji however hard he trained himself.

If so, why shouldn't he walk on a different path by improving the agility of muscle fibers instead of their hardness so that he could control his muscles with his spiritual threads to draw the patterns?

Drawing runes with muscle fibers!

This was the brand-new technique that Li Yao had thought of.

After more than ten days of testing, based on the observation of how the Titan Warriors made use of their battle patterns, he was certain that the method was feasible!

"HOOOO!"

Li Yao's eyes were bloodshot. His long hair, which hadn't been cut for quite a few months, fluttered. Streams of spiritual gas surged out in the tiny training chamber and terrified the barbells in the corner, which were emitting weird noises. They even formed visible swirls and circled him crazily!

Finally!

With the help of the muscle stripes, when my fighting will soared and my spiritual gas surged, I surpassed the peak of the Refinement Stage and reached the superlative height of the Refinement Stage that other Cultivators in space have never entered!

Li Yao smiled. The fatigue from the previous harsh training session was entirely gone. The furious spiritual gas flooding into his body seemed to have turned into an afternoon breeze in summer for him.

He walked to the front of an iron target and started the final training with the most basic punching.

A thousand punches. Begin!

This was the scene that Wei Changsheng and his fellow members of the Iron Bears Detonation Team saw when they entered the training chamber.

A booth had been established in a corner of the spacious advanced training chamber. It was enclosed with large tempered glass, through which one could vaguely see that a 'stout' man was punching something in True Qi Locks.

However, he seemed to be exhausted. After each punch, he would have to stop for a moment and breathe heavily, if not gagging.

His face was extremely twisted, too, indicating that he was being tortured inhumanly.

Fu Dong, manager of the training chamber, was sitting in the outside, his eyes half closed. He seemed to have become used to everything here.

Wei Changsheng was greatly surprised. The advanced training chamber was almost exclusively reserved for the elites of the Iron Bears Detonation Team and the Fierce Storm Assault Team. However, they barely came to this place because they had been bettering their teamwork in the desert over the previous month.

How come there was a personal training booth right now?

Even Shi Meng, captain of the Iron Bears Detonation Team, and Xiong Zhenzhen, captain of the Fierce Storm Assault Team, did not have such a privilege!

Wei Changsheng's face suddenly turned gloomy. It was not about himself. But on what grounds was this unfamiliar short man entitled to a personal booth if Captain Shi Meng, whom he admired most, was not?

He did not dare express his discontent openly in front of Fu Dong. Therefore, he managed to fake a smile and asked, "Uncle Fu, what is this all about?"

Fu Dong did not even bother to raise his eyebrow. He replied, "This training chamber has been specially modified under Boss Xiong's instruction. Nobody is to enter Sand Scorpion's personal booth, but you are free to do your practice in the outside."

Chief Xiong's instructions?

Wei Changsheng was secretly startled. He was about to ask more when he suddenly smelt an intense aroma of meat.

One of the members of Iron Bears Detonation Team exclaimed in joy, "It's the meat of Silver Striped Boars! Yummy yummy!"

Silver Striped Boars were rarely-seen demon beasts in the desert. Their meat was delicious and contained abundant spiritual energy. However, their number was small, and they were often very vigilant. They did make delicious food, but it was very difficult to capture them. Even experts like themselves hardly had the opportunity to enjoy them.

Wei Changsheng sniffed hard and laughed in satisfaction. "It's truly the meat of Silver Striped Boars, with at least five kinds of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures roasted with them! They are definitely the best food in the world. Our chief is truly generous now that the apocalypse is coming close!"

The qi-trainers' training often consumed enormous physical strength. It was a common practice for some food to be kept in the training chambers for the gluttons, but such delicious food like the meat of Silver Striped Boars was hard to come by.

One of the members of the Iron Bears Detonation Team swallowed and couldn't help but raise the white cloth on the meat of Silver Striped Boars, only to be slapped away by Fu Dong.

Fu Dong said coldly, "Don't touch it. It is prepared for Sand Scorpion. The food for other people is aside."

Wei Changsheng opened the few giant iron buckets and looked inside suspiciously, only to be irked. Although the contents smelt as good as the meat of Silver Striped Boars and some Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures had been added, the most critical part of the food was ordinary pork and just the bones and internal organs of the Silver Striped Boars.

Chapter 572: Unbelievable Craziness!

Chapter 572: Unbelievable Craziness!

"Uncle Fu!"

Wei Changsheng attempted to hold back his anger and remarked, "What's the meaning of this? Before, not just Captain Shi and Captain Xiong, even Chief Xiong had the same food with everyone else when he was training with us! Who is this Sand Scorpion exactly? He doesn't look familiar. Why is he qualified to enjoy such a large Silver Stripe Boar all by himself while we can only eat some offal?

"Has he made any distinguished contributions to the tribe? Is he able to destroy a top-tier demon beast in the battle to come?"

"I know him!"

A member of the Iron Bears Detonation Team gazed at Li Yao for a long time before he finally remembered who the strange guy was. He patted his head and shouted, "This guy, Sand Scorpion, only joined the tribe a month ago. It's said that he fought two Emperor Sand Scorpions in the wilderness and saved Wu Mayan. He was wounded due to the venom of the demon beast, and his mind is clouded!"

"Right!"

Another teammate recalled him now that his origin was mentioned. He sniffed and said, "One month ago, during the competitive test with the Fierce Storm Assault Team, Wu Mayan brought the man to watch, but he was so shocked by a Wolf Fang that he fell to the ground. His face was pale, himself shuddering, and he failed to get back on his feet for a long time!"

"What?"

Wei Changsheng couldn't help but burst into laughter. "I remember it now. Indeed, there was such a coward back then. Did we talk about him for a long time after we returned?

"It was just a Wolf Fang! What's the big deal even if it did explode right in front of his face? Men of the Iron Bears Detonation Team wouldn't have even raised an eyebrow, much less dodging and hiding. I was wondering where such a timid fellow came from. I didn't know that it was him!"

"Hehe. Is it anything extraordinary to slay two Emperor Sand Scorpions? If I had encountered them, I could've killed three or even more!"

"Our chief is not fair regarding the matter. The guy only rescued his foster son. Even though Wu Mayan is a rarely-seen genius in our tribe, there's no need to treat him as nicely as this!"

The more they talked, the angrier they became. Suddenly, the personal booth was opened with a 'Chi' sound. As if a wind from the nether world blew by, Li Yao staggered out exhaustedly.

He was soaked in sweat and couldn't even stand straight. Even his eyes had lost focus.

The training just now seemed to have drained him. His stomach was rumbling, and he could only see the food in front of him. Not bothering the irritated newcomers, he sniffed, smelt the aroma of the pork, and walked toward the Silver Stripe Boar.

The members of the Iron Bears Detonation Team glared at him, but he took them all for nothing.

Wei Changsheng sneered. He took a step forward and stood in the way between Li Yao and the Silver Stripe Boar.

Li Yao's hair was soaked with sweat and was stuck on his face, droplets of sweat dripping constantly. He glanced at Wei Changsheng through the gap of his hair casually and indifferently.

With only that one glance, the smile on Wei Changsheng's face froze. He felt that he had been placed in a frigid hell at absolute zero. His face was pale, his eyelids jumping crazily. He failed to come up with anything for a long time.

Li Yao bypassed him silently and picked up the big tray of food, before he wobbled toward the gate with heavy feet.

"Sand Scorpion, you are not finishing the food here because you are in a hurry to train below?" asked Fu Dong, who was apparently not new to the situation.

Li Yao did not even have the strength to talk. He nodded and vanished out of the gate.

Everyone was awed by his uncanny aura. None of them stood out and stopped him; they only watched him leave proudly.

It was not until three seconds after he vanished that the icy air thawed. Everybody in the room swallowed subconsciously.

As if his neck had been grabbed by an invisible, giant hand, Wei Changsheng's face was practically blue due to shortness of breath. He was finally able to cough loudly as cold sweat began popping up on his back.

Horrifying!

The exchange of eyes a moment ago had been too horrifying!

He felt that a real Titan Warrior had stood in front of his face, staring at him emotionlessly from a high stance!

If he had made any other movements, he would've been slain for sure!

"Changsheng, what happened? Why didn't you stop the guy?"

"The guy is but skin and bones. He's not even two meters tall and barely reaches your chest!"

"Why didn't you punch him right in his face and snatch his Silver Stripe Boar?"

"Damn it. We've been training and suffering in the desert day and night, and we're not even allowed to have one mouthful of the Silver Stripe Boar. Why is the fair-skinned boy entitled to the Silver Stripe Boar by training casually inside a windless and rainless training chamber?"

"Unfair! It's too unfair! We're going to argue with the chief!"

Members of the Iron Bears Detonation Team felt embarrassed for their fear a while ago after they came to again and all started yelling.

But Wei Changsheng was still not himself yet.

Fu Dong eyed them coldly, his lips curling in mockery, as he said, "Do you think that, by slaying demon beasts in the desert under scorching sunlight and savaging storm, you've had enough suffering and training and are qualified to eat the Silver Stripe Boar?"

A member of the Iron Bears Detonation Team shouted, "Our previous trip was an out-and-out practical drill. We cleaned up the nine nests of the demon beasts and killed more of them than anybody could count! What's craziness if our deed wasn't? Who's qualified for the meat if we are not?"

Fu Dong rose up suddenly and replied grimly, "You would not buy it if I say that Sand Scorpion is more qualified than you. Therefore, you can follow me and see how the man has been training himself so that you won't need to disgrace yourself before the chief."

"We might as well see it. How impressive can it possibly be? We've seen the outcome of his training just now. His grimacing face and half-dying appearance did not befit a real expert! The real men of Iron Plateau should be as calm as anything. Even if your leg is torn off by a demon beast, you simply kick out the teeth of the demon beast with your other leg!"

His words naturally raised laughter, and somebody even applauded.

Fu Dong smiled casually and led everybody into the personal booth.

Among the crowd, Wei Changsheng observed the surroundings suspiciously and mumbled, "Nothing interesting here. Who hasn't used True Qi Locks set at thirty times the standard pressure before? The weight of the deep squat is merely 1,500 kilograms. I can do twenty sets of them at any time!"

Fu Dong answered expressionlessly, "First, the weight of 1,500 kilograms is for relaxation and rehabilitation after seven hours of crazy training. I will save the trouble of telling you what the maximum weight of his deep squat is because you won't believe it anyway.

"Second, look at the True Qi Locks more carefully. It's not thirty times the standard pressure, but fifty times!"

"What!"

All the members of the Iron Bears Detonation Team were dumbfounded.

Spiritual gas at thirty times the standard pressure was already the limits for common qi-trainers. Even experts at their level were not willing to recall the terrible experience of when they endured thirty times the standard pressure.

Fifty times? What would that feeling be?

Fu Dong smiled and continued. "This set of True Qi Locks was modified by Sand Scorpion himself. It can trigger the spiritual gas up to fifty times the standard pressure.

"He has been training for seven hours wearing such True Qi Locks and could still finish five sets of deep squats with 1,500 kilograms.

"His every training session consumes hundreds of True Qi containers!"

Those present were all experts. They inferred the intensity of Li Yao's training instantly and were all frightened.

Fu Dong then pointed at an iron target in a corner of the training chamber. "Now, look at the target. Do you see any anomalies?"

Everybody examined the target doubtfully. The target was made of 'Black Rock Gold', a common metal material on Iron Plateau. It was riddled with fist indentations.

However, it was not unusual. Everyone there could leave deeper, clearer traces on such targets when they exerted all their strength.

Fu Dong said strangely, "Touch it."

Wei Changsheng was bold enough to extend one of his fingers to the surface of the target. His eyes immediately widened as he exclaimed, "It's so hot. Hundreds of degrees at least!"

"Correct."

Fu Dong said with his hands held in his back, "Maybe you think that the highest level of punching such iron targets is to embellish the targets with the traces of your fists. The deeper and the clearer the traces are, the more awesome you will be.

"But when Sand Scorpion was punching the target, he transformed most of the damage into heat. Under his bombardment, the temperature of the target was raised by 420 degrees!

"And this was after he had just finished the high-intensity training in the True Qi Locks.

"I even suspect that, if he filled himself and took a good rest, he could punch the target so hard that it will melt when he exerts his full strength on the target without burden!"

Everybody looked at each other in bewilderment.

Fu Dong looked at their facial expressions and chuckled. "You think his training is as simple as that? Tell you what, such a personal booth was established because he needed to train himself in certain extreme environments!

"When you saw him just now, he was doing the final relief and recovery procedure. The oxygen concentration inside the booth is approximately 5%, one quarter of the comfortable parameter for human beings.

"During his real training, he pumps away all the air inside the booth to make it almost a vacuum!"

Wei Changsheng and his companions were truly appalled.

Training crazily in a vacuum while being pumped with spiritual gas fifty times the standard pressure!

Where was this monster Sand Scorpion from?

"He—he has been training like that all the time?" Wei Changsheng stammered. But for some reason, he believed that it was true when he thought of Li Yao's cold and indifferent eyes.

Fu Dong nodded with an inexplicable expression on his face. After a long sigh, he commented, "Since you went to practice in the desert, he has been coming to this place to conduct the extreme training that is beyond anyone's imagination every day.

"I've been responsible for the training chamber for almost thirty years, and I've witnessed a lot of tough experts. Xiong Wuji in the old days, your captain Shi Meng, Xiong Zhenzhen of the Fierce Storm Assault Team, the young genius Wu Mayan who rose to fame only recently… They are all adamant and resolute people and have experienced cruel training without exception.

"However, this is the first time that I've ever seen a monster as crazy as him.

"How much of a contribution do you think a man who has been training in such a way can make in the battle against the apocalypse to come? Do you agree that he is qualified to have a Silver Stripe Boar all to himself now?"

Wei Changsheng was silent. Suddenly, he put one of the manacles on his wrist and, gritting his teeth, turned on the switch. The spiritual gas, set fifty times the standard pressure, was immediately poured in!

"Ahhhh!"

Wei Changsheng immediately screamed desperately like a pig being butchered. He fell to the ground as if he had been struck by lightning. Then he was bouncing and jumping like a lobster that had just been tossed into a cooker, crying for mommy.

"Not good. Changsheng is foaming at the mouth. He is about to pass out!"

"Hurry and save him!"

The training chamber was in a mess.

Chapter 573: Sky Scorpion Armor

Chapter 573: Sky Scorpion Armor

As the egg of apocalypse ripened, the gargantuan meteorite mountain began to emit large clusters of air currents in various colors that interweaved with each other and grew toward the sky helically. They swallowed one cloud after another and eventually formed a swirl of seven-colored smoke in the sky.

The residents of Iron Plateau called such a phenomenon an 'apocalypse cloud'.

The appearance of an apocalypse cloud suggested that the egg of apocalypse would break out in several days.

The egg of apocalypse that was about to mature was on the northwest side of the Furious Bears Tribe. When it was sunny during the day, one could see that a small apocalypse cloud in the northwest sky, surrounded by colorful radiance but with immeasurable darkness in the center, was staring at the ground like a weird, unblinking eye.

One month earlier, Furious Bears City had been seething with enthusiasm like a giant steel refining factory.

But as the apocalypse drew near, the entire city calmed down. Like a warrior who was whetting his saber in the darkness, all the anxiety, excitement, dread, worry, and hope were turned into the monotonous noise of the honing of their blades against the grindstone.

In the weapon factory, the refiners and workers who had been working hard for months were lying everywhere, snoring.

They had finally finished forging a batch of brand new magical equipment before the egg of apocalypse ripened.

The latest sonic sword model's distribution of tubes for the internal circulation and venting of spiritual gas had been redesigned. When the spiritual gas surged out, it would add slight vibration at a high frequency to the edge of the sword so that the damage of the blade could be improved.

Almost twenty ancillary spurts were added to two sides of the main spurt, which was emitting spiritual gas along the two sides of the sword. The middle of the sword would receive a counterforce that would make it essentially an invisible rail. Therefore, the strike of the sword would be more accurate and stable.

The latest Wolf Fang model had seven brand-new attack rune arrays on the interior side. Not only did they reduce the cost of crystals, they had also increased the firepower of the grenades. The latest Wolf Fangs also boasted a unique delayed detonation system that could be controlled with telepathic thoughts. As long as one thought about it, more than ten Wolf Fangs could be detonated simultaneously.

The elites of the Fierce Storm Assault Team and the Iron Bears Detonation Team absolutely loved the new weapons. They'd been dwelling in the test fields affiliated to the weapon factory to familiarize themselves with the new magical equipment.

Today, the last test was going to be held.

Tomorrow, the warriors of the Furious Bears Tribe would march into the desert and challenge the apocalypse!

In the test field, almost all the members of the Fierce Storm Assault Team and the Iron Bears Detonation Team had gathered.

There were almost a hundred soldiers on both sides. They were all experts above the 40th level of the Refinement Stage. Although they were insignificant in number, the solemn and daunting aura emanated from them almost tore the entire test field in half, as if they were two armies.

The two parties confronted each other silently. But the last competitive test was postponed for a long time. It was not until people were whispering to each other that Xiong Wuji appeared on one side of the test field.

"Warriors of the Furious Bears Tribe!"

Xiong Wuji's voice was not high, but his every word swept into everybody's ears like a hurricane. "Tomorrow, we will be setting off to challenge the apocalypse. Today, we are running our last competitive test.

"The purpose of the competitive test is, on one hand, to let you understand the magical equipment in your hands better, and, on the other hand, to let you know your comrades and brothers who will be fighting side by side with you better!

"Fierce Storm can only entrust the ground to Iron Bears, and Iron Bears can only entrust the sky to Fierce Storm, after you learn each other's formidability in the competitive tests!

"Also, a new warrior will be joining the competitive test today. The competition of two sides will become one of three sides! The rules are the same. Each of the three sides has a home camp. As long as you bring the flag in the center of the test field to your home camp, your side will be deemed the winner!

"Due to the limitation of time, the warrior had no time to practice with everyone else in the desert, and therefore, is not familiar with the battle formations. Therefore, he is not going to be listed in the main troop but will be asked to perform free hunting as a lone wolf in the battlefield.

"But still, I think that it is necessary for you to meet the warrior. After the competitive test today, you will know whether or not you should be worried if he is standing next to you!"

Xiong Wuji's words raised a riot.

In the battle of apocalypse, most warriors would join battle formations and fight as a team.

But there were always some experts who wandered out of the battle formations and to hunt individually.

Sometimes, it was because their capability was too high, and they could not achieve their maximum damage in battle formations; sometimes, it was because of their special technique, say, full-range indiscriminate area attack, which would hurt their teammates if they were in the battle formations.

Although they were free to choose their targets, their goal was almost always the strongest beast in the apocalypse. The experts who were hunting individually would always lunge at wherever it was the most dangerous!

Only the strongest, the most experienced, and the most determined warriors in the tribe were qualified to conduct free hunting.

However, the elites of the two teams had seen all the seasoned warriors of the Furious Bears Tribe and cooperated with them neatly multiple times. Wasn't it redundant to arrange a competitive test to let them get to know each other?

Just when everyone was baffled, a figure not very tall gradually appeared from the darkness.

"It is him!"

In the Iron Bears Detonation Team, Wei Changsheng gasped, his right-hand tremoring slightly beyond his control.

"It is him?"

Xiong Zhenzhen, leader of the Fierce Storm Assault Team, was somewhat confused. She glanced at Xiong Wuji in discontent, frowning.

"You may call him Sand Scorpion."

Xiong Wuji said, "Chances are that you do not know him well at present, but believe me, by the end of the competitive test, he will have left a very deep impression on all of you!"

Four hundred sharp eyes were staring at 'Sand Scorpion' as if they were shooting arrows, only to be entirely blocked by the weirdly-shaped armor on him.

It was bright grey armor with the jet armor of the Fierce Storm Assault Team as the prototype. However, it had undergone unrecognizable and even insane modifications.

The layered plates of the armor were round with barely any sharp thorns. They had copied a lot of the attributes of insects and arthropods in the principle of bionics. At first look, it seemed to be a large scorpion that had stood straight like a human. But folded wings on the back of the armor made of tens of thousands of thin, translucent, interconnecting metal foils made it look like an enormous dragonfly.

Behind the back of the armor, more than twenty True Qi containers were densely placed. Their size was smaller than that of commonly-seen True Qi containers, but there were clusters of glamorous spiritual stripes on them. A two-handed sword more than 2.5 meters long was hanging at the waist of the armor. The body of the sword was riddled with messy spurts, yet they brought a weird feeling of beauty.

It was possible to imagine that, when the messy spurts ejected spiritual gas at the same time, the trajectory of the sword would definitely become mysterious and unpredictable.

Chi… Chi… Chi…

While he walked toward everyone slowly, white steam was dispersing from the joints of his armor, as if the armor was a living dragon that was breathing nonstop.

Occasionally, through a gap in the steam, one could see a pair of unattractive eyes. But if one were to stare at him for more than three seconds, one would be able to discover hunger and thirst in his eyes, like two vipers that had just finished their hibernation and seemed to be ready to go on a killing spree.

Xiong Wuji patted Li Yao's shoulder and asked, "Are you ready?"

Li Yao squinted and nodded his head. The two vipers deep down his pupils were immediately gone.

Since he finished the basic training five days ago, he had been dedicated to the modification of the armor.

For a magical equipment maniac, fighting a battle without armor was as uncomfortable as going shopping naked.

Based on the jet armor of the Fierce Storm Assault Team, with consideration of the characteristics of the iron shield armor, and following certain designing principles of crystal suits, he had created a brand-new set of armor of his own.

The standard jet armor had more than thirty spurts so that the qi-trainers could alter their directions in the midair swiftly.

However, on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, there were more than fifty main power rune arrays and more than a hundred ancillary power rune arrays.

As a seasoned Exo, Li Yao was much more adept at direction alternation in the air than the qi-trainers.

Therefore, he had installed 61 spurts on the armor that he modified. Together with the sliding wing he had designed, he was totally able to perform unbelievable turns and sprints in the air!

Li Yao was very satisfied with the armor, which had exploited every possibility of the utilization and enhancement of spiritual gas.

Also, a lot of amazing inspiration had popped up in Li Yao's head while he was crafting the armor. He had accumulated valuable experience for his own crystal suit in the future.

He had named the jet armor 'Sky Scorpion'.

Today was also the first field test for the Sky Scorpion Armor.

Xiong Wuji glanced at everyone and said, "The structural design of this Sky Scorpion Armor was also found by me in the exploration of the underground relic a month ago. However, since many components of the armor have to be manually made carefully, the speed of production of such armors is not high. Today, only one set of such armor has been successfully forged. We cannot equip everyone with the armor as of now.

"Besides, it required some special skills to wear the Sky Scorpion Armor. Therefore, they are not available for everyone!"

Xiong Wuji's words infuriated everyone on the spot.

What does he mean by saying that it requires some special skills to wear the Sky Scorpion Armor? Is he insinuating that we are all not capable enough?

They all glared at Li Yao.

In the Fierce Wind Assault Team, the members who had seen Li Yao falling to the ground in fear of a Wolf Fang in person showed despise, too.

On the Iron Bears Detonation Team's side, Wei Changsheng secretly went to his captain Shi Meng and said, "Captain, he is the one I talked about!"

Shi Meng had already put on the entire iron shield armor. He was like a moving war fortress. His eyes were glittering in the gaps of the facial cover and locked onto Li Yao like two cannons extending out of battlements.

CRACK! CRACK!

Shi Meng's bones emitted crisp sounds, which were clearly audible despite his thick armor, as he warmed up his body. He rubbed his hands and smirked. "Very good. I've been meaning to meet the monster who can endure fifty times the standard pressure since the day you mentioned him. However, I haven't been able to see him even though I went there every day over the past few days!

"Let me see how venomous this Sand Scorpion is!"

Five minutes later, the competitive test hosted by Xiong Wuji in person commenced after an earsplitting roar!

"The test now begins!"

Chapter 574: Tail Turning!

Chapter 574: Tail Turning!

The spacious test field was more than two kilometers long and one kilometer wide. The center of the test field was lower than the periphery, making it a man-made ravine dozens of meters deep. Almost a hundred stone pillars were standing in the bottom of the ravine. The flag, on which a bear head was painted, had been affixed to the largest pillar.

The Fierce Storm Assault Team and the Iron Bears Detonation Team started from the two ends of the test field, while Li Yao started from the edge of the half.

While Xiong Wuji's roars were still echoing in the air, he had already marched out.

After each step, a huge amount of spiritual gas would spray out of his arms, legs and his body, accelerating his speed to maximum instantly.

Swoosh!

Li Yao jumped up, the metal wings on his back unfolding completely. They did not look like wings of a bird, more like fish fins.

As the spiritual gas surged out, the thousands of metal foils on the wings vibrated at the same time, making themselves look like blinking scales of goldfish in the water.

Li Yao's movement was agile and swift. Like a swordfish that was sprinting in the seawater, he swooped and snatched the flag and put it on his back.

The pole of the flag had been crafted out of special magnetic materials, so that it could be conveniently fixed to the back of any armor.

This was just the beginning.

The elites charging close from the two directions had surrounded him.

They considered him a deadly opponent after hearing Xiong Wuji's introduction. Now that he had secured the flag before everybody else, he was even more of a target for them all.

That was also what Li Yao had been yearning for.

This time, Li Yao did not want to resort to any plots or tricks, nor did he care about the victory of the game. He merely wanted to know exactly how strong he was after a month of crazy training!

"Bring it on!"

Li Yao grinned, licking his lips that had cracked because of his thirst. He unsheathed the giant sword 2.5 meters long, and instead of returning to his home camp in the same way, he leapt several times, charged at the Fierce Wind Assault Team, and crashed into them brutally!

Dozens of members of the Fierce Wind Assault Team were gliding in midair with the help of their jet armor. Another dozen of them were zigzagging on the ground in unpredictable and mysterious routes. Xiong Zhenzhen, an expert in the 79th level of the Refinement Stage, was at the rear of the team, and her sharp killing intent had poked forward and locked onto Li Yao even though he was hundreds of meters away!

Li Yao could even sense that the breastplate of his armor was uttering rattling noises because of her killing intent, which was suppressing him like countless fast arrows.

The sounds further triggered his fighting will. He felt that he was back to the days and nights when he was slaughtering his enemies brutally in the Titan Illusionary Land!

One versus a hundred!

Li Yao roared. Spiritual gas spurted out from his back, making the flag flap in the air. His speed was even higher than before.

Just when the two parties were about to engage, he abruptly fell to the ground beyond everyone's expectations, as if he had been smashed by a giant, invisible hammer right in the face!

Before the members of the Fierce Storm Assault Team realized what was going on, a large batch of dense Wolf Fangs had rushed close in the sky!

As it turned out, the members of the Iron Bears Detonation Team, seeing that Li Yao was fleeing in the opposite direction with the flag, were worried that he would return to his own home camp or that the Fierce Storm Assault Team would take the flag. Therefore, they simply launched a hurricane-like grenade attack!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Almost a hundred Wolf Fangs that had been redesigned by Li Yao exploded one after another. Countless fireballs appeared in midair.

Although the number of crystals in the Wolf Fangs were only one third of the original, the sky was still burning as if on fire. The grenades raised a large area of smoke that blocked everybody's vision.

Swoosh!

In the middle of the black smoke, Li Yao jumped up and slashed his saber upward like a scorpion that was raising its tail!

Chi—

Intense spiritual gas surged out from the two sides of his giant saber, which surpassed the speed of sound instantly as if it had grown wings!

His target responded in a hurry. The two thin swords in his hands broke the sonic barrier within the moment, too!

Sonic sword versus sonic sword!

However, in order to reduce the weight for the convenience of air battles, the Fierce Storm Assault Team members were all equipped with light swords. How could they compete against the monster-level blade in Li Yao's hand that weighed almost four hundred kilograms?

The member of the Fierce Storm Assault Team who was clashing with Li Yao grunted. He lost control of his swords and was immediately blown away!

Li Yao's face was red as if he had been drinking delicious wine. His giant sword raised a tornado and smashed away three members of the Fierce Storm Assault Team within several seconds.

At this moment, the black smoke gradually dispersed. Everybody was able to see their target clearly.

Six members of the Fierce Storm Assault Team sprinted at him from six directions simultaneously. Twelve sharp auras of sword from them blocked all the routes of escape around Li Yao!

Li Yao's eyes suddenly shined. The two vipers deep down in his pupils craned their heads, while he dashed toward one of the sword auras. The plate on his right arm suddenly revealed a gap from which two glittering iron balls rolled out.

Li Yao threw the two balls casually. After two explosions, the sword aura was blown into nothingness quickly.

They were delicate mini crystal bombs!

The flawless net of swords immediately had a fatal hole.

The Sky Scorpion Armor blinked out of the hole like a slippery loach. Before anyone realized what was going on, he had waved his sword and cut off the spiritual gas tubes on the back of two members of the Fierce Storm Assault Team precisely!

Chi—

The two members of the Fierce Storm Assault Team were yelling and dancing crazily like balloons that had been pierced by a needle.

Their teammates all felt their heads going dizzy.

"How is it possible? His movements in midair, the attacking, the dodging, and the sprinting, are even swifter than ours.

He is like a ghost!"

"The giant sword of his is at least three hundred kilograms. But in his hand, it is even more agile and precise than the lightest sword. Why?"

But before they figured out the answer, a furious tide of iron flooded to them!

The Iron Bears Detonation Team had come close!

Their appearance meant the arrival of the gale of Wolf Fangs.

All the members of the Iron Bears Detonation Team were muscular men who possessed enormous strength. They could hit a flying bird thousands of meters away precisely with a Wolf Fang no larger than a fist.

The targets moving in the sky were naturally the best goals for them.

Suppressed by the heavy firepower, both Li Yao and the Fierce Storm Assault Team were forced to land on the ground.

Li Yao grinned and laughed silently. He kicked the shoulder of a member of the Fierce Storm Assault Team heavily and knocked him hundreds of meters away. With the counterforce, he threw himself into the battle formation of the Iron Bears Detonation Team like a cannonball.

More than ten members of the Iron Bears Detonation Team surrounded him. Dozens of high walls seemed to be collapsing toward him at the same time!

Li Yao returned the giant sword to his back. He then extended his fingers. Ten coldly-shining, sharp blades appeared on his fingertips!

His two hands suddenly turned into two streaks of silver brightness. The iron shield armors touched by him were all blossoming and exploding with their plates and components flying out!

The development level of the arts of magical equipment on Iron Plateau was relatively primitive after all. As a monster who could locate the flaws of a crystal suit from the gap as thin as hair on it, Li Yao found the iron shield armors that were crude, shabby and connected by rivets completely unchallenging.

If his hands were moving at their top speed, he could've dismantled such armor barehanded!

Several members of the Iron Bears Detonation Team exclaimed in shock. Their thick and dense siege was somewhat disrupted.

Taking advantage of their confusion, Li Yao blinked behind them and aimed his ten sharp finger blades at the spiritual gas tubes between the True Qi containers and their armor!

It required a huge amount of spiritual gas to drive such heavy armors. The spiritual gas stored inside a qi-trainer's body was far from enough. Therefore, every iron shield armor was attached to more than twenty True Qi containers. Some of the True Qi containers were directly connected to the components, but some others were linked to the armor via tubes.

For ease during a battle, most tubes to transmit spiritual gas had been made of soft materials and were only protected by a hard shell. They were the most fragile parts of the armor!

Chi! Chi! Chi!

The battle formation of the Iron Bears Detonation Team had already become an enormous hot tub. White fog was spreading everywhere, and the sound of spurting spiritual gas echoed nonstop.

Since the members of the Iron Bears Detonation Team were tall and strong and their armor was extremely heavy, they were not blown away by the leaking spiritual gas. However, it was difficult for them to stand on their feet.

"Get out of the way!"

Shi Meng, captain of the Iron Bears Detonation Team, lunged close like a huge mountain that had grown hundreds of legs.

His size was the largest of all in the Iron Bears Detonation Team. Yet, he was sprinting at a speed even higher than that of many members of the Fierce Storm Assault Team!

Li Yao blinked and leapt backwards. Spiritual gas burst out of his back and pushed him up into the sky like an invisible spring.

Swoosh!

In midair, Xiong Zhenzhen, captain of the Fierce Storm Assault Team, crossed her swords and launched a deadly attack like a patient hunter who had waited long enough.

Li Yao's face color remained unchanged. His giant sword appeared in his hands miraculously and cut in the center of Xiong Zhenzhen's crossed swords!

Xiong Zhenzhen sniffed. She controlled her spiritual gas delicately and drew a slight curve on her crossed swords, which made them slide on the edge of Li Yao's giant sword.

In the meantime, she slithered close like a swift swallow, almost kissing the edge of her enemy's blade!

She finally discovered the biggest advantage of the giant sword. It was not its weight, but its length!

The longer a blade was, the stronger it would be. The shorter a blade was, the trickier methods it had to resort to. Li Yao's giant sword was a heavy blade whose damage could not be maximized without enough distance. However, Xiong Zhenzhen had drawn close to Li Yao by the swinging force of her soft swords!

Li Yao's face remained unchanged, except that the smile on the corner of his lips suddenly turned extremely weird.

After a crack, the giant sword dissected itself into more than ten pieces, each connected to one another via spiritual gas tubes, soft ropes crafted out of the veins, and nerves of demon beasts.

Driven by spiritual gas, the sword had become a whip more than ten meters long. It looked both like a swift boa and the deadly tail of a scorpion!

How could the armor be named Sky Scorpion without a tail? The giant sword's name was exactly 'Scorpion's Tail'!

Shua!

The giant sword took a turn like a scorpion that was waving its tail, and the tip of the sword lunged toward Xiong Zhenzhen's back like the sting of the scorpion!

Chapter 575: One Punch Is Enough!

Chapter 575: One Punch Is Enough!

Xiong Zhenzhen did not expect Li Yao's weapon to be so sordid despite its simple and straightforward appearance. The strike was aiming at the blind spot on her back, and there was no time for her to block it with her swords. She frowned in anger.

However, she was an expert in the 79th level of the Refinement Stage after all, and her combat ability was close to that of a high-level Building Foundation Stage Cultivator. Faced with danger, she did not panic, but summoned her spiritual gas, which formed an invisible swirl behind her and stalled Li Yao's sword.

In the meantime, her two soft swords shivered like two hissing vipers and swiped at Li Yao's throat!

The dissected Scorpion's Tail was controlled via the ropes and spiritual gas tubes. It relied on the swinging force to maximize the damage of the attack. But mired in Xiong Zhenzhen's swirl, the tip of the sword was not able to move any further. Even though it managed to break through the swirl in the end, it would have lost all its momentum and could in no way pierce through Xiong Zhenzhen's armor.

But Xiong Zhenzhen's sword would penetrate through the gap between Li Yao's helmet and breastplate within the next half second!

Right then, an earsplitting shriek burst out from the tip of Scorpion's Tail. A long blue needle darted out from there!

As it turned out, the tip of Li Yao's sword was hollow, in which a deadly venomous needle had been hidden. Now that it was ejected by high-pressure spiritual gas, it broke through the swirl instantly and crashed into Xiong Zhenzhen's armor brutally!

Shua!

Three stabilizer fins as thin as paper opened up on the back of the needle. Exhaust flames squirted out and the needle started revolving rapidly!

The venomous needle was much thinner than a chopstick. Yet, Li Yao had been able to empty the back end of the needle and fill it with crystals, thereby transforming the needle into a super mini rocket!

Pushed by the gushing spiritual gas and the exploding crystals, the venomous needle revolved rapidly, drilled into Xiong Zhenzhen's armor without trouble, and passed through her chest!

In the next moment, blood was spraying in the air!

Thankfully, since it was merely a test, Li Yao did not really smear deadly poison on the needle, nor had he aimed the needle at Xiong Zhenzhen's heart. The needle pierced into her body but avoided her vital organs.

Otherwise, his attack could've blown up Xiong Zhenzhen's heart directly!

Even so, Xiong Zhenzhen's face still turned pale in shock. She grunted and fell out of the sky.

In the meantime, Li Yao sensed that a mountain, or more exactly, an erupting volcano, had moved below him!

He kicked Xiong Zhenzhen's breasts mercilessly. With the counterforce and his surging spiritual gas, he altered his direction weirdly!

Where he had been about to land, four Wolf Fangs exploded at the same time, raising a raging tide of flames and chaos.

However, another Wolf Fang that was even larger had been tossed to his new direction and was rushing right in his face.

Li Yao did not even bother to blink. The result of the hard training over the past month was fully demonstrated. A huge amount of spiritual gas surged out of his right arm and tangled together like multiple white dragons. It formed an enormous shield three feet in front of his fists and smashed at the Wolf Fang!

BOOM!

A startling fireball was raised in midair, which Li Yao crawled out from. Although his armor was blackened, his speed was as high as before.

He had blown up a Wolf Fang directly!

"Excellent!"

Earsplitting roars were echoing on the ground. Shi Meng, captain of the Iron Bears Detonation Team, couldn't have been more excited. He squatted deeply. Spiritual gas surged out crazily from his legs as if he had bound two shrieking True Qi trains to them!

He exerted his strength. Centering at his feet, a vast spider net of cracks that looked like a super weird rune array appeared instantly on the ground covering fifty square meters!

Huala!

The ground within fifty square meters was pressed down brutally by his spiritual gas. A shallow pit more than half a meter deep had been left!

Shi Meng soared to the sky like a rocket and punched. Squeaking noises were resounding in front of him. Even the air turned extremely fuzzy!

Li Yao's eyes were bloodshot, his face hideous, while he shouted like the primordial beasts had.

If he were to take off his armor, everybody would be able to see that the muscles all over his body were bouncing crazily like furious flames. Those on his back had even formed an angry face of fire!

"Hu!"

Li Yao punched, too. White light seemed to appear on the edge of his fist as the air had been compressed to the point that it was about to explode!

Iron fist versus iron fist!

For a moment, all the members of the Iron Bears Detonation Team held their breath and stopped moving, waiting for the result of the collision dumbly.

One of them was the super strong man Shi Meng, who boasted the most physical strength in his generation of the

Furious Bears Tribe, while the other one was a mysterious monster who could withstand spiritual gas set to fifty times the standard pressure. At this moment, even the most experienced teammates of the Iron Bears Detonation Team were not certain that their captain would be the final winner!

BOOM!

Before the fists of the two parties collided, the air currents raised by them had crashed heavily, leading to a visible blast that rippled out rapidly like manic gales!

Brightness resembling flames were vaguely blinking on them. It was not spiritual energy but their hot, mad, unstoppable fighting will!

The fighting will enchanted Li Yao's soul and bewildered his mind. Giant gaps were appearing on the plate of his right arm, revealing countless reckless silver iron balls inside.

It was not until the last moment that Li Yao's head was clear briefly again. He managed to lock his armor again, but his movements were disrupted as a result.

BOOM!

An explosion that seemed to suggest that a weapon factory had exploded broke out between the two fists.

Due to the 0.1 seconds of delay, Shi Meng's spiritual gas flooded out and swallowed Li Yao instantly.

Everybody felt that their head was dizzy. Then, they saw that Li Yao was blown away like a kite whose string had been cut off before he hit the ground brutally. The flag that he'd been carrying had fallen some twenty meters away.

They were dazed for almost three seconds, before they realized what had happened and lunged at the flag after a shout.

Li Yao did not come back to himself until ten seconds later. He shook his head hard but still felt that his ears were ringing. He blinked slowly, but the ground was still leaning toward the left.

What an impressive punch!

His spiritual gas pierced into my armor, muscles, and bones and attacked my internal organs and cerebrum directly!

Although I am not wounded on the surface, my internal organs and my cerebrum are vibrating at a high frequency inside my body!

My cerebrum is bashing my skull in each direction. I feel that somebody is smashing my head with a giant hammer more than ten times per second right now. His one punch has resulted in a severe brain concussion. If it were someone else, they would've been beaten into a coma or killed on the spot!

Captain of the Iron Bears Detonation Team, Shi Meng…

Li Yao sat on the ground for over half a minute before he staggered to the edge of the test field, where he sat down and took a long breath in relief. A satisfied smile appeared on his face.

The battle was truly entertaining and gratifying!

He tried his best to hold back his nausea and observed the competition between the two elite teams quietly.

Xiong Zhenzhen's lung had been punctured by him, and she had lost most of her combat ability. The Iron Bears Detonation Team took the advantage and attacked under the lead of Shi Meng. Eventually, they brought the flag back to their home camp.

The test was ended!

However, there were no cheers on the winning side, and those who failed were not depressed, either. Everybody was staring at Li Yao in shock and respect.

Although he had been defeated in the end, he had put down more than ten elites by himself and almost finished the captain of the Fierce Storm Assault Team.

It was also safe to say that his defeat was because of Xiong Zhenzhen and Shi Meng's collaboration.

Such a failure was definitely worth being proud of. They were both shocked and amazed!

Xiong Zhenzhen and Shi Meng walked forward and eyed Li Yao in a complicated way.

"You went easy on me just now."

Due to the huge loss of blood, Xiong Zhenzhen's lips were somewhat pale. She was still in a trance right now and could not believe what had just happened.

"It's just a test," replied Li Yao with a coarse voice and weird tone.

After a month of interaction, he had picked up the accent of the Iron Plateau natives a bit. However, he did not dare speak as fast he used to and could only utter a sentence word by word. Thankfully, there were not many traces of the space residents in his words, although they did sound somewhat different to the natives' ears.

"It's been a long time since I last enjoyed such a satisfying match! The strength of your fists is only slightly lower than that of mine!"

Shi Meng burst out into laughter contentedly. He extended his hands to Li Yao as he remarked, "Your name is Sand Scorpion? You are truly an expert. Welcome to the Furious Bears Tribe. We are lucky to have you to fight side by side with us to challenge the apocalypse!"

Li Yao hesitated briefly. Then he grinned and extended his hand, too.

…

An hour later, in a desolate factory on the west side of the weapon factory…

It was the place where the previous weapon factory had been established more than five decades ago. But the factory had been burnt to the ground in an accident and abandoned ever since. When Li Yao proposed to build his own armor, Xiong Wuji asked someone to clean up the area and install several simple tools. It was Li Yao's shabby refining chamber right now.

The Sky Scorpion Armor that Li Yao built was almost exclusively based on the ancient techniques forty thousand years ago that did not demand much on the facilities. Therefore, he could make do with what he had.

In front of the giant mirror, Li Yao examined the Sky Scorpion Armor with great satisfaction. But an urge popped up in his mind again when he thought of the fierce battle previously.

The heritage of the Titan Warriors is indeed terrifying. It can soak people in the pleasure of killing all the time. No wonder so many experts of the Furious Bears Tribe became mentally deranged and slaves to their killing intent.

My brain went blank when I was enjoying the fight just now. I almost couldn't help but perform 'that move' before my fist and Shi Meng's fist collided!

Thankfully, I didn't. Otherwise…

Four metal statues were placed in the middle of the debris. The more Li Yao thought of the punch previously, the more untamable the fighting will deep in his bones got. He suddenly blinked to the front of one of the metal statues. He crouched, with his legs widened like a long bow, before he put his right arm behind his back. The plate on his right arm revealed a crack from which nine iron balls rolled out. The iron balls were concentrated on the surface of his fist controlled by his spiritual gas!

The nine iron balls were, in fact, mini crystal bombs with magnetic shells. They could be absorbed to the surface of the armor and roll around without falling.

"EXPLODE!" Li Yao bellowed and punched the chest of the metal statue brutally with his right fist.

The nine mini crystal bombs were immediately detonated. But before their damage was fully triggered, it had been wreathed by the trailing wind resulting from the punch and pierced through the chest of the metal statue like a focused, super-compressed magma!

BOOM!

The punch mixed with the damage of nine crystal bombs did not stop until it reached dozens of meters away. The upper half body of the metal statue had been completely destroyed, and a valley more than half a meter deep had appeared in the ground.

It looked as if a meteorite had brushed past the ground. Hot steam was still popping up nonstop!

The strength of his iron fist together with the damage of the crystal bombs was so overwhelming!

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao looked at the traces left by his previous punch in fulfilment and finished his thought.

Otherwise, Shi Meng wouldn't be able to join the battle of apocalypse!

Chapter 576: Charging at the Apocalypse!

Chapter 576: Charging at the Apocalypse!

At midnight, deep below the temple of techniques, inside Xiong Wuji's personal training chamber...

Bright silver starry brightness was blinking vaguely on the Black Star Stone floor that was as deep and dark as ink, as if the night sky had been reversed and paved on the ground.

Li Yao was standing right on the 'night sky'. He was wearing a pair of pure white linen pants, and his upper body was naked. His eyes were half close, his breath long and stable. Spiritual gas leaked through the pores all over his body and spread out like ripples. The furthest had reached more than thirty meters away.

The field of spiritual gas around him was now 77 meters in diameter, suggesting that he was in the 77th level of the Refinement Stage!

Li Yao suddenly opened his half-closed eyes and took a deep breath. His chest rose high, almost expanding to double its size.

All the air inside the training chamber seemed to be absorbed by him!

As he took in the air, the spiritual gas around his body also marched at his heart unstoppably under the motivation of his muscles and veins!

Crushing the Black Spider Death Curse with spiritual gas of the 77th level!

The black tattoo on Li Yao's chest was writhing and wriggling like snakes that were burnt by fire. It was fleeing toward the deeper part of his heart with haste!

Li Yao grunted and fell to one knee, smashing a tile of the floor into pieces, before he vomited a mouthful of black blood.

The splashing blood shivered like an evil creature and did not die down for a long time.

Still can't.

But the Black Spider Death Curse has been somewhat moved. I can sense its… fear!

Li Yao grimaced and stopped attacking. He dispersed his spiritual gas evenly around his body to nurture his muscles and veins.

Although the previous trial had not worked out, the reaction of the Black Spider Death Curse had given him new hope. He would definitely be able to break through all the shackles as long as the spiritual gas inside his body was stronger!

Xiong Wuji's surprised voice came over. "One month ago, I never would've believed that anybody could break into the 77th level of the Refinement Stage from the 14th level, nor would I have expected that a qi-trainer in the 77th level could heavily wound Xiong Zhenzhen and almost draw with Shi Meng."

Li Yao lowered his head, watching the tattoo on his chest reappearing, as he replied confidently, "My capability was close to the peak of the Building Foundation Stage in the beginning. Gauged in the metrics of Iron Plateau, it was well above the 90th level of the Refinement Stage. It's just that my heart has been locked by the Black Spider Death Curse, and I cannot liquefy my spiritual energy.

"However, my brain, my limbs, and all my internal organs except for my heart are all in the Building Foundation Stage.

"So, I did not break into the 77th level of the Refinement Stage in the past month; I merely trained myself crazily in the qi-trainers' way and learned to wield the same strength inside my body in a different form!

"It's a shame that one month is still too short. If I had three months, I might have been able to reach strength equivalent to the peak of the Building Foundation Stage while at the Refinement Stage. Chances are that I would have made it into the 95th level of the Refinement Stage or even higher!"

Li Yao was enticed by the idea.

Now that he was in the 77th level of the Refinement Stage, he had sensed clearly that his combat ability was not far from when he was in the high level of the Building Foundation Stage.

Based on the deadly skills and the technique to release his killing intent that he had learned in the Titan Illusionary Land, together with the instantaneous damage when his spiritual gas burst out, his combat ability was even surpassing that of the old days.

He pondered for a long time and concluded that, although he seemed to be at a lower Cultivation level right now, he had in fact only switched to a different combat mode!

Manipulating the spiritual energy in the gas form was one combat mode, and manipulating that in the liquid form was another. There were no rules that the latter was necessarily stronger than the former.

But Li Yao was still desperate to know how strong he would become if when he was able to switch between the two combat modes freely at will or even combine them into one after he resolved the Black Spider Death Curse!

Thinking about that, Li Yao said earnestly, "Thank you very much, Chief Xiong. I don't think every native of Iron Plateau would be so open-minded and unbiased as to provide all their secret training techniques generously for a space resident!"

Xiong Wuji smiled casually. "The apocalypse is coming. The more top warriors we have in our tribe, the more likely we will be able to survive. In the critical times of life and death, prejudice is the least of my concerns.

"Moreover, it was quite a fair deal that we made. The modification plans of sonic swords and Wolf Fangs that you offered left a deep impression on the refiners in the weapon factory. They said that the overall combat ability of the tribe will be significantly increased when the new weapons are manufactured and equipped.

"Your contribution in that regard alone is enough for me to trade any secret techniques with you."

Li Yao shook his head slightly.

They were both well aware that the value of the secret arts was not the most important factor in the exchange of knowledge. The most important factor was that, in the eyes of Iron Plateau natives, the techniques of qi-trainers were supreme and unparalleled. Xiong Wuji had definitely risked a lot of things and held back tremendous pressure when he decided to let an outsider learn their ultimate secrets before he knew enough about him.

Li Yao stared at him in the eyes and said solemnly, "Chief Xiong, thank you for your trust. Tomorrow, you will know that you've made the right call."

Xiong Wuji smiled and said, "Tell me, Li Yao. Are Cultivators in space all like you?"

Li Yao lowered his head. It took him quite a long time to consider the question.

When Li Yao raised his head again, there was delight deep down his eyes, as he observed, "There are countless Cultivators in space. Of course, their personalities are different. Some of them are brave, some craven; some are selfish, some altruistic. I can't tell which personality has the advantage in number.

"However, I have encountered many people who are like me. A great many of them."

Xiong Wuji said, "That will be great."

He raised his head and gazed at the dark ceiling. His eyes seemed to be piercing dozens of floors over his head into the sky and capturing the shining stars. He was apparently deep in thought, but there was no telling what he was thinking of.

Right then, with a 'BAM' sound, the door of the training chamber was bashed open, and a thin young man staggered inside.

It was Wu Mayan!

The hair all over his body was trembling. Even his teeth were clattering. It took him forever before he summoned enough strength and shouted in a voice that was entirely different from usual, "Father Xiong, you said that I would be allowed to join the battle against the apocalypse as long as I completed the training plan that Uncle Sand Scorpion arranged for me. You won't go back on your word, will you?"

Xiong Wuji was dazed. "You've completed it?"

Wu Mayan grinned, his every tooth glittering, "I have! You can ask Master Fu Dong if you want. My movements were as standard as in a textbook, and I took absolutely no shortcuts—"

While he was talking, he suddenly faltered and fell backward to the ground. Snoring sounds came one second later.

Xiong Wuji looked at Li Yao and said, "I thought that the training plan you arranged for him was incompletable."

Li Yao frowned as he stared at the young man who was crouching on the ground and replied, "It is."

…

The next day at noon, the sun was hot, and the sandstorm was raging.

"Haha. The young genius Wu Mayan finally gets to play his part in the battle of the apocalypse now! Father Xiong was the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau. I'm going to surpass him and become the new best warrior of Iron Plateau in the future!"

Wu Mayan danced excitedly on his single tank and almost fell off. Two flags of the Furious Bears Tribe were fluttering behind the vehicle.

Li Yao was driving a single tank next to him. The tank had been added with the shells of the Emperor Sand Scorpions.

They were the trophies that he had gotten when he saved Wu Mayan.

The curved shells of the Emperor Sand Scorpions could make the surface of the single tank streamlined and reduce the friction of the wind. They could also protect the key parts so that they would not be affected by the sand in the desert.

At first glance, the single tank was an Emperor Sand Scorpion that was lurking in the sand. The rams at the front of the vehicle had been replaced by two giant scorpion claws, which protruded out from the two sides of the tank.

At the rear of the single tank, two scorpion tails were raised high and aimed at the front.

They were two True Qi cannons decorated with shells from the tails of the Emperor Sand Scorpions as if they were real scorpion tails.

The awe-inspiring single tank made Li Yao look intimidating and dominating. Wu Mayan also found it difficult to move his eyes away from it.

Li Yao had promised that he would craft an even better one for him after the battle of the apocalypse.

Single tanks were fastest. A bunch of iron knights were charging in the lead like the sharpest arrowheads.

Behind them, smoke was soaring like a sandstorm. Earsplitting fulminations of spiritual gas made the ground slightly tremble.

Thousands of True Qi tanks, carrying tens of thousands of qi-trainers, turned the desolate land into a simmering ocean.

In the middle of the pack were many enormous True Qi beasts that were almost twenty meters tall. They were like moving fortresses with countless exhaust tubes standing behind them from which dragons of smoke were rushing.

Many other heavy True Qi tanks were carrying large, fully-enclosed iron boxes. Nonstop bashing sounds could be heard from the boxes, as if the most ferocious animals had been locked in them!

The Furious Bears Tribe only had a population of several million, and yet there were tens of thousands of qi-trainers among them, meaning that one person in every hundred people had the opportunity to become a qi-trainer.

Such a ratio was much higher than the odds of ordinary people in the outside world awakening their spiritual roots. It was a result of being eliminated and filtered in the harsh environment for five thousand years.

The qi-trainers marched forward toward northwest like a raging tide. The team made of ordinary fighters was some distance away from them and formed the second defense line.

They were all the adults in the tribe. Although they were not qi-trainers, the tall and strong Iron Plateau natives could still wield simple True Qi weapons with the help of True Qi containers. They were responsible for catching the small fries that luckily escaped the battle formation at the front.

In the unlikely scenario that the qi-trainers failed, they would fight until there were none of them, too.

The apocalypse cloud in the sky of the northwest looked entirely different from several days ago. The colors had dimmed, and the arms formed by the cloud were slithering like the limbs of a giant beast. The size of the cloud was larger, and it looked like it had already consumed a corner of the sky. The black hole in the middle had expanded, too. From the center of the black hole, thousands of dazzling electric arcs were unleashed. They seemed to be piercing into everyone's heart!

"Come on. Let's fight!"

The qi-trainers of the Furious Bears Tribe roared, laughed, and screamed. They accelerated the vehicles below them to the highest speed and almost blew them into pieces as they charged at the apocalypse cloud like a whirlwind!

Chapter 577: Six Tribes Gathered!

Chapter 577: Six Tribes Gathered!

The tanks of the Furious Bears Tribe drove in the unceasing sand for hundreds of kilometers, leaving a long, yellow trail behind them, as they entered the center of the desert.

This place was a paradise for demon beasts. Some of them that had been lurking underground had even formed a flock with a population of several hundred. But, however large the flock was, they did not dare mess around with the unstoppable iron army!

Even the most brutal demon beasts were hiding in the depths of their nests, the entrances to which they had blocked with rocks and grass. They felt the shaking earth and shuddered in the darkness!

The apocalypse cloud continued to grow larger and almost covered half of the sky. The blue color of the remaining half sky was becoming lackluster, too.

Although they were still hundreds of kilometers away, the shrieks and screams deep inside the apocalypse cloud were already audible. A large beam of smoke, which seemed to have formed from billions of evil spirits, rose up from the horizon to the sky!

Li Yao and Wu Mayan were riding forward together when they heard noises from their left and right that were even louder than the roars of the apocalypse cloud.

They looked back and noticed that two equally large teams of tanks had appeared on the horizon on their left and right simultaneously and rushed at them at the same time.

The tanks on the left side were amazingly fast and approached them like a silver hurricane.

Li Yao squinted and observed carefully. He found that the paint on the tanks was colorful and eye-catching, and he felt that they were like caterpillars with various insignia.

The structure of their tanks was similar to that of the Furious Bears Tribe's tanks, except that they were apparently much more finely-made. A lot of rare metal materials had been used in the vehicles. Several guns and a handful of sabers and swords were placed beside almost every warrior.

On the flag behind their tanks was painted a glittering sliver crescent moon. There was a grinning face on the moon that was in the same style as the emblem of the Burning Sun Tribe.

Wu Mayan declared, "They are the tanks from the Silver Moon Tribe. The Silver Moon Tribe is the richest one of the six tribes of Iron Plateau. They have several large mother lodes in their territory, and they like to do business among the six tribes. Therefore, they have accumulated tremendous wealth. Their armor and magical equipment are the most delicate on Iron Plateau!

"However—"

Wu Mayan grimaced. "Qi-trainers of the Silver Moon Tribe are very valiant when they have enough ammunition and spiritual gas, but if the battle is prolonged and they run out of supply, it will be hard to tell!"

Li Yao nodded and pointed at the right. "What about them?"

The tanks on the right were even more raucous than the Silver Moon Tribe. Countless muscular men were wrapped in chains of cartridge clips and carried several True Qi guns on their backs.

Such weapons could spray the bullets out by the high-pressure spiritual gas. They were definitely as powerful as the spiritual guns in the outside world.

Many warriors were yelling and shooting their guns at the sky. Their bullets were almost the size of a child's fist. There was no telling what kind of crystals were stored in them, but the chemical reaction in them was evidently not smooth. They all exploded in midair and became colorful fireworks.

Wu Mayan announced, "They are the tanks of the Heaven Wolves Tribe. People there prefer to use firearms. The larger the caliber of their weapon, the stronger they are considered to be. Therefore, the strongest expert is the one using the biggest gun! Look, their tanks are full of machine guns and turrets that can aim at any angle!

"What the top experts of the Heaven Wolves Tribe use can barely be called guns; they are essentially carrying large cannons onto the battlefield!"

While the two of them were talking, Xiong Wuji and the leaders of the Furious Bears Tribe rushed out of the formation and gathered with the heads of the Silver Moon Tribe and the Heaven Wolves Tribe. The three parties rode together and greeted each other by shouting. Obviously, they were in a close relationship.

Wu Mayan drew close to Li Yao and whispered to him, almost extending his mouth to Li Yao's ear, "In every battle of the apocalypse, all the experts and leaders of the six tribes of Iron Plateau gather together. Therefore, every battle of the apocalypse is also a chance for the six tribes to hold a meeting. The strategy for the development of the six tribes of Iron Plateau in the next ten years will be discussed in such meetings!

"The Silver Moon Tribe and the Heaven Wolves Tribe are in a good relationship with us; we are always on the same side!

"But the other three tribes are not so close to us!"

Li Yao raised his eyebrow. "Are there conflicts?"

Wu Mayan blushed. Thankfully, it was hard to distinguish in the middle of the raging sandstorm. He explained, "The environment on Iron Plateau is extremely rough. Nobody's life is easy. Sometimes, due to the different development plans, conflicts are bound to occur!

"Both mother lodes and arable lands are limited. In competition for resources, several major and minor conflicts have broken out over the past thousands of years.

"However, the occasional apocalypse outbursts suppress all the skirmishes in the end. A thousand years ago, the seniors of the six tribes made a deal together that the resources should be distributed according to the performaces in the battles of the apocalypse!

"Whoever hunts the most beasts in a battle of apocalypse will be granted with the largest portion of resources. Whoever has the best performance in a battle of apocalypse will earn the right to command everybody else in their tribe! Those who disobeyed them would be attacked by the other five tribes!

"It has been an unshakable rule on Iron Plateau.

"Therefore, although we do not always see eye to eye with one another, we managed to maintain the ostensible peace.

"However—"

Wu Mayan lowered his head deeply but held it high again a moment later. He bit his lips so hard that there were traces of his teeth on them, before he said loudly, "Since my mother brought me to the Furious Bears Tribe thirteen years ago, the conflict among the six tribes has become even more heated!

"Furious Bears, Silver Moon, and Heaven Wolves were relatively politer to outsiders. Later, after my mother cured several leaders of the Silver Moon Tribe and the Heaven Wolves Tribe, they all accepted us.

"But as for Burning Sun, Feathered Snakes, and Giant Axe, they were not so easy to talk sense to. They detest space residents and have demanded many times that the Furious Bears Tribe kick us out and leave us at the mercy of the desert!

"I remember that, when the three tribes learned that I was starting to learn the qi-trainers' techniques, a civil war among the six tribes of Iron Plateau almost broke out!

"Father Xiong has shouldered all the responsibility by himself so that my mom and I could live comfortably in Furious Bears City to this day!"

While talking, the young man's eyes turned red. He clenched his fists, his tone sharper than ever. "I have two motivations for my strict training. Firstly, I want to protect my mom so that nobody is mean to her!

"Secondly, I don't want to disappoint Father Xiong!

"I remember that, when the experts of Burning Sun, Feathered Snakes, and Giant Axe gathered at the time and urged the Furious Bears Tribe to drive us away, Father Xiong took all the pressure by himself the hard way!

"I still remember clearly what my father said at that moment.

"He said that the Iron Plateau natives and the space residents shared the same blood. We are all human beings, striving for survival, and therefore shouldn't attack each other.

"If determined to fight, the real men of Iron Plateau should challenge the Core Formation Stage Cultivators and the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the space fairly and squarely. Why should they vent their anger from five thousand years ago on a widow and her child?

"After saying that, he defeated three experts from the three tribes in a row in the arena and therefore earned us the right to stay!

"I will never forget how manly Father Xiong was after the battle, despite the heavy wounds and dripping blood!

"He has paid so much to protect my mom and me; I shall become someone who deserves his sacrifice!

"Yes. We are all human beings, and our blood is equally red and hot. I'm going to prove that point!

"Although the blood of space flows in my veins, I will become the strongest warrior on Iron Plateau!

"Hu—"

The young man roared. He snatched a flag from the back of his tank and dashed at a slant stone. Then he leapt into the air with the stone as a platform.

The young man burst into laughter, with the flag flapping in the wind, like a torch that would not die down however intensely the storm was blowing.

The scene impressed Li Yao deeply. He recalled how Wu Mayan had fallen to the ground exhaustedly late the previous night.

The training plan he had drafted for Wu Mayan was ten times crueler than 'the infernal special training program of death', the plan Sun Biao had devised for him years ago. He had thought that Wu Mayan would definitely give up, but as it turned out, the young man had made his way through it!

Maybe the thirteen-year-old young man was not a genius but a lunatic just like himself.

Li Yao took a long breath in relief. He grinned and accelerated his tank to catch up with his young companion.

After another hour of rushing, the tanks from the other three tribes finally appeared!

The competition between the two sides started the moment they met!

Wu Mayan pointed at the three waves of smoke and interpreted them for Li Yao.

"The red smoke on the left, and the fastest one, is the Burning Sun Tribe! Their tanks boast the highest speed and specifications. They have also trained the best scouts and charging team in their tribe. They are an out-and-out tribe of racing!

"The Burning Sun Tribe worships speed. They believe that the faster one is, the stronger one is!"

Li Yao recalled Yan Chihuo of the Burning Sun Tribe, who was indeed an excellent tank racer. If he hadn't had such a marvelous gadget to escape, Black Wing, he might've been unable to escape the man's pursuit.

"The tanks in the middle belong to the Feathered Snakes Tribe. Do you see the falcons and giant bats in the sky? They are all animals that have been tamed by the Feathered Snakes Tribe.

"The Feathered Snakes Tribe is the tribe that is best at domesticating animals. Not only are they adept at releasing animals in a battle, they are also fond of strengthening themselves with the animals!

"There's this virulent Feathered Snake that they specially bred. When they are young, they let the snakes bite themselves and stimulate their bodies with the poison. Their flesh, veins, and nerves are strengthened in such a way, and the strongest warriors of the Feathered Snakes Tribe are eventually created!

"On the right, it's the Giant Axe Tribe. They are the tribe with the strictest rules in battles.

"Look, there are a lot of drumming cars in their tribe. Everybody marches forward toward the demon beasts and throws their axe at the same time according to the drumming. The overwhelming wave of axes can almost even tear a mountain apart instantly!"

Chapter 578: Showing Off!

Chapter 578: Showing Off!

Li Yao looked ahead and immediately noticed dozens of excessively large tanks from the Giant Axe Tribe that had hundreds of drums placed on them. Countless brawny men, who wore nothing on their upper body, were hitting the drums hard!

The heavy drumming together with the fulmination of spiritual gas allowed the qi-trainers of the Giant Axe Tribe to activate their spiritual gas at the same time. Although there were only several thousand of them, they were marching forward slowly but surely as if they were an army of tens of thousands of soldiers!

Li Yao secretly commended them. The armies of the six tribes of Iron Plateau had their own distinctive characteristics, but all of them were well-trained and obedient to commands. Many of their battle formations were even more advanced than those of the Heaven's Origin Sector.

Cultivators in the Heaven's Origin Sector would join the battles against the Blood Demon Sector based on the 'war system'. But essentially, the system was designed to maximize and make best use of their personal combat ability; it was not really fit for a great war that often required well-ordered teamwork.

Enlisting the Cultivators with high personal combat ability into thoroughly organized battle formations was a headache for every leader in the world of Cultivators, especially commanding them like a real army while not preventing the Cultivators from using their best techniques. Both the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector had failed to find a good solution to the dilemma.

But the qi-trainers on Iron Plateau had discovered a unique way.

The leadership of the three tribes, including Xiong Wuji, rushed toward the three new teams of tanks.

In the meantime, countless young qi-trainers wandered out from the other three tribes and shuttled around the Furious Bears Tribe's team on their agile and swift single tanks. They were yelling and roaring with arrogant expressions, as if they were trying to provoke the Furious Bears Tribe intentionally.

Li Yao glanced questioningly at Wu Mayan.

Wu Mayan explained, "This is a tradition of Iron Plateau. Every battle against the apocalypse is the time when all the experts of the six tribes gather. As long as one distinguishes themself in battle, their name will be heard all over Iron Plateau!

"Therefore, before each battle, many unknown qi-trainers will come out and show off in order to provoke the other tribes, especially the 'landlord'. They are implying that, although this is our territory, they are going to make the greatest contributions in the battle to come no matter what!

"Valiancy is what matters most on Iron Plateau. We must fight back such provocations. Let's consider it a warm-up before the battle of apocalypse!"

His eyes bloodshot, Wu Mayan gazed at the single tank that was galloping at a high speed in the lead.

Li Yao squinted and discovered that the flag of the Burning Sun Tribe was on the back of the tank.

It appeared that Wu Mayan still remembered how the three tribes had visited Furious Bears Tribe and insisted that he and Sha Yulan be banished.

The knight of the Burning Sun Tribe in the lead was excellently controlling the tank. His single tank was moving toward left and then right, like a catkin in the wind, while he slashed his saber so fast that thousands of streams of silver brightness flooded out of the vehicles. He even drove under the heavy tanks of the Furious Bears Tribe from one side and crawled out from the other side dangerously, raising roars of applause.

Wu Mayan bellowed and accelerated suddenly toward the knight of the Burning Sun Tribe. He waved the flag of the Furious Bears Tribe hard and crossed his opponent's flag of the Burning Sub Tribe!

This was the way to answer someone's provocation on Iron Plateau!

BOOM! BOOM!

Intense white smoke spurted out of the back of the two True Qi tanks, with flames vaguely mixed in them. The fulminations of the two vehicles were even noisier than those of heavy tanks.

At first, they drove next to each other. Then they started to try to go faster than their opponent, and whoever was in front would spurt the gas right into the other person's face.

The two of them had officially pissed each other off and were ready for a competition!

As more than a hundred thousand qi-trainers had gathered in the desert, there were bound to be young and ambitious warriors whose fighting will was soaring now that a life-and-death battle was approaching. It was only reasonable that such minor conflicts had burst out.

Over the past hundreds of years, such competitions before battles had already become a tradition. As long as nobody was killed, everybody was free to do what they wanted. Also, the competitions greatly helped boost the morale of the army.

Naturally, the winners of the competition were excited and more confident than before after they secured the victory, and those who failed would also feel ashamed and would try to win back their pride in the battle to come. Therefore, they were often particularly fearless later.

Even for the spectators, the hotblooded competitions were beneficial for them to release some tension before the battle.

It was a valuable lesson that had been passed on generation after generation for hundreds of years. Nobody stopped them. Instead, seeing that the two of them were challenging each other, all the other qi-trainers shouted and cheered. The drumming tanks of the Giant Axe Tribe worked even harder and started playing a blood-boiling battle hymn!

Wu Mayan and the knight of the Burning Sun Tribe went faster and faster and soon surpassed the vanguard, leading the way in the desert.

The desert was full of peril. Although the ground seemed normal, it was quite possible that the underground demon beasts had sabotaged and created countless empty chambers below the earth. Also, the seemingly solid ground could very well be a thin layer of rock that covered a bottomless abyss, opened up by the apocalypse's ravaging of the land!

The anti-gravity technology of Iron Plateau was very underdeveloped. Most of the tanks had to ride close to the ground. For super-large tanks weighing hundreds of tons, they would be destroyed together with the passengers on them should they fall into a pit or an abyss.

Therefore, in front of the main troops, there were vanguards who were driving single tanks that had been equipped with special probe magical equipment, which hit the ground continuously. They were able to determine whether or not the ground was solid enough for the main troops to pass over by listening to the echoes.

The job could be very dangerous; sometimes the probe magical equipment even collapsed the underground empty chambers directly.

Weird whirls that boasted immense attraction force often existed in the empty chambers. Like swirls in an ocean, they could drag the victims underground easily.

Therefore, only the nimblest warrior with the keenest senses could serve in the vanguard.

Wu Mayan and the knight of the Burning Sun Tribe, on the other hand, had gone beyond the vanguard and were rushing into the desert that had not been explored yet.

The gap in capability between the two parties was obvious. Wu Mayan was definitely at a much lower level than the knight of the Burning Sun Tribe. He was much less skilled at driving the single tank than was his opponent, too.

The desert seemed flat from afar. But it was, in fact, ragged and full of ravines and bizarre rocks because of thousands of years of erosion. Occasionally, there were also skeletons of enormous demon beasts.

Yet, the knight of the Burning Sub Tribe was zigzagging about, dodging the obstructions swiftly. He was moving so fast and fluently that he seemed to be riding on a highway.

Wu Mayan, on the other hand, was like a fearless desperado. He saw absolutely no obstruction and simply rushed straight at the apocalypse cloud. However bumpy the road was, his route remained utterly unchanged!

His opponent was avoiding the obstructions while he was crashing into everything in his way without paying it any heed. Therefore, his opponent's advantage in skills was evened out by his boldness.

However, everybody could tell that he was risking his life for the game. Such a way of driving was a major burden both for himself and his single tank. If he was inattentive for one moment, he and the vehicle would be buried together!

All the qi-trainers were deeply awed.

The competitions before the battles were only meant for fun after all. It was a game among the young people of the six tribes. There were no grudges between them, and rarely had anyone risked their life for the victory of such a game. They did not understand why the knight of the Furious Bears Tribe was so agitated.

Swoosh!

Wu Mayan's True Qi tank rode above the rib of the skeleton of a large demon beast and, drawing an arc in the curved bone, rushed up high into the sky, leaving six thick beams of smoke trailing behind him, as if the vehicle had grown wings. The speed of his tank was brought to the highest, and it surpassed the knight of the Burning Sun Tribe for the first time.

The knight of the Burning Sun Tribe seemed to be intimidated by his resolution. He hit the brakes hard and came to an abrupt halt!

Wu Mayan burst into laughter. He did not land on the ground until he had flown almost five hundred meters. Sparks were spluttering everywhere when the tank hit the earth.

However, at exactly the moment of his landing, a sandstorm suddenly swept over, and the ground collapsed, revealing almost a hundred enormous caves!

"Not good. Iron Ore Worm nests!"

The faces of some of the experienced qi-trainers immediately blanched.

Iron Ore Worms were the experts of digging holes in the desert. They lived on the microconstituents in the rocks and could release special digestive acids that could transform the most solid rocks into loose sand.

They had been devouring rocks and defaecating unsolid earth all their life.

One Iron Ore Worm was enough to drill countless holes under the ground of several square kilometers and turn the area into a labyrinth.

But as it turned out, the place was a nest of Iron Ore Worms. Maybe it was because Iron Ore Worms' favorite microconstituents were highly concentrated in the area. Judging from the scale, dozens of Iron Ore Worms had taken the place as their nests.

They had been digging holes and enjoying the delicious food day and night. The hard rock stratums had turned into the softest sand during the process. Some spots in the region had been entirely hollowed and only had a thin cap over them.

Wu Mayan's heavy landing had crushed cap that was as thin as an egg shell. The nests of the Iron Ore Worms were exposed to the daylight.

Dozens of Iron Ore Worms were wriggling crazily underground and screaming desperately in outrage. Their mouthparts, which were full of acid and sharp teeth, were enlarged to such an extent that they could swallow Wu Mayan together with his tank!

Wu Mayan dashed among the various holes and dodged the assault of several Iron Ore Worms closely.

One of the Iron Ore Worms spurted a storm of iron ores brutally toward his back. Sparks immediately began popping up on the back of his single tank. Within a moment, the sparks turned into dancing flames!

Several other single tanks had rushed out from the main troops of the six tribes, trying to charge into the nests and save Wu Mayan.

A few experts of the Fierce Storm Assault Team of the Furious Bears Tribe had also dived into the air at a high speed.

However, a single tank in the shape of a venomous scorpion darted into the nests of the Iron Ore Tribes before anybody else.

The flag of the Furious Bears Tribe was stabbed into the back of the single tank, and yet the knight's skills of driving were even more sophisticated than those of the knights of the Burning Sun Tribe. He was galloping on the collapsed ground and dodging the bullets of the Iron Ore Worms every now and then. Sometimes, he even raised the head of the tank and moved toward the back of the Iron Ore Worms!

The second before Wu Mayan was to be devoured by the Iron Ore Worm, the scorpion-like tank arrived. The knight riding on it was quick enough to snatch Wu Mayan and toss him to the back of his tank.

After a huge CRACK, Wu Mayan's single tank was bitten by two Iron Ore Worms simultaneously and torn apart!

BOOM!

The broken single tank suddenly exploded astoundingly, as the knight had thrown several Wolf Fangs into it.

Smoke was spreading, and fire was soaring. The scorpion-like tank weaved deftly among countless infuriated Iron Ore Worms before it rushed out of the cave several seconds later!

Chapter 579: Challenging the Apocalypse!

Chapter 579: Challenging the Apocalypse!

His fluent driving skills made the spectators wonder whether or not he could drive the scorpion-like tank on a spider's web without breaking any of the threads!

The knight of the Burning Sun Tribe who had raced with Wu Mayan in the beginning was startled for a long time. He did not expect that there were such skilled knights in the Furious Bears Tribe. A moment later, he accelerated his tank and drew close, planning to have a duel with the knight on the scorpion-like tank.

However, the eighteen exhaust tubes in rows at the rear of the scorpion-like tank suddenly dispersed. Like two folded hands that were now opened, seven-colored mystic rays burst out and pushed the vehicle forward. The knight of the Burning Sun Tribe was left far behind, while the scorpion-like tank returned to his own tribe without even bothering to look at him.

For a moment, the Furious Bears Tribe were simmering with excitement. Nobody had anticipated that a knight of the Furious Bears Tribe could defeat the Burning Sun Tribe in a race. Cheers and applause echoed like thunder.

There was brief silence on the Burning Sun Tribe's side, but it was soon broken by thundering ovation, too.

Valiancy was valued most in the six tribes of Iron Plateau. The knight on the scorpion-like tank had risked his own life by rushing into the nests of the Iron Ore Worms and saving somebody else. Such an insane action and his marvelous racing skills had won the fondness of the warriors of the Burning Sun Tribe.

In the other tribes, many other experts were eyeing the scorpion-like tank in amazement, trying to find out who the knight was. However, his face was covered by a neatly-forged helmet that looked like the head of a scorpion. They could only see a pair of sharp eyes through the blockage of the dust.

The knight of the Burning Sun Tribe, on the other hand, cursed and returned to his team in frustration, only to be mocked by his companions ruthlessly.

At first, he had hesitated for a moment in front of the nests of the Iron Ore Worms and did not rush inside to save the victim as soon as possible, which was a clear sign of his lack of courage. Then, when he wanted to race with the new opponent, he couldn't even catch up with the tank's exhaust. It was truly a humiliating failure!

The chiefs of the six tribes soon began their meeting on the top of a large spider-like war machine that belonged to the Furious Bears Tribe. Seeing the episode, the chiefs and the other experts around them were greatly interested.

Yan Zhengdong, chief of the Burning Sun Tribe, had skin and muscles as healthy and vigorous as those of young men even though his hair was white. However, embarrassment was written all over his face. He tried to make a smile and remarked, "I was told long ago that two young experts had distinguished themselves in the Furious Bears Tribe in the recent ten years. One of them is Xiong Zhenzhen, and the other is Shi Meng. Neither of them has reached forty yet, but they have both entered the 80th level of the Refinement Stage. I wonder, is this knight Xiong Zhenzhen or Shi Meng?"

Xiong Wuji grinned like a big bear who had just stolen a honeycomb and replied, "His name is Sand Scorpion!"

On the back of the scorpion-like tank, Wu Mayan waved and writhed in excitement on the seat, half lying in it. He was so thrilled that he was almost lost for words. "Uncle Sand Scorpion, you were so awesome! I didn't know that your racing skills are so good! Even the knight of the Burning Sun Tribe did not dare step in, but you simply barged into the chaos without any hesitation.

"I saw it. I saw everything! You were driving on the back of the Iron Ore Worms and even jumped from there to the head of another Iron Ore Worm! That was so cool!

"No. You have to be my master! Recruit me as your disciple, Uncle Sand Scorpion! Teach me the secret methods to improve dozens of levels within one month and the coolest racing skills!"

Li Yao enjoyed the feeling of speed to his heart's content that he hadn't enjoyed for a long time. He didn't reply until quite a while later. Then, he opened his mouth with a coarse voice. "Why did you rush out? You were no match for him."

Wu Mayan's joyfulness was terminated. He was silent for a long time, before he gnashed his teeth. "I know the knight. His name is Yan Chihuo. He is son of Yan Zhengdong, who is the chief of the Burning Sun Tribe! Three years ago, when the Burning Sun Tribe, the Feathered Snakes Tribe, and the Giant Axe Tribe gathered in Furious Bears City and browbeat

Father Xiong into kicking my mother and me out, he was there, too, and he even pushed my mother heavily one time!

"He said at that time that the cowardly rats of space are not qualified to live in a town of Iron Plateau natives!

"I've remembered those words my entire life!

"I rushed out today because I wanted him to know who the cowardly rat really was!"

While talking, Wu Mayan suddenly stood up from the back seat of the tank.

Although Yan Chihuo had returned to his own team, he was being mocked by many warriors of his tribe. Bravery was the most important criterion for Iron Plateau natives. The courageous men were respected anywhere, and those who lacked guts would never be looked up to even if they were the son of the chief.

Yan Chihuo was quite angry and therefore glared at Li Yao's tank.

Since Wu Mayan was standing straight on the seat, he was much taller than Li Yao.

He took off his helmet and scowled at Yan Chihuo while pointing at his own face.

Yan Chihuo narrowed his eyes. He was confused at first because he did not realize who the guy was. A moment later, he suddenly discovered that the one racing with him just now was the little bastard from the space.

When he thought that the little bastard surpassed him at the end of the match, Yan Chihuo's face almost turned green in fury.

The entire Burning Sun Tribe was filled with discussion, too.

It was one thing to have been defeated by a knight of the Furious Bears Tribe and a whole different thing to have been beaten by a space resident!

Wu Mayan winked at him again before he put on his helmet and sat down again. He begged for a second time, "Uncle Sand Scorpion, please recruit me as your disciple! I can endure any pain or suffering as long as I can become stronger than right now. Next time, not counting on you, not counting on Father Xiong, I'm going to teach those condescending bastards a good lesson on my own!"

Li Yao was quiet in the blowing sandstorm for a long time before he slightly sighed and answered, "After the battle, if both you and I are alive, and you pass my final test, I will recruit you as my disciple."

"Really?"

Wu Mayan was so excited that he almost started performing backflips on the rear of the tank. Then he yelled, "What kind of test? Just bring it on! I'm scared of no tests!"

Li Yao smiled. "It's simple. You will only be gnawed by a few ants for a while."

…

It was late night when the qi-trainers of the six tribes reached the area of the egg of apocalypse after a long expedition of four hundred kilometers through a sandstorm.

The apocalypse cloud had consumed the sky above their heads. It was emitting bleak, gloomy, bluish rays. Illuminated by the light, every qi-trainer looked like a dead body.

This was a great canyon hundreds of meters deep. One could not help but wonder whether or not it had been created by the giant falling meteorites thousands of years ago. The bottom of the canyon had turned into a lake because of years of sinking rainwater. At this moment, the lake was bubbling and raising fuzzy fog. There was no telling how large the lake was.

Li Yao looked far ahead and found an extremely high mountain vaguely visible in the middle of the fog. Bizarrely-shaped, daunting rocks covered the mountain. Some of them protruded out of the mountain like the teeth and claws of animals, making the mountain look like a caltrop, just billions of times larger.

Large clusters of black smoke popped out of the gaps of the rocks and soared to the sky, joining the apocalypse cloud continuously.

BOOM CRACK! BOOM CRACK!

Rumbling noises echoed nonstop inside the apocalypse cloud, and brilliant lightning danced crazily, adding to everyone's uneasiness.

The beasts tamed by the Feathered Snakes Tribe sensed danger, too. Although they were restricted by their masters through secret arts, they were still grunting in low voices nervously.

Sensing that a large batch of human beings had drawn close, the apocalypse cloud shrank violently. It started raining suddenly, but the rainwater was extremely stinky.

"Hu—Hu—"

The apocalypse cloud was rolling and constricting. It swept over toward the canyon and wreathed the entire meteorite mountain, making it look like a gargantuan black heart that was beating and emitting dull 'LUM DUM' noises. Everybody felt that their own heart was grasped uncomfortably.

"Eggs of apocalypse can sense the existence of strangers. Since so many vigorous human beings have gathered in this place, the egg of apocalypse will be stimulated, and its maturing will be accelerated!

"Every sign indicates that the egg of apocalypse will explode before dawn!"

Wu Mayan was extremely happy after getting Li Yao's promise, so he explained the situation to him respectfully.

This particular egg of apocalypse was at the bottom of the great canyon. The terrain was very much in the six tribes' favor, because they could block all the apocalyptic beasts born from the egg as long as they guarded the two ends of the canyon.

The east side of the canyon was relatively narrow; it was not suitable to deploy large armies there. Therefore, the Furious Bears Tribe, the Silver Moon Tribe, and the Heaven Wolves Tribe were stationed in the west, while the Burning Sun Tribe, the Feathered Snakes Tribe, and the Giant Axe Tribe established their camps on the east side. Everybody was ready for battle.

The apocalypse cloud covered more of the meteorite through the beams of smoke with each passing minute. By five o'clock in the morning, the meteorite mountain had lost all its shape and was completely enveloped by the apocalypse cloud. It had truly become a wriggling egg of demons.

When the first blood-red ray of sunlight pierced through the sky and reached the egg of apocalypse, earsplitting shrieks burst out of the egg, as if the wraiths in the deepest level of hell were crying. In the dense smoke, thousands of black streams spurted out and spread to the entire canyon!

"Let it begin!"

More than a hundred thousand qi-trainers roared at the same time. Their voices almost broke the canyon apart!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM BOOM!

The True Qi artillery deployed behind the battle formations of the qi-trainers launched the first bombardment controlled by ordinary people!

The True Qi artillery could throw crystal bombs weighing hundreds of kilograms several thousand meters away with a reasonably high precision by detonating super-compressed air.

However, the bodies of the eccentric beasts born in the apocalypse were extremely sturdy. They wouldn't be hurt at all if the bombs did not explode right on their critical parts.

Besides, the True Qi artillery would consume a large number of resources. Also, due to the underdeveloped technology in the production procedures, many components would be loosened after each firing, therefore affecting the airtightness of the firearm. The second firing required tedious preparation before it could be carried out. So, the

True Qi artilleries could not bombard the enemy continuously.

In light of the shortcoming of the True Qi artillery, they were often used to launch one bombardment when the egg of apocalypse was about to explode and all the apocalyptic beasts were still gathered.

After that, the qi-trainers would be engaged in head-on bloody battles to secure the final victory!

Flowers of flames blossomed in the black smoke and soon wreathed the egg of apocalypse, transforming it into an orange super large fireball.

However, the fireball was collapsing inwardly nonstop. After each collapse, a large cluster of smoke rushed out!

The giant lake in the center of the canyon had been enshrouded in black smoke. The bubbling sound of the lake water was getting louder and louder, as if the entire lake was being vaporized.

Screams that nobody had heard, even in their worst nightmares, echoed from the black smoke!

Chapter 580: Manic Warriors!

Chapter 580: Manic Warriors!

Some enormous shadows gradually revealed themselves from the black smoke, although they were still not very clear. The crimson sun outlined their body and dyed the shadows blood red. Most of the shadows were like humungous insects, except that the most brutal features of almost ten different kinds of insects had been combined into one.

Standing on a magnificent war machine that looked like a spider, Xiong Wuji announced, his voice piercing through the entire canyon like a tolling bell and rumbling thunder, "Warriors of Iron Plateau, yet another egg of apocalypse has broken out, and the pests have shown up in front of us again!

"Behind us is our home and countless defenseless towns where our parents, siblings, and children are living happily!

"One escaping pest is enough to destroy the peace!

"Come on. Tell the pests with your fists and blades that this is our home and that the planet belongs to qi-trainers!

"Over the past five thousand years, we've crushed countless pests. In the five thousand years to come, we will go on fighting and exterminate even more pests! If the apocalypse breaks out ten thousand times, we will blow it up ten thousand times!

"This is our belief. This is the highest glory for every qi-trainer. Born in Iron Plateau, die in Iron Plateau!"

Cheers and roars burst out from the two sides of the canyon. All the qi-trainers were slapping their tanks with their weapons, raising brilliant sparks, while they bellowed at the same time.

"Born in Iron Plateau, die in Iron Plateau!"

Their killing intent soared up to the sky. Even the apocalypse seemed to be awed. Many gaps appeared in it like interconnecting wounds.

Through the gaps, rays of sunlight sprayed down and flowed on the desert like gold blood.

Coming! Coming!

Large flocks of beasts charged out of the black smoke. They were no longer blocked, and their hideous appearance was fully shown. Like a tsunami, they roared, shrieked, and scampered toward the two sides of the canyon!

Most demon beasts that could live in the harsh environment of Iron Plateau for thousands of years were insects and reptilians. The eccentric beasts produced by the egg of apocalypse carried distinctive characteristics of the two kinds of demon beasts.

Some of the eccentric beasts were like enormous lizards, except that their backs had grown almost ten sharp blades that looked like the forelegs of a mantis, which they were waving crazily.

Some other thick-skinned giant turtles with solid shells were dragging sturdy scorpion tails. When they waved their tails softly, visible waves spread through the air.

There were also countless snake-type eccentric beasts that were as wide as buckets, but disproportional antennas that solely belonged to insects were protruding out of their heads.

Some of the snake-type apocalyptic beasts only had one antenna that was thick, straight, and looked like a battering ram, while some others had four antennas that looked like iron maces on each sides of their head, which could concentrate in the middle from various directions and pierce forward as their jawbone constricted.

Whatever the form of the eccentric beasts, the surfaces of their bodies were all glittering. Because of the large amount of metal inside their bodies, it was like in an invisible armor that increased their defense ability by ten times. So, they were much more difficult to deal with than common demon beasts.

Such eccentric beasts of the apocalypse were not natural-born after all. They could not even be called life forms because they were 'weapons' that the apocalypse had specially refined!

Their vitality and strength would fully burst out for several days. After the duration, they would be automatically disassembled and die.

It was also why the outbreaks of apocalypse in the Dark Continent did not affect the territory of the six tribes.

However, for the outbreaks of the apocalypse that were too close, the 'weapons' could sweep over everything in their way like locusts and demolish all the towns, villages, farmlands, and mines before their vitality ran out.

Not only would they eliminate every creature they met, they would also absorb the mother lodes and corrupt all the arable land. The development of the civilization would suffer a critical setback because of the disruption!

Therefore, they had to be gathered and annihilated before they dispersed into the wilderness!

"Release the Manic Warriors!" shouted Xiong Wuji.

Soul-stirring drumming echoed.

DONG! DONG! DONG! DONG!

"Wu—" Countless brawny men, whose muscles and veins were bulging, were carrying long horns on their shoulders that had been crafted out of the bones of bull-type demon beasts. They blew the horns, and the sound rang over in the battlefield.

"Heh—Ho! Heh—Ho!"

More than ten heavy tanks, on which hundreds of fully-enclosed big boxes were carried, had been deployed on the two sides of the battle formation. The doors of the boxes were slowly opened by chains as a bunch of men chanted.

"Hoooooooo!"

With roars that seemed to be from the most ferocious animals, countless crazy figures leapt out of the iron boxes. They were all tall and mighty giants!

These men had messy hair and bloodshot eyes. There was not even the tiniest hint of humanity on their face. The soul of deadly animals seemed to have been poured into the bodies of human beings.

Wounds were all over their bodies, from which blood was flooding out. The wounds were all caused when they bashed the walls of the boxes too hard.

Some of them were wearing simple armor, but most of them felt uncomfortable because of the friction of the armors and tore apart their clothing, revealing their unparalleled sinewy bodies!

"Hoooo!"

The giants that looked like crazy devils had been consumed by their fighting will and lost their rationality long ago. Also, since they had been locked in darkness for too long, they turned around and immediately launched attacks when they were freed!

"They are the qi-trainers of all the six tribes who have become mentally deranged."

There was pity deep down in Wu Mayan's eyes as he further explained to Li Yao, "Their souls dwelled in the Titan Illusionary Land for too long to come back. They've turned into slaves of bloodthirst. They no longer recognize anyone, not even their own family, and will simply kill anyone they see when they go mad. Therefore, they could only be confined to below the temple of techniques!"

Li Yao remembered the screams and the bashes he had heard when he entered the bottom level of the temple of techniques for the first time. He frowned and asked, "What about now?"

Taking a deep breath, Wu Mayan held his head high and said proudly, "Now is different. With the apocalypse drawing near, even the most insane qi-trainer will recall their true destiny!"

Xiong Wuji roared and jumped off the spider-like war machine. His spiritual energy surged out, supporting him to float in midair, as he gazed at the mentally deranged qi-trainers from a high stance and shouted, "Qi-trainers, the apocalypse has come! In front of you are the family and friends you swore to protect, and behind you are your real enemies! Vent your boiling fighting will on the stinky pests!"

The word 'apocalypse' was like a mysteries spell that halted the infuriated qi-trainers where they were.

Ripples spread out from their crimson eyes, and what could almost be called 'humanity' popped up on their hideous faces again.

"Ahhhhh!"

Several mentally deranged qi-trainers held their heads with their hands and screamed.

The drumming became even faster, and the horn was even louder. Tens of thousands of eyes shouted desperately in the highest pitch, their faces turning red because of shortness of breath. "Born in Iron Plateau, die in Iron Plateau!"

"Born…"

"Born in Iron Plateau…"

"Die in… Iron Plateau!"

Finally, many mentally deranged qi-trainers struggled and started echoing the declaration, however hard it was.

After each syllable, their vocal cords seemed to be ripped apart once. The weird voices sounded like a mix of the roars of a human being and those of a ferocious animal!

They breathed heavily and raised their fists, which were still bleeding. They waved them at the battle formation hard, as if they were cheering up their comrades and asking everyone to fight bravely.

Then, they slowly turned around inch by inch.

Hundreds of heavy sabers and swords, as well as several flags that were fluttering in the wind, had been stabbed in the empty ground hundreds of square meters ahead of them.

The mentally deranged qi-trainers walked forward faster and faster, leaving deep footprints behind, until they were sprinting to the forest of blades. They each snatched a weapon or a flag when they passed by the field!

BOOM! BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM!

Those mentally deranged qi-trainers were all experts who had been crazy about training. That was why they couldn't free themselves from the Titan Illusionary Land.

Although their brains had been ruined, their capability had not. On the contrary, the range of their spiritual gas outburst was even increased because of their madness!

The hundreds of manic warriors unleashed their spiritual gas at the same time, which surged out and congregated into an unstoppable hurricane. The auras from the sabers and swords that they were waving hard became the edge of the hurricane, and the invisible blade of spiritual gas cut countless interconnecting traces on the crags on the two sides of the canyon!

Their speed was higher and higher. When hundreds of people stomped on the ground simultaneously, even the hardest rock was shattered. They rushed toward the beasts of the apocalypse and crashed into them brutally!

Hurricane versus tsunami!

"Born in Iron Plateau, die in Iron Plateau!"

The mentally deranged qi-trainers finally regained part of their consciousness at the last moment as their fighting will soared. They saw their enemies and remembered what they were trying to protect. Their throats, which had been stuffed for too long a time, uttered the motto resolutely!

In their crazy laughter, they fully burnt their life and soul like torches that were going to burn through the heavens, and they collided into the beasts brutally!

Even the eccentric beasts created by the apocalypse that knew nothing but killing were somewhat overwhelmed by the senseless hurricane. Their seemingly irresistible momentum had been blocked by just several hundred qi-trainers!

The manic warriors stabbed into the core of the pack of beasts like a sweltering saber!

They rode on the back of the giant lizards where mantis-like sickles were grown and chopped of their heads, without bothering that the sickles had pierced deep into their own body.

A giant turtle had pierced through the chest of a manic warrior with its scorpion tail. But the manic warrior simply gripped the scorpion tail and yanked it out of the turtle shell with brute force!

Another manic warrior was bitten in half by a giant snake-type beast, which devoured the upper half of his body. But he then cut open the beasts' guts from the inside while he was still alive!

They were qi-trainers, the qi-trainers who had lived and struggled on the harsh planet for five thousand years!

The cruel scenes of battle even bewildered Li Yao, who felt that his every muscle, every bone, every nerve, and every drop of blood inside his veins were about to break out of his body untameably!

His fighting will had started to soar!

Chapter 581: Unstoppable!

Chapter 581: Unstoppable!

The battle formations on the two sides of the canyon were like two primitive forests that had been on fire for three days and three nights and were about to burn a deep hole in the ground. Everybody's eyes were blood-red, their muscles bulging and their spiritual gas surging out!

When the spiritual gas of the hundred thousand qi-trainers gathered together, brightness that seemed to be real flames soared up hundreds of meters into the sky, flickering.

Everybody's fighting will had been brought to the maximum!

Fighting will and fighting will collided, and spiritual gas joined spiritual gas. As if ten thousand burningly hot iron blocks had been tossed into an icy lake, steam began popping out nonstop, and the water was splashing. An intense storm was brewing!

LUM DUM! LUM DUM! LUM DUM!

For a moment, Li Yao seemed to be able to hear the heartbeat of every one of the hundred thousand warriors on the spot and see the overlapping brain waves released from their minds. In the meantime, his own brain waves were spreading out and vibrating at the same frequency as everyone else's!

Reverberation of fighting will!

It was the technique that the qi-trainers of Iron Plateau learned in the Titan Illusionary Land and could significantly improve the overall combat ability of a group!

The reverberation of the fighting will of a hundred thousand people made Li Yao blood boil and his muscles restless. He felt that his fighting will seemed to have become something just like his spiritual threads that could alter entities in reality. The spiritual gas thirty meters away from him was beyond the control of his spiritual gas, but he could make use of it easily with his fighting will!

One qi-trainer may not be a match for a Cultivator, but when countless qi-trainers gather and their fighting will reverberates, they will be in their ultimate form and become much stronger!

Li Yao thought through many things quickly. The redness inside his eyes grew even deeper and darker, and the giant sword was shaking on his back and patting his shoulder plate nonstop!

Everyone's blade was getting out of their control and batting their master's armor crazily, raising rounds of clangs!

"The first battle formation, march out!"

Xiong Wuji chose the perfect time to launch the attack.

At this moment, the beasts were sparse and disorganized due to the assault of the manic warriors, and the morale of the army of the qi-trainers was at its highest, motivated by their fearless comrades.

Under Xiong Wuji's command, six legions marched out of their camps from two sides of the canyon and charged at the apocalypse!

"Uncle Sand Scorpion, you must recruit me as your disciple when we get back!"

Wu Mayan's single tank had been destroyed in the nests of the Iron Ore Worms. Right now, he was aboard a carrier that had been covered by iron planks with sharp thorns. He grinned at Li Yao among countless other tall and muscular men and soon disappeared in the raging dust!

According to their different capability, the eccentric beasts of apocalypse were classified into three levels: ghost, dragon, and calamity.

As was often the case, the first batch to appear in an apocalypse outbreak consisted of ghost-level beasts. They were the cannon fodder of the apocalypse.

Therefore, the qi-trainers below the 30th level of the Refinement Stage, who were relatively weak, would be responsible for dealing with them.

Dragon-level beasts were the generals in an apocalypse outbreak. They had to be dealt with by the stronger experts above the 30th level of the Refinement Stage. Li Yao and the other elite warriors who had been asked to do free hunting were all waiting patiently for their arrival.

As for calamity-level beasts, they were out-and-out disasters just as their name suggested. They were often condensed by the essence of an egg of apocalypse. Some of them were stronger than others, and the strongest of them sometimes required all the top experts of the six tribes to work together in order to exterminate them!

If they ran out of the siege, then just as their name implied, every one of them would raise a calamity!

Thankfully, only one calamity-level beast would be born during each apocalypse outbreak. They were usually the heads of the apocalyptic beasts, and as long as the calamity-level beast was slain, the victory of the battle of apocalypse would be secured!

As the army of qi-trainers marched forward, the canyon was packed with people despite its amazing width. Steam and sand climbed in the sky and competed against the black smoke.

Li Yao jumped off his tank and hopped onto the back of a war machine almost twenty meters tall that looked like a six-legged spider.

With the advantage in altitude, Li Yao could clearly see that the six legions charging from two directions had encountered the beast tide of apocalypse. Countless sprays of iron and blood were splashing!

The six tribes' styles of fighting were vastly different.

The Furious Bears Tribe had the largest number. They had been deployed in the central lane, where there were the most beasts. As the most frantic experts who liked head-on clashes best, they charged at the beast tide at an amazingly high speed while they threw Wolf Fangs toward their enemies crazily. Many of the heavy grenades pierced into the shells of the eccentric beasts like falling stars before they exploded suddenly, leaving shocking holes on the beasts' bodies!

Just when the apocalyptic beasts felt that their heads were dizzy, the legion of the Furious Bears Tribe crashed into them. Earsplitting noises only drifted over several seconds after the slashing of sabers and swords, just like devastating thunder that could only be heard long after lightning had torn apart the sky!

The Silver Moon Tribe used a completely different style. They were the richest among the six tribes of Iron Plateau and possessed the finest weapons. Every True Qi tank and every qi-trainer was carrying various kinds of firearms on them, as if they were running mobile magical equipment stores!

When they were engaged with the beast tide, after the noise of scraping metal and the spinning sounds of gears, six stabilizer feet would extend out of their tanks, and a layer of iron shields would descend, turning the tanks into small fortresses, which were like nails that had been pinned into the beast tide. In the meantime, all the qi-trainers would shoot guns from behind the shields.

Occasionally, they would lower the shield on purpose to lure the beasts in before they cut the intruders into pieces with such fancy tricks that one might think they were doing acrobatics.

Although such a style seemed somewhat sordid, Li Yao had to admit that it was quite effective. As one tank after another crashed into the beast tide, the torso of the apocalypse had been tacked multiple times, and the nails were gradually reaching its heart!

The unconquerable mobile fortresses disrupted the momentum of the beast tide, which became intermittent after they reached the point.

When the fortresses were finally destroyed, the qi-trainers of the Silver Moon Tribe showed unparalleled courage, too. None of them turned around and ran away. When there were only a few of them left in their team and had run out of supplies, they would trigger a gadget on the tank and turn it into a burning fireball that consumed all the apocalyptic beasts in the surrounding hundred square meters.

In such a way, they proved the valiancy of the merchant tribe!

The Heaven Wolves Tribe on the right was even tougher. Black firearms had been added to the shoulders, arms, waist, and legs of everybody's armor. The guns they were carrying in their hands were even thicker than the Six-Barreled Vulcan Machine Guns that Li Yao was used to. In his opinion, they were not guns at all, but crystal bomb launchers!

Countless muscular men of the Heaven Wolves Tribe were holding such 'crystal bomb launchers' in their hands, and they shot dense waves of destruction and crushed over the beast tide!

Further ahead, legions from the Burning Sun Tribe, the Feathered Snakes Tribe, and the Giant Axe Tribe could vaguely be seen.

The legion of the Burning Sun Tribe was in the lead. It was almost entirely made of single tanks, each of which had blades on both sides of their body. There was no telling what crystal powder had been added to the tank, but as the spiritual gas of the riders surged out, the blades all glittered coldly like two broad, magnificent sabers!

As they were about to engage with the enemy, the qi-trainers of the Burning Sun Tribe suddenly dispersed and rushed into the beast tide like lightning. The blades passed by the apocalyptic beasts at such a high speed that many of them felt nothing wrong and did not collapse to the ground or break into two halves until several seconds later!

Some of the apocalyptic beasts noticed the incoming threats and lunged at the knights of the Burning Sun Tribe. However, the knights of the Burning Sun Tribe showed unparalleled racing skills by drawing unbelievable arcs with their single tanks. At one moment, they were flying over the heads of the beasts; the next moment, they were sliding underneath. Barely any of them were actually caught by the apocalyptic beasts.

The legion of the Feathered Snakes Tribe was even livelier. Although they were not large in number, they were surrounded by their domesticated animals, which were far greater in number. Such animals had been trained with secret arts for thousands of years. Now, they had joined the battle together with their masters accompanied by weird flute and whistle sounds!

Moreover, the legion also included Feathered Snake Warriors who had been trained through the biting of the Feathered Snakes. Because of the venom they'd injected into their bodies, they were fearless of the erosion of any poison from the demon beasts!

What left Li Yao the deepest impression, however, was the legion of the Giant Axe Tribe.

The Giant Axe Tribe worshipped the color black. Everyone was wearing uniform black armor and carrying a giant black axe that reflected absolutely no light.

Different from the disorganized and obstreperous style of the other five tribes, they were more like a well-trained formal army.

Six drumming tanks were lined up behind their battle formation, echoing thudding noises at a fixed rhythm to help them regroup. Even when the roars and bellows of the other five tribes were tearing the clouds apart, the Giant Axe Tribe remained silent, except when they shouted in acknowledgment of their leader's command.

They were like a bottomless swamp that would swallow any enemy.

The drumming became even rapider. The legion of the Giant Axe Tribe formed neat rows as if they were about to march in a parade. Several hundred people in one row, they strode forward at the same time.

Their speed was not fast, but their movements remained perfectly accurate. If one were to observe from the side of a row, they would feel that it was one person moving forward. Only the stomping noises when thousands of iron boots hit the ground simultaneously could make one realize what a terrifying army it was.

Many of the apocalyptic beasts boasted remote attack abilities. Venomous liquids and needles rained upon them, only to be mostly blocked by the giant axes as broad as shields in front of them.

Occasionally, somebody was hit, or found that venom was leaking in through the gaps on their armor. However, they gave no response, not even bothering to frown, and continued marching forward.

Somebody suffered fatal wounds and collapsed silently, but the warrior in the row behind filled the vacancy automatically; the battle formation was not affected at all.

The neat rows gradually approached the beast tide like the edge of a black saber.

Finally, many apocalyptic beasts were outraged and dashed at them.

The one in the leftmost of each row seemed to be the squad leader. Under their command, the hundreds of warriors in the row raised their giant axes and slashed them down at the same time. The spiritual gas generation devices embedded inside the giant axes blew out streams of white air currents and accelerated them. Hundreds of blade auras gushed forward and minced every apocalyptic beast within range!

Chapter 582: One Fist and One Sword!

Chapter 582: One Fist and One Sword!

Li Yao was deeply impressed by the scene. He couldn't help but wonder what the outcome would be if qi-trainers and Cultivators of equal number were engaged in a fight.

His conclusion was that, faced with qi-trainers whose fighting will was reverberating, Cultivators would definitely be on the losing side, unless there were multiple Core Formation Stage Cultivators as backup!

However, Cultivators had exploited the potential of spiritual energy in various ways. They had devised countless kinds of brilliant models of spiritual energy and rune arrays, and they had invented many different types of powerful magical equipment, including warships that were tens of thousands of meters long. The qi-trainers were definitely no match for them in this regard.

The two branches of human beings had their own specialties. If they could join hands against a common foe, the Temple of Immortals and the Immortal Cultivators would be eliminated in no time. However, due to the trick of fate, there was still a long way to go before the deep misunderstanding from five thousand years ago was fully resolved.

The first assault lasted three hours. The apocalyptic beasts seemed to be butchered and barely had chance to counterattack. However, according to Xiong Wuji's description about the entire process of a battle against the apocalypse, the real fight had only just begun.

Every battle of the apocalypse was like this. At the beginning, the qi-trainers were full of supplies and spiritual gas and at an overwhelming advantage when they met the enemy.

However, as the battle continued, the True Qi containers they carried and the spiritual gas inside their body would run out after a long fight. Eventually, they would be both exhausted and short of supplies.

To make things worse, when the qi-trainers were in the state of fighting will reverberation, they would know nothing except to march forward. Even if they were worn-out and their vitality was being drained, they would not step back anyhow. Simply speaking, they all went mad during the fight.

Many experts had collapsed to the ground and perished on the spot while they were fighting hard.

The apocalypse would often seize the moment and summon a large batch of dragon-level apocalyptic beasts to retaliate. This had often led to a tremendous loss for the qi-trainers and had nearly broken their battle formations several times throughout history.

Therefore, when the first batch of warriors became tired, the stronger experts would be deployed.

They had to charge at the beast tide without bothering about anything else and replace the qi-trainers who were becoming over-exhausted so that they could rest in the camps and refill their True Qi containers.

The replacement was key to a battle. If the first echelon failed to fall back successfully, it meant that a lot of warriors would be killed even if the battle was won in the end, and the victory would hardly be a victory at all!

"The second echelon, march out!" bellowed Xiong Wuji at the top of his voice.

The headcount of the second echelon was only one third of the first, and yet they were ten times more daunting. Every tribe sent out their best elite squads, including the Fierce Wind Assault Team and the Iron Bears Detonation Team!

BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM!

The earth was shaking, with fractures appearing on the ground from which scorching steam was popping out.

The fractures extended deep into the black smoke in which their source was hidden deeply. As the black smoke wriggled, magnificent beasts rushed out of it!

The new apocalyptic beasts were all almost twenty meters tall. They were like moving hills and were surrounded by vague demonic fog that was burning like flames, indicating that they were capable of not only killing with their animalistic instincts but also manipulating spiritual energy in a certain mysterious way!

The dragon-level apocalyptic beasts had finally shown up!

The appearance of the dragon-level beasts greatly refreshed the ghost-level beasts, which had been cast into chaos. As if receiving the same command at the same time, they automatically regrouped around the dragon-level beasts and formed combat squads with their reinforcements as the core!

Some of the qi-trainers could not free themselves from the bloodlust. Although their spiritual gas had run out, they were still charging at such combat squads alone with nothing but their broken blades, only to be torn apart by the dragon-level beasts miserably.

"The first echelon, fall back!"

The elite teams of the six tribes had marched into the battlefield. Many experts above the 50th level of the Refinement Stage soared into the sky and aimed at a dragon-level beast before they lunged at them!

"The third echelon, go forward and cover the retreat of the first echelon!"

At Xiong Wuji's command, the iron line constituted by countless enormous tanks and spider-like war machines pushed forward slowly but surely.

The qi-trainers responsible for the tanks and war machines were not very strong, but they had all received special training to steer the giant machines that were driven by spiritual gas.

Their mission was to push forward and form an iron defense line so that the exhausted warriors of the first echelon would return to safe area sooner.

There was also the fourth echelon after the third echelon, which included Xiong Wuji and the other top experts of the six tribes. As the reserves, they were waiting patiently and silently for the arrival of the calamity-level apocalyptic beast!

Standing on the back of a giant war machine stably as if he had been nailed to it, Li Yao was moving forward together with the third echelon while he observed the situation of the battle coldly.

Since he had never practiced or cooperated with anybody else, he would only be a nuisance if he was enlisted into the battle formation. Therefore, Xiong Wuji had sent him to the third echelon and asked him to decide what to do on his own.

Li Yao condensed his spiritual gas into needles and stimulated his brain cells in order to enter the super perceptive state.

After one month of training, he had grasped the threshold of his brain cell activity in the Refinement Stage, so he wouldn't wreck his cerebrovascular vessels easily now.

By slightly increasing his brain cell activity, his eyes instantly blinked like a rippling lake. Everything happening in the battlefield turned into clusters of dazzling data in his mind.

Now that the war machine was about to enter the battlefield, Li Yao suddenly leapt out. The Sky Scorpion Armor turned into a streak of brightness and reached the edge of the canyon after several jumps.

Swoosh!

Li Yao moved on the vertical crags as if he were running on the ground. Sometimes, he was crawling on all fours; sometimes, he was gliding forward, pushed by his surging spiritual gas. Both like a sordid lizard and a nimble leopard, he dashed to the center of the canyon within a moment. He stomped on the cliff brutally and rushed out like a rocket with the counterforce, leaving a giant hole dozens of meters in diameter behind him!

Shua!

With the surging spiritual gas, the aura of his giant sword extended out more than a hundred meters and slapped downward like a long whip.

A large apocalyptic insect with transparent wings was hovering four to five three meters in the air and diving down to hunt the qi-trainers. Too focused on the enemies on the ground, it did not notice the incoming attack from the sky. Half of its wing was chopped off by the aura of the blade instantly, making it lose control over its body and fall to the ground.

The spurts all over Li Yao's body were gushing air out fast, accelerating him helically and turning him into a giant revolving drill falling from the sky. Before the dragon-level beast came back to itself, his giant sword had pierced into the critical part on his abdomen and span brutally, breaking the torso of the insect into two halves!

"Careful!"

A deafening bellow from Shi Meng, captain of the Iron Bears Detonation Team, echoed from the right.

Li Yao's heart constricted violently. He concentrated his attention and noticed that a behemothic dragon-level beast was rolling over from his left!

This eccentric beast seemed to have been a certain kind of large armadillo originally. It was covered in solid shell, and a coldly-shining sharp thorn was protruding from every piece of the shell. When it crouched, it would turn into a ball of thorns almost ten meters in diameter which would blow away or simply crush over all the qi-trainers and other beasts in its way into mud of blood!

"You are no match for it! Let me!" roared Shi Meng who had already started sprinting.

Li Yao tried to retreat his giant sword, only to find that the body liquid of the dragon-level beast under his feet was extremely thick and had stuck his blade and his boots to the ground. He only drew long translucent gel out and was not able to either free his sword or himself in the haste.

In the meantime, the stinky smell of the iron armored armadillo had almost reached the back of his head. Li Yao's bloodshot eyes seemed to be exploding in the time of urgency. He extended his right arm and opened his hands. The shoulder plate split, and more than twenty crystal bombs that looked like iron balls rolled out of the arsenal and gathered in the front of his fist!

Li Yao put his right arm below his ribs. His upper body was almost twisted to the opposite direction of his lower body, as if he had become a battering ram that had been compressed completely. His every muscle was nearly torn apart, while helical spiritual gas revolved in front of his right arm rapidly together with more than twenty crystal bombs and formed a cone!

Half of the crystal bombs were smeared black, and the other half remained white. At that moment, the black bombs had been aimed at the iron armored armadillo.

"The 77th level of the Refinement Stage, Explosive Punch!"

After a roar, the muscles all over Li Yao's body shrank abruptly, while his right arm drew an arc as fast as lightning and hit the shell of the iron armored armadillo brutally in dazzling brightness!

BOOM!

Because of the special design of the crystal bombs, together with the spiritual shield condensed by Li Yao's spiritual energy, all the damage had been released forward like an arrow. Pushed by the helical spiritual gas, the more than twenty crystal bombs were detonated almost simultaneously. They congregated into an orange line of flames and pierced through the iron armored armadillo's body directly!

The iron armored armadillo screamed miserably and fell to the ground, unable to roll forward anymore.

The previous attack had cracked the shell on its back. Blood was flowing out from the wounds, and almost all its bones had been broken. Its soft internal organs were exposed to the air, too.

Li Yao took the opportunity and drew out his sword by chopping off the thick gel with his condensed spiritual gas. He then jumped high into the sky and stabbed the giant sword into the body of the iron armored armadillo quickly until the only thing left in the air was the grip of the sword!

Chi—

At this moment, the spurts on the two sides of Li Yao's giant sword showed their second usage. Other than increasing the stability of the sword when it was waved, they could expand the internal injuries by spraying out air currents when the sword was stabbed into the enemy's body!

Li Yao's spiritual gas surged out and blew into the hollow grip of the sword. Sixteen unstoppable streams of spiritual gas jetted out from the spurts of the sword and minced the soft internal organs of the iron armored armadillo like sixteen sharp blades!

The high and mighty ferocious beast finally died amid desperate screams.

Standing behind the iron armored armadillo, Li Yao raised his giant sword and waved the blade to remove the dense blood that was still mixed with the invisible aura of sword.

An unlucky ghost-level beast was precisely on the way of the invisible sword aura that had just been shaken off. It was cut into two halves before it even had the chance to scream!

Slaying two dragon-level apocalyptic beasts within a breath, including an iron armored armadillo, which ranked top ten among all the dragon-level beasts, Li Yao cast the battlefield a hundred square meters nearby into a second of weird silence with his unparalleled brutal behavior.

The qi-trainers were all dazed. The ghost-level beasts that had lost the leadership of the dragon-level beast were unable to move anymore, intimidated by Li Yao's soaring killing intent!

Shi Meng was stunned and soaked in sweat. It was not until this moment that he knew Li Yao had not tried his best in the test. If the guy had collided into him with that punch, his right arm wouldn't be able to move for at least half a month!

Chapter 583: Calamity Level!

Chapter 583: Calamity Level!

Li Yao did not realize that so many pairs of shocked eyes were gazing at him, because he was still thinking about that earth-shaking punch.

The explosive strength of the iron armored armadillo was quite impressive. The previous punch had left him with heavy wounds, too. Several of his fingerbones had been entirely shattered.

However, the enormous blow just now seemed to have opened a gate that had been sealed inside his body for a long time. An uncanny power was released, which accelerated the recovery of his fingerbones and made his blood hotter than ever!

Although the physical blood on his giant sword had been shaken off, crazy redness was still flowing vaguely around the blade. It was his untamable fighting will and killing intent!

Li Yao roared and, carrying the giant sword on his shoulder, lunged at where the beasts were most numerous!

He could not tell reality from hallucination now. He sometimes knew that he was fighting the apocalyptic beasts on Iron Plateau, and sometimes he forgot everything and became a Titan Warrior slaying various kinds of ferocious insects on unknown planets.

His brain waves were spreading farther and father and vibrating at a higher and higher frequency. He could sense everybody's fighting will, which had become almost tangible. The entire battlefield was a simmering ocean of fighting will!

Slashing, slaughtering, and exploding! After every movement, his nerve endings would shiver beyond his control, giving him ultimate pleasure and a deeper understanding about the truth of fighting.

Suddenly, there was nothing in front of him and nobody to kill.

Li Yao suddenly felt lost. It was at this moment that he heard Shi Meng shout, "Sand Scorpion! Sand Scorpion! Fall back now! You've been fighting for two hours. Your spiritual gas is running out! Retreat quickly!"

Li Yao was suddenly greatly alarmed. As if somebody had tossed a bucket of cold water on his head, he finally regained the ability to think normally.

In his own memory, the battle had only been going on for no more than five minutes.

He finally understood why so many qi-trainers dwelled in the world of killing and were unwilling to quit the battlefield even when they were exhausted.

The feeling was too wonderful and addictive. One would only sink deeper and deeper until one could not free oneself anymore.

The Sky Scorpion Armor had almost turned into a pile of wasted copper and iron. His giant sword was full of dents, as if it were a chainsword. There was no part on his body that was not aching. He felt that his several veins and nerves had been cut apart by burning clamps, and spiritual gas was flowing violently and messily inside his body due to the factures.

Li Yao grunted and almost fell to his knees. He hurried to stab his giant sword into the ground as a club to support himself.

Looking ahead, he found that he had marched forward almost a thousand meters against the direction of the beast tide, leaving a gory path behind him. The five hundred square meters nearby was filled with the bodily fluids of the apocalyptic beasts. There was no telling what the broken corpses had once been at all.

The apocalyptic beasts further ahead that were still alive only dared to bare their fangs at him from afar, but none of them had the courage to draw close, as if the five hundred meters around Li Yao was a swamp of death!

Shi Meng and six members of the Iron Bears Detonation Team rushed close, carried Li Yao, and ran back immediately. Their voices were all shaking. "Sand Scorpion, you are too crazy! Even Chief Xiong was not as insane as you all those years ago. You broke out of the frontline and moved so deep into the beast tide that you almost pierced through it!"

"The chiefs and experts of several other tribes were all asking who you were. Now, you name is truly resounding in all the six tribes! Chief Xiong asked me to bring you back no matter what. Take a rest after you're back and refill your True Qi containers. You can still fight again later if you want!"

Li Yao breathed heavily. He felt drained at this moment, and his body felt like it was soaking in a thick, sticky lake that was still rising. He was so tired that he did not even have the strength to blink.

Right at this moment—

The earth trembled all of a sudden. An immense blast came over from the depths of the black smoke, accompanied by a high-pitched shriek.

Everyone within five kilometers was knocked over. Even the heavy tanks weighing dozens of tons were pushed back several meters!

BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM!

The black smoke shrank and expanded repetitively as if an enormous heart more than ten kilometers in diameter was beating.

As the frequency of the heartbeat became higher and higher, ten seconds later, the area above the black smoke blossomed like a bud, from which a colossal apocalyptic beast soared into the sky!

The apocalyptic beast was apparently much more devastating than the previous ghost-level beasts and dragon-level beasts. It was like a hybrid of a mosquito and a longhorn beetle, also known as a longicorn. Covered by a glittering black shell, which was painted with gold stripes, it gave every sign that it was an insect, and yet it seemed as proud and magnificent as a lion or a tiger. Its antennae, which were more than fifty meters long, were shivering and emitting earsplitting noises like two giant masts!

"Hiss! Hiss! Hiss! Hiss! Hiss! Hiss! Hiss!"

It was an extremely intense mental attack!

"It's the calamity-level beast, the strongest one of all the eccentric beasts in the apocalypse!" shouted Shi Meng loudly.

Every qi-trainer within hundreds of square meters from the calamity-level beast was staggering in agony as if they were drunk regardless of what level they were in. Many of them were covering their ears with their hands. Some of them were even digging into their earholes with their fingers until they were bleeding, but they still failed to stop the noises from piercing through their skulls.

Soon, somebody was foaming at the mouth, somebody's face was covered in blood, and large bumps were protruding out of somebody's head as if the pressure inside the head was so high that the skull was about to break!

Longicorn had bad sight and could only distinguish objects with their antennas.

This calamity-level longicorn, however, had a pair of big crimson compound eyes with amazing eyesight. When its elytra 1 , which had turned into bone, were fully opened, sixteen streams of air currents spurted from its back and accelerated the insect to an unbelievable speed. It dived down and extended its forelegs toward a heavy tank, before it brought the tank to the air, hovered for a moment, and smashed it at a giant vehicle nearby. With an earsplitting explosion, the two war machines were both destroyed!

"The calamity-level apocalyptic beast has arrived!"

"Those below the 70th level of the Refinement Stage, retreat five hundred meters immediately and clean up the dragon-level and ghost-level beasts on the battlefield!"

"This calamity-level beast is good at mental attacks. All qi-trainers specializing in mental attacks, counterattack in advance!"

Thunderous sounds echoed above the battlefield.

DONG! DONG DONG DONG DONG!

While all the qi-trainers below the 70th level of the Refinement Stage were retreating from the surrounding of the calamity-level beast, the eight drumming tanks of the Giant Axe Tribe were marching forward unstoppably, and the drumming was becoming louder and louder. The eight tanks were as overpowering as eight crystal warships!

The drums of the Giant Axe Tribe were the best magical equipment for mental warfare. Not only could they boost the morale and enhance the fighting will of the warriors on their side, they could also resist the mental bombardment from the enemy!

DONG! DONG DONG DONG! DONG DONG DONG DONG!

The exciting drumming rose up from the ground and blew at the calamity-level beast like thunder!

The calamity-level beast shrieked. It suddenly opened its mouthpart and spurted a black tornado!

The tornado wriggled and twisted in the air.

Li Yao observed more carefully and discovered that the tornado was actually made of countless tiny black beetles!

The beetles hummed and surrounded one of the drumming tanks instantly. Then, after an earthshaking explosion, all the black beetles burst into flames and turned into small burning fireballs that were flying everywhere!

The burning beetles were not dead yet. They were all crashing at the drumming tank and would explode whenever they hit anything.

The beetles contained a lot of oily materials, and nothing could stop them from exploding. The drumming tank was immediately drowned in a sea of flames. All the qi-trainers of the Giant Axe Tribe on the tank were ignited!

However, although furious flames were consuming them, their movements were still neat and harmonious, and they were still beating the drums hard in the fire!

The drumming mixed with flames was brought to the sky hundreds of meters high and turned even louder and more enthusiastic.

The other seven tanks of the Giant Axe Tribe seemed unconcerned of what had happened to their companions and continued moving on.

The drumming would not stop as long as any of them were alive!

"Go!"

"Go!"

"Go!"

Inside the reserves team at the rear of the camps on the both sides of the canyon, the top experts of the six tribe who had waited long enough finally appeared. Thanks to the precious time earned by the drumming tanks, they'd managed to approach the calamity-level beast!

Li Yao gritted his teeth and tried to march forward, too, only to almost fall off to the ground when he took the first step. Luckily, two members of the Iron Bears Detonation Team caught him.

"You've run out of strength because of the prolonged fighting. You must have some food, treat your wounds, and replenish your supply of True Qi containers before you go to the battlefield again, or you'll be committing suicide!"

Shi Meng strode forward, the Wolf Fangs on his body clicking each other. He held two of them in his hands.

"A war cannot be won by one person. Rest assured and take a rest now. We've got it!"

Li Yao felt warm and nodded his head solemnly. He retreated from the battlefield with the help of the two members of the Iron Bears Detonation Team.

"Uncle Sand Scorpion!"

Hardly had he returned to the back of the iron defense line made of hundreds of heavy tanks when Wu Mayan rushed to greet him.

The young man's face was covered in dust, and he had bruises all over his body. Thankfully, there were no heavy wounds. He was in quite high spirits.

"Uncle Sand Scorpion, you were so awesome! I saw everything from back here. You put down one ghost-level apocalyptic beast with each attack. Even the dragon-level beasts could not block your sword! You were definitely the most eye-catching one in this battle!"

After more than half a day's chaotic battle, it was almost noon. The qi-trainers had been too focused on the fight on the battlefield to distinguish where they were. Therefore, Li Yao was seeing not only the qi-trainers of the Furious Bears Tribe, but also those from the Silver Moon Tribe, the Heaven Wolves Tribe, and even some from the Burning Sun Tribe, the Feathered Snakes Tribe, and the Giant Axe Tribe who had been cut off from their main troops, blocked by the apocalyptic beasts, and forced to retreat to the Furious Bears Tribe's camp.

The six tribes of Iron Plateau worshipped strength more than anything else. Regardless of their relationship with the Furious Bears Tribe, everybody had been conquered by Li Yao's valiancy and were eyeing him with respect.

The name of 'Sand Scorpion' had spread among many qi-trainers.

Chapter 584: Slaying the Calamity

Chapter 584: Slaying the Calamity

Sha Yulong had come to the frontline for the battle of the apocalypse, too. She examined Li Yao's body as quickly as possible and found that he was merely too exhausted and had not suffered many heavy wounds. Therefore, she simply took out the secret medicines refined out of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures to help him recover his strength faster.

Together with Wu Mayan, Li Yao ascended to a temporary watch tower. They observed the situation while they rested.

Dozens of experts, including the chiefs of several tribes, had surrounded the calamity-level beast from various directions. Fireballs and blasts bombarded the calamity-level beast nonstop and practically encased it in a shell of smoke!

However, this particular calamity-level beast was extremely hard to deal with. It boasted advanced flight ability. Thanks to certain spurting organs inside its body, it could jet intense air currents when it fully opened its elytra and accelerate itself to the speed of sound within a moment. Therefore, the qi-trainers all found it difficult to lock onto the calamity-level beast.

Furthermore, the shell of the calamity-level beast was oily, slippery, and curved; whatever hit the shell would simply slide away.

Several experts had tried to jump onto its back, only to be shaken off by the calamity-level beast after several bumps.

Besides, the calamity-level beast could launch mental attacks with its antennae that targeted the qi-trainers' brains directly and spray mouthpart black beetles from its mouth that could self-detonate and trigger bizarre fire that was extremely hard to put out.

Moreover, with its enormous body size and amazing high speed, it was diving down from the sky all the time and knocking over several heavy tanks and war machines with each run. Some low-level qi-trainers were even directly torn apart by the blast when the calamity-level beast flew past them!

After dozens of rounds of fighting, after numerous casualties on the qi-trainers' side, the first crack appeared on the shell of the calamity-level beast, but it became even more daunting and crazy than before!

"The woman tied with two gold serpents riding on the white falcon is Lan Yi, the best expert of the younger generation of the Feathered Snakes Tribe.

"The one carrying two millstone-like axes who took a blow from the calamity-level beast the hard way just now is Guan Hao, the top expert of the younger generation in the Giant Axe Tribe!

"The guy who almost chopped off one antenna of the calamity-level beast is Yan Chifeng, the young expert of the Burning Sun Tribe who rose to fame in recent years. He is Yan Chihuo's elder brother. The guy is a maniac, too focused on training to care about anything in the outside world. He didn't show up when the three tribes gathered in Furious Bears City. Therefore, there's no grudge between us!"

Wu Mayan's eyes were glittering as he analyzed the participants on the battlefield for Li Yao.

He had always strived to be the strongest warrior on Iron Plateau. So, he had collected a lot of files about the experts of the other tribes, especially the younger ones, in his spare time.

"The fellow who carries guns all over his body is Gao Lang of the Heaven Wolves Tribe, and the guy wearing fancy clothes with nine swords on his back is Wen Renxiao of the Silver Moon Tribe. They are both experts above the 80th level of the Refinement Stage!

"The five of them, together with Shi Meng and Xiong Zhenzhen of our tribe, are the seven most marvelous warriors in the younger generation of the six tribes of Iron Plateau. But right now, I'm afraid that you must be considered, too. No. In my opinion, you are more awesome than any of them!"

The biggest advantage of the path of Cultivation that the qi-trainers walked on was that training was easy and convenient. As long as one could overcome the pain when one's veins and nerves were being expanded, one could surpass the 20th or even the 30th level of the Refinement Stage in less than twenty years if one trained oneself hard, thereby becoming a reasonably good warrior.

But the biggest shortcoming of such a path was that the prime years of the qi-trainers were too short and that they were always restrained by their age.

For a Cultivator who paid enough attention to fitness and practiced Soul Converging Techniques, they could burst out unparalleled strength even when they were two hundred years old.

However, since the qi-trainers were burning their soul and wielding their spiritual gas unceasingly, their bodies went downhill after they reached eighty years old, and they could not stay in their peak for very long.

On Iron Plateau, 'the biggest fists belong to the young' was the ultimate truth. Therefore, all of the tribes attached great importance to the education of young people. In the battle of the apocalypse, the young experts were asked to fight in the front lines together with the seasoned warriors!

Li Yao observed the battle for a while and somehow felt that something was not right. He pondered for a while and realized that, although the battle had been on for a long time, Xiong Wuji, as the best warrior of the six tribes on Iron Plateau, still hadn't taken any action.

"Right, where is Father Xiong?"

Wu Mayan looked around. His eyes suddenly shone as he exclaimed, "There he is!"

Li Yao raised his head. He found Xiong Wuji standing alone on the peak of the crags, hundreds of meters high. The chief seemed to be both observing the overall situation of the battle and waiting for something to appear patiently.

Frowning, Li Yao concentrated his attention and translated what he saw into series of data, while he analyzed the activity and attack patterns of the calamity-level beast quickly.

Weakness, weakness… No calamity-level beast could be devoid of weaknesses!

Li Yao squinted and continued observing for long time. He then turned around and, reflecting on the whole plan for a while, said to Wu Mayan in a low voice, "Listen carefully. I want you to do something for me."

…

Ten minutes later…

BOOM! BOOM!

Li Yao's scorpion-like tank emanated earsplitting fulminations. Large clusters of white smoke sprayed out from every gap between the curved shells on the surface of the vehicle.

Sitting on the tank, Li Yao tested and adjusted the angle of every tube.

It was not until this moment that many qi-trainers from other tribes knew that he was the knight who rescued somebody else in the nests of the Iron Ore Worms previously. They all cheered for him!

Li Yao crouched on the tank. His Sky Scorpion Armor seemed to have melded with the tank, becoming one entity. He zigzagged for a while at the rear of the battlefield before he suddenly took a big turn and rushed at the precipitous cliff on one side of the canyon.

The moment he was going to hit the cliff, Li Yao lifted the head of the tank and made the tank perpendicular to the ground. Then he drove on the cliff and soared upward. Half a minute later, Li Yao reached the top of the canyon!

Looking down from his new vantage point, Li Yao could see nothing but smoke and dust.

However, the calamity-level beast was attacking so furiously that even someone blind could feel where it was.

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and gazed at the experts who were attacking the calamity-level beast in a group. His computational ability increased nonstop as he calculated the deadliest moment to attack.

Finally, the calamity-level beast burst into an outrage again after it was hit brutally by Guan Hao's axe. It sprayed a wave of self-detonating beetles first and then dived down from the air, snatching a war machine and tearing it apart!

"Now is the time!"

The scorpion-like tank roared like an iron beast and rushed at the edge of the cliff as if it were an arrow just released from a bow. Drawing a sharp arc in the midair, the tank aimed at where the calamity-level beast was precisely!

The calamity-level beast was feeling dizzy because of the collective attack from the experts well above the 70th level of the Refinement Stage. Escaping its attention, the scorpion-like tank managed to get right in front of it!

The antennas of the calamity-level beast shivered rapidly. It spat a mouthful of self-detonating beetles and formed a black shield in front of its body!

The scorpion-tank, however, accelerated itself by spurting large clusters of air currents and made two circles in the air before it crashed into the wall of black beetles and turned into a fireball!

At this moment, the tank passed by the left eye of the calamity-level beast.

But judging from the trajectory of the sliding, the tank was about to brush past the calamity-level beast, and there was no way that it could hurt the eye.

It was also what the calamity-level beast thought.

However, a large and thick tail pierced out of the fireball into a corner of the calamity-level beast's eye!

The tank dangled from the eye of the calamity-level beast with the stinger on the tail as the hook; so deep was the stinger that it was impossible to shake off.

Before the calamity-level beast was able to grab it with its forelegs, the scorpion-like tank exploded intensely. Countless pieces of the tank immediately turned one of the calamity-level beast's eye into a hole mixed with blood and flesh!

"Hiss! Hiss! Hiss! Hiss! Hiss! Hiss! Hiss!" The calamity-level beast screamed miserably.

Li Yao, on the other hand, had leapt out of the fireball the second before the explosion.

The Sky Scorpion Armor had been stained with a lot of the thick liquids from the black beetles. It was now on fire and turning him into a man-shaped flame.

However, in light of the principles of crystal suit designs and crafted by Li Yao himself, the Sky Scorpion Armor was both tight and heatproof. The fire would not leak in any time soon.

How could the heat alone stop a monster like Li Yao?

Shua!

Li Yao splayed his hands, one sharp blade ejecting from each finger. He grasped the shell on the back of the calamity-level beast and moved forward inch by inch with his arms.

The calamity-level beast sensed that the enemy was on its back, too. Its antennae started twitching violently and launched mental attacks nonstop, and it shook crazily in the air, trying to shake Li Yao off its body.

The other experts on the ground and in the air were all dazed. They did not know how tight and heatproof the Sky Scorpion Armor was and were all stunned to see a burning man clutching the back of the irritated calamity-level beast.

A moment later, they all realized what Li Yao was trying to do. Somebody immediately roared, "Attack with full strength now. Distract its attention!"

Everybody spared no efforts, not even caring that they might die because of exhaustion after the battle, while they launched storm-like attacks!

With their cooperation, Li Yao crawled to the other eye of the calamity-level beast, which failed to get a moment of rest, slowly but surely.

The crimson eye was like ten thousand hexagonal rubies piled together. It was glittering and emitting soul-stirring brightness.

Chi!

Suddenly, intense air currents spurted out from the gap of the shell on the top of the eye and knocked Li Yao off!

However, the moment Li Yao was blown away, he had unsheathed his giant sword and stabbed it in the opposite direction of the course of his flight!

The giant sword dissected itself again and was enlengthened to more than ten meters. In a weird curve, the blade pierced into the calamity-level beast's remaining eye deeply.

Li Yao released the giant sword. Spiritual gas spurted out from the grip of the sword and pushed it forwards. Eventually, the sword was reassembled, with one third of its body buried in the eye of the calamity-level beast.

The eye of the calamity-level beast was a compound one. Even if part of the eye was damaged, it wouldn't lose all its vision.

However…

BOOM!

In the next moment, the giant sword exploded brutally just like the tank had!

There were fewer crystals in the giant sword than in the tank. But since all the damage had been aimed in one direction, not only was the eye of the calamity-level beast completely destroyed, some of the shrapnel even reached deeper into the enemy's brain and diminished its thinking and sensing abilities heavily!

Chapter 585: Best Warrior of Iron Plateau!

Chapter 585: Best Warrior of Iron Plateau!

The abdomen of the calamity-level beast emitted shrieks that could tear the qi-trainers' brains apart. Every stripe on the shell was glittering. The two antennae were shaking so violently that they seemed as if they could break apart at any moment. It was apparently in insufferable agony!

However, the senses of an insect were not entirely based on its eyes. This calamity-level beast was a biological weapon produced by the egg of apocalypse and had the distinctive features of many insects. Other than its eyes, it could also perceive the surroundings with its antennae.

Hating Li Yao's guts, the calamity-level beast rushed at Li Yao crazily!

Drawing a helical line of fire in midair, Li Yao fled toward the back of the battlefield and dived to the ground.

The calamity-level beast, in excruciating pain, focused all its attention on Li Yao while it pursued him.

The two parties were both amazingly fast. They hit the ground in no time.

On the ground was an iron fortress made of five or so heavy tanks and war machines!

The spiritual gas surging out of the Sky Scorpion Armor was now mixed with dazzling flames right now. Li Yao roared and crammed through the narrow gaps in the iron fortress!

The calamity-level beast was too huge, and its brain was too seriously damaged to determine the size of the object in front of it. It thought that there was merely a heavy tank in front of it and therefore crashed into the object brutally, trying to knock it over.

However, it only ended up crashing into the iron fortress!

The several heavy tanks constituting the iron fortress were all vehicles used to carry the large True Qi artillery. When the situation demanded, they could serve as artillery bases. Therefore, they all had stabilizer feet that could pierce deep into the ground and fasten themselves.

Right now, the stabilizer feet had all been extended deep the underground as the tanks were deployed as artillery bases. The tanks were also connected with each other with thick chains and couldn't have been steadier.

The calamity-level beast struggled hard for a while. More than ten chains were broken apart, but there were still several dozen more chains that bound it to the heavy tanks.

The calamity-level beast tried again, but there was no time for that. The cannonballs piled in the iron fortress, which could almost be called an arsenal, were detonated at the same time. The fireball consumed everything within two hundred square meters nearby. The blast from the explosion even knocked several tanks a thousand meters away.

The relatively weak qi-trainers could not hear anything after a dull pain in their ears. They could only watch a giant mushroom cloud rising into the sky slowly and eclipsing the apocalypse cloud not far away, which was now at its most lackluster.

When the fireball finally died down, a giant pit almost twenty meters deep appeared on the ground. All the heavy tanks had been blown to smithereens in the previous explosion, along with the calamity-level beast. Much of the metal on the tanks had been melted and was flowing inside the body of the beast.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Countless experts approached the calamity-level beast and gave the thrashing pest a final strike.

Insect-type apocalyptic beasts were extremely vigorous. Some of them could go on a rampage as if nothing had happened even when their heads were chopped off. Therefore, one could never rest assured until they were fully shattered!

It was the lesson learned from blood and tears in the hundreds of battles before.

But it was none of Li Yao's business now.

After running away as quickly as possible for more than a hundred meters, he took off the burning armor on his body and collapsed to the ground.

The demonic flames of the beetles were extremely weird. Despite the protection of the Sky Scorpion Armor, a lot of black and purple blisters had formed on his body. Some kind of poison seemed to be mixed in them, too, as the wounds were extremely stinky.

Hardly had he rolled on the ground to put down the flames when countless hands lifted him up high.

Countless qi-trainers of Iron Plateau were cheering for him. They were echoing the same thing.

"Sand Scorpion! Sand Scorpion! Sand Scorpion! Sand Scorpion!"

No matter who killed the calamity-level beast in the end, it was Li Yao who had given it the critical strike. Nobody would rob him of the glory. He was destined to be the most brilliant nova in this battle of the apocalypse!

Soon, cheers burst out from the front, indicating that the calamity-level beast had been unquestionably slain!

All left on the battlefield were small fries. It was only a matter of time before the final victory was secured.

Li Yao was thrown into the sky and caught by the crowd. His head was dizzy, and he was extremely excited. Yet, he had a weird feeling. Looking ahead, he discovered that Xiong Wuji was still standing on the top of the cliff hundreds of meters high. The chief's eyes were even sharper than before, as if he was searching for something.

Right when Li Yao was baffled by Xiong Wuji's odd behavior, and right when everybody was ecstatic, intense quakes came from underground!

The shaking was so strong that hundreds of cracks immediately appeared on the ground and crawled to the crags on the two sides of the canyon, reaching the top in to time.

Ka! Ka! Ka! Ka!

The cracks interconnected and spread afar like a spider net, covering the steep cliffs. Large rocks fell from the sky and triggered enormous dust when they hit the ground, as if the bottom of the canyon was a dim, yellow sky!

"What's going on?"

"An earthquake?"

"Not good. We are now at the center of the canyon. The crags on our two sides might collapse and bury us!"

"That's—"

Everyone, including Li Yao, looked at the center of the quakes behind the defense line of the Furious Bears Tribe in shock and desperation.

In less than three seconds, the ground there rose up abruptly, forming a hill dozens of meters high.

Then, the hill suddenly exploded. A gargantuan figure almost a hundred meters long gradually revealed itself in the dirty smoke!

What a terrifying apocalyptic beast it was!

It looked like an Iron Ore Worm, except that it was ten times larger. The length of its body that had crept out of the ground was already almost a hundred meters long, and its width was close to ten meters. Sharp thorns covered its body. Different sections of the body were twisting and revolving in different directions, making it look like a super large excavator!

The apocalyptic beast that looked like a longicorn just now was merely an ant compared to the newcomer!

A heavy tank was precisely on the spot where the new apocalyptic beast dug out of the ground. It had been blown into the sky, only to be wolfed down by the apocalyptic beast in the next moment.

BOOM!

The remaining cannonballs and crystals inside the heavy tank exploded. Two vast fireballs popped out of the super-large worm. Yet, it couldn't have cared less about it and simply spurted a mouthful of flames as if it were burping after it swallowed the remains of the burning tank.

"This—this is a calamity-level apocalyptic beast?"

"A second calamity-level apocalyptic beast?"

Everybody was dumbfounded. Even the chiefs of the other tribes were lost for words for a moment.

In the time of urgency, Xiong Wuji leapt down from the cliff and fully released the terrifying capability of the 99th level of the Refinement Stage. Like a falling star, he landed on the head of the super-large worm within a breath, and he slashed down his three-meter long saber!

DANG!

The saber and the super-large worm's head collided in a thunderous sound. The saber cut deep into the super-large worm's head and almost slashed its circular mouthpart into two halves, but it was pinched by the worm and Xiong Wuji failed to withdraw it quickly!

The super-large worm retreated underground in agony.

But Xiong Wuji was absolutely fearless. Spiritual gas surged out of his fists, which were expanding crazily in furious flames, as he punched the mouthpart of the super-large worm time and time again.

After each punch, several tusks of the worm were smashed into pieces!

The worm and the warrior slowly sank underground just like that!

The earth was still shaking violently nonstop.

Everybody was stunned at what they saw. Li Yao was the first to come to himself. He quickly run to the edge of the cave that the super-large worm had slithered out of, only to discover that the cave was too deep to measure and seemed to lead to the center of the planet!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The earth was as unsteady as an ocean that was experiencing a tsunami. A bump dozens of meters high would rise up; next, countless hollows would collapse, revealing the bottomless holes below from which smelly air currents were spraying out.

The crags on the two sides of the canyon were collapsing. Minor downfalls were taking place everywhere!

It was not until the intense quakes lasted almost twenty minutes that the super-large worm rushed out of the cave in the center of the battlefield again, except that it was extremely lethargic this time. Hardly had it craned its head out of the ground when it collapsed and screamed miserably, writhing.

After it rolled on the ground for five minutes, the super-large worm gradually lost momentum. Like a water bag that was riddled with holes, bluish bodily fluids flowed out from its wounds, and it slowly shriveled up.

From its mouthpart, which had lost almost all its teeth, a man neither tall nor strong walked out unhurriedly.

Everybody gasped.

His body was stained with thick liquids that seemed to be very corrosive. Many of his body parts had been eroded to the bones. His right arm had been cut apart from the elbow. Blood was springing out from the wounds and leaving a red river while he stepped forward.

He was literally drawing a blood line as he made each step!

Li Yao, Sha Yulan, Wu Mayan, and the rest of the qi-trainers of the Furious Bears Tribe hurried to rush forward to support him.

"Chief!"

Before Xiong Wuji collapsed to the ground, Li Yao and Wu Mayan, one from the left and the other from the right, caught him in time. The man had the weight of a mountain!

"Father Xiong!"

Wu Mayan looked at Xiong Wuji's vanishing right hand and knew that the worm must've swallowed it and grinded it into pieces; it was impossible to get it back. He was so worried that his eyes turned red.

"Don't cry."

Xiong Wuji still had the strength to smile. He said softly, "I still have a left hand. It is enough for me to resist another apocalypse outbreak and earn you twenty years of time. Twenty years later, when a third battle of apocalypse begins, it will be little ones such as you who must really play your part!"

"Father Xiong!"

Wu Mayan sniffed hard, trying to hold back his tears. Yet, his voice was shivering. "How did you know that there was another calamity-level apocalyptic beast and that it would be such a large one?"

"Because the previous one was too weak."

Xiong Wuji said softly, "Judging from the scale of the apocalypse cloud, enormous energy should've been contained inside the egg of apocalypse. But the apocalyptic beasts born from it were too weak and were almost annihilated by us within one day. Even the 'calamity-level beast' that showed up at the end was weaker than it should have been.

"If history is any reference, several experts above the 70th level of the Refinement Stage should have to sacrifice themselves in order to slay a calamity-level beast. But this time, barely any of us were seriously hurt. It definitely did not feel right.

"Only 70% of the resources were used to produce those apocalyptic beasts. Where did the remaining 30% resources go?

"Therefore, I estimated that there was another calamity-level beast. No. In fact, it was the only real calamity-level beast in this battle against the apocalypse!"

Li Yao took a deep breath to suppress the shock in his heart.

Going underground and slaying a calamity-level beast purely on his own!

That was exactly what Xiong Wuji, the strongest expert on Iron Plateau in the 99th level of the Refinement Stage and the best warrior of the six tribes, had done!

Chapter 586: Victory Ceremony!

Chapter 586: Victory Ceremony!

Five days after the battle of apocalypse…

Eggs of apocalypse were not simple meteorites; they were more like queer plants whose roots could reach thousands of meters below the ground to absorb the nutrition and various other resources in the deep mother lodes in order to produce terrifying apocalyptic beasts.

Based on the technology of Iron Plateau and the trend of development, such deeply buried assets could not have been exploited within the next few hundred years.

Therefore, the corpses of the apocalyptic beasts and the broken pieces of the eggs of apocalypse after they exploded were all extremely valuable.

From the dead bodies of the beasts, the Iron Plateau natives could not only collect the unreachable resources from underground but also gather a lot of super alloys that could not be synthesized by themselves.

Only after clearing the battlefield for five days were all the dead bodies and broken pieces on the ground scrutinized and amassed. Still, below the ground, the roots of the meteorite were still waiting to be excavated.

Such resources would help the torch of humanity on Iron Plateau burn for the next ten years.

According to the custom, all the warriors participating in the battle of apocalypse were invited to Furious Bears City regardless of which tribe they belonged to.

A grand carnival, which would last ten days and ten nights, began in Furious Bears City. The qi-trainers from the other five tribes, as the most honorable guests, received the best treatment for their life-and-death fights, which had saved countless people from the Furious Bears Tribe.

The young qi-trainers from different tribes also took the opportunity to get to know each other and tried to build up their social network. Some of their lifelong brothers were actually met in such occasions.

Many other young men were entertaining themselves day and night after they were drunk.

Iron Plateau was quite open-minded in this regard. For the survival of the civilization, the strong experts were expected to have more children. Such 'communication' between tribes was of paramount importance to improve the bloodlines of the certain tribes. Not only was it not forbidden, it was even something that was encouraged.

The children conceived on such occasions were all valuable treasures. They would not be despised even if they did not know who their father was. The tribe would offer a lot of allowances to the children to help them grow healthily and set them on the path of training.

All in all, for ordinary people and the low-level qi-trainers, this was the moment of pleasure after a life-threatening battle!

As for the leadership of the six tribes, they had gathered in Furious Bears City, too, to discuss the credits of every warrior in the battle and distribute the trophies accordingly.

They would also try to settle the minor conflicts that had arisen between the tribes over the past ten years and those that might occur in the next ten years due to the different ideologies of development. They would revise the rules on how to handle such conflicts when they happened, too. Essentially, it was a grand alliance meeting for the six tribes.

The six tribes of Iron Plateau had kept the fire of civilization burning for thousands of years due to such a convention.

Furious Bears City had now become an ocean of excitement. Although night had fallen, the city was as bright as day because of the brilliant lights. All the chimneys were spurting steam that were mixed with fireworks crystals nonstop. The smoke was colorful and dazzling in the night sky, constituting glittering clouds and illuminating Furious Bears City as if it were a flamboyant paradise.

There was nothing but cheers and laughter on the street. After going through life and death together, even the qi-trainers from the Burning Sun Tribe, the Feathered Snakes Tribe, and the Giant Axe Tribe, who had been in a bad relationship with the host tribe, had become the most welcomed guests. Whenever they saw qi-trainers from the other five tribes, the residents of Furious Bears City would crowd forward unanimously and lift them high into the sky as if they were great heroes.

Many passionate girls were also taking the opportunity to whisper their addresses to them or even simply slipping little notes on which their addresses were written into the qi-trainers' pockets.

On a corner of Sha Yulan's hospital, inside a single ward, Li Yao was emotionless as if he were in a vacuum because he was fully focused on the refinement of a magical equipment component.

Over the past month, he had been living in this place. This particular ward had been modified into a minor workshop by him.

The heavy work such as forging and tempering had to be done in the weapon factory, but the delicate work such as polishing, micro-carving, and assembling could be done in this place.

After the battle against the apocalypse, Li Yao did not waste any second in celebration; he was dedicated to the maintenance of the Sky Scorpion Armor and the recreation of his tank.

The work took him three days. During his spare time, he also drafted a brand-new design after thorough consideration, and he had finally created a piece of new magical equipment based on the design.

Ka Da!

Li Yao placed the last gear into the magical equipment and sent a stream of spiritual gas into it softly. The five iron fingers of the magical equipment immediately started bouncing agilely.

What he had refined was a True Qi artificial arm.

By altering the angle, intensity and direction of the inputting spiritual gas, the fingers could be manipulated very nimbly.

It was not a piece of delicate magical equipment per se, but Li Yao had put a lot of thought into the materials of the artificial arm, and he was certain that he had done the job with the best of his skills in tempering.

He had employed every forging technique he knew, such as 'Casting Dragon Scales' and 'Seven Layered Heavens'. At first glance, it was just a black, unattractive artificial arm made of iron, but in fact, it was much harder than many artificial arms made of super alloys. Also, it was packed with spiritual gas tubes and spurts both inside and outside. Therefore, it was particularly suitable for qi-trainers.

Xiong Wuji's capability had been greatly compromised after he lost his right arm. If he put on the artificial arm, the loss could be made up for more or less.

Li Yao squinted and appreciated his masterpiece, greatly satisfied. Dwelling in the world of magical equipment, he found himself unconcerned of the liveliness and laughter in the city.

Right then, somebody knocked the door rapidly. Li Yao knew it was Wu Mayan the moment he heard the sound.

Parceling the artificial arm with a grey cloth carefully and putting it into his backpack, Li Yao opened the door.

"Uncle Sand Scorpion!"

Wu Mayan was quite excited. His hair and clothes were both somewhat messy; there was no telling how many girls had tried to stop him while he was on his way to the hospital. "Father Xiong asked me to invite you to join the ceremony tonight!

"He knows that you prefer quietness to rambunctiousness. However, it is different tonight. It's the ceremony for all qi-trainers!"

Wu Mayan explained what would happen while they walked forward. Li Yao only learned at this moment that, according to the tradition of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, only the warriors who participated in the battle of the apocalypse would be considered real qi-trainers. The purpose of the ceremony was to grant the title of 'qi-trainer' to the participants of the battle such himself!

Since there were too many qi-trainers who had joined the battle against the apocalypse, the ceremony was conducted in the central squares of all five districts in Furious Bears City. Li Yao and Wu Mayan arrived at the main square, which was the largest of all.

The ceremony had long begun. Hundreds of colorful bonfires were burning in the vast square, each surrounded by a circle of food. Hundreds of qi-trainers were talking and laughing as they patted each other's shoulders. Some of the qi-trainers were dancing wildly and excitedly around their bonfire, while some others, who were half drunk, were wrestling half for real and half for fun. The ambience was both warm and friendly.

Wu Mayan brought Li Yao to a bonfire, which seemed to be occupied by the young experts who had greatly distinguished themselves in the previous battle of the apocalypse. Their arrival caught everyone's attention.

Three of the young experts stood up. They were wearing the badges of Burning Sun, Feathered Snakes, and Giant Axe respectively.

Li Yao recognized that they were his comrades who had fought against the giant longicorn together with him. According to Wu Mayan, they were the top experts in the younger generation of the three tribes.

"Guan Hao, of the Giant Axe Tribe!"

A lofty and strong young man, with a disproportionately big head and a square face that looked like the body of an axe, grinned at Li Yao.

"Lan Yi, of the Feathered Snakes Tribe!"

A slender woman with red hair, which was tied up with two gold serpents, was eyeing Li Yao with great interest.

"Yan Chifeng, of the Burning Sun Tribe."

Yan Chifeng looked like an ordinary man. His height and weight were not impressive for an Iron Plateau native, but his fists were shockingly big and seemed abnormal compared to his other body parts. He must've put a lot of hard work into his hands.

Yan Chifeng seemed to be the leader of the three. There was not much delight on his face. He said to Li Yao solemnly, "I thought that Xiong Zhenzhen and Shi Meng were the strongest warriors in the younger generation of the Furious Bears Tribe. However, your performance was doubtlessly the most brutal of all in the battle of the apocalypse.

"Over the past few days, we've trained with Xiong Zhenzhen and Shi Meng several times in Furious Bears City, with victories and failures on both sides. But it was quite a shame that we never found you! Today, we finally meet each other formally. However, it is the ceremony, and we cannot fight properly. If so, what is the point of meeting? Why don't we make an appointment now so that we can fight each other to our hearts' content next time we meet?"

As it turned out, the man was truly an out-and-out training maniac. He seemed to be unaware of the notion of small talk at all and went directly to the topic of fighting the moment they met each other!

However, it matched Li Yao's taste precisely.

After the battle of the apocalypse, Li Yao sensed that he had a deeper understanding about the utilization of spiritual gas. Also, he had gained a lot of experience on the blood-soaked battlefield. There were signs that he might make a breakthrough soon, but he did not know whom to turn to yet.

Before, he had been communicating with Xiong Wuji. However, Xiong Wuji had suffered heavy wounds in the battle. Not only did he lose his right arm, his internal organs and his brain had also been severely affected. There was no way that the chief could practice with him after only several days.

Now that the three young experts had fed themselves to his mouth, he couldn't have been happier to accept them.

Therefore, he nodded and said coarsely, "I will be training in the temple of techniques tomorrow morning."

The three of them immediately beamed with joy. Guan Hao, the expert from the Giant Axe Tribe, laughed and remarked, "Excellent. Very straightforward. As expected of the most brilliant nova in the battle of the apocalypse! Let's bring Wen Renxiao of the Silver Moon Tribe and Gao Lang of the Heaven Wolves Tribe tomorrow. The six of us will fight until we are all satisfied!"

Such practices were necessary for the six tribes because the young experts were likely to become the pillars of their respective tribes in the battles of the apocalypse in the decades to come, and they would fight side by side one day as the main force to resist the calamity-level beasts!

Therefore, it was very important that they knew each other's capability clearly.

Although the six tribes were in a strange relationship, there was not much of a grudge among the young people who liked fighting more than anything else. They drank wine and ate delicious meat, while they exchanged their experience in training with each other. Very soon, everybody was familiar with each other. Li Yao remained silent most of the time and listened to other people talking about their achievements, but it was not in the least boring for him.

Before anybody realized it, an hour had passed. The colorful clouds in the sky were suddenly blown away by a weird wind, revealing the stars and the deep, dark firmament.

"The ceremony has now officially begun!"

Chapter 587: Banished!

Chapter 587: Banished!

The people of Iron Plateau did not like unnecessary and overelaborate formalities. Besides, now that a hundred thousand qi-trainers had gathered in this place, it was impossible to arrange any complicated procedures. According to Wu Mayan, the so-called ceremony was merely watching a video from five thousand years ago together. After that, everything would be complete!

Shua! Shua! Shua!

Dozens of thick, bright pillars rose up from the periphery of the square and weaved into such an overwhelmingly vast light beam in the sky that one would be able to see it clearly from more than ten kilometers away.

Li Yao had seen such technology in the Heaven's Origin Sector when he took part in the Limit Challenge Competition for the first time. However, the light beam here was larger and had a higher resolution. A magnificent world of giants seemed to have been overturned and placed right above the head of the residents of Furious Bears City.

Wu Mayan told Li Yao that the magical equipment to project the light beam came from the golden era before the apocalypse's arrival. Only one video clip was stored inside.

Over the past five thousand years, the six tribes of Iron Plateau had spent countless invaluable resources to maintain the magical equipment. But as time went by, it still gradually wore out.

It was said that the six tribes would play the video clip on the ceremony of adulthood every year hundreds of years ago.

But as the magical equipment to project the light beam gradually degraded, they showed the video clip less frequently. Now, they only played it during the victory ceremony after the battles against the apocalypse.

The night sky was shaking like a surging ocean, while the lights were blinking like dragon scales. Soon, a black and red picture condensed in midair.

Black was a sky that was occupied by smoke, and red was a furiously burning city.

It had once been a super city ten times larger than Furious Bears City, but it was now debris in the sea of flames.

Illuminated by the red lotus of destruction were a bunch of men who seemed to have just been dug out from the earth. Their battle suits were mostly melted. They were soaked in blood, their hair burnt, suggesting that they had just gone through a bloody battle in the city rubble!

The ten thousand or so men were classified into six teams. A giant flag was flapping in front of each team with exactly the same pattern as the badge of the six tribes of Iron Plateau.

Six extraordinarily muscular men walked slowly to the camera carrying the flags. Displayed in the 3D light beam, they were like giants who were about to land on the earth from the sky.

The hundred thousand qi-trainers were silent. The millions of residents of Furious Bears City, including the old people who had watched the video before, all held their breath and observed quietly.

The six muscular men carried the flags of their respective sects to the remains before them that had collapsed.

Wu Mayan explained to Li Yao in a low voice that the city on fire had been the biggest city on Iron Plateau five thousand years ago, and it was where the coalition government of the six major sects had been located.

The remains that were about to collapse at any moment used to be the Great Congress of the coalition government. It had been the center of decision-making for the entire Flying Star Sector.

In the video clip, more than ten thousand Refinement Cultivators believing in the ideology of homers stared at the flag of their sects solemnly.

Six flags were fluttering against the blowing wind on the debris that had once been the center of the Flying Star Sector.

"I, Yang Kaicheng, secondary disciple of the Furious Bears Union, hereby announce in the name of the 4,524 disciples of the Furious Bears Union in the Refinement Stage…"

One of the six muscular men atop the debris, who had a red birthmark on his face, walked out and glanced over the disciples of the six sects with eyes as sharp as sabers. "… that Xiong Zhen, leader of the Furious Bears Union, Master Qing Feng, former leader and the manager of library of classics, Xia Houliang, Dong Jiaping, Xie Tianling, elders of the Furious Bears Union, as well as all the other members of the Furious Bears Union who escaped from Iron Plateau, are in violation of the creeds on which the Furious Bears Union was established. They are guilty of cowardice and disloyalty!

"The 4,524 Refinement Stage disciples of the Furious Bears Union have ruled unanimously that—

"Xiong Zhen, leader of the Furious Bears Tribe, shall be banished and never allowed to return!

"Master Qing Feng, former leader and the manager of library of classics, shall be banished and never allowed to return!

"The three elders and all the other members of the Furious Bears Union who defected shall be banished and never allowed to return!"

Below him, countless disciples of the Furious Bears Union were roaring thunderously.

Yang Kaicheng waved the flag hard and retreated.

A second muscular man, whose hair had been burnt, strode out, the giant flag flapping in the wind like a blossoming flower. "I, Xu Haoyan, Level 9 Deacon of the Burning Sun Alliance, declare on behalf of the 6,725 Refinement Stage disciples who are still striving on Iron Plateau…

"…that the members of the Burning Sun Alliance who absconded to space have defied the rules of this Alliance. Their crimes shall not be pardoned.

"The following sentences have been unanimously agreed upon.

"Fei Zhengyang, leader of the Burning Sun Alliance, shall be banished and wanted for the rest of his life. Once the criminal returns to Iron Plateau, all the disciples here shall work together to execute him!

"The five elders of the Burning Sun Alliance shall be banished and wanted for the rest of their lives. Once traces of the criminals are found on Iron Plateau, all the disciples here shall work together to slay them!

"All the members of the Burning Sun Alliance who have deserted to space shall be banished from the Alliance and never be admitted again!"

Xu Haoyan waved the Burning Sun flag hard, too. Countless men in crimson robes echoed in acknowledgement.

The representatives of the Refinement Stage disciples of the Giant Axe Hall, the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood, the Silver Moon Sect, and the Heaven Wolves Fortress followed and waved the flags of their sects, announcing the eviction of the leaders, elders, and members of such sects who had fled to space in the name of the low-level disciples!

Yang Kaicheng, a Cultivator of the Furious Bears Union who had made the declaration first, walked forward again and spoke.

"Right now, there is not a single Building Foundation Stage Cultivator on Iron Plateau. We Refinement Stage Cultivators, the small fries in the world of Cultivators before, are the only protectors of the planet now!

"But, so what?

"We are all human beings. The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators don't have any more arms than we do. If anything, I think they might be short of balls!"

There was laughter in the crowd.

Veins bulged out on Yang Kaicheng's neck. His face turned red as he yelled, "Those spineless Core Formation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators have all run away in fear! But the Refinement Stage Cultivators are still fighting on Iron Plateau! They are terrified by the apocalypse, but we are not. We will fight the apocalypse at the cost of anything for a thousand or even ten thousand years without giving in!

"Maybe we will fail. Maybe we will die. Maybe our civilization won't last long in the desolate land, and we might end up being barbarians like those at the beginning of our civilization again.

"But, so what ?

"A hundred thousand years ago, the ancestors of human beings started from scratch and understood the mysteries of Cultivation by fighting against the harsh environment. They built a brilliant and prosperous civilization from the barbaric tribes.

"Even if we are really forced to go back to the era of tribes, we will simply walk through the path of evolution again!

"I announce today that the Furious Bears Union will be renamed as the Furious Bears Tribe. We will thrive and rebuild our civilization against the harsh environment like the primitive savages a hundred thousand years ago!"

"I announce today that the Burning Sun Alliance will be renamed as the Burning Sun Tribe!"

"I announce today that the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood will be renamed as the Feathered Snakes Tribe!"

The six sects that lingered on Iron Plateau started calling themselves tribes, a sign that they had completely separated from their compatriots in the space.

"What's the difference between a Cultivator and a pest if they cannot protect their home and their people? This apocalypse has disgraced the name of 'Cultivator' and made it into a synonym of cowardice and defection!

"Let those rats flee desperately in space under the name of Cultivators! From today on, we will abandon the title of Cultivators. We are qi-trainers!"

"Qi-trainers!"

"Cultivators can get the hell off the planet as far away as they want. The qi-trainers will guard Iron Plateau for all eternity!

"Qi-trainers! Qi-trainers! Qi-trainers! Qi-trainers!"

In the beginning, only the ancient qi-trainers five thousand years ago were shouting in the giant light bean on the night sky.

But at some point, the qi-trainers on the ground had started echoing the name, too, with their face red and tears blinking in their eyes.

In the end, the entire Furious Bears City, regardless of their age and sexuality, and no matter whether they were qi-trainers or ordinary people, were chanting the same word.

Furious Bears City turned into an ocean of roars.

…

Late at night, the ceremony that had lasted more than half a day finally ended. Although there were still drunk and cheerful people on the street, Sha Yulan's hospital was quite peaceful.

In the back of the hospital, beside a clear pond, Li Yao, Xiong Wuji, and Sha Yulan were strolling in the moonlight.

Crack!

Xiong Wuji sprayed spiritual gas out of his wound and controlled the artificial arm to pick up the pebbles on the road and toss them into the pond. He smiled in great satisfaction as the ripples spread out in the pond.

"Thank you very much, Li Yao."

Xiong Wuji said sincerely, "You've helped me too much, both in the battle of apocalypse and with the artificial arm!"

Li Yao smiled and replied, "I said that I would show Chief Xiong what a real Cultivator looked like, but I was actually the one who was awed in the battlefield. Chief Xiong has shown me what a real qi-trainer looks like!

"The artificial arm is about nothing else. It was merely a gift that I made in admiration of your valiancy. You deserve to be the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau!

"Right now, the artificial arm is merely made of common metals. It's probably enough for temporary use. When the trophies of the battle of the apocalypse are distributed, I will see if I can strengthen it with the metals retrieved from the corpses of the apocalyptic beasts. I cannot guarantee that 100% of your capability can be restored, but I'm confident a majority of it will come back!

"If I return to space one day, I may be able to produce an even stronger artificial arm for you!"

Li Yao was not lying. He had devised quite a few plans to make artificial arms. However, they all required precise facilities, Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, and special alloys that were non-existent on Iron Plateau. Therefore, he could only craft such an artificial arm with iron as the main material for now.

Xiong Wuji stopped by the pond. His face suddenly turned serious, as he promised solemnly, "Rest assured. You will return to space one day."

The corner of Li Yao's eyes jumped. He put on a series expression, too, as he asked, "I remember that Chief Xiong mentioned that you would talk about a big deal with me after the battle of the apocalypse. Has the time for making a deal come yet?"

Chapter 588: Reincarnation!

Chapter 588: Reincarnation!

Xiong Wuji sat on a green rock next to the pond, his artificial hand knocking the rock softly. He gazed at the reflection of the moon in the pond before he opened his mouth a moment later. "The purpose of our meeting today is exactly the big deal. However, before we get into the details, I would like to know whether or not you have a new understanding of the apocalypse.

"Last time we talked about the apocalypse, you were merely listening to Sha Yulan's narration. But now that you've experienced the full outbreak of an egg of apocalypse. I wonder, as a space resident, can you explain the mystery of the apocalypse from a new viewpoint? What is the so-called apocalypse exactly?"

Li Yao found a smaller rock near Xiong Wuji and seated himself on it. He kicked a pebble below his feet into the pond. After a 'plop' sound, the reflection of the moon broke into pieces of silver brightness, as if the pond were a breathing universe.

"I fell into a trance during the battle of the apocalypse. Several hours of high-intensity combat only lasted five minutes in my perception. I felt that I had turned into an entirely different species, and I was completely captivated."

Li Yao was deep in thought. "After the battle of the apocalypse, I discovered that, although my level had no significant improvement, my skills in killing had made great progress, and the lust for killing had been lurking inside my body all the time.

"I have become better at fighting and slaughtering!

"It did not happen to me alone. Wu Mayan, who took part in the battle of apocalypse for the first time, had a similar experience. He made a major breakthrough in the battle and reached the 16th level of the Refinement Stage!

"We must note that he is not even fourteen years old yet!

"Such odd phenomena have been baffling me.

"I've been reflecting on the entire process of the outbreak of the egg of apocalypse and the significance of apocalypses at night sometimes. I pondered why it launched such complicated, inefficient attacks to Iron Plateau. The outbreaks of the eggs of apocalypse are not destructive events at all; they are merely… rehearsals!

"This morning, a very bold assumption that could explain the whole thing suddenly occurred to me!

"I would've discussed the matter with you even if you hadn't summoned me."

Xiong Wuji's eyes suddenly rolled. He asked, "What's the assumption?"

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao replied, "Many people consider apocalypses as doom or weapons that the more developed civilizations utilize to destroy mankind. But I don't think that theory is valid. It cannot explain all the different types of apocalypse, either.

"There are many legends in the ancient Cultivation world about experts fighting against apocalypses. It is said that such experts would ascend to a holy land where they would meet many bizarre-looking deities after they successfully resisted the apocalypses.

"If the purpose of apocalypses is destruction, how can you explain the holy land and the deities?

"As for the assault against the Iron Plateau Space Zone, although the apocalypse almost wiped out Iron Plateau, the previous knowledge of the Titan Warriors was transported here, too!

"Therefore, my assumption is that the apocalypse was indeed launched by the Titan Warriors. But their purpose was not destruction, but the dissemination of their civilization in a certain way!"

"Oh?"

Xiong Wuji tried to hold back his surprise and observed, "That is very illogical. Why would a civilization leak their precious knowledge to someone else randomly? What benefits could the Titan Warriors get by offering their knowledge to us?"

Li Yao nodded and said, "The motivation of the Titan Warriors troubled me for a long time. It is definitely absurd under normal circumstances. A Nascent Soul Stage harassing an unfamiliar young man he met on the road and insisting to offer all his Cultivation to the stranger is bizarre; how could such a thing happen?

"But then, I come up with an explanation.

"What if the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator is about to die?

"What if the civilization of the Titan Warriors is on the brink of death or has already fallen?"

Li Yao's eyes glittered as he mumbled, "Survival, continuity, and expansion are the instincts of every civilization. Generally speaking, the Titan Warriors will in no way pass their knowledge to somebody else easily. However, if their civilization has encountered a catastrophe and the experts among them find it impossible to avoid the disaster, then…

"Hide the tinder of their civilization in materials like meteorites and let it roam about the universe, searching for an appropriate planet and species to accept the gift.

"Isn't it a plausible possibility?"

Sha Yulan couldn't help but interject, "If it were a gift, why did they give it to us in such an extreme and cruel way?"

Li Yao smiled coldly. "If you have experienced the Titan Illusionary Land, you will know that the Titan Warriors are definitely not at all kind. To fight is their natural instinct, and their civilization is based on fighting, too!

"Therefore, their knowledge must be passed on in the most rough and brutal way, because they were trying to pick out the most coldblooded and ruthless warriors!"

Sha Yulan was curious. "But what if we failed to persist and were entirely destroyed?"

Li Yao answered, "If we were destroyed, we were destroyed. I imagine that we are not the only subject that the Titan Warriors' knowledge was sent to. Chances are that many other 'apocalypses' are still floating in the sea of stars. They are tests for civilizations, and only the species that have passed the test are qualified to accept their knowledge!

"It can be compared to an evil wizard who kidnaps a lot of children and forces them to go through the harshest and bloodiest training. It doesn't matter if most of the children are killed in the process as long as the strongest, meanest, and toughest one survives through everything and picks up his knowledge! That's all he desires!

"The apocalypses that the ancient Cultivators experienced and the holy land and deities they witnessed must've been for similar reasons. They passed the test of certain civilizations and received parts of their heritage!"

Sha Yulan shuddered and murmured, "Horrible. If that's the truth of apocalypses, it will be so horrible."

"Horrible, but natural and reasonable."

Li Yao squinted and continued, "For example, if the civilization of mankind is coming to an end one day and there's no other choice expect to send out our heritage that stores the essence of our civilization, will we not put some tests on the heritage? Will we grant the knowledge to whatever species is lucky enough to gather it?"

Sha Yulan was somewhat confused. "I don't understand."

Li Yao explained, "Let's say that there is a creature that looks like a hybrid of centipede and maggot. Do you want the tinder of human civilization to be passed on to them?"

Sha Yulan shivered and shook her head subconsciously.

Li Yao said, "That's right. The creature that looks like a hybrid of centipede and maggot is still within the range of our perception after all. But I think that, given the vastness of the universe, it's quite possible that there are countless other life forms that we cannot understand at all.

"Imagine that the heritage of mankind finds two species when it travels in the boundless universe. One of the species are basically rocks that have come to life and can't be called a life form at all in our eyes, while the other species looks like monkeys.

"Which of the two sides will we offer our heritage to?

"We will doubtlessly choose the monkeys.

"Imagine again that there are two monkey species. One of them is mild and gentle and believes in justice, order, and ethics, while the other is brutal and aggressive to the point of parricide. Who will we wish our heritage to be passed to?

"Obviously, we will set up an extremely complicated examination system in our heritage to determine whether or not the life form and the moral principles of a certain species befit our tradition. If possible, we will choose the species that is closest to us to accept the tinder of the human civilization, won't we?

"Everything that has happened to the Iron Plateau Space Zone was perhaps merely a judgement made by the civilization of the Titan Warriors.

"The Titan Warriors' civilization is based on wars. Violence is their highest moral standard!"

Sha Yulan smiled bitterly. "If that is really the case, I really wish that we could've rejected the uncanny gift!"

Li Yao's voice was somewhat gloomy. "Now that the Titan Warriors have found a species that is similar to themselves, how can they abandon it casually? I'm even beginning to think that the apocalypse is not just about passing on the knowledge. It is also meant to transform the humans on Iron Plateau without anybody realizing!

"The eggs of apocalypse that break out every ten years or so have mired the Iron Plateau natives. All the resources have been dedicated to war preparation. It's impossible for the civilization to advance into a higher phase. In the end, we will become a fighting species that knows nothing about construction and everything about destruction.

"In every battle of the apocalypse, after each fighting will reverberation, the knowledge of the Titan Warriors will be further entrenched in our brains!

"If it goes on like this, things may still look the same in the hundred or thousand years to come. But what about tens of thousands of years?

"Isn't it possible that the human civilization on Iron Plateau will forget everything, fight in the most primitive ways, and become the new Titan Warriors?

"I said 'heritage' just now. On second thought, the word is not accurate.

"The process is more like a 'possession'. A civilization is trying to possess another civilization. The Titian Warriors are trying to reincarnate themselves in the bodies of the Iron Plateau natives!

"Think about the qi-trainers who dwelled in the Titan Illusionary Land for too long and lost their minds.

"From our perspective, they've become mentally deranged. But if we were to look at them from a different perspective, aren't they the new generation of Titan Warriors?

"Let's review the story I told in the beginning. A dying Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator found a young man on the street and demanded that the young man accept his heritage no matter what. Did the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator really want to pass on his knowledge, or was he planning to steal the young man's body and be reborn in it through special methods?

"This is the truth of the apocalypse that I have come up with. It is not trying to destroy us but transforming us into 'them'!"

Li Yao finished his speech and looked at the two of them peacefully.

Sha Yulan was dumbfounded, her body shuddering beyond her control.

Xiong Wuji, on the other hand, was completely emotionless. He seemed to have figured out the point long ago.

"Excellent."

He talked slowly. "Your speculation is exactly the same as what I've been thinking lately. However, I didn't see things as clearly as you because I've been part of this game all along. Now that you've mentioned it, everything is beginning to make more sense now!

"If our understanding of the apocalypse is similar, a lot of time can be saved in convincing each other in the deal that I'm about to propose.

"Li Yao, the deal I'm going to propose concerns not just you and me but also the fate of Iron Plateau!

"Let's be honest here. I'm hoping to eliminate the chasm that has lasted five thousand years and re-establish communication between the Iron Plateau natives and the space residents!"

Chapter 589: Swallow or Be Swallowed

Chapter 589: Swallow or Be Swallowed

Having just seen the impassioned recording of the qi-trainers banishing the spacers five thousand years ago, Li Yao was truly shocked by Xiong Wuji's proposal. "What did you say?"

"Iron Plateau cannot hold on much longer."

Xiong Wuji was entirely emotionless. Every muscle on his face was as tough as steel, as he explained, "For countless years, the Iron Plateau natives have been struggling, reproducing, and expanding. The east part of the continent below our feet is almost entirely occupied by us. Our society seems to be prosperous and blooming!

"But in fact, we've reached the limit of our expansion and the peak of our development. What awaits us is a path leading straight down to the hell!

"The most critical problem is the lack of resources.

"Every battle against the apocalypse consumes tremendous resources. To deal with the battle of the apocalypse that just happened, all the mother lodes near Furious Bears City have been emptied in order to produce enough war machines and crystal bombs, but the equipment was mostly wrecked in the battle.

"The trophies we collected from the apocalyptic beasts are far from enough to make up for the loss.

"The other five tribes are in a similar situation to the Furious Bears Tribe. All the existent mother lodes will be drained in the new few decades. If they want to excavate more resources, they will have to establish new mines and towns far from the main cities.

"However, building new mines and towns and protecting the supply line between such locations and the main city will consume a lot of resources itself. The scourge of the demon beasts on the way must be taken into account, too. One moment of carelessness may result in tremendous losses!

"The leaders of the six tribes are well aware of the situation. Judging from the trend of our development, the best we can do is to persist for several decades and resist another ten or so apocalypse outbreaks. Then, we will run out of resources and have no way to continue walking on the old path.

"Everybody has been considering how to solve the problem. They have proposed many insights such as improving our technology in excavation and tempering so that we can make use of the mother lodes deeper below the ground.

"But whatever method we employ, they all demand the investment of tremendous time and resources. The upgrade of technology cannot be completed within one day. Dozens of years, or even hundreds of years, and the hard work of several generations are mandatory for the process, not to mention that we might be walking on the wrong path and have to correct our mistakes every now and then.

"However, we have neither time nor resources.

"The outbreaks of the eggs of apocalypse every ten years or so have forced us to spend all our available resources to cope with it. The harassment of the demon beasts has been a major headache for us, too. We don't have the resources to begin research that could potentially last a hundred years!

"Before, it always baffled me why the eggs of apocalypse broke out in such a weird pattern. But after I listened to your assumption, I've figured out everything now!

"The purpose of the outbreaks of the eggs of apocalypse is to act as 'technology blockers'. They block all possibilities of advancement in our basic technology and coerced us to pour our resources into the war and improve ourselves in the pattern that they have set up!

"When such 'improvement' continues for thousands of years, everything about the civilization of mankind will be abandoned, and we will be adept at the mode of war of the Titan Warriors. Maybe, to quote you, 'we' will be transformed into 'them' at that time!"

While talking, Xiong Wuji's body started shivering slightly.

Sha Yulan was behind him, with her hands placed on his shoulders. There was panic her eyes, too.

"I understand now. I understand everything now."

Xiong Wuji mumbled to himself, "I was always curious about one thing when I was training in the Titan Illusionary Land. Titan Warriors were a species that preferred slaughtering to construction. Then why did they boast such finely-made weapons? Many of their weapons were made of special alloys based on technology that was far more advanced than ours. Such weapons were indicative of a high industrialization level!

"Now that I think about it, it might be related to the 'eggs of apocalypse'!

"Eggs of apocalypse, as well as the insects we see in the Titan Illusionary Land, are possibly the tools of production for the Titan Warriors!

"They herd the insects just like we herd cows and sheep!

"They stabbed the eggs of apocalypse deep underground where the eggs would grow weird 'roots' to collect the resources in the mother lodes. Then, a lot of apocalyptic beasts would be born!

"Such apocalyptic beasts were the best metal manufacturers. They could eliminate the impurities inside the raw minerals by inexplicable biochemical reactions so that the purest metals could be retrieved. They could even combine several different kinds of metal and turn them into super alloys!

"Not to mention that the apocalyptic beasts were themselves Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures that contained tremendous spiritual energy!

"The Titan Warriors have been herding such apocalyptic beasts. Then, when the time is right, they detonate the eggs of apocalypse, slay the apocalyptic beasts, and collect the super alloys and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures inside the bodies of the beasts to arm themselves!

"I assume that this is the paradigm of survival for the Titan Warriors' civilization!

"Right now, the Titan Warriors are guiding us to give up mankind's way of life and embark on their path!"

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao nodded quickly. "That's very reasonable. Gathering the resources deep underground with eggs of apocalypse and slaying the apocalyptic beasts after they have purified and melted the resources will not only satisfy the Titan Warriors' lust for killing but also provide them with profound resources!

"In such a way, the Titan Warriors can get a huge amount of super metal without any industry and craft indestructible weapons with the materials!

"It is indeed particularly suitable for the Titan Warriors!"

Xiong Wuji gnashed his teeth and said, "There's more to it.

"In the Titan Illusionary Land, I turned into a Titan Warrior several times that was hiding inside giant creatures, which were thousands of meters long and looked like enormous beetles. I was jumping from one planet to another and going on new killing sprees!

"It's possible that such enormous beetles are the 'interstellar warships' for the Titan Warriors. They swallow one planet after another like locusts in such vehicles!"

Li Yao added, "I've had similar experiences!"

Xiong Wuji said, "Maybe, in thousands of years, when all the Iron Plateau natives are transformed into new Titan Warriors, they will grasp the method to produce such 'warship beetles', too. They will collect the underground resources with the eggs of apocalypse and create countless warship beetles, and then—

"They will sabotage the entire Flying Star Sector!"

Li Yao subconsciously shivered. "Although it does not have any proof, your theory sounds rather plausible. The appetite of the Titan Warriors is definitely much bigger than a single planet!"

Xiong Wuji smiled bitterly and replied, "Do you understand now why I propose to get in touch with the space residents despite all the possible opposition?

"The heritage of the Titan Warriors' civilization is like thick ink, while Iron Plateau is like a glass of water.

"If you pour the ink into the glass, all the water will be corrupted before long.

"However, the human civilization of the Flying Star Sector as a whole, which has expanded to every corner of this constellation, is like the pond in front of us!

"Thick as the ink may be, it will disappear once it is poured into the pond.

"In such a case, the Titan Warriors won't be able to transform us. Instead, the civilization of mankind will swallow theirs completely!

"This is a war!

"Maybe the Titan Warriors' civilization perished billions of years ago, and maybe it was millions of lightyears away from us!

"But still, this is a war between two civilizations, spread out over infinite time and space!

"If the Iron Plateau natives continue secluding ourselves and refuse to get in touch with the outside world, we will be transformed by the Titan Warriors sooner or later. Eventually, the entire Flying Star Sector and even other human civilizations beyond this constellation will be jeopardized!

"However, I believe that, as long as the wisdom of the Iron Plateau natives and the space residents is combined, we will definitely figure out a way to unravel the mysteries of the Titan Warriors' civilization and find out the techniques of resource collection and reproduction of creatures behind the eggs of apocalypse!

"By then, the Titan Warriors' civilization will be entirely swallowed by us. We will become even stronger than right now!"

Xiong Wuji's eyes were glittering. Although he was steady on the giant green rock, Li Yao had the feeling that he was even mightier than when he had fought against the calamity-level beast!

A war between two civilizations across billions of years and hundreds of lightyears!

Li Yao was so shocked by the groundbreaking hypothesis that he found it hard to breathe.

He also understood better why Xiong Wuji, the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau and the strongest man on the planet, was proposing to get in touch with the space residents who had once been considered 'traitors'.

Li Yao asked, "Chief Xiong, what are you planning to do?"

Xiong Wuji pondered for a moment. Then he smiled bitterly. "The chasm between Iron Plateau natives and space residents has become too deep and wide over the years. The icy wall cannot be thawed within one day.

"In fact, about two thousand years ago, the space residents sent representatives to Iron Plateau, hoping to restore communication between the two parties.

"But the resources on Iron Plateau were relatively abundant at that time. Also, our predecessors had made continuous breakthroughs on the path of qi-training from the 50th level to the 70th and even to the 90th.

"Everybody thought that we could make breakthroughs without any constraint. We would surpass the 100th level, the 500th level, and the 1000th level in no time.

"Therefore, the predecessors at that time discarded the space residents' request on the spot and dismissed all the representatives.

"After that, the starships of the space residents were forced to land on Iron Plateau many times.

"You also know that most of the area on Iron Plateau is surging ocean and the Dark Continent, both of which are not under our control.

"Even within the area under the control of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, deserts and demon beasts dominate most of it. We can only ensure that the towns and the transportation lines are secure.

"Therefore, the passengers on those starships did not last long They were either swallowed by demon beasts or slain by the savages in the Dark Continent.

"Then rumors spread far and wide. The space residents began to consider Iron Plateau a forbidden area for Cultivators and us to be barbarians who feasted upon raw meat and blood!

"Such a stereotype cannot be changed shortly. I plan to send a delegation to space to get in touch with the space residents first so that they will see what the Iron Plateau natives today actually look like.

"If possible, we can make some deals by exchanging our unique techniques or resources!

"After we take the first step and our wariness is mostly relieved, we can start negotiating about interacting on a larger scale!

"Li Yao, if you are willing to, I want you to join the delegation as the intermediary between the Iron Plateau natives and the space residents!"

Chapter 590: If Not Me, Who?

Chapter 590: If Not Me, Who?

Li Yao was dazed. "Chief Xiong, I'm just a common Cultivator, born and raised in a remote area of the sea of stars, and what I was working in was a medium-size Exo Society instead of a renowned Cultivation sect. I do not know anyone in the leadership of Heavenly Saints City. Is it really appropriate for me to serve as the intermediary?"

Xiong Wuji smiled and replied, "Frankly speaking, it is exactly because of your background and your clean history with the 'six major sects of Heavenly Saints City' that I want you to take the job. Just think about it. How awkward will the relationship between the six tribes of Iron Plateau and the six sects of Heavenly Saints City be? Is it suitable for us to start our dialogue with them?"

Li Yao thought for a moment and immediately realized the reason.

In the ceremony just now, he had seen that the six tribes of Iron Plateau had ended on bad terms with the six sects that escaped to the space. They had banished the leaders and the elders in the name of the common disciples. For the more radical tribes, such as the Burning Sun Tribe, they had even put the previous leaders and elders on a wanted list!

It was indeed an awkward relationship between the six tribes of Iron Plateau and the six sects of Heavenly Saints

City. To put it more seriously, it was about the competition of 'rightfulness'.

Between the Furious Bears Tribe and the Furious Bears Union of Heavenly Saints City today, which was the rightful successor of the 'Furious Bears Union' five thousand years ago?

If the two parties started their communication with such issues as their focus, the negotiations would never be completed. Chances were that a war would break out immediately!

Xiong Wuji smiled bitterly. "Now you get it. Even if I can convince the chiefs and elders of the other five tribes to reach out to the space residents, we cannot go to Heavenly Saints City directly, nor will the six sects of Heavenly Saints City be very happy to see us!

"Therefore, I'm hoping to find an intermediary who is familiar with both the Iron Plateau natives and the space residents but is not closely related to the six sects of Heavenly Saints City. The person must be someone the Iron Plateau natives trust, too.

"Sha Yulan is a good candidate. However, she is just a doctor with barely any physical strength. I prefer a tough warrior who can ensure the mutual benefits of both parties in times of emergency with all methods possible!

"I've been considering the matter since you introduced yourself. Your performance in the temple of techniques and in the battle of the apocalypse further persuaded me. Li Yao, you are the perfect choice!"

Li Yao scratched his head. He suddenly felt tremendous pressure. He asked, "What should I do?"

Xiong Wuji replied, "We have an escape capsule under our control, the one in which Sha Yulan landed on Iron Plateau. However, it was seriously damaged during the forced landing. Over the past ten years, I've gathered a lot of resources, but there's no telling whether or not it can be repaired.

"If you can fix the escape capsule, I want you to leave Iron Plateau and contact your companions.

"Didn't you say that you were from a medium-size Exo Society? It couldn't be better. We can purchase a few small starships through the Exo Society so that we can send a delegation into space and start making deals.

"During the deals, the two parties will get to know each other better. The scale of the deals will gradually expand, and the chasm between us will be eliminated sooner or later."

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao asked, "What items of the Iron Plateau natives do you want to trade with the space residents?"

"There are too many."

Xiong Wuji answered quickly, "First of all, the dead corpses of apocalyptic beasts will be the best goods. Their shells and sharp claws contain a lot of special alloys that even the space residents might not be able to produce!

"Secondly, the training skills of the qi-trainers. We have focused on the arts of manipulating spiritual gas for thousands of years. In the world of Cultivators, the vast majority are still Refinement Stage Cultivators, right? Such skills will definitely be very attractive to them!

"Thirdly, as you said before, our True Qi magical equipment is very suitable for low-level Refinement Stage Cultivators. As long as the price is good enough, it is definitely tradable, too.

"There are also the hearts of the Titan Warriors and the pieces of eggs of apocalypse. They all boast sophisticated techniques and are absolutely invaluable goods!"

Li Yao nodded. "Then what do you want in exchange?"

Xiong Wuji counted his fingers as he said, "Firstly and most importantly, the technology to excavate the resources deep underground. According to Sha Yulan, the mining technology of the space residents is so advanced that they can excavate mines on many asteroids. We are in desperate need of such technology!

"If such technology is too cutting-edge to be traded, alternatively, we are hoping to get some large-scale defensive weapons to help us resist the eggs of apocalypse outbreaks so that our resources can be saved to develop our own technology to excavate the deeply buried mother lodes.

"Also, all subjects of fundamental knowledge are goods that we desire!

"We are even planning, if possible, to send a batch of students to study in the schools of the space residents and learn their knowledge systematically.

"The bottom line is, after years of discussions with Sha Yulan, I find that there are a lot of complementary areas for the two parties. As long as we can put aside our prejudice, this is definitely going to be a win-win situation!

"You, as the intermediary, won't suffer any loss, either. We are talking about a deal between one giant planet and countless space towns. I can't begin to fathom how large the scale of the commodities will be. Both you and the Great Horn Exo Society will get enormous benefits in the process!"

Li Yao was greatly interested.

As a Cultivator, and an experienced refiner, Li Yao could easily become a millionaire with no concerns about his personal needs if he merely wanted to meet the demands of his own training.

However, his goal was to craft at least one piece of planetary-level magical equipment before he returned to the Heaven's Origin Sector.

These two tasks both required astronomical resources, and there was no way that he could complete them alone!

If he could mend the relationship between the Iron Plateau natives and the space residents, and even let the two parties engage in large-scale business activities, he would definitely gain tremendous wealth and countless connections as the intermediary!

Considering the whole thing carefully for a moment, Li Yao replied, "I've seen the general inventory of trophies of the battle of apocalypse. Many special alloys are hard and tensile enough for me. With my current capability, I should be able to repair a super-small starship such as an escape capsule. At the very least, I can make it fly to the edge of the Iron Plateau Space Zone, which is in the coverage of the Spiritual Nexus. I will be able to send a message to the Great Horn Exo Society once I make it there!

"After that, I can absolutely get you one or two starships to bring the delegation of the Iron Plateau natives to the space.

"I do not know many people in Heavenly Saints City. However, the experienced Exos in the Great Horn Exo Society must know some.

"I have friends in the circle of refiners who might be of help, too."

Li Yao was thinking about Huangpu Xiaoya.

As a noble family of refining that had lasted for more than a thousand years, the Huangpu family was definitely a friend to many Cultivators. That would be of great help to him.

"However—"

Li Yao said solemnly, "I want the thing to be done honestly and openly. We must inform the six sects of Heavenly Saints City in advance to avoid any misunderstanding. Right now, the entire Flying Star Sector is anxious, and the Immortal Cultivators of the Temple of Immortals are stirring chaos everywhere. The Cultivation sects couldn't be more nervous at this point. If a conflict arises because of a misunderstanding, our clever endeavor will bring us no good."

Xiong Wuji nodded. "Of course. The more sensitive an issue is, the more important it is to get things done openly. We have no evil intentions anyway. Every move in the plan can be set to the public!"

Li Yao hesitated for a moment and asked, "Do all six tribes of Iron Plateau agree to get in touch with the space residents?"

Xiong Wuji smiled and, waving his artificial arm, replied, "That was why I attacked and slayed the calamity-level beast so boldly.

"I've talked about the matter with the Silver Moon Tribe and the Heaven Wolves Tribe for quite a while. Right now, Furious Bears, Silver Moon, and Heaven Wolves have reach a consensus to get in touch with the space residents and trade for resources and technique that are necessary for our future development.

"As for the Burning Sun Tribe, the Feathered Snakes Tribe, and the Giant Axe Tribe, they, of course, won't be so willing to cooperate.

"But according to the convention of Iron Plateau, the more contributions you make in a battle against the apocalypse, the louder your voice will be regarding the strategy of development for Iron Plateau in the next ten years!

"Three for the proposal and three against it, the vote seem evenly-matched. But now that one of my arms was wasted, I think they will not stop us from sending a delegation, however discontented they are!"

Li Yao was silent. He finally knew why Xiong Wuji was so brave and fearless in the battle of apocalypse now.

Watching the blinking water in the pond, Li Yao said gravely, "Chief Xiong, you must think carefully before you leap. What you are going to do is different from the battle of the apocalypse.

"In battle, you are a hero either you win or lose. Even if you are swallowed by an apocalyptic beast and die without a grave, you will still be a marvelous hero. In thousands of years to come, the Iron Plateau natives will still sing about you and your achievements.

"However, as for what you are going to do next, as long as you make the first step, many diehards will disparage you as traitors and cowards even if you succeed in the end. You will be loathed by everyone, and you will die a disgraceful death.

"Moreover, the process may not be as smooth as you imagine. After all, the two parties have been separated for five thousand years. Five thousand years of hatred and misunderstanding are going to be resolved by you alone. It is not going to be an easy task!

"Should you fail, the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, and the biggest hero in every Iron Plateau native's heart, will be utterly discredited and become a rat on the street that everybody will spit on. You will be cursed for all eternity!"

Xiong Wuji smiled. He suddenly grasped Sha Yulan's hand.

Sha Yulan was dazed for a moment, but she didn't retreat her hand and simply held his hand tight.

Xiong Wuji heaved a long sigh; the air leaving his nose disturbed the tranquil surface of the pond. He then said slowly, "Something must be done, and some curses must be shouldered.

"Since everyone considers me the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, who is qualified to shoulder 'curses for all eternity' if not me?

"Rest assured. Whatever you think of, I've thought about since long ago. I'm ready to be condemned and doomed before I make the step!

"Tomorrow is the meeting of the six tribes. You will come with me, and I will propose the motion to communicate with the space residents formally.

"Even if my bones are shattered and my soul destroyed, I will not allow the Titan Warriors to swallow my homeland!"

Chapter 591: Oasis Plan!

Chapter 591: Oasis Plan!

"Reaching out to the space residents? Chief Xiong, you are playing with fire!"

Yan Zhengdong, chief of the Burning Sun Tribe, smashed the giant desk with a bam sound, leaving a clear indent of his fist in the black wood that was as solid as iron. He rose up suddenly and glared at Xiong Wuji.

The chief of the Giant Axe Tribe and that of the Feathered Snakes Tribe, as well as the elders of those tribes, all frowned.

Behind them were the young experts of the three tribes who had been invited to the meeting because of their excellent performance in the battle of the apocalypse.

The young warriors were not as courteous as those sitting at the front. Some of them, in fear of Xiong Wuji's toughness, were merely whispering to each other in complaint. But the more irrational and disobedient guys were simply shouting.

"Xiong Wuji is mad!"

That was what happened in the meeting of the six tribes.

The motion that Xiong Wuji put forward to reach out to the space residents was lambasted by the Burning Sun Tribe as expected.

Even on Xiong Wuji's side, not everyone in the Furious Bears Tribe, the Silver Moon Tribe, and the Heaven Wolves Tribe knew about the matter.

Some young qi-trainers gasped in shock, apparently hearing the bold idea for the first time. The crowd was humming, as if ten thousand mosquitoes were flying in the meeting room.

Li Yao made the greatest contribution in the battle of apocalypse only secondary to Xiong Wuji. Therefore, he was qualified to sit at the very front of the crowd. He could see one side of Xiong Wuji's face clearly.

Xiong Wuji's nerves seemed to be made of tempered steel. He had foreseen the strong objection and therefore was not in the least surprised.

Yan Zhengdong, chief of the Burning Sun Tribe, gnashed his teeth. "Chief Xiong, the so-called communication and negotiation of yours mean leaking the secrets of Iron Plateau to the space residents. No way! There's no way that the Burning Sun Tribe will approve of such a motion!"

Xiong Wuji said solemnly, "History has proved that seclusion does not lead to good results! No techniques can be kept a secret forever. Only by communication, absorption, and evolution can our techniques become stronger and stronger!

"Of course, we won't be offering our core techniques for nothing. We are going to trade them for the space residents' techniques and resources! By then, if Chief Yan feels that a certain deal is inappropriate, you can always vote against it!"

Yan Zhengdong burst into laughter. "That's an interesting thought. But who can guarantee that the space residents have no other evil purposes? Chances are that they've been coveting Iron Plateau for a long time!"

Xiong Wuji replied seriously, "All the more reason we should communicate with them. Only by talking with them can we know what is on the space residents' mind and how advanced their Cultivation technology is! As the saying goes, you can never lose a battle if you know both yourself and your enemy. But right now, we don't know the first thing about the space residents. If they are really malicious, we don't even know how to resist them. That's definitely not what we want!"

Yan Zhengdong's face reddened, his veins bulging on his neck. He yelled, "I don't know anything about the space residents, but I know everything about the Iron Plateau natives! If the space residents dare to mess around on Iron Plateau, we will make them die without a grave!"

Xiong Wuji raised his voice, too. "And exactly how are we going to make them die without a grave? We are all well aware of the state of the six tribes. All the resources have almost been drained to fight against the apocalyptic beasts!

"Just now, the Heaven Wolves Tribe and the Giant Axe Tribe were bickering for an entire hour over a mother lode of Purple Mist Stones with an annual production of only three thousand tons. Three thousand tons! That was among the tiniest mother lodes three hundred years ago. The elders of the two tribes in the past could've met and had a dinner with each other and figured the whole thing out. But right now, the fuss has to be addressed in the meeting of the six tribes! Why? Because we are running out of resources! The shallow resources on the top of the earth have almost been emptied!

"I know that many people object to communicating with space residents because you cannot let go of the betrayal five thousand years ago. But the dwindling resources are the most crucial problem at hand right now! If we don't reach out to the space residents and we don't purchase more resources, in a few decades, when everyone sitting here is old or dead, are you expecting the qi-trainers sitting behind you and me to kill the apocalyptic beasts with stone axes and wooden sticks?

"Chief Yan, if you are against my motion, why don't you tell us what plans you have in mind to address the resource shortage?"

Yan Zhengdong chuckled and replied, "Of course, I have my plans!

"Now that all the leadership of six tribes are gathered today, I would like to take the opportunity to introduce the 'Oasis Plan'!"

"Oasis Plan?"

Lively discussions dominated the room again. The qi-trainers on the Furious Bears Tribe's side were looking at each other in bewilderment. There was confusion in everyone's eyes.

The qi-trainers on the Burning Sun Tribe's side, on the other hand, put on a mysterious smile, as if they were sure about their victory.

For the first time, surprise appeared on Xiong Wuji's face. Obviously, he had never heard of the 'Oasis Plan' before.

Li Yao sat straight and narrowed his eyes.

Yan Zhengdong cleared his throat and continued, "It is well known that the territory of the six tribes of Iron Plateau is merely a small portion of all the land on our planet. Most of the land beyond our territory is known as the Dark

Continent, which was the first to take a strike from the apocalypse!

"The Dark Continent is dominated by demon beasts and savages. The eggs of apocalypse break out at a much higher frequency than those in our territory do. However, the longevity of the apocalyptic beasts is usually very short. Several days, tops. That's why we are never affected by them.

"Over the past thousand years, countless expedition teams have been sent to the Dark Continent, and none of them have reported any traces of intelligent creatures. In the recent few hundred years, due to lack of resources, we abandoned the exploration of the Dark Continent once and for all.

"However, one year ago, the Burning Sun Tribe received a signal from the Dark Continent!"

"What?!"

This time, even Xiong Wuji's face changed color.

The qi-trainers of the three tribes sitting behind them were in a riot, too.

Watching everybody's reaction coldly, Yan Zhengdong was very satisfied. "The Burning Sun Tribe organized a new exploration team and traced the origin of the signal deep into the Dark Continent. Finally, we found a brand-new tribe in a valley!"

Xiong Wuji was dumbfounded. The whispers behind him grew even louder. Many people stood up involuntarily in shock.

Li Yao, on the other hand, furrowed his brow, deep in thought.

Yan Zhengdong went on. "This particular tribe called themselves the 'Oasis Tribe'. Their predecessors had struggled for thousands of years in the Dark Continent, a much harsher environment than ours. A lot of their heritage was lost. Their development level was hundreds of years behind ours. Except for a few techniques and magical equipment, they were basically a real tribe of primitives.

"However, we discovered mother lodes with abundant reserves in the territory of the Oasis Tribe. Since they had never been exploited on a large scale, the resources inside were enough for our usage for the next few hundred years until we pass the difficult times and develop our own excavation technology to retrieve the deeply buried resources!

"Also, according to our interaction with the local residents of the Oasis Tribe, they were all nomads with no fixed homes, and they have found minerals that were exposed to the air in dozens of areas where they had briefly stayed. It is very likely that more resources are waiting to be unearthed by us!

"All in all, the Oasis Tribe will be our best guide in the Dark Continent. With their direction, I'm certain that we will exploit all the resources on the Dark Continent.

"Therefore, the Burning Sun Tribe, together with the Giant Axe Tribe and the Feathered Snakes Tribe, has drafted the Oasis Plan!

"We are hoping to send large-scale teams to the Oasis Tribe and help it settle in the Dark Continent. Then, with the Oasis Tribe as the base, we will exploit the resources on the Dark Continent as best we can!

"This is our solution to our shortage of resources. What's your opinion, Chief Xiong?"

Xiong Wuji was dazed for a long while, before he opened his mouth. "The Dark Continent is a complicated place. We must discuss the details more carefully before we make any decisions."

Yan Zhengdong smiled. "That will be unnecessary. Before the battle of the apocalypse, the three tribes here formed the first expedition team and sent it to the Oasis Tribe."

"What?!"

Xiong Wuji was outraged. He rose up suddenly and said solemnly, "Chief Yan, that was a big decision. Why did you not wait until the meeting of the six tribes so that everyone could discuss it together?"

Yan Zhengdong sneered. "Is there anybody here who doesn't know that Chief Xiong has been spellbound by a girl from space and wants to reach out to the space residents?

"The secret agreements that the three tribes to the west made under the table were never left to the discretion of the three tribes in the east, were they?

"Right now, what's done is done. The first expedition team has gone deep into the Dark Continent, and it's impossible to recall them!"

The buzz in the room was louder than ever. The elders of the Furious Bears Tribe, the Silver Moon Tribe, and the Heaven Wolves Tribes were all frowning hard, deep in thought.

Xiong Wuji tried to hold back his anger and said, "I still feel that something is not right! Our ancestors searched the Dark

Continent for thousands of years without finding any traces of civilization, and a tribe has shown up out of nowhere at this moment?"

"Chief Xiong—"

A coarse voice came from Yan Zhengdong's back. "I was in full charge of the Oasis Plan, and I was in the first expedition team to witness the existence of the Oasis Tribe and the mother lodes around. They are 100% true. I swear with my life."

"Master Yan!"

Xiong Wuji's anger immediately dispersed. He bowed respectfully.

A hunched man slowly rose up from behind Yan Zhengdong. He was a white-haired old man as thin as skeleton. His legs had been cut off from the knees, and he was sitting on a special jet wheelchair that could spurt spiritual gas and push him around freely.

The old man seemed to enjoy a high prestige in all six tribes. His appearance silenced all the qi-trainers on the Furious Bears Tribe's side.

Li Yao was greatly baffled. He slightly leaned back and asked Shi Meng, who was behind him, "Who is this old man?"

Shi Meng's face was full of admiration, as he replied in a low voice, "He is Yan Xibei, Chief Yan Zhengdong's elder brother, as well as the well-acknowledged best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau before Chief Xiong! He was also once an unparalleled expert in the 99th level of the Refinement stage!

"In a battle of the apocalypse thirty years ago, he resisted the collective attacks of dozens of dragon-level beasts and stalled a calamity-level beast for almost half a day entirely on his own. He almost reversed the outcome of the battle purely by himself! Therefore, although his capability plunged due to the heavy wounds in the battle, he is still revered in all six tribes!"

Li Yao frowned. "Is it possible that he is lying?"

Chapter 592: Weird Chief

Chapter 592: Weird Chief

Shi Meng shook his head so hard that it could have fallen off his neck. "Absolutely not! Yan Xibei always bears the entirety of Iron Plateau in mind. There are no difference between tribes in his eyes. He treats the qi-trainers from every tribe the same. Whichever tribe has problems, he will always try his best to solve them!

"With his prestige and experience, he should've been the chief of the Burning Sun Tribe. However, he insisted that he would have to prioritize the interests of the Burning Sun Tribe if he became the chief and would not be able to treat every tribe equally anymore. Therefore, he handed the post over to his younger brother, Yan Zhengdong!

"After he was heavily wounded, Yan Xibei has been travelling among various tribes and helping everyone in need with the fortune of his family. He also kept nothing to himself when he taught the younger generation the arts of training!

"Our Chief Xiong was once stuck for more than half a year when he tried to surpass the 90th level of the Refinement Stage. It was not until he received Yan Xibei's wholehearted enlightenment that he made a major breakthrough and went on to the 99th level!

"That's why Chief Xiong called Yan Xibei 'master' just now. The two of them were indeed a student and a teacher!

"Do you think that such an upright hero would be a liar?"

Li Yao felt a headache coming on.

According to Shi Meng, Yan Xibei, the previous best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, was an impeccable saint.

Such a man was either too wise and brave or extremely cunning. It was definitely not going to be easy to deal with him!

Now that Yan Xibei had appeared, Xiong Wuji's tone immediately softened. He conceded, "Master Yan, if you've investigated the matter in person, of course we believe that the Oasis Tribe is real! The people of the Oasis Tribe are our compatriots, and it's only reasonable that we interact and communicate with each other. However, the Oasis Plan and the motion I proposed just now are not contradictory.

"No matter how many resources are stored in the Dark Continent, they will be used up one day. To excavate the resources will require huge expenses, too. In many years' time, we will still have to get in touch with the space residents. If so, why don't we prepare earlier?

"The Furious Bears Tribe does not object to the Oasis Plan. I believe that the Silver Moon Tribe and the Heaven Wolves Tribe are the same. However, it won't be too much of a burden if we try to communicate with the Oasis Tribe and the space residents at the same time."

"No! No! Absolutely impossible!"

Before Yan Xibei could reply, Yan Zhengdong, chief of the Burning Sun Tribe, had already jumped to his feet, his veins bulging on his forehead. He shouted desperately, "The Burning Sun Tribe insists that we keep our distance from the space residents no matter what!"

Xiong Wuji frowned deeply. He asked solemnly, "Chief Yan, your reaction is rather strange. I have agreed to join your Oasis Plan. Why are you unwilling to even send a delegation to investigate the development of the space residents?

"I wonder, what are the opinions of the Giant Axe Tribe and the Feathered Snakes Tribe?"

Yan Zhengdong sniffed heavily. He looked at the other two chiefs on his side in anger.

The chief of the Giant Axe Tribe was wearing black clothes that looked like a military uniform with two crossed giant axes weaved in silver threads on his chest.

His eyes were narrow and long, like the coldly blinking edge of an axe. Pondering for a moment, he slowly replied, "If the Furious Bears Tribe is willing to invest enough resources in the Oasis Plan, then the Giant Axe Tribe agrees to get in touch with the space residents."

"What?!" Yan Zhengdong slapped the desk in fury. "Gu Lei, what's the meaning of this?"

Gu Lei, chief of the Giant Axe Tribe, said coldly, "We of the Giant Axe Tribe have always considered ourselves to be a real army. We are as wary of the space residents as the Burning Sun Tribe is. However, I totally agree with what Chief Xiong said just now. You can never lose a battle when you know both yourself and your enemy well!

"As soldiers, nobody understands the importance of tactical intelligence better than us. We've been separated from the space residents for five thousand years. There is so much hatred between us, and yet we know barely anything about them. What a terrible situation we are in!

"Over the past thousand years, some starships of the space residents have been forced to land on Iron Plateau, and we've examined a lot of debris.

"Everybody here knows that the starships of the space residents are getting more advanced and powerful. God knows what phase they are in right now!

"Nothing is more horrifying than an enemy lurking in the shadows that we know nothing about!

"Therefore, the Giant Axe Tribe agrees to reach out to the space residents. If they really are as friendly as Chief Xiong hopes they will be and would like to communicate with us peacefully, it will be all good. If they are hostile, at least we will get to know more details about them and make precautions accordingly!"

Yan Zhengdong was rendered speechless. His face turned red, but he failed to give a response for a long time. At last, he added, "Gu Lei, have you forgotten the vow our ancestors made five thousand years ago?"

The chief of the Giant Axe Tribe answered calmly, "Of course we haven't. Iron Plateau will always be our home. Every qi-trainer of the Giant Axe Tribe will protect our home until the last bit of our blood is shed! But it does not mean that we should be confined to Iron Plateau forever!

"Our ancestors never dictated that we never step off Iron Plateau, did they?"

"Chief Yan, I think that you are overreacting, too."

The chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe was an old lady with white hair and a wrinkled face, and yet she was wearing more than ten blossoming flowers in her hair, which made her look somewhat hilarious. She tapped the table and remarked, "Just think about it. The Iron Plateau natives are the rightful successors of the Flying Star Sector. We have our fair share of the resources in space, too! Why are the rats in space monopolizing all of them? Are we not qualified to go to space?

"We are not abandoning Iron Plateau anyway, nor are we attracting the space residents to our planet. We are merely going to investigate the space residents. If you are not satisfied, you can consider the communication to be a reconnaissance mission!

"I think the task is definitely worth a try.

"Moreover—"

Glancing at Xiong Wuji, the chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe was smiling. "Chief Yan, you don't think that Chief Xiong will abandon the idea just because you don't agree, do you? Chances are that the three tribes of the west will send their own delegation into space without informing us first. Will you know what they are trading with the space residents?

"Do you want to start a civil war between the six tribes because of that?

"It's better to unify and set up rules first than let them act on their own. I believe that Chief Xiong will definitely set an example to abide by the rules for everyone else, won't he?"

Xiong Wuji let out a long breath in relief and nodded quickly. "Of course. This is a big deal that naturally requires the six tribes to sit down and settle the details to ensure that everything is within our expectations. This is just a preliminary proposal. Everybody's input is very valuable."

"No. I'm still against it. Strongly against it!"

Yan Zhengdong was even more infuriated, like a furiously burning torch. His veins were about to explode out of his temples, while he glared at Xiong Wuji and gnashed his teeth. "This whole thing is unnegotiable. You cannot do it!"

Now, even the chief of the Giant Axe Tribe and that of the Feathered Snakes Tribe were puzzled.

Gu Lei, chief of the Giant Axe Tribe, was a good friend of Yan Zhengdong. He asked in confusion, "Zhengdong, what are the reasons of your objection? Why don't you tell us your insights on the advantages and disadvantages of the motion?"

Gazing at Xiong Wuji in silence for a long time, Yan Zhengdong finally said, "I suggest the meeting be adjourned today. We will further discuss the issue tomorrow!"

The chief of the Giant Axe Tribe and that of the Feathered Snakes Tribe were both dazed for a moment. They looked at each other and were smart enough to realize that Yan Zhengdong must have something that he did not want to share. They could only nod their heads and postpone the meeting for now.

The first day of the meeting of the six tribes came to a sudden end just like that.

Xiong Wuji's face turned extremely weird, as if Yan Zhengdong's eyes had pierced through his soul. He was somewhat lost long after the meeting was ended.

Even Li Yao seemed to have contracted a special virus. His eyes turned deep and dark, and nobody noticed when he left. He returned to his ward directly after the meeting and meditated on his bed. It was not until ten o'clock in the evening that he went to Xiong Wuji's ward.

The light was off. Xiong Wuji was sitting in the darkness all by himself, like a rotten wooden sculpture.

He seemed to be much thinner than half a day ago. The aura of the best warrior on Iron Plateau had vanished from him.

"The discovery of the Oasis Tribe is quite odd!"

Li Yao went to the topic straightforwardly. "Your ancestors searched the Dark Continent for thousands of years without finding any civilizations. It is quite uncanny that a tribe popped out of nowhere at such a moment!"

Xiong Wuji was suddenly woken up from his trance. He calmed himself down and said, "It is indeed quite unbelievable that the Oasis Tribe was found. However, Master Yan Xibei is the most respected man on Iron Plateau and I believe in him. He would never do anything that is harmful for the interest of Iron Plateau!"

Li Yao suddenly changed the topic. "Let's put the issue aside for a moment. I want to discuss my arrival on Iron Plateau with you.

"Do you still remember that I said I was forced to escape to Iron Plateau because of the hunting of an expert space pirate?"

Xiong Wuji was dazed for a moment. He did not understand why Li Yao had brought the subject up. "I do. What now?"

Li Yao narrowed his eyes, his voice dissecting the situation layer by layer like the sharpest scalpel. "Do you not feel that this is too much a coincidence? It is almost like a novel.

"Isn't that what happens in all novels? When the protagonist meets a bad man that is too strong for himself, he can always run away with the favorable circumstances around him and then seek revenge after he trains himself hard!

"Why did there happen to be a planetary ring right behind myself when I was faced with a Core Formation Stage expert, and why was there Iron Plateau, known as the forbidden area for Cultivators, right inside the planetary ring that even the Core Formation Stage expert dare not trespass?

"Was it really because I was very lucky?"

Xiong Wuji frowned. "There are always coincidences."

Li Yao nodded. "That's what I thought; there are always coincidences.

"However, let's say that it was a coincidence that I luckily escaped to Iron Plateau.

"And it is another coincidence that a tribe living in the Dark Continent which nobody had ever found for thousands of years popped up exactly at this moment.

"I can accept one coincidence, but the cooccurrence of two coincidences really makes me feel creepy now."

Chapter 593: Everybody's Got a Secret

Chapter 593: Everybody's Got a Secret

Xiong Wuji lowered his head and pondered for a moment. "You said earlier that the Great Horn Exo Society had to flee to the Iron Plateau Space Zone trying to escape from the hunting of Storm Prison, who assaulted them suddenly.

"Never did they know that it was exactly what Storm Prison had planned.

"Storm Prison had also hoped to make the best use of the complicated terrain of the Iron Plateau Space Zone to run away after the Great Horn Exo Society was destroyed!

"Therefore, they set up traps in the periphery of the Iron Plateau Space Zone and waited for the Great Horn Exo Society to come close. Then, the Great Horn Exo Society fell right into the traps as expected and was almost exterminated."

The muscles on Li Yao's face was shivering nonstop, as he mumbled to himself, "That is what I thought previously.

"I thought that Fengyu Zhong drove the Great Horn Exo Society to the Iron Plateau Space Zone before he launched the fatal strike because he wanted to make use of the terrain in this area, and that my abrupt appearance had disrupted all the schemes of the Temple of Immortals.

"I've never doubted that until this afternoon!

"But after I heard the discovery of the Oasis Tribe…"

Li Yao took out a piece of paper from his pocket.

The paper was meant for him to draw structural designs on. But now, he drew a simple map of the Flying Star Sector in several seconds.

"Look, this is the Old Dragon Space Zone where Storm Prison ambushed the Great Horn Exo Society in the beginning. There are two forsaken space zones and one world fragment between this particular space zone and the Iron Plateau Space Zone. The journey is too long, and there are bound to be a lot of variables!"

Li Yao pointed at the map of universe and explained, "In the end, it was exactly because Fengyu Zhong wasted too much time on the road that he failed to eliminate the Great Horn Exo Society!"

Xiong Wuji raised his eyebrow. "What's the problem?"

Li Yao narrowed his eyes, with coldness beaming out. He replied, "The problem is, I know Fengyu Zhong very well, and this is definitely not his hunting style!

"He is a viper that has been nesting on Spider Den for decades. His hunting style is simplicity and sharpness. He always tries to shorten the time of his hunting and reduce the unnecessary procedures!

"For him, the simpler a hunting plan is, the better. One more procedure means one more thing that can possibly go wrong!

"Therefore, after the meeting today, I returned to my room and tried to walk in Fengyu Zhong's shoes.

"I discovered that, according to his style, he could definitely have launched the fatal strike in the Old Dragon Space Zone and blown the horn of the final battle there!

"It is true that the environment of the Old Dragon Space Zone was not favorable for his escape, but such a plan would've bought him at least one extra day for his getaway!

"One day was more than enough for him to flee!

"Why did he give up the easiest choice and change his habit by going through so much trouble to drive the Great Horn Exo Society to the Iron Plateau Space Zone?

"An old, cunning, experienced space pirate would never have done such a redundant thing.

"I can only speculate that it was not Fengyu Zhong's will, but the hint or command from someone above him, or to be more exact, someone from the Temple of Immortals.

"For some reason, the Temple of Immortals needed the final battle to break out in the Iron Plateau Space Zone!"

Xiong Wuji gasped. "That's just your speculation."

Li Yao sighed. "I hope it's just my speculation and I am being paranoid, too. But sadly, my instincts are hardly ever wrong. When I foresee danger, danger is very likely to occur.

"I thought that the game was concluded in the periphery of the Iron Plateau Space Zone and I was the winner.

"But now I realize that the game only began at that moment, and I don't even know who my opponent is or what he wants.

"In the hands of my real opponent, Fengyu Zhong is merely a chess piece on a board and a chip in a casino even though he is in the Core Formation Stage!"

Li Yao finished his speech, only to find that Xiong Wuji was not focused on him at all. The chief's eyes were hollow. There was no telling what was on his mind.

"Chief Xiong?"

Li Yao called him gently. Xiong Wuji was suddenly back to himself from the trance, and his eyes were focused again.

Li Yao asked, "Chief Xiong, is there something bothering you?"

Xiong Wuji coughed and said, "I'm alright. Just a bit tired."

"Please do take a good rest, Chief Xiong. I will calculate everything carefully when I return. Logically, the Temple of Immortals did not know of my existence in the beginning. So, I was definitely not the target of the scheme. I must rule out all the interfering factors resulting from my appearance and deduct the entire event from the starting point with the hypothesis that I don't exist. I'll see whether or not I can find why our enemy had to set the Iron Plateau Space Zone as the battlefield!

"I believe that, as long as I find their motivation, we will know what they are really up to!"

Li Yao rose up and bid farewell to Xiong Wuji, but Xiong Wuji seemed to be hesitating about something. It was not until Li Yao reached the door that he suddenly called out.

"Li Yao!"

Li Yao turned around, confused. He felt that Xiong Wuji was getting weirder and weirder.

Xiong Wuji clenched his fists so hard that his artificial arm was emitting cracking noises. He gnashed his teeth. "Believe me. Whatever I did, I did for Iron Plateau! You must believe me!"

Li Yao frowned "What do you mean, Chief Xiong?"

Xiong Wuji, however, seemed to regret saying what he'd said. He waved his hands lethargically and said, "Nothing. I'll see you tomorrow."

Then, he added, "If anything goes wrong in the future, please take care of Sha Yulan and Wu Mayan for me. Send them back to the space if possible."

Li Yao was dazed. He was planning to pursue further, but he found that Xiong Wuji had turned into a frozen statue again.

Li Yao returned to his own room in bafflement. The more he thought about it, the more uneasy he became. Pondering for a moment, he released Neltharion in stealth mode and hid it in the trunk of a giant tree in the yard.

It could see the door of Xiong Wuji's ward clearly from that angle.

Xiong Wuji was still in low spirits because of the heavy wounds, and therefore did not notice anything wrong.

Li Yao had no idea why he was spying on a friend, but when he looked at Xiong Wuji at the end of their conversation, he had felt that the chief's eyes were extremely strange, and some deeply buried secrets seemed to be hidden in them.

After the deployment, Li Yao sat cross-legged and gradually increased his brain cell activity, while he ruminated on every detail from the moment he'd boarded the carrier of the Temple of Immortals.

Such deduction was even more exhausting than drafting structural designs for magical equipment. Li Yao felt dizzy and drowsy by the time he reached the 7th day of the event.

Suddenly, a black shadow blinked in his vision.

A man in a black cloak had snuck into the yard behind the hospital quietly.

Something is indeed wrong!

Li Yao was refreshed. He pretended that he was breathing in a fixed frequency. Also, he had turned off the lights when he started his meditation. Therefore, anyone passing by would only think that he was sound asleep.

White hair could vaguely be seen below the cloak. Under the moonlight, Li Yao could see a face as red and healthy as that of a baby.

It was Yan Zhengdong, chief of the Burning Sun Tribe!

What's he doing here? Li Yao was greatly confused.

Zigzagging forward secretly, Yan Zhengdong went to Xiong Wuji's ward and pushed open the door.

The door was not locked. Xiong Wuji seemed to have known that a visitor was coming.

After he went inside, the door was locked after a click.

Neltharion could not capture the sound inside the room. Li Yao was so curious that he was scratching his head hard. He felt that his brain was about to explode with interest.

The door of the room was not opened again until half an hour later, when Yan Zhengdong stormed out of the room in fury.

His cloak was awry, yet he was too anxious to sort it out. He was somewhat pissed and yelled at the room in a low voice, "Yes, I don't believe in you! Whoever brings up the motion is fine, except for you! Absolutely not you!"

Xiong Wuji's voice came over from the room intermittently. He was talking about something like 'swear to god' and 'punished by the heavens if not', but it was impossible to distinguish exactly what he was saying.

Yan Zhengdong, on the other hand, snorted and said, "Cut the crap. The qi-trainers believe not in the deities or the heavens but our weapons and fists. Your vows do not mean a damn thing!

"Anyways, in the interests of the six tribes, I will not reveal who you are, but you'd better stop concocting your evil plans. Just be the chief of the Furious Bears Tribe and behave!

"If you've made up your mind to talk to the space residents, you will have to wait until I die! I will not allow you to do that as long as I'm alive!"

Finishing his words, Yan Zhengdong waved his sleeve and strode away.

Li Yao felt his heart pulsating with curiosity. He wondered whether or not to let Neltharion follow, but he eventually gave up the idea after some hesitation.

The Burning Sun Tribe was stationed in an independent camp at the corner of Furious Bears City together with the Feathered Snakes Tribe and the Giant Axe Tribe. There were many experts inside the camps. If somebody discovered traces of the magical equipment, it would be hard for him to explain.

After Xiong Wuji shut the door of the room again, Li Yao had Neltharion return and fell into deep thought again.

This time, he was pondering the relationship between Xiong Wuji and Yan Zhengdong.

Xiong Wuji had a big secret, and Yan Zhengdong was not as unreasonable as he appeared to be in the meeting in the afternoon. He seemed to know Xiong Wuji's secret and had good reasons for his objection.

What a mess!

Li Yao pondered for a whole night, yet he failed to figure anything out. When dawn came, he finally couldn't help it any longer and took a nap on the bed.

But shortly after he fell asleep, he was woken up by hasty horns.

There were also vague drumming noises in the distance.

Battle drumming.

Incoming enemy?

Li Yao was greatly surprised because he could tell that it was the war horn of the highest level in Furious Bears City.

Generally speaking, it was only blown when the apocalyptic beasts were attacking the city in full strength!

What's going on?

Li Yao hurried to put on the Sky Scorpion Armor that he had just repaired and rushed out of the hospital.

The streets were in chaos. There was not the slightest ceremonial ambience left. Everybody was hustling and bustling like headless flies. The qi-trainers were shouting, yelling, and running toward the east of the city.

"Uncle Sand Scorpion! Uncle Sand Scorpion!"

Wu Mayan appeared out of nowhere. One of his shoes had been knocked off in the crowd. He snatched Li Yao's arm, and his body curled like a shrimp because he was out of breath.

"What happened?" asked Li Yao solemnly.

"The thousands of qi-trainers of the Burning Sun Tribe are rioting! War! They are declaring war against us!" Wu Mayan shrieked.

That's impossible!

Li Yao was greatly shocked. He asked in disbelief, "For what?"

Although there were conflicts among the six tribes of Iron Plateau, they were not severe enough for a war. Opinions had differed in the meeting yesterday, and there had been quarrels, but all the chiefs were smart and rational people. The chiefs of the Giant Axe Tribe and the Feathered Snakes

Tribe, for example, had both agreed to get in touch with the space residents despite their hatred against the deserters.

Even when the secret conversation between Yan Zhengdong and Xiong Wuji ended on bad terms last night, Yan Zhengdong had mentioned that he would keep the interests of the six tribes in mind.

How come a war was breaking out?

"Yan Zhengdong, chief of the Burning Sun Tribe, has been killed!"

Wu Mayan was almost crying. He panicked and exclaimed, "The Burning Sun Tribe seems to have proof that Father Xiong killed him to keep his mouth shut. They are trying to avenge their chief!"

Chapter 594: Shocking News!

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When Li Yao and Wu Mayan reached the camps of the Burning Sun Tribe and the other two tribes, the sky in the east of the city seemed to be burning.

The thousands of qi-trainers of the Burning Sun Tribe were all fully armed. Many of them still had bandages on their heads, and yet they'd all unsheathed their weapons and summoned their spiritual gas, suggesting that they were ready for a total war.

Yan Xibei was floating here and there on his True Qi wheelchair, screaming and shouting, trying to soothe the simmering atmosphere.

The Giant Axe Tribe and the Feathered Snakes Tribe received the news of Yan Zhengdong's murder, too. They were greatly surprised, and, not knowing what the situation was, prepared themselves for battle, too.

The Giant Axe Tribe turned into a black swamp again. The brightly shining axes formed a forest of steel so dense that one would be chilled to the bones just looking at them.

The Feathered Snakes Tribe, in the meantime, had become an ocean of animals. The animals were apparently much more disobedient than people. All the shrieks and squeaks made the area even messier than before.

The qi-trainers of Furious Bears City were crowding to the area, but they did not dare take any action now that the situation was unclear.

The Heaven Wolves Tribe and the Silver Moon Tribe, although having been in a good relationship with the Furious Bears Tribe, found themselves unable to pick a stance when they heard such a horrible accident that the chief of the Burning Sun Tribe had been murdered.

"Xiong Wuji, you killed my father. The Burning Sun Tribe will not stop fighting until all of us die! War! Total war!" Yan Chihuo, Yan Zhengdong's youngest son, was standing on a heavy tank and screaming in outrage, with a white cloth tied to his forehead.

Yan Chifeng, the eldest son of Yan Zhengdong and the best expert in the younger generation of the Burning Sun Tribe, was wearing a white cloth on his head, too. However, he remained silent in the heavy tank.

Inside the heavy tank was a long desk covered by a white sheet in the shape of a human. Brown stains of blood were left on the white sheet.

Xiong Wuji was standing on another heavy tank. He bellowed first to silence everybody, before he opened his mouth again solemnly. "Brother Yan Chihuo, we will definitely investigate your father's misfortune in Furious Bears City until the truth is found out. But I don't have either the motivation or the capability to kill Chief Yan. Please don't act recklessly and do things that satisfy your foe and hurt your friends!"

"Xiong Wuji, stop being pretentious here. Everybody thought that you were a big hero, the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau!

"Screw you!

"I didn't know you were so cunning and sordid until today!"

Tears in his eyes, Yan Chihuo pointed at Xiong Wuji and shouted, "You and my father had a big fight in the meeting yesterday. Late last night, my father went to visit you to discuss things, only to come back furious! My father was up all night. He'd been sighing and saying that he knew a big secret about you. The six tribes would be divided if the secret was told, but he would feel guilty if he kept it a secret!

"As it turned out, my father died miserably on the bed this morning. Who else could've done this except you? Who else?

"Today, the chiefs and elders of all the tribes are here. Please reveal the true face of the ambitious schemer for justice!"

Gu Lei, chief of the Giant Axe Tribe, leapt to the heavy tank Yan Chihuo was in. He apologized to Yan Chifeng first and asked the son of the deceased to lift the white sheet so that he could observe Yan Zhengdong's fatal wound. He then raised his voice and shouted, "Yan Chihuo, it is truly an unprecedented event in the thousands of years of history of Iron Plateau for a chief to die abruptly during the meeting of six tribes!

"However, there are still many points about the matter that call for our attention. We must not jump to any conclusions.

"The conflict between Chief Yan and Chief Xiong took place in front of many people, which is undeniable. The two of them discussing secretly late at night and ending on bad terms might also be true. You said that Chief Yan had to his knowledge Chief Xiong's top secret. I believe you, too!

"However, are such reasons enough for Chief Xiong to act toughly in his own territory and kill the confidant? It does not seem very plausible."

The chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe, in the meantime, had stepped on the heavy tank, too, with two pythons as stairs. She also checked the cause of Yan Zhengdong's death.

Then she shrieked, "The Feathered Snakes Tribe has always been a good friend to the Burning Sun Tribe. The Furious Bears Tribe is definitely responsible for the neglection of safety measures, which caused Chief Yan to be assassinated in Furious Bears City.

"However, if Chief Xiong really wanted to keep Chief Yan's mouth forever shut, he wouldn't have chosen such crude methods, would he?

"Everybody saw how intense his relationship with Chief Yan was yesterday. If Chief Yan was killed, he would definitely be at the top of the list of suspects!

"If the investigation proves Chief Xiong to be the murderer, the Feathered Snakes Tribe will surely stand with the Burning Sun Tribe and seek justice for you even at the cost of total war!

"However, groundless speculation does not seem enough for us to start fighting each other!

"Try to calm down for a moment. We'll look into the case carefully. The true murderer, whoever they are, must not be let go of!"

"Indeed!"

Xiong Wuji declared, "It's true that Chief Yan and I didn't see eye to eye. But why on earth would I kill him just like that in my main city? Besides, I was heavily wounded in the battle of apocalypse and just put on an artificial arm. How was I capable of killing Chief Yan without alarming anyone else?"

Yan Chihuo gnashed his teeth. "Because of my father's old age and the wounds he suffered when he was young, he was far less vigorous than he appeared to be. However, to preserve his face, he always bulged his flesh by expanding his spiritual gas when he was out to pretend that he was still healthy. In fact, his capability plummeted long ago. Also, he suffered internal injuries in the battle of the apocalypse!

"Even if you don't act in person, there are at least a handful of experts in the Furious Bears Tribe who can kill my father quietly in an ambush!

"As for the reason you killed my father with such crude methods, that's because the secret my father knew about you is too shocking, and if it was revealed, you would be discredited and doomed forever. Therefore, you had to kill him immediately, however risky it was!"

Xiong Wuji bellowed, "He who has a mind to beat his dog will easily find a stick!"

The chief of the Giant Axe Tribe and the chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe frowned at the same time. "Yan Chihuo, do you have any solid proof?"

Yan Chihuo's eyes glanced over the faces of the two chiefs like magma. He suddenly burst into strange laughter that was even nastier than wailing. He roared to the sky, "Xiong Wuji, you are truly a distinguished schemer, considering how you've been fooling everyone! It's too bad that the wheels of justice grind slowly but surely. A sleazy man such as yourself won't get your way for long! Proof? Alright. Let me ask you. Why on earth have you been insisting on getting in touch with the space residents?"

Xiong Wuji replied immediately, "For the future of Iron Plateau, of course!"

Yan Chihuo's face had been fully twisted, as he yelled, "More like you've been spellbound by the witch Sha Yulan!"

Everybody was whispering to each other when they heard Yan Chihuo's words.

The qi-trainers of the Furious Bears Tribe, having been berated by Yan Chihuo for a long time, were more than angry. They all took the chance to curse back.

Even the chiefs of the Giant Axe Tribe and the Feathered Snakes Tribe were shaking their heads slightly.

The chief of the Giant Axe Tribe said in a low voice, "Ah Huo, that's entirely irrelevant. The thing about Sha Yulan and Wu Mayan has been settled in the arena. It's not a tradition of the Iron Plateau natives to go back on our words."

"Yes!"

In the battle formation of the Giant Axe Tribe, a tower-like muscular man more than 2.5 meters tall suddenly walked out of the crowd. He waved his giant axes and shouted at Yan Chihuo, "That year, the three tribes gathered in Furious Bears City and made a deal with Chief Xiong to settle the matter with three battles. If he won them all, we would seek no more trouble and consider the woman and her child ordinary members of the Furious Bears Tribe!

"As it turned out, Chief Xiong defeated me, 'Mountain-cutting Hatchet', in front of everyone in the arena!

"Now, you are calling that woman a witch again. Aren't you slapping my face?"

The qi-trainers valued their credits more than their life. Since they had promised to not harass Sha Yulan anymore if they were defeated in the arena, they would not say anything against her again in public however discontented they were inside.

Yan Chihuo's accusation of 'witch', on the other hand, had violated the taboo. Even many people in the Giant Axe Tribe and the Feathered Snakes Tribe were booing him.

"Brother Yan Chihuo!"

Xiong Wuji held his head high and announced furiously, "Previously, the Burning Sun Tribe, the Feathered Snakes Tribe, and the Giant Axe Tribe gathered in Furious Bears City and demanded Sha Yulan and her child be banished from Furious Bears City. We swore in the name of the ancestors of the six tribes that we would sort everything through three battles. If I won all of them, everybody would stop nitpicking the identity of Sha Yulan and her child; if I failed any of the three battles, they would be banished to the desert to live on their own!

"The result was that I was fortunate enough to win all the three battles. The two of them had been regarded as ordinary members of the Furious Bears Tribe ever since.

"Now, you are calling Sha Yulan a witch. Do you want to overrule the result of the battles?

"As for your indictment that I was spellbound by Sha Yulan…

"Hahahaha. What's wrong with that?

"Now that so many qi-trainers of the six tribes are gathered here, I would like to announce to everybody that…

"It's true that Sha Yulan and I are in love with each other. With everything coming to this far, I will take her as my wife for the rest of my life!"

His declaration almost blew more than half of Furious Bears City into the sky like an enormous crystal bomb!

"Ah!"

Wu Mayan shouted and pinched Li Yao's waist hard.

The young man had known that his mother and his foster father were in a close relationship, but he did not expect his foster father to be so audacious as to declare his proposal in front of more than a hundred thousand people!

The qi-trainers of the tribes were all dumbfounded, especially those from the Burning Sun Tribe, the Giant Axe Tribe, and the Feathered Snakes Tribe.

They had thought that they had located Xiong Wuji's weakness, but now that he had put forward such a straightforward declaration, they suddenly felt lost and didn't know what to do next.

Li Yao found Sha Yulan in the crowd. She was dumbfounded, too. Her face was red, her body was shuddering, and she was already on the brink of passing out. There was no telling whether she was overly scared or overly happy.

Xiong Wuji squinted, his voice suddenly turning sharper than ever. "Brother Yan Chihuo, Sha Yulan is the woman I love most, and a member of the Furious Bears Tribe. I want you to apologize to her for your insulting words!"

The daunting aura of the 99th level of the Refinement Stage was fully released, as if a tornado was rising up from the ground. Xiong Wuji suddenly turned more horrifying than ever!

Yan Chihuo's face turned pale. He suddenly took a step back and swallowed. Then he said that, "Alright. I apologize. It was wrong of me to say that. Sha Yulan is definitely not a witch!"

Everybody was dazed again, especially those familiar with Yan Chihuo.

Yan Chihuo suddenly changed his tone and shrieked, "I thought that Sha Yulan, the 'witch' from space, had been deceiving our Chief Xiong with pillow talk and finally planted the idea of meeting space residents into your head!

"I was wrong. Very wrong!

"I didn't know until this morning that Sha Yulan is indeed not a witch. She is just a poor woman whom you have been using as your camouflage!

"You were never spellbound by her!

"Since the very beginning, long before she arrived in Iron Plateau, Xiong Wuji, the ambitious schemer, has been planning to get in touch with space residents. Everything has been within your control. Her arrival merely gave you a perfect excuse for your cause!

"All this time, the Burning Sun Tribe, the Feathered Snakes Tribe, and the Giant Axe Tribe believed that Sha Yulan beguiled you and that you were confused because of her. In fact, it was never the case!

"The truth, and the biggest secret that my father discovered, is—"

Yan Chihuo pointed at Xiong Wuji's nose, his fingernails pale and his fingertips shivering.

Xiong Wuji's expression suddenly turned extremely weird. The aura around him became sharp beyond his control.

Coldness beamed out of the eyes of the chief of the Giant Axe Tribe and the chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe. They made a step forward simultaneously and shielded Yan Chihuo.

"Xiong Wuji, you never saw this coming, did you?"

Yan Chihuo laughed out loud. "You thought that your secret would be safe forever after you killed my father, but you didn't know that my father passed on the secret to me smartly before his death!

"Chiefs, elders, and seniors of all the six tribes of Iron Plateau!

"Brothers and sisters of the six tribes!

"And the qi-trainers in the Furious Bears Tribe who have been fooled by Xiong Wuji!

"Listen to me carefully!

"The man standing right before your eyes, the greatest hero on this planet who has slain a calamity-level beast on his own, known as the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, Xiong Wuji…

"…is actually a space resident!"

Chapter 595: Beside the Black Tooth River

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Silence. There was nothing but dead silence throughout the area.

Yan Chihuo's last announcement was so shocking that it blew the minds of all one hundred thousand qi-trainers like a super crystal bomb.

The vast camp was absolutely quiet. It was not until three seconds later that hissing sounds soared to the sky.

That was because everyone had opened their mouth as wide as humanly possible and was gasping hard.

More than ten seconds later, shouts and curses occurred in the Burning Sun Tribe, the Feathered Snakes Tribe, and the Giant Axe Tribe.

The qi-trainers of the Furious Bears Tribe were more than angry. They called Yan Chihuo's name and condemned that he was talking nonsense.

The hair all over Wu Mayan's body was shivering. He crouched and could barely talk. "Father Xiong. He—he—he—"

Li Yao was dumbfounded, too, but he also realized that it was probably true. The accusation was too appalling and unbelievable. Yan Chihuo wouldn't have dared to say that if he did not have valid proof.

If that was the case, Yan Zhengdong's uncanny words last night would make perfect sense.

As it turns out, you are the one with the real acting skills here, Chief Xiong!

Li Yao secretly commended him while he recalled everything he had experienced after he had come to the Furious Bears Tribe. Many problems that had been troubling him had answers now!

He had been curious why Xiong Wuji trusted a space resident so quickly and even fully opened the core secrets of the temple of techniques to him!

He had thought that it was because Iron Plateau natives were simple and straightforward. But the truth was…

He peeped at Xiong Wuji and found his face gloomy with pity and fury. The chief's fists were clenched so hard that the air might be exploding at any moment. Yet, he didn't give any refutation.

The chief of the Giant Axe Tribe took a long breath and said solemnly, "Yan Chihuo, this is a very severe accusation. You must not attack other people blindly. What evidence do you have?

"If you do not have valid proof and simply speculate that the chief of another tribe is a space resident, the Giant Axe Tribe will not stand on the Burning Sun Tribe's side!"

The chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe shrieked, "Nor will the Feathered Snakes Tribe! This is too shocking! What proof have you got?"

Yan Chihuo sniffed and laughed. Then suddenly, tears flowed out of his eyes. He took out a piece of creased paper from his pocked and said, "This is proof!

"After my father and Xiong Wuji's meeting failed, the more he thought of it, the less confident he became. Therefore, he released a stream of sharp spiritual gas and left shallow traces on the paper.

"The words were not readily recognizable. But as long as you mix the ash of the Candle Grass and the Purple Firefly Powder into water and soak the paper into the solution, the substances will have chemical reactions with the spiritual gas left on the paper, and you can see the tiny words appearing on the paper!

"The paper was folded and thrown into the dustbin.

"But when we were checking our father's body, we found that his eyes were unclosed and focused on the dustbin. That's how we retrieved the paper in the end!

"Leaving 'hidden script' with spiritual gas was our father's favorite game that he liked to play when my brother and I were young. I did not expect that he would be playing the game with us for the last time in such a way!"

Yan Chihuo was weeping again while he was talking.

The chief of the Giant Axe Tribe nodded. "That explains a lot. What exactly was written on the paper? Don't be hasty and take your time. If possible, don't skip any words on it."

Yan Chihuo sniffed. Biting his lips, he said, "It was a story that happened beside the Black Tooth River more than forty years ago."

The Black Tooth River was a big river to the south of the territories of the six tribes. The river was rapid, the spiritual energy was abundant, and there were many resources. Occasionally, many precious beasts would go by the place. It was a prime hunting spot for many qi-trainers in the six tribes.

"That year, my father went hunting with his companions in the tribe upstream of the Black Tooth River. They met a very cunning demon beast along the way, which escaped even though it had been shot.

"My father pursued the demon beast and got further and further away from his companion. Eventually, they lost in touch with each other, and my father did not know where he ended up.

"At that time, he encountered Xiong Dachuan, a qi-trainer from the Furious Bears Tribe!

"The two tribes were in better relationships than right now, and Xiong Dachuan was a well-known warrior among the six tribes. My father had always admired his valiancy. The two of them had a nice talk.

"As it turned out, Xiong Dachuan had an only son who was not one year old yet. His wife passed away because of dystocia during labor. The baby had congenital muscular dystrophy and suffered from various other diseases. There was no telling how much longer he could survive.

"According to the shaman in the tribe, only a 'Seven-colored Phoenix Tail Mushroom', a rarely-seen fungus, could potentially restore his son's health. He was looking for such mushrooms in the origin of the Black Tooth River.

"Then, the two of them went further to the upstream and hunted together. But later, my father discovered in a bush the remains of an escape capsule and some items for infants when they were apart.

"A while later, he heard Xiong Dachuan roaring. My father hurried to join him and check, only to find the bones of a baby that had been gnawed out of shape by demon beasts.

"It must've been an escape capsule of the space residents that malfunctioned during the forced landing to Iron Plateau. It happened to fall into the depths of the desert and became the victim of demon beasts.

"It was not unusual in Iron Plateau. Although the Burning Sun Tribe was never fond of the space residents, young infants were innocent after all. My father and Xiong Dachuan slayed two demon beasts that were planning to feast upon the bones and buried the poor baby. Then, they searched the escape capsule's surroundings for a day and a night, only to find no other space residents.

"They must've been eaten by the demon beast if there were any survivors of the crash.

"My father did not think too much of the incident and dropped it when he returned to the Burning Sun Tribe. He and Xiong Dachuan became good friends and exchanged quite a few letters. My father had even asked somebody to bring a batch of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures to aid in his son's recovery.

"Later, it was said that Xiong Dachuan finally found the Seven-colored Phoenix Tail Mushroom, and his sick son gradually got better. My father was very happy for him!

"But what was odd was that, although my father valued his friendship with Xiong Dachuan and planned to visit him in the Furious Bears Tribe many times in the years to come, Xiong Dachuan always avoided meeting my father on purpose.

"My father did not overthink it. He thought that their friendship was affected by the relationship between the two tribes that was getting more and more intense. In the end, he dropped the idea once and for all.

"But fifteen years ago, Xiong Dachuan suddenly sent a letter to my father and insisted that my father come to meet him.

"My father was quite confused, but he went to Furious Bears City anyway. Then he learned that Xiong Dachuan was dying due to heavy wounds from a hunting trip.

"Xiong Dachuan was in a high fever for three days and three nights, and his head had become muddled. But my father's arrival somehow refreshed him. He dismissed everyone else and talked to my father alone.

"Xiong Dachuan told my father that he did a silly thing more than twenty years ago which had been bothering him the whole time. He could not let go of it, nor did he know how to face my father!

"My father was greatly baffled and pursued further, but Xiong Dachuan went mad again and kept repeating 'Black Tooth River' without offering any explanation.

"Three days after my father left, he heard news of Xiong Dachuan's death.

"My father was puzzled by Xiong Dachuan's riddle. More than twenty years ago. Black Tooth River. The clues suggested their first encounter. Then what was the silly thing that he referred to?

"It was not until the next battle of the apocalypse, in which Xiong Wuji, Xiong Dachuan's only son, greatly distinguished himself and made unparalleled contributions to the elimination of the calamity-level beast, thereby becoming known as the best expert in the younger generation of the six tribes, that my father noticed him!

"However, after his observation, my father found that Xiong Wuji and Xiong Dachuan were not alike at all!

"Xiong Dachuan was a typical qi-trainer of the Furious Bears Tribe. He was more than 2.4 meters tall and extremely muscular, literally a moving iron tower. His face was long, and his jaw was very sharp!

"Xiong Wuji, on the other hand, was less than two meters tall, even shorter than the common qi-trainers of his tribe. His shoulders were not wide, and his face was square.

"My father thought that he took after his mother. But after investigation, my father found that his birth mother was also more than 2.2 meters tall. She had been a marvelous warrior herself!

"How come the son of two giants was so short? Was it because of his natural-born deficiencies? But how did a child with natural-born deficiencies grow into the best expert in the younger generation of the six tribes?

"Beside the Black Tooth River, more than twenty years ago…

"My father pondered for a long time and finally figured out a shocking theory. Was it possible that Xiong Dachuan's only son had died more than twenty years ago, and the 'Xiong

Wuji' right now was a space resident that he had picked up beside the Black Tooth River?"

The chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe couldn't help but remark, "But years ago, your father saw the bones of the baby and buried his body himself!"

"Indeed. It was the exact question that perplexed my father."

Yan Chihuo nodded and continued. "The question remained unanswered for several years, until he went to congratulate the wife of a qi-trainer who had given birth to twins.

"When he saw the twins, he was suddenly enlightened and thought—what if there had been more than one baby in the escape capsule?

"A pair of twins were placed in the escape capsule. One of them was killed by the demon beast, while the other one was lucky enough to survive the disaster and be discovered by Xiong Dachuan!

"New fathers are always tender to babies. Besides, Xiong Dachuan's own son was dying. He must've hidden the surviving child with the complicated feelings!

"Later, his only son still died, and he simply replaced the deceased baby with the child from space that he'd picked up beside the Black Tooth River!

"There wouldn't be much difference between one-year-olds. Besides, Xiong Dachuan's son had been sick since he was born and remained in his home all the time. Few people had seen him in person. Even if somebody else noticed the anomaly of the baby, Xiong Dachuan could always give the credit to the Seven-colored Phoenix Tail Mushroom, which had turned his son plump and healthy again. That was perfectly convincing!

"If the aptitude of the baby had been insufficient and he ended up being an ordinary member of the Furious Bears Tribe, maybe Xiong Dachuan would have been less bothered.

"However, seeing the child from space reveal a natural talent in training and was almost certain to become an important figure of the tribe in the future, Xiong Dachuan naturally felt uneasy and therefore summoned my father to Furious Bears City.

"It was a shame that he had been grasped by madness before he was able to tell the story. When my father thought the whole thing through, it was already years later!

"At that time, Xiong Wuji had earned the title of 'best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau' and was already nominated as the chief of the Furious Bears Tribe!"

Chapter 596: Truth Cabinet

Chapter 596: Truth Cabinet

"Although my late father's rashness is well known, he knew that he had to do everything cautiously because the conclusion was too shocking!

"By that time, my father had been the chief of the Burning Sun Tribe for many years; he was no longer just an ordinary warrior. Therefore, it was definitely inappropriate of him to declare his discovery without solid proof!"

The chief of the Giant Axe Tribe slowly nodded and said, "Indeed. Everything is just Chief Yan's speculation. It is quite natural that a child looks different from their parents. If a chief accuses another chief of being a space resident without valid proof, a war may break out between the two tribes!"

Yan Chihuo said, "That was exactly what my father thought. Therefore, he buried the secret in his heart and told nobody anything.

"A few years went by peacefully just like that, until Sha Yulan and her son arrived in the Furious Bears Tribe.

"The Burning Sun Tribe was better than bursting into fury just because of a widow and her son. But when my father thought of Xiong Wuji's suspicious identity, he got anxious and wanted to test Xiong Wuji with the matter!"

The chief of the Giant Axe Tribe nodded and frowned. "That explains a lot. I have been wondering why Chief Yan was so concerned about a woman from space, who did not even have the strength to catch a chicken, and her baby, who was still in his crib, that he even asked the three tribes to gather and force Xiong Wuji to kick them out. It nearly caused a riot!"

Yan Chihuo said, "My father has been a hero all his life. Even though he loathed the space residents, he wouldn't have asked for a woman's trouble. It was Xiong Wuji's attitude that he wanted to test.

"In the end, Xiong Wuji took full responsibility for the matter and even agreed to fight three experts from the three tribes in an arena. Although he won the battles in the end, my father grew warier of him!

"However, suspicious as my father might have been, Xiong Wuji had never done anything harmful to the interest of the Iron Plateau natives. My father was not sure whether he was unaware of his birth, considered himself to be a real man of Iron Plateau despite his birth, or was still lurking and concocting an earthshaking scheme!

"My father had to be more vigilant and started waiting and watching!

"Then, there were only several years until the next battle of apocalypse. All the tribes were preparing for the war actively. It would be even more inappropriate if my father brought up the issue recklessly, which might have divided the six tribes and even lead to a civil war!

"But after the battle of the apocalypse, Xiong Wuji put forward the motion of large-scale communication with space residents. My father couldn't help but doubt what his true purpose was, given everything that had happened in the past, and therefore strongly voted against the motion. He finally had enough of waiting and went to confront Xiong Wuji last night.

"Interrogated by him, Xiong Wuji admitted in the end that he had learned of his own birth from the mouth of Xiong Dachuan before his death more than ten years ago. It is the blood of space that has been flowing inside his veins!

"Even so, my father still never intended to reveal his true identity in public, because my father knew that Xiong Wuji's heroic performance in the battle of apocalypse was his indestructible armor. Unveiling him would definitely lead to the ultimate confrontation between the Burning Sun Tribe and the Furious Bears Tribe!

"Therefore, my father simply reminded Xiong Wuji that, as long as he abandoned the idea of meeting space residents and worked as the chief of the Furious Bears Tribe dutifully, my father would tell nobody the secret!

"But my father did not see through Xiong Wuji's personality at all. The man was brutal enough to agree with my father at the moment and immediately had him killed later!"

When Yan Chihuo finally finished his speech, he was crying so hard that he could barely talk anymore.

The hundred thousand people in the spacious camp fell into silence.

Unbelievable as the story that Yan Chihuo had told was, it was quite logical and explained a lot of things. Nobody could find any loopholes in it.

While observing Xiong Wuji's face, the chief of the Giant Axe Tribe said, "Yan Chihuo, can we read Chief Yan's last note in your hand in person?"

Yan Chihuo sobbed and said, "Such hidden script can only manifest once. Right now, the spiritual gas attached to the paper has all been consumed. There's nothing left! But I've scrutinized the paper when I read it. It was definitely my father's handwriting!"

The chief of the Giant Axe Tribe furrowed his brow even harder. "So to speak, you still don't have any solid proof?"

Yan Chihuo held his head high and glared at Xiong Wuji, his eyes burningly hot, as if he were hoping to bite some flesh off the murderer. He announced, "I swear with the head above my neck that everything I said is true! If you want proof, it's simple. Let's have the Truth Cabinet that has been enshrined in the Feathered Snakes Tribe delivered here and let Xiong Wuji stand in it. We'll simply ask whether or not he is a space resident. Everything will be settled!

"If Xiong Wuji dares to stand in the Truth Cabinet and pronounce 'I'm not a space resident', we will admit that the murderer is someone else and that we've wronged him. I will bend my knee and apologize to him and do whatever he wants me to do!

"If he doesn't have the guts to do that, it will be evidence that he has known his identity all the time, and that whatever I said just now is true!

"Xiong Wuji, do you or do you not dare to go into the Truth Cabinet? Answer me!"

Yan Chihuo was shouting louder and louder. The qi-trainers of the Burning Sun Tribe behind him were echoing him.

"Truth Cabinet!"

"Go to the Truth Cabinet!"

There were many times more qi-trainers on the Furious Bears Tribe's side, yet their spirits couldn't have been lower.

Most of them were looking at each in shock and panic. Unwilling to accept Yan Chihuo's accusation, they were all staring at Xiong Wuji, hoping that he could give a powerful rebuttal immediately or even prove his innocence in the Truth Cabinet to wash off such shameless slander!

Wu Mayan held Li Yao's hand tight and explained, his eyes red, "The Truth Cabinet is a piece of powerful magical equipment that was created before the apocalypse. It is said that the magical equipment can test whether or not someone is lying by monitoring the changes in their heartbeat and pulse as well as the waves of the soul. It has been proven that the results are absolutely precise!

"However, the operation of the Truth Cabinet is very complicated. It requires a large quantity of resources, too. Therefore, it has never been used randomly and is now sealed in the temple of the Feathered Snakes Tribe!"

Gazing at Xiong Wuji, the chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe had a grave expression on her face, her high-pitched voice turning low and deep. "Chief Xiong, you've heard Yan Chihuo's case clearly. Generally speaking, it is very unsuitable to test whether or not the chief of a tribe is speaking the truth with magical equipment. But the accusation is too appalling and seriously jeopardizes the relationship between the six tries!

"Do you have any solid proof to answer Yan Chihuo's accusations, Chief Xiong?

"If you cannot provide evidence, either, then the Feathered Snakes Tribe strongly suggest that Chief Xiong go to the Truth Cabinet to prove that you are not a space resident!"

The chief of the Giant Axe Tribe said solemnly, "The Giant Axe Tribe seconds the suggestion. Such an absurd accusation is a huge insult to the Furious Bears Tribe. If Chief Xiong proves that he is not a space resident in the Truth Cabinet, the Giant Axe Tribe is willing to provide thirty percent of our trophies as compensation!"

"Xiong Wuji, if you are not a space resident, I'll chop off my head and give it to you as my apology!" Infuriated, Yan Chihuo slapped his own neck so hard that it turned red.

Everyone held their breath, waiting for Xiong Wuji's reply.

Xiong Wuji's face was twitching violently. He gritted his teeth and said, "I'm willing to go to the Truth Cabinet to prove that I did not kill Chief Yan or ask anyone else to kill him!"

"No!"

Yan Chihuo bellowed, "Only the simplest true-or-false questions can be completely examined by the Truth Cabinet! There are many methods to bypass the detection of the Truth Cabinet if the question is too complicated!

"For example, you could've made a deal with your accomplices long ago that, as long as you cough or blink your eyes on certain conditions, they would immediately carry out the annihilation operation!

"Such an assertion as 'I did not kill him or ask anybody to kill him' is too ambiguous and very easy to circumvent the investigation of the Truth Cabinet!

"If you are really innocent, just go to the Truth Cabinet and declare to the world that you are not a space resident! I dare you!"

The chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe nodded and said, "Yan Chihuo is right. The Truth Cabinet can monitor the heartbeat, flow of blood, rhythm of spiritual gas, and vibration of the soul. It is absolutely precise.

"However, it is a tool after all and can be deceived by complicated questions. If you mix one deceptive sentence within ten true sentences, the remaining nine sentences will still be true, but the meaning of your statement might be entirely changed!

"Chief Xiong, now that you are willing to go to the Truth Cabinet, just a simple declaration 'I am not a space resident' will be perfect, right? As long as you prove your innocence, the Feathered Snakes Tribe is also willing to offer thirty percent of our trophies as compensation for the offence to the Furious Bears Tribe!"

Yan Xibei had been listening to the heated debate in silence all the time. Finally, he opened his mouth. "It is the Burning Sun Tribe that calls for the test. If the Giant Axe Tribe and the Feathered Snakes Tribe are both willing to offer thirty percent of their trophies as compensation, then, on behalf of the Burning Sun Tribe, I announce that, if Chief Xiong proves himself not a space resident, we will bring out fifty percent of our trophies as compensation for the Furious Bears Tribe!"

Humming sounds burst out again in the crowd when they heard Yan Xibei's words.

The compensation that the three tribes were proposing was even more than the trophies that the Furious Bears Tribe had been allocated previously. It was evident enough of their integrity.

There was sorrow on Yan Xibei's face. He sighed. "This incident is the misfortune of the Burning Sun Tribe as well as all the six tribes. Now, if we want to settle the conflict shortly, we must prove Chief Xiong's innocence as soon as possible. A test in the Truth Cabinet is the best choice at hand! Heaven Wolves, Silver Moon, what do you have to say?"

The Heaven Wolves Tribe and the Silver Moon Tribe were in a better relationship with the Furious Bears Tribe, but with everything coming to this point, what else could they do?

The two chiefs looked at each other and tried to convince Xiong Wuji. "Chief Xiong, what's happened has happened. There's no other solution. Just go to the Truth Cabinet and prove your innocence! Rest assured, after you prove that you are not a space resident, we will make sure that the insult your just suffered is properly apologized for. In the meantime, we will provide ten percent of our trophies as compensation!"

"What's the big deal about the Truth Cabinet?"

"Chief, just go to the Truth Cabinet! How is it possible that you are a space resident? Not in the world!"

"Chief, show them that you are an out-and-out man of Iron Plateau in the Truth Cabinet!"

On the Furious Bears Tribe's side, many qi-trainers were shouting and yelling, not believing that Xiong Wuji was a space resident no matter what.

Xiong Wuji lowered his head and gave no response.

Like a black hole, he absorbed all the rays of light near him. He was silent for half a minute, before he suddenly raised his head again.

Desperation was written all over the face of the best warrior of the six tribes on Iron Plateau, when he said in a tone resembling that of a ghost, "That will be unnecessary. I am a space resident."

Chapter 597: Too Exaggerated

Chapter 597: Too Exaggerated

Many qi-trainers of the Burning Sun Tribe, the Feathered Snakes Tribe, and the Giant Axe Tribe had almost already believed the story when Yan Chihuo told it so convincingly, and Xiong Wuji had kept silent all that time. Now that Xiong Wuji had admitted it himself, a super-compressed True Qi container seemed to be exploding all around him. The three tribes were in an utter mess right now.

Even the qi-trainers of the Giant Axe Tribe, who were most famous for their strictness, were yelling and cursing.

The qi-trainers of the Burning Sun Tribe were all jumping to their feet, cursing him.

On the Furious Bears Tribe's side, everybody was devastated. They could not believe that the pillar of their tribe was a space resident who had known his identity for more than ten years ago but kept it a secret the whole time.

The qi-trainers who cursed Yan Chihuo and swore that Xiong Wuji was in no way a space resident were all rendered speechless, blushing.

The chief of the Giant Axe Tribe and the chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe sighed softly. Even the chiefs of the Heaven Wolves Tribe and the Silver Moon Tribe were shaking their head, not knowing what to do next.

Li Yao and Wu Mayan were still in the crowd. Wu Mayan had been simmering all the time, but now that he had heard that his foster father came from space just like him and saw his foster father being lambasted by so many people, he couldn't hold himself back any longer. Throwing off Li Yao's hand, he leapt upwards to Xiong Wuji's side before he shouted aloud, "Shut up!

"Father Xiong is a space resident. So what? That's no proof that Father Xiong killed anybody! Why are you cursing him?

"Regardless of whether he is a space resident or an Iron Plateau native, Father Xiong has always been a great hero! He just slayed a calamity-level beast in the battle against the apocalypse a few days ago! He is a good guy, not a bad man!

"And you—"

Wu Mayan turned around and glared at everyone in the Furious Bears Tribe, his hands on his hips, "Are you all deaf? Do you not hear that they are cursing our chief?

"Just ask yourself. Was Father Xiong not at the forefront of every battle and hunting trip? How many of you have been saved by Father Xiong before? Did Father Xiong not give you the meat and the intact bones and himself the worst materials when he was distributing trophies? For how many years has Father Xiong been the chief? Just go to his house and see if Father Xiong has bought anything of any value!

"In the battle of the apocalypse a few days ago, Father Xiong lost one hand! If Father Xiong hadn't fought so hard, the giant worm could've collapsed the entire canyon and buried all of you!

"Right now, just because the blood of the space residents flows in Father Xiong's veins, you've stopped believing him and think that he is a murderer?"

He jumped and bellowed. Many qi-trainers of the Furious Bears Tribe was blushing in embarrassment.

Somebody suddenly shouted in a corner of the Burning Sun Tribe's camp, "That little bastard is in Xiong Wuji's gang! They are both space residents. Space residents murdered our chief!"

Hearing such words, the qi-trainers of the Burning Sun Tribe grew even angrier.

" Xiao 1 Yan!"

Sha Yulan was so concerned about her son that she crawled up to the heavy tank without even thinking and stood in everybody's sight.

Many people were woken up by Wu Mayan's words. He was right. Just because Xiong Wuji was a space resident did not mean he killed the chief of the Burning Sun Tribe!

Whatever the truth was, he was still the chief of the Furious Bears Tribe right now, and he represented the dignity of their tribe. How could they allow other people to insult him just like that?

This was Furious Bears City, territory of the Furious Bears Tribe. Whoever the murderer was, the Furious Bears Tribe should be in charge of the investigation and the trial!

Immediately, a lot of qi-trainers of the Furious Bears Tribe triggered their spiritual gas and lined up beside Xiong Wuji.

Many other qi-trainers had formed battle formations and tried to push back the formations of the other three tribes.

The two parties were shoving and cursing each other. It was quite a mess. Many people had unsheathed their weapons. Blood was about to be spilled.

" Stop! "

Thunder suddenly seemed to burst out on the ground. Overwhelming soundwaves broke out of Xiong Wuji's chest, and the intimidating aura around him reached every corner of the field. Everybody felt that they had been hammered right in the head, and their ears were all ringing.

Xiong Wuji took a long breath. His voice was sent to everyone's ears like rumbling thunder with his extremely powerful spiritual gas, as if he was pushing his words into everyone's earholes hard with a pair of invisible, giant hands!

"I, Xiong Wuji, am indeed a space resident who was picked up by Xiong Dachuan beside the Black Tooth River more than forty years ago! I admit that part!

"However, over the last forty years, I've always considered myself to be a real Iron Plateau native, even after I learned of my birth!

"I've done nothing wrong to Iron Plateau. I want to get in touch with the space residents for the future of Iron Plateau, too!

"I can say confidently that I deserve my late foster father Xiong Dachuan and all the compatriots of Iron Plateau!

"I did not kill Chief Yan. There must be a dreadful scheme behind all this! My own death or disgrace matters little, but the scheme might put the future of Iron Plateau at risk!

"Right now, the six tribes of Iron Plateau must be more united and find the one behind the scheme, instead of fighting and killing each other!

"I know that I will be the prime suspect anyway after I reveal my identity. The brothers of the Burning Sun Tribe have every reason to doubt me!

"As a space resident, it's inappropriate for me to be the chief of the Furious Bears Tribe anymore!

"I hereby announce that I, Xiong Wuji, will no longer be the chief of the Furious Bears Tribe. The affairs in my tribe handled by me will now be handed over to the three elders of my tribe until the new chief is selected!

"As for me, I am willing to be locked in the underground cage that used to hold the manic warriors in the bottom level of the temple of techniques while the investigation proceeds!

"I will stay in the cage until the investigation is concluded!

"However—"

Xiong Wuji's countenance suddenly turned extremely horrifying. The heavy tank below his feet fulminated, as if the metal found his fury unbearable and was screaming in pain.

"It's true that I've been lying to everybody, and I have no defense now that everybody doubts me.

"But Sha Yulan and Wu Mayan did not know of my background, either!

"They are innocent. However outraged you are, just vent your anger upon me! I am no longer the chief of the Furious Bears Tribe now but just a common qi-trainer. I love them more than anybody else in the world. Whoever hurts them, so much as one of their hairs drops to the ground, don't blame me for my mercilessness!"

When 'mercilessness' rushed out of his mouth, the heavy tank below Xiong Wuji's feet couldn't bear it any longer and collapsed with an explosion. It had almost been pressed to the ground by Xiong Wuji's immense spiritual gas!

The qi-trainers who had been cursing him loudly were soaked in cold sweat. For some reason, their profanities were all swallowed by themselves.

It was not until this moment that they realized, whether Xiong Wuji was an Iron Plateau native or a space resident, he was still a strong expert in the 99th level of the Refinement Stage, and not a push-over that they could do whatever they wanted do!

…

Late at night, in a special prison cell used to lock the mentally deranged qi-trainers in the depths of the temple of techniques deep underground…

Since all the manic warriors had been sacrificed in the battle of apocalypse, Xiong Wuji was all by himself in the prison cell. He was sitting cross-legged in a dark corner. His breath was steady, and his hollowed eyes were glittering.

Suddenly, the hinge out of the prison cell was moved, and the door was slowly opened. Li Yao crept in quietly and closed the door.

"I didn't kill him," said Xiong Wuji calmly.

"I know."

Li Yao replied casually, "If you really wanted to kill him, you would've made thorough plans more than ten years ago when you knew your foster father Xiong Dachuan talked with Yan Zhengdong before his death.

"Anyways, if it were me, and I had clandestine schemes, I definitely would've eliminated all the problem-causing factors ten years in advance!"

"Then what are you doing here?" Xiong Wuji asked, somewhat in surprise.

Li Yao smiled. "To discuss what we are going to do next, of course. Stop pretending, Chief Xiong. I don't believe that you will simply wait and watch."

Xiong Wuji raised his eyebrow. "How am I pretending?"

Li Yao stared at him in the eyes and said, "The whole drama you played after your true identity was revealed was truly seamless and immaculate.

"Too bad that your desperation as deep and dark as blackhole in the end was too exaggerated, and your face was utterly ingenuine. Therefore, I realized you were putting on an act.

"I believe that you and I are the same kind of people. We will not give up, even if everything is hopeless, as long as we are still breathing.

"Since you had such a big secret with you, you must've thought of the strategies for when your identity was revealed. How could you possibly be grasped by desperation after only a few words and simply locked yourself in a cage, waiting to be punished?

"If my guess is correct, this seemingly unbreachable cage of manic warriors is definitely not enough to stop you. You were merely trying to vanish from everyone's sight with your submission as a disguise so that you could carry out your plans."

Xiong Wuji pondered for a moment and chose to believe in Li Yao. Admitting that he still had backup plans, he asked, "You feel that everything that happened today was odd, too?"

"Of course it's odd. Other than anything else, there were clearly several people in the Burning Sun Tribe who were fanning the flames!

"Logically, the fact that you are a space resident is completely irrelevant to the murder per se. It is not difficult to think through at all.

"However, according to my observation, several activists in the Burning Sun Tribe were fooling those around them and planting in everyone's mind the notion that 'space residents murdered Chief Yan'!

"The situation should've been under control. But misled by those activists, it went further and further over the line."

Xiong Wuji clenched his fists so hard that they were almost cracking. He gnashed his teeth. "If I knew who planned the whole thing in the background, I would cut out their living guts and let them be cursed for all eternity!"

Li Yao said, "The entire Furious Bears City was in a mess today, but I managed to find a peaceful place to reflect on the accident and to continue the deduction I didn't finish last night. Finally, I figured out what the outcome of the battle in the periphery of the Iron Plateau Space Zone would have been if I wasn't there.

"Do you want to know what I discovered?"

Chapter 598: Monstrous Deduction

Chapter 598: Monstrous Deduction

The coldness inside Xiong Wuji's eyes were almost burning through the rocky wall of the underground cage. He said solemnly, "Is the battle that happened in the edge of the Iron Plateau Space Zone related to the revealing of my identity?"

Li Yao looked around and knocked off a sharp stone from the wall. He sat cross-legged before Xiong Wuji and drew a circle on the ground between them and said, "You will know whether or not they are related after you hear my analysis.

"As I said before, five warships of Storm Prison surrounded three starships on the Great Horn Exo Society's side and were about to destroy them all. Luckily, I appeared in time and distracted Storm Prison, thereby disrupting the Temple of Immortal's scheme.

"If I hadn't shown up, the three starships on the Great Horn Exo Society's side would definitely have been annihilated.

"Then, was it possible that the three starships would release a lot of escape capsules so that some of the crew members could run away at the last moment?"

Xiong Wuji pondered for a moment and said, "Of course! Since they were doomed, there would be hope to reestablish the group as long as some of them were alive. If it were me, at such a crucial moment, I would ask the strongest and the most wounded to stay and stall the enemy, while I demand mediocre experts and the slightly wounded to run away and avenge us later."

Li Yao smiled. He stabbed dozens of dots with the sharp stone inside the circle, as he said, "I thought so, too. Alright. Let's say that the Great Horn Exo Society and the other two Cultivation sects released almost a hundred escape capsules, which carried their hope. These runners would be the reasonably good warriors on the three starships and bring a lot of magical equipment with them. It is also very possible that they were equipped with crystal suits, right?"

Xiong Wuji nodded. "Yes. It was better to let them take all the precious magical equipment and weapons to increase their odds of escaping than to let the space pirates loot all the assets."

Li Yao asked, "Then, where would they run away to?"

Deep in thought, Xiong Wuji said slowly, "According to your description, there was only one place that could help them escape from the space pirates. The planetary ring in the periphery of Iron Plateau!"

Li Yao agreed. "Indeed. The impetus and fuel of escape capsules are not very impressive. Whichever direction they chose to run to, they would have been caught by space pirates sooner or later. The planetary ring in the periphery of Iron Plateau was the only place where they could hope to survive the disaster.

"However, since I hadn't shown up, it should've been more than easy for Storm Prison to finish the three starships on the Great Horn Exo Society's side and send out many hunters to go after the escape capsules!

"The escape capsules would have no other alternatives except to cross the planetary ring, however risky it was, and land on Iron Plateau, while hoping that the 'forbidden area for Cultivators' would intimidate the space pirates and force them to stop. Isn't that so?"

Xiong Wuji nodded. "Yes. Now that you mention it, it seems to be the only reasonable choice that the runners could've possibly made."

Li Yao continued his analysis. "On Storm Prison's side, they were faced with the danger of being surrounded by the Cultivators' reinforcements anyway. When the escape capsules fell into the gravity pull of Iron Plateau, they would've calculated that the odds of catching up to the prey were close to zero. Therefore, they would've retreated according to their original plan. It is also a reasonable assumption, is it not?"

Xiong Wuji replied, "It is."

Li Yao sighed. "Look, to this moment, this is a classic plot in novels. The bad guys are about to defeat the good guys, but the good guys run away to a place beyond the bad guys' reach due to favorable circumstances. Everything is so reasonable, so natural, and so perfect. The 'good guys' would've felt nothing wrong, the 'bad guys' such as Fengyu Zhong would've felt nothing wrong, and the Cultivators' reinforcements wouldn't have realized that somebody was behind all this at all, either. Chances are that they would have been celebrating because there were many survivors after the disaster!

"However, all the choices and events would've led to a situation that had never been seen for thousands of years.

"Over the past thousands of years, few space residents have been forced to land on Iron Plateau, and most of them were civilians or non-battle-type Cultivators, such as Sha Yulan, who were of little threat to Iron Plateau natives. Isn't that so?

"However, this time, hundreds of fully-armedm, battle-type Cultivators, who were equipped with powerful crystal suits, would have been forced to land on Iron Plateau!"

Xiong Wuji immediately felt a cold droplet of sweat roll down his spine. His eyelids twitched violently as he observed, "That's very true. Since we went our separate ways five thousand years ago, there have never been that many battle-type Cultivators on Iron Plateau."

Li Yao went on. "If one or two Cultivators unfortunately fell into the desert, they would doubtlessly become food for demon beasts. But the case would be different if there were hundreds of battle-type Cultivators equipped with crystal suits. They had all received the most professional combat training, and their teamwork was flawless because they were on the same side and had cooperated for a long time.

"It is very likely that they would have gathered within a few days and survived in the desert as a group!

"They knew very well that Iron Plateau was a forbidden area for Cultivators. Therefore, they would definitely tread lightly. Then, they would be faced with two choices. Should they keep hiding in darkness, or should they get in touch with the Iron Plateau natives?

"It was quite possible that the six tribes of Iron Plateau had already discovered them. They had two choices, too. Should they wage a war against the 'intruders' immediately, or should they talk to them cautiously first?

"I believe that latter choices would've been more likely.

"Although the Burning Sun Tribe, the Giant Axe Tribe, and the Feathered Snakes Tribe despised space residents, in my opinion, their leaders are definitely the opposite of reckless. Their heads are quite clear, and they would not attack the space residents without a good cause.

"If it were the Furious Bears Tribe, the Heaven Wolves Tribe, or the Silver Moon Tribe that the survivors reached out to, it is even possible that they would have been invited to fight the battle of the apocalypse together, just as I've experienced in the Furious Bears Tribe!

"However, it wouldn't have mattered if the two parties found each other and if they were engaged in a war."

After making the assertation, Li Yao suddenly changed the topic. "In the meantime, let's take a look at the world of Cultivators in space.

"The Great Horn Exo Society was a heroic group whose feat of defeating space pirates had become well known. Their current mission was part of the Cultivators' plan to lure Fengyu Zhong to show up, too.

"But the Cultivators did not see it coming that, not only did Fengyu Zhong really show up, he had even almost destroyed the Great Horn Exo Society as well as the starships of another two Cultivation sects!

"It was like kicking the Cultivators to the ground and slapping them right in the face!

"To preserve their face, and to honor their brotherhood, the Cultivators would have had no choice but to break into Iron

Plateau to rescue the survivors when they learned that so many people had been forced to land on the planet.

"Otherwise, people would stop trusting each other. 'Cultivator' would become an absolutely worthless word!"

Xiong Wuji nodded. "Indeed. According to what you've said, people of the Great Horn Exo Society are out-and-out heroes. The forces of the Flying Star Sector cannot turn a blind eye to them, at least not ostensibly.

"That is especially so now that the space pirates are on the rise and all the Cultivators are panicking. The heroes who had become symbols for the resistance against space pirates could not be ignored. They would have to be rescued no matter what the cost was."

Li Yao said gloomily, "I thought that the purpose of the Temple of Immortals was to exterminate the Great Horn Exo Society. But now that I think of it, I'm afraid their true purpose was to create a certain scenario in which a large batch of battle-type Cultivators were forced to land on Iron Plateau. Therefore, the battle had to be fought in the periphery of the Iron Plateau Space Zone and nowhere else!

"However, it wouldn't have been an easy task even if the Cultivators wanted to save their fellows.

"The starships sailing in space are different from the crystal warships designed to fight within the atmosphere.

"Besides, Iron Plateau's harshness is well known. They could not be too prudent when they were making their preparations.

"Therefore, when the Cultivators discovered that the survivors of the battle had escaped to Iron Plateau, it was not likely that they would breach through the planetary ring and land on the planet to rescue them immediately, which would've been a suicidal endeavor. They would make thorough plans and select some smaller crystal warships that were suitable for battles and rescue missions within the atmosphere. They would also adjust their crystal suits and form a large rescue team that was familiar with battles on the ground and the rescue work. They would only act when everything was set.

"All things considered, it would have taken them at least two months.

"Alright. This is about everything that would have happened in this circle. Let's take a look at the other side."

Li Yao drew another circle beside the previous one and continued. "This circle represents Iron Plateau. Things happening here are much simpler and require no deduction, because they are facts that are still going on!

"In the meeting of six tribes, the chief of one of the tribes is killed. Before his death, he unveiled a big secret that the chief of another tribe is a space resident!

"This particular chief from space has been trying hard to convince everyone to get in touch with the space residents. Moreover, the chief talked to, if not embraced, hundreds of fully-armed, battle-type Cultivators not long ago!

"Now, what have we got here? We've got tens of thousands of infuriated, rampant qi-trainers who hate the space residents' guts!

"What do you think would happen when they learn that hundreds of fully-armed, battle-type Cultivators were living in the desert?"

Xiong Wuji's eyes suddenly shone, his face pale.

Li Yao drew an arrow out of the circle on the right and one from the left silently. The two arrows collided heavily. He then drew a star that stood for explosion in the middle.

"My conclusion is that, misled by several 'activists', the tens of thousands of outraged qi-trainers would march toward the Cultivators and tear them to pieces.

"Not just the Burning Sun Tribe. The Furious Bears Tribe, to prove their innocence and that they had nothing to do with Cultivators, would be even more active to eliminate them!

"Such a conclusion is not very implausible, is it?

"Alright. What would the rescue team of Cultivators find when they finally reached Iron Plateau? The bones of the 'big heroes' who had been torn to pieces, if there were any left!

"More than a hundred thousand warriors who were extremely vigilant and hostile were on Iron Plateau. What would they do when they found that the space residents were 'invading them on a large scale'? Would there be communication or negotiation?

"There wouldn't. Since the moment they killed hundreds of 'big heroes' in the eyes of the Cultivators, reconciliation was no longer an option.

"The only outcome would be war. A war between space residents and the Iron Plateau natives!

"That is the most reasonable possibility that I deduced based on the information I knew. Please do enlighten me if you find any errors or mistakes."

Li Yao finished his speech and looked at Xiong Wuji, his hands on his legs.

Xiong Wuji stared at him weirdly and didn't open his mouth until a long while later. "Are you a monster? How did you figure out such a delicate scheme?"

Chapter 599: Point of No Return!

Chapter 599: Point of No Return!

Li Yao crumbled the sharp stone into powder in his palm and sprayed it on the two circles, while he said casually, "I'm not a detective. I merely let everything run the most natural course and see what would happen."

Xiong Wuji rubbed his rough face hard and remarked, "There is a loophole in your deduction. What if the rescue team of Cultivators were faster than you thought and came before my identity was exposed? There wouldn't be conflicts if so."

Li Yao explained, "Don't you see? The one behind the curtain knew of your identity long ago. That was a bomb that they could detonate anytime they wanted!

"Also, the six tribes of Iron Plateau, at least the Burning Sun Tribe, has been infiltrated. The spies had everything under their control. If needed, they could even have created some 'evidence' to prove that you were associated with the hundreds of battle-type Cultivators who fell onto Iron Plateau!

"The bottom line is, there were bound to be conflicts when the rescue team of Cultivators arrived!"

Xiong Wuji asked, "Raising a war between the Iron Plateau natives and the space residents… What benefits can the Temple of Immortals get from such an endeavor?"

Li Yao explained, "Before the battle of the apocalypse, although I knew that many qi-trainers were in the 'superlative height' beyond the 14th level of the Refinement Stage, I did not think too much of it and believed that the Cultivators' powerful fleet and techniques could destroy the Iron Plateau natives easily.

"But the battle against the apocalypse changed my opinion. In regard to combat on the ground, the Iron Plateau natives would definitely make the most formidable opponents!

"Despite the powerful fleet of the space residents, Iron Plateau was still protected by a piece of defense magical equipment very close to the stellar level. They could not launch large-scale attacks from space!

"Let's say they bombarded Iron Plateau crazily from space, but Iron Plateau has the most profound underground life-support system. Years ago, even the apocalypse failed to demolish the planet completely. The space residents would never kill all of you simply by bombarding you from space!

"Therefore, when the war began, the space residents could only break into the atmosphere and start marching on the ground if they wanted to win the war.

"I believe that the space residents would definitely underestimate your combat ability—I doubt that they would see you as anything more than barbarians—before reality taught them a harsh lesson.

"If so, Iron Plateau would be a swamp of war that could mire and eliminate a huge number of soldiers in the world of Cultivators! Wouldn't that be the greatest benefit for the Immortal Cultivators?"

Thinking for a moment, Xiong Wuji replied, "What if the Cultivators were smart enough to recognize the invincibility of the Iron Plateau natives on the ground after the few battles in the beginning and decided to cut their loss and retreat!

"We must note that the Iron Plateau natives do not have the ability to sail in the sea of stars. If the Cultivators stopped attacking Iron Plateau, we would not be able to counterattack however angry we were."

With a weird smile, Li Yao observed, "Indeed you do not have the ability to cruise the cosmos. But other than Cultivators, there is a third force that boasts such an ability!"

Xiong Wuji shuddered. "Space pirates?"

Li Yao nodded. "Yes. Space pirates.

"Before, although space pirates are a major hazard, it has always been mobility and speed that they counted on most. They are a bunch of bandits after all. In regard to head-on battles, they are definitely no match for the regular soldiers in the world of Cultivators.

"Therefore, they can only block sailing routes, ambush carriers, and loot small towns. As for the larger star fortresses where the strong sects were stationed, they wouldn't dare to touch them for the world!

"But let's imagine such a situation. The space residents and the Iron Plateau natives were engaged in a total war and fought several battles hard on Iron Plateau, both parties suffering heavy losses. Then, the space residents realized the strength of the Iron Plateau natives, ceased the war, and ran back to space.

"For Iron Plateau natives, their homes must've been ruined, and their family killed, in the war. They were grasped by endless pain and hatred, but they could not catch the mortal enemies because they did not have vehicles!

"At this moment, space pirates showed up, with disguises and fancy slogans, naturally. They might have called themselves 'liberty defenders against the tyranny of Cultivators', for example.

"The enemy of my enemy is a friend. Now that the two parties both loathed space residents, with the propaganda of the spies who had infiltrated the Iron Plateau tribes earlier, they would definitely form an alliance swiftly!

"If so, the shipping capacity of the space pirates and the combat ability of the Iron Plateau natives combined would be so much stronger than calculating them independently.

"If three to five starships of the space pirates were to transport thousands of Iron Plateau natives into space, how many cities and towns in space could resist them other than Heavenly Saints City?

"I've been curious all the time. For an organization living in the darkness such as the Temple of Immortals, 'confidentiality' is supposed to be its lifeline. Why is it jumping out impatiently as if it's worried that everybody in the universe doesn't know them? It's like the Immortal Cultivators are trying to kill themselves!

"Of course, Immortal Cultivators of the Temple of Immortals are not committing suicide. Their purpose since the very beginning has always been to raise a war between the space residents and the Iron Plateau natives, the latter being their cannon fodder. As long as everything went as planned, their combat ability could even be expanded hundreds of times instantly!

"This could be their whole scheme and their ultimate goal!"

Xiong Wuji was awed by the terrible potential future. He mumbled to himself, "It's horrible. Too horrible!"

Li Yao said, "To carry out the scheme, the Temple of Immortals must've worked in secret on Iron Plateau for many years. Besides the Burning Sun Tribe, even the Furious Bears Tribe might've infiltrated by some of them. However, the most critical question at hand is, who killed Chief Yan Zhengdong?

"It seems difficult to find the murderer. But in fact, it is not.

"First of all, your identity must've been exposed long ago instead of only being revealed by Chief Yan Zhengdong before his death. If the Temple of Immortals learned your identity so late, they wouldn't have been able to make such a scheme at all.

"If Chief Yan Zhengdong was the only one who knew your secret before, he would only have told someone very close to him who would in no way leak it out.

"Also, Chief Yan Zhengdong's murderer was either someone so strong that he was assassinated in silence without putting up any resistance or someone extremely close to him who he wouldn't have believed would assault him.

"Moreover, the murderer must be very familiar with Chief Yan's handwriting and the game he played with his sons when they were young, so that the murderer could prepare a hidden script of spiritual gas in advance and make sure it could be found.

"Considering all the conditions, it is not hard to figure out who the murderer was. It was Yan Xibei, the elder brother of Chief Yan Zhengdong and the previous best warrior of six tribes of Iron Plateau!"

Xiong Wuji suddenly shivered and blurted out, "That's impossible!"

Li Yao said, "Other than Yan Xibei, Yan Chihuo, who was jumping and yelling and demanding that you go to the Truth Cabinet, might be the true murderer, too. But I think the odds are low that he committed patricide.

"The reason is simple. He is too young and short-tempered for Chief Yan to tell him the big secret that you are a space resident. What if he went out and told everybody he met the story? A war between the two tribes might have started. I believe that Chief Yan would rather have talked to the chiefs of the other two tribes than let his impatient son know the secret.

"But Yan Xibei is different.

"Not only was he the best warrior on Iron Plateau decades ago, his integrity was also well acknowledged. As Chief Yan Zhengdong's elder brother, he must be the person that Chief Yan trusted and relied on most.

"Chief Yan knew your big secret, yet he did not dare tell anyone about it in fear of the division of the six tribes. It was perfectly normal that he went to his elder brother to discuss the matter when he felt depressed, wasn't it?

"But he did not know that Yan Xibei had joined the Temple of Immortals long before and was the agent of the organization in charge of the scheme on Iron Plateau. Such a piece of shocking news was definitely the ultimate treasure for him.

"After that, the whole scheme that the Temple of Immortals concocted was built on the secret!"

His eyes half closed, Xiong Wuji's voice was shivering. "I still can't believe it. Why did Master Yan do that?"

Li Yao sighed. "Of the billions of techniques and paths of Cultivation, I only ask you this—do you want immortality? If Yan Xibei has really joined the Temple of Immortals and become an Immortal Cultivator, what cannot be abandoned or traded for the pursuit of the so-called immortality?"

Xiong Wuji lowered his head and meditated. He suddenly shook his head and said, "No. No. Something's not right. Your deduction has a deadly flaw.

"All the story you told just now is what might have happened if you didn't exist!

"But the fact is that your arrival caused a problem for the Temple of Immortals in the battle at the edge of the Iron Plateau Space Zone. The three starships on the Great Horn Exo Society's side did not release any escape capsules. Hundreds of fully-armed battle-type Cultivators were not forced to land on Iron Plateau. You were the only one who reached this place!

"Just because of you, would the six tribes of Iron Plateau be vigilant, and would the Cultivators send a large-scale rescue team?

"The scheme of the Temple of Immortals should've been disrupted when you appeared. Why was Yan Zhengdong still killed in the end?"

Li Yao replied calmly, "You've forgotten about the 'Oasis Plan'.

"The Temple of Immortals has been planning in the darkness for too many years. How on earth could they put all the eggs in one basket? I think that the battle in the periphery of the Iron Plateau Space Zone was their Plan A, and it's possible that the 'Oasis Plan' was their Plan B!

"No matter which of the two plans succeed, a large batch of Cultivators will be unwittingly lured to Iron Plateau!

"Just wait for it. I estimate that a piece of shocking news will come from the Dark Continent in the next couple of days, one that will attract all the qi-trainers' attention.

"That's because every plan will expose its loopholes and the designer's true purpose sooner or later.

"Yan Zhengdong was not killed by you after all. If the six tribes are to pursue the investigation further, more and more suspicious points will be found.

"You, the qi-trainers of Iron Plateau, seem outspoken and straightforward with more brawn than brains. But in my opinion, the chief of the Giant Axe Tribe and the chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe are as shrewd as monkeys!

"They won't be deceived for long.

"Even within the Burning Sun Tribe, many qi-trainers will notice the anomalies of the accident a few days after they calm down.

"Besides, you've been the chief of the Furious Bears Tribe for more than ten years, and you boast unparalleled prestige. Without solid proof that you are the murderer, what's the big deal even if the blood of space runs in your veins?

"Besides, although you were born in space, you've grown up on Iron Plateau since you were a baby!

"Right now, people may still be eyeing you with bias because of the shock. But after a few days, I'm sure many of them will let go of the prejudice. By then, you will still have strong influence in your tribe even if you are no longer the chief!

"Your identity is like a time bomb. Once it is detonated, huge damage might be dealt. But when smoke clears, everything will be peaceful again.

"Therefore, I estimate that the Temple of Immortals will definitely seize their chance in the coming few days and release another piece of devastating news that will lead the situation to the point of no return!"

Chapter 600: Warrior's Wrath!

Chapter 600: Warrior's Wrath!

Hardly had Li Yao finished his speech when hasty footsteps could be heard outside the door. The heavy iron door was pulled open by chains; Wu Mayan and Sha Yulan staggered inside.

When the door was closed, vague yelling and shouting echoed in from the pathway outside.

Wu Mayan was already out of breath from running. He waved his arms as if he were flapping wings, while he shouted, "Father Xiong, not good! According to the Burning Sun Tribe, the expedition team sent by the Burning Sun Tribe, the Feathered Snakes Tribe, and the Giant Axe Tribe found that some Cultivators were attacking the Oasis Tribe when they arrived!

"After they defeated the Cultivators, they interrogated the captives and learned that Cultivators were preparing to ambush the Oasis Tribe and launch a large-scale invasion to Iron Plateau with the Oasis Tribe as their base!

"Also, there is no telling where the story comes from, but word on the street is that—"

The young man caught his breath for a moment and continued speaking, his eyes blinking. "That Father Xiong is an agent that the space residents sent. You were proposing to get in touch with the space residents so that they could know more about us! The space pirates finished their preparations long ago. A few months ago, they made their move in the periphery of the Iron Plateau Space Zone. Now that your identity has been revealed and their plot failed, they are planning to attack by force instead!

"Right now, Furious Bears City is in mayhem. All the tribes are summoning their elite warriors, preparing to go to the Oasis Tribe and check what is going on!"

Li Yao and Xiong Wuji looked at each other. They were not in the least surprised.

Wu Mayan was about to cry. "Father Xiong, you are not an agent, are you? You are definitely not an agent, right?"

Xiong Wuji was silent. With the light from a dim torch nearby, he suddenly noticed that Sha Yulan's right hand was bleeding. He frowned and rose up, trying to hold Sha Yulan's arm, while he asked, "Are you hurt?"

Sha Yulan suddenly jerked back and avoided him. She bit her lips and said, "Xiong Wuji, regardless of whether you are a good man or a bad man, you… have always been using me as your camouflage, haven't you?"

Xiong Wuji was dazed. The flames in his eyes were frozen as if a cold wind had just blown by. He was silent for a long time before he took a long breath and replied, "Of course not!"

His eyes turned deep and dark, as his thoughts went back to long, long ago. He said in a low voice, "Fifteen years ago, my foster father, Xiong Dachuan, told me the secret of my birth before his death and cast me in confusion and misery!

"I'd been listening to the stories of the ancestors of Iron Plateau resisting the apocalypse all my childhood. It would be too much if I said I hated the space rats who fled without fighting, but I did not think highly of them, either.

"As I gradually grew up, I considered the predecessors as my role models and trained myself crazily, hoping to become a real tough man of Iron Plateau!

"Finally, I distinguished myself in my tribe and became one of the top exerts in the younger generation. I was about to embark on the path that the predecessors had walked on!

"Never did I expect that fate would make such a terrible joke. I learned that I was a descendent of the rats in space!

"For two years, I was unable to free myself from the desperation. I lost my way in my training, too, and was almost mentally deranged many times.

"When I was at the lowest point of my life, you brought Xiao Yan to the Furious Bears Tribe.

"Since I already knew that I was the offspring of space residents, I was naturally very curious about my 'compatriots' from space. Therefore, I found you very attractive and wanted to know more about the space residents from you.

"While you stayed here, I heard many stories about the space residents, and I witnessed you treating the patients, who in my eyes were already dead, despite the cold eyes of other people and at the risk of humiliation or even abuse.

"I knew that it was absolutely none of your business, and that if the patients really died later, your outcome would have been more than awful!

"Because of you, I discovered that there was not much difference between the space residents and the Iron Plateau natives. Kindness, tenacity, sincerity… The characters that Iron Plateau natives were proud of could be found in space residents, too!

"When Xiao Yan started training, I saw how he gritted his teeth and endured the pain that many young men of Iron Plateau found unbearable in order to prove the courage of space residents. I was greatly touched by his determination!

"If a space resident could become a qi-trainer and even the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, what was the essential disparity between a space resident and an Iron Plateau native?

"It was thanks to lessons I learned from the two of you that I finally realized who I was and what I should do!

"That's why I wanted to reach out to the space residents, eliminate the chasm between the two parties, and reestablish some form of communication!

"I, Xiong Wuji, swear to the ancestors of Iron Plateau and the billions of stars in the space that my purpose is as simple as that. I have never done anything that harms the interest of Iron Plateau!

"Moreover, I have never regarded you as camouflage. I really… am attracted to you. I love you, and I want to marry you and make you my only woman!"

Xiong Wuji's shouting was almost battering the big iron door.

It was the second time that Wu Mayan had heard the proposal. He blushed in embarrassment and hid behind Li

Yao.

Sha Yulan finally burst into tears. She murmured, "I… I believe you. I believe in you."

Xiong Wuji was overjoyed. "You do?"

Sha Yulan smiled, tears in her eyes. "Who else can a woman trust if she doesn't trust the one she loves?"

Xiong Wuji laughed out aloud. "Great! Great! As long as the two of you are on my side, what's the big deal if everyone else considers me to be an unforgivable devil?

"A deeply buried plot is behind everything that has happened. The Oasis Tribe should be the center of the plot! Xiao Yan. Guard the door and make sure other people do not come close. There is something I need to discuss with your mom and Sand Scorpion!"

Wu Mayan was much more well-behaved after all the abrupt changes today. He did not ask any questions and nodded before he pushed open the door and walked out.

As the prison to lock the manic warriors, the place was extremely solid with no other exits. There was only one pathway leading to the area, which was heavily guarded by the qi-trainers from the six tribes.

When Li Yao went down here, he had undergone quite a few security checks.

Xiong Wuji closed the door. He suddenly bent and groped for something on the ground. When he reached a certain location in the southwest corner, he bulged his eyes and exerted his strength. After a grunt, he fully released the spiritual gas of the 99th level of the Refinement Stage, which stuck the ground!

As the muscles all over his body protruded out, the 'ground' was lifted upwards inch by inch, which turned out be a cubic giant stone more than one meter in length, width, and height!

The giant stone filled in a hollow on the ground precisely. Now that the stone was removed, the deep and dark hole was exposed to all present.

Xiong Wuji said, "This giant stone was devised by me years ago. Only those above the 96th level of the Refinement Stage can possibly lift it up!

"It seems to be an ordinary stone, but it actually contains special minerals that can block the spiritual gas. Nobody would ever be able to find the secret room below the stone!"

Li Yao remarked, "This prison cell of manic warriors turns out to be Chief Xiong's secret base."

Xiong Wuji smiled. "More than six decades ago, a very strong qi-trainer above the 90th level of the Refinement Stage, who was unfortunately mentally deranged, was locked in this prison cell.

"He was mentally deranged soon after a battle of the apocalypse, but the gap between that and the next battle of apocalypse was longer than usual. Therefore, he was locked in this place for sixteen years.

"Since mentally deranged qi-trainers are all extremely dangerous and as brutal as animals, outsiders generally do not open the cages and check them.

"Therefore, nobody knew that part of his intelligence was kept despite his madness and that he dug a long tunnel with his bare hands through the underground rock stratums. He was even smart enough to cover it up by blocking the entrance of the cave with soil!

"Since this place was deep underground, he shouldn't have been able to run away whichever direction he moved to. But as it happened, there was an underground river nearby. When his endeavor was discovered, the tunnel he created had almost extended into the river!

"After that, people managed to block the tunnel and then abandoned the prison cell. When I became the chief and learned my identity, I set up a secret chamber in case I ever needed it under the pretext of repairing the prison cell.

"Come on!"

Xiong Wuji was the first to jump into the secret chamber, followed by Li Yao and Sha Yulan.

The secret chamber established below the prison of the manic warriors turned out to be a rather spacious arsenal. A lot of holes had been dug in the walls and were filled with various kinds of weapons, including coldly shining sabers and swords, True Qi firearms of unbelievable calibers, and boxes and bundles of Wolf Fangs.

There were several other cases in the corner. Xiong Wuji kicked them open. Inside them were crystals of extremely high purity. They could be used for training or refined into magical equipment. With triggering devices, they could be crafted into crystal bombs, too!

CRACK! CRACK!

Xiong Wuji checked the status of the weapons carefully, and the sounds of magical equipment components colliding were awfully chilling in the darkness.

Li Yao knew that Xiong Wuji would be more or less prepared. However, he did not expect that the man had built such an arsenal underground and hidden so many deadly weapons that were almost enough to equip a special squad!

Li Yao picked up a crystal from the case and examined its purity with his eyes, while he murmured, "Chief Xiong, it seems that Yan Chihuo was right. The preparations in this place befit an ambitious schemer more than a big hero!"

Winning Sha Yulan and her son's trust, Xiong Wuji had completely let go of the unease and depression he had just now. He regained his confidence and said with a sunny smile, "I was never a big hero in the first place. That's a title that other people imposed upon me. I have been an out-and-out schemer the whole time!

"My scheme is to let the Iron Plateau natives and the space residents let go of their biases and fill the five-thousand-year-long chasm so that they can be united again!

"The universe is too large a place with too many unknown species. Some of them, such as the Titan Warriors, have even been trying to possess us as a foreign civilization! We are all human beings. What are our reasons for continuing this internal conflict?

"Unite all human beings to make us the strongest species in the boundless sea of stars, defeat all unknown species, and let our civilization live long and prosper. That's what a real expert human should do!

"In the past, I'd cursed the heavens for my sorry fate, but I figured everything out later.

"As a descendent of the space residents, I have ended up being the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau. Then, my destiny is so much more than simply resisting the apocalypse!

"Reuniting the Iron Plateau natives and the space residents is my real destiny and the ultimate goal that I will achieve even at the cost of my life. Whoever stands in my way must be ready to taste the wrath of the best warrior on Iron Plateau!"

Chapter 601: Start a War!

Chapter 601: Start a War!

"Here's my suggestion—"

Li Yao pulled out the weapons packed inside the holes on the wall, laid them on the ground, and picked his favorite ones, while he remarked, "It's a mess outside right now. For three space residents such as yourselves, it's not safe to stay here. Somebody might become suspicious of me because of my mysterious background, too.

"Chief Xiong, I want you to run away through the tunnel together with Sister Sha and Wu Mayan. But you need to make some noise during your escape to attract the six tribes' attention. It will be best if they send a large batch of warriors to stop you so that I have one to two extra days to do my business. Can you do that?"

Xiong Wuji chuckled. "Not just one or two days. Who in the six tribes can really stop me if I'm determined to go? However, why am I going to do that?"

Li Yao said, "Everything I said just now is only my personal assumption. Such a carefully weaved plot is the most vulnerable of all. As long as a single link is broken, the entire plot will be wasted.

"For example, right now, although the six tribes of Iron Plateau have burst into fury, there are not hundreds of Cultivators in front of them that they can kill. So, it is impossible that an unresolvable conflict will break out.

"But something must be happening in the Oasis Tribe that can raise such a conflict between the Iron Plateau natives and the space residents!

"I believe that, when the main troops of the six tribes arrive in the Oasis Tribe, an incident will trigger said conflict!

"It will require a lot of ammunition and supplies for the six tribes' trip deep into the Dark Continent, even if they are merely summoning the rapid response troops made of the elite soldiers. Besides, they'll have to march toward the destination in True Qi tanks and stay in battle formations. All things considered, it will take them five to six days. If you can stall them for a day or two, they will not appear in the hotspot for a week or so.

"If I rush to the Oasis Tribe by myself, I will definitely be much faster than the main troops. It is quite possible that I will reach the Oasis Tribe four to five days earlier than them!

"I will seize the opportunity and investigate whether or not this is part of the scheme of the Immortal Cultivators!"

Xiong Wuji pondered for a moment and promised, "I will buy you three days!"

Li Yao nodded. "There's more. Do you have a pen and paper here? I want you to write letters to Xiong Zhenzhen and Shi Meng. I will deliver them later.

"Since this is an emergency operation, the six tribes will only send out the best squads for now. The Fierce Storm Assault Team and the Iron Bears Detonation Team are definitely on the list. I want you to write down all our speculations in detail.

"I wonder, how good is your relationship?"

Xiong Wuji said, "I brought them up. They are to me like children to a father. But right now—"

Li Yao said, "That will be enough. Right now, of course they are still suspicious, but I'm not forcing them to make a choice right now. I'm merely planting seeds of doubt in their hearts.

"You must ask them to be more active and bring more warriors as if they are trying to prove the innocence of the Furious Bears Tribe.

"Furious Bears City is our territory in the first place. Since this is the base of the operation, it is only reasonable that the Furious Bears Tribe sends out the most men. Besides, all the supplies and logistical service will be provided by the Furious Bears Tribe. That's a perfect excuse to deploy more hands, too.

"Other people will not notice anything wrong because they will think that the Furious Bears Tribe is trying to make up for the previous mistake.

"If Xiong Zhenzhen and Shi Meng grow suspicious because of your letters at this moment, they will definitely believe me when I present the solid evidence to them at the Oasis Tribe.

"Moreover, you'd better write two letters to the chiefs of the Heaven Wolves Tribe and the Silver Moon Tribe and another two to the chiefs of the Giant Axe Tribe and the Feathered Snakes Tribe. You can let Xiong Zhenzhen and Shi Meng keep them first and deliver the letters at the critical moment later!

"By then, as long as the other five tribes hesitate, the Burning Sun Tribe alone won't be able to stir much trouble.

On the contrary, their radicalness will only make people question them!"

Xiong Wuji nodded. "Alright. Let me see how I should phrase the letters."

Li Yao added, "However, although you may mention a guy named 'Li Yao', don't point out that it is me. I would prefer to be 'Sand Scorpion' in the days to come."

Xiong Wuji frowned. "Are you underestimating the wisdom of the Iron Plateau natives? With everything coming this far, as 'Sand Scorpion' with a mysterious background, you are very likely to be associated with the space resident Li Yao. If your identity is revealed at crucial moments like mine was today, you will find yourself in an awkward situation."

Li Yao smiled casually. He suddenly asked a strange question, "Chief Xiong, if you had passed the test of the Truth Cabinet today, other people wouldn't have pursued the issue further or doubted your identity, would they?"

Xiong Wuji replied, "Of course! Integrity is highly valued on Iron Plateau. Asking an Iron Plateau native to go to the Truth Cabinet is the biggest insult for them. It means that other people do not believe what the person says and have to resort to magical equipment to test its validity.

"If the magical equipment shows that the person did not lie in the end, it will be a very serious slander. Other people will definitely hurry to make apologies. They won't have the courage to doubt the person again!

"Throughout history, there are even cases where the accuser killed themselves on the spot in front of everyone when the accused passed the test of the Truth Cabinet and proved their honesty!"

Li Yao concluded, "So, as long as I pass the test of the Truth Cabinet, everybody will believe that I am not a space resident."

Xiong Wuji narrowed his eyes and said, "Li Yao, I know you are a magical equipment expert, but the Truth Cabinet is the most ancient treasure on Iron Plateau whose core components can be dated back to the era of the Star Ocean Imperium. It can make judgements by examining one's soul directly. You are not going to fool it!"

Li Yao blinked his eyes and replied, "Rest assured, Chief Xiong. I absolutely trust the accuracy of the Truth Cabinet. In fact, I was rather worried that it was not accurate enough. But according to your description, I think my concerns were unnecessary."

Xiong Wuji stopped talking and focused on considering the content of the letters.

Click! Click!

The only sound left in the room was Li Yao's examination with the guns and blades.

Suddenly, Li Yao came to an abrupt halt.

He was holding a super-heavy gun that was black on the surface but emitting bluish colors in the middle.

At first look, it was six iron tubes the width of the arms of an adult locked together roughly by a bone ring made of the ribs of demon beasts that could spin by the gears and chains on the body of the gun.

Every time the trigger was pulled, the gears would utter clicking sounds, and the chains would drag the barrel toward the next slot.

If the trigger was held down, the barrels would start revolving rapidly.

Li Yao squinted and drew close to the gun to observe it, only to find that the bullets that such a 'gun' employed were even larger than his fist.

"What is this?" Li Yao was secretly surprised.

Xiong Wuji raised his head and was dazed, too. "Why are you examining that? It was the special weapon of Lei Hou, captain of the Iron Bears Detonation Team more than a hundred years ago. It is a mix between a gun and a Wolf Fang launcher. By the mechanism of high-pressure spiritual gas, it can spray Wolf Fangs out like bullets! Its damage can be extremely shocking!

"However, the shortcomings of the weapon are obvious, too.

"Firstly, the recoil is too strong. Every shoot is like punching the shooter heavily right in the chest. Even the strongest warrior wouldn't persist for long.

"Secondly, its consumption of Wolf Fangs is too huge. Look. In burst mode, this monster can blow out more than two hundred Wolf Fangs within one minute! But how many Wolf Fangs can a member of the Iron Bears Detonation Team bring in total?

"Lei Hou, who had been naturally endowed with unparalleled strength, was the only one that could manage to use this weapon in his prime years. But after he passed away, nobody was willing to use it anymore, until it was discovered by me.

"I appreciated its fierce firepower and thought that I might be fighting all by myself if my identity was revealed someday. In such a situation, I would be in desperate need of such heavy magical equipment. So, I kept the weapon to myself.

"But later, I thought it through. If my identity was revealed, I would definitely have to run away immediately. How many Wolf Fangs would I be able to bring if I was on the run? Such a deadly weapon would only be a burden for me!

"The name of the weapon is 'Thunderous Roar'!"

"That explains a lot!"

Touching the gun, Li Yao added, "Chief Xiong, I want to take away two thirds of the high-purity crystals and refine them into bullets and crystal bombs. Also, I need the detailed maps of the warehouse that stores the trophies of the battle of the apocalypse, as well as the deactivation methods for the traps inside the warehouse. I believe you should know all of them."

Xiong Wuji raised his eyebrow. "You want the trophies?"

Li Yao licked his lips and said, "You were in the 99th level of the Refinement Stage. But now that you are wounded, you are basically equal to the peak of the Building Foundation Stage. I am now around the 80th level of the Refinement Stage. Together with the battle experience when I was in the peak of the Building Foundation Stage, I am equal to the high level of the Building Foundation Stage!

"If everything has been the scheme of the Temple of Immortals, there must be an expert on Iron Plateau supervising the development of their evil plan. He should be at least in the Core Formation Stage and have a lot of accomplices with him.

"It's impossible for us to improve our capability quickly within a couple of days. Therefore, we have to drown them with the tide of magical equipment!

"Therefore, I will need the best Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, the purest crystals, and the most solid shells of apocalyptic beasts to craft the strongest magical equipment!

"Chief Xiong, is there any place nearby other than Furious Bears City that boasts basic refining facilities?"

Xiong Wuji considered for a long time. He finally gritted his teeth and said, "Alright. I will draw the maps of the warehouse for you, and I will give you the structural designs and the deactivation methods of the seven traps in them. Besides, among the trophies, there are several cores of the apocalyptic beasts that are extremely unsteady but boast tremendous spiritual energy. They've been locked in the most confidential safe in the warehouse whose password I 'forgot' to tell the three elders just now. You must deliver it for me!

"There's a 'Red River Mine' 260 kilometers west of Furious Bears City. Three years ago, it was abandoned because the mother lodes were emptied. However, a lot of refining facilities were left there. I remember there was a maintenance workshop that had a full set of tools for repair work.

"The Red River Mine is in a rather desolate area. Whatever you do, nobody will notice."

"Excellent!"

Li Yao rubbed his hands and carried 'Thunderous Roar' on his back immediately. He then picked almost ten True Qi guns of fierce firepower and also various kinds of sabers and swords.

The two of them talked very fast. Sha Yulan was at a loss, listening to them. Finally, she couldn't help but ask, "What are you planning to do?"

Li Yao smiled and waved the guns in his hand. "To start a war."

Chapter 602: Beginning of the War!

Chapter 602: Beginning of the War!

Sha Yulan found it hard to believe. "If everything is truly a scheme, the organization behind it is unbelievably appalling. You are going to start a war against them with just the two of you?"

Li Yao replied, "When I was in the periphery of the Iron Plateau Space Zone, I was all by myself, but I still won the battle! In the war today, the number of soldiers on my side has doubled. What's the reason not to fight?"

Xiong Wuji added solemnly, "As long as you and Xiao Yan are on my side, I won't hesitate even if I have to wage a war against the sea of stars!"

Sha Yulan was silent briefly, before she took a surprising action. She picked up a True Qi gun from the ground and started testing it rather skillfully.

Xiong Wuji was dazed. "Yulan, what are you doing?"

Sha Yulan smiled. She bit the band of the gun with her teeth so that her hands were freed. She then bound her hair tight into a ponytail, before she observed, "The number of soldiers on your side is not doubled but tripled!

"Stop looking at me like that. I've spent too many years on Iron Plateau and even experienced a battle of the apocalypse. There's a good chance that I've seen more dead people than you. You think I don't know how to play with guns and blades?

"I don't know what kind of scheme is behind everything or who has been concocting all this in secret.

"But I do know that the scheme is going to hurt the two men that I love most!

"Whoever wants to hurt my son and my… husband, I have no alternatives but to fight them until they are dead!"

Click!

The bullets were loaded, and killing intent was written all over Sha Yulan's face.

…

An hour later, Li Yao returned to the surface.

The six tribes had all sent guards to the temple of techniques. They searched and scrutinized those going in and out of the makeshift prison.

However, Li Yao had stored all the assets in his Cosmos Rings and gone out empty-handed.

Although the representatives of the Burning Sun Tribe were somewhat suspicious, they could only watch Li Yao leave proudly. After all, this place was within the Furious Bears Tribe's territory, and there was no solid evidence to prove that Xiong Wuji was the murderer.

As for Sha Yulan and Wu Mayan, they stayed and accompanied Xiong Wuji in the cage of the manic warriors.

When the time of their deal with Li Yao come, they would act.

In the eyes of outsiders, since the Iron Plateau natives on the ground hated them very much, it was perfectly normal that the three space residents chose to hide in the underground together.

When Li Yao was walking on the street, it was already cold, late night. However, all lights in Furious Bears City were on; it was as bright as day. Chaotic crowds were everywhere.

Last night, the street had been the same, the people had been the same, but it was the liveliness of joy and harmony.

Right now, everyone was vigilant and anxious. Now and then, True Qi tanks carrying fully-armed qi-trainers would rush by. The intense atmosphere could be detonated with a single spark.

Li Yao calculated in silence. The Oasis Tribe was in the depths of the Dark Continent. Now that the report had come, the qi-trainers would definitely march out the moment all preparations were completed.

However, due to the battle of apocalypse a few days ago, all the tanks and war machines were more or less damaged. Even if the six tribes only decided to deploy the elite squads, they would still have to bring abundant True Qi containers and have their vehicles examined and strengthened. Also, since the journey was very long, it was necessary that they took rests and refilled their supplies on the way. All things considered, it would take them at least five days before they reached the Oasis Tribe.

But if Li Yao were to go there by himself riding on Black Wing, he could cross the entire continent within one day as long as he had sufficient crystals!

However, he needed to spend a lot of time in refining magical equipment and other useful tools.

After considering for a long time and settling all the details, Li Yao went to Xiong Zhenzhen and Shi Meng.

The two leaders of the best teams of the Furious Bears Tribe had indeed received the command to march toward the depths of the Dark Continent. They were preparing and training the warriors.

The three of them met in the test field of the weapon factory where they were performing emergency maintenance on the armor broken during the battle of the apocalypse.

Li Yao said nothing and simply handed over Xiong Wuji's letters to them.

They read the letters carefully. The more they read, the more they frowned, and the more thoughtful they became.

Seeing that they had finally finished reading the letters, Li Yao said coarsely, "I want the specific location of the Oasis Tribe."

Xiong Zhenzhen exchanged a look with Shi Meng and gave no reply. She suddenly changed the topic and asked solemnly, "Sand Scorpion, are you a space resident?"

Li Yao's pupils constricted, but he replied calmly, "No."

Shi Meng clenched the letter hard and gnashed, "Sand Scorpion, everybody has seen your bravery in the battle of the apocalypse. We've been through life and death together, and I consider you a real brother!

"The two of us could never have achieved what we've achieved today without the tutelage of Chief Xiong, either. I don't believe that Chief Xiong is a traitor even now!

"However, what's the point if we are the only two who believe the letters? We cannot even convince everyone in the Furious Bears Tribe, let alone those in the other five tribes!

"The most critical question right now is you, Sand Scorpion. Are you a space resident or not?

"Don't blame us for not trusting you. Your appearance was quite queer, and your talents too uncanny! Not only did you advance into the 80th level of the Refinement Stage within one short month, you could even craft such delicate armor!

"Besides the Furious Bears Tribe, there are no reports of missing warriors in the other five tries whose descriptions were even close to you. The Burning Sun Tribe encountered a space resident two months ago. I can't find a second explanation except that you are a space resident!"

Li Yao was as calm as ever. "I am not a space resident."

Xiong Zhenzhen raised her voice in anger. "Sand Scorpion, you delivered the two letters to us because you trust us, and you want us to help you and Chief Xiong, but you must be honest with us!

"I'm willing to trust you. Just because you are a space resident doesn't mean you are our enemy, but we'll have to make thorough plans if you are one!

"Blame yourself for your brilliant performance in the battle of apocalypse. Every tribe has got their eyes on you.

Everything that has happened, do you think other people are all idiots and won't suspect you?

"Tell us the truth now. There's still time to make up for it. We'll figure something out together!

"If you don't tell the truth now, you will risk being revealed in front of everyone's eyes. By then, nobody will believe you anymore even if everything else you say is true!"

Li Yao smiled bitterly. He replied, "I am truly not a space resident. What can I do to make you believe me?"

Xiong Zhenzhen and Shi Meng gazed at him and said simultaneously, "You swear?"

Li Yao declared solemnly, "I swear that I'm not a space resident!"

The two of them looked at each other and both fell silent. Shi Meng heaved a long sigh of relief and said, "Alright. Now that you are willing to swear, I will believe you for now. But if I ever discover that you were lying and are a space resident, I will be the first to kill you!"

Xiong Zhenzhen said, "Sand Scorpion, you are a smart guy, and you should know that lying to us right now will do you no good. If you are really a space resident, there is no way that you can pass the test of the Truth Cabinet! I will believe your words for now. This is the map that the Burning Sun Tribe gave us. The specific location of the Oasis Tribe has been marked on it."

"I am not a space resident."

Li Yao looked them in the eye without any fear. "I will say exactly the same words if I have to step into the Truth

Cabinet."

...

The unrest lasted all night. Furious Bears City seemed to be on fire everywhere. The furious flames were almost burning holes in the dark night sky. Before dawn, when the qi-trainers of the six tribes, who had been busy all night, just stopped and took a rest, a piece of shocking news came from the northwest of the city.

Xiong Wuji escaped!

He vanished together with Sha Yulan and Wu Mayan, two space residents, from the underground cage and suddenly appeared in a river dozens of kilometers away. Then, he hijacked a heavy tank and went southwards toward the desert!

As a result, Furious Bears City was even more anxious. The elite qi-trainers of the six tribes were all summoned to go after him.

The qi-trainers of the Furious Bears Tribe were unwilling to let their 'former chief' fall into the hands of outsiders. Therefore, even more people from their tribe were deployed to go south.

On the other hand, Furious Bears City, which had been excited all night, was somewhat cooled down because of this incident, like a drunk person who was fast asleep after a night of craziness.

At 6:30 in the morning, half an hour after the elites of the tribes went to chase after Xiong Wuji, a ghost-like figure slid into the warehouse of trophies.

Precious as the trophies were, they were all unrefined raw materials. Since it was a mess outside and everywhere was short-handed, there were not many guards in the warehouse.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Something rushed close in the air. Two guards fell to the ground without even having the opportunity to grunt.

The third guard realized what was going on, but he saw that a black shadow passed by him. He then felt that the back of his head was cold before he lost consciousness in the end.

The last guard was about to cry out when his voice was blocked in his throat; a stream of spiritual gas had surged out along his throat into his brain and cast him into coma.

The gate of the warehouse was installed with an extremely complicated gear password lock that could only be opened by adjusting the angles of the six gears on it. If so much as one of the gears was in the wrong angle, the siren inside the gate would shriek such an earsplitting sound that half of Furious Bears City would hear it.

Thankfully, it was also very complicated to change the password of such gear locks. Since Xiong Wuji had been very 'frank' yesterday, the three elders of the tribe did not hurry to change the password but dedicated themselves to the affairs of their tribe instead.

Click!

With a satisfying sound, the gate of the warehouse was slowly opened.

The most solid shells of apocalyptic beasts and their sharpest teeth and claws, as well as their cores that were extremely volatile but contained profound spiritual energy… All the trophies from the battle of the apocalypse were stored in the warehouse.

Was there any better place in the world than here for a refiner?

…

Three hours later, a number of the experts who had gone to pursue Xiong Wuji finally returned.

Yan Xibei, the chief of the Giant Axe Tribe, and the chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe stood in the middle of the warehouse with gloomy expressions, as if somebody had smashed them right in their faces and left deep holes there.

The qi-trainers of the six tribes were checking the losses.

"Electric Spider teeth, Heavenly Star Insect shells, cores of the Red Horned Beetles… All the most valuable Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures with the most spiritual energy have been stolen? All?" asked Yan Xibei, his voice shaking. There was rarely-seen resentment on his face, as he gnashed his teeth.

"None were left, especially the cores of the apocalyptic beasts," replied a qi-trainer, who was in charge of the assessment, nervously.

Even the chief of the Giant Axe Tribe, who had been calm all the while, was roaring. "Asshole! The cores contain extremely violent spiritual energy. They'd been condensed by the egg of apocalypse over more than ten years with the resources it collected from underground. They would have been enough for the six tribes to start a great war!"

Chapter 603: Apocalyptic Extension!

Chapter 603: Apocalyptic Extension!

Three days later, in the northwest edge of the Furious Bears Tribe's territory, beside a zigzagging valley…

Hundreds of years ago, there used to a running river in this place, but it had dried long ago due to climate change.

The riverbed, infiltrated by the underground mother lodes, was as red as blood. Looking from afar, a crimson river seemed to be still flowing slowly.

The hundreds of square kilometers nearby were uninhabited, but weird sounds were echoing in a forsaken mine.

The dense sounds seemed to suggest that a tornado was savaging the cave, or that two primordial beasts were fighting each other in the depths of the mine. Occasionally, deafening explosions would burst out from hundreds of meters below the ground, blowing smog mixed with stone powder of various colors out of the cave.

Finally, everything went peaceful again that afternoon. An exhausted man, dragging quite a number of fully-loaded carts, crawled out of the cave.

Colorful stone powder was all over Li Yao's body. Even his face had become fuzzy. His hands were shivering, and his sweat that dropped to the ground vaporized immediately due to the high temperature.

He hurried to pour half a bottle of clean water into his mouth. In great satisfaction, Li Yao licked his dry lips and suddenly kicked over the few carts, allowing all the items inside them to roll out. He then examined the works that he had refined crazily in the previous three days.

The first cart was packed with bullets.

The True Qi guns on Iron Plateau launched bullets by spiritual gas that the qi-trainers blew in from the back of the weapon.

Theoretically speaking, even an iron ball could deal unparalleled damage when it was granted with enough momentum.

However, the impetus of spiritual gas was limited anyway. To increase the damage of the guns, he'd had to revise the bullets.

Those bullets were crafted from the corpses of the apocalyptic beasts and high-purity crystals.

Most of the bullets were armor-piercing projectiles. The most solid bones of the dragon-level beasts were utilized as cores, and the crystals stored inside the bullets would explode furiously after they pierced the target's body.

For those in the low level of the Refinement Stage, such bullets could wipe them out instantly!

The second cart carried several guns and melee weapons. They had all been renewed after he'd added the bones of the apocalyptic beasts and special alloys to them.

Since nobody was around, Li Yao was able to perform the best of the ancient arts of refining that he knew. He utilized all the materials perfectly and improved the strength and sharpness of the weapons to their maximum.

In the third cart was 'Thunder Roar', the deadly weapon that could spray Wolf Fangs out like they were bullets!

Li Yao had redesigned 'Thunder Roar' so that it could launch the oval-shaped crystal bombs that he had specially made.

The crystal bombs looked as unattractive as eggs, but they were made of the cores of the dragon-level beasts. One of them was enough to blow up half of a mine or clear the small fries within a hundred square meters.

Even the experts in the Building Foundation Stage or the Core Formation Stage might not be bold enough to confront such explosive bullets!

What was most shocking was that he had crafted two hundred such explosive bullets at the cost of almost all the precious trophies from the battle of the apocalypse!

Refining such Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures into bullets and crystal bombs was the most wasteful way to make use of them. Even Li Yao felt slightly regretful.

But there were no other options. His time was too limited for him to create the exquisite and elegant magical equipment. He could only choose the simplest, the roughest, and the wildest style!

I'm truly sorry, six tribes of Iron Plateau. I've wasted so many of your resources for my own usage! But if we cannot make it through this war, there will be no future for Iron Plateau at all!

If we can grit our teeth through the disaster and unveil the scheme of the Temple of Immortals, the Immortal Cultivators will become our common foe. Interspace trade will be as certain as anything can ever be. However many resources I've wasted, they can be traded back later!

While thinking, Li Yao kicked over the fourth cart.

Rolling on the ground were the components of a set of armor that looked like the shell of a beetle.

"Sky Scorpion Armor, suit up!"

Li Yao took a deep breath. Spiritual gas surged out of his body and spread out like ripples, raising a strong attraction force.

The components on the ground were absorbed to him one by one. They were combined and assembled into an awe-inspiring armor!

The brand-new Sky Scorpion Armor had been upgraded with the materials of the apocalyptic beasts!

Although the structure was basically the same, unlike the previous Sky Scorpion Armor, which only simulated the appearance of the Emperor Sand Scorpion and was made of common metals, the new Sky Scorpion Armor had employed a large quantity of shells and bones of apocalyptic beasts and even part of the body materials of the two calamity-level beasts!

One of the two calamity-level beasts was a sturdy being that could resist the collective attack of more than ten experts around the 80th level of the Refinement Stage. The defensive ability of its shell was almost equal to that of a Core Formation Stage Cultivator!

As for the giant sandworm, the other calamity-level beast, although its skin was soft, the defense ability of the beast was equally impressive. The circular blade-like teeth inside its mouthpart were perfect to be embedded on the surface of the armor as thorns, too!

Putting on the brand-new Sky Scorpion Armor, Li Yao seemed to have turned into a human-shaped apocalyptic beast. He couldn't have been more horrifying!

But it was not the end yet.

After putting on the armor, Li Yao showed no signs of stopping. He moved forward and kicked over the fifth cart. It was still armor components that were rolling on the ground, except that they were larger in size and much more primitive and crazier!

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Attracted by Li Yao's spiritual gas, the giant armor components all flew in the air and circled around him.

Li Yao's feet left the ground, and he floated at an altitude of three meters high. He stretched out his arms to let the new components be attached to the Sky Scorpion Armor.

In the Sky Scorpion Armor, he was almost 2.2 meters tall. But after the new components were plugged into it, he turned into a giant almost four meters tall!

The upper body of the dual armor was like a monolithic scorpion that had stood straight. Distinctive features of spiders could be found on it, too. On the back of the shoulders, two claws resembling the forelegs of mantis protruded. A long horn that looked like a spear extended high into the sky on the helmet!

The whole armor was mostly black with gold stripes all over the body, which made it look like a tiger crossed with an insect!

It was an Ares Extension!

Ares Extensions could provide enhancements to a crystal suit and made it surpass its limits during combat briefly. They could only be used once or twice, so they were installed with all kinds of devastating attack rune arrays and strengthening plugins.

Li Yao had retrieved a 'Dragon Scale Extension' on Boneyard. The power of the Ares Extension had left a deep impression on him. When he arrived in the Flying Star Sector, he had collected a lot of files about such equipment and tried to devise an Ares Extension on his own several times.

But as his research proceeded, he discovered that the cost of crafting an Ares Extension was really too high. All the strengthening plugins had to be made of abundant Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, and the most powerful attack rune arrays could only be driven by the purest crystals.

It was safe to say that every Ares Extension was founded on tremendous wealth, and yet it was essentially an expendable.

Only the affluent imperial army of the Star Ocean Imperium could afford such expensive magical equipment.

After Li Yao finished the cost analysis, he immediately gave up the idea of crafting an Ares Extension.

But right now, with the tremendous Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures he had acquired, and due to the urgent need to improve his combat ability in only a couple of days, Li Yao finally created an Ares Extension without even thinking about the cost.

Since all the strengthening components were made of materials from the apocalyptic beasts, he had named this particular Ares Extension 'Apocalyptic Extension'!

BOOM!

With the Apocalyptic Extension on his body, Li Yao's terrifyingly oppressive aura was even stronger than before. Air waves spread out crazily when he only slightly exerted his strength. Sand was raging in the desert, but the hundred square meters around him couldn't have been clearer because every tiny dust had been blown away by his dominating aura!

After swallowing massive Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures with the Art of the Swallowing Whale, I have reached the 81st level of the Refinement Stage, which equals to somewhere between the high level and the peak of the Building Foundation Stage.

Together with the Sky Scorpion Armor that has exploited the essence of the apocalyptic beasts and this powerful Apocalyptic Extension, I can fight a Core Formation Stage Cultivator for a while when the situation demands!

"Little Black, let's go!"

Black Wing had greatly enjoyed itself with Li Yao over the last couple of days. Having swallowed quite a lot of cores of apocalyptic beasts, it contained more spiritual energy than ever before.

As Li Yao roared, intense streaks of blackness spurted out of the sword and darted toward the north like a rocket.

After passing through thousands of kilometers in the desolate area west of the territories of the six tribes, he finally entered the so-called 'Dark Continent'.

However, Li Yao did not dive into it immediately. He meandered in the desolate area and searched for the terrain that he needed.

Eventually, he found a valley to his satisfaction. He then crawled into a cave in the depths of the valley.

He sprayed the broken cloths and pieces of daily necessities that he had prepared before into the cave and carved various traces on the wall of the cave with a bone blade.

The Hundred Smelting Clan had a lot of secret arts that could disguise magical equipment into everyday objects. Some of them could be used to camouflage rocks, too.

After delicate decoration, the cave looked as if somebody had lived here long ago.

Maybe very soon, the preparations in the cave would come in handy.

Li Yao checked one last time to make sure there were no loopholes. After that, he went westward and marched into the Dark Continent!

Chapter 604: Eerie Temple

Chapter 604: Eerie Temple

Different from what Li Yao had imagined, the 'Dark Continent' was not dark at all. On the contrary, the sunlight during the day was even more dazzling.

The sky was exceptionally clear, to the point that it felt unreal, as if one could see the blinking stars through the dome.

Five thousand years ago, this had been the place to endure the first wave of the apocalyptic strike. Almost all traces of civilization had been wiped out.

As far as one's eyes could reach, the bleak land was like from a remote, foreign star, with all kinds of terrain that were beyond anyone's imagination. The earth rose up into the sky and then dropped down underground, leaving craters on the surface.

Such craters were all caused by the giant meteors five thousand years ago. To this day, a lot of meteorite fragments were still left in the bottom of the giant pits thousands of meters deep.

For five thousand years, the smaller craters deep within the massive craters had been brushed and eroded by rainwater. Some nearby rivers had changed their routes, and as a result, many round lakes had formed.

Because of the meteorite pieces at the bottom of the lakes, colorful mist was floating on the water's surface. Looking from the ground, they were like giant vesicles that protruded out.

Occasionally, two craters would draw close to each other, and their ridges combined, making them look as sharp as tusks.

Such a harsh environment was extremely unsuitable for mankind, but it was a haven for demon beasts and demonic plants.

Countless colorful plants had grown out of the lakes at the bottom of the craters, decorating the craters as if they were flowers. Thousands of demon beasts were roaring in the creepy forest. When Li Yao passed by several craters, he even encountered the assault of a large batch of flying demon beasts.

Li Yao even found beings that resembled humans in the forest.

They were all around two meters tall. Their skin was as grey as a rock, with a layer of red moss that could change its shade and shape growing on it.

At first glance, they were identical to the Titan Warriors, except that they were smaller in size.

They were wearing the simplest beast hide and carrying bone blades made from the skeletons of demon beasts. Their way of communication was like both a human language with short syllables and the low and deep bellows of animals.

They seemed to be unaware of the training of spiritual gas at all. Yet, they all boasted enormous physical strength. Bloodthirsty and aggressive, they could rush in the forest and tear apart demon beasts with their bare hands. Then, they ate the raw meat of the prey and drank their blood.

Li Yao hid himself in the darkness and observed the wildlings for a long time. Then he came to a conclusion.

After the first wave of apocalyptic strike five thousand years ago, the ancestors of mankind here were too few to pass on the tinder of human civilization in the harsh environment.

In the Dark Continent, their civilization had retrograded generation after generation, and they ended up becoming primitive wildlings.

Their civilization had disappeared, but the knowledge of the Titan Warriors had been sent to them in ways Li Yao didn't know, which became their only reliance to fight against nature.

Right now, such wildings had lost most of their language ability. They could only communicate with each other through simple yells. Bloody moss similar to those on the Titan Warriors had appeared on their body, too. The shapes and shades of the moss could be altered at will and serve as a tool of communication, too.

Maybe, after another thousand years of seclusion in the Dark Continent, the wildings would lose their last bit of language ability and forget their identity as human beings.

It was possible that they would regard the meteorites standing on the earth everywhere as the 'divine mountains' of their species. They would consider the hearts of the Titan Warriors that they had excavated from the meteorite mountains to be gifts from 'the gods'. They might think themselves to be the chosen ones.

By that time, they would truly have become the next generation of Titan Warriors!

Li Yao secretly sighed and continued his journey to the valley where the Oasis Tribe was located.

In fear that he might run into scouts of the Temple of Immortals, Li Yao did not to fly very high or fast.

Every time before he moved forward, he sent out Neltharion in stealth mode to investigate the route and make sure there were no abnormalities.

When he finally reached the vicinity of the Oasis Tribe, it was noon the next day.

This area was a rarely-seen plateau in the Dark Continent. A few craters that were not very deep were scattered on the ground. The horizon was dotted with oases on which countless fat animals were roaming.

Li Yao found a narrow, long valley between two oval-shaped craters. He observed it through Neltharion and saw vague traces of man-made architecture inside the valley.

However, on the other side of the valley, smoke was rising, and fire was burning through the sky. The sound of combat echoed over from it.

A beam of intense black smoke pierced into the sky like a giant pillar.

Li Yao was somewhat surprised. He hurried to take out a grey camouflage cloth that was similar in appearance to rocks around him before he crawled on the ground with Black Wing and took a turn from one of the craters.

In the meantime, he let Neltharion draw close to the battlefield in its stealth mode.

As he came closer to the valley, Li Yao could see clearly that a weirdly-shaped, magnificent temple in a primitive, wild, and ungodly style was leaning against the cliff on the left side.

The temple was surrounded by dozens of shabby stone buildings and a few messy tents. One look was enough to determine that they belonged to a town of an underdeveloped tribe.

This should be the so-called Oasis Tribe.

In the town, many men wore bone armor but with their upper bodies naked. Their hair was muddled, and their lips were extremely thick. Their faces all looked rough. There were bone rings on their lips, ears, and noses. Hideous green tattoos were painted on their faces and bodies.

Judging from their houses, clothing, and behavior, their civilization level was much lower than the six tribes of Iron Plateau, but it was higher than that of the other wildings Li Yao had seen in the Dark Continent.

They were probably the residents of the Oasis Tribe.

Other than them, Li Yao saw a bunch of other guys in delicate armor driving True Qi tanks with the flags of the Burning Sun Tribe, the Feathered Snakes Tribe, and the Giant Axe Tribe behind them.

They were probably the first echelon of explorers in the Oasis Plan.

At this moment, both the qi-trainers of the six tribes of Iron Plateau and the barbaric warriors of the Oasis Tribe were yelling and shouting and marching toward the other side of the valley.

"The bandits from space are trying to destroy our town, butcher our families, and take our land!"

"Fight them! Let's fight them!"

"The six tribes of Iron Plateau will defend our home together with the Oasis Tribe!"

Li Yao realized that it was not good. He tried his best to look afar, only to discover that a crystal warship seemed to have been seriously damaged on the other side of the valley. Dense black smoke was popping up from the foot of the mountain.

A lot of Cultivators in crystal suits, in the meantime, were fighting a heated battle with the Iron Plateau natives.

With the assistance of crystal suits, the Cultivators were stronger than the Iron Plateau warriors. However, there was only about a hundred of them; they were terribly outnumbered by the opponents. They couldn't breach the defensive line of the Iron Plateau warriors, either.

What's happening? They're fighting already?

Li Yao was anxious. He manipulated Neltharion to move closer, only to find a flag flapping in the wind in the middle of the Cultivators and a very familiar battle emblem that was glittering in the scorching sun on the damaged crystal warship.

It was—

The Great Horn Exo Society's battle emblem!

Li Yao was dumbfounded. Ten thousand questions popped up in his mind.

Why did the Great Horn Exo Society appear in Iron Plateau? How did they find this place?

Do they have nothing better to do than to provoke the Iron Plateau natives? They are fighting so hard, like they are determined to break into the Oasis Tribe's town by passing through the Iron Plateau natives' defensive line no matter what!

Li Yao's first thought was to show up and stop the conflict immediately.

But right now, the two parties were already engaged in a head-on battle. Would they listen to him calmly and rationally?

Besides, Li Yao had a deeper and deeper feeling that there was more to the story and a great plot was behind the appearance of the Great Horn Exo Society.

The Great Horn Exo Society was almost demolished a few months ago in the periphery of the Iron Plateau Space Zone. Even if it has recruited new members after that, how earth did they come into conflict with the Iron Plateau natives without a good reason?

Why did they come here and attack the Oasis Tribe's tribe?

Is there a secret buried in the town?

Li Yao was interested by the idea. He immediately drove Neltharion to take a turn and snuck into the Oasis Tribe's town while most of the qi-trainers and the barbaric warriors were in the frontline.

The Oasis Tribe's town was almost exclusively made of crude stone houses. Li Yao did not notice anything wrong in them.

However, the temple next to the cliff gave him a gloomy, chilling feeling whenever he peeped at it.

The giant stone pillars supporting the temple was carved with evil, bizarre patterns.

In front of the temple were four enormous statues of blue-faced monsters with sharp tusks that looked half human and half demon.

The cult of ghosts and devils was very normal for primitive tribes, but Li Yao still felt it was somewhat weird.

After pondering for a while, he finally discovered that it was because the technology to build the temple far exceeded the development level of the Oasis Tribe.

The vivid statues of monsters were not like something that the residents of the Oasis Tribe could make.

Neltharion snuck into the temple close to the ground.

The temple was empty, paved with giant black stones. In the middle of the temple, an enormous stele covered in a white sheet was standing. The sheet seemed to have remained untouched for a long time; it was already covered in dust.

Li Yao controlled Neltharion to crawl below the white sheet. He was expecting yet another unholy pattern, when he discovered a line of finely-written words.

"Of the billions of techniques and paths of Cultivation, I only ask you this—do you want immortality?"

Li Yao's pupils constricted violently. It was truly the work of the Temple of Immortals!

But after a moment, he realized that something was still not right.

This temple was a bit too eye-catching. The bizarre statues outside and the stele that had the slogan of the Temple of Immortals gave Li Yao the feeling that the owner of the temple was worried that other people would not realize that this place was a bureau of an evil organization.

Chapter 605: The Other Side of the Scheme

Chapter 605: The Other Side of the Scheme

While Li Yao was deep in thought, he suddenly heard a tiny 'crack' sound. A black tile in a corner of the temple suddenly lowered, revealing steps leading to the underground.

Then, a black shadow dashed out and appeared on the ground!

It was a barbaric warrior wearing bone armor, ear rings, and nose rings, with tattoos all over his face.

Yet, the brightness of evilness and wisdom that was glittering in his eyes did not befit an unclever primitive barbarian at all.

Also, he had dashed out extremely fast just now, almost as quick as a phantom. There was no telling how much stronger he was than the real barbarians outside!

The moment the man dashed out, on the black wall, a slender shadow slowly condensed and gradually formed into a man.

The man was wearing qi-trainer armor, with the battle emblem of the Burning Sun Tribe on his chest. However, his behavior was mysterious, and his face was gloomy. The air around him was entirely different from that near the wild, casual Iron Plateau natives.

Li Yao felt that cold sweat on the back of his neck.

The first person had come out too suddenly, and he couldn't have foreseen him coming. But the expert hiding beside the wall had escaped his attention the whole time!

Thankfully, he was merely exploring the temple with Neltharion and kept the magical equipment sliding at the lowest speed and altitude in stealth mode.

If he had snuck into the temple in person, the expert next to the wall would've discovered him immediately!

Judging from the perfectness of his disguises and the first person's agility when he dashed out from the underground, the two of them were very likely above the high level of the Building Foundation Stage and were good at the arts of disguise and assassination.

One of the two was dressing like an Oasis Tribe warrior, while the other was dressing like a qi-trainer of the Burning Sun Tribe. However, they were apparently very familiar with each other. They nodded in greeting and exchanged a thoughtful look.

The man next to the wall said, "Change of plans. The six tribes of Iron Plateau will be delayed for two days. Carry out Plan No.4."

The barbaric warrior from the underground nodded and left the temple. The entrance on the ground was sealed again.

The man next to the wall hopped backwards into darkness, melting into the wall.

Li Yao was even more cautious. He was literally moving Neltharion inch by inch.

Something had to be hidden underground, but the entrance was closed, and an enemy was monitoring the surroundings from the outside. What should he do?

Suddenly, Li Yao thought of something. He drove Neltharion out of the temple from the same way he'd come in.

If there was a secret chamber below ground, ventilation tubes leading to the surface of the earth were always necessary to retrieve fresh air.

Li Yao circled the temple patiently with Neltharion and examined every detail. As he expected, he found an inconspicuous crevice on the left side of the temple near the foot of the cliff.

Air was popping out of the crevice now and then. Neltharion had detected that the temperature of the air was slightly higher than that of the environment.

The narrow and long crevice was only the width of a palm. There was no way that a normal person could cram in. If somebody were to detonate it, their attempt was bound to be discovered.

However, Neltharion was exactly the width of a palm, and therefore could crawl into the crevice easily.

After zigzagging inside the crevice for a long time, traces of man-made objects were finally exposed. A ventilation tube had been buried deep inside the crevice.

Neltharion moved downward in the ventilation tube for three minutes in stealth mode until it met dozens of branches ahead.

It appeared that the scale of the secret chamber was larger than Li Yao had thought.

He chose a branch randomly. It was not until Neltharion reached fifty meters below the ground that it entered a narrow pathway.

The pathway was absolutely straight with no places to hide in at all. There were a few guards in the clothes of the Oasis Tribe warriors on both sides. Those people looked equally shrewd and tough, and in no way did they resemble the ignorant barbarians.

Li Yao held his breath and controlled Neltharion to move forward along the foot of the wall. At the end of the pathway was a heavy iron door behind which cries and shouts could vaguely be heard.

In the lower part of the iron door was a hole not very large that was probably meant to deliver food and water to the prisoners inside. Neltharion crept into the room through the hole.

Li Yao was greatly surprised by what he saw.

This was an extremely spacious cage where almost twenty prisoners were confined. They were all young people in their twenties at most.

Most of the young people had fair skin and elegant manners, entirely different from the style of the Iron Plateau natives.

Some girls were sobbing. Some young men were arguing with each other. Some were listening to the noises nearby by sticking their ears to the wall, while some were comforting their weeping companions even though there was nothing but gloom on their own faces.

Li Yao observed the young people one by one with Neltharion, only to come to a suddenly halt.

He found an old acquaintance among the young people—Xie Anan!

Xie Anan was a freshmen year student in the Refining Department of Flying Star University and also one of the volunteers in the Skyhill Sword Seminar. When Li Yao applied for the Skyhill Sword Seminar, he had registered at her desk.

When he arrived in the Skyhill Domain, the two of them had met by accident in the Museum of Swords and Sabers. Later, he had gotten to know a few other fellow Cultivators in the circle of refiners through Xie Anan and had taken part in the 'Sword Tasting Get Together' with them.

After that, when she saw that Li Yao trained with the Purple Ring Sword Ants, she had tried it herself, only to foam and pass out due to the excruciating pain. She had left a deep impression on Li Yao.

How on earth was she captured and brought to Iron Plateau?

Li Yao tried his best to hold back his curiosity and observed carefully.

Xie Anan was much thinner than a few months ago. Her round, apple-like face had become long and thin. She looked much more mature, too, with resolution on her face.

She was comforting one of her female companions who kept sobbing. "Rest assured. The sound of combat is breaking out in the outside. Somebody must've come to rescue us!"

After pondering for a moment and scanning the environment in the cage, Li Yao found no alternatives except to gamble.

He drove Neltharion to pass through the crowd cautiously and arrived behind Xie Anan. He then touched her back with the head of the warship model softly three times.

Xie Anan's eyes were wide open. She turned around and check, only to find nothing.

Li Yao pinned Neltharion's head to Xie Anan's body and wrote on her back. "Don't be alarmed."

Xie Anan blinked her eyes. She managed to not scream although it was quite hard.

Controlling Neltharion, Li Yao wrote again. "Go to the bathroom."

The cage was mixed with males and females. There was a booth in a corner that was some sort of bathroom. It had no door, but there was a curtain that could block the vision from outside.

Xie Anan swallowed troublesomely. She said a few more comforting words to her companion before she walked into the bathroom and pulled the curtain shut.

Li Yao wrote on her back. "Who are you? Why are you here? Speak in your lowest voice."

After he finished writing, he immediately drove Neltharion to Xie Anan's mouth.

Xie Anan rubbed her face hard to calm herself down. She held her face with her hands. A barely audible voice leaked out from between her fingers. "My name is Xie Anan. I am a student of Flying Star University. Who are you? Are you here to rescue us?"

Neltharion flew to her back again and started writing. "Keep talking. Don't stop. Tell me everything you know, including everyone's identity."

Xie Anan swallowed and moaned, "I… I barely know anything! As a freshman year student of the Refining Department of Flying Star University, I was listed as a volunteer of the Skyhill Sword Seminar according to tradition, but then a great explosion took place during the event!

"The Skyhill Domain was in a havoc back then. Affected by the blast, my head was dizzy. I only vaguely remember that, in the flames, a man in a doctor's uniform asked me whether or not I was a student of Flying Star University. I nodded, and he brought me to an ambulance. I don't know what happened next.

"When I woke up again, I found myself in what seemed to be a carrier and confined in a fully enclosed cabin. My hands and legs were sore, and my spiritual root was locked by certain barriers. I couldn't make use of spiritual energy at all and became completely useless.

"Somebody brought me food and water every day. Occasionally, several people wearing masks would come and interrogate me. They wanted to know who I was and the social network of my family and friends. Now and then, they would bring a few photos over and asked whether or not I knew people on the photos.

"Many of the people were my classmates. Some were the big shots in Heavenly Saints Institute.

"I… I didn't want to tell them, but their eyes seemed to be shining and glittering. Without me knowing it, I'd confessed everything."

Li Yao nodded. The interrogators would have been Meditation Healers who were adept at mental attacks. It would have been more than easy for them to deal with a low-level Cultivator who was no better than an ordinary person now that her spiritual root had been locked.

Xie Anan continued. "I found myself in many different carriers on my way, but I didn't know when the changes took place. I often slept very soundly, and when I woke up, I would be in a different cabin. Just like that, I was all by myself. I didn't even know how many days it had been since I was captured.

"Until… about five days, or ten days—I really can't tell—ago, I lost consciousness again. When I woke up, I already in this cage.

"There were already eleven people in the cage when I arrived. Eight more came one by one later. Together with me, there are twenty hostages in total now.

"I know almost everyone here. Some of them were exactly the people I saw in the photos. Anyways, they are either students of Flying Star University or students of Heavenly Saints Institute."

Li Yao narrowed his eyes. Flying Star University and Heavenly Saints Institute were the two supreme academic establishments in the Flying Star Sector. Students of the two colleges were literally superstars of tomorrow. They enjoyed a high status both in the world of Cultivators and among ordinary people.

Neltharion went on to write on Xie Anan's back. "What else do they have in common except that they are all college students?"

Xie Anan thought carefully for a moment and said, "Yes. Although everyone here cannot wield our spiritual energy because they've locked our spiritual roots, they do not forbid us from talking. After communicating with each other, we found that many of us have impressive familial backgrounds.

"Of the twenty prisoners, twelve are students of the Heavenly Saints Institute. Heavenly Saints Institute is a private school that only admits the descendants of the privileged in Heavenly Saints City.

"For the twelve of them, many of their parents and grandparents are all in the important posts of the six major sects. There's even Wan Hongying, who is the blood granddaughter of the leader of the Burning Sun Alliance!"

Blood granddaughter of the leader of the Burning Sun Alliance, one of the six major sects in Heavenly Saints City!

Li Yao felt that his blood was freezing.

Xie Anan continued. "As for the eight students from Flying Star University, although our backgrounds are less intimidating, our families are deeply connected to many forces in the Flying Star Sector. We are either heirs of noble families or have family members who are in the important positions of certain sects. Take me for example. I am from the family of Xie, a noble family of refining, but I'm the most insignificant one here."

Twenty heirs of major sects and families as well as brilliant students of the best colleges in the Flying Star Sector had been kidnapped and confined in Iron Plateau.

Chapter 606: Tank of the Burning Sun Tribe

Chapter 606: Tank of the Burning Sun Tribe

Li Yao somehow understood why the Great Horn Exo Society was attacking the Oasis Tribe without a care.

But there were many details that he hadn't thought through yet. He continued writing with Neltharion. "Somebody has come to your rescue. Do you know how they learned where you are?"

Xie Anan hesitated for a while. Finally, she made up her mind and said, "Wan Hongying, granddaughter of the leader of the Burning Sun Alliance, has a 'Planet Coordinate Pill' inside her body!

"This is a very unique treasure made of the cores of seven different kinds of demon beasts. When it is swallowed, it will become liquid and meld with the flesh and blood. No methods will ever be able to find it.

"However, with the special secret technique, the owner can trigger it when it is within the range of a planet, so that the liquid will be condensed into a pill again. Other people will be able to locate the coordinates of the pill immediately.

"Such a special treasure has been refined for the security of important people. We didn't know before until Wan Hongying said confidently that somebody had come to rescue us. That's when we learned she had such a treasure with her."

Li Yao thought for a moment, he asked with Neltharion, "Does your enemy know of the existence of the Planet Coordinate Pill?"

Somewhat confused, Xie Anan replied, "That I don't know. Logically, since Wan Hongying's spiritual root was locked, too, her capability should be as good as that of an ordinary people. It wouldn't have been possible for her to keep it a secret."

Li Yao couldn't help but sneer. The Temple of Immortals knew exactly that a Planet Coordinate Pill was inside Wan Hongying's body, yet they still locked her together with so many other hostages. It was clear that they wanted the rescuers to know where the captives were.

Taking the events that took place inside the six tribes of Iron Plateau into consideration, the purpose of the Temple of Immortals couldn't have been more obvious.

While Li Yao was pondering, Xie Anan suddenly put on an extremely weird expression. She yawned and suddenly fell asleep, her body leaning against the wall of the bathroom until she gradually fell to the ground.

Snores came over from the outside, too. The other nineteen college students had fallen asleep at the same time. Streams of bright green gas were floating above their heads weirdly.

Huala!

The door of the prison was opened. Six muscular men wearing black masks walked in. They covered the heads of the hostages with black cloths first so that nobody could see the hostages' faces before they stuffed every hostage into a very big bag. They'd also tied up their hands and legs with the veins of demon beasts so that the hostages wouldn't be able to move at all.

Then, one hand pulling two bags, the six muscular men dragged the twenty college students out of the underground chamber.

Li Yao followed and observed. He found a heavy True Qi tank coming over slowly from the shadow of the valley.

The tank was in a very impressive style. It looked like a leopard that had horns all over its body, a perfect combination of speed and savageness.

It had been deeply modified, with exhaust tubes all over the body of the tank. When it rushed by, a tornado seemed to be raised. Blood-like flame patterns were painted on the two sides of the tank. There was also the battle emblem of the Burning Sun Tribe on the head.

The tank of the Burning Sun Tribe stopped by the foot of the hill. A qi-trainer of the Burning Sun Tribe crawled below the tank with a box and reappeared three minutes later.

Was he examining the vehicle, or was he installing something?

Li Yao's heart was beating fast, as he smelled an intense scent of danger.

Very soon, a rock was pushed open heavily. The six muscular men walked out and threw the twenty hostages on the enclosed carriage in the back of the tank.

Wu! Wu!

The iron beast shrieked earsplittingly. It was activated again and rushed toward the other side of the valley.

The Burning Sun Tribe was the fastest and the best at racing among the six tribes. This heavy tank modified by the Burning Sun Tribe was no slower than the single tanks when it was fully activated despite its enormous size!

In less than ten minutes, the tank of the Burning Sun Tribe had driven out of the valley. It took a turn and rushed southwards like a lightning!

Li Yao raised Neltharion's altitude as high as he could and found that the tank had covered dozens of kilometers in the blink of an eye.

On this side of the valley, the battle was still ongoing. However, the Great Horn Exo Society seemed to realize that the hostages had been transferred. There were signs that they were trying to retreat, but they'd been surrounded by the fearless barbaric warriors and could get away in a hurry.

In the horizon of the south, vague smoke could be seen.

It belonged to a large team of tanks, one made of the best, fully-armed qi-trainers of the six tribes of Iron Plateau.

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao changed his direction immediately and marched southwards!

The two schemes were about to be connected. He finally knew what the Temple of Immortals was up to!

The heavy tank carrying twenty important hostages was going all the way to the south. It would certainly run into the elite warriors of the six tribes, who were all ready for battle.

Since someone among the hostages had a 'Planet Coordinate Pill', which could tell the rescuers their location, the Great Horn Exo Society must've already discovered that the hostages were going south.

With the Great Horn Exo Society's capability, it wouldn't be hard for them to get rid of the Oasis Tribe. They would soon trace the Planet Coordinate Pill and march toward the south, too.

Within the following day, the Great Horn Exo Society, who went south to rescue the hostages, and the elite warriors of the six tribes, who went north to resist the 'intruders from the space', would encounter one another.

No. The Great Horn Exo Society must have helpers.

The twenty hostages are either heirs of noble families or descendants of the leadership of the important sects. They are also students of Flying Star University and Heavenly Saints Institute, treasures of the Flying Star Sector!

When news that they were kidnapped spread out, Cultivators in space would definitely have found the pressure unbearable and summoned the best soldiers to rescue them. It was just that the Great Horn Exo Society showed up in the Iron Plateau Space Zone in advance for some reason. That's why they became the first echelon!

Chances are that many starships and experts in the world of Cultivators have been gathered in space right now!

Yes. That must be the case, otherwise the Temple of Immortals wouldn't have chosen such a moment to initiate their scheme!

When the experts arrive in Iron Plateau and find the Oasis Tribe's temple, they will definitely think that this is a secret base of the Temple of Immortals!

At that time, if they find that the Great Horn Exo Society has been engaged with the Iron Plateau natives or has even been wiped out…

Right. The man just now has installed god knows what to the bottom of the tank. If it is a bomb…

If the tank of the Burning Sun Tribe fell into the hands of the six tribes of Iron Plateau and suddenly exploded, killing all twenty hostages, the Iron Plateau natives wouldn't be able to explain themselves even if they each grew another ten tongues.

Besides, would the proud and outraged Iron Plateau natives bother to explain themselves at all?

They would more likely talk with their blades and cannons!

The more Li Yao thought the whole scheme in detail, the colder his heart became.

Black Wing accelerated to its maximum speed. However, since the tank of the Burning Sun Tribe left the valley, it had been floating in midair by spurting intense air currents from the bottom. The impetus of the tank was quite impressive, too. Although it hadn't reached the speed of sound yet, it was quite fast!

Black Wing was merely a flying sword after all. Although it could surpass the sonic speed in short-distance sprinting, it couldn't be kept at the supersonic state all the time even if Li Yao was trying his best because too much spiritual energy had been consumed during the long journey to the north.

Speeding up and slowing down, when Black Wing almost spurted the last breath of blackness more than half a day later, Li Yao finally caught up with the tank of the Burning Sun Tribe.

However, the dust on the horizon was already very clear. It was rushing by like the wind of wolves that couldn't tame their fighting will anymore.

The elite warriors of the six tribes were driving toward them precisely!

Observing the north through Neltharion, which was flying in the sky, Li Yao found that the Great Horn Exo Society had gotten rid of the Oasis Tribe. A hundred fully-armed Exos were marching south at full speed.

Damn!

Li Yao gritted his teeth. Black Wing accelerated to its top speed one last time, and all the spurts on the Sky Scorpion Armor were jetting spiritual gas. Finally, Li Yao turned into a streak of brightness and landed on the tank of the Burning Sun Tribe!

The tank suddenly shivered and slowed down. The hatch on the carriage was opened abruptly, from which six qi-trainers leapt out.

"Who are you?"

The qi-trainers of the Burning Sun Tribe were infuriated, ready to kill the stranger.

What embraced them, however, was two black guns.

"A good man!"

Li Yao pulled the trigger suddenly. Pushed by the high-pressure spiritual gas, bullets rained upon them.

The bullets were all made of high-purity crystals. Each of them was as powerful as a Wolf Fang.

For a moment, gunfire was all there was. Four qi-trainers were blown off the vehicle before they had the opportunity to scream!

There was barely any space on top of the tank for the qi-trainers to hide. When the remaining two qi-trainers were jumping away in a hurry, Li Yao seized the opportunity to kick them off the tank.

Since the tank was still moving at a super high speed, their kisses with the ground proved to be quite miserable. They would be in a coma for a long time, if they were not killed instantly. There was no way that they could catch up with the tank again.

Li Yao strode forward. But he quickly retreated in the very next second, with a 'cling' sound bursting out on his breastplate!

A weird, slender man gradually popped up from the top of the tank, like someone who had crawled out of a swamp. It was exactly the man in the wall that Li Yao had seen in the temple of the Oasis Tribe.

The man was carrying a sword as narrow and long as a needle in one hand and a dagger that was emitting bluish colors in the other. He looked at Li Yao's breastplate, somewhat surprised, with a gloomy face. A moment later, he said gravely, "You—"

"Damn you!"

Li Yao waved his hands. The two common guns in his hands vanished, replaced by 'Thunderous Roar', the super deadly weapon that had six barrels each thicker than his arm!

Li Yao smiled and pulled the trigger brutally. 'Thunderous Roar' emanated sounds terribly fitting for its name, while dazzling brilliance surged out of the barrels. He felt that a rhino was bashing his chest at a speed of a hundred meters per second!

Chapter 607: Rush Hour

Chapter 607: Rush Hour

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

A volcano of rainbow seemed to be erupting in front of Li Yao. Furious streams of spiritual energy smashed at the man in the wall!

However, the moment the bullets rushed out, the man in the wall suddenly blurred. He was both like hundreds of overlapping photos and a cluster of hazy mist.

The super explosive bullets made of the cores of twelve apocalyptic beasts passed through the shadows and did not explode until they were hundreds of meters away. The air waves that they raised looked like a new mountain on the desert!

Li Yao seemed to be stunned.

The man in the wall smiled. He extended one of his fingers and shook it, while he observed casually, "You are too slow —"

Before he concluded his sentence, the pupils of the man in the wall suddenly constricted. He shrieked, and his body was duplicated and vaporized again!

But there was no time!

Hardly had his body spread out into thousands of shadows when a horrifying hole appeared on his chest, as if an invisible, sharp blade had pierced through his back to his chest.

Through his body, one could even see the horizon far away!

A line of blood popped up in the air weirdly. It took a turn and reached Li Yao amid swooshing sounds before it circled around him slowly.

The man in the wall was dumbfounded. He lowered his head inch by inch and looked at the enormous hole on his chest. The smile of disdain on his face had not yet disappear, but there was astonishment deep inside his eyes.

The previous strike had blown away more than half of his internal organs. Despite his amazing Cultivation, he was still rather shocked and had to focus most of his spiritual energy inside his body to repair the bleeding organs. Otherwise, his heart, of which there was only half left now, would stop beating!

Li Yao's bewilderment turned into a hideous grin.

He knew that the man in the wall would not be so easy to deal with.

The hostages in the tank were of paramount importance. Since the man was responsible for the supervision job, he had to be an expert of the Temple of Immortals close to the Core Formation Stage, if he was not already in the stage. Besides, it was very likely that he knew many sordid and malicious secret arts.

Therefore, Li Yao had never thought that 'Thunderous Roar' could kill the man in the wall alone.

Just now, he had kept Neltharion in the stealth mode in the tank's way.

The tank was moving forward at a high speed itself. In the meantime, not only had Neltharion been revolving continuously, it suddenly sprinted at the last moment and darted toward the incoming tank!

When Neltharion reached the man in the wall, its relative speed was the speed of the tank and that of itself combined. Since it was a piece of super magical equipment from the Star Ocean Imperium made of amazingly hard materials, together with the momentum resulting from its revolution, even a Core Formation Stage Cultivator would've been drilled right through!

This was Li Yao's real deadly move!

The explosive bullets that Li Yao had triggered in the beginning were merely interferences for the man in the wall so that he wouldn't notice the sprinting Neltharion!

CRACK!

The explosive bullets were reloaded. Taking advantage of the brief bafflement of the man in the wall, Li Yao blew all twelve explosive bullets into his body emotionlessly.

The immense blast pushed the man in the wall hundreds of meters away. He was swallowed by a series of colorful 'bubbles' of flames before he had the chance to scream!

Since the explosions took place too close, the tank was shaking violently and was about to be knocked over by the tremendous blast, as if it were a lonely boat moving forward in a surging ocean.

Li Yao extended his spiritual threads to their limits to make sure that the twenty hostages in the carriage and the driver in the cockpit were the only people on the tank. He then crawled toward the other side of the cockpit against the fierce wind on the top of the tank.

Like a deadly venomous lizard, Li Yao crept into the cockpit. In the next moment, the gun as thick as a cannon barrel had been stuck to the driver's head.

Chi!

The burning barrel of the gun left a circular stamp on the driver's face like a soldering iron.

"Get lost," Li Yao said casually.

He did not want to shoot the gun here. Thunderous Roar was too powerful. With such an enclosed environment and such a short distance, it was quite possible that the entire tank would be destroyed, resulting in casualties among the hostages.

There was no telling whether the qi-trainer was a member of the Temple of Immortals or he had simply been fooled by them. Either way, he was already soaked in sweat from seeing the barrels of the gun, which were wider than his own face. Li Yao kicked him right in his waist heavily before he came back to himself. The door of the tank was knocked open, and he fell into the raging dust after a scream.

Li Yao seated himself in the driver's place. He familiarized himself with the control methods of the tank of the Burning Sun Tribe, while he let Neltharion shake off the blood and soar into the sky again in stealth mode.

On the horizon, the tanks of the six tribes of Iron Plateau were not far away from him. By his estimation, the two parties would engage within half a day.

The tanks of the six tribes were divided into two sections. While the main troops were at the rear, the single tanks of the Burning Sun Tribe were leading the charge in the vanguard.

The Burning Sun Tribe was best at racing. Their single tanks had all undergone special modifications. If they did not think about the cost of spiritual gas, their tanks could float in midair, supported by the jetting spiritual gas, for several thousand kilometers. Technically speaking, such vehicles were not 'tanks', but flying transportation tools such as shuttles.

In this incident, it was the chief of the Burning Sun Tribe who had been murdered. Desperate for revenge, they were naturally the angriest and the fastest to slay the space residents.

Li Yao calculated quickly. He found that he would run into the fastest ten or so tanks of the Burning Sun Tribe in the lead one hour later.

"Damn!"

If he were meeting one of the other three tribes, such as the Furious Bears Tribe, he could explain to them what had happened. But he couldn't tell how many people in the Burning Sun Tribe had joined the Temple of Immortals.

Besides, considering what he had done in Furious Bears City, it wouldn't be wrong at all to accuse him of 'defection'.

If the warriors of the Burning Sun Tribe decided to attack him the moment they saw him, Li Yao wouldn't be able to clarify himself at all.

I cannot meet them!

Li Yao span the steering wheel hard. The iron beast weighing dozens of tons roared in earsplitting sounds, while the spiritual gas spurting out of the underside of the tank swept an arced sand wave on the desert. Li Yao changed the direction of the vehicle and rushed toward the east!

In the south were the tanks of the Iron Plateau natives, and in the north was the Great Horn Exo Society, who was determined to rescue the hostages. He wouldn't be able to communicate with either party unless he exposed his true identity.

But if his true identity was revealed, his appearance on Iron Plateau would be even more like a scheme in the eyes of the six tribes.

The east side was full of craters and too rough to ride on, and the west side was a large desert. Although there were hills and hollows, too, the tank was not afraid of the obstacles since it could fly at an altitude of five or so meters to the ground.

Li Yao glanced around and took out a wrench and a dagger from the glove compartment to fix the steering wheel and the accelerator so that the tank could maintain the current speed and direction toward the west.

After that, he took a long breath and crawled out of the cockpit again before he gripped the surface of the tank and reached beneath!

Hu! Hu!

Beneath the vehicle, countless spurts were spurting spiritual gas at the ground. Caught unprepared, Li Yao felt that somebody had hammered him heavily right in his head, and he almost fell off.

He shook his head to refresh himself. Then, the veins on his arms all protruded out, while he crawled to the beam in the middle of the underside against the blow of spiritual gas.

As he expected, he found a slightly distended metal component in the center of the underside. It was a silvery grey and felt as smooth as silk. The technology of the metal refinement was clearly not on par with the manufacturing of the tank of the Burning Sun Tribe.

Li Yao had never seen an Iron Plateau native who could craft such a smooth and delicate gadget.

Then, it had to be from somewhere else other than Iron Plateau.

Holding his breath, Li Yao took off the armor on his right hand. A thin, almost transparent blade appeared and rolled among his fingers. He groped for the shell of the metal object carefully and dismantled it one millimeter after one millimeter.

Appearing in front of him was a piece of extremely precise piece of magical equipment.

Countless crystal chips were surrounding a glittering purple crystal, which had a long and narrow black shadow in the center, making it look like a deep and dark eye.

Demon Eye Stone?

Li Yao was secretly surprised. Demon Eye Stone was one of the marrow crystals that boasted tremendous spiritual energy and only came into being after billions of years in an environment with a high temperature and pressure.

The power of one marrow crystal equaled to that of hundreds of crystals of the same volume.

Among the various kinds of marrow crystals, Demon Eye Stone was one of the few ones with the most abundant spiritual energy.

Right now, this particular Demon Eye Stone was connected to countless crystal wires as thin as hairs, which were connected to crystal chips. Li Yao bulged his eyes so hard that they almost popped out before he managed to see the attack rune arrays on the crystal chips.

As he expected, this was a powerful crystal bomb.

If the power of the Demon Eye Stone was fully unleashed, all the creatures within three hundred square meters would definitely be annihilated.

The crystal bomb was surrounded by twelve oval-shaped iron balls. In the middle of the balls, there was a gap that could be used to open them.

Li Yao opened the balls and checked, only to find certain greenish, oily liquids inside them.

What's this?

Li Yao squinted. He suddenly recalled a serial bomb that Huangpu Shiyi once mentioned.

The core of such bombs was an ordinary crystal bomb, surrounded by special ejective devices that could spray the small iron balls that contained venomous liquids around before detonating them.

The venomous liquids inside the small iron balls would vaporize when heated and turn into a deadly neurotoxin. The final effect varied when different venomous liquids were chosen. In better cases, people would pass out, and in worse cases, the victims would be killed instantly. Even Cultivators were vulnerable to the attack.

If the tank continues running toward the tanks of the six tribes and is stopped by them, the important figures of the six tribes will definitely gather around the tank and check.

If the tank is suddenly detonated, not only will the twenty hostages be blown into pieces, the blast together with the neurotoxin will also likely kill many important figures of the six tribes.

By then, the space residents will think that the Iron Plateau natives slew the twenty hostages, and the Iron Plateau natives will think that it is a decapitation tactic taken by the space residents with the passengers on board as disguises even if I tell them that they are real hostages!

Chapter 608: You Are a Space Resident!

Chapter 608: You Are a Space Resident!

The neurotoxin that could kill hundreds of people instantly was right in his hand. If it was detonated, even Li Yao was not confident that he could survive the disaster.

His back was soaked in sweat, only to be vaporized by blowing wind in the next second.

CRACK!

A stalagmite on the ground skimmed against his back, leaving a white trace on the armor there.

Li Yao gulped. He narrowed his eyes, while bright gold lines were interconnecting, extending, and outlining the detailed structural design of the crystal bomb.

Huangpu Shiyi was the best bomb expert in the Temple of Immortals. Therefore, the bombs of the Temple of Immortals were more or less in his style. It was even possible that the very crystal bomb in front of him had been crafted by Huangpu Shiyi in person long ago.

Li Yao was also an expert of crystal bombs. Huangpu Shiyi's knowledge was now all his. In the days on Iron Plateau, he had spent a lot of time reflecting on the techniques that Huangpu Shiyi had taught him. Therefore, it was not difficult to dismantle the crystal bomb.

However, Li Yao discovered that a small telepathic thought transmitter was buried deep inside the crystal bomb.

When the spiritual energy circuit was intact, the transmitter would be alright. But once the spiritual energy circuit was broken, a sign that the crystal bomb had been compromised, the transmitter would be automatically triggered and send out a feeble telepathic thought.

Then, a certain someone would know that the bomb had been sabotaged.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao devised a new circuit with a crystal as the source of spiritual energy. He then docked the new circuit around the telepathic thought transmitter which would be fooled into thinking that the spiritual energy circuit was still intact.

After that, Li Yao concentrated his attention on dismantling the crystal bomb.

Neltharion became his second pair of eyes, observing the route for him. Occasionally, when there were large obstacles such as giant craters ahead, Li Yao would crawl into the cockpit again to alter the direction.

It was not until more than half an hour later that he finally finished dismantling the crystal bomb and removing all the chips that were meant to receive signals and telepathic thoughts.

Right now, the crystal bomb was under nobody's control.

Li Yao thought of something. He took out some materials and further modified the crystal bomb by adding a lot of his own chips.

This crystal bomb was activated again, but it only listened to his command now.

When everything was done, an hour and twenty minutes had passed.

Some ten single tanks of the Burning Sun Tribe were already within reach!

BOOM! BOOM!

The two parties were less than one kilometer from each other. The mobile True Qi cannons deployed on the single tanks of the Burning Sun Tribe were all blowing out crystal bombs, which sent enormous fireballs toward Li Yao's tank.

Li Yao gritted his teeth. Seeing that there were no obstructions in front of him, he simply leapt to the back of the tank and shot Thunderous Roar at the middle of the incoming single tanks three times.

After three explosions, mushroom clouds soared into the sky. The blast savaged the hundreds of square meters nearby. Several single tanks were knocked over by the air waves. The knights on them fell off and rolled on the plateau, left behind by their companions immediately.

"There has been a misunderstanding. Listen to my explanation!" Li Yao bellowed, his spiritual gas pushing his every word hundreds of meters away where they exploded like crystal bombs.

Li Yao took out a common gun. He crouched on the top of the tank and aimed at the head of a single tank. After a bam, the engine system of the single tank started roaring in protest with black smoke popping up. It fell over together with the knight on it.

"There's a great scheme behind all this. Why don't we sit down and talk about it nicely?"

Li Yao picked six Wolf Fangs that he had specially modified. The grips on the grenades had been removed, which made them look like goose eggs, but they had been filled with double crystals. Now, they were thrown toward the back of his tank.

The Wolf Fangs all exploded. They formed a wall of flames more than ten meters tall behind Li Yao's tank. In the end, four knights of the Burning Sun Tribe leapt over the wall. But one of them was hit by the air currents and was blocked behind the wall.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Two knights of the Burning Sun Tribe suddenly accelerated and finally reached Li Yao's tank!

"Don't fight. Let's talk!"

Li Yao's body moved. A long tusk-like saber appeared in his hand. It had features of a Scorpion's Tail and was similar in style to the Boiled Blood Wind Slashing Saber. Made of the sturdiest body parts of the apocalyptic beasts, the blade was roaring stubbornly in the fierce wind.

Shua!

Hardly had a knight raised his gun when its barrel was chopped off by Li Yao, who then strode forward, and, lowering his elbow and lifting his shoulder, knocked the knight to the ground fifty meters away.

"Violence is never a solution to any problem. Why do you not understand that?"

Li Yao turned around and shot a long needle made of the bones of an apocalyptic beast into the scapula of the other knight. He then drew close and kicked him so heavily that the knight's breastplate almost collapsed into his chest. The second knight was knocked off the tank, too.

Li Yao secret sighed. Talk was indeed hard.

CRACK!

A soft sound drifted over from the rear of the tank. The last knight of the Burning Sun Tribe had leapt to the top.

The crimson armor on this knight was much more glamorous than others. He seemed to be made of frozen flames that were about to be unfrozen. His eyes were slightly red, and like two volcanoes that were about to erupt, magma was rolling unstoppably deep inside his eyes.

A blood-red saber was slowly raised and pointed at Li Yao.

It was Yan Chifeng, eldest son of the late chief of the Burning Sun Tribe, blood brother of Yan Chihuo, the best expert in the younger generation of the Burning Sun Tribe, and a comrade who had fought side by side with Li Yao in the battle of the apocalypse!

The man was an out-and-out maniac in training. In the morning of the six tribes' meeting, he had practiced with Li Yao in the temple of techniques. Therefore, the two of them were sort of acquaintances.

Li Yao knew well that Yan Chifeng was far stronger than his emotional brother Yan Chihuo and was already in the 83rd level of the Refinement Stage. The man was one of the best warriors, even when taking all the young people of the six tribes into consideration. He would definitely be an opponent that was hard to deal with.

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao spoke, not expecting any response. "I can explain."

"Alright. I'm listening," said Yan Chihuo coldly, who was still holding his crimson saber aiming at Li Yao's throat, but did not take any action.

"What?" Li Yao was stunned.

"I am a man who loves nothing more than fighting, and I always believe that a match is the best occasion to reveal one's true personality!" Yan Chihuo declared. "I've practiced with you before. For some reason, I don't think you are a guy with evil purposes. So, I'll give you three minutes for you to explain yourself."

Li Yao's eyes rolled quickly, as he replied, "Indeed, I am not."

Yan Chihuo said seriously, "I've carefully reflected on my father's accident from the beginning to the end over the last couple of days. The more I thought about it, the more suspicions I had. But when I was going to investigate, some emergency broke out and interrupted my schedule. I feel that—"

Li Yao added for him, "You feel that somebody was manipulating you in the darkness. They did not give you the time to rest and think!"

Yan Chifeng's eyes suddenly shone. "Yes. Exactly!

"Also, as for my uncle Yan Xibei and my brother Yan Chihuo, they've been acting weird, too.

"I can't tell why I feel they are being weird, but I did feel uncomfortable when uncanny changes suddenly happened to two family members whom I'd lived with for decades."

Li Yao blinked, as his eyes became brighter and brighter. He mumbled, "Your senses are keen. Your uncle and your brother were probably involved in the great scheme long ago or even the organizer of it. Your father was very likely killed by one of them, if not the two of them together!"

"What?"

Yan Chifeng's saber suddenly shivered, and he almost lost control over the grip. There was a hint of sorrow and anger on his expressionless face, as he shouted, "Who are you exactly? What has been going on?"

"Well—"

Li Yao hesitated, as if he was considering whether or not to tell the truth to Yan Chifeng.

"Sand Scorpion, the two of us fought side by side in the battle of apocalypse. I appreciate your valiancy, and I am willing to believe you!"

Yan Chifeng sheathed his saber. He took a step forward and raised his voice. "But what can you do if I am the only one who believes you? Right now, the six tribes of Iron Plateau have gone mad, and the Burning Sun Tribe is the maddest of all! If you are still hesitating to tell me all the truth, how can I help you?

"Right now, I'm the only person that you can count on. No. You are the only person that I can count on to save Iron Plateau and resolve the conspiracy!

"The tank below our feet, although very fast, consumes high-pressure spiritual gas at an astonishing speed, too!

"Judging from the engine noises, I can tell that more than half of the storage has been used. It will run out of gas in less than twelve hours. Where are you going to run to after that?

"Were you saying that you could explain? Then explain everything to me! The two of us are going to break the trap together!"

Li Yao faltered, his lips trembling. Finally, he gritted his teeth and said, "I—I can explain to you what has happened, but I cannot tell you who I am!"

Yan Chifeng scoffed, "I know who you are. You are a space resident, aren't you?"

Li Yao suddenly retreated as if he had been bashed hard. His eyes were wide open, as he stammered, "You—you—"

Yan Chifeng sighed. "You've taken the wisdom of the Iron Plateau natives too lightly. You really think that we are ignorant barbarians? Two months ago, a space resident landed on Iron Plateau and encountered my brother. The Burning Sun Tribe sent out a lot of hands to search for him, only to never see him again as if he had melted into the desert.

"A few days later, you showed up in the Furious Bears Tribe, with mysterious backgrounds, and claiming that you'd lost your memory.

"Forget the amnesia part. The exquisite armor you made is a completely different style from those made on Iron Plateau!

"Is there a second possibility if you are not the space resident?

"Rest assured. I don't think you have any malicious schemes even if you are a space resident. The reason is simple. If you had schemes, you wouldn't have shown up in front of my brother openly and frankly, would you?"

Li Yao was silently for a long time. He gnashed, "Can I trust you?"

Yan Chifeng took another step forward. "You have to."

Li Yao took deep breath. A saber seemed to be passing by his eyes and cutting of the last bit of his hesitation.

"Alright. I'll take the risk."

Li Yao raised his head and looked at Yan Chifeng in the eyes, while he clenched his fists and announced, "Yes. As a matter of fact, I am a space resident!"

Chapter 609: Joining Hands!

Chapter 609: Joining Hands!

Yan Chifeng's eyes turned deep and dark. He squinted and said, "I don't like space residents, but I hate those more who murdered my father and involved the Burning Sun Tribe and Iron Plateau in their plot! What have you discovered exactly? Speak!"

Li Yao retracted his saber and gun, too, before he said, "It's windy up here. If you truly believe me, let's talk in the cockpit."

Yan Chifeng replied without any hesitation, "Alright."

The two of them entered the cockpit. Li Yao calmed himself down and said, "It all started with an organization named 'The Temple of Immortals' and a bunch of guys who call themselves 'Immortal Cultivators'…"

He briefly introduced the whole story within ten minutes.

Yan Chifeng furrowed his brow as he listened to the story attentively. He finally concluded, "So, the Temple of Immortals is trying to induce the Iron Plateau natives' hatred against the space residents and mislead them into thinking that the space residents are preparing to attack Iron Plateau with my father's death and Xiong Wuji's identity issue as the fuse.

"As for the space residents, the Temple of Immortals wants to infuriate the space residents with the death of the twenty hostages they hold and make them believe that Iron Plateau is a secret base of the Temple of Immortals.

"In such a way, a great war between space residents and Iron Plateau natives is bound to break out. On one hand, space residents will be mired in the swamp of war. On the other hand, Iron Plateau natives will become the perfect cannon folder who carry their own food even if space residents retreat in time."

Li Yao nodded. "That's about what happened. The twenty hostages are right behind us."

"But there's still something that I don't understand."

Yan Chifeng continued speaking after a momentary pause. "According to your theory, the Oasis Tribe is very likely to have been infiltrated by the spies of the Temple of Immortals. It might even be a fake tribe created by the Temple of Immortals.

"If the twenty hostages were already locked in the temple of the Oasis Tribe, why didn't they kill the hostages right in the Oasis Tribe instead of going all the way to the south redundantly?"

Li Yao explained, "Timing was the most critical factor.

"In the Temple of Immortal's original plan, when Chief Yan was murdered and Xiong Wuji's identity was exposed, the fury of the six tribes of Iron Plateau would definitely be raised.

"If news that the Oasis Tribe was assaulted by Cultivators came over, the six tribes would definitely gather the elite warriors and rush to reinforce them as fast as possible."

Yan Chifeng nodded. "Correct. That's exactly what we did."

"But you were two days late," Li Yao said. "The Temple of Immortals did not expect that Chief Xiong would escape, nor did they anticipate that I would steal all the most valuable trophies from the battle of the apocalypse. As a result, Furious Bears City fell into chaos. The investigation and the curfew made your arrival two later than it should.

"If you were not delayed by two days, then you would have arrived exactly when the Great Horn Exo Society was attacking the Oasis Tribe. You and them would then have engaged in a fierce battle. At that time, the Temple of Immortals would have slain the twenty hostages, and you would have become the perfect scapegoats. You would be the murderers. Every member of the Great Horn Exo Society would be a witness."

Yan Chifeng said, "What about the reality?"

Li Yao said, "The reality is that you were two days late. Few qi-trainers of Iron Plateau were in the Oasis Tribe.

"Note that Cultivators are not completely ignorant of Iron Plateau. Since they know that a lot of qi-trainers live on Iron Plateau, it's possible that they are aware of the Dark Continent, which is not under control of the six tribes.

"So, if twenty hostages were killed in the depths of the Dark Continent, the six tribes of Iron Plateau would not be necessarily related to it.

"Besides, if you were two days late, people of the Oasis Tribe alone would've been far from enough to stop the Great Horn Exo Society.

"Here's what would've happened. If they kept the hostages alive, the Great Horn Exo Society would have likely rescued them. If they killed the hostages, the Great Horn Exo Society would have no reason to fight any longer. You would never have been able to catch them when they got rid of the Oasis Tribe and returned to the space.

"Since the major conflict between Iron Plateau natives and space residents did not break out, the two parties would have several days to calm down and think. The longer they thought, the more likely they would notice something wrong. The Temple of Immortal's endeavors would all have been in vain if so!

"Therefore, the Temple of Immortals could only revise its plan. The conflict that was supposed to break out in the Oasis Tribe was set to take place on the way to the south."

Yan Chifeng took a deep, deep breath. He shuddered uncontrollably. "Horrible. This is horrible. If the plot comes true, Iron Plateau will be doomed! No. We have to stop it. What—what plan have you got?"

Li Yao said, "I was planning to take a big turn and get rid of you so that I can find the Great Horn Exo Society and explain to them first. Then, I will explain the situation to the six tribes. However…"

"It doesn't matter. I can explain to the six tribes!"

Yan Chifeng smashed his fist and promised unhesitatingly, "We will complete the task separately. You will explain everything to the space residents, and I will talk sense into the six tribes of Iron Plateau. The conflict is not to break out no matter what.

"However, well, you have indeed looted too many trophies from Furious Bears City. That was a bit out of line. Together with your identity as a space resident, it will be hard for other people to believe you!"

Li Yao smiled and said, "Don't worry about that. I'm 70% confident that I can convince other people that I'm not a space resident!"

"What?"

Yan Chifeng's eyes suddenly shone with interest. "You must be cautious. Since there are too many suspicious points about the accident, the Feathered Snakes Tribe have packed the 'Truth Cabinet' onto a heavy tank and brought it over to make sure that the important people are speaking the truth! Are you sure that you can pass the test of the Truth Cabinet?"

Li Yao hesitated and mumbled, "Fine. Who else can I trust except you? I'll tell you the truth now!

"As I said, I am a reasonably good refiner.

"When I learned of the existence of the Truth Cabinet, I read a lot of files and basically understood what its mechanism was. It is an antique from thousands of years ago anyway and is not flawless. There are many ways to bypass it."

Yan Chifeng's eyelids were jumping crazily, as he remarked, "If you are really asked to stand in the Truth Cabinet, they won't poke the complicated questions. A simple question 'are you a space resident' is enough to finish you!"

Li Yao smiled. He suddenly scratched the back of his head and seized a piece of black foil the size of a fingernail from the depths of his hair. There was no telling what it was made of, but it had been carved with dense, helical rune arrays so dexterously that it apparently far exceeded the technology level of Iron Plateau.

Yan Chifeng's pupils suddenly shrank to two needles, as he asked suspiciously, "This is—"

"The most brilliant part about the Truth Cabinet is that it can monitor soul waves as well as one's heartbeat, blood pressure, and pulse," Li Yao replied.

"With my Cultivation, it's not difficult to control my heartbeat, blood pressure, and pulse for a short while, but there's nothing I can do with soul waves!

"Therefore, I've crafted this magical equipment. If I stick it to the back of my head, I can suppress the waves of my soul as if I am in a deep sleep state. I will be able to get away from the Truth Cabinet!"

Yan Chifeng blinked in surprise. "Are you certain you can trick such delicate magical equipment?"

He was going to snatch the black foil, but Li Yao was quick enough to hide it back in his messy hair again.

Like a gambler who'd wagered all his money, Li Yao hissed, his eyes burningly red, "This is the only solution. I can only take the risk whether I'm certain or not! If the interference chip really helps me pass the examination of the Truth Cabinet, the scheme of the Temple of Immortals will fall apart immediately!"

Yan Chifeng breathed hard and said, "You're right. As long as we explain everything to our respective sides, and you fool the Truth Cabinet with your chip and prove that you are not a space resident, all the plots of the Temple of Immortals will be revealed!"

Pondering for a moment, he took out a ragged map from his pocket and opened it. "It's not going to work out if you drive forward like a headless fly.

"To carry out the Oasis Plan, many people of the Burning Sun Tribe have been exploring the Dark Continent over the past year. We are quite familiar with the terrain here.

"130 kilometers to the west is a small valley surrounded by hills that contain special magnetic stones which can block the detection of many kinds of magical equipment. Also, the valley is like a maze. You can hide yourself in the valley first.

"By my estimation, the Great Horn Exo Society will reach you earlier at their current speed. You can wait in the valley and explain the situation to them.

"When I return to the team of the six tribes, I will try my best to explain it to everyone, too. When they are all calmed down, I will bring them over to meet you!

"By then, the misunderstanding will have been eliminated, and the hostages will be safe and sound. Naturally, we will be able to stick together and fight against the great devil named the Temple of Immortals!"

"Sounds good. Let's do it!"

Li Yao altered the direction and drove toward the unknown valley that Yan Chifeng had mentioned.

As he was about to leave the tank, Yan Chifeng suddenly turned around and asked, "Sand Scorpion, you've told me so many secrets, even including the fact that you are a space resident. You wouldn't mind telling me your real name, would you?"

Li Yao smiled. "I will definitely tell you after the battle. But for now, you can still call me Sand Scorpion."

"Alright, Sand Scorpion. Just wait for me in the valley. The two of us will work together and ruin the Temple of Immortals' scheme!" declared Yan Chifeng resolutely.

Li Yao looked at him in the eye and said solemnly, "Of course, I will be waiting for you. I hope that you don't disappoint me. If we can really stop the Temple of Immortals, you will be the greatest contributor, Yan Chifeng!"

Yan Chifeng laughed in satisfaction. "I quite enjoyed myself in the temple of techniques the other day. I wondered at that time when such a great fighter as yourself emerged on Iron Plateau. I didn't know that you were a space resident! You may have a point. Iron Plateau natives and space residents are all human beings. We should be united! I hope we can practice together again after the battle if we have the chance."

Li Yao smiled. "Believe me. There will be."

"Alright. Let's move out separately and fight the enemy together!" Yan Chihuo nodded as he said that.

He jumped off the tank, soon disappearing in the raging dust.

Coldly watching the sandstorm caused by Yan Chifeng's movement disappearing on the horizon, Li Yao accelerated and rushed toward the valley Yan Chifeng pointed out without looking back.

Chapter 610: Great Horn Again!

Chapter 610: Great Horn Again!

Two hours later, Li Yao appeared in the valley Yan Chifeng talked about.

This area was full of stone pillars and ravines, and all the paths weaved and intertwined. It was indeed the perfect place to hide.

Li Yao examined the tank and noticed that half of the high-pressure spiritual gas had been drained after such a long rush. The remaining fuel was only enough to last one night.

If he were to provide impetus for the iron beast weighing dozens of tons with the spiritual gas inside his body, he would be exhausted in the next couple of hours.

He had to stop no matter what.

Booming sounds could already be heard from the carriage. The twenty hostages there were all Cultivators anyway. After more than half a day's rest, many of them had woken up. However, because of the barriers imposed on them and the veins of demon beasts which tied them up, they could do nothing except to bash the wall of the carriage.

Li Yao looked around and parked the tank in a relatively flat area within the valley. He then took out a lot of materials made of the corpses of apocalyptic beasts, most of which were solid shells with sharp edges.

Piling all the materials up nearby, he snatched the twenty writhing hostages out of the carriage and cut off the ropes on them, setting them free one by one.

The hostages had only just woken up, and their heads were quite dizzy because of the bumps of the tank. Breathing fresh air all of a sudden, they were all at a loss.

Several girls exclaimed in shock when they saw Li Yao.

Right now, Li Yao was wearing the fully-enclosed Sky Scorpion Armor, which was refined out of the shells of the apocalyptic beasts. He looked cruel and brutal, utterly not anything related to kindheartedness.

Shua!

The facial cover on the Sky Scorpion Armor moved up, revealing a pair of coldly blinking eyes. Li Yao shouted as loud as he could, "Don't be scared, everybody. You are no longer in danger. You are currently standing on Iron Plateau, and I am an Iron Plateau native!"

Everybody had managed to keep calm before he talked, but when they learned that they were on Iron Plateau, the legendary 'forbidden area for Cultivators', the faces of the young people all blanched.

They were all Cultivators, and they all knew a thing or two about the grudge between qi-trainers of Iron Plateau and Cultivators in the space.

There was no telling what would happen to them after falling into the hands of this weird-looking Iron Plateau native, but the man's armor alone seemed enough to suggest that its owner was not the most lenient person in the world!

Ignoring their fear, Li Yao went on. "I know how deep your misunderstanding about Iron Plateau is. But listen to me, all the rumors you've heard about Iron Plateau natives are false! In fact, we are kind, frank, and gentle. We are great dancers and peace-lovers, too!

"But there's no time for the useless crap now. Pick up a tool and dig your pits there!"

Li Yao suddenly changed his attitude. He sheathed his saber and raised Thunderous Roar, while he shouted angrily, "Chop-chop! Go to dig pits! This will be the ending for the lazy ones!"

He slashed his saber. The aura of his blade extended to more than ten meters and cut a giant stone in half!

The young men and women were all too scared to do anything. Coerced by the saber and the gun, they could only pick up several sharp-edged tools from among the apocalyptic beast shells and stagger over to the flat area Li Yao designated.

Some of them thought that Li Yao was asking them to dig their own graves and were quite anxious, while some other people were secretly hiding the shell inside their palm, ready to fight back desperately when must.

But Li Yao only asked them to dig pits no larger than heads. The pits were in a patterned distribution. Looking at them from above, they seemed to be constituting a weird rune array.

The hostages were all whispering to each other suspiciously, not having the faintest clue what the Iron Plateau weirdo was up to.

Li Yao had no time to bother them. He observed all the pits through Neltharion from above and was calculating the distribution of the pits crazily and modifying the crystal bombs he had taken out from his Cosmos Ring. Although he did not dig the pits himself, he was soaked in sweat, too.

Right then, Li Yao's movement came to a sudden halt. He stared at the northeast sky.

Dozens of black spots could vaguely be seen there.

The Great Horn Exo Society had arrived!

While Li Yao was thinking how he should reach out to the Great Horn Exo Society, his pupils suddenly constricted, and he sensed a sharp sting in his back. He slid toward the left with all his strength, and a series of bullets brushed past by his armor and pierced deep into the rock!

Deep inside the rock, a dull blast burst out, and stone powder spurted out from the pit.

Nice shot! The seven bullets were in different trajectories during their flight, but they were focused in a straight line when they reached the target. As a result, the seven bullets only caused one hole! Besides, the strength of the bullets was condensed and did not explode until it reached the center of the rock!

If they hit the body of a human, I fear that there would only be a tiny scar on the surface, but the internal organs of the victim would all be minced into pieces by the bullets!

The thoughts flashed in his brain briefly and did not last long because Li Yao's computational ability was focused on a certain object dashing at him from behind to his left.

By the observation of Neltharion, Li Yao found that it was an Exo in a tiger-like crystal suit!

When did two such experts join the Great Horn Exo Society?

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and searched his memories for a while, only to find no Exo of the Great Horn Exo Society similar to the two Exos in any way!

The gun expert was hiding among the rocks and stalled Li Yao with his remarkable shooting skills while the expert in the tiger-like crystal suit, who was apparently a melee fighter, took the chance to draw close and crashed at Li Yao brutally!

Li Yao sneered. Spiritual gas surged out of his body crazily. A lot of white steam popped out from the gaps of the Sky Scorpion Armor and completely concealed him. When the melee expert rushed into the range of his spiritual gas, he punched out casually!

The terrifying spiritual gas of the 80th level of the Refinement State was fully exerted!

BOOM!

After the punch, Li Yao remained where he was, but his opponent retreated almost ten footsteps back after a miserable grunt.

Li Yao immediately charged forward after the first attack. His saber drew a weird curve in the air and cut into the neck of the melee expert!

The melee expert was sweating in fear. He did not expect the weird-looking man to be so much stronger than the qi-trainers of Iron Plateau he had met previously. He raised his sword to block the slash, only to be knocked away by Li Yao's blade, which continued sweeping at his neck!

Just when the saber was about to kiss his neck, the gun expert shot another hundred bullets in graceful arcs, with some of them aimed at Li Yao's saber and some at Li Yao's critical spots.

However, all the bullets missed their target because Li Yao had vanished!

Li Yao's previous attack was a feint. Despite its shocking speed, it did not boast the corresponding strength. Li Yao had been merely trying to determine the location of the gunner.

By analyzing the trajectories of the bullets, and with the supervision of Neltharion in the sky, Li Yao soon discovered the gunner, who was crouching between two rocks, covered in a camouflage cloth that could alter its color and pattern at its master's will.

BOOM!

Li Yao raised Thunderous Roar and shot the hill behind the gunner. One explosive bullet was enough to blow half the hill off. Broken stones fell from the sky like a storm!

Caught unprepared, the gunner hurried to dash out of the crevice in case he was buried alive by the collapsing hill, only to run into Li Yao in the next moment, who was charging at him.

As a gunner, his melee combat ability was quite common. Li Yao captured him after one round, and he was unable to move anymore.

Li Yao dragged the gunner like he was dragging a chicken and laid his saber on the gap between his helmet and breastplate. Then he stomped on the ground and landed on a protruding rock after several jumps. He crouched behind the gunner and looked down at the valley like an eagle.

That was the picture that the melee expert saw when he was back to himself. He couldn't help but shout, "Lu Dian!"

Although a saber was resting on his neck, Lu Dian was not in the least fearful. He shouted back.

"Zuo Xiaohu, leave now! The man is quite strong. The two of us combined are no match for him!"

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Right then, the dozens of members of the Great Horn Exo Society all landed. Lei Dalu and Bai Kaixin were in the lead.

Seeing that Lei Dalu had taken off his helmet and showed his real face, Li Yao was somewhat relieved. However, he did not put down the saber, which was still on the gunner's neck.

The one who was held captive by Li Yao was Lu Dian, 'White-haired Gun King', who had just returned to the Great Horn Exo Society.

The melee expert who had punched against Li Yao only to be blown away, on the other hand, was Zuo Xiaohu.

In the new-born Great Horn Exo Society, other than the few experts of the previous generation such as Lei Dalu, Zuo Xiaohu and Lu Dian were among the best warriors in the group!

The two of them had ambushed the enemy but suffered such a brutal failure. The capability of the enemy was indeed terrifying.

Lei Dalu's face was quite gloomy.

Although the enemy seemed to be by himself, who knew whether or not more enemies were hiding inside the zigzagging valley?

However, the enemy captured an Exo of the Great Horn Exo Society instead of killing him. There was no telling what that was supposed to mean.

"The twenty hostages are safe and sound. They are right behind me!" Li Yao bellowed. "But qi-trainers of Iron Plateau are coming to this place from various directions!

"They are all the best warriors of the six tribes. Most of them are equivalent to Building Foundation Stage Cultivators!

"But there are only dozens of you, and I'm afraid most of you are in the Refinement Stage. Also, after the fierce battle just now, your crystal suits have been more or less damaged!

"Even if I hand over the hostages to you, you won't be able to run away!"

Finishing his speech, Li Yao threw Lu Dian off the rock precisely into Zuo Xiaohu. The two young experts rolled on the ground in a mess.

"Captain Lei, come here and let's talk!"

Lei Dalu and Bai Kaixin both reeled in shock. They had not realized that the weirdo knew Lei Dalu's name and the Great Horn Exo Society's situation so clearly!

Bai Kaixin said in a low voice, "He's right. There's smoke in all directions. According to the scouts, the new arrivals seem to boast very finely-made war machines with amazingly high speed. Their capability must be good, too, and in no way similar to the wildings that we encountered previously."

"I feel that something is wrong. My instinct tells me that we are in a trap."

Pondering for a moment, Lei Dalu jumped up and stood next to Li Yao on the rock.

"Who are you?" Lei Dalu demanded. "Do you know me?"

Li Yao opened half of his facial cover slowly. He looked at Lei Dalu with a smile, as he blinked and said softly, "It's me."

Chapter 611: Imminent Peril

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Over the three months he had spent on Iron Plateau, Li Yao had lived in the wilderness in the beginning and trained himself in the craziest ways after he reached the Furious Bears Tribe. Therefore, his looks had changed a lot.

To avoid being seen through, he had also been adjusting his facial muscles slightly day after day. After two months of hard work, he looked like a totally different person now.

At this moment, he relaxed all the muscles that he had been twisting by force and resumed his original appearance.

Lei Dalu was confused briefly. But seeing Li Yao's cunning countenance, Lei Dalu's eyes grew wider and wider, as if he had seen a ghost. "You—you—"

Li Yao lowered his voice and said, "Captain once offered me an Eight Arm Suit as a gift. You were the one who saw me off when I left the Great Horn Exo Society, too. We were chitchatting while we watched Gold Horn undergoing maintenance in the port. I remember clearly what the conversation was. Should I repeat it to convince you of my identity?"

Lei Dalu took a long breath and smiled. "That's unnecessary. It's not that I don't believe you. I was just a bit surprised. How did you end up here dressed like this?"

"You know what planet we are on as well. Do I want to get myself killed by dressing like a Cultivator? It's you who are dressing weirdly here. A bunch of fully-armed Cultivators landing on Iron Plateau and getting into conflict with Iron Plateau natives? You must feel that you've lived long enough! "Li Yao said.

Lei Dalu frowned. "Some important hostages are hidden on Iron Plateau; we're here to rescue them. But, it seems that you were faster than us!"

Li Yao waved his hand and said, "Our time is short. The main troops of Iron Plateau natives will surround us shortly. They are all elites above the 50th level of the Refinement Stage. Common low-level Building Foundation Stage Cultivators are but toys to them! I'll explain the details to you later. Right now, I only need to know two things.

"Firstly, why were you the first to come to the hostages' rescue?

"Secondly, are the Cultivators' main troops on their way to Iron Plateau?"

Lei Dalu nodded. "The hostages are all college students of Flying Star University and Heavenly Saints Institute. Their family members are mostly the pillars of the major sects and noble families. One of them is even the granddaughter of the leader of the Burning Sun Alliance! The news that they were kidnapped shook the world of Cultivators. The consequences would have been dire if the hostages were not rescued!

"Therefore, the six major sects and the various noble families have all sent their best warriors. Should the rescue mission fail, a brutal reprisal will immediately be launched!

"As for us, we were already in the Iron Plateau Space Zone. Therefore, they contacted us and asked us to try to rescue them first."

Li Yao was curious. "Why did you come to the Iron Plateau Space Zone? Besides, wasn't the Great Horn Exo Society crippled a couple of months ago? Has it been rebuilt successfully in such a short time? The new members look rather unfamiliar, but they are quite capable despite their lack of experience in combat."

Lei Dalu coughed and scratched his head. "They are all kids dismissed from the Tiger Killer Camp long ago and orphans that we fostered earlier. They've gathered and reestablished the Great Horn Exo Society since they heard that we were nearly wiped out.

"As for the reason we came to the Iron Plateau Space Zone in advance… We were here for you in the beginning."

Li Yao was dazed for a moment, but he thought everything through in the next moment. He felt his eyes were hot.

No wonder the Great Horn Exo Society was the first to appear on Iron Plateau.

Their original purpose was not to rescue the hostages but to rescue him!

Taking a long breath and calming himself down, Li Yao spoke fast. "Alright. Let's talk more later. I would rather not expose my identity at this moment. So, please give orders on behalf of me, captain. Right now, we are in a tricky situation. One step wrong, and the fire of war will be ignited and consume us all! There's only one way if we want to save our asses and resolve the conflict in front of us!"

Lei Dalu asked nervously, "What is it?"

Li Yao squinted and replied, "Digging pits!"

…

At the same time, in the periphery of the Iron Plateau Space Zone, amid the deep and boundless sea of stars, more than ten colorful exhaust flames were interweaved and extended toward the end of the cosmos.

At the front of the exhaust flames were more than ten magnificent, domineering warships!

Different battle emblems were painted on the head of the warships. Some of the battle emblems were like suns and moons, some were like rampant bears, some were giant serpents that had grown wings, and one of them was two crossed great axes.

Furious Bears Union! Burning Sun Alliance! Feathered Snakes Brotherhood! Heavenly Wolves Fortress! Silver Moon Clan! Giant Axe Hall!

The main warships of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, the strongest sects of the Flying Star Sector, had rushed to the Iron Plateau Space Zone!

Since the granddaughter of the leader of the Burning Sun Alliance had been kidnapped, 'Proud Sun', a warship of the highest level in the Burning Sun Alliance, had been sent out for the mission and served as the flagship of the fleet.

Proud Sun was a sister starship to 'Burning Sun', the commanding starship of the Burning Sun Alliance. It was not hard to imagine its formidability!

Right now, inside a meeting room on Proud Sun, more than ten members from the six major sects and the noble families were having a discussion.

A middle-aged man in the captain uniform, whose eyes were hollowed and whose hair was spotted with redness, mumbled, "There's still no news from the Great Horn Exo Society."

He was Wan Liyun, captain of Proud Sun, son of the leader of the Burning Sun Alliance, and father of Wan Hongying, who was one of the hostages!

"Iron Plateau has a complicated natural environment. Strong sources of interference are both in the atmosphere and in the planetary ring. It's hard to transmit telepathic thoughts from inside. The Great Horn Exo Society might have already rescued the hostages successfully and be on their way out of Iron Plateau!"

A Cultivator from the Furious Bears Union comforted him, although he was quite worried himself.

His blood nephew had also been imprisoned with no telling of life or death.

Wan Liyun clenched his fists hard and gnashed his teeth. "According to the intelligence we collected, Iron Plateau is very likely an important base for the Temple of Immortals. Maybe the Iron Plateau natives have colluded with Immortal Cultivators since long ago!

"If that's true, I am going to turn Iron Plateau into an ocean of flames!"

…

On Iron Plateau, in the Dark Continent, not far away from the valley where the Oasis Tribe was located, a small drill protruded out of the ground and observed the surroundings cautiously like a clever marmot.

The rod below the drill carried crystal cameras and a lot of other probe magical equipment that could search for the feeble spiritual waves nearby.

Deep below the drill, fifty meters into the underground, Sparkle was hiding in the earth silently.

"Let me take a look! Let me take a look!"

"Odd. We just sensed that a bunch of Cultivators were fighting the natives hard. Why are they gone all of a sudden?

"They must be hiding somewhere nearby. Enlarge the search area. Do not overlook the feeblest spiritual waves."

Mo Xuan and the other four spectral Cultivators had snuck onto Iron Plateau three days ago.

As a multipurpose exploration starship, Sparkle was designed for missions on planets. The best stage for it was always within the atmosphere.

Since it was an exploration starship, it was very small in size and carried much magical equipment that could help it pass through dangerous areas. After treading lightly inside the planetary ring for four days, the starship had crossed treacherous zone without being damaged at all.

The previous mission of Sparkle was to explore Boneyard, which had required it to sneak thousands of meters below ground. Therefore, the main gun of the starship was replaced by a drill of mystical rays, and a lot of magical equipment suitable for digging holes below ground had been installed, too.

Over the past two months, the five spectral Cultivators had gathered a lot of files from the Spiritual Nexus, too, and were aware that Iron Plateau was a forbidden area for Cultivators. Therefore, they did not dare fly in the sky openly. Instead, they chose to dig underground with the drill of mystic rays and kept moving in stealth mode.

One day ago, they had detected the existence of the Great Horn Exo Society and found that it was engaged in a battle with the Oasis Tribe. They were quite curious and followed the newcomers.

However, they seemed to have lost the Great Horn Exo Society.

"Professor, feeble spiritual waves are coming from southwest. But the distance is too long for us to tell whether or not they are man-made. We cannot calculate the accurate distance, either."

"What else can we do? Let's go there and check!"

"Not good. Professor, several giant sandworms are coming at us. It appears that we've dug into their nest!"

"What? Prepare to fight!"

…

DUM! DUM DUM DUM DUM!

The drumming tanks of the Giant Axe Tribe were playing exciting battle hymns that were echoing in the sky.

Thousands of the best warriors of the six tribes, riding on hundreds of tanks, were charging at the valley where Li Yao was hiding, their blood so hot that it was almost burning.

"War! War! A war against the space residents!"

"The space residents are asking to be killed now that they've trespassed on our homeland!"

In the carriage of a heavy tank, Yan Xibei, the chiefs of Giant Axe, Feathered Snakes, Silver Moon, and Heaven Wolves, and an elder from the Furious Bears Tribe, as well as Xiong Zhenzhen and Shi Meng, gathered together and listened to Yan Chifeng's speech solemnly.

Shi Meng's eyeballs were about to explode. He bashed the desk and roared, "Yan Chifeng, say again!"

"Brother Shi Meng, I'm not lying to you. Sand Scorpion is truly a space resident and a spy that his compatriots sent to monitor us!"

Yan Chifeng maintained the same poker face as before, but there was grief inside his eyes while he said seriously, "A while ago, I chased after a tank of the Burning Sun Tribe with more than ten brothers and found that the driver was exactly Sand Scorpion. He opened fire mercilessly the moment he saw us. If the knights of the Burning Sun Tribe were less skilled in racing, many of them would've been killed instantly! You are free to ask anyone who went with me. They all saw it with their own eyes!

"I was fortunate enough to dash to the bottom of the tank, escaping his attention while he was too concentrated on other people. He didn't notice my existence!

"I hid myself for a long time. He seemed to think that he had gotten rid of all the pursuers and laughed in great satisfaction. Then he started talking with the passengers on board.

"It was not until then that I learned that the everyone on the vehicle was a spy sent by the space residents to examine the terrain of Iron Plateau for the next step of their operations!

"Their plan was to hide in the valley in front of us. Other stronger Cultivators seem to be backing them up there. Also, before long, an enormous fleet of the space residents will arrive and invade Iron Plateau!"

Chapter 612: Let's Talk Nicely!

Chapter 612: Let's Talk Nicely!

"What!"

Shi Meng's face lost all color, his lips shivering, as he demanded, "Repeat every word that Sand Scorpion said. Don't leave out any!"

Yan Chifeng smiled bitterly. "Brother Shi Meng, you could've crawled to the bottom of the tank and listened yourself! Since the heavy tank floats in midair by jetting spiritual gas, the noises can be really deafening when it was rushing at a speed of hundreds of kilometers per hour with the sound of wind and that of the spurting spiritual gas combined! I only managed to eavesdrop on some of what was said by concentrating my spiritual gas in my ears. Most of the content was actually thought through by myself! It will be too much if you ask me to recite what I heard!

"I know that Sand Scorpion was a rising new star in the Furious Bears Tribe. It's perfectly normal that you cannot accept the fact that he is a spy of the space residents. However, it's very easy to prove what I said. Let's just go inside the valley and see if there are any Cultivators!

"I guarantee that a lot of fully-armed Cultivators are hiding in the valley right now!"

Shi Meng gazed at him for a long time.

Yan Chifeng's eyes were clear, his face firm. He looked as frank as anyone ever could.

Shi Meng finally lost confidence. He smashed the desk so hard that its one corner was broken off, before he cursed angrily, "Sand Scorpion! Sand Scorpion! I didn't know that you were lying to us after all! I was an idiot to have been fooled by your fancy words!"

Yan Chifeng sighed and said, "Brother Shi Meng, please don't blame yourself. It's not that we are not smart enough, but because the space residents are too cunning!

"Even I did not expect that such a distinguished warrior in the battle of the apocalypse would be a space resident!

"It was also a sign that the space residents have infiltrated Iron Plateau on a terrifying scale!

"However, if we think about the matter carefully, there are actually a lot of leads!

"You mentioned that Sand Scorpion was discovered by Wu Mayan, a space resident, in the wilderness and diagnosed with amnesia by Sha Yulan, another space resident.

"Just think about it. If Xiong Wuji, Sha Yulan, and Wu Mayan have been colluding all along, wouldn't it be more than easy for them to fake the loss of memory for their new companion?

"Right after Sand Scorpion arrived, Xiong Wuji found an 'ancient relic' and retrieved brand new structural designs of magical equipment. Was it really a coincidence?

"Sand Scorpion is an expert in magical equipment modification. The methodology and style of his refining work is completely different from Iron Plateau's traditions!

"How can you explain all that?

"When he sensed that his identity was about to be exposed, he decided to go big and stole the most valuable treasures earned in the battle of apocalypse from the warehouse. I cannot think of a second possibility if he is not a spy of the space residents!"

Yan Chifeng's continuous questioning cast the carriage into brief silence. Shi Meng was breathing faster and faster. Redness spread from his neck all the way to his face, making him look like a cooked crab.

Shi Meng and Xiong Zhenzhen looked at each other and gnashed their teeth. "Iron Bears Detonation Team and Fierce Storm Assault Team, prepare to fight!"

Chief of the Giant Axe Tribe slapped the table heavily, too. "Give my orders. Have the Giant Axe Tribe ready for battle!"

"The Silver Moon Tribe is ready for battle!"

"The Feathered Snakes Tribe is ready for battle!"

Yan Chifeng coughed and turned to Yan Xibei and said respectfully, "Uncle, shall we…"

Yan Xibei frowned deeply. His eyes shrank to the size of needles and were hidden in the darkness. He stared at Yan Chifeng for a long time, before he finally said, "The terrain here is complicated with too many ravines and hills. We must be careful not to fall into chaos during the battle.

"Bombard them with True Qi artilleries first. If Cultivators run out, strike them mercilessly!"

"Understood!"

"Understood!"

As the commands were issued, all the carriages of the heavy tanks were slowly opened. Pulled by winches and chains, True Qi artilleries more than half a meter in diameter were lifted and aimed at the valley in front one by one!

"Crystal bombs have been loaded!"

"Prepare to transmit high-pressure spiritual gas!"

"Angle and trajectory are determined!"

"Getting in the shooting range!"

Exactly at this moment, an earsplitting thunder suddenly broke out inside the valley. After an earthquake, dozens of beams of white smoke soared up to the sky and exploded!

Everybody in the carriage was shocked. Yan Chifeng almost jumped to his feet. He raised his eyebrow while he shouted, "There have indeed laid ambushes. The Cultivators have made their move first!"

Shi Meng and Xiong Zhenzhen looked at each other and left the carriage. They leapt to the top of the tank from the back.

A while later, they returned with weird expressions. There was confusion in their eyes, as they seemed unable to describe what they had seen. Dazed for a long time, they said, "Chiefs, you'd better open the cap of the carriage. There are words in the sky."

"What?"

The few chiefs looked at each other in bewilderment. Yan Chifeng was quite startled, too. He hurried to heave the ceiling of the carriage with chains so that everyone could crane their neck and observe the sky above the valley.

They saw more than ten fire balls blossoming in the sky. Somebody must've launched the crystal bombs vertically into the sky from the valley. The crystal bombs were in a patterned distribution and had been mixed with many other minerals. Exploding in midair, they were like brilliant fireworks and formed a line of enormous words.

'We surrender!'

Yan Chifeng was dumbfounded. "What is this?"

Every letter was dozens of meters long and wide. The smoke seemed to have frozen in the sky and did not disperse until a long time later. Everybody within ten kilometers was able to see them clearly.

As a result, the chiefs and elders inside the commanding tank were all stunned.

The common warriors on other vehicles were even more dumbfounded, not knowing what was going on.

Iron Plateau natives valued valiancy more than anything. It was the most despised behavior to kill the captives. Now that the opponents said that they were surrendering, they did not what to do now!

While they were hesitating, another dozen beams of white smoke rose to the sky and exploded like fireworks. The colorful smoke formed a new line.

'Let's talk nicely!'

Inside the valley, taking advantage of the time that the army of Iron Plateau natives were on the march, Li Yao had requested that everyone in the Great Horn Exo Society work together and dig hundreds of pits on the hill and flat area!

With his precisely calculation, the depth and gradient of every pit were different. As long as the crystal bombs he modified were planted in them and launched into sky by a Wolf Fang, the smoke they released would form great words in the sky!

Although the words were ugly and looked weird, they were still recognizable!

This was a means of communication that Li Yao had come up with three days ago.

The critical factor leading to the conflict between Iron Plateau natives and space residents was the failure of communication. The two parties had no opportunity to talk at all and simply fought each other the moment they met. How could the misunderstanding be resolved if so?

By the fireworks modified from crystal bombs, Li Yao was able to broadcast the messages to everyone who could see them.

"The third row, go!"

As Li Yao roared, the third row of crystal bombs rushed out and exploded in the sky. Yet another line formed from the colorful smoke.

'We are scapegoats. There is a set-up here!'

It was immediately followed by the fourth line.

'Whoever opens fire is trying to shut our mouths forever!'

The four lines of words hung in the sky. Every Iron Plateau native saw them clearly.

As a result, even the drumming of the Giant Axe Tribe was somewhat disordered.

"We are entering the shooting range of the True Qi artilleries!"

On the commanding tank, the four chiefs, the elder of the Furious Bears Tribe, Shi Meng, and Xiong Zhenzhen were all staring at Yan Xibei.

Every wrinkle on Yan Xibei's face was shining like countless cold sabers. He considered for a while and said solemnly, "Give my command. We will halt now, but keep the artilleries ready!"

Yan Chifeng opened his mouth, but he didn't know what to say despite his quick wits.

Creak!

Hundreds of armed tanks stopped outside of the valley and surrounded its entrance. The qi-trainers couldn't have been more vigilant!

A moment later, a man walked out of the valley slowly. He was wearing a heavy armor, but a saber and gun were dangling from his back. He opened his hands to show that he was carrying no weapons. His helmet had been removed, and his sharp eyes seemed to be able to flatten the tires of the heavy tanks from hundreds of meters away!

It was exactly Li Yao!

His hands up and his face peaceful, Li Yao walked toward the thousand infuriated qi-trainers one step after another all by himself!

Seeing that Li Yao appeared, the crowd was like fire that had been poured oil on. It was especially so for the Burning Sun Tribe, where countless people were already yelling.

"It's Sand Scorpion!"

"Here comes the spy of the space residents!"

"He has stolen all the most valuable trophies in the warehouse!"

"Look. His armor is made from the shells of the apocalyptic beasts, the most precious ones!"

"Shameless. That's too shameless!"

"He's in Xiong Wuji's gang. They are all spies from space. Kill him! Kill him!"

On the commanding tank, the chief of the Giant Axe Tribe observed the warriors of the Burning Sun Tribe coldly. He turned around and said to Yan Xibei, "Master Yan, please refrain your soldiers until the truth is unveiled. Even if Sand Scorpion is really a space spy, we can still find the real murderer of Chief Yan and Xiong Wuji's whereabouts from him!

"We cannot afford to be reckless and ruin the leads!"

Right then, the three lines in the above had gradually blurred, but the last few words of the last line were still persisting.

With the 'keep our mouths shut forever' hanging above their heads, the qi-trainers did not dare attack him as he approached even though they were quite outraged.

Li Yao smiled, as if the thousand angry, aggressive, and rampant qi-trainers were but meek sheep. He walked forward until he was a hundred meters away from them, before he said to everyone merrily, still keeping his hands above his head, "Greetings!"

"Sand Scorpion!"

Shi Meng was more than angry; he was the first to jump out. "That day, you swore that you were not a space resident. I didn't know that you were lying to us! Your true identity has been revealed! What tricks are you planning to play now?"

"Who says I'm a space resident? I'm not!"

Li Yao glanced through the thousand qi-trainers one by one. His countenance gradually turned resolute, while he roared, "An organization named the Temple of Immortals is behind all this. They assassinated Chief Yan and let the space residents take the blame. Their purpose is to raise a war between Iron Plateau natives and space residents so that they can take advantage!"

"Shut up!"

Yan Chifeng finally couldn't help it any longer and leapt out. Tears in his eyes, he pointed his long sword at Li Yao. "Sand Scorpion, how dare you keep arguing for yourself when the truth has been revealed!

"Let me ask you!

"Are you a space resident?

"Did you steal the previous trophies from the warehouse in Furious Bears City that countless Iron Plateau warriors died for?

"Are fully-armed Cultivators hiding in the valley behind you?

"Speak now!"

Chapter 613: Truth… Is Out?

Chapter 613: Truth… Is Out?

Seeing that Yan Chifeng lunging out like a wolf all of a sudden, Li Yao was greatly surprised. His face was paler than that of a dead person, while he pointed at Yan Chifeng and stammered, "You—you—"

"You didn't see this coming, did you, Sand Scorpion?"

With tears in his eyes, Yan Chifeng roared, "Your scheme is indeed immaculate, but the heavens were merciful enough to let me hear your confession just like it let my father learn Xiong Wuji's secret! Sand Scorpion, stop struggling. You are as much a space resident as Xiong Wuji!"

Uneasiness flashed on Li Yao's face, which was soon replaced by agitation as if he were a caged beast. He replied coarsely, "I—I'm not a space resident!"

Shi Meng strode forward, unsheathing his saber. His eyes were red as he cried, "Sand Scorpion, I said that I would be the first to kill you if you lied to me! You are not a space resident? Then how can you explain Yan Chifeng's questions?"

Li Yao was utterly overwhelmed. He swallowed and managed to answer, "I am truly not a space resident. Chief Xiong has been treating me very well like a nephew. Naturally, I believe every word he said.

"In the dungeon, Chief Xiong told me that everything was part of a plot and that the center of the plot was the Oasis Tribe. He asked me to investigate the Oasis Tribe with all that I could!

"Since I was alone and my capabilities are limited, I could only steal the tremendous Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and refine them into magical equipment!

"After I crafted a lot of magical equipment and repaired the armor on my body, I immediately headed north and happened to run into a tank of the Burning Sun Tribe on my way.

"I grew suspicious about the tank and tried to block it. However, several experts suddenly dashed out of the vehicle.

"After I defeated them, I found that twenty hostages were locked in the carriage, and they were all Cultivators!

"After that..."

Li Yao glared at Yan Chifeng and continued talking. "Yan Chifeng told me to come to this valley. Later, a hundred Cultivators arrived, too. However, they were not malicious, merely misled by the Temple of Immortals to come here to rescue the hostages!"

"Excuse me?"

Yan Chifeng was so angry that he was laughing. "Sand Scorpion, you have picked a great name. You are trying to sting me even before your own death!

"I told you to come to this place? I've never been here before. How did I know that there was a valley here?

"Besides, my father was murdered only a few days ago, and you were likely to be one of the suspects; I only hated that I couldn't skin you. Why on earth would I offer help for you escape?

"There are too many loopholes in your terrible lie!"

Li Yao blushed and shouted, "It is not a lie! I am not a space resident!"

Yan Chifeng bulged his eyes and burst into fury. "Shut up! The evidence is right here. How can you craft such exquisite armor if you are not a space resident?"

As if he were hit by a lightning, Li Yao was rigid for a long time, before he replied miserably, "It is—it is related to my background. It's personal. Please don't push me!"

Yan Chifeng sneered, "Of course it's about your background. It's not strange at all that a space residence can produce such finely-made armor!"

"Bulls*it! Bulls*it! Bulls*it!"

Li Yao was like an erupting volcano that had been suppressed for a long time. Two hot streams spurted out of his nostrils, while spiritual gas was circling him and sweeping sand and dust!

He pointed at Yan Chifeng's nose and yelled, "Yan Chifeng, this is all your trap. You are framing me up! I am an out-and-out warrior of Iron Plateau. I'm not a space resident. Definitely not!

"It's the greatest disgrace for a man of Iron Plateau to be vilified for a rat from space!

"Yan Chifeng, you are discrediting me. I... I'm challenging you to a duel!"

Li Yao was going to jump at Yan Chifeng, when Shi Meng and Xiong Zhenzhen strode forward and blocked him in advance. They both aimed their blades at Li Yao.

The hundreds of qi-trainers also pointed their guns at Li Yao.

Shi Meng shrieked, "Stop there! One step closer, and you will be immediately minced into pieces!"

Yan Chifeng took a few steps back and screamed, "Sand Scorpion, on any other occasion, I would definitely accept your duel and avenge my father in person!

"But right now, don't even think about messing things up in such a way. We are not going to be fooled!"

Li Yao was so anxious that he was sweating hard. He was waving his hands desperately like someone about to be drowned, while he shouted at Shi Meng and Xiong Zhenzhen, "I'm truly innocent! Believe me! I'm not a space resident!"

"Enough!"

The chief of the Giant Axe Tribe suddenly roared on the heavy tank and almost deafened everyone on the spot.

"Sand Scorpion, you said that you were not a space resident and that Yan Chifeng is framing you. We cannot determine the validity of your words in the haste.

"Thankfully, before we moved north, we foresaw such scenarios!

"Do you dare to prove your identity in the Truth Cabinet?"

Li Yao changed his face color greatly when he heard 'Truth Cabinet'. He scratched the back of his head subconsciously while he replied restlessly, "Going to the Truth Cabinet is the biggest insult for a warrior of Iron Plateau. Why do I have to go to the Truth Cabinet?"

Hearing his words, everybody was whispering to each other. Shi Meng and Xiong Zhenzhen were even more disappointed.

Yan Chifeng laughed. "Sand Scorpion, cut your useless excuses. You don't dare go to the Truth Cabinet at all because your true face will be unveiled when you are there!"

Chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe stood up on the commanding tank and shrieked, "Sand Scorpion, we all agree that going into the Truth Cabinet is an insult, which equals to saying that we don't believe the charged. However, the issue at hand is of paramount importance. We can only assume that you are a spy from space if you are not willing to go to the Truth Cabinet!

"A few days ago, in order to push Xiong Wuji to go to the Truth Cabinet, the five tribes proposed quite a lot of compensations. Today, as the chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe, I promise you that the conditions are still valid if you prove your innocence in the Truth Cabinet!

"As long as you prove that you are not a space resident and you were framed by somebody else, the portion of the trophies belonging to the Feathered Snakes Tribe that you stole will be considered our gift. Moreover, you will be an honorable guest in the Feathered Snakes Tribe anytime!

"Same goes for the Giant Axe Tribe!"

"Same goes for the Heaven Wolves Tribe!"

"Same goes for the Silver Moon Tribe!"

While talking, the qi-trainers drew close to Li Yao and gradually surrounded him.

Oppressed by the intimidating aura, Li Yao was speechless for a long time. He suddenly pointed at Yan Chifeng and said, "If the Truth Cabinet is a must, why am I the only person asked to do the test?

"Yan Chifeng has accused me of being a spy from space. However, I say that he is an agent of the Temple of Immortals! We should go to the Truth Cabinet together!"

Yan Chifeng had known that he might have such demands. He said unhesitatingly, "Sand Scorpion, I didn't expect you to be so insane. Not only did you murder my father, you are also trying to blame me for it?

"Alright! As long as you prove yourself to be not a space resident first, what harm is there if I have to do the test myself?"

The chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe waved her hands. "Someone! Deliver the Truth Cabinet here!"

Wu—

Lengthy horns echoed in the Feathered Snakes Tribe as a special heavy tank drove out of the formation slowly.

Eight muscular men were pulling enormous chains from the two sides of the tank. They exerted all their strength, and veins were bulging out all over their body, before they finally managed to open the carriage.

Inside was a weirdly-shaped cabinet.

The cabinet was supported by four copper pillars on which countless shocking patterns were carved.

The patterns were pictures where people of different ages and genders were cutting out their hearts from their chest and murmuring something to the organs. It was both terrible and eccentric.

Behind the cabinet was a black iron chair. The back of the chair was a hat that had been embedded with countless crystals. It was connected to the Truth Cabinet via hundreds of zigzagging crystal wires.

On the front side of the Truth Cabinet, two words in a vintage style, one on the left and the other on the right, were written, which were 'True' and 'False'.

Then, another four heavy tanks drove forward slowly. The eight muscular men connected several thick tubes to the Truth Cabinet.

The four heavy tanks were fully loaded with high-purity crystals to provide sufficient energy for the Truth Cabinet to function normally.

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and observed. The 'Truth Cabinet' seemed to be piled up by two pieces of magical equipment that were in completely different styles.

On the outside, it was full of gears, chains, rivets, and other crude components from which spiritual gas was spurting out nonstop.

At the center of the Truth Cabinet, through the gaps between the gears and the chains, however, Li Yao could see the core of the magical equipment, which was translucent and seemed to be made of jade. It was floating slowly in midair, releasing a mysterious aura.

Like a weird eye, it seemed to be piercing through his heart directly.

In the bottom-left corner of the Truth Cabinet was a rusted sign that had already been worn out after thousands of years of erosion.

Li Yao maximized his sight and distinguished a few words on it.

"Special Polygraph of the No.[--] Fleet of the Star Ocean Imperium!"

Li Yao suddenly figured out that the core of the Truth Cabinet was a polygraph of the Star Ocean Imperium from ten thousand years ago. No wonder it required so much energy to be activated and even the Cultivators could not fool it.

"Sand Scorpion, please go into the Truth Cabinet!" shouted the chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe.

Li Yao nodded his head and strode forward.

Yan Chifeng suddenly interjected, "Wait. Space residents all have uncanny gadgets. He might have magical equipment that can bypass the Truth Cabinet. Search him first!"

The chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe nodded. Two gold snakes suddenly crawled out of her colorful robe and slithered toward Li Yao, as she said, "Sand Scorpion, do forgive me!"

Li Yao scowled. He adjusted his armor and allowed the snakes to creep in.

Yan Chifeng said again, "The Truth Cabinet mainly targets the head. His hair must be carefully examined."

The chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe glanced at him but didn't say anything. The two gold snakes crawled into Li Yao's hair and searched for a long time, only to find nothing.

The chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe nodded her head. "Other than his weapons, Sand Scorpion does not carry any special magical equipment."

Yan Chifeng rolled his eyes, but he did not question the result. He simply remarked, "Alright. Now that the chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe has examined him in person, it should be all good!"

Li Yao sniffed and leapt onto the Truth Cabinet. He looked down at everybody, with a smile of victory curling on his lips, before he shouted, "You will soon believe that I am truly not a space resident."

"Sand Scorpion!"

The chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe said, "If you are indeed not lying, just declare in front of thousands of compatriots of Iron Plateau through the Truth Cabinet that you are an Iron Plateau native!

"If the Truth Cabined proves that you are telling the truth, the Feathered Snakes Tribe will believe your story!"

Chapter 614: Tell You… Honestly?

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The smile on Li Yao's lips instantly froze. A drop of cold sweat rolled down to the tip of his nose.

"Sand Scorpion, I'm confused right now. Just announce that you are an Iron Plateau native on the Truth Cabinet!"

Shi Meng shouted, "As long as you prove your innocence, the Furious Bears Tribe will support you to the end until there are none of us left!"

"Yes! If you pass the test of the Truth Cabinet and prove yourself to be an Iron Plateau native, the Giant Axe Tribe will believe every word you said, too!"

"Same goes for the Silver Moon Tribe!"

"Same goes for the Heaven Wolves Tribe!"

The elite warriors of the six tribes all started shouting.

Two priests of the Feathered Snakes Tribe in colorful clothing made of feathers leapt onto the Truth Cabinet. They operated on the magical equipment and gestured for Li Yao to proceed. "Please!"

Li Yao raised his head and looked at the yellow sky. He took a long, deep breath. Ten thousand thoughts were rolling through his mind.

Should I take the risk with a homophone? After all, 'Grand Plateau' and 'Iron Plateau' sound similar. If I say 'I'm a Grand Plateau native', I might be able to fool the Truth Cabinet!

But Li Yao immediately dismissed the idea.

It was a horrible plan. The core of the Truth Cabinet was a military polygraph from the Star Ocean Imperium that monitored the soul of the charged directly. How could it be conned by such petty tricks like homophones?

Li Yao quickly thought of many things. Finally, he clenched his fists and said with much hesitation, "I—I can't say that!"

"What!" Shi Meng gasped. "You still daren't? You are not an Iron Plateau native?"

The chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe furrowed her brow and cawed like a crow, "Are you admitting that you are not an Iron Plateau native?"

Yan Chifeng tried to hold back the joy in his eyes, while he said coldly, "Of course, he is not an Iron Plateau native. I said he was a space spy long ago!"

"It's not like that!"

Veins were bulging on his forehead, and resentment seemed to be pouring out of his eyes as tears. He waved his hands and shouted desperately, "I—I don't know whether or not I am a real Iron Plateau native. It is also the biggest secret about myself!

"But I am absolutely certain that I am definitely not a space resident!"

The chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe was curious. "You are either a space resident or an Iron Plateau native. What do you mean by saying that you don't know whether or not you are a real Iron Plateau native?"

Everybody stared at Li Yao who was struggling in pain. There was grief in his anger and loneliness in his grief.

For a moment, he did not seem to belong to this world. While smiling bittering, he replied, "Everyone, especially brothers from the Furious Bears Tribe, I'm truly sorry!

"There are many things that I haven't confessed to you yet. There's indeed a great secret buried inside my body that makes me unclear who I am!

"I once thought that, as long as I fought side by side with everybody against the apocalypse like a real warrior of Iron Plateau would, I would be acknowledged by everybody and regarded as a real Iron Plateau native!

"Hehe. I was wrong. Very wrong!

"Whatever I do, however many apocalyptic beasts I slay, however much blood I shed… I'm afraid I will never become a real Iron Plateau native! Never!"

"But I swear that I am not a space resident. Definitely not!"

Shi Meng was baffled. He strode forward and cried, "Sand Scorpion, what are you talking about? I don't understand! What's your secret? Just tell us!"

Li Yao smiled miserably. His body was shaking so hard that he seemed like he would fall out of the Truth Cabinet at any point.

The previous speech seemed to have drained him. He shook his head and murmured, "It will be useless. Whatever I say right now, nobody will believe me. You will only consider me to be a liar!

"Hehe. It's not your fault but mine. There are too many suspicious points about me to be washed away by the bit of blood I spilled in the battle of apocalypse!"

His words rendered everyone bewildered. Many qi-trainers thought of Li Yao's brutal performance in the battle of apocalypse and lowered their heads while they thought to themselves, Have we really wronged him? Does he really have something personal that he would rather not tell?

The chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe said solemnly, "Sand Scorpion, stop delaying. After all, you are either a space resident or an Iron Plateau native! Since you said that you did not know whether or not you are a real Iron Plateau native due to private reasons, then just sit on the chair and state 'I am not a space resident'. It will be the same!

"If the Truth Cabinet proves that you are speaking the truth, you can tell us your identity and background then. Everybody will believe you after that, won't we?"

Hearing that, many qi-trainers nodded their heads in approval.

"Indeed. You are either a space resident or an Iron Plateau native. Prove that you are not a space resident first. Then you can tell us where you come from. Even the longest and the most sophisticated story has a beginning and an ending!"

"Yes. Prove that you are not a space resident first. Let's talk about the rest later!"

Yan Chifeng frowned in silence. He felt that something was wrong, but he failed to determine where the loophole was.

Li Yao sniffed and said, tears in his eyes, "Alright. Thank you for giving me this opportunity. After I prove that I am indeed not a space resident, I will share my background and secrets with you, and you will be judges to decide whether or not I am a real Iron Plateau native!"

Then, Li Yao seated himself on the iron black chair unhesitatingly. The two priests of the Feathered Snakes Tribe put on his head the hat embedded with dozens of crystals and carved with countless rune arrays, before they fixed it with belts.

The chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe declared slowly and solemnly, "The Truth Cabinet… is now activated!"

After a while of humming sounds, the four thick tubes connected to other heavy tanks were dancing up and down as if they were alive.

Immense spiritual energy flooded into the Truth Cabinet unstoppably. The gears and chains started spinning rapidly. Hot steam popped out from the exhaust tubes, wreathing the entire Truth Cabinet in an ocean of fog. Li Yao, who was sitting on top of it, looked like a deity!

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Rune arrays inside the hat were illuminated one after another brilliantly, as if half a sun was covering Li Yao's head!

Li Yao was seeing all kinds of hallucinations. The whole world turned into chaos. The desert and the qi-trainers were all gone. The only thing in the entire universe was a lonely, monolithic eye that was gazing at him without blinking!

The stare of the eye seemed to be piercing through his flesh and his brain deep into the center of his soul!

Li Yao shuddered. He felt that the eye had become a weird hand that was touching the deepest part of his soul coldly.

Vaguely, he heard the chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe shout, "Sand Scorpion, you may speak now!"

Trying to hold back the discomfort inside his soul, Li Yao clenched his fists and sat straight, while he roared without any hesitation, "I am not a space resident!"

BAM! BAM!

Complicated mechanical noises echoed inside the Truth Cabinet. The central component that was the polygraph was fully functioning and releasing spiritual waves in ripples nonstop.

There was nothing but silence on the spot. Everybody focused their eyes on the 'True' and 'False' in front of the Truth Cabinet.

Although Yan Chifeng was quite certain of the result, he couldn't help but bulge his eyes, his hands shaking.

A moment later—

Shua!

The left side of the Truth Cabined suddenly glittered in green. The word 'True' was shining brightly, the glow of which reached almost ten meters away and formed an identical word in the air!

"It's true!"

The chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe exclaimed, "He is speaking the truth. He is not a space resident!"

"Marvelous!"

Shi Meng, Xiong Zhenzhen, and the other qi-trainers of the Furious Bears Tribe were dazed briefly, before they were so overjoyed that they were almost jumping. "Sand Scorpion is not a space resident!"

"Not a space resident?"

"Sand Scorpion is truly not a space resident?"

"What is going on? Was Yan Chifeng lying? He couldn't be! What was he lying for?"

The qi-trainers of the other tribes were all whispering to each other in confusion. Those from the Burning Sun Tribe were all scratching their faces, dumbfounded.

Yan Chifeng was wearing such an absurd expression as if Li Yao had kicked his nose to the back of his head. He was absolutely stunned and was about to dig his own eyeballs out. In bafflement, he mumbled, "How is that possible?"

Li Yao took off his hat. He rose up suddenly and stared down at Yan Chifeng, while he bashed his chest and shouted, "Yan Chifeng, I've proven myself to not be a space resident through the Truth Cabinet. What else have you got?"

"It's impossible. Definitely impossible!"

Yan Chifeng was utterly confused. He took a few steps back, his eyes shuddering nonstop. Then he shrieked, "You must have fooled the Truth Cabinet with your magical equipment. Otherwise, everything will be inexplicable! Where—where are you from? Why did you say that you were unclear whether or not you were a real Iron Plateau native just now? From whom did you learn such sophisticated armor-making technology?"

Li Yao eyed him coldly as if he was a pig about to be butchered, while he replied casually, "The chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe personally checked just now and made sure that I did not carry any special magical equipment. If you are not assured, you can examine me yourself, and I'll do the test again!"

"That will be unnecessary!"

The face of the chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe was extremely awful. She glared at Yan Chifeng and said, "For thousands of years, the Truth Cabinet has been protected and operated by the Feathered Snakes Tribe. It is our greatest glory and responsibility!

"If I've examined the charged and said he is okay, he is okay. Anyone who thinks that he is not okay is indicating that they don't trust the Feathered Snakes Tribe. Is that the case?"

Yan Chifeng's face was pale. He stammered, "Chief, I didn't mean that. But Sand Scorpion's backgrounds are too mysterious. We must get to the bottom of it!"

Li Yao signed and said, gritting his teeth, "This is the biggest secret of my life. I wasn't going to tell it even if I was to be killed. But today, with everything reaching this point and a great plot looming ahead of us, I see no other options except to tell the truth!

"But I wonder, is everybody willing to believe me now?"

"Of course!"

Shi Meng was the first to jump out. He roared, "Now that you've passed the test of the Truth Cabinet and proved that you are not a space resident, what else can they say? The Furious Bears Tribe definitely believes you!"

"Yes."

The chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe said, "As guardians of the Truth Cabinet, the Feathered Snakes Tribe absolutely respects the test result of the Truth Cabinet. Our promise is still valid. Sand Scorpion, you are now the most honorable guest of the Feathered Snakes Tribe. We definitely believe you!"

The qi-trainers of the other tribes were also nodding their heads. Many of them realized that they'd misunderstood Li Yao and lowered their heads in embarrassment.

"Alright!"

Moved, Li Yao continued, "Now, please listen to the story of my life and decide whether or not I am a real Iron Plateau native!

"Brother Shi Meng, I'm terribly sorry. I've indeed lied to you about many things!

"More than a month ago, when I just arrived in the Furious Bears Tribe, I lost my memory briefly because of the poison of the Emperor Sand Scorpions. That is true!

"However, my body was very sturdy, and the poison did not paralyze my brain for long. A few days later, flashbacks of my previous life started occurring to me!

"Like a blind man groping to know the shape of an elephant, I picked up the episodes of my past bit by bit. With the common sense and knowledge that I learned in the Furious Bears Tribe, I sorted through everything and finally found my past!

"As it turns out, I… I..."

Li Yao's chest was heaving, up and down. He took multiple breaths and finally made up his mind and declared, "As it turns out, it is very likely that I was raised by a space resident!"

Chapter 615: Mysterious Origin

Chapter 615: Mysterious Origin

His words turned the qi-trainers into a frozen ocean. It was not until three seconds later that gasps came over. Shi Meng was the most dumbfounded of all. He pointed at Li Yao and said, "Sand Scorpion, you—you—"

Li Yao closed his eyes, as if he was recalling the past from long ago. He said, "I grew up in a very cruel dark world where the strong prey on the weak. I was an orphan and did not know who my parents were or where I came from. I could only struggle to survive in the world of darkness like a wildling!

"World of darkness? Wildling?"

Shi Meng thought for a while, and his eyes immediately bulged. "Brother Sand Scorpion, are you a wilding from the Dark Continent? It's impossible! The natural environment of the Dark Continent is too harsh to support civilization. The human beings there have all retrograded into ignorant animals.

"Even the relatively intelligent wildings such as those in the Oasis Tribe are still quite underdeveloped. They can never talk as sensibly as you and grasp such brilliant armor technology!"

"Indeed!"

Yan Chifeng said maliciously, "Your accent is apparent different from the Iron Plateau natives. Chances are that it is the space natives' accent!"

Li Yao sighed and said slowly, "I do not know whether or not I was a wilding on the Dark Continent. I only know that I used to live like an unwitty animal and struggle in the Dark Continent until I met a heavily wounded weird man who was wearing a ragged false skin that I had never seen before.

"I didn't know that the false skin was called 'clothes' until a long time later.

"The weird man did not seem to be a local but more like a traveler from a foreign land or even a foreign space zone. He was in possession of very strange knowledge and techniques. He raised me and taught me a lot of things, including magical equipment knowledge that was entirely different from the traditions of Iron Plateau!"

Shi Meng's eyes suddenly shone. He smashed his fist and said, "Are you saying that a space resident was forced to land on the Dark Continent and taught you advanced techniques including the magical equipment skills after he found you by accident?"

Li Yao nodded and then shook his head. "It was basically the case, but I am not sure whether or not he is a space resident, because he never told me where he was from!

"Then someday, he vanished. He is probably dead. In the world of darkness, accidents and deaths couldn't be more normal.

"So, I left my home and reached the nearby of the Furious Bears Tribe after various obstacles. I happened to run into

Wu Mayan, who was fighting Emperor Sand Scorpions. You all know what happened later."

Shi Meng nodded quickly. "That explained a lot. So to speak, your amazing capability and sophisticated armor crafting skills can be traced now.

"Since the space resident could for live such a long time in the Dark Continent, he must have been an expert in space. It is not strange that he taught you so many brilliant techniques. But why didn't you tell us earlier?"

Li Yao smiled bitterly. "I was new to this place and unfamiliar with everybody. How could I dare to say things like that? As it happened, I was diagnosed with amnesia because of the Emperor Sand Scorpions. So, I simply pretended that my memory was lost.

"Later, I gradually assimilated into the Furious Bears Tribe. However, I soon learned about the discord between space residents and Iron Plateau natives and figured out that my foster father was likely from somewhere else. Besides, I also knew a lot of techniques that did not belong to Iron Plateau!

"After living in solitude all my life, I quite enjoyed the Furious Bears Tribe's ambience with so many beings of my own kind around me. I considered myself to be a member of the Furious Bears Tribe, too!

"I feared that I would be banished from the Furious Bears Tribe and end up in the desert by myself again after I told anyone my secret. How could I tell such a story to you?"

Shi Meng opened his mouth but did not come up with anything after thinking for a long time. He lowered his voice, somewhat in embarrassment, and said, "Brother Sand

Scorpion, you were overthinking. The Furious Bears Tribe is not—not—"

Li Yao continued, "Your guess is correct. In fact, the structure designs that Chief Xiong found were all authored by me. But I meant no harm for you at all. I merely wanted to fight against the apocalypse side by side with you!"

Shi Meng and Xiong Zhenzhen both exclaimed in shock.

The qi-trainers of other tribes were greatly interested, too.

In the battle of apocalypse, the new weapons of the Fierce Storm Assault Team and the Iron Bears Detonation Team had left a deep impression on them. They did not know that the designer of the weapons was standing right before them!

The man was indeed of high value!

Li Yao went on. "Since my foster father was likely a space resident, after Chief Xiong's birth was revealed, I did not grow suspicious of him. Instead, I found him closer to me than before. That is why I visited him in the dungeon without concerns.

"He said that he was set up and that there was a great plot behind all this; I believed him. That was the reason I looted the warehouse of materials and went all the way to the north!

"That is my background. My foster father is probably not an Iron Plateau native, and I do have knowledge that could not be found elsewhere on Iron Plateau. Just now on the Truth Cabinet, I was too unconfident to say I was 'a real Iron Plateau native'! Everyone, please decide. If you think that I can't be counted as an Iron Plateau native, I'll have no defense!"

Everybody was silent.

If what he said was true, there was really no way they could blame Sand Scorpion. His birth parents were possibly wildings in the Dark Continent. However, wildings lived on Iron Plateau, too!

The chief of the Giant Axe Tribe looked at him with sharp eyes and asked solemnly, "Sand Scorpion, since you mentioned that you once lived with your foster father in the Dark Continent, do you still remember where your residence was?"

Li Yao thought for a moment and replied, "There are no landmarks on the desert, and it's troublesome to recognize locations. However, I remember that I spent my last few years in a mountain cave that was very flat. The top of the mountain was like a desk, so I called it 'Desk Mountain'.

"Also, there were two rivers on the east side of Desk Mountain. The two rivers were quite weird. They were so close to each other as if somebody had torn one river into two halves."

"Twin Dragons River!" a qi-trainer of the Feathered Snakes Tribe shouted. "He's talking about Twin Dragons River! We saw the two rivers before when we were exploring the Dark Continent. There was quite a heated discussion back then!"

Li Yao said again, "There was an enormous stone arch at the foot of Desk Mountain. The cave I lived in was near the stone arch."

The chief of the Giant Axe Tribe nodded and said seriously, "Alright. We'll ask somebody to investigate Twin Dragons River after everything is over. It will be very easy to determine whether or not somebody lived there long ago!"

"What's the investigation for?" Shi Meng bellowed angrily. "Sand Scorpion has told us such a big secret. Do you still not believe him? Either way, the Furious Bears Tribe fully trusts his words. Sand Scorpion is a warrior of the Furious Bears Tribe. Always will be!"

"Investigation is indeed unnecessary."

Yan Chifeng strode forward. His eyes were bloodshot, and he was breathing heavily. "Don't be tricked, everybody! This guy is cunning and sleazy. He must've prepared in the Twin Dragons River! For—for some reason, he fooled the Truth Cabinet just now and gained your trust. Naturally, he can say whatever he wants now and tell the biggest lies in the world!"

Li Yao's eyes were deep and dark. Endless fury was brewing inside his eyes, like a seemingly tranquil ocean before a storm.

Silently, he unsheathed his saber all of a sudden and slashed at his head.

Everybody exclaimed in shock, only to find that Li Yao's messy hair was flying in the wind. He turned bald after a few seconds.

Li Yao lowered his head and slapped it, showing it to everybody. He then demanded, "Everybody, Yan Chifeng insisted that I resorted to tricks just now. Please take a look. Do I have anything on my head?"

Yan Chifeng sneered, "There is nothing right now, but there might've been. Go to the Truth Cabinet again, I dare you!"

Li Yao smiled casually. Beyond everyone's expectation, he turned around and sat back to the iron black chair, before he placed the hat on his bald head quickly.

Yan Chifeng was dumbfounded, and so were all the other qi-trainers. Shi Meng was stomping his feet. "Sand Scorpion, going to the Truth Cabinet is the biggest insult for a warrior of Iron Plateau. You've proved your innocence. You don't need to do it again!"

Then, he glared at Yan Chifeng. "What's the meaning of this? You cannot stop distrusting him, can you? Do you think you can slur a warrior of the Furious Bears Tribe repeatedly?"

The chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe shrieked, "Sand Scorpion, the Truth Cabinet pries into one's soul directly. Continuous usage will deal tremendous damage to your mind! We believe you. Just get down!"

Looking around, Li Yao shook his head firmly. He said, "Yan Chifeng's suspicions are not entirely groundless. My background is indeed too unbelievable. I know that many people still have doubts. Come on. Prove my innocence with the Truth Cabinet!"

"He's being pretentious!"

His eyes blood-red, Yan Chifeng was like a gambler that had wagered all his chips in a game. He waved his arms crazily and shouted, "He knows full well that you will not run the test on him again. He is just bluffing!"

Li Yao glared and said, "Come on. Come on. Do you want me to live the rest of my life with other people's doubts?"

The chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe hesitated for a while. She exchanged a look with the chief of the Giant Axe Tribe and glanced at the seething crowd. Finally, she gritted her teeth and commanded, "Activate the Truth Cabinet!"

Hum! Hum!

Overwhelming spiritual energy flooded into the Truth Cabinet. Li Yao was surrounded by mystic rays and white steam, and a dazzling sun rose up on his head again.

The chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe said solemnly, "Sand Scorpion, you may begin. Tell us your background!"

Trying to hold back the coldness to the bones, Li Yao shouted, "I was an orphan. I did not have parents. I grew up in a cruel, dark world!"

After a series of mechanical sounds inside the Truth Cabinet, the greenness on the left suddenly bloomed. The word 'True' gradually appeared!

"It's true! It's true!" everybody in the Furious Bears Tribe roared. Many other qi-trainers from the Silver Moon Tribe and the Heaven Wolves Tribe were echoing, too.

Gritting his teeth, Li Yao continued. "I was raised by a mysterious man. He was probably from a foreign world. He was definitely not an Iron Plateau native!"

The world 'True' popped up again.

People from the Giant Axe Tribe and the Feathered Snakes Tribe were all cheering for him.

"He taught me a lot of knowledge regarding the maintenance and creation of magical equipment, but the knowledge was entirely different from the traditional knowledge of Iron Plateau!"

'True'!

This time, even some qi-trainers of the Burning Sun Tribe were applauding him.

"Because of the profound knowledge in my brain that does not belong to Iron Plateau, I don't think I am a proper Iron Plateau native. However, in any case, I am definitely not a space resident! "

'True'!

"Pu!"

As if his soul was exhausted, Li Yao vomited a mouthful of blood. He couldn't hold it any longer and fell off from the iron black chair.

"Enough! Stop!" shouted the chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe.

The qi-trainers were all simmering with joy.

"It's true. Sand Scorpion was telling the truth. He did not lie to us!"

On one of his knees, Li Yao threw away the hat on his head. He did not wipe the blood on his lips, and his face was extremely pale. But he still managed to gaze at Yan Chifeng with a vague smile and say, "Now what?"

Chapter 616: One Question!

Chapter 616: One Question!

Like a hungry wolf that had fallen into a trap, Yan Chifeng had cold droplets of sweat the size of beans all over his face. Killing intent was blinking inside his eyes, as he couldn't wait to cut Li Yao into thousands of pieces.

However, the chief of the Giant Axe Tribe and the chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe had stopped beside the Truth Cabinet. Their cold eyes were like an iron fence that blocked his route of attack.

Yan Chifeng gulped and noticed that there was nothing but dead silence around him.

Raising his head, he found that the qi-trainers of the other five tribes were all eyeing the Burning Sun Tribe coldly and that most of the qi-trainers of the Burning Sun Tribe were eyeing himself coldly and expressionlessly.

"Brother—"

Sitting next to Yan Xibei, Yan Chihuo was gloomy. Veins were bulging from his right hand as he clenched his saber hard. He gnashed his teeth and said with suspicion, "Brother, you said that you heard Sand Scorpion admitting that he was a space resident yourself, right?"

Even more cold sweat appeared on Yan Chifeng's face. He felt as if somebody had poured a bucket of cold water on his head. Looking at Li Yao and then at his brother and uncle, he roared like an animal, "Are you insane? You choose to believe an outsider instead of me?

"I—I—I know it now!

"You have all been fooled by him. Even I was fooled by him. Back in the tank, he pretended that he had not discovered me and said that lie on purpose to mislead me!

"Besides, even if he is not a space resident, he can still work as a spy for the space residents! Anyway, a lot of fully-armed Cultivators are indeed hiding inside the valley. You must trust me!

"Sand Scorpion! You were not speaking the whole truth, because it was only part of the story. If you are confident, I'll raise questions for you, and you will answer 'yes' or 'no'. That's the only precise way to determine the validity of your story!"

Upon hearing his words, the qi-trainers from the other five tribes all started booing him. Even his many companions in the Burning Sun Tribe were showing despise.

Credibility was highly valued on Iron Plateau. Sand Scorpion had proved his identity through the Truth Cabinet many times. Yet, Yan Chifeng was still harassing him. He had clearly crossed the line.

The chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe's eyes shined coldly. She was about to speak when Li Yao interjected in advance and said while coughing, "Yan Chifeng, everything I said is true, and I am not scared of your questions. You can run tests however you want!

"However, I've passed the test many times in the Truth Cabinet. It's only reasonable that you have your turn now!

"You say that I'm a spy from space, but I say that you are an agent of the Temple of Immortals. I have done two rounds of tests now. Do you dare come here and have a go?

"As long as you can pass the test of the Truth Cabinet, I'll do one more round of tests for you!"

"Well—"

Yan Chifeng's face was pale, his sweat pouring down. He was shaking his eyes erratically.

The qi-trainers of the other five tribes, seeing his hesitation, all squinted and whispered to each other more and more loudly.

"Ah Feng!"

Gazing at Yan Chifeng, Yan Xibei sighed and said, "With everything coming this far, for the honor of the Burning Sun Tribe, to find out the truth of Zhengdong's murder, and for the future of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, just go to the Truth Cabinet and prove your innocence!"

"Uncle—"

Yan Chifeng's face twisted. He was about to argue, when he found that, not only were the experts of the other five tribes pointing their blades at him, even many people of the Burning Sun Tribe, including his own brother, Yan Chihuo, were more vigilant than before and seemed to consider him an enemy!

Yan Chifeng bit his lips hard, regretting that he couldn't mince the wretched Sand Scorpion into pieces. He calmed himself down and said loudly, "Alright. I've done nothing wrong. What harm is there to go to the Truth Cabinet?

"I am definitely not a member of the Temple of Immortals. The Truth Cabinet can test me however it wants about that!

"When the Truth Cabinet proves that I am speaking the truth, Sand Scorpion, I will ask you several questions that are going to rip apart your mask!"

Yan Chifeng sniffed and walked toward the Truth Cabinet with his head held high.

"Wait!"

Li Yao suddenly rose up. Wiping the blood on the corner of his lips, he said, "Chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe, and everybody else, I know a lot more about the scheme than you do. Chief Xiong has also informed me of his suspicions, too. To ensure the accuracy of the test, can I propose a question and ask Yan Chifeng to answer it?"

The four chiefs, Yan Xibei, and the elder from the Furious Bears Tribe discussed for a while, before the chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe replied, "Why don't you tell us what your question is first?"

Yan Chifeng shrieked, "He is definitely going to set up a trap in his question!"

Li Yao sneered, "Rest assured. The question that I propose will be heard by everybody. They will be able to tell whether or not there are traps in it!

"Yan Chifeng, you said that you are not a member of the Temple of Immortals. I definitely believe that!

"Since you knew about the existence of such a tool as marvelous as the 'Truth Cabinet' from the beginning, you must've made thorough plans to cope with it.

"It's possible that you indeed did not join the Temple of Immortals. You merely contacted each other and made clandestine deals. For example, you would provide cannon fodder for the Temple of Immortals, and the Temple of Immortals would make you king of Iron Plateau, or give you certain Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures that could help you break into a higher level.

"It's also possible that you'd never heard the name of the Temple of Immortals before and you address each other using pseudonyms. For example, 'Organization A' or 'Temple of the Undying'. If you are in fact a member of the Temple of the Undying, it is of course true that you are not a member of the Temple of Immortals!

"Let's say the Truth Cabinet detects that you've heard of the Temple of Immortals before. You can always argue that certain spies from the Temple of Immortals that infiltrated the Burning Sun Tribe mentioned it to you before. You'd completely forgotten it, but the memory had been etched to your soul. It's perfectly reasonable!"

Yan Chifeng couldn't help but sneer, "You are indeed considerate. It appears that, even if the Truth Cabinet proves that I don't belong to the Temple of Immortals, it won't help anything?"

"No, it won't," Li Yao admitted. "To prove your innocence, we must get to the bottom of everything, which is the death of your father, Yan Zhengdong!"

Yan Chifeng burst into fury. "What? Are you insinuating that I murdered my own father? That's unreasonable! Too unreasonable! Come on. Let's go to the Truth Cabinet and find out!"

"Why are you so excited?" Li Yao replied coldly. "At first, I suspected Yan Xibei and Yan Chihuo. But on second thought, one of them is old and disabled, and the other is too young and lacks the capability. It wouldn't have been safe to entrust the murder to them.

"However, you would be different. You were both strong and Yan Zhengdong's trusted son. You were most suitable for the assassination.

"However, there are many ways to kill someone. For example, you could've beaten Yan Zhengdong until he was heavily wounded and then asked someone else to finish him off. It wouldn't have been false if you claimed that you did not kill anybody."

Yan Chifeng was so outraged that he was laughing. Tears were flowing out, as he bellowed, "Then I will prove through the Truth Cabinet that I did not fight against my father that night!"

"Wait!"

Li Yao coughed slightly. He rubbed his temples slowly, as if he hadn't recovered from the suffering of his soul being torn apart, before he continued calmly. "Such questions are too broad and fuzzy. Maybe there were other experts from the Temple of Immortals, and you did not do it in person. That's also possible."

Yan Chifeng was angry. "This won't do, and that won't do. What exactly do you want?"

Seeing that Yan Chifeng was so firm, many people in the Burning Sun Tribe were somewhat convinced. They whispered to each other, "Yan Chifeng does not seem to be lying. He is not a member of the Temple of Immortals, nor did he kill Chief Yan!"

Li Yao continued unhurriedly. "That day in Furious Bears City, I heard the whole case. It was said that you were training in a quiet place by yourself at dawn and did not know your father was dead until your brother Yan Chihuo asked somebody to inform you when he found your father's body. Isn't that right?"

Yan Chifeng laughed aloud. "Everybody in the six tribes know that I am a training maniac. I practice in seclusion every night. You are accusing me just based on that?"

"No. You're wrong." Li Yao shook his head and said softly, "The point is, if you were speaking the truth, your brother Yan Chihuo learned of your father's death earlier than you did, right?"

Yan Chifeng's eyes shook as he suddenly shuddered, and yet, he failed to come up with any response.

Li Yao smiled and gestured toward him. "Yan Chifeng, please go to the Truth Cabinet and state: 'Five days ago, in Furious Bears City, I did not know that Yan Zhengdong was dead until Yan Chihuo's envoy found me.' That will be enough.

"If you were not lying, this should be a positive statement, shouldn't it?

"But if a 'False' pops up on the Truth Cabinet after you make the statement, then it will be kind of weird. If you were training in seclusion all night, how come you knew of your father's death before your brother told you?

"This is the question I want to ask. You can analyze carefully if there's any trap in it.

"Is there a possible scenario where Yan Chifeng is innocent and he could learn of his father's death earlier than his brother Yan Chihuo?"

Murmurs broke out among the qi-trainers, too. Everybody frowned, deep in thought.

Five minutes later, Yan Xibei gradually floated out on his jet wheelchair. In misery, he shook his head slowly. "There are no traps. If Yan Chifeng had nothing to do with the incident, it is simply impossible for him to have found out that Yan Zhengdong was dead before Yan Chihuo!"

His declaration was like a death sentence for Yan Chihuo, whose face had turned from red to purple and from purple to black and eventually ended up pure white!

"Brother!"

After a clang, Yan Chihuo unsheathed his saber and roared, hot tears running out, "Brother, are you related to our father's death?"

Yan Chifeng held his heart and replied resolutely, "Of course not!"

Yan Chihuo waved his saber—a scorching aura darted out—while he said, "If not, go to the Truth Cabinet and say the words!"

Yan Chifeng rolled his eyes and glared at Li Yao in hatred. He gnashed his teeth, "Alright. If you don't believe me, I might as well prove my innocence through the Truth Cabinet!"

He spat and strode toward the Truth Cabinet, while he announced, "Sand Scorpion, after I prove my innocence, I'll ask you one last question, and your true face will—"

Half way through his speech, Yan Chifeng suddenly stomped on the ground. His spiritual gas surged out and raised a sandstorm that blocked everybody's vision.

Then, he leapt up like a viper and charged back at Yan Xibei, who was still floating in midair!

Yan Chihuo was caught unprepared. He roared and lunged at his brother, only to be kicked right in the chest by Yan Chifeng's unpredictable and almost invisible attack. Under the bombardment of the spiritual gas, he was blown away immediately while he was vomiting blood.

When the dust settled, Yan Xibei had fallen under Yan Chifeng's control. A dagger was pierced deeply into the old man's neck. With a tiny bit of spiritual gas, his veins and spines would be cut in half!

Yan Chifeng's hair was messy because of the wind, and his eyes seemed to be bleeding. His face was so hideous that he barely looked like a human. He yelled to all the qi-trainers, "Don't come here! I'll kill him if anyone comes close!"

Chapter 617: Yan Chifeng's Ambition!

Chapter 617: Yan Chifeng's Ambition!

Yan Chihuo was at a loss. It was more like his brother had stabbed him instead of kicking him. He shouted, "Brother, you are mad!"

The chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe and the chief of the Giant Axe Tribe were dumbfounded, too. They both bellowed, "Yan Chifeng, put down Master Yan now!"

The qi-trainers of the other five tribes all crowded close, their weapons shining coldly.

The qi-trainers of the Burning Sun Tribe, on the other hand, were too stunned to believe what was happening.

Although Yan Xibei had been the best warrior of the six tribes when he was young, the lower half of his body from his pelvis had been amputated due to the heavy wounds he suffered. He had to move about on his wheelchair every day. There was still spiritual gas flowing inside his body, but it was absolutely no match for the young and strong Yan Chifeng, who was an expert above the 80th level of the Refinement Stage.

Yan Chifeng had stabbed the dagger into his neck. Held captive by his nephew, the old man was blushing due to shortness of breath and could barely talk.

However, he was a tough man, and there was not the slightest hint of fear on his face, only sorrow and desperation. He shouted, "Warriors of the Burning Sun Tribe, don't care about me. Slay the insane insurgent immediately!"

Yan Chifeng smiled hideously. He span his dagger and locked Yan Xibei's throat with spiritual gas, making him unable to even scream.

The old man looked both angry and pitiful. He seemed to be willing to perish together with Yan Chifeng.

Yan Chifeng crouched in Yan Xibei's shadow and glared at Li Yao with the utmost resentment. "Sand Scorpion, you've suspected me since the beginning?"

Li Yao answered coldly, "Make no mistake. This is not personal. I was doubting many of you, or more exactly, everyone except me.

"The development of the situation has deviated from the Temple of Immortals' plan. To rectify the situation, I knew they would have to make a move promptly.

"So, the first to come to me was most likely with the Temple of Immortals, isn't that so?"

Yan Chifeng was rendered speechless. He was dazed for a long time before he burst into laughter. "Good! Good! I did not expect that such a thorough plan had been sabotaged by you! But just you wait. We have many other arrangements on Iron Plateau. The game is not over yet!"

"Brother!"

Tears in eyes, Yan Chihuo shouted desperately, "Is Father's death really related to you? Why did you do it? How could you do it?"

"Yan Chifeng!"

The chief of the Giant Axe Tribe and the chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe also declared sharply, "Thousands of people have surrounded you. There's no way that you can escape. What benefits has the Temple of Immortals offered you, and what else has been arranged on Iron Plateau? Speak now!"

"Hehe. Hehehehe!"

Yan Chifeng's hair was spluttering in the wind, and his face was full of resolution. He smiled coldly. "Do you think that I cooperated with the Temple of Immortals for my own benefit? Then you are very wrong!

"Just wake up already, frogs in the well!

"Iron Plateau natives have been separated from space residents for five thousand years, and they were much luckier than us! Other than the strike of apocalypse five thousand years ago, they have enjoyed a peaceful development all this time. Today, their civilization level and war potential far exceed ours!

"Space residents boast powerful warships, advanced crystal suits, a territory of dozens of space zones, and countless asteroids with abundant resources!

"In the meantime, we can only lay low on Iron Plateau and fight desperately against the apocalyptic beasts in the harsh environment!

"As the situation continues, the gap in capability between the two parties will only get larger. Are we even qualified to compete against space residents?

"It's true that the space residents' invasion is fake news this time, but who can guarantee that space residents will not invade Iron Plateau and annihilate every one of us someday in the future when they are far stronger than us?

"Speak. Who is confident to say that? Anyone?

"You attack, or your get attacked. Now is our best opportunity!

"While the gap between the two parties is not too huge, with the Temple of Immortals as a strong ally, we will march out into space, plunder their techniques, conquer their towns, enslave all the space residents, and become the real dominator of the Flying Star Sector again!

"This is my only purpose. I have really been considering the future of Iron Plateau!

"Wake up, compatriots of Iron Plateau! We cannot wait on Iron Plateau to be slaughtered! Let's work together with the Temple of Immortals and slay those damn space residents so that we can be the real kings of the world!"

"Brother, you are really mad!" Yan Chihuo roared. "If you've been considering Iron Plateau, why didn't you propose your plan openly instead of killing Father just like that?"

Yan Chifeng sneered, "You think I didn't hint to him? Too bad that his cowardice grew with his age. He always spouted bullsh*t like 'We are all human beings anyway' and 'We should not fight each other unless it is absolutely necessary!'

"He didn't understand the cruelty of the universe at all. The strong prey on the weak, and only the fittest survive! If you don't kill them now, what can you do when they come to kill you after they grow strong enough?

"If space residents invade Iron Plateau on a large scale in the future, millions or even tens of millions of people might die!

"I chose to trade my father's life for the most brilliant future for the Iron Plateau natives. What's wrong with that?

"Little Brother, warriors of the Burning Sun Tribe, the Giant Axe Tribe, and the Feathered Snakes Tribe, do you not hate space residents as much as I do? Now is our best shot. If we miss out the opportunity, we will only be butchered when thousands of warships of the space residents gather on Iron Plateau!"

"Shut up!"

The chief of the Giant Axe Tribe finally couldn't hold himself back any longer. He pointed at Yan Chifeng and shouted, "The grudge between us and the space residents is none of the Temple of Immortals' business! Even if we have to wage a war against the space residents, we will never cooperate with such an evil, surreptitious organization!

"For their so-called cooperation, they've even fooled you into killing your own father!"

The chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe shrieked, too, "Are we hoping to get ourselves killed by working with such an organization?"

"Brother, turn back now!" Yan Chihuo begged, crying. "The Temple of Immortals must be fooling you. How can they cooperate with you so easily? You have nowhere to go now.

Just reveal all their arrangements on Iron Plateau as atonement!"

"Haha. Hahahaha!"

Yan Chifeng burst into laughter. "Of course, the Temple of Immortals is not that kindhearted. However, I didn't treat them honestly, either! Anyways, I have received a lot of secrets arts from the Temple of Immortals that can potentially increase the longevity of qi-trainers by decades!

"Why could all the qi-trainers from history to today only reach the 99th level of the Refinement Stage? Because our training methods and our living environment are too rough. Our life is too short, and our prime years are even shorter!

"Let's take this 'former best warrior' for example!"

Yan Chifeng shook Yan Xibei roughly and laughed in derision. "How magnificent and dominating he was years ago! But now that he is old, he is purely at my mercy like a dog!

"With the profound secret arts of the Temple of Immortals, our lives can be lengthened, and we can keep ourselves in our best state. It is very likely that we will break the ceiling and enter the legendary 100th level of the Refinement Stage!

"Come here and stand on my side. I'll share the secret arts with all of you. We'll rush out of Iron Plateau and reign the Flying Star—"

The more he talked, the more excited he got. He completely overlooked the old man under his control.

Before he could finish his last word, Yan Xibei, who had been suppressed by him, suddenly bulged his eyes and bellowed. Simultaneously, his elbow flew backward with all the spiritual gas that he could muster!

The attack condensed all the strength inside his body. He was not preparing to defend at all!

Yan Chifeng did not foresee that the old man still had the ability to counterattack. His chest was smashed heavily, and his ribs were immediately broken, almost piercing into his heart.

He screamed and cut his dagger deep into Yan Xibei's neck. A terrifying arrow of blood darted out!

But the two of them were separated because of the attack.

"Master Yan!"

Countless qi-trainers who had been helped by Yan Xibei before lunged forward in anxiety and fury.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The Heaven Wolves Tribe was best at shooting. Countless guns had been locked onto Yan Chifeng since long ago.

Without Yan Xibei as his shield, countless crystal bombs and bullets immediately rained upon him and raised dozens of orange fireballs near him!

Yan Chifeng truly deserved to be a young expert above the 80th level of the Refinement Stage. Even under the barrage of so many people, he still concentrated his spiritual gas and lunged back toward at the Truth Cabinet.

The chief of the Giant Axe Tribe and the chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe tried to block him, but Yan Chifeng dodged both of them and landed on the Truth Cabinet!

"Come here!" Yan Chifeng grinned hideously.

On the Truth Cabinet, Li Yao was still in a trance, his face pale, suggesting that he had not recovered from the pain of his soul being tormented yet. He was clearly the best hostage on the spot!

However, the moment he landed on the Truth Cabinet, Yan Chifeng sensed a sharp killing intent from Li Yao's seemingly dumb eyes!

For a moment, all the pores on Yan Chifeng's body constricted!

Hu!

Two streams of surging spiritual gas collided abruptly on the Truth Cabinet. The sandstorm they raised wreathed the Truth Cabinet as if it were a stage concealed by curtains. There was no telling what was going on. A feeble sound of blades colliding spread out. Then it was absolutely silence.

The wind on the desert blew by coldly, pulling open the curtains of the stage.

On the Truth Cabinet, Li Yao and Yan Chifeng were frozen, like two statues, with their backs against each other.

Yan Chifeng's long sword pointed at the air behind Li Yao, while Li Yao's saber was aimed to the sky behind Yan Chifeng.

Everyone below held their breath.

A drop of blood slowly rolled from the tip of Li Yao's saber. It was shivering and about to drop to the ground.

Yan Chifeng tried to move his eyes, but he couldn't even complete such a simple movement.

Li Yao retracted his saber and drew close to Yan Chifeng, almost kissing his earlobe, while he said in a barely audible voice, "Are you curious where I hid my magical equipment that I claimed could fool the Truth Cabinet?

"Idiot. There's no such magical equipment at all. It was merely an offcut when I practiced my micro-craving skills.

"The Truth Cabinet is a marvelous tool from ten thousand years ago. I hadn't even seen it before today, so how could I figure out its mechanism and create a corresponding gadget to fool it?

"I was just lying to you so that you would underestimate me in our final battle that would definitely take place on the Truth Cabinet.

"Why could I pass the test of the Truth Cabinet, you ask?

"It's a long story. I can see that you are in a hurry. Why don't we talk about it later?"

Yan Chifeng's eyes remained frozen, but the hatred in them grew more and more intense. He stared at Li Yao, and his lips trembled. However, nothing except hisses escaped his mouth.

Pu!

A horrifying wound appeared on Yan Chifeng's neck. Almost half of his neck had been chopped off. A cluster of bloody mist suddenly blossomed like a red lotus and dyed the Truth Cabinet as if it were in a feverish dream.

Clang!

His long sword falling to the ground, Yan Chifeng kneeled down slowly before Li Yao, resentment written all over his face. His head fell aside, and he stopped moving.

Chapter 618: Thunderous Roar Roars!

Chapter 618: Thunderous Roar Roars!

Li Yao shook off the last drop of blood on the tip of his saber and returned the blade to its sheath as he secretly sighed.

If possible, he didn't want to kill Yan Chifeng.

The scheme of the Temple of Immortals on Iron Plateau was too complicated for a maniac of training such as Yan Chifeng to be the supervisor. If he was killed, all the leads would disappear.

However, Yan Chifeng was also an expert above the 80th level of the Refinement Stage. Li Yao only pretended that he was still in the agony of his soul being torn apart so that the man would draw close to him incautiously.

His execution of Yan Chifeng had been extremely lucky but also dangerous.

Li Yao was not confident at all that he could capture such an expert alive.

Below the Truth Cabinet, when the warriors of the six tribes saw that Yan Chifeng, one of the few top experts in his generation, kneeled down and died, they all exclaimed in shock.

Those of the Burning Sun Tribe were wearing complicated expressions, not knowing what they should do with the situation.

Many other people, in the meantime, went to Yan Xibei.

The previous best warrior of Iron Plateau was no longer the hero he used to be. A terrible wound had been left on his neck. Although it had been blocked by herbs and stopped bleeding, Yan Xibei looked terribly weak. He couldn't even talk because of his injured throat. Tears of regret and embarrassment flowed out of his brown eyes. There was no telling whether he was feeling sorry that the Burning Sun Tribe had been fooled by the schemer or that he had been so humiliated by his nephew in public.

Li Yao leapt down and said to the four chiefs on the spot, "Now that the truth is out, why don't I invite a representative of the Cultivators in the valley out so that we can figure out the details together?

"Cultivators will be carrying first-aid kits. The medicine in them should be enough to seal Master Yan's wound for now. We'll make further pl—"

Before Li Yao could finish, a quake suddenly shook the ground beneath them. The ground seemed to become a surging ocean, and rumbling noises echoed underground. The earth broke apart, and many True Qi tanks fell into the newly opened ravines!

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

Dozens of horrifying cracks appeared near the valley, from which dense mist spurted out. The grey mist seemed to be alive and continued spreading and dispersing, soon enshrouding the entire valley area. It surrounded everybody on the spot like a circular great wall, reaching high into the sky.

Hiss! Hiss! Hiss! Hiss!

Creepy shrieks came over from the grey mist. Countless black shadows were hovering at a low altitude.

Shua!

One of the black shadows suddenly dashed out of the grey mist toward the single tank closest to the mist. In the blink of an eye, the knight on the tank had been snatched into the mist!

The sound of bones being broken and flesh tearing apart immediately echoed inside the grey mist, accompanied by screams and laughter of demon beasts!

"This is—"

The grey mist had come too quickly for anybody to realize that they were being surrounded. The chief of the Giant Axe Tribe and the chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe looked at each other and said, their faces pale, "An egg of apocalypse has exploded!"

Li Yao gasped in shock. "How is this possible? Didn't one of them just explode?"

Some bizarre-shaped shadows could be vaguely seen inside the grey mist.

They were like giant fetuses that were still stained with wet, thick amniotic fluid. Looking like half-melted apocalyptic beasts, they were even more disgusting than the fully-grown ones.

Many apocalyptic beasts were dragging tubes that looked like bloody vines that extended toward the depths of the grey mist. The tubes were expanding and shrinking nonstop, sending energy into their bodies.

The chief of the Giant Axe Tribe smiled bitterly. "It's true that the eggs of apocalypse in our place have just broken out. But this is the Dark Continent, far away from the territory of the six tribes. The eggs of apocalypse here have absorbed the resources hundreds of kilometers nearby. They do not belong to the system of the eggs of apocalypse in our territory.

"Besides, there are many circumstances that can lead to the explosion of an apocalyptic egg in advance!"

Li Yao narrowed his eyes.

He remembered that Xiong Wuji had told him why the eggs of apocalypse should not be detonated. It was because explosions tended to stimulate the eggs of apocalypse to release the beasts earlier!

"Damn!"

Li Yao gnashed his teeth and thought through many things.

He finally understood why Yan Chifeng had lured him to this valley. As it turned out, the Temple of Immortals still had backup plans here.

A maturing egg of apocalypse must've been somewhere below the valley. When the Temple of Immortals discovered it, they planted a lot of bombs near the egg.

If everything went smoothly, then all was good.

But if their plan did not go well and their scheme was revealed, just like what had happened just now, they would detonate the egg of apocalypse and release the beasts in advance to slay everyone on the spot!

In such a case, the elite warriors of Iron Plateau would all be killed. It was against the purpose of the Temple of Immortals, which was to diminish the strength of both sides. A lot of excellent cannon fodder would be wasted, too. However, the Temple of Immortals' plan could proceed again anyway!

Seeing more and more shadows popping up inside the grey mist and hearing the shrieks around becoming louder and louder, Li Yao squinted and asked in a low voice, "Can we reach out to the outside world?"

The chief of the Giant Axe Tribe shook his head. "We can't!

"Tremendous magnetic minerals are contained inside the hills and block all our signals. We cannot communicate with our home!"

Li Yao took a deep breath and touched the grip of Thunderous Roar.

As the number of the apocalyptic beasts in the grey mist increased, so did his own fighting will.

"Chief."

Li Yao asked another question, "Since the egg of apocalyptic was detonated in advance, it did not ripen, so the apocalyptic beasts inside won't be as strong as those in the previous battle of the apocalypse, right?"

"Of course. When an egg of apocalypse is triggered prematurely, most apocalyptic beasts inside will be killed instantly because they are still merely in the embryo state. Those lucky enough to survive will have no more than one tenth of their capability left."

The chief of the Giant Axe Tribe smiled bitterly. "But we are seriously short of hands, too. Although the best warriors of Iron Plateau have been gathered here, there are only several thousand of us, and we don't have any reinforcements."

"Let us prepare to fight!"

Li Yao remarked, "We might have reinforcements."

After that, Li Yao turned around and rushed toward the valley.

The Cultivators from the Great Horn Exo Society, to avoid a misunderstanding, had been hiding inside the valley.

They had talked with the hostages and learned what had happened to them.

However, the suddenly appearance of the grey mist had surprised all the Exos.

Lei Dalu strode forward and asked, "What's going on?"

"The misunderstanding has been cleared for now, but we've got a new situation."

Li Yao quickly explained everything that happened and the eggs of apocalypse to them. He glanced at the Cultivators and then stared Lei Dalu in the eye. He said one word after another, "Right now, you have two options.

"The first option, go back!

"Your crystal suits all boast amazing short-distance flight abilities. With the Iron Plateau natives fighting ahead, it won't be difficult for you to escape the siege of the apocalyptic beasts!

"The second option, go forward!

"You will fight side by side with the Iron Plateau natives and slay all the pests until we march out from the front!

"I appreciate that so many people who barely know me risked coming such a long way here to rescue me.

"So, I don't want you to die for nothing.

"The situation is unclear now. Both directions entail dangers. But to be honest, I think it is more dangerous to stay and fight!

"To retreat or to fight, it's your call."

Finishing his speech, Li Yao closed his facial cover and turned around.

"Wait!"

Lei Dalu shouted silently, "Are you staying to fight with the Iron Plateau natives?"

Li Yao replied without looking back, "I promised an Iron Plateau native that I would show him what a real Cultivator should be like."

Carrying 'Thunderous Roar' on his shoulder, he strode out of the valley.

Lei Dalu opened his mouth and cursed silently. He returned to the company of the Great Horn Exo Society.

"Captain, what is going on? What did the barbarian of Iron Plateau say?"

"What's happening outside? Where did so many demon beasts come from? They seem very strong!"

"Captain, the hostages have been saved. What do we do now?"

Lei Dalu was silent for a moment. He then rubbed his face hard and said seriously, "Stop yelling. We are going to make a choice now."

…

When Li Yao returned to the outskirts of the valley, the grey mist was much thinner. The grinning, weirdly-shaped apocalyptic beasts were much clearer than before.

Earsplitting roars burst out in the battle formation of the qi-trainers, which even eclipsed the shrieks of the apocalyptic beasts. Everyone's fighting will was soaring higher than ever!

However, there was a hint of grief inside the fighting will.

Li Yao asked around and learned that, when he went to contact the Cultivators inside the valley, Yan Xibei had dashed into the mist on his wheelchair while the other qi-trainers were gathering their tanks and preparing for the battle.

"Master Yan must've found the insult unbearable!"

His eyes red, Shi Meng sighed. "He couldn't bear to see the Burning Sun Tribe as it is now and decided to wash away the dishonor of his tribe with his own death!"

Li Yao opened his mouth but didn't say anything. There were still a lot of questions that were bothering him, but Yan

Xibei's sudden death cast him into confusion again. He felt that one of his feet had already stepped into an abyss, and it was quite awful.

However, all the questions could only be answered after the pests in front were cleared!

Click!

Li Yao set Thunderous Roar to burst mode and loaded the explosive bullets the size of a baby's fist made of the cores of apocalyptic beasts!

"Ho! Hooooo!"

Finally, enough apocalyptic beasts were gathered inside the mist. Uttering soul-stirring shrieks, they marched toward the qi-trainers' battle formation. However, their shrieks were soon suppressed by earsplitting explosions!

Li Yao pulled the trigger brutally, and Thunderous Roar roared!

Chapter 619: Breaking the Death Curse!

Chapter 619: Breaking the Death Curse!

Thunderous Roar had been designed to launch Wolf Fangs. But after Li Yao's modification, it was now able to launch super explosive bullets made of apocalyptic beasts' cores continuously!

The super explosive bullets were all refined out of the cores of the dragon-level apocalyptic beasts. Every darting bullet was roaring crazily like a dragon-level apocalyptic beast!

In a moment, the hundreds of square meters in front of Li Yao were enveloped by the blast. Countless enormous tides made of lights and flames overlapped and swept the battlefield each higher than the previous one!

These apocalyptic beasts were all semi-finished products that had been released prematurely. How could they resist the explosion of the cores of the real dragon-level apocalyptic beasts?

In the earth-breaking explosions, countless apocalyptic beasts had been ripped apart into pieces by the unstoppable furious power before they had the chance to stretch their claws!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Thunderous Roar seemed to be alive when it was firing in burst mode. The recoil was so huge that it was struggling hard in Li Yao's arms as it roared earsplittingly like an infuriated primordial animal!

Li Yao's head seemed to have turned into a volcano. His soul was burning so intensely that invisible flames were popping up from his head. The spiritual gas of the 80th level of the Refinement Stage was full unleashed, and he turned into a mobile human-shaped artillery.

Something seemed to be spurting out of Li Yao's body together with each bullet. When the super explosive bullets exploded where the apocalyptic beasts were densest, the pictures of flying flesh and savaging flames made his fighting will soar and his blood simmer. He felt that the deepest part of his soul was tremoring beyond his control!

Every attack of Thunderous Roar would make the weapon bash Li Yao's chest like a giant hammer because of the recoil. Although he was struck heavily, Li Yao sensed that the Black Spider Death Curse around his heart was showing signs of loosening!

This—this is—

With the profound spiritual gas of the 80th level of the Refinement Stage and my seething fighting will, I can finally try to break the Black Spider Death Curse right now!

Li Yao was overjoyed by his finding. He further immersed himself in the pleasure of destruction!

He controlled his heartbeat consciously. With every heartbeat, a super explosive bullet would rush out, and he would make a step forward!

One shot, one step, and one heartbeat. The immense spiritual gas of the 80th level of the Refinement Stage bombarded the Black Spider Death Curse crazily!

His heart seemed to have turned into scorching iron, while the nine streams of evil black gas turned into earthworms screaming miserably as they were being burnt!

Excruciating pain caught him like vipers, but the tide-like ecstasies greater and greater swallowed all the discomfort.

Li Yao completely forgot where he was. Scarlet brightness blinking inside his eyes, he marched forward accompanied by blood and blasts!

It was not until Thunderous Roar emitted a click sound that he discovered that one of the bullet belts had run out and regained part of his consciousness.

Li Yao grunted. He finally sensed the agony as if his heart were being torn apart. His hands were also burningly hot like they had been soaked in magma.

He lowered his head and looked. Thunderous Roar was bright red, like a piece of steel that just got out of the furnace.

The plate on his hands had been shattered by the recoil, and his fingertips were chafing.

Cracks resembling spider nets had appeared on his breastplate because of the continuous strikes of Thunderous Roar!

In front of him—

Dozens of shooting stars seemed to have passed by from a low altitude, leaving trenches more than half a meter deep in the ground. Every trench seemed to be on fire. White steam was popping out of them nonstop!

Centered at Li Yao, the area of hundreds of square meters was caught in a weird silence.

No apocalyptic beasts survived. There was not even one intact corpse.

The broken limbs and the scorching rocks were mixed. Some of the rocks were melted into what seemed to be colorful glass!

Deep inside the grey mists, countless apocalyptic beasts were shuddering. Awed by Li Yao's unstoppable aura and the remaining scent of dragon-level apocalyptic beasts inside the super explosive bullets, they were silent for half a minute before they attacked again!

Li Yao groped for bullets, only to find nothing.

The super explosive bullets that Thunderous Roar used were all made of the cores of the dragon-level apocalyptic beasts. He had only refined two bullet belts in total. Right now, one of them had already been used up.

Besides, the weapon was too hot right now, and its barrels wouldn't be able to resist the enormous force. If he continued shooting in burst mode, it was quite likely that the gun would break apart on the spot!

Li Yao spat and put away Thunderous Roar. He unsheathed his saber, staring at the seemingly endless apocalyptic beasts inside the grey mists coldly.

Right then, he heard the sound of ocean.

An ocean made of machines and spiritual gas behind him was raging forward!

The elite warriors of the six tribes condensed into waves of iron and copper. They shouted and yelled and charged into the grey mists along with the drumming passing by Li Yao!

In the moment, Li Yao was like a drop of water that flowed into a rampant ocean and a burning torch that joined boiling magma!

The fighting will of thousands of people burnt furiously. Ripples as if real things were spreading out, influencing and enhancing each other!

Reverberation of fighting will!

"Sand Scorpion!"

Shi Meng suddenly appeared in his back and supported him, while he shouted, "Are you alright? You were mad enough to clear almost half of the battlefield alone just now! We were completely dumbfounded. What is that gun exactly? Truly unbelievable!"

Li Yao managed a smile, but his heart was still beating fast. His brain was in a mess, and he couldn't speak anything. The only sounds that he could utter were the roars of the primordial animals.

Shi Meng shook him hard for a while. Seeing that he was not heavily wounded but only exhausted, Shi Meng was greatly relieved. He raised his saber high and picked up his Wolf Fangs before he bellowed, "Iron Bears Detonation Team, strike!"

Dozens of iron giants in super heavy armor charged at where the grey mist was densest. Soon, the sound of explosions and battle drifted over.

Roars and yells were echoing nonstop throughout the entire battlefield. This battle of the apocalypse was much smaller in scale than the previous one. However, the two parties had met and engaged in a head-on battle from the beginning!

Li Yao took a long breath. His heart almost burst out of his chest.

Most of the warriors were blocked by the grey mist, but he could sense everyone's whereabouts precisely. Their fighting willing was burning so furiously that they were the brightest beacons in the mist!

Break! Break!

The enormous spiritual gas of the 80th level of the Refinement Stage attacked the Black Spider Death Curse without bothering about anything!

The Black Spider Death Curse, realizing that its doom was drawing close, stuck to his heart and wouldn't let go. It even condensed into needle-like bugs, trying to slither deeper into his heart!

Just when Li Yao's spiritual gas and the Black Spider Death Curse were in a deadlock, he suddenly sensed the arrival of new fighting will that was completely different from that of the qi-trainers but was equally strong!

Exos of the Great Horn Exo Society were standing on the hill like a hundred rocks while they observed the battlefield.

The endless apocalyptic beasts and the qi-trainers of Iron Plateau even tougher than them left a deep impression on the space residents.

"This is all due to the schemes of the Temple of Immortals!"

Lei Dalu shouted at the loudest of his voice, "If all the Iron Plateau natives below us are slain, the Temple of Immortals might still be able to get their way and raise a war between Iron Plateau natives and space residents!

"Our starship has been seriously damaged. Even if we run out of this place right now, it will take us quite a few days to fix it. If the Temple of Immortals has other arrangements on Iron Plateau, we won't be able to leave the planet on our own!

"So, the only solution right now is to fight side by side with the Iron Plateau natives below us and annihilate all the pests so that we can win their trust and get their help!

"Prepare to fight, Great Horn Exo Society!

"The right flank of the apocalyptic beasts seems to be made up by those better at remote attacks. Their melee combat ability must be very weak. Let's stab into their right flank!

"Go now. Show the Iron Plateau natives how real Cultivators fight!"

Thousands of power rune arrays were activated. The fulminations suppressed all the other noises in the battlefield for a moment.

When the Great Horn Exo Society started charging, many qi-trainers were dazed for a moment.

They were even somewhat vigilant when they saw the Cultivators in eccentric armor waving weird magical equipment.

However, when the Great Horn Exo Society turned into a shining blade and pierced into the right flank of the apocalyptic beasts, all the vigilance and misunderstanding was gone.

The qi-trainers saw clearly that, no matter whether they came from Iron Plateau or the space, no matter what environment they had been raised in, and no matter how different their understanding about the utilization of spiritual energy was, their blades were equally sharp, and their blood was equally red and hot!

Sensing the two enormous clusters of fighting will gradually joining together, Li Yao laughed out and lunged at the beasts.

A translucent mantis-like apocalyptic beast came at him, shrieking. Li Yao roared and slashed his saber, which seemed to have turned into a furious bolt of lightning!

Huala!

A thunderbolt broke out in front of Li Yao, inside his brain, and in his heart at the same time.

While the mantis-like beast was chopped in half, a stream of black gas darted out of his chest and shrieked in the air before it turned into vague smoke and disappeared!

One of the nine streams of black gas formed by the Black Spider Death Curse had finally been broken by him!

Li Yao couldn't have felt more satisfied at that moment. He felt that a shackle that had confined him for a long time had shattered. A familiar strength returned to his body. The range of his surging spiritual gas further expanded, too!

Excellent. This is the way!

With the reverberation of fighting will, thousands of people's strength can be gathered and help me break the Black Spider Death Curse!

Li Yao waved his saber. Spiritual gas surged out, and the aura of the blade was extended to more than ten meters away with sawtooth-like edges as if it had grown tusks!

After breaking part of the curse, Li Yao's control over his spiritual energy was even more skillful. His capability was instantly higher than a moment ago!

"Kill them all!"

Li Yao charged to where there were the most apocalyptic beasts.

Chapter 620: The Real Player!

Chapter 620: The Real Player!

The battle lasted three hours, and by the time it was over, night had fallen.

There was so much blood in the air that the sky seemed to be full of holes. Even the stars were dyed a queer crimson color.

With a crack, the saber in Li Yao's hand finally couldn't resist his surging spiritual gas anymore and broke into pieces the size of fingernails.

But they managed to maintain the shape of a saber, enhanced by Li Yao's spiritual gas, and did not explode until the saber was pierced deep into a behemothic apocalyptic beast's internal organs, which were immediately minced into a pulp.

The apocalypse beast collapsed and stiffened. However, Li Yao stopped looking at it and picked up a dented saber from the ground. His spiritual gas surged out and decorated the common saber glitteringly as if it were the most marvelous blade in the world.

Li Yao couldn't remember how many sabers he had broken.

He only knew that the blades and weapons he carried with himself had been used up an hour ago.

Even the Sky Scorpion Armor crafted out of the shells of apocalyptic beasts was riddled with holes and cracks.

However, his fighting will did not perish with his weapons. Instead, it was even higher than before as the slaughter continued.

For three hours, he had attacked the Death Curse with the reverberating fighting will and broken six shackles.

With each shackle broken, his control over spiritual energy grew more delicate, and the range of his surging spiritual gas expanded even further!

Just when he was going to summon his spiritual gas and blow up the last three shackles, he suddenly felt empty, and he could see the mountains and crags thousands of meters away. However, there were no more apocalyptic beasts in between.

Li Yao was at a loss, not knowing where he should go to.

Shi Meng and another member of the Iron Bears Detonation Team, on the other hand, hurried to drag him and shouted into his ears, "Sand Scorpion, wake up! Stop fighting. You are going to be mentally deranged!"

As it turned out, when they saw that Li Yao was fighting more and more bravely like a crazy devil, they thought that he had become addicted to the pleasure of killing and was about to become a monster who knew nothing but slaughtering.

Shi Meng clicked his tongue and shouted, "Sand Scorpion, what drugs did you take today to make you so insane? Do you know how many dragon-level apocalyptic beasts you've slain? The qi-trainers of the other five tribes did not even dare to come close to you and fight by your side. They feared that you wouldn't recognize who they were and kill them in your delirium!

"I thought you were tough enough in the previous battle of apocalypse, but I didn't expect that you would be ten times fiercer today!"

Li Yao licked his dry lips. The last three shackles still confined his heart and made him unable to condense his spiritual gas and advance into the Building Foundation Stage. He was quite upset.

He was hoping to continue slaughtering the apocalyptic beasts, but all he could see in the grey mist were his companions.

The roars of the apocalyptic beasts were replaced by cheers of joy.

"We've won!"

Shi Meng listened attentively for a while, before he raised his saber and said merrily, "We've annihilated all the apocalyptic beasts!"

"So easy?"

Li Yao took a rest. The previous prolonged battle of the apocalypse was still as fresh as yesterday in his mind. How come this outbreak was so lethargic?

Although the warriors present were all elites of the six tribes and Cultivators who had offered their help, Li Yao still felt that the ending had been too abrupt and something was wrong.

"Last time, it was a fully mature egg of apocalypse, but this time, it's only a hasty outbreak. Chances are that the egg of apocalypse only just started brewing the beasts. It goes without saying that their intensities are different!" Shi Meng grinned. "Anyway, there are no apocalyptic beasts anywhere close. The grey mist is dispersing, too. This must be all of them!"

Several True Qi tanks turned on their headlights and patrolled the battlefield, picking up the injured and the deceased.

When everybody gathered in the entrance of the valley and did a headcount, they discovered that approximately two hundred people had passed away and all the rest were seriously wounded and exhausted. Their ammunition and True Qi containers were running low, and their weapons and blades were all severely damaged.

Many qi-trainers were so exhausted that they did not have any strength left. They couldn't even stand on their feet. Some other people had even passed out now that the battle was over.

Everybody was stained with dust and blood. Iron Plateau natives and space residents were no longer distinguishable. True Qi armor and crystal suits were all wasted iron and copper when they were broken. Cultivators of the Great Horn Exo Society and qi-trainers of the six tribes leaned against each other and breathed heavily on the ground.

For a battle of apocalypse, it was already an unbelievably small loss.

"Be cautious, everybody. Brace for the second wave of apocalyptic beasts. Turn on all the tanks. We will march out of the grey mist in ten minutes!" the chief of the Giant Axe Tribe shouted on a drumming tank.

He was the commander-in-chief of the battle. After all, the place was full of peril. It would be the best if they left the place as soon as they found all the injured warriors!

But Li Yao's heart was pounding, and he frowned deeply because he thought that the victory had come too easily.

Suddenly, he remembered Xiong Wuji's words.

One egg of apocalypse could only absorb limited resources from underground.

If the small fries that it produced were too weak, it was a sign that most of the resources had been dedicated to an extremely strong apocalyptic beast!

Li Yao swallowed and said, his voice tremoring, "Shi Meng, did you kill any calamity-level apocalyptic beasts? It is my understanding that one calamity-level apocalyptic beast comes with every outbreak of eggs of apocalypse."

Shi Meng was dazed. He shuddered, too, and replied, "I didn't seem to run into any strong beings close to the calamity level.

"However, since the egg of apocalypse was detonated by force, maybe the calamity-level beast was still too young and was killed in the explosion. It is not unlikely."

Li Yao didn't believe that The Temple of Immortals' arrangements would be so simple. He suddenly jumped to his feet and shouted excitedly, waving his arms, "Don't relax. Stay alarmed. The battle is not over yet!"

The warriors of the six tribes had seen his insane bravery just now and more or less considered him to be the strongest expert in the younger generation. They were not unwilling to listen to his warning, but the fierce combat in the last three hours had drained everyone's spiritual gas. They were merely fighting with the support of their fighting will.

But right now, all the apocalyptic beasts they could see had been cleared. Their stress had been removed. Many of them couldn't even move their fingers while they were sitting on the ground, let alone standing up and holding their weapons!

Right then, the grey mist in front of everyone became hazy again, while heavy footsteps in a fixed rhythm came over from the depths of the grey mist.

An enormous apocalyptic beast was walking toward everybody unhurriedly!

Before the apocalyptic beast showed itself, the air was already frozen. An invisible mountain seemed to have fallen from the sky and buried everyone.

Such an intimidating aura only suggested one thing—a calamity-level apocalyptic beast was coming!

Li Yao could feel his heart palpitating as he gazed at the grey mist with his eyes wide open.

The grey mist gradually split like a curtain being pulled, revealing a brand-new apocalyptic beast.

The apocalyptic beast was rather skinny for a calamity-level apocalyptic beast, and it was no more than five meters tall.

It was like a combination of the forelegs of a mantis, the body of a tarantula, and the tail of a scorpion. However, it didn't give any sense of ugliness typical of the jumbled demon beasts or carry any hideousness that belonged to insects. Surrounded by a thin, bright aura, it was weirdly graceful and majestic!

It was like a tyrant standing in its own palace!

"Ah!"

Many qi-trainers gasped and screamed in disbelief.

The front end of the insect body was connected by countless purple gold veins and nerves to the upper body of a human being!

If the lower half body that looked like an insect was ignored, the upper half body of the human would have looked immaculate. Every muscle was shining in glamorous colors. Magnificent blood stripes identical to the tattoos on the Titan Warriors were flowing on the skin slowly as if they were alive!

But that was not the reason everyone was so shocked.

What appalled them was that the queer 'calamity-level apocalyptic beast', which was a combination of a human and various insects, had a face that was exactly the same as Yan Xibei's.

However, the face was much younger than the old man's face, which had been full of wrinkles and looked like dry rind.

For a moment, many of them seemed to see Yan Xibei when he was the best warrior of Iron Plateau in his prime years!

However, his white hair did not turn black, and bloody brightness was blinking at the end of his white hair!

'Yan Xibei' was wearing a weird expression. There was no telling whether he was sad or sorry. He simply eyed everyone emotionlessly, while he drove his six limbs to crawl over slowly, the greasy scorpion tail glittering.

All the qi-trainers seemed to be stunned by the nightmare-like scene and were utterly quiet.

Suddenly, a man leapt out of the crowd with a broken saber on his back. He charged to the front of 'Yan Xibei' unstoppably and waved his blade, before he bellowed, "What— what the f*ck are you exactly? What did you do to my uncle?"

'Yan Xibei' smiled and said, "Ah Huo, it's me."

His voice came both from his chest and from a certain organ in the insect body. It was mixed with the human voice and hums of insects. Everybody felt goosebumps rising up just listening to him.

Yan Chihuo was about to go crazy. He held his head and shouted, "What— what is going on? Uncle, weren't you killed in the grey mist? How did you end up like this?"

"Don't you see?"

Gazing at Yan Xibei, Li Yao said coldly, "Yan Chihuo, your big brother was a training maniac. Strong as he might have been, he did not have the connections and resources to carry out the scheme of the Temple of Immortals!

"Your big brother was merely a chess piece under someone else's control. Our Master Yan Xibei, the well-respected previous best warrior of Iron Plateau, was the real player of the chess game!"

Chapter 621: Mountain King!

Chapter 621: Mountain King!

As if hit by a bolt of lightning, Yan Chihuo was barely able to hold his broken saber. He was so shocked that he stepped back and mumbled, his face pale, "Uncle, is this true? Did you murder my father, your own brother?"

Deep in thought, Yan Xibei glanced at Li Yao casually and sighed. "Ah Huo, believe me, I gave Zhengdong opportunities. If he were less stubborn, the two of us would've worked together for the future of Iron Plateau!

"If possible, I definitely wouldn't let a single drop of Iron Plateau blood be shed for nothing, nor would I show up in front of you in such an appearance!

"I've been restraining myself just now and controlling the apocalyptic beasts to launch as few fatal attacks as possible. They were merely consuming your strength and your spiritual gas.

"If I didn't, do you think that only two hundred people would've been killed?"

Yan Chihuo had always greatly admired his uncle. He had respected his uncle even more than his own father. Right now, when he heard Yan Xibei admitting that Yan Zhengdong had been murdered by him, he was grasped by desperation and shouted, "Why—why are you doing this? What do you want exactly?"

Yan Xibei seemed to suddenly fall into a trance. He replied, "There are many things that I need to do. It is a long road that I'm walking on. Not everyone has the chance to finish the journey with me.

"If everything had gone smoothly, the smallest sacrifice could've earned the best results. Many people, including Ah Feng, wouldn't have died.

"It's a pity that Sand Scorpion was clever enough to see through my plan. But his cleverness is merely a petty trick. In the end, he can't stop me after all. All those lives have been lost for nothing!"

Li Yao sniffed and thought quickly. White steam was popping up from his forehead.

"Sand Scorpion, I didn't know that you noticed Yan Xibei's anomalies long ago!"

Shi Meng patted his shoulder hard and asked hopefully, "You must be waiting patiently for him to reveal his true face before you blow him up with your trump cards, mustn't you?"

Li Yao glanced at him and replied, "You are thinking too much, brother. I only thought through everything a moment ago, and I certainly don't have any trump cards with me!"

"Hehehehe!"

Yan Xibei chuckled, the shell on his insect body shivering slightly. "The three hours of fierce battle have drained most people's spiritual gas. The more capable you are, the more exhausted you will be. Right now, there are less than twenty of you who can still fight, and even those twenty are on the verge of passing out, too. Where are your trump cards?

"Besides, this 'apocalyptic body' that I carefully refined, although still immature, can still wield the combat ability of a calamity-level apocalyptic beast!

"Let's say you still have your trump cards. So what? They will only be torn apart by me easily!"

Yan Xibei paused and smiled weirdly. He then shouted, "Xie Hong, Ye Jun, Wei Honghui, Mu Jianyuan, Zhang Chengfei, you can come out now!"

While talking, five glittering threads suddenly spurted out of Yan Xibei's insect body and darted toward the qi-trainers like sharp arrows. They tied up the thighs of five qi-trainers, before Yan Xibei exerted some strength and pulled them over to him!

Of the five qi-trainers, three were wearing the armor of the Burning Sun Tribe, while battle emblems of the Feathered Snakes Tribe and the Giant Axe Tribe could be found on the other two qi-trainers.

They were all lightheaded because of the sudden movement, and their eyes were all shaking fast, indicating that they had something they would rather other people not know. Looking at each other in bewilderment, they seemed to realize something.

Yan Xibei smiled. "With everything reaching this point, the five of you can stop hiding and declare openly that you belong to the Temple of Immortals now."

The five of them blinked and looked at Yan Xibei unconfidently.

Yan Xibei's throat suddenly trembled, and a completely different voice that was as dull as colliding rocks came out.

"I am the Mountain King!"

The five of them gasped and finally shouted ecstatically, "Master Yan, you are the Mountain King? What—what a sur—"

"When we saw you diving into the grey mist, we thought you were dead and the Temple of Immortals' plan had come to an end. We didn't know that everything was within your control. How marvelous!"

"Your—your new body is truly—truly—truly startling!"

The warriors of the six tribes finally realized what was going on. The chief of the Giant Axe Tribe and the chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe looked awful, as they did not expect that somebody in their own tribe had been transformed into the Temple of Immortals' spy.

Yan Xibei smiled and replied casually, "Sorry that I kept it a secret for so long. However, the 'apocalyptic body' is my biggest secret. If I told you about it and you told the Lotus King, your real master, the entire Temple of Immortals would have known that my capability was much higher than their evaluation!

"If so, how could people like the Lotus King take advantage of me without any doubts?"

The five of them were shuddering with pale faces when they heard 'Lotus King', their exultation from a moment ago all gone.

One of them managed a smile and said, "Master Yan. You—you must be joking. We—we have always been the Mountain King's subordinates! You are our leader. What does the Lotus King have to do with anything?"

The legs of another qi-trainer were shaking hard, and he lost control over his tongue. "Mountain King, it's true that we talked to the Lotus King several times, but it is you who we've pledged our loyalty to. We—"

Another two qi-trainers had sensed the subtle killing intent and looked around for a way of escape.

There was pity in Yan Xibei's eyes, as he remarked, "There's no personal grudge between the Lotus King and me. You are all my compatriots, and I find it hard to kill you. However, what I'm about to say is best not heard by you. Do excuse me, everyone!"

Hardly had he concluded his speech when the threads suddenly tightened as if they had become thin blades. Three spies who had joined the Temple of Immortals were minced into multiple parts before they had the chance to scream!

The remaining two spies, on the other hand, had chopped off the threads in advance. They roared and fled in two different directions, one going east and the other going west. In the blink of an eye, they had dashed almost thirty meters away.

Yan Xibei grinned hideously. He extended his arms and opened his palms. Two weird waves immediately appeared in the air and condensed into two translucent hands, which moved forward and snatched the two running qi-trainers.

Yan Xibei clenched his fists, and the two giant translucent hands collapsed toward the center like iron walls. Two clusters of blood exploded in midair, and the muscular men were crushed into two indistinguishable meatballs!

The cruel picture rendered everyone on the spot dumbfounded.

Those familiar with the five qi-trainers all knew that the two who ran away in the end were both experts above the 50th level of the Refinement Stage.

Yet, they did not have the slight chance to counterattack when faced with Yan Xibei!

The apocalyptic body was truly terrifying!

Yan Xibei rubbed his hands and said, "Alright. All the irrelevant people have been cleared, and you've seen my real capability. Now, let's get down to business.

"Sand Scorpion said that the Temple of Immortals has a scheme on Iron Plateau. I don't deny that.

"However, as you have seen just now, I, Yan Xibei, am different from the other people of the Temple of Immortals.

"I am, and always will be, an Iron Plateau native no matter what. How could I jeopardize my own homeland and my compatriots? There are two paths in front of you. You can choose the one that you prefer.

"Firstly, stand on my side and help me become the master of the Temple of Immortals. We will transform the Temple of Immortals with our strength and turn the organization into a tool of Iron Plateau natives that carries out our will!

"Secondly, if you are unwilling to stand on my side, then you can go to hell!

"Don't be hasty. I know warriors of Iron Plateau better than anyone else. I'm aware that you are fearless of death. However, you must think about your family and compatriots in your hometown. Think about your parents, your brothers, your wives, and your children!

"You are all the best warriors on Iron Plateau. What can the rest of Iron Plateau natives do if you are all dead? By then, it is very possible that they will really become the cannon fodder of the Temple of Immortals!"

Yan Xibei's short speech cast the spot into silence. Everyone's face was pale.

"Ah Huo, why don't you make a choice first?"

Yan Xibei looked at his nephew with a smile.

Every muscle on Yan Chihuo's face was twitching violently. He suddenly took a deep breath and spat hard, "Damn you! Old fart, I will choose a third path!

"I will blow you—half-human-half-devil monster—up into pieces!"

Emotionlessly, Yan Xibei formed a spiritual shield in front of him that blocked Yan Chihuo's saliva, while five spider threads pierced through Yan Chihuo's thighs and picked him up shakily.

"Ahhh!"

Yan Chihuo's entire weight was lifted by a few extremely thin threads that were hooked into his flesh. He was screaming in the excruciating pain, "F*ck you, you old fart. You are not my uncle. My uncle died a hero's death! You are a monster! You are a f*cking monster! I will not stand on your side even if I'm to be killed!"

"Ah Huo, you are too rash and useless compared to your brother."

Yan Xibei manipulated another coldly shining thread, which slithered toward Yan Chihuo's neck.

There was still blood on this particular thread. It was the one used to kill one of the spy of the Temple of Immortals just now.

"My own brother has been killed by me. One of my nephews, too. What's wrong with killing the other one? Since you are not willing to stand on my side, Ah Huo, your uncle will grant you a quick death!"

Right then, abrupt changes took place. Yan Xibei's pupils constricted violently, while the mantis forelegs blurred into dozens of shadows and blocked more than ten invisible bullets!

"Who's there?" Yan Xibei narrowed his eyes and glared at the qi-trainers with his sharp eyes.

A tall man in a ragged crystal suit slowly made his way to the front of the crowd. Half of his facial cover had been knocked off, revealing a bristly, unshaven chin. He grinned and said, "My name is Lei Dalu. I am just an ordinary Core Formation Stage Cultivator."

Chapter 622: Best Versus Best!

Chapter 622: Best Versus Best!

"And me, I am Zuo Xiaohu, nominated as the strongest young man of the East Continent Space Zone three times and known as the future star in the Great Horn Exo Society!

"This is Lu Dian, the 'White-haired Gun King' who is the best shooter of the Wild Goose Academy. The previous bullets were gentle only because his hair hasn't turned white yet! When it does in a moment, one shot will be enough to blow up your head!

"To tell you the truth, we saw through your plot at the very beginning, and we reserved our strength a while ago, waiting for the moment to come! Our captain is a legendary Core Formation Stage Cultivator. Together with the two young tigers that are us, we will definitely beat you up to the point that your parents will not recognize you if we are pissed off. So, you'd better stay where you are!"

Lei Dalu, Zuo Xiaohu, and Lu Dian were standing proudly, their spiritual energy soaring into the sky like a torch that was burning through the heavens!

All the qi-trainers were dumbfounded. They looked at the three of them in disbelief.

Yan Xibei was dazed, but then he suddenly burst into laughter. "Interesting. How interesting! Core Formation Stage Cultivator? It's a pity that the Lotus King has already sent your files to me. Are you Lei Dalu? You were in the Core Formation Stage before, but due to the heavy wounds you suffered in the battle in the Iron Plateau Space Zone a few months ago, I'm afraid that you are not even close to your peak state yet.

"As for Lu Dian and Zuo Xiaohu? I've never heard the two names before. Shrimps in the Building Foundation Stage, tops!

"You have used up your spiritual energy in the previous battle. You are merely bluffing!

"Besides—"

Yan Xibei suddenly laughed crazily. "Suppose you are indeed a real Core Formation Stage Cultivator, so what?

"This apocalyptic body of mine boasts combat ability far higher than that of the Core Formation Stage!"

Yan Xibei roared and opened his arms again. His hands changed into various shapes in midair, while three enormous hands appeared and snatched at Lei Dalu and the other two Cultivators!

Zuo Xiaohu suddenly changed his face color. He shouted, "Crap. Captain, he saw through us!"

Lei Dalu cursed. One of his wounds opened up again as he summoned the blood on the tip of his heart that was critical for a Cultivator in order to make use the last bit of his spiritual energy.

A giant axe full of dents whose edge was gone struck forward like a hammer and crashed into the enormous hand heavily!

Zuo Xiaohu crossed his arms. Two streaks of cold brightness blinked on the end of his elbows as he knocked the invisible waves in the air, too.

Lu Dian's body suddenly shook, and he picked two silver pistols from who knew where. Dozens of bullets rushed out and formed a blinking shield in front of him!

Yan Xibei's enormous hands, however, was much faster and more agile than they had thought. Like three mountains that had fallen from the sky, instead of clenching them, they smashed at the three Cultivators like rocks weighing thousands of tons!

Crack! Crack!

Suppressed by the unbelievable force, the crystal suits of the three Cultivators all exploded. Blood was spurting out all over their body!

"I have to go now!"

Li Yao's eyes were blood-red. His spiritual gas surged out again even though his heart was still aching, as he was preparing to release the Apocalyptic Extension, the strengthening plugins, and had the last try!

"Let's go!"

When the qi-trainers saw that the Cultivators who they had always despised were so tough and brave, their fighting will was ignited, too. All of them managed to stand on their feet and unsheathe their broken blades, before they gritted their teeth and moved forward!

Yan Xibei was trying to crush the three Cultivators' crystal suits by brute force with his enormous spiritual gas. He was also doing his best.

His face was so twisted that it barely belonged to a human being. The blood stripes all over his body bulged and expanded like thick veins in which spiritual energy in clusters the size of fists were transmitted!

CRACK! CRACK! CRACK!

The three Cultivators had been too weakened because of their heavy wounds and insufficient spiritual energy to fight against Yan Xibei's carefully made 'apocalyptic body'.

More and more cracks appeared on their crystal suits, which gradually overlapped with scaring noises.

It sounded that the three crystal suits would explode in the next second, and the three Cultivators inside would be ground to a pulp!

Yan Xibei roared crazily, "Do you see? This is my strength! The strength of blood stripes! It is too much for you!"

While his roar was still echoing in the sky, an earsplitting fulmination suddenly broke out in the hazy air. Two gold pillars of light slashed open the darkness of night like sabers and paved a brilliant and splendid path over everyone's head.

A monolithic iron beast suddenly dashed out of the mist and crashed at Yan Xibei!

Yan Xibei's face immediately paled. The enormous hands suppressing the three Cultivators were quickly retracted and formed into two new hands in bloody brightness slapping the iron beast, one from the left and one from the right, as if they were trying to flatten it!

BOOM!

The two enormous hands kissed each other like two walls!

The iron beast immediately moaned because of the metal being crushed.

It was not until this moment that everybody saw that it was actually a damaged heavy tank!

However, the tank was surrounded by immense spiritual gas, too. Instead of being flattened by Yan Xibei's enormous hands, it continued rushing at him despite the spluttering sparks.

There was a deafening explosion when they collided. The heavy tank was naturally a total loss now, but Yan Xibei was knocked back almost fifty meters and rolled on the ground, too.

Everybody was bewildered and stared at the heavy tank, which was beyond recognition now.

Dozens of meters away, Yan Xibei had regained his balance. The crash did not hurt him. He gazed at the remains of the heavy tank gloomily and furiously.

Huala!

Above the heavy tank, the door was kicked open. Enshrouded by the surging white steam, a muscular man not very impressive in height, who was wearing the armor of the Furious Bears Tribe and carrying two sabers on his back, crawled out of the cockpit!

"Ah!"

Hundreds of qi-trainers exclaimed in shock.

Xiong Wuji, the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, was standing between them and Yan Xibei like a fortress.

"And you said that you didn't have any trump cards!" Shi Meng was practically crying in joy. "You must have made a deal with the chief that he would come to save the day when the truth is revealed!"

"Well—"

Li Yao scratched his head and replied honestly, "That was not in my plan. Coincidence. It's purely a coincidence."

Yan Xibei narrowed his eyes. Blood stripes crawled over his skin and covered his face as if they were living creatures. He was now wearing a hideous, bloody mask.

Waving the six insect limbs, Yan Xibei crept close again and said indifferently, "Xiong Wuji!"

"And me!"

Roaring echoed again in the hazy mist, before a single tank suddenly appeared in midair and landed before the qi-trainers' battle formation with thousands of sparks!

Wu Mayan and Sha Yulan were on the vehicle!

The three space residents living in the Furious Bears Tribe had all arrived.

Li Yao was dazed and said hurriedly, "What are you doing here?"

Wu Mayan waved his saber and replied, "To fight, of course! Wow. How did Yan Xibei become that?"

Li Yao was angry. "You can come if you insist. But what is Doctor Sha doing here? She won't help the battle at all!"

Sha Yulan combed her hair calmly and smiled. "As I said in the dungeon a few days ago, whoever wants to hurt my husband and my son, I can only fight them until one of us survives.

"Besides—

"If the Temple of Immortals' plot succeeds, the entire Iron Plateau will be mired in the flames of war. I can hide myself right now, but where can I hide myself when all my family members are killed in the war?"

After saying that, Sha Yulan leapt off the single tank. She then took two heavy medication cases out of the tank, while she eyed around and asked, "Where are the heavily wounded?"

Many qi-trainers finally came back to themselves at this moment. They realized that they'd wronged Xiong Wuji a few days ago.

Seeing that he had come to their rescue without caring about the past and that Sha Yulan, a strengthless doctor, had come to the battlefield in person, the warriors of the six-tribes all lowered their heads in embarrassment.

Xiong Wuji took a few steps back to Li Yao's side. He gazed at Yan Xibei and asked solemnly, "What is going on? How did Master Yan Xibei end like this?"

"Long story short."

Li Yao took a deep breath and said quickly, "We are the good guys. Yan Xibei is the bad guy. If you take care of him, you take care of everything."

"Understood!"

Xiong Wuji clenched his fists.

"Little Xiong, it's useless. Give up and stand on my side."

Yan Xibei rubbed dust off his body with his insect limbs and said casually, "You were in the 99th level of the Refinement Stage in your best state, which only equals to the peak of the Building Foundation Stage.

"Besides, you were seriously wounded a few days ago, and your right arm was chopped off. Although you have an artificial arm right now, it remains unknown whether or not you can perform the best of your combat skills.

"After I meld with the apocalyptic body, the top of my combat ability far exceeds the Core Formation Stage!

"My strength is not something you can resist. You are only increasing the number of casualties by fighting against me. Just surrender and stand on my side!"

"Master Yan!"

Xiong Wuji stepped forward and opened his arms. His spiritual gas circled him like a translucent dragon and gradually spread out.

His face tranquil, he said determinedly, "Born in Iron Plateau, die in Iron Plateau. I've heard the eight words more times than I can count since childhood. I even heard them many times from your mouth, too.

"Although I was not born in Iron Plateau, I can always die in Iron Plateau!"

The cold wind was blowing hard on the desert. The best warriors of Iron Plateau of two different generations confronted each other in the devastating sound of storm.

Li Yao gritted his teeth and snuck back to Sha Yulan. "Sister Sha, I still have several cores of apocalyptic beasts. But there are too many impurities in them, and they are not suitable to be made into bombs.

"If I swallow all of them, can you dissolve the spiritual energy contained in the cores with your massage skills and transmit most of it to my heart?"

Sha Yulan was dazed and exclaimed in shock, "What are you trying to do? Unrefined cores of apocalyptic beasts are more volatile than gunpowder. Your body is likely to explode after you swallow them!"

Li Yao grinned. "I will die either when my body explodes or when Yan Xibei crushes me. Just tell me if you can guide the spiritual energy into my heart!"

Sha Yulan hesitated. "Maybe—"

When she said 'maybe', a few bizarre-shaped, fragrant cores of apocalyptic beasts appeared in Li Yao's palm.

Then he craned his neck and devoured all of them.

The Art of the Swallowing Whale was activated!

"Hiss!"

Li Yao's eyes bulged instantly. He felt that his stomach had become a monster paradise where thousands of apocalyptic beasts were galloping on a rampage!

Chapter 623: Mysteries Behind the Blood Stripes

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Li Yao was cramping in pain. His eyes seemed to have become rockets that would rush out of his head at any moment. Hot streams were flooding from his internal organs to his limbs.

Such furious spiritual energy was far beyond his soul's control. It was simply impossible to guide the spiritual energy to his heart!

"Hu! Hu!"

Li Yao breathed heavily, only to discover that the air he exhaled was now a weird color!

I've made it big this time!

Back on Boneyard, to make a quick breakthrough, Li Yao had swallowed tremendous Flowing Brightness Crystals.

However, the Flowing Brightness Crystal was one of the most mild and steady Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. It was not harmful to take them orally without refining.

The cores of the apocalyptic beasts, in comparison, contained a lot of impurities whose components were unclear.

The cores with the fewest impurities had been swallowed by Li Yao long ago and helped him improve from the 77th level of the Refinement Stage to above the 80th.

The cores with more impurities had been refined into super explosive bullets and crystal bombs.

What remained were the few cores that had the most impurities. They were so volatile that they were not suitable to be made into bombs because there was no telling when they would suddenly explode.

Despite his sturdy body built up by the Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining technique and his digestive ability based on the Art of the Swallowing Whale, he found the cores unbearable.

In less than a moment, his abdomen had protruded out. Various forces were raging inside, as if many monsters were about to break out of his body!

At the critical moment, Sha Yulan cast spells silently while she drew different shapes with her hands. Her spiritual energy consolidated into more than ten long needles that were almost transparent and pierced into Li Yao's abdomen softly.

When the long needles entered his body, Li Yao felt that a huge amount of ice had been poured on the volcano inside his stomach. The irritating spiritual energy suddenly calmed down.

Sweat was pouring off Sha Yulan's forehead as she was clearly making the best use of her soul power. She changed the shapes of her hands, while the needles of spiritual energy shivered and eased Li Yao's stomach, glowing brilliantly.

Li Yao felt that a pair of warm hands were rubbing his chest gently and dissolving the spiritual energy bit by bit.

However, the furious spiritual energy was too enormous after all. How much time it would take to fully thaw the cores at such a low speed?

Li Yao's eyes were shaking in pain, while he shouted in his mind, Chief Xiong, buy me some time. Try to buy me some more time! Chat with the old monster. Make small talk and discuss what his feelings were when he set off on the unreturnable path…

The two best warriors of Iron Plateau confronted for a long time, before Xiong Wuji asked solemnly, "Master Yan, I don't understand. With your integrity and your love for Iron Plateau, how did you become a dog of the Temple of Immortals? What benefits did the Temple of Immortals offer you that made you betray your compatriots and your homeland?"

Hooray! Li Yao was almost crying with joy. He wanted to jump up and give Xiong Wuji a big hug.

Yan Xibei sniffed. The interconnecting blood stripes on his face somehow faded. He replied casually, "Little Xiong, you should know what kind of person I am better than anybody else. Is the Temple of Immortals even qualified to make me their dog?

"Alright. If I don't explain everything to you today, it seems that you won't choose to stand on my side at all. I might as well tell you the story as it is!

"When you saw my appearance just now, you must've felt that I was no better looking than a monster. You were probably also baffled as to why I could control the egg of apocalypse and turn myself into a 'calamity-level apocalyptic beast', weren't you?

"Let me ask you first. Do you know what the apocalypse actually is?

"I'm afraid that none of you know the answer!"

Xiong Wuji replied coldly, "The apocalypse that happened on Iron Plateau is probably a 'possession' that a civilization implemented on another civilization. The Titan Warriors are trying to reincarnate themselves inside the human beings' bodies!"

At this moment, Yan Xibei was truly stunned. He stared at Xiong Wuji for a long time and nodded in approval. "Excellent. Excellent, Little Xiong. I didn't know that I still underestimated you. I thought through the whole thing because I had the heritage of the blood stripes. It is quite impressive that you made the conclusion just based on the traces you found in the battles of the apocalypse. Really impressive!

"Possession. Reincarnation. The two words are very precise. In fact, there are probably no words that are more fitting than them!

"Since you already know the truth, a lot of my time can be saved."

Xiong Wuji clenched his fists and raised his voice. "Master Yan, I'm more confused now. If you knew the truth of the apocalypse to be a war that another civilization waged against mankind, why were you involved in such a scheme to make human beings attack each other?"

Except for Li Yao and Sha Yulan, everybody else was perplexed, not knowing what riddles the two of them were speaking.

Yan Xibei smiled and didn't answer immediately. "You were wrong about one thing. It is not the Titan Warriors that are trying to possess us, but the 'Blood Stripe Virus'. The so-called Titan Warriors are merely their puppets."

Xiong Wuji's eyes widened in shock. "Blood Stripe Virus? What is that?"

Yan Xibei pointed at the twisting, erratic stripes that looked like veins on his body and said, "In the Titan Illusionary Land, every Titan Warrior has such continuously changing bloody tattoos.

"Red moss has appeared on the wildings in the Dark Continent, too. After thousands of years of evolution, they will turn into blood stripes that are much clearer.

"When we studied the Titan Warriors before, we thought that the blood stripes were just a unique organ that was used to absorb spiritual energy and communicate with each other!

"We were terribly mistaken!

"Such blood stripes, blood speckles, and blood moss are themselves a life form, a parasite, a highly-developed, intelligent, and yet amorphous species that can only live on other living creatures!

"The Titan Warriors are but their puppets. They are the real planners of the apocalyptic strikes!

"I call such parasites the 'Blood Stripe Virus'. But calling them 'Blood Spirit' or 'Blood Demon' is equally appropriate."

His words rendered everyone on the spot dumbfounded as if they'd been hit by a lightning.

Even Li Yao and Xiong Wuji had never heard of the 'Blood Stripe Virus' before. They looked at each other and swallowed hard. The dense blood stripes all over Yan Xibei's body appeared queerer and eviler now.

Touching the blood stripes on his chest that were protruding like vines, Yan Xibei mumbled, "In the battle of the apocalypse thirty years ago, although I managed to reverse the situation on my own, I was seriously wounded and my Cultivation plunged.

"I tried many methods, but the recovery of my Cultivation was still extremely slow. Eventually, I made up my mind and went to the Dark Continent by myself, hoping to challenge my limits in the harshest environment. I would either die in a battle or make a breakthrough in it!

"After travelling for a year in the Dark Continent, I slew countless demon beasts and fought many times against the wildlings. My Cultivation gradually recovered, too.

"However, after one battle, a weird-looking deadly beast, which had blood speckles all over its body, got its eyes on me.

"The capability, intelligence, and cunningness of the demon beast were far beyond my expectation.

"It was indeed the most perilous battle of my life. I only killed the beast after a whole night of fighting!

"However, the moment the deadly beast died, the weird blood speckles on its body suddenly flew to my legs as if they were alive and dyed my lower body crimson!

"I sensed an extremely uncanny strength inside the blood speckles, which were not only taking over my body but also invading my soul!

"With no other options, I had to grit my teeth and chop off my lower half body. Then I burnt it to ash with the fuel that I carried with me.

"It was not until the blood speckles screamed for more than an hour in the flames that they were completely gone!"

Gasps echoed among the qi-trainers.

Many qi-trainers only knew that Yan Xibei had gone to train in the Dark Continent for several years and came back heavily wounded. Although the wounds were healed, his Cultivation had hit rock bottom, and he was barely capable of anything later.

They hadn't known that he had experienced something so shocking!

Yan Xibei's face was utterly tranquil, as if he was telling a story irrelevant to himself. "I lost my legs, and my Cultivation plummeted. After I returned to the Burning Sun Tribe, I was so frustrated that I abandoned the thought of picking up my Cultivation again. I planned to teach my compatriots and disseminate my knowledge for the rest of my life.

"But I didn't know that my previous slash had not eliminated all the eccentric blood. One drop of the blood moved to my upper half body before I chopped off my legs and had been hiding there ever since.

"It lurked in darkness and waited for its opportunity. Finally, one day, two years later, it started attacking my brain and tried to turn me into its puppet!

"Thankfully, most of the blood had been attached to my legs, which had been separated from me. The remaining strength of the blood was less than one percent of what it should've been.

"When I discovered it, naturally, I spared no soul power to fight against it!

"I don't need to elaborate on the dangers of the battle. Anyways, after struggling on the sickbed for three days and three nights, I finally defeated the drop of blood, or rather, the 'Blood Stripe Virus'!

"Hehe. It planned to invade my brain and turn me into its puppet. But on the contrary, it was swallowed by me, and I received the essence of its life, which was the knowledge of the Blood Stripe Virus!

"Blood Stripe Virus is a very ancient life form that originated from a faraway foreign constellation billions of years ago!

"As parasites, their bodies are thick fluids that look like drops of blood.

"They hide themselves in meteoroids and float purposelessly in the sea of stars as they look for potential hosts that they can live on.

"The Titan Warriors we saw were initially ancient apes. But they contracted the Blood Stripe Virus and became the best puppets. The symbiosis lasted tens of thousands of years."

Chapter 624: Bloody Evolution!

Chapter 624: Bloody Evolution!

"The Blood Stripe Virus stimulated the brains of the ancient apes and induced the formation of basic intelligence. Then, after thousands of years guidance, they gradually endowed the apes with the techniques of absorbing and utilizing spiritual energy!

"As a result, the Titan Warriors became the best bodies and arms for the Blood Stripe Virus to build the civilization that they craved for.

"Other than living on animals, the Blood Stripe Virus can also attach themselves to plants and germs. By transforming rocks with special plants and fungi, they can turn the rocks into the 'eggs of apocalypse' that we've seen.

"After the modification of the plants and the germs, eggs of apocalypse will grow roots that can extend to thousands of meters below the ground where they can absorb the resources from the mother lodes. Countless vesicles will be formed inside the rocks, too, where the resources will be dedicated to transforming the ordinary animals into apocalyptic beasts!

"Apocalyptic beasts are livestock for the Blood Stripe Virus!

"When a batch of 'livestock' grows mature, they will all be released as an egg of apocalypse outbreak. Then, the Titan

Warriors would be summoned to fight against the apocalyptic beasts!

"Such battles give the Blood Stripe Virus tremendous precious resources from underground.

"But more importantly, the endless fierce battles between the Titan Warriors and the apocalyptic beasts would result in unparalleled fighting will and killing intent!

"Such 'sense of slaughtering' is mandatory for the survival of the Blood Stripe Virus!

"The Blood Stripe Virus is an extremely weird life form. As parasites that boast enormous mental power, they do not have a high materialistic demand, but they need a 'sense of slaughtering'; it is their 'food'!

"The Blood Stripe Virus needs killing just as we need air and water. Without death, destruction, and devastation, the Blood Stripe Virus will gradually wither and perish!

"Therefore, the more brutal the battles between the Titan Warriors and the apocalyptic beasts were and the more creatures were killed, the more gratification of demolition and annihilation the Blood Stripe Virus would be able to devour, and the stronger and happier they would be!

"This is the reason for the bloodthirst of the Titan Warriors!

"The symbiosis between the Blood Stripe Virus and the Titan Warriors lasted tens of thousands of years. They swept countless constellations and had a territory that was far larger than the Star Ocean Imperium's in their prime years!

"However, one day, billions of years ago, their world suddenly experienced a destructive strike!

"Many constellations were wiped out instantly. Both the Blood Stripe Virus and the Titan Warriors could do nothing about it. The remaining Blood Stripe Virus could only board their starships, or in our eyes, the bizarre-shaped meteoroids, and flee in a hurry!

"The Blood Stripe Virus could live in the vacuum for a long time, and they did not need many resources for their survival. However, the journey in the cosmos was long and dark, and they couldn't find a new species to provide 'killing intent' for them.

"The surviving Blood Stripe Virus soon realized that they were about to wither. They could only seal the essential knowledge of their race with secret arts before they entered a certain 'hibernation state' on different meteoroids that were running toward different directions of the universe, hoping to find another world suitable for them and another species that could be lived on!

"I don't know anything about the rest of the Blood Stripe Virus. However, I do know that part of the race discovered the Flying Star Sector and human beings after floating in the universe for billions of years!

"Therefore, the Blood Stripe Virus in the hibernation state was awakened!

"That is what happened five thousand years ago."

The qi-trainers listened to the story in confusion and finally associated it with the arrival of apocalypse in the Flying Star Sector five thousand years ago. They were all stunned and exclaimed in shock.

Yan Xibei said peacefully, "The rest is history. A large number of meteoroids inhabited by the Blood Stripe Virus marched into the Flying Star Sector and nearly destroyed Iron Plateau, because the Blood Stripe Virus meant to build Iron Plateau into an environment favorable for them and transform human beings into their puppets, the new 'Titan Warriors'!

"However, the possession between civilizations could not be finished in a day.

"After tens of thousands of years of symbiosis, while the Titan Warriors were modified into the best puppets, the Blood Stripe Virus had evolved, too, in order to live more comfortably inside the Titan Warriors' bodies.

"The human beings of five thousand years ago were not the best candidate puppets for the Blood Stripe Virus. The most critical problem was that the intelligence of human beings was too high. It was quite possible that they would be swallowed by human beings when the infection process failed, just like what has happened to me.

"Therefore, the Blood Stripe Virus has been consuming our resources through the outbreaks of the eggs of apocalypse and strengthening our bodies without us knowing.

"In the meantime, we released endless fighting will in the fierce battles, which was the best nutrition for the Blood Stripe Virus, which has just woken up from the hibernation state.

"Our civilization would be less and less developed, but our skills of killing would be more and more proficient and our bodies stronger and stronger. We would become bloodthirsty, aggressive, primitive… Everything that the Blood Stripe Virus hoped us to be!

"Today, the most crucial turning point has come.

"We have basically used up the most fundamental resources to sustain a civilization. In the future, we will be more dependent on our flesh, blood, and most primitive fighting instincts. Finally, we will grow into the new Titan Warriors and the best puppets for the Blood Stripe Virus!"

Yan Xibei fell into silence after his speech.

During the silence, the only sound was the blowing cold wind on the desert. No one opened their mouth.

Many quick-minded people had already envisioned the future of Iron Plateau from Yan Xibei's brief introduction. They were all awed by the dark, disheartening scenes.

Even the bravest warriors found it hard to breathe and were tremoring uncontrollably.

"Little Xiong, I don't know how you felt when you found out the truth of possession between civilizations."

Yan Xibei's eyes shook, and there was a hint of fear in them. He murmured, "When I finally sorted out the puzzle based on the heritage of the Blood Stripe Virus, my very first feeling was horror. Endless horror!

"The universe is too vast, too cold, and too dark!

"Mankind calls itself the strongest fighting species in the sea of stars. We've defeated countless unknown species while we were expanding our territory!

"Conquering nature, slaying demons, building new worlds, defeating foreign species… How powerful and dominating!

"However, we are still merely frogs in a well when faced with the boundless universe!

"Deep within the heritage of the Blood Stripe Virus, a lot of mottled pictures were hidden. I saw a spacious universe and countless unknown species in them.

"Some of the species were without entities. They were formless like devils, and yet they could take away the lives of thousands of creatures instantly.

"Some species were made of flesh and blood, but they could live and fight effortlessly in a vacuum and even feast upon meteorites!

"Some other species were like lifeless soil and rocks, but they boasted extremely uncanny techniques, too!

"Such unknown species are like deities in myths. Even the human beings of the Star Ocean Imperium, the well-acknowledged summit of humanity, might not have been able to defeat them!

"When I figured out the truth, I was like a water snake that had suddenly discovered a boundless ocean next to the pond which it had always considered to be its own kingdom. Living in the ocean were all ferocious animals such as sharks and dragons!

"The desperation caused by a whole new world suddenly unfolding itself in front of me explosively is beyond the description of any words.

"However, I was never a man who would be beaten by desperation.

"When my panic and desperation gradually faded, I immediately started pondering our future path. The destination of mankind and the ruthless universe was too complicated a problem for me to solve. But at the very least, I should alter the fate of Iron Plateau and free my compatriots and descendants from the miserable future of being enslaved by the Blood Stripe Virus!

"Over that year, the metaphysical and yet urgent questions such as how to make Iron Plateau natives stronger and how to stop the tragedy that was bound to occur thousands of years later had been troubling me. I was barely able to breathe.

"But my compatriots and my family knew nothing about anything.

"It's just like an army of soldiers that had been born blind, were striding toward a cliff, and were about to fall into the abyss.

"I was also a member of the blind army, but somehow, I was suddenly granted sight. I saw brightness as well as the cliff in front of us!

"But I could not shout or change anything, because the army was too huge and the path we were standing on was too shallow. If I suddenly burst out a cry, it was very possible that everyone would fall off from the two sides of the path and still end up in the abyss!

"We had no other options except to move forward until we reached the destination of destruction!

"I struggled for a whole year in pain and devastation. Many times, I thought about sharing my assumptions with everyone. But what could they do even if they learned the truth? Without resources, we would not be able to fight against the eggs of apocalypse. When the towns were destroyed and our civilization collapsed, we would still become the Blood Stripe Virus' slaves just like the wildings on the Dark Continent!

"While I was seized by desperation, however, I gradually discovered that unexpected changes were happening to my body!

"After I fully absorbed the drop of eccentric blood, my own blood as well my nerves and flesh were gradually becoming different. Not only did my capability slowly recover, my senses and control over spiritual energy also increased significantly. Besides, I seemed to have been granted the ability to modify animals and communicate with the eggs of apocalypse!

"After many tests, I finally concluded that, after I swallowed the Blood Stripe Virus, I had combined the strength of mankind and that of the Blood Stripe Virus. I had evolved in a brand-new way!

"The discovery made me overjoyed. It also opened a new window for me!

"The strong prey on the weak in the ruthless universe. Tigers eat men, but men can eat tigers, too!

"Attack or be attacked. Instead of waiting to be controlled by the Blood Stripe Virus thousands of years later, we might as well swallow the Blood Stripe Virus first while we still have the ability to fight!"

Chapter 625: Yan Xibei's Counterattack!

Chapter 625: Yan Xibei's Counterattack!

"After we absorb the Blood Stripe Virus and grasp their techniques, naturally, we won't be scared that they will come to manipulate us in thousands of years' time!

"Besides, after assimilating the Blood Stripe Virus into our bodies, we will all evolve into newer, stronger human beings. It's very possible that we can march out of Iron Plateau and rule the entire Flying Star Sector!

"This is not only the only destiny of Iron Plateau but also the brightest future for the Flying Star Sector. It is even a brand-new path for mankind in general!"

The more Yan Xibei talked, the more excited and crazier he became. The blood stripes all over his body were glittering and fluctuating. Creepy noises were also echoing from the shell on his insect body like metal rubbing together.

"Bulls*it! This is bulls*it!"

Unable to stand on his feet, Yan Chihuo sat on the ground before Yan Xibei. His thighs were full of blood, and his face was pale, but he still shouted, "If you are really considering for the future of Iron Plateau, why didn't you put forward your proposal openly instead of cooperating with the Temple of Immortals and killing so many people?"

Yan Xibei sighed and replied, not without regret, "You think I never thought that?

"When I made up my mind, my very first thought was to share it with the public and ask everyone else to study the Blood Stripe Virus together with me in order to scrutinize and make the best use of it.

"However, three unresolvable problems immediately occurred to me.

"Firstly, look at me. Do you want to be like this?"

Yan Xibei pointed at the blood stripes on his body, which were twisting like vipers, vines, and veins and releasing eccentric redness, with a self-mocking smile.

"Or this?"

He then pointed at his extremely hideous body that was made up by multiple giant insects.

Not waiting for a reply, he shook his head and said, "It's impossible. You would definitely be unwilling to be changed into such appearances unless it was absolutely necessary. My plan would meet countless obstacles. I assumed that you would rather cooperate with the space residents than meld with the Blood Stripe Virus.

"No. You wouldn't agree to my plan. If anything, you would even think that I had been controlled by the Blood Stripe Virus, and that my soul and brain were no longer my own. Everything I did was actually the Blood Stripe Virus' will so that it could bloom and spread to every corner of Iron Plateau, if not the Flying Star Sector. You would think that way, right?"

"Correct!"

Xiong Wuji said coldly, "Master Yan, after listening to your theory, I have every reason to believe that the Blood Stripe Virus has conquered your brain. Or in other words, you've been possessed by the Blood Demon!"

Yan Xibei was not angry. He smiled and replied peacefully, "Yes! That is a very reasonable doubt! If I were you and I saw such an ugly monster showing up, I would naturally speculate that he was possessed by a demon and would never believe anything coming out of his mouth!

"I pondered for a long time, but I failed to find an undeniable method to prove that I was not possessed by the Blood Stripe Virus.

"Therefore, I could not tell the secret, because nobody was going to believe me even if I did.

"Like I said just now, you are like people who are born blind. You don't know what brightness is. Even if I tell you that I see the cliff ahead of us and a bright path beyond it, you will not believe me but simply think that I've been bewildered by a devil.

"But I am well aware that I am not controlled by the Blood Stripe Virus. My head is as clear and sharp as ever, and I am nothing but rational.

"Hahahaha. Since it is inexplicable, I might as well not explain it at all! The whole world may misunderstand me, but so what? Just allow me to save Iron Plateau on my own!

"However, since I was on my own, the next crucial issue immediately emerged, which was that I didn't have enough resources to study the Blood Stripe Virus and perform the necessary experiments!

"I'd been struggling against the Blood Stripe Virus for years and stopped taking care of the affairs of my tribe long ago. My younger brother, Yan Zhengdong, had become the chief.

"I was never a man fond of power. If I suddenly meddled in the tribe's affairs and demanded a lot of resources, I was bound to be suspected!

"Although I had a lot of connections in all of the six tribes, they could not be translated into the enormous resources that I was in dire need of.

"Even if many people in the six tribes were willing to listen to my command and provide the resources for me, they would inevitably know that I was preparing for a groundbreaking discovery!

"Thirdly, and lastly, let's say that I could collect resources and carry out my plan in secret. There was still a fatal problem that I could not bypass.

"The space residents!

"I had profound understanding about the capability gap between Iron Plateau natives and space residents. I was well aware that, after thousands of years of separation, the overall combat ability of Iron Plateau natives is much lower than that of space residents.

"At the moment, since we are all human beings, the ostensible peace is still maintained.

"However, if my plan is carried out on a large scale, and Iron Plateau natives start evolving into a whole new life form by absorbing the Blood Stripe Virus…

"… will space residents idle by and watch?

"They won't. When they discover Iron Plateau natives in our new forms, they will definitely regard us as terrible monsters and destroy us mercilessly!

"We do not have the ability to cruise in the universe and would only be able to take their blow. The war could never be won!

"If any of the three problems remained unresolved, my plan would be just an unreachable dream!

"However, Iron Plateau natives were not doomed.

"While I was troubled by the three problems, I accidentally discovered that a mysterious organization was active on Iron Plateau. They were looking for a 'cooperator', or rather, a puppet, on Iron Plateau!"

Xiong Wuji narrowed his eyes and remarked coldly, "The Temple of Immortals?"

Yan Xibei nodded with a smile. "Yes. The Temple of Immortals!

"We all know the purpose of the Temple of Immortals. This organization of the so-called Immortal Cultivators has been conspiring against Cultivators and infiltrating them for many years. But they were in lack of ordinary soldiers, or cannon fodder, if you will.

"The tricks, plots, and harassment of space pirates were far from enough to overturn the world of Cultivators.

"Iron Plateau natives, who boast countless excellent warriors and have a long grudge with Cultivators, naturally caught their attention.

"Iron Plateau natives are too untamable to be directly commanded by them. So, they could only look for a puppet on Iron Plateau and raise a war between Iron Plateau natives and space residents through the puppet. That was the easiest choice.

"The puppet had to enjoy certain prestige in the six tribes and be familiar with their situation in order to supervise the plan of the Temple of Immortals.

"Also, the puppet could not be very strong. He had to be at their mercy and be able to be wiped out easily when necessary.

"Lastly, the puppet had to have a fatal weakness or a very urgent demand that they could lure him with.

"Haha. Hahahaha. Who else on the entire Iron Plateau could meet all the three conditions except for me?

"Therefore, a leader of the Temple of Immortals who called himself 'Lotus King' soon found me and tried to talk me into their plan.

"They threw out two baits.

"The first bait was that the cooperation between the Temple of Immortals and Iron Plateau natives was equal. When the plan succeeded, the Flying Star Sector would be evenly divided between us.

"As for the other hook, they claimed that they had methods to treat my legs and restore my capability. My longevity could also be lengthened so that I would be able to explore the summit of qi-training!

"In order to convince me and show their respect for Iron Plateau natives, they even invited me to be one of the four leaders of the Temple of Immortals. 'Four Kings of Immortality, Mountain Sea Black Lotus'!

"Ridiculous. It was too ridiculous. Those ugly, cowardly Immortal Cultivators who wouldn't hesitate to sell their mothers for their own benefits were too naïve and hilarious!

"What kind of person did they think I, Yan Xibei, was? Immortality? Recovery of capability? A useless title?

"Honor or disgrace, gains or losses, strong or weak, and even life or death were as meaningless as the clouds in the sky for me. They were not worth mentioning at all!

"Besides, I had just experienced a perilous battle against the Blood Stripe Virus and grasped the virus' knowledge. The struggles that I had passed were too harsh for me to be fooled by petty benefits!

"They thought that an empty title, Mountain King, was enough to buy me and ease my vigilance so that they would take advantage of me however they wanted. But they did not know that it was exactly the reason I became wary of them!

"'Four Kings of Immortality, Mountain Sea Black Lotus'. The Sea King, the Black King, and the Lotus King are all super experts above the Nascent Soul Stage!

"I appeared to be in the Building Foundation Stage even after I was partly recovered by the secret arts of the Temple of Immortals. What qualifications did I have to be on par with them?

"The higher they raised me, the clearer I was of their ill intentions.

"The Immortal Cultivators were trying to trade an empty title for the future of Iron Plateau!

"When all the cannon fodder ran out, they could do whatever they wanted to the 'Mountain King', who could not even defeat a Core Formation Stage Cultivator, couldn't they?

"Excellent plan. It was indeed an excellent plan!

"It's a pity that, if the Blood Stripe Virus had failed to transform me into its puppet, what made the Temple of Immortals think that they could manipulate me?

"On the surface, I pretended that I was fascinated by the Temple of Immortals' offer and joined the organization to become the 'Mountain King'.

"But under the table, I demanded a lot of resources, including the state-of-the-art research facilities and secret arts, from the Temple of Immortals under the pretext that I was making preparations for their plan.

"With the resources, I completed the Temple of Immortals' scheme while I conducted my own research. With the wildlings on the Dark Continent as experiment subjects, I tested the best methods to swallow the Blood Stripe Virus without being corrupted on them!

"In the meantime, I communicated with a meteorite with the foreign blood inside my body and turned it into my own egg of apocalypse!

"Don't think that you are in a random valley. This particular valley was carefully chosen after years of prospecting!

"Several rarely-seen mother lodes are buried deep below the ground of the valley where countless precious minerals were condensed. But they were too deeply concealed for Iron Plateau natives to explore and excavate.

"However, the eggs of apocalypse can absorb all of the underground resources!

"In short, this valley is my personal natural paradise!

"I planted an egg of apocalypse in the depths of the natural paradise. In the center of the egg of apocalypse, I grew the strongest calamity-level apocalyptic beast in history, which I carefully refined after gathering the essences of countless apocalyptic beasts!

"However, the calamity-level apocalyptic beast does not have a brain or thinking ability. It is just a body, an unfathomably strong 'apocalyptic body'!

"Hehe. The other three kings of The Temple of Immortals thought me an ignorant barbarian and an old fart that they could make use of as they saw fit. But they did not know that, once the apocalyptic body grew mature and I was fully melded with it through the blood stripes, I would be able to wield a terrifying combat ability far beyond that of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators!

"When that day comes, what can the Lotus King, the Sea King, and the Black King do with me?"

Chapter 626: Melding Completed!

Chapter 626: Melding Completed!

"Master Yan!"

Xiong Wuji stepped forward, leaving cracks on the ground. He raised his voice. "If you did not mean to help the Temple of Immortals, why did you kill your own brother and incite a war between Iron Plateau natives and space residents? Do you know how many people will die, how many towns will be destroyed, and how many refugees will have to flee and live in underground shelters for the rest of their lives once the war begins?"

"Of course, I do. However, as long as my plan is carried out, a war against the space residents is inevitable."

Yan Xibei smiled casually. "Since the war will break out sooner or later, we might just as well fight it in the name of the Temple of Immortals and make everyone else believe that we are cannon fodder that has been fooled.

"The thing about cannon fodder is that nobody will pay attention to it despite the scale, isn't it? Cultivators will be focused on the real schemer behind everything, the Temple of Immortals, won't they?

"It is also needless to say that we will be granted the ability to enter space during the war. We might even have chances to maneuver several starships of the space pirates or build some of our own!

"However, none of the factors were the main reasons for me to start the war.

"The most critical reason is that you will never agree to meld yourselves with the Blood Stripe Virus while at peace no matter what.

"But everything would change when a cruel war begins and Iron Plateau is in perils.

"Think about it. After the war begins, Iron Plateau will be bombarded into a wasteland by the space residents, and the surviving Iron Plateau natives will only be able to hide themselves in the underground shelters, shuddering in fear. Countless qi-trainers will suffer heavy wounds in the battles against Cultivators and will be on the brink of death.

"Right then, I will announce that I've developed a method that can recover the heavily wounded and increase their combat ability quickly.

"Even though the side effect of the method is that the patients will look quite ugly, it is utterly insignificant when they are motivated by hatred and threats that are suffocating Iron Plateau natives.

"When a large batch of qi-trainers accept the foreign blood and meld with the Blood Stripe Virus, there won't be too many obstacles to further promote the method.

"Hehe. Before long, we will raise a terrifying army with blood stripes below the ground of Iron Plateau!

"At that time, we will be able to counterattack and take over the Temple of Immortals as well as the space pirates under their control. We will sweep the Flying Star Sector and implement our will in every corner of the sea of stars!

"This is my whole plan, which is devoid of any selfish reasons. Everything is for the consideration of the future of Iron Plateau natives!"

Xiong Wuji felt creepy and gnashed his teeth. "It's a pity that your plan won't work out now!"

Yan Xibei sighed. "There are always unexpected factors. Over the past ten years, I've been working and hiding myself in secret all the time. On one hand, I could not let you see any anomalies. On the other hand, I had to deal with the cunning leaders of the Temple of Immortals!

"They thought that I was too old and stupid. I was ostensibly the supervisor of all the arrangements on Iron Plateau as the 'Mountain King', but they had been infiltrating the six tribes all the time. They were even bold enough to send a few spies to the Burning Sun Tribe! However, I pretended that I didn't know anything. All my patience was meant to buy me more time for the apocalyptic body to grow mature so that the war fire can be ignited!

"But I didn't expect that, although my decade-long plan was not seen through by the Lotus King, not by the elders of the six tribes, and not by the experts among the Cultivators… it was sabotaged by a wildling who jumped out of nowhere!

"I blame the Lotus King for my mistake. He told me that a space resident named 'Li Yao' had snuck into Iron Plateau. The man was cunning and full of dirty tricks. He was quite cruel and resolute, too. The Lotus King asked me to be very cautious of him.

"Sand Scorpion, when I learned your existence, and especially after you and Xiong Wuji fled together, I assumed that you are the space resident Li Yao. All my arrangements were based on that assumption!

"If you were indeed the space resident named Li Yao, you shouldn't have been able to pass the test of the Truth Cabinet, and the following changes wouldn't have happened at all!

"But I didn't expect that you would pass the test of the Truth Cabinet and prove that you are not a space resident. Since you have nothing to do with that Li Yao, a deadly loophole appeared in my plan."

Xiong Wuji shouted angrily, "Therefore, you killed your own nephew?"

Yan Xibei shook his head in regret. "Ah Feng was a good kid. He had been in touch with the 'Mountain King' the whole time, but he didn't know that the Mountain King was actually me.

"The situation at that time had already gone out of control.

"In order to refine the egg of apocalypse, and to fool the Immortal Cultivators such as the Lotus King as well as the experts of the six tribes, I'd already poured 99% of the foreign blood in my body into the egg of apocalypse to produce the apocalyptic body. I only kept a tiny bit of the foreign blood to maintain the connection.

"Before I joined with the apocalyptic body, I had not been strong enough to deal with the new changes.

"Therefore, when I discovered that things were getting out of my control, I commanded Ah Feng, under the name of the Mountain King, to lead you all into the valley at any cost.

"My original thought was that, if everything went well on the Truth Cabinet, then it would be all good. But if anything went wrong, I could interrupt the development of the apocalyptic body and meld with it ahead of schedule.

"However, I didn't anticipate that Ah Feng would kidnap me at the crucial moment in the end. I could only sacrifice him in order to free myself."

"Hu..."

Li Yao had been holding his breath and listening. He finally took a long breath in relief now that a few important questions that had been bothering him were resolved.

Sha Yulan's hands were moving faster and faster. Hundreds of stars seemed to be emerging among her fingers and blinking above Li Yao's abdomen. A moment later, she exclaimed, "We made it!

"I've finally dissolved all the spiritual energy contained inside the cores and sorted them through!

"Right now, as long as I guide all the spiritual energy into your heart and limbs with the secret massage arts, you will be able to absorb all of it!"

Li Yao beamed with joy. He couldn't help but grin. "Great! With so much spiritual energy, I will definitely be able to break the last three shackles of the Black Spider Death Curse!

"Yan Xibei, hehehehe, you think that you are a sure winner right now, but you don't know that a lot of unexpected factors are still here!

"After I break the Black Spider Death Curse, I will be able to advance into the peak of the Building Foundation Stage at the very least. Together with Xiong Wuji, who is in the 99th level of the Refinement Stage, and Lei Dalu, who is in the beginning level of the Core Formation Stage, as well as so many other qi-trainers, you will not remain invincible as long as we work together!

"It's only because you are too chatty! Why do bad guys like you always keep talking and wasting your time when your evil plan is about to work out? That is so idiotic!

"Sister Sha, how long do you expect it will take to guide all the spiritual energy into my heart?"

Sha Yulan calculated quickly and replied, "Very soon. Thirty hours, tops!"

Li Yao was rendered speechless. "Sister, now is not the time for jokes."

Sha Yulan frowned, "Who's joking? You only managed to survive the digestive process with my secret arts of the Sha family and your monster-like body. If it were a different person who had swallowed so many cores of apocalyptic beasts that had so many impurities, they would've been killed a long time ago!

"If the cores of apocalyptic beasts can be taken orally like tonics, wouldn't any random guy be able to become an expert after swallowing several of them?"

Li Yao smiled bitterly. "Fair enough, Sister! But according to my observation, Yan Xibei is not likely to talk for another day and night however loquacious he seems."

In the front, Xiong Wuji looked Yan Xibei in the eye and shouted excitedly, "Yan—"

"Wait!"

Yan Xibei tilted his head. He was wearing a relieved smile as if he had finished a prolonged wait for something. He burst into laughter. "Little Xiong. We'll talk later if you have anything else you want to say. But right now…"

"Hooooo!"

Yan Xibei's eyes suddenly bulged, and he roared without a warning. An intense, bloody aura spurted out of the pores all over his body and formed a crimson apocalypse cloud in the sky!

Surrounded by a thin layer of blood mist, he was ten times more intimidating than before!

Everybody was dumbfounded, including Li Yao.

"I'm sorry. There's something that I forgot to tell you," Yan Xibei said in a smile. "Since the apocalyptic body was dismembered from the egg of apocalypse in advance, it has been quite difficult for me to meld with it by force.

"In fact, the melding process was not completed until just now. My nerves and veins had all been growing and docking to my new body!

"If everybody had attacked without thinking the moment I showed up, there was a twenty or thirty percent likelihood that you might have been able to kill me.

"Therefore, I had to pick some topics that you were all interested in to buy me more time.

"Right now, the apocalyptic body has melded successfully. Although it is just a semi-product, it can still wield combat ability close to the Nascent Soul Stage!

"Thank you for your patience, everybody. Haha. Hahahaha!"

Sha Yulan looked at Li Yao emotionlessly.

Li Yao scratched his head. "Alright. It seems that Yan Xibei's wisdom is slightly higher than I thought."

Waving his enormous scorpion tail, Yan Xibei crawled close to everyone and grinned hideously. "I know that you still have a lot of questions, but it doesn't matter. I don't intend to kill you.

"I merely mean to beat you until you're heavily wounded, drag you underground, and transform all of you with the Blood Stripe Virus!

"When you are fully melded with the Blood Stripe Virus and evolve into a new life form, you will understand my efforts and realize that the path I am walking on is the only option to protect our home and create the brightest future!"

"Yan Xibei, you've been beguiled!" Xiong Wuji bellowed.

The black hide armor covering his upper body was broken into pieces, revealing a brawny body with overlapping scars. He opened his arms. His spiritual gas surged out like an iron wall that stood in Yan Xibei's way!

Chapter 627: Great Path of Immortality!

Chapter 627: Great Path of Immortality!

"You claim that you are creating the brightest future, but isn't the future of Iron Plateau made of every Iron Plateau native's future?"

Xiong Wuji crossed his hands. Two thick-backed, broad-edged sabers appeared in his hands. The auras of his blades extended out into a burning crosshair. He said, "When a war between Iron Plateau natives and space residents breaks out, with the Immortal Cultivators stirring trouble, even if the experts can be melded with the Blood Stripe Virus, what are the ordinary people going to do? From Iron Plateau to the space, billions of ordinary people will die! They do not even have a 'present', and you are talking about 'future'! What kind of bullsh*t future is that?"

Yan Xibei burst into laughter. His six insect limbs moved forward like paddles as he accelerated. The spreading bloody brightness around him condensed into two sharp claws again, which snatched at Xiong Wuji from both sides!

BOOM!

Their spiritual gas collided heavily. As if a crystal bomb weighing a hundred thousand tons had been detonated, quite a few True Qi tanks nearby were knocked into the air and smashed the ground, turning into wasted iron and copper.

All the qi-trainers and Cultivators found it hard to keep their eyes open against the blast. The sweeping dust blocked everything. They could only hear Yan Xibei scream in the center of the sandstorm, "For the succession of our civilization, some people must be sacrificed. Too many of our ancestors have sacrificed themselves while we struggled to survive in the desolate planet for thousands of years. What's wrong with sacrificing more right now? All the deaths will be worthwhile as long as our civilization proceeds!"

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Two True Qi trains seemed to be crashing continuously inside the sandstorm, or maybe they were two hungry tyrannosaurs that were mauling each other. Not only was the earth shaking, even the stars in the sky seemed to be unable to withstand the summit confrontation of the two best warriors of Iron Plateau. The rays from the sky were feeble and shivering!

Xiong Wuji roared, "Didn't our ancestors choose to stay on Iron Plateau in order to protect our home and the ordinary people living on it? Our ancestors worked hard for five thousand years so that the wasteland could finally be revived. But right now, you are going to set it in war flames again and kill so many ordinary people! A civilization that passes on in such a way is definitely not the civilization that our ancestors wanted. Definitely not!

"There are clearly many other ways to solve the problem of being possessed by an alien civilization! We can cooperate with the space residents! All the human beings can work together and crack the mysteries of the Blood Stripe Virus!

"You've been bewildered, Yan Xibei! No. You are not Yan Xibei at all!

"The Yan Xibei I knew was willing to fight for every Iron Plateau native, no matter whether they were strong or weak, qi-trainers or ordinary people, old or young, and from the Burning Sun Tribe or the Furious Bears Tribe. When they were in danger, the real Yan Xibei would show up and fight for them at any cost!

"If sacrifices were unavoidable, he would only sacrifice himself! He would definitely not let someone else die and shamelessly call that 'sacrifice'!

"Yan Xibei is dead. You are only the Blood Stripe Virus, the Blood Demon, taking his body as your shell!

"When your plan succeeds, the Iron Plateau natives and the space residents will all be destroyed and turned into a species entirely different from human beings! That is your real plan. Your plan of possession!

"I, Xiong Wuji, might not be a real Iron Plateau native, but regardless of whether I am an Iron Plateau native or a space resident, I won't let things go your way!"

BOOM!

As Xiong Wuji roared, an unparalleled blast spread out crazily and blew away the dust around the two of them. A picture of two statues was revealed!

Xiong Wuji's dual sabers were pushed against the two mantis forelegs on Yan Xibei's insect body. Although they were absolutely still, dazzling sparks were bursting out from where the blades kissed each other!

Xiong Wuji's immense spiritual gas of the 99th level of the Refinement Stage condensed incessantly around him like an unyielding torch that was burning crazily with his life as its fuel!

Yan Xibei's bloody aura, on the other hand, had turned into two enormous hands and pressed Xiong Wuji's flames of spiritual gas!

Earsplitting thunders were breaking out where the two streams of spiritual energy clashed!

The two parties seemed to be in an impasse. However, Yan Xibei was smiling and showing no signs of trouble, while Xiong Wuji's face was red, and the veins on his neck were twice as swollen as before.

BOOM!

Yan Xibei pressed downward. Xiong Wuji finally couldn't bear it any longer. He grunted, the skin all over his body fracturing with blood jetting out. He fell to one knee.

Centered at him, the earth ten square meters nearby collapsed for half a meter!

"Chief!"

"Chief Xiong!"

Although Xiong Wuji had resigned as the chief of the Furious Bears Tribe in front of all the qi-trainers, many of them forgot to change their way of addressing him in the time of urgency.

Pa!

Yan Xibei's scorpion tail turned into a streak of blackness and whipped Xiong Wuji hard. Xiong Wuji could not dodge and had to take the blow the hard way, only to be slapped almost fifty meters away and crash into two rocks before he finally fell to the ground. A shocking purple bruise appeared before his chest, and he vomited a mouthful of black blood!

"Did you see that? This is the formidability of the apocalyptic body! The 99th level of the Refinement Stage is but the strength of an ant in front of me!"

Taking a deep breath, Yan Xibei was fascinated by the unprecedently strong body, with joy beaming out of his face. He rubbed his mantis forelegs and crawled toward Xiong Wuji slowly, while he remarked coldly, "Do you think that everything will be fixed after you finish the Blood Stripe Virus?

"Naïve!

"The human civilization has been too fortunate. Unbelievably fortunate!

"In the hundreds of thousands of years while we evolved from monkeys into human beings and built up a civilization with a territory beyond one planet, we were never once discovered by any strong unknown species. We lived our lives like babies in cradles, safely and happily.

"In our childhood, when we explored the sea of stars, the constellations around us were all inhabited by creatures far weaker than us. We could conquer them, enslave them, and plunder their resources at our will. Finally, we built a powerful nation called the Star Ocean Imperium in our peak!

"However, luck is not going to be on our side forever!

"If the Blood Stripe Virus could discover us, why can't the deity-like civilizations that I saw in the heritage of the Blood

Stripe Virus?

"Or rather, in the depths of the endless cosmos, will there be a super civilization that is stronger than any alien species that the Blood Stripe Virus has seen? Maybe human beings are but ants for them!

"Even if we fixed the problem of the Blood Stripe Virus today, what if a stronger civilization invades us tomorrow?

"What if another apocalypse breaks out, this time, not about passing on knowledge and possessing our civilization but about pure destruction? What are we going to do if a deity-like civilization yawns and stomps on an ant accidentally?

"Just wake up! The carefree childhood is long over. We are surrounded by a perilous sea of stars and a dark forest where countless ferocious animals and birds are lurking. If they so much as sense our existence, they will jump out and swallow us for dinner!

"Be stronger!

"We have no other options except to become stronger. Become stronger through whatever methods at whatever cost!

"Tigers eat men, but men can eat tigers, too. Our only path is to get stronger and stronger and be men who eat tigers and dinosaurs. If deities do exist, we will eat all of them someday!

"Melding with the Blood Stripe Virus and evolving into stronger, more excellent human beings is the first step!

"After that, we will continue evolving. Eliminate the weak and become even stronger! Only by doing so can we expect to compete with the invincible deities and survive in the dark forest for all eternity!"

Standing in front of Xiong Wuji, Yan Xibei looked down at him.

While vomiting blood, Xiong Wuji smiled miserably. "Eliminate the weak? The deaths of billions of ordinary people are nothing but 'elimination' for you?"

"I don't like the Immortal Cultivators, but they're right about one thing."

The bloody brightness around Yan Xibei was still condensing. It was even darker and denser, making him look like a devil being born from blood. He said, "The evolution has long begun. Cultivators, Immortal Cultivators, and qi-trainers are all new human beings who have made a step forward in the path of evolution!

"Stronger, smarter, better human beings are the only hope for mankind. From the perspective of the civilization as a whole, ordinary people who cannot evolve are utterly useless. Their only value is to serve as soil and provide nutrition and resources for us.

"If the conditions allow, I am not a man who hungers for blood.

"But right now, the environment we are faced with is too harsh. The useless ordinary people have already become burdens and nuisances!

"Put down the burdens and cut off the nuisances so that we can march into the battlefield with a light pack. Concentrate all our resources on evolution. That is the only way of survival in the dark forest!

"Hehe. The selfish members of the Temple of Immortals are too scared of death and only pursue their own longevity. They are shameless enough to call themselves 'Immortal Cultivators'.

"Maybe, the new human beings who pursue the immortality of the human civilization with every method possible, such as myself, are the real Immortal Cultivators!

"What I am Cultivating is the real great path of immortality!

"Evolve! Continue evolving! One day in the future, the human civilization will evolve into a celestial civilization, and we will be the strongest hunter in the dark forest!"

Pa!

Wu Mayan dashed to Xiong Wuji's back without anybody knowing and dragged him back quickly, while he shouted at Yan Xibei, "Look at yourself. Celestial civilization? I call it a cockroach civilization!"

Yan Xibei was dazed for a moment and smiled without being bothered. "Celestials or cockroaches, the critical thing is that we are alive.

"Survival is everything. There are endless possibilities as long as we are alive!

"Live. Live on. Live on like insects, swine, tigers, wolves, dragons, snakes, gods, or devils!

"This is my path and the path leading to the immortality of the human civilization. This is the only real path of immortality!"

Chapter 628: Make a Road, Set a Fire!

Chapter 628: Make a Road, Set a Fire!

BOOM!

Yan Xibei was talking so excitedly that the bloody aura around him was all dancing as if it were alive. However, a fireball suddenly exploded in front of him, and the brightness around Yan Xibei was shrieking in pain.

As it turned out, Wu Mayan had shot out a crystal bomb brutally with a thick True Qi gun!

"Huh?"

Ruthlessness suddenly blinked in Yan Xibei's eyes, and he grinned hideously. "Those who are too stubborn to embrace evolution shall all be eliminated!"

A bloody claw was suddenly condensed in midair and snatched at Wu Mayan's head, producing earsplitting noises.

Fearlessly, Wu Mayan grabbed a saber that was even longer than himself and jumped up into the sky, slashing the bloody claw!

However, he was too young and only in the 13th level of the Refinement Stage after all. After the clash, the bloody claws remained harmless, but his own saber was broken in half after a clang from the middle!

Wu Mayan grunted. His fingers bleeding, he fell down from the sky.

The bloody claw was much faster than him and went directly for his skull. If they snatched his head, it would definitely be crumbled in the next second!

In the time of urgency, Xiong Wuji suddenly rose up. He picked up his foster son and put him on his back, while he crossed his arms and summoned his spiritual gas to block the bloody claws!

" Do not touch my son! "

Yan Xibei smiled casually. He suddenly exerted his strength. The blood claw seemed to have turned into a red shooting star and blew Xiong Wuji and Wu Mayan hundreds of meters away, leaving a deep ravine in the ground.

The two of them span wildly in midair and crashed into the qi-trainers.

The qi-trainers hurried to help Xiong Wuji get on his feet, only to discover that his chest was bloody and hot steam was popping out nonstop, as if he had really just been hit by a meteorite.

The qi-trainers of the Furious Bears Tribe and the other five tribes as well as Cultivators from the Great Horn Exo Society were all greatly awed!

Tiny fighting will was hovering and consolidating above the exhausted warriors' heads.

Most of them were using their sabers and flags as clubs and managed to stand on their feet by supporting each other.

Motivated by invisible strength, their fighting will reverberated, and their spiritual gas surged out!

"Fight! Let's fight!"

"Chief Xiong was right. He is not Yan Xibei. He is not a human being. He is the Blood Stripe Virus. A Blood Demon!"

Sha Yulan gritted her teeth, with hot tears rolling inside her eyes. She forced herself to not look at Xiong Wuji and continued guiding the spiritual energy to attack Li Yao's heart wholeheartedly.

Sensing the reverberating fighting will that was even more emotive than before, Li Yao felt like he was in the middle of a raging ocean and could not hold it any longer. He jumped up and grabbed a broken saber. A bloody aura immediately sprayed out of his blade!

Sha Yulan exclaimed in a low voice, "The guidance has not been completed yet. The immense spiritual energy is still on a rampage inside your veins, nerves, and internal organs. If it is not completely dissolved and digested, you may die in body explosion at any moment!"

"There's no time to bother about that!" Li Yao spat, only to discover that his saliva raised a tiny flame when it hit the ground.

Licking his lips, he couldn't tell what the simmering situation inside his body really was. He simply said, "Let me just slash him and enjoy myself for a moment!"

"Kill him!"

Chiefs of the Giant Axe Tribe, the Feathered Snakes Tribe, the Heaven Wolves Tribe, and the Silver Moon Tribe, as well as the dozens of qi-trainers who still had the ability to fight, roared and rushed forward!

"Kill him!"

Lei Dalu, Zuo Xiaohu, Lu Dian, and the other Cultivators of the Great Horn Exo Society who could still stand also charged at the enemy without thinking about anything else!

"Kill him!"

Li Yao felt that his body was on fire. The broken saber in his hand had joined with him and became an unquenchable torch. It was not spiritual gas that was spurting out of the back of his armor, but orange exhaust flames!

Accelerating himself to the maximum speed, Li Yao turned into a brilliant star and darted at Yan Xibei!

"Ants are just ants! What can you do even if your number is impressive?" Yan Xibei suddenly roared.

The bloody flames hundreds of square meters around him suddenly exploded! A hundred bloody claws extended from the ocean of blood and snatched at everybody on the spot!

Pu!

Li Yao felt that his chest had been bashed hundreds of times within the moment. The spiritual gas that he had just summoned all collapsed, while he was blown hundreds of meters away and crashed into a heavy tank!

There was nothing but blood-red in front of his eyes. Two honeycombs seemed to have been stuffed into his ears, because he could hear nothing except an incessant humming. It was not until almost twenty seconds later that he regained his sight and hearing. He discovered that the hundreds of people who had charged forward had all been blown back by the storm and were scattered on the battlefield.

Most of them were unconscious. There was no telling whether they were alive or dead.

Those who were conscious had also been heavily wounded and were bleeding profusely, unable to stand up again.

Yan Xibei sneered, "The fierce battle over the previous three hours drained your spiritual gas. Even though you were above the 70th level of the Refinement Stage, your combat ability is below the 20th level of the Refinement Stage now that your spiritual gas had run dry and you are exhausted.

"In comparison, this apocalyptic body of mine boasts combat ability close to the Nascent Soul Stage!

"On what grounds do you think you can fight against me—"

Before Yan Xibei finished his sentence, his pupils shrank violently as he looked to his left in surprise.

To his left, a man soaked in blood, with no skin still intact, managed to stumble to his feet.

The best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, Xiong Wuji!

Yan Xibei squinted, crawled over, and shook his head. "It's useless. Little Xiong, give up!"

Xiong Wuji stood stably and took a deep breath. Still in a trance, he looked around for anything that could serve as a weapon near him. He smiled miserably and said, "That's why I say that you are not Master Yan at all.

"When I was the most confused, the most desperate, and the most frustrated, it was Master Yan who told me that strength and victory did not matter for an Iron Plateau qi-trainer.

"What matters is to fight and never to give up as long as you are still breathing!"

Yan Xibei narrowed his eyes. His scorpion tail was raised high again.

"Father Xiong, you've been injured. Let me!"

Protected by Xiong Wuji just now, Wu Mayan only rolled tumble a few times on the ground and was not wounded. He tore off two strips of cloth from his coat with his teeth and bound his hands with the broken saber. Then he dashed to Xiong Wuji and glared at the scorpion tail that was even thicker than his waist. He raised his saber high and gnashed his teeth. "Come on, you monster. I am Wu Mayan, Xiong Wuji's son and the future best warrior of Iron Plateau!"

"What a touching father-son relationship."

Yan Xibei smiled. The scorpion tail turned into a streak of brightness again, this time, not whipping but piercing!

The sharp venomous sting was aimed at Wu Mayan's thin chest!

Wu Mayan shouted desperately. The surging spiritual gas around the young man was definitely much more than fifteen square meters. His soaring fighting will seemed to have repaired the broken saber and made it even sharper than when it was intact. He slashed it down brutally!

Chi!

The scorpion tail penetrated flesh. The venomous pierced through the body out of the back!

"Ahh!" Sha Yulan cried, her tears flowing out.

But a moment later, she suddenly found that her son had been kicked away when the sting arrived, and it was actually Xiong Wuji who had been pierced through!

The sting had penetrated into Xiong Wuji's left shoulder blade, but he clutched the thick scorpion tail, and his legs stabbed into the earth like two giant trees. Yan Xibei found it impossible to retract the tail however hard he tried!

" Do not touch my son! "

With every word Xiong Wuji roared, the earth below him would quake. His dispersed spiritual gas was concentrated again and raged out like a tsunami!

Ten meters… Twenty meters… Thirty meters…

The range of Xiong Wuji's surging spiritual gas continued expanding!

"Little Xiong, you are truly unsuitable to be a leader. Too emotional. It was only your foster son whom you don't have any blood relationship with!"

Yan Xibei slowly wriggled his scorpion tail and enlarged the wound on Xiong Wuji's left shoulder.

The dense thorns on the scorpion tail almost shattered Xiong Wuji's left shoulder.

Yan Xibei declared gloomily, "Not just a foster son, even a true born son must be sacrificed for the continuity of the civilization when necessary!

"In the dark universe, everything must be calculated precisely for survival. Emotions are the most useless things of all. The new human beings after evolution should retain none of them!"

"Father Xiong!"

Wu Mayan was somewhat lightheaded. He tried to stand up with his broken saber as a club but failed after multiple attempts.

"Big Xiong!"

Sha Yulan rushed toward the two most important men in her life without caring about anything.

Yan Xibei raised his eyebrow. Killing intent appeared in his eyes. Yet, before he launched the fatal attacks toward the two, he suddenly felt an enormous, uncanny force coming from his scorpion tail!

Xiong Wuji had pushed him three meters backwards against his scorpion tail with a body of flesh and blood!

The range of Xiong Wuji's surging spiritual gas was still expanding. Seventy square meters. Eighty. Ninety…

"Without emotions, what is the difference between humans and rocks?"

Every muscle on Xiong Wuji's body was cramping because of the excruciating pain. Blood was flowing out of the gaps in his broken armor like rivers. Two bloody footprints were left behind as he stepped forward.

Even so, he was still pushing Yan Xibei back!

The range of his surging spiritual gas was still growing. Ninety-three square meters. Ninety-four. Ninety-five!

"Chief!"

"Chief Xiong!"

Countless qi-trainers who had fallen to the ground, unable to stand up, were clenching their fists and cheering for him.

Even Li Yao was gritting his teeth, as if it were a way to transfer the remaining fighting will inside his soul into Xiong Wuji's body!

"We are, of course, evolving continuously, to be smarter, stronger, and more excellent.

"But the purpose of our evolution is to protect more people and let more people live a better life!

"I've been training crazily and making myself stronger all the time because I want to protect my homeland, my compatriots, and the very planet below our feet!

"If I have to sacrifice my home, my family, and everything that I swore to protect in order to be mightier, such strength is definitely not what I want!"

Ninety-seven square meters. Ninety-eight square meters. Ninety-nine square meters!

Amidst the endless, reverberating fighting will from countless qi-trainers, Xiong Wuji improved himself, reaching the 99th level of the Refinement Stage, the highest state for the qi-trainers of Iron Plateau over the past five thousand years!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Yan Xibei's bloody aura formed another hundred claws and bashed Xiong Wuji's spiritual gas. Every blow made Xiong Wuji's body tremble and his wounds bleed fast!

"Even if the universe is as dark as you described, we will not abandon our emotions or the things that we swore to protect!"

As if pressed by a pair of invisible, giant hands, Xiong Wuji bent, and his knees fell to the ground beyond his control.

However, no matter how many new wounds were added to his body, no matter how many bones were broken, and no matter how badly his internal organs were torn apart, he gritted his teeth through the agony and even stood straight again without giving in!

Xiong Wuji laughed aloud. "What you see as burdens and nuisances are the only motivation for us to stride forward in my eyes! We will carry everything on our back and walk forth until we get out of the dark forest!"

"Just wake up. There are no roads in the dark forest. We will never walk out of it!" Yan Xibei roared. The veins on the apocalyptic body became as thick as boas. A boundless ocean of blood swept at Xiong Wuji!

"If there are no roads, we will make one. If we can't walk out, we will set the dark forest on fire and burn it to the ground!"

Xiong Wuji uttered a deafening roar. The range of his spiritual gas was supposed to have reached its limits, but it continued magnifying, despite the suppression of Yan Xibei's blood ocean. Finally—

The range of his surging spiritual gas reached a hundred square meters!

Chapter 629: Strongest Strike!

Chapter 629: Strongest Strike!

"This is—"

The qi-trainers were very sensitive about the range of spiritual gas. With their bare eyes, they could easily measure that Xiong Wuji's surging spiritual gas had reached a hundred square meters, which meant that he was in the 100th level of the Refinement Stage, an accomplishment that no expert in the five thousand years of history of Iron Plateau had ever achieved!

What was the difference between ninety-nine and a hundred?

The difference seemed as insignificant as one square meter, but a change in quantity always led to a change of quality eventually. The last one square meter was the critical threshold!

Hot water at 99 degrees Celsius would boil if it was heated one degree higher!

Xiong Wuji's spiritual gas was boiling!

For a moment, everyone felt that Xiong Wuji's spiritual gas had experienced a drastic change.

It had nothing to do with the coverage. His spiritual gas was now granted with something entirely new, as if it boasted an independent will. It was expanding and constricting uncontrollably like everybody's heart that was beating faster and faster!

"This is—"

Yan Xibei sensed that a strong force was spurting out despite the suppression of his bloody mist, like a patch of grass that was crawling out of the crevices and growing stubbornly despite the heavy rock above its head.

Confusion appeared in his blood-red eyes for the first time, but it was soon replaced by endless brutality. The scorpion tail was spinning at an even larger angle, while the two mantis forelegs were raised high!

"He!"

Streams of spiritual gas jetted out from Xiong Wuji's eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, and the pores all over his body. They interweaved and melded with each other, forming a raging, dominating cloud of spiritual gas above his head that was confronting Yan Xibei's apocalypse cloud not far away!

He suddenly bellowed and exerted his strength. His countless veins immediately bulged wide and exploded below his skin!

Xiong Wuji's hands clutched Yan Xibei's scorpion tail like two pincers. He then pulled it so hard that Yan Xibei almost fell over. Shaking the scorpion tail crazily, Xiong Wuji was swinging Yan Xibei, who was unable to stand on his feet steadily.

Xiong Wuji was only slightly more than two meters tall, but he was like a hammer throw athlete. Standing in the center firmly, he used Yan Xibei's tail as his chain and swung Yan

Xibei, who was almost five meters tall, around almost a hundred times!

Dust was raging out around the two of them, as if a tornado was soaring and charging at the sky!

The two streams of immense spiritual energy disturbed the balance of nature. Dark clouds crowded close from various directions and swept across the night sky like a black tide. Bolts of lightning were swimming in the ocean of blackness like dragons extending their sharp claws. The earsplitting thunder seemed to be competing with the roars of the two experts on the ground!

The cold raindrops were smacking every qi-trainer's face hard.

A storm was coming!

BOOM!

After the hundredth swing, a deafening explosion burst out in the middle of the tornado. Cracks immediately spread out on the ground. A spider net hundreds of meters in diameter emerged. Xiong Wuji had bashed Yan Xibei to the ground hard!

The sand was flying about them, and the spiritual gas was on a rampage. Everyone's eyes were wide open, and yet they could only see a mist of blood. Even if they perceived the battlefield with their spiritual energy, they could only sense a raging ocean of blood and a torch that was burning through the heavens!

In the sky, the cloud of spiritual gas formed by Xiong Wuji and Yan Xibei's apocalypse cloud were still crashing and mauling each other like two ferocious animals. The cracks on the ground, which were getting denser and denser, were also demonstrating the intensity of their fierce battle!

Everyone, including Li Yao, could do nothing except watch.

The formidability of either Xiong Wuji, who had reached the 100th level of the Refinement Stage, or Yan Xibei, who boasted the apocalyptic body, was much higher than themselves. Even if they managed to stand up and join the fight, they would merely be distractions to Xiong Wuji.

Therefore, they could only grit their teeth and clench their fists while they released their fighting will and reverberated with Xiong Wuji, who was becoming more and more determined!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

In the end, nobody was able to tell whether the sounds were the noises resulting from the combat of the two experts in the mist or the thunder that was breaking out in the sky!

BOOM! CRACK!

An extremely thick lightning hit the mist brutally like an upside-down gold tree!

A muscular man was blown backward from the mist and crashed into a True Qi tank, which lead to an explosion. He then stood firmly in the flames!

Li Yao blinked his eyes hard and looked. It was Xiong Wuji!

Xiong Wuji seemed to have just returned from the bottom level of hell after slaying some crazy devils on his way; he couldn't have appeared more wretched.

The scorpion tail that had been stabbed into his left shoulder had been torn off from Yan Xibei's body by brute force and was dangling softly from his shoulder.

But the tail had pierced so deeply that his left shoulder blade had been entirely broken. His left arm was swinging beside his body, apparently crippled.

As for his right arm—

Xiong Wuji had lost his right arm in the previous battle against the apocalypse. Li Yao made an iron artificial arm for him later.

The very artificial arm had been twisted into a cluster of wasted copper and iron in the fierce fight. It was even blown away in the end. What was left was a bare elbow on his right shoulder.

Since only several days had passed after the battle of the apocalypse, the wound on his elbow had not fully recovered yet. During the fierce battle, it had torn apart and was bleeding again, making Xiong Wuji look as miserable as anyone could.

Xiong Wuji's two arms had both been broken!

Deep laughter came from within the bloody mist.

No words could describe Xiong Wuji's eyes. The fury in the eyes of all the qi-trainers on the spot seemed to have been condensed in the depths of his!

He waved his broken arms, the aura around him increasing instead of diminishing. The tremendous spiritual gas of the 100th level of the Refinement Stage was consolidated and further consolidated in front of his broken arm in helical forms!

He seemed to have grown two thick arms of spiritual energy. His new hands that were condensed by his fighting will and fury were clenched, and his fists became a bright ball that was even more dazzling than the sun!

As the bright ball continued expanding, Xiong Wuji was withering at a visible speed. His brawny and healthy body was becoming dry, as if the bright ball had drained all of his vitality.

In a moment, Li Yao realized what Xiong Wuji was doing.

He was burning his life and soul. He was going to let out all of his spiritual gas in the purest, most violent, and most direct way!

Once the attack was released, Xiong Wuji's veins and nerves would all be destroyed, and he would become useless, if not killed on the spot. He would be even weaker than those in the first level of the Refinement Stage!

Li Yao's eyes bulged, and he held his breath. He was not able to utter anything, but his heart was beating faster and faster at the same pace with the hearts of Xiong Wuji and all the other qi-trainers and Cultivators in the battlefield.

There were no shocked exclamations at this moment.

There was no useless crap such as 'No, Chief Xiong, don't!'

Everybody simply gritted their teeth and tightened their muscles, while they stared at the strongest man on Iron Plateau launching the strongest strike of his life!

"Hooo!"

There was no telling whether it was thunder in the sky or the roars from Xiong Wuji's chest, or maybe it was the sound of Xiong Wuji's blast blowing into the bloody mist.

The chuckles inside the bloody mist came to an abrupt stop, replaced by an exclamation of disbelief. However, the exclamation only lasted half a second, because it was soon buried by an earsplitting explosion!

The bloody mist turned into shields, trying to block the blast that had been condensed out of Xiong Wuji's lifelong spiritual gas. The entanglement of the two clusters of immense spiritual energy attracted the thunderbolts in the sky like two super magnets. Lightning fell into the bloody mist nonstop, dying it dazzling white and making everybody unable to keep their eyes open. Hot tears and cold rainwater mixed and covered their face. Blood and sweat, a bitter and salty combination, flowed in their mouths!

The explosion continued for another ten seconds.

A storm finally embraced the earth.

Everybody raised their head and found that the place where Yan Xibei and Xiong Wuji fought had become a deep crater from which crimson steam was popping out nonstop. There was no sign of Yan Xibei at first glance at all.

"Big Xiong!"

"Father Xiong!"

Wu Mayan and Sha Yulan rushed toward Xiong Wuji.

Xiong Wuji's short hair had turned purely white. His muscular body was now as skinny as a skeleton. He shivered and slowly turned around, opening his broken arms with a big smile, before he finally collapsed to the ground.

The moment he collapsed, Wu Mayan and Sha Yulan reached him. The three of them held each other in the pouring rain.

Is Yan Xibei dead?

Li Yao's heart was still beating fast, not because of the influence of Xiong Wuji's fighting will anymore, but because he vaguely sensed that danger was not gone yet.

The crimson steam from the crater was darker and more furious!

Soon, before the smile on the qi-trainers' faces vanished, their uneasy eyes were focused on the crater again.

Even Xiong Wuji, who had only closed his eyes in Sha Yulan's arms for half a second, suddenly gawked wide-eyed at the crater in disbelief.

Desperation appeared on the face of the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau for the first time!

"Hehe. Hehehehe..."

Coarse laughter came over from the crater, as an extremely ugly thing slowly crept out!

Yan Xibei's upper body was tilted to a weird angle. A shockingly giant hole appeared on the right part of his chest. Half of his body had almost been blown off. The right side of his face had been affected, too, where his many body parts, including his right eye and right ear, were gone!

It seemed that a meteorite had just pierced through his body.

However, the blood stripes tangling him were wriggling and repairing his body crazily.

Granulated tissue covered the wounds, which were being healed at a visible speed. But he was even more hideous than before.

A cluster of bloody mist enshrouded the right side of his face and quickly fixed his right eye. However, when the bloody mist faded, what took its place was a crimson compound eye that made everybody feel chilly.

"Xiong Wuji, I didn't expect that the 100th level of the Refinement Stage, the ultimate level that the qi-trainers of Iron Plateau had been dreaming for five thousand years, should be first broken into by a space resident! I feel very happy as your teacher!

"However, as I said, the apocalyptic body boasts a combat ability close to the Nascent Soul Stage!

"No matter how many breakthroughs you make, whatever mutations you experience, you think you can defeat me with only the 100th level of the Refinement Stage?

"How about a second strike exactly like the previous one? Maybe I will be defeated by you if so. Haha. Hahahaha!"

Instead of waiting for his body to be fully recovered, Yan Xibei waved his broken forelegs and crawled toward everyone!

Desperation. Everybody was grasped by endless desperation!

How could Xiong Wuji possibly perform the strongest strike that he had just unleashed by burning his life and soul at the cost of his lifelong Cultivation a second time?

Would any of the remaining warriors be able to take Yan Xibei's one attack, if they could stand up at all?

"Huala! Huala!"

The heavy rain poured on Li Yao's head as well as into his heart, drowning all his messy feelings.

All the methods had been tried. But he still needed a day and a night to dissolve all the spiritual energy and break the remaining three shackles of the Black Spider Death—

Li Yao's eyes suddenly widened.

To his surprise, he found that the Black Spider Death Curse, which had been confining his heart, had only two shackles left. One of them had vanished into thin air!

He squinted and thought carefully, recalling that Yan Xibei had bashed his chest precisely where his heart was when he charged at the monster.

Could it be that Yan Xibei blew up a shackle of the Black Spider Death Curse when he was trying to blow up my heart?

Chapter 630: Make a Legend!

Chapter 630: Make a Legend!

Seeing that Yan Xibei was crawling closer and closer and his veins were becoming thicker and thicker, making his face so twisted that it could barely be called human, Li Yao gritted his teeth, picked up a broken saber, and charged at Yan Xibei, while he roared, "Don't be fooled, everybody! This old fart is bluffing!

"How can he be unharmed after enduring a full-strength strike from Chief Xiong? His capability must be at the rock bottom right now! Let's kill him while he's injured!"

Li Yao bellowed and jumped up!

The very next second, he was already slapped away by the enormous hand formed by Yan Xibei's bloody mist, as if he were but a fly. After waving his hands and legs crazily in the air, he crashed into a hill heavily and cracked many rocks!

His head dizzy, Li Yao felt that every bone in his chest had been fractured into multiple pieces. A mouthful of blood was stuck inside his throat, neither going up or going down. He couldn't have felt more uncomfortable.

Yet, a smile of relief beamed on Li Yao's face, because, when he sensed his body carefully, he found that there were only… There were still two shackles of Black Spider Death Curse!

You've got to be kidding me!

Li Yao was dumbfounded. His eyelids were jumping crazily while he remembered the previous blow. It seemed that he had failed to adjust his body to the perfect angle at the last moment. Therefore, Yan Xibei's strike did not hit his heart precisely, veering a little bit to the right.

Li Yao spat the blood in his mouth out. Looking at the lightning flashing in the sky, he was of a mind to roar to cheer everybody up. However, he finally gave up after three seconds of preparation due to lack of strength. He gnashed his teeth. "You've seen it, everybody. Yan Xibei has been heavily wounded and is weaker than ever. The blow is soft and entirely strengthless—Pu!"

A mouthful of blood was finally thrown out. Illuminated by the lightning, Li Yao's face was paler than that of a corpse.

The qi-trainers and the Cultivators, on the other hand, realized that it was true. After Xiong Wuji broke into the 100th level of the Refinement Stage, he was at least equal to a Core Formation Stage Cultivator. The strongest strike at the cost of his life and all his Cultivation wouldn't be harmless for Yan Xibei at all.

Flesh and blood could be repaired quickly. However, the combat ability could not be recovered so fast.

Right now, Yan Xibei was at his weakest.

But his capability was recovering quickly with every passing second!

"Let's go! This is our last chance!"

With a roar, the dozens of qi-trainers and Cultivators all burnt their life and soul while they staggered and lunged at Yan Xibei for their last strike!

Yan Xibei's face was extremely gloomy under the bloody aura. He glared at Li Yao with the utmost hatred.

He had suffered heavy wounds when he had just melded with the apocalyptic body that was not even mature yet. Li Yao was quite right that he could not have recovered instantly.

He had planned to bluff to buy himself more time just as he did in the beginning. But the wretched 'Sand Scorpion' saw through him this time!

Of course, Yan Xibei was not in the least bothered by the flies that were coming at him. But many of his veins and organs had just been reborn and were not suitable for a fierce fight yet!

"You are seeking your own death!"

Gnashing his teeth, Yan Xibei clutched a random qi-trainer with his bloody claw. The newborn mantis foreleg slashed brutally, and the qi-trainer's head immediately left his body!

He had no time to care about his plan now; he was merely venting his anger by slaughtering!

However, the miserable death of a qi-trainer made the other qi-trainers even more unbendable. They all charged at him in no fear of death at all!

Li Yao gritted his teeth and sprinted again. This time, his computational ability soared while he calculated the trajectories and strength of Yan Xibei's attacks accurately so that he could set himself in the most appropriate position.

When his saber slashed into Yan Xibei's insect body, the bloody claw snatched his heart precisely!

The attack almost pierced through his heart.

The second to last shackle of Black Spider Death Curse that had been hiding inside his heart disappeared after a weak scream!

This is the way!

Li Yao was overjoyed. He vomited blood but laughed as he guided his spiritual energy to repair the damaged heart and calculated the second chance.

Now is the time!

While Yan Xibei was holding one qi-trainer in each of his hands, Li Yao charged at Yan Xibei's face, his eyes shining coldly!

As he expected, Yan Xibei had been prepared for the potential attacks at his chest. The bloodstained spider threads interweaved into the sharpest net of defense, and a cluster of bloody mist rushed out at Li Yao's own chest!

In the depths of Li Yao's heart, a cluster of spiritual energy was long ready, too. It almost spurted out of his chest at the same time!

When the two streams of spiritual energy collided heavily, the last shackle in the middle was immediately burnt to ashes!

BOOM!

Li Yao was blown backward again, this time crashing into a drumming tank of the Giant Axe Tribe by accident. A dull noise echoed inside the big drum.

LUM DUM! LUM DUM LUM DUM LUM DUM!

Li Yao could hear nothing in the darkness except his own heartbeat, which was clearer and heavier than ever and sounded like blood-boiling drumming that was faster and faster!

The nine shackles of the Black Spider Death Curse had all been destroyed. He had regained the ability to liquefy his spiritual gas and advance into the Building Foundation Stage!

Li Yao grinned and laughed crazily and silently in the darkness. He summoned all his soul power and spread out all the spiritual gas inside his body!

The range of his surging spiritual gas was thirty square meters, forty square meters fifty square meters… Seventy, eighty!

"Huh?"

Harassed by the many qi-trainers, Yan Xibei was feeling upset when he suddenly sensed that a cluster of spiritual gas was expanding beyond his expectation.

The other qi-trainers also gazed at where Li Yao was in bewilderment.

They discovered that the cluster of spiritual gas did not stop expanding when it reached eighty square meters but continued spreading out!

"This is—"

Everybody gasped. A tiny spark was kindled in the bottom of their hearts. There was hope again!

Yan Xibei grinned hideously. "Xiong Wuji was in the 100th level of the Refinement Stage, but he had to kneel down before me, too! Even if there is another one in the 100th level of the Refinement Stage, so what?"

Even though he was saying that, he still crawled toward Li Yao despite the collective attack of dozens of qi-trainers.

Li Yao gritted his teeth and expanded the range of his spiritual gas without caring about anything else. Eighty-six square meters, eighty-seven, eighty-eight!

Eighty-eight square meters, however, seemed to be his limits. After his range expanded to eighty-eight square meters, it was not able to move forward one inch, although the edge of his spiritual domain was quivering.

Yan Xibei burst into laughter. "Just the 88th level of the Refinement Stage!"

In his laughter, Li Yao took a deep, deep breath. He meditated on the hundreds of structures of the spiritual liquid, while he compressed, consolidated, and liquefied the enormous spiritual gas of the 88th level of the Refinement Stage with his burning fighting will!

For common Cultivators, the 14th level of the Refinement State, or rather, the peak of the Refinement Stage, was the threshold where they could compress their spiritual gas into spiritual liquid thereby advancing into the Building Foundation Stage.

Then, what would happen if the tremendous spiritual gas of the 88th level of the Refinement Stage was all condensed into spiritual liquid?

DUM! DUM DUM! DUM DUM DUM DUM!

There were no drummers on the tank, and yet it was drumming soul-stirringly, motivated by Li Yao's strength.

Li Yao's body seemed to have turned into an enormous swirl that absorbed all the spiritual gas nearby, and he condensed all of it into spiritual liquid through the high-speed revolutions.

Unstoppably, he broke through the low level, the middle level, and the high level of the Building Foundation Stage without any hinderance and advanced into the peak of the Building Foundation Stage effortlessly!

BOOM! BOOM BOOM!

Quite a few drums couldn't help it any longer and exploded after echoing their highest note!

But Li Yao's outburst had not stopped yet.

He sensed that there was boundless spiritual gas near him that he could continue compressing after he reached the peak of the Building Foundation Stage!

He was still far away from his limits!

"This is—"

Li Yao was both surprised and overjoyed. He made up his mind and continued compressing crazily.

The spiritual gas was compressed into spiritual liquid, and the spiritual liquid was showing the sign of consolidation under the high pressure!

When the spiritual liquid solidified, it would mean that he had arrived in the Core Formation Stage!

I'm going to break into the Core Formation Stage and slay this mother*cker!

Li Yao's eyes were crimson, and the skin all over his body was breaking apart. However, it was not blood that was seeping out of his wounds, but red brightness mixed with spiritual energy!

He decided to take his chances without caring about anything!

For common Cultivators, entering the Core Formation Stage was a hundred times more difficult than entering the Building Foundation Stage. Not only did they need to refill countless Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures before their attempt, they would also have to be guided with secret arts in the deep meditation state during the process, not to mention that they had to find a unique opportunity or timing. Even so, the chances of success were still slim.

Breaking into the Core Formation Stage in the middle of a fierce battle in high spirits after a vehement speech was almost something that would only appear in legends!

However, today, Li Yao was making a legend!

Consolidate! Consolidate! All the spiritual liquid, solidify now!

As more and more spiritual liquid flooded into his body, the swirl in the center of his abdomen was showing traces of solidification. His spine was numb and itching. Coldness was brushing the two ends of his spine like tides!

However—

Li Yao's eye suddenly bulged. His eyes were bloodshot, and he was unable to move.

He was not prepared for the Core Formation Stage after all.

Maybe, the tremendous spiritual gas of the 88th level of the Refinement Stage far exceeded the need to form the core. However, his brain was not developed enough to fully control the spiritual gas to transform it from the gas form into the liquid form bit by bit, and then from the liquid form into the solid form drop by drop until the spiritual liquid was melded together perfectly!

He was more like a 'dinosaur' among the Cultivators. His strength was enormous, but his brain was too small to make the best use of his strength!

Cr*p. I'm going to be mentally deranged!

Li Yao grunted. His computational ability surpassed his limits, and countless cerebral vessels immediately exploded. His brain went blank, and he completely lost control over the spiritual energy in his abdomen.

Boosted by the inertia of the revolution, spiritual liquid was still flooding into his chest and consolidating, but in a weird structure that looked extremely ugly. It did not seem to be a core, but more like a lump, a lump of spiritual energy beyond Li Yao's control that could potentially get him killed at any moment!

However, none of the outsiders knew anything about it.

They could only feel that Li Yao's aura continued improving inside the drumming tank until it reached a level that they couldn't comprehend at all!

The things happening to Li Yao were too extraordinary. Although Yan Xibei had learned a thing or two about the Building Foundation Stage, the Core Formation Stage, and the Nascent Soul Stage after he joined the Temple of Immortals, he could barely understand Li Yao's current uncanny status.

But he did vaguely feel that 'Sand Scorpion' was about to form the core!

In cold sweat, Yan Xibei roared and summoned countless bloody claws to drive away the qi-trainers near him despite his unrecovered wounds.

Then, he charged at the drumming tank in a streak of redness!

"You want to form the core? Not so fast!"

Yan Xibei grinned hideously. The newborn scorpion tail, endowed with all the strength in the apocalyptic body, pierced at Li Yao's swollen abdomen!

Chapter 631: Simmer! Superlative!

Chapter 631: Simmer! Superlative!

On the verge of mental derangement, Li Yao was quite befuddled. But he sensed the incoming danger out of instinct and crossed his arms to block the scorpion tail.

However, the enormous, apocalyptic strength inside the scorpion tail pierced into his abdomen, like a bolt of lightning, aimed right at the lump of spiritual energy that he had just condensed!

BOOM!

For a moment, Li Yao felt that a volcano was erupting inside his abdomen. The overwhelming spiritual energy spurted out like magma. All the disordered strength finally found a leak and escaped out of his body in a hurry!

Li Yao was finally back to himself. He was no longer in danger of mental derangement, but he had also come to the painful understanding that his core formation had failed!

Yan Xibei did not expect that such enormous and chaotic spiritual energy was concentrated in Li Yao's abdomen. Although his previous attack had pierced Li Yao's abdomen, the counterforce resulting from the outburst of spiritual energy had blown him away brutally. The newborn veins and nerves were a mess again!

Expanding his senses, Yan Xibei found Li Yao lying in the drumming like a balloon that had lost all the air. He couldn't help but burst into laughter. Without caring about his wounds, he spread out his arms. Bloody mists stayed on his arms for a while, before they flew into the sky and condensed into two giant bloody hands!

"Ho!"

Yan Xibei bellowed and slapped his hands brutally. The two giant hands smashed Li Yao like two mountains.

BOOM! BOOM!

After two earsplitting explosions, two giant handprints more than half a meter deep appeared on the more than ten square meters of ground around the drumming tank which had been crushed into a cluster of wasted iron!

Li Yao did not have the opportunity to jump out of the tank. He fell to one knee, with metal parts smothering him from various directions. The bones throughout his body were emitting cracking noises. Even breathing became very difficult for him.

"I failed..."

Li Yao smiled miserably. Blackness blinked in front of his eyes. Out of his expectation, it was not very painful. He only felt extremely fatigued.

He felt that it was not cold metal that were pressing him but a warm swamp whose black, thick mud was surrounding and swallowing him bit by bit.

Gradually, he could no longer sense his limbs and his facial organs. Even his breathing and heartbeat became slow. Like an insect that was mired in amber, he slowly gave up struggling.

However, stinging feelings were still stimulating the deepest part of his brain.

They were… fighting will that looked like sparks, the last fighting will from all the qi-trainers nearby in the state of reverberation!

When the qi-trainers saw that the drumming tank Li Yao was in had been completely crushed, they thought that Li Yao had been killed and simply lunged at the enemy with no consideration for their own safety!

Their capability had hit rock bottom, but their fighting will had bounced to the peak when they were hopeless!

"Born in Iron Plateau, die in Iron Plateau!"

There was no telling who uttered the eight words first, but they were like a spell that made the exhausted warriors, whose spiritual gas had run dry and who were supposed to never stand up again, manage to struggle to their feet and support each other. They stared at Yan Xibei and moved inch by inch toward him as if their eyes were their crutches!

"You truly have no fear of death. Then you might as well die now!"

Yan Xibei manipulated the bloody hands and waved the scorpion tails and mantis forelegs to continue the slaughter while he shouted loud.

Motivated by such intense fighting willing, Li Yao's withered heart expanded again.

His fighting will extended out like hundreds of tentacles and sensed every other qi-trainer's fighting will!

Whenever he touched the burning fighting will of a qi-trainer, his own fighting will would increase a little bit, and when his fighting will had been expanded to the limits, he suddenly discovered something.

The chaotic spiritual energy spurting out of his abdomen was still spinning around him slowly. It was fluctuating at the same frequency as the vibration of his soul, and it was even under his control!

Li Yao's nearly pure black eyes constricted violently. Two stars seemed to have exploded in the center of his pupils. His fighting will continued soaring and broke the limit of all limits!

He gritted his teeth and stood on his feet silently against the steel that was pressing his head!

"This is—"

The eyes of everyone present bulged as they gawked at the scrapped tank in disbelief.

They all sensed that a tremendous force was slowly rising from the remains of the tank!

"What!"

Yan Xibei burst into fury. He took a deep breath and spat a mouthful of blood and sprayed the blood evenly on his two hands.

His hands, which were now mixed with purple auras, slapped again heavily. With a long screeching noise, the remains of the tank were crumbled into an iron ball by him!

However, spiritual energy was still spreading out of the gaps of the iron ball like tides.

Although it was in the liquid form, it seemed to be in an extremely high temperature and was boiling.

The boiling spiritual liquid turned into spiritual gas and expanded. When the spiritual gas reached a certain boundary, it cooled down and consolidated into spiritual liquid again. The process was repeated incessantly, and a great circulation was formed!

No qi-trainer knew what was going on.

Most of the Cultivators of the Great Horn Exo Society were unconscious. Only a few of them vaguely sensed an enormous strength as if a storm was brewing.

Lei Dalu, as the Cultivator at the highest level involved in the battle, was the only one who could feel the entire process of the formal changes and the circulation of spiritual energy.

However, even Lei Dalu had never seen such a weird phenomenon.

The Building Foundation Stage Cultivators could liquefy their spiritual energy, and when the liquefied spiritual energy was compressed to the minimum into the solid state, they would enter the Core Formation Stage.

However, nobody had ever thought what would happen if the spiritual liquid was boiled instead of being solidified.

BOOM! CRACK!

Dozens of bolts of lightning illuminated the sky at the same time as if they sensed that a strong being had appeared on the ground.

With the lightning as the background, the iron ball exploded like a crystal bomb, revealing a shining figure in the center!

It was exactly Li Yao!

He was still wearing the ragged Sky Scorpion Armor. But every plate was now entangled by spiritual energy and emitting flowing brightness as if they were made of translucent jade.

Stirred by the spiritual energy, his hair seemed to have grown significantly. It had been a mess on his head before, but right now, it was erect like swords, with gold brightness rooted at the end!

Purple electric arcs were dancing around him, overlapping and colliding now and then. Dazzling brilliance was released!

Yan Xibei was more than angry. His scorpion tail shook violently in a 'pa' sound, sending a cluster of weird redness out toward Li Yao's face, surpassing the speed of sound instantly!

But Li Yao snatched it at the last moment and crushed it to pieces!

It was a crimson venomous sting!

"That's impossible!" Yan Xibei lost his calmness. "What level is this? Even peak of the Building Foundation Stage should be no match for me!"

Li Yao took a deep breath and looked at his hands in confusion. He warmed up his fingers, sensing the new changes that had happened to his body.

It was quite weird that, although he had failed to form the core and a large hole was left in his abdomen, resulting in a huge mess within his body, he was now able to manipulate the dispersing spiritual energy with his immense fighting will. He could even boil the spiritual liquid escaping from his body into the gas form and absorb it again!

As the circulation went on faster and faster, his strength became higher and higher!

"This is not the peak of the Building Foundation Stage."

Li Yao's eyes were shining brighter and brighter, as he mumbled to himself, "I have surpassed the peak of the Building Foundation Stage. Just like…

"Just like the predecessors of Iron Plateau who broke the limits and created the superlative height of the Refinement Stage beyond the peak of it!

"Old monster!"

Li Yao stood in midair and slowly flew toward Yan Xibei, his lips curling into a hideous smile.

"Don't be scared. This is not the Core Formation Stage, but it is not the peak of the Building Foundation Stage, either.

"This is the superlative height of the Building Foundation Stage!"

"Superlative height of the Building Foundation Stage?"

Yan Xibei was dumbfounded. He immediately burst into fury. "What kind of bullsh*t level is that? There isn't such a thing!"

BOOM!

Li Yao suddenly accelerated to the maximum speed and crashed into Yan Xibei, while he shouted, "Chief Xiong was right. Roads are made by people. Every level is created by people, too. This is the level that I have created, the superlative height of the Building Foundation Stage!"

"Whatever level you are in, you can go to hell!" Yan Xibei bellowed. The bloody aura around his body was all turned into the most powerful blast and brutally blew Li Yao hundreds of meters away into a rock.

The bystanders were all stunned, not sure how they should react.

When they saw that Li Yao was so confident in such a glamorous appearance, they had thought that he would be able to fight Yan Xibei for a long time and did not expect that he would be blown back so easily!

However, weird clicking sounds echoed in the rock that Li Yao had crashed into. His dominating aura was not in the least diminished, either. Soon, even the hill could not bear it any longer, and overlapping cracks appeared on its surface.

Huala!

The rock exploded in raging dust, and a magnificent shadow suddenly leapt up from the broken stones!

The glittering black armor was painted with gold rings. Two crossed sabers were attached to its back, and a giant spear pointed at the sky from its helmet as if it were trying to cut a hole in the sky!

Everybody gasped. In their trance, many people thought that they were looking at yet another calamity-level apocalyptic beast. But when they looked carefully, they found that it was a set of plugins refined out of the bones and shells of the calamity-level apocalyptic beasts as well as materials from other demon beasts!

"Do forgive me, everybody. I have just grasped a new way to utilize my strength, and I'm still familiarizing myself with it."

Li Yao warmed up his four limbs. The spluttering electric arcs attached the strengthening plugins to the Sky Scorpion Armor perfectly. It was agiler, swifter, and stronger than he had anticipated!

Apocalyptic Extension versus apocalyptic body!

Calamity versus calamity!

Swoosh!

In the blink of an eye, Li Yao, wearing the Apocalyptic Extension, was already gone. The rock that he had been in exploded, revealing a giant hole almost five meters deep where hot steam was popping up nonstop as if it had been hit by a falling star!

Yan Xibei, on the other hand, screamed miserably!

Chapter 632: Underground Changes!

Chapter 632: Underground Changes!

After putting on the Apocalyptic Extension, Li Yao was more than five meters tall, too, and on par with Yan Xibei.

They collided like two calamity-level apocalyptic beasts.

The sabers on Li Yao's back pierced deep into Yan Xibei's body, while Yan Xibei's scorpion tail dug into the stomach of the Apocalyptic Extension, and his mantis forelegs left two deep traces on the plugins!

However, the Apocalyptic Extension was merely Li Yao's strengthening components and had no senses at all. Li Yao wouldn't be harmed even if it was shattered.

Yan Xibei's apocalyptic body, on the other hand, was made of flesh and blood and was connected to his own body.

The result of the hundreds of high-speed collisions in that moment was that Li Yao tore off plenty of meat and shells from Yan Xibei's body while Yan Xibei failed to hurt Li Yao, although he had almost wrecked the Apocalyptic Extension.

Even the apocalypse cloud condensed by Yan Xibei's bloody mist in the sky was scattering apart under the blast of Li Yao's surging spiritual energy!

"It's impossible!"

Yan Xibei was both grieving his loss and screaming miserably. His calmness from a moment earlier was entirely gone!

He tried his best to summon the foreign blood inside his body. The veins covering his body were getting thicker and thicker. Many overlapping spots bugled high as if they were ugly hearts while the foreign blood inside them accrued.

Bo! Bo bo bo bo!

Dozens of 'hearts' broke apart instantly!

Boundless bloody mists flooded out and blew Li Yao away brutally.

Li Yao rolled in midair to ease the blast and was barely hurt from the explosion as he landed on the ground. The aura around him continued on the rise!

Hum! Hum hum hum hum!

The broken sabers and swords in the surrounding area were all trembling violently as if they were being controlled by a storm. They soared into the sky after a while and, spinning in midair, gathered in front of Li Yao!

The blades were broken, dented, and rusty because of the acid from Yan Xibei's apocalyptic body.

Many of them were stained with the qi-trainers' blood, which started running again, spurred by the pouring rain and Li Yao's surging spiritual energy, even though it had dried previously!

The hundred blood-stained sabers were revolving in front of Li Yao at an extremely high speed like a tornado!

After Yan Xibei detonated the blood on his body, an unparalleled, intense bloody mist was condensed. It was so red that the color was bordering on purple and black. Countless patterns in the shape of apocalyptic beasts protruded out of the surface of the bloody mist. They were roaring, raging, and making the bloody mist look like a devil that had grown countless heads of other apocalyptic beasts!

The strength of both parties had been increased to the maximum. Their spiritual gas formed an absolute domain that the wind and rain could not enter. The storm was smashing their heads like a waterfall smashing giant stones and forming a hazy fog!

Lightning was attracted by the dominating force field between them and hit the center while spluttering crazily!

Shua!

Li Yao and Yan Xibei surpassed the speed of sound simultaneously. When the collision took place, even the lightning bypassed them as if they were in fear of the intense blast.

Everyone could only see a cluster of brightness ten times more dazzling than the lightning spreading out quickly from the point of collision. The light ball was soon blown away by an immeasurable blast. Affected by the blast, the pouring rain started moving parallel to the ground instead of vertically.

A moment later, the sound of the tide-like collisions finally reached everyone's eardrums!

Blood splashed out from their ears, and they could not hear anything for a while.

They could only see that, against the flashing lightning, the two tall shadows were confronting each other like two magnificent statues!

CRACK! CRACK! CRACK! CRACK!

Weird noises were echoing inside the Apocalyptic Extension. As it turned out, Yan Xibei had won the round and suppressed Li Yao!

"Is this the superlative height of the Building Foundation Stage? You were merely bluffing!"

Yan Xibei burst into laughter. He suddenly exerted his strength and crushed the Apocalyptic Extension. Then—

It exploded!

Before everyone had the chance to exclaim, a streak of black brightness had dashed out of the dazzling fireball and appeared behind Yan Xibei as if it had passed through him!

Yan Xibei's smile immediately froze.

Li Yao was on one of his knees, with a sharp knife extending toward his back from the elbow of his Sky Scorpion Armor. The rainwater had wiped the last bit of blood on the blade away, making it as clear as a mirror.

Li Yao naturally had known that the Apocalyptic Extension that he had refined in a hurry was no match for Yan Xibei's apocalyptic body, which the guy had worked on cautiously for more than ten years.

However, the thing about Ares Extensions was that they were all expendable!

With his Apocalyptic Extension as bait, he launched the fatal attack!

Yan Xibei's eyes bulged, and he looked at his abdomen in disbelief. His waist used to be connected to the insect body, but right now, a black wound was slowly expanding on his waist until it penetrated all the way through his body.

As black blood and white bodily fluids seeped out, he gradually lost control of his lower half.

The apocalyptic body had been cut off from Yan Xibei by Li Yao!

Without the apocalyptic body, Yan Xibei was merely an ordinary qi-trainer. The thick veins bound to his upper body were withering at a visible speed, leaving black scars behind like vines that had been consumed by flames.

He screamed and fell to the ground. Two streams of spiritual gas spurted out of his palms, and he fled away with the counterforce!

But how could Li Yao allow him to run away? He turned into a streak of brightness again as he stretched out his right arm and picked a random weapon from the battlefield with his spiritual gas.

When the weapon reached his hand, Li Yao noticed that it was actually a flagpole, with the flag of the Furious Bears Tribe that was riddled with blood stains and holes, big and small, flapping in the wind on the top.

Yan Xibei was rushing at an amazingly high speed. He had already run almost a thousand meters away in that moment.

But Li Yao was even faster. He appeared behind Yan Xibei after only a few leaps. The flagpole in his hand was humming and entangled by purple gold electric arcs, turning into an unstoppable spear!

Just when Li Yao was about to thrust the spear, Yan Xibei suddenly grinned. An earsplitting explosion burst out deep under the ground, and bloody mist soared to the sky like a volcano erupting. The earth collapsed, revealing a spacious and bottomless cave!

Yan Xibei accelerated again and threw himself into the cave like a weight.

Li Yao followed him without any hesitation. He tightened his body as if it were a bow, and the flagpole in his hand became the sharpest arrow. With an outburst of spiritual energy, the flagpole was thrown out with dazzling electric arcs!

BOOM! BOOM!

The two of them hit the bottom after falling down hundreds of meters, one after the other.

The place had originally been a natural limestone cave. But when Yan Xibei discovered it, he had transformed the cave into a secret base where he experimented on his apocalyptic body.

On the walls of the cave, dense weird plants that looked like vipers and vines were wriggling frantically.

Many spots where the 'veins' overlapped bulged high, resulting in translucent vesicles in which countless apocalyptic beasts were being brewed.

Behind Yan Xibei, in the center of the darkness, a giant object more than ten meters in diameter that looked like an enormous heart was fluctuating and trembling.

This object was perhaps the nest where he had bred the apocalyptic body.

His eyes wide open, Yan Xibei straightened his arms and tried to crawl to the bloody heart.

However, the flagpole of the Furious Bears Tribe had pierced through his heart from his back. Almost half of the flagpole had disappeared into the ground of the cave and made him unable to move.

The surging spiritual gas on the flagpole had blown Yan Xibei's heart into pieces a long time ago. He was merely enjoying his last breath.

Li Yao walked to Yan Xibei and stared down at him coldly.

Below Yan Xibei, blood was spreading out and bubbling with foam while it screamed feebly as if it were alive.

Yan Xibei raised his head with the last bit of his strength, so forcefully that his spine was emitting cracking noises. He smiled miserably at Li Yao.

"You all think that I was possessed by the Blood Demon and everything I did was for the Blood Stripe Virus, don't you? You think you are doing good by eliminating the evilness!

"But have you ever considered the possibility that I was never possessed by the Blood Demon and everything I said was true? What are you going to do then?

"Haha. Hahahaha. It doesn't matter. You will know the answer soon.

"Inside the 'blood pool' is the foreign blood that I carefully refined for the warriors of the six tribes. I planned to invite everybody here so that the success rate could be higher.

"But right now, at such a short distance, with a telepathic thought of mine, the blood pool can be detonated immediately, and the foreign blood will be vaporized and escape to the earth!

"Several of them are bound to be touched by the blood. You will know then whether or not I was lying. Haha. Hahahaha!"

The killing intent in Li Yao's eyes was immediately maximized!

Yan Xibei grinned hideously. "Don't be silly. You wouldn't be so naïve as to think that I didn't trigger my telepathic thought until I explained everything to you in great detail, would you? I activated the self-detonation neuron of the blood pool before I said the first word. The blood pool will explode in exactly three seconds. Let's see how you rescue all the people above us!

"Or, will you simply consider all the people who have breathed the bloody mist to be possessed by the Blood Demon and kill every one of them? Is that what you're going to do?"

Li Yao gasped and gazed at the blood pool, which was constricting and expanding at a higher and higher speed!

Three seconds, two seconds, one second!

The enormous 'heart' slowly calmed down after trembling violently for a while.

The deep red color gradually became gray, as if it were turning into a giant rock. After that, nothing else happened at all.

Li Yao blinked and looked at Yan Xibei with interest.

Yan Xibei's eyes were even wider than Li Yao's, and he looked at the blood pool in disbelief. He mumbled, "How could it be... How could it be?"

Li Yao's brain suddenly shivered as he sensed a very familiar spiritual wave from the depths of the blood pool, which had become completely motionless. He thought of something and was stunned!

His heart beating fast, Li Yao sent a telepathic thought into the blood pool.

"S—Sparkle?"

There was no response from the grey blood pool at first. But very soon, an airy spiritual wave came over. "Li Yao!"

BOOM!

A drill of mystic rays pierced through the half-dead blood pool from inside, and a dragon-like warship covered in armor that looked like scales leapt out of the ground!

Chapter 633: Doom of the Foreign Blood

Chapter 633: Doom of the Foreign Blood

The drill of mystic rays was bouncing like unpredictable flames in Yan Xibei's pupils, burning the last bit of his consciousness into oblivion.

The best warrior of Iron Plateau in the old days took a long breath, before he gradually froze, withered, and died with an indescribable expression on his face.

Li Yao didn't know what to say. He scratched his helmet for a long time before he asked, "How did you end up here?"

"We came to Iron Plateau to look for you and did not know it was so weird until we arrived. Without your specific coordinates, we could only wander aimlessly," Mo Xuan explained. "Later, we noticed that an Exo Society had landed on Iron Plateau. We had been following them secretly, but we lost them half a day ago.

"We detected that spiritual waves of this area were extremely intense, so we drew close below the ground.

"We did not anticipate that so many eccentric demon beasts were lurking here. To avoid them, we increased the speed of the drill, but we accidentally dug into a cluster of extremely strange mucus.

"The mucus seemed to be a living thing and attacked us, even trying to infiltrate Sparkle!

"But you also know that the five spectral Cultivators including me are all the crew members on board. Our bodies are made of nanotechnology-based alloys that were impenetrable for the mucus. Of course, we launched a counterattack mercilessly!

"The moment after we destroyed the central nerves of the mucus, we sensed your telepathic thoughts and drilled our way out!"

Li Yao realized that he had truly been lucky. Although the Blood Stripe Virus could corrupt living creatures and even germs, the bodies of Mo Xuan and the other spectral Cultivators were liquid metal, a kind of powerful magical equipment from the Star Ocean Imperium. It was definitely not something that the Blood Stripe Virus could conquer!

The crew members of Sparkle were the natural enemy for the Blood Stripe Virus!

"What's the situation right now?" asked Mo Xuan.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao replied quickly, "The situation is rather complicated. You'd better keep lying low below the ground. Set the communication channel to No. 9; I'll reach out to you later!"

Since they were on the same planet, communication was a lot easier. Although Iron Plateau was not covered in the Spiritual Nexus, Li Yao could contact Sparkle through telepathic thoughts enhanced by crystal processors at the agreed frequency. It was essentially a point-to-point super mini network.

The electromagnetic environment on Iron Plateau was quite erratic, but Li Yao's capability had soared, too. The power of his soul was ten times stronger than in the past. Simple communication at a distance of several hundred kilometers wouldn't be a problem.

Looking at Yan Xibei's body one more time, Li Yao sighed with mixed thoughts.

Yan Xibei was truly the most formidable enemy he had ever met on his path of Cultivation. Although Skeleton Dragon, the ancient deadly demon from forty thousand years ago that he had encountered on Boneyard, was much more impressive than Yan Xibei in terms of absolute strength, the demon's scheme, arrangement, and response to changes were far from the previous best warrior of Iron Plateau.

Manipulating Iron Plateau natives, space residents, and Immortal Cultivators at the same time purely on his own, and trying to twist the course of development of a planet and even a constellation in the next thousands of years…

How ambitious and bold that was!

Also, the man had been so close to victory at the end.

Although it was Yan Xibei who had died in the end, Li Yao did not think that he had defeated him. Maybe, the man had been just short of some luck.

If Yan Xibei were not possessed by the Blood Demon, and the future that he described was a plausible possibility, then—

Li Yao shook his head and tossed the philosophical problems away. For some reason, he found it hard to hate Yan Xibei.

Righteous or evil, Yan Xibei deserved to be the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau in the past!

Li Yao sighed. He then retrieved some crystal bombs that he had dismantled from the tank of the Burning Sun Tribe and placed them on Yan Xibei's body solemnly.

Mo Xuan was dazed. "What are you doing?"

Li Yao replied, "Every living creature here, including the smallest insects, might have already been corrupted. Naturally, I'm going to bombard everything to the ground. As it happens, this very bomb contains fatal neurotoxins. I don't know if they work on the foreign blood, but they should be better than nothing!

"I've set the bomb to explode in half a minute. You go back to where you came for now. I'll send the map of the Furious Bears Tribe to you shortly. We'll meet again later near the Furious Bears Tribe!"

"Alright!"

Mo Xuan also knew that Li Yao must've experienced a lot of adventures on Iron Plateau, but now was not a good time to talk yet. He maneuvered Sparkle and disappeared in the hole he had come from.

Li Yao looked at Yan Xibei's body for the last time. Spiritual gas spurted out from the Sky Scorpion Armor as he flew off.

Just when his feet left the ground, weird redness suddenly leapt out of Yan Xibei's body and pierced at Li Yao's back like a lightning!

Just as I expected!

Li Yao had been waiting for it. He had condensed dozens of purple gold electric arcs inside his right palm. He opened his right hand, and the Purple Electric Blue Hellfire Claw Art was activated to the maximum. The electric arcs were all released and hit the bloody redness precisely!

Hiss! Hiss! Hiss!

The electric arcs locked the bloody brightness like a cage. It was screaming miserably and trying to rush out of the cage, only to be burnt into black stinky smoke when it reached the boundary. After ten seconds, its struggle became feebler and feebler, and it turned into ash in the end!

"Hu..."

Li Yao took a long breath in relief. A bloody streak suddenly blinked in the depths of his left eye, but he didn't realize it and dashed to the earth without looking back.

On the earth, the heavy storm continued unabated.

The weird grey mist flooding out of the cave made everybody wary of getting too close. They could only hold their breath and gaze at the entrance of the cave.

Xiong Wuji managed to sit straight with the support of Wu Mayan and Sha Yulan. He gritted his teeth and stared with hope.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The thunderous explosions from underground seemed to indicate that a great earthquake had happened.

Before everybody had the chance to exclaim, a shadow dashed out of the cave.

It was Li Yao!

In that moment, the valley was seething with cheers and applause that even eclipsed the sound of the storm!

...

In the planetary ring outside Iron Plateau, the fleet of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City had already gathered. Countless Exos and armed shuttles were sent out to perform directional blasting jobs.

Although they could not destroy the whole defense array, they were capable of digging a hole through it.

Inside the bridge of Proud Sun, the flagship, Captain Wan Liyun was eyeing the space steles about to be detonated one after another coldly.

By controlling the direction, angle, and intensity of the explosions and deploying a huge number of magnetic devices, the soldiers were creating a channel in the dense array of meteoroids.

On the light beam, a Cultivator wearing the badge of the Burning Sun Alliance reported, "In twenty-four hours, a channel that assault warships can pass through will be completed!"

"Very good. These are the last twenty-four hours. If we don't receive a signal from the Great Horn Exo Society, we'll send our main troops down!

"Remember, it is very possible that Iron Plateau has become a base of the Temple of Immortals. All the qi-trainers are our potential enemies. So, don't consider this operation a simple rescue mission.

"This is war. A real war!"

Wan Liyun smashed the control panel and gnashed his teeth in fury. "If the rescue mission fails, or the hostages are confirmed dead, retaliation is to be put into action immediately. I want Iron Plateau to be buried in flames!"

Next to Wan Liyun, a Cultivator wearing the emblem of the Furious Bears Union observed gravely, "Captain Wan, we have always believed that there is much more to the incident. Should we act more judiciously until we have solid evidence proving that Iron Plateau natives were involved in the kidnapping?"

"Judiciously?" Taking a deep breath, Wan Liyun replied coldly, "Brother Su, you must think that the Burning Sun Alliance has gone mad because our disciples were captured and even murdered, right?

"This is the latest news sent from the Heavenly Saints Space Zone. Brother Su, and everyone else, please take a look.

"Up until now, the Heavenly Saints Composite Index has dropped by more than forty percent compared to three months ago. The average share price of the major groups under the name of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City has plunged by fifty percent. The transportation sector suffered the heaviest losses. More than seventy percent of the share price has been vaporized.

"This is an out-and-out stock market crash!

"Right now, the financial market is in chaos. A lot of transportation companies are dying under the threat of the space pirates. The cargo passing through Heavenly Saints City this month was only sixty percent what it was during the same period last year. Don't forget that Heavenly Saints City is the most heavily guarded metropolis in space!

"Some smaller space towns have shut their doors to the outside world in fear of the assault of space pirates. Their cargo throughput was only twenty to thirty percent of last year's!

"You still think that the so-called space residents and the Temple of Immortals are merely skin diseases?

"They are most definitely not!

"The civilization of the Flying Star Sector is founded on the smooth, secure lines of transportation!

"The six sects of Heavenly Saints City are acknowledged by most ordinary people because we can protect the traffic lines and ensure the communication of people and goods in the bleak, dark universe!

"Transportation lines are the foundation of our civilization. Without transportation lines, we are but lone islands scattered in the sea of stars. Before long, our entire civilization will collapse!

"After the several months of rioting from the space pirates, all the people of the Flying Star Sector are hiding in their towns and fortresses, shuddering in fright. They are losing confidence in the six sects of Heavenly Saints City!

"If a rumor that we cannot even protect our family and disciple breaks out right now and that they were ruthlessly murdered by Immortal Cultivators whom we can only sit and watch to run away, how can we convince the ordinary people that we have the ability to protect them?

"If we don't have the ability to protect ordinary people, why would they support us, buy our shares, receive the education that we provide, take our carriers, and stand on our side?

"Do you understand? This is not an issue of twenty hostages; it concerns whether or not everyone in the Flying Star Sector should continue trusting the six sects of Heavenly Saints City!

"It will certainly be for the best if we can rescue the hostages, but if we can't, we have no other options except to launch a thunderous attack at Iron Plateau with all our might. We will rebuild people's confidence in the six sects of Heavenly Saints City with the destruction of our enemy!

"Do you agree, everybody?"

There was a long silence inside the bridge.

Cultivators wearing the emblem of the Furious Bears Union slowly nodded their heads. "Agreed."

Those wearing the emblem of the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood replied, their eyelids twitching, "Agreed."

Heavenly Wolves Fortress, Giant Axe Hall, Silver Moon Clan… All the Cultivators sighed and nodded one after another. "Agreed!"

Wan Liyun was flushed and appeared restless. He waved his hands, somewhat tired. "Everybody, take a good rest in our last day. In twenty-four hours, 'Operation Thunder' will be carried out!"

Right then, the light beam started shaking weirdly. Taking a deep breath, the officer exclaimed, his voice shaking, "Ca—Captain, we received a message from the Great Horn Exo Society!

"The rescue mission was a success!

"The twenty hostages are all unharmed!"

Chapter 634: Ultimate Core!

Chapter 634: Ultimate Core!

Ten days later, in Furious Bears City…

The Temple of Immortals' scheme had been foiled, but its repercussions still plunged Furious Bears City into a swirl of events. Li Yao, on the other hand, was bothered by none of it. The most important task for him in the past few days had been to eat well, sleep well, and treat his wounds while consolidating his position in the unprecedented superlative height of the Building Foundation Stage.

Shua!

Sha Yulan plucked the last gold needle from his chest. Sensing the prospering circulation of spiritual energy inside his body, she smiled. "Your body is even sturdier than that of the healthiest qi-trainer than I've ever seen. I have no idea how you trained yourself to such an extent at all. I thought that you would have to lie on bed for a couple of months, but you've fully recovered after only ten days!"

Li Yao smiled, too. He sensed the strength that felt both familiar and strange flowing inside his body. He punched several times, and the air in front of him rippled like water. However, there was not the slightest sound.

His control over his strength had reached an amazing level that far exceeded the peak of the Building Foundation Stage in common sense. Even Cultivators in the beginning level of the Core Formation Stage might not have been as skilled as him!

Sha Yulan was beaming with interest and said, "The world of Cultivation is indeed full of changes and mysteries. I thought that you were dead for sure, but you've set yourself off on a whole new path!

"I've carefully analyzed everything in the last couple of days. Your status right now is different from the superlative height of the Refinement Stage. Not every qi-trainer can enter your level by compressing their spiritual gas after they reach a certain threshold in the Refinement Stage.

"At that time, the chaotic spiritual energy released from the cores of the apocalyptic beasts was still lingering inside your body, waiting to be transformed and absorbed. It was accumulating in your abdomen and could have killed you.

"As it turned out, Yan Xibei's attack with his apocalyptic strength battered the foreign spiritual energy and set it free from your body!

"Moreover, Yan Xibei's bloody mist covered you like a big cooker and restrained the escaping spiritual energy around you, making it have nowhere to run to.

"Also, everybody was in the most intense reverberation state at that moment.

"All the coincidences together led to your inexplicable level."

Li Yao chuckled and scratched his head, realizing that he was truly unbelievably lucky.

Sha Yulan suddenly changed the topic. "However, regarding the weird situation inside your body, I have two speculations, one good and the other bad. Which one would you like to hear first?"

Li Yao thought for a moment and replied, "The bad one, please."

"Although you've broken into the 'superlative height of the Building Foundation Stage' by luck and your combat ability has been significantly increased, I estimate that it will be ten times more difficult for you to enter the Core Formation Stage than for common Building Foundation Stage Cultivators," said Sha Yulan.

Li Yao raised his right eyebrow.

Sha Yulan explained, "You've received the harshest training of the qi-trainers, and now, you are in the superlative height of the Building Foundation Stage. As a result, your veins, nerves, and abdomen have ten times the capacity of common Building Foundation Stage Cultivators'!

"Metaphorically speaking, if the body of a common Building Foundation Stage Cultivator is a lake, your body is an ocean."

Li Yao nodded. His spiritual energy capacity had indeed improved a lot over the last couple of months. After he entered the superlative height of the Building Foundation Stage, he had been feeling hungry all day. His daily training always consumed dozens of crystals, and he still felt that he hadn't enjoyed himself. His body had become like a bottomless hole.

"Let's say that one would be able to enter the Core Formation Stage when the 'water level' reaches a certain height. One heavy rain will be enough to raise the water level of the 'lakes' of common Building Foundation Stage Cultivators and make them reach the threshold," Sha Yulan said. "But for an 'ocean' such as yourself, one heavy rain is far from enough. How much water do you need if you want to raise the water level of an ocean by one meter? I can't even imagine!"

Deep in thought, Li Yao realized that Sha Yulan did have a point.

Sha Yulan continued her explanation. "For a long while now, I've been wondering why none of the qi-trainers, many of whom were talented and smart, have ever entered the Building Foundation Stage successfully in the past several thousand years. There should've been some, no matter how low the odds are!

"Now, I finally understand that it was because the qi-trainers overstretched their veins and nerves, increasing their spiritual energy capacity. While their 'lakes' grew larger and larger, more and more 'water' could be stored, but it made it more and more difficult to improve the 'water level' in order to reach the threshold of the Building Foundation Stage!"

Li Yao slapped his thigh and observed, "Good point!"

"There's another fatal problem about your body. Your abdomen was pierced through by Yan Xibei's brutal attack. It is now like a bag riddled with holes. However much rice you put into the bag, some of it is bound to leak out.

"The strength that leaks out makes your whole new level. However, it also adds to the difficult of breaking through to the Core Formation Stage, because forming the core highlights the concertation of spiritual energy and not dispersion.

"All in all, my conclusion is that you've already deviated from the normal path of training. The superlative height of the Building Foundation Stage is not compatible with the Core Formation Stage, just like the superlative height of the Refinement Stage does not agree with the Building Foundation Stage!

"When the qi-trainers persist in walking on the superlative height of the Refinement Stage and surpassing the 50th level, the 80th, and even now the 100th, the price they pay is that they are unlikely to enter the Building Foundation Stage.

"If you go higher in the superlative height of the Building Foundation Stage, you may reach the 10th, the 20th, and even the 100th level of the Building Foundation Stage, but it is very possible that you will have to pay your price, too, which is that… you will never enter the Core Formation Stage!"

Li Yao felt a headache coming on. It was indeed a tough choice.

The superlative height of the Building Foundation Stage was a significant improvement to his combat ability. According to Li Yao's self-evaluation, his maximum combat ability was close to that of the middle level of the Core Formation Stage. Even if he ran into an experienced Core Formation Stage Cultivator such as Fengyu Zhong again right now, he would not necessarily be on the losing side.

If he could march into the 30th or the 50th level of the Building Foundation Stage someday, it was not unlikely that he could defeat the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators!

However, Cultivation was not simply about the improvement of combat ability.

The Core Formation Stage, Nascent Soul Stage, and Divinity Transformation Stage represented the major landmarks in the path of evolution.

He was like a dinosaur among Cultivators right now.

The combat ability of dinosaurs was naturally much higher than that of monkeys.

But that did not mean that dinosaurs were more advanced than monkeys; monkeys had endless potential due to their intelligence!

Li Yao took a long breath and asked curiously, "Then, what's the good news, Sister Sha?"

Sha Yulan smiled and replied, "Need I inform you of the good news? Your body is now an ocean. Although it is ten times more difficult to enter the Core Formation Stage, you will be the strongest Core Formation Stage Cultivator in history should you succeed some day! I don't even know whether or not 'core' will be an appropriate word to describe your status by then. Your capability will definitely be terrifying!"

Li Yao's eyes suddenly shone. It was quite true. Raising the water level of an ocean by one meter was naturally much more troublesome than lifting that of a lake. However, the force used when the ocean moved several meters would be much more intimidating than when a lake moved!

"It's decided then!" Li Yao clenched his fists, his eyes glittering. "I will not abandon the Core Formation Stage. Maybe I will suddenly break into the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage from the superlative height of the Building Foundation Stage one day during my training!

"Superlative height of the Core Formation Stage! Wow. I'm drooling just thinking of it!"

Sha Yulan couldn't help but chuckle. She covered her mouth and said, "Alright. Alright. You can study how to form the ultimate core right now. I'll go and change Big Xiong's medication. Right, come to Big Xiong's ward soon. Captain Lei seems to have brought Big Xiong something, and he wants to share it with you!"

After Sha Yulan left, Li Yao pondered for a moment and locked the door from inside. Then he secretly established communication with Sparkle.

Sparkle was hiding dozens of meters below his ward. Since the distance was very short, the point-to-point communication was not in the least hindered by the rock stratums in between.

Sparkle had not been idling by in the last couple of days. Li Yao had sent the broken Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and the pieces of the Apocalyptic Extension into Sparkle. Professor Mo Xuan had taken charge of the repair work, and everything was successfully completed three days later!

Li Yao explained his situation to the five spectral Cultivators. He also told them that he wouldn't give up on the Core Formation Stage. Mo Xuan and the rest of the spectral Cultivators couldn't have agreed with him more.

As refiners, they did not think too highly of the improvement of combat ability that the superlative height of the Building Foundation Stage brought.

What the Core Formation Stage could offer was not only enhancement of combat ability, but also a totally different understanding of spiritual energy.

Many kinds of planetary-level magical equipment could only be utilized by those above the Core Formation Stage. Li Yao wouldn't be able to make use of them even if he was in the 10,000th level of the Building Foundation Stage.

"The path to the Core Formation Stage is always full of perils," said Mo Xuan. "Thankfully, we still have plenty of time. It's been only less than one year since we arrived in the Flying Star Sector, and you have already entered the unprecedented superlative height of the Building Foundation Stage. Maybe in the next ten years, you will really find an opportunity to become an ultimate Core Formation Stage Cultivator! If there are no other ways, we can always try to facilitate the process with magical equipment! But let's settle the details later. We've been drilling below the underground for too long. Two crystal reactors exploded in the morning, and we are still working on them."

"Alright. Let's talk soon."

Li Yao nodded his head. He was going to shut off the communication, when he suddenly bulged his eyes and shouted, "Wait!"

Mo Xuan was caught unprepared. He asked, "What's the problem?"

Li Yao narrowed his eyes deep in thought while he mumbled, "Facilitating the process with magical equipment…

"Professor Mo Xuan, look, one of the biggest problems for me right now is that my abdomen is too huge and my veins too thick, resulting in a huge consumption of spiritual energy during my training. The other problem is that my abdomen is riddled with holes that seem fine in everyday life but leak spiritual energy in extreme moments.

"Let's say that we can craft a piece of magical equipment whose form and mechanism are similar to those of crystal reactors. It will be a pressure cooker three to four meters in diameter!

"Then, I will sit inside the pressure cooker and form the core there.

"Since it is a fully-sealed pressure cooker, the spiritual energy inside my body will have nowhere to escape to even if it wants to run away. Instead, it will only be pressed by the overwhelming pressure from all directions until it is all compressed to the same spot. Won't that be the ultimate core that I talked about?"

Mo Xuan was silent for a long time, before he replied, "That's an interesting thought, young man. Let's talk about it later!"

Mo Xuan cut off the communication.

What does he mean? Isn't it a great idea?

Li Yao rubbed his hands. Hooked by his bold hypothesis, he started making designs on a blank light beam.

Chapter 635: Father Xiong's Father

Chapter 635: Father Xiong's Father

When Li Yao walked out of his ward, the first thing he saw was the Great Horn Exo Society's crystal warship, which was floating in the bright blue sky.

Up in space, countless small carriers had been transporting assets to the crystal warship like ants, and then the Great Horn Exo Society had brought the assets to the six tribes of Iron Plateau.

Every cloud had a silver lining. After the scheme of the Temple of Immortals was revealed, Xiong Wuji's dream of Iron Plateau natives and space residents cooperating was coming true faster than expected.

For the Iron Plateau natives, a lot of their elite warriors had been killed in the consecutive fierce battles. Besides, all six tribes had more or less been infiltrated by the Temple of Immortals. There was no telling whether or not remaining spies of the Temple of Immortals were still instigating trouble in the Dark Continent, either. Therefore, they were in dire need of all kinds of aid.

In the world of Cultivators, the last couple of months had been quite rough, too. Social order was in chaos, and the financial market suffered heavy losses. Ordinary people and Cultivators were gradually losing their faith.

If a large-scale ground war were to break out at this moment, a lot of resources and lives would be wasted.

Nobody wanted to fight a war unless necessary.

Right now, it was very likely that the Iron Plateau natives would form an alliance with the space residents. The future might be uncertain, but the two parties could at least join their hands against the Temple of Immortals for now.

It was great news for the market and a cardiotonic for the chaotic situation.

The twenty college students from the two best universities of the Flying Star Sector had been rescued by Iron Plateau natives. With that event as a trigger, the ice-breaking process was officially begun.

However, despite the strong will of communication from both parties, the fleet of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City did not land on Iron Plateau directly.

Instead, after they picked up the twenty hostages and expressed their gratitude to the Iron Plateau natives, they quickly retreated to the edge of the Iron Plateau Space Zone, a signal that they were not malicious or aggressive.

After all, the relationship between the two parties was too sensitive. Theoretically speaking, both of them considered themselves to be the rightful successor of the six major sects of five thousand years ago.

The chief of the Furious Bears Tribe was essentially the leader of the Furious Bears Union. Just as two suns could not be in the sky at the same time, the Furious Bears Union naturally could not have two leaders.

Every step had to be made cautiously to avoid the potential disputes.

Therefore, the Great Horn Exo Society, which had zero affiliation with the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, became the best intermediary and a bridge of communication between the two parties.

The six sects of Heavenly Saints City sent a lot of assets that the fleet carried to the six tribes of Iron Plateau through the Great Horn Exo Society, meeting the Iron Plateau natives' urgent need and showing their sincere gratitude for rescuing the hostages.

Li Yao's and Xiong Wuji's wards were separated by a yard. Xiong Wuji's situation was worse than Li Yao's. He could barely sit straight to this day.

All suspicions about him were gone. He had also advanced into the unrecorded 100th level of the Refinement Stage in front of everyone. Although it had only lasted a moment, he had nearly blown Yan Xibei into pieces. Such valiant and ruthless actions made everybody in the six tribes worship him.

The Furious Bears Tribe agreed unanimously that he should continue working as the chief, although he rejected the offer multiple times, claiming that his blood was from space and his capability had hit rock bottom.

Therefore, his ward had turned into his office.

The ward, which was always teeming with people, was unusually quiet right now. Sha Yulan and Wu Mayan were the only two accompanying him.

Despite the white hair and the slender figure, Xiong Wuji was in a quite good mood, if not somewhat excited.

Li Yao smiled. "What kind of good news did Chief Xiong receive?"

Xiong Wuji grinned and was somewhat nervous, making Li Yao doubt whether or not he was the tough guy that he had known.

Sha Yulan smiled and explained, "Just now, Captain Lei brought a document. It was the name list of all the passengers and crew members of the starships that had accidents near the Iron Plateau Space Zone five decades ago. The document, including the names, the profiles, and the photos of the victims, is inside the crystal processor."

Li Yao immediately realized that, if Xiong Wuji was indeed from the space, his family must be in the list.

No wonder even such a tough man was uneasy.

Sha Yulan looked at Xiong Wuji and smiled. "Big Xiong is nervous. Let's help him look into it!"

"Yes. Let's help Father Xiong find out what his parents look like!"

"They must be great heroes just like Father Xiong!" said Wu Mayan cheerily.

Li Yao also smiled. He agreed unhesitatingly, "Alright. Let's help Chief Xiong together!"

Sha Yulan activated the crystal processor and projected a light beam where she displayed the 3D pictures of the victims of the accidents after sorting out the information.

She said, "I glanced roughly just now. Over the few years, one passenger starship and two carriers were lost near the Iron Plateau Space Zone. There is no telling whether they experienced cosmic storms or were plundered by space pirates, but not even a screw was found in the end.

"On the missing starships, there were 234 passengers with kids, and thirteen of them were carrying twins. Three were Cultivators.

"Here. This is Fei Kuo from the Fire Cloud Sect. He was a Cultivator in the peak of the Building Foundation Stage. It is said that he was quite a celebrity in the Great Bravery Space Zone. A man of chivalry!"

A muscular man with a square face and a long beard appeared on the light beam. He looked strong and magnificent.

Wu Mayan blinked and mumbled, "He looked a bit similar to Father Xiong. Turns out Father Xiong's father was truly a great man. No wonder Father Xiong is so awesome!"

Xiong Wuji finally couldn't hold it any longer and turned around. He held his breath and observed carefully. After staring for a while, he remarked hesitatingly, "He might be, but let's check others first."

"Alright."

Sha Yulan was very patient and displayed all the passengers that brought twins with them on the light beam.

Cultivators first and then ordinary people.

Xiong Wuji narrowed his eyes in silence.

When the photo of the ninth passenger leapt out of the light beam, Sha Yulan, Wu Mayan, and Li Yao all exclaimed.

Too similar!

The passenger's appearance was too similar to Xiong Wuji today!

Although he was not very tall and strong, he stood with a straight back, and his eyes were narrow, long and extremely clean!

Looking at the photo and at Xiong Wuji in person, one would inevitably conclude that they were related.

Xiong Wuji's eyes instantly turned red. He said coarsely, "He—he is probably my father. What's his name? What kind of person was he?"

Sha Yulan glanced at the man's profile and replied, "His name is Xiong Xiangrong. He was a teacher and an ordinary person."

"I didn't see this coming."

Wu Mayan's eyes bulged, and he mumbled in a low voice, "Father Xiong's father is an ordinary person…"

"Hahahaha..."

Xiong Wuji finally burst into laughter in great satisfaction. He laughed so hard that tears were flowing out. "I didn't know that my family name was truly Xiong. Fantastic. Really fantastic…"

Looking at him crying in joy, Li Yao thought of his own origins with complicated feelings. He snapped Wu Mayan's forehead softly and said, "What's wrong with an ordinary person? Iron Plateau natives and space residents. Ordinary people and Cultivators. Aren't they all human beings?"

Wu Mayan held his head after an ouch. He suddenly rolled his eyes and said, "Uncle Sand Scorpion, Father Xiong has found his father. Let's leave him and my mom alone for now. There's something that I want to ask you!"

"Oh?"

Li Yao smiled. He somewhat knew what was on the young man's mind and simply said to Sha Yulan, "Sister Sha, Chief Xiong has found his birth father. You can study his profile in detail now. Ah Yan and I will wander around for a while!"

They left the ward and walked to a pond in the center of the yard.

"Uncle Sand Scorpion, do you remember you promise?" Wu Mayan's eyes were shining, as he declared, "You said that you would recruit me as a disciple if we were both alive after the battle of the apocalypse. Right now, I've passed two of them. You won't go back on your words, will you?"

"I always keep my promise. However, I also said that I would only recruit you as my disciple if you could endure the biting of a few ants," Li Yao replied.

"That's not a problem." His hands on his hips, Wu Mayan gnashed his teeth. "As long as you are willing to recruit me as your disciple, I can let a tiger bite me however many times it wants, not to mention some ants. Bring them on!"

Li Yao squatted and said, "Give me one of your fingers."

Gritting his teeth fearlessly, Wu Mayan extended his right index finger with his eyes closed.

Soon, he felt that his finger was itching. He opened his eyes, only to discover that Li Yao had snatched several ordinary ants and placed them on his fingertip.

Wu Mayan was dazed. "What's the meaning of this?"

Li Yao smiled and replied, "Nothing. I was planning to make things difficult for you with a certain test, but you proved yourself in the battle against Yan Xibei. When you charged at Yan Xibei without hesitation, I made up my mind that I would recruit you as my disciple if you are willing to!"

Li Yao's maximum combat ability right now was close to the middle and high level of the Core Formation Stage. He was even qualified to establish his own sect. It was only natural that he had a disciple.

Wu Mayan was not fourteen years old yet, and he had already advanced into the 15th level of the Refinement Stage. Such a genius was definitely a treasure that countless sects would fight for.

After getting to know each other for a few months, Li Yao felt that his integrity was unquestionable. Now that the young man was willing to learn after him, naturally, he wouldn't say no.

Hearing that Li Yao had agreed, Wu Mayan was so excited that he made three back flips in the air. He then kneeled down beside the pebbles near the pond and said respectfully, "Master!"

Li Yao scratched his hair. In the dreams of Ou Yezi's life, he had tasted the feeling of being the leader of a major sect. At that time, he had thousands of disciples under his command. Naturally, being called 'master' was not new to him.

However, now that Wu Mayan had kneeled down before him and addressed him as master, he would have to be responsible for him.

Li Yao thought over all the expertise he knew about and tried to select some techniques that were suitable for Wu Mayan.

Yet, Wu Mayan had already proposed a question dutifully. "Master, I've been thinking about a question lately and failed to solve it. I think I've run into a dead end! I wanted to ask my mom and Father Xiong, but I felt that they might not be able to understand the question. I wonder, can you help you with it, Master?"

"Oh?" Li Yao raised his eyebrow. Pretending to a serious teacher, he pointed at a grey rock beside the pond and said, "Sit down and let's talk."

Chapter 636: Will You Practice the Technique?

Chapter 636: Will You Practice the Technique?

Like a monkey that was sitting on thorns, Wu Mayan was moving uneasily. His eyes flickered about for quite a long time; he was hesitating. "Master, I've been reflecting on Yan Xibei's theory about the survival and development of the human civilization. The more I think about it, the more reasonable it appears to me!

"Do you think there's any chance that he was not possessed by the Blood Demon and he meant what he said and his prediction was true?"

Li Yao was dazed. "Is this happening? You were gritting your teeth and waving your saber crazily that day. I thought that you would be quite unwavering."

Wu Mayan lowered his head, somewhat embarrassed. He kicked a pebble into the pond, which raised dull noises, before he said, "I also found the transformation of my attitude very weird. After prolonged consideration, I finally discovered that the critical factor was that—

"He was too ugly."

Li Yao was rendered speechless.

Wu Mayan explained carefully, "My blood was boiling, and my head was seething with fury. Nobody had the time to think about what Yan Xibei was saying. I only saw that he was half a human and half an insect with countless vine-like veins fluctuating on his body. He was exactly what a monster should look like! Of course, I slashed him mercilessly!

"But in my spare time over the last couple of days, I've thought about his words, and they began making more and more sense to me.

"Isn't survival everything for a civilization? All things can happen only if the civilization exists. Once it perishes, hopes and ethics will be no more!

"If some sacrifices and changes must be made for the continuity of the civilization, they seem worthwhile to me.

"If the universe above our heads is truly a ruthless, dark forest, we have no options except to alter ourselves according to the rules of the forest, however cruel they are.

"I cannot find loopholes in Yan Xibei's theory. The more I think about it, the more I am convinced.

"In my opinion, if Yan Xibei had not looked so disgusting but had looked like a deity wearing a glittering silver robe, many people might have been persuaded by him!

"This is the question that has baffled me for days. Please enlighten me, Master."

Li Yao blinked and stared at Wu Mayan in silence.

Holding his breath, Wu Mayan looked at him, full of hope.

Li Yao suddenly sighed. He patted Wu Mayan's shoulder and said solemnly, "Ah Yan…"

"I'm all ears, Master!" Wu Mayan replied respectfully.

"Look, I'm new to the job of teaching, too. Can we start our discussion from the relatively rudimentary topics?

"You are asking me about the future of humanity in your first class. Isn't that question too sophisticated? I was not prepared at all. In fact, I haven't had my lunch yet!

"How about this. I'll teach you four solutions to the 'Black Tiger Snatching the Heart' technique. As for the future of human civilization, let's talk about it later, shall we?"

Wu Mayan was not entirely satisfied. "Okay…"

Li Yao cleared his throat. Staring at the ripples in the pond, which were calming down, in a daze, he suddenly changed his mind and said, "Alright, but I don't know much about the dark forest and the human civilization.

"Let's talk about a single person. For example, you.

"Is survival the most important thing to you? Are you willing to endure all kinds of sufferings to the extent that you end up completely different just in order to be stronger and survive?"

Wu Mayan was dazed for a moment. Deep in thought, he nodded his head unconfidently a while later. "It probably is. One only has opportunities when they are alive. Everything will be gone after they are dead."

"Alright. Let's assume that there is such an extreme situation. Remember, just an assumption."

Li Yao tapped his forehead and said, "You are living in a dark forest that is packed with ferocious animals, traps, and hunters. It is a lawless world where the strong prey on the weak!

"With your current capability, if you walk in any direction, you will be devoured with no bones left in less than half a day.

"At this moment, you suddenly find a book that records an unparalleled technique. If you grasp the technique, you will dominate the dark forest and become invincible. At the very least, you won't be scared any longer and can live on for a long time!

"Then, will you practice such a technique?"

"Do I even need to think? Of course I will practice it. Only the fools won't! Whatever price I have to pay, however tedious the process is, I will master the technique!" Wu Mayan blurted out.

Li Yao smiled and said, "Don't be hasty. Wait until I'm done. Learning such a technique is not very difficult. However, it requires a prerequisite that you castrate yourself. Do you know what 'castrate' means? Castrate means—"

Li Yao explained the meaning in great detail. He even picked up a fallen branch and drew a few illustrations of the operation in the mud.

"Huh?" Wu Mayan was dumbfounded. "What kind of bullsh*t technique is this? I have to chop off my thing before I get to practice it?"

Li Yao tapped a stone and said, "Assumption. I already said that it was only an assumption. Now, will you practice the technique?"

Wu Mayan's eyelids were trembling as he said, "W—well, aren't there any alternative techniques?"

"No."

Li Yao shook his head. "Other techniques are too weak. Only this unparalleled technique can allow you to survive in the dark forest."

"That's too outrageous!" His eyes bloodshot, Wu Mayan couldn't help but look at groins. He hesitated for a while and asked, "Are there any consequences after I castrate myself?"

"There might not be many."

Li Yao tilted his head and thought hard for a while, before he replied, "But castrating yourself is not as simple as that. After you castrate yourself, your body will change, and your psychological state will be gradually affected, too. Due to the lack of testosterone, you will lose all your sex drive, and there is the possibility of hair loss. In addition, you will experience frequent hot flashes, and more fat will accumulate around your chest area. You understand the kind of misunderstandings that a build-up of fat in that area could lead to, don't you?"

Wu Mayan shuttered in coldness. "I do."

"That's good. You can make a choice now," Li Yao said. "Death? Or invincibility as the king in the dark forest after you grasp the unparalleled technique?"

Wu Mayan was silent for a long time, before he sighed and replied, "I might as well choose to die."

"Therefore, you think that part of you is more important than your life, and you would rather die than to have it castrated, right?" Li Yao said.

Wu Mayan was dazed. Deep in thought, he replied slowly, "I'm getting what you are trying to say, Master. If I would rather die before part of me is castrated; there must be something about a civilization and a species that they are unwilling to let go of, sort of like…"

Li Yao added, "Sort of like the 'thing' for a civilization."

Wu Mayan slapped his thigh and said, "Yes. Like the 'thing' for the civilization. They do not want to be castrated even if they have to die!"

Li Yao grinned and said, "More or less. In fact, the question has bothered me for a long time, too. Many times, I thought, what if Yan Xibei was never possessed by the Blood Demon and was speaking the truth? Were we doing the right thing if that was the case?

"However, just a moment ago, I suddenly thought everything through.

"The biggest difference between us and Yan Xibei is not about the Blood Stripe Virus. Even if he was not possessed, we would still be the opposite kinds of people.

"For some people, there is always something that they would rather die than give away. Awesome as the unparalleled technique may be, we will only wipe our ass with it.

"But if it were Yan Xibei, he might really castrate himself in order to get started with the technique.

"Different ideologies lead to different paths. Maybe the universe above our heads is truly a ruthless, dark forest, but I won't castrate the most precious things for me to survive in the forest. If I am not lucky enough and I have to die, so be it!"

Wu Mayan pondered for a while and mumbled, "You do have a point, but I feel something is wrong. We were talking about the future of humanity a while ago. How did the topic change to castration?"

"It's the same thing." Li Yao blinked and said assuredly, "If you castrate yourself, you will have no children. What is the future of humanity if they don't have posterity?"

…

Another half month passed. Li Yao had consolidated his stance in the superlative height of the Building Foundation Stage. His spiritual energy could be transformed between liquid and gas at his will, and his understanding about the reverberation of fighting will had reached a whole new level, too.

Sparkle returned with trophies galore. With the state-of-the-art drilling technology, the crew members had cruised below the ground of Iron Plateau and explored a lot of ancient cities of the Flying Star Sector that had been buried five thousand years ago. Their adventures had awarded them with abundant remains of magical equipment and useful Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures.

The communication between Iron Plateau natives and space residents had become smoother and smoother. The two parties had established an association of communication that was responsible for the subsequent issues of trade and transportation.

Many well-respected professors and leaders from Flying Star University and Heavenly Saints Institute, the two best colleges in the Flying Star Sector, arrived in Iron Plateau after a long trip.

Ostensibly, they'd come to express their gratitude in person to the Iron Plateau natives for saving the twenty students.

In fact, they were the representatives of Cultivators who had come to discuss the cooperation of a deeper level formally.

After all, the Great Horn Exo Society was too insignificant to make promises for all the Cultivators in space.

The presidents and professors of the two colleges, on the other hand, were in the academic circle. They did not belong to the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, and yet they boasted enough prestige and influence among Cultivators. Therefore, they were the perfect representatives for the negotiation.

Everything was progressing smoothly. Iron Plateau was entering a new era of hope.

For Li Yao, it was time to leave Iron Plateau and embark on a new trip of training!

Chapter 637: Invincible in Iron Plateau!

Chapter 637: Invincible in Iron Plateau!

"What? You are leaving?"

In the residence of the chief of the Furious Bears Tribe, the mysterious smiles on the faces of Xiong Wuji and Lei Dalu turned into bewilderment all of a sudden. They stared at Li Yao in disbelief.

The Great Horn Exo Society had played an important role in the hostage incident. Hundreds of its members had fought side by side with the qi-trainers, and many of them had sacrificed themselves. Therefore, the Iron Plateau natives had been treating them especially warmly.

Until the delegation of Cultivators arrived, the Great Horn Exo Society had served as the bridge of communication between the two parties and still played its part after the presidents and professors of the two supreme colleges landed.

Many qi-trainers were still wary of the space residents. Only the Cultivators of the Great Horn Exo Society, who shed blood together with them, could be fully trusted.

Over the past few months, Lei Dalu and Xiong Wuji had been communicating with each other a lot because of the public affairs. The two of them shared similar tempers and became good friends.

Just now, they were wearing smiles as if they had prepared a surprise for Li Yao. But they did not expect that Li Yao would bring an even bigger surprise for them.

Li Yao raised his eyebrow and said, "Is there a problem? I said to Chief Xiong a long time ago that I was forced to land on Iron Plateau and have been kept in this place because of the subsequent events.

"Right now, all the problems have been solved.

"A new chief has been elected in the Burning Sun Tribe. After a month of investigation, many spies of the Temple of Immortals have been discovered. It is only a matter of time before every one of them is fished out by following up the leads.

"As for the Cultivators, they have transported a batch of medical facilities to Iron Plateau quickly. The heavily wounded qi-trainers will receive the best treatment.

"Also, the 'Association of Interstellar Communication' has been established. Large-scale communication is already underway.

"I won't be of much help even if I continue to stay on Iron Plateau.

"Besides, I didn't speak the whole truth on the Truth Cabinet that day, and I've been feeling uneasy. The longer I delay, the more likely it is that I will be seen through. It will be pretty bad when that happens."

Li Yao spoke frankly. Xiong Wuji and Lei Dalu were both aware of his background and knew that he was not an Iron Plateau native at all.

Xiong Wuji looked at Lei Dalu and asked hesitatingly, "Li Yao, there is still a question that we have been trying to hold back for a long time. How did you pass the test of the Truth Cabinet that day? Was there really any magical equipment that could disturb the functionality of the Truth Cabinet?"

Li Yao was silent for a while.

He had discussed the question with Professor Mo Xuan, and they had reached a consensus that it was not good to reveal his real identity yet.

It was not because he did not trust Lei Dalu or Xiong Wuji, but because of the Temple of Immortals.

Although the Temple of Immortals' scheme had failed, the organization still boasted tremendous capability in the dark. If Yan Xibei was not lying, the other three leaders of the Temple of Immortals were all super experts in the Nascent Soul Stage. More importantly, Li Yao did not even know who they were.

If Li Yao were to release his real identity to the public, stating that he was from a different world and in possession of many techniques and magical equipment the Flying Star Sector had never heard of, he would definitely become one of the most important targets for the Temple of Immortals. There would be no way that he could train himself and learn knowledge without being disturbed.

"It's true that I cannot craft a piece of magical equipment that could deceive the Truth Cabinet," Li Yao replied. "But the Truth Cabinet is a dead thing after all. There are many ways to bypass it. Maybe, everything I said was true, except that it was in a different time sequence and short of a few critical sentences.

"For example, Chief Xiong, has it ever occurred to you that, if you are a space resident growing up on Iron Plateau, it is possible that an Iron Plateau native grows up in the space?

"Wouldn't such a man pass the test of the Truth Cabinet?"

Xiong Wuji and Lei Dalu were both dazed. It was something that they had never thought of.

Li Yao scratched his hair and said, "Of course, my background is a secret, but it doesn't matter now. I'm leaving Iron Plateau soon anyway. Speaking of which, I must trouble Captain Lei to find a starship to Heavenly Saints City for me."

Lei Dalu's eyes were blinking as he said, "You're going to Heavenly Saints City? With what identity?"

"Of course I'm going to Heavenly Saints City, as I said a long time ago," Li Yao said matter-of-factly. "As for my identity? Of course, I will go under my real name, Li Yao! Although an accident happened at the Skyhill Sword Seminar this year, I did demonstrate my capability before it. Right now, the world of Cultivators is in chaos, and it's a great time for the Exos to show themselves off. I don't think the three main crystal suit centers will reject me!"

There was even more interest in Lei Dalu's eyes. He asked, "You are interested in the refinement of crystal suits?"

"Not just crystal suits. I'm interested in all kinds of magical equipment. But of course, the more advanced, the better," Li Yao replied.

Lei Dalu questioned further about his plans. "Then, what about the most cutting-edge theories about magical equipment? Although the three main crystal suit centers are best known for their products, they cannot be compared to the two supreme colleges in regard of magical equipment theories, can they?"

Li Yao found it odd. "That's for sure. But what's with all the questions, Captain Lei?"

Lei Dalu coughed and looked at Xiong Wuji. He was about to speak, when cheers and drumming suddenly came over from outside as if a carnival had just started.

"Let's go out. We'll talk about how you leave Iron Plateau shortly."

Xiong Wuji and Lei Dalu seemed to be expecting the arrival of such a bunch of people. They dragged Li Yao out of the house.

On the street, the saluting cannons were echoing and releasing brilliant fireworks and ribbons.

Two drumming tanks of the Giant Axe Tribe were in the lead, followed by the tanks of the other five tribes except the Furious Bears Tribe. They all put down the flags of their respective tribe as a signal of respect for the Furious Bears Tribe.

All the tanks were painted with glamorous colors and decorated with the skeletons of demon beasts.

The qi-trainers on the tanks were wearing glitzy robes made of beast hides and feathers. They were playing various kinds of instrument airily.

On the biggest True Qi tank at the center, a giant pillar more than ten meters tall and almost three meters in diameter was positioned. When the tanks slowly reached the front of the chief's residence, the muscular men roared at the same time. Dense white steams spurted out of the tank, and the giant pillar was slowly erected!

The giant pillar was made from 'Gold Apparition Wood', an extremely rarely-seen ancient tree on Iron Plateau.

Bathed in sunlight, golden brightness vaguely flowed on the rind of the Gold Apparition Wood. It tangled the giant pillar like gold scales and looked quite splendid.

Four enormous words were written on the giant pillar in the bones of the apocalyptic beasts.

'Invincible in Iron Plateau!'

"Wow!" Li Yao gasped, his eyes glittering. "Very impressive. What is this supposed to mean?"

"The Furious Bears Tribe made the greatest contribution in the incident even though it had been wronged by the other five tribes.

"This is a sign of gratitude and contrition from the five tribes. It also means that they will listen to the Furious Bears Tribe's command until the next battle of the apocalypse!"

Xiong Wuji smiled and said, "That is especially so for the Burning Sun Tribe. Whoever the real conspirators were, the incident was caused by the Burning Sun Tribe after all. Therefore, they offered this very precious Gold Apparition Wood. It is sort of their plea for forgiveness!

"Aside from its splendidness, the Gold Apparition Wood can also concentrate the spiritual energy nearby. If the giant pillar stands in Furious Bears City, those who are training in the several kilometers around will all benefit from it. Such a gift is evident of their sincerity!

"As for the four words, 'Invincible in Iron Plateau', the reason is simple. The five tribes are showing their respect for the best warrior of Iron Plateau and thanking him for rescuing hundreds of qi-trainers and avoiding a catastrophe!"

"That explains a lot." Li Yao nodded his head and observed, "Chief Xiong made such a great contribution to Iron Plateau and even advanced into the unprecedented 100th level of the Refinement Stage. You truly deserve to be called 'Invincible in Iron Plateau'!"

Xiong Wuji eyed him with a weird expression and suddenly asked, "What, you think 'best warrior of Iron Plateau' refers to myself?"

Li Yao was dazed. "Doesn't it?"

Xiong Wuji smiled casually. "I suffered heavy wounds in the battle against Yan Xibei. I can manage to work as the chief of the Furious Bears Tribe right now, but 'Invincible in Iron Plateau' is too much for me right now!"

Li Yao's eyes bulged, and he blurted out, "Who else deserves such a title if the warrior who advanced into the 100th level of the Refinement Stage doesn't?"

Xiong Wuji looked at him quietly.

Lei Dalu looked at him quietly.

Li Yao blinked and tilted his head, deep in thought. He finally realized what was going on.

Before he could open his mouth, the hundred warriors from the five tribes on the tanks bashed their chests together and shouted as loud as they could.

"The Burning Sun Tribe pays respect to the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau!"

"The Giant Axe Tribe pays respect to the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau!"

"The Feathered Snakes Tribe pays respect to the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau!"

Many other muscular men wearing nothing on their upper body moved a lot of heavy boxes from the tanks and opened them in front of thousands of bystanders. Inside the boxes were dazzling, rarely-seen treasures of the five tribes.

Before Li Yao went into the Truth Cabinet the other day, the chief of the Feathered Snakes Tribe had promised that the Feathered Snakes Tribe would offer part of their trophies as compensation once his innocence was proven.

The chiefs of the other four tribes had made similar promises, too.

In the end, not only did Li Yao prove himself, he had also killed Yan Xibei and saved the day.

Therefore, the five tribes fulfilled their promise and took out even more treasures of their tribes to show their gratitude for Li Yao, the new best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau!

Seeing hundreds of super brawny men more than 2.5 meters tall staring at him with admiration, Li Yao felt that cold sweat was appearing on his forehead. He said, "What do you think will happen if I tell them that what I said on the Truth Cabinet was not necessarily the truth, that I was in fact not a wildling from the Dark Continent, that I hadn't even lived for a year on Iron Plateau, and that even the cave they found a couple days ago, allegedly my old residence, was actually faked and prearranged by me?"

Chapter 638: Perfect Solution!

Chapter 638: Perfect Solution!

Li Yao did not wake up until the next morning. In his trance, he felt that his cheek was still aching, and even his burps were tasted like condiments. He was intimidated by the feast last night when he thought about it again.

He had not drunk much alcohol, even though the muscular and unconstrained Iron Plateau natives all seemed to be excellent drinkers. It was because everybody was a qi-trainer and could barely got intoxicated. Drinking alcohol was as boring as drinking cold water for them.

Therefore, the way that qi-trainers expressed their hospitality on Iron Plateau was to offer meat instead of wine.

The qi-trainers of Iron Plateau were quite old-school. They considered one's appetite a good gauge for strength. The more one could eat, the better one would be able to control their body, and the stronger one would be!

Li Yao, as the new best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, was naturally the primary target that received the most attention during the feast. Not only did the leaders and elders of the other five tribes bring the gluttons of their tribes to toast meat in turn, even many qi-trainers of the Furious Bears Tribe had gone to him with beef steaks and lamb chops, raising a civil war.

Li Yao had never been fond of liveliness, but he felt somewhat embarrassed that the five tribes had given him so many Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures for free.

The trip to Iron Plateau had definitely been worth it. For him, he had looted the warehouse that stored the trophies in the battle of apocalypse. For Sparkle, it had explored Iron Plateau's underground and found a lot of relics from five thousand years ago in which many remnants of magical equipment were buried.

Right now, the five tribes had even offered their most valuable treasure that they had kept for years to him.

By Li Yao's preliminary estimation, the resources would be more than enough to establish a small sect.

Although their gratitude to Li Yao for saving their lives was sincere, Li Yao always felt that he was not justified enough to accept all the gifts. With such thoughts, how could he reject their toasts? In the end, he just let go of his self-restraint and started eating!

Li Yao utilized the Art of the Swallowing Whale to the maximum and had the biggest meal of his life. At the beginning, he had still managed to keep counting how many lamb legs he had eaten. But later after he choked the chief of the Giant Axe Tribe, he was somewhat drunk with meat and start eating carefreely.

Li Yao scratched his belly and walked out of his room, only to find that Xiong Wuji and Sha Yulan were waiting for him outside.

Since he did not intend to live long on Iron Plateau, he had been crashing at Xiong Wuji's house.

Snatching a cup of cold tea on the table and drinking all of it, Li Yao frowned and said, "Chief Xiong, please don't tell me that you didn't know they were giving me such a pillar."

"Of course, I did, but what could I say?"

Xiong Wuji shrugged and replied matter-of-factly, "You were the one who revealed the Temple of Immortals' scheme and killed Yan Xibei in front of everyone. The thousand qi-trainers on site all witnessed Yan Xibei's toughness in person. Even he was no match for you! Who else deserves to be the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau if not you?

"Iron Plateau natives never go back on their word and always pay compliments when compliments are due. Your contribution in the whole event cannot be exaggerated. Yesterday, they were only offering a little something as a signal of their gratitude. Could I say no to that?"

Li Yao felt a light headache. He said, "It sounds reasonable. But I wonder, did you receive such a giant pillar with 'Invincible in Iron Plateau' on it when you were acknowledged as the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau?"

"Then and now are different," Xiong Wuji replied solemnly. "You know our current situation as clear as I do. We lost a large number of elites in the battle of the apocalypse. Then, because of the trouble that Yan Xibei caused, we suffered even more losses. There is no telling whether or not the Temple of Immortals still has other plans, and the remaining Blood Stripe Virus might still be lurking in the Dark Continent!

"Large-scale communication with the space residents is a two-sided coin, too. Whatever the consequences are, Iron

Plateau will definitely be greatly changed!

"Right now, everyone in the six tribes is anxious about their future.

"Naturally, a heroic figure such as yourself must be decorated and promoted to calm everybody down."

Li Yao was dazed for a long time before he replied, "Fair enough, Chief Xiong. However, with the giant spotlight over my head, how am I going to get away from here? You are not expecting that I stay and guard Iron Plateau under the title of 'best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau', are you? That, I can't do. Besides, my identity issue hasn't been resolved yet!"

Xiong Wuji looked at Sha Yulan with a smile and said, "Don't worry about that. I've figured out everything. It's definitely a perfect solution!"

Sha Yulan projected a light beam from a mini crystal processor and showed Li Yao a proposal.

After the large-scale communications began, Sha Yulan, with her life experience both in space and on Iron Plateau, became an important official in the newly-established 'Association of Interstellar Communication'.

"Right now, the relatively simple trade deals have been settled and are about to be carried out," Xiong Wuji explained.

"For example, there are many mother lodes on Iron Plateau that we cannot exploit with our current technology, but with the space residents' help, we will be able to excavate and refine them.

"Also, Iron Plateau is a scarce planet. With enough resources and guards, it is an excellent place to develop agriculture and livestock production. For many space towns that have very limited room, Iron Plateau will be a great manufacturer of diary goods and farm products. In the meantime, the farming will gradually change the terrain of Iron Plateau, and we might flourish again like five thousand years ago.

"In short, the deals regarding resources are easy, but cultural communication is much more difficult.

"The biggest problem at hand is that space residents and Iron Plateau natives don't know each other.

"Space residents think that Iron Plateau natives are simple-minded barbarians with more brawns than brains, if not wildlings who feast upon blood and raw meat.

"On the other hand, Iron Plateau natives consider space residents all cunning, cowardly, and conceited rats.

"The thousands of years of separation cannot be filled up in only one day. Besides, there's also the competition of rightfulness between us and the six sects of Heavenly Saints City. Direct talk is not an option.

"Therefore, after a long discussion with the leadership of the two supreme colleges of Heavenly Saints City, we decided to gradually resolve the problem with the academic circle as our starting point.

"More specifically speaking, we are going to introduce a series of inter-planet study programs and visiting scholar programs. We'll send a hundred young people to study in the two supreme colleges of Heavenly Saints City as a start.

They'll get to study the advanced techniques of the space residents, and their understanding about the society and culture of the space residents will be deeper. More importantly, they are going to disseminate the culture of Iron Plateau and show the space residents that we are not primitive barbarians and that muscles are not our everything.

"Students of the two supreme colleges will all be pillars in the world of Cultivators in the future. If they have a few classmates from Iron Plateau, the communication between the two parties will be a lot easier later!"

"Wait!" Li Yao suddenly waved his hand, as he thought he knew where the conversation was going to. He asked, "Chief Xiong, you are not asking me to join the hundred students and be an exchange student, are you? I'm sorry, but I'm definitely not going!"

This had to be a joke. Even ignoring the superlative height of the Building Foundation Stage, which was of his own invention and assuming that he was merely at the peak of the Building Foundation Stage, he was still among the top experts in the world of Cultivators.

The leadership of many sects, the experienced refiners of major crystal suit centers, and the teachers and even professors in many renowned universities were merely in the peak of the Building Foundation Stage.

And now, he was going to start from scratch as a student like a rookie?

Of course, he wouldn't waste his time in such a way!

"Of course not!" Xiong Wuji immediately replied. "Right now, you are officially the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron

Plateau, and you stand for the top combat ability of Iron Plateau. Asking you to be a student equals to admitting that we are weaker than the space residents. Why would we do that?

"What I was meaning to ask was whether or not you are interested in going to the two supreme colleges of Heavenly Saints City to communicate and doing the research work as a visiting scholar and a representative of Iron Plateau."

Li Yao was dazed. "Visiting scholar?"

Xiong Wuji smiled and said, "Yes. We have come to an agreement with both Flying Star University and Heavenly Saints Institute. In the next five years, we will send at least ten visiting scholars to Heavenly Saints City.

"The visiting scholars are all the well-known experts on Iron Plateau. Naturally, their expertise and their jobs are different from the students'.

"According to our agreement, the visiting scholars can choose designated projects based on their interests and specialties and work with the most talented geniuses in the world of Cultivators.

"They can also teach courses in their special fields.

"Faced with the threat of the Temple of Immortals, the two parties are both genuine about the agreement. We will exchange techniques for techniques. The two supreme colleges will provide the best treatment for our visiting scholars. All the research programs will be open for you. As long as you prove yourself to be capable enough, all the project teams will welcome you, and all the available resources will be at your disposal."

"Is that so?"

Li Yao was greatly interested. His lips curled up into a smile.

If the two supreme colleges that represented the highest academic level of Cultivators opened all their resources and programs for him, becoming a visiting scholar seemed to be much a better choice than working in the three crystal suit centers.

After all, most of the cutting-edge theories, advanced experiment facilities, and talented geniuses were all gathered in the two supreme colleges.

Even the experts in the three main crystal suit centers were mostly the professors or visiting professors of the two colleges.

"I've given it a lot of thought. This is the best choice for both you and Iron Plateau," Xiong Wuji explained. "Since the moment you slew Yan Xibei, you have been destined to become the strongest expert on Iron Plateau and the center of admiration. Can you vanish quietly? How will I explain it to all the Iron Plateau natives when they find out that you're gone?

"The identity of visiting scholar, on the other hand, gives you a perfect excuse to leave Iron Plateau for Heavenly Saints City.

"In a few years, after the chaos on Iron Plateau is settled and new experts emerge in the six tribes, their memory of you will gradually fade.

"At that time, you can live in Heavenly Saints City and choose to not come back to Iron Plateau again as an ambassador of Iron Plateau. It won't feel strange anymore, will it?

"On the other hand, if you are all by yourself, even though you are the super refiner Li Yao whose both hands can surpass the speed of sound, it's very possible that you won't get access to enough resources. You will most likely end up being an ordinary worker in the three main crystal suit centers if you file your applications.

"But everything will be different if you are a representative of Iron Plateau, won't it?"

Chapter 639: Ridicu

Chapter 639: Ridiculous Appointment!

Li Yao's interest was greatly piqued.

Although he had distinguished himself in the Skyhill Sword Seminar, he was still a young man in the world of Cultivators. He would have to start with the secondary projects and gain his seniority even if he were to join the three main crystal suit centers under the identity of Li Yao. It would take him forever before he got to do what he wanted.

The wait would naturally be much shorter if he represented Iron Plateau. It was quite possible that he would get in touch with the real high-end projects in advance.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao frowned and said, "What about my identity? Nobody is a fool. Rumors are already spreading out. Bai Kaixin, the vice-captain of the Great Horn Exo Society, has been asking to have dinner with me all the time lately. Perhaps he already started doubting me."

Xiong Wuji smiled casually. "Don't you see? If you are a Mr. Nobody, naturally, many people will question your identity. But right now, you are the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau. Behind you are thousands of qi-trainers. Excluding crazy lunatics, who can doubt you, dares to doubt you, and is willing to doubt you?"

Li Yao was dazed. He thought carefully for a while and made up his mind. "Alright, I will go to Heavenly Saints City as the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau and work as a visiting scholar!"

Xiong Wuji smiled. "This is the first time that space residents have ever seen us in the past five thousand years. Your behavior will potentially influence how space residents take Iron Plateau natives. To be honest, I wouldn't be as relieved if it were anybody else. If they made a joke of themselves, every Iron Plateau native would be disgraced. You are doing me a great favor by going there first.

"However, bear this in mind. After you reach Heavenly Saints City, you will certainly meet a lot of people from the six sects of Heavenly Saints City. Many of them may not have forgotten the competition of rightfulness yet and will likely to provoke you. We are in troubled times..."

"I understand." Li Yao suddenly interrupted him. "I'm not a man fond of quarrels. I'll try to restrain myself for the big picture. I won't get into conflict with them easily."

"Why not?" Xiong Wuji raised his eyebrow and said, "What I meant was that, if anybody provokes you, you must fight back brutally and teach those blind idiots what an Iron Plateau native looks like."

"..." Li Yao was rendered speechless.

"Right. One more thing. Did you really recruit Ah Yan as your disciple?"

"Yes," Li Yao admitted honestly. "He is very similar to myself ten years ago, but with a much higher aptitude. I recruited him as my disciple wholeheartedly.

"However, since we have over-planet study programs right now, I suggest Wu Mayan goes to study in Heavenly Saints City, too, to broaden his horizon and make him gain more experience, so that he can progress further in his training.

"There are still two months until he is fourteen years old, but he has already entered the 16th level of the Refinement Stage. I think neither Flying Star University nor Heavenly Saints Institute will reject such a treasure."

Xiong Wuji smiled. "Alright. That is exactly what was on my mind. I meant to send Ah Yan to study in Heavenly Saints City, but I thought that I'd better hear your opinion first since you are his master. It's all good then if you have no objections!

"However, you and Ah Yan are both special. According to him, he kneeled before you beside the pond as a gesture of acknowledging you as his teacher. That won't do!

"You are now the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau. It's a big deal that you have recruited a disciple. We cannot do things so inappropriately.

"How about this. I'll have everything prepared. Before you set off, experts of the six tribes and Cultivators who are still on Iron Plateau will be invited to join the ceremony. He will be acknowledging you as his master in public. It will also be a demonstration to the Cultivators of your prestige on Iron Plateau."

Li Yao was going to say no, but he soon realized that Xiong Wuji was trying to promote his name, and it would be beneficial for his future development.

Feeling the warmth in his heart, Li Yao nodded with a smile. "Alright. Whatever you say, Chief Xiong!"

…

Half a month later, in Flying Star University inside Heavenly Saints City…

Flying Star University was located on the third orbital ring, the one closest to the downtown area of Heavenly Saints City. Inside the orbital ring, there were natural landscapes that simulated mountains and rivers, as well as central business districts that were full of skyscrapers. Laboratories and teaching buildings could be seen everywhere, too.

The spiritual energy transmission tubes on the wall of the orbital ring continued releasing spiritual energy into the air and built a man-made paradise inside the third orbital ring where the students and scholars of Flying Star University could train themselves at will.

At this moment, in the natural landscape area of Flying Star University, next to a spring lake, an old man wearing a cloak was fishing. His fishpole was shivering slightly, and he looked half asleep, but he was quite enjoyed himself.

However, the old man's good mood was disrupted by the buzz of his mini crystal processor. After the old man read the message, his face turned darker than ever.

"Ridiculous appointment!" The old man threw the fishpole to the ground and asked gravely, "President Shang, may I ask who came up with the idea of letting the so-called best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau work as a visiting scholar in the Refining Department of Flying Star University? What place do they think the Refining Department is?"

The old man was Wei Wenyao. He was one of the best masters of refining in the Flying Star Sector as well as the dean of the Refining Department of Flying Star University. He was a well-respected authority in the circle of refiners.

President Shang, whom he was speaking to, was merely a deputy president in charge of administration and human resources. He was not famous in the academic circle and did not have any projects that he should be proud of. Moreover, he was almost forty years younger than Wei Wenyao.

As a renowned scholar, Wei Wenyao did not care about his title at all. He berated ruthlessly, "President Shang, Flying Star University is not a random community college where anybody can work as a visiting scholar or visiting professor!

"According to tradition, the visiting professor of Flying Star University should at least be a professor of one of the other 122 colleges in the Flying Star Sector, and even a visiting scholar should be, at least, an associate professor!

"Right now, you are making history by asking a barbarian to work as a visiting scholar in the Refining Department, join our research, and even teach our students! Is this a joke?"

President Shang hurried to explain, "Dean Wei, please calm down. Communications between Cultivators and Iron Plateau is underway. You are well aware of that, too. You supported the decision and even stated that you would like to recruit a few students from Iron Plateau, didn't you?"

"Cut the nonsense!" Wei Wenyang was rather bad-tempered. He glared and shouted, "Students and scholars are different. If students from Iron Plateau come here, I can always teach them special courses about the rudimental common sense about refining for the sake of communication even if they are not as smart as our students. But if a visiting scholar comes to this place, they are going to teach our students and join our projects. Not only will they mislead the students, it's also quite possible that they will mess around with the projects and delay our progress!

"Besides, I'm rather curious. Since you mentioned that the guy is the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, you can always send him to the Combat Department or the Exo

Department. He would be most welcomed in those places. Why does he have to come to the Refining Department?"

President Shang replied, his face bitter, "We thought exactly the same in the beginning. Since he is known as the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, he must have unique stills with him even though the Cultivation techniques of Iron Plateau are slightly underdeveloped, considering that he is the 'best' anyway. Therefore, we welcomed him to teach the students of the Combat Department and take part in the projects there. If possible, he could work with our combat-type Cultivators and develop new techniques.

"However, although the man said that teaching students of the Combat Department was not a problem, he also stated that he was interested in the arts of refining, too, and would like to exchange ideas with the best refiners of the Flying Star Sector on the latest theories in refining."

"Exchange ideas?" Wei Wenyao was so angry that he was actually laughing. "President Shang, not that I look down on the Iron Plateau natives whom I know for a fact are not primitive barbarians, but really… Forget it. Tell me more about the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau. Does he have any experience in refining?"

President Shang coughed and replied, "Iron Plateau is still relatively closed to us for now, and we do not have a very good intelligence network. Right now, the two parties are in a honeymoon state, so it's impossible for us to send people to investigate. Thus, what we have here are only the official profiles that the Iron Plateau natives offered us.

"According to the Iron Plateau natives, this best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau was in fact a wildling born in the Dark Continent…"

"Wait!" Wei Wenyao was dumbfounded. "I just said that they were not primitive barbarians, and you are immediately giving me one to prove that I was wrong?"

"Please listen to my explanation first." President Shang thought that the whole thing was absurd, too, but he was responsible for human resources after all. "The best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau has a legendary background. It is said that, although he was born a wildling, he was actually raised up by a mysterious space resident who was not only an unparalleled expert but also a skilled refiner. Therefore, the best warrior knows a thing or two about refining."

"Bullsh*t," Wei Wenyao sneered coldly. "The art of refining is a professional, complicated, comprehensive subject that involves hundreds of independent courses and countless kinds of precise magical equipment. Only after rigorous, systematic training can a qualified refiner be raised.

"A mysterious expert living in the woods teaching a random guy casually for several years, and an expert of refining was born? Is this a fairy tale?"

President Shang wiped the sweat on his forehead and replied, "I've seen the armor that the best warrior refined. It seems rather delicate to me."

Wei Wenyao sniffed and said, "I've seen a lot of True Qi armor and True Qi blades crafted by the Iron Plateau natives over the last couple of days. They have their own advantages, but in regard to structure and materials, they are still in the primitive, crude phase.

"Maybe, a refiner was forced to land on Iron Plateau and taught the barbarian some basic skills of refining that were enough for him to distinguish himself on Iron Plateau.

"But it does not mean that such a barbarian is qualified to work as a visiting scholar in my Refining Department!"

Chapter 640: Magnate of the Magnates

Chapter 640: Magnate of the Magnates

"The bottom line is, have you ever seen his capability in person, President Shang?"

President Shang nodded quickly and replied, "I have. At the disciple recruitment ceremony in Furious Bears City three days ago, the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau showed his skill a little bit.

"There were three super alloy planks twenty centimeters thick that could serve as the gates of treasuries, with a gap of one meter in between.

"After his one punch, the first plank was immediately melted by his spiritual gas; even its surroundings became orange.

"On the second plank, hundreds of holes appeared. His spiritual gas was condensed into needles and pierced through the plank.

"His spiritual gas did not run out after blowing through two planks and left a fist indentation more than ten centimeters deep on the third plank!

"The Cultivators who joined the ceremony did not think too highly of the Iron Plateau natives. They were dumbfounded when they saw his performance. According to the evaluation of several battle-type Cultivators, the man's maximum combat ability was at least in the middle level of the Core Formation Stage.

"The Iron Plateau natives also have secret arts that can allegedly enhance their combat ability by reverberating their fighting will. If he is on a rampage, he might be able to fight a peak-level Core Formation Stage Cultivator! I've seen it with my own eyes."

Wei Wenyao scoffed. "What about a peak-level Core Formation Stage Cultivator? Fighting and refining are entirely irrelevant. That's why I said he should be invited to the Combat Department."

President Shang smiled and said, "Don't be hasty, Dean Wei. I haven't finished my point yet. Iron Plateau natives value aggressiveness and valiancy, and they worship the strong more than anything!

"The best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau enjoys quite a high prestige in the place. Not only did tens of thousands of people of the Furious Bears Tribe participate in the ceremony, the other five tribes also sent many representatives led by their chiefs and elders to congratulate him. It was indeed a lively and splendid scene!"

Wei Wenyao frowned. "What does that have to do with the Refining Department?"

"The guests did not come empty-handed. The gifts from the five tribes almost filled the valley. Any one of them was an invaluable treasure," President Shang replied. "The best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau then gifted twenty Cloud Thunder Pearls even larger than pigeon eggs to his disciple!

"As a refiner, you must have heard about the treasure before. Not only does the pearl glitter at night, enormous spiritual energy of the thunder class is also contained inside. It is one of the best ancillary materials for training!

"A Cloud Thunder Pearl the size of a finger is already too precious to be bought on the market, not to mention twenty of them the size of pigeon eggs!"

Wei Wenyao gasped.

He was a refiner, so he knew what a valuable material Cloud Thunder Pearl was better than anybody else.

President Shang lowered his voice and said, "We were all shocked by the extravagance of the best warrior. After we asked around, we learned that the man had done the five tribes a great favor even though he had been wronged by them. Therefore, the five tribes offered a large number of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, as well as other valuable resources, to him to express their apology and gratitude.

"Although Iron Plateau is a desolate area, a lot of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures have been found during the five thousand years of exploration. The endless mother lodes buried underground alone are much more promising than the dust in space where we get our resources, are they not? Therefore, the Iron Plateau natives may seem strong and simple-minded, but they are out-and-out magnates!

"Therefore, the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau is one of the richest among the magnates. It may be exaggerating to say that he is richer than a country, but it's quite possible that his belongings are more valuable than the assets of a small sect!"

"Oh?"

Wei Wenyao finally realized where the conversation was going.

President Shang was beaming with a smile. "Now you see, Dean Wei. This is the situation I assumed.

"Sand Scorpion learned from a refiner from space during his childhood and must've grasped a thing or two. In the primitive world of Iron Plateau, he is the tallest among a bunch of dwarfs. Of course, he feels like he is a king.

"Since the man is unparalleled on Iron Plateau, it is natural that he feels his refining arts are already excellent, and he has decided to communicate with the masters of refining.

"Of course, we can turn down the request, but I suggest that Dean Wei does not to rush into anything. In short, the man is a classic more-wealth-than-wisdom guy. If such a rich man comes to the Refining Depart as a visiting scholar, he is definitely going to bring a large sum with him!"

Wei Wenyao stopped whining.

Being a dean of the Refining Department of a college was different from being a pure refiner.

The most important task for a dean was perhaps not his own study, but to find more donors for the Refining Department.

It was true that Flying Star University was one of the two best colleges in the Flying Star Sector, but no colleges in the world would ever complain that they had too much money.

The Refining Department was quite a large department, with a lot of money-burning projects and programs. Besides, the

Refining Department of the Heavenly Saints Institute was always competing with them.

If an idiot really came here with loads of money…

Wei Wenyao quickly thought of several projects in the department.

The projects had all been stagnated for various reasons. Some were because of the impractical designs, some because of the huge investment, and some because of the tremendous setbacks they suffered.

President Shang hurried to fan the flames. "Dean Wei, stopping hesitating. This is not a wildling; this is a mother god of fortune! If you hesitate, he might go to the Heavenly Saints Institute and revive a few projects of the Refining Department there. Please don't be angry then!"

Wei Wenyao was finally interested in the idea. "President Shang, are you sure that he is willing to invest? How rich can he be, considering that he's all by himself?"

"That's not a problem." President Shang smiled. "He may be not rich enough, but he is backed by the entire Iron Plateau! As for whether or not he is willing to invest, that will depend on your treatment of him. In my opinion, with so many great masters of refining in our department, it will be more than easy to fool a bumpkin from the remote area when they team up."

Wei Wenyao chuckled. "We are not 'fooling' anybody; we are mere each playing our part in the discovery of the endless mysteries in the world of refining together with our good friend from Iron Plateau, with the intelligent doing the research and the wealthy paying the money!"

After he shut off the communication, Wei Wenyao thought for a moment and reached out to almost ten project leaders who were currently short of funding. A remote meeting was held.

A moment later, doubts and exclamations burst out above the small lake again.

"What? A wildling is coming to my project team as a visiting scholar? Isn't that bullsh*t?"

…

Outside of Furious Bears City, Li Yao's and Wu Mayan's shadows were lengthened by the setting sun.

The following day, the two of them would set off. For the first time in Wu Mayan's memory, he was going to leave Iron Plateau for the boundless universe. The young man was a bit uneasy.

His right arm was exposed to the air, as he was testing a piece of new magical equipment Li Yao had refined for him. It was a silver glittering glove that extended to his elbow with complicated spiritual stripes on it. When he put on the glove, his right arm looked like an artificial one and was quite eye-catching.

The glove was based on Xiong Wuji's right arm, which had been blown away during his fierce fight against Yan Xibei.

Wu Mayan had picked up the broken arm from the battlefield and begged Li Yao to craft a glove for him.

Xiong Wuji's artificial arm was made of ordinary materials. Therefore, Li Yao added another dozen or so rarely-seen materials to it and asked for the advice of the five spectral Cultivators on Sparkle before the job was done.

Wu Mayan put on the glove and punched, tornadoes sweeping out from his right fist. He had trained himself hard wholeheartedly. His sweat was glimmering in the sunset.

"Have you made up your mind?" Li Yao smiled at his first disciple. "Have you decided to keep walking on the path of qi-training?

"I need to remind you that you cannot have all the best in the world. The path of qi-training and the path of normal Cultivation are not compatible. The thicker your veins and nerves are, the more spiritual gas you will be able to store. However, the result is that it will be more difficult to liquefy the spiritual gas.

"You are still young, and you have the chance to choose. But after another few years of training, I'm afraid that you will never get to the Building Foundation Stage.

"My situation is different. I'd already been in the Building Foundation Stage before I started practicing the qi-trainers' arts. Therefore, you cannot copy my experience."

Wu Mayan punched hard one more time. Looking at his spiritual waves dispersing dozens of meters away, he wiped his sweat and nodded his head. "The decision has been made. Although Master and Father Xiong both want me to study in Heavenly Saints City, and I'm very interested in meeting the experts in space myself, I will probably never be a Cultivator. My path is destined to be the path of qi-trainers!

"What's wrong with not being able to build the foundation?

"For five thousand years, the highest level of the Iron Plateau qi-trainers had always been the 99th level. Many people thought that the so-called 100th level did not exist and was just an ungrounded illusion. The 99th level was supposedly everyone's limit!

"However, Father Xiong punched that 'limit' into pieces with his iron fists!

"If he could reach the 100th level, I think the 101st level, the 200th, the 500th, and the 1,000th are definitely reachable, too!"

"With your aptitude, a lot of people will be willing to guide you when we arrive in Heavenly Saints City. Chances are that you will have the chance to enter the Core Formation Stage in the next twenty years. Your capability wouldn't be necessarily lower than that of the 100th level of the Refinement Stage," Li Yao said.

"At the very least, the Building Foundation Stage, the Core Formation Stage, the Nascent Soul Stage, and the Divinity Transformation Stage are unambiguous and unmistakable. The journey to the 1,000th level of the Refinement Stage, in comparison, is long and full of terrors. Why do you have to choose such a path?"

Looking at the desert and mountains far away, Wu Mayan replied softly, "Because it is the path that Father Xiong wanted to walk on."

Chapter 641: He Will Not Be Easy to Deal With

Chapter 641: He Will Not Be Easy to Deal With

Two months later, in the No. 6 space port of Heavenly Saints City…

"Achiu!"

Xie Anan sneezed. Her small nose shivered slightly, and she shrank further into her red coat, as if she were trying to bury herself in it.

As a star fortress, Heavenly Saints City maintained the climate and weather by magical equipment. It was possible to set the environment to a cozy temperature.

But people living in space often missed the seasonal changes on planets. Therefore, spring, summer, autumn, and winter were simulated on Heavenly Saints City. Occasionally, there was rain, snow, and fog.

It was the beginning of spring in Heavenly Saints City. Damp, cold wind was blowing in the scarce No. 6 space port and piercing into the collars and sleeves of the travelers through the tiniest gaps.

However, what really frustrated the young girl was not the weather but the grueling task that awaited her.

Xie Anan rubbed her hands and complained to Long Yunxin in a low voice.

"Really. There are so many students in our department. Why does it have to be me to welcome the visiting scholar?"

Xie Anan and Long Yunxin both came from noble families of refining that had a long history. They had been friends from a young age.

In the previous Skyhill Sword Seminar, both of them had been in touch with Li Yao. Long Yunxin had even been defeated by him.

Since she had been eliminated from the tournament too early, Long Yunxin naturally did not receive any offers from the three main crystal suit centers.

Thankfully, since her basic skills were quite good, and her family had a lot of connections in the circle of refiners, she had finally been accepted by the Refining Department of Flying Star University, her mother school, as an associate researcher. She was currently working in a renowned laboratory affiliated with the Refining Department.

Xie Anan, Long Yunxin, and four young refiners of the Refining Department of Flying Star University had come to the No. 6 space port in order to welcome a special visiting scholar.

The hundred exchange students from Iron Plateau had mostly arrived one month ago. The young people from a desolate planet had made quite a fuss and left a lot of funny tales when they first got to the most prosperous city of the Flying Star Sector.

The visiting scholar, Sand Scorpion, however, did not come with his compatriots. He was late by one month and did not arrive until today.

The Refining Department of Flying Star University had reached a preliminary consensus as to the treatment of the unique visiting scholar.

Although none of the professors and experts believed that Sand Scorpion was capable enough to be an actual contributor to the studies of refining in Flying Star University, everybody definitely wouldn't say no if the guy decided to put his money into their projects.

It would be even better if the Iron Plateau natives, who were on his back, grew interested in the Refining Department of Flying Star University because of him and invested even more.

Therefore, it had been decided that he would be welcomed warmly.

With the prestige of Flying Star University in the world of Cultivators, it was almost a pilgrimage for the visiting scholars from other space zones when they came here. Visiting scholars, at best, would usually have someone from the school greet them at the space port.

But this time, four young teachers and researchers of the Refining Department had come to the space port to welcome the guest in person. It was unusually formal for Flying Star University.

Long Yunxin, unlike Xie Anan, had volunteered to come.

She hated boredom more than anything else and, therefore, was quite interested in the visiting scholar from Iron Plateau. She said with a smile, "It can't be helped, Anan. You are the only one in our department who has met Sand Scorpion before. Since he saved your life, you are naturally the best candidate to welcome him today. Speaking of which, what kind of person is this best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau in your eyes?"

Xie Anan suddenly blushed.

Half a year ago, after the big explosion in the Skyhill Sword Seminar, she had been kidnapped and taken to Iron Plateau by the Temple of Immortals. It was 'Sand Scorpion' who had rescued her.

However, she had only seen 'Sand Scorpion' once in the valley and was handed over to the Great Horn Exo Society soon. She had never met him again before she left Iron Plateau.

However, there was a little secret in her heart.

When the twenty hostages were still held in prison, 'Sand Scorpion' had talked to her and learned the details from her mouth before the following operations were carried out.

Does he still remember me? Xie Anan thought to herself, only to be shocked by her idea.

She replied, her face red, "I—we weren't freed until we reached some valley. My head was dizzy when he took off our facial covers, and I couldn't see him clearly. I only remember that he was wearing a hideous armor, and his face was hidden by his messy hair. His voice was coarse, and he was quite mean. Before we caught our breath, he had already asked us to dig pits.

"However, we heard a lot of tales of Sand Scorpion from the Great Horn Exo Society later. It was said that he is a super expert who rose to fame recently on Iron Plateau. No one in all the six tribes had second opinion about his invincibility.

Even the previous, previous best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau was slain by him!"

Xie Anan grimaced. "Such a brutal guy must not be messed with. Now I'm part of the reception work, what—what if I piss him off?"

The four young men chitchatting nearby came over and said with smiles, "Don't be scared. We are all here for you. He is just another barbarian who has more brawns than brains!"

Although Xie Anan was a student and they were teachers, they were born in the noble families of refining, too, and had known each other since childhood. They had always considered her to be a little sister.

Therefore, they were not as restrained as normal teacher-student relationships.

The young refiner in the lead was as slender as a monkey and had a mole below his left eye. His name was Hou Zitao, and he specialized in guns boosted by spiritual energy. He had quite a few patents despite his young age and was a rising new star in the circle of refiners.

He joined Flying Star University five years ago, but he had been working as an assistant for other people and did not apply for his own project until this year. He was quite ambitious, planning to make a career out of the project.

He had never realized the importance of funding when he was an assistant. But now that he was leading a project team on his own, he immediately found that the arts of refining were too, too, too costly.

Flying Star University was never short of experts and professors. Thus, it was extremely difficult for a young genius like Hou Zitao to apply for research funds.

Naturally, when he heard that a silly yet rich landlord was coming to the Refining Department as a visiting scholar, Hou Zitao was the first to offer to join the reception team.

Hou Zitao smiled. "Anan, don't think too much. Just go up there and say nice words to him for saving your life when he shows up. When he is overwhelmed with self-satisfaction, we'll come close and adulate him to the point that he will forget his name. Then, we'll show him the few projects that we've been working on. Awesome as the guy may be, he has nothing but muscles. Does he really know anything about refining? By then, hehehehe..."

Hou Zitao was smiling cunningly.

The other young refiners were more or less the same. They were all laughing and rubbing their fists, making plans to seize the rarely-seen opportunity to let the goose lay more golden eggs for them.

Long Yunxin sniffed and dragged Xie Anan to aside. Coldly eyeing the guys who were enjoying such fantasies, Long Yunxin lowered her voice and said, "Anan, don't listen to the jibber-jabber of those people. Just do what you are asked to do and don't presume that the man is really a wealthy idiot. It is not going to be easy to take advantage of him. In my opinion, the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau will not be easy to deal with!"

Xie Anan was dazed. "Sister Long, do you know Sand Scorpion?"

With a mysterious smile, Long Yunxin replied, "Of course I don't. But I have a good friend in the Cross Wind Space Zone who told me a piece of shocking news yesterday!

"Anan, do you know why Sand Scorpion was delayed for so long?"

Xie Anan was still confused. "The Cross Wind Space Zone?"

"Yes. There's a small family of Cultivators in the Cross Wind Space Zone known as the Wu family, who did not have many experts. One of the least famous noble families, I would say."

Long Yunxin told the story merrily. "However, twenty years ago, a quite capable young expert named Wu Mafei emerged in the Wu family. He reached the high level of the Building Foundation Stage before he was forty years old. He joined the White Dragon Society, a fairly influential sect in the Cross Wind Space Zone, and became a pillar of the sect, making quite a fortune for his family.

"Too bad that the geniuses always seem to be cursed. A few years later, when Wu Mafei went to visit his in-laws with his wife and his child, they encountered space pirates and went missing.

"At that time, everyone thought that Wu Mafei and his next-of-kin were dead. The great fortune that Wu Mafei made and the insurance compensation that the White Dragon Society provided naturally fell into his other family members.

"The seniors of the Wu family were too old. But Wu Mafei had two brothers who claimed all the money.

"But as it turned out, although Wu Mafei perished, his only son Wu Mayan survived on Iron Plateau.

"Now that the communication between Iron Plateau natives and space residents has been reestablished, Wu Mayan naturally went back to the Cross Wind Space Zone to visit his family with his father's ashes.

"However, his visit put the Wu family in an embarrassing situation. It had previously been an unknown family and only earned some fame by Wu Mafei's hard work. Its prosperity later was based on Wu Mafei's insurance, too!

"Now that Wu Mafei's only son suddenly showed up, how should the assets of the Wu family be divided?"

Xie Anan listened to the story in confusion. She tilted her head and thought for a while. "Since Wu Mafei still has a son, his son is naturally the rightful heir to the compensation, pension, and the money that Wu Mafei earned previously."

Long Yunxin smiled knowingly. "That's common sense, but Wu Mafei's two brothers have enjoyed his legacy for so many years. How could they bear to hand over everything that was once theirs?

"The communication has just begun. Iron Plateau is still a mysterious place for most space residents. Nobody knows much about the situation on Iron Plateau.

"When Wu Mayan went back, he looked like a teenager no more than fifteen years old, and his mother was a strengthless doctor. His uncles thought that they could take advantage of the widow and the fatherless child, and they planned to keep the legacy for themselves. According to my friend, they provided a very harsh agreement, trying to kick away the mother and the young man with petty benefits.

"However, other than being the only son of Wu Mafei, Wu Mayan has yet another identity. He is the disciple of Sand Scorpion, the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau!

"Besides, Sand Scorpion went to the Cross Wind Space Zone together with Wu Mayan!"

Chapter 642: Glorious Sunlight Group

Chapter 642: Glorious Sunlight Group

"Ah?"

Attracted by the story, Xie Anan exclaimed, "Sand Scorpion must be not easy to deal with. Since he could rise to fame in a world as lawless as Iron Plateau, he would definitely teach the Wu family a hard lesson!"

Long Yunxin blinked and said, "If he simply engaged in fights without thinking, I wouldn't think so highly of him. He would merely have been another reckless man.

"However, according to my friend, through some methods, Sand Scorpion made the Wu family attack him first!"

"Were they crazy?" Xie Anan was quite surprised. "The man is the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau. How could they be so foolish?"

"It was a good demonstration of Sand Scorpion's cunningness." Long Yunxin took a long breath and continued. "When Sand Scorpion just showed up, he didn't reveal his identity, and he looked like a plain redneck. It was said that several members of the Wu family mocked him at the welcome party, but he did not respond or fight back. When a Cultivator of the Wu family challenged him, he turned it down with the excuse that he was injured and dedicated himself to the meat on the table. As a result, nobody thought much of him.

"There was no telling whether he really liked to keep a low profile or he was acting on purpose. If he was pretending the whole time, his mind is too treacherous.

"The Wu family is a third-rate family in the Cross Wind Space Zone after all, and they don't really know any top secrets. How could they know that the redneck that they'd been laughing at was actually the best warrior on Iron Plateau?

"In the end, when conflict broke out between the two parties regarding the recognition of Wu Mafei's legacy and the division of his assets, the Wu family was bewildered enough to ask three Building Foundation Stage Cultivators to deal with Sand Scorpion!

"Can you guess what happened?"

"What?" asked Xie Anan interestedly, her face red because of the coldness.

Long Yunxin extended her three fingers and waved them softly, as she replied, "Three Building Foundation Stage Cultivators were in crystal suits, fully armed.

"Sand Scorpion did not even use any weapon, much less a crystal suit. He crushed the three of them barehanded!"

"What!" Xie Anan gasped. "Defeating three Building Foundation Stage Cultivators without weapons? He is so terrifying?"

Long Yunxin was still in shock, too. "I couldn't agree with you more. The news I got was that Sand Scorpion had a pair of hands like two devils. When his fists hit his opponent's crystal suits, the crystal suit would turn into components, and part of the suit would be dissembled!"

Xie Anan's eyes nearly popped out of her skull. "Dismantling a crystal suit emptyhanded? Unbelievable!"

Long Yunxin nodded in agreement. "The three Building Foundation Stage Cultivators were quite famous in the Cross Wind Space Zone, and yet, they suffered a humiliating defeat because of Sand Scorpion. Naturally, the entire Cross Wind Space Zone was shocked.

"It was not until this moment that Sand Scorpion told everybody who he actually was. He also formally accused the three Building Foundation Stage Cultivators to be assassins from the Temple of Immortals who had been ordered to kill him!

"The Wu family had thought that Sand Scorpion was just a Mr. Nobody, so they were all dumbfounded at the situation!

"Think about it. The cooperation between space residents and Iron Plateau natives had reached the most critical moment. Sand Scorpion was not only the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau but also a visiting scholar invited by Flying Star University. Neither of the two identities was something that the Wu family could mess around with!"

Xie Anan couldn't help but chuckle. "They deserved it!"

Long Yunxin laughed, too. "Anyways, after the incident, most of the property of the Wu family returned to Wu Mayan. His two uncles who had ill intentions were saved of the punishment of going to jail, but they were eliminated from the decision-making circle of the family. They received a small pension and retired in embarrassment.

"Later, Wu Mayan reorganized the assets of the Wu family. Supported by his mother's family, he established a new 'Glorious Sunlight Group'. No sooner had it been founded than it started negotiating about cooperation and acquisition with a few sects in the transportation industry of the Cross Wind Space Zone, showing that the owner of the enterprise had a lot of resources!

"It was said that the Glorious Sunlight Group would take the trade between the space and Iron Plateau as their main business, and they will most likely monopolize many resources on Iron Plateau!"

"Wu Mayan is quite impressive. He is just a teenager, and he can already form such ambitious plans?" Xie Anan mumbled.

Long Yunxin snapped her forehead softly and smiled. "You dummy. Wu Mayan is not fifteen years old yet, and he has grown up on Iron Plateau. How much could he know about business? His mother's family is best known for their medical arts and know little about corporate affairs, too. Besides, even though they were interested in the idea, they did not have the capital to establish the Glorious Sunlight Group! Sand Scorpion must be behind the endeavor."

Xie Anan finally realized what this was all about. "Indeed. I'm told that Sand Scorpion is quite rich. Besides, since he is the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, his list of connections on Iron Plateau must be enormous, too. Good heavens. If the resources of an entire planet are monopolized by his Glorious Sunlight Group, his wealth will be intimidating!"

Long Yunxin nodded. "Yes. The real owner of the Glorious Sunlight Group is definitely Sand Scorpion. The resources of a major planet are too abundant. Even if he is not monopolizing all of them, a franchise of one tenth of the important resources is enough to make the Glorious Sunlight

Group one of the top-tier organizations in the Flying Star Sector!

"However, what I was really awed was Sand Scorpion's cunningness.

"Before, I thought the same with those people." Long Yunxin nodded at the four daydreaming young refiners and chuckled. "I thought that, impressive as his title might be, the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau would merely be a burly barbarian after all. With a few compliments and adulations, we would definitely get him to dance however we wanted.

"But after I was told of the incident, I was literally soaked in cold sweat. If Sand Scorpion was manipulating everybody and set up a trap for the Wu family to help Wu Mayan get his annoying uncles away, then his devices would be too scary!

"These four guys think that he is a fat lamb waiting to be butchered. They do not know that his wisdom is proportional to his wealth! Although they are trying to fool him right now, I bet they will be devoured by him without any bones left while they think they are taking advantage of him!"

Xie Anan's face was even more twisted, as if she had just bitten a sour apple. She smiled bitterly. "Sister Long, after hearing your story, I'm even less willing to welcome the intimidating guy now!"

…

"Dear passengers, we are arriving at the No. 6 space port of the third orbital ring of Heavenly Saints City, our final destination. Please make sure your belongings are with you. The Feathered Snakes Brotherhood offer mind-refreshing pills for free for every passenger on board to ease your fatigue after such a long journey. The mind-refreshing pills are made of thirty-six valuable..."

Listening to the loud and clear advertisement, Li Yao stretched his arms and observed the view outside the cabin window with great interest, while he murmured to himself, "How splendid!"

He was in the middle of a carrier that was hundreds of meters long. Naturally, it was not a real cabin window next to him but a light beam where the real-time scenery that the crystal cameras captured of Heavenly Saints City was displayed.

It was not until this moment that Li Yao witnessed the magnificence and splendidness of the biggest metropolis of the Flying Star Sector in person.

Half an hour away, they passed the ninth and the tenth orbital rings, the two outmost residential areas of Heavenly Saints City.

Further outside, the eleventh and the twelfth orbital rings were still under construction.

Countless carriers and engineering starships towed the war remnants from various parts of the Flying Star Sector, which would then be refined in the space factories near Heavenly Saints City. Together with the components produced in asteroids and world fragments, they constituted new flesh and bones of Heavenly Saints City.

Thousands of workers collaborated with the automatic construction magical equipment. The scene reminded Li Yao of ants who were building their nests.

Thanks to the hard work of the workers, Heavenly Saints City was expanding at a visible speed. Instead of a dead object, it was likely an awesome giant beast that was roaming in the sea of stars.

Heavenly Saints City was made of a star fortress and ten orbital rings that surrounded it. The orbital rings were connected to each other by high-pressure vacuum tubes. There were many branches on the vacuum tubes and their ends were connected to countless smaller star fortresses.

At first glance, the city looked like a big tree with countless fruits on it.

They'd been floating in Heavenly Saints City for more than half an hour, and yet they still hadn't reached the 'third ring' from the 'tenth ring'. Hundreds of carriers had jammed the traffic ahead of them.

Li Yao stopped staring out the window and focused his attention on the desk in front of him.

On the desk was a common watch made of 462 components.

Li Yao tapped the desk with his right hand softly. He suddenly flipped his palm, and his spiritual energy surged out toward the watch. His fingers did not move, but the watch was dismantled into hundreds of components in the blink of an eye!"

Still can't. My control over my spiritual energy is still too primitive. I cannot dismantle all of the components without touching the watch.

Li Yao slightly frowned.

It was extremely difficult to increase the hand speed after it surpassed the speed of sound. If he wanted a major breakthrough, he would have to break the limits of hands and operate on materials directly with his spiritual energy. That away, much more delicate control than hands would be achieved.

A Cultivator only had ten fingers, but they could form thousands of spiritual threads. If their every spiritual thread was nimbler than their fingers, their 'hand speed' would be increased by hundreds of times!

If the skill was adeptly grasped, it would not be impossible to dismantle a crystal suit or a starship barehanded.

Without feeling bored, Li Yao dismantled and assembled the watch time and time again. However, his thoughts suddenly flashed back to a month ago.

When he thought of everything that had happened in the Cross Wind Space Zone, he couldn't help but feel funny.

As a man born in the magical equipment graveyard, he had never been fond of being in the spotlight. Lurking in an inconspicuous corner and waiting for the prey was the most comfortable style for him.

Therefore, he had refused to go to Heavenly Saints City with the exchange students, because a huge number of reporters were definitely going to show up wherever they arrived. He did not intend to waste his precious time on meaningless social activities.

As it happened, Wu Mayan was going to his hometown to scatter his birth father's ashes, and Sha Yulan meant to visit her parents in the Cross Wind Space Zone, too. Therefore, Li Yao had decided to go with them. He had planned to go to

Heavenly Saints City after all the family matters were settled.

He had been hoping to avoid trouble and had been keeping quite a low profile. However, trouble always seemed to come to him anyway.

Chapter 643: Welcome Gift!

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The trip might not be as bad as I thought.

It was a pure coincidence that Li Yao went to the Cross Wind Space Zone. He had not planned to do so in the beginning. However, he had never been a man who liked to refuse other people. Since those two uncles of the Wu family had been seeking their own doom, how could he not fulfil their wish?

He had merely wanted to take back the legacy his disciple was entitled to in the beginning. However, after investigating, he found that the Wu family was mainly engaged in the transportation industry, and most of its assets were relatively new carriers.

When Wu Mafei, Wu Mayan's birth father, was alive, he had been in charge of the transportation business of the White Dragon Society. After a few years of work, he had led his family into the transportation industry, too.

Despite his two brothers' evil characters, they were quite seasoned in the business operations.

After Wu Mafei passed away, his two brothers had continued working in the transportation industry with the connections and capital that he had left behind. In honor of Wu Mafei, the White Dragon Society maintained the cooperation with the Wu family, too. For more than a decade, the family business had thrived. No wonder Wu Mayan's two uncles were reluctant to let go of it.

After the investigation was done, Li Yao quickly thought of something and associated it with the scheme that had been on his mind recently.

Later, with evidence that the two uncles had hired muscle against himself and a series of clandestine arrangements, Li Yao kicked them out of the decision-making circle of the Wu family and helped Wu Mayan get back what should have been his all along.

Inside the Wu family, except for the two uncles, there were also many secondary members who were all quite familiar with the transportation industry. Li Yao appointed the dutiful, obedient ones and those who had been not favored by the two uncles because of their close relation with Wu Mafei as the new administration.

With that personnel as the foundation, as well as the tremendous resources that Li Yao had gained on Iron Plateau and the support of Sha Yulan's family, the 'Glorious Sunlight Group' was established!

Li Yao was not scared that the Wu family would betray him, because the main advantage of the Glorious Sunlight Group was Li Yao and Wu Mayan's connection with Iron Plateau and the monopolization of resources based on it.

Without the relationship, the 'Glorious Sunlight Group' would have been nothing.

Besides, Li Yao believed that everyone would understand the dire consequences of betraying him after witnessing him blow up three crystal suits barehanded.

Li Yao's purpose of establishing the Glorious Sunlight Group was very simple. Firstly, he was hoping to make money through the trades between the Iron Plateau natives and space residents. The profits would support the refinement of his future planetary-level magical equipment and the search for the Heaven's Origin Sector.

Because of the vastness of the space, it was a money-burning task to find a special constellation between the countless stars and locate its coordinates precisely.

Secondly, since the Glorious Sunlight Group was planning to transport goods for Iron Plateau natives and space residents, it was only reasonable that it established its own team of guards or even an Exo Society, considering the chaos in the Flying Star Sector.

It was a perfect excuse for Li Yao to assemble his own armed forces.

Maybe one day, the Exo Society under the name of the Glorious Sunlight Group would go back to the Heaven's Origin Sector together with him!

Besides, right now, the newly established Glorious Sunlight Group was a great cover to hide a lot of secrets for him.

After the Glorious Sunlight Group was registered, Li Yao purchased a batch of secondhand carriers in the name of the company through online trade platforms. Many carriers had similar shapes to Sparkle.

Li Yao planned to modify the secondhand carriers to the point that they would look exactly like Sparkle. After that, he would dismantle one of the carriers and only keep its number.

In such a way, Sparkle would have a perfect disguise and become legalized. It would be able to cruise through the space routes openly. Nobody would notice anything wrong unless they boarded the starship and checked.

Other than that, Li Yao also purchased a lot of magical equipment for refiners under the name of the Glorious Sunlight Group, hoping to build the Glorious Sunlight Group's own laboratory for Mo Xuan and the other spectral Cultivators.

Mo Xuan, as the dean of the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution in the old days, had waited for too long in the long journey in the sea of stars. He almost couldn't wait to act now.

Li Yao had once discussed with them about establishing a branch of the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution in the Flying Star Sector. Right now, Li Yao had enough resources to fulfil his promise now.

The branch could be established under the name 'Research Center of the Glorious Sunlight Group'.

The Glorious Sunlight Group has been born. Although it does not boast many carriers right now, considering our monopolization of Iron Plateau, which is a goose that lays golden eggs, many sects have already proposed cooperation. A lot of profit is waiting for us.

Selling the unpurifiable ores on Iron Plateau to the world fragments in space that have the technology to refine them alone is enough for us to make a fortune!

Therefore, the research funds shouldn't be a problem.

As for Professor Mo Xuan, he was in charge of Project Mystic Skeleton all by himself and was one of the leading experts among the grassroots refiners. He is clearly not a nerd who knows nothing but research. With abundant resources, it should be a familiar job for him to establish and manage a research center.

Everything has been set on track. Very good. I can focus myself on training right now. I'm definitely going to form the ultimate core within five years!

The starship shivered slightly and docked at the space port.

Li Yao stretched his arms. His left hand moved softly, and the hundreds of components dancing in midair immediately rushed to his wrist, where they circled and assembled into a watch precisely.

The second hand was ticking accurately.

Li Yao walked to the exit amid other travelers.

Before, when his identity had been revealed in the Cross Wind Space Zone, the Cultivation sects there had suggested sending a starship to escort him to Heavenly Saints City.

Flying Star University had also proposed to pick him up in the Cross Wind Space Zone.

However, he had turned down the offers and decided to go to Heavenly Saints City on a regular carrier, after demanding that Flying Star University not to leak his whereabouts.

The trouble he was trying to avoid was not just reporters, who were literally everywhere, but also the Temple of Immortals, which was lurking in the darkness.

After the incidents on Iron Plateau, Li Yao had no doubt that his name was on the top of the blacklist of the Temple of Immortals.

Although he was not scared of the Temple of Immortals, it would be quite a bummer and a waste of his time, which he could've used for training, if a bunch of assassins were asking for his trouble all day.

Seeing no reporters outside the space port, Li Yao was greatly relieved. He squinted and looked for his ride.

Soon, he saw three men wearing the badge of Flying Star University.

However, the three of them seemed too muscular, and the aura around them was ten times sharper than that of common refiners.

The two parties looked at each other. The three men hesitated for a moment and raised their wrists to check the photo on their mini crystal processors before they finally strode toward him.

Li Yao frowned and thought to himself, Are you kidding me? Assassins of the Temple of Immortals are outrageous enough to do their job in Heavenly Saints City openly? No. Although the three of them look quite capable, they do not seem to be assassins.

"Master Sand, greetings!"

The three of them walked to Li Yao like three mobile radiation sources without hiding their provocative aura at all. The one in the lead was quite hefty and more than 2.2 meters tall, with acne all over his face, clearly a guy who wouldn't enjoy a day until he had experienced a satisfying fight. He grinned and said, "I am Liao Guohui, a teacher of the Combat Department of Flying Star University. I'm from the Furious Bears Union!"

"My name is Cai Yu. I also work in Flying Star University." The second young man, who was slender and looked like a snake, smiled and said, "I am a disciple of the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood."

The third young man was stout, with a neck thicker than his head and a long bag on his back. His eyes were big, but his pupils were small, from which needle-like brilliance was beaming out. He eyed Li Yao up and down rudely and said, "I am Feng Kaixuan, a secondary researcher of the Flying Sword Department.

"I'm from the Heaven Wolves Fortress."

Li Yao was dazed and realized what was going on. "Nice to meet you, fellow Cultivators. But I seem to recall that it is the Refining Department that was supposed to pick me up. Most of my research will be conducted in the Refining Department, too. I wonder…"

"Master Sand, you are the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, and the three of us are more or less known in the younger generation of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, too."

Snake-like young man Feng Kaixuan said in a smile, "We were all excited to learn that you were coming to Flying Star University as a visiting scholar. We thought that we finally would have the opportunity to experience the marvelous skills of the legendary qi-trainers. But we didn't expect that you would choose to go to the Refining Department!

"However, it doesn't matter. The main reason that the three of us have come here to greet you is to let you know that the Combat Department, the Battlesuit Department, the Flying Sword Department, and the other departments related to fighting welcome you to come at any moment to exchange our thoughts and ideas.

"The six sects of Heavenly Saints City and the six tribes of Iron Plateau are in a subtle relationship. Everybody knows that. But we are young people after all, and we should not refrain from talking to each other because of shadows of the past. Don't you agree, Master Sand?"

Li Yao smiled. "Of course. I would like to communicate with the teachers and students of the Combat Department, the Flying Sword Department, and the Battlesuit Department if possible, too."

Feng Kaixuan smiled and extended his hand to Li Yao. "Alright. We don't have any other purposes. We are merely here to give Master Sand a warm welcome."

"That's very kind of you."

Li Yao looked at Feng Kaixuan's hand.

The right hand he extended seemed to be carved out of a huge rock. There was not the slightest hint of flesh and blood at all.

Li Yao did not say anything and simply shook his hand as if it were nothing unusual.

Feng Kaixuan's face immediately froze.

As if suffering from an electric shock, his hairs all stood up.

Chapter 644: Your Fists Are Too Strong

Chapter 644: Your Fists Are Too Strong

CRACK! CRACK! CRACK! CRACK!

The bones all over Feng Kaixuan's body was emitting crackling noises as if they were fireworks, his teeth clattering.

"What!"

Cai Yu was greatly surprised. He was hesitating whether or not he should interject, but then Li Yao let go of Feng Kaixuan's hand and extended it toward him.

Cai Yu sniffed. Brutality suddenly shone in his eyes, as he extended his right hand, too.

He had made full preparations. Veins were bulging on his right hand, and electric arcs were vaguely dancing among his fingers!

The two hands grasped each other slowly but surely.

The electric arcs among Cai Yu's fingers were crushed as if they were several ants.

Cai Yu grunted. The skin all over his body suddenly turned blood-red. His eyeballs protruded out and were soon occupied by the exponentially growing streaks of blood.

Li Yao was still smiling. He shook Cai Yu's right hand for a while, before he let go of it and extended his hand toward Liao Guohui.

The hefty guy, Liao Guohui, was from the Combat Department. There were hints on his body that suggested he was a body practitioner or body fundamentalist. He was the strongest of the three when it came to empty-handed fights.

However, he was soaked in cold sweat when he saw what had become of his two good friends, whose capability was very close to his own. He did not dare underestimate the plain-looking best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau. Gritting his teeth, he snatched Li Yao's right hand with both of his giant hands while he bellowed, "Master Sand, welcome to Heavenly Saints City!"

BOOM!

The black hair on the two giant hands almost completely devoured Li Yao's right hand.

Liao Guohui's teeth were emitting rubbing noises; he was shaking Li Yao's hand so hard that he was grinding his teeth into pieces.

Holding one hand with two hands. Other people who did not know what was going on might think that Li Yao had done Liao Guohui a great favor and that Liao Guohui was trying to express his gratitude by such a way of handshaking.

Li Yao frowned and couldn't help but grunt. His muscles were rigid for a moment, before they were relieved again. In embarrassment, he said in a low voice, "I'm sorry, Mister Liao. You are too strong. I could not reserve anything."

Liao Guohui stood stiffly as if he were a willow tree that had just been hit by lightning.

Li Yao's right hand slithered out of Liao Guohui's hands like a loach. He said solemnly once again. "I'm sorry, Mister Liao. It was not intentional. Your fists were really too strong!"

While talking, Li Yao nodded at the other young teachers, before he picked up his suitcase and strode off.

He soon merged in with other travelers, and none of them could see where he was anymore.

The fulminations inside Feng Kaixuan's body did not die down until five seconds later. His cold sweat seemed to suggest that he'd been interrogated for three days and three nights. He managed to raise his right hand, only to discover that it was trembling violently beyond his control!

"Ho—horrifying! It was not a handshaking. I felt like my right hand was placed in the mouth of a demon beast that bit it hard!"

Still in shock, Feng Kaixuan looked at his good buddy Cai Yu next to him. The redness over Cai Yu's body had only just faded, but his right hand, with which he had shaken Li Yao's hand, was expanding at a visible speed until it was three times the usual size. It was translucent and an alarming red, like a weird balloon.

"I—I can't feel my right hand now. Is that guy a human being? Even the few Core Formation Stage Cultivators in our department are not as intimidating as this!"

Cai Yu's face collapsed while he gazed at his right hand in disbelief.

Feng Kaixuan touched his palm gently, and he immediately screamed like a pig being butchered.

The two of them looked at each other in bewilderment, as if they were in a match of cold sweat.

The freezing wind blowing in the space port was almost turning them into ice creams.

"Brother Liao is indeed the strongest of us!" Feng Kaixuan took a breath and commented, "As expected of a man from the Combat Department. You drew with such a monster in a head-on clash!"

He seemed to forget that Liao Guohui had held Li Yao's one hand with two hands of his own.

"The best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau has indeed got something about him. We were too careless. Thankfully, Brother Liao managed to defeat the guy in the end. Otherwise, it would've been a major disgrace for us today!"

Cai Yu took out a can and sprayed the medication on his right hand carefully. A moment later, he suddenly found something weird. "Brother Liao, why are you not moving?"

Feng Kaixuan patted Liao Guohui's shoulder, "Right. Brother Liao, why did he apologize to you in the end and say that you were too strong? What does that mean? You had a slim advantage?"

"Don't touch me!" Liao Guohui shouted, but there was no time. Feng Kaixuan's hand had already landed on his shoulder.

Huala!

Liao Guohui's body trembled. Interconnecting cracks now appeared on the ground three square meters around his feet.

Below his feet, the ground had crumbled to pieces, making him look several centimeters shorter than he should have!

That was not the end. As the cracks appeared below his feet, countless streams of spiritual gas suddenly burst out of Liao Guohui's body. His long robe bulged out at first into what seemed to be a ball, before all of his clothes, including his pants and underwear, exploded with earsplitting noises. The tattered clothes were flying crazily in midair and barely any remained on his body.

In the coldness of spring, the young teacher, Liao Guohui of the Combat Department of Flying Star University, glared at his two companions in the No. 6 space port, which was teeming with people, naked.

The cold wind was kind enough to put a layer of goosebumps on him.

Feng Kaixuan and Cai Yu were dumbfounded. They looked at Liao Guohui's goosebumps with the utmost fear.

Liao Guohui's face was more hideous than when he was crying. His voice coarse, he explained, "He meant that he did not hold back at all because I was too strong. That is why he said sorry."

"Ah!"

At this moment, several travelers noticed Liao Guohui's eccentric appearance and exclaimed in shock.

…

The five young refiners of the Refining Department of Flying Star University, and Xie Anan, were holding a large sign saying 'Master Sand'. They looked at the crowds in eagerness.

A 3D picture was projected from Hou Zitao's mini crystal processor.

The man in the picture was standing proudly on a bloody dais built by the bones of demon beasts. He was wearing glamorous clothes refined out of demon bones and hides, with a colorful crown made of feathers on his head. The most eye-catching part about him was his right shoulder, which had a demon tusk more than a meter long attached. It was daunting, brutal, and savage!

Below the helmet was an extremely rough face full of beards. His eyes seemed to be eating people alive, making people too scared to look at him even though it was merely a picture.

"How is he still not here?" Hou Zitao stood on his toes and looked around. "Such a distinguishing style should be very easy for us to notice."

Seeing the picture of 'Sand Scorpion, the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau', Xie Anan was even more scared. She hid herself behind Long Yunxin and said, "Sister Long, that can't be right. Last time I saw Sand Scorpion, he did not seem be dressed like that. Is he really so horrifying?"

"This is the formalwear that he wore when he recruited his disciple." Long Yunxin comforted her, although she was not so sure herself. "He wouldn't wear such ostentatious clothes in daily life, would he?"

"Not good!" Hou Zitao frowned. "I may have found several young teachers of the Combat Department and the Battlesuit Department. I was told that some young teachers from the departments who were raised up in the six sects of Heavenly Saints City did not buy Sand Scorpion's title as the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau. They've been planning to teach Sand Scorpion a lesson for a long time. Did they come here to ask for his trouble?"

"Where are they?"

Long Yunxin and Xie Anan looked at where Hou Zitao was pointing, only to see Liao Guohui, who was barely wearing anything and holding his legs so hard that he might've been postponing his urination for two hours. The man was so ashamed that he seemed to be willing to dive into the ground at any point.

Xie Anan exclaimed in shock and immediately blushed.

Long Yunxin coughed hard. "Well. Isn't—isn't he Liao Guohui from the Combat Department? I recall that he is one of the strongest experts in the younger generation of the Furious Bears Union. But I didn't know that he was a fan of public exposure?"

While everybody looked at each other in bewilderment and confusion, Li Yao walked toward them with a smile.

He did not see the sign of 'Master Sand', but he saw Xie Anan.

He had met the girl both in the Skyhill Sword Seminar and on Iron Plateau. The two of them were quite connected.

Li Yao walked up to them and said with a smile, "Greetings, everyone. Nice to meet you again, Xie Anan. I am Sand

Scorpion."

Everybody was dazed, their eyes blinking.

Standing in front of them was a plain young man, so unattractive that there were no good points about him at all.

He was wearing a grey wind coat whose sleeves had cracked because of long-time rubbing. Inside the wind coat was a sweater that was very comfortable but the opposite of expensive. On his feet were boots full of cracks. The only adornment on his body was the glittering watch on his wrist, but it was one of the cheapest brands on the market.

Below his messy hair was a face devoid of any characteristics. However, his face was shaved clean, to the point that one might say too clean.

At first glance, one would think he was an out-and-out white-collar worker. If he were to put on sportswear, nobody would doubt him if he claimed that he was a college student!

Such an ordinary-looking, unattractive young man was like a totally different person from the fearsome, majestic best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau in the picture!

Li Yao saw the picture on Hou Zitao's mini crystal processor, too. He couldn't help but smile bitterly.

The photo had been taken during the ceremony where he recruited Wu Mayan as his disciple. Xiong Wuji had insisted that it should be an unprecedented gala of the Furious Bears Tribe and demanded that he put on the glamorous formalwear made of demon bones and hides according to the traditions of the six tribes of Iron Plateau. Even his beard was stimulated through secret arts so that it could grow faster. Xiong Wuji had said that it was how the best warrior of Iron Plateau should look.

Li Yao had thought that, since he was about to leave Iron Plateau, he might as well take the opportunity to boost the morale of the qi-trainers.

However, after he left Iron Plateau and returned to space, he realized that his pose in the recruitment ceremony had become the official portrait of 'the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau'. Whenever the media mentioned him, it would always be the barbaric and primitive picture that came with his name.

Chapter 645: A Real Master

Chapter 645: A Real Master

Li Yao had found it hilarious in the beginning, but he soon realized that it might not be a bad outcome. If he shaved his face clean and put on ordinary clothes in space, nobody would recognize who he was if they did not observe him carefully and have a pair of keen eyes. A lot of his trouble could be saved.

After he entered the superlative height of the Building Foundation Stage, his control over the muscles throughout his body became more delicate than before. He could even slightly change the shape of his bones.

Li Yao's current face was vastly different from when he participated in the Skyhill Sword Seminar. It was even more ordinary right now. He had also changed his hands a little bit. Therefore, Xie Anan failed to recognize him.

The girl blinked and felt a familiar scent from the guy 'Sand Scorpion', as if she had seen him a long, long time ago. Her face flushed, she said, "Nice to meet you, too, Master Sand Scorpion. I didn't think that you would still remember me."

Li Yao smiled. "Of course I do. It was thanks to your calmness on Iron Plateau that the following rescue mission was carried out successfully."

However, his words made Xie Anan's face even redder. She lowered her head and looked at her feet while she thought to herself, He still remembers me.

Hou Zitao finally came back to himself. He was secretly delighted because Sand Scorpion did not appear to be an unfriendly guy. He immediately signaled to his companions and put on a sunny smile, while he said, "Master Sand, nice to meet you. I'm Hou Zitao from the Refining Department. I volunteered to greet you when I was told that you were coming to the Refining Department as a visiting scholar.

"Everybody knows that Master Sand Scorpion is the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, but few of them are aware that you are adept at the arts of refining, too. We've all seen the 3D photos and structural designs of the True Qi armors, True Qi blades, and crystal bombs modified by you. They are indeed quite sophisticated and can be described as top-tier in many regards! We can't wait to share our research programs with Master Sand and hear your enlightenment!

"Take the program that I've been working on for example. I feel that Cultivators nowadays do not have a good solution to the alternation of remote magical equipment and melee magical equipment yet.

"When a gun runs out of ammo or crystal cells, it becomes completely useless. On the other hand, sabers and swords cannot attack the enemy in a long distance.

"A Cultivator often has to bring a gun as well as a melee weapon in order to meet the need of both remote and melee combat. In regard of load, logistics, and maintenance, such a design is a great burden!

"Therefore, I'm preparing to devise a super weapon that combines remote magical equipment and melee magical equipment so that the problem can be solved once and for all. The burden for Cultivators and logistics will be greatly relieved!

"You know that the Temple of Immortals and space pirates have been running rampant recently. Our supply lines have been seriously affected by them. If such super weapons are successfully developed, the returns will be very promising!

"If you are interested, Master Sand, you are welcome to my laboratory any time. We can even research together!

"Truth be told, my research has already entered the most crucial procedure. As long as the last sum of investment is in position, our first prototype will be produced shortly, and it is only a matter of time before they are mass-produced!"

Li Yao smiled. "You are too courteous, Master Hou. Despite your young age, you've published five papers in 'Bimonthly Journal of the Gunnery Association' and 'Light Magical Equipment Studies' and are well-acknowledged as an expert in regards of guns.

"I've read all your papers. Your modification plan of 'Icy Flames Explosive Bullets', in which you proposed to mix the spiritual energy of the ice class and that of the fire class before it is released to make the best of the mechanism of thermal expansion and contraction, gave me a lot of insights. The formulas and rune arrays you mentioned in your article were of tremendous help to me.

"However, I'm not the best at the gun-type magical equipment, and I do not know much about the arts of shooting. Of course, we can exchange our ideas and thoughts, but I wouldn't be bold enough to call my words enlightenment."

Hearing his words, Hou Zitao and the other young refiners were greatly surprised. They had thought that Sand Scorpion was an idiot who knew nothing about refining, and yet he could comment on Hou Zitao's paper?

The four of them looked at each other in bewilderment. They had been planning to brag about themselves, but they were uncertain of the newcomer's knowledge right now and did not know whether or not they should stick to their plan.

Li Yao smiled casually. After the deal of cooperation between Flying Star University and Iron Plateau was settled, he had been authorized to read the files and papers of the Refining Department of Flying Star University.

Other than the confidential projects, most of the projects were accessible to public. Their relative files could be bought on academic websites.

Of course, the core data was kept secret. But for an expert like Li Yao, he could still infer a lot of things from the publicly published papers.

Although he had been staying in the Cross Wind Space Zone over the past month, he had a basic understanding about the studies of every expert and professor in the Refining Department of Flying Star University right now.

Solo magical equipment was a field that he was quite interested in, too. Since it somewhat overlapped with Hou Zitao's studies, Li Yao had spent quite some time studying the guy's theories.

Li Yao smiled and said, "Master Hou, it is an interesting idea to combine remote magical equipment with melee magical equipment. However, although the methodology you choose is not wrong, you've increased a lot of unnecessary difficulties for yourself. Technologically speaking, combining vibration sabers and spiritual guns is too complicated and too costly, if the plan succeeds at all."

Hou Zitao was greatly shocked. He took a step back and blurted out, "There are so many kinds of melee magical equipment. How did you know that I was going to combine vibration sabers with spiritual guns?"

Li Yao explained, "The latest paper you wrote elaborated on the application of 'Mid Noon Electricity Brewer', an ancient rune array, in modern magical equipment.

"As far as I know, this particular rune array's efficiency of storing and releasing thunder is extremely low, and it has many other shortcomings. Even in the ancient Cultivation world forty thousand years ago, it was never an excellent rune array and has been forsaken for a long time.

"Such a rune array is definitely a good choice if you want to improve the damage of the weapon with the power of thunder.

"The weak magnetic field generated by the ancient rune array is also an excellent buffer to offset the shaking resulting from vibrations.

"With consideration of other studies that you've been working on, I speculated that you were trying to combine vibration sabers with spiritual guns. However, the high-frequency vibration of the saber would lead to the violent quakes of the barrel. You were looking for a special buffer material or rune array to offset the vibration without affecting the precision of shooting and the damage of the saber."

Hou Zitao was dumbfounded. A drop of cold sweat trickled down his forehead.

That was exactly his idea. Sand Scorpion had guessed his modification plan based on a few papers he had written even though the guy had been living on the desolate Iron Plateau the whole time?

That—that's too monstrous! Who said that he was a silly, wealthy bumpkin who was readily foolable?

Besides, the Mid Noon Electricity Brewer was a very ancient, unpopular rune array, with a low efficiency in both the storage and the release of thunderbolts. In the ancient Cultivation world forty thousand years ago, dozens of rune arrays of the thunder class shared similar functions and could replace it. Therefore, even the ancient Cultivators did not use such a rune array much. Its inheritance had been lost since long ago!

Hou Zitao had only learned about the existence of such a rune array and the special buffering ability it could offer from a mysterious refiner named 'Fiend Star' on the Spiritual Nexus by accident. That was the starting point of all his studies.

However, this Sand Scorpion knew the Mid Noon Electricity Brewer, too? Unbelievable!

Hou Zitao instantly put on a serious countenance and asked respectfully, "Master Sand, do you think the approach is wrong?"

"It is not wrong, but it is too difficult and costly."

Li Yao explained patiently, "The Mid Noon Electricity Brewer is an ancient rune array from tens of thousands of years ago after all. The structure of the rune array is very primitive, and its stability extremely low. To make sure that it functions steadily on guns, you will have to add another few stabilizing rune arrays for it and even establish a 3D rune array group. Like this, for example."

Li Yao thought for a moment. Since it was just a casual chitchat instead of a formal discussion, he decided to save himself of the trouble of summoning a light beam. He simply condensed his spiritual energy on his right hand and waved in midair.

Ripples immediately appeared in the air as if it were water.

Li Yao extended dozens of spiritual threads from his fingertips and left traces on the airwaves. Within a breath, more than twenty formulas and structural designs revealed themselves in the air.

Hiss!

Everyone was stunned at the translucent strokes condensed by spiritual gas that were emerging in the air and could not move their eyes away from them.

They all had seen such a technique before. The better of them could also draw runes in the air with their spiritual energy as the ink.

However, the runes they drew would soon disappear like a drop of water dispersing on paper.

Sand Scorpion's runes in midair, on the other hand, were extremely clear, as if they had been written with a pen. They did not scatter for a long time!

How high is this guy's Cultivation?

Everyone was greatly shocked.

Hou Zitao was the most shocked one of all, because he found that Sand Scorpion had written a series of formulas quickly and casually related to issues that had bothered him for a long time. They would solve the critical problem at hand completely!

While reading all the formulas, Hou Zitao felt that he had eaten a mouthful of mustard. Coldness was piercing his skull. He did not just feel enlightened; he felt that his brains were being rebuilt!

These—these formulas can be used to calculate the perfect structure of rune arrays for the super weapon combining the vibration sabers and spiritual guns!

Hou Zitao did not even know what to say. He stammered, "Master Sand Scorpion, you've thought through it since long ago."

After only one minute, he was already addressing 'Master Sand Scorpion' sincerely now.

Li Yao, on the other hand, frowned and shook his head. "No. As I said, the approach is too complicated.

"Look, if you adopt such an approach and utilize such a complicate rune array group as a buffer, your final product will definitely have a huge, heavy unit toward the front.

"The most important factor for guns and blades is balance. This redundant unit will be like a lump. Wherever it grows, the balance of the weapon will be seriously affected.

"Not to mention that the buffer unit will also consume a lot of spiritual energy, which means that the working time of the weapon will be significantly reduced.

"There's also the fault rate. I believe that Master Hou must have seen it, too. Because of the designing principles, the fault rate of the buffer unit will be quite high."

"Indeed."

Soaked in sweat, Hou Zitao nodded his head, although he did not actually see a damn thing.

"Combining remote magical equipment and melee magical equipment is for the purpose of reducing the weight and the cost of spiritual energy, as well as easing logistics. But such a malformed weapon with a great lump on it will not achieve the goal. It is not hard to estimate that such weapons will be kept in laboratories after their prototypes are born. They will never be mass-produced, and even if they are, nobody will purchase them," Li Yao concluded.

Chapter 646: Chain Gun?

Chapter 646: Chain Gun?

Hou Zitao seemed to have been punched right in the chest. His face was extremely pale.

He had always been an enthusiastic and outgoing man, otherwise he wouldn't have been asked to greet Li Yao.

But, however enthusiastic he was, he was still quite depressed when Li Yao asserted that his research would only be paperwork.

The other young refiners were greatly shocked to see the formulas that Li Yao provided, too. But their studies were not focused on gun-type magical equipment, and they found many formulas very confusing.

However, they could tell from Hou Zitao's expression that he had been completely awed.

"Sister Long."

Xie Anan dragged Long Yunxin back and asked in a low voice, "Is Sand Scorpion very skilled in refining, too? I don't understand the formulas he listed nor the buffer rune array group that he constructed just now."

Long Yunxin was silent for a moment, before she replied, "I can only understand one third of them. But judging from Hou Zitao's reaction, they seem to have blown his mind!"

Hou Zitao's eyes were bloodshot. He scanned Li Yao's formulas for a long time, while his pale face gradually turned red. He tried to find a loophole in theories but failed to come up with anything. In the end, he smiled bitterly. "Thanks for the enlightenment, Master Sand Scorpion. You were right. Based on the technology level of the Flying Star Sector right now, it is indeed impossible to minimize the buffer unit without affecting its usability. My approach has been wrong since the very beginning. It appears to be a dead end to combine guns and blades!"

The redness on his face faded instantly, replaced by dull gray, and his back slouched.

"Not necessarily."

Li Yao blew at the air softly, and the patterns that he had just drawn immediately dispersed. He explained solemnly, "The vibration saber is not an option. But have you ever considered chainswords? Chainswords deal damage by revolving and cutting. The quakes from the weapon are much gentler than those from the vibration saber. Combining chainswords and spiritual guns into brand new 'chain guns' could be an excellent approach."

Hou Zitao shook his head and replied gloomily, "Chainsword, vibration saber, and heat axe. I have considered all the classic melee magical equipment. But of the three of them, the vibration saber is the simplest in structure. As for chainswords, they are too complicated to be combined with spiritual guns."

Li Yao smiled casually and drew another ten drafts in midair while he continued speaking. "Master Hou, these are some structural designs that I devised during my spare time. They can possibly combine a chainsword with a spiritual gun. Feel free to offer your input."

Hou Zitao glanced at the drafts and was immediately dazed. His two eyes seemed to have turned into bloody mouths trying to devour all the designs.

"Your papers gave me a lot of insights. Truth be told, I'd been meaning to refine a piece of magical equipment that combines remote magical equipment and melee magical equipment. However, I was not familiar with the structure of spiritual guns and, therefore, never started the real work," Li Yao said.

"I've read the preliminary reports of your research, and I think it is quite mature already. Even if you didn't come to greet me, I would have gone to you in person someday. But I'm wondering, what's your opinion about my approach?"

Hou Zitao was dazed. "What are the rune arrays utilized in the structural designs? How come I never saw them before?"

Li Yao smiled and said, "They are some of the ancient rune arrays that I found in the relics of Iron Plateau. They must've been left by our predecessors in the era of the Flying Star coalition government five thousand years ago."

"That's the golden era before the apocalypse," Hou Zitao gasped.

Li Yao nodded. "Indeed. Honestly speaking, the overall level of refining of Iron Plateau is far from that of the Cultivators in space. But as for myself, I experienced a lot of adventures when I was young and discovered knowledge from the ancient times. Therefore, I'm in possession of many secret arts that other people may have no idea about."

"That explains a lot!"

Everybody looked at each other in bewilderment, but they found it understandable on second thought.

Although Iron Plateau was a desolate area at present, it had been the pivot of the Flying Star Sector five thousand years ago. Heritages of the past buried in certain underground relics would definitely be very normal.

No wonder Sand Scorpion was so impressive.

Hou Zitao scratched his head and mumbled, "However, feeble as the quakes of chainswords may be, they will still affect the precision of the guns without the buffer units. How are we going to handle that?"

"Master Hou, I'm afraid that you've got it wrong," Li Yao said. "I don't think we need to focus on precision and damage at the same time. Even if such 'chain guns' are really developed, no real experts would be interested in them.

"It's clear that such a combinative weapon will be neither as sharp as real swords nor as precise as guns.

"For real experts, they will pursue the most professional magical equipment instead of such combinative weapons.

"However, how many real experts are out there? Ordinary people and low-level Cultivators are the majority.

"Right now, the entire Flying Star Sector is anxious. Before, a fleet of carriers only needed one or two guardian starships or a few Exos on board to protect them. But they wish for every crew member on board to be a soldier at the moment. Nobody feels assured unless they have a weapon in their hand.

"Such chain guns should be made for them when successfully developed. Therefore, it is unnecessary to pursue precision. As long as the cost and the fault rate are reduced, it should be good enough.

"Moreover, we can even utilize the quakes when chainswords are spinning to increase the dispersion of bullets in order to make up for the shortcoming that ordinary people cannot shoot precisely. Of course, many new rune arrays will have to be utilized. I need to think more carefully about them. We can discuss later."

Because of his engagement in Project Mystic Skeleton, Li Yao was quite experienced in the research and development of MP magical equipment. Since he was a believer of the grassroots ideologies, he knew better than anybody else what mattered most for a piece of MP magical equipment.

"Believe me," Li Yao smiled at Hou Zitao, "Master Hou, the most important thing for us right now is time. If we can provide the prototype of such magical equipment, it will definitely be a hit and even become a bestseller in the Flying Star Sector!"

Hou Zitao rolled his eyes and was about to comment, when one of his companions suddenly pushed him aside and said, "Master Sand Scorpion, nice to meet you. I am Ning Changfeng from the Refining Department. My main research field is defensive magical equipment. Look, I've run into a minor problem lately..."

Half way through his speech, another young refiner came close and said, "Master Sand Scorpion..."

Xie Anan and Long Yunxin looked at each other in bewilderment. Long Yunxin gnashed her teeth. "What a bunch of losers!"

She strode forward, too, and crammed in the crowd, before she put on the most charming smile and said gracefully, "Master Sand Scorpion, greetings. My name Long Yunxin. I am..."

What the heck!

Xie Anan was rendered speechless, and her lips were pouting.

It would normally have taken half an hour to travel from the No. 6 space port to the Refining Department of Flying Star University by shuttle.

But they spent an hour and a half on the road.

It was not because of a traffic jam, but because the young refiners were discussing issues regarding refining with Master Sand Scorpion.

When the shuttle slowly landed, Hou Zitao and the rest of them had already started worshipping Li Yao.

Without being reminded, they would have completely forgotten that they were welcoming an idiotic magnate from Iron Plateau who had more brawns than brains. They already considered Li Yao to be a real master of refining!

Hou Zitao bowed and said in adulation, "Master Sand Scorpion. This way, please. Watch your head. We are arriving at the No. 1 refining center of the Refining Department of Flying Star University."

Li Yao observed the scenery in front of him with great interest.

Flying Star University truly deserved to be one of the two best colleges of the Flying Star Sector. The campus was quite beautiful. He felt like he was in the middle of a forest park. As far as his eyes could see, there was nothing but grass, trees, and hills. Quite a few tiny and delicate floating mountains were drifting in the sky. Some waterfalls were pouring down, pushing over the sparkling drops of water together with the aroma of soil. The environment was truly entertaining.

If he did not raise his head, he might have forgotten that he was inside an enormous circular space station.

The entire Flying Star Sector was located in the third orbital ring of Heavenly Saints City. The place he was at was actually in a cylindrical structure. Therefore, Li Yao noticed that the land on the horizon gradually leaned upwards and extended over his head.

Whichever direction he was going to, he would reach the 'above' of where he was standing right now and return to exactly the same spot if he continued walking.

Raising his head, he found vivid blue sky and white clouds.

However, Li Yao was aware that they were all illusions made by magical equipment. If the illusions were gone, he would see forests and buildings dangling down from the dome of the high sky.

In the eyes of the residents there, he was also 'dangling' and attracted by the man-made gravity field.

"Nice to meet you, Master Sand."

In the hall of the No.1 refining center, Wei Wenyao, dean of the department, greeted him with a smile.

But his eyes became somewhat weird as he glanced over at the five refiners who were apparently flattering the one they had picked up. He was secretly wondering what was going on.

Although he had asked them to be warm, their behavior was a bit too much, considering that their purpose was merely some research funds. Where were the manners of an expert?

The thoughts rolled around for a while in his mind, but Wei Wenyao quickly averted his eyes and said with a smile, "It must've been an exhausting trip, Master Sand. Do excuse us. We were supposed to prepare a welcome party for you, but since the Temple of Immortals went on a rampage, the researchers here have been quite tense. Everybody is occupied in their refining projects when they are not teaching students. They've been working day and night, and it's becoming normal for them to not have any sleep for ten days. Therefore, they really don't have the time to greet you."

Chapter 647: Ares Laboratory

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"You are too kind, Dean Wei."

Li Yao knew that Wei Wenyao was speaking the truth. Real scholars and Cultivators did not have so much time for social activities. It was more usual that they complained that they did not have enough time.

Li Yao had similar experiences, too. If his training had entered the most crucial procedure and he was asked to abandon his work in order to welcome an unfamiliar guest, he wouldn't have been too happy about it, either.

"Dean Wei, I do not like formalities, either. Just consider me a regular visiting scholar. Miss Xie Anan can stay and show me around, but Master Hou and Miss Long both have new ideas that they are desperate to test out. There's no need to waste their time," Li Yao said.

"Oh?"

Wei Wenyao was dazed for a moment. Seeing the ecstasy and eagerness on their faces, he was quite surprised because it was different from what he had imagined.

Hou Zitao, Long Yunxin, and the rest of them looked at each other. They bade farewell to Li Yao respectfully before they nodded at Wei Wenyao and rushed out of the room in the blink of an eye. Wei Wenyao was even more surprised.

Wei Wenyao thought for a moment and asked, "I wonder, is there any particular project that you would like to work on?"

Generally speaking, common visitors had already reached out to an expert or professor in Flying Star University and discussed the possibility of their cooperation before they came to the college. The experts and professors of Flying Star University often filed applications and invited the visiting scholars to come.

Naturally, before their arrival, their research field had been mostly fixed.

But Li Yao was an exception. Wei Wenyao did not have high expectations for his skill in refining, either. He was merely posing a random question.

"I'm very interested in the studies of middle- and small-sized magical equipment in your department, especially that related to crystal suits. I know several experts in your department to be authorities of the trade. Their laboratories are among the most famous laboratories in the Flying Star Sector. Can I pay a visit to those laboratories first?" Li Yao asked.

He activated the light beam and listed the laboratories that he wanted to visit.

Wei Wenyao glanced at them and coughed. "Some of them are available, but some of them are conducting important experiments today and will not be open in the coming few days. You can visit them later."

However, he was not telling the truth.

Although many middle-aged and young refiners in the Refining Department welcomed Li Yao's arrival, some real big shots did not think too highly of the unfamiliar guest.

Those authorities were as respected as Wei Wenyao in the circle of refiners, if not more. They were quite famous and never in lack of patrons.

Many of them were elders or even previous leaders of certain sects, or the masters of a noble family of refining. They were never short of funding.

Such people valued their honor and integrity more than anything, and there was no way that they would open their laboratories to a barbarian from a godforsaken planet.

Naturally, Wei Wenyao wouldn't be so blunt as to tell Li Yao that.

He picked several laboratories in Li Yao's list whose owners he had talked to before. He then settled the visiting hours with Li Yao, before he sent the detailed information and routes to Li Yao's and Xie Anan's mini crystal processors.

After that, Li Yao started touring the No. 1 refining center with Xie Anan as his guide.

Flying Star University truly deserved to the one of the two supreme colleges in the Flying Star Sector. The No. 1 refining center alone was larger than the entire Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution in Li Yao's memory. The myriad of glamorous magical equipment he saw in certain open laboratories could almost have been compared to the booth of the Refining Department of Deep Sea University.

The finely-made tools and facilities inside the professional refining chambers were great eye-openers for Li Yao, who was greatly enjoying himself.

Many of the tools and facilities had been developed by Flying Star University itself. The sophisticated technology involved in them completely hooked Li Yao.

His style was quite a surprise for the owners of the laboratories, too, because it was beyond their expectation.

However, the refiners all secretly chuckled when they saw that Li Yao was so horny that he was about to jump onto the magical equipment. Bumpkins were bumpkins after all! He must have never seen anything so fantastic!

In more than half a day, Li Yao visited nine laboratories with great interest, but he still felt that he was not entirely satisfied.

Xie Anan, on the other hand, couldn't take it any longer. She apologized to Li Yao, blushing, and hurried to go to the bathroom.

Li Yao roamed in the hallway joyfully, his hands behind his back. Many pictures of classic magical equipment were hanging on the walls of the hallway. They were fine artworks and worth appreciating.

After enjoying three pictures, his eyes suddenly brushed past a close door, on the top of which, two magnificent words were written: 'Ares Laboratory'.

Li Yao suddenly thought of something.

The owner of the laboratory was Xue Yuanxin, one of the top experts in crystal suits in the Flying Star Sector. He had been the First Armadominus in Red Line School, one of the three main crystal suit centers, in his early years and devised quite a few classic crystal suits, many of which were still equipped by a large number of Cultivators even today.

After leaving the Red Line School, Xue Yuanxin joined Flying Star University. He had dedicated himself to the development of Ares Extensions, a different field, instead of continuing crafting crystal suits.

"The damage of normal crystal suits cannot satisfy my imagination now. Only the Ares Extensions can possibly realize my dream of blowing up a starship with one punch!"

That was Xue Yuanxin's answer when the reporters asked him.

Crystal suits were Li Yao's specialty, too. He also had firsthand experience on building an Ares Extension on Iron Plateau. However, he had never learned the arts of the Ares Extensions systematically after all. The 'Apocalypse Extension' he had refined last time were merely a simple amalgamation of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, which was the biggest reason Yan Xibei had destroyed it so easily.

If all the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures had been carefully concerted and a real Ares Extension crafted, Li Yao estimated that Yan Xibei would've been suppressed by him directly.

Therefore, this Master Xue Yuanxin was on the top of the list of experts that he wanted to communicate with.

It was a pity that Master Xue was in the middle of an important experiment today, and his laboratory was closed.

Li Yao sighed, not without regret. He was about to leave, when he suddenly sensed very weak shaking.

He sniffed and smelled a vague uncanny scent.

Advanced laboratories were mostly soundproof and fully-enclosed. If he could feel weak quakes in the hallway, an enormous shaking must have taken place inside the Ares Laboratory. Together with the uncanny scent and the violent spiritual energy of the fire class, Li Yao inferred that a small explosion had occurred inside the laboratory.

As he expected, a moment later, the red light on the top of the Ares Laboratory started blinking, and the door glided to the sideways. A cluster of white smoke mixed with flames flooded out of the room.

Many refiners who had dust all over their faces ran out while coughing. Some of them were spraying foam and water with antifire magical equipment. The flames were quickly put out, but the vaporized water made the spot even foggier.

The practice of refining could be really dangerous; explosions were nothing but normal. The refiners were anxious but not disordered. They extinguished the fire in a neat fashion according to the standard procedure.

Li Yao did not want to interject. Every laboratory had its own regulations and exigency plans in case of explosions. Who should run away, who should hide themselves, and who was responsible for putting out the fire were all listed clearly in the plans.

If an outsider barged in recklessly, not only would they be of no help, they would also disrupt the pace of the team.

However, while he was watching them doing their job, he suddenly felt weird waves from inside the laboratory. A sense of danger pierced through his soul like an invisible venomous sting!

"Not good!"

Li Yao's pupils suddenly constricted. He stomped on the ground so hard that his boots turned into powder and left two shallow traces on the floor, before he turned into a streak of darkness and darted into the laboratory!

The laboratory was almost a thousand square meters, with a hollow in the middle that was more than twenty meters deep. It occupied quite a few floors of the refining center.

A ball-like furnace was revolving slowly under the influence of the magnetic field in the hollow at the center of the laboratory, supported by anti-gravity rune arrays.

It was 'Gold Ball XII', an advanced floating furnace and one of the top-tier furnaces in the Flying Star Sector. It was most suitable for refining solo magical equipment such as blades, crystal suits, or strengthening components.

But at that moment, a crack more than two meters long had appeared on the left side of 'Gold Ball', from which colorful steam was jetting out. Li Yao couldn't help but feel pitiful, seeing the miserable appearance.

In the middle of the smoke, many refiners wearing heatproof suits were spraying foam with cylinder-shaped antifire magical equipment. The purple foam contained abundant spiritual energy of the water class and could neutralize the high temperature. They were very mild and wouldn't affect most Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures.

One of them glared at Li Yao. "It is dangerous here. Get out!"

"Of course, it is dangerous!"

Having no time to explain anything, Li Yao summoned his spiritual energy to form a cluster of high-pressure gas around him to avoid the invasion of heat, before he condensed a thin layer of spiritual energy around his body as if he had put on a silver shining armor.

While everybody's exclaimed, Li Yao dashed into the gold ball in a streak of brightness.

"Ah!"

Everybody exclaimed once more in shock.

Right now, the temperature inside the furnace was still more than 1,000 degrees. Even iron would be melted. But the man had rushed into it even without a crystal suit. He was merely committing suicide!

However, how could they have stopped him even if they wanted to with their capability?

Before they came back to themselves, Li Yao had already crawled out of the gold ball, with two objects about to be melted in his hands that were enveloped in his spiritual gas. He kept them far away from each other while he shouted at everyone, "Spray the cooling liquids!"

Li Yao's voice contained unstoppable strength like a sharp axe. Everybody shuddered and sprayed cooling liquids on the objects.

It was not until the two objects were enshrouded by purple icy fog and the irritating spiritual energy inside of them gradually calmed down that Li Yao took a long breath in relief. His clothes had been soaked in sweat, and he found it hard to stand on his feet.

It was too dangerous. That one second just now had been even more dangerous than the moment when he confronted Yan Xibei!

Chapter 648: Tortoise and Snake Locking the Mountain

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Although Li Yao was not aware of the specific composition of the two clusters of materials, he did sense the subtle reaction between them. Once they were melted and mixed, an even more intense explosion was definitely going to be triggered, even releasing fatal gas!

The moment Li Yao rushed into the furnace, the two clusters of materials were about to be melted!

The dumbfounded refiners nearby had no idea that they'd been on the doorstep of hell a while ago.

Hardly had Li Yao taken a breath in relief when he heard a coarse, high-pitched scream from the depths of the smoke, as if a hen had been grabbed by the neck. "Hurry to run. The combination of venomous dragon bone marrow and Heavenly Fire Crystals is very likely to cause an explosion. Run away, now!"

A short, grey-haired old man rushed out of the smoke. His clothes had been singed black by the flames, and his messy white hair was stuck to his big forehead. He was short and slender. His limbs were like four rods, but his head was exceptionally big, taking up almost half of his body.

Veins were bulging from the old man's forehead. His pupils seemed to be squeezing blood to put out the fire. He was about to crawl into the furnace without caring about anything, when Li Yao was quick enough to stop him.

"Master Xue, I've separated the Heavenly Fire Crystals and the bone marrows of venomous dragons and cooled them down to below 500 degrees."

Li Yao had seen Xue Yuanxin's photo on the Spiritual Nexus and watched a few lecture videos made by him. He knew that the unattractive little old man in front of him was one of the best crystal suit designers in the Flying Star Sector.

He also realized what the materials that he had just separated were.

He did not know much about the so-called venomous dragon bone marrow, because there were many kinds of dragon-type demon beasts, hundreds of which carried deadly poison and could be called 'venomous dragons'. Since Li Yao did not know exactly which type of dragon Xue Yuanxin was experimenting with, he naturally had no idea what attributes the marrows had.

However, Li Yao was very familiar with the material 'Heavenly Fire Crystals', which was a type of marrow crystal of the fire class with special characteristics.

Although it belonged to the fire class, it boasted tremendous heatproof abilities. The higher the temperature it was in, the more stable it would become. It wouldn't explode even if the environment was in a temperature of more than 2,000 degrees.

However, Heavenly Fire Crystals would undergo uncanny changes if they were heated to a temperature between

1,350 degrees and 1,450 degrees for more than ten seconds, giving birth to a new material named 'Fire Destroyer Crystals'. During the process, ninety percent of the spiritual energy contained inside the marrow crystals would be released instantly and lead to very serious explosions!

Although Li Yao did not know what the venomous dragon bone marrow was exactly, it must have been carrying deadly poison based on its name. The explosions of the Heavenly Fire Crystals could've vaporized the venomous dragon bone marrow and turned it into fatal gas!

Li Yao estimated that the furnace was supposed to improve the temperature from several hundred degrees to more than 1,800 degrees instantly, and there would be no time for the Heavenly Fire Crystals to initiate any chemical reactions. It would remain steady until the refining process was done.

But the experiment had gone wrong. A minor explosion had taken place inside the furnace in the beginning, resulting in a crack on the surface of the furnace that could not maintain the high temperature anymore.

As the steam jetted out, the temperature inside the furnace dropped to around 1,400 degrees. The Heavenly Fire Crystals reached the threshold of mutation, and a great disaster was almost caused.

"Separated? That's good. It's great that they are separated!"

Two lines of blood spilled out of Xue Yuanxin's ears. He seemed to have been injured in the previous accident. His eyes glanced at Li Yao in confusion but did not stop there for long. He staggered to a corner of the laboratory and sat on the ground. Holding his head in his hands, he mumbled, "What's happening? I've tested all the formulas time and time again. There's no way that they can possibly go wrong.

Why was so much gas generated that the furnace was overwhelmed? Where did the gas come from?"

Li Yao's interest was aroused. He drew close to the old man and looked. A giant light beam was floating in front of Xue Yuanxin. The light beam was packed with formulas and equations in the minimum font size as well as several structural designs and flowcharts.

It appeared that he was trying to refine a new material.

Material science was not Li Yao's specialty. The formulas and equations that Xue Yuanxin had written were extremely sophisticated, too. Li Yao's head went dizzy as he read them. Eventually, he managed to distinguish the six main materials and the thirty-seven subsidiary materials that Xue Yuanxin employed to build the new material.

However, although Li Yao was not good at theories in the science of materials, he had witnessed the combination of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures countless times in Ou Yezi's memory pieces, and he was quite familiar with the scent and color of the flames when they were refined.

Li Yao recalled the view inside the furnace and commented uncertainly, "Master Xue, when I was in the furnace just now, I seemed to smell the ash of leaves of the eucalypt trees. By logic, the forty materials that you selected wouldn't produce such an odor no matter what.

"As far as I know, the materials that tend to trigger such a smell in high temperature include the Heavenly Flourishment Wood, the Sea Tiger Tusk, the Blue Cloud Vine, the Green Spirit Stone, among a few others.

"If I may point out, the Green Spirit Stone always accompanies the Green Hellish Ancient Bronze, and they are sometimes mixed together.

"Normal purification procedures can hardly remove all the Green Spirit Stones from the Green Hellish Ancient Bronze.

"The way I see it, you've employed a lot of Green Hellish Ancient Bronze as the base material in your experiment. Is it possible that some Green Spirit Stone was mixed in and was released in the high temperature? The enormous gas the stone releases instantly could surpass the pressure limit of the furnace very quickly."

Xue Yuanxin was dazed for a moment. "You understand my formulas?"

Then, his eyes bulged wide, and he slapped his thighs in ecstasy, while he said, "Yes. It's possible. Very possible! The Green Spirit Stones will have reactions with Fire Phoenix Glass when they are heated to more than 2,000 degrees! The Green Fire Glass Gas will be produced, and its volume will be expanded by thousands of times instantly!

"My calculations are correct. It was the purification of the Green Hellish Ancient Bronze that went wrong. Otherwise, I would've successfully refined the 'Super Bendable Steel'! Cough-cough-cough."

"Super Bendable Steel?"

Li Yao was greatly interested. It sounded like a whole new material.

Considering that Master Xue Yuanxin was supervising the experiment in person and the forty or so kinds of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures employed in the experiment were all invaluable, the new material seemed very interesting.

Xue Yuanxin finally eyed Li Yao up and down, before he blurted, "Who are you? Are you one of my students?"

Li Yao coughed. He had read the guy's introduction on the Spiritual Nexus and knew the top-tier master of refining in the Flying Star Sector was adept at his specialty but quite jumbled in daily life. It was said that he could not remember his students' names even if they had been studying under him for years. Or rather, he did not bother to remember their names at all.

Li Yao scratched his nose and said, "I was merely passing by when I sensed the anomaly in your refining furnace. I took the chance to crawl in and separate the two materials. That's all."

"Your senses are keen enough for you to discover the anomaly of the two materials? And you can locate the source of the problem by the scent of the materials?" Xue Yuanxin was quite interested. He observed Li Yao carefully for a while, before he pointed at the light beam like a kid who was showing off his toy. "I'm refining a new material named 'Super Bendable Steel'. As its name suggests, it is a very flexible material, but it is also as tough as steel!

"The greatest feature of the material is that it can absorb and store energy!

"If my calculations are correct, the material can absorb seventy percent of the energy resulting from the enemy's attack and store it. When enough energy is accumulated, the user can unleash all of it with a telepathic thought and return the enemy's attack to them!

"If such a material is successfully refined and employed to the 'Unparalleled Extension' that I developed recently, it will become the most awesome Ares Extension in the history of the Flying Star Sector!"

"Absorbing and storing seventy percent of the attack in the material to make use of for the counterattack?" Li Yao gasped. If such a material was really successfully refined, it would definitely be the most precious treasure even if it could only be used once.

The Ares Extension based on such materials deserved to be called 'Unparalleled'!

Xue Yuanxin chuckled in satisfaction. He tapped the light beam and displayed several drafts. "This is the Unparalleled Extension!"

Li Yao was deeply attracted by it after one glance. Although they were the simplest drafts, and perhaps graffiti in the eyes of outsiders, Li Yao sensed the essence of the design as an expert!

"The Tortoise and Snake Locking the Mountain framework!" Li Yao blurted out. "I haven't seen such an ancient framework on crystal suits and strengthening plugins for a long time. Such a framework boasts extraordinary speed and agility, but its biggest shortcoming is the weak defense.

"But if the 'Super Bendable Steel' is successfully developed and covers the Tortoise and Snake Locking the Mountain framework like flesh and blood, the shortcoming of the weak defense could be resolved once and for all!

"As expected of Master Xue. This is very impressive. You've thought of a framework that can make the best of the Super Bendable Steel when you are refining it!"

This time, it was Xue Yuanxin who was surprised.

'Tortoise and Snake Locking the Mountain' was based on 'Tortoise and Snake Blocking the River', an ancient array forty thousand years ago. It had grown mature in the Star Ocean Imperium and was adopted by many crystal suits.

However, because of its weak defense, it had never been the mainstream framework of crystal suits or strengthening plugins.

Today, few people knew the existence of such a framework.

Even several experienced refiners that Xue Yuanxin taught himself had never heard of the framework before. When Xue Yuanxin was planning to devise the new Ares Extension based on the framework, everybody had been baffled and failed to appreciate the beauty of it until he explained carefully.

He did not expect that the young man would see through it in such a short time!

"Who are you exactly?" Xue Yuanxin squinted and looked at Li Yao's face carefully for a while, only to discover that he was still a stranger. The master of refining scratched his white hair in embarrassment and said, "Are you a new teacher at the Refining Department? A researcher? Whose laboratory are you working in?"

Li Yao grinned and replied, "Master Xue, my name is Sand Scorpion. I'm a visiting scholar, and I've just arrived. I haven't picked a laboratory yet."

"Sand Scorpion?" Xue Yuanxin frowned. He scratched his scarce white hair and thought hard for a while. Finally, his eyes shone, and he exclaimed, "The idiotic magnate from Iron Plateau who knows nothing?"

Chapter 649: Edge Sharpeners' Meeting

Chapter 649: Edge Sharpeners' Meeting

An hour later, in a special ward of the No. 1 hospital of Flying Star University, Xie Anan watched the summit confrontation of two refiners, one old and the other young, in complete bewilderment.

Li Yao and Xue Yuanxin each had a light beam floating in front of them. They were elaborating on their theories while they drew structural designs and equations on the light beams without halting to contemplate at all, as if the models and formulas had been stored on their fingertips, waiting to spurt out, since a long time ago!

Xie Anan blinked hard and tried to follow their conversation, but however hard she listened to them, the only thing that she could be sure of was that they were talking about issues regarding refining.

As for what the issues were exactly, she did not have the slightest idea.

What are they talking about?

Xie Anan was confused. She felt that she was five years old again, when she had listened to the seniors of her family discussing the arts of refining at dinner table.

Tilting her head and biting her fingers, she failed to figure out why things ended up like this after she went to the bathroom.

"I failed."

Li Yao took a long breath in relief and said sincerely, "Master Xue Yuanxin, you truly deserve your fame. You have a profound understanding about the minimalization of power rune arrays at ten times sonic speed. The plans you proposed are more mature, reliable, and… elegant. Yes. That's the word. The distribution of your power rune arrays is very elegant!

"Taking this round into consideration, I lost eight of the ten questions. Master Xue, you have my admiration!"

It was not until Xie Anan heard it that she realized the two of them had debated with each other on ten conundrums about the arts of refining.

Not expecting that Li Yao could win two of them, Xie Anan bulged her big eyes and gazed at Li Yao in disbelief like a squirrel that had seen a pineapple.

Xue Yuanxin's head was buried in bandages, which made his head even larger. His long and narrow neck almost couldn't support the head any longer and was shivering.

He observed Li Yao carefully again and said after a long sigh, "Other than the few old monsters in the circle of refiners, it's been a long time since I exchanged my ideas and thoughts with someone else. It is true that the new generation will invariably surpass the old!

"Don't presume that I did not see through your plan. Your proposal of the power rune arrays at ten times sonic speed looks simple, rough, and somewhat against common sense, but such a distribution could boost the utilization rate of crystals allowing the speed to be accelerated to maximum instantly!

"If super high-quality crystals with a purity more than 99% are used as the fuel, I estimate that your power rune array can accelerate to more than twelve times the speed of sound from zero within ten seconds!

"Our plans are based on different designing principles. My plan is thorough and rational, and your plan is radical and even somewhat insane.

"Although I don't think that ordinary crystal suits and Exos can withstand such a high acceleration, since we said that we were merely talking about theoretical possibilities with no consideration for practical implementation, we drew even with each other in the last round. You don't need to flatter me!"

Li Yao was quite startled hearing that.

Minimalizing the large-scale power rune arrays that were suitable for crystal warships so that they could be applied to crystal suits was his specialty.

This power rune array that had been crazily modified with a low reliability and yet could burst into thirteen times the speed of sound in a moment was a design tailor-made for himself and prepared to be installed on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit in the future.

The materials of common crystal suits were too weak to withstand fierce battles at such a high speed; they would likely break apart in midair.

Common Exos could not withstand the tremendous counterforce, either. The brain would lose a lot of blood, resulting in the potential loss of their sight or even the constriction of their cerebral vessels, which might lead to a coma!

However, such a design was not a problem for the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, refined out of the body tissues of Skeleton Dragon, and Li Yao, who was half a body practitioner and had been Cultivating with the Thousand Tempering Hundred Refining technique.

It was his own reserved design. He did not expect that Xue Yuanxin could see through it after such a short time and inferred the maximum performance based on the structural designs!

This unattractive old man was really scary!

Seeing that Li Yao did not object, Xue Yuanxin burst into laughter. But a while later, he suddenly changed his face color and started cursing. "Damn you, Wei Wenyao. Due to his inconclusive investigation, I almost thought that you were really an idiotic magnate and missed out on meeting a genius!

"How about this, Little Sand?"

With a sunny smile, Xue Yuanxin moved his giant head close. "You said that you haven't picked a main research field in Flying Star University. Are you planning to join a laboratory or to do pure theoretical research?"

Li Yao replied frankly, "I haven't decided the specific direction yet. But I'm mostly interested in solo combat magical equipment. Besides, as you witnessed just now, I'm better at practical work than theories. Therefore, I will probably join a laboratory, that is, if anybody is willing to accept me."

Xue Yuanxin found it amusing. "With your expertise, you're worrying that nobody is going to accept you? Forget it. Just come to my Ares Laboratory! As I've told you just now, I have two projects at hand. One of them is the refinement of the special material 'Super Bendable Steel', and the other is its application to a new Ares Extension in order to craft the best Ares Extension in the Flying Star Sector—the Unparalleled Extension!

"Are you interested?"

Standing aside, Xie Anan was dumbfounded. She was shouting in her heart, Master Xue is inviting Sand Scorpion to join his projects!

Everybody in the Refining Department of Flying Star University knew that, although Master Xue Yuanxin was approachable in daily life and never refused the questions of students even if they were just in the freshman year, the Ares Laboratory was his most precious treasure. Every researcher in the laboratory had been carefully selected and screened. They were the best elites in the field of refining.

Many researchers in the laboratory had the ability to conduct their own research independently. But they were still willing to work under Master Xue Yuanxin so that they could learn more from him.

But today, Master Xue was extending an invitation promptly. That was quite new!

Seeing that Li Yao did not give any response, Xue Yuanxin thought that he had other ideas and continued. "Truth be told, the thing I like most about you is not your theoretical background, but your skill in real operations based on natural instincts! None of my disciples foresaw the possible explosion of the venomous dragon bone marrow and

Heavenly Fire Crystals. You were merely passing by from outside and yet you could locate the problem!

"Such intuition cannot be taught in a school. One can only expect to slowly accumulate it after thousands of instances of actual refining work. I have no idea how you got such instincts. You are truly an out-and-out monster!

"I am too old to conduct the lengthy refining jobs in person right now. I had a disciple whom I'd taught for more than twenty years, but he passed away unfortunately in the riot of the Temple of Immortals.

"If he were alive, the purification of the Green Hellish Ancient Bronze would not have gone wrong.

"If you are willing to join the Ares Laboratory, you will be asked to be in charge of the crucial work in either the Super Bendable Steel project or the Unparalleled Extension project, and you will be the third refiner, or even the second refiner, only below me, of the entire project. How does it sound?"

"I'm afraid that you misunderstood me, Master Xue," Li Yao said. "I am rather willing to join the Ares Laboratory, but I've made a deal with Hou Zitao, Long Yunxin, and a few young refiners in the department, and I will probably spend some of my time on their projects.

"Moreover, my own personal laboratory is under construction at present, and I will probably carry out a few minor projects in them. I'm afraid that I won't be fully dedicated to the development of the Super Bendable Steel and the Unparalleled Extension. Do you mind, Master Xue?"

Xie Anan's heart was beating fast. She did not know that Sand Scorpion was planning to build his own laboratory at such a young age!

Xue Yuanxin smiled and said, "That is not a big deal. We are in the middle of a crisis. Every refiner has a handful of projects to take care of. Even I have to guide the work of another six laboratories other than managing the Ares Laboratory.

"Your personal laboratory? Sounds interesting. Just tell me if you ever need anything, and I'll see if I can help."

Li Yao was overjoyed.

What he hoped to establish was the most advanced refining center. The experimental facilities and magical equipment in such a refining center were sometimes unpurchaseable even if one had enough money.

Over the last couple of days, he had asked Lei Dalu, the Wu family, and the Sha family to buy the equipment through their connections. But since they were not in the circle of refiners, it was not easy for them to find the best place for the purchase.

"Sure," Li Yao replied quickly. "If Master Xue trusts my ability, I will definitely live up to your expectations and do my best in the development of the Super Bendable Steel and the Unparalleled Extension!"

"Excellent!" Xue Yuanxin's face was beaming with joy. "If so, it is very possible that we will succeed in completing the two projects before the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting in half a year's time and awe every one of them there!"

Li Yao raised an eyebrow. "Edge Sharpeners' Meeting?"

Xue Yuanxin nodded his head. "The Edge Sharpeners' Meeting is a gala of refiners in the Flying Star Sector that is held every five years. All the renowned refiners will participate. They will comment on the latest magical equipment developed over the past five years and discuss the possibilities of future magical equipment.

"The Edge Sharpeners' Meeting this year will be even more unique. It will be the largest one over the recent hundred years.

"The scourge of space pirates and the rise of the Temple of Immortals have terribly affected the entire Flying Star Sector. Every trade has been considering the solutions to the hazards. Of course, the refiners are no exceptions.

"That will be theme of the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting this year. We will discuss what kind of magical equipment can potentially contain the Temple of Immortals and annihilate the space pirates lurking on Spider Den!

"It is said that several refining proposals on a planetary-level, or even quasi-stellar-level, will be put forward in the meeting. The representatives in the circle of refiners and the delegates from the six sects of Heavenly Saints City and the other important sects will gather together and discuss the feasibility of the proposals. Then, after the most excellent proposal is selected, all the resources of the Flying Star Sector will be devoted to it!"

"Quasi-stellar-level magical equipment!" Li Yao gasped and swallowed hard.

Chapter 650: Little Dummy

Chapter 650: Little Dummy

At eight o'clock at night, the visiting time of the special ward ended.

Although Li Yao and Xue Yuanxin were both in good moods and willing to talk overnight, Li Yao was still driven out of the room by the resolute nurse.

In the campus, Li Yao was walking to the visiting scholars' dormitory led by Xie Anan.

"Thank you very much for your help today, Miss Xie Anan." Li Yao smiled. "You've spent an entire day accompanying me. I do appreciate it."

Blushing, Xie Anan replied, "You are very welcome. You saved me on Iron Plateau without considering your own life. I did nothing except show you around. That's not worth mentioning."

For some reason, maybe because he had saved her life before, Master Sand gave her a familiar and reliable feeling, as if they had known each other since long ago.

The ridiculous worries before she picked him up in the morning were long gone.

"You don't need to work as a tour guide in the coming few days anymore. With the help of my mini crystal processor, I will get familiar with everything slowly."

Li Yao knew that most students in Flying Star University were very diligent. Wasting too much of her time on him would do her training no good.

While talking, he noticed that the girl was looking around anxiously. Li Yao found it quite odd. "Miss Anan, is there anything else that you need to attend to tonight? If you do, you can go back now. The dormitory area is not far ahead. I can walk there by myself."

"No. No." Xie Anan's face was red. She waved her hands and replied, "I'm good. However, would you please wait for me for five minutes?"

Naturally, Li Yao nodded.

Xie Anan stood on her tiptoes and looked around. She found a small flower bed in a corner nearby. Squatting next to the flower bed, she took out a parcel of chopped meat from her pocket.

Li Yao remembered that Xie Anan had asked the kitchen to prepare it for her when they were back in the hospital.

Cultivators had different eating habits. Some secret arts required 'blood food', in other words, raw ingredients that had not been cooked. Most kitchens had a lot of them prepared. Li Yao had not found it strange at the time.

At first, Xie Anan sprayed a circle of fragrant powder on the grass. She then took out a vintage wooden box, which she opened carefully and tilted it onto the chopped meat.

From the wooden box, more than ten dark purple ants crept out.

Li Yao raised his eyebrow high. "This is…"

Xie Anan poured all the ants inside the wooden box out. There were approximately twenty of them.

The ants had been hungered for a long time. Now that they smelt the aroma of flesh and blood, they immediately feasted upon the food.

Cracking noises were echoing as if they were some twenty pinchers opening and closing instead of twenty ants. The scene was quite appalling.

Xie Anan observed the ants eating the meat carefully. Now and then, she would extend a finger and push the wandering ants back to the meat.

Her hands were quite fast. Before the ants bit her, she had already retracted them.

"They are Purple Ring Sword Ants. I've been feeding them in order to train my hand speed, but they are not so easy to deal with. They have to eat at this hour every day, or they will starve. At noon today, their feeding time was already delayed. So, sorry, I had to stop for a while. Ouch!"

While Xie Anan raised her head and explained to Li Yao, an extremely large Purple Ring Sword Ant bit her hand hard while she was not concentrating.

The girl jumped to her feet in the excruciating pain. She gasped, producing hissing sounds, and she was waving her hands faster than a fan.

However, it was much better than last time she was bitten by a Purple Ring Sword Ant, when she foamed and passed out instantly.

Seeing that she recovered after only several seconds and bent down again to organize the Purple Ring Sword Ants while gritting her teeth, Li Yao was even more surprised. He asked unconsciously, "Purple Ring Sword Ants? It must be very painful to be bitten by them. How did you come up with such a training method?"

Xie Anan focused her attention on the Purple Ring Sword Ants in front of her. In less than three minutes, the chopped meat was eaten up by them.

The Purple Ring Sword Ants, after having a delicious dinner, immediately escaped to various directions.

However, the circle of powder that Xie Anan sprayed on the grass was the most fearful thing for the Purple Ring Sword Ants. It blocked them like an invisible wall.

The Purple Ring Sword Ants were even more furious now that they had nowhere to run. They were rubbing their tusks hard, creating strange metal noises!

Xie Anan bulged her eyes. Without blinking, she snatched the Purple Ring Sword Ants one by one and put them back into the wooden box.

"It is indeed very painful to be bitten by them. However, the improvement on hand speed is very significant, too. My hands right now are twice as fast as half a year ago!"

Xie Anan stood straight and said proudly, "This is a secret art I learned from a super refiner. He was the most brilliant genius that I've ever seen and the idol that I admired most. However, since the riot of The Temple of Immortals, he has never seen or heard anymore. Perhaps he has perished."

The girl couldn't help but pout her lips in regret.

"Well…" Li Yao scratched his chin, deep in thought. "How many Purple Ring Sword Ants can you train with right now?"

"Thirteen!" Xie Anan replied proudly, before she stuck out her tongue somewhat in embarrassment. "But I'm likely to be bitten every other minute with thirteen Purple Ring Sword Ants. Sometimes, three or four of them bite me at the same time. Hahahaha. I can only handle eleven Purple Ring Sword Ants flawlessly right now."

"Three or four Purple Ring Sword Ants biting you simultaneously?" Li Yao was stunned. "Do you not feel pain?"

"Of course, I do!"

Xie Anan extended a finger and let a Purple Ring Sword Ant crawl on it. The bouncing muscles on her fingertip and the flowing spiritual gas froze the Purple Ring Sword Ant like invisible amber.

However hard the Purple Ring Sword Ant bit, it was not able to reach her skin.

Xie Anan raised her finger and watched the glittering insect in purple armor wholeheartedly, before she said, "But this is how training works. It is either painstaking or exhausting. How can anybody succeed in training by lying on bed while eating and drinking casually?"

"But such a method of training is too cruel." Li Yao was somewhat confused. "Miss Xie Anan, as I recall, you are from a major noble family of refining, and there must be many secret arts within the Refining Department of Flying Star University, too. They wouldn't be half as painful as the one you are practicing right now.

"Why did you give up the easy secret arts in favor of such a cruel technique?"

Xie Anan slid the last Purple Ring Sword Ant into the wooden box. She took a long breath in relief and sat down beside the flower bed. She opened her hands and said, "There's no other way. Although I am from a noble family of refining, I've known that I am not gifted in the arts of refining since I was a kid.

"I've always been the least talented one compared with Sister Long Yunxin as well as the siblings and cousins of my own family, not to mention Master Sand and Master Li Yao whom I saw before.

"When I was little and trained with other people, everybody else could understand many secret arts simply by reciting them several times. But as for me, I had to cling to my crystal processor for three days and three nights trying to swallow it whole, and sometimes I failed to understand the secret arts even after doing that.

"The only shining point about me is that I am determined, and I am willing to remember many things by repeating them. When I was seven, I already memorized the entire 'Encyclopedia of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures'.

"However, by repetition, the best I can do is be admitted to Flying Star University.

"When I came to Flying Star University, I discovered that my classmates were all one-in-ten-thousand geniuses. I was no match for anybody at all. However hard I worked, I was always the tail-ender in my class.

"Nobody gave me any pressure. Even my family did not have high hopes for me. As long as I could graduate smoothly and work as a common refiner in the family business, it would be good enough for them. However, I did not want to succumb to my fate!

"Even though I cannot rise like a star in a Skyhill Sword Seminar like the super genius refiner Li Yao did, at least—at least I want to participate in a Skyhill Sword Seminar like Sister Long Yunxin. I want to feel the burning rivalry on the match field in person and the palpitation when I am competing with the best experts of the trade!

"Training with Purple Ring Sword Ants is naturally very painful. If my purpose is to increase my hand speed, there are a lot of other secret arts in the Refining Department that are more secure, more reliable, and less painful.

"However, I—please don't laugh at me, Master Sand—can barely understand the secret arts. Even if I am going to train with them, the effect will be little to none. Ten days of my training might not give me as much improvement as those geniuses would have in one day.

"The training method with Purple Ring Sword Ants, on the other hand, does not require much understanding. As long as one can hold back the pain, it will be fine. Such a method is perfect for a dummy such as myself. Haha!

"After Li Yao rose to fame in the Skyhill Sword Seminar, many students in Flying Star University and Heavenly Saints Institute learned to train with the Purple Ring Sword Ants. But as far as I know, I'm the only one who has persisted for half a year!

"Other people often laughed at me, or maybe it was just a kindly reminder, saying that the training method with the Purple Ring Sword Ants is only suitable for super geniuses like Li Yao, that it is not suitable for people of little aptitude like myself at all.

"But it's not like that in my eyes.

"Maybe, the gap between me and Li Yao is greater than the distance between two Sectors. Maybe, my lifelong training will be less fruitful than one tenth of his achievements.

"But at the very least, if Li Yao can train with the Purple Ring Sword Ants right now, I can do the same however unintelligent I am.

"Maybe, after I train myself for twenty years, I will have more Purple Ring Sword Ants under my control than Li Yao did months ago. Haha. Hahahaha!

"Besides..."

The girl changed her topic and said somewhat embarrassedly, "I haven't heard any news about Li Yao for a long time. Maybe he has indeed passed away. If that is the case, I should pass on his training method."

Li Yao couldn't help but cough. He said, "Are you so desperate to become a master of refining?"

"I don't care about being a master or not. I guess I will never become one considering my lack of talents. Haha!"

Xie Anan licked her finger, which was still red because of the biting of the Purple Ring Sword Ant a while ago. She gave Li Yao a brilliant smile and said, "It's just that I love the arts of refining. I just love then even though I know I'm not gifted at them."

"Okay."

Li Yao was silent for a long time. Illuminated by the dim street lamp, his lips curled into an equally brilliant smile as the girl's.

"I've changed my mind," Li Yao said with a smile. "Miss Xie Anan, I would have to ask you to show me around the campus of Flying Star University. I'm afraid a lot of your time will be wasted. Do you mind?"

"Absolutely not. You're very welcome."

Xie Anan shook her head hard. She thought for a moment and said somewhat embarrassedly, "But if possible, can you let me stand by and listen to your discussion with Master Xue next time?"

Li Yao found it amusing. "Can you understand our conversation?"

Xie Anan's face turned red again. She lowered her head and looked at her feet while she replied, "Maybe I will suddenly get the hang of it someday while I'm listening…"

Chapter 651: Something Weird

Chapter 651: Something Weird

Xie Anan's diary:

March 20.

Sand Scorpion is truly a mystery.

Yesterday, he was having a long conversation with Master Xue Yuanxin, who praised him, calling him one of the most brilliant geniuses of his generation. But he made a big joke of himself today!

This morning, I led him to the library of ancient classics of the Refining Department. All the copies of the precious books found and produced over the past thousands of years have been stored inside. Normally speaking, faculty and students have to ask for permission to go inside. Only the most experienced professors and scholars can go to the library anytime they want. But even they cannot borrow the ancient books and can only read them inside the library.

Sand Scorpion, on the other hand, tilted his head and fell asleep after browsing through twenty ancient books at an amazingly high speed!

Sleeping in such a sacred place as the library of ancient classics… Many experienced refiners immediately noticed him.

When they learned that he was the 'barbarian' from Iron Plateau, everybody burst into laughter. Somebody even belittled the barbarians, saying that they should not act like intellectuals when they knew nothing about the discipline.

I was very embarrassed at the time. I meant to explain for Master Sand Scorpion, but he was already in the deep sleep state, and I couldn't wake him up. It was not until three hours later that he stretched his arms in satisfaction. I didn't know what to say.

The story quickly spread. Before noon, everybody in the Refining Department had heard the story and considered him a joke.

However, four o'clock in the afternoon, his research plan was announced. When everybody discovered that he has joined Master Xue's Ares Laboratory, their facial expression was quite complicated!

I happened to run into a refiner who mocked him in the library in the morning. I knew that the refiner had applied for the Ares Laboratory but was turned down by Master Xue.

When he learned the news, his face was gloomier than a rainy day. I tried my best not to laugh out aloud.

Some of them were secretly discussing whether or not Master Xue was cooperating with the magnate from Iron Plateau because of a shortage of funding after major setbacks.

Of course, I know that is not the case, but it is not wrong that Master Sand Scorpion was sleeping soundly in the library in the morning, either.

I don't know how to comment on him now.

…

March 22.

I'm going to die! I'm going to die! I'm going to die!

Master Sand Scorpion remained exactly the same in the past two days. He slept for three hours in the library of ancient classics in the morning, spent his afternoon in the Ares Laboratory, and did his training in seclusion at night.

The whispers that I overhear have grown louder and louder now. People were saying that somebody sleeping in the best library of the best university of the Flying Star Sector is not a pleasant view.

But naturally, nobody dared whine in front of the 'best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau'.

I, of course, secretly mumbled dissatisfaction to myself. Maybe he noticed it, because he started playing tricks on me today!

He said that he found a secret art from the ancient classics that could mutate the Purple Ring Sword Ants and 'slightly increase the pain of biting'. As a result, the training would be more effective.

I believed him like an idiot and trained the Purple Ring Sword Ants according to the secret art.

As it turned out, the pain was not 'slightly' increased; it was literally doubled! I was almost killed by the agony!

Is this what the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau and a master of refiner should be like? He was too mean! I gave him so much help by showing him around the campus over the last couple of days!

However, I'm not sure whether or not it's my imagination, but my hand speed does seem to be a little higher after the training. Is it true?

…

March 30.

I was shocked today!

As it turned out, Master Sand Scorpion was not sleeping in the library of ancient classics every day. He was training himself in the deep sleep state!

Today, I noticed by accident that he had memorized quite a few ancient classics. I asked, and he told me that he had remembered and digested one tenth of all the ancient books stored inside the library in only one week. That was horrifying!

Training in the deep sleep state sounds like a marvelous skill!

In my excitement, I blurted and asked whether or not he could teach me.

With a mysterious smile, he said that he would teach me the secret art when I could withstand the biting of ten mutated Purple Ring Sword Ants at the same time.

Is that a joke? The Purple Ring Sword Ants strengthened according to his secret arts are even more ferocious than tigers. How can anybody endure ten of them simultaneously?

But I won't give up. Normal people might, but I am a dummy. Somebody told me that dummies deal with pain better.

Well, now that I think of it, he was the one who told me that…

…

April 25.

Hooray!

Hahahaha. Hahahahahahaha. After more than one month, I'm finally able to withstand the biting of three mutated Purple Ring Sword Ants right now. I can even sing songs with my face color unchanged while my body is cramping.

Master Sand Scorpion's dumbfounded expression was the most satisfying reward for me. My suffering over the past month was entirely worth it!

Master Sand Scorpion fulfilled his promise.

Although he did not teach me the secret art of training in the deep sleep state, he taught me two fundamental skills: 'Art of the Swallowing Whale' and 'Chaos Gale Hammer Technique'.

Master Sand Scorpion said that he would like to teach a course if possible, despite only being a visiting scholar.

But since he had never been a teacher before and he did not know how good his teaching was, he planned to experiment on me first.

According to him, my body was rough and wouldn't crack down anyway.

That was too mean. Is body roughness something to be proud of?

But anyways, the two fundamental skills were not very complicated, although the training process was quite exhausting. I did not experience the drowsy feeling when I read the other Cultivation arts.

Master Sand Scorpion said that he had gone through a lot of trouble to simplify the secret arts in light of my perception.

Why do his words always sound so malicious?

…

May 29.

UNBELIEVABLE!

Without me knowing, Master Sand Scorpion has been in Flying Star University for more than two months.

Since he has been keeping a low profile, and I am used to his identity as a refiner, I almost forgot that he is also the 'best warrior of six tribes of Iron Plateau'.

Today, Master Mo Tianlu from the Combat Department came to challenge Master Sand Scorpion!

I know Master Mo Tianlu quite well. He is a pure combat-type Core Formation Stage Cultivator. It is said that he encountered space pirates hijacking the starship he was in when he was young, and he slayed almost a hundred of them all by himself. He is quite a brutal guy and one of the most fearsome teachers in the Combat Department!

The two of them entered a world fragment and practiced. Ten minutes later, they were out. Master Mo Tianlu was sweating, crippled, and coughing.

But Master Sand Scorpion was as healthy as before. He saw the challenger off with a smile!

After Master Mo Tianlu left, a more appalling incident took place. Master Sand Scorpion found several wasted sets of armor and punched them into perfect iron balls barehanded!

I was dumbfounded and asked him the reason. His answer was that his fighting will was aroused by Master Mo, but he couldn't do his best because his opponent was not an enemy. Therefore, he could only vent his fighting will on the scraps.

Good heavens! A Core Formation Stage Cultivator was crippled and ran away covering his face, and he was saying that he did not do his best! I wonder, what would the outcome be like if he was doing his best?

Later, we chitchatted for a long time, and I learned that teachers from the Combat Department, the Flying Sword Department, and the Battlesuit Department went to challenge him every few days.

I asked him the total number. He tilted his head and thought for a while, replying that he could not remember the specific number, but there should be thirty to fifty.

Honestly speaking, although he is indeed strong, the casual countenance on his face made me want to punch him hard for the honor of Flying Star University.

…

June 22.

Something uncanny happened today.

Sister Long Yunxin has been acting weird since Master Sand Scorpion came to the Refining Department.

She is beautiful and very fashionable, but she is now even more lovely and elegant.

She often comes to visit me, hoping to have dinner with me and Master Sand Scorpion.

But Master Sand Scorpion does not want to have dinner with her.

Or rather, other than me and Master Xue Yuanxin, Master Sand Scorpion does not want to waste his time on anybody.

He has been researching or training himself every day. When he is free, he always figures out various methods to torment me.

Today is Sister Long's birthday.

She did not invite anybody else but demanded that I bring Master Sand Scorpion through whatever method possible to have dinner with her in a very expensive cafeteria on campus. The Scallions Chicken in the cafeteria is really delicious!

She was extremely, extremely, extremely pretty today. Right. Important things must be highlighted.

However, while I was enjoying the food with the Art of the Swallowing Whale, she talked with Master Sand Scorpion about a lot of stuff that was incomprehensible for me.

At first, she asked Master Sand Scorpion about his personal life, whether or not he had a girlfriend and whatnot.

Master Sand Scorpion said that he did not have a girlfriend. Sister Long looked quite happy.

But then, Master Sand Scorpion added that he had a fiancé who was waiting for him in his hometown. Sister Long immediately frowned and drank her wine silently.

That was the part where their dialogue turned weird.

Master Sand Scorpion was having beef noodles, but Sister Long chopped a lobster and dropped it to Master Sand Scorpion's bowl. She said, "There are a lot of delicious foods in the world. One can always have some lobster even if they love beef noodles."

But Master Sand Scorpion simply replied that his stomach was small, and a bowl of beef noodles was enough to keep it full for a long time.

What the heck was he talking about?

His stomach is much larger than mine. I've seen in person that he swallowed twenty bowls of beef noodles without breaking a sweat.

Besides, he never refused lobsters and crabs, either!

Sister Long poured wine for him and asked why he could not have a lobster when he seemed so hungry.

Master Sand Scorpion replied that it was not a matter of his appetite. Beef noodles were delicious, and lobsters were delicious, too. But if the two foods were combined, their flavors would affect each other. Both the beef noodles and the lobster would be ruined. He would feel sorry for his stomach.

Sister Long was even more disappointed and kept drinking.

She did not dissolve the alcohol with her spiritual energy even though she is a Cultivator. When she was half drunk, she said, "Your fiancé is in your hometown. Are you never lonely?"

Then, Master Sand Scorpion said the most sophisticated, incomprehensible sentence of the night.

He opened his hands, his palms facing the ceiling, while he looked Sister Long in the eye and said solemnly, "As you can see, I'm a very awesome refiner.

"All my expertise is based on my hands.

"There are 34,482 muscles on my hands in total, 78% of which have been repetitively trained by me.

"These two hands are much more agile than any organ on your body. They can do whatever I want them to.

"These two hands can do whatever you can do.

"But you may not be able to do what these two hands can."

After hearing his words, Sister Long's face turned from red to pale, from pale to green, and from green to purple, as if she had been seriously wounded and was about to vomit blood. She left the table and ran away quickly.

Sister Long has always been smart and elegant. I'd never seen her so agitated before.

I asked what Master Sand Scorpion meant by his final words while attacking a drumstick.

But Master Sand Scorpion only smiled and did not give an answer.

Later, I went to Sister Long. She was weeping in her dormitory.

I comforted her for a long time, and she finally stopped crying.

Then, I asked her the same question. Why was she compared to a pair of hands?

Sister Long started weeping again, her tears flooding out like a broken dam.

This time, there was absolutely no way that I could stop her from crying.

I have no idea what the intelligent people were talking about. It might not be a bad idea to be a little dummy. After all, I have no worries and can focus my attention on refining.

I feel that I've made great improvements over the last two months. Maybe, one day, I can surpass Sister Long.

It will be good enough if I can be better than her for one day, one hour, one minute, or even just one second!

Chapter 652: Half a Year Later

Chapter 652: Half a Year Later

July 7.

Today is the happiest day of my life.

Since it's summer holiday, all the young members of the Xie family from every corner of the Flying Star Sector have returned to our hometown.

According to the tradition, this is the time when the younger generation holds a match within the family.

In the previous family competitions, my ranking was always very low, and I was sometimes overwhelmed by my cousins three or four years younger than me.

But this year, out of so many members of the Xie family, my comprehensive rank made its way into top 10!

My hand speed ranked the top among all!

My entirely family was shocked. My great grandfather and great grandmother summoned and praised me. My father and my mother were overjoyed, too, saying that our ancestors must have worked very hard to enlighten me.

In fact, it had nothing to do with our ancestors. I may not be very smart, but I do know that Master Sand Scorpion should be credited for my improvement.

Master Sand Scorpion can always come up with surprising training methods to torture me. They are barely sufferable, but I have to say that they are very effective. One will receive huge returns as long as they can grit their teeth through the process.

Moreover, he is cold to everybody else, but for some reason, he is very patient with me. Whenever I go to ask him about questions I don't understand, he always stops doing whatever he is busy with and gives me guidance unwearyingly.

It is quite odd that, after his interpretation, the seemingly esoteric theories of refining become straightforward and self-explanatory just like one plus one equals two.

A bold idea recently occurred to me.

I want to be Master Sand Scorpion's disciple.

Not the teacher-student relationship in school where one teacher has hundreds of students, but a true disciple!

But it is quite difficult!

I'm aware that Master Sand Scorpion has only one true disciple named Wu Mayan, who is in the Battlesuit Department of Flying Star University.

Wu Mayan is a real super genius. He has become a big name on campus after only several months.

Although he is only fourteen years old, his combat ability is close to that of the Building Foundation Stage. When he entered Flying Star University, the Combat Department, the Battlesuit Department, and the Flying Sword Department fought for him so hard that the deans were nearly bashing their heads.

It seems like he was born in a crystal suit, and he has natural instinct for them. After studying in the Battlesuit Department for only four months, he has already become an expert in crystal suits. None of the junior year students or below are a match for him. Only several senior experts in the senior year ever manage to draw with him.

Last month, he was appointed as a representative of Flying Star University in the intercollege crystal suit match. It was the first time in history for a freshman year student. He defeated five elite students from the Battlesuit Department of Heavenly Saints Institute with a 'Lone Wolf Battlesuit'. The entire Heavenly Saints City was shocked!

It is safe to say that Wu Mayan is even more famous than Master Sand Scorpion, who has always been lying low on campus.

Somebody from the five main arenas has come to ask him whether or not he was willing to fight with the professional Exos in the arenas.

Sigh. Only such talented geniuses deserve to be Master Sand Scorpion's true disciple.

I'm afraid that there's still a long way to go for a fool like me, isn't there?

But forget it. I planned to stay at home for one month, but I've decided right now that I will return to Heavenly Saints City tomorrow.

Master Sand Scorpion said that he would be staying in school for his training during the summer holiday. I will just go to find him and ask if he's willing to recruit me as his disciple.

Anyway, he's not likely to bite me, is he?

…

July 13.

I'm so angry! I'm so angry! I'm so angry!

What kind of guy is he? How can there be such an annoying boy!

I returned to Flying Star University and found Master Sand Scorpion today. I summoned my courage and proposed my request.

As it happened, the super genius Wu Mayan was present, too.

After I proposed my request, before Master Sand Scorpion said anything, the guy bulged his eyes and looked at me from top to bottom carefully. If I could read his mind, he must have been saying, "Huh? Someone of your aptitude is hoping to be the true disciple of my master?"

Not only did he stare at me, he even whispered with Master Sand Scorpion for quite a while. I overheard that he was speaking evil of me!

Thankfully, Master did not listen to his jibber-jabber. Although he didn't agree to my request immediately, he did not turn it down, either.

Hehe. There's still hope since he did not reject me, and I won't give up trying as long as there's the tiniest hope!

One other thing. Is the boy really fourteen years old? He is several inches taller than me, and his chest is as broad as a wall.

Crap.

If Master Sand Scorpion really recruits me as his disciple, wouldn't I have to call the annoying kid 'Senior Brother'?

That would be a huge bummer!

…

August 29.

Recently, I've been feeling that Master Sand Scorpion is more and more like an iceberg. However magnificent it appears, it is always ten times greater below the surface of the ocean!

Without me knowing, it's been five months since he came to Flying Star University.

Over the past five months, he has either been napping in the library or dwelling in the Ares Laboratory.

After the previous accident, the progress of the Ares Laboratory was kept confidential. Nobody knew how their project is going.

Therefore, in the Refining Department, suspicions about Master Sand Scorpion's skillfulness in refining have reappeared after several months of silence.

Of course, I knew that Master Sand Scorpion must be very excellent in refining. But honestly speaking, I'd never seen him craft anything in person, and I couldn't help but wonder how excellent he was.

But what happened today shed light on his capability, or rather, part of his combat ability.

A month ago, various journals and websites featuring magical equipment started introducing a tool named 'Combat Ability Detector' on a large scale.

Most of the articles were bragging about the magical equipment, claiming that it could run a series of complicated calculations based on data of moving speed, air vibrations, and spiritual waves and give an estimation of the enemy's combat ability.

Besides, the 'Combat Ability Detector' has recorded the appearances of the commonly-seen demon beasts, thousands of kinds of starships and the most popular crystal suits in the Flying Star Sector.

After scanning with the magical equipment, one is able to tell precisely which crystal suit the enemy is in, the advantages and disadvantages of the crystal suit, and all the other important information for the battle.

Growing up in a noble family of refining, I've seen too many such things. The more fabulous a piece of magical equipment sounds, the more likely that the journals and websites have been bribed. These articles are merely 'advertorials'.

However, publishing advertorials on so many different journals and websites at the same time is a huge investment, too. The producer of the Combat Ability Detector must boast tremendous capital.

I was quite curious about the magical equipment.

The few commercials set up on the Spiritual Nexus were quite professional and distinguished, too.

Therefore, I ordered two of them, one regular model and one crystal-suit-embedded model that could be installed to a crystal suit conveniently.

Five days ago, the Combat Ability Detectors were finally delivered. I tested them in person and had to say that, although they were not as immaculate as the advertorials claimed, they were definitely worth my money.

From the perspective of a refiner, the magical equipment was elegantly designed and very robust. The spiritual energy circuits were very smooth, and it was unhindered and flawless when it was functioning.

Although it was a piece of cheap, popular magical equipment, I found that it employed a lot of extremely complicated super-tiny rune arrays and crystal chips, as well as seven very sophisticated distributions.

Such a design was a definitely a masterpiece.

I felt at the time that the magical equipment would be a hit.

As I expected, after it was on sale for only one week, not only was it greatly complimented on the Spiritual Nexus and by the experts and professors in the circle of refiners, even the academic journal of the Refining Department of Flying Star University listed it as one of the ten most recommended tools of the month.

Besides, it was the monthly bestseller in the category of mini magical equipment on many websites.

Bestseller after only one week. It was quite beyond my expectation.

After I investigated the sales, I discovered that a great number of orders from Iron Plateau were placed on the very first day that the Combat Ability Detector was sold to public.

The six tribes of Iron Plateau bought a hundred thousand Combat Ability Detectors altogether!

Naturally, my curiosity was aroused.

Although the communication between Iron Plateau and the space has been reestablished, the fat orders still seemed quite odd, considering that the magical equipment was only just invented after all.

The manufacturer of the Combat Ability Detector was an unknown company. But after I traced it on the Spiritual Nexus, I found that the company was affiliated with the Glorious Sunlight Group!

Wasn't the Glorious Sunlight Group an enterprise of Master Sand Scorpion, according to Sister Long?

I went to ask Master Sand Scorpion cautiously with a Combat Ability Detector.

But he admitted very frankly that the Combat Ability Detector was the first piece of magical equipment developed by 'Glorious Sunlight Refining Center', which was under his name. He was the supervisor of the entire development process, too!

In other words, the Combat Ability Detector was Master Sand Scorpion's work!

I was immediately dumbfounded.

I knew that Master Sand Scorpion was awesome, but I didn't know that he was that awesome.

That was not the end of it. Later at dinner, I met Master Hou Zitao.

Master Hou has been quite mysterious over the past months. He has been dedicated to the development of a super weapon. Occasionally when I saw him, he would always look somewhat at a loss, as if he hadn't closed his eyes for ten days and ten nights.

But today, he was exultant and jumping up and down like a monkey. The moment he met me, he told me that his super weapon, 'chain gun', had been successfully developed. The experiments showed satisfactory results, and the performance of the new weapon far exceeded his expectation. It is about to be mass-produced, and it will definitely be a hit!

Of course, I congratulated him. But he said, embarrassedly, that the magical equipment was not crafted by him alone, but co-developed by him and Master Sand Scorpion. Or rather, Master Sand Scorpion was the bigger contributor to the project and was the lead refiner, and he could only be listed as the second refiner.

I took the opportunity and asked his opinion on Master Sand Scorpion's capability in refining.

He scratched his hair for a long time and replied with two words.

"Can't tell."

There's only one month before the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting that is held every five years.

I'm wondering what the facial expressions of the guys who are doubting his capability in refining right now will be when he shows up in the meeting hall with his Combat Ability Detector and the chain gun.

I'm really looking forward to it!

Chapter 653: Principle of Eating

Chapter 653: Principle of Eating

Three days later, in the No. 4 multifunctional hall of the Combat Department of Flying Star University…

"This is everything about the methodology and circulation of spiritual energy in the Art of the Swallowing Whale. But the key point is still meditation. You must stimulate your stomach with your mindpower."

Li Yao was giving a speech.

He was teaching an extracurricular course.

Visiting scholars and visiting professors were different. Such courses had no credits and, therefore, couldn't be regarded as optional courses. They were merely a means of communication like public lectures.

However, almost seven hundred students from various departments were still attracted to Li Yao's class, including many graduates who had become quite distinguished.

Naturally, it was because of his remarkable performance in the competitions against the experts from the Combat Department, the Flying Sword Department, and the Battlesuit Department over the past half year.

After being polished for half a year, Li Yao had an entirely different aura around him.

His face was still unattractive, but his messy hair looked like a black waterfall crashing down on broken stones. It was a soul-stirring color as if it were alive.

Spiritual energy was the source of the darkness of his hair. It was a sign that the spiritual gas inside his body was extremely profound.

He was wearing a plain, white robe and had bound his hair, which he couldn't comb down, with a hair band casually. Standing on the podium alone, he seemed like someone from a different world.

The spacious multifunctional hall was occupied by the hundreds of Cultivators, but all their auras combined seemed to be no match for his. They couldn't help but focus their eyes on him.

The course that Li Yao taught had a simple name, which was 'Art of the Swallowing Whale'.

The students were quite enjoying the course and taking notes on their light beams every once in a while.

Li Yao put his hands on his stomach and rubbed it softly, while he said, "As its name suggests, when the ancient Cultivators invented the technique, they imagined that their stomach was a den where the most hungry and ferocious animals—such as lions, tigers, and dragons—lived!

"Turning your stomach into a dragon will naturally increase its capacity for food. The Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures indigestible for common people will be able to be absorbed easily. Just like this."

Li Yao took a long breath. His abdomen slightly rose, and he let go of his hands. Noises like the roars of tigers, lions, and dragons were echoing from his belly, as if a bunch of animals were rushing close unstoppably.

The students were all amazed by it.

Li Yao smiled. "Different approaches can lead to the same destination. If you will, you can also imagine your stomach to be a bottomless swirl."

While he was talking, Li Yao's abdomen fluctuated and raised the deafening sound of the tides. Everybody listening to it was shocked.

"Or rather—"

Li Yao continued his speech. "We are all modern people, and we can adopt more modern means in our imagination. You may imagine your stomach to be a furnace heated to thousands of degrees. Whatever food is transmitted into it will be melted instantly!"

Before the loud noises of tides died down, they had already been replaced by the fulminations that were indicative of a fully functioning furnace.

Had they not seen it in person, the students would never have believed that one could utter such incredible sounds with the wriggling of one's stomach.

"Alright."

Li Yao stopped demonstrating the technique. He checked the time and said, "Let's call it a day. If anyone is interested, we have a final lecture on Friday, in which I will tell you the helpful and harmful relationships between special foods.

"Last ten minutes. Any questions?

"Third row on the left."

A tall student stood up and asked in a loud voice, "Master Sand, I'm a senior year student of the Combat Department. The utilization of nutrition is highlighted in the Combat Department, too. But you seem to have attached even more importance to it. If I may ask, do you think the top priority for a Cultivator is the food they have?"

"Indeed, I think so. In combat, refining, and even the training of pure computational ability, adequate energy is a categorical prerequisite." Li Yao nodded as he spoke. "Isn't there a saying that has been passed on for tens of thousands of years? 'One can live without dignity, but one cannot live without food.'"

Everybody on the spot laughed.

The tall student couldn't help but laugh, too. He took a few breaths to calm himself down, before he opened his mouth again. "However, Master Sand, I've read a lot of ancient classics on training. They all stressed the significance of absorbing energy from nature. It was said that one wouldn't need to take any food when they cultivated themselves to the highest level.

"It appeared to me like the most awesome Cultivators kept the furthest distance from meat and everything. The mouthwatering food in other people's eyes was smelly and filthy for the ancient Cultivators.

"Why are modern Cultivators walking on the opposite path?"

Li Yao smiled. "Diets like that are complete bullsh*t. Cultivators consume hundreds of times more energy than ordinary people do because of their daily training and combat. Where can they refill the energy if not from food?

"Retrieving sufficient energy by interacting with nature? That's utter nonsense!

"The only absorbable energy in nature is solar energy. But how much can that be? Right now, many households have solar energy healers or solar energy generators. You must've experienced how long it takes to boil a tank of water with solar energy.

"And that is based on spacious solar panels. However hard Cultivators train themselves, their skin won't be half as efficient as the solar panels. Besides, there is absolutely no need for them to turn their skin into such things at all.

"The normal energy in nature is not worth our effort at all, except on one occasion.

"That is the outbreak of sunspots or solar flares when other celestial bodies hit the sun.

"At that time, the radiation and electromagnetic waves will be drawn close to us like raging tides.

"That is the real energy of nature!

"However, such occasions are extremely rarely-seen. They will only appear every ten years or so and cannot be considered a regular training method at all."

The guy scratched his head and nodded. Then he asked again, "But the ancient classics in different era and from different sects all mentioned the importance of absorbing energy of nature and considered independence from food a symbol of one's achievement in Cultivation. Why?"

Li Yao pondered for a moment and replied, "Everyone, I know that many of you like to browse through the ancient classics and hope to discover an unparalleled technique from the ancient Cultivation world so that you will be invincible after you grasp it.

"I'm not saying that the works of the ancient Cultivators are not worth studying, but we must pay special attention to the difference between ancient Cultivators and contemporary ones during our research.

"In the ancient Cultivation world, the civilization of mankind was still nascent. Most people were still enshrouded in darkness and illiteracy. Ancient Cultivators didn't have a clear, thorough understanding of the world, either.

"Therefore, they often had to resort to many pretentious tricks to maintain their high and mighty image among the ordinary people so that they could organize and lead the ordinary people more easily.

"When a Cultivator claims that he trains himself by absorbing energy of nature, he will sound mysterious and look like a deity.

"But if the Cultivator says that the accomplishment of his Cultivation is because he can eat eight bulls per meal, the ordinary people will revere him much less, won't they?"

The students burst into laughter again.

"On the other hand, the ancient Cultivators did not value cooperation as much as we modern Cultivators do. They were often involved in ostensible or clandestine internal conflicts and wouldn't show their real Cultivation arts to other people easily.

"As the saying goes, the truth can be concluded with one sentence, but a lie needs thousands of words to cover up.

Many billionaires nowadays are publishing their biographies and spreading the keys to their success by telling people how they built their empires from scratch.

"But I don't think any of you believe that what they wrote are the real tricks to their fortunes, do you?

"If so, why are you so confident that the ancient Cultivators would pass on the real techniques of Cultivation to their followers unselfishly?"

DANG DANG DANG

A crisp sound suddenly burst out.

Li Yao waved his hand and said, "Alright, everybody. Class dismissed."

"Master Sand!"

Many students rose up from their seats, planning to ask Li Yao more questions.

But Li Yao had dashed out of the multifunctional hall in advance and appeared in a quiet road elsewhere on campus one minute later.

Almost at the same time, his mini crystal processor buzzed.

Inside the light beam was a dark-gold, metal puppet that looked like a golden skull.

Li Yao smiled. "Professor Mo."

The golden skull was exactly Mo Xuan.

Mo Xuan and the other spectral Cultivators from the Heaven's Origin Sector, after travelling here and there on

Sparkle for almost one year, suddenly realized one day that there was no need for them to hide at all.

They were in a weird life form right now, but there were spectral Cultivators in the Flying Star Sector, too, and they enjoyed almost the same rights as ordinary people just like the spectral Cultivators did in the Heaven's Origin Sector.

Since the bodies of the five of them were made of liquid metal, it would be more than easy for them to crawl into metal puppets and disguise themselves as local spectral Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector!

Considering the vastness of the Flying Star Sector, it was perfectly normal that several remote, unpopulated towns existed in the edges of a certain space zone.

Cultivators ending up as spectral Cultivators with their bodies gone when they were faced with cosmic storms was nothing unusual, either.

Therefore, after three months of planning, Mo Xuan and the other four spectral Cultivators appeared in broad daylight with new identities.

It was barely possible to confirm the validness of one's identity in the boundless sea of stars. Also, since they were endorsed by the Glorious Sunlight Group, nobody would be suspicious about their identity at all.

Professor Mo Xuan became the supervisor of the Glorious Sunlight Refining Center without any trouble as a spectral Cultivator. He had already showed up in several half-public social occasions.

With his management, the construction of the Glorious Sunlight Refining Center had proceeded smoothly. After only half a year, two laboratories, one large and public and the other small and secretive, had been established.

The public Glorious Sunlight Refining Center was headquartered in the Cross Wind Space Zone, with a branch in Heavenly Saints City, where a lot of research work on the Combat Ability Detector and the chain gun was conducted.

Li Yao planned to develop it into one of the best refining centers of the Flying Star Sector in the future.

As for the other laboratory, Li Yao and Mo Xuan had built the secret laboratory based on Sparkle, which was smaller in scale but had more advanced facilities.

This place was their real center of refining. Only the one man and five ghosts from the Heaven's Origin Sector knew of its existence.

The magical equipment that was not suitable to be made known to other people, as well as the further modification of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, would be worked on in that laboratory.

Chapter 654: Master Is Back

Chapter 654: Master Is Back

"The chain gun is going to be a hit!" Professor Mo Xuan's metallic voice was filled with undisguisable joy. "A day ago, a carrier of the Glorious Sunlight Group was assaulted by the space pirates. The carrier 'happened' to be guarded by the Great Horn Exo Society, and five hundred prototypes of the Aurora Chain Gun 'happened' to be in the cargo!

"In the end, the Great Horn Exo Society took out the chain guns in the cabin and fought the space pirates hard with them. They stalled the Blood Hand Pirate Gang, which ranked the 31st on Spider Den, until reinforcements arrived and eliminated the enemies altogether!

"Such a satisfactory and dramatic victory is definitely worth reporting. Right now, all the journalists of the Cross Wind Space Zone have arrived in the area and are interviewing the Great Horn Exo Society. The newly-born Aurora Chain Gun is the unquestionable star of the show, too!"

"Were we so lucky?" Li Yao was overjoyed, but he rolled his eyes and asked, "No. You must've prearranged everything, didn't you?"

"Of course, we did. Such a series of coincidences could not happen at the same time," Professor Mo Xuan replied merrily. "Bai Kaixin, advisor of the Great Horn Exo Society, is truly an unpredictable man. He gathered a lot of intelligence in advance and inferred the route and personnel of the Blood

Hand Pirate Gang. As it turned out, the pirate gang finally bit the bait after we wandered around in our route with a cargo of firearms for three days. This is the best advertisement for us!"

"Bai Kaixin!"

Li Yao rubbed his face, recalling Bai Kaixin, who was always frowning in depression. He never knew what to say.

Over the past half year since the Glorious Sunlight Group was established, the cooperation between them and the Great Horn Exo Society had grown deeper and deeper. Supported by the Glorious Sunlight Group as well as Iron Plateau, the Great Horn Exo Society expanded like a balloon being injected with air. Most of the guardian work for the Glorious Sunlight Group was taken care of by them, too.

After only half a year, the Great Horn Exo Society had grown from an unknown middle-sized Exo Society to one of the greatest Exo Societies of the Flying Star Sector—at least in terms of scale.

The 'chain gun', a piece of new magical equipment co-developed by Li Yao and Hou Zitao, targeted ordinary people and low-level Cultivators as the potential customers. It was perfect for the Great Horn Exo Society as a standard weapon.

Li Yao did not expect that Bai Kaixin would have arranged everything in advance and offered him such a big gift in return!

When the battle of the annihilation of the Blood Hand Pirate Gang was disseminated to various space zones via the Spiritual Nexus, many people grew interested in the eccentric magical equipment that the Great Horn Exo Society carried with them.

At first look, such magical equipment was a storm bolter with a relatively thick barrel.

However, the underside of the front end of the gun was embedded with coldly-blinking sawtooth. There was a transformation trigger at the rear of the gun, too.

When the transformation trigger was touched, the folded gunstock would be unfolded and turn into a strengthening plugin, which would fix the gun onto the arm. In the end, the gun would become a sharp single-edged chainsword.

The Great Horn Exo Society were still exultant after a fierce battle. When they were interviewed by the journalists, they all waved their new weapons with pride and demonstrated the usage of the weapon toward the journalists without exhaustion.

In a few days, the new magical equipment named 'Aurora Chain Gun' was known by everybody as the hundreds of videos of the interviews spread out.

Some magical equipment magazines praised the chain gun.

"From the traditional perspective, remote attack and melee attack are often difficult to be melded together perfectly. A soldier often has to carry a gun as well as a chainsword or a vibration saber.

"However, the enemy they are faced with are either thick-skinned demon beasts or heavily-armored Exos. Not only are they incapable of killing their enemy with the remote firepower, their enemy are also extremely fast and can cover their entire shooting range in the blink of an eye.

"In a real-life battle, it is often the case that your enemy will show up right in front of your nose the second after you aim at your enemy and shoot them.

"The super experts can, of course, throw away the storm bolter and pick up their chainsword in less than one second.

"However, for the low-level Cultivators and ordinary people, they will be caught in an awkward situation.

"Although the invention of Aurora Chain Gun does not solve the problem perfectly, it has introduced a relatively practical approach, to say the very least. Judging from the fierce battle that happened in the edge of the Cross Wind Space Zone, the Aurora Chain Sword will be a piece of magical equipment popular among low-level Cultivators.

"From many demonstration videos, we can clearly see that, while the members of the Great Horn Exo Society were opening fire at their targets, the embedded sawtooth in the front end of the gun had already started revolving rapidly. When the rune arrays on the sawtooth were triggered, sharp light blades were generated on the surface of the gun.

"Special sensors have been installed to the front end of the chain gun, too, which allow it to detect the object that is coming close in advance.

"When the object is ten meters away from the gun, the embedded sawtooth will jet out automatically, and the gunstock at the back will restructure itself and turn into a plugin to stabilize the gun on the arm of the Exo. As a result, the gun will be switched to the 'melee mode' seamlessly.

"The user will need to do nothing except to stab forward with their chain gun, and the enemy that is lunging close will be sending themselves to the edge of the blade!"

While there were compliments, there were also criticisms.

Many conservative magazines and websites expressed restrained suspicions about the new magical equipment.

"The chain gun indeed boasts an excellent design, but its structure is too complicated and coupling. The fault rate is going to be very high.

"The manufacturer of the Aurora Chain Gun was an unknown before now, nor was it ever engaged in the magical equipment business.

"It had no products whatsoever until half a month ago when the Combat Ability Detector was released.

"Although the Combat Ability Detector has been well-accepted on market, ancillary magical equipment and aggressive magical equipment are two entirely different fields.

"It remains to be seen whether or not such a small company is supervised by an excellent master of refining who can watch over the assembly line of such a piece of precise magical equipment."

The two opinions both had a lot of supporters. Together with the flames that someone fanned intentionally, news about the chain gun was all over the Spiritual Nexus.

The Aurora Chain Gun was not officially released yet, but it had received much more attention than other magical equipment developers could dream of.

After several days, a journalist from one media outlet finally located the investor of the small company. He wrote a column article with a quite eye-catching title.

"Rise of a Giant—An Exploration of the Glorious Sunlight Group!"

"Over the past half year, many people in the world of Cultivators have heard the name of the 'Glorious Sunlight Group', a conglomerate with Iron Plateau's backing that has monopolized the sales of certain minerals from Iron Plateau.

"But beyond everyone's expectations, the Glorious Sunlight Group did not stop on trades. It has been also marching into the magical equipment industry at a sprinting speed!

"As the journalists of this magazine pursued further into the matter, we discovered that the Combat Ability Detector, which has been quite a hit recently, was the first magical equipment developed by the Glorious Sunlight Group!

"The Aurora Chain Gun, another piece of new magical equipment that appeared out of nowhere and raised a heated discussion on the Spiritual Nexus, is co-produced by the Glorious Sunlight Group and Flying Star University!

"It is worth mentioning that the two pieces of magical equipment received a large number of orders from Iron Plateau the moment they were revealed!

"Therefore, it is not hard to imagine that, backed by an entire planet and tens of thousands of qi-trainers on it, the Glorious Sunlight Group will not only become a giant in trade but also an unneglectable rising power in the magical equipment industry!

"However, according to the information that this magazine gathered from various resources, the supervisor of the Glorious Sunlight Refining Center is Mo Xuan, an unknown refiner.

"Sand Scorpion, the biggest shareholder of the Glorious Sunlight Group and known to be the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, does not have any masterpieces so far despite his claim that he is passionate about refining.

"With their understanding about refining, can they produce such delicate magical equipment as the Combat Ability Detector and the chain gun?

"Is it possible that somebody else is hiding behind the Glorious Sunlight Refining Center?

"Later, the journalists of this magazine will visit the Glorious Sunlight Refining Center in person and reveal the answer for you!"

This article deepened the sense of mystery surrounding the Glorious Sunlight Group, which had already been mysterious enough. For a moment, everybody in the circle of refiners was talking about 'Glorious Sunlight'.

Three days later, a piece of even more shocking news raised a riot among the refiners!

Master Fiend Star, an expert adept at classical refining theories, reappeared after vanishing for more than half a year!

Moreover, he showed up with a very detailed and professional article analyzing the two pieces of new magical equipment released by the Glorious Sunlight Group in terms of their structure, performance, and the rune arrays employed.

After reading the explanation of Master Fiend Star, the fans of magical equipment finally learned that the seemingly cheap Combat Ability Detector and the Aurora Chain Gun had utilized many ancient rune arrays and models from forty thousand years ago. They were actually quite sophisticated from the technological perspective!

Some people questioned if Master Fiend Star had written the article because he was paid. Some other people were asking about his relationship with the Glorious Sunlight Refining Center.

Master Fiend Star thanked everybody for their sincere concern about himself over the past half year at first. Then he expressed his apology for his disappearance. Although he did not admit his relationship with the Glorious Sunlight Group, he did not deny it, either. Instead, there was a clear hint between the lines that he was cooperating with the Glorious Sunlight Refining Center closely!

This news raised even more discussion.

The classical refining theories put forward by Master Fiend Star had been confirmed and even applied to many kinds of magical equipment by quite a few refiners after the one year.

The expertise of Master Fiend Star was well acknowledged in the circle of refiners, too.

If the Glorious Sunlight Refining Center was actually led by Master Fiend Star, it was not unusual that such two pieces of magical equipment, which employed a lot of classical refining theories, were developed.

"These are two masterpieces that Master Fiend Star worked hard on in seclusion for half a year!"

Somebody even made such a bold assumption on the Spiritual Nexus.

Chapter 655: Hard and Soft, the Unparalleled Extension

Chapter 655: Hard and Soft, the Unparalleled Extension

After much exposure, the two pieces of magical equipment were not only known by all the Cultivators but also highly expected by ordinary people.

With the chaos in the Flying Star Sector, many remote space towns had established their own militia or guard team. Their demand for magical equipment had soared.

The Combat Ability Detector had only just started being manufactured. Since the colossal order from Iron Plateau had to be finished first, it went out of stock on the official website very quickly.

The Aurora Chain Gun was still in the field test phase. It was a battle-related magical equipment that concerned the life and death of the user. Therefore, it could only be perfected and finalized with the data accumulated in the tests.

However, some of the prototypes were put on market through various channels.

The Cultivators who received the prototypes mostly recorded their own tests and uploaded them to the Spiritual Nexus.

Some of them were even publishing tutorial videos with titles like '24 Moves for the Chain Gun', 'True Knowledge of the Chain Gun', and such.

For the time being, the two pieces of magical equipment were both barely available on market. One could not buy them even if they had loads of money!

However, Li Yao did not have time to enjoy the fever.

All his attention was now focused on a different piece of magical equipment.

Inside the Ares Laboratory, more than twenty refiners, including Li Yao and Xue Yuanxin, were holding their breath and staring at a set of strengthening plugins on the test platform, which was bound by countless electric arcs.

The set of plugins were a light grey, bordering on transparent. It looked quite unattractive, like a frozen cloud.

On the other side of the test platform, ten pieces of aggressive magical equipment were being charged.

Dazzling, colorful light balls were continuously condensing at the dark heads of the barrels and the front ends of the rails with blood-freezing hissing sounds.

Suddenly—

Swoosh!

The balls of lightning restricted by three rails expanded to such an extent that they darted out with an earsplitting explosion and crashed in the Ares Explosion in a purple streak!

Hum!

The seeming unattractive Ares Extension hummed in a sound resembling a bell being tolled. Ripples were spreading out on the surface of the magical equipment even though it was solid, each of which were a different color but equally brilliant.

As the ripples spread out, the damage of the balls of lightning were evenly dispersed to every part of the extension.

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

Next to the test platform, the hundreds of light beams floating in the air were displaying different figures.

The changes in the tens of thousands of numbers reflected the performance of the Ares Extension precisely.

The hums gradually died down. The energy of the ball lightnings was fully released, and they perished without a sound.

The surface of the bright grey Ares Extension, on the other hand, had purplish electric arcs popping up that looked like lightning that was raging in the cloud silently!

Hiu!

Pa!

BOOM! CRACK!

A moment later, the other powerful aggressive magical equipment had finished charging. Thunderbolts, lightning, flames, acid, frigid rains… Attacks of spiritual energy in various forms stormed upon the Ares Extension!

The figures on the monitoring light beam were continuously changing. Cracks began to appear on the Ares Extension. However, most of the attacks were absorbed by the Ares Extension as the ripples spread out!

Every attack dyed the Ares Extension with a new color. At first, it was only enshrouded in several electric arcs. Then, a few bouncing flames were added, followed by clusters of deep blue that represented freezing coldness.

When all the attacks came to a stop, the originally unattractive Ares Extension was enveloped in a colorful and dazzling mist and couldn't have looked more splendid!

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

On the light beam, countless figures jumped crazily and assembled into various equations, which then calculated thousands of results. A translucent 3D human model appeared on some ten light beams, too, while the system analyzed every organ in great details.

Finally, all the blinking figures jerked hard. One of the light beams flew out in front of everyone and enlarged itself. The eventual conclusion was demonstrated on it.

"According to the calculation of the crystal processor, in the saturated bombardment over the past thirty seconds, the Ares Extension absorbed 74% of the attacks perfectly. The virtual user inside the Ares Extension broke three ribs, with his liver slightly injured. The overall combat ability of the user has been lowered by 7%. He has suffered 'minor injuries', which will not affect any subsequent combat!

"More importantly, the special material—Super Bendable Steel—employed by the Unparalleled Extension can absorb most of the damage. The user can unleash all of it and return the attacks to where they come from with a telepathic thought!"

"We've made it!"

It had been half a year since the major setback of the explosion of the No.1 furnace.

Over the past half year, every refiner in the Ares Laboratory had been dedicated to the research day and night.

Several deep sleep capsules lay in a corner of the laboratory. When they were too tired, they would crawl into the deep sleep capsules and rest for an hour or two, before they got back to work crazily again.

The craziest researchers had not been away from the Ares Laboratory for months. Their skin was even paler than paper.

Right now, the seed on which everybody poured their sweat and blood finally produced fruit!

Even the most solemn scholars were waving their fists and crying in joy like teenagers who had just won a bet.

Every refiner was holding back their tears and hugging their working partners passionately.

Li Yao was embraced by quite a few refiners.

"Master Sand, we've made it!"

"Master Sand, you are indeed the bringer of good fortune of the Ares Laboratory. Without you, our plan would have been delayed for another two to three years!"

"Master Sand, the insane ideas that we came up with have all been realized. Hahahaha. All realized!"

"Your skills in forging are indeed marvelous. Are they secret arts from Iron Plateau? If you hadn't tempered the materials in person time and time again, we wouldn't have been able to develop sixteen different models of the Super Bendable Steel so quickly!"

Although many people in the outside world were still questioning Li Yao's aptitude in refining, the refiners in the Ares Laboratory knew the formidability of the 'idiotic magnate from Iron Plateau' after working together for six months.

However, since everybody was devoted to the research work, they'd never had the time or the energy to explain to everyone.

Xue Yuanxin nodded his head in approval, too. He complimented sincerely, "Master Sand, it's been a rough journey. You are unquestionably the second refiner for the Unparalleled Extension!

"With the Unparalleled Extension as well as the three models of Super Bendable Steel that you invented yourself, you will definitely rise to fame shortly in the circle of refiners!"

"You are too kind." In the warm ambience, Li Yao felt his eyes well up. He replied honestly, "Both the Super Bendable Steel and the Unparalleled Extension were developed by everybody together after arduous efforts day and night. The credit goes to the entire Ares Laboratory!"

Li Yao meant what he said.

Six months ago, he had never expected that he would encounter so many obstacles in the development of the Super Bendable Steel and the Unparalleled Extension.

Every refiner in the Ares Extension was a genius, a weirdo, and a maniac.

Amazing ideas were popping up in their heads every day.

"Will the stealth ability be increased after we join the extractant of Night Light Chrysanthemum into the Super Bendable Steel?"

"Can we combine the nine-star chain distribution of power rune arrays with the triangular distribution of power rune arrays? If we succeed, the maximum acceleration of the Unparalleled Extension will be improved by more than 3%."

Li Yao was exactly the same. His brain was like a volcano that was hurling out burning-hot notions and creative ideas unstoppably every day.

After joining such a team, Li Yao felt that he was fish that had swum into an ocean. They never let go of any seemingly impossible thoughts but would confirm or overthrow the hypotheses with countless experiments. They never stopped pursing the perfectness by revising their original plan unceasingly. When everything was impeccable, they would break apart the impeccable plan and start all over again.

In the end, Li Yao had forgotten how many times they had tried before they got sixteen kinds of 'Super Bendable Steel' with slightly different attributes and finally crafted the Unparalleled Extension that could return the enemy's attack back at them!

While everybody was thinking highly of him and considered him to be a genius refiner, he respected the refiners from the bottom of his heart, too.

Over the past half year, he had learned many things from everybody.

It was needless to mention Xue Yuanxin, who was a real skilled Armadominus as well as a creation-type Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage. By learning from him, Li Yao had grasped a lot of tricks in developing Ares Extensions and precious skills in the refinement of crystal suits.

Other refiners were all the experts of their field. Material science, structural mechanics, operational research…

Even the Building Foundation Stage Cultivators often had several amazing skills themselves. Li Yao had benefited a lot from them by learning from them modestly.

After working for half a year in the most professional refining team in the Flying Star Sector, he was able to combine everyone's theories before he conducted the final practical operations. His level of refining made yet another shocking breakthrough!

Not only did he make progress in his refining, he also improved his combat skills a lot.

There were many experts in the Combat Department, the Flying Sword Department, and the Battlesuit Department. They were mostly in the Core Formation Stage and were seasoned warriors. Their matches with Li Yao often ended with handshaking in peace, and they'd all learned valuable lessons from each other.

There were also several Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who were like boundless oceans. The few tutorial battles alone in which he was an assistant were enough to make Li Yao feel that his trip to Flying Star University was definitely worth it.

After half a year of polishing and training, although he hadn't formed his core yet, Li Yao estimated that his maximum combat ability was at least double his ability half a year ago.

He was no longer scared of Fengyu Zhong, a real Core Formation Stage Cultivator, even if they were wearing the same crystal suits, because he was very confident in his combat skills in any crystal suit now.

Besides, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was being deeply modified in the 'No.2 Laboratory of the Glorious Sunlight Refining Center'.

Li Yao was looking forward to a second head-on clash with Fengyu Zhong after the modifications of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit were complete!

"Master Xue, now that the Super Bendable Steel and the Unparalleled Extension have been successfully refined, please don't forget our deal from the beginning," said Li Yao with a smile.

"I won't. Definitely won't." Xue Yuanxin was in a quite good mood. He waved his hands and said, "The Glorious Sunlight Group has invested so much money in my program and accelerated my research significantly. Besides, we've signed a contract a long time ago. We will absolutely supply the Super Bendable Steel and the Unparalleled Extension for you in advance later!"

After pausing briefly, the old man rubbed his fists, his eyes shining with joy. "We will have to run a field test now, won't we?"

Chapter 656: Unparalleled Desperation!

Chapter 656: Unparalleled Desperation!

Ding Hao was startled when he stepped into the Swirling Stone Domain, a world fragment.

The Swirling Stone Domain was a super-large test field for magical equipment with a diameter of more than a hundred kilometers. The ground was riddled with holes that would jet high-pressure air currents every once in a while and blow up the rocks into sky, forming a tornado of stones. The environment was quite rough. Generally speaking, only the most important magical equipment would be tested there.

Ding Hao was a postgraduate of the Battlesuit Department in the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage. He was among the most distinguished postgraduates and could stay at school to instruct students if he wanted to.

He had signed a contract with the school and was a magical equipment tester.

Whenever a piece of new magical equipment was developed by the Refining Department, professionals such as himself would be asked to run tests on them.

After he got the job, Ding Hao had tested about fifty kinds of magical equipment, some of which were large and some small, but he had never seen so many spectators before.

In the auditorium around the test field, which was covered by a translucent defense rune array, not only were the experts and professors of the Refining Department seated, there were also many teachers from the Battlesuit Department, the Flying Sword Department, and the Combat Department. Everybody was whispering to each other in high spirits.

Ding Hao even spotted the dean of the Battlesuit Department, who was chitchatting with a dry, short old man that had a disproportional head.

If his eyes were not deceiving him, it was Xue Yuanxin, one of the most respected refiners in the world!

It appears that the magical equipment to be tested today will be extraordinary.

Ding Hao's heart was beating fast. He raised his head and found that six Exos were already standing in the middle of the test field in full crystal suits. They were doing last-minute checks with the help of assistants.

Ding Hao's pupils shrank violently.

He knew all the six Exos. They were top experts of the Combat Department, the Flying Sword Department, and the Battlesuit Department and also some of the magical equipment testers who were on par with him, if not better!

While he was baffled, they were looking at him, too. Somebody even exclaimed.

At first, Ding Hao thought that they were surprised to see him. But soon, he sensed an invisible mountain behind him that was moving close and making him barely able to breathe.

Turning around, Ding Hao was greatly shocked.

Master You Wenjun!

A tall, handsome man with starry eyes brushed past him. The invisible aura around the newcomer forced him to step back uncontrollably. It was not until he walked ten meters away that Ding Hao returned to normal. He took a long breath with complicated thoughts.

Master You Wenjun was one of the strongest experts among the faculty of the Combat Department. He was in the beginning level of the Core Formation Stage.

Not only was he a teacher in Flying Star University, he had also participated in the competitions in crystal suit arenas multiple times. He had once held a seventeen-game winning streak. It was said that he was engaged in the bloody battles with space pirates in the riot of the Temple of Immortals, too!

No wonder his aura was so daunting. Such seasoned warriors with abundant real-life experience were far better than the rookie college students such as Ding Hao.

You Wenjun went to the preparation area in a corner and put on a special crystal suit that had been installed with sensors and charged with only half the spiritual energy with the help of the staff. The crystal suit had only 30% of its original strength.

Ding Hao was bewildered. It seemed that even You Wenjun was a tester, too. Or rather, they were going to be 'testees' as the targets for the new magical equipment!

Five minutes later, another batch of testers crowded over. They were mostly students in their junior year and senior year and, therefore, were relatively weak. The majority of them were in the high level or peak of the Refinement Stage. After everybody put on their crystal suits, their battlesuits were uttering clanging sounds, making the preparation area rather lively.

Ding Hao observed and discovered that the team of testers were made of thirty Refinement Cultivators, nine Building Foundation Stage Cultivators including himself, and a Core Formation Stage Cultivator, You Wenjun.

Everybody was in their crystal suit, and their coldly shining blades formed a sharp metal forest. Centered around You Wenjun, the scorching air was bursting out, making them look like an invincible iron army.

Forty fully-armed Exos in total. What kind of magical equipment needs a team of so many testers?

Ding Hao was growing more and more dubious.

A while later, after a beep, the detailed information about the test was transmitted to their crystal processors.

Ares Extension?

Ding Hao's eyebrow was furrowed. He was aware that Ares Extensions could significantly increase the combat ability of a crystal suit. But one versus forty?

Were they serious?

Hu—

A blowing wind passed by the sky of the test field, which was now enveloped in dust and smoke. The three red lights on one side of the test field turned green one after another.

Ding Hao's crystal processor reminded him that the test had begun!

Instantly, Ding Hao tensed out of natural instinct, while he crouched and gazed at the center of the test field with the other thirty nine Exos.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Thirty Refinement Stage Cultivators went to the flanks and surrounded the center.

In the center of the test field, a short-distance teleportation array emanated ivory brilliance, which rippled out like a melting candle before it was slowly condensed into a tall body. The Ares Extension known as 'Unparalleled' was revealed to everybody.

Is this the Unparalleled Extension?

Ding Hao eyed his opponent with scorn.

There was no telling what the crystal suit that the Cultivator surrounded by forty Exos was wearing, but it was covered by a layer of weirdly-shaped, pearl-grey strengthening plugins. Perhaps based on the principles of biomimetics, the plate of the extension was arced and looked like the shell of insects. The overall height of the Cultivator was almost four meters.

Standing amid crystal suits that were less than 2.5 meters, it looked rather cynical.

Ding Hao had studied a lot of structures of the classic Ares Extensions and watched a lot of videos where the Ares Extensions went on a rampage.

Most classic Ares Extensions all looked dominating and magnificent.

In comparison, the Unparalleled Extension before him had nothing except inner beauty, if put nicely, or was quite dumb and ugly, if put more frankly.

Can such an Ares Extension withstand the collective attack of forty Exos? It will be quite hilarious if we blow it up into pieces a moment later.

Hardly had the idea occurred to Ding Hao when earsplitting explosions broke out inside the test field. More than ten crystal suits lunged at the Unparalleled Extension with dazzling exhaust flames behind them!

In the introduction of the test, the thirty Refinement Stage Cultivators were responsible for the first wave of attacks. They did not think too highly of the unattractive Unparalleled Extension either and simply decided to take it down together!

However—

So strong?

Ding Hao shuddered, and his back was soaked in sweat.

Half a second ago, 'King Kong Battlesuit', a super heavy crystal suit with enormous defensive capability, passed by him like a falling star while it was blown backwards and did not hit the ground until it was fifty meters away. A hole the size of a basin appeared on its chest from which dazzling sparks were bursting out. The Exo was cramping, unable to stand on his feet. The redness popping up from his head suggested that he had been 'killed'!

However, Ding Hao did not notice how his opponent launched the attack at all!

The user of the Unparalleled Extension was attacking the Refinement Stage Cultivators like a hungry tiger mauling lambs. It looked heavy and stupid, but it was actually amazingly agile. In unpredictable curves, it divided the thirty Refinement Stage Cultivators like the sharpest scalpel. Every half a second, one of the crystal suits would be blown away brutally.

There was nothing but the screams of the testers inside the communication channel.

Since there were thirty crystal suits, there were always opportunities to counterattack. Many of them bombarded the Unparalleled Extension with various techniques when their companions were blown away. Some even resorted to suicidal attacks!

The user of the Unparalleled Extension, on the other hand, did not bother to dodge or defend; he simply resisted the fatal attacks by doing nothing!

To Ding Hao's surprise, the grey, inconspicuous Unparalleled Extension was not destroyed by the attacks. It gradually became surrounded by glamorous colors like a warrior whose blood was boiling and whose fighting will was soaring!

In a moment, all the thirty Refinement Stage Cultivators were lying on the ground, defeated.

Ding Hao sniffed and summoned his spiritual energy. The aura of his saber was extended to ten meters long and blinking like a hissing viper, making his saber appear to be wreathed in a hazy rain and utterly unpredictable.

When he made the first step, a silver brightness next to him darted out and broke the sonic barrier instantly. It zigzagged around the opponent and phantomized into seven shadows, which sprinted toward the middle at the same time. The shadows hit the same spot and minced the target!

Excellent! Ding Hao secretly complimented. The one who launched the attack was Zhong Lifang from the Flying Sword Department. He was from a noble family, renowned for their flying swords, and in the high level of the Building Foundation Stage. He was stronger than many teachers!

His previous move, Shadow Slash, was the ultimate skill of his family. He had modified it with a lot of teachers of the Flying Sword Department. The speed and strength of the move had been improved to the pinnacle!

Although his target was not Ding Hao, Ding Hao still felt as if his heart and eyes were stung by needles.

Caught off guard, the Unparalleled Extension was hit precisely.

But ripples spread out on the surface of the Unparalleled Extension. The set of strengthening plugins seemed to have turned into liquid from metal and started shaking.

The user of the Unparalleled Extension showed absolutely no sign of being wounded. He did not even slip backward. Turning around and slashing his saber, he blew Zhong Lifang more than ten meters away!

Ding Hao's eyes almost popped out of their sockets. He felt goosebumps all over his back. Before he came back to himself, his opponent had launched an attack promptly and crashed toward him like a high-speed crystal warship!

The Unparalleled Extension right now had gotten rid of all the nasty appearance a while ago.

In brilliant mists and smoke, it smashed down at him like a mountain of colorful flames!

Endless coldness emerged from the bottom of Ding Hao's heart. His soul was so deeply awed by the enemy that he had completely forgotten that it was merely a test. He uttered a desperate roar uncontrollably!

Chapter 657: Core Technology Holder

Chapter 657: Core Technology Holder

BOOM!

A ball of lightning exploded on the Unparalleled Extension. It was from one of the Exos behind Ding Hao who launched a remote attack. However, the seemingly powerful explosive bullet did nothing but make the Unparalleled Extension shake for a moment. Then, most of the energy of the lightning was absorbed by the Unparalleled Extension and formed a new layer of brilliance on its surface!

Ding Hao came back to himself and took the opportunity to step back. He crouched and activated all the power rune arrays on his crystal suit to the maximum. The moonlight-like aura of his saber was as unpredictable as smoke, but it quickly reappeared in the upper, middle, and lower part of the Unparalleled Extension in the blink of an eye.

All three Hidden Moon Slashes had hit the target precisely!

Deep inside Ding Hao's brain, he felt that his soul was shivering. Judging from his spurting spiritual energy, he could tell that his opponent had failed to dodge his attacks.

But what was horrifying was that, although the attacks hit the target, they seemed to have cut into a boundless ocean or a thick, heavy swamp. There was not the usual sense of gratification when he cut an object in half, and he could not have felt more uncomfortable!

Ding Hao did not know whether he should continue attacking or retreat. However, he was so short of breath that he felt like vomiting blood. In the meantime, the breastplate of the Unparalleled Extension blossomed like a flower from the middle, revealing a dazzling light ball that was growing larger and larger in front of Ding Hao.

Ding Hao felt that the world was swirling, and he completely lost control over his crystal suit, which was shrieking in alarm. All the performance parameters on the light beam were as red as scorching coal that was burning through his heart.

Huala!

Ding Hao fell to the ground heavily, unable to stand on his feet anymore. He could not even lift his finger. The only functional part of his crystal suit was the crystal camera, which captured the scene where You Wenjun, the Core Formation Stage Cultivator, was charging at the opponent.

BOOM!

After an earthshaking explosion, an invisible blast was quickly expanding from the center of the test field. The air currents were raging like a tsunami and tossed Ding Hao and the rest of them away brutally.

In the stands, all the teachers, experts, and professors from the Combat Department, the Flying Sword Department, the Battlesuit Department, and the Refining Department stood up.

They held their breath and widened their eyes while they gazed at the center of the test field, which was now enshrouded in sand and smoke!

When the obstructions finally died down, a giant crater, which was ten meters in diameter, appeared in the center of the test field, as if a shooting star had just visited the place. Hot steam was popping up from the depths of the crater nonstop, distorting the view nearby.

You Wenjun and the user of the Unparalleled Extension had been blasted to two sides of the crater, each with a deep ravine in front of them.

They were like fossils that had been embedded into the soil, unable to move at all.

Both the crystal suit and the Ares Extension had been seriously wrecked. Sparks were dancing all over their bodies, and light flames of chaotic spiritual energy were jetting from everywhere.

"Hua…"

Low exclamations echoed from the auditorium. Everybody cast their eyes to the outcome light beams in front of them.

Hundreds of indexes that represented the vital signs of the two Exos were changing constantly, while the crystal processor was examining their body status.

"Both of them have been heavily wounded and will be in a weak state for more than five seconds. It remains to be seen which of the two recovers faster."

"This is a battle with no winners!"

Hiss!

The conclusion raised a round of gasps among the faculty.

However, after only three seconds, on the light beam that represented the user of the Unparalleled Extension, the indexes underwent drastic changes again. A new line appeared.

"Beep. Anomaly in the vital signs of the No.1 tester has been detected. After reevaluation, his combat ability will be partly restored in 3.3 seconds!"

Hardly had the sentence was concluded when the user of the Unparalleled Extension staggered to his feet on the test field!

Every spectator was greatly shocked.

After a head-on clash with a Core Formation Stage Cultivator, the guy could still stand on his feet.

What kind of Ares Extension was that? And who exactly was wearing it?

Although some ten Exos were still standing in a corner of the test field, and the Unparalleled Extension had been twisted beyond recognition with flames bursting out here and there, none of them dared rush close and get themselves killed. They had all been awed by the air around the Unparalleled Extension, which made them feel that it was a primordial beast.

Beep! Beep! Beep!

The green lights on the two sides of the test field turned red again. Multiple pieces of flying magical equipment hovered above every tester and covered them in defense rune arrays.

"The first field test of the Unparalleled Extension has now ended!"

In the auditorium, everybody was looking at the members of the Ares Laboratory in compliment and admiration.

"As expected of Master Xue Yuanxin. As expected of the Unparalleled Extension!" The dean of the Battlesuit Department was the first to stand up and applauded. "This is a very successful test. Congratulations, Master Xue, and every researcher in the Ares Laboratory!

"I believe that the Unparalleled Extension will definitely become the ultimate extension that every Exo in the Flying Star Sector dreams of when it shows up in the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting in half a month!

"Hahahaha. Master Xue, so many people from my Battlesuit Department have been terribly beaten up by the Unparalleled Extension. You must bear our contribution in mind. When all the tests are done, please make sure that you spare some of the extensions for the Battlesuit Department!"

The dean of the Combat Department nodded in approval, too. "Returning the enemy's attack to themselves is indeed a marvelous design. The user of the Unparalleled Extension was apparently far weaker than You Wenjun, and yet, he could instantly unleash the spiritual energy that the Unparalleled Extension accumulated previously and deal as much damage to You Wenjun as You Wenjun did to himself. Moreover, his combat ability even recovered faster than You Wenjun's. Impressive. Very impressive!"

Now that the Unparalleled Extension had proved to be a great success, Wei Wenyao, dean of the Refining Department, was of course the happiest of all. He was so delighted that he could barely stop smiling. He said, "Master Xue, after the explosion half a year ago, we thought that it would take another two to three years before the Unparalleled Extension was produced. We did not expect that you would receive a huge investment from the Glorious Sunlight Group and complete the project right before the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting!

"Compared to the Unparalleled Extension, the new material, Super Bendable Steel, has endless potential and can be applied to shields or defense facilities. It has a very bright prospect!

"It was definitely the right call to introduce Master Sand Scorpion as a visiting scholar. No wonder you asked him to be in charge of the test!"

In a corner of the test field, Li Yao walked unhurriedly toward the Unparalleled Extension with a giant box of tools on his back.

"The guy is unbelievably lucky to be listed among the researchers of the Unparalleled Extension and to be responsible for the first field test!"

"That can't be helped. He has paid a fortune after all. Your money is your voice. If you want to do the same, why don't you sponsor a project with loads of money, too?"

"Tsk. Tsk. Tsk. I didn't expect that the idiotic magnate from Iron Plateau would take advantage of his wealth so much!"

Many refiners were eyeing Li Yao with admiration and jealousy. They lowered their heads and whispered to each other.

Xue Yuanxin smiled and, glancing over everyone, said, "You think that Master Sand only brought a sum of funding to the Ares Laboratory?"

"What do you mean?" The refiners were dazed.

Xue Yuanxin cleared his throat and said casually, "Before, since the Unparalleled Extension was still being developed, everyone in the Ares Laboratory was wholly dedicated to our work and did not have the time to brief anyone on our progress.

"But now that the Unparalleled Extension has worked out the way we expected, we are now able to give a summary of our progress so far.

"Truth be told, during the development process, other than providing funds, Master Sand Scorpion has also offered 32 core technologies and was engaged in the research of 155 new rune arrays. He has also invented three different models of Super Bendable Steel independently that all boast very amazing attributes.

"Besides, the forging, polishing, and assembling work of the Unparalleled Extension was all taken care of by him. Sometimes, he would be standing next to the furnace for the refining work that could take as long as twenty hours.

"Because of his contribution to the project, it has been unanimously agreed that he is the well-deserved second refiner of the Unparalleled Extension. He will be listed right behind me in the name list of the researchers."

"What!"

Not only were the experts and professors of the Refining Department greatly shocked, those from the Combat Department, the Flying Sword Department, and the Battlesuit Department were dumbfounded, too!

"Moreover…"

As if he felt that everybody's mouth had not been opened wide enough, Xue Yuanxin said, "Although the Unparalleled Extension has been successfully refined, seven indispensable components employed in it can never be crafted directly by us no matter what. They have been forged by Master Sand after repetitive tempering.

"Perhaps I am too old and shortsighted, but in my opinion, no refiner in the entire Flying Star Sector will be able to copy Master Sand's tempering technique.

"Therefore, it is not a problem if anyone wants to order an Unparalleled Extension, but you'd better make an appointment with Master Sand first and see if he's willing to forge a batch of new core components for you."

Xue Yuanxin's remarks stirred chaos in everyone's mind.

Although some of the refiners had guessed that Li Yao was capable in refining, they had never anticipated that his skills in refining could be so proficient that the core part of the Unparalleled Extension was in his hands!

It meant that anybody, including the high and mighty Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, had to come and beg Li Yao if they wanted an Unparalleled Extension!

That was really—

The refiners who were envious of Li Yao's wealth a moment ago were now rendered speechless. They looked at each other in bewilderment, each refiner's face redder than the next.

In the test field, Li Yao opened the tool box. His hands were like the wind as he dissected the Unparalleled Extension and the crystal suit below it, both of which had been seriously deformed.

Wu Mayan lunged out of the remains of the crystal suit.

Although his face was swollen and there was blood dripping from the corner of his lips, Wu Mayan could not have been more ecstatic. He exclaimed in wild joy and hugged Li Yao.

"That is so satisfying, Master!

"The Unparalleled Extension is indeed satisfying! I felt that I could defeat a hundred opponents all by myself when I was wearing it!"

It was not until this moment that the Exos on the test field realized that the user of the Unparalleled Extension, who had fought them unstoppably, who had left the deepest fear and desperation in their heart, and who had engaged in a head-on clash with a Core Formation Stage Cultivator, You Wenjun, was actually the young genius Wu Mayan who was only fourteen years old!

For a moment, everybody was dumbfounded.

Chapter 658: I Need a Sandbag

Chapter 658: I Need a Sandbag

Late at night, in a world fragment one kilometer in diameter…

It was Li Yao's personal training area.

Since the business of the Glorious Sunlight Group was on track, he had rented such an area from a world fragment developer.

There were no special natural laws in the place. The only feature was that it was quiet enough, and nobody would disturb his training.

"Master, it felt great in the Unparalleled Extension. I once thought that combat in crystal suits were the most thrilling things in the world, but now I realize that a crystal suit plus an Ares Extension is hundreds of times more thrilling!"

Wu Mayan was still dwelling in the fierce battle from earlier in the day. He was waving his hands in excitement. "Ho! Ho! Ho! A Core Formation Stage Cultivator! I blew up a Core Formation Stage Cultivator!"

Li Yao smiled. "There's still a huge gap between you and a Core Formation Stage Cultivator. You were merely taking advantage of the Unparalleled Extension, which had absorbed many attacks in advance, and your enemy was caught unprepared in your final outbreak.

"I'm certain that, if the test is run again, or your opponent had learned the features of the Unparalleled Extension in advance and was prepared for it, the outcome would be entirely different.

"But your performance today was indeed very excellent, and you have explored all the potential of the Unparalleled Extension. It was beyond my expectations.

"You've grown a lot over the past half year!"

Over the half a year, Wu Mayan had undergone dramatic changes.

After he entered Flying Star University, the young genius who had advanced into the peak of the Refinement Stage at an age of only fourteen attracted everyone's attention.

The training system of Flying Star University was the most advanced one in the entire Flying Star Sector. Countless experts and training planners were at Wu Mayan's service. Besides, Li Yao had gathered tremendous Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures for his disciple and himself without caring about the cost.

Since Wu Mayan was in the growing phase, it was as if he had a new appearance every day. He was already almost thirty centimeters taller than half a year ago, and his weight was twice as much. But he did not give the feeling of obesity at all. His muscles as impressive as those of a leopard, glittering even in darkness. Together with the air of the wilderness that he carried from Iron Plateau, he would not be doubted if he claimed that he was actually twenty.

He already had many fangirls in the campus.

Wu Mayan grinned, revealing his white teeth. He puffed his chest out and said proudly, "Thank you for insisting that I come here to study. I feel that I have made tremendous improvements over the past half year, too!

"Right now, I can extend my spiritual gas to more than thirty meters away, and I've broken into the 35th level of the Refinement Stage!

"In real-life combat, even Cultivators in the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage are no match for me!

"Crystal suits are now my favorites, too. It was really an excellent decision that you asked me to pick the Battlesuit Department! I have a feeling that I was born for crystal suits!

"Right now, the students in the junior year and the senior year are no match for me at all even if ten of them are attacking me together. Only some of the postgraduates can manage to endure several moves from me.

"But I don't like fighting with them. Their level may be very high, but most of them have never killed anyone or seen real blood. Too tender! It's boring."

Wu Mayan had grown up on Iron Plateau, where the environment was extremely unfavorable. He had also engaged in two battles of the apocalypse and faced off against the super expert Yan Xibei.

Regardless of his capability, his real-life combat experience and his calmness in a fierce battle could never be found among common college students.

"Is that why you went to arenas and participated in crystal suit matches in secret?" Li Yao asked.

Wu Mayan had been elaborating on his accomplishments, but Li Yao's comment suddenly made him shudder. He stuck his tongue out and scratched his head, somewhat in embarrassment. "You knew about that, Master? I only went there for fun. The opponents in the crystal suit arenas are brutal guys who have slain space pirates in real battles. Their Cultivation may not be very high, but their actual combat ability and their response to changes are far better than the performance of common college students.

"Fighting against them is much more gratifying!"

Li Yao could not help but smile. "The mysterious newcomer, Iron Fire, in the Heavenly Sword Arena. A winning streak of seven games. Quite popular recently. Your combat videos are on every website and always rank high in the most recommended list. It is quite annoying when the pop-up windows keep bugging me while I'm browsing the websites. There's no way that I wouldn't see information about you at all."

Wu Mayan lowered his head and said, "I'm sorry, Master. I didn't intend to keep it a secret. I planned to tell you after I secured ten victories in a row. It would have been a nice surprise! But I ran into a real expert in the eighth game, and I got beaten the heck out of me. Haha. After that, I was too embarrassed to tell you the story."

Li Yao stared at Wu Mayan and said, "I do not object to your participation in the crystal suit arenas. For other people, crystal suit arenas may be cruel places. But for a qi-trainer who grew up on Iron Plateau such as you, crystal suit arenas are merely parks for entertainment.

"But I do feel that you seem a bit proud recently."

Wu Mayan immediately put on a solemn expression. He said seriously, "It was wrong of me, Master."

"I'm not saying you are wrong." Li Yao pondered a moment and said slowly, "Everybody's living environment and life experiences are different. Naturally, their personalities are not the same.

"Take me, for example. I don't like putting myself in the spotlight and being observed by everyone in public. I prefer dark corners. I feel comfortable when I stay there, because darkness represents safety in the place where I grew up.

"But you are different.

"Your unique identity made you the most distinguished existence in the Furious Bears Tribe since childhood. You lived with everyone's attention and were faced with suspicion and challenges from other people every day.

"You could only fight back other people's doubts with your fists and your pride in order to get what you wanted in a place like Iron Plateau.

"I am only trying to tell you that you must keep being proud if that is what matters to you. Do not abandon your precious pride even if you are defeated, savaged, and stomped into the deepest level of hell. You must crawl out of the nether world again with your pride!

"You are the most brilliant genius with the highest aptitude that I've seen all my life. Proud prodigies such as yourself tend to give up on themselves and brood over their failure after only one setback.

"I saw the video of your humiliating defeat in the Heavenly Sword Arena in your eighth game. Your opponent was rather unkind. He insulted and tricked you on purpose after he defeated you.

"I was afraid that you might have been affected by it and meant to talk sense into you. However, I can tell that I underestimated you, and you handled it just fine."

Wu Mayan chuckled and said, "That's not a big deal. There were many times when I was mocked, bullied, and kicked down when I was a kid. If I could not stand up again after being humiliated, I would've killed myself a long time ago!"

Weird brilliance suddenly flowed out of Li Yao's eyes, as he nodded his head and said, "Alright. If so, I think you're ready for a more crushing defeat and more brutal torment."

Wu Mayan was confused. "What do you mean, Master?"

Li Yao's lips curled into a cruel smile. He snapped his fingers and retrieved two metal boxes carved with runes from his Cosmos Ring.

Wu Mayan's eyes beamed with joy. "The Unparalleled Extension!"

"The Unparalleled Extension is sort of co-developed by the Glorious Sunlight Group and the Ares Laboratory. Many technologies are shared by the two parties. I have made a deal with Master Xue Yuanxin that the Glorious Sunlight Group will reserve the right to produce the Unparalleled Extension and all derivative models," Li Yao said.

"Come on. Here is an Unparalleled Extension as well as your favorite Thunderous Fire Battlesuit, containing the most advanced skill cards. Put on them, and let's have a match."

Wu Mayan was dazed and scratched his head with a smile. "Master, this extension does not seem to be the beta model. Its activation level of spiritual energy is 100%. My control over the Unparalleled Extension is not flawless yet. When the battle is too heated, I'm afraid that I won't be able to restrain myself."

Li Yao laughed. "You're worrying that you might hurt me?"

"You are a great expert in the superlative height of the Building Foundation Stage, Master. I'm told that you persisted for a long time in a match with a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator of the Combat Department a few days ago. Naturally, I'm no match for you!"

Wu Mayan blinked his eyes and said, "I believe that you can punch me into pieces barehanded even if I'm in the Thunderous Fire Battlesuit.

"But it's completely different with the Thunderous Flame Battlesuit and the Unparalleled Extension combined. You know the power of the Unparalleled Extension better than anybody else. This afternoon, I blew up forty Exos in total. Even a Core Formation Stage Cultivator could not withstand my one punch!

"Master, you are, of course, far stronger than the Core Formation Stage Cultivator, but he failed to resist the Unparalleled Extension when he was in his crystal suit!"

"Okay," Li Yao said slowly, "I didn't say that I wouldn't wear a crystal suit."

"You must be joking!" Wu Mayan laughed hard, holding his belly. "Crystal suits are vastly different from the True Qi armor that we wore on Iron Plateau. They are a hundred times more difficult to use! What you wore previously could only be called True Qi armor at best. The Apocalyptic Extension that you were in when you fought against Yan Xibei was not a real Ares Extension, either!

"Since you have never learned the real arts of crystal suits, it might be a burden for you if you put on one!"

Li Yao smiled and pressed his forehead with his finger. Green brilliance quickly blinked around his body, which was soon covered in a green crystal suit.

Wu Mayan exclaimed and said, "So, Master has learned how to wear a crystal suit."

But then he could not help but laugh.

Li Yao was wearing a 'Green Wolf Battlesuit'. Designed for middle- and low-level Cultivators, it was simple in structure and convenient to use. Even many strong ordinary people could make use of them. It was one of the most basic models of all crystal suits.

It was not hard to guess the performance of such a cheap product.

The parameters of the Green Wolf Battlesuit were less than one third of those of the Thunderous Fire Battlesuit that Wu Mayan liked best, not to mention the Ares Extension.

Although his master seemed to have modified the Green Wolf Battlesuit significantly, Wu Mayan did not find many traces of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures on it.

Besides, the framework of the crystal suit was too weak. How much improvement could be made even if it was modified?

"Master, let's be serious. If you really want to enjoy a fight, how about we swap the suits? I will wear Green Wolf, and you can wear Thunderous Fire and the Unparalleled Extension!

"But the control system of the Thunderous Fire is quite complicated. Can you handle it?"

Li Yao bounced up and down and warmed up his wrists and ankles, while he smiled. "It's alright. I merely intend to test the performance of the Unparalleled Extension in person so that I can collect firsthand data for the next modifications. If you are too worried that you might hurt me, you can stay there and take a few punches from me first."

"Alright."

In Wu Mayan's eyes, Li Yao was the most reliable man except Father Xiong.

Now that his master was determined to enjoy himself, he would gladly let him.

Wu Mayan put on the Thunderous Fire Battlesuit and activated the Unparalleled Extension, which then dismembered itself and enshrouded itself in countless electric arcs before they were attached and fixed to the Thunderous Fire Battlesuit.

The Unparalleled Extension, almost four meters tall, revealed itself again!

"Are you ready?" asked Li Yao casually.

"What's there to be ready for? Just bring it on, master!" Wu Mayan patted his breastplate hard, producing clanging sounds.

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao set himself in the sprinting posture, but he suddenly raised his head and asked, "Right. Ah Yan, do you know why I suggested you pick the Battlesuit Department?"

"Huh?" Wu Mayan grunted. "I don't. Why?"

"Because," said Li Yao with a smile, "I need a sandbag."

Chapter 659: Air Change!

Chapter 659: Air Change!

"What!"

Wu Mayan's pupils shrank so much that they almost vanished.

Every pore on his body seemed to have been pierced by an icy needle!

Although protected by two layers of armor, he still felt the deepest fear to the bones!

The Green Wolf Battlesuit was gone.

A giant pit almost ten meters in diameter appeared where his master had been standing, as if it had been bombarded by a cannon!

Was this caused when Master stomped on the ground?

It was not until this moment that the earthshaking explosions reached him. Although filtered by both the Unparalleled Extension and the Thunderous Fire Battlesuit, the noises still made his ears ache.

Wu Mayan raised his hands to resist the attack out of intuition. Yet the space in front of him was empty. He could not sense where his master was at all.

In the next 0.01 seconds, the sensors on the back of the Thunderous Fire Battlesuit uttered earsplitting shrieks!

Something was charging at him from behind at a velocity five times the speed of sound!

When did Master reach behind me?

Wu Mayan's brain was almost frozen. A horrifying picture popped up in his head beyond his control. He seemed to have become a docile lamb whose neck was about to be bitten by a giant, green wolf. He was about to be mauled and eaten as a whole!

In that moment, Wu Mayan abandoned the idea of behaving nicely and taking a few punches from his master.

Is this really happening? Since when did Master grasp such terrifying combat skills with crystal suits?

In the next moment, Wu Mayan's chest was smashed heavily like a comet hitting the sun!

It's impossible!

He was aiming for my back. How did he come to the front?

Unparalleled Extension, activate and stop him!

Wu Mayan was almost shocked out of shape. He finally saw the shadow of the Green Wolf Battlesuit for the first time, but his master had already kicked his breastplate brutally.

Thankfully, the front side of the Unparalleled Extension was stocked with a lot of Super Bendable Steel, which absorbed most of the strength in the kick.

Even so, the Thunderous Fire Battlesuit still uttered beeps in alarm, and a tiny crack appeared on his breastplate.

Such enormous strength. Thank god I have the Unparalleled Extension!

Just when the idea popped up in his head, Wu Mayan sensed that something was wrong.

His master's kick had not ended yet. The leg of his master had turned into a cluster of green mist as if it were a vibration saber.

Before the first wave of attacks came to an end, the second and the third bombardment of spiritual energy arrived!

Pa! Pa pa!

Fulminations were bursting out on the front side of the Unparalleled Extension. The ripples on the Super Bendable Steel were chaotic. The surface of the strengthening plugins were simmering as if they had been boiled!

Wu Mayan felt that a weird strength pierced deep into his heart through his spiritual shield, his Unparalleled Extension, and his Thunderous Fire Battlesuit!

He recalled the recruitment ceremony more than half a year ago, where his master had shown a technique in public. After one punch, the spiritual energy penetrated through three layers of iron planks and left countless holes in the last one.

Pu!

Wu Mayan felt that his heart was riddled with holes, too, and vomited a mouthful of blood.

After only one kick, the Unparalleled Extension, which was four meters tall, was swept almost a hundred meters away by the Green Wolf Battlesuit, which was only two meters tall. It rolled around a number of times on the ground before it was able to get back on its feet again.

On one knee, Wu Mayan breathed heavily and stared at Li Yao in shock and suspicion.

Terrifying! Too terrifying!

It was totally different from the battle in the test field during the day.

At that time, he was very confident even though he was faced with forty opponents led by a Core Formation Stage Cultivator.

However, although he had put on the Thunderous Fire Battlesuit and the Unparalleled Extension and was merely faced with a beginner-level Green Wolf Battlesuit, he was still overwhelmed with horror!

Li Yao walked slowly to his disciple as he recorded on the crystal processor of the Green Wolf Battlesuit with his telepathic thoughts. "The standard model of the Unparalleled Extension's waist and shoulders are too fat. Although the defense ability is improved, it is very difficult to change the direction. When faced with an agile opponent with a high speed, the user will be caught in an awkward situation and have no ability to fight back if the user is not strong enough.

"In the modification for the 'extreme model', the redundant shoulder pads and skirt armor must be cut off even though the defense ability will be slightly reduced."

"Master, I'm going to fight back!"

Wu Mayan burst into fury.

It was not his style to be attacked passively. With the Unparalleled Extension, he would slay all the deities in the world if he had to!

He stomped on the ground and rushed forward. Every step he made raised an earthquake in the world fragment. He reached Li Yao's front in the blink of an eye, and his right leg jerked at Li Yao's face like a cannonball!

Li Yao's body instantly turned into a cluster of green mist. Before Wu Mayan's leg drove away his blurred shadows, he had drawn close to Wu Mayan and returned an identical kick to Wu Mayan's groin!

"Ah!" Wu Mayan screamed miserably, his eyeballs almost flying out of his head!

"The defense for the genitals is too weak." Li Yao frowned and noted on the crystal processor, "But it can't be helped. Too much protection around the genitals will affect the movement of the legs and reduce the agility.

"The balance between the defense of genitals and the agility of the legs has to be further optimized. Maybe we should remind the user to pay special attention to the lower half of their body."

"That's outrageous, Master!"

Gritting his teeth, Wu Mayan extended a heated saber, shrouded in orange brilliance, from the front end of his right arm. However, his abdomen suffered a third strike when his blade was only half out.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Wu Mayan felt that he had been hit by a thousand lightning bolts simultaneously.

Without the restriction of his crystal suit, the hair all over his body would have been standing on end right now.

He finally realized that the size of the Unparalleled Extension had become a burden when his master drew close to him and waged a gapless, head-on battle.

His master was like a green ghost with unpredictable movements. The dozens of shadows that he produced all seemed to be real.

The Unparalleled Extension was sturdy enough to resist most of the attacks from his master. But he could not even touch his master's shadow.

He was now completely trapped in his master's pace. Under the continuous strikes, the Thunderous Fire Battlesuit witnessed a significant decline in its performance parameters, which had mostly turned into a dangerous red by this point.

"The weaponry system on the two arms is too slow to react. In the extreme models designed for high-end users, such a design can be removed. For the real experts, it is much faster to draw their own swords than to wait for the automatic activation of the weapons."

Li Yao attacked while noting the shortcomings of the equipment. "The ratio of the weight of the upper body to that of the lower body can be adjusted, too. Otherwise, the drawback that the top half is heavier than the bottom half will soon be revealed when facing a real expert.

"The arc-shaped design that mimics the shells of insects can offset most attacks, especially the remote ones. But in comparison, its performance is not so satisfying in head-on battles.

"However, this is quite a dilemma, and there's barely any room for improvement. We can only pay special attention while we are using it. We must maintain a certain distance from the enemy and avoid head-on battles. Three to ten meters should be the best range of attack for the Unparalleled Extension."

Li Yao suddenly discovered that Wu Mayan had become silent after he was punched more than a thousand times and half buried in soil.

"Huh?"

It did not befit Wu Mayan's personality.

Li Yao's eyes suddenly shone. He noticed that the Unparalleled Extension had absorbed tremendous spiritual energy from the previous punches. It had turned from an unattractive silver grey to a glittering bright gold!

Li Yao realized what was going. His lips curled into a smile, and he suddenly halted his smooth attack.

At the same time, Wu Mayan let out an earsplitting bellow. Dazzling brilliance broke out of the Unparalleled Extension and congregated into a torrent of spiritual energy that was more violent than a tsunami, more scorching than magma, and more furious than a tornado, sweeping everything in its way!

"Master, I'm sorry!" Wu Mayan shrieked and punched the chest of the Green Wolf Battlesuit hard. His fist left a deep dent in the breastplate of the Green Wolf Battlesuit. The wonderful feedback indicated that it was not a shadow but a real entity!

I finally hit Master!

Wu Mayan was almost crying in joy.

Now that he had hit the target, Wu Mayan definitely would not let go of such a good opportunity. His following attacks immediately landed on the crystal suit seamlessly!

His master seemed to have been caught off guard by his sudden outbreak and kept retreating without fighting back at all. The Green Wolf Battlesuit was seriously twisted, and it was likely to explode at any point!

Wu Mayan was overjoyed at first. But very soon, he realized it was not good. The Green Wolf Battlesuit about to be blown up was empty. Nobody was inside!

Right then, the crystal processor detected that a new Green Wolf Battlesuit was sprinting close from his right at an amazingly high speed!

Neither of the two Green Wolf Battlesuits were phantoms; they were both real!

That's impossible!

This is—

Air Change!

This time, Wu Mayan was truly bewildered!

Air change was also known to be 'ultimate suit changing skill'. Wu Mayan had learned in one of his classes that it was the most marvelous technique among the combat skills in crystal suits!

The mechanism was quite simple. An Exo could carry two or more crystal suits in their Cosmos Ring, and when one of the crystal suits was seriously damaged to the point of destruction, they would take off the crystal suit immediately and put on another one.

It was easier said than done. For a piece of precise magical equipment such as a crystal suit, it would take three to five seconds to put on or take off for a normal Exo. Changing a crystal suit would take ten seconds altogether.

On a battlefield, nobody would give an enemy ten seconds to change their crystal suit!

Therefore, although the technique granted the Exos with even stronger combat ability, few of them had ever used it in the real battles. It was almost considered to be a lost, marvelous skill!

Wu Mayan never expected that his master could perform an air change!

He did not expect that his master could change his crystal suit so fast!

Wu Mayan remembered clearly that an experienced Exo showed an air change in the class. It took him 3.9 seconds to finish the process without any interference.

Wu Mayan felt that he was about to burst into tears.

But his tears were pressed back by the excruciating pain.

His master seemed to have forgotten that he was his disciple and considered him a mortal enemy. His waist was whipped brutally yet another time.

The long-stored spiritual energy of the Unparalleled Extension had all been released. It was now at the weakest state. The previous attack almost whipped his soul out of his body.

Wu Mayan, who wanted to cry but had no tears, finally recalled his master's remark in the beginning, which he had not understood at that time.

I think you're ready for more crushing defeat and more brutal torment.

Chapter 660: Invincible Man!

Chapter 660: Invincible Man!

Over the next three seconds, Wu Mayan felt as if he had been swimming in a surging ocean for three years.

In the beginning, he had still been able to wave his hands to resist. But later, he could not even pretend that he was counterattacking. He watched the hundreds of parameters on the light beam, which represented the performance of the Unparalleled Extension, plunging like broken balloons.

The alarms of the crystal processor were like the Unparalleled Extension's screams and moans.

CRACK! CRACK! CRACK! CRACK!

The Unparalleled Extension, which claimed to boast immense defense ability, seemed to have been mauled by a thousand green wolves. Under Li Yao's bombardment, cracks were finally appearing on it!

When the cracks appeared, it was not able to hold the attacks anymore and collapsed into pieces a moment later like a broken dam!

The Unparalleled Extension had been blown up by Li Yao!

Wu Mayan grunted and was blown backwards, falling to the ground on all fours heavily.

But his shock somehow made him forget his pain. Lying on the ground, he gazed at the scene in disbelief. The Unparalleled Extension had been battered like a beetle that had been stepped on!

The Unparalleled Extension has been punched into pieces by Master!

Wu Mayan felt his head was dizzy and could not stand on his feet at all.

Li Yao walked to his slowly and said, "Although the Super Bendable Steel has a special feature that it can absorb, store, and unleash spiritual energy, it also has a deadly drawback, which is that the toughness of the material will be greatly weakened after several instances of absorption and release. It will be as fragile as glass.

"It means that this is a one-off material. When spiritual energy is released on a large scale, the hardness of the material will be lowered by a large extent. After several releases, the material will become completely useless.

"It is also the reason the Super Bendable Steel is only suitable for the Ares Extension but not for normal crystal suits."

Wu Mayan's eyes had lost focus, and he had heard nothing that Li Yao just said. He mumbled to himself, "The Unparalleled Extension has been blown up."

Li Yao crouched, sprinted, and kicked Wu Mayan another hundreds of meters away, leaving a deep ravine on the ground!

"Although I am a refiner, and I've dedicated a lot of my time and effort to the Unparalleled Extension, I need to tell you this," Li Yao said solemnly. "There is no invincible magical equipment or techniques.

"There are only invincible people in the sea of stars."

Deep in thought, Wu Mayan put on an extremely serious expression, although his face was as swollen as that of a pig. He gritted his teeth and said, "I understand it now, Master. I will train myself hard. I will become the unparalleled man in the universe even if I do not have the Unparalleled Extension!

"Wait, Master. I already understand the logic. Why are you still coming over? I—I don't need your help to stand up.

"Master, why is your fighting will not reduced at all? I've admitted my failure!

"Don't come close! Stop there, Master! I'll cry for help if you get any closer!

"I have understood the logic, Master. I've understood the logic perfectly. Somebody help me! Aya!"

…

Half an hour later, Wu Mayan was sitting on what could barely be called the Thunderous Fire Battlesuit. He was grimacing like a wife who had been wronged by her newlywed husband, while he smeared balm on his head that was almost as swollen as a ball now.

At that moment, the previously handsome young man was now even more ugly than a demon boar.

"You were too brutal, Master!" Wu Mayan was hissing as he spoke, because several of his teeth were missing, and air was coming out of the holes. "I admitted my failure. Why were you still attacking so ruthlessly?"

Holding his chin next to him, Li Yao gazed at the air. His eyes seemed to have pierced through the void and saw the views of a long, long time ago.

With a vague smile, Li Yao mumbled, "My teacher did exactly the same. He would savage me even if I was already beaten down until I passed out in coma."

"Is that so?" Wu Mayan thought of something and suddenly exclaimed loudly, "Master, your countenance is quite queer when you talk about your past and being miserably tortured by other people. It seems to be an enjoyable memory that you like to dwell on. Since you are clearly missing the good old times when you were savaged, if I may ask, do you have a quirk that I don't know about?"

"Cut the nonsense!" Li Yao glared at him and said, "I've found that you have learned a lot of crap over the past half year."

"Weren't you telling me to visit more places and broaden my horizon? Of course, I got in touch with things that I didn't know!" Wu Mayan grimaced and said with a smile, "But I didn't know that Master is an expert in crystal suit. If I had known it, I would have asked you to run the test in person during the day. There was no need for me to take action at all!"

Li Yao sorted out the data that he just collected and replied, "The Unparalleled Extension in my plan has three versions in total. Right now, only the standard version has been developed, for which you were perfect to run the test. For the next version, I will work together with Master Xue Yuanxin on the 'extreme version' that is specialized for the top experts above the Core Formation Stage. The speed, agility, and usability will all be greatly increased. Of course, the enhancement to their combat ability will be maximized, too!"

Wu Mayan tilted his head and thought for a while. He asked curiously, "Well, the standard version for common Cultivators and the extreme version for the Core Formation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators make two versions in total. What about the third?"

Li Yao answered casually, "The third version is for my own use. I call it the Sand Scorpion version."

"…Okay."

Wu Mayan scratched his nose after a long sigh.

Over the past half year, he had become the most brilliant rising star in Flying Star University. Everybody said that he was a rarely-seen genius who would only appear once in a hundred years!

He had lived up to their expectation and risen to fame at a lightning-like speed, bringing shock to everybody on a daily basis.

In Flying Star University, in Heavenly Saints Institute, in Heavenly Sword Arena… He reaped everyone's amazement, praise, admiration, jealousy, and even hatred!

But when he returned to his training chamber and was faced with his master, he sensed the abyssal desperation again.

When could the rarely-seen genius be as good as his master?

Li Yao sorted out the data and started cleaning up the ragged crystal suit. He dismantled the wasted iron into the most fundamental components. Some of them were twisted. Li Yao would straighten them with his bare hands, and they were renewed as if they were processed in the most precise facilities.

While cleaning up the mess, Li Yao said, "I pulled some strings to make you the first tester for the Unparalleled Extension. Your performance indeed far exceeded my expectations. But the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting in half a month is a big event of the Flying Star Sector. Public tests that are more difficult will be held again by then.

"I'll return to the Cross Wind Space Zone in the next half month. Just train yourself and distinguish yourself in the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting!"

"Understood. I'm going to sweep the spot and show everyone what the first disciple of the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau looks like!"

Wu Mayan jumped up and accidentally moved his broken bones. He gasped and bent down again. While he grimaced, he said, "But why are you going to the Cross Wind Space Zone?"

"To borrow money," Li Yao replied casually.

Wu Mayan was dazed. "Are you short of money, Master? I'm told that the Glorious Sunlight Group is operating quite well."

"It is. But we spend faster than it earns." Li Yao glanced at Wu Mayan and said, "The balm you are smearing right now is hundreds of times more expensive than gold, and the test we ran just now wasted two Green Wolves, one Thunderous Fire, and one Unparalleled Extension.

"Such a consumption rate is too much even if we have a mountain of gold."

After he reached the superlative height of the Building Foundation Stage, Li Yao's demand on resources soared together with his capability.

Crazy training relied on determination as well as incessant Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures!

Li Yao's and Wu Mayan's training costs were ten times more than that of Cultivators of their level. Such hard work would melt their muscles and bones or even kill them if they did not absorb enough spiritual energy.

Over the past half year, Li Yao and Wu Mayan had consumed more resources than many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators did.

In terms of personal wealth, Li Yao was as rich as many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators with the support of Iron Plateau.

The wealthy and powerful Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were often faced with the same problem. They were not alone and had hundreds if not thousands of disciples and descendants.

The resources that the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators got could not be wholly dedicated to their own training. They had to consider their posterity and their connection network.

For example, if a prodigy gifted in training emerged in their family, the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators would definitely spare some of the resources for them and spend part of their time and energy in guiding the younger generation. Only by doing so could they maintain the normal functioning of their family or sect.

If a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was selfish and devoured all the resources available without offering any to their child or grandchild, it would only be a matter of time before they lost all support and became alone.

By then, they would be able to collect enough resources by themself. It would be a lose-lose situation.

The redistribution among the family was one of the disadvantages of the big households.

But it was different for Li Yao. The Glorious Sunlight Group had risen like a volcano eruption and accumulated tremendous wealth, but he had no descendants and only one disciple.

Therefore, he had no concerns and poured all the resources available into himself and Wu Mayan. It was also one of the biggest reasons for their significant improvement over the previous half year.

Even so, after spending a fortune for half a year, Li Yao felt that he was getting skint. A few new projects had just been initiated in the Glorious Sunlight Group, and the capital chain was quite tense.

As it happened, the Cross Wind Union Back had extended its hand to him. Some of their proposals were worth negotiating.

Also, since the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was currently being modified in Sparkle, which was also docked in the

Cross Wind Space Zone, Li Yao intended to bring it back by the way.

After cleaning up everything, Li Yao planned to leave the world fragment, but he suddenly remembered something and turned around. "Right. You don't like Xie Anan?"

Wu Mayan immediately sniffed. "Master, you are not recruiting the silly woman as your disciple, are you?"

Li Yao found it odd. "Xie Anan does not look like a hateful girl. How did she piss you off? You have disliked her since the beginning. Why are you so cold toward her when you've met so many times? It never occurred to me that you are so obstinate."

Wu Mayan blushed and murmured, "When the silly woman and I met for the first time and I introduced myself, she exclaimed and said, 'You're the kid who beat up a teacher of the Combat Department!'

"Damn. Who's 'the kid'? I'm forty centimeters higher than the silly woman!"

Chapter 661: Arriving in Cross Wind

Chapter 661: Arriving in Cross Wind

Four days later, a 'humpback-level' carrier gradually appeared in the boundless sea of stars and sailed slowly to the central area of the Cross Wind Space Zone.

Such long-distance carriers often shortened the time of sailing by performing multiple space jumps.

Most of the time during the journey, the passengers stayed in tiny deep sleep capsules with their bodies soaked in special protective liquids. Their consciousness would stay within the Grand Illusionary Land for entertainment.

In such a way, the ordinary people, whose bodies were relatively weak, could also withstand the tearing force during space jumps.

Right now, the long journey had almost come to an end. Most of the passengers had left their sleep capsules and entered the open area to warm up their bodies.

Sitting in a corner of the dining room, Li Yao placed seven mechanical watches of different brands and structures on the table before him. He tapped his fingers on the table.

Suddenly, he flipped his hands, and invisible spiritual energy flooded toward the seven mechanical watches like tides.

CRACK! CRACK!

After a series of tiny cracking sounds, the seven watches were dismantled into the most fundamental components. The clutch wheel, the tourbillon, the decompression lever… More than 8,400 components were mixed together in midair under the guidance of Li Yao's fingers in a variety of different shapes, at one moment a lozenge, the next a cube.

Shua!

A deep blue color suddenly flashed. All the components were parted from each other and reassembled into seven watches.

Tick-tock. Tick-tock. Tick-tock.

Six watches were running precisely without the slightest fault. But the second hand of the last watch was shivering and only moved forward every two seconds or so.

My technique of remote manipulation is not good enough yet. I can only dismantle and assemble six watches simultaneously at best right now.

It will be something if I can control nine watches and ten thousand components at my will.

By then, ordinary crystal suits will not be able to withstand my touch however smooth and seamless they seem.

Li Yao half closed his eyes and extended his spiritual threads into the seven watches, while he sensed the tiniest changes in the components and located the source of the malfunction of the last watch.

He suddenly felt something and opened his eyes, only to discover that a plump girl was staring at him in bewilderment with two glasses of soybean milk, two boiled eggs, and a plate of steamed buns.

It was possible that the little girl had seen his performance just now.

Since he was about to reach his destination, Li Yao was in a quite good mood. He smiled at the little girl and waved his hands.

The little girl hesitated. Seeing that the dining room was full of people, she finally could not hold her curiosity and summoned her courage to go to the stranger and said, "Big brother, was that a magic trick?"

Li Yao thought for a while and snapped his fingers, retrieving a cluster of red metal the size of a baby's fist.

The metal was named 'Red Bright Gold'. It could ease the mind and calm people down. It was particularly helpful to prevent the children from crying at night and improve their sleep quality.

Li Yao smiled and said, "I'm going to do another magic trick for you."

He folded his hands and covered the Red Bright Gold, which was extremely hard, inside his palms. His hands were gradually enveloped by orange brilliance.

The little girl bulged her eyes. "It's so hot. Your hands seem to be on fire, big brother!"

Li Yao laughed. "It's alright. Come here, little sister. Blow at my hands."

The little took a long breath and blew at Li Yao's hands hard while holding her belly. She then looked at Li Yao in expectation.

Li Yao whispered spells, and his eyes were flickering fast. A moment later, he opened his hands again.

The sharp-edged Red Bright Gold was now shaped like a vivid deer by his spiritual gas.

The red deer had the slightest details and was elegantly shaped.

If somebody else saw it, they would definitely think that it was a masterpiece from an expert sculptor.

"Wow!"

The little girl opened her mouth in disbelief. Her big blinking eyes were full of admiration.

Li Yao smiled. "Here, this deer is my gift for you. But do not tell anyone about my magic trick. Otherwise, they might come to me for deer, too. I don't have so many deer with me."

"Sure. I won't tell anybody!"

The little girl was completely hooked by the red deer. She held it carefully and appreciated it with great interest, while she mumbled to herself, "Such a beautiful deer. She seems to be drinking water with her head lowered. It's so marvelous. Thank you, big brother. I'm going to show it to my father!"

The little girl did not have time to bother with her tray. She simply left it on the table and jumped into the crowd clutching the red deer.

Li Yao planned to have a rest in the cabin. But since the little girl's food was still there, it didn't seem right to leave immediately.

A moment later, a slightly-fat, middle-aged man in plain clothes came to him, followed by the little girl.

There was a unique feeling of shrewdness and honesty in the middle-aged man, suggesting that he might be a merchant travelling about. He apologized to Li Yao sincerely, "I'm terribly sorry, mister. My daughter likes to snatch good items when she sees one. That's very bad of her. Such a delicate handcraft is definitely very expensive. How can you take it?

"Hurry up." He touched his daughter and said, "What did I tell you before we set off? You behaved quite well all the way here, and now you are naughty again because we are almost home! Return it to your big brother!"

"Okay!"

The little girl pouted her lips and handed over the red deer unwillingly.

Li Yao smiled and pushed it back into the little girl's hands. "It's alright. It is just a gift that I gave to the little sister. Just consider it as a toy."

"That is very kind of you!"

Seeing the delight on his daughter's face, the middle-aged man sat in front of Li Yao and pushed the tray over. "Here. Have you eaten anything, mister? Do you want some?"

The middle-aged man was quite warm, and the little girl was innocent, too. Li Yao found it hard to say no to them.

Over the past half year, he had been training crazily in Flying Star University and had almost forgotten what a normal life should be like. It did not seem like a bad idea to take a brief rest during the journey.

The middle-aged man's family name was Tong, and he was a native of the Cross Wind Space Zone, running a small business there.

Naturally, Li Yao did not reveal his real identity. He only said that his family name was Sand, and he had just graduated from a college in Heavenly Saints City and come to the Cross Wind Space Zone to try his luck since it was developing quite well.

"Little Sand, it is a wise decision to come to the Cross Wind Space Zone! The Cross Wind Space Zone had not been developing well over the past year; it has been soaring and putting on a new appearance every day!"

Old Tong shelled the eggs and said proudly, "Other than anything else, the very humpback-level carrier that we are in right now is the first clue.

"The Cross Wind Space Zone was only an unknown small space zone in the past and absolutely no match for the top three prosperous space zones of the Flying Star Sector. The transportation routes to and from Heavenly Saints City were few, and the carriers were ragged. One space jump would require three days and three nights of preparation!

"At that time, it would take me at least two weeks to go to Heavenly Saints City!

"But right now, with the most advanced carrier of the Flying Star Sector, three to five hours are enough to prepare a space jump. Besides, our transportation routes have been given the highest priority. When we reach a jumping point, however many carriers are waiting in line, we will perform the space jump in priority.

"After only three days, we've completed twenty-two short-distance space jumps across more than ten space zones and arrived in the Cross Wind Space Zone from Heavenly Saints City. This is indeed rushing speed!

"Do you know the reason for the Cross Wind Space Zone's dramatic change?"

Li Yao smiled. "What is it?"

"The Glorious Sunlight Group, of course!" exclaimed Old Tong as he slapped his thigh, his face flushed. "Little Sand, you are a college student in Heavenly Saints City, and you must've heard about the Glorious Sunlight Group before. But only the natives of the Cross Wind Space Zone have experienced the changes that the Glorious Sunlight Group has brought for us!

"Since it was established in the beginning of this year, the Glorious Sunlight Group has been expanding exponentially. It has been setting up fleets of carriers, acquiring Cultivation sects, monopolizing the minerals and resources on Iron Plateau, producing new magical equipment… The momentum has never halted, and there were big movements almost on a monthly basis!

"Right now, the Glorious Sunlight Group' child companies, branches, and affiliated sects are scattered in every world fragment and space town of the Cross Wind Space Zone. It has, in effect, become the dominator of the Cross Wind

Space Zone and made our hometown a place of business that almost equals the top three space zones!

"The Cross Wind Space Zone is never short of opportunities today. There's gold everywhere. Young people from Heavenly Saints City such as you are likely to soar into the sky if you are diligent and smart enough to seize the opportunities that the Glorious Sunlight Group offers!"

"Is that so?"

Li Yao thought of something and was interested in the opinion of the ordinary people about the Glorious Sunlight Group and Iron Plateau. He then asked, "Brother Tong, I'm told that the Glorious Sunlight Group is deeply connected to Iron Plateau?"

"What's wrong about Iron Plateau?" Old Tong frowned and said, "Currently, many files about Iron Plateau are gradually being declassified. Everybody knows that the six sects of Heavenly Saints City and the Iron Plateau natives do not see eye to eye with each other because of the competition for rightfulness. But for countryfolk doing business such as us, the events five thousand years ago are too far away, are they not?

"It's clear that the Glorious Sunlight Group is backed by the Iron Plateau natives. But so what?

"Right now, since the Glorious Sunlight Group is headquartered in the Cross Wind Space Zone, this place has become an important transfer base for the communication between Iron Plateau and the outside world. Just think about it. How many business opportunities are out there and how many benefits will the Cross Wind Space Zone earn from the endeavor?

"Isn't it perfect that everyone's making money?

"Before, we thought that the Iron Plateau natives were primitive barbarians and were rather worried. But later, as we got in touch with them as some of the Iron Plateau natives arrived in the Cross Wind Space Zone through the Glorious Sunlight Group, we discovered that, although they can be a bit uncivilized, they have one nose and two eyes and looked exactly like us!"

Li Yao pondered for a moment and asked again, "Brother Tong, the rise of the Glorious Sunlight Group is definitely beneficial for ordinary people. But what about Cultivation sects? I don't think they would welcome the arrival of such a conglomerate, would they?"

Chapter 662: I Like to Keep a Low Profile

Chapter 662: I Like to Keep a Low Profile

Old Tong chuckled. "Cultivators of the Cross Wind Space Zone are even more glad to see the rise of the Glorious Sunlight Group!

"The Cross Wind Space Zone has never been a place with abundant spiritual energy in the first place. The several Cultivation sects here are all insignificant. The local Cultivators have to travel and explore the outside world if they want to make progress.

"But since the Glorious Sunlight Group appeared, the tremendous resources from Iron Plateau have to stop by the Cross Wind Space Zone first. Think about it. Who will be the first to make use of the resources? Cultivators of the Cross Wind Space Zone, of course!

"Besides, with the communication between Iron Plateau and space growing more and more heated and the amount of trade between the two parties increasing significantly, the Glorious Sunlight Group is not capable enough to eat the whole pie by itself!

"The Wu family and the Sha family in the Glorious Sunlight Group were local families of the Cross Wind Space Zone in the first place. They then cooperated with the White Dragon Union, which ranked among the top three in the Cross Wind Space Zone. The other Cultivation sects received a lot of orders from the Glorious Sunlight Group or from certain franchises.

"As a result, many Cultivation sects expanded quickly and marched into the top 500 sects of the Flying Star Sector after only half a year!

"With such great benefits, what can the Cultivation sects complain about? Truth be told, other space zones could not have the Glorious Sunlight Group move there even if they wanted to!

"More importantly, the Temple of Immortals and the space pirates have been on a rampage recently. Many remote space zones were caught in fire of war in the past year.

"The Cross Wind Space Zone, on the other hand, is guarded by quite a few Exo Societies. Also, I'm told that a large number of Iron Plateau natives will be trained in the Cross Wind Space Zone later.

"With so many experts gathered here, the Cross Wind Space Zone is safer than ever. Space pirates do not dare harass us at all. Ordinary people and Cultivators alike can enjoy a peaceful life. This is a great benefit that no money can trade for.

"Therefore, Little Sand, just rest assured and make your career in the Cross Wind Space Zone. You have a very promising future.

"Chances are that this place will flourish even more than Heavenly Saints City one day!"

After staying for such a long time in the Flying Star Sector, Li Yao gradually grasped the characteristics of the social form of the Flying Star Sector.

The biggest difference between the Flying Star Sector and the Heaven's Origin Sector was that the former did not have a central government.

After the arrival of the apocalypse, Iron Plateau turned into a wasteland, and the fleet that marched into space was battered by the cosmic storms and scattered in various space zones, too.

For three thousand years, they struggled separately. The notion of a unified nation and government was gone.

After three thousand years, the Flying Star Sector was reconnected as a whole because of the development of the Spiritual Nexus technology and the space jump technology. But most of the sects in their respective space zones had grown mature and established their independent kingdoms. Although the six major sects were still the strongest of all, they were far from the glory of thousands of years ago now that dozens of generations had passed.

Heavenly Saints City today was the more prosperous, magnificent, and advanced metropolis in space, but it was not the capital of the Flying Star Sector.

Technically speaking, Heavenly Saints City was equal to a space town of remains in a remote area. It had no right to force anybody to do anything.

Or rather, the six sects of Heavenly Saints City were sort of the moderators in the Flying Star Sector. They were the leaders of the Flying Star Sector in name, but their followers might not listen to their command when it concerned their own interests.

Before, the six sects of Heavenly Saints City boasted the highest capability, the most techniques, and the largest number of experts. Therefore, the Cultivation sects large and small in other space zones of the Flying Star Sector were willing to invest in them and send their disciples to study in Heavenly Saints City. They also answered the six sects of Heavenly Saints City's call to develop techniques and magical equipment together.

In such a way, Heavenly Saints City maintained a subtle administration over the entire Flying Star Sector.

However, the rise of the Temple of Immortals disrupted the subtle balance. The six sects of Heavenly Saints City were not able to reinforce the Cultivation sects and space towns in many remote towns in time and offer the protection that they had promised, which was a great disappointment for the local residents.

The Cultivation sects in many remote space zones had already withdrawn their investments in Heavenly Saints City. It remained to be seen whether they would form an alliance among themselves, invest in the new powers such as the Cross Wind Space Zone, or even negotiate with the space pirates.

In such a chaotic situation, it was naturally great that so many experts were stationed in the Cross Wind Space Zone.

The two of them had a long, pleasant conversation. Without them knowing, the carrier had docked at a world fragment named 'Flowing Orchid Domain' smoothly.

It was the home base of the Wu family and where the Glorious Sunlight Group was headquartered right now, and it was gradually turning into the pivot of the entire Cross Wind Space Zone.

In front of the passengers was a large space port with perfect facilities and luxurious decorations that was still being expanded.

The magnificent buildings inside the world fragment looked equally impressive to those in Heavenly Saints City, a sign of the unstoppable rise of the Cross Wind Space Zone.

The floating plates that looked like clouds dispersed and transported the passengers to the exit of the port steadily.

"Brother Tong, it's time to say goodbye. Can you give me your contact information?"

Li Yao smiled. He felt that Old Tong was a quite interesting guy.

A few prolonged shrieks suddenly echoed in the sky. They were high-pitched but not earsplitting, like the sound of the divine cranes.

Six bright-silver, elegantly-shaped, extravagant shuttles fell from the sky and stopped in front of the three of them stably.

The door of the shuttles flipped like seagulls opening their wings. More than ten sharp-looking men wearing the same uniform jumped out of the vehicles and stood in one line before them.

"Chairman!"

The intimidating men slightly bowed and greeted at the same time.

Li Yao blinked in surprise.

Old Tong burst into laughter until his face was red. He patted Li Yao's shoulder and said, "Little Sand, I'm sorry. I told you that I was a businessman, but I didn't tell you what my business was. The 'Silver Ocean Corporation' that I'm currently running is developing well and now ranks the third among all the companies in the Cross Wind Space Zone!

"I was not lying to you on purpose, but I always like to keep a low profile. It was not a business trip to Heavenly Saints City, either. So, I merely wore the casual clothes.

"You see, I'm the perfect example of the benefits of the Glorious Sunlight Group. Half a year ago, my company was half dead. I was betrayed by a good brother and was in huge debt. Every direction was a dead end for me!

"Many people were suspicious when the Glorious Sunlight Group was just established. Since I had no other alternatives, I decided to put all my money into it and take a gamble!

"My corporation was among the first companies to cooperate with the Glorious Sunlight Group. As it turned out, after only half a year, my business has been revived and is developing rapidly!

"Here, Little Sand, take it!"

Old Tong took out a neat box from his pocket and opened it.

He did not take the ordinary cards on the top but picked out a glittering gold card from the bottom.

When Li Yao took the card, the surface of the card immediately shined, and two glamorous, calligraphic words showed up: Silver Ocean!

It was not until this moment that Li Yao learned Old Tong's full name was actually Tong Dashu.

Tong Dashu laughed and said, "Little Sand, after our chitchat, I can tell that you are a young man with a clear mind.

"Besides, you offered a gift for my daughter; it's only natural that I return the favor.

"Although I'm no big shot in the Cross Wind Space Zone, I know quite a few people here, and I'm quite familiar with the leadership of several child companies of the Glorious Sunlight Group.

"Since you are new to this place, do you need any recommendation letters?

"Alright, we can talk about that later. Let's get on the shuttle first. Where are you going to? I'll give you a ride!"

This time, Li Yao was truly embarrassed. He put the card into his pocket solemnly and shook his hands. "That will be unnecessary, but thank you all the same, Brother Tong. My friend has come to pick me up. Look, he's here."

A plain-looking shuttle for home use, or more commonly known as a 'supermarket shuttle', slowly stopped by Li Yao.

An unattractive middle-aged man got off the shuttle. He was rather grave, if not anxious, around Li Yao and did not dare breathe too loudly. He helped Li Yao move his suitcases to the trunk of the shuttle.

Tong Dashu scratched his head. For some reason, the middle-aged man looked rather familiar.

Li Yao smiled. "Brother Tong, goodbye. I will come to find you if needed. I wish you a flourishing business."

Entering the shuttle, Li Yao waved his hands at the little girl from the back of the shuttle window. "Little Dandan, see you. Don't forget to put the deer below your pillow at night. She will play with you in your dreams."

The supermarket shuttle slowly passed by the six extravagant shuttles and staggered off into the sky.

"The guy is quite interesting."

Touching his bristly unshaven chin, Tong Dashu entered the back of one of the extravagant shuttles together with his daughter.

Tong Dashu sank himself in the leather seat and closed his eyes, resting.

However, for some reason, he was ill at ease, as if he had neglected something extremely important.

The driver looked rather familiar. I feel like I have seen him somewhere before.

Wait—

Tong Dashu's suddenly bulged, and he lunged out of his seat. His head bashed the ceiling of the shuttle so hard that it shook a while in midair!

"Dad!"

Tong Dandan, his daughter, was dumbfounded.

"Chairman?"

The driver and his body guards in the front row all turned around and looked their boss in shock, only to discover that their boss was sweating and cramping hard with a pale face as if he was having a seizure.

"No. It's impossible. My eyes must've deceived me. They must have!"

Tong Dashu turned on his crystal processor, his hands trembling. Appearing on the light beam was a financial magazine issued last month.

The cover was a map of the Cross Wind Space Zone, which was a glittering silver sea of stars, and a daunting middle-aged man who opened his hands and held all the stars!

The eyes of the middle-aged man were as sharp as those of an eagle. Although it was merely a cover photo, Tong Dashu still felt tremendous pressure from him.

The photo was captioned "Dominating Cross Wind!"

"Top on the annual rank of businesspersons of the Cross Wind Space Zone, leader of the Wu family, CEO of the Glorious Sunlight Group, Wu Zhengyang!"

Wu Zhengyang, who had all the stars under his control, looked exactly the same as the driver who had picked up Little Sand with a supermarket shuttle, opened the door for him, and moved the suitcases into the trunk respectfully.

Tong Dashu gasped and collapsed on the seat. He felt that ten thousand needles were stinging his bottom.

"Who is this young man exactly?

"Even the CEO of the Glorious Sunlight Group can only be his chauffeur?"

Chapter 663: Almost Mentally Deranged

Chapter 663: Almost Mentally Deranged

Li Yao sat in the old, ragged seat of the supermarket shuttle comfortably. He spared ten percent of his attention to the vastly changing Floating Orchid Domain outside the window, eighty percent on the modification plan of the 'Unparalleled Extension, Sand Scorpion Version', and the last ten percent listening to Wu Zhengyang's report.

Like a human-shaped crystal processor, Wu Zhengyang spoke hundreds of numbers, deals and rules within ten seconds. If an ordinary person were to hear his report, they would only hear hums resembling the sound of the wild bees. But experts like Li Yao could concentrate their spiritual energy on their ears and receive the compound information that he delivered.

Wu Zhengyang was 77 years old and an admin-type Cultivator. He was of the same generation as Wu Mayan's grandpa.

He had no son of his own. When Wu Mayan's father was alive, they were in a quite close relationship. He had almost been the guardian of Wu Mayan's father.

After Wu Mayan's father passed away, there were quite a number of conflicts within the Wu family for his legacy. Wu Zhengyang had tried to protect the interests of Wu Mayan's father, only to be kicked out of the leadership of the family by a few younger members. He was asked to expand the market for the family in one of the most desolate space towns in the remote area of the Cross Wind Space Zone.

When Li Yao arrived in the Cross Wind Space Zone and was involved in the internal conflicts of the Wu family, he immediately invited the old man back and supported him to be the leader of the Wu family and the CEO of the Glorious Sunlight Group after he learned of the existence of such a person.

It was needless to elaborate on Wu Zhengyang's gratitude and reverence for Li Yao. For example, Li Yao asked the old man to pick him up in the space port, preferably not very eye-catchingly. As it turned out, to neatly carry out Li Yao's command, the CEO dressed like a retired teacher and drove the cheapest shuttle. It could not have been easily for him.

Li Yao was keeping a low profile not because he was pretentious, but because he did not want to waste his time.

If the Glorious Sunlight Group were to send a team of shuttles to welcome him, every ant in the city would know of his arrival. With the influence of the Glorious Sunlight Group in the Cross Wind Space Zone, a few welcome parties were unavoidable. He would have to meet the leaders and elders of many sects in person.

Even if one welcome party was as short as two hours, three or five of them would mean a waste of an entire day.

The path of Cultivation was like rowing a boat against the current. One would either move forward or be pushed backwards. Li Yao was not willing to waste his time, not for even for one second.

It was exactly by seizing every 'one second', which other people often neglected, and dedicating them to crazy training that he broke into the superlative height of the Building Foundation Stage and surpassed many Core Formation Stage Cultivators in terms of combat ability before he was even twenty-five!

With Wu Mayan picking up him, he had learned every detail about the latest situation of the Glorious Sunlight Group in the half hour journey. Not even half a second of time was wasted.

"Chairman, we're here," said Wu Zhengyang respectfully.

Li Yao's official title in the Glorious Sunlight Group was 'Chairman of the Board'.

CEO and general manager sounded awesome, but in fact, both of them were still high-level workers doing their job for other people.

In comparison, the Chairman of the Board was the real head of a company. Awesome as the CEO was, the Chairman of the Board could have them changed anytime they wanted.

Li Yao concentrated his attention and looked into the distance.

They had reached the periphery of the Floating Orchid Domain. This area was frequented by deep blue mist that looked like orchids floating in the air all year long, which made it look like a splendid paradise.

As far as his eyes could see, buildings were being constructed everywhere.

In the outermost circle were hundreds of spiritual energy transmission tubes that were being built. They could send abundant spiritual gas to this area and spray it into the air, making the place a perfect destination for training.

On the ground, factories as magnificent as palaces had risen up. Looking like a chess board, they were divided into four zones.

Firstly, the mineral purification center. The raw minerals transported from Iron Plateau would be purified into high-purity crystals in such factories.

Secondly, the logistics center. The resources that were not processable in the Floating Orchid Domain would be gathered here and delivered to various other space zones of the Flying Star Sector.

Thirdly, the magical equipment centers. 32 magical equipment assembly lines would be established in the first stage of the project. Later, many kinds of magical equipment, including the Combat Ability Detector and the Aurora Chain Gun, would be able to be mass-produced in this place. It would be unnecessary to ask other sects to be subcontractors.

In Li Yao's vision, the factories here could be built into super magical equipment factories one day where crystal suits could be produced on a large scale.

Fourthly, the test field. For now, it only met the needs of the Glorious Sunlight Group. But it would be able to bid for the test tasks of large magical equipment produced by other sects in the future, too.

Above the continuous, coruscating buildings were three floating mountains in the sky that had been constructed in a traditional style. They looked like real mountains that had been cut off and launched into the sky. The mountains were elegantly curved with quite a few steep cliffs. The flowers, grass, rivers, and waterfalls on them made a beautiful view.

Li Yao was aware that the three mountains had different functions.

One of them was the Glorious Sunlight Refining Center.

One of them was a large training camp that could accommodate three thousand people at the same time. In the near future, countless qi-trainers of Iron Plateau would be studying the combat skills of the space residents inside the camp and become the special sentinels for the Glorious Sunlight Group.

The last of them was the headquarters of the Glorious Sunlight Group.

The earth and the sky were both teeming with people and vehicles. Hundreds of shuttles were flying up and down like butterflies in a garden.

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao mumbled to himself, "This is… my Glorious Sunlight Group!"

Despite his usual calmness, he found it hard to contain himself when seeing how his enterprise was flourishing.

Although he was very clear that the business was not founded on the capital of his own but the loans provided by the Cross Wind Union Back and other financial institutions in the space zones nearby, which were confident in the future of the Glorious Sunlight Group, although he knew that he had to win the support of the Wu family, the Sha family, and the other sects large and small in the entire Cross Wind Space Zone, even if he was the biggest shareholder of the Glorious Sunlight Group, and although he was fully aware that the rapid expansion of the Glorious Sunlight Group couldn't have happened if it were not the bond between Iron Plateau and space and the backing of Iron Plateau… uncontrollable, boundless ecstasy still popped up deep inside his heart.

Ten years. It has only been ten years!

Ten years ago, I was a scavenger of the Heaven's Origin Sector wondering where my dinner would be while having breakfast. Several muscular ordinary people were enough to beat me away with their iron sticks!

But in ten years, I've already come so far and so high, step by step!

In a trance, Li Yao was suddenly seeing a lot of hallucinations.

He envisioned tens of hundreds of people in a spacious square.

On the left, everybody was dressed in white. They were employees and partners of the Glorious Sunlight Group. Bowing to him, they bellowed at the same time, "Greetings, Chairman!"

Those on the right were wearing black armor and seething with killing intent. They were qi-trainers from Iron Plateau. Bashing their breastplates to the same rhythm, they shouted, "Sand Scorpion! Sand Scorpion! Sand Scorpion!"

He saw that the Glorious Sunlight Group had grown larger and larger still as the communication between Iron Plateau and space extended to a deeper level. Very soon, it swallowed the sects large and small in the Cross Wind Space Zone and became a super sect. The Cross Wind Space Zone was built into the most prosperous, most advanced space zone of the Flying Star Sector!

He saw that, in the future, the rising Glorious Sunlight Group eclipsed Heavenly Saints City like a nascent sun.

He saw that he was standing in the middle of the three floating mountains of the Glorious Sunlight Group one day, which were ten times as large as today.

In front of him, the leaders and elders of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City as well as other organizations from the rest of the space zones all lowered their proud heads and listened to his commands, holding their breath.

Looking down at the heroes of the era, Li Yao was about to open his mouth, full of ambitions, when a streak of darkness suddenly darted at his neck from afar!

He was alarmed and tried to dodge out of natural instincts. But over the past few years, he had dedicated most of his energy to the development of the Glorious Sunlight Group and spent far less time on his personal training. His Cultivation had stagnated for a long time, and he failed to dodge the attack.

Shua!

His head swirled in midair. The lights and shadows blinked and replaced each other, and it was not until a long time later that a man in black whose face was unclear was located.

However, for some reason, he knew that it was an assassin from the Temple of Immortals.

"Ah!" Li Yao exclaimed and suddenly came back to himself. He felt that forehead had been stung, and the hallucinations were still reappearing as if real.

Rubbing his eyebrow and glancing at his watch, Li Yao noticed that only three seconds had passed.

That was close. I was almost mentally deranged!

Li Yao heave a long sigh of relief. He knew that he was excited by the picture of flourishment of the Glorious Sunlight Group and nearly lost his mind because of his thinking.

Cultivators' computational abilities were hundreds of times higher than those of ordinary people.

Faced with such thoughts, the ordinary people's fantasy was usually very brief and blurred.

For example, when an ordinary person saw a beauty on the street and fantasized about sleeping with her, they could dwell in their illusion for several seconds at best. There was no way that they could figure out the details such as the hotel and the room they went to, the decorations of the room, or the brand of the safety measures that they used.

In comparison, Cultivators could summon their immense computational ability and fantasize to infinity instantly. Glancing at a beauty on the street, they could imagine every wrinkle on her skin.

For the less determined Cultivators, it was easy for them to dwell in their own illusions without being able to free themselves.

It was also one of the common reasons for the mental derangement of Cultivators.

Thankfully, I woke up at the end.

If I were spellbound by the magnificence in front of me and shifted part of my attention to the development of the Glorious Sunlight Group, it might really get a chance to thrive faster, but my own capability is definitely going to be affected.

Keep clear. I must keep clear!

I am the source of my own strength! The Glorious Sunlight Group is but a tool that collects resources for me. I cannot put the cart before the horse!

Li Yao closed his eyes and took another long breath.

When he opened them again slowly, his eyes were as tranquil as water. The previous delirium was all gone.

The enormous Glorious Sunlight Group that appeared to be an independent kingdom had the same reflection in his eyes as the sand castle on a beach in a kid's eyes.

"My destination is never here."

Li Yao's sight pierced through the headquarters of the Glorious Sunlight Group up above the clouds deep into the sky.

Behind the sky was the boundless sea of stars.

Chapter 664: Strengthened Mystic Skeleton

Chapter 664: Strengthened Mystic Skeleton

The incident of nearly getting mentally deranged in front of the headquarters of the Glorious Sunlight Group gave Li Yao a deeper understanding about the source of his strength. Therefore, he did not waste a single second in the Glorious Sunlight Group but went to a training chamber that Wu Zhengyang specially prepared for him.

However, there was one place that he had to visit.

Half a day later, outside the Floating Orchid Domain, inside a secret dock in space, there were five seemingly-identical plain carriers.

The leftmost one was rusted and riddled with dents resulting from collisions with meteoroids. It was Sparkle, which had been deeply modified.

Standing before the control panel of Sparkle, Li Yao watched the performance parameters that were rushing down like a waterfall on the display light beam in surprise.

According to the parameters, Sparkle had a far stronger firepower than crystal warships of the same value. After tremendous modifications without caring about the cost, it also boasted an engine system that was more powerful than many main force crystal warships.

A great locomotive dragging a small cart. Sparkle might not have been the strongest crystal warship of the Flying Star Sector, but it definitely ran faster than any other starship.

With complicated feelings, Li Yao observed, "We've made tremendous progress over the past two years!"

Mo Xuan and the other spectral Cultivators were standing behind him.

The five of them had all occupied artificial bodies, but their bodies looked more like octopi than humans.

Their cylindric torsos were surrounded by more than ten extendable artificial arms which were waving crazily, allowing them to manipulate twenty control light beams and make adjustments according to thousands of pieces of data simultaneously.

After a long sigh, Mo Xuan said, "We thought everything would be gone when the crystal reactor exploded. We did not expect that we would be reborn in such a way and even granted with… unbelievable abilities."

Mo Xuan waved his hands softly. The 'Four Kings' gloated and suddenly inserted their artificial arms into the control panel. Then, four clusters of blinking silver liquid metal crawled into the crystal processor along the artificial arms like four silver snakes.

In a moment, the performance parameters on the light beam bounced crazily. It was further increased by a large extent compared to a while ago.

Then, the numbers overlapped and interweaved into four vivid faces that were grimacing at Li Yao.

Mo Xuan explained, "Our life form right now is very different from normal spectral Cultivators. It is safe to say that we are a combination of a ghost and a mainframe crystal processor!

"By accident, we discovered that, other than controlling the mainframe crystal processor of Sparkle, we are even able to manipulate other crystal processors freely at will!

"Our souls can be circuited with tens or even dozens of large crystal processors. Our capability will be significantly increased with the computational ability of the crystal processors!

"It was exactly based on such an amazing ability that the five of us finished the preliminary modification of Sparkle in only one year and made it the most mysterious, fastest assault warship that boasts the most advanced stealth ability in the Flying Star Sector.

"It is also why we could complete the deep modification of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit!

"Come here!"

Mo Xuan smiled at Li Yao. "I know that you can't wait for it anymore!"

…

In the secret workshop at the center of Sparkle, there was a giant cylindrical tank that was filled with thick, bright gold liquid. Ripples were spreading out on the surface of the liquid, as if a sleeping ferocious beast was breathing peacefully.

Waving his artificial arms, Mo Xuan quickly operated the light beam.

After a crisp sound, the gate below the tank was opened, and the bright gold liquid was gradually extracted.

Soon, a tall armor in the shape of a human was revealed. Gold dew was shimmering on the plate, reflecting glamorous colors.

Li Yao found it hard to breathe, and his hands were tremoring beyond his control.

The newborn Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit left him with the impression that it was not a cold crystal suit but a living devil!

The crystal suit was still pure black. But it was not the black of the night sky, not the black of an abyss, but more like the black of an expanding blackhole that was absorbing all surrounding light and vision. The less determined people would inevitably have the illusion that the crystal suit was growing and swallowing everything nearby.

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit in the past was embedded with abundant body materials of Skeleton Dragon and the scraps of ancient magical equipment from forty thousand years ago that it had looted.

Also, Li Yao had brought a lot of trophies from the battles against the apocalypse, including the remains of his 'Apocalyptic Extension', to Mo Xuan.

After half a year's refinement, all the materials had been perfectly combined. The crystal suit seemed naturally-made and showed no hint of being an amalgamation of so many materials whatsoever.

The surface of the black armor did not reflect any light. But when Li Yao closed his eyes and perceived the crystal suit with his spiritual threads, he could vaguely 'see' the flowing gold brilliance that looked like flashing dragon scales behind the blackness, as well as the undissolving color of blood in the deepest part of the gold brilliance.

The helmet of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was perfectly arced and looked like a waterdrop. Three red crystal cameras were embedded to the upper half of the facial cover in the shape of a downward-pointing triangle. Other than that, there was no redundant paint or decoration. The simplicity of the crystal suit adorned it with an awe-inspiring beauty.

Li Yao stuck his right hand to the tank softly.

The sleeping Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit slightly shivering. Roars of the dragon were echoing from the inside of the crystal suit, as if a sword was about to be unsheathed.

Li Yao felt that the glass tank had become burning iron planks that had melted his fingers. Five hot streams flooded into his heart from his fingertips. His heart was beating faster and faster and was about to burst out of his chest into the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

"Are you satisfied?" Mo Xuan smiled. "To realize the designs that you desired, especially the one regarding the embedded sheath on the back of the crystal suit, we ran so many computations that twenty-three super crystal processors exploded!"

Li Yao gave no response and simply gazed at the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

At that moment, he would not have bothered to move his eyes even if a star was exploding next to him.

…

An hour later, ten thousand meters away from Sparkle, a ragged crystal warship sailed slowly in the universe.

The starship was seriously wrecked during an assault of space pirates and was beyond repair. It was then modified into a target starship by Mo Xuan and his team.

By remote control, they activated the spiritual shield and the defense network of the starship. A hundred beast puppets were placed inside each cabin of the starship, too.

"It has been a long time, old friend!"

A black lightning suddenly flashed in front of Sparkle and blended in with the dark universe in the next second. Weird black waves covered the distance of ten thousand meters in the blink of an eye and appeared in front of the target ship!

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

A colorful, dazzling air defense fire net was interweaved around the target ship.

The streaks of blackness turned into a cluster of raging black mists and passed through the net instantly like a drop of water. Then, it drilled into the thick armor of the target ship like a scorching needle!

Sha! Sha! Sha! Sha!

Inside the target ship, all the beast puppets sensed the arrival of an intruder.

Organized by the telepathic thoughts that were input previously, they crowded toward the cabin that the intruder had barged into.

The intruder did not stop at all. He crouched and lunged out, turning into a streak of blackness again and going on a rampage in the narrow cabins.

Passing by several beast puppets, the intruder waved his hands casually, and several streams of black fog darted out. The beast puppets were immediately frozen as if a spell had been cast upon them.

A moment later, after a 'huala' sound, they collapsed to the ground and broke into the most fundamental components.

BOOM!

The intruder accelerated again. Wreathed in weird materials that looked both like liquid and gas, he blew up several decks and charged at the engine compartment, the center of the target ship.

"Come on out, Black Wing!"

For the sake of heat dissipation, the engine compartment was usually the largest cabin on a starship.

After he reached the place, a black flying sword suddenly appeared in front of the intruder.

The flying sword seemed to be made of an intact black jade. It was transparent, warm, and smooth. Inside the body of the sword that seemed to be filled with gels, black threads, which looked like capillary vessels, were shivering as if they were alive.

This was the latest form of Black Wing after it absorbed countless high-quality crystals!

Black Wing roared and, hovering in midair briefly, darted into the embedded sheath in the center of the back of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. It was neatly fixed to the sheath without the tiniest gap.

Black Wing seemed to have become the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit's 'spine'. The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, which had already been daunting enough, spurted out thousands of streams of black gas.

Motivated by Li Yao's surging spiritual energy and manipulated by his spiritual root, the intense black gas was condensed to his back on the two sides of Black Wing. It was continuously compressed and condensed into new forms.

"Ahhh!"

Li Yao unleashed the terrifying strength of the superlative height of the Building Foundation Stage with absolutely no concerns. The black gas gradually formed six wings behind the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit!

BOOM!

The six wings looked like burning black torches. The longest two were more than twenty meters, and the shortest two were almost ten meters. They made the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit even more like an unstoppable devil walking on the earth!

Shua!

Behind the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, a red cloak of light flames hovered and extended to almost a hundred meters away like a dragon soaked in blood!

This is the source of my strength!

Clenching his fists, Li Yao savored the satisfaction when the strength of his every cell was fully unleased and significantly enhanced by the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit!

Although the barrier on Black Wing was not cracked yet, and it could not be used as a weapon directly, Li Yao had redesigned the back of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and combined Black Wing into it.

With the hardness and speed of Black Wing, it would not only greatly increase the general toughness of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit but also allow the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit to surpass its speed limits time and time again!

Fengyu Zhong? The Temple of Immortals? Immortal Cultivators?

Li Yao roared and dashed at the high-pressure crystal reactor like a black spear after flapping the six black wings!

…

Inside Sparkle, the five spectral Cultivators were monitoring Li Yao's field test wholeheartedly.

The hundred light spots on the light beam that represented the beast puppets died down quickly one after another, like an area of candles that had been swept over by a furious wind.

Suddenly, the remaining twenty light spots were gone in the same second!

On the light beam, an orange fireball appeared in the middle of the target ship and tore it in half instantly.

Like metastasizing cancer, the fireball consumed the broken target ship.

On the light beam nearby, a glittering number was jumping continuously, shocking the five spectral Cultivators.

"From the beginning of the test to the time when he blew up a starship, it only took…

"79 seconds!"

Chapter 665: Cultivation Bond

Chapter 665: Cultivation Bond

One day later, in the Cross Wind Union Bank…

After a day of field testing, Li Yao was very satisfied with the performance of the new Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. His next step would be to start crafting his tailor-made version of the Unparalleled Extension according to his combat style and the features of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

However, even without the Unparalleled Extension, Li Yao was confident that he could fight against enemies in the Nascent Soul Stage with the help of Black Wing.

After taking back the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Li Yao had no other business in the Cross Wind Space Zone apart than one thing—borrow money!

For Cultivators at his level, the resources they consumed every day were beyond the wildest imagination of ordinary people.

Since the Glorious Sunlight Group was still developing, the capital available to the company was rather tight. Besides, he could not pay for his own training with the money of the group directly even though he was the Chairman of the Board, considering that there were other shareholders.

To be listed was definitely the best approach to raise funds.

With the current scale and future prospects of the Glorious Sunlight Group, it was more than easy for the company to be listed.

However, Li Yao was not planning to do that.

Once it was listed, there would be even more shareholders in the company, and he was not sure that he could remain as the actual owner of the company anymore.

Besides, after the company was listed, the financial report and the business status of the company would have to be published regularly, not to mention the audits and the supervision.

Sparkle was Li Yao's biggest trump card and had consumed a lot of resources of the Glorious Sunlight Group. The big hole in the balance sheet would be discovered immediately if professional accountants were to audit it.

Li Yao did not intend to expose Sparkle to the world, at least for now.

He did not want his company to be listed, but he was in dire need of a large sum of money for his own training. While Li Yao was experiencing a huge headache, the Cross Wind Union Back, which had cooperated with him before, presented a rather tempting proposal.

"Manager Zhao, it's only been a short time since I came to space. Although I've heard about Cultivation Bonds before, I have never gotten to know their details. Please to enlighten me," Li Yao said in a smile.

There were only four people in the small meeting room: Wu Zhengyang on his side, a red-faced obese middle-aged man across the desk, and a plain-dressing, slender old man who seemed rather haughty and gloomy.

The fat middle-aged man was named Zhao Hongguang. He was the vice manager of the Cross Wind Union Back in charge of the credit loans.

Although he looked rather unattractive, he was actually an admin-type Cultivator in the Core Formation Stage. Wu Zhengyang had been in touch with him since the Glorious Sunlight Group was first established and spoke very highly of him.

The cold old man was 'Master Heavenly Eye' according to Zhao Hongguang. He was the leader of the Heavenly Eye Sect as well as the president of Heavenly Eye Consultancy, a company.

But Li Yao had no idea what the Heavenly Eye Consultancy was actually about.

"The full name of the Cultivation Bond is 'Cooperative Bond for Cultivators'. It's actually very simple. You will understand what it is as soon as I explain to you." Zhao Hongguang smiled. "Chairman Sand, you may consider it a tool to get you listed."

Li Yao frowned and said, "The Glorious Sunlight Group does not intend to be listed yet."

Zhao Hongguang's face remained unchanged. He replied casually, "I'm afraid you misunderstood me, Chairman Sand. I was not talking about the Glorious Sunlight Group, but you, yourself, Sand Scorpion, the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau. You will be listed."

"Huh?" Li Yao raised an eyebrow and looked at the manager with suspicion.

Zhao Hongguang had never met Li Yao before and did not know the background of the guest from Iron Plateau. Therefore, he decided to explain it in the most straightforward way. "The most important factors about Cultivation are 'wealth', 'residence', 'arts', and 'companions'. The debate as to the order of the latter three remains unabated to this day, but 'wealth' has been acknowledged by everyone as the top priority all.

"Nothing can be done without money. It has been so since the ancient Cultivation world forty thousand years ago. Cultivators consume hundreds of times more resources than ordinary people do every day, and when they are preparing for a major breakthrough, say, from the Refinement Stage to the Building Foundation Stage or from the Building Foundation Stage to the Core Formation Stage, they have to prepare a great sum of money and tremendous resources for themselves.

"Then, here comes the question. Marvelous as Cultivators may be, they cannot turn stones into gold. Besides, most of them are training hard every day. How do they have the time to make money?

"Therefore, ancient Cultivators, righteous and evil alike, had to reign over ordinary people. They would levy taxes, con the underprivileged, or even rob them directly, exploiting ordinary people for money.

"The righteous Cultivators managed to maintain basic morals. They pretended to be 'deities' or 'grand masters' by fooling the ordinary people with exotic appearances and unbelievable techniques so that the ordinary people would be willing to offer their money promptly.

"It is needless to mention the evil Cultivators. They resorted to all kinds of inhuman methods in order to retrieve resources.

"When a righteous Cultivator ran into an evil one, or two righteous Cultivators met each other, as long as there were no witnesses, it was nothing usual for one of them to slay the other and loot the victim's treasures.

"That was the reason for the chaos and lawlessness in the ancient Cultivation world forty thousand years ago.

"But after forty thousand years, we are all civilized people today. Naturally, we cannot exploit ordinary people and gather resources in such crude and rough ways.

"Besides, anyone who knows the first thing about economics will realize that both the feudal system that the righteous Cultivators employed and the slavery system that the evil Cultivators counted on have a very low efficiency in resource collection."

Zhao Hongguang paused for a moment. He seemed to have sensed the impatience in Li Yao's eyes and immediately got to the point. "It is better to allure the ordinary people with benefits and win together than to rob their money by force.

"With this principle in mind, Cultivation Bonds appeared in the Flying Star Sector several thousand years ago.

"For example, in the ancient Cultivation world, if a Core Formation Stage Cultivator sensed something and realized that the time to enter the Nascent Soul Stage had come, what would he do when he needed resources but was short of money?

"If he did not have the support of his sect or his family, he would have to resort to robbery or exploiting ordinary people, wouldn't he?

"But now is different.

"Right now, the Core Formation Stage Cultivator can release his own 'Cultivation Bond', say, a hundred dollars apiece. He can make a deal with the purchasers, promising that they will receive a dividend of ten dollars annually for certain years, and that if he successfully enters the Nascent Soul Stage, he will return the principal with a bonus of thirty dollars or even more.

"Think about it. If a Core Formation Stage Cultivator really makes a breakthrough into the Nascent Soul Stage, his connections, social position, and influence will all increase a lot. The extra payment will not be the slightest problem for them.

"This is the mechanism of the Cultivation Bond.

"It is a win-win for Cultivators and ordinary people.

"By releasing Cultivation Bonds, Cultivators can raise a large sum of funds for their training. If his training yields a satisfactory result, the ordinary people who purchased his Cultivation Bonds will receive huge returns, too."

Li Yao immediately understood it. But he thought of something that did not seem right and asked, "Wait, what if the Cultivator fails to enter the Nascent Soul Stage or even unfortunately becomes mentally deranged and dies during the breakthrough? The investors who bought the Cultivation bonds will have a huge loss, won't they?"

Zhao Hongguang smiled and said, "Don't worry. That could only happen when the Cultivation Bond was just born. After thousands of years of development, the regulations about the Cultivation Bond are quite mature. It is no longer a simple certificate of loans, but a financial product like shares and futures.

"Firstly, if a Cultivator plans to raise money for his training through the Cultivation Bond, they must be assessed by a qualified evaluation company first.

"There are only eleven companies with such qualifications. Their credit can all be dated back to a thousand years ago."

Li Yao glanced at Master Heavenly Eye, who was sitting in front of him.

Master Heavenly Eye was observing him in great interest. His two eyes were like glittering crystal cameras, and he did not hide his staring, which was almost rude, at all.

Li Yao finally realized why the manager of the 'Heavenly Eye Consultancy' had showed up there.

"Secondly," Zhao Hongguang continued, "the Cultivator must be endorsed by one or several eligible sects, groups, or financial institutions. If the Cultivator does not spend the money he raised in training but dedicates himself to personal entertainment or even worse nonsense, the sects, groups, and financial institutions will share liability.

"As for you, Chairman Sand, I believe that the Cross Wind Union Back, the Glorious Sunlight Group, and Iron Plateau are all willing to endorse you.

"Thirdly, there are many professional insurance companies in the Flying Star Sector that provide services for Cultivation Bonds. As long as the investors are willing to pay some money, the insurance company will compensate for most of their losses in case the Cultivator fails or dies during their breakthrough.

"Fourthly, there are always some fixed assets or real estates under a Cultivator's name. If he dies abruptly, his legacy will be reclaimed to compensate the investors.

"With multiple protective measures, Cultivation Bonds are developing fast nowadays and have become an important market of investment that almost equals to the stock market. Many famous Cultivators have released their own Cultivation Bonds.

"Here. This is an exchange platform of Cultivation Bonds. Take a look, Chairman Sand."

Zhao Hongguang projected a light beam from his mini crystal processor. Red and green names and numbers appeared on the light beam, followed by up arrows and down arrows and ended with a small percent.

At first glance, it was indeed identical to a stock exchange platform.

However, at the front of each line, it was not the names of sects or companies, but those of Cultivators.

There was a small window in the top left corner where a solemn old man wearing a seven-star robe was shaking his head and commenting on the changes.

"Zhang Ao, elder of the Seven Mysteries Sect, performed a previously unseen move in a battle against the space pirates the other day. According to sources, Elder Zhang Ao has been working on the improvement of 'Seven Mystic Slashes', a saber art. It might be a sign that he has made a preliminary success.

"Boosted by the good news, the price of Elder Zhang Ao's Cultivation Bonds has been soaring since the trade hour. So far, it has increased by 3.3%.

"If the good news is real, it is estimated that the price will be increased by another 10%.

"On the other hand, Yuan Ziping, an unaffiliated Cultivator of the Red Moon Space Zone who has been preparing to break into the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage since half a year ago, unfortunately suffered a failure, according to his spokesperson in the press conference last night.

"His spokesperson also pointed out that, although the breakthrough failed, Yuan Ziping was definitely not mentally deranged, nor did he suffer any heavy wounds. He was merely exhausted and needed a few months of rest.

"According to him, the rumors that Yuan Ziping was mentally deranged after the breakthrough and regressed in his cultivation are pure nonsense, and Yuan Ziping reserves the right to sue the rumor-makers for libel.

"Even so, the price of Yuan Ziping's Cultivation Bonds has witnessed a significant decline. It dropped by 4.6% during the press conference, which made him the Cultivator with the greatest slipping rate other than deceased Cultivators over the past three months."

Chapter 666: High Risks, High Returns!

Chapter 666: High Risks, High Returns!

Li Yao stared at the exchange platform quickly and immediately understood. "So, the stronger a Cultivator is, the higher, say, his 'price', will be, right?"

Zhao Hongguang replied, "Theoretically, yes. But it is much more complicated in reality. The bond price has to do with the age, background, social connections, and the methods of dividends.

"For example, if a Core Formation Stage Cultivator is more than two hundred years old, his bond price wouldn't be too high however capable he is, unless he is very likely to enter the Nascent Soul Stage shortly. It is understandable. He is too old and has little potential.

"Another example. If a Cultivator makes a breakthrough but his competitor makes an even bigger one, the Cultivator's bond price will definitely plunge, too. After all, there can't be two tigers on the same mountain."

"One more example. If a Cultivator is not very strong but in desperate need of money. He grits his teeth and releases a batch of Cultivation Bonds at a price of a hundred dollars apiece, promising that he will offer twenty dollars as dividend per year. Naturally, it becomes a hit and the bond price will soar. But it will be a whole different story as to whether or not he can fulfil his promise at the end of the year.

"In other cases, the capability of a Cultivator remains unchanged, but he claims that he has found a new world fragment or a new area of space debris. It is not unusual for his bond price to rise multiple times.

"All in all, the market of Cultivation Bonds is the same as the stock market, where the sects that are running well do not necessarily have a high share price. Too many erratic factors are involved in the process. It is a boundless world soaked in immeasurable water.

"However, rest assured, Chairman Sand. The market of Cultivation Bonds is supervised by the 'Cultivation Securities Regulatory Commission', also known as the CSRC 1 . Releasing false news or conducting clandestine deals will be punished severely when discovered."

Li Yao nodded. He had heard about the Cultivation Bond before and knew that it was a mature, public, and legal financial product, but he had never found the time to study it.

According to the description, it did seem to be a great solution to raise funds for his personal training quickly.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao raised another important question. "A sect must be strictly audited and monitored when it is to be listed. Is it also the case for a Cultivator?

"If a certain organization is supervising every sum of money I spend and my training progress in every field, that won't do."

Zhao Hongguang seemed to have expected Li Yao's concerns. He smiled casually and said, "Cultivators are different from sects. Most of them have top confidential secrets that they do not want anybody else to know. Our predecessors have thought of it since a long time ago.

"Allow me to elaborate. The Cultivation Bond is just a collective name. There are many categories below it.

"Some of the categories are obliged to release all the details to the public. After all, the ordinary investors are putting their lifelong savings into your hands. It's only natural that you answer for them, isn't it?

"After you raise enough money from the investors, you must tell the public what Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures you have bought, what kind of training you have done, and which level you are in on a regular basis. Monthly report, quarterly report, biannual report, and annual report are all mandatory.

"However, there is one other type of Cultivation Bond that does not require anything. As long as they are sellable, and the dividends are done according to the deal, it will be fine. You can do whatever you want with the money provided that the CSRC does not find any clues to associate you with crimes."

Li Yao was dazed. "The second type of bonds is rather risky. Who would buy that?"

Zhao Hongguang smiled. "High risk, high returns. The first type of Cultivation Bond, known as a transparent bond, is a steady investment. The dividend rate is low, and not many people are interested in them. The annual percentage rate is only slightly higher than the interest rate of banks.

"The second type of Cultivation Bond is better known as a free bond in the trade. It is indeed risky, but its returns are very high, too. If you are planning to release free bonds, Chairman Sand, you'd better be prepared to return three to four hundred dollars three years later for every hundred dollars you sell right now."

Li Yao thought for a moment. With the speed of the development of the Glorious Sunlight Group and his personal training, it would not be very much even if the loans were doubled three years later.

Zhao Hongguang continued. "Chairman Sand, there's no need to decide between the two. In fact, what most Cultivators release are combinative bonds. Part of their bonds are transparent, and the rest of the bonds are kept to themselves and fully at their own disposal.

"It's impossible that a Cultivator cannot reveal any of his techniques to the public, isn't it? He is definitely an evil Cultivator if so.

"For normal Cultivators, they naturally want to keep their core techniques a secret, but they are not afraid to reveal some of their rudimental techniques.

"The money you raise through the 'transparent bonds' can be used to train the public-accessible techniques, while you can train your core techniques with the money collected through the 'free bonds'.

"Other than that, you can also release 'oriented bonds'.

"For example, if you plan to study the 'Great King Kong Fist Art' today and you estimate the cost to be fifty million, you can release 'Great King Kong Oriented Bonds' with a worth of fifty million bringing your budget plan.

"You will make a deal with the investors that the fifty million you borrow today will be specifically used for the training of the Great King Kong Fist Art and won't be spent on anything else. You will show them what materials you are going to buy, which training chambers you are going to rent, how many tutors you are going to hire, and the total cost.

"If you grasp the Great King Kong Fist Art within five months, you will return the principal together with the dividends, and if you fail, you will return the principal back in a certain amount of time as dictated in the budget plan.

"Such oriented bonds are very popular among ordinary investors since they are simple, open, and barely risky although the interest rate is not high.

"You see, raising money by releasing combinative bonds and oriented bonds is both adaptive and convenient, and your secrets will be kept safe. Isn't it an excellent choice?"

Li Yao nodded in agreement.

Through such a mature method of fundraising, a huge amount of funds could be collected legally, efficiently, and peacefully. No wonder robbery was rarely-seen in the modern Cultivation world.

Reading the detailed information about the Cultivation Bonds, Li Yao furrowed his brow again and asked, "Manager Zhao, the release of Cultivation Bonds cannot be done in one day. They have to be approved by the CSRC. It will take at least a year and a half, give or take.

"Besides, it seems to me that you are not authorized to release Cultivation Bonds, are you?

"But I'm in dire need of money right now. It will be best if I can get it within the next half a month.

"Since you proposed a meeting today, I believe you've figured a solution to the problem?"

"Indeed, I have."

Zhao Hongguang did not waste any time and put forward the proposal without beating about the bush. "Releasing Cultivation Bonds is indeed not a business of the Cross Wind Union Bank, and even if we were to submit a release proposal right now, it would not be approved for quite some time.

"However, the Cross Wind Union Bank and the important sects in the Cross Wind Space Zone have high hopes for Chairman Sand. We believe that your Cultivation Bonds will be released successfully one day, and that their price will soar after they are.

"Therefore, we would like to propose a deal with Chairman Sand. We will purchase a certain number of your unreleased Cultivation Bonds in advance. Or in other words, you will receive a huge loan with your future Cultivation Bonds as collateral."

Zhao Hongguang pushed a jade chip over solemnly and said, "This is our proposal. Please take a look, Chairman Sand."

Li Yao inserted the jade chip into the crystal processor and browsed through the clauses. He then looked at Zhao Hongguang again and said, "The amount of the loan is indeed impressive, but the interest rate is even more impressive!

"Chairman Zhao, the Glorious Sunlight Group is now in the golden phase. It will be more than quadrupled in the next few years.

"As for myself, I have profound connections on Iron Plateau, too.

"In the meantime, I'm the sole owner of the patents for the Combat Ability Detector and the joint owner of the patents for the Aurora Chain Gun. You should know the value of the two kinds of magical equipment very clear.

"I don't think I need to brag about my personal strength.

"Investing in me has a low risk and high returns. Such a high interest rate is beyond my expectation."

Zhao Hongguang smiled and looked at Master Heavenly Eye.

Master Heavenly Eye had remained silent the whole time as if he were forged of iron. He opened his mouth for the first time, and his voice was like the sound of running gears, completely devoid of any emotions.

"Chairman Sand, in the circle of 'evaluators', it is a common practice to divide the credit level and risk level of a Cultivator or a sect into eight classes.

"The highest class represents the brightest prospect with endless potential and barely any risk. Cultivators or companies in this class are absolutely worth investing in.

"Therefore, Cultivators and companies in the highest class can raise a huge sum of money at a very low cost. Their interest rate is also the lowest.

"But as for you, you are now evaluated to be in the fifth class by the Heavenly Eye Sect. It is our opinion that investment in you can yield enormous returns but with considerable risk. Therefore, we suggest that the institutions invest cautiously, and the individual investors keep their distance."

"Oh?" Li Yao leaned back in his chair. He grew interested and asked, "What are my risks?"

Master Heavenly Eye replied, "You have concluded your advantages very well. I do not need to repeat them.

"In the evaluation report of the Heavenly Eye Sect, you have two main risks.

"Firstly, it is our understanding that your combat style is different from common Cultivators. In the multiple competitions in Flying Star University, you have performed the technique of vaporizing spiritual liquids more than once, and your Cultivation is much higher than the usual peak of the Building Foundation Stage."

Li Yao sniffed but did not deny it.

Emotionlessly, Master Heavenly Eye continued. "Surpassing the peak of the Building Foundation Stage, your next step will be the Core Formation Stage. Entering the Core Formation Stage is a dangerous process. One might be mentally deranged and lose part of their Cultivation should they be careless.

"Since your training methods are different from normal, we estimate that the risk of you breaking into the Core Formation Stage is much higher than the risk of common Building Foundation Stage Cultivators.

"This is the first risk that we must remind the investors of.

"Secondly, assassination from the Temple of Immortals.

"According to various sources, you now rank the 14th on the must-kill list of the Temple of Immortals, which is a place much higher than most Core Formation Stage Cultivators.

"If you are indeed assassinated, even with the compensation of insurance companies, the investors will still suffer a huge loss.

"Considering the two risks, we can only set your credit level to be the fifth class despite your tremendous potential."

Chapter 667: Edge Sharpeners' Meeting Begins!

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Li Yao said coldly, "Since your sources told me that I rank the fourteenth on the must-kill list of the Temple of Immortals, you should also know that I've slain sixteen assassins from the Temple of Immortals over the past half year, seven of whom were from the notorious 'Spider's Thorn'. One of the assassins was in the Core Formation Stage, and his heart was blown up by me while he was alive."

Master Heavenly Eye nodded. "That's very true, but it has also been confirmed that the Temple of Immortals will launch an unprecedented assault on the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting, which will be held in ten days.

"At that time, you will possibly be one of the important targets for the Temple of Immortals."

Li Yao smiled. "The Edge Sharpeners' Meeting is a gala for refiners that is held every five years. All the experts of the Flying Star Sector will gather. In the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting this year, issues regarding the stellar-level magical equipment will be discussed, with the sole purpose of dealing with the Temple of Immortals.

"Of course, the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting will be a target for the Immortal Cultivators.

"However, the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting is different from the Skyhill Sword Seminar, which is a tournament among young refiners. It will be a real summit forum and will be held in the central area of Heavenly Saints City. Other than refiners, a lot of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators will attend the meeting, too.

"I would very much like to know how the Temple of Immortals will launch a large-scale attack under so many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators' noses in the heart of the Flying Star Sector!"

Since the assault on the Skyhill Sword Seminar one year ago that marked the rise of the Temple of Immortals, the organization had kept quiet except for their activity on Iron Plateau.

The space pirates had been harassing the towns and people as usual, but they were far from enough to overturn the Flying Star Sector.

Therefore, everybody was speculating that the Temple of Immortals was secretly accumulating its strength and planning an earthshaking operation.

The Edge Sharpeners' Meeting was naturally the best target for the Temple of Immortals.

Everybody knew that.

But Li Yao could not begin to fathom how the Temple of Immortals could fish up so many refiners in the central area of the Flying Star Sector, breaching the protection of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Core Formation Stage Cultivators.

"Immortal Cultivators are not morons who will readily commit suicide. Every sign indicates that the Temple of Immortals is mobilizing its forces. Some of the spies that have been lurking in Heavenly Saints City for decades recently popped up. Their cost is quite huge," Master Heavenly Eye said.

"With that in mind, the raid on the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting will likely succeed, at least from their point of view."

Li Yao was silent.

Zhao Hongguang smiled and said, "Chairman Sand, the Heavenly Eye Sect is one of the oldest evaluation agencies of the Flying Star Sector. Their evaluation report is absolutely justified. Naturally, you are free to look for a different agency to evaluate your potential and risks, but I believe that there won't be much difference.

"You are now a pain in the ass for the Temple of Immortals, and they are very likely to summon a lot of assassins against you in the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting.

"It is quite risky for us to lend you money right now. Naturally, the interest rate is slightly higher.

"If you are not satisfied by the proposal, I suggest we talk about the deal several months after the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting, when the Temple of Immortals' plots will have proved futile.

"I believe that your credit level will have significantly improved, and your interest rate will plummet by then."

Li Yao considered carefully.

The large sum of money he was trying to collect was exactly meant for the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting.

The Edge Sharpeners' Meeting was the most professional meeting for all the refiners in the Flying Star Sector. Other than the exhibition of the latest magical equipment, a lot of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures would be auctioned, some of which were extremely rarely-seen.

The inventory of part of the materials to be auctioned had been published in advance.

Li Yao was determined to bid for twenty or so of them no matter what their price was!

Reading the proposal carefully again and again and calculating for a long time, he confirmed the details with Zhao Hongguang for the last time. "The money will all be in position before the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting?"

Zhao Hongguang smiled. "Of course."

Li Yao took a deep breath and extended his hand to the vice manager of the Cross Wind Union Back. "Deal."

He was more and more looking forward to the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting.

…

Eleven days later, in the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting at the central area of the Heavenly Saints City…

"Wow!"

The moment she stepped out of the interview car, Yi Feilan felt that a thousand colors crashed into her eyes, and ten thousand sounds were vibrating her eardrums.

Her head was dizzy, and her lips were dry.

She was a journalist from 'Entertainment Weekly', but she was like a country bumpkin who was visiting the city for the first time and felt like she had forgotten to bring her brain with her.

In space, she had never seen such a spacious man-made area that looked like a real planet, nor had she seen so many obstreperous people who had packed the entire area with barely any gaps for her to squeeze through!

The Edge Sharpeners' Meeting was divided into the sales area, the auction area, the lecture area, and the forum themed on the arts of refining in the next millennium.

Each of the areas had dozens of halls and open-air demonstration zones.

As far as one's eyes could see, every direction was teeming with people, making the place look like a lively grocery market.

The air was so hot that it seemed like it would start burning at any moment.

As if worrying that the scene was not fervent enough, hundreds of enormous light beams were floating in midair, and the broadcast balls that had wings and were boosted by power rune arrays were flying everywhere, promoting the latest products released in the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting as loud as possible.

"The annual product release conference of the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood has finished. The latest generation of

'Dragon Snake Sword', the flagship model of flying swords, will be up for sale in half a month!

"The new Dragon Snake Sword employs the latest 'Phase Phantom' technique. The trajectory of the flying sword is much more complicated and unpredictable, and the minimum spiritual energy that it requires and the telepathic thought reflection area have both been greatly improved. It is now being tested in the No.6 test field!"

"'Furious Sun', the super-large power rune array co-developed by the Burning Sun Alliance and the Star Fighters Alliance, has been released! Designed for crystal warships, 'Furious Sun' utilizes the groundbreaking hexagonal turbo boost structure and can improve the speed of the current crystal warships of the Flying Star Sector by at least 5%!

"The Furious Bears Union and the Iron Stream Crystal Suit Center have introduced their 'Heavenly Lord', a heavy, powerful crystal suit. It is going to be displayed in the No.4 exhibition hall. Ten lucky dogs will be picked after drawing lots to wear 'Heavenly Lord' in person and feel its invincibility in the test field!"

Yi Feilan felt that her legs could not support her anymore. At a loss, she clutched the seasoned journalist near her who had seen the scene multiple times. "Brother Mo, there are so many booths here. Which one should we get started with? Boss said that we must look for the thrilling news. What is thrilling news? I have no idea!"

'Weekly Entertainment Magazine of the Blue Sky Space Zone' had always been focused on gossip news. Yi Feilan was a green hand who had only just graduated this year. She did not have any idea about magical equipment or refiners at all.

However, the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting was a great event in the circle of refiners. The magazines, large and small, in the Flying Star Sector all sent their reporters. Yi Feilan's magazine was not an exception.

Compared with Yi Feilan, the old journalist, Mo Lin, was much calmer. Although he did not know much about magical equipment and refiners, either, he had done a lot of preparation work. Besides, after decades as a journalist, he had quite a lot of connections in his trade.

While communicating with his friends in the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting via a light beam and asking about the most valuable news, Mo Lin intentionally dragged his tone and said, "The thrilling news is of course the most attractive news. But our magazine is not specialized in magical equipment. Our readers couldn't care less about the performance of the magical equipment. So, it will be best if we can dig out some interesting news…

"Here it comes!"

Like a hound that saw a rabbit, Mo Xin's ears were suddenly perked up, and he exclaimed in shocked, "Air change! A young genius only fourteen years old has performed an air change, allegedly the most marvelous technique among Exos! He's in the No.2 test field. Let's go!"

Mo Lin immediately ran off.

Baffled, Yi Feilan followed him. While running, she received the background files that Mo Lin sent over and finally realized what was going on.

What was being displayed in the No.2 test field was a new crystal suit co-developed by the Refining Department of

Flying Star University and the Silver Heart Crystal Suit Center.

However, it was not the crystal suit that caused such a buzz, but the tester.

The crystal suit had three models in total: high-speed scout model, melee combat model, and stealth-sniper model.

Generally speaking, the tester would retreat to the side of the arena and change to the second model with the help of staff after displaying one model.

However, during the test, the tester used air change, which was known to be a 'godly skill' among Exos, and switched to the melee combat model from the high-speed scout model in only several seconds.

He put on the stealth-sniper model in the same way.

The entire changing process took less than four seconds. It was indeed fluent and flawless!

When everybody was wondering which renowned expert was wearing the crystal suit, they were all shocked!

After the Exo took off the facial cover of his protective mustard-seed suit when he finished demonstrating the three models, the spectators discovered in shock that he was a young man!

"Fourteen-year-old, unparalleled genius!"

"The strongest newcomer of the Flying Star Sector this year!"

"A rising new star, and a legend that has just begun!"

Together with the shocking titles was a face that was handsome, indifferent, and somewhat wild.

The face alone was enough to conquer all the females from 16 years old to 160.

Looking at the picture on the light beam, Yi Feilan somehow understood why Brother Mo decided to interview the young man.

Such a pretty face would definitely be a favorite of the loyal readers of their magazine!

However, the young genius seemed to be favored by a lot of reporters.

The outside of No.2 test field was packed with people. They were all journalists who were carrying large crystal processors and microphones and eyeing each other suspiciously.

Hardly had Yi Feilan caught her breath when she saw a man dart out above the journalists' heads in her direction.

"Hooray!"

Yi Feilan almost cried in joy. It was the young genius who was running at her!

He was trying to avoid the journalists and failed to distinguish where he was going.

Gritting her teeth, Yi Feilan sprinted at the young man.

However, due to an obstruction she neglected, she fell off on the ground right before the young genius.

The young genius frowned. He was still young and not shameless enough to run away immediately after seeing the pitiful appearance of the girl. He helped her to her feet.

"Thank you."

Yi Feilan's face was red, and she breathed heavily. "Wu Mayan, nice to meet you. I am—"

Wu Mayan extended his fingers and said coldly, "Half a minute, two questions."

Yi Feilan rolled her eyes and said quickly, "Alright. You are only fourteen years old, and you are already able to perform the marvelous 'air change'. It's incredible. Can you tell us your training tricks?"

Emotionlessly, Wu Mayan replied, "That was not air change."

Yi Feilan bulged her eyes. "It wasn't? But—"

"Compared to the real air change," said Wu Mayan, who was quite frustrated, "what I just performed was crap."

"Well…"

Yi Feilan calmed herself down and raised the second question. "Wu Mayan, you are the well-acknowledge genius in Heavenly Saints City, and you have reached a level higher than many forty-year-old Cultivators at only fourteen. But you are as calm as ever and do not have the arrogance that is typical for young geniuses at all. May I ask how you have been adjusting yourself? As a young genius living in public eye with barely any peers in the entire Flying Star Sector, it is extraordinary of you to keep the inner peace!"

Wu Mayan glanced at her, his lips twitching, as if part of his hateful memory was triggered. He pushed her aside and walked away without looking back.

While walking, he gnashed his teeth. "If you are savaged in a living hell for half an hour every night no matter how dominating you are during the day, you will be as peaceful as me!"

Chapter 668：I Want a Master!

Chapter 668: I Want a Master!

In the circle of refiners, the Xie family of West Rock was a major family with a history of hundreds of years. Naturally, it had its own booth in the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting, where quite a few new flying swords and shields were exhibited.

After only three days since the Edge Sharpener's Meeting began, a lot of sects had come to negotiate or consult. One of them even placed a large order of a thousand super flying swords. It was indeed a great sign for the business.

Xie Qianhe was 59 years old and one of the top experts in refining in the Xie family. However, he did not work in the family business; he served as the deputy director of the technical department of the Silver Heart School, one of the three crystal suit centers.

Right now, Xie Qianhe's face was gloomy, and he was in the worst mood.

Pa!

In the hotel where the Xie family was staying, he slapped a table and glared at his daughter, frowning hard. "What? You want Sand Scorpion to be your master?"

"Yes!"

Xie Anan raised her head high and stared back at her father, whom she had always revered. She summoned her courage and said, "Father, I want to be Sand Scorpion's true disciple and study the arts of refining from him!"

Looking at his daughter in disbelief, Xie Qianhe blurted out, "Anan, 'master' and 'teacher' are very different. In modern society, a Cultivator can have thousands of teachers. You pay tuition fees, and they teach. Fair deal with no arrears. The relationship is done as soon as the course is over.

"But 'master' is a whole different conception!

"If Sand Scorpion really becomes your master and you his true disciple, you will have to inherit his ideology and methodology completely. Your refining skills will be seriously affected by him, and it will be quite troublesome if you want to look for a different master in the future."

"I know."

Xie Anan nodded solemnly as she said, "I know it is not a joke to be a true disciple. That's why I want to ask you to propose the request for me. It will be the best if grandpa can talk to Master Sand as the leader of the Xie family, if that's possible."

Xie Qianhe found it amusing. "Anan, what's wrong with you? I don't have any bias against the Iron Plateau natives, and I can't thank Sand Scorpion enough for saving your life. But isn't he the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau? Does he know anything about refining?"

"Master Sand is quite adept at refining!" Xie Anan's eyes were shining when she talked about Li Yao's skills in refining. She raised her head and said, "Master Xue Yuanxin of the Ares Laboratory holds Master Sand in very high regard. Besides, Master Sand has produced the Combat Ability

Detector and the Aurora Chain Gun. My own progress over the recent half year is based on his enlightenment, too!"

Xie Qianhe coughed and looked at his wife next to him.

Dong Hanxiang, Xie Anan's mother, was from a noble family of refining. She hugged her daughter and said with a smile, "Anan, Master Sand Scorpion is your life-saver. It's natural that you pay attention to him more and admire or even worship him.

"As the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, he definitely has things that are worth respecting.

"However, when it comes to the arts of refining…

"You are too young to know the clandestine rules in the circle of refiners.

"Yes, rumor has it that Master Sand is actually an expert in refining, and Master Xue Yuanxin spoke very highly of him. Besides, he is the patent owner of the Combat Ability Detector and part of the Aurora Chain Gun.

"Hehe. Such news can only fool outsiders. Most people in our circle are rather suspicious about it.

"It has happened before that some rich guys who didn't know the first thing about refining spent a fortune on acquiring other people's patents and claiming them as their own achievements.

"You also know that your master Sand Scorpion's Glorious Sunlight Group has a large refining center under its name. Then, who can tell whether the patents in his hand were developed by himself or by the employees of the refining center?

"As for the remark of Master Xue Yuanxin, it's even simpler. Praising each other when a project succeeds is quite normal. Master Xue's Ares Laboratory and the Glorious Sunlight Group have been cooperating neatly. It was only natural that Master Xue complimented him on the occasion. You wouldn't expect Master Xue to accusing him of being a pretentious rookie, would you?"

Unconvinced, Xie Anan craned her neck and said, "But—"

Dong Hanxiang pressed her shoulder and continued. "Yes, we've all seen your rapid progress in person. But according to you, Master Sand Scorpion only taught you some of the most rudimental training methods. There is nothing extraordinary about them.

"On the contrary, your father and I think that his training methods are too cruel and violent. Only a dummy like you could've persisted for so long. We didn't know it in the beginning, or we definitely would've told you to drop it.

"Such cruel training will naturally increase your capability right now, but it will do your future growth no good in the long term."

Seeing her daughter's awful face, Dong Hanxiang hurried to add, "I'm not saying that Master Sand doesn't know anything about refining. I do believe that he has many secret arts that can be traced back to Iron Plateau. Some of them may be new to you, and that's why you were hooked.

"However, such secret arts are merely tricks after all. They are not the real methods to practice refining.

"We don't object that you ask him questions or even study several techniques after him.

"However, is it really a rational decision to be his true disciple?"

Xie Anan's eyes bulged, and tears were swirling in them. She bit her lips and said, "Mom, Dad, why can't you believe me?"

Dong Hanxiang looked at her husband and coughed. She said, "It's not that we don't believe you. In—in fact, you father has already found the perfect master for you!"

"What?" Xie Anan was dumbfounded.

Xie Qianhe smiled. "I was going to tell you later as a surprised, but it doesn't hurt if you find out now.

"You know Master Huangpu Bo in the Silver Heart School I work in? He is an elder of the Huangpu family, a noble family of refining that has existed for a thousand years. He is a renowned expert in the circle of refiners.

"Over the past year, I've been working on the same project with Master Huangpu, and I have a good relationship with him. He told me that he was planning to recruit one last disciple now that he had grown too old.

"Not long ago, I showed your performance in the family competition to Master Shiyi. He was quite amazed by your hand speed and asked about you a lot.

"It was definitely a pleasant surprise. Everybody knows that Master Huangpu's eight true disciples are all big shots today.

"If you become the last disciple of Master Huangpu, won't it be much better than being the disciple of Sand Scorpion?"

Xie Anan gasped and stepped back in disbelief. She stuttered, "Ma—Master Huangpu is willing to recruit me as his disciple?"

Xie Anan had heard the thunderous name of Huangpu Bo multiple times before. The expert was equally renowned as Master Xue Yuanxin in the circle of refiners.

Xie Anan felt that her head was dizzy, and it was hard to keep steady.

Xie Qianhe was very satisfied about his daughter's reaction. He nodded and said, "Master Huangpu did not make any promises, of course. He only said that he would like to meet you during the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting. But in my opinion, since your hand speed is 15% faster than two months ago, there won't be any problem as long as you perform normally when Master Huangpu interviews you."

Xie Anan opened her mouth but failed to come up with anything. Then, she seemed to have made up her mind. Her eyes shining like a star, she slowly shook her head and said, "Dad, Master Huangpu thought highly of me because of my hand speed. But my hand speed is actually Master Sand's work. I still want to study after Master Sand and pass on his arts of refining."

"You—"

Xie Qianhe's eyebrow stood up. He had no idea why his daughter, who had been mild and obedient all the time, was so stubborn that day. He raised his voice and bellowed, "That is Master Huangpu! Other people would not have such an opportunity even if they begged him for three days and three nights. Why do you not know what is good for you, my child?"

"Dad, I'm well aware of Master Huangpu's fame in the circle of refiners and how immeasurable his skills are. I also know that his eight disciples are all well-known experts."

Flushed, Xie Anan spoke faster and clearer, although she stammered in the beginning, "However, I also know that Master Huangpu's eight disciples are all talented geniuses!

"Dad, I know myself very well. Although nobody has ever told me, I'm very clear that I have no talent in refining, and I am just an unattractive dummy.

"Even if I become Master Huangpu's true disciple today, I have no confidence that I can grasp his refining skills.

"Maybe, only Master Sand's training methods are suitable for a dummy such as myself.

"Believe it or not, Mom, Dad, although Master Sand's methods are physically painful, there was nothing but peace and satisfaction in my mind, because I could clearly feel that I was making progress, and I found the fun in the arts of refining!"

The air seemed to have frozen in the small room.

Xie Qianhe was dumbfounded, not expecting his daughter to come up with such rebuttals.

Dazed for a long time, he suddenly rose up and stormed out. Before he left the room, he bawled, "This is too important a decision to be made by yourself. When your grandpa learned of the matter, he was overjoyed. He has already started making arrangements!

"Anyways, you will meet Master Huangpu with me tomorrow!"

"Old Xie! Old Xie!"

Seeing that the father and the daughter were at an impasse, Dong Hanxiang stomped on the ground anxiously. She comforted her daughter, "Anan, don't be scared. Your father is as bad-tempered as decades ago.

"But since when did you become so stubborn, too?

"Let's not rush into anything yet. We'll talk about it later. Anyway, just go to meet Master Huangpu first tomorrow, alright?

"Old Xie? Old Xie!"

Dong Hanxiang chased after her husband.

Chapter 669: A Great Joke

Chapter 669: A Great Joke

"The child used to be very obedient. Why is she making a mistake at the crucial moment?"

In the corridor, Xie Qianhe was still angry. He yelled, "Everybody knows that the Glorious Sunlight Group is on the rise and has a huge amount of wealth. There are endless benefits if we can be connected to them. If I were a man without a backbone, why would I say no to her decision?

"But I really want my daughter to make some achievements in the path of refining.

"I thought so hard for her, and yet she believes that I am wronging her!"

"Old Xie!"

Dong Hanxiang held her husband's arm and said, "After the incident of the Temple of Immortals, our daughter has indeed become more mature and independent. Besides, Sand Scorpion saved her life personally, and it's perfectly normal that she admires or even relies on him. Of course, she cannot change her mind so quickly now that you are making a decision for her.

"Besides, Iron Plateau boasts a long, mysterious history. It's not unusual that the secret arts of refining lost five thousand years ago have been found again. To say that Master Sand is a man who knows nothing about refining is a bit too much. I estimate that he must have several ultimate skills."

"What?" Xie Qianhe glared. "You don't want our daughter to be Sand Scorpion's disciple, do you?"

"Why would I?" Dong Hanxiang found it amusing and replied, "If I hadn't witnessed that incident this morning, I might've considered it. What I meant is that you shouldn't be so rough. Give our daughter some time for her to think it over. Later, I'll make some delicious food for her, and we will have a nice talk. She'll definitely change her mind."

"This morning?" Xie Qianhe was rather curious. "What happened this morning?"

Dong Hanxiang tried to hold back her smile and said, "I went to the 'Auction of Advanced Meteorite Materials' this morning. In the auction, there was a bizarre stone that was more than one meter in diameter, with red streaks all over its body and bright gold hair on the surface. It was named 'Red Streak Gold Hair Stone' on the inventory."

"I know that." Xie Qianhe nodded. "It is said that the meteorite likely contained super-pure 'Radiating Crystal', which makes it one of the most valuable items in the auction. Experts from everywhere were interested in the stone. Didn't we planned to bid for it, too? But we eventually abandoned it because its price was definitely going to soar up."

"No need to bid at all," Dong Hanxiang said. "After I went there, all the experienced refiners were allowed to examine the stone closely. I was given five seconds, too.

"I scrutinized it with our family's secret arts and immediately sensed something wrong with it.

"The color of the red streaks on the meteorite felt right. But the gold hair was too bright compared with the 'Gold Hair

Thousand Threads' that grow along with the real Radiating Crystal, and it was reflecting green when it was aimed at the source of light.

"I immediately realized that it was not Radiating Crystal that was stored inside the meteorite, but 'Grey Crystal', which looks very similar to it!"

Xie Qianhe nodded quickly. "Indeed. The appearance of the Grey Crystal and the changes it brings to the environment are very similar to those of the Radiating Crystal.

" Radiating Crystal is a super material with a high spiritual energy capacity that can mitigate wind-class and thunder-class energy. It is thirty times more precious than normal marrow crystals!

"However, Grey Crystal is merely worthless crap. Their values are totally incomparable!"

Dong Hanxiang said, "Naturally. All the refiners who examined the Red Streak Gold Hair Stone retreated graciously with a mysterious smile.

"Everybody saw through the secret of the stone. But seeing through it did mean that they had to say it out loud. Since it was an auction, none of us were willing to disrupt their business.

"When the Red Streak Gold Hair Stone was officially bid for, nobody raised their paddle."

Xie Qianhe smiled. "Why would they raise a paddle when they already saw through the stone? It is not important if they waste some of their money, but their credibility will be greatly affected if their eyes are not keen enough and they buy a counterfeit."

"That was exactly what everybody thought," Dong Hanxiang said. "The Red Streak Gold Hair Stone was about to go unsold, but then somebody raised his paddle. Guess who it was."

Xie Qianhe rolled his eyes and asked, "Sand Scorpion?"

"Exactly! He jumped out and became the idiot!" Dong Hanxiang slapped her thigh and said, "Sand Scorpion has spent the last two days in the auction purchasing countless Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. He made his decision very quickly and never hesitated to raise the price. Everybody knows of him.

"Old Xie, you know that rumors over the past few days say that he is actually an expert of refining who has been hiding himself. Seeing that he bought so many Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures confidently without batting an eye, everybody almost believed that he might be as awesome as was claimed.

"As it turned out, he spent tens of thousands of dollars on a useless Red Streak Gold Hair Stone during the auction. Like you said, the waste of money was unimportant. What was important was that everybody witnessed his carelessness in person!

"Right now, everybody must be chuckling secretly. Considering that he cannot distinguish the Radiating Crystal from the Grey Crystal, the so-called Master Sand must be very limited in the arts of refining. It appears that his patents, inventions, and Master Xue Yuanxin's remark for him are rather invalid. Maybe he spent a fortune in order to make himself look better."

Xie Qianhe put on a solemn face and said seriously, "It was wrong of you. Master Sand is our daughter's life-saver no matter what. It's one thing that I don't agree to our daughter's request of being his disciple, but it's another thing that he is fooled by other people. You should've reminded him on the spot."

"He and I were sitting in two different corners of the auction hall. There was a long distance between us. How was I supposed to remind him?"

Dong Hanxiang rolled her eyes at her husband. "Besides, he made the call quite fast and raised the price by fifty million during the first round, as if he was worried that somebody else was going to bid against him. When the deal was settled, he seemed overjoyed. What could I say then?

"Telling him in public that he had made a mistake and spent tens of thousands of dollars on a stone that was worth several hundred at best... that would be like smacking him in the face!"

"True."

Xie Qianhe thought for a moment and sighed. "But in the end, although you didn't smack his face in front of everyone, he smacked his own face so hard that I wonder if there's any left now!

"I really can't understand this Master Sand. Why is he not contented with being the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau and insisting on meddling in the circle of refiners? He is asking for trouble.

"Anyway, after hearing your story, I have all the more reason to refuse our daughter's request. The Xie family has existed for almost a thousand years. It is not the most famous one among refiners, but we have our own honor. I can't allow our daughter to study under such a magnate, or we will be the greatest joke in our circle!"

Xie Qianhe glanced at his mini crystal processor. He slapped his head and said, "Not good. Master Huangpu asked me to join a magical equipment evaluation meeting. I was too busy talking to you and forgot it!"

He hurried to go out of the hotel. When he reached the turn of the corridor, he thought of something and turned around. "Have a nice talk with Anan later and tell her what happened in the auction this morning. Right. Doesn't the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting have its own official website and online forum? I believe that it must be a hit already in the forum. Find some threads and show them to her.

"For young people, our words are not half as persuasive as those online!"

"I've already found a lot of them. But you two were arguing with each other too fiercely. I feared that our daughter might be too embarrassed, so I didn't bring them out immediately."

Dong Hanxiang triggered the light beam and entered the official online forum of the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting.

In the free discussion area, several threads marked as 'popular' already had more than a thousand replies.

One of the threads was titled "Magnate from Iron Plateau took action again and secured an 'amazing' stone from outer space with a fortune!"

The apostrophes on 'amazing' could not have been more sarcastic, and the replies were equally acerbic.

"Congratulations. Less than one billion for such a large meteorite..."

"I was there, too. It was indeed an 'amazing' stone. Really amazing. Hahahaha..."

"Amazingly stupid?"

"Why are you so straightforward? Can't the rich do whatever they want with their money?"

Xie Qianhe sniffed and was finally reassured. He turned around and left.

It was already evening, but the refiners participating in the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting and the visitors still came and went, filling the entire area.

Xie Qianhe was half an hour late when he finally arrived at No.22 enclosed examination center. The evaluation meeting had long begun.

In the world of Cultivators, before a piece of important magical equipment was released, the producer often invited renowned experts of the trade to run detailed analysis and tests on the magical equipment.

It was because most kinds of important magical equipment had endless variants and mysteries. A product release conference and several simple field tests were far from enough to fully demonstrate the strength of the magical equipment.

In comparison, such products were often worth millions if not billions. A release conference alone was not enough to entice potential customers.

Therefore, the experts of the trade would scrutinize the magical equipment beforehand in a small evaluation meeting and endorse it when it was released. It was a very popular way of promotion in the industry.

Taking part in the evaluation meeting had many requirements, too. The participants had to sign a contract first and guarantee that they would not leak the details before the release conference or make money based on any inside information they knew.

The more important a piece of magical equipment was, the more complicated the contract would be.

Glancing at the contract he was about to sign, Xie Qianhe was startled. It appeared that the magical equipment to be evaluated today had a profound background!

He was even more certain of his deduction when he entered the enclosed examination center, which had been disinfected and dedusted.

The participants included not only the several experts from the Silver Heart School but also two specialists from the Red Line School and a professor from the Refining Department of Heavenly Saints Institute.

They were all renowned big shots in the circle of refiners.

As it turned out, Xie Qianhe's Cultivation was the lowest of all.

"Fellow Cultivator Wang, Master Li, Professor Situ!"

Xie Qianhe hurriedly walked forward and apologized. "I'm terribly sorry that I was delayed by some trivia."

"Time is money, Little Xie. No need to be courteous. Come here."

The host of the evaluation meeting was Master Huangpu Bo from the Silver Heart School.

His hair was white, but his face was that of a child. He was not tall, and all his limbs were quite short. His nose was like a red, round meet ball, occupying half of his face.

Putting on his refining uniform, Xie Qianhe asked respectfully, "What magical equipment are we going to evaluate today, Master Huangpu?"

Master Huangpu replied, "The Unparalleled Extension produced by the Ares Laboratory of the Refining Department of Flying Star University!"

Chapter 670: Super Advanced Core Component

Chapter 670: Super Advanced Core Component

Xie Qianhe was quite shocked.

In order to make sure that the evaluation meeting was unbiased, nobody except the host knew the object to be evaluated.

Xie Qianhe had known that Master Xue Yuanxin was crafting a brand-new Ares Extension and that Sand Scorpion was involved in the project, too.

However, as an outsider, he was not clear on whether Sand Scorpion was merely the investor or really working as part of the team and making contributions.

But he did not think much. As an experienced refiner, he left all the annoyances behind him when he devoted himself to his work.

He was half an hour late, and the evaluation meeting had long begun. A piece of giant anti-gravity magical equipment was placed on the platform, supporting an Ares Extension in midair. Half of the Ares Extension has been dismantled with only the framework left, which looked like a dinosaur fossil recently excavated.

Even so, the elegant design and the intimidating aura of the extension were still apparent.

The experts of the trade all took out their secret gadgets and evaluated the parameters of the Unparalleled Extension with their ultimate skills. They dismantled the magical equipment and studied the components while they commented on it.

"This is indeed Master Xue Yuanxin's masterpiece. The prolonged preparation was definitely worth it. I've seen a lot of crystal suits and Ares Extensions that employ the principle of biomimetics. However, Master Xue is the only one who has achieved the perfect balance between defense and agility by combining biomimetics and aerodynamics!"

"As a brand-new alloy, the Super Bendable Steel utilizes a unique honeycomb structure that can crystalize the spiritual energy when it floods in with an extremely low loss rate. Together with the special ripple-like buffer rune arrays, the spiritual energy can be absorbed, stored, and unleashed again!"

"Although the material's longevity is too short for it to be applied to normal magical equipment such as crystal suits, it is perfect for an Ares Extension for one-off usage."

The experts of the trade all complimented the Unparalleled Extension.

Xie Qianhe circled around the framework of the Unparalleled Extension and tested the technology of spiritual energy storage in the breastplate. He was deeply amazed and nodded in approval, too.

Master Huangpu, on the other hand, had been testing the spine of the Unparalleled Extension in a corner of the test field. Now that the examination was finished, he joined the crowd and smiled. "Old Xue has been quiet in Flying Star University for the last couple of years. I thought that he'd given in to his old age and did not expect that he would present such a big surprise for the world of Cultivators out of nowhere!

"Thankfully, the Silver Heart School has not initiated any important Ares Extension projects in recent years. If we had, we definitely would have been eclipsed in the competition!"

The refiner from the Red Line School observed bitterly, "The Red Line School prepared to release an Ares Extension during the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting. Now, this is going to be a clash!"

Everybody laughed, knowing that the refiner was merely joking.

Before Master Xue Yuanxin joined Flying Star University, he had worked as the First Armadominus in the Red Line School for decades. The Red Line School was like his home, and it was quite proud now that Xue Yuanxin presented such a great product.

Moreover, even if the Ares Extension manufactured by the Red Line School was not as good as 'Unparalleled', there would still be endless benefits if they continued cooperating with Master Xue Yuanxin.

Therefore, although the refiner from the Red Line School sounded frustrated, he was actually wearing a smile and felt equally honored.

Master Huangpu smiled. "Come here, everyone. Old Xue spoke to me in person, telling me that the spine of the Unparalleled Extension is the most delicate part of it. I have just examined it, and it is indeed extraordinary. Here, you can have a look yourself."

The supportive axis in the back was the most important part for both crystal suits and Ares Extensions.

The supportive axis connected the crystal processor above, the super-compressed crystal reactor in the middle, and the main power rune arrays at the back.

Just like the spine of a human being, it was always of paramount importance.

If the spine was broken, a man would be paralyzed. It was exactly so for the supportive axis.

Therefore, the supportive axis was also known as the 'crystal spine'. It was one of the most essential units for crystal suits and Ares Extensions.

Taking a deep breath, Master Huangpu Bo rubbed his hands. White mist as thick as water flowed out of his palms and divided into four streams.

An intact crystal spine was dissected into dozens of fundamental components after several cracking sounds.

Most components were left aside. But seven intriguing components in eccentric shapes were gathered in the middle.

It seemed that they were the core components of the crystal spine.

The seven experienced refiners all held their breath and observed the seven components carefully.

The seven components were all in irregular forms and had sharp edges. They looked somewhat similar to the real spine of a dragon.

When aimed at the light, colorful brilliance was vaguely spreading out like hazy mists.

"This is—"

Xie Qianhe tried to explore one of the components with his spiritual threads to determine the materials that constituted the component.

Yet, his soul shivered, and his face color immediately changed.

"This component is made of the Heavenly Fire Wolfram, the Moon Tear Germanium, and the Electric Brewer Bronze, three extremely aggressive materials, as well as dozens of other microelements!

"How can that be?"

Xie Qianhe had a deep understanding of material science. He said, "Heavenly Fire Wolfram, Moon Tear Germanium, and Electric Brewer Bronze are the ultimate materials of the fire class, the water class, and the electricity class respectively. They are all extremely violent!

"Just as there can't be two tigers on the same mountain, the three materials are like 'tyrants' among Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. Only one of them can be used as the main material for a piece of magical equipment. Other materials should all be ancillary ones.

"It is already extremely difficult to meld two of the materials into one, not to mention combining three steadily and naturally while maintaining their respective features!

"Master Xue Yuanxin is indeed not old yet!"

"And this one—"

Xie Qianhe's shock had not ended yet. When he triggered the component with his spiritual energy, he seemed to hear a sign from the inside of the component. Then, three tiny rune arrays appeared on the surface of the component that had been empty a moment ago.

"Hidden runes!"

Xie Qianhe's eyes opened even wider.

Hidden runes, as the name suggested, meant rune arrays that were hidden inside the magical equipment instead of being carved on the surface.

There were many merits to such a practice. The rune array would remain intact for longer and was less likely to be damaged. It would be less affected by the spiritual waves of the outside world, and the circulation of spiritual energy would be smoother.

But it was extremely difficult to compose hidden runes. Even Xie Qianhe was not confident that he could leave hidden runes on any material, much less a weird, synthesized one!

However—

Xie Qianhe gasped.

Something weird happened.

While he sent more spiritual energy into the component, the three hidden runes on the surface of the component underwent subtle changes and turned into three entirely different rune arrays!

"Stroke switching!"

Xie Qianhe was dumbfounded by Master Xue Yuanxin's amazing skills in refining.

Stroke switching was another sophisticated technique in refining that allowed a refiner to compose different rune arrays on the same spot with different ink and methods.

When the telepathic thought from the user or the spiritual energy sent in were altered, the runes would change into various forms accordingly.

However large a piece of magical equipment was, the space for runes was always limited.

When one could only carve five rune arrays with the common techniques, they would be able to carve fifteen or even more with the 'stroke switching' technique.

It was needless to say which of the two choices was better.

Take the component in front of Xie Qianhe for example. The two sets of rune arrays that appeared before and after both highlighted 'solidness', 'sturdiness', and 'persistence'. But he had sensed that the first set of rune arrays was more focused on attack while the second gave more attention to defense.

It meant that the Unparalleled Extension could be switched between the aggressive form and the defensive form freely at will after adopting such a design.

"Combing three materials as volatile as Heavenly Fire Wolfram, Moon Tear Germanium, and Electric Brewer Bronze perfectly and composing six sets of different rune array groups in the tiny space with the hidden rune technique and the stroke switching technique… The spiritual energy circulates smoothly, and the hundreds of runes do not affect each other at all!

"The toughness and performance of the component is at least 30% higher than components of the same type.

"Immeasurable. Truly immeasurable!

"As expected of Master Xue Yuanxin, the previous First Armadominus of the Red Line School!"

Xie Qianhe was fully convinced. Such marvelous arts of refining were perhaps unattainable for him in the rest of his life!

However, on second thought, Xie Qianhe felt happy and grinned when he realized that his daughter would probably study equally marvelous refining skills from Master Huangpu, who was as famous as Master Xue.

The other few experienced refiners surrounded the seven irregular components and were all amazed. They all sang its praises.

"The core components of the crystal spine must've been polished by Master Xue in person. They are indeed wonders!

"The seven core components alone are enough to support an excellent Ares Extension even if there is no Super Bendable Steel!"

"Not just the Ares Extension! The seven core components are at a very advanced level in regard to sturdiness and functionality. They can be applied to many high-end crystal suits!"

"For example, 'Red Phoenix', the flagship model that the Red Line School introduced this year, specializes in high-speed scouting. It has an extremely low weight. But to achieve the purpose of reducing the weight, the performance of the crystal spine was not very satisfactory.

"If it is strengthened with the same techniques as the seven components, the performance of the crystal suit will definitely be upgraded!"

The other few refiners all nodded their heads in approval.

The amazing performance that the seven components showed had proved them qualified enough to be applied to magical equipment of various types. They could turn ordinary into extraordinary and ultimately improve the quality of a piece of magical equipment.

They whispered to each other and planned to talk with Master Xue about cooperation or even transferring the techniques.

But with a complicated smile, Master Huangpu sighed and said, "If I may suggest, you can stop thinking about how to please Old Xue."

"Why? Is Master Xue unwilling to transfer the techniques?"

The refiner from the Red Line School said confidently, "As long as Master Xue is willing to transfer the techniques, we can pay whatever price he wants!"

The Red Line School was practically Xue Yuanxin's home, and the two parties had always been in a close relationship. If the techniques were confidential, they could always rehire Master Xue and ask him to provide technical support.

But Master Huangpu shook his head and said, "No. According to the work report of the Unparalleled Extension in my hand, the seven core components were not refined by Old Xue, but by Sand Scorpion, the second refiner of the Unparalleled Extension!"

Chapter 671: Why Are You Crying?

Chapter 671: Why Are You Crying?

The air in the examination room seemed to have been pumped away. There was nothing but dead silence for ten seconds. Then, the experts of the trade all jumped to their feet.

"Sand Scorpion? The magnate from Iron Plateau?"

"It's true that he has a refining center under his name, but does he really know the arts of refining himself and is so adept at them?"

"Is—is it possible? I'm told that he made a fool of himself this morning by purchasing a worthless crap with a fortune. He was the biggest joke in the auction!"

"I remember that he is not very old. Forty years old, tops. The seven components are crafted skillfully without the least hint of hinderance. It also carries a vintage air with it. Such a young man is definitely not able to do that!"

Hearing the exclamations, Xie Qianhe felt that his head was dizzy, and his ears were humming. He could not help but step back in shock.

He opened his mouth, too, and was about to question Master Huangpu, but he knew deep in his heart that Master Xue would not make such a joke in the work report.

Is Sand Scorpion really an expert of refining who has been hiding himself?

Producing such super components, his skills in refining are really unbelievable. Did he start learning the arts of refining before he was born?

Xie Qianhe could not figure out the reason at all.

He recalled his remark about the guy in front of his daughter. His mouth immediately turned sour, and he was grasped by complicated feelings.

Listening to everyone peacefully, Master Huangpu nodded and said, "To be honest, I found it as hard to believe as every one of you.

"Seeing is believing. It's very simple if we want to know Sand Scorpion's expertise in refining.

"Just now, I made a deal with Sand Scorpion through Old Xue that we will 'barter' tomorrow."

"What!"

Everybody was greatly surprised. They did not expect that Master Huangpu would propose to communicate with Sand Scorpion despite his fame in the circle of refiners.

'Barter' was also known as an 'exchange of techniques'. It was a very common method of communication among refiners.

The rules for bartering were very simple.

For example, Master Huangpu was quite interested in the techniques through which Li Yao forged the seven core components and wanted to know more about them. But Li Yao would not show the techniques to anybody easily because such precious techniques were priceless. Therefore, if Master Huangpu was really interested in them, he could offer some of his own techniques for Li Yao to decide. The two parties would demonstrate their own techniques, which were mostly of similar value, unreservedly, including every detail, to each other.

This would be a bartering of techniques.

As for how much the other party would be able to grasp, it would all depend on their own understanding.

'Barter' was both communication and competition.

The subtext was:

"Even if I show every move of my technique to you right in front of your face, you won't be able to understand it!

"On the contrary, I will grasp your technique as long as you show it once to me!"

After all, refiners were not combat-type Cultivators who played with blades. Most of them did not have grudges with each other. There was no way that they would engage in a real battle.

Competing with each other by bartering would not only measure the skillfulness of different refiners but also maintain the ostensible peace. Besides, it could also stimulate the development of the arts of refining in general. Therefore, it was quite popular among refiners.

For many refiners, their sole purpose of travelling to Heavenly Saints City after a journey of ten thousand miles was to barter techniques with other experts. Nothing else.

They did not expect that Master Huangpu would propose to barter with a young refiner.

However, on second thought, if the seven core components were indeed refined by Sand Scorpion, the techniques were definitely worth trading with any skill.

Master Huangpu always considered the arts of refining his life. No wonder he would not let go of such an opportunity.

The refiner from the Red Line School hesitated and said, "Master Huangpu, I want to exchange techniques with Sand Scorpion, too. I wonder, will he accept?"

Master Huangpu smiled. "I can ask Old Xue to forward your message. But according to Old Xue, Sand Scorpion is an out-and-out maniac in refining who is interested in every skill. It should not be a problem.

"However, what kind of technique are you going to barter with?

"I proposed to exchange his techniques with my 'Heptahedral Dual Rune Array Structure'.

Everybody gasped again simultaneously.

The Heptahedral Dual Rune Array Structure was Master Huangpu's well-known ultimate skill that could embed two unidentical and different-sized rune arrays together.

Even the simplest rune array groups would have dozens of new variations after employing such a design!

They did not expect that Master Huangpu would be so extravagant as to offer such secret arts.

But in a way, it did make sense. The techniques to forge the seven components were too incredible. The guy would not agree to the barter at all if they were not sophisticated techniques such as the Heptahedral Dual Rune Array Structure, provided he was not an idiot.

Everybody looked at each other in bewilderment.

They were all planning to barter with Sand Scorpion. But now that Master Huangpu had provided such a high-level technique, they would not only be considering Sand Scorpion a moron but also slapping Master Xue's and Master Huangpu's faces if they were to offer some rudimental skills of refining.

Pondering for a long time, the refiner of the Red Line School stomped on the ground and gritted his teeth. "I—I can show Sand Scorpion the complete 'Light Chasing Hellfire Art'!

"This secret technique can improve the temperature inside a furnace by at least 1,200 degrees in three seconds!"

Another refiner stepped forward, his eyes red. "I will trade my 'Heavenly Thread Blood Binding Art' for his techniques. This is a secret art that can strengthen materials with blood. I have not even taught my true disciples the skill. Is it good enough?"

Seeing the generosity of their companions, the other refiners all gritted their teeth and proposed their ultimate skills.

One of the refiners breathed heavily and said, "What's the big deal about bartering? I don't believe that he can learn such a delicate skill after seeing it only once!"

Xie Qianhe was hesitating at first until he was enlightened by the remark.

He strode forward and said, "Master Huangpu, I want to barter with Sand Scorpion, too. I cannot reveal the Xie family's secret arts to outsiders, but I received a secret art named 'Dividing Gold Splitting Jade Art' ten years ago that can be used to purify materials.

"When Cultivated to the highest level, the secret art can purify lowly materials with abundant impurities into high-level materials with few to no impurities. It is a supreme Cultivation art that can improve the quality of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures!

"I believe the technique should be enough to trade with Sand Scorpion!"

Master Huangpu asked everybody to write down the names and effects of their techniques. He then gathered the information and sent it over to Master Xue Yuanxin.

A while later, the response came.

"Sand Scorpion has agreed to barter with everybody in the No.19 refining workshop at dawn tomorrow!"

"Excellent!"

Xie Qianhe clenched his fists hard.

He was going to observe in person whether or not Sand Scorpion's skills in refining were as good as they appeared to be!

Half an hour later, Xie Qianhe walked out of the examination room and called his wife. "Ah Xiang, about Anan's master…"

"Old Xie, not good!"

Dong Hanxiang was quite anxious. "Anan just left a note and ran away through the window!"

"What?"

Xie Qianhe widened his eyes and was dazed for a long time. Taking a long breath, he said, "Forget it. Leave her alone. She's almost twenty years old. She should know what she's doing."

Dong Hanxiang was dumbfounded. She expected that her husband to burst into fury when he heard the news and did not think that he would be so calm.

"Old Xie, what happened?"

"Nothing," Xie Qianhe replied gloomily. "It's just that my eyes are not as good as the old days."

…

"Greetings, dear audience. I am Yi Feilan, a journalist from 'Entertainment Weekly', reporting from the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting.

"Even the best magical equipment relies on a Cultivator to dedicate the highest performance. Today, we have been following the young genius Wu Mayan. According to the latest news, Wu Mayan is currently training in the No.77 training room affiliated to the meeting.

"What kind of training did the young genius go through to become the most eye-catching superstar in Flying Star University?

"Now, please follow me to the door of the No.77 training room and wait for Wu Mayan to appear!"

After talking to concealed microphone that was hidden on her collar, Yi Feilan lurked behind some bushes stealthily and mumbled to herself, "Wu Mayan, I'm definitely going to catch you this time."

A moment later, the door of the No.77 training room opened slightly.

"He's here!"

Yi Feilan was refreshed and immediately came up with nineteen interview plans, some of which were hoping to earn his sympathy while some others were bordering on harassment.

However, just when she jumped out of the bushes, she saw the guy's face in the artificial moonlight.

Yi Feilan gasped and froze.

The man, or rather, the object that appeared to be a man, had a swollen head that was even larger than a pig head and covered in bruises. He was so miserable that even his parents would not have recognized him.

The high-toughness protective suit on his body had been torn into thousands of threads, flying in the wind.

His skin was either blue or purple, and there was absolutely no place that was the normal color. His many body parts were bleeding, as if he had been beaten up by dozens of muscular men for three days and three nights.

Like a dying old man, he held the wall and shivered for two minutes before he staggered forward, crippled and hunched, while hugging his chest with his arms.

Yi Feilan was dazed for a long time.

In the cold moonlight, there were tears on the engorged face.

"Well, I'm sorry, dear audience. Our sources might have made a mistake. The young genius Wu Mayan is not in the No.77 training room. We'll look around in the few training rooms nearby…"

The deformed young man did not notice the journalist who left in disappointment. He simply wobbled forward at speed lower than that of a grandma. While moving, he gnashed his teeth and grumbled, "That's too outrageous. Just one hand, and I was—"

Suddenly, a tiny shadow jumped out from a corner.

The young man was caught off guard and dodged on instinct. However, the wounds all over his body were ripped open, and he felt that he had jumped into a tank of boiling oil!

The young man had an urge to roar and cry.

"Senior Brother Wu!"

With a sunny face, Xie Anan suddenly saw Wu Mayan's murderous eyes with the help of the moonlight. Her smile was immediately frozen as she asked, "Senior Brother, why are you crying?"

Chapter 672: The Spirits of Ancient Refiners

Chapter 672: The Spirits of Ancient Refiners

" You've got the wrong guy! " exclaimed Wu Mayan through lips that were as thick as sausages right now.

Xie Anan laughed. "Are you kidding me? I'm a refiner, and I observe people's hands first when I see them. Although your face has been utterly reshaped by Master Sand, the distribution of joints on your hands suggest that you are exactly Senior Brother Wu."

Dumbfounded, Wu Mayan blurted, "Who says that I was beaten by master? I ran into a wall by accident! Also, who is your senior brother? Don't try to pull strings with me!"

He did not realize that he had acknowledged his identity.

Xie Anan chuckled. "It's not a shameful thing that one is taught a lesson by their master. What's there to be ashamed of? You are an interesting kid."

Wu Mayan burst into fury and was about to jump up when his wounds were torn open again. He grunted in pain. "Xie—Xie Anan, don't be outrageous. Who—who's a kid?"

Xie Anan rubbed her hands and came close while smiling. "Come here. Let me help you. I guarantee that your swelling will be gone in ten minutes."

Wu Mayan did not buy it at all. His big face twisted again as he raised his eyebrow and shouted, "Don't come close. What are you doing? I warn you, Xie Anan—"

Wu Mayan was about to weep. Ten Xie Anans would be no match for him on a different occasion. But he had just been taught a hard lesson by Li Yao, and even his stomach was cramping because of it. There was no way that he could summon his strength at all.

Although Xie Anan was not a battle-type Cultivator, her strength was hundreds of times higher than before after practicing the Art of the Swallowing Whale and the Chaos Gale Hammer Technique under Li Yao's guidance. Her hands were faster than ever, too.

As a result, she snatched Wu Mayan's shoulders in the blink of an eye.

"Hiss—"

Wu Mayan was about to scream, but the excruciating pain that he expected did not come. Instead, he felt that his shoulders were itching.

Wherever Xie Anan's hands reached, the agony all turned into warmth, like the bitter tea that was dissolving in the mouth and left aroma. He could not have felt more comfortable.

"Well—"

Wu Mayan widened his eyes. He did not anticipate that the silly woman would have such skills.

"How about it? Do you feel better?"

Xie Anan was trying to bond with her future Senior Brother, or rather, her 'little' brother. She did her best to patch him up while she said with a smile, "This is a secret art that Master Sand taught me. He said that it was excavated from a jade chip from the ancient Cultivation world forty thousand years ago and has amazing effects for quick recovery after training.

"Over the past half year, I've often been as miserable-looking as you. Therefore, Master Sand taught me the secret art so that I can be recovered faster and deal with the next day's training."

Wu Mayan was dazed. "You've often been tortured by master, too? How could he bear to do that? Besides, aren't you a refiner?"

Xie Anan raised her eyebrow and replied casually, "In the past half year, you spent most of your time in the Battlesuit Department. It was me who was around Master Sand all the time. Your appearance today is nothing unusual for me.

"It's true that I'm a refiner, but Master Sand said that the foundation of refining is a healthy body.

"Master Sand also said that my talents are not enough for me to become an 'intelligent' refiner, but I could try to be a 'physical' refiner and focus my attention on forging.

"He hesitated about the training in the beginning, too. But I asked him to increase the amount of training. I knew that I was not smart enough, and I am far from being an unparalleled genius like Senior Brother Wu. If I did not work harder, I would really stand no chance at all."

Wu Mayan was silent.

The suffering of the tutorial battle half an hour ago was still scary for him right now when he thought of it. He was of a mind to run away immediately so that he would be saved from the torment tomorrow night.

He looked at Xie Anan carefully and found it hard to believe that such a girl who still had baby fat and looked like a doll could withstand his master's brutal training methods.

"Why did you come here?"

Wu Mayan's tone softened.

Xie Anan's movement stopped briefly. She bit her lips and said, "I'm here for Master Sand. Just now, I had a big fight with my family…"

Wu Mayan listened to the whole story, but he was a young man of fourteen after all, and he did not how to handle such matters.

"Is Master Sand inside?" Xie Anan looked at Wu Mayan in expectation with her watery eyes wide open.

Wu Mayan had never been stared at by a girl at such a short distance.

His face, which was no longer swollen, suddenly turned red again.

"Alright. Alright. A gentleman does not argue with a woman. I'm going to let you go this time." Wu Mayan waved his hands in annoyance. "Master is still training in the room. I'll bring you in and say a few nice words for you later!"

"Really? Thank you, little Senior Brother!"

In ecstasy, Xie Anan's hands pressed hard.

"Hiss—"

Two hot tears suddenly flowed out of Wu Mayan's eyes, as he screamed desperately, " Xie Anan! Were you my mortal energy in my previous life?"

…

The following morning, before dawn, the artificial sky was still dark.

The area where the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting was held, on the other hand, was illuminated by countless lights.

The forum for refiners that was held once every five years was too good an opportunity to miss. Many refiners gathered and talked with each other all night long without sleeping at all.

In his decades of life as a refiner, Xie Qianhe had bartered with countless people. But it had been a long time since he was so nervous before the exchange. He paced back and forth anxiously in front of the door of the refining workshop.

That day, seven refiners would be exchanging techniques with Sand Scorpion. Naturally, they could not go inside the room together and had to communicate with Sand Scorpion privately in a fully-enclosed environment one by one.

According to the rules, integrity was of paramount importance in the competition between refiners. Before the exchange of techniques, both parties would swear a Blood Oath and sign a contract stating that they would not inform the process and the result of the barter to any third party, and that the techniques they saw would be kept to themselves if grasped and could not be taught to anybody else.

Master Xue Yuanxin, as a renowned expert, was invited as the Observer of today's barter.

Therefore, the few refiners ahead of Xie Qianhe all remained absolutely silent after they went out. They kept their mouths shut and stood still with a mysterious face.

Xie Qianhe felt like a cat was scratching his heart. He was going to ask, but he found it hard to open his mouth.

However, from the shock and bewilderment that occasionally leaked out of their eyes, he had vaguely sensed that Sand Scorpion's skills were beyond their expectations.

A while later, the airtight door of the refining workshop was opened. A cluster of high-pressure gas immediately spurted out from inside.

"Here comes Fellow Cultivator Yin!"

Yin Yuanhua, who had just bartered with Sand Scorpion in the room, was also a specialist from the Silver Heart School. He was Xie Qianhe's colleague and they were quite close.

Xie Qianhe hurried to go forward and ask, "Old Yin—"

Master Xue Yuanxin, who was standing to the side, coughed slightly.

Yin Yuanhua was wearing a complicated countenance with both amazement and confusion. He said, "Old Xie, it's your turn to appreciate Fellow Cultivator Sand's methods now."

Xie Qianhe was refreshed. He took a long breath and strode into the refining workshop.

The airtight door was closed behind him. The gears on the two sides of the door slowly pumped away the air in the room and blocked the workshop from the outside world. The entire space was filled with steady, unreactive gas.

In the middle of the workshop was a ball-shaped floating furnace. Hundreds of shining materials were placed in the open warehouses on the two sides.

Sand Scorpion was sitting right behind the furnace.

The heat emitted from the furnace twisted the rays of light and made his body look somewhat unpredictable.

Xie Qianhe observed the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau carefully and realized that he was much younger than he had imagined. Besides, he did not have the calm and casual demeanor on Master Huangpu.

On the contrary, his hair was messy, and his eyes were red and hollowed. His lips were cracked, suggesting that he hadn't drunk anything for a long time.

There was nothing but emptiness in Sand Scorpion's eyes, which seemed to have pierced into the thick wall of the furnace and extended into the bouncing flames. He was mumbling to himself and calculating something wholeheartedly.

It was only when Xie Qianhe coughed that Sand Scorpion raised his head and glanced at him.

Xie Qianhe shuddered and felt that his eyes were cold and crazy.

Although it was merely a competition between refiners, he felt that he was faced with a hungry, ferocious beast, and that one of them would have to die.

An absurd idea suddenly popped up in Xie Qianhe's mind.

He had heard tales where the ancient refiners would spend ten years day and night in forging an unparalleled sword. They would jump into the furnace and offer themselves as sacrifices so that the sharpest blades in the world could be born!

He had found it hard to imagine what kind of insane refiners would do such things.

But at that moment, he suddenly felt that if there were such refiners, their appearance and spirits would be exactly the same as Sand Scorpion!

Xie Qianhe felt that his lips were dry. He said, somewhat in embarrassment, "Fellow Cultivator Sand, thank you for saving my daughter. My daughter also told me that you went through a lot of trouble giving her enlightenments recently…"

"Fellow Cultivator Xie."

Li Yao was still dwelling in the soul-stirring competition of refining skills a moment ago.

The few refiners who had gone in moments earlier were all experts among experts. The marvelous skills that they demonstrated had given him great satisfaction, as if he had enjoyed a delicious meal.

His computational ability had soared to the maximum, making his head look like a rapidly-functioning, burning mainframe crystal processor, while he analyzed the techniques he had just seen crazily.

He was still hungry at this moment, and there was no time for small talk at all.

Crazy brilliance suddenly beamed out of Li Yao's deep eyes, as he yelled, "Let's talk about the irrelevant stuff outside. Refining is the only theme in this place!"

Chapter 673: Dividing Gold Splitting Jade, Nine Dragons On Body!

Chapter 673: Dividing Gold Splitting Jade, Nine Dragons On Body!

Li Yao's words were like a bucket of icy water that was poured over Xie Qianhe's head. He shuddered hard and suddenly came back to himself.

Troubled by too many trifles, he had not been himself in the past two days.

Li Yao was right. They were both refiners, and refining was their everything. Then, let the arts of refining solve all the problems!

In a moment, Xie Qianhe exuded the intimidating aura of a top refiner once more. Confidence flowed out of his body as he nodded. "Alright. Fellow Cultivator Sand, let's begin!"

He retrieved dozens of materials from his Cosmos Ring and placed them in front of Li Yao.

"Removing the impurities in the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures to get the purest ingredients possible has always been a prerequisite for refining!

"Materials that have impurities will either yield unqualified magical equipment with unexpected consequences or even cause various dangers during the refining process!"

Li Yao nodded. The explosion that took place when he met Master Xue Yuanxin for the first time was because the impurities of one of the ingredients had not been completely cleaned!

Xie Qianhe said confidently, "Every refiner has their own approach to remove impurities and cleanse materials. But the 'Dividing Gold Splitting Jade Art' that I'm going to show today is the ultimate skill in this aspect.

"Please take a look, Fellow Cultivator Sand.

"This is a Colored Star Stone of extremely low quality. Such materials tend to attract the microconstituents in the mother mode, which will decorate the stone with various colors.

"Although it looks beautiful, there are too many impurities in them.

"By my estimation, 77% of the Colored Star Stone is contaminated by impurities. It is barely usable for any purpose!

"It is quite tricky to remove the impurities inside the Colored Star Stone in a normal way.

"But the Dividing Gold Splitting Jade Art adopts a smart approach. By refining the Colored Star Stone with metal and jade, all the impurities inside the stone will meld together, before they are eliminated as a whole!"

Li Yao's eyes suddenly shone with interest. "The 'gold' and 'jade' in the Dividing Gold Splitting Jade Art are mere catalysts?"

"Exactly." Xie Qianhe nodded in approval. "Different materials require different metals and jades as catalysts.

There are endless permutations and combinations. I have not explored all of them even though I've studied for ten years.

"Fellow Cultivator Sand, since we are exchanging techniques, I'm not going to keep anything to myself. The information stored in this jade chip is the correlation between materials and their best catalysts that I have tested over the past ten years. Take a look!"

Xie Qianhe took out a translucent jade chip from his pocket, touched it, and tossed it into the air.

The jade chip boasted auto-play technology. It floated in midair and radiated. Octagonally blinking runes fell down like a waterfall and illuminated the entire refining workshop.

Li Yao's eyes were glittering like two crystal cameras with the highest resolution as he tried to capture every piece of information before him.

Xie Qianhe smiled casually. It was impossible that somebody else could learn his ten years of hard work in only several minutes.

Xie Qianhe said, "Fellow Cultivator Sand, allow me to show you the usage of the Dividing Gold Splitting Jade Art in person."

He activated the furnace and set the temperature on the operation menu, ready for the real refining work.

Xie Qianhe tossed the Colored Star Stone as well as the Night Flowing Gold and the Black Green Jade, which served as catalysts, into the furnace. Setting the procedures on the furnace, he closed his eyes and waved his fingers crazily.

Mumbling spells to himself, he put his fingers in hundreds of different postures within an instant.

Inside the furnace, the fire was burning hot. The Colored Star Stone, the Night Flowing Gold, and the Black Green Jade were all slightly melted. Under the strike of spiritual energy, they were gradually combined and turned into a cluster of colorful liquid metal.

Xie Qianhe's hands were in a quite weird posture. His palms were far away from each other, but the ten fingers were tangled together.

Suddenly, his palms crashed against each other hard. The hundreds of runes floating in midair all flooded into the furnace and reached the materials that were about to be melted!

BOOM!

Earthshaking noises were echoing inside the small furnace, as if a treasure was about to find its way out of the soil!

As the runes merged in the furnace, sounds of wind and thunder resonated within. Small pearls were pushed out of the giant cluster of liquid metal and rolled along the wall of the furnace before they were blown away by the rune array of the wind class to the waste pipe nearby and extracted out of the furnace.

The multicolored pearls seemed to be made of thousands of paints. They were still squeaking, suggesting that they were in an unstable state.

The impurities stored inside the Colored Star Stones had been absorbed by the Night Flowing Gold and the Black Green Jade like a sponge absorbing water.

Three minutes later, Xie Qianhe stopped the technique.

His uniform was soaked in sweat, and his face was red. But he was in quite high spirits while he looked at the waste pipe in satisfaction. He smiled at Li Yao. "Fellow Cultivator Sand, this is how the Dividing Gold Splitting Jade Art works. After preliminary processing, 80% of the impurifies inside the Colored Star Stone have been removed. It should be able to meet the need of simple projects now.

"If the demand on the purity of the material is higher, then the material must be cleansed time and time again until it is usable."

Li Yao bowed and spared no words in his compliment. "The Dividing Gold Splitting Jade Art is indeed marvelous. Thank you for your demonstration, Fellow Cultivator Xie!"

After saying that, he sat on his knees again and gazed at the furnace with his hands holding his chin, not moving anymore.

Xie Qianhe returned his jade chip to his pocket and smiled casually. "That's alright. I will be waiting for Fellow Cultivator Sand to show us your technique to build the seven core components!"

After that, he went to the door of the workshop.

According to the deal yesterday, the seven of them would show their techniques to Sand Scorpion first, and then they would watch Sand Scorpion displaying the secret art for forging the components together.

When he was about to exit the room, Xie Qianhe could not help but turn around.

With only a single glance, his eyeballs froze.

Sand Scorpion's hands were folded into a square pyramid, with the ten fingers tangled together and the palms far away from each other, in exactly the same gesture that he had made just a moment earlier!

In only three seconds, Sand Scorpion changed seventeen different hand gestures that were all loaded with spiritual energy and not simply for show.

As long as his palms collided, the power contained in the seventeen gestures would all be released!

These are the seventeen most difficult gestures in the Dividing Gold Splitting Jade Art!

He has only seen me perform once, and he grasped all of them?

Xie Qianhe was dumbfounded.

Although he could tell that Sand Scorpion's gestures were still not precise, did not follow the standard, and would probably ruin the materials inside a furnace if the gestures were activated, the guy had definitely grasped the essence of the Dividing Gold Splitting Jade Art. The only thing he needed was repetitive practice!

Xie Qianhe felt that his head was dizzy.

Before he came back to himself, Sand Scorpion shook his hands and suddenly formed new gestures in a more primitive, traditional, and fluent style!

This is not the Dividing Gold Splitting Jade Art but another secret art to eliminate the impurities in materials that he knew before.

No. It is not right. His gestures are quite weird and give me a very familiar feeling.

He is trying to incorporate the Dividing Gold Splitting Jade Art into his own skills of refining!

Xie Qianhe was greatly shocked.

What he did not know was that Li Yao had practiced dozens of secret arts to purify materials in the Heavenly Refining Tower of the Hundred Smelting Clan in Ou Yezi's memory pieces.

However, most of the secret arts were too ancient to be implemented in the modern furnaces.

Li Yao had agreed to barter with Xie Qianhe not because he desired the Dividing Gold Splitting Jade Art itself, but because he wanted to study the tricks to use such an ancient technique in modern furnaces.

The Dividing Gold Splitting Jade Art was too sophisticated and boundless. Even for Li Yao, he was not able to grasp all of it in several minutes after watching Xie Tianhe practice it.

However, by observing the entire process, Li Yao was enlightened and found a brand-new approach to applying ancient techniques to modern furnaces.

The methods of purification had been practiced hundreds of times in his memory. Naturally, they were now fluent and flawless when Li Yao showed them in reality.

Born in a noble family of refining, Xie Qianhe was a man of integrity. He would not pry into other people's arts of refining and quickly stopped watching Li Yao.

He did not know how he left the refining workshop and simply sat down like the previous refiners did.

He did not even notice that Master Huangpu was walking to him.

When he was back to himself, Master Huangpu had walked out of the furnace with a complicated expression. It seemed that he was somewhat shocked by Sand Scorpion, too.

"Everybody, let's go inside now. It's time for Fellow Cultivator Sand to demonstrate his technique for us."

With mixed feelings, Xie Qianhe entered the workshop again with the other refiners.

The workshop had been cleaned. A booth in a corner of the room, which had been sealed by rune arrays, was now opened, revealing an anvil carved with complicated patterns that both looked like clouds and swirling thunderbolts.

Inside the furnace, the alloy made of the Heavenly Fire Wolfram, the Moon Tear Germanium, and the Electric Brewer Bronze was revolving rapidly. The irritating spiritual waves that were spreading out of the materials were shaking the furnace hard.

There was absolutely no redundant emotion on Li Yao's face. Passion for the arts of refining was all there was. His eyes that seemed to be on fire licked every refiner, as he said, "Thank you for all your wholehearted enlightenments, everybody. In a moment, I will show you how to combine the three tyrannical materials together manually and how to carve rune arrays on them with the hidden rune technique and the stroke switching technique!"

He!

On Li Yao's body, the refining uniform made of mustard-seed materials with such a high elasticity that it could be lengthened to more than ten meters away was now torn apart into various pieces as if it had decayed for a hundred years and blossomed in midair, revealing bright gold, magnificent muscles behind it!

There were no tattoos on Li Yao's body, but colorful brilliance was vaguely flowing inside his veins and nerves that were slighting protruded, like nine dragons that were raging and roaring silently!

Chapter 674: Star Basher, Divine Anvil!

Chapter 674: Star Basher, Divine Anvil!

The seven refiners all took a step back.

As pure creation-type Cultivators, they found it hard to stand so close to a human-shaped beast like Li Yao.

Li Yao waved his right hand. Black brilliance suddenly shined on the Cosmos Ring on his little finger and formed into a giant hammer in midair that was covered in bumps and hollows and seemed to be made of a meteorite.

"This is 'Star Basher'. It was forged with 'Lackluster Star Rock', a meteorite from outer space, as the main material and 145 other Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures including the Crescent Moon Essence, the Black and Red Jade, and so on, after being baptized with nine drops of blood from my heart every day for 49 days!

"The 'Divine Anvil' over there was made by the Iron Heart Powder of a high density that had accumulated for billions of years ten thousand meters under the spot where the five great mountains of Iron Plateau overlapped.

"Everything has to behave nicely when it comes to the Divine Anvil, be it a dragon or tiger. They will have to be flattened and reshaped even if they are deities."

Carrying the Star Basher on his shoulder, Li Yao seemed to be able to melt metal with his eyes, which were glittering along with his veins and nerves. He looked more intimidating than ever!

The three aggressive materials inside the furnace were just melted together. The performance parameters on the operation light beam were shining. It was time to extract them.

Li Yao extended his left hand. Bright gold spiritual gas leaked out of his pores and condensed into a giant hand in midair, which snatched into the discharge pipe of the furnace and picked out the alloy that was thousands of degrees in temperature.

All seven refiners exclaimed in shock, including Master Huangpu.

Remote manipulation was not a marvelous skill for experts at their level.

But remote manipulation could be very different, depending on the object to be manipulated.

They could snatch metals that were at a normal temperature and were relatively steady, even if the object weighed hundreds of kilograms.

However, the alloy in front of them was at a high temperature of thousands of degrees. Besides, it was made up by three aggressive materials. The repulsion between the ingredients were very strong, and earsplitting noises were already echoing as they left the furnace, as if three ferocious beasts had been locked in the same narrow cage and were about to start brawling.

But Sand Scorpion had grasped such untamable materials steadily by remote manipulation!

He sniffed and closed his left hand. The bright gold hand in midair immediately shrank in size, putting an end to the noises coming the irritating alloy, which was now as timid as a mouse.

Li Yao threw the alloy at the Divine Anvil.

The Divine Anvil was originally a black, lackluster anvil. However, when it was in contact with Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures that contained tremendous spiritual energy, all the spiritual stripes on its surface started shining!

Clouds were flowing, thunder was rumbling, and lighting was flashing. Hundreds of electric arcs were generated on the Divine Anvil and tied up the alloy like countless ropes.

"Hiss—"

Li Yao took a deep, deep breath.

His inhaling was like the absorption of a giant whale. More than half of the air in the workshop was absorbed into his chest, which immediately expanded to twice its usual size. Two swirls in the air seemed to be forming before his nose!

Everybody immediately felt short of breath, as there was not enough oxygen in the room.

Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum!

The ventilation rune arrays on the ceiling, sensing that the workshop was short of oxygen, immediately functioned and sent in new air.

The seven refiners looked at each other in bewilderment. They were all the top experts of the trade and had witness various kinds of bizarre skills of refining, but they had never seen such an impressive performance before.

The real refining was not yet begun, but the aura was already so appalling!

BOOM!

While they were startled, they suddenly heard a heaven-splitting explosion. Nobody saw how Sand Scorpion took action, but the enormous Star Basher suddenly vanished into thin air. It turned into an unpredictable black dragon and mauled the Divine Anvil time and time again.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The noises, each one louder than the last, seemed to be threatening to destroy the workshop at any point like an invisible tsunami.

The mystic rays emanated from the Divine Anvil were even more dazzling.

Xie Qianhe's eyes suddenly shone, and he seemed to see a soul-stirring illusion where the Divine Anvil turned into a high platform that was hundreds of meters tall, and the serial lightning was hitting it nonstop!

The Star Basher struck the Divine Anvil a thousand times in only one minute from various directions.

As the tide-like spiritual energy crashed and cleansed them, the three aggressive materials finally lowered their proud heads under Li Yao's crazy attack and were fully combined.

As the temperature dropped, the alloy gradually hardened, and the round metal balls were knocked into complicated facets.

Suddenly—

The Star Basher was completely gone; Li Yao had put it back in his Cosmos Ring. He slightly opened his legs, and his toes clutched the ground like sharp claws, making the ground shiver as if an earthquake was coming. Every muscle and vein on his body was jumping crazily like simmering magna. The nine dragons on his body were all roaring and about to soar into the sky.

Shua!

The nine dragons crawled out of his body of flesh and blood!

"Ah!"

Xie Qianhe lost calmness and shouted. He thought that Li Yao's body had exploded.

But when he looked more carefully, he found that it was actually the liquefied spiritual energy in Li Yao's veins and nerves that had just burst out.

Li Yao's control over his spiritual liquid far exceeded the best of the Building Foundation Stage Cultivators. Under the command of his soul, the nine 'dragons' split and gathered again, forming a giant that seemed to be made of sophisticated capillary vessels!

The bright gold giant, which only had veins and nerves, was more than three meters tall. Its head against the ceiling and its feet stomping on the ground, the workshop seemed like it could crack at any moment!

Li Yao bit the tip of his tongue and spat out a mouthful of blood. He then waved his hands and covered the mist of blood with his hands. He drew runes in the air with the blood as the ink. However, the final runes were not red but bright gold!

Behind him, the transparent giant condensed by his spiritual liquids was copying his gestures and drawing exactly the same runes. In a moment, the giant finished a hundred extremely complicated runes!

"Sealing the runes with the gold spirit, and drawing runes in the void, now!"

Li Yao suddenly bulged his eyes and roared when the alloy on the Divine Anvil was cooled down a certain temperature and put on a red color on the surface.

With his bellow, seven electric arcs flooded out of the Divine Anvil and pushed up the alloy like a spring.

The hundreds of runes in the air as well as the bright gold giant behind Li Yao all turned into streaks of brightness and crowded toward the alloy in a hurry!

BOOM!

A small sun seemed to be rising inside the workshop. There was nothing but blankness that Xie Qianhe could see. When the blankness gradually faded, he found that the runes and the gold giant were all gone, and a newly forged component was swirling slowly in midair. Tiny and delicate runes were appearing and disappearing on the surface of the component, until they gradually sank down.

"Everyone—"

Li Yao wiped his sweat and was quite satisfied about his performance. He asked with a smile, "Do you have any questions?"

The seven refiners were all dumbfounded.

Speechless for a long time, the refiner from the Red Line School, looking at Li Yao's scary muscle, which apparently boasted tremendous strength, managed to open his mouth. "Fellow Cultivator Sand, it appears to me that your secret art has a high demand on physical strength, doesn't it?"

Li Yao smiled and admitted frankly, "Indeed. This secret art of mine is easy to practice, but to achieve the best performance, you will have to boast enough physical strength.

"By my estimation, with two to three times of the strength of battle-type Cultivators in the peak of the Building Foundation Stage, one will be able to fully bring out the potential of the manual forging technique."

The seven refiners were all rendered speechless. The same thoughts popped up in their minds.

We were fooled!

Is he serious? A skill of refining requires the combat ability of the peak of the Building Foundation Stage?

This skill is absolutely useless for us!

How many people in the entire Flying Star Sector are in such a level?

And how many of them are talented in refining?

As it turned out, they had traded seven techniques for one technique that they could not practice at all!

But this was how the exchange of techniques worked.

Sand Scorpion had shown every detail of the skill and even illustrated the circulation routes of spiritual energy inside the body with a bight gold giant. They could only blame themselves for being unable to learn it.

Everybody could not help but sigh to themselves.

Such an unreasonable manual forging technique was totally tailor-made for Sand Scorpion. No wonder he was so generous and agreed to barter with everybody quickly.

Master Xue and Master Huangpu might have been better at the arts of refining than Sand Scorpion was and could see through the tricks of the technique, but they did not have the physical strength to perform such a savage technique even if the two renowned experts of the trade were combined.

The more quick-minded refiners immediately realized that Sand Scorpion was about to rise to fame in the circle of refiners.

Such a manual forging technique was impossible to be duplicated by anyone else, which meant that Sand Scorpion had work on every Unparalleled Extension in person!

Ares Extensions were all extremely expensive. Those who had the funds to purchase Ares Extensions were all the top experts in the world of Cultivators.

But right now, they had to make friends with Sand Scorpion first if they wanted to buy an Unparalleled Extension!

Moreover, such a manual forging technique could be utilized to improve the performance of the key components of many other kinds of magical equipment.

Other than everything else, the secret art he had just shown alone was enough to make countless experts rush to adulate him!

"Fellow Cultivator Sand's marvelous skill is indeed a great eye-opener for me. The barter with Fellow Cultivator Sand has proved my trip to the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting worthwhile!"

Master Huangpu gave a very high remark for Li Yao.

Xie Qianhe felt even more frustrated hearing that.

There was one thing that had been bothering him. He tried to hold it back, but he finally couldn't contain himself and asked Li Yao, "Fellow Cultivator Sand, the arts of refining you demonstrated today show that you are definitely a super expert.

"I do not believe that you couldn't tell the Radiating Crystal from the Grey Crystal in the auction yesterday.

"Then, why did you spend tens of millions of dollars on a useless meteorite that contained a lot of Grey Crystals?"

Chapter 675: The Best Master!

Chapter 675: The Best Master!

The seven refiners all looked at Li Yao suspiciously.

They had all heard that Li Yao had spent a fortune on Grey Crystals.

It had spread among the circle of refiners and became a joke for many of them.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao retrieved the meteorite, which was like a lump, from his Cosmos Ring and put it on the Divine Anvil.

"This is the Red Streak Gold Hair Stone that I bought in the auction yesterday."

Of the seven refiners, five did not participate in the auction yesterday. They all went close and studied the material carefully.

Xie Qianhe took out a magnifying lens from his pocket and put it to his right eye. He observed the pattern on the surface of the meteorite while he touched the 'hair' with his two fingers.

The refiner from the Red Line School, in the meantime, retrieved a glittering gem from his Cosmos Ring. It was emitting dozens of different colors like a lantern.

When the brilliance of the gem reached the Red Streak Gold Hair Stone, it would be reflected into entirely different shades.

The refiner from the Red Line School observed the reflection, deep in thought.

"In my opinion—"

Master Huangpu did not resort to any examination magical equipment but simply sniffed his fingers after scratching the surface of the stone casually. He said certainly, "It is beyond a doubt that Grey Crystals are stored inside the stone. Besides, 60% of them are corrupted by impurities, which means that they are of a low quality even among Grey Crystals."

The other refiners came to similar conclusions.

Two of the refiners had already examined the stone in the auction. They thought they had made a mistake and examined it again today, but the result was the same.

"I seem to have taken advantage of you in the barter just now," Li Yao said frankly. "Now that everybody is interested, please step back and trigger your best defensive magical equipment. I will dissect the stone here and now. Consider it compensation for everybody."

Everybody recalled how Li Yao had swung the Star Basher so fast that it seemed to disappear entirely. They knew how terrifying the human-shaped beast's refining arts were already.

Thankfully, it was Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures that the hammer was smashing. If the target of the hammer were a skull, even ten grand masters of refining would have been smashed to pieces.

Was he going to perform an even more brutal skill in refining?

Everybody looked at each other in bewilderment and retreated to a corner.

As refiners, they carried a lot of magical equipment with them. Now, every one of them triggered five or so pieces of defense magical equipment, which wreathed them in multiple layers of colorful spiritual shields. Then they calmed down and observed Li Yao again.

They had thought that Li Yao would bring out an even more appalling hammer than the Star Basher.

But Li Yao simply took out a pair of silver, glittering gloves from his Cosmos Ring and put them on.

Li Yao's face was extremely solemn. Veins and nerves bulged on his two arms again, and his fingers were cramping crazily, as if he were using a piece of invisible magical equipment.

"What's the meaning of this?"

Xie Qianhe squinted and maximized his sight. He saw that Li Yao was extremely prudent and no more as confident and smooth as when he was waving the Star Basher, but he did not see anything in Li Yao's hands at all.

Right then—

Shua!

One of the protruding bumps on the top right corner of the Red Streak Gold Hair Stone was dismembered from the main body and fell down onto the Divine Anvil, before it rolled on the ground just in front of everyone.

The fracture was as smooth as a mirror, without the slightest error, like a piece of tofu that was cut by the sharpest scalpel.

But it was not tofu; it was an extremely hard meteorite!

With the illumination of the lights, Xie Qianhe vaguely saw that something gold was blinking right in front of Li Yao. Several gold threads that were thinner than a hair were floating in midair.

The threads were almost transparent and would only glimmer when the lights were at the appropriate angle.

The source of the threads were Li Yao's gloves.

He was extremely cautious about the threads, too, while he drove the threads toward the Red Streak Gold Hair Stone with his spiritual energy.

The threads were very thin, but they were also very sharp when filled with spiritual energy. When they brushed the meteorite, it was peeled apart layer by layer as if it were an onion.

Gazing at the Red Streak Gold Hair Stone, Li Yao spoke softly after a moment, with drops of sweat hanging all over his naked upper body.

"This is 'Monocrystal Mica Thread', which I invented recently. They are very sharp but equally difficult to utilize. I haven't got the hang of using them yet and might lose control at any moment. I was worried that I might hurt you."

Although he spoke very casually, the refiners all felt that their eyelids were twitching when they chewed on it.

The Monocrystal Mica Thread were so sharp, erratic, and unpredictable. It was naturally prefect to cut Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, but wouldn't it be easier to cut the body of flesh and blood?

They all shuddered when they thought of dozens of Monocrystal Mica Thread piercing through them silently and dismembering them into several pieces without them feeling any pain.

This is too brutal. The Monocrystal Mica Thread is not a piece of refining magical equipment at all. It is meant for attacks!

Several refiners were all mumbling to themselves.

When they were back to themselves, Li Yao had already removed the outmost shell of the Red Streak Gold Hair Stone. The raw minerals inside looked like grey coral stained with white spots.

Grey Crystals indeed!

The experts all recognized it immediately. If the real Radiating Crystals were inside, the spots on the surface would have been bright silver instead of the lifeless pale white right now.

But Li Yao did not even bat an eye. He suddenly widened his half-closed eyes, while his hands turned into a cluster of mist.

The countless Monocrystal Mica Threads phantomized into streaks of gold like invisible darts that completely wreathed the Grey Crystals. After a while of clattering noises, the Grey Crystals and the other impurities were all cut off the stone and flung into the air!

Shiu!

When the Monocrystal Mica Threads reached the core of the Grey Crystals, a weird shriek suddenly echoed on the Divine Anvil. Something green soared to the ceiling and flooded the entire workshop with a green glow. Everybody seemed to smell a certain fragrance!

"What?"

Xie Qianhe gasped.

Li Yao suddenly stopped his movements and retracted the Monocrystal Mica Threads. It was not until this moment that he took a long breath in relief, and his sweat poured down like rain.

On the Divine Anvil, amid the scraps and powder of the Grey Crystals, a weird material that looked like metal, wood, stone, and jade was lying quietly.

It was the size of a fist and a warm green color. It seemed like water that had been frozen, and green mist was gradually spreading out from the material.

Just one glance at it was enough to refresh one's heart and soul!

"This is—"

The six refiners, including Xie Qianhe, scratched their heads and looked at each other in confusion. They thought hard, but they couldn't tell what the material was.

They all looked at Master Huangpu to ask for help.

But after pondering for a moment, Master Huangpu shook his head with a bitter smile, too, and looked at Li Yao.

Li Yao warmed up his arms, which were sore and aching. With a smile of relief, he explained, "This is 'Green Sky Jade', a very ancient material. I only browsed through its introduction in an ancient notebook a while ago."

"It looks like jade, but it is actually some sort of 'amber'. For some reason, it fell underground and experienced countless accidental events and changes. After billions of years, it is finally condensed.

"Even in the ancient Cultivation world forty thousand years ago, Green Sky Jade was also very rarely-seen. I did not expect that I to sense the signs of Green Sky Jade in the meteorite when I saw it. Although I was only 30% sure, I decided to take a shot anyway."

"That explains a lot!"

All the refiners realized what had happened.

The refiner from the Red Line School said somewhat in embarrassment, "Fellow Cultivator Sand is indeed knowledgeable. Even rarely-seen materials from forty thousand years ago could not escape your attention. I did not think too much of it when my friends talked about the matter, but now I know that I misjudged. Fellow Cultivator Sand has found an invaluable treasure!"

"Not necessarily invaluable," Li Yao said. "It is indeed an ancient treasure, but items from the past are not always good.

"Every stone below our feet were formed billions of years ago. They could be called 'Wonderful Stones from Billions of Years Ago' if you will. But are they of any use?

"The Green Sky Jade, although rarely-seen, does not have many amazing effects. Honestly speaking, it can only cleanse the veins and build up the body for the user.

"Besides, it will take a long time before the effects reveal themselves. Therefore, the Green Sky Jade is only suitable to be crafted into personal ornament for the low-level Cultivators to wear.

"In terms of value, it is not necessarily worth the price I paid."

The refiner from the Red Line School was confused. "If there was only a 30% likelihood that the Green Sky Jade is stored inside, and it won't pay off even if it does, why did you buy it, Fellow Cultivator Sand?"

Pausing for a moment, he slapped his head and realized the reason. "Fellow Cultivator Sand is a collector who loves the rarely-seen items, aren't you? Since it is a collection, measuring it with its value is not appropriate."

Li Yao smiled casually and glanced at Xie Qianhe. He shook his head and said, "I didn't buy it for my personal collection.

"I have a student who is extremely determined but not very talented. She has been doing very harsh training with my guidance.

"I mean to recruit her as a true disciple, but her life will become even more difficult.

"This student of mine is a girl. I don't want her to be exhausted because of over-training, nor do I want her to become a thick and hideous monster. Therefore, I have been hesitating.

"Thankfully, with the Green Sky Jade, her nerves, veins, and bones will gradually be strengthened, and her aptitude will be more or less improved. Besides, it will also help her recover after the harsh training and maintain her body figure."

Xie Qianhe was dumbfounded and immediately blushed.

He was so ashamed of himself that he was about to find a hole in the ground and crawl in.

As it turned out, Sand Scorpion had bought the meteorite with such a fortune because he wanted to give the gift to his daughter!

The guy had made thorough plans for Anan!

He was only 30% certain that the Green Sky Jade was stored inside, which meant that there was a 70% likelihood that he would gain nothing and really become a big joke in the circle of refiners!

All he did was for Anan!

The refiner from the Red Line School was amazed. "Fellow Cultivator Sand is not only erudite but also considerate of the students. Those who are recruited as his true disciples must've done a lot of good things in their previous life!"

"You don't say. Just look at Wu Mayan."

Another refiner smiled. "Although the arts of combats and the arts of refining are different, after witnessing Fellow Cultivator Sand's... intimidating skills today, I'm pretty sure that Fellow Cultivator Sand's new true disciple will be a new superstar before long just like Wu Mayan!"

"Master Sand!"

Xie Qianhe's face was so rad that somebody might have dipped pepper oil on it. He could not help it any longer and strode forward. He bowed so deeply to Li Yao that his head nearly hit the ground, and he said, "I—I was really blind. I'm terribly sorry!"

The refiners looked at each other in bewilderment, not knowing why Xie Qianhe, the deputy director of a major department in the Silver Heart School, suddenly became so courteous toward Sand Scorpion.

It seemed a bit too much, even if Sand Scorpion's skills were better than his.

Li Yao was dazed, too. He frowned and said, "Fellow Cultivator Xie, we can talk in private."

"No!"

Xie Qianhe was breathing heavily and his hands were shivering, while he said, "Master Sand thought and did so much, but I've been—

"If I don't explain it to everybody right now, I will deserve to be neither a refiner nor a father!

"It's perfect that so many fellow Cultivators are here today. Please be my Observers. I'm going to make an announcement."

Taking a deep breath, Xie Qianhe turned to Huangpu Bo. He bowed to the ground again and said solemnly, "I'm very sorry, Master Huangpu, but I didn't know that my daughter Anan had found the best master for herself since long ago!"

Chapter 676: Planet V.S. Planet!

Chapter 676: Planet V.S. Planet!

Ten days had passed since the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting began.

As the product release conferences were held and more advanced seminars were hosted, the name of the 'Glorious Sunlight Group' was gradually acknowledged by a lot of refiners.

At first, it released the 'Combat Ability Detector', a piece of MP magical equipment very suitable for ordinary people and low-level Cultivators.

Then, together with the Refining Department of Flying Star University, it released the Aurora Chain Gun and the Unparalleled Extension.

The Aurora Chain Gun targeted ordinary people and low-end users as potential customers just as the Combat Ability Detector did.

But, the Unparalleled Extension was designed for the wealthy, high-end users.

One rudimental and the other advanced, the invention of the two pieces of magical equipment showed the research ability of the Glorious Sunlight Group.

However, as for 'Sand Scorpion', the owner of the Glorious Sunlight Group, there were two opposing opinions.

Those who had communicated with him naturally knew Li Yao's capability very well.

But most people still considered him an idiotic magnate who hired a batch of top-tier refiners with the wealth that he had accumulated through the trade between Iron Plateau and space. The so-called products were actually those refiners' work, and he had merely bought them out in order to make himself look better.

The anecdote that he had paid tens of millions of dollars for a worthless stone in the auction was widely known, too, after spreading over several days.

Not only had every refiner learned of the story, even many ordinary people who came to visit the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting had heard a thing or two about it.

Through the people's lips and the gossip columns, in most people's eyes, Li Yao became an out-and-out pretentious magnate.

However, the explosive news yesterday smashed their illusion into pieces!

Xie Anan, a member of the main bloodline of the Xie family of West Rock, had formally acknowledged Sand Scorpion as her master!

It was said that the recruitment ceremony had been quite splendid. Not only had every member of the Xie family who participated in the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting arrived, even the top experts of the trade, including Xue Yuanxin and Huangpu Bo, had come as guests and offered valuable presents for the master and the disciple!

Outsiders might not know what it meant, but the event raised a riot in the circle of refiners.

The Xie family of West Rock was incomparable for the Mo family and the Huangpu family, but it was an ancient noble family that had existed for hundreds of years.

What was a noble family best known for? They were best known for their honorable blood, and they could be quite stubborn and unfriendly. They would die before they were disgraced.

When a descendant of a noble family looked for a master, they had to find a truly excellent one because it concerned the honor of their family.

Even if the family was running to a dead end, there was no way that anyone from the family would succumb to an unscholarly magnate!

Besides, the Xie family had been operating quite well recently. It seemed unnecessary to resort to such a method even if it was trying to cooperate with the Glorious Sunlight Group.

Moreover, even Xue Yuanxin and Huangpu Bo, two renowned experts of the trade, had come to congratulate in person!

It was natural that Xue Yuanxin showed up. Everybody knew that his Ares Laboratory was collaborating with the Glorious Sunlight Group, and the two parties were quite close.

But Master Huangpu Bo had absolutely nothing to do with the Glorious Sunlight Group!

For a moment, there were all kinds of speculations. The 'pretentious idiot' was now wreathed in a halo of mysteries!

However, in the eleventh day, all the whispers were gone, because the main theme of the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting this year had finally come.

After five thousand years, the Flying Star Sector was about to initiate a plan to craft a piece of super magical equipment above the planetary level!

Dwarfed by such an influential event, any explosive news became sparks that were not worth mentioning at all.

…

The main conference hall of the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting was a building half buried underground and half open to the air that looked like a giant crystal egg. It was named 'Great Hall of the Next Millennium'.

The decisions to be made there were indeed going to change the fate of the Flying Star Sector in the next thousand years or even longer!

When Li Yao stepped into the main conference hall, he felt that he entered a boundless universe.

The black marbles on the ground boasted special sound-absorption and light-absorption technology. Together with the brilliant stars on the dome, he inevitably had the feeling that he was just an insignificant being.

Yes, insignificant.

He could be called an expert of refining in many regards right now.

But when it came to planetary-level magical equipment, no refiners would be able to produce them purely on their own, not even the best experts.

The sweat and wisdom of thousands of refiners and the resources of an entire Sector had to be gathered in order to produce a piece of such magical equipment after arduous efforts!

Just think about the defense rings of Iron Plateau, which had been crafted five thousand years ago before the arrival of the apocalypse.

To produce the magical equipment, the entire sector was divided!

Li Yao walked into a small meeting room with Xue Yuanxin and Huangpu Bo.

The Great Hall of Next Millennium adopted a very advanced system that combined reality with illusion. All the participants would enter their respective booth, but they could be connected to each other through the 'Half-Step Grand Illusionary Land'.

That way, they could listen to the presentation of the project proposers while discussing with each other in secret without affecting anybody else.

Today, more than 13,000 people joined the 'Millennium Meeting'.

Other than the refiners, there were also leaders of the major sects and organizations.

The production of the planetary-level magical equipment required the collaboration of the entire Flying Star Sector. All the sects would have to provide resources more or less.

Li Yao was allowed to enter the meeting room of the highest level together with Xue Yuanxin and Huangpu Bo, two renowned masters of refining, not only because of his expertise in refining, but also because he was a representative of the Glorious Sunlight Group as well as Iron Plateau.

In the small meeting room, the three of them waited solemnly.

Two proposals of planetary-level magical equipment would be discussed in the Millennium Meeting, the better of which would be selected and implemented later.

Of course, if there were too many objections about the two proposals and they were believed to be impracticable, the participants were allowed to modify or put forward new proposals on the spot.

Ten o'clock in the morning.

Hundreds of mystic rays in various colors gradually appeared in the meeting room, transforming one of the walls of the meeting room into a translucent Grand Illusionary Land that seemed like a podium.

Streams of information regarding the background of the Millennium Meeting, an introduction to the Temple of Immortals, and files about the sharpest claws and teeth of the Temple of Immortals—the space pirates—fell down from the top of the Grand Illusionary Land.

A giant map of a space zone popped up in the Grand Illusionary Land, but it was covered in clusters of lackluster dusts. At first glance, although it did not look as rough as the Iron Plateau Space Zone, it was even more mysterious and unpredictable than it.

It was the Spider Den Space Zone where Spider Den, the base of all space pirates, was located, and also the darkest place in the entire Flying Star Sector.

A grey-haired but magnificent-looking old man, who appeared to be made of steel, gradually walked to the podium.

Li Yao's pupils constricted violently. Despite the blockage of the Grand Illusionary Land, he could still vaguely feel that unwavering belief that seemed to be a mountain in the old man's body.

"He is Si Koulie, leader of the 'Star Fighters Alliance'. He is also one of the best experts in the refinement of starships, and he is now in the Nascent Soul Stage!"

Xue Yuanxin said in a low voice, "The first proposal of the planetary-level magical equipment was drawn up by the Star Fighters Alliance."

Li Yao was quite startled.

Compared with battle-type Cultivators, the advancement of creation-type Cultivators was very difficult. Core Formation Stage creation-type Cultivators were already rarely seen.

It meant that Si Koulie must be one of the most awesome refiners in the Flying Star Sector.

It was a pity that their research fields were different. Li Yao did not know much about the construction of starships.

If Professor Mo Xuan were here, he would definitely be very interested in talking with him.

Professor Mo Xuan had been focused on crystal suits, too, when he was alive.

But after he reached the Flying Star Sector, in order to upgrade Sparkle, he and his students had dedicated themselves to the modification of starships day and night and accumulated a lot of experience during the change of research field.

After they became 'Star Spirits', they boasted the uncanny ability of increasing their computational ability by manipulating crystal processors. Therefore, their Cultivation improved quite fast.

Li Yao estimated that Professor Mo Xuan would be at least in the high level of the Core Formation Stage if he were alive.

However, the spectral Cultivators were gauged by a different evaluation system, and 'Star Spirits' such as Professor Mo Xuan were different from normal spectral Cultivators. Even Li Yao did not know how terrifying they would be when they unleashed all their potential.

The Edge Sharpeners' Meeting was very likely to be the Temple of Immortals' target. To avoid unnecessary trouble, Li Yao did not ask the five Star Spirits to come to Heavenly Saints City.

The Star Fighters Alliance was not a sect but an association formed by 28 sects that specialized in the production of starships. It was sort of a 'starship manufacturers' guild'.

It was not hard to guess that the proposal Master Si Koulie was about to present should be some sort of starship.

Li Yao's guess was correct.

However, when Si Koulie projected the illustrations of their proposal for planetary-level magical equipment into the Grand Illusionary Land, Li Yao still gasped.

What appeared in the Grand Illusionary Land was a blue planet.

The planet was named 'Ice King'. It was the seventh planet in the Mystic Ice Space Zone with a diameter of more than 5,300 kilometers and a density slightly higher than that of Iron Plateau. The temperature on the planet was fifty degrees below zero all year round.

The Star Fighters Alliance's plan was to refine the planet into a monolithic starship!

"It is well known that we failed to eliminate the space pirates because Spider Den was an important planet of resources in the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago. The planet is full of facilities for refining and defense systems. Together with the space pirates' enhancement in the thousands of years, the planet is basically an iron hedgehog right now.

"Also, the natural environment of the Spider Den Space Zone is very complicated. Cosmic dust, space storms, and electromagnetic swirls are everywhere.

"Hundreds of years ago, an enormous fleet of a thousand crystal warships was deployed hoping to annihilate the space pirates once and for all.

"But the space pirates simply waited patiently and waged a war of attrition by relying on Spider Den. After years of tug-of-war, the supplies of the fleet gradually ran out, and the fleet encountered a rarely-seen double disaster. Barely any crystal warship returned from the battle.

"The hard lesson tells us that normal starship cannot expect to compete with such a planet of resources that has been armed to teeth.

"Therefore, the only solution is to modify a planet into a starship and to fight the planet with a planet!"

Chapter 677: Ice God Clash!

Chapter 677: Ice God Clash!

In the soundproof meeting room, Li Yao could not hear other people's reactions, but he vaguely sensed strong spiritual waves. The other participants of the Millennium Meeting must be as shocked as he was.

Transforming a planet into a starship!

How bold and how unbelievable!

Li Yao was fascinated by the data, files, and structural designs that were being manifested in the Grand Illusionary Land.

Although he had witnessed the power of the planetary magical equipment at the periphery of Iron Plateau, it was merely debris left from five thousand years ago.

However, reading the structural designs for a new one, he felt that he was about the create history.

Si Koulie continued his speech. "Turning a planet into a starship has always been the highest dream for the starship designers. However, it is too technologically difficult, and the resources needed are too many. Even in the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago, there were not many successful examples.

"Therefore, although the partners of the Star Fighters Alliance already had the idea hundreds of years ago, we never had the opportunity to implement it.

"But thirty years ago, we discovered a relic of the Star Ocean Imperium from the war remains. From the relic, we learned of a project named 'Ice God' was carried out in the Flying Star Sector back in the era of the Star Ocean Imperium.

"The content of the project was to carve overwhelming power rune arrays on the surface of the planet with its geothermal energy as the source of power so that the planet's trajectory would be altered, and it would march into the universe as an invincible warship of mankind!

"According to the files, the Ice God Project was fully initiated in the last days of the Star Ocean Imperium. A planet with appropriate quality, density, and orbit was selected, and the modification work was begun.

"However, half way through the project, the Armageddon Rebellion took place. As the civil war broke out, the Flying Star Sector became one of the most heated battlefields. The Ice God Project was thus put on hiatus.

"The Star Fighters Alliance explored for more than twenty years after we retrieved the file and finally ascertained that the 'Ice God' mentioned in the file was actually 'Ice King' in the Mystic Ice Space Zone!

"Later, we sent a large number of Cultivators to investigate Ice King, and they reported numerous traces of modification in the style of the Star Ocean Imperium!

"Ice King is enveloped in a low temperature all year long, and the spiritual energy activities are not strong. The modification materials employed by the Star Ocean Imperium were all processed to work at low temperatures. Today, most of the rune arrays and facilities are still usable.

"Besides, thousands of tunnels leading to the core of the planet have been excavated, so thermal energy is readily available.

"According to our calculations, 55% of the Ice God Project has been completed. What we need to do is to restart the project and finish it!"

Si Koulie's tone was determined, resolute, and gave a blood-boiling feeling, as if the craziest dream would come true as long as he waved his hands.

While he was giving the speech, information flooded into the meeting rooms through the Grand Illusionary Land.

In the Millennium Meeting, the meeting rooms were classified into ten levels according to the capability of themselves and the strength of the organizations they represented. Information of different details was presented to them.

The meeting rooms at the edge were reserved for the low-level Cultivators of the small sects.

The information they received was that a project named Ice God—in which a planet would be refined into a starship—was to be implemented.

As for the technological details, they had no access to them at all.

The VIP meeting room that Li Yao was in, on the other hand, presented most of the details of the technology and the key data.

Li Yao and his two companions both maximized their computational ability. Six eyes were glittering while they sorted through the information like human-shaped crystal processors.

In a moment, white steam was popping up from their heads, which seemed to have turned into chimneys. The meeting room was wreathed in fog, as if it had become public baths.

Xue Yuanxin focused his eyes on Li Yao and asked solemnly, "What do you think, Master Sand?"

Li Yao's eyes were particularly deep right now, and a bouncing brilliance was beaming out them. Deep in thought, he replied, "… I don't know."

Xue Yuanxin and Huangpu Bo frowned at the same time.

"You really think I know everything, don't you, masters?"

Li Yao scratched his hair that was as messy as bird nest and opened his hands reluctantly. "We only know what we know. Refining a crystal suit and refining a starship the size of a planet are vastly different. Hundreds of starship designers of the Star Fighters Alliance must've work on it carefully for a long time. How could I understand all of this so quickly?"

Xue Yuanxin and Huangpu Bo looked at each other and laughed in amusement.

It did make sense. But Li Yao had left too deep an impression on him recently, and they subconsciously took him for an omniscient man.

Xue Yuanxin and Huangpu were also experts who specialized in small magical equipment such as crystal suits. But they were much more experienced after all, and they had worked with other refiners on extremely complicated projects before. Therefore, they all had some understanding about such projects.

Pondering for a moment, Huangpu Bo said, "Judging from the files, if the Ice God Project is restarted, it is very likely that Spider Den will be destroyed once and for all!"

Xue Yuanxin smiled bitterly. "However—there's always a 'however'—is it an easy task to transform a planet into a starship? Can we really finish the project that even the Star Ocean Imperium failed to accomplish?"

The two of them shook their heads and continued reading.

When they got to the budget of the plan, they all exclaimed in shock and stood up.

"Are you kidding me? According to the budget, all the Cultivators would have to pawn their pants before the Temple of Immortals is destroyed!"

Li Yao felt a headache coming on.

He finally felt the hesitation that his predecessors must have experienced five thousand years.

The super magical equipment at the planetary level would indeed drain the resources of the entire Sector!

None of them were specialists in starships. Therefore, they simply discussed among themselves and did not say anything.

But the Grand Illusionary Land had connected the entire meeting hall. The participants were free to raise questions at any moment, and the speaker could reply to the questions or change the pace of their presentation accordingly.

In a moment, Si Koulie received a lot of messages from the experts and scholars. He browsed through them for a moment, before he raised his head again, the confidence on his face undiminished. He said casually, "Just now, a lot of fellow Cultivators offered valuable input. Most the questions are on the feasibility of the Iron God Project. Are we able to produce a real planetary-level warship based on our current technology?

"My answer is no!

"We definitely do not have the capability to build a real planetary-level warship."

His words dazed Li Yao.

He could almost hear the hums in the entire meeting hall right now.

Si Koulie smiled and said confidently, "However, everyone, our purpose is to strike Spider Den, which does not require a real planetary-level warship at all!

"Please take a look, everyone. This is the new Ice God Project after our revision.

"We don't need to empty Ice King; we don't need to alter its environment; we don't need to build cabins that are vital for the survival of the soldiers; we don't even need to install weapons!

"Ice King itself will be the most invincible weapon!

"All we need to do is to install a super-large engine system for Ice King, which will be powered by the spiritual energy deep below the surface of the planet. We will make Ice King perform a space jump and appear outside the Spider Den

Space Zone. Then, we will set Ice King's trajectory toward Spider Den.

"In the meantime, the coalition fleet of Cultivators will sail behind Ice King.

"When Ice King is close enough to Spider Den, after precise calculation, Ice King will be accelerated and hit Spider Den heavily!

"Ice King is one of the smallest planets. Its size is only 1.1% the size of Iron Plateau and 4.9% that of Spider Den.

"However, as long as its momentum is high enough, it will be more than easy to destroy all the defense systems on the surface of Spider Den after a huge collision with the mass of Ice King.

"After the collision, and when the surface of Spider Den is ruined, the coalition fleet will be able to launch attacks on Spider Den freely. We will finish the chaos of space pirates once and for all!

"Space pirates are the claws of the Temple of Immortals. As long as we chop off the claws, the Temple of Immortals will become a lake without an inlet and a tree without leaves. It will no longer be able to cause any problem!

"The most crucial thing about the project is not the modification of Ice King, but how to move such a large object to the periphery of the Spider Den Space Zone through space jumps.

"Naturally, we cannot reveal the core technology to the public yet. But I guarantee that the magical equipment installed inside Ice King by the Star Ocean Imperium can support such a long-distance space jump!"

After finishing his speech, Si Koulie bowed and left the podium.

The new budget plan was sent to Li Yao and the other refiners.

It was a commonly-seen trick.

The first budget plan was the cost of transforming Ice King into a real starship.

But the revised plan was the cost to crash Spider Den with Ice King by only keeping the normal functions of its engine parts.

Although the budget was still quite high and endless resources would be consumed, the numbers were much smaller than the astronomical ones in the first plan and gave a feeling that the new plan was not totally unacceptable.

Of course, the decision was too important to be made so quickly after he gave a short speech. This was only a brief introduction, and there would be countless meetings to discuss the details later.

In the next, the second proposal, a competitor of the Ice God Project, was introduced.

The presenter of the second proposal was the Grand Illusionary Group.

"He is Xiao Xuance, CEO of the Grand Illusionary Group and the previous leader of the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood. Some people even say that he is the crownless king of the Flying Star Sector!"

Xue Yuanxin pointed at the man who had broad shoulders and a solemn face with mysterious charisma beaming out of his eyes and introduced him to Li Yao. The guy was walking to the podium in the Grand Illusionary Land.

Chapter 678: Xiao Xuance's Proposal!

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"Xiao Xuance, from the Grand Illusionary Group!"

Taking a breath slowly, Li Yao had complicated feelings.

The human civilization of the Flying Star Sector was scattered in the dozens of space zones of the Flying Star Sector. For such a civilization, the most important thing was not water, food, or air, but network.

Water, food, and air could be generated by the self-recycling mini biological system in any space town.

However, without the network, all the space towns would become lone islands in a boundless ocean. There would not be a society at all.

In every space zone of the Flying Star Sector, countless Spiritual Beacons were floating in the vacuum.

Through the Spiritual Beacons, the overwhelming Spiritual Nexus connected the dozens of space zones together closely.

Although people lived in dark, cold starships in reality, they could appear in the virtual great outdoors in the Grand Illusionary Land and talk to their friends several space zones away as if their friends were next to them.

Moreover, training facilities that were indispensable for Cultivators, such as the Crystal Suit World, could not function without the Spiritual Nexus.

The Grand Illusionary Group was a major conglomerate that was funded by the six sects of Heavenly Saints City and provided network services for the Flying Star Sector.

70% of the Spiritual Towers of the Flying Star Sector were produced, deployed, and maintained by the Grand Illusionary Group.

The system of the Grand Illusionary Land was constructed and managed by the Grand Illusionary Group, too.

Therefore, although the Flying Star Sector did not have a grand unified government, many sociologists believed that the Grand Illusionary Group shouldered part of the government's responsibility and ensured that the human beings of the Flying Star Sector could live and thrive even though they were so disorganized.

The CEO of the Grand Illusionary Group truly deserved to be called the 'crownless king' of the Flying Star Sector.

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and observed Xiao Xuance carefully.

The man was wearing black linen clothes sewed with gold streaks. His curled hair that was black, shining, and filled with alluring charisma dangled down from his shoulders casually.

His eyes were long, narrow, and almost extended to his temples like two sharp black swords. However, they were gapless and did not emit any brilliance. Instead, they were like two deep lakes that absorbed all the light nearby.

At first glance, he was a middle-aged man in his fifties.

Yet, Li Yao knew for a fact that Xiao Xuance was actually almost 260 years old and a rarely-seen hybrid-type Cultivator both talented in battle and in administration.

He had already advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage a hundred years ago. Right now, he was definitely above the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage, which meant that he was undoubtedly one of the strongest experts in the Flying Star Sector!

Looking at Xiao Xuance, Li Yao suddenly felt that his tongue was bitter and sore. He recalled the first time he had gotten in touch with a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator.

It was in the Temple of Fallen Stars in Empyrean Star City of the Heaven's Origin Sector.

At that time, faced with a Nascent Soul Stage such as 'Iron God' Yan Ba, he was completely at a loss and overwhelmed by him. Even breathing was troublesome for Li Yao.

He had felt that he was faced with a mountain that rose high into the clouds. The peak of the mountain was wreathed in mist, and there was no telling exactly how high it was. He had no courage to climb on the mountain at all.

But right now, he seemed to be able to feel the gap between himself and Xiao Xuance clearly, as if the clouds in the sky were gone. He could see what the peak of the mountain looked like up above, and he finally had the courage to challenge the mountain!

One day—

Li Yao clenched his fists and had a strong 'I can replace you' urge in his heart.

Other than the urge of competitiveness, he also had subtle expectation for the new speaker.

The Ice God Project that Si Koulie proposed, although simple and wasteful, was actually feasible. There was a high likelihood that Spider Den would be destroyed once and for all after the endeavor.

Li Yao pondered for a long time and did not find any better solution.

He was wondering what kind of plan the crownless king of the Flying Star Sector would propose.

Xiao Xuance stood straight on the podium.

Mysteries were beaming out of his extremely long eyes. He did not turn his head, and yet he seemed to have glanced through everyone on the spot.

Everybody, including Li Yao, felt that Xiao Xuance was paying attention to them.

"Two questions."

Without further ado, Xiao Xuance extended two fingers and went directly to the topic. "Firstly, who is our enemy exactly?"

His voice was not loud and did not carry Si Koulie's powerful and persuasive feeling. Instead, it sounded as if he were talking about a self-explanatory natural law that did not require any fury or other emotions.

"Are space pirates and Immortal Cultivators our real enemies?

"Space pirates are but thieves who are hiding and making a living by taking advantage of the remains of the Star Ocean Imperium on Spider Den.

"Immortal Cultivators are just timid rats among the Cultivators.

"The world of Cultivators boasts enormous resources with countless sects, starships, and specialists. Why have we failed to eliminate a few space pirates and degraded Cultivators and even been caused major problems by them?"

Taking a long breath, Xiao Xuance said casually, "Because our real enemy is not space pirates or Immortal Cultivators, but space and distance, or in other words, the mysterious, boundless sea of stars in front of ourselves!

"The universe is too vast a place. As we explored one space zone after another, the distance between us was longer and longer, and the supply line was extended further and further. Like a giant who is growing infinitely, we will be inevitably crushed by our own weight!

"The Flying Star Sector is too large! Even the strongest organization cannot protect every node of every sailing route all the time!

"You can be a thief for a thousand days, but you cannot be braced for burglary forever. Weak as the space pirates may be, they can act freely. They can always choose the time when we are least prepared and attack the places that are least guarded. Whether their assaults succeed or not, they will immediately run away. Blocked by the countless stars, what can the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators do even though they are immensely strong?

"Let's say we demolish Spider Den, destroy the space pirates, and uproot the Immortal Cultivators. So what?

"In the ten thousand years of history of mankind, I've never noticed any era that was completely devoid of thieves.

"As long as we continue expanding in the universe, the distance between us is bound to be lengthened, and the burden for our supply line will be heavier and heavier. Even if we remove the space pirates for now, one day they will return and bite our weakest parts like they did!"

Xiao Xuance paused for a moment and folded his middle finger, leaving the index finger in the air, while he said, "The second question. Forget what will happen in the next thousand years, and let's focus on the present. Who can guarantee that space pirates are the Temple of Immortals' only accomplices?

"The Ice God Project that Leader Si proposed is indeed very practicable. However, it will consume tremendous resources, and the best outcome it can achieve is that the space pirates lurking on Spider Den will be annihilated.

"Here comes the question. Let's say that we drain the resources of half the Flying Star Sector without thinking about the cost and carry out the Ice God Project, and that Ice King and Spider Den collide into each other and both explode. What if we then find that the Temple of Immortals have other schemes and that it has an even sharper claw?

"I believe everybody has felt the sordidness and cunningness of the Temple of Immortals in person over the past year. Is such an organization, which has been hiding in darkness for hundreds of years, going to reveal its full capability to us openly?"

Xiao Xuance lambasted the Ice God Project ruthlessly.

It was similar to the contradiction between the spacers and the homers five thousand years ago.

The resources were limited and could only support one plan. Therefore, the proposers of the plans were natural competitors.

But this time, Xiao Xuance launched a critical strike and pointed out the two fatal weaknesses of the Ice God Project.

Li Yao was deep in thought. After hearing Xiao Xuance's questions, he felt that the Ice God Project was not appropriate, too. Such a risky plan seemed to be too much of a gamble for the Flying Star Sector.

But how exactly was Xiao Xuance going to address the problems?

Xiao Xuance was silent for ten seconds and allowed the audience to reflect on his words. Instead of giving an answer promptly, he played a 3D video clip through the Grand Illusionary Land.

It was the field test of two teams of Exos.

"A new crystal suit?"

Li Yao and his two companions were immediately refreshed, because this was what they were good at.

However, no matter how hard they thought, they could not figure out how a crystal suit could eliminate all the space pirates and Immortal Cultivators.

The field test was conducted in a narrow valley.

The blue team consisted of ten Exos who were wearing classic crystal suit models. Judging from their warm-up movements, they were all seasoned Exos.

There were almost a hundred Exos on in the red team. They were wearing a light crystal suit that Li Yao had never seen before. Their crystal suits were so short and small that their gears together with themselves were no taller than two meters.

Li Yao frowned. Such a height suggested that the Exos inside were teenagers who were no taller than 1.5 meters. Besides, since the plate of the crystal suit was thin, there was not much room to store crystals and magical equipment.

In real battles, such tiny crystal suits were rarely-seen, and their combat ability could not be very high.

The process of the battle proved Li Yao's assumption.

The ten Exos in the blue team were all experienced warriors. Crystal suits were like their second skin. Their tactical movements were carried out fluently and precisely.

Although the red team outnumbered the blue team, they were like a bunch of beginners. Their movements were inflexible and clumsy, making them both like zombies and rusted machines.

However…

"Huh?"

The small movements of several Exos made Li Yao's pupils constrict violently.

He discovered that, although the hundred Exos in the red team were rigid most of the time in their tactical movements, they seemed to have a 'eureka' moment and performed unbelievable marvelous skills when the blue team entered their attack range.

In the ten minutes of battle, Exos in the red team were knocked down one after another.

On the other hand, the blue team suffered 'casualties', too, because of the occasional 'eureka' moments in the red team.

What was weird was that, whenever Exos in the blue team were 'injured' or 'killed', they would be immediately dragged off the battlefield.

However, when the Exos in the red team fell to the ground, and even when their crystal suits were spluttering with sparks and electric arcs, the staff simply idled by and watched indifferently.

It appeared that they did not care about the lives of the red team at all.

The Exos shouldn't be treated like this even if they are just beginners.

Li Yao frowned and felt that the test was very weird.

After twenty minutes, the test was over.

The hundred Exos in the red team were all knocked to the ground.

In the meantime, the blue team suffered a loss of eight Exos. Only two ragged crystal suits managed to keep standing in the battlefield.

The team combat is not of a very high level. The amazing tactical movements that the red team performed must be because they've installed advanced skill cards. But even so, their overall combat ability is still mediocre.

What does Xiao Xuance mean by showing this? How can we expect to defeat the space pirates with this?

On the battlefield, the two Exos in the blue team left the picture, and around ten crystal suits in the red team that were not seriously wrecked staggered to their feet.

It appeared that the crystal suits in the red team were the objects being tested.

Li Yao was even more confused. The Exos in the red team were weaker than the cannon fodder of space pirates. What could they do?

Seven crystal suits in the red team bowed to the camera. After a 'Chi' sound, the armor split from the head to the breast like a blossoming flower.

"Hiss—"

Li Yao, Xue Yuanxin and Huangpu Bo, three experts in crystal suits, all gasped and exclaimed in shock.

Inside the seven crystal suits were complicated components and units. There were no Exos at all!

Chapter 679: Grand Illusionary Legion!

Chapter 679: Grand Illusionary Legion!

The units inside the chests of the seven crystal suits emanated starry crimson brilliance that pierced into Li Yao eyes through the Grand Illusionary Land like countless rubies.

Cold sweat was popping up on his forehead.

If there were no Exos inside, such magical equipment was not a crystal suit, but a human-shaped beast puppet. They were also known as 'spiritual puppets'.

Spiritual puppets were once a piece of popular magical equipment. They were tireless and fearless, and they could fight in extremely harsh environments, which made them the perfect weapons for a war.

However, spiritual puppets were commanded by crystal processors. However advanced crystal processors were, they were dead objects after all and could only carry out orders rigidly despite their immense computational ability.

There were too many variables in a battlefield. Even the crystal processors with the best performance could not replace the brain of a human.

Besides, the crystal processors whose computational abilities met the needs of a battlefield were often extremely large and expensive. They were also hundreds of times more vulnerable than a brain and easy to be damaged. It was impossible to apply them to spiritual puppets.

Therefore, it was determined that spiritual puppets could not replace crystal suits and Exos soon after they were invented, and such tools were gradually forsaken.

However, the spiritual puppets produced by the Grand Illusionary Group seemed to be different from what Li Yao had imagined.

Although their movements were still rigid, their choice and implementation of tactics were quite smart, as if an invisible brain was commanding them!

Xiao Xuance's calm voice came over again. "Now, allow me to introduce to you the 'Grand Illusionary Soldier Project'.

"I believe everybody has noticed that the Grand Illusionary Soldier is a spiritual puppet that is smarter, more agile, and more responsive to changes!

"In the past, the biggest shortcoming of spiritual puppets was that the normal crystal processors with average performance could not simulate the thought processes of human brains during combat. Those that could simulate more than 30% of the reactions were all large and expensive mainframe crystal processors. They could not be installed in the puppets, whose bodies were too small, and their price was too high!

"It's true that life is priceless. But the resources and cost to build spiritual puppets installed with a mainframe crystal processor could be used to train twenty Exos and equip them with MP crystal suits.

"It was never cheap to produce spiritual puppets.

"Therefore, spiritual puppets were gradually replaced by beast puppets, which were cheaper and had a better price-performance ratio. It would take as many resources to train five Exos and produce twenty beast puppets as it would to build three to five spiritual puppets, but the combat ability of the former was ten timers higher than that of the latter!

"The Grand Illusionary Soldier, on the other hand, adopted an entirely different designing principle.

"What is installed inside the chest of each Grand Illusionary Soldier is 'Empyrean Sun-V' crystal processor, which is cheap yet efficient.

"I believe that many refiners here know that it is a popular crystal processor which is applied to many low-end crystal suits. Its computational ability is not very high, at least not high enough to support the crystal suit to perform such complicated tactical movements.

"And this is the key to the 'Grand Illusionary Soldier Project'.

"Inside every Grand Illusionary Soldier, other than an 'Empyrean Sun V' crystal processor, a special rune array to receive telepathic thoughts has also been installed. Through the reception array, all the Grand Illusionary Soldiers are connected to the 'virtual star brain'!

"One Grand Illusionary Soldier is naturally far from enough to be called a piece of planetary-level magical equipment.

"However, if we gather all the resources of the Flying Star Sector and produce tens of thousands of Grand Illusionary Soldiers, they will constitute a 'Grand Illusionary Legion' after they are connected to the virtual star brain. It will be a piece of out-and-out planetary level, if not stellar-level, magical equipment, whose influence will radiate to every corner of the Flying Star Sector!"

Li Yao, Xue Yuanxin and Huangpu Bo looked at each other in confusion. "Virtual star brain?"

In the Grand Illusionary Land, the valley dispersed into butterflies and disappeared.

Xiao Xuance's image showed up again.

His background seemed to be a vast universe where countless stars were swirling, colliding and finally condensing into a shining gold super brain!

Every star seemed to be a brain cell, and the rivers of stars that were made of countless congregating stars were the circuits inside the brain. The collision between stars was producing sparks of wisdom!

The camera pushed forward and magnified the brain that was made of countless stars. Some of the stars jumped out and were dissected into hundreds of pictures.

Every picture was a battle of Exos fighting in the Grand Illusionary Land!

"The Spiritual Nexus that connects the entire Flying Star Sector has been built for more than a thousand years, and virtual platforms such as the Crystal Suit World have been successfully established for hundreds of years, too," Xiao Xuance said.

"Over hundreds of years, countless Exos left immensurable data with their wisdom and experience after they fought in the virtual platforms via the Grand Illusionary Land.

"In the one minute just now, yes, in only one minute, 16,072 virtual battles took place in the Grand Illusionary Land, some of which were the summit confrontations between super experts!

"It is safe to say that all the possible situations in a real-life battlefield have happened before in the virtual battlefields!

"My fellow Cultivators and dear users of the Grand Illusionary Land, I'm afraid that you haven't realized the value of the combat data that was accumulated in the Grand Illusionary Land.

"The so-called 'virtual star brain' is a piece of magical equipment invented by a genius of the Grand Illusionary Group who specializes in crystal processors. What is stored inside the virtual star brain is the valuable combat data filtered from the countless battles in the Grand Illusionary Land over the past hundreds of years.

"All the Grand Illusionary Soldiers are connected to the star brain through the Spiritual Nexus. When they are in a battlefield, they will select the most suitable move from the star brain according to the actual situation.

"The moves have all been performed by real Exos in the Grand Illusionary Land before. They are calculated by real human brains!

"The Grand Illusionary Soldiers to be produced in such a way, although still incomparable to the real Exos, are far stronger than traditional spiritual puppets!

"More importantly, the cost to produce them is very cheap. Common crystal suits can also be modified into them easily. Tireless and fearless, they will patrol, guard, and fight all year long in any place as long as it is covered in the Spiritual Nexus.

"Everyone, both Immortal Cultivators and space pirates are not very strong, and they will never fight a head-on battle against the main force of Cultivators. They will only look for our weakness and harass us in these places.

"As I said just now, our real enemy is the boundless universe!

"It is not unusual for our Core Formation Stage Cultivators or even Nascent Soul Stages to travel in exhaustion from one remote space zone to another in order to deal with the emergencies. But their opponents might only be several space pirates in the Building Foundation Stage!

"If we deploy a large number of Grand Illusionary Soldiers in every space zone—"

Xiao Xuance waved his hand. The picture in the Grand Illusionary Land suddenly changed into various crystal warships that had been modified to accommodate countless Grand Illusionary Soldiers. The Grand Illusionary Soldiers were all sitting cross-legged in the maintenance rune arrays like statues, wreathed in green.

Suddenly, a space town in front of the crystal warship sent out alarms of incoming space pirates!

The green glow of the maintenance rune arrays immediately disappeared. The six circular crystal cameras on the heads of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers were all beaming in red, while they stood up from the rune arrays simultaneously and lunged at the space town in groups.

"Even if the Grand Illusionary Soldiers cannot destroy the space pirates, they can significantly diminish the activity zone of space pirates and stall them during their assault so that other Cultivation sects can gather their main forces to surround and annihilate the space pirates!

"Flexibility is everything for space pirates. Without flexibility, even the strongest space pirates will be fish in a water tank that have nowhere to run to!

"If thousands of Grand Illusionary Soldiers are patrolling on every sailing route of every space zone one day, it's impossible for space pirates, Immortal Cultivators, demon beasts, unknown species in space, or extraterrestrial devils to sabotage our peace and prosperity!

"This is the future of the Flying Star Sector. The best future!"

Taking a long breath, Li Yao collapsed to his seat helplessly.

He was somewhat convinced by Xue Xuance.

But he did feel a little bit weird. A gloomy thought suddenly occurred to him,

If the Grand Illusionary Legions are deployed in every space zone, what will the Exos do?

Huangpu Bo mumbled, "It seems that the tale about the 'Star Child' is true."

Li Yao was dazed. "What is Star Child?"

Huangpu Bo explained, "In the past decades, there has been a rumor in the circle of refiners that Xiao Xuance has a foster son who is both a natural-born retard and an unparalleled genius!"

Li Yao was confused. "Retard? Genius?"

Huangpu Bo said, "It is said that his foster son is very unintelligent in daily life. He is perhaps almost a hundred years old, and yet he still acts like a seven-year-old.

"However, such a retard, on the other hand, is an unparalleled genius in regard to Spiritual Nexus and an out-and-out expert in crystal processors. When it comes to the Spiritual Nexus and crystal processors, he immediately seems to be possessed by a god or a devil!

"It seems that all his wisdom was dedicated to the Spiritual Nexus and the crystal processors, and he did not have redundant brain cells to work on his daily life!

"Inside the Grand Illusionary Group, Xiao Xuance's foster son has been called 'Star Child'. It is said that he was the supervisor of a large, confidential project.

"I thought that it was pure nonsense. How can a retard whose intelligence equals to a seven-year-old manage a large project?

"But if the 'virtual star brain' is a real thing, it was mostly likely invented by the Star Child!"

Chapter 680: Next Millennium

Chapter 680: Next Millennium

Li Yao was listening to the tales about 'Star Child', the super genius in crystal processors, from Huangpu Bo, when he suddenly heard an argument in the Grand Illusionary Land. He raised his head and found that Si Koulie, the proposer of the Ice God Project just now, had reappeared on the podium and was confronting Xiao Xuance in fury.

"Just now, Xiao Xuance claimed that the Ice God Project has several fatal drawbacks and would be costly and doomed to fail. Si Koulie found it intolerable and is about to debate with him," Xue Yuanxin explained.

Li Yao was dazed. "He can do that?"

"Of course, although both of them are leaders of major organizations and big shots in the Nascent Soul Stage, the plans they propose will influence the lives of too many people. This is indeed the competition of the righteous path."

Xue Yuanxin opened his hands and said, "They both believe that only their plan can destroy the Temple of Immortals and save the Flying Star Sector. Faced with the competition for the righteous path, the last thing they care about is their manners. Just think about what happened five thousand years ago!"

Li Yao realized that it did make sense. Five thousand years ago, for the competition of the righteous path, assassinations even took place in the Grand Congress. Right now, it could almost be called harmonious since the two of them were merely arguing with each other.

Now that two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were at loggerheads, their intimidating aura was almost tearing the Grand Illusionary Land apart.

Si Koulie was like a ball of lightning that was spitting electric arcs, while Xiao Xuance was as tranquil as a frozen ocean. The anger and aggressiveness from the other party did not influence him at all. He said, as calmly as before, "Please don't be agitated, Leader Si. It might have been too blunt for me to say that the Iron God Project is too costly and doomed to fail. However, my accusation is not ungrounded.

"Firstly, time. By your estimation, how long will it take before the Ice God Project is accomplished?"

Si Koulie craned his neck and replied stubbornly, "With enough manpower and resources, the project will be finished in around twenty years!"

"Twenty years?"

Xiao Xuance smiled and said, "Then, how are we going to cope with the Temple of Immortals during those twenty years while we devote our every penny and all the available resources to the project? You don't think that space pirates and Immortals Cultivators will simply stand by and watch as we carry out the Ice God Project and demolish their den, do you?

"Besides, you said yourself that it is the best-case scenario with enough manpower and resources.

"It is well-known that the Flying Star Sector does not have a central government. Hundreds of sects and thousands of space towns are scattered in the dozens of space zones. How can you make sure that all the sects will provide sufficient resources promptly and willingly?

"Don't forget the tragedy of five thousand years ago when our ancestors tried to collect enough resources to build stellar-level magical equipment, and that was when we still had a central government!

"Let's say we are really putting the Ice God Project into effect. Who's going to decide how many resources a sect is going to provide? What if a sect simply shrugs and says that they cannot provide the resources? Who is authorized to punish the sects when they are hiding their resources? How are you going to deal with the sects that refuse to join the Ice God Project but will share the fruit when it succeeds?

"The Ice God Project looks perfect. But it is founded on the hypothesis that the hundreds of sects in the world of Cultivators work hard together selflessly. Is that possible?

"As long as one or two sects conceal some of their resources for their own interest, other sects will definitely follow them. When a chain reaction is triggered, the entire project will collapse eventually!

"Besides, before Ice Kong is finished, its combat ability will remain zero, no matter how many resources are poured into it!

"If any errors happen to the project, our resources will all be wasted!"

Si Koulie's opened his mouth, only to come up with nothing. He was dazed for a second, before he asked solemnly, "Is the

Grand Illusionary Soldier Project any different?"

"Of course it is," Xiao Xuance said peacefully. "The Ice God Project seems intimidating and invincible, but its purpose is still a piece of traditional, if not obsolete, planetary-level magical equipment.

"In comparison, the Grand Illusionary Soldier is a piece of brand-new magical equipment based on big data. It can be called a 'magical equipment cloud'.

"Compared with the Ice God Project, the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project highlights the importance of numbers. It is very cheap to produce a Grand Illusionary Soldier and connect it to the star brain.

"Ice King is absolutely useless before it is successfully transformed. However, even one Grand Illusionary Soldier will boast a certain amount of combat ability, however insignificant it is. As the number of the Grand Illusionary Soldier grows to a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand… The combat ability of the Grand Illusionary Legion will soar exponentially!

"More importantly, the Grand Illusionary Soldier is a piece of free, open-source magical equipment. What is demonstrated in the video is just one model of it.

"In fact, as long as they have the most crucial 'reception array of telepathic thoughts', any sect and refiner can produce the Grand Illusionary Soldier according to their own scheme or even transform their old and outdated crystal suits into Grand Illusionary Soldiers!

"In such a case, the procedure of 'resource collection' can be eliminated. The project will be implemented in the hundreds of sects all over the Flying Star Sector simultaneously!

"In short, the 'Grand Illusionary Soldier Project' is just a standard that we propose. Under the standard, the sects can either deliver their resources to us and ask us to manufacture the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, or they can produce Grand Illusionary Soldiers of their own according to the structural designs and designing principles that we provide.

"If a certain sect does not approve the Grand Illusionary Project, it's perfectly fine. They can choose to stay away from the project.

"After all, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers that other sects produced will only be responsible for protecting the towns and sailing routes within the territory of their sects.

"Open-source, free, and agile. These are the three core principles of the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project!"

After finishing his speech, Xiao Xuance gestured toward Si Koulie in a 'please enlighten me' sign.

Si Koulie's face was as red as pig's liver, as he said, "The bottom line is, the Grand Illusionary Solider is still a piece of defense magical equipment. Even though they are stationed everywhere in the Flying Star Sector, the best they can do is protect the sailing routes from space pirates. How can they annihilate the space pirates completely?"

"Ants can bite an elephant to death when there are enough of them. Changes in quantity will inevitably lead to changes in quality," Xiao Xuance said casually. "Protecting the sailing routes is just the first step. When we have enough Grand Illusionary Soldiers to form a Grand Illusionary Legion, we will wage a war against Spider Den immediately.

"After all, the soldiers are cheap cannon fodder. All we are going to lose are just some resources.

"By our estimation, if four fifths of all the sects start to produce the Grand Illusionary Soldiers with abundant resources on a large scale, an army with reasonably good combat ability will be formed within two years to protect the sailing routes from the scourge of space pirates. In five to seven years, an enormous Grand Illusionary Legion will be ready to attack Spider Den.

"The specific data and process of the calculations have been sent to everyone seated in the hall. You can check for yourself whether or not I am bluffing.

"The Grand Illusionary Project not only takes much shorter time than the Ice God Project but also boasts another great advantage.

"The Ice God Project is a suicidal plan. After a huge collision, all our resources devoted in the twenty years will be gone!

"What if the Temple of Immortals have other moves?

"In comparison, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers are not likely to be wiped out in the war despite being mere cannon fodder. But even if they are, reproducing a batch of them is much more convenient than building another planetary-level crystal warship!"

Si Koulie was rendered speechless. He took a long breath and glared at Xiao Xuance. "What about security? The Grand Illusionary Soldiers are commanded by the virtual star brain. If the Temple of Immortals invades the Spiritual Nexus and gains control over the star brain, won't they be able to manipulate the entire Grand Illusionary Legion?"

With a thin smile, Xiao Xuance replied, "Since crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus were invented, there have always been concerns regarding such magical equipment that can simulate the mind of mankind. Many fictions also depicted the blackout of the Spiritual Nexus and the crystal processors, which developed independent consciousness and became evil.

"But please rest assured, everybody.

"Firstly, for the sects that are willing to join the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project, we will open the source code and the log of the production of the virtual star brain as much as we can so that all of the sects will know the development process and operation mechanism of the virtual star brain.

"Secondly, we will provide a 'star brain clone', or 'child brain', if you will, for every space zone. The Grand Illusionary Soldiers in your space zone will be directly under your own control.

"In fact, it is impossible for the Grand Illusionary Group to maneuver all of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers at once. The universe is too vast, and there is always a lag to transmit telepathic thoughts via the Spiritual Nexus. The Grand Illusionary Group in Heavenly Saints City is not able to control a Grand Illusionary Soldier dozens of space zones away directly, is it?

"Thirdly, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers rely on the network to perform the 100% of their combat ability. Once the network is cut off, their combat ability will drop to 5% of their original, and they will be no better than scrap metal.

"Even if the crystal processor experts of the Temple of Immortals succeed in hacking the 'star brain clone' of a certain space zone and seize abundant Grand Illusionary Soldiers, all the Spiritual Towers will still be in our control.

"As long as we cut off the Spiritual Nexus, all the Grand Illusionary Soldiers that have lost control will immediately be paralyzed.

"Look, even if the Grand Illusionary Soldiers are hacked by the Temple of Immortals, we have backup plans to cope with it. But Leader Si, what if the Temple of Immortals infiltrates or even steals your Ice God warship after it is successfully built?

"Do you have any emergency plans?"

Si Koulie coughed hard and said, "Well—"

Xiao Xuance smiled and stopped further harangue. He turned to the camera and extended his hands, while he spoke sincerely. "Fellow Cultivators, since we are having a 'Millennium Meeting' today, our eyes must not be restricted to here and now!

"Space pirates and Immortal Cultivators are just insignificant obstacles in the future path of the human civilization of the Flying Star Sector.

"Now that we are gathering the resources of the entire Sector to build a piece of planetary-level magical equipment again after five thousand years, we must lay a solid foundation for the development of the Flying Star Sector in the next thousand or ten thousand years!

"Close your eyes and imagine that, when the scale of the Grand Illusionary Legion is large enough, the robotic soldiers will not only defend the sailing routes and towns in our back but also develop the planets whose environments are too harsh for human beings. They can also serve as pioneers to explore new worlds so that the brightness of the civilization of the Flying Star Sector will illuminate the entire universe in the next millennium!"

Chapter 681: How Did You Know?

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The debate between two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators came to an end.

Too much information had been presented to all the Cultivators in the morning. They would have to consider for a long while and sort it out despite their extraordinary computational ability.

Therefore, no meetings were arranged for the afternoon.

All the Cultivators frowned and contemplated in their own meeting rooms.

Collapsing in the depths of the soft seat, Li Yao was like an animal that hid itself in its nest when it sensed an incoming danger.

It was a debate without any suspense. Si Koulie was totally outshone.

Compared to the Ice God Project, the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project had overwhelming advantages. The whole project was perfect, to the point that it was too perfect!

Li Yao could not see any loopholes in the project for now, but he intuitively did not like the plan.

Narrowing his eyes and biting his fingernails, Li Yao pondered for a while. Sweat the size of beans rolled down his forehead again.

Deep in thought for a long time, he suddenly widened his eyes so much that the corners of his eyes were almost torn apart. Taking a deep breath, he gazed at the two renowned crystal suit designers and said solemnly, "Master Xue, Master Huangpu, what I'm about to say might be too ungrounded and appalling. You may think that I'm being paranoid, but still, I have to say—"

"Wait." Xue Yuanxin raised his hands and interrupted him. Patting his own big head, he said, "Let me take a guess first. Are you worrying that the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project is vulnerable to the invasion of the Temple of Immortals even though it looks immaculate? If the Temple of Immortals hacks into the star brain after thousands of Grand Illusionary Soldiers are produced, we will be trapped by our own scheme."

"More than that," Huangpu Bo added. "Xiao Xuance, as the CEO of the Grand Illusionary Group, has offered a solution to such an emergency. However, if Xiao Xuance has other intentions and the Grand Illusionary Group has been infiltrated by the Temple of Immortals since the very beginning, they can easily set up deceptions in the project such as telepathic thoughts that can hibernate for several years. When the timing is appropriate, the telepathic thoughts will be triggered, and the Temple of Immortals will take control of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers and the Flying Star Sector without any trouble!"

"Huh?"

Li Yao was dumbfounded and almost fell off from his seat. He stammered, "How—how did you know?"

Xue Yuanxin and Huangpu Bo looked at each other and could not help but laugh at the same time.

"Little Sand, although we are both more than a hundred years old right now, we were once teenagers and at an age to dwell in fantasies, too," Xue Yuanxin said.

"I remember when I was in junior high school," Huangpu Bo remarked," magazines such as 'Fiction World' were always my favorite. Literary works in which the Spiritual Nexus was compromised, the crystal processors lost control, and the beast puppets rebelled were already a cliché back then."

"Yes. I recall that there was a classic movie called 'War of Deities and Devils'. Right now, dozens of prequels and sequels have been produced. You can find a lot of similar plots in the movies.

"Many refiners were attracted by such fictions and movies and grew interested in magical equipment and the Spiritual Nexus, so they set off on the path of refining in the end. Do you think that we cannot think of your concerns?"

"Is that so?" Li Yao scratched his hair and blushed. He said, somewhat in embarrassment, "Please do excuse me, masters. I've never seen such movies on Iron Plateau. Perhaps I was being too paranoid."

"No. No. No. Your concerns are perfectly normal and necessary," Xue Yuanxin said solemnly. "A piece of stellar-level magical equipment can change the fate of a Sector. It is simplely prudence to imagine the most extreme conditions!

"Suppose we select the Grand Illusionary Project in the end, the Temple of Immortals will definitely try its best to gain control over it once it is fully implemented.

"But again, any kind of stellar-level magical equipment is possible to be infiltrated.

"Right now, you are worried that the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project might be taken advantage of by the Temple of Immortals in the end. But won't Ice King be likely to be seized by the Temple of Immortals after it is transformed into an invincible warship? Or rather, is there any kind of stellar-level magical equipment that will absolutely be never infiltrated by the enemy. We cannot stand by and do nothing just because we fear that the Temple of Immortals might intrude and manipulate our products."

Li Yao thought for a moment and said, "That makes sense."

"Make bold assumptions, and run careful verifications," Huangpu Bo said. "Naturally, we won't initiate the Grand Illusionary Project recklessly just because of a few words of Xiao Xuance.

"The technological investigations will take at least a year and a half. The project won't be carried out until we are totally sure that there were no loopholes.

"If there are any problems, the project will be postponed indefinitely.

"Moreover, we will investigate and monitor the actual supervisor of the stellar-level magical equipment, or in this case, the Grand Illusionary Group and Xiao Xuance.

"It's not that we don't believe in Xiao Xuance, but the matter is too important. Any Cultivator, even you, will be thoroughly vetted and traced back to your great, great grandparents for complete scrutinization if they become the supervisor of the stellar-level magical equipment."

Li Yao was greatly relieved. "Technological investigations for an entire year? Very good and very necessary. We can do two years if one year is not enough, or three if two are not. I would rather endure the harassment of the Temple of Immortals for several more years than have such a big project carried out hastily!"

"Of course. Considering the strength of space pirates and the Temple of Immortals right now, it won't be a problem for the world of Cultivators in the next couple of years," Xue Yuanxin and Huangpu Bo said at the same time.

Li Yao could not sit any longer now that he had received so much information.

He wanted to go back to his residence and reach out to Professor Mo Xuan and the other Star Spirits in the Cross Wind Space Zone.

The five of them had once been living in the form of 'Phantom Entities', and they were reincarnated in liquid metals combined with the mainframe crystal processor of Sparkle in the destructive cosmic storm.

After the accident, they were all granted a certain ability to control crystal processors and boost their computational ability.

Li Yao meant to discuss the Grand Illusionary Project with them and see whether they could find any loopholes in it or he was simply being hysterical.

However, an unexpected message disrupted his plan.

Xiao Xuance invited me to a secret meeting?

Li Yao narrowed his eyes, not knowing what was on the mind of the CEO of the Grand Illusionary Group.

Maybe, he wanted to talk Li Yao into supporting the Grand Illusionary Project in the secret meeting?

After all, the Glorious Sunlight Group and the entire Iron Plateau backing Li Yao could provide tremendous resources.

The flames of suspicion that just died down in Li Yao's heart start bouncing again.

He decided that something must be wrong with Xiao Xuance if the man was too enthusiastic about the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project and wanted to have it fully carried out no matter what.

Thinking through that, Li Yao gladly accepted the invitation and planned to get in touch with Xiao Xuance at a short distance.

…

Half an hour later, Li Yao began to suspect his previous suspicions.

He was in a spacious meeting room three hundred meters below the main hall of the Millennium Meeting.

Illuminated by the glittering crystal processors and ever-changing light beams, it was more like a command center.

When Li Yao arrived, almost a hundred Cultivators were already sitting in the command center.

Li Yao had seen most of their photos before in various Cultivation magazines.

Their resounding names had been chanted time and time again on the Spiritual Nexus, sometimes in shock, sometimes in fear, and sometimes in admiration.

Five Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and more than sixty Core Formation Stage Cultivators. All pure battle-type Cultivators!

This was essentially a gathering of the peak warriors of the entire Flying Star Sector!

With so many super experts crowding at the same place, although everybody was cautious enough to suppress their capability to below 1%, the dominating aura from them still make the underground command center as solemn as a grave.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Core Formation Stage Cultivators glanced at him and quickly moved their eyes away.

Li Yao's eyelids twitched violently. He felt that his back was soaked in cold sweat.

Several experts there were from Flying Star University and had communicated with Li Yao before. They nodded at each other in acknowledgement.

It seemed that the meeting had nothing to do with the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project.

If the Grand Illusionary Soldiers were the focus of the meeting, research-type and creation-type Cultivators should have been invited instead of the murderous fighters here.

Xiao Xuance in reality was even taller and stronger than in the Grand Illusionary Land. The black cloak on his body was like a black shadow of high mountains in a dark night. But he did not carry any feeling of aggressiveness at all.

He appeared more like a veteran who was full of hot blood and passion, willing to sacrifice first for his creeds, than a high and mighty leader.

Although Li Yao was still suspicious, he had to admit that Xian Xuance was a charismatic man when he was faced with him.

"Senior Xiao, I thought you invited me to ask me to support the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project," remarked Li Yao.

Cultivation aside, Xiao Xuance was ten times as old as him. It was only appropriate that he address Xiao Xuance as a 'senior'.

Xiao Xuance smiled casually. "My young friend Sand, you are a representative of the Glorious Sunlight Group and Iron Plateau. Your support will, of course, be necessary when we carry out the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project.

"However, I don't want any organization to express their support easily before they figure out the situation clearly.

"If you are really willing to support the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project, I'm hoping that the refiners of the Glorious Sunlight Group can locate the loopholes in the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project with your wisdom instead of carrying out the project right now."

"Oh?" Li Yao blinked his eyes. "I didn't know Senior Xiao was so prudent."

"We can't be prudent enough when we are faced with a planetary-level magical equipment system that can change the fate of the Flying Star Sector." Xiao Xuance sighed and said, "Although the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project is safe and secure according to our calculations and there is no way that the star brain will be compromised, the wisdom of everyone in the Grand Illusionary Group is still too limited. We need every Cultivator of the Flying Star Sector to give us a hand!

"Moreover," Xiao Xuance smiled bitterly and said, "different from the traditional Demonic Cultivators, Immortal Cultivators are barely distinguishable in daily life. I cannot guarantee that the Grand Illusionary Group is devoid of spies sent by the Immortal Cultivators.

"Therefore, even if the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project is to be implemented, every Cultivator must keep an eye on it closely!

"We welcome you to supervise us in the strictest standard, my young friend Sand. If you suspect that one of the workers here is an Immortal Cultivator, you can tell us first even if you don't have any proof. We'll definitely look into the matter.

"In regard to the safety issue, it's better to wrong a thousand innocent people than to let one suspect get away."

Li Yao opened his mouth and yet did not know what to say. He could only frown and nodded. "Alright."

"But it's still a future far away from now. Even if everybody agrees to implement the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project, it will still take one to two years to start. We can discuss and make sure there are no loopholes in the project during that time," Xiao Xuance said.

"We invited my young friend Sand and other fellow Cultivators above the Core Formation Stage because we have something urgent to tell you.

"Now that everybody is here, allow me to introduce to you the assault the Temple of Immortals is going to launch in the main area of the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting at the center of Heavenly Saints City.

"Inside the Temple of Immortals, the deadly assault that has been planned for more than half a year is known as the Mist Plan!

Chapter 682: The Mist Plan

Chapter 682: The Mist Plan

Whispers immediately filled the command center.

Li Yao was quite startled, too.

He had long known that a secret squad made by the elite members of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City were investigating and striking the Temple of Immortals on a hidden battlefield. But he did not know that the squad had made such a remarkable achievement as to learn the code name of the Temple of Immortals' next operation.

"Many fellow Cultivators know that we established a rapid response force named 'Immortal Slayers' with the core disciples of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City as pillars after the appearance of the Temple of Immortals to cope with the unprecedented change," Xiao Xuance said.

"However, for the sake of confidentiality, few knew that the Immortal Slayers were actually divided into two squads. On the surface, they were a rapid response force. But in fact, quite a lot of members of the Immortal Slayers infiltrated the Temple of Immortals.

"The underground frontline was bloody and cruel. Over the past year, a hundred and thirty-two Immortal Slayers have sacrificed themselves in the darkness.

"It is based on their endeavor and sacrifice that we gradually grasped some of the secrets of the Temple of Immortals, including the general picture of the 'Mist Plan'!

"Therefore, before the formal introduction of the Mist Plan, let's express our sincerest gratitude for the martyrs!"

All the Cultivators lowered their heads and had a moment of silence.

"Other than them, there is a special Cultivator that we shouldn't forget."

Xiao Xuance continued his speech touchingly. "Fellow Cultivator Li Yao, the unaffiliated Cultivator who was the first to unveil the secrets of the Temple of Immortals.

"Although Fellow Cultivator Li was merely an unaffiliated Cultivator in the Building Foundation Stage, he sabotaged the first great scheme of the Temple of Immortals with his unparalleled wisdom and courage and informed us of the existence of Immortal Cultivators so that we could make preparations sooner."

Li Yao was almost moved.

He found it harder and harder to tell whether Xiao Xuance was a good man or a bad one.

After a minute of silence for Li Yao and the deceased Immortal Slayers, the gloom on Xiao Xuance's face was entirely gone. He put on a shrewd and determined face again and waved his hands, summoning hundreds of light beams behind him on which detailed profiles of the members of the Temple of Immortals were listed.

"Since the battle in the Iron Plateau Space Zone was over one year ago, the Temple of Immortals has never planned any big operations. They seemed to have vanished in the sea of stars and simply asked the space pirates to continue harassing our sailing routes.

"We suspected that the Temple of Immortals were accumulating its strength in secret and planning an earthshaking operation. Therefore, we dedicated a lot of manpower to investigate and finally discovered the 'Mist Plan'."

Shua!

About ten pictures on the light beam behind Xiao Xuance were enlarged.

Most of the pictures were quite fuzzy or captured from a special angle. It was very hard to distinguish the faces of the people in the pictures.

"According to our investigation, the eight people in the pictures are all high-level killers of Spider's Thorn, an assassin group of Black Spider Tower. They are known as the 'Eight Blades'.

"The Eight Blades of Black Spider are all super experts above the Core Formation Stage. They have arrived in Heavenly Saints City and snuck in right next to us!"

Gasps were echoing inside the command center again.

Eight Core Formation Stage Cultivators, who were adept at stealth and assassination, had teamed up. Even a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator would have a headache if he ran into them.

No wonder so many experts had been summoned for the meeting today!

Xiao Xuance waved his hands. The light beam changed into a black shadow with a big blood-red question mark in the middle.

"Eight Blades of Black Spider are not leaders of the Mist Plan, despite all being in the Core Formation Stage.

"Four Kings of Immortality: Mountain, Sea, Black, Lotus. Of them, Yan Xibei, the Mountain King, was in charge of fanning the flames in the six tribes of Iron Plateau and has been slain by Fellow Cultivator Sand.

"Right now, the 'Mist Plan' is probably supervised by the Black King, another leader of the Temple of Immortals.

"We don't have the first clue as to who the Black King is exactly. Our best guess is that he is probably 'Hellsword' Zhuang Ziyou, one of the two top experts on Spider Den who is equally famous as Bai Xinghe, the 'Pirate Potentate'.

"However, 'Hellsword' Zhuang Ziyou is an unpredictable lone wolf all the time and wanders separately from the pirate gangs. He does not even listen to the orders of the 'Pirate Potentate' Bai Xinghe. We truly do not know much about him.

"Of course, it is not appropriate to say that the Pirate Potentate and the Hellsword are the top two experts right now. According to the latest news, Fengyu Zhong, captain of Storm Prison, has advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage recently!

"It is quite possible that there are three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators among the space pirates!"

Li Yao raised his eyebrow.

Fengyu Zhong was now a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, too?

He had killed Fengyu Zhong's only son. The two of them were mortal enemies and would not stop hunting each other until one of them was killed.

Li Yao was eager to find out whether or not he could take down a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator with the help of the reborn Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit now that he was in the superlative height of the Building Foundation Stage and had a capability almost twenty times higher than common Cultivators in the peak of the Building Foundation Stage.

"The Black King, who is possibly in the Nascent Soul Stage; the 'Eight Blades of Black Spider, who are in the Core Formation Stage; and other experts hiding in the darkness that we do not know yet are the operatives of the 'Mist Plan'!

"Even for the Temple of Immortals, such an elite team must be made up their top warriors.

"In other words, as long as we can fish them up, the Temple of Immortals will suffer heavy losses, and we will get more precious time for the planning and building of our stellar-level magical equipment!"

Xiao Xuance paused for a moment and looked at everybody.

A Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator who had wrinkles all over his face and looked to be three hundred years old observed casually, "This is the center of Heavenly Saints City, the most heavily guarded place in the entire Flying Star Sector. Even if they have a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator and eight or more Core Formation Stage Cultivators, can they do whatever they want and kill anybody here?"

"Of course not."

The light beam behind Xiao Xuance changed yet again. Three big words—Heart Gnawing Mist—popped up along with a large number of files.

"The Heart Gnawing Mist is the new-generation poison that the Temple of Immortals condensed based on countless ancient books by mixing nine different common poisons and purifying them with modern technology. It can attack flesh, cells, nerves, and the soul at the same time!

"We don't know the power of the Heart Gnawing Mist as of now. But by our rough estimates, one spoonful of Heart Gnawing Mist should be enough to kill tens of thousands of people when it is released into the air!"

The 300-year-old Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was not moved. "We've all seen better poison. Is the Temple of Immortals trying to kill so many Core Formation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators with venom?"

"The Heart Gnawing Poison is not designed for you." Xiao Xuance shook his head and replied calmly, "It is prepared for ordinary people and low-level Cultivators."

"What?"

Everyone, including Li Yao, was shocked.

"Heavenly Saints City is a star fortress. Our central area is essentially an enclosed iron ball. All the fresh air is provided by an artificial circulating system.

"When the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting began, experts, scholars, and visitors from other space zones all came to enjoy the gala. Up until the day before yesterday, the population of the central area of Heavenly Saints City was three times the usual, a new record!

"All these people need to breath oxygen. Our air recycling system is now already overloaded.

"If the Temple of Immortals infiltrates one of the procedures of the air recycling system and injects abundant Heart Gnawing Mist, it will definitely fill the entire central area of Heavenly Saints City. What will the consequences be, if I may ask?

"Perhaps Cultivators above the Building Foundation Stage will be able to resist the poison. But the ordinary people and low-level Cultivators are bound to be affected by the mist.

"At that time, the central area of Heavenly Saints City will be in chaos. All the Core Formation Stage Cultivators and the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators will be busy rescuing the people.

"The 'Black King' and the 'Eight Blades of Black Spider' will naturally take the opportunity to assassinate the targets whom they deem of value and who are least prepared.

"Even if the assassination fails, the chaos they make in the central area of Heavenly Saints City will be a major strike for people's confidence in Cultivators and, therefore, shake the foundation of the world!

"This is the general picture of the Mist Plan."

There was half a minute of silence in the command center.

Although the ventilation rune arrays were fully functioning and releasing fresh air that even carried the aroma of soil after a rain, the Core Formation Stage Cultivators and the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators all felt short of breath, as if they had already been poisoned by the mist.

Coldness beamed out of the eyes of the 300-year-old Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, while he raised his voice and asked, "Fellow Cultivator Xiao, are you sure that the Immortal Slayers have fully grasped the Mist Plan and we have the Black King and the Eight Blades of Black Spider on our radar?"

"No. The Black King and the Eight Blades of Black Spider are not important. The Heart Gnawing Poison is the key."

Greasy sweat was pouring down the forehead of another Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, who was a bit obese, while he asked, "Have we located all of the Heart Gnawing Mist?"

"We have." Xiao Xuance nodded calmly. "After several months of hard work, we have found out the residences of the Black King and the Eight Blades of Black Spider in Heavenly Saints City and how they are preparing to breach in the air recycling system!

"The Mist Plan started several years ago. Two Immortal Cultivators snuck into the central area of Heavenly Saints City two years ago and have been working in the air recycling stations.

"Of course, it is also possible that the Temple of Immortals bewildered the Cultivators who used to work in the air recycling station and turned them into emotionless Immortal Cultivators."

"What!"

A Core Formation Stage Cultivator rose up and exclaimed in shock. Half a second later, he blushed and sat down again.

"There's no need to be worried, everybody. We have everybody on the list under our control. The coordinates of all the Immortal Cultivators and the Heart Gnawing Mist are in our hands.

"The net has been thrown, and the fish will be picked up before midnight.

"However, we did not expect that the Temple of Immortals would send so many experts for the mission. The soldiers of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City and the Immortal Slayers may not be capable enough to annihilate all of them.

"Therefore, we need you to give us a hand. There is no way that such a tragedy can be allowed to take place in the central area of Heavenly Saints City!"

Chapter 683: Genius and Mentally Retarded

Chapter 683: Genius and Mentally Retarded

"It is our responsibility to slay the devils!"

The Core Formation Stage Cultivator who exclaimed in shock just now stood up again and declared, "What do you mean by giving you a hand? This is a disaster that the entire Flying Star Sector is faced with. There's no reason the six sects of Heavenly Saints City should work it out on your own. Just tell us what to do, Senior Xiao!"

Xiao Xuance slightly bowed and said sincerely, "Please don't misunderstand us, everyone. There were not many Cultivators outside Heavenly Saints City working as the Immortal Slayers, partly because we feared that the message would more likely be leaked out, and partly because all the space zones needed their warriors to protect their own land against the rampant space pirates nowadays.

"If the operation succeeds and the Temple of Immortals is significantly reduced, we will definitely publicize the files about the Immortal Slayers as much as we can and recruit Cultivators beyond Heavenly Saints City into the team. Everybody will work together and fight against the Immortal Cultivators!"

The wrinkled Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator said gloomily, "Naturally, we are going to do our part now that the Immortal Cultivators have all been locked onto. However, Brother Xiao said that the Mist Plan is to be carried out tonight. The time is too short, and many of us don't even know each other, let alone cooperated before. I'm afraid that our teamwork may not be flawless in a metropolis with complicated terrain such as Heavenly Saints City."

Xiao Xuance assured confidently, "No need to worry, everybody. The main force of the operation is still the Cultivators from the six sects of Heavenly Saints City. We have practiced multiple times to ensure that everything will be okay.

"Your job is to guard in the periphery of the city in case that some of our enemies run away.

"If the Black King of the Temple of Immortals arrives in person, such an expert in the Nascent Soul Stage might still be able to get away even if three to five other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators are hunting him. Therefore, we have to make thorough preparations!

"We have decided on your position and responsibilities according to your capability and personality. Please take a look."

Xiao Xuance clapped his hands softly. The wall on the left side of the command center suddenly split apart, revealing a large crystal processor center.

Dozens of crystal processor experts were tapping and operating crazily on hundreds of light beams, analyzing the tremendous data.

Li Yao noticed the guy sitting in the middle of the crystal processors immediately.

In fact, nobody could overlook him.

He was definitely more than two hundred kilograms and was basically a mountain of white, greasy meat. There were wrinkles on his skin all over his body, and his legs were drowned in his fat.

His skin was scarily fair, his hair was as yellow as straw, and his eyeballs were slightly red as if they were covered in a thin blood membrane.

Every sign suggested that he was an albino.

Li Yao knew that the eyes of such patients often had mutations before they were born. Their sight was often affected.

Moreover, his two eyes were very far away from each other, his forehead was extremely broad, and his lips were very thick. His face suggested he had Down syndrome, or in other words, a natural-born intellectual disability.

It was hard to tell his age with all the fat on his body, but Li Yao guessed that he should be in his fifties anyway. Yet, the man was wearing a fancy big shirt that had lovely bears on it while he was enjoying a lollipop in his mouth with cracking noises as he bit it.

The innocent countenance on his face usually exclusively belonged to little kids.

"Dad! Dad! I've just got another one! He was trying to play hide-and-seek with me. I only managed to capture him again after changing 72 algorithms!"

The big fatty in his fifties was surrounded by hundreds of translucent light beams on which various kinds of data was going up and down like a surging ocean. Ordinary people might have been dazzled and even vomited blood just glancing at them, and yet the man was dancing joyfully as if he were playing an interesting game.

Seeing that Xiao Xuance had arrived, he immediately shouted, hoping to be praised.

"Good boy. Let me take a look. There are still three left. Can you capture all of them in ten minutes?"

Xiao Xuance's expression immediately changed. He took out a piece of candy from his pocket and said in a tone that was usually used to comfort kids, "As long as my boy can find all of them, I will give you this nougat."

"Wonderful! Wonderful!"

The fatty clapped his hands, and he was almost drooling. He extended his two fingers and then added another one after thinking for a moment. "I want two candies. No. Three!"

"Alright. If you can find all of them, I will give you three candies!"

Xiao Xuance patted the head of the fatty affectionately and said softly, "I believe my boy will definitely be awesome enough to locate all the bad people!"

The 'boy' dived into the world of data. He bulged his eyes and did not move his hands. Streams of spiritual energy flowed out of his fingertips and manipulated hundreds of light beams simultaneously.

Of the more than seven hundred light beams that were floating in the crystal processor center, half were being controlled by him alone, and the other half were evenly divided by ten or so crystal processor experts.

"A Cultivator!"

Li Yao's pupils constricted violently. He had not expected that the albino fatty who suffered from Down syndrome was actually a Cultivator.

Judging from his dedication to the data, he was a fairly good one!

Li Yao remembered that Huangpu Bo had told him that Xiao Xuance had a foster son who was both genius and mentally retarded.

He was the 'star child'!

Xiao Xuance turned around. He glanced at everyone with a complicated expression and said, "This is Xiao Tianbao, my foster son. I believe that many of you have heard rumors about him.

"Whatever other people might think, he is a truly determined man, a Cultivator who is as innocent as a baby and willing to devote his everything to Cultivation!

"In his life, there is absolutely nothing except Cultivation!

"Xiao Tianbao was the leading developer of the star brain to manipulate the Grand Illusionary Soldiers. No. Actually, he created the star brain purely on his own. There is no need to doubt his ability.

"We were able to lock onto the Black King and the Eight Blades of Black Spider precisely because Xiao Tianbao found signs in the billions of telepathic thoughts flooding via the Spiritual Nexus and traced them back to the Immortal Cultivators' portable crystal processors.

"Also, Xiao Tianbao and the other crystal processor experts have come up with 27 tactical plans according to the terrain of Heavenly Saints City, the capability of the warriors of the Temple of Immortals, all known data of the Mist Plan, and the strength of every one of you.

"Before the operation, a tactical crystal processor will be handed over to you. You will only need to act according to the plans stored in the crystal processor, and everything will be good!"

This was the first time that most Cultivators had seen the legendary 'star child'. They were all very interested in the talented weirdo.

Most of them were pure battle-type Cultivators and did not know what Xiao Tianbao was doing on the light beams.

Li Yao, on the other hand, knew a thing or two about crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus. He tilted his head and observed for a long time. The more he watched, the more he was awed.

"The information streams suggested that people of the Temple of Immortals were very prudent. Not only were they altering their personal identification telepathic thoughts every half an hour, they would also run dynamic encryptions on them by choosing three encryption methods randomly from seventeen different encryption methods. They even set up traps in which antitracking telepathic thoughts were stored, and they would be alarmed when anything went wrong!"

Seeing that a tricky problem was solved, Li Yao's eyes glowed, and he could not help but ask, "How did you lock onto them so quickly without them knowing it?"

Although Xiao Tianbao was naïve, he was not afraid of strangers. Li Yao's question poked right at what he was most proud of. He replied happily, "You like playing games, too, big brother? It's very simple!"

"At first, you run an inverse filtering with the Spiritual Griffin Algorithm and find the frequent cluster points of the key words entering and exiting Heavenly Saints City. Then, you plug in a hyperlink to them with the Nine Algorithms of Hook Chen and locate all the discontinuous variables, before you calculate all the recurrent sets with the Master Instability Regression Method. After that, run a few serial iterative algorithms and find the clusters whose wave frequencies are higher than the Master Heavenly Crane's equilibrium line. At last, you will only need to reorder the abnormal clusters by selection sort or insertion sort, and those bad people will be right in front of your nose, won't they?"

Xiao Tianbao blinked his red eyes, which were almost transparent, and looked at Li Yao in expectation of his compliment.

Cold sweat was popping up on Li Yao's forehead.

"That explains a lot!"

Li Yao slapped his head as if he had figured everything out. "Fellow Cultivator Xiao is truly considerate. You have my admiration!"

Xiao Tianbao pouted. "What do you mean, big brother?"

Xiao Xuance went forward and smiled. "Big brother was praising you for playing the game well! Here. I'll give you a candy first!"

"Gimme two!" Waving his chubby fingers, Xiao Tianbao chuckled. "I'm going to give big brother one. He understood what I said while none of the other people could!"

"Master Sand—"

Several teachers of the Combat Department and the Battlesuit Department came over and eyed Li Yao with admiration. "We are all pure battle-type Cultivators and don't understand the algorithms and data at all. We didn't know that Master Sand could comprehend all of that. You truly deserve to be a rising star of refining!"

"What did Fellow Cultivator Xiao mean? Can you explain the technological jargons to us, Master Sand?"

More than ten earnest eyes were focused on Li Yao.

Li Yao's eyelids were twitching violently. He coughed for a long time, before he finally squinted and said, "It's mysterious and complicated. You have no theoretical knowledge of data mining and analysis. I cannot explain the concepts to you in a hurry.

"Anyways, first things first. Let's focus our attention on the Mist Plan of the Temple of Immortals for now!"

"Fellow Cultivator Sand is quite right," Xiao Xuance said solemnly. "To prevent the news from leaking out, the operation has been kept confidential until the last moment. Therefore, it might be a bit hasty right now.

"Everybody has two hours for preparation starting from now. We will be faced with a brutal battle. Do be careful and make sure that your most powerful magical equipment is ready.

"If you did not bring sufficient magical equipment with you, the six sects of Heavenly Saints City have prepared abundant tools, which you are free to choose from.

"In two hours, we will gather in the hall of the Millennium Meeting and begin the operation.

"The name of our operation will be—'Mist Clearing'!"

Chapter 684: Unresolvable Conundrum

Chapter 684: Unresolvable Conundrum

In the training room, Li Yao was pacing back and forth anxiously like a leopard that had fallen into a trap. Now and then, he would scratch his hair hard, as if he was trying to dig out some insights from it.

The training room was rented for during the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting. Since he had too many secrets that he would rather nobody knew, he had installed very inconspicuous monitoring rune arrays in the corners of the training room to make sure that it was not broken into or under surveillance.

In a corner of the training room, a weirdly-looking crystal processor was trembling violently and sending a large paragraph of information out.

What Li Yao was transmitting was the Ice God Project and the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project that he had learned of that morning.

But he was transmitting them not through the Spiritual Nexus established by the Grand Illusionary Group but through his own route that Mo Xuan and himself had worked on together.

Professor Mo Xuan and him often talked a lot about the secrets in the Heaven's Origin Sector, and no information was absolutely safe in the Spiritual Nexus. Therefore, when the Glorious Sunlight Group was about to rise, Li Yao secretly transferred part of the capital to Professor Mo Xuan and asked him to refine a batch of their own Spiritual Towers.

Spiritual Towers were nodes of the Spiritual Nexus and a piece of classic magical equipment dating back to ten thousand years ago. They were not complicated in structure, and Professor Mo Xuan could totally build them right now.

After a batch of Spiritual Towers was produced and disguised as meteoroids and debris, they were shipped to all the space zones from the Cross Wind Space Zone to Heavenly Saints City by Sparkle in secret.

Naturally, with Li Yao's current wealth, it was impossible to build a second Spiritual Nexus that covered the entire Flying Star Sector. However, constructing a 'Spiritual Route' to support point-to-point communication from Heavenly Saints City to the Cross Wind Space Zone was quite realistic.

Since it was his personal route, there was no way that anyway could monitor the data at all.

At first, Li Yao was quite hesitative because the Glorious Sunlight Group had just been founded and was in dire need of money in every regard. He had wondered whether or not it was necessary to build such a route.

However, after witnessing Xiao Tianbao's remarkable skills, he could not help but feel lucky that he made a wise decision.

Unfortunately, the Spiritual Towers on the route were still too few. The signals were intermittent, and the speed of transmission was extremely slow.

Also, the size of the information contained in the Ice God Project and the Grand Illusionary Project was unbelievably huge. It took half an hour before they were sent over.

At this moment, there was one hour, nine minutes, and thirty-seven seconds to go before the 'Mist Clearing Operation'.

"The two proposals of planetary-level magical equipment are both very excellent. What are you worried about, Li Yao?"

After the relay across more than ten space zones, Professor Mo Xuan's picture on the light beam was twisting. Occasionally, streaks and flakes were popping up.

"I don't know. The plan looks perfect. I just…"

Narrowing his eyes, he tapped his temples and said, "I don't like the Grand Illusionary Soldier intuitionally. I feel that I smelt something uncomfortable."

"Our brain receives billions of items of information every day. 99% of that is deemed to be useless and is screened out," Professor Mo Xuan said. "Our brain will only process the 1% information that is useful for us.

"However, the 99% filtered information is not really abandoned forever. Some of it is still stored inside our brain and analyzed by our subconsciousness without us knowing it.

"Now and then, our subconsciousness will connect the blinking gold pieces in the 99% useless information and come up with some very precious conclusions.

"This is what our 'intuition' really is.

"A Cultivator's brain is much more developed than that of an ordinary person. The analysis and computational ability of our subconsciousness are also a hundred times better than those of ordinary people. Sometimes, our intuitions and predications are actually the results of the computation of our subconsciousness!

"Therefore, if you feel that the plan is inappropriate intuitionally, don't let go of your suspicion easily. Listen and sense with your heart. Stand in your subconsciousness and find the answer from the 99% useless information!"

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao closed his eyes and mumbled, "Did you know, Professor? I suddenly remembered the 'Limit Challenge Competition' in the Devil Flood Dragon Island, the first brutal battle that I ever participated in when I was young.

"In the Devil Flood Dragon Island, all the young genius near my hometown were gathered. Most of them were talented and the best, one-in-ten-thousand elites.

"At that time, my capability was merely mediocre compared to them.

"However, with my talents in refining, I was able to assemble most of the magical equipment on the Devil Flood Dragon Island and sold the tools to the geniuses.

"What they did not know was that I left a 'backdoor' in every piece of magical equipment, and I was the real master of their weapons!

"Therefore, even the geniuses whose capabilities far exceeded mine would be at the mercy of me as long as they were using magical equipment assembled by me!"

Professor Mo Xuan said casually, "I see where this is going. You are scared that somebody might leave 'backdoors' in the planetary-level magical equipment.

"Leaving backdoors is almost the unspoken rule in the circle of refiners. Even I always felt tempted to leave a few backdoors when I was refining magical equipment.

"However, if you're worried that the Grand Illusionary Soldier has backdoors, there are two critical questions that need to be addressed.

"Firstly, the Grand Illusionary Soldier is a piece of magical equipment highly dependent on the Spiritual Nexus. Without the Spiritual Nexus, they are barely of any value for a battle and will be a waste of resources.

"But the Flying Star Sector is too large a place, and the signals in the Spiritual Nexus are bound to lag when they are transmitted dozens of space zones away, not to mention the interference during transmission.

"Look. We are merely sending signals of picture and sound, and the transmission is already very unstable. It is terribly difficult to transmit complicated telepathic thoughts continuously.

"If there were really backdoors, how big would the backdoors have to be?

"Moreover, although most of the Spiritual Nexus is built and managed by the Grand Illusionary Group, the hundreds of sects scattered across dozens of space zones can influence the Spiritual Towers, too. They can always destroy the Spiritual Nexus if they realize that the Grand Illusionary Soldiers are going out of control.

"Once the Spiritual Nexus is down, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers will be wasted iron and coper!"

Li Yao frowned. "This is also the question that baffled me most. I wouldn't be so anxious if I knew the answer.

"The first problem can be resolved by technological approaches, however hard. But the second problem can barely be fixed," Professor Mo Xuan said.

"Before the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project is fully activated, technological hearings and source code examinations that can potentially take one to two years will be conducted first. There are many experts that specialize in crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus in the Flying Star Sector. All the important sects have their own advisors, too. I've been in touch with some of them before, and they knew what they were talking about quite well.

"With so many experts, they can always run the test with the most simple and straightforward methods, say, 'infinite regress'. After one to two years, loopholes will definitely be found out if there are any.

"You don't think that the wisdom of all the experts in the Flying Star Sector combined is no match for a retard, do you?"

Li Yao was even more agitated. He was about to bash the wall with his head while he said, "Indeed! I thought so too. We are not making a movie right now. The experts and scholars are not stupid. They can locate any loophole and kick open any backdoor if they have one to two years."

Li Yao paced to a corner of the room in annoyance, when his body suddenly stiffened.

"…If they have one to two years. One to two years."

He jumped high as if he had been struck by lightning, and his head crashed into the ceiling, which was more than four meters from the ground. After a crack, a giant hole was left on the ceiling, and he fell back to the ground with dusts all over his face.

Lying on the ground, Li Yao stretched out all his limbs and stared at the hole in the ceiling. His soul seemed to have exploded, and shocking brilliance beamed out of his eyes!

"Professor, I haven't found out the answer to your first question yet, but I've come up with a possibility for the second question.

"Professor, you and my four Senior Brothers are all special spectral Cultivators that are combinations of Phantom Entities and the mainframe crystal processor of Sparkle. Crystal processors are part of you, and your understanding about them must be a hundred times deeper than normal crystal processor experts!

"In your opinion, if the time for examination is shortened to three to six months, instead of one to two years like right now, is it possible to hide some of the loopholes?"

Professor Mo Xuan pondered for a moment and said, "Locating a loophole in the billions of lines of source code is like fishing for a needle in an ocean. If the time limit is three months or shorter, full-coverage methods such as 'infinite regress' will not be adopted. Theoretically speaking, it is possible to conceal a backdoor.

"However, it is just theoretical. As far as the Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector and the Heaven's Origin Sector that I know, I don't think any of them can achieve such a goal!"

"That's right! That's right!"

Li Yao suddenly sat straight. He crossed his legs, and brutal brilliance beamed out of his red eyes despite his face still being coated with dust.

"Professor, the Temple of Immortals is a weird organization, is it not?

"In their debut one year ago, all their operations were smoke grenades, and their sole purpose was to raise a war between the Iron Plateau natives and the space residents!

"Their scheme was indeed seamless and flawless.

"If I, the weirdo neither from Iron Plateau nor from the space, did not show up, it is quite possible that their plan would have worked out!

"However, it has been an entire year after the battle of Iron Plateau, but the Temple of Immortals has kept a low profile and resorted to normal approaches such as assaults and assassinations.

"Such dull and straightforward methods are completely inconsistent with the wisdom implied in the scheme when they first showed up.

"It is almost like an unparalleled martial arts expert who starts waving his fists idiotically after he performed the most brilliance move in the world!"

"Maybe, the Temple of Immortals has been accumulated their strength in preparation for their thunderous attack, the Mist Plan," Professor Mo Xuan said.

Li Yao sniffed. "The thunderous attack has been fully unraveled before it is carried out. That's too stupid.

"However, let's put the 'Mist Plan' aside and look at Iron Plateau in retrospective.

"Professor Mo Xuan, what do you think will happen if I didn't show up and a great war between Iron Plateau natives and the space residents broke out exactly as the Temple of Immortals planned?"

Chapter 685: Better Be a Thief

Chapter 685: Better Be a Thief

Mo Xuan was deep in thought. Gold sparks were bursting out of the two deep hollows on the metal skull, while he said, "If the Temple of Immortals' plan succeeded, the Iron Plateau natives would have been the cannon fodder of the Immortal Cultivators. They would have been projected to dozens of space zones nearby via the crystal warships of the space pirates. A total war would have broken out. What else?"

Li Yao's eyes were shining. He spoke so fast that his voice was like rushing bullets. "Then, the Flying Star Sector would have faced an enormous crisis that can only be resolved by focusing all the resources and manpower available.

"There would be two plans for the Cultivators to choose.

"But the Ice God Project would still have been impractical, because the modification of Ice King requires at least twenty years. During the twenty years, the combat ability of Ice King will remain at zero. The Iron Plateau natives and the Immortal Cultivators are no fools. They would not stand by and watch the Cultivators to transform Ice King but come up with a way to sabotage the project!

"Moreover, let's say that Ice King modifications are completed after twenty years and it's turned into an invincible starship, don't forget that the Cultivators have two targets right now: Iron Plateau and Spider Den!

"Awesome as Ice King may be, it can only hit one planet at most. It would is impossible to destroy Iron Plateau and Spider Den at the same time!

"Therefore, if the war broke out, the Ice God Project would have been out of the picture from the beginning.

After a brief silence, Professor Mo Xuan's voice turned sharp. "Then, there's only the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project left."

"Indeed," Li Yao said coldly. "The Grand Illusionary Soldiers are very cheap and can be refined by the other sects. As long as some of them are produced, they will boast a certain amount of combat ability. Also, they can be deployed in every corner of the Flying Star Sector. It is definitely a piece of perfect, tailor-made magical equipment for the 'riot of the Iron Plateau natives'!

"No. It is also possible that the 'riot of the Iron Plateau natives' was a scheme tailor-made for the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project!

"Faced with the incoming Iron Plateau natives, it would have been impossible for the Cultivators to run the most detailed tests within one to two years patiently.

"Think about it. In the endless darkness, at the edge of the Flying Star Sector, one space town after another is swallowed by the 'ferocious' Iron Plateau natives and space pirates. Countless ordinary people are butchered. The fearsome flames of war are ignited in every part of the Flying Star Sector and sweep across the world!

"Under such circumstances, how can you expect to examine the Grand Illusionary Soldier for one to two years?

"Even three to six months might be too long.

"If I were a leader of a sect, and the space towns in my territory were being assaulted by the Iron Plateau natives, I would definitely try to buy a batch of Grand Illusionary Soldiers to solve the imminent threat whatever the cost.

"In such a case, the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project would be implemented in haste after a short period of one to two months of examination, if it is examined at all, won't it?

"Professor, based on your experience, do you think it is possible to check the loopholes once the Grand Illusionary Project is fully initiated?"

Mo Xuan shook his head. "That would be very difficult.

"Li Yao, you are not a professor in the field of crystal processors. I can only explain it to you with the shallowest metaphor.

"Before the Grand Illusionary Project is activated, the star brain is in the original state. It is like a frozen, solid ocean.

"Although it is difficult to fish for a needle in a frozen ocean, it is still possible once countless experts are gathered.

"However, after the project is activated and the star brain starts running, billions of telepathic thoughts will enter and exit the star brain every second. The frozen ocean will be unfrozen, and surging tides will rage everywhere.

"Think about it. How is it possible to locate a needle that is flowing together with the waves in a rampant ocean with immeasurable undercurrents?"

Li Yao's voice was chilly. "So, if no loopholes are found in the preliminary tests in the beginning one to two months, it is unlikely that they will be found in the future, correct?"

Mo Xuan spoke with a voice resembling the sound of rusted gears. "Yes."

The training room was caught in a brief silence. The only sounds were Li Yao's heavy breaths and the background noises when the crystal processors were transmitting information over a long distance.

After a long time, Li Yao took a long breath and said, "The great bandit Fengyu Zhong revealed himself in order to attract the Cultivators to the Iron Plateau Space Zone. The battle in the Iron Plateau Space Zone was meant to drive the Cultivators to Iron Plateau in order to raise a great war between Iron Plateau natives and space residents.

"Once the war broke out, the world of Cultivators would have had to pick the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project!

"If that were the case, everything would be more logical.

"Since the appearance of Immortal Cultivators in the big explosion during the Skyhill Sword Seminar, we have considered the Temple of Immortals to be the schemers and the space pirates to be their puppets.

"Therefore, Cultivators devoted all their resources and attention to the Temple of Immortals.

"No one has ever thought the other possibility. If space pirates are the puppets of the Temple of Immortals, are the Temple of Immortals a puppet of somebody else?"

Mo Xuan pondered for a moment. "You are suspecting Xiao Xuance?"

"He is indeed worth suspecting," Li Yao replied.

"What's his motive?" Mo Xuan asked. "He is the CEO of the Grand Illusionary Group and the crownless king of the Flying Star Sector. He is already at the peak of the world of Cultivators. Does he have any reason to destroy the mountain below his feet?"

"A crownless king is not as good as a crowned king," Li Yao answered gloomily.

Mo Xuan thought for a moment and said, "Fair enough. But there are two points that call for our attention.

"Firstly, the Temple of Immortals' scheme on Iron Plateau has met a fiasco. The Iron Plateau natives and the space residents are communicating closely right now. It is practically impossible that a war will threaten to break out again. But still, the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project has been introduced and is waiting to be tested.

"This point alone is enough to disapprove your assumption just now.

"Secondly, as the CEO of the Grand Illusionary Group and the leader of the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project, Xiao Xuance will be standing in the spotlight from the beginning. He will be scrutinized and suspected by everybody. If he is the real schemer behind everything, it seems to be a very risky decision.

"Think about what happened on Iron Plateau. Yan Xibei, the Mountain King, was the real schemer, but he pushed his nephew Yan Chifeng to the front and did not expose himself until the last moment when he had no alternatives.

"Isn't it too early for Xiao Xuance to jump out and take charge of everything personally?"

Li Yao's eyes were rapidly flickering from side to side. He scratched his head and mumbled, "It's indeed very strange, unless, of course, Xiao Xuance has an unquestionable way to prove his innocence. But, how can he?

"Is the schemer not Xiao Xuance but somebody else in the Grand Illusionary Group?"

"Everything you said is just your assumption," Mo Xuan said. "You came to the conclusion by setting your perspective and your goal in advance. It is a very far-fetched deduction that is not supported by any proof.

"If you throw out your theory right now, nobody will believe it, and you won't be able to lock onto the real schemer even if they do!"

Li Yao scratched his hair in desperation. His pupils suddenly constricted while he gnashed his teeth.

"No!

"If my assumption is correct, there is definitely something wrong with the Mist Plan and the Mist Clearing Operation!

"An unexpected situation will force the world of Cultivators to initiate the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project in a hurry without testing it first!"

Mo Xuan observed calmly, "Maybe. But look at your watch. The Mist Clearing Operation will be carried out in 55 minutes and 33 seconds. How can you expect to stop it with your words?

"Don't forget who you are. In the eyes of Cultivators, you are still an Iron Plateau native. Although the Iron Plateau natives and space residents are in a close relationship right now, it is impossible for them to question Xiao Xuance and the Grand Illusionary Group co-funded by the six sects or cancel the Mist Clearing Operation just because of your accusations.

"Competition for rightfulness still looms between the six tribes of Iron Plateau and the six sects of Heavenly Saints City. Their relationship is sensitive. As the 'best warrior of six tribes of Iron Plateau', you must be careful about what you say and do.

"Besides...

"What if you are wrong?

"What if the Mist Plan and poison that can kill countless people does exist and the operation to stop the plan is disrupted by you?"

Li Yao shuddered and cursed.

He had once thought that Yan Xibei was the greatest schemer in the world.

But based on what is happening right now, if his guess was correct, this flawless 'overt plot' was much more neatly-made than Yan Xibei's plan!

Li Yao suddenly burst into laughter. Tears were almost flowing out of his eyes.

Mo Xuan was curious. "What are you laughing for?"

"I'm laughing at Yan Xibei, who thought himself a hero but was in fact yet another chess piece on someone else's board."

His face red in excitement, Li Yao rubbed his abdomen and said, "Yan Xibei thought that the army of Iron Plateau strengthened by the Blood Stripe Virus could swallow the Temple of Immortals. But he did not know that the Temple of Immortals was but a disguise for another force!

"I don't know whether or not the real schemer saw through Yan Xibei's trick, but they would not have cared about it even if they did.

"If Yan Xibei's plan did work out someday and he entered the space with thousands of blood-striped warriors or even took control over the Temple of Immortals as he planned, he would have been dumbfounded to find out that there were billions of Grand Illusionary Soldiers that he was faced with!

"Blood-striped warriors versus the Grand Illusionary Soldiers. Tsk. Tsk. The picture is too gory for me to imagine. Haha. Hahahaha!"

Sparks in the bottom of Mo Xuan's eyes were shining again, as he said, "Laugh as you will, but I need to remind you that the Mist Clearing Operation will be put into action in 49 minutes and 21 seconds. Whether it is a trap or not, it is now already underway.

"Not you, nor anybody else, will be able to stop it!"

"That's right!"

Li Yao covered his face with his hands and buried his head in his arms. Frustrated voice came through the gaps of his fingers as he said, "Nobody's going to stop it. Then…

"Professor, even if the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project is activated right now, it will take five years or so for the project to yield satisfactory results. Can the five Star Spirits, including yourself, find the possible loopholes inside the star brain and block them in five years?"

"That's impossible!" Professor Mo Xuan asserted. "You can be a thief for a thousand days, but you can't be braced for burglary forever. Although we can hack most crystal processors, we are definitely not almighty gods!

"Such an arduous endeavor far exceeds the limits of our computational ability. However hard we train ourselves and level up, we won't be able to do it!"

"You won't—"

Li Yao's voice turned from frustrated into desperate, but his words stopped half way through the sentence. His fingers suddenly splayed, and from the gaps between his fingers beamed out crazy brilliance that could be found on the gambler who had lost all the games until he had the last bargaining chip. He was ready to take the risk right now!

"Professor! What did you say? Can you repeat it?"

"I said that we will not be able to locate the loophole however hard we increase our computational ability."

"No. Not that. The sentence before it. You said that one can be a thief for a thousand days but cannot be braced for burglary forever."

"That's what I said. Is there a problem?"

"No problem! Absolutely no problem! So, it is much more difficult to keep an eye on a thief than to be a thief, isn't it?"

"Well, I guess. What do you mean?"

"I mean—"

Li Yao suddenly leapt up, like a butterfly that had struggled out of its invisible cocoon. His face was beaming with joy while he gazed at the light beam with his bloodshot eyes and said, "With the ability of the five Star Spirits, it is impossible to stop the thieves from visiting. But what if you are thieves?"

Chapter 686: Brain Concussion Plan

Chapter 686: Brain Concussion Plan

"We are thieves?" Mo Xuan fell silently briefly. Then his voice suddenly turned high and sharp. "You want us to hack the star brain?"

Li Yao nodded. "Is it possible?"

"Very difficult," said Mo Xuan. "We don't even know what the 'star brain' is right now. How can we prepare to hack it?"

"It is not going to be a problem," Li Yao replied confidently. "Don't forget that the Grand Illusionary Group will share all the original data and source code before the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project is fully implemented as a sign of their sincerity, so everybody will be clear on the mechanism of the star brain.

"Although the span of examination might be only three months or even shorter, which is not enough for you to discover all the loopholes in it, it should be more than enough for you to figure out the weakness of the star brain or even stuff some 'toys' into it, shouldn't it?

"After that, you will have several years to come up with a solution to crack, infiltrate, and control the defense system based on the star brain!"

Mo Xuan thought for a moment, before he replied slowly. "Although the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Flying Star

Sector both originated from the Star Ocean Imperium, the two worlds have been developing separately for almost ten thousand years. The crystal processor technology in the two worlds are similar but definitely have slight differences.

"There are indeed some network viruses and approaches to hacking crystal processors in the Heaven's Origin Sector that we have never seen in the Flying Star Sector.

"However, has it ever occurred to you that, even if we take control over the star brain, the Spiritual Nexus will still be out of our reach? If our enemy just cuts off the network, we will be screwed.

"Which means that the best outcome we can get is that we will have control of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers of a space zone, if not a planet, for a very short amount of time."

"This is our only option right now," Li Yao said helplessly. "Whatever the outcome turns out to be, let's make do with it for now!

"Our time is limited, Professor. The operation I'm going to take part in will possibly have three results.

"The first one. Nothing weird happens during the operation, and the Mist Plan is sabotaged smoothly as we planned. Everybody is happy. If so, the discussion we had just now will have been meaningless. We can all go to bed and have a nice sleep.

"The second result. Something unexpected takes place in the Mist Clearing Operation, but I am still alive after the accident. If so, we will settle what we are going to do next based on the real situation.

"Thirdly, if I 'die' in the Mist Clearing Operation—"

Mo Xuan raised his voice. "Say what?"

Li Yao frowned and said, "Listen to me first. If I 'die', I want to you to do two things.

"Firstly, cut off the point-to-point communication from the Cross Wind Space Zone to Heavenly Saints City immediately, keep our own Spiritual Towers silent, and ready the self-destruction magical equipment in them.

"Once anybody draws near to the Spiritual Towers, detonate them instantly. Nobody is to discover our secrets no matter what!

"Besides, whoever sends a message to you in my name, whether through the Spiritual Nexus or through our private route, no matter how much they know about me and how similar they are to me, that won't be me!

"According to our security protocol, when you see 35 threads with certain titles appearing in 27 forums at the same time, the one who reaches out to you between 7:34 p.m. to 7:41 p.m. in the standard time of the Flying Star Sector will be the real me!"

Li Yao and Mo Xuan had their own secret code.

Mo Xuan would browse through 27 heated online forums every day. If a certain thread appeared in a certain board at a certain time, it might have been posted by Li Yao.

35 special threads appearing in 27 special forums at a special time. The odds of a coincidence would be close to zero!

"Alright. This is our defense. Let's talk about attack now.

"If I really 'die' or go missing, most of my shares in the Glorious Sunlight Group will be transferred to the fund of the Glorious Sunlight Refining Center and supervised by you. You will have sufficient resources to conduct research and training.

"Then, the five star spirits will shift the focus of your training to the invasion of the Spiritual Nexus and the technology to hack crystal processors!

"Your life form is a combination of spectral Cultivators and crystal processors in the first place. Breaking into crystal processors is as natural as breathing for you. I believe that you will definitely become the best experts in the field after a few years of training.

"When the Grand Illusionary Group shares its original data and source code of the star brain, make a judgement yourself. If you are confident, stuff some toys into it. If you are not, it won't be a big deal. But you must try your best to analyze it with all your computational ability!

"You see where I'm going at, don't you?"

Mo Xuan listened attentively and said, "Everything else is fine. But you are going to 'die'?"

Li Yao smiled bitterly. "It's not like I want to die. However, I fear that some Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators want me to.

"Think about it. I sabotaged the first scheme of the Temple of Immortals on Iron Plateau, which proved their grueling endeavors a waste of time. I'm afraid that they've been gnashing their teeth for a long time waiting to drink wine out of my skull!

"If the real schemer behind everything is a super expert similar to Xiao Xuance and he is thinking hard to kill me, I have to be prepared for the worst!"

"You can choose not to participate in the Mist Clearing Operation," Mo Xuan said.

Li Yao blinked and said, "The Mist Clearing Operation is not the only time when they can kill me. I can dodge once or twice, but I cannot dodge forever. I'm afraid that a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator wants my head right now.

"Oh. There seems to be more than one.

"Fengyu Zhong, whose only son was killed by me, has recently advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage, too. Well. Well. Well. Two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators are lining up to kill me!

"I can at least be prepared in the Mist Clearing Operation. Also, many other Cultivators will be with me. Even if a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator means to harm me, they might not be bold enough to act under the watch of witnesses.

"But God only knows how they will plan their next trap. I cannot be wary of assassination twenty-four hours a day, can I? I won't have time to do training at all if so!

"Fortunately, the business of the Glorious Sunlight Group has been set on track. You have stable sources of income for your research and training. Moreover, you have legal identities right now, and it is no longer necessary to hide.

"The value of 'Sand Scorpion, the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau' has been fully exploited. More and more restraints are coming with the identity.

"You see, because of the subtle relationship between the six tribes of Iron Plateau and the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, if I were Sand Scorpion, there would be many things I could not say nor do, and I would be a center of attention wherever I went!

"Therefore, when we were speaking of the Mist Clearing Operation, it suddenly occurred to me that, if I absolutely had no other options and I was running to a dead end in every direction, would it not be an excellent choice to just die?

"Sand Scorpion, the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, cannot make irresponsible accusations. But a Mr. Nobody will be free to say whatever is on his mind.

"If the words of a Mr. Nobody are not convincing, then…" Li Yao smiled. "If they come from the mouth of the big hero, Li Yao, who was the first to reveal the scheme of the Temple of Immortals, somebody is definitely going to believe it!

"Alright. Time is precious. The Mist Clearing Operation is about to begin. Let's stop talking and do our job separately!

"The great devil we are going to deal with this time is probably Xiao Xuan ce, the crownless king of the Flying Star Sector. Allow me to give a code name for our operation. Let's call it the 'Xuan Extinguishing Plan', shall we?"

Mo Xuan did not know how he should respond.

Li Yao scratched his neck and said, "My bad, Professor. I forgot that 'Xuan' was in your name, too. Then…

"Since the purpose of our operation is to breach into the star brain, let's just call it the 'Brain Concussion Plan'!"

Li Yao cut off the communication and retreated the crystal processor into his Cosmos Ring.

Then, he reached out to Wu Mayan with the mini crystal processor on his wrist.

"Master, you look well today. Anything particular that you're happy about?"

Wu Mayan immediately started exclaiming when he saw Li Yao.

"Do I?"

Li Yao scratched his face and felt that he was ecstatic, too. No. He had become increasingly ecstatic ever since he heard about the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project, the Mist Plan, and the Mist Clearing Operation.

Untamable flames were jumping out of his every cell, as if something that had slept for more than half a year deep inside his bones was gradually waking up.

"You do!" Wu Mayan nodded carefully. "Over the past half year when we were in Flying Star University, I always felt that there was some sort of… laziness, for the lack of a better word, in you. You did not seem energetic enough whatever you did. Even when you were fighting, the fearlessness and the burning fighting will when you confronted Yan Xibei on Iron Plateau never showed up again.

"But right now, it's as if you're back on Iron Plateau again, Master!"

"Maybe." Li Yao grinned, feeling that his every cell was moaning. He mumbled to himself, "Maybe you're right. The recent half year in Flying Star University has been comfortable, steady, and carefree.

"However…

"It seemed to get more boring as days went on.

"Perhaps I am not born for a comfortable life. A different way of living is more suitable for the real me!

"Listen up, I'm going to be part of an event shortly. You will know what it is in the news tomorrow. I need you to do three things for me.

"Firstly, in the safe inside my training room, there are two jade chips and two Cosmos Rings that I prepared for you and Anan. The password for the safe is the sixth variation of the Flying Spirit Seven Star Array.

"If I don't come back in three days, you should open the safe, take out the jade chips and the Cosmos Rings, and share them with Anan. The two of you will motivate each other and train yourselves according to the arts inside the Cosmos Rings.

"Secondly, Master Mo, a spectral refiner of the Glorious Sunlight Refining Center, is a good friend of mine. You can trust him completely. Talk to him if you run into any trouble.

"Thirdly, have you read the news regarding the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project?"

Wu Mayan nodded. "The news says that it is one of the two proposals of planetary-level magical equipment."

"I think the project is really good and promising. If anyone questions it, you will be the first to root for the project as a representative of the Grand Illusionary Group. Do not in the world speak ill of the project. Do you understand?"

Wu Mayan was confused. "Master, I'm not getting your point."

"The bird in the lead always gets shot down first. You don't need to understand now. You will know it when you know it."

Li Yao thought for a moment and asked again, "Right. You didn't tell anybody that I know how to use a crystal suit, did you?"

"Why would I?"

Wu Mayan almost jumped to his feet. Blushing, he replied, "After I was beaten up by you last time, you made me swore to keep it a secret. A real man never goes back on his word. Why would I tell it to anybody? I didn't even tell Father Xiong!"

"Then keep it for a while longer, real man. Remember…"

Staring at the light beam, Li Yao said solemnly one word after another, "I will be back."

Chapter 687: The Real Game!

Chapter 687: The Real Game!

At 7:58:36 p.m. in the standard time of the Flying Star Sector, in the central area of the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting in the first ring of Heavenly Saints City, a deep, dark night sky gradually manifested in the artificial dome. The lamps brought brightness to the city. The tourists, who did not know what was going on, were still coming and going amid lively laughter.

Many product release conferences and magical equipment tests were carried out as planned.

In every refining room, countless refiners were talking and communicating with each other without a care in the world.

Everything seemed the same as yesterday.

But an impenetrable dragnet had been tossed over 27 coordinates in the central area silently.

Hospital, supermarket, intersection, luxury hotel, ragged motel, air cleaning station, temporary space sport for the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting…

Danger was lurking in the ostensible peace. The final tranquility before the earthquake was so protracted that it was almost breathtaking.

The Mist Clearing Operation was about to be put into action.

In the entrance of the No.55 examination tube at the outskirt of the city, Li Yao was crouching behind the complicated wires and hid himself in the darkness, like a viper that had snuck into a swamp.

The muscles all over his body were shivering and making his armor utter clattering noises.

Participants of the Mist Clearing Operation were divided into three groups.

The first group was the strike team. They were in charge of the thunderous attack toward the Black King and the Eight Blades of Black Spider, who had been locked onto long ago.

Members of the strike team were mostly the super experts of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, including several battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. They had done hundreds of rehearsals in the virtual Heavenly Saints City built by the Grand Illusionary Land and prepared for every contingency.

The second group was the siege team. It consisted of the core disciples of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, too. They were well-trained and fearless of death.

Their task was to surround and block all the Immortal Cultivators after the thunderous attack was launched.

Cultivators in the Nascent Soul Stage were all daunting super experts who would not be suppressed just because their enemy had an advantage in number.

The 'Black King', the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator of the Temple of Immortals, might not have been as strong as the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators of the six sects of Heavenly

Saints City, but he was certainly better at stealth and assassination.

If such a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was determined to flee, three or even more Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators might not be able to stop him!

If he abandoned his escape when he ran into a dead end and decided to make some victims without considering the cost, ten Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators might not be enough to stop the tragedy in the central area of Heavenly Saints City!

Therefore, there were ten times the warriors on the Cultivators' side than those on the Immortal Cultivators'; nobody dared to be careless.

Cultivators of the siege group had made up their minds that they would stall the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators should they show up even at the cost of their own lives!

The third group was the leak-filling team.

The Cultivators who were temporarily summoned, including Li Yao, were mostly assigned to this team. They constituted the third defense line and guarded the entrances and exits of the first space ring that the enemy was most likely to attempt to escape from.

Heavenly Saints City was too large a metropolis. Other than the ten rings in outer space, the central area of the first space ring was itself an enormous central area.

The population of the city had soared because of the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting. To meet the need of visitors and participants of the meeting, countless assets were transported from the other nine rings to the central area.

Therefore, a lot of temporary space ports and docks had been built, and more ships were commuting between the first ring and the other rings every day. The terrain was extremely complicated.

Therefore, it is necessary for the leak-filling team to stay alert in the places where the enemy might get away.

The 'Mist Clearing Operation' had been rehearsed in the Grand Illusionary Land countless times before a perfect plan with consideration of every factor was drafted.

Right now, the one who was hiding near the No.55 ventilation tube together with Li Yao was Ye Hongfei, a crystal suit expert in the Core Formation Stage and a young associate professor of the Battlesuit Department of Flying Star University who had communicated with him a lot.

Ye Hongfei was also Sand Scorpion's crystal suit teacher.

Two months ago, Li Yao had gone to the leadership of the school and stated that he had recognized the formidability of the super magical equipment known as crystal suits. He had expressed his interest in the arts of crystal suits.

As it happened, Ye Hongfei had a few matches with Li Yao before, and the two of them got along quite well. Therefore, he agreed to the assignment and taught Li Yao the rudimental knowledge about crystal suits in his spare time.

"Master Sand, are you a bit nervous?"

Ye Hongfei was watching the dozens of pictures on the light beam that were captured from the first person perspective of the members of the strike team and the siege team. It was meant to allow the leak-filling team in the outmost area to follow the progress of the Mist Clearing Operation.

"Nervous?"

A cluster of blood-red spread out in the depths of Li Yao's left eye and formed a demonic crimson ring around his pupil before it suddenly vanished. He licked his dry lips and replied, "I'm not nervous; I'm hungry, so hungry that I'm shaking."

Ye Hongfei replied, "Hungry? I have a few highly-condensed spiritual energy biscuits here. Do you want some?"

Li Yao shook his head. "Thanks, but no. It is not my stomach that is hungry. The biscuits are not going to feed me."

Ye Hongfei was dazed for a moment. Then he smiled and said, "I understand. You are not nervous; you are excited! When I went to participate in the unlimited crystal suit match in the Heavenly Sword Arena for the first time, I felt the same."

"You don't understand, Master Ye. This is different from the arena matches that you took part in."

Li Yao's expression became weird while he rubbed his left temple slowly. He seemed to be both expecting and enjoying something. His eyes half closed, Li Yao mumbled, "Master Ye, you were born in a noble family, and you have been a well-acknowledged prodigy since you were born. You grew up smoothly, went to the Battlesuit Department of Flying Star University smoothly, stayed to teach at the school smoothly, and advanced into the Core Formation Stage smoothly.

"The most brutal battle for you is perhaps an unlimited crystal suit match in an arena. No more!

"Therefore, you don't have any idea what I am expecting!

"The unlimited crystal suit matches that are held in designated arenas and watched by countless spectators are but child's play for me.

"Let me tell you what a real unlimited match is.

"The sky and the earth are the area, the billions of stars in the universe are my audience, and the sun and the moon will be the judges. Every last bit strength in my soul, cells, and life is exploited. Even death will not mark the end for the match!

"This is a real unlimited match and a game that I've been yearning for!

"Right now, the game is about to begin. How can I not be excited and hungry?"

Ye Hongfei was dumbfounded.

The Core Formation Stage Cultivator was deeply awed by the powerful, sharp, and mysterious aura that had suddenly burst out of Li Yao's body.

For a moment, he even felt that he was shuddering.

With a pale face, Ye Hongfei stammered, "Ma—Master Sand, what happened to you? You seem different from usual."

Li Yao was shocked and confused himself by what he had blurted out just now. Taking a deep breath, he rubbed his left eye and said in a low voice, "I'm sorry, Master Ye. I must have been too excited to keep my tongue in order.

"But anyway, we've been assigned to a terrible location in the Mist Clearing Operation. The No.55 ventilation tube is the safest and most unlikely place for the Immortal

Cultivators' escape. Are they not looking down upon us by sending us here?"

Li Yao only spoke half the truth.

Since this was the 'safest' and 'most unlikely place for Immortal Cultivators' escape', those around him were definitely not the super experts.

It meant that, if the super experts among Immortal Cultivators such as the Black King 'accidentally' chose to break out of the siege through the No.55 ventilation tube, Li Yao would have barely any teammates that would be of use!

"It can't be helped. The Mist Clearing Operation is truly a great undertaking. Not just you, even I have never seen so many experts gathering together in all my years as a Cultivator!

"This is a real war of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators!"

Ye Hongfei was greatly relieved, seeing that Li Yao had returned to normal. He smiled bitterly and said, "Although I am in the Core Formation Stage, you were quite right about my lack of experience in real-life combat. I'm no match for the super experts who are all seasoned warriors. It's only normal that I was assigned to the most remote place."

Li Yao sniffed. "But my combat ability is as good as that of a Core Formation Stage Cultivator, and I have abundant experience in real-life battles. Why was I ordered to this location, too?"

When he spoke the last sentence, Li Yao turned on the communication channel intentionally so that every member of the Mist Clearing Operation would hear it.

Ye Hongfei glanced at Li Yao's face and noticed that he was perfectly normal. He scratched his nose and said, "Master Sand, let's be honest here. It's true that your secret arts are indeed powerful enough to help you wield combat ability more than ten times that of a Cultivator in the peak of the Building Foundation Stage. Normal Core Formation Stage Cultivators are no match for you, and you may even be able to survive one or two attacks from a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator.

"However, that's only true when nobody is wearing a crystal suit!

"Crystal suits were the greatest invention of the modern Cultivation civilization. It is a super platform and the king of magical equipment! A Cultivator with and without a crystal suit can have a vastly different combat ability!

"Although I'm definitely no match for you when I'm not in a crystal suit, you've already seen me in a crystal suit in person. You don't need me to remind you of the results of our competitions, do you?

"As for the True Qi armor of Iron Plateau…

"Forgive me for being too blunt, but the difference between a True Qi armor and a crystal suit is similar to the different between a bull and a rhino. They may look alike, but their enhancements for combat are worlds apart!"

Li Yao glared at him. "About that!"

Ye Hongfei opened his hands and said, "I wouldn't have put it so straight if you were not an experienced refiner who participated in the refinement of the Unparalleled Extension and a bunch of other crystal suits. You should have a personal understanding about the formidability of crystal suits right now, no?

"Otherwise, you wouldn't have gone to the leadership of the school hoping to learn the arts of crystal suit in a hurry two months ago, would you?

"However, it's only been two months, and you simply devoted your spare time to it instead of practicing crystal suits full-time. I was only able to teach you the rudimental knowledge. So, I'm well aware of your skill in a crystal suit!"

Chapter 688: War of the Nascent Soul Stage

Chapter 688: War of the Nascent Soul Stage

Li Yao patted the armor on his body that was carved with glamorous spiritual stripes and looked like a ferocious insect. He said, "Of course, I know that my crystal suit techniques are not good enough. So, what I'm wearing is still the 'Sky Scorpion Armor', but it is now the 'universe strengthened version'!

"This armor has been modified by Master Xue Yuanxin and me together at the cost of a great many Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. A lot of features of crystal suit have been added. Also, we redesigned the internal structure of the armor based on aerodynamics with special crystal processors. It is definitely not the same as the normal armor!"

Ye Hongfei chuckled and managed a smile. "Master Sand, you are the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau. Nobody will doubt your combat ability when you are in your Sky Scorpion Armor. However, the battle today is too important. It concerns not only your honor as a warrior but also the lives of millions of people. Therefore, it is quite understandable that they are making such arrangements.

"Master Sand, it is also the qi-trainers' creed to protect ordinary people. You must know the thoughtfulness of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, right?"

Li Yao sniffed and stopped talking. He rubbed the Sky Scorpion Armor in silence.

His eyes glanced over between the downtown area far away and the No.55 ventilation tube.

Deep inside his brain, his computational ability soared as he drew up countless routes of escape and response strategies to cope with the Black King should the man appear.

Everything was ready.

The net was gradually tightened.

At 8:12:33 p.m., in the temporary market outside the main field of Edge Sharpeners' Meeting, a plain-looking young man dressed like a tourist was eating noodles slowly.

Two red-faced, drunk men who were leaning on each other staggered past him.

At 8:12:37 p.m., in a temporary hospital near the main field, several ambulances were blaring out high-pitched sirens while they carried a large number of patients who were all moaning on stretchers in agony. It was said that there was a large-scale food-poisoning incident.

At 8:12:47 p.m., outside the No.2 air cleaning station on the perimeter of the central area, a team of Cultivators wearing invisible suits dispersed and moved toward the station from various directions. They were like black mercury that was rolling slowly under the dark night.

In a high tower not far away, the scope of a spiritual energy sniper had locked onto a worker inside the air cleaning station who was drinking tea and chitchatting casually.

According to the intelligence, the worker next to the third window to the left was a spy of the Immortal Cultivators!

At 8:13:01 p.m., on the 16th floor of a luxury hotel in the northwest corner of the downtown area, two cleaners were doing their job with the dust-absorbing magical equipment on the circular corridor that was paved with extravagant carpets.

A young man in fashionable clothing, hugging a chuckling girl who was wearing barely any clothes and had a pair of sexy eyes, went to his own room.

It seemed that he had failed to hold back his libido. He pressed the girl to the wall and started kissing her before he went into the room.

Without anybody knowing it, the two passionate lovers and the two cleaners were all near Room 1608.

In the seven high buildings near the luxury hotel, experts in the Nascent Soul Stage were monitoring the situation closely.

Countless pieces of magical equipment, rune arrays, and barriers were ready and locked onto the hotel.

Cold sweat was rolling down every Cultivator's head.

Although the trap seemed lethal, nobody could confidently say that they would be the winners. They felt that cold waves were surging forward inside their hearts even though magical equipment that had been piled up like a mountain was right behind them.

It was because their target was also a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator!

At 8:13:27 p.m., three seconds were left before the activation of the Mist Clearing Operation.

One of the two drunk men in the night market suddenly fell to the ground because of an obstacle and started throwing up until his clothes were all dirty.

His companion burst into laughter and did not look at the tourist who was having noodles at all.

In the temporary hospital, many doctors and nurses were as busy as bees.

Most of the patients who suffered acute intoxication as well as the doctors who came with the ambulances gradually surrounded one of the nurses without alarming anyone.

In the high tower outside the No.2 air cleaning station, the shooter softly applied pressure with his finger on the trigger.

Complicated spiritual stripes were emitting dim brightness around his long finger and gradually melted with the spiritual stripes on the sniper, making the sniper an appendix of his body and soul.

On the corridor of the 16th floor of the luxury hotel, the sexy girl was moaning hungrily, but there was nothing except coldness and sharpness in her eyes, which seemed to be watching an invisible clock and waiting for the second hand to pass the last three slots.

Tick-tock, tick—

Suddenly!

1.5 seconds before the Mist Clearing Operation was to be activated, the corridor on the 16th floor of the luxury hotel exploded!

In the flooding light and heat, a lot of soul attack rune arrays targeting Cultivators were triggered. The corridor immediately turned into a hell where devils were shouting and screaming!

BOOM!

Beside the kissing lovers, a man-shaped hole was blown out of the wall of the corridor. A black shadow dashed out like a demon saber flying out of the nether world!

The black shadow neither fled to the side nor leapt out of the window. Instead, he stomped on the ground and jumped up, blowing up the ceiling above his head and reaching the corridor of the 17th level!

The entire hotel had been heavily surrounded with traps everywhere.

However, in order not to alarm the Black King, the siege was not very close to him, nor was it very big.

The corridor on the left and on the right, the stairs, the floors below and even outside the window had all been installed with the most delicate traps.

The floors above had the weakest defense!

The cleaners and the lovers immediately tore off their disguises. The intimidating aura of a super expert suddenly burst out of each person's body as they rushed to chase after the target!

But the sexy girl suddenly bulged her eyes, which were now bloodshot. There was shock and desperation in the blood streaks there!

Chi!

An appalling aura exploded out of the girl's large breasts, leaving a black hole behind. Her entire heart had turned into black powder!

As it turned out, the black shadow slashed at her without anybody knowing when he was running out and blew her heart up!

The girl stumbled forward two steps, before she fell to the ground and began seizing.

Like a balloon that had been pierced by a needle, the spiritual gas that was all set to go turned into colorful smoke and leaked out of her dead body.

In the profile database of the Immortal Slayers, only one person had such terrifying saber arts.

Zhuang Ziyou, one of the three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators on Spider Den, was known to boast the most unpredictable and the most devastating saber arts!

"The Mist Clearing Operation, activate!"

"Activate!"

"Activate!"

The operation had been seen through by the hostile Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator 1.5 seconds in advance. There were no other options except to activate it immediately.

In the night market, the drunk man who was vomiting, his companion, and three other customers who were enjoying their noodles suddenly lunged at the unattractive tourist!

In the hospital, dozens of white sheets flew to the air, only to be torn apart by the surging spiritual energy, blossoming like flowers.

Outside the air cleaning station, the shooter pulled the trigger as calmly as when he was breathing, sending out a bullet made of an entire marrow crystal with eleven attack rune arrays. In the meantime, more than a hundred members of the strike team took action and decisively stuck the air cleaning station where most of the liquefied Heart Gnawing Mist was stored!

Around the luxury hotel, prolonged enchanting started echoing.

More than fifty powerful barriers that had been prepared in the skyscrapers nearby were activated simultaneously. Colorful brilliance soared up into the sky, where it interweaved into a great net before it slowly fell down.

The air inside the net instantly turned extremely thick. The low-level Cultivators even found it hard to breathe.

All the Nascent Soul Stage summoned all of their spiritual energy. The daunting aura of the super experts almost burned thousands of holes in the artificial sky!

Other than the four locations, near the main field of the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting and in the downtown area of the first space ring of Heavenly Saints City, countless Cultivators took action in almost a hundred locations and attacked their targets that had been locked onto for a long time!

All the cameras were sliding, swirling, shaking, and flipping.

Fog, explosion, and blood dominated the cameras, which were trembling violently. Just one look at it was enough to make the watcher vomit. There was no telling what was going on in the central area at all!

Li Yao could only hear exclamations, screams, curses, and explosions, each louder than the previous one, in the communication channel.

Occasionally, some of the pictures stopped moving. Those pictures were all captured from a very low perspective, as if their owners were crouching on the ground.

It was evident that the owners of the pictures were all dead.

Li Yao cursed and stood straight, looking into the distance.

He saw that flames were illuminating the forest of iron that was the central area of Heavenly Saints City as if it was broad daylight.

Fire balls were rising up nonstop. The upper half of the tallest skyscraper was wreathed in furious fire, making it look like a torch.

The central area of Heavenly Saints City was in chaos.

The Cultivators that had been deployed to every center of the city showed up immediately. They evacuated the crowd, soothed the people, and rescued the injured. However, the riot was not likely to die down any time soon.

Two invincible armies seemed to be engaged in the most gory, brutal street battle in Heavenly Saints City!

This was the formidability of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

A Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator could wage a war purely on their own!

This was an out-and-out war of the Nascent Soul Stage!

Chapter 689: Minor Test

Chapter 689: Minor Test

Li Yao's crystal processor projected a complicated 3D light beam, which was the map of the entire central area of Heavenly Saints City.

Amid the coruscating skyscrapers, dozens of light spots were glittering.

Most of the light spots were red, some of them were gold, but several were a devastating black.

The red light spots meant that the battle was still going on, the gold ones meant that the Immortal Cultivators had been captured or killed, and the black ones meant that the Cultivators had failed and that the Immortal Cultivators in the area had run away.

As time went on, more and more red light spots turned gold.

The Immortal Cultivators who had snuck into Heavenly Saints City, prepared for assassination or destruction, had been taken down one by one!

But Li Yao was not in the least relieved.

Several of the 'Eight Blades of Black Spider' had been killed. But 'Hellsword' Zhuang Ziyou, the most crucial man on their side, was still on the run!

He truly deserved to be a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. Although he was being hunted and blocked by countless soldiers, he seemed to have split apart into dozens of clones that were showing up in various places of Heavenly Saints City at the same time!

Sweat was pouring off Li Yao's forehead like a rain. His pupils shrank and expanded like crystal cameras while he calculated all the locations where 'Hellsword' had last been seen. After a comprehensive analysis, he suddenly discovered that—

Hellsword was rushing at exactly where he was!

Li Yao scowled.

The No.55 ventilation tube that he was responsible for was the last place that Immortal Cultivators would break through among all the locations.

Therefore, the defenders in this place were the weakest of all.

But as it happened, 'Hellsword' was like a scalpel that had grown eyes. After several large-scale movements, he ripped a tiny gap in the impregnable dragnet and broke out of the blockade of more than ten Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators by stabbing precisely into the fatal weakness in the defense network!

However, if 'Hellsword' had received the arrangement of all the Cultivators in advance, including the zone where every Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was at in the beginning, it was not completely undoable with his Nascent Soul Stage Cultivation together with his talents in stealth and assassination.

Li Yao's fighting will soared to the peak. The scorching flames spurting out of his pores were almost burning the Sky Scorpion Armor into wasted iron.

He was waiting for the arrival of 'Hellsword', a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, patiently!

He planned to run a test with the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator.

"Hellsword is breaking out from the northwest!"

"He is quite fast!"

"He killed Elder Gao!"

Exclamations as well as the angry bellows of several Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators echoed continuously inside the communication channel.

Li Yao heard none of it. He was like a piece of wood floating in a swamp. Calm and steady, to the point that he was almost stiffened.

Suddenly—

Two buildings in an abandoned factory not far away exploded weirdly, with green flames soaring into the sky.

With them as disguises, some airwaves that were almost transparent dashed at the No.55 ventilation tube at a lightning-like speed!

He's here!

Li Yao pupils immediately shrank to the size of bright gold needles.

This was the first time he ever fought a head-on battle with a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator whose fighting will had soared to the peak!

The weird airwaves passed through the abandoned factory within a breath and, taking a weird turn, blinked in front of Li Yao!

Li Yao instantly felt lightheaded. The entire world turned blood-red. Giant swirls in the shape of skulls filled the sky. Countless hideous devils were crawling out of the depths of the swirls and coming at him!

It was a mental attack!

Li Yao gritted his teeth and blinked. Then, the sky of devils was gone, only to be replaced by an overwhelming tsunami of saber aura!

It was difficult to describe the horrendousness of the saber aura.

Normal saber aura could only be extended to a hundred meters away, no matter how unstoppable it was.

But the unpredictable attack in front of his eyes was launched at God knows when, and yet it could not have been more magnificent. It reminded Li Yao of the tides that were ten thousand meters high when he first landed on Boneyard.

One slash was already so terrifying!

Li Yao was overwhelmed by hopelessness and desperation.

That's not right!

But he suddenly came back to himself as if somebody had stabbed his brain with a needle. High as a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator's Cultivation might be, they could not trigger a ten-thousand-meter-tall aura after a single slash!

It was still mental attack!

'Hellsword' Zhuang Ziyou, other than being a notorious space pirate, was also a skilled Meditation Healer. Rumors even had it that several well-cited papers on the mysteries of the human brain on the spiritual Nexus had actually been written by him.

His saber arts always attacked the flesh and the soul at the same time!

A casual slash built a dual illusion easily. The formidability of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was partly revealed!

With the solidness of Li Yao's soul, he could naturally destroy the illusions as soon as he realized it.

However, beyond the illusions, Zhuang Ziyou's real unstoppable attack had condensed into a streak of blackness and cut precisely into Li Yao's chest!

Li Yao retreated, screamed, flew backward, and rolled on the ground!

Feeling that his attack had hit the target, Hellsword accelerated to the maximum speed without looking at his victim anymore and turned into a blurred shadow, flashing into the depths of the No.55 ventilation tube!

The ventilation tube was connected to various locations of the central area of Heavenly Saints City. It also led to the temporary ports and docks where he could sneak into the other nine space rings of Heavenly Saints City.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

In three seconds, several colorful light flames reached near No.55 ventilation tube.

All the Cultivators were gnashing their teeth in regret.

They were the Core Formation Stage Cultivators and the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who had participated in the 'Mist Clearing Operation'. They were only several seconds close to capture Hellsword!

"Fellow Cultivator Sand has been killed by Hellsword!"

"Master Sand!"

Ye Hongfei was greatly shocked. He did not realize what was going on until this moment and hurried to Li Yao.

Pu!

Li Yao opened the facial cover of the Sky Scorpion Armor and vomited a mouthful of black blood. His face was extremely pale.

Before anybody could see it, Li Yao put on a vague smile.

Lowering his head, Li Yao discovered that the breastplate of the Sky Scorpion Armor had been torn apart like a pile of toilet paper.

One slash from a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator had declared the True Qi armor to be a total loss.

"I'm fine."

Li Yao vomited yet another mouthful of black blood and managed to sit straight. After breathing for a while, he ripped off the broken breastplate and took out three layers of 'Super Bendable Steel' behind it.

Li Yao secretly clicked his tongue in shock.

As an energy-absorption material, the Super Bendable Steel boasted a defense ability ten times higher than that of normal alloys. But the first layer of the Super Bendable Steel did not absorb any energy at all and was directly smashed to pieces. On the second layer, a shockingly deep crack in the shape of the edge of a saber appeared in the middle. The third layer of the Super Bendable Steel was emitting an orange color, indicating that tremendous spiritual energy was stored inside!

Breaking through two layers of the Super Bendable Steel and yet still dealing so much damage. The capability of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator in a crystal suit is truly appalling!

Li Yao whistled to himself in his heart. He had finished his minor test.

Although Li Yao felt uncomfortable the moment he heard the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project and even came up with a series of possible plots together with Mo Xuan, he was well clear that his presumptions were not backed by any proof. They were likely just nonsense.

Li Yao had not known whether or not he was imagining some nonexistent schemes because he was just being too paranoid under the pressure of the assassins from the Temple of Immortals.

He needed more valid proof for his theory.

Therefore, he ran a minor test.

Everyone's location was prearranged. However, Li Yao slightly moved away from the place where he should have been before 'Hellsword' arrived.

The fact that Hellsword could breach through the siege from where the defense was the weakest could have been a coincidence or based on his super intuition as a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, which helped him to locate the loopholes.

Therefore, that was not conclusive proof.

However, Li Yao had moved away from the place where he was supposed to be before he arrived and was not standing in his way at all!

It meant that, of all the Cultivators who were staying on alert near the No.55 ventilation tube, Li Yao was the least threatening one for 'Hellsword'!

Or rather, if 'Hellsword' intended to attack Li Yao, he would have to deviate from his route of escape and waste almost one second!

One second was more than enough to determine the outcome of a competition between Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. If 'Hellsword' was really of a mind to run away, why would he trouble himself by attacking Li Yao when he was being hunted by several Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators?

The Sky Scorpion Armor, after being modified by the great refiner Xue Yuanxin, was very similar to a crystal suit in appearance. Unless he had known the detailed profiles in advance, there was no way that 'Hellsword' could have recognized Li Yao!

Besides—

The immense strength and the weirdness in the attack did not befit a 'casual attack' at all!

Every single piece of information indicated that the man had been prepared to launch the attack at Li Yao from the very beginning!

This was exactly what Li Yao was trying to prove.

I cleared the way for you, and several Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were chasing you like rabid dogs. Yet, you wasted half a second and took a slight turn just in order to slash at me!

This armor of mine is not particularly cool or eye-catching, and I was keeping a low-profile like a dork. What did I do to piss you off?

Unless, of course, 'Hellsword' knew that 'Sand Scorpion' would show up in this place from the beginning and decided long ago to slay the guy who sabotaged the endeavors of the Temple of Immortals while he was escaping!

While proving his previous assumptions through the attack, Li Yao also planted a 'seed' in Hellsword's heart.

Normal people would always burst out the greatest strength and highest speed at the moment of life and death.

But Li Yao had gritted his teeth and controlled his body so that he dodged the attack at the 80% of his maximum speed.

It was a risky decision.

But Li Yao believed that Hellsword had made a wrong judgement about his capability now.

At the very least, he would think that this was the highest speed of 'Sand Scorpion'.

Hellsword, your strength has not diminished yet. I cannot kill you even if I equipped the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit right now.

However, if there's a third action after the Mist Plan and the Mist Clearing Operation, will such an important man like yourself be out of the picture?

You are definitely going to stir more trouble in Heavenly Saints City!

The next time we run into each other, we will settle our debt, and I will be recouping additional interest!

Chapter 690: Death of Apollo

Chapter 690: Death of Apollo

Seeing that Li Yao could still sit straight, the other Cultivators who participated in the Mist Clearing Operation were all overjoyed. Many of them took out medication drugs and magical equipment.

"Fellow Cultivator Sand, are you alright?"

Li Yao's eyes suddenly split, and his face turned extremely pale and slightly green. Sweat the size of beans was smashing the ground like rainwater.

His hands shivering, he ripped open the mustard-seed suit on his body. In front of his chest was a black and purple bruise that seemed to have been caused by a venomous centipede. It was swollen, and it looked as if pus would burst out as soon as anybody touched it.

"I—Ke ke ke ke—I'm fine."

Of course, he was fine.

Everything was a disguise. He destroyed his skin with spiritual energy and faked the seemingly terrible wounds that in fact did not matter at all.

'Hellsword' was best at mental attacks. Since Li Yao's soul had been cleansed by Ou Yezi, the last thing he was scared of was a mental attack.

Therefore, when he learned that the Black King, one of the four kings of the Temple of Immortals, was possibly the lone wolf 'Hellsword', he came up with such a risky plan.

If it were another Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator who was best at not mental attack but strength, speed, or computational ability, Li Yao would not have dared wear the Sky Scorpion Armor and use 80% of his maximum speed at all.

He would have donned the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and summoned Black Wing to boost his combat ability long ago!

"Senior Cai, I—I'm fine." Li Yao breathed heavily and asked, "What's the current status?"

He recognized that the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator in the lead was Cai Qi, an old, renowned professor of the Flying Sword Department of Flying Star University. Professor Cai was also an elder of the Silver Moon Clan, one of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City.

Different from the 'leak-filling team' who joined the Mist Clearing Operation at the last moment, Professor Cai was a key member of the operation and had been part of it since the beginning.

Naturally, he knew much more information than Li Yao and the rest of them did.

Cai Yi, a sword Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage, was wearing a plain, light crystal suit, but he was surrounded by more than ten weird flying swords that had no handles and looked like silver crescent moons. The flying swords were circling him at a seemingly low speed, and they were not emitting any dazzling brilliance. Yet, their trajectories were extremely uncanny. After just a few glances at them, Li Yao already felt short of breath.

Calculating inside his brain silently, Li Yao discovered that, if the two of them were to fight right now, he would not be able to calculate the possible attack routes of the flying swords or dodge them at all!

He felt like he was bathing in cold moonlight. Wherever he went, the moonlight would be after him.

Cai Qi waved his left hand. A crystal processor ejected out of the arm of the crystal suit and projected almost a hundred light beams.

As a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator and a key member of the Mist Clearing Operation, Cai Qi had a far more advanced crystal processor than Li Yao. After all the light beams spread out, the area practically turned into a temporary command center.

It was exactly what had been designed in the plan of the Mist Clearing Operation. Once the situation got out of control and Hellsword or the Eight Blades of Black Spider ran away, the siege network would immediately be enlarged. All the Core Formation Stage Cultivators, Building Foundation Stage Cultivators and Refinement Stage Cultivators would listen to the command of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator that was closest to themselves.

Cai Qi's voice was calm, but Li Yao could tell that he was somewhat relieved.

"All the secret bases of the Immortal Cultivators have been occupied!

"More than fifty Immortal Cultivators were slain on the spot. More than a hundred were captured. Some of them are still on the run, but they are still within the siege!

"As for the Eight Blades of Black Spider. Five were killed, two were captured alive, and one escaped!

"All the liquefied Heart Gnawing Mist is now in our control. Our specialists are currently analyzing its components.

"Other than that, we have also controlled a batch of powerful explosive magical equipment!

"It has been confirmed that 'Hellsword' Zhuang Ziyou, the lone wolf on Spider Den, is the Black King and the leader of the Mist Plan. He is still on the run. It is not unlikely that he has fled out of the central area of Heavenly Saints City!"

Good news came one after another.

Although it was not a great victory, the Mist Plan had definitely been disrupted.

Hellsword had got away, but it was never going to be an easy task to capture a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator who was desperate to run away in such complicated terrain with such a great population.

But seven of the Eight Blades of Black Spider had been taken down!

Seven Core Formation Stage Cultivators adept at the arts of assassination could not be brought up by any organization easily. This operation was definitely a great blow for the Temple of Immortals!

Was my guess wrong?

Leaning against the ventilation tube, Li Yao was quite confused while he pretended to smear the ointment on his chest.

The Mist Clearing Operation was going very well. All the nests of the Immortal Cultivators had been demolished. Right now, the central area of Heavenly Saints City was packed with Cultivators whose vigilance was higher than ever.

It was safe to say that the central area of Heavenly Saints City had never been more heavily guarded in history.

Even if the Immortal Cultivators had any backup plans, the best time to activate them seemed to have already passed.

"Don't celebrate yet, everybody. It's still possible that other Immortal Cultivators are lurking in the central area of Heavenly Saints City. Besides, many ordinary people are not at ease and might get into trouble again," said Cai Qi solemnly.

"Besides, Hellsword is still on the run. If he goes on a rampage, he can turn into a human-skinned animal at any time and murder countless innocent people!

"Right now, all the connection tubes between the three internal space rings and the seven outer space rings have been cut off. All the commuting carriers have stopped running, too. The internal space ring is now fully enclosed!

"Cheer up, everybody, and fear no sacrifice. We must find Hellsword!"

Li Yao's heart was pounding. The strategies that the decision-makers of the Mist Clearing Operation adopted were proper and flawless.

Heavenly Saints City was a metropolis in space consisting of a star fortress in the center and ten super large circular space stations. There was nothing between the space rings. They were connected to each other by logistic tubes and carriers.

Now, the tubes were sealed, and the carriers had been called off. Even if Hellsword broke out of the space rings and fled into space, he would become a very conspicuous target that would be locked onto easily.

But why did he still feel vaguely ill at ease?

"Master Ye." Li Yao's eyelids suddenly twitched. He asked Ye Hongfei in a low voice, "The Mist Clearing Operation is the biggest operation that you've seen in your life, and almost all the experts in the world of Cultivators have gathered, even including many Refinement Stage Cultivators, correct?"

Ye Hongfei was dazed for a moment, before he replied, "Indeed. The central area of Heavenly Saints City is too populated and has a complicated environment. Not only do we need to annihilate all the Immortal Cultivators, we also have to protect ordinary people and avoid as many casualties as we can. Therefore, including the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, almost all the organizations in Heavenly Saints City large and small have been summoned and deployed to the three inner rings!

"Just rest assured. Although Hellsword is still running, the three inner rings have now been sealed. The vigilance in the city is now the highest in history. He won't be able to get away even if he is a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator!"

"That's true," Li Yao mumbled. "All the strength of Heavenly Saints City has been mobilized to the three inner rings whose connection to the seven outer rings has been cut off.

"Then, what about the seven outer rings?

"The defense of the seven outer rings must be the weakest in history, is it not?"

Ye Hongfei blinked, somewhat in confusion. "Well, I suppose. With the chaos in the three inner rings, all the Cultivators are carrying out the Mist Clearing Operation here. Naturally, few people are guarding the seven outer rings.

"However, there are not many targets worth attacking in the seven outer rings."

In Heavenly Saints City, the further a space ring was from the center, the less important it was.

The headquarters of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, the Grand Illusionary Group, the three main crystal suit centers, Flying Star University, and Heavenly Saints Institute… Every important organization was established in the central area and within the first three space rings.

As for the space rings beyond, only the less important organizations such as smaller sects or arenas were located there.

The rings after the fourth space ring were mostly the living areas of ordinary people.

Li Yao rubbed his face so hard that it was almost smoking. He pondered for a moment and asked, "The ten space rings of Heavenly Saints City each encapsulate the last one. Therefore, the second ring is larger than the first ring, and the third ring is larger than the second ring, right?"

Ye Hongfei laughed. "Isn't it obvious?"

Li Yao continued. "So, the ninth ring is larger than the eighth ring, and the tenth ring is the largest and most populated one of all the space rings!"

Ye Hongfei nodded. "True that!"

Li Yao's voice became gloomier and gloomier. "When I came to Heavenly Saints City, I noticed that the construction of the tenth ring was not done yet. It was continuously expanding outwards.

"In other words, other than being the largest, most populated district of Heavenly Saints City, the tenth ring is also a super chaotic construction site.

"There are bound to be a lot of vulnerabilities in such a big construction site and many places that might conceal dirt. It is very easy to be infiltrated, isn't it?"

Ye Hongfei turned solemn, too. He pondered for a moment and agreed. "That's true. However, there are no targets worth attacking in the seven outer rings."

"You're quite right," Li Yao said. "With the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting that is only held once every five years, all the experts and scholars of the Flying Star Sector have gathered in the central area. Cultivators who usually live in the seven outer rings have come to the central area for the meeting, too.

"With the 'Mist Clearing Operation' this year, more Cultivators have gathered in the central area.

"Therefore, the number of Cultivators in the seven outer rings, especially the tenth ring, has hit rock bottom.

Everybody's eyes are focused on the central area and the three inner rings, on the 'Mist Plan' and the 'Mist Clearing Operation', and on the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator 'Hellsword'!

"Nobody will bother to look at the tenth ring.

"After all, there are no targets worth attacking at all, only tens of millions of ordinary people!"

"Ah!"

Right then, exclamations came over in the communication channel.

Li Yao raised his head and noticed that all the Cultivators had opened their facial covers. There was shock and fury on their faces, suggesting that something important had happened.

There was chaos on the hundred light beams that Cai Qi projected. A major twist seemed to have taken place.

Li Yao felt that his heart was tightened as he asked, "What happened?"

"We have discovered Apollo's body," Cai Qi replied in anguish. "It was in 'Hellsword' Zhuang Ziyou's bed in his hotel room. Three lines of words were left on the chest of the body.

" Of the billions of paths of Cultivation,

" I only ask you this…

" Do you want to walk on the immortal one?

"This is clearly a message to all Cultivators!"

"Who is Apollo?" Li Yao asked.

Cai Qi requested permission from the command center. After he was authorized, he glanced over everybody and sighed. "Apollo is the secret code name for a Cultivator. He was the first agent of the Immortal Slayers to infiltrate the Temple of Immortals. It was through the vital intelligence provided by Apollo that we gradually grasped the general picture of the Mist Plan.

"However, Apollo has been killed by the Immortal Cultivators!

"Thus, the Immortal Cultivators have seen through Apollo's identity since long ago but kept him passing on false information to us!"

Chapter 691: Arrival

Chapter 691: Arrival

Cai Qi's words froze every Cultivator's heart like a cold tornado.

The Cultivators who were quick-minded and had amazing computational ability had realized that, if the Immortal Cultivators revealed the entire Mist Plan to 'Apollo' when they knew his real identity, something must have been seriously wrong with the Mist Plan.

However, it was unmistakable that seven Core Formation Stage Cultivators had been captured through the Mist Clearing Operation and that a large batch of Heart Gnawing Mist and crystal bombs had been found.

Everybody looked at one another in bewilderment. The area was caught in a weird silence.

In the command center of the Mist Clearing Operation, countless Cultivators were reviewing and analyzing every battle that had taken place.

In the meantime, many research-type Cultivators were seizing every second to crack the Heart Gnawing Mist, the vital poison to the Mist Plan.

A while later, shocking results came one after another.

"Of the seven members of the Eight Blades of Black Spider we slew or captured, at least four are fakes!

"By analyzing the combat videos captured by the crystal cameras dynamically, we discovered that four of the assassins never showed any ability beyond the peak of the Building Foundation Stage before their deaths as they struggled to resist.

"How could a Core Formation Stage Cultivator not burst out their best ability at a moment of life and death?

"The identities of the other three assassins are rather suspicious, too. Although two assassins showed techniques that seemed to belong to the Core Formation Stage, their veins exploded, and they all died sudden deaths after the fierce battle. It is possible that they took a lot of drugs to stimulate their veins and increase their strength.

"This means that the 'Eight Blades of Black Spider' we discovered were probably assassins of a lower level in disguise. They were 'stand-ins' for the real 'Eight Blades of Black Spider!

"It is also possible that one to two real assassins of the 'Eight Blades of Black Spider' were leading six to seven 'stand-ins'. The assassin who succeeded in getting away might be the real one!"

The news exploded like a crystal bomb in the crowd.

Before everybody recovered from the dizziness, a piece of even more shocking news crashed at them like an unstoppable tide!

"According to the preliminary analysis of the research-type Cultivators, the Heart Gnawing Mist is fake, too!

"It is not precise to call the poison false. In fact, the 'Heart Gnawing Mist' is a simple combination of nine venomous gases. It has no technological requirements whatsoever and is rather unattractive in terms of toxicity, volatility, and infectivity. With the current techniques in the world of Cultivators, it can easily be sealed, cracked, and purged. Such a poison cannot be called a piece of 'vital' magical equipment at all!"

Cai Qi was both confused and frustrated. He mumbled to himself, "Maybe, the Heart Gnawing Mist never existed in the first place. It was merely a made-up super poison to misguide our investigation and to distract our attention.

"Stay alert, everybody! Activate your spiritual energy to the maximum and turn on all your safety magical equipment!"

Cai Qi suddenly raised his voice. Thunder seemed to be breaking out in the communication channel as he shouted. "The Temple of Immortals forced us to mobilize all our strength with the nonexistent 'Mist Plan', but this can't be their ultimate goal. They must have prepared something more unpredictable and dangerous for us!

"All the Cultivators nearby, move close to me immediately. Make sure you have two companions at all times. Don't be alone. I repeat. Whatever strange things you find, don't investigate them alone and simply report back to me!"

The air seemed to be pumped away in that moment, and the atmosphere was more intense than ever. Every Cultivator had a grave countenance, as if an invisible demon was crouching in the dark depths of space, eyeing them in amusement despite the thick metal city walls.

"Senior Cai, maybe the Temple of Immortals does have other plans, but I want to make sure of something with your first."

Li Yao asked very calmly, "Is Senior Xiao Xuance the leader of the Immortal Slayers and the supervisor of the Mist Clearing Operation?"

Cai Qi was dazed for a moment. He frowned and said, "How is it possible? Xiao Xuance is the CEO of the Grand Illusionary Group. He is responsible for the expansion and maintenance of the Spiritual Nexus. He also has to participate in the 'Grand Illusionary Soldier Project'. He is occupied in all kinds of affairs from dawn to dusk every day. There's no time for him to handle the things regarding the Immortal Slayers at all.

"The Grand Illusionary Group and the Immortal Slayers are two independent systems. The former does not govern or manage the latter.

"As for the Mist Clearing Operation, he is not in charge of it, either. However, we knew that Xiao Tianbao, his foster son, was an expert in crystal processors and, thus, invited him to supervise the monitoring work."

Li Yao blinked and pondered for a moment. Then he asked again, "Then, if my guess is correct, some of the Immortal Slayers, especially those who infiltrated the Temple of Immortals, must be Xiao Xuance's true disciples or his family members, aren't they?"

Cai Qi looked at him strangely and said, "Isn't it only reasonable?"

Ye Hongfei pulled Li Yao's sleeve and said in a low voice, "What are you trying to ask, Master Sand? Xiao Xuance is from the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood and was its leader for decades. Naturally, many of his disciples and family members are Immortal Slayers!"

Li Yao was confused. "What do you mean?"

"Did you not know?" Ye Hongfei found it odd. "The six sects of Heavenly Saints City and the six tribes of Iron Plateau should be similar. Our ancestors are all the remaining troops after the civil war of the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago.

"The soldiers belonged to different systems, and they slowed evolved into different sects according to their own features.

"For example, the Furious Bears Union originated from the 'Furious Bears Assault Team', a paratroop regiment of the Star Ocean Imperium that was particularly good at assault missions.

"As for the Burning Sun Alliance, it was based on the scout troops of the Star Ocean Imperium. Therefore, they possess a lot of speed-type secret arts and are best at guerilla warfare and reconnaissance.

"The Feathered Snakes Brotherhood can be traced back to the intelligence department of the Star Ocean Imperium. Information collection, infiltration, interrogation, anti-interrogation… Those are all their specialties!

"Therefore, when the team of Immortal Slayers was established, it was only natural that most of the participants were disciples of the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood.

"Xiao Xuance was the leader of the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood for decades. He has more disciples and grand-disciples in the sect than anybody can count. What's odd about there being several of his true disciples among the Immortal Slayers?"

Li Yao was dumbfounded and rendered speechless.

He finally understood why such a marvelous tool as the 'Truth Cabinet' was in the hands of the Feathered Snakes Tribe when he was back on Iron Plateau.

As it turned out, their ancestors were actually responsible for the intelligence work. The decision was perfectly understandable!

"However—"

Li Yao was not fully convinced and was about to open his mouth again, but Cai Qi interrupted him coldly. "Fellow Cultivator Sand, I may have guessed what you're thinking. You want to know whether or not Xiao Xuance has true disciples and family members among the Immortal Slayers. I can tell you that he does have, and that they are in quite high positions.

"Xiao Xuance's blood son Xiao Tianyang is a key member of the Immortal Slayers and of paramount importance for the infiltration plan!"

Li Yao had guessed it a long time ago. He frowned and said, "Where is Xiao Tianyang right now?"

Cai Qi gnashed his teeth, his every word dashing out like a flying sword. "Xiao Tianyang is now in Xiao Xuance's arms!

"He is Apollo, who was just killed by the Temple of Immortals as a message to us!"

"What!" As if hit by a lightning, Li Yao took a few steps back and crashed into the ventilation tube heavily.

The collision was so huge that it was echoing inside the ventilation tube. The color on Li Yao's face was entirely gone.

Beep! Beep! Beep!

Hasty alarms broke out on every Cultivator's crystal processor.

The hundred light beams triggered by Cai Qi were blinking ominously red at the same time. Devastating screams each louder than the last were coming through the communication channel.

"The tenth space ring! A great explosion took place in the tenth space ring!"

"Abnormal spiritual waves are everywhere around the tenth space ring, as if it has been savaged by an unexpected cosmic storm!"

"No. Not a storm…"

"It's—it's—it's extraterrestrial devils!"

"The extraterrestrial devils have arrived in the tenth space ring!"

All the Cultivators, including Cai Qi, lost their color. Their faces were paler than a corpse's right now.

They were not as terrified when they learned that 'Hellsword' got away, when they discovered that 'Apollo' was dead, or when they realized that the Mist Plan was merely a smoke grenade tossed out intentionally by the Temple of Immortals.

They had never expected that they would be faced with one of the most horrifying catastrophes for every sector: the extraterrestrial devils!

Through researching the manipulation and utilization of spiritual energy, human beings had realized the existence of a type of energy that was entirely different from commonly-seen spiritual energy a long time ago. It was known as 'tenebrum energy'.

However, debates remained unabated as to the essence of the tenebrum energy even to this day.

However, there was one well-accepted theory.

Mankind was not the first dominator of the endless sea of stars. Before the civilization of human beings was established, countless prosperous civilizations and kings emerged in the boundless cosmos.

The strong prehistoric species addressed by the ancient people as 'deities' or 'devils' failed to resist the deterioration of time and gradually went extinct over billions of years.

However, although the prehistoric civilizations were doomed, the thoughts, or the will, of the experts of the civilizations sometimes lingered on like ghosts.

Such thoughts that contained infinite anger, horror, desperation, regret, and brutality would wander here and there in the space.

Most of the thoughts would gradually diminish as time went by until they completely vanished in the end.

However, some of the thoughts would combine with spiritual energy by accident, or rather, corrupt the spiritual energy, by turning the pure, steady, and mild spiritual energy into a vastly different form that could be extremely violent.

That was tenebrum energy.

Moreover, when endless tenebrum energy was concentrated, the apparitions from the past civilizations could develop self-awareness again.

Such apparitions often gathered in somewhere mysterious in the endless sea of stars.

Nobody knew their purpose. But when they came, the only thing they brought was always betrayal, slaughter, and destruction.

They were the extraterrestrial devils!

Chapter 692: Enough Is Enough!

Chapter 692: Enough Is Enough!

Since human beings evolved beyond the primitive phase and started exploring the mysteries of spiritual energy, tenebrum energy had existed in the world of Cultivators like a shadow.

The demonic Cultivators who were willing to be corrupted by the tenebrum energy and practice the arts of the devils for fortune, strength, ambition, or grudges had been all Cultivators' mortal enemies since the era of the ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago.

The fall of the glorious Star Ocean Imperium could mostly be blamed on the extraterrestrial devils, too.

When Li Yao was little, the teacher in his school had told him that the demonic Cultivators were all monsters without any humanity who knew nothing expect killing.

However, on second thought, such an assertation was too simple and rough.

If they were really senseless monsters who knew nothing except killing, how could they have set up so many delicate traps that brought about the doom of the expedition army of the imperium?

Besides, when Li Yao was in the Heaven's Origin Sector, he had met a young man who practiced the tenebrum energy and yet maintained his rationality and self-awareness.

Therefore, Li Yao estimated that the demonic Cultivators should be similar to the demon race.

Low-level demonic Cultivators were slaves of the tenebrum energy. Just like low-level demons, they knew nothing but havoc and destruction.

In the meantime, the high-level demonic Cultivators, such as the leaders or the kings, were perhaps similar to the silver-blood demons and the saint-blood demons, who not only boasted unparalleled wisdom to concoct impressive schemes but could also conceal their features to make themselves appear exactly the same as normal human beings.

The Heaven's Origin Sector was a small world with few demonic Cultivators. Catastrophes such as the arrival of the extraterrestrial devils barely happened in history.

The extraterrestrial devils were entities of pure energy. Therefore, they could only launch mental attacks. The more horrified a man was, the more intense his mental waves would be. The extraterrestrial devils would come at them like flies that had smelt fresh blood.

All Cultivators and ordinary people in the Heaven's Origin Sector lived on the same planet with their feet against the solid ground and their heads below a blue sky. Everybody worked together and fought together. Even deaths in a battle were not very scary for them.

Since they were peaceful and in high spirits all the time, their souls were extremely solid. Even ordinary people who had no Cultivation would be as vigorous as a burning torch. Naturally, the extraterrestrial devils had barely any chances to take over their minds.

But things are different in the Flying Star Sector.

Although this sector had an extremely large territory that covered dozens of space zones, the total population of the sector was similar to that of the Heaven's Origin Sector. Most of the land was scarcely resided.

Most people were scattered in the sea of stars.

For some of the space zones, they might only have ten to twenty million people despite their enormous size. The residents in those space zones were like dozens of ants on a dry leaf that was floating on a boundless ocean.

Staying in the bleak, vast universe all year long, one might find it difficult to keep their mental stability.

Li Yao had once heard a word called 'claustrophobia'.

He had once imagined that if he were living in a gloomy, narrow, and thin starship all his life with a cold, dark universe outside the window, he would be prone to the scourge of a cosmic storm at any time. A tiny accident on the starship might mean the destruction of the entire town.

In such a living environment, even though the Grand Illusionary Land could soothe anxiety, it was still very easy for the mental deterioration of the group to take place.

This was the best land for the extraterrestrial devils to demonstrate their power.

In the Flying Star Sector, the arrival of the extraterrestrial devils was as common as the beast tide outbreaks in the Heaven's Origin Sector.

During their thousands of years of struggle against the extraterrestrial devils, people of the Flying Star Sector had accumulated abundant experience in dealing with them.

Many large space towns had deployed special barriers around themselves to keep the extraterrestrial devils away.

Inside the town, 'Mind Clearing Spell', 'Mind Easing Spell', and 'Soul Pacifying Spell' would be played at certain hours during the day. The rain-making rune arrays in the space towns were also added with sedating water.

Well-trained Meditation Healers and therapists would also examine the residents regularly to monitor their mental health.

Heavenly Saints City, as the biggest city in the Flying Star Sector, naturally had the most advanced rune arrays and magical equipment to resist the extraterrestrial devils.

Theoretically speaking, it was impossible for extraterrestrial devils to arrive on a large scale.

However…

If someone who had ill intentions had snuck into the tenth space ring of the Heavenly Saints City and established 'Extraterrestrial Devils Altars' through which they summoned the extraterrestrial devils with blood sacrifices while all the Cultivators were gathered in the three inner rings to participate in the 'Mist Clearing Operation', it would be an entirely different matter.

As of now, Li Yao did not know that the relationship between the Immortal Cultivators and the demonic Cultivators yet.

Although Huangpu Shiyi claimed that deities and devils were the same, that was only his own theory.

But one thing was certain.

Immortal Cultivators and demonic Cultivators were both enemies of Cultivators and humanity!

"The great explosion in the tenth space ring is still going on, and a large-scale riot is taking place. Everybody is panicking. Several monitoring sites have reported that the mental pressure of many ordinary people has surpassed the limits. They are likely already possessed by extraterrestrial devils!

"Extraterrestrial devils have appeared in the third district, the fifth district, and the sixth district. Countless ordinary people have been possessed by the devils and turned into aggressive lunatics!

"The intensity of the extraterrestrial devils' outbreak is the worst in the last hundred years!"

One message after another was passed on to Cai Qi's crystal processor.

Every message was like a burning saber that was slashing every Cultivator's face time and time again.

In a moment, gold streams of information popped up on Cai Qi's crystal processor and poured down like a heavy rain.

Cai Qi glanced at it and suddenly stood straight. For a moment, he seemed ten meters taller. The crescent flying swords around him suddenly accelerated and turned into blurred silver shadows, wreathing him in a fatal veil!

The intimidating aura of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was fully exuded!

"The Mist Clearing Operation has now been declared a failure.

"It is confirmed that the Mist Plan was merely a disguise for the Temple of Immortals, whose real purpose was the tenth space ring of Heavenly Saints City. They are planning to raise a large-scale riot inside the tenth space ring!

"Now, all the battle-type Cultivators will be divided into two roles. Some of the Cultivators will stay and protect the ordinary people and the non-battle-type Cultivators in the three inner rings, while the other battle-type Cultivators will march toward the tenth space ring immediately to settle the riot and destroy the devils!

"The mission will be very risky. The arrangement of the Immortal Cultivators is quite thorough. They must have prepared something more than just the arrival of the extraterrestrial devils!

"It is most likely that many experts of the Temple of Immortals, including the top assassins such as the 'Eight Blades of Black Spider', are now hiding in the tenth space ring among the ordinary people who have been devilized. They will find opportunities to assassinate us while we are rescuing the ordinary people!

"If we go to rescue them, the Cultivators will definitely suffer a lot of casualties.

"But if we don't, the catastrophe will only get worse. All of the tenth space ring will be mired in the swamp of devils. Tens of thousands of innocent citizens will die. The ordinary people will lose faith in Cultivators forever!

"I am not the leader or supervisor of most of the Cultivators here. Therefore, I cannot demand you to do anything. What you do next is all up to you!

"Whoever is willing to go to the tenth space ring, just step forward. We will gather in the No.3 temporary port and depart for the tenth space ring to slay all the devils!

"Those who are not willing to take the risk, stay here and protect the ordinary people and the non-battle-type Cultivators—which is an equally important task!"

All the Cultivators were silent briefly. There was no telling who was the first to step forward. They seemed to be in exactly the same location, but the distance between was much shorter.

Including Li Yao, every Cultivator made a step forward. A big step.

"Great!" Cai Qi roared. "Maybe the Temple of Immortals have won the battle for now, but as long as one last Cultivator is still breathing, we will not stand by and watch ordinary people to be savaged by them!

"Fellow Cultivators, please set the reception sensitivity of your crystal processor to the highest. The command center is drafting new battle plans according to the terrain and the real-time pictures of the tenth space ring. They will be sent to your crystal processor shortly!

"Better late than never. Let's go!"

Cai Qi waved his hand. Everybody cheered and followed him.

His face red, Ye Hongfei said to Li Yao in a low voice, "Master Sand. Thank you for helping us out."

In his eyes, Li Yao was from Iron Plateau. The catastrophe happening in Heavenly Saints City should not have been his concern.

Glancing at the ragged 'Sky Scorpion Armor, Universe Strengthened Version' on Li Yao, Ye Hongfei could not help but observe, "However, your armor…"

Cai Qi glanced at Li Yao, too. With a hint of appreciation and admiration, he said softly, "Fellow Cultivator Sand, thanks for your generous help. But do you need new armor? If it is inconvenient for you to look for a replacement right now, I think we can find you a spare crystal suit when we arrive at the temporary dock. But I'm wondering whether or not you can wear them."

"That will be unnecessary."

Li Yao narrowed his eyes. The muscles on his face were twitching. Solemnly, he tore the broken Sky Scorpion Armor off and threw the pieces to the ground heavily.

"I have no other options now. With everything reaching this point, this must be when people say enough is enough. There's a secret that I have to make public now!"

Li Yao sighed and cleared away the remnants of the True Qi armor in a few moments. He pressed his forehead with his fingers softly.

The Cosmos Ring on his index fingers emitting orange brilliance. Countless light streams flowed out and covered his body slowly like a brook!

When the orange brilliance gradually solidified, Ye Hongfei, who was standing next to him, exclaimed in shock, "A crystal suit!"

"Exactly!"

It took Li Yao ten seconds for him to summon the crystal suit from his Cosmos Ring and cover it on his body without a gap.

He smashed his breastplate hard with a crisp sound.

Li Yao said seriously, "Fellow Cultivators, truth be told, I've made huge improvements in the arts of crystal suits under the enlightenment of Fellow Cultivator Ye Hongfei over the past two months. I'm now perfectly capable of wearing the 'Green Wolf Battlesuit', a beginner-level crystal suit!

"The gold crystal suit that I'm wearing right now is modified by Master Xue Yuanxin, the well-known expert of crystal suits. Because I do not know much about crystal suits, he has simplified the operation system of the common Green Wolf Battlesuit and added a lot of powerful magical equipment and high-level skill cards. It is the evolved version of the 'Green Wolf Battlesuit'—the 'Gold Wolf Battlesuit'!

"After Master Xue's modification, it has turned from a beginner-level crystal suit into a main-force crystal suit that boasts tremendous capability!

"Therefore, you don't need to worry that I might drag you down in the fierce battle.

"After I am equipped with the Gold Wolf Battlesuit, I am unimaginably strong!

"This is my secret weapon!

"When 'Hellsword' came over just now, I planned to put on the new equipment, but he was too fast and got away before I had the chance to wear the crystal suit. What a shame!

"If I had put on the Gold Wolf Battlesuit earlier, I might have been able to stop 'Hellsword'!"

All the Cultivators were dumbfounded.

It had been forever since the Core Formation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators last saw such a rudimental crystal suit like the 'Green Wolf Battlesuit'.

The crystal suits that they were wearing were at least twenty times as valuable as the Green Wolf Battlesuit.

But the 'Gold Wolf Battlesuit', which was an 'evolved version', might be slightly better than the original.

However, when Cai Qi thought of the poor performance of the 'Sky Scorpion Armor, Universe Strengthened Version' just now…

Cai Qi opened his mouth and held back his words after thinking for a moment. He patted Li Yao's shoulder softly and said, "Fellow Cultivator Sand is indeed reliable and loyal to friends. You truly deserve to be the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau! I do appreciate your help.

"Nobody will question your capability and bravery, but…

"The environment of the tenth ring is much more complicated than that of the three inner rings. When we are on the battlefield, it will be best if you can be cautious and stay with us instead of fighting by yourself, Fellow Cultivator Sand."

Chapter 693: Heroes After Death

Chapter 693: Heroes After Death

The No.3 temporary port had originally been prepared for the abnormally large number of tourists during the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting, but it had turned into a military port.

Due to the unexpected accident, the space port was a hive of activity. Not enough crystal warships were found in the hurry. Therefore, shuttles and civil carriers between the space rings had all been expropriated.

The weight-carrying vehicles of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City moved the battle magical equipment stored in the sects to the space port.

Those crowding the space port mostly consisted of fully-armed Cultivators in crystal suits. Most of the Cultivators were furious enough to volunteer to go to the tenth space ring. In the end, the crystal processor had to draw lots to decide who was to stay and protect the central area.

On the giant light beam floating in the sky, information streams that looked like a surging ocean appeared. They were connected to all the Cultivators' crystal processors and guided them to different areas where the Cultivators were allocated special magical equipment to deal with the extraterrestrial devils, before they went separate ways and boarded different starships, marching toward the battlefield.

The space port was full of people but not chaotic. The Cultivators had freed themselves from the frustration of the failure of the 'Mist Clearing Operation' and dedicated themselves to the new battle.

In the somewhat intense atmosphere, everybody ground their teeth hard. No one was shouting or yelling. The only sound that could be heard in the vast No.3 dock was the occasional collision of crystal suits.

"Master Sand, the command center has assigned us to the same team. When we arrive in the tenth space ring, you must follow me closely and do not act recklessly."

Glancing at the 'Gold Wolf Battlesuit' on Li Yao's body, Ye Hongfei hesitated before continuing. "Extraterrestrial devils and demon beasts are different. We cannot deal with ordinary people who are possessed by the devils by killing them directly. Most of the devilized people are actually recoverable. Therefore… you must follow my lead. Do you understand?"

Li Yao did not answer the question. He frowned and said, "Master Ye, it's very likely that assassins of the Temple of Immortals are now lurking in the tenth space ring, pretending to be devilized people. Right now, the devils' flames are burning in the tenth space ring, and the spiritual energy there is an utter mess. We will not be able to notice the assassins even if they show any signs.

"While we are rescuing ordinary people, they will find an opportunity to kill us. I'm afraid that is the real purpose of the Temple of Immortals. We…"

Ye Hongfei smiled bitterly. "At a moment like this, who doesn't know that? But it's not like we have any other choice. We cannot stand by and watch the tenth space ring's destruction.

"When ordinary people are possessed by devils, we can save them within the first day and night.

"If we do not act immediately, the ordinary people in the tenth space ring will either be slain by the devilized people or become slaves of their slaughtering will forever. They will stay as the devils' possessions for the rest of their lives!

"Even though we know clearly that the Temple of Immortals is going to ambush us in the tenth space ring, we have to grit our teeth and try our luck!"

As the two of them were talking, earsplitting metallic noises disturbed them.

Li Yao raised his head, only to find a troop made of almost a hundred metal skeletons, who strode close in a neat battle formation with their heads held high.

The bones of the metal skeletons were all made of the best super alloys, covered by multiple layers of armor. On the surface of the armor were glamorous spiritual stripes that were emitting colorful brilliance and covered the components inside the body, which were as delicate as the parts of a watch.

All the metal skeletons were carrying sharp swords and powerful firearms, with crimson flames burning in their deep, dark eyes.

They were indeed ghostly and fearsome!

Li Yao was somewhat shocked. He subconsciously asked, "Spectral Cultivators?"

"Exactly!" Ye Hongfei said proudly. "This is the 'Spiritual Ghost Legion' of Heavenly Saints City. All the battle-type Cultivators of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City join the 'Spiritual Ghost Legion' and continue making their contributions if they turn into spectral Cultivators after their death.

"The Flying Star Sector is always troubled by the extraterrestrial devils. Extraterrestrial devils are entities of energy, and so are spectral Cultivators. Therefore, spectral Cultivators are the best soldiers to deal with the extraterrestrial devils.

"In every big town of the Flying Star Sector, such troops of spectral Cultivators are stationed. Once the towns are invaded by extraterrestrial devils, they lead the charge!"

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. "Can spectral Cultivators fight, too? As I recall, spectral Cultivators are quite fragile and unstable, are they not?"

A body of flesh and blood was the best container for a soul. Without the body, one's soul would turn extremely vulnerable.

Even though the soul hid itself in an artificial body, it was still prone to the interference of various kinds of light, heat, radiation, and spiritual waves.

After a cosmic storm, it was not unusual to find that the soul of a spectral Cultivator was entirely gone, never to be seen again.

Therefore, most of the spectral Cultivators that Li Yao knew preferred the indoors to the outdoors. They lived in anti-radiation buildings and disliked alfresco activities. The jobs they were occupied with were mostly about pure thinking and far away from the interference of spiritual energy.

Even the five 'star spirits' including Professor Mo Xuan also fitted with the pattern; they spent most of their time in the mainframe crystal processor of Sparkle.

Battle-type Cultivators often took part in the research work, such as creating a new Cultivation art or devising a new skill of martial arts, when they turned into spectral Cultivators after their death. They rarely participated in a real-life battle personally.

In other words, the spectral Cultivators might boast tremendous combat ability, but they were too brittle to endure brutal clashes on a battlefield.

Flames of admiration were flowing inside Ye Hongfei's eyes, as he raised his voice and commented, "They definitely are. The combat style of the spectral Cultivators is often suicidal. After an arrival of extraterrestrial devils, countless spectral Cultivators will perish forever. But next time the catastrophe takes place, they will charge forward without any hesitation again. Maybe—"

Ye Hongfei's eyes suddenly froze half way through his speech. He gazed at Li Yao's back.

As it turned out, the 'Spiritual Ghost Legion' just passed by the two of them. One of the spectral Cultivators overheard their conversation and walked toward them.

"We are Cultivators."

Fire was blossoming like red lotuses inside the spectral Cultivator's eyes, as he clenched his coldly shining fists and touched his breastplate softly.

On his chest, a weird battle emblem was painted. A rusted, lackluster flying sword and a broken saber with countless dents were crossed on a skull that was full of cracks.

"We are still Cultivators even though we are dead."

Maybe it was Li Yao's imagination, but when the spectral Cultivator made that declaration, he felt that it was not a cold metal skeleton standing before him but a handsome young warrior made of flesh and blood.

He blinked, and when he looked at the spectral Cultivator again, he had already turned around and joined the troop.

In front of the team of spectral Cultivators, an iron giant more than four meters tall was carrying a black flag on its shoulder.

That same battle emblem, as well as the words 'Spiritual Ghost', was painted on the flag, which was flapping in the wind.

Spectral Cultivators did not have real bodies. The artificial bodies they chose were of various forms and shapes. Some of the giants in the team were almost five meters tall, while some other spectral Cultivators had multiple heads and numerous limbs, making them look like crazy demons.

However, whatever the artificial bodies looked like, the burning fighting will in them was exactly the same as the fighting will in the Cultivators who were alive.

Li Yao took a deep breath and clenched his fists.

"Extraterrestrial devils!

"Alright. Let's have a great battle together with the fellow Cultivators both alive and deceased!"

In the next hour, countless shuttles, carriers, and crystal warships lunged at the tenth space ring from the central area of Heavenly Saints City!

On one of the carriers, Cai Qi was briefing the situation on the battlefield to the Cultivators who were temporarily under his command.

In fact, most of the Cultivators there had abundant experience in dealing with extraterrestrial devils. His introduction was meant for Li Yao, who was 'from Iron Plateau' and had never witnessed the horror of the extraterrestrial devils in person.

"Remember, there are three kinds of enemy that we need to cope with!

"Firstly, the extraterrestrial devils!

"Extraterrestrial devils are entities of pure energy. They are invisible and hard to locate. Mental attacks are their specialty. They are also able to manipulate items from afar and condense them into a certain object!

"However, if we spray the secret 'Devil Revealing Powder' on them, the extraterrestrial devils will immediately be separated from the air.

"Once the extraterrestrial devils are found, try to use weapons of spiritual energy and avoid using physical bullets.

"As for melee weapons, the auras of your blades will deal fatal damage to the extraterrestrial devils, but the edges of the blades will be not so helpful!

"Secondly, the ordinary people who are possessed by extraterrestrial devils, or devilized people, if you will.

"Since the arrival of extraterrestrial devils just took place, the ordinary people who are possessed by the extraterrestrial devils are not bewildered too much yet. Our most important task is to restore the consciousness of these people and bring them back to the safe area.

"Just now, everybody has received a large number of Mind Clearing Spells, Soul Pacifying Spells, and Exorcising Drugs. Such runes and magical equipment are very effective in driving the extraterrestrial devils away. As long as they are not possessed by the devil kings, the ordinary people will recover shortly.

"However, do remember that, if blue gas or black gas is popping up from the heads of people who are possessed, they are too deeply affected to be saved. Do not hesitate to do what you must do when you see them!

"Thirdly, assassins from the Temple of Immortals!

"The riot in the tenth space ring is apparently not the Temple of Immortals' purpose. Their real goal is to attract us to the tenth space ring where they can assassinate us. Therefore, not only will the top assassins such as the Eight Blades of Black Spider be lurking there, Hellsword, who just got away, might also have retreated to the tenth space ring, waiting for his victims there!

"Chances are that a second or a third Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator of the Temple of Immortals will show up!

"Danger looms ahead, but we have to go on undeterred. We have no other options except to try our best! Remember, stay close to me, and do not act recklessly. Report to me if you find any traces of the Immortal Cultivators!

"Your duties, the area we are responsible for, the hostiles' strength, our allies nearby, the distribution of devilized people, as well as any other useful information has all been sent into your crystal processors. Seize the last few minutes and absorb as much as you can!

"We are about to reach the tenth space ring. Any questions?"

Cai Qi looked at Li Yao.

Li Yao shook his head.

A hasty shriek came from the broadcast rune array. "We are now in the tenth space ring!"

Chapter 694: Battlefield of Extraterrestrial Devils

Chapter 694: Battlefield of Extraterrestrial Devils

Cai Qi's crystal processor projected almost a hundred light beams that displayed the situation of the battle in the sea of stars.

The space between the ninth space ring and the tenth had turned into a weird ocean of flames.

The tenth space ring was the most enormous circular town furthest from Heavenly Saints City. It was like a giant serpent that had bitten its own tail.

Compared to the tenth space ring, even the biggest starship looked like a speck of dust.

Explosions were taking place everywhere on the 'giant serpent'. Gas along with colorful fire was jetting out at a high speed from the fractures.

The giant serpent seemed to have been stabbed multiple times, with hot blood spurting everywhere!

Broken remnants were scattered everywhere in space. Most of them were the pieces resulting from the explosions. They were mixed with broken bodies that were floating in the cold universe like hideous, miserable statues.

Around ten thousand carriers had originally been docked at the tenth space ring. When news that extraterrestrial devils had shown up inside the space ring arrived, they all broke off from the space ring and fled in a hurry.

However, even the most solid plate was not able to resist the extraterrestrial devils. Many starships fell victim to the extraterrestrial devils. After being possessed by them, the crew members immediately turned mad and attacked other crew members to gain control over the starship.

Many starships deviated from their routes and collided into each other. Some of them sailed out of the port, only to turn around and crash into the tenth space at a high speed, leading to gory serial explosions!

The sounds of the horrific explosions could not travel in space, a vacuum.

Without oxygen, the flames resulting from the explosions could not last long, either.

However, the flames in space right now were in a green color. They were savaging and spreading as if they were alive. Dancing a strange dance, they swept across even more starships.

Some of the green flames were twisting and wriggling into vivid facial organs and limbs. Ugly and rampant, they collected a lot of debris and absorbed it into their bodies, turning themselves into giants dozens of meters tall!

"Devils! Thousands of devils!"

The devils that were wandering outside of the tenth space ring, noticing that the main troops of Cultivators arrived, immediately screamed and charged at them.

Nothing was audible in the space, but the shrieks of the devils were not sound but a special vibration of the magnetic field that could take effect on the Cultivators' soul directly.

Therefore, despite the distance of tens of thousands of meters in between, all the Cultivators felt that their head becoming dizzy and their breath unsteady, as if a lot of cold talons were scratching their head softly!

Due to the emergency, most of the Cultivators had not boarded crystal warships but shuttles and carriers whose defense abilities were much weaker.

It would be terrible if such vehicles were harassed by the devils.

Right then, countless metal skeletons dispersed from the carriers and flew toward the devils!

The Spiritual Ghost Legion!

The weapons of the spectral Cultivators were all specially made for the extraterrestrial devils. It was not bullets that were shot out of the barrels but flashing electric arcs. Their blades were extremely narrow, too, and yet they could trigger auras almost twenty meters long because of the special design.

The spectral Cultivators were extremely fast and were soon engaged with thousands of devils.

For a moment, sparks and electric arcs were spluttering everywhere. The auras of the blades formed a shining gold dragnet that minced countless devils into pieces.

The green fire raised by the devils lost support after the flashing of the sabers, and it collapsed, turning back into chaotic fireballs. The fireballs soon dispersed into thousands of shivering flickers, which struggled for a moment before vanishing amid miserable screams.

However, there were simply too many devils. It was often the case that around ten devils would battle against one spectral Cultivator. They formed sharp claws and teeth with the debris of starships and tore the spectral Cultivators into pieces!

The spectral Cultivators, whose artificial bodies broke apart, did not disperse immediately. Instead, dazzling brilliance beamed out of their souls as they marched toward the giants controlled by the devils and rushed into them.

The souls and the devils competed for the control over the 'debris giants'!

The giants were like puppets that were manipulated by two puppet masters and dragged in opposite directions simultaneously. One moment, they were dancing, but the next, they were attacking the other side of their body. Some of them were even torn in half by brute force.

The two broken halves of the giants continued crashing into each other instead of repairing their body with replacements first. The souls and devils hiding inside the giants also clashed and mauled each other. Their energy was completely released during the high-speed collisions.

The battle between the spectral Cultivators and the extraterrestrial devils was indeed scary!

"The Spiritual Ghost Legion is trying to buy us more time and open a channel for us!

"We are now on a carrier that cannot break into the tenth space ring directly. Fellow Cultivators, prepare to get off!"

Red lights were flashing inside the carrier. "Chi" sounds were echoing nonstop inside the cabin as the atmospheric pressure inside the carrier was being adjusted in order to open all the gates.

"Slay the devils to serve the great Dao. Cultivators, let's go!"

Cai Qi, a sword Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage, was the first to dash out of the carrier.

Behind him, hundreds of Cultivators lined up and dived into space like golden scales!

From the countless starships nearby, thousands of Cultivators surged out and moved toward various zones of the tenth space ring according to the instructions on their crystal processors.

Every squad of Cultivators was led by a Core Formation Stage Cultivator or a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. Those above the Building Foundation Stage were in the vanguard or covered the back. The Refinement Stage Cultivators, who were the largest in number, were in the middle. All the squads were oval-shaped.

Cai Qi truly deserved to be a renowned professor of the Flying Sword Department of Flying Star University. Faced with the harassment of thousands of devils, the intimidating aura of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was fully revealed.

The dozens of crescent flying swords around him instantly phantomized into thousands of blade auras, which raised a silver storm in the sea of stars!

The storm seemed to boast an uncanny attraction force. Not only were all the devils within the coverage of the auras minced to pieces immediately, all the other devils nearby were drawn close to it like broken boats that had fallen into a swirl. They struggled and screamed, only to be ripped apart by the storm of swords, perishing on the spot.

The surround square kilometer became peaceful once more.

A Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator's wrath is indeed not to be underestimated!

Li Yao secretly complimented Cai Qi. If he tried his best, he might be able to clear all the devils within a square kilometer, too. But he would have to be engaged in a fierce battle that was in no away as simple or straightforward as Cai Qi's attack!

"All the devils in front of us have been cleared. Let's rush inside together!"

Hundreds of Cultivators congregated into a torrent of iron under the lead of Cai Qi. Thousands of light flames burst out of their backs and pushed them through a damaged gate into the inside of the space ring!

All the space towns attached great importance to explosions and damage to the shell. Every large space town had thousands of airtight gates. Even if explosions took place in 70% of the area, the gates would still remain sealed and turn the area into vacuum so that the remaining 30% would be safe.

But right now, Cultivators had gained access to the switches of all the airtight gates and emergency exits on the tenth space ring.

After taking various turns and passing through seven airtight gates, they finally found that the air was breathable again.

They had entered the downtown area of the tenth space ring.

The downtown area was packed with skyscrapers, streets, and people.

However, compared to the central area, the buildings were much denser. There were also multiple illegal temporary buildings, which was a clear sign of the rapid growth of the city. The whole area felt like a primitive, untamable forest of steel.

There should have been a blue sky on the artificial dome. However, because of the serial explosions, the giant light beams on the dome were all malfunctioning. They either blacked out, looking like square, gray clouds, or were battered, revealing the interconnected tubes that constituted the dark, cold dome.

The downtown area was burning; there was fire everywhere.

Explosions, collapsing buildings, and helpless screams could be heard everywhere.

Amidst the skyscrapers, a gloomy wind was blowing, producing creepy noises that both sounded like a gale and the scary laughter of invisible, ferocious animals.

Chi! Chi! Chi!

Right then, it suddenly started raining, with the vague aroma of the Osmanthus flowers mixed in the rainwater.

"The Devil Revealing Powder!"

"Our men have taken control of the rain-making rune array and added the Devil Revealing Powder to the water. There's no way that the extraterrestrial devils can hide themselves now!"

Several Cultivators were shouting in joy in the communication channel.

A while later, ripples and waves appeared in the air, and devils that were wriggling, struggling, and roaring were unveiled!

"Hiss!"

Everybody gasped. "So many devils!"

The sky of the entire downtown area was black and green, as if a dark green ocean was upside down. There were devils everywhere!

They felt that they were hikers exploring a deep, dark cave who had suddenly found that the top of the cave was occupied by vampire bats when then ignited a torch all of a sudden. Even the most strong-willed Cultivators were somewhat shocked.

The ordinary people in the downtown area were thrown into greater chaos. The panicked crowds were running about without caring about anything.

Seeing the Cultivators who were wearing crystal suit, the ordinary people were like those being drowned who had snatched the last straw. They screamed, yelled, and pushed each other as they ran toward them.

Li Yao's brow was furrowed so hard that it was almost a broom.

The place was too chaotic.

Since there were so many panicking ordinary people, as long as several assassins of the Temple of Immortals were hiding among them, they could very easily succeed in killing several Cultivators while the Cultivators were rescuing ordinary people even though their Cultivation was much lower than their potential victims!

The battlefield that the Temple of Immortals had designed was indeed sordid!

Chapter 695: Devilized People

Chapter 695: Devilized People

"Hua la la la!"

Many delicate octagonal golden balls flew out of the pockets of Cai Qi and many other Cultivators. They rolled and soared into the air while runes appeared on their faces with crisp sounds.

It was magical equipment known as 'Airborne Soul Easing Balls' that had been carved with anti-gravity rune arrays and broadcast rune arrays inside. Its sounds could calm people down efficiently.

Dozens of 'Airborne Soul Easing Balls' were resonating in the sky like a bunch of squirrels. The crowd that was in panic soon went back to themselves.

Cai Qi rose into the sky and floated in midair as he declared, "All citizens, don't fret. I am Cai Qi, a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator of the Silver Moon Clan! A large batch of Cultivators has arrived in the tenth space ring. Please retreat to the shelters under their protection according to our emergency plans!"

Cai Qi's voice contained enormous spiritual energy and sounded absolutely reliable and unquestionable. It freed all the ordinary people from confusion and terror.

Just like most ordinary people living on the Grand Desolate Plateau of the Heaven's Origin Sector had been trained to deal with the beast tides, ordinary people of the Flying Star Sector had experienced many drills in preparation for the arrival of extraterrestrial devils, too.

How to escape, how to resist, how to overcome one's fear so that the devils would have no opportunity to occupy one's body… There was a whole set of well-tested, effective rules.

Every space town had a lot of shelters in which a lot of defense rune arrays that were sedatives and deterrents for the extraterrestrial devils were carved. There were also sufficient food and water in such places.

Once the extraterrestrial devils arrived, the guards, made of Cultivators and fighters, would immediately counterattack while the young and strong citizens would be responsible for protecting the old, the weak, the sick, and the disabled in the shelters!

However, the scale of the invasion of extraterrestrial devils this time was too large. Everybody was caught unprepared and, therefore, freaked out.

Now that they were comforted by the 'Airborne Soul Easing Balls' and reminded by a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, the young people among the crowd finally remembered their duty and stood out to gather and organize the people.

His eyes as sharp as swords, Cai Qi glanced over the crowd. He then asked five Refinement Stage Cultivators to protect them on their way to the closest shelter.

After everything was made clear, and the refugees were about to leave in gratitude, Cai Qi suddenly furrowed his brow and sniffed heavily!

His sniff was exactly like a thunderclap. Even Li Yao was shocked into cold sweat and almost put on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit immediately.

The crowd was so scared that their legs were all shaking. Some of the more timid ones even collapsed to the ground, their legs turning into noodles.

"It's alright. Go now. Be safe!"

Cai Qi waved his hands and bid them farewell.

This was merely his test.

The Cultivators were in too much of a hurry to distinguish whether or not the crowd there was mixed with assassins from the Temple of Immortals, and it would be a terrible disaster if there were and they caused a mayhem in the shelter.

Therefore, Cai Qi initiated the test with the aura of a sharp sword while everybody was least prepared.

If assassins of the Temple of Immortals were indeed with the crowd, they definitely would have jumped out because they would have thought that they had been seen through.

"Let's go now. We are still in a suburb that does not have a large population. The center of the city will be more chaotic!"

Cai Qi had barely finished his sentence when countless people flooded out of the dense alleys again.

Those people were dressing like normal citizens, but there was a grey membrane covering their eyes that completely buried their pupils as if they were cataract patients.

Their clothes were mostly ragged. Thick veins were protruding out of their skin that was exposed to the air, cramping, as if strength that did not belong to themselves was coursing inside their bodies.

Most of the people were drooling and oinking, their chests fluctuating. Steam was emitting out of their body, as if they had a high fever. They were all wearing an excited expression.

Their physical strength far exceeded that of ordinary people. Even the old men almost a hundred years old had muscles so large that their skin was torn apart. They were running amazingly fast like ferocious animals.

Some of them were covered in green gas with black smoke popping up from their head. Their skin had exploded, revealing the bloody flesh below. They were on all fours and, completely ignoring the artificial gravity, leapt between the skyscrapers like apes, leopards, serpents, and tigers!

"Devilized people have appeared!"

"These ordinary people have all been possessed by devils. The strength deep inside their cells has been exploited to the maximum, making them ten times as sturdy as normal people!"

"If we don't rescue them as soon as possible, they will be exhausted and drained within one day!"

"Seven-star Devil Slaying Array, activate!"

Before they reached the tenth space ring, all the Cultivators had received a lot of magical equipment and runes to resist devils in the temporary space port, including materials to establish arrays.

As a refiner, it was Li Yao's responsibility to build the array and activate the magical equipment.

Therefore, one of the 'Seven Stars' of the array was manipulated by him.

"Hehehehe. Kill! Kill them all!"

With dim lights in their eyes, thousands of devilized people were foaming and cramping while they drew close to the Cultivators.

Cultivators were all roaring. According to their duties that their crystal processor stated, dozens of Cultivators left their companions and marched into the crowd!

"Freeze! Freeze! Freeze! Freeze! Freeze!"

They triggered barriers continuously inside the crowd. The air was solidified briefly, and invisible walls blocked the incoming senseless people.

The devilized people had been ordinary people before they were possessed by the devils. How could they be match for Cultivators who were wearing crystal suits even if their physical strength was ten times higher?

In a moment, they seemed to have been mired in an invisible swamp. The raging devilish aura was halted temporarily.

Seven Cultivators, including Li Yao, took the opportunity to surround the crowd. They stabbed seven pieces of magical equipment into seven locations where the people were densest!

The magical equipment looked like enormous loudspeakers.

The loudspeakers were more than two meters cubed and looked like a small building. Eight stabilizing feet were under each loudspeaker. There was no doubt that the loudspeakers were extremely powerful!

On the surface of the loudspeakers, through the honeycomb like vibration membranes, one could see clearly hundreds of broadcast rune arrays carved inside. Inside each broadcast rune array was a glittering crystal!

Right now, the spiritual energy inside the crystals had all been triggered!

"The Seven-star Devil Slaying Array is too aggressive. Many of the people here might end up with broken eardrums, but it is an emergency right now, and we don't have time to bother about that. Let's just treat them later after the crisis at hand is resolved!

"Mystic music taming the soul, seven stars slaying the devils, activate!"

Li Yao and the other six Cultivators poured immense spiritual energy into the enormous loudspeakers.

BOOM!

Thunderous noises broke out of the seven big loudspeakers at the same time.

Although he was standing behind the loudspeaker protected by his crystal suit, Li Yao still felt dizzy because of the blast. Two caterpillars seemed to have crawled into his ears and were making their way forward, making him both itch and hurt.

He even felt short of breath. His soul seemed to be dashing out of his body through his skull.

"What—what a powerful piece of magical equipment!"

Li Yao breathed for a while. He looked carefully and discovered that the seven crossing loudspeakers precisely covered all the devilized people. Many of them sat to the ground because of the unexpected outburst.

Their ears were all bleeding while they were wearing confused expressions.

On the top of their heads, countless greenish devils flew out!

The devils were not able to resist the high-frequency sound and were pushed out of their bodies!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The explosive sound of the Seven-star Devil Slaying Array was still echoing as if it were in a valley. But its volume was becoming weaker and weaker, until in the end it turned into a piece of mind-refreshing music.

A shock in the beginning and a comfort in the end. Most ordinary people who were not deeply possessed were immediately woken up, the grey membranes in the bottom of their eyes gone. They lost all their strength and collapsed to the ground.

However, people who were deeply possessed were not awoken. Instead, they seemed to be infuriated by the Seven-star Devil Slaying Array. Their teeth and fingernails extended exponentially, and their skin all broke apart, turning them into pure monsters!

The devils that were pushed out of the ordinary people's bodies and hovering in the sky burst into fury, too. They squeaked and turned into skeletons, bats, or other bizarre-shaped creatures while they lunged at the Cultivators.

"You have revealed yourselves, and you are still trying to make trouble?"

Cultivators all activated their magical equipment. Various colorful blade auras swept through the air and minced the devils.

Many Cultivators were carrying spiritual energy guns. Electric arcs surged out, and thunder was reverberating, leaving thousands of holes in the devils.

The devils disappeared as fast as they arrived. With the joint effort, Cultivators extinguished them instantly as if they were candles in the wind!

"Hurry and save them!"

By the calculation of the mainframe crystal processor of the command center, it was made sure that every squad of Cultivators had members good at melee attacks, remote shooting, scouting, and defending at the same time. Naturally, Cultivators who were adept medics were part of every squad, too.

Therefore, many Cultivators immediately charged into the crowd and launched their techniques of recovery in order to at least restore their ability to walk.

They also retrieved boxes of nutrition drugs from their Cosmos Rings so that the ordinary people who had just got rid of the devils and were still in shock could resume their strength quickly.

A batch of devils had just been wiped out, but the devils hovering in the sky of the downtown area were not in the least diminished.

With a gloomy face, Cai Qi bellowed, "Don't be too confident, everybody! Devils feast upon fear. They will split and grow like an infectious disease. It is very likely that they will revive so long as one of them exists!

"What we have just annihilated were the most insignificant devils, and we already used a lot of spiritual energy and materials.

"As we move close to the downtown area, the devils will be stronger.

"According to the information sorted by the command center, a lot of devilized people are gathered in the 'Lofu Supermarket'. It is very possible that an altar designed to attract the extraterrestrial devils is inside the supermarket!

"It is our mission to rescue the devilized people and destroy the altar!

"Clean up your magical equipment and calm down. Let's move forward, Cultivators!"

Chapter 696: Devils' Altar

Chapter 696: Devils' Altar

The closer they drew to the downtown area, the more devilized people they met. The toughness of the devils increased significantly, too.

The devils they met in the beginning would be executed by a single slash, but the devils they met later had black smoke that looked like armor all over their bodies. Even if they were cut into multiple parts by the sword auras, they would be reborn after a bout of hideous laughter as long as they did not perish on the spot.

Hundreds of Cultivators including Li Yao defeated four large-scale hordes of the devils and rescued seven batches of ordinary people who were possessed by devils. But they had consumed a lot of their supplies in doing so.

Under the management of Cai Qi, not many of them were hurt. However, the magical equipment of most people had been well-worn, and the spiritual energy inside their bodies had declined greatly. The majority of their crystal suits had been compromised by the devils and were damaged.

Not many dents could be seen on the surface, but the colors of the crystal suits were much more lackluster than in the beginning.

The faces behind the iron armor were paler than before, too.

"This is not going to work out. The Temple of Immortals is clearly draining our strength with the extraterrestrial devils," Li Yao said to Ye Hongfei. "The closer we get to the center of the city, the more dispersed we will become. We need to assign a lot of Cultivators to protect the citizens to evacuate to the shelters.

"In the meantime, our spiritual energy and magical equipment have both been depleted. The way I see it, most of the Refinement Stage Cultivators are running out of strength.

"There is no doubt that the Immortal Cultivators are waiting for us in the center of city and will launch fatal assassinations when we are the most fatigued and the most fragile!"

"Do we really have a choice?" Ye Hongfei asked tiredly. The confidence and excitement he had when the Mist Clearing Operation just started had entirely disappeared. He smiled bitterly. "Look at these people."

He was pointing at a batch of citizens who they had just rescued. There were almost a thousand of them.

The closer they got to the center of the city, the more deeply possessed the ordinary people were. They were completely exhausted even though the devils had been driven out of their body. As if just recovered from a deadly disease, they were lying on the ground in various postures. Therefore, a great many Cultivators had to escort and look after them.

Being possessed by a devil was the most terrible nightmare. It was definitely not the most pleasant thing in the world.

The most horrifying memories of an ordinary person who had experienced such an incident would all occurred to them again. They all looked devastated and ill at ease.

Even the young and the strong were sweating and breathing hard, not to mention women and children.

Li Yao saw that a plump, middle-aged woman was weeping uncontrollably even though she was trying to press back her fear.

She was holding a little boy in her arms. The boy's face was pale, and the bulging veins on his face had not faded down yet. He was too scared to cry now.

A Cultivator carried a stiffened old man out of the crowd and placed him aside carefully, before he covered him in a white sheet and sighed.

"He's been possessed for too long. All his physical energy has run out. Even the gods can't save him now."

Dozens of dead bodies were placed neatly beside the old man's.

The bodies, the burning skyscrapers he saw all the way here, and the broken walls stained with blood pierced deep into Li Yao's eyes and scratched his brain cells like daggers.

It had been a long time since Li Yao was as furious as this.

He was so angry that he felt that teeth were growing inside his heart and biting together!

"The Temple of Immortals… Immortal Cultivators…"

An hour later, when Cai Qi's squad reached the Lofu Supermarket on Peace Road, which was in the secondary central zone of the tenth space ring, there were only a hundred and fifty Cultivators left in the team.

The rest of the Cultivators had not been swallowed by devils; they were escorting the citizens to the shelters.

The Lofu Supermarket was a seventeen-story building. The bottom four floors were a supermarket, and there was a movie theater, a Grand Illusionary Land entertainment center, a magical equipment experiencing center, and other recreational facilities on the floors above. It was the center of the ten blocks nearby.

Right now, the Lofu Supermarket had lost its usual liveliness. Gloomy wind was blowing, and ghosts were crying. The place felt like the deepest level of hell.

All the glass windows of the building had been broken. Greenish flames flowed out of the dark windows and wound all their way to the top of the building like vines. They then soared into the sky and congregated into a swirling cloud above, reaching the dome of the tenth space ring.

Inside the cloud, waves were surging, and bubbles were rising up and down. Now and then, a large number of devils would rush out of the void into the tenth space ring!

As the Cultivators had expected, there was indeed an altar in the Lofu Supermarket that broke the boundary between the three-dimensional universe and the four-dimensional universe and lured endless devils from somewhere unknown in the boundless sea of stars into Heavenly Saints City!

If the altar was not destroyed, new devils would arrive incessantly, even if all the devils in Heavenly Saints City were exterminated!

Hiu! Hiu hiu!

Sensing that a large batch of Cultivators had arrived, thousands of devils rose up to the sky from the Lofu Supermarket and formed a great army.

These devils were different from those Li Yao had met previously. Not only were they much clearer and more vivid, there were also covered in delicate armor. Li Yao could even vaguely see complicated stripes on the armor!

Moreover, they were in a neat battle formation like a real army, which looked indeed magnificent and intimidating!

"They are the real extraterrestrial devils. The previous devils we met were no match for them at all. Be careful, everybody!"

Barely had Cai Qi finished his sentence when thousands of ordinary people possessed by the devils leapt out of the alleys nearby again!

In the air, the army of devils were drawing close.

On the ground, countless devilized people were charging in, absolutely fearless of death.

"I will resist the devils. You go to rescue the citizens!"

Cai Qi soared into the sky. The dozens of crescent flying swords suddenly emitted dazzling ivory brilliance and formed a half-circular ring more than three meters in diameter with edges on both sides.

The two ends of the ring were sharp, and its middle part was broad. The 'crescent moon' emanated freezing brilliance. The surging aura from the blade alone was already enough to make a lot of devils that were drawing close scream and crumble!

"Demons and devils, be purged now!"

At this moment, Cai Qi finally revealed the full capability of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. Just one man and one sword, yet the cold blade auras covered the entire sky like milk and gel. The army of the devils was frozen in midair by him alone!

The giant flying sword that looked like a crescent moon condensed together and flashed past thousands of devils and then split into dozens of minor moons and executed the devils that were running away!

Thousands of demons were slain by Cai Qi alone. The smoke shivered like chopped meat, but before it had the chance to be condensed again, storms of swords came again and tore it to pieces completely!

Li Yao and the other Cultivators felt that their blood was boiling just watching the fight. They took the opportunity to deploy the arrays and rescue the people!

Hiss!

When thousands of devils were mercilessly slaughtered by Cai Qi, an upsetting shriek suddenly burst out in the depths of the Lofu Supermarket.

A streak of greenness soared into the sky, and hundreds of tentacles darted about the area.

Caught unprepared, almost a hundred devils were tied up by the tentacles and absorbed into the greenness, vanishing from sight!

After swallowing hundreds of devils, the greenness expanded and suddenly constricted into the elegant shape of a human.

The young man seemed plain and looked like a smiling young man.

However, its appearance put a lot of pressure on all the Cultivators. The higher their Cultivation was, the more terrified they were!

High-level Cultivators with keen senses such as Li Yao seemed to be seeing mountains of corpses and seas of blood. Skeletons were screaming right next to their ears, which seemed to have been pierced through by gold needles!

Pu!

The chest of the 'young man' suddenly fluctuated as he spat out a mouthful of green fire, which split into dozens of streams and darted at the Cultivators.

The Cultivators all dodged, but two of them reacted slower and were hit by the devilish fire!

"Ah!"

The devilish fire instantly turned into a green cloak and wreathed the two Cultivators.

Although they were protected by crystal suits, the two Cultivators were still dancing and shouting crazily inside the flames.

An uncanny scene happened. The screams were suddenly transformed into weird laughter after several seconds. The devilish fire crawled into the crystal suits through the gaps as if they were small bugs and merged into their bodies!

A while later, miserable chuckles echoed inside the crystal suits.

The two Cultivators both slight bent down, their hands and feet cramping crazily. The spiritual energy around their bodies became more furious, chaotic, and irrational!

"Not good, the negative emotions deep inside their brains, including their fear, hatred, jealousy, and everything else, have been magnified to the maximum. They have been swallowed by their own dark side and possessed by the devil. They are now demonic Cultivators!

"This devil right in front of us is the real king of the devils here. I'm going to deal with it. Half of you will resist the army of the extraterrestrial devils; the other half will go into the super market and destroy the altar!

"If the altar remains intact, countless more devils will arrive in this world!"

Beep!

Two different colors were blinking on everyone's crystal processor. They were organized into several teams according to their Cultivation and characteristics.

As the situation of the battle changed, everybody would get to know their latest mission instantly.

Li Yao and Ye Hongfei looked at each other and accelerated to the maximum speed in the blink of an eye. They bypassed all the devils and devilized people and charged into the broken supermarket after a few jumps.

Inside the supermarket, the air was so stinky that it seemed as if it would condense into blood at any point. They felt that they had entered the stomach of a titanic beast.

Crimson, evil murals were everywhere on the walls nearby. One look at them was enough to make one's head dizzy and remind them of their gory and terrible memories.

"The scent of blood is very strong here. The devils' altar should be on the second floor!"

Ye Hongfei was carrying a sword in each hand, but sword auras were coming out from both ends of his swords. He led the charge and sprinted toward the stairs while he minced two devils that were lurking below the stairs into pieces along the way!

Chapter 697: Slaying a Nascent Soul

Chapter 697: Slaying a Nascent Soul

Li Yao's nostrils flared, and his eyes stopped briefly at the ceiling. Then he sprinted to the northwest corner of the first floor and rose up like a rocket, crashing through the ceiling into the second floor!

BOOM!

After a huge explosion, dust was sent everywhere.

The second floor was the food area of the supermarket. Almost a thousand shelves used to be kept here. But right now, the center of the second floor had been cleared. A great altar made of bones had been established there.

More than ten crimson giant pillars were standing around the altar. They looked both like totems and gargantuan candles.

On the 'candles', mysterious lights were blinking, and their flames interweaved with each other into an enormous net whose threads were all wriggling as if it were a living thing.

Countless bright green vesicles were formed on the net. There were more than a thousand of them.

As the giant net shivered, the vesicles fluctuated, too. Their color turned from a bright, translucent green into a deep green. In the end, they were as dark as ink, and it seemed as if liquid would leak out at any point.

Pa!

A dark green vesicle suddenly exploded, unveiling several devils that were wearing solid armor and surrounded by intense evil flames!

The common devils could arrive into the world of human beings through the cloud in the sky.

But the stronger devils could not be teleported directly. They had to be bred around the altar before they were finally born!

The flight of stairs up which Ye Hongfei had marched into the second floor was guarded by hundreds of devils.

However, none of the devils expected Li Yao to be so unreasonable as to crash into the second floor directly from the floor below their feet.

Pa!

Li Yao snapped his fingers.

Floating Six-barrel Vulcan Machine Guns appeared from his Cosmos Ring one after another.

Four… Eight… Twelve… Sixteen…

Sixteen Floating Six-barrel Vulcan Machine Guns formed a four-by-four matrix in front of Li Yao. The heads of the barrels were all glimmering mysteriously. The agitated bullets and spiritual energy were roaring inside the magazines!

The devils were not afraid of real-entity bullets, but Li Yao never had the habit of using only bullets.

The large-caliber bullets that he employed were all embedded with crystals or even entirely made of crystals. They also carried a lot of attack rune arrays.

With a gloomy face, Li Yao growled a word through gritted teeth. "Die!"

The guns roared, and the bullets flew toward everything. Lines of fire interweaved with each other. Thunder was echoing; electric arcs were shining; freezing wind was blowing. Surging sword and saber auras dominated the area!

Six Floating Six-barrel Vulcan Machine Guns blew out a fire network almost a hundred meters in radius, covering more than half of the supermarket.

All the devils within the range of Li Yao's barrage were fleeing or being minced apart directly. The devils' altar and the fetuses of devils that were not mature yet all turned into twisted smoke and perished!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Li Yao savaged everything and went on a killing spree!

Ye Hongfei, who had reached the second floor just now, was utterly shocked by such brutal firepower. He quickly retreated down the staircase, in case he became the victim of the 'best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau' when the guy was killing too happily to think about who he was attacking.

The room temperature increased by almost fifty degrees; it felt like a boiling cooker.

The ground was riddled with bullet holes and looked like a honeycomb. The floor had been significantly weakened, to the point that one might have fallen onto the first floor accidentally if they stepped on the wrong area.

Li Yao moved forward slowly, searching every corner with a pair of cruel eyes. Cracking noises were echoing nonstop as he stomped the devils' altar into powder!

It was not until this moment that Ye Hongfei craned his head carefully. His shocked voice came over in the communication channel. "Master… Master Sand, that's quite impressive!"

Li Yao was briefly silently before he replied casually, "In fact, I'm more of a shooter."

Ye Hongfei was rendered speechless. He leapt on the second floor with his double-edged sword and searched for remaining enemies together with Li Yao.

Hiss!

A devil that had been hiding in the gaps of the wall suddenly lunged out, intending to crawl into his crystal suit while Li Yao was turning around.

But Li Yao seemed to have eyes on the back of his head. One of his Six-barrel Vulcan Machine Guns pierced forward from an unbelievable angle into the devil's chest.

Open fire. Explode. Over!

Right then, Li Yao vaguely heard a baby's cry in the place where Ye Hongfei was searching.

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. His pupils constricted violently, and his eyebrow stood up like needles!

"Master Ye, don't!"

Li Yao suddenly turned into a streak of brightness and passed through the entire supermarket in a breath.

In a temporary warehouse in the northeast corner of the supermarket, dozens of broken bodies were piled up. Intermittent cries of a baby were echoing from the depths of the corpses, but the volume of the cries was dropping, as if the baby could not hold the weight of the dead bodies any longer.

Ye Hongfei was digging into the mound of bodies.

Since he was afraid that he might hurt the baby, he did not dare blow up the bodies with his spiritual energy. He could only move the bodies away one after another with his spiritual threads as well as his bare hands.

However, while he was moving the seventh body, a streak of redness suddenly darted out from the bottom of the bodies!

The eighth 'body' sudden became alive. A cluster of redness blew into Ye Hongfei's chest and burst out behind his back brutally!

What burst out together was a series of overjoyed chuckles whose owner's evil plan had worked out.

Ye Hongfei grunted and fell backwards. His double-edged sword triggered dozens of auras and enshrouded the eighth 'body'.

However, the 'body' felt like a slippery loach. After the previous attack, it took a few turns and escaped from all the auras, before it accelerated to the maximum speed and dashed toward the window!

But then, it ran into Li Yao's saber and turned into a real body, a body that was chopped in half.

It was not a devil, nor did it show any sign of being possessed by one. Instead, it was an assassin from the Temple of Immortals who had been lurking below the bodies the whole time.

"Master Ye!" Li Yao bellowed and gave Ye Hongfei a hand, only to find a big hole on the left side of his chest. More than half of his heart had been blown away. Blood was spurting out more magnificently than a volcanic eruption.

Ye Hongfei's facial cover opened, revealing a pale face. He sealed his fractured veins forcefully and condensed membranes with his spiritual energy to cover his broken heart. Finally, his face regained some color, and he mumbled feebly, "Baby… A baby's down there."

"There are no babies here!"

The baby's cries came to a sudden halt after the assassin of the Temple of Immortals died. Li Yao liquefied his spiritual energy and poured it into the dead bodies like mercury. He scanned carefully for a long time and was certain that none of the dead bodies were in the size of a baby.

Naturally, it was safe to say that the cries of the baby had been faked by the assassin.

"There are none?"

Ye Hongfei was dazed for a moment. He breathed heavily in relief. "That's good… That's good…"

His voice gradually fade out.

"Master Ye, hang in there!"

Li Yao gritted his teeth and retrieved a red pill that had wrinkles all over its surface and looked like a nut.

The pill was named 'Great Red Pill'. It was a present that the Silver Moon Tribe had offered him when he was back on Iron Plateau. It was said that the pill could revive the deceased and was the best medication for injuries.

Only one pill could be made after several years of refining the cores of four apocalyptic beasts as well as hundreds of other Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. Therefore, such pills were extremely precious.

Even Li Yao had only one such pill himself. He had planned to save his own life with the pill at a certain time.

However, he stuffed the pill into Ye Hongfei's chest without any hesitation.

The Great Red Pill shivered the moment it touched blood. Streaks of redness were flowing out of all the wrinkles as if it were a budding seed or a sponge that was absorbing water. The shocking wounds were sealed until no gap was left.

"Wu…"

Ye Hongfei took a long breath and felt that a hot spring was flooding into his chest and solidifying his soul. He knew that the rich man from Iron Plateau must have used very precious healing drugs for him.

Ye Hongfei lowered his head and smile bitterly. "I—I'm sorry, Master Sand. It is funny that I told you to be careful while in fact I'm the reckless one here.

"You were quite right. I'm in serious lack of real-life combat experience. Even such an easy trap fooled me."

Li Yao was both anxious and angry. He said gravely, "Master Ye, did you not guess that this was very likely a trap made by an assassin?"

Ye Hongfei coughed a mouthful of blood out and replied softly, "I did. But what if it were real?

"I knew it could be a trap, but what if the assassin of the Temple of Immortals had captured a real baby?

"But I know that there are no babies here now. That's good. That's good…"

Li Yao did not know what to say.

He felt that his nostrils were itching as if many ants had crawled inside.

At this time, the follow-up squads finally broke through the devils and devilized people outside and charged into the supermarket.

"Master Ye, this is not going to work out!" Li Yao said in a hurry. "The command center has to change the strategy. The closer we get to the downtown, the more traps appear. We will suffer a lot of casualties in the end even if we successfully save all the ordinary people in the tenth space ring!"

Ye Hongfei's eyelids gradually fell down. He was silent for a long time, before he replied softly, "Master Sand, the strategy is not going to be changed.

"The slogan of qi-trainers is 'born in Iron Plateau, die in Iron Plateau'. For Cultivators, we can also live in space and die in space!"

Ye Hongfei passed out.

Li Yao held him in a daze for a long time. He handed him over to the Cultivators who were good at healing when the reinforcements arrived.

Li Yao stood up straight inch by inch and walked toward the window.

After every step, the floor below his feet would break.

Countless pebbles were rising around him slowly as he moved forward and dropped to the ground after he passed by.

Li Yao had not been so furious for a long time. He was so angry that he found it hard to tame his spiritual energy. Endless vigor seemed to have been stored inside his body like a tsunami that was about to break out!

Beep! Beep!

The crystal processor uttered hasty alarms.

"'Hellsword' Zhuang Ziyou, the hostile Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, has shown up again and killed a Cultivator at the high level of the Building Foundation Stage instantly!"

"Hellsword!"

Li Yao spoke the name in a coarse voice.

Huala!

In the surrounding five square meters, the floor exploded into broken stones the size of fists.

The broken stones were then turned into powder that looked like sand a second later. They condensed a brewing storm around Li Yao!

Inside the storm, an immense aura was flowing out of Li Yao's body, wreathing the beginner-level Gold Wolf Battlesuit in a soul-stirring air. Thousands of gold streaks were beaming out of the gaps of the crystal suit!

In that moment, an invisible string inside Li Yao's head seemed to snap.

He made an extremely insane decision.

Today, whatever price he had to pay, he would slay a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator!

Chapter 698: Worth a Try!

Chapter 698: Worth a Try!

Swoosh!

Without any hesitation, Li Yao dashed toward the center of the city like a hungry wolf.

"Fellow Cultivator Sand, what are you doing?"

Cai Qi, the sword Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage, sensed Li Yao's furious spiritual waves and was greatly shocked.

"They have heavily wounded Master Ye," Li Yao shouted. "I'm going to avenge him!"

After saying that, he cut off the communication directly.

If Cai Qi had been able to see Li Yao's face, he would have discovered that Li Yao's countenance was somewhat twisted and totally different from his voice.

His voice was coarse, crazy, and rash.

But his countenance was extremely tranquil. His eyes were as deep and dark as a cold spring. His lips that were as thin as sharp blades.

In a small alley some ten blocks away, Li Yao returned both the Gold Wolf Battlesuit and the mustard-seed suit into his Cosmos Ring.

Glancing around for a while, his eyes stopped at a clothes store on the left side of the street.

A while later, Li Yao was rushing through the streets 'in panic' dressed like a common citizen with blood smeared on his face.

At this moment, the catastrophe of devils finally escalated into the second phase.

In the first phase, the Cultivators were faced with only devils and devilized people.

But as the squads entered deep into every district of the tenth space ring and rescued more and more citizens, they were more and more scattered, and their traces were gradually grasped by the Immortal Cultivators who were lurking in the darkness.

The attack on Ye Hongfei was only the beginning.

Starting from that moment, the Immortal Cultivators who had been hiding themselves showed up one after another.

Some of them blended in with scared ordinary people, some pretended to be dead bodies around the devils' altars, and some acted like devilized people and assassinated the Cultivators when their spiritual energy was running dry and they were in a hurry to rescue ordinary citizens!

The Cultivators had the advantage in numbers, but they were walking in the light while the enemy was in the dark. They also had to rescue the ordinary people. Moreover, among the Immortal Cultivators, there were the real 'Eight Blades of Black Spider', top assassins of the Temple of Immortals, and 'Hellsword', a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator!

On the Cultivators' side, more than ten Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators had arrived, but the tenth space ring was in an utter mess right now. The assassins often fled far away immediately when their assassination failed. It was extremely tricky to keep them on the radar.

Grunts and moans were echoing nonstop inside the communication channel.

News that a Cultivator had perished came one after another.

The blue sky, which was in fact a dome, had a series of explosions. After spluttering sparks, it turned into a square black screen.

Countless black screens were connected together, as if night had fallen.

…

Half a day later, Li Yao arrived in the refrigeration warehouse of a big hotel not far away from the center of the city.

The refrigeration warehouse was half below the ground and had very solid walls.

Li Yao had also deployed a lot of alarm and defense rune arrays, making the place a temporary fortress for him.

After all the rune arrays were triggered, an overwhelming defense network was established. Then, Li Yao retrieved a piece of bizarre-shaped magical equipment from his Cosmos Ring.

It looked like a colorful metal helmet that was embedded with crystals. Li Yao put it on his head. As the rune arrays functioned, the crystals started glittering. Streams of brightness in various colors flowed out and leaked into Li Yao's forehead, temples, and skull.

The magical equipment was named 'Super Perception Hat'. Li Yao had made it specially for complicated computations in the super perceptive state. It could both cool down and nurture his head so that his head would not overheat, and the broken cerebral vessels would be repaired promptly. Moreover, the secret medications inside the helmet could also provide nutrition for his brain cells in order to stay in the super perceptive state longer.

More than ten light beams were projected by Li Yao's crystal processor. Video clips as well as dazzling data were being displayed on them.

All the crystal processors of the Cultivators were connected to the Spiritual Nexus. The real-time footage captured by the crystal cameras attached to the Cultivators was all uploaded to the Spiritual Nexus, too.

The hundred video clips being played right now were all captured in an instant by the Cultivators who were believed to have been ambushed by 'Hellsword'.

In most of the video clips, the only thing that could be seen was a blink of blackness. After that, the Cultivators were either injured or killed.

"Brain cell activity, 300%!"

Two pieces of glasses seemed to be broken at the bottom of Li Yao's eyes, which were now much sharper and clearer.

"Current target: to kill 'Hellsword' Zhuang Ziyou, a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator!

"Advantages: precise evaluation of the enemy and myself based on the shared information on the Spiritual Nexus; a super crystal suit whose performance is better than the enemy's and can be further boosted by 'Black Wing'; a maximum combat ability equaled to that of Core Formation Stage Cultivator in the middle to high level; the enemy's negligence of my ambush; the enemy's wrong judgement about my capability; the enemy's wrong specialty in mental attack, which is where my defense ability is the highest!

"Disadvantages: as a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, the enemy's basic capability is way higher than mine; even though the enemy's crystal suit is not as good as the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, it is definitely one of the best in the Flying Star Sector, and there won't be much difference in its performance; the enemy is probably supported by Core Formation Stage Cultivators such as the 'Eight Blades of Black Spider'; the enemy most likely possesses inside information on us and knows our latest progress exactly!

"The trickiest problem is that my purpose is not to run away from a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, not to wound a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, but to kill a Nascent Soul Stage!

"A Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator is stronger than anyone could imagine. I won't have a second chance if I miss the first attack!"

Although the 'Super Perceptive Hat' was fully functioning, and the rune arrays and crystals were all humming, steam was still popping up from the gaps of the helmet.

The temperature inside the refrigeration warehouse seemed to have been increased by more than ten degrees.

Li Yao's brain was overloading. His brain cell activity continued on the rise. 500%! 900%!

Holding his head in his hands, Li Yao listened to the explosions of his cerebral vessels while he pondered calmly.

"My hard capability is still no match for that of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. The support of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and Black Wing may not be enough to cover the gap.

"Naturally, they should be more than enough for me to run away from a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator.

"But it will be a whole different matter to execute a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator without giving him any chance to run away.

"If I act right now, the odds of success are no higher than 1%!

"However—

"Tough as Hellsword may be, he is a human and not a god!

"A human will be tired and wounded. There will be a time when his magical equipment cracks and his spiritual energy runs dry!

"He has been causing trouble in the tenth space ring for five hours. During those five hours, he has dodged the searches of more than ten Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators while he assaulted dozens of other Cultivators!

"Even Building Foundation Stage Cultivators are not readily killable for a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator when they are in crystal suits and their spiritual energy is fully burning.

"When he killed them, he must have consumed his spiritual energy, utilized his magical equipment, and even paid a higher price!

"Moreover, he has also slain two Core Formation Stage Cultivators and heavily wounded one.

"The three Core Formation Stage Cultivators all fought back hard. One of them even detonated his own core, which must have dealt a certain amount of damage to him.

"But there's no telling how great an effect that was yet."

Colorful pictures were flashing inside Li Yao's eyes. He ordered the video clips that allegedly recorded Hellsword's assassinations in strict chronological order. Then, he raised his computational ability and analyzed all the videos.

Speed, strength, moves, temperature, humidity… He retrieved a lot of information from the videos and sent it to his brain.

"As I expected!

"The third Building Foundation Stage Cultivator that Hellsword assaulted was on par with the seventeenth Building Foundation Stage Cultivator. They were both in the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage, both focused on physical strength in their Cultivation, and both adopted similar moves to deal with the enemy because they were from the same sect.

"In the first attack, it took Hellsword 1.21 seconds to finish the battle, while it took him 3.44 seconds in the second assassination!

"Collect all the data including Hellsword's speed, strength, time of assassination, and everything else in the videos, calculate a spiritual mountain sequence with the great regression algorithm, and then turn it into a system of ordinary differential equations with the Tyrant's Armor theorem.

"It will be quite simple after that. A problem that even college students can work out very quickly. Set Hellsword's combat ability in the beginning as 100, with the independent variables and dependent variables both calculable, what is the rate of the decline of his combat ability in the five hours, and what is the number of his current combat ability according to the trend?

"Let's solve the equation set with convergent approaches. I'm getting a series of convergent sequences of numbers. When the polynomials are expanded three times, it will be the trend of the decline of Hellsword's combat ability!

"According to the trend, Hellsword's speed is only 79.2% of his original speed during the last assault. His agility is only 71%, and only 68% of his absolute strength still remains.

"His tactical choices are getting more and more conservative, and he has been acting more and more prudently. There were many times when he could have killed more victims, but he simply let go of the Cultivators within his reach in fear that he would be stalled by them and the reinforcing Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators would arrive.

"After a comprehensive analysis of all the data, my conclusion is that, if his original combat ability was 100, his current combat ability is between 68.2 and 71.3. Considering that he might have been hiding his strength in the beginning, his real combat ability should be higher than that.

"Taking my own combat ability into calculation, and measuring the results with a double fold algorithm, the odds of me killing him instantly are lower than 2.9%!

"The odds are still too low. Now is not the time for me to take action yet!"

Right then, new information popped up in the crystal processor.

"Elder Thousand Crane, a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator of the Furious Bears Union, had a battle with Hellsword just now. They exchanged three moves and were both injured. Hellsword ran away!

"Video of the battle is being uploaded!"

Li Yao was refreshed. He immediately compiled the latest video into thousands of data and added them into calculation.

"Excellent!

"After a head-on clash with another Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, Hellsword's speed and agility during his escape have both plunged significantly!

"According to the comprehensive analysis, his current combat ability is only around 51!

"In such a case, with appropriate tactics, I will be able to lock onto him before he is fully recovered. The odds of me executing him are now higher than 28.8%!"

Li Yao leapt up from the cold ground and rubbed the frost on his face. Taking a deep breath of the cold hair, he felt that both his brain and chest were reinvigorated.

"A success rate of thirty percent is worth a try. Let me slay a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator and offer his head to the deceased!"

Chapter 699: Let the Vulture's Game Begin!

Chapter 699: Let the Vulture's Game Begin!

Five seconds later, three devils gradually seeped out of the walls in a remote alley. They condensed into three sharp-edged shadows quietly and gazed at the guy walked close from the end of the alley.

The man was wearing ragged clothes that were stained with blood. He was walking in a hurry and watching the crystal processor on his wrist every now and then, like a white-collar worker who was late for work.

The weird image was utterly incompatible with the burning city.

Although the devils did not have much thinking ability, they did feel that it was somewhat strange. However, before they dwelled on the uncanniness any longer, their instincts to assault and slaughter drove them to utter blood-breezing shrieks as they lunged at the man.

Suddenly—

The three devils were frozen in midair in a hilarious posture as if a spell had been cast upon them. Even their shrieks came to a sudden halt, like roosters whose throats had suddenly been cut off.

'Surrounded' by the three devils, Li Yao tapped on the crystal processor and searched for the latest information about Hellsword.

As he expected, there was no more news about the enemy.

According to the model of Hellsword's capability that Li Yao had constructed, as time went by, the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was slowly recovering bit by bit even though he was not taking any medication.

Right now, the success rate that Li Yao estimated had dropped to 28.1%.

But he did not dare dream that Hellsword would be silly enough to confront another Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator so that he could take the advantage.

At this moment, Hellsword's combat ability was approximately 55% of the original.

It was a very perfect number.

If it were any lower, with the wisdom and resolution of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, Hellsword would definitely retreat from the battlefield without looking back. He would not be bewildered by petty benefits and put his life in danger.

Even though Hellsword still stayed there, Li Yao estimated that he would not act again.

Since the Temple of Immortals had prepared for the operation for a long time, there were bound to be a lot of secret bases littered about the tenth space ring. Hellsword would definitely try to avoid the hunting of the hostile Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and sneak into the secret bases for his recovery.

Then, he would decide whether to continue his assassination or retreat as quickly as possible according to the status of his recovery and the situation of the battle in the outside world.

Therefore, this was the moment when Hellsword was the weakest. He would not get any weaker.

The biggest problem, however, was how to lock onto Hellsword.

Although he only had half of his combat ability left, a lone wolf like him who had made as distinguished accomplishments as those of pirate gangs all by himself must be really good at hiding and stealth.

With the invasion of the devils, the city was in havoc. More than ten Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators might not be able to locate Hellsword even if they joined hands.

It was even less likely for Li Yao to find him.

However…

He could not find Hellsword, but it did not mean that Hellsword could not find him.

"Let's make a gamble, Hellsword," Li Yao mumbled with a vague smile tugging at the corners of his lips, but there seemed to be two clusters of freezing ice inside his eyes.

Common bait would definitely not be tempting enough for Hellsword in his current status.

However, Li Yao believed that he was different.

Firstly, he had sabotaged the Temple of Immortals first big operation on Iron Plateau and facilitated the reconciliation and communication between the Iron Plateau natives and the space residents.

Secondly, of the four kings of the Temple of Immortals, Yan Xibei, the Mountain King, had been killed by him. If 'Hellsword' was the real 'Black King', he would surpass the deceased Mountain King and the other two kings after he killed Li Yao even though he had never thought of avenging the Mountain King.

Lastly, and most importantly, Li Yao had just been assaulted by Hellsword half a day ago.

When one entered the Nascent Soul Stage, be they Cultivators or Immortal Cultivators, they would all become perfectionists more or less and hate not finishing what they had started. At least, that was so for Li Yao.

The target whom he failed to kill was now waltzing about in broad daylight right before his nose again. Li Yao believed that such humiliation and temptation would be too much even for a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator.

Hellsword, the prey that ran loose a moment ago now feeds itself to your mouth. Will you take action or not?

Li Yao thought through the thirteen traps that he had devised before and made sure they were the best he could do for now. He nodded his head in satisfaction, then—

CRACK!

He took off the crystal processor distributed by the command center and, browsing through the key information for the last time, crushed the crystal processor.

The crystal processor immediately exploded and turned into dust.

Li Yao cut off all communication with other Cultivators and became all by himself again.

Although the crystal processor could provide him with a lot of valuable information, other people might have been able to track and lock onto him through methods such as 'hot spot sensation' and 'telepathic thought mining' as long as he was within the coverage of the Spiritual Nexus.

Right now, Li Yao was almost sure that the Immortal Cultivators had infiltrated the world of Cultivators on a deep and large scale.

He found it impossible to tell whether those behind the Spiritual Nexus were Cultivators or Immortal Cultivators.

Therefore, he decided to believe in nobody and rely solely on himself!

A man and a sword were enough to roam the universe!

The real strength of the Immortal Cultivators is much lower than that of Cultivators, but since they are hiding in the darkness, they can always make plans, set up traps, or launch assaults without any concern. When the Cultivators form a large troop ready to strike them, they can always dismiss themselves and vanish into thin air.

Darkness is their most powerful magical equipment!

But now, I have such magical equipment, too!

The Cultivators are in the light while the Immortal Cultivators are in the darkness, but I will sink into places that are darker than darkness. I will strike the Immortal Cultivators just like how they strike the Cultivators!

Li Yao closed his eyes and took a deep breath.

The air was stinky, mixed with the scent of gunpowder and rust. It smelt both cold and sweet and reminded him of the days long, long ago in the magical equipment graveyard when he stared at formidable enemies from the dark corners of the trashes with the sharp blades made of wasted iron in his hand.

No. Not enemies.

They were food.

The Vulture's food.

Licking his lips that had fractured because of his excitement, Li Yao smiled and walked out of the alley.

It was not until he was ten footsteps away that the three devils that were frozen in midair resumed the ability to move around.

They were dazed for a moment and were about to lunge out again, but they were torn into thousands of shreds within a breath before they had the chance to scream.

Li Yao waved his hands as if he had just slapped three flies.

…

In an underground parking lot at the center of the city, hundreds of shuttles were packed to the brim with shuddering citizens.

The atmosphere was very intense. Many people wanted to cry, but they feared that the devils outside might notice them so could only bite their hands, trying to control their emotions.

A dirty old man was squatting in a corner. His white hair was messy and stained with dry leaves and mud.

He was wearing a coat that was riddled with holes, and he did not move for a long time. There was no telling whether he was alive or not.

Such devastated old men were everywhere after the arrival of the extraterrestrial devils.

But nobody knew that he was in fact 'Hellsword' Zhuang Ziyou, a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator!

Behind the scared face, deep inside his grey, brown eyes, there was nothing but tranquility and indifference. Beneath his coat, he triggered a lackluster light beam without alarming anyone and learned the latest status of the battle through his spies outside.

Hiu!

A tiny sound of air being break apart pierced into his ears.

Hellsword sniffed, knowing that a hostile Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator had just flown past him on a flying sword.

But so what?

He had compressed his capability to the minimum with the Soul Converging Technique. Unless the ten or so Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators surrounded the parking lot and examined the refugees one by one, there was no way that he would be found.

The terrible wound on his waist was temporarily sealed, and his shattered liver was stuck together by his spiritual energy, which stopped his combat ability from further declining.

After he took a few pills, his spiritual energy and soul power had recovered a lot, enough for him to fight new battles.

After successfully slaying two Core Formation Stage Cultivators, seventeen Building Foundation Stage Cultivators, and countless Refinement Cultivators and having a head-on clash with another Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, he would say that it was not a bad result at all.

This place was 3.4 kilometers away from the nearest secret base of the Temple of Immortals.

Inside the secret base, there were fully-equipped med bays and deep sleep capsules. His combat ability would be restored to above 95% within three hours.

But Hellsword was still waiting for an opportunity.

Several Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were doggedly searching for him everywhere. He would be seeking death if he revealed himself.

After all, the wounds on his body were not fatal. He could just wait there patiently. As a lone wolf, he was always patient, and he knew the power of darkness best.

In a moment, reports of his subordinates came over.

"Master Elder, two members of the 'Eight Blades of Black Spider' exposed themselves on purpose and attracted the attention of all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. Also, on the West Lake District, another secret altar has been activated and is drawing a lot of devils close. It is estimated that many Cultivators will go there!

"Right now, there are no traces of hostile Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the 15.5 square kilometers around you. Besides, due to the chaos of spiritual energy and the mayhem that the devils caused, the hostile Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators' search range has been minimized. They will not be able to find you from ten kilometers away!"

Hellsword smiled casually. "You've all been troubled. Ask the Eight Blades of Black Spider to tread lightly. Right now, we are still seriously outnumbered on the battlefield, and we will be dead for sure if a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator catches up!

"Bear our goal in mind. We are not fighting the battle to win, and it's impossible for us to win. As long as we spread horror among the ordinary people and diminish the strength of the Cultivators as best as we can, it will be good enough!

"Protecting yourselves is the top priority. Striking the enemy is secondary. If the situation is not right, retreat immediately and do not be headstrong!

"After all, we have planted the seed of terror in the hearts of ordinary people and low-level Cultivators, and we have achieved the purpose of the battle. Now that the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators are all arriving, and the extraterrestrial devils are gradually being cleared, it's time we move on to the next phase and prepare our retreat."

His subordinate nodded. "That's very wise of you, Master Zhuang."

Hellsword coughed hard and stood on his feet slowly, leaning against the wall. He went to the deeper part of the parking lot, ready to return to the secret base.

Right then, a new message on the light beam attracted his attention.

"Sand Scorpion, the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, has shown up alone!"

Chapter 700: Assassination and Assassination

Chapter 700: Assassination and Assassination

Hellsword's facial expression remained absolutely unchanged. He asked his subordinate, "Where did he show up? Is it a trap? Are there any Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators near him?"

"It doesn't seem like a trap," his subordinate replied. "We have basically locked onto all the hostile Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators that have entered the battlefield. The summoning of extraterrestrial devils in the West Lake District is the largest one in our plan. Most of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators' have directed their attention to it.

"Meanwhile, Sand Scorpion is going in the opposite way of all the hostile Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. He seems to have burst into fury and is on a killing spree without a destination!

"The key information has been transmitted to your crystal processor via the 'dark net'!"

Communication was of paramount importance for space pirates during a hunt. In order to not be monitored by the Spiritual Nexus of the Cultivators, they had gradually developed certain technology to establish a temporary network on a battlefield during their thousands of years of struggle.

The temporary networks were unpredictable and hard to capture. They boasted strong anti-jamming abilities, too, and were also known as the dark net.

The light beam in front of Hellsword's eyes was changing its content at a frequency of ten slides per second. His eyeballs were flickering up and down nonstop as if a vibration rune array had been installed in them.

Five seconds later, Hellsword narrowed his eyes and issued his command.

"Ghost Sting, Grey Fox ,and Thorny Shadow, stop your assassination immediately."

Hellsword then gave his orders to those three members of the Eight Blades of Black Spider. "Sand Scorpion has shown up. He is an important target who is of the highest value relative to his capability.

"Before, he was hiding in Flying Star University where there are a lot of experts. It was quite difficult to deal with him. Our previous assassinations all failed. Even a Core Formation Stage Cultivator on our side was compromised.

"It will be best if we take the guy down before our retreat!

"Ghost Sting and Grey Fox, your task is not to assassinate him but to cruise and stay on alert in the ten square kilometers around him. As long as there are signs that the hostile Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators are going toward Sand Scorpion—remember, so much as signs—abandon the assassination immediately and retreat in separate directions.

"Thorny Shadow, you will do the job!

"Although Sand Scorpion is not weak, he is still wearing a beginner-level crystal suit. There's no evidence that he is an expert in crystal suits. Therefore, his capability must have declined a lot!"

On the light beam, a man whose face was covered in black fog nodded. "Understood, Master Zhuang!"

Pausing for a moment, he asked again, somewhat in hesitation, "Sand Scorpion slew the Mountain King. Do you not want to take him down in person?"

Hellsword coughed for a moment. Then he smiled and said, "I'm seriously wounded right now, and I need to take a rest in the base. You can claim the credit."

Hellsword cut off the communication. On the light beam, he saw the three assassins of the Eight Blades of Black Spider in the Core Formation Stage rush at Sand Scorpion's location.

Hellsword smiled and walked out of the darkness, too.

He did not move toward the secret base but snuck toward the direction of Sand Scorpion.

…

Ho! Ho! Ho! Ho!

On a blood-drenched street, amid the burning debris of the city, Li Yao, wearing the Gold Wolf Battlesuit, was on a rampage with one super anti-ship saber more than two meters long in each hand.

Such a terrifying weapon was designed for super muscular Cultivators. It was said that it could chop the plate of small starships in half, which said volumes of its formidability!

That was not all of it. Around Li Yao, sixteen Floating Six-barrel Vulcan Machine Guns were moving everywhere, unleashing a storm of burning bullets!

Two sabers and sixteen guns drove almost a thousand squeaking devils away.

Li Yao's crazy laughter leaked out of the gaps of the Gold Wolf Battlesuit. The flames of spiritual energy around him were fluctuating wildly, not steady at all.

All signs suggested that he was delirious!

From the dark windows on the high buildings nearby, three sniper rifles secretly protruded out and locked onto him.

When the bullets of the sixteen Floating Six-barrel Vulcan Machine Guns ran out, the last devil was ripped apart, and Li Yao was the most relaxed, the three sniper rifles were triggered at the same time!

Two black bullets and a rushing electric arc dashed to his front from three different angles instantly!

Li Yao seemed to have grown eyes on the back of his head. He was long prepared for the attack. His body blinked weirdly, and two bullets passed through his shadows, collided, and exploded!

The electric arc hit precisely on Li Yao's breastplate.

Li Yao did not shake at all even though the electric arcs were covering his body. He stowed the sixteen guns into his Cosmos Ring as quickly as a lightning, while he turned into a streak of brightness and leapt forward in zigzags to avoid the snipers, sprinting for the turn of the street.

Huala!

When he reached the corner of the street, four melee-combat crystal suits suddenly appeared from the debris, the collapsed buildings, and the wells.

Two heavy crystal suits that looked like shields lunged close and tried to stall him without worrying about the damage sustained while the other two light crystal suits stabbed two sharp daggers at the gaps below the abdomen of the Gold Wolf Battlesuit, one from the left and one from the right.

Li Yao roared. The wolf head embedded on the breastplate of the Gold Wolf Battlesuit suddenly opened its mouth. A cluster of spiritual energy, which had been stored for a long time, rushed out and left a shocking giant hole in the chest of the first heavy crystal suit!

Meanwhile, he shook his left hand. The lengthy saber broke into pieces and rained upon the assassin on the left side.

There was a short sword about half a meter long in Li Yao's hand!

A sword in a saber. As it turned out, the anti-ship saber was merely a sheath that contained a deadly weapon!

The shorter the distance of a battle was, the more dangerous it would be. The assassin had drawn close to Li Yao, and it was difficult to wield the anti-ship saber at such a distance.

However, it was the perfect range of attack for a short sword.

The attention of the assassin was distracted by the pieces of the broken saber. When he was back to himself, he felt his chest turn cold. The short sword pierced deep into his heart and exploded brutally after a 'beep' sound!

Crystal bombs were planted inside the short sword that would be triggered as soon as it entered a body. Although it could only be used once, it was definitely a sordid and deadly weapon!

The entire stomach of the assassin together with the left side of his chest were blown to smithereens!

Within a breath, both assassins had been killed.

The remaining two assassins were dazed for a moment, not knowing what to do.

Li Yao sneered and leapt forward, preparing to execute the two of them.

However, from the shadows of the two assassins, the two dead bodies, and even Li Yao himself, weird phantoms suddenly dashed out.

It seemed that their shadows were all alive. They formed sharp venomous stings and pierced at the vital parts on Li Yao's body!

Li Yao was caught unprepared by the attack. He dodged three stings, but the other two still stabbed into his flesh. He grunted miserably.

The five phantoms condensed in midair into a crystal suit that was almost pure black.

The crystal suit was made of special light-absorption materials. Everybody's vision was blurred and could not see the details of the crystal suit. It looked like a black sketch.

The two stings that stabbed into the gaps of the Gold Wolf Battlesuit were thin daggers that extended out of the arms of the black crystal suit.

That was the performance of 'Thorny Shadow', a top assassin of Black Spider Tower and one of the Eight Blades of Black Spider!

Li Yao seemed to be in agony. The wolf head in front of his breastplate opened its bloody mouth again and launched a dazzling cannonball of spiritual energy. Simultaneously, he waved the other saber of his, raising a tornado.

However, before the aura of the blade passed through the black crystal suit, it had split into almost ten shadows and dispersed.

The shadow blades were retreated, and two arrows of blood immediately jetted out of the wounds!

Li Yao changed from attack to defense very quickly. Seeing that he had missed the target, he turned around and ran away without hesitating.

He did not flee to the street but crashed through the wall of a building.

Against the surging spiritual energy, the walls made of bricks, stones, and rebars were no better than toilet paper.

Five shadows converged into one again. Thorny Shadow sneered and chased after him.

The Gold Wolf Battlesuit destroyed one wall after another as Li Yao fled hastily in the labyrinth-like buildings.

The black crystal suit blinked about, sometimes appearing in midair, sometimes appearing in the darkness. It ran after the prey neither fast nor slowly, like a haunting ghost.

The distance between the two parties was gradually reduced.

Huala!

Suddenly, there was nothing but brightness in front of the Gold Wolf Battlesuit. Li Yao had crashed out of the building from the other side and entered a new street!

Thorny Shadow was overjoyed and accelerated to his maximum speed!

Within that moment—

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

In the building behind Li Yao, countless oriented crystal bombs that he had planted in advance were detonated. Hundreds of furious flames burst out and wreathed Thorny Shadow.

The crystal bombs naturally dealt little damage to the assassin, who was in the Core Formation Stage. However, they exposed his location and jammed his crystal cameras and crystal processor.

Caught unprepared, his speed and reaction were both slower than they should have been.

In the chaos, Thorny Shadow felt that an undersea volcano was erupting violently. Countless hot streams and magma were spurted out and raised a hurricane on the surface of the ocean!

The alarms that his crystal processor sent almost deafened him.

The speed, agility, and strength of his target improved exponentially!

In 0.5 seconds, his crystal camera captured what the enemy's crystal suit looked like.

The enormous size, the cold weapons, and the intimidating aura. Everything indicated that it was not the Gold Wolf Battlesuit!

Air change!

Thorny Shadow was shocked.

He did not expect that the Iron Plateau native who was in no way well trained in the arts of crystal suit, according to his intelligence, was actually an expert who had grasped such a remarkable skill as 'air change'. His opponent had put on a faster, stronger, more fearsome crystal suit in the blink of an eye.

In that moment, Thorny Shadow realized that it was a trap, a fatal trap specially prepared for the Eight Blades of Black Spider!

It was a pity that his epiphany came too late.

Shua!

The twisted, unpredictable aura of Li Yao's saber stabbed into the breastplate and the facial cover of the black crystal suit like a butcher's cleaver. The blood hesitated for half a second before it spurted out, forming a giant red tree in midair!

However, one other thing flew up into the sky together with Thorny Shadow's head.

Li Yao's right arm!

While Li Yao launched a fatal attack toward Thorny Shadow, a mysterious shadow suddenly lunged out from his back and darted at Li Yao's heart!

Li Yao had summoned all his strength, and there was no time for him to do anything. In his haste, he could only block the incoming attack and protect his heart with his left arm.

However, the enemy's attack was unbelievably brutal. While he chopped off Thorny Shadow's head, his left arm, which was protected by the crystal suit, was cut off from the elbow together with the thick, heavy crystal suit!

Chapter 701: Trump Card and Trump Card

Chapter 701: Trump Card and Trump Card

" Ahhh! "

This time, Li Yao really screamed desperately.

Blood jetted out of his broken arm shockingly, only to be sealed by his spiritual energy a moment later like a faucet that had been closed.

Before the first explosion died down, the second explosion, which was even fiercer, took place. Intense black and scorching venomous gas were mixed inside the bombs, too.

Li Yao ran away crazily in the middle of the smoke and the venomous gas!

Shua!

Covering his broken arm, Li Yao rushed into the street and threw aside a manhole cover. He stuffed his heavy crystal suit into the narrow sewer. Then, a series of explosions took place inside the sewer, with smoke and dust flying everywhere. The sewer collapsed and stopped the enemy from further hunting.

Li Yao fled like a stray dog in the labyrinth of the sewer system. Three minutes later, he appeared in the construction site of a skyscraper nine kilometers away.

Since the tenth space ring was still being expanded, such construction sites were everywhere.

Before, a few workers had lived in this place. But after the arrival of the extraterrestrial devils, all of them had run away. The place had become empty.

Hollow sounds were echoing in the empty building as the crystal suit stepped on the hard ground.

Li Yao could not hold it any longer and collapsed. He held the ground with his only hand and observed his broken left arm, moaning in disbelief.

Right then, cold footsteps came over behind him.

Li Yao's body was stiffened. He felt like he was standing in the cold wind naked and shivering even though he was protected by a heavy crystal suit.

What appeared in the stairs was also a black crystal suit that utilized light-absorption materials.

The crystal suit boasted a giant vibration blade that was directly connected to the right arm. The helmet and the facial cover were specially designed. Three swirling demonic horns pierced toward the sky.

That was 'Black Horn', a special crystal suit for mental attacks developed by the Silver Heart School. The three black horns were actually three antennas that could significantly boost the power of the soul and improve one's strength in mental attacks.

The Black Horn Battlesuit was already a top-tier crystal suits in the Flying Star Sector. After being crazily modified by the experts on Spider Den, it now boasted impressive specifications in melee combats, too.

In the database of the Cultivators, there was only one person who was capable enough of using such a modified Black Horn.

'Hellsword' Zhuang Ziyou, a Nascent Soul Stage!

Holding his broken arm, Li Yao asked, his voice shaking, "How did you see through me?"

Hellsword was silent briefly. He walked toward Li Yao unhurriedly while he answered with a faked voice. "Your disguise was very good, but your acting was a bit too exaggerating.

"In my eyes, you have at least three loopholes.

"Firstly, according to the files we gathered in the war on Iron Plateau, you are cunning, brutal, and thoughtful. You are definitely not a common Iron Plateau native, nor are you a reckless man who has nothing but courage.

"For a man like you, if you were not good enough in a crystal suit, how could you even consider a crystal suit that you are not familiar with to be your trump card? Why didn't you store a few True Qi armors in your Cosmos Ring?

"The answer is obvious. Your crystal suit skills are not as bad as you claimed. You are an expert of crystal suits!

"Secondly, even if you are using a crystal suit as your trump card, why would you choose a 'Gold Wolf Battlesuit'?

"Although it is an upgraded model of the Green Wolf Battlesuit enhanced by abundant Heavenly Materials and

Earthly Treasures, its framework is quite old-fashioned. The improvement would not be too significant at all!

"With your wealth, it's perfectly possible for you to purchase a more advanced crystal suit and ask a master to simplify the operation system so that you can use it at your will. That's the more reasonable choice.

"Don't you know masters of crystal suits such as Xue Yuanxin and Huangpu Bo? Right, I almost forgot. According to our latest intelligence, you are an excellent crystal suits master yourself. Simplifying the operation system is just a piece of cake. No trouble for you at all.

"Thirdly, you acted too rashly. Just because you were infuriated by our shamelessness, you went on a rampage in the downtown area alone without caring about anything?

"That did not sound like something that the sly Sand Scorpion in our files would do.

"Your acting crossed the line.

"With consideration of the three loopholes, I was totally sure that the Gold Wolf Battlesuit was definitely not your trump card!

"You put on the Gold Wolf Battlesuit in front of everywhere because you wanted us to underestimate you so that you could set up your traps more conveniently."

Li Yao's voice was both calm and frustrated as he said, "Therefore, you pretended that you were fooled and asked somebody else to step into my traps, didn't you? The guy was quite capable, and he was adept at shadow arts. If I am not mistaken, he was 'Thorny Shadow' of the Eight Blades of Black Spider, right?

"In order to push me to reveal my trump card, you were cruel enough to sacrifice one of the Eight Blades of Black Spider. Hellsword's methods are indeed impressive!"

Hellsword smiled casually. "How could a bait any weaker than 'Thorny Shadow' force you to resort to your trump card?

"Although your combat ability is merely in the Core Formation Stage, your value is much higher than common Core Formation Stage Cultivators and even some Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who know nothing but fighting. You are definitely one of the greatest troublemakers for us!

"Thorny Shadow is dead, but I have learned that your real trump card is the most advanced heavy crystal suit, 'Fire Tyrant', developed by the Red Line School.

"The 'Fire Tyrant Battlesuit' of yours seems to have been modified with abundant Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. The seven materials that I recognized right now are all invaluable.

"Such a crystal suit befits the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau more!

"Well well well. On a different occasion, if you are wearing the 'Fire Tyrant Battlesuit', there is a 90% likelihood that you might have gotten away even if I attacked with my full strength!

"Only one of the Eight Blades of Black Spider in exchange for all of your trump cards and one of your arms. That's a good bargain.

"All in all, in this hunting game, Thorny Shadow is a cicada, you are a mantis that devours him, and I'm a sparrow that devours you!"

Killing intent was soaring in Hellsword's voice.

"Wait!" Li Yao cried, pressing his broken arm. "I don't want to die. Give me a chance. I would like to surrender?"

Hellsword chuckled. "You would?"

Li Yao breathed heavily. "I know you won't believe it, but since I'm so valuable and I'm very influential on Iron Plateau, you should at least give it a try. After all, one of my arms has been chopped off, and all my trump cards have been seen through. I can never get away from the hands of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator like you, can I?"

Hellsword nodded and stepped forward softly. "It seems so."

Li Yao breathed heavily and struggled to his feet. He staggered toward Hellsword while he murmured, "Therefore—"

His voice suddenly turned high and sharp. "Let's die together!"

Before the sentence was concluded, the crystal bombs that had been planted in every corner of the construction site were detonated at the same time and turned the building into an ocean of flames!

The points of the explosion had been carefully selected so that the power of the explosion could be gathered and sweep across everything!

After Li Yao made the declaration, however, he did not lunge forward hoping to perish together with his enemy. Instead, he stomped on the ground and fell to the floor below!

The floor where he had been standing on had already been weakened beforehand. It was stomped into dust without any trouble!

All the declarations such as 'die together' were deceptive moves.

He was still trying to run away!

However—

The serial scheme was all within the expectations of Hellsword. The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator had seen through everything since a long time ago!

"Hehe. This construction site is indeed a place of escape that you have prepared.

"I knew that you wouldn't surrender!

"But so what?

"After two minutes of chitchatting, another 4% of my liver has been repaired. It will be more than easy for me to slay a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator who claims to be in the superlative height!"

The moment the explosion took place, Hellsword stomped on the floor as if he had seen it coming and fell onto the floor below almost at exactly the same time as Li Yao did.

Before he reached the ground, Hellsword had already lunged at where Li Yao was falling accelerated by the power rune arrays. His right hand turned into a streak of blackness and stabbed at the chest of the 'Fire Tyrant Battlesuit' at an amazingly high speed!

"Even the 'Super Bendable Steel' is not going to save you today!"

Pu!

His right hand pierced into the chest of the heavy crystal suit easily as if it were tofu.

However, the weird feedback made Hellsword's pupils shrink suddenly.

In the next second, the Fire Tyrant Battlesuit exploded in midair!

Until this second, everything had been under Hellsword's control.

But he did not expect that the Fire Tyrant Battlesuit would explode, nor did he expect that it was not smoke and fire that came with the explosion but glue!

The super sticky glue made of twenty-eight kinds of resins and the body fluids of demon beasts!

With Hellsword's Cultivation, even though the super sticky glue was showered over his face, his movement was not hindered much at all.

Then, all the glue was burnt into ash by his spiritual energy.

However, at exactly this moment, Hellsword saw feathers.

Thousands of black feathered, condensed by the purest spiritual energy, were deep, light, and sharp and danced in midair like snowflakes from the dark ceiling.

Six enormous wings of spiritual energy covered more than half of the floor, turning it into a dark abyss.

In the center of the dark abyss was a crystal suit that looked like a black hole. Three crimson crystal cameras were in an upside-down triangular distribution. Gloomy rays were emitting from there, as if they were laughing silently.

Isn't the speed of his air change 2.59 seconds?

How did he put on a different crystal suit in less than one second?

What is this damn crystal suit exactly?

The sprinting speed of the blackhole-like crystal suit was definitely more than seven times the speed of sound, because Hellsword did not hear any sound.

But for some reason, he felt as if he could hear the shriek of a vulture!

At the moment of life and death, Hellsword summoned the unparalleled capability of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. He twisted his body into such an unbelievable angle that his bones and his crystal suit were all cracking. Several rune arrays on his crystal suit broke down in that moment because it could not withstand his explosive strength.

Within that moment, at the cost of destroying rune arrays, breaking bones, and battering his liver, Hellsword moved half a step to the right and avoided the crying saber in Li Yao's right hand!

In the meantime, his left leg kicked at Li Yao's abdomen in a weird curve, while a short blade that was lighter and thinner than a feather ejected silently from the tip of his foot!

In the database of space pirates and Cultivators, it was recorded that the lone wolf Zhuang Ziyou was called

'Hellsword' because the name of the marvelous weapon with which he secured his fame was 'Hellsword'.

However, except for dead people, few knew that 'Hellsword' was not the eye-catching vibration saber on his right arm but the invisible venomous dagger hidden below his foot!

While the 'Hellsword' rushed out, Hellsword summoned all his soul power and triggered the strongest mental attack of his life.

Hiu!

For a moment, countless ghosts were lunging out from the dagger, as if the attack knocked down the wall between Hell and the human world!

However—

Li Yao's speed increased again and surpassed the limits in Hellsword's calculation instantly!

The dangling arm on the left of the crystal suit that seemed empty before was now back to life like a snake that had crawled out of a crevice!

When countless black feathers interweaved into flames and flashed past Hellsword 's eyes, there was only one thought in the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator's brain, which was almost boiling now.

Didn't I now chop off his left hand?

Why does he still have it?

Chapter 702: Feathered Dragon Saber

Chapter 702: Feathered Dragon Saber

Shua!

Two black crystal suits turned into translucent shadows at the same time and passed through each other.

In midair, the raging ghosts and the unpredictable black feathers collided like a storm.

The ghosts, in their desperate screams, vanished into black smoke.

The flying black feathers were melted like snow under the sun, too.

However, the 999 black feathers were physical entities. They entangled the left arm of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit without a gap and formed a weird-shaped saber that looked like a giant feather.

It was Feathered Dragon Saber, a piece of tailor-made magical equipment that Li Yao, Professor Mo Xuan, and the other spectral Cultivators from the Heaven's Origin Sector had invented based on the feature that Li Yao's spiritual energy could be transformed between the gas form and the liquid form freely at will.

The saber was refined based on the scraps of ancient magical equipment, the bones of Skeleton Dragon and the apocalyptic beasts, and the pieces of the Boiled Blood Wind

Slashing Saber. Because of its modular structure, with a telepathic thought, Li Yao could turn the saber into 999 sharp feathers and hid them in thousands of illusions of black feathers formed by his spiritual energy, so they could attack the enemy from utterly unpredictable angles.

The last remnants of the shadows of the ghosts were gone.

The construction site returned to peace again. Wind was blowing past the empty floor, raising a storm of dust that looked like a fog.

The two crystal suits were ten meters away from each other, in the same posture of their final attack, like perfect statues.

Clang!

Feathered Dragon Saber fell to the ground.

Huala!

A shocking wound appeared on the breastplate of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, as if a devil that opened its blood mouth.

Chi! Chi!

Blood mist exploded out of Li Yao's chest as he staggered and fell to one of his knees. A deep hollow was left on the floor, and he coughed loudly.

"Cough cough. Cough cough cough cough. A Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator is indeed a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator!"

His face as pale as paper, Li Yao breathed heavily for a long time. He managed to constrict his muscles and sealed the veins near his wound. Then he gritted his teeth to stand up and walk toward Hellsword.

Hellsword was absolutely still.

"Including the Sky Scorpion Amor, I've used four sets of suits altogether and deployed thirteen serial traps. All the crystal bombs and magical equipment on my body are now gone.

"I didn't know that—Cough Cough. Cough cough cough cough—"

Li Yao coughed hard and walked to Hellsword's front. He stood face to face and helmet to helmet with the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator.

Hellsword could kill him easily as long as he raised his hand. Yet, he kept still and did not move at all.

Li Yao breathed hard and managed to finish the sentence. "I didn't know that I would have to pay such a high price in order to kill you!"

Li Yao opened his fingers and pressed the helmet of Hellsword's crystal suit. He suddenly exerted his strength!

Huala!

'Hellsword' Zhuang Ziyou, the scary Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator on Spider Den, could not withstand the pressure and kneeled down before Li Yao!

"You are the first Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator that I slew."

Looking down at Hellsword, Li Yao remarked, one word after another, "But you won't be the last."

Ka!

A terrifying explosion suddenly burst out in Hellsword's neck, as his entire spine was blown into powder.

When the Feathered Dragon Saber passed by, Hellsword's neck had been swept through by the aura of Li Yao's saber. His head seemed to be connected to his body, but the link between them had been entirely cut off. It was no different than beheading him.

Even a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator could not survive their head being separated from their body.

Besides, Li Yao's final pressing had poured a huge amount of spiritual energy into Hellsword's brain through the helmet of the crystal suit, which had completely wrecked his brain.

The dominating Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator finally bowed below Li Yao's feet and lowered his head, as dead as anyone could ever be!

Li Yao sniffed and rubbed his hands. He kicked down Hellsword's dead body. Greedy laughter echoed below his crystal suit, as if he were planning to rip off Hellsword's 'Black Horn' and search for trophies.

The moment he touched the Black Horn Battlesuit, however, Li Yao suddenly shrieked. The Feathered Dragon Saber that was left aside exploded into 999 sharp feathers instantly and raised a black storm on the floor again!

"Ahhh!"

A weird scream suddenly echoed in the air of the southeast corner. It sounded like the screams of ten thousand tortured souls in the deepest level of hell combined. Like a scorching iron needle, the sound stung Li Yao's brain!

A dark red phantom that looked both like dim fire and weird flowers gradually emerged in the air. As it formed, the phantom condensed into the shape of a human more than half a meter tall that looked both like a dwarf and like an infant.

Pierced repetitively by the Feathered Dragon Saber, the phantom was twisting in agony and gazing at Li Yao with the utmost hatred and fear!

"You—you knew that I was not dead!" shouted the dark red phantom.

Li Yao smiled. "The soul power of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators is far stronger than common Cultivators. It is more likely for them to turn into a spectral Cultivator.

"As for you, the well-known 'Hellsword' Zhuang Ziyou, mental attacks are your specialty, and you have a profound understanding about the studies of brains. Other than being a brutal bandit, you are also a great 'Meditation Healer'.

"Therefore, it is even more likely for you to turn into a spectral Cultivator than common Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

"I was merely testing, and I didn't expect that you would jump out so quickly."

Hellsword was squeaking in anger like fire onto which oil had just been poured. The flames of the phantom suddenly rose and almost licked the ceiling.

It was a pity that he had just died, and his soul had only managed to escape from his body through secret arts. His current state was very unstable because he was not a real spectral Cultivator yet. His capability was only one percent compared to when he was alive!

Although Li Yao was heavily wounded, the guy was still much stronger than he was.

He could only stall for a while longer so that his soul could stabilize. With a few minutes, he would be transformed into a spectral Cultivator from a wandering ghost. By then…

Hellsword pretended that he was deeply regretful and shouted, "What I chopped off just now was a false hand?"

"Of course, it was a real hand. For a lone wolf like you, it would have been impossible for you to not notice the difference between cutting into muscles, veins, and bones and chopping off a false hand, right?"

Li Yao opened his hands and replied, "It's just that the hand was not mine."

Hellsword was so furious that he was shaking violently. He shrieked, "So, your target since the very beginning has not been the Eight Blades of Black Spider but me? Crazy! You are crazy! Your maximum combat ability is in the Core Formation Stage at best, and you are insane enough to hunt a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator! Maniac! You are an out-and-out maniac!"

"If you don't have anything constructive to say, let's begin," Li Yao replied calmly.

He waved his right hand. Spiritual energy flooded over like a tide and formed a shining silver hand, grasping Hellsword's ghost by the throat.

When the wolf grows old, the crows ride him. If he were in his peak state, Hellsword, as a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, would have kicked Li Yao away like driving a stray dog, if not killing him instantly!

However, right now, Hellsword's ghost was like a hen whose throat was cut off. No matter how hard he struggled and shrieked, he could only be dragged to Li Yao in the end.

"What do you want?" shouted Hellsword in panic, half faked and half in real fear.

Every move that Li Yao took was beyond his expectation. He was no longer confident in the situation now.

Li Yao bound Hellsword's ghost to the front of his breastplate with his spiritual energy, making it a 'shield'. Then he smiled and said, "A Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator must be hiding a lot of precious Cultivation arts, techniques, magical equipment, and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures on their body.

"I went through all the trouble and drained all my crystal suits and magical equipment to kill a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. Naturally, I want to search his body thoroughly and see what trophies I have earned.

"However, from a different point of view, if I were a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, I wouldn't want my body to be insulted by the successors and my collections to be looted by my enemy.

"Therefore, I would certainly set up all kinds of traps inside my crystal suit and even hide aggressive magical equipment inside my body. If anybody was going to tear open my crystal suit by brute force and damage my body, then… BOOM! They would pay a good price!

"In the meantime, I would also deploy numerous self-destruction programs in all my Cosmos Rings. If anybody opened the Cosmos Rings by force, the programs would be automatically activated and turn the Cosmos Rings into useless stones!

"The hunters are coming close, and my time is limited. As a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, you are probably not scared by my threats and interrogation. So, I will save the nonsense and simply use you as my shield.

"If there are any traps on your crystal suit and your body, you will be the first to take their blow once they are triggered!

"After all, I am protected by this super crystal suit that boasts amazing specifications, with a lot of additional layers of Super Bendable Steel at the critical areas. With the ghost of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator as my shield, I will not necessarily die even if the traps are triggered.

"However, you are in front of me, and you have no crystal suit or clothes to protect you. The adventure might not be as safe for you, no?"

"Wait. Stop now!" shouted Hellsword, who was struggling crazily.

But Li Yao did not care about him at all. He crouched on one of his knees. The Feathered Dragon Saber flew back to his left arm, but almost a hundred feathers were left and protruded to the front, forming three sharp claws.

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao raised his left arm high and was about to stab the claws into the breastplate of Hellsword's crystal suit.

"No. There are traps in my crystal suit and my body. They will explode if you tear them apart!" screamed Hellsword desperately, having no other options.

Chapter 703: You May Die Now

Chapter 703: You May Die Now

"I don't like to force people to do anything."

The claws extended by the Feathered Dragon Saber scratched on Hellsword's crystal suit in screeching noises, as Li Yao replied casually, "Say it or not, the choice is all yours. I will get the trophies either way."

"I will. I will."

Hellsword was about to burst into tears.

If he had teeth right now, he would be biting them so hard that they would have crumbled to nothing.

It was true that powerful magical equipment and attack rune arrays had been deployed on his crystal suit and his body. The enemy was bound to trigger the traps once they looted them.

His original plan had been to hide in the darkness as a ghost and attack Li Yao's brain when Li Yao was wounded while searching his body.

But he did not know that the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau was so cunning that the guy not only guessed that he might become a ghost but also took him as a shield!

Is this maniac really an Iron Plateau native who has more brawns than brains?

Hellsword felt like crying.

Deep in thought, he quickly worked out a new scheme now that the previous one had failed. He listed all the traps hesitantly.

"Below the left side of the breastplate, there is a poison vesicle that is controlled by a rune array. If it is touched, it would explode and vaporize all the venom. The solution is…"

"The helmet cannot be ripped off, too. If it is ripped off by brute force, the entire super compressed crystal reactor will explode. The power of the explosion should be enough to blow up the entire building…"

Hellsword suddenly turned obedient and revealed all the traps on the Black Horn Battlesuit.

He had thought that, even if he pointed out all the traps, it would take Li Yao twenty minutes or even longer to dismantle such a complicated and precise crystal suit.

Yet, Li Yao's hands turned into two clusters of black mist in which countless black feathers were flying. After a series of clanging sounds, the Black Horn Battlesuit turned into the most fundamental components and covered on the ground in less than one minute.

Looking at his dead body, Hellsword's ghost shuddered and further concealed his killing intent.

Li Yao eyed the magical equipment on the ground in great satisfaction and complimented, "You do have a lot of treasures with you. The 'Black Horn Battlesuit' is already one of the most expensive crystal suits of the Flying Star Sector, but judging from the plugins here, the money you spent on modifications is almost twice its original price!"

Hellsword was furious, but he noticed the greed in Li Yao's voice. He thought of something and suddenly asked, "I would like to surrender!"

Li Yao could not help but chuckle. "I said exactly the same thing a few minutes back, and we both saw what happened next, didn't we?"

"I know you find it hard to believe, but I'm different from you," Hellsword replied quickly. "You are a big hero with no fear of death, but I am just a selfish Immortal Cultivator. I will do anything in order to survive!

"What I'm about to say is exactly the same as you said. As a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, not only am I familiar with many secrets on Spider Den, I am also aware of the details of the Temple of Immortals. I am very valuable and definitely worth giving a chance!

"If you do not believe me, I can tell you a big secret first as a signal of my sincerity!

"Mountain Sea Black Lotus, the four kings of immortality. The assault on Heavenly Saints City is supervised by the 'Black King', but I am not the Black King!"

Li Yao raised his eyebrow. "Is that so?"

Hellsword's ghost bounced weirdly and condensed hard without alarming anyone, trying to transform into a real spectral Cultivator, while he threw out a piece of shocking news to shift Li Yao's attention. "Just think about it. Although I'm in the Nascent Soul Stage, I always come and go alone, and I don't have any skills in management and administration. How could I plan and implement such a large-scale operation?

"As for who the Black King is exactly, naturally I can't tell you right now. But as long as you accept my surrender and give me a chance to make things right, I will definitely tell you everything that I know."

Li Yao smiled. His hands moved as quickly as wind as he searched Hellsword's body carefully. Eventually, he found four Cosmos Rings.

Li Yao said unhurriedly, "Senior Zhuang, I fear that you're mistaken about something.

"I'm from Iron Plateau. I do not feel very happy that you are causing a mayhem in Heavenly Saints City, but it is not enough for me to burst into outrage without caring about anything.

"You want to make things right, but does it have anything to do with me? I don't care about who the real Black King is at all, either!

"Right now, as a tiny ghost, you are completely at my mercy. I can spare your life or kill you instantly!

"If you want to surrender, give me something I'm interested in!"

"You are not interested in the Black King's identity?" Hellsword shrieked.

"Cultivators may be, but not for me," Li Yao replied. "How about this. The 'Hellsword Arts', your ultimate skill, is indeed marvelous. Despite all the unfavorable circumstances, you managed to cut open such a giant wound on my chest. If I didn't have my left hand, you definitely would have beaten me!

"The sword arts of yours are very creative. I like it!

"Give me your arts, and I will consider your request.

"However, listen up. You only have once chance. Do not try to fool me. The Hellsword is hidden below your foot. Therefore, the sword arts probably originated from a weird kicking skill and are totally different from normal sword arts. I can see through it immediately.

"You said yourself that I am an out-and-out maniac. You don't want to know what a maniac will do when he gets mad, do you?"

Hellsword was dumbfounded, as if Li Yao had dug a hole on his chest and cut his heart away.

Li Yao frowned. "If you would rather not, forget it. A true gentleman does not take away other people's favorites."

"I—I'm willing to!" Hellsword was secretly overjoyed, and yet he shrieked in depression. "My sword arts are in the Cosmos Ring that you found in my hair.

"But the Cosmos Ring has been set with a password and divided into three overlapping rooms. Only after you open the first room can you open the second, and there's a secret rune array below the third room. The passwords for each room are different.

"One wrong password, and the Cosmos Ring will destroy itself immediately. Nobody will get anything from it!

"My sword arts are not kept in the innermost room, but in the jade chip of the ledger in the outermost room after being encrypted!"

Li Yao chuckled and said, "A trick to fool the smart. Normal people would think that the most valuable treasure was hidden in the most inconspicuous room, but you have placed it in the very first room. How cunning of you!"

"Not as cunning as you!" Hellsword replied unhappily. He paused for a moment, and as if admitting his failure completely, he said, "Fine. Struggles are futile now that I've fallen into the hands of such a brutal man like you. I can tell you the passwords of the four Cosmos Rings, they are…

"You can try them yourselves and see if I'm lying.

"Come on. Try the Cosmos Rings, and you will know that I'm genuine. But don't regret. You must accept my request if you take my treasures. You will garner fame and fortune and do other Cultivators a great favor by doing that.

"If you go back on your words, I will not let go of you even if I die!"

Li Yao pondered for a moment and nodded. "Alright!"

While 'alright' was still echoing in the air, the Feathered Dragon Saber suddenly exploded into dozens of black feathers and darted at Hellsword's ghost!

The attack far exceeded Hellsword's expectation. He had thought that Li Yao would not attack him until he verified all the passwords of the Cosmos Rings!

Why now?

The ghost was split into multiple parts before it had the chance to scream. It was not until ten seconds later that the divided ghost was condensed again. But he was feebler than ever now.

Hellsword was dumbfounded. He did not believe that Li Yao was brutal enough to attack without any warning!

Hellsword was totally confused. He shouted angrily, "What—what are you doing?"

"I have a few best friends who are spectral Cultivators."

Li Yao's voice turned extremely calm with no sign of greed at all. He said, "Through them, I have learned a lot of secrets about spectral Cultivators.

"For example, it takes less than ten minutes for an expert like you to transform from a ghost into a spectral Cultivator and restore part of your combat ability. Since you do not have a real body, your attacks will become weirder and more unpredictable than when you were alive.

"Therefore, I made a bold assumption that you did not mean to surrender.

"Since the very beginning, you've been rambling on, and you gave up all the traps on the crystal suit and your body without much struggling.

"In the end, you even told me the secrets of the Hellsword Arts and the passwords of your Cosmos Rings…

"Your only purpose was to buy you more time so that you could be transformed into a real spectral Cultivator. Then, you would launch a fatal attack and reverse the situation!

"Three minutes and fifty-eight seconds have passed since your soul left your body. I was in much more danger right and did not dare to let you condense it any longer."

Hellsword had worked hard for four minutes and was about to be transformed into a real spectral Cultivator, only to be slashed back to the starting line. He was so mad that blue smoke was popping up. "You—you knew it since the beginning. You've been acting!"

"Indeed. You are not the only one who can pretend." Li Yao smiled. "The Hellsword Arts are indeed marvelous. Why would you tell me the passwords of all your Cosmos Rings and the location of the Hellsword Arts honestly if I did not act?

"Right now, I have got everything I want. You may die now. As for your threat, hehe, you think you can ever come back to me now that you've fallen into my hands?"

Li Yao raised his hand and snapped his fingers.

After every snap, a Six-barrel Vulcan Machine Guns would appear in the air. Sixteen guns surrounded Hellsword's ghost, and the bullets were jumping maliciously inside the magazines.

This time, Hellsword was really desperate. "You can't kill me. I know countless secrets and treasures. Do not kill me. They are all yours. All yours!"

Li Yao heard none of it. His right hand snatched one of the guns while he examined the bullet clips and the barrels.

"Don't—don't kill me! You can imagine the immensity of the Temple of Immortals! We will have the entire Flying Star Sector under our control eventually! You will have nowhere to run!

"Join us. Your personality and your shrewdness indicate that you are a natural-born Immortal Cultivator. Join the Temple of Immortals, and your future is nothing but bright!

"Maybe—maybe you can become the new 'Mountain King'. I will support you. We will work together and explore the true path of immortality!

"Immortality! That's immortality I'm talking about! Endless life, endless Cultivation arts, endless power and wealth, endless mysteries in the endless universe!"

Hellsword was so scared that he did not even know what he was saying.

Crack!

Li Yao inserted a thick bullet clip. Each of the bullets was the size of one of his fingers.

Holding the gun with both of his hands and stepping on the head of Hellsword's corpse, he aimed at the ghost.

The other fifteen guns also revolved fast, stimulated by his telepathic thoughts. A storm of bullets was looming.

Li Yao smiled, a shallow dimple appearing on his face. While he pulled the trigger brutally, he opened his mouth and spurted three words at the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator.

"Go to hell!"

Chapter 704: End of the First War

Chapter 704: End of the First War

Sixteen interconnecting lines of burning bullets dissected the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator's soul like jigsaws!

Hellsword screamed miserably and struggled hard. A waning voice echoed from the writhing ghost.

"Immortality… Immortality… Immortality…"

However, the feeble voice was eclipsed by the roaring bullets. It was like a tiny spark that was overwhelmed by an enormous tide.

The fire of Hellsword's soul shrank and diminished at a visible speed until it was thinner than ever.

One minute later, Li Yao stopped shooting.

Huala!

The floor of the upper level could not withstand the barrage and collapsed, raising a storm of dust.

Gloomily, Li Yao carried the gun on his shoulder as he paced slowly in the debris, searching.

Suddenly, he halted and gazed at several broken bricks in the debris with a cruel smile.

His spiritual energy swept over and dragged out the remaining soul that was no larger than a cockroach.

The remaining soul was only the size of fingernail. But it had limbs and a face, and it looked exactly like Hellsword except countless times smaller.

The remaining soul was uttering high-pitched noises and struggling under Li Yao's pressure.

However, nobody was able to tell what he was talking about. He might have begging for mercy, screaming, browbeating, or cursing.

Looking at the remaining soul, Li Yao said, one word after another, "Since the moment you became an Immortal Cultivator and assaulted ordinary people, you should have seen this day coming.

"Listen up. You may have many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. Your organization may be powerful. Your plan may be very thorough. Your infiltration to the world of Cultivators may be quite deep.

"You can choose to start the war at any time, at any place, and in any way you want.

"However, you don't have a say in when and how the war will end. I, Li Yao, will make the call!"

The name 'Li Yao' dazed the remaining soul of Hellsword, which was writhing hard. There was epiphany, regret, and fury on his face.

The next second, Li Yao poured all of his spiritual energy into his right foot and stomped on the remaining soul.

Hellsword, as a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, could not even utter a final scream. After a dull noise, both his body and his soul were exterminated by Li Yao!

At this moment, less than ten minutes had passed since the two of them entered the construction site.

Li Yao raised his hands and placed Hellsword's dead body and the Black Horn Battlesuit into the Cosmos Ring. He did not feel any hinderance.

It indicated that Hellsword was not lying. There were no more Cosmos Rings on his body.

Cosmos Rings were refined based on the mechanism of space collapse and transference. They could store almost any object, but there were two restrictions that came with them.

Firstly, living creatures could not be stored because they would crumble into a pile of meat when they were folded and unfolded.

Secondly, one Cosmos Ring could not store another Cosmos Ring. It had to do with the interference and rejection of two collapse fields. The mechanism was quite complicated, and even Li Yao did not know much about it.

Therefore, if there were more Cosmos Rings on Hellsword's body, Li Yao's movement would have hit an invisible wall, and he would not have been able to store them.

On second thought, there were no reason why Hellsword would lie to him. He must have handed over all the Cosmos Rings partly to reduce his wariness and partly to stall him longer so that his soul could be further consolidated.

If Li Yao were not such a weirdo that attacked him without verifying any of the Cosmos Rings' passwords, the plan of Hellsword's counterattack would have likely worked.

Li Yao studied the crystal processor dismantled from the head of the Black Horn Battlesuit.

In order to win his trust, and more importantly, to buy himself more time, Hellsword had told Li Yao the password of his crystal processor a moment ago.

According to the crystal processor, several experts of the Temple of Immortals were lunging toward the building.

Li Yao licked his lips and finished the preparation inside the building in one minute and a half. Then, he glided to the first floor through the elevator shaft, before he removed his crystal suit and put on clothes that were riddled with holes and stained with blood and mud. With a dumb-looking countenance, he staggered out of the construction site.

BOOM!

Half a minute later, an earsplitting explosion took place in the building behind him. It collapsed from the middle, as if an invisible giant hand had pressed it down into the ground!

The blast raised a furious wind and passed Li Yao, making his messy hair even messier.

Li Yao did not turn back to watch the explosion.

He kept looking at the front, searching for his next prey.

Right then, weird humming sounds echoed in the sky and attracted his attention.

He raised his head, only to discover that a cluster of objects that looked both like a dark cloud and a swarm of locusts had flown in through the damaged places on the dome.

Li Yao looked carefully and realized that they were crystal suits that were smaller and more concise than normal crystal suits!

Green lights were shining through the gaps of all the crystal suits. They extended to their faces and formed three lines that were twisting and jumping into simple facial expressions.

Li Yao pupils constricted violently. They were not crystal suits, but—

The Grand Illusionary Soldiers!

Thousands of Grand Illusionary Soldiers lunged into the tenth space ring. The newcomers immediately attracted the attention of a lot of devils.

Countless devils formed tornadoes and swept at the Grand Illusionary Soldiers!

Dark clouds collided in midair, but the outcome was quite surprising.

Although the combat ability of one Grand Illusionary Solider was weak, as could be seen in the demo last time where ten Grand Illusionary Soldiers were no match for one Exo, they were cold machines and did not have a brain that devils could invade, nor did they have the notion of fear or any other negative emotions.

Therefore, countless devils hovered around the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, jumping and bouncing, only to find no gaps they could enter into.

On the other hand, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers had been equipped with spiritual energy weapons targeting energy entities. After a flash of light sabers, several devils were immediately cut into pieces!

The devils could only heave the debris from the ground and smash it at the Grand Illusionary Soldiers by way of remote control.

However, such a way of attack was merely an ancillary approach and nowhere near as powerful as their mental attacks.

Only several thousand Grand Illusionary Soldiers defeated devils that were ten times more than themselves and drove them away from the battlefield. Soon, the block was cleared. The Grand Illusionary Soldiers immediately moved on to the next block.

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and looked at the retreating Grand Illusionary Soldiers, deep in thought.

In the deep, dark sky, a solemn voice came over. "Citizens of the tenth space ring of Heavenly Saints City, don't panic. I am Xiao Xuance, a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator and the CEO of the Grand Illusionary Group!

"I, as well as all the other Cultivators in Heavenly Saints City, have devoted ourselves to the battle to slay the devils!

"Not just that, prototypes of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, the latest invention of the Grand Illusionary Group that is still being tested, have been deployed!

"Six thousand Grand Illusionary Soldiers are now fighting against the extraterrestrial devils!

"Please stay safe in the shelters. We will clear all the devils and rescue you shortly!"

In countless shelters of the tenth space ring, all the citizens waved their arms and exclaimed silently.

"Hooray!"

"Cultivators have arrived with their latest magical equipment!"

"We are saved. We are saved!"

The six thousand Grand Illusionary Soldiers, after clearing four blocks collectively, dispersed in various directions.

The Grand Illusionary Soldiers were the best tools to deal with the extraterrestrial devils. They played an important role in every battlefield.

In the fierce battles, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, which were made of common materials and therefore were very weak, suffered tremendous damage, too.

However, the slaughter machines that did not know fear, pain, or exhaustion would crawl on the ground and lunge at the devils in the sky boosted by the power rune arrays even though their legs were broken.

The picture of the Grand Illusionary Soldier fighting until the last breath left a deep impression on Cultivators and ordinary citizens alike.

An hour after the Grand Illusionary Soldiers were deployed to the battlefield, the chaos in the tenth space ring was basically under control. The Temple of Immortals' scheme was already doomed.

Lurking alone in the darkness, Li Yao stared at a small shop whose gate was closed.

According to Hellsword's crystal processor, it was a secret base of the Temple of Immortals.

"Cultivators have utilized new magical equipment never seen before. The extraterrestrial devils are about to be annihilated. Carry out Plan C and evacuate immediately!"

"After the assault of Heavenly Saints City, Cultivators will definitely seek retaliations crazily in the near future. Don't wander about in the outside world and return to Spider Den as soon as you can!"

On the dark net, messages and commands were continuously sent, detailing the closest routes of escape for the Immortal Cultivators and the space pirates that were scattered everywhere in Heavenly Saints City.

The tenth space ring was too large, even larger than many asteroids. At this moment, riots and explosions were still taking place everywhere. Countless starships anchored in the docks were leaving and fleeing away from the place.

The Cultivators were too busy saving the people to bother about them. The tenth space ring was now filled with debris both inside and outside. Once the starships passed through the debris, they would be like waterdrops in an ocean, and it would be impossible to lock onto them.

The starships anchored in the hundreds of space ports of the tenth space ring seemed to have come from various space zones of the Flying Star Sector for the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting.

However, a lot of the space pirates' starships were actually mixed in them. Once they were loaded with space pirates and Immortal Cultivators, they would soar into the sky and run away from Heavenly Saints City.

Spider Den?

Li Yao chewed on the name.

Spider Den, the home camp of all the space pirates and the most terrifying place of the Flying Star Sector, might be where the secrets of the Temple of Immortals were buried.

Why would the Cultivators who were supposed to protect ordinary people end up being cruel, lawless space pirates?

Where did the Temple of Immortals come from?

How were Immortal Cultivators and demonic Cultivators related, and how were they different?

Li Yao scratched his chin.

He knew where he should look for his answers now.

Chapter 705: Death of Sand Scorpion

Chapter 705: Death of Sand Scorpion

One month passed after the battle in the tenth space ring.

Heavenly Saints City was the center of the world of Cultivators after all. When large batches of Cultivators crowded into the tenth space ring and slaughtered the devils together with the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, the only thing awaiting the extraterrestrial devils was doom.

One altar was destroyed after another, and the devils vanished into black smoke following each other.

However, since the environment of the tenth space ring was too complicated and too many citizens had been possessed by the devils, it took three days and three nights to finish off the remaining devils that were hiding among the broken walls and sewer systems, and it took another ten days before the last devil was finally killed.

During that time, most Immortal Cultivators retreated from the tenth space ring successfully and ran to space with the help of space pirates, before vanishing into thin air through space jumps.

The aftershock of the arrival of the extraterrestrial devils still echoed in the dozens of space zones of the Flying Star Sector one month later.

During the unprecedented catastrophe, not only had the ordinary citizens living in the tenth space ring suffered heavy casualties, the Cultivators who went to reinforce them had also witnessed a huge loss. Almost a hundred experts in the Core Formation Stage were injured or even killed. As for those below the Core Formation Stage, there were too many to count.

Many Cultivators had gone missing during the chaos. It was very likely that they self-detonated and died together with their enemy.

Sand Scorpion, the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, was one of them.

After more than half month of extensive searches, there was still no trace of him.

Cultivation was a dangerous profession. Every Cultivator had a habit of buying a huge amount of insurance and leaving a will.

The will not only applied to the cases where the Cultivators died, but also took effect when the Cultivators went missing, became mentally deranged, or secluded themselves for a long time.

When the Cultivators returned, recovered from their mental derangement, or broke their seclusion, the testament would expire immediately.

It was based on the special circumstances of Cultivators. After all, even the strongest expert was not certain that they would be perfectly safe during their daily training and that they could maintain their rationality forever.

Li Yao had managed to survive several attempted assassinations by the Temple of Immortals while he was in Flying Star University. One of the assassinations had even been conducted by an expert in the Core Formation Stage.

Therefore, he had made detailed arrangements to make sure that the Glorious Sunlight Group would not be affected when something happened to him.

In the central area of Heavenly Saints City, in the corridor outside the main meeting room, Xie Anan was pacing back and forth anxiously until she saw a grave young man. She hurried to run to him, almost tripping herself over.

"What about it? They said that they'd found traces of master. Is it true?"

Wu Mayan was much more solemn than a month ago and much more mature for his age.

He bit his lips hard, and his eyes were slightly red. He breathed heavily for a moment and nodded, but then he shook it after thinking for a moment.

Xie Anan bulged her eyes. "What happened? Say something?"

"The Rescue Committee found master's crystal suit." Wu Mayan took a long breath before he continued. "It was not the Gold Wolf Battlesuit but the debris of a 'Fire Tyrant Battlesuit', a crystal suit that is ten times more advanced than the Gold Wolf Battlesuit!"

Xie Anan almost jumped to her feet when she heard the first half of the sentence, but she felt her head go dizzy when she heard the latter half. "Debris? How bad is the debris?"

"Very bad." Wu Mayan gnashed his teeth. "More exactly, it is not debris but some tiny pieces."

Xie Anan stumbled a few steps back. Her face lost all color, and she asked, her voice shivering, "How did they know that it was master's crystal suit?"

Wu Mayan replied gravely, "Master Xue Yuanxin and Master Huangpu Bo ran detailed analysis on the scraps of the crystal suit and found traces of a special manual forging method from them. Such a method was of master's own invention. He was the only one in the entire Flying Star Sector who knew it. You should be clearer about that than I am."

Xie Anan's face was even paler. She mumbled, "But—but they didn't find master's body, did they?"

"Of course, there was no body." Wu Mayan smiled bitterly. "Experts of the Rescue Committee found master's Gold Wolf Battlesuit ten kilometers away from where the scraps were found. They came to a conclusion after preliminary investigation and analysis.

"The Gold Wolf Battlesuit that master showed in front of everyone was not his real trump card. His real trump card was the Fire Tyrant Battlesuit, which was ten times stronger!

"The Gold Wolf Battlesuit was modified by master and Master Xue Yuanxin together. But master also hid a Fire Tyrant Battlesuit in secret and strengthened its key parts with his special technique. Maybe he even lowered the difficulty of operation. Nobody knew anything about it!

"It was not a spur-of-the-moment thing that master went to the central area of the tenth space ring. He made thorough plans, hoping to catch a big fish with himself as the bait and slay the fish with the 'Fire Tyrant Battlesuit'!

"But as it turned out…

"He indeed caught a big fish, but the fish was so big that it was essentially a whale!"

"What!" Xie Anan exclaimed.

Wu Mayan continued he story. "Master and the big fish fought hard for a while and found that he was no match for the enemy. It was also possible that he was heavily wounded by the big fish and about to be killed.

"Having no other options, master had to activate the self-detonation system of the 'Fire Tyrant Battlesuit' and turned the super-compressed crystal reactor into a giant bomb, dying together with the enemy!"

Xie Anan was about to cry out. As a refiner, she knew the terrible outcome when the crystal reactor of such a high-level crystal suit like the 'Fire Tyrant Battlesuit' was detonated better than anybody else.

Not the slightest flesh and blood would be left. Everything would be obliterated!

Biting her lips hard, Xie Anan asked, "How was it possible? Who could have pushed master to that far?"

"According to the traces on the spot and the pictures captured by the crystal cameras," Wu Mayan explained solemnly, "the one who forced master to reveal all his trump cards and even detonate himself was most likely 'Hellsword' Zhuang Ziyou, a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator!"

Xie Anan was immediately dumbfounded!

Admiration beamed out of Wu Mayan's eyes as he remarked, "Master truly deserved to be the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau. To think that he fought a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator for such a long time! Although we don't know whether or not Hellsword was killed in the end, he must at least have been heavily wounded.

"The Immortal Cultivators' quick retreat had a lot to do with Hellsword's accident, too!

"Master is a great hero. As his true disciples, we must not be looked down upon by other people and dishonor him!

"Regardless of whether master is missing or dead, we must train ourselves hard and disseminate his knowledge!"

Xie Anan nodded her head in a daze. Tears were running on her cheeks.

Wu Mayan sighed and said, "A lot of experts are still running the analysis right now. If master's opponent was really 'Hellsword' Zhuang Ziyou, he will be the greatest hero of the entire Flying Star Sector! A detailed report will be published after the investigation. I believe that all our questions will be answered in the report.

"Now, let's go back to the meeting!"

…

In the hall of the Millennium Meeting, tens of thousands of people were seated in the super large room established by the Half-step Grand Illusionary Land like a deep well.

Other than Cultivators, a lot of ordinary people attended the meeting, too. They were either the representatives from other space zones or the survivors of the tenth space ring.

Right now, a memorial for the deceased during the catastrophe of extraterrestrial devils was being held.

The memorial was the end of a disaster but the beginning of their revenge!

Xiao Xuance, CEO of the Grand Illusionary Group, was floating in the middle of the vague smoke in the center of the Grand Illusionary Land.

He seemed to be a hundred years older than one months ago. His face and skin that was not covered by his ivory robe were covered in wrinkles and aged-marks, as if he could not withstand the loss of his son. With a heartbroken face, he was making a speech.

"…During the disaster, I lost my dear son.

"But my grief is not just for him.

"I was not the only one who lost a son. Thousands of fathers and mothers lost their dear sons and daughters, thousands of wives and husbands lost the one they were supposed to grow old with, and thousands of innocent kids lost their parents, who loved them most and who sheltered them from the wind and storm. Thousands of families will not laugh as much in the future!

"I'm not just grieving. I feel ashamed, too, so ashamed that it is beyond description!

"I am guilty. All Cultivators are guilty!

"We underestimated the Immortal Cultivators, or the demons who call themselves Immortal Cultivators. We did not know that they would be insane and inhuman enough to attract extraterrestrial devils to such a populated metropolis as Heavenly Saints City and cause such a tragedy!

"If we had realized the brutality of the Immortal Cultivators sooner, if we had activated the planetary-level magical equipment projects earlier and entered a war state earlier, and if we had refined the strongest Grand Illusionary Soldiers with real Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures instead of common metals when we initiated the 'Grand Illusionary Soldier Project', the catastrophe might not have happened at all, and even if it did, we would have been able to save more people!

"How I wish I knew a technique that could alter the flow of time, even at the cost of all my techniques and the last bit of my soul power!

"But it is a pity that history cannot be changed, and the deceased cannot be revived. Our regrets are entirely useless. Useless!

"The one thing we can do right now is not regret, not grieve, not devastate, but take revenge!

"Revenge! Revenge! Revenge!

"Nobody shall be unpunished after slaughtering so many ordinary people! The fear and destruction they imposed on ordinary people will be paid back ten times and a hundred times more fiercely tomorrow!

"Let's take action, Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector!"

Xiao Xuance opened his arms. An intimidating aura flowed out of his body and boiled all the spectators' blood, although none of them were watching him in person. He declared, "I beg everyone to join me and summon all the resources available to destroy the Temple of Immortals whatever the cost!"

Chapter 706: New Era

Chapter 706: New Era

Together with the declaration, a hundred Grand Illusionary Soldiers appeared in the darkness behind Xiao Xuance. Illuminated by the dim light, they appeared particularly high and mighty.

Different from the prototypes that had appeared in the tenth space ring a month ago, these Grand Illusionary Soldiers were much tougher and more agile. Bright gold flames were flowing on their surface like the hair of ferocious animals.

"Better late than never. After all the prototypes of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers were damaged or destroyed in the tenth space ring a month ago, all my colleagues in the Grand Illusionary Group worked day and night and built a hundred new Grand Illusionary Soldiers with tremendous Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures without caring about the cost!

"The stronger, steadier, and more aggressive Grand Illusionary Soldiers will be the standard model to be manufactured in place of the earlier prototypes!

"Meanwhile, I, Xiao Xuance, would like to make an announcement in front all the fellow Cultivators and compatriots of the Flying Star Sector!

"In order to destroy the Temple of Immortals, I will donate all my belongings to establish a fund under the name of my son Xiao Tianyang. The fund will be dedicated to the production of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers!

"It's a great misfortune that one's son dies when one is old. But I believe that my son Xiao Tianyang's soul will live in thousands of Grand Illusionary Soldiers in such a way and keep on fighting the good fight!

"Compatriots and Fellow Cultivators, my personal strength is limited. The Grand Illusionary Soldier Project needs your support. The future of the Flying Star Sector needs your support!

"We are running out of time!

"What happened in the tenth space ring was unfortunate, but it might have been fortunate too. It happened to be in the periphery of Heavenly Saints City, and a lot of Cultivators were nearby during the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting. Therefore, we reacted immediately after the arrival of the extraterrestrial devils and stopped chaos soon after.

"However, what if the extraterrestrial devils do not visit Heavenly Saints City but drop by your hometown or a remote space zone?

"An entire space town might be absorbed by the devils in a day and a night. Until the last innocent victim is possessed by the devils, not enough warriors will be able to rescue them!

"The Grand Illusionary Soldiers are the bane for the extraterrestrial devils. Only the Grand Illusionary Soldiers can rescue the Flying Star Sector!"

Xiao Xuance's words raised whispers in the small, independent meeting rooms.

The Grand Illusionary Soldiers were different from traditional planetary-level magical equipment such as the 'Ice God

Project'.

The super projects such as the Ice God Project, which meant to build a planet into a piece of magical equipment, required a huge investment and a long working period. There would be too many unexpected factors during the project. If so much as only one tenth of the sects objected to it, the project would immediately be suspended.

In comparison, every sect and every space town could decide whether or not to join the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project on their own. It could be implemented immediately as long as one tenth of the sects were willing to give it a try.

It was the greatest feature for such a piece of 'cloud magical equipment'.

Xiao Xuance glanced at the light beam and replied, "Many fellow Cultivators asked whether or not they could refine the Grand Illusionary Soldiers on their own.

"Allow me to repeat myself.

"The Grand Illusionary Soldier Project is a real non-profit project. The Grand Illusionary Group are pushing the project at a great cost and risk willingly!

"In fact, the productivity of the Grand Illusionary Group is limited. It is impossible for us to produce all the Grand Illusionary Soldiers!

"Therefore, we welcome all the Exos, refiners, and experts of crystal processors in the Flying Star Sector to contribute your wisdom to the research of more advanced models of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, as long as these models can be connected to the enormous database 'star brain' provided by the Grand Illusionary Group.

"If you want to purchase them from the Grand Illusionary Group, you can buy them at the price of the cost to help us cover the necessary cost of labor, transportation, and waste of materials. We will not be making any profit during the process!

"The Grand Illusionary Group will list all the costs in our monthly report. I guarantee that every cent of your money can be tracked clearly!"

Many Cultivators inside the meeting rooms were greatly interested.

"The Dragon Sea Sect has two mining bases in the Overly Blue Space Zone. The environment is too harsh for Cultivators to be stationed for long. We can buy five hundred Grand Illusionary Soldiers to defend the mining bases and the transportation routes!"

"The Red Heart Sect lost an elder in the Core Formation Stage and several core disciples in the Building Foundation Stage. Right now, our strength has plummeted. We don't have enough warriors to defend the twelve space towns under our protection. If the space pirates and the Immortal Cultivators assault us while we are weak and summon extraterrestrial devils in our space towns, the outcome will be terrible. We should buy a batch of Grand Illusionary Soldiers and increase our defense, too!"

"The Furious Flames Island has our own refining center. Although we are not capable of producing high-quality crystal suits, we have abundant experience in refining beast puppets. Right now, with slight modifications, we will be able to build a batch of soldier puppets whose cost is about the same as that of beast puppets. After they are connected to the 'star brain', the combat data of countless seasoned

Exos will be shared with them and enhance their combat ability exponentially! This is quite a fair deal. We're in!"

"The Green Feather Sect is in, too! Our mentor programs in the past decades did not go well. We have two experts in the Core Formation Stage in our sect and many Refinement Stage Cultivators, but we have few Building Foundation Stage Cultivators who are pillars of a sect.

"There are dozens of trading routes under the name of the Green Feather Sect. How can two Core Formation Stage Cultivators protect all of them? Because of the assaults of space pirates, our trading routes have been frequently targeted in the last year. The two Core Formation Stage Cultivators have continually been on the move and almost became mentally deranged. With the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, they can share the pressure of defense even if they cannot clear the enemy promptly and give the Core Formation Stage Cultivators of our sect a rest!"

"Indeed, the Flying Star Sector is too chaotic these days. Space pirates, extraterrestrial devils, Immortal Cultivators… All kinds of enemies have been showing up. After all, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers can be manufactured by ourselves. If we implement the project, we can not only boost domestic consumption, stimulate the economy, and increase jobs, but also increase the sense of safety for ordinary people and their confidence in Cultivators!"

"We're in! The seventeen sects of the Swooping Eagle Space Zone have agreed unanimously to join the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project!"

On the light beam of Xiao Xuance's crystal processor, the spots that represented different sects started blinking one after another.

"Everyone—"

Xiao Xuance pressed his hands and said, "Every piece of new magical equipment will be questioned and criticized when it is just born. Therefore, it is perfectly normal if any fellow Cultivators are still suspicious about the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project. I will not urge you to make any decision without full consideration!

"However, for those sects who are willing to join the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project but are in lack of funding, you can rest assured, too!

"I know that it's been a rough year for many sects because of the savaging space pirates. Everybody has been thrifty, and no one has money to spare.

"Therefore, under my advisement, all the banks under the names of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City have introduced a new program called 'Grand Illusionary Soldier Special Loan', which is financed by the six sects of Heavenly Saints City to support the middle and small sects that are going through difficulties.

"As long as it is confirmed that your sect was savaged by the space pirates multiple times over the past year and is short of capital, you can apply for a loan and bring a batch of Grand Illusionary Soldiers back first to solve any urgent issues. When your trading routes are peaceful again, you can pay the loan back slowly!"

The words raised a riot among the Cultivators from many sects, especially those in the remote towns.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

On the light beam, more and more light spots that represented 'In' were shining like gold scales.

Suddenly, Xiao Xuance's eyebrow raised high. Ecstasy beamed out of his eyes but was soon concealed.

"Everyone, allow me to tell you a piece of great news. Leader Si of the Star Fighters Alliance has agreed to join the Grand Illusionary Project, too!"

The light beam suddenly blinked, and an old man appeared next to Xiao Xuance.

It was Si Koulie, leader of the Star Fighters Alliance and a master in starship designs, who had confronted him in the very hall with the proposal to convert a planet into an invincible warship!

"Today, I still maintain that the 'Ice God Project' is a great project worthy of the resources of the entire Flying Star Sector and the endeavors of countless Cultivators!"

Expressionlessly, Si Koulie sighed. "However, the situation today has changed. The threats of the Immortal Cultivators are too imminent. We do not have several decades to build a planetary-level warship.

"Maybe, when everything is settled, we will still have chance to carry out the Ice God Project slowly.

"But right now, all the sects in the Star Fighters Alliance decided unanimously that the resources we planned to devote to the Ice God Project should be devoted to the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project in order to build an invincible legion and wage war on the Immortal Cultivators in the cruelest way!"

Si Koulie cut off the communication. His image gradually disappeared.

The somewhat depressed old man knew that the Grand Illusionary Soldiers were the most suitable magical equipment for the Flying Star Sector right now.

But with mixed feelings, he did not want to talk about it anymore.

Before his image vanished into darkness, more sects were shocked by the news and decided to join in.

"More than sixty percent of all the sects have decided to join the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project. Everybody, please bear today in mind, because it will be the most important day in the history of the Flying Star Sector!"

Xiao Xuance was so excited that he could not hold himself back any longer. He bellowed, "The Immortal Cultivators think that they can bend us with terror and slaughter!

"But they forget that human beings are the strongest fighting species in the sea of stars. We may die, but we will not be bent or scared!

"Today is the rebirth of humanity of the Flying Star Sector. From today on, the entire Flying Star Sector will be united. Everyone, Cultivators and ordinary people alike, will contribute all our wisdom, strength, sweat, and resources to establish a brand new era!"

Xiao Xuance glanced at a blinking picture on the bottom-left corner of his light beam.

It was a tall and strong middle-aged man who was grinning carefreely.

It was Xiao Tianyang, Xiao Xuance's deceased son, as well as the agent 'Apollo' who had snuck into the Temple of Immortals.

Deep, complicated brilliance beamed out of Xiao Xuance's long and narrow eyes. Tears suddenly flowed out, as he murmured to himself, "Ah Yang, your sacrifice will not be in vain.

"A new era has finally come. Our civilization has embarked on the true path. We will be greater, stronger, and more beautiful!"

Chapter 707: Undercurrents Everywhere

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Several hundred meters below the hall of the Millennium Meeting, in a room of crystal processors and light beams, humming noises and scorching air filled the area.

The room was dim. Xiao Xuance's determined face was on every light beam.

His roar was echoing inside the small room.

"New era… New era… New era… New era…"

Xiao Tianbao, 'star child' and Xiao Xuance's foster son, was like a mountain of meat standing in the center of the room. Almost ten big bowls were placed in front of him, in which various kinds of candies were packed.

Xiao Tianbao was grimacing. Every time he blinked, a piece of candy would slowly fly into the air into his mouth.

Crack. Crack.

Xiao Tianbao was eating the candies faster than other people ate a meal. While chewing the candies happily, he calculated the sum of resources that all the sects were willing to devote.

Complicated numbers were blinking rapidly in front of him, and his expression was one of extreme joy.

Around him, starry brilliance popped up like gold fireflies. Glamorous rays of light emanated from him and interconnected into a translucent structure, wreathing himself inside.

It was a golden brain, one that seemed to be made of billions of stars in the boundless cosmos.

Suddenly—

"Dad!"

Xiao Tianbao suddenly burst into tears because he had bitten his own tongue.

…

Three days later, at the edge of the Flying Star Sector, in an unknown place, the Black King was pacing anxiously like a black viper that had fallen into a trap. His bloodshot eyes hiding behind the black mask seemed as if they would spurt venom at any moment.

"It's been a month. You finally responded, Lotus King!"

Ripples spread out on the light beam before the Black King and gradually formed a phantom that was wearing a white robe.

The phantom was wearing a mask just like him, except that the mask was shaped like a blossoming lotus. Two long and narrow eyes that looked like sickles were exposed on the above of the mask.

The Lotus King chuckled. "What's all the fuss about? Haven't we made a deal?

"After the assault of Heavenly Saints City, the Cultivators were always going to be mad and would search for us with all their manpower.

"Long-distance communication across space zones has to be established on the Spiritual Nexus. There are many experts of crystal processors in the world of Cultivators, so it's possible that they will track us and lock onto us.

"Therefore, we agreed to not get in contact with each other in the one month after the attack. Why were you so desperate to contact me? Wasn't it a successful assault?"

The Black King gnashed his teeth. "Successful?"

"Of course," the Lotus King replied casually. "We tricked the Cultivators with the Mist Plan at first. Then, the extraterrestrial devils arrived in Heavenly Saints City, the heart of the Flying Star Sector, for the first time in the thousands of years. A lot of Core Formation Stage Cultivators and Building Foundation Stage Cultivators were slain. As for those in the Refinement Stage, there were too many to count.

"The operation was a major strike for the fame of Cultivators. We planted seeds of doubt and fear in the heart of countless Cultivators and ordinary people. Of course, it was a very successful mission!"

"But we've lost a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator!"

The Black King burst into fury and smashed the desk hard, as if he were trying to cross the space and smash the Lotus King's head into pieces, while he said, "We failed to reach out to Hellsword when we were retreating. There was no response when we sent messages to him through the dark net. In fact, there has been no response from him even to this day!

"In the meantime, Cultivators have confirmed that Sand Scorpion, the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, detonated the crystal reactor of a 'Fire Tyrant Battlesuit' at a close distance during the battle with Hellsword in hope of dying together with him.

"Right now, the world of Cultivators has gone crazy and regard Sand Scorpion as a great hero and a fearless warrior. It is said that statues of Sand Scorpion will be built in Heavenly Saints City, and that movies featuring him will soon be made!

"Damn. In such a case, they must be very confident about their conclusion."

The Lotus King observed calmly, "I've read the report myself, but they didn't find Hellsword's crystal suit and his body."

The Black King glared at him. "It's simple. Hellsword was heavily wounded during the explosion and was not able to retreat with us. He could only hide himself and treat his wounds first!

"But it's been more than a month. Even the most serious wounds should be partly recovered now!

"We agreed on a secret code. As long as he posted several absolutely normal threads on certain websites, we would know his situation immediately.

"But until now, there's been nothing!

"Then, the only possibility is that he was so heavily wounded that he died eventually after he fled from the battlefield!

"A Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. Nascent Soul Stage! Although at the beginning level, he was still a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator!

"Do you know how much time and effort I spent on him and how many benefits I promised him in order to recruit the lone wolf in the Nascent Soul Stage?

"But now, he has died an uncanny death, killed by a junior who was in the high level of the Core Formation Stage at best!"

The Lotus King was as calm as before. "Think about it positively. At least, he killed Sand Scorpion, too. Although Sand Scorpion's combat ability was in the Core Formation Stage at best, he was cruel and cunning, and he influenced enormous resources in space and on Iron Plateau. He should never be underestimated.

"In my mind, he was one of the top five troublemakers for our cause!

"Thankfully, he is dead now, with no ashes left whatsoever. I felt greatly relieved when I heard the news."

The Black King raise his voice. "What can Sand Scorpion's death help with anything? The real problem is that the Cultivators have initiated the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project ready to launch a counterattack!"

The Lotus King smiled. "Of course there is going to be counterattack. You didn't think that a visit of extraterrestrial devils could intimidate all the Cultivators and make them beg for mercy, did you?"

"I knew there would be counterattack, but I did not know that it was going to be so tricky, nor did I know that there would be such a thing as 'star brain' that could turn the puppets that were no better than scrap iron into reasonably good soldiers," the Black King replied gloomily. "If the Grand Illusionary Soldiers are stationed in every space zone and important trading route, the activities of the space pirates and us will face major problems.

"Over the past few days, I've even been wondering if we jumped out too early."

"Huh?"

The Lotus King's eyes turned narrower, longer, and sharper.

"Tactically speaking," the Black King said, "we secured one victory after another. We stagnated business, we ambushed towns, we assassinated Cultivators, and we even savaged Heavenly Saints City, the heart of the Flying Star Sector.

"However, the world of Cultivators is too large, and there are too many Cultivators. Maybe, we underestimated them. We exposed ourselves too early and infuriated them too early!

"Have we been too radical from a strategical point of view? Should we have kept hiding in the darkness for another several hundred years before we took any action?"

The Lotus King leaned forward, as if he was crawling out of the virtual light beam to the Black King's face. He asked coldly, one word after another, "Are you questioning our path?"

The Black King's body shook slightly before he burst into fury and yelled, "Of course not! The Immortal Cultivators are the only direction of mankind's evolution. I have never doubted that!"

"That's good." The Lotus King retreated and said, "Anyways, the battle of Heavenly Saints City has passed. For now, let's focus our attention on Spider Den. We must control the entirety of Spider Den and every space pirate!"

The Black King sniffed. "Control the entirety of Spider Den? The place is a total mess right now! Bai Xinghe is an out-and-out lunatic and does not know what is good for him at all. He refused the great path of immortality. The man is destined to be a bandit for the rest of his life!

"Now, Hellsword is dead, too!

"Before, of the three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, namely Hellsword, Fengyu Zhong, and Bai Xinghe, we had two under control.

"But Hellsword is dead. Fengyu Zhong is a newly-risen Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. Even though he is supported by us, it will be an arduous task for him to defeat Bai Xinghe, the seasoned Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator and the notorious, wealthy 'Pirate Potentate' who has dominated Spider Den for thirty years!"

"Spider Den is must more than a nest for space pirates," the Lotus King said. "It is of paramount importance for us and must be under our full control!

"Kill Bai Xinghe whatever the cost!"

…

Meanwhile, in a secret dock somewhere in the Cross Wind Space Zone, Sparkle had been upgraded yet another time.

The purpose of the modification was not to increase the firepower or the speed, but to increase the computational ability of the mainframe crystal processor.

Right now, the mainframe crystal processor of Sparkle was even more advanced and sophisticated than that of the super space towns that could accommodate millions of people.

On the bridge, the shells of the five spectral Cultivators were standing aside, while their real entities, which were the mustard-seed level liquid metals, were rolling on the ground.

That was their favorite form.

"They found the scraps of Li Yao's crystal suit and concluded that Li Yao died after detonating his own crystal suit."

"However, it was not the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit but a Fire Tyrant Battlesuit that Li Yao modified himself."

"If Li Yao was truly at his wit's end, he would have been wearing the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. Even if he detonated himself, it should have been the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit that has exploded!"

"So, Li Yao is not dead yet. Not dead. Hahahaha!"

Four clusters of liquid metals were twisting on the ground excitedly.

"Everyone!"

The largest cluster of liquid metal extended two hands that looked like sprouts and clapped them.

Mo Xuan said solemnly, "Right now, the speculations of Li Yao and me before the event have become reality one after another. Cultivators have indeed initiated the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project.

"Whatever secret motives are behind the project, we must take action immediately!

"The Immortal Cultivators are absolutely inhuman. Their creed is the opposite of ours.

"Besides, they have a deep grudge with Li Yao.

"If the Immortal Cultivators have the Flying Star Sector under their control, ordinary people will certainly be butchered, and we will be mired in trouble, too. There will be no telling when we can go back home.

"Therefore, from the perspectives of both ideology and personal interest, we must fight against the Immortal Cultivators until the end!

"In three days' time, the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project will open the original data and source code of the 'star brain'. That will be our best shot.

"I hereby announce that the 'Brain Concussion Plan' is officially activated!

"One day, Li Yao will be back. I hope that we can give him our full support when he is here!"

Chapter 708: Reborn in a Labyrinth

Chapter 708: Reborn in a Labyrinth

In the depths of the Flying Star Sector, through more than ten fatal stone belts and areas where cosmic storms were active, somewhere near the Spider Den Space Zone, a fat 'black-behemoth' level carrier was avoiding the meteoroids at an amazing speed while flying toward Spider Den along a secret route.

The black-behemoth-level carrier was one of the thousand starships that had fled out of the tenth space ring of Heavenly Saints City a month ago.

Developed more than 180 years ago, the black-behemoth-level carrier was an old model. Since they were simple in structure and sturdy, many such carriers were purchased by dealers of second-hand starships when they were declared total losses, before they were repaired, modified, and sold again.

Many black-behemoth-level carriers were sold and resold almost ten times. After multiple times of modification, they often looked entirely different from what they were supposed to be.

That was exactly the case for this black-behemoth-level carrier.

In the space port of Heavenly Saints City, it was registered under a perfectly legal identity and claimed to be from a remote space town of a remote space zone.

There were few Cultivators in the space town. Most of the folks there were bumpkins who never went to cities.

All the files and data were real. If the Cultivators of Heavenly Saints City really went to the edge of the Flying Star Sector where the starship was registered, a bunch of farmers there would stand out and admit that they did own such a starship.

But in fact, the black-behemoth-level carrier belonged to the space pirates.

Hiding behind the plate armor that was full of patches were the deadliest crystal cannons and the most advanced, vigorous, and fastest power rune arrays.

After fleeing out of Heavenly Saints City, the starship returned to the remote space zone where it was registered after seven space jumps. Then, it hid itself on the back of a desolate planet for ten days to make sure that it had no followers before it performed another space jump and left the place.

During the twenty days after that, it had been cruising along a secret sailing route that only the space pirates knew.

Today, the carrier had finally reached the periphery of the Spider Den Space Zone.

The black-behemoth-level carrier, which had undergone tremendous modifications, boasted enormous power rune arrays that were disproportionate to its size. It had eighteen main power rune arrays, each of which was ten meters in diameter.

Other than them, there were more than five hundred ancillary power rune arrays to help the giant object move more swiftly.

Such an enormous group of rune arrays was stuffed into a carrier that was not designed to be so fast. Naturally, a complicated heat-emitting system was mandatory.

The black-behemoth-level carrier was installed with an air cooling system. A circle of cooling tubes that looked like a labyrinth surrounded the engine compartment and took up five times more space than the engine itself did.

As different power rune arrays functioned or halted, the tubes would spurt burning air currents hundreds of degrees high one moment and then freeze into a frigid hell of minus a hundred degrees the next moment. It was truly the roughest place in the world.

It appeared that no creature could survive in such a cruel world.

Right now, it was 4:33 p.m. in the standard time of the Flying Star Sector.

Li Yao turned off the refreshing music in his crystal processor and stretched his arms comfortably in the frost of one of the cooling tubes.

He sensed that the No.12 main power rune array in the engine compartment below him was functioning at 75% of its capacity.

It meant that the cooling tube he was hiding in would be filled with scorching air of 2,400 degrees in 13.3 seconds.

Besides, the air currents contained very corrosive components, which consisted of the waste gas from when the cooling liquids that the rune arrays employed were vaporized.

Even with the protection of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, he would not be able to last for half an hour in such a high temperature and such fatal venomous gas.

On the other hand, the No.7 and No.8 power rune arrays on his right side had just spurted rapidly for acceleration.

According to the pattern that he discovered over the past month, the two power rune arrays would rest for at least an hour and function at only 30% of their capacity.

It meant that, as long as he passed the intersection 37 meters behind him in ten seconds and changed his position, he would be granted with at least another 49 minutes of peace.

Of course, that was only if the carrier did not run into any accident.

Li Yao still felt scared as he remembered the scene three days ago when the carrier was in a cosmic storm.

At that time, all the power rune arrays had been activated to the maximum. Sweltering venomous gas had raged inside the cooling tubes without any pattern.

He could only improve the activity of all the cells on his body to their maximum while holding back the excruciating pain of his bottom being roasted. He rushed among the cooling tubes and searched for a chance of survival in the deadly flames.

Compared to the adventure three days ago, the heat right now that was licking his face was merely a cool breeze during an autumn dusk.

Before the entire cooling liquid was consumed by fire, Li Yao turned into a streak of blackness and zigzagged to a new area that was temporarily safe.

"Hehe."

Sensing that burning air currents had rushed past him as if they were doing him a massage, Li Yao felt that his every cell stretched out like unfolding tea leaves that were put into hot water. He could not help but smile.

He had been lurking for a month in the cooling tubes of the carrier.

Over the past month, he would move in the cooling liquids every hour to dodge the hot stream and venomous gas in order to look for new place of survival.

Sometimes, he had to sprint every few minutes and search for the small area that was safe when 99% of the cooling tubes were filled with flames.

However, for some reason, struggling in such a harsh environment made Li Yao feel cheerier than when he was living a peaceful, carefree life in Flying Star University.

The peaceful life in Flying Star University was good, but it was short of something.

Maybe, he was born to live such a life, a life of walking beside a bottomless abyss and seeking safety amid peril.

"I'm alive again," Li Yao mumbled and took a long breath.

The air was smelly despite the multiple filters of the crystal suit, but it was no less intoxicating for him. With a fascinated expression, he repeated, "I'm alive again!"

Swoosh!

Li Yao crouched and turned into a black ball lightning, flashing inside the narrow cooling tubes. Now and then, he would draw a deadly curve with the tip of his left foot!

The sword art he had been practicing was different from his saber arts. It was more sordid and mysterious, like a viper without bones.

It was 'Hellsword Arts', the ultimate skill of 'Hellsword', a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator!

Spider Den was home to all the unparalleled brutal bandits of the Flying Star Sector. It was much more perilous than Iron Plateau.

Since Li Yao was sneaking into Spider Den alone, he had to increase his capability as much as he could.

'Hellsword Arts' was originally a kicking skill, but Hellsword had added elements of mental attacks to it and transformed it into a deadly sword art. It was quite complicated and had a lot of variations. Naturally, it was impossible for Li Yao to grasp all of it within one month.

However, Li Yao had a great advantage. His soul power was very strong because his brain had been blasted and cleansed by Ou Yezi.

Before, he had never practiced any mental attack skills and merely solidified his soul for defense.

But a lot of tricks of mental attacks were recorded in the 'Hellsword Arts', as well as the techniques to build illusions and affect the enemy's senses with one's mental power.

After a month of wholehearted study, he had learned a thing or two about their usage.

In regard to mental attack, everybody's approach was different. Hellsword was best at picturing gloomy, terrifying ghosts, but Li Yao did not have to be the same.

Hiu!

Li Yao's left foot kicked forward together with a flash of a dagger. In the meantime, he pictured a horrendous image in his mind, before he compressed the picture into a ball the size of a bean with his soul and batted it out with his mental power!

Bo!

The ball exploded in midair, unfolding the picture that was an enormous, furiously-burning furnace.

Inside the crystal reactor, the wind was blowing, and the flames were roaring!

If the enemy was hit by Li Yao's mental attack, they would feel as if they had been placed in a gargantuan furnace being cooked in a temperature of thousands of degrees.

With no entrances or exits, they could only be heated to death. Such an illusion was as intimidating as the illusion of ghosts built by Hellsword.

So much as the enemy was dazed for a moment, Li Yao could come close and cut into their throat!

"The assets that I brought have mostly run out, especially clean water. Thankfully, I'll be arriving at Spider Den shortly. There's no need to look for water now.

"In the battle of Heavenly Saints City, I used up all my crystal bombs and materials for magical equipment. I looted some materials from Hellsword's Cosmos Rings, but they do not meet my needs right now.

"It is great that I stored the Star Basher and the Divine Anvil inside my Cosmos Ring and carried them with me earlier. With enough materials, I will be able to build a batch of desirable magical equipment on my own!

"It's not difficult to sneak into Spider Den. The tricky problem is how to approach the heads of the space pirates so that I can investigate the secrets of the Temple of Immortals."

Li Yao opened 'Stormy Sword', Fengyu Zhong's notebook, on his crystal processor and started reading carefully.

The notebook recorded Fengyu Zhong's lifelong expertise. It was an extremely thorough tutorial for robbery that he had prepared for his only son, Fengyu Ming.

Other than the hunting methods, 'Stormy Sword' also recorded a lot of rules, anecdotes, and analysis of the major forces on Spider Den. It even listed the most ferocious and cunning bandits on Spider Den and rated them according to how dangerous they were.

Those people were all brutal bandits that Fengyu Zhong would rather his son not mess around with.

After slaying Fengyu Ming, Li Yao had looted the Space Pirate 101 from him. At that time, he had no idea that the book would prove to be so useful later.

Chapter 709: Rules of Darkness

Chapter 709: Rules of Darkness

Normal people would think that, since space pirates committed all kinds of crimes, Spider Den, their home camp, must be a chaotic and lawless place.

However, according to Fengyu Zhong's notes, that was far from the truth.

Although countless brutal bandits were gathered on Spider Den, a set of effective rules of darkness had been established after thousands of years of cruel competition.

Restricted by the rules, few open fights had ever broken out on Spider Den, although competitions in secret were not uncommon. At first glance, Spider Den was a peaceful and ordered place.

But it was quite understandable on second thought. Since so many lawless, ferocious space pirates gathered in the same place, if they were not restricted by a set of unquestionable rules, they would have attacked each other until all the other people died and turned Spider Den into a mess. It would have been impossible for them to go out and rob other starships at all.

Li Yao heard that many seasoned bandits allowed their subordinates to do all kinds of cruel things during their operations. However, when they were back to their nest, or even the villages near the nest, they would abide by strict rules and forbid their subordinates from even touching the belongings of the villagers.

As the saying went, the fox preys farthest from his hole. It was not because of their sense of justice but a necessity for their survival.

It was exactly the same for Spider Den. Under the tough rules of darkness, the space pirates were divided into three classes.

The bottom class, as well as the class that boasted the largest number, was made of people who could barely be called space pirates.

They were the reserves of the space pirates.

Some of them were fighters and Cultivators who committed felonies such as murder or robbery and violated the laws of their space zones. They had nowhere to run to except Spider Den.

Some of them were the victims who had been kidnapped and brought back to Spider Den after all of their belongs had been looted by space pirates. Having no other options, they turned from victims into persecutors.

Some of them were the offspring of the space pirates on Spider Den over the past hundreds of years.

Living in such an environment, they learned nothing other than the arts of robbery. After they grew up, they often had no alternatives except to walk on the path of darkness, too.

Those people were in the bottom of the food chain of Spider Den.

They had to prove their capability in places such as underground arenas in order to be hired by a certain pirate gang.

After all, all the space pirates were risking their lives when they were doing their job. Even if the newcomers were not real experts, they had to prove themselves to be brutal and fearless of death in order to participate in the hunting game.

After they were picked, they were still not counted as real members of the pirate gang. The pirate gang was merely taking them to loot the lambs together.

Most of the trophies belonged to the pirate gang that took them for the mission. It was considered the ticket fee for keeping them aboard.

It was the unspoken rule of Spider Den.

There were no other ways. Without a starship, even a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator would barely loot any victims in space.

After a few life-and-death battles, the survivors of the newcomers would become official members of the pirate gang.

Then, some of the trophies would be allocated to them, and they could exchange them for more advanced Cultivation arts and techniques on the black market.

For the people in the bottom class, it was sort of the starting line of their career.

But there were some weirdoes among them who went on their own when they had the chance to join a pirate gang.

They would board other space pirates' starships but not work together with them.

Such people were the lone wolves among space pirates. 'Hellsword' Zhuang Ziyou was one of the best of them.

However, most people still preferred to join a pirate gang. They would then be in the middle class of the space pirates and become real bandits.

Real space pirates and reserve space pirates differed in whether or not they had their own starships.

With a starship, they could perform free hunting and would be the owner of most of their trophies. It was vastly different from the shrimps of the bottom class.

But these bandits were still not at the top of the food chain of Spider Den. Above their heads were the real dominators of space pirates.

Space pirates came and went like the wind, their paths unpredictable. They were only limited by two factors.

Firstly, supply bases, where they could repair and modify their starships, refill their fuel, and purchase new crystal suits.

Secondly, intelligence and money-laundering network, or in other words, large-scale black markets. It would be better if extravagant places for entertainment were in such places where they could forget the risk of everyday life in cold, dark space.

Both factors could be found on Spider Den. They were controlled by the real dominators of the space pirates!

Take 'Pirate Potentate' Bai Xinghe for example. Under his control, he had forty percent of the docks on Spider Den, almost ten crystal suit centers, and a secret arsenal allegedly left by the Star Ocean Imperium.

Although most of the magical equipment in the arsenal was now debris, some of the units were still functional and could boost the performance of modern magical equipment when they were activated!

If the starship of a space pirate was damaged, they had to repair it in the docks that belonged to Bai Xinghe in most cases because some of the maintenance facilities could not be found anywhere else.

Naturally, Bai Xinghe could ask for whatever price he wanted. After he earned a huge amount of money from the brutal bandits, the bandits could only swallow their anger and express their gratitude.

That was the real space pirate of the space pirates and the king on Spider Den.

The three classes were clearly divided. The bottom class did not have their starships. The middle class had their starships but could not maintain or supply them. The top class had starships and could maintain, modify, and refine crystal suits on their own, to the point that they were almost an army.

There were nine such dominators who boasted their own docks and crystal suit centers on Spider Den. They formed an organization named 'Nine Dragons Union' to enforce the rules of darkness.

The rules were simple. Everybody was free to do whatever they wanted on Spider Den. Assassination, robbery, betrayal, massacre… Anything they wanted could be done.

But no matter what they did, no evidence was to be left behind.

Without evidence, even if all of Spider Den knew that a certain massacre was done by a certain space pirate, nobody would bother about it.

On the contrary, they would praise the space pirate for their marvelous skills in secret.

However, if the victims luckily survived the accidents and brought undeniable proof with them, then the nine biggest pirate gangs would say sorry and eliminate the unfortunate criminal.

It was not because of the crime he committed, but because he was idiotic enough to leave an eyewitness after the crime.

Restricted by such rules, the dark society of Spider Den had functioned smoothly for a thousand years even though countless brutal bandits were gathered in the place.

Over the past thirty years, the leader of the Nine Dragons Union had always been 'Pirate Potentate' Bai Xinghe.

It was not the first time that Li Yao had seen the name 'Bai Xinghe'.

In the entire 'Stormy Sword', the name appeared 136 times.

In most paragraphs where 'Bai Xinghe' was mentioned, Fengyu Zhong wrote with a tone mixed with hatred, jealousy, fear, and respect.

At the end of the notebook, Fengyu Zhong even specially wrote a biography for Bai Xinghe and recorded his marvelous rise on Spider Den, hoping to set a role model for his son.

In the biography, Fengyu Zhong even mentioned 'Yan Xinjian', the legendary ancestor of space pirates five hundred years ago!

In the history of the Flying Star Sector, Yan Xinjian was a rarely-seen capable man.

He had originally been the elder of the Heaven Wolves Fortress, one of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, and the vice commander of the joint fleet of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City.

His boss and his wife were both disciples of the Silver Moon Clan and were involved in a relationship.

After learning of the matter, Yan Xinjian made thorough plans without alarming everyone. He butchered his wife, his boss, and every other member of his boss's family before he joined Spider Den with a bunch of loyal followers and became one of the most troublesome bandits in the world.

Five hundred years ago, the Flying Star Sector was short of anything but heroes. The Cultivators formed a super fleet of almost a thousand starships, hoping to take over Spider Den and annihilate all the space pirates.

When the fleet drew close, all the space pirates panicked. It was Yan Xinjian who organized the mobs who were essentially loose sand and waged a war against Cultivators for several years until a cosmic storm destroyed a lot of the starships on the Cultivators' side. The assault was thereby aborted, and the myth that 'Spider Den is never to be breached from the front' was left.

From then on, Yan Xinjian was respected as the emperor of all space pirates. It was even said that he boasted the technique of summoning cosmic storms.

Aside from his personality and integrity, in regard to Cultivation and capability in administration, Yan Xinjian was definitely one of the most distinguished people in the thousands of years of history of the Flying Star Sector.

Fengyu Zhong did not go so far as to compare Bai Xinghe to such a legendary person, but it was evident enough that he thought very highly of Bai Xinghe.

Bai Xinghe's rise was another shocking story.

He was not a native of Spider Den. It was said that, when he was seven, the starship he boarded on was engaged in a cosmic storm. He was discovered by space pirates and sold to Spider Den, only to become a 'treasure hunter' later.

'Treasure hunter' sounded like a cool title, but it actually entailed endless sweat and blood.

Spider Den was a planet of resources and industry in the days of the Star Ocean Imperium. Although most of the resources were drained during the civil war, a lot of secret treasures and facilities were still left behind.

It was said that, at the end of the war, to deal with the enemy, the whole of Spider Den was hollowed, and an extremely complicated underground labyrinth was built.

The underground labyrinth was a fortress whose size was unimaginable. Countless arsenals and shelters were built inside, and tremendous invaluable secret treasures as well as unbelievable Cultivation arts, techniques, and training facilities were hidden.

With the technology of the Flying Star Sector nowadays, the space pirates never went deeper than two hundred meters, a far distance away from the center of the underground labyrinth, even though they'd been working for a thousand years.

Traps, secret tunnels, and automatic defensive magical equipment had been deployed in the deeper parts of the labyrinth so that the guards could continue the fight after they retreated into the fortress when the enemy invaded.

The space pirates wanted to excavate the arsenals, magical equipment, and techniques and did not want to be hurt by the traps. Therefore, they would hire 'treasure hunters' to explore the underground.

Sometimes, when nobody answered their call, they would buy slaves for the mission.

They were more like suicide missions than treasure-hunting missions. The death rate was shockingly high. The treasure hunters were essentially experimental mice.

It was said that Bai Xinghe had the ability to soften his bones. Also, since he was only seven years old, his body size was small, allowing him to crawl into tunnels no larger than mouseholes. He was the best treasure hunter.

For five years, he worked as a treasure hunter. He crawled below the ground of Spider Den and narrowly escaped death countless times, as if he were blessed by a deity.

In the end, the space pirates who owned him were amazed and moved him out of the dark place. He was promoted to be an official space pirate from a dead-for-sure treasure hunter.

It was said that many space pirates believed that he had unbelievable luck, and that if they kept him on board, their starships would not be blown up by Cultivators.

Chapter 710: Man of the Time

Chapter 710: Man of the Time

Bai Xinghe was recruited to a starship when he was eleven. Talented as he might have been, he was merely an ordinary person and could only serve as a sailor.

Maybe the deities were indeed watching over him. His luck continued, and he survived the fierce battles one time after another. His experience in fighting grew more and more abundant. He became stronger and stronger.

When he was fourteen, his spiritual root was awakened, and he became a Cultivator.

Then, his life was unstoppable like a flooding river.

At first, nearly at the cost of his own life, he rescued the leader of the pirate gang who bought him and pushed him into the abyss of Spider Den. He gradually won the leader's trust and became his right-hand man.

Then, he conspired with a bigger pirate gang and buried the leader once and for all in a perfect betrayal.

However, he did not take the opportunity to take over the pirate gang. Instead, he joined the bigger pirate gang together with the pirate gang he used to be in.

Several years later, the leader of the bigger pirate gang died abruptly.

What was weirder was that Bai Xinghe, who had only begun his career a few years earlier and had no expertise or connections, was appointed as the new leader of the pirate gang.

Everybody agreed to the decision unanimously, except for the dozens of dead people whose throats were cut in the night.

In the decades that followed, there was a series of schemes, treacheries, massacres, alliances, and betrayals.

Bai Xinghe, the orphan who survived the cosmic storm and the treasure hunter who struggled to survive in the underground abyss of Spider Den, grasped one starship after another, and then crystal suit centers, and then docks.

In the end, the 'Abyss Pirate Gang', governed by him, became the strongest pirate gang on Spider Den, and he personally gained control over the largest number of docks and crystal suit centers, thereby known as the well-deserved 'Pirate Potentate'!

During the decades of his rise, even the most ferocious space pirates would cry when they heard his name. The destruction of countless pirate gangs seemed to be related to him, but every operation had been clean without any traces. Therefore, the guardians of the rules of darkness could do nothing about it.

However, when he became the Pirate Potentate, he suddenly turned into the most loyal enforcer of the rules of darkness and started talking about 'traditions' with everybody.

He collected the evidence of the pirate gang's previous crimes diligently and revealed it in public in the meetings of the Nine Dragons Union. Then, he struck the pirate gangs under the name of the Nine Dragons Union and took over their assets and manpower matter-of-factly. His forces further expanded.

As a result, not only was Bai Xinghe's personal strength getting higher and higher, other space pirates also became dutiful and obedient, intimidated by him.

It was not exaggerating to say that the recent decades were the golden era for Spider Den, when the society was most stable, and the crimes were fewest.

With so many docks and crystal suit centers, it had been a long time since the Abyss Pirate Gang went looting personally. They could lord over other pirate gangs and absorb blood from them.

It was one of the benefits of staying at the top of the food chain.

Even Fengyu Zhong, the old, cunning fox, is so wary of Bai Xinghe. It seems that he is not going to be easy to deal with.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao meant to scratch his hair, only to touch his solid helmet. He then realized that he had been the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit all the time over the past month and had not taken it off other than when he was refilling spiritual energy.

Other than the information, Fengyu Zhong also recorded a very interesting anecdote.

It was a secret about Bai Xinghe's rise.

Even in a place where personal ability was valued and familial background was overlooked such as Spider Den, Bai Xinghe was still a living legend to have risen from a rat-like treasure hunter into the greatest king of space pirates in only a hundred years.

When people analyzed Bai Xinghe's skyrocketing rise, they found that he was always able to take out a huge amount of powerful magical equipment.

Then, word on the street was that Bai Xinghe had a 'Spider Key' in his possession.

The underground of Spider Den was a complicated fortress. Such a fortress naturally had a control center, a map, and a key to turn off all the traps.

Over the past thousand years, no space pirate had been able to locate the control center or the key.

Many space pirates suspected that Bai Xinghe had crawled into certain secret tunnels and found the center of the underground fortress with the help of his tiny body size during his early years when he was still a treasure hunter. He must have retrieved a detailed map and a key to enter every room of the underground fortress!

In such a case, the arsenals, magical equipment, and techniques buried for ten thousand years were naturally all his!

With such extensive resources, and also because he was an unparalleled genius himself, it was only reasonable that Bai Xinghe became the dominator of Spider Den!

When the rumor was out, all the space pirates were grasped by jealousy. Some planned to steal, and some planned to rob. Seven pirate gangs joined hands, hoping to annihilate the Abyss Pirate Gang and take the Spider Key.

In the end, Bai Xinghe destroyed all the seven pirate gangs and swallowed them instead!

Then, it was said that the Spider Key did not exist and that it was a false message released by Bai Xinghe's opponent so that everybody would turn against him.

But a more terrifying theory was that, although the Spider Key did not exist, it was Bai Xinghe who released the false message. His purpose was to lure other pirate gangs into attacking him so that he could launch a counterattack justifiably. In such a case, he would still be abiding by the rules of darkness on Spider Den and swallowing other pirate gangs to expand his forces at the same time.

After the seven pirate gangs were exterminated by Bai Xinghe, no more space pirates dared to mess around with him anymore.

Another point of interest was that Bai Xinghe, the Pirate Potentate, had a weird sense of humor.

He had truly refined a giant pendant that both looked like a spider and like a key and put it on his neck, showing it to everybody. The pendent was waving in front of chest wherever he went.

But no space pirates ever dared to ask him whether or not it was the Spider Key that could control the entire underground fortress of Spider Den and the countless kinds of magical equipment, techniques, and arsenals inside!

For a space pirate, his achievements could not be more remarkable.

Li Yao turned off his crystal processor and inwardly sighed.

On his journey to Spider Den, he would be faced with both Fengyu Zhong, an old, cunning fox who was now in the Nascent Soul Stage, and Bai Xinghe, the most distinguished space pirate alive.

If Hellsword was not lying, the real Black King should be at least in the Nascent Soul Stage, too.

Three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. And that was not counting the other experts of the Temple of Immortals such as the Lotus King.

For a moment, Li Yao had the urge to go back home immediately.

This trip to Spider Den will be different from my visit to Iron Plateau. I must change my style and focus more on investigation without alarming anyone. I should not fight unless it is absolutely necessary. I must keep a low profile! Otherwise, if three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators are angered by me, the outcome won't be good!

Li Yao scratched the iron skull of the crystal suit and pondered. The carrier has cruised in the sea of stars for more than a month and crossed multiple stone belts. Many parts on the carrier have been damaged. When it arrives in Spider Den, it will certainly be examined in a certain dock. At that time, I will sneak out and hang around with the reserve space pirates in the bottom class who are waiting to be employed.

The questions remains, how am I going to approach the leadership of Spider Den?

While Li Yao was thinking hard, the cooling tubes all started shivering slightly.

Li Yao was dazed. He leaned against the wall of the tube and heightened the sensitivity of his soundwave reception rune array to the maximum, only to hear earsplitting roars from every direction.

Not good!

Li Yao's pupils constricted violently. Again!

There was no telling what accident the carrier had run into, but it was zigzagging and performing the craziest dodging movements.

In such a state, all the power rune arrays were fully activated. Naturally, the hot stream inside the cooling tubes was disordered and lost all patterns!

BOOM!

In the next moment, Li Yao was blown away by a cluster of air more than two thousand degrees high and extremely corrosive!

The crystal processor of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was buzzing crazily. The damaged part on the breastplate, which had temporarily been repaired by materials from the Black Horn Battlesuit, was ripped open again. Endless flames leaked into his crystal suit through the holes. He felt that he was slashed in the chest again!

I'm going to die!

Li Yao ran forward crazily and improved his senses to the limits, looking for a shelter in the labyrinth of cooling tubes.

However, the fully-functioning power rune arrays were even more fierce than three days ago when the carrier was caught by a cosmic storm. Of all the cooling tubes, there was not one whose temperature was low enough for him to stay in briefly.

What's happening? Another cosmic storm?

It can't be! We're already in Spider Den Space Zone, and they are travelling in the sailing route that they are most familiar with. It's not likely that they are unfortunate enough to run into such a large-scale cosmic storm. Or are they?

The alarms on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit were louder and louder. In his anxiety and finding that he had nowhere to run to, Li Yao gritted his teeth and blew up part of the cooling tube, crawling out!

He appeared in the maintenance room next to the engine compartment. It was empty for now.

However, dangerous red lights were blinking on the wall of the cabin.

Broadcast rune arrays were sending out hasty alarms, too.

Li Yao had chosen the starship to lurk in after full deliberation. He had examined the few starships he found and selected the most ragged-looking one.

According to the plan on Hellsword's crystal processor, there were no important people of the Temple of Immortals on this starship. It was merely transporting the trivial assets and low-level Immortal Cultivators.

The journey was very long. Li Yao did not intend to stay on the same starship with dangerous people such as the Black King for a month.

Even so, he could not be too careful.

Looking around, Li Yao removed the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and put on a mechanic's uniform after picking one from the closet of the room.

At this moment, the carrier was shaking more and more violently, like a lonely boat at the mercy of the surging ocean, one that had a giant hole on the bottom.

Li Yao's head almost crashed into the ceiling several times.

Sticking his ear to the cabin door, Li Yao listened carefully for a while. When he was sure that there was only one person's footsteps, Li Yao opened the door suddenly.

"What—what has happened?" Li Yao stammered, pretending to panic.

There was indeed only one space pirate in the pathway who hadn't got the opportunity to put on his crystal suit. His face was even paler than that of a dead person, as he shrieked, "Bo—Boss Bai is here!"

Chapter 711: Two Tigers on One Mountain

Chapter 711: Two Tigers on One Mountain

Li Yao was dumbfounded.

Theoretically speaking, the leader of any pirate gang could be addressed as 'Boss Bai' as long as their surname was Bai.

However, over the past few decades, there had been only one Boss Bai on Spider Den. None of the other space pirates dared to call themselves 'Boss Bai'. They did not even have the courage to call themselves 'Brother Bai'.

Li Yao did not expect that Bai Xinghe, whose legendary life had left a deep impression on him a moment ago, would attack the carrier he was on so quickly.

Confused, Li Yao blurted out, "Isn't Boss Bai on our side? We are all working for the Temple of Immortals. Why is he assaulting us?"

It was not unusual for space pirates to attack each other when they encountered in the space. But it mostly happened when a pirate gang had just finished a job and their trophies attracted other pirates' attention.

The carrier Li Yao snuck in, on the other hand, was commanded by the Temple of Immortals and had just finished the assault on Heavenly Saints City. It had been cruising in stealth mode and had not robbed anybody. Naturally, there were no valuable goods on the starship.

What was wrong with Bai Xinghe? Why did he do such a thing so close to Spider Den, everybody's home camp?

Li Yao thought that the question he raised was perfectly reasonable. But the panicked space pirate grew suspicious the moment he heard the question. He eyed Li Yao up and down and asked, "Who are you?"

Li Yao frowned. He had been seen through.

Li Yao sighed. Spiritual energy surged out of his body and condensed into an invisible giant hand, which grabbed the space pirate's throat and raised him into the air.

The space pirate was quite weak. Now that he was choked by the hand, his face immediately turned black, and his eyeballs were rolling crazily. However, he could not scream or cry for help.

Li Yao dragged him back to the maintenance room and threw him to the ground heavily.

After a click, Li Yao locked the door with his spiritual energy, and he eyed the man coldly. He did not release his throat until he was almost in a state of shock.

The space pirate squirmed and coughed loudly like a half-dead lobster.

Li Yao extended one of his fingers. Invisible spiritual energy turned into a sharp cone on his fingertip and poked the man's chest softly, as he asked, "I will ask questions, and you will answer them. If you tell the truth, I will spare your life."

The space pirate was quite a quick-minded guy. Feeling the throbbing pain on his chest, he knew that his kidnapper was not someone he could deal with. He quickly nodded and said, "Don't kill me. Whatever you want to know, senior, I will tell anything!"

"The situation was quite a mess when the starship left Heavenly Saints City," Li Yao said. "Other than members of the Tiger Teeth Pirate Gang, some of the space pirates from several other gangs were evacuated to this starship, too.

"It's impossible that you know the hundreds of space pirates. Why did you grow suspicious about me? Is there anything wrong with the question I asked?"

The space pirate breathed heavily for a while and felt like crying. "Everybody on Spider Den knows that Boss Bai and Fengyu Zhong, who only rose to fame recently, do not see eye to eye with each other.

"Two tigers cannot live on the same mountain, and two kings cannot rule Spider Den at the same time.

"Before, 'Hellsword' Zhuang Ziyou, the other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator on Spider Den, had many conflicts with Boss Bai, too. They reached a deal in the end. Hellsword would be a lone wolf and never establish his own pirate gang. In return, Boss Bai would provide a huge number of resources for Hellsword every year.

"With such a deal in place, the two space pirates in the Nascent Soul Stage were at peace again.

"But it is different for Fengyu Zhong. He has always been ambitious, and now with the support of the Temple of Immortals, he has swallowed quite a few pirate gangs over the past year. His strength is ten times higher than before. Naturally, clashes between Boss Bai and him are inevitable.

"Although the two of them had not begun fighting yet when we left Spider Den, it was perfectly normal for them to lose patience and decide to attack the other party. Therefore, it is quite abnormal that you were so surprised.

"Your second question is even more weird."

Li Yao raised his eyebrow. "I said everybody was working for the Temple of Immortals. Isn't it so?"

"Of course not." The space pirate smiled miserably. "Everybody on Spider Den knows that other people work for Boss Bai. Boss Bai does not work for anybody."

Li Yao was dazed. He pondered for a moment and realized that he had been wrong about something all the time.

From the moment he first came into contact with the Immortal Cultivators, space pirates had been their accomplices. Fengyu Zhong was personally involved in the Immortal Cultivators' first scheme and was a loyal dog for them.

In the battle of Heavenly Saints City, a lot of space pirates had participated and helped with the transportation.

Therefore, Li Yao had the impression that all the space pirates were partners of the Immortal Cultivators.

But it appeared now that space pirates and Immortal Cultivators were not necessarily on the same boat.

At the very least, Bai Xinghe, the 'Pirate Potentate', did not seem to be a guy willing to bow to somebody else, according to his life experience.

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao asked, "Is Boss Bai in a bad relationship with the Temple of Immortals? What are their conflicts?"

The space pirate replied helplessly, "What can the pawns such as us know about the specific conflicts? But over the past year, there have indeed been a number of rumors saying that Boss Bai does not like the Immortal Cultivators of the Temple of Immortals, who jumped out of nowhere."

Li Yao was going to ask the reason, but he swallowed the question and realized that he was being silly.

An emperor would not allow somebody else to covet his empire. Who was Bai Xinghe? He was the underground emperor of Spider Den!

As the Pirate Potentate, Bai Xinghe suddenly discovered that an enormous organization was lurking right under his nose. It had ill intentions and concocted various evil plans.

Li Yao felt that it was alarming enough if he were Bai Xinghe.

"Didn't the Temple of Immortals try to buy over Boss Bai?" Li Yao asked.

The space pirate quickly replied, "Maybe. But Boss Bai buys other people. How can anybody buy Boss Bai? In short, over the past year, Boss Bai has not thought highly of many things that the Temple of Immortals did. It is said that they had conflicts in secret many times. The Temple of Immortals' full support for Fengyu Zhong had a lot to do with those conflicts, too."

Li Yao pondered for a moment and thought everything through.

For such a distinguished man as Bai Xinghe, it was extremely difficult to buy him. The price would be very high, and even if he was bought, it would be hard to manipulate him. Nobody could anticipate if he would swallow the Temple of Immortals instead.

Therefore, the Temple of Immortals decided to bring up their own 'Pirate Potentate'.

In the past, Fengyu Zhong was also a well-known brutal bandit in the circle of space pirates. But he did not have his own docks or crystal suit centers. In other words, he was only among the best ones in the middle class of space pirates.

Such people were the most ambitions and the easiest to buy over. As long as he was promised Bai Xinghe's position as the new ruler of space pirates when the endeavors succeeded, he would be the most loyal warrior for the Temple of Immortals and do what he was ordered to wholeheartedly.

Naturally, it hurt the interests of Bai Xinghe, the incumbent 'Pirate Potentate'. The conflicts between the two parties were not strange at all.

Li Yao sorted through all the information in his head and asked a few more questions.

However, the man was a pawn in his pirate gang in the first place, and he had been away from Spider Den for almost half a year for the mission. Therefore, he did not know the latest situation on Spider Den. Li Yao's questions proved futile.

"Last question. Answer it honestly, and I will not kill you." Li Yao did not give him time to think. He asked straightforwardly, "How many ordinary people have you killed?"

The space pirate was dazed for a moment. His eyeballs rolled to the up.

It was a micro-expression suggesting that he was recalling and counting.

It also meant that he had killed ordinary people.

Li Yao's lips curled. His eyes turned cold.

The space pirate shuddered and shouted crazily, "You said you wouldn't kill me! You said you wouldn't kill me!"

Scratching his chin, Li Yao smiled. "Do I look like someone who honors his words?"

Five minutes later, Li Yao appeared among the overlapping wires of spiritual energy above the cabin that stored the escape capsules.

Unless absolutely necessary, Li Yao did not want to run into space in an escape capsule, especially at a moment when Bai Xinghe's starships were possibly patrolling nearby.

The explosions gradually died down, and the carrier became stable again.

Li Yao hid himself and released Neltharion silently. He attached half of his telepathic thoughts to Neltharion and commanded it to fly along the pathway in stealth mode.

It was obvious that every zone of the carrier had been taken over by another group of space pirates.

The intruders were well-trained and looked sharp. Intense killing intent was flowing out of their eyes. It was not simply boldness on the surface, but a toughness deep to the bones indicating that they did not care for the lives of other people or their own.

Faced with the intruders, the space pirates on the carrier did not have the courage to fight back at all. They all sat in the corners of each cabin with their hands on their heads.

Li Yao thought of something. The intruders were likely from Bai Xinghe's Abyss Pirate Gang.

Right then, a large batch of space pirates crowded toward the bridge.

Since Neltharion was no larger than a finger and it was in the stealth mode, it followed the space pirates into the bridge easily.

In the middle of the bridge, there were two space pirates, one standing and the other on his knees.

The standing pirate was wearing colorful casual clothes. He was slightly bold, and his hawk nose protruded forward high. A blinking, eye-catching pendent in the shape of a spider was hanging on his neck.

It seemed that he was not here for a fight, but for a vacation.

He stared at the space pirate who was kneeling before him in pure boredom. There was pity and scorn in his indifferent eyes.

The space pirate who was on his knees was wearing a glamorous coat made of bear hide, with a bear head sewn onto its shoulder. He could not have looked more intimidating.

Yet, sweat and tears covered his face. He was going to move forward and hold the other person's leg, but he did not have the courage and simply cried. "Boss Bai, I was wrong. I was really wrong. Please do spare me!"

The two words 'Boss Bai' nearly made Li Yao's heart skip a beat.

He did not know that the legendary Pirate Potentate would assault the carrier in person. No wonder the bridge had been taken over so easily.

If he had known that Bai Xinghe, a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, was in this place, Li Yao would never have dared to send Neltharion in.

However, it was easier to come in than to get out. The cabin door had been closed. Members of the Abyss Pirate Gang was everywhere. Li Yao did not dare to move at all, fearing that Bai Xinghe would discover him.

He could only hide Neltharion in a corner and eavesdropped anyway.

Li Yao knew the space pirate who was begging on the ground. He was Luo Jinhu, the owner of the carrier and the captain of the Tiger Teeth Pirate Gang.

The man was an expert in the beginning level of the Core Formation Stage. His name was on the wanted list of Heavenly Saints City for his countless crimes.

However, such a brutal bandit in the Core Formation Stage was like a stray dog whose three legs had been broken before Bai Xinghe. He was crying buckets and could not have looked more miserable!

Chapter 712: Bai Xinghe's Charisma!

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"Ah Hu, many pirate gangs answered Fengyu Zhong's call to assault Heavenly Saints City under the lead of the Temple of Immortals. Do you know why I came to talk to you instead of anybody else?" asked Bai Xinghe politely.

His voice was neither coarse or sharp. It sounded comfortable and reliable, and it made those who heard his words feel refreshed.

His smile was natural and genuine, too, as if he were really chitchatting with one of his followers.

However, for some reason, with his saber-like hawk nose, the words gave everybody a creepy feeling.

Li Yao felt scared even though he was merely observing through Neltharion, as if his spine was clenched by a pair of cold hands that he could not get rid of.

Luo Jinhu, captain of the Tiger Teeth Pirate Gang, was shuddering in fear, not knowing what to do.

Clap. Clap. Clap.

His hands on his back, Bai Xinghe started pacing. Weird sounds came from his feet while he walked.

It was then that Li Yao noticed that the Pirate Potentate was wearing a pair of slippers below his fancy beach shorts.

What an awesome man! Li Yao secretly complimented.

Casual clothes, beach shorts, and slippers. In such a next-door-neighbor style, the man had crossed the sea of stars and taken over a hostile starship. He stood before a brutal bandit in the Core Formation Stage casually, and the brutal bandit was sweating as if sitting on a thorny carpet.

That was truly the demeanor of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator and the dominating aura of the Pirate Potentate!

Li Yao was fascinated by his attire and made up his mind that he would wear exactly the same when he advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage someday.

Roaming space in beach shorts and slippers. That was what a real expert should do!

"Thirty-one years ago, your pirate gang was ambushed by other space pirates, and you had only one starship left. Who helped you defeat your enemy?"

Bai Xinghe paced behind Luo Jinhu and patted his shoulder neither softly nor heavily, while he asked casually, "Twenty-two years ago, you killed the son of the Surpassing Cloud Sect and were hunted by three Exo Societies. Who helped you escape and rescued you?

"Seventeen years ago, who provided a lot of resources for you to advance into the Core Formation Stage?"

Luo Jinhu was shaking even more violently.

Despite the long distance, Li Yao could almost hear the trembling noises of his bones.

Bai Xinghe sighed softly and said, "Ah Hu, I know that the Temple of Immortals revealed itself and Fengyu Zhong rose up quickly over the past year. He seemed like the new king of space pirates. Therefore, many people joined his cause. It is not strange.

"However, I did not expect that you, Luo Jinhu, would betray me, too!

"Betrayal is nothing unusual on Spider Den. My heart did not hurt much, either. I merely wondered whether or not my sight had impaired because of my old age.

"Therefore, I paid a visit to your starship personally to see if you are really a traitor. Do you think you are a traitor?"

"I'm not!"

Bai Xinghe's accusation was like three burning stings that stabbed into Luo Jinhu's coccyx.

Luo Jinhu jumped to his feet after a shiver while he shouted, "Boss Bai! Brother Bai! I've always born the great favors that you did me in mind! What am I if I betray my brother?

"But you know that my business hasn't been running well over the past two years. I lost two armed carriers in the South Mouth Space Zone. One of my old brothers in the high level of the Building Foundation Stage was heavily wounded and required a lot of resources to recover. Our income failed to meet our needs.

"This time, the Temple of Immortals offered a very high price. Therefore, we agreed to be hired by them and went to Heavenly Saints City.

"It's all about business and does not hurt Boss Bai's interests. It's not betrayal at all!"

Bai Xinghe chuckled. "Right. You did not betray me. You had a deal with the Temple of Immortals and shipped some people to Heavenly Saints City. What about your journey? Was Heavenly Saints City an enjoyable place?"

Luo Jinhu was dazed for a moment. He soon realized what Bai Xinghe meant.

His face pale, cold sweat was popping up all over his body. He stammered, "Bo—Boss Bai, none of the dozens of pirate gangs knew that the Temple of Immortals would be so crazy when we signed the contract.

"We—we thought that there would be assassinations and explosions in Heavenly Saints City at best.

"Nobody knew that they would do such an inhuman thing as to attract extraterrestrial devils!

"Honest to God, we were just Mr. Nobodies and did not know their plan at all. We merely helped them transport the goods and the soldiers.

"All the goods were packed in boxes with barriers on the outside. Most of the people of the Temple of Immortals were wearing masks, too. We couldn't see their faces!

"Nobody knew what they were up to!

"Although we don't care about life and death as space pirates, everybody is scared of the devils. If we knew that they were planning an arrival of extraterrestrial devils, nobody would've gone with them!

"Everyone was shocked when the extraterrestrial devils arrived, but there was no turning back at that point. We could only struggle on to make it to the end.

"Truth be told, Boss Bai, although people of the Temple of Immortals gave us magical equipment and tools to resist the extraterrestrial devils, those things sometimes worked and sometimes didn't.

"Many space pirates were swallowed by extraterrestrial devils. It's said that an accident happened to one of the altars, and the brothers of an entire pirate gang were turned into devilized people!

"Everybody has been complaining that we were fooled by the Temple of Immortals. We were thinking that we should demand for more rewards from Black Spider Town and Fengyu Zhong. We hate their guts right now. Why would we betray Boss Bai?"

"That explains a lot. You were fooled by other people. You did not mean to betray me. You did not hurt my interest… Bullsh*t! "

Bai Xinghe suddenly burst into a rage. A hurricane seemed to have formed inside the bridge. Dozens of light beams on the control panels broke apart and perished!

Bai Xinghe jabbed Luo Jinhu's back hard and roared, "You greedy idiots haven't seen through the Temple of Immortal's intentions even to this day?

"Fooling you to assault Heavenly Saints City without telling you their real intentions was a stone that kills two birds!

"Before, space pirates were merely the skin disease for the Cultivators. We could not stir much trouble. Therefore, they could barely made up their mind to gather all the elites to destroy us at a high price!

"But now, space pirates, extraterrestrial devils, and Immortal Cultivators have been combined. We are now a fatal disease to the Cultivators! They are going to come at us for real even if they have to pawn their pants!

"From the moment the extraterrestrial devils arrived, the space pirates who were part of the battle have been labelled as 'the Temple of Immortals' and added to the must-kill list of Cultivators. You are not going to get away!

"No. Not just you. Cultivators won't care exactly which pirate gangs participated in the battle of Heavenly Saints City and which ones didn't. They will form a great army and attack Spider Den. They will slay all the space pirates and eliminate every one of us!

"Do you want me to explain the matter to the Cultivators then? I'm truly sorry, Fellow Cultivators. Although I have committed a great number of crimes, I never took part in the battle of Heavenly Saints City or the arrival of extraterrestrial devils. I am different from the Temple of Immortals. How about you letting me go, Fellow Cultivators?

"Does that explanation sound good to you? Is it good, huh?

"You idiots can always kill yourselves if you want to, but why did you have to drag me down with you? And you said you did not hurt my interest or betray me?

"Why didn't you tell me earlier if you didn't intend to betray me?

"If you had any trouble, I could've helped you. Have I never refused your request? Why did you choose to act on your own? Why!"

Luo Jinhu's spine was almost broken because of the jabbing. He collapsed to the ground like a dead dog, breathing heavily.

After the catharsis, Bai Xinghe's countenance suddenly changed. He became calm and casual again, like a totally different person, before he asked, "Ah Hu, how old are you?"

Luo Jinhu was dazed, not having any clue why Bai Xinghe was asking that. He managed to reply, "A hundred—a hundred and three."

"Oh."

Bai Xinghe smiled, as if the harangue just now had nothing to do with him. He remarked, "A hundred and three years old and in the Core Formation Stage, you can almost be called an adult now, and you still believe in bullsh*t like immortality?"

In a gloomy face, Luo Jinhu replied, "Of course I don't believe such crap like immortality; even I'm not that foolish."

"Then what was their bait?" Bai Xinghe's face turned cold again, as he asked, "If you needed money or goods, you could've asked for my help. But since you signed a contract with the Temple of Immortals without telling me, they must've offered you something more valuable, something that I could not provide. What was it?"

Luo Jinhu hesitated for a moment. He gritted his teeth and confessed, "Boss Bai, truth be told, both me and our brothers of the other pirate gangs make our living in the most dangerous way every day. Unpredictable notions such as immortality can only fool three-year-olds. We won't buy that anyway.

"Besides, the people of the Temple of Immortals do not look like seniors who have lived for hundreds of years!

"However—

"Boss Fengyu—Ugh, the bastard Fengyu Zhong said that the Temple of Immortals was a vast organization. A lot of Immortal Cultivators were lurking in every space zone of the Flying Star Sector. When the timing was appropriate, they would strike together to overturn the rule of Cultivators. A kingdom of immortals on earth would be established!

"In the brand-new country, the Immortal Cultivators would be the dominators, and the ordinary people would be their slaves who would be driven, exploited, and incarcerated. They would do whatever they wanted!

"We space pirates are rats that everybody stomps on and have lived our lives in fear and darkness.

"But as long as we helped the Temple of Immortals' cause, when the Immortal Cultivators ruled the Flying Star Sector, we would be the regular army of the new kingdom!

"Based on the size of my Tiger Teeth Pirate Gang, if I did my part, I had a good chance of becoming the commander of the fleet of a space zone."

Bai Xinghe nodded and smiled. "That explains a lot. Kingdom of immortals. That sounds much more reasonable than an eternal life.

"How about this? Ah Hu, it's better to work with someone you are familiar with than to work with a stranger. Instead of helping the Temple of Immortals, why don't you help me to build a great Flying Star Empire? I will decree you to be the Great General of the Universe. How does that sound?"

Luo Jinhu observed Bai Xinghe's face and managed a smile. "Bo—Boss Bai, you must be joking…"

"You know I'm joking, too!"

Bai Xinghe changed his expression again and kicked right in Luo Jinhu's big pale face, his slippers embedded inside. Luo Jinhu was knocked to the ground!

Bai Xinghe stomped on him and bellowed, "You know that I can't build a Flying Star Empire. You know that an idiot like you does not deserve to be the Great General of Universe. You know that I was making fun of you.

"Why were you not so clever when you were fooled by the Temple of Immortals' bullsh*t?

"Kingdom of immortals on earth? Command of a fleet? Are they qualified? Are you qualified?"

"A bunch of cultists whose brains are all damaged and a swarm of mobs who know nothing but robbing are trying to overthrow Cultivators who have reigned for thousands of years? In your f*cking dreams!"

Chapter 713: Buy Me, Sell Me

Chapter 713: Buy Me, Sell Me

Luo Jinhu struggled below Bai Xinghe's slippers like a cockroach. He screamed, "I was wrong. Boss Bai, I know I was wrong!"

"Of course you were wrong."

Bai Xinghe stomped hard several times before he moved his slippers away from Luo Jinhu's face, where dozens of slipper prints had been left.

Luo Jinhu's face looked like a potato that had been thoroughly mashed.

Bai Xinghe took a breath in relief. His voice turned comforting and reliable again as he asked, "Ah Gou, what kind of criminals do you think can always go unpunished?"

Luo Jinhu had become used to Bai Xing's sudden change of topics. He thought hard for a moment and hesitated. "The real smart ones?"

"No. The most cunning fox is still no match for a hunter. Even the smartest criminal will be caught sooner or later as long as they keep doing their job," Bai Xinghe replied casually. "Only one kind of bad guys can get away from justice forever, when the damage they cause is far lower than the cost in order to capture them. Do you understand?

"Forget it. I can tell from your ignorant eyes that you don't understand.

"Let me change my question. Do you know what Senior Yan Xinjian, the supreme space pirate five hundred years ago, did after he defeated the fleet of Cultivators?"

Luo Jinhu shook his head helplessly.

Narrowing his eyes, Bai Xinghe said gravely, "The supreme space pirate Yan Xinjian rose to power during the war and gathered a bunch of soldiers who were absolutely loyal to him. After he defeated the fleet of Cultivators, he immediately swept Spider Den unstoppably!

"With consideration of the crimes that the space pirates committed, he sentenced the space pirates who were hated by a lot of people to death, those who had killed the important disciples of major sects and who were disobedient!

"Later, he sent the videos of the space pirates' executions to Cultivators through underground channels.

"Later, he summoned all the space pirates for a meeting and established ten rules, which are known as 'Ten Sword Rules' today.

"In every robbery, take away two thirds of the trophies and leave one third for the victims.

"If there's no resistance, don't hurt the ordinary people on board and the armed soldiers if they lay down their weapons and surrender.

"No rapes. Never kill pregnant women and kids below ten.

"Never plunder carriers that have just experienced a cosmic storm!

"Never plunder a carrier twice in one journey. Do not touch anything and retreat immediately if you find that the starship has been looted before!

"There are five more rules besides those. Whichever pirate gang violated the rules, Yan Xinjian would be the first to ask for their trouble until they admitted to their guilt.

"At that time, everybody said that Yan Xinjian was a fool. Cultivators were their mortal enemies anyway. The self-restricting rules were completely redundant for them.

"There were even people who thought that Yan Xinjian was a spy sent by the Cultivators, even if he had caused the Cultivators a crushing defeat in the battle to protect Spider Den.

"However, despite the doubts, there was not a second fleet waging a second war on space pirates in the hundred years after Yan Xinjian passed away.

"Why? Do you think that they were really scared of Spider Den?

"Of course not. Senior Yan Xinjian merely gave Cultivators a clear message: You will pay a high price if you attack me, and your damage is very low if you leave me alone. I am just a minor disease and not worth your trouble.

"Yan Xinjian is the greatest precursor of the robbing industry in my mind.

"However, now that he has been dead for hundreds of years, you greedy, short-sighted idiots know no self-restrictions at all. The Ten Sword Rules have long been left behind!

"Today, you are even asking for your own death by promoting yourself from dermatitis into cancer for the Cultivators.

"How does it feel, Captain Luo? Your wish has been fulfilled. Great crimes have been committed, and you are a crazy devil now. All the Cultivators will come after you. You must feel comfortable and satisfied with a strong sense of accomplishment. Your life is worth it, is it not?"

Luo Jinhu felt like crying. "Boss Bai, please stop making fun of me. Help me find a way to survive!"

Bai Xinghe snorted and said, "Way to survive? We have only two ways ahead of us.

"Firstly, in several years, when the Immortal Cultivators' cause fails, Spider Den will be destroyed by Cultivators. The space pirates, who are their mortal enemies on the surface, will be the best targets. We will all be executed.

"In the meantime, the Immortal Cultivators will use our dead bodies as cover and continue lurking for their next chance.

"It is quite possible that while we are fighting a bloody battle with Cultivators on Spider Den, they will be drinking orange juice on a sunny beach in a certain world fragment and watching the live stream of the battle news.

"Secondly, despite all the unfavorable circumstances, the Immortal Cultivators might succeed, but vanguards like you won't end any better!

"They could even do such a thing as attracting extraterrestrial devils. Do you think they will honor their promise for thieves such as you and me? Hilarious!"

"Boss Bai, we had the same doubts before." Luo Jinhu finally rose from the ground. He kept kneeling on the ground and said, "But you also know that the most important thing for space pirates is the intelligence network. Our trophies can only be sold through the black market, too!

"Over the past hundreds of years, Black Spider Tower has risen up. The intelligence network and black market of Spider Den are both controlled by them. They are our eyes, ears, and mouths!

"It was not until one year ago that we learned that Black Spider Tower was a branch of the Temple of Immortals. The previous leader of Black Spider Tower is very likely the 'Black King', one of the four kings of the Temple of Immortals!

"Right now, our eyes, ears, and mouths are all in the Temple of Immortals' control. It is difficult for us to run our business without cooperating with the Temple of Immortals.

"Boss Bai, you have a lot of docks, crystal suits, and… possibly underground industries on Spider Den. Naturally, you can refuse to work with Black Spider Tower.

"But we are too poor and need to do a job every few days. We have to sell the stolen goods in exchange for resources. Without Black Spider Tower, our ears are deaf, and our eyes are blind. Our source of income will be cut off. How are we going to feed ourselves?

"Therefore, we were accidentally trapped by them. It is impossible to do without them now. We can only sell ourselves to the Temple of Immortals!"

Bai Xinghe was silent briefly. He patted Luo Jinhu's shoulder and said solemnly, "I know your difficulties, too. Otherwise, I would have crushed you instead of wasting so much time talking to you.

"These bastards are indeed clever. They've weaved such a giant net on Spider Den with Black Spider Tower. Even I fell into the net without knowing it.

"A year ago, when their real faces were revealed, the space pirates were already on their boat. The only choice we had was to sell ourselves to them.

"However, there are two ways of selling ourselves."

Luo Jinhu was dazed. "Two?"

Bai Xinghe extended two fingers and waved his index finger as he said. "Firstly, sell ourselves like Fengyu Zhong. Bite and bawl for the Temple of Immortals. The more we do, the better we are paid."

Luo Jinhu was suspicious. "Is there a second way of selling?"

"Secondly..."

Bai Xinghe retreated his index finger, leaving his middle finger pointing at the ceiling. "We tell the Temple of Immortals to give us certain benefits here and now! Otherwise, we will sabotage their cause even at the risk of our own lives!

"It is easier to wreck something than to complete it. The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators are no gods. There are many things we can't accomplish.

"However, in this world, there are few things that a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator cannot wreck if they are determined to even at the cost of their own life!"

Bai Xinghe smiled. "How could I? They are very capable and have a lot of trump cards. There are several Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in their pocket, too. How do I dare to piss them off?

"I will merely annihilate Fengyu Zhong."

Luo Jinhu almost choked.

Bai Xinghe narrowed his eyes and said coldly, "Do you know the difference between me and Fengyu Zhong?

"The rabid dog only had several starships a year ago and barely any industries on Spider Den.

"Spider Den has never been his. If he is the one to sell it, naturally, he will sell it at a low price!

"If Spider Den is worth ten thousand dollars, he will still be making profit if he sells it at a hundred dollars.

"In such a way of selling, none of the pirate gangs will end up well if they join him. They will all become cannon fodder. Some of them more advanced and some rudimental, but cannon fodder all the same.

"I am different. Spider Den is mine. If it is worth ten thousand dollars, I'm going to sell it at a hundred thousand dollars, a million dollars!

"Right now, we are selling ourselves, not cabbages. Ah Hu, tell me, do you want the rabid dog to sell you, or do you want me?"

Luo Jinhu breathed heavily. "I—I understand, Boss Bai. You are going to take down Fengyu Zhong. When he is down, the Temple of Immortals can only count on you. You will certainly sell us at a great price!"

Bai Xinghe smiled kindly. "Ah Hu, you are finally clever now. I'm very happy!

"However, I am different from the Immortal Cultivators such as Fengyu Zhong. We've know each other for decades. You should know that I never make empty promises or write rubber checks. Eternal life, commander of a fleet. Such nonexistent things are jokes!

"Let's talk about benefits that are more materialistic."

Luo Jinhu held his head high and declared, "Boss Bai has been lenient to me. You are essentially my new parent. I don't ask for any benefits if I can die for you!"

"Bullsh*t!" Bai Xinghe kicked Luo Jinhu down again. "Cut the crap! With a decent price, you wouldn't even blink before selling your family! Also, for a decent price, I guarantee that I will sell your mother to the brothel tomorrow! We are all lawless space pirates. Are you pretending that you are a loyal knight?

"Look here! Do you know what this is?"

Bai Xinghe waved the spider pendent in front of his chest.

Luo Jinhu spat out a broken tooth, dazed. Greedy brilliance was glimmering in his eyes.

Bai Xinghe smiled. "It seems you do.

"It's understandable, the whole of Spider Den knows that I was a treasure hunter before I made a name of myself.

"It is said that I once entered the control center of the underground fortress of Spider Den and retrieved a detailed map.

"With the map, and the 'Spider Key' that can open all the secret tunnels, I have in my hands the arsenals, magical equipment, and techniques of Spider Den!

"The 'Spider Key' might not be real, but I definitely have my trump cards, considering that I could build such a large business from scratch in only a hundred years, right?"

Luo Jinhu's voice changed, like a girl who saw a diamond weighing four kilograms. "Boss Bai, what do you mean?"

Shaking the 'Spider Key', Bai Xinghe said softly, "Tell you what, in the civil war of the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago, Spider Den was so much more than a simple industrial planet. A great secret was buried deep below the ground.

"The secret has nothing to do with you.

"But the magical equipment and techniques scattered around the secret might have a lot to do with you, right?"

Luo Jinhu swallowed and cried in joy, "Boss Bai, are you planning to—"

"Bravery comes with a high reward!"

Bai Xinghe retracted his Spider Key and raised his voice, "I'm not going to lie to you now. Supported by the Temple of

Immortals, Fengyu Zhong's forces are quickly expanding. A lot of pirate gangs have joined him!

"I'm not confident that I can win the fight!

"Although I'm not willing to share my trump cards with everybody, wealth, magical equipment, and techniques are merely belongings. They are only useful when I'm alive!

"Therefore, I will call for a secret meeting in a few days. All the space pirates who decide to back me will share the Cultivation arts and secret treasures I brought out from the arsenals of Spider Den!

"Half of them will be split before the battle, and the others will be divided evenly after Fengyu Zhong is dead. All the goods will be examined beforehand. They are definitely real!

"This is what Boss Bai is going to do!

"I, Bai Xinghe, always buy people and sell people honestly!"

Chapter 714: Carrot and Stick

Chapter 714: Carrot and Stick

While talking, Bai Xinghe took out something from his pocket and tossed it to Luo Jinhu's. It rolled on the ground crazily.

Li Yao observed through Neltharion and discovered that it was a vintage jade chip as well as five shining silver metal balls.

"Ah Hu," Bai Xinghe said, "I know that you've been training with the Tiger Stripe Divine Fire Art over the past few years, but it is hard to improve when you reached the sixth level.

"This jade chip was excavated by me from the underground arsenals. It is the 'Devilish Tiger Crushing Bones' art that an elite troop of the Star Ocean Imperium trained with ten thousand years ago. It is quite similar to the Tiger Stripe Divine Fire Art that you have been training with, and you should find it very easy to get started. Your combat ability will be significantly improved if you train yourself hard!

"The Cultivation art itself is not very attractive. Right now, there are many similar versions on the Spiritual Nexus. Everybody is free to practice them as long as they do not fear mental derangement.

"However, what was stored with the Devilish Tiger Crushing Bones were nine pills that were made of the cores of dozens tiger-type demon beasts. Even in the elite troop ten thousand years ago, only those who made great contributions had the privilege to take them!

"There were nine pills corresponding to the nine levels of the Devilish Tiger Crushing Bones. Take one after you advance into each level, and you will bring out all the potential of the art and wield the strength of a tiger slayer!

"Here are the arts of the first five levels and five pills. Train with them first. After Fengyu Zhong is down, I will give you the remaining arts and the last four pills!"

Luo Jinhu exclaimed in joy and was so excited that he did not know what to say.

Bai Xinghe patted his shoulder and lowered his body, whispering, "Ah Hu, we are all in the robbing business. Our way of making money is quite dangerous. It is very important that we seize the day. Only your own strength is real; everything else is false.

"Cut off the heads of those who claim that they can live forever and mince their body into pieces! Can they stay alive? Even if you are appointed as the commander of a fleet, other people can blow up your head with a flying sword easily if you are not strong enough. Isn't that right?

"I can neither grant you an eternal life nor appoint you as a fleet commander, but I do have a lot of arts and pills that can improve your Cultivation!"

"Boss Bai!"

Luo Jinhu's eyes were burning with greed. His neck was almost twice as thick while he put the arts and the pills back into his pocket carefully. He then shouted, "I don't have anything to say except that I'm all yours, Boss Bai! Damn it.

Let's fight the rabid dog Fengyu Zhong hard! Kill him and let the Temple of Immortals know who the real boss of Spider Den is! Even the Immortal Cultivators must bow and cooperate with Boss Bai!

"When you decide to take action, Boss Bai, just give me a call. The men and the guns of the Tiger Teeth Pirate Gang will fight until there are none left!"

Bai Xinghe smiled. "Alright. I'll see how you fight your battle, then.

"Remember, I can always tell who is fighting for me for real, who is merely cheering for me, and who is colluding with my enemy behind me.

"For those who fight for me for real, no matter how heavy the losses they suffer during the battle are, I will compensate all of them! Other than that, it's also possible that I will bring them to the secret arsenals that I discovered below Spider Den!"

Luo Jinhu's eyes beamed with interest. "Are you serious?"

Bai Xinghe chuckled. He raised his right hand and curled his finger.

A brutal bandit almost three meters tall, who looked like an iron tower in his crystal suit, bowed and handed over… a cup of cold juice respectfully!

Bai Xinghe sipped the juice and sighed in satisfaction.

Luo Jinhu was dumbfounded, not knowing what was going on.

In a moment, two space pirates escorted two prisoners to the bridge and threw them between Bai Xinghe and Luo Jinhu as if they were dead pigs.

Both prisoners were from the Tiger Teeth Pirate Gang. Although they were not tied up, barriers had been imposed upon them. The wrists and ankles were twisted weirdly, and their chins were essentially two balls as their jaw bone had been battered. They could not utter a single syllable now.

The moment they saw Bai Xinghe, they started writhing crazily. The utmost fear beamed out of their eyes.

Bai Xinghe smacked his lips and said casually, "These two are the core members of your gang. One of them is the accountant who manages the entire flow of your capital. However, according to my investigation, they have joined the Temple of Immortals in secret.

"Unlike you, who was simply running errands for the Temple of Immortals for money, they have been brainwashed and become Immortal Cultivators!

"They have been instigating your subordinates to join the Temple of Immortals. There is even a whole set of follow-up plans to gradually steal your power. If they were exposed, or they found that your stance was unsteady, they would immediately take you and lead the Tiger Teeth Pirate Gang to join Fengyu Zhong's Storm Prison!

"All the evidence is in the crystal processor. Read it carefully. Don't say that I've wronged a good guy."

One space pirate pushed a crystal processor to Luo Jinhu.

Luo Jinhu hesitated for a moment. He then turned on five light beams and browsed through the information quickly, his sweat pouring. In a moment, he burst into fury and lunged forward like a lunatic before he kicked the two of them in their groins.

"Bao Xueyi, Gong Laojiu, you two bastards betrayed me?"

They shook their heads hard. They seemed to have a lot to say, and even their tears were flowing out, and yet they could not open their mouths and explain themselves.

Bai Xinghe narrowed his eyes and enjoyed the juice, as if he did not care about what was happening at all.

Luo Jinhu rolled his eyes. He gritted his teeth and stomped on the ground. Opening his hands, he condensed his spiritual energy on his fingertips into sharp talons before he stabbed them into the two prisoners' chests and crushed their hearts!

The two Immortal Cultivators, who dreamed for an eternal life, were killed immediately.

Luo Jinhu heaved a long sigh of relief. He wiped his cold sweat and said dutifully, "Thank you for digging out the two bastards for me, Boss Bai. From today on, I will only listen to your command. I will do whatever you ask me to and kill whoever you want dead!"

Bai Xinghe finally put on a smile of comfort. He craned his neck and drank all the juice before he smashed the glass cup into pieces against the control panel.

"Remember your words today. I will find you when the time is right. Drag your boat to the Sanpao's dock for maintenance. As for the damage on the starship, just find an excuse to cover them.

"After all, you've slain two Immortal Cultivators. The Temple of Immortals will doubt you however hard you explain yourself. Therefore, you might as well save the trouble."

His sweat pouring, Luo Jinhu was grasped by desperation. In despair, he bowed and said, "Fare well, Boss Bai.

"However, if I can be so bold to ask, how did you know that spies of the Temple of Immortals are in the Tiger Teeth Pirate Gang, Boss Bai?"

Bai Xinghe replied without looking back, "Idiot. You don't know the answer to such a simple question?

"Of course it's because my own spies are in the Tiger Teeth Pirate Gang, too!"

"Haha. Hahahahahaha!"

In the laughter, the Abyss Pirate Gang vanished like an ebbing tide. Soon, all the intruders were gone.

Luo Jinhu, a Core Formation Stage expert, was shuddering in fear, alone in the bridge.

No. Technically speaking, someone else was crouching among the tubes in the rear part of the carrier and shuddering with him.

After making sure that Bai Xinghe had indeed left the carrier, Li Yao took a long breath in relief.

He warmed up limbs that were somewhat numb now and noticed that his mustard-seed suit was soaked in cold sweat.

Although the two of them were merely talking, Li Yao felt that he had witnessed a fierce fight between top experts, and he was completely overwhelmed by Bai Xinghe.

No wonder Fengyu Zhong, as an old cunning fox himself, is so wary of him. Bai Xinghe, the Pirate Potentate, is truly impressive!

The captain of the Tiger Teeth Pirate Gang, Luo Jinhu, is clearly not as innocent as he claimed to be. It's possible that he joined the Temple of Immortals long ago!

When Bai Xinghe dragged the two Immortal Cultivators out, Luo Jinhu's surprise was half faked. He must've known their identities from the start!

Maybe the two Immortal Cultivators were the officers of communication between him and the Temple of Immortals!

Bai Xinghe clearly knew that, too.

But he pretended that he didn't and blamed everything on the two Immortal Cultivators. Moreover, he broke their jaws beforehand and made them unable to talk. They could only serve as scapegoats!

After the two Immortal Cultivators died, whatever deals Luo Jinhu had made with the Temple of Immortals would be no more.

In less than twenty minutes, Bai Xinghe coerced Luo Jinhu into killing two Immortal Cultivators personally with both a carrot and a stick, and he made the guy take his side again. From now on, Luo Jinhu can only work hard for him!

He truly deserves his fame. A man who has dominated Spider Den for decades is definitely not to be underestimated!

'Hellsword' Zhuang Ziyou was also in the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, but he was a pure fighter and far from a charismatic leader such as Bai Xinghe.

However, it was not within Bai Xinghe's expectations that a freak named Li Yao happened to be lurking inside the carrier.

As a result, Li Yao heard a lot of secrets he was not supposed to know.

It appears to me that Bai Xinghe is in a subtle relationship with the Temple of Immortals.

He might not wage a total war on the Temple of Immortals, but if he takes down Fengyu Zhong, he will both stabilize his position as the ruler of Spider Den and have more bargaining chips when he negotiates with the Temple of Immortals. That part should be true.

Bai Xinghe and Fengyu Zhong are going to have a fight. Great shows will begin on Spider Den soon. It will be an opportunity for me!

For a moment, Li Yao even considered whether or not he could sneak to Bai Xinghe's side.

He had one trump card, which was his identity.

As the murderer of Fengyu Zhong's only son, Li Yao was Fengyu Zhong's mortal enemy and would in no way cooperate with him.

Therefore, if his real identity was revealed, Bai Xinghe might not necessarily kill him. It was even possible that he would extend his hand to Li Yao and deal with Fengyu Zhong together.

However, Li Yao disapproved of the plan just a second later.

Bai Xinghe was indeed too scary.

Li Yao could not tell which of his words were true and which were false even at this moment.

Li Yao knew exactly what the outcome would be if he stepped too close to a ruthless tiger. His intuition told him to keep his distance from strong experts such as Bai Xinghe.

I might as well land on Spider Den first before I decide what to do next.

Chapter 715: Spider Den

Chapter 715: Spider Den

Ten thousand years ago, Spider Den had been an ordinary planet at the edge of the Flying Star Sector, far away from the star and without atmosphere, until one of the fleets of the Star Ocean Imperium landed accidentally to avoid a cosmic storm.

While waiting for the prolonged cosmic storm to pass, one of the bored Cultivators in the imperial army, who was adept at the spiritual energy of the earth class, considered roaming below the surface great entertainment.

But when he performed his techniques again and cruised below the ground as if he were sailing, he hit an invisible wall.

The Cultivator, who was almost buried alive, after being dug out, shouted to his rescuers without even having the time to care about his swollen head. "There's a mountain below the ground, a mountain made entirely of Divine Cloud Stones!"

The Divine Cloud Stones were not among the most expensive Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, but they were what the imperial army needed most.

When a large number of Divine Cloud Stones were refined into alloys and installed on starships as plate armor, its absorption of spiritual energy would be significantly enhanced, and it would boast certain stealth ability.

An exploration team made of countless research-type Cultivators soon arrived. They were mostly geologists and material scientists.

The outcome of their study was beyond anyone's expectations. Other than the Divine Cloud Stones, there were also hundreds of different mother lodes below the ground in which copious amounts of high-purity crystals were stored!

The planet was priceless!

Modification immediately began.

At first, star beacons were established on a large scale in this remote space zone. More than a hundred super star beacons were activated at the same time and formed a great array in space. A great 'space gate' was opened.

Through the space gate, every space zone in the Flying Star Sector could send carriers to this place. They would then gather in the orbit of Spider Den!

Cultivators descended on Spider Den like rainwater. One rune array after another was constructed. Ivory pillars of light soared into the sky and dispersed into an artificial atmosphere.

The biological system of the planet improved after the atmosphere was established. The air became suitable for human beings, too.

Then, billions of workers and heavy mining magical equipment were transported to the place by starships incessantly from the Flying Star Sector and even other parts of the Star Ocean Imperium.

The drills dug down, and explosions echoed nonstop. Humanity marched toward the core of the planet and eventually conquered it.

At first, Spider Den was a simple resource planet. The crystals and raw minerals were all packed into carriers and shipped to the important refining towns of the Flying Star Sector through the space gate.

But soon, people realized that it was too inefficient. The raw crystals and minerals were too large in size and cost a lot of fuel during their transportation, not to mention the potential damage on the way.

Since there were so many resources on the planet, after prolonged exploration and calculation, it was ascertained that building refining factories on Spider Den was a better choice in terms of cost.

Iron forests rose up around the giant mining holes that were more than a thousand meters in diameter. Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures purification centers, assembly lines of various kinds of magical equipment, and even a test center for the latest inventions were all established on the planet.

In just a thousand years, the previous rocky planet turned into an iron one that was riddled with holes and shining in metallic colors.

The planet was full of mining holes. Even the smallest holes were almost a thousand meters in diameter, and the largest holes were more than a hundred kilometers in diameter and extended to hundreds of meters down the ground.

All kinds of refining facilities were around the mining holes. Deep down in the mining holes were interconnected tunnels that led to the bottomless abyss in the deepest part of the underground.

Later, after the Armageddon Rebellion, various frontlines were in crisis during the last years of the civil war.

The planet, which was about to be forsaken since its resources were running out, was prioritized by the military because of its industrial foundations and the endless tunnels below the ground.

The complicated, interweaving tunnels that looked like a spider net were a natural fortress.

The military shipped countless pieces of magical equipment, resources, and assets from the big space zones of the Flying Star Sector and modified Spider Den completely, determined to wage a final battle against the rebels with this planet as one of the last strongholds.

However, before the final battle began, the 'Supreme Emperor' and the 'Mad Armageddon' had an ultimate competition in Empyrean Terminus, the capital planet of the imperium.

After the battle that had no winners, the Star Ocean Imperium fell apart. All the preparations were rendered meaningless.

In the thousands of years that followed, Spider Den was hidden in darkness.

Even after the remaining troops of the Star Ocean Imperium reestablished a coalition government on Iron Plateau, the planet at the edge of the Flying Star Sector was still undiscovered.

It was not until thousands of years later, when the apocalypse arrived and Cultivators together with countless ordinary people fled into space only to be assaulted by meteoroids, that some roamers found Spider Den as well as the resources, debris, and abandoned starships that had been left on the planet.

These people were the earliest space pirates.

That was the history of Spider Den.

At least, it was the history that Cultivators told to the public.

On Spider Den today, the artificial atmosphere created ten thousand years ago was already battered. The dim sky was riddled with holes. Fatal venomous gas was everywhere in the wilderness. It was very unfavorable for the survival of human beings.

The giant mining pits that could more dozens of kilometers in diameter became new cities. Translucent domes covered the cities where they were exposed to the ground and blocked the air inside and outside from exchanging, thereby building micro biological systems inside the cities.

Social classes were obvious in the cities of the mining pits in regard to their altitude.

Those who lived in the highest places, which were closest to the ground and could enjoy sunlight, however rarely, were the rulers of space pirates that had their own bases, docks, and crystal suit centers and could make profit without doing anything such as Bai Xinghe.

In the deeper part of the mining pits were neighborhoods hiding in the tubes and the conveyors. They were places of entertainment where the space pirates enjoyed wine and whores. The largest black market of the Flying Star Sector was hidden in such places, too.

The middle class in the food chain of the space pirates, namely those like Fengyu Zhong in his old days who did not have their own bases, would often vacation and enjoy themselves there while having their starships maintained after a job.

In the bottom of the mining pits, there was no sunlight at all. Every street could only be illuminated by the rune arrays. The largest number of space pirates lived in this place.

Most of those who were struggling there were not strong enough. They were not qualified even if they would like to be space pirates and could only live off the charity that the upper levels donated to them.

However, they were not the most miserable people on Spider Den, because they still had hope.

In the world of darkness, the pirate gangs large and small would hold competitions regularly and select the stronger ones as the new blood of their organization.

With any luck, one day, they could be roaring in space on a starship, even if they had been nibbling stones ten thousand meters below the ground the day before.

What was more miserable than them were the slaves deeper inside the tunnels and the treasure hunters who were exploring the underground fortress.

Although most of the resources on Spider Den had run dry, that was only for the army of the Star Ocean Imperium's needs.

The scale of space pirates was much smaller than the imperial army, and so was their demand for resources. If they did not care about the cost, they could always exploit some resources from the dried-up mother lodes.

As for the underground fortress, there was no need to stress its importance.

Since Bai Xinghe's rise over the past hundred years, rumors about the secret treasures that the Star Ocean Imperium left in the depths of Spider Den had become more prevalent. The pirate gangs all worked harder to explore the underground.

However, the underground fortress was like a stomach that was forever hungry. The lives of countless treasure hunters were devoured, and still a second Bai Xinghe was not born!

At this moment, in 'Silver Wing City', the fifth largest city on Spider Den, 1,600 meters below the ground, Li Yao, in an old coat and with his hands in his pockets, was unhurriedly walking across a rusted bridge.

Below him was an abyss of raging black smoke. Above his head was a colorful forest of steel. Wind that carried the stink of rust and blood swirled up from the bottom of the pits and passed by him, raising his coat high and revealing a dagger and the handle of a gun tucked into his trousers.

He looked completely different right now.

After Li Yao reformed his facial muscles with his spiritual energy, his face was longer, and his jaw was slightly protruding. His eyes were sunken and bloodshot. There was not one second when his eyeballs were still; they were scanning the environment around him all the time.

His back was slightly hunched. His shoulders were narrowed, and his arms were enlengthened. When he put his hands back to his pockets, they looked like two folded sabers.

Everybody could tell that such a guy must have murdered countless people and was a brutal, ruthless man.

That was the new image that Li Yao came up for himself after reading through the entire book of 'Stormy Sword'.

After sneaking out of the dock of space pirates, he showed up on the streets of Silver Wing City in the daylight with the brand-new appearance.

Li Yao was not worried that somebody would question who he was.

This place was Spider Den, the holy land of criminals in the Flying Star Sector as well as the well-acknowledged dirtiest place in the world.

Countless desperadoes were smuggled to Spider Den through various channels after they committed unpardonable crimes in their hometown.

Some of them killed people who must not be killed, some stole things that nobody was supposed to steal, some were looking for an opportunity for revenge, and some had unimaginable secrets in their hands.

Moreover, the thousands of pirate gangs were in a complicated relationship, too.

In such an environment where the last thing in short supply was brutal men, how could one investigate whether or not another person's identity was real?

If they were too curious, it was quite possible that the person would simply stab their knives into the interrogator's chest!

Therefore, it was a matter of course to use fake names, identities, and faces on Spider Den.

It was both a basic courtesy and the need of survival to not ask about someone else's background and real identity.

Chapter 716: Black Market of Silver Wing

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I didn't know that the previous leader of Black Spider Tower was the real Black King. No wonder Black Spider Tower and the Temple of Immortals cooperated so flawlessly and it worked so hard for the Temple of Immortals. As it turns out, the two of them are essentially the same thing. Black Spider Tower is a branch of the Temple of Immortals!

Black Spider Tower controls the intelligence and the money-laundering networks of the space pirates. Just like Luo Jinhu said, when Black Spider Tower is controlled, most space pirates are controlled. Other than the tough and ambitious guys like Bai Xinghe, common space pirates can only bend their knees and listen to the Temple of Immortals' commands.

Right now, Bai Xinghe is waging a war on Fengyu Zhong. However many trump cards he has, it seems to me that Fengyu Zhong, who is supported by the Temple of Immortals and Black Spider Tower, is on the winning side.

From the perspective of a Cultivator, naturally, I hope the war to be bigger and to last longer so that the strength of both sides will be more wasted. It will be best if both parties suffer heavy losses during their competition.

With that in mind, my strategy is to help the weak side.

For now, it seems that I should help Bai Xinghe.

However, Bai Xinghe is not an ignorant man. He is the brutal and cunning Pirate Potentate.

Although he seems to have strictly abided by the 'Ten Sword Rules' coined by Yan Xinjian, the supreme space pirate, I'm quite sure that he won't hesitate to kill anybody when it is necessary!

I need to think carefully as to how to help the brutal bandit.

But in order to intervene in the strife, I have to know the details of the strife no matter what and try to place myself in a relatively important position.

While Li Yao was pondering, a great explosion suddenly took place above his head. He looked up, only to discover that the buildings on the upper levels close to the ground were lit up with sparks. The next moment, countless tubes, shelves, and bridges rained down amid roaring noises!

Li Yao's pupils shrank violently. Like a blurred shadow that was blown away by wind, his body suddenly dispersed and condensed into a real identity in the pathway close to the edge of the pit.

Screeching noises were echoing behind him, as the objects from the sky smashed the corridor that he had been walking on. Many space pirates who were also passing by were crushed to a pulp.

In a moment, the corridor was cut off. Countless space pirates fell into the abyss in screams together with the broken bridge.

More than half a minute later, faint collisions came over from the depths of the black smoke.

"Another battle!"

"Damn it. I thought that I would have several peaceful days after I returned to Spider Den. But I'm now living in fear every day! It's even more dangerous than floating in the space!"

"Yesterday, Black Moon fought Senior Fungus. Who's fighting who today?"

"No idea. One of Fengyu Zhong's lackeys versus one of Bai Xinghe's lackeys, that's for sure!"

Many space pirates were hiding in a corner just like Li Yao did. They watched the sky with their bloodshot eyes hard, fearing that the debris might fall on their heads while they cursed in low voices.

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and maximized his vision. He could vaguely see several hundred crystal suits were jumping and attacking each other in the steel forest.

Every now and then, one of the space pirates would be struck on a critical point and fall down into the depths of the abyss, crashing into countless bridges, tubes, and tunnels during the freefall.

They would be surely dead when they fell into the bottom of the mining pit that was almost ten thousand meters deep, even if their previous wounds did not kill them.

Li Yao frowned and thought fast. In the past, there was only one king on Spider Den. His words were the truth. It was possible for order to be maintained. But now that a new king named Fengyu Zhong is rising, the stability in the past has naturally been ripped apart during their competition!

I'm now in a complicated environment. The most important task for me right now is to fill my Cosmos Rings with assets. Food, water, and materials are all necessary.

Also, I need to get a reasonably good crystal suit. My Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and Hellsword's Black Horn Battlesuit are both too eye-catching and must not be revealed easily.

After thinking the matter through, Li Yao looked around and noticed a bunch of space pirates crouching in a corner.

There were three space pirates in the gang. Judging from their ragged clothes, they were not anything related to tough.

With a vague killing intent, Li Yao clutched the one in the middle who looked like their leader and slapped his face almost twenty times without saying anything. Then, he tossed the space pirate to the ground heavily and stomped on his chest, before he said casually, "Bastard, this is my first day in Silver Wing City. I need a crystal suit for self-defense. Where can I buy one?"

Those space pirates were just the shrimps of the shrimps. Seeing that Li Yao was so brutal, none of them dared fight back or attempt to reason with him.

The space pirate whose chest was stomped on, with detestation in his eyes, shrieked, "Go to Brother Yi! Brother Yi has the most powerful modified crystal suits in Silver Wing City. I'm sure you will be satisfied, senior!"

Half an hour later, Li Yao found the man who was referred to as 'Brother Yi' in the black market of Silver Wing City. The merchant's proper name was 'Niu Youyi'.

The black market of Silver Wing City was in the depths of a zigzagging tunnel.

In the dim lights, a lot of holes were dug out on the walls. Countless merchants of the black market were sitting inside them in boredom.

They were all carrying their mini crystal processors and would display their goods through light beams. When their customer was satisfied, they would go to somewhere secret for the real exchange.

Most of the goods were naturally magical equipment, Cultivation arts, and materials.

But many merchants also sold the latest information and introduced 'jobs' to different space pirates as intermediaries.

Niu Youyi was exactly such a merchant who sold magical equipment, information, and, when the price was good enough, his own wife, without batting an eye.

"I need a modified crystal suit, at least as powerful as the 'Fire Dragon Battlesuit'. Heavy firepower is preferred. Money is not going to be a problem!"

Li Yao retrieved a silk bag from his Cosmos Ring and opened a gap. Brilliance immediately darted out.

Inside the bag were high-purity crystals. One gram was enough for a high-level Cultivator to train for a long time. They were the best and most reliable currency anywhere.

Niu Youyi glanced at the bag, and his eyes were practically burning with greed. He grinned and said, "Not a problem. Definitely not a problem. Everybody in the black market knows that I have the best range of modified crystal suits.

Come here. You are my big client today. Please follow me to the crystal suit warehouse at the back. You are free to choose anything you want!"

Niu Youyi rubbed his hands and bowed. He took quite a few turns and reached an abandoned tunnel far away from the black market.

He opened a rusted gate. A rather spacious room greeted them. It must have been the warehouse where the raw minerals were temporarily stored in the old days.

Right now, almost a hundred crystal suits were piled neatly in the warehouse.

Although most of the crystal suits were damaged and looked secondhand, Li Yao could tell as a professional that they had been repaired and maintained reasonably well. Moreover, practical modifications had been performed. They were definitely very helpful.

Creak.

Niu Youyi closed the gate of the warehouse and smiled. "One of your friends must have introduced you to my business. I am the most well-known trustworthy man in the black market of Silver Wing City. Since this is our first deal, price is not important. What is important is that you are satisfied! Just examine them and pick one. Take your time."

Li Yao put his two fingers on the surface of the crystal suit and touched it carefully, inferring the technology level of the crystal suits by the camouflage on the shell. He asked without turning back, "I'm told that you sell information, too? I've been doing business in space for two years. How is Spider Den so chaotic nowadays? It was not like this in the old days!"

Niu Youyi grinned. "You've got keen eyes, sir. Today is different from the past. Spider Den is now no longer the peaceful paradise for space pirates!

"Right now, everything is a mess. A minor battle every three days, and a major one every five. Many great space pirates were not killed in space but died uncanny deaths in their homes!

"Since it's been a long time since you were here, it is indeed necessary for you to learn the latest situation.

"Of course, mess has merits, too. The messier the world is, the more flourishing our business will be, and the more new pirates can replace the old ones, isn't that so? I can tell from your appearance that you are a capable one. I have a number of missions to introduce to you. The major pirate gangs today like the foreign space pirates best, those who are capable and do not have deep ties to Spider Den such as yourself. If you are willing to take the risk, it is not unreasonable to assume that you will soar into the heaven in just one leap!"

Li Yao snapped a blinging crystal the size of a bean to Niu Youyi's feet, while he said coldly, "Tell me the news first. If I'm satisfied, I'll give you another one.

"As for my choice of crystal suit, let's hear your story first.

"Common sense is unnecessary. Tell me the important things. I know that the Temple of Immortals supported Fengyu Zhong to be the new king of pirates and had a major conflict with Bai Xinghe. The two parties are in an intense relationship today and will start a total war at any moment.

"But I'm baffled why the Temple of Immortals did not deal with Bai Xinghe when it just revealed itself last year."

Niu Youyi picked up the crystal, observed it and whistled, before he replied unhurriedly, "The Temple of Immortals is indeed impressive, but Boss Bai is not a guy to be underestimated, either!

"When the Temple of Immortals first showed up, all the space pirates were shocked. Many people did not trust them. Boss Bai was one of them. He even cursed them in public many times!"

Li Yao raised his eyebrow. "And the Temple of Immortals did not take care of him?"

Niu Youyi smiled. "That was the first clue of Boss Bai's wisdom. As the saying goes, the dogs that bite don't bark. With Boss Bai's capability and personality, he was bound to be discontented about the Temple of Immortals either way. If he showed no response and even acted cooperatively when he learned of the Temple of Immortals' existence, there must have been something wrong with him, and he must have been planning something in secret. Isn't it so?"

Li Yao pondered and replied, "That's true."

"Boss Bai pretended that he was angry and yet had to cooperate with the Temple of Immortals because of their tremendous capability," Niu Youyi said. "As a result, the Temple of Immortals' suspicion was reduced a lot.

"Then, Fengyu Zhong rose under the support of the Temple of Immortals and swallowed a lot of other pirate gangs. Boss Bai bluffed and made quite a few declarations, but he never took any action.

"Right. He did take action once. Boss Bai attacked Fengyu Zhong one time, only to suffer a brutal failure and a heavy loss of soldiers because of the intervention of the Temple of Immortals.

"From then on, Boss Bai kept lying low and launched no counterattacks except cursing.

"At the time, everybody thought that Boss Bai was doomed and that Fengyu Zhong was about to suppress him.

"But we didn't know that everything was Boss Bai's plan!"

Chapter 717: Fake It Until You Make It!

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Recently, Spider Den had been particularly lively. Scumbags in every corner of Flying Star Sector had gathered in this place. Niu Youyi, the black market merchant, told Li Yao a concise summary of the events that had taken place over the past year, and it seemed he had told a lot of people about the events before.

More than a year ago, the Temple of Immortals suddenly revealed itself. Not only were the Cultivators greatly shocked, most space pirates were caught unprepared, too.

In the beginning, Bai Xinghe did not start on bad terms with the Temple of Immortals, because he knew that the Temple of Immortals must have prepared a lot of schemes during their hundreds of years of hiding in darkness. Besides, most of the personnel of the organization was still lurking. It was not time to take action yet.

Therefore, he pretended to be a guy who tried to defend his position and yet did not have enough strength. He was very stubborn about the Temple of Immortals' recruitment on the surface, but he kept a close relationship with Black Spider Tower, a branch of the Temple of Immortals. A lot of his business operated through the channels of Black Spider Tower. When people of the Temple of Immortals reached out to him and invited him to join it, he did not turn down the offer, although he did not agree on the spot, leaving room for negotiation.

When the Temple of Immortals supported Fengyu Zhong to be the second king of space pirates in order to marginalize him, he burst into fury and planned multiple operations targeting Fengyu Zhong.

However, the operations were all unsuccessful and crushed by Fengyu Zhong easily.

As a result, he gave Fengyu Zhong and people of the Temple of Immortals the impression that he was 'just so-so'.

For the Temple of Immortals, they did not want to completely alienate Bai Xinghe.

After all, a lean camel is still bigger than a horse. Since Bai Xinghe had been running his business on Spider Den for almost a hundred years, he had grasped immeasurable resources and subordinates in secret. It would have done nobody any good if they were determined to eliminate Bai Xinghe.

The best solution was to boil the frog in warm water. On one hand, they made various promises to Bai Xinghe and even tempted him with the title of the fifth king of the Temple of Immortals. On the other hand, they fully supported the rise of Fengyu Zhong in order to gradually reduce Bai Xinghe's power. When Fengyu Zhong was as influential as Bai Xinghe among the common space pirates, there would be no other alternatives except to lower his head.

Over the past year, the strategy proved to be very successful.

Bai Xinghe gave other people the feeling that he was too old and no longer the striving young man he used to me. He treasured his accomplishments over the past decades too much and did not dare fight a head-on battle with the ambitious latecomer Fengyu Zhong. At the same time, he was greedily negotiating with the Temple of Immortals on every detail as to his position, power, and resources after he joined the Temple of Immortals, as if he would really become the fifth king of the Temple of Immortals as long as the Temple of Immortals agreed to his conditions!

As a result, many pirate gangs that supported Bai Xinghe gradually took Fengyu Zhong's side.

Even within the Abyss Pirate Gang, many space pirates who built the enterprise from scratch together with him gradually became involved in the Temple of Immortals, too.

Bai Xinghe seemed to know none of it. He was still making ridiculous plans one after another and even gave people the feeling that he was trying to win the Temple of Immortals' favor against Fengyu Zhong.

Later, everybody on Spider Den would learn his newly-drafted plan the moment he announced it.

After several times of failure, Bai Xinghe seemed to be intimidated. He completely backed off and became more unfriendly than ever, as if he had abandoned all hope.

He did not make a move when Fengyu Zhong secluded himself for one month to break into the Nascent Soul Stage.

"Boss Bai is really old now, and the Temple of Immortals is too strong!"

For a moment, all the space pirates were whispering in secret.

If it were one year ago, nobody would even have dared to think about that, much less whisper about it.

However, none of the space pirates knew that Bai Xinghe had not taken any real action yet.

The man who could spend a fortnight in the underground world of Spider Den and melt the darkness into his blood knew clearly that, even though Fengyu Zhong was advancing into the Nascent Soul Stage in seclusion, the strength of the Temple of Immortals on Spider Den was still much higher than his.

He stood no chance of winning if he acted now.

He had to wait no matter what.

He knew that the Temple of Immortals would not lurk on Spider Den forever. No matter how they planned to overthrow the Cultivators, they would have to mobilize most of their strength into space to fight against the Cultivators.

His guess was correct.

The battle of Heavenly Saints City was the largest operation since the Temple of Immortals revealed itself. It required even more manpower and resources than the battle of Iron Plateau did.

The Immortal Cultivators who belonged to the Temple of Immortals, the assassins of Black Spider Tower, and the space pirates who joined Fengyu Zhong's side gradually moved on to Heavenly Saints City for the mission over the few months.

The intelligence network under the control of Black Spider Tower was also fighting hard with the 'Immortal Slayers' sent by the Cultivators, trying to dig out spies that were hiding inside the Temple of Immortals such as 'Apollo'.

With all the emergencies, the half-boiled old frog really did not deserve much attention.

However, at exactly the same time when the battle of Heavenly Saints City broke out, Bai Xinghe took action!

Fake it until you make it.

Within one night, six bureaus of Black Spider Tower were uprooted, seven black markets under the control of Black Spider Tower were looted and burnt to the ground, and twelve docks and crystal suit centers under the name of Fengyu Zhong were assaulted simultaneously. Not only were all the facilities destroyed, a lot of refiners also went missing. Many of them were even beheaded on the spot!

Everything changed overnight.

Before dawn, the leaders of eleven pirate gangs lost their heads without a reason.

All of them had been loyal to and were greatly helped by Bai Xinghe, but they joined Fengyu Zhong's side when Bai Xinghe showed that he was weak.

The strength that the Temple of Immortals had left on Spider Den was mostly wiped out during the night.

Just like that, Bai Xinghe took advantage of the situation with one year of forbearing and one night of outbreak. He proved with his brutal methods that the Pirate Potentate might not achieve anything but was certain able to sabotage many things!

Right now, the situation on Spider Den was utter chaos.

Many space pirates were awed and returned to Bai Xinghe.

However, many other space pirates held that the Temple of Immortals were deeply rooted and extremely wealthy. Even though Bai Xinghe was on the winning side right now, it was impossible for him to last long against the Temple of Immortals. He was merely trying to get more bargaining chips for his negotiation with the Temple of Immortals.

Therefore, these people were determined to stand with Fengyu Zhong, Black Spider Tower, and the Temple of Immortals, with the thought 'difficult times are when one's loyalty is proved' in mind, and worked even harder.

Although Bai Xinghe's Abyss Pirate Gang and Fengyu Zhong's Storm Prison Pirate Gang had not engaged in battle yet, the secondary pirate gangs had already started fighting.

They were like the scouts sent by two great armies who were involved in brutal combat.

"Right now, Spider Den is a chaotic place. Almost every city is on fire!

"But this is also the time when foreign space pirates like you earn your fame!

"Many pirate gangs are hiring talents with a decent price. Daily contracts and result-based contracts are all available! If you distinguish yourself and Boss Bai or Fengyu Zhong notices you, your future will be nothing but bright!"

Niu Youyi spoke touchingly, as if he were really thinking of Li Yao's interests.

Li Yao asked, showing neither approval nor disapproval, "You know a guy?"

"Of course!" Niu Youyi smiled. "Although I cannot introduce you to the Abyss Pirate Gang or the Storm Prison Pirate Gang, I do know some guys in the middle-sized pirate gangs on both sides."

"Is that so?"

Li Yao blinked and asked, "I wonder, which side is more likely to win? I have never liked to stand on the loser's side."

Niu Youyi replied, "In terms of odds of success, Fengyu Zhong's side is obviously higher. He is supported by Black Spider Tower and the Temple of Immortals after all! However, Boss Bai has his own advantages, too, which are the secret treasures below ground!"

Li Yao's eyes suddenly shone as he asked, "What secret treasures?"

The gate of the warehouse had been closed, but Niu Youyi still looked around to make sure nobody was eavesdropping, before he lowered his voice and said, "You must know a thing or two about Boss Bai's rise even though you are not a native of Spider Den. But I'm afraid you don't know the details.

"It is said that Yan Xinjian, the supreme space pirate from five hundred years ago, went deep down underground and found the control center of the underground fortress of Spider Den before the fleet of Cultivators arrived. It was only because he activated the defense system of Spider Den to 50% that the army of Cultivators was stopped!

"In his early days as a treasure hunter, Boss Bai found Yan Xinjian's notebook by accident and learned his knowledge. He then grasped all the secrets below the earth of Spider Den!

"Think about it. In the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago, the military constructed Spider Den as the last castle of the Flying Star Sector! Unbelievable resources, Cultivation arts, and magical equipment were buried inside! Bring several items out, and everybody will benefit a lot!"

Li Yao sniffed. "Even though Boss Bai received the heritage of Yan Xinjian, how can everybody know such a big secret?"

Niu Youyi replied, his face unchanged, "It is hard to tell if the story is true, but the Cultivation arts and magical equipment that Boss Bai presented are definitely real!

"In short, Boss Bai has decided to bring out all his belongings to fight a last battle!

"This is basically the situation right now. If you join Fengyu Zhong's side, you will be more likely to win with the support of Black Spider Tower and the Temple of Immortals, but your gains will be relatively fewer. Many of their promises are empty and can only be redeemed a long time in the future.

"If you stand on Boss Bai's side, naturally, the chances of winning are slim, but you will receive your rewards on the spot and won't need to wait at all.

"Since you are planning to buy a high-end crystal suit like 'Fire Dragon Battlesuit', I assume you are an expert perhaps in the Building Foundation Stage. Both sides are running out of hands and are in desperate need of experts like you. Think about it. I'll introduce you to them and give you a 70% discount on the intermediary fee!"

Chapter 718: You Know Too Much

Chapter 718: You Know Too Much

Li Yao snapped the second crystal to him and said, "Cut the crap. I want to know the top ten pirate gangs that are based in Silver Wing City or often come here for maintenance and supplies, especially the information about the three biggest. Their leaders, their leaders' relatives, the relationship between them. I want to know every detail.

"It's the same rule. If I'm satisfied, I'll give you another crystal and buy a crystal suit of the highest specifications from you. Perhaps I will need your help in my business in the future, too. Now, let us begin!"

Niu Youyi swallowed hard and glanced at the gate of the warehouse subconsciously, but he soon retreated his eyes and elaborated. "The two biggest pirate gangs in Silver Wing City are naturally 'Split Sun' and 'Wild Tide'. The two pirate gangs have been in a bad relationship due to a conflict some twenty years ago. Quite a few people on both sides have been killed in the fierce battles. Their hatred toward each other is unresolvable right now. Before, when Boss Bai was on the top of everybody, they did not dare start an open fight on Spider Den.

"More than one year ago, when the Temple of Immortals revealed itself, the leader of the Split Sun Pirate Gang joined their side without any hesitation.

"On the Wild Tide Pirate Gang's side, since they are deeply involved in Boss Bai's business, they failed to join the new giant promptly, and as a result, they were suppressed by the Split Sun Pirate Gang and had a rough year.

"A few months ago, the majority of the soldiers of the Split Sun Pirate Gang were summoned by the Temple of Immortals to Heavenly Saints City. Few of them were left on Spider Den.

"After Boss Bai suddenly declared war on the Temple of Immortals, the Wild Tide Pirate Gang took the opportunity to fight back and seized almost all the assets that the Split Sun Pirate Gang left in Silver Wing City. Most of the space pirates in the Split Sun Pirate Gang were killed or driven away. They have indeed gotten their revenge.

"However, during the past half month, the space pirates who were sent to Heavenly Saints City have mostly returned. The strength of the space pirates on the Temple of Immortals' side has grown significantly, too. They must be planning a counterattack right now.

"The fierce battle that took place above our heads just now should be the main force of the Split Sun Pirate Gang, who just returned from Heavenly Saints City, attacking the Wild Tide Pirate Gang.

"However, hehe, a piece of complementary news. It seems that the attack plan was known by the Wild Tide Pirate Gang earlier. The Split Sun Pirate Gang will probably suffer a heavy loss and won't take back their assets."

Li Yao nodded. "Tell me their important members and the zones where they are most active."

Niu Youyi widened his eyes and licked his lips, beginning a long speech.

After he talked for ten minutes, dull knocks on the door echoed.

Niu Youyi suddenly grew nervous. He gestured Li Yao and, holding the sword he carried, shouted, "Who is it?"

The stranger out of the door replied, "Old Eight. I'm here to take my crystal suit."

Niu Youyi was relieved. He nodded at Li Yao, indicating that it was all good, and said in a low voice, "It's a friend. He's here to take a crystal suit that has undergone maintenance."

Li Yao move slightly and got out of the way.

Niu Youyi opened the door slightly. Three gloomy, muscular men walked in one after another. They seemed a bit surprised and frowned when they saw Li Yao, too.

"This is a client my friend introduced to me, and an expert possibly in the Building Foundation Stage. We are all good friends here," Niu Youyi said in a hurry. "With the chaos in Silver Wing City, there's really no need to give yourselves additional trouble, is there, everybody? Hold on a second. I'm going to bring your crystal suit in a moment!"

While talking, he locked the gate of the warehouse again. Wiping the rust with his clothes, the merchant walked toward the crystal suit shelves.

The three newcomers glanced at Li Yao and soon shifted their attention to the crystal suits in the warehouse.

One of the space pirates, who was slender and had a cross-shaped scar on his face, said, "Old Yi, I was talking about the brand-new 'Racing Fire' strengthening plugin for power rune arrays. Don't you dare mess around with us with the secondhand goods you recycled from the battlefield. If we find out that you did, we'll skin you alive!"

"How could I?" Niu Youyi immediately defended himself in great dissatisfaction. "Everybody in the black market of Silver Wing City knows that I'm always the most honest one in business. Otherwise, the three of you would not have asked me to maintain your crystal suits, would you? I guarantee that it is an authentic, brand-new 'Racing Fire'. If you so much as find one scratch on it, tear me apart!"

"That's good!" the space pirate said coldly. "We all have examination magical equipment with us. Open the cover of the power rune arrays on the crystal suit. We will take a closer look!"

"Of course!"

Niu Youyi bowed his head and walked to the shelves while talking about the details of the crystal suit with the three space pirates.

Maybe it was a coincidence, but the crystal suit they were talking about was right behind Li Yao.

Therefore, including Niu Youyi, the four space pirates were gradually surrounding Li Yao.

The moment before Li Yao was completely surrounded, he suddenly took a big step back and smiled. "It seems that my guess was correct."

The four space pirates were dazed for a moment. They exchanged a look quietly. Niu Youyi managed a smile and said, "What do you mean, sir?"

His hands behind his back, Li Yao said unhurriedly, "Just now, I captured a space pirate and humiliated him right in front of his friends. But then I asked him who the most reliable crystal suit merchant in Silver Wing City was, a question that indicated that I am a stranger to the city.

"I assumed that, since he hated me and did not know my background, although he did not dare to fight back on the spot, he would definitely try to seek retaliations in other ways.

"Therefore, the guy he introduced me would most certainly be the most untrustworthy and the most unsafe crystal suit merchant in Silver Wing City.

"It was quite possible that the guy would be the most dishonest, cunning, and dangerous one.

"Besides, the crystal suit merchant might also have some bad habits. For example, when he noticed the tremendous wealth that a non-native customer accidentally showed, he would try to kill the customer and loot his corpse.

"I also assumed that, since the crystal suit merchant was always doing such clandestine jobs, the nest of his operations must be very inconspicuous.

"Besides, when he saw that I was a fat lamb and decided to butcher me, he wouldn't tell anyone about me, except his accomplices.

"Therefore, nobody would know anything that happened in his nest for the time being.

"More importantly—"

Li Yao glanced at the crystal suits on the shelves and remarked, "The crystal suits you have in stock are too lousy. I'm interested in none of them.

"But since you are always robbing other space pirates, and it's inevitable that you run into some tough guys occasionally, your own crystal suits must be more advanced than the crystal suits displayed here, mustn't they?"

Li Yao's words made the lips of the four space pirates dry.

The space pirate who had a cross-shaped scar on his face narrowed his eyes, with intense killing intent flowing out!

Niu Youyi, on the other hand, rolled his eyes and mumbled, "You've known that I would rob you since the beginning, and you still came with me?"

His sweat suddenly poured down and he nearly collapsed to the ground, while he shrieked, "Senior, spare—"

There was no time!

His three companions were not as quick-minded as him. Seeing that their identity had been exposed, they started retrieving their crystal suits from their Cosmos Rings!

Li Yao sighed and shook his head. "You really shouldn't have worn nothing when you entered the warehouse just in order to ease my wariness."

It took him one second to finish the sentence, not enough time for the three space pirates to fully equip their crystal suits.

In that time, Li Yao had vanished!

Like an unpredictable cloud, he turned into black smoke and flashed past the three space pirates!

Niu Youyi's eyes widened. He could not see any trace of Li Yao at all and could only sense Li Yao's existence by the movements and reactions of the three space pirates!

The first space pirate had just put on the breastplate and the skirt armor when his face twisted beyond the limits as if he had seen the greatest horror. In the next second, he vomited a mouthful of blood that was mixed with his broken internal organs, and he collapsed to the ground as if all his bones had been removed.

The second space pirate took the opportunity to put on most of the crystal suit. But when he retrieved the helmet from his Cosmos Ring, his head suddenly soared into the sky, spraying a torrent of blood!

The third space pirate, who was the guy with a cross-shaped scar on his face, was the fastest one to put on all of his crystal suit.

After a roar, his vibration saber rushed out, only to come to an abrupt halt in midair. He turned into a frozen statue, unable to move anymore.

Niu Youyi was horrified. He gazed at the space pirate for a long time before he finally discovered that dozens of threads thinner than hair seemed to have stabbed into the gaps of the third space pirate's crystal suit.

The threads were almost transparent. There was no telling what they were made of.

Had the blood not been leaking out along the threads and condensing into pearls, he would not have recognized that there was such a piece of weird magical equipment at all!

The dozens of threads did no damage to the crystal suit but killed the space pirate inside instantly!

And the source of all three deaths was… right behind him!

Niu Youyi nearly defecated in his pants. He kneeled down on the ground and shouted at the top of his voice, "Spare my life, senior! Take whatever crystal suits you want! Whatever you want to know, I will tell you everything that I know, no more and no less!"

Li Yao's casual voice came behind him. "You didn't finish your introduction just now. I'll give you five minutes. Go on."

Niu Youyi took a long breath. His tongue had never worked harder in his entire life.

Li Yao listened attentively while checking the time. When five minutes were over, although Niu Youyi had not finished his introduction, he still stopped talking for the sake of his own safety.

"That's enough. I'm satisfied by your performance. One last thing. Why did you mess around with me? Did you know who I am?"

Niu Youyi shook his head hard and replied, "I—I don't know who you are, senior. If I did, I wouldn't have dared rob you even if I was drunk!"

"Then remember this. My name is—"

Li Yao paused suddenly. He blinked and then continued. "My name is 'Bloody Vulture'. Do you remember it now?"

Niu Youyi nodded vigorously and replied, "I do. I do. I will always bear Senior Bloody Vulture's name in mind and never ask for your trouble in the future! Whatever you need me to do, just tell me!"

"Very good."

Li Yao's lips gradually curled, as he put on a creepy smile that made goosebumps rise all over Niu Youyi's body.

"Right now, you know too much."

Chapter 719: Bite the Bait

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It was dusk when Nie Feijun stepped into the Dancing Phoenix Pavilion.

Mysterious lights were shimmering in the countless mining holes of Silver Wing City from top to bottom. Illumination rune arrays were installed inside crystals that had been hollowed. Such lamps were bringing brightness to a world of relaxation and entertainment.

The Dancing Phoenix Pavilion was one of the most luxurious hotels in Silver Wing City. The fantastic and rarely-seen treasures of the Flying Star Sector had been transported to the place through the underground channels of Black Spider Tower, making the place as extravagant as the high-level hotels of Heavenly Saints City, if not more so.

"Young Master Jun!"

Seeing that Nie Feijun had brought quite a few friends here, the manager of the Dancing Phoenix Pavilion immediately greeted him, in such an adulating way that it seemed as if he would not mind kneeling down and cleaning his shoes.

What a bunch of fickle people. You were not like this half a year ago!

Nie Feijun sneered.

His father was the captain of the Wild Tide Pirate Gang. In the past year, since the Split Sun Pirate Gang, their old nemesis, joined the Temple of Immortals' side, the Wild Tide

Pirate Gang had gritted their teeth and stayed on Bai Xinghe's side. They were constantly suppressed by their mortal enemy. Nobody in Silver Wing City had high hopes for them.

As a result, Young Master Nie had been mocked and questioned everywhere.

But everything was good now. After Bai Xinghe's declaration of war, the Wild Tide Pirate Gang initiated full-scale counterattack. A lot of the Split Sun Pirate Gang's bases were destroyed, and one of the most important crystal suit modification centers was also burnt to the ground.

Over the past few days, since they learned of the Split Sun Pirate Gang's counterattack plan in advance, they had made thorough preparations and secured another major victory today. Even one of the vice captains of the Split Sun Pirate Gang had been killed. It was an unprecedented success!

Right now, the Wild Tide Pirate Gang's prestige in Silver Wing City was at its peak. The other pirate gangs large and small all expressed their submissiveness and acknowledged them as the owners of the docks and the crystal suit centers. Every member of the Split Sun Pirate Gang had fled and hidden themselves thousands of meters below the ground, having no courage to show up at all.

No wonder the manager of the Dancing Phoenix Pavilion was so humble today.

Nie Feijun was in a good mood. He had come to the Dancing Phoenix Pavilion today after inviting several good friends who helped him during the battle in the day for dinner. He did not bother to talk to the manager and simply waved his hand at him before he went into the lobby.

Hardly had he entered the lobby when he heard a drunkard yelling, "Are you made of jade or what? Why can't I touch you? I have all the money in the world. Bring—burp—bring me your manager!"

Then, the weeps of a waitress came over.

Nie Feijun frowned.

The Dancing Phoenix Pavilion was one of the most luxurious hotels in Silver Wing City. The space pirates who were wealthy enough to be a customer in this place were definitely not the shabby thieves but the formally-dressed great bandits. No matter how brutal and merciless they were in space, they often pretended that they were gentlemen in this place.

If the guy was looking for sexual entertainment, there were countless places for that in Silver Wing City. Why must he yell and shout in this place where everybody was enjoying their dinner?

"Young Master Jun?"

The manager rubbed his hands and looked at Nie Feijun helplessly.

In order to run a business in a nest of pirates such as Silver Wing City, the Dancing Phoenix Pavilion was naturally backed by somebody else. Before, it was the Split Sun Pirate Gang. But naturally, the supporter of the hotel was the Wild Tide Pirate Gang now.

Right now, the Wild Tide Pirate Gang was in its peak days. Since somebody was making a fuss right in front of his face, Nie Feijun felt obliged to take care of it. He asked solemnly, "Who is he?"

"A wealthy magnate who doesn't look familiar. It seems that he is new to Spider Den and does not know the conventions here," the manager said in a low voice. "Just now, he proposed a lot of outrageous demands. Young Master Jun, you also know that the Dancing Phoenix Pavilion is just a peaceful place for dinner and does not do any other business. But the customer simply wouldn't let it go and kept harassing us."

Nie Feijun nodded as he realized what was going on.

It must be a space pirate who had done a major job and fled to Spider Den with the stolen goods. Chances were that he had a few coins in his pocket because he had just sold the stolen goods through the black market and felt that it was hard to contain his libido.

With the chaos in the Flying Star Sector and the continuous battles between Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators, many people had decided to take advantage of the havoc. A 'space pirate' did not need to be registered in a labor union, nor did it require any work experience. As long as the evil thoughts prevailed, anybody could turn into a space pirate after they made up their mind and committed major crimes for money and treasures.

Therefore, there had been quite a few foreign magnates emerging on Spider Den over the past half year.

However, those people usually did not end well. Most of them were devoured by the local space pirates of Spider Den with even no bones left.

But Nie Feijun did not intend to rob the fat lamb today. He nodded and spoke to his two tough-looking subordinates. "Take him to the pit around the back. Break his knees and knock out all his teeth. That should be enough. I'm in a good mood today and will spare his life."

His subordinates acknowledged and strode forward. After noises of utensils being broken apart, somebody yelled, "Do—do you know who I am? The fu—Ouch, ouch!"

A smelly drunkard was dragged out by Nie Feijun's subordinates.

The waitress who was harassed just now hurried to thank him.

Nie Feijun smiled and did not think too much of the incident. After his friends and him were seated, they talked and laughed and toasted merrily.

However, half an hour passed, and his subordinates still had not returned.

Nie Feijun felt alarmed. He was quite familiar with the environment of the Dancing Phoenix Pavilion. There were complicated forsaken tunnels right behind the hotel. It should not have taken them as much time even if they were torturing the drunkard slowly.

He hurried to contact his subordinates, but nobody replied in the communication channel.

After prolonged 'beep-beep-beep' sounds, Nie Feijun and the other space pirates at the dinner table looked at each other in bewilderment, all putting on solemn expressions.

"Let's go!"

As the son of the captain of the Wild Tide Pirate Gang, Nie Feijun had abundant experience in combat. Now that he had a sense of danger, his very first reaction was not to go to the tunnels to check but to leave the hotel immediately!

Nie Feijun crawled into his own 'Rapid Dragon Armed Shuttle' outside the Dancing Phoenix Pavilion and heaved a long sigh of relief.

The Rapid Dragon Armed Shuttle boasted amazing performance in vertical rising and landing and was designed to fight in tunnels that had a lot of vertical sections. The 128 flying swords it carried could be released simultaneously and manipulated by the crystal processor on the top of the armed shuttle automatically in order to rectify the trajectory of attack before they reached the body of the enemy. The firepower was extreme fierce!

Moreover, the seven layers of spiritual shields of the armed shuttle were unbreakable even when face with the most advanced crystal suit. The defense ability was very impressive!

However, the moment when Nie Feijun activated the Rapid Dragon Armed Shuttle, the vehicle, which was as valuable as a high-end crystal suit, turned into a furiously-burning fireball after an earsplitting explosion!

"Ouch!"

Nie Feijun was an expert in the Building Foundation Stage. The explosion did not kill him instantly, but his skin was all charred. With a scream, he soared to the sky and summoned his crystal suit while holding back the excruciating pain!

Right then, a black shadow blinked to Nie Feijun's side like lightning, as if it had calculated the angle and the direction precisely earlier!

"You dared to anger me? Whoever you are—die now!"

Nie Feijun, son of the captain of the Wild Tide Pirate Gang and an expert in the Building Foundation Stage, was killed!

The entire city was shocked in half an hour.

After striking the Split Sun Pirate Gang heavily twice consecutively, the Wild Tide Pirate Gang had become the well-deserved dominator of Silver Wing City. Under such circumstances, the son of the captain of the Split Sun Pirate Gang was killed in public!

Moreover, the murderer broke out of the siege and ran away!

For a moment, the Wild Tide Pirate Gang indeed turned into a wild tide. Inside Silver Wing City, countless space pirates received orders to search for the mysterious assassin.

Five hours later, Li Yao crawled out of a stinky gutter and lay on the ground. He opened the facial cover and the breastplate of his crystal suit while he coughed hard.

The wound in front of his chest was still bleeding, but the pain had calmed down and did not affect his fighting.

He had just escaped from the nine waves of blocking.

With his maximum combat ability close to that of the peak of the Core Formation Stage, it was more than easy for him to run away from the space pirates.

If he were mad, he could even have charged into the headquarters of the Wild Tide Pirate Gang and go on a killing spree.

But right now, he was playing the role of a tough bandit who had done a job and come to Spider Den for entertainment.

He suppressed his capability to the high level of the Building Foundation Stage.

It was because experts in the peak of the Building Foundation Stage were rare both on the Cultivators' side and on the space pirates' side. They were all well-known. A random guy with such a high Cultivation would easily raise suspicion.

He had fought against a lot of people in the Storm Prison Pirate Gang and even had a brief battle with Fengyu Zhong himself. Storm Prison must have had a lot of his combat videos from which his habits of fighting could be analyzed.

Therefore, he had completely changed his approach to fighting and abandoned the skills that he was most familiar with. He mainly used guns and the weird kicking skill transformed from the 'Hellsword Arts'.

With the double restraints, it was not usual that he was wounded.

Moreover, the wounds were exactly what he needed.

He even felt that the wounds were not serious enough and was planning to expose his traces on purpose in order to fight the pursuers one more time, when he heard soft footsteps nearby.

Li Yao smiled, knowing that the fish had bitten the bait.

When he looked back, seven fully-armed space pirates were scattered near the gutter. They seemed to be blocking all his ways of escape, but they did not come any closer, a subtle sign of their friendliness.

An Exo who was wearing an ivory crystal suit with a mask that looked like a fox face chuckled. "New to the place, unfamiliar with the terrain, and yet successfully escaping from the hunting of the Wild Tide Pirate Gang multiple times, while slaying more than ten experts during the counterattack. You will be famous after the battle.

"However, are you not curious why these people are chasing you so persistently and without bothering about the cost?

"Tell you what, my friend, you are in serious trouble!

"Do you have any idea who the guy you killed in the beginning was?"

Brutality beaming out of his eyes, Li Yao replied in a coarse voice, "I don't care who he was. He is dead because I wanted him dead!"

Chapter 720: Progressive Concession

Chapter 720: Progressive Concession

The man who was wearing a silver mask of a fox face chuckled and said unhurriedly, "With your expertise, it is quite possible that you can kill whoever you want. But you have to pay a price when you kill some of them.

"Let me tell you the truth. The guy you killed just now is the eldest son of the captain of the Wild Tide Pirate Gang!

"You don't need me to explain the position and power of the Wild Tide Pirate Gang in Silver Wing City, do you?"

Li Yao suddenly shivered, his face twisting. He cursed, "No wonder so many scumbags were chasing after me. How f*cking unlucky I was. I just killed a random guy, and I hit the jackpot!"

While he was talking, strong killing intent flowed out of Li Yao's body. His eyes started at the strangers like flying swords, as he asked solemnly, "So, you are trying to capture me to claim the rewards from the Wild Tide Pirate Gang?

"If so, just bring it on!"

The masked man hurriedly stepped back and raised his hands, indicating that he was not malicious. He said, "Make no mistake, sir. We're not here to capture you. On the contrary, we might be the only people in Silver Wing City who can help you!"

"Cut the nonsense!" Li Yao spat and grinned. "I've seen too many such tricks. Everybody knows that the Wild Tide Pirate Group is now the dominator of Silver Wing City after defeating the Split Sun Pirate Gang. All the space pirates are now trying to please the Wild Tide Pirate Gang. You sons of b*tches are merely trying to win my trust before you find an opportunity to tie me up and send me to the Wild Tide Pirate Gang!

"Help me? Why would you be so kind to help me?

"Stop wasting my time. If you want a fight, so be it. I cannot guarantee that you will all stay here forever, but I'm 90% sure that you will be buried together with me!"

The masked man took another step back and asked his subordinates to keep distance from Li Yao. He bowed and said, "Allow me to introduce myself. I am Yin She, the advisor of the Split Sun Pirate Gang."

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. He grunted and went back to the gutter.

It was beyond Yin She's expectation. He was somewhat anxious. "What's the meaning of this, mister?"

Li Yao grinned. "If you are indeed from the Split Sun Pirate Gang, I do believe that you mean no harm for me.

"However, I also believe that you are about to try to recruit me. I'm sorry, but I'm not interested at all. With that in mind, we might as well go our separate ways here and now!"

Yin She was dumbfounded. "Are you not even willing to hear what I have to offer?"

"No," Li Yao replied without even turning back. "Everybody in Silver Wing City knows that the Split Sun Pirate Gang has been beaten to the ground. Whatever's left of your members are merely stray dogs now. Whatever great offers you give me, I can only enjoy them if I'm alive. I do not intend to play hide-and-seek in the depths together with you!"

Yin She's voice was now mixed with anger. "You are now being hunted by more than half of the people of Silver Wing City. Everyone in the Wild Tide Pirate Gang is determined to skin you and eat you alive. You are now no better than a stray dog! How are you expecting to run away if you don't cooperate with the Split Sun Pirate Gang?"

Li Yao sneered. "I have my own approaches, and I don't need to explain them to you and ask for your approval."

"I know what your approaches are even if you tell me nothing," Yin She said disdainfully. "Three hundred meters above the gutter is the biggest magical equipment store for wilderness survival in Silver Wing City. All kinds of magical equipment that can help you live in the fatal environment on the surface of Spider Den can be purchased there.

"You are planning to sneak into the store and get loads of magical equipment to help you survive in the wilderness. Then, you will find a way out of Silver Wing City, travel through the wilderness, and enter into another city, right?

"However, I suggest you think before you leap.

"Since I know what is on your mind, people of the Wild Tide Pirate Gang must know what is on your mind, too. I estimate that a lot of space pirates of the Wild Tide Pirate Gang are planning on ambushing you in the store. As long as you show up there, you will be dead for sure!"

Li Yao suddenly froze.

Yin She smiled. "I know that you must be used to doing your job alone and never trusting anybody. However, in the current situation, you killed the son of the captain of Wild Tide Pirate Gang, which is something you can never make up for, and the Split Sun Pirate Gang has been a mortal enemy for the Wild Tide Pirate Gang all the time because we are on different sides.

"Cooperating with us may be your best option right now, sir."

Li Yao turned around. Pondering for a moment, he said coldly, "I'm told that the bureaus and bases that the Split Sun Pirate Gang established in Silver Wing City have all been destroyed by the Wild Tide Pirate Gang. The attack you recently planned was crushed, too!

"Moreover, I'm told that, after Boss Bai demonstrated his strength again, many space pirates rejoined his side, too. He now has an overwhelming advantage in numbers and is unstoppable!

"Meanwhile, the Split Sun Pirate Gang is on Fengyu Zhong's side. Although Fengyu Zhong has advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage, he is still the newcomer in the competition. I fear that he is no match for Boss Bai!"

Yin She burst into laughter. "Of course, Bai Xinghe is an extraordinary man. But Fengyu Zhong is backed by Black Spider Tower and the Temple of Immortals! Recently, our strength has been mostly concentrated in Heavenly Saints City. Bai Kaixin only managed to take advantage of us while we were weak. Right now, our people are returning to Spider Den, and our strength is growing day after day!

"Tell you what, the battle today was merely a minor test. The big picture was not affected whether it succeeded or not! The real thunderous attack has yet to break out!"

"Oh?" Li Yao looked down, deep in thought.

Yin Shen took the chance to persuade him. "You have nowhere to run in Silver Wing City. Even if you flee to the wilderness, you will be faced with the hunting of the Wild Tide Pirate Gang forever! Besides, the Wild Tide Pirate Gang is a loyal subject of Bai Xinghe, and you must know a thing or two about Bai Xinghe's intimidating strength on Spider Den!

"Even if you successfully run to a second city, you might not necessarily be safe!

"You might get a moment to catch your breath only if you flee into space.

"However, since you have come to Spider Den, you must have committed felonies in space. How can you go back and ask to be captured?

"Therefore, there is absolutely nowhere to run to for you now!

"Your only choice is to cooperate with us. We will work together and eliminate the Wild Tide Pirate Gang and even Bai Xinghe himself. After that, not only will your head be safe and secure again, your position will also rise higher!

"It's indeed a bit hasty to ask you to join the Split Sun Pirate Gang so suddenly, but we can cooperate on equal terms. The operations we've been planning recently could really use experts like you!"

Li Yao observed Yin She for a long time with a pair of eyes that resembled hooks. He smiled. "You want to hire me? My salary is very high!"

Yin She smiled, too. "Backed by the Temple of Immortals and Black Spider Tower, we are lacking anything but resources. Whatever you demand, just say it out!"

"My requirements are not outrageous."

Li Yao extended three fingers and said, "If you want to hire me, you will give me a basic salary every day and a 'movement fee' after every battle I take part in. You will also give me a 'headcount fee' for every person I kill on the battlefield according to their Cultivation, as well as a 'maintenance fee' according to the damages to my magical equipment on the battle. Is there a problem?"

Yin She was dazed for a long time. He pondered for a moment and said, "As long as you prove yourself to be worthy, naturally, we won't hesitate to offer you money and resources. But I'm curious about one thing.

"Nie Feijun was merely between the low level and the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage. It is not unusual that you could slay him instantly when you were wearing a crystal suit.

"However, according to the combat videos of yours that I just watched, I assume that you are no higher than the high level of the Building Foundation Stage.

"How did you escape from the serial hunting of so many space pirates?

"Honestly speaking, if you were merely a combat-type Cultivator in the high level of the Building Foundation

Stage, I wouldn't have risked showing up and recruiting you.

"It was your 'ability' that attracted my attention. I wonder, can you explain it to me?"

Li Yao licked his lips and replied casually, "Other than knowing some shallow fighting techniques, I'm also an explosions expert."

"Explosions expert?" Yin She's interest was greatly aroused. He nodded and said, "Very good. We are in dire need of such an expert right now. Then, how should we address you?"

Li Yao squinted. There was wariness in his eyes again.

"We are not interested in your past, and we know that you are not likely to tell us your real name," Yin She explained. "What we need is just a code name for the sake of easier communication."

Li Yao replied coldly, "Call me 'Bloody Vulture'."

…

"Bloody Vulture, a combat-type Cultivator between the middle level and the high level of the Building Foundation Stage, is good at movement techniques and kicking techniques, the production and deployment of crystal bombs, and various tactics to cooperate with his crystal bombs.

"He is both bold and brutal and killed somebody without thinking about the consequences when he was angry. Judging from his tone, he must have committed major crimes in space.

"In our database, no names or nicknames similar to 'Bloody Vulture' were found. There were no search results on his face and appearance, either. It is estimated that he has disguised himself, but that is quite normal on Spider Den. Nothing to be surprised at.

"After analyzing the combat videos in which he escaped from the hunting of the Wild Tide Pirate Gang, I have ascertained that he is truly a very skilled explosion expert. He will be of high value for our operations in the future.

"Also, after multiple checks, Nie Feijun has indeed been slain by this guy. It is impossible that the death was faked. Therefore, it is impossible that he is an undercover member of the Wild Tide Pirate Gang. There's no doubt about that."

In the deepest part of Silver Wing City, more than six thousand meters below the around, inside a secret chamber established in the zigzagging tunnels, You Dongsheng, the leader of the Split Sun Pirate Gang, narrowed his eyes and studied a case file carefully.

"In such a case, this Bloody Vulture can't be an undercover member of the Wild Tide Pirate Gang, can he?"

The boss of the Split Sun Pirate Gang tapped his crystal processor slowly and told Yin Shen, his advisor who was standing solemnly aside, "However, there is still something suspicious about the guy."

Chapter 721: No Innocent Souls Under My Saber!

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The Leader of the Split Sun Pirate Gang tapped the crystal processor quickly and divided the light beam into five sections, each displaying different footage. They were all captured by somebody else when Li Yao was breaking out of the siege.

The leader's eyes were as thick as the venom retrieved from the teeth of a viper. He said calmly, "Judging from his reactions during his escape, Bloody Vulture is a prudent, calm man.

"Also, as an explosion expert, he has to deal with crystal bombs that are extremely precise every day. One moment of carelessness, and he will be blown into pieces. Therefore, it is impossible that he is a reckless man.

"Then, why was such a calm man involved in a conflict with Nie Feijun in the Dancing Phoenix Pavilion in the first place?"

"Many people have confirmed that it was Nie Feijun who demanded that his knees be broken and his teeth be plucked first," Yin She explained. "Even the calmest person would burst into fury when they ran into something like that, not to mention a brutal bandit who has zero respect for life."

"No. I was not talking about that." The leader shook his head slowly and said, "I was talking about him harassing the waitress of the Dancing Phoenix Pavilion half-drunk before that.

"It is a basic skill of survival for a space pirate to notice their surroundings. As a lone wolf, it is all the more important for him to observe the environment he is in.

"As you said, he was a very calm space pirate who acted on his own. When he came to a place like the Dancing Phoenix Pavilion, he should have known that it was not a random hotel where he could horse around and that he would be in trouble if he did.

"Then why did he horse around anyway?

"That is why I'm suspicious about him. I think that harassing the waitress does not fit the calmness that he demonstrated later!"

Yin She smiled. He thought for a moment and replied, "Big brother, I never like to use the word 'coincidence', but what happened might really be just a coincidence.

"After the assassination, we found that the nest of Niu Youyi, a black market merchant in the center of Silver Wing City, had been blown up earlier. The traces of explosion were very similar to the methods Bloody Vulture showed later."

The leader of the Split Sun Pirate Gang sneered, "Niu Youyi? The scumbag who liked to rob other space pirates finally had his karma!

"I assume that Bloody Vulture went to Niu Youyi to purchase magical equipment, but the merchant had ill intentions and played dirty tricks again, only to piss off someone he should not have pissed off and be slain mercilessly!

"However, what does it have to do with my suspicion?"

"Your assumption is right. Our preliminary analysis is that Bloody Vulture went to buy magical equipment from Niu Youyi since he was new to the place. In the end, Niu Youyi was killed by Bloody Vulture when he planned to rob him," Yin She explained. "Bloody Vulture must have sacked his shop by the way.

"Bloody Vulture made a fortune after looting Niu Youyi. It was only reasonable for him to enjoy himself in the most luxurious hotel of Silver Wing City."

"Enjoyment was reasonable," the leader observed coldly, "but harassing the waitress was reckless."

Yin She blinked and said, "It would've been reckless if he were sober, but it was nothing odd when he had drunk an entire bottle of 'Drunk Deity'.

"Big Brother, you also know that 'Drunk Deity' is a popular refined wine in the Flying Star Sector. It is made of 'Drunk Deity Vine', a valuable Heavenly Material and Earthly Treasure, as well as dozens of other herbs. It is said that the wind can cleanse the veins, refresh the soul, and even improve one's Cultivation!

"Naturally, after having 'Drunk Deity', he lost control of himself when his blood boiled and his nerves were excited. Even an expert in the Core Formation Stage might find it unbearable, not to mention a Building Foundation Stage one.

"The 'Drunk Deity' wine in the outside world is mostly made of the powder of the Drunk Deity Vine, or even counterfeits that are other vine-type herbs. Such wine is absolutely useless!

"In comparison, the Drunk Deity wine that the Dancing Phoenix Pavilion provided is brewed by the hotel itself. It is the unique feature of the hotel and one of the best Drunk Deity wines in the entire Flying Star Sector!

"We estimate that Bloody Vulture must've had a lot of Drunk Deity wine in space and thus did not think too much of it. Therefore, he ordered a bottle with no concern when he reached the Dancing Phoenix Pavilion.

"He must've regarded the Drunk Deity wine here as the lousy wine he drank in space. He didn't know that the Drunk Deity wine would be so potent!

"Also, the biggest feature of the Drunk Deity wine is that it is sweet and tastes as smooth as silk. There will not be the slightest hinderance. The wine will only take effect one to two hours later.

"Captain, look, this is the surveillance video we stole from the Dancing Phoenix Pavilion, and Bloody Vulture's order clearly listed that it was Drunk Deity he demanded.

"This is the picture at the first few hours of his drinking. It is obvious that he is drinking the Drunk Deity wine.

"He was indeed calm and stayed alert in the beginning. He was looked around warily while he was drinking.

"However, as he drank more and more wine and finished the entire bottle, he was no longer the master of himself when the wine took effect!

"His harassment of the waitress and his encounter with Nie Feijun both happened after that.

"Therefore, everything should be a coincidence."

The leader frowned. "I don't like the word 'should'. Can you find the files of the crimes Bloody Vulture committed in space?"

"That will be tricky." Yin Shen opened his hands helplessly. "In the dozens of space zones, thousands of Cultivation sects, and millions of space towns, who knows what case he did in which town? Such desperadoes are the most careful with their tongue. They will never tell other people what they did. Otherwise, other people might threaten them with the information someday.

"The more skilled an expert is, the more secrets they have. We are now in desperate need of hands. If we only employ people after we fully vet their ancestors, they will all join Bai Xinghe's side!

"After all, we are only hiring him for battles. He will never touch our top secrets. I think our investigation is good enough."

"You do have a point. Observe him in secret for another three days. If everything is alright, ask him to take part in the operation in three days' time!"

The leader pondered for a moment and turned on another light beam.

It was the picture of Li Yao at exactly that moment, taken from a very weird angle.

Lying on his bed, with his hands as the pillow, Li Yao was whispering a weird song, as if he had no idea that such an inconspicuous camera was hidden in his room.

Neither the leader nor the advisor knew that Li Yao was whispering a song from a different world named 'Forty

Millenniums of Cultivation'.

…

Li Yao lay on his bed comfortably. The terrible wounds on his chest had been treated with an ointment, and he had done some recovery training with the facilities provided by the Split Sun Pirate Gang.

Thus, he could focus his attention on the current situation.

With the information that Niu Youyi provided, he had basically understood the status of the major pirate gangs in Silver Wing City and found a suitable target.

Then, he went to the Dancing Phoenix Pavilion and had a whole bottle of the Drunk Deity Wine, making an excuse for his rashness and the assassination resulting from his recklessness.

Up until now, everything went quite smooth. He had been hired by the Split Sun Pirate Gang as he had planned.

Working as a mercenary instead of joining the Split Sun Pirate Gang was a choice that could not be helped.

Standing in the middle of the competition between Bai Xinghe and Fengyu Zhong, two brutal bandits, was like struggling to survive between two great swirls. One would be smashed into pieces if they were imprudent for one moment.

Even though the leader of the Split Sun Pirate Gang was a moron, Li Yao did not dare to underestimate Fengyu Zhong's wisdom. During the head-on clash with Fengyu Zhong in the periphery of the Iron Plateau Space Zone, the traps that he had set up were seen through by Fengyu Zhong multiple times. The old, cunning fox had an intuitional sense of danger.

If Li Yao acted in a hurry to join the Split Sun Pirate Gang and get in touch with the core secrets, even a pig would know that there was something wrong with him, not to mention Fengyu Zhong!

The identity of a mercenary could maintain his independency and help him avoid the most thorough investigations.

The identity of an 'explosions expert', on the other hand, was both a disguise and the best role to reach the center of the competition.

Li Yao believed that, for such a large-scale battle in such a complicated terrain as Spider Den, an explosions expert was definitely an indispensable figure.

As long as he can proved himself to be an out-and-out explosions expert, there would certainly be a vast stage for him to show off. Later, he would be able to influence the outcome of the battle to some degree and make Spider Den an even more chaotic place than right now!

Soon, I will have to prove my 'value'!

Li Yao had knocked open the door of the Split Sun Pirate Gang with Nie Feijun's head. A lot of other space pirates would die at his hands in future, too.

But he did not hesitate at all.

Both the Split Sun and the Wild Tide were among the top twenty pirate gangs on Spider Den.

On the wanted list that the major Cultivation sects provided, the crimes they had committed were recorded in great detail. They were all wicked criminals and deserved death penalties.

Nie Feijun, who had been killed by him earlier, had once hijacked nine carriers in a row in the Flowing Flower Space Zone, and to prevent the news from leaking out, he slew every crew member on board after he looted the carriers!

It was just one of the insignificant crimes that the space pirates committed.

After all, the space pirates—be they part of the Split Sun or the Wild Tide, be they on Fengyu Zhong's side or on Bai Xinghe's side, and whether they followed the rules on the surface or completely disregarded them—were merely demon beasts wearing human skin.

No. Demon beasts fought against human beings due to natural instincts and for their own survival.

The space pirates, in comparison, were mostly strong Cultivators themselves. Yet, they forgot the responsibilities on their shoulders and did things that were even worse than the demon beasts' actions!

This is why I like Spider Den.

In this place, there are no innocent souls under my saber. Every scumbag I kill is revenge for the endless restless ghosts in space!

I can kill anybody blatantly without caring about anything!"

Chapter 722: Li Yao's Methods

Chapter 722: Li Yao's Methods

Three days later, in a secondary mining hole hundreds of meters in diameter on the east side of Silver Wing City…

After hundreds of years of construction, this place had been built into a minor maintenance dock for starships.

The vertical wells led to the ground and up into the bright purple sky. The small assault starships no longer than a hundred meters could be maintained and launched into space by the helical ejection rune arrays deployed on the wall of the mining hole. It was safer and more confidential than to have the starship maintained in the orbit of the planet, and such a way often consumed less fuel.

Right now, an assault starship was being maintained inside the dock.

Countless mechanics were crawling up and down under the command of refiners. Sparks were bursting out everywhere. It was quite a lively scene.

Suddenly—

Dozens of ceramic balls that contained flashing rune arrays were tossed into the place from the tunnels in various directions. They exploded in midair consecutively and constituted a dazzling array of brightness, dying the dock pure white.

Everybody could see nothing except whiteness. They could only hear furious roars,

"The Split Sun Pirate Gang is doing our job here. Lie low if you don't want to get killed!"

Hundreds of ferocious space pirates lunged out of the shadows of the mining pits.

They had put on their crystal suits a long time ago, and their crystal cameras were installed with a special protection membrane. Therefore, they were not affected by the flash bangs while they charged at the important locations.

A brutal combat instantly began!

Over the past three days, a lot of space pirates of the Split Sun Pirate Gun had returned from Heavenly Saints City to Spider Den and regrouped. The leader of the gang, with the support of Fengyu Zhong, also summoned a lot of resources and recruited new subordinates on Spider Den. Countless brutal bandits had joined his cause. Therefore, his attack right now was much fiercer than the one three days ago!

In the blink of an eye, the front side of the dock was wreathed in flames.

Outside the main battlefield, where it seemed quiet, Li Yao started his attack, too.

He was wearing a grey, light crystal suit that had ancillary wings made of the skins of demon beasts behind the arms and the legs. When they were opened together, the crystal suit would look like a giant bat.

The mining holes, which could easily be thousands of meters deep, often had chaotic vertical air currents. With such ancillary wings, the air currents could be made best use of to make the crystal suit even more mysterious and unpredictable.

The crystal suit was named 'Drunk Bat'. It was a special crystal suit built for the unique environment of Spider Den. The difficulty in operating it was quite high, too.

Swoosh!

After putting on the Drunk Bat Battlesuit, Li Yao seemed to have really turned into a bat that had drunk too much wine. While everybody's attention was focused on the main battlefield, he slipped into the dock without alarming anyone.

Beep! Beep!

Right then, the crystal processor of the Drunk Bat Battlesuit displayed that it had detected a hostile expert named Gui Feng, the deputy captain of the assault team of the Wild Tide Pirate Gang!

The crystal processor immediately displayed all the information regarding Gui Feng in the database, including several of his battle videos.

It was said that the man was in the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage and adept in wind-class spiritual energy. He also had a piece of air-controlling magical equipment in his possession that could compress the air into invisible 'air blades' and kill people in a breath!

While the files were blinking on Li Yao's light beam, some other bloodstained information popped up in Li Yao's brain, too.

Space pirate Gui Feng was wanted by more than five hundred space towns. His bounty on the wanted list of space pirates published by Heavenly Saints City ranked in the top thousand, too. More than twenty bloody cases in space were associated with him based on solid evidence.

Li Yao sneered. The information streams of the bloody cases seemed to have turned into magma and flooded into his legs. His speed was further accelerated. With the help of the chaotic air currents, he blinked and split off into seven clones, which all lunged at Gui Feng simultaneously!

As a seasoned space pirate, Gui Feng had keen senses. When the dock was breached from the front, he had immediately focused his attention on the rear part.

Hardly had Li Yao's seven clones appeared when he triggered almost twenty air blades quietly and slashed them over. In the meantime, he raised four spiritual shields in front of him!

However, although his spiritual shields could resist Li Yao's physical attack, they could not block Li Yao's telepathic thoughts!

One of Li Yao's telepathic thoughts was condensed to the size of a mustard seed and pierced through Gui Feng's spiritual shields, through his crystal suit, and into his brain without any trouble.

Then, it exploded brutally!

It was a method of mental attack that Li Yao had invented himself. He called it a terror bomb.

Li Yao's expertise in mental attacks was based on Hellsword's 'Hellsword Arts'.

However, the structure of his mental power was totally different from Hellsword's.

His soul was much more solid, but it was not as mysterious and erratic as Hellsword's.

Li Yao had tried learning all of the methods of mental attack from Hellsword, but the outcome of the training had not been satisfactory.

He had thought hard for a long time. Then one day, it suddenly occurred to him that he could simulate the mechanism of crystal bombs.

At first, he would compress a telepathic thought that stored immense mental power into a tiny bomb with his ultra-solid soul. Then, he blew the telepathic thought into the enemy's brain at a high speed and detonated it brutally there!

Such an approach to mental attacks was much less mysterious and unpredictable, but it was rough and straightforward!

For a moment, the thousands of information streams stored inside the telepathic thought exploded inside Gui Feng's brain like a real bomb!

Gui Feng's eyes blinked. He fell into a world of illusions knitted by Li Yao carefully. He felt that he was placed in the middle of a furnace whose walls were as smooth as a mirror. Endless fire was crowding in and setting him in an eternal furnace of doom!

" Ah! "

Such illusions were even more terrifying than the thousands of ghosts that Hellsword created. Gui Feng was soaked in sweat, even though he was a brutal bandit who had committed countless murders.

Not good. He's an expert in mental attacks!

Stimulated by his cold sweat, Gui Feng came back to himself instantly. The world of illusions collapsed like a sand tower in a blowing wind, but in the world of reality—

His heart had been stabbed through by Li Yao's saber!

Li Yao's spiritual energy surged out. Real flames burst out and burnt Gui Feng's heart into ashes with a breath!

…

"The attack is not going well."

In the shadow of the mining hole, the leader of the Split Sun Pirate Gang and Yin She, his advisor, were monitoring the entire battlefield.

His newly-recruited subordinates were mostly mobs that had been summoned hastily not long ago. They had only trained with each other several times in the virtual world.

The dock used to belong to the Split Sun Pirate Gang, but after the Wild Tide Pirate Gang took it over, a series of modification had been carried out, and countless hidden forts and firing points had been added. Now that their attack was organized according to the old map, naturally, they suffered heavy casualties.

On the Wild Tide Pirate Gang's side, they were well-prepared and had been on a winning streak recently. Therefore, they had high morale. The longer they fought, the braver they became.

Due to the length of the battle and the unexpected casualties, the temporarily recruited mobs were all hesitating to charge forward and were planning to retreat.

Yin She sighed. "It's a pity that two starships of our elites were chased after by Cultivators in the Silver Brilliance Space Zone. They are still playing hide-and-seek in the stone belts there and haven't returned to Spider Den yet. We can only count on those scumbags that we hired recently. I estimate that our attack will prove to be futile."

"It doesn't matter. Few of them are our own. What we lose is just a bit of money," the leader said slowly. "The most important thing is to show our attitude to Fengyu Zhong and the Temple of Immortals. As long as our stance is confirmed, no matter how heavy our losses are, Fengyu Zhong and the Temple of Immortals will cover them."

While the two of them were talking about the battle, a gray shadow blinked close to the wall like a chameleon. Before they knew it, it had reached their side.

The leader and the advisor immediately furrowed their brows with a gloomy face.

Recently, the Split Sun Pirate Gang had hired a lot of soldiers in Silver Wing City and the few cities nearby. Of all the mercenaries, the guy 'Bloody Vulture' was paid the most. His ability to escape from the Wild Tide Pirate Gang nine times that day was highly valued.

Today was his first battle. They had thought that he would demonstrate an amazing performance and did not expect that he would retreat so quickly.

"You—"

Before Yin She had the time to finish his sentence, the newcomer threw a helmet to his feet.

Yin She's pupils constricted violently as he exclaimed, "Gui Feng's helmet?"

Li Yao gave no reply and simply crouched behind a bunker.

While the leader and the advisor were in a daze, an earthshaking explosion suddenly broke out above their heads. When they looked up, they discovered that a great fireball almost a hundred meters in diameter was rising up from the engine compartment of the starship that was being maintained in the dock. The fireball almost blocked the entire mining hole now.

The scorching air currents swept over more than half of the dock instantly. After a period of screeching noises, the starship broke apart and was stuck in the mining hole!

As the air currents swept over, intense explosions continued breaking out in every corner of the dock. Fireballs were growing out of thin air like orange mushrooms.

The space pirates of the Split Sun Pirate Gang and those of the Wild Tide were caught unprepared alike. They were all screaming in the ocean of flames!

The blast came over like an overwhelming tsunami. Yin She, as an advisor, was not a combat-type Cultivator. The blast knocked him over directly.

Even the leader of the Split Sun Pirate Gang was slightly shaking in the blast.

Lightheaded, two ferocious bandits looked at Li Yao in bewilderment.

Li Yao brushed off the dust on his shoulder, and a calm voice came from beneath his cold mask. "The obstacles have all been cleared. Your main troops may attack now."

"But—"

Yin She was of a mind to jump and shout. They were planning to take back the maintenance dock instead of destroying it completely. Such insane explosions had essentially blown the entire dock up. Even though it was taken back, it would not function normally without a year and a half's reconstruction!

Besides, there were so many their people inside the dock!

"You—"

Yin She was about to burst into fury, but for some reason, when he looked at the facial cover on the newcomer's helmet, even though he could not see them, he felt as if two cold eyes had brushed past by his heart.

Yin She secretly shuddered and looked at the leader.

The leader of the Split Sun Pirate Gang was dazed for a long time, too. In the end, he waved his hands helplessly and gnashed his teeth. "Attack!"

Chapter 723: Terror Bomb

Chapter 723: Terror Bomb

As more and more space pirates on the Temple of Immortals' side retreated to Spider Den from Heavenly Saints City, Fengyu Zhong's counterattack pushed forward continuously.

In the various mining pit cities on Spider Den, the scattered battles grew larger in number and scale, showing signs that a great war was about to break out.

On the Nexus, both true and false news about the open and secret competitions of the two parties were spreading crazily like wildfire.

In the dynasty-changing battles, many brutal bandits whose notorious names once reached afar died miserably and quietly in the dark gutters at the bottom of the mining pits.

In the meantime, many new-generation bandits who had never been heard of before replaced their predecessors and rose to fame.

Bloody Vulture was one of them.

In a short month, not only did the name of 'Bloody Vulture' become well-known in Silver Wing City, it had also attracted much attention in the other cities of Spider Den.

On December 17, during the attack of a crystal suit maintenance center under the Wild Tide Pirate Gang's control, Bloody Vulture slew two space pirates in the Building Foundation Stage and nine in the Refinement

Stage. He also blew more than half of the center into smithereens.

On December 19, the Split Sun Pirate Gang assassinated the chief accountant of the Wild Tide Pirate Gang. In the end, Bloody Vulture's serial bombs separated the chief account from his body guards and exposed his traces. The chief account was then beheaded by a flying sword launched from 1,300 meters away.

On December 25, the secret treasury of the Wild Tide Pirate Gang, which stored not only most of the cash of the gang but also the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures for the space pirates' training, was blown up by Bloody Vulture within only five minutes, despite the fact that it was said to be made of an extremely sturdy alloy and installed with countless defense rune arrays. The resources were all plundered by Bloody Vulture and the Split Sun Pirate Gang!

On December 27…

On December 31…

In less than one month, Bloody Vulture participated in almost twenty battles and played a vital role in every one of them. Even if the Split Sun Pirate Gang's attack failed, he could often accomplish something on his own. Therefore, he became the most hated target for the Wild Tide Pirate Gang and rose to fame in the circle of space pirates!

According to the files on the Nexus, the man was brutal, merciless, and never considered the consequences of his actions. Once he went mad, he would not be able to tell friend from foe at all.

As a result, he often planted crystal bombs all over the battlefield without thinking about anything else. Even in daily life, he was not someone that other people could mess around with.

According to sources, another lone wolf who was also hired by the Split Sun Pirate Gang was dissatisfied about Bloody Vulture's rewards and had a conflict with him during a feast.

Bloody Vulture did not fight back on the spot and simply left. All the other space pirates thought that he was scared and mocked him hard.

But the next day, when the lone wolf was doing his training, the crystal reactor of his crystal suit had an uncanny explosion.

The famous brutal bandit who had once killed dozens of Cultivators died miserably on the spot without even having the chance to scream.

After that incident, no space pirates dared to question why Bloody Vulture's rewards were the highest of all.

…

Lying on the bed comfortably, Li Yao tapped the light beam and browsed through the information about himself on the dark net.

Since Spider Den and Heavenly Saints City were mortal enemies, it was impossible for the Grand Illusionary Group to have established Spiritual Towers in this place. For the sake of safety, the Spiritual Towers built by Spider Den were not compatible with the standard Spiritual Towers of the Cultivators.

Therefore, it was impossible to connect to the Spiritual Nexus of the outside world on Spider Den.

However, the local area network of Spider Den had abundant content, too, and most of the content was exactly what the space pirates were interested in.

Through the local area network, Li Yao was not only able to browse through the remarks that other space pirates gave him but also able to collect valuable information about the moves that Fengyu Zhong and Bai Xinghe were going to make.

In order to recruit more subordinates and expand their forces, the two parties did not conceal their schemes at all. They were both boasting about themselves on the network, bluffing that they were the sun in the middle of a day while their opponent was a dying sun that was about to set.

Fengyu Zhong and Bai Xinghe's head-on clash should be within the next couple of days, concluded Li Yao.

He had seen Bai Xinghe a month ago. Such a great man definitely understood the importance of timing.

Before, Bai Xinghe's ambushes had only succeeded because most of the strength of the Temple of Immortals was not on Spider Den.

Once the focus of the Temple of Immortals returned to Spider Den, he would stand no chance at all.

The only choice he had was to take down Fengyu Zhong before the enemy's main force returned and force the Temple of Immortals to sit down and negotiate with him!

On the Temple of Immortals' side, their capability was naturally much higher than Bai Xinghe's. But their target was the entire Flying Star Sector, and it was impossible to concentrate all their attention on Bai Xinghe.

Take down Bai Xinghe, or accept his conditions, however unwilling they were, if it was impossible to take him down. The choice had to be made quickly. It was unwise to spend most of the resources and manpower on the old bastard Bai Xinghe.

It was one of the most important reasons that Li Yao had shown off crazily.

He had to prove his value with all methods available. He had to prove that he was qualified to participate in the final battle between Fengyu Zhong and Bai Xinghe!

According to the news on the dark net, the battles between the secondary pirate gangs culminated five days ago. Since then, both parties have been keeping a low profile. There have been no big operations for days.

As for the Split Sun Pirate Gang, another starship fully loaded with elites returned to Spider Den the other day, but no new attacks were carried out.

Besides, many other famous assassins, mercenaries, and lone wolves have disappeared. They must be working in secret right now.

This is the calm before the storm. A great war is about to break out!

I wonder, will my performance over the past month be noticed by Fengyu Zhong?

Li Yao turned off the light beam. He took a deep breath and closed his eyes, starting his daily training.

Over the past month, the Split Sun Pirate Gang had changed Li Yao's residence three times, each more extravagant than the last.

However, Li Yao was very clear that crystal cameras must have been installed in secret nooks and crannies to monitor him.

He was not willing to do any real training while being watching by somebody. Therefore, he simply refined and perfect the 'terror bombs' inside his brain.

Terror bombs were mental weapons condensed by his telepathic thoughts. They could bewilder and intimidate the enemy with a world of illusions.

In order to trap an enemy with a solid soul in a world of illusions, the illusions had to be built in a vivid and flawless fashion.

Building a life-like world from scratch was a job that would consume a lot of mental power and computational ability.

The flowers and woods, the bouncing flames, the ripples when a breeze passed by a lake… Every detail had to be modelled, scripted, and rendered.

If the computational ability was insufficient, the illusions rendered would be very lousy. When the flames were bouncing too rigidly, the enemy caught in the illusions would immediately notice that everything was fake.

In the field of mental attacks, Li Yao was just a beginner. Although he had tested it on many space pirates, he still found it complicated and extremely difficult to grasp.

It took him two hours to condense a 'terror bomb' that could last three seconds. When he finished the job, his sheets were soaked in sweat.

The rendering is still not good enough. If the enemy is above the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage, when their soul shakes violently, the three methods of rendering that I current employ might have conflicts. The entire world of illusions will collapse immediately.

I have to find several rendering methods that are more powerful. Maybe I should buy a few books on the construction of illusions as well as some on modelling and rendering techniques.

Li Yao concluded the lessons of his training.

Right then, somebody knocked the door lightly.

Click!

Li Yao waved his hand. His spiritual energy reached the defense rune arrays and opened the door automatically.

Yin She, the advisor, walked in cautiously.

After a month of battles, Yin She had a profound understanding of how dangerous Bloody Vulture was. He also remembered how miserably the mercenary who had conflicts with Bloody Vulture during the feast had died the day after during his training.

More importantly, the crystal suit whose crystal reactor went wrong was the mercenary's own.

Nobody had any idea how Bloody Vulture got the crystal suit and set up traps on the crystal reactor without alarming its owner!

From that day on, the advisor had always felt lucky that he was courteous and did not offend the dangerous person when he recruited Bloody Vulture.

"Another mission?" Li Yao sat straight on the bed.

"Congratulations, Brother Bloody Vulture. Your career is about to soar!" Yin She smiled delightedly. "Brother Bloody Vulture has been on a kill spree in Silver Wing City over the past month. Not only is the Wild Tide Pirate Gang awed by your name, it has also been heard by Boss Fengyu Zhong, the new dominator in the circle of space pirates!

"Boss Fengyu Zhong has watched a lot of your battle videos and is very interested in you. He would like to invite you for a real big operation!

"It is not the child's play between the Split Sun Pirate Gang and the Wild Tide Pirate Gang, but a great war that can potentially turn the whole of Spider Den upside down! The question remains, is Brother Bloody Vulture willing to take the risk?"

It's finally here!

Li Yao felt thrilled. But he replied, showing no sign of his excitement, "Fengyu Zhong is starting a final battle against Boss Bai now?"

Everybody on Spider Den had learned of the matter. It was not odd for Li Yao to ask that.

Yin She blinked and said, "We all know what is going on. There's no need to say it out loud. After all, you are paid for what you do, Brother Bloody Vulture, and I guarantee that you will gain a lot of benefits by working for Boss Fengyu Zhong directly, that is, if you are bold enough to do so."

"Since the day I killed the son of the captain of the Wild Tide Pirate Gang, there has been no turning back for me."

Li Yao jumped up from his bed and stretched out arms. Cracking noises echoed all over his body, as if a bloodstained eagle was opening its wings behind him.

Li Yao smiled. "Bring me to Boss Fengyu Zhong. I will surprise him."

Chapter 724: Four Brutal Bandits

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Capital Nest, the biggest city on Spider Den, was where the mother lodes had been densest on Spider Den ten thousand years ago, and it was the mining city that the Star Ocean Imperium developed in the earliest stage.

Looking down through the window of the crystal warship, Li Yao noticed that there was nothing except jam-packed mining pits over the hundreds of square kilometers of desolate land, which made it look like an enormous honeycomb.

In the complicated underground tunnels, countless magical equipment centers, starship maintenance centers, and purification plants for Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures were hidden. Together with the underground city that could accommodate millions of workers and Cultivators and the underground fortress that was concealed below the underground city, even the locals who had lived in the city for generations did not have the slightest clue how enormous the city made of interconnecting mazes was!

Capital Nest was the center of Spider Den. It was home to Bai Xinghe, the Pirate Potentate, and also where Black Spider Tower was headquartered.

Right now, both parties were preparing their soldiers and supplies, ready for the last battle that could break out at any moment.

The city was divided into two zones, one in the east and the other in the west, with a clear boundary. The air was so intense that a single spark could detonate hundreds of mining pits at the same time.

The crystal warship that Li Yao was on flew into the zone that was under the Temple of Immortals’ control slowly through a giant hole slanted downward.

Capital Nest was entirely different from Silver Wing City in style.

Although the Wild Tide Pirate Gang and the Split Sun Pirate Gang had been fighting hard in Silver Wing City, most people’s daily lives had not been affected. The black market, the hotels, and the magical equipment stores opened as usual, and the underground arenas and the strip clubs were packed with space pirates, too.

Capital Nest, on the other hand, had turned into a grave military fortress. Most of the stores were closed, and few lone space pirates could be seen on the street. Most of the space pirates were in neat groups and wearing standard crystal suits, leaving the impression that they were actually an army.

The space pirates were mostly wearing red crystal suits and white ones.

Those in red crystal suits had the mark of an angry black spider on their chests. The mark of their leader had a few gold stripes painted on the outside.

According to the introduction of Yin She, the advisor, they were all soldiers commanded by Black Spider Tower.

Those Exos in white crystal suits seemed to be in a higher position than the soldiers. Their crystal suits were more elegant and streamlined, giving a feeling of a perfect ‘waterdrop’ from head to toe. Certain half-stealth rune arrays seemed to have been utilized, because the crystal suits were entangled by invisible waves and appeared to be partially melded with the air. They looked extraordinary and seemed to belong to a different world.

On the left side of their breastplates, ‘Immortality’ was painted in an ancient style.

Those people were not space pirates but the armed forces directly under the command of the Temple of Immortals. It was sort of the regular army of the Immortal Cultivators.

More than one year ago, when the Temple of Immortals revealed itself on Spider Den, it had recruited a lot of talents for its regular army.

However, the requirements of the ‘Immortal Army’ was quite rigorous. Most of the candidates were screened because they could not complete the tests.

Those who passed the tests were all one-in-a-thousand experts.

It was said that they had been further trained and cleansed by the Temple of Immortals after they were recruited with many secret arts from the era of the Flying Star coalition government that had been lost for thousands of years. After only a few months, they would be transformed completely!

Fengyu Zhong had summoned Li Yao to a training camp of Black Spider Tower.

There were already dozens of space pirates in the hall when Li Yao went into the training camp.

When they saw him, they did not hide the wariness and hostility in their eyes at all.

The most notorious bandits on Spider Den are all here!

Li Yao glanced around and found his heart beating faster.

After a quick look, he noticed several brutal persons who were not only on the top of the wanted lists of Cultivators but also intimidating enough even in the circle of space pirates.

A kind-looking old man whose hair and beard were white was standing on his left side. His name was Master Phantom Sea, and he had originally been an elder of the Silver Moon Clan, one of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City.

However, when his campaign to become the leader of the sect failed, he dealt with the new leader with poison in secret out of hatred. However, his scheme failed. The Silver Moon Clan sent quite a few experts to capture him. He slew one Core Formation Stage Cultivators and almost twenty Building Foundation Stage Cultivators, before he ran away from Heavenly Saints City to Spider Den.

From then on, he had become a great bandit roaming through space. He was absolutely merciless during his jobs, especially when he ran into the carriers under the name of the Silver Moon Clan. No living creatures would be left!

Standing next to Master Phantom Sea was a muscular man more than 2.3 meters tall. His muscles bulged out to an unbelievable degree, and his eyes looked like burning bronze bells. White air currents were spurting out of his nostrils nonstop. He looked like an infuriated ox that had been stuffed into the shell of a human being!

The man was carrying two crossed giant axes that were even broader than doors on his back. The edges of the axes were covered in dents and blood stains, a signal that they had devoured countless innocent souls. Just one glance at them was enough to make people feel creepy.

The muscular man was named ‘Bloody Axe’. He was the champion of the underground arenas of Spider Den.

Space pirates were all brutal, but the underground arenas thousands of meters below the surface were lawless, cruel places, even for them. Even the strongest fighter might not be able to survive ten competitions when they were sent to the arenas.

‘Bloody Axe’, on the other hand, was the only expert who had fought a hundred battles in the underground arenas and retired alive over the past several decades.

Although he was merely in the beginning level of the Core Formation Stage, he would slash ruthlessly at those in the middle level of the Core Formation Stage or even at the peak when he went mad!

A short, lovely girl was hiding in the shadow behind Bloody Axe. Her clear eyes and her slender body made her absolutely unfit for the dirty environment. She was almost like a hostage that the space pirates had brought here.

But Li Yao knew for a fact that the woman who looked like a teenager in high school was at least seventy years old. She was known as ‘Fairy Coral’, and she was even more dangerous than the awe-inspiring ‘Bloody Axe’.

The coral snake was the most beautiful and the most fatal!

When she first showed up, she was merely a mistress of the leader of a pirate gang. Everybody considered her to be a simple toy and did not think too much of her.

But soon, the pirate gang she stayed in had a clash with a bigger pirate gang. After the pirate gang was swallowed, she was naturally a trophy to serve the new leader.

Then, all the leaders of the pirate gangs who accepted her would suffer a uncanny disaster within the next year, as if she had been cursed. They were either swallowed by other pirate gangs, or assassinated, or executed by Cultivators when their hunting jobs were leaked out and they were captured.

In short, whichever pirate gang she stayed in, it would be destroyed soon after, and she was always able to take the most valuable treasures of the pirate gang.

Rumor had it that she was adept at the skills of enchantment and had been practicing a certain evil technique that could absorb other people’s vitality to maintain her youth.

Many space pirates who were bewildered and fooled by her once united and went looking for vengeance, only to never be found again.

Therefore, the space pirates all honored her as ‘Fairy Coral’ when she was present and called her ‘Witch Coral’ behind her back.

Li Yao’s most attention was focused on four space pirates. Other than the three of them, the fourth space pirate was a dwarf no higher than 1.3 meters with extremely short limbs.

The dwarf named ‘Wang Haha’ had a rarely-seen profession on Spider Den.

He was a thief.

Spider Den was a congregation of bandits. Yet, a thief had appeared in the home of the bandits, and he was not a random thief but a famous one. Everybody knew how he made his living, but he had still lived his life happily for decades.

Two things were obvious.

Firstly, his skills were good, to the point that other people could not catch him even though they knew that he was a thief.

Secondly, he was very strong. Even if a space pirate knew that their items had been stolen by him, they did not dare ask for them back.

Everybody on Spider Den knew that Wang Haha stole everything, including heads, especially those on necks that could still talk and laugh.

Li Yao looked around and was somewhat relieved.

Those who had been invited there were all lone wolves that did not belong to any organization and mercenaries who did their jobs for rewards.

For the pure combat-type Cultivators there, they were no lower than the peak of the Building Foundation Stage. Many of the experts there were in the high level of the Core Formation Stage, too.

For those lower than the peak of the Building Foundation Stage, they all had a certain specialty other than combat.

For example, he was an explosion expert, Fairy Coral was good at enchanting skills, and Wang Haha was an all-stealing thief.

While he was pondering, Wang Haha moved his stout body toward him in a very troublesome way.

As he was observing other people, other people were observing him, too.

Over the past month, ‘Bloody Vulture’ had been quite a resounding name in the circle of space pirates. Seeing that the newly-risen brutal guy had been summoned by Fengyu Zhong, too, those seasoned bandits were quite surprised.

“You are Bloody Vulture from Silver Wing City. Then you must know who I am. Hahahaha!”

Wang Haha extended his short hands and blinked, while he said, “I’m told that your hands are very fast, and you can plant crystal bombs on other people without them knowing. As it happens, my hands are fast, too, and I can take out anything from other people without them knowing!

“You put things inside, and I take them out. The two of us should hang out together more!”

Wang Haha’s voice was high and sharp. He immediately attracted all the space pirates’ attention.

The seasoned bandits all looked at them with great interest, looking forward to the competition between the two ‘quick-hands’.

Fairy Coral observed Li Yao from top to bottom carefully. Weird brilliance beamed out of her eyes, as she tried to lean close to Bloody Axe.

But Bloody Axe quickly retreated as if she were a ghost. It was obvious that he did not want to have physical contact with the woman who could absorb other people’s vitality.

Li Yao narrowed his eyes. His lips curled up into a smile while he extended his right hand to Wang Haha.

Chapter 725: Fengyu Zhong’s Promises

Chapter 725: Fengyu Zhong’s Promises

Bo!

As their right hands touched each other lightly, explosions resembling the sound of an air tank being broken apart immediately echoed in the hall.

The space pirates whose eyes were not keen enough could only see that dazzling brilliance was breaking out of Li Yao and Wang Haha’s hands.

Those who had sharper eyes, on the other hand, saw their ten fingers were enlengthened abruptly at the same time, as if they had grown another ten joints and as if all the bones on the fingers were gone. Their hands whipped and entangled each other like two infuriated octopuses. Every finger was like a serpent that tried to crush the opponent’s fingers!

When the bystanders blinked and tried to see more clearly, after another ‘Bo’ sound, Li Yao’s and Wang Haha’s right hands were both thrown away, as if an invisible bomb had exploded between them.

Wang Haha carried out agility disproportional to his fatness and flew almost ten meters back like a balloon before he landed on the ground without causing a sound. He blew at his right hand that was slightly red and smiled. “Your right hand is indeed quite fast. Haha. Hahahaha!”

His right hand was slightly swollen, with steam popping up. But like a magic trick, his left hand waved and three eye-catching balls appeared in the gaps between his fingers.

Li Yao touched his pocket, and his face lost its color.

Wang Haha was still laughing. His left hand did not seem to be moving at all, but the three crystal balls, which were almost transparent, were dissected into tiny components that were swirling above his palm slowly. Three small crystals were glittering and emitting dangerous brilliance.

The space pirates gasped and realized that, while Wang Haha was competing with Li Yao with his right hand, his left hand had stolen three crystal bombs from Li Yao’s pocket without any of the audience noticing. Moreover, he had dismantled the crystal bombs into the most fundamental components and completely disarmed them!

He truly deserved to be called an all-stealing thief!

For a moment, many space pirates were sneering.

They were all the time-tested bandits on Spider Den. Although they had their own conflicts, none of them liked the newcomer who had skyrocketed to fame in the past month.

Now that Wang Haha had taught Li Yao a lesson, the bandits were all gloating in great satisfaction.

Li Yao frowned. His eyes were cold, but he did not burst into fury.

After another two notorious bandits arrived at the hall, the illumination rune arrays on the ceiling gradually dimmed. A beam of light fell down and formed a vivid phantom.

It was exactly Fengyu Zhong, who had just entered the Nascent Soul Stage and was aiming to become the new dominator of Spider Den!

This was the first time that Li Yao had met the old, cunning bandit face to face. He could not help but feel a bit nervous.

In a black cloak, Fengyu Zhong hid most of his face in the shadow below his hat, making him even more mysterious.

He coughed and said unhurriedly, “Everybody here is a well-known hero of Spider Den. You are either long-known or only rose to fame recently—”

When he mentioned ‘rose to fame recently’, many space pirates looked at Li Yao.

Wang Haha even chuckled without trying to hide it.

Before his laughter stopped, a shriek suddenly burst out behind his neck!

The shriek was both like the cry of a ghost and the howl of a wolf. It sounded like a cat that fell from a room at midnight. He felt that a devil was lurking right behind his neck!

Every space pirate felt their head spin. They looked at Wang Haha in great surprise.

Wang Haha jumped up instantly, his face so twisted that even he would not have recognized himself. As if he had installed springs on his arms and legs and removed their joints, their lengths were suddenly doubled while he groped on his back. He jumped up and down and searched for a long time before he took a round ball off his back!

Everybody could tell that the round ball looked exactly the same as the crystal bombs that Wang Haha had just stolen from Li Yao's pocket.

"When did Bloody Vulture plant the bomb on Wang Haha's back?"

"Thankfully, it was just a shriek. If it had detonated instantly…"

Wang Haha's face was even redder than a pig's liver, while he glared at Li Yao in both fear and shock, with cold sweat all over his face.

Li Yao smiled. "Don't be scared. It's a false one. The real bomb is in somewhere else."

Wang Haha was relieved when he heard the first half of the sentence, but the latter half made him jump up again and fumble hard all over his body with a pale face.

"Five seconds remaining."

Li Yao announced the countdown calmly. "Five… Four… Three…"

All the space pirates were dumbfounded. They could not believe that Li Yao had planted two micro crystal bombs on Wang Haha during the short competition, nor could they believe that he would be so insane as to detonate the bomb right in front of Fengyu Zhong!

But judging from his confident and casual appearance, the guy did not seem to be bluffing.

Wang Haha was waving his hands and legs crazily, his tears almost flowing out. His coolness a moment ago was entire gone.

Like a monkey that was trying to scratch the lice on its body, Wang Haha’s hands and feet turned into a gray blur. He almost wished that he had a tail to help with the search now. He was about to take off his shirts and pants, but he failed to locate the crystal bomb!

“Two… One…”

Li Yao dragged his tone.

The space pirates were secretly alarmed. “Is—is he lying to Wang Haha? How could he have planted a second crystal bomb on Wang Haha without Wang Haha noticing?”

Wang Haha’s face lost its color. He screamed and crossed his hands. Then, he tore off a piece of man-made skin the size of a fingernail from the back of his right hand!

Below the man-made skin was a black ‘millet’ seed. There was no telling when it had been stuck to the back of his hand. He was in so much of a hurry to search for all his body parts that he did not realize it was right on his hand!

Wang Haha hurried to toss the fake skin to the ground.

BOOM!

The floor that was made of solid granite was left with a hole more than half a meter deep.

Cold sweat was popping up on every space pirate’s forehead.

Half a second later, and Wang Haha’s right hand would’ve been wasted, if he was not killed on the spot!

“This Bloody Vulture’s capability is more terrifying than in the rumors. He planted two crystal bombs on Wang Haha in the blink of an eye in such a sordid way!”

“But how did he do it?”

“Wang Haha is an almighty thief. His hands must be more sensitive than his mouth. How did he not feel anything wrong when his hands were stuck with fake skin?”

Looking at the smoke rising up from the ground, Wang Haha collapsed into his seat, all his strength gone. He licked the back of his hand and mumbled, “Snake Hemp Flower?”

The space pirates immediately realized what had happened. Snake Hemp Flower was an anesthetic material. The liquids purified from the Snake Hemp Flower could serve as ingredients for thousands of different anesthetics.

It was obvious that Bloody Vulture had smeared the anesthetic refined from Snake Hemp Flower on the fake skin and stuck it to the back of Wang Haha’s hand while the thief was too busy stealing his crystal bombs.

Wang Haha’s right hand was red and swollen after the fierce competition just now. Because of the burning heat, his sensitivity had been significantly reduced. Together with the numbing of the Snake Hemp Flower, Wang Haha did not realize that a foreign object was on the back of his hand.

All the space pirates swallowed hard.

Even the all-stealing thief who counted on sensitivity and alertness such as Wang Haha was ambushed by Bloody Vulture without him knowing. If it were them…

No other space pirates dared eye Li Yao in a scornful way anymore. Few of them had the courage to look back when he looked at them.

The weird brilliance in Fairy Coral’s eyes, on the other hand, became even brighter. She looked at him and did not hide her interest in him at all.

Wang Haha breathed hard and glared at Li Yao in fury, but he lowered his head helplessly, knowing that he had been crushed in the competition today!

Fengyu Zhong’s phantom observed the situation without saying anything, and he did not intend to stop them at all. It was not until this moment that he smiled. “It is beyond my expectation that so many great heroes answered my call to gather in this place. Whatever grudges you had in the past, you are at least comrades on the same boat at this moment. We should work together against the common enemy!

“Time is precious. I will explain the situation as quickly as possible.”

“Over the past two months, Bai Xinghe betrayed us and launched his counterattack. He has been killing and robbing on Spider Den to expand his forces. Many flip-floppers chose to join his side again, too.

“Tomorrow night, he will be organizing what he calls a ‘Meeting of Heroes in Space’. Every well-known space pirate has been invited to attend. He claims that he will bring out all the Cultivation arts and secret treasures he excavated from the underground fortress of Spider Den as rewards in the battle!

“It is not hard to guess that, after the meeting, all the space pirates on Bai Xinghe’s side will attack with all their might and fight the final battle with us!

“However, rest assured, everybody. I can tell you three facts.

“Firstly, the lousy performance on our side over the past few months is partly because we were caught unprepared and partly because we were concealing our capability so that Bai Xinghe wouldn’t be prudent!

“Secondly, although Bai Xinghe is meeting the ‘great heroes’, he doesn’t know that many of our people have pretended to join his side. Tomorrow will be the date of death for Bai Xinghe!

“Thirdly, Bai Xinghe is too mean and insincere. He is about to die, and he is still only bringing out the secondary treasures from the underground fortress.

“But I am different. The Black King of the Temple of Immortals and I have both agreed that, after we kill Bai Xinghe and get the map of the underground fortress and the key to the control center, we will invite all the contributors to enter the underground fortress and share the treasures of ten thousand years ago together!”

“Hiss!”

Many space pirates gasped and stood up in excitement.

The first two points that Fengyu Zhong made did not surprise them. Even a pig on Spider Den knew that the final battle between Fengyu Zhong and Bai Xinghe was drawing near.

Also, since Bai Xinghe was desperate to expand his forces and did not vet the space pirates who joined him, it was not unusual that Fengyu Zhong’s spies had infiltrated his ranks.

But the third point Fengyu Zhong made let everybody’s heart beat fast and their faces red.

The underground fortress of Spider Den, in which the secret treasures of the Star Ocean Imperium were buried!

Chapter 726: Bai Wulei

Chapter 726: Bai Wulei

Fengyu Zhong waved his hands and raised his voice. “It is well known that Spider Den was one of the last strongholds of the Flying Star Sector in the civil war of the Star Ocean Imperium. A lot of underground fortresses, magical equipment warehouses, and secret training facilities are buried deep below our feet!

“The secret to Bai Xinghe’s rise was that he got the map of the underground fortress of Spider Den as well as the key to get into the control center!

“After we finish off Bai Xinghe and take the map and the key, we will enter the underground together. Everything we see will be distributed according to our contributions!

“Some of you might doubt that we will not keep our word after the job is done. But if you think about it carefully, you will see that everybody present is an influential person on Spider Den and in the circle of space pirates.

“Our greatest enemy is not Bai Xinghe but the entire world of Cultivators. If we do not fulfil our promise and lose your support, how are going to deal with the full-scale attack of the Cultivators in the future even if we take down Bai Xinghe?

“Everybody, we are now wagering on our last chance now! The Cultivators will never let us go after the battle of Heavenly Saints City. They will destroy Spider Den at whatever the cost and slay every one of us all!

“Our only solution is to kill Bai Xinghe, enter the underground fortress, find the secret treasures of the Star Ocean Imperium, and fight on against the Cultivators until the end!

“Therefore, there’s no way that we will go back on our word. Wouldn’t we be committing suicide if we betrayed you?

“Isn’t it so, everybody?”

The brutal bandits were all quick-minded enough to soon realize that Fengyu Zhong was not lying.

As the saying went, ‘When the prey is captured, the hound will be useless’. Even if Fengyu Zhong really considered them to be hounds, the biggest ‘prey’ at present was the world of Cultivators instead of Bai Xinghe.

It was impossible for the Immortal Cultivators to kick them away before they seized control of the Flying Star Sector completely.

To resist the furious attack of the Cultivators, they had to rely on the strength of the space pirates.

When the space pirates thought that the secret treasures buried below the ground of Spider Den for ten thousand years would be fully open to them, everybody began breathing heavily.

‘Bloody Axe’, champion of the underground arenas, was even yelling in excitement. He bashed his chest hard while he shouted, “Captain Fengyu, we have all slain quite a number of important people on Bai Xinghe’s side over the past few months. He must regard us as sworn enemies now, and there’s no way to resolve the hatred.

“Right now, the only solution for us to fight Bai Xinghe until the end and take him down!

“Just speak, Captain Fengyu. What do you want us to do? Damn it. The secret treasures of the Star Ocean Imperium alone are tempting enough for me to kill Bai Xinghe!”

Fengyu Zhong glanced over everybody on the spot.

All the space pirates nodded their heads in agreement.

Li Yao pretended to think carefully and also nodded his head.

Fengyu Zhong was very satisfied. He smiled and said, “Rest assured, everybody. I wouldn’t be so hard on you as to ask you to confront Bai Xinghe. In the battle tomorrow, Bai Xinghe will be dealt with by the Storm Prison Pirate Gang, Spider’s Thorn, and the Immortal Army. Your job will be to take care of somebody else.”

Fengyu Zhong clapped his hands lightly. A frozen phantom appeared right next to him. It was a middle-aged man who looked energetic and had a pair of sharp eyes and grey-haired temples.

Fengyu Zhong coughed lightly and introduced, “This is Bai Wulei, the first true disciple of Bai Xinghe and a Cultivator in the peak of the Core Formation Stage only half a step away from the Nascent Soul Stage. Over the past decade, he has been the commander of the ‘Ghost Knights’, the strongest assault team of the Abyss Pirate Gang. He is the No.2 person in Bai Xinghe’s enterprise.

“Bai Xinghe has no sons. It is said that he once had one but killed him personally in the end.

“Bai Wulei is not only his first true disciple but also sort of his foster son. He is Bai Xinghe’s right hand and probably his heir.

“Over the past month, Bai Xinghe has had an unprecedentedly intense relationship with us. The two parties have both been alert. Bai Wulei and his Ghost Knights were summoned to guard the Red Steel Crystal Suit Center.

“The Red Steel Crystal Suit Center is the most advanced crystal suit factory of Spider Den. It is based on an ancient refining center of the Star Ocean Imperium and allegedly applies lots of technology and secret arts of that era. It is the only place on the entire Spider Den where ‘Super Gale’, a special crystal reactor for crystal suits, can be manufactured.

“The crystal reactor is the heart of a crystal suit. ‘Super Gale’ has a performance far better than most of the common crystal reactors. The elites under Bai Xinghe’s command have mostly been equipped with the ‘Super Gale’ crystal reactors, which greatly enhance their combat ability!

“It was based on the team of Exos who were equipped with the ‘Super Gale’ crystal reactors that Bai Xinghe secured continuous victories and dominated Spider Den in the old days!

“Therefore, the Red Steel Crystal Suit Center is the foundation of Bai Xinghe’s success!

“Tomorrow night, most of the people on Bai Xinghe’s side will be attending the ‘Meeting of Heroes in Space’. The meeting will be attacked by the Storm Prison Pirate Gang, Spider’s Thorn, and the Immortal Army personally.

“The Red Steel Crystal Suit Center will be the least guarded. Bai Wulei and the few of his subordinates will be the only watchmen.

“Your mission is to attack the Red Steel Crystal Suit Center and execute Bai Wulei. Is there a problem?”

The space pirates looked at each other in bewilderment and gave no reply.

Bai Wulei was the first true disciple of the Pirate Potentate, the No.2 of Bai Xinghe’s group, and a great expert in the peak of the Core Formation Stage. Naturally, he was a brutal bandit that everybody on Spider Den knew.

Over the past twenty years, using the excuse of his old age, Bai Xinghe often secluded himself for training. His daily affairs were mostly handled by Bai Wulei. The operations of the Abyss Pirate Gang were run by Bai Wulei, too.

Therefore, many space pirates had not seen Bai Xinghe in person, but all of them had witnessed Bai Wulei’s cruelty.

Now that they learned that their target was such a great expert in the peak of the Core Formation Stage, many space pirates were having second thoughts.

Fengyu Zhong observed everybody’s expression and smiled casually. “Rest assured, everybody. The battle tomorrow concerns the future of the entire Spider Den. We are not asking you to get yourselves killed in vain. Let me tell you the truth. In the battle tomorrow, a batch of assassins from Spider’s Thorn and the Immortal Army will help you in secret. More importantly, some of Bai Wulei’s most trusted people are Immortal Cultivators!

“As long as you all work hard and fight with your best, we will be sure winners of the battle!

“After the job is done, your contributions will be calculated according to the battle videos captured by your crystal cameras. The more contributions you make, the closer you will be to the lead when we get into the underground fortress!”

“Alright!”

The space pirates also realized that, since it would be the final battle between Fengyu Zhong and Bai Xinghe tomorrow, there was no reason Fengyu Zhong would risk jeopardizing his cause by setting traps for them. Besides, Fengyu Zhong was going to deal with Bai Xinghe, the Pirate Potentate, in person, so they had no options except to bite into Bai Wulei no matter how tough the man was.

Bai Wulei was in the peak of the Core Formation Stage, but there were more than ten space pirates here who were in the Core Formation Stage, too. If they failed to take down Bai Wulei, how could they claim their reward and share the secret treasures under the ground together with Fengyu Zhong?

Therefore, whether they meant it or were pretending, all the space pirates shouted and accepted the job. The hall was seething with excitement.

Li Yao observed everything in silence and thought about it carefully.

It seemed that the Temple of Immortals, Black Spider Tower, and Fengyu Zhong had made thorough plans and sent a lot of spies into Bai Xinghe’s gang. They were all set for the thunderous attack tomorrow night.

The question remained, how was Bai Xinghe, the well-known Pirate Potentate, going to deal with the schemes?

…

For the sake of confidentiality, after hearing Fengyu Zhong's plans, Li Yao and the rest of the space pirates were not allowed to leave Black Spider Tower's training camp anymore.

Fengyu Zhong also knew that the battle to come was of paramount importance. In order to boost morale, besides making enticing yet empty promises, he also provided a lot of authentic Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures for the space pirates.

Naturally, Li Yao took all of them gladly without being courteous.

Inside the training camp of Black Spider Tower, all the network was cut off. It was impossible to know what was happening outside. Li Yao could only maximize his hearing and gathered all the sounds in the outside world carefully.

As time went by slowly but surely, Capital Nest seemed to have turned into a smothering grave. Before, there were still occasional noises. But after one night, they were all replaced by dead silence.

Li Yao felt ill at ease.

He was not worried about the battle that was about to break out; he was concerned that Bai Xinghe's gang might collapse too fast and would not diminish the Immortal Cultivators' strength enough.

If Bai Xinghe failed to react properly and was crushed by Fengyu Zhong, the Temple of Immortals might gain access to the underground fortress of Spider Den and even receive the control clearances. The capability of the Immortal Cultivators would be further increased if so.

It was definitely not going to be good for the world of Cultivators.

Li Yao’s only hope was that Bai Xinghe would show his wisdom as the Pirate Potentate!

…

The next day, although it was dusk, the sky thousands of meters above everybody’s head was riddled with holes as usual. There was nothing but darkness.

Dim orange lights were glowing from the walls of the mining holes, which originated from the residual crystals and mother lodes.

Wreathed in the feeble lights, Capital Nest at dusk was like a frozen ocean of magma. Below the seemingly solid shell on the surface were raging undercurrents and rampant flames!

In the district under the Temple of Immortals’ control, teams of the Immortal Army in ivory, translucent crystal suits were gathered and allocated marvelous magical equipment from the secret arsenals.

The soldiers of Black Spider Tower in black crystal suits also formed squads and marched toward their respective targets.

Before they went out, the killers of Black Spider Tower who were adept at stealth and assassination had snuck into Bai

Xinghe’s territory from various directions and lurked around their targets.

In the district under Bai Xinghe’s control, countless docks and shuttle stations were opened. Crystal warship carrying space pirates that had joined his cause were arriving from every city of mining pit on Spider Den at his call.

The Abyss Pirate Gang, the largest group of space pirates on Spider Den, was prepared for battle, too. All the squads had brought their vigilance to the maximum.

The battle that would decide the king of Spider Den would break out in a few hours!

Chapter 727: Full-Blown War!

Chapter 727: Full-Blown War!

At seven o’clock in the evening, deep inside Bai Xinghe’s residence, a warm feast was about to begin. The leaders of countless pirate gangs had gathered in this place, waiting desperately for Bai Xinghe to bring out the secret treasures of the Star Ocean Imperium that he had excavated from the underground world.

Gazed at by countless pairs of hungry eyes, Bai Xinghe stepped on the podium, wearing a cloak made of pure white feathers.

At exactly the same time, a team of elites consisting of more than ten experts in the Core Formation Stage and a hundred in the Building Foundation Stage were secretly marching toward the Red Steel Crystal Suit Center, which was guard by Bai Wulei, Bai Xinghe’s right hand.

Li Yao was still wearing the Drunk Bat Battlesuit while he leapt up and down in the iron forest. He triggered his telepathic thoughts and scanned the enemies and surroundings, while he studied the map of the Red Steel Crystal Suit Center and Bai Wulei’s battle videos one more time.

Looking far ahead, Li Yao vaguely saw an enormous building standing in the middle of the enormous underground pit.

Every inch of the building was densely packed with countless crystal cannons wherever possible. All the crystal cannons were protected by the most solid spiritual shields. Even an expert in the Core Formation Stage might find it hard to blow up one of them after a single attack.

In the meantime, hundreds of seasoned Exos were patrolling on alert at the crucial locations of the buildings.

It was definitely not a crystal suit center but a heavily-guarded military fortress!

Li Yao frowned. Since the crystal suit was so well-defended, there would be a lot of casualties if they assaulted it from the front. It would be quite tricky to protect himself by not really trying his best while not being seen through by Fengyu Zhong.

Right then, above their heads, in the district controlled by Bai Xinghe, explosions that sounded like dull thunders echoed!

The final battle between Fengyu Zhong and Bai Xinghe had finally broken out!

Beep! Beep!

Li Yao’s crystal processor was connected to the temporary local area network established by Fengyu Zhong. As the explosions came over, streams of information immediately flooded in and formed dozens of light beams on his retina.

The light beams included the distribution map of the most important firing points of the Red Steel Crystal Suit Center, the current location he was at, and the places of attack that he could choose.

The arrow that was nocked must be shot. Although the brutal bandits all sensed the scariness of the Red Steel Crystal Suit Center, with everything coming to this point, they would not be spared by Fengyu Zhong when he secured his victory if they deserted now.

Therefore, Master Phantom Moon, Fairy Coral, Bloody Axe, Wang Haha, and the other space pirates all selected their primary target.

Li Yao quickly picked the place he was going to break in, too.

The hundreds of bandits immediately turned into hundreds of streaks of brightness, as they lunged at the targets they had chosen!

Hardly hard they sprinted forward when an earsplitting explosion took place inside the Red Steel Crystal Suit Center. Several ultra-large furnaces were blown up into the sky. The scorching air currents mixed with fatal venomous gas swept across everything nearby!

Countless space pirates who were loyal to Bai Xinghe were screaming miserably inside the venomous fire. The previously flawless defense was immediately filled with loopholes.

The Immortal Cultivators lurking around Bai Wulei!

Li Yao quickly thought everything through. Fengyu Zhong had not lied. How could he count on only the greedy mercenaries to take down such a critical enemy stronghold?

It was very likely that they were merely bait to draw the attention of the guards. The real crucial factors of the mission were the Immortal Cultivators hiding behind Bai Wulei.

Right then, a new message that his crystal processor presented stabbed into Li Yao’s brain like a cold dagger!

“Abort the attack.

“The mission has been changed.

“Bloody Axe is Bai Xinghe’s guy. He is a spy that was asked to infiltrate us. The plan has now changed—execute ‘Bloody Axe’!

“There’s no need to worry about the attack from the Red Steel Crystal Suit Center. The Red Steel Crystal Suit Center is now fully under our control!”

For a moment, a hundred bolts of lightning seemed to break out at the same time inside Li Yao’s brain.

‘Bloody Axe’, the human-skinned bull who had a strong body and a simple mind, did not look like an undercover agent at all. But as it turned out, he was Bai Xinghe’s guy!

In the meantime, despite the gory explosion just now, the Red Steel Crystal Suit Center’s overall defense network was not ruined. Why did Fengyu Zhong claim that it was fully under his control?

Li Yao had still not found the answers to any of his questions when a deafening roar echoed right in front of Li Yao.

Bloody Axe soared into the sky!

Having secured a hundred consecutive victories in the underground arenas and retiring safe and sound, Bloody Axe was definitely not as reckless as he appeared to be. His boldness was merely his protective coloration.

Behind the barbaric and senseless appearance, Bloody Axe was definitely a careful and skeptical man!

Although Fengyu Zhong’s new command was sent to the rest of the space pirates and not him, Bloody Axe still sensed dangerous from the weird behavior of those around him.

Before the other space pirates surrounded him, he took action and dashed at the Red Steel Crystal Suit Center at his top speed!

Bloody Axe was wearing a heavy crimson crystal suit, with two giant horns on the helmet. White airwaves were spurting out of the gaps of his crystal suit and made him look like an infuriated bull. He gave other people the feeling that, even if there was a mountain before him, he would simply continue running and break through it!

The moment Bloody Axe jerked up, Master Phantom Moon, who was the closest to him, took action. Silver brilliance as cold as moonlight shivered and swept toward Bloody Axe unpredictably.

The silver brilliance was like extremely thick seawater. It did not intend to kill Bloody Axe immediately, but it successfully dragged him down.

Bloody Axe’s crazy rush, after being hindered by the cold moonlight, slowed down for reasons nobody knew.

Swoosh!

Two giant wings seemed to open on Bloody Axe’s back. Li Yao observed carefully, only to discover that they were two great axes!

The great axes flipped up and down and cut off multiple streaks of ‘moonlight’.

But the remaining moonlight was still harassing him incessantly like venomous bugs that could crawl into any gap.

While Bloody Axe was struggling against the ‘moonlight’, a shining golden ball suddenly soared from below Bloody Axe and circled around him. The next second, the ball reached his face and split all of a suddenly, reshaping into a special crystal suit with short limbs.

Li Yao was greatly interested. *Wang Haha’s Gold Ball Battlesuit!*

Wang Haha was a natural-born dwarf. It was said that he had received a secret technique to soften, shrink, and build up his bones. After he practiced the technique, it became even more impossible that he grow to a normal body size.

For his figure, it was hard to wear common crystal suits. Therefore, he sought a different approach and asked the crystal suit experts on Spider Den to build a unique crystal suit for him.

Such a crystal suit would be a gapless iron ball when it is folded. The defense rune arrays carved on the surface were flawless, making the crystal suit even sturdier than many heavy crystal suits.

Also, pushed by the power rune arrays, the iron ball had utterly unpredictable trajectories. It was difficult for normal Exos to capture it.

When Wang Haha folded the crystal suit, he was less than one meter tall, but Bloody Axe was almost three meters tall after putting on his heavy crystal suit.

One small and the other huge, it was almost like a competition between a kid and a giant.

Wang Haha’s tiny body size was now a great advantage for him. He made best use of his agility and velocity. Like a balloon that had been stabbed with countless holes, he flew around Bloody Axe’s head at a high speed to interfere with his senses.

Sharp as Bloody Axe’s axes might have been, it was impossible for him cut his own head with them. Besides, there was also a covetous Master Phantom Moon next to him.

” **Hooo!** ”

Faced with the attack of Master Phantom Moon and Wang Haha, and sensing that countless other brutal bandits were about to join the fight, Bloody Axe suddenly roared and clashed his great axes against each other hard. In dazzling brilliance, the great axe exploded into thousands of pieces, which darted at Master Phantom Moon and Wang Haha like shooting stars!

Neither Master Phantom Moon nor Wang Haha anticipated that Bloody Axe would use his axes, which he treasured as much as his own life, in such a way. They were both dazed for a moment.

Taking advantage of their bewilderment, Bloody Axe turned into a streak of redness and rushed toward the Red Steel Crystal Suit Center.

While running, he roared, “Don’t open fire! I’m on your side!”

From the depths of the Red Steel Crystal Suit Center, a streak of whiteness soared into the sky and reached Bloody Axe after only a few leaps.

Bloody Axe was overjoyed. He shouted, “Bai Wulei, help me!”

The whiteness did not slow down when it reached Bloody Axe. Instead, it further accelerated and crashed into him. Before Bloody Axe realized what was going on, the whiteness had pierced through his crystal suit and his chest!

It was a pure white crystal suit that seemed to be made of an intact white jade. The crystal suit looked so elegant that it was more like a piece of beautiful artwork than a weapon. There were no redundant paints or decorations on the streamlined facial cover except for two waterdrop-shaped sensors that looked like tears on the corners of the eyes below the two azure crystal cameras.

Although it had just passed through Bloody Axe’s chest, the crystal suit was not in the least stained with blood. It was as clean as any crystal suit could ever be and was shining brilliantly.

Bloody Axe stiffened. He lowered his head inch by inch and checked, only to discover that a giant hole more than half a meter in diameter had appeared on his torso and that all his internal organs had been burnt to ashes!

Even for an expert in the Core Formation Stage, it would have been impossible to survive under such circumstances!

” **Bai! Wu! Lei!** ”

Bloody Axe cursed his killer’s name, gnashing his teeth, with the last big of his strength, before he fell to the ground like a giant bird that had been shot by an arrow.

What’s going on?

Bloody Axe is Bai Xinghe’s guy, and Bai Wulei is the first true disciple of Bai Xinghe as well as the No.2 person of Bai Xinghe’s group!

Why did he slay Bloody Axe and show up right in front of us so straightforwardly?

Li Yao’s heart was beating faster and faster. He vaguely felt that the direction of the battle was going to be beyond his expectations!

Chapter 728 - Hunt Bai Xinghe!

“Now, do you know why I said we would be sure winners of the battle?”

A familiar voice came from behind Li Yao, making the pores all over his body constrict suddenly, as if a cold viper had just tied up his spine.

There was no need to turn back. The crystal camera in the rear of the helmet had detected that an extremely hideous crystal suit was gradually emerging from the darkness.

The crystal suit seemed to be made of hundreds of twisted bronze faces that were all writhing, struggling, and moaning in creepy sounds.

When he first saw it, the crystal suit had left a deep impression on Li Yao.

He had once fought against the owner of the crystal suit in the Iron Plateau Space Zone and had almost been killed by the wrath of the crystal suit.

Right now, the crystal suit had been fully upgraded. The bronze faces attached to the crystal suit were larger in number and had more miserable expressions. The scent of desperation mixed with the stink of the deepest level of hell was even more terrifying than before!

It was ‘Hundred Faces’, Fengyu Zhong’s special crystal suit that boasted powerful mental attack abilities.

Wasn’t Fengyu Zhong going to attack the ‘Meeting of Heroes in Space’? How did he end up here?

Li Yao pondered for a moment. His pupils were immediately enlarged. He vaguely guessed Fengyu Zhong’s schemes and immediately felt that his temples were drumming.

In the Hundred Faces Battlesuit, Fengyu Zhong passed through the crowd of space pirates, before he smiled casually. “Allow me to introduce you to the Black King, one of the four kings of the Temple of Immortals. He is also known as Master Hidden Fog, the previous leader of Black Spider Tower.”

Li Yao was so shocked that he almost let out a cry, because he did not realize that somebody was standing next to Fengyu Zhong until this moment!

The stranger was also wearing a crystal suit, but he had covered his body with a deep black linen cloak, and his body parts exposed to the air were all enshrouded in gray fog. He looked like a man made of smoke. Li Yao could not sense anything even when he tried with his spiritual threads.

Such a living man was standing right next to Fengyu Zhong, and yet Li Yao did not notice him at all until Fengyu Zhong introduced him!

It was far beyond the level of a stealth ability and had to be a very professional mental technique that could bypass the eyeballs and interfere with the optic nerves. Therefore, even when other people saw him, the image would not be sent into their brain through the nerves!

As it turns out, the previous leader of the Black Spider Tower is the real Black King! Hellsword is absolutely no match for him!

Li Yao felt that his head was dizzy, and he swallowed subconsciously.

Hellsword was in the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage, but the real Black King was at least in the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage!

Li Yao vaguely felt that the situation was gliding toward the loss of control faster and faster and was about to enter an unpredictable abyss.

In the delicate White Jade Battlesuit, Bai Wulei landed on the ground slowly and stood in line with Fengyu Zhong and Master Hidden Fog.

Many quick-witted space pirates finally understood what was going on. But some other space pirates were still confused, not having the slightest clue about the current situation.

Fengyu Zhong explained unhurriedly, “There’s no need to be surprised, everybody. This is indeed Fellow Cultivator Bai, the No.2 person of the Abyss Pirate Gang as well as the leader of the Ghost Knights.

“However, Fellow Cultivator came to understand the true path of Cultivation a long time ago and joined the Temple of Immortals. He is now an honorable Immortal Cultivator!

“Just now, the explosions and fierce fights inside the Red Steel Crystal Suit Center were because Fellow Cultivator Bai was clearing out the obstinate diehards who were still loyal to Bai Xinghe!

“Right now, everybody in the Red Steel Crystal Suit Center is one of Fellow Cultivator Bai’s trusted subordinates. They are only loyal to Fellow Cultivator Bai!

“Other than the ‘Ghost Nights’ of Fellow Cultivator Bai, a lot of elites of the Immortal Army and the assassins from Black Spider Tower including ‘Eight Blades of Black Spider’, as well as experts of the Storm Prison Pirate Gang, have gathered here!

“I’m sorry that I’ve kept the real target of the operation a secret until this moment. But since it is too important, I believe you will understand me!

“In short, we have here two experts in the Nascent Soul Stage, almost twenty in the Core Formation Stage, and hundreds of seasoned space pirates above the Building Foundation Stage!

“Our target is not Bai Wulei, not the Red Steel Crystal Suit Center, but… Bai Xinghe himself!”

Fengyu Zhong was already simmering with killing intent when he announced his nemesis’s name.

All the space pirates shuddered.

Fengyu Zhong’s voice suddenly turned extremely cold. “What? Is there anybody who would rather quit right now because it is too dangerous?”

The space pirates looked at each other in bewilderment. They were all unparalleled, brutal bandits who would not even blink when killing the innocent. Naturally, they knew the consequences if they ‘quit’ in such circumstances. None of them would be foolish enough to be the first to refuse the command in public.

“There’s nothing to worry about, everybody. Every detail is within our control!”

Bai Wulei strode forward and smiled casually.

He and Bai Xinghe did not have a blood relationship, but Bai Xinghe’s warm and comforting voice had been passed onto him. He gave people the feeling that he could be trusted when there was no good reason for that.

Bai Wulei spoke slowly. “Right now, ‘Ghost Knights’, the strongest assault team in the Abyss Pirate Gang, are fully under my control. Meanwhile, Bai Xinghe has no idea that I have abandoned the dark for the light now.

“Soon, I will try to fool Bai Xinghe into coming here. With Master Hidden Fog and Captain Fengyu, two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, on our side, our capability will be higher than his. He will not see it coming when I launch a fatal attack from behind when the battle reaches the fiercest moment!

“By then, the Ghost Knights will shift their direction of attack and fight together with the Immortal Army and the assassins from Spider’s Thorn. With the help of all the heroes here, Bai Xinghe won’t be able to run away however capable he is!”

Bai Wulei’s voice was more alluring than ever. “Everybody!

“Fortune comes with risks. Bai Xinghe has been the dominator of Spider Den for decades. Of course, it will be extremely dangerous to take him down. But if we succeed, our gains will be unimaginable, too!

“In the past ten years, I have managed most of the affairs of the Abyss Pirate Gang. I have even entered the underground fortress of Spider Den, led by Bai Xinghe, multiple times and excavated tremendous techniques and magical equipment there!

“I’m aware of most of the areas in the underground fortress. But the crucial areas, as well as the ‘Spider Key’ to the control center of the fortress, are in Bai Xinghe’s sole possession!

“Of course, the Spider Key is not the pendant that he wears on his neck. It is concealed in the Cosmos Ring on the fourth finger of his left hand!

“As long as we slay Bai Xinghe and get the Spider Key inside the Cosmos Ring, I will immediately be able to lead you to the underground fortress to excavate the techniques and the secret treasures!

“Right now, my identity has not been exposed yet. This is a rare opportunity. If we miss out tonight, who is confident that we can ever kill Bai Xinghe in the future?”

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Around them, countless soldiers in ivory crystal suits that belonged to the Immortal Army and those in black crystal suits that belonged to Black Spider Tower appeared like ghosts, imposing heavy pressure upon the space pirates.

The space pirates looked at each other in bewilderment. None of them dared say ‘no’.

Fengyu Zhong laughed. “Great! You are indeed audacious heroes of the present day. I assume that none of you have second thoughts? Alright. In a moment, I will assign your tasks in the coming battle. The battle is of paramount importance for every one of us. Therefore, you must listen to your command and hold your position. If anybody is absent without leave or even deserts, don’t blame me for my mercilessness, because you will get not only yourself killed but your family too!

“However, like Fellow Cultivator Bai stated just now, tonight is our best shot to slay Bai Xinghe. I, Fengyu Zhong, hereby make a Blood Oath that, if we work hard together and slay Bai Xinghe at the risk of death, I will immediately lead everyone into Spider Den’s underground and excavate the secret treasures together with Fellow Cultivator Bai!”

Coerced by Fengyu Zhong and tempted by Bai Wulei, all the space pirates were browbeaten into the mission of attacking Bai Xinghe!

The Ghost Nights commanded by Bai Wulei pretended to fight the soldiers of the Storm Prison Pirate Gang. Smoke was everywhere in the Red Steel Crystal Suit Center. Fireballs were soaring into the sky and almost pumping away all the air.

Disguised in the smoke and debris, the powerful crystal cannons were altering their angles in secret. The trajectories of their attack outlined the areas of doom.

The corpses on the ground whose crystal suit were battered were mostly faked by the assassins from Black Spider Tower.

The twenty experts in the Core Formation Stage were arranged to the crucial locations that had been carefully calculated multiple times.

The capability Li Yao demonstrated was below the Core Formation Stage, and he had only joined Fengyu Zhong’s side recently. Therefore, he was arranged to be stationed at the periphery of the battle instead of joining the first wave of collective attack toward Bai Xinghe. He was asked to establish a defense line with his expertise in explosions in order to slow down Bai Xinghe if the man tried to break out of the siege.

The Pirate Potentate is screwed!

Li Yao cried in his heart.

That day, when he heard the conversation between Bai Xinghe and Luo Jinhu in the carrier, he had thought that Bai Xinghe was a great man and expected a fierce competition between him and Fengyu Zhong.

But Li Yao did not know that, before the competition began, his first true disciple, leading the strongest team under his banner, had rebelled and joined his enemy’s side!

How was the guy going to fight the battle now?

Li Yao felt a headache coming on. He had thought that the battle between the two parties would last for ten to fifteen days and that there would be enough time for him to find a loophole so that he could influence the situation in secret and balance the strength of the two sides.

But as it turned out, Fengyu Zhong had mobilized all his strength at the very beginning. He seemed to be ready to finish the battle once and for all!

Two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators may not be enough to stop Bai Xinghe. But it will be hard to say if his first true disciple, whom he views almost as his foster son, betrays him!

Li Yao was anxious, but there was nothing he could do. He could only do some tricks to the crystal bombs he planted, but he was not confident in their effects at all.

Bai Xinghe, you are the Pirate Potentate. Last time I saw you, you were as awesome as any man could ever be! Don’t tell me that you will be fooled so easily!

Chapter 729 - Ambushes on All Sides

Since the first explosion, Capital Nest had been caught in an ocean of flames. Mining holes were crumbling and collapsing everywhere. Buildings weighing thousands of tons turned into debris. Countless space pirates on the way were crushed into mud by the collision before they had the chance to scream.

The hundred docks, crystal suit centers, mineral purification factories, and magical equipment warehouses under Bai Xinghe’s control were attacked furiously at the same time!

In the hall of the ‘Meeting of Heroes in Space’, intense explosions had taken place, too. Amid the dense smoke, many space pirates who were loyal to Fengyu Zhong and the Temple of Immortals ripped off their disguises and started attacking in the chaos.

Those space pirates thought that Fengyu Zhong and the elites of the Temple of Immortals were lurking nearby and were about to launch a fatal attack against Bai Xinghe soon.

They did not know that they were merely chess pieces for the Temple of Immortals and cannon fodder than were destined to be sacrificed.

Havoc. There was nothing but havoc in the heart of Spider Den.

Explosions were everywhere, flames were everywhere, and poisonous gas was everywhere. Countless space pirates were fighting each other in the maze-like tunnels. At first, they managed to tell friend from foe by the battle emblem on their chests. But later, as their crystal suits broke and their battle emblem were hidden by blood, the rampant space pirates could only shout when they met a stranger, “Bai Xinghe or Fengyu Zhong?”

If the stranger hesitated for a moment, they would be killed instantly!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

A warehouse of crystals buried deep down the ground was detonated, triggering a minor earthquake; nobody knew whether it was caused by Bai Xinghe or Fengyu Zhong. The blast raged below the ground and collapsed almost a hundred tunnels, crushing all the space pirates inside together with their crystal suits.

The earth was ripped apart. Scorching steam jetted out. The magma at the bottom of the planet was stirring!

Like a bat whose wings were folded, Li Yao lurked in the darkness, absolutely still.

But deep inside his heart, a series of explosions were taking place, causing a mess in his mind.

Would Bai Xinghe come?

Li Yao predicted that he would.

In the scheme, the attack in the Meeting of Heroes in Space seemed to be faked by the Temple of Immortals, whose real purpose was to force Bai Xinghe to focus all of his available strength on the meeting hall. Then, it seemed that the soldiers of the Temple of Immortals, Black Spider Tower, and the Storm Prison Pirate Gang would blow up the Red Steel Crystal Suit Center and execute Bai Wulei!

The Red Steel Crystal Suit Center was the foundation of Bai Xinghe's success, and Bai Wulei was essentially his heir and the No.2 person in his gang!

Nothing could happen to them.

If Bai Xinghe really made such a judgement, he would definitely suppress the chaos in the Meeting of Heroes in Space as quickly as possible and rush to Bai Wulei's rescue without thinking about anything else.

Li Yao could already infer what would be on Bai Xinghe's mind in such a short time. Since the Temple of Immortals had planned for a long time, and Bai Wulei, as Bai Xinghe's first true disciple, must have a deep understanding about his master's personality, the traps they set up must be immaculate, and Bai Xinghe would most certainly walk right into them!

Since the moment of Bai Wulei's betrayal, Bai Xinghe had already lost the fight before it began!

While Li Yao was pondering, an ominous buzz echoed inside his crystal processor.

He's really here!

Li Yao's pupils constricted to two needle tips. On the map displayed on his crystal processor, a cluster of immense spiritual energy was lunging at the Red Steel Crystal Suit Center at a speed several times higher than the speed of sound!

Li Yao considered sending out telepathic thoughts in order to probe more precisely. However, Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were very sensitive to the spying of other people. In order not to alarm the prey, Fengyu Zhong strictly forbade everybody from detecting the situation actively and only allowed them to receive the spiritual energy radiation that Bai Xinghe released.

Li Yao was of a mind to warn Bai Xinghe of the traps there by peeping at him with telepathic thoughts.

However, Bai Xinghe was definitely not a man of integrity; he was a ferocious bandit. If Li Yao reminded him, he would absolutely flee as quickly as possible, leaving Li Yao alone to face the suspicions of Fengyu Zhong, the Black King, Bai Wulei, and the rest of them.

Although Li Yao did not wish for Bai Xinghe to be killed too quickly, he did not intend to get himself killed, either.

Besides, Bai Xinghe was extremely fast. While Li Yao was hesitating, he had already marched into the Red Steel Crystal Suit Center, which was now a furiously burning building.

“Ah!”

“He’s here!”

“Boss Bai. It’s Boss Bai!”

Li Yao felt that some twenty monkeys were tickling him. He could only search for Bai Xinghe’s traces through the picture captured by other people’s crystal cameras.

Everybody was moving at a supersonic speed. The pictures they captured were all swirling. Li Yao was about to throw up just watching all of them.

Right at this moment, everything froze!

The daunting aura that Bai Xinghe released suppressed everybody where they stood!

Li Yao finally saw clearly Bai Xinghe’s appearance through the picture captured by dozens of Exos from various angles.

Bai Xinghe was wearing a bright blue middle-sized crystal suit. Gold stripes were interweaving on the surface of the crystal suit, making the shell of the crystal suit look like dragon scales. Every ‘dragon scale’ was vibrating at a high frequency and emitting bluish colors, adding to the mysteriousness of the crystal suit.

The two shoulders looked like two dragon heads which had opened their bloody mouths. Six artificial arms extended from his back, the front ends of which were all grimacing dragon heads!

Together with the two on the shoulders, the eight dragon heads were each holding a ball in their mouths.

Some of the balls contained thousands of spluttering electric arcs. Some of the balls seemed to be filled with endless flames, with magma blossoming out. Some of the balls were bright blue and seemed nothing unusual, but the mouths that stored them were wreathed in thick frost!

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

The eight dragon heads craned and spat the balls in their mouths out toward the crystal suits nearby at an unbelievable speed.

The crystal suits that were hit by the lightning balls were pierced, locked, and torn apart by hundreds of deep blue electric arcs immediately.

Those hit by the flame balls were melted together with the Exos inside into a pool of steel.

Those hit by the frost balls lost all their color and turned into gray statues. So much as somebody toughed them slightly, they would crumble into countless ice shards the size of fingernails and collapse!

It was Bai Xinghe’s personal crystal suit, Dragon King, which was said to have been made based on multiple secret arts of the Star Ocean Imperium and was the strongest crystal suit on Spider Den!

Li Yao was deeply fascinated, not by the invincibility of Bai Xinghe, but by his Dragon King Battlesuit.

The Dragon King Battlesuit did not look like a dead object at all. It looked as if eight real dragons were hovering around him and protecting him when he was wearing the crystal suit!

Hiss—

Suddenly, there was nothing but blankness in Li Yao’s eyes. All the light beams were occupied by snowflakes.

In the meantime, an intense blast swept across the entire crystal suit center like a tsunami that had hit the seashore.

Li Yao was alarmed, knowing that Fengyu Zhong and Master Hidden Fog must have revealed themselves. The brutal clash of three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators jammed the transmission of telepathic thoughts and tore apart the network.

In a trance, Li Yao received two information streams simultaneously.

The first information stream was a raging, unpredictable galaxy. Countless stars were falling upon the world like a waterfall, drowning everybody in the boundless ocean. He had the feeling that he was too insignificant to resist anything and could only kneel down and pray.

The second information stream, on the other hand, consisted of thousands of bronze faces that were floating in midair. They constituted a maze of faces, each of which were screaming miserably and shedding tears of blood. It was equally soul-stirring and made Li Yao want to shrink back and shudder.

The two information streams were like two different worlds that were colliding heavily without conceding at all.

Li Yao knew that the telepathic thoughts, the spirits, and the will of the two experts in the Nascent Soul Stage were fighting hard.

A battle in the Nascent Soul Stage could never be underestimated. Many less capable Cultivators were not able to withstand the pressure when the telepathic thoughts of the two of them were at war. They all fell to the back one after another, holding their heads.

Even the iron tubes of the crystal suit centers were at the mercy of the daunting aura. Amid screeching noises, one rivet after another darted out!

Li Yao could see nothing but snowflakes on the light beams, and his brain was occupied by the absolutely dominating aura of the two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. He could not spare any of his attention to sense the real situation of the battle at all.

Besides, the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were all amazingly fast. They could launch dozens of fatal attacks within a second. Victory or failure could be determined within a breath. There was no way that they would fight for three hundred rounds like low-level Cultivators did!

While Li Yao was awed, another entity that was sharp and looked like black smoke intervened in the competition between two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators!

The Black King of the Temple of Immortals, as well as the previous leader of Black Spider Tower, finally took action!

Almost at the same time, in the depths of the Red Steel Crystal Suit Center, thunderous noises were breaking out. Then, an earsplitting shout was heard.

“Bai Wulei, you, too?”

Li Yao’s heart shook violently. He could picture what had happened just now.

As a well-known expert, Bai Xinghe was above the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage at the very least, while Fengyu Zhong was in the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage at best.

Of course, Fengyu Zhong was no match for him during their competition.

However, Master Hidden Fog, who was the Black King of the Temple of Immortals, seized the moment to launch his attack.

With Bai Xinghe’s wisdom, he must have foreseen that somebody from the Temple of Immortals would join the battle on Fengyu Zhong’s side in person. Therefore, the appearance of the Black King was within his expectations.

But he did not know that both Fengyu Zhong and the Black King were merely disguises to distract his attention. His enemy’s real deadly move was made by Bai Wulei, his first true disciple who came to help him a hurry just now!

Two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators caught him in a fierce battle so that Bai Wulei, an expert in the peak of the Core Formation Stage and half a step away from breaking into the Nascent Soul Stage, could launch the fatal attack behind his back!

Li Yao had every reason to believe that Bai Wulei must have carried some powerful magical equipment that the Temple of Immortals offered him and he had heavily wounded Bai Xinghe instantly!

Chapter 730 - Broken Hand

In that moment, dozens of people roared from various directions around the entire Red Steel Crystal Suit Center. The Core Formation Stage experts of the Temple of Immortals and Black Spider Tower all lunged up!

The Ghost Knights, who were fighting bloody battles against their ‘enemy’, also shifted their target and bombarded Bai Xinghe together with the crystal cannons that had been deployed to the critical firing points!

The ‘corpses’ lying awry on the ground jerked up instantly, some interfering with Bai Xinghe’s senses, some dragging him down, and some standing in the paths of his escape!

A hundred experts were trying to hunt the Pirate Potentate together!

Capital Nest was in an utter mess. Most of Bai Xinghe’s people had been stalled in the main district. Also, since the Ghost Knights, his strongest assault team, had been stationed in this place, Bai Xinghe had come with only a few trusted subordinates.

Confident in his personal strength and much faster than his subordinates, Bai Xinghe had been all by himself when he marched into the crystal suit center.

When the ambushes were launched, the dozens of subordinates that Bai Xinghe brought with him had only just arrived. They were immediately attacked by the Immortal Army and Spider’ Thorn at the same time.

“Ahhh!” Bai Xinghe roared.

As if a thunderclap had just broken out, the entire crystal suit center was uttering clattering noises. The ultra-large furnaces weighing thousands of tons seemed to be ringing, with humming sounds echoing nonstop.

Li Yao felt that his ears were numb, and his heart was heavier and heavier.

Bai Xinghe had lost his cool.

Li Yao sighed. He had hoped that Bai Xinghe would still have some last resorts. For example, Bai Wulei was actually his spy in the Temple of Immortals and would cooperate with him at the crucial moment to slay Fengyu Zhong and the Black King.

Right now, the idea ridiculous; Bai Wulei had truly betrayed Bai Xinghe.

What do I do?

I thought that the two large pirate gangs would have a prolonged battle and that I could take the advantage and investigate Heavenly Saints City and the Immortal Cultivators in secret and even earn some person benefits in the meantime!

I didn’t expect that Bai Xinghe would fail so fast!

As soon as he is killed, those fickle pirates will certainly join the Temple of Immortals’ side without even batting an eye.

Moreover, Bai Wulei has the strongest soldiers of the Abyss Pirate Gang under his control. Chances are that everything will be settled by tomorrow morning!

If so, the Immortal Cultivators will gain full control over Spider Den. With Bai Xinghe’s map and key, they can also excavate the secret treasures of the Star Ocean Imperium that are buried deep below the ground!

No. I cannot let things go their way!

Li Yao secretly gritted his teeth.

He did not know whether or not the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project proposed by Xiao Xuance was associated with the Temple of Immortals and Immortal Cultivators.

But one thing was absolutely certain.

Once the Temple of Immortals controlled the underground fortress of Spider Den, their strength would definitely increase significantly, and more space zones would be savaged by them miserably.

More innocent ordinary people would be involved in the fire of war, just like the citizens on the tenth space ring of Heavenly Saints City!

I must stop them!

Bai Xinghe can’t die, at least for now!

If Bai Xinghe is alive, the flip-floppers will still be awed by his prestige and won’t obey the Temple of Immortals completely without second thoughts.

More importantly, I cannot allow the Temple of Immortals to take over the underground fortress of Spider Den!

Right then, another earthshaking explosion took place inside the crystal suit center, as if a weird swirl appeared out of nowhere and minced everything that it absorbed into smithereens!

Fengyu Zhong was startled and angry shouts came over in the communication channel. “Stop him!”

Opportunity only knocks once. It’s show time!

The killing intent inside Li Yao’s eyes blinked like a sharp blade. He jumped up and accelerated beyond the speed of sound instantly as he dashed to the sky of the battlefield.

He saw that almost twenty streams of colorful brilliance that were rushing and hovering. They were tangled together, and then they were colliding into each other heavily. Several of the streams suddenly exploded!

In midair, the remains of gear seemed to be frozen. They were floating around the streams of brilliance, scattered. Dragged by the chaotic spiritual energy, they turned into the most fatal weapons, tearing everything in the way apart!

Li Yao was greatly shocked. He could tell after a quick look that these scraps did not belong to crystal suits but Ares Extensions.

Judging from the number and category of the debris, there were multiple Ares Extensions!

How scary!

It's been less than half a minute since Bai Xinghe stepped into the trap, and these people have already blown up almost five Ares Extensions with their brute force?

Li Yao finally understood why the solid crystal suit center a moment ago turned into a ragged building that seemed to be just hit by a meteor shower.

BOOM! BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM!

The streams of brilliance clashed brutally. Every collision seemed to be ripping space apart. Even though Li Yao was more than a hundred meters away, he was already shaking because of the blast.

Shua!

Half a second later, the bluish brilliance suddenly screamed. The glove of a crystal suit together with half a bloody palm flew into the sky!

It was Bai Xinghe!

Half of his left hand had been chopped off!

Bai Wulei was overjoyed. He knew that Bai Xinghe's most treasured Cosmos Ring was on the fourth finger of his left hand, which had soared into the sky together with the broken hand!

Bai Wulei immediately summoned his spiritual energy to snatch the broken hand. A tiny loophole appeared in the previously flawless siege!

Fengyu Zhong shrieked, “He did it on purpose. Leave the broken hand alone!”

There was no time!

Before Fengyu Zhong uttered the first syllable, Bai Xinghe had already roared. The bluish brilliance grew into a raging dragon and dashed out of the siege!

It was exactly the moment that Li Yao had been waiting for. He was the first to lunge forward!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Li Yao seemed to have turned into a great crystal bomb himself. Almost twenty fireballs suddenly exploded around him. The colorful smoke devoured Bai Xinghe like a grimacing giant beast!

However, half a second later, a miserable scream echoed inside the stomach of the giant beast, before Li Yao hit the ground with smoke all over his body like a falling star!

Bai Xinghe’s speed was not affected at all. The dragon-shaped brilliance darted toward the depths of the crystal suit centers. He swept across everything like a tornado and raised a series of collapses and explosions.

Smoke, dust, and fire completely concealed his path of escape.

When Fengyu Zhong, Bai Wulei, and the Black King reached the back of the crystal suit centers, they could only see a world of scrap and debris. There was no hint of Bai Xinghe whatsoever.

“Cough cough. Cough cough cough cough!”

Li Yao tried to hold back his heartbeat that had reached more than three hundred beats per second and managed to sit up straight.

He lowered his head and discovered that the breastplate of the Drunk Bat Battlesuit had been battered and that there was a bruise larger than his fist on his chest. When he observed more carefully, he even found tiny strokes on the bruise.

The bruise rendered Li Yao speechless.

It was because the bruise had not been caused by Bai Xinghe’s fist but by the index finger of his right hand!

All the tiny strokes were actually Bai Xinghe’s ‘fingerprint’ that had been left on Li Yao’s chest through his crystal suit when Bai Xinghe’s spiritual energy burst out!

The Pirate Potentate is indeed terrifying!

After being stabbed in the back by an expert in the peak of the Core Formation Stage who he trusted most and fighting against two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators for a long time under the collective attack of hundreds of brutal bandits, he abandoned the most precious part of his hand like a gecko and created a chance of survival for himself!

Also, during his escape, he blew up my breastplate with nothing but a finger!

Although Li Yao was not wearing his most advanced Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and he had suppressed his capability to the high level of the Building Foundation Stage on purpose, the terrifying capability that Bai Xinghe demonstrated still surprised him.

Fengyu Zhong, Bai Wulei, and the Black King landed on the ground heavily. Although their faces were unclear, Li Yao could sense the gloom over their heads.

Fengyu Zhong's eyebrow was furrowed.

The crystal bombs that Li Yao detonated a moment ago without caring about anything somehow jammed their vision and telepathic thoughts. They did not really help block Bai Xinghe at all.

However, it was Fengyu Zhong himself who issued the command 'stop him'. Li Yao was the first the answer the call and got beaten up miserably by Bai Xinghe. He should be credited even though he did not contribute at all.

It was a time when every soldier mattered, so Fengyu Zhong found it inappropriate to blame him. He helped Li Yao to his feet and said solemnly, "Fellow Cultivator Bloody Vulture, are you alright?"

"I—I'm fine!'

Li Yao took off his facial cover and vomited a mouthful of blood. Faking a pale face, he replied miserably, "Bai Xinghe is really—really strong!"

Fengyu Zhong narrowed his eyes and looked around. He said seriously in the communication channel, "Fellow Cultivator Bloody Vulture is tough and brave and has made great contributions! As everybody can see, Bai Xinghe's Cosmos Ring is now in our hands. With Bai Wulei leading the way, we are now able to enter the underground fortress at any time to excavate the secret treasures of the Star Ocean Imperium in the depths of Spider Den!

"By then, Fellow Cultivator Bloody Vulture will be the first to select the techniques and the magical equipment that he likes!"

Greedy breaths could be heard in the communication channel.

“Fellow Cultivators, Bai Xinghe is nearing his last breath! Just now, he suffered a critical blow by Bai Wulei and fought a long time with me and Master Hidden Fog. Of his internal organs, his liver, kidney, and spleen have been broken apart. The fractured bones on his body are too many to count!

“Even though he is in the Nascent Soul Stage, it is impossible for him to repair all his broken internal organs within several hours!

“Right now, his capability is in the Building Foundation Stage at best!

“The fight between him and Fellow Cultivator Bloody Vulture further proof!

“Fellow Cultivator Bloody Vulture is in the high level of the Building Foundation Stage, but Bai Xinghe’s full-strength attack only battered his crystal suit without killing him instantly!

“We should also bear in mind that it was when his wounds were suppressed by his spiritual energy.

“The longer he delays, the heavier his wounds will be, and the less likely that he will be able to get them under control with his spiritual energy!

“Search immediately! He can’t run far away! We must find Bai Xinghe even if we have to turn the city upside down! Whoever discovers Bai Xinghe first will be qualified to be the first to enter the underground fortress!”

Chapter 731 - Three Purposes

The space pirates were greatly relieved when they saw that Li Yao could still stand on his feet after taking an attack from Bai Xinghe, although his crystal suit was broken.

Right now, everything had basically been settled. It was the greatest opportunity to take advantage of the heavily wounded Pirate Potentate. Moreover, they did not even need to attack Bai Xinghe in person. As soon as they found Bai Xinghe’s tracks, they could send a message through the network to Fengyu Zhong. The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators would immediately rush over and finish him.

Now that Bai Xinghe’s Cosmos Ring had fallen into Bai Wulei’s hands, the space pirates were all envisioning an underground treasury whose gate was opening slowly to reveal the endless secret treasures of the Star Ocean Imperium waiting to be excavated. They all cheered and applauded for the achievement so far.

Bai Wulei raised Bai Xinghe’s broken hand high and showed the Cosmos Ring on it to everybody, while he declared, “Bai Xinghe has a lot of secret bases in Capital Nest. He told some of them to me personally but kept the rest a secret. He thought that I did not know them at all!

“Hehe. He did not know that I have been investigating them in secret for a long time. All his secret bases are crystal clear to me!

“Our time is precious. I’m about to send the coordinates of Bai Xinghe’s secret bases to your crystal processors. You will start searching for him immediately. Don’t give him any time to rest!”

When a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator rushed at full speed, they could run to more than ten kilometers away every minute. Therefore, it was indeed important that they took action instantly.

In the blink of an eye, Fengyu Zhong, Bai Wulei, and the Black King, as well as the experts from Black Spider Tower and the Immortal Army, marched toward Bai Xinghe’s secret bases.

The rest of the brutal bandits also rubbed their fists and dispersed, motivated by the prospect of treasures.

The crystal suit center that was exceptionally lively a while ago was now wreathed in dead silence. Nothing could be heard except the collapsing sounds of the furnaces and heavy facilities established at higher locations, which were falling off because the foundations supporting them had broken apart.

Li Yao took off the broken Drunk Bat Battlesuit slowly and vomited the last mouthful of blood that he had faked. While he lowered his head and pretended to cough, he hid the bouncing brilliance inside his eyes deeply.

Through the risky confrontation with Bai Xinghe a moment ago, he had achieved three purposes.

Firstly, the crystal bombs that he detonated had interfered with everybody’s vision and telepathic thoughts and slightly increased Bai Xinghe’s odds of escape.

Secondly, one of the crystal bombs that he detonated stored a special drug named ‘Ice Butterfly Powder’.

Such a drug was retrieved from the bodies of dozens of insects and refined into two genders, male and female.

When the female drug was released, it would be stuck to the human body and could not be washed away easily.

The drug was flavorless and colorless. It gave no painful or itchy feelings when it touched the skin. If the victim was not looking for it, they would never feel anything wrong.

However, as long as the essence of the male drug was dipped into the eyes, one would be able to vaguely see the traces that the Ice Butterfly Powder left in the air.

It was like Li Yao had put a reel of threads on Bai Xinghe’s body and was holding one end of the threads in his hands.

Wherever Bai Xinghe was hiding, he would be able to track the guy and find him!

The refining methods of the ‘Ice Butterfly Powder’ was an ancient prescription that Li Yao had found in the Heavenly Refining Tower in Ou Yezi’s memory pieces. Li Yao believed that even Bai Xinghe would not know of such a secret art in the world!

Thirdly, Li Yao was trying to wreck the Drunk Bat Battlesuit with Bai Xinghe’s hands!

Before the battle, the Drunk Bat Battlesuit had been connected to the network on Fengyu Zhong’s side. Everybody’s vision and coordinates were shared.

For commanders such as Fengyu Zhong, they were also aware of the performance parameters of every crystal suit.

While Li Yao could see the picture from the main perspective through other people’s crystal cameras, other people naturally could see a lot of things through the crystal cameras of the Drunk Bat Battlesuit.

But in the search that followed, Li Yao did not wish to be monitored by Fengyu Zhong all the time, nor would he want other people to see anything they should not see through his crystal cameras when he found Bai Xinghe.

If he switched to a different crystal suit without a good reason, he would raise a lot of suspicion under whatever pretext.

But right now, since the Drunk Bat Battlesuit was on the brink of destruction, he put on his standby crystal suit and was in too much of a hurry to search for Bai Xinghe to join Fengyu Zhong’s network again. It made sense more or less now.

Shua!

Li Yao pointed at his forehead with his index finger and his middle finger of his right hand, retrieving a very commonly-seen crystal suit on Spider Den named ‘Dark Crow Battlesuit’ from his Cosmos Ring.

The crystal suit had been specially modified by Li Yao, not to strengthen it but to weaken it. All the complicated components were removed. Except for the fundamental rune arrays, it was essentially an empty shell.

Moreover, mini crystal bombs had been installed to all the joints of the crystal suit. It was made sure that the crystal suit would be detonated instantly at his telepathic thought.

The sole purpose of the modification was to reduce the hinderances during his ‘air change’ and make it even faster. He would be able to summon the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, his real trump card, in the blink of an eye!

To start with, Li Yao was already an expert of ‘air change’. His speed in putting on a different crystal suit was already fast enough.

Through such a design, he would not be changing into a different crystal suit; he would be simply putting on one.

Therefore, the speed at which he put on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit would certainly be higher than what the enemy anticipated!

As long as he was 0.1 seconds faster than the enemy’s expectation, it would be much more likely that he secured the final victory of the battle!

Swoosh!

Li Yao turned into a streak of blackness and disappeared into the depths of Capital Nest.

Taking quite a few turns and reaching the corner of a mining hole, Li Yao stopped and dipped two clusters of a translucent, deep blue ointment into his eyes.

When he returned to the sky of the crystal suit center, Li Yao was confident and observed the battlefield from a high stance, trying to find the traces of the target.

A weird thing happened!

On the northeast corner of the crystal suit, a vague blue trace was floating, as if countless blue butterflies were dancing.

It was the trace that the Ice Butterfly Powder left in the air and also the route of Bai Xinghe's escape.

However, the blue trace did not extend to far away and simply vanished into thin air.

Leaning against the wall of the mining hole, Li Yao dashed close silently. He investigated where the trace disappeared, only to find that it was an area of collapsed debris. Countless narrow gaps were among the broken ultra-large furnaces.

Deep inside the furnaces, the blue trace could be clearly seen again.

Could it be—

Li Yao's heart was beating fast as he thought of a possibility.

Bai Xinghe was indeed bold. When everybody thought that he would run far, far away because of his heavy wounds, he had returned to hide in the depths of the crystal suit center right below Fengyu Zhong, Bai Wulei, and the Black King's noses after leaving the impression that he had left!

Li Yao secretly complimented the Pirate Potentate, before he blinked into the debris.

In the middle of utter darkness, the trace of the Ice Butterfly Power was still crystal clear. Li Yao followed Bai Xinghe's route of escape and gradually moved downwards after a few zigzags.

Passing through two ventilation tubes and one forsaken transmission tube of materials, wriggling quietly for almost ten minutes, and jumping off a fracture, Li Yao arrived at a stinky sewage processing pool.

It was not ordinary sewage that was processed here, but the cooling liquids from the refining work and the residues after Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures were purified in the crystal suit center.

Most of the sewage was highly poisonous and corrosive.

Inside the pool, almost a hundred kinds of different sewage in various colors were blended, making it look like a great vat where bubbles where popping up nonstop.

Despite the filtering of his crystal suit, Li Yao still felt that two burning chisels had been stabbed into his nostrils. It was quite unpleasant.

The pool was surrounded by tubes leading in every direction. There were also several dark pathways whose destinations Li Yao did not know.

However, none of the channels had the trace of the Ice Butterfly Powder.

On the other hand, the surface of the colorful sewage was vaguely reflecting the dim light of the powder when Li Yao observed it carefully.

Li Yao sneered and raised his wariness while he jumped into the sewage.

He had been prepared for the possibility that Bai Xinghe was lurking right inside the pool.

However, there was something else inside the pool. A long outlet tube was at the bottom of the pool and led to nobody knew where.

Li Yao frowned. Normal liquids could not wash off the Ice Butterfly Powder, but the sewage here was mixed with the waste of countless Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and had removed most of the Ice Butterfly Powder.

He could only vaguely sense the starry brilliance before him now.

Li Yao swam forward hard. After floating in the dark, dirty water for almost twenty minutes, he suddenly felt a hint of brightness above his head.

He groped and found a hole more than one meter in diameter in the top of the tube. The edge of the hole was quite rough, and it was exactly the size for a man in crystal suit to crawl out.

This is the place!

Li Yao was refreshed. He suddenly raised his hands and tossed out a flare that stored super flashing rune arrays as well as an ordinary crystal bomb.

As he expected, the moment the crystal bomb exploded, a furious wind blew past the above the tube!

Li Yao took the opportunity to jump up. Before the enemy realized what was going on, he threw out yet another two flash bangs and two decoys. A high-pitched shriek burst out in the narrow space which was soon enshrouded in black smoke!

Li Yao was like a giant spider when he dashed out of the tube. He slid on the ground on all fours to the edge of the narrow room.

Everything was covered in smoke. Under the interference of the lights, noise, and telepathic thoughts, Bai Xinghe, who was already heavily wounded, would not be able to locate his precise location, while he could lock onto his enemy with the last traces of the Ice Butterfly Powder.

Bai Xinghe realized that his precious attack had failed and immediately calmed down. Like a wounded tiger, he crouched to the side of Li Yao.

While the flash bangs gradually faded out, Li Yao glanced at the surroundings and discovered that he was in a secret chamber no larger than five square meters. Green moss was growing all over the walls. Cockroaches and rats were fleeing in a hurry to the corners.

Then, he was wreathed by absolute darkness again and faced with the most terrifying man on Spider Den silently.

Chapter 732 - Mutual Deterrence

Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum!

Li Yao’s every brain cell was shaking violently, and his computational ability soared as he recalled Bai Xinghe’s appearance that he had caught a moment ago.

The man was still wearing the Dragon King Battlesuit, but it had been twisted during the high-intensity combat. The eight previously-magnificent dragon heads were now dangling down. Two of the heads had been entirely chopped off, with only half the artificial limb left, like eels that had been skinned and beheaded.

Besides his broken left hand, which was still bleeding, there was a shocking giant hole on his abdomen. Although he was suppressing the wound with his spiritual energy, Li Yao still vaguely saw the scattered organs through the flesh and blood.

Bai Xinghe could not have looked more lackluster.

But Li Yao was absolutely certain that it was faked.

Right now, Li Yao had two options. Or rather, he had two purposes by chasing after Bai Xinghe at risk.

If Bai Xinghe was still capable of fighting, Li Yao would try everything he could to cooperate with him. He would try to restore the man’s strength so that he could gather his remaining troops and drag the Temple of Immortals down like a sticky, smelly candy. The strength of the Immortal Cultivators would be reduced as much as possible this way.

But if Bai Xinghe was too heavily wounded to be saved, Li Yao would kill him in advance, and then—

He would take away the Dragon King Battlesuit, the best crystal suit on Spider Den!

Li Yao had not done much ‘murdering before robbing’, but since his opponent was the Pirate Potentate and a criminal who had committed countless gory crimes, he would not be bothered at all if he had to do it.

Li Yao had witnessed the invincibility of the Dragon King Battlesuit in person just now. Although he was betrayed by his disciple and two experts in the Nascent Soul Stage were attacking him collectively, Bai Xinghe had still managed to kill at least three Core Formation Stage Cultivators instantly with the Dragon King Battlesuit!

The eight extendable artificial arms of the Dragon King Battlesuit as well as the ‘dragon balls’ that can devour and pour out spiritual energy are all perfect magical equipment!

If I can combine the Dragon King Battlesuit and the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit by tearing off the eight ‘dragon heads’ and installing them on my crystal suit, well, wouldn’t it be the best crystal suit in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector?

Li Yao was hooked by the idea.

To save or to kill all depended on Bai Xinghe’s strength.

Li Yao had not figured out the real status of his opponent yet. The scenes on the carrier occurred to him again. It was very clear to him that he was dealing with a ferocious tiger right now, and he could not be too careful.

Li Yao held the key to the dilemma here, so he was not afraid of waiting. In the end, Bai Xinghe lost his patience and said solemnly in the darkness, “I’m told that a brutal man named ‘Bloody Vulture’ who is adept at crystal bombs recently joined Fengyu Zhong’s side. I trust that it is you.

“You were the first to charge at me a moment ago, but you helped me to escape indirectly by disturbing the vision and senses of Fengyu Zhong and the rest of them. Why?”

Li Yao replied, “If I say that I’m actually a worshipper of Boss Bai, and that I pretended to join Fengyu Zhong just so that I could make great contributions by rebelling at the crucial moment, would you believe it?”

“No,” Bai Xinghe said.

After a ‘oh’, Li Yao continued. “Perhaps I felt that the benefits I would get by handing you over were less than those I would get by helping you hide, so I utilized a secret tracking skill on Boss Bai when I let you go on purpose so that I could swallow Boss Bai’s trophies after I found you alone. Naturally, if Boss Bai does not try to keep me quiet with great treasures, I will sabotage Boss Bai’s escape plan even at the risk of my death… I wonder, do you believe that?”

“This is a much more reasonable explanation,” Bai Xinghe observed.

“Clever rabbits have multiple nests,” Li Yao continued, “Boss Bai wouldn’t tell all your secrets to your first true disciple, would you? After all, he was only your disciple, not your son. Speaking of which, I’m told that Boss Bai has even slain one of your sons before.”

Li Yao tried to infuriate Bai Xinghe and find his weak spot, but Bai Xinghe did not seem offended at all. He said calmly, “That’s a fair point. I indeed have several shelters where valuable items are stored. Cultivation arts, techniques, magical equipment, crystal suit… You name it. As long as—cough, cough—as you escort me to my shelter, I can give you whatever you want.”

“Boss Bai, promise as you will, but please don’t pretend that you are heavily wounded by coughing,” Li Yao said. “However bad your injuries are, I believe that you can manage to suppress a few coughs.

“Of course, I desire your treasures. Escorting you to your shelter is not a problem, either. The real problem is how I can trust you.

“It is not far from the ground here, and you are heavily wounded right now. If we get into a fight, Fengyu Zhong’s people will notice immediately. Therefore, even if you hate my guts, it’s impossible that you fight me here.

“I’m absolutely safe in this place.

“However, when we reach your shelter, or rather, your secret base, there are bounded to be countless traps under your control. With your Cultivation in the Nascent Soul Stage, even though your internal organs are broken, they can be more or less repaired after some time.

“If you suddenly attack me by then, I will have no one to turn to at all.

“If the conundrum remains unsolved, our cooperation, or negotiation, will be completely groundless.”

“Indeed. It is very considerate of you, my young friend Bloody Vulture,” Bai Xinghe praised. “It is indeed a serious problem. Honestly speaking, my young friend, right now, I’m thinking about how I can skin you and mince you into pieces at the earliest chance. Hehehehe. You don’t mind, do you?”

Li Yao smiled. “Not at all. I’m totally cool with it. It’s perfect normal and understandable that Boss Bai thinks so.”

Bai Xinghe nodded. “It seems that we are at an impasse right now. I’m like a piece of delicious meat but with bones stuck in your throat. You stomach will be hurt if you swallow me, but you will feel regretful if you spit me out. It’s truly a dilemma.

“However, since you decided to come after me when you knew the dilemma, I believe you must have a perfect solution to it. I’m all ears.”

Shua!

Li Yao retrieved a piece of magical equipment the size of an egg, which was round, emitted a greenish color, and seemed to be carved out of jade, out of his Cosmos Ring and threw it over.

“Honestly speaking, I have always admired Boss Bai, and I’ve made countless plans of cooperation should I have the opportunity one day.

“Boss Bai is the Pirate Potentate. You are as tough as a tiger and as audacious as a lion. With a simple yawn, you can devour me, who is nothing but an insignificant sparrow!

“Cooperating with you is like putting one of my feet in hell. One moment of carelessness, and my head might be chopped off.

“Therefore, I thought hard for a long time and figured out a stupid approach.

“This is a middle-sized crystal bomb that contains a minor marrow crystal. It is connected to my brain through a telepathic thought reception array and can be detonated in three ways.

“Firstly, if I recite the spell in my brain, with a telepathic thought, it will be immediately detonated.

“Secondly, if my heartbeat stops, or my brainwaves no longer spread out, it will be immediately detonated.

“Thirdly, if the crystal bomb is more than a hundred meters away from me, it will be immediately detonated.

“Please take a look carefully, Boss Bai. This crystal bomb is my masterpiece. Layers of defense rune arrays have been carved on it to make sure that it will not explode unless one of the three conditions are met. It won’t explode no matter how hard it is struck, crushed, or shaken!

“Now, will you open your mouth slowly and… swallow the crystal bomb?

“With Boss Bai’s expertise, it is definitely possible to fix the crystal bomb in your stomach by controlling your muscles.

“After that, I will have a bargaining chip to contain Boss Bai. Our cooperation will be implemented based on mutual trust and reciprocity. Isn’t it right?”

Bai Xinghe’s warm and comforting voice gradually turned sharp, mixed with anger of being fooled. “Hehe. The world has indeed changed. Even a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator dares to play tricks in front of me now!”

Li Yao said calmly, “Boss Bai, there’s no need to pretend that you are angry. We are both clear that the crystal bomb cannot kill a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator.

“Even if you suffer fatal wounds, I believe you have a hundred methods to slay a minor Building Foundation Stage Cultivator before your death!

“Therefore, unless I’ve gone mad, I will never detonate the bomb if it is absolutely necessary.

“All healthy negotiations must be built on equal terms. If one party has a capability far higher than the other, their negotiation might break apart at any point.

“My proposal is only meant to avoid risks. If we can both kill each other at any time, we will be in a balance of ‘mutual deterrence’, or ‘mutually assured destruction’, if you will.

“If you do not want to succumb to such humiliation, it doesn’t matter. Let’s fight now and see if Fengyu Zhong and the Temple of Immortals’ people can trace back to us by the explosions and noises!

“You may take your time to consider, but I cannot guarantee that I was not followed while on my way here. Chances are that Fengyu Zhong has already come down and is showing up at any moment.”

Like a silent tortoise, Bai Xinghe pondered carefully for a long time. In the end, he smiled bitterly. “It seems that I’m truly old now. Bai Wulei at first, and Blood Vulture now.

“Spider Den in the future definitely belongs to the young people.”

The Pirate Potentate was indeed decisive. Realizing that the situation was not in his favor, he picked up the crystal bomb, opened his facial cover, and swallowed it!

Patting his belly, Bai Xinghe asked casually, “My young friend, do you want to perceive with your spiritual energy and see whether I have swallowed the bomb or tricked you?”

“I already did. The crystal bomb is indeed in your stomach. Now, you can talk about our routes of escape, Boss Bai,” Li Yao said. “The chamber is enclosed on all sides and full of poisonous gas. There is not a second exit. You are not planning to hide here for a year and a half hoping that Fengyu Zhong won’t find you, are you?”

Bai Xinghe chuckled in a low voice and floated in midair with the help of the Dragon King Battlesuit.

Li Yao did not ease his vigilance at all after his opponent swallowed the crystal bomb. He stayed alert and prepared to summon the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit the moment anything went wrong.

But Bai Xinghe went directly to the ceiling and groped for something carefully.

Li Yao was dazed. He turned on the lights of his crystal camera and looked at the ceiling.

Mud, stone, and moss were falling off. On the bare ceiling, a complicated rune array was gradually revealed.

Bai Xinghe took out a bizarre-shaped crystal that looked like a cat paw and pressed it into a hollow on the ceiling. After a click, the crystal melded with the ceiling flawlessly.

Zi… Zi…

After the crystal was embedded, the rune array seemed to be woken up. Glamorous brilliance was beaming out, like the shining stars in a night sky.

“You are truly lucky,” Bai Xinghe said solemnly. “I agreed to cooperate with you not because I was scared that Fengyu Zhong would be attracted here before I killed you, but because I was scared that our fight might destroy the transportation array on the ceiling!”

Chapter 733 - Great Array of Gold Threads!

Watching the glittering octagonal rune arrays dangling down from the ceiling, Li Yao secretly wiped his sweat.

He was truly lucky. Since Bai Xinghe’s internal organs were exposed to the air because of his heavy wounds, it had taken him longer to pass through the sewage processing poll.

For Li Yao, with the help of the ‘Ice Butterfly Powder’, he did not waste a second in the hunting.

If he had been three to five minutes late, perhaps Bai Xinghe would’ve rune away through the secret teleportation array!

Judging from the complexity of the runes on the teleportation array and the energy level of the crystal that Bai Xinghe had inserted to drive it, it was a middle-sized teleportation array that could send people to almost twenty kilometers away.

Capital Nest was a big place. Li Yao would never find him again if he ran twenty kilometers away from here!

Gazing at the teleportation array, Li Yao reminded him, “Don’t forget that we cannot be more than a hundred meters away from each other, Boss Bai. We should enter the teleportation array together.”

Bai Xinghe smiled and set his hands in a certain gesture, while his telepathic thoughts surged into the teleportation array along with his spiritual energy.

A deep blue, cone-shaped pillar of light was immediately triggered inside the teleportation array.

Bai Xinghe eyed Li Yao and made a ‘let’s go’ gesture.

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao raised his alertness to the maximum, and he stood right next to the strongest, most brutal bandit on Spider Den.

He was too close to the Pirate Potentate. Although he had other trump cards and had made full preparations, he still found it hard to breathe.

Bai Xinghe chuckled in a low voice. “An expert in the high level of the Building Foundation Stage, adept at the arts of explosion and with such a sharp head, has never been known before? Even though you are new to Spider Den, you should have been a famous guy in space before.

“I wonder, which face is hiding behind the name of ‘Bloody Vulture’?”

Li Yao was surprised, knowing that Bai Xinghe had sensed his psychological weakness. He was even more alarmed now.

Before he replied, the blue brightness was denser than ever. They seemed to be placed in the middle of certain thick blue liquids.

In a trance, Li Yao found himself in a completely different space.

It was a dry cave, with withered plants everywhere on the ground. Other than the teleportation array under their feet, there was only a zigzagging gap leading to nobody knew where.

After the two of them walked out of the teleportation array, Bai Xinghe punched back and destroyed the transportation array with his surging spiritual energy.

Now, even though Fengyu Zhong could find the teleportation array on the other side, it was impossible for them to jump over through it.

Li Yao glanced around. They could not have jumped to more than twenty kilometers away. Judging from the environment here, it should be—

The underground of Spider Den!

Li Yao thought of something and asked, “Is this the underground fortress of Spider Den?”

“This is just one of the entrances,” Bai Xinghe replied casually. “I explored the fortress as a ‘treasure hunter’ from the age of seven. I know every maze inside the place as clearly as I know the back of my hand. This place is more comfortable to me than my own bed. Is there a better place to serve as my last base?”

Li Yao was curious. “If you can establish a teleportation array, why didn’t you teleport us to the control center of the underground fortress directly? For the purpose of confidentiality?”

Bai Xinghe smiled and explained, “The fortress of the Star Ocean Imperium is much more complicated than you think. The center of the fortress is enclosed by a very powerful rune array based on the mother lodes below the ground, which can block all the space jumps.

“It is like an invisible shell that enshrouds the entire underground fortress. You cannot be teleported into it and can only walk into it on your feet.

“Such a design is meant to avoid the scenario where the enemy appeared right inside the fortress through certain mysterious teleportation techniques.

“Now, let’s get going.”

Bai Xinghe lowered his head and crammed into the zigzagging gap in an extremely awkward posture.

Li Yao frowned.

For some reason, although everything had been under his control after he found Bai Xinghe, he had a stronger and stronger sense of danger now.

Endless pictures and sounds turned into crazily dancing butterflies inside his brain. They were about to condense into a mottled image, when they crumbled all of a sudden at the last moment!

Seeing that Bai Xinghe was about to disappear into the gap, Li Yao perceived the crystal bomb and found it still inside Bai Xinghe’s stomach, functioning. He made up his mind and followed Bai Xinghe into the gap.

The gap was precisely the size of the skull and limbs of a human being. Once someone crammed into it, they would not be able to move their head and limbs at all and could only move forward slowly, boosted by their power rune array.

After wriggling forward for more than half an hour, the path was gradually broadened, and Li Yao could crawl on all fours.

After crawling for another twenty minutes, a metal tube with a fracture on it appeared on the side of the path.

They struggled into the metal tube through the fracture. Five minutes later, the two of them appeared in a dim metal pathway.

The air was so stuffy that it seemed to have been frozen here for ten thousand years. One could even squeeze rust out of the air there.

Li Yao glanced around and suddenly asked, “Wait a moment. Boss Bai, the map of the underground fortress and the Spider Key to deactivate all the traps have all fallen into Bai Wulei’s hands together with your broken hand?

“Or rather—”

Li Yao finally realized the source of his unease. “Are there really such things as the map and the Spider Key?”

Bai Xinghe chuckled in a low voice again, which was echoing in the dark pathway. “Of course there are. Don’t presume that the Temple of Immortals is made of fools. They have been carefully planning for I don’t know how long. Even my most trusted first true disciple has been converted to their side. I have truly suffered a brutal failure. What’s there to say?

“The path we are currently on is not the main road of the underground fortress, but a shortcut that I explored myself. We won’t be discovered if we go this way.

“The underground fortress is made of countless complicated mazes. It is a hundred times larger than Capital Nest. The space pirates have been exploring it for hundreds of years and they haven’t covered all the area yet. Are you worried that you might run into Fengyu Zhong and Bai Wulei?”

While talking, Bai Xinghe walked forward. After a short while, he took out a bottle from his pocket and squeezed two drops of ointment before smearing them on his eyelids. Then, he threw the bottle to Li Yao.

“Smear the ointment on your eyelids. It will be good for you.”

Li Yao straightened his arms and kept the bottle as far away from himself as possible, while he observed and probed the bottle carefully with his spiritual threads.

As a refiner who had read a lot of classics in the Heavenly Refining Tower on the ancient materials, he knew a thing or two about most Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures.

The right gold ointment did not seem poisonous.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao closed his left eye and rehearsed for the combat mode where he only used his right eye. Then, he opened his facial cover and smeared a drop of the ointment on his left eyelid.

Shua!

After the cool ointment leaked into his eyelid, countless narrow, golden threads immediately popped up in the dark pathway ahead of him.

The threads were like snakes in a sea. They were floating, hovering, and entangling each other in midair. Occasionally, dozens of gold threads would condense together and blossom like a flower, only to split up abruptly and dart out like electric arcs at an amazing high speed!

Li Yao vaguely felt that the activity of the gold threads was patterned. But after calculating for a while, he found that it was too complicated for him to get a result.

Closing his left eye and looking ahead with his right eye, which was not smeared with the ointment, Li Yao found that the hallway was absolutely empty.

Li Yao was secretly alarmed. It must be a certain defense array that was still functioning after ten thousand years.

The technology of the Star Ocean Imperium was truly unbelievable!

“This is just a minor measure of defense in the underground fortress on the safest shortcut that I carefully selected,” Bai Xinghe said. “On other roads, the traps and rune arrays are too many to count!

“After ten thousand years, with the passage of time and the intense tectonic movements, only less than one tenth of all the traps are still functioning.

“If it were ten thousand years ago when the fortress was just built, nobody would’ve been able to take over it without sacrificing tens of thousands of Cultivators!”

Li Yao threw the bottle back to Bai Xinghe and said, “Lead the way.”

Bai Xinghe was surprised. “You only smeared one of your eyes?”

“One eye is enough,” replied Li Yao.

There was no way that he would smear Bai Xinghe’s ointment on both of his eyes.

If Bai Xinghe had done something untoward to the ointment, at least he could save one of his eyes and retain the ability to counterattack.

Bai Xinghe did not say anything more. His body suddenly turned into a streak of greenness as he dashed into the great array of gold threads.

The swimming golden threads, upon sensing that an object of intense spiritual energy was approaching, were dancing twice as fast as before!

Yet, Bai Xinghe seemed to be well aware of the patterns of the gold threads. He jumped and moved inside the array casually.

At first, he stuck to the ground like a dry leaf, then he moved forward on the wall like a gecko, and next he sprinted forward holding the ceiling. After a few jumps, he was already dozens of meters away.

Li Yao stared at his routes of movement without blinking his eyes. Then he darted into the array of gold threads in exactly the same way as Bai Xinghe did.

The dim, dark pathway did not seem to have an end. The area where the golden threads were dense was almost a thousand meters long. Li Yao was able to follow Bai Xinghe in the beginning, but as he went deeper and the gold threads became thicker, Bai Xinghe’s shadow turned mysterious and unpredictable.

Li Yao had smeared the bright golden ointment that allowed him to see the array only on his left eye. Therefore, it was inevitable that he had misjudgment on the trajectory and speed of the golden threads.

Just the moment before he charged out of the array, his crystal suit accidentally touched one of the golden threads.

In the next moment—

Hiu! Hiu hiu hiu hiu!

Dozens of gold threads, in unstoppable brilliance, turned into flying swords and darted at the critical parts all over Li Yao’s body brutally at a speed ten times higher than before!

Chapter 734 - Surging Nether River

Li Yao’s eyes widened. Three layers of spiritual shields appeared on his body, and he leapt forward out of the array of gold threads agilely.

The dozens of gold flying swords brushed past by him and left shallow traces on his crystal suit.

The last one of them, however, was like a persistent parasite and stabbed into his left leg after a weird blink!

Li Yao screamed and rolled on the ground. He uncovered his crystal suit and discovered that the gold flying sword had torn away a slice of his leg, leaving a scorching wound. But thankfully, his bone was not hurt!

Li Yao gritted his teeth and retrieved a bottle of medicine from his Cosmos Ring. He spurted a cluster of white fog from the bottle onto his leg and temporarily froze the wound.

He then turned the gear on the bottle and pressed the switch again. This time, it was an azure foam, which looked like a gel, that were spurted out.

The foam was smeared on the wound evenly. It quickly consolidated when they met air. After being condensed, it became slightly elastic and looked like an artificial muscle.

Li Yao finally took a long breath and look back in fear.

Bai Xinghe looked at him emotionlessly during the entire process. In the end, he complimented, “Your movements were quite smooth. Perhaps you are not in the high level of the Building Foundation Stage, but the peak of it.

“However, the blow you took just now was as redundant as my coughs in the beginning.

“You tried to lower my wariness by hurting your leg intentionally and mislead me into thinking that your left leg would be your weakness. But the truth is, your fatal move would be carried out by your left leg should we get into a fight, wouldn’t it?”

Li Yao was stiffened and cursed to himself.

Bai Xinghe smiled. “Don’t be angry. I could have kept my finding to myself and pretended that I didn’t see through your plan. If we really get into a fight, I would have been able to anticipate your move and find an opportunity to counterattack when you kick with your left leg under the illusion that I’ve been fooled, wouldn’t I?

“I pointed it out as a gesture of my sincerity. The remaining journey will only be more difficult than the array of gold threads. If we continue mistrusting each other and having conflicts, it is possible that neither of us will leave the dark underground.”

Li Yao was greatly alarmed. “There are more traps ahead of us?”

Half an hour later, Li Yao was dumbfounded and speechless when he saw everything before him.

Led by Bai Xinghe, they passed by more than ten intersections after quite a few zigzags and two arrays of gold threads before they finally reached the end of the pathway.

However, it was not the original exit of the pathway but a hole that had been torn open by brute force.

What appeared in front of Li Yao was a cliff whose bottom was unclear.

The rock stratums on the two sides of the cliff were ripped open, leaving an enormous hollow in the middle. The two of them seemed to be standing in the middle of a magnificent mountain looking at the mountain on the other side that was covered in hazy mist.

Looking down at the bottom of the cliff, Li Yao saw a raging river hundreds of meters below him.

Li Yao had never seen such a splendid and formidable underground river. It was like a rampant dragon rushing toward the center of the rock stratums at the core of the planet.

What was more blood-freezing was that the water of the river was greenish, as if billions of butterflies were lying on the riverbed flapping their wings together!

The river seemed exactly like the legendary Nether River in hell. Gloomy wind was blowing, and tides were surging, illuminating the crevices on the cliff with a miserable green and enshrouding everything in mysteriousness and horror.

This place was like the entrance to hell and the boundary that marked the world of the living and that of the deceased!

Huala! Huala!

Water pillars shot up hundreds of meters from the ‘Nether River’ every now and then. They bashed the walls on the two sides of the cliff like green flames, leaving dark green traces on the walls as if a giant centipede had just passed by. They were not gone until a long time later.

“The underground fortress has been built for ten thousand years,” Bai Xinghe explained. “During the past ten thousand years, a great many tectonic movements have happened here and vastly reshaped the environment.

“About fix thousand years ago, perhaps because of the apocalypse that swept across the Flying Star Sector, a great earthquake took place on Spider Den although it was not directly hit by the meteorites.

“The earthquake resulted in countless faults below the ground and scattered the underground fortress!

“The underground fortress had no ‘shortcuts’ in the beginning at all, but the super earthquake created such a road for us.”

Bai Xinghe took out a metal ball and tossed it into the air. The ball hovered above their heads and projected a beam of clear mystic rays toward the black fog on the other side of the cliff.

The mystic ray seemed to be able to pierce everything through. It outlined the other side of the cliff almost a thousand meters away.

On the cliff, dozens of giant crevices were glittering under the illumination of the mystic ray.

Pointing at the crevices across them, Bai Xinghe said, “Look, the crevices did not exist before the earthquake. The underground fortress on the two sides of the cliff was connected back then. It was flawless and had no loopholes at all.

“But the super earthquake tore the underground fortress in half. Naturally, some loopholes were revealed.

“However, most of the crevices lead to dead ends or empty warehouses. What we are going to is the crevice that I painted with double gold stripes. Look at it carefully.”

Li Yao triggered the scanning ability of his crystal cameras as he observed his surroundings.

Jumping off the cliff toward the crevice in front of him meant a distance of around a thousand and seven hundred meters on average. It was a sprint for a crystal suit and not that difficult.

However, Bai Xinghe introduced their task in great detail and was much more prudent than when they were passing through the arrays of gold threads.

Li Yao thought of something and asked, “Are there any problems with the river?”

Bai Xinghe smiled. “There are no problem; there are just ‘things’.”

“Things?” Li Yao narrowed his eyes. The ‘things’ that appeared in this place were definitely not docile even if one was thinking with their toe.

Bai Xinghe explained, “The underground river is where the dozens of mother lodes of Spider Den congregated. A lot of spiritual liquids and valuable microelements are contained in the water.

“After the super earthquake, a lot of beasts living in other places migrated to the river and flourished. After thousands of years of being nurtured by the water, they absorbed a lot of microelements and underwent mutations. They can be quite tricky to deal with.

“In the darkness above our head, there are also beasts that feast upon the mother lodes. They and the beasts in the river always hunt each other and are mortal enemies.

“They are beasts, not traps. Therefore, there are no patterns about them at all.

“Before, when I entered the place, they were suppressed by the intimidating aura of the Nascent Soul Stage and were too awed to come close.

“However, I’m heavily wounded today. It’s hard to say how they will greet us.”

Li Yao warmed up his body, with cracking noises echoing from his joints. He glanced around again and said in a low voice, “Got it. Let’s go.”

“Alright!”

Hardly had the word flown out of his mouth before Bai Xinghe stomped on the ground, breaking hundreds of stones. He summoned his spiritual energy and darted above the nether river!

Li Yao moved, too, and chopped off a rock that was protruding out of the wall of the cliff with his arm. He caught the rock and threw it at the sky of the Nether River brutally!

Hiu! Hiu!

Bai Xinghe dashed into the broken stones.

Li Yao was no slower than himself and jumped on the rock he chopped off.

Huala! Huala! Huala!

The river below them seemed infuriated. Hundreds of thick green pillars rose up to the sky simultaneously, each of which concealed a hazy beast that looked both like a dragon and a boa. They opened their blood mouths and bit at the two intruders brutally!

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Hundreds of awe-inspiring giant beasts swooped down from above. They smashed down like a cloud!

The beasts in the sky looked like bats at first sight, except that they were broader and narrower. Like sharp boomerangs, they hovered rapidly until they were close to the speed of sound. Their sharp edges were emitting cold brightness, which was a natural blade aura!

Bai Xinghe roared. The stones around him all exploded. Each of the stones was enshrouded in spiritual energy. He seemed to have hundreds of clones that attracted the attention of most beasts.

The six dragon heads that had fallen asleep for a long time were woken up again. Six dragon balls were spat out and circled around Bai Xinghe like satellites, mincing the ten or so beasts closest to him into pieces!

In the meantime, Li Yao stomped on the rock he was on heavily, crushing it to smithereens in his craziness.

With the counterforce, his speed was further accelerated. Hundreds of blade auras wreathed him and formed an impenetrable web of sabers around him.

When his saber flashed, four beasts in the sky were cut in half silently, and a large cluster of orange blood burst out in two green water pillars nearby!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Earsplitting explosions took place behind Li Yao. Dozens of fireballs illuminated the cliff as if it were daylight. The beasts in the air and the giant boas in the river had all become used to living in an environment with weak light. They were all stunned when they were caught in a flare all of a sudden.

Li Yao took the opportunity to sprint forward into the crevice across the cliff covering a distance of more than a thousand and seven hundred meters together with Bai Xinghe.

Pa! Pa! Pa!

Dozens of beasts in the air failed to decelerate and hit the rocks near the crevice heavily, falling into the Nether River after a series of weird screams.

Inside the Nether River, the tides were roiling, and the dirty foam was exploding. Countless beasts in the air and the giant boas in the river were engaged in a chaotic battle.

The two of them, especially Bai Xinghe, breathed heavily on the ground for a long time. He had suffered heavy wounds previously. The fierce combat and the exhausting sprint affected his wounds. He held his abdomen, his body shaking.

After resting for a minute, Bai Xinghe said slowly, “In a moment, we are going to take off our crystal suits and suppress our capability to that of an ordinary person with the Soul Converging Technique. Remember, do not leak the tiniest spiritual wave.

“Because if you do, both of us will be dead for sure!”

Chapter 735 - Palace of Stars

Take off the crystal suit, restrain the spiritual energy, and suppress the capability to that of an ordinary person?

Li Yao’s first thought was that Bai Xinghe was playing another dirty move. But after thinking a moment, he realized that the situation would be more in his favor if they both lost their crystal suits, since the Dragon King Battlesuit that Bai Xinghe wore, although damaged, still boasted much higher specifications than his Dark Crow Battlesuit.

Besides, Bai Xinghe’s heavy wounds were being suppressed by his spiritual energy. If he were to restrain his spiritual energy and revert to an ordinary person, his wounds would only become heavier.

The proposal that Bai Xinghe made was disadvantageous for him from whatever perspective.

While Li Yao was pondering, Bai Xinghe had already removed his Dragon King Battlesuit and gradually sunk his spiritual energy to the depths of his cells with the Soul Converging Technique.

“Wu—”

Without the support of the spiritual energy and resisting his wounds with his body of flesh and blood, even a man as tough as Bai Xinghe still grunted.

Bai Xinghe flipped his hand and took out a drug, smearing all the ointment on the terrible wounds on his abdomen. As bloody foam popped up nonstop, a hint of color returned to his pale face.

Bai Xinghe smiled miserably and said, “There’s a big guy ahead who takes spiritual energy as food. All the living creatures that emit spiritual waves are prey to it. The more intense their spiritual waves are, the greater an appetite it will have!”

Li Yao thought for a moment and took off the Dark Crow Battlesuit, too. He suppressed his capability to its limits and only dragged the crystal bomb in Bai Xinghe’s stomach with one of his telepathic thoughts to make sure that it wouldn’t explode.

Back when he was in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, Li Yao had once been enlightened by Iron God Yan Ba, a body fundamentalist in the Nascent Soul Stage. If they were both barehanded, Li Yao was the one who had more of an advantage. Therefore, he was not worried that Bai Xinghe might play tricks on him.

The two of them walked forward for another twenty minutes along the narrow crevice.

The rock stratums there were more seriously wrecked. They would be walking through the natural caves one moment, then stepping on rusted pathways, jumping off gaps dozens of meters deep the next moment, and sometimes climbing cliffs dozens of meters tall along the thick and rough walls like lizards.

After walking for a long time, they still had not run into the ‘big guy’ that Bai Xinghe mentioned. While Li Yao was suspicious, Bai Xinghe suddenly hushed him and pointed upward.

Above their heads was a long and deep gap that led straight up to the ground. It was almost like a natural well.

Li Yao glanced at the well roughly and only felt that the rocks inside the well looked quite weird and aggressive.

When he observed carefully, he gasped and discovered that a monolithic beast that looked like a giant spider was crouching on the wall of the well!

The beast was unbelievably huge. It had more than ten limbs, each of which were around seven meters long. It was a bright gray color and covered in rocky lumps, completely fitting in the environment.

The beast was sleeping. Its complex, deformed eyes were a lackluster red color that looked like dried blood on what seemed to be its head.

Li Yao watched more carefully and found that almost ten of its limbs and half of its torso were hidden in the solid rock, like a crocodile that was half sunk in a swamp.

Bai Xinghe said in an extremely low voice, “Don’t fret. I call the big guy ‘Lustful Rock Spider’. It is perhaps a spider-type beast that has gone mutations in the mother lodes of the earth class below the ground. It is naturally endowed with the Earth-Escaping Technique. Despite its enormous size, it can enter and exit the rock stratums freely with the technique.

“However, the Earth-escaping Technique consumes a lot of spiritual energy. Therefore, it spends most of its time dormant to avoid exhaustion until a prey with immense spiritual waves shows up and serves as its dinner.

“We are not emitting any spiritual waves right now. It is not worthwhile for the beast to waste abundant spiritual energy to hunt us down with the Earth-Escaping Technique, because the spiritual energy it absorbs by devouring us will not cover what it wastes to capture us. It is not a fair deal.

“We are totally safe if we don’t irk the beast.”

Li Yao secretly smacked his lips. The route of Bai Xinghe’s escape was truly sordid and perilous!

If Fengyu Zhong and the other Immortal Cultivators chased after him, after passing through the dangerous array of gold threads and the Nether River, they would certainly be most vigilant at this moment. There was no way that they would take off their crystal suits. If anything, they would deploy multiple spiritual shields around them, which would emanate tremendous spiritual waves.

As a result, they would make the best prey for the Lustful Rock Spider!

Li Yao did not know exactly how strong the mutated beast was. However, since it was deep below ground, if the beast of the earth class went on a rampage and collapsed the tunnels, it would be major trouble for anybody.

The two of them treaded lightly and moved forward with only the strength of their muscles and bones for almost ten kilometers, before Bai Xinghe waved his hands in relief and said, “Alright. We are now far away from the hunting range of the Lustful Rock Spider. We can activate our spiritual energy and put on the crystal suits.”

“Don’t move!” Li Yao said coldly. “Don’t put on your crystal suit yet. Let me see if the crystal bomb is still inside your stomach… Very good. You may put on your crystal suit now.”

Bai Xinghe summoned the Dragon King Battlesuit unhurriedly and put it on, before he remarked, “You are very cautious.”

Li Yao wiped off the cold sweat on his forehead and grinned. “I can’t be too cautious now that I’m cooperating with Boss Bai. Are there more dangerous traps ahead of us?”

“No.” Bai Xinghe shook his head and said, “My last shelter is right before us.”

The pathway came to an end. In front of them was a forsaken warehouse that was empty and full of stinky odors.

Bai Xinghe groped all over the wall on the left side of the warehouse. Then, after a ‘chi’ sound, deep blue lines gradually appeared on the wall. The blue lights were blinking and interweaved into what seemed to be a gate.

Next to the gate were three glimmering rune arrays. Bai Xinghe typed almost a hundred times on the three rune arrays instantly as if his fingers were flying. Soon, the blue lines dyed the entire gate blue, which seemed to lead to a different world.

Bai Xinghe and Li Yao entered the blue gate at the same time!

Li Yao’s breathing halted.

He had been prepared for everything. His face color would not have changed at all whatever terrors he saw.

However, in a fortress thousands of meters below the ground, he saw a night sky.

A pure, clear starry sky that was as boundless as ocean where countless brilliant stars were shining.

Li Yao had never seen so many stars at the same time in his entire life. He felt that he had fallen into a beach of stars with his head upside-down.

Taking a deep breath and shaking his head hard, Li Yao finally realized that he had reached an enormous palace.

The dome of the palace was made of countless translucent diamonds, and every diamond was embedded with crystals that were as brilliant as stars.

No…

The crystals were not simply embedded into the diamonds. Instead, they constituted a complicated, overwhelming great array in which they were swirling, shining, changing, and fading like real stars!

It was like a real universe that was slowly flowing above Li Yao's head!

What… what is this place?

Why is such a mysterious palace that can simulate the fickleness of the universe still functioning after ten thousand years in a fortress ten thousand meters below the ground?

The dome of diamonds is more than a thousand meters in diameter. It is quite a piece of enormous magical equipment itself. The rune arrays that power it must be too magnificent to fathom!

For a moment, Li Yao completely lost his cool.

Below the dome of crystals that looked like a night sky, the palace was packed with countless pieces of magical equipment that Li Yao failed to recognize. Judging from their structure, they should be research facilities.

In the middle of the palace, hundreds of super-large crystal processors were placed in rows, each of which was more than three meters tall. They were like a silent army.

“This place looks like a research center or a command center. Is this the central control room for the underground fortress of Spider Den?”

Bai Xinghe quite enjoyed bathing in the rays of the bright universe. He stretched his arms in great satisfaction and smiled. “Beautiful, isn’t it?

“The dome of diamonds was constructed to simulate the entire detectable universe. Every shining star stands for a real entity!

“Ten thousand years ago, this place used to be a research center, or an ‘underground observatory’, if you will, that was specially designed to study and pry into the secrets of the stars. Therefore, the place is named ‘Star Prier’s House’.

“Star Prier’s House?”

Li Yao vaguely remembered that he had heard the name from somewhere else.

Pondering for a moment, he realized where this vague recognition came from.

Back when he was on Iron Plateau, Xiong Wuji and Sha Yulan had once introduced to him the apocalypses.

They had said that the apocalypses were the most inexplicable phenomena in the modern Cultivation world and that they might be related to the destruction and possession of different civilizations.

It was said that, in the last years of the Star Ocean Imperium, a Cultivator whose surname was Liu was an astrologist who specialized in apocalypses. He claimed that he had pried into the secrets of the stars and therefore named his research institute ‘Star Prier’s House’.

From then on, everybody addressed the Cultivator as—Liu the Prier!

This place was once Liu the Prier’s residence where he studied the apocalypses?

Bai Xinghe touched the research equipment from ten thousand years ago and said casually, “Are you curious as to why an observatory that studies space was established ten thousand meters below ground and how ‘Star Prier’s House’ is related to the underground fortress?

“Also, it is well-known that Liu the Prier was the only Cultivator who resolved the mysteries of apocalypses. Soon after he made the declaration that he had ‘pried into the secrets of the stars’, he was mentally deranged and went mad.

“Do you want to know what Liu the Prier found?”

Li Yao’s head was in a mess. It was true that he was quite interested in all the questions. He immediately concentrated his attention, ready to hear a secret story in ten thousand years ago.

However, he felt ill at ease in the bottom of his heart. An obscure shadow gradually popped up in his brain.

It was Yan Xibei.

Li Yao seemed to see Yan Xibei again, who said to everybody with a smile on the battlefield of apocalypse on Iron Plateau, *“Do you want to know the secrets about the Blood Stripe Virus?”*

This is not right! This is not right!

What’s Bai Xinghe’s problem? Why is he telling me the secrets of ten thousand years ago without a good reason? What benefits can he get by tell me such things?

Just like Yan Xibei, he is trying to buy himself more time!

Chapter 736 - Mutual Deterrence Is Broken!

Hiu!

Li Yao quickly retreated to ninety-nine meters away. One meter further, and the crystal bomb inside Bai Xinghe’s stomach would be detonated immediately. Still not relieved, he opened his hands and formed four spiritual shields in the front while planting a hundred crystal bombs that would explode the moment they were touched amid the spiritual shields, building three walls of bombs!

After finishing the decoration in the blink of an eye, Li Yao was somewhat relieved.

Bai Xinghe was dazed. He seemed to be surprised as he said, “My young friend Bloody Vulture—”

“Don’t move. Don’t talk. Let me think for a minute!” Li Yao yelled. Every cell in his body was vibrating crazily as he prepared himself for battle. The chaotic butterflies of thought congregated and dispersed inside his brain, leaving starry brilliance behind.

From the moment he caught up to Bai Xinghe, Li Yao had been feeling ill at ease. But during the way, Bai Xinghe had behaved obediently, and the multiple traps below the ground had distracted Li Yao’s attention. Therefore, Li Yao had gradually overlooked the warning in his heart.

But right now, the uncanny behavior of Bai Xinghe introducing a secret story from ten thousand years ago without a good reason made the warning pop up again. Something was buzzing earsplittingly inside his head.

This is not right. My intuition tells me that I must have ignored something very important. That's why I felt so alarmed all the way here!

Details! Remember every detail of Bai Xinghe!

Li Yao utilized all his computational ability and analyzed every second since Bai Xinghe's appearance by dividing them into a hundred pictures and scrutinizing every single frame.

It was like the wildly flying butterflies in his brain were fixed, and the stripes on them were zoomed in. Everything was crystal clear now!

When the totally different stripes on two butterflies were conflicting with each other in his brain, Li Yao's pupils constricted violently because he realized the reason of his unease!

The first picture was on the carrier of the Tiger Teeth Pirate Gang, where Bai Xinghe kicked Luo Jinhu down and said, *"Cut the crap! With a decent price, you wouldn't even blink before selling your family! Also, for a decent price, I guarantee that I will sell your mother to the brothel tomorrow! We are all lawless space pirates. Are you pretending that you are a loyal knight?"*

The second picture—No, actually it was not picture, but a voice that Li Yao had heard. It was the miserable scream when Bai Xinghe was ambushed by his first true disciple. *"Bai Wulei, you, too?"*

The scream was indeed full of bewilderment, fury, hatred, and desperation!

Li Yao also recalled ‘Stormy Sword’, a notebook written by Fengyu Zhong personally, in which Bai Xinghe’s rise was elaborated in his biography.

During the process of turning from a treasure hunter that was humbler than a rat miraculously into a Pirate Potentate, he betrayed at least three leaders who were practically fathers to him and sold twenty sworn brothers!

‘Stormy Sword’ was a tutorial on the arts of space pirates that Fengyu Zhong had written for his son, Fengyu Ming. It was quite personal, and there was no reason for him to slander Bai Xinghe in such a way.

Therefore, for a great man who established his fame with plots, betrayals, and treacheries and knew clearly that there was no warmth between space pirates but only backscratching, how would he utter such a desperate, painful, and stunned scream even if he was truly betrayed by his disciple?

But if his scream was faked, or at least half faked, what would have been on his mind?

Li Yao thought quickly and put himself in Bai Xinghe’s shoes.

If he had been in Bai Xinghe’s position, heavily wounded and aware that there was a secret teleportation array that nobody else knew of deep below the ground of the Red Steel Crystal Suit Center, he would know that he had to get there as quickly as possible.

Shua! Shua! Shua!

Every crevice and intersection when he traced back to Bai Xinghe in the beginning popped up his brain again.

He constructed a transparent map of escape inside his head, while he calculated quickly how long it would take for a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator to finish the whole journey.

Five seconds later, he came to a conclusion that almost froze all the blood throughout his body.

“You were waiting for me,” Li Yao mumbled. “I didn’t catch you; you were waiting for me next to the secret teleportation array on purpose!”

Bai Xinghe’s voice was equally warm and comforting, like the everlasting spring breeze, when he said, “My young friend, what you are talking about?”

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao stared at every power rune on Bai Xinghe’s body and gnashed his teeth. “According to my calculations, even though Fengyu Zhong was right about you being in the Building Foundation Stage because of the heavy wounds, you would still have been able to enter the teleportation array half a minute before I showed up!

“Through the teleportation array, it would have taken you only a few seconds to reach the entrance of the fortress. You needed only to destroy the teleportation behind you, and I would never have been able to find you again!

“If you were indeed running away without caring about anything, there was no reason for you to have been delayed there for half a minute!

“The only plausible explanation is that you slowed down on purpose to wait for me, or rather, somebody who might catch up with you!”

Bai Xinghe smiled casually and clapped his hands. “My young friend, you are indeed thoughtful as a well-known bandit in the circle of space pirates who rose to fame in only one short month. Although your epiphany comes too late, it is worth complimenting.”

The armor on the hands of his crystal suit clashed, emitting crisp sounds that echoed inside the vast palace, mixed with a hint of scorn.

Li Yao’s heart seemed to be swallowed by a black hole. He found himself barely able to breathe.

While Bai Xinghe applauded, he realized that something impossible had happened!

The crystal bomb that he had forced Bai Xinghe to devour was gone!

From the very beginning, Li Yao had bound one of his telepathic thoughts to the crystal bomb tightly. Even when he was passing the hunting range of the ‘Lustful Rock Spider’, he had been bold enough not to retreat it!

According to Li Yao’s calculation, there were only two approaches if Bai Xinghe wanted to get rid of it.

Firstly, by stimulating the muscles and the internal organs, he could push the crystal bomb from his stomach to his throat within half a second and spit it out!

Secondly, he could secrete liquids that were extremely corrosive and melt the trigger of the crystal bomb.

For Li Yao, when he activated the Art of the Swallowing Whale, he could even corrode, melt, and absorb steel. Since Bai Xinghe was in the Nascent Soul Stage, Li Yao, having the good habit of never underestimating his enemy, assumed that he had equal ability and a speed of corrosion ten times higher.

Even so, it would take one second to destroy the bomb!

In comparison, it would only take 0.1 seconds for Li Yao to detonate the bomb!

Therefore, after making sure that the crystal bomb was in Bai Xinghe’s stomach, Li Yao had been following him confidently.

But it never occurred to him that the crystal bomb would vanish into thin air within only 0.05 seconds!

Li Yao’s forehead was immediately soaked in cold sweat.

Bai Xinghe did not spit the crystal bomb out, and there was bound to be debris even if he eroded the crystal bomb with his gastric acid. But Li Yao felt nothing when the crystal bomb was obliterated without a trace!

Bai Xinghe was still standing ninety-nine meters away. He was chuckling in a low and confident voice, like a kind old man who was watching a kid who was uneasy because he had done something wrong.

Yet, Li Yao felt that cold wind was swirling behind him, as if Bai Xinghe was standing right behind him and staring at the back of his head!

There was only one Bai Xinghe, and yet his scent could be sensed in two locations simultaneously. It was definitely not something that could be done for a heavily wounded Building Foundation Stage Cultivator!

“My young friend Bloody Vulture, you are indeed smart. But maybe because you are too smart, you tend to ignore things that are very obvious,” Bai Xinghe said unhurriedly. “Maintaining a ‘mutual deterrence’ with your crystal bomb? It is indeed a clever move. But it is also more than easy to solve the dilemma.”

Cold sweat was pouring down, as Li Yao gnashed his teeth. “No. The crystal bomb must be still in your stomach. You are merely bluffing!”

Bai Xinghe sneered. He gradually straightened his back, which was somewhat hunched because of the pain a moment ago.

Illuminated by the dim lights, he could not have looked more high, mighty, and terrifying!

“I have been roaming in the sea of stars for a hundred years. Do you think I need bluffs to deal with such a junior like yourself? The solution to your ‘mutual deterrence’ is very simple. You will find it not worth mentioning at all after I explain it to you!

“For space pirates like you and me, we often carry more than one Cosmos Ring with us. In order to keep them away from others’ attention, we often hide them all over our body, sometimes even devouring them and storing them inside our body.

“I have a Cosmos Ring that is hidden in my stomach.

“I merely moved my stomach just now and triggered my Cosmos Ring to absorb your crystal bomb.

“Naturally, the independent space inside the Cosmos Ring is billions of lightyears away from the Flying Star Sector we are in. Therefore, the crystal bomb was detonated the moment it was absorbed into the Cosmos Ring.

“However, the best it could do was destroy the items inside my Cosmos Ring. It could never do any harm to myself.

“Do you see, my young friend Bloody Vulture? Your ‘mutual deterrence’ had a terrible loophole from the beginning!”

Li Yao was dumbfounded. He thought carefully and realized that he had indeed ignored the possibility.

No. He did not ignore it. Triggering a Cosmos Ring required summoning spiritual energy and a certain gesture in order to cooperate with the runes.

It was also one of the reasons Cosmos Rings were built into the shape of rings and worn on fingers. In such a way, it would be easier to change the hand gesture.

For example, raising the middle finger and the index finger of the right hand and touching the middle of his eyebrow slightly was Li Yao’s special gesture to retrieve a crystal suit from his Cosmos Ring at the highest speed.

But Bai Xinghe could complete the gesture to trigger the Cosmos Ring simply by moving his stomach?

Was it even possible?

“Therefore, the mutual deterrence is now broken. The wounds you suffered are not half as heavy as they appear. Killing a Cultivator in the peak of the Building Foundation Stage is a piece of cake for you.”

Li Yao smiled miserably. “It seems that I’m a victim of my own scheme now.

“Boss Bai, right now, the only method that I can threaten you with has lost effect. But you didn’t kill me instantly and tried to dawdle. I believe that you must be more or less injured and would like to fight when you are better recovered.

“Now, you are trying to treat your injuries, and I don’t want to die soon, either. May I ask for one last thing from Boss Bai?

“There are many suspicions points about the whole event that baffled me. Would you care to explain the crucial parts so that I can die an insightful death?”

Chapter 737 - Questions Before Death

Li Yao’s heart was pounding, because he was not sure whether or not Bai Xinghe would be trapped.

Normally speaking, such a fierce person would definitely not chitchat or give a long, dull speech before their schemes worked out like normal villains in a story.

However, although it was clear that Bai Xinghe could absorb the crystal bomb into his Cosmos Ring and ambush Li Yao at any moment, he had not done so yet.

Even after they arrived at his secret base, he was still trying to buy himself more time by telling tales of ten thousand years ago.

Li Yao could only guess that Bai Xinghe was really wounded and in the middle of recovery. If they were to fight now, the man would have to pay a price he was not willing to.

He wanted to get more time for himself, and Bai Xinghe wanted to get more time, too. While the two of them were procrastinating, it might be possible for him to elicit information that Bai Xinghe would not normally speak of.

Spiritual energy at least in the Core Formation Stage was released by Bai Xinghe’s body, while he pulled a piece of magical equipment that looked like a metal ball from hundreds of meters away and stuck it to his abdomen.

The magical equipment hummed and emanated greenness that covered the wound on this abdomen.

Strong vitality could immediately be felt in Bai Xinghe’s body. He was apparently healing himself.

Bai Xinghe exhaled with the utmost pleasure and smiled casually. “Your plan of balance of threats are quite creative despite the fatal loopholes. I quite like it. You can ask a few questions, but I can’t guarantee that I will answer all of them.”

“Alright.”

Li Yao did not want to give Bai Xinghe much time for recovery. He immediately asked, “You knew that Bai Wulei would betray you? Is the whole thing part of your scheme?”

Bai Xinghe pondered for a moment and shook his head slowly. “I knew that somebody was going to betray me, but I didn’t know who they were specifically.

“It’s been a hundred years since I rose to the Pirate Potentate and quite a few decades since the Abyss Pirate Gang became the largest pirate gang on Spider Den.

“Although the Temple of Immortals only formally introduced themselves last year, Black Spider Tower, one of their branches, has existed for a hundred years. Therefore, it’s been at least a hundred years since people of the Temple of Immortals were active in the darkness.

“During the hundred years, my rise and the glory of the Abyss Pirate Gang were definitely not things that they could overlook or let go of.

“Therefore, as long as the Temple of Immortals is not made entirely of idiots, they wouldn’t have started infiltrating the Abyss Pirate Gang only one year ago. Their real infiltration must’ve begun decades earlier.

“Spies of the Temple of Immortals must have been lurking in the Abyss Pirate Gang for a long time. It is even possible that many people were already Immortal Cultivators before they joined the Abyss Pirate Gang.”

Li Yao thought quickly and understood a lot of things. “Therefore, the whole final battle between the old dominator of Spider Den and the new one was pointless. Your real purpose was not to eliminate Fengyu Zhong but to dig out the Immortal Cultivators that had been lurking in the Abyss Pirate Gang for perhaps decades?”

Bai Xinghe nodded. “Yes. That was one of my purposes.”

Li Yao pondered for a moment and mumbled, “Since the very beginning, including the splendid-looking ‘Meeting of Heroes in Space’, everything has been your scheme. You were skeptical about everybody, even including your own true disciple Bai Wulei!

“However, if you really didn’t trust anybody, why did you tell Bai Wulei where you hide the map of the underground fortress of Spider Den and the key to it?

“Wait—”

Li Yao bulged his eyes. “You pretended to regard Bai Wulei as your heir and that you trusted him. You even handed over the actual daily operations of the Abyss Pirate Gang to him. You told him where you hid your map and your key. In the end, you broke your hand on purpose and sent the Cosmos Ring that stored the map and the key to him…

“Following which, Bai Wulei, Fengyu Zhong, the Black King… all the Immortal Cultivators and the space pirates who betrayed you will enter the underground fortress with your key according to your map!

“Then, perhaps after a boom, the entire underground fortress will explode, right?”

Bai Xinghe was silent for a long time before he sighed. “My young friend Bloody Vulture, it’s a pity that you appeared at a bad time. Otherwise, I would’ve been tempted to recruit you as my disciple for your smartness.”

Li Yao laughed drily. “That will be unnecessary. Boss Bai’s disciples do not seem to end well.”

Bai Xinghe ignored his sarcasm and remarked calmly, “However, you were wrong about one thing. I didn’t consider my first true disciple a chess piece. I really regarded him as my heir and hoped that he could inherit the Abyss Pirate Gang after I die.

“This was just a minor test.

“If Bai Wulei passed the last test, he would’ve been totally fine and would have been the real master of the Abyss Pirate Gang one day.

“It is a shame that he was too hasty!”

Li Yao rolled his eyes and frowned. “No. No. If you had been suspicious about Bai Wulei and only faked your injuries, how were you hurt so badly and why did you hesitate even to kill a minor Building Foundation Stage Cultivator like myself?”

Bai Xinghe sensed that the wounds on his abdomen were recovering at a higher speed and that his strength and

Cultivation were returning to himself. He smiled and said, “It was within my expectations that Bai Wulei would ambush me. I calculated everything except for one.”

Li Yao raised an eyebrow. “What is it?”

Bai Xinghe said, “Master Hidden Fog, the previous leader of Black Spider Tower, is not the Black King of the Temple of Immortals!”

“What!”

Li Yao was dumbfounded again. Hellsword was not the Black King, and the leader of Black Spider Tower was not the Black King, either? Then who exactly was the Black King?

Bai Xinghe explained in a tone that could almost be called appreciation. “In the beginning, rumor had it that Hellsword, the lone wolf, was the Black King—I didn’t buy it. I knew very clearly about Hellsword’s capability. He was a fine warrior in one-versus-one fights. But managing an enormous organization? He didn’t have such expertise.

“Therefore, I personally investigated in secret. All the evidence suggested that Master Hidden Fog, the previous leader of Black Spider Tower, was the real Black King.

“Black Spider Tower was the most important branch for the Temple of Immortals. Or rather, one of them worked in the darkness while the other on the surface. Since they were integral and indispensable, it was only natural that the leader of Black Spider Tower was one of the four kings of the Temple of Immortals, wasn’t it?

“Therefore, when Master Hidden Fog, Fengyu Zhong, Bai Lei, and a few experts of ‘Eight Blades of Black Spider’ attacked me together, I was not surprised and focused much of my attention on Fengyu Zhong and Master Hidden Fog, the two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators on the spot.

“When Bai Wulei ambushed me, Fengyu Zhong and Master Hidden Fog launched their deadliest attacks, too.

“My original plan was to pretend to be wounded by the strikes and run away to the underground fortress where I could plan my final battle!

“But I didn’t expect that Master Hidden Fog’s attack was unimaginably weak. It was not befitting for the ultimate strike of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator at all. He was in the high level of the Core Formation Stage at best. He only looked intimidating but there was nothing concrete below his disguise!

“In the meantime, on my left side, among the ‘Eight Blades of Black Spider’, an assassin whose code name was ‘Dark Empyrean’ suddenly displayed a combat ability that was even higher than that of Fengyu Zhong!

“In that moment, Dark Empyrean improved his Cultivation to at least the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage!

“I gathered the files of the Eight Blades of Black Spider a long time ago and have watched the battle videos of every one of them thousands of times. I knew every detail about their posture, attack patterns, and habitual movements.

“Therefore, after we encountered, I made the judgement quickly that he must be Dark Empyrean, one of the Eight Blades of Black Spider. I thought that he was merely in the Core Formation Stage and did not care too much about him at all.

“Therefore, his strike truly wounded me heavily!”

Li Yao was soaked in sweat. “Are you saying that an unparalleled expert in the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage has been pretending that he is in the Core Formation Stage and working as ‘one of the Eight Blades of Black Spider’ all this time?”

“Correct.” Bai Xinghe nodded and said, “Dark Empyrean joined the battle of Heavenly Saints City as one of the Eight Blades of Black Spider. It is clear now that he did not just participate in the battle but also commanded the troops in the frontline!

“Hellsword is not the Black King. Master Hidden Fog is not the Black King. The seemingly inconspicuous warrior of the Eight Blades of Black Spider is the real Black King and the master of Black Spider Tower!”

Li Yao was fascinated and had to admit that the attacks and counterattacks between the Temple of Immortals and Bai Xinghe were indeed marvelous.

Pondering for a moment, he asked again, “How did you know that I would catch up to you, and why did you wait for me?”

Bai Xinghe laughed. “I was not sure that you would, but it was an odd move that you suddenly marched out trying to stop me.

“I believe that every odd move has a logical reason.

“After preliminary analysis, I inferred that you planted some sort of tracker on me during our encounter.

“My head is quite valuable. It is perfectly normal that somebody wants to swallow it alone.

“Although I found no trackers on my body, it was worth a try. After all, I had plenty of time. Fengyu Zhong wouldn’t have found me for another ten minutes.

“I planned to wait for you for five minutes in case you caught up to me. Even if you didn’t, I wouldn’t lose anything.

“As it turned out, it took you only half a minute to arrive!”

Li Yao smiled bitterly. He didn’t know that his every move had been within Bai Xinghe’s calculation.

But there was one thing that confused him. He asked, “Why did you wait for me? Was I of any use to you?”

“You were,” Bai Xinghe explained. “My internal organs were heavily wounded because of the Black King’s strike, and I’m now merely in the Core Formation Stage. It would be quite risky for me to pass through the sky of the Nether River, and it would be more than troublesome if I fell into the river after being attacked by the boas and the bats collectively.”

Li Yao finally understood everything. “So, I shared the pressure by attracting half of the boas and bats, significantly increasing the odds of you passing through the Nether River safely!”

Bai Xinghe smiled. “Exactly. There is a vast difference in the pressure that fifty boas bring compared to a hundred. If the situation got out of control, I could also have ambushed you along the way so that you would fall into the river and attract the boas’ attention. That way, it would have been easy for me to run away.

“I would’ve been all on my own trying my luck. But since my young friend Bloody Vulture was so kind and friendly and volunteered to be my bodyguard, how could I refuse such kindheartedness?”

Li Yao sighed. “That explains a lot. Boss Bai is right. I was indeed asking for my own death. Nobody else is to blame. But there is one last question. I won’t rest in peace after I die if I don’t know the answer—”

No.

Li Yao had no questions.

While the two of them were talking, Bai Xinghe had been treating his wounds and recovering his Cultivation wholeheartedly. But Li Yao had been doing something else.

He pretended that he was attracted by Bai Xinghe’s explanation and was drawn closer during the conversation.

Right now, the distance between them was not 99 meters, but 67.2 meters.

It was the perfect range of attack for the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit!

Chapter 738 - Show You Some Respect

Chapter 738: Show You Some Respect

Li Yao raised a series of questions not because he intended to know their answers but because he wanted to ease Bai Xinghe’s vigilance.

As mysteries were solved one after another, Bai Xinghe’s capability was gradually recovering, and his wariness was somewhat weakened while he was rambling on.

At this moment, Li Yao could not wait any long. If the conversation continued, Bai Xinghe might realize what was going on at any second.

Therefore, before Li Yao finished his last question, Li Yao attacked suddenly like a dazzling blast of lightning!

In that instant, the crystal bombs previously floating in front of him darted at Bai Xinghe, only to explode on their way!

Li Yao’s purpose was not to attack, but to conceal his body with the burning fireballs as camouflage.

Covered by the serial fireballs, Li Yao performed the fastest ‘air change’ in his life.

The Dark Crow Battlesuit that had been modified specially suddenly collapsed and exploded. Dragged by his spiritual energy, the components condensed into an intact crystal suit in front of him again.

Moreover, Li Yao transmitted a cluster of human-shaped spiritual energy into the crystal suit before making it lunge at Bai Xinghe!

If Bai Xinghe perceived the situation with his spiritual threads, he might mistake the empty crystal suit for Li Yao, while in fact, the real Li Yao had put on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit in that moment and hid behind the pretense quietly.

BOOM!

Bai Xinghe was indeed tricked. A thunderous roar echoed behind the serial fireballs. A spiritual storm at least in the peak of the Core Formation Stage broke through the wall of fire and blew the Dark Crow Battlesuit into pieces!

Li Yao took the opportunity to stomp on the ground, and he accelerated to his top speed through the Dark Crow Battlesuit's pieces. Then he threw out all the 'terror bombs' he had formerly condensed inside his brain and performed the 'Hellsword Arts' to the best of his ability with his left leg, which kicked forward like wind and whip!

The daggers originally installed below the feet of Hellsword's personal 'Black Horn Battlesuit' had been dismantled and transplanted to the feet of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

With a telepathic thought, the daggers stuck out silently, drawing a black abyss in midair!

After he performed the attack, however, Li Yao suddenly felt greatly alarmed.

Something was not right!

Bai Xinghe bursting into fury?

It was impossible. Bai Xinghe would be dead before he burst into fury!

Not good. The man was not tricked. He had seen through that nobody was inside the Dark Crow Battlesuit and was merely pretending that he hadn’t!

Li Yao shrieked loudly. His left leg, which had been fully extended, was folded by force and changed from whipping into crashing with his knee.

Then, all the power rune arrays on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit gave out dazzling brilliance all of a suddenly. Black Wing, which was now the spine of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, triggered six wings of spiritual energy, too.

At the risk of the bones all over his body being fractured, Li Yao finally managed to twist his direction and moved leftwards five meters!

Swoosh!

The moment he left his original route, Li Yao sensed that a ‘shooting star’ just brushed past him.

Although he was wearing one of the strongest crystal suits in the Flying Star Sector, the rampant, scorching spiritual energy still invaded his crystal suit and set the right side of his body on fire!

Bai Xinghe lied to him after all.

He had been answering all the questions in a seemingly honest way. Maybe his every sentence was true, except for the one where he stated that he was merely in the Core Formation Stage because of Dark Empyrean’s attack.

He was lying. The attack that Bai Xinghe performed just now definitely belonged to the Nascent Soul Stage!

If Li Yao hadn't had a eureka moment, chances were that the strike would've killed him instantly!

Although he had nearly been killed a moment ago, Li Yao had no intention to retreat at all. His fighting will soared, and he charged forward instead of running away. The Feathered Dragon Saber, his ultimate weapon right now, rushed out, with the feathers on the edge crumbling and condensing into a tornado of sharp aura that swept toward Bai Xinghe!

Bai Xinghe was heavily wounded. He must've paid a certain price by launching the previous attack. Now, this is perhaps my only chance!

Bai Xinghe did not seem to be expecting that Li Yao could avoid his disguised fatal attack, or maybe it was because his wounds were not fully recovered yet and the previous attack affected them. Either way, he suddenly stopped where he was for a moment.

In the next second, Bai Xinghe's left hand, which had been half chopped off, let out astounding gold brilliance!

Swoosh!

A golden dragon suddenly exploded from his left hand!

The golden dragon dashed into the center of the tornado of sharp aura and triggered an earthshaking explosion. For a moment, everything was trembling violently. Even the three hundred super crystal processors from ancient times that were placed neatly in the center of the palace were disordered because of the blast.

Li Yao and Bai Xinghe encountered and passed each other. They exchanged locations, with fifty meters between each other.

Li Yao was one of his knees. He raised his right arm high. The black feathers all returned to his right hand and formed a glamorous black saber again.

Bai Xinghe floated in midair about half a meter from the ground. His left arm that was now more than three meters long gradually retreated; it turned out to be an artificial limb that could be extended and shortened freely at will in the shape of a golden dragon.

It was the ninth dragon head of his crystal suit!

Li Yao had always considered Bai Xinghe to be his most formidable enemy. After he arrived on Spider Den, he had put a lot of time into studying him, especially his special crystal suit ‘Dragon King’. He was confident that he knew every detail of the crystal suit.

The Dragon King Battlesuit excelled on Spider Den with the eight artificial limbs that looked like dragons.

But nobody knew that there was a ninth dragon head!

The golden dragon head was even thicker and more domineering than the other eight dragon heads. The crystals and rune arrays carved on it were twice as numerous, too. As the mouth of the head opened and closed, it could be seen that three dragon balls of spiritual energy were hovering inside!

No wonder Bai Xinghe abandoned half of his hand without any hesitation.

The ninth dragon head, and the strongest one, could be attached to his left arm and manipulated by his spiritual energy. His hand was redundant in the first place!

Huala! Huala! Huala!

More than ten deep, interconnecting dents suddenly appeared on the Dragon King Battlesuit.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Three clear fist indentations appeared on the breastplate of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, too. They overlapped on the left side of the breastplate and almost penetrated through it.

Li Yao saw various colors in front of him, and he felt as if his heart was about to explode.

“Pu!”

Li Yao vomited a mouthful of blood. However, his aura did not diminish but increase. The maximum combat ability that equaled to a Core Formation Stage Cultivator fully burst out, while his spiritual energy as vast as an ocean expanded to a hundred meters away!

The hundred square meters were his domain!

Gripping the Feathered Dragon Saber in his hands, Li Yao raised it high above his head. The invisible aura of his blade pierced out and slashed a narrow, long crack on the ground between the two of them, extending toward Bai Xinghe!

BOOM!

Li Yao stepped forward heavily. Centered at his foot, the ground within one square meter collapsed.

One step, one step, yet another one step.

As if he were possessed by a devil, Li Yao raised his saber high, and his killing intent soared as he drew closer to Bai Xinghe!

“Boss Bai!” Li Yao shouted gravely. “Right now, you haven’t recovered from your heavy wounds yet. Even though I cannot kill you, I can at least make you pay a good price before my death!

“Maybe I can even wound you heavily again and make you fall into the Building Foundation Stage for real!

“I don’t want to die. I believe you don’t want to fight Bai Wulei, Fengyu Zhong, and the Black King when you are merely in the Building Foundation Stage, do you?

“But right now, the mutual deterrence between us has been broken. We have no other options except to fight until the end!

“Unless—

“Unless we find a new way to establish mutual deterrence where we are held back by each other simultaneously!

“Boss Bai, I’ll give you ten seconds. Take off your Dragon King Battlesuit, here and now!

“You are a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. With the enhancement of your crystal suit, I’m definitely no match for you. I can continue cooperating with you without fear only if you take off your crystal suit!

“If you would rather not, then let’s fight!”

“Ten!

“Nine!

“Eight!

“Seven!”

After each countdown, Li Yao would step closer to Bai Xinghe, and the aura circling around the Feathered Dragon Saber would further increase.

He was not bluffing at all; he was really ready for the last battle with Bai Xinghe!

“Three!

“Two!

“One!”

Li Yao was only ten meters away from Bai Xinghe.

For two top experts, such a distance was too short even for a melee combat; they had practically stabbed a knife into each other’s stomach!

Li Yao’s aura had been improved to the maximum. There was nothing but determination in his eyes!

Before Li Yao’s final step, Bai Xinghe suddenly took half a step back. His Dragon King Battlesuit dissected and went back into his Cosmos Ring.

Right now, Bai Xinghe was only wearing a mustard-seed suit. He stared at Li Yao with appreciation and mixed thoughts.

Li Yao was greatly relieved and found it barely possible to keep standing. It was indeed the most dangerous ten seconds of his life.

Without the enhancement of his crystal suit, Bai Xinghe’s combat ability was basically on par with his.

Even for an unparalleled bandit like Bai Xinghe, it would still take him tenths of a second to put on the whole crystal suit.

Tenths of a second were more than enough for him to do many things and slash many times.

Li Yao retrieved a rope from his Cosmos Ring and threw it to Bai Xinghe. He kept the Feathered Dragon Saber raised in midair and demanded, “Boss Bai, you have two options right now.

“You can either stay in your current level and stop further healing your wounds.

“Or, if you want to recover your Cultivation faster with magical equipment, you bind your hands up with the rope refined out of the veins of the ‘Rhino-Hide Green Fire Beast’.

“I believe you must know how tough the veins of the ‘Rhino-Hide Green Fire Beast are.

“With the Cultivation of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, the veins cannot stop you. The best it can do is waste half a second.

“Therefore, although your Cultivation is higher than mine, I will have one more second to react. We will be on par with each other and reach a new ‘mutual deterrence’.”

Bai Xinghe picked up the rope and smiled at Li Yao casually.

For some reason, Li Yao suddenly felt that Bai Xinghe’s attitude had changed. There was no hostility in him anymore. He was really eyeing Li Yao in the way a senior looked at his junior.

Bai Xinghe answered calmly, “Alright. I can tie up my hands.

“But I’d better make something clear for you.

“I took off my crystal suit and will tie up my hands voluntarily not because I was scared to fight against you.

“Your crystal suit is indeed impressive. But even with your crystal suit and your capability in the superlative height of the Building Foundation Stage, you cannot beat me into the Building Foundation Stage.

“I am doing this only because I want to show some respect for Sand Scorpion, the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, as well as Li Yao, the big hero who was the first to discover the plot of the Temple of Immortals.”

Chapter 739 - Thank You, Li Yao

Li Yao was dazed and suddenly felt extremely cold.

The way he unleashed his spiritual energy was different from usual, and when he summoned the strength in the superlative height of the Building Foundation Stage, the difference would be very obvious. Therefore, it was not strange that Bai Xinghe guessed that he was Sand Scorpion.

But how did Bai Xinghe know that he was Li Yao?

Li Yao pretended to be calm. Like a leopard ready to attack, he asked suspiciously, “What are you talking about?”

Bai Xinghe smiled casually and replied, “The skillfulness of your utilization of spiritual energy in the liquidous form is one of the best of the Flying Star Sector. You are only in the Building Foundation Stage, and yet your combat ability is equal to someone in the Core Formation Stage. As far as I know, Sand Scorpion, the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, is the only one who boasts such a technique.

“However, the universe is too vast a place. I can’t say for sure that nobody else knows such a technique.

“The most decisive proof, on the other hand, is the kick of your left leg.

“Hellsword was a unique lone wolf in the Nascent Soul Stage on Spider Den. I analyzed his techniques carefully before.

Therefore, I’m very positive that what you performed was ‘Hellsword Arts’, Hellsword’s ultimate skill!

“It was said that Hellsword died together with Sand Scorpion in the battle of Heavenly Saints City. Even his crystal suit had vaporized.

“Right now, a man likely to be Sand Scorpion performed Hellsword’s ultimate skill. Isn’t the man’s identity obvious?”

Li Yao nodded his head and acknowledged, “Very marvelous deduction, Boss Bai. I am Sand Scorpion!”

“No!” Bai Xinghe suddenly raised his voice. Like a thunderclap, he yelled, “You are not Bloody Vulture. You are not Sand Scorpion. You are Li Yao!”

Every word was like a crystal bomb whose noises echoed inside the room after explosions.

Li Yao was as calm as before. “Why did you say that?”

“Firstly, the crystal suit you are in is glamorous, delicate and strong,” Bai Xinghe replied. “It is as good as the Dragon King Battlesuit, which was made based on the technology of the Star Ocean Imperium. As for the employment of precious materials, it is even better than the Dragon King Battlesuit.

“You can’t find many such excellent crystal suits in the entire Flying Star Sector.

“Li Yao fought Storm Prison and even Fengyu Zhong himself when he rescued the Great Horn Exo Society. A lot of battle videos were left. I watched some of them through secret channels.

“I found that although the appearance of your crystal suit is totally different from Li Yao’s at that time, the styles, as well as the spirits in the bones, of the two crystal suits are very similar.”

Li Yao smiled. “Maybe it is because Li Yao’s crystal suit and mine were made by the same Armadominus?”

Bai Xinghe nodded. “It is indeed a possibility. But if Sand Scorpion is not Li Yao, one thing will be inexplicable, which is your skills of using crystal suits!

“Although we only had one round of attack just now, the crystal suit skills you displayed in your move were definitely among the top of the world. Even I had to concentrate all my soul power and computational ability to deal with them!

“You are a super expert in crystal suits!

“According to the files, Sand Scorpion is an Iron Plateau native who had never touched crystal suits until a few months ago. However talented he is, it is impossible for him to have gained such an expertise in crystal suits after only a few months, isn’t it?”

Li Yao was rendered speechless.

It was indeed inexplicable for him.

Bai Xinghe continued slowly. “Li Yao went missing on Iron Plateau, and Sand Scorpion distinguished himself miraculously after Li Yao disappeared. Before, many people had linked Li Yao to Sand Scorpion. But it was said that Sand Scorpion proved his identity on the so-called Truth Cabinet. Therefore, nobody talked about it anymore.

“However, I don’t believe dead objects like the True Cabinet. I prefer to believe… this.”

Bai Xinghe raised his hands, which had been tied up, and pointed at his head.

“Based on our communication so far, I believe that you were definitely able to fool a polygraph with your cunningness.”

Li Yao was silent for a long time and reflected on all the details. Still, he failed to come up with any rebuttals.

Bai Xinghe would not buy it if he argued unreasonably anyway. Li Yao could only sigh and smiled bitterly. “Boss Bai is indeed as smart as they say. You’re right. I am Li Yao.”

Bai Xinghe’s eyes suddenly turned extremely deep and dark, like two bottomless springs. He said softly, “Thank you, Li Yao.”

Li Yao was dumbfounded. He blurted out, “For what? For killing the only son of your old nemesis Fengyu Zhong, or for the favor that I’ve done you by jumping out promptly to be your bodyguard?”

Bai Xinghe took a long breath in relief. All the hostility on him seemed to have gone. He said earnestly, “Thank you for saving a certain someone without caring about your own life a long time ago.

“Believe it or not, since you are Li Yao, I am prepared to keep you alive unless I absolutely have no reason to.”

Bai Xinghe was not wearing his crystal suit, and his hands were tied up with the toughest rope.

Yet, when he stood straight and made the declaration, he seemed to be a majestic tyrant who could have Li Yao killed any time he wanted.

“You—”

Ten thousand questions were popping up in Li Yao’s heart. He wanted to pursue further.

But Bai Xinghe had already moved to a corner of the palace. He shook his hands. Like a blossoming lotus, a wall of runes appeared on the wall, which dispersed into a door of a small cabin abruptly.

Chi—

The door of the cabin was opened. Li Yao looked inside and noticed that there were crystals, magical equipment, and food inside. A med bay was also lying in a corner of the room.

Bai Xinghe exposed his back to Li Yao without looking back. He walked into the cabin as he said, “We’ve passed through multiple traps and had a minor competition just now. A lot of spiritual energy has been wasted. Come in and refill yourself. The Immortal Cultivators will be here soon.”

Li Yao thought of something and asked, “Do you really plan to fish up all the Immortal Cultivators with the underground fortress? Isn’t it too obvious? Was Bai Wulei not suspicious when you told the secrets to him on purpose?”

“There’s nothing to be suspicious about,” Bai Xinghe replied. “Two months ago, I launched the first counterattack against the Temple of Immortals. At that time, Bai Wulei was still lurking and pretending to be loyal. I was moved and told him the map of the underground fortress, the location where the Spider Key was hidden, and the method to activate the Cosmos Ring.

“I told Bai Wulei that resisting the Temple of Immortals was perilous and life-threatening. Chances were that I would be killed by the Temple of Immortals. If I died abruptly, I hoped him to fulfil by wish my fighting until the end with the resources in the underground fortress.

“You see. Wasn’t it very logical for me to confess the location where the map and the key were hidden?”

Li Yao thought carefully and shook his head. “Even if Bai Wulei was fooled, Fengyu Zhong and the Black King are both tricky and cunning. They will not be trapped so easily.”

Bai Xinghe sneered. “They have no options right now. They made promises to so many space pirates, and now I’m ‘heavily wounded, presumably dead’. Everybody saw that the map and the key fell into their hands, so will the space pirates agree to fight for him anymore if they do not explore the underground fortress and the secret treasures as soon as possible?”

Li Yao thought hard for a long time, his eyes shining brighter and brighter. He mumbled, “So, you claimed that you would reward your subordinates with the secret treasures in the underground fortress and you convened the ‘Meeting of Heroes in Space’ because you were trying to raise the expectations of the space pirates so that Fengyu Zhong could only buy them over with better offers!

“It’s like two people bidding for the same treasure, with one of proposing absurd prices. It was not because he wanted the treasure per se, but because he was forcing his opponent to pay a higher price!

“Since you were tempting the space pirates with the secret treasures of the Star Ocean Imperium, the Temple of Immortals had to provide better offers for the greedy space pirates in order to recruit them!

“What could possibly be more valuable than the secret treasures of the Star Ocean Imperium? Of course, the chance to explore the entire underground fortress!

“Now that the Temple of Immortals has made such promises, there’s nothing they can do even if they know that there might be traps underground. They are faced with tremendous pressure from the Cultivators and require the loyalty of the space pirates. They cannot bear to lose their trust now!

“The ferocious space pirates are all selfish people who will risk their lives for one dime. Now that such a fat piece of meat is hanging right before their eyes, they will not possibly let it go!

“This is not a plot; this is an open trap. No matter what is coming for them, since you have suffered a crushing defeat, the Temple of Immortals must fulfil their promises!”

Li Yao was almost applauding for Bai Xinghe’s delicate scheme, but he realized that something was wrong on second thought. “However, what if the Temple of Immortals asks the space pirates to be cannon fodder in the vanguard and does not enter the underground fortress personally? How are you going to implement your plan if so?”

Bai Xinghe smiled. “Everything is just your assumption. What if there are no traps?

“What if endless secrets treasures and techniques are waiting for the first visitor below the surface of Spider Den?

By then, the space pirates will definitely loot all their findings. Do you think they will ever hand them over to the Temple of Immortals?”

Li Yao pondered carefully and discovered that Bai Xinghe had indeed figured out what everybody else was thinking about.

Sending a batch of avaricious, fearless, brutal space pirates into the underground treasury was like sending a pack of wolves into a sheepfold. It would be a miracle if some bones were left half a day later!

Therefore, the Temple of Immortals would certainly send someone important to supervise the situation.

“Moreover, there’s a third possibility,” Bai Xinghe continued, “which is that I am not dead and ran into the center of the underground fortress where I destroy it or completely seal all the tunnels.

“Without the resources of the underground fortress, how is the Temple of Immortals going to fight against the entire world of Cultivators?

“Therefore, they have no alternatives except to march into the underground fortress as quickly as they can!”

Li Yao took a deep relief and thought through the whole plan. There was nothing but admiration in his heart.

He commented, “With the Abyss Pirate Gang as a bait, you established such a great scheme. You are indeed adventurous, Boss Bai!”

Bai Xinghe said calmly, “The Abyss Pirate Gang was doomed. Spider Den was doomed.

“Even if I successfully took down Fengyu Zhong and cooperated with the Temple of Immortals with advantageous conditions, how long would I be able to show off?

“In several years, everything will be gone when the army of Cultivators arrived.

“The Abyss Pirate Gang is destined to collapse. Spider Den is destined to be destroyed. Exploiting the last bit of their potential before their demolition is the most sensible choice. What’s there to hesitate over?”

Li Yao was silent. He recalled the pessimistic words Bai Xinghe had said to Luo Jinhu on his carrier. It seemed that the Pirate Potentate did not have high hopes for space pirates or the Immortal Cultivators, then—

“Boss Bai, what are you up to exactly?” Li Yao blurted out.

Chapter 740 - Pry into the Secrets of the Stars!

Bai Xinghe tore off the metal membrane on a high-nutrition drug’s bottle and chugged all of it. He licked his lips and burped in great satisfaction. Then he asked back, “What about you? What’s your purpose?

“The style of your crystal suit is totally different from the few most advanced crystal suit centers of the Cultivation world. The materials it is made of are extremely precious, too. My three full-strength punches did not even blow apart the breastplate of the crystal suit!

“The organization behind you that can produce such a suit and raise such an expert like yourself must be tremendously powerful.

“As a representative this mysterious organization, Li Yao, what are you doing on Spider Den in such time of troubles? You did not come here to persuade me to do the right thing and cooperate with the Cultivators against the Immortal Cultivators, did you? Haha. Hahahaha!”

Li Yao was silent for a moment. Then he shook his head. “I did not.

“Boss Bai, in the circle of space pirates, you are among the more rational ones. During the decades as the Pirate Potentate, you barely went on hunting jobs yourself. All you needed to do was simply exploit other pirate gangs.

“Compared to rabid dogs such as Fengyu Zhong, you are almost a man of integrity.

“However, decades before your rise, you still committed endless unpardonable crimes. Your hands are soaked in the blood of the innocent.

“It is true that you would not kill anybody if the victims did not resist. But why would they not resist when you were looting the goods that they purchased with their own money, sometimes even with loans?

“Boss Bai, I only respect you as ‘Boss Bai’ because I admire your strategies and audaciousness. But after all, there is not much difference between Fengyu Zhong and you. You are both scumbags.

“If a scumbag like you can be washed clean and reembraced by the community of Cultivators, wouldn’t it be terribly unfair to the innocent victims who were butchered by you miserably?

“I don’t want to lie to you, and you won’t be fooled anyway.

“The enemy of an enemy is not necessarily a friend. Although the Immortal Cultivators are the greatest threats right now, I will try my best to kill you when the time is appropriate for the revenge of the victims of your crimes!”

“Well said!” Bai Xinghe laughed. “I’m growing more and more fond of you from the bottom of my heart, Li Yao!

“Do you feel that you are a man of honor and veracity?”

Li Yao stood straight and replied coldly, “I’m indeed a man of honor and veracity compared with a lawless space pirate like you. More importantly, I’m willing to pay a price for the justice that I believe in at any time!”

“Very good.” Bai Xinghe clapped his hands and observed, “Many people in the world who call themselves mature do not believe in justice. They think that justice is just a joke for little kids. But in fact, they are just scared of justice. They are weak deep down in their bones. They do not want to pay the price to realize their justice.

“Although what you believe in is just ignorant justice, your persistence is still very touching.

“Compared with such an ethical, justified, and persistent Cultivator, we selfish, merciless, and lawless space pirates as well as the inhuman Immortal Cultivators are truly out-and-out scumbags!

“However—”

Bai Xinghe suddenly put on an extremely weird expression. He blinked and asked mysteriously, “Do you want to know where space pirates come from and how the Immortal Cultivators originated?

“Why did the Cultivators who were supposed to protect humanity and sacrifice themselves degenerate into space pirates and even the Immortal Cultivators in the darkness of the universe?

“Let me tell you. It’s simple. Really simple.

“One second, one snap of the fingers, and a Cultivator will be transformed into an Immortal Cultivator. And once they are transformed, there is absolutely no way that they can turn back. Haha. Hahahaha!”

Li Yao thought of something and asked earnestly, “Do you know the truth about the Immortal Cultivators?”

Smiling, Bai Xinghe pointed at his feet. “Yes, I do. The truth is right here.”

Li Yao was amazed. “Here? You said just now that this place was an observatory.”

“Correct,” Bai Xinghe replied. “We are indeed in an observatory. More specifically speaking, an observatory that studies the ‘apocalypses’.”

Li Yao was confused. How was an observatory that studied the apocalypses related to the Immortal Cultivators?

Bai Xinghe smiled and continued. “Have you ever heard of a theory named ‘dark forest’?”

Li Yao had heard the term before from Huangpu Xiaoya, who was the heir of a noble family of refining, on the carrier of the Temple of Immortals.

At that time, Huangpu Xiaoya had declared that if the universe was truly nothing more than a bloody, shadowy dark forest…

Later, when he was on Iron Plateau, he had also heard Xiong Wuji stating that, if the universe was truly a dark forest of dead ends, he would set a fire and make a road himself!

Back then, Li Yao did not think too much of it. He had thought that it was a coincidence that the two of them made the same metaphor.

As it turned out, it might not be a coincidence. Was ‘dark forest’ a proper noun?

“The apocalypses have always been the greatest mysteries in the world of Cultivators since forty thousand years ago to this day,” Bai Xinghe explained. “Countless Cultivators have dedicated themselves to the studies of the apocalypses. They proposed many theories to explain the apocalypses. The ‘Dark Forest Theory’ was one of the most perfect, plausible theories.

“The Dark Forest Theory was coined with in this very palace by the great scholar Liu the Prier ten thousand years ago.”

The apocalypses were the uncanniest phenomena in the universe. They were almost the most unpredictable field in the modern Cultivation world.

Some people even said that those who understood the apocalypses understood the whole universe!

Li Yao found himself deeply attracted to Bai Xinghe’s words.

Sitting cross-legged, Bai Xinghe treated his wounds while he talked unhurriedly. “Ten thousand years ago, when Spider Den was just discovered, countless Cultivators who were adept at prospecting came to this place to explore the mother lodes.

“According to the laws of the Star Ocean Imperium, when a new mother lode was discovered, part of the ownership of the mother lode would be given to the discoverer as a reward. The deeper the mother lode was and the more difficult it was to be located, the more ownership would be transferred to the discoverer.

“At that time, a Cultivator whose surname was Liu was extremely gifted in utilizing the spiritual energy of the earth class. He was also good at the Earth-Escaping Technique, which allowed him to roam the underground of Spider Den freely. In the end, almost half of the mother lodes below Spider Den were discovered by him.

“Therefore, when the large-scale exploitation began, he became wealthy all of a sudden. He turned out to be one of the most famous magnates in the mining industry and controlled the biggest mining corporate on Spider Den. In his prime years, his personal wealth almost equaled the money in the national treasury.

“Capital Nest above our head used to be headquarters of that Cultivator’s mining corporation. Half of the city was built by him.

“The Cultivator had an only son, but his son was the very opposite of him. His son hated entering the underground and enjoyed exploring space. After studying in the few most famous cities of the Star Ocean Imperium, he became a specialist in apocalypses.

“At that time, the study of apocalypses was a well-respected subject.

“That time was the renaissance of mankind. The territory of the Star Ocean Imperium covered thousands of constellations. During its expansion, besides dealing with the demon race, our old nemesis, it also conquered countless alien species.

“It was the most magnificent era of humanity. Everyone was ambitious and craving to march forward into the deeper universe!

“Naturally, a lot of alien species were met during their march toward the universe. As a result, the studies on the other civilizations of the universe became a very popular field of research.

“How many civilizations are hidden in the vast universe? Compared with the civilization of human beings, are they strong or weak? Do those civilizations know each other? If they do, what is their attitude toward other civilizations?

“Those questions were exactly what mankind at that time was eager to find out.

“Many scholars believed that the apocalypses were related to the civilizations beyond. As long as the mysteries of the apocalypses were cracked, the truth of the universe would be found.

“On the other hand, the civilization of human beings suffered multiple apocalypses both in the era of the ancient Cultivators and in the Star Ocean Imperium. They had a profound understanding about the power of the apocalypses.

“Therefore, some other people also wondered whether or not they could turn the apocalypses into some sort of weapon since they were so powerful.

“Study the apocalypses, block the apocalypses, capture the apocalypses, and hack the apocalypses. In the end, the apocalypses would be ‘weaponized’ and ‘manufactured’. They would be the indestructible, invincible ultimate weapon of mankind!”

Li Yao was dumbfounded.

He was truly awed by the all-conquering ambitions of his predecessors of the Star Ocean Imperium.

Trying to turn the apocalypses into weapons was exactly what the ‘strongest fighting species in the universe’ should do!

“Driven by the two motivations, the smartest brains of the Star Ocean Imperium were all devoted to the studies of the apocalypses.

“However, the unpredictable, mysterious apocalypses were barely observable, and the difficulty in capturing and studying them goes without saying. It was an unbelievably costly project. Most of the scholars could only work for the Star Ocean Imperium under the leadership of the twenty Guilds of Provenance and the military in order to conduct their research.

“But it was different for the only son of a magnate.

“The father was the wealthiest man alive. The studies of apocalypses were a noble research field. Since his son was talented and interested in that research, naturally, he gave his son his full support. If the mysteries of the apocalypses were successfully cracked, not only would they secure fame and fortune, their names would also be passed on in the history books of generations to come!

“Therefore, the father and son spent tremendous wealth purchasing the most valuable Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and the crystal processors that boasted the highest computational ability in the Flying Star Sector. Then, they established an enormous observatory, or a ‘center of apocalypse studies’, if you will, under Spider Den’s surface, based on their abundant experience in underground construction!

“Of course, it was not an easy task to build such a palace of stars with the efforts of a single family. The construction process took several decades. Quite a lot of changes happened during the time. Even the magnate of the mining industry died of old age.

“But his son remained unwavering. After he inherited his father’s corporation, he devoted even more capital to the job as if he were possessed by a devil. Finally, the ‘Star Prier’s House’ was successfully built!”

“‘Star Prier’ was exactly the ambition of the son. Therefore, all the following generations have called him ‘Liu the Prier’, because he meant to pry into the secrets of the stars!”

Chapter 741 - Hopes to Go Home

Chapter 741: Hopes to Go Home Translator: flycrane01 Editor: Millman97

Li Yao was greatly touched. A great man whose name had been passed on for ten thousand years indeed deserved his fame!

But he was still baffled by something. "Why was an observatory that was meant to study the universe built more than ten thousand meters below the ground? Wouldn't it save a lot of money and effort if the site were built on the surface?"

Bai Xinghe smiled and said, "It's simple. This is not a simple observatory that studies the three-dimensional universe, but one that can study the four-dimensional universe directly!"

Li Yao's widened in astonishment. "What!"

"The universe is too vast," Bai Xinghe explained. "For normal observatories, however advanced their technology is, it is unlikely that their observation can surpass the speed of light. The celestial phenomena they observed might actually have taken place billions of years ago.

"However, our universe resulted from a big bang of spiritual energy. Every object in the universe is naturally endowed with spiritual energy and is constantly radiating it. The only difference is that some objects emit more spiritual energy while some emit less.

"When the cosmic radiation pierces through the thick shell of the planet deep into the core, most of the impurities are blocked. The only thing left are the most crucial particles, radiation, and waves, or in other words, the essence of the universe!

"This center to study apocalypses was built ten thousand meters below the ground because it tried to eliminate all the impurities with the lithosphere as a 'filter' so that the essence of the universe could be studied.

"After multiple screenings, only the most crucial particles, radiation, and waves is left. When they are calculated by the most advanced super crystal processors of the Star Ocean Imperium, a 'real-time' universe, one in the four-dimensional form that is not restricted by the speed of light, will be simulated in exactly this place ten thousand meters below the ground!"

Li Yao was stunned and found it impossible to calm himself down.

Bai Xinghe's wounds had basically recovered. He suddenly jumped up and strode out. "Seeing is believing. Let's just go and check."

Li Yao followed him, hooked.

Bai Xinghe went to the center of the three hundred super crystal processors. His spiritual energy stretched out and turned on the dozens of crystal processors in the central part of the array. Various mottled shadows was displayed, as if they were brain cells that had been woke up.

"You've seen the raging Nether River just now," Bai Xinghe said. "Endless spiritual energy is stored inside the water of the river.

"The center of apocalypse studies uses the water of the Nether River as the power source. Together with the self-repairing magical equipment in this place, as long as the water of the river does not run dry, the palace of stars will continue functioning in a half-perpetual state.

"Although a super earthquake took place long ago, some basic functions of the center still remain.

"However, the super crystal processors of the Star Ocean Imperium are too complicated. I spent my whole life studying them, and yet I only got a grip of it.

"Look—"

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

As Bai Xinghe operated, colorful pillars of light soared up from the super crystal processors and darted at the transparent diamonds on the dome.

For a moment, the entire dome of diamonds seemed to be revived. All the 'stars' were a hundred times more dazzling than a moment ago and illuminated the palace as if it were daylight!

Billions of stars were burning splendidly and glamorously right above Li Yao's head!

Li Yao was overwhelmed by the beauty of the brilliant sea of stars that was about to pour onto his head, unable to say anything.

Bai Xinghe narrowed his eyes and smiled. "I was exactly like you when I saw the vast sea of stars for the first time. I was dazed for more than an hour.

"Look at them carefully. This is the exact universe we are in. It is identical to the universe above our heads. If you boast enough computational ability, you can find any Sector or any star in the universe on the dome."

"A real-time, simulated universe..."

Li Yao suddenly shivered and almost jumped up to grab Bai Xinghe's neck. He was so excited that smoke was nearly popping up from his head as he shrieked, "You said that any Sector can be found in the dome of diamonds? Then, is it possible to get its coordinates?"

Coordinates! The coordinates of a Sector!

The biggest problem that the Cultivators from the Heaven's Origin Sector, including Li Yao, were faced with was that they did not have the coordinates of their home!

In the beginning, they jumped to the Flying Star Sector randomly. They did not know the relative location between the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector or the specific coordinates of the Heaven's Origin Sector!

The coordinates of a Sector were its address in the universe. How could one go home if one did not know the address of one's home?

But the ancient observatory from ten thousand years ago could very likely provide the coordinates of the Heaven's Origin Sector!

How could Li Yao not be thrilled and lose his calmness?

Bai Xinghe was quite shocked at Li Yao's excitement. Glancing at him suspiciously, he still explained, "Theoretically speaking, yes.

"However, there are too many Sectors in the universe. The known world for mankind is just a tiny corner of the universe. Unless the Sector boasts distinctive features, you will not be able to recognize it when you see it.

"Besides, my own strength is not enough to activate all the super crystal processors. The observatory must be repaired first with all the manpower and resources of the Flying Star Sector. Otherwise, everything will be impractical."

Li Yao took a deep breath and tried to calm his burning brain down.

Features of the Heaven's Origin Sector?

So obvious!

The Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector were rarely-seen 'Twin Sectors' in the universe. Besides, the two Sectors were attracted to each other in the four-dimensional level and would crash and meld very soon!

There would not be too many Sectors with such characteristics in the entire universe, and even fewer around the Flying Star Sector. Or rather, it was possible that there would only be one!

As for the recovery of the underground observatory with all the resources of the Flying Star Sector...

Li Yao secretly swore that he would have it done no matter the cost!

After drifting in the Flying Star Sector for such a long time, he finally saw the hope to go home now!

For a moment, Li Yao felt like raising his head and roaring. He was never more confident in his future road!

No obstacles were going to stop him!

Observing him with great interest, Bai Xinghe suddenly asked, "You seem very excited, and you are desperate to find the specific coordinates of a certain Sector. Why?"

Li Yao was greatly alarmed.

He had exposed too many personal feelings in front of the old fox.

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao forced himself to calm down and focus on the endless sea of stars on the dome of diamonds.

He tried locating the Heaven's Origin Sector with his bare eyes.

But he soon discovered that it was like looking for a special grit in a desert. The task was totally impossible.

Under Bai Xinghe's guidance, Li Yao soon learned how to observe and locate the glittering Sectors in various forms, as well as the ferocious-looking mist of light that separated the Sectors.

Those mists of light were the cosmic storms in the four-dimensional time and space.

When one was involved in such a cosmic storm during their space jump, their body and soul would both be destroyed with nothing left.

Except for the Sectors and the cosmic storms, Li Yao occasionally found many blinking light spots.

In the four-dimensional universe, the light spots were moving very fast. They were not like normal Sectors, but it was equally impossible for them to be shooting stars, which would not have been so large in size.

No. Not occasionally.

When Li Yao stepped back and looked at the general picture, he found, to his surprise, that such light spots were everywhere in the sea of stars.

Some of them were marching forward unstoppably and sweeping everything in their way.

Some of them were zigzagging, leaving an irregular, unpredictable trace.

Li Yao noticed that when the light spots touched the areas that represented the Sectors, both the light spot and the Sector would vanish after letting out dazzling halos. They would never show up again, leaving a black, ugly speckle on the dome.

Li Yao pointed at the light spots and asked, "What are they?"

Bai Xinghe smiled, in an extremely weird and creepy way. He replied, "Those light spots are the apocalypses."

Li Yao chewed on Bai Xinghe's every word over ten seconds.

After ten seconds, his body stiffened.

If those light spots were the apocalypses, didn't it mean that billions of apocalypses were wandering in the universe right now and might fall upon their heads at any moment?

Moreover, in that brief period, Li Yao already witnessed two Sectors perishing after colliding with the apocalypses.

Did it mean that the apocalypses had destroyed two Sectors in the second just now?

Were they the secrets of the stars? Horrifying! It was truly horrifying!

Bai Xinghe observed his facial expression and suddenly smiled. "Don't be worried. They are not as horrifying as you saw. In order to give you a better understanding, I've adjusted the flow of time to the highest speed. What you saw just now was the universe that the center of apocalypse studies has observed over ten thousand years, but I compressed it into several seconds."

Li Yao was dazed for a moment and could not help but curse silently.

Bai Xinghe seemed to have let go of his hostility, but he was still attacking his mental defenses in such a way, forcing him to reveal something he should not have in his utmost shock!

"Don't be nervous. Aren't the apocalypses less terrifying now? Come on!"

Bai Xinghe sat cross-legged and gestured for Li Yao to sit down, too. He said, "Let's meditate on the mysteries of the apocalypses, the stars, and the universe below the glamorous dome of diamonds like the great scholar Liu the Prier did ten thousand years ago.

"Let me tell you what the apocalypses and the dark forest are!"

Li Yao pondered for a moment and sat down face to face with Bai Xinghe.

Shua!

The dome of diamonds above their heads suddenly turned into a cubic light beam. All the stars poured down around them, bathing the two of them in the splendid sea of stars.

Li Yao calmed himself down and asked coldly, "Is the dark forest related to the Immortal Cultivators?"

"It is," Bai Xinghe replied. "The dark forest is very related to the Immortal Cultivators, the Cultivators, and every other human being."

Chapter 742 - Two and a Half Rules

Bai Xinghe narrowed his eyes and sensed the vast sea of stars flowing past him slowly.

Li Yao also saw that a light spot that represented an apocalypse just flashed by his cheek.

Bai Xinghe opened his eyes slowly and said in an old, coarse voice, “Imagine that you are Liu the Prier, the great scholar who studied the apocalypses ten thousand years ago. You’ve finally built the observatory successfully and managed to simulate the real-time universe with the three hundred super crystal processors. You see for the first time so many apocalypses flying here and there right above your head.

“Then, what will you think?

“What is the truth about the apocalypses? Where are they from, and where will they go to?”

“The universe is a vast place. It’s perfectly normal that there are prosperous civilizations other than mankind. Now that even human beings are considering to weaponize the apocalypses, it is very likely that the apocalypses are the weapons launched by a strong civilization for the purpose of destroying or corrupting another civilization,” Li Yao replied.

It was the deduction that Li Yao and Xiong Wuji had made together on Iron Plateau.

Bai Xinghe was surprised, too. He stared at Li Yao in deep thought and remarked, “My young friend Li Yao, you are giving me more and more surprises. I didn’t know that there were such excellent young men in the world of Cultivators.

“It’s perfectly normal that you would regard the apocalypses as weapons of a different civilization after witnessing the horror of an apocalypse’s arrival.

“However, many Sectors that experienced apocalypses are actually quite underdeveloped. They are of little threat to other civilizations, like the Flying Star Sector five thousand years ago.

“Why are such harmless Sectors attacked by the apocalypses?

“Why are there so many apocalypses cruising in the sea of stars? Are they part of a cosmic war where hundreds of civilizations are involved?

“For exactly what purpose did the civilizations launch the apocalypses?”

Li Yao considered carefully for a moment and shook his head. “I don’t know.”

After a long sigh, Bai Xinghe said, “Liu the Prier was truly one of the most distinguished persons of the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago. If the civilization of mankind does exist in billions of years, maybe they will have forgotten the ‘Supreme Emperor’, but they will definitely remember Liu the Prier!

“Ten thousand years ago, Liu the Prier sat alone in this very palace below the endless stars and meditated for several years. Finally, he came up with two and a half rules that were of paramount importance!”

Li Yao raised his eyebrow. “Two and a half?”

Bai Xinghe ignored him and extended one of his fingers. He said, “Firstly, the resources of the universe are limited.”

Li Yao was dazed and almost laughed out aloud. What kind of rule was that? It was a simple fact that everybody knew!

In the world of ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago, it was exactly because of the internal strife among the major sects, which even created a monster species named the demon race, under the pressure of quickly diminishing resources, that society finally collapsed.

Although it was widely believed that the universe was boundless, it remained unknown whether or not the universe did have a boundary. Besides, even if the universe was truly boundless, the resources available for human beings were limited anyway.

Therefore, such a rule was a correct and yet useless statement.

Bai Xinghe seemed to have foreseen his reaction. He quickly extended his second finger and said, “Secondly, chains of suspicion exist in the entire universe and among all the civilizations.”

Li Yao frowned. “What are the chains of suspicion?”

“Just think about the multiple confrontations we had just now,” Bai Xinghe explained. “It is a perfect example for the chains of suspicion.

"Li Yao, since you killed Fengyu Zhong's only son and were under the threat of the Immortal Cultivators, theoretically speaking, your best choice was to cooperate with me. But why did you keep all kinds of traps and tricks ready to kill me at any moment?"

"Of course!" Li Yao said. "Even if I did have the motivation to work with you, I didn't know whether or not you would stab me in the back!"

Bai Xinghe smiled and nodded. "That's right. It was the same for me, too.

"I naturally knew that it would be best if we cooperated. But who could tell your real purpose? Who could say for sure that you would not suddenly change your attitude and stab me in the back for reasons I didn't know?

"Look. You didn't want to kill me, but you were scared that I wanted to kill you. So, you had to prepare to kill me at any time.

"I didn't want to kill you, either. But I was scared that you wanted to kill me, and I was more scared that you might kill me first because you thought that I was going to kill you. Therefore, I had to kill you in advance before you killed me.

"This is a perfect example for the chain of suspicion. Quite a tongue twister, isn't it?

"Now, let's break the chain of suspicion and trust each other. We will work together and fight against the Immortal Cultivators together. I can make a Blood Oath that I will not kill you no matter what. Will you believe it?"

Li Yao shook his head and immediately replied, "No!"

The moment he replied, he realized the terror of the ‘chains of suspicion’.

Bai Xinghe nodded in satisfaction. “That’s right. You don’t believe me, and I don’t believe you. Even if you make ten Blood Oaths, I will still not believe you. Our peace right now is exclusively maintained by the ‘mutual deterrence’.

“Remember this, though!

“We both belong to the same species. We can communicate with each other freely. We share the same way of thinking and the same emotions. We are under the threat of a common foe. In this place, we also have abundant resources. Crystals, magical equipment, drugs, you name it. Everything is sufficient.

“Despite all the favorable circumstances, there is an unbreakable chain of suspicion between us!

“What if we remove all the favorable circumstances?

“If we don’t have the Immortal Cultivators to focus our attention on, if the resources around us are running dry with only one bottle of a high-nutrition drug left, if we belong to different species and cannot comprehend each other, like—”

Bai Xinghe suddenly changed into a giant lizard that stood on its feet without giving any warning. The lumpy, thick skin of the lizard was packed with festering wounds, and stinky liquids were dripping off the wrinkles. The lizard was shrieking and waving its claws at Li Yao crazily!

Although he knew that it was an illusion created by Bai Xinghe, Li Yao could not help but jump up and unsheathe his saber.

After he drew out his weapon, however, he blinked and found that Bai Xinghe was still sitting cross-legged, staring at him peacefully.

Li Yao’s heart was pounding, and his back was soaked in sweat. He did not know that Bai Xinghe’s mental attacks were so powerful until now. He gnashed his teeth. “What were you doing?”

Bai Xinghe smiled casually. “Just now, I turned myself into a very kind alien species and bid you the highest respect in a very friendly posture.”

Li Yao almost started cursing immediately. Was the wretched appearance of the creature anything close to kindness?

But a moment later, he realized what Bai Xinghe meant.

Different civilizations originated from different planets and evolved into different appearances in different environments. It was inappropriate to judge the attitude of a different civilization against the aesthetics of human beings.

Bai Xinghe and I are both human beings. We have a common foe and almost unlimited resources. Yet, we cannot trust each other and are deeply wary of each other. If anything goes wrong, we will attack each other immediately!

If two different civilizations of entirely different life forms and with opposite ways of communication run into each other in the universe where the resources are limited, they will also have an unbreakable chain of suspicion between them, and they will constantly be wondering if the other party is trying to kill them.

Li Yao found it too scary to go any further.

Bai Xinghe said gravely, “Now you see. The resources of the universe are limited. Chains of suspicion exist among different civilizations. Under the two rules, there will only be one outcome for the universe.

“Liu the Prier described his assumption with a very vivid metaphor.

“The universe is like a dark forest. Every civilization is a hunter lurking in the darkness. They have to tread lightly and never make any sound, because countless other covetous hunters are lurking in the deeper darkness, waiting for them to expose their tracks.

“Whatever alien species a civilization finds, they should launch a fatal attack as soon as possible. Because of the chains of suspicion, nobody will cooperate with a totally different civilization sincerely. Even though two civilizations work together occasionally through approaches such as ‘mutual deterrence’, the balance can be very feeble and will collapse easily.”

Li Yao was silent.

The mutual deterrence between Bai Xinghe and him had been broken in less than one second.

No. Since the beginning, the mutual deterrence had been a trap that Bai Xinghe set up.

Right now, although a second mutual deterrence had been achieved, who could tell how long it would last?

Li Yao pondered for a while and suddenly said, “There is a loophole about the Dark Forest Theory.

“Civilizations do not necessarily need to fight each other brutally when they find each other.

“Consider such a possibility—a highly-developed civilization finds a civilization so underdeveloped that it would never be any threat to them.

“Then, is it not possible that the highly-developed civilization would consider the underdeveloped civilization slaves, pets, or cannon fodder?”

“Maybe,” Bai Xinghe replied. “That is where the last half rule that Liu the Prier proposed comes in, the ‘Child-of-Destiny Rule’.”

Li Yao was amused. “‘Child-of-Destiny Rule’? What is that? Why is it a ‘half rule’?”

“The Dark Forest Theory can be used to explain the major apocalypses,” Bai Xinghe said, “but it is not convincing enough to explain the minor apocalypses.”

Li Yao thought for a moment and realized that he was right.

The apocalypses could be divided into two kinds. The apocalypses that could destroy a planet or an entire Sector, such as those that happened to the Flying Star Sector five thousand years ago, were known as ‘major apocalypses’.

In the history of mankind, the number of major apocalypses was very low. Only two or three such events had been recorded in the history books. Most of the other tales were mixed with myths and legends that could not be verified.

What were much larger in number were the minor apocalypses that targeted individuals. There were too many of them to count.

Many Cultivators who tried to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage from the Nascent Soul Stage had experienced the minor apocalypses.

In fact, in the world of ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago, most Cultivators had no awareness of the ‘major apocalypses’ at all. The only apocalypses they knew of were the ‘minor apocalypses’ that targeted individuals!

If the apocalypses that could destroy a planet were attacks launched by a different civilization, what were the minor apocalypses exactly?

It was unlikely that a civilization was so bored as to send an apocalypse across the vast sea of stars just in order to kill a single person, wasn’t it?

Chapter 743 - Children of Destiny

“In order to explain the minor apocalypses,” Bai Xinghe said, “Liu the Prier found endless ancient books and notes and carefully studied the ancient Cultivators’ experiences. He realized that all the ancient Cultivators who suffered apocalypses shared the same feature.”

“What is the feature?” Li Yao asked solemnly.

“They are all unparalleled experts!” Bai Xinghe answered.

Li Yao was rendered speechless. Of course, it was the experts who were struck by the apocalypses. Normally speaking, only those who were at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage and about to enter the Divinity Transformation Stage were likely to experience apocalypses.

He had never heard of a Cultivator in the Refinement Stage suddenly being hit by an apocalypse while walking on the street. That would be hilarious.

Why would the ancient people named the level above the Nascent Soul Stage the ‘Divinity Transformation Stage’?

Because they believed that the Cultivators in the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage would be tested by the apocalypses, and those passed the test would become deities and gods. That was where ‘Divinity Transformation’ came from.

“In the last years of the ancient Cultivation world forty thousand years ago, all the Sectors were engaged in a war,” Bai Xinghe said. “The tyrants also rose up and attacked each other. It was truly an era of chaos!

“Therefore, Liu the Prier studied the Sectors during the period as the entire universe. He considered every Sector to be an independent civilization.

“Then, Liu the Prier discovered that, when two Sectors were at war, the more developed Sector was not necessarily a sure winner.

“On many occasions, a single super expert was enough to twist the situation of the war!

“The super experts might have been the humblest person of his Sector, but they seemed to be blessed with unimaginable luck and simply skyrocketed miraculously!

“For such experts, they would run into anonymous experts who would teach them techniques when they were on the street, find ancient secret treasures when they fell off a cliff, and when they bought a random pet, they would find out in the end that it was the best beast of the best beasts!

“It was like that the wheel of fate had decreed that they should emerge and change the world!

“Therefore, Liu the Prier called such people ‘Children of Destiny’.

“In the research journal, Liu the Prier listed three examples.

“Long Fentian, the second son of a minor family in the Dark Fire Sector. His family went bankrupt, his father was crippled by his enemy, and his own fiancée broke up with him. There couldn’t be a more miserable person in the entire Sector!

“However, within a few years, the man rose to fame miraculously and became the best expert of the Dark Fire Sector. He distinguished himself in the war between the Dark Fire World and the Crescent Moon Sector by slaying the seven top experts of the Crescent Moon Sector by himself. In the end, he helped the Dark Fire Sector defeat the Crescent Moon Sector, whose overall capability was ten times higher!

“Ye Xinglong was originally an unknown soldier in the coalition army of the Cultivation sects of the Windy Sun Sector. At that time, the Windy Sun Sector was involved in a chaotic war among dozens of Sectors. It was the weakest of all the participants of the war and could have perished at any moment.

“But this guy, Ye Xinglong, boasted unbelievable charm and made countless beauties of many other Sectors bend for him. Not only did he sleep with the beauties of various Sectors, he also accrued abundant resources and techniques through the girls. In the end, he rose from a private to the commander of the coalition army of dozens of Sectors!

“Xiao Han used to be a servant of a small sect of the Furious Flames Sector. It was said that he was a cripple whose veins were all broken. But he had an extremely rarely-seen talent that allowed him to communicate with ghosts. Wherever he went, he could always meet countless ghosts and discover the techniques and the information about ancient treasures through the ghosts. He also quickly rose to fame in only several decades and helped the Furious Flames Sector defeat almost a hundred Sectors. At the end of the First Civil War of Cultivators, the Furious Flames Sector became the well-accepted ruler of the world!

“The Dark Fire Sector, the Windy Sun Sector, and the Furious Flames Sector were all insignificant Sectors before those people appeared. They were essentially ‘underdeveloped civilizations’. Yet, because of the miraculous rise of the ‘Children of Destiny’, they crushed the Sectors that were far stronger and more developed than themselves!

“Based on that finding, Liu the Prier put forward the last half rule.

“During the competitions between high-level civilizations and low-level civilizations, the former is unassailable in general, but there are factors that can change the outcome, which are the Children of Destiny.

“If a Child of Destiny who boasts unbelievable luck emerges in an underdeveloped civilization, it is possible that the civilization will pose a certain threat to a highly-developed civilization, if not completely defeating it!

“Therefore, even if a high-level civilization is faced with a harmless low-level civilization, since the former does not know if a Child of Destiny will suddenly appear someday, it will simply choose to… destroy everything!

“But since the samples for observation are too few and restricted to the civilization of human beings, there is no telling whether or not the rule applies to the entire universe. Therefore, it is only a ‘half rule’.”

Li Yao found it hard to believe. “Luck? I don’t believe in such things.”

“Neither do I,” Bai Xinghe replied. “You may just consider such a phenomenon as ‘possibility’. It’s like the lottery whose winning odds are one billionth. But after billions of tickets are sold, somebody will win the lottery sooner or later. It is not because the guy is particularly lucky but because the mechanism of probability takes effect.”

Li Yao thought for a moment and found the explanation irrefutable.

Pondering briefly, Li Yao finally thought everything through. He said, “So, the minor apocalypses are weapons to ‘exterminate’ the Children of Destiny?”

Bai Xinghe nodded and said, “Even if the ‘Child-of-Destiny Rule’ does not exist, it is undeniable that all the experts slain by minor apocalypses are the essence of mankind and the best of their generation, isn’t it?

“So many unparalleled experts failed to pass through the test of the apocalypses. It was an unbelievably heavy loss for the human beings!

“If the apocalypses did not exist and they continued their training, they might’ve been able to invent more techniques and secret arts. The civilization of mankind might be hundreds of times stronger right now!

“If we consider it from that point of view, the minor apocalypses have indeed slowed down the development of our civilization. That is definitely categorically true.”

Li Yao felt goosebumps rising on his skin. “Do you mean that, for tens of thousands of years, countless strong civilizations have been watching over us silently and wiping out the experts among us in order to eliminate the possibility of our development?”

Bai Xinghe shook his head and replied, “According to the notes of the ancient Cultivators, the methods of attack of every apocalypse and their outcomes were different. They did not seem to be arranged by the same civilization.

“However, it is not very logical that hundreds of other civilizations have been monitoring the civilization of mankind all the time. After all, a hundred thousand years back, the civilization of mankind was still in the primitive phase. There was no reason for so many powerful civilizations to be coveting us.

“Therefore, Liu the Prier made the judgement that the minor apocalypses were not set to attack us on purpose but released by a civilization a long time ago with certain conditions as the trigger and spread all over the universe.

“When one of the conditions is met, the apocalypse will be activated and launch the attach automatically.

“It means that the minor apocalypses only attack randomly. Some of us are only unlucky enough to run into them.”

Li Yao found it confusing. “Why?”

“The universe is too vast,” Bai Xinghe explained. “Even if civilizations similar to mankind or even far more advanced than ours do exist, they must be very far away from us. It is possible that they are millions, if not billions, of lightyears away from us!”

Li Yao nodded. It was quite true.

When the civilization of mankind was in its prime, it had crossed through a large area of the universe and conquered a lot of alien species. But most of the species did not have a systematical civilization.

In the ancient classics, the alien species were sometimes referred to as elves, goblins, and gnomes. In fact, they were merely natives of foreign planets.

In the vast territory that human beings had explored, there was not a single civilization as developed as that of mankind. Therefore, if such civilizations did exist, they must have been extremely far away from mankind.

“Let’s say the two civilizations are a million lightyears away from each other,” Bai Xinghe said. “When the hostile civilization sensed the civilization of mankind, it immediately launched a powerful apocalypse at the speed of light, which marched toward the civilization of mankind unstoppably!

“But it would still take a million years for the apocalypse to arrive, wouldn’t it?

“A million years!

“Think about it. It took us only a hundred thousand years for us to evolve from creaking monkeys to what we are today!

“Imagine where we would have been in a million years. Would we even be scared of the so-called ‘apocalypse’ by then?

“Chances are that we would even have calculated the trajectory of the apocalypse and found a way to counterattack!

“For the civilization that launched the attack, was it trying to kill a civilization, or was it trying to get itself killed?”

Li Yao nodded his head. The points seemed pretty solid.

“Therefore, the more reasonable approach would be to release countless ‘minor apocalypses’ after setting certain hibernation and wake-up conditions. They would float in the endless universe aimlessly and slowly. When some of the conditions were met, they would be triggered immediately and perform the attack! That way, it would be faster, more reasonable, and less costly.

“Why did the apocalypse only visit the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who were breaking into the Divinity Transformation State in the world of ancient Cultivators?

“I assumed that, when a Cultivator summoned all the spiritual energy in the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage to break the threshold of the Divinity Transformation State, the immense spiritual waves that they released might have been perceived by a ‘minor apocalypse’ that happened to be drifting nearby. It would then be activated immediately!

“In the world of ancient Cultivators, there was also a theory called ‘integrity quotient’. It was said that, if a Cultivator did good things such as helping the weak and the poor, they would avoid the fate of the apocalypses. Some people even claimed that a certain great man of an honorable sect who had accumulated enough positive karma was safe and secure when he tried to break into the Divinity Transformation State without suffering from any apocalypses.

“Hehe. The real reason is much simpler. The guy was lucky enough that there happened to be no minor apocalypses near the Sector he was in when he was trying to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage!”

Li Yao clapped his hands and said, “That is a very reasonable explanation!

“The major apocalypses are ‘strategic weapons’ of a civilization. They are costly and difficult to be launched. After all, they are powerful enough to destroy a planet and even a Sector. I believe that, even for the alien species that are far more developed than mankind, they cannot launch them randomly.

“The minor apocalypses, on the other hand, are ‘tactical weapons’. They are cheap, easy to utilize, and very inconspicuous. Therefore, they launched as many as possible without caring about anything, all in order to stall and even block the evolution of other civilizations!”

Chapter 744 - The Last Flying Star Citizens

Bai Xinghe stared at Li Yao in silence. The image of stars and apocalypses blinked on his face. Beneath the shadow of the universe, there was no telling whether he was crying or laughing.

Li Yao’s head was a mess.

He had once discussed the origins of the apocalypses with Xiong Wuji on Iron Plateau and listened to Yan Xibei, who was apparently possessed by the Blood Stripe Virus, explaining why the Blood Stripe Virus initiated the apocalypse on Iron Plateau.

Right now, everything that Bai Xinghe spoke was neatly aligning with their theories.

Was it possible that everything was true? Was the universe really a dark forest?

Li Yao gritted his teeth and shook his head.

He felt that the Dark Forest Theory had loopholes, very big ones, intuitively. However, he could not tell exactly what they were.

Maybe, it was because he did not like the Dark Forest Theory from the bottom of his heart, or a universe that was so cold and cruel!

Again, Li Yao remembered what Huangpu Xiaoya and Xiong Wuji once said.

“Even if the universe is truly nothing more than a bloody, shadowy forest, we Cultivators will burn all that we have to give out a single spark!”

“If there are no roads in the dark forest, then just set a fire and make your own road!”

Only after Li Yao learned the truth did he realize the tremendous confidence between the lines.

Taking a long breath, Li Yao held his head high and looked Bai Xinghe in the eye. He said, one word after another, “I don’t like the Dark Forest Theory. Not at all.”

Bai Xinghe laughed in amusement. “The laws of nature have nothing to do with your personal feelings. Like it or not, the dark forest is right here around us.”

“We seem to have gone off topic,” Li Yao said coldly. “How is the Dark Forest Theory, whether it is true or not, related to the Immortal Cultivators?”

Bai Xinghe’s voice turned even more ghostly as he continued his explanation. “Like I said, the dark forest is right here around us. It is not just among different civilizations. A dark forest can appear anytime inside a civilization, too!

“Have you ever heard of a bunch of people named ‘Fire Stealers’?”

Li Yao was suddenly alarmed.

Of course, he had heard the name before.

Five thousand years ago, when the Flying Star Sector encountered an apocalypse, the citizens of the Flying Star

Sector were divided.

One group of people constructed an enormous space fleet, hoping to shift their entire civilization into the starships and flee from the planet. They were known as ‘spacers’.

The other group planned to concentrate all the resources of the Flying Star Sector on ‘Iron Plateau’, the capital planet, in order to build a planetary-level defense array to resist the apocalypse. They were known as ‘homers’.

Although the spacers and the homers held completely different ideologies, they were compatriots after all. Therefore, ostensible peace was maintained until the end. After negotiations, all the techniques, Cultivation arts, and the training facilities were divided into two halves, and the two groups were supposed to go their separate ways and develop on their own.

But as it turned out, a bunch of radicals among the spacers believed that Iron Plateau could never resist the apocalypse. They held the belief that it was better to keep the Cultivation arts and techniques to the spacers so that their future development would be smoother than to let those classics be buried together with the homers forever.

The radicals made thorough plans carefully for decades and eventually stole the vast majority of the Cultivation arts, techniques, and resources that were left on Iron Plateau!

Those people believed that their endeavors were to make the torch of the civilization of the Flying Star Sector burn brighter. Therefore, they called themselves ‘Fire Stealers’!

“It appears that you do,” Bai Xinghe said casually. “That’s understandable. You are the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau. How could you not know those guys who made the Iron Plateau natives unable to train normally and have to turn into ‘qi-trainers’?

“However, have you ever thought of one question?

“At that time, after the Fire Stealers took away abundant Cultivation arts, techniques, and training facilities, they left Iron Plateau in advance and retreated to the edge of the Flying Star Sector.

“By logic, the Fire Stealers had a lot of crystal warships. They were made of the experts among the spacers. Besides, they were not struck by the apocalypse from the front because they were at the edge of the Flying Star Sector.

“But today, while the offspring of the Iron Plateau natives and the space fleet, who were struck by the apocalypse, managed to survive and thrive in every space zone of the Flying Star Sector, why did the Fire Stealers who hid themselves in the edge of the Flying Star Sector vanish into thin air?”

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. It was indeed an unanswered question.

Of the three forces at that time, the homers and the spacers all endured destructive strikes, and the fleet of the Fire Stealers couldn’t have suffered more damage even if they were affected by the blast of the apocalypse, too, considering that they were hiding at the edge of the Flying Star Sector.

Where did they go in the five thousand years that followed?

After a long sigh, Bai Xinghe said, “Let me tell you what happened. After you hear the story, you may realize that ‘apocalypses’ are not the most terrifying things in the universe!”

Li Yao listened attentively and somewhat nervously.

“The radicals among the spacers, when starting Plan Prometheus, were actually not evil or shameless guys.

“On the contrary, many of them were determined and of high integrity. They were willing to sacrifice themselves for the continuation of their civilization at any time.

“They implemented Plan Prometheus with the thought of ‘one for all’ in mind.

“After stealing tremendous Cultivation arts and techniques from Iron Plateau and fleeing to the edge of the Flying Star Sector, they had maintained contact with the main fleet of the spacers at all time, claiming that they would join the main fleet when the apocalypse passed and everything was settled, and that they should be punished according to their crimes.

“Many of them even made Blood Oaths that they would kill themselves immediately after they returned.

“All the sins will be shouldered by us, with the hope that the humans of the Flying Star Sector will live long and thrive forever!”

“That was the slogan of the Fire Stealers at that time.

“It sounds selfless, ambitions, and decent, doesn’t it?”

Wearing a weird smile, Bai Xinghe continued coldly. “Then, the apocalypse arrived. However, instead of lunging at Iron

Plateau, it divided into two halves and attacked Iron Plateau and the space fleet simultaneously!

“For a moment, the overwhelming apocalypse swept the two cores of the Flying Star Sector. Iron Plateau and the space fleet were each mired in the swirl of destruction. The Flying Star Sector was caught in chaos and did not recover until a thousand years later!

“The fleet of the Fire Stealers, while hiding at the edge of the Flying Star Sector, observed the arrival of the intimidating apocalypse and detected that the cores of the Flying Star Sector were wreathed in destructive strikes. Naturally, their connection with the main fleet was cut off, too, because the main fleet was crumbling and struggling in the rampant cosmic storms!

“After a certain amount of time, maybe several years, of observation and analysis, the fleet of the Fire Stealers made sure of something, which was that Iron Plateau and the space fleet had been both destroyed in the apocalypse!

“After ascertaining the ‘fact’, other than shock and grief, they were also overjoyed after the catastrophe.

“Because they had survived!

“They still boasted a fleet of a reasonably large scale as well as many experts. More importantly, they boasted countless techniques, Cultivation arts, and training facilities!

“The torch of the civilization of the Flying Star Sector had not faded away yet. Right now, they were the only hope of mankind in the Flying Star Sector!

“In a moment, the last bit of guilt in the Fire Stealers vanished!

“In retrospect, what they did had been right all the time.

“If they had not been as bold, the entire civilization of the Flying Star Sector would have been demolished!

“Right now, they were the last Flying Star citizens. They had to revive the civilization and pass on their legacy no matter the cost!”

Li Yao was fascinated.

Everything seemed very logical to this point, but Li Yao had sensed a hint of danger.

Bai Xinghe smiled and continued. “When the ecstasy from the beginning gradually faded, the last Flying Star citizens found a fatal, unresolvable conundrum.

“They were short of food and fuel.”

“What?” Li Yao blurted out.

“It’s quite understandable. Plan Prometheus was a top secret from the beginning. Naturally, they could not attract everyone’s attention by moving a lot of starships,” Bai Xinghe explained. “Therefore, the crystal warships under their control were not large in number, and they were not necessarily carriers that were most suitable for cargo.

“Cultivation arts and techniques did not take up much space. But the training facilities and the various kind of magical equipment would occupy a lot of room.

“They did not carry enough Cosmos Rings to store so much magical equipment and training facilities.

“As for food and water, it was difficult to store them for long in Cosmos Rings, too.

“In order to steal more magical equipment and training facilities, they could only modify the starships discretely by expanding the warehouses and reducing the food and fuel they carried.

“After all, according to the plan, they would stay at the edge of the Flying Star Sector for only one to two years, no longer than five, before they turned themselves in to the main fleet when the apocalypse passed.

“The point had been repetitively made in the conversation between them and the main fleet. They had stressed that they were not traitors and that the resources they carried were not enough to support a journey across Sectors. Therefore, they would have to turn themselves in in the end. Otherwise, there was no way that they could survive.

“Naturally, the main fleet carried enough food and fuel, and there was enough room to build a self-circulating biological system in space to produce new food.

“Therefore, right now, the Fire Stealers, the ‘last Flying Star citizens’, were caught in an extremely awkward situation.

“They boasted the strongest techniques of the Flying Star Sector, the most advanced magical equipment, and the most complicated training facilities!

“But they did not have the food and fuel that were mandatory for their survival!

“Without food, people would starve. Without fuel, the starships were not going anywhere. Even if the strongest magical equipment of the universe was stored in the vehicles, they were nothing more than iron coffins drifting in the boundless universe!

“What was more critical was that, before making sure that the main fleet had been destroyed, they had been drifting in the edge of the Flying Star Sector for years. Even though the most rigorous rationing system had been implemented in the beginning, there was still not much food left!”

Chapter 745 - Out of Two, One Will Live

The word ‘food’ made Li Yao shudder. He asked, “They could’ve explored the space zones nearby, or search on the remains of the fleet after the apocalypse. Perhaps they could collect enough resources to build their own space towns and recycling system.”

“You are right,” Bai Xinghe said, “but the solutions were too far away to resolve the imminent problems. Both the exploration and the search required plenty time and resources, and they had neither of those.

“Oh, I was wrong.”

Bai Xinghe put on the creepiest smile that Li Yao had ever seen, as he said, “They had resources but not enough to sustain every one of them on board.

“If all the resources were concentrated, chances were than one tenth of the Fire Stealers could survive.”

Li Yao thought of something and immediately pictured something scary in his mind.

Bai Xinghe announced gravely, “The Fire Stealers might have been people of integrity who were willing to sacrifice themselves. However, at that moment, it was not just their own lives that were at risk but the last hope of the Flying Star Sector!

“If the impasse continued, everybody would die. But if some of them were ‘sacrificed’, the rest of them might survive and have enough resources to explore new space zones and collect more debris. There would be a chance, however slim, that the ash of the humanity of the Flying Star Sector could be rekindled in the future!

“Do you see it now? The fleet of the Fire Stealers had turned into a small dark forest where the resources were limited, and everybody had a good reason to survive. Even though some of them were willing to sacrifice themselves, they were usually not alone but accompanied by their family on the starships!

“There being no other options, the Fire Stealers immediately started attacking each other!

“It is impossible to verify the details now, but in the end, about nine tenths of the Fire Stealers died in the internal strife for the competition of resources. Only one tenth of them lived on, over their companions’ dead bodies, with their companions’ resources.

“They were like ghosts wandering in the sea of stars. With whatever resources they had, they struggled hard at the edge of the Flying Star Sector for a hundred years, until the influence of the apocalypse completely passed.

“At that time, they finally received messages from the central area of the Flying Star Sector. They learned that the main fleet had not been completely destroyed by the apocalypse. Some of the starships survived and were rebuilding the civilization slowly.”

Bai Xinghe smiled, very bitterly.

“Everything seemed to be an absurd, vicious, and ironic joke.

“The only reason that motivated the Fire Stealers to attack each other by resorting to all kinds of sordid methods was that they were the last Flying Star citizens and that everything they did was meant to sustain human civilization in the Flying Star Sector.

“Therefore, although they were guilty, they were not wrong. They had no options!

“However, after they discovered other survivors, the belief that had gradually seeped into their blood over the hundred years collapsed!

“A hundred years ago, when their fathers implemented ‘Plan Prometheus’, their fathers could have gone to the court of law confidently and justifiably, despite the unforgivable crimes they had committed.

“But now it was their turn, they had no courage to face any trials.

“Because they knew that they were wrong and that they had violated the ethics of the Cultivators and even all human beings!

“Or rather, after struggling for a hundred years in the dark forest, after mauling each other willingly or unwillingly, the ethics and code of conduct for the old human beings had been ripped apart. They had established a new set of rules and ethics, the rules and ethics of the dark forest!

“Although they had the facial organs, limbs, and appearance of mankind and spoke the human language, below their skin, they had mutated into a different species. They were alien humans!

“Finally, they encountered other survivors.

“Maybe, the survivors asked of their background, and they were too ashamed to talk about it.

“Maybe, they were running out of resources again, and they simply picked up their weapons habitually.

“The bottom line was, they did not cooperate with the survivors and did what they had become most familiar with over the past hundred years—killing and looting!”

Li Yao took a deep breath and imagined the edge of the Flying Star Sector thousands of years ago.

Hundreds of crystal warships that looked that iron coffins packed with corpses were drifting in space. They collided and exploded, releasing fatal mystic rays nonstop.

Colorful halos were appearing, like flowers that were blossoming on decayed bodies. Most of the coffins were shattered. Only few of them rushed out in the end…

Were the Cultivators inside them Cultivators?

Were the human beings inside of qualified to be called human beings?

Li Yao swallowed and asked, “How do you know such secret events as if you’d seen them in person?”

Bai Xinghe said casually, “The posterity of the Fire Stealers cruised in the edge of the Flying Star Sector all the time. When the first job was done, there was no stopping it. When they met other survivors, they often hunted the victims down ruthlessly. After they gathered enough resources, they would explore new space zones. In the end, they truly found a new space zone, as well as resource planet that was left by the Star Ocean Imperium named Spider Den."

It was an unexpected and yet reasonable answer.

Li Yao took a long breath in relief. "So, space pirates are the offspring of the Fire Stealers. That explains why the space pirates who had no technological backgrounds could develop a planet and cause chaos in the entire Flying Star Sector."

Bai Xinghe bent down and stared at Li Yao without even blinking, before he asked creepily, "You think space pirates are merely the offspring of the Fire Stealers?"

Li Yao shivered. "What do you mean?"

Bai Xinghe's voice seemed to be coming from a deep, deep abyss, as he said, "Do you want to hear another story?

"You've heard a lot of events in the history. Now, let's talk about something closer. I'll tell you my experience and how I came to Spider Den."

Li Yao was somewhat shocked.

It was well-known that, when Bai Xinghe was young, the starship he boarded on was engaged in a cosmic storm. He was rescued by the space pirates that were passing by and sold to Spider Den as a slave.

Was there more to the story?

Emotionlessly like a withered tree, Bai Xinghe started narrating before Li Yao replied. “My parents were both Cultivators. But they were unaffiliated Cultivators and did not belong to any sect. They each bought one carrier both to make a living and to travel in different space zones to expand their horizon. They believed that it was beneficial for their training.

“I had been living with them on their carriers since I was born. Other than being short of playmates, my life had been quite carefree, until we encountered a super cosmic storm that almost equaled to a space swirl during a voyage when I was seven.

“In order to avoid the super cosmic storm, we deviated from our sailing route. There was no telling where we ended up. The carrier was seriously damaged. A lot of food and fuel had been destroyed. Our communication equipment was damaged, too.

“We had lost in touch with the rest of the world.

“At that time, a starship larger than ours was involved in the same cosmic storm and blown to the same unknown space zone with us. It rescued us at the crucial moment.

“The cosmic storm was still raging, and we could only sail deeper into the unknown space zone together, looking for a peaceful port where we can hide.

“My parents appreciated their help very much. Our friendship after working together against the cosmic storm grew deeper, too.

“At that time, everybody thought that the cosmic storm would pass very soon, and we could at least repair the navigation and communication magical equipment on one of the starships so that we could reach out to the closest space town and ask for help.

“But as it turned out, the duration and scale of the cosmic storm far exceeded everyone’s expectations.

“The hundreds of space towns near the main sailing route were all affected by the cosmic storm and could barely rescue themselves. They had no spare hands at all.

“To make matters worse, after being assaulted by the aftershock of the cosmic storm, our starships were so damaged that they were beyond repair.

“One month later, the cosmic storm gradually died down, but we had ended up in a godforsaken place in the depths of the universe.

“The remainder of our food and fuel was running dry, too.

“The navigation and communication magical equipment could not be repaired anytime soon, either. There was even a lot of new damage. The two starships were likely to collapse at any point.

“In the beginning, nobody had expected that the situation would be as bad.

“During the cooperation, we informed each other of the remaining resources on our starships and even exchanged a few items.

“Therefore, we both knew very clearly how many resources the other starship had left.”

“In the next—”

Bai Xinghe suddenly fell silent when he got to that part of the story.

He seemed to have put on a rusted mask.

In an inhuman voice, he said, “We launched an attack.

“My father, an honorable Cultivator who used to risk his life protecting ordinary people and who had almost ten irrecoverable scars after multiple battles with space pirates, launched a fatal attack on our life-savers with the excuse of another barter when they were not prepared!

“Everybody was killed by us!

“All the resources were taken away!

“Their starship was dismantled into the most fundamental components to strengthen our starship.

“However, haha, everything proved to be in vain in the end. When my parents were about to complete everything, the aftershock of the cosmic storm arrived again and battered our starship, pushing it to an even remoter area of the universe!

“In the end, everybody died. I lay inside the debris of the starship alone and was discovered by a starship of space pirates that was passing the area in a hurry to avoid the hunting of the Cultivators.

“When they searched the debris, the space pirates took me away as their trophies and sold me to Spider Den. I became a slave in the darkness just like that.

“After you hear the story, do you feel that a karma happened to my parents?”

Li Yao did not know what to say.

“You may find it hard to believe,” Bai Xinghe said, “but before the cosmic storm, everything my parents ever did deserved their title as ‘Cultivators’.

“If there were only the two of them on the starship, I dare say that they would rather have killed themselves than attack the people who saved their lives.

“However, things were different if their most beloved son was on board.”

Bai Xinghe’s voice was lower and lower, until in the end it was so softly that he seemed to be speaking right inside Li Yao’s ears. “Although I was only seven at that time, I remember clearly to this day what my father said to my mother when they sent me to the safe house in preparation for the battle.

“Out of two, one will live.

“If I don’t kill them, they will kill me.”

Chapter 746 - Bai Xinghe's Purpose

The two sentences stabbed into Li Yao’s heart like sharp, icy daggers.

Li Yao felt that his head was dizzy while his mind drifted to an unknown corner in the universe where two broken, rusted starships had floated a hundred years ago along with Bai Xinghe’s narration.

Glancing at him coldly, Bai Xinghe said, “The Flying Star Sector is a large place. Natural disasters such like cosmic storms happen on a daily basis in space. There are too many people that are lacking resources because of natural disasters every day. I believe that my parents couldn’t have been the only victims of such tragedies. There are bound to be more people that are trapped in the ‘dark forest’ like the Fire Stealers years ago or my parents!

“When a Cultivator abandons their belief because there are no options, it is unlikely that they can return to the normal society.

“Even if they hide everything in their daily life, they would be scared and living in fear until they die.

“No matter how magnificent the throne you sit on is, how big the organization under your control is, and how strong you are, as soon as anybody discovers traces of your crimes, the only outcome for you is that you will be demeaned and will fall from the clouds into an abyss.

“No sects, no towns, and no normal societies will ever tolerate such things.

“The only place that embraces them in the entire Flying Star Sector is Spider Den!

“Now, do you see why the space pirates could never really be uprooted in the past hundreds of years as if they were wild grasses?”

Li Yao took a long breath and said, “That explains a lot. What about the Immortal Cultivators?”

“It’s simple,” Bai Xinghe replied.

“The thing about human beings is that they will always try to find excuses for themselves no matter how unforgivable or inhuman the crimes they’ve committed were.

“Asking those high and mighty Cultivators, who consider themselves the living embodiment of honor and integrity, to acknowledge that they are timid, sordid, lawless bandits?

“That would be even more miserable than killing them directly!

“Liu the Prier lived in the last years of the Star Ocean Imperium. With the heated, prolonged civil war, his research did not receive much attention.

“Although the Flying Star Sector was home to Liu the Prier, nobody had a deep understanding about his research. Most of the space pirates had only heard the tales about him and his studies, but no more.

“That was so until five hundred years ago, when Yan Xinjian, the supreme space pirate, arrived in Spider Den. In order to deal with the coalition fleet of Cultivators, he excavated the underground fortress on a large scale and found Liu the Prier's belongings by accident.

"From then on, the Dark Forest Theory gradually spread out among the leadership of the space pirates.

"Those space pirates felt that they'd got the ultimate treasure.

"If the universe was truly a dark forest where the strong preyed on the weak and where the fittest survived, everything they had been doing would be perfectly justified.

"It is not me but everybody else that is wrong!

"The universe is exactly like that. Everything we are doing follows the rules of the universe.

"We boast enormous strength. We represent the direction of evolution. Of course, we are more qualified to survive and to utilize tremendous resources than the ordinary people are!

"It is purely a waste when the precious resources in the sea of stars are consumed by ordinary people. They should only be controlled by us so that we can strive to break the limits of evolution with the resources and make the civilization of mankind strong enough to survive in the dark forest!

"Therefore, robbing the ordinary people of their resources is justified, reasonable, and necessary. We are the new human beings that originate from old human beings but have surpassed them. The new human beings, who are stronger, fiercer, and crueler, are the only direction that the civilization of mankind should strive toward!

"That was exactly the ideology of the Immortal Cultivators."

Li Yao took a long breath in relief.

After Bai Xinghe’s explanation, most of the questions that had been haunting him had been answered.

He thought the whole thing through from the beginning to the end and found that there was still a minor problem that he did not understand. He asked, “Is it a coincidence that the underground fortress of Spider Den overlaps with Liu the Prier’s center of apocalypse studies?”

Bai Xinghe smiled. “Of course, it’s not.

“Soon after Liu the Prier came up with the Dark Forest Theory, the ‘Armageddon Rebellion’ took place. Bewildered by the extraterrestrial devils, the Blood God, commander-in-chief of the expedition army of the Star Ocean Imperium, turned into the ‘Mad Armageddon’!

“The civil war of the Star Ocean Imperium broke out, and the Flying Star Sector was soon involved. Despite the vastness of the Flying Star Sector, there was not a place peaceful enough to keep a research center.

“At that time, the situation was quite chaotic. Many Sectors lost contact with the Empyrean Terminus Space Zone, where the Supreme Emperor was located. The military stationed in the Flying Star Sector had prepared for the worst. They built quite a few permanent fortresses that were deeply buried in the ground. Spider Den was among them.

“The Star Prier’s House was commandeered. The reasons were simple.

“Firstly, the Star Prier’s House had three hundred super crystal processors with high computational abilities.

“After inheriting his father’s tremendous wealth, Liu the Prier had established the Star Prier’s House with all his assets because of his addiction to academics. The three hundred crystal processors he purchased were all civil models. But after they employed the special algorithms, their computational ability was even higher than many crystal processors in the military.

“The three hundred super crystal processors were extremely valuable. How could the military ignore them? They were utilized to control part of the defense rune arrays and the magical equipment.

“Secondly, although the Star Prier’s House was built to study the apocalypses, it was essentially an observatory that could monitor the situation in space in all directions.

“After slight modifications on the space-monitoring array of the Star Prier’s House, it could be added to the air defense network and monitor the situation throughout the Spider Den Space Zone. Should the rebels march close, they would be locked onto earlier.

“Therefore, the Star Prier’s House became the pivot of the underground fortress.

“It was a shame that the air defense network never played an important role during the civil war, even after the Supreme Emperor and the Mad Armageddon heavily wounded each other.

“However, Yan Xinjian, the supreme space pirate five hundred years ago, discovered the Star Prier’s House and activated part of the defense arrays that remained on the surface of Spider Den via the crystal processors. In the battle of Spider Den, the invading fleet of Cultivators were greatly frustrated by the defense arrays!”

Li Yao nodded quickly.

Every word that Bai Xinghe said matched flawlessly with the information that he knew. The man could not have been lying.

But if so, everything seemed to make less sense.

Li Yao’s eyes suddenly turned sharp as he stared at Bai Xinghe’s forehead. He said, “Boss Bai, thank you for your generosity. A lot of my questions have been solved. It appears that you are hoping to cooperate with me sincerely.

“However, there is one thing that is still bothering me.

“Boss Bai, you believe in the Dark Forest Theory, don’t you?”

Bai Xinghe nodded. “Yes. I have no doubts about the Dark Forest Theory whatsoever.”

Li Yao continued. “And you admit that you are a merciless and lawless space pirate?”

Bai Xinghe replied casually, “You don’t need to be so polite. I will admit it even if you say that I’m repugnant, shameless, inhuman and that I will die a miserable death.”

“Then it is quite odd.”

Scratching the metal chin of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Li Yao mumbled, “You are a lawless bandit, and you are an avid believer of the Dark Forest Theory. Then—

“Why are you not an Immortal Cultivator?

“Isn’t it very weird when you think about it carefully?

“With Boss Bai’s birth, life experience, and social position, you should’ve been a real and hardcore Immortal Cultivator. It is the greatest shame for the Immortal Cultivators that you are not one of them!

“Not only did you refuse to be an Immortal Cultivator, you are also challenging the Temple of Immortals, the organization of the Immortal Cultivators. Why?

“Some say that you were not willing to work under other people. That was why you ended with the Temple of Immortals on bad terms. I thought about it carefully and realized that it did not make any sense.

“During Boss Bai’s rise, you worked as the muscle and a lackey for other people countless times, and you even called quite a few people your foster fathers. But in the end, you killed all of them when the time was right.

“With Boss Bai’s personality, if you were not satisfied that you were merely one of the four kings of the Temple of Immortals, the most reasonable choice would’ve been to join the Temple of Immortals first and then to kick out all the dissidents so that you could’ve gathered all the power and become the sole ruler of it. Isn’t it so?

“Besides, the four kings of the Temple of Immortals are not in a chain of command.

“Yan Xibei, the Mountain King, was in charge of the affairs on Iron Plateau. Dark Empyrean, the Black King, is the supervisor of Black Spider Tower. The other two kings must have their special duties, too.

“Even though you joined the Temple of Immortals, your independence wouldn’t have been affected at all.

“Then, what was your purpose for turning against the Temple of Immortals completely at the cost of the entire Abyss Pirate Gang?”

Li Yao remembered his first encounter with Bai Xinghe on the carrier of the Tiger Teeth Pirate Gang. The conversation between Bai Xinghe and Luo Jinhu was still echoing beside his ears to this day.

The contempt in between Bai Xinghe’s words did not seem to be faked.

Now that he thought of it carefully, there vaguely seemed to be sorrow behind the contempt.

Bai Xinghe was silent for a long time, as if Li Yao had asked something he would rather not talk about.

Li Yao said, “So, my guess is correct.

“Even though you are not lying, you have kept something to yourself, something that is very important, which is your real purpose to attract the Immortal Cultivators into the underground fortress by making such a sophisticated plan!”

Bai Xinghe smiled bitterly. “My young friend Li Yao, I’ve underestimated you again. It’s been decades since I last ran into such a formidable opponent like you!

“You’re right. By logic, I should’ve been an Immortal Cultivator. My fate was arranged in such a way that it appeared implausible that I would refuse to be an Immortal Cultivator.

“However, just like most choices in the world, you know a certain road is right, but you have a perfect reason not to walk on it.

“My reason, on the other hand, has nothing to do with you personally.

“Now, everything I need to say has been said. I only ask you one thing. Would you like to give me a hand to make the Temple of Immortals pay a miserable price in the depths of the underground fortress?”

Chapter 747 - Dragon King Is Mine!

Li Yao beamed with joy, and he rose up suddenly. “Boss Bai, you truly have other arrangements. There must be something wrong with the map and the key that you intentionally gave to Bai Wulei. You must know some of the traps set up by the military of the Star Ocean Imperium!”

Bai Xinghe shook his head. “Like I said just now, there are no such things.

“Bai Wulei, Fengyu Zhong, Dark Empyrean, and the rest of the Immortal Cultivators of the Temple of Immortals are all cunning to their bones. They are definitely no fools.

“There are many coincidences in my plan. One will find it weird when they think about it for a moment. If I gave them the false map and key, how could the cunning, brutal bandits have been tricked?

“Besides, the space pirates have been exploring the underground fortress since a thousand years ago. Although they never entered the central area, they had accumulated abundant experience in underground exploration.

“Since the Temple of Immortals has been lurking on Spider Den for a hundred years, they must’ve recruited a lot of prodigies in this field, too.

“The experts are surely adept at the studies of architecture, structures, traps, and rune arrays. They will have a profound understanding of the underground fortress’ design and the mechanisms of functioning behind the traps and the secret tunnels.

“After they received the map and the key, those people will definitely have studied them repetitively until every detail was made clear, before the explorers marched into the ground!

“How could I alone compete with the wisdom of so many experts?

“Besides—”

Bai Xinghe smiled bitterly and said, “The Star Ocean Imperium did not leave any traps that could destroy the underground fortress completely ten thousand years ago!”

Li Yao blinked. “They did not?”

“There might’ve been some,” Bai Xinghe said, “but the more precise a piece of magical equipment is, the more likely it is prone to damage. After ten thousand years, with countless serious earthquakes in the period, the previously destructive magical equipment must’ve been corrupted a long time ago, if there ever was any.”

Li Yao realized that it made sense.

As a refiner, he knew the importance of maintenance very well.

Even in the world of ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago, a primitive flying sword would have to be cleansed by various Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and even blood, or it would become lackluster and rusted later.

As for the modern magical equipment that was precise in structure and involved complicated mechanisms, it was all the more important that such devices were maintained on a regular basis. The cost of such maintenance was usually very high. When the magical equipment was not used for a long time, the price for a major maintenance might even be higher than the price at which it was purchased in the beginning.

What was even more terrifying was that many radiative or corrosive crystals must be kept steady by changing new rune arrays every once in a while. Otherwise, when the shell of the magical equipment eroded, a great explosion would be triggered. Such accidents were not unusual at all.

Li Yao had once discovered a crystal warship from the Star Ocean Imperium named Sparkle on Boneyard. It was purely a coincidence. The crystal warship had only managed to survive until its discovery because it was soaked in the silver liquid that was full of spiritual energy deep below the ground.

Even so, the crystal warship never regained its combat ability until after multiple maintenance and strengthening sessions.

The underground fortress of Spider Den was too large in scale. Even if a certain trap that could destroy the fortress did exist, it must’ve been extremely precise. How could it remain intact for ten thousand years?

Li Yao frowned and asked curiously, “Boss Bai, you’ve known the way to enter the core area of the underground fortress since long ago. Have you never thought of building some traps of your own? It seems to be more of your style.”

Bai Xinghe replied, “Although I am in the Nascent Soul Stage, I am not omnipotent. How can I build large traps deep below the ground all by myself?

“If I wanted to build traps on a large scale, I would have had to mobilize a lot of manpower and resources. But I have always considered the underground fortress my secret base. How can I allow other people to enter it easily?

“Those who are capable of building such traps must be seasoned refiners and mechanics. They have a lot of friends, and they are quite influential. Even if I was the de facto ruler of Spider Den, it’s not like I could kill them all after the job was done!”

Li Yao thought for a moment and realized it made sense. Such complicated traps could definitely not be built by any random guy.

The refiners who were capable of building such traps must have had strong support. It was unlikely that Bai Xinghe could kill all of them in order to shut their mouths!

Bai Xinghe sighed and said, somewhat helplessly, “When I became aware of the existence of the Temple of Immortals, it became even less likely that I would establish any traps, because I did not have any idea who in the Abyss Pirate Gang were the spies of the Immortal Cultivators. Under such circumstances, wouldn’t I be killing myself if I asked my subordinates to build the traps?”

Li Yao realized that it was true. Even Bai Xinghe’s first true disciple had betrayed him. It was very prudent of him not to ask any of his subordinates to handle such affairs.

No wonder he had concocted such a scheme that seemed to be very plain and obvious.

It was because the Temple of Immortals had no worries at all. They knew for a fact that he could not have set up any traps deep below the ground!

“The bottom line is, the map I gave Bai Wulei was real. It was drafted based on multiple military maps of the Star Ocean Imperium. Some of the places were hidden, including the Star Prier’s House that we are currently in.

“But the main control center of the underground fortress, as well as the warehouses where abundant weapons, magical equipment, and crystals are stored, are all marked clearly on the map.

“The key that I surrendered was real, too. It was not really a key but a series of identification rune arrays and dynamic passwords. With the identification rune arrays and the passwords, they will be able to reach the control center without any hinderance.

“I did not leave behind any tricks because every trick and trap on the map and the key would have been seen through.

“However, I did not come to the underground fortress waiting to be killed, either. My tricks are somewhere else that I cannot tell you about right now.”

While talking, Bai Xinghe raised his hand and threw over a cluster of greenness.

Li Yao did not catch it with his hands. Instead, he covered the object with his spiritual energy carefully, only to discover that it was a Cosmos Ring with a vivid head of an infuriated dragon on the surface of it.

Bai Xinghe smiled casually. “The Dragon King Battlesuit is inside. I have cancelled the barriers on the Cosmos Ring. You are free to retrieve it now.

“If you are willing to give me a hand and prefer to deal with the Immortal Cultivators rather than the grudge between us first, help me repair the Dragon King Battlesuit.

“Because of my misjudgment, the strike of Dark Empyrean, the real Black King, dealt severe damage to the Dragon King Battlesuit, although it did not kill me instantly. The damage will be a nuisance when my real plan is activated.

“However, both ‘Li Yao’ and ‘Sand Scorpion’ are the best refiners of the Flying Star Sector. I believe that people of the Temple of Immortals will never have guessed that you are with me right now.”

Bai Xinghe had offered the strongest crystal suit on Spider Den to him!

Holding back his excitement, Li Yao’s shook as he said, “What benefits can I get by helping you repair your crystal suit?”

Bai Xinghe smiled. “Let’s be honest here. The maintenance manual, structural design, and the spiritual energy flowcharts are all inside the Cosmos Ring. The crystal suit employs a lot of technologies of the Star Ocean Imperium. Its nine dragon heads were even directly refined out of the components of the Star Ocean Imperium. They are very sophisticated.

“For such a skilled refiner like yourself, isn’t it the greatest benefit that you get to browse through the maintenance manuals and the structural design?

“Honestly speaking, I can do the simple maintenance myself. Unless it is absolutely necessary to, I never would have given the Dragon King Battlesuit to you!”

Li Yao chuckled. He finally understood why Bai Xinghe, an unparalleled brutal bandit, had been talking so sincerely with him and even telling him his childhood stories.

It seemed that the man was trying to win his trust.

Bai Xinghe must have made secret arrangements in the underground fortress.

But he calculated everything except for the identity of the real Black King. As a result, the heavy strike from the real Black King not only wounded himself but also seriously damaged the Dragon King Battlesuit!

As an expert in the Nascent Soul Stage, he could treat his wounds and recover slowly, and he could even suppress the wounds temporarily with secret arts.

However, Bai Xinghe was not a professional refiner after all. If his crystal suit was too seriously damaged, there was no way that he could repair it himself.

As it happened, Bai Xinghe discovered Li Yao’s real identity and that he was an excellent refiner in the Flying Star Sector. Then, Li Yao’s personal value for him increased significantly.

Handing the crystal suit over to an unfamiliar refiner was a risky decision because the refiner could set up countless backdoors during the maintenance without anybody knowing.

Li Yao was definitely no match for Bai Xinghe in terms of combat ability, but when it came to refining, Li Yao was confident that it would be a miracle if Bai Xinghe could find one of the backdoors when he set up ten!

Bai Xinghe had no alternatives right now and could only believe in his expertise. That was why he rambled on about his secrets as a gesture of friendliness.

Li Yao was deeply moved by Bai Xinghe’s sincerity. Then he decided that he should plant at least twenty backdoors in the Dragon King Battlesuit.

Of course, Bai Xinghe knew of the refiners’ doings and that his crystal suit would not end well now that it had fallen into the hands of such a sly man, but he did not have a second option.

After throwing the crystal suit over, Bai Xinghe said gloomily, “It will take the Immortal Cultivators three to five days for them to analyze the map and gather all of the ‘contributors’ in preparation for the exploration of the underground fortress.

“You can take your time to repair the crystal suit in the next couple of days. There is sufficient food and crystals here. Take whatever you want. No need to ask me.”

Bai Xinghe stood up again and went into the metal cabin to treat his wounds.

His two hands were still bound by the rope, and his Dragon King Battlesuit was now in Li Yao’s hands. Li Yao thought for a long time and found no loopholes in Bai Xinghe’s request or reasons to stop him from healing his wounds.

Until the problem of the Immortal Cultivators was resolved, the conflict between the two of them was not likely to escalate.

Forget it. Whether he meant it or not, the Dragon King Battlesuit is now in my hands anyway. After I set up twenty backdoors in it, I will not be scared at all even if we are forced to fight again!

Chapter 748 - A Second Time!

Li Yao swallowed somewhat greedily.

The Dragon King Battlesuit, known as the strongest crystal suit on Spider Den, was now right in his hands.

He was yearning to know how formidable the crystal suit was exactly!

“Star Basher, Divine Anvil!”

Li Yao raised his hands and retrieved two pieces of magical equipment for refining.

In the next few days, Li Yao and Bai Xinghe each occupied half of the palace. Li Yao focused his attention on the research and maintenance of the Dragon King Battlesuit, while Bai Xinghe spent most of his time working on the three hundred super crystal processors when he was not treating his wounds.

After ten thousand years, those crystal processors were mostly broken despite the protective rune arrays in the Star Prier’s House. Bai Xinghe could only combine the components of multiple crystal processors into a brand new one.

As a result, the number of the normally functioning crystal processors had been greatly reduced. Less than fifty of them were successfully turned on by Bai Xinghe in the end.

Li Yao did not bother to check what Bai Xinghe was doing because all his attention was focused on the Dragon King Battlesuit.

The crystal suit was refined in an unmistakable style of the Star Ocean Imperium. The nine dragon heads were built with components from the Star Ocean Imperium and could not integrate with the modern crystal suits perfectly. Therefore, they could only be attached to the back of the crystal suit in the form of ‘dragon heads’.

The Dragon King Battlesuit was a collection of the wisdom of the evil geniuses on Spider Den. The complicated structural designs and spiritual energy flowcharts fascinated Li Yao.

One of the structural designs was enough for him to study wholeheartedly in the labyrinth of thought for hours.

Repairing such a high-end crystal suit was a great challenge even for Li Yao.

It was an even more thrilling game to set up backdoors without alarming its owner or affecting the performance of the Dragon King Battlesuit.

Li Yao greatly enjoyed himself in those five days.

Two of the dragon heads of the crystal suit had been completely destroyed. There was nothing Li Yao could do about them without large maintenance magical equipment.

However, his amazing manual-forging skills basically recovered their structure. Besides, Li Yao even devoted some of the precious materials he had retrieved on Iron Plateau to the upgrade of the Dragon King Battlesuit in order to make up for the parts that were beyond repair.

In the end, every part of the Dragon King Battlesuit, from the crystal processor to the power rune arrays, and from the crystal reactor to the defense system, was full of backdoors. Li Yao could easily influence the Dragon King Battlesuit with his telepathic thoughts now.

After putting on the Dragon King Battlesuit maintained by him, whatever ill intentions Bai Xinghe had, he would have to behave and cooperate with him obediently.

The whole maintenance job only took three days, but Li Yao did not intend to return the Dragon King Battlesuit to Bai Xinghe so fast.

Before the Immortal Cultivators stepped underground, he would, of course, seize every second to study and grasp every detail of the Dragon King Battlesuit!

The Dragon King Battlesuit employed a lot of technologies from the Star Ocean Imperium.

As for the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, no matter how many times it had been modified and how many Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures had been applied to it, its framework was based on a model of crystal suits in the Star Ocean Imperium, too.

Therefore, the two crystal suits shared unbelievable similarities in many regards.

The more Li Yao studied, the more he drooled and the less he was willing to return the Dragon King Battlesuit to Bai Xinghe.

He had fantasized, more than once, about tearing apart the Dragon King Battlesuit and applying most of the components, especially the seven remaining dragon heads, to the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit—his own crystal suit would definitely become much more magnificent.

During their fourth day in the Star Prier's House, Bai Xinghe finally finished debugging the super crystal processors and triggered immense telepathic thoughts.

More than a thousand light beams were immediately projected by the super crystal processors, which displayed the footage of the thousands of crucial areas of the underground fortress.

There was also a complicated map of the underground fortress that looked both like a honeycomb and an ants' nest. It was floating between the two of them, with bright golden brilliance blinking slowly.

It was the overall picture of the underground fortress.

Right now, they had thousands of 'eyes' in the fortress.

The Immortal Cultivators were even more cautious than they expected and did not come until the seventh day.

The surveillance crystal cameras deployed in the secret corners sent the pictures back to the Star Prier's House. Just like two assassins lurking in darkness, Li Yao and Bai Xinghe looked at the prey in silence as they gradually walked into the trap.

To their credit, the intruders could not have been more prudent.

The first echelon to show up in the core area of the underground fortress was not made of human beings but scouting crystal cameras that were engraved with anti-gravity rune arrays and could float in midair.

Through the observation of the crystal cameras, and after making sure that their map was accurate, the Immortal Cultivators then sent out a large batch of beast puppets.

Most of the beast puppets were only the size of mice, which allowed them to appear in every gap and every corner of the fortress.

The reconnaissance of the vanguard lasted a whole day.

The intruders waiting at the entrance were wearing crystal suits in various colors and models. The battle emblems on their breastplates differed, too. They were obviously from different pirate gangs.

There was no telling what approaches the Temple of Immortals had resorted to, but the space pirates were all obedient and able to contain their greed during an entire day of patient waiting, as if they were a well-trained army.

One day later, the Immortal Cultivators and the space pirates treaded lightly into the underground fortress.

On the bright golden map, the red spots that represented the intruders gradually spread out, as if a bag of red beans had been sprayed on the ground.

The Immortal Cultivators and the space pirates gradually gained control over every pathway, corridor, lift, and chamber, as well as the warehouses of magical equipment and the arsenals on every floor.

However, through the surveillance crystal cameras, Li Yao saw that the space pirates were cursing in anger because they found nothing.

“Idiots,” Bai Xinghe said coldly. “They never think with their heads. How much of the magical equipment and weapons from ten thousand years ago is still working today? The items that I brought to the ground to entice them were almost all of the usable goods here. How could a large batch of magical equipment be waiting for them to excavate?”

Different from the shrimps, the Black King, Bai Wulei, Fengyu Zhong, and the other important persons of the Temple of Immortals did not stop by the warehouses near the entrance of the underground fortress. They cracked one trap after another according to the guidance of the map and went straightly to the depths of the underground fortress.

At the bottom of the bright golden map, which represented the deepest level of the fortress, was the largest warehouse of magical equipment here.

Bai Xinghe had once told Bai Wulei that the most important secret treasures were hidden there.

When Bai Wulei, Fengyu Zhong, and the Black King marched into the deepest level of the underground fortress together with abundant soldiers of the Immortal Army and Black Spider Tower, Bai Xinghe stretched his arms and warmed up his body. He extended his hands to Li Yao and said, “Alright. We’ve been resting for quite a few days. It’s time for us to make our move.

“You’ve studied the Dragon King Battlesuit for a long time. Shouldn’t you give it back to me now?

“Also, my hands have been tied up in the rope over the last couple of days. We are about to fight the Immortal Cultivators soon. Can I tear apart the rope and warm up my hands?”

Li Yao stuffed the Cosmos Ring that stored the Dragon King Battlesuit into the breastplate of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, before he shook his head and said, “Wait a moment. Tell me your plan first. I have to hear your whole plan and our roles in it to make sure that everything is reasonable before I give your Dragon King Battlesuit back to you.”

Bai Xinghe narrowed his eyes and stared at Li Yao for a long time. He smiled, revealing his white teeth, as he said, one word after another, “My young friend Li Yao, did you know that there were many times when I was tempted to rip apart the peace and perish together with you?”

Before Li Yao replied, he sighed and said, somewhat frustratedly, “Forget it. None of that crap makes any sense now with everything coming to this point.

“Alright. In fact, my plan is very simple. All the traps of the Star Ocean Imperium have been wasted, and I indeed don’t have the ability to reestablish the raps.

“But it doesn’t mean that nobody before me made arrangements in the underground fortress!”

Li Yao rolled his eyes and asked subconsciously, “Who?”

Bai Xinghe smiled and said, “Who do you think—”

Half way through his sentence, Bai Xinghe attacked all of a sudden!

At such a moment!

Both of his hands were tied up in a rope. His Dragon King Battlesuit had been hidden by Li Yao. The Immortal

Cultivators had barged in and infiltrated every corner of the fortress.

This was the least likely moment for Bai Xinghe to attack!

But he had chosen this exact moment to launch an attack on Li Yao!

In that moment, the dominating aura of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator reached every corner of the Star Prier’s House. It swallowed Li Yao like an exasperated ocean!

The rope on Bai Xinghe’s hands was easily torn apart!

Every hair on the back of Li Yao’s head was standing up.

He did not see it coming at all and was literally caught unprepared!

He did not have the vaguest clue why Bai Xinghe would attack resolutely at a moment that was most inappropriate for an attack!

Li Yao was not slow to respond. The moment Bai Xinghe attacked, he made the dodging movements in time.

But lightning suddenly struck inside his brain.

No! That was not a real attack but a mental one. He was fooling me into dodging so that he would have more time!

Too late. Li Yao realized what was going on too late.

When his Feathered Dragon Saber swept over, Bai Xinghe’s fierce attack was suddenly gone, and he vanished into unpredictable smoke and dispersed!

When the smoke was condensed again ten meters away, Bai Xinghe had put on a new crystal suit, one that was silver but full of crimson strips that looked like flowing blood!

“Huchi. Huchi…” Li Yao was breathing heavily.

The daunting aura of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator made him sweat nonstop, as if he was experiencing the most intense attack!

Li Yao’s heart continued to fall.

The crystal suit Bai Xinghe was wearing right now was named ‘Blood River’. It was also one of the most classical, high-end crystal suits of the Flying Star Sector. Although it was not as invincible as the Dragon King Battlesuit, the gap in performance between it and the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was not much.

Li Yao finally understood something. From the moment Bai Xinghe tossed the Cosmos Ring that stored the Dragon King Battlesuit over, the man had never intended to put on the crystal suit that was destined to be riddled with backdoors again!

The Dragon King Battlesuit was just a disguise, one that could ease Li Yao’s wariness.

Before, Li Yao had one more second than Bai Xinghe. The valuable one second placed them in a balance due to the ‘mutual deterrence’!

But now, Li Yao had been fooled by him and did not launch a fatal attack during the one second while he tore apart the rope and put on the new crystal suit.

The mutual deterrence had been broken yet again!

Chapter 749 - Never To Bend

Why?

Li Yao's head was in an utter mess. He could not understand the situation at all.

It was not because he did not foresee that Bai Xinghe might be hiding a second crystal suit, but Bai Xinghe had no reason to attack him right now at all!

Right now, the Immortal Cultivators had invaded the underground fortress. Although Bai Xinghe had treated his wounds, the heavy injuries resulting from another Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator could not be mended so easily.

Besides, the Dragon King Battlesuit had been planted with almost twenty backdoors. Bai Xinghe must have guessed that, too.

After he put on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, he definitely had the strength to fight against a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. Bai Xinghe could certainly infer that by sensing the aura around him.

What could Bai Xinghe possibly get by slaying him right now?

The man's second crystal suit would certainly be damaged or even destroyed during the fierce fight.

His unrecovered wounds would be even heavier.

Even though he had the Dragon King Battlesuit, the magical equipment would still be riddled with backdoors. Without Li Yao, he would not be able to crack any of them!

The conclusion was that he would gain nothing at all!

Li Yao had considered every detail over the past few days. He had thought that Bai Xinghe really did not have a second option in the scenario and could only cooperate with him. That was why he had maintained Bai Xinghe’s crystal suit without concern.

But now—

Bai Xinghe did not launch attack immediately after he put on the Blood River Battlesuit.

However, the horrifying aura of the Pirate Potentate was gradually spreading out along with the stripes on the crystal suit that were as red as blood.

When the Pirate Potentate was angry, the river of blood would flood!

Bai Xinghe said coldly, “You set up traps on the Dragon King Battlesuit.”

It was not a question but a declaration.

Li Yao thought quickly and replied, “Of course I did. Besides, many of the back doors do not need remote control and can be triggered automatically. If I’m dead, the Dragon King Battlesuit will be totally wasted!”

Bai Xinghe smiled. “Are you threatening me? Magical equipment is dead; humans are alive. With or without the Dragon King Battlesuit, I am Boss Bai all the same!

“If you are not lying, just let the Dragon King Battlesuit be buried with you, Li Yao. You deserve it.”

Li Yao was rendered speechless. He could not understand why after thinking hard for a long time. In the end, he asked honestly, “Why did you choose to end the peace between us now? What benefits can you get?”

In that moment, Bai Xinghe was like a tyrannosaur that had completely got rid of its camouflage and revealed its intimidating aura. A voice tougher than steel came over from his silver white facial cover. “You have set more than ten traps in the Dragon King Battlesuit. As soon as I put on it, I will be completely at your mercy and become your puppet, will I not?”

Li Yao was silent for one second, before he replied, “Yes. I have indeed hidden a lot of tricks, but they are all for self-protection.

“The Temple of Immortals is an enormous organization. Even if Bai Wulei, Fengyu Zhong, and the Black King are all taken down, it is unlikely that we can uproot the entire the Temple of Immortals all at once.

“Before the Temple of Immortals is demolished, you are still of value. I guarantee that I will do no harm to you.”

Bai Xinghe laughed in the most scornful way. “Value? Guarantee? Haha. Hahahaha!

“Li Yao, you are still too young. Maybe you have calculated everything, but there is no way that you can calculate what is on the mind of an old man such as myself.

“When I just began my career, it’s true that I was very ambitious. I respected a lot of people as my fathers and lowered my head before them. I was driven, enslaved, and manipulated countless times. But every time, I chose to suppress my fury and slowly gather my strength, before I got even with them in the last moment!

“Maybe, if it were seven decades ago, I would have behaved nicely and put on the Dragon King Battlesuit, and I would have tried to think of other ways to con you and beat you in the end.

“But right now, I’m too old. When one grows old, his bones become hard and vulnerable. My back cannot be bent, and my head cannot be lowered.

“Who do you really think the Pirate Potentate is? Huh?”

Bai Xinghe’s aura burst out again like a flood. Even the sea of stars swirling on the dome of diamonds was eclipsed by his proud declaration!

“I, Bai Xinghe, have roamed the sea of stars for a hundred years. What situations have I not been in? What experts have I not killed? What dangers have I not experienced? Even the leaders and elders of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City would shudder in fear if they heard that the Pirate Potentate is coming to visit them!

“And you, a junior who has barely got out of your cradle, have manipulated me, insulted me, and threatened me time and time again. And you dared to play ‘mutual deterrence’ with me? F*ck you!

“Right now, you are planning to further control me and take advantage of me with my crystal suit, and you want me to be your puppet with the string in your hands?

“How can I be expected to accept such humiliation?

“Let me tell you, brat. From the moment I became ‘Boss Bai’, nobody has ever controlled me. Not the Immortal Cultivators. Not you!

“Now.”

Bai Xinghe raised his hands and threw out a bottle, which rolled on the ground in the middle of them.

It was a weird, translucent medication container in the shape of a calabash with weird crimson ripples inside.

A strange aroma was gradually leaking out of the container and formed dozens of narrow, long red lines in midair that were twisting weirdly.

Bai Xinghe raised his right thumb and pointed it at his feet slowly, before he shouted, “You have two options right now!

“Firstly, you will drink all the drugs in the container and kneel before me obediently, and you will call me ‘Boss Bai’ in the most respectful way!

“Then, you will listen to my command and do whatever you are asked to. I guarantee that the bastards of the Temple of Immortals will be destroyed soon, and I will bring you out of this place safe and sound!

“After we are out, I will tell you how to resolve the barriers imposed by the drugs, and I will offer you tremendous techniques and magical equipment!

“To tell you the truth, you have done a favor for me before. So, as long as you behave nicely, I guarantee that I will not kill you, and I will give you great benefits. I will also strike the Temple of Immortals and the Immortal Cultivators together with you in the future.

“Believe it or not, this is my first offer!

“Secondly, if you don’t make a choice in ten seconds, we will fight!

“Maybe, you have more trump cards.

“Maybe, I will have to pay a high price if I want to kill you, and I might be killed by the Immortal Cultivators in the end because of that.

“But so what?

“Even the thieves who just got started declare bold bullsh*t like ‘the loss of my head is just a scar on my neck’. Do you think I’m scared of death when I’ve been working as a bandit for more than a hundred years?

“Ten!

“Nine!

“Eight!”

Bai Xinghe’s aura dominated the entire palace.

The situation had been reversed.

Seven days ago, it was Li Yao who declared the countdown to Bai Xinghe confidently and domineeringly, browbeating him into a second balance of mutual deterrence.

But right now, it was Bai Xinghe who was shouting the countdown unstoppably.

However—

When Bai Xinghe got to ‘eight’, Li Yao shook his head in a bitter smile and said, “There’s no need to count, Boss Bai. I choose the second option.”

“Oh?” Bai Xinghe was not surprised at all. “Are you not willing to kneel before me, or do you not believe my words?”

Li Yao raised his saber slowly. The unstoppable sharpness of his blade cut a gap in Bai Xinghe’s aura, as if it were paving a bloody path in a forest of swords and spears.

“It’s not because of that. It’s just that, like Boss Bai, I will not entrust my own fate to somebody else.”

A smile appeared on Bai Xinghe’s face. “Excellent. Really excellent. Li Yao, you are truly a worthy opponent deserving of me fully burning my life and soul and summoning all my capability. Bring it on!”

Bai Xinghe stepped forward.

He only moved forward less than half a meter, but in Li Yao’s perception, a fleet of hundreds of crystal warships seemed to be crashing at him overwhelmingly!

Li Yao gritted his teeth. His eyes were bloodshot, especially his left eye, which was so red that magma seemed like it would flow out at any moment!

He could almost hear the sounds of his exploding brain cells.

Li Yao only had the last half trump card left, which was an ‘Unparalleled Extension’ that had not been successfully refined yet!

This particular Unparalleled Extension that had been designed for the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was extremely difficult to build. Li Yao had only just completed the prototype and could only actualize one third of the possible enhancement.

Besides, it would take a few seconds for him to retrieve the Unparalleled Extension from his Cosmos Ring and install it on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

Would Bai Xinghe, who had gotten serious now, give him several seconds?

Li Yao suddenly asked, “Boss Bai, can you tell me the truth of everything before we fight our last battle?

“What plans do you have in mind? Who is the someone important to you that I saved? I can’t die in peace if I don’t know the answers to these questions!”

Bai Xinghe stepped forward again and replied casually, “No.”

“Seven days ago, you were so elaborative and friendly!” Li Yao remarked gloomily.

Bai Xinghe took a third step. “It was all meant to ease your alert seven days ago, which is not necessary right now.

“I will bury the secrets deep down in my heart. Whether you die or I die, there is no way that I am going to reveal the secrets. No way!”

Li Yao smiled bitterly. All his methods were running to a dead end. Bai Xinghe, who was serious, did not leave any loopholes for him at all.

It appeared that a fight was the only solution now.

There was no way that Li Yao would drink the drug that Bai Xinghe had offered him and become a puppet no matter what.

Even if Bai Xinghe abided by his promise and let go of Li Yao in the end, Li Yao would still not do that, because he and Bai Xinghe were the same. They would never surrender their fate to somebody else!

“Let’s fight!”

There was only the last seven meters between the two of them. The air around them was so intense that it was bubbling as if it were boiling, placing the two of them in an ocean of slaughter!

Thousands of light beams were still swirling around them, displaying the situation of the space pirates and the Immortal Cultivators who were infiltrating the underground fortress like a tide.

Fengyu Zhong, Bai Wulei, and the Black King had already opened the gate to the main warehouse at the bottom level of the fortress.

The killing intent of the two of them had already engaged with each other like the vanguards of two great armies, as if thousands of grimacing vipers on both sides were charging at the other party in hissing sounds.

Li Yao eliminated all the irrelevant thoughts in his mind and triggered his fighting will to the maximum.

However, the moment before he made his move, his eyes accidentally passed Bai Xinghe and stopped at the picture on a light beam right behind Bai Xinghe.

Li Yao was suddenly dumbfounded.

Chapter 750 - I Beg You!

Every light beam was monitoring a certain area, pathway, warehouse or chamber.

Most of the places were now full of the Immortal Cultivators and space pirates.

On this particular light beam, two space pirates were captured, too. However, different from their companions, who were plundering the trophies merrily, they crawled into an inconspicuous tunnel after quite a few stealthy maneuvers, one in front and the other behind.

Then, the two of them took off their crystal suits so that they would be off the grid for the other space pirates.

What dumbfounded Li Yao were the faces of the two space pirates.

Li Yao knew who they were. They were the last people in the world that should and could have shown up.

They were Lei Dalu, captain of the Great Horn Exo Society, and Bai Kaixin, the advisor of the Great Horn Exo Society!

Are—are you kidding me?

What exactly is going on here? Why have Lei Dalu and Bai Kaixin appeared in this place, pretending to be space pirates?

From the picture, Bai Kaixin seemed to be surprised that Lei Dalu should appear out of nowhere, too. The two of them stared at each with extremely weird expressions.

However, there was only picture but no sound on the light beam. Since they would turn their backs to the camera now and then, Li Yao had no idea what they were talking about. He could only see that Bai Kaixin sat down slowly leaning against the wall of the tunnel.

An even weirder thing then happened!

As, Bai Xinghe was in the Nascent Soul Stage, his senses were hundreds of times keener than ordinary people. Even when his killing intent had been raised to maximum, he was still paying close attention to the hundreds of light beams.

Therefore, Bai Xinghe discovered Lei Dalu and Bai Kaixin no later than Li Yao did.

Then—

After being tense for more than half a minute, Bai Xinghe suddenly lost all his spirits like a balloon that had been pierced with a hole. The overwhelming aura around him was completely gone, and he was a dry, old man again!

Li Yao was even worried that, if Bai Xinghe took off his crystal suit, he would collapse to the ground immediately!

What—what kind of schemes and traps is this? Li Yao blinked his eyes, utterly confused.

Huala! Huala! Huala!

The ‘Blood River Battlesuit’ on Bai Xinghe suddenly exploded and sprayed all over the ground.

Before the fight began, he abandoned the advantages that he had secured through all the trouble and took off his crystal suit!

Without the protection of his crystal suit, the muscles all over Bai Xinghe’s body went sloppy. They were dangling down from his bones.

The intimidation and sharpness of the Pirate Potentate had disappeared, replaced by confusion and even anxiety, which Li Yao could not understand!

“Bring out the Dragon King Battlesuit,” Bai Xinghe said exhaustedly. “I’ll put on it.”

“Huh?”

Li Yao was baffled. He vaguely realized that Bai Xinghe’s uncanny behavior must have something to do with the abrupt appearance of Lei Dalu and Bai Kaixin.

It couldn’t be a trap. Their arrival was not within Bai Xinghe’s expectations and had completely disrupted Bai Xinghe’s neatly-made scheme!

Li Yao suddenly thought of something. He asked, “You said that I did you a favor by saving somebody else at the risk of my own life. I did indeed risk myself by saving the Great Horn Exo Society at the periphery of the Iron Plateau Space Zone. Is either Lei Dalu or Bai Kaixin related to you?”

Bai Xinghe was silent.

The hands of the Pirate Potentate, an expert in the Nascent Soul Stage, were shaking.

Li Yao raised his voice. “Boss Bai, what is going on exactly? You should tell me the whole truth now!

“If you really wish for a sincere cooperation between us, you should at least tell me your reasons and your plans!”

Bai Xinghe’s eyes suddenly turned dirty. There was resignation to the old proverb ‘man proposes but Heaven disposes’ [1] all over his face. He replied in an extremely coarse voice, “Alright. There’s not much time left for us. I’ll tell you everything!

“However, promise me that you will help me rescue them when you know everything!

“I’m begging you, Li Yao!”

…

In an inconspicuous tunnel deep below the underground fortress, the captain and the advisor of the Great Horn Exo Society were confronting each other in silence and in darkness.

Bai Kaixin was already living in depression every day in the first place. Right now, his face was so gloomy that it was if it would rain at any moment. He said coldly, “You shouldn’t have come here.”

Lei Dalu picked his ears and flicked his earwax to the tunnel casually. Then he said, “Should or shouldn’t, I’m already here.”

Bai Kaixin gnashed his teeth. “What are you doing here?”

Lei Dalu opened his hands and said, “A month ago, Mr. Advisor of the Great Horn Exo Society, my best bro, left me an odd letter casually, claiming that he would like to quit the Great Horn Exo Society. Then he went missing mysteriously never to be seen again.

“Of course, I tried my best to track him down and see if I could persuade him to come back. But I did not know that I would find a great secret. As it turned out, he was dissatisfied about the life in the Great Horn Exo Society because it was too boring and unrewarding, and he decided to start a new career that had quite promising prospects named space pirate.

“Tsk. Tsk. Tsk. There are indeed a lot of treasures in the underground fortress. I was told that the main warehouse on the bottom level has mountains of gold and silver. I felt so tempted that I was thinking of joining the enemy’s side when I had the opportunity!”

The phrase ‘space pirate’ seemed to stimulate Bai Kaixin’s nerves. He suddenly burst into fury and blurted out, “I am not a space pirate!”

His words echoed inside the tunnel.

Lei Dalu grinned and stared at him in silence.

Bai Kaixin seemed to have lost all his strength. He sat down slowly, leaning against the corner, while he said sadly, “You shouldn’t have come. It’s dangerous here. Very dangerous. You might get killed at any moment!”

“Okay.”

Lei Dalu scratched his nose and said, “Then, at least tell me what I going to be killed for.”

Bai Kaixin was silent for a long time. His eyes suddenly turned hollow, and his voice seemed to be coming from a deep cave. He finally resolved himself to tell the whole story.

“A long time ago, there was a young man whose parents were both Cultivators.

“As far as he could remember, he had been living with his mother. His mother was a gentle and smart woman. Although she was busy at work, she never forgot to teach him the strictest principles of the Cultivators.

“He had heard a lot of stories where Cultivators helped the weak, punished the evil, and protected the ordinary people from his mother since he was a little kid. He secretly swore that he would become a Cultivator in his mother’s story somebody.

“His father was always out and rarely went back home. Even when he was at home, he was always serious and seldom asked about him.

“But his parents loved each other very much. In the rare days when his father was at home, they would spend a lot of time together talking and laughing. It was quite warm.

“Many families were like this one. The young man did not think too much of it in the beginning.

“However, as the young man grew older, he discovered that his living environment was kind of weird.

“The young man and his mother lived in an underground chamber. Although there were all kinds of facilities, including the virtualization magical equipment that could simulate sunlight and natural environment, the young man hardly ever got in touch with other people. Other than his mother, his only playmates were the silly beast puppets.

“When he was old enough to surf the Nexus, his mother allowed him to. But it was clear that all the information had been filtered multiple times, as if she was scared that the young man might find out something.

“I forgot to mention that the young man’s mother was a very awesome expert in crystal processors. What she had been busy doing was attempting to crack a batch of ancient crystal processors.

“The young man grew older and more suspicious every day. He felt that he had been living in a carefully constructed greenhouse.

“Finally, one day, when his mother was busy, the young man ran away from home and saw the real world that he was living in for the first time!

“What a scary world it was!

“Dead bodies were everywhere in the stinky gutters. All the people on the street were like animals in human skin. Crazy devils were dancing in the soul-stirring neon lights!

“The young man was even fooled and almost sold as a slave. Thankfully, his father’s subordinates came in time.

“His father’s subordinates started a merciless slaughter immediately. Not only did they kill those who tricked the young man, they also slew many irrelevant, innocent people in the cruelest methods!

“The scene awed the young man profoundly.

“The young man finally learned that the world he had been living on was Spider Den, the most terrifying place in the entire Flying Star Sector!

“His father was not one of the Cultivators from his mother’s stories at all, but a ruthless space pirate!

“What was even more horrifying was that the love between his father and his mother was perhaps faked. It was possible that his mother did not live with his father at her will at all!

“His mother had been captured during a hunting job of the space pirates. Because of her fierce resistance, his father could’ve executed her without any hesitation.

“However, his father earlier found a batch of ancient crystal processors that he could not crack himself. Therefore, after learning that his mother was an expert in crystal processors, his father spared his mother’s life.

“Moreover, even his own birth was likely based on an extremely cruel reason!

“His father wanted his mother to stay in the underground willingly to help him crack the crystal processors. His father also feared that she might do tricks to the crystal processors in secret. Therefore, his father raped her in the most sordid ways, until he was born in the end.

“He was born to be a tool that his father could use to threaten his mother!

“Hehe. The young man finally discovered that everything in his life was a lie.

“He finally understood the origin of his name.

“The young man was named… Bai Wuxin [2] !

“His father had been a tearless, heartless, and lawless bastard the whole time!

“The young man found everything completely unacceptable and had a mental breakdown. After several years of life in confusion and denial, the last accident that put him in the utmost desperation happened.

“Soon after the super crystal processors were successfully cracked, Bai Wuxin’s mother died!

“All the evidence suggested that it was his father who killed her!

“That was quite reasonable. The super crystal processors had been cracked. His mother was no longer of any value, but she was a threat who could potentially leak the secrets of the underground world. Therefore, it was only natural that his father shut his mother’s mouth once and for all!

“After all, his father was a man without feelings. What kind of things could he not do?”

Chapter 751 - Never to Regret

This chapter is updated by NovelFull.Com

“His mother’s death was the straw that broke the camel’s back. He went mad and planned to kill his father no matter what!

“Obviously, his assassination failed. Also, his father was inhuman enough as to beat him to ‘death’ brutally and even threw his body into the random stinky gutters of Capital Nest!

“However, it was not Bai Wuxin’s doom yet. Three days later, he woke up in the gutter and survived stubbornly!

“In the years that followed, Bai Wuxin lived in the darkness of the bottom level of Capital Nest and was constantly polished by the cruel rules of Spider Den. While his capability soared, his talents were awakened, and his brain developed an extremely high computational ability, and he could keep clam at any time.

“By accident, he joined a pirate gang.

“Bai Wuxin did not mean to become a space pirate. Never for one moment had he forgotten his mother’s teachings. Also, he hated all the space pirates and was desperate to seek revenge from his father!

“He was merely taking the opportunity to leave Spider Den.

“He made it.

“The pirate gang he joined was engaged with an enemy in space and battered before they started their hunting job.

“Bai Wuxin found a chance to steal an escape capsule and left the pirate gang. He was saved by a fleet of carriers in the end.

“From then on, Bai Wuxin used a different name and buried his past deeply. He travelled in the universe and worked in multiple organizations and Exo Societies, until he met the Great Horn Exo Society and a wounded, sloppy man one day.

“The two of them both loathed the space pirates. So, they became best friends and teamed up to slay the space pirates.”

Bai Kaixin was silent for a long time when he got to this part. In the end, he took a long breath and bit his pale lips hard, before he gnashed his teeth, his voice shivering. “However, no matter how many space pirates he killed, Bai Wuxin never had enough capability to challenge his father, because his father was… Bai Xinghe, the Pirate Potentate!”

Bai Kaixin finished his story and looked at Lei Dalu, his eyes red.

Lei Dalu scratched his hair hard, his dandruff flying crazily like snowflakes.

Pondering for a long time, Lei Dalu rubbed his cheek as if he had a toothache, before he said, “Old Bai, think on the bright side. Nobody gets to choose their parents. Besides, it might not be as bad as you think…”

“Not as bad as I think?” Bai Kaixin finally burst into fury. Tears all over his face, he roared, “Bai Xinghe is my father. Tell me, how can it be any worse?”

Lei Dalu blinked slowly and then replied delightedly, “For example, Bai Xinghe being your father is better than Fengyu Zhong being your father, isn’t it?”

Bai Kaixin was dumbfounded.

His facial expression suggested that he was going to either spit right in his best friend’s face or lunge forward and bite him hard.

Lei Dalu chuckled and said, “If so, why did you sneak into Spider Den? Right now, Bai Xinghe is at total war with the Temple of Immortals. He is definitely no match for the Immortal Cultivators. Since you hate his guts, isn’t his death what you desire most?”

Bai Kaixin’s countenance suddenly changed. Intense confusion appeared on his face, as he mumbled, “Because when Bai Wuxin grew older and even cracked one of the jade chips left by his mother, he found that there were a lot of suspicious points about the whole event. Everything he believed in was probably false!”

Lei Dalu frowned. “A jade chip?”

“It was a jade chip in the shape of a pendant, the only belonging that his mother left him,” Bai Kaixin said. “Before, Bai Wuxin always regarded it as a normal charm. But when he grew up and advanced into the Building Foundation Stage, he sensed the telepathic thought stored deep inside the jade chip. It was not until ten years later that he cracked the barrier on the pendant and found out the information inside the jade chip.

“Inside the jade chip was his mother’s diary, from the day when she was captured by the space pirates to a few days before her death.

“The diary smashed the ‘facts’ that Bai Wuxin had firmly believed in into smithereens!

“In the diary, Bai Xinghe only forced his mother to crack and repair the ancient crystal processors in the underground chamber and… did not rape her.

“Everything that happened later, including the birth of Bai Wuxin, was at his mother’s own will!

“In the beginning of the diary, his mother mentioned that she felt that Bai Xinghe was different from other space pirates and a great secret that kept him living in suffering seemed to be concealed in the bottom of his heart. Maybe, there was still conscience in him, and he was not as cruel and merciless as he appeared to be.

“Her purpose in the beginning was simple, too. She knew that there was no way that she could get out of the place. If by any chance she could approach Bai Xinghe, get to know him, influence him, and even change his mindset, maybe the man would commit fewer murders in the future.

“If Bai Xinghe killed one less person because of her, that would be her last contribution to the Cultivators.

“However, when the two of them really started communicating with each other, nobody could say for sure where their feelings and emotions were heading. It is safe to say that even they had forgotten what was on their mind in the beginning and what their purposes were.

“Anyways…

“In the diary ten years later, Bai Wuxin’s mother left a conclusion for her son. She told her son that, when her son grew up, learned the whole thing, and viewed the relationship between his parents in retrospect, he might find it unacceptable, appalling, or even ugly and disgusting. But no matter what he thought—

“She did not regret it.

“For all those years, she had never regretted staying with Bai Xinghe!”

Bai Kaixin had tears all over his face again. He sobbed for a long time before he continued his story. “His mother’s diary raised a tsunami in Bai Wuxin’s head.

“His mother was an expert in crystal processors, possessing immense computational ability. Although women tend to be silly when they are in love, Bai Wuxin did not believe that his mother hadn’t calmed herself down after so many years.

“Since his mother stated that she never regretted it, there must have been true love between Bai Xinghe and her.

“Then, regarding his mother’s abrupt death…

“At this moment, Bai Wuxin, as a grown-up now, reviewed everything that happened years ago and found a lot of uncanny points.

“Firstly, Bai Wuxin was only a teenager when his mother was killed. With Bai Xinghe’s cunningness, if he were the real murderer, how could he have left so much evidence that even his son could discover?

“Secondly, with Bai Xinghe’s Cultivation, it was impossible that he beat his son to death ‘accidentally’. If he wanted his son dead, how could he have let him survive in the end?

“Thirdly, Bai Wuxin had been living in an underground greenhouse before the accident and barely experienced any difficulties in daily life. He was not a battle-type Cultivator, either. Yet, he lived safe and sound for years in Capital Nest, where the death rate was astonishingly high. Whatever dangers he was in, he could always resolve them in ways that he could not even tell himself. In the end, not only was he alive, he also learned a lot of new stuff, and his capability soared. He even possessed basic combat skills!

“Fourthly, it was quite uncanny that the pirate gang was defeated by its enemy when he left Spider Den and he managed to steal an escape capsule in the chaos to run away.

“If all these things were lucky coincidences, then Bai Wuxin must have saved the world in his previous life!”

Lei Dalu listened attentively and suddenly commented, “Therefore, you suspected that there was the other side of the story.

“For example, Bai Xinghe captured an expert in crystal processors during a hunting job. He happened to have a batch of ancient crystal processors that he was desperate to decrypt. Therefore, he spared the expert’s life.

“Maybe in the beginning, he was merely exploiting the expert’s value. But a secret chamber, a lonely man, a lonely woman… Who can say for sure what chemical reactions happened between them?

“In the end, the two of them formed a small family deep underground. It was perhaps the only safe house for a great bandit such as Bai Xinghe who lived in storms of blood all the time.

“More than ten years later, their child gradually grew up. But his ‘wife’, the expert in crystal processors, was killed!

“Bai Xinghe rose to the top abruptly in only a hundred years. Naturally, he had a lot of enemies. And in places such as Spider Den, his enemies wouldn’t care about morality at all!

“In the end, his wife was killed by one of his enemies.

“Besides his grief, Bai Xinghe was shocked to another terrifying reality. His son would never be safe if his son was kept on Spider Den!

“Since his enemies could kill his wife, they could of course kill his son.

“Therefore, he had to find a way to send his son away from Spider Den!”

In a trance, Bai Kaixin mumbled, “There are many space pirates on Spider Den who send their family to the outside world. Why did he resort to such an extreme approach?”

Lei Dalu’s lightheartedness was entirely gone. His eyes were as cold and clean as the water in a brook while he said, “There’s no reason you could not think of something that even I could think of. It’s just that you don’t want to admit it.

“Bai Xinghe was the Pirate Potentate, the man in the spotlight all the time. Even if he sent his son to the outside world, it was likely that his enemies could find his son again. Therefore, he simply took the opportunity and made a scheme. He pretended that he had lost his mind and beat his son to death!

“It was even possible that the ‘evidence’ that associated him with his wife’s death was likely to be handed over to his son in a certain way by him intentionally for the purpose of infuriating his son. In such a way, his son would definitely cross the line without caring about anything else. He would have a perfect reason to eliminate his son.

“After that, all the space pirates would know that he killed his own son. His enemies naturally wouldn’t consider his son a target any longer.

“However, it was only the secondary purpose.

“More importantly, he hoped that the relationships between his son and Spider Den, the space pirates, and himself, the most infamous bandit alive, could be severed once and for all. All the connections should be wiped out!

“Maybe, his wife’s death taught him a good lesson. He did not wish for his son to embark on the road of space pirates like him. He hoped that his son could be a man who walked in daylight, a good man who had nothing to do with space pirates and even loathed them, and a Cultivator… a real Cultivator from his wife’s stories!”

Bai Kaixin finally collapsed. He covered his face and shook his head hard, before he murmured, “I don’t know… I don’t know… I don’t know…”

Lei Dalu sighed and said, “You’ve come to Spider Den for an answer, haven’t you?”

Chapter 752 - Secret Training Room!

Updated by NovelFull.Com

Covering his face, Bai Kaixin said through the gaps between his fingers, “In fact, I should’ve come earlier. I notice several suspicious points a long time ago and vaguely guessed the answers.

“But I didn’t dare. I did not have the courage!

“I was scared that my guess was wrong and that Bai Xinghe was really an inhuman animal who killed his own wife and son!

“I was even scared that everything had been faked by him. He did not kill his own wife. Everything was meant to send his son away from Spider Den to a place where his son could live a good, peaceful life. If so—

“How was I supposed to face him?

“He was an unpardonable space pirate with blood all over his hands. There was no reason why I should let him go.

“But in the meantime, he was my father. If he had really never done anything wrong to me and my mother, could I kill him personally?

“Therefore, I’ve been hesitating and debating with myself all these years. I couldn’t make up my mind. So, I simply buried the whole thing deep down in my heart. I pretended that I knew nothing of it!

“I was too timid, and even shameless, was I not?”

Lei Dalu plucked his beard hard but gave no reply, so Bai Kaixin continued, “When the Temple of Immortals rose and the Immortal Cultivators showed up, I stopped thinking about confronting him, because everybody thought that the space pirates and the Immortal Cultivators were the same thing. I thought that Bai Xinghe was an Immortal Cultivator, too.

“In the debut of the Immortal Cultivators, the Great Horn Exo Society was their target. They meant to destroy all of us!

“If Bai Xinghe did send me out of Spider Den intentionally years ago, he must have known that the advisor of the Great Horn Exo Society was his son, Bai Wuxin!

“But the Immortal Cultivators started the battle anyway!

“It was evident enough that, whether I knew the answer or not, he did not care about me. My life and death did not mean a damn thing to him.

“After I figured it out, I was no longer in a dilemma. I felt less sad when I did not have any expectation.

“It was not until the news that Bai Xinghe and the Temple of Immortals were on bad terms and would go to war came over that I realized that the space pirates and the Immortal Cultivators might not necessarily be the same thing!

“Old Lei, you were right. The odds of Bai Xinghe’s success in the war against the Temple of Immortals are slim. If he is killed, I won’t know the answer for the rest of my life!

“That was why I decided to sneak into Spider Den without thinking about anything else. I want to ask him face to face whether or not my mother was killed by him and I was delivered out of Spider Den on purpose!”

Lei Dalu uprooted a grey hair suddenly. His eyes were clearer than ever before as he grinned. “Old Bai, you are not telling the whole truth. In fact, the answer has already been obvious since the moment Bai Xinghe started a total war against the Temple of Immortals. There is no need to ask.

“You left the Great Horn Exo Society and snuck into Spider Den because… you want to save your father, don’t you?”

Bai Kaixin was speechless. He was dazed for a long time, before he lowered his head deeply and said, “With the crimes that Bai Xinghe committed, he should be punished, after a trial of justice by the Cultivators and the victims, instead of being killed by the Immortal Cultivators.”

Lei Dalu patted his good friend’s shoulder and said, “Alright. I totally got you, buddy, but why are you so sure that Bai Xinghe fled to the underground fortress after he was heavily wounded? And where can we find him?”

“I lived in the depths of the underground fortress from the day I was born,” Bai Kaixin said. “This is my home. Of course, I knew a lot of secret tunnels.

“In the diary that my mother left, some of the information about the underground fortress was recorded, too, including the locations of Bai Xinghe’s secret bases.

“He will definitely come to this place when he is too heavily wounded and has nowhere else to run because…”

After pausing for a moment, Bai Kaixin’s voice became clear and tough again. “Because this place is his home!”

…

In the meantime, inside the palace of stars, Li Yao listened to Bai Xinghe’s story quietly and concluded, “Therefore, in order to keep the secrets of the Star Prier’s House to yourself, you killed your wife to shut her mouth, and in your fury, you killed your own son, too. But your son was lucky enough to survive and escaped from Spider Den after a series of coincidences, only to become Bai Kaixin, the advisor of the Great Horn Exo Society in the end.

“Now, you are too old, and your attitude has changed. You feel sorry for your son and you want to save him?

“Boss Bai, do you believe such a flawed story yourself?”

Bai Xinghe was rendered speechless.

“When you mentioned that you killed your wife, you looked to the top right corner, and your pupils expanded slightly. These are both signs of lying,” Li Yao said. “It is not strange that you were lying. In fact, I wonder if you have ever spoken truth.

“But when you were lying before, even the tiniest muscle on your face wouldn’t twitch. I was never able to notice anything abnormal.

“Based on that, I think it’s safe to say that even killing your wife in your imagination was insufferable for you.

“Your wife must not have been killed by you. Your enemies, or somebody else, did it, right?

“Now, I finally understand why you waged a war at the Immortal Cultivators without caring about the cost.

“Two years ago, in the first battle of the Cultivators, they targeted the Great Horn Exo Society and meant to kill your son. If I hadn’t shown up in time, there was a good chance that Bai Kaixin would’ve become dust in the universe.

“You paid such a high price to help your son out of Spider Den far away from space pirates so that he could live a good, peaceful life, even at the cost of your son hating you for the rest of his life. It was clear that you loved your son profoundly.

“The Immortal Cultivators, on the other hand, chose your son as their target and almost killed him. Naturally, you burst into fury and were determined to destroy the Temple of the Immortals without caring about the consequences even at the cost of your own life.”

Ruthlessness beamed out of Bai Xinghe’s eyes, as he said coarsely, “You talk too much!

“I have confessed everything now. Will you help me or not?”

When ‘not’ came out of his mouth, the floor ten square meters around Bai Xinghe’s feet turned into ruins completely. It was pressed down more than half a meter by his spiritual energy!

For a moment, dust filled the palace.

“I will! Of course, I will!” Li Yao replied unhesitatingly.

Both Lei Dalu and Bai Kaixin were his friends. When he was trapped on Iron Plateau, the Great Horn Exo Society, knowing that the planet was a ‘forbidden area for Cultivators’, had still marched to Iron Plateau at great risk in order to save him.

Right now, their life was endangered. How could Li Yao stand by and watch?

However, Li Yao found something confusing. He asked, “Boss Bai, I’ve been in touch with Bai Kaixin for a while. His strategies and computational ability are as good as yours. Although he is not a battle-type Cultivator, he certainly has the capability to protect himself after all these years of struggle.

“Besides, right now, he is with Lei Dalu, who is a Cultivator in the Core Formation Stage.

“Over the past year, the Great Horn Exo Society has been a close partner of the Glorious Sunlight Group. We have produced a batch of powerful crystal suits for their use. They should be both carrying the crystal suits and other magical equipment with them.

“Their identity hasn’t been seen through by the Immortal Cultivators yet. They shouldn’t be in too much danger right now. Why are you in such a rush?”

Bai Xinghe smiled bitterly. “It is not the Immortal Cultivators that I’m scared of, but the traps in the fortress, which are already activated!”

“What?” Li Yao was bewildered. “Is it possible? Like you said, the traps from ten thousand years ago should’ve been damaged already. You couldn’t have installed new traps. What’s there to be activated?”

Bai Xinghe hesitated for a moment. Glancing at his son on the light beam, he made up his mind and said, “The traps deployed by Yan Xinjian!”

Li Yao was dazed. “The supreme space pirate, Yan Xinjian, who defeated the coalition fleet of the Cultivators and established ‘Ten Sword Rules’ five hundred years ago?”

Li Yao suddenly thought through many things.

It was said that Yan Xinjian was the first space pirate to enter the core area of the underground fortress.

Also, according to Bai Xinghe, Yan Xinjian was the first to discover the Star Prier’s House. He had activated the defense rune array on Spider Den with the super crystal processors, which caused a major problem for the incoming coalition fleet of Cultivators and eventually forced them to retreat.

Rumor on Spider Den had it that Bai Xinghe was the successor of Yan Xinjian’s knowledge!

If it was Yan Xinjian, it was quite possible that large-scale traps could have been established underground.

The title of ‘supreme space pirate’ did not come from nothing. When the coalition fleet of the Cultivators had just been defeated, Yan Xinjian’s power reached the peak on Spider Den. He took the opportunity to perform purges on Spider Den by eliminating the dissidents and driving away the disobedient. All the while, he collected tremendous resources and wealth!

At that time, Yan Xinjian’s prestige on Spider Den was ten times higher than Bai Xinghe’s today!

It was also told in some tales that Yan Xinjian reached the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage only several decades after defeating the coalition fleet of the Cultivators. He was the well-deserved best expert of the Flying Star Sector at that time!

Yan Xinjian had enough manpower and resources to fully modify the underground fortress and deploy multiple traps, before executing all the workers and sealing the news when all the jobs were done.

However…

Li Yao frowned. “Why was Yan Xinjian setting up traps down here?”

“Because he established a secret training room in the deepest part of the underground fortress,” Bai Xinghe explained.

Li Yao was baffled. “A secret training room ten thousand meters below the ground? Why?”

“Because he was planning to break into the Divinity Transformation State, something nobody had ever done in the five thousand years after the apocalypse!”

A Divinity Transformation Cultivator!

Li Yao gasped. He quickly thought through the whole thing and shouted excitedly, “I got it!

“Since Yan Xinjian was the first to discover the Star Prier’s House, naturally, he learned the truth of the apocalypses through the legacy of Liu the Prier.

“It was clear to him that he might be struck by an apocalypse when he broke into the Divinity Transformation Stage from the Nascent Soul Stage. But the apocalypses all required a process of ‘perception’ and ‘activation’.

“That was why he built a secret training room ten thousand meters below the surface. He was going to hide here while he attempted to break through to the Divinity Transformation Stage!

“Such a plan had two merits.

“Firstly, blocked by the rock stratums as thick as ten thousand meters, the spiritual energy he released when he was breaking the threshold of the Divinity Transformation State might have escaped the attention of the ‘minor apocalypses’ that were floating in the universe. In such a way, the ‘minor apocalypses’ that were meant to exterminate the experts would not be activated!

“Secondly, even if a ‘minor apocalypse’ was truly activated, it might not be able to pierce through ground and exterminate him!”

Chapter 753 - A Five-Hundred-Year Battle!

Bai Xinghe nodded and quickly replied, “Correct. In order to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage, Yan Xinjian levied and looted on Spider Den. He annihilated a lot of pirate gangs with the excuse that they violated the ‘Ten Sword Rules’ before collecting all their resources. Naturally, he made a lot of enemies. There were even more who behaved nicely and obediently but were in fact merely scared of the tremendous soldiers under his control.

“It was not a small task to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage from the Nascent Soul Stage. Three to five years were already rarely seen. During the breakthrough, the Cultivator needs to be totally focused. They have absolutely no time or energy to care about other affairs.

“If Yan Xinjian did not show up on the ground for several years, his power would definitely be assumed, and the reign of iron and blood built by him would collapse. When other space pirates learned that he was hiding below the ground doing his training, they would definitely do anything they could to sabotage his endeavor to enter the Divinity Transformation Stage.

“During the period when a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator broke into the Divinity Transformation Stage, it was like a caterpillar in a cocoon waiting to become a butterfly. It was the most vulnerable time of their life. They had to pass through all kinds of difficulties and were prone to heavy wounds or mental derangement at any time.

“If his enemies suddenly marched into his training room when Yan Xibei was mentally deranged, it was not hard to guess what would happen next.

“Therefore, in order to advance into the Divinity Transformation Stage successfully, Yan Xinjian made full preparations. Not only did he establish a secret training room ten thousand meters below the surface, he also set up multiple lethal traps based on the original fortress.

“Yan Xinjian created ‘Ten Sword Rules’ when he governed Spider Den. He was quite merciful to his prey in space, but to the space pirates on his side, he was cruel and ruthless and would butcher them easily.

“Many space pirates at that time complained about his petty kindness. Hundreds of years later, many people in the world of Cultivators still hold him in high regard, insisting that he at least had a certain mortal standard.

“But they did not know that Yan Xinjian was so tough on the space pirates and performed purges every once in a while partly in order to accumulate wealth and resources quickly, which were necessary for his breakthrough into the Divinity Transformation Stage, and partly, as well as more importantly, to execute all the insiders with the purges as the disguise.

“After everybody who knew the secret training room and the underground traps was wiped out, Yan Xinjian ‘died abruptly’!

“But in reality, he secluded himself underground for the breakthrough into the Divinity Transformation Stage!”

Li Yao was hooked and couldn’t help but ask, “If so, the anecdote should be a top secret. How do you know it?”

Bai Xinghe smiled and said, “I found some of Yan Xinjian’s notes from the super crystal processors of the Star Prier’s House. He set the notes to be automatically unlocked and readable three hundred years after he entered the secret training room.

“If somebody entered the Star Prier’s House and activated the super crystal processors within three hundred years, not only would they have no access to the notes, all the traps in the underground fortress would be triggered immediately and destroy everything!”

Li Yao thought through the whole thing very quickly.

Whether the breakthrough to the Divinity Transformation Stage succeeded or failed, the answer would be revealed within a hundred years.

If Yan Xinjian successfully advanced into the Divinity Transformation Stage, he should have ended his seclusion in several decades. By then, he could always modify or delete his notes, and he could have governed Spider Den again as the ‘best expert of the Flying Star Sector’.

If he did not turn on the super crystal processors three hundred years later, there was only one possibility, which was that he was dead.

The breakthrough from the Nascent Soul Stage to the Divinity Transformation Stage was a risky process. Even without the influence of the apocalypses, the success rate was no higher than 10%. Yan Xinjian probably left those notes in order to leave his legacy for the latecomers. Many high-level Cultivators would do similar things for total strangers when they were striving to enter a higher level.

“The notes that I received marked the secret training room and the locations of the traps in great detail,” Bai Xinghe said. “It also recorded part of Yan Xinjian’s secret arts and techniques. However, according to the notes, most of Yan Xinjian’s magical equipment and techniques were stored in his secret training room. He hoped that those who were fortunate enough to read the notes could open his secret training room and become his real successor!”

Li Yao suddenly beamed with joy. “So, you are indeed Yan Xinjian’s successor!”

Bai Xinghe sneered and shook his head. “No, I am not. I did not open Yan Xinjian’s secret training room.”

Li Yao was dumbfounded.

The secret training room of a Cultivator in the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage equaled to his treasury. There must have been immeasurable benefits hidden inside. Yet, Bai Xinghe, the space pirate who made his living from others’ fortunes, chose not to open it?

“Why?”

Bai Xinghe replied coldly, “Because I didn’t believe in Yan Xinjian.

“When I was young, I once considered the ‘supreme space pirate’ as my role model and went through a lot of trouble to collect information about him.

“After cross-checking the files and the notes he left, I felt more and more alarmed as I studied deeper.

“On the surface, all the files stated that Yan Xinjian ran away from Heavenly Saints City and ended up on Spider Den because his wife cheated on him. The man burst into a fury and slew countless people.

“However, as I studied the files carefully, I found anomalies and came to a different conclusion.

“Yan Xinjian’s wife might have cheated on him, or she might not have. It doesn’t matter. What mattered was that Yan Xinjian was likely to have received a map, or at least the scraps of a map, of the underground fortress of Spider Den earlier.

“Otherwise, how could Yan Xinjian, as an outsider, find the entrance to the core area of the underground fortress in only one and a half years, when the local space pirates on Spider failed to find it for hundreds of years?

“Therefore, his wife cheating on him was probably only his excuse. In such a way, he could escape to Spider Den without raising the suspicion of the space pirates!

“It was even possible that the battle of Spider Den was manipulated by him in person, too!

“Think about it. Yan Xinjian ran to Spider Den alone. However capable he was, would the ferocious, disobedient space pirates really listen to his command?

“Only when the coalition fleet of the Cultivators approached could the value of him, the man who was most familiar with the starships of the Cultivators, be maximized. That was why he was granted with the temporary right to command many pirate gangs on Spider Den!

“Yan Xinjian gradually rose to power during the protracted war. All the space pirates who objected to him or doubted him got killed in the bloody battles.

“After years of war, the Cultivators were finally defeated and retreated without a victory, but the space pirates suffered equally heavy losses. Many pirate gangs were wasted or crippled. The best experts among space pirates were mostly killed. The one who got the most benefits was Yan Xinjian!

“He turned from a desperate deserter into the supreme ruler of Spider Den!

“The world of Cultivators and Spider Den were both tricked by him while knowing nothing of it. The man was indeed cunning and strategical!

“Would such a terrifying man really pass on his legacy to latecomers?

“Naturally, normal people may think that, since Yan Xinjian was likely to be killed, his last words might not be harmful. It was not a strange idea that the deceased left some benefits for the latecomers so that they could pass on their will.

“But was Yan Xinjian normal people?

“I did not dare take the risk. In my life, I was never scared of anybody, even when I was surrounded by Cultivators, outnumbered ten to one. But after learning of Yan Xinjian’s doings, I felt goosebumps all over my body.

“My intuition told me to keep as far away from anything related to Yan Xinjian as possible!

“Therefore, although I discovered Yan Xinjian’s secret training room, and I knew that his legacy and secret treasures were probably hidden inside, I gritted my teeth and made up my mind that I would not open it for the rest of my life!”

Cold sweat appeared on Li Yao’s forehead as he heard the story.

It was definitely true that none of the people who left their names in history and whose influence lasted to this day were easy to deal with.

If Yan Xinjian were really behind the curtain of everything, the resolution and schemes of the ‘supreme space pirate’ were indeed appalling.

Li Yao couldn’t help but recall the residence of Skeleton Dragon on Boneyard.

At that time, Skeleton Dragon was also luring the new generations with secret treasures for the purpose of breaking the barriers and returning to the world!

Although Yan Xinjian was probably long dead, who could say for sure what was on the mind of the old monsters in the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage?

It was possible that the notes he had left in the super crystal processors were really bait to fool the latecomers into opening the secret training room!

However, Yan Xinjian must never have foreseen that, after hundreds of years of waiting, it was another man who was as resolute as himself named Bai Xinghe who discovered the notes, and that he could refrain from succumbing to such huge temptations!

Maybe, this was a five-hundred-year battle between the ‘supreme space pirate’ and the ‘Pirate Potentate’!

“So, you did not open Yan Xinjian’s secret training room but merely took control over the traps he made? That explains a lot. You have indeed never deployed any traps below the ground. The Immortal Cultivators would never even think that they will be faced with the most terrifying traps designed by the supreme space pirate himself!" Li Yao said.

Bai Xinghe smiled bitterly. "Not the Immortal Cultivators, but us. The traps have been activated. Nobody is going to run away!"

Li Yao was dumbfounded. "When did you activate the traps?"

"I didn't have to," Bai Xinghe replied. "The trigger system of the traps is very complicated. By taking the total weight of everybody in the underground fortress, the heat and spiritual waves they emit, the waste gas they breath out as well as other factors into account, after a series of precise calculations, as long as the trigger system determines that a lot of intruders have entered the core area, especially the main warehouse at the bottom level, all the traps will be activated immediately!

"Therefore, the traps have been activated now. Nobody is going to stop them!"

Li Yao blinked fast. "Why can't I feel anything?"

Bai Xinghe sighed and said, "Do you remember the Nether River that we leapt across seven days ago? The Star Prier's House uses the water of the river as its source of energy. Yan Xinjian's traps are based on the Nether River, too.

"Once the traps are activated, the critical parts around the Nether River will be blown up immediately. The route of the Nether River will change, and the water will pour into the underground fortress and devour it!"

Chapter 754 - Return of the King!

Hardly had Bai Xinghe concluded his explanation when the entire Star Prier’s House started shaking slightly. Li Yao stuck his hands to the ground. Spiritual energy surged out of his palms as he sensed the surroundings carefully. He did detect that spiritual energy of the water class was roaring in various directions. Even the steam in the air was more irked than usual.

The color of Bai Xinghe’s face changed, and he said in a hurry, “There’s no time. I’ll explain to you later while we are on our way!”

Li Yao hesitated for a moment and tossed the Cosmos Ring that stored the Dragon King Battlesuit to Bai Xinghe.

After changing into the Dragon King Battlesuit, Bai Xinghe threw a Cosmos Ring to Li Yao, too, saying that it would be needed soon.

Bai Xinghe set the super crystal processors to run automatically. The two of them exited the Star Prier’s House from the way they had entered, except that they bypassed the Lustful Rock Spider’s hunting range and zigzagged down a brand-new branch.

Bai Xinghe was carrying a mini crystal processor that was connected to the super Cultivators remotely. It could display the real-time picture that the thousands of crystal cameras captured. However, the transmission of telepathic thoughts was intermittent because of the complicated terrain in the underground fortress. They could only stay close with Bai Kaixin and Lei Dalu. As for Bai Wulei, Fengyu Zhong, the Black King, and the other Immortal Cultivators, they were not able to monitor them constantly.

While they were on their way, the shaking became more and more violent. In the beginning, a slight shiver would only occur every twenty seconds or so. But now, a great earthquake would take place every other second.

Bai Xinghe ran forward fast as he explained, “Yan Xinjian spent decades resetting the parameters of the crystal processors in the main control room of the underground fortress. There was nothing strange upon first inspection, but an extremely sordid backdoor actually had been concealed.

“When the traps are activated, the entrance and the exit of the underground fortress will be immediately detonated. But other than them, all the other channels, including the gates, tunnels, ventilation tubes, and maintenance tubes, will be fully opened and cannot not be closed off with the crystal processors so that the flood can pour in without any obstacles!

“The flood is not terrifying per se. Many crystal suits can fight underwater. For the experts who have Cultivated to a certain level, they can live a long time by holding their breath and resorting to their ‘inner cycles’.

“However, there are countless horrifying beasts inside the river. Those we met when we leapt across the Nether River are just one kind of them. The hundreds and even thousands of other beasts did not have the ability to soar hundreds of meters into the sky. That was all.

“The beasts have lived in the Nether River for thousands of years. By absorbing the mother lodes below the ground, they continue mutating and strengthening themselves. They have strong senses about spiritual energy just like the Lustful Rock Spider and feast almost exclusively upon spiritual energy!

“When the intruders in the underground fortress encounter such a drastic change, they will certainly put on their crystal suits and trigger their spiritual energy. If so, they will be perfect prey for the beasts in the water!

“Moreover—”

Bai Xinghe narrowed his eyes and said, “A lot of high-purity crystals, such as ‘Thunder Stones’ and ‘Sunlight Stones’, are stored inside the warehouse of the underground fortress. Those crystals are as stable as rocks in dry air. However, once they meet water, intense chain reactions will be triggered. A huge amount of spiritual energy and heat will be emanated instantly as they turn into powerful bombs!

“Hehe. It was indeed an excellent move for Yan Xinjian. Since this is a fortress, important war assets such as the Thunder Stones and the Sunlight Stones are not weird at all when they are piled up in this place!

“The intruders would never have dreamt that the Thunder Stones and the Sunlight Stones, which are stored in the driest, special warehouses and blocked by drying rune arrays, will be submerged by a flood!

“The flood and the explosion of the Thunder Stones and the Sunlight Stones will block the upper half part of the underground fortress immediately.

"The important persons of the Immortal Cultivators are all concentrated in the bottom half of the fortress. They will have absolutely nowhere to run to when they realize what is going on!"

Sweat covered Li Yao's forehead. Yan Xinjian's schemes were indeed sordid.

It was impossible to destroy the entire underground fortress. However, drowning half of the fortress by pouring the river into it, together with the explosion of the crystals and the underwater predators, was going to be a major headache for the intruders.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao asked, "Such traps might be sufficient for those in the Refinement Stage and in the Building Foundation Stage, but I wonder whether or not they are effective for those in the Core Formation Stage and in the Nascent Soul Stage."

"That is exactly why I am hiding here," Bai Xinghe explained. "After I discovered Yan Xinjian's traps, I thought of building the traps into my last trump card. Therefore, I performed major modifications on the Star Prier's House and sealed it again. Moreover, I deployed water-driving rune arrays around the house and stored tremendous food, compressed air, and water-driving magical equipment inside.

"In the meantime, I spent ten years digging a secret tunnel leading to the outside of the underground fortress from the Star Prier's House. The front end of the tunnel exceeded the block range of the fortress. I built a one-way teleportation array there that could transport people out!

"My plan was simple. When the river poured into the underground fortress, I would stay in the Star Prier's House and have a good rest while I observed the fight between the Immortal Cultivators and the underwater beasts.

“When the Immortal Cultivators had soaked in water for one day or two and were exhausted in the battles against the beasts, I would sneak out with the water-driving magical equipment and assassinate my targets.

“The underground fortress has a complicated terrain, and I am familiar with the environment here. Having had several days of good rest and knowing the location of every one of them, I could avoid the strongest experts and attack the lone, weak ones.

“With my capability in the Nascent Soul Stage and the chaos of the situation, it should not be a problem to slay a few people in the Core Formation Stage. By any luck, I could assassinate Fengyu Zhong or the Black King if I had the opportunity!

“Whether I could successfully assassinate the important persons of the Immortal Cultivators or not, I would return to the Star Prier’s House without any hesitation and then leave the underground fortress through the secret tunnel!”

Li Yao thought for a moment and suddenly blurted out, “When a tiger leaves a mountain, the monkey calls itself the king.”

Bai Xinghe chuckled and sneered. “Do you think Boss Bai is a monkey? But you are not wrong. Compared with the powerful Temple of Immortals, I am indeed a monkey.

“However, when I reappear on the surface, the ‘tigers’ of the Temple of Immortals will still be struggling to survive in the underground fortress!

“The traps might not be enough to kill the Black King, Fengyu Zhong, and Bai Wulei, but the space pirates and the Immortal Cultivators in the Refinement Stage and Building Foundation Stage will definitely suffer heavy losses!

“Then, just think about it. All the space pirates who distinguished themselves in the final battle between me and Fengyu Zhong and proved themselves loyal to the Temple of Immortals were permitted to enter the underground fortress. Then, what kind of person would be left on the surface?”

Li Yao took a long breath and replied, “All the space pirates loyal to the Temple of Immortals have come deep below the ground. Those left on the surface will either be the pirate gangs that were defeated and battered because they are loyal to you or those who were not really willing to contribute to the Temple of Immortals’ cause during the last battle!

“The final battle between Fengyu Zhong and you was like a filter that directed all the hardcore lackeys of the Temple of Immortals underground. Those who were left on the surface are definitely not the most loyal ones even though they were lackeys, too!”

“Exactly,” Bai Xinghe said. “That is the key of my entire plan.

“As the saying goes, a cake is sour when it is not divided evenly. I publicized the news that a lot of secret treasures of the Star Ocean Imperium are buried inside the underground fortress since a long time ago. Even a pig on Spider Den should be familiar with the rumors and fantasizing the wealth, not to mention the space pirates.

“The space pirates left on the ground are destined to not be trusted by the Temple of Immortals in the future. They can only wait and watch other pirate gangs looting trophies underground and probably swallowing them one day when those pirate gangs are strong enough!

“Tell me, what would those space pirates think?

“It is needless to say that the pirate gangs defeated and loyal to me are probably waiting for their death now. As long as there is a slim chance of survival, they will definitely try their best!

“Alright. That would have been the basic situation when Boss Bai, the Pirate Potentate, returned to the surface.

“The Temple of Immortals would have no leaders, and their core persons would not be able to break out of the underground fortress in a fortnight.

“Besides, with the flood and the explosions, and because of the blockage of the thick rock stratums, no news would be leaked out. I would be the only one who could tell them what happened below the ground.

“Just like that, when I showed up in front of everything and claimed that I had killed all the key persons of the Temple of Immortals in the underground fortress, preferably with the Black King’s or Fengyu Zhong’s head, do you think there would be anybody on Spider Den who would not obey me?”

Li Yao thought for a moment and cursed. He mumbled, “The king has returned!”

Bai Xinghe smiled and said, “Half a month would be more than enough for me to carry out a brutal counterattack!

“By then, even if the Black King or Fengyu Zhong could break out of the underground fortress, so what? Everything would already have changed!

“Hehe. What I was going to lose was the Abyss Pirate Gang, whose loyalty was questionable, but what I was going to get was the whole of Spider Den! Isn’t that a fair deal?”

“It’s a pity that you never calculated that your son would appear out of nowhere,” Li Yao said.

Bai Xinghe smiled bitterly. “Indeed, I didn’t. What a fool. I haven’t seen him for decades. Right now, I seem to be doomed for sure. Why did he come here?

“Is it possible that he grew suspicious about his past and wanted to know the truth before I was killed?”

Li Yao recalled Bai Kaixin’s eyes that were forever filled with vague sorrow and yet were as sharp as a frosted blade. He shook his head and said, “Boss Bai, you can’t see the big picture because you are in the game. Bai Kaixin is such a smart guy. Do you think he does not know the truth to this day? In my opinion, he figured everything out a long time ago.

“He did not come for an answer; he came to save you.”

Bai Xinghe suddenly stopped running and blurted out, “I am a battle-type Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage, and he is an admin-type Cultivator in the Building Foundation Stage. Do I need him to save me? What makes him think that he can save me?”

“The fact that he is your son,” Li Yao said.

Bai Xinghe was dazed for almost ten seconds. He suddenly burst into laughter. The aura of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator fully burst out and nearly knocked Li Yao over.

“Yes. I should’ve realized it earlier. He is here to save me. My son is here to save me!

“But right now, let your old man save you first!”

Chapter 755 - Fierce Flood!

Inside the main warehouse at the bottom level of the underground fortress, Bai Wulei looked at debris, remains, and the rusted scraps of magical equipment that had been piled up like a hill, dumbfounded.

Powerful crystal suits of the Star Ocean Imperium appeared to be hanging on the sixty shelves that were dozens of meters high. However, with the slightest touch, all the crystal suits crumbled into crazily flying iron dust as if they were made of sand.

Bai Wulei coughed heavily because of the stimulation of the iron dust. He coughed while he bellowed, “It’s impossible! How could there be only such a pile of garbage? The old man said that magical equipment that could equip tens of thousands of Cultivators was hidden in his place!”

He rushed crazily inside the warehouse madly and explored the weapons and magical equipment one area after another. It was a pity that his finger seemed to be blessed with a destructive ability all of a suddenly. All the weapons and magical equipment he touched were shattered and collapsed into debris.

“How can this be?” Bai Wulei was about to cry. He gnashed his teeth and said, “It’s unreasonable. The old man already presented countless techniques and magical equipment he took from the underground fortress in order to boost morale. At that time, I asked him what about ourselves when we were offering so many secret treasures to other people.

“In the end, the old man burst into laughter and declared that what he had taken out was only one tenth of all the treasures. The real good items were still below the ground!

“How is it possible?

“There must be something wrong. There must be another warehouse. There must be!”

Bai Wulei waved a seemingly glamorous flying sword. But after one slash, it broken into more than ten pieces, suggesting that it was more fragile than glass.

Fengyu Zhong, Master Hidden Fog, who was the previous leader of Black Spider Tower, and Dark Empyrean, who was the real ‘Black King’, all frowned and stared at the wall, deep in thought.

The spacious warehouse was wreathed in a vague black mist, as if streams of demonic aura were leaking in through the wall.

Fengyu Zhong asked respectfully, “Black King, what do you think?”

Since Dark Empyreal had launched an attack in the Nascent Soul Stage toward Bai Xinghe in front of everybody, there was little point in him concealing his identity any longer. Getting rid of the low profile as one of the ‘Eight Blades of Black Spider’, he stood confidently, surrounded by a daunting, decisive aura. He replied calmly, “It appears that we have all been fooled by Bai Xinghe. The old, cunning Pirate Potentate was merely bluffing.

“There are not as many secret treasures of the Star Ocean Imperium as he claimed. Even if there were, most of the magical equipment and the weapons would already be rusted and damaged.

“Those he brought to the surface were just about everything. That old fox!

“However…”

Dark Empyrean, the Black King, narrowed his eyes and said slowly, “It suddenly occurs to me that, although most of the weapons and magical equipment on our way here are seriously damaged, there are a great number of war assets, especially high-purity crystals such as the Thunder Stones and the Sunlight Stones. Their volume seems to far exceed the need of a regular war.”

Hardly had he concluded his sentence when the color of his face changed abruptly. He drew a rune quickly and held it in his palm while he murmured a spell. Then he opened his hands suddenly!

A black bug immediately flew out of his hands and flew far away in a streak of blackness.

A moment later, Fengyu Zhong’s nose flapped as he sniffed the air. He observed with a solemn face, “Something is indeed not right. The moisture of the air has increased all of a sudden. The spiritual energy of the water class is very active right now!”

“Not good!” Dark Empyrean seemed to have sensed something. His face turned extremely pale as he shouted loudly, “Hurry and leave!”

…

The middle level and the upper level of the underground fortress had changed entirely.

Over the past ten thousand years, the multiple earthquakes, especially the super earthquake affected by the apocalypse five thousand years ago, had already riddled the fortress with holes everywhere.

The traps that Yan Xinjian had devised neatly, through a few insignificant explosions, altered the route of the Nether River precisely, turning the Nether River into a raging dragon that invaded the fortress. The hair, claws, and teeth of the dragon were running into the fortress through the countless fractures on the top half of the fortress!

In a moment, the underground fortress turned into a swamp!

The unstoppable flood was roaring in every pathway like ferocious beasts, smashing everything in its way.

Countless space pirates were consumed by the flood before they realized what was going on. They were bashed into the wall hard by the rushing torrent. Despite the protection of their crystal suits, they were vomiting blood with their internal organs torn apart.

The flood alone was not terrifying, but most of the warehouses inside the underground fortress were packed with high-purity crystals such as the Thunder Stone and the Sunlight Stone.

Those extremely unstable crystals did not even need to meet water directly to explode. As long as the moisture of the air increased to a certain level and the spiritual energy of the water class in the air was active enough, they would detonate instantly!

As a result—

Explosions were taking place everywhere inside the underground fortress. Countless warehouses and pathways collapsed before they were swallowed by the flood. The space pirates and the Immortal Cultivators inside were buried and suppressed by the fireballs and billions of rocks that were cascading down on their heads without even having the opportunity to scream.

For the areas that were not affected by the explosions of the Thunder Stones and the Sunlight Stones, when they were drowned by the flood, the eccentric beasts living inside the Nether River crawled into the fortress along with the currents.

Those eccentric beasts had been living in absolute darkness for thousands of years. They could only perceive their prey through spiritual energy.

In order to keep away from their enemies, most of them had evolved with the ability of converging their spiritual energy, too.

Right now, the space pirates and the Immortal Cultivators who had triggered their spiritual energy instead of concealing it in the emergency were like butterflies in a dark night. They became the most appealing prey for the eccentric beasts.

There were floating eccentric beasts that were emitting dim lights like jellyfish, fish-type beasts that had sharp tusks and could bite through the toughest super alloys, and insect-type beasts that both looked like water snakes and giant centipedes with flagella and tentacles wriggling all over their bodies to name a few.

Hundreds of eccentric beasts were swimming, sneaking, and searching in the water, exchanging greedy and cruel information with each other.

Even the mortal enemies gave up the idea of hunting each other for now because more delicious prey was right in front of them.

Swoosh!

A floating eccentric beast that looked like a transparent jellyfish lunged at a space pirate who was struggling inside the flood. The boneless body of the beast opened like a bag and covered the space pirate’s head as fast as lightning. The soft tentacles groped for the gaps in the victim’s crystal suit and injected the fatal venom into it.

Hiu!

Hundreds of ‘goldfish’ that had the sharpest teeth congregated into a cluster of deadly gold as they charged at an Immortal Cultivator who had suffered internal injuries during the strike of the flood. Their teeth bit his crystal suit hard. After being ripped for a moment, the crystal suit was creaking and about to crumble at any moment!

Hu!

The insect-type beasts that looked like enormous centipedes spurted corrosive body liquids as they swam forward. The dark green body liquids quickly spread out in the water and enshrouded two Immortal Cultivators, who did not know what was going on silently, like faint mist.

“Ah!”

“Ah! Ah!”

“What is this? What is this damn thing?”

Screams were echoing nonstop inside the communication channel of the space pirates and the Immortal Cultivators. Countless people were killed before they sensed where their enemy was!

…

Inside a secret tunnel, Bai Kaixin and Lei Dalu were moving forward prudently. Suddenly, Lei Dalu’s nostrils widened, and his ears twitched. He leaned against the wall and listened carefully for a while, before he mumbled, “Something’s wrong.”

Bai Kaixin turned nervous. “What is it? This road is very inconspicuous. The Immortal Cultivators shouldn’t be able to discover it.”

“It doesn’t sound like the Immortal Cultivators,” Lei Dalu murmured. Then he suddenly shouted, “Not good. Run quickly!”

“What’s going—”

Before Bai Kaixin finished his sentence, he had already heard a boom far away from them, as if something had exploded, which was followed by the earsplitting noise of a flood that was pushing close to the two of them unstoppably.

Bai Kaixin was lost, too. “What’s happening?”

Huala! Huala! Huala!

As if the horn of the God of Water had been blown, a tide rounded the corner and was rushing close.

“What are you waiting for? Run now!”

Lei Dalu snatched Bai Kaixin’s elbow and ran as fast as he could!

…

Li Yao and Bai Xinghe had snuck into the river. Everything they saw raised the deepest fear deep down their heart.

It was a pathway that had just been savaged by the flood and the eccentric underwater beasts.

Endless debris was floating in the dirty water. There was no telling whether it was originally crystal suits or the magical equipment inside the underground fortress. Occasionally, there were empty crystal suits stuck in a strange position, as if waving at the bottom of the pathway. When Li Yao drew close and observed, he often discovered that there were only skeletons inside the crystal suits, if there was anything at all.

They were the space pirates and the Immortal Cultivators who had been attacked by the eccentric beasts. Not even their bodies remained.

Li Yao and Bai Xinghe were both aware of the toughness of the underwater beasts. They both switched their crystal suits to stealth mode and tried to reduce the spiritual energy being emitted as much as possible, while they continued forward in the water purely with the strength of their muscles and bones.

Right now, a huge bunch of space pirates and Immortal Cultivators had triggered their spiritual energy to the maximum due to anxiety. They were more eye-catching prey than the two of them. Therefore, it did not matter very much even if some of their spiritual energy leaked out.

They had been engaged with a lot of eccentric beasts on their way, too. If the shoal was not large enough, they would eliminate the beasts as quickly as possible. When it was too large, they would simply turn off the last bit of their spiritual energy output and pretend to be two cold, iron shells.

Since the eccentric beasts had been living below the dark underground for generations, most of their optical organs had retrograded, and they could only perceive their surroundings with spiritual energy. Li Yao and Bai Xinghe did not run into any trouble when they passed the blind predators. However, the ugly appearance of the beasts caused goosebumps all over Li Yao’s body.

“The two of them are running toward the core area of the underground fortress.”

While there were no eccentric beasts nearby, Bai Xinghe triggered the light beam again and watched. There was worry in his voice as he said, “Not good. According to their current route, it is likely that they will run into the main force of the Immortal Cultivators!

(Updated by NovelFull.Com)

“We have to save them before they meet the main force of the Immortal Cultivators and bring them back to the Star Prier’s House before we all run away from here together!”

Chapter 756 - To Kill, to Save!

Right now, the lethal flood was gradually invading the middle level and the bottom level of the underground fortress from the top level of it.

Many space pirates and Immortal Cultivators had noticed the incoming flood and sealed the entrances and exits of the rooms by force, but the blockage was not waterproof. It was not long before they were crushed by the pressure of the flood.

However, the underground fortress was enormous in scale and complicated in terrain. It was not entirely drowned by the flood so quickly.

Bai Kaixin had grown up in the underground fortress. Naturally, he knew that countless brutal beasts lived within the Nether River. Therefore, Lei Dalu and him did not head upwards against the flood but downwards to avoid the flood and search for a possible shelter.

The main force of the Immortal Cultivators led by the Black King, on the other hand, was marching upward, trying to flee as quickly as possible!

“Not good!”

At a turn of a pathway, Lei Dalu suddenly stopped and released his telepathic thoughts. He sensed for a moment and said coarsely, “I’ve sensed that quite a few experts are releasing their aura blatantly and unstoppably as they are making their way upwards. There are at least two experts in the Nascent Soul Stage, two at the peak of the Core Formation Stage, and another ten or so in the lower levels of the Core Formation Stage!”

Bai Kaixin pondered for a moment and replied, “They must be the main force of the Immortal Cultivators. Fengyu Zhong, Bai Wulei, the Black King, and their lot!”

They looked at each other in bewilderment. Although they had disguised themselves and snuck into the pirate gangs amid the chaos, they were not real space pirates after all. It was quite possible that the experts in the Nascent Soul Stage would see through them quickly.

Besides, with the chaos below the ground, it would not be unusual if those selfish Immortal Cultivators captured them to use as cannon fodder.

“Let’s go back and find another way!”

The two of them made up their mind quickly and turned around, having no desire to meddle with the Immortal Cultivators at all.

…

Not far away from them, inside the main corridor of the underground fortress, the Black King suddenly stopped and said coldly, “Wait. Something is not right!

“I just sensed that somebody scanned me with their telepathic thoughts not far away.

“It was not odd that somebody scanned me. It is odd, however, that the man turned and ran away in a different direction after he saw me. Judging from the speed of his escape, the man is probably in the Core Formation Stage!

“We are all allies here. Why is he running away from us? There must be something wrong with them!”

Fengyu Zhong frowned and said, “Black King, I think it’s more important that we get out of here as quickly as possible, isn’t it?”

The Black King sniffed and glared at him. “Why do you think a flood is savaging the underground fortress and there are explosions everywhere? Chase and catch those people!”

Fengyu Zhong was dazed for a moment and immediately realized what was going on. Endless brutality beamed out of his eyes as he went after where Lei Dalu and Bai Kaixin had disappeared together with Master Hidden Fog, Bai Wulei, and the elites of the Immortal Cultivators that were with him.

…

“They have encountered the Immortal Cultivators!”

Eight floors above them, Bai Xinghe cursed and stopped converging his spiritual energy. Together with Li Yao, he activated the power rune arrays to the maximum, as he accelerated his speed to the highest. The two of them darted to the lower floors along with the flood like two undercurrents.

Shua!

Countless eccentric beasts were ignorant enough to attack them while they were on their away, only to be blown into clusters of blood by Bai Xinghe’s spiritual energy.

After descending four floors, they were even met with almost twenty dizzy space pirates. Having no time to disguise their identities, they simply put on the most brutal appearance and slashed their way forward!

Hiu!

Li Yao's Feathered Dragon Saber turned into hundreds of inconspicuous fish in the dirty, black water. They were ten times more dangerous than they were in the air. They snuck into the gaps of the crystal suits of almost ten space pirates, cut opened their main artery, reached their heart and blew it up. They then broke out of the space pirates' bodies again and returned to Li Yao.

The Feathered Dragon Saber turned from black to crimson immediately.

Bai Xinghe was even more insane. Eager to rescue his son, he fully exerted the unbelievable capability of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. Dragon balls of tremendous size were appearing and disappearing on the seven dragon heads of the Dragon King Battlesuit. The space pirates who were caught by them were not left with an intact body.

Explosions were echoing two floors below, but the shaking was not violent. It did not seem to be the result of the Thunder Stones and the Sunlight Stones exploding but a fight.

Lei Dalu and Bai Kaixin must have engaged with the Immortal Cultivators!

The color of Bai Xinghe's face changed, and he was about to dash downward, only to be stopped by Li Yao.

"Boss Bai!"

Li Yao pointed at the space pirates killed by him.

The crystal suits of those space pirates were basically intact, except for the tiny holes on the wrists, thighs, or the necks. Nobody would notice anything wrong when the crystal suits were disguised without looking at them carefully.

Bai Xinghe immediately realized what he meant. He selected two corpses approximately their size together with Li Yao and replaced the Dragon King Battlesuit and the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit with the dead bodies’ crystal suits, before the two of them continued rushing downwards.

The two floors were a fairly large warehouse area. They had not been drowned by the flood yet, and the water only reached everyone’s waist.

When Li Yao and Bai Xinghe arrived, they discovered that almost twenty Immortal Cultivators were attacking Lei Dalu and Bai Kaixin together.

Among the Immortal Cultivators, Fengyu Zhong and Bai Wulei, as well as a few experts of the Eight Blades of Black Spider, were present.

With Lei Dalu’s and Bai Kaixin’s capability, they could not resist the enemy at all.

The Immortal Cultivators meant to capture them alive and feared that they might detonate themselves. That was why they had managed to hold out for a few minutes.

Li Yao and Bai Xinghe looked at each other before approaching the enemy quietly, one from the left and the other from the right.

They were both wearing the crystal suits of space pirates, with the battle emblem of the pirate gang they were in on their chest. Right now, the Immortal Cultivators were in a hurry to capture the Bai Kaixin and Lei Dalu alive and did not pay much attention to them. They thought that Bai Xinghe and Li Yao were merely other space pirates who considered the place a shelter.

“Bai Wulei?” Li Yao suggested the target of their attack inside the communication channel.

“Fengyu Zhong!”

Bai Xinghe was truly the Pirate Potentate. He planned to take down an expert in the Nascent Soul Stage at first try!

“Okay!” Li Yao replied without any hesitation.

Bai Xinghe’s strength was slightly higher than Fengyu Zhong’s, and when he was in an outburst, he could boast the combat ability of the Nascent Soul Stage briefly. If the two of them joined their hands and ambushed the enemy without alarming him, it was very likely that Fengyu Zhong would be heavily wounded!

Fifty meters… Forty meters… Thirty meters…

The two of them pretended that they were here to help and drew closer and closer to Fengyu Zhong.

Right then, Bai Kaixin suddenly screamed.

One of the Eight Blades of Black Spider had stabbed a flying sword that was almost transparent deeply into the left side of his chest!

The flying sword seemed to be a piece of extremely vicious magical equipment. When the edge of the sword entered Bai Kaixin’s body, it started pumping his blood and spurting it out from the hollow grip of the sword!

Seeing that his only son was heavily wounded, Bai Xinghe shivered and gasped uncontrollably. The aura beyond the Core Formation Stage spread out of his body all of a sudden!

Fengyu Zhong was also a cunning and vigilant man. He sensed that anomaly immediately and was greatly alarmed. Leaving the two prey that were about to fall into his hands aside, he retreated a hundred meters and hid behind the countless Immortal Cultivators. He shrieked, “There’s something wrong with the two newcomers!”

Li Yao cursed within his heart. At this point, there were no other options. He threw dozens of crystal bombs out. With the brilliant fireworks for cover, he and Bai Xinghe completed air changes instantly!

“Kill them!”

Li Yao lunged at the Immortal Cultivators like a tiger attacking lambs. After a few zigzags, a few Immortal Cultivators who were relatively weaker were chopped in half instantly!

“It is… you!”

Fengyu Zhong was both shocked and scared. Although the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit looked completely different from when it had been at the periphery of the Iron Plateau Space Zone after multiple upgrades, Fengyu Zhong still grasped the unique aura of the crystal suit keenly!

“It is more important to save them. Don’t fight for too long. Their reinforcements will arrive at any moment!” Bai Xinghe shouted in a hurry inside the communication channel.

His capability was slightly higher than Fengyu Zhong’s, and Li Yao’s capability was slightly higher than Bai Wulei’s.

However, other than Fengyu Zhong and Bai Wulei, their enemies also included Master Hidden Fog, the previous leader of the Black Spider Tower, and the multiple experts of the Eight Blades of Black Spider, who were adept at stealth and assassinations and boasted a higher combat ability than that of normal Cultivators in the same level. It would not be easy to kill them all.

Besides, Bai Xinghe had vaguely sensed that Dark Empyrean, the real Black King, was running close at a high speed.

When the Black King arrived and they were surrounded by a large batch of Immortal Cultivators, there was no way that they could survive.

When the attempted ambush failed, it was smart to run away quickly. Before Lei Dalu realized what was going on, Bai Xinghe had already placed Bai Kaixin on his shoulder and shouted at him, “Follow me!”

Lei Dalu was dazed. Naturally, he had recognized the famous ‘Dragon King Battlesuit’. The fact that the Pirate Potentate was standing right before him made the captain who earned his living by hunting down space pirates quite uncomfortable.

Li Yao slashed another Immortal Cultivator in half and detonated almost a hundred crystal bombs in a row, turning more than half of the warehouse into a forest of flames, before he went back to Lei Dalu like a rabbit and patted his shoulder firmly. “Captain, I’ll explain to you later. Just run quickly!”

Lei Dalu gasped when he realized who was talking and said, “Li Yao?”

Discovering that this little brother of his seemed to appear in the most unbelievable places under the most unbelievable identities every time, Lei Dalu was dumbfounded.

Last time, it was Sand Scorpion, the best warrior of Iron Plateau. This time, he got even crazier and became a lackey of the Pirate Potentate?

Li Yao said in a hurry, “Advisor Bai was hit by ‘Back Teeth Heart Tangling Sword’. If it is removed by force, the entire heart will be dragged out. We have to find a safe place and destroy the traps inside the sword first!”

“Alright!”

Lei Dalu thought quickly and realized that, no matter why Li Yao had shown up in this place, Bai Xinghe would not mean any harm to Bai Kaixin.

Before the flames of the explosions died down, the three of them, carrying Bai Kaixin, escaped the way where they had come and ran out of the siege of the Immortal Cultivators!

Half a minute after they fled, the Black King charged into the warehouse with a large batch of Immortal Cultivators!

Seeing the mess and the wounded who were screaming in the water, the Black King was gloomy.

After hearing Fengyu Zhong’s report, the Black King’s face remained unchanged as he said seriously, “It was indeed Bai Xinghe’s scheme. But I wonder why he showed up without any reason!

(Updated by NovelFull.Com)

“They can’t run far away carrying a heavily wounded ally. Run after them. Stop Bai Xinghe whatever the cost!

“Right now, the upper level of the fortress is completely blocked. There is no way that anybody can get out within the next ten days. We have to capture Bai Xinghe and elicit everything from him!

“My methods are not easy to shake off. He cannot be in his peak state right now. Go after him!”

Chapter 757: A Truth That Nobody Believes

Chapter 757: A Truth That Nobody Believes

In a warehouse that had been swallowed by the flood, there was an empty space around five meters in diameter in the center. In the middle of the space was a deep blue ball that was floating and emitting electric arcs.

It was a water-driving ball. With the mechanism of ionization, it could create and maintain a waterproof space for half an hour.

Bai Kaixin's upper half body was naked. His face was as pale as paper. With the help of the anti-gravity rune arrays, he floated three inches from the ground, with a translucent flying sword that looked like a fishbone atop his heart.

Coldly shining thorns were all around the flying sword. Just one look at them was enough to make one's heart beat fast.

Li Yao manipulated dozens of metal threads that were thinner than his hair with his telepathic thoughts and extended them into the hollow grip of the flying sword. After groping carefully for a while, he completely destroyed the traps inside the flying sword after a click sound.

The spurting blood came to a sudden stop.

Li Yao took a long breath in relief. He wiped off the sweat on his forehead and said to Bai Xinghe and Lei Dalu, "The traps have been destroyed. The sword will not absorb blood from

Advisor Bai's body any longer. However, I'm not a doctor. The flying sword is really too close to the heart. It's impossible to remove it here. Let's see what we can do after we get to the Star Prier's House."

Bai Kaixin was lackluster, and his lips seemed to be dyed with chalk. He stared at Bai Xinghe and did not move his eyes away even when Li Yao was destroying the traps.

Bai Xinghe was in a trance. His face grew old at a visible speed, as if the sword was not stabbed in his son's chest but his own.

Shivering, Bai Kaixin extended one of his fingers.

Li Yao and Lei Dalu both turned to Bai Xinghe. They both knew what Bai Kaixin meant. He meant to ask Bai Xinghe a question, one that he had guessed the answer to but would like to hear it from Bai Xinghe's mouth anyway.

Bai Xinghe was silent for a long time. He opened his mouth slowly, his voice so coarse that it seemed to come not from his throat but from his broken heart. "Although your mother was not killed by me, I was to blame for her death! If I didn't force her to stay on Spider Den, she wouldn't have been killed. She wouldn't have!

"It was me who got her killed. It was me!"

Bai Xinghe collapsed to the ground in grief, mumbling. Faced with his heavily wounded son, he lost his demeanor as the Pirate Potentate completely.

Bai Kaixin finally learned the answer. There were tears in his eyes, but the sorrow that had occupied his face for decades faded away all of a sudden as if it had been blown away by a spring breeze.

For the first time, Li Yao discovered that Bai Kaixin was quite a handsome man when he was not wearing a bitter expression.

He shook his hands slightly and allowed his father's rough hands to hold them, before he closed his eyes with a smile in relief.

"The flying sword had been broken. We must head back to the Star Prier's House. The Immortal Cultivators are coming close to the area we are in. They will find us shortly!"

Bai Xinghe treated Bai Kaixin's wounds simply. Then, he asked Li Yao to fix the lower bottom half of the flying sword, while he chopped off the part of the flying sword that was out of Bai Kaixin's body. The only thing left on Bai Kaixin's chest was a slight bulge.

Then, he put a special waterproof suit on Bai Kaixin. Then he carried him and deactivated the water-driving ball. The four of them swam toward the Star Prier's House.

From the surveillance cameras, they could tell that the main troops of the Immortal Cultivators were surrounding them.

The experts above the Core Formation Stage were not something that the underwater beasts could deal with. They would only be slightly harassed by the beasts, but nothing more.

"Hurry up!"

Bai Xinghe was in the lead. They made their way in the flood that was devoid of any light and returned to the Star Prier's House.

After half an hour's journey, they gradually drew close to the Star Prier's House.

However, there was no road forward.

The entire pathway had collapsed due to an intense explosion. Debris and rocks had completely blocked it.

"Well—" Li Yao frowned. When they went down, the pathway had been perfectly fine. He did not expect it to have been destroyed so quickly.

"Is there another way?" Lei Dalu asked.

"Yes!" Bai Xinghe replied.

He glanced at the picture on the mini crystal processor, only to smile bitterly and added, "There are two other ways that we can take, but they are both occupied by the Immortal Cultivators now!"

"Then we can only dig through the pathway!"

Lei Dalu stuck his hands to the debris and rocks before he bellowed and exerted his strength. An enormous rock in front of him was immediately crushed into powder.

However, more rocks slowly fell down and took up most of the space that he had just emptied.

"Let me have a try!"

With Li Yao's telepathic thoughts and his surging spiritual energy, the Feathered Dragon Saber dispersed again and reformed into a giant black drill.

The drill of mystic rays on Sparkle was a piece of powerful magical equipment from the Star Ocean Imperium. Li Yao had killed Skeleton Dragon with the drill of mystic rays and had been particularly fond of the magical equipment ever since then.

Because of his insistence, when the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was being modified, a small drill of mystic rays had been created and embedded with the Feathered Dragon Saber.

Sha! Sha! Sha! Sha!

The drill made of the Feathered Dragon Saber revolved rapidly, surrounded by brilliance electric arcs and mystic rays that were illuminated the dark water of the river. Soon, a large space was drilled out.

However, the pathway was extremely long, and the tectonic structure above was very unstable. Despite the marvelous tool in Li Yao's hand, he had to work carefully and push forward at a very low speed.

While he drilled forward, Lei Dalu stabilized the pathway behind him. Bai Xinghe watched them in silence while holding Bai Kaixin.

When another twenty meters was drilled through inside the pathway, half of the empty space had a collapse again. Bai Xinghe suddenly said, "You guys take your time to drill forward here. I'm going to investigate the Immortal Cultivators' progress."

Li Yao and Lei Dalu were both dazed for a moment. They both realized what Bai Xinghe was going to do.

Bai Kaixin's eyes shone in the dark water. In response, Bai Xinghe smiled and pressed somewhere behind his son's neck, making his son close his eyes as he fell into a deep sleep.

Shua!

Bai Xinghe took off the Dragon King Battlesuit and stored the crystal suit into one of his Cosmos Rings before he threw the Cosmos Ring to Li Yao. In the meantime, he put on the 'Blood River Battlesuit' that he had worn during the second confrontation with Li Yao!

"Li Yao, consider the Dragon King Battlesuit a gift of mine. It would be a shame if the crystal suit fell into the hands of the Immortal Cultivators," Bai Xinghe said casually. He patted the Blood River Battlesuit on his body and declared, "The crystal suit on my body is enough."

"Boss Bai!"

Li Yao's heart was filled with a mixture of emotions. He did not know what to say.

Bai Xinghe put his son down carefully and touched his forehead for the last time. He waved his hands and vanished into the darkness.

From then on, Li Yao could only talk to Bai Xinghe through the communication channel.

"The latest map of the underground fortress, including the parts that Yan Xinjian changed and the location of his secret training room, has been sent into your crystal processor," Bai Xinghe said. "It is a little gift that I offer you. You are a worthy opponent, Li Yao."

Li Yao gnashed his teeth. "Are you really going, Boss Bai?"

"Is there a second option?" Bai Xinghe asked casually. "I'll give you half an hour. You must break through the pathway within half an hour and get my son out of the place. Otherwise, I won't let you go even if I die and become a ghost!"

Li Yao was silent.

Bai Xinghe smiled bitterly and said gloomily, "I've been lying to you about something. If I don't tell you the truth now, I think I will not die in peace. Just consider it a story if you find it too hard to believe.

"Do you remember how I came to Spider Den?"

Li Yao was dazed. "Is it all false?"

"Everything in the beginning is true," Bai Xinghe mumbled. "We encountered a space storm, ended up in an unknown space zone, were saved by somebody else, and got caught in desperation later. My parents planned to kill our lifesavers so that we could keep ourselves alive… That part is true.

"But then I lied!

"At that time, I was already seven, and I already knew a lot of stuff.

"When my father said, 'Out of two, one will live' and 'If I don't kill him, he will kill me', although I didn't know what he meant, I did sense the soaring killing intent from his tone and his facial expression.

"It was something that I'd never sensed from my father before.

"I was so scared that I cried. I held my father's legs and asked what he was going to do exactly and whether or not he was planning to do something bad.

"I said to my father—'Father, you are a Cultivator; Cultivators don't do bad things!'

"Maybe my father was moved by these words. He was dazed for a long time and suddenly held my mother, both of them crying. He cried and screamed, 'I don't deserve to be a Cultivator!'

"The two of them cried for a long time and gradually calmed down. They agreed that, if they did such things to their lifesavers, who had offered them such great help, they could barely be called humans any longer, much less Cultivators.

"Therefore, they decided that they would try to repair the communication magical equipment with all the remaining resources on the starship one last time. If it didn't work out, they would see what they could do the next day.

"However…

"That night, while they were working hard to repair the communication magical equipment, our lifesavers assaulted us!"

Li Yao couldn't help but cry out, "Say what?"

Bai Xinghe's voice was as cold as that of a ghost, as he said, "Our most trusted lifesavers ambushed us. Everyone on board, including my parents, was killed by them. I only got away from the disaster because my parents put me into an escape capsule in advance and launched it. Then, I was fished up by the space pirates.

"Hehe. My father was right. Out of two, one will live. If I don't kill him, he will kill me. I was the one who got them killed. I killed my own parents!

"If—if I hadn't stopped him, maybe it would have been us that made it to the end, and I wouldn't have fallen into Spider Den and ended up being an inhuman, lawless space pirate!"

"Why did you lie to me in the beginning?" Li Yao asked solemnly. "What could you get by telling such a lie?"

"Because," Bai Xinghe said gravely, "I meant to make you believe in me at that time, and you certainly wouldn't have believed the truth!"

Li Yao found it curious. "Why?"

"Because—"

Bai Xinghe's voice sounded like he had gone mad. "Do you know who our 'lifesaver' was?

"Haha. Hahahaha. The one who rescued us first but also pulled the trigger first, slew everyone on board, and looted all the resources on our starship in the desperate situation was the former leader of the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood, the CEO of the Grand Illusionary Group, the crownless king of the Flying Star Sector, and the unquestionable leader of the Cultivators—Xiao Xuance!"

Chapter 757 - Boss Bai!

The name ‘Xiao Xuance’ was like an eruption of thunder that broke out inside Li Yao’s brain.

It was also like a bolt of lightning that connected all the pieces together!

When Li Yao and Professor Mo Xuan had discussed whether or not there could be something wrong with the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project, they had met an unanswered question, which was Xiao Xuance’s motive.

Logically, as the crownless king of the Flying Star Sector and the leader of all Cultivators, Xiao Xuance did not seem to have any motivation to overturn the Flying Star Sector.

The theory that he was trying to change from the ‘crownless king’ into the ‘crowned king’ did not seem very satisfactory.

However, if Xiao Xuance had been baptized by the ‘dark forest’ more than a hundred years ago and killed countless innocent fellow Cultivators and ordinary people for his own survival, then…

Li Yao was instantly soaked in cold sweat. Everything was explainable now!

Bai Xinghe took his long silence for suspicion and smiled bitterly. “You don’t believe it, do you? That’s right. Nobody is going to believe it! Although Xiao Xuance hadn’t advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage a hundred years ago, he was an expert in the Core Formation Stage, the elder of the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood, a man worthy of respect in the world of Cultivators. He punished the outlaws and helped the weak, like any noble man would do!

“When he first rescued our starship, he might not have been vicious at all. He thought that reinforcements were coming very soon. He even offered the resources on his starship to us for free.

“Several of the wounded crew members on our starships were treated on his starship. Some of them were even treated by him in person at the cost of his own spiritual energy.

“At that time, my parents couldn’t stop complimenting him. Cultivators from the six major sects of Heavenly Saints City were truly different. That was exactly what an elder of a great sect looked like!

“Hehe. Maybe that was partly why my parents hesitated later.

“It never occurred to them that, however great the sect a person hails from is and however chivalrous they are, they do not have a second option when they are trapped in the dark forest.

“Out of two, one will live. If I don’t kill him, he will kill me. The logic is very simple. Since my parents could think of it, Xiao Xuance definitely could, too.”

Li Yao took a long breath and asked, “Are you sure it was Xiao Xuance?”

Bai Xinghe laughed bitterly. “I was already seven at that time, and I admired the celebrities in the world of Cultivators. When my parents told me that he was an expert from the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, naturally, I bore his name in mind. How could I be mistaken?

“When I was sold to Spider Den, inside the dark fortress that was full of traps, there was not one moment when I stopped reciting the name ‘Xiao Xuance’ in my mind!

“Revenge! Revenge for my parents!

“Seeking revenge from Xiao Xuance was the only motivation to keep me alive in the darkness underground!

“It was a pity that I chose a wrong path.

“If I wanted revenge, I had to be stronger. However, there was only one way if I wanted to be stronger, which was to be a space pirate—the strongest, the cruelest, and the most brutal space pirate!

“When I became a space pirate, I had to kill people, a lot of innocent people. I had to pour the blood of the innocent on my unpardonable, inhuman soul!

“After repetitive plundering, slaughtering, and betraying, I became stronger and stronger, but I also became more and more desperate.

“You see, I found that the gap between me and Xiao Xuance was too huge. It was impossible for me to become stronger than him no matter how hard I tried!

“When I became a well-known brutal bandit on Spider Den, Xiao Xuance became the leader of the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood.

“When I established the Abyss Pirate Gang and rose to power on Spider Den, Xiao Xuance became the CEO of the

Grand Illusionary Group and controlled most of the Spiritual Nexus!

“When the Abyss Pirate Gang became the most powerful organization on Spider Den and I became the Pirate Potentate, Xiao Xuance became the crownless king of the entire Flying Star Sector and the leader of all Cultivators!

“Haha. Hahahaha. The Pirate Potentate. Sounds cool and awesome, doesn’t it? But it is just insignificant crap in front of Xiao Xuance. When I leave Spider Den, I am a rat that everyone spits and stomps on. How am I qualified to fight against Xiao Xuance?”

“Why didn’t you state the truth?”

“Who would believe it?” Bai Xinghe responded. “When I sorted through the truth and my voice was loud enough, I had already become an infamous space pirate. Who would believe my story when I didn’t have the slightest proof?

“Nobody would believe the truth that I told, but Xiao Xuance would certainly notice it and realize that I was the only survivor of the disaster decades ago!

“He would certain try everything he could to deal with me!

“As the CEO of the Grand Illusionary Group, he had more than half of the Spiritual Nexus under his control. It would be more than easy for him to delete, add, or forge information!”

Li Yao was silent.

It was also why he had never proposed his assumptions on the Spiritual Nexus.

He was afraid that, wherever he posted a thread of the ‘truth’, it would be deleted instantly, and Xiao Xuance would trace it back to him without any trouble!

“Now, do you understand why I would rather die before I become an Immortal Cultivator?” Bai Xinghe sighed. “Yes. I firmly believe in the Dark Forest Theory, but my parents died because of the Dark Forest Theory. I cannot regard the Dark Forest Theory as the ultimate Dao for me!

“However, although I’m against the Immortal Cultivators, it is impossible for me to embrace the world of Cultivators.

“Hehe. Even Xiao Xuance, the leader of all Cultivators, could easily cross the line of the Cultivators and butcher the innocent when he was trapped in the dark forest.

“After everything he did, he could still keep it as a secret and rise to power in the world of Cultivators until he became the leader of it.

“Then, what is the difference between the Immortal Cultivators and the Cultivators?

“Maybe, righteous and evil, Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators, are just the same thing in the dark forest. The same thing…”

Bai Xinghe’s voice was intermittent, becoming weaker and weaker.

Because of the savaging flood and the serial explosions, the communication between the two parties was gradually cut off.

“No. Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators are absolutely different!” Li Yao clenched his fists hard, declaring in such a high voice that it even shocked himself. The fury that he had been suppressing in his mind after he heard the Dark Forest Theory from Bai Xinghe seven days ago fully burst out. “The so-called Dark Forest Theory is just Liu the Prier’s own invention after all!

“I don’t believe that such a simple theory can depict the truth of the entire universe!

“The universe cannot be so dark!

“Even if it is, are there really no opportunities to change it at all?

“Let me tell you, Boss Bai. Even if the odds are just one billionth, I, as well as all the real Cultivators, will set the dark forest into eternal flames!”

There was nothing but white noise in the communication channel. Bai Xinghe’s voice was gone for such a long time that Li Yao thought that the communication had been cut off.

But the Pirate Potentate last words came over in the end.

“I wish you luck. I truly do.”

…

In the depths of the underground fortress, inside an empty warehouse, wearing the Blood River Battlesuit, Bai Xinghe released the immense spiritual energy of the Nascent Soul Stage without any disguise.

Stimulated by the surging spiritual energy, the bloody stripes on the surface of the crystal suit seemed to come to life and emitted a boiling aura of blood in various directions.

In front of Bai Xinghe, Bai Wulei, Fengyu Zhong, Master Hidden Fog, the Black King, Eight Blades of Black Spider… Hundreds of experts among the space pirates and the Immortal Cultivators all focused their attention on the great enemy.

It was like a tiger being surrounded by a pack of wolves. The wolves knew that the tiger was dead for sure, but none of them had the courage to lunge at the tiger first.

Bai Xinghe glanced over the Immortal Cultivators on the spot and stopped at Bai Wulei, his true disciple. A deep voice came from his cold helmet, as he said, “Bai Wulei, things have gone too far between you and me. I only want to ask you one question.

“Was Meng Yue killed by you?”

Bai Wulei was silent for a moment. Then he laughed and sneered, “Yes. Your wife was killed by me!”

His tone absolutely unchanged, Bai Xinghe asked, “Why?

“I never wronged you after I recruited you as my disciple. Not only did I teach you countless techniques and secret arts, you were also promoted to a high position in the Abyss Pirate Gang despite your young age. I was treating you like my own son.

“Right now, the Temple of Immortals has showed its muscles, and you have your own supporters. It is not strange that you betray me.

“But decades ago, the Abyss Pirate Gang was like the unstoppable rising sun. Why did you kill my wife at that time?”

“Treated me like your own son? Do you really think I was a fool?” Bai Wulei replied coldly. “Look at your real own son Bai Wuxin. How did you treat him?

“You built a greenhouse below the surface when he was born and kept him insulated from the ugliness of the world of space pirates. I don’t think he had even killed a hen when he was fifteen, had he?

“What about me?

“It’s true that you taught me your techniques and secret arts, but you were merely treating me as a tool!

“You taught me how to kill people when I was six. You taught me how to disguise, how to plot, and how to betray when I was eleven!

“Hehe. Why didn’t you teach your own son any of that? Why didn’t you ask your own son to butcher one starship of people after another together with you? Why?

“Why did I kill your wife, you ask? It’s simple. I was jealous. I was jealous of everything that Bai Wuxin had. I envied that he could grow up innocently and carefreely in the garbage heap called Spider Den, as if he had been born in a f*cking noble family of Cultivators!

“Such a life was something I had never relished and would never have the opportunity to!

“What I could not get, Bai Wuxin could never get. I must destroy his everything. Simple as that.”

Bai Xinghe nodded. “Understood. For decades, I’ve always thought that my enemies killed Meng Yue because they were coveting the secrets inside the underground fortress. I was investigating the wrong line of thought all along. It never occurred to me that you were involved.

“But it is still not late to have learned the truth now.”

Bai Xinghe stepped forward in midair as if there were invisible stairs before him, approaching the hundreds of Immortal Cultivators.

The color of Bai Wulei’s face changed greatly as he shouted loudly, “Bai Xinghe, with everything reaching this point, just give up. You don’t stand a chance!”

Bai Xinghe smiled, before he suddenly vanished into thin air.

Then, a thunderous roar suddenly echoed in the void.

” **Call me Boss Bai!** ”

Chapter 758 - Bandit and Dog

The ears of all the Immortal Cultivators were humming, as if two sharp blades had pierced into their brains through their ears. Their heads were dizzy, and they were seeing all kinds of illusions. All of a sudden, Bai Xinghe seemed to have thousands of clones that were charging right to their face and even into their crystal suits.

“Ahhh!”

Many Immortal Cultivator who were weaker screamed in abject fear, even though they were not wounded, and launched their strongest attacks toward the illusions.

Thousands of streams of golden brilliance burst out of the void, as if a hundred small suns had risen up slowly. Even if they shut their eyes tightly, they could not stop Bai Xinghe’s sharp sword aura from breaching their defenses and sweeping into their brains!

Fengyu Zhong shrieked. Every bronze ghost face on the Hundred Faces Battlesuit opened its eyes, which were shedding blood, and screamed miserably.

The screams spread out in midair like ripples, outlining a fuzzy shadow of blood.

“There he is. Stop him!”

The Black King’s black crystal suit turned into a cluster of black fog, which turned into hundreds of weird bats.

The black bats crowded toward where Bai Xinghe was at.

BOOM! BOOM!

The hundred black bats were engaged with Bai Xinghe’s bloody shadow.

The head-on clash between two experts in the Nascent Soul Stage made the entire warehouse shake violently. Countless cracks were growing on the walls and the dome. Flooding water spurted in along the cracks, stabbing and stirring everything like billions of swords of water!

The hundred black bats suddenly dispersed. Fengyu Zhong took the opportunity to activate Devil’s Cry, his long spear. Hundreds of ghost faces interweaved into a sharp aura and pierced forward. Bai Xinghe grunted, and the bloody shadow twisted and disappeared all of a sudden!

Before the Black King and Fengyu Zhong had the chance to catch their breath, Bai Wulei suddenly cried miserably behind dozens of Immortal Cultivators who were protecting him!

Everybody was greatly shocked. Their attention had been focused on the battle between the three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

They had never thought that Bai Xinghe would attack Bai Wulei while he was fighting hard against two experts in the Nascent Soul Stage.

“It’s a decoy. A bloody incarnation!”

The Black King was gloomy. He did not find out until this moment that the ‘Bai Xinghe’ who exchanged three moves with him just now was merely a puppet condensed by blood.

In the face of his full-strength strike, the puppet had been scattered into broken pearls of blood.

The real Bai Xinghe, on the other hand, had snuck behind the Immortal Cultivators and grabbed Bai Wulei’s head!

Crack! Crack! Crack!

The helmet made of super alloys was as vulnerable as rotten wood in Bai Xinghe’s hands. After a slight press, it was already shrinking in size.

Bai Wulei felt that a surging river was flooding into his body from the top of his head. He had no strength to counterattack at all.

His two eyeballs were about to be squeezed out of their sockets. His screams were even more miserable than those of the hundreds of ghost faces on Fengyu Zhong’s crystal suit combined!

Bai Xinghe grinned hideously. “Even your betrayal is a fiasco. Why bother living?”

While talking, he exerted his strength. Dozens of thunderbolts seemed to be echoing inside his palms. After a ‘pa’ sound, Bai Wulei’s head together with his helmet was crushed into the size of an apple. Bone and metal was mixed together, and blood was spluttering everywhere. The scene could not have looked gorier!

The headless corpse twitched briefly in midair for a moment, before it fell into the flood helplessly. The water current was quite rapid. There was no telling where the dead body had ended up to after a short moment.

Within a breath, Bai Xinghe had killed a Cultivator in the peak of the Core Formation Stage with such cruel methods right in front of two experts in the Nascent Soul Stage!

Everybody was so shocked at Bai Xinghe’s approach that they did not know what to say.

Deep laughter that resembled that of a wounded lion echoed inside the Blood River Battlesuit.

Crimson balls of blood were leaking out of Bai Xinghe’s crystal suit as if it were his skin. Heated by his spiritual energy, the bloody was vaporized into a mist, and the mist dissolved into red aura that extended to every corner of the warehouse!

LUM DUM! LUM DUM! LUM DUM!

Hundreds of bloody auras were fluctuating in the air along with the rhythm of Bai Xinghe’s heartbeat.

Everybody’s soul was shivering together with Bai Xinghe’s heart.

Very soon, the bloody auras formed various bloody flying swords, which span around Bai Xinghe slowly.

“He… is burning his life and soul without caring about anything!”

The Black King and Fengyu Zhong both felt their heads going dizzy. It did not feel like a Cultivator no taller than two meters was appearing above their head, but an overwhelming giant of blood hundreds of meters tall!

Both the Black King and Fengyu Zhong regretted believing in Bai Wulei easily and being fooled underground.

Unless there were absolutely no choices, they would definitely rather not have a head-on battle with a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator who had gone mad in such a narrow space!

“Stall him!” the Black King said coldly to Fengyu Zhong in the communication channel. In the meantime, his telepathic thoughts surged out as he gave commands to his subordinates around to form a battle array.

“Boss Bai!”

Fengyu Zhong immediately understood what he was being asked to do. He shouted, not very confident of his declaration, “What are you struggling for with everything coming this far? Just give up already!

“We are all lawless bandits here. Are you pretending that you are a hero now that you are going to be killed?

“You and I are the same. We don’t have any choice other than joining the Temple of Immortals!

“Faced with the great Dao of immortality, I guarantee that the grudge between us will be cleaned once and for all!”

Bai Xinghe smiled. He extended his right hand and opened it.

The bloody stripes on the Blood River Battlesuit seemed to be a living thing. They flowed along his arm and gathered in his hand, forming a bloody saber.

As more and more blood flowed out of his veins, the saber became ever longer, and the ripples on the surface of the saber were echoing with his heartbeat.

Gazing at the tip of his saber, Bai Xinghe said casually, “You and I are different.”

Fengyu Zhong burst into laughter. “What’s the difference? Did you kill fewer people than I did? Cut the crap! You are destined to be a hateful space pirate, and you think you can correct your wrongdoings before your own death?”

The tip of the bloody saber drew a curve on the battle array of the Immortal Cultivator that was about to take shape. Bai Xinghe glanced at Fengyu Zhong and curled his lips up. He said, “I am a ruthless, unforgivable bandit. And you—

“You are just a dog.”

…

The pathway was almost dug through.

Li Yao’s spiritual energy was running out. The size of the drill was a third smaller than in the beginning. He felt that his ribs were aching. While catching his breath, he suddenly sensed the intense spiritual waves below him that felt like a volcano eruption.

It was the most brilliant moment that a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator could present when they burnt their life and soul and released everything they had!

“Boss Bai…”

Li Yao did not know how he should comment on the Pirate Potentate at all. Of course, he was an unpardonable bad man, but the guy had also offered the Dragon King Battlesuit to him. Moreover…

Suddenly, Li Yao’s body was stiffened. He cursed silently.

I was fooled again.

Bai Xinghe gave the Dragon King Battlesuit as well as the map of the underground fortress to me, including the location of Yan Xinjian’s training room, and volunteered to cover our retreat. He also told me the past of Xian Xuance and him…

Everything he did was meant to persuade me to fight against Xiao Xuance and avenge him!

Bai Xinghe knew that, as the Pirate Potentate, even if his plan worked out and he successfully escaped from the underground fortress, he would not be able to compete with Xiao Xuance even if he had all the resources and manpower of Spider Den under his control. If anything, he would only be seen as a greater villain and end up being another medal on Xiao Xuance’s chest!

Therefore, he handed over the ‘mission’ to me!

He knew that ‘Sand Scorpion’, the owner of the Glorious Sunlight Group, is my other identity, and I have a lot to do with Iron Plateau, which means that I can summon tremendous resources and manpower!

He also inferred from the style of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit that another mysterious organization is backing me!

Therefore, it is possible that I can achieve the purpose that he could not!

The cunning bandit was afraid that I would not take the bait. He lured me with the Dragon King Battlesuit and Yan Xinjian’s training room first and made me feel that I owe him. Then he told me the story between Xiao Xuance and *him and revealed Xiao Xuance's real face to trigger my sense of justice.*

Then he sacrificed himself to buy us more time, which is another favor that I owe him!

Damn. Everything he did was in order to make to go against Xiao Xuance!

So soon as I had the idea of 'telling Xiao Xuance's secret to public' and Xiao Xuance discovered even a hint of the plot, he would certainly try to kill me to shut my mouth. By then, I and the forces behind me would have to start a total war against Xiao Xuance!

Li Yao was amused. Boss Bai was indeed Boss Bai. At the last moment of his life, he established his final scheme!

However, Li Yao decided to take the bait willingly.

Xiao Xuance, you might have had no choice in the desperate situation after the cosmic storm a hundred years ago.

But right now, the great explosion in the Skyhill Sword Seminar, the countless victims on Iron Plateau, the arrival of extraterrestrial devils in Heavenly Saints City… Everything you did has crossed the line!

If you were really behind everything, I will most certainly unveil your real face. Even though you are in the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage, I will execute you whatever the cost!

Huala!

The pressure was suddenly gone. The drill of mystic rays dug through the last bit of the debris. An empty hallway appeared again!

“Captain, hurry and stabilize the last section. Let’s not get sloppy at the crucial moment!”

While Lei Dalu was strengthening the last section of the pathway, Li Yao turned back and picked up Bai Kaixin, who was still unconscious.

At that moment, Li Yao finally figured out why Bai Xinghe had given the precious crystal suit and the map to him instead of his own son.

He loved his son and did not wish his son to be involved in the dangerous swirl related to Xiao Xuance.

Huala! Huala!

The flood was still striking. The pathway that had just been stabilized was showing signs of collapse again. Rocks and rebars began falling again.

Li Yao tried to cover Bai Kaixin with his body, but rocks weighing hundreds of tons buried his feet when he was about to crawl out of the pathway.

“Captain, get him!”

Li Yao threw Bai Kaixin to Lei Dalu. Then he unsheathed the Feathered Dragon Saber and removed the rocks on his legs bit by bit.

He did not dare to detonate the rocks with his spiritual energy, because he was worried that the gap resulting from the explosion might make even more rocks fall from the ceiling.

Right then—

Crack!

An ominous crack echoed above Li Yao's head. The flood suddenly turned dirty.

"Not good!"

Li Yao's pupils shrank violently. Before he had the chance to shout a warning, he sensed that an immense strength had pressed down.

A great mountain seemed to have collapsed and smashed at his head!

Li Yao had no choice but to bellow. His spiritual energy burst out in the mud and flood like a bomb.

It was like quenching one's thirst with poison. Although some of the space was cleared, more rocks and debris were falling off above his head!

Li Yao could not tell which direction he was heading in. He could only follow the glimmering light in front of him subconsciously. The pathways behind him collapsed one section after another, until it was entirely twisted and broken.

When everything was stabilized again, Li Yao turned around and found that the channel he had gone through all the trouble to dig out had vanished. What he was faced with was scattered rocks.

Chapter 759 - No Way Out

Li Yao's head was dizzy. He was surrounded by absolute darkness. The warehouses and pathways nearby had been entirely blocked, but new gaps and hollows had also been created by the violent quakes. The flood was squeezed and twisted during the collapses and gave birth to rapid undercurrents, swirls, and bubbles!

The area he was in was both like a maze and swamp. It had been entirely reshaped in the tremors just now.

The furious spiritual energy was spinning around him quickly like ten thousand swirls. Even when he fully released his telepathic thoughts, they were devoured by the swirls, and he could not perceive the surroundings at all.

There was nothing but blank noise in the temporary communication channel. The communication between Lei Dalu and him had been entirely cut off!

It seems that I will have to find another way out. Thankfully, I have the map of the underground fortress. Although the area has collapsed, it is unlikely that the entire underground fortress has been destroyed. There is bound to be a way out.

While Li Yao was pondering, his breath suddenly halted for a moment. His intuition told him that a great danger was coming his way, as if—

A high mountain was crashing at him at a high speed from below the ground!

Gritting his teeth, Li Yao blinked backwards more than a hundred meters in the flood that looked more like mud now.

Another collapse took place here and buried the area where he had been standing earlier. An enormous black shadow appeared out of the broken rocks!

The shadow was dozens of meters long. More than half of it was buried inside the rocks. What was exposed to the air were five thick limbs that were covered in thorns. The lumpy shell of the shadow made it looked no different from a giant rock. However, blood-freezing redness was beaming out of the joints of the shell, which looked like the patterns of a deadly beast.

The translucent, complex eye of the shadow glittered suddenly like clusters of crystals like an enormous spotlight. Li Yao was enshrouded in the thick brightness.

Li Yao spat and finally realized why there would be such uncanny, large-scale collapses.

It was the work of the Lustful Rock Spiders, the enormous beasts lurking on the upper level of the underground fortress!

Even Bai Xinghe, a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, would rather not mess around with them and simply concealed his spiritual energy when he was passing through their hunting range.

It seemed that the changing of routes of the Nether River and the serial explosions in the underground fortress had affected the habitat of the Lustful Rock Spiders too.

Maybe the place it had been lurking in was not appropriate for his survival, or perhaps it had sensed the tremendous spiritual energy spurting out from the fortress and decided to have a good meal. Whatever the reason was, the big monster had sneaked down to the lower level of the fortress, too!

The Lustful Rock Spider was naturally blessed with earth-escaping techniques. The thick rock stratums would not be enough to stop them at all!

“In a head-on clash, the brave one wins. Bring it on!” Li Yao bellowed.

With the chaos in the environment, if he were pushed somewhere else by the Lustful Spider Rock, chances were that the way leading to the Star Prier’s House would be entirely blocked.

He had to kill the monster no matter what and find a way to the Star Prier’s House!

The Feathered Dragon Saber had not resumed the form of a saber yet and remained a drill. A huge amount of spiritual energy was flowing out blatantly, making it looked like a burning torch.

Li Yao gritted his teeth, ready to have a great battle with the Lustful Rock Spider!

Right then, the rocks above his head fell down crazily again, and a giant pillar of thorns revealed itself!

The giant pillar was a limb of another Lustful Rock Spider!

A second Lustful Rock Spider crept out of the rocks!

The majority of the second Lustful Rock Spider was buried inside the rocks. Only a tiny bit of its body was exposed to the air. There was no telling how large it was.

However, the limb that it extended out just now was almost twice as thick as those of the first Lustful Rock Spider!

Cold sweat was pouring off Li Yao’s head.

“Huh. In fact, those who suit their actions to the situation are wise. A tactical retreat when necessary is a smart move under certain circumstances.”

The first Lustful Rock Spider remained absolutely still while it stared at Li Yao with its complex eyes.

Li Yao suddenly felt that something was not right.

After scanning the surroundings with his telepathic thoughts, Li Yao discovered that the defensive paint on the surface of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was mostly gone, and the flexibility of the super alloys was quickly diminishing!

In other ways, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was turning into a rock quickly!

“Petrifying mystic rays!”

Li Yao shuddered heavily.

From the ancient classics he had read, Li Yao knew that a lot of beasts of the earth class in the primordial era, when the universe had just been created, boasted terrifying techniques that could pour spiritual energy of the earth class into the body of other creatures in weird forms through mystic rays and take away their vitality, transforming the victims into stone-like objects.

Those objects were also known as fossils!

The scholars in the world of Cultivators had excavated a lot of fossils, including many strong dinosaurs. Some of them were naturally made, but some others were impossible to have been made in a natural environment from a geographical standpoint. The latter were the masterpieces of the deadly beasts.

Li Yao did not realize that the Lustful Rock Spider could also trigger petrifying mystic rays. It was perhaps because they were the descendants of the primordial beasts and had passed on in the depths of the underground for billions of years!

Huala! Huala! Huala!

Before Li Yao came back to himself from his surprise, another hundred Lustful Rock Spiders that were smaller in size crawled out of the rocks.

The new Lustful Rock Spiders were about the size of Li Yao. They were fast and agile. Wherever Li Yao could enter, they could enter without any trouble, and for the places that Li Yao could not enter, they could still enter through their earth-escaping techniques!

There was only one thought in Li Yao’s brain.

Run!

It seemed that the Lustful Rock Spiders belonged to the same clan. Since their habitat had been destroyed, their entire clan had migrated to look for a new home.

During a migration, it was reasonable that abundant food needed to be stored first.

Hiu! Hiu!

Two small Lustful Rock Spider charged at him, one from the left and the other from right.

Li Yao raised his hands and threw out two crystal bombs, blowing the two Lustful Rock Spiders into pieces.

When he took a breath in relief, thinking that the Lustful Rock Spiders were too fragile, he discovered that the body liquids of the Lustful Rock Spiders would significantly reduce the hardness of his crystal suit when they stained it. The vulnerability of his crystal suit soared as it was doused in the gray bodily fluids, further petrifying!

Damn. They are essentially self-detonating bombs!

Li Yao was caught off guard. One of the power rune arrays of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had been corrupted by the body liquids of the Lustful Rock Spiders when they exploded. It soon turned into a rock and stopped providing any impetus.

No wonder even Bai Xinghe was not willing to deal with these insects!

Without any hesitation, Li Yao released another hundred crystal bombs, not to trigger explosions, but to freeze the flood in front of him with the tremendous frost rune arrays inside the bombs.

Crack! Crack!

The ice was shattered by the Lustful Rock Spiders within one second. A soul-stirring pursuit was happening in the absolute darkness!

Li Yao could only cry for help. He could not tell where he was and simply rushed forward crazily in the maze-like underground fortress.

When he was slow for several seconds, a few Lustful Rock Spiders would catch up with him, and he would be involved in a harassing battle.

The small Lustful Rock Spiders did not boast high combat abilities, but they would detonate themselves automatically when they were heavily wounded. Their spluttering body liquids were like quick-drying concrete. A tiny speck was enough to seal one of the rune arrays on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

The two giant Lustful Rock Spiders, on the other hand, would only show up after a long while.

Every time Li Yao took a breath in relief and thought that he had gotten rid of them, the two Lustful Rock Spiders would suddenly leap out from the rocks and stir up everything around Li Yao!

Bai Xinghe had mentioned that the Lustful Rock Spiders searched for the enemy with spiritual waves. If there were no spiritual waves, they would not be able to detect anything.

Li Yao had the idea that he could risk taking off the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and concealing all his spiritual energy. Then, he could pretend to be an ordinary person and hide in a corner.

But after hesitating for a long time, he did not have the courage to do so.

Right now, the Lustful Rock Spiders were right behind him, darting petrifying mystic rays at him nonstop. He had only managed to resist their attack with his spiritual shield and his crystal suit.

If he retreated his crystal suit and converged his spiritual energy, turning himself into an ordinary person, his own skin would probably end up become rock when it was scanned by the petrifying mystic rays!

It is not going to work out if I simply keep on running!

Maybe because Li Yao had blown up two Lustful Rock Spiders, or maybe because the spiritual waves from the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit were more intense than those of the other crystal suits, the Lustful Rock Spiders chasing after Li Yao would not let him ago.

After he slayed more than thirty Lustful Rock Spiders, more rune arrays on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit turned into rock, and the specifications of the crystal suit plummeted.

Li Yao gritted his death. He would be killed sooner or later if he kept running about like a headless chicken.

He had the map of the underground fortress, but the problem was that he did not where he was.

Calculate now!

Li Yao drew the routes that he just ran and compared them with the multiple pathways inside the underground fortress.

He was going in straight lines most of the time, which did not have many features. The crystal processor outputted seven coordinates he could be at after analysis.

Having no other choices, Li Yao could only turn around and circled around at the risk of being corrupted by the Lustful

Rock Spiders.

After running three laps, he finally collected enough features to locate his precise coordinates in the map.

I'm now in the southeast corner at the bottom of the underground fortress. There's a long way to go to the Star Prier's House. I basically have to cross the entire fortress.

Besides, the Lustful Rock Spiders are right behind me. Even if I'm lucky enough to make my way to the Star Prier's House, I might not be able to get rid of them.

It will be a major disaster if those bastards rush into the Star Prier's House!

The last thing Li Yao wanted was for the Star Prier's House to be destroyed, not only because Lei Dalu and Bai Kaixin were probably hiding in the Star Prier's House treating their wounds, but also, and, more importantly, because the three hundred super crystal processors of the Star Prier's House could search for the coordinates of the other Sectors. They were the only hope for him to return to the Heaven's Origin Sector.

He could not lose them no matter what!

Therefore, until he got rid of the Lustful Rock Spiders, he could not draw close to the Star Prier's House.

Is there any place nearby where I can keep myself away from the Lustful Rock Spiders?

Li Yao glanced over the important locations on the map of the underground fortress. Finally, his eyes stopped at location at the deepest part of the underground fortress, which had been clearly added most recently.

Li Yao discovered that he was close to Yan Xinjian’s secret training room.

Chapter 760 - Out of Expectation

Li Yao’s interest was aroused. Yan Xinjian had built the secret training room in order to avoid the strike of the apocalypses. Therefore, a lot of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures had been employed. The shell of the training room was made of super alloys and hundreds of layers of defense rune arrays. It was basically indestructible.

Such a shell was designed to resist the apocalypses. The Lustful Rock Spiders could dig through the rocks, but there was no way that they could crawl through the shell of the secret training room.

Should I take the risk?

In the information that Bai Xinghe had transmitted to Li Yao, the method to open the secret training room was included.

However, the methods had been left by Yan Xinjian, so there could be hidden traps in the method.

Li Yao had experienced quite a few similar traps. His first encounter with Ou Yezi, his adventure on Boneyard, which almost destroyed the Heaven’s Origin Sector and forced Li Yao to roam in the sea of stars and end up in the Flying Star Sector, and so on.

BOOM! BOOM!

Another violent earthquake took place. The two Lustful Rock Spiders seemed to have gone crazy because they had been chasing their prey for too long. They raised a storm in the rock stratum above Li Yao’s head.

There’s no time to consider any of that now.

As the Lustful Rock Spiders caused havoc, the pathways and warehouses marked on the map were all demolished. The map would soon be useless in guiding him.

The performance of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit continued dropping because of the petrifying mystic rays. Li Yao was not sure whether the weakening was permanent or not. But apparently, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit could not be recovered for now.

In another five minutes, when all the pathways collapsed, he would not be able to run to Yan Xinjian’s secret training room even if he wanted to!

Yan Xinjian was a human being, not an ancient demon. Even though he was in the Nascent Soul Stage, it’s been five hundred years, and he is probably as dead as anyone can ever be right now.

Even if his remaining soul still lingers, should I really worry about that? There is nothing in my brain but soul remnants!

Li Yao thought quickly and made up his mind. He sprinted toward a pathway on the left leading downwards.

Two small Lustful Rock Spiders popped up on his way, only to be chopped in half by him. The bodily fluids they spurted out corrupted yet another three rune arrays on the surface of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

As he moved violently, cracking noises were echoing on the surface of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, and the crisp camouflage dropped off one piece after another.

Li Yao had no time to check his crystal suit. Guided by the map, he dashed to a secondary warehouse at the bottom level of the underground fortress quickly.

He then crawled into a secret maintenance room through the ventilation tube in the northwest corner of the warehouse.

After passing through the maintenance room, Li Yao reached a dormitory for soldiers that was only half completed. The other half of the dormitory was a dark cave.

Upon first inspection, this place was the end of the underground fortress whose construction was concluded in too much of a hurry.

Li Yao glanced around. Almost a hundred stalactites were dangling down from the top of the cave, emitting colorful brilliance.

On the corresponding locations on the ground were thick stalagmites.

Li Yao found one of the stalagmites and rotated it 180 degrees quietly.

The stalactites above his head suddenly shone brightly. Almost a hundred mystic rays popped up an formed a thousand unpredictable patterns that were a password rune array.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Li Yao felt as if he were standing in the stomach of an enormous beast. The cave was shaking crazily.

The two giant Lustful Rock Spiders must have sensed Li Yao's spiritual waves and were marching toward him rapidly.

Hurry! Hurry! Hurry!

Li Yao felt that his heart was being burnt. Before the light beam was fully unfolded, his right hand had already input a series of passwords.

He only hoped that the password was true now. He was ready to take any of Yan Xinjian's ill intentions as long as he was permitted into the room right now!

Beep! Beep! Beep!

As the password was typed in, the light beam turned from scarlet into emerald.

Chi—

On the ground, all the stalagmites kept swirling nonstop. Hundreds of giant screws seemed to be rising slowly from the floor.

Li Yao had not been excited for half a second yet, when two extremely thick insect limbs darted out of the rocks and pierced into the floor, brushing past the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, leaving two deep scratches on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and nearly piercing Li Yao.

Dozens of small Lustful Rock Spiders crawled out of the rocks along the two limbs and lunged at Li Yao crazily!

Li Yao had no more options. At the risk of the shell of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit being seriously corroded, he waved his blade into a tornado and slayed more than ten Lustful Rock Spiders within a breath.

Before the shell of the crystal suit was fully petrified, he crashed toward the inner inside of the cave.

Chi…

A gap was opened slowly in the darkness in the depths of the cave. Inside the gap was a mix of greenish, bluish, and reddish colors.

A weird wind blew through the cave. It was not very chilly, but Li Yao shuddered.

By this point, there was no way to retreat now. Li Yao summoned his courage and dashed into the gap. He rolled on the ground and split off into seven clones that charged toward the deeper part of the training room from various directions, while his real body stopped right near the door.

As his clones lunged in, squeaking noises echoed inside the secret training room. There were also weird cries of children and sounds of cans and bottles being knocked over.

The door was not completely closed yet. More than ten Lustful Rock Spiders took the opportunity to march in. What was more horrible that the two giant Lustful Rock Spiders had caught up, too!

“Hiss! Hiss!”

The two giant beasts were too large to crawl into the secret training room, but they bashed against the training room hard like two crystal trains while they shrieked in such a high voice that Li Yao’s eardrums felt as if they were being torn apart. They also extended two thick limbs into the door, stopping it from being closed.

I have to shut the door!

Li Yao gritted his teeth and tried to slash the obstacles, only to be harassed by the ten or so small Lustful Rock Spiders that had already gotten into the room.

He meant to take down the small Lustful Rock Spiders first, but the two insect limbs were like two sharp sickles that were clattering loudly ready to reap his life anytime.

Moreover, the two giant Lustful Rock Spiders were crouching right outside the door of the training room. Their complex eyes were projecting mystic rays into the room from various angles.

If the mystic rays covered the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, its defense ability would be greatly diminished!

While Li Yao was in a flurry, hundreds of light spots suddenly darted from the depths of the training room toward the outside as fast as lightning!

Li Yao was dazed, suspecting that his eyes were deceiving him. It was not Yan Xinjian's remaining soul that appeared in front of his eyes but… hundreds of mice!

Fluffy, white mice with a golden stripe from head to tail on their back!

Such mice were formally known as 'Golden Stripe Mice'. It was a commonly seen animal for experimental purposes because of their keen sense of spiritual energy.

Many Cultivators would try a lot of extreme methods when they were trying to break into a higher level. They often ran experiments on the mice first.

Therefore, it was not unusual for there to be so many mice in Yan Xinjian's secret training room.

They must have been brought into the training room by him five hundred years ago. Even if he had only brought ten of them in the beginning, five hundred years was more than enough for them to reproduce into a clan of thousands of members.

What dumbfounded Li Yao was that the mice were not naked but covered in tiny ‘robes’. They looked hilarious.

Many mice were also wearing delicate ‘armor’ over their robes. They were also holding ‘flying swords’ that looked like needles in their paws and tails.

Not just that. The mice were classified into six teams according to the colors on their robes. Although they were apparently not well trained, they moved and attacked in an organized fashion. They looked like six funny troops.

The mice that were wearing ‘robes’ and holding ‘flying swords’ were squeaking. Their noises were even mixed with the sound of the human language.

Li Yao listened carefully. He heard that they were all shouting, “Let’s get out! Let’s get out! It’s been five hundred years. The door is finally opened!”

Every mouse was smaller than Li Yao’s fist, but they were releasing rather impressive spiritual energy. The ‘captain’ of every mice team even had the spiritual energy equal to that of a Cultivator in the Refinement Stage.

They caught the Lustful Rock Spiders’ attention the moment they showed up.

Compared to the tricky Li Yao, those mice were apparently much more delicious and suitable food.

Most of the Lustful Rock Spiders abandoned Li Yao and turned to attack the mice.

The Lustful Rock Spiders and the mice had a fierce confrontation.

The limbs of the Lustful Rock Spiders were sharp. They could kill a mouse after stabbing their body. Very soon, they kept almost ten mice on their sharp limbs.

The mice, on the other hand, were quick and agile. The few mice in the lead were even able to perform certain techniques. While the Lustful Rock Spiders were attacking their companions, they crawled to top of the Lustful Rock Spiders' bodies.

They stabbed their needle-like flying swords deep down their feeble complex eyes. Then, they waved their paws crazily, made the gestures, and cast the spells. Their 'flying swords' immediately rushed inside the Lustful Rock Spiders' bodies.

Soon, a few Lustful Rock Spiders collapsed and stopped moving.

While the Lustful Rock Spiders were being harassed by the mice, Li Yao, having no time to feel surprised, quickly dashed to the door. He raised the Feathered Dragon Saber high above his head and chopped the giant limbs that blocked the door brutally!

All his strength had been condensed in the attack. After the flash of the saber, the limbs were broken, and bodily fluid was jetting everywhere!

The two giant Lustful Rock Spiders stepped back amid screams. The door was finally closed.

The rune arrays carved behind the door emitting dazzling brilliance. They revolved for a moment, and the door closed up without leaving the slightest gap.

BOOM! BOOM!

The two Lustful Rock Spiders burst into fury outside the room. They were bashing and gnawing at the wall hard.

However, when the door was closed, the quakes were much less violent. Only when Li Yao stuck his hands to the wall could he vaguely sense the feeble shaking.

Li Yao finally had the chance to catch his breath. He turned around and discovered that the hundreds of mice, as owners of the place, had slayed all the remaining Lustful Rock Spiders after sacrificing dozens of their companions.

The hundreds of mice were all glimmering in different colors according to the ‘robes’ on their bodies. The colors that Li Yao saw through the gap in the beginning were in fact from them.

The mice formed a battle formation and surrounded Li Yao. They drew close to him while they creaked crazily!

Chapter 761 - Mice

Ten thousand meters below the ground, inside a training room of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, five hundred aggressive mice were wearing armor and holding flying swords, yelling and shouting angrily.

The scene was both weird and funny. Li Yao did not know what to do for a moment.

Of the hundreds of mice here, even the strongest were merely equal to the Cultivators in the Refinement Stage Cultivators. Li Yao would not have been scared even if the mice were sprinting forward and attacking him together.

However, the mutation of the mice probably had a lot to do with Yan Xinjian’s training room. Li Yao did not intend to execute all the mice without knowing what had happened here.

Li Yao raised his alert and observed them.

Seeing that the door behind Li Yao was closed again, the mice were all jumping up and down while they shouted angrily.

The mice that were emitting orange colors, which made them appear to be burning, were the most outraged. They waved ‘needles’ and made gestures to point the weapons forward, while they bellowed, “Open the door. Open the door! I am the best expert of the Flying Star Sector. If you don’t open the door, I will crush you into pieces instantly!”

The mice that were emitting green colors were gentler. They twisted and said with an alluring voice, “You came to this place because you saw my notes? Wonderful. Come on and inherit my knowledge and the unparalleled techniques… However, open the door first. It’s too dark here. Too choking!”

The mice that were emitting crimson colors, which were twisting like weird flames ,drooled while they stared at Li Yao maliciously. They squeaked, “What a healthy body! Offer it to me. Possession! I’m going to possess your body!”

The mice that were emitting blue colors, in the meantime, held their head in their hands and said lethargically, “It’s hopeless! It’s hopeless! He cannot open the door! He can’t! We are going to be locked here for another five hundred years!”

The mice that were emitting black colors were grasped by desperation. They craned their necks and burst into creepy laughter. “It’s useless. We can’t run out. Even if we get out of here, where can we run to? It’s too large. It’s too dark. There’s nowhere to run to. Nowhere to run to!”

Another several mice that were emitting gentle white colors were leaning against the wall. They mumbled to themselves, “Xiao Yu, Xiao Yu, I shouldn’t have killed you. I miss you so much, Xiao Yu…”

The hundreds of mice in different appearances baffled Li Yao. He had a weird feeling that they were not mice but human beings with real emotions and feelings.

Li Yao could not help but ask, “Who are you?”

The mice fell silent for a moment. Then they started shouting at the same time, simmering, on the tip of their feet, with their tails straightened.

“I am Yan Xinjian, the best expert of the Flying Star Sector!”

“I am the supreme space pirate Yan Xinjian!”

“I am Yan Xinjian, the vice commander of the coalition fleet of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City!”

“I am Yan Xinjian!”

“I am Yan Xinjian!”

All the mice were yelling. Li Yao noticed that the mice whose ‘robes’ and ‘armor’ were more glamorous had higher Cultivation and clearer tones.

In the meantime, the mice that had little clothing on their body were only shouting fuzzily. Their voices were little more than a normal mouse’s cry, except it could rise and fall in pitch, and they tried to utter ‘Yan Xinjian’.

However, were these mice all Yan Xinjian?

Li Yao could not figure out what had happened.

When he decided to risk entering Yan Xinjian’s training room, he had been prepared to have a huge fight with Yan Xinjian’s remaining soul. He would not have been surprised to see any abrupt changes, but he had never thought that he would be faced with so many mice.

Li Yao tried to hold back his laughter and said, “There are so many of you here. Which of you is Yan Xinjian exactly?”

His words raised a riot among the mice. All of them craned their necks and jumped crazily, while they shouted, “I am

Yan Xinjian. I am the real Yan Xinjian. They are all frauds. They are all my clones!”

While they were arguing, they started to fight among themselves!

The mice emitting orange colors were the largest in number. They waved their needles and triggered sword auras the size of one’s finger, while they pierced and slashed the other mice. They shouted, “I am Yan Xinjian, the best expert of the Flying Star Sector. You are all my clones. You are all fakes. Only I am true! I’m going to swallow all of you! All of you!”

The mice emitting green colors confronted the red mice. “Damn. You are just my clones and part of my desire. I am the real Yan Xinjian!

“I am not just the best expert of the Flying Star Sector. I am also going to unite the entire Flying Star Sector and become the king of it. Just behave and become one with me!”

The mice that where emitting white colors cried nearby and shouted, “I am Yan Xinjian. I am the original Yan Xinjian. I am the real Yan Xinjian! I don’t want to be the best expert of the Flying Star Sector. I don’t want to be the king of the Flying Star Sector. I just want Xiao Yu to be alive again. I just want Xiao Yu to be alive! It’s all your fault! You killed Xiao Yu!”

The red mice and the green mice stopped fighting and stabbed their needles at the white mice. “It’s your fault! It’s your fault! If you did not think of the bi*ch at the critical moment and disrupt my thoughts, would I have become mentally deranged, would my breakthrough have failed, and would I have ended up like this?”

The mice that were emitting dense black colors and wreathed in desperation were sitting in the middle of the chaos. They gazed at the ceiling and smiled dumbly, while they murmured, “It’s hopeless. It’s hopeless. It’s too vast. It’s too dark. There’s no way to get out. There’s no way to get out.”

The mice in different colors all claimed that they were the real Yan Xinjian. The more they talked, they angrier they became. The more they argued, the higher their voices got. In the end, all of them were fighting against each other.

Their needle-like flying swords were flying crazily everywhere. Spiritual energy the size of fingernails was bursting out like bombs. The mice were not horsing around at all but were fighting a life-and-death battle that was even crueler than the fight against the Lustful Rock Spiders.

Very soon, dead bodies of the mice were lying everywhere on the ground.

However, before each mouse was stabbed through and killed on the spot, a tiny wave would spread of their brain and go to the depths of the training room.

Li Yao could see now that the mice were holding ‘flying swords’ and wearing armor not because they were trying to resist the intruders but because they had been in a constant internal strife for hundreds of years.

The mice were so devoted to their fight that they completely ignored Li Yao.

Li Yao’s curiosity was aroused. He explored the training room and those brainwaves.

Yan Xinjian’s secret training room was in a shape of a ball. It was surrounded by a shell of indestructible shell made of super alloys and divided into three levels.

The top level was the living area, but it was now full of tiny buildings that looked both like a honeycomb and a palace.

They were the bureaus of the mice. Countless mice were crawling in and out of the buildings. Li Yao felt that his head was dizzy just looking at them.

The brainwaves returned to the buildings. Very soon, a new mouse crawled out of the buildings, with the brightness of wisdom in their eyes, while they waved and danced crazily as if they were drunk.

Possession?

The souls of the dead mice return to this place and occupies the body of another mouse.

Li Yao thought of something and realized that the jibber-jabber of the mice might not have been complete nonsense.

Behind the buildings were enormous iron cages in which more mice were locked.

They were all normal mice, animals without the slightest wisdom.

The entire living area has been modified into a kingdom of mice. Yan Xinjian is probably already dead.

Li Yao realized that, whether Yan Xinjian was good or evil, he must have the aura and demeanor of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. If he were alive, there was no way that he would allow those mice to blemish his training room.

But Li Yao did not relax and entered the middle level carefully.

The second level took up the most area of the training room. It was the warehouse of materials.

A Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator need to consume astronomical crystals and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures in order to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage. The resources that Yan Xinjian had collected and looted on Spider Den five hundred years ago were all stored here for his usage during the breakthrough.

Hiss!

So many Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures were glittering right in front of Li Yao’s face like a spectacular thicket of coral. Li Yao was fascinated by the brilliance and gasped, his heart almost jumping out of his throat.

Although he was a refiner, he had never seen such abundant treasures before!

A third of the materials here were available neither in the Heaven’s Origin Sector or in the Flying Star Sector. Even in Ou Yezi’s memory pieces, they were only briefly mentioned but never really showed up!

Yan Xinjian indeed went through a lot of trouble to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage. The entirety of Spider Den must’ve been exploited by him!

No. Spider Den alone could not boast such a large quantity of exotic treasures. Right. They must be from the underground fortress!

How could the underground fortress left by the Star Ocean Imperium really be empty?

Even though the traps and the magical equipment were damaged during the ten thousand years, Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures would not decay so easily!

Five hundred years ago, Yan Xinjian was the first to enter the underground fortress. He must have moved all the valuable Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures from the underground fortress to this place!

That was why Bai Xinghe found no valuable items when he entered the underground fortress again five hundred years later!

But as it turned out, I am the one to take all the advantage now!

Li Yao swallowed hard. Flames were almost spurting out of his nostrils.

His training methods were different from normal. Forming the core for him was as difficult as breaking into the Nascent Soul Stage for other Cultivators.

Before, he did not have enough resources and opportunities. He had been wandering around the Core Formation Stage but could not find a way to get in. Although the superlative height of the Building Foundation Stage granted him the combat ability above the peak of the Core Formation Stage, he was not really in the peak of the Core Formation Stage after all!

With so many Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures in this place, he was definitely going to soar into sky!

However, there were traces of gnawing on many Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. Li Yao pondered for a moment and realized that it must have been the mice.

What is the relationship between the mice and Yan Xinjian exactly?

Li Yao considered carefully while he explored the warehouse of materials. When he reached the southwest corner of the warehouse, his heart, eyes, and brain froze almost simultaneously.

A man was gazing at him in the darkness with his eyes wide open!

Chapter 762 - Essence of the Star Ocean Imperium!

Li Yao was so scared that he almost slashed the Feathered Dragon Saber instinctively.

He had just scanned the entire training room with his telepathic thoughts and sensed no hints of experts, but the man had been lurking in the darkness, gazing at him, for such a long time without being discovered by him.

After releasing nine layers of spiritual shields instantly, Li Yao felt safer. He calmed himself down and looked carefully, only to find that he was being paranoid. The man he saw was not alive, but a corpse soaked in a crystal flume.

The crystal flume was like a translucent coffin that was filled with bright green preservative liquid. The corpse, covered in a mustard-seed suit, was standing inside.

In the darkness, the preservative liquid was emitting mysterious fluorescence, making the body seem to be alive. Creepy scents were spreading out of the dead body.

Li Yao’s pounding heart gradually calmed down. He discovered that the preservative liquid was quite dirty. There was damage over the entire body, and even the mustard-seed suit was riddled with holes because of biting.

All was likely the mice’s doing.

Even the eyelids of the corpse had been torn away by the mice, making the man literally ‘dying with eyes open’. That was why he was ‘gazing’ at Li Yao in the darkness all the time.

He is…

Li Yao thought of something. Although the body had been seriously damaged, he could tell from the facial structure of the body that it was similar to Yan Xinjian’s appearance in many pictures.

Besides, there could not be a second man who showed up in the secret training room without a reason and whose body was carefully preserved other than Yan Xinjian.

The best expert of the Flying Star Sector five hundred years ago, the unparalleled expert who had the chance to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage, Yan Xinjian, died just like that, in a world of darkness ten thousand meters below the ground, and turned into a cold body that was gnawed at by mice. Even his eyelids have gone.

Li Yao had complicated feelings.

In order to break into the Divine Transformation Stage, Yan Xinjian had indeed made full preparations. He had even taken the resistance of apocalypses into consideration.

However, he had still failed in the end. He perished, his Cultivation gone, and mice even insulted his body after he died.

Bai Xinghe said that everything Yan Xinjian did, including killing his wife and the family of his leader, was perhaps a disguise to cover his real purpose, which was to explore the underground of Spider Den for treasures.

If Yan Xinjian had known that this would be his ending after he abandoned everything and went through all the trouble, I wonder, would he have given up his dignity and his career?

Li Yao sighed. He could not help but recall the mice that were emitting white brightness. They were like men living in pain who kept reciting their late wife's name in regret.

Li Yao was more and more eager to know what had happened inside the secret training room for five hundred years.

How did Yan Xinjian die? Where were those mice that could spoke human language from?

Li Yao looked at the back of the crystal flume and found that a lot of debris of magical equipment was piled up in the corner. After examining for a while, he decided that they were the scraps of several artificial bodies.

Artificial bodies were different from the spiritual puppets. They were specially refined to serve as bodies for spectral Cultivators. Therefore, the specifications of the crystal processor and the overall structure were slightly different. As a seasoned refiner, Li Yao recognized what the objects were quickly.

Scraps of so many artificial bodies?

Was there once a strong spectral Cultivator in this place

Right. Right. Yan Xinjian must've been smart enough to foresee that he might die during the breakthrough. But one's soul would not necessarily go immediately after they died. So, he prepared a lot of artificial bodies in case he perished unfortunately during the breakthrough. Thus, he *still had the chance to be transformed into a spectral Cultivator and continue his training!*

However, ghosts have their longevity, too. Five hundred years is too long. Even the strongest spectral Cultivators gradually disperse, and all their brainwaves quiet down in the end. When that happens, it marks the arrival of their real 'death'.

Li Yao held back his curiosity and kept exploring.

At the bottom of the training room was the true training area, which was divided into two areas, training and meditation.

Li Yao was faced with a whole lot of bizarre-shaped training facilities as if he had been placed in the middle of an iron forest. He was so thrilled that he was about to cry.

So many powerful training facilities. They are all invaluable treasures!

Li Yao held his breath, his hands shaking. He touched the cold shell of the training facilities carefully, especially the Red Dragon Swallowing the Sun pattern, which was the battle emblem of the Star Ocean Imperium.

They are the training facilities of the military. Judging from the patterns next to the battle emblems, they are prepared for high-level officers. Only real experts in the military were qualified to use them!

Right. The underground fortress above my head was the last stronghold of the Flying Star Sector. In the plan, countless experts would have gathered and fought in this place. Therefore, it is only natural that advanced training facilities were constructed deep inside the fortress!

Yan Xinjian selected all the usable training facilities five hundred years ago and moved them here!

Also, the Fire Stealers five thousand years ago, who were the predecessors of the space pirates, stole a lot of the most advanced training facilities when then carried out 'Plan Prometheus'. They must have brought the stolen goods to Spider Den in the end. Eventually, Yan Xinjian, as the supreme space pirate, got took all of them and transferred them here!

Therefore, the training room is the essence of the underground fortress, no, the essence of Spider Den!

Li Yao was like a rat that had fallen into a tank of rice. He was flushed with excitement and did not even know where to put his hands.

This training machine can release hundreds of 'tiny ball lightnings' no larger than one millimeter in diameter instantly. When the ball lightnings are imported into the limbs and organs, the acupoints will be stimulated and the body will be built up. It must be hundreds of times more effective than the common 'electric arc training equipment'!

This training machine can simulate 150 times standard gravity? That's awesome!

Hiss. This training machine can stimulate the trainer's brain directly and simulate the battle scenes of a hundred experts in the Star Ocean Imperium in their brain. The trainer will be fighting against the experts in the deep meditative state!

This training machine is even more powerful than a furnace. It can create an environment of any temperature between absolute zero and five thousand degrees. The trainer will be able to train in the burning heat or the freezing cold!

As a training maniac and a crazy fan of magical equipment, Li Yao felt his soul shivering and his blood boiling when he read the introductions that were as glamorous as flowers on the training machines.

The meditation chamber at the bottom was an even bigger eye-opener for him.

The meditation chamber was not very large. Li Yao could only cram himself in, and he could only sit cross-legged after he entered it.

Dense runes the size of the heads of flies were carved on the smooth walls. When Li Yao sat at the center of the chamber, they immediately started humming.

Every rune turned into a dancing, brilliant butterfly and flew into Li Yao's brain swiftly.

Li Yao's consciousness was pumped away from his body. It left Spider Den and the Flying Star Sector at a speed higher than that of light and returned to the Heaven's Origin Sector, to his past.

The teachings of so many seniors and masters during his growth popped up inside his brain again.

The mechanisms of training, formulas, and techniques that had troubled him before were now as obvious and understandable as one plus one equaling two.

The details of the bloody battles he experienced occurred to him again.

It was like the review of a fierce chess game after the game was completed. Li Yao reflected on all the battles that he had participated in and thought of dozens of new ways of fighting instantly.

During the ‘Limit Challenge Competition’ that I took part in on the Devil Flood Dragon Island, although I was on a killing spree with the backdoors I left on the contestants’ magical equipment, such a way of fighting was not the most efficient. If I had adopted this strategy, this strategy, and this strategy… I might have been able to achieve better results!

I once encountered Wang Ji, a silver-blood demon and the prince of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers, in the Thunderous Sound Mountain. At that time, I could do nothing except run away. But now that I think of it, if I had selected apposite tactics, there would have been a one percent likelihood that I could have reversed the situation and executed Wang Ji!

In the battle versus Skeleton Dragon…

During the fight against Fengyu Zhong…

Li Yao only planned to have a try of Yan Xinjian’s training facilities briefly, but he found it hard to stop when he got started. When he was back to himself, he realized that three hours had passed.

Unbelievable. Truly unbelievable. I have sorted through most of my combat experience in three hours of meditation inside this chamber. My tactical choices are clearer now, and I have a deeper understanding about the utilization of spiritual energy!

Although my strength is not improved, my wisdom as to how to use the strength has been significantly improved!

Before Li Yao left the meditation chamber unwillingly, Li Yao carefully studied the surroundings and discovered that the entire chamber was made of an intact, flawless black jade.

The jade was about five meters in diameter. A hollow around two meters in diameter had been made in the middle and was a natural space for meditation.

Li Yao had never seen such weird jade before. He thought hard and compared it with all the jade materials in Ou Yezi’s memory pieces. Still, he got nothing.

It was possible that the jade was from the outer space and was unique in the world of Cultivators. No wonder it was built into a meditation chamber by Yan Xinjian.

After three hours of fighting, the living area was already brimming with bodies. Even the most ferocious red mice were showing signs of exhaustion.

When Li Yao showed up again, the mice all crowded toward him like a tide.

The red mice roared, “I am Yan Xinjian. I demand that you kill all the rebels right now, or I will blow you to smithereens together with them!”

The green mice responded, “I am the real Yan Xinjian. They are all fakes. Just kill all of them right now. I will teach you all my techniques. Hahahaha!”

The purple mice negotiated, “I am Yan Xinjian. Young man, I can see that your body is quite good. Why don’t you lend it to me for a while? When I am out of the place, I will find a way return it to you. You can’t get out of the place without me. You can’t!”

The depressed blue mice were still leaning against wall while moaning, “It’s useless. Nobody is going to get out. Never going out!”

The few white mice were crouching in a corner. They dragged their voice and cried loudly, “Xiao Yu, I shouldn’t have killed you. I’m so regretful. I’m so regretful…”

Chapter 763 - Dead End

The hundreds of mice creaked while they crawled on Li Yao's body along his legs. They were like the soldiers of Lilliput climbing on a giant that looked like a mountain.

Li Yao frowned. His spiritual energy surged out and blew the mice off his body. Countless mice fell to the ground in an utter mess. The red mice were jumping angrily, the green mice were screaming, and the blue mice were laughing creepily. The room was like a boiling teapot, and Li Yao felt that his head was dizzy because of all the noise.

Li Yao glared and bellowed, "Stop yelling!"

His spiritual energy spread out like tide, mixed with sharp killing intent.

The mice shivered and looked at each other in bewilderment. Most of the mice did not dare to move anymore, but the red mice were still shaking their heads and wagging their tails, bluffing.

Right then, the training room shook violently again. An earsplitting explosion took place outside.

Li Yao stuck his ear to the door and listened carefully. Dull noises were echoing outside, as if countless rocks were collapsing. Half a minute later, there was nothing but dead silence. He could not even hear the two Lustful Rock Spiders now.

The two Lustful Rock Spiders burst into fury because they could not crash into the training room. Therefore, they *simply collapsed the cave above the training room and tried to bury me alive.*

Li Yao inferred such from the sounds.

It was within Li Yao’s expectations, so he was not very worried.

Such forced collapses were not solid and gapless. With the drill of mystic rays, he could always dig through the obstacles slowly if he had one month.

I’ve been here for more than three hours, and I don’t feel short of air at all. It seems that the air recycling rune arrays are still functioning normally.

Also, since so many mice are living in this place, there must be abundant air, water, and food.

It was rather chaotic outside. Li Yao wondered whether or not Lei Dalu and Bai Kaixin had successfully made it to the Star Prier’s House when the two Lustful Rock Spiders were attracted to him.

Even if they had fled, there were still thousands of space pirates and Immortal Cultivators on the ground who would not leave in another month or two.

Therefore, it might not be a bad idea to lie low there for a while.

But there was one question…

How can I open the door of the secret training room?

Li Yao frowned. The door he had entered through had blended into the wall after flashes of rune arrays. There was not the tiniest gap right now.

The wall seemed to be made of a certain super alloy. Li Yao took off his gloves and groped with his fingers for a long time. He did not find any gaps or holes at all.

He scratched the wall hard with the Feathered Dragon Saber and only managed to scrape off some powder after working hard for a long time.

Li Yao picked up the powder and put it below his nose, before he sniffed and examined it. However, he could not discern the elements of the super alloy at all.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao stored the powder carefully and planned to investigate further with magical equipment later. Then, he took a few steps back and punched the wall hard with all his spiritual energy.

BOOM!

As he expected, the surging spiritual energy was like a bull made of mud that was pushed into an ocean. It did not raise the slightest ripple and was devoured by the wall without leaving any traces.

This is getting tricky.

In order to avoid the apocalypses, Yan Xinjian must have built the training room with the hardest super alloy with countless defense rune arrays embedded in between.

How can I break the shell of the training room with my brute force when even an apocalypse might not be able to?

In the notes that Yan Xinjian left, there were only methods to enter the training room. He did not mention how to exit it. It *seems that special passwords, gestures, or even Cultivation arts are required if one wants to open the door from the inside!*

Li Yao quickly thought of what the blue mice had said.

“We can’t get out. We can never get out!”

Li Yao raised his hands. His spiritual energy swept across the mice.

The mice quickly dispersed, but a red mouse, a green mouse, and a blue mouse were snatched by him.

Li Yao opened his hands and exerted his strength slightly. The three mice immediately started squeaking.

“How should the door be opened?” Li Yao asked coldly.

The red mouse was so outraged that the messy hair on the top of its head stood on end. It was trying to stab Li Yao’s fingers with the ‘needles’.

However, it was held one foot away from Li Yao, and due to the shortness of its limbs, it was not able to touch Li Yao’s fingers. It was so angry, and its whiskers were shaking violently, while it declared, “I am the best expert of the Flying Star Sector. How dare you insult me like that? Put me down now, or I will chop off your head with just one move!”

The green mouse struggled hard, with the most cunning expression on its face. It shrieked, “Put me down! The door can only be opened with the ‘Dream Breaking Arts’. You can’t get out of the place without my help! Put me down. I’ll teach you the Dream Breaking Arts, but you need to bring me out together, and you must help me to eliminate all the fakes!”

The blue mouse, on the other hand, only laughed miserably. “Don’t believe me. Don’t believe me! I’ve forgotten. I’ve forgotten the Dream Breaking Arts. We can’t get out! We can’t!”

Li Yao pulled the green mouse closer and asked, “What are the Dream Breaking Arts? A secret technique of Yan Xinjian’s? Tell me everything that you know!”

The green mouse rolled its eyeballs crazily and scratched his cheeks, stammering, but it failed to come up with anything.

“Huh?”

Li Yao was angry. His telepathic thoughts struck the green mouse’s brain like a lightning, which was so painful that the green mouse’s limbs were all cramping. Its tail rigid, the green mouse held its head and screamed, “I forgot. I’ve forgotten. I’ve forgotten the Dream Breaking Arts. Ahhh!”

“Hehehehe!” The red mice laughed.

“Hahahaha!” The blue mice chuckled.

“Huhuhuhu!” The black mice giggled.

“Xiao Yu, where are you? Don’t leave me. Xiao Yu…” The mice that were emitting white colors were still crouching in the corner lethargically, as if they saw none of what was happening in front of them, while they called a woman’s name nonstop.

Li Yao spat in his heart and threw the green mouse away. He captured several more mice, but the results were the same.

The red mice were arrogant and bad-tempered. They considered themselves to be the best expert of the Flying

Star Sector and would rather die before they surrendered. They would resist without caring about anything, even when they were completely suppressed by him, and were not willing to cooperate with him at all.

The blue mice and the black mice acted like there was nothing in the world that they cherished. They kept reciting ‘we can’t get out’. When Li Yao pushed further, they simply craned their necks and stared at Li Yao indifferently.

The green mice were very willing to cooperate, but they seemed to have really forgotten the Dream Breaking Arts and could not provide anything of value at all, even though they were quite enthusiastic in negotiating with Li Yao.

Li Yao was as busy as a bee for half an hour. The hair of those mice was all over his body, but he did not collect any useful information at all.

In the beginning, Li Yao had thought that the mice had wisdom and could be spoken to sensibly. But after further communication, Li Yao discovered, to his disappointment, that their brain capacity was limited after all and that they could only repeat the several sentences. When the topic was outside that range, their nature would be immediately revealed, and they did not understand what he was talking at all.

Realizing that he would not get anything from the mice, Li Yao could only turn back and continue his searching.

Soon, he found the air-cleaning rune arrays and water-cleaning rune arrays.

Other than the primary ones, there were also two sets of supply rune arrays and countless components for repairs.

Their structure was very simple. Even outsiders could repair or replace them very easily.

Yan Xinjian planned to lurk below the ground for decades. If anything happened to him, he might even have needed to live on in the form of a spectral Cultivator for hundreds of years. Therefore, he had everything set.

Even a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator could not hold their breath for decades. They would be zombies if so!

It was good news for Li Yao.

He examined the two rune arrays carefully. Judging from the level of damage, they could function normally for at least another several decades and provide sufficient water and air.

Then, Li Yao found the food storage room on the right side of the warehouse of materials.

A huge number of high-nutrition drugs, edible and dehydrated Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, the meat of eccentric beasts, and a lot of fresh food preserved by the refreshing rune arrays were placed in this room.

Most of the food was sealed in cans, especially the high-nutrition drugs and the dehydrated ingredients. They could be stored for hundreds of years without decaying.

The fresh meat, on the other hand, had holes all over them. It seemed that the mice had been living on the meat over the past hundred years.

Yan Xinjian was in the Nascent Soul Stage. His appetite must be a lot higher than mine.

He stored enough food for a hundred years. Then, it was unfortunate of him to have perished and turned into a spectral Cultivator. Spectral Cultivators do not need food or water and can be sustained with crystals only. Therefore, a huge amount of food has been left in this place.

Air, water, and food were all sufficient. Li Yao was greatly relieved. He began to search for a second exit.

Yan Xinjian prepared to live here for decades. The garbage and the defecations had to be dumped in a certain way. So, there must be a certain exit in this place!

Li Yao examined the training room carefully and finally found the channel for garbage and defecations an hour later.

However, the channel gave him a headache.

It did not lead to the outside world but an incinerator nearby.

The garbage and defecations would be burnt into ash in the incinerator, and the ash would be blown away by the rune arrays of the wind class later.

There were nine tubes to discharge the ash, all of which were the size of fingers. There was no way that a human being could crawl out through them.

This is a dead end. I have to leave through the front door.

There are only two ways to leave through the front door. Firstly, I can blow up the door with strength that is even higher than that of a minor apocalypse.

Or secondly, I have to find out what exactly the Dream Breaking Arts is.

Li Yao found almost twenty crystal processors in the training room.

However, except for the mainframe crystal processors controlling the various rune arrays inside the training room, which boasted tight defense rune arrays that blocked them from the mice, the other crystal processors had been mostly deformed by the mice.

But it was not a problem for Li Yao. He unplugged the storage chips of the broken crystal processors and studied the structure of rune arrays for half a day to determine the storage mechanism.

Then, he assembled a small convertor and connected the storage chips to the crystal processor of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

Let me see what Yan Xinjian has left in his crystal processors!

Li Yao rubbed his hands. His telepathic thoughts rushed into Yan Xinjian’s storage chips along the crystal processor.

Chapter 764 - Yan Xinjian's Training Log

The storage chips did not have any passwords or barriers. Li Yao’s trouble in cracking them was saved.

Several storage chips had been left with a few holes by the mice. The information contained in them was incomplete.

However, the remaining ocean of information was already a great eye-opener for Li Yao, who felt that he had climbed on a mountain of treasures.

Most of the jade chips recorded Yan Xinjian’s training notes. They were the detailed explanations, suspicions, and reflections based on his own understanding after he studied thousands of techniques profoundly.

Not only did he explain the Cultivation arts in great detail, he had also recorded the changes in his body and soul. Besides words, there were also pictures, videos, and data detailing his training after he grasped the techniques!

This is indeed invaluable treasure!

A Cultivator in the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage had analyzed every detail in his training process and summarized his lifelong training, including his experience during the breakthrough toward the Divinity Transformation Stage. Every event had been elaborated on!

Li Yao browsed through it quickly. He felt that he had fallen into a giant kaleidoscope. He felt that every word in the notes was as precious as gold. His eyes glimmered, and his heart was racing while he read on!

Since Yan Xinjian lived below the ground for more than a hundred years, he had left too many notes for Li Yao to finish reading so quickly. Therefore, Li Yao put the notes aside and checked other things.

Soon, a document named ‘training log’ caught his attention.

He vaguely sensed that Yan Xinjian’s secret must have been kept inside.

The training log was not a journal but a work record like a logbook for sailors where the status of Yan Xinjian’s daily training was noted down.

Yan Xinjian seemed to be a taciturn, meticulous man. The training log in the first few years was very brief. The subjects were mainly his body status and the training arrangements for the day. The several years of records were all alike. They were boring, dull, and as precise as machines.

However, several years later, short comments appeared in the log. His feelings and his remarks on the Cultivation arts were involved.

“I haven’t made any progress in the ‘Upper Clear Flame Manipulation Arts’ for three months. What a headache.”

“‘Truth Returning Technique’ is purely garbage. It was really a waste of time for me to eliminate two pirate gangs in order to get it!”

Li Yao speculated that, to live in solitude ten thousand meters below the ground and be secluded in such a narrow space with only mice as companions, the mental pressure must have been very high.

Even a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator might suffer from mental illnesses when they lived alone for several years.

As Li Yao expected, when he got to the later chapters of the log, Yan Xinjian became more and more depressed and agitated when he could not find an approach to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage more than ten years later.

Sometimes, there were two words in the log for months—’Same old!’

Sometimes, he would be berating many Cultivation arts and ancient classics for days, claiming that they were not worth practicing at all.

Sometimes, he gnashed his teeth, cursing some people who must’ve been his enemies.

Sometimes, he kept repeating the name of a woman, ‘Yun Suoyu’. He swore that the woman was a haunting witch that would not rest in peace even though she had died but kept showing up in the room every day.

Based on the context, Li Yao inferred that Yun Suoyu was his wife who was killed by him. She was also the ‘Xiao Yu’ that the white mice repeated.

After twenty years of mental crisis, the log was suddenly written in a different style. It became positive and even started bragging about Yan Xinjian.

Yan Xinjian had finally found a way to enter the Divinity Transformation Stage.

“The last step. I’m about to succeed. The entire Flying Star Sector will kneel before me!”

It was the last chapter of the log that was in continuity with the previous ones.

The next chapter jumped to a month later, which was written in an extremely crazy style.

“You sick bi*ch!

“Why? Why did you have to show up and stare at me at the crucial moment when I was about to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage?

“Why were you smiling? What was so funny?

“How did you crawl into the place anyway? How? Speak. Speak!

“Don’t smile. Don’t smile! I’m going to kill you! I’m going to kill you!

“You made my breakthrough into the Divinity Transformation Stage fail. You made me mentally deranged and heavily wounded. I’m going to die in this wretched place!

“You made me end up like this, a ghost hiding in scrap iron and copper!

“I failed. I have failed!”

Although hundreds of years had passed and Li Yao was merely reading the log on the light beam, he could still read intense hatred and regret between the lines.

It seems that…

In order to find an excuse to get out of Heavenly Saints City, Yan Xinjian killed his wife before he left.

Maybe his wife had not cheated on him at all. This is certainly a story with a lot of twists and turns. But the bottom line is, Yan Xinjian felt sorry for his wife and was ashamed when he thought of her.

When he finished the arrangements for everything after decades and finally escaped to the underground, preparing to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage, the shame in the bottom of his heart gradually emerged because of the long solitude and let him see his wife’s illusion occasionally.

Moreover, at the crucial moment when he was about to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage, the wife he killed long ago reappeared in his brain, which made him lose control over his mind and got him killed because of mental derangement.

After he perished, his soul transformed into a spectral Cultivator and hid in an artificial body. The vacant one month must be the period in which he turned from a normal Cultivator into a spectral Cultivator.

Li Yao read on patiently.

The log that followed proved his deduction.

The focus of Yan Xinjian’s training suddenly shifted from regular techniques to methods to build up soul power for spectral Cultivators.

However, training in the form of a spectral Cultivator was only Yan Xinjian’s backup plan after all. Most of the techniques he knew were for living persons, and he did not know much about the training of the spectral Cultivators.

Therefore, in the more than a hundred years that followed, he could only stop his soul from retrograding but could not recreate his formidability in the old days.

He could not even return to the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage, not to mention breaking into the Divinity Transformation Stage.

Two hundred years passed. In the last fifty years, Yan Xinjian’s training log became more and more disordered and was barely readable. In the messy lines, about five different characters were narrating from their perspective at the same time.

Are you serious? Yan Xinjian, the old ghost, suffered from schizophrenia after living alone for two hundred years below the ground?

Judging from the tone and the style of writing, Li Yao distinguished five different characters that were composing the log, or rather, five facets of Yan Xinjian’s mind that turned into his clones and stated everything on their own.

One of the clones were still dreaming about breaking into the Divinity Transformation Stage and uniting the Flying Star Sector. It kept repeating that it would cultivate to the ultimate level, rush out of the underground, unite Spider Den, and sweep the Flying Star Sector with the strength of Spider Den.

Another clone was grasped by desperation. It chewed on Liu the Prier’s Dark Forest Theory all day and put forward a lot of assumptions and deductions. It also came up with several possible social structures of alien civilizations and the means of war that those civilizations would resort to against humankind.

Many civilizations were as vivid as real things in the deductions. Their strange means of attack made Li Yao scared and soaked in sweat, too.

One other clone was living in regret and completely abandoned training. It grieved over everything in the past and only hoped that the wheel of time could be reversed to the day when his wife was killed. It would extinguish all the ambitions and schemes and simply live a peaceful life with his wife.

Only one of the clones remained absolutely calm and pondered brand new Cultivation arts.

One of the Cultivation arts could compress the soul to the minimum into the shape of a needle before darting it into the brain of the prey so that the control over the prey’s head would be taken over.

In short, it was a secret art of ‘possession’.

The second Cultivation art was a domineering Cultivation art based on his experience in Cultivation and more than ten techniques that he had grasped. It was named ‘Dream Breaking Arts’!

However, there were back doors in the Dream Breaking Arts. The Cultivation art was authentic, but when the trainer practiced to between the fourth level and the fifth level, their brain would endure a fierce storm, and their soul power would be greatly weakened!

From the general logic of the Dream Breaking Arts, it was not exactly a backdoor, because the brain storm was necessary to purge and cleanse the brain so that further training could proceed.

Yan Xinjian was indeed up to something!

Li Yao thought through Yan Xinjian's scheme very quickly. He immediately felt creepy and applauded Bai Xinghe's wisdom.

Yan Xinjian's scheme was quite sordid. He knew that he could not live forever as a spectral Cultivator and that he could not regain his previous Cultivation no matter what.

Besides, the electromagnetic environment of the outside world was complicated and far less stable than ten thousand meters below the ground. He could live hundreds of years in this place, but if he left and was exposed to sunlight, he might really kick the bucket thirty or fifty years later. That was if his hordes of enemies had not come looking for revenge first.

Therefore, Yan Xinjian decided to keep hiding below the ground and practiced the art of 'possession' in secret.

After all, he had left some bait outside.

As long as somebody found the Star Prier's House and his message, they would certainly be tempted to explore the training room of the 'best expert of the Flying Star Sector'.

Once somebody entered the secret training room, if they were not capable enough, Yan Xinjian could possess them on the spot and reappear with a brand-new body.

If the newcomer was strong, Yan Xinjian would trick the prey into practicing the Dream Breaking Arts. When the prey reached between the fourth level and the fourth level and suffered from a brain storm, Yan Xinjian would suddenly attack them while their soul power was at its weakest. Odds were quite high that he could occupy a new body!

Thankfully, it was Bai Xinghe who discovered Yan Xinjian’s training room. Boss Bai is truly Boss Bai. He held back his desire for decades and ignored Yan Xinjian’s training room!

If it were anybody else, they would have been possessed by Yan Xinjian already!

Chapter 765 - Ironic Truth

Li Yao wiped the sweat off his forehead and kept reading.

Yan Xinjian had unhurriedly implemented his great plan of possession step by step.

As time went by, Yan Xinjian’s secret art of possession had become more and more sharp and brutal, and the Dream Breaking Arts were gradually perfected, too. Except for the brain storm that everybody had to experience when they were between the fourth level and the fifth level, it was indeed a powerful super technique.

The data had reached around a hundred years ago. But the training journal came to an abrupt halt.

When new chapters appeared, it was already more than half a year later.

The first new chapter had only two words.

“Mice! Mice!”

The second chapter did not appear until three months later. There was only one inexplicable paragraph in it.

“There are no other solutions. This is the last resort. Thankfully, I have many mice.”

Li Yao swallowed and read through all the remaining log patiently in the next hour.

Although he had been prepared, he was still dumbfounded when he learned everything that happened later.

He glanced at the squeaking mice around him. The mice had all learned of his toughness and did not dare get too close to him.

The red mice were gritting their teeth in clattering noises. They glared at him with their tails straightened like spears.

The green mice were rolling their eyes nonstop. There was no telling what kind of schemes they were concocting.

The blue mice had deep eyes. They stared at him pitifully and told in silence the desperation that had echoed for five hundred years.

Li Yao sighed and suddenly felt truly sympathetic for Yan Xinjian.

No matter what crimes he had committed years ago, his ending seemed a bit too miserable.

Li Yao imported Yan Xinjian’s training log into his mini crystal processor. Then, he brought the log to the meditation chamber at the bottom of the training room.

Li Yao took a deep breath and entered the deep meditative state amid the prolonged humming sounds.

The information that he had collected just now was all glittering inside his brain. The general picture of everything and the portrait of Yan Xinjian’s life gradually took shape.

…

Five hundred years ago, Yan Xinjian used to be most famous genius in training of the Flying Star Sector.

He was born in a middle-class family and revealed his talents when he was very young. He was carefully educated by the six sects of Heavenly Saints City and advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage when he was only a hundred years old. During the battles to eliminate space pirates, he made a lot of contributions and was promoted to the vice commander of the coalition fleet of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City. He was responsible for the safety of Heavenly Saints City and the core area of the Flying Star Sector.

At that time, Yan Xinjian's rise was an out-and-out miracle. Many civilians considered him to be their role model.

However, his rise ended there, because his supervisor was also a rarely-seen genius in training. The two of them were of similar ages and Cultivation, but their backgrounds were vastly different. His supervisor was born in a noble family with parents who were both celebrities of the Flying Star Sector.

If things went on like that, his supervisor could live another two hundred years with his Cultivation. The 'vice' in Yan Xinjian's title would never be taken away.

It was not hard to guess how depressing it must have been for Yan Xinjian, the super genius who had been used to leading the vanguard and making the call in everything, to work as the deputy of somebody else for hundreds of years!

A long time later, Yan Xinjian, who had lost his mind by then, left a lot of criticism about his supervisor in his training log. Jealousy, depression, hatred, fury… All the feelings were written between the lines.

In Yan Xinjian's opinion, his Cultivation, capability, and charisma were all better than his supervisor's, and the sole reason why his supervisor was commanding the coalition fleet of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City was the man's background!

Envy could tie up a person like a viper. Even the expert in the Nascent Soul Stage could not free himself from it after decades.

Then, one day, Yan Xinjian received a detailed map of the underground fortress of Spider Den, as well as part of the permissions that were known as 'Spider Key', by accident.

It was the duty of the coalition fleet of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City to deal with the space pirates. Naturally, Yan Xinjian knew everything about Spider Den. He was aware that a lot of secret treasures of the Star Ocean Imperium were probably hidden inside the underground fortress.

If I can get those treasures, my Cultivation will definitely reach a higher level. I will be able to surpass the noble families and even dominate the entire Flying Star Sector!

Li Yao did not know if Yan Xinjian really thought that way. However, it was not a solo task to hunt for treasures on Spider Den. He needed strong support.

Besides, he was now the mortal enemy of the space pirates. Not to mention Spider Den, if he so much as drew close to the Spider Den Space Zone, countless space pirates would have blown him out of the sky without any hesitation.

Moreover, how was he going to explain everything to the other Cultivators? When the message was out, he would not be able to own all the treasures.

Therefore…

After a painful, prolonged hesitation, he killed his own wife, Yun Suoyu, and slew the entire family of his supervisor!

Did his wife really cheat on him?

From the context, Li Yao felt that she did not.

Otherwise, Yan Xinjian would not have felt so guilty, to such a degree that he could not let it go after decades.

Yan Xinjian was merely devoured by the constantly expanding greed in the bottom of his heart. He did such an insane, inhuman thing only because he needed a justifiable reason to desert Heavenly Saints City and sneak into Spider Den!

He made it!

After he defected to Spider Den, because of the murders he committed, most of the space pirates did not doubt him.

But at that time, he was still alone and did not have the power to conduct large-scale searches.

Therefore, he managed to incite the Cultivators to wage a war on the space pirates. Then, with his advantage as the previous vice commander of the coalition fleet of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, he was granted temporary leadership by many pirate gangs because he was familiar with the enemy.

For an unparalleled expert such as Yan Xinjian, there was no way that he would relinquish the leadership after getting it ‘temporarily’.

In the decades that followed, he defeated the Cultivators, purged Spider Den, and seized absolute power. Finally, he achieved his purpose and excavated the underground fortress on a large scale.

Yan Xinjian knew that the secret treasures would raise a storm of blood should they appear on the ground. Not only would all the space pirates be fighting for them, it was also very likely that the Cultivators would come back again.

Therefore, Yan Xinjian simply built a secret training room deep below the ground and shifted the training facilities and precious resources of the Star Ocean Imperium, as well as the treasures he looted in space, into the place!

When all the arrangements were completed, he killed all the insiders and set up multiple traps. Then, he left some bait before he entered the secret training room, preparing to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage.

It was a perfect plan.

Yan Xinjian calculated everything, including the possibility of an apocalypse.

But he missed out one thing, which was his heart.

He did not expect that his wife whom he had killed decades ago would show up again right in front of him when he was breaking into the Divinity Transformation Stage from the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage.

Yan Xinjian’s mind was disturbed. He was mentally deranged and heavily wounded. After a few days in a critical condition, he died. The only thing that remained was his soul.

Thankfully, he had been prepared for such a scenario and could continue his training as a spectral Cultivator in the artificial bodies.

However, the speed of his training was much lower than when he was alive.

Just like that, he continued training for a hundred years below the ground, hoping to restore his capability.

The high-intensity training was very damaging for the artificial bodies. He had to switch to a new artificial body every few days.

Gradually, all the artificial bodies in storage were seriously worn. He had to repair and maintain them on his own and reused the old artificial bodies.

Then, an accident happened.

When Yan Xinjian entered the secret training room, in order to experiment on new techniques, he had brought a few mice.

After hundreds of years, there were already hundreds of mice.

With Yan Xinjian's Cultivation, even though he had become a spectral Cultivator, it was not likely that he overlooked the beasts.

Li Yao estimated that he was too lonely below the ground and simply kept the mice as pets, except that he controlled the total number of them.

But it was not within Yan Xinjian's expectation that some mice escaped his attention and broke the crucial components on an artificial body.

The damage was very inconspicuous. Yan Xinjian was not a refiner and did not notice it during the maintenance.

When he did high-intensity training with said artificial body, a serious accident happened.

The outcome was quite miserable. Yan Xinjian’s soul was split apart and could not sustain the basic form of a spectral Cultivator. He had to possess something immediately, or he would be gone forever!

The objects of possession had to be a living creature.

Yan Xinjian went through all the trouble and developed such a sordid skill named the Dream Breaking Arts, but there was no time for him to wait for a human being on the ground to arrive.

Right now, the only living creatures inside the secret training room were… the mice!

It was not difficult to take over the mice’s bodies. A mouse’s brain was simple in structure and had barely any soul power. There would be barely any resistance.

However, since the brains of the mice were too simple, they could not accommodate Yan Xinjian’s soul, which was tremendous in size.

It was like stuffing an elephant into a rat hole. The mission was simply impossible.

Yan Xinjian was truly a genius of training. Before his soul entire dispersed, he came up with a solution. He dissected his enormous soul into hundreds of parts with a secret art, each of which took over the body of one mouse!

From the ancient times to this day, ‘possession’ had always been a dangerous endeavor. One moment of carelessness, and the host might devour the intruder’s soul instead, just like Ou Yezi, who tried to take over Li Yao’s body before.

Splitting one’s soul into hundreds of parts each possessing a mouse was an insane attempt that nobody had ever even thought of before.

Nobody knew what the consequences would be.

But Yan Xinjian had no other choice.

Therefore, he said, “I have a lot of mice.”

How crazy, desperate, and ironic his final words were!

…

The hundreds of mice I saw were indeed Yan Xinjian. Inside every mouse’s brain is part of Yan Xinjian’s remaining soul!

Yan Xinjian had made it. His life continued in hundreds of mice in such a weird way.

But he had failed, too, because he did not know any techniques for the training of animals.

Chapter 767 - Five Hundred Remaining Souls

Although animals and plants could all turn into creatures of wisdom, there were many prerequisites.

Some of them were manually made, such as demons. Their brain cells and bodies underwent world-shaking evolutions within several hundred years. After being filtered harshly, one in ten thousand might become powerful biological weapons.

Some other creatures might have lived on rough foreign planets that boasted special radiations and mother lodes. Against all the odds, the wisdom of the natives was triggered, and they became intelligent.

Before Yan Xinjian entered the secret training room, he had calculated everything. But he did not expect that he would be forced to enter the bodies of mice one day.

Therefore, although he had prepared a lot of techniques for training as a spectral Cultivator, he did not have any training methods for animals.

As a result, although he successfully possessed the mice, he did not have any idea how he could carry out his training with the mice’s bodies.

The training log that followed clearly showed how tense, how crazy, and how desperate Yan Xinjian was after he turned into the mice.

The super genius thought of every method possible, trying to transform the training methods of humans so that mice could train with them, too.

However, his brains were now no larger than peanuts. How many sparks of wisdom could he trigger even if he used his every single brain cell?

Besides, there was something that Yan Xinjian did not think of.

When a person's self-awareness was divided into five hundred parts, would every independent part of self-awareness equal to the person himself?

In the world of Cultivators, notions such as ‘clone’ and ‘real body’ were not new. However, were the clone and the real body the same person?

What was more devastating was that, before Yan Xinjian possessed the mice, he had already been showing signs of schizophrenia. There were almost five different personalities inside his brain at the same time.

As his soul was divided into five hundred parts, the different personalities flew into the bodies of different mice along with the scraps of his soul.

The different personalities that used to cram in the same body finally appeared in the secret training room, controlling independent entities!

Every group of mice represented one of Yan Xinjian's personalities. They believed that they were the real Yan Xinjian and the other mice were simply Yan Xinjian's ‘doggedness’, ‘irrelevant thoughts’, and ‘mental obstacles’.

Since the others were mental obstacles, it was best that they were removed.

Therefore, a civil war broke out!

The details of the war were not recorded in the training log, but Li Yao could infer the situation of the war with the chapters written in different tones.

Those mice transformed scraps of magical equipment into ‘armor’ and ‘flying swords’ and built their own ‘cities’ and ‘houses’ with whatever techniques they remembered. They attacked each other every day.

During the hundred years, the Yan Xinjians were fighting incessantly inside the training room. The reason was that they could only kill the bodies of the other mice but not the remaining souls lurking inside the victims’ brains.

Whenever a mouse was killed, the remaining soul inside its brain would simply float away and look for a new mouse to possess.

After all, mice were extremely fertile. Without control, they could flourish into thousands of members in several years from two to three in the beginning.

There was abundant food and no predators inside the secret training room. The number of the mice had been growing exponentially.

If they had not killed a lot of their companions in the ‘civil war’, the place would have been overflowing with mice a long time ago.

However, that was all decades ago.

Since decades ago, the updates of the training log had become intermittent. Sometimes, there were no new chapters for years.

Even if something new was added, it was usual very simple. Even the word order was sometimes wrong. The training log seemed to be written by a three-year-old who had only just learned the language.

The mice were retrograding.

Although Yan Xinjian did not find an appropriate training method for the mice, he managed to maintain his techniques and consciousness for decades. But the passage of time was not something that he could resist.

The longevity of the mice was short in the first place. Also, because of the gory battles, most of the mice could not live for one and a half years.

Sometimes, when part of Yan Xinjian’s remaining soul just took over the body of a mouse, it was immediately slain by others.

The process of possession consumed soul power, too. After every possession, Yan Xinjian’s remaining soul decreased slightly. Countless feelings, memories, and thoughts were mottled and crumbling, eventually leaving him like black and white butterflies.

After countless possessions, his memories and self-awareness were finally gone. What was left was the last big of his determination like the struggling sparks in an amber.

There had been no updates on the training log since ten years ago. Not a single new word had been added.

It seemed that the Yan Xinjians had already forgotten how to control the crystal processor.

No, they were not Yan Xinjian; they were just a bunch of pathetic mice that carried Yan Xinjian’s different personalities.

That was Yan Xinjian’s story, which had come to an end.

Retrograding was like a snow slide. There was no way to stop it.

If Li Yao had not come, maybe in another three to five years, the last bit of Yan Xinjian’s will inside the mice’s brains would have totally vanished.

By then, they would have become normal mice and continued living inside the secret training room for the next hundred or thousand years, until all the resources ran out and the air-cleaning and water-cleaning rune arrays broke.

Or maybe, before the last bit Yan Xinjian’s soul vanished, the mice would all have gone mad and killed each other brutally, until Yan Xinjian’s last self was killed by himself.

Li Yao took a long breath with mixed feelings.

He thought for a long time and yet did not know what to comment on what he had read. But an old saying popped up inside his head.

If you had seen the day coming, would you have done what you did?

Li Yao was silent. He imagined how sad and desperate Yan Xinjian had been when he decided to tear his soul apart into five hundred pieces and throw them into the bodies of mice.

Li Yao also thought, when part of Yan Xinjian’s remaining soul invaded the body of a mouse and yet could not find a suitable training method, he had fought hard against other ‘clones’ while resisting the irresistible retrogradation of his brain. When his memories faded away like fallen flowers, had he remembered how ambitious he had been hundreds years earlier, when he was promoted to the vice commander of the coalition fleet of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City although he was born a poor boy?

Had he remembered his life before he discovered the treasures below the surface of Spider Den, the time when he cuddled his wife and complained about his work while his wife combed his hair and comforted him?

Alright. Let’s not think that much yet. I’d better figure out how to get out of this place first. Otherwise, there is a good chance that I will become the second Yan Xinjian!

Li Yao shuddered and shook his head, throwing aside the miserable image of him ending up as the mice behind him. He then searched for the methods to open the door of the training room.

Very soon, he found the answer in one chapter of the training log.

The mice were not lying to him. The door of the training room had been installed with barriers both on the inside and on the outside. If one wished to open the door from inside, they had to practice the Dream Breaking Arts to the sixth level and condense their spiritual energy into a unique ‘key’ with the special methods!

Odd. Why can the door only be opened with the Dream Breaking Arts? What is the purpose of such a design?

Li Yao pondered for a moment. Then he slapped his head and realized that it was a silly question.

Of course, the Dream Breaking Arts was the only key to the door. It was all part of the possession plan!

A hundred years after Yan Xinjian became a spectral Cultivator, his soul power gradually diminished, and possession was his only choice.

However, even if somebody on the ground found his message and entered the secret training room, they might not necessarily listen to his commands.

Those on Spider Den were all cunning, brutal bandits. Would they behave nice and simply practice the Dream Breaking Arts when he asked them to?

It was impossible. The newcomers would definitely be suspicious about him.

Besides, even if they were interested in the skill, they did not have to practice it in this place. They could always empty the room out and find a safe place outside where they were protected by trusted people. They could always study the art later.

At that time, Yan Xinjian was in the form of a spectral Cultivator. His capability was no higher than the peak of the Core Formation Stage. The newcomers might even have been stronger than. He would not have any solution even they did not obey him.

That was why Yan Xinjian designed a door that could only be opened via the Dream Breaking Arts.

As long as a newcomer entered the secret training room, the door would be automatically closed and would not be opened again until they practiced the Dream Breaking Arts.

At that time, Yan Xinjian would pretend that he was weak and feeble and say things like ‘Young man, I can see that you are talented, and your body is very strong and surrounded by a halo of extraordinariness. I have been dead for years and cannot practice the Dream Breaking Arts. The hope for us to get out is all on you.’ or other similar crap.

The newcomer would not have any options. If they did not intend to die of old age inside the training room, they could only behave nicely and practice the Dream Breaking Arts.

As for the Dream Breaking Arts, except for the minor flaws between the fourth level and the fifth level, it was indeed a powerful technique.

The more the newcomer practiced, the less suspicious they would get and the more they would believe that Yan Xinjian was passing the knowledge on to them sincerely.

In order to open the gate sooner, the newcomer would definitely train hard. When the first four levels were grasped, their suspicions should already be entirely gone, and they would focus their attention on the destiny of the sixth level.

Then, when they experienced a brain storm in the middle of the fourth level and the fifth level, Yan Xinjian would attack the newcomer all of a sudden and try to possess their body!

What a marvelous scheme!

Li Yao could not help but wonder what he would have done if the last accident had not happened to Yan Xinjian and he were still alive as a spectral Cultivator right now.

He was afraid that he would have had to practice the Dream Breaking Arts anyways even though he knew that there might be tricks in it, before he figured out a way to fight against Yan Xinjian's wisdom.

Thankfully, Yan Xinjian has been dead for decades. There are only a bunch of mice left. There's no way that they can take over my body!

I can practice the Dream Breaking Arts without worry now!

Li Yao licked his lips and retrieved the Dream Breaking Arts. He browsed through the introduction part first.

While he was reading, Li Yao's mouth grew wider and wider, and his eyes bulged out like two duck eggs.

What!

The Dream Breaking Arts can only be practiced when the subject's Cultivation is higher than peak of the Core Formation Stage? What the heck?

Chapter 768 - Strive for Core Formation!

Li Yao cried helplessly. His training methods were different from normal Cultivators. Although his combat ability was close to that of the Core Formation Stage, and he could even fight a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator when he was in his best state, the way that his spiritual energy functioned was the way of the Building Foundation Stage after all.

There was a notion called ‘overclocking’ in the field of crystal processors. By special designs, the low-level crystal processors could have the performance of high-level crystal processors’.

Li Yao’s training methods were similar to the idea of overclocking.

But the low-level crystal processors were essentially low-level crystal processors anyway, however much they were overlocked. Many large programs that required high specifications could not be run on them.

“What is Yan Xinjian’s problem? Why did he have to set such a high threshold for the Dream Breaking Arts?” Li Yao cursed aloud. He thought carefully and sighed, realizing that it was only reasonable.

Yan Xinjian had taken everything into consideration. He must have foreseen that, if he offered a common Cultivation art as the password to open the door, the newcomer would definitely be suspicious—why would a Nascent Soul Stage

Cultivator choose such a simple technique as the key to the door?

There must be something wrong!

It was only reasonable and less suspicious if his own ultimate art was set as the password to the door.

Besides, a mediocre technique commonly seen everywhere might not interest the newcomer at all. But his own ‘ultimate art’ would certainly be much more tempting.

On the other hand, the Dream Breaking Arts was the summary of Yan Xinjian’s lifelong experience as a Cultivator. The essence of his countless other techniques had been embedded into it. When other people picked it up, their body and soul would gradually morph toward Yan Xinjian’s original body, until they became ripe for possession.

After Yan Xinjian successfully took over the body, he would immediately be controlling the body free at will. There would not be much rejection at all.

It was a perfect plan.

But it was now a major headache for Li Yao.

I cannot open the door until I reach the sixth level of the Dream Breaking Arts, and I cannot reach higher than the fourth level of the Dream Breaking Arts until I advance into the peak of the Core Formation Stage even though I can practice the first three levels.

But I am not even in the Core Formation Stage yet!

Can I afford to stay here and train myself until I reach the peak of the Core Formation Stage?

This place is indeed the best natural paradise for training in the Flying Star Sector. One day of training here equals to ten days outside. But do I have that much time? The situation outside could escalate at any moment!

Li Yao felt that his heart was burning.

In the ten days that followed, he seized every second and skimmed through the information and files inside the crystal processors. He also groped the wall inch by inch. He even tried to put on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and cut into the wall with the drill of mystic rays.

As a result, the drill of mystic rays and the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit were both serious damaged, and only a shallow trace was left on the wall.

Li Yao adopted almost twenty different examination methods and analyzed the metal powder off the wall. Yet, he could not tell their specific constituents.

He only knew that the material was extremely hard, and its microstructure was similar to the ‘Super Bendable Steel’. It could shift the energy on the point of impact evenly to the entire shell, before the energy was buffered, dissolved, and absorbed by the arc-shaped structure of the shell. The energy would then be transferred to the defense rune arrays.

Li Yao calculated for a whole night and came to the conclusion that, if he refined all the high-purity crystals inside the training room into a super bomb, it was possible that he could blow the door open from the inside with a targeted explosion.

However, the secret training room was fully enclosed, and the spiritual energy had nowhere to run to, which meant that the abundant spiritual energy would destroy everything inside the training room before it destroyed the door.

It would have been difficult for him to survive the explosion even if he hid inside the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

Li Yao was helpless.

Right now, he had only one option.

He had to advance into the peak of the Core Formation Stage in the shortest amount of time possible and grasp the sixth level of the Dream Breaking Arts!

Li Yao took a long breath after he made the decision. He threw away the crystal processor and sat on the ground in a daze.

Countless mice—red, green, black, and white—surrounded him with their tiny eyes wide open and looked at him without blinking.

…

Li Yao’s training log. Day one.

“I never expected that I would be writing a training log. It feels odd. I hope I don’t end up like Yan Xinjian.

“If the day really comes, I will certainly not choose to split my soul and live in the bodies of mice.

“Now that I think about it, the underground of Spider Den and the underground of Boneyard have a lot of amazing similarities.

“In the underground of Boneyard, Gao Xingce, the previous captain of Sparkle, also lived in solitude for hundreds of years in a sealed room. Eventually, his memories faded away and his soul vanished.

“However, Gao Xingce and Yan Xinjian are different.

“Senior Gao Xingce gritted his teeth to live on for an honorable purpose. He was backed by the belief that he was protecting humanity. At the last moment of his life, even if he had wiped out all his memories, he never forgot his family, especially his wife and his children.

“His self-awareness dispersed in the beautiful memories where his wife and his children were in his company. I think that he died a peaceful and gratifying death.

“What about Yan Xinjian?

“For the pursuit of power and strength, he lost his humanity and killed his own wife. His name was rotten, and in the end, he was the victim of his own scheme.

“When his soul gradually faded away in the brains of the mice, who would he be thinking of?

“Right now, I’m going to strive for a higher level and more strength, too.

“If everything goes well, I will advance into the peak of the Core Formation Stage one day. Someday in the future, I may even break into the Nascent Soul Stage and boast the combat ability equal to that of a crystal warship!

“I hope that I can always remember why I pursued strength in the beginning and do not get lost as my strength increases.

“Who should I hope to become if I must choose between Gao Xingce and Yan Xinjian?

“I don’t know whether or not I have the guts to be a hero like Gao Xingce when the moment of decision comes.

“However—

“I will never become Yan Xinjian. Never.”

…

Li Yao’s training log. Day 11.

“I broke six ribs today and got my liver torn apart seriously.

“Thankfully, Yan Xinjian left a lot of advanced medical facilities and healing drugs. After my maintenance, most of the facilities are still running normally.

“Today, I have finally determined the functions of all the training facilities here!

“A Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator is indeed a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. His training methods and the intensity of his training are just insane!

“I have lowered the intensity of most of the training facilities here by several levels, but several key training facilities are not adjustable. I can only train in the level that Yan Xinjian had fixed earlier.

“It is the intensity that a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was used to. I feel scared just thinking about it!

“However, I don’t have a choice.

“It will take about twenty years for a regular Cultivator to advance from the peak of the Building Foundation Stage to the high level of the Core Formation Stage.

“But I don’t have that much time. In five years or so, there will be enough Grand Illusionary Soldiers to form an army. Whatever plans Xiao Xuance has in mind, they will be fully implemented by then!

“If I can only get out of this place after twenty years of training, I’m afraid that the entire Flying Star Sector will be filled with the Grand Illusionary Soldiers and controlled completely by the Immortal Cultivators!

“Therefore, I have no better ways except to try my best!

“I have to break into the peak of the Core Formation Stage in five years and grasp the sixth level of the Dream Breaking Arts!”

…

Li Yao’s training log. Day 33.

“The training is harsh. It is depressing to live alone ten thousand meters below ground, too. I’ve gradually come to feel the same as Yan Xinjian must have years ago, and I understand why he allowed the mice to reproduce freely.

“Because observing the mice is now the only entertainment when I’m not training.

“Many scraps of Yan Xinjian’s soul still reside in the bodies of the mice. A different color represents a different personality. The mice of the same personality form a mini tribe.

“After a month of observation, together with the reference of Yan Xinjian’s training log, I gradually discovered the difference between the mice.

“The red mice stand for Yan Xinjian’s ambitions. Although they are trapped in such a wretched environment, they are still making wild dreams of breaking into the Divinity Transformation Stage and governing the Flying Star Sector.

“The red mice always consider themselves to be kings of the Flying Star Sector. Occasionally, one of the red mice would crawl to the top of their ‘castle’ and wave a tiny cloth, shouting, ‘I’m an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage. I’m the king of the Flying Star Sector!’

“What is most hilarious is that, before the other tribes attack the mouse, the other red mice would crowd forward, drag the mouse down, and rip it into pieces.

“Hehe. It seems that, even if they represent the same personality, they are not the same person. Every one of them thinks that they are the real Yan Xinjian and others are merely clones.

“The green mice stand for the cruelty and cunningness in Yan Xinjian’s mind. Their tribe is deadly silent most of the time. All the mice are crouching in dark corners, rolling their eyes, and formulating funny plots one after another.

“They often come and talk to me, claiming that they are willing to recruit me as their disciple and teach me unparalleled techniques, as long as I bring them out of the place.

“The most hysterical thing is that they have completely forgotten all the techniques other than their plots. Therefore, when I pretend that I agree to their proposal and ask them to provide their techniques, they will be dumbfounded and simply look at me without words, as if they are crystal processors that have crashed.

“The blue mice and the black mice probably stand for the desperation that Yan Xinjian accumulated for five hundred years below the ground. Other than staring at the ceiling dumbly and repeating things like ‘we can’t get out’, they are always discussing the Dark Forest Theory solemnly. Now and then, they grasp their whiskers and say things like ‘It’s too dark, and there’s nowhere to run to.’

“I’ve discovered that they have completely stopped reacting to light. Even when I flash them with the most dazzling lamps, they still simply bemoan that it’s too dark as if nothing happened.

“However, I don’t like the red mice, the green mice, the blue mice, and the black mice.

“I like the mice that are emitting mild white colors best.

“They stand for the greatest loss in Yan Xinjian’s heart, his wife, who was killed by himself.”

Chapter 769 - A Thousand Days of Training

“The pure white mice are the smallest in number. They do not like to participate in the competitions among mice. Their favorite thing is to mumble alone in the corners.

“Sometimes, I listen to them carefully and find that they are recalling their past with their wife hundreds of years ago.

“At that time, Yan Xinjian was not the vice commander of the coalition fleet of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City yet. He was merely a talented, ambitious young man. Since he devoted most of resources to training, life was quite difficult for him. He only managed to climb higher and higher with the encouragement and support of his wife.

“Every time they get to the end of their story, the pure white mice always sob in grief. Occasionally, when they are too sad, they even run to the front of other mice and yell, ‘You killed her. It was you who killed my wife!’

“Naturally, they end up being ripped apart by other mice, and their remaining soul turns into a streak of whiteness looking for a new mouse to possess.

“Several times, I also saw the pure white mice drag out ignorant female mice from the cage, hug them and murmur, ‘Xiao Yu, Xiao Yu’, regarding them as their ‘wife’.

“Those female mice were not possessed by any soul. They were the most ordinary animals. They could not do anything despite their hard struggles. Other ‘clones’ of Yan Xinjian all burst into laughter when they saw this.

“I felt quite uncomfortable seeing what happened to them. Finally, one day, I drove away mice in other colors and built a small house for the pure white mice with the materials that I specially prepared. I then established defense rune arrays around the house so that the mice that stood for the guilt and shame in Yan Xinjian’s heart could live in peace temporarily.”

…

Li Yao’s training log. Day 356.

“Without me knowing it, it’s been more than a year.

“There have been no sounds outside at all over the past year. I don’t know whether or not Lei Dalu and Bai Kaixin successfully ran away or if people of the Temple of Immortals were all annihilated.

“However, neither of the two parties should know that I’m in this place.

“Bai Xinghe was the only one who knew the secret of Yan Xinjian’s secret training room. Also, the two Lustful Rock Spider went on a rampage and buried the entrance to the secret training room with abundant rocks in their fury.

“There are no magical equipment or techniques in the underground fortress. Even if some members of the Temple of Immortals escaped, there should be no reason for them to excavate the underground fortress on a large scale, given the tremendous manpower and resources required.

“Therefore, I can train myself without worry here.

“After one year of training, although my Cultivation is still in the superlative height of the Building Foundation Stage, my combat ability and my battle sense have undergone drastic changes.

“By my estimation, they are at least twice as good as one year ago!

“I’ve been absorbing the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures that Yan Xinjian left with the Art of the Swallowing Whale every day, and my body of flesh and blood have both been upgraded in amazing ways.

“As for the techniques that Yan Xinjian left, except for those that only people above the Core Formation Stage can practice, I’ve studied almost all of them. When I compared them with the techniques that I knew before, I was greatly inspired by the similarities and differences between them.

“Maybe, on the same day next year, I’ll be advancing into the Core Formation Stage!”

…

Li Yao’s training log. Day 577.

“Today, Yan Xinjian’s clones had an unprecedented war.

“In fact, there had been signs of war since days ago. The mice collected a lot of food and crystals, which was quite unusual for them. They then crafted countless ‘flying swords’ that looked like needles and strengthened their ‘castles’. Even the red mice that were often very bad-tempered went quiet.

“However, since my training came to the crucial moment, I didn’t have time to pay attention to the mice.

“When I noticed it, the war between the mice had already begun. The red mice seemed to be planning to destroy all the other mice once and for all.

“At the end of the war, every party involved left almost a thousand bodies. Hundreds of Yan Xinjian’s remaining souls were broken apart. The remaining souls that still existed were extremely lackluster and looked like shaking candles that were about to burn out.

“I even saw that one of Yan Xinjian’s remaining souls tried to possess a mouse, only to fly out in half a minute after crawling into the mouse’s ear. It was even more pitiful after the endeavor.

“That remnant of Yan Xinjian’s soul had been weakened to such a point that it could not guarantee to possess a mouse now.

“I suddenly realized why the war had broken out.

“Yan Xinjian’s doom has come.

“His remaining soul was too weak to be weakened any further. It will perish completely within a year and a half.”

…

Li Yao’s training log. Day 701.

“Anxious. Anxious. I’m very anxious!

“My capability is now so strong!

“I can punch a thousand times in one minute under fifty times the standard gravity. The blast from my fists can trigger a force of thousands of kilograms up to three meters away. With a telepathic thought, the weight of thousands of kilograms can be condensed in an area the size of my fingertip!

“I can survive for dozens of seconds in an environment of almost a thousand degrees, naked. Even if the environment suddenly shifts to minus two hundred degrees, I won’t even bat an eye, and 30% of my combat ability will still remain!

“In the ancient classics of training, it was described that high-level Cultivators were ‘unwavering in front of flood or fire’. That must be what I’m currently experiencing!

“But why can I never find an opportunity to form the core?”

…

Li Yao’s training log. Day 733.

“The red mice have gone extinct today. The ambitions deep inside Yan Xinjian’s heart are finally gone.

“Barely any mice in other colors are alive now. As for the pure white mice, there is only the last of them.

“For some reason, as Yan Xinjian’s remaining soul perished bit by bit, I was gradually grasped by desperation, too, and I did not have the courage to imagine what my life would be like once all the remaining souls were gone.

“Maybe, deep in my mind, I considered his remaining soul as someone alive, no matter how evil and sordid he was.

“Once the ‘someone’ died, I would be the only person in this room.

“Can I really succeed in forming the core? Will I ever get out of this place?

“Today, I asked myself in the mirror such questions.

“A weird thing happened!

“The me in the mirror looked like a totally different person. His left eye was emitting demonic red brightness, and he nodded his head affirmatively with a mysterious smile on his face.

“I was greatly shocked and shook my head hard. When my mind was clear again, I looked at the mirror, only to discover that—

“There was no mirror.

“I was merely talking to myself against a wall.”

…

Li Yao’s training log. Day 809.

“I feel that I’m now mired in a weird swirl.

“My strength continues expanding, but my Cultivation does not rise accordingly.

“Recently, I’ve been feeling that my brain is not enough to control every part of my body. I often make attacking movements subconsciously, like a tyrannosaur driven by the lust of killing whose brain is only the size of a peanut.

“Is this mental derangement?

“I’ve read a lot of books, including those left by Yan Xinjian and the ancient classics in the Heavenly Refining Tower deep inside my brain. I searched for the symptoms of mental derangement when a Cultivator was about to break into a higher level.

“I discovered that the anomalies that happened to me were different from the normal symptoms of mental derangement.

“But anyway, I cannot continue training in such a way. Something serious is definitely going to happen to me if I go on!

“After a long period of consideration, I’ve decided today that I’ll put my training on hold for now.

“After all, my combat ability is dozens of times higher than that of the peak of the Building Foundation Stage in common sense. Since so many Cultivators in the peak of the Building Foundation Stage have formed their cores with a lesser combat ability, the obstacle that blocks me from forming the core should not be my body.

“Of course, I will not idle by ten thousand meters below the ground. Don’t forget that I’m a hybrid-type Cultivator. Other than talent in combats, I’m also gifted at creation!

“I’ve stopped worrying about the ways to form the core and brought out the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, the Dragon King Battlesuit, and the Unparalleled Extension. I plan to study how to combine the two super crystal suits and the most advanced Ares Extension of the Flying Star Sector.

“Many Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures in Yan Xinjian’s training room are not absorbable. Leaving them below the ground will be the greatest waste ever.

“I’m planning to craft the best crystal suit of the Flying Star Sector, the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and the Blood Demon

Sector with those Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures as well as the key components on the two super crystal suits.

“Then, based on the crystal suit, I will build a tailor-made Unparalleled Extension for myself!

“Mystic Skeleton plus Dragon King, Unparalleled in the sea of stars. Just thinking about them is enough to make me thrilled!”

…

Li Yao’s training log. Day 1000.

“What a nice surprise!

“Since I gave up the pursuit of absolute strength when I sensed the untamable desire for killing deep inside my heart half a year ago, I’ve been polishing my mind by refining crystal suits.

“The combination of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and the Dragon King Battlesuit went very well. Also, during the arduous tasks of designing and forging day after day, I could clearly feel that my mind was cleansed and perfected.

“As a result, last night, when I completed the design of a critical valve of the strengthened crystal reactor, I suddenly felt that my spine was itching so hard that I could barely resist. My limbs and internal organs seemed to have turned into endless dragons flooding into my spine and then gathering at the end of my spine!

“I had the feeling that the end of my spine was ‘expanding’.

“I knew that the evolution had begun!

“My ‘second brain’ is awakening, maturing, and taking shape!

“When the ancient Cultivators strove for a higher level, they often valued ‘opportunity’ or ‘spur of the moment’. In fact, such feelings were just the reactions between their brand-new organs and the surrounding spiritual energy.

“This is my opportunity!

“Better late than never. I’m going to have everything prepared in three days and advance into the Core Formation Stage officially!”

Chapter 770 - Breaking Out of Seclusion

Three days later, at the bottom of the secret training room, Li Yao was sitting in the middle of the meditation chamber, which was made of an intact meteorite, surrounded by the carefully selected Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. The pills and the crystals were all glowing, making him seem to be made of translucent jade, too. Immense vitality was flowing below his skin like tides.

After more than three years of high-intensity training in solitude, Li Yao was now more serene, solemn, and peaceful. His eyes looked like oceans before a great storm.

Finally, I've reached the threshold.

Li Yao sensed the tremendous energy inside his body that was about to burst. There was no emotion on his face, not even expectation, because everything was natural and a matter of course.

My current capability is dozens of times higher than the peak of the Building Foundation Stage. Stably compressing such tremendous spiritual energy from the liquid form into the solid form is going to be extremely difficult!

If I'm careless for one moment during the compression, the spiritual energy in the solid form will become disordered and transform into the purest chaos, which will rip me apart directly.

However, if I miraculously succeed…

Li Yao exhaled slightly and dispelled the messy thoughts from his brain.

He checked the items that might be of use for the last time and began the process of forming the core!

I will not fail.

On the other side of the sea of stars, in my home, somebody is waiting for me!

I already have a way to calculate the coordinates of the Heaven's Origin Sector. The path home is right before my eyes!

Nothing in this world is going to stop me!

Li Yao gritted his teeth and activated the 'Core Formation Instrument'.

The Core Formation Instrument was a piece of ancillary magical equipment to help the formation of the core that Li Yao had invented himself. It looked like a special crystal suit, except that countless bottles of drugs were connected to the shell of the magical equipment.

When Li Yao released his spiritual energy unstoppably, the fully-enclosed suit would cover all the spiritual energy inside. Together with the tightness of the meditation chamber, an environment similar to the super-compressed crystal reactor would be simulated.

The strengthening drugs were condensed into lines of liquids thinner than his hair because of the high pressure, and they penetrated into Li Yao's body before being released among Li Yao's muscles, veins, and nerves.

In a moment—

As Li Yao fully released his spiritual energy and started compressing it, Li Yao shuddered violently and felt that his entire spine had woken up. It was expanding, expanding, and expanding into a raging gold dragon!

In the meantime, all kinds of illusions were popping up inside his brain. The wheel of time was reversed, and his consciousness went backwards as if it were ebbing. It returned to the surface of Spider Den, Heavenly Saints City, the Iron Plateau Space Zone, Boneyard, and the Heaven’s Origin Sector. In the end, it came back to the magical equipment graveyard in Floating Spear City of the Star Glory Federation.

He was a baby lying in a stinky gutter, staring at the dim, yellow sky quietly.

Backwards. Backwards. He continued going backwards on the path of his life!

There was suddenly nothing but blackness in front if his eyes. Li Yao found himself in the middle of warm water and could not have felt more comfortable and safer. He had turned into a tiny fetus and returned to the original point of his life.

At this point, his life had only just sprouted. There were endless possibilities in his evolution. His brain, spine, limbs, and internal organs did not exist yet. The only things that existed were episodes of causality that interweaved into helical forms and were dancing like butterflies.

Li Yao’s soul was as clear as moonlight. He knew exactly what he was going to do.

He had already found the password of his body. He would optimize his body from the source and unseal the barrier of evolution so that the speed of evolution could be hundreds, thousands, millions of times higher!

With a telepathic thought, part of Li Yao's spiritual energy flew toward his episodes of causality.

The chains of genes were ripped apart!

The evolution rushed forward toward a whole new direction!

BOOM!

A thunderclap echoed inside Li Yao's spine.

An organ that did not exist in the beginning, similar to the 'spiritual root' except that it was hundreds of times stronger, was sprouting, growing, developing, and expanding at the end of Li Yao's spine!

If Li Yao's soul could have left his body at that moment and observed himself externally, he would have discovered that his every cell was spurting endless light and heat like a volcano. The brilliance had even pierced through the iron suit he was wearing and turned it as transparent as glass.

Below the transparent suit, his veins, nerves, bones, and internal organs were so clear that they seemed to be soaked in certain white, fluorescing liquids.

Li Yao finally could not hold it any longer and roared!

"Ahhhhh!"

He felt as if a small blackhole that was about to devour his soul, flesh, and spiritual energy had appeared at the end of his spine.

He had no choice except to summon the spiritual energy all over his body and throw it into the ‘blackhole’ incessantly!

Li Yao had a vague feeling that, if he could fill the ‘blackhole’ before the spiritual energy inside his body ran out, he would not only be advancing into the Core Formation Stage but also forming a unique, super core.

But if he failed to fill up the ‘blackhole’ before his spiritual energy ran out, it would definitely continue devouring, eventually crushing Li Yao into the most fundamental particles. He would be gone from this world for all eternity!

Time and space had lost their significance. Li Yao had no idea how long the process had lasted at all.

He kept drifting in a vast universe like a lonely cell. His telepathic thoughts left him at the speed of light and turned into shining stars in the dark space very soon.

Did I make it?

Did I make?

Did I?

Did?

?

…

Another year had passed.

It had been five standard years of the Star Ocean Imperium since the great confrontation between the previous king of space pirates and the new one.

The Flying Star Sector had changed more during those five years than it did during the five hundred years before the event.

The fire of war had consumed many space zones. Countless Cultivators had unfortunately perished. A lot of new organizations had risen to fame in the chaos, and the new-generation's experts had gradually stepped onto the stage, drawing new paintings in the sea of stars with their hot blood and the blades in their hands.

Capital Nest, the biggest city on Spider Den, had been totally reshaped by the continuous war.

In the afternoon of that day, inside a forsaken tunnel of Capital Nest, the earth was shaking slightly, and feeble sounds were echoing deep below the ground.

A moment later, the earth suddenly bulged high before it collapsed down and revealed a hole more than half a meter in diameter.

The broken rocks fell silently, but there was no sound of them hitting anything for a long time, which indicated that the hole was very deep and perhaps led to the core of the planet.

Half a minute later, an average-sized young man awkwardly crawled out of the hole.

He looked quite plain. His messy hair covered his shoulder randomly. Since he had been out of the sunlight for a long time, his skin was so pale that it was almost transparent.

His eyes were quite weird. They seemed to be covered by a colorful membrane. Even in the depths of darkness, colorful brilliance was still shining in his eyes as he looked around.

He seemed a bit thin, and there was not much muscle on his body. However, when the sharp-edged rocks scratched his skin, not only did they fail to break his skin, their edges were also polished smooth, as if somebody had touched them thousands of times carefully.

Almost ten colorful rings were outside of the young man’s pupils. In the darkness, all the rings were expanding and shrinking, as if the most precise crystal cameras were adjusting the focal length.

When he finally sensed the brightness outside of the tunnel, the young man was dazed for a moment. His eyes were soon filled with tears. He lay on the ground, his limbs all stretched out and waving crazily. His belly was rising and falling, as if an ocean had been stuffed inside. Cries of joy and relief were echoing deep inside his throat.

The young man was, of course, Li Yao.

After five years, he had finally escaped from Yan Xinjian’s secret training room!

“Old Yan, come here.”

Li Yao cried and laughed for a while. Then he took out from his pocket a metal cylinder, which had ventilation holes, and opened it carefully. Inside the cylinder were two mice.

Over the past five years, Yan Xinjian’s soul fragments that were attached to the mice had gradually withered. When Li Yao broke out of the training room, all the other remaining souls had dispersed except for a mouse that had been emitting white colors in the beginning.

However, the white colors on the mouse was fading away, too, and its behavior was no different from common mice. Regret and longing similar to human beings occasionally appeared in the mouse’s eyes, but they were soon eclipsed by the cruelty of animals.

When Li Yao left Yan Xinjian’s secret training room, he brought the mouse and a female mouse that it would not let go of out together.

“Go now, Old Yan, and your… Xiao Yu.”

Li Yao put the two mice on the ground. They hugged each other and crawled to the inside of the tunnel, staggering. Soon, they disappeared into the darkness.

Watching the two mice gradually disappear, Li Yao felt both delighted and lost.

He calmed himself down and thought of his plan again.

When he was digging holes below the ground, he could vaguely sense the frequent intense explosions on the surface. It seemed that a fierce war was still on.

It was a good sign that suggested that Xiao Xuance’s Grand Illusionary Soldiers had not taken over Spider Den completely yet.

There was still a chance to change everything.

Xiao Xuance, the crownless king of the Flying Star Sector. The war between you and me has finally begun!

Li Yao smiled and walked out of the forsaken tunnel. He raised his right hand and retrieved a ragged, gray coat from his Cosmos Ring before he put the clothes on.

After every step he made, the air around him would slightly change. The strange colors inside his eyes were gone, and his eyes appeared dirtier. His skin, which was as warm and smooth as jade before, turned thick and rough, too.

When he got out of the forsaken tunnel, he seemed to be a totally different person, a shrimp of the lowest class that could be seen everywhere on Spider Den.

Chapter 771 - New Version of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers

Capital Nest was burning.

The biggest city on Spider Den had never been affected by any war since the battle to protect Spider Den five hundred years ago. But in Li Yao’s five-year absence, it had become battered and buried in debris.

Li Yao walked upwards along the spiral stairs. Wherever his eyes reached, he could see that countless tunnels and caves had collapsed, and many of what used to be buildings were debris lying awry on the ground now. Traces of fire and battle could be found in a lot of places. In some places, even the mountains were half blown apart, revealing the bare, ugly rocks below.

Li Yao was planning to capture a space pirate for interrogation when hasty alarms suddenly echoed above his head. He raised his head and found dozens of white pillars of smoke left in the sky, as if several shooting stars had just flown past the broken atmosphere.

Brightness vaguely flowed out of Li Yao’s eyes. He raised his hands and released Neltharion, which had been heavily modified by him. The magical equipment entered stealth mode instantly and observed the earth from the sky hundreds of meters from the ground.

The surface of Spider Den was enshrouded in smoke and dust. The ground near Capital Nest seemed to have been hit by hundreds of meteor showers. Steams and smoke were popping up nonstop from the pits. The colorful smoke did not vanish until a long time later, as if it had been frozen. On the top, the smoke dispersed into what seemed to be mushrooms, making them look like a weird forest.

When the ‘shooting stars’ passed the sky, hundreds of sword auras and pillars of light rose from the ground and darted toward the ‘shooting stars’. A certain defense rune array seemed to be functioning.

However, the trajectories of the ‘shooting stars’ were extremely unsteady, and they were as unpredictable as dry leaves in a blowing wind. Besides, there were defense rune arrays outside of the ‘shooting stars’, too. Even when they were hit by the sword auras on the ground occasionally, they would continue smashing at the ground without being damaged after ripples of light spread out over their surface.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Countless shooting stars hit the ground and raised a sand storm hundreds of meters high.

Soon, clattering noises echoed inside the sandstorm. A silver metal torrent flooded out of the sandstorm and blossomed like a flower into the various tunnels of Capital Nest.

Grand Illusionary Soldiers!

Li Yao pupils constricted violently. From the perspective of Neltharion, he could clearly see that the metal torrent was made of silver war puppets with limbs, a head, and everything. But they were all no higher than two meters. It was unlikely that they were crystal suits. The only possibility was that they were the Grand Illusionary Soldiers!

The Grand Illusionary Soldiers that had been dispatched for the battle were completely different from the prototypes that Li Yao had seen in the Meeting of the Next Millennium five years ago.

They were apparently better made. The rune arrays carved on their bodies were more elegant and glamourous. Illuminated by the setting sun, brilliance was flowing on them, indicating that they were made of more advance materials, too.

The Grand Illusionary Soldiers have been deployed to assault Spider Den, and the Temple of Immortals and the space pirates are actually the defenders now. It seems that the Immortal Cultivators are in a bad position.

A lot of the Cultivators' warships must have gathered near Spider Den.

The Grand Illusionary Soldiers required the Spiritual Nexus to be connected to the enormous database of the Grand Illusionary Group in order to achieve their best performance. Based on Li Yao's knowledge five years ago, there was no Spiritual Nexus in the Spider Den Space Zone.

Therefore, quite a few crystal warships of the Cultivators must have gathered in space and established a temporary network as its nodes.

The Immortal Army and the space pirates in various directions of Capital Nest, noticing that the Grand Illusionary Soldiers had invaded, lunged out and fought the intruders hard.

The Grand Illusionary Soldiers are quite strong. Li Yao observed the situation calmly.

Compared with the prototypes five years ago, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers today moved more agilely and had abundant tactical choices. Li Yao noticed that they frequently performed the classical moves of the best Exos as if actual humans were controlling the metal puppets.

Common Grand Illusionary Soldiers could resist the bombardment of crystal cannons head-on almost five times. For the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, which were more eye-catching in color and protected by multiple layers of spiritual shields, they could even be on par with the space pirates in the Building Foundation Stage during the battle.

It will indeed be terrifying if there are a million such warriors!

Li Yao continued climbing upwards, searching for a suitable target.

Very soon, he found a burning building and a few dead bodies on the ground nearby.

Li Yao opened his fingers. His spiritual energy surged out like a tide and forced the bodies to float in midair.

He moved his fingers quickly. The crystal suits on the few bodies were dissected into the most basic components after a ‘huala’ sound.

Tens of thousands of components formed a tornado in the air and swirled rapidly.

Li Yao curled his finger. The tornado of components moved toward him and wreathed him. After a period of clattering sounds, a brand-new crystal suit was assembled, and the redundant components darted out automatically into the rocks like bullets in earsplitting noises.

His left hand behind him casually, Li Yao extended his right index finger. A brilliant sun was soon shining on his finger.

Immense spiritual waves were spreading out of the light ball, which was soon perceived by the Grand Illusionary Soldiers.

They were like a group of sharks that had smelt a drop of blood.

Seven Grand Illusionary Soldiers immediately lunged at him.

Li Yao shook his right hand. The light ball of spiritual energy vanished into thin air. The surface of his crystal suit was covered in a thin spiritual shield, and he simply allowed the Grand Illusionary Soldiers to barrage him.

He discovered that the Grand Illusionary Soldiers were made of teams of seven. Every team had roles such as remote attackers, melee fighters, snipers, and tanks. The teamwork was neat and flawless, indicating that they had been well-trained.

The specifications of the temporarily assembled crystal suit plummeted like a thermometer that had been broken.

Bathed in the sword auras and the bombardment of spiritual energy, Li Yao noted every perceivable change, deep in thought.

In less than half a minute, the crystal suit on his body had been riddled with holes and was on the brink of destruction.

Some of the crystal cannons hit the parts of his skin that were exposed to the air, but it seemed that they had missed their target since there was absolutely no damage at all.

The combat data has mostly been collected.

Li Yao extended his right hand again and snapped his index finger.

A streak of whiteness darted out of his fingernails and blew up the head of a Grand Illusionary Soldier instantly before it marched to the next one.

It was not until the heads of three Grand Illusionary Soldiers were blown up that a high-pitched noise was echoing above the battlefield.

What is their internal structure?

Li Yao opened his right hand and pressed down. The remaining four Grand Illusionary Soldiers seemed to be suppressed by an invisible mountain. However many sparks were bursting out of their joints, they could not move forward even one step.

Hundreds of spiritual threads emerged like vipers on Li Yao’s right hand. They slithered toward one of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers. They circled around the Grand Illusionary Soldier three times before they found the first gap.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Li Yao’s spiritual threads flew up and down around the Grand Illusionary Soldier. Five minutes later, the Grand Illusionary Soldier was dismantled into the most fundamental components.

The structure is quite precise. The designs of five classical crystal suits have been borrowed from. The key components are all made of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. Quite a piece of magical equipment. It must have consumed a lot of resources, though.

Li Yao’s eyes were like two crystal cameras with extremely high resolutions. The loose components were transformed into microstructural designs and saved in his brain.

In the same way, he dismantled the rest of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers that were designed for different purposes.

According to the different tactical purposes, the sniper, the melee fighter, and the heavy firepower Grand Illusionary Soldiers boast different designs. The commander has a strengthened telepathic thought reception rune array attached to its crystal processor, which ensures that enough information can be received even if the Spiritual Nexus is unstable, and it can share the information with its ‘subordinates’.

Pa!

Li Yao held his right hand. All the components floating in midair were pressed together by the invisible spiritual energy as if they were plasticine. They were crumbled and crushed until they became a big, smooth iron ball.

Watching the iron ball falling into the deepest part of a mining hole, Li Yao was deep in thought. *It seems that the technology in the Grand Illusionary Soldiers has significantly improved in the past five years. Such a team of Grand Illusionary Soldiers may mean little for the Cultivator above the Core Formation Stage, but they can pose a huge threat for common Cultivators.*

If there are enough of them, say, ten thousand, even a Core Formation Stage Cultivator would have a headache.

Also, since those Grand Illusionary Soldiers have been deployed for battles publicly, they are perhaps not the best weapons under Xiao Xuance's control. Chances are that he is manufacturing even stronger Grand Illusionary Soldiers in secret!

Li Yao roamed the battlefield in the ragged crystal suit, looking for a suitable target to interrogate. He was desperate to know what had happened in the outside world exactly during his five years of training below the ground.

He did not intend to capture an ordinary space pirate, because they were merely cannon fodder and had no access to inside information.

He did not want to capture the soldiers of the Immortal Army, either. Those Immortal Cultivators might know much more information, but they were also the most fervent zealots and would not tell him the information he needed easily.

Soon, he found a perfect target.

It was a team of space pirates with a battle emblem of a bloody raindrop, which was a sign of the Storm Prison Pirate Gang, on their crystal suits.

Since Fengyu Zhong was designated by the Temple of Immortals as the new ruler of space pirates, his subordinates must know more than other people do.

The space pirate in the lead is in the peak of the Building Foundation Stage. He must be one of the core members in the Storm Prison Pirate Gang.

It shall be him!

Li Yao moved forward and turned into a streak of brightness. When he accelerated, the whole world seemed to be frozen by a cluster of invisible glue. The Immortal Army, the space pirates, and the Grand Illusionary Soldiers were suddenly slowed down, and he was the only one that retained the high speed!

Shua!

When Li Yao reached the center of the battlefield, the ragged crystal suit on his body had long been shattered, but his target was a muscular man more than two meters tall, more than 2.5 meters tall including his heavy crystal suit.

However, Li Yao snatched the neck of the space pirate with his right hand only and dragged him off the battlefield without any trouble!

Chapter 772 - This Is the Last War!

The space pirates, the Immortal Cultivators, and the Grand Illusionary Soldiers only sensed something flash by. The next thing they knew, a man who had been jumping and yelling a moment ago vanished into thin air!

Inside an abandoned warehouse far away from the battlefield, Li Yao shook his right hand, and cracking noises echoed inside the space pirate’s body, which looked like a black, iron tower. Li Yao broke all his joints, and he was tossed to the ground like a spineless snake.

Li Yao’s spiritual energy entered the space pirate’s body and mercilessly stimulated the nerve endings and acupoints like needles.

“Ahhhh!”

The space pirates jerked up as if he had been hit by ten thousand lightning bolts simultaneously, only to be pressed down by Li Yao’s spiritual energy. He seemed to have hit an invisible cap and fell back to the ground heavily. His eyes were so bloodshot that they might have burst out at any point!

Right when his soul power was the weakest, redness blinked in Li Yao’s eyes, and he threw a ‘terror bomb’ into the space pirate’s brain, where it was detonated!

In a moment, the space pirate began seeing all kinds of illusions. He felt if he was placed in the middle of a magnificent furnace whose walls were as smooth as mirror. He could not get out of the cage however hard he tried. On the bottom of the furnace, the temperature was rising, and the air gradually turned more scorching than ever.

On the top of the furnace was a horrendous devil that was staring at him emotionlessly.

The space pirate completely broke down and stopped struggling. He breathed heavily and cramped uncontrollably.

Li Yao observed for a moment and asked solemnly, “Did you enter the underground fortress five years ago? What became of Bai Xinghe in the end?”

The space pirate shuddered in both fear and confusion. As if hypnotized, he murmured, “Five years ago, I followed captain and went to the underground fortress. But we encountered flood, explosions, and collapses and got trapped for an entire month before we finally escaped.

“Bai Xinghe… Boss Bai… was strong. Too strong!

“Boss Bai fought hundreds of space pirates and Immortal Cultivators all by himself. He heavily wounded captain and the Black King of the Temple of Immortals. Although the blood on his body was almost running dry, he killed two of the Eight Blades of Black Spider unhurriedly before he finally fell into the flood.

“We searched for his body in the water for a long time but found nothing. It was perhaps swept to a deeper part of the underground fortress by the flood.”

“Oh?”

Li Yao was immediately interested. It was unlikely that Bai Xinghe survived the battle against two experts in the Nascent Soul Stage and hundreds of other high-level Cultivators. However, since the man’s body was never found, he could make something out of that.

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao spoke again. “Tell me any news on the Great Horn Exo Society in the past five years.”

The space pirate quickly replied, “The Great Horn Exo Society has been growing quickly over the past five years. It is almost the biggest Exo Society of the Flying Star Sector now. They established their headquarters on Iron Plateau, and a lot of elites among the qi-trainers have joined the Great Horn Exo Society. As for their equipment, the Glorious Sunlight Group has greatly supported them.

“The Glorious Sunlight Group is another organization that has been expanding quickly over the past five years. The Glorious Sunlight Magical Equipment Research Center is now almost on par with the three main crystal suit centers and has provided a lot of advanced magical equipment.

“Supported by Iron Plateau and the Glorious Sunlight Group, although Lei Dalu, the captain, and Bai Kaixin, the advisor, are merely in the Core Formation Stage, the Great Horn Exo Society has a lot of hands and a high comprehensive capability despite its lack of super warriors!”

Lei Dalu and Bai Kaixin had both escaped!

Li Yao was greatly relieved. It was a piece of good news that he had been looking forward to for five years.

“Has the Glorious Sunlight Group been developing fast recently?” Li Yao asked calmly.

In the space pirate’s illusion, Li Yao’s voice was as overwhelming and irresistible as thunder. He could only confess obediently. “Very fast. The Glorious Sunlight Group is already one of the strongest organizations in the Flying Star Sector, other than the six sects of Heavenly Saints City. There is a guy named Wu Mayan in the Glorious Sunlight Group. He is the best expert in the younger generation of the Flying Star Sector now. He has killed many of our people in the past five years. The Black Spider Tower organized several assassinations against him, but none of the attempts succeeded.”

Li Yao could not help but smile in his mind. The young Wu Mayan was indeed not idling around!

Having received satisfactory answers to the three most crucial questions, Li Yao was much more confident about the situation right now. He then asked the space pirate about the history of the Flying Star Sector in the past five years unhurriedly.

It was only after he asked carefully that he learned a great many events had taken place in the Flying Star Sector over the past five years.

Five years ago, during the final battle between the old king of space pirates and the new, although Fengyu Zhong and the Black King had been heavily wounded and Bai Wulei had even been executed by Bai Xinghe, Bai Xinghe’s great escape plan did not work out in the end because of Bai Kaixin’s abrupt appearance. The Temple of Immortals still controlled Spider Den.

Then, the survivors of the Temple of Immortals got out of the underground fortress in the next month and successfully subdued all the forces that were still loyal to Bai Xinghe.

Since Bai Xinghe and Bai Wulei were both dead, there was a power vacuum in the Abyss Pirate Gang. It was incorporated into the Immortal Army and the Storm Prison Pirate Gang.

After taking over the whole of Spider Den, the Temple of Immortals soared in capability. It began carrying out operations everywhere and harassing all the remote space zones.

In the first two years, they made a lot of progress. During their prime days, they even occupied two space zones and established governments according to their ideology.

But their good days did not last long.

The assaults of the Immortal Cultivators triggered the deepest sense of crisis for the Cultivators. All the sects dedicated their available resources to the production of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers without caring about the cost.

As more and more Grand Illusionary Soldiers rushed out of the assembly lines, those war machines that were tireless and fearless were deployed to the remote space zones and the dangerous sailing routes. They were like nooses that gradually tightened the necks of the Immortal Cultivators and the space pirates.

In the beginning, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers could do nothing except increase the cost and duration of the space pirate’s jobs.

Even so, the space pirates already felt very uncomfortable because they had to pay more, and their gains were fewer.

Gradually, with the technology of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers growing more and more mature and better materials being adopted, the combat ability of the Grand

Illusionary Soldiers significantly increased. They were able to fight the space pirates in high-intensity combat.

The remote space zones that used to be flat plateaus turned into marshes and swamps when the tremendous Grand Illusionary Soldiers guarded them. When they were careless and got trapped by the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, they would not be able to get away unless they paid a high price.

After several large pirate gang got trapped by the Grand Illusionary Soldiers when they were plundering and were annihilated by the reinforcing Cultivators later, all the space pirates began hesitating. They often did not dare do anything until they had lurked for months and made thorough plans. Even so, the success rate of their missions was dropping fast.

Faced with such a dilemma, the Immortal Cultivators offered no good solutions. Over the years, they attempted to lure the extraterrestrial devils in several space zones. But the Grand Illusionary Soldiers were like the insecticide for the extraterrestrial devils. The hasty operations did not achieve the desired results at all. Instead, the hatred and the resolution of the entire Flying Star Sector were triggered by their boldness.

“Let’s go to Spider Den and destroy the Temple of Immortals once and for all!”

It became the unanimously agreed slogan in the Flying Star Sector for all the Cultivators and ordinary people.

The Flying Star Sector was on the move. Every magical equipment center was crafting the components of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers day and night. Every light beam was displaying the scenes where the Grand Illusionary Soldiers fought the extraterrestrial devils. Every kid’s favorite toy for their birthday was a model of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers!

Just like that, starting from the third year, the attackers and the defenders swapped their roles. The Temple of Immortals and the space pirates experienced unprecedented failures in all space zones. Not only were the Immortal Army and the pirate gangs defeated brutally many times, many Immortal Cultivators who had been lurking in the world of Cultivators were also dug out and executed with their names rotten.

By the fourth year, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers covered 70% of the space zones of the Flying Star Sector. Many sects and space towns had handed over the guardian work of the sailing routes to them.

The impregnable dragnet had wreathed all the sailing routes and the important space towns. The space pirates and the extraterrestrial devils that had savaged the Flying Star Sector in the old days were rushing toward their doom.

In the fifth year, the fully-blown counterattack of the Cultivators began.

Not only were the two space zones occupied by the Immortal Cultivator recovered, the vanguards made of the Heaven’s Origin Sector had even marched into the Spider Den Space Zone.

The Temple of Immortals was no longer as impressive as it had been five years ago. It was like a stray dog whose legs were all broken and could only manage to hold out on Spider Den.

As their doom drew closer and closer, some of them thought of surrendering.

However, the Cultivators had made announcements stating that the space pirates and the Immortal Cultivators had the blood of the innocent all over their hands, and they were unpardonable by any criterion. Therefore, their surrender would not be accepted, and they would be completely annihilated!

Right now, the troops of the Cultivators had established a defense line in space at the periphery of the Spider Den Space Zone.

They had taken over a space gate left by the Star Ocean Imperium and were busy repairing it.

The so-called ‘space gate’ was not really a gate but a super space lighthouse made of countless star beacons.

Once repaired, the ‘lighthouse’ would release immeasurable spiritual waves and broadcast its coordinates clearly in order to provide navigation for the crystal warships that were performing a space jump.

The Flying Star Sector was too large. The dozens of space zones were far away from each other. It was impossible for the troops to cruise to the Spider Den Space Zone slowly, because it would consume too much fuel and time. Chances were that it would take a fleet in the furthest space zone dozens of years to arrive in the Spider Den Space Zone.

Once the space gate was repaired, the coordinates of the Spider Den Space Zone would be highlighted unmistakably on the space map. Through space jumps, all the fleets would be able to show up in the Spider Den Space Zone instantly.

The Cultivators, the Immortal Cultivators, and the space pirates all knew that it was the final war!

Right now, the space pirates of the entire Flying Star Sector and the soldiers of the Temple of Immortals were all hiding on Spider Den, waiting for their doom.

It was also said that the leaders of the big sects of Flying Star Sector had gathered in Heavenly Saints City. A morale-building rally was about to be held.

Once the space gate was repaired, countless Cultivators, crystal warships, and Grand Illusionary Soldiers would show up around Spider Den through space jumps. They would launch a thunderous attack and crush the planet into smithereens forever!

Chapter 773 - Space Gate

The space pirates and the Immortal Cultivators were very clear that they would be doomed when the space gate was successfully repaired.

Therefore, since the day they found the fleet of the Cultivators at the periphery of the Spider Den Space Zone, brutal battles had never ceased, not for a single day.

The space pirates and the Immortal Cultivators were sabotaging the repair work of the space gate so that they could postpone the date of their death day by day.

As for the Cultivators, not only did they establish defense lines near the space gate, they had also launched a lot of Grand Illusionary Soldiers to Spider Den on a regular basis.

It was partly to stall the space pirates and the Immortal Cultivators and partly reconnaissance by firepower. Through the data collected in the battles, the final battle could be won easier.

As more and more crystal warships fully loaded with Grand Illusionary Soldiers marched into the Spider Den Space Zone, the space pirates and the Immortal Cultivators began showing the signs of losing. Their multiple assaults had met failures. It was very likely that the space gate would finish construction within one month.

That was all the information that the space pirate knew.

Of course, Li Yao did not show any mercy to the member of the Storm Prison Pirate Gang. After hearing everything, he snapped a light ball with his right hand, which pierced through the captive's breastplate and into his chest. The spiritual energy immediately melted his heart like magma.

The space pirate's bulged. They were still filled with confusion and consternation, but they gradually lost their color.

Li Yao fell into deep thought. If everything was part of Xiao Xuance's plan, what was he up to exactly? Was he really going to destroy Spider Den?

A moment later, Li Yao waved his fist and almost shouted out aloud.

He understood it now! He understood everything!

Five years ago. He had been discussing the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project with Professor Mo Xuan. At that time, they had agreed that, even if Xiao Xuance set up backdoors in the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, it was impossible for him to take control over all the Grand Illusionary Soldiers in the dozens of space zones simultaneously.

Due to the long distance between space zones, the transmission of telepathic thoughts had latency even if they were transmitted at the speed of light.

The Cultivators in a different space zone had many ways to cut off connection from the Spiritual Nexus with other space zones and turn the Spiritual Nexus of their space zone into a local area network. Any commands from the outside world would be blocked!

However, in the final battle, the problem would be no more!

This was the final war. In order to completely destroy Spider Den, the Cultivators would definitely concentrate most of the available soldiers and crystal warships to this place. The Grand Illusionary Soldiers would also be shipped here through space jumps. The greatest hazard of the Flying Star Sector would be dealt with once and for all!

Since all the Grand Illusionary Soldiers were focused in the same space zone, the latency of the Spiritual Nexus did not exist!

Besides, in a battlefield, there could only be one commander and one voice. It was impossible for all the units to fight on their own. Therefore, after they gathered in the Spider Den Space Zone, all the Grand Illusionary Soldiers and Cultivators would definitely be commanded as a whole. Who else could the supreme commander be except for Xiao Xuance, the crownless king of the Flying Star Sector?

It would be even easier for Xiao Xuance to do his tricks!

“Spider Den is Xiao Xuance’s bait. The Temple of Immortals and the Immortal Cultivators are merely Xiao Xuance’s stepping stones. Everything he has been doing is to focus most of the strength of the Flying Star Sector and the Grand Illusionary Soldiers in the Spider Den Space Zone!

“Xiao Xuance is taking the Blood God’s example!” Li Yao mumbled and shuddered violently.

Ten thousand years ago, during the prime years of the Star Ocean Imperium, an expedition army was formed by all the elites of the nation and marched toward the last nest of the demon race.

They had thought that they would be sure winners and that the demon race would be wiped out without much trouble.

However, the Blood God, the supreme commander of the expedition army, was transformed into the Mad Armageddon and rebelled. He then made an alliance with the demon race, manipulated by the extraterrestrial devils.

Struck by the rebellions and the demon race together, the expedition army, which represented the top combat ability of mankind, was obliterated!

If there are really backdoors in the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, after all the people are gathered in the Spider Den Space Zone, Xiao Xuance will activate his plan, and the Grand Illusionary Soldiers will attack the Cultivators under his command together with the space pirates and the Immortal Cultivators!

Caught off guard, the Cultivators will definitely suffer heavy losses, if not leaving no survivors at all!

This is going to be the last war. When the elites in the world of Cultivators perish, the space zones without guardians will be like fat lambs that can only wait to be butchered!

Yes. Yes. This is the only possible plan and the only hope for the Immortal Cultivators to win the war when they are terribly outnumbered!

Li Yao had been suspicious for a long time. Compared to the Cultivators, the Immortal Cultivators were too weak. Their schemes in the Skyhill Domain, Iron Plateau, Heavenly Saints City, and Spider Den, although neat and seamless, were all restricted to the tactical level. Even if all their schemes worked out, they were not likely to really shake the foundation of the Cultivators’ reign in the Flying Star Sector. If anything, they would only expose themselves more and more during the operations.

The Immortal Cultivators were never going to win a war of attrition!

If Li Yao could think of that, the schemers among the Immortal Cultivators must have been able to think of that, too. But they had jumped out unhesitatingly anyway and implemented their cruel, sordid plans one after another.

Why?

Before, Li Yao had been baffled.

But now, he had fully understood.

It did not matter how many times the Immortal Cultivators failed. Even if they had failed in the Skyhill Domain, on Iron Plateau, in Heavenly Saints City, and on Spider Den alike, it was not important.

As long as they acted like they were a threat and everyone supported the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project, driven by their sense of crisis, it would be good enough!

The space pirates, the Immortal Cultivators, the Black Spider Tower, the Temple of Immortals… All of them were mere insignificant chess pieces.

Xiao Xuance and his Grand Illusionary Soldiers were the real players here!

Right now, the players had made their final move. The trap was already taking shape!

No. I cannot allow the space gate to be repaired.

Right now, the leaders of every space zone and the officials of the important sects are all on their way to Heavenly

Saints City for the morale-building rally.

When the morale-building rally is over, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers and the crystal warships in various space zones will perform space jumps and reach this place together!

After they all arrive, Xiao Xuance will be able to initiate his final scheme!

If I destroy the space gate, I can at least buy myself enough time to leave for Heavenly Saints City and unveil Xiao Xuance's true face in front of everyone!

Li Yao did not have any evidence right now. Everything was just his speculation. However, he was ninety percent confident about his deduction.

It was, naturally, very tricky to accuse the crownless king of the Flying Star Sector without proof.

However, the validness of an accusation had a lot to do with the person who made it.

If Bai Xinghe went to accuse Xiao Xuance, nobody would believe him even if he was speaking the truth.

But Li Yao was different. He was a big hero of the Flying Star Sector, the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, and the real controller of the Glorious Sunlight Group!

Li Yao was not worried that the Glorious Sunlight Group would betray him, because the foundation of the Glorious Sunlight Group was its research center. Even if everybody else in the world betrayed him, the research center, supervised by Professor Mo Xuan, would stand by him.

With my words, I can influence the decisions of the Glorious Sunlight Group, Iron Plateau, and the Great Horn Exo Society. When they take action together, a chain reaction in the world of Cultivators will be triggered. I don't believe that Xiao Xuance will stand by and watch.

When he takes measures, his flaws will be revealed, and I will finish him quickly with a headshot!

Li Yao thought of something and realized that such a plan was a bit too passive. He might not be able to reveal Xiao Xuance's plot completely.

Maybe, I should dig a pit for Xiao Xuance with something that only I know about…

But right now, let me check the space gate first!

Only a minority of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers were sent to Spider Den after all. They were gradually extinguished by the space pirates and the Immortal Cultivators.

The secret docks below Spider Den launched countless crystal warships, which marched into space with long exhaust flames behind.

With Li Yao's Cultivation right now, he easily snuck into a crystal warship and got a ride into space.

After more than half a day's flight, they were already in the vast universe. The continuous flames of war dyed the darkness crimson.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Before they entered the battlefield, the surging spiritual waves were already crashing into the shell of the crystal warship like tireless tides.

Then, earsplitting alarms echoed. The crystal warship shook suddenly and lost all its momentum. It circled and crumbled slowly.

They had been hit by a dense bombardment and ripped apart.

Hiu!

Wearing the standard crystal suit of the Immortal Army, which he had taken from an unlucky man, Li Yao dived into space like a normal soldier.

The spectacular view he saw, however, made him stop breathing briefly.

More than a hundred large star beacons, each of which was almost a hundred meters long, formed what seemed to be a cube. Every ridge of the cube was dozens of kilometers long.

Spiritual energy reverberated between the star beacons. Brilliant lines connected them, making them clear and eye-catching in the dark universe.

They seemed to be a cube made of a deity that had been left in space.

It was the space gate.

Right now, countless refiners and mechanics were clinging to the star beacons like ants on a pebble. They were seizing every second to repair the devices. (Updated by NovelFull.Com)

The eight angles of the space gate each had an enormous star fortress. They looked like eight giant honeycombs.

Every honeycomb was almost a hundred kilometers in diameter. Countless crystal suits, armed shuttles, and even crystal warships were entering and exiting the 'honeycombs'.

It was really incredible that eight star fortresses of such enormous scale had been moved to the frontline.

Centered around the eight star fortresses, dozens of defense lines spread out and covered the space gate tightly.

The space pirates, the Cultivators, the Immortal Cultivators, and the Grand Illusionary Soldiers were involved in fierce combat in the cold universe. The scorching flowers of death were blossoming on the dead bodies and the remains of the starships. Tides of spiritual energy pushed away the corpses and the debris in various directions like dandelions in a blowing wind.

The space gate is about to be recovered. Only one corner is still lackluster.

Other than the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, the elites of the Cultivators are stationed here, too!

Li Yao frowned. He saw that the battle emblems of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City were carved on many crystal warships.

In the fierce battles, many Exos showed excellent combat ability, too.

Xiao Xuance's scheme was top secret. Perhaps few Immortal Cultivators in the Temple of Immortals knew it. Naturally, the

Cultivators in this place were not likely to be his accomplices. They were probably cannon fodder that had been fooled to go there.

Therefore, Li Yao could not simply kill them.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao thought of an approach.

Chapter 774 - Li Yao's Scheme, Begin!

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Li Yao’s two eyes seemed to have become two black holes. Endless stars in the universe, together with the two parties that were involved in the fierce battles, especially the experts, were devoured. Their coordinates, their movement patterns, and the trajectories of their attacks were all transformed into a series of complicated data. A bright golden storm of data was congregating inside Li Yao’s brain as he calculated and sorted through every detail in the battlefield.

For a moment, Li Yao considered whether or not he should reveal his identity immediately and announce Xiao Xuance’s scheme to public.

But he abandoned the idea very quickly.

When an arrow was put on the bow, it had to be shot out. For a war that everybody in the Flying Star Sector was involved in, the daily consumption of resources was already astronomical. For the war to be halted or stopped because of several words from somebody was impossible.

With Xiao Xuance’s position, power, and prestige, he was not likely to be crushed by groundless rumors, either.

If Li Yao launched his attack prematurely, he could only raise Xiao Xuance’s wariness, defense, and readiness. Xiao Xuance would cover any flaws in his facade, and he would also launch the fiercest counterattack in order to destroy Li Yao and even the Glorious Sunlight Group, the Great Horn Exo Society, and Iron Plateau behind him!

However, the space gate is about to be completed, and the final battle could happen at any moment. I don’t have any time to collect evidence!

Besides, Xiao Xuance is a prudent, meticulous man. In order to achieve his purpose, he sacrificed his own son. For such a brutal man, how much evidence will he have left for me to find?

The time is too urgent. I have to gamble. If Xiao Xuance doesn’t bite my bait, I can always reveal my identity and speak the truth to everybody!

In that moment, Li Yao planned a trap for Xiao Xuance!

First, he was going to attack the defense lines of the space gate together with the space pirates!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The flowers of death were blossoming among the space pirates and the Immortal Army. Countless Immortal Cultivators were blown up by the immense blast.

Without the protection of spiritual energy, their broken bodies were soon frozen into icy blocks by the cold universe, drifting randomly in the battlefield.

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and calculated the trajectories of the bombardment quickly. It took him five seconds to find a satisfactory coordinate and angle.

Without any hesitation, he charged at where the Cultivators' defense was weakest, with an orange exhaust flame spurting out of his back.

Half a minute later, Li Yao was hit precisely by a powerful crystal cannon in the front!

The bombardment came from the main cannon of a crystal warship. The tremendous spiritual energy stored in the attack blew him away instantly!

When the light of the crystal cannon died down, although Li Yao's body was still intact, his crystal suit had been battered, and blood was flowing out all over his body.

The blood was soon frozen and turned into crimson frost.

Li Yao drifted slowly toward a corner of the space gate as if he were a dead body.

There were many dead bodies similar to him on the battlefield. Nobody paid him much attention.

Sneaking into the defense line under the disguise of a corpse was a common strategy. However, the soldiers who carried out such a strategy had to wear a crystal suit when they pretended to be dead bodies, too.

In the airless, frigid space, without the protection of a crystal suit, even Cultivators would not able to hold on for long.

At the very least, their heads had to be protected by helmets, which would provide necessary oxygen and energy.

On the other hand, Li Yao was only covered by twisted scraps of his crystal suit, which had been melted onto his body as if it were slag.

His head was exposed to the vacuum. His eyes were wide open and dim. His facial expression was frozen in the bewilderment at the last moment of his life. Over all, he looked like a vivid rock statue.

Shua! Shua! Shua!

Mystic rays beamed out of the Cultivators’ crystal warships and scanned the battlefield carefully, especially the ‘dead bodies’ whose limbs were intact and whose crystal suit was undamaged.

If so much as the tiniest spiritual wave was perceived, the crystal warships would bombard the targets mercilessly until the dead bodies were blown into ashes together with their crystal suits.

Corpses like Li Yao that did not have crystal suits and had twisted limbs were determined to be ‘lifeless’ and simply ignored by the crystal warships.

Li Yao gradually approached the space gate.

The powerful crystal cannon gave him a high initial velocity. In the vacuum where there was barely any friction, he was like a shooting star.

However—

There were too many variants in a battlefield, and he could not take all the accidents into consideration.

A crystal warship suddenly exploded near him, and its debris smashed at him like a hurricane.

With Li Yao’s Cultivation right now, he could resist all the incoming scraps as long as he placed the weakest spiritual shield around him.

But as a ‘dead body’, he could not do that.

The distance is close enough, Li Yao thought as he calculated quickly. At this moment, there were the last fifteen kilometers between him and a star beacon that had been repaired.

Then—it’s time to take action!

In a moment, Li Yao’s eyes turned from a dull gray to shining gems. Endless lightning was dancing around his pupils. The crimson frost on his skin was boiled into a bloody aura that surrounded him!

Hiu!

Li Yao did not crash at the space gate. Instead, he darted toward a crystal warship that was closest to him!

…

Rong Jun was extremely excited in the simmering battlefield.

Rong Jun was a Cultivator in the high level of the Building Foundation Stage and also an experienced Exo. It had been more than half a month since he came to the front line, and he had participated in more than ten bloody battles where he had slain dozens space pirates and Immortal Cultivators. Naturally, his excitement was not because of a regular battle.

He was so thrilled that he was barely able to control himself because another batch of Cultivators had arrived in the Spider Den Space Zone.

Long Feihu, his idol and the undefeated champion of the Heavenly Sword Arena, was among the newcomers!

Long Feihu was a top expert who had been famous for almost fifty years. He was in the high level of the Building Foundation Stage, and his skills in operating a crystal suit were fantastic. In the Heavenly Sword Arena, one of the top five arenas of Heavenly Saints City, he had once secured a miraculous hundred-win streak!

Many young men of the Flying Star Sector actually embarked on the path of an Exo after watching Long Feihu’s combat videos!

Rong Jun was no exception. When he was little, Long Feihu had already distinguished himself. He kept Long Feihu’s personal autograph to this day, which was the most valuable treasure for him.

He did not expect that he would be fighting side by side with his greatest idol. Besides, the two of them were so close to each other. How could Rong Jun not be excited?

Long Feihu! The expert who secured a hundred victories in a row! The legendary expert of the Heavenly Sword Arena!

Strong. He is so strong. Just one slash, and a ‘Greedy Wolf Battlesuit’ has been chopped in half!

The helmet and the breastplate of such a crystal suit adopted the Great Bright Alloy, which is extremely hard. They are designed to resist the bombardment of a crystal cannon multiple times. But Long Feihu broke them apart with a casual attack!

In the chaos of the battle, neither of the two parties were able to keep their battle formation. It had become an open hunting ground.

Rong Jun simply chose to stay closely behind Long Feihu. He accepted his idol's temporary command and teamed up with him, while he observed his idol's battle skills.

Rong Jun had thought that Long Feihu's fighting style was the glamor and sophistication he demonstrated in the Heavenly Sword Arena.

But now that he was on the battlefield, he realized that Long Feihu had not been giving his best performance in the arena at all. His real fighting style was simple, straightforward, and cruel. The piercing and the slashing were clean and quick. Barely any space pirates or Immortal Cultivators could let him attack twice. In several minutes, countless dead bodies were already floating around Long Feihu. He was likely the most precise slaughtering machine in the world!

Rong Jun was completely fascinated. He was about to cheer for his idol loudly in the communication channel!

Suddenly—

Earsplitting alarms echoed inside Rong Jun's crystal processor. An immense spiritual wave was darting at an unimaginable speed from behind him!

Before he realized what was going on, Long Feihu had rushed upward!

Then, Rong Jun felt as if a crystal warship was rushing at full speed crashed into him!

I'm screwed!

Rong Jun was blown away before he had the chance to scream.

With his abundant experience in fighting, he knew clearly that it was probably the last second of his life.

However, in the next second, as he gradually freed himself from the tremendous blast stabilized himself, Rong Jun discovered, to his surprise, that he was not dead. In fact, there were not the slightest injuries on his body. Even his crystal suit was undamaged!

How is this possible?

Rong Jun was immediately soaked in cold sweat. At first, he thought that he had been hit by a mental attack. But when he looked at his surroundings, he found out that he had truly been blown several kilometers away!

This… this is impossible!

A stream of spiritual energy blew me several kilometers away without hurting me at all? Who—who did it? His control over spiritual energy must be incredibly precise!

Before Rong Jun recovered from his daze, he saw an even more dumbfounding scene!

His crystal camera found that Long Feihu, his idol, was floating a kilometer away like a puppet that had lost all its strings. Flames were bursting out from all the key parts of his crystal suit, as if somebody had chopped off all the transmission tubes of his crystal suit!

“Senior Long!”

Countless exclamations echoed inside the communication channel.

Clearly, Rong Jun was not the only person who had seen the shocking view.

“Cough cough. Cough cough cough cough!”

After three seconds of silence, Long Feihu’s coughs came over in the communication channel.

Along with the coughs was a furious roar. “Got away. He got away!”

“Long—Long Feihu was totally crushed in just one second!”

(Updated by NovelFull.Com)

Something deep down in Rong Jun’s heart seemed to be collapsing. He held back his astonishment and looked at Long Feihu’s back.

He saw a streak of redness hundreds of meters long that looked like a shooting star with a long exhaust flame. It was zigzagging agilely in the impregnable web of fire. The crystal cannons hit him multiple times, but in the end, it was the blurred shadow of him that was shattered.

Within a breath, after altering his direction hundreds of times, the red shooting star with an extremely long exhaust flame crashed into the front of a crystal warship heavily!

Chapter 775 - Reappearance!

Chapter 775: Reappearance!

If it were not for his helmet, Rong Jun’s jaw would have hit the ground.

When a crystal warship was sailing in the universe, sometimes it would have to pass through meteoroid showers. Therefore, the head of the crystal warships was always specially strengthened. Even if it were hit by the main cannon of the enemy, it might not necessarily take any damage.

However, the streak of redness was like a burnt iron chopstick piercing through tofu. It was not in the least hindered and penetrated into the crystal warship easily.

The only thing left was a pure round and red hole around which the steel was bulging and melting into an orange ring.

The communication channel was immediately thrown into chaos. Somebody was calling for reinforcements, somebody was contacting the Cultivators in the crystal warship, and somebody was shouting to determine the stranger’s identity by comparing his features with the profiles in the database.

However, after less than twenty seconds, the streak of redness penetrated through the other end of the crystal warship!

Never in the Cultivators wildest dreams had they foreseen that an expert on the enemy’s side could pass through a crystal warship in less than twenty seconds.

There were no Cultivators behind the crystal warship!

Then, Rong Jun saw a devastating scene.

In the blink of an eye, the streak of redness reached the front of a star beacon.

Due to the long distance and the crimson aura around the enemy, Rong Jun could not tell what the enemy’s crystal suit looked like exactly. He only saw that six limbs around five meters long extended out of the redness, as if a weird, giant spider had stretched out. Then, the six limbs pierced into the star beacon brutally!

Every star beacon was almost a hundred meters long, protected by powerful defense rune arrays.

However, no matter how brilliantly the stripes on the defense rune arrays were shining and how forceful the electric arcs they released were, they could not stop the intruder from blowing six holes in the hundred-meter-long star beacon with the six limbs!

On the back of the star beacon, six volcanoes seemed to erupt at the same time. Countless components and scraps spurted out together with the flames and poured into the depths of the sea of stars.

Then, the man held the star beacon with his six limbs and started spinning it. In just one second, he had spun the star beacon almost a thousand times!

Is he a human being?

Rong June felt that his head was dizzy, and his heart was freezing. The endless data jumping out of the light beam made him wonder whether or not he was in the middle of a dream!

In the end, the man threw the star beacon away brutally. The star beacon immediately turning into a roaring shooting star and crashed at the star beacons further ahead.

BOOM!

There was no sound in the vacuum, but the spiritual waves raised by the huge collision of the two star beacons were like a tsunami. Rong Jun could not help but move backward, as if he had heard an earsplitting explosion.

The star beacons that were used to navigate the long-distance space jumps were very precise magical equipment. When the two star beacons crashed heavily, the violent shaking triggered a certain chain reaction in the components inside them. After a few weird flashes, the two star beacons collapsed toward the center and exploded within a breath. The fireballs expanded stubbornly in the vacuum like a deformed tumor. Dazzling, eccentric colors were beaming out!

Although Rong Jun was not a refiner, he could tell that the two star beacons had been destroyed!

The crimson shadow slowly rose up from the red lotuses of destruction and stared at the battlefield like an invincible God of War.

Although Rong Jun was behind the enemy, he still shivered and had a feeling that a ferocious animal had got its eyes on him and would bite off his head as soon as he moved slightly!

What was odd was that the mysterious intruder suddenly went rigid, and even bent his body, for a moment in the battlefield full of unexpected factors.

Rong Jun did not know what it meant. Ever since the crimson shadow showed up, his movements had been clean and precise without the slightest hesitation. But right now, he seemed to be… catching his breath?

The chaos and noise in the communication channel gradually cleared up and calmed down.

Countless Cultivators and Grand Illusionary Soldiers were marching toward the mysterious expert.

But the mysterious expert did not dawdle for too long. Before he was surrounded, he dashed out of the circle at an amazingly high speed.

When Long Feihu came back to himself, he changed to a speed-type crystal suit and chased after the enemy. But after half a minute of rushing, the distance between them only continued to increase. He could only shake his head and abandon the pursuit.

The enemy reached the most chaotic area of the battlefield and split off into dozens of blurred shadows that ran in different directions.

The serial explosions of the two crystal warships were like a hurricane that blew away all the blurred shadows.

The Cultivators and the Immortal Cultivators alike lost track of the expert.

He had gone.

Rong Jun looked at where the enemy had disappeared, dumbfounded, unable to calm himself down for a long time.

When he looked back, he found that the two star beacons had been completely melted into wasted iron and copper. They were now beyond repair.

Rong Jun sighed. Those star beacons were mostly magical equipment left by the Star Ocean Imperium that were now put into use again after maintenance.

With the technology of the Flying Star Sector, it was possible to produce more of them, but it would require a huge amount of manpower and resources, and it would take at least a month to ship the new star beacons to the frontline after they were manufactured.

The space gate was a precise system. Without the broken and damaged star beacons, it would not be able to guide the space jumps of the large-scale fleets. Should there be an error, the whole fleet might end up in a foreign, desolate space zone outside of the Flying Star Sector, or even directly twisted in the four-dimensional universe.

The day of the final battle has to be put off for at least a month.

Rong Jun felt that his head was aching.

Right then, he heard Long Feihu’s solemn voice in the communication channel. “The stranger is in the Nascent Soul Stage and has never appeared before!”

The appearance of a new expert in the Nascent Soul Stage was not just a headache for the Cultivators on the battlefield.

Since the arrival of the extraterrestrial devils five years ago, the Cultivators had decided to implement the ‘Grand Illusionary Soldier Project’ and set up a command center in Heavenly Saints City that was responsible for the organization of the war against the Temple of Immortals.

At this moment, it had been three hours since the two star beacons were destroyed.

The command center was still in a mess because of the aftershock of the incident.

The damage of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was equal to that of a crystal warship. But their stealth ability and their agility were hundreds of times higher than those of a crystal warship. They were essentially strategic weapons that could move, attack, or hide themselves!

If a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator had made up their mind, it would not be a problem if they intended to destroy a city or suppress an asteroid!

Therefore, for the two parties engaged in any war, they had to closely monitor the first-rate and the super experts in the peak of the Core Formation Stage and in the Nascent Soul Stage on the enemy’s side. They would create secret files and collect all the data so that they would know exactly where those experts were at any given moment!

On the other hand, the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were not carrots in a farmland. They could not just appear out of nowhere.

It would consume astronomical resources to raise a Cultivator into the Nascent Soul Stage. Advanced facilities and wholehearted mentors were mandatory, too. The whole process might easily take a hundred years.

No Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators would show up without a reason!

After five years of warfare, the few Nascent Soul Stage experts on the Temple of Immortals' side were all under the Cultivators' watch. But the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator who emerged beyond all expectations did not look like any of the Immortal Cultivators that had appeared before.

Was he the last trump card of the Immortal Cultivators?

Unlikely. If he was the last trump card, why did he join such a daily battle that mattered little to the war as a whole? Why did he have no backup and seem to be entirely fighting on his own?

…

Because the hall of the Meeting of the Next Millennium in Heavenly Saints City was spacious enough to land large crystal warships and the conference rooms were advanced enough to accommodate tens of thousands of Cultivators simultaneously, it had been serving as the command center for the war against the Immortal Cultivators since the Edge Sharpeners' Meeting ended five years ago.

Inside the command center, the thousands of light beams were displaying the battle pictures captured three hours ago repetitively.

Most of the videos had been captured by the Exos, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, and the crystal warships. Since the enemy had been too fast and the battlefield too complex, almost all the pictures were fuzzy and barely distinguishable.

Countless experts of crystal processors were trying everything they could to retrieve the key information from the fuzzy videos and compare it with the files in the database.

Xiao Xuance, as well as the leadership of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, the Star Fighters’ Alliance, and the Glorious Sunlight Group, had arrived in the place. They were all frowning, deep in thought.

A new expert in the Nascent Soul Stage had appeared. It was too important an issue to be handled by Xiao Xuance alone.

Besides, the Cultivators from various sects had seen the enemy in person on the battlefield. It was impossible for Xiao Xuance, who also had no reason, to cover the incident up now.

“When a worm is killed, its body might still be cramping. Since the army of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers was established, the war has been going very well, or too well, some might say.

“Right now, the Temple of Immortals has finally revealed their last strength. It appears that the final battle will not be as smooth as the previous ones!”

It was Si Koulie, leader of the Star Fighters’ Alliance, who was speaking coldly while crossing his arms next to Xiao Xuance.

The Star Fighters’ Alliance was made of twenty-eight important sects in the other space zones. It was safe to say that the organization was an alliance of the middle and small sects of the Flying Star Sector.

Five years ago, he had been selfless enough to withdraw from the competition and support Xiao Xuance. It was why the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project had been carried out without much trouble.

Because of his high prestige in the six sects of Heavenly Saints City and the various smaller sects in the other space zones, Si Koulie naturally became the second in command, only below Xiao Xuance.

With a gloomy face, Xiao Xuance stared at the ever-changing picture, the senile plaques on his face getting even darker. He did not say anything for a long time, but his eyebrows became continually more furrowed.

Soon, more than ten light beams were enlarged, and the image was enhanced. More and more details were revealed.

“The results are in!”

One of the Cultivators in charge of the crystal processors stood up and said, “We have analyzed the pictures taken by hundreds of crystal cameras and overlapped them dynamically. Then we optimized the details with data association. A clear static image has been generated. We are still working on the dynamic image.

“Please take a look everybody, this is the enemy’s crystal suit.”

A fuzzy figure was displayed on the light beams from different angles.

Although most parts of the figure were covered in red mist, six intimidating limbs were protruding out.

What Rong Jun mistook for the limbs of a spider turned out to be six magnificent dragons, whose six bloody mouths were biting glittering balls respectively. / NovelFull.Com

All the Cultivators gasped.

“The Dragon King Battlesuit!”

Chapter 776 - The Gone Starship

Bai Xinghe’s Dragon King Battlesuit was one of the most distinctive crystal suits of the Flying Star Sector. The dragon-like artificial limbs that could be dated back to the Star Ocean Imperium were unique and could not be found anywhere else.

A hundred super crystal processors were overloading, trying to run computations in order to compare the image with the files of the Dragon King Battlesuit that had been collected earlier.

Ten minutes, a conclusion was out. The artificial limbs were more than 95% similar to the components of the Dragon King Battlesuit!

In the meantime, the preliminary computations on the speed, strength, and combat ability had yielded results, too.

“Long Feihu is in the high level of the Core Formation Stage and has dominated the Heavenly Sword Arena for decades. His combat ability is very high, but he was crushed by the mysterious expert after one attack!

“Powerful defense rune arrays have been established on every star beacon. They should be enough to resist a full-strength shot from the main gun of a crystal warship or the fiercest attack from the peak of the Core Formation Stage. Yet, they were shattered by him within a breath!

“The combat ability the man demonstrated in the minute is definitely in the Nascent Soul Stage!”

Very soon, more and more videos, files, and data were manifested.

The picture from Long Feihu’s crystal camera caught everyone’s attention.

Long Feihu was very experienced. When he realized that he was no match for his enemy, he kept moving his head according to the trajectory of the enemy’s movement. Therefore, his crystal camera captured a relatively stable video clip of 2.1 seconds.

Other than the visible light, the crystal cameras could also capture and analyze invisible light.

For some advanced crystal cameras, they had been installed with special rune arrays to record the various radiations released when spiritual energy was flowing.

By analyzing the radiations, one would be able to tell the route of the enemy’s spiritual energy.

There was such a crystal camera on Long Feihu’s crystal suit.

“The mode of the mysterious expert’s spiritual energy is 75% similar to Bai Xinghe’s ‘Tyrannical Ocean Arts’. It is safe to say that they are the same Cultivation art.

“The ‘Tyrannical Ocean Arts’ is Bai Xinghe’s personal skill. It is said that he inherited the knowledge from Yan Xinjian, the supreme space pirate five hundred years ago. Bai Xinghe never taught the technique to anybody. Even Bai Wulei, his first true disciple, never had the privilege to learn it!”

The weird conclusions cast the command center in a weird silence.

The Cultivators had collected a lot of intelligence about the great strife on Spider Den five years ago. They knew that Bai Xinghe had ended on bad terms with the Immortal Cultivators because of the competition of power and had been killed.

But now, Bai Xinghe, who had disappeared for five years, reappeared in front of everyone?

“I suggest—”

Noticing that Xiao Xuance did not say anything for a long time, Si Koulie spoke seriously. “Bai Xinghe or not, the man has a combat ability at least in the Nascent Soul Stage. He must not be let go of easily!

“We should establish a rapid-response squad targeting the mysterious expert to collect his data, search for his location, run pertinent rehearsals, and draft several plans to capture or kill him!

“The man must have certain plans on his mind now that he has suddenly shown up. We must prepare ourselves early in case we are caught off guard!”

Xiao Xuance frowned but quickly stabilized his facial expression. His eyes, which were wavering just now, suddenly became resolute again. He nodded and said, “Leader Si is right. A man in the Nascent Soul Stage whose identity and purpose are unknown is indeed troublesome. We should make plans and strategies in advance so that he does not become an unexpected factor in our final battle. As for the members of the rapid-response squad…”

Before Xiao Xuance opened his mouth, Si Koulie interrupted him, “The enemy is in the Nascent Soul Stage. Naturally, all the experts in the Nascent Soul Stage on our side must be involved. Other than them, all the elites in other fields should be included, especially the experts adept at tracking and monitoring!”

Si Koulie’s propose was reasonable. Xiao Xuance found no reason to object. Therefore, he agreed quickly. “Alright!”

…

Three hours later, in the headquarters of the Storm Prison Pirate Gang in Capital Nest on Spider Den, Fengyu Zhong was pacing back and forth with great anxiety. He coughed every now and then, making his hunched back even more hunched.

Ever since killing Bai Xinghe and becoming the de facto ruler of Spider Den five years ago, the new king of space pirates had never been more restless.

In front of Fengyu Zhong, the air above a light beam projector suddenly twisted. Blue smoke seemed to be popping up.

A moment later, the smoke condensed into an empty shadow.

Fengyu Zhong was refreshed. He stepped forward and bowed. “Lotus King!”

The Lotus King was emotionless, as if he were wearing a badly-made mast. He asked straightforwardly, “Was Bai Xinghe really killed by you five years ago?”

The appearance of the mysterious expert in the Nascent Soul Stage baffled the space pirates, too. Fengyu Zhong had watched the battle videos more than half a day ago many times. He knew that the Lotus King would ask the question and therefore answered quickly, “He should be dead. After we escaped from the underground fortress, we studied the videos together repetitively. Bai Xinghe was hit by me and the Black King at the same time. More than half of his heart was blown up, and his internal organs were mostly burnt into ashes. It is impossible that he survived.”

The Lotus King said coldly, “But you never found the body.”

“It could not be helped,” Fengyu Zhong said. “The entire underground fortress was filled with water and blocked by rocks and mud. It was like fishing up a needle in an ocean.

“Besides, there were terrifying beasts below ground, which were likely to have already devoured Bai Xinghe’s body. If so, we would not have found the body even if we turned the fortress upside down.”

The Lotus King nodded and approved of the reply. He suddenly changed the topic and asked, “There’s something that is quite odd. The mysterious expert halted for 2.7 seconds after destroying two star beacons, as if he was catching his breath.

“Too many things could happen in a battlefield quickly. The standstill of almost three seconds was enough for many experts to lock onto him. Why did he do that?”

Fengyu Zhong was dazed, not sure what the Lotus King meant.

The Lotus King continued. “Regarding the anomaly, I’ve come up with three possibilities. Now, I want to discuss with you and see if there’s a fourth one.

“Firstly, the man was Bai Xinghe. He was heavily wounded by you and the Black King five years ago but not killed. He snuck underground and treated his wounds in his nest. Now, his wounds have recovered, and he’s out for revenge.”

Fengyu Zhong shook his head and said, “Unlikely. His heart exploded, his internal organs were burnt, his spine was shattered into smithereens, and even his ‘Nascent Soul’ was blown into pieces. Such fatal wounds cannot be recovered within five years.”

His expression unchanged, the Lotus King continued. “Secondly, the man was not Bai Xinghe but Bai Xinghe’s secret disciple, or somebody who accidentally inherited Bai Xinghe’s knowledge.”

Fengyu Zhong thought for a moment and replied, “It’s a more plausible possibility, but there are many suspicious points. Bai Xinghe had a disciple in the Nascent Soul Stage whom he kept a secret for decades? Why didn’t he summon his disciple in the great strife five years ago?

“As to the possibility that somebody found Bai Xinghe’s legacy after he died and Cultivated to the Nascent Soul Stage in only five years… That’s simply absurd!”

The Lotus King continued. “Then, there’s only the last possibility. Under the collective attack of you and the Black King, Bai Xinghe was killed, but then he reincarnated in a different body!”

Fengyu Zhong’s eyes beamed with interest. “Possession?”

He smashed the desk hard and exclaimed, “Right. Right. Everything makes sense now if it was possession. At that time, the Black King and I failed to exterminate him, and he fled with the last bit of his vitality. Then, he found an appropriate body and performed the secret arts of possession, reincarnating himself in the body of someone else!”

The Lotus King asked, “Is there a fourth possibility?”

Fengyu Zhong pondered for a moment and shook his head. “No. Absolutely not!”

“Alright!” The Lotus King quickly made the decision. “Then, with the three possibilities in mind, we will make a set of plans to deal with the man!

“But first, we must make one thing clear. Whether he is Bai Xinghe who hasn’t recovered from his wounds, or he is Bai Xinghe’s disciple, or he is Bai Xinghe’s reincarnation in someone’s body, the real problem is, how high is his Cultivation?”

Fengyu Zhong’s brows furrowed as he said, “I see what you are getting at, Lotus King. If Bai Xinghe hasn’t recovered from his wounds, it is unlikely that he is at his peak state even if he has been treating himself for five years.

“If he is Bai Xinghe’s disciple, it is unlikely that he has advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage after only five years.

“The same goes for reincarnation. Since he has possessed the body for only five years, even if his soul is in the Nascent Soul Stage, his body won’t be half as strong as it used to be.

“Therefore, the man is probably not really in the Nascent Soul Stage. He simply stimulated himself to the Nascent Soul Stage with a certain secret art!”

“Exactly,” The Lotus King said. “It was why he was stiffened for 2.7 seconds after a fierce battle.

“He was exhausted and ran out of strength. Maybe it was because his soul has not adapted to his body yet. Maybe it was because of the recoil of his secret art!

“However, we have to verify our deductions with further investigation. Let’s not jump to conclusions!

“All in all, the man is an unexpected factor. His threat to us is greater than anybody else’s. We have to concentrate most of our attention on him. Find out his real capability first and draft an effective plan of annihilation. Also, lock onto him as soon as possible, whatever the cost. I need to know where he is hiding!”

“Lotus King!” Fengyu Zhong hesitated for a moment but still spoke the truth. “Half an hour ago, I received a message that a ‘Swift Sparrow’-level crystal warship of the Purple Fire Pirate Gang is gone.”

Lightning was flashing in the Lotus King’s eyes as he demanded, “What do you mean by ‘gone’?”

“The crystal warship had undergone tremendous modifications and joined the battlefield as a medical starship. Its mission was to aid the recovery of the exhausted Immortal Cultivators,” Fengyu Zhong explained. “If somebody important was heavily wounded, they could board on the starship and return to Spider Den quickly.

“Therefore, the starship had a high speed.

“Also, in case it was harassed by the Cultivators, the space jump system of the starship remained on all the time. As soon as it was surrounded by the enemy, it could jump out quickly!

“The medical starship has been gone for two and a half hours. At first, we thought that it had been blown up by the Cultivators. But after we scoured the battlefield, we found no debris from it. Judging from the video captured by the crystal warships nearby, the missing starship was not bombarded heavily. It is unlikely that the starship was completely wiped out.

“It just vanished mysteriously, as if it escaped from the Spider Den Space Zone through space jumps without a good reason.”

Chapter 777 - Our Cause Will Succeed!

Ever since the Grand Illusionary Soldiers were promoted on a large scale and the Immortal Cultivators experienced continuous failures, the Cultivators had locked almost all the space zones. A lot of secret sailing routes and nests had been discovered.

Therefore, unless it was absolutely necessary, the space pirates would not jump out of the Spider Den Space Zone, because other space zones were even more dangerous. It was easy to jump out, but to return to Spider Den would be quite difficult.

“What’s your opinion about the whole event?” the Lotus King asked. “What’s the purpose of the man who seems to be Bai Xinghe?”

“My speculation is that he was trying to hijack a crystal warship in the chaos and escape from the Spider Den Space Zone,” Fengyu Zhong said. “He destroyed two star beacons and tore a giant hole in the defense line of the Cultivators. Our morale was boosted, too.

“At that time, many people did not know who he was and thought that he was an expert from the Temple of Immortals. Therefore, they all charged forward in order to cover him.

“I think that he entered the medical starship openly with the excuse that he was in dire need of treatment because of the heavy wounds he suffered when he destroyed the star beacons.

“After he boarded the medical starship, he invaded the bridge, captured the captain and the sailors, and initiated a space jump.

“If he was really Bai Xinghe’s reincarnation and had a capability close to the Nascent Soul Stage, it would not have been hard for him to control a medical starship.”

The Lotus King gave no comment and simply said, “I need the files of the medical starship, including its number, features, personnel, and all the information about its mainframe crystal processor!”

“Understood. I’ll send over every detail of the medical starship within half a day!”

Fengyu Zhong hesitated for a moment. A drop of cold sweat appeared on the tip of his nose, but he summoned his courage and said, “Lotus King, we’ve been grasped by desperation. Today, we suffered heavy losses and are running out of food and ammunition. Right now, the morale on Spider Den has hit rock bottom. Many people are fighting like caged beasts, and many more are simply waiting to be killed!

“With everything coming this far, do we really need to care about a mysterious expert? Even if he is really Bai Xinghe, can the situation get any worse?”

The Lotus King’s eyes suddenly turned sharp; two lotuses seemed to be blossoming in them. He said, “Captain Fengyu, firm your belief. Do not lose your hope in our victory. Moreover, do not fall in the last darkness before the dawn!”

Fengyu Zhong was dazed. He had hesitated for a long time before he raised his doubts. He had thought that the Lotus

King would burst into fury and did not expect such a reassuring reply.

When he looked again, the Lotus King had already vanished in the smoke.

…

Between the central area of Heavenly Saints City and the first space ring, almost a hundred elegantly-shaped new starships that looked like silver flying swords were docked in the vast universe.

The starship in the middle was more than ten kilometers long and looked like a long spear surrounded by nine flying swords, wreathed in a layer of mysterious silver brightness. One could feel both the air of grace and cruelty from it.

It was ‘Heavenly Phantom’, the flagship of the Grand Illusionary Group as well as the command starship of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers. It was one of the strongest crystal warships of the Flying Star Sector!

The performance of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers was highly dependent on the ‘star brain’, which had been developed by the Grand Illusionary Group. Considering the latency and losses in the transmission of telepathic thoughts across space zones, the Grand Illusionary Group had specially built Heavenly Phantom and transferred ‘star brain’, the super crystal processor, to the starship.

When the space gate was fully repaired, before the final battle, Heavenly Phantom would jump to the periphery of the Spider Den Space Zone together with the fleets of dozens of space zones. It would serve at the pivot of the Spiritual Nexus and constantly transmit the enormous data of fighting stored inside the star brain to the reception rune arrays of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers.

Since the ‘star brain’ was the core of the crystal warship, the bridge of Heavenly Phantom was different from that of other starships. In the middle and rear part of the bridge was a yard more than three hundred meters high, which was surrounded by countless crystal chips, disks, and rune arrays that constituted computation matrices. They were glittering like fireflies.

The yard was like a palace, with a translucent phantom floating in the middle. The bright golden rays of light outlined the complicated circuits of a brain, which was fluctuating in a fixed rhythm.

It was both like a brain made of billions of stars and the heart of a devil.

Xiao Tianbao, creator of the star brain, a super genius in crystal processors, and Xiao Xuance’s adopted son, was sitting right below the star brain, which was almost a hundred meters in diameters, drooling, gurgling, and murmuring to himself.

Now and then, golden telepathic thoughts would spread out of the star brain and zigzagged into Xiao Tianbao’s nostrils, mouth, and ears like little snakes.

Xiao Tianbao moaned in great satisfaction. He waved his arms and legs, enjoying everything around him.

Tens of thousands of light beams were floating around the star brain.

Every light beam showed the picture from the main perspective of a Grand Illusionary Soldier.

They were fighting, patrolling, guarding, or undergoing maintenance.

They were the Grand Illusionary Soldiers controlled by the Grand Illusionary Group. Most of them were deployed in Heavenly Saints City.

Standing in a secret chamber at the back of the bridge, Xiao Xuance stared at the unpredictable sparks as billions of data streams were colliding inside the crystal processor through the one-way glass, expressionless and deep in thought.

A young man wearing the green uniform of the Grand Illusionary Group, whose hair was as dense as that of a majestic lion, walked in. He bowed behind Xiao Xuance and said, “CEO.”

The door closed silently behind them. A mystic ray scanned the room.

It was determining whether or not there were detectaphones in the room.

Without turning around, Xiao Xuance asked, “How are the forces of the other space zones?”

“Sixty percent of all the space zones have finished gathering,” the young man replied. “It is estimated that more than eighty percent of the elites of the Flying Star Sector will be gathered in the Spider Den Space Zone, as well as the majority of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, for the final battle.

“However, we have just lost two star beacons in the Spider Den Space Zone. Although a batch of backup star beacons have been produced, it will take at least a month to ship them to the frontline.”

“Alright,” Xiao Xuance said. “I want you to focus on something else.

“The man who showed up a day ago and is believed to be Bai Xinghe has attracted the attention of all the Cultivators. The important sects are now establishing a rapid-response squad with the man as the sole target.

“I am a member of the rapid-response squad. I’ll put you inside the squad later, too.

“But we must establish our own secret squad to eliminate the person!

“By our estimation, the man has escaped from the Spider Den Space Zone after hijacking a medical starship.

“Right now, we have all the information about the medical starship, including the twelve most likely destinations of the space jumps.

“The Cultivators haven’t grasped this lead yet. We must locate the man before the Cultivators do!”

The young man nodded and said, “Understood!”

Pondering for a moment, Xiao Xuance patted the young man’s shoulder and explained, “It is very possible that your mission concerns the outcome of our cause. You must raise your alert and consider it your top priority. Finish the mission with all the resources and manpower available!

“I don’t believe in coincidences. Not at all.

“Right now, our cause has come to the most crucial moment, and the final victory will be ours if we make another step forward. But a person who seems to be Bai Xinghe jumped out of nowhere for no good reason. Why?

“An unexpected factor. The man is a great unexpected factor. Right now, victory is within our grasp. No unexpected factor is advantageous for us. Therefore, no matter what the unexpected factor is leading to, we must rule it out in advance!

“Later, I’ll talk to Tianbao and ask him to spare part of the computational ability of the star brain to help your operation. As long as the man uses his crystal processor, boards a starship, or has any connection with the Spiritual Nexus, he will be locked onto by us!”

The young man’s pupils constricted suddenly, but he nodded quickly and said, “Understood!”

“Moreover,” Xiao Xuance sighed and said, “after so many years of preparation, we are finally seeing the final battle on the horizon now. Maybe I was a bit too nervous. There might have been loopholes in my reactions when the unexpected factor appeared today. Si Koulie might have felt that something was wrong and become suspicious about me.

“Therefore, we cannot loosen the monitoring of Si Koulie. Rather, we need to tighten it. Whatever the old man says, whoever he meets, especially those he talks to via the Spiritual Nexus, I need to know everything. Also, we must ensure that we can cut in and block his signal at any time!”

“Understood,” the young man replied, his face unchanged. “We have never stopped monitoring Si Koulie, the leadership of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, the leadership of the Glorious Sunlight Group, and those from Iron Plateau. Should anything go wrong, we can react immediately.

“Although Si Koulie is in the Nascent Soul Stage, he is just a refiner and has no talent in fighting. If the situation demands, it will not be a problem to take him down.”

Xiao Xuance frowned and said, “Don’t do it unless we absolutely have to. He is the second in command of the war after all. If he is killed, there will be too many consequences. The assassination might get us exposed in the end.

“Right now, the most important task for us is to find out the motive and the purpose of the man who seems to be Bai Xinghe. What is he up to exactly?”

Staring at the star brain on the other side of the glass, Xiao Xuance fell into deep thought again. It was not until five minutes had passed that he found that the young man was still standing behind him.

Xiao Xuance waved his hands, somewhat exhaustedly. “Leave now.”

The young man was silent for a moment. Then, like a spear that suddenly pierced into the floor, he raised his right arm and clenched his fists, while he bellowed with the utmost determination, “Long live the civilization of mankind!”

Xiao Xuance was dazed for a moment, knowing that his subordinate had sensed the anxiety in the deepest part of his heart.

He was not infuriated. Instead, he felt slightly moved.

Pa!

Xiao Xuance turned around and closed his legs. His face suddenly turned resolute, and it was glowing. In high spirits, he even appeared slightly younger than before.

He straightened his right arm with all his strength like the young man and clenched his fists.

Xiao Xuance gazed at the young man.

The young man fearlessly stared back at him with a pair of clear eyes. The air was about to be detonated by their enthusiasm.

Taking a deep breath, Xiao Xuance said unwaveringly, “Our cause will succeed. Our cause must succeed. Long live the evolution! Long live the Immortal Cultivators! Long live the civilization of mankind!”

Chapter 778 - The Real Immortal Cultivators

At the same time, the news that the Dragon King Battlesuit had reappeared in the sea of stars raised unceasing ripples like a giant rock that was tossed into a frozen pond.

Inside the station of the Great Horn Exo Society in the Cross Wind Space Zone…

After five years of development, with the support of the Glorious Sunlight Group and Iron Plateau, the Great Horn Exo Society had changed from a small Exo Society with only one ragged starship into a super large group that boasted dozens of crystal warships and hundreds of carriers.

Except for the lack of top experts, the scale of the Exo Society was definitely the largest in the Flying Star Sector.

It had an assault team that was purely made of the qi-trainers from Iron Plateau. The assault team had been fighting in all kinds of harsh environments such as the remains of starships, asteroids, and stones belts. The qi-trainers had made great contributions over the past five years and often made the space pirates and the Immortal Cultivators lose confidence.

At this moment, on Gold Horn, the flagship of the Great Horn Exo Society, Lei Dalu and Bai Kaixin watched a fuzzy video in a trance, then in excitement, and then in confusion.

“Anyways, he has escaped!”

Lei Dalu took a long breath in relief, with a sincere smile on his face.

“But why did he destroy two star beacons instead of fighting against the Immortal Cultivators?”

Bai Kaixin’s white eyebrows were shivering like two long fishing lines.

Lei Dalu scratched his beard and said, “Li Yao is definitely not an Immortal Cultivator. There must be a deeper meaning to his actions. We should be prepared to fight in advance. He will certainly reach out to us one way or another.

“Ask Zuo Xiaohu, Lu Dian, and the rest of them to cheer up. I have a vague feeling that the most important battle of my life is coming!”

…

Five days later, an enormous fleet was sailing slowly between the Cross Wind Space Zone and the Heavenly Saints Space Zone, with the battle emblem of the Glorious Sunlight Group painted in mystic rays at the front.

In the rear part of the fleet, on a round starship for the test of new magical equipment, five spectral Cultivators residing in artificial bodies were faced with hundreds of light beams on which streams of information were pouring down like waterfalls.

There was not much difference on the metal skull, but the shinning spots of light in their eyes indicated the untamable shock and excitement deep inside their souls.

“At 3:52, on the third child board of the ‘War Observation’ forum, a reply with a special character has been found in the fifth latest post!

“At 4:09, on the website of ‘Secret Garden’, the username ‘UltimateThunder0011′ has been registered, as agreed upon in our secret code!

“At 4:41… At 5:35… At 7:18…”

For the last five years, Professor Mo Xuan and the other spectral Cultivators had been browsing through dozens of special websites on the Spiritual Nexus every day, to no avail.

But today, the special reply and the special username that they had agreed a deal on five years ago had finally shown up!

“Li Yao is back!”

“In one of the threads, he recommended other people to listen to a song named…’Homecoming’.

“Does—does it mean that he has found a way to go home? Are we able to go home now?”

There were exclamations in the bridge.

“In another thread, there was the tourism commercial of the Dawn Moon Space Zone. Just as we talked about before, Li Yao does not want to communicate with us via the Spiritual Nexus, which is too unsafe. He wants one of us to go to the Dawn Moon Space Zone and talk to him in person!

“Right. He also asked us about the development of the ‘Brain Concussion Plan’ with the secret code.”

Low chuckles echoed in the metal speaker in Professor Mo Xuan’s throat. According to the means of contact that they had agreed upon five years ago, he logged into a website that featured jokes and funny stories and left a reply on the fifth thread of the third child board.

“The brain is open!”

…

It had been twenty days since the appearance of the Dragon King Battlesuit.

During those twenty days, the Flying Star Sector had seemed undisrupted, and everything had gone on normally.

The minor battles at the periphery of the Spider Den Space Zone were continuing. Four new star beacons that had just been refined were moved to the frontline slowly through short-distance space jumps.

In the world of Cultivators, the leadership of the important sects were all on their way to Heavenly Saints City, ready to take part in the strategical meeting and the morale-boosting rally for the second war against Spider Den after five hundred years.

However, in the darkness of the universe beyond the senses of the ordinary people, undercurrents were swirling and colliding heavily, raising shocking black sparks.

Cultivators, Immortal Cultivators, space pirates, spectral Cultivators from the Heaven’s Origin Sector… Multiple forces were trying to locate the mysterious man wearing the Dragon King Battlesuit with any methods possible.

However, after the grand appearance twenty days ago, the man was like a piece of ice that had been melted in the water or a dry leaf that was rotting in a swamp. There were no traces of him at all.

But three days ago, interesting changes finally took place.

A group of Grand Illusionary Soldiers that were patrolling near the Swooping Eagle Space Zone found debris of starships that was still relatively intact in a stone belt. It appeared that a great explosion of starship must have happened.

Judging from the remaining radiation, the explosion had taken place quite recently. Chances were that it had happened only days ago.

The sea of stars had an unstable mood. It was not unusual for a starship to get into an accident. After a rescue team was sent out as per tradition, the incident turned into part of the patrol log, and the patrol log was saved in the database as part of the information stream. It did not catch the attention of the Cultivators.

However, the Immortal Cultivators noticed the incident keenly.

Judging from the structure of the remains and the scraps that were still complete, they all belonged to a medical starship.

Also, the Swooping Eagle Space Zone and the Spider Den Space Zone were not far away from each other. One space jump was enough to reach it.

In the places where the Cultivators were not looking, a giant black web covered the Swooping Eagle Space Zone and the three space zones nearby quietly.

…

In Heavenly Saints City, on Heavenly Phantom, the flagship of the Grand Illusionary Group, Wen Wenkang examined the transmission tube of the starship slowly. Occasionally, when other crew members passed by, the white-bearded old man would smile and greet them with his beer belly.

Wen Wenkang was 212 years old. For a Cultivator in the beginning level of the Core Formation Stage, he had passed his prime years and was in the middle of the dusk of depression.

He was not a talented, awe-inspiring Cultivator. The accomplishments he had made were all based on his hard work. He had learned things bit by bit and trained himself dutifully.

In his old age, he seemed to have accepted his fate, and his ambitions had gone entirely. He was ready to enjoy his retired life in a place with splendid natural views when the war was over.

On his chest, the emblem of the Star Fighters’ Alliance was obscured by the oil. Yet, he was not bothered by it and had not wiped the emblem for a long time.

To ensure the publicity of the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project, the Grand Illusionary Group and the Star Fighters’ Alliance had co-produced Heavenly Phantom. Wen Wenkang was the chief technician that the Star Fighters’ Alliance had sent to Heavenly Phantom. He had just finished the day’s work.

He put everything back to where it belonged slowly. Then, with his hands behind his back, he whispered a song and entered a lift through the channel below the maintenance room. The lift then moved down slowly and brought him to a common room in the end.

In the middle of the common room was an oily king-sized bed.

Wen Wenkang did not lie on it. Instead, he raised the mattress, revealing a secret teleportation array below.

Five minutes later, Wen Wenkang appeared in a secret chamber in the center of Heavenly Phantom.

Heavenly Phantom had a total length of 37 kilometers. It was essentially a large town. Building several secret chambers inside the starship was more than easy.

When the gate of the secret chamber was slowly closed after a ‘chi’ sound, Wen Wenkang’s slightly hunched back gradually straightened. The laziness and dumbness on his face entirely disappeared. Two ferocious tigers that represented determination and dedications woke up in his eyes.

He had personally built the secret chamber. It was a secret command center with a high computational ability and confidentiality.

Light beams were flashing everywhere. No seats around the six long desks were empty.

As far as one’s eyes could reach, the participants were mostly middle-level or high-level officials and the core disciples of the Grand Illusionary Group.

Others were the core members of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City and the Star Fighters’ Alliance. But most of them were young people and the radicals in their respective sects.

Everybody was wearing the same expression as Wen Wenkang’s. Determination, fanaticism, and slight anxiety because of the upcoming great war.

Wen Wenkang nodded at Xiao Xuance, who was sitting at the end of the long desk, indicating that he had examined the room and there were no detectaphones or other surveillance magical equipment.

Xiao Xuance stood up and tapped the desk softly. When everybody quieted down, he said calmly, “Yesterday, fellow Cultivator Cui Zongping of the Silver Moon Clan unfortunately perished.

“Fellow Cultivator Cui was an expert in data mining. In order to dig out the information of our target from the data of the Swooping Eagle Space Zone, which was as tremendous as ocean, he performed the ninth level of the ‘Wind Catching Algorithm’ for nine hours, even though he was merely in the high level of the Building Foundation Stage. He became mentally deranged in the end.

“He could’ve been saved, but in order to keep the secret of our organization, he held back the excruciating pain, sent the valuable information to us, and deleted all traces inside his crystal processor, before he cried out for help in the end.

“When help came, it was already too late. Fellow Cultivator Cui had perished!

“Fellow Cultivator Cui sacrificed himself for the renaissance of mankind, the greatest cause in the entire universe. Now, let’s have one minute of silence for Fellow Cultivator Cui!”

Shua!

Everybody including Wen Wenkang stood up. They extended their right arms and clenched their fists, before they folded their arms and stuck their fists to their chests. They all mourned in silence and solemnity.

After a minute, Xiao Xuance looked around and said seriously, “We are different from the counterfeits of the Temple of Immortals. We are the real Immortal Cultivators.

“The real Immortal Cultivators are not scared of death. To sacrifice for the civilization of mankind is our greatest happiness and glory!

“For decades, countless predecessors have sacrificed themselves unhesitatingly and unwaveringly, in order to build our cause to what it is today. The Flying Star Sector, which has been divided by five thousand years, will be reunited by our hands. One civilization, one leader, and one true path!

“However, the moment before our final victory, our cause has met a fatal threat!”

Chapter 779 - He's Coming!

Xiao Xuance paused for a moment and observed the reactions of the ‘real Immortal Cultivators’.

Everybody was as strongminded as he expected. They did not even blink.

Satisfied, Xiao Xuance continued. “I know that it was quite risky for everybody to come here without alarming your own sect. Let’s cut to the chase and invite Captain Xiao Yushan, leader of the ‘Dragon Slaying Operation’, to explain the latest developments.”

Xiao Yushan was the young man with dense hair whom Xiao Xuance had summoned twenty days ago.

He was a member of the Xiao family and had been under the tutelage of Xiao Xuance when he was growing up. Naturally, he had accepted Xiao Xuance’s ideology and become a staunch Immortal Cultivator.

The Dragon Slaying Operation was a set of plans to deal with the unexpected reappearance of the Dragon King Battlesuit. Search, localization, defense, siege, assassination, and manipulation, every procedure had dozens of backup plans.

Xiao Yushan stood up quickly without any ado and bowed to everyone.

Dozens of light beams were hovering behind him. He was wearing a jade ring on his right index finger, which shot out a scarlet ray as he pointed at the light beam and said, “Three days ago, we discovered part of the debris of ‘White Horse’, the medical starship that went missing more than half a month ago, at the periphery of the Swooping Eagle Space Zone. By analyzing the spiritual energy residue and the remaining materials, we estimated that White Horse collapsed due to a very serious explosion.

“The explosion was too fierce to have been an accident. Besides, there had not been serious cosmic storms around the Swooping Eagle Space Zone recently. Therefore, we came to the conclusion that the explosion was man-made.

“We set the Swooping Eagle Space Zone as an important area of investigation and devoted a lot of resources for the search, only to come up with nothing.

“There are three space zones near the Swooping Eagle Space Zone that are all within reach of one space jump. If one boarded a quick carrier, they could travel between them within one to two days.

“We found a lot of valuable clues in the Mystic Cloud Space Zone, which is next to the Swooping Eagle Space Zone.

“First, let’s do some calculations.

“Jumping from the Spider Den Space Zone into the Swooping Eagle Space Zone before blowing up the starship would take one to two days.

“Putting on a faked appearance in the Swooping Eagle Space Zone, sneaking into a high-speed carrier, and leaving for the Mystic Cloud Space Zone would take another one to two days.

“All things considered, that would have been three to five days in total.

“Exactly six days after the Dragon King Battlesuit reappeared, seven hospitals of the Mystic Cloud Space Zone were broken into. Medication worth of millions was taken. The local sects investigated the case for days but found no leads at all. They were only sure that it must have been done by an expert.

“After our thorough investigation, we found that the seven cases had something in common. In the inventory of the stolen items, there were a lot of medications that were designed to pacify the soul.

“Fellow Cultivator Yin Pingzi of the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood is a spectral Cultivator who passed away more than a hundred and thirty years ago. He has done profound research on the arts of reincarnation and possession.

“According to Fellow Cultivator Yin Pingzi, such dark arts are extremely perilous. Even if it works out, the body will experience strong rejection reactions in the first couple of years. If the user is not careful, their soul will still be expelled out of the body.

“The weaker the possessor’s soul is and the stronger the body of the victim is, the more intense the rejection reactions will be. They will have to take a lot of medicines to pacify their soul and maintain the stability of their body.”

When Xiao Yushan got to this part, one of the Immortal Cultivators tapped the table and said, “Fellow Cultivator Xiao, if I may interrupt.

“We get what you are trying to say. Your team believe that Bai Xinghe has reincarnated and fled to the Mystic Cloud

Space Zone. He broke into the seven hospitals for the soul-pacifying medicine only. Other items he took away were just distractions.”

“Exactly.” Xiao Yushan nodded and said, “The members of the Dragon Slaying Operation and part of the star brain’s computational ability analyzed for an entire day. This is the most likely possibility.”

“If so—” The Immortal Cultivator narrowed his eyes, which were as sharp as swords. “The medicine in general hospitals are mediocre after all. If the man was really Bai Xinghe’s reincarnation, he would definitely have the capability to sneak into the local sects of the Mystic Cloud Space Zone and steal better drugs, wouldn’t he?”

Xiao Yushan shook his head and said, “This is exactly why Bai Xinghe was smart. Stealing medicines from Cultivation sects would have been too obvious and exposed him.

“In comparison, stealing the normal medicines from general hospitals was much more low-profile. Nobody would overthink it.

“In fact, if we had not known which starship he ran away on, we wouldn’t have locked onto the Swooping Eagle Space Zone so quickly, and if we hadn’t concentrated tremendous resources and computational ability in this place, such minor cases definitely would’ve been neglected by us, considering the vastness of the Flying Star Sector.

“It’s true that the medicine is poor in quality. That is why he went to seven hospitals altogether.

“Retrieving the essence from abundant mediocre medicines should be enough for his use temporarily.”

The Immortal Cultivator who suspected him pondered for a moment and said, “Alright. You’ve convinced me, Fellow Cultivator Xiao. Please continue.”

Xiao Yushan nodded. The light beams behind him changed. He said, “For the sake of confidentiality, the scale of our organization has been kept small. It is nowhere near as large as the Temple of Immortals, which serves as our disguise. We don’t have many spare hands in the Swooping Eagle Space Zone. Most of the time, we can only collect and analyze the public information.

“However, the Black Spider Tower has been developing in the Flying Star Sector for hundreds of years and is more or less associated with the underground worlds of the major space zones.

“Over the past years, Spider Den has been on the decline. The smugglers, drug dealers, and gamblers have been restraining themselves, seeing that things were not going well. However, the Black Spider Tower has enough evidence of their crimes to force them to cooperate.

“Still, we found nothing through the public information or underground methods.

“Our target was extremely prudent. Other than stealing the soul-pacifying medicines, which was probably a must for him, he did not leave any traces.

“However, seven days later, a weird burglary took place in the Three Brightness Space Zone.

“This time, the victim was not a hospital but a store of mining magical equipment. A lot of devices for prospecting, mining, and purifying were stolen.

“The case was quite odd.

“We all know that mining magical equipment, such as drills, excavators, pumps, and ventilation rune arrays, is large, heavy, and not very valuable. More importantly, it is difficult to sell them because normal people won’t need such rigs at all.

“What was the purpose of stealing so much niche, hefty mining magical equipment?

“In addition, the crime scene was too clean. Judging from all the evidence, the thief absorbed the mining magical equipment with a few Cosmos Rings.

“Cosmos Rings are highly valuable. One advanced Cosmos Ring might be more expensive than a high-level crystal suit. Besides, every Cosmos Ring has a limited longevity.

“The thief had at least five Cosmos Rings with him. He was definitely a magnate, and yet he was stealing worthless mining magical equipment with the precious Cosmos Rings. It’s like hijacking a bus with a gun made of diamonds. The whole thing did not make any sense.

“We looked into the case carefully and finally found something interesting in the inventory of the lost goods.”

Behind Xiao Yushan, a mystic ray was divided into six beams, each of which projected a translucent shadow on one of the long desks.

It was a piece of magical equipment more than two meters in both length and width, which was square and looked like an iron block. Enshrouded in a vague black air, it emitted the solidness and clumsiness that solely belonged to the mining magical equipment. There was also a curved metal web unfolding on top of the magical equipment.

“Great Pagoda VII, a special communication device for mines. It boasts a high penetrability and interference immunity, designed for the remote areas that are not covered in the Spiritual Nexus and in the mines where there is tremendous interference. The range of communication can cover the normal asteroids. Even if it is placed a thousand meters below the ground, the telepathic thoughts can still be transmitted through the thick rocks.

“More importantly, such a communicator is based on the point-to-point link of telepathic thoughts and does not require the Spiritual Nexus. Essentially speaking, it is just a super large interphone.”

Another Immortal Cultivator raised his hand. “So, if somebody talks via the Great Pagoda VII communicator, we will not know the content of their conversation, right?”

“If we don’t know the time and location of the conversation, no,” Xiao Yushan replied.

The command center was caught in dead silence. All the Immortal Cultivators were frowning.

Clearly, none of them liked the feeling of losing control.

After a moment, Xiao Yushan continued. “If we assume that the stolen cases of the seven hospitals and the burglary of the store of mining magical equipment were done by the same person, it will be much easier to determine his traces.

“After a day and a night’s hard work, during which time a Fellow Cultivator unfortunately sacrificed himself, we finally found the traces of the target in the Dawn Moon Space Zone, which is in the middle of the Three Brightness Space Zone and the Mystic Cloud Space Zone, and proved that the target stayed in the Dawn Moon Space Zone for a while.

“Then, everything becomes clear.

“The target suffered heavy wounds below the ground of Spider Den five years ago. It took him five years to recover by means of either healing or possession.

“Then, he joined the chaotic battle and hijacked a medical starship, jumping to the Swooping Eagle Space Zone.

“He knew that the Swooping Eagle Space Zone was very dangerous. So, he didn’t leave any traces and simply snuck into the Mystic Cloud Space Zone.

“In the Mystic Cloud Space Zone, perhaps due to the strong rejection between his body and his soul, he was forced to steal a batch of soul-pacifying medicines.

“Then, he left the Mystic Cloud Space Zone and snuck into the neighboring Dawn Moon Space Zone.

“The Dawn Moon Space Zone was just a transfer station. Besides, there was not much magical equipment there since it was most famous for its scenic spots. He did not find anything he needed.

“Therefore, he jumped to the Three Brightness Space Zone where he finally found two Great Pagoda VII communicators, which could allow him to talk to someone else without accessing the Spiritual Nexus. He would be able to send or receive commands.

“Please take a look. Spider Den, Swooping Eagle, Mystic Cloud, Dawn Moon, and Three Brightness. He roamed in five space zones in less than half a month. It was indeed an incredible speed. If we did not have the key leads, and without the support of the star brain, we would not have been able to lock onto him!

“As expected of the Pirate Potentate, but it’s a shame that he can’t get away from us!”

The Immortal Cultivator who raised a question in the beginning asked again, “I’m sorry, Fellow Cultivator Xiao. I have to return to the Furious Bears Union to avoid suspicion. Can you tell me your conclusion? Where is he running to and what is his purpose?”

“Running?”

Xiao Yushan smiled. Dozens of mystic rays interweaved into a map of the universe in front of him, where dozens of space zones were like translucent glass balls, swirling in the vast cosmos.

Five of the balls were connected by a golden line.

“This is the target’s route.”

The golden line extended toward the center of the map, reaching another glass ball that was neat and layered.

“This is Heavenly Saints City.

“Do you see it, everybody? He has not been running from the beginning but marching unstoppably toward Heavenly Saints City. He is coming to us!”

Chapter 780 - Dawn of the Imperium

The conclusion raised a minor riot among the Immortal Cultivators.

However, the real Immortal Cultivators’ nerves and will had been quenched and were as tough as steel after dozens of years of underground fights. Even a situation a hundred times more dangerous would not even slightly shake their firm belief.

Everybody’s expression remained unchanged. They held their breath and waited for more information.

Expressionlessly, Xiao Yushan continued. “The range of the Great Pagoda VII communicator is not very large. It can only cover an asteroid at best and cannot support long-distance communication across space zones.

“However, as large as Heavenly Saints City may be, it is still smaller than an asteroid. The Great Pagoda VII can cover every corner of this place.

“Therefore, the mysterious expert believed to be Bai Xinghe is very likely to start a secret conversation with somebody, or a certain organization, in Heavenly Saints City. The conversation will be of paramount importance.

“Right now, he is faced with another problem, which is to give one of the Great Pagoda VII communicators to the target he wants to talk to.

“The problem is not hard to solve. Although the Great Pagoda VII is large and heavy, since he has quite a few Cosmos Rings with him, he can store one of the Great Pagoda VII communicators in his Cosmos Ring and hide the Cosmos Ring in ordinary goods. Then, he can ship the goods to Heavenly Saints City by express delivery.

“Every day, the number of the packages going in and out of Heavenly Saints City is astronomical. Neither us nor the Cultivators have the capability to scrutinize every package. Moreover, the target might have sent hundreds of similar packages to confuse us.

“Therefore, the Great Pagoda VII communicator will probably reach the person he wants to speak to. We cannot stop him.

“This is the most likely identity, the route of his escape from the Spider Den Space Zone, the approaches he adopted, and part of the purposes of the mysterious expert wearing the Dragon King Battlesuit.

“After a comprehensive analysis on the information we’ve gathered so far, we have determined that the man is extremely dangerous. There is an 88% likelihood that the man is targeting us. But it remains unclear whether he is targeting the ‘Temple of Immortals’, our disguise, or the ‘Second Imperium’, the organization of the real Immortal Cultivators.

“With all that in mind, the command center of the Dragon Slaying Operation has come up with the following countermeasures.

“Firstly, by tomorrow morning, we will get two Great Pagoda VII communicators.

“The refiners in our organization will run the most thorough research on the magical equipment and learn its mode of transmission and the features of its signals. They will also produce magical equipment that can search for and lock onto other Great Pagoda VII communicators as quickly as possible.

“The Great Pagoda VII is a piece of civil magical equipment. It is not very complicated. The experts in our organization have read the designs. By preliminary analysis, all the work can be done within five days.

“By then, as long as the target activates the Great Pagoda VII communicator in range of Heavenly Saints City, we will sense and lock onto it within several seconds. We will also be able to interject and analyze the content of the conversation so that we know what they are up to.

“Secondly, all things considered, there is a 90% likelihood, or even higher, that the mysterious expert is Bai Xinghe’s reincarnation.

“Although Bai Xinghe was in the Nascent Soul Stage, his soul was heavily wounded five years ago. There is no way that he could have regained the capability of the Nascent Soul Stage after possessing a body for only five years.

“With that in mind, the organization is hurrying to refine a batch of magical equipment for soul attacks and summoning experts who are adept at soul attack into the Dragon Slaying Operation. We are hoping that we can kill the target and relieve all our worries in one attempt when the moment comes.

“Thirdly, the space zones that Bai Xinghe set foot in have been ascertained. Assuming that he is marching toward

Heavenly Saints City without rest, the date of his arrival and the mostly likely route are both estimative.

“Millions of tourists enter Heavenly Saints City every day. Over the past few months, because of the upcoming final battle, the leadership and the high officials of the major sects of the entire Flying Star Sector have been coming to Heavenly Saints City for the rally. The population is ten times greater than usual. We cannot keep everybody on our grid.

“However, if we are sure about the time of the target’s arrival and the likely route, the range of our surveillance can be greatly reduced. Chances are that we can lock onto him as soon as he shows up!

“Fourthly, Bai Xinghe is coming to Heavenly Saints City after such a long journey. There is no way that he is going to speak to a Mr. Nobody. The person he means to talk to must have high prestige and be very influential in the world of Cultivators.

“In the Flying Star Sector nowadays, only the leaders of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, the officials of the Star Fighters’ Alliance, the heads of the Glorious Sunlight Group, and the representatives of Iron Plateau meet such requirements. There are not too many of them.

“Therefore, while we are searching for Bai Xinghe, we cannot stop monitoring them!

“Fifthly, and most importantly, all the analysis and speculations we made are possibly incorrect. Everything may be a trap!”

All the Immortal Cultivators were listening attentively, only to be baffled by his statement.

Xiao Xuance patted Xiao Yushan’s shoulder and gestured for the young Immortal Cultivator to sit down. “Everything we have discussed is 80% likely to be solidly grounded.

“There is another 20% likelihood that everything is incorrect. The target might not be Bai Xinghe. There might not be a Dragon King Battlesuit at all.

“The worst case-scenario is that the ‘Second Imperium’ has been exposed. Or at least, the Cultivators have grown suspicious about the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project. They are testing us in such a way to make us reveal our own loopholes in the haste.

“Therefore, I must repeat myself. Everybody must obey the orders. Nobody is to act on their own. Do not overreact until the last moment.

“Of course—”

Xiao Xuance paused for a moment. A dangerous, palpable aura flowed out of his every pore and formed a solid armor around his body.

“Right now, the likelihood that we will have to carry out Plan B has significantly increased.

“Everybody must be prepared. The battle might not go as well as we imagined. It is very likely to be a bitter one where many people will die, their souls perishing forever.

“However, eventually, on the land dyed red by the blood of the martyrs, a new, great nation, one that can lead the civilization of mankind to its prime again, will rise!

“Nobody can stop the rise of the Second Imperium. Not the Cultivators. Nor the ‘Bai Xinghe’, or whoever he is!

“This is the brief on the progress of the Dragon Slaying Operation so far. In a moment, everybody’s task will be sent to your crystal processor.

“For the renaissance of our civilization, let’s work hard together, Fellow Cultivators!

“Any questions?”

A slender Immortal Cultivator, who had a resolute face, stood up and asked, “According to the calculation of the organization, when will Bai Xinghe reach Heavenly Saints City?”

“In ten days, the four backup star beacons will be shipped to the periphery of the Spider Den Space Zone,” Xiao Xuance replied. “After another three to five days of debugging, the space gate will be totally repaired.

“When the hundred star beacons are gathered, the dazzling spiritual waves released will be like a lighthouse in a dark night. Every space zone in the Flying Star Sector will be illuminated.

“By then, the Cultivators, crystal warships, and Grand Illusionary Soldiers in every space zone will jump to the Spider Den Space Zone for the final battle.

“The morale-boosting rally will be held in fifteen days’ time in Heavenly Saints City.

“After the rally, the strongest forces of every space zone will jump to the Spider Den Space Zone at the same time. That will be the dawn of the imperium!

“As for Bai Xinghe, he is likely to sneak into Heavenly Saints City three days before the rally, in other words, twelve days from today!”

…

Thirteen days later, in the tenth space ring of Heavenly Saints City, a middle-aged man, who was wearing a black wind coat and carrying an old suitcase, was walking slowly on the streets of the central business district, which was packed with people.

Fatigue of a long journey still lingered on his face, but his beard had been shaved clean. The fragrant jade bracelet on his wrist was emanating refreshing smell.

He looked like a commonly-seen merchant who had come to Heavenly Saints City from another space zone for business

However, when teams of Grand Illusionary Soldiers strode past him in neat formations, there was a hint of worry and anxiety in the deepest part of the plain-looking eyes.

After five years, Li Yao had finally returned to Heavenly Saints City.

Heavenly Saints City was the economical, administrational, cultural, and military center of the Flying Star Sector.

The second Battle of Spider Den to be fought very soon would be the biggest war of the Flying Star Sector in the past five hundred years. As the center of the Flying Star Sector, it was naturally the biggest rally point of the armed forces.

All the available soldiers and crystal warships of Heavenly Saints City and the few space zones nearby would congregate here and jump to the Spider Den Space Zone together.

The first impression when Li Yao returned to Heavenly Saints City was that it had become an out-and-out military camp. Soldiers and trucks could be seen everywhere, and killing intent was rising nonstop.

Before he entered the space port, he had already seen thousands of crystal warships gathering in the periphery of Heavenly Saints City through the window of his carrier.

The fleet was in such an enormous scale that even the sky and the sun were eclipsed. Even if a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator showed up in front of the fleet, they would inevitably panic and feel dwarfed.

When he entered the tenth space ring, he saw countless Cultivators and Grand Illusionary Soldiers striding toward the space ports boarding on the crystal warships, cheered and applauded by the crowds, all set to go.

During the arrival of extraterrestrial devils five years ago, the tenth space ring had ended up being a kingdom of devils. Residents here hated the space pirates' and the Immortal Cultivators' guts. They were the most enthusiastic supporters of the war.

“March to Spider Den! Blood for blood!”

On the streets and valleys of the tenth space ring, colorful light beams were flashing above the heads of the hotblooded young men, indicating their excitement and the passion of the entire city.

Chapter 781

It had been seven years since the Temple of Immortals revealed itself. The attitude of the ordinary people in the Flying Star Sector and the Cultivators had undergone drastic changes.

In the beginning, they were stunned, confused, and hesitant. Now, they were determined and confident, to the point that they were almost arrogant.

As victories were secured one after another, especially after the Grand Illusionary Soldiers were deployed to various space zones, the Temple of Immortals had began showing signs of failure. Even the space pirates, which had been quite a hazard before, were gone. Both the ordinary people and the Cultivators had a much higher sense of safety and pride now.

“The second battle of Spider Den will be the last war of the Flying Star Sector!”

“After the battle, Spider Den, the source of darkness of the Flying Star Sector, will be demolished. Also, protected by the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, none of the space towns are likely to be invaded by the extraterrestrial devils anymore.”

“An eternal peace is arriving soon. No more killing, plundering, or sabotaging!”

After Li Yao travelled through almost ten space zones, he had picked up on the optimistic, and sometimes naïve, thoughts from countless people.

As to the outcome of the battle, there was no suspense at all.

Experts and professors were unnecessary. Any random shop assistant, taxi driver, or middle-school student could elaborate on the subject.

“In the first battle of Spider Den five hundred years ago, the fuse was Yan Xinjian’s defection and murders. The six sects of Heavenly Saints City were pissed off. But other than them, the Cultivators of the other space zones were not affected.

“The fleet of the Cultivators was formed in a hurry. Many sects were not trying their best. They were technically loose sand.

“On the space pirates’ side, they had Yan Xinjian, who was familiar with the Cultivators, as the supreme commander. Besides, the connection between Spider Den and the outside world was not cut off. Other than the main battlefield, countless space pirates were still roving in the other space zones and continued bleeding the Cultivators while the defense of their homes was weak. That was one of the reasons the coalition army of the Cultivators retreated in the end.

“The second battle of Spider Den is entirely different.

“The connection between Spider Den and the outside world has basically been cut off. All the space pirates are restrained to Spider Den. They are in lack of medication, ammunition, and supplies; they are simply waiting to be killed.

“But for the Cultivators, we are more united than ever. Every Cultivator in every sect is making the greatest contributions they can.

“More importantly, during the past five years, almost every sect has produced countless Grand Illusionary Soldiers with abundant resources. When the final battle begins, all the Grand Illusionary Soldiers will be gathered in the Spider Den Space Zone as the first echelon. The Cultivators will not march forward and crush the enemy until Spider Den has already been burnt to the ground!

“The Cultivators are sure winners of the fight. The humiliation of the brutal failure five hundred years ago will be cleaned soon!”

It was the prevailing opinion nowadays. From the experts of war on the TV to the clerks at a grocery market, everybody believed that the Cultivators would win the war easily.

Among the crowds in the tenth space ring who were seeing the Cultivators off to the frontline, there was not the slightest solemnness, as if the Cultivators were joining not a battle but a parade.

In many places, festival decorations were already being prepared for the great victory soon to come.

A delighted smile was on every citizen’s face.

Li Yao realized that his heavy mind was out of place compared to the elation of the city. He managed to curl his lips into a rigid smile.

In front of him was the biggest square of the tenth space ring as well as the most populated place.

For a spy who had snuck into Heavenly Saints City in secret, it was a perfectly reasonable decision to wander in the square, which was packed with people, to get rid of the potential followers.

Li Yao moved through the crowd with difficulty while he looked around at the skyscrapers around him.

The walls of the skyscrapers had been covered by a few enormous light beams, which were displaying the news about the final battle.

“This morning, the delegation made of the leaders and the elders of the Pill Cauldron Sect, the Silver Ring Guild, the Ice Cocoon Fortress, and the other four Cultivation sects in the Red Pinewood Space Zone arrived in Heavenly Saints City for the morale-boosting rally.

“Up until now, of the top five hundred Cultivation sects of the Flying Star Sector, 401 have sent their leadership to Heavenly Saints City. It is an unprecedented amalgamation in the five thousand years of history of the Flying Star Sector!

“Ahead of the final battle, the Grand Illusionary Group has publicized the latest models of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, namely an underground type that is designed to fight in the tunnels of Spider Den, an assault type that can break into the hostile starships and detonate themselves, and a medical type that carries a lot of medical drugs and can serve as a emergency med bay on the battlefield.

“So far, the Grand Illusionary Group has introduced 43 models of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers. The application of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers will reduce the casualties of the Cultivators to the largest extent.

“Ten thousand elites of the qi-trainers will arrive in Heavenly Saints City on the carriers of the Great Horn Exo Society at one o’clock in the afternoon.

“It is well known that the qi-trainers and the Cultivators have developed on their own on with different paths of the cultivation. But in the final battle soon to come, the qi-trainers and the Cultivators will fight side by side. Our blood will be shed together and prove that we are all citizens of the Flying Star Sector!”

Li Yao gazed at the light beams attentively. Without him knowing, he was jostled into a noisy, excited crowd.

It was a bunch of middle-school students with flowers and flags.

They seemed to have just finished the pageant. Many young men had not regained their calmness from their excitement yet. Every pimple on their faces was glittering.

They were yelling and waving their hands crazily, their saliva flying everywhere, as they discussed the final battle to come.

Nobody had any doubts about the outcome, but they were concerned whether or not all the leaders of the Temple of Immortals would be captured.

It was well known that the Temple of Immortals had four leaders, namely the Mountain King, the Sea King, the Black King, and the Lotus King.

However, after seven years of bloody battles, although the Mountain King had been confirmed to be Yan Xibei and the Black King Dark Empyrean, the real identities of the Sea King and the Lotus King remained unclear.

Over the past years, the real identities of the Sea King and the Lotus King had been a heated topic on the street and the Spiritual Nexus.

From the leaders and elders of the major sects, to the old and the weak ordinary people, they all had their opinions.

When Li Yao passed by the students, he happened to see a chubby boy waving his hands shouting excitedly. “In fact, it is not hard to guess who the Lotus King and the Sea King are. The answer is crystal clear as long as we think about it reversely.

“During the seven years of bloody battles after the Temple of Immortals showed up, who has benefited the most? The Glorious Sunlight Group, without a doubt!

“It was an unknown corporation in the beginning, but it has miraculously risen after only seven years to become the most important force except for the six sects of Heavenly Saints City and the Star Fighters’ Alliance. The Glorious Sunlight Group is definitely the greatest beneficiary of the war!

“Therefore, in my opinion, Sand Scorpion, the real controller of the Glorious Sunlight Group, is the Lotus King or the Sea King. He faked his own death during the arrival of the extraterrestrial devils five years ago in order to ease everyone’s alert. In fact, he has been hiding behind the curtain and manipulating everything!”

Li Yao was rendered speechless.

“Shut up!”

Many of his classmates made a gesture of despise to the little fatty. This was the tenth space ring. Sand Scorpion had died fighting for the residents here and was quite respected by the locals.

“That’s pure nonsense.”

A girl who had freckles all over her face shouted, her hands on her hips, “Sand Scorpion was the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau and slayed Yan Xibei, the Mountain King, in person. He perished together with ‘Hellsword’ Zhuang Ziyou, a space pirate in the Nascent Soul Stage. How could he be the Sea King or the Lotus King of the Temple of Immortals?

“In my opinion, since the Cultivators have not found out who the Lotus King and the Sea King really are after seven years, they must be the last people in the word to be suspected.

“What kind of person is the least suspected in the world?

“There’s a certain someone that you must’ve never doubted before. Li Yao, who discovered the Temple of Immortals first!

“Haha. You are all dumbfounded and did not see it coming, did you? That’s right. That is exactly what the Temple of Immortals want!

“Just think about it. Wasn’t the appearance of Li Yao, the big hero, quite odd? He was so young, and yet his hands could break into sonic speed. He was excellent at refining, but he was also an experienced Exo. That’s too incredible!

“Therefore…”

Instead of waiting for the girl to finish her theory, Li Yao curled his lips and left them.

He was not very surprised.

This was not the first time he had heard similar assumptions.

The middle-school students were merely repeating the rumors on the Spiritual Nexus.

After Li Yao returned, he had spent quite a lot of time gathering information regarding the Temple of Immortals on the Spiritual Nexus.

He did not abandon the idea that he should post Xiao Xuance’s scheme on the Spiritual Nexus so that everybody could read it.

However…

Li Yao discovered that somebody had already posted threads declaring that the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project was a big trap and that Xiao Xuance was the Lotus King of the Temple of Immortals as early as five years ago.

Along with such a thread were ‘Si Koulie is the Lotus King, and the Temple of Immortals is just an organization where the smaller sects gather trying to overturn the six major sects of Heavenly Saints City’, ‘Sand Scorpion is the Lotus King, the Temple of Immortals and Iron Plateau are actually the same gang, and Yan Xibei’s death was purely a distraction’, ‘Li Yao is the Lotus King. Otherwise, it is impossible for a young man who appeared out of nowhere to boast such capability’. There were other conspiracy theories.

All theories seemed logical and convincing. They were even supported by plenty of valid, but circumstantial, evidence.

Xiao Xuance, Si Koulie, Sand Scorpion, and Li Yao were not the only suspects who had been accused of being the Lotus King or the Sea King. There were also the leaders and elders of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, the heads of the Star Fighters’ Alliance, the masters of several famous families of Cultivators, and so on.

In short, almost every famous Cultivator had been suspected of being an Immortal Cultivator.

If the leader or the elder of a certain sect was not suspected of being an Immortal Cultivator, they were sometimes too embarrassed to greet their fellow Cultivators, because it meant that they were too insignificant to be mentioned.

At first, all the sects paid great attention to the accusations and investigated them thoroughly.

Xiao Xuance and his Grand Illusionary Soldier Project was the one with the most valid proofs.

The Grand Illusionary Soldier Project was postponed for half a year, as a result. Even Xiao Xuance himself was almost sent to a special court for trial.

However, after thorough investigation, it was ascertained that the so-called ‘proof’ was actually groundless or made-up. The investigators even traced it back to a special squad of the Immortal Cultivators who were in charge of cyberwarfare inside the Temple of Immortals.

According to their confession, most of the false accusations were made up by them for the purpose of disrupting people’s minds, wasting the Cultivators’ resources, smearing the leaders such as Xiao Xuance or Si Koulie, and even alienating the world of Cultivators from Iron Plateau by vilifying Sand Scorpion.

Chapter 782 - Got Eyes on Me

Chapter 782: Got Eyes on Me

When the truth was out, the investigation into Xiao Xuance was immediately suspended.

Later, the Cultivators discovered, while Xiao Xuance had been wronged, he had still been working day and night to perfect the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project.

Moreover, he had no complaints about the investigation at all. Instead, he comforted the frustrated and guilty investigators.

All the Cultivators were moved by Xiao Xuance’s demeanor during the incident.

On the other hand, during the half year when the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project was postponed, more space towns suffered heavy losses.

By then, investigations targeting Si Koulie, Sand Scorpion, Li Yao, and the leaders and elders of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City had been conducted many times, too, but in a much lower profile.

The results proved that the ‘plots’ were purely imaginary and not supported by any solid evidence at all.

From then on, the leadership of the Cultivators was extremely wary of those various kinds of conspiracy theories.

When a new accusation popped up, the Cultivators would often suspect the guy who proposed it instead of the person who was accused of being an Immortal Cultivator.

Right now, only the gossipers on the street and the middle-school students who had nothing except their hot blood still talked about such accusations as if they were a real thing.

The move that the Immortal Cultivators played made Li Yao raise his thumbs.

Xiao Xuance must have foreseen that the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project would be suspected and scrutinized.

Therefore, he asked his own son to be killed at first to win the trust of the other Cultivators.

Then, he put forward the accusations on himself to force the Cultivators to investigate them.

Misguided by the ‘proof’ that he provided himself, naturally, no truths could ever be found.

After his own son had been ‘sacrificed’ and he had personally been ‘wronged’, nobody would doubt Xiao Xuance’s loyalty anymore!

Seeing through the scheme, Li Yao had to give up the idea of telling everything to public on the Spiritual Nexus. Other people had proposed stories a hundred times more interesting than his version. Nobody would be interested in his theory at all even if he published it on the web.

Tomorrow is the morale-boosting rally. I can only turn to my last resort now.

Let’s hope that Xiao Xuance will take the bait.

Li Yao sped up through the square to took three subways to kill the afternoon. Then, at dusk, he returned to a hotel at the suburb of the tenth space ring.

It seemed inappropriate for a man with his appearance to stay in such a hotel.

However, Heavenly Saints City was ultra-lively before the final battle. From the central area to the tenth space ring, all the hotels that were even remotely luxurious had been reserved by the big sects of the Flying Star Sector.

It was not very strange that a ‘businessman’ was forced to live in the suburbs of the tenth space ring.

Li Yao returned to his room.

The experts of the Glorious Sunlight Group, the Great Horn Exo Society, and Iron Plateau are all in position.

Li Yao browsed through a heated website. The secret code that Professor Mo Xuan and he had made a deal on half a month ago in the Dawn Moon Space Zone was hidden in the seemingly plain posts and replies.

The preparations are all complete. Now I have to wait and see if the slippery fish will be hooked!

Li Yao took a long breath and rubbed his rigid face hard, before he glanced at the time on the bottom right corner of the light beam.

It was 18:37:22 p.m.

Night had fallen.

It was destined to be the longest night of the Flying Star Sector.

Li Yao retrieved a Great Pagoda VII communicator from his Cosmos Ring and unfolded the signal transmission web on the top of it. He then sent a tiny bit of spiritual energy into the magical equipment.

The magical equipment hummed as the rune arrays on it activated and glittered.

Let’s do this. The final battle is on!

Crimson flames were burning inside Li Yao’s eyes. He bit his lips so hard that his teeth pierced in them. A bloody, palpable aura was flowing around him.

…

“The special waves of the Great Pagoda VII communicator have showed up!”

On Heavenly Phantom, the flagship of the Grand Illusionary Group, inside the command center of the ‘Second Imperium’, the organization of the real Immortal Cultivators, an analysist shouted, almost failing to tame his excitement.

His two hands turned into two clusters of mist and jumped among hundreds of spiritual stripes.

With his rapid movements, the maps on the light beams were zoomed in and magnified. They changed from 2D to 3D and became more and more precise.

Inside the command center, countless Immortal Cultivators were refreshed and roaring with thrill.

Xiao Xuance was wearing a pure white robe, with an emblem of the Grand Illusionary Group embroidered in golden threads on his chest. His expression remained absolutely unchanged, except for the bright golden flames that quickly flashed in the bottom of his eyes. He raised his voice and commanded, “Group One, hack into the communication and monitor the content of the conversation!

“Group Two, find out the target’s coordinates and work out the environment he is in!

“Group Three, track the target’s identity!

“Group Four, lock onto the person that the target is speaking to by tracing the waves!

“Operation squad, examine your magical equipment for the soul attack and be ready to move out!”

As he issued the command, countless Immortal Cultivators hiding among the Cultivators in the five groups took action.

Over the past half month, they had done a lot of monitoring, detecting, and filtering work and gathered a lot of data. They had also estimated the possible area where the source of signals would show up. Soon, hundreds of items of information were falling down on the light beams.

“The source of signals has been fixed. It is in a room on the third floor of the ‘Three God Hotel’ in the northeast area of the tenth space area, which is one of the places that we have been monitoring closely!

“The name of the guest of the room is ‘Qian Kanghui’ in the registration book. Male, 51 years old, from the Mystic Cloud Space Zone.

“It remains unclear whether the identity is true or false. But since the target lingered in the Mystic Cloud Space Zone and stole medicine from seven hospitals, it is natural that he took the identification information of an ordinary person!”

“We have captured the signals of the Great Pagoda VII communicator. Analyzing and cracking them. Over the past half month, we have completely grasped the forms of the telepathic thoughts sent to and from the Great Pagoda VII communicator. It is estimated that we can hack into their conversation in three minutes!”

“Found it! The signals were directly sent to the first space ring. Searching for the specific coordinates… Got it!”

“On the nineteenth floor of the ‘Star Fighters’ Plaza’ in the first ring, there is another Great Pagoda VII communicator of the same model. The two communicators are now connecting. They must belong to the same set!”

Xiao Xuance narrowed his eyes, and a few crow’s-feet that looked like the edges of a sword suddenly appeared.

The situation was on the verge of losing control.

The Star Fighters’ Plaza was a bureau that the Star Fighters’ Alliance had established in Heavenly Saints City.

The dozens smaller sects that constituted the Star Fighters’ Alliance were all among the top one hundred of the Flying Star Sector in terms of comprehensive capability.

The Star Fighters’ Alliance was very powerful. Otherwise, they would not have been able to put forward the Ice God Project and go at loggerheads against the Grand Illusionary Group.

An organization that had the capability to craft a piece of planetary-level magical equipment was never to be underestimated!

The nineteenth floor of the Star Fighters’ Plaza was where the office of Si Koulie, the leader of the Star Fighters’ Alliance as well as a refiner in the Nascent Soul Stage, was at.

“Hurry up!” Xiao Xuance shouted loudly. “I want Si Koulie’s all movements over the past few days. Who has he seen? Are there any anomalies?”

Si Koulie was second in terms of authority in the world of Cultivators, only lesser than Xiao Xuance. Naturally, the Immortal Cultivators had been paying close attention to him.

In less than two seconds, Si Koulie’s agenda over the past three days was displayed on the light beam.

“Over the past three days, Si Koulie has been busy taking part in the strategical meetings for the battle to come. There is nothing abnormal.

“Yesterday, Si Koulie met Mo Xuan, the supervisor of the refining center of the Glorious Sunlight Group and a spectral refiner who rose to fame in recent years. The two of them talked in secret for a long time.

“The meeting was arranged a long time ago. Since too many qi-trainers are going to participate in the battle of Spider Den from Iron Plateau, the crystal warships of the Glorious Sunlight Group and the Great Horn Exo Society are not enough to transport all of them.

“The Star Fighters’ Alliance is best known for their crystal warships. Therefore, the two parties were planning to ship part of the qi-trainers to the frontline with the crystal warships of the Star Fighters’ Alliance.

“This issue was probably what Si Koulie and Mo Xuan talked about.

“Their meeting was one hour longer than expected.

“However, they are both super refiners of the Flying Star Sector. It is not unusual that they discussed the arts of refining for a while longer.

“When the meeting was over, Si Koulie went to the hall of the Meeting of the Next Millennium, the command center of the battle of Spider Den.

“The leaders and elders of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City were all there. Si Koulie went to meet the six leaders.

“According to our sources, some new changes happened to Iron Plateau. Ten thousand more qi-trainers would be joining the battle than expected. They would also be carrying heavy and clumsy magical equipment that required more crystal warships to load.

“However, on their way to Heavenly Saints City, they were met with a cosmic storm. Many crystal warships were seriously damaged and will not move in the next half month.

“Therefore, Si Koulie went to discuss with the leaders of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City and transfer part of the qi-trainers to the crystal warships of other sects.

“It was not a serious issue, but since too many parties were involved, and the transportation plan of the crystal warships of many different sects had to be rectified; it was quite troublesome. They did not finish the new arrangement until late night.

“Other than that, Si Koulie had no abnormal behavior.

“Right. Two days ago, Si Koulie’s great granddaughter, who is a student of Flying Star University, went to the Star Fighters’ Plaza and had dinner with him.”

Xiao Xuance was startled. He pondered for a moment and asked, “Si Koulie’s great granddaughter? Does she visit her great grandfather often?”

“Not really.” One of the analysists shook his head and said, “The workload of Flying Star University is quite heavy. All the students have to work day and night. Besides, it was not a weekend two days ago, either.

“Besides, Si Koulie is stern and rigid. To prepare for the battle of Spider Den, he hardly spent any time on personal affairs.

“But that night, he put off an important meeting and had a two-hour dinner with his great granddaughter in private.

“The incident was recorded because of its unusualness.”

Frowning, Xiao Xuance was sweating all over. His computational ability soared to the maximum!

A moment later, Xiao Xuance blinked and said, “Over the past half month, we’ve been focusing on the packages that Si Koulie and the leadership of the Star Fighters’ Alliance received and found nothing strange.

“However, is it possible that the target did not send the Great Pagoda VII communicator to Si Koulie directly, but stuffed it into a Cosmos Ring, disguised the good, and sent it to Si Koulie’s great granddaughter?”

Chapter 783 - Crucify Xiao Xuance!

Chapter 783: Crucify Xiao Xuance!

Immediately, more than ten data analysisists started searching for the packages that Si Koulie's great granddaughter had received during the last half month on the Spiritual Nexus.

However, the result was not important now.

What was important was that a Great Pagoda VII communicator had breached the Immortal Cultivators' surveillance and ended up in Si Koulie's hands without anybody knowing.

The dangerous person suspected to be Bai Xinghe had started a conversation with Si Koulie. Their dialogue might sabotage all the endeavors that the Immortal Cultivators had worked hard on for decades.

Jamming the Great Pagoda VII communicator and cutting off the communication was doable.

But that would be admitting that they were guilty and also strongly raise Si Koulie's suspicion.

Therefore, Xiao Xuance could only ask the operation squad to reach the tenth space ring as quickly as possible and let the assassination group that targeted Si Koulie be prepared. Then, he simply waited and watched.

Two and a half minutes later, the Immortal Cultivators cut into the conversation between the target and Si Koulie.

The two parties were both using faked voices, but it was not hard to distinguish them from their tones and the content.

All the Immortal Cultivators held their breath as they listened to the conversation between the dangerous person who was suspected to be Bai Xinghe and Si Koulie.

When they hacked in, the conversation had already been on for more than half a minute. Neither party was interested in small talk, and they went directly to the topic.

Although his faked voice was rigid and unemotional, it could not hide Si Koulie's intense scorn. "You went through all this trouble and even used my great granddaughter to pass on the Great Pagoda VII communicator to me, just because you wanted to convince me that you could help me push down Xiao Xuance?"

The man suspected to be Bai Xinghe had an equally cold and rigid voice. Every word seemed to be coming from a running gear. He said, "Don't tell me that you don't want to push down Xiao Xuance.

"In the Flying Star Sector, the Star Fighters' Alliance is the strongest, other than the six sects of Heavenly Saints City.

"In the past, you have been suppressed by the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, and you do not stand any chance.

"But over the past years, the Glorious Sunlight Group has risen, which is supported by a behemoth named Iron Plateau.

“If the Star Fighters’ Alliance and the Glorious Sunlight Group join hands, the capability combined is no lower than that of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City. By then, if a great scandal about Xiao Xuance, the crownless king of the Flying Star Sector, is suddenly out, Si Koulie, you will be the well-deserved top figure of the Flying Star Sector!”

Si Koulie burst into laughter. “You think I’m a three-year-old who can be so easily misguided? Are you going to insinuate that Xiao Xuance is the Lotus King or the Sea King of the Temple of Immortals?

“Save yourself the trouble!

“Xiao Xuance was indeed suspected of being an Immortal Cultivator before, but I was suspected of being the Lotus King or the Sea King, too! Is there any famous person in the world of Cultivators who has not been suspected before? Your tricks won’t work here!”

The man he was talking to was silent for a moment, before he replied, “If you have absolute faith in Xiao Xuance, why did you choose to waste your time talking to me? Did the proof that I sent with the communicator interest you?”

There was a minor riot in the command center of the Immortal Cultivators when they heard ‘proof’. Many Immortal Cultivators were frowning.

Emotionlessly, Xiao Xuance pressed his hands and gestured for everyone to calm down and not to be troubled by such ruses.

“We have calculated every detail carefully. No proof has ever been left. Don’t be fooled, everybody!” Xiao Xuance assured them and kept listening.

“Your so-called ‘proof’ is purely groundless and not of any worth,” Si Koulie said. “I agreed to talk to you only because I had guessed who you were!

“You are… Bai Xinghe!”

The man suspected to be Bai Xinghe replied with silence. There was nothing except the blank noise in the communication channel.

“As expected of the Pirate Potentate,” Si Koulie said. “You were bold enough to barge into Heavenly Saints City all by yourself.

“I was very curious about your real purpose. That was why I decided to talk to you. But no worries. The conversation is just between us, because I know very clearly that you are monitoring it in a certain way and will run away quickly at the earliest ominous sign.

“Bai Xinghe, although you’ve been a major headache for the Cultivators, it is also a fact that you waged a war against the Temple of Immortals five years ago. So, I’m willing to give you a chance and hear what you have to say.

“However, if what you are going to say is crap like that, then you might as well save your time. I will abort the communication immediately and order your capture.

“Right. I can offer you a piece of information for free.

“According to the deductions and calculations we made in the last five years, of the four kings of the Temple of Immortals, at least one is fake. Either the Lotus King or the Sea King does not exist at all!”

The man suspected to be Bai Xinghe seemed to be surprised. He exclaimed, “What?”

“Don’t you see?” Si Koulie sneered. “The so-called four kings were the Temple of Immortals’ own claim. It is just their own words. Not just four kings. If they want, they can declare that they have a hundred and eight kings!

“A nonexistent Lotus King or Sea King has forced us to waste a huge amount of manpower and resources on investigations over the past years, to the point that every Cultivator lived in fear. Many Cultivators were suspected or accused and had to suspend their work. As a result, our counterattack plan was postponed for years, and intense mistrust among the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, the Star Fighters’ Alliance, and Iron Plateau was brewing!

“From that perspective, a nonexistent Lotus King or Sea King is as damaging as the Mountain King or the Black King, isn’t he?

“Even if we destroy the Temple of Immortals someday, we cannot eliminate a nonexistent person. The so-called Lotus King or Sea King will haunt us and live on as a symbol and an idol when the Immortal Cultivators rise again.

“Now, are you still insisting that Xiao Xuance is the Lotus King or the Sea King?”

The man suspected to be Bai Xinghe replied coldly, “Interesting news. However, I do not intend to accuse Xiao Xuance of being the Lotus King or the Sea King. Not at all.”

“Is that so?” There was surprise in Si Koulie’s voice. He said, “Then, what kind of indictments are you going to make that can push Xiao Xuance down right before the final battle?”

The man he spoke to said, “How about intentional homicide?”

“Who is the victim?” Si Koulie asked.

“Tomorrow,” the man said, “the morale-boosting rally for the battle of Spider Den will be held. The leadership of more than four hundred and seventy of the top 500 sects will attend. It is definitely the greatest event in the world of Cultivators in the past five thousand years!

“If you present unquestionable evidence to the tens of thousands of Cultivators at the rally, proving that Xiao Xuance butchered a whole starship of Cultivators and ordinary people a hundred and twenty years ago just in order to steal their food, fuel, and supplies, do you think your arraignment can push down Xiao Xuance, the leader of all Cultivators and the crownless king?”

His words struck Xiao Xuance like a lightning.

Xiao Xuance’s mask-like cold and determined face cracked and collapsed.

“A hundred and twenty years ago…”

Xiao Xuance’s eyelids were twitching violently beyond his control.

The Immortal Cultivators were all discussing heatedly, too.

They had thought that the dangerous person would provide certain evidence suggesting that Xiao Xuance was the Lotus King of the Temple of Immortals and a hardcore Immortal Cultivator.

They were all prepared for such a prosecution and had hundreds of countermeasures.

But the man had tossed out such an unexpected bomb!

Even Si Koulie seemed to be caught unprepared. He asked, “A hundred and twenty years ago, he butchered a whole starship of Cultivators and ordinary people?”

The man who was suspected to be Bai Xinghe replied, “You heard me. The Star Fighters’ Alliance must have investigated Xiao Xuance’s background, too. You should know that he was involved in a cosmic storm a hundred and twenty years ago and luckily escaped after going missing for a long time.”

“Yes,” Si Koulie mumbled, “it is true that he was unfortunately consumed by a cosmic storm during an operation to hunt space pirates. He did not appear with the seriously damaged crystal warship again until after almost half a year.

“Are you suggesting that, for his own survival, he looted other starships and killed innocent people during the half year?

“If such an accusation is true, Xiao Xuance will definitely be crucified. But tell me one thing first. How do you know about it?”

The man suspected to be Bai Xinghe laughed in grief and misery. “It’s simple. I was an eyewitness of the event!

“I saw with my own eyes that Xiao Xuance killed my parents as well as everyone else on board!”

Si Koulie gasped, utterly shocked by the breaking news.

Xiao Xuance’s body shook slightly. He gritted his teeth and said, “Hurry up and get all of Bai Xinghe’s photos and videos in our database. Scan and rebuild Bai Xinghe’s appearance. Try to show his face between the age of seven to ten. Hurry! Hurry! Hurry!”

The conversation went on in the communication channel. Si Koulie calmed himself down and said, “If everything you said is part of the Temple of Immortals’ scheme, then I have to admit that this is much more refreshing than the previous accusations I have heard.”

The man suspected to be Bai Xinghe said calmly, “Although I’ve told countless lies in my life, I am speaking the truth this time.

“In the cosmic storm, my parents’ crystal warship was taking shelter in the same place as Xiao Xuance’s did. In the end, we all ran out of food and supplies and could not persist any longer.

“For survival, Xiao Xuance butchered everyone on our starship. I luckily escaped because of my parents’ protection, only to end up on Spider Den and become a space pirate later.

“From then on, to destroy Xiao Xuance and avenge my parents has been the sole purpose in my life!

“After I became the Pirate Potentate, I began gathering proof about the crime years ago in secret, but it was a long time ago and Xiao Xuance had covered up most of the evidence.

“I spent my whole life collecting enough evidence to prove that Xiao Xuance was guilty, but I never had the opportunity to send it out before I was involved in the final battle against the Temple of Immortals.

“Thankfully, the heavens watched over me. I was not killed below the ground. It’s been five years, and I’ve finally crawled back out!”

Chapter 784 - I Am Not Bai Xinghe

Si Koulie finished his story for him. “Then, you snuck into Heavenly Saints City, found me, and hoped that I could help you crucify Xiao Xuance with the evidence you provided?

“A very marvelous story, but there is one issue.

“If you really have solid proof, why did you not store it in the Cosmos Ring and send it to me along with the Great Pagoda VII communicator?

“Or, is the so-called evidence nonexistent, and everything part of your trick?”

The other man chuckled. “The evidence is of paramount importance. It is my lifelong work. Of course, I would not send it in a package. Who knew whether or not it would be blocked half way through?

“Moreover…” he paused for a moment and said unhurriedly, “why would I give you all the evidence when we have not negotiated the conditions yet?”

Si Koulie laughed. “You need conditions to avenge your parents?”

The man suspected to be Bai Xinghe replied, “There’s no need to be sarcastic. A guy as smart as you must have realized that, if Xiao Xuance was coldblooded enough to butcher a starship of innocent people a hundred and twenty years ago, his personality is no different from that of the

Immortal Cultivators. The odds that he is also an Immortal Cultivator will significantly increase!

“If Xiao Xuance is really an Immortal Cultivator, the battle of Spider Den to come shortly is likely a great trap that could potentially overturn the world of Cultivators.

“Even if you are selfless enough to not want to push down Xiao Xuance for your own interests, you don’t want the Flying Star Sector to be mired in chaos and ruled by the Immortal Cultivators, do you?

“For me, it doesn’t matter. Even if the Immortal Cultivators assume power, I’m now all by myself with a different appearance, and I can live a comfortable life anywhere!

“But you are different. The Star Fighters’ Alliance is too large an enterprise for you to run anywhere. Besides, your ideology is the opposite of the Immortal Cultivators’. A brutal fight for the true path of the great Dao is inevitable!

“Therefore, the evidence is more important to you than it is to me.

“If you are unwilling to make a deal, we can always go our separate ways. I can leave now and wait to watch how Cultivators like you are slaughtered in the battle of Spider Den patiently.”

Si Koulie was silent for a moment, before he opened his mouth again. “What are your conditions?”

The man suspected to be Bai Xinghe said, “Firstly, abandon the investigation and the pursuit of Bai Xinghe forever. Bai Xinghe is really dead. All the crimes that he committed when he was alive should be pardoned. I am not Bai Xinghe.”

“That explains a lot. You reincarnated yourself in a different body!”

The man suspected to be Bai Xinghe remarked, “That’s what you say. I did not say, nor did I admit, that I am Bai Xinghe.

“In another several years, when my soul and my body are better combined, there will be no proof that can associate me with Bai Xinghe.

“I can swear a Blood Oath to you that I don’t have any ill intentions. I’m just tired of being a space pirate and want to live a tranquil life under a different identity.”

“What else?” Si Koulie asked.

‘Bai Xinghe’ smiled and said, “Secondly, I’m alone and cash-strapped right now, and I don’t want to make a living with what I’m familiar with. Therefore, shouldn’t the Cultivators provide decent support for a big devil who has abandoned darkness for the light? You know, for the sake of the peace of our society?”

“How much money do you want?” Si Koulie questioned.

The man suspected to be Bai Xinghe was angry. “Money? What kind of person do you think I am? Isn’t it too vulgar to talk about money for people in our level?

“I don’t want any money. I merely want the ownership of certain Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, resources, real estate, natural paradises, and mother lodes. Here’s the inventory…”

He spoke an astronomical number of items.

Both Si Koulie in the Star Fighters’ Plaza and the Immortal Cultivators on Heavenly Phantom were dumbfounded by his demand.

Si Koulie raised his voice. “You are insane!”

The man suspected to be Bai Xinghe snickered and said, “Si Koulie, you must bear in mind that the evidence that I’m about to offer you will possibly rescue the entire Flying Star Sector. Is my reward too high for you? It seems that you don’t value the Flying Star Sector highly enough!”

Si Koulie said solemnly, “It’s not about the worth. Tomorrow is the morale-boosting rally. I cannot prepare so many things overnight even if I agree to your conditions!”

The man suspected to be Bai Xinghe said, “It doesn’t matter. I can trust your promise as long as you agree to my conditions. However—”

He finished the rest of his demand quickly. “I want you to get to an uncompleted building named ‘Complex Star Plaza’ in the northwest district of the tenth space ring in an hour and a half.

“I have established a ‘Spiritual Horn Soul Poisoning Array’ inside the building. As long as we make a Blood Oath in the array, the oaths will be a hundred times more effective than normal Blood Oaths. The consequences when the oaths are broken are too much even for a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator.

“I will swear that all the evidence I give you is true and that I will retire, cause no damage to the Flying Star Sector, and kill no innocent people in the future.

“In return, you will swear that you will withdraw the accusations and bounties on Bai Xinghe and transfer everything I demanded legally to me bit by bit.

“There is no room for the space pirates in the Flying Star Sector in the future. With so many resources at my disposal, there is no reason for me to restart my old job.

“If you break the vow, you will suffer the consequences yourself first. Then, I will kill your entire family one by one!

“Hehehehe. Si Koulie, I am much younger than you. You are old and weary. With the consequences of the strengthened Blood Oath, you will not live another ten years! After you are dead, I will have plenty of time to send your offspring to the hell to accompany you!

“Therefore, with such assurances, I think neither of us will break our vows, will we?”

Si Koulie did not burst into fury. He replied calmly, “How do I know that it is not a trap? Chances are that you will assassinate me when I just set foot in the tenth space ring!

“We are all in the Nascent Soul Stage, but you are a combat-type one; I’m no match for you.”

The man suspected to be Bai Xinghe replied, “What benefits can I get by killing you?

“If everything I said was a lie, or a scheme of the Temple of Immortals, killing you is still meaningless, because you are just the second in command of the world of Cultivators. There’s still Xiao Xuance above you!

“Killing you will only infuriate the Cultivators and cannot stop the final battle.”

Si Koulie pondered for a long time and said, “Alright. I promise you, but I will not go there by myself. Four bodyguards will come with me.

“Make no mistake. It’s not because I don’t trust you, but because there might be assassins of the Temple of Immortals in the tenth space ring.”

The man suspected to be Bai Xinghe said, “Alright. You can bring four bodyguards, but not ‘Su Changhe’. He is an expert in mental attacks. I don’t want any experts of mental attacks to be near me. Choose a different one!

“Also, you cannot tell your bodyguards your true purpose, nor can you reveal our conversation to anybody else.

“The more people who know it, the more danger I will be in. I trust nobody in this place, including you!

“If a third person learns of the matter, I will go away immediately and hide myself in a place that is totally safe. I will simply watch the army of Cultivators’ doom on Spider Den.”

“There’s no need for alarmism,” Si Koulie said. “I will make a judgement myself as to if your story is true when I see the evidence.”

The man suspected to be Bai Xinghe sneered and cut off the communication.

On Heavenly Phantom, there was nothing but dead silence in the command center of the Immortal Cultivators.

On the light beam, a 3D image of Bai Xinghe’s head appeared.

With the efforts of the facial analysis specialists and the modelling experts, the wrinkles on the face were gradually removed, and the skin became smoother and younger.

Eventually, it turned into a face of a boy around eight years old.

“This is the most likely appearance of Bai Xinghe when he was eight!”

Xiao Xuance gazed at the face, deep in thought.

“CEO!” One of the Immortal Cultivators stood up and asked solemnly, “Is what Bai Xinghe just said true?”

Xiao Xuance nodded slowly and said with a heavy heart, “It is. I know the face. There was such a boy on the starship. I thought that he was killed during the explosion. I did not know that he slipped through the accident and even became the Pirate Potentate!”

Humming whispers were immediately echoing among the Immortal Cultivators.

The Immortal Cultivator continued his questioning. “Then, theoretically speaking, is it possible that Bai Xinghe gathered solid evidence about the event years ago?”

Xiao Xuance lowered his head and considered carefully for ten seconds, before he struggled to nod his head. “If Bai Xinghe said that he grasped evidence that I was the Lotus King, it would have been absolutely impossible. The whole thing would definitely be a trap.

“However, when the incident occurred, I was not the leader of the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood yet, nor the CEO of the Grand Illusionary Group. The Second Imperium was far from being established, too. There were not many resources that were absolutely under my control.

“Theoretically speaking, it is indeed possible that Bai Xinghe has found some evidence. It may not be enough to prove that I am guilty, but it should be enough to raise the suspicion of Si Koulie, the leadership of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, and all the other Cultivators!”

The Immortal Cultivator raised the third question. “So, if they complete their deal and Si Koulie really throw out all the evidence on the morale-boosting rally in front of tens of thousands of Cultivators, will our plan likely be disrupted?”

“Yes,” Xiao Xuance confirmed.

All the Immortal Cultivators were silent for three seconds. Then, shouting and yelling a hundred times louder than before burst out.

The command center seemed to have turned into a honeycomb. Every Immortal Cultivator was barking at the top of their voice.

“Kill them!”

“Now that few people know of the event, everything will be taken care of as soon as the two of them are killed. In another few days, the army of the Cultivators and the Grand Illusionary Soldiers will jump to the Spider Den Space Zone. There will be absolutely nothing to fear then!”

“Yes, but we must not take action until they meet in the tenth space ring and the decisive proof is presented!”

“Right now, the central area of Heavenly Saints City is packed with Cultivators of various sects. Every place is heavily guarded, and it is difficult for us to assassinate anybody.”

“But the tenth space ring is at the periphery of Heavenly Saints City, where the defense is much sloppier. It will be much more convenient for us to kill somebody!”

Chapter 785 - Make or Break

A slim, indifferent-looking Immortal Cultivator spoke up. “Calm down. Calm down. Has it ever occurred to you that everything might be a trap that is luring us to step in?

“The five or so bodyguards that Si Koulie always brings with him are all in the Core Formation Stage. Two of them are even at the peak of it

“Although Si Koulie is not a battle-type Cultivator, he is in the Nascent Soul Stage after all. If he really engages in a fight, I believe that it will not be difficult for him to wield the combat ability of the beginning level of the Core Formation Stage.

“Together with Bai Xinghe, who is also in the Nascent Soul Stage, it is going to be a great mess and require a lot of hands if we want to take all of them down without alarming anybody.

“If the assassination fails, the Second Imperium will likely be exposed!”

His words put his outraged companions deep in thought.

A moment later, another Immortal Cultivator frowned and said, “What if it is not a trap?

“What if the crucial evidence does exist and falls into the hands of Si Koulie, and he sets the whole thing to public in the morale-boosting rally? By then, the attack on Spider Den might be postponed or even cancelled. The investigation into the CEO and the Grand Illusionary Group will be a hundred times more rigorous than last time!

“At worst, the CEO might be stripped of his mandate, locked up, and tried!

“We have prepared for this day for decades. Right now, the arrow is already on the bow. Many fellow Cultivators are all set in various battlefields. We cannot afford a thorough investigation!”

“Enough!”

Xiao Xuance raised his hands. An invisible aura surged out of his body and blew away the messy discussion.

All the Immortal Cultivators were dazed briefly, but their anxiety was more or less relieved.

Xiao Xuance took a deep breath. His eyes became as clear as a brook and as deep as an ocean again as he said calmly, “You’ve all got a point, fellow Cultivators. We are now faced with two possibilities.

“The first possibility is that everything Bai Xinghe said is true, and he does have evidence to prove that I’m guilty.

“If so, we must annihilate him and Si Koulie as well as the four bodyguards during their meeting!

“Two assassination squads may not be enough for the task if we want everything to be done neatly. I will have to take action in person!

“However, there’s a second possibility.

“Everything might just be a trap. Si Koulie might have grown suspicious of me and tested me together with Bai Xinghe on purpose. If I really take action in person, I will fall into their trap!

“If that is the case, then our best strategy is to stay calm and pretend that we know nothing about it.

“Si Koulie will not have solid evidence in his hands if that’s the case. Otherwise, he could have accused me in front of the leadership of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City.

“Because of the lack of evidence, he cannot accuse me as it would lead to internal strife in the world of Cultivators. Nor does he have any reason to stop the battle of Spider Den!

“Only one of the two possibilities is right.

“If we make the right choice, the Second Imperium will thrive unstoppably!

“If we make the wrong one, our cause will suffer a heavy blow, and the civilization of mankind of the Flying Star Sector will continue sinking into the darkness of disunity for another thousand years!”

“CEO!”

Several Cultivators shouted excitedly, “Let us do the job! If we fail, we will sacrifice ourselves for our belief. We will not expose our origins or you!”

“It’s useless,” said Xiao Xuance as he shook his head. “If an assassination takes place, it will be obvious that the conversation between Si Koulie and Bai Xinghe was overheard. The battle of Spider Den will be put off indefinitely until the force is uprooted.

“Fellow Cultivator Yuchi was right about one thing. Many of our Fellow Cultivators have initiated our plan in their posts. The bullets are out of the barrels, and the sharp blades have already been unsheathed. It is impossible to take them back without letting them taste blood!

“Fellow Cultivators, stay calm for a moment. Let me think for three minutes.

“I will sort through the detail of the whole incident from the beginning to the end and see if I can find a fatal loophole!”

Xiao Xuance fell silent after finishing his last words. Even his skin turned gray, as if he were a dull statue.

All the Immortal Cultivators held their breath and clenched their fists while they stared at their leader quietly.

Two minutes and fifty-nine seconds later, Xiao Xuance’s frozen eyes suddenly flickered. Two streams of brilliances beamed out, like the flames of spiritual energy spurting out when the main gun of a crystal warship was launched!

“CEO!”

All the Immortal Cultivators felt as if Xiao Xuance was like a saber that had been unsheathed abruptly after being sealed for a long time. His aura dominated the entire room!

Every Cultivator felt their blood boiling, ready for a great fight!

“I’ve made up my mind.”

Xiao Xuance looked around and said, his every word sounded like a barrage of the main gun of Heavenly

Phantom, “Immortal Cultivators, for the sake of the civilization of mankind, let’s take action!”

…

An hour and a half later, at 20:07:44…

Although the light beams on the artificial dome displayed a sky of stars, the neon lights, flashing rune arrays, and advertisement bulletin boards inside the tenth space ring still illuminated the forest of skyscrapers. It was truly a sleepless city.

The streets were packed with people who were cheering on their parade. The enormous light beams on the skyscrapers were displaying the latest promotional videos for a movie.

The movie had been produced by the Grand Illusionary Group at the cost of more than three billion, and it was predicted to be one of the best films of the year. It told the story of everything about the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project. The name of the movie was ‘New Era’.

It was said that Xiao Xuance, the CEO of the Grand Illusionary Group, had personally come up with the name.

The northwest part of the tenth space ring was an industrial zone.

In the arrival of the extraterrestrial devils five years ago, it had been one of the most severely-struck districts. A lot of debris and scrap still remained uncleared after five years. It was a rarely-seen desolate area of the tenth space ring.

At the center of the northwest district stood a building of more than thirty floors. If was half built, and there were spiritual energy transmission tubes and scaffolding on the outer walls everywhere. But all the floors had nothing except for the framework. Against the dark night sky, the whole building looked like a hollow skeleton.

“CEO, Si Koulie’s shuttle has flown into the skyscraper directly. Other than the four bodyguards in the Core Formation Stage, he did not bring anybody else.”

Since they had received the intelligence in advance, the assassination squad of the Immortal Cultivators had hidden themselves in the high towers and debris around the Complex Star Plaza earlier.

Due to the urgency, they did not have enough time to deploy complicated rune arrays, but through secret channels, they had shipped three super-heavy crystal cannons, whose bombardment equal to the full-strength strike of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, to this place.

The three super-heavy crystal cannons were all aimed at the Complex Star Plaza.

The falsified evidence had been set up, too. If the Cultivators investigated the evidence that had been left on purpose, they would find out that the assassination was another dying struggle of the Temple of Immortals.

The people who volunteered to be sacrificed had been selected, too. They were indeed from ‘Spider’s Thorn’, an assassins’ organization on Spider Den.

Xiao Xuance monitored the situation inside the Complex Star Plaza through a telescope that boasted penetrative and night-viewing functions.

He saw that Si Koulie had left his four bodyguards on various floors of the plaza and ascended to the tenth floor by himself.

As for the man suspected to be Bai Xinghe, the Immortal Cultivators had followed him closely ever since he left the hotel.

His every movement, including the process in which he set up an array inside the Complex Star Plaza, had been seen clearly.

“Our enemies consist of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator whose soul is unstable, a non-battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, two in the peak of the Core Formation Stage, and two in the middle level of the Core Formation Stage.

“Our backups include one in the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage, four in the peak of the Core Formation Stage, nine in the beginning and middle level of the Core Formation Stage, all of whom are adept at assassination, and three super-heavy crystal cannons.

“For this operation, the three super-heavy crystal cannons will open fire first with the hope of seriously wounding Bai Xinghe, the most threatening Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator for us. Then, those in the Nascent Soul Stage and the peak of the Core Formation Stage who are adept at mental attacks will hunt Bai Xinghe together!

“Everybody else will harass Si Koulie and his four bodyguards. More importantly, interferences of the highest level must be imposed. The connection between them and the outside world must be cut off. Their telepathic thoughts are not to be sent out!

“When the Nascent Soul Stage expert on our side finishes Bai Xinghe, he will return and take care of everybody else!

“If everything goes well, the battle will be concluded in thirty seconds!”

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

The operation plan was sent to every Immortal Cultivator’s crystal processor. All the Immortal Cultivators were emotionless, with the dim brightness of the light beams glimmering in their eyes.

“Synchronize the time on your light beams,” Xiao Xuance said softly in the communication channel. “Right now, it is 20:12:35. The ‘Dragon Slaying Operation’ will be activated at 20:15 sharp!”

All the Cultivators’ breathing became lighter and lighter. Their hearts were beating along with the changing time on the light beams.

20:14:30… 20:14:40… 20:14:50…

The three super-heavy crystal cannons lurking the darkness had all been filled with spiritual energy. Every rune array on the body of the cannons was flowing as if they were alive, giving a feeling that they were butterflies that had crawled out of their cocoons.

Inside the Complex Star Plaza, Si Koulie was standing on the same level as Bai Xinghe. They were confronting each other in silence.

58… 59… It was 20:15 sharp!

Xiao Xuance’s bellow came over in the communication channel. “The Dragon Slaying Operation begins now!”

Shua! Shua! Shua!

Three torrents of flame spurted out of the barrels of the super-heavy cannons like a volcano eruption. Due to the disguise of special rune arrays, the three torrents were as lackluster as the bleeding sun at dusk. They did not raise any sound when they darted through the air.

However, when they hit the middle part of the Complex Star Plaza, the entire skyscraper was like an icy block that met magma or a tower of sand that collided into a tide. It melted and collapsed instantly!

“Immortal Cultivators, attack!”

Xiao Xuance was as quick as a lightning. He dashed into the building almost the moment the crystal cannons hit the plaza. The other assassins were not as fast as him, but they were closer to the building and had already started moving when the crystal cannons were still preparing.

Therefore, the moment the building collapsed, dozens of streaks of brightness stabbed into the dissecting plaza like sharp sabers!

Chapter 786 - Four Experts

As dozens of Immortal Cultivators dashed into the Complex Star Plaza, nine rune arrays in the three hundred square meters nearby hummed together like wild butterflies. Rays of light soared into the sky like the fireworks for a festival.

Although they were dazzling, many other places were igniting firecrackers for celebration in the night of joy. The flashing flames did not catch anyone’s attention.

However, when the colorful flames reached the highest point, they condensed together and formed a fully-enclosing light beam that descended like an upside-down bowl and covered the entire Complex Star Plaza!

The real Complex Star Plaza was collapsing fast.

However, the illusion that the light beam presented was normal and peaceful. There were no quakes, noises, or dust at all. The Complex Star Plaza was still standing on the ground solidly.

It was a special array that could block all kinds of waves. Not only would the sounds and quakes be retained inside, the signals of the Spiritual Nexus and the telepathic thoughts of the Cultivators could not be sent out, either.

The Complex Star Plaza had been severed from the outside world!

When Xiao Xuance charged into the building, the middle part of the building completely collapsed. The floors above that had remained intact buckled and blew away the foundations of the building like a giant bomb.

Inside the area that was blocked, the earth was shaking, and smoke was rising everywhere.

Searching for a target in such an environment was like fishing for a needle in an ocean.

However, Xiao Xuance and all the other Immortal Cultivators taking part in the operation were experts adept at assassination. Before the bombardment, they had calculated where the target might be after the building collapsed precisely!

More than ten streams of flames spurted out of Xiao Xuance's crystal suit as he locked onto Bai Xinghe after a series of dazzling small-scale movements!

However—

Before he launched his first mental attack, Bai Xinghe had vanished into the depths of the smoke at a speed much higher than he had expected, like an unpredictable cloud, giving the feeling that he had not been affected by the bombardment at all.

Xiao Xuance suddenly felt greatly alarmed.

The bombardment of three super-heavy cannons should have at least dealt some damage to a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, even if they could not kill him instantly.

Besides, Xiao Xuance had added a lot of rune arrays for mental attacks to the three super-heavy crystal cannons.

For a man who had possessed a new body and did not have a stable soul, the bombardment should have been the heaviest shock. He should have been stunned for a second or two even if he was not wounded!

How did Bai Xinghe run away so fast?

Xiao Xuance’s nose twitched quickly. His pupils constricted, and his temples seemed hollow.

He had sensed the scent of the residues of crystals and the remaining spiritual waves after a large-scale rune array functioned.

But the large-scale rune array was not the ‘Gold Horn Soul Poisoning Array’, which could boost the consequences of the Blood Oath, but a certain defense rune array, one of the highest level that would cost a great number of crystals!

Bai Xinghe pretended that he was deploying the Gold Horn Soul Poisoning Array, while in fact he set up a defense rune array that could protect two people at the center of the false array, which helped him to resist the bombardment of the super-heavy crystal cannons!

The two rune arrays were of completely different qualities and could in no way overlap, which meant that the Gold Horn Soul Poisoning Array did not exist at all. It was just a disguise.

In that moment, Xiao Xuance thought everything through.

He did not curse, nor did he waste any second in regretting. Instead, he simply accelerated to his maximum speed, trying to run away from the other side of the collapsing skyscraper!

But there was no time!

Several screams echoed in the smoke below him, followed by the sounds of crystal suits being broken and bones being fractured. All of the sounds came from the Immortal Cultivators that Xiao Xuance was most familiar with.

Then, five intimidating auras soared up into the sky and locked onto Xiao Xuance in less than 0.1 seconds!

Xiao Xuance could only come to an abrupt halt.

One meter further, and the five aggressive auras would have launched a critical strike at him simultaneously!

Even though he was in the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage and was known as the best expert of the Flying Star Sector, it was impossible for him to resist the full-strength strikes of five Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators!

Very soon, five crystal suits that were in different shapes but equally daunting slowly revealed themselves in the smoke and surrounded Xiao Xuance from various directions.

Outside of them, almost twenty Immortal Cultivators that were not dead yet were floating in midair, too. They stared at their ‘prey’ in bewilderment, not having the first clue why the bodyguards who were supposed to be in the Core Formation Stage were so strong!

Crack! Crack!

The stone, rebar, and cement fell on the crystal suits like a meteor shower, only to be blown into pieces by the surging spiritual energy.

The Immortal Cultivators and the Cultivators stood in midair, confronting each other in silence in the undying smoke.

Although the five people surrounded him were wearing crystal suits and he could not see their faces, Xiao Xuance still distinguished who they were quickly, because the crystal suits of the super experts were often specially modified or even tailor-made. Also, the unique spiritual waves of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator helped him to determine who they were, too.

“Liao Huagu of the Furious Bears Union!

“Zhuge Ci of the Silver Moon Can!

“Master Empty Cicada of the Burning Sun Alliance!

“And you, too, Luo Xingzi of the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood, my good junior brother!”

In the circle of Cultivators, the names of the four experts were among the most influential ones. They were the life goals for many Cultivators.

They were all the deputy leaders or elders of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, as well as battle-type Cultivators in the Nascent Soul Stage!

However, Xiao Xuance’s eyes did not stop for long on the four Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. Very soon, he gazed at the fifth person on the spot, as if the guy who was coughing slightly right now was his real opponent.

A layer of ever-surging black smoke covered the fifth person’s crystal suit and concealed most of the details.

However, the six artificial limbs protruded out of his back that looked like dragons exposed who he was.

“Bai Xinghe,” Xiao Xuance said softly, one word after another.

Li Yao chuckled in amusement as response.

“So, this is really a trap?” Xiao Xuance said casually. “Bai Xinghe showed up on purpose to attract my attention. He let me discover that he stole two Great Pagoda VII communicators and lured me into eavesdropping on your conversation. But everything has been a scheme since the beginning.

“Si Koulie’s four bodyguards swapped identities with the four experts of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City a long time ago. Let me see. Maybe it was last night. When you were discussing the rearrangement of the transportation plan in the hall of the Meeting of Next Millennium, the four experts disguised themselves as the four bodyguards and left with Si Koulie. Then, you came to the Complex Star Plaza together, didn’t you?

“Hehe. What a pity. I should have attended the meeting yesterday. If I did, I would have seen through your disguise instantly.

“But I was too busy tracking Bai Xinghe and only asked my deputies to participate on my behalf.

“It seems that Bai Xinghe doesn’t have any proof, does he? But me showing up here right now has offered you the best proof!

“There’s just one thing that I don’t understand. Bai Xinghe is an infamous bandit. How did he persuade you into setting up such a trap when he did not have any evidence? Junior Brother, even you are part of the scheme. Why?”

Amidst the raging smoke, the sixth crystal suit slowly rose up. It was Si Koulie, the leader of the Star Fighters’ Alliance, who was the bait in the trap.

Hiding behind Luo Xingzi, a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator from the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood, he said coldly, “Give it up, Xiao Xuance. We know what you are thinking about!

“You want to buy yourself more time so that your accomplices on Heavenly Phantom in the central area of Heavenly Saints City can take action.

“It’s useless. You are not the only guys who know how to set up barriers. At exactly the moment of the assassination, an even larger array was unfolded and covered the one square kilometer around the plaza. All the telepathic thoughts and signals of the Spiritual Nexus in the area are being jammed indiscriminately!

“Whatever commands you have, you will not be able to send them out!

“In the meantime, at least five Cultivators in the Nascent Soul Stage and more than ten in the peak of the Core Formation Stage are now marching toward the tenth space ring with the elites of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City and the Star Fighters’ Alliance!

“As for the headquarters of the Grand Illusionary Group, your nest, and Heavenly Phantom, your flagship, they are now being taken over by a special squad of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City!

“You must have thought that we could not respond to changes when all the messages were cut off, mustn’t you? But it never occurred to you that the loss of messages was also a message!

“Before we set up the trap, we had made a deal with the experts of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, the Star Fighters’ Alliance, and the Glorious Sunlight Group. We would send a message to them every other second.

“If they did not receive any messages after three seconds, then something was wrong! They would enter the headquarters of the Grand Illusionary Group and board the Heavenly Phantom immediately!

“Therefore, it doesn’t matter that you want to buy yourself more time because time is now on our side!”

Xiao Xuance was silent for a long time. He exhaled for a long time and smiled bitterly. “I have no words to say about my misjudgment. I only want to know this. Why did you believe in Bai Xinghe?”

Si Koulie shook his head and said, “You’re wrong. It was not Bai Xinghe that we trusted, but the Glorious Sunlight Group and Iron Plateau.

“I don’t know how Bai Xinghe convinced the Glorious Sunlight Group and the heads of Iron Plateau, but Professor Mo Xuan of the Glorious Sunlight Group yesterday declared non-confidence in you, the commander in chief, and demanded a ‘test’ for you before the final battle on behalf of the Glorious Sunlight Group, the Great Horn Exo Society, and the several chiefs of Iron Plateau.

“If the requirements were not met, the Glorious Sunlight Group, the Great Horn Exo Society, and Iron Plateau would withdraw from the final battle unilaterally.

“It was quite a big deal. The six sects of Heavenly Saints City and the Star Fighters’ Alliance could not allow such a thing to happen. Also, the so-called ‘test’ would be absolutely harmless as long as you were innocent.

“More importantly, whether you are an Immortal Cultivator or not, we will be able to capture Bai Xinghe!

“Or rather, Bai Xinghe proposed to turn himself in as long as we ran the test.”

“Turn yourself in?” Xiao Xuance was truly dazed. He turned to Li Yao again and said, “I didn’t know that you were willing to pay such a high price for your revenge!”

Li Yao burst into laughter and replied, “You killed my parents. As long as you are crucified, I can die ten thousand times without complaint!”

Chapter 787 - Imperium of True Human Beings

“Senior Brother!”

Luo Xingzi was Xiao Xuance’s junior brother in the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood. When Xiao Xuance had been the leader of the sect, he had been one of the deacons.

Therefore, he could hardly believe Xiao Xuance’s betrayal and had almost even passed out in fury. He yelled, “So, you are really a member of the Temple of Immortals and a cowardly Immortal Cultivator?

“Why?

“Senior Brother, you are the best expert and the crownless king of the Flying Star Sector. You are already at the peak of the world of Cultivators. Even if you are interested in the secret arts of longevity, there are endless resources at your disposal!

“Why did you create the Temple of Immortals and get so many innocent people killed?”

Xiao Xuance smiled casually. “It’s true that I am an Immortal Cultivator. But the so-called Temple of Immortals is just a disguise. Don’t mistake the selfish, spineless ‘false Immortal Cultivators’ of the Temple of Immortals for us ‘real Immortal Cultivators’!

“You’re right, Junior Brother. I am already at the top of the world. If it were for my own interest, even if I wanted to pursue an eternal life, it would not have been necessary for to stir up so much trouble.

“However, hehe, although it is immortality that we the real Immortal Cultivators pursue, we are not talking about the eternal life of individuals, but the splendor and eternality of the civilization of mankind!

“Our dream is very simple. We will reunite the Flying Star Sector, which is essentially loose sand, and build a powerful nation governed by the Immortal Cultivators!”

“What?”

Everybody, including Li Yao, was greatly shocked.

“Ever since the arrival of the apocalypse and the collapse of the coalition government of the Flying Star Sector five thousand years ago, we have been the lone dusts in the sea of stars without our own country!

“Five thousand years. It’s been five thousand years!

“We groped and struggled in the darkness. To this day, the dozens of space zones are still only minding their own business, completely disorganized.

“This is the source of all tragedies!

“If we weren’t loose sand, how could the space pirates have been so wild and even defeated the attack of the Cultivators with a single planet?

“If we weren’t loose sand, how could we have hesitated to get in touch with the compatriots on Iron Plateau for five thousand years?

“If we weren’t loose sand, how could we never have the ambition to explore other Sectors?

“For five thousand years, we’ve been cowering in the Flying Star Sector like turtles. We barely explored the world fragments near the Flying Star Sector, not to mention sending out a large-scale expedition army to explore other Sectors like we did five thousand years ago!

“Five years ago, faced with the threat of the Temple of Immortals, the world of Cultivators, which was in disunity, still refused to work together on the Ice God Project. In the end, it was a non-obligatory ‘Grand Illusionary Soldier Project’ that was carried out!

“Hehe. In the eyes of the Immortal Cultivators, if the Flying Star Sector remains as divided as it is now, we will forever be as weak as today, our civilization will not make any progress, and we will never step out of the Flying Star Sector and regain the glory of the Star Ocean Imperium!

“Yes, the glory of the Star Ocean Imperium!

“Back in the Star Ocean Imperium, the Flying Star Sector was one of the most important districts. There are endless magical equipment, debris, and relics even to this day!

“We are the offspring of the greatest warriors of mankind from the era of the Star Ocean Imperium!

“We should concentrate all our resources and realize the wish of the strongest human beings of the Star Ocean Imperium. We should rebuild the imperium so that the civilization of mankind can rise again until it becomes the strongest species in the sea of stars!”

Xiao Xuance was speaking faster and faster until he sounded insane in the end.

Even Luo Xingzi was somewhat awed by his resolution. He was dazed for a long time before he opened his mouth again. “Even so, there was no need to resort to such extreme methods. You know that the unification of the Flying Star Sector and the foundation of a new coalition government is not a new idea. We are already on the road!”

Xiao Xuance burst into laughter. “A thousand years of thinking, and what?

“It’s useless, Junior Brother. The Flying Star Sector has been divided for too long. The middle-sized and small-sized sects are the rulers of their respective space zones, which are essentially their independent kingdoms.

“Every sect has their own interests, and every space zone has their own plans!

“As the saying goes, it is better to be the head of a hen than to be the tail of a phoenix. How can those sects willingly establish a coalition government with us?

“Chances are that they will even suspect that the six sects of Heavenly Saints City are merely taking the chance to swallow them!

“Leader Si is right here. The Star Fighters’ Alliance always represents the interest of the middle-sized and small-sized sects. Why don’t you ask him if he is willing to?

“Hehe. In fact, there is no need to ask. Even if a new nation is established in hundreds of years, after countless negotiations and compromises, a weak parliamentary regime is most likely to be adopted.

“By then, in parliament, all the representatives will still argue against each other and double-deal for the interests of their own sects!

“Such a ‘nation’ will be merely a glamorous-looking skin. How can it realize the last wish of the Star Ocean Imperium?

“All in all, in the eyes of the Immortal Cultivators, the sects in the Flying Star Sector nowadays, be they the six sects of Heavenly Saints City or the smaller sects in the other space zones, and I do mean each and every of them, are a cancer to our civilization!

“Our civilization can only progress after all the sects are destroyed, when the power and resources of every space zone is concentrated in the hands of one leader and we are guided by one voice and one true path!

“Besides, hundreds of years of negotiations and compromises are just a waste of time. Can we really afford that?”

Luo Xingzi gnashed his teeth. “So, you Immortal Cultivators made up an organization called the Temple of Immortals and caused mayhem in the Flying Star Sector because you were paving the way for the ‘Grand Illusionary Soldier Project’. But in fact, you have backdoors in the ‘star brain’, the main database for the Grand Illusionary Soldiers. In the end, the Temple of Immortals and the Grand Illusionary Soldiers will attack the Cultivators collectively. When the main force of the Cultivators is destroyed, you will reign over the Flying Star Sector, right?”

After a long sigh, Xiao Xuance answered, “Exactly. We’ve been carrying out the plan for decades. Never did we expect that it would fail at the last moment!

“I took everything into consideration, but I never knew that a survivor was left in the slaughter a hundred and twenty years ago and that the survivor even became the ‘Pirate Potentate’!”

“Senior Brother!” Luo Xingzi burst into fury. “People of different such beliefs should distance themselves from each other. This is the last time that I will call you Senior Brother. In the future, I will call you Xiao Xuance!

“Xiao Xuance, the Immortal Cultivators like you claim that you are fighting for the civilization of mankind, but how many people has the Temple of Immortals that you made killed in the great explosion during the Skyhill Sword Seminar, in the arrival of the extraterrestrial devils in the tenth space ring, and all the other disasters over the past five years? So many innocent men and women!

“And you, you killed a starship full of people for your own survival a hundred and twenty years ago, and yet you are brass enough to declare that you are not a coward?”

“Of course, I’m not a coward,” Xiao Xuance replied calmly. “My own life is as insignificant as dust, but a great responsibility was on my shoulders. My value to the civilization of mankind is ten times, a hundred times, and a thousand times more than that of all the people on that starship combined!

“From the perspective of the civilization of mankind as a whole, I had more reason to survive than the people on that starship.

“So, I killed them and saved myself. It was not for my own survival but for the rise of the civilization of mankind. How is that cowardly?

“As for the victims killed by the Temple of Immortals…

“The birth of any great nation requires the blood of countless sacrifices. The loss of so many people, including my own son, leads to the rise of a brand-new imperium. Isn’t that good enough?”

Luo Xingzi was dumbfounded, not knowing what to say for a long time.

Even Li Yao was stunned, with a feeling that Xiao Xuance was so shameless that he almost sounded reasonable.

Xiao Xuance continued speaking, his voice becoming ever louder. “Don’t you see, Junior Brother? This universe is a dark forest where the strong prey on the weak. Survival of the fittest is the only law of nature!

“Only the strongest, the most coldblooded, and the cruelest civilization can live in the dark forest!

“Just look at what the civilization of mankind has become under the leadership of the Cultivators!

“Slack, undetermined, hypocritical, and weak. You’ve lost the wariness of the entire universe!

“You are just asking for your own death!

“Your slogan that it is the responsibility of the Cultivators to protect the weak is hilarious!

“There are only limited resources in the universe. Wasting the precious resources on people who are as weak as ants will only result in the decline of the entire civilization!

“Filter the weak, bring up the strong, and keep evolving. That is the path of immortality for a civilization!

“When the Immortal Cultivators take over the Flying Star Sector and build our nation, all the resources will be controlled and distributed by the government. Everybody will go through the strictest screening when they are born. The sick and the disabled do not need to live one more day to waste food!

“The infants who are healthy and strong will receive the harshest training. For the talented geniuses, whatever their familial background is, they will get the most resources and the guidance of the most excellent teachers. For the weak without talents, no matter how noble their family is, they will be eliminated without any mercy!

“The strong will enjoy excessive resources and focus on their training. They do not need to waste any of their time on ordinary people.

“The weak will be sent to the resource plants, where the environment is harsh, for mining and make whatever contributions they can to mankind!

“Other than that, rigorous competitions will be held regularly. With their lives on the line, the strongest of the strong will be selected and enlisted into an expedition army to recover other sectors, collect more resources, and even explore the ‘Empyrean Terminus Sector’, the center of the old Star Ocean Imperium!

“This is the future of the civilization of mankind!

“This is the dream country that the Immortal Cultivators have been fighting for throughout the years!

“This is the second unified imperium in the history of mankind that will pass on the glory of the Star Ocean Imperium—our Imperium of True Human Beings!”

Chapter 788 - Demeanor of the Immortal Cultivators

All six Cultivators, including Li Yao, were shocked to speechlessness by Xiao Xuance’s craziness.

Although Li Yao had known that the Temple of Immortals must have had great plans, he had never expected that it was purely a disguise to cover the horrifying ‘Imperium of True Human Beings’.

Luo Xingzi took a long breath and said, “Xiao Xuance, this is madness. Wake up!

“No matter how magnificent and glorious your ‘Imperium of True Human Beings’ may be, it has collapsed and vanished into thin air.

“Right now, the coalition squad of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City and the Star Fighters’ Alliance should have taken over the Grand Illusionary Group and Heavenly Phantom. A hunting group made of almost a hundred super experts has arrived in the tenth space ring, too. They will be here in several minutes.

“Surrender, Xiao Xuance.

“We have five Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators right here. Five versus one. Even though you are in the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage and the best expert of the Flying Star Sector, you do not stand a chance.

"Let's say you can get away today, what then? Your schemes are known to the world, and your organization is now melting like ice. What can you do except kill several more innocent people?

"Allow me to beg you as a representative of the innocent people. If you remember that you once swore to protect the weak as a Cultivator, just give up the meaningless resistance.

"Xiao Xuance, you were the idol for countless Cultivators. Righteous or evil, you are definitely one of the most influential men in the world. Now that you've failed, just admit your failure frankly!"

Xiao Xuance was silent.

Li Yao and the other Cultivators' hearts were all pounding.

This is the most crucial moment.

Xiao Xuance was the best expert of the Flying Star Sector. If he was determined to run away, the five Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators present might not be enough to stop him.

If he went on a rampage in the tenth space ring, it was very likely that he could drag hundreds of Cultivators and tens of thousands of ordinary people to hell before he was killed.

After a minute of silence, bitter laughter echoed inside Xiao Xuance's crystal suit. He said, "Alright. I took a gamble, and I accept the result. Dragging those ants with me is quite boring, too. I surrender!"

While he was talking, the aura of the Nascent Soul Stage gradually dispersed. His capability fell from the Nascent Soul Stage to the Core Formation Stage, the Building Foundation

Stage, and the Refinement State, until in the end he became no different from an ordinary person. It was only with the support of his crystal suit that he managed to stay in midair.

The six Cultivators all took a long breath in relief, with cold sweat on their back.

Strong as Xiao Xuance might have been, it would still take him half a second to ignite the power of his soul and summon the combat ability of the Nascent Soul Stage from the status of an ordinary person.

The five Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators had locked onto him and would not give him such a chance.

It meant that he had really given up all resistance.

Nobody had gotten hurt. It was the best result anybody could have imagined.

“B—Boss Bai, thank you.”

Inside the communication channel, Luo Xing hesitated for a long time but stilled thanked the infamous bandit sincerely.

Xiao Xuance was the previous leader of the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood. His betrayal was a major strike for the prestige of the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood. A great purge was underway.

Today, Luo Xingzi had forced Xiao Xuance to surrender as a representative of the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood. It was sort of a self-purging of the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood.

However many crimes Bai Xinghe had committed in the past, he had done the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood a favor in this matter.

Li Yao felt that a giant rock was finally off his heart. He almost burst into laughter on the spot.

Over the past month, his computational ability had almost been kept at the highest in every second. He had calculated and devised traps incessantly. He walked in the shoes of Xiao Xuance, Si Koulie, the leadership of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City and countless other people. He had carefully considered what other people’s reactions might have been and finally came up with such a neat trap!

He had been anxious almost every second, and every day had been as long as a year for him!

Right now, everything was settled. In the great gamble where the fate of the Flying Star Sector was the prize, he was the winner!

His bargaining chips were few, and his cards could not have been worse. But with the information that Xiao Xuance was not aware of, he had fooled the best expert of the Flying Star Sector!

Li Yao really had the urge to roar and do a hundred and eight backflips in a row!

Even the best expert of the Flying Star Sector has been tricked brutally by me. Hahahaha!

Li Yao wondered whether or not Xiao Xuance would vomit blood and become mentally deranged if he revealed his true face of Li Yao in front of Xiao Xuance right now.

However, it might be a better idea to wait until the four experts had completely controlled Xiao Xuance.

Luo Xingzi walked to Xiao Xuance prudently, preparing to impose barriers on him.

But Xiao Xuance coughed hard.

He coughed, shuddered, and bent down.

His vitality quickly flowed away from him like translucent smoke.

Drops of blood were leaking out of his crystal suit!

Luo Xingzi was greatly shocked. He hurried forward and held Xiao Xuance.

The best expert of the Flying Star Sector was like a dying old man. He clung to his junior brother’s arm and did not have the strength at all.

Luo Xingzi opened his hands and tore off Xiao Xuance’s helmet.

Below the helmet was face that was as slim as a skeleton. Countless flies seemed to be crawling on the face. Even the skull below was twisting, scattering, and condensing, as if a giant hand was shaping it into a completely different appearance.

Although Li Yao and the other Cultivators did not come close, they saw the face clearly through Luo Xingzi’s crystal camera.

It was not Xiao Xuance. Although he was too slender to be recognized, the shape of his bones was entirely different!

The man was not Xiao Xuance!

Li Yao was dumbfounded!

“You are not Xiao Xuance. Who are you exactly?”

Luo Xingzi clutched the man’s hair hard. But hardly had he touched it when the hair mostly all fell out.

There was not the slightest vigor in the man’s body, but his big eyes, which were particularly bright, were full of derision. Weird sounds came from the mouth, where the teeth were all gone.

“I am… the Lotus King.”

Luo Xingzi was greatly alarmed.

“No need to fret.” The man cackled like a crow until everybody felt creepy. Then he continued. “The Lotus King is neither a battle-type Cultivator nor in the Nascent Soul Stage. My only technique is to simulate the aura of the Nascent Soul Stage with the Cultivation of the Core Formation Stage. Nothing else. Haha. Hahahaha!

“Usually, as the Lotus King, I suppress my emotions, feelings, and soul with my secret arts. The CEO’s tremendous telepathic thoughts will enter my body, and I will be the speaker of the CEO’s will!

“Even though I was unfortunately captured by you, the CEO can argue that I am merely a tool that the Temple of Immortals used to frame him and that I have nothing to do with him.

“But right now, it is no longer necessary. The CEO permitted me to tell you everything after I buy twenty minutes for him… as a reward for my lifelong devotion.

“Cough cough. Cough cough cough cough!”

The Lotus King vomited a mouthful of pure black blood and burst into laughter. “Today, I’ve indeed dedicated the best performance of my life. Haha. With the Cultivation of the Core Formation Stage, I triggered a dominating aura higher than the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage and did not give myself away even though five Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators had locked onto me!

“Totally worth it. After my life as an Immortal Cultivator, I’ve scared five Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators to pale faces. My life has totally been worth it!”

The faces of Li Yao and the rest of the Cultivators blanched.

It was the Lotus King who had fallen into the trap, and the Lotus King was just a stand-in for Xiao Xuance.

Then, where was the real Xiao Xuance?

More importantly, since Xiao Xuance had allowed the Lotus King to tell them everything, he must have made up his mind to stop pretending!

They had wasted almost thirty minutes on the Lotus King. What had happened in the outside world in the meantime?

The Lotus King had been burning his life and soul in order to exude the aura of the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage. Right now, he was already on the brink of death. At the last moment of his life, he was suddenly refreshed and stared at Li Yao with a weird smile while vomiting blood.

“Bai Xinghe, you truly deserve to be the Pirate Potentate. Your schemes are indeed lethal and sordid. Our cause was nearly jeopardized.

“It is a pity that the CEO sensed danger at the last moment and guessed your intentions, but he pretended that he didn’t and arranged the ‘assassination’ anyway!

“Hehe. You fished us up with two Great Pagoda VII communicators, but in exactly the same way, the CEO fished up all the elites of the Cultivators with three super-heavy crystal cannons and a false ‘Xiao Xuance’!

“You mentioned that a hundred super experts had arrived in the tenth space ring?

“That was great news. It suggests that few experts were left in the central area of Heavenly Saints City and the first space ring, right?

“You were wrong about one thing. Very wrong. Time was not on your side but on ours!

“While we were rambling on, the CEO should have already annihilated the Cultivators who entered the headquarters of the Grand Illusionary Group and Heavenly Phantom!”

Li Yao was rendered speechless. He cursed in the most profane language in his heart, and he felt that his face was hot with pain, as if Xiao Xuance had slapped it so hard from thousands of kilometers away that even his teeth were knocked out.

The Lotus King laughed confidently. “After tonight, the entire Heavenly Saints City will belong to the Immortal Cultivators. The new era has arrived. Nobody is going to stop the rise of the Imperium of True Human Beings!”

Luo Xingzi was infuriated. He pressed the Lotus King’s skull with his five fingers and bellowed, “Shut up. Tell us your whole plan, or I guarantee that you will regret being born into this world!”

There was nothing but contempt deep inside the Lotus King’s eyes. He shook his hard stubbornly under Luo Xingzi’s hands until his neck was almost cracking. “At this moment, do you still think that we are those cowardly false Immortal Cultivators?

“Fellow Cultivators!”

The Lotus King shouted at the loudest of his voice with the last bit of his strength, “The New Era Plan has been initiated. There is no need to hide ourselves anymore!

“Before the dawn of success comes, let the Cultivators see what the real Immortal Cultivators are!”

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

The almost twenty Immortal Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage around were definitely no match for the five Cultivators in the Nascent Soul Stage. But after they heard the declaration, they burnt their life and soul and brought their combat ability to the peak without any hesitation.

Almost twenty torches seemed to be burning furiously in the dark night!

“Our mission has been completed. We’ve stalled the super experts of the Cultivators!”

“Right now, the central area of Heavenly Saints City must’ve been overturned already.

“The new era has come!”

“Fellow Cultivators, march on! Let the timid and hypocritical Cultivators see the demeanor of the real Immortal Cultivators!”

“Long live evolution! Long live the Immortal Cultivators!”

“Long live the civilization of mankind! Long live the Imperium of True Human Beings!”

Amid earsplitting roars, the twenty or so Immortal Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage launched a suicidal charge toward the five Cultivators in the Nascent Soul Stage!

Chapter 789 - Super Decapitation Operation

When one was relentless, a thousand enemies might not stop him. Although they were absolutely no match for the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, the insane Immortal Cultivators burst out auras that even eclipsed their enemies and rushed toward their doom at a speed beyond their limits like shooting stars and moths that were darting into fire!

The four experts were all sweating in shock. But Li Yao roared inside the communication channel and woke them up. “Don’t kill them. Keep them alive for interrogation!”

The next moment, tremendous pressure was released from the five of them and covered the Immortal Cultivators’ heads like giant, invisible hands.

The Immortal Cultivators, however, were determined to die. Although they were suppressed by the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, they burnt their life and soul even harder and struggled to move their hands and feet.

Crack! Crack!

Because of the pressure from the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, their joints and bones fractured one after another, and even their crystal suits were twisted into wasted iron and copper.

But none of the Immortal Cultivators gave up. Just like that, they dragged their broken bodies toward the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators one millimeter after another!

“Long live the civilization of mankind!”

When they discovered that, blocked by the tide-like spiritual energy, it was impossible for them to reach the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. The few Immortal Cultivators in the lead suddenly roared. The pressure inside their body suddenly soared, and light and heat was released from their crystal reactors before they turned into a series of enormous fireballs!

BOOM! BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM!

The Immortal Cultivators detonated their cores and died for their belief!

The self-detonation of those in the Core Formation Stage was never to be underestimated. Even the five Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators had to defend themselves from the savaging blast. Their overwhelming spiritual energy somewhat retreated.

The other Immortal Cultivators finally got rid of the shackles of the spiritual energy. They sprinted forward like more than ten bloodstained leopards charging at five rhinos!

Pa! Pa! Pa!

Like the mantises holding their forelegs in front of cars, they were all asking for their own death. Within a breath, the Immortal Cultivators were either dissected or turned into a messy mix of steel and flesh together with their crystal suits.

But they successfully left unignorable traces on the crystal suits of the five Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, too!

Half a minute later, only the last Immortal Cultivator was floating in midair.

His crystal suit had been entirely shattered. His right thigh had been cut off from his waist, and the wound had been sealed with bright green foam. His left arm was bent backwards unnaturally. His helmet was gone, revealing a face that was quite attractive but twisted because of excitement.

“Ah Song!” Liao Huagu, who was from the Furious Bears Union, exclaimed in shock.

He recognized that Immortal Cultivator as Cheng Xuesong. The man was a member of the Furious Bears Union, and his master was Liao Huagu’s junior brother.

More importantly, Cheng Xuesong’s father was the deputy president of the Furious Bears Union!

Even the son of the deputy president of the Furious Bears Union had become an Immortal Cultivator.

Liao Huagu was more than pitiful. He yelled, “Ah Song, surrender now! Stop being pigheaded. The six sects of Heavenly Saints City will give you a fair trial!”

Cheng Xuesong was both fanatic and indifferent. He glanced over the enemies around him and stared at the dead bodies of his companions in the smoke. In the end, he looked in the direction of the central area of Heavenly Saints City in his imagination.

His final look was full of hope and vision.

Cheng Xuesong smiled. He looked at his senior in the Furious Bears Union as if the man were a moron.

“I am an Immortal Cultivator. I am a great warrior who fights for the civilization of mankind. Why do you think the six sects of Heavenly Saints City are qualified to try me?

“Stop wasting your time. Let history judge unbiasedly who is right and who is wrong!

“Long live the Imperium of True Human Beings!”

The last heavily wounded Immortal Cultivator charged at five Cultivators, who were hundreds of times stronger than him, unstoppably.

Maybe he had recognized that the enemies’ strength far exceeded his own. To avoid being captured alive, Cheng Xuesong poured his spiritual energy into his core and activated the self-detonation rune array of his crystal suit the moment he charged out.

The next second, both he and his crystal suit turned into flying red butterflies!

For a moment, the eyes of the six Cultivators were all dyed red by the blood of the Immortal Cultivator.

When their vision returned, they could only see the scraps of the melted crystal suit blowing their spiritual shield like meteorites, raising flowers of flames that were blossoming in the garden of destruction.

The last Immortal Cultivator had gone, but the aftereffects of his final moment did not disperse for a long time, like a black flag that was riddled with holes.

The six Cultivators looked at each other in bewilderment and did not know what to say for a long time.

Shua!

The barriers that covered the Complex Star Plaza were finally broken.

Hundreds of Cultivators lunged at the debris.

Although they were hundreds of meters away, Li Yao could already feel their intimidating aura.

Li Yao felt that he was sitting on a giant icy block with coldness spreading from his anus to his heart. He gasped and asked, “How many people did you send to the tenth space ring?”

“Not very many, for the sake of confidentiality. Four hundred people at most. Besides, most of them do not know the real mission.” Si Koulie sounded somewhat lost. “However, in order to make sure that Xiao Xuance is captured and that he does not go on a rampage, the reinforcements are all super experts. Quite a few of them are battle-type Cultivators in the Nascent Soul Stage. As for those in the Core Formation Stage, there are too many to count!”

Li Yao gnashed his teeth. “So, the central area of Heavenly Saints City is really empty right now?”

Si Koulie was silent for a moment. His body slightly shivered as he said softly, “Yes.”

Li Yao felt a headache coming. He suddenly realized three facts.

Firstly, the Grand Illusionary Group controlled the most and the best Grand Illusionary Soldiers of the Flying Star Sector. Even though there were no backdoors in the ‘Grand Illusionary Soldier Project’, those Grand Illusionary Soldiers were still under the direct command of Xiao Xuance.

Secondly, the super experts and the best warriors of the Cultivators had all been diverted to the tenth space ring, which was the furthest from the central area of Heavenly Saints City, because of Xiao Xuance’s trick.

It was a long journey between the central area and the tenth space ring. Getting out was quite easy, but it would be quite a different matter if they wanted to return.

Also—

Of the top 500 sects of the Flying Star Sector, the leaders, elders, and important figures of more than four hundred sects were now gathered in the hall of the Meeting of Next Millennium, attending strategical meetings and discussing the military arrangements for the battle of Spider Den.

Leaders needed to manage all the complicated affairs of a sect. Naturally, most of them were admin-type Cultivators; few of them were battle-type.

If Xiao Xuance wiped out the leaders and elders of more than four hundred sects…

“F*ck.”

Li Yao squinted and cursed in a low voice.

It was 20:40:33.

…

Thirty minutes earlier, at 21:10:33, a minor accident took place in the No.4 military space port between the central area of Heavenly Saints City and the first space ring.

In order to spare vehicles to transport the reinforcements of Iron Plateau, which was not part of the original plan, dozens of crystal warships had temporarily changed their locations.

A crystal warship of the Furious Bears Union, however, flew to the wrong sailing route and crashed into a carrier of the Star Fighters’ Alliance.

The crash led to a chain reaction. More than ten crystal warships scratched each other.

In the end, one of the crystal warships of the Silver Moon Clan, during the emergency, hit Heavenly Phantom, the flagship of the Grand Illusionary Group.

Heavenly Saints City was one the biggest rally points for the final battle. Crystal warships several times more than its capacity had gathered in this place.

The leadership of more than four hundred sects had come to Heavenly Saints City for the meeting. Although they did not bring all of their sect’s crystal warships, every sect had brought a few with them.

Therefore, every military space port of Heavenly Saints City had been particularly busy over the past month. Such accidents of had happened almost on a daily basis. It was not strange.

However, half a minute after the accident, a maintenance starship of the Star Fighters’ Alliance drew close to Heavenly Phantom and docked to it.

A batch of ‘refiners’ of the Star Fighters’ Alliance and several high officials of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City boarded Heavenly Phantom. They claimed that the previous collision might have damaged Heavenly Phantom's space jump system, and a full examination was necessary.

The Grand Illusionary Group was not an independent sect but an enterprise co-established by the six sects of Heavenly Saints City. The original capital, workers, and managers all came from the six sects of Heavenly Saints City. Many high officials of the Grand Illusionary Group were from the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, too. Naturally, they had to receive the command of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City.

Since the visitors were high officials of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, and they carried the orders of the command center, there was no reason to stop them.

The maintenance group entered Heavenly Phantom without any trouble, but they did not go to the central part of the starship where the space jump system was. Instead, they went directly to the bridge. It was said that they had to discuss the damage of the starship with the captain first.

Emotionlessly, Ning Wushuang walked into the bridge of Heavenly Phantom together with the maintenance group.

His heart was beating the fastest that he could remember since he had entered the Nascent Soul Stage.

Is Xiao Xuance really an Immortal Cultivator? Is the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project really a trap?

Ning Wushuang was a pure battle-type Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage, but his highly developed brain cells still granted him a thinking and analyzing ability much higher than normal people.

However, he had considered the two questions with his billions of brain cells for a long time and come up with no answers.

Ning Wushuang was one of the few people who knew the truth in the ‘maintenance group’.

The rest of the members were mostly gathered in a hurry three hours ago and informed that they were going to participate in an operation that was of paramount importance.

Some of them did not even know that it was an operation at all; they thought that it was really a maintenance task.

However, whether they knew the truth or not, every member had been vetted profoundly. They were absolutely loyal and reliable and did not have anything to do with the Grand Illusionary Group, the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood, Xiao Xuance, or the Xiao family.

Since Heavenly Phantom was docked at the port, it was running in the semi-automatic mode. The ‘star brain’, which boasted enormous computational ability, took care of most of the affairs. There were few people on the bridge.

The captain of Heavenly Phantom was standing in the middle of the bridge with his hands behind his back, waiting for them patiently.

Ning Wushuang felt somewhat relieved. It seemed that the enemy had not grown suspicious.

The captain of Heavenly Phantom was an admin-type Cultivator at the peak of the Core Formation Stage. He was definitely no match for Ning Wushuang and could be taken down easily.

When the captain was down, Heavenly Phantom was occupied, and the star brain was taken over, Xiao Xuance would not be able to cause any trouble even if he was an Immortal Cultivator.

Chapter 790

Four thin metal patches on which several simple rune arrays were carved were pinned to Ning Wushuang's chest. Their sole use was to receive the signals of Luo Xingzi and the other experts.

According to the deal, the four Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators would send a signal to him every other second. The metal patches would stay quiet when they received the signal.

But if they failed to receive any signal for three seconds, they would shake feebly.

It meant that the telepathic thoughts of four Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were jammed at the same time.

Normally speaking, it was impossible.

One second passed after another. Although Ning Wushuang controlled his pores by force, cold sweat was still popping up on his forehead.

At this moment, the negotiation between Si Koulie and Bai Xinghe had already begun. If everything was normal in another ten minutes, it would be evident that Xiao Xuance was not an Immortal Cultivator and that it was a false alarm.

If so, they would retreat quietly after 'maintaining' Heavenly Phantom. Xiao Xuance would not know that he had gone through such a test at all.

Maybe after Spider Den was suppressed and the Temple of Immortals was demolished, they would publicize everything.

It would not matter at all by then.

Most Cultivators did not believe in deities because, to some extent, they were the ‘deities’ in the eyes of the ordinary people in the past!

But right now, Ning Wushuang, as a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, started praying in secret, hoping that the gods that were watching over mankind, if there were any, did not get sloppy at the crucial moment.

However, half way through his prayer, the metal patches on his chest started shivering.

There was a moment when Ning Wushuang’s heart almost froze. The metal patches seemed to have turned into hundreds of cold bugs gnawing his heart.

The telepathic thoughts of four Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators have been jammed and cut off!

Xiao Xuance is really an Immortal Cultivator!

Ning Wushuang wanted to curse loudly, but he held back his feeling in the next 0.01 seconds. He snapped his fingers and sent out a command through his crystal processor.

Every member of the ‘maintenance group’ was allocated a crystal processor in which hundreds of commands were preset before the operation.

To avoid any suspicion when they checked their light beam at the same time, a tiny broadcast rune array had been planted to the ears of every team member.

As Ning Wushuang sent out the command, the rune array stimulated their eardrums, and the voice that only they could hear came over.

“An emergency has occurred. Stay calm. This is not a drill. I repeat, this is not a drill.

“Xiao Xuance has rebelled and is the leader of the Immortal Cultivators. It is very likely that the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project is a trap!

“Right now, Xiao Xuance is being hunted. Everything is under control. Our task is to control the bridge, take over the star brain, and occupy Heavenly Phantom!”

Ning Wushuang could clearly feel that many people behind him shook slightly and that their spiritual waves were somewhat chaotic.

However, those Cultivators were the most calm and resolute people.

It was also one of the most important reasons why they were selected.

One second later, everybody calmed down.

Ning Wushuang was somewhat relieved, but his fluctuating chest could not calm down.

Right now, Heavenly Saints City, or rather, the fate of the entire Flying Star Sector, was in his hands.

There could not be too many Immortal Cultivators, and they would definitely be no match for the Cultivators in head-on clashes. The only thing that they could make use of was the Grand Illusionary Soldiers.

However, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers had to be connected to the enormous database of the star brain to read the combat data of the Cultivators who had fought in the Grand Illusionary Land before in order to maximize their combat ability.

As long as the star brain was controlled, or destroyed if necessary, the rebellion of the Immortal Cultivators would be extinguished before it began.

With a natural smile, Ning Wushuang walked to the captain of Heavenly Phantom in the most relaxed fashion.

Right now, they were taking the initiative. The opponent would be unaware that their identity had been exposed.

As he expected, there was no alert in the captain’s eyes. He merely frowned with confusion when he saw the strangers coming. He seemed to be baffled why a minor collision would require such a fuss.

There were the last five meters between the two of them.

The bridge suddenly shook slightly, as if another collision had happened, or the starship was caught in a minor cosmic storm.

However, everything went peaceful again in five seconds.

Ning Wushuang was dazed.

Of course, the central area of Heavenly Saints City never had cosmic storms. Also, in their plan, no crystal warships would hit Heavenly Phantom again.

Then what was the shaking about?

The captain of Heavenly Phantom seemed to be dumbfounded by the unexpected shaking, too. He looked at Ning Wushuang in confusion and walked over to him, while he said, “Fellow Cultivator Ning, what is going—”

A tiny broadcast rune array had been planted inside Ning Wushuang’s ears, too. At this moment, somebody was yelling in the loudest voice, “Terrible! An unprecedented explosion took place in the headquarters of the Grand Illusionary Group!

“The blast reached one kilometer away. Two blocks were demolished. The headquarters of the Grand Illusionary Group are now an ocean of flames. The Grand Illusionary Plaza has been entirely destroyed!”

Ning Wushuang felt that his head was dizzy, and he nearly tripped over.

It was very likely that the headquarters of the Grand Illusionary Group was another base of the Immortal Cultivators. At the same time as he entered Heavenly Phantom, another team that was larger in scale, made up of more than twenty experts above the peak of the Core Formation Stage, went into the Grand Illusionary Plaza to take over the Grand Illusionary Group!

But right now, such a horrendous explosion had taken place in the Grand Illusionary Group that a crystal warship floating in the space port dozens of kilometers away was affected by the blast.

How intense was the explosion?

Was it possible that any of the Cultivators who had gone into the Grand Illusionary Group survived?

Ning Wushuang’s head was almost shrieking in shock. It took him 0.1 seconds for him to realize that he must have been exposed, too.

Better to attack first!

Gritting his teeth, Ning Wushuang stepped forward. He launched an attack toward the captain of Heavenly Phantom while he summoned his crystal suit!

However, the moment before he launched his attack, the captain of Heavenly Phantom who was coming over slowly suddenly accelerated into a streak of brightness and initiated an overwhelming attack.

The attack was so powerful that it far exceeded the limits of the peak of the Core Formation Stage, nor did it befit an admit-type Cultivator. All signs suggested that—

The captain was a battle-type Cultivator in the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage!

Shua!

An elegantly-shaped crystal suit gradually covered Ning Wushuang.

But it could not be enclosed when it reached his chest, because a thick, strong arm had pierced into Ning Wushuang’s chest and burnt his heart into ash.

The furious spiritual energy savaged inside Ning Wushuang’s body like a flood and cut off all his vitality before he triggered the capability of the Nascent Soul Stage.

Ning Wushuang did not even have the chance to be surprised before his facial muscles were gradually frozen, and his eyes lost all color.

He had thought that his opponent would at least talk to him for a while.

But his opponent had merely looked at him indifferently. His lips, as thin as the edge of a saber, were held tight and showed no sign of opening.

Before he was consumed by darkness, Ning Wushuang saw that the opponent’s face was twisting and changing. His eyes were long and narrow and extended to his temples.

In the deepest part of his eyes, two bloody lotuses were blossoming.

Pa da!

Ning Wushuang’s body collapsed to the ground, cramping slightly.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

The killing lasted only one second. Before the operation squad of the Cultivators realized what was going on, the gate of the bridge had been closed, and the maintenance channels above were all opened, from which hundreds of Grand Illusionary Soldiers jumped down.

The Grand Illusionary Soldiers were totally different from those in service of other sects. They were all more than 2.2 meters tall, with a layer of purple, golden brilliance emanating from their shells. It was not dull lights that were blinking in the six crystal cameras on their head but bouncing flames, as if they boasted a real soul.

Since there was no need to accommodate a human being, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers could be loaded with more crystals and bigger crystal reactors. As a result, they could trigger an even more immense storm of spiritual energy!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Every Grand Illusionary Soldier was riddled of dense holes. At this moment, flames of light spurted out of the holes and gradually consolidated into translucent muscles, veins, and nerves, making them even more high and mighty!

The marines who were busy doing their job previously inside the bridge all tore off their disguises, too, unveiling their real faces as battle-type Immortal Cultivators.

The captain of Heavenly Phantom was a totally different person now, one mixed with calmness and frenzy, reality and illusions, and sordidness and brutality!

Xiao Xuance, an Immortal Cultivator!

Xiao Xuance's eyes did not stop on the operation squad of the Cultivators at all. He stared at the wall of the bridge, as if his eyes could pierce through the thick plate into the sea of stars.

He raised his right hand and pressed down slightly, before he commanded, "Kill them all!"

Three minutes later, the battle was over. A river of blood was flowing inside the bridge.

Xiao Xuance could have floated over in midair, but he still chose to stride forward with his head held high through the pools of blood and the mountains of corpses, leaving a line of bloody footprints, before he entered the control room of the star brain behind the bridge.

Xiao Tianbao was still operating crazily below the star brain with a naïve face.

Xiao Yushan stepped forward. He stood at attention and raised his right arm. “Everything is ready. The ‘New Era Plan’ can be initiated at any moment!”

Pausing for a moment, he lowered his voice and said, “However, it’s a bit too hasty now that we decided to start it in advance. Many Fellow Cultivators are not ready yet. It is not flawless.”

He had been brought up by Xiao Xuance and was almost like his grandson. Right now, he was Xiao Xuance’s right hand man. It was his most important task to voice all his concerns without keeping anything to himself.

“There’s no time.” Xiao Xuance squinted, the lotuses inside his eyes shivering slightly. “It was indeed a critical move that Bai Xinghe played. My fate would have been at his mercy no matter which of the two roads I chose.

“Besides, since Bai Xinghe could influence the Star Fighters’ Alliance and the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, he must be backed by an even more powerful organization!

“I guarantee that, even if I did not arrange the assassination and they did not get any proof about my crime, the organization behind Bai Xinghe would still have put forward a non-confidence motion during the morale-boosting rally and tried to postpone the final battle!

“Right now, our entire organization is exerting all our strength. We are on the verge of being exposed and cannot afford an investigation.

“Therefore, neither to assassinate him nor to stay and do nothing was the right choice. The two roads were both dead ends.

“The only sensible choice was to rebel in advance!

“Hehe. Bai Xinghe is truly the Pirate Potentate. The moves that he has been playing are neat, lethal, and almost flawless!

“It’s a pity that I’m the crownless king of the Flying Star Sector. You are just a bandit, and you think that you are qualified to play chess with me?

“You want to play chess, but I will knock over the board. Not just that, I will smash the chess pieces and the board into smithereens and build a new world on them!”

Chapter 791 - The Flying Star Sector Is Peaceful Tonight!

Xiao Xuance clenched his fists and smashed the table. The uniform of the captain was torn into pieces by his surging spiritual energy.

With the help of Xiao Yushan, he put on a pure white, neat uniform with a beautiful emblem that was a furiously burning planet on the chest.

The burning planet was the battle emblem of the Imperium of the True Human Beings. The incessant flames were a symbol that the Immortal Cultivators would burn everything as the fuel to push the civilization of mankind forward!

Xiao Xuance and Xiao Yushan looked at each other and nodded solemnly. Then, together with another dozen Immortal Cultivators, they took out a blood red ribbon and tied it on their left arms.

On the ribbon, six big words were neatly painted: Overturn the world with my blood!

The uniform was white, and the ribbon was blood red, fluttering even though there was no wind.

Protected by the dozens of Immortal Cultivators, Xiao Xuance walked to the front of the star brain.

More than ten crystal cameras aimed at him from different angles. With the blinking, unpredictable star brain as the background, he started his speech toward all the Immortal Cultivators in the Flying Star Sector.

“Fellow Cultivators, establishers of the Imperium of True Human Beings, and warriors who fight for our civilization.

“It’s been five thousand years since the apocalypse!

“Over the five thousand years, the Flying Star Sector has been governed by the Cultivators and turned into a tray of loose sand. It is weak, feeble, and breathing its last breath in the darkness of the universe, struggling against the various natural disasters!

“The shortsighted Cultivators placed the interests of their sects above the interests of the civilization of mankind. It is impossible for them, nor did they want to, rescue our civilization. They have never even thought to regain the glory of the Star Ocean Imperium and recover the magnificence of a great civilization and a great species!

“Unify the human beings, establish the new imperium, and embrace the renaissance of a great civilization. This sacred and splendid mission can only be accomplished by the Immortal Cultivators!

“The civilization of mankind should not sink in the weakness, selfishness, and hypocrisy of the Cultivators any longer. It is the Immortal Cultivators’ turn to guard the civilization, to shape the civilization, and the rebuild the civilization!

“Now, the most crucial moment has come!

“The shameless Cultivators have grown suspicious of us. We cannot wait until all of them are gathered in the Spider Den and must activate the ‘New Era Plan’ according to our backup plan!

“I hereby decree that all Immortal Cultivators in Heavenly Saints City, the Spider Den Space Zone, and the other space zones of the Flying Star Sector shall activate the New Era Plan according to the secondary plan when you hear the secret code!

“Here are our targets. Firstly, occupy the central area of Heavenly Saints City, break into the hall of the Meeting of the Next Millennium, control the leadership of the top five hundred sects of the Flying Star Sector, and kill them if necessary so that all the sects of the Flying Star Sector lose their commanders!

“Secondly, occupy the No.9 military space port of the first space ring!

“The No.9 military space port boasts the greatest arsenal for the battle to come. Countless powerful magical equipment and crystals are stored inside. It is even more valuable than the headquarters of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City!

“If we occupy the No.9 military space port and take over the magical equipment and crystals, the Cultivators in Heavenly Saints City will lose the ability to fight a protracted battle!

“Thirdly, the Immortal Cultivators on Spider Den should charge at the fleet of the Cultivators near the space gate immediately, leading all the space pirates, the Immortal Army, and the assassins of Spider’s Thorn!

“This time, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers will be on your side. It is hoped that your collective attack will eliminate all the Cultivators at the periphery of the Spider Den Space Zone with no survivors remaining!

“There’s no need to worry about the casualties of the space pirates. Use excessive nebulized exhilarants if necessary to trigger their slaughtering will. Do not let them stop fighting until they are dead!

“Fourthly, all the Immortal Cultivators of the other space zones should act with the local Grand Illusionary Soldiers to interfere with the guardians of your respective space zones and delay them from reinforcing Heavenly Saints City!

“Once we control the heads of the five hundred sects, take over the most important arsenal, and seize Heavenly Saints City, victory will be ours!

“Without the leadership and commanders, the dozens of space zones will be in disorder. Under the collective attack of Heavenly Saints City and Spider Den, they will be taken down one after another. If they do not surrender, their only destiny will be death!

“My Immortal Cultivators and my comrades!

“The future of the civilization of mankind depends on the battle! Let’s pave a way of survival in the dark forest for the civilization of mankind with blood, fire, iron, and strong will!

“Right now, as the commander-in-chief of the Imperium of True Human Beings, I now announce the secret code of our operation—the Flying Star Sector is peaceful tonight!”

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

Invisible spiritual waves spread out from Heavenly Phantom unstoppably and disseminated to other space zones through the secret spiritual towers that the Grand Illusionary Group had built throughout space in secret.

Some of the space zones were not able to hear Xiao Xuance's full speech because of the instable signals or for the sake of confidentiality, but they all received the short secret code for the operation.

"The Flying Star Sector is peaceful tonight!"

Or rather, the secret code appeared in the contact points of major sects of dozens of space zones blatantly in plain text. It was scanned and received by every crystal warship.

While Xiao Xuance was making his blood-boiling speech, the star brain, the translucent super crystal processor almost a hundred meters in diameter, went through drastic changes, too.

Every 'brain cell' was shivering, swirling, and crashing crazily, leading to brilliant sparks. The enormous data contained in every spark was enough to burst any Cultivator's head!

The star brain was sending commands to the millions of Grand Illusionary Soldiers scattered in dozens of space zones.

When the commands reached their destination, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers would run under brand new permissions. Only the Immortal Cultivators registered in the database would be able to control them.

It would take a certain amount of time for the signals of the Spiritual Nexus to jump to every space zone. For the space zones far away from Heavenly Saints City, it was possible for the Cultivators there to cut off the signals of the Spiritual

Nexus before all the Grand Illusionary Soldiers went out of control.

However, over the past five years, the entire world of Cultivators had dedicated a lot of resources to the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project. The Grand Illusionary Soldiers were the largest in number and the strongest magical equipment for many sects.

Without the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, the combat ability of the sects would be lower than ever.

Besides, once the space zones decided to cut off the signals of the Spiritual Nexus with Heavenly Saints City, they would completely lose contact with Heavenly Saints City.

By the time they established new channels of communication with the spiritual towers that did not belong to the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, it was very possible that Heavenly Saints City would have fallen into the Immortal Cultivators' hands, and the heads of the five hundred sects would be dead people.

"The Flying Star Sector is peaceful tonight."

The somewhat ironic secret code contaminated every corner of every space zone of the Flying Star Sector at the speed of light like virus.

…

At that moment, Heavenly Saints City was mired in chaos.

Accusing the crownless king of the Flying Star Sector of being an Immortal Cultivator had dire consequences after all. If it was not handled carefully, a civil war between the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, the Star Fighters’ Alliance, and the Glorious Sunlight Group might break out instantly.

With the final battle drawing near, naturally, such a thing could not be allowed to happen.

Therefore, although Mo Xuan expressed strong non-confidence in Xiao Xuance to the six sects of Heavenly Saints City and the Star Fighters’ Alliance on behalf of the Glorious Sunlight Group and Iron Plateau, not many people knew of the matter. Only dozens of the most crucial people knew the details of the issue, and hundreds more knew only a thing or two about the accusation.

The moment before the shocking explosion took place in the headquarters of the Grand Illusionary Group, most of the Cultivators still did not have any idea what was going on and were still under the impression that an easy victory was on the way.

When the Grand Illusionary Plaza along with the hundreds of Cultivators inside soared into the sky because of the explosion, the headquarters of the Grand Illusionary Group was drowned in an ocean of flames, and the blast knocked down many skyscrapers several kilometers away. A lot of Cultivators were had their mouths open in bewilderment, holding their humming ears, as if invisible people were stuffing eggs to their mouth.

The headquarters of the Grand Illusionary Group was the center of the Grand Illusionary Land and the Spiritual Nexus. Even the enormous data of the command center of the final battle needed to be transmitted through the super crystal processors in the headquarters of the Grand Illusionary Group.

The explosion not only killed countless super experts among the Cultivators but also sabotaged their communication network.

All the Cultivators were running around like headless chickens, cursing loudly at the light beam of their crystal processor, which showed nothing but snowflakes.

The Immortal Cultivators, on the other hand, had been prepared for this. They had moved all the core data and the super crystal processors to Heavenly Phantom.

Heavenly Phantom was the real center for them. The headquarters of the Grand Illusionary Group was just an empty shell.

“The Flying Star Sector is peaceful tonight.”

The secret code lingered on like an apparition in the Flying Star Sector.

…

The first space ring of Heavenly Saints City had already been caught in havoc because of the great explosion in the city.

A luxury shuttle flew above the crowd in a hurry. Inside the shuttle was an elder of the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood.

He had received the news of the great explosion of the Grand Illusionary Group and knew that dangerous changes had taken place. He was in a hurry to go to the space port, ready to leave for the central area.

Right then, he heard a resolute voice from the wrist crystal processors of his chauffeur and his bodyguard.

“The Flying Star Sector is peaceful tonight!”

Before the elder of the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood realized what was going on, the chauffeur had driven the shuttle off the route to a dark valley.

The bodyguard was wearing a pair of colorful, thorny gloves on his tough hands. He patted the elder’s shoulder, and the eruptive spiritual energy immediately collapsed the admin-type Cultivator’s not-so-strong body.

The bodyguard looked at him and said solemnly, “Elder Ye, a new era has come. Cooperate with us and work for the rise of the Imperium of the True Human Beings!”

Elder Ye immediately understood everything. His facial muscles regained their calmness after half a second of twitching. He took a long breath and collapsed in his seat helplessly. He shook his head with a bitter smile and said, “I’ve been a Cultivator for more than a hundred and twenty years. I don’t want to change now.”

“Alright.” The bodyguard took out a black dagger from his pocket and stabbed into his chest. “Then, please die for the civilization of mankind!”

Chapter 792 - Face for Face!

Inside a camp of Exos in the southeast part of the central area of Heavenly Saints City, the ‘Bloody Axe Legion’, the most excellent Exo Society of the Giant Axe Hall, one of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, was stationed. It was made of five hundred Exos who were all above the Building Foundation Stage. With the strict and obedient fighting style of the Giant Axe Hall, they were a horrifying force.

At this moment, the captain of the Bloody Axe Legion turned off the light beam that was displaying ‘the Flying Star Sector is peaceful tonight’ silently. He stood on a high platform and stared at the five hundred warriors who were gathered.

They were temporarily gathered because of the great explosion of the Grand Illusionary Group’s headquarters. Although they did not know what was going on, they were ready to deal with any changes.

“Warriors of the Giant Axe Hall,” the captain of the Bloody Axe Legion shouted, “betrayed! A filthy betrayal has just taken place! The Star Fighters’ Alliance and the fifty-six middle-sized sects have betrayed Heavenly Saints City and the world of Cultivators!

“The so-called Temple of Immortals is just a plot of the Star Fighters’ Alliance. They were planning to destroy all of us on Spider Den together with the space pirates!

“Xiao Xuance, as leader of the Cultivators, has been suspicious of the Star Fighters’ Alliance and investigating in secret. Finally, he has got something!

“The Star Fighters’ Alliance realized it and initiated their plan in advance in their desperation. Just now, they blew up the headquarters of the Grand Illusionary Group!

“Now, Heavenly Saints City is in peril, the world of Cultivators is in peril, and the Flying Star Sector is in peril!

“I have received the secret command from our leader. We have been asked to take action immediately and attack the Star Fighters’ Plaza!

“In a moment, I’ll send the command of our leader to you. Then, you will cut off the connection of your crystal processor.

“Remember, the Star Fighters’ Alliance has hacked into the Spiritual Nexus and will very likely send false messages to you. Do not be disturbed by them!

“Some of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers have fallen into the Star Fighters’ Alliance’s hands and are attacking our fellow Cultivators. Do not waste time on them. It is our mission to break into the Star Fighters’ Plaza and annihilate all the traitors of the Star Fighters’ Alliance!

“The fate of the Giant Axe Hall is in our hands. Warriors of the Bloody Axe Legion, let’s go!”

Led by their captain, the five hundred Cultivators who had been fooled roared and marched out of their camp, heading toward the Star Fighters’ Plaza unstoppably.

…

The Grand Illusionary Group had proposed the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project. Naturally, Heavenly Saints City was the biggest place of production and utilization of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers.

The third space ring outside of Flying Star University and Heavenly Saint Institute, after five years of construction, had essentially become a manufacturing base of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers.

In the enormous assembly lines, countless magical equipment components slid by every second and were put together by the flipping artificial arms. The crystals were filled, and the crystal processor was embedded in.

Inside the warehouse, many products of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers were folded and stored on the shelves.

The Grand Illusionary Soldiers were not all the Grand Illusionary Group’s property. A majority of them were ordered by other sects and refined by the Grand Illusionary Group.

Considering that the battle of Spider Den was about to begin, there was no need to ship the Grand Illusionary Soldiers back to their respective space zones. It seemed a better idea to jump to Spider Den from Heavenly Saints City together and return to their space zones when the war was over. That way, less money and resources would be wasted.

Therefore, over the past month, the number of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers stored in this place had reached a new high.

At this moment, ‘the Flying Star Sector is peaceful tonight’ was resounding in the third space ring through the broadcast rune arrays on the ceiling.

Since it was the biggest base of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, the Immortal Cultivators had spent much time infiltrating the factory. Almost half of the guards were Immortal Cultivators.

After a brief slaughter resulting in countless corpses, only the Immortal Cultivators' guards remained.

"The No.1 factory zone is now under our control."

"The No.2 factory zone is now under our control."

"The No.3 factory is being fought over. Estimated to be under our control in two minutes and fifty seconds."

The dozens of Immortal Cultivators operated on the light beams quickly while they announced the progress.

"Firstly, deploy the defense rune arrays in case the Cultivators return to the refining center.

"Then, release the stock!

"Set all the assembly lines at the highest speed and do not worry about the cost. One more Grand Illusionary Soldier means one more hope for the imperium!"

Zi! Zi! Zi!

Countless spiritual energy circuits were emitting a feeble brightness as they activated the Grand Illusionary Soldiers they were docked to.

The crouching Grand Illusionary Soldiers were picked up by the artificial arms out of the warehouse and stretched out.

Other artificial arms brought them chainswords, vibration sabers, heated axes, and small crystal cannons.

Teams of Grand Illusionary Soldiers, after being fully equipped, flew toward the central area with flames of passion burning in their eyes.

…

On Spider Den…

One crystal warship after another soared into the sky. Every one of them was like a can because they were packed with space pirates.

Spider Den was almost empty. Every starship that could move for a few hours in space was being activated. The air of every city in the mining pits was injected with excessive exhilarants.

‘Incendiary’, ‘Bullet’, ‘Bloody Thorn’, ‘Last Shot’… All the awe-inspiring exhilarants would cause irrecoverable wounds to the human body when they ran their course. In the worse cases, the victims might be paralyzed or mentally deranged.

But at least for now, the nerve endings of all the space pirates were on fire. The space pirates who had been frustrated for an entire year regained their previous cruelty, brutality, and arrogance. They roared like animals and batted the cabin walls of the crystal warships with their chainswords while they lunged at the space gate at the periphery of the space zone.

Near the space gate, the daily battle of attrition was underway.

However, the space pirates and the Immortal Cultivators were suddenly ten times more aggressive than before, to the point that they seemed to have suddenly lost the fear of death.

While the Cultivators were baffled, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers who were fighting side by side with them came to a standstill simultaneously. They were like silent, iron tombs floating in the deep, dark universe, except for the rhythmic brilliance that was shining deep inside their eyes.

“The Flying Star Sector is peaceful tonight.”

…

In half hour, the entire Heavenly Saints City, or rather, almost the entire Flying Star Sector, was burning.

However, in the debris in the northwest district of the tenth space ring of Heavenly Saints City, the four Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who were well respected in the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, the leader of the Star Fighters’ Alliance and the second in command in the world of Cultivators, and the young man who could command most of the resources of the Glorious Sunlight Group and Iron Plateau knew absolutely nothing about it.

Xiao Xuance did not want them to send messages to the outside world. Therefore, he had imposed special barriers to block all the waves entering and exiting the Complex Star Plaza.

The soundwaves, vibration waves, and spiritual waves were all blocked.

In the meantime, Li Yao and the rest of the Cultivators thought that they were hunting Xiao Xuance and did not wish for Xiao Xuance to contact his accomplices. Therefore, they had imposed an even larger barrier outside of Xiao Xuance’s.

Blocked by the double barriers, all the waves and telepathic thoughts inside could not be sent out, but no information of the outside world could be transmitted in, either.

Therefore, while Xiao Xuance initiated the ‘New Era Plan’ flagrantly and commanded his subordinates to take action, Li Yao, Si Koulie, and the other people who had the capability to influence the situation wasted almost half an hour for nothing!

It was not until the barrier was removed and the communication was restored that they learned of everything that had happened in the central area from the thousands of new messages.

After he learned the truth, even Li Yao wanted to slap his face hard.

“Xiao! Xuan! Ce!”

Li Yao burst into such a fury that he almost jumped into the air and pluck his hair to vent his anger.

Ever since he had gotten the nickname ‘Vulture’, he had never been fooled so humiliatingly!

However, Li Yao could not bear to waste a single second in outrage or frustration. He compressed his anger into a spark and buried it in his heart, while he began thinking calmly.

Xiao Xuance has won the first round, but the game is not over yet!

Xiao Xuance has played all his trump cards and is in an overwhelming advantage right now, but I have three trump cards that are yet to be revealed!

Firstly, after Li Yao reached out to Professor Mo Xuan half a month ago, he had spoken to Xiong Wuji, chief of the Furious Bears Tribe on Iron Plateau, through Mo Xuan. With the help of Xiong Wuji, he had mobilized the elites of the six tribes of Iron Plateau and formed an expedition army whose number was much larger than previously expected.

The expedition army was in Heavenly Saints City right now. They had left their crystal warships and moved into Heavenly Saints City under the pretext that the carriers of the Glorious Sunlight Group were too seriously damaged in the cosmic storm.

With everything in chaos right now, such a well-trained army would definitely be a pillar to stabilize the situation!

More importantly, the Iron Plateau natives never liked magical equipment that was too precise, and they simply despised the Grand Illusionary Soldiers.

Therefore, there were no Grand Illusionary Soldiers in the army of the qi-trainers at all!

Secondly, Xiao Xuance was not aware yet that Li Yao was not the recently reincarnated Bai Xinghe whose soul was unstable. The truth was that he was not scared of soul attacks at all. On the contrary, soul attacks were his favorite, and he could take however many there were!

Right now, the only people who knew his real identity were the five spectral Cultivators, Xiong Wuji, Lei Dalu, and Bai Kaixin. None of them were likely to be Immortal Cultivators.

Li Yao had planned to unveil his real identity after Xiao Xuance was captured, but it seemed to him now that playing ‘Bai Xinghe’ a while longer had many merits and no harms.

Thirdly, and most importantly, he still had the ‘Brain Concussion Plan’!

The Brain Concussion Plan, which had begun five years ago, had yielded fruits. The five star spirits, including Professor Mo Xuan, had cracked the deeper structure of the star brain and programmed a few viruses that specially targeted the star brain. As soon as they hacked the star brain, they would be able to take control over part of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers!

Xiao Xuance, Li Yao’s face is not something that you can slap easily!

Very soon, I’m going to make you pay an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and a face for a face!

Chapter 793 - The Brave Will Win!

Anxious discussions were echoing inside the communication channel. Many experts in the Core Formation Stage and Nascent Soul Stage were somehow confused by the situation right now and did not know what to do.

“Don’t panic. We still have our chance!” Li Yao bellowed.

Veins bulged out of his temples as his computational ability surged out from the depths of his brain cells like a volcano eruption. He sorted through the progress of the battle so far.

“Our plan to lure the enemy did not completely fail. Instead, it has obviously disrupted Xiao Xuance’s plan!

“Xiao Xuance’s best plan must’ve been to annihilate the available warriors of the Cultivators together with the space pirates after the Grand Illusionary Soldiers and the elites jumped to the Spider Den Space Zone.

“Even though he had a backup plan, which was to rebel in Heavenly Saints City, I think it should not have been today, but tomorrow in the morale-boosting rally, because that would have been the only time when the leadership of almost five hundred sects was all gathered.”

Everybody pondered for a moment and immediately thought the whole thing through after hearing Li Yao’s words.

If Xiao Xuance were to activate the ‘New Era Plan’ in Heavenly Saints City, the available warriors of the other space zones would no longer be his target. His target would be the heads of the five hundred sects. It would be a large-scale ‘decapitation operation’.

Only in the morale-boosting rally tomorrow would the heads of the five hundred sects show up simultaneously.

Today, although many of the heads were attending strategical meetings, they were scattered everywhere in the meeting hall. The leadership of many sects were in different space rings, rearranging the crystal warships or checking the inventory of the war assets.

Even if Xiao Xuance took control over the hall of the Meeting of Next Millennium, it was impossible for him to control all the leaders and elders. Those outside the central area of Heavenly Saints City in the space rings could all be temporary commanders and summon the Cultivators nearby to fight with them!

Besides, after the Glorious Sunlight Group and Iron Plateau’s accusations against Xiao Xuance, the six sects of Heavenly Saints City had increased the defenses of the hall of the Meeting of Next Millennium, too. Two Exo Societies had been stationed inside the hall in advance. Three thousand qi-trainers from Iron Plateau who had just arrived in Heavenly Saints City were staying in a temporary camp near the No.3 space port in the central area.

The No.3 space port was only several kilometers away from the hall of the Meeting of the Next Millennium.

Should there be anything wrong, the three thousand qi-trainers who were all ready for action could reinforce them immediately.

All the factors guaranteed that Xiao Xuance’s decapitation strategy would not work out so easily.

The other twelve thousand qi-trainers were stationed in the important locations of the central area, the first space ring, and the second ring. It was very easy for them to reinforce their allies, too.

“Right now, although we have been caught off guard, the situation is not within Xiao Xuance’s plan, either. Both sides have weaknesses. Victory and failure have not been decided yet. It all depends on which party stabs into the other party’s weakness first!”

The sweat on Li Yao’s forehead became bright red. Because of the high-intensity computations, the temperature of his brain had exceeded eighty degrees. His cerebral vessels were all exploding, resulting in serious internal bleeding!

Li Yao’s eyes were bloodshot. Trying to hold back the dizziness, he spoke with a higher and higher voice. “The biggest manufacturing base of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers of the Flying Star Sector is in the third space ring. Xiao Xuance is definitely not going to let go of it!

“After seizing all the Grand Illusionary Soldiers in Heavenly Saints City, he will definitely command the Grand Illusionary Soldiers to seize the crystal warships and those inside the third space ring to attack the hall of the Meeting of the Next Millennium as well as the other important warehouses!

“When Xiao Xuance’s army breaks into the hall of the Meeting of the Next Millennium and takes over the most important arsenals, the Cultivators will be losing!

“Our only opportunity is to board on Heavenly Phantom, the flagship of the Grand Illusionary Group, and control or destroy the star brain!

“When the star brain is gone, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers will lose 90% of their combat ability. They will be no different than beast puppets. No harm will ever be done.

“Since confidentiality has been the Immortal Cultivators’ top priority, and they did not expose themselves after lurking for decades, there cannot be too many of them. They are highly dependent on the Grand Illusionary Soldiers.

“Without the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, the scheme of the Immortal Cultivators will be finished!

“Besides, Xiao Xuance must be protecting the star brain on Heavenly Phantom, too. If we take down Xiao Xuance, the Immortal Cultivators will lose their leader. They will be in a mess, too!

“We have almost ten experts in the Nascent Soul Stage and dozens in the Core Formation Stage here. Such an enormous force is as threatening as a fleet. We must not be stalled in the battlefield outside Heavenly Saints City. We have to penetrate into the central area of Heavenly Saints City, slay Xiao Xuance, and destroy the star brain!

“If things had happened as Xiao Xuance planned, we would’ve already jumped to the Spider Den Space Zone when he rebelled. In the vast space, Heaven Phantom would have been protected by the crystal warships that were under the control of the Immortal Cultivators. Besides, Heavenly Phantom could move around to avoid the infiltration of the Cultivators. There would have been no way that anybody could get close to the star brain.

“But right now, since Xiao Xuance took action in a hurry, Heavenly Phantom is still parked in the space port of the central area.

“There is only limited room between the central area and the first space ring. It is now packed with hundreds of crystal warships. During the fierce battle, many crystal warships will block the sailing route. Heavenly Phantom won’t be able to get away even if it wants to. Because of the intense bombardment, it cannot perform a space jump, either. It is now mired in a swamp, unable to move anywhere!

“In a head-on clash, the brave will be the winner. Breaking into Heavenly Phantom is our only chance!

“This is my opinion. Do you have any suggestions?”

All the Cultivators were staring at Li Yao in silence. Even the sound of their breathing was gone in the communication channel. Everybody seemed to be bewildered by what Li Yao had just said.

Li Yao frowned. “What’s wrong?”

Si Koulie coughed and said, “Nothing. I just felt that Boss Bai was quite… a man of honor and integrity when you said that!”

Li Yao blinked. He was not certain whether or not there were Xiao Xuance’s spies among the hundreds of Cultivators who reinforced them. Therefore, he simply said, “Just consider it atonement for what I did in the past, alright? Besides, my parents haven’t been avenged yet. I won’t die a peaceful death unless I kill Xiao Xuance!

“Anyways, don’t mind the irrelevant stuff. Our time is limited. We must be fast! Otherwise, if Xiao Xuance really breaks into the hall of the Meeting of the Next Millennium and kills hundreds of leaders and elders, the Flying Star

Sector will suffer heavy losses even if the insurrection of the Immortal Cultivators is pacified in the end!”

Si Koulie and the other few Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators discussed for a moment and soon agreed on Li Yao’s plan.

They all boasted tremendous computational ability and were basically super crystal processors. It took them only a few seconds to realize that what Li Yao had proposed was their only choice.

Xiao Xuance was performing a decapitation operation on the hall of the Meeting of the Next Millennium.

Then, they would perform an even more shocking decapitation operation on Xiao Xuance!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Right then, the tenth space ring started shaking slighting in earsplitting explosions.

The artificial dome thousands of meters above the ground was sparking, as if the night sky was on fire.

“The crystal warships deployed outside the tenth space ring have exploded!

“Many of the crystal warships carried a lot of Grand Illusionary Soldiers. Some of them have already been taken over by the Immortal Cultivators. They are attacking all the space ports in the tenth space ring and trying to block the sailing route.

“It appears that they are planning to blow up all the space ports and seal the sailing route to stop us from going to the central area!”

The battle situation outside the tenth space ring was soon displayed on Luo Xingzi’s crystal processor.

“Thousands of Grand Illusionary Soldiers have breached the defense of the tenth space ring and are marching inside!

“Our defense on the tenth space ring is not very strong. To make matters worse, many critical locations are guarded by the Cultivators and the Grand Illusionary Soldiers together. Therefore, many nodes of defense have been broken through instantly!

“We are the targets of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers!

“Xiao Xuance knows we are here. He won’t let us go away so easily!”

All the Cultivators were wearing grave faces.

In terms of numbers, even counting the reinforcements that would arrive later, there were only hundreds of them, which was insignificant compared to the vastness of Heavenly Saints City.

However, in terms of the combat ability, they had almost ten Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, dozens in the Core Formation Stage, and hundreds in the Building Foundation Stage. They were unquestionably the most influential chess piece in the game.

Whether or not the chess piece could be moved to the hostile king for checkmate would decide the outcome of this chess game with the universe as the board and the stars as the chess pieces!

“Ask all the crystal warships of the Star Fighters’ Alliance, the Furious Bears Union, the Silver Moon Clan, and the

Heavenly Wolves Fortress in the eighth, ninth, and tenth space rings to reinforce the tenth space ring after they clear out all the Grand Illusionary Soldiers!”

Si Koulie and the few Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators quickly issued their commands.

There was quite a long distance between the tenth space ring and the central area.

They could fly over in their crystal suits at the cost of their own spiritual energy.

But after a long journey in the storm of bullets and swirls of spiritual energy, where they might be engaged with countless Immortal Cultivators and Grand Illusionary Soldiers, their crystal suits would have been serious damaged, and their own spiritual energy would run dry, even if they did arrive at Heavenly Phantom in the end. How could they fight ‘the best expert of the Flying Star Sector’ under such circumstances? They would be committing suicide!

Therefore, they had to ask one of the crystal warships to fly them to the central area of Heavenly Saints City!

However, Heavenly Saints City was in chaos.

The secret command that the star brain had sent out might not have been enough to control all the Grand Illusionary Soldiers in the other dozens of space zones across the vast space. But at the very least, it was not problem to control all the Grand Illusionary Soldiers inside Heavenly Saints City.

Those Grand Illusionary Soldiers had originally been stored in the crystal warships ready to be shipped to the Spider Den Space Zone.

When there were enough of them, they would break into the bridge together with the lurking Immortal Cultivators and seize control over the crystal warship.

If there were not enough of them to occupy the crystal warship, they would simply cause havoc inside the crystal warship.

The latest model of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers developed by the Grand Illusionary Group was allegedly designed to destroy the crystal warships of the space pirates in the final battle. They were simple in structure and low in cost and essentially walking crystal bombs.

Therefore, many sects had purchased them in bulk.

But right now, they had turned into the most fatal daggers stabbing countless holes in the crystal warships.

Si Koulie and the other Cultivators did not receive any confirmation after they sent out their command.

Li Yao frowned and secretly called Sparkle!

Chapter 794 - "Mirror"

After the ‘Brain Concussion Plan’ was activated five years ago, Professor Mo Xuan and the other spectral Cultivators had gathered critical data during a full-scale examination of the star brain while running pertinent cracking and research. They had found out methods to hack the crystal processor and paralyze it instantly!

There was short-distance, point-to-point communication between Li Yao and Sparkle via a mechanism that was similar to that of the Great Pagoda VII. It was encrypted seven times and barely monitorable.

However, such a way of communication would trigger very immense spiritual waves, which could be noticed by other people easily.

It was why Li Yao had not reached out to Sparkle in the past day.

But right now, Heavenly Saints City was in chaos. Countless spiritual waves were flooding in space disorderedly. He did not need to worry that somebody might notice the anomaly anymore.

“Professor, what is your status? Unharmed from the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, I presume? When can you hack Heavenly Phantom and paralyze the star brain?”

There was intense anxiety in Professor Mo Xuan’s voice as he replied, “The fleet of the Glorious Sunlight Group and the Great Horn Exo Society are fighting hard against the Grand Illusionary Soldiers near the fourth space ring, but since the third space ring is a base of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, the place has now been locked down. It will take us some time to break through the space ring.

“As for the star brain… We are working hard to crack the barrier of Heavenly Phantom now!”

Li Yao was greatly alarmed. “Say what? Didn’t you say a couple of days ago that the thirteen barriers of Heavenly Phantom had been deciphered and you could hack the star brain in five minutes?”

“Yes. That was the case a few days ago,” Professor Mo Xuan said helplessly. “However, the moment the rebellion took place in Heavenly Saints City, a new, almost flawless barrier appeared on the surface of Heavenly Phantom. It is like a one-sided reflection membrane that has covered the entire crystal warship. The information and telepathic thoughts inside can be sent out without the slightest hinderance, but any signals from the outside world are reflected when they reach the shell!”

Li Yao was dazed. “Reflected?”

“I have no time to explain the specific mechanism to you right now. You can imagine that Xiao Xuance decorated the shell of Heavenly Phantom with a ‘mirror’ that simply reflects all the ‘rays of light’ that we sent to it!” Professor Mo Xuan said bitterly. “Xiao Xuance truly deserves to be known as the best expert of the Flying Star Sector. He had made thorough plans. I only realized just now that the thirteen complicated barriers previously were just bait that he let out intentionally for other people to crack! The mirror-like, one-sided reflection membrane is his real defensive measure!”

“How long do you expect you will need to break through the one-sided reflection membrane?” Li Yao asked in a hurry.

“Hard to say,” Professor Mo Xuan replied. “The barrier is completely different from all the defense approaches for crystal processors that we’ve met before. I have a feeling that it is in a different style from that of the barriers of both the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector!

“I’ve never seen such a weird barrier before. I’m doing my best to calculate and analyze it. However, in the best case-scenario, it will take six to eight hours for us to figure out the structure of the one-sided reflection membrane and another six to eight hours for us to program our virus into a form that can penetrate through the ‘mirror’!”

“That will be a whole night!” Li Yao’s face immediately turned greener than a cucumber. He gnashed his teeth and said, “Absolutely no way. The central area will be smashed into smithereens by the Immortal Cultivators in one night!

“We don’t have so much time. We have to waste the star brain within three hours!”

“The computational ability of the five ‘star spirits’, including me, is already higher than that of most super crystal processors,” Professor Mo Xuan replied, “but we cannot destroy the star brain in three hours even if we join our hands, unless we attack the star brain from the inside. The previously-unseen one-side reflection membrane is so weird!”

“Attack the star brain from inside?” Li Yao was dazed for a moment. Then, his lips cured into a smile of determination. He said, “Professor, please pilot Sparkle to the tenth space ring as quickly as possible!

“Try not to catch the Grand Illusionary Soldiers’ attention by maintaining the appearance of a ragged carrier. Their primary targets will be the crystal warships with high firepower!

“In the meantime, warm up the rigs and prepare to trigger the real form of Sparkle, especially the drill of mystic rays that we’ve been modifying for seven years!”

After a moment of silence, Professor Mo Xuan raised his voice and said, “Understood!”

Li Yao took a deep breath. He felt as if every inch of his skin was burning.

His two fists were even scorching as if he were holding two clusters of flames.

Heavenly Phantom was the flagship of the Grand Illusionary Group, the control center of all the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, and the command starship of the coalition army of the Cultivators in the battle of Spider Den to come. It was indubitably the strongest crystal warship of the Flying Star Sector!

Heavenly Phantom was also one of Xiao Xuance’s trump cards for his rebellion.

One Heavenly Phantom was enough to suppress half of the central area. Even if dozens of regular crystal warships bombarded it at the same time, it would not bother to hide at all!

What would happen when such a behemoth ran into Sparkle, which had been modified with the body materials of Skeleton Dragon and scraps of ancient magical equipment by the spectral Cultivators from the Heaven’s Origin Sector?

Li Yao was going to discuss the details with Professor Mo Xuan, when noises suddenly occurred in the communication channel.

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. “What happened?”

Professor Mo Xuan sounded grave. “The Immortal Cultivators and the Grand Illusionary Soldiers just broke into ‘Cloud’, one of the crystal warships of the Surpassing Sky Sect. Master Sky Spirit, leader of the sect, happened to be on board. He led the remaining disciples into the engine compartment and detonated all the fuel, blowing up the starship and perishing together with the enemy. He has sacrificed himself for his belief!”

After a moment of silence, Li Yao asked softly, “What’s the situation inside the city? Give me the most important information.”

Professor Mo Xuan stopped talking and sent an enormous stream of information into Li Yao’s crystal processor.

Right now, Heavenly Saints City was like a groundless pavilion that was quickly being dissected in the swirl of steel and flames!

Ever since the secret code ‘the Flying Star Sector is peaceful tonight’ was sent out, all the Grand Illusionary Soldiers had become the sharpest blades of the Immortal Cultivators.

Most of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers had been packed into crystal warships ready to be shipped to the battlefield.

Therefore, the crystal warships took the first blow and suffered the heaviest losses.

Head-on clashes were taking place inside the dozens of enormous fleets. The seemingly tranquil starships were bursting out dazzling flames and fireballs, as if they were being attacked by an invisible army.

The crystal warships that went out of control bombarded the allies next to them. Because of the limited room in the space port, the victims could not dodge, and almost every attack hit its target.

Some of the starships were detonated by the Cultivators or the Immortal Cultivators. The blast swept everything. Every space port was like a furiously-burning iron graveyard!

Outside the central area, the moment he issued the secret code, Xiao Xuance had commanded Heavenly Phantom to open fire at the crystal warships nearby that had not been infiltrated by the Immortal Cultivators.

Caught unprepared, many crystal warships lost their combat ability after flowers of destruction blossomed.

However, the crystal warships were too large anyway. Although they were riddled with holes, their billions of tons of weight were not going anywhere.

The debris of countless crystal warships blocked every sailing route and Heavenly Phantom’s way.

Besides, not all the crystal warships were affected by the Grand Illusionary Soldiers.

Many assault starships and attack starships were not large but boasted tremendous firepower. To increase their capacity for magical equipment and ammunition, there were not warehouses on them. So, they did not carry any Grand Illusionary Soldiers.

They came back to themselves from the riot quickly.

Although they did not know what had happened, they counterattacked intuitionally when they were attacked by Heavenly Phantom.

Because of the fierce bombardment, Heavenly Phantom could not perform a space jump to move to a more secret and secure location.

Overall, the battle in space was in the Immortal Cultivators' favor.

As they had planned, they messed up the Cultivators' crystal warships and basically blocked the traffic between the third space ring and the fourth space ring so that the Immortal Cultivators and the Grand Illusionary Soldiers within the third space ring could attack the hall of the Meeting of the Next Millennium unhurriedly.

However, the attack on the ground did not go as smoothly as planned.

The biggest trouble came from the Glorious Sunlight Group.

Li Yao and Professor Mo Xuan had speculated that there might be something wrong with the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project five years ago. During those five years, although Professor Mo Xuan could not stop the Grand Illusionary Soldiers from being equipped on a large scale, he had secretly been developing magical equipment that could jam the Spiritual Nexus.

With the enormous resources of the Glorious Sunlight Group, Professor Mo Xuan had manufactured a batch of special bombs in secret. They were the size of grenades and shared the same usage. When they were tossed away and detonated, they would jam the Spiritual Nexus dozens square meters nearby for several seconds.

Several seconds were enough for a well-trained Cultivator or qi-trainer to do many things!

Therefore, when the Immortal Cultivators attacked the hall of the Meeting of the Next Millennium with a large back of Grand Illusionary Soldiers, they discovered that the defense was better than they had expected because of the two Exo Societies that appeared out of nowhere.

Then, when they fought hard against the two Exo Societies, three thousand qi-trainers marched close from the flank. Those barbaric warriors from Iron Plateau were not only carrying heavy sabers but also the jamming bombs that they had just been offered.

Similar things happened in the first space ring.

The three large warehouses of magical equipment and crystals were the arsenals for the last battle. In Xiao Xuance’s plan, they were also the most important locations that must be taken over.

However, when the Immortal Cultivators and the Grand Illusionary Soldiers attacked the arsenals, they encountered the qi-trainers from Iron Plateau, too.

The commander of the qi-trainers was Yan Chihuo from the Burning Sun Tribe.

Five years ago, Yan Chifeng, his brother, and Yan Xibei, his uncle, conspired to murder Yan Zhengdong, his father, who was also the chief of the Burning Sun Tribe. A total war between Iron Plateau and the six sects of Heavenly Saints City had nearly been caused.

During the incident, Yan Chihuo, who was uncalm and bad-tempered, had been the first to suspect Xiong Wuji, which almost led to a great disaster.

When the truth was out, guilt had grasped Yan Chihuo. He had even tried killing himself once to wash away his disgrace!

After Xiong Wuji learned of the matter, he had gone to Yan Chihuo and talked to him overnight many times. Later, he had even recruited as Yan Chihuo as his true disciple.

During the five years that followed, under the tutelage of Xiong Wuji, the irascible young man’s personality had greatly changed. He had also been training crazily and considered it an act of repentance for himself.

At this moment, with the guidance of his master and the help of the drugs, resources, and training facilities provided by the Glorious Sunlight Group, Yan Chihuo had advanced into the 95th level of the Refinement State and become one of the best experts on Iron Plateau!

Chapter 795 - Cover the Retreat

“Five years ago, it was the Temple of Immortals that stirred up trouble on Iron Plateau and nearly triggered a great war between Iron Plateau and the six sects of Heavenly Saints City. Xiao Xuance has been proved to be the leader of the Temple of Immortals. He is every Iron Plateau native’s mortal enemy!

“Qi-trainers! Even the apocalypse failed to wipe us out. What can this scrap iron and copper do?

“Today, let our valor flourish in the heart of the Flying Star Sector!”

One was most motivated when looking for revenge. Yan Chihuo’s father had died in the scheme of the Temple of Immortals, and the leader at the back of the Temple of Immortals was Xiao Xuance!

The ten thousand qi-trainers led by Yan Chihuo were like torrents that were rushing everywhere inside the first space ring, raising sparks of iron and blood in their crashes. They guarded the most important warehouses stably and earned precious time for the Cultivators to gather!

…

In the second space ring, Wu Mayan was taking action, too.

The second space ring was the educational district of Heavenly Saints City. It was occupied by Flying Star

University, Heavenly Saints Institute, and the various research centers, schools, and neighborhoods affiliated with the two supreme colleges.

The students of Flying Star University and Heavenly Saints Institute were all one-in-ten-thousand elites. Even the first-year students boasted tremendous capabilities. The faculty, especially the professors of the Combat Department, the Battlesuit Department, and the Firearms Department, were mostly the top-tier experts in the world of Cultivators.

Li Yao had informed Wu Mayan through Xiong Wuji more than half a month ago and asked him to make preparations in case Xiao Xuance suddenly rebelled.

However, considering the gossip in the college, he did not tell Wu Mayan that he was back.

During the five years, Wu Mayan had finished courses that would usually take more than ten years for other people. He had earned diplomas from the Combat Department, the Battlesuit Department, and three other departments. He was currently working at a research center affiliated to the Flying Star Sector on the subject of the reverberation of spiritual energy.

The reverberation of spiritual energy could only be performed by qi-trainers in the past, which meant that only the spiritual energy in the gaseous form could resonate.

Wu Mayan’s goal was to extrapolate the technique to the Building Foundation Stage and the Core Formation Stage so that the spiritual energy in the liquid and solid forms could resonate, too!

Barely anybody had been match for Wu Mayan five years ago. Now, after five years, he was unquestionably number one in the younger generation of the two colleges.

In a private competition, he had even defeated the rest of the ‘top ten experts of the two supreme colleges’ all by himself!

The Glorious Sunlight Group and Iron Plateau provided astronomical resources for him. The noble families of refining expressed their support for him because of Xie Anan, his junior sister, too.

Therefore, Wu Mayan was quite influential in the two colleges.

So, after Professor Mo Xuan told Wu Mayan what had happened in the central area, it had only taken him half an hour to gather the most capable teachers and students of the two supreme colleges and inform them of everything.

“Xiao Xuance is an Immortal Cultivator. The Grand Illusionary Soldiers have rebelled!”

As an educational district, the second space ring did not have many military ports or Grand Illusionary Soldiers.

The few Grand Illusionary Soldiers there were destroyed by the teachers and students quickly.

Those Grand Illusionary Soldiers that had apparently gone out of control further proved Wu Mayan’s words.

“March to the first space ring! Protect Heavenly Saints City! Protect the Flying Star Sector!”

The shuttles at the periphery of the second space ring had mostly been destroyed by the Grand Illusionary Soldiers together with the space ports.

But it was not important.

The second space ring and the first space ring were very close. Cultivators could fly over directly after they put on their crystal suits.

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

Outside the second space ring, countless colorful mystic rays soared into the sky and darted toward the first space ring like a brilliant meteor shower!

…

While a heated battle was underway in the central area of Heavenly Saints City and the first space ring, Li Yao and his companions were involved in trouble in the tenth space ring, too.

During the disaster of the extraterrestrial devils five years ago, it was the Grand Illusionary Soldiers who had banished all the enemies once and for all.

Therefore, the residents of the tenth space ring particularly appreciated and trusted the Grand Illusionary Soldiers.

Also, since this place was the outermost part of Heavenly Saints City and habituated mostly by civilians, not many Cultivators lived or were asked to be stationed there.

Therefore, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers were the best choice of guardians for the tenth space ring. 70% of the defensive work was carried out by them.

Right now, the Cultivators were swallowing the bitter fruit that they had grown themselves.

All the Grand Illusionary Soldiers deployed in the tenth space ring crowded toward the northwest district. They surrounded the hundreds of Cultivators like a cold tsunami.

Although there were almost ten Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, they felt unease when they were faced with tens of thousands of Grand Illusionary Soldiers.

Besides, a lot more Grand Illusionary Soldiers were reinforcing nonstop. Observed from afar, they looked like an ever-expanding cloud!

“There are too many Grand Illusionary Soldiers. Our spiritual energy is dropping fast!”

“My crystal suit is already overloading. Luo Xingzi, cover me while I put on my second crystal suit. I only brought three crystal suits with me in total!”

“All the space ports of the tenth space ring have been destroyed by the Grand Illusionary Soldiers. Even if our crystal warships arrive in time, they will have no place to dock!”

There was nothing except bad news in Li Yao’s communication channel.

He gritted his teeth and waved his saber forward, extending the aura until it was dozens of meters long.

In front of him, all the Grand Illusionary Soldiers in the shape of a sector were like bamboo crafts that had been stomped on. They exploded amid cracking noises, their components flying everywhere.

One attack eliminated almost thirty Grand Illusionary Soldiers.

However, more Grand Illusionary Soldiers quickly filled the vacancy like mercury. They marched onward fearlessly and emotionlessly, draining Li Yao's spiritual energy and crystal suit.

This is not going to work!

After almost three thousand Grand Illusionary Soldiers had been destroyed, many Cultivators were running out of spiritual energy. There were even casualties.

"Leader Si, have the crystal warships of the Star Fighters' Alliance not arrived in the tenth space ring yet?" a Cultivator shouted in the communication channel.

"The main force crystal warships of the Star Fighters' Alliance and the six sects of Heavenly Saints City are the important targets of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers. They are all being harassed!

"The Grand Illusionary Soldiers have also occupied the artilleries of several space rings. They've blocked the sailing route with railguns. The crystal warships will suffer heavy losses after they pass each space ring!"

Si Koulie's throat sounded like smoking.

"A starship of the Glorious Sunlight Group has broken through the eighth space ring. It is arriving in the tenth space ring soon!" Li Yao roared, refreshed.

All the Cultivators were delighted first, but doubts surfaced very soon.

"The starship is going to carry us all through the ten space rings. It will be blocked and hunted. Therefore, it must be tough enough," Si Koulie said straightforwardly "I've never heard that the Glorious Sunlight Group has ever refined any powerful crystal warships. What is the level of this particular starship?”

“Believe me!” Li Yao declared confidently. “It is definitely the best starship in the world! We should go to the No.17 space port right now to meet the starship!”

Si Koulie and the rest of them considered for only three seconds before they accepted Li Yao’s plan.

They had no other options.

“March toward the No.17 space port!”

When the dozens of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Core Formation Stage Cultivators went on a rampage, even all the Grand Illusionary Soldiers in the world were not enough to stop them!

In that moment, flying swords were raging, magical equipment was roaring, and smoke was rising nonstop. An iron forest seemed to be burning, and molten steel was flowing everywhere like magma!

Almost a hundred experts broke out of the siege!

But hundreds of Cultivators in the Building Foundation Stage were still mired in the swamp, unable to move.

More Grand Illusionary Soldiers were marching close from the flanks unstoppably, like the fangs of a viper that were biting together.

“If the Grand Illusionary Soldiers keep following us, there is no way that we can all board the crystal warship.”

Looking at the overwhelming Grand Illusionary Soldiers, Liao Huagu, a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator from the Furious Bears Union, suddenly said calmly, “The number doesn’t matter in the assault of Heavenly Phantom, but the speed must be high!

“Fellow Cultivators, leave now. I will cover your retreat!”

“Fellow Cultivator Liao!”

All the Cultivators were yelling. They knew what Liao Huagu meant.

Even though he was a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, nothing but doom awaited him if he was attacked by tens of thousands of Grand Illusionary Soldiers simultaneously.

“Leave now! Stop wasting your time here!”

Liao Huagu opened his arms. Flames of light leaked out of his crystal suit and formed a giant dozens of meters tall in midair. It could vaguely be seen that a light ball that looked like a baby was crouching in the center of the giant.

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator had started burning his life and soul. He was releasing the spirit and will that he had accumulated over his entire life!

“Even the Immortal Cultivators can defend their beliefs at the cost of their life. Are the Cultivators no match for them?

“No matter what, I will not let any Grand Illusionary Soldier pass by me before you all board the crystal warship!

“Go now! Go assault Heavenly Phantom and execute Xiao Xuance!” Liao Huagu roared almost crazily.

Above his real body, the giant, which was dozens of meters tall, was also thundering. The soaring flames of light were both like wings and a pair of hands that were going to rip apart the darkness of night!

“Let’s go!”

There was no time to dawdle. More arduous fights were awaiting them. All the Cultivators gritted their teeth and darted toward the No.17 space port.

Liao Huagu smiled. Faced with the tens of thousands of Grand Illusionary Soldiers, he closed his eyes and reminisced about his life, his eyes somewhat wet.

Right then, he sensed unfathomable strength appearing behind him. He opened his eyes and immediately frowned.

Another Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, Zhuge Ci from the Silver Moon Clan, had left the team and returned to him.

“What are you here for? You don’t believe that I will stop them?” Liao Huagu burst into fury.

“Exactly, I don’t believe in your soft bones,” Zhuge Ci scoffed. “In all the time I’ve known you, have you ever won a single competition between us? During the share meeting of the Furious Bears Tribe and the Silver Moon Clan, you even wept after you failed. Haha. Covering the retreat is such an important task. How can I trust that you will handle it well?”

“Bullsh*t! Bullsh*t! Bullsh*t! That was more than a hundred years ago. It doesn’t count!” Liao Huagu was more than angry. “You are shameless enough to talk about the fights when our spiritual roots had not even awakened yet more than a hundred years ago. Why don’t you talk about the competitions after we advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage? Have you ever won any of them?”

Zhuge ci smiled. “That’s because I went easy on you. You are more or less a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator and an elder of your sect. I was merely helping you preserve your face in front the juniors.”

Liao Huagu laughed so crazily that there were tears in his eyes. “Hahahaha. It’s been two hundred years. You have not changed at all. Shameless and rodomontade. One look at you is enough to piss me off. Just get out of here and stop being a nuisance!”

“What will you do if I don’t?” Zhuge Ci asked calmly.

Liao Huagu’s laughter came to an abrupt end. He was silently briefly, before he took a breath and said, one word after another, “Then let’s have one last competition and see who the better one is!”

“Alright. Then I’ll show you the latest accomplishments of my training over the past few decades,” Zhuge Ci said. “However many Grand Illusionary Soldiers you kill, I will kill one more!”

The two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators stopped talking.

A monolithic giant gradually formed above Zhuge Ci’s real body, too.

The two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were dozens of meters away from each other.

But the two giants were very close to each other because of their enormous size.

Shoulder to shoulder, and the furious flames interweaving together, they confronted the sweeping black clouds alongside one another!

Chapter 796 - Transformation

The No.17 space port had been bombarded into smithereens. All the airtight doors and the docking rune arrays had turned into the melted slag. The air inside the tenth space ring leaked out through the damage, raising minor swirls along with the debris on the ground.

The Grand Illusionary Soldiers were crowding toward the port from various direction like locusts. Xiao Xuance seemed to have discovered the aim of the experts and wanted to drown them in an ocean of iron with all the forces available. At least, he wanted to drain their spiritual energy and damage their crystal suits.

“Where is the crystal warship of the Glorious Sunlight Group right now?” Si Koulie asked, breathing heavily.

He was not good at fighting. Persisting in the storm for so long had hit his limits.

“The crystal warship has broken through the ninth space ring smoothly and will be arriving soon. However, it cannot be docked here. We’ll just fly out of the space port to board it!”

Li Yao and the Cultivators fought and moved out of the space port.

The situation in space was even more chaotic than the tenth space ring. The Grand Illusionary Soldiers that looked like red-headed flies were everywhere. Crystal warships were colliding and exploding as far as one's eyes could reach. The ever-surging fireballs looked like fireworks and showed absolutely no sign of dwindling.

"We have suffered heavy casualties. There's no time to look for a second starship!" Si Koulie scanned the status of all the Cultivators in the system. He said worriedly, "The crystal warship of the Glorious Sunlight Group is our only hope. Is it capable enough of bring us through nine space rings to somewhere near Heavenly Phantom?

"We must know that Heavenly Phantom is a super warship co-produced by the Star Fighters' Alliance and the Grand Illusionary Group. At that time, we did not know that Xiao Xuance was an Immortal Cultivator. It was designed to be the flagship of the coalition army in the final battle. Therefore, it was refined with the most marvelous techniques. The main guns and the defense rune arrays have never even been used before in any main force warships of the Star Fighters' Alliance!

"If a regular starship shows up in front Heavenly Phantom, it might be blown into oblivion after one shot!"

"Rest assured!" Li Yao licked his lips and said, "This crystal warship is the Glorious Sunlight Group's secret weapon. Its firepower might not be as impressive as that of Heavenly Phantom, but it is definitely the fastest, the most inconspicuous, and the most distinguished in interference and anti-interference starship of the Flying Star Sector—It is here!"

All the Cultivators were overjoyed. Thousands of crystal cameras scanned the surroundings far and wide.

But as far as their eyes could reach, there were nothing but broken starships on the burning battlefield. There was not the slightest sign of a super starship.

Right then, a ragged starship crawled out of an area of debris.

It was a carrier no longer than two kilometers. It was round and looked like a fat buffalo. The anti-collision plates on the surface were mottled, dented, and rusted. On the shell of the starship, the heat-resistance and defensive patches were a mess. It was like a twelfth-hand antique that somebody had bought from a bankrupt ship factory and did not even bother to paint the anti-rust lacquer.

All the Cultivators were rendered speechless.

Their skeptical eyes pierced through their crystal suits and toward Li Yao without any disguise.

Si Koulie was dumbfounded, too. He failed to come up with any comment and could only gasp.

Thousands of Grand Illusionary Soldiers condensed into dozens of tornadoes and swept toward them and the old-aged carrier.

All the Cultivators believed that the carrier was doomed, because they did not detect any cannons or even a glimmering spiritual shield on the surface of the carrier.

When the Grand Illusionary Soldiers invaded the carrier, its only outcome would be destruction!

However, when hundreds of Grand Illusionary Soldiers moved to a hundred meters from the carrier, they came to a weird standstill in glittering sparks at first, before their limbs and spines were twisted into screws amid cracking noises.

In a moment, the hundreds of Grand Illusionary Soldiers were completely destroyed.

“This is the latest magnetic defense rune array that can deploy a very powerful, controllable magnetic field outside the starship. With sufficient spiritual energy, all the metal within range can be manipulated!” Li Yao explained to the bewildered Cultivators.

Si Koulie was the first to come back to himself. He flew toward Sparkle without any hesitation. “We don’t have any choice now. Get on board!”

The five gates on the right side of Sparkle were opened. More than a hundred Cultivators boarded the starship at the same time. More Grand Illusionary Soldiers followed them, only to be shredded into pieces by the special magnetic field when they entered Sparkle’s defenses’ range!

Sparkle turned around and marched toward the central area of Heavenly Saints City!

“Welcome aboard, fellow Cultivators.” Professor Mo Xuan greeted the hundred Cultivators gracefully in an artificial body. “Powerful medical and recovery magical equipment has been installed on Sparkle. Please make the best use of the facilities to recover your strength and restore spiritual energy for the fierce battle to come.”

The environment inside Sparkle was totally different from the shabby appearance on the outside.

Overall, every place was built with silver liquid metal. There was not the slightest gap on a single cabin door, much less traces of forging or riveting. It seemed to be made of an intact silver block.

It would not be exaggerating to say that it was flawless.

Even the experienced Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City were awed by the internal structure of Sparkle after they were aboard and did not know what to say for a long time.

Si Koulie, as an expert in starships, was glowing with interest. He scratched every corner of Sparkle and seemed to be willing to melt into it!

Si Koulie was the most skilled expert in the production of starships in the Flying Star Sector. Although Professor Mo Xuan and the other spectral Cultivators had turned into unique ‘star spirits’ by accident, their main specialty was crystal suits. In regard to starships, they were not as knowledgeable as Si Koulie.

However, the life forms of Professor Mo Xuan and the other star spirits were the souls of human beings combined with the mustard-seed-level liquid metal on the starship.

One might say that they were part of Sparkle, and Sparkle was their ‘body’!

The modifications that they did to their ‘body’ naturally far exceeded Si Koulie’s expectations.

“I didn’t know that the Glorious Sunlight Group had such a high expertise in the refining of starships. Even the Star Fighters’ Alliance might not be able to produce such a strong starship!” Si Koulie complimented sincerely.

Professor Mo Xuan smiled and waved his hands. The silver walls around immediately rippled as if they were water in a pond. Soon, they became almost transparent.

The whole of space was before them.

In front, a few other light beams displayed Sparkle’s form and the situation of dozens of battlefields captured from different perspectives.

At this moment, Sparkle had left the tenth space ring for the central area of Heavenly Saints City, but their trouble had not ended yet. Many Grand Illusionary Soldiers had captured the scene where the experts entered Sparkle.

A great number of Grand Illusionary Soldiers and starships that were controlled by the Immortal Cultivators marched toward Sparkle quickly, planning to block the starship on its way.

Faced with the overwhelming enemies, Professor Mo Xuan did not intend to fight the hard way. Instead, he piloted Sparkle into a battlefield that was packed by the debris of more than ten starships.

Si Koulie was dazed for a moment. He was an expert in starships and naturally knew a lot about the tactics of the starships.

Entering a zone of debris could allow the starship to get away from the enemy’s searching. However, it would also mean that the starship would be trapped in the zone forever and completely lose its mobility. Therefore, it was quite a passive tactic.

However, what happened next made him feel stunned even though he had been dealing with starships all his life!

When Sparkle flew into the debris zone, it had been a fat carrier.

However, after the ragged plate was shaken off inside the debris zone, it changed into a slender assault warship.

After a quick look, Si Koulie recognized that it was a ‘Red Shark’-level assault warship that the Star Fighters’ Alliance devised more than a hundred and thirty years ago. Since it was simple in structure and reliable in performance, it was very popular among the middle and small sects. Today, it was still many small sects’ favorite.

The Red Shark assault warship was also rusted and riddled with holes. Large clusters of fireballs were popping up everywhere, as if a large batch of Grand Illusionary Soldiers were raging inside the starship and the Cultivators on-board would lose control at any moment.

Si Koulie blinked and realized that it was a very smart camouflage.

The Grand Illusionary Soldiers were looking for a ragged carrier instead of a Red Shark assault warship.

Besides, judging from the appearance, the shaking and collapsing assault warship would not catch the Grand Illusionary Soldiers’ attention at all!

With such a disguise, Sparkle passed through the ninth and the eighth space rings easily. Such light assault warships boasted plain firepower and were not threats to Heavenly Phantom. On the priority rank of the Immortal Cultivators, they were in a very low position.

However, after analyzing the data in the battlefields carefully, Xiao Xuance did cast his suspicious eyes to the weird assault warship in the end.

At this moment, Professor Mo Xuan played the same move. Sparkle entered another packed battlefield and took off another ‘shell’, pretending to be a ‘Light’ rapid starship that was much smaller in size!

“The surface of Sparkle is adorned with both mechanical structures and the camouflage of mystic rays. It can pretend to be fourteen different models of crystal warships according to our demand in a battle. Moreover, it can also fake six forms, including ‘slightly damaged’, ‘heavily damaged’, ‘loss of momentum’ and ‘total loss’, in order to bait the enemy!” Professor Mo Xuan declared proudly.

Later, they changed into six different disguises, from a rapid starship, to a maintenance starship, to a medical starship, and to debris that had completely lost all impetus. Finally, in the storm of bullets and cannon fire, it reached the central area of Heavenly Saints City without being damaged at all!

However, in the central area, the disguises would not work anymore!

Chapter 797 - Brilliant Sparkle!

The central area of Heavenly Saints City was the focus of the Immortal Cultivators. The majority of their crystal warships and Grand Illusionary Soldiers had been gathered in this place.

Most of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers there were larger, faster, and protected by brighter spiritual shields. The flying swords and mystic rays that they triggered were more agile and destructive, too!

Li Yao even saw dozens of Grand Illusionary Soldiers shoot out almost eight hundred flying swords, which riddled a crystal warship with holes immediately and made it lose all its combat ability!

“They are all the masterpieces crafted by the Grand Illusionary Group themselves without bothering about the cost. They are far better than the inhomogeneous products that other sects refined!”

The Grand Illusionary Soldiers in the central area was not only better in quality but also larger in quantity. Instead of thin tornadoes, they formed wriggling black clouds that consumed the sky.

Some of the smaller crystal warships were completely wreathed by the Grand Illusionary Soldiers. When the Grand Illusionary Soldiers dispersed, the glamorous-looking starships turned into broken, lackluster debris!

The scene was both like a shoal of piranhas biting the prey that had fallen into the water crazily and an ant army marching on the ground, turning all the creatures in their way into bones!

Protected by the millions of Grand Illusionary Soldiers, Heavenly Phantom was like a majestic king in silver armor, aweing the entire space zone!

“The main gun of Heavenly Phantom was developed by the Star Fighters’ Alliance, the Grand Illusionary Group, and almost twenty other sects that are famous for their crystal cannons,” Si Koulie said in an almost desperate tone. “It is known as ‘Heavenly Might Artillery’!

“The Heavenly Might Artillery has ninety-nine ball-like turrets. However, the turrets are not fixed on the surface of Heavenly Phantom but floating around Heavenly Phantom, connected by the electromagnetic force. They can move along any trajectory, like ninety-nine satellites that surround Heavenly Phantom!

“The ninety-nine turrets can either be evenly distributed around Heavenly Phantom and attack individually or move to the same location and constitute a super cannon whose damage is unimaginable.

“One shot is enough to vaporize an entire crystal warship!

“The Heavenly Might Artillery is the strongest aggressive magical equipment in the Flying Star Sector. No cannons are a match for it!”

Li Yao observed from afar and, thanks to his amazing eyesight, indeed found almost a hundred light spots that were circling around the body of Heavenly Phantom.

Every turret of the Heavenly Might Artillery was around one hundred meters in diameter. They were round, translucent, and looked like glittering pearls from a distance.

The glamorous brilliance they shot out, however, boasted unbelievable damage. It was as powerful as the main gun of regular crystal warships. Moreover, the cooldown of the turrets was extremely short. They were shooting almost consecutively without a break!

Pulled by the electromagnetic force, the ninety-nine floating turrets moved around Heavenly Phantom quickly. There was not a blind spot at all!

No break, no blind spot, and extremely powerful. According to the defense of the target, one, two, or even more turrets could be gathered together in order to increase the intensity of the attack. This was the Heavenly Might Artillery, a super weapon that the refiners of the entire Flying Star Sector had worked hard on for a long time!

In the most crucial battlefield that was supervised by Xiao Xuance in person, every crystal warship had been locked onto by the Grand Illusionary Soldiers. Even if they had become empty shells and lost all momentum, they would not be let go of until they were completely ripped apart!

Sparkle could not fake its way forward now.

“We can only break in by force now!” Bloody flames were flowing crazily inside Li Yao’s eyes. His lips curled in excitement as he said, “Leader Si, please give a command to the starships in the battlefield that are still under the control of Cultivators. Ask them to stall the enemy no matter what the cost is. We are about to launch the final charge!

“Professor Mo, Leader Si has sent the structural design of Heavenly Phantom to the mainframe crystal processor of Sparkle. Now, let’s march forward at full speed with the bridge of Heavenly Phantom as our target!”

Si Koulie lost his cool. “Bridge? The bridge is the heart of Heavenly Phantom. Besides, the star brain is right behind the bridge! When we devised Heavenly Phantom, the defense of the bridge was the highest priority! We are definitely going to suffer the most brutal attack from Heavenly Phantom if we choose that place as our destination!”

Professor Mo Xuan smiled. “Then, please sit in the buffer rune arrays, everybody, because the remaining part of our journey might be a bit… bumpy.”

Crack! Crack! Crack!

The souls of Professor Mo Xuan and the other spirits completely melded into the mainframe crystal processor of Sparkle.

All the disguises outside Sparkle was taken off during the acceleration.

The rusted and dented plate was gone, replaced by a splendid, translucent body that was immaculate!

Hiss!

When the Cultivators saw Sparkle’s real form through the light beam, they all gasped in shock.

Si Koulie was so thrilled that he found it hard to breathe.

The starship in front of their eyes was less than nine hundred meters long. Faced with the super starships that could easily be more than ten kilometers long, it seemed to be insignificant.

However, the neat and delicate starship was like a brilliant diamond emitting dazzling brilliance that immediately attracted everyone’s attention!

Although they were merely observing the starship on the light beam, every Cultivator could feel the untamable urges of Sparkle, as if it was not a crystal warship but a ferocious animal that had travelled from the primordial era to the present day!

Si Koulie could not help but compare Sparkle to Heavenly Phantom, which he refined in person.

Although the sizes of the two starships were vastly different, one of which looked like an elephant and the other a mouse, the aura and brilliance of Sparkle were as daunting as Heavenly Phantom, if not more!

It was like a firefly suddenly emitting endless flames and trying to burn the sun up!

“Please sit down, everybody. We will now distribute most of the spiritual energy and the computational ability to the power rune arrays and the defense rune arrays. We won’t be able to ensure the stability of the starship!”

Professor Mo Xuan’s voice, which was generated by the vibrating metal patches, sounded quite excited. “Sparkle, move forward. Target: Heavenly Phantom, the flagship!”

Hiu!

In the next moment, all the Cultivators seemed to be bashed hard right in their faces. Even the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators fell into the buffer rune arrays all of a sudden and did not adapted themselves to the high speed for a staggeringly long time.

The shining starship was immediately noticed by Xiao Xuance.

After analyzing the speed, agility, and the spiritual waves it released, the star brain determined Sparkle to be the most dangerous enemy!

“Block it!” Xiao Xuance bellowed.

Within a breath, commanded by the star brain, whose computational ability was as vast as an ocean, countless Grand Illusionary Soldiers and crystal warships under the control of the Immortal Cultivators crowded toward Sparkle.

In the meantime, forty-one out of the ninety-nine turrets on Heavenly Phantom locked onto Sparkle!

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

Deep purple brilliance flashed on the forty-one turrets at the same time. Then, forty-one bolts of lightning flashed across space and split into a storm of lightning!

Many Cultivators and crystal warships that were standing in the way of the lightning were torn apart ruthlessly.

Some of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers were unfortunate enough to be captured by the lightning storm, too. They all turned into broken, empty shells after spluttering sparks.

However, defense shields that looked like golden scales appeared around Sparkle, turning it into a dragon that had soared into the sky. It rushed forward in the dazzling lightning, completely undamaged. Even its speed was not affected at all. The starship turned into a streak of brightness and moved forward!

Two crystal warships controlled by the Immortal Cultivators blocked Sparkle’s way, one on the left and the other on the right. They planned to force Sparkle to change its direction, only to be crushed immediately like a dark cloud that was torn apart by sunlight!

Sparkle leapt out of the cloud and split the darkness of the universe like a golden sword!

There was no need to mention the Grand Illusionary Soldiers. In front of Sparkle, which had accelerated to the highest speed, they were like thousands of ants trying to stop a sprinting crystal train. The only possible outcome for them was to be crushed into smithereens instantly!

Standing on the bridge and looking at Sparkle, which was charging close, Xiao Xuance was lost for a moment.

The thousands of light beams on the bridge were displaying bad news on the ground incessantly.

It had been three hours since the New Era Plan was initiated. However, the Immortal Cultivators had not taken over the hall of the Meeting of the Next Millennium and the few important warehouses of magical equipment in the first space ring.

The qi-trainers who jumped out of nowhere and the elites of Flying Star University and Heavenly Saints Institute, who had organized themselves much faster than he had expected, had all caught him unprepared.

But so far, those difficulties were all conquerable.

Although the battle was stagnant right now, the Cultivators would be tired and wounded, and they needed rest. After all, their bodies were made of flesh and blood.

After two hours of high-intensity combat, the spiritual energy of most Cultivators was already running dry.

With the help of Heavenly Phantom, he had basically suppressed all the crystal warships above the central area of Heavenly Saints City.

Most of the crystal warships had either been taken over by the Immortal Cultivators or utterly broken apart!

In half an hour, the battle would be completely under his control. He would be able to spare his hands and suppress the central area with Heavenly Phantom.

If it was necessary, he could aim the Heavenly Might Artillery at the hall of the Meeting of the Next Millennium and bombard it directly. He would be glad to find out how many strikes that defense rune array of the great hall could resist exactly.

Despite all the unfavorable circumstances, Xiao Xuance had thought that the balance of victory was slowly leaning toward him.

However, at the most crucial moment, an unbelievably cutting-edge starship jumped out of nowhere. According to the calculation of the star brain, the starship did not hide its target at all. It was darting directly toward the heart and the head of Heavenly Phantom!

“Deploy three times, no, five times more Grand Illusionary Soldiers to defend the bridge. I want the bridge and the chamber where the star brain is placed filled with Grand Illusionary Soldiers until nothing can pass through!

“Turn all the turrets to the left side of Heavenly Phantom and aim them at the target together!”

Chapter 798 - Instant Movement, Breaking In!

Shua! Shua Shua!

The ninety-nine turrets that were evenly distributed around Heavenly Phantom now all glided to the left side.

Ninety-nine giant ‘marbles’ that were perfectly round and smooth were piled up high. Starting from the foundation of the tower, every turret glittered suddenly and transmitted surging spiritual energy forward.

When the spiritual energy of different marbles was concentrated to the front of the giant artillery, it seemed to be a bright purple solar prominence that contained endless power and could stab a hole in the universe!

“The spiritual energy is charged. The ninety-nine turrets have been adjusted to the same frequency!”

“The trajectory of the target has been locked. It does not change its course at all and simply comes straight at us!”

“Prepare to open fire in three seconds!”

For all the Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators inside Heavenly Saints City, those were perhaps the longest, most painful three seconds of their life.

Everyone who was placed in the battlefield, be they Cultivators or Immortal Cultivators, could not help but slow down their attack. They gazed at the streak of gold that was darting at Heavenly Phantom at a high speed with scorching eyes.

Even the Grand Illusionary Soldiers became somewhat inert because the star brain had shifted a huge amount of computational ability to control the Heavenly Might Artillery and analyze Sparkle’s path.

It felt as if everything in the entire universe except for Heavenly Phantom and Sparkle halted for three seconds!

The mainframe crystal processor of Sparkle sensed that the starship had been locked onto, but it had no intention of decelerating or dodging.

The speed of the starship had been brought to the maximum. It was impossible to slow down or take down. Not only would a great amount of time and fuel be wasted, the starship would risk being harassed by the Grand Illusionary Soldiers again.

Although Sparkle could paralyze the Grand Illusionary Soldiers with the electromagnetic defense system, it would have to consume a lot of spiritual energy. When it was drowned in an ocean of Grand Illusionary Soldiers, there would be no way to accelerate again.

Therefore, Sparkle could only take the chance. It moved faster and faster, leaving a magnificent blurred shadow trailing behind!

“Open fire!” Xiao Xuance said coldly.

“Activate!” Li Yao shouted, with veins bulging on his face.

There was no sound. In the universe of silence, a silver dragon mixed with purple electric arcs spurted out and exploded into billions of crazily dancing snakes, sweeping the more than ten cubic kilometers on the left side of Heavenly Phantom.

All the Exos, Grand Illusionary Soldiers, and crystal warships within range were torn apart and obliterated into scorching torrents of particles. Pushed by the billions of dazzling snakes, they congregated into a sea of destruction and lunged at Sparkle!

However, Sparkle was still marching forward, like a lone warrior on the battlefield who was charging toward the barrage of ten thousand sharp arrows!

Many Cultivators who saw the scene closed their eyes sadly, unwilling to witness the doom.

Inside Sparkle, quite a few Cultivators who were wreathed in the buffer rune arrays exclaimed in shock, too.

However, the next second, Sparkle disappeared!

The surging tsunami of spiritual energy and the heated torrents of particles only tore Sparkle’s golden blurred shadow into pieces!

Including Xiao Xuance, no one realized what had happened.

The star brain, on the other hand, calculated Sparkle’s location at the earliest chance—It was now on the right side of Heavenly Phantom!

Instant movement!

Sparkle had performed an instant movement, or rather, a super short-distance space jump, in the last second.

Although space jump was a mature technique in the Flying Star Sector, the super long-distance jumps across Sectors and the super short-distance jumps were both problems that had baffled the scientists for a long time.

Super short-distance space jumps were especially troublesome. Because the distance was too short, it had a high demand on the instant changes between the three-dimensional universe and the four-dimensional universe. It was like sewing on a cell and had been an impossible conundrum!

Besides, for normal space jumps, the starships had to warm up for a few hours while remaining absolutely still before they performed one if they intended to arrive at a specific location.

Otherwise, the outcome of the starships would be exactly like when Li Yao jumped together with Skeleton Dragon. They would not be able to set their destination, and there would absolutely be no telling where they would end up.

But right now, Sparkle had performed an incredible high-precision instant movement while it was at a rushing speed against the bombardment of immense spiritual energy!

Such a technique had far exceeded the highest of the Flying Star Sector!

“It’s impossible!” Xiao Xuance’s face had become twisted. He roared, “Stop it! Stop it now!”

“It’s impossible!”

All the Cultivators who saw the scene, on the other hand, were all overjoyed and exclaimed in disbelief.

In their earnest eyes, Sparkle crawled out on the right side of Heavenly Phantom, as if it had just passed through an invisible wormhole. Its speed was not in the least affected. Moreover, crimson flames in the shape of a torch flooded out of the head of the starship and revolved rapidly into a giant drill that seemed to be able to blow up the sky!

Right now, the tip of the drill was less than ten kilometers from Heavenly Phantom.

Given the velocity of starships, the distance was shorter than the width of hair.

Nothing could stop the assault of Sparkle now.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

The ninety-nine turrets quickly glided to the right side of Heavenly Sparkle. Intense brightness was beaming out while they were on their way, indicating that they had been recharged before they arrived at their destination.

However, before they condensed into an enormous artillery again, Sparkle had already pierced through five layers of the spiritual shields of Heavenly Phantom, as easily as an awl stabbing through five pieces of paper.

Before the surging spiritual energy in the turrets was triggered, Sparkle had already drilled the artillery apart. All the turrets were swinging in various directions crazily!

The drill of mystic rays penetrated through the solid plate that was dozens of meters thick. Sparkle had stabbed into the head of Heavenly Phantom!

Although there was no sound in space, all the Cultivators who saw the scene seemed to hear earsplitting noises. They felt that their heads aching, as if something had drilled a hole in their skull brutally!

Heavenly Phantom, which was more than thirty kilometers long, and Sparkle, which was hundreds of meters long, were two extremities. They were like an elephant and a mouse.

However, when the ‘little mouse’ that was Sparkle crept into Heavenly Phantom’s body and swept aside everything in its way with the help of the drill of mystic rays and the tremendous impetus of the engine, the elephant could do absolutely nothing to stop it from moving forward despite its outrage!

Inside Heavenly Phantom, countless cabins were quickly filled up with quick-drying foam, which soon consolidated into stiff rocks.

However, Sparkle had been designed to roam below the solid rock stratums of Boneyard, so Sparkle did not met any problem when it was pushing forward. It did not stop drilling until it was less than a hundred meters from the bridge.

Li Yao clenched his fists and shouted excitedly, “One step forward, and we will drill through the star brain!”

“Can’t do that. Sparkle has reached its limits. One more step forward, and it might crumble immediately. Besides, the souls of the five of us are already burning up, too!” Professor Mo Xuan’s voice was feeble. “The super short-distance space jump was a state-of-the-art technique even in the era of the Star Ocean Imperium. Although we managed to perform it, the ‘instant movement’ has caused great damage to both Sparkle and us. Our computational ability has been consumed a lot!

“Drilling through the solid defense rune arrays and shell of Heavenly Phantom was a major undertaking for the drill of mystic rays. Sparkle right now is an arrow that has run its course. It cannot take a step further!”

Li Yao thought for a moment and asked, “Then, right now, the ‘mirror’ outside Heavenly Phantom should’ve been broken, right? Can you hack the star brain and paralyze all the Grand Illusionary Soldiers?

“We can stay here while you paralyze the Grand Illusionary Soldiers. Then, we will march out and take down Xiao Xuance!”

“It’s impossible!” Professor Mo Xuan said. “The star brain is too powerful and complicated. It will take at least ten minutes for us to infiltrate and trigger the virus.

“The star brain is likely to detect us during the process. If so, an intense combat of computational ability will begin.

“This is the head and heart of Heavenly Phantom, guarded by countless Grand Illusionary Soldiers. If the star brain detects us, they will come over very quickly and rip Sparkle together with us into shreds before we manage to activate the virus!

“Therefore, you have to attack the bridge and try to slay Xiao Xuance. That way, you will distract the Grand Illusionary Soldiers’ attention and buy more time for us!

“The Grand Illusionary Soldiers in this place are basically Xiao Xuance’s personal guardians. They must be controlled by the star brain directly, which means that the star brain must spend a lot of computational ability on them!

“The more heated your fight is, the more computational ability the star brain will have to summon to deal with you. We will be able to take advantage of its weakness and perhaps activate the virus after fooling the star brain completely!”

Li Yao realized that distracting its attention was quite a good plan.

Then, what else was there to say? Time to fight!

They were immediately divided into two groups. Part of the Cultivators, including Si Koulie, stayed to protect Sparkle, while the rest of the Cultivators went to march toward the bridge led by Li Yao and Luo Xingzi!

With everything coming this far, there was no need to preserve spiritual energy anymore. Li Yao ushered the six dragon heads on the back of his crystal suit to blow out extremely powerful dragon balls, which blew up the cabin walls along with the Immortal Cultivators and the Grand Illusionary Soldiers behind the walls. The road leading to the bridge was created!

On their way, countless Grand Illusionary Soldiers came at them from the pathways on the left and right.

Those Grand Illusionary Soldiers were slightly different from those that the Cultivators had seen in space.

Not only were they made of much better materials, more importantly, they were also much more agile, and their choice of tactics was much more mysterious and unpredictable, as if living souls were hiding behind the thick armor. There was no feeling of machinery in them at all.

Li Yao knew that the Grand Illusionary Soldiers were directly manipulated by the star brain. Their computational ability could be ten times higher than those out in space!

Faced with the Grand Illusionary Soldiers that were marching close like tides, countless Cultivators in the Building Foundation Stage and the Core Formation Stage volunteered to stay and resist them, earning precious time for Li Yao and the rest of the high-level Cultivators. After three minutes of high-intensity fighting, they finally broke into the bridge.

Li Yao, however, gasped when he saw what was inside the bridge. He swallowed difficultly and felt the hair on the back of his head standing up one by one!

Chapter 799 - Life and Cell

As a super starship more than thirty kilometers long, Heavenly Phantom boasted an extremely spacious bridge. The tallest section was almost a hundred meters. It was essentially a splendid palace!

On the cabin walls were dense crystal processors that were emitting lackluster brilliance. Like weird eyes, they stared at the intruders without blinking.

The crystal processors were surrounded by defense rune arrays that looked like membranes. They were shivering and shining like bubbles below sunlight. In the rear of the bridge where the star brain was located, more than ten defense rune arrays had been established, drowning the star brain in a mysterious, flowing mist.

At this moment, on the bridge, thousands of Grand Illusionary Soldiers were piled up from the ground into the air neatly in the shape of a cube.

The Grand Illusionary Soldiers were tall, slender and elegantly-designed. Their bodies seemed to be made of white jade, and there was not the slightest incongruity, except for the battle emblem of a burning golden planet that was embedded on the chest.

Li Yao had never seen such delicate, glamorous Grand Illusionary Soldiers before. They were essentially lifeless combinations of machinery and crystals, and yet they were releasing spiritual energy to the surroundings blatantly as if they were intelligent creatures.

The spiritual energy of so many Grand Illusionary Soldiers interweaved into an indestructible cage!

The cage was slowly pushing close to the Cultivators.

Li Yao could not find a trace of Xiao Xuance.

Did I make a mistake? Has Xiao Xuance entered the central area to attack the hall of the Meeting of the Next Millennium instead of staying on Heavenly Phantom to command the battle?

Li Yao was somewhat confused. Logically, it was simply impossible. The star brain was of paramount importance for the Immortal Cultivators. It was unlikely that Xiao Xuance would give up its protection and move somewhere else.

Or, did Xiao Xuance think that the unprecedently strong Grand Illusionary Soldiers were enough to block all the Cultivators?

“Give it up!” Right then, a cold voice came from the broadcasting rune arrays below the skull of a Grand Illusionary Soldier. “You have come a long way from the tenth space ring. You are running out of strength. You are doomed to be drowned by the ocean of Grand Illusionary Soldiers. You do not stand a chance.

“Give up the futile resistance and the meaningless sacrifice.

“We are all the strongest warriors in the lead of the path of evolution. We are the hopes of the civilization of mankind. There is no reason we should attack each other!

“If you surrender now, I will not care about your doings in the past. Even Bai Xinghe can be pardoned. We will work together to build the Imperium of True Human Beings and realize the renaissance of the civilization of mankind. We will fight against the horrifying foreign species in the dark forest side by side!”

Li Yao was suddenly alarmed. He vaguely guessed the tactic that Xiao Xuance had chosen.

Before he opened his mouth, Luo Xingzi, Xiao Xuance’s junior brother, had already roared in the utmost fury, “Shut up!

“Xiao Xuance, you are talking about the civilization of mankind all the time. Greatness, glory, and renaissance. They are indeed high-sounding and righteous!

“But look at what you’ve been doing when you were talking about the rise of the civilization of mankind!

“Seven years ago, in the Skyhill Sword Seminar, you blew up tens of thousands of people through the Temple of Immortals!

“On Iron Plateau, your scheme nearly put Iron Plateau and Heavenly Saints City at loggerheads against each other. Should the civil war have begun, countless innocent people would have lost their family and buried themselves in space!

“Five years ago, in the tenth space ring, the arrival of the extraterrestrial devils, directed by you, resulted in the deaths of more than a hundred thousand people. Even more suffered severe life-changing injuries!

“During the past five years, the crimes that the Immortal Cultivators have committed in the Flying Star Sector are simply too many to count!

“How many innocent victims have been killed by you, the sordid Immortal Cultivators? They were all living souls made of flesh and blood. They were somebody’s father, mother, son, daughter, husband, or wife!

“You filthy bastards used living human beings as chess pieces, as your tools, and as the ‘fuel’ that kept your ambitions burning. Even your own son was killed without any hesitation when the situation demanded it. And you are shameless enough to talk about the civilization of mankind? Damn you!”

The Grand Illusionary Soldier fell silent.

However, not far away, another Grand Illusionary Soldier raised its head, with crimson colors beaming out of its eyes. It commented calmly, “In mankind’s millions of years of glory, what is the difference between the so-called son and a hair? Will you hesitate when you pluck out one of your hairs?”

After saying that, the Grand Illusionary Soldier fell silent, too.

Far away from the two Grand Illusionary Soldiers, a third Grand Illusionary Soldier at a another corner of the cube opened its mouth. “In the boundless sea of stars, in the dark forest where the strong prey upon the weak and only the fittest survive, and in the everlasting war that has been on for billions of years, individuals are absolutely meaningless. Only the civilization of mankind as a whole is invaluable!”

A fourth Grand Illusionary Soldier at the center of the cube continued, its voice piercing through the distance of dozens of meters like a sharp sword, as tough as iron. “Every human being is a cell. When all the cells are gathered, the great civilization of mankind is formed.”

A fifth Grand Illusionary Soldier next to the fourth one went on. “For a living creature, its metabolism, the death and birth of its cells, is the least unusual thing in the world. The weak cells may wither, but they will give place to the cells that are even stronger. Only after countless cycles of metabolism can the creature become stronger.”

A sixth Grand Illusionary Soldier, which was right before the Cultivators, said, “This is the path of evolution! This is the path of immortality! For the immortality of the civilization of mankind, what’s the big deal about sacrificing some tiny cells? Not just millions of people, even if billions of people must be sacrificed, we Immortal Cultivators will be justified and unwavering!”

All the Cultivators failed to come up with a response.

Li Yao was so worried that he was having a headache.

It was not because of Xiao Xuance’s bewildering propaganda, but because he had finally found out the tactic that Xiao Xuance had adopted!

Xiao Xuance was truly sordid enough. He was on Heavenly Phantom, but he was wearing a crystal suit that looked exactly like the Grand Illusionary Soldiers and hiding himself among the thousands of counterfeits!

The thousands of Grand Illusionary Soldiers had become the best camouflage for him.

Since the Cultivators were not able to tell which of them was a Grand Illusionary Soldier and which was the real Xiao Xuance, the Cultivators had to focus all their attention and go at full strength prudently when they were faced with every Grand Illusionary Soldier.

Even for the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, their spiritual energy was still limited. It would be used up very quickly in high-intensity combat.

Before, when they were faced with the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, which were basically expendable, the Core Formation Stage Cultivators and the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators could suppress their strength and fight the battles in a frugal manner.

However, right now, they knew that one of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers was the best expert of the Flying Star Sector. Who dared to preserve their strength anymore?

The cost of one moment of carelessness would probably be their own life!

Li Yao cursed within his heart. *Are you kidding me? As the best expert of the Flying Star Sector, he could have crushed the enemy with his muscles. And yet, he is now fighting with his brain. He is really not giving other people any chance at all!*

“For the last time.” The thousands of Grand Illusionary Soldiers each raised one finger at the same time. “Is there anybody willing to pledge their loyalty to the Imperium of True Human Beings, and to me, Xiao Xuance?”

All the Cultivators bit their lips hard, as if their tongues had all be cut off.

Luo Xingzi burst into laughter. “Xiao Xuance, save your time! Our beliefs are different. In the eyes of the Cultivators, human beings are just human beings. They are not monkeys or ants, much less cells! As long as there is a single breath in the last Cultivator, they will fight your Imperium of True Human Beings until the end!”

Xiao Xuance sniffed. The giant cube made of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers moved again slowly and drew close to the Cultivators.

“Li Yao, we’ve broken through the first defense line. The virus will be planted very shortly. Not only will it be able to paralyze the star brain, a large batch of Grand Illusionary Soldiers will also fall into our control! Do something and buy us more time!” Professor Mo Xuan shouted in the secret communication channel.

Li Yao shuddered. He suddenly raised his hands high in the posture of surrender and said, “Wait, Xiao Xuance. After hearing what you’ve said, on second thought, I suddenly feel as if you are very reasonable, and I can barely find any rebuttals!

“It’s quite right that every weak human being is just a cell. The death of millions of people is just the loss of a hair or a fingernail for the civilization of mankind. Honestly, we rub off some of our dead skin when we are taking a shower every day, right?

“Therefore, Fellow Cultivator Xiao, I wonder, can you give a little more introduction about your Imperium of True Human Beings? For example, what kind of benefits are there if we join the imperium, what will the constitution of the imperium be when the regime is in place, and what are the ranks of nobility of the imperium? For the men of justice who abandon the darkness for the brightness in the frontline such as myself, can you knight me? Why don’t you tell me about that?”

All the Cultivators looked at Li Yao, dumbfounded.

Li Yao felt as if he heard a feeble curse in the communication channel, too.

All the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, on the other hand, chuckled in amusement.

“Alright.” The Grand Illusionary Soldier in the front extended three fingers and said, “I’ll give you three seconds. Attack any Cultivator with your strongest move sparing no effort, and I will believe your sincerity and introduce to you the future of the Imperium of the True Human Beings in great detail.”

“Huh?” Li Yao was stunned.

“Beep. Time is up. The window is closed!”

All the Grand Illusionary Soldiers unsheathed their sabers, their spiritual energy all bursting out!

The bird that takes the lead is often shot first. Hundreds of intimidating auras locked onto Li Yao at the same time!

Damn you! It’s only been one second!

Li Yao felt like crying. Every time he meant to stall his enemy, his enemy was always smarter than he thought!

Hiu! Hiu!

The thousands of Grand Illusionary Soldiers shrieked earsplittingly. The soundwaves pierced into the Cultivators’ crystal suits without any hinderance and blew into their ears. Everybody’s head was aching, as if somebody was twisting their brain with sharp knives!

The cube suddenly crumbled. The thousands of Grand Illusionary Soldiers, mixed with Xiao Xuance, the best expert of the Flying Star Sector, lunged at the dozens of Cultivators from various angles!

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Li Yao threw out countless crystal bombs that could jam the Spiritual Nexus.

However, this place was the center of the star brain, and the intensity of the signals of the Spiritual Nexus was unbelievably high. Other than making the eyes of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers blink for a moment, the crystal bombs had absolutely no effect!

Chapter 800 - Shameless and Domineering

Every Grand Illusionary Soldier was like a ball of lightning that had expanded to the limits. Hundreds of bluish electric arcs were released from them, dancing, interweaving, connecting the thousands of Grand Illusionary Soldiers together into a prison full of thorns of lightning.

Those Grand Illusionary Soldiers were state-of-the-art puppets that the Grand Illusionary Group had crafted at a cost of tremendous Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. Although they were no match for the Core Formation Stage Cultivators and the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, they were not shrimps that could be tackled easily, either. Also, when every Grand Illusionary Soldier was on the brink of destruction, they would detonate themselves under the control of the star brain, which was a major headache for the Core Formation Stage Cultivators and the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

Inside the cage, dozens of streaks of brightness dashed here and there in the thorny bushes like pieces of silk, leaving glamorous blurred shadows behind them. Wherever they went, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers exploded one after another. However, the pieces that remained after the Grand Illusionary Soldiers exploded were still restricting the zone of activity for the Cultivators like the whips of lightnings.

Compression, harassment, exhaustion… Those were exactly the purposes that the Grand Illusionary Soldiers had been designed for!

The computational ability of those Grand Illusionary Soldiers controlled directly by the star brain is too high!

Li Yao frowned deeply.

In terms of spiritual energy capacity, speed, or strength, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers were absolutely no match for the Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage and the Nascent Soul Stage.

However, they always seemed able to predict the movement of the Cultivators and act accordingly. Sometimes, they simply detonated themselves, giving birth to shields of flames and lightning to block the Cultivators. The physical strength and spiritual energy of the Cultivators were running out quickly, and their crystal suits rapidly were being worn down, too.

It’s been a thousand years since the Grand Illusionary Group provided the Grand Illusionary Land service to the world of Cultivators!

Over the thousand years, all the Cultivators, including those in the Core Formation Stage and the Nascent Soul Stage, have become used to conducting virtual training and combat via the Grand Illusionary Land.

Therefore, the enormous database of the Grand Illusionary Group has stored a lot of combat data of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, including the features of their tactics, their fighting habits, their maximum speed, their favorite moves and so on. Everything is stored deep inside the star brain!

Which means that the star brain has seen through every tactic, move, and technique of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators here!

With the immense computational ability of the star brain, it must have simulated today's battle in the Grand Illusionary Land thousands of times before it drafted the perfect strategies to cope with us. That's why the Grand Illusionary Soldiers are so difficult to get rid of!

Right then, a desperate scream echoed inside the communication channel.

While multiple Grand Illusionary Soldiers were detonating themselves, one of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers suddenly moved ten times faster. Three blade auras that were more than ten meters long were extended from the vibration saber and hit three Cultivators precisely at the same time like vipers and dragons!

The three Cultivators were all in the Core Formation Stage, but the three auras blew up their spiritual shields, smashed their breastplates, and broke several of their ribs.

The unstoppable spiritual energy even pierced hundreds of holes the size of needle tips in their hearts!

It was Xiao Xuance!

Li Yao's eyes bulged as he tried to lock onto Xiao Xuance.

But his crystal suit was identical to the Grand Illusionary Soldiers in appearance. When he was mixed among thousands of Grand Illusionary Soldiers, with the dazzling explosions, mystic rays, and blurred shadows, it was impossible to locate him.

Are you kidding me? I always think that I am already shameless enough in a battle, but the best expert of the Flying Star Sector is even more shameless than I am!

Li Yao was so angry that he felt his head was smoking. He bellowed in the communication channel, “All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, leave the Grand Illusionary Soldiers alone. Let’s go over and attack the star brain!”

The six dragon heads on the back of the crystal suit opened their bloody mouths. Six dragon balls were dancing rapidly around his body like satellites and formed six dazzling rings of various colors. The rings quickly expanded and instantly cut the ten or so Grand Illusionary Soldiers around him in half. Orange brilliance burst out from the fracture, and the Grand Illusionary Soldiers all exploded before they halted for a moment!

Li Yao took the opportunity to dash toward the star brain!

The control room of the star brain was right behind the wall of the bridge, which was translucent and seemed to be made of jade.

Through the defense rune arrays and the jade wall, the star brain could be clearly seen.

Hiding yourself, huh? Let’s see where you are going to hide yourself when I blow up the wall!

Li Yao opened his arms. Thousands of streams of spiritual energy flowed out of his limbs and went upwards along his arms into his palms helically, where they formed two dazzling light balls.

He put his hands together. The two light balls were like two black holes that were both attracting and rejecting each other, and they flew crazily in the shape of the number ‘8’.

Li Yao roared and pushed forward with all his strength. The two light balls rushed out and expanded into an enormous pillar of light three meters in diameter, which had a rapidly-revolving, black and white drill in front!

The drill shrieked like a raging dragon.

All the Grand Illusionary Soldiers that were standing in the way of the pillar of light were obliterated.

The drill hit the defense rune array in front of the jade wall brutally.

For a moment, the whole bridge shook.

The illumination rune arrays on the ceiling became brighter and brighter until they were dazzling because of the excessive input of spiritual energy. They all exploded after a cracking noise in the end, casting the bridge into a moment of darkness.

Then, the emergency illumination rune arrays came on. However, the lights were blinking and unstable. A moment in the light was followed by a moment of darkness.

In front of Li Yao, the defense rune array collapsed deeply like a giant swirl and did not return to normal until almost twenty seconds later.

However, chaotic electric arcs were still popping up in the seemingly peaceful air, indicating that the defense rune array was still active.

Li Yao breathed heavily, his face pale.

In terms of the intensity of spiritual energy, the previous strike had basically reached his limit. He had thought that he would have been able to blow up the defense rune array.

“Save yourself the trouble!” hundreds of Grand Illusionary Soldiers sneered simultaneously. “It is the main crystal reactor of Heavenly Phantom that provides spiritual energy for the defense rune array. The diameter of this particular crystal reactor is five hundred meters. How much spiritual energy do you think it can generate?

“Even the full-strength strike of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator would be nothing but a scratch for the defense rune array!”

Li Yao chuckled. As a refiner, he knew full well that Xiao Xuance was merely bluffing.

Although the crystal reactor of a crystal warship was huge, it was mainly used to provide impetus to push the vehicle forward instead of boosting the performance in combat. Therefore, the combustion mode of crystals was slow and stable. It could not be compared to the crystal reactor of a crystal suit or the internal organs and the brain of a Cultivator, where their spiritual energy was stored.

Besides, since it was the ‘main’ crystal reactor, naturally, it was responsible for most of the spiritual energy output of Heavenly Phantom. It would be a miracle if 10% of the spiritual energy that the crystal reactor generated was allocated to the defense rune array!

Now that Xiao Xuance was wasting his precious computational ability talking to him in the fierce battle, it was evident that he was attacking the man’s critical weakness!

The other experts in the Nascent Soul Stage were all smart and possessed a high computational ability, too. They quickly realized what was going on and changed their tactics. Instead of annihilating the Grand Illusionary

Soldiers, they all flew to the star brain and attacked the defense rune array between the control room of the star brain and the brain, even at the risk of being hit by the Grand Illusionary Soldiers!

For a moment, saber and sword auras dominated the place, the fireballs were flying everywhere, and the storms of spiritual energy did not die down for a long time!

Strong as the Grand Illusionary Soldiers might have been, they were not enough to stop the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who were getting serious. Under the full-strength strikes of the six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, the defense rune array turned into billions of stars and spluttered out after rippling for a while, vanishing into thin air!

“The defense rune array has been broken!”

Now, the only thing that stood between the Cultivators and the star brain was a jade wall!

Although Xiao Xuance showed up again and killed six Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage, the Cultivators were on a rampage, too. All the Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage surrounded the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators so that the latter could barrage the defense rune array of the star brain without worries, while they stalled Xiao Xuance and his Grand Illusionary Soldiers at the cost of their own lives!

Even though Xiao Xuance was the best expert of the Flying Star Sector, he was not able to kill every Core Formation Stage Cultivator instantly, especially when the Core Formation Stage Cultivators were determined to die!

BOOM! BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM!

Led by Luo Xingzi, the six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators all launched their most powerful attacks. Mystic rays, flying swords, sabers, and ball of lightning hit the jade wall consecutively!

The jade wall broke!

Cracks resembling the spider web quickly covered the entire jade wall, making the star brain behind the wall look even more twisted and hideous!

Hiu!

Seeing that the next bombardment of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators would completely blow up the jade wall, Xiao Xuance finally lost his cool. A plain-looking Grand Illusionary Soldier appeared in between the jade wall and the six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators at such a high speed that it was almost an instant movement.

BOOM!

The camouflage that made him look like a Grand Illusionary Soldier broke apart suddenly, revealing a golden, blinking crystal suit.

The most eye-catching part of the crystal suit was the highly-risen helmet. It made Xiao Xuance’s head disproportionally long, as if he were wearing a majestic crown. Four different faces were carved on the four facets of the ‘crow’. Indifferent, infuriated, ecstatic, and sorrowful!

The breastplate of the crystal suit was painted with a large face, too, half of which was hideous and malicious while the other half was friendly and benevolent. It seemed to be a combination of the deities in the heavens and the devils in the deepest level of hell!

It was Xiao Xuance’s own crystal suit—Heavenly Lord!

When the Heavenly Lord Battlesuit showed up, the half-kind-half-hideous face on the breastplate started twisting. Everybody heard laughter and cries at the same time.

Including Li Yao, all the Cultivators were grasped by part-fear and part-reverence.

Mental attack!

Xiao Xuance’s crystal suit boasts very strong mental attack techniques, too. It is hundreds of times more advanced than Fengyu Zhong’s Hundred Faces Battlesuit!

Li Yao was greatly alarmed, knowing that the best expert of the Flying Star Sector was finally showing his real strength!

Hoooo!

Xiao Xuance did not roar, but the spiritual energy that surged out roared earthshakingly like a giant beast in space. Bright golden balls appeared in the air, spinning and emitting deafening sounds.

They were the bombs of spiritual energy that Xiao Xuance had formed with his own spiritual energy!

“Six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, and Bai Xinghe who is barely one… Six and a half altogether. You think that’s enough to defeat me?

“Too naïve!”

When all the bombs of spiritual energy rushed toward the Cultivators, Xiao Xuance turned into seven streaks of golden brightness and fought the seven Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators simultaneously!

The best expert of the Flying Star Sector was truly shameless when he chose to be, but when he decided to fight the hard way, he could not have been more domineering!

Chapter 801 - Suppressing the Nascent Souls!

One versus seven, and yet he was taking the initiative to attack. While the bombs of spiritual energy were detonated, leading to an ocean of flames, the streak of golden brightness that was Xiao Xuance turned into seven different images. He had shaped his spiritual energy into different forms according to the characteristics of the seven experts!

Li Yao suddenly felt tremendous pressure. He felt that a golden needle was stabbing into every pore on his body!

Thankfully, Xiao Xuance had mistaken him for Bai Xinghe and launched a mental attack toward him. Therefore, he was able to defend himself without unleashing his real capability.

Ding! Ding! Ding! Ding! Ding! Ding! Ding!

Their battle sabers collided brutally a thousand times within a moment, as if thousands of golden threads were drawing something in midair. Thousands of deep dents appeared on the edges of the sabers. After thousands of clashes, both of the sabers crumbled heavily!

Although the sabers were broken, they maintained their original form, bound by the surging spiritual energy of the two parties engaged in the battle. They were even more untamable and daunting while they mauled each other like two dragons that were trying to swallow one another.

Their spiritual energy continued flooding out into a dazzling blast that decimated all the metal scraps into powder. The powder was then condensed into silver pearls because of the high temperature and the high pressure, which then darted out quickly, piercing through dozens of Grand Illusionary Soldiers and multiple Cultivators!

In the meantime, a mental attack that was much sharper than the edge of the saber slashed into Li Yao’s brain.

Although Li Yao’s soul was extremely solid, he intended to mislead Xiao Xuance for a while longer. Therefore, he screamed and flew backwards, crashing into a bunch of Grand Illusionary Soldiers.

On the back of the crystal suit, Black Wing was eager to act. If Xiao Xuance followed, Black Wing would immediately trigger two enormous wings and help him bring his speed to the maximum so that he could launch the most furious counterattack with his saber.

Yet, Xiao Xuance did not go after him any further. The seven streaks of golden brightness retreated and condensed into a blinking, intimidating man again.

However, his crystal suit was now on the verge of collapse because of the brief but bloody battles.

The crystal suits of the six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were not any better. They were also riddled with shocking gashes and would crumble suddenly if somebody touched them lightly.

“Xiao Xuance, you are too arrogant!” Luo Xingzi struggled to laugh. “We are all in the Nascent Soul Stage. Even if you are the best exert of the Flying Star Sector, you cannot defeat all seven of us at the same time!

“You are doomed to failure in this battle!”

Xiao Xuance sneered and continued summoning his spiritual energy. The golden flames around him were burning more and more furiously, until in the end, he seemed to have completely melded into the fire of spiritual energy.

His crystal suit, muscles, bones, and internal organs seemed to have turned into translucent crystals, except for the baby-like entity in the depths of his body that was glittering clearly!

That was the Nascent Soul!

By passing through the Refinement Stage, the Building Foundation Stage, and the Core Formation Stage, the spiritual energy had shifted from a gas to a liquid and then to a solid. In terms of effectiveness, it had arrived at the peak now.

In the training that followed, the Cultivators had to combine the spiritual energy in nature with their own will and consciousness. They would polish the purest, truest, and most original ego and toss it into the spiritual energy in order to produce a self in the state of pure energy.

The self of pure energy was the ‘true self’. The purpose of Cultivation was to build up the ‘true self’!

Right now, Xiao Xuance was releasing his innermost strength. His determination that had been accumulated for hundreds of years would be let out within a moment. It was obvious that he was going to fight everybody head-on!

BOOM!

BOOM! BOOM!

The six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators all released their strongest spiritual waves too, and their bodies were crystalized into translucent appearances, too.

A strong will that was different but equally resolute appeared in the center of their bodies in the form of babies!

“Xiao Xuance, we are from the same sect. I know exactly how many techniques you have!”

Luo Xingzi had almost gone mad. He and Xiao Xuance had both come from the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood. After Xiao Xuance’s rebellion, the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood would definitely suffer heavy losses, if it could survive the disaster at all.

It was too painful to think about for Luo Xingzi, who was an elder of the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood!

Therefore, he had made up his mind!

“You are the best in the Flying Star Sector. I’m no match for you. But today, I’m going to stall you for one minute even at the cost of my own life!

“Fellow Cultivators, leave Xiao Xuance to me. You break through the jade wall and destroy the star brain right now!”

Luo Xingzi burst into laughter. His strongest will turned into a cluster of whiteness, which consumed his body from the inside!

When the whiteness expanded to the limits, a shadow more than three meters tall surrounded by endless stars suddenly jumped out!

An Ares Extension!

Normally speaking, the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators hardly resorted to one-off magical equipment such as an Ares Extension at the beginning of a battle.

Because the speed, strength, and intensity of spiritual energy of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were too high, if they equipped an Ares Extension too early, it was likely that the Ares Extension would quickly become scrap metal.

When a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator put on an Ares Extension, it was often a sign that they were ready to do their best!

Xiao Xuance sneered and raised his right hand. Nine spiritual shields that looked like transparent glass immediately appeared in front of him.

Luo Xingzi, who was rushing close, slowed down as he passed through every spiritual shield.

Xiao Xuance took the opportunity to retrieve an Ares Extension from his Cosmos Ring and fixed it on his body.

His Ares Extension was unique. It was like the purest gem. When it was on the crystal suit, it seemed to be nonexistent except for the glimmering spiritual stripes.

But because of the diffraction, refraction, and reflection of the gem, the blinking crystal suit looked even more magnificent.

The two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who had put on their Ares Extensions and motivated their combat ability to maximum collided. However, the immense blast that everybody expected was not triggered. Instead, they were like two blackholes that had crashed, and a fatal attraction force was generated.

The scraps, debris, and Grand Illusionary Soldiers were all drawn close to them.

When they were two to three meters from the two of them, they would all be blown into smithereens because of the high-frequency vibration.

Luo Xingzi roared in the communication channel, “Hurry and attack the jade wall!”

The five Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators gritted their teeth and bypassed the two of them, focusing their attention on the jade wall.

Xiao Xuance’s shrieks were almost painful. He turned into dozens of streaks of golden brightness, darting in various directions, trying to attack the five Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, only to be blocked by Luo Xingzi each time.

Li Yao’s eyes shuddered. He felt that something was not right, but there was no time to think about it carefully in the middle of the fierce battle.

He did not join the group to attack the jade wall. Instead, he stood behind them and dealt with the endless Grand Illusionary Soldiers together with the Core Formation Stage Cultivators.

They destroyed thousands of Grand Illusionary Soldiers within a minutes, but there were countless Grand Illusionary Soldiers deployed on Heavenly Phantom.

The Grand Illusionary Soldiers crowded in through the pathways, the damage, and the fractures like an incessant tide of iron!

Under the blow of the iron tide, the vitality of many Core Formation Stage Cultivators was withering. Several Cultivators even burnt furiously into gray statues in midair before they perished silently!

“Professor, how long till you activate the virus and paralyze the star brain?” Li Yao shouted in his personal channel.

“Two minutes and thirty seconds!” Professor Mo Xuan was shouting coarsely, too.

Right then, a cracking noise echoed behind Li Yao.

Under the collective attack of the five Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, the jade wall was finally blown up!

All the Cultivators were exclaiming joyfully in the communication channel.

However, behind the crumbling and collapsing wall was not the star brain but another wall.

Thousands of broadcasting rune arrays had been installed on the wall. They looked like thousands of densely distributed swirls. In the center of every swirl, a weird bluish crystal was glittering, as thousands of deep eyes were gazing at them without blinking.

Li Yao was suddenly alarmed.

They had all been fooled!

They had thought that the jade wall was translucent and that they would see the star brain after the wall was broken.

But the fact was that the jade wall was not translucent. It was a large rune array that displayed illusions!

What exactly were—

Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum!

Before Li Yao get to sort through his messy thoughts, the thousands of broadcasting rune arrays all started shaking violently. High-frequency soundwaves indistinguishable to the human ears swept across the entire bridge like tornadoes. Countless tiny bubbles were appearing in midair like thousands of mini swirls that were crashing and combining!

What the heck!

Li Yao was greatly surprised. The abrupt changes must have been Xiao Xuance’s arrangement.

The problem was that, except for the impressive visual and sound effects, he did not feel in the least harmed. On the other hand, he felt quite refreshed and energetic!

But unceasing grunts and screams were echoing inside the communication channel. All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, including Luo Xingzi, seemed to have suffered a critical strike. Their auras were lower than ever.

The Nascent Souls that had been glittering were now flickering like candles in the wind. They shrank in size and soon disappeared inside their bodies.

“Our Nascent Souls have been suppressed!”

“I cannot enter the Nascent Soul Stage right now!”

“What—what is this array?”

Suppressed by the ultrasounds, Xiao Xuance was not able to summon the capability of the Nascent Soul Stage, either.

Yet, he burst into laughter crazily.

“Luo Xingzi and the rest of the brainless brutes, you didn’t see this coming, did you?

“I spent decades perfecting the ‘New Era Plan’. Of course, I considered the possibility that I might be attacked by several, or even more than ten, Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators at the same time.

“Although I’m the best expert of the Flying Star Sector, I’ve never overestimated my combat ability. I was scared that I would be harassed. Very scared!

“It would be quite a nuisance if three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators attacked me together, not to mention six!

“That’s why I devised this trap to treat you guys!

“This array is named ‘Great Empyrean Soul Stirring Array’. It has been developed by the Imperium of True Human Beings over several decades for the purpose of taming the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators!

“There are thousands of broadcasting rune arrays here. A ‘Dragon Demon Crystal’ is installed in the center of every one of them.

“I have allocated almost half of the spiritual energy of the main crystal reactor of Heavenly Phantom to stimulate them. The ultrasounds that they trigger are enough to suppress any Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators within the range of the soundwaves to below the Nascent Soul Stage!

“Before the crystals are broken, they can work for at least one minute. During that minute, none of us can enter the Nascent Soul Stage and can only stay at the peak of the Core Formation Stage at best.

“Hehe. You wanted to play the decapitation move on me because you thought that the Immortal Cultivators were short of top warriors. We had too few Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, and the regular Grand Illusionary Soldiers are not enough to stop you!

“Right now, neither side has Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, but I still have thousands of Grand Illusionary Soldiers. How are you going to fight me?”

The faces of Luo Xingzi and the other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators paled. “…We’ve been tricked!”

Li Yao was dazed. “Huh?”

Chapter 802 - Why Is There Music?

At this moment, the six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators finally realized that Xiao Xuance had summoned his Nascent Soul and fought against seven by himself not because he was arrogant, not because he thought he could defeat them alone, but because he was baiting the seven of them into releasing their Nascent Souls so that the array would cause the greatest shock to their soul!

The Core Formation Stage and the Nascent Soul Stage had a vast difference. If they were restricted to the peak of the Core Formation Stage, it was quite possible that the torrent of Grand Illusionary Soldiers would drown them!

Besides—

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Dozens of Immortal Cultivators suddenly flew out from various directions of the bridge. They were all wearing crystal suits and Ares Extensions. Their auras were as intimidating as the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators'!

Heavenly Phantom, as the home camp of the Immortal Cultivators, was naturally not guarded by Xiao Xuance and the Grand Illusionary Soldiers alone. There were a lot of experts on aboard, too.

Those experts might not have been in the Nascent Soul Stage, but now that the great array had created a special battlefield where there was no Nascent Soul Stage, the

Cultivators’ advantage of having top warriors was lost, while the Immortal Cultivators’ advantage in numbers was maximized!

“Xiao Xuance has been long aware that the only way to win the battle is the decapitation strategy!

“Therefore, he set up a fatal trap with himself and the star brain as the bait, one that was designed to hunt the best warriors in the world of Cultivators!

“And we’ve conveniently stepped into the trap!”

All the Cultivators realized what was going on. Their brains and their hearts were grasped by desperation as if they had fallen into a bottomless abyss.

“Ahhhhhhhhhhh!”

Luo Xingzi struggled to form the Nascent Soul under the suppression of the array.

However, just when his will was melted with his spiritual energy and about to take the shape of a baby, it was minced apart by invisible waves. His soul was shocked again, and his brain was cast into a surging ocean. He could not help but vomit a mouthful of blood, and his face was paler than that of a dead person!

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

Thousands of mystic rays, bolts of lightning, and blade auras attacked the dozens of Cultivators.

A great array that could suppress the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators could not last for long no matter what. Xiao Xuance only had one minute before the array was broken.

Therefore, he did not give any moment of rest to the Cultivators and simply asked the Immortal Cultivators and the Grand Illusionary Soldiers to launch the strongest attack!

All the Cultivators were caught in the tide of destruction!

The half-gloomy-half-sunny face on the breastplate of Xiao Xuance’s Heavenly Lord Battlesuit laughed and shrieked together with all the other Grand Illusionary Soldiers. “Stop struggling! I’ve planned this for decades! Every tiny detail has been calculated. All the changes are within my control. You stand absolutely no chance!”

BOOM!

Luo Xingzi was blown away by three Immortal Cultivators, only to be surrounded by more than ten Grand Illusionary Soldiers.

Although he gritted his teeth and slashed the Grand Illusionary Soldiers into scraps instantly, he was half a second slower. One of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers detonated itself near him. The spiritual energy resembling a volcanic eruption almost knocked him over, and the flames flooded in through the holes in his crystal suit, biting his flesh crazily and burning his bones!

In its unfortunate days, a tiger might be bullied by a dog. The strong Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage was likely to be seriously wounded by several Immortal Cultivators and dozens of Grand Illusionary Soldiers when his Nascent Soul was suppressed!

If so, even if he persisted for one minute, his bones would be fractured, his internal organs would be torn apart, and his soul would be damaged.

By then, even if he was able to condense the Nascent Soul again, there would be nothing he could do anymore!

Luo Xingzi was dizzy and anxious.

He spared part of his attention to observe the battlefield. The other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were displaying a similar performance to him. They were all drowned in the torrents of Grand Illusionary Soldiers, and their spiritual energy was continuously weakened because of the self-detonations.

On the other hand, the performance of the Core Formation Stage Cultivators was much better since they were used to fighting in the Core Formation Stage.

It was because of their struggles that the defense line of the Cultivators did not collapse.

However, as more and more Grand Illusionary Soldiers rushed into the bridge, they had almost occupied every inch of the room. Everybody could tell that the Cultivators were on the losing side. Another half minute was the best they could do!

However—

Luo Xingzi thought of something. He had not seen Bai Xinghe for a long time.

Where had the cunning guy gone?

Scanning the battlefield with his telepathic thoughts, Luo Xingzi felt his heart turn heavy again.

Maybe because he was wary of the cunningness of the space pirate, Xiao Xuance had selected Bai Xinghe as a primary target. The man had been surrounded by hundreds of Grand Illusionary Soldiers, which sealed him like a giant iron ball dozens of meters in diameter.

Even Bai Xinghe has been blocked…

Luo Xingzi was suddenly grasped by desperation.

Was today really the end of the Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector?

Since the attack of the ‘Great Empyrean Soul Stirring Array’ was indiscriminate, Xiao Xuance’s own Nascent Soul had been suppressed, too. Therefore, he was very prudent and stayed out of the battle. He triggered his endless computational ability together with the star brain and commanded the Grand Illusionary Soldiers to launch suicidal attacks, while he jeered at everybody to disturb their mind.

“Six of the seven Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators triggered the full capability of the Nascent Soul Stage just now because of my temptation. Your Nascent Souls were locked onto by the great array, and your souls have all been severely shocked!

“But Bai Xinghe was sleazy enough to keep himself in the peak of the Core Formation Stage just now and did not expose his Nascent Soul!

“However, it is useless, Bai Xinghe. You’ve just reincarnated. Your soul is very unstable right now. My array has the effect of suppressing the soul in the first place. You won’t persist for long before you are burnt to ash!

“As you did not show your Nascent Soul just now, you will not be able to see it again! Haha. Hahahaha!”

BOOM!

In Xiao Xuance’s wild laughter, another Grand Illusionary Soldier held Luo Xingzi’s leg and detonated itself.

The close-distance explosion dealt serious damage to Luo Xingzi. His entire right leg was almost blown apart.

Although he managed to maintain the functions of his bones and his veins with his immense spiritual energy, the excruciating pain made him unable to stay in the peak of the Core Formation Stage!

Luo Xingzi’s capability plummeted, as did his desperate mood.

The other Cultivators were all groaning in pain in the communication channel, not just for themselves, but also for the dark future of the Flying Star Sector!

However, just when everybody’s heart hit the rock bottom—

They heard music.

The music that was more and more loud, violent, and passionate!

The suffocating drumming, the flawless flutes, the soul-stirring pipa and huqin [1] …

They seemed to be being played together with hammers, anvils, flames, and blood. Every listener felt that they had to roar and bring out the brilliance of their life!

Moreover, in the simmering music, they could vaguely hear a coarse voice singing with unfathomable fervor.

“Look, the dense clouds cannot stop the running sea of stars.

“Endless darkness will disperse. Lights of life will illuminate the sky.”

All the Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators were dumbfounded, including Xiao Xuance.

“Why—why is there music?”

“Somebody is singing? What is going on?”

After a moment of hesitation, everybody looked at the big ‘iron ball’ that enshrouded Bai Xinghe.

They had all distinguished that the music of iron and fire was coming from the ball!

“Do excuse me. This is my own BGM. It’s called ‘Conquer the Universe’.”

A clear and peaceful voice echoed inside the giant iron ball made of hundreds Grand Illusionary Soldiers, piercing through the steel, the explosions, and the spiritual waves and shocking every Cultivator and Immortal Cultivator.

“B—BGM?”

Luo Xingzi slashed a Grand Illusionary Soldier into pieces, dragging his bleeding leg, while he roared, “What is that?”

Surrounded by the hundreds of Grand Illusionary Soldiers, Li Yao explained calmly, “My core is different to yours. When it is triggered to the maximum, it will spin at a speed of more than nine thousand and nine hundred revolutions per second while it pulsates like a heart.

“All in all, it is in an extremely unstable state, and it will emit earsplitting noises!

“I estimate that it is a side effect from when I surpassed the peak.

“I was troubled and worked hard on it for a long time, but I was not able to keep my core stable or eliminate the earsplitting noises. I could only guide it and make its vibrations more rhythmic. It sounds much less annoying when it is a piece of music.

“It can’t be helped. I don’t want to so arrogant that I play a long clip of background music whenever I trigger my best capability, either. But it really cannot be removed. Please try to ignore back. Just consider it as a battle hymn to cheer us up!”

Luo Xingzi and the other Cultivators present were struck speechless.

Xiao Xuance burst into fury. “You are still acting all mysterious toward the end of your life? I’m going to blow you up right now!”

BOOM!

The dozens of Grand Illusionary Soldiers that constituted the giant iron ball were detonated at the same time. The scraps and the flames condensed into a giant metal rose.

However, from the depths of the flower, an enormous hand more than ten meters long suddenly extended out!

With the debris of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers as the bone and the spluttering electric arcs as the veins, the giant hand snatched at Xiao Xuance!

All the Grand Illusionary Soldiers standing between the giant hand and Xiao Xuance were torn to pieces immediately!

Xiao Xuance was greatly shocked!

“It’s impo—”

Before he finished the last word, the best expert of the Flying Star Sector was smacked away by the giant hand brutally, crashing into four Grand Illusionary Soldiers, one Immortal Cultivator who was almost killed, and the cabin wall after an earsplitting explosion. All the crystal processors in the dozens of square meters nearby were pulverized into powder!

Shocked!

All the Cultivators and the Immortal Cultivators would not have been more shocked even if the world was overturned right now!

They did not realize until this moment that the hundreds of Grand Illusionary Soldiers did not surround ‘Bai Xinghe’ but were attracted by the bizarre force inside his body and unable to move. They had formed the best shield and protected him while he triggered the unparalleled capability that far exceeded anybody else’s without any worries!

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

The Grand Illusionary Soldiers near Li Yao had all been melted into orange mud by the extremely high temperature and blossomed like petals.

In the center of the petals, a crystal suit slowly rose up and stood in midair, surrounded by thousands of Grand

Illusionary Soldiers. It was entirely different from the Dragon King Battlesuit that everybody had seen just now.

“How did you—”

Xiao Xuance exerted his strength and jumped out of the cabin wall. He found it hard to believe his eyes!

Chapter 803 - Superlative Height of the Core Formation Stage!

All the mist on the crystal suit in front of everybody was gone, revealing a shell that was as deep as the night sky and as brilliant as the stars!

There was not the slightest joint on the entire crystal suit, as if it were made of an entire piece of liquid metal. On the elbows, knees, waist, and groin, where flexibility was most needed, metal was flowing and appeared as soft and smooth as silk.

The surface of regular crystal suits was often carved with tremendous rune arrays, especially the power rune arrays to control the direction and the attack rune arrays to trigger the spiritual energy.

However, all the rune arrays on this particular crystal suit were protected by half round jade covers. At first glance, dozens of bright golden pearls seemed to have been embedded on the surface of the crystal suit.

The spiritual energy transmission tubes among the ‘pearls’ were all golden lines that looked like the veins and nerves of the crystal suit!

The six dragon heads that had been raging on the back of the crystal suit were gone. But the right arm of the crystal suit was now adorned with six crimson stripes that looked like dragons, as if the will and demeanor of the six dragons had all been condensed into the patterns lurking on the right arm and could lunge out at any moment!

Huala!

Black Wing, which served as the support axis on the back of the crystal suit, released black flames in two directions. The flames expanded like tides and formed two black light wings that were dozens of meters long.

The edges of the wings were mixed with thousands of golden feathers that were vibrating at a high frequency. They looked like vivid, sharp flying swords!

The crystal suit boasted the mysteriousness of the night sky, the dominance of the dragon king, and the brutality of Skeleton Dragon from forty thousand years ago!

Mystic Skeleton plus Dragon King, unparalleled in the universe!

When the specifications of the crystal suit quickly appeared in everybody’s crystal processor, all the Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators were greatly shocked!

Compared to this crystal suit, even the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators’ tailor-made crystal suit seemed to have become wasted iron and copper!

“This—this crystal suit has adopted a lot of components and units of the Dragon King Battlesuit, but it is not the Dragon King Battlesuit. Its performance is much better than the Dragon King’s!”

“Bai Xinghe has been preserving his strength all this time. The specifications of the crystal suit are even higher than those of Xiao Xuance’s Heavenly Lord Battlesuit!”

“You are just bluffing. You can’t fool me!” Xiao Xuance roared. His spiritual energy surged out. All the debris and scraps within three meters were blown into smithereens, highlighting his outrage more clearly than ever.

“No matter how pretentious you are, you only wield the combat ability of the peak of the Core Formation Stage. Besides, you’ve just reincarnated yourself. I don’t believe that your soul can take such a blow!”

Xiao Xuance turned into a streak of golden brightness, and a hammer of soul power that was extremely sharp was thrown out, which was even faster!

Over the past month, Bai Xinghe had been the primary target of study for the Immortal Cultivators. Other than Xiao Xuance, six experts of mental attacks had been practicing a cooperative attack very hard!

Therefore, when Xiao Xuance launched the attack abruptly, six experts in mental attacks took action at the same time, too!

The soul power of the six of them was like six iron walls that blocked Li Yao’s soul from all directions and formed an extremely solid cage!

BOOM!

The hammer of Xiao Xuance’s soul power hit the ‘cage’ heavily. The cage immediately echoed like a bell that had been tolled, producing deafening sounds that were inaudible for ordinary people but could tear apart their soul!

According Xiao Xuance’s calculations and the countless simulations of the star brain, the ‘Soul Striking Bell’ and ‘Spirit Splitting Hammer’ were more than enough to completely drive a soul that had reincarnated within the past several years and had not fully merged with the body out of its shell!

Even worse, the soul might be completely torn apart and would not be able to condense again for another several hours!

However, Li Yao had no intention to dodge or defend when they launched the mental attack. Instead, he counterattacked in the most brutal way, boosted by the black light wings that were dozens of meters long.

Attack versus attack!

The golden feathers on the edges of the light wings dispersed at an amazing speed, but they were still linked to the light wings with tiny golden threads. Like thousands of thin blades, they darted tracing back to the source of the mental attack in midair and quickly locked onto the six mental attack experts!

“How could it be?”

“Why is his soul so solid and cannot be driven out of the body?”

“Not good!”

Most Cultivators were only best at specialties. Since they were experts in mental attacks, they were naturally mediocre in real sword and saber combat. How could they resist Li Yao, who was as ferocious and a wolf and a tiger?

Amid the exclamations and screams, one of the experts in the lead was pierced through by hundreds of golden feathers, turning into a cluster of blood mist.

The rest of the experts, seeing that it was not good, hurried to flee to the Grand Illusionary Soldiers.

However, they were not fast enough.

Hundreds of feathers swirled rapidly around their bodies, chopping off the heads of two experts, which flew up to the ceiling due to the pressure of the blood. The other three experts paid a price of one of their limbs before they managed to run to the behind of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers!

In that moment, three Immortal Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage were annihilated, and three were heavily wounded!

Such a terrifying combat ability far exceeded the limits of the peak of the Core Formation Stage and the category of ‘concealed capability’.

Even the Cultivators who were his temporary teammates were sweating hard.

One of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator could not help but speak to Luo Xingzi in private. “Luo Xingzi, isn’t Bai Xinghe… a bit too magnificent? Why does he give me a feeling that he is actually the final boss?”

“…” Luo Xingzi.

There was no time for Li Yao to deal with the three shrimps who had just gotten away. His target was Xiao Xuance, the best expert of the Flying Star Sector!

Shua!

For a moment, blurred shadows were appearing in midair. Almost twenty Heavenly Lord Battlesuits showed up simultaneously, each equally dominating and splendid!

However, every Heavenly Lord Battlesuit was harassed by a Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit!

The two parties were fighting with their sabers and swords, shooting each other with crystal cannons at a super close distance, confronting each other with perilous soul attacks, or even crashing into each other's fists, feet, knees, and elbows like the most primitive, barbaric warriors!

The speed of their movements, the sharpness of their techniques, and the immensity of the power released made all the Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators dazzled. They could not analyze the real traces of the two parties in the battle even when they used up all their computational ability!

Suddenly—

After a series of earsplitting explosions, all the blurred shadows of the Heavenly Lord Battlesuit condensed again, and he was blown backwards.

The shining surface of the crystal suit was now wreathed in a lackluster color, as if it had turned from gold into bronze.

The best expert of the Flying Star Sector had failed in the head-on clash that was devoid of any tricks!

“You are not Bai Xinghe,” Xiao Xuance roared both in shock and in fright. “Who are you exactly?”

All the Cultivators gasped at what he said.

When the mysterious man reached out to them through the Glorious Sunlight Group, they had been suspicious of his identity, too.

But everything he had said and the unique dragon-like artificial arms on his crystal suit had finally convinced them.

Later, the capability that he demonstrated, and especially the step-by-step fatal traps, made them relieved of their worries and acknowledge that he was Bai Xinghe, the old and cunning Pirate Potentate!

But right now, when the mysterious man triggered his real capability, the Cultivators also found that the man’s fighting style was slightly different from the real Bai Xinghe’s.

He was even stronger than the real Bai Xinghe!

The Cultivators were both surprised and delighted, if not baffled.

They did not have the slightest clue where such a super expert in the world of Cultivators had come from and how he could have improved his speed, strength, and soul to such a shocking degree in a battlefield where the Nascent Soul could not be condensed!

His eyes bloodshot, Xiao Xuance shouted desperately, “Impossible! It’s absolutely impossible! It doesn’t matter who you are! Nobody can wield the combat ability of the Nascent Soul Stage in my great array! You are in the peak of the Core Formation Stage, and I’m in the peak of the Core Formation Stage, too. There’s no way you can be so much stronger than me!”

“Who says that I’m in the peak of the Core Formation Stage?” The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit vanished into thin air, only to reappear above the Heavenly Lord Battlesuit the very next second. “Let me show you the invincibility of the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage!”

BOOM!

Xiao Xuance was bashed to the ground like a cannonball.

Dozens of Grand Illusionary Soldiers quickly moved forward and triggered powerful electric arcs and formed an electromagnetic web whose buffering saved him from the fate of hitting the ground.

However, he could not have looked more disgraced!

With its vast computational ability, the star brain finally finished comparing Li Yao’s fighting style and the features of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit with the files stored inside its database, which were as boundless as an ocean. A shocking conclusion had been reached.

“The crystal suit is very similar to Li Yao’s crystal suit, which appeared in the Iron Plateau Space Zone before!

“The guy’s fighting style is 73% similar to that of Sand Scorpion, the best warrior of Iron Plateau who disappeared five years ago!

“Li Yao, Sand Scorpion, Iron Plateau, Glorious Sunlight Group…

“You are Sand Scorpion. Sand Scorpion is Li Yao. It’s been you all along!”

Xiao Xuance immediately thought everything through. His face suddenly turned extremely pale, making the signs of age on his face more conspicuous than they should have been.

“Li Yao!”

“Sand Scorpion!”

“It’s him. It’s him!”

All the Cultivators, including Luo Xingzi, were overjoyed and felt like shouting and crying. Their computational ability was all extremely high. If they had not found out the truth after getting so much information, they would have been too ashamed to be called Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators anymore!

“Sand Scorpion or Li Yao, the bottom line is, it’s time for our counterattack!”

Motivated by Li Yao’s shocking performance, all the Cultivators initiated their counterattack with higher morale than ever!

Xiao Xuance grunted and fled to the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, quickly vanishing into the iron torrents.

The wings of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, on the other hand, minced all the Grand Illusionary Soldiers that were rushing over into pieces with auras almost a hundred meters long that looked like two black sabers!

“Xiao Xuance!”

Li Yao’s body seemed to have turned into dozens of streaks of blackness and appeared in various locations at the same time, locking onto Xiao Xuance’s position precisely. Roars resembling storm and thunder echoed inside the black streaks. “Your Grand Illusionary Soldiers are grandly illusionary!”

At this moment, there were seventeen seconds to go before the ‘Great Empyrean Soul Stirring Array’ collapsed.

The battle hymn of the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage had just reached the loudest note!

Chapter 804 - Dare to Duel Me?

In the last seventeen seconds, faced with Li Yao, who was in the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage, Xiao Xuance chose to run away without any hesitation.

Other than the Heavenly Lord Battlesuit, he also had multiple Ares Extensions and endless Grand Illusionary Soldiers to cover his retreat.

Even though your capability is higher than mine at the moment, it is unlikely that you can kill me in less than twenty seconds! In the meantime, the overwhelming Grand Illusionary Soldiers on my side can seriously wound the six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators on your side!

In another twenty seconds, the Great Empyrean Soul Stirring Array will collapse, and I will be able to trigger the combat ability of the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage again. My chance of winning is not slim!

Those thoughts quickly flashed in Xiao Xuance’s brain. His body disappeared among the countless Grand Illusionary Soldiers like ice melting in water!

Sixteen seconds remained.

Dozens of streaks of blackness gathered from various directions and formed the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit again.

While Li Yao’s spiritual energy surged out, silver brilliance was beaming out of the blackness, which covered the Mystic

Skeleton Battlesuit and condensed a glamorous shell!

At first glance, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit seemed to have doubled in size and painted with a silver camouflage. The silver lacquer looked like the clearest lake in which ripples were spreading out peacefully.

It was the Unparalleled Extension, an Ares Extension tailor-made for the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit that Li Yao had refined himself!

BOOM!

The air surrounding Li Yao was entirely shattered and covered in a white fog.

In one second, he slightly altered his direction sixty-six times at a supersonic speed.

The ‘white fog’ was actually the combination of the dozens of sonic booms!

Now that Li Yao had locked onto Xiao Xuance, there was no way that he could run off easily.

Fifteen seconds remained.

The two super crystal suits that were both equipped with the Ares Extensions crashed into each other quietly.

For experts in the level of Li Yao and Xiao Xuance, they could have launched hundreds of sharp attacks within one second, but they simply stuck to each other like two of the softest feathers.

However, the air around them was twisted, as if it had turned into dirty seawater.

The ‘ball of seawater’ that appeared out of nowhere continued expanding. All the Grand Illusionary Soldiers swallowed by the ball would be crushed into pancakes by the super pressure, as if they had really been placed in a deep ocean tens of thousands of meters deep!

The head-on clash lasted three seconds.

Cracks finally appeared on the surface of Xiao Xuance’s Ares Extension. Then, scraps the size of fingernails burst out!

Eleven seconds remained.

Dozens of Grand Illusionary Soldiers behind Li Yao detonated themselves at the same time. The flames they generated were manipulated by Xiao Xuance’s telepathic thoughts and turned into a giant fire snake that stabbed Li Yao’s spine!

Li Yao had to focus his attention on the fire snake.

Xiao Xuance took the opportunity to flee.

He stored the Heavenly Lord Battlesuit and the Ares Extension into his Cosmos Ring and put on a crystal suit that was in exactly the same in appearance to the Grand Illusionary Soldiers!

Ten seconds remained. Nine seconds remained. Eight seconds remained!

The Grand Illusionary Soldiers around Li Yao were exploding one after another. They were not blocking Li Yao but merely jamming the scanning of his telepathic thoughts so that he would not be able to locate the real Xiao Xuance!

Seven seconds. Six seconds. Five seconds!

All the other Grand Illusionary Soldiers and Immortal Cultivators lunged at the Cultivators crazily without a care for themselves, for the sole purpose of inflicting more wounds to the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators before they recovered!

Five seconds. Four seconds!

Li Yao frowned. He diminished the range of his telepathic thoughts.

Three seconds remained!

Li Yao had locked onto Xiao Xuance again!

He threw out a batch of powerful terror bombs, which mixed with the most worrying thought for Xiao Xuance in the bottom of his heart. “Xiao Xuance, your Imperium of True Human Beings is screwed!”

Then, ninety-nine golden feathers pierced through the wall of flames and outlined a special Grand Illusionary Soldier neatly.

When all the other Grand Illusionary Soldiers were marching forward fearlessly and detonating themselves one after another, a Grand Illusionary Soldier that looked very ‘prudent’ became very distinctive.

The last two seconds!

Realizing that he had been seen through, Xiao Xuance summoned the Heavenly Lord Battlesuit and the Ares Extension again.

However, before he finished installing the Ares Extension, Li Yao had shown up right before him and blown it into pieces!

Pu!

Xiao Xuance suffered a heavy kick to the chest. Despite the protection of the Heavenly Lord Battlesuit, almost ten of his ribs were broken. He had never suffered a heavier wound in the past dozens of years.

However, pushed by Li Yao’s heavy strike, he flew as far away as he could.

Hundreds of Grand Illusionary Soldiers stood before him and formed a full-enclosing giant shield connected by the electric arcs and the magnetic field.

The last second!

Li Yao raised his right hand. Countless pieces of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers were attracted to him and condensed into a metal saber more than forty meters long. He waved the saber and slashed at Xiao Xuance’s shield.

After a thunderous explosion, both the saber and the shield exploded!

However—

The effect of the Great Empyrean Soul Stirring Array had run out!

The tens of thousands of crystals embedded at the center of the broadcasting rune arrays cracked and exploded in one second, turning into colorful powder!

Xiao Xuance had been waiting a long time for that moment. He regained the immense Cultivation of the Nascent Soul Stage instantly. When the aura of Li Yao’s blade left the saber and rushed toward, he grabbed and crushed it amid crazy laughter instead of dodging!

The invincible aura of the blade was crushed in one grab!

“Now that you’ve failed to kill me in one minute, you are doomed!”

At this moment, countless Grand Illusionary Soldiers were still crowding into the bridge from various directions.

Luo Xingzi and the other five Cultivators returned to the Nascent Soul Stage, too, but their ‘Nascent Souls’ were much smaller in size than before.

Just now, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers had protected Xiao Xuance. Except for the heavy strike at the end, he did not suffer any injuries, nor did he use too much of his spiritual energy. Therefore, he still possessed the ability to fight.

The six Cultivators in the Nascent Soul Stage, on the other hand, were not only heavily wounded but also running out of spiritual energy because of the fierce battle against the Grand Illusionary Soldiers just now.

“The stronger you are, the quicker you become exhausted. Li Yao, how long can you stay in the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage?

“You raged for an entire minute so magnificently and killed quite a lot of my Grand Illusionary Soldiers. You must be reaching your limits, right?

“More than a hundred thousand Grand Illusionary Soldiers have been deployed on Heavenly Phantom. How many more can you take down?

“I’m going to exhaust each and every one of you with the pure advantage in numbers!”

Xiao Xuance was extremely cautious. Although he had regained the capability of the Nascent Soul Stage, he was still hiding among the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, healing his wounds, making new strategies, and striking at the Cultivators’ belief, because he was quite wary of Li Yao’s weird superlative height of the Core Formation Stage.

The situation was indeed not in the Cultivators’ favor.

The six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators had been surrounded by infinite Grand Illusionary Soldiers. It was impossible to reduce their number.

Amid Xiao Xuance’s crazy laughter, the crystal cannons on the shoulders of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers released dangerous electric arcs. Their chainswords and vibration sabers were triggered to the maximum, too!

Breathing heavily, the Cultivators stood next to each other, faced with the surging tides raised by the iron torrent!

Li Yao laughed, too.

Professor Mo Xuan lost his cool and shouted in the secret channel, “Well done, Li Yao. We’ve made it!

“In the one minute just now, you successfully distracted Xiao Xuance’s attention and forced him to concentrate most of the computational ability of the star brain on you. It was a great opportunity for our infiltration.

“Because of your intense attack, we’ve finished the planting and the activation of the virus one minute faster than we expected!

“In five seconds, we will be able to control the central area around the star brain. Not only will we be able to paralyze all the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, we can even control all of them in the bridge!

“But we cannot control them for long. You must seize the window to take down Xiao Xuance and destroy the star brain!”

“Understood!”

Li Yao licked his lips.

In three seconds, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers would be out of Xiao Xuance’s control. Then, he had to find a way to buy him three seconds!

Li Yao took a deep breath. He suddenly pointed at Xiao Xuance, who was hiding behind the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, and yelled, “Xiao Xuance, if you have any guts as the best expert of the Flying Star Sector, do you dare to duel me? Let’s see whether the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage is better or the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage is more awesome!”

Xiao Xuance laughed aloud. “Did you break your head when you formed the core? Right now, my thousands of Grand Illusionary Soldiers have surrounded you. Victory is all mine. A duel? Do you think we are in a movie or what?”

Li Yao sighed and said somewhat helplessly, “Alright, it is you who refused the proposal of a duel. Don’t say that I didn’t give you the opportunity later!”

After the conversation, three seconds were up!

In a moment—

The star brain had been bright gold in the beginning, but part of the virtual neurons at the core turned into a weird gray and then transformed from gray into black!

Twisted and tampered telepathic thoughts darted out of the star brain in all the directions in the sea of stars!

On Heavenly Phantom, in space, and inside Heavenly Saints City… all the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, whatever they were doing a second ago, came to a weird standstill.

Many Grand Illusionary Soldiers that had been flying fell and hit the ground, leaving giant pits.

Their arms that had been waving swords and sabers a moment ago put down the blades and placed them on the two sides of the body. Then, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers crouched into the shape of balls, entering their idle mode!

They were like an army that had lost their vitality. The sound of slaughtering and explosions ended abruptly.

Inside Heavenly Saints City, many Cultivators and qi-trainers were dumbfounded. They looked at each other in bewilderment, not having the vaguest clue what had just happened.

In the meantime, on the bridge of Heavenly Phantom, the tens of thousands of Grand Illusionary Soldiers, after a moment of silence, opened their eyes again. Starry brilliance was beaming out.

But the brilliance turned into a strange gold!

Shua!

The tens of thousands of Grand Illusionary Soldiers turned to Xiao Xuance at the same time. The hundreds of them that were guarding around Xiao Xuance aimed their crystal cannons at Xiao Xuance. Dangerous brightness was flashing in their weapons.

“This is—”

Xiao Xuance was dumbfounded. Inside the Heavenly Lord Battlesuit, the crystal processor that was connected to the star brain was in chaos, too. The information streams projected to him were like scattered swirls that he could not make anything out of!

“The star brain has been planted with a virus. How is it possible!”

Li Yao extended his right hand and pressed down, while he said, “Kill him.”

Chapter 805 - Doom of the Villain

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

The Grand Illusionary Soldiers that had been loyal to Xiao Xuance suddenly turned into Li Yao’s dutiful dogs and lunged at Xiao Xuance without any hesitation!

The crystal cannons were roaring, the chainswords were slashing, and the vibration sabers were uttering desperate screams!

Xiao Xuance made a poor decision himself, too. With the capability of the Nascent Soul Stage, he should not have been locked onto by the Grand Illusionary Soldiers so easily. However, he had regarded the Grand Illusionary Soldiers as his own ‘shield’ a moment ago. Therefore, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers around him were particularly dense with barely any gaps.

When the Grand Illusionary Soldiers rebelled and attacked their master, even Xiao Xuance was bewildered for a moment, before he was drowned in the iron torrent quickly!

All the Cultivators were shocked!

Exclamations echoed nonstop in the communication channel. Countless Grand Illusionary Soldiers passed by them like the fiercest piranhas and dispersed when they were about to hit the Cultivators, as if the Cultivators were covered in an invisible shield.

The Cultivators who were breathing hard because of the shortness of spiritual energy watched the Grand Illusionary Soldiers lunging at Xiao Xuance, their fear not entirely gone. They felt their heads going dizzy, and they failed to come up with any comments.

Luo Xingzi and the other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were the fastest to realize what had happened. They were overjoyed. “You planted a virus in the star brain?”

Li Yao nodded. “There’s no time to explain. The star brain can automatically detect and annihilate the viruses. We cannot keep the star brain paralyzed for long. We have to seize every second to exterminate Xiao Xuance and destroy the star brain!”

Li Yao charged at Xiao Xuance, closely followed by the other six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who apparently considered him the core of attack!

Six Cultivators in the Nascent Soul Stage and one in the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage were attacking the best expert of the Flying Star Sector together!

With Xiao Xuance’s capability, if he was determined to run away, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers would not necessarily have been able to stop him, but the situation was different when several super experts were monitoring him in the periphery!

Manipulated by the spectral Cultivators, countless Grand Illusionary Soldiers flew to Xiao Xuance and detonated themselves. Even the Grand Illusionary Soldiers that did not detonate themselves were also improving the output efficiency of their crystal reactors to the maximum. As a result, the crystal reactors together with their entire bodies were all melting into molten iron. They all smashed at Xiao Xuance like clusters of magma!

Sixteen Six-Barreled Revolving Vulcan Machine Guns appeared around the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit again. But this time, it was not the highly-heated explosive bullets that were triggered, but the freezing bullets that contained frost rune arrays!

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

Every bullet would explode into a vague, icy mist when they reached Xiao Xuance. The melted, twisted iron and alloys were frozen by the icy mist and turned into an extremely thick shell after they were combined!

The six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators all saw through Li Yao’s tactic.

He was building an ‘iron cocoon’ around Xiao Xuance in such a way so that Xiao Xuance would be restrained inside and could not get out of the siege!

“Let’s do it together!”

Of the six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, two were adept at temperature manipulation techniques. They blew rain and ice quickly toward the target.

The other four Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, although not as good at the temperature-manipulating techniques as their other two companions, mostly brought a few crystal bombs of the ice class with them.

For a moment, cold, bluish colors were flashing crazily, and the air was freezing. Hardly had the Grand Illusionary Soldiers around Xiao Xuance been melted in the high temperature when they were condensed into ugly shackles again!

“Ahhh!”

This time, Xiao Xuance truly burst into fury. The flames outside the Heavenly Lord Battlesuit gradually expanded into a giant almost five meters tall whose face was as vivid as that of a real person. His fury could be clearly seen on the giant.

The self-detonation of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers and the re-forged iron shackles seemed to have no other effects except stalling him for half a second in his craziness!

However, half a second was enough!

The self-detonation of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers delayed him for half a second, and the collective attack of the six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators delayed another half. And when the half second was over, new Grand Illusionary Soldiers had crowded close again!

The Grand Illusionary Soldiers and the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were like two giant hands that was smacking Xiao Xuance in turn unceasingly; Xiao Xuance felt lightheaded but had nowhere to run!

Xiao Xuance suffered heavy wounds in that minute. His spiritual energy was burning up, too, in the prolonged battle. The giant of flames seemed intimidating, but they were shaking like a torch in the billowing wind. Occasionally, long streams of fire were thrown out, but they would often collapse after swallowing less than ten Grand Illusionary Soldiers despite their awe-inspiring appearance.

Seeing through Xiao Xuance’s fatigue, Li Yao flapped his wings and dashed to dozens of meters away where he stared at the villain who was coming to his doom.

When Xiao Xuance released furious flames of spiritual energy for the seventh time, trying to break out of the siege, only to be smashed back by Luo Xingzi doggedly, Li Yao finally raised his right hand and opened his fingers, aiming his palm at the prey!

The six dragon-like spiritual stripes on the right arm of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit spiraled to the center of his palm.

In the palm was another golden stripe in the shape of a dragon head, as if an enormous dragon was lurking right inside Li Yao hand!

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and mumbled spells. The six dragon stripes on his right arm and the golden rune inside his palm were flaring in dangerous brilliance at the same time!

Shua!

When the dragon stripes were the brightest, six dragons suddenly appeared out of nowhere and span rapidly around Li Yao’s right arm!

The right arm of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit underwent shocking changes, too. The plate continuously extended, and his fist was consumed by a golden light beam from which an exceptionally majestic dragon flew out!

The highlights of Bai Xinghe’s Dragon King Battlesuit were the nine dragon-like artificial limbs that were passed on from the era of the Star Ocean Imperium. In the battle against the Temple of Immortals, two of them had been damaged. The remaining seven had been heavily modified by Li Yao and transformed into a piece of very awesome aggressive magical equipment.

The artificial limbs could be placed on the back or returned to the Cosmos Ring. At the crucial moment, the six artificial limbs could be activated at the same time and revolve rapidly around his right arm, boosting the drill of mystic rays that had been installed on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit earlier and increasing the power of the drill to the maximum!

Hiss! Hiss! Hiss! Hiss! Hiss! Hiss! Hiss!

With the most majestic dragon as the axis, the other six artificial limbs were revolving at the highest speed. Endless spiritual energy spurted out of Li Yao’s palm and constituted a gargantuan drill with the seven dragons as the bones. Glamorous flames as if a starship crashing through the atmosphere were triggered while the drill was spinning in the air intensely!

Even Li Yao found himself barely able to perform such a violent attack. He felt that his entire right arm was about to be torn apart. He extended his left hand and grabbed his right arm to help maintain the stability of the giant drill!

Far away, after fighting hundreds of rounds with the six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and destroying thousands of Grand Illusionary Soldiers, Xiao Xuance was burning his life and soul to the limits, too. At this point, the flames surrounding him quickly expanded into a magnificent man who was wearing a crown and a battle robe.

It was a shame that his soul had already started dispersing. The magnificent sight did not last half a second before it turned into a bloated monster who was laughing crazily in desperation.

But the crown on his head was equally delicate and still glittering splendidly!

“Go to hell!” Li Yao roared. He pushed his right arm forward brutally. The drill of mystic rays mixed with seven enormous dragons instantly turned into a giant pillar of light that rushed toward Xiao Xuance!

BOOM!

Xiao Xuance’s spiritual shield held back the attack for half a second. The collision of the immense spiritual energy triggered such a sweeping blast that countless Grand Illusionary Soldiers nearby were blown to smithereens.

Half a second later, Xiao Xuance’s spiritual shield together with his Heavenly Lord Battlesuit completely collapsed. The pillar of golden light pierced into his chest and out of his back. A shocking giant hole was left on his chest by the drill of mystic rays. All his internal organs were gone. Even the blood all over his body was vaporized in an instant!

The mystic rays faded out.

All the attacks came to an end.

Xiao Xuance was still floating in midair, holding his saber high, with the same unbendable demeanor as before.

However, the color on his skin had gone, turning him lead colored.

“You… may stop me…”

Starting from his feet, Xiao Xuance’s body turned into ash, flying into the air inch by inch, as if ten thousand gray butterflies were dancing gracefully near him.

“But you cannot stop the evolution!

“Long live the evolution! Long live the Immortal Cultivators! Long live the civilization of mankind!”

When his saber turned into ash, he tried to raise his hand high and roar. But hardly had he moved his arm when his fist collapsed as if it were made of sand.

He could only wave his bare wrist and shout desperately, “Love live the Imperium of True Human Be—”

Before he made the final declaration, Xiao Xuance—the best expert of the Flying Star Sector, the commander-in-chief of the Imperium of True Human Beings, and an Immortal Cultivator—completely turned into ash, dispersing in the air!

None of the Cultivators who saw the scene would be calm again until a long time later.

Even the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were looking at each other in bewilderment. They were asking the same question—”Is this the end of everything?”

“It is not. We must destroy the star brain!”

Li Yao’s face was pale, and his temples were pulsating after performing his strongest move. He gritted his teeth and closed his right hand. The seven dragons that had pierced through Xiao Xuance’s body just now took a turn in midair and rushed toward the thousands of broadcasting rune arrays behind him.

BOOM!

The high wall that was embedded with broadcasting rune arrays had been on the verge of collapse in the first place.

Under the scourge of the seven dragons, the wall exploded and revealed the vast control room behind it, where the star brain, the most crucial device for the Immortal Cultivators, was hidden!

The control room of the star brain was as vast as the bridge, but most of the space was occupied by giant crystal chips, computational rune arrays, and ventilation tubes. However, at the center of the room, in a vertical room that looked like a shaft, loose light spots were floating in midair and outlined what seemed to be a brain!

A lot of Immortal Cultivators were surrounding the star brain, but most of them were experts in crystal processors. Suppressed by the Grand Illusionary Soldiers and the seven super experts, they were unable to fight back at all.

“We must be careful, everybody. Do not think that everything is over now that Xiao Xuance is dead. If my guess is correct, an even more formidable enemy is probably lurking in this place!”

His eyes as sharp as lightning, Li Yao locked onto a ‘meat mountain’ right below the star brain.

It was Xiao Tianbao, Xiao Xuance’s foster son, the creator of the star brain, and the mentally retarded genius known as the ‘star child’!

Chapter 806 - World of Star Brain

“What?”

Xiao Tianbao, the ‘star child’, was the creator and the first operator of the star brain. If the Cultivators wanted to gain control over the star brain, their best choice was to coerce him. After all, other than his talent with crystal processors, his IQ was very low. It would not be a problem to force him to give up the keys of the star brain.

Luo Xingzi and the other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were about to charge at Xiao Tianbao, only to came to an abrupt halt when they heard Li Yao’s words.

After everything that had happened, especially when Li Yao finished Xiao Xuance quickly and neatly in one move at the last moment, none of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators dared to disregard his opinions, despite the mysteries surrounding him.

“Stop pretending, Xiao Tianbao. I don’t believe that you are a retard!” Li Yao extended his right arm. A deep purple light ball, surrounded by pale, spluttering electric arcs, was being condensed inside his palm. He remarked, “For a man of your Cultivation who is capable of producing a super crystal processor like the star brain, how can you really be a retard?

“The Immortal Cultivators are too few. Your entire plan is dependent on the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, and you are the key to the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project. I don’t think that is a coincidence!

“Since the very beginning, you Immortal Cultivators have been doing things in an onion-like style. Mask after mask, and camouflage after camouflage. The space pirates are a disguise for the Temple of Immortals, and the Temple of Immortals is a disguise for the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“Both on Iron Plateau and on Spider Den, the greatest villain did not show up easily until the last moment!

“However, Xiao Xuance, as the commander-in-chief of the Imperium of True Human Beings, violated the pattern!

“He was the one to put forward the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project, not to mention that he was the CEO of the Grand Illusionary Group. He kept himself in the spotlight almost since the very beginning!

“As it turned out, when the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project was proposed, many people, including me, grew suspicious of the project and even doubted that Xiao Xuance had other ill intentions!

“Although Xiao Xuance managed to win the other Cultivators’ trust by sacrificing one of his sons and throwing out a series of false conspiracy theories, all of which were quite effective, his actions were too risky. They did not seem to be the real style of the Immortal Cultivators!

“Therefore, I made a bold assumption that Xiao Xuance is not the real commander-in-chief of the Imperium of True Human Beings, at least not the only one. You, Xiao Tianbao, the ‘star child’, the creator of the star brain, and the pivot of the entire plan, are the real controller of the Imperium of True Human Beings behind Xiao Xuance!”

His deductions were reasonable and logical. All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were nodding their heads in approval, convinced.

But Xiao Tianbao burst into tears, his legs kicking crazily and his fat shivering.

Li Yao was not fooled. He sneered and said, “Do you feel that it is funny to keep acting when everything has reached this point? If you do not reveal your true face, don’t blame me for my brutality!”

Xiao Tianbao was still crying and even farted loudly.

Li Yao sneered. Redness suddenly beamed out of his eyes, and he threw out the purple light ball in his hand, which hit Xiao Tianbao’s chest precisely.

After a thunderous sound, Xiao Tianbao turned into a pile of ash before he had the chance to grunt. What a quick, clean death!

“…” Li Yao.

“…” Luo Xingzi.

“…” All the other Cultivators.

Everybody was looking at Li Yao in silence.

Blinking rapidly, Li Yao quickly made certain gestures with his hands. Deep green flames of spiritual energy flew out into the air, dispersing into a bright green mist.

It was a technique to detect ghosts and spectral Cultivators. If the remaining soul of a dead person ran away, it would leave traces on the green mist.

However, Li Yao searched far and wide, only to find no traces of any lingering souls at all. Xiao Tianbao was as dead as anyone could ever be. There was no way that he could cause trouble anymore.

Luo Xingzi couldn't help but observe, "Well, Fellow Cultivator Li, have you overthought the whole thing? Maybe Xiao Tianbao was really a retard… that was particularly handy with crystal processors?"

Li Yao ground his teeth so hard that sparks were almost bursting out. He frowned hard and murmured to himself, "It's unreasonable. Xiao Tianbao must have been an important person of the Imperium of the True Human Beings even if he wasn't the controller of it. How—how could he have been killed by such a harmless attack?

"There's no other choices now. Xiao Tianbao is dead. We cannot turn off the star brain through him; we can only demolish the big guy now!"

In the urgency, Li Yao did not have too much time to think. Together with the other six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, they flew into the 'shaft' in the center of the control room.

Above their heads, the translucent, golden brain was fluctuating like a heart.

The brain cells were flashing and then dwindling. They looked both like stars and eyes that were staring at the unannounced visitors indifferently.

Li Yao gritted his teeth and summoned the sixteen Six-barreled Revolving Vulcan Machine Guns again. After a series of cracking noises, the magazines of super bullets made of marrow crystals were locked and loaded!

Right then, Professor Mo Xuan suddenly shrieked in the communication channel, “Not good! Run away quickly!”

Abrupt changes took place!

In a moment, countless bubbles began popping up in the depths of the translucent brain. The dead gray area that had been invaded by the virus suddenly shone brilliantly!

The translucent brain kept expanding until it passed through Li Yao’s body like a weird wind!

Li Yao suddenly felt greatly alarmed. He pulled the triggers subconsciously and raised sixteen fire snakes.

However, all the fire snakes seemed to hit a black swamp like statues made of mud being pushed into an ocean. They did not even raise any ripples!

“This is—”

When Li Yao soared up in the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, he seemed to break dozens of invisible walls and break out of Heavenly Phantom instantly.

What appeared before him was a universe in a fierce battle, but not around Heavenly Saints City and in a completely foreign space zone.

Thousands of enormous starships were fighting against a fleet of a hideous-looking alien civilization. Blood was shed in space, and countless souls perished!

Li Yao had never felt feebler. He lowered his head and noticed that black materials were being secreted by the dark universe and quickly crawled on the legs of the Mystic

Skeleton Battlesuit. They wriggled upwards and spread out like a combination of leeches and centipedes.

“What is this place?”

Behind Li Yao, Luo Xingzi and the other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators appeared in the weird space, too. They were also wreathed, drowned, and swallowed by the black liquids leaking from the universe!

“Weren’t we attacking the star brain? How did we end up in this place?”

Looking at the weird scenes around them, the crystal warships that were more splendid than palaces and the ferocious beasts larger than starships that were attacking each other, even the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators felt that their blood was freezing and exclaimed in shock.

Countless stars rushed close from various directions and condensed into a deformed kid whose head was extremely huge and whose body was as slim as a skeleton. The kid looked at them and said casually, “This is the world of my brain. Didn’t you want to destroy me? You are welcome to try!”

His words made all the Cultivators feel horrid.

“The world of your brain…” Li Yao pondered for a moment, only to shudder violently and realize why he had shown up here all of a sudden. “You are the star brain! The star brain is alive. Xiao Xuance was not the real controller of the Imperium of True Human Beings, nor was Xiao Tianbao. It is you who has been controlling the organization all along!

“You’ve launched a mental attack at us!

“This is not a real world but an illusion that you made up!”

Li Yao suddenly felt extremely cold.

The fact that the star brain had self-awareness was already dreadful enough. He had never expected that the star brain would boast enough soul power to trap him and the other six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in an illusion without alarming them!

Li Yao could not even begin to fathom how immense the star brain’s soul power was.

The star child looked at Li Yao for a while. There was a hint of praise in his indifferent voice, as he said, “Li Yao, you are very smart. You’ve almost guessed everything right. I assume that the virus in my head must have something to do with you, right?

“Five years ago, when the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project was just activated and all the Cultivators were allowed to scan my brain, I sensed that some reprobates seemed to have other plans with my brain.

“As it turned out, your ‘virus’ really took effect at the critical moment. It took me quite a long time at a cost of astronomical computational ability and spiritual energy to annihilate the virus and fix the loopholes. I did not even have the time to rescue Xiao Xuance!

“However, I am much more than the star brain. I am also Xiao Tianbao, the Sea King of the Temple of Immortals, as well as another dozen roles.

“All in all, you may call me… the star child.

“This is my name in the Imperium of True Human Beings. Star Child No.19.”

Li Yao was genuinely stunned. He finally realized that his suspicions about Xiao Tianbao were not groundless. However, Xiao Tianbao was merely a reincarnation of the star child, and the loss of a reincarnation mattered little to the star child!

As it turned out, the Mountain King, the Sea King, the Black King, and the Lotus King of the Temple of Immortals all existed, and the Sea King was actually the real supervisor of the entire scheme!

However, what was the meaning of ‘Star Child No.19’? Were there another eighteen terrifying creatures such as the one right in front of him?

Li Yao’s mind was in a mess as he considered the question. Luo Xingzi, on the other hand, burst into laughter and said, “It matters not whether you are Xiao Tianbao, the Sea King, or the so-called star child, the scheme of the Immortal Cultivators has been foiled. We will not allow the so-called ‘Imperium of True Human Beings’ to be established even at the cost of our lives!”

Star Child No.19 looked at the seven Cultivators calmly. Although his face and eyes were all made of stars, Li Yao could easily distinguish the amusement and contempt in them.

“There’s something that all of you, including Xiao Xuance, have mistaken. Completely mistaken,” Star Child No.19 said calmly. “The New Era Plan launched by the Immortal Cultivators was not meant to establish the Imperium of True Human Beings but to bathe Flying Star Sector in the glory of the imperium.

“In fact, a thousand years ago, the Imperium of True Human Beings, the second magnificent imperium that is going to lead the civilization of mankind, was already established in the Empyreal Terminus Sector, the old capital of the Star Ocean Imperium!”

Chapter 807 - A Ten-Thousand-Year Bloody Battle

The Empyrean Terminus Sector, Planet Empyrean Terminus!

It had once been the capital of the Star Ocean Imperium and the heart of the civilization of mankind. It was also the place where the final battle between the Supreme Emperor and the Mad Armageddon, two unparalleled experts of mankind, had taken place ten thousand years ago!

In the legends, because the battle between the Supreme Emperor and the Mad Armageddon was too fierce, the whole of Empyreal Terminus, and even the entire Sector, had been shattered into countless fragments!

But right now, the weird ‘Star Child No.19’ claimed that the Imperium of True Human Beings was established on the debris of Empyreal Terminus a thousand years ago!

All seven Cultivators, including Li Yao, gasped at the shocking news. Their brains completely went blank.

Is he fooling us? Is he trying to buy himself more time? But what is he buying time for right now?

Li Yao thought quickly and tried to escape from the weird illusion. However, the soul power of the star child was too tremendous. The illusionary world he had built was so vivid that Li Yao could not find any loopholes. He even felt that this was the real world and he had been in a dream until then!

Li Yao was very clear that, when the black liquid that was spreading on his legs completely consumed him, his brain would be occupied by the will of the star child, and he would become the star child’s puppet!

He had to break the illusion!

In order to break the illusion, he needed to find a loophole first!

Star Child No.19 seemed to see through what was on his mind. He said casually, “Are you suspecting that I lied?

“Believe me. There is no need for me to lie right now. I’m very interested in a sincere communication with the seven unparalleled experts of the Flying Star Sector and showing the formidability of the Imperium of True Human Beings to you.

“If possible, I do not want to burn the Flying Star Sector to the ground, either. After all, every Cultivator in this place can be an excellent warrior of the Imperium of True Human Beings to fight for the future of the civilization of mankind. Wouldn’t it be a shame if you are killed in internal strife?

“If you are worried that I’m deliberately procrastinating, or if you are deliberately procrastinating, then just stop wasting your time. You are in the world of my brain. In this place, our communication is established purely telepathically. No matter how much we talk, it will be only several seconds in the real world.

“99% of my plan has worked out. The glow of the imperium will soon illuminate this dim world. Nobody can stop it. There are only two roads in front of you. You either bend and integrate, or you are obliterated!”

Ripples suddenly spread out in the space behind Star Child No.19. Like an overwhelming light beam, it displayed something brand new.

It was another space zone that was plagued by the fire of war. The crystal warships of countless Cultivators and space pirates were involved in a gory battle. Corpses and debris were floating in space, reflecting eye-catching colors under the illumination of mystic rays.

Li Yao and the other six Cultivators were no strangers to the space zone.

It was the Spider Den Space Zone, the nest of the space pirates.

Behind the battlefield, the space gate was particularly attention-grabbing.

The lighthouse, made up almost a hundred super star beacons, was adjusting its structure and being manipulated by a mysterious strength, changing from a perfect tube into a lozenge that looked like a diamond.

Starting from the bottom of the diamond, star beacons were illuminated one after another. The intensity of their brightness far exceeded everybody’s imagination.

Star Child No.19 smiled and said, “You think that the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project is the focus of the Immortal Cultivators and that the space gate is just a piece of insignificant magical equipment that has only been repaired because the Grand Illusionary Soldiers and the Cultivators need to be mobilized to the Spider Den Space Zone, don’t you?

“You are terribly wrong.

“The Grand Illusionary Soldier Project is, of course, very important. If it works out, I will be able to control the Flying Star Sector decades in advance. Then, in a few more decades, I will be able to transform the Flying Star Sector into the Imperium of True Human Beings and all the Cultivators into the Immortal Cultivators. The imperium will have a lot of backup soldiers.

“However, it is not the key of the plan. The real key is the ‘space gate’ that none of you have ever paid attention to!

“Ten thousand years ago, Spider Den was one of the most important mining planets of the Star Ocean Imperium. At that time, the imperium built a lot of super star beacons that allowed the crystal warships and carriers of all the other Sectors to jump to his place instantly.

“However, after ten thousand years, most of the star beacons have run out of their spiritual energy or are serious damaged.

“Right now, the super star beacons are shining again.

“With my precise calculation and distribution, the resonation of mystic rays and the radiation they send out will not only illuminate the entire Flying Star Sector but also reach the Empyrean Terminus Space Zone, where the signals will be caught by the ‘stargazers’ of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

“Hehehehe. You think that the space gate is meant to guide the way for the army of the Flying Star Sector so that they can jump to the Spider Den Space Zone simultaneously?

“No. Its real purpose is to guide the way for the army of the Imperium of True Human Beings and to inform them of the precise coordinates of the Flying Star Sector!

“With the precise coordinates, it won’t be long before the expedition army of the imperium marches to this world. You and your Sector alone are far from enough to compete with the imperium!

“You have already lost!”

His words frozen all the Cultivators’ heart and brain instantly.

…

In space, in Heavenly Saints City, in the Spider Den Space Zone, and in dozens of other space zones of the Flying Star Sector, countless Grand Illusionary Soldiers, which had just entered their idle mode, stood up again after a period of beeping sounds, with coldness beaming out of their eyes, surrounded by dazzling electric arcs!

It was the same on Heavenly Phantom. Except for some of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers on the bridge and inside the control room of the star brain, which were still under the control of Professor Mo Xuan, the majority of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers fell into the star brain’s hands again and charged at the bridge.

Both parties were Grand Illusionary Soldiers, and the battle was quite evenly-matched. However, there were fare more Grand Illusionary Soldiers under the star brain’s control than those under Mo Xuan’s. It would only be a matter of time before they broke into the bridge.

“What has happened? The enemy’s computational ability soared all of a sudden and annihilated the virus we planted!”

“I sensed that the enemy’s thinking pattern underwent drastic changes. It seems that the star brain… possess self-awareness now!”

“Huh? Would that make it just like us?”

The five star spirits looked at each other in bewilderment.

“Li Yao and the other Cultivators must be in an unimaginable crisis. The star brain is much more terrifying than we expected. We are definitely no match for it in the competition of computational ability!”

There was unwavering determination in Professor Mo Xuan’s voice, as he said, “There is only one way to counterattack now. We march inside ourselves!”

“Professor?”

The other four star spirits were confused.

“The enemy’s computational ability is higher than ours. It has most of the Spiritual Nexus under its control, too. Fighting against it online is a dead end. But don’t forget—”

Professor Mo Xuan smiled and then continued. “Don’t forget that the body of the star brain is just regular metal and crystals. But our bodies are made of the mustard-seed liquid metals from the Star Ocean Imperium that can swallow other metals and crystals to reproduce!

“We are definitely no match for the star brain in terms of computational ability, but physically… we can totally devour it!”

“Devour it?”

The four star spirits were dazed. They then waved their hands merrily. “Right! Right! We will swallow the crystal chips and the computational arrays that constitute the body of the star brain. Let’s see what it can compute when all its materials are gone!

“Its life form is similar to ours. Chances are that our ability will be increased a lot after we swallow it!”

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Liquid metal that looked like mercury leaked out of the five artificial bodies and quickly flowed to the control room of the star brain along the tubes and gaps of the starship!

The five star spirits were very clear that, as easy as the process sounded, it would definitely be the most perilous battle since they had become star spirits.

Nobody was sure whether they would swallow the star brain or be manipulated by the star brain with its immense computational ability!

But this was their only choice right now.

“If we digest the star brain and improve our computation ability to the maximum, we will certainly be able to activate the super crystal processor system in the Star Prier’s House. Then, we will locate the Heaven’s Origin Sector and find our way home!

“Let’s go, Cultivators from the Heaven’s Origin Sector!”

…

In the illusion built by the star brain, a grandiose new world was slowly rising in the endless flames of war.

“Ten thousand years ago, the final battle between the Supreme Emperor and the Mad Armageddon almost destroyed the Empyreal Terminus Sector. However, this place was the heart of the civilization of mankind. We had the most powerful magical equipment, the most advanced training facilities, and the most sophisticated techniques.

“Soon after the final battle, countless experts of mankind crowded into the Empyrean Terminus Sector from various places and struggled to survive the disaster.

“However, it was not just the human beings who were aware of the value of the Empyreal Terminus Sector. The demon race, the extraterrestrial devils, and all kinds of bizarre alien species in the universe discovered it, too.

“The collisions between the Supreme Emperor and the Mad Armageddon was too powerful. They ignited a torch in a dark forest. As a result, countless hunters lurking in the shadows discovered traces of new prey!

“Therefore, for the ten thousand years, fighting has never ceased in the Empyrean Terminus Sector!

“The Empyreal Terminus Sector became a world of bloody battles. Wars, massacres, and destruction have filled every second of the past ten thousand years!

“The Imperium of True Human Beings was established exactly in such a world of bloody battles!”

The illusion behind the star child suddenly changed into magnificent metropolises, sky-blocking warship, and countless experts that were soaring up and roaring in the sea of stars!

Crushed by the experts, the hideous demons and the alien species were all blown to smithereens and ended up as meat patties and oceans of blood after miserable screams!

“We are the brand-new human beings that have evolved in the bloody battles of ten thousand years. The Imperium of True Human Beings is a new summit of the civilization of mankind as well as the only future for humanity in the dark forest!”

Chapter 808 - Secrets of Star Children

The universe started shaking violently along with the star child’s roar. The stars were all shooting close and congregated into overwhelming torrents of information that penetrated through everybody’s body!

” Ahhh! ”

His face twisted, Li Yao felt his every cell brimming with overlapping scenes.

He seemed to see great cities in metallic colors rising up from the ground, crystal warships being produced from the keel to the shell, and countless brawny, gloomy experts receiving the harshest training!

Conquers and slaughters. If the endless blood was gathered together, it would be enough to extinguish a burning star!

In such a way, the star child poured the history of the creation and expansion of the Imperium of True Human Beings into Li Yao’s and the other six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators’ souls.

The Empyreal Terminus Sector was the center of the civilization of mankind. It was a world with the most Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, the most abundant resources, and the most abundant spiritual energy.

Although it had been broken apart by the Supreme Emperor and the Mad Armageddon ten thousand years ago, the great battles between the super fleets under their command led to an ancient battlefield that was a hundred times more precious than that of the Flying Star Sector!

In the ten thousand years that followed, mankind, the demon race, the extraterrestrial devils, and the alien species in the universe fought an unceasing bloody battle for the resources, the secret treasures left by the Supreme Emperor and the Mad Armageddon long time ago, and even the mausoleum of the Supreme Emperor.

The Imperium of True Human Beings born in the ten-thousand-year bloody battles was brewed in the boundless killing intent. It was crueler, more resolute, and more merciless than any civilization of mankind in the past.

The Imperium of True Human Beings expanded very fast. In several thousand years, it had already absorbed almost all the prosperous districts of the Star Ocean Imperium. Then, through the ‘stargazers’, it extended its tentacles in various directions to search for the more remote Sectors.

Countless Sectors bent their knees to the brilliance of the imperium and provided infinite resources, magical equipment, and warriors for the imperium. Nurtured by those Sectors, the Imperium of True Human Beings grew larger and larger like a rolling snowball, and its capability soared exponentially!

The so-called ‘stargazers’ were a very special profession of the Immortal Cultivators. They were a sort of combination of astronomers and historians.

They examined and searched for unvisited space zones with the most advanced observational magical equipment. But at the same time, they were familiar with all the ancient classics and could find traces of a certain Sector from ancient records, thereby determining the rough location of the Sector.

With the continuous endeavors of the stargazers, the lost Sectors were rediscovered one after another, and their precise coordinates were soon ascertained, too. Then, the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings would immediately set off to jump to those Sectors and demonstrate the glory and the power of the imperium!

However, such a practice was only applicable to the prosperous areas of the Star Ocean Imperium.

As for the Sectors that were billions of lightyears away far from their reach, the stargazers could barely do nothing about them with their own capability and the probe magical equipment.

The universe was too boundless. Only one in a billion space zones might be suitable for the survival of living creatures.

The spiritual energy to transport an expedition army of a reasonable scale billions of lightyears with a space jump would be astronomical.

Strong as the Imperium of True Human Beings might have been, it could not allow an expedition army wander around in the vast universe aimlessly like headless flies when the precise coordinates of the destination had not been retrieved yet.

It was difficult to transport a fleet, but it was not easy to transport a piece of magical equipment, either. In fact, during space jumps, one gram of additional weight meant the consumption of tons of crystals.

In order to explore the remote area far from the Imperium of True Human Beings, the Immortal Cultivators had come up with many unconventional approaches.

In a certain plan, they even dissected the brain of a human being from the body and installed it into a piece of special probe magical equipment that was teleported through a space jump.

Since it was only the brain that was teleported, the load of the weight was minimized.

However, even a brain still weighed one to two kilograms, and hundreds of space jumps were often required before a Sector habituated by human beings was discovered.

Such low-efficiency searches consumed too many resources. When the territory of the imperium expanded and all the Sectors that were relatively obvious had been discovered, it became trickier and trickier to find the remaining Sectors.

After hundreds of years of research, the experts of the Imperium of True Human Beings finally invented the cheapest and most convenient method to explore the universe.

The entire brain was too redundant. Only the soul needed to be teleported!

The star children were thus born.

Every star child used to be a stargazer with an extremely high Cultivation who had dedicated their entire life to the exploration of the sea of stars. When they were old and their body feeble, their soul was at the most powerful point of their life!

Then, their soul was extracted from their body through secrets arts, with the complicated memories and unnecessary emotions removed, before the soul was refined together with the purest souls of hundreds of children. There were chances that a special spectral Cultivator, namely the star child, would be produced!

The toughness of the star child was a hundred times higher than normal spectral Cultivators, which allowed them to ignore the side effects when they were teleported through space jumps. Moreover, they could absorb the spiritual energy in the universe and sustain their consciousness for a long time.

The star child was essentially just a weightless ghost. Therefore, at the cost of the least spiritual energy, they could be teleported to dozens of space zones away within a breath in search for the traces of the civilization of mankind.

When a new civilization of mankind was locked onto, they would observe quietly for a while and record the features of the Sector before they returned to the Imperium of True Human Beings with the information.

Then, the expedition army of the imperium would march off and arrive at the heart of the Sector!

That was how the imperium expanded.

Li Yao’s body was shivering when he heard the story.

There was no telling whether it was out of fear or fury.

He had heard of the brutality of the demon race and the extraterrestrial devils in the stories of the seniors many times.

However, he had never thought that a nation of human beings could be so inhuman that they could kill hundreds of children to produce a star child simply for the exploration of more space zones and the expansion of the imperium!

No. This was only the mature process of production. Before the plan succeeded, countless more innocent children must have been sacrificed to run the horrendous experiments!

Bright red flames appeared on Li Yao’s body and burnt the black liquid, which had gradually crawled to his torso, into ash!

“Don’t judge the methodology of the Imperium of True Human Beings with your boring criteria of ‘moral’ or ‘mercy’. In the ten-thousand-year battles, we had no other options! If we were as soft and hesitant as before, the entire species would have been wiped out a long time ago,” the star child said coldly. “For the continuity of the civilization, every human being must be prepared to sacrifice themself. It is exactly because of the sacrifices of so many people that the imperium has been growing so fast!

“It is a pity that I was unfortunate enough to encounter an unprecedented cosmic storm after a super long-distance space jump even though I did find the prosperous world of human beings that is the Flying Star Sector.

“That was a hundred and twenty years ago.”

A hundred and twenty years ago, an unprecedented cosmic storm?

Li Yao quickly thought of the storm in which Xiao Xuance and Bai Xinghe were involved in.

The star child said, “At that time, I had just crossed a distance of billions of lightyears. My soul was feebler than ever before, and there was no way that I could resist such a violent storm. In the raging radiation and electromagnetic waves, my soul was battered, and I lost 99% of my soul power and computation ability. My connection to the Imperium of True Human Beings was cut off, too. I was on the brink of destruction.

“When I was about to perish, I accidentally discovered two crystal warships that were attacking each other. It was not until later that I discovered that the captain of one of the starships was named Xiao Xuance and that he was a promising young man in the Flying Star Sector.”

The rest was history.

The star child lost 99% of his soul power and could not return to the Imperium of True Human Beings.

The prosperity of the Flying Star Sector far exceeded his expectation, too. The apocalypse that occurred five thousand years ago seemed to have brought fresh air to the world even though it was almost destroyed. After the catastrophe, the Flying Star Sector had a completely different attitude to other Sectors.

The star child snuck into Xiao Xuance’s crystal warship. He was a high-level Cultivator with amazingly computational ability in the first place. For the sake of investigation, he had also practiced many secret arts to influence other people. Since Xiao Xuance had just experienced a ‘dark forest’ situation, his mind was disturbed, and his brain was unstable.

The star child easily planted a seed named ‘Imperium of True Human Beings’ in Xiao Xuance’s head.

In the decades that followed, the star child lurked in the darkness, recovering and building up his soul power.

With his help, Xiao Xuance rose to power and became the leader of the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood.

In the meantime, the ‘Second Imperium’ and the ‘Temple of Immortals’ were both being brewed.

Finally, when the star child recovered part of his capability, he carefully selected a Down syndrome patient in which to reincarnate himself.

The soul of the Down syndrome children was incomplete congenitally. The odds of a successful possession were very high. As it turned out, the star child made it in one attempt.

Then, with some tricks, he manipulated Xiao Xuance to foster the retard and started developing the ‘star brain’. In fact, he was merely expanding his computational ability by combining countless crystal processors.

In the meantime, he met Xiao Xuance on the Spiritual Nexus under the identity of the Sea King and guided him to establish the Second Imperium, the Temple of Immortals, and the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project step by step.

Affected by the ‘seed’ that he had planted in the beginning, Xiao Xuance felt nothing wrong. He believed from the bottom of his heart that he was the creator of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

“If Xiao Xuance’s ‘New Era Plan’ worked out, we would have been able to transform the Flying Star Sector into the imperium within a hundred years and provide unlimited resources and soldiers for the imperium. It would not have been necessary for the expedition army of the imperium to come such a long way here.

“It’s a shame that he failed.

“But it doesn’t matter. Although Xiao Xuance failed, there are still the seven of you.

“Among you, there are the elders and experts that can speak for the six sects of Heavenly Saints City. We even have the real controller of the Glorious Sunlight Group and the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau here!

“Communicating with you will do, too.”

Chapter 809 - Men of Different Beliefs Go Separate Ways!

Luo Xingzi was more than angry. Flames of spiritual energy surged out as he pointed his longsword at the star child and shouted, “Shut up! Men of different believes should go separate ways! You Immortal Cultivator consider ordinary people to be ants and would do anything in order to achieve your purpose. Even new-born babies can be ‘sacrificed’ under your regime. The Cultivators will never be your accomplices!

“Besides, the Imperium of True Human Beings raised a storm of blood in the Flying Star Sector before you officially show up. In the Skyhill Domain, Heavenly Saints City, Iron Plateau, and dozens of other space zones, tens of thousands of innocent victims have been murdered by you!

“There’s nothing worth communicating between us. Let the sword in my hand decide whose path is the righteous one!”

The star child’s voice was as calm as before. “Luo Xingzi, there is no need to burst into such fury. It only indicates the weakness and fright in your heart.

“I sent so much valuable information about the Imperium of True Human Beings to you without keeping anything to myself because I want us to settle our differences and stop attacking each other.

“Cooperating with the imperium brings you only merits and absolutely no harm.

“According to the traditions of the imperium, remote Sectors such as yours are usually reigned in a semi-autonomous regime. As long as you submit to the imperium, you may be the governors or the masters of the Flying Star Sector.

“The imperium will not destroy your sects. Instead, a lot of magical equipment, resources, and techniques will be offered to you so that you can become even stronger.

“You may even have the privilege of studying more advanced techniques in Empyrean Terminus, the capital of the imperium, and step into an unimaginable new level.

“The six of you are all in the Nascent Soul Stage. Have you never dreamed of ascending into the Divinity Transformation Stage before?”

“Divinity Transformation Stage?”

The six Cultivators looked at each other in bewilderment with complicated feelings.

It was not because they were tempted, but because… if experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage did exist in the Imperium of True Human Beings, the capability of the imperium was unfathomably high!

“Li Yao, your training methods are quite unusual. You are only in the Core Formation Stage, and yet your combat ability is equal to the Nascent Soul Stage. It is truly incredible.

“However, I assume that you must have encountered a lot of difficulties during your training, mustn’t you? It must have been troublesome and perilous for you to advance into the Core Formation Stage from the Building Foundation Stage. Your chances are really slim if you want to break into the Nascent Soul Stage from the Core Formation Stage on your own.

“I can even say that, without very special fortuitous events, you are never going to enter the Nascent Soul Stage.

“But if you join the Imperium of True Human Beings, you can study with the Immortal Cultivators of the imperium and form your Nascent Soul with the help of experts in the Nascent Soul Stage and the Divinity Transformation Stage.

“Wouldn’t it be a shame if such a genius is restricted to the ‘superlative height of the Core Formation Stage’ forever?

“Moreover, for highly-developed worlds such as the Flying Star Sector, the imperium will even ask you to conquer the underdeveloped Sectors nearby. You will gain tremendous benefits from the conquered Sectors, too.

“How does it sound? If you agree to cooperate with the imperium, your own Cultivation will soar exponentially, and you may break into a new level. Your sects will thrive, your progeny will be stronger, and with the help of the imperium, you will expand forward, until every one of you becomes the master of a Sector!”

Luo Xingzi laughed. “If there are so many benefits, why didn’t you come up with the offer a hundred and twenty years ago? There are no three-year-olds here. We are all clear that no lunch comes free. What are we going to pay?”

“Simple. Resources and warriors,” the star child replied. “I have observed you for a hundred and twenty years. I cannot help but conclude that the Flying Star Sector has been treating the ordinary people too mercifully. In fact, most ordinary people are parasites to the civilization of mankind. They waste resources and make no contribution. Yet, you’ve been protecting and indulging them, which will only stagnate the entire civilization.

“For example, there are dozens of space zones in your territory. A lot of planets boast high reserves of resources in those space zones. Yet, the development has been slow because of the harsh environment on them.

“But in fact, as long as you modify the body of the ordinary people slightly, they will be transformed into slaves with infinite strength. Then, they can be sent to those planets for mining. Tremendous resources will be excavated at an extremely low cost. The price is merely the lives of some slaves. Nothing more.

“Another example. The weird ‘eggs of apocalypse’ on Iron Plateau can swallow animals and transform them into strong apocalyptic beasts.

“Such a mysterious technique will be highly valued in the military. With some human experiments, I believe that strong ‘apocalyptic warriors’ can be produced, which will further increase the capability of mankind.

“But you did not do that, either. What a waste of such treasures!

“When the Flying Star Sector becomes part of the imperium, the parasites will not be allowed to live such comfortable lives anymore. The imperium will teach you hundreds of amazing methods that will exploit the potential inside the bodies of ordinary people and turn them from idle parasites into beings that are useful to the civilization of mankind.

“Hehe. Although ordinary people are just ants, they will still be a tiny bit of fuel when they are tossed into the fire of our civilization.

“By then, as long as the Flying Star Sector provides a certain number of warriors, slaves, and resources for the imperium every year, you will receive a huge amount of assistance. Everything will be better for the six sets of Heavenly Saints City and the six tribes of Iron Plateau. Your interests will not be harmed at all.”

“Understood.” Luo Xingzi took a deep breath and said, “You are saying that, as long as we give up the interests of ordinary people of the Flying Star Sector and connive while they turn into cannon fodder for the Imperium of True Human Beings, the Cultivators such as us will gain astronomical benefits?

“No. Hehe. If we agree to such a deal, I’m afraid we can no longer be called Cultivators. By then, we will be just like you… the Immortal Cultivators!”

“Maybe you find such a proposal hard to accept for now,” the star child said calmly, “but when you reach Empyrean Terminus and experience the real meaning of the true path of immortality, you will definitely figure out that this is the inevitable future of the civilization of mankind!”

“Shut up! By no means will we select such a future!” Luo Xingzi’s eyes were bloodshot. Colorful brilliance burst out of his body as he rushed toward the star child!

The star child made of billions of stars was almost a hundred meters tall. He was like a magnificent buddha in front of everyone.

Luo Xingzi charged at him like a firefly charging at the radiating, furiously-burning sun!

BOOM!

The star child blocked Luo Xingzi’s attack by extending just one of his fingers. Then, he curled his finger and flicked Luo Xingzi away as if the Cultivator were a fly!

“This is the world of my brain, a palace constructed by my soul power. How can you expect to defeat me in this place?”

The star child’s voice suddenly turned thick and heavy like roaring thunder. From the battlefield in space far away, which had been the star child’s background, the debris of almost a hundred crystal warships suddenly flew toward him rapidly. A dozen crystal warships collided and interweaved into hands and feet several thousand meters long, and the remaining crystal warships formed a monolithic torso!

An iron giant made of hundreds of crystal warships stood up slowly in the illumination of the stars!

All seven Cultivators gasped sharply. Although they knew that it was an illusion that the star child had made, they could not help but feel gloomy and desperate!

“Do you see? This is my power. This is the power of the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“There is nothing that your Sector can do to resist such power!

“Come on. Join the imperium and become an Immortal Cultivator. One day, you will be as strong as me!”

The debris and scraps on the chest of the giant that was almost ten thousand meters tall wriggled into an enormous face. That face was what had just spoken.

Compared to the magnificent giant, Luo Xingzi was as insignificant as a random speck of dust floating in the depths of the universe.

But the dust lunged at the giant for a second time. A furious roar echoed against the thunderous sounds that the giant made. “What’s the meaning of strength if you can’t protect the weak?

“We are Cultivators. We burned out life and soul, paid everything, and embarked on the path of Cultivation to protect our home and every ordinary people in the sea of stars!

“We will sacrifice for the civilization of mankind, but we will only sacrifice ourselves. We will not sacrifice other people for our glory and greatness!

“Sacrificing yourself or sacrificing other people is the biggest difference between the Cultivators and the Immortal Cultivators!

“I, Luo Xingzi from the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood, will always be a Cultivator, and I will fight against the Immortal Cultivators and the dreadful future of the Imperium of True Human Beings until the end of my life even if my body perishes and my soul is cursed forever!”

Swoosh!

Luo Xingzi turned into a straight golden line and stabbed at the chest of the iron giant like an extremely narrow, long sword!

The star child sniffed. A third metal arm suddenly protruded out of his chest, opened, and slapped at Luo Xingzi brutally like a collapsing mountain!

BOOM!

This time, Luo Xingzi was not blown away. Instead, it was the giant hand of the star child that was showing signs of crumbling, because the moment before the collision occurred, another six streaks of brightness darted close and resisted the attack together with Luo Xingzi!

All seven Cultivators made their choice!

“You—”

Looking at the six Cultivators who flew to his side and helped him block the giant hand of the star child, Luo Xingzi felt that his nose itching, and his eyes welling up. He could not help but laugh aloud until his tears dropped!

“Do you see? This is the choice of the Flying Star Sector! This is the answer of the Cultivators!”

“Poor choice.”

The star child’s voice was louder than before and more outraged. The debris of various kinds of starships flooded out of his body incessantly and strengthened his third arm, which was protruding out of his chest. The arm was now full of thorns and hooks. The fingernails on the five fingers were longer and brought the seven Cultivators more pressure.

“Cultivators like you have lived a peaceful life in the remote area of the sea of stars for ten thousand years. You are like the flowers in a greenhouse, and you have never seen a real storm before. That is why you are insisting your hilarious beliefs!

“Protecting the weak is just a boring hypocrisy. It is just a way to satisfy your vanity when you are praised and adulated by the ordinary people!

“For your vanity, you’ve protected the ant-like ordinary people but buried the future of your entire civilization!

“This is your righteous path that leads to the abyss. This is what you think to be justice!”

Chapter 810 - The Last Cultivators

BOOM!

A thousand crystal cannons suddenly emerged in the giant hand formed by the star brain. The balls of lightning were raining, and the electric arcs were pouring down. All seven Cultivators lost their sense of direction and were drowned in the ocean of flames!

Swoosh! Swoosh!

When the crystal cannons finally ceased fire, ten thousand iron chains darted out of the palm of the giant hand and pierced into the seven Cultivators’ crystal suits brutally. They were bound up by the thorn-like chains and were unable to move at all.

“Open your eyes and see the universe!”

Together with the star child’s roar, countless shadows appeared in various corners of space, as if all the deities and devils in the entire universe had arrived at the same time.

They were as magnificent as mountains and as boundless as oceans. The seven Cultivators were completely overpowered in front of them.

The billions of shadows formed billions of crazily growing trees, which constituted a dark, cold forest that occupied the entire universe.

“Do you see it? The cold universe is a dark forest. If you want to survive, you must abide by the cruelest rules!

“The strong prey on the weak, and only the fittest survive. In order to be stronger, leniency, moral, pity… Everything can be abandoned. Everything must be abandoned!

“This is evolution, just like the fish changing into amphibians by abandoning their bladders and fins after they climbed onto land!

“Evolution, evolution, evolution! Evolution is everything! You evolve, you survive; you don’t evolve, you die!”

Shua!

The thorns that pierced deep into the seven Cultivators’ bodies suddenly turned into black vipers that injected the venom into the depths of their souls incessantly.

The souls of the seven of them had all been suppressed, and they did not have the strength to struggle. The black venom even flowed out through their mouths, noses, eyes, and ears, forming a thin seal on the surface of their bodies.

Li Yao felt the fire of his soul becoming weaker and weaker, and his computational ability plummeted because of the corruption of the black venom. He even found himself agreeing with the star child’s principle from the bottom of his heart.

He does seem to have a point. We’ve been living in the remote area of the universe and never been through much trouble. That’s why we believe in protecting the weak.

If we had been living in a cruel world of bloody battles for ten thousand years, what would we have chosen in order to protect the civilization of mankind?

Li Yao suddenly shuddered coldly, realizing that he almost lost control over his mind.

No! No! No! A civilization where the majority of the people are sacrificed for the benefits of the strongest few is absolutely not the real civilization of mankind!

Li Yao wanted to shout, but the black venom filled his throat, and he could not say anything even after coughing for a long time.

“Do you see? I can easily suppress the souls of the seven of you with my strength and turn you into my obedient slaves!”

The star child suddenly stopped torturing them and said coldly, “Without you, I can still control the entire Flying Star Sector with the Grand Illusionary Soldiers. But if that is what I must do, a prolonged war will definitely be raised. The Flying Star Sector will be crippled, and billions of people might be killed.

“In order to maintain the full functionality of the Flying Star Sector, so that it can provide soldiers and resources for the imperium dutifully, I am not willing to do that.

“Also, I believe that you are not willing to see the Flying Star Sector plagued by warfare, either.

“So, I’m going to give you one final chance.

“The seven of you all boast tremendous influence in the Flying Star Sector. With your power and prestige, and together with the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, the Flying Star

Sector should be able to be conquered with no blood shed. You can run the world in the way that the imperium does.

“I know that you are too pigheaded, and you are absolutely not scared of death. However, you might want to consider the ordinary people even if you are not considering for yourselves.

“If you don’t resist and surrender nicely, the Flying Star Sector will retain part of its independency. In the future, when you become the real controllers of the Flying Star Sector, as long as you provide a certain number of soldiers and resources, the imperium will not meddle in the internal affairs of the Flying Star Sector. You will be able to shelter many people.

“By then, you can establish certain ‘reserves’ on some planets and migrate some of the ordinary people to those places where they will continue living their peaceful lives, if you think your hypocrisy and vanity can be satisfied in such a way.

“This is the greatest concession that the imperium can make!

“If you are determined to resist and refuse the generosity of the imperium, you will be considered enemies of the Imperium of True Human Beings and traitors of the civilization of mankind!

“The imperium has never shown mercy to the traitors of mankind!

“When the expedition army of the imperium arrives, the Flying Star Sector will be crushed. Not only will all the Cultivators be wiped out, the ordinary people will also be punished in the harshest of ways. They will be refined into the lowliest slaves and sent into the roughest resource planets in the edge of the imperium. They and their posterity will be forever doomed!

“Is that the future that you want?

“Is that the price you are willing to pay for your stubbornness?”

Luo Xingzi and the other Cultivators were all dumbfounded, unable to come up with any response.

They were definitely not scared of death, but if the Imperium of True Human Beings was really so strong, resistance would be meaningless. If anything, the ordinary people of the Flying Star Sector would only end in a more miserable situation.

It was definitely not the outcome that they were willing to accept.

The souls of Luo Xingzi and the rest of them shivered slightly. Gaps as thin as hairs appeared on them.

The black liquids took the opportunity to march deep into the souls of the six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, sabotaging and seizing control over them.

The six of them struggled helplessly as if they had been mired in a swamp.

Li Yao was the only one who gritted his teeth and managed to keep his head clear despite the corruption of the black venom.

He felt that something was off.

That’s not right. If the star child’s soul power is as strong as it appears to be, he could have suppressed us from the very beginning. Why did he waste so much time talking to us?

Or rather, if he is really so tough, there was no need for him to control Xiao Xuance to launch the so-called ‘New Era Plan’ at all. He could have found an excuse to concentrate all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the control room of the star brain on Heavenly Phantom before he launched mental attacks and brainwashed everybody. Would that not have been much more straightforward?

Something is wrong. Something is definitely wrong!

By logic, since he knows that we are all the most hardcore Cultivators and that our beliefs to protect the ordinary people were not formed yesterday, he must know that we are not likely to be persuaded by a few words of his. Then, there is no reason why he should describe the brutality of the Imperium of True Human Beings so elaborately!

Unless…

Li Yao suddenly thought of something. Unless he has been bluffing in order to make us overwhelmed by anxiety and dismay!

Yes. Yes. Up until now, everything is just this damn kid’s own story. The rise of the Imperium of True Human Beings, the control of the prosperous areas of the Star Ocean Imperium, countless Sectors bowing to the brilliance of the imperium… That’s all bulls*it. All the claims are not supported by any proof!

Is he really so strong?

We have six Cultivators in the Nascent Soul Stage here. Together with my soul, it’s seven versus one. Even though the soul of the star child used to be a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator, he might not be able to suppress all of us right now!

Don’t forget that he has to spend a lot of computational ability controlling tens of thousands of Grand Illusionary Soldiers and fighting against the star spirits!

Right, the star spirits!

The five star spirits must be doing the best they can outside right now!

All things considered, the star child is definitely not as strong as he appears to be. That’s why he has been exaggerating the invincibility and the horror of the Imperium of True Human Beings. He means to scare us and shake the stability of our souls!

In mental confrontations, the solidness of the souls was very important, but what mattered more was the determination and the fighting will!

The source of strong determination and fighting will was a firm belief!

When two Cultivators of a similar level were engaged in a mental battle, their beliefs could not be more important.

The Cultivator with a firmer belief was more likely to secure the final victory!

Whether a belief was firm or not in many cases depended on the ‘facts’ that the two parties believed in.

For example, if a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator launched a mental attack against a Refinement Stage Cultivator and forced him to believe that ‘the sun is square’, it would be quite an easy task.

But if the two parties were both in the Nascent Soul Stage, with one of them believing that ‘the sun is round’ while the other accepting ‘the sun is square’ to be true, the former would definitely secure the victory when their beliefs collided in a mental war.

Since the very beginning, the star child has been expounding on the ‘opinion’ that the Imperium of True Human Beings is invincible and that there is nothing we can do to stop it. He has turned the ‘opinion’ into a ‘fact’ without us knowing!

Disturbed by such false facts, our beliefs are being shaken. We do not have faith in ourselves anymore. How can we expect to defeat him?

The new discovery greatly refreshed Li Yao.

However, his beliefs were not getting any firmer because of the new discovery, because everything was just his speculation. He did not have any evidence to prove that the star child was lying.

No solid proof, no firm belief. And without a firm belief, he could not utilize the full strength of his soul!

What do I do? Li Yao was anxious.

The star child held the advantage. The palace of his mind was already indestructible. Unless he found solid evidence, Li Yao could not even completely convince himself, much less wake up the six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators to fight against the star child together!

“If you are still not willing to give up, I might just as well give you an even more desperate message.”

Deep inside the body of debris, the soul of the star child slightly shivered, indicating that it was a bit unstable, too.

There was a hint of unpredictable earnestness in the indifferent voice, as the star child said, “The imperium has almost recovered all the Sectors habituated by human beings after a thousand years of expansion.

“Many Sectors were extremely harsh environments. The experts there had abandoned the idiotic ideology of protecting the weak a long time ago. When the army of the imperium appeared, they joined us without the slightest resistance.

“Those Sectors too foolish to shift from the path of the Cultivators have almost all been destroyed because they could not adapt themselves to the competition in the dark forest. The lucky survivors are merely breathing their last breath right now.

“You are the last Cultivators in the dark forest.

“Hehe. In the cold, boundless universe, you fools are fighting on your own.”

Chapter 811 - You Got Me!

“What?”

Harassed by the black venom, the souls of the six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were significantly weakened, and their computational ability had hit rock bottom. Besides, they accepted that the Imperium of True Human Beings was a powerful nation from the beginning and, therefore, believed the star child’s last statement without being able to judge it at all.

The statement was the straw that broke the camel’s back. The souls of the six of them were pressed down and slid toward doom.

In the middle of the black venom, the flickering fire of souls was moaning desperately.

“We are… the last Cultivators?

“So many Sectors have embarked on the cruel, survival-of-the-fittest path?

“We are the only survivors. We are alone in the dark forest!”

The struggles of their souls grew feebler and feebler, and their bodies, which were wreathed by the venom, turned rigid and stiffened. Starting from their fingers and toes, they slowly became black statues.

But deep inside Li Yao’s soul, a fire was bouncing more and more fiercely and crazily!

He stared the star child in the eyes like a gambler who was going to win everything or lose everything.

The loophole had appeared, but the loophole was not big enough for him to crush the star child in one shot.

He had to rip open an even larger loophole and boost the confidence of the six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators with undeniable facts by unveiling the real face of the star child and the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“Hahahaha. Hahahahahahaha!”

Li Yao suddenly burst into crazy laughter. Even the stars in the universe were somewhat shocked by the madness. The black venom that stuffed his throat was blown away by the laughter.

He burnt his life and soul without a care. Finally, he regained the ability to yell and shout!

The star child looked at him peacefully, as if he had known that the man had prepared other tricks.

“Fellow Cultivators, do not believe what he just said. He was lying!” Li Yao shouted desperately. “In the prime years of the Star Ocean Imperium, the civilization of mankind extended to thousands of Sectors. How could the Imperium of True Human Beings have conquered so many worlds within only a thousand years?

“Let me tell you… a piece of top confidential information!

“In fact, there is an enormous observatory below Spider Den that boasts advanced technology and allows the user to communicate with other Sectors!

“Over the past five years, I stayed below the surface of Spider Den because I was looking for other Sectors through the underground observatory!

“Besides, after five years, I’ve successfully discovered three Sectors, namely the Rising Sun Sector, the Black Moon Sector, and the Heaven’s Origin Sector! The three Sectors are still guarded by Cultivators. There are no Immortal Cultivators, much less traces of the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“So, the only conclusion is that the star child has been lying!”

“That is—”

The soul power of the two parties was very close to each other. Therefore, the mental confrontation was a confrontation of will and belief!

Li Yao’s confident and convincing declaration somewhat restored part of the belief in the six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. The black venom that surrounded them faded away a little bit.

“Believe me!” Li Yao gnashed his teeth. “Even if the universe is truly a dark forest, even if countless Sectors have been conquered by the Imperium of True Human Beings, the Flying Star Sector is definitely not fighting alone. There are bound to be other Sectors that persist in the path of the Cultivators and will fight side by side with us!”

Zhi! Zhi! Zhi! Zhi!

The black venom on the six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators’ body screamed miserably. Like thorns that were being burnt, they turned into ash and quickly dispersed!

However, when the six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators recovered part of their computational ability, they immediately recognized that Li Yao’s words were rather groundless and lacked solid proof.

“Hehe. Hehehehe.”

Behind the debris of countless starships, the fire of the star child’s soul grew weaker and weaker, too.

Li Yao was quite right. The star child was indeed not strong enough to suppress six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and one in the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage simultaneously.

He had gone through all the trouble to build the mind palace, render so many deities and devils, and elaborate on the formidability and horror of the Imperium of True Human Beings at a huge consumption of computational ability for the sole purpose of shaking the belief of the seven of them.

Now that he was about to succeed, naturally, he would not allow Li Yao to sabotage his endeavor at the last moment!

The star child smiled casually and talked in a matter-of-fact tone. “Li Yao, in only seven years, you’ve grown from a Mr. Nobody into a top-tier expert and now control one of the most important forces of the Flying Star Sector. You are indeed not easy to deal with.

“No wonder nobody saw through you when you pretended to be Bai Xinghe for an entire month. That is because you are as cunning and foxy as him!

“You are doomed to failure right now, and you are dreaming to reverse the situation by bluffing?”

Li Yao swallowed hard and roared drily, “I have indeed found the Rising Sun Sector, the Black Moon Sector, and the Heaven’s Origin Sector. You must believe me, Fellow Cultivators!”

The souls of the six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were flickering and fluctuating. They were like the candles in the wind and seemed like they could perish at any moment.

The black venom came back again and gnawed at their souls like thousands of snakes.

Of course, they wanted to believe in Li Yao, but honestly speaking… his declaration seemed to be made up randomly, because there were too many loopholes!

The star child was amused and said calmly, “Now that you are not willing to give up, allow me to point out the loopholes in your statement.

“Firstly, it is true that there is an ancient observatory below Spider Den’s surface, but according to the files of the Imperium of True Human Beings, the observatory was built by Liu the Prier, an ancient scholar whose main research field was the apocalypses.

“Liu the Prier was the first to come up with the Dark Forest Theory. He is quite famous in the Imperium of True Human Beings, too. We all know a thing or two about his life story. We are aware that he once built an observatory in his hometown, but the purpose of the observatory was not to communicate with other Sectors but to study the apocalypses.

“Therefore, even if you were fortunate enough to find the observatory, and even if it hasn’t been ruined by the passage of time, it is impossible for you to have reached out to other Sectors with the observatory!

“Besides, if you had talked to other Sectors, there would have been very intense spiritual waves.

“But the Immortal Cultivators on Spider Den detected no anomalies!

“Therefore, I assume that you might’ve indeed found the ancient observatory, but the observatory must’ve been abandoned a long time ago, right?

“You found the names of several Sectors in the files stored in the observatory at best, and you are hoping to bluff me now that you are in peril!

“But you are very unlucky.”

The star child smiled and said, “Rising Sun, Black Moon, and Heaven’s Origin. The three Sectors you just mentioned were discovered by the imperium a long time ago.”

“How—how could you?” Li Yao’s voice was shivering.

The star child continued. “554 years ago, the Imperium of True Human Beings discovered the Black Moon Sector. It was taken into the territory of the imperium with no blood shed.

“434 years ago, the coordinates of the Rising Sun Sector were determined by the imperium. There were some obstinate Cultivators in this world, but after the army of the imperium was sent out, the Rising Sun Sector was conquered only three years later.

“As for the Heaven’s Origin Sector…”

The star child paused for a moment and said, “Let me see. It was a small, barren Sector at the edge of the Star Ocean Imperium, wasn’t it? The Imperium of True Human Beings discovered the Heaven’s Origin Sector 219 years ago, but the Sector had been completely wrecked with no living creatures left. It was not worth developing at all. Therefore, it was abandoned by the imperium.

“Well—”

Li Yao did not know what to do and was lost for words.

The star child burst into laughter. “So, just admit it. You were lying!

“You didn’t reach out to the Rising Sun Sector, the Black Moon Sector, or the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Everything was made up by you just now!

“Two of the three worlds are now governed by the Immortal Cultivators, and the last one has been forsaken. You are the last Cultivators!”

The souls of the six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were shaking violently.

“Li Yao, were you really lying? Did you not find any new Sectors?”

Li Yao was quiet for a long time. Like a balloon that had just been pierced through, he gradually collapsed and mumbled, “You are good. Even such a neat story has been seen through. There’s nothing I can do now…”

His words cast the six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators into absolute desperation. They could not even move their fingers.

The star child chuckled. “Now, have you realized the invincibility of the imperium?”

Countless tentacles suddenly expanded, and the black venom poured into the bodies of the seven Cultivators nonstop!

Li Yao was like a puppet whose string had been cut off. He stood in a daze and simply allowed the black venom to swallow him and turn him into a giant, black cocoon.

Sensing the fear and desperation of the seven Cultivators, the star child’s soul was burning furiously again. It was even stronger and solider than in the beginning!

Right now, the belief of the seven Cultivators had been completely suppressed. Nothing could stop the true path of immortality from transforming the world now!

However—

The star child suddenly sensed that, inside the black cocoon that wreathed Li Yao, there was a tiny bit of ‘belief’ that was too hard to be swallowed or digested.

“What is that?”

The star child was baffled. He had discredited Li Yao’s story. Why was there such a firm belief deep inside Li Yao’s soul?

Li Yao’s somewhat weird voice echoed inside the black cocoon. “Wait. I have one last question!

“Now that the Imperium of True Human Beings is really strong, if you want me to submit to the imperium and become an Immortal Cultivator, it is not undoable in principle.

“However, I want to make sure of something one last time. Did the Imperium of True Human Beings discover the Heaven’s Origin Sector to be a wasteland 219 years ago?”

The star child was dazed for a moment. He intuitionally felt that it was a tricky question.

However, he had made the declaration before. His suppression over the seven Cultivators was solely based on the validness of his words. If he hesitated right now and the seven Cultivators sensed his weakness, he would be done for!

Therefore, the star child simply said coldly, “That’s right. How could there be any tinder of civilization on a desolate, sterile Sector at the edge of the universe that had been floating alone for ten thousand years?”

“Okay.” Li Yao could not help but chuckle. “If so, I have no further questions!”

Chapter 812 - This Is the Future!

In a moment, the firm belief expanded into a furious tornado. Before the star child was able to do anything, the black cocoon had been ripped apart by hundreds of golden rays of light from the inside.

The hundreds of tentacles that pierced deep into Li Yao’s soul all fell into Li Yao’s control. They turned from black into gold and went backwards, creating a hole hundreds of meters in diameter on the body of the star child!

“It’s—It’s impossible!” Looking at Li Yao, who was glowing dazzlingly like a supernova outbreak, the star child was dumbfounded. “Why? Your lie has been seen through, so why is your belief getting stronger, firmer, and more and more unshakable?”

The six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators’ minds were in chaos, and they were about to surrender, but they sensed the unmistakable belief emitting from Li Yao’s body, too, and opened their eyes in confusion.

No sound could be heard in the vacuum of the universe, but this place was not the real universe; it was the star child’s mind palace.

Therefore, as Li Yao’s body expanded, the earsplitting battle hymn that had been resounding inside his brain raged in the boundless universe unstoppably!

Billions of stars with dazzling brilliance rushed to Li Yao from various directions, turning into furious flames and putting a brand-new crystal suit on him. His body size was expanding unbelievably.

A hundred meters, five hundred meters, a thousand meters!

Affected by Li Yao's soaring fighting will, the debris of crystal warships covering the star child was crumbling and collapsing. The iron giant continually decreased in size!

The disparity in size between the two parties was reducing quickly!

“Are you curious why my belief is so firm?”

Li Yao was smiling inside the armor of stars. A saber hundreds of meters long was condensed with the flames of stars in his hand, whose edge was extending forward as more and more stars joined it.

The saber tore apart the universe and pointed at the star child, while Li Yao said, “It's simple; what has been supporting me is not just a belief!

“Like I said just now, even if the universe is nothing more than a cold, cruel dark forest, even if the Imperium of True Human Beings reigned by the Immortal Cultivators has really conquered most of the Sectors habituated by mankind, it does not mean that the Flying Star Sector is the last Sector that still persists in the path of the Cultivators!

“I believe that in the war against the Immortal Cultivators, the Imperium of True Human Beings, and the dark forest, the Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector are definitely not fighting alone. No matter what, the Cultivators from at least another Sector have been fighting side by side with them at the risk of their own lives!

“The Flying Star Sector is never alone!

“This is both my belief and the fact that is happening right before you the idiot’s eyes!”

As the universe-shaking roars echoed, the aura on the saber in Li Yao’s hand had extended to thousands of meters. He slashed at the star child unstoppably!

“Ahhhh!”

The star child’s right arm was formed by the debris of more than ten crystal warships. Now, it was further compressed into a longsword that was surrounded by black gas. The blade managed to block Li Yao’s saber of stars. The blast resulting from the collision of the two weapons was no less intimidating than the most chaotic cosmic storm!

The star child’s voice sounded more anxious than ever. “Who—who are you exactly?”

Li Yao burst into laughter. “I am Li Yao. Vulture is my nickname, and the Heaven’s Origin Sector is my home!”

“The Heaven’s Origin Sector is your home?”

The star child was dumbfounded. His computational ability was mired in a chaotic swirl and could not maintain the solidness of his soul any longer. The black longsword formed by his right arm was chopped in half by Li Yao’s saber of stars. However, the saber did not stop there and continued pushing toward the star child’s chest, until the enormous face on the chest was slashed apart, too!

The golden aura of the saber even penetrated through the star child’s body and blossomed out of his back!

“The Heaven’s Origin Sector is your home?”

The six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector exclaimed in shock, too. Although they did not know exactly what had happened, their beliefs were firmed again, motivated by Li Yao’s soaring fighting will. They were ready to fight one more time!

“My Fellow Cultivators here must have investigated my background earlier. You must have been curious about how a Mr. Nobody with no background could show such weird refining arts in the Skyhill Sword Seminar all of a sudden, fight the notorious space pirates in the Iron Plateau Space Zone, and even become the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, right?

“It’s simple. Of course, I have my own masters and legacies. However they are not rooted in the Flying Star Sector but in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, a whole different world!

“Yes. The Heaven’s Origin Sector, which, according to what the guy just said, was a wasteland when it was discovered by the Imperium of True Human Beings two hundred years ago!”

The six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators could not have been more shocked!

The wound on the star child’s chest was almost a thousand meters long. Countless crystal warships were wriggling in it but could not heal it. Like a bottomless gorge, the wound added to the ugliness of the enormous face. “It’s impossible. You are lying. What evidence have you got?”

Li Yao laughed. He pointed the saber in his right hand at the star child, and he touched the center of his eyebrow with his left index finger and middle finger. He said, “Evidence?

“I am the evidence!

“Star Child No.19, you said just now that the Heaven’s Origin Sector had been desolate since more than two hundred years ago.

“Now, allow me to burn my life and soul and release my memory pieces so that you can see what the real Heaven’s Origin Sector looks like!

“I believe that every one of you knows what a high demand building a vivid, vast world places on one’s computational ability. If the Heaven’s Origin Sector does not exist, with the computational ability of the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage, there is no way that I can make up so many memories all at once so quickly!

“Take a look. This is my hometown, the Heaven’s Origin Sector!”

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

From the center of Li Yao’s soul, golden streams of information rushed out and surged into overwhelming images in the sea of stars, illuminating the dark forest made of the deities and devils of the universe.

They were all the memories that he remembered most clearly!

The first picture was him in the War Museum of the Star Glory Federation. He watched countless Cultivators marching toward the army of the demon race on their starships, especially the scene where Distant Expanse, the flagship of the Cultivators, crashed into Heaven’s Field, the flagship of the demon race, in the battle that marked the foundation of the Star Glory Federation.

Above the clouds that were dyed red by blood, the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag, the national flag of the federation, was fluttering in the wind!

The second picture was the scene where seven weak Cultivators sacrificed themselves against overwhelming Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes to buy more time for the ordinary people on the crystal train to the Grand Desolate War Institution.

The third picture was in the Battle of Seven Cities. While countless ordinary people ran away from their homes that were caught in the flames of war, teams of Cultivators and federal soldiers were marching onto the perilous battlefield against the current!

The fourth picture was on Boneyard. Li Yao, Ding Lingdang, and the other Cultivators were fighting the squad of the demon race and Skeleton Dragon. In the end, Li Yao activated the drill of mystic rays of Sparkle and teleported himself as well as Skeleton Dragon to an unknown world!

Other than the four enormous pictures, there were thousands of smaller, scattered pictures. They were not relatively unimportant memory pieces, but the social form, customs, and history of the Heaven’s Origin Sector were reflected in them, too.

Such a life-like world was too complicated and vivid to be constructed in the spur of the moment.

Along with the pictures were roars each higher than the last.

“Cultivators are the sabers of the civilization of mankind!”

“Dispelling evil is our responsivity. Pests, prepare to die!”

“Get the hell out of here. Don’t stand in my way while I’m busy saving the world!”

“Cultivate for the rise of the federation!”

“Cultivators are fearless of death. Those who fear death will never be Cultivators!”

“Cultivators are here!”

The pictures and the voices dazzled the six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, whose souls were burning furiously!

The black venom all over their bodies was burnt to ash and obliterated after screams.

Their souls condensed into the shape of human beings. Glamorous crystal suits that looked like diamonds and coral, which could never appear in reality, were growing crazily on their bodies, making their size expand continuously. They looked like giants that were slowly rising from an abyss!

“It’s true. Li Yao was speaking a truth. There is at least one world other than the Flying Star Sector that is still guarded by the Cultivators.”

“Cultivators are here… It’s been a long time since I last heard such a refreshing declaration!”

“Although it is a small Sector that only has one space zone and insufficient resources, it has a very stable planet that is habituated by tens of billions of people. The war potential is quite huge. The Cultivation level is not low, either. Some of their technology is even more advanced than that of the Flying Star Sector!

“The Flying Star Sector is vast and unpopulated. All the citizens are dispersed.

“The Heaven’s Origin Sector is small and has a huge population. The people are highly concentrated. They also have a very strong army that maximizes the combat ability of the ordinary people in groups!”

“The two Sectors are quite complementary!”

“The Star Glory Federation that governs the Heaven’s Origin Sector has existed for five hundred years, but the star child claimed that it was a wasteland two hundred years ago?”

“He was lying!”

“If he was lying about the Heaven’s Origin Sector, who knows whether or not his stories about the Rising Sun Sector and the Black Moon Sector were true?”

“Is the Imperium of True Human Beings really as strong and invincible as he described to be? Has it really governed both of the Sectors of mankind?”

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were all smart and determined people. Just now, their souls had been suppressed by the star child, and their computational ability had plummeted. That was why they had not been thinking too clearly.

Now that Li Yao had pointed out a loophole in the star child’s lie with undeniable facts, it was like a hole being dug on an indestructible dam.

A collapse was about to happen!

The mind palace built by the star child started shaking. The deities and devils that constituted the dark forest crumbled and dispersed one after another!

“Do you see it, Star Child No.19? This is my world!”

Li Yao burst into laughter. Every picture of his memory was burning in golden flames. They turned into flying fire birds and swept across the entire dark forest, scorching the illusions of the deities and devils who were all screaming miserably. In the end, they flew to Li Yao one by one and melted into a pair of golden wings thousands of meters long!

“You kept saying that only by removing the humanity and sacrificing the ordinary people in the cruel dark forest will the civilization of mankind have a future.

“The Heaven’s Origin Sector has been faced with serious threats all the time, but we have never forgotten what we fought for in the beginning and what we are dying to protect!

“Open your goddamn eyes and watch carefully. This is the future of the civilization of mankind!”

Chapter 813 - Collision of Souls!

Every word Li Yao roared raised a tide in the dead sea of stars along with the high-pitched drumming at the center of his soul.

Every feather on the golden wings turned into a minor power rune array. Together, the power rune arrays spurted dazzling sparks that reached hundreds of kilometers away, making him look like a rushing meteor shower coming from the end of the endless universe!

Boosted by the countless power rune arrays, Li Yao’s speed was accelerated to the maximum instantly. His soul and his saber of stars melded into one as he stabbed the hideous face on the chest of the star child.

Chi!

Like a burning blade stabbing snow, all the debris of starships on the star child’s chest was melted, vaporized, and driven apart!

The enormous face grimaced, apparently in excruciating pain.

Li Yao’s soul twisted crazily. The wound soon turned into an enormous swirl that gradually expanded to the star child’s entire body, mincing the thousands of crystal warships that made up the body into smithereens!

“Ahhh!”

The star child screamed miserably. The real face of his soul was exposed. It was waving hundreds of thick tentacles like a gargantuan, mutated octopus.

The illusions of the deities and devils in the universe all crowded to him and melted into his body.

After every illusion was absorbed, his soul grew stronger, and his tentacles became thicker. Dense sucking discs, fangs, thorns, and hooks appeared on the tentacles, too. The front ends of many tentacles were opening like blossoming flowers, making them look like bloody mouths.

A soul in the shape of a purple octopus almost ten thousand meters tall versus golden wings that were equally tall!

The universe was the battlefield, the stars were their weapons, the galaxy turned into sabers and swords, and their roars became the daunting cosmic storms!

“Even if there are still Cultivators in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, you are just lucky dogs below the saber of the imperium. None of you ants are going to stop the march of the imperium however many of you there are!” the star child roared.

His hundreds of tentacles extended infinitely and dragged the debris of crystal warships close again. They then crushed and pressed the crystal warships brutally, turning them into crystal bombs that boasted highly-compressed spiritual energy and were extremely unstable. The bombs made of crystal warships were then tossed at Li Yao!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Li Yao was swallowed by countless destructive walls of fire, but in only 0.01 seconds, he had broken through the ocean of fire and sprinted forward. His soul also released thousands of threads and attracted all the crystal warships nearby to him, before he compressed them into giant golden feathers, each of which was dozens of meters long with delicate spiritual stripes on the surface and flames of spiritual energy dancing on them.

BAM!

The two immense souls that were Li Yao and the star child had a head-on clash!

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

Hundreds of purple tentacles tied Li Yao up. The thorns and the hooks trapped him in excruciating pain, while the sucking disc was absorbing his soul power crazily!

Li Yao gritted his teeth, but he could not free himself from them for the moment.

The star child burst into laughter, only to be interrupted by an overwhelming storm of debris. The giant face of the octopus was now riddled with holes.

It was Luo Xingzi and the other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators!

Their souls had expanded to more than a thousand meters, too, while they attacked the raging monstrous octopus!

“Li Yao, we are here!”

“Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector will fight side by side and make our own path in the dark forest!”

When Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were infuriated, the world could be overturned. Right now, the entire mind palace was shaking violently. Cracks were appearing at the end of the deep, dark universe, expanding quickly like spider webs. The background was falling apart, only to reveal the black chaos behind!

Li Yao’s eyes were burning. Feathers were flying crazily and cutting the star child’s tentacles and body like thousands of golden daggers.

“You pushed me to this!”

The star child was more than exasperated. His soul expanded quickly. More tentacles were protruding out of his round body, making him look even more hideous and bloodthirsty.

“I meant to keep you alive so that you can help stabilize the situation of the Flying Star Sector and contribute to the imperium.

“But since you are too obstinate, you’ve left me no choice except to eradicate your souls!”

Luo Xingzi gasped. “How could it be? His soul power is still soaring incessantly. Was he not doing his best a moment ago?”

“This is his last shot!” Li Yao shouted. “He must’ve relinquished the control over most of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers and the space gate and shifted all his computational ability to this mind place!

“As long as we can survive the attack, he will be doomed!”

The star child grinned hideously. Thousands of tentacles were slithering around him like thousands of vipers. Their sharp ends aimed at the seven of them at the same time, before bloody mouths were split apart on them.

“Li Yao, you are indeed very smart!

“However, how will you survive the attack?”

…

In the real world, at the periphery of the Spider Den Space Zone, the star beacons on the space gate, which was now in a lozenge shape, were being illuminated one by one. They were blinking in a mysterious rhythm. Their invisible brilliance was transmitting short messages to billions of lightyears away through the four-dimensional space.

70% of the star beacons had been illuminated. The blinking mystic rays would soon constitute a complete pattern and send out the precise coordinates of the Flying Star Sector.

But the process came to an abrupt halt.

In the meantime, most of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers were attacking the hall of the Meeting of the Next Millennium and the important warehouses of magical equipment, only to calm down weirdly and simultaneously enter the idle mode again.

The Cultivators were all breathing hard in confusion, not entirely recovered from their fear.

The star child had abandoned its control of the space gate and most of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers temporarily. He only kept a tiny portion of them to protect his real body.

In such a case, he would be able to concentrate most of computational ability on Li Yao and the rest of the Cultivators!

Inside the control room of the star brain, the real bodies of Li Yao and the other Cultivators were floating in the middle of the ever-changing golden brain dragged by an invisible force. Their four limbs dangled down helplessly as if they were in a deep coma. Their occasionally cramping hands and feet were the only sign that they were still alive.

The computation rune arrays and processing chips nearby, which looked like skyscrapers, were all emitting flashing red lights. The cooling rune arrays were also functioning at the highest efficiency in hissing sounds, too. Frost and fog were being spurted out nonstop.

Even so, some of the rune arrays were still exploding every now and then.

The star brain had reached its limits, too.

At this moment, in an inconspicuous corner of the ‘skyscrapers’, five clusters of round, fat liquid metal were rippling on the surface while they communicated with each other in a secret way.

“What’s going on? Why has the outer defense of the star brain dropped by 95%?”

“Most of the defensive barriers have malfunctioned!”

“The Grand Illusionary Soldiers guarding the star brain have mostly entered the idle mode. There are barely any defenses right now!”

“Is it a trap?”

Professor Mo Xuan made the call. “We cannot hesitate anymore. It is now or never. We will start the invasion immediately!”

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

The five clusters of liquid metal were like all-pervasive mercury and snuck to the inside of the brain. They looked for the most critical computational rune arrays and processing chips before they devoured and sabotaged the units.

“Hiss. Such high computational ability. What a delicious meal!”

“Wow. I have never seen the structures or circuits of such processing chips. They are far more advanced than the technology of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector. I must devour them now so that I will be able to simulate them virtually!”

“Damn. Those few rune arrays are not edible. We will destroy them, then!”

The five star spirits were like mice that had fallen into a tank of rice. They moved anywhere they wanted without being stopped at all, enjoying the most scrumptious meal of their lives!

…

Deep inside the star brain, in the middle of the mind place, the enormous soul of the star child had completely overwhelmed those of the seven Cultivators. Thousands of tentacles tied them up like vipers and thorns. The sucking discs continued absorbing their soul power, while the fangs injected endless fear into the depths of their souls.

“He—he is too strong. His real ‘star brain’ is the most advanced super crystal processor of the Flying Star Sector. It is also supported by the spiritual energy generated by the main power rune array of Heavenly Phantom. We are no match for him!”

“Don’t waver. Such a consumption rate must be a heavy burden for him too. It all depends on which of the two parties is more tenacious!”

“Ahhh!”

The souls of the seven Cultivators were being savaged by the star child. They were about to collapse at any point!

“Hahahahahahaha!” The star child laughed crazily. “Do you regret it now? It’s too late!

“No. I’m not going to let you die now. That would be too easy a death for you!

“I will keep part of your consciousness. You will see the outcome of the Flying Star Sector in person. You will watch as the Flying Star Sector is drowned in an ocean of flames and everybody ends up as the most humble slaves and test subjects of the imperium!

“Right. There’s also the Heaven’s Origin Sector! A population of tens of billions? Well, well, well. Isn’t it very nice? You will be the best fuel for the torch of our civilization!”

Illusions appeared behind the star child again. Countless pictures emerged in which the ordinary people were mining in the rough resource planets or being tested on with new Cultivation arts and techniques in the laboratories until they were tortured to death.

The six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators gritted their teeth in fury and sorrow. Affected by the prospect of such misery, their souls were shaken again.

However, Li Yao was emotionless. There was nothing but coldness in his eyes. Even the last bit of redness in the deepest part of his eyes had almost frozen into red crystals now right.

He was waiting for the last opportunity.

Laugh as you will now. I’m indeed no match for you.

But I’m not fighting alone!

I believe that Professor Mo Xuan must be fighting together with me from the outside in a certain way!

Keep it up. Keep it up and never give up. A miracle is going to occur!

Suppressed by the star child, Li Yao’s soul was becoming more and more lackluster. The edge of every feather was enshrouded in a layer of black venom.

The six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were all struggling hard, too. They could not utter any sounds except grunts.

The star child’s hideous laughter grew more and more earsplitting. It replaced the drumming from the center of Li Yao’s soul and seemed to fill the entire universe.

Suddenly—

The star child’s hideous laughter came to an abrupt end, substituted by an exclamation.

Five wriggling lumps suddenly protruded on his body, as if something was trying to rush out of his body!

Chi!

Finally, the five lumps all broke free. Five fat, golden silkworms crawled out of his body and devoured his soul and computational ability as if they were chomping on mulberry leaves!

They were the projections of Professor Mo Xuan and the other star spirits in the mind palace!

Chapter 814 - Vulture Plan!

“What is this? A new virus?”

The star child had never expected that five bugs would crawl out of his soul at the crucial moment. Moreover, they seemed to be absorbing his computational ability in a weird way!

The star child was greatly shocked. He could only turn around and focus tremendous computational ability on the five star spirits.

But the star spirits were not simply viruses. They were attacking the computational rune arrays and the processing chips of the star brain. When the body was gone, there would be nowhere that a soul could place itself in. They had grabbed the star child’s neck!

Besides, now that most of his computation ability had been summoned to deal with the five star spirits, the star child was no longer able to suppress Li Yao and all the other Cultivators.

Shua! Shua! Shua!

After flashes of sabers and swords, countless tentacles were broken off and burnt into ash.

Li Yao and his companions broke out of the siege again!

“Impossible!”

The star child watched black venom spurting out of the broken tentacles, unable to do anything about it. He was shivering unnaturally like a seriously deformed heart.

Because of the continuous gnawing of the five gold silkworms, his soul could not be kept stable any longer. The hundreds of tentacles all got out of his control and straightened up. The blood mouths that looked like flowers at the front end of the tentacles were all writhing in pain.

The fangs broke off, the thorns disappeared, the sucking discs dried up, and the black aura vanished. The dented skin became smooth again. The front ends of the tentacles turned from bloody mouths into baby faces!

The babies were all crying. They struggled to get away from the tentacles and fled like small tadpoles with long tails.

As the tentacles broke off and fled, the soul of the star child withered and shrank, with wrinkles all over the surface. Giant holes were even appearing in many places, as if he were a rotten jellyfish.

“They are the souls of the babies that were forced into his soul!”

Li Yao quickly realized what was happening.

“The star child was refined by combining the soul of a high-level Immortal Cultivator and those of hundreds of babies.

“In the past, when the soul of the Immortal Cultivator was powerful enough, he could suppress the souls of the hundreds of babies and drive them at his own will.

“But now that his soul power is declining, he is no longer able to control the souls of the innocent babies!

“This is our best chance!” Li Yao roared.

The wings on his back extended like two burning suns until they were almost ten thousand meters away!

Then, the two wings of flames tied him up and turned him into an enormous drill of flames, which darted at the core of the star child’s soul brutally!

“Don’t you see? You’ve been abandoned by the future of mankind!

“Go to hell with your imperium!”

All of Li Yao’s soul power was condensed into the drill and pierced through the star child’s body!

BOOM! CRACK!

In that moment, deafening thunders were echoing in every corner of the mind palace. Lightning was splitting apart the entire universe. The illusions of the deities and the devils were burnt into ash!

The mind palace was like a tower of sand faced with an overwhelming tsunami. It was sliding to the inevitable doom amid the earsplitting sound of tides!

“Ahhh!” the star child cried miserably. Without the nourishment of the souls of hundreds of babies, he appeared extremely old like the dried bones in a tomb or a zombie that had died centuries ago. In the radiating sunlight, he turned into streaks of black smoke, dispersing, vaporizing, and disintegrating!

“Just wait for it!” Pitiful screams came over from the black smoke that was dashing everywhere like a headless chicken.

“I’ve sent 70% of the coordinates of the Flying Star Sector to the imperium. The imperium will find you sooner or later!

“Even though the coordinates are incomplete, the best you can do is survive another two hundred years!

“In two hundred years, the expedition army of the imperium will come to this place and conquer both the Flying Star Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

“You have nowhere to run. You are doomed!”

Li Yao’s soul was reshaped into a human again. The thousands of golden feathers turned into dozens of tornadoes and slashed the running black smoke. He said, “Let your imperium bring it on. We will show them the real future of mankind ourselves!”

In the surging flames of spiritual energy, the black smoke was fading.

However, hundreds of streams of black smoke darted to Li Yao at a lightning-like speed and condensed behind him!

At this moment, the star child retracted all of his tentacles. There was only a giant, round body left. It was more like a combination of a jellyfish and a sea urchin than an octopus.

He wriggled crazily and giggled. “Die with me, Li Yao! Even if I cannot destroy all the Cultivators, I can at least turn you into a moron!”

“Not good!”

The six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the five star spirits all lost their cool, knowing that the star child was going to detonate his soul and perish together with Li Yao in his final bout of madness.

They all charged at Li Yao and the star child unhesitatingly without caring about their own lives.

But it was too late!

Hardly had they moved when the star child suddenly expanded into a black light ball that consumed Li Yao’s soul like a black sun after a series of miserable laughter!

The immense blast even blew the souls of the six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the five star spirits thousands of kilometers away. They failed to stabilize themselves for a long time.

At the same time, the mind palace completely collapsed. Everybody was forced back to reality and into their own bodies.

The six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators regained control over their bodies, only to discover that the phantom of the brain in midair was dispersing and flying high above the ‘shaft’ like burning butterflies.

But Li Yao was falling down, his head toward the ground.

Since their souls had just returned to their bodies, the six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were all stiff and could not help him. They could only watch Li Yao fall to the ground heavily.

“Li Yao!”

The five star spirits crawled out of the computational rune arrays and the processing chips, but they could not sense Li

Yao’s spiritual waves at all. For a moment, they also lost their cool.

In the depths of Li Yao’s brain, most of the star child’s soul power was transformed into the purest damage, attacking Li Yao’s soul like a black tide.

Under the strike of the star child, in the deepest part of Li Yao’s brain, a dark, red, lozenge-shaped crystal shivered for a moment and then broke apart!

…

The battle of Heavenly Saints City was finally over.

After the star child detonated his own soul, the star brain was completely taken over by the five star spirits, which meant that all the Grand Illusionary Soldiers and Heavenly Phantom were on the Cultivators’ side now.

The Immortal Cultivators had been few in number in the Flying Star Sector in the first place. Without the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, they could not stir any further trouble.

Yan Chihuo, Wu Mayan, and all the Cultivators who were caught in hard battles were sitting on the ground exhaustedly as they read the message from Heavenly Phantom quietly.

“Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector, maybe you don’t know what exactly happened yet.

“Today, we have witnessed the greatest insurgency in the history of the Flying Star Sector. The Immortal Cultivators, led by Xiao Xuance, the CEO of the Grand Illusionary Group, launched a sudden assault to us!

“Right now, the situation is under our control. We will tell everything exactly as it happened.

“However, before we begin, we would like to introduce a Cultivator from another Sector to you.

“His name is Li Yao.

“‘Vulture’ Li Yao, from the Heaven’s Origin Sector!”

…

Li Yao woke up.

He seemed to have had a very, very long and weird dream.

In the dream, he became a Cultivator who dominated the universe. He even left the Heaven’s Origin Sector for another bizarre world where he spent many thrilling days. He made the most trustworthy friends and defeated the most ferocious enemies.

Although the dream was mottled and blurred now, the passionate feeling was still lingering in his heart.

Soaked in sweat, he breathed hard. It took him a long time before he finally recalled who and where he was.

“This is the magical equipment graveyard, Lake Rusty, Floating Spear City, Star Glory Federation, and the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

“I am just a regular scavenger.”

…

Three months after the battle of Heavenly Saints City, in a hospital affiliated with Flying Star University, inside a confidential ward, Li Yao was floating in the middle of bright green medication drugs. His eyes were half closed, and his breath was feeble. Even his eyeballs had not moved for a long time.

“Doctor, is there no sign of him waking up at all?”

Mo Xuan, Luo Xingzi, Si Koulie, and many other people stood before the med bay, their eyebrows furrowed.

“Not yet.”

An experienced doctor whose beard and hair were both white sighed and said, “Fellow Cultivator Li Yao saved the Flying Star Sector. We have summoned the best doctors and Meditation Healers of the Flying Star Sector and brainstormed ideas.

“But his situation is very weird.

“The brainwaves in 99% of his head are dead. Logically, it means that his soul has perished, and he has been trapped in the most serious vegetative state. Even if he does wake up one day, he will be mentally retarded.

“However, one percent of the area in the deepest part of his brain is still active.

“This particular area is guarded by a very weird barrier. The best ten Meditation Healers worked together and failed to crack it. We do not know what is inside at all.

“The good news is that his body maintains a very high vitality and absorbs the spiritual energy inside the medication drugs automatically.

“Right now, the only thing we can do is wait. If a miracle happens, he might wake up tomorrow. Or maybe, he will not wake up ever again.”

…

BOOM!

A mountain of garbage collapsed next to him. Countless pieces of magical equipment fell toward him like an avalanche. Li Yao moved and laughed in the tide of rubbish like the most agile monkey.

He was lucky enough to have found a navigation chip of reasonable quality today. His stomach would be fed for the next three days.

However, he had to get rid of Fatty Leung and his gang first!

The weird dream occasionally occurred to him late at night and made his heart itch. He felt that this was not the life he desired and that he was destined to do something greater!

However, in the day, he had to struggle for survival every second. There was no time to think about the future anymore.

A dream was just a dream!

Better face reality!

…

Six months after the battle of Heavenly Saints City, Wu Mayan and Xie Anan stood before the med bay.

Wu Mayan had grown into a tall, strong, and handsome young man. Xie Anan was no longer a little girl and much more mature, too.

The two of them stuck their face to the glass so hard that their noses became meatballs.

“Master, we knew that you are very awesome, but we didn’t know that you were so awesome!

“Just wake up soon. There are a lot of things that we have to work on together!”

…

“Beat him!”

“F*ck. You dared to steal the Wild Wolves Gang’s possessions? You must’ve lived long enough!”

“Beat him! Beat him hard and bury him alive in the garbage mountain!”

Li Yao was losing consciousness. His eyes were covered in blood, and he had lost all sense of pain, or rather, every single one of his senses.

His limbs were twisted at weird angles, and he was thrown to the bottom of a garbage mountain like a soft starfish.

Above his head, several muscular men detonated the garbage mountain with crystal bombs while they laughed hideously.

Huala!

The overwhelming garbage drowned him.

He could not breathe. He could not resist. He could only allow the darkness and the blood to swallow him.

He had lost the will to resist, too. A voice seemed to be mumbling right beside his ears, “Just give up. What are you struggling for? Why live such a miserable life?

“Just give it up. Just sleep comfortably…”

Li Yao smiled wretchedly. His eyes gradually closed.

“Hehe. This is the inevitable outcome for a scavenger like me, isn’t it?

“There’s no way out. Struggling among piles of garbage every day, hungry and wounded. Maybe death is indeed more comfortable.

“It’s too painful. It’s too dark. I’m never going to get out.

“There is no need to struggle. All my effort was in vain. The Vulture Plan has failed. Just give it up…

“Wait!”

When Li Yao fully closed his eyes while he was murmuring to himself, the two words ‘Vulture Plan’ pierced the tiny bit of brightness that had been sealed for a long time in the deepest part of his soul!

Chapter 815 - One Year's Progress

Li Yao felt that a dark red bubble inside his brain had been pierced open. Endless information spurted out, only to turn into bright golden ash in the next second, dispersing like burnt butterflies.

He found himself in a hazy mist. Although he did feel that he had touched upon something, it all slipped through his fingers like sand.

The desperate screams turned into mumbles in the wind, and the unforgettable memories became scenes in a dream. In a trance, Li Yao seemed to see himself floating before a blue planet and roaring in a voice that he could not hear, “I’m not dead yet. The Vulture Plan has not failed! I will carry out the Vulture Plan even if I drift to the end of the universe!”

The declaration was like a spell that ripped apart the darkness and blood that were about to bury him.

BOOM!

The garbage mountain suddenly collapsed. Magical equipment debris was burning furiously and smashing against the ground. The scavengers, who were ferocious a moment ago, all covered their heads with their hands and ran away.

Li Yao slowly rose up and floated in midair, eyeing the surroundings coldly, with a scornful smile on the corner of his mouth.

Although he did not know what exactly the ‘Vulture Plan’ meant, the two words refreshed his soul and made him realize that this was a world of illusions.

“False. Everything is false. This is not the real world but the maze of my mind!

“My soul was attacked by the star child’s soul and has been trapped in this chaotic maze!

“Break now!” Li Yao bellowed.

He waved his right hand hard. The thousands of garbage mountains nearby all rose up into the midair, manipulated by a weird strength, before they exploded like thousands of bombs!

Pieces like shooting stars riddled the gray sky of this world with holes, revealing the obscure brightness beyond the dome.

The entire world was shaking. The sky was breaking and falling like glass. The earth was collapsing, and black smoke was running out. All the people turned into bloody brightness and vanished into thin air!

When the sky entire collapsed, Li Yao turned into a streak of golden brightness and soared up, breaking out of the cocoon!

Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum!

As if a giant, golden bell in the depths of his brain had been tolled, Li Yao felt like he had crossed a very, very long ivory pathway and then fallen into a bottomless abyss. In the end, after a while of uncontrollable shivering, his soul returned to his brain and gained control over his body again!

“This is—”

Li Yao found himself soaked in a pool of warm medication drugs. Many doctors in white robes were observing him with great interest.

Behind the crowd, Wu Mayan and Xie Anan were standing on their tiptoes and looking at him in anxiety.

Li Yao smiled. A lot of bubbles popped up in the medication drugs. With a telepathic thought, he sent a message to Wu Mayan and Xie Anan.

“I’m back!”

…

An hour later, after a series of body examinations, Li Yao chatted with his two disciples while he warmed himself up in the rehabilitation room.

“Master, that was really incredible of you. I thought that you were awesome enough to beat Yan Xibei and Xiao Xuance. I didn’t know that you’d slain a deadly demon that was unparalleled forty thousand years ago when you were only in the Building Foundation Stage!”

Wu Mayan grimaced and shouted in an exaggerated tone. “You are definitely the legend of legends!”

Li Yao chuckled, somewhat blushing.

When he released his memory pieces in the star brain, he had seen the day coming.

Right now, although the star child and Xiao Xuance had both been eliminated, the shadow of the Imperium of True Human Beings still loomed over all the Cultivators' heads. A full cooperation between the Flying Star Sector and the Heaven's Origin Sector was necessary. Naturally, all information would be released to public. There was no need for him to conceal his identity right now.

"You've been in a coma for an entire year. In the past three days, your brainwaves have been more intense than ever before. Everybody said that you would wake up soon, but the big shots like Mo Xuan, Si Koulie, and Luo Xingzi are discussing an important affair in Spider Den and cannot come to greet you. Therefore, they asked me to wait for you here.

"They also told me to take you to Spider Den as soon as you woke up so that you would be able to discuss the matter that concerns the fate of both the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector!"

Li Yao was refreshed. A matter that concerned the fate of the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector?

Needless to say, they must have ascertained the coordinates of the Heaven's Origin Sector, and communication between the two Sectors was underway!

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao said, "There's no need to hurry. I've been sleeping for an entire year. Tell me what happened in the Flying Star Sector over the past year first."

Wu Mayan nodded and triggered the light beam of his crystal processor.

Professor Mo Xuan and the rest of them had predicted that Li Yao would wake up soon. Therefore, they prepared a telepathic thought that contained tremendous information and poured it into Li Yao’s brain, allowing him to roughly learn the changes in the Flying Star Sector over the past year.

…

The Cultivators had regained control of most of the space zones, but the Immortal Cultivators and the space pirates had still fought in the Spider Den Space Zone.

The Cultivators investigated and removed all the spies of the ‘Imperium of True Human Beings’ and the ‘Temple of Immortals’ in three months. Then, their army marched toward the Spider Den Space Zone.

The final battle was smoother than anybody had expected.

Without Xiao Xuance and the star brain, the remaining Immortal Cultivators lost their leaders and were completely disorganized.

At the last moment, the Black King and Fengyu Zhong had a huge conflict, too.

The most crucial factor was that the Immortal Cultivators had been fooled by the star child and thought that they were the establishers of a new imperium. It was such a belief that had motivated them to fight against the Cultivators.

After they learned that they were nothing more than chess pieces, the beliefs of many Immortal Cultivators were seriously shaken.

Before the Cultivators reached Spider Den, serious internal strife had already broken out between the Immortal Cultivators and the space pirates.

As a result, the Cultivators took over Spider Den in less than a month. The Black King died in battle, and Fengyu Zhong was captured alive. The latter was then sentenced to death and executed immediately by the war court consisting of all the victims.

The insurrection that greatly damaged the Flying Star Sector seriously changed its social structure, too.

Because spies of the Immortal Cultivators might have been lurking in the six sects of Heavenly Saints City and the other important sects, a temporary committee was established when the battle of Heavenly Saints City was over, which was led by Si Koulie, Luo Xingzi, and Mo Xuan, who was representatives of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, the middle and small sects, and Iron Plateau respectively.

Of course, Mo Xuan had another identity. When Li Yao was in a coma, he was also a representative of the Cultivators from the Heaven's Origin Sector.

The temporary committee became the de facto top decision-makers of the Flying Star Sector.

Their job was to hunt all the escaping Immortal Cultivator and restore order to the Flying Star Sector. They were also responsible for collecting all the intelligence regarding the Imperium of True Human Beings.

After defeating the star brain, the five star spirits had read a lot of valuable information from the data left by the star child, including some of the techniques from the Imperium of True Human Beings.

Whenever the secret bases of the Immortal Cultivators were occupied, a lot of techniques and magical equipment that belonged to neither the Flying Star Sector nor the Heaven's

Origin Sector were discovered, too. It was estimated that they were built in secret by the Immortal Cultivators under the star child’s instructions for the preparation of the future government.

The techniques and magical equipment were very beneficial for the improvement of the Cultivation level of the Flying Star Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector. They were invaluable.

By further analyzing the remaining data left by the star child, the Cultivators retrieved a lot of information about the social form of the Imperium of True Human Beings and the life of ordinary people in it.

Some of them were sent for mining on resource planets with harsh environments, some were test subjects for the latest Cultivation arts of the Immortal Cultivators, and some were the slaves of the warriors. The devastating scenes shocked all the Cultivators. The entire Flying Star Sector was infuriated by the findings.

“The Flying Star Sector will not accept such a future. We will not be part of the Imperium of True Human Beings even if we are destroyed!”

“Fight against the Immortal Cultivator until the end!”

When the files were publicized, such notions became the common understanding throughout society.

The communication between the Flying Star Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector, which Li Yao was most concerned about, had made significant progress, too.

After Spider Den was recovered, the Cultivators excavated the underground fortress. With the guidance of Lei Dalu and

Bai Kaixin, they soon found the ‘Star Prier’s House’, the ancient observatory.

The capability of the five star spirits had soared after they consumed part of the computational ability of the star child. They repaired the super crystal processors in the Star Prier’s House and explored the universe with the devices immediately.

Before Wu Mayan returned to Heavenly Saints City, the latest news had been that there were already important discoveries.

On the six sects of Heavenly Saints City and the Star Fighters’ Alliance’s side, a coalition fleet of an enormous scale was being established, too. Many of the starships were going through special modifications for super-long space jumps across Sectors.

All the preparations were underway!

Li Yao saw the current appearance of Heavenly Saints City in the pictures.

The central area and the first space ring had suffered the most damage in the great insurrection. A lot of buildings had collapsed, and quite a few blocks were entirely wiped out.

However, above the debris, a splendid new city was rising to the sky with the joint effort of the Cultivators and the ordinary people!

Li Yao saw that everybody looked different from before, although he could not tell exactly what the differences were. He just felt that everybody was motivated and in high spirits. There were sparks in the eyes of the plainest construction workers!

“The insurrection has changed the Flying Star Sector,” Wu Mayan said solemnly. “Unpardonable as Xiao Xuance might have been, he was right about one thing. The Flying Star Sector in the past was loose sand. Most of the sects only wanted to live their own comfortable lives with their doors shut. They had lost the courage to strive forward and explore the outside world!

“But right now, with a great enemy looming ahead of us, everything has changed. After five thousand years, the Flying Star Sector is united once again!”

Chapter 816 - Portent of the Imperium

Li Yao had woken up!

The news spread to every corner of the Flying Star Sector. The entire world was ignited. Everybody was overjoyed.

Apart from reversing the situation purely on his own and rescuing the Flying Star Sector at the most perilous moment, the fact that he had slain Xiao Xuance, who was known to be the best expert of the Flying Star Sector, alone was enough to make Li Yao a superstar admired by countless people!

Right now, the gloom of war had not dispersed yet, and the Imperium of True Human Beings might be coming back at any time. The waking of a super expert was a major boost for the morale of the Flying Star Sector.

The financial markets were the first to respond. For a moment, all the stock prices were rising.

The news industry was the second the respond. The hospital that Li Yao was in was quickly surrounded by hundreds of reporters.

“The hero who saved the Flying Star Sector has finally woken up!”

“The Glorious Sunlight Group under his name has become a super organization on par with the six sects of Heavenly Saints City and the Star Fighters’ Alliance!”

"It is estimated that the Glorious Sunlight Group will be the most important bridge in the communication between the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector. Its capability will only rise higher!"

"Li Yao, as the biggest shareholder of the conglomerate, might not be the strongest Cultivator in the Flying Star Sector, but he is definitely the wealthiest one!"

To pacify the people and to boost the morale, Li Yao accepted the interview of two influential media groups even though he was in a hurry. Then, he left for Spider Den on a crystal warship.

…

One day later, in the sky of Capital Nest on Spider Den, the cabin door of a crystal warship was slowly opened, revealing three blinking shuttles, which flew to the center of the city in a triangle formation.

Looking down at Spider Den, which had been reborn, Li Yao had complicated feelings.

The abandoned resource plant had been revived after it returned to the embrace of the Cultivators and ordinary people.

On the horizon, countless giant ivory pillars stood tall. They pierced into the clouds and formed ivory umbrellas in the sky, with mysterious mist spreading on the edge.

They also looked like enormous mushrooms that were spurting spores to various directions.

They were the super-large atmosphere-stabilizing rune arrays.

Through the rune arrays, a steady man-made atmosphere would be created. Then, the environment of the planet would be gradually reformed. In the end, Spider Den would be suitable for living again and could potentially accommodate billions of people.

The air on the ground had not been cleaned yet and was still corrupted by venomous gas. The workers were all wearing engineering crystal suits, working hard to transform the planet bit by bit.

Wu Mayan told Li Yao that, after Spider Den was taken back, the temporary committee had ruled that half of the resources on Spider Den would be used to compensate the families of all the victims of the space pirates and the Immortal Cultivators over the years.

As long as they had evidence, they would be granted with the exploitation right of certain resources on Spider Den.

In such a case, building Spider Den meant building their own home. All the forces were devoted to the transformation of Spider Den. Many people even moved their entire family to Spider Den and considered it a new beginning.

“Right now, Spider Den and Iron Plateau are both going through large-scale modifications. Although the two planets are both congenitally deficient and much less habitable than the planet of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, they are still much better than the narrow starships and the unstable world fragments,” Wu Mayan said confidently.

“The two habitable planets will be two enormous war bases. In less than a hundred years, the population of the Flying Star Sector will definitely be multiplied. When the population is larger, the number of Cultivators will grow, too. Our war potential will significantly increase!

“If the Imperium of True Human Beings really dares to come, they will pay a good price!”

Li Yao smiled. After six years, Wu Mayan had indeed grown a lot. He was no longer the boy he used to be!

The shuttle sped up to the depths of Capital Nest

…

Three hours later, they reached the Star Prier’s House in the underground fortress.

The ancient observatory was glowing with glamorous colors after several months of serious maintenance.

Flying Star University and Heavenly Saints Institute had both established offices there. The best astronomers and astrologists of the Flying Star Sector had gathered in this place, too.

The five star spirits considered the Star Prier’s House their new base, too.

The reason was simple. The hundreds of super crystal processors passed on from the Star Ocean Imperium were invaluable meals for the star spirits, who feasted upon computational ability. What else would they want to do before all the super crystal processors were cracked?

“Li Yao!”

Seeing Li Yao, Professor Mo Xuan gave him a bearhug in the artificial body.

“Li Yao!”

Luo Xingzi and Si Koulie were quite excited, too.

Although they were from two different Sectors, they had the same title—Cultivators. In the battle of Heavenly Saints City, they had been through life and death together. In the battles to come, they would also fight side by side!

Other than Luo Xingzi, Si Koulie, Mo Xuan, and a few leaders of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, there was an unexpected person who made Li Yao overjoyed.

“Chief Xiong!”

Xiong Wuji, the previous best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, greeted him.

“Good lad, you’ve finally woken up!”

Xiong Wuji patted Li Yao’s shoulder with a smile and said, “Ever since you passed the test of the Truth Cabinet, I’d been wondering how you did it. I didn’t know that the answer was so simple. You are of course not a space resident. You are a resident of the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Hahahaha!”

Li Yao blushed, somewhat embarrassed.

It was not decent of him to have kept it a secret for such a long time, but after all those years, and with the great enemy named the Imperium of True Human Beings drawing near, the little misunderstand years ago were not worth mentioning.

“It appears that you have indeed made important discoveries!”

Li Yao was so anxious that he quickly asked for the progress after the small talk.

Xiong Wuji had suffered heavy wounds in the battle against Yan Xibei and had not recovered much in the past five years. However, he enjoyed unparalleled prestige in the six tribes of Iron Plateau, and he was the soul of Iron Plateau.

Now that he had arrived, it was evident that the meeting was of paramount importance.

Li Yao thought of something and asked excitedly, “Have you located the precise coordinates of the Heaven’s Origin Sector? Are we able to return to the Heaven’s Origin Sector now?”

The room was caught in a weird vibe after his words. Everybody looked at each other in silence.

Professor Mo Xuan patted his shoulder and explained, “Li Yao, don’t be hasty. We have indeed located the coordinates of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, but… it is rather complicated.”

“Complicated?”

Li Yao was dazed. He could tell that Professor Mo Xuan was not delighted but worried about the situation.

Professor Mo Xuan coughed and said, “It’s a long story. Let me explain it to you slowly. First thing’s first. Here are the discoveries we made in the past half year.”

Professor Mo Xuan waved his hands. The room was gradually dimmed, but the arced dome was shining and packed with dense stars again.

“Firstly, we evaluated the Imperium of True Human Beings by the information left by the star child and the observation of the prosperous areas of the Star Ocean Imperium through the Star Prier's House.

"The Imperium of True Human Beings does exist, and its comprehensive ability is very high!

"Although it is not strong enough to conquer every human Sector as the star child claimed, the imperium has seized control of the vast area around the capital space zone of the Star Ocean Imperium.

"Also, judging from the information left by the star child, the imperium has experts at least in the Divinity Transformation Stage!

"That was the information a hundred and twenty years ago when the star child left for the mission.

"There is no telling how much progress the Imperium of True Human Beings has made after such a long time."

The star map in the dome was enlarged, highlighting an area where the stars were particularly dense. It looked like a nest of billions of fireflies.

Li Yao slightly frowned, but he was not very surprised.

The formidability of the Imperium of True Human Beings was within his expectations. There was no need to panic.

In the war against the Imperium of True Human Beings, they had the most marvelous weapon in the world, which was distance.

Both the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector were millions of lightyears away from the prosperous area of the Star Ocean Imperium. They were even further from the

Empyrean Terminus Sector and the planet of Empyreal Terminus.

Long expeditions were the least sensible choices in the military. It was true that the Imperium of True Human Beings was strong, but how many soldiers the imperium could project to millions of lightyears away was a whole different matter.

Throughout history, many empires that dominated the world for the time had sent magnificent armies to attack the enemies that seemed to be insignificant, only to be defeated after the enemies stalled them with the advantages in terrain for years. Not only were the expedition armies destroyed, the empires also collapsed and fell into the abyss of destruction.

“Compared with the Imperium of True Human Beings,” Professor Mo Xuan said, “we do not have many advantages, but the ‘Star Prier’s House’ is our greatest advantage!

“Normal means of observation cannot be faster than light. When we see a world that is millions of lightyears away, we are in fact seeing the scenes in the world millions of years ago.

“But the observation magical equipment in the Star Prier’s House can observe the spiritual waves in the fourth dimension through the basic particles below the ground and then infer the real-time status of a certain world even though the world is millions of lightyears away!

“It was through the Star Prier’s House that we discovered the expedition fleet of the imperium.”

Li Yao raised his eyebrow. “The Imperium of True Human Beings has sent out an expedition fleet?”

“Strictly speaking, we suddenly found very unusual spiritual waves in the prosperous areas of the Star Ocean Imperium that were jumping to the edge of the cosmos through incessant short-distance space jumps,” Professor Mo Xuan said. “If the spiritual waves maintained their current trajectory, the Flying Star Sector was right ahead of them!

“Therefore, we concluded that they were the expedition fleet of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

“It was first detected two months ago. The timing is reasonable, too.

“The star child sent most of our coordinates to the Imperium of True Human Beings through the space gate, and the Immortal Cultivators of the imperium established a fleet in ten months and started an expedition!

“According to numerous calculations and estimations, judging from the current speed, the fleet will arrive in the Flying Star Sector in two hundred years.

“However, there are too many unpredictable factors in the universe. It will not be surprising if the fleet comes a hundred years early or late.”

Li Yao scratched his chin and mumbled, “So, in a hundred to three hundred years, the army of the Imperium of True Human Beings will be upon us?

“But there is something that I don’t understand. Why are they so slow? Can’t they appear right in the Flying Star Sector with a super long-distance space jump? Won’t they catch us off guard if so?”

Chapter 817 - Doomed

Before Professor Mo Xuan opened his mouth, Si Koulie replied, “That is because of you, Li Yao. You stopped the star child from sending our coordinates to the Imperium of True Human Beings. As a result, the Imperium of True Human Beings did not receive all the parameters of our location.”

“Exactly.” Professor Mo Xuan continued the explanation. “Based on our analysis of the space gate, the Imperium of True Human Beings now only knows that a world of human beings exists in a certain direction millions of lightyears away, which is far from enough.

“The universe is too big. Distance is our greatest weapon. Millions of lightyears mean that the journey will take them millions of years even if they are moving at the speed of light.

“An error, the breadth of a single hair, can lead you a thousand miles astray. If the expedition fleet of the Imperium of True Human Beings activated a super long-distance space jump without specific coordinates, even if they had 99.9% of the precise coordinates, as long as there was the tiniest error in the 0.1% of the coordinates that they were not sure about, they would likely jump to an unknown desolate world.

“A space jump consumes an astronomical amount of spiritual energy. It is even more so for an expedition fleet that can conquer a world.

“If they arrived in desolate worlds after multiple space jumps, they might run out of spiritual energy and get trapped forever.”

Li Yao nodded. There seemed to be countless stars in the universe, but 99.9% of space was desolate. Only a tiny percentage of space was filled with spiritual energy and fit for the survival of living creatures.

Should a fleet lose its direction, it would be not unusual if it ended up stranded in a desolate world after multiple space jumps.

“Short-distance space jumps have two merits,” Professor Mo Xuan explained. “Firstly, the precision of each jump is relatively higher. There will be fewer errors, and even if there are, they can be rectified before the next jump.

“Secondly, the starships can stop and refill their spiritual energy after every jump. They will never run short of spiritual energy or be too damaged to repair.”

“Even with short-distance space jumps, the expedition can take hundreds of years,” Li Yao said. “Can the Immortal Cultivators on board live such long lives?”

“By our estimation, the fleet of the Imperium of True Human Beings must be of an enormous scale. If their starships are the size of Heavenly Saints City, they can easily establish a micro self-circulating system. The Immortal Cultivators can training themselves and live as normal people do. They can even give birth to the next generation, too. The long time matters little for them.

“That was the usual approach during the Star Ocean Imperium when human beings expanded to outside worlds.

“In fact, the ‘sect’ system of the ancient Cultivators is kept to this day because of such a pattern of war, too.

“The universe is too boundless. It usually takes hundreds of years to explore a new world. During the hundreds of years, it is often hard for the expedition fleet to be directly commanded by the mother planet.

“Therefore, the expedition fleets gradually evolved into ‘Cultivation sects’, which maintained a certain degree of independence in their small world of the expedition army.

“In other words, the Imperium of True Human Beings must’ve sent out a ‘Cultivation sect’ to deal with the Flying Star Sector. It is even possible that the Cultivation sect has been promised many benefits. For example, the Flying Star Sector might be granted to the sect after it is occupied.”

Li Yao thought for a minute and then asked, “Since we have found the territory of the Imperium of True Human Beings, can we launch a strike against the Empyrean Terminus Sector, the heart of the imperium? Or, if we don’t launch the strike, can we teleport a starship or a person over?”

Li Yao was all ready for action. Passive defense had never been his style. Attacking aggressively was always his first choice!

Professor Mo Xuan smiled bitterly and said, “Distance is a double-edged sword. Just as the Imperium of True Human Beings cannot lock onto our precise coordinates, we do not know the precise coordinates of the Empyrean Terminus Sector, either.

“If we perform a super long-distance space jump, maybe there is a 0.01% likelihood that we can teleport someone to the vicinity of the Empyrean Terminus Sector. With any luck, the guy will reach the Empyrean Terminus Sector after another five hundred or so short-distance space jumps.

“So complicated?” Li Yao secretly clicked his tongue. After pondering for a moment, he asked somewhat in confusion, “Since super long-distance space jumps are so difficult, how did different Sectors communicate with each other in the Star Ocean Imperium?”

“Before the Star Ocean Imperium, in the thirty thousand years reign of the demon race, they had established large-scale groups of star beacons in every Sector, which were essentially ‘space gates’,” Professor Mo Xuan said.

“When mankind rose again and the Supreme Emperor established his imperium, the space gates were furthered expanded. In the end, ‘cosmic lighthouses’ were constructed in every Sector to guide the starships.

“The technology to produce starships was much more advanced than right now, too.

“With the precise equipment, the guidance of the lighthouses, and the state-of-the-art starships, it was as easy as pie for people of the Star Ocean Imperium to cruise among different Sectors.

“Today, most of the space gates have been destroyed in the ten thousand years of war, and the star maps that marked the precise coordinates of all the Sectors are mostly lost, too. Our starships are not as advanced as the old days. Therefore, communication between Sectors is naturally a hundred times more difficult than in the era of the Star Ocean Imperium.”

Li Yao nodded and thought everything through.

However, he was still wondering why Professor Mo Xuan was so worried and why the ambience was so weird. “Alright. In short, an expedition fleet of the Imperium of True Human Beings is coming at us right now.

“Thankfully, we have at least a hundred years, and two to three hundred if we are lucky, to prepare.

“I think the top priority right now is to reach out to the Heaven’s Origin Sector first.

“The Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector are very complementary. If a large-scale collaboration is established between the two parties, both Sectors will definitely make significant progress in the hundred years to come.

“Professor Mo Xuan, did you say just now that the precise coordinates of the Heaven’s Origin Sector have been determined?”

With a weird expression, Professor Mo Xuan replied, “You must bear one thing in mind. The primary usage of the Star Prier’s House is not to look for other Sectors but to search for, analyze, and study the apocalypses.

“By Liu the Prier’s definition, the so-called apocalypses are abnormal spiritual waves in the sea of stars that are unlikely to be generated naturally.

“Half a month ago, we observed such ‘abnormal spiritual waves in the sea of stars that are unlikely to be generated naturally’ in a location that is extremely close to the Flying Star Sector.”

“What?” Li Yao had a creepy feeling. “Are you suggesting that the Flying Star Sector is faced with another apocalypse, professor?”

Professor Mo Xuan was silent.

Si Koulie sighed. “In the beginning, we were all shocked. It never rains; it pours. If we experience an apocalypse before the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings comes, the Flying Star Sector will certainly be doomed for all eternity.

“But very soon, we discovered that the intensity of the spiritual waves was much lower than the apocalypse five thousand years ago. It is likely a tactical ‘minor apocalypse’ instead of a world-blighting ‘major apocalypse’.

“Also, the target of the apocalypse is not the Flying Star Sector, either. After brushing past the Flying Star Sector, it lunged at another Sector that is not far away from the Flying Star Sector.

“No. Not one but two Sectors that were melding into each other.”

Li Yao opened his mouth but failed to come up with any comment.

The collision of two Sectors was a very rarely-seen phenomenon in the universe. The odds of such an occurrence were far lower than one billionth.

The two Sectors that were very close to the Flying Star Sector and gradually merging could only be the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector!

“A minor apocalypse is coming at the Heaven’s Origin Sector?” Li Yao mumbled to himself.

Si Koulie coughed and said, “After we located the trajectory of the apocalypse, it was quite easy to trace back the origin of the apocalypse.

“After more than ten days of calculation, we inferred when and where the apocalypse first appeared preliminarily.

“It was launched from the Empyrean Terminus Sector, the heart of the Imperium of True Human Beings, almost one year ago.”

Li Yao gasped. “Are you suggesting that the Imperium of True Human Beings launched an apocalyptic strike against the Heaven’s Origin Sector?

“But why?”

Li Yao was dumbfounded, not because he was shocked that the Imperium of True Human Beings was able to launch an apocalyptic strike, but because he could not begin to understand why the Heaven’s Origin Sector, instead of the Flying Star Sector, was the target.

“Our assumption is that it was because the Heaven’s Origin Sector was too ‘bright’.”

Professor Mo Xuan finally calmed himself down and said, “Like I said just now, without precise coordinates and the navigation of star beacons, super long-distance space jumps are not feasible.

“However, the Heaven’s Origin Sector is a special case.

“The Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector are currently merging. You may imagine that the two Sectors are crashing right now. The collision may not affect the living creatures of the two Sectors, but it will certainly emanate tremendous invisible particles and waves, which makes the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector a furiously burning ‘torch’ in the dark universe.

“If a certain ‘stargazer’ of the Imperium of True Human Beings observed our direction through the fourth dimension via a piece of special magical equipment, it is very unlikely that he will find the Flying Star Sector. However, it is likely that he will ‘see’ the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, which are crashing and releasing intense spiritual waves!”

Li Yao had an absurd feeling of ‘being beaten without a good reason’. He was dazed for a long time before he managed to ask, “What is the purpose of the Imperium of True Human Beings’ minor apocalypse?”

“If you stand in the shoes of the Imperium of True Human Beings,” Si Koulie said, “everything will be logical and make perfect sense.”

Chapter 818 - Save the Heaven's Origin Sector

“Imagine you are a general of the Imperium of True Human Beings. You are in a dark, obscure, perilous battlefield where there are high mountains that pierce into the sky, forests with all kinds of dangerous creatures, and bottomless swamps. Everything in the battlefield is covered by a dense war fog.

“Right now, a flickering candle suddenly illuminates the darkness on the horizon. It blinks and sends you a piece of information.

“You read the information and realizes that it is sent from a scout who you lost contact with a long, long time ago. He tells you that he has discovered a very valuable prey.

“However, before he tells you the specific coordinates, the environment he is in, and the status of the prey, the candle dies down, never to be kindled again.

“That was the situation the Imperium of True Human Beings was in.”

Li Yao nodded, deep in thought. It was true that the star child was a scout and that he had been exterminated before he had the chance to send more information over.

Right now, the Imperium of True Human Beings only knew that there was a prey a certain distance away in a certain direction. Nothing more.

“As a general, you can summon a huge expedition army and assault the prey by way of ‘parachuting’.

“But it is very clear to you that 99.9% of the places around the prey are mountains, swamps, abysses, and deserts. Should your main troop ‘parachute’ to those places, they will be dead for sure.

“So, after careful consideration, you decide to let your expedition army walk and search for the prey the regular way by avoiding all the dangerous places.

“Although it will cost more time and effort, such an approach is much more safe. The army will certainly be not wiped out by nature.”

Si Koulie’s metaphor gave a detailed analysis on the advantages and disadvantages of the super long-distance space jumps and short-distance ones.

“However, just because a large-scale expedition army cannot parachute to the prey directly, it does not mean one or two soldiers of the special forces cannot go over, right?

“Before the army sets off, deploying special forces to the enemy’s base and investigating the environment is a common tactic.”

Li Yao realized where he was getting at. “Leader Si, are you suggesting that the minor apocalypse from the ‘Imperium of True Human Beings’ is like the ‘special forces’ who have come here for reconnaissance?

“But I’m rather confused. Can the apocalypses perform space jumps, too?”

“For the apocalypses that are the strikes a civilization launches toward another civilization, their attributes and appearances vary greatly and are quite unpredictable,” Si Koulie replied.

“Every apocalypse is produced in a different way for a different purpose. Some of the apocalypses focus more on destruction, some highlight infiltration, and some are good at blockage. Isn’t it quite normal that some apocalypses are fast enough to cruise beyond the speed of light?

“The apocalypses manufactured by the same civilization can be different, too. You wouldn’t carry bullets with all the same attribute, would you?”

Li Yao immediately understood it. It was quite right. In the case of bullets, there were sniper bullets, armor-piercing bullets, frost bullets, incendiary bullets… Every kind of bullet had its own special use.

The category, characteristics, and uses of the apocalypses could only be a thousand or even ten thousand times more than those of the bullets.

The apocalypse that the Blood Stripe Virus had caused five thousand years ago focused on ‘legacy’ and ‘destruction’. It could not perform a space jump.

The minor apocalypse that the Imperium of True Human Beings launched recently apparently focused more on velocity. It was not strange that the apocalypse could perform a space jump.

“Chances are that the minor apocalypse is an upgraded version of the star child. Although the Imperium of True Human Beings could not teleport a whole fleet over, it should be more than easy for them to send another star child to us.”

“An upgraded version of the star child?”

Li Yao shivered but did not speak.

“The Imperium of True Human Beings does not know our precise coordinates. Therefore, the ‘minor apocalypse’ was only sent to somewhere near the Flying Star Sector.

“However, it sensed the dazzling fire resulting from the collision of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector the moment it arrived.

“Think about it. You have parachuted into an absolutely dark battlefield, and your task is to search for an enemy who is lurking in the darkness.

“You don’t know where exactly your enemy is hiding, but a bright torch suddenly appears in front of you. What will you do?”

Li Yao took a deep breath and mumbled, “I’m afraid that I would go over and check it first.”

Si Koulie smiled bitterly and said, “It must’ve been what the apocalypse thought, too. That is why it brushed past the Flying Star Sector and lunged at the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector.

“By our analysis, it is very possible that the apocalypse calculated that the two Sectors had abundant spiritual energy by the signs of the collision. The spiritual energy could be used to build a brand-new space gate, and the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector would be a perfect platform to attack the Flying Star Sector.”

Li Yao was dazed. “A platform?”

Si Koulie nodded. “Exactly. Maybe the apocalypse is carrying certain navigation magical equipment like a space gate that will automatically unfold when it absorbs enough spiritual energy. If so, the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings can jump to the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector directly.

“If we look from the perspective of the whole universe, the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector are only one step away from each other. Attacking the Flying Star Sector with the Heaven’s Origin Sector as the platform is much more convenient than crawling slowly for more than a hundred years.”

The hypothesis made Li Yao shudder.

With a bitter smile, Professor Mo Xuan said, “Maybe, the minor apocalypse was merely attracted by the collision of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector in the beginning. But after it discovers that tremendous creatures live in both of the Sectors, the expedition army will certainly change their target and conquer the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector first.”

Si Koulie sighed and said in a low voice, “Fellow Cultivator Mo, the Heaven’s Origin Sector has been burdened by the Flying Star Sector. The disaster should’ve had nothing to do with you.”

Professor Mo Xuan waved his hands and said solemnly, “The Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector are right next to each other. If the Flying Star Sector falls, there is no way that the Heaven’s Origin Sector can get away. We are in the same boat. The disaster is coming sooner or later.”

Watching the glittering stars on the dome, Li Yao asked gravely, with redness shining in the bottom of his eyes, “Then, how soon will the minor apocalypse arrive in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector?”

“The apocalypse reached somewhere near the Flying Star Sector with a super long-distance space jump,” Si Koulie said. “Then, it rectified its direction after three short-distance space jumps and flew toward the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector.

“Right now, it has come to the end of its course, and it has been cruising normally. There is no sign of space jumps. Perhaps the previous four jumps have drained its fuel.

“Judging from the current speed, it will reach the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector in five years!”

“Five years?”

Li Yao bit his teeth so hard that sparks were almost bursting out, but he simply swallowed all the sparks into his stomach.

…

One month later, in the hall of the Meeting of the Next Millennium in Heavenly Saints City, the leaders of all the Cultivation sects of the Flying Star Sector and the representatives of ordinary people in all the space zones, altogether 12,993 people, had been gathered. They were about to vote on a motion that could determine the future of the Flying Star Sector.

The motion was ‘Should the Flying Star Sector rescue the Heaven’s Origin Sector with its best?’

It was a tough choice.

The Heaven’s Origin Sector was at war with the Blood Demon Sector right now. The two parties were on par with one another. The Heaven’s Origin Sector even had a slim advantage.

When the two Sectors fully merged, a final battle was destined to break out. Perhaps it had already broken out.

The Heaven’s Origin Sector would certainly suffer heavy losses even if it won the war in the end.

If so, it was unlikely that the Heaven’s Origin Sector could resist the minor apocalypse that was heading toward it.

The result would be tragical unless the Flying Star Sector sent reinforcements to the Heaven’s Origin Sector unitedly, not sparing any efforts.

Defeat the demon race first, and resist the apocalypse together!

There was no doubt that a war across Sectors would consume a lot of resources of the Flying Star Sector, not to mention that the citizens of the Flying Star Sector would shed their blood or even got killed in a foreign land.

The Flying Star Sector today had barely recovered from the chaos of the Immortal Cultivators, which had lasted eight years. The choice naturally not an easy one.

In an ivory long robe that had an emblem of the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars on the chest, a symbol of the Star Glory Federation and the Heaven’s Origin Sector, Li Yao stood on a round podium.

Behind him, pictures were flashing. Tremendous information about the Heaven’s Origin Sector was being displayed, including the major sects of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the best magical equipment, the metropolises, and the people who live in cities, towns, and villages. There were also pictures of when the iron army lunged at the beast tide under the guidance of the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag.

“This is the Heaven’s Origin Sector, a small, barren world at the edge of the sea of stars.

“This is the Star Glory Federation, a nation established doggedly against the plundering and slaughtering of the demon race!

“After five hundred years, we built the Star Glory Federation from a small tribe where the survivors huddled to warm each other into a powerful nation that has expanded to every corner of the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

“Every ordinary person and every Cultivator is fighting bloody battles and guarding the glory of the civilization of mankind under the flag of the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars.

“Eight years ago, I arrived in the Flying Star Sector by accident and discovered, to my surprise, that human beings exactly like us live in this world that is entirely different from the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

“We have the same hot blood flowing in our veins, we believe in the same creeds, we persist in the same path of Cultivation, and we defend the same honor and glory!

“Now, as a common Cultivator from the Heaven’s Origin Sector, I beg my Fellow Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector to save the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Star Glory

Federation, and the billions of people living there—Billions of compatriots!”

Chapter 819 - Fight for the Future!

Finishing his speech, Li Yao closed his lips, bowed deeply, and left the hall.

Assisting the Heaven’s Origin Sector with all the resources concerned the future of the Flying Star Sector. The decision could certainly not be made by a few words of his. After that, there was nothing he could do except wait for the results together with the five spectral Cultivators from the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

After Li Yao left, Luo Xingzi, the host of the meeting, slowly ascended to the center of the hall. He glanced over the thousands of small meeting rooms that looked like crystal vesicles.

Xiao Xuance used to be the leader of the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood, and the Immortal Cultivators had infiltrated the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood most deeply, too. His rebellion had been a major blow for the prestige of the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood.

Luo Xingzi had been Xiao Xuance’s junior brother and an elder of the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood. The moment when the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood was questioned, he had shouldered the responsibility resolutely and purged the Immortal Cultivators inside the Feathered Snakes Brother without any mercy. Later, in the battles against the space pirates and the remnants of the Immortal Cultivators, the members of the Feathered Snakes Brother had always led the charge in the vanguard, trying to wash away the dishonor with their blood.

Luo Xingzi and the Feathered Snakes Brother won the respect of the other Cultivators again in such a way.

Luo Xingzi bowed courteously, before he opened his mouth and said, “This is all the intelligence we’ve collected so far. We are about to vote on the motion that will decide the fate of the Flying Star Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

“However, before we begin to vote, I would like to express my opinion on behalf of nobody but myself as a Cultivator of the Flying Star Sector.

“Firstly, from the perspective of the universe as a whole, the Flying Star Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector are right next to each other. We are neighbors.

“If the minor apocalypse of the Imperium of True Human Beings attacks the Heaven’s Origin Sector or even occupies it, it is very likely that super star beacons will be established in the Heaven’s Origin Sector to guide the army of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

“If so, it will take less than ten years, instead of hundreds of years, for the army of the Imperium of True Human Beings to fall upon us, with the Heaven’s Origin Sector as a ‘platform’.

“That’s why they say ‘teeth cannot live without lips.’

“Therefore, rescuing the Heaven’s Origin Sector is rescuing ourselves. Only if we resist the minor apocalypse can we earn ourselves one to two hundred years’ time of development!

“Secondly, I know that a lot of fellow Cultivators here are worried that interfering with the war in another Sector will greatly diminish our own capability, considering that we have not recovered from the eight-year insurrection and that we will be faced with the invasion of the Imperium of True Human Beings a hundred years from now.

“To such an opinion, I would say that rescuing the Heaven’s Origin Sector will bring us greater benefits than our costs, because the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector are highly complementary.

“The two Sectors have their own specialties in techniques, Cultivation arts, and magical equipment. We can learn from each other and take what we need.

“In the aspect of social structure, the Heaven’s Origin Sector has a lot of shining points that we can study.

“It is well known that the Flying Star Sector has been too loose since the apocalypse five thousand years ago. The dozens of space zones and thousands of Cultivation sects have always been minding their own business. Even Heavenly Saints City, which is the largest in scale, is just a super city.

“Although we have many experts, advanced magical equipment, and popularized crystal suits, we are in lack of a powerful central government to integrate all the resources.

“It was exactly because our strength was too divided that we couldn’t do anything about a tiny Spider Den. The Immortal Cultivators implemented the insurrections for the same reason, too!

“If we keep the lifestyle that we have now, how are we going to handle the well-trained, disciplined army of the Imperium of True Human Beings when the space pirates and the Immortal Cultivators, which were few in number, already gave us such a headache?

“Therefore, it is common sense now that the Flying Star Sector must be united again.

“However, it is not easy to govern the dozens of space zones under the same unified government!

“We’ve been divided for too long. In five thousand years, we have never established a large country or an enormous army.

“Even the leaders and elders of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City only manage millions of people at best.

“As for our army, the fleets and Exo Societies affiliated to the Cultivation sects often have a headcount of less than a hundred thousand.

“If we really establish a central government that governs billions of people and an enormous army made of tens of millions of soldiers, how exactly are we going to run the central government in order to make use of the resources of the Flying Star Sector in the most reasonable and efficient way? How are we going to command the army with so many soldiers to have a head-on clash with the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings?

“Nobody knows the answers.

“We have no experience. Everything is only theoretical, but the Imperium of True Human Beings won’t give us a second chance to try!

“However, let’s take a look at the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

“Although the Heaven’s Origin Sector is only a small world in one space zone, all the spiritual energy and resources have been concentrated and given birth to a relatively prosperous and stable planet, Heaven’s Origin.

“The Star Glory Federation, which governs Heaven’s Origin, has a population of tens of billions. It has been fighting the demon race for the past five hundred years, too.

“The Star Glory Federation has essentially been at war for five hundred years. It has profound experience and knowledge on the economic system during a war, the efficient utilization of resources, the establishment and management of large-scale armies, the cooperation of the Cultivators and the ordinary people, and so on.

“According to Fellow Cultivators Li Yao and Mo Xuan, in the most extreme circumstances, the Star Glory Federation can gather an enormous army with more than two billion soldiers and equip all of them with weapons such as chainswords and storm bolters after a ‘general mobilization’.

“If we cooperate with the Heaven’s Origin Sector, not only will we be able to exchange our magical equipment and techniques, we can also learn about the management of super large governments and armies from the Star Glory Federation. In the meantime, the demon race will be the best targets to train our army, too.

“An army that has never seen blood is an army without hope. The claws and teeth of the demon race are the best whetstones to sharpen the army of the Flying Star Sector!

“Above are the advantages if we assist the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the disadvantages if we don’t, in my opinion.

“However, apart from the gains and losses, I would like to discuss something deeper with you.

“In the battle against the star child, he depicted a horrible scene for us where all the human worlds had been conquered by the Imperium of True Human Beings, and every Sector was ruled by the Immortal Cultivators. Such worlds were the cruelest ones where the strong feasted upon the weak. Only the strong could dominate the world and enjoy a happy life, while the weak were simply tools, toys, and garbage that were not worth mentioning!

“Although the star child was exaggerating, and the Imperium of True Human Beings has not expanded to such an extent yet, who is certain that such a picture will not become reality if we keep waiting for our doom and hiding our heads in the sand like ostriches?

“When the Imperium of True Human Beings really conquers the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and all the other Sectors that belonged to the Star Ocean Imperium, we will really become the ‘last Cultivators’. By then, who will hear our cries for help and come to fight side by side with us?

“Therefore, although I know that it will be costly to assist the Heaven’s Origin Sector, although many people will die, although many starships will be destroyed, and although many sects may never recover, I still hope that we can make the right choice!

“At the very least, I, Luo Xingzi, from the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood, hereby make a Blood Oath in front of all the fellow Cultivators here that I will be in the first echelon to go to the Heaven’s Origin Sector if the motion is approved and won’t come back until the demon race and the minor apocalypse of the Imperium of True Human Beings are defeated!

“Not just the Heaven’s Origin Sector. If we find other Sectors in the future and people there are in need of the help of Cultivators, I will go there without any hesitation, too!

“Moreover, I’m even hoping that, in the future, not too far away from today, our posterity will form an unstoppable army and attack the territory of the Imperium of True Human Beings to free all the ordinary people that are enslaved by the Immortal Cultivators!

“Think about it carefully, everybody! Think about why we are gathered here today and what we are voting for!

“No. We are here today not to decide whether or not to rescue the Heaven’s Origin Sector, not to decide whether or not to rescue ourselves, but to decide whether or not to rescue the future of the civilization of mankind!

“Whether the civilization of mankind is guarded by the Cultivators or blemished by the Immortal Cultivators in a thousand years might depend on the sacred vote in your hands today!”

Luo Xingzi concluded his speech, and the voting officially began.

In the closed meeting rooms, the leaders and elders of every Cultivation sect were whispering to each other, deep in thought.

Many people were reading the information about the Heaven’s Origin Sector again and again, calculating losses and gains.

More people were viewing the intelligence about the Imperium of True Human Beings that had been retrieved in the past half year, thinking carefully.

Three minutes later, the virtual voting light beams were triggered one after another. All the representatives had made a choice, either with a heavy heart or with a determined one.

Li Yao and Professor Mo Xuan waited in their own meeting room. It was perhaps the longest five minutes of their lives. The vibe inside the room could not have been more intense. It was like an icy storm had frozen each and every of them.

Nobody was talking, and nobody was breathing. Li Yao, Professor Mo Xuan, and the rest of them all gazed at the light beam in front of them.

Suddenly, ripples spread out on the light beam and condensed into Luo Xingzi’s face again. He glanced down and, although trying to control the muscles on his face, could not help but beam with passion.

“The results of the voting are now out.

“11,033 votes for the motion, 1010 against it, and 950 abstentions.

“The motion has been passed by an absolute majority!

“The Flying Star Sector will assist the Heaven’s Origin Sector with our best. We will defend the future of the civilization of mankind together!”

Chapter 820 - Cosmic Slingshot

Instantly, the meeting room of the six Cultivators from the Heaven’s Origin Sector turned from a glacier into an erupting volcano!

“Passed!” Li Yao shouted and waved his hands crazily, leaving a deep ravine in the ground.

For a moment, despite the suffering and setbacks he had gone through in the past decade, despite the unbelievable level he had reached, and despite his immense computational ability, he had completely lost control over his emotions. Tears spurted out his eyes and flowed on his face crazily, and he seemed to have turned into a random young man in his twenties again.

Professor Mo Xuan took two steps back and sat in the chair, only to crush the seat because he had forgotten that he was in a heavy artificial body.

He sat on the ground in a daze and chuckled lightly at first before he covered his metal face and sobbed in great relief.

The other four spirits, who were the ‘Four Kings’ of the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution, all got out of their artificial bodies and danced happily as liquid metal.

Beep! Beep! Beep!

Countless Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector sent congratulations to them through the light beams.

“Master!”

Wu Mayan was laughing hard on the other side of the light beam with his hands on his hips, his white teeth glittering.

Xie Anan stood behind him with a smile, too.

Li Yao’s two disciples seemed to always be in each other’s company.

“Master, this is great!” Wu Mayan shouted. “I will get to go to the Heaven’s Origin Sector with you and fight the demon beast! Hehe. I grew up on Iron Plateau. Not just the demon beasts, even the apocalyptic beasts that are tougher them are nothing in my eyes. I wonder, is the demon race of the Blood Demon Sector stronger than the apocalyptic beasts?”

“Li Yao!” Lei Dalu and Bai Kaixin started a call, too. “There’s no need to say anything. Friendship is what matters most for us Cultivators! The Flying Star Sector was saved in the end only because you killed Xiao Xuance at the crucial moment and Professor Mo Xuan and the other fellow Cultivators controlled the star child.

“Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector are definitely not the ungrateful scumbags. Now that we have decided to fight side by side, we will definitely walk with you to the end. There is no way that we will abandon our comrades halfway!

“Rest assured. The Great Horn Exo Society will definitely be in the first echelon of the reinforcements to the Heaven’s Origin Sector!”

“Li Yao!” After Lei Dalu and Bai Kaixin, it was Huangpu Xiaoya, the heir of the Huangpu family, one of the noble families of refining that had passed on for a thousand years.

Seven years ago, after the Skyhill Sword Seminar, she and Li Yao had both been kidnapped by Huangpu Shiyi of the Temple of Immortals. Huangpu Shiyi had even conspired to chop off her hands to replace his. It was Li Yao who had sabotaged Huangpu Shiyi’s plan and saved her in the end.

For Huangpu Xiaoya, Li Yao was her life-saver. After his identity was revealed, the cooperation between the Huangpu family and the Glorious Sunlight Group had reached a new level.

“The Huangpu family is a noble family of refining. We don’t have many excellent warriors. But on behalf of the Huangpu family as well as another twenty-two noble families of refining, I announce that we will try our best to facilitate the communication between the two Sectors, and we will not keep anything to ourselves in the exchange of knowledge, aiming boost each other to a higher level with the most sincerity!”

“Li Yao!”

Xiong Wuji, Sha Yulan, Flying Star University, Heavenly Saints Institute, the three main crystal suit centers…

Countless Cultivators made promises to Li Yao solemnly.

In the end, it was Si Koulie, the leader of the Star Fighters’ Alliance.

After the insurrection of the Immortal Cultivators, the six sects of Heavenly Saints City had become less respected than before. The Star Fighters’ Alliance had basically become the biggest force of the Flying Star Sector, and Si Koulie was in effect the ‘supreme leader’ of all the sects of the Flying Star Sector right now.

His face red, Li Yao said, somewhat clumsily, “…Thank you.”

Although his enormous computational ability could have provided a thousand flamboyant words for him to express his complicated feelings, he still chose the simplest ‘thank you’ in the end.

“There’s no need to thank us. Just as Luo Xingzi said, we did not decide to rescue the Heaven’s Origin Sector; we decided to fight side by side with our fellow Cultivators in the Heaven’s Origin Sector to defend our future!

“It feels good to know that you are not alone in the universe and that some other people far away from you share the same beliefs as you.”

Li Yao took a long breath and clenched his fists, before he declared determinedly, “Of course, we are not alone. Even if the universe is truly a dark forest, I believe that we will not be the only shining sparks.

“Other than the Flying Star Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector, I believe that there are still countless Sectors where the Cultivators haven’t forgotten their duties and their dreams yet. They are still protecting every ordinary person and their ordinary yet happy life!

“One day, we will find them. When all the sparks are gathered together, we will be a flame that razes the dark forest to the ground!”

Si Koulie smiled. “I hope so. Maybe I won’t be able to witness it, but I believe that you and the future generations will definitely make sure that it happens!

“Alright. Back to business. Now that the motion to assist the Heaven’s Origin Sector has passed, we can move on to the next step of our plan.

“The biggest question right now is no longer whether or not to assist the Heaven’s Origin Sector, but how.

“It is well known that a space jump across Sectors will consume tremendous spiritual energy. The starships will be damaged in the process, too.

“We have determined the coordinates of the Heaven’s Origin Sector through the Star Prier’s House, but teleporting a super-light starship over and teleporting an enormous fleet are completely different matters.

“To teleport a Cultivator in the Refinement Stage and one in the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage are vastly different, too.”

Li Yao was silent.

The stronger a Cultivator was, the more spiritual energy would be stored in their body, and the more difficult it would be to perform a space jump.

Therefore, in the Occult Orbs Fellowship of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, it was mostly the Cultivators in the Building Foundation Stage who were asked to cruise across the universe and explore the world fragments. Those in the Core Formation Stage and Nascent Soul Stage were barely summoned.

But right now, Li Yao had advanced into the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage. His spiritual energy was as abundant as that of the Nascent Soul Stage. It would not be an easy task for him to be teleported via a space jump.

Li Yao asked in a hurry, “With the technology of the Flying Star Sector, how many starships and experts can be teleported to the Heaven’s Origin Sector?”

Si Koulie smiled and replied unhurriedly, “Don’t be hasty. I’m here to discuss the issue with the Glorious Sunlight Group. Do you still remember the ‘Ice God Project’?”

Li Yao was dazed. Of course he remembered the Ice God Project. It was the plan for a piece of planetary-level magical equipment proposed by Si Koulie six years ago to deal with the Temple of Immortals and the space pirates.

The purpose of the plan was to refine a planet named ‘Ice King’ into an unprecedented starship and teleport the starship to somewhere near Spider Den through the super space jump array on Ice King left by the Star Ocean Imperium. In the end, the starship would crash into the nest of the space pirates!

However, the plan, which was deeply flawed, was dwarfed by Xiao Xuance’s seemingly immaculate ‘Grand Illusionary Soldier Project’.

Glamorous sparks were jumping in Si Koulie’s eyes, as he said solemnly, “I’m thinking of restarting the ‘Ice God Project’ right now!”

Li Yao blinked, knowing that there must be a reason for Si Koulie’s proposal. He pondered for a moment. “Are you trying to make use of the super space jump array on Ice King, Leader Si?”

Si Koulie burst into laughter. “You are indeed very smart, Li Yao!”

Li Yao thought for a moment and frowned. “But the space jump array can only allow Ice King to jump among the various space zones of the Flying Star Sector. I assume that a teleportation across Sectors will be too much of a burden for the array, no?”

The space jumps within a Sector and those between different Sectors were like swimming across a river and swimming across an ocean. The difficulty was obvious.

Si Koulie smiled confidently. “Li Yao, you forgot about the weight of Ice King.

“The space jump array on Ice King was a piece of super magical equipment in the Star Ocean Imperium. The technology entailed in it is beyond our imagination.

“Yes. If we are pushing Ice King, it can only be teleported within the Flying Star Sector.

“But don’t forget that we are not pushing Ice King right now but a starship that is only one millionth the weight of the planet!”

Li Yao immediately thought the whole thing through. He patted his head in delight.

If the super space jump array on Ice King was compared to a giant catapult that could throw a rock weighing ten thousand kilograms a hundred meters away, how far away could it throw a stone weighing a hundred kilograms or even ten kilograms?

Ice King was among the smallest planets in terms of size and weight, but it was far heavier than a crystal warship nonetheless.

A crystal warship was to a planet what dust was to a pebble!

Of course, the specific methods of calculation would not be so simple. Teleporting a heavy object to somewhere near and teleporting a light object to somewhere far away required different functioning mechanisms for the array, too, which meant that the array would need to be greatly modified first before it was put to use.

However, theoretically speaking, it was a feasible plan!

“In the restarted ‘Ice God Project’, all the combat units of Ice King will be removed,” Si Koulie said excitedly. “It will be reconstructed into a base of interstellar teleportation!

“Or to put it simply, we will transform Ice King into a giant ‘cosmic slingshot’!

“The super space jump array can be utilized repetitively after modification. It will fire the crystal warships to the Heaven’s Origin Sector one after another!

“The first batch of starships to be launched will carry tremendous magical equipment units. After they reach the Heaven’s Origin Sector, they will establish point-to-point star beacons that will emit mystic rays that are only visible to us. Such star beacons will guide the starships between the two Sectors.

“I’m told that you have a similar launch base in the Heaven’s Origin Sector known as ‘Heaven’s Artillery’, right? If so, after the Heavenly Artillery is fully upgraded with the technology of the Star Ocean Imperium left on Ice King, it will likely be transformed into another ‘cosmic slingshot’.

“If so, a bridge will be established between Ice King and the Heaven’s Artillery, or rather, a super high-speed crystal rail that connects two Sectors!

“The two Sectors will be closely linked after that!

“This is the brand new ‘Ice God Project’. Of course, there will be a lot of difficulties when it is implemented. I need the help of the Glorious Sunlight Group, especially Professor Mo Xuan and your companions!

“After absorbing the star child and analyzing the super crystal processors in the Star Prier’s House, your group’s computational ability must be the highest both in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and in the Flying Star Sector!

“Only with your computations and analysis can we expect to transform Ice King into a cosmic slingshot, a piece of planetary-level magical equipment!”

Professor Mo Xuan and the other four star spirits beamed with interest. They held their heads high and replied, “We would be happy to help!”

Chapter 821 - New Strength

In the Heaven’s Origin Sector…

The city was an expanding corpse.

The rebars of the hollow skyscrapers were like twisted bones, the broken roads and bridges seemed to be damaged limbs, and the shuttles that were on fire resembled rotting organs. Illuminated by the setting sun, everything looked as if it had been soaked in stinky blood. There was nothing but silence in the air, except for the cackles of the crows in midair that had just finished a satisfactory meal.

More than twenty mushrooms were blossoming in the horizon far away. The crazily growing fungi had enshrouded half of the sky with the cold, hard colors.

Li Yao was lurking in a collapsed building. The rebars and cement had completely buried him and blended him into the debris.

In the scope of his sniper, an Immortal Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage 1,730 meters away was scolding his subordinates. The battle emblem of the burning planet that belonged to the Imperium of True Human Beings was emitting a bloody brilliance on his uniform. It was perhaps the only thing that could be called ‘fresh’ in the gray world.

It had been five years since Li Yao returned to the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

After the Ice God Project was restarted, the refinement of the ‘cosmic slingshot’ had gone very well. It had only taken them a year and a half to finish the modification of Ice King. Then, they had returned to the Heaven’s Origin Sector through the vehicle.

However, they had been too late.

The Star Glory Federation had suffered heavy losses in the war against the Blood Demon Sector and had been on the brink of destruction. The arrival of the minor apocalypse had been an even huger catastrophe.

Bewildered by the Immortal Cultivators, many people of the Heaven’s Origin Sector had given up the path of the Cultivators. They believed that only by embarking on the path of the Immortal Cultivators could they resist the Blood Demon Sector and save their home.

As a result, a space gate that was even more enormous in size than the one in the Flying Star Sector had been established in the orbit of Heaven’s Origin very soon.

When the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings appeared in the sky of Heaven’s Origin, many people had realized that they had been fooled, but there had been no time for regret.

To this day, under the two threats of the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Blood Demon Sector, the Heaven’s Origin Sector had been shattered into smithereens. 90% of the cities had been ruined, and 70% of the population had been consumed in the fire. The survivors were either catching their last breath deep down in the underground fortresses or launching futile resistances among the collapsed buildings like moths charging at the fire, leaving the last mark of the civilization of the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

Nine glittering stars were swirling on the scope. As Li Yao’s breath turned more and more stable, the nine stars gradually flew to the temples of the Immortal Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage.

Five… Six… Seven…

When all the nine stars were focused on the head of the Immortal Cultivator, the ‘Seven-star Soul Stealing Nails’ would be able to attack the brain and soul of the Immortal Cultivator directly. The man would have to pay a high price, if he was not killed immediately!

However—

Experts in the Nascent Soul Stage had keen senses. When six stars were locked onto his head, the temples of the Immortal Cultivator suddenly collapsed. Then, his body blurred as he lunged directly in Li Yao’s direction!

The full-speed sprinting of an expert in the Nascent Soul Stage was definitely faster than a bullet. Two thousand meters was merely a footstep for them!

In the blink of an eye, the Immortal Cultivator dashed over to Li Yao. The intimidating aura around him split the cement on Li Yao’s body into power. Even the rebars were screeching as if they were breaking apart!

Li Yao, on the other hand, burst into laughter. The capability of the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage fully burst out, and the unstoppable aura of the Feathered Dragon Saber slashed at the Immortal Cultivator’s neck!

It was Li Yao's trap in the first place.

Long-distance shooting was not his specialty. He had intentionally let the opponent discover the gun so that the man would think that it was a sniper who was lurking in this place.

Generally speaking, the melee combat ability of a sniper was always weaker.

The Feathered Dragon Saber was Li Yao's real killing move.

Pu!

A large head soared into the sky, and a flower of blood blossomed. The headless corpse continued rushing forward until it crashed into the debris after a boom!

But Li Yao felt greatly alarmed. There was a voice in his head that told him everything was just a dream. His opponent had not been killed by him. Instead, he was a victim of his opponent's mental attack and had been trapped in illusions!

Shua!

Li Yao tried his best to move leftwards for more than three hundred meters, narrowly avoiding the bombardment of a crystal cannon, but the overwhelming airwaves still blew him away.

While he was in midair, he heard shouting from various directions.

“That is Li Yao!”

“Don't let him get away!”

“Kill him! Kill him!”

Li Yao’s heart seemed to have fallen into a bottomless hole. He finally understood that it was a neatly concocted trap meant to capture him!

At least five Immortal Cultivators in the Nascent Soul Stage were lurking nearby. There was even a monster in the Divinity Transformation Stage.

“Leave me alone. Just go away!” Li Yao bellowed at the debris, but a streak of brightness soared up into the sky stubbornly and flew toward him.

It was Ding Lingdang!

Her crystal suit was riddled with holes, and her hair had become frizzy because of the burning fire. Her face was partly red and partly black, but her eyes were as brilliant and resolute as before.

“Let’s go together!” Ding Lingdang shouted loudly. She held Li Yao’s hands, and the two of them broke out of the siege together.

At the same moment, the debris nearby suddenly exploded, revealing more than ten small crystal warships, which rose to the sky. Their crystal cannons formed an impregnable net and blocked Li Yao and Ding Lingdang’s path of escape!

BOOM!

One cannonball rushed toward them. Threatened by the hundreds of streaks of auras near him, Li Yao could not dodge the attack.

But Ding Lingdang pushed him away heavily!

Ding Lingdang took the blow of the crystal cannon in his place. Under the thousands of surging electric arcs, her crystal suit was battered into pieces, flying in the air like butterflies!

“Ahhh!” Li Yao roared. Spiritual energy mixed with blood spurted out of every pore all over his body. He slashed his saber and forced away three Immortal Cultivators. Then, having no time to bother about the two flying swords which had stabbed into his stomach, he was going to run to Ding Lingdang, but a fickle, unpredictable flying sword just appeared out of thin air within a breath and pierced into his left eye brutally!

Hiss!

Li Yao’s left eyeball exploded. Excruciating pain grabbed his entire head like an octopus, making him suffer and unable to think.

Blood and tears flowed out of his left eye, where the flying sword remained. Before his soul fell into nothingness, the picture of Ding Lingdang being tied up by thousands of electric arcs had been etched into his heart and gave him the greatest fright.

In a voice not humanly possible, Li Yao roared, “I cannot accept such a future!

“I… am too weak!

“Stronger. I must continue training and get stronger! The superlative height of the Core Formation Stage is far from enough to compete with the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“Hehehehe. Strength. I need more strength! Whatever the methods are, and no matter how high the price is, I must get… new strength!”

…

Li Yao suddenly woke up from his dream.

He jerked up from his bed like a lobster that had been tossed into a burning pan alive.

His left eye was still hurting badly, and his clothes had been soaked in sweat. His heart was beating so fast that he could almost see it through his chest.

His mouth was dry, and he could not utter a word for a long time.

His left eye hurt more and more badly, and the world in it was bloody, too. He touched it with his hand and noticed that there were blood and tears in his palm.

Li Yao was dazed for a long time. He activated the selfie function of his crystal processor.

Himself on the light beam looked both familiar and strange. His face was pale and covered in sweat. There was barely any color in his right eye, but eerie, bloody streaks were rippling in his left eye. They were flowing slowly like ghosts and flames as if they were alive.

It was more than ten seconds later when the bloody streaks in his left eye gradually faded away. He recovered and slowly recalled where he was.

“Hu…” Li Yao took a long breath in relief and wiped off his cold sweat exhaustedly.

The Ice God Project had been underway for only three months. They had not returned to the Heaven’s Origin Sector yet. He was in his special training room in Flying Star University.

Everything that had happened was just a nightmare.

Maybe because he was too concerned about the Heaven’s Origin Sector, maybe because he was too worried about the capability of the Blood Demon Sector and the Imperium of True Human Beings, and maybe because his soul had not recovered from the self-detonation of the star child, he had been having uncanny dreams even since he woke up from the coma.

Li Yao was no stranger to uncanny dreams. Ever since he remembered things, he had often dreamed that he was in a place named ‘Earth’. After he absorbed Ou Yezi’s memory pieces, he had often learned the ancient refining skills from forty thousand years ago in his dreams, too.

But those two kinds of dreams were totally different from the bloody dreams that he had been having recently.

The new dreams were crueler, bloodier, and darker. They were almost exclusively pictures where the Heaven’s Origin Sector was destroyed, his family and friends in the Heaven’s Origin Sector were killed, and the entire universe was conquered by the Imperium of True Human Beings.

With Li Yao’s Cultivation today, he had the ability to control his braincells and influence his dream to some degree.

However, the new dreams were like parasites. He simply could not get rid of them. If anything, they were only getting worse.

In the beginning, he would only have the dreams when he was in the deep sleep state.

Later, he was having the dreams even when he was sleeping normally for an hour or two.

To this day, even though he was not sleeping but merely taking a nap because of the fatigue after crazy training, he could not help but find himself in the uncanny dreams experiencing the horrifying doom of the Heaven's Origin Sector.

Just now, he had just finished a set of deep squats in an environment of fifty times the standard gravity. He had been taking a break but somehow fell asleep without him knowing.

“Maybe my soul has indeed not recovered yet, and I was too exhausted.”

Li Yao rubbed his left eye softly and mumbled to himself.

However, determination suddenly beamed out of his left eye, as he gritted his teeth and said, “Nothing can be achieved without exhaustion. Just because they are dreams doesn't mean that they will not come true one day!

“No. My training speed is too low. When can I ever form the Nascent Soul if things go on like this?

“I have to find new strength one way or another…”

Chapter 822 - Li Yao's Changes

Li Yao sat cross-legged, deep in thought. He did not seem aware that subtle blood red brightness was spreading deep inside his left eye when he was meditating.

Two eyes in different colors, one black and the other crimson, made him exceptionally weird and mysterious.

Li Yao sat absolutely still for three hours. Then, his left eye constricted violently, and he vomited a mouthful of black blood.

Having no time to clean the stain, he triggered an empty light beam with his crystal processor. His telepathic thoughts flooded out into golden threads and quickly interweaved into complicated drafts.

His inspiration soaring like a volcanic eruption, he drew one sophisticated draft after another unstoppably. In less than half a day, almost a thousand 3D structural designs had been stored.

Li Yao reached out to Mo Xuan and Si Koulie through the Spiritual Nexus.

Si Koulie was the best expert in the refinement of starships of the Flying Star Sector, while Mo Xuan was a walking super crystal processor. They made the strongest refining team together. Right now, they were both on Ice King supervising the Ice God Project.

Ice King was very far away. The super space jump array left by the Star Ocean Imperium caused a lot of interference, too. It was not until Li Yao waited for three minutes that their fuzzy image appeared on the light beam.

“I need to build a special starship, no matter what the cost is!” Li Yao demanded firmly while he sent the designs that he had just drawn to them.

“Li Yao, why?

“Didn’t we agree that ‘Sparkle’ would be the first starship to be teleported and that we would produce eleven multipurpose exploration starships by copying the structure of Sparkle? The twelve starships would be the first echelon of the communication between the two Sectors.

“Right now, ‘Heavenly Phantom’ is being modified on a large scale, too. When the ‘highway’ between the two Sectors is established, Heavenly Phantom will be teleported to the Heaven’s Origin Sector as the real flagship.

“When the firepower of Heavenly Phantom, it will certainly suppress the Blood Demon Sector.

“What other starships do you still want to build?”

The two of them read Li Yao’s structural designs suspiciously.

“I want to build a starship that solely belongs to myself. I will be the only passenger on the starship!”

Li Yao rubbed his left temple and explained, “I’m feeling that my current speed of training is too low. If things remain unchanged, when can I expect to advance into the Nascent Soul Stage?

“Therefore, I would like to take a minor risk.

“Look at my drafts. It is not a simple starship that I’m devising but a very special training room!

“When the ‘cosmic slingshot’ ejects us brutally, our bodies and souls will enter a higher dimension after we shatter the void. I believe that it will be the best training period for me!

“Yes, that’s right. I’m going to train myself in the four-dimensional space and try to advance into the Nascent Soul Stage!”

Mo Xuan and Si Koulie were dumbfounded. They eyed Li Yao as if he were lunatic. Although they were so far away from each other, Professor Mo Xuan was even thinking about extending his hand out of the light beam to touch Li Yao’s forehead and see if he was feverish.

After reading Li Yao’s structural designs for a long time, Professor Mo Xuan frowned and said, “Li Yao, your designs are quite creative. The flowchart of spiritual energy and the distribution of tubes are different from your usual style—they are more brutal and straightforward—but are you sure you are willing to take the risk?

“Li Yao, it’s only been eight years since we got to the Flying Star Sector. You haven’t even reached your thirty yet.

“Eight years might be a long time for an ordinary person, but for a Cultivator in the Core Formation Stage, it is just the blink of an eye. You’ve only spent several years in the Core Formation Stage, and the core that you formed is a very unstable ‘superlative core’.

“There is a long life ahead of you. Are you certain that you want to try breaking into the Nascent Soul Stage in such a risky way so prematurely?”

“I am.” Li Yao narrowed his eyes and said coldly, “I can wait, but the Heaven’s Origin Sector can’t. I must gain access to even more strength as quickly as possible!

“Anyways, I’ve made up my mind. On the way back to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, I will pilot a starship alone and try to break into the Nascent Soul Stage in the special starship!

“I’m hoping that I can be part of the Ice God Project from now on and build the new starship together with you!”

Mo Xuan stared at him for a long time through the light beam, not knowing what was on Li Yao’s mind at all.

However, for a Cultivator, once they had made up their mind, they would not change their decision easily.

The persistence was their belief. Other people may argue with them, but if they were determined, the third-party would not say any more because too much interjection would be dismissing the Cultivator’s belief.

Besides, Li Yao was the real controller of the Glorious Sunlight Group. It was perfectly reasonable that he wanted to build a tiny starship with a slice of the resources of his own corporation.

Mo Xuan tilted his head and thought for a while. He felt that Li Yao did have a point, but he was still uneasy for some reason. In the end, he could not help but nod under Li Yao’s scorching gaze. “Alright. We will spend part of the computational ability on your special starship starting from today.”

…

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Inside the small training room, it sounded like more than ten super shuttles were rushing at the supersonic speed at the same time or hundreds of crystal bombs were exploding.

The walls and the floor were all made of Red Obsidian, whose hardness was five times higher than that of the diamonds. But right now, it was full of bumps and dents like the muddy road after a rain, with interconnecting ravines and gaps everywhere.

What was louder than the rushing sounds and the explosions was the music played inside Li Yao’s body. It fluctuate between high-pitched, low-pitched, and creepy. Gloomy winds seemed to be passing by, and ghosts were crying, making those who heard it scared and full of goosebumps.

“Stop! Stop! I give up. I give up!”

Wu Mayan was wearing a crystal suit inside and an Ares Extension outside. Yet, he was running here and there under the threat of Li Yao, who was wearing nothing except for a mustard-seed suit. He raised his hands to surrender and screamed, “Master. Let me catch my breath. Catch my breath…”

Emotionlessly, Li Yao’s lips curled into an indifferent smile, and he said coldly, “It’s only been five minutes, and you are already asking for a break. Is that really my first disciple’s performance?”

“It is not the fighting with you that overwhelms me but the music played by your core!”

Wu Mayan opened his helmet and said, “Master, I know that your superlative core is extremely unstable and that you keep it revolving at a speed all the time to make sure that it is steady. You also make use of the noises of the core and transform them into the background music that is sort of a mental attack.

“I also know that you’ve selected twenty-three pieces of music from the millions of soundtracks of the Flying Star Sector to express your state of mind when you are angry, thrilled, calm, concerned, or certain of your victory. By the cooperation of the music and your state of mind, not only will you increase your own combat ability, you will also be able to suppress the enemy’s soul!

“Wow. I’m truly impressed by such marvelous techniques, Master. There is nothing but admiration that I can give to you.

“However, Master, when you choose your background music, could you pick the less horrifying pieces?”

Li Yao scratched his nose. “Did I pick the horrifying ones?”

“You did!”

Wu Mayan counted his fingers and said, “I’ll leave the few tunes in the beginning aside. The later few are already terrifying enough, aren’t they? You can tell from their names. ‘Bloody Chihiro’, ‘Incoming Ghosts’, ‘Devils Above’, ‘The Soul-Resting Song of Hell’…

“Honestly speaking, Master, when such background music is played, it is usually the time when the villains in a movie show up!”

Li Yao grinned and licked his lips. “Is that so? I think that they are good. Pleasant enough for me.”

Wu Mayan hesitated for a while and continued. “Also, I’m told that Master is now building a brand-new starship for a breakthrough in the four-dimensional space?

“Master, if I may, is it not a bit too hasty?

“You haven’t reached your thirties yet, and your capability is already in the top-tier of the Flying Star Sector. It is already a miracle of miracles! I don’t think good luck will be with somebody forever. Right now, it seems unnecessary to risk advancing into a higher level.

“In my opinion, you can stay in the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage for ten to twenty years first, and you can try to break into the Nascent Soul Stage when your Cultivation is stable enou—”

Before Wu Mayan was able to complete his remark, he suddenly felt that a blowing wind was coming at him. Hardly had he had chance to react when his throat was grasped by an overwhelming strength!

Hiss… Hiss…

A freezing iron needle seemed to have been pierced into every pore on Wu Mayan’s body. His spiritual gas had been completely locked, and he was not able to fight back at all!

His right hand behind his back, Li Yao grabbed his disciple’s throat with just his left hand for more than half a minute. He stared at the young man emotionlessly while his disciple was kicking crazily with tears and sweat flooding out. In the end, he pulled Wu Mayan to his face and said to him softly, one word after another, “You don’t know what you are doing.

Are you qualified to interfere with how your master trains himself?

“Why don’t you spend the spare time thinking about how to make yourself stronger?

“Remember, I don’t like a disciple with soft bones. If you cannot keep up with me… maybe I will beat you to death by accident someday.”

Li Yao tossed Wu Mayan, who was about to pass out, to the ground as if he were a piece of garbage. Without paying attention to him anymore, Li Yao started his own training.

“Cough cough. Cough cough cough cough cough cough!”

Wu Mayan crouched on the ground like a roasted shrimp. His face was red, and there was the deep, purple mark of hand on his neck.

He coughed so hard that he was almost throwing up his internal organs. His lips shivered for a long time, but he failed to come up with anything.

When he looked at master with fear, Wu Mayan was even more shocked.

Are—are you kidding me? Master’s capability is even higher. He is doing such crazy training in sixty times the standard gravity?

What—what drugs has he been taking the past several months?

Chapter 823 - Return to the Heaven's Origin Sector!

Li Yao’s weird changes scared Wu Mayan, who went to discuss the issue with Xie Anan after considering for a long time.

Xie Anan felt that her master had been acting weird recently, too. He was not as patient as he used to be, and he scorned, if not scolded, her when she failed even one of her refining tasks.

The two of them chatted for a long time at night and were both worried. They decided to observe him in secret for a long time, and if their master remained as weird as right now, they would report the issue to the seniors such as Mo Xuan and Si Koulie so that they could all work on it together.

However, what was odd was that, ever since he lost control of himself and nearly suffocated Wu Mayan, Li Yao seemed to have forgotten everything that had happened. He returned to the determined, outspoken, and straightforward man again. His attitude toward his disciples changed greatly, too. He became as careful and easygoing as the past and never reproached them again.

Moreover, even when Wu Mayan gritted his teeth and asked about the single starship cautiously again, Li Yao did not burst into fury. Instead, he summoned Xie Anan and brought out all his structural designs. Then, he patiently explained his purpose and methods in great detail.

Wu Mayan was a genius in training, and Xie Anan was a rising star in the circle of refiners. After analyzing Li Yao’s structural designs, they had to admit that, theoretically speaking, training on the starship in the four-dimensional space was feasible.

Although it might not be enough to help a person break into the Nascent Soul Stage, their soul would be cleansed and built up. There did not seem to be any harm.

In the end, Wu Mayan and Xie Anan were both relieved. They figured that their master was just in a bad mood earlier because of the stress and had now managed to adjust himself.

They soon forgot the incident.

After all, the two of them, or rather, the entire Flying Star Sector, had been too busy to bother a ‘trifle’ like that.

Ever since the scheme of the Immortal Cultivators was disrupted, and the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Imperium of True Human Beings were discovered, the Flying Star Sector had been like a small pond that was thrown into a boundless ocean. The complicated outside world caught everybody unprepared.

The entire Flying Star Sector was in the fast lane. The sect structure, social form, and the educational system of the Cultivators were all broken. New orders were being established at a lightning-like speed.

The first question that everybody was faced with was the Grand Illusionary Soldiers.

The Grand Illusionary Soldier Project had been carried out for five years. A lot of sects had devoted tremendous resources to produce the Grand Illusionary Soldiers. It was impossible for them to simply abandon all the magical equipment.

After much deliberation, all the Grand Illusionary Soldiers were put on hiatus for half a year. During the half year, Professor Mo Xuan and the crystal processor experts from the important sects scrutinized the star brain, which was in a hibernation mode, to make sure that all the loopholes had been sealed. Then, they divided the computation modules of the star brain into more than ten parts, which were stored in different locations and protected by multiple barriers.

Other than that, Professor Mo Xuan also planted countless ‘telepathic bombs’ inside the star brain and made sure that he would be able to counterattack immediately if the star brain was compromised.

With all the security measures, the star brain’s transmission speed of data dropped a lot, which affected part of the performance of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers. But it was much safer and more trustworthy now. Nobody would be able to seize control over the Grand Illusionary Soldiers after they seized the star brain.

Even so, the uncompleted production plan of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers was aborted. More resources were dedicated to the refinement of the crystal suits and crystal warships again.

The Cultivators had realized clearly that all magical equipment had loopholes and that it was human beings themselves who were most reliable.

Also, a large batch of Grand Illusionary Soldiers were seriously damaged in the insurrection of the Immortal Cultivators, bordering on total losses. To restore their combat ability would consume more resources than to produce new Grand Illusionary Soldiers of the same number.

Those Grand Illusionary Soldiers unfitting for repair were modified with prospecting and excavating functions before they were dedicated to the development of Iron Plateau and Spider Den.

Iron Plateau used to be the heart of the Flying Star Sector, with countless secret treasures and remains of the towns from five thousand years ago buried below the ground. Spider Den’s underground boasted tremendous relics and mother lode residues, too.

Before, because of the division, no single sect had the capability to develop Iron Plateau or Spider Den.

But right now, the Flying Star Sector had joined hands to perform earth-shaking modifications on the two habitable planets.

In the heated construction, deserts turned into green lands, the gray sky was blue again, and many ancient cities buried deep below the ground embraced the sunlight!

Li Yao never lost control of himself again.

He dedicated himself to the Ice God Project wholeheartedly. Not only did he participate in the refining work of the new single starship in person, he also joined the calculation and production of the ‘cosmic slingshot’.

Sometimes, he locked himself in his own room for more than ten days, calculating the structure of his starship and examining the star map. Sometimes, he trained himself in dozens of times the standard gravity until he was bleeding hard.

After tons of structural designs were drafted, he occasionally climbed onto the roof and stared at the night sky. The stars were shining in the deepest part of his eyes, but there was no telling what he was thinking about.

Finally—

In the ninth year after Li Yao and his companions traversed to the Flying Star Sector, the Ice God Project achieved preliminary success!

The first stage of the cosmic slingshot had been completed, and thirteen starships that could cruise across Sectors had been refined, too!

It was time to go home!

…

Ice King was a desolate planet at the edge of the Flying Star Sector. Since it was far from the star, the surface of the planet was entirely frozen. There was no atmosphere, much less breathable air for human beings.

The size and weight of Ice King were extremely low. It was only one tenth the size of Iron Plateau, which meant that the gravity was very weak.

Without the hinderance of the atmosphere, there would be less friction when the starships soared to the universe.

It was a perfect, natural launch base for starships.

Today, Ice King was packed with simmering people whose enthusiasm was almost melting all the icy blocks on the planet!

Amidst the continuous mountains of ice, two enormous man-made ravines, one horizontal and the other vertical, had been dug on the ground and formed a cross. Both ravines were more than three hundred kilometers long. Their profile was as smooth as a mirror without the tiniest flaw. Yet, ripples of spiritual energy were spreading out nonstop, and colorful, complicated rune arrays were glimmering every now and they.

It was the super space jump array left by the Star Ocean Imperium.

At the intersection of the two enormous ravines, a shaft whose walls were empty had been established. Thirteen well-prepared starships were floating in the middle of the shaft, wreathed in bluish colors.

Twelve starships were similar in appearance. There was only a slight difference in certain units on them.

They were Sparkle, and the simplified versions of Sparkle, namely Spark I to Spark XI.

There were few passengers on the twelve starships. Most of the storage space of the starships was loaded with magical equipment units to build star beacons.

After they reached the Heaven’s Origin Sector, they would find an appropriate location to build a super star beacon.

The star beacon would emit mystic rays at a specific frequency. The observers unaware of it would not discover the signals, and even if they did, they would only consider it to be a normal astronomical phenomenon.

Only the Flying Star Sector could lock onto the mystic rays and read the corresponding information according to the signal.

With the navigation of the super star beacon, the following fleets would be larger in scale and sail between the Flying Star Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector more swiftly.

Other than the twelve starships, there was a bizarre-shaped starship that was much smaller in size. In fact, it was less than thirty meters long.

Different from the slender, sharp-edged style of the mainstream starships of the Flying Star Sector, this particular starship was very fat and seemed to be connected by multiple round rings. It was more appropriate to call it a cocoon than to call it a starship.

It was the single starship devised by Li Yao and co-produced by the Grand Illusionary Group and the Star Fighters’ Alliance. It had been designed with the principles of bionics and adopted a lot of materials of the apocalyptic beasts from Iron Plateau. During the flying, the shell of the starship would keep revolving, which made the stability and anti-collision ability of the starship multiple times higher than those of normal starships.

Li Yao had named his special starship ‘Firefly’.

On the platform next to the launch base, all the experts of the Flying Star Sector had been gathered. They were bidding each other farewell.

The first echelon of Cultivators to go to the Heaven’s Origin Sector included Luo Xingzi, who was a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, Lei Dalu and Bai Kaixin, who were both in the Core Formation Stage, and Wu Mayan and Xie Anan, Li Yao’s two disciples.

“We’re finally coming home!”

Looking at the shining starships in the blue brightness not far away and the splendid view of the super space jump array, Li Yao, Professor Mo Xuan, and the rest of the Cultivators from the Heaven’s Origin Sector hugged each other. Everybody was emotional and desperate to go home.

“The Feathered Snakes Brotherhood made terrible mistakes in the insurrection of the Immortal Cultivators. Although it was because of the enchantment of Xiao Xuance, the previous leader, there is nothing we can to make up for what we did.

“Now, we can only wash away the disgrace that has choked the Feathered Snakes Brother with blood and bravery. Fierce battles are awaiting us in the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Every Cultivator of the Flying Star Sector must lead the charge. One day, the Feathered Snakes Brotherhood will become one of the most respected sects in the Flying Star Sector again because of our valiancy!” Luo Xingzi roared to fifty Cultivators of the Feathered Snakes Tribe who were fully armed in distinctive armors. The fifty-one of them were all ready to fight.

“The most important thing about us Cultivators is friendship. The Cultivators of the Heaven’s Origin Sector have done us a great favor, and now it’s time that we return it!” Lei Dalu bellowed to the members of the Great Horn Exo Society, his belly protruding.

After ten years of development, the Great Horn Exo Society had become one of the strongest Exo Societies of the Flying Star Sector.

However, because of the limited carrying capacity, he had only selected a hundred experts to go with him, including the new-generation warriors such as Zuo Xiaohu and Lu Dian.

“Master, you must be very careful. Don’t be too persistent you if cannot make a breakthrough for now. It will be a disaster if you become mentally deranged!” Xie Anan said to Li Yao uneasily.

Li Yao smiled. He patted Xie Anan’s head and said, “Don’t worry. I’ve made full preparations. I will not be mentally deranged. Just wait for it. When we arrive in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, I will certainly show you… a brand-new master!

“Right. Have you brought the thing I gave you?”

Xie Anan nodded her head. “I have. However—”

Li Yao waved his hand. “No ‘however’. Just remember what I said. Everything will be good.

“Alright. Ice King has reached the expected trajectory. It’s about time that we march to the Heaven’s Origin Sector!”

Chapter 824 - Mouse Bai

“Ladies and gentlemen in front of the light beam, this is ‘Across the Heaven’s Origin Sector’, a special live segment hosted by the Flying Star TV. The most thrilling moment is about to come. The first echelon of Cultivators to go to the Heaven’s Origin Sector has boarded on their starships!

“Ten thousand years! We’ve lost contact with our brother worlds for ten thousand years after the Star Ocean Imperium collapsed.

“For the ten thousand years, we’ve been resisting the extraterrestrial devils, the demon beasts, and the apocalypse in the cold, bleak universe all by ourselves.

“But everything will be different from now on. We are about to fight side by side with another Sector!

“Let’s congratulate the return home of Li Yao, Mo Xuan, and the other friends from the Heaven’s Origin Sector and pray that the Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector will have a safe journey and bring the greetings of the Flying Star Sector to our brothers in the Heaven’s Origin Sector!”

At this moment, the Flying Star Sector was silent. The ordinary people closed their eyes and prayed in silence, while the Cultivators made hundreds of different gestures and sent telepathic thoughts of bliss into the universe.

At the periphery of the Spider Den Space Zone, on a ragged carrier, dozens of thickheaded, brutal-looking crew members crowded in a stinky cabin. Their muscles were so tight that their clothes were almost being ripped apart, and their fists, which were the size of a pot, were twisted so hard that sweat seemed to be dropping, while they prayed for the travelers in a way that did not seem praying at all.

Puchi!

While those rude and yet kind men were praying quietly, an inharmonious noise came from a corner. Somebody laughed in a shrieking voice.

“Mouse Bai, you are asking for trouble again!”

A muscular man with a long beard opened his eyes, only to see an extremely ugly young man whose head was disproportionally huge.

The young man was wearing an expression of easiness. He was actually yawning at such an exciting moment. Instead of praying with everybody else, he had taken out a bag of peanuts from god knew where and was enjoying himself. For some reason, his appearance made people want to beat him.

The young man was really ugly.

He seemed congenitally deficient and malnourished after he was born. He was only around 1.3 meters all. His pinky skin was wrinkled. His ears were larger than fans. His nose was long and red. Two of his big incisors protruded out, but his eyes were as small as needle tips, and the freckles that surrounded his eyes were as dense as the stars in a night sky, making him wear a natural eye-patch all the time. He did not seem to be a good person at all but fitted every description of a thief.

The young man’s surname was Bai. Since he looked like a mouse, and he kept two weird white mice as his pets, everybody called him ‘Mouse Bai’.

Mouse Bai had boarded the carrier three months ago.

At that time, Spider Den was being developed heatedly. The demand on carriers and engineering starships was very high. The carrier that belonged to a private company joined the gold rush and worked for half a year on Spider Den.

When they left Spider Den, the young man somehow got himself on board.

Other than space pirates, there were many civilians on Spider Den, too, who were the victims kidnapped by the space pirates, the posterity of the victims, or the family of the space pirates. Not all of them had committed crimes. Many of them were even slaves who had been oppressed for a long time.

After Spider Den was taken over, naturally, the victims could not be all killed. After rigorous identification and lie-testing, the residents of Spider Den who were innocent were asked to join the construction of Spider Den if they were eighteen or older and go to temporary school if they were not.

Even so, many people were plagued by their bad habits. They hated working as much as they hated school, and they simply horsed around and made trouble every day.

Mouse Bai was exactly such a man.

When he just got on board, his situation was much worse. He was essentially a skeleton, and he had a giant hole that basically incrusted on his head. The doctor on the starship said after examination that his skull had been bashed into several pieces. 99.9% of the people would have died of such injury, but the young man was tough enough to survive.

His injury somehow triggered the sympathy of the captain of the starship, who sent his photo and his fingerprint to Spider Den to check, only to find that the young man was an orphan who roamed the streets every day. A few days ago, he accidentally fell into a mining pit. Everybody thought that he was killed, but he somehow ended up on the carrier.

He was not a space pirate, nor did he ever commit any crimes. He looked rather pitiful for a teenager. Therefore, the captain took him in.

The young man's vitality was tougher than that of a cockroach. It took him less than a month to be fully recovered, but because of his indolence, which he developed on Spider Den, he was the first to come for dinner and the last to go to work.

The captain was kind enough to ask him to take several courses through the crystal processor, but he fell asleep every time a book was opened.

Seeing that he was not interested in books, several crew members meant to teach him martial arts, but he only laughed and refused them.

After several days, everybody on the carrier was pissed. They only regretted that they could not open the ventilation tube and throw the slug into space.

The only shining point about the scalawag was that he was good-tempered and smiling all day. He was never angry when other people cursed him or pulled his ears. Even when other people snapped his head in outrage, he would act like it was nothing. There was no telling whether he was broad-minded or simply shameless.

Mouse Bai was still enjoying his peanuts although dozens of muscular men were glaring at him. He even picked his teeth with his little finger now and then, utterly satisfied.

“Hey!” One of the muscular man held his ears and pulled him up, his saliva darting to the young man’s face like nails. “Mouse Bai. It’s fine that you are lazy and sleazy normally. But how can you be so indifferent when we are all praying for Li Yao and the other travelers?”

Mouse Bao simply allowed his ears to be pulled and continued enjoying his peanuts. He said with a smile, “I knew that my boy Li Yao is an unbelievably lucky man and that I could trust him to do anything nicely and smoothly.

“If so, why do I have to waste my time with a useless prayer?”

“Huh?” Brother Hong was even more furious. He pinched Mouse Bai’s ear hard. “You have a tongue disproportional to your size, wrinkly Mouse Bai. Li Yao is the top-tier super experts of the Flying Star Sector, and a formidable man who slayed Xiao Xuance? You are no match even for his booger. How did you dare to call him ‘my boy’?”

“Hiss…” Mouse Bai pretended that he was in pain. But the smile on his face told everyone that the pain was actually nothing for him. “Brother Hong, as I have repeated carefully to everybody three thousand two hundred and twenty-five times, you can beat me or curse me at your will, but can you please stop calling me… Mouse Bai?”

Brother Hong burst into laughter. “Why don’t you look at your reflection in your pee? What are you if not Mouse Bai?”

Mouse Bai blinked his eyes and said, “Please call me… Bo—Brother Bai.”

All the crew members were laughing hard. Brother Hong mocked him. “You’re a lazy kid who can’t drag or carry anything. Every time we ask you to do anything, you always have excuses. You even mocked our martial arts. What, we are now worthy to be your brothers?”

Mouse Bai yawned and said, “I have explained many times. I was born for something big. Of course, I’m not interested in the trivia such as repairing the ventilation rune arrays, cleaning the toilets, or dredging the sewer.”

Brother Hong sneered, “What is ‘something big’, B—Brother Bai?”

Mouse Bai tilted his head and thought carefully. “Caught in a cosmic storm, engaged with space pirates, visited by the extraterrestrial devils… Should such incidents occur, I will certainly show up and help you handle everything well in return for your favor to save my life.”

Everybody was laughing even harder. Brother Hong was so amused that he curled his fingers which were thicker than Mouse Bai’s wrists and snapped Mouse Bai’s big forehead. “Stop bragging about yourself. If you really want to return the favor, just get the hell out of here as soon as possible. You are not only a nuisance for us but also a waste of the food on the carrier!”

“Rest assured.”

Mouse Bai smiled and tapped the rusted secondhand crystal processor on his wrist. A mottled light beam was projected.

It was a virtual application form displayed on the light beam.

“I’m feeling rather embarrassed myself that I’ve troubled you for so long. Besides, it’s too peaceful and boring here.

Since I have had enough rest, I’m thinking of doing something more interesting that I’ve never done before.”

The glittering two words ‘Burning Prairie’ on the light beam dazed all the crew members briefly, who looked at each other in bewilderment, only to laugh so crazily that the small carrier seemed to be exploding!

“The Burning Prairie Fleet?”

“The wrinkled Mouse Bai is going to join the Burning Prairie Fleet?”

The Burning Prairie Fleet was a new fleet currently being planned in the Flying Star Sector. The purpose was to break the traditions of the sects and the Exo Societies and to gather all the young elites of the Flying Star Sector who would be trained from scratch. It was estimated that they would become the most influential forces of the Flying Star Sector decades later.

When the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings arrived in the Flying Star Sector, the Burning Prairie Fleet would give them a great welcome gift!

In short, it was a fleet targeting the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings and a future fleet established for the war a hundred years from now!

‘Burning Prairie’ was named after the proverb ‘the smallest spark can set ablaze an entire prairie’, with the hope that the two tiny sparks that were the Flying Star Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector would raise a furious fire of humanity in the dark forest!

The Burning Prairie Fleet might decide the fate of the Flying Star Sector.

Therefore, all the sects devoted a lot of resources and sent their most distinguished disciples to join it.

The Burning Prairie Fleet was also recruiting students from military schools in the entire Flying Star Sector. All the children from six to fourteen were allowed to apply.

A hundred years later, those people would be slightly more than a hundred years old. For Cultivators, it was the perfect balance point of spiritual energy and life experience. They would be at the peak state of their life and work as the pillars of the Flying Star Sector.

The Flying Star Sector was all shocked by the news. The disciples of the noble families were all cramming to apply for the fleet.

Because of the fierce competition, the pass rate of the first test was just 1 in 13,000.

The entrance test of the Burning Prairie Fleet was extremely rigorous even for the students from military schools. It was said that one of Luo Xingzi’s great grandsons were eliminated during the test.

And now this wrinkled mouse was planning to apply?

Was there a greater joke in the world?

Brother Hong laughed so hard that he was burping. “What makes you think that you are qualified to apply for the military school of the Burning Prairie Fleet? Ha. You’ve even changed your name into… Bai Xingjian? The name sounds awesome enough, but it does not seem to match your magnificent appearance!”

Mouse Bai smiled and shook his head. “Wrong. I’m not going to apply for the Burning Prairie Fleet; I’m going to… command the Burning Prairie Fleet.”

Everybody was literally rolling on the ground in laughter. Holding his belly, Brother Hong laughed so hard that he almost could not catch his breath. “Hahahaha. You are trying to murder me with laughter, aren’t you? Since when has Mouse Bai become such a man of justice? Are you planning to defeat the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings as the commander-in-chief of the Burning Prairie Fleet one day?”

Mouse Bai opened his mouth and planned to explain, but after thinking for a moment, he shut his mouth with a self-deprecating smile, before he retreated to a corner.

“Ladies and gentlemen, the countdown has begun. Our warriors will be off in ten seconds!”

The host on the light beam was shouting desperately, catching all the crew members’ attention. Nobody bothered with the fanfaronade any longer.

Mouse Bai narrowed his eyes. Lights and shadows were alternating on his face. Glimmers polished after hundreds of years of time were spreading in the eyes of the extremely ugly young man.

Two lumps suddenly protruded on the back of Mouse Bai’s neck. Two little mice crawled out of the lumps soon.

The two mice had smooth skin and looked more appealing than himself. There was wisdom in their eyes as if they were intelligent creatures. The tail of one of the mice had a hint of bright gold.

Mouse Bai snapped his fingers. Two peanuts flew into the air, only to be caught by one of the mice with its tail, which then shared the food with its companion.

“You understand me, don’t you?” Mouse Bai said to the mouse with a golden tail in a smile.

Weird brilliance was blinking in the mouse’s eyes, as if it did understood what he had just said.

Mouse Bai threw another peanut to the mouse and said causally, “You must know why I am going to command the Burning Prairie Fleet and confront the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings, don’t you?

“Of course, it is not for the Flying Star Sector, or for the future of the civilization of mankind, or for other crap like that.

“It’s only because… I want to taste the feeling of failure.”

Chapter 825 - Breaking the Cocoon

“Activation of the super space jump array of Ice King, countdown!”

Inside the control center, hundreds of the best starship experts and astronomers all held their breath. The air was so intense that sparks were almost bursting out. Si Koulie, the leader of the Star Fighters’ Alliance, entered a stream of spiritual energy into the activation rune array with a solemn face.

Hum!

For a moment, deep down Ice King, something seemed to have exploded, triggering a minor earthquake. Something unfathomably strong appeared to be erupting from the core of the planet crazily!

“Ten! Nine! Eight!”

The countdown of the last ten seconds began. The entire Flying Star Sector was enshrouded in silence. Everybody held their breath, gritted their teeth, and counted the time in their heart.

Deep below the two enormous ravines, both hundreds of kilometers long, bluish colors were soaring like tides and soon dashed out of the ground. They darted toward the sky like a rising tower!

“Seven! Six! Five!”

The power rune arrays in the rear of the thirteen crystal warships at the bottom of the ‘tower’ were glittering. The bodies of the crystal warships turned transparent. Thousands of runes overlapped and seemed to be rushing out at any point.

“Four! Three! Two!”

There was no atmosphere on Ice King. Naturally, there was no blue sky. The high tower of mystic colors extended to the endless stars toward the edge of the universe.

It was no longer a high tower but a highway and a bridge that connected two worlds!

“One!”

“Zero!”

“Launch!”

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The exhaust flames of the thirteen starships were blown dozens of kilometers away along the ravines. The blast of energy was so intense that the frozen ground ten square kilometers nearby was all unfrozen. The ice blocks were vaporized directly before they were heated into liquid, turning into glamorous bluish ice crystals in a hazy mist.

In the middle of the bluish mist, the thirteen starships rushed out like arrows released from a bow on the universal bridge formed by the space jump array. It took them only three seconds to break out of the gravity of Ice King and accelerate to their maximum speed!

Right now, only the large crystal cameras that had been set in the orbit of the planet earlier could capture the shadows of the thirteen starships.

At the end of the universal bridge, the bluish colors spread out into a splendid nebula that was fluctuating mysteriously as if it were alive.

The thirteen starships dived into the nebula unstoppably!

Inside the nebula, electric arcs were shining, and sparks were spluttering. A moment later, the entire nebula abruptly condensed into a blue spot, before it exploded into billions of blue beams that blossomed in various directions like unprecedented fireworks.

When the fireworks died down, the thirteen starships and the universal bridge had vanished, raising a round of exclamations from the audience.

The thirteen starships had run to a new world across the universal bridge!

Their battles in the Flying Star Sector had come to an end for now, but new battles were awaiting them elsewhere!

…

Inside Firefly, Li Yao sat cross-legged and kept his body steady with the restriction of the gravity rune arrays, while he gritted his teeth to endure the side effects of the space jump.

He had entered the four-dimensional universe again and experienced the uncanny phenomena that could never be felt in the three-dimensional universe for a second time.

He ‘saw’ that his body had turned transparent. Not only could he ‘look internally’ and watch his internal organs and every vein and nerve, he could even unfold and stretch out all the veins and nerves with a telepathic thought in order to examine his body structure more carefully.

Even his brain could be unfolded into a plane. His brain cells were like watery grapes hanging inside his brain waiting for him to taste.

Time seemed to be fully at his control in this place, but it all seemed meaningless, too. All of the episodes of his life had been piled up like a heap of cards and could be sorted in any order.

Training. Training. Don’t forget your training!

Li Yao took a deep breath, or rather, he felt that he took a deep breath, and forced himself to enter the training state.

In the four-dimensional universe, he could clearly see that a new organ the size of an egg had grown out on the end of his spine. It was gray and divided into two halves. There were bumps and dents everywhere on the new organ, making it looked like a small cerebrum.

Li Yao knew that it was the second new organ for a Cultivator after the ‘spiritual root’—the ‘second brain’!

The first brain was mainly responsible for the body of flesh and blood, including all the activities of the cells and nerve endings.

The second brain, on the other hand, was solely in charge of manipulating the fickle spiritual energy so that the Cultivators could absorb and utilize the spiritual energy faster and more efficiently.

More precisely speaking, the second brain was a ‘virtualized’ and ‘spiritualized’ brain. It was a transitional organ in the process of transformation from a body of flesh and blood into an entity of pure energy.

Almost a hundred golden spiritual threads as thin as hairs extended out of Li Yao’s second brain and formed a shining golden ball at the center of his stomach.

The golden ball was his core. More precisely speaking, it was a polymer of his subconsciousness and his spiritual energy.

The second brain was the real entity, while the core was the source of energy. They were indispensable to each other.

Li Yao controlled his second brain carefully and extended even more golden threads into the core.

His core started revolving rapidly. The halo surrounding the core grew more brilliant. With slight vibrations, the core was playing pieces of soul-stirring music.

Faster. Faster! The revolution speed of my core can be higher. If it can reach a hundred thousand revolutions per second, maybe I will be able to advance into a new level!

A hundred thousand revolutions per second. I’m going to make it!

Gradually, his core turned into what seemed to be a small bud that was about to blossom during the high-speed revolutions.

Li Yao was fascinated. He controlled his every vein and nerve while he poured all the spiritual energy inside his body into the core.

The core was everything for him now. He completely lost all sense of time. After nobody knew how long, the core slightly moved, and the ‘petals’ around the core all opened.

Li Yao was overjoyed. His soul dived into his body and flew next to the core.

Right then, an abrupt change took place!

His soul shook violently. In a trance, his core suddenly turned from a blossoming bud into a demonic cocoon. After a crack, the cocoon exploded, revealing a bloody shadow that darted out, then wreathed and swallowed his soul!

“Ah!” Li Yao exclaimed. He opened his eyes suddenly, only to find that he was sitting at the center of the training room as before.

There was nothing wrong except for the cold sweat on his forehead.

“Was it another nightmare?” Li Yao mumbled to himself. He raised his head and was dumbfounded.

He found that another person was sitting in front of him, his eyebrows furrowed, deep in thought.

He was on Firefly alone, and he was in the middle of a journey in the four-dimensional universe. There was no way that a second person could get on board.

But the stranger was indeed not a second person, because he was another Li Yao!

“Don’t you find it very odd?”

The stranger sitting in front of him who had an identical appearance to Li Yao raised his eyebrow and said, “What exactly is the uncanny dream that we have been having ever since we knew things? In the dream, we came from a weird place named ‘Earth’. Do you think that there is really such a place named ‘Earth’?”

“What?”

Li Yao’s mind was a mess. He could barely think properly.

Another voice came over from behind him. Li Yao turned around, only to find that another version of himself was calculating something quickly in front of the desk. The third Li Yao calculated while he said solemnly, “In the past, we always believed that maybe some space zone out there in the universe indeed had a planet named ‘Earth’ and that our soul was teleported and reincarnated in the body of an orphan living in the magical equipment graveyard in the suburb of Floating Spear City on the planet of Heaven’s Origin after we were killed in a car accident on the planet named ‘Earth’.

Li Yao could not help but nod. “Exactly.”

“But think about it more carefully now. The theory cannot stand any scrutiny!”

A third voice came over next to Li Yao. A new Li Yao was scratching his hair and declared in pain, “From the uncanny dream we had in the beginning, we could tell that the so-called ‘Earth’ was a barren world that was absolutely devoid of spiritual energy. Those living on Earth were all ordinary people, and their souls were the feeblest ones.

“In our previous life, we were a common car mechanic. Naturally, our soul was not very strong!”

“Here comes the question!” A fifth Li Yao held his arms and leaned against the wall, while he said, deep in thought, “The universe is full of peril. Even the Immortal Cultivators of the Imperium of True Human Beings could only be teleported after they refined their souls into ‘star children’. If so, how could the soul of an ordinary person on Earth be teleported through the sea of stars?

“It is very possible that his soul would be minced apart by the radiations and the ionosphere before it floated out of the atmosphere, not to mention cruising across thousands of Sectors and tens of thousands of space zones!”

A sixth Li Yao suddenly showed up right in front Li Yao. He blinked his eyes and said, “Let’s say that everything before is just a coincidence. But what happened later does not make any sense.

“I am talking about Ou Yezi’s possession.

“Ou Yezi was the leader of the Hundred Smelting Guilt forty thousand years ago and a legendary master of refining. His Cultivation was too high for anybody to reach, and his soul was immensely strong!

“Even though his body was so seriously wounded in the time travel of forty thousand years that he could not avoid a regular high-speed crystal train, his soul could not have been hurt too badly with the protection of his body, could it?

“Then, why did his possession fail?

“In the past, I always thought that it was because I was an earthling reincarnated in this world. My body had been possessed once. Therefore, it could not be possessed again.

“But that theory barely makes any sense. The earthling Li Yao was just an ordinary person whose soul was extremely weak. It should have been more than simple for Ou Yezi to wipe out my soul, shouldn’t it?”

Li Yao was hooked by the questions. He pondered for a long time. Then, all of a sudden, he and the ten or so of himself in the room asked at the same time, “The Vulture Plan?”

Chapter 826 - Dark Reflection

Li Yao suddenly shuttered. Firefly was gone, and he was floating in front of a blue planet in a foreign space zone again.

A frustrated, depressed voice was echoing inside his ears. “We’ve failed. We’ve completely failed!

“It’s too strong and too dark. We cannot destroy it. Can’t!”

Then, Li Yao heard himself roaring, “No. The Vulture Plan has not failed yet. Even if I drift to the end of the universe, I will go on fighting and return one day!”

BAM!

The picture blossomed like broken glass. He found himself back in the cabin of Firefly faced with dozens of himself, who were all deep in thought.

“It seems that the Vulture Plan is indeed very important for us. So important that we could not forget it even though we were reincarnated after a long journey. We even gave ourselves the nickname ‘Vulture’ subconsciously in order to keep us from not forgetting it.”

The dozen Li Yaos merged together one by one. They mumbled, “Does the so-called ‘Earth’ exist in reality? If it does, is it really a regular planet without the slightest spiritual energy?

“I vaguely recall that there are legends of Pangu, Nuwa, and the Primeval Lord of Heaven on Earth, too. There are also dinosaurs, fossils, and prehistoric creatures. But they are vastly different from ours when it comes to details.

“On Earth, dinosaurs were just pure ferocious beasts. They were not intelligent creatures, and they never created a brilliant civilization.

“How is Earth related to the worlds of Cultivators? Was the earthling Li Yao really a common mechanic? How were we banished or escaped from Earth to the Heaven’s Origin Sector?

“Mysterious. It’s really mysterious!

“Do you not want to unveil the Vulture Plan and even return to Earth someday to find out the ultimate truth?”

After every sentence, two Li Yaos would meld into one. When the last questions were posed, there was only one identical self left in front of the real Li Yao.

Li Yao licked his lips and almost nodded on instinct, but a stinging pain suddenly came over from the depths of his soul. He was alarmed and suddenly blurted out, “Who are you exactly?”

The Li Yao in front of him smiled. “You know it. I am you, except that I am the part in your soul regarding the ‘Vulture Plan’ that has been locked and sealed!

“I have no idea why the part was sealed. Perhaps some people did not want us to know the truth?

“All in all, when you were striving for the Nascent Soul Stage just now, you caused a crack on the indestructible seal. That was why so many pieces of your soul leaked out and raised a series of questions for you!

“Now, you’ve found so many inexplicable points. Do you not want to find out the real answer?

“Come on. Let’s join together and break the seal. We will unravel the secrets of the ‘Vulture Plan’ and find out what exactly the so-called ‘Earth’ is.”

The stranger was talking in a bewildering way while he extended his right hand.

Li Yao held his breath, his eyes full of confusion. He could not help but raise his right hand and touch the stranger’s fingertips.

With a casual smile, the stranger mumbled, “Yes. Just like that. After we are completely melded, we will definitely find out the truth of every—Ahhh!”

His last word was disrupted by a miserable scream.

As it turned out, intense electric arcs suddenly burst out from Li Yao’s fingertips and pierced at the stranger. Caught unprepared, the stranger was immediately wreathed in electric arcs!

The stranger shrieked in outrage, “What—what are you doing? Do you not want to find out the truth?”

Li Yao sniffed. The confusion in his eyes was all gone, and they were now as clear as water and as sharp as blades. “Are you planning to fool me with such petty tricks? I don’t believe in your locks and seals!

“Let me think carefully about what you are exactly!”

Li Yao thought quickly. Pictures of the past quickly sild in front of his eyes, and he concentrated all his computational ability on scanning for the anomalies.

So, he found one!

It was during his fierce battle against Yan Xibei who had an ‘apocalyptic body’ on Iron Plateau. The two of them had fought so hard that they were stained with a lot of each other’s blood!

Li Yao’s pupils shrank violently. “You are the Blood Stripe Virus.”

When he said ‘Blood Stripe Virus’, the stranger shrieked even more twistedly than just now. The electric arcs ridded him of his disguise bit by bit, revealing a person identical to Li Yao, except that his face was as crimson as blood, which made him looked like a weird statue covered in a layer of red lacquer.

The Blood Stripe Virus, a mysterious alien species in the universe, boasted terrifying mind control and body transformation techniques. They were the masters of the Titan Warriors and the launchers of the apocalypse of the Flying Star Sector five thousand years ago!

Cold brilliant was spreading out like ripples in Li Yao’s eyes, as he sneered, “So, this explains a lot.

“Decades ago, you snuck into the body of Yan Xibei, the best warrior of Iron Plateau at that time, and bewildered him in secret so that he became one of the four kings of the Temple of Immortals. You then influenced him to refine the apocalyptic body and carry out your plan.

“Eight years ago, during the fierce battle between me and Yan Xibei, you saw that Yan Xibei was on the losing side. Therefore, you hid yourself in one drop of his blood and infected me when the blood touched my body!

“However, at that time, you were still very feeble. Therefore, you simply lurked and accumulated your strength.

“Right. When I was training in Yan Xinjian’s residence below Spider Den, there was a time when I was agitated and having hallucinations. That must have been you testing me because you had recovered part of your strength, wasn’t it?

“However, the result of your test was that my soul was still very solid, and it was not a good time to start swallowing me yet. Therefore, you settled down again.

“In the end, when I clashed with the star child from the Imperium of True Human Beings and my soul was seriously wounded by his self-detonation, you finally got your chance!

“When my soul was shattered and I was cast into a coma, you built the illusions of the Heaven’s Origin Sector deep inside my head, trying to stop my soul from struggling and push me into an eternal sleep. If so, you would have been able to occupy my body, which does not belong to you!

“But at the critical moment, you accidentally triggered the ‘Vulture Plan’, which had been hidden in the deepest part of my soul and woke me up!

“There was nothing you could do, and you feared that an attempted possession might alarm me. Therefore, you changed your methodology and continued influencing me in secret.

“Now that I think of it, the decisions I made recently are so weird!

“I have reached the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage in my twenties, and my combat ability is equivalent to that of the Nascent Soul Stage. My training speed is not slow. Instead, it is too fast!

“As the saying goes, more haste, less speed. My foundations are not steady, and my beliefs are not firm. The priority for me right now should be stabilize myself in my current level instead of making breakthroughs blindly. Is it really necessary for me to train in the four-dimensional universe?

“The war of two Sectors depends on the comprehensive capability. Even if I advance into the Nascent Soul Stage, I’m afraid that I still won’t be the decisive factor of the war at all!

“Besides, even if I wanted to train myself in the four-dimensional universe, I could have established a training room in Sparkle. Why did I have to build a starship for myself?

“Right now, I’ve finally realized that I was bewildered by you when I made those decisions!

“You meant to possess my body when I was trying to make a breakthrough by force in the four-dimensional space, when my soul would be most vulnerable!

“If I were on Sparkle, Professor Mo Xuan and the others would have been monitoring my training status closely. Should anything have gone wrong, they would immediately have broken into the room to rescue me, and they certainly would have discovered the anomalies in me!

“But on Firefly, I am all by myself. If an accident happens to me, I will have absolutely no one to turn to, isn’t it so?”

The bloody Li Yao in the front was gradually melting with mists of blood spreading out like the icy sculptures under the sun.

But his countenance was becoming more and more evil and weird. He smiled and said, “We are indeed smart. We got most things right, but we are afraid that we are wrong about one thing.

“It’s true that we have contracted the Blood Stripe Virus, but the life form of the Blood Stripe Virus is totally different from human beings, or any other creatures. They do not have self-awareness, thinking ability, or a soul!

“Therefore, I am not the Blood Stripe Virus; I am you. More precisely speaking, I am the other side of you.”

Li Yao’s eyelids were bouncing quickly. He could not have been any warier.

The bloody Li Yao opened his hands and smiled wickedly. “Don’t be nervous. When there is brightness, there is darkness. Brightness and darkness are just two sides of the same coin. You have always pretended to be chivalrous, determined, persistent…

“But, do ask yourself, are you really as righteous, resolute, and unwavering as you appear to be?

“When you struggled to survive in the magical equipment graveyard, did you never have the intense want to kill someone?

“Faced with your classmates’ mockery and watching them riding their luxury shuttles, were you not strongly jealous of them?

“While the overwhelming beast tide was coming at you, was there never a moment when you thought to give up everything and run away immediately?

“When Yan Xibei and Xiao Xuance preached their ideology to you, did you never have a second thought and wonder whether or not the path they’d been walking on was the right one?

“When you learned that the apocalypse from the Imperium of True Human Beings was about to hit the Heaven’s Origin Sector, did you never have dark thoughts in your mind and complained to yourself that the Heaven’s Origin Sector was burdened by the Flying Star Sector?

“Was there never a moment when you even thought that it would be best if the apocalypse changed its direction right then and lunged at the Flying Star Sector instead?

“It was the dark thoughts that you once had, your hatred, jealousy, fear, suspicion, wavering, fury, and confusion which gradually brewed, grew, and proliferated, that gave birth to me in the end.

“Who am I? I am just a tiny reflection of your soul in the abyss of darkness.”

Chapter 827 - Roaring Bloody Tide

Li Yao gnashed his teeth in contempt. “I got it. The Blood Stripe Virus is like a key that opened the zone deep inside my brain that stored the negative emotions and the dark thoughts. The devil in my heart was triggered and transformed into a scumbag that is you.”

The bloody Li Yao smiled casually and replied, “What can the devil in your heart do? It is just redundant thoughts during your training. When there are too many irrelevant thoughts, the normal functioning of your brain will be greatly hindered. Not only will your computational ability plummet, your telepathic thoughts will sometimes even overflow, which will cause you to be mentally deranged. Your soul will collapse, and you will turn into a retard!

“How can such a devil be compared to me?

“I’m merely helping you consider things from a different point of view.

“There is no need to be so resistant to the infection of the Blood Stripe Virus. The life form of the Blood Stripe Virus is entirely different from that of human beings. The two parties have no conflict of interest. You may consider their relationship as a symbiotic one, which is ubiquitous in the universe. There is no need to talk about other species. Take human beings for example. Inside the bodies of the human beings, many beneficial germs such as lactobacillus are living.

“Even though you are in the Core Formation Stage, as long as you cannot get rid of the body of flesh and blood, you will have to live in harmony with the lactobacillus. Since you do not reject lactobacillus, why do you loathe Blood Stripe Virus so much?”

“My lactobacillus do not utter sounds in my head to bewilder me every day, nor will they affect my will!” Li Yao said coldly.

“How do you know?” the bloody Li Yao asked. “How do you know that the lactobacillus living in your body are not influencing your brain without you knowing in a mysterious way that you cannot comprehend?

“Moreover, is the resistance you are showing right now actually made by the lactobacillus, who are manipulating your brain because they do not want a new competitor to enter the body?”

Li Yao was suddenly lost for words.

The bloody Li Yao laughed and opened his hands. “Don’t be nervous. It is pure jibber-jabber. See? I’m good at considering problems from the points of view that you ignore. When we are combined, we will be able to analyze problems in a much more comprehensive way. We will understand the essence of training. Our computational ability will be much higher, too!”

Li Yao could not help but take a step back. “No matter how marvelous your speech is, I will not be controlled by the Blood Stripe Virus!”

“What’s bad about merging with me?” The bloody Li Yao opened his arms and said sincerely, “Do you not want to find out the truth of the ‘Vulture Plan’? Do you not want to know why you ended up in the Heaven’s Origin Sector? Do you not want to return to Earth and reveal the secrets behind everything?

“Stop lying to me. I know you do. Ever since you had memories, and ever since you had those bizarre, uncanny Earth dreams, the questions have been baffling you, harassing you, and torturing you!

“I am you. The questions I asked a moment ago were the ones that have popped up in your mind millions of times before. Do you dare say that you do not want to find out the ultimate answers?

“But it is not an easy task to look for the answers!

“If Earth does exist, it is perhaps in a world independent from all the worlds of Cultivators. Going there will not be as simple as returning to the Heaven’s Origin Sector from the Flying Star Sector. If anything, it will be a hundred times more difficult than directly jumping to the Empyrean Terminus Sector, the capital of the Imperium of True Human Beings, from the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

“With your current aptitude, you will not be able to go to Earth and find out the answers in your entire life, even if you live for three hundred years, five hundred years, or even a thousand years!

“Right now, only the Blood Stripe Virus can help us!

“Do you remember Yan Xibei’s ‘apocalyptic body’? Yan Xibei was a low-level qi-trainer who was crippled and heavily wounded, but with the apocalyptic body, he boasted the strength close to the Nascent Soul Stage!

“Right now, you have created an undocumented approach of training by breaking into the superlative height of the Core

Formation Stage. Your combat ability is close to that of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators!

“If you have the strength of the Blood Stripe Virus under your control, you will be able to build your own ‘apocalyptic body’. Just think about it. What a horrifying level it will be! Chances are that the monsters in the Divinity Transformation Stage of the Imperium of True Human Beings will be no match for you!

“Your Cultivation has always been on the road less travelled. It is already so troublesome to form the core. How long do you think it will take for you to generate your Nascent Soul by normal training methods? It is even possible that you will never enter the Nascent Soul Stage in your life!

“Therefore, you might as well walk on the Blood Stripe Virus’ path. You will build an ‘apocalyptic body’ and then condense a unique ‘Bloody Soul’!

“After you build an apocalyptic body and condense a Bloody Soul, not just the threats of the Blood Demon Sector, even the attack of the Imperium of True Human Beings will be nothing in our eyes. By then, we will save the Heaven’s Origin Sector and boast the strength of a higher level that can allow us to barge into the territory of the Imperium of True Human Beings or explore Earth, which is beyond all the Sectors of the Cultivators!

“Isn’t it the best choice right now?”

The bloody Li Yao’s voice was enchanting and gentle.

As his spell went on, his hands grew longer and longer still while they extended to Li Yao’s face. “Come on. Accept the strength of the Blood Stripe Virus. This is the only path…”

Confusion was written all over Li Yao’s face. He seemed to be mired in chaos. It was not until the bloody hands almost touched his face that his eyelids suddenly jumped, and he roared resolutely, “No!

“I will not be fooled!

“Yan Xibei’s lesson is as fresh as yesterday for me right now. You are just trying to spread the Blood Stripe Virus through me so that you can enslave all human beings!

“By then, the human beings will be monsters who know everything about destruction but nothing about construction, just like the ‘Titan Warriors’ once enslaved by you!

“In your dreams! I will never let you occupy my body!”

Li Yao waved his hands hard, raising a storm of spiritual energy, which ripped the bloody person into thousands of small pearls of blood, each of which seemed to be displaying a weird face deep below their surface.

In a series of twisted laughter, the blood pearls vanished into thin air like bubbles in sunlight.

The next moment, a voice that was both familiar and stranger suddenly echoed inside Li Yao’s brain. “But I’ve already occupied your body.”

Li Yao was greatly alarmed. He seemed to have woken from yet another weird dream.

The journey in the four-dimensional universe was about to come to an end. His infinitely unfolded body was gradually returning to the three-dimensional state.

But the left side of his body was twisting weirdly, utterly beyond his control!

His left eye was both like a furious burning coal and a shining spotlight. He did not need a mirror to know that his eyeball must have been dyed the most dazzling red.

The redness was spreading to his internal organs and limbs like a virus. After it controlled the left side of his body in the blink of an eye, it went on to the right side of his body!

“You woke up too late!” The voice deep down his brain seemed to be talked to himself. “Why do you think you recovered so fast from the heavy wounds due to the star child’s self-detonation?

“Of course, it was because I contributed in secret and helped you repair your soul!

“However, while I was repairing your soul, I also ‘stitched’ something special into it.

“After you entered the four-dimensional space, your poured unlimited spiritual energy into your core to increase its rotational speed to the maximum in an attempt to break into the Nascent Soul Stage. It was a major shock for your soul and gave me a great opportunity!

“There is nothing that can stop me from taking over the body now!

“Heaven’s Origin, a planet with a population of tens of billions!

“The entire Iron Plateau only has a population of less than a hundred million, and all the space zones of the Flying Star Sector combined had a population of around ten billion.

However, Heaven's Origin, a single planet, has tens of billions of residents, or rather, tens of billions of hosts that can provide mental power to support me incessantly!"

"Ah!" Li Yao screamed miserably. Bloody strains extended out of his left eyeball toward his right one.

Li Yao was in such pain that he was writhing on the ground and bashing his head hard, but he had completely lost control over his left hand. When his right hand meant to attack his left eyeball, his left even blocked the aggressive attack.

"Stop your futile struggle. You are only increasing your suffering!

"What's wrong with being a host of the Blood Stripe Virus? The Blood Stripe Virus will not interfere with your wars against the Blood Demon Sector and the Imperium of True Human Beings. Instead, it will only give you a hand!

"After all, the source of strength for the Blood Stripe Virus is the lust for killing of the host. The fiercer your war is, the stronger the Blood Stripe Virus will be!"

Li Yao held his head hard and bellowed, "I will not let it go your way. I would rather die before my body is occupied by the lust for killing!"

With all his strength, Li Yao crashed open the door of the training room heavily into the cockpit.

Since the distance was short and the destination was clear, Firefly had been cruising in its autopilot mode. Manual manipulation was barely necessary.

In several seconds, the space jump would be over, and they would show up in the sky of the Heaven's Origin Sector.

With any luck, they would even end up in the gravity sphere of the planet of Heaven's Origin directly!

Bloody tears were flowing out of Li Yao's eyes as he dragged the left side of his body, which was shivering crazily, and crawled to the control panel.

In a corner of the control panel, locked tight by triple barriers, was a self-destruction rune array!

"You want to die together with me? Too late now!"

The laughter inside Li Yao's head was louder and louder now. His consciousness was dwindling fast. He felt as if he was mired in a bloody swamp sinking nonstop. Another self-awareness, one that was stronger, gloomier, and crueler, was replacing the old one and taking over his entire brain as it gradually revealed itself.

"Right now, I have controlled 95% of your brain.

"In a few seconds, we will arrive in the Heaven's Origin Sector and meet our family and friends. Ding Lingdang, Yuan Manqiu, 'Fiend Blade' Peng Hai, 'Solar Eclipse' Jiang Shaoyang…

"Rest assured. I shall leave none behind.

"Look, we are here. Heaven's Origin is right in front of us. What a lovely planet!"

The bloody Li Yao laughed crazily. Firefly shook violently, and the chaotic light beam was clear again, manifesting everything that the crystal cameras had captured.

An enormous planet was floating in front of their eyes quietly.

The bloody Li Yao’s laughter came to an abrupt end. Appalling spiritual waves were rushing out for the first time after he revealed himself. “No. This is—”

Almost at the same time, deep inside the control panel of Firefly, a high-frequency soundwave beyond the perception of human ears echoed.

A mental attack targeting the soul burst out like a volcanic eruption and swept the entire cockpit, piercing through Li Yao’s brain completely!

Chapter 828 - Battlefield of the Heaven's Origin Sector!

On Heaven’s Origin of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the sky of the Grand Desolate Plateau seemed to be stretched by many invisible giant hands and collapsed weirdly, forming ‘swirls’ that were beyond the three-dimensional time and space.

Twelve streaks of brightness dashed out of the ‘swirls’, as if they had been thrown up by twelve invisible, enormous beasts. They moved toward the boundless desert.

The mainframe crystal processor was quickly analyzing the constituents of the air and the gravity of the planet. It was also estimating the diameter of the planet in order to calculate its mass.

The final results were identical to the data of Heaven’s Origin.

“We’ve made it!”

There was nothing but exclamations on the bridge of Sparkle.

Wu Mayan jumped up in excitement. Lei Dalu and Bai Kaixin hugged each other, thrilled. The spectral Cultivators from the Heaven’s Origin Sector were all crying and unable to control their emotions.

The Grand Desolate Plateau was their destination.

The Heaven’s Origin Sector was highly populated. In the central area of the Star Glory Federation, super metropolises could easily spread to a thousand kilometers away. Considering the instability of the space jump, if the destination had been set near the capital of the Star Glory Federation, should there have been an accident such as the explosion of one of the starships, the burning debris might have been a destructive catastrophe for the cities.

Therefore, the ‘Heaven’s Artillery’, with which the Heaven’s Origin Sector explored the universe, was deployed in the Grand Desolate Plateau, which was vast and least populated. Even if there was an accident, the damage caused to the Heaven’s Origin Sector would be minimized.

Also, Professor Mo Xuan and the other spectral Cultivators were all locals of the Grand Desolate Plateau. They were familiar with the environment there and could make the parameters more accurate when they set them.

“We’re home. We’re finally home!”

Professor Mo Xuan managed to hold back his complicated feelings. His artificial arms were slightly trembling as he activated twenty pieces of probe magical equipment.

In a moment, twenty probe balls carved with floating rune arrays were launched from Sparkle to various direction.

They were contacting the other twelve starships and scanning the terrain to further determine their coordinates.

The picture sent by the probe balls gave them a big surprise.

The Grand Desolate Plateau right now was completely different from their memories.

The sky was broken and filled with colorful clouds in the shape of swirls. They were wriggling in the sky like enormous snails.

Venomous mist so thick that it seemed to be solid was floating in the air, slithering weirdly like translucent tentacles.

In the desert far ahead and near, countless behemothic skeletons were lying. Many of their bones were more than a hundred meters long. All of them used to be hideous demon beasts.

The skeletons of the demon beasts were mixed with the debris of the crystal tanks, telling the stories of the gory battles in silence.

A probe ball that had flown hundreds of kilometers away captured an enormous relic that looked like a forsaken city. More than half of the buildings had been buried by the dark red sand. Only the several highest towers had their upper sections exposed on the surface of the ground like broken tombstones.

The probe ball moved up. It could vaguely see that the desert in the north of the Grand Desolate Plateau had all turned red. A boundless red tide seemed to be consuming the entire world.

“How did everything become like this?” Professor Mo Xuan sighed. “It seems that the merging of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector has accelerated in the years we were away. A few earth-shaking wars must have taken place here. Even the cities of the Grand Desolate Plateau have turned into wastelands!

“Gao Yang, scan the structure of the forsaken city and compare it with the cities in our database. See which city it is exactly, and we will know our precise coordinates. Then, we will send the information to the rest of the twelve starships and the entire Heaven’s Origin Sector!”

Gao Yang, who was one of Professor Mo Xuan’s disciples, nodded, but he did not respond for a long time.

Professor Mo Xuan found it odd. Comparing the features of a city was a simple task. With their current computational ability, it should have been done within a breath.

The forsaken city was unbelievably huge. It must have been one of the core cities of the Grand Desolate Plateau and was unlikely to have been built after they left. Therefore, they must have had the critical features of the city in their database.

“Gao Yang, what’s up?” Professor Mo Xuan asked solemnly.

Gao Yang replied, his voice shaking, “Pro—Professor, the city buried by the sand is… Wild Waves City!”

Wild Waves City was the largest city on the Grand Desolate Plateau. It was also where the Grand Desolate War Institution, one of the nine elite schools of the Star Glory Federation, was located!

Professor Mo Xuan shook so hard that his artificial body almost broke apart.

On the light beam, dozens of crystal warships of the Star Glory Federation were rushing at them. Countless Exos and armed shuttles surrounded them like wild bees.

On the head of those crystal warships, two glittering emblems were painted on the left and the right.

The left side was the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars, while the right side was a saber and a chainsword crossed on the background of a furiously burning fist, which was the emblem of the Grand Desolate War Institution!

The emblem refreshed Mo Xuan and his companions who were nearly grabbed by desperation, but they could not have been more baffled.

“What happened in the past ten years? Why was Wild Waves City demolished? Since when has the Grand Desolate War Institution bought so many crystal warships?”

As a multipurpose exploration starship, Sparkle was not very large in size. The dozens of crystal warships of the Star Glory Federation were much larger than it and soon arrived.

Trying to hold back his excitement, Professor Mo Xuan commanded, “Send a message to those starships and tell them that Li Yao and Mo Xuan are back!”

However, before their telepathic thoughts were sent over, their mainframe crystal processor had received a telepathic thought from the crystal warships.

The message was very simple. In fact, it had only one word.

“Sparkle?”

…

An hour later, on the bridge of Sparkle, the experts from the Flying Star Sector were all observing the red-haired

Cultivator who was addressed as ‘Captain of the First Assault Team of the Grand Desolate Legion’ with great interest.

It was the first Cultivator from the Heaven’s Origin Sector who they had met except for Li Yao and Mo Xuan.

The person had exceptionally long limbs, which were as tensile and forceful as whips. The dark red battle robe of the person had the emblem of the Grand Desolate War Institution painted on the chest. It was emitting sharp killing intent, too.

The most eye-catching part about the person was the hair. Not only was it in a fresh crimson color, it was also burning furiously like flames. Anyone who drew close would feel the scorching airwave. There was no telling how the person kept their head from being burnt.

Such an odd symptom is either the sequela from the mental derangement while practicing an ultimate technique or the result of lethal poison that the person has pushed to the hair. Or maybe it is because of both…

Luo Xingzi watched the person hugging Professor Mo Xuan tightly, deep in thought.

Since the Flying Star Sector was going to fight side by side with the Heaven’s Origin Sector, it was important that they had a general idea of the capability of their comrades.

The local Cultivator of the Heaven’s Origin Sector left a deep impression on Luo Xingzi, who estimated that the person was perhaps in the peak of the Core Formation Stage. But more importantly, the person seemed quite young. Thirty years old, tops. There must have been a lot of fortuitous incidents, too.

Is the Heaven’s Origin Sector a factory that produces young geniuses?

Luo Xingzi was greatly amazed.

Professor Mo Xuan was quite concerned about the Grand Desolate War Institution and his wife, Yuan Manqiu. The red-haired captain told everything that had happened and assured him.

Over the past ten years, vast changes had indeed taken place in the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

After Li Yao and Mo Xuan left, the merging of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector had further accelerated. Right now, the two worlds were like the two kernels in the same peanut. They were in a ‘half-blended’ state, and they were equivalent to two space zones of the same Sector now.

Besides, countless wormholes had appeared between the two worlds that could be travelled through easily.

To the north of the Grand Desolate War Institution, the ‘Dark Desolate Domain’, which resulted from the collision of the two worlds, had expanded to dozens of times its size ten years ago.

The Dark Desolate Domain, where countless Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures were generated because of the unsteady spiritual energy, had become a gruesome battlefield.

The war between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector had upgraded, too. It was no longer restricted to the small-scale harassment and anti-harassment. A few head-on, hard battles had been fought.

Five years ago, the demon race even teleported a whole army directly to Wild Waves City, where the Grand Desolate War Institution was located, through a precise point-to-point space jump.

Although the army was annihilated in the end, Wild Waves City was ruined, too.

“There is not an inch of peaceful land on the vast Grand Desolate Plateau now that can accommodate a quiet campus,” the red-haired captain said. “Therefore, the Grand Desolate War Institution has moved the campus to crystal warships and turned into a nomadic college that recruits all the young people who have lost their homes because of the war on Iron Plateau. We teach, and they grow, in the bloody battles!

“Among the armed forces of the Star Glory Federation, the Grand Desolate War Institution is also known as the ‘Grand Desolate Legion’. We are now one of the four greatest legions of the federation!

“Professor Yuan Manqiu is safe and sound, too. Under her leadership, the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution has become the second-best academic establishment of refining in the federation, only below the Refining Department of Deep Sea University!”

Hearing that his wife was fine, Professor Mo Xuan was greatly relieved. He said, “Since the Grand Desolate Plateau is now safe, please hurry to search for the remaining crystal warships. It will be terrible if they encounter the assault squads of the demon race!”

The red-haired captain said, “We’ve been searching the five hundred square kilometers nearby in the last hour and eleven starships similar to Sparkle have been found.”

Professor Mo Xuan was dazed. “But we have thirteen starships. One of them is very small and looks like a cocoon. It is piloted by Li Yao alone!”

“What?” The red-haired captain suddenly raised their voice. “Why?”

Professor Mo Xuan was confused. “The fact that twelve starships have been found within five hundred square kilometers proves that it was a successful space jump with precise landing points. Logically, there is no way that Li Yao should have failed.

“Also, it’s been an hour. He should have contacted me long ago.”

“Weird. We cannot reach out to Firefly. It doesn’t seem to have come to the Heaven’s Origin Sector with us at all!”

“Understood!” the red-haired captain said. “We will increase the search range immediately and look for Firefly, which has probably crashed in the thousand square kilometers nearby!”

“Please—Please wait a moment.”

While everybody was worried, Xie Anan moved out of the crowd, with a jade chip in her hands. “Master gave the jade chip to me before we left and asked me to play the message after we jumped to the Heaven’s Origin Sector.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

Everybody was baffled.

Professor Mo Xuan took over the jade chip and inserted it into his chest. He then projected a light beam with the crystal camera on his forehead.

Inside the light beam, Li Yao’s image gradually condensed and looked at everyone with a smile.

“Do excuse me for talking to you in such a way.

“First of all, I would like to tell you a piece of bad news. Hahahaha. It’s very likely that I have been infected by the Blood Stripe Virus.”

Chapter 829 - The Most Difficult Scheme

His words shocked everyone on board!

Gasps were echoing nonstop inside the bridge. The qi-trainers from Iron Plateau all jumped to their feet. But the few Cultivators of the Heaven's Origin Sector were still confused. The red-haired captain stared at Li Yao on the light beam while asking Professor Mo Xuan, “What is the Blood Stripe Virus?”

Inside the light beam, Li Yao scratch his head and said in a lighthearted tone, “I was mired in a prolonged coma during the battle against the star child when my soul was hurt by his self-detonation.

“In my coma, I had a lot of bizarre nightmares. All the nightmares had one thing in common, which was that they were persuading me to give up and embrace the eternal sleep.

“After I woke up, the memories of the nightmares kept bothering me.

“I believed that I was never a person to give up easily. Besides, the way home was right before my eyes, and I was about to reunite with my family and friends in the Heaven's Origin Sector. Was there any reason I should stop striving before victory?

“If dreams were a reflection of my subconsciousness, then my subconsciousness must have vastly changed from my normal thinking.

“At that time, I secretly grew suspicious.

“After I woke up, I felt that I was even more unusual. I always daydreamed, and the nightmares were more and more terrible. Every time I struggled to get away from the nightmares, I sensed that my lust for killing was more intense, and I was more cynical and brutal!

“Growing more and more suspicious, I started to observe those around me in secret.

“I thought that, if my soul was invaded or infected by foreign forces, they might jam my senses in a certain way and make it difficult for me to detect their existence.

“But my abnormal behavior would certainly trigger abnormal reactions from those around me.

“Then, as long as I considered those around me as ‘mirrors’, I would be able to deduce my situation.

“As it turned out, I found that Wu Mayan and Xie Anan, my disciples, changed their attitudes to me.

“In the past, they were quite at ease when they were with me. I was more like a training partner than a master to them.

“But now, they were very cautious and in fear.

“One day, I even discovered a very deep mark on Wu Mayan’s neck which seemed to have been left after somebody grabbed the neck hard for a long time.

“During those few days, Wu Mayan had only been training with me and did not fight anybody.

“Besides, if the mark was left by somebody else, he would have certainly told me.

“Since he did not mention anything, it indicated that it was done by me.

“However, I remembered nothing of the matter. It was quite strange.

“There were two possibilities. Firstly, it was done by not me, but another ‘being’, a ‘foreign intruder’, or a ‘second personality’ that was lurking in my body.

“Secondly, it was done by me, but then something wiped out, or at least disguised, the memory.

“Whatever the fact was, I finally ascertained after the incident that my soul had been infected.

“I meditated for a long time and recalled my battle experiences, trying to find out the perpetrator.

“Skeleton Dragon? Yan Xinjian? Xiao Xuance? Star child?

“Those enemies all boasted tremendous soul power, but could they have infiltrated my brain without alarming me and corrupt my soul slowly but surely?

“I did not think that they were as capable.

“Finally. I found the answer.

“The Blood Stripe Virus!

“The Blood Stripe Virus is a mysterious alien foreign species. It is invisible and unpredictable, but it can live inside the brains of living creatures, influence their behavior, and feast upon their killing intent!

“Billions of years ago, the Blood Stripe Virus took the Titan Warriors as their puppets. When the Sector of the Titan Warriors was destroyed, the virus came to the Flying Star Sector through the apocalypse and landed on Iron Plateau, planning to modify Iron Plateau and the Iron Plateau natives over tens of thousands of years and change the latter into their new hosts.

“During their invasion, the essence of the Blood Stripe Virus even invaded Yan Xibei and bewitched him into building the ‘apocalyptic body’ in order to accelerate the Bloody Stripe Virus’ erosion.

“When I fought Yan Xibei, we engaged in close-combat. Blood was spluttering everywhere. Although I was very cautious, it is possible that one drop of blood or two touched my body. Maybe the Blood Stripe Virus was lurking inside the blood and snuck into my body.

“However, the Blood Stripe Virus did not see it coming that my soul was ten times more solid than Yan Xibei’s and that it could not find an entrance at all. Therefore, it kept lurking until it found an opportunity when my soul was blown apart by the star child. During my one-year coma, it infected me with the bloody nightmares and finally successfully got into my soul and my brain!

“If that was the case, there would only be two questions left.

“Firstly, what was the purpose of the Blood Stripe Virus? Secondly, how deeply had I been infected?

“Walking in the virus’ shoes, it is not hard for me to guess its purpose. It wanted to go to the Heaven’s Origin Sector with me.

“Although the Heaven’s Origin Sector is not large, the population is concentrated on one planet. It is like a public square packed with people and perfect for the parasites to spread out.

“Besides, the Heaven’s Origin Sector is at war with the Blood Demon Sector and has to resist the minor apocalypse of the Imperium of True Human Beings later. The Blood Stripe Virus consumes lust for killing as food. Such a world is perfect for its appetite!

“As to how deeply I am infected, and how badly my brain has been corrupted… Those appeared to be questions whose precise answers I can never find.

“I could only make deductions based on the information I know.

“The most important piece of information was that I proposed to build ‘Firefly’ and train alone during the space jump.

“After I found out about the infection of the Blood Stripe Virus and looked at the ‘Firefly’ project in retrospective, I noticed a lot of suspicious points. It was not like a proposal that I would make under normal circumstances at all but like a scheme that the Blood Stripe Virus bewildered me to put forward in order to swallow my soul during the space jump.

“Then, it at least indicated that the Blood Stripe Virus hasn’t taken full control of me yet. There is still a critical step.

“Maybe, it could trigger the fear, fury, hatred, bloodthirst… and all the other negative emotions deep inside my brain and slightly manipulate my behavior when I am at the mercy of those negative emotions.

“It could also eradicate or cover part of my memories and relieve my doubts when I am strongly suspicious in a certain way, similar to hypnotization.

“However, I believe that neither manipulation or coverage can be used unlimitedly.

“The reason is simple. On one hand, the strength of the Blood Stripe Virus was limited. Otherwise, it would not have lurked for so many years.

“On the other hand, and more importantly, if it twisted my will and wiped my memory by force frequently, an entirely different me would definitely be shaped. I, and those around myself, would certainly be skeptical.

“It is the last thing that it would like to see.

“Therefore, there is still a slim chance of winning for me.

“My judgement was that, when my soul was blown apart by the star child’s self-detonation, the Blood Stripe Virus probably pried into most of my memory pieces and knows clearly about my past. It even hid some ‘backdoors’ inside my soul, possibly.

“But I didn’t think that it could know my every movement or thought.

“It’s like a person with ‘dual personality’ who would have two personalities appearing in turn. One of the personalities would not know everything that the other personality knew.

“Since I am not aware of the thoughts of the Blood Stripe Virus, there is no reason why the Blood Stripe should know what is on my mind every second. At least, I hope so.

“I began to consider how to deal with the Blood Stripe Virus.

“At first, I thought about telling everybody of the matter and cope with the Blood Stripe Virus with everybody’s help.

“But I gave up the idea immediately after I thought of it.

“The Blood Stripe Virus is mysterious and fickle. You might not have any solution even if I told you. If anything, you might have been alarmed.

“I was most worried that the Blood Stripe Virus would run away from my body.

“When it is in my body, I can think of something to deal with them. But if it flees into somebody else’s body, or even a snake, insect, rat, or ant, and lurks for another hundred years before it stirs trouble again, nobody will be prepared for them.

“Therefore, I could not ask for anybody’s else. I had to address it myself, and I had to do it in the least eye-catching way without giving myself away.

“The most critical point was that I did not know whether or not the Blood Stripe Virus could see what I saw and heard at all times.

“Without any options, I could only have a try.

“At first, I ran a minor experiment.

“On my training journal, I recorded my anomalies and stated that I was strongly suspicious that my soul had been invaded and that I must have it tested in a certain way.

“When I wrote the article, my mind was very clear, and I was certain that I was not affected by anything.

“It suggested that the Blood Stripe Virus’ interferences were not real-time. They could not learn my every thought immediately. Otherwise, they would not have allowed to write such an article.

“Then, after I wrote the article, it was even less likely that it would manipulate me to delete it, because deleting an article would leave even more traces. When there were too many traces, I would be bound to be suspicious.

“The Blood Stripe Virus could only avoid my test in a certain other way.

“Following that, I started to study the magical equipment on the examination and the attack of souls.

“A year ago, to deal with the ‘reincarnated’ ‘Bai Xinghe’, the Immortal Cultivators produced a lot of magical equipment for mental attacks, but they had already lost the war before most of the devices got to be utilized.

“I borrowed a large batch of them and studied them carefully. In the end, I crafted a tiny piece of magical equipment that could examine the soul. I named the magical equipment ‘Soul Monitor’.

“As long as I put the Soul Monitor on the back of my head, it would automatically scan my brainwaves and my soul waves to examine whether or not my soul was pure and unaffected.

“Of course, I knew that the Soul Monitor had zero effect.

“Since the Blood Stripe Virus had allowed me to produce the Soul Monitor smoothly, the device must have no effect on it at all. It were confident that it could get away from the Soul Monitor’s detection and therefore ease my alert once and for all.

“However, it might not have known my true purpose for building the Soul Monitor.

“I was not meaning to detect the Blood Stripe Virus. I was merely taking a gamble that, when I scanned my brain with the Soul Monitor, the Blood Stripe Virus would enter a certain ‘idle’ state and hide deep inside my brain in case any abnormal waves were detected.

“It meant that I would be granted temporary ‘absolutely safe time’ by the Soul Monitor. I could do whatever I want during the time without worrying that the Blood Stripe Virus might find anything.

“I could use the Soul Monitor for an hour every time, and I could not use it too many times. If I detected nothing after three to five times, I should stop the experiment by logic. Otherwise, the Blood Stripe Virus would suspect that I had other plans.

“Three to five times, an hour every time. Together, that would be three to five hours.

“What could I accomplish in such a short amount of time?”

Chapter 830 - Doom of the Blood Stripe Virus (End of Volume II)

“The production of Firefly had already begun, and I could not stop it because I could not stay in the Flying Star Sector. However, I could not go to the Heaven’s Origin Sector for real, either.

“Both the Flying Star Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector have billions of human beings. There are my family and friends as well as countless compatriots. It would be a complete tragedy if the Blood Stripe went on a rampage in either Sector.

“Perhaps, I could adjust the coordinates of Firefly and made it jump to a desolate, unpopulated Sector?

“But technically speak, it was difficult to achieve.

“Firefly was designed for the short-distance space jump between two neighboring Sectors. By no means could it jump to millions of lightyears away.

“Besides, the adjustment of such a scale would likely have been found out by the control center and the Blood Stripe Virus.

“I began to think. Was there a place that was devoid of human beings and within my reach as long as I changed one or two parameters in the thousands of coordinate settings?

“Hehe. You must have guessed it.

“Exactly. The Blood Demon Sector!

“The Blood Demon Sector has been preliminarily merged with the Heaven’s Origin Sector. They are like twin worlds. The parameters of the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector in the four-dimensional universe are 99.9% identical and have only a 0.01% difference!

“I made the decision!

“The Blood Stripe Virus meant to completely corrupt my soul and take control over my mind during the space jump. Then, I would tempt it with ‘Firefly’ as the battlefield and start a final battle!

“Even if I failed the final battle, I would not allow them to go to the Heaven’s Origin Sector to enslave my family, friends, and compatriots!

“Therefore, I pretended that I was fooled and joined the production of Firefly actively. I even read a lot of books on the technology of space jumps and learned the methods to reset the navigation system and to manually control the starship.

“Firefly would be piloted by me alone. Should there be a fault, I could only fix it by myself. It was only natural that I learned knowledge on those topics. The Bloody Stripe Virus would not have been suspicious about my behavior.

“During my studies, I grasped the coordinates of the Blood Demon Sector as I planned. I also learned how to activate the emergency maintenance mode and manually adjust the coordinates of the destination.

“In the four hours of precious ‘absolutely safe time’ while I had the Soul Monitor on, I gathered all the mental attack magical equipment that Xiao Xuance had prepared to deal with Bai Xinghe and extracted the most valuable core units. I then built them into a piece of unprecedently powerful magical equipment for mental attacks. The immense spiritual waves released from the device were enough to tear apart the soul of an unparalleled expert!

“To avoid the suspicion of the Blood Stripe Virus, after I refined a ‘soul bomb’ four times, I stopped using the Soul Monitor.

“Everything was peaceful again.

“I pretended that I was relieved and dedicated myself to my training and the production of ‘Firefly’.

“The Blood Stripe Virus stopped messing around with me for a long time, too.

“From the virus’ perspective, now that the host was walking on the ‘right’ path and everything was going on as it had planned, it was indeed unnecessary to ask for more trouble by interfering with or prying into the host’s soul. If the host was suspicious again at the last moment, it would be the victim of its own scheme.

“Or rather, maybe the Blood Stripe Virus was accumulating its strength in secret, too, preparing to possess my body during the space jump!

“Today is the last day before our departure.

“I activated the Soul Monitor and received an hour of ‘absolutely safe time’ during the last examination on Sparkle. Then, I slightly adjusted the parameters of the destination of Sparkle and hid the ‘soul bomb’ inside the control panel before I connected the bomb to the self-destruction rune array.

“Right now, the usage of the self-destruction rune array on Firefly has changed.

“Only after the self-destruction rune array is triggered during the space jump will the starship be shifted to the correct route and return to the Heaven’s Origin Sector with everybody.

“If the self-destruction array is not triggered, Firefly will remain its trajectory toward the Blood Demon Sector and detonate the ‘soul bomb’ when the space jump is about to be completed!

“Do you understand?

“If I haven’t triggered the ‘self-destruction rune array’ before the space jump is over, it is indicative that I have been controlled by the Blood Stripe Virus. It will be the Blood Stripe Virus that occupies my brain and soul. My own soul will perhaps be lurking in the deepest part of my brain, completely overwhelmed by the intruder.

“As a result, when the soul bomb is detonated and the blast sweeps across Firefly and pierces through my brain, it will be the soul of the Blood Stripe Virus that takes the blow!

“Its soul will be the best shield for my soul!

“I will launch the last counterattack when its soul is ripped apart and try to suppress, swallow, and purge the Blood Stripe Virus!

“This is my whole plan, one whose success rate is close to zero, because the entire plan is based on the presumption that the Blood Stripe Virus does not know what I am thinking at all times.

“Maybe its strength far exceeds my imagination, and it has learned everything.

“Therefore, I strongly suggest that, if you find Firefly next to yourselves after you arrive in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, you must impose the strictest quarantine upon me. You must not believe anything that I say, even if I tell you that I’ve successfully suppressed the Blood Stripe Virus. Do not believe anything!

“In such a case, I’m very likely to have been fully controlled by the Blood Stripe Virus like Yan Xibei used to be.

“If you do not find Firefly, don’t be worried. It is a piece of good news that suggests that my plan has succeeded… at least partly.

“I’m already back home; I’m just landing on the other side of it.

“There are too many burdens and concerns in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector. I would worry that the Blood Stripe Virus might infect my family, friends, and compatriots all the time.

“It is very likely that the Blood Stripe Virus will do insane things while they are manipulating my body. For example, killing one of my family or friends, as a way to shake my belief.

“When I ask myself if I can be unwavering when one of my close friends is killed by me, I do not have the confidence to say yes.

“The Blood Demon Sector is different.

“I have zero concerns there. I can fight the Blood Stripe Virus however I want without worries. Even if I am blinded by bloodthirst when I am occasionally manipulated by the Blood Stripe Virus, it will not matter because there will be no friends but only foes.

“Alright. I’m running out of time. This is about everything.

“I’m sorry that I didn’t tell you the truth earlier. It is not because I didn’t believe in you, but because the battle had to be fought alone.

“I’m sorry, Wu Mayan and Xie Anan. There were days when my attitude was bad. You must have been frightened.

“In the end… I’m sorry, Ding Lingdang.

“I promised you that I would reunite with you in ten years, but I’m afraid I will be delayed in the Blood Demon Sector for a few years to purge the Blood Stripe Virus. Therefore—”

There was a rigid smile on the corner of Li Yao’s lips when he said sorry.

But deep inside his eyes, a scattered starry brilliance was shining, and two streams of hot tears seemed to be flooding out.

His voice came to an abrupt end, but he turned off the crystal camera before his tears ran out.

The picture was frozen just like that. It gradually turned transparent and dispersed, like the flickering sparks after the brilliant fireworks.

There was nothing but silence on the bridge.

Everybody was stunned by the shocking secret battle.

They had no idea at all that, while they were planning the journey home delightedly, Li Yao was fighting such a weird, perilous battle against an enemy that was more formidable than Skeleton Dragon, Xiao Xuance, and the star child!

“Li Yao…”

Lei Dalu, Bai Kaixin, Luo Xingzi and Professor Mo Xuan were all somewhat lost.

“Master…”

Wu Mayan and Xie Anan both clenched their fists, sobbing.

BOOM!

The upright, furiously burning hair of the captain of the Grand Desolate Legion seemed to have been drenched in oil. It was burning even more devastatingly, and the flames on the outside turned purple!

Dangerous colors were beaming out of the eyes of the red-haired captain, who grumbled, “Li Yao, you son of a b*tch…”

“You—” Wu Mayan was dazed. Then he burst into fury. “Why are you cursing my master?”

The red-haired captain sniffed. The long hair suddenly moved even though there was no wind. A fire snake suddenly darted out toward Wu Mayan.

Caught unprepared, Wu Mayan was tied up by the snake. Hundreds of tiny flames were immediately burning on his body!

Everybody was shocked, especially those from the Flying Star Sector.

Wu Mayan had been training crazily over the past few years. He had advanced into the 95th level of the Refinement Stage and was marching toward the legendary level beyond the 100th level of the Refinement Stage. His combat ability was close to the peak of the Building Foundation Stage, and he was not necessarily scared even if he was faced with a Cultivator at the beginning level of the Core Formation Stage.

The red-haired captain, who was ten years older than him at most, had defeated him in one move, and he could not counterattack at all?

The person was indeed strong!

The red-haired captain dragged Wu Mayan to the front. The long flames slithering around Wu Mayan, hissing, like countless fire snakes.

Wu Mayan was grimacing in pain and kicking crazily, but he could not hit his opponent at all. He could only shout, “My master is a great hero. To keep the Blood Stripe Virus from spreading, he travelled to the Blood Demon Sector alone instead of returning to his long-dreamed home! Why did you curse my master?”

“Why?” The red-haired captain sniffed and said, “I’ve waited for him for ten years, and all I get is a weightless ‘sorry’. Am I now allowed to curse him?”

Wu Mayan was dazed. “Huh?”

The red-haired captained glanced at Wu Mayan up and down and said, “You are loyal enough to your master, but Li Yao seems to be quite a bad teacher. His disciple is so weak; you could not even resist my attack!

“His teaching methods must have been too merciful, mustn’t they? From today on, let your masteress give you a few good lessons!”

“Mas—masteress?”

Wu Mayan could not help but shudder. He had a bad feeling that his future life would only be more difficult.

The red-haired captain was smiling more and more dangerously. “Your body looks healthy enough. After I discipline you for a year and a half, you should be qualified to go to the Blood Demon Sector with me.”

“To the Blood Demon Sector?”

Wu Mayan was even more surprised.

“Exactly.”

The red-haired captain licked her lips and warmed up her fingers slowly. Cracking noises that resembled thunder were echoing from the joints, which gave a chill to everybody who heard them.

“I’ve never been fond of waiting, and I’ve shown him enough respect by waiting for him for ten years. Since he is unwilling to come back, I will simply go to the Blood Demon Sector and drag him back!

“Blood Stripe Virus? You sure are bold to take my man away from me!

“You are seeking your own death!”

(End of Volume II)

(Prelude of Volume III)

…

“Idiot, what do you think ‘demons’ are?”

…

“Don’t be silly. I am a demon, and I always will be.”

…

“The fate of the demon race depends on the battle. The capital of the Star Glory Federation is right ahead of us. Warriors, march toward destruction in order to realize our immortality. The glorious Pantheon of Demons is awaiting us!”

…

“You know nothing. You know f*cking nothing! I’m screwed! I’m hopeless! I—I’m turning into a human being!”

Hi, guys. Welcome to the end of Volume II of FMC. Li Yao’s journey in the Flying Star Sector will be concluded here.

Volume II differs from Volume I in that there are more plots and schemes and fewer straightforward level-ups. Also, the Dark Forest Theory has been elaborated in Volume II, which I have to say makes a lot of sense when you think about it carefully. It is one of the important reasons why the two major villains in Volume II, namely Yan Xibei in the former half and Xiao Xuance in the later half, are justified about they are doing in their own way. They are indeed evil, but it is hard to argue that their ideology is purely groundless. In fact, it is their coldness and pessimistic view of the universe that makes the empathy of Li Yao and the other Cultivators more valuable and heartening. I said at the end of Volume I that the theme of the novel is devotion and sacrifice in my opinion. Right now, I stand by my statement ;).

A lot of suspense has been left at the end of Volume II. The adventure Bai Xingjian who is apparently the upgraded version of ‘Boss Bai’, the details of the Vulture Plan, the upcoming head-on clash with the evil superpower named Imperium of True Human Beings, to name a few. All will be further revealed in Volume III.

But Li Yao has more urgent business at hand right now. The war between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector is now in the most heated stage. How is he going to settle the conflict? Are human beings really on the righteous side in the strife? What are demons exactly? Your stereotype about demons will be changed in Volume III. Stay tuned. ?

Chapter 831 - Twelve Ancient Demon Clans

The Dry Leaf Village on the Hundred Desolation Mountain of the Blood Demon Sector was the one of the poorest and most barren towns even by the standard of the Blood Demon Sector.

The residents who lived in the undeveloped mountain village had to get up to dig for their food before dawn every day.

The morning sun had only just shed dazzling redness and glamorous purple colors to the ridge of the Hundred Desolate Mountain when the Dry Leaf Village was simmering with all kinds of sounds.

The insects started scarifying the soil and gathering the honey, the minotaurs were ploughing the land, which was suffering from drought, and the hunting team made of were-tigers and werewolves set off to the depths of the Hundred Desolation Mountain, hoping to try their luck and see if they could run into a few fat preys.

“Brother. Come on. Rise and shine!”

At the east of the Dry Leaf Village, inside a particularly ragged woodhouse, a young girl was shaking a sleep bag weaved from vines.

The girl was small in size. Her eyeballs were gold, and the features of a felid could be found on her face, especially her ears, which were as furry as a cat’s ears.

Her arms were smooth and hairless, no different from those of human beings, but her hands and feet had grown the volar pads and the sharp talons of the felids.

The young girl was wearing very cool clothes. She only covered her breasts and her waist with beast hides. A belt with a lot of bone adornments was hanging from her waist. On the right side of her body was a bone container polished from the hollow leg bone of an enormous demon beast.

She shook for a long time, but there was no response from the sleep bag at all. The cat-eared girl mumbled in dissatisfaction before she took out a sharp bone needle from the container and stabbed into the core of the sleep bag of vines.

Hissing sounds came from the sleep bag. Then, just like quickly dispersing mimosa, the vines all retreated back to the walls of the woodhouse.

A drowsy young man fell out from the sleep bag and sat on the ground in a daze, his only eye blinking in confusion.

The young man who was addressed as ‘brother’ by the cat-eared girl looked vastly different from her. He maintained most of the features of a human being. The only thing different about him was his exceptionally long canine teeth, which protruded out of his lips like coldly shining daggers, and the intense demonic air around him.

The young man seemed to be heavily wounded. His left eye and left arm were tied up by dirty bandages from which the fragrance of medicine could be smelted.

His left arm was obviously much smaller than his right arm. It was dangling freely from his shoulder as if it had completely withered.

The cat-eared girl took out a voluptuous bud from her container. She then pinched the bud and pushed the pollen to her palm, before she blew at the young man. After a ‘pu’ sound, the slightly simulative powder was flying everywhere inside the room.

“Achoo! Achoo! Achoo!”

The young man sneezed heavily. His right eye, which was an amber color, was finally clear again.

The cat-eared girl smiled. “Morning, big brother.”

The young scratched his nose and nodded.

“How is it going? How is it going? Do you feel better today? Can you recall more things than yesterday now?”

The cat-eared girl blinked her big eyes and asked in a hurry, “Do you remember who you are and who I am?”

The young man grinned and said in a coarse and feeble voice, “My name is Lei Qi. I’m a native of the Dry Leaf Village of the Hundred Desolation Mountain, born and raised in this place. I have never left the Hundred Desolation Mountain in all my life. I used to be the best hunter in the village.

“You are my sister Lei Lan. We have a brother named Lei Chuang. The three of us live together.

“Half a month ago, an enormous meteorite hit the Hundred Desolation Mountain, causing a great forest fire. The Dry Leaf Village was soon affected. All the villagers went to the mountain to put out the fire, but I was trapped by the fire and heavily burned, and I unfortunately fell off a cliff.

“When I was found, I was already out of shape. My brain was damaged, too, resulting in the loss of all my memories.

“After I was rescued, I lay in bed for half a month before my body gradually recovered, and I can more or less recall things of the past right now.”

“Excellent!” Lei Lan, the cat-eared girl, was overjoyed. “You’re finally smart again. Not as muddled as a few days ago anymore.

“Come on, brother. Let’s review the knowledge that I’ve taught to you in the last couple of days, including who we are and where we come from. Do—do you remember them?”

The young man tilted his head and thought hard for a moment. Then, he nodded solemnly and replied, “I do. We are demons.”

“We are indeed demons. Then what exactly are demons? I read the Legends of Ancient Demons to you yesterday. Do you remember what it said, brother?” Lei Lan asked, her voice shaking and full of hope.

The young man coughed lightly and said unhurriedly, “According to the Legends of Ancient Demons, the demons are created by the Primeval Lord of Heaven.

“Long, long ago, before the universe was born, we and the creator of the universe were all floating in the endless nothingness.

“He was the primeval spirit of the world, known as the Primeval Lord of Heaven.

“The Primeval Lord of Heaven floated for billions of years in the nothingness. One day, he thought of something and decided that he wanted a change. Then, an immeasurable big bang took place in the endless nothingness. In a moment, the universe was born in the big bang.

“The universe that was born was seething like magma in places and freezing like a glacier in others. The planets collided into each other heavily and ripped each other apart, turning into raging nebulas. The nebulas then swirled and condensed rapidly, turning into uneven planets again.

“The universe was exactly such a pot of hot soup. Chaotic, disordered, and utterly devoid of any pattern.

“The Primeval Lord of Heaven admired pattern, order, and tranquility. He made the most original regulations for the chaotic universe, which were known as the ‘Great Dao’. There were three thousand items of the Great Dao in the beginning, which included the most fundamental laws of nature for the functioning of the universe.

“Triggering the big bang and establishing the three thousand items of Great Dao drained almost all the energy of the Primeval Lord of Heaven, who was about to enter hibernation.

“He was not satisfied with the rough and messy world. Before he fell asleep, he created the Pangu Clan, the first intelligent species in the universe, with the last bit of his spiritual energy. He also entrusted an arduous task to the Pangu Clan, which was to calm the furious and chaotic universe.

“During the long time while the universe was being calmed, since the environment of every world was different, the Pangu Clan evolved as they modified all the planets. They turned into twelve different clans, which were the Twelve Ancient Demon Clans, our ancestors.

“In the scorching planets full of volcanic eruptions and magma, the Pangu Clan evolved into the ‘Zhurong Clan’, which could manipulate fire freely at will and even live inside magma.

“In the planets that were wreathed in oceans, the Pangu Clan evolved into the ‘Gonggong Clan’, which could manipulate the undercurrents and tides and rein the undersea creatures.

“In the desolate planets that had nothing but mountains and rocks, the Pangu Clan evolved into the ‘Houtu Clan’, which was enormous in size and could lurk deep below the ground to absorb the microconstituents inside the rocks.

“In the gaseous planets without continents or oceans, the Pangu Clan evolved into the ‘Tianwu Clan’, which could control the wind, and the ‘Qiangliang Clan’, which could feast upon thunder and lightning.

“In the worlds with few resources and sources of energy, the Pangu Clan evolved into a new clan named the ‘Kuafu Clan’.

“The Kuafu Clan chased after stars throughout their life. They built great rune arrays outside the stars and collected every bit of spiritual energy emitted by the stars, which they would use to build other worlds.

“It was a grueling job. Countless members of the Kuafu Clan were unfortunately burnt to ash when they were swept by the solar prominence and the solar storms while they absorbed the energy of the stars. Some of stars of the Kuafu Clan even failed to resist the high temperature of the stars and lost their momentum, only to be captured by the gravity of the stars and fall to the center of the stars.

“However, the next generation of the Kuafu Clan would still carry on their predecessors’ duty and chase after the stars.

“In their prime years, the Kuafu Clan could even enshroud a star with a great rune array, producing a ‘Kuafu Sphere’, thereby absorbing every drop of spiritual energy from the star.

“Just like that, with the collective endeavors of the Kuafu Clan, the Zhurong Clan, the Gonggong Clan, and all the other ancient demon clans, a great number of Sectors were created, and everything was flourishing!

“The golden years at the beginning of the universe are known as the ‘Primeval Era’.

“However, when there is sunlight, there is shadow; when there is birth, there is death; when there is righteousness, there is evil; when there is order, there is chaos.

“The Primeval Lord of Heaven represented the order, pattern, rules, and the Great Dao of the entire universe. However, the ultimate existences that stood for mess, disorder, and destruction were born during the big bang, too.

“They were ‘Chaos’.

“Life stands for hope, but life gives birth to mess and disorder, too. While the twelve ancient demon clans established the Sectors where billions of creatures developed, the Chaos was slowly expanding in darkness and corrupting the creatures’ hearts, too.

“In the end, the Pangu Clan made of the twelve ancient demon clans had an earthshaking primeval war against the species under the control of Chaos.

“In the primeval war, the skies of countless planets were torn apart, the ground collapsed, and the atmosphere was broken.

“Many planets were even directly absorbed by the stars and turned into insignificant solar storms.

“The primeval war lasted tens of thousands of years. In the end, the Pangu Clan defeated the species controlled by Chaos and sealed Chaos completely.

“However, the primeval war consumed the potentials of the Pangu Clan and drained their vitality. The broken planets could not be restored quickly, either.

“In order to mend all the Sectors that were bordering on destruction, the twelve ancient demon clans combined all their essence and produced a thirteenth ancient demon clan—the Nuwa Clan!

“When the twelve ancient demon clans fell asleep, the Nuwa Clan would carry out the ‘Sky Fixing Plan’ and repair all the Sectors!

“In order to repair the Sectors that had been damaged as quickly as possible, the Nuwa Clan created a brand-new species as their assistants—the human beings!”

Chapter 832 - Uncanny Incidents

“Human beings were a species that was full of energy and desires. Although they did not boast the powerful techniques that the thirteen ancient demon clans did, their curiosity and ability to reproduce were unlimited.

“More importantly, they could learn things and evolve on their own. Therefore, they could repair the Sectors without being commanded by anyone.

“The Nuwa Clan was very satisfied with the species that was designed to modify the worlds. Therefore, with the strength of the spiral arm of galaxies, they tossed the human beings to all the Sectors that were scattered throughout universe.

“The newborn human beings, as expected, started to learn promptly. They reproduced at a high speed and expanded their species. Meanwhile, they repaired the worlds with the spiritual energy.

“Gradually, all the Sectors were revived again.

“However, maybe because of the natural deficiencies of the human beings, or maybe because Chaos had polluted the first batch of human beings at the very beginning of the ‘Sky Fixing Plan’ with endless lust and desires, human beings grew more and more ambitious and greedy while they repaired the worlds. They were gradually lost and forgot their mission.

“They considered themselves to be masters of the sky and the earth. They changed from repairing the worlds to modifying them and eventually to exploiting them. They went against the Great Dao of living in harmony with nature and exploited every bit of spiritual energy on every planet in the most extreme ways possible.

“Later, when the human beings discovered the secrets of the thirteen ancient demon clans, they took the opportunity when the twelve ancient demon clans were in hibernation and the Nuwa Clan was the weakest to betray their creators ruthlessly. They found most of the ancient demon clans and destroyed them!

“Without the suppression of the thirteen ancient demon clans, the human beings lived an even more lawless life. A reign of darkness that lasted tens of thousands of years thus began!

“Under the cruel reign of the human beings, the forests were burning, the earth was moaning, the sky was never clear, and hydrilla and oil were floating on the oceans all the time.

“Most of the species other than the human beings either ended up being their slaves or were entirely wiped out.

“Forty thousand years ago, human beings were finally a victim of their own greed and ambitions. A destructive civil war broke out.

“The civil war seriously undermined the evil civilization of mankind. It also created the best opportunity for the renaissance of the demon race!

“Overthrow the tyranny of the human beings and restore the Great Dao of the balance of nature in the universe!

“Motivated by such beliefs, the descendants of the ancient demon clans that were scattered everywhere in the sea of stars stood up against human beings. After endless blood and efforts, the human beings were successfully suppressed… for thirty thousand years!

“After thirty thousand years of rest, the worlds that were riddled with holes because of the human beings’ pollution finally regained part of their vitality.

“However, the human beings came back again and established the Star Ocean Imperium, planning to restore their evil reign.

“Thankfully, the Star Ocean Imperium was just a freak that was piled up by the might of a tyrant. When the tyrant died abruptly, it soon collapsed.

“Today, ten thousand years later, the human beings and the demon race are both resting. Neither party can seize control over all the Sectors in the universe.

“Ostensibly speaking, the population, resources of the human beings, and their control over the worlds are much higher than ours, but we must not give up easily!

“Evil can never suppress justice for long, as history has proved. One day, we will overthrow the cruel reign of human beings and set the universe back to the track of balance of nature again!”

The young man finally concluded his long speech. He felt that his mouth was dry, so the cat-eared girl handed over a wood bowl to him. He drank the sweet water, which was mixed with honey, in great satisfaction before he licked his lips and smiled.

“Excellent. Brother, you do remember all of it!” the cat-eared girl Lei Lan exclaimed in joy and jumped up in a high mood with the wood bowl. “I’m going to make something delicious for you. We have fresh fish. It will taste good if I blend them with ear-folding grass!”

The young man bathed himself in the glowing morning sun comfortably. Scarlet brightness covered him like a hazy red mist, making him look somewhat mysterious.

After the cat-eared girl turned around and left, the young man’s right eye immediately turned from amber into a cold, deep black color.

His left eye, which was covered in a bandage, seemed to be emitting redness despite the blockage of the bandage.

“The Primeval Lord of Heaven? The thirteen ancient demon clans? The Sky Fixing Plan?

“Very interesting genesis mythology.

“However, what is more interesting is, why does this family of demons have to ask me to pretend to be this ‘Lei Qi’?”

Li Yao scratched his left temple, which was covered in bandages, softly and mumbled to himself.

It had been half a month since he landed in the Blood Demon Sector.

On Firefly, the formidability of the Blood Stripe Virus and its infiltration on his soul were beyond his expectation.

Even the explosion of the soul bomb failed to destroy the Blood Stripe Virus completely.

Later, Li Yao's soul and the remaining strength of the Blood Stripe Virus had a soul-stirring fight.

The destination of Firefly was not as good as its companions. Although it reached the Blood Demon Sector safely, it was too close to the planet.

Captured by the tremendous gravity of the planet, Firefly's power rune arrays lost control, and it was pulled into the atmosphere and crashed into the ground.

The only thing that was lucky for Li Yao was that he crashed at the depths of the Hundred Desolation Mountain, which was far away from the center of politics of the demon race. He did not catch the attention of the strong demons, either.

The immense blast of the crash not only destroyed Firefly completely but also triggered a forest fire.

While Li Yao was slowly recovering in the burning Hundred Desolation Mountain, he found the team of demons who came to put out the fire.

When he saw the team, who all had different appearances, Li Yao thought of something.

Although he had planned to stay in the Blood Demon Sector and not to return to the Heaven's Origin Sector until he completely purged the Blood Stripe Virus, it was quite a tricky problem for him to survive in the Blood Demon Sector, which was brimming with demons, as a human being.

Before Li Yao left the Heaven's Origin Sector, the experts of the Blood Demon Sector had been on par with those of the Heaven's Origin Sector. They were classified into four levels, namely demon soldier, demon general, demon king, and demon emperor. The demon emperor, which was the strongest of all, equaled to the Nascent Soul Stage for the Cultivators.

In terms of combat ability, Li Yao was not scared of any top experts of the Blood Demon Sector.

However, his opponent would not solo him. The most famous strategy of the demon race was their tides of insects and beasts!

Even in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, reports were not few of high-level Cultivators being surrounded by a large batch of low-level demon beasts and eventually dying of exhaustion.

He was now at the heart of the Blood Demon Sector. Should his identity be exposed, without the collective attack of several demon emperors, the rushing beast tides alone were enough to crush him into smithereens.

Therefore, when Li Yao discovered that the demons who came to put out the fire were not exclusively ugly snakes or rats, and that many of them carried distinctive features of human beings, he slightly rectified his plan and burnt his body with the flames on purpose.

With his Cultivation at the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage, he was able to control the speed of his metabolism. The cells all over his body could be replaced at a high frequency.

With enough spiritual energy, it would only take him a few hours for him to replace all the cells on the surface of his body.

The fire burn of such a degree was not a big deal for him at all.

As for the change of the length of his canine teeth and the color of his pupils, it was not too difficult, either.

Li Yao had once accepted the spiritual seed of Yan Ba, a body fundamentalist in the Nascent Soul Stage.

The training approach of the body fundamentalists was to trigger the primordial strength hidden in their bodies and force their cells into a temporary atavistic state so that the strength of the primordial ferocious animals, which were the ancestors of human beings, could be activated.

Many body fundamentalists would grow intense hair or scales while they were at the highest point of their training, and it was not unusual for their body size to triple or for them to grow sharp horns and claws.

After all, human beings evolved from monkeys, and monkeys evolved from all kinds of primordial animals.

Human beings, who called themselves the wisest of all creatures, were just another kind of animal. It was not usual for the features of an animal to be activated again.

Although Li Yao was not a real body fundamentalist, the Blood Stripe Virus was an expert in the refinement of living creatures. After absorbing most of the abilities of the Blood Stripe Virus, it was more than simple for Li Yao to slightly alter the appearance of his hair, iris, fingernails, and teeth.

Li Yao’s original plan was to pretend to be heavily wounded and see if he could sneak into the villages of the demons to gather more intelligence.

If the strangers were malicious, he would attack them first and slay all the demons, save one or two captives for interrogation.

But what happened later was quite beyond his expectations.

After the demons found him ‘seriously wounded’ and ‘out of shape’, they neither went up to him and gave up first aid or attacked him immediately while he seemed feeble.

After a while of whispers, one of the tiger demons who was particularly tall and strong went out and carried him back home, stating that he was ‘Lei Qi’, the pillar of his family and the best hunter in the village.

What was that all about?

Li Yao could not have been more confused.

He could easily tell that, except for his canine teeth, which were slightly sharper, his half golden hair, and his right eye that had gone amber, there were absolutely no similarities between him and the tiger demon. Even a blind person would not have mistaken them for blood brothers.

Over the few days when he faked his coma, the family that brought him back did not show any happiness that a family member had luckily escaped a disaster at all. Instead, they were sighing and living in fear every day.

Sometimes, the tiger demon, Lei Chaung, would fiercely argue with his sister, Lei Lan. It appeared that Lei Chuang was unwilling to bring him back, but the demon simply had to.

An old demon whose legs had withered and looked like both a fox and a legless wolf dropped by the tiger demon’s house with an enormous turtle as his vehicle several times, too, and talked to Lei Chuang in a low voice.

It seemed that accepting Li Yao as their ‘big brother’ concerned the fate of not only the family of the tiger demon but also the entire village. Without the demon named ‘Lei Qi’, dire consequences might happen to the village.

It is getting interesting now. All the fifty or so households of demons in the village know clearly that I am mostly certainly not ‘Lei Qi’, but everyone pretends that they are blind.

Why?

Li Yao pondered in silence.

Other than the identity of ‘Lei Qi’, the village in the Hundred Desolation Mountain was weird, too.

Chapter 833 - Master of the Demon Planet

Although Li Yao did not know much about the demon race, he had some basic common knowledge.

Hierarchically speaking, the demons could be classified into four levels, namely saint-blood, silver-blood, bronze-blood, and black-blood.

The saint-blood demons were the royal families in the dynasty of demon beasts that had lasted thirty thousand years. They boasted mysterious and unpredictable strength. It was said that they could even communicate with the gods and trigger the powerful techniques of the ancient demon clan temporarily.

However, in the era of the Star Ocean Imperium, the saint-blood demons had all been slaughtered, if not exterminated, by the Supreme Emperor.

After ten thousand years, the saint-blood demons were rarely seen, if they still existed at all.

The silver-blood demons were the ruling class. Most of the demon kingdoms and demon cities in the Blood Demon Sector were mastered by the silver-blood demons.

On Boneyard, Li Yao had slain ‘Wang Ji’, the prince of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers. He had been a silver-blood demon.

The bronze-blood demons were the warrior class, and the black-blood demons were the peasants, miners, and farmers at the bottom class.

The higher a demon’s social class was, the more human features they would carry when they were born. The demons of lower classes had to train themselves hard in order to grasp the ability of ‘polygraphing’ to make themselves look like human beings.

In the small village deep inside the Hundred Desolation Mountain, the residents could neither be the silver-blood demons with honorable bloodlines or the experts with profound expertise, but Li Yao had discovered the distinctive features of human beings on them.

For some of the villagers, except for the horns on their head, the long tail above their bottom, or the membranes between their fingers, they were almost identical to human beings.

It was also one of the most important reasons why he could hide himself among the villagers with minimal disguise.

Other than that, there was one other thing that was extremely odd.

Besides the hierarchical classes, the demons could also be divided into different parallel clans.

Even in the roughest way and not counting the subcategories, the demons could still be further classified into the Feather Clan, the Sea Clan, the Insect Clan, the Claw Clan, the Horn Clan, and a bunch of other weird communities.

Generally, demons of the same clan would live together.

The tiger demons would live in the same village, and the rabbit demons would live in another one. Their habits were different, and their demand for the environment varied, too. Would it not have been a mess if they were all put together?

The only exceptions were the large cities that had a large population. They were almost the only places where demons of different kinds would live together.

However, in the remote mountain village that had only fifty or so households, more than ten different demons lived together. Maybe the snake demons were the next-door neighbor to the rabbit demons, and the tiger demons were living in harmony with the cow demons. How strange!

‘Chaotic’ was exactly Li Yao’s first impression of the village.

It was not just the village. The households were even more so.

Li Yao discovered that, in many households, the demons of the family had vastly different appearances that not just resulted from their genetic expression. Some of the demons were even displaying features of multiple genera.

Maybe horns that belonged to the bull demons were growing on the head of a tiger demon, and the teeth of the bull demons were as sharp as those of a tiger demon.

Li Yao frowned deeply when he noticed the phenomena. He could not help but wonder how chaotic the relationship of the previous generation of the demons was.

But it was not right!

Ignorant as Li Yao might have been, he knew the basic concept of ‘reproductive isolation’.

Even if a tiger demon and the bull demon could not contain their libido and their certain ‘organs’ boasted certain’ functions’, it was impossible for a child mixed with features of tiger demons and bull demons to be born.

Odd. Really odd!

The so-called demons were refined by human beings forty thousand years ago based on animals. If so, essentially speaking, they should still be animals.

Animals of different genera cannot have children after all!

Alright, the tiger demons and the bull demons are all mammals. Let’s say that the reproductive isolation was broken when they were stimulated by the ‘Demon God Virus’. I’ll believe it for now.

But yesterday in the village, I clearly saw a female snake who had rabbit ears!

It really does not make any sense!

Li Yao scratched his head and doubted the history that he had known since he was a little kid for the first time.

Over the past few days, Lei Lan, the cat-eared girl, in order to help her ‘brother’ ‘regain’ his memories, had read a lot of tales from the Legends of Ancient Demons to him.

The Legends of Ancient Demons was a classical book that was very popular among the demons. Li Yao, for one, had discovered that the old demons in the village quite liked to interpret the Legends of Ancient Demons to the young demons while they enjoyed the sunlight.

In Li Yao’s opinion, the Legends of Ancient Demons was a collection of folklores and the most elementary textbook. It was perhaps compiled by the leadership of the demons for the ethic education of the public.

In the Legends of Ancient Demons, the descriptions about the origins of the demon race and human beings were not surprising.

That was exactly how myths should be written. Everything was all about bluffing and tracing the ancestors back to heroes and gods. The stories could never be too exaggerated, and the clan for which the myths were written always stood for justice and righteousness.

After all, it was not like the demons would acknowledge that they were evil weapons created by human beings, right?

As for the stories of the Primeval Lord of Heaven, the Pangu Clan, and the Nuwa Clan, they were quite understandable, too.

Essentially speaking, the demon race was a parasitic civilization. Before them, human beings had already created a brilliant civilization. During the thirty thousand years when the demon race reigned the sea of stars, it was impossible, and unnecessary, for them to build a set of whole new civilization system from scratch. They simply inherited everything of the civilization of mankind, including the language, culture, social classes, national structure, and everything else.

Modifying the myths of human beings into the demons’ own was only natural for the demon race.

Therefore, the fancy stories on the Legends of Ancient Demons did not shake Li Yao’s belief after all.

But he was truly puzzled by the fact that the same demon was showing the features of multiple kinds of demons.

It was also why he dawdled and had not left the village even though he had completely recovered three days ago.

He was intending to find out the secrets behind the demons.

What exactly were the so-called ‘demons’?

For the ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago, they called all animals that had trained themselves into the appearances of human beings demons.

But in the modern society forty thousand years later, evolutionism had prevailed. Human beings had acknowledged that they were also animals that had evolved from monkeys.

In other words, human beings were all ‘animals that had trained themselves into the appearances of human beings’.

Therefore, the definition of ‘demons’ had changed, too. All species whose evolution was not natural but boosted manually and by force were known as ‘demons’.

But on second thought, wasn’t the training of Cultivators ‘unnatural and boosted manually and by force’, too?

When the body fundamentalists trained themselves to the highest stage, they would trigger the potential in the deepest part of their cells, and they would show the features of primordial beasts. Those body fundamentalists in the ‘primordial state’ looked less like human beings than many demons!

Maybe there is not an essential difference between human beings and the demon race, is there? Everything is defined later.

Right now, the minor apocalypse of the Imperium of True Human Beings is coming near. The war between the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector must be concluded as quickly as possible.

But the Blood Demon Sector has enormous forces, and the demon race is adept at survival. A total war will not be finished in a couple of years.

Even if the planet of the Blood Demon Sector is burnt to the ground with the joint effort of the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector and the surface of the planet is occupied, the remaining demons will still hide below the ground and stall most of our forces with prolonged guerrilla warfare and harassing battles!

At that time, a thousand enemies may be killed, but eight hundred of us will die, too. What can we fight the Imperium of True Human Beings with?

What do I do? What can I do to finish the war within a few years?

Maybe, I can switch to a different method.

I now have the strength of the Blood Stripe Virus. I can train myself in brand new ways on the cellular and even genetic level. I can even absorb the essence of the demon beasts and the demons and insert it into my genetic chain. My body will be repaired, and I will be able to produce an unparalleled 'apocalyptic body'!

If I have such an ability, maybe I will be able to turn into an expert demon by training in the ways of the demon race at a high speed without resorting to the strength of a Cultivator. I might boast certain influence on the planet soon, and I can even become the master of the Blood Demon Sector!

By then, won't I have the ability to manipulate the course of the war?

Li Yao's lips curled into a cold smile uncontrollably. He seemed unaware that his withered left arm, which was tied up in bandages, was gradually expanding in size, as if a certain mysterious strength was proliferating inside it!

Suddenly—

Li Yao sniffed. His soul triggered an electric arc and slashed toward the center of his brain like a lightning sword!

Screams echoed deep inside his brain. A small bloody person was cut in half by Li Yao's soul power and turned into two pools of blood. The two pools of blood slowly melded together into a bloody person again, only this time much smaller.

The bloody person had all the appearances of a human being despite its small size. Its facial organ was particularly vivid and identical to Li Yao. It was grimacing and jumping up and down in pain.

Li Yao's soul sneered. *It's been only two days, and you are trying to stir trouble and affect me again?*

As I said, I will slay you every time you tempt me. I will kill you a hundred times if you tempt me a hundred times. One day, I will execute the bloody devil in my heart!

The small bloody shadow in the deepest part of Li Yao’s brain was Li Yao’s mental devil after melting the Blood Stripe Virus.

After the fierce battle against the Blood Stripe Virus on Firefly half a month ago, although he could not purge the Blood Stripe Virus completely in the end, he was able to drive the virus out of his soul and condense it into such a mental devil that he sealed in his left eye and left arm.

As a result, Li Yao’s left eye and left arm became cages for the mental devil. Li Yao could monitor its status at any time without worries that it might flee and cause trouble to the world.

However, the Blood Stripe Virus was attached to his mental devil, and the mental devil was invisible and unpredictable. It appeared whenever he had negative emotions and could not be removed at all.

In the first couple of days, Li Yao would slay the mental devil whenever he sensed it.

However, it could only cure the symptoms, not the disease. One moment of carelessness, and the mental devil appeared again. When he was uncalm, the more he killed, the more times it would show up.

In the end, he had to acknowledge the existence of the mental devil, however unwilling to, and let it survive temporarily as long as it did not mess around.

Chapter 834 - Chaotic-Blood Demons

The persistent mental devil gave Li Yao a major headache. He swore that he would purge it completely one day.

However, his anger and discontent turned into red streaks and flooded toward the mental devil. They repaired the mental devil’s deformed body like the best tonic.

The mental devil giggled and danced inside Li Yao’s brain. It even smirked to piss him off knowing that Li Yao could do nothing about it.

Li Yao was more than angry. The wretched Blood Stripe Virus was indeed a haunting ghost!

The mental devil declared, its hands on its hips, “Kill me as you will. After all, I don’t have the ability to fight back at all. You can butcher me however you see fit.

“However, don’t blame the Blood Stripe Virus for everything!

“On Firefly, your soul clashed against the Blood Stripe Virus heavily. I believe that you must have found out a lot of secrets of the Blood Stripe Virus. You know that the Blood Stripe Virus does not have self-awareness, any thinking ability, or any kind of moral standard.

“The Blood Stripe Virus does not necessary feed on the lust for killing. All intense emotions are food for the Blood Stripe Virus.

“The Blood Stripe Virus does not only boost the host’s killing intent, either. All emotions are significantly enhanced!

“It’s a pity that, hehehehe, the most intense emotions for most intelligent creatures in the universe are the desire for killing and destruction!

“It was so for the Titan Warriors, Yan Xibei, and the Iron Plateau natives. Now, are you any different?

“So, stop fooling yourself by saying ‘the Blood Stripe Virus tempted you and brought about the mental devil’. You have had the mental devil for a long time. The Blood Stripe Virus only gave it a hand and helped it to reveal itself!

“I did not tempt you just now. The previous thoughts were all your own. I merely brought them out of your subconsciousness so that you could see them more clearly!”

Li Yao hated everything that his mental devil said, but he failed to come up with a response.

The mental devil laughed hard in triumph. Shaking its head, it said, “In fact, it is very simple if you want to annihilate me. As the saying goes, a fire can burn wild grass to the ground, but they will rise again in the spring breeze next year. How can you execute me by slashing so straightforwardly? I will be back to life the next time you have negative emotions!

“However, if there are absolutely no negative emotions in your heart, and you become a positive man who walks in brightness all the time, you will be flawless, and I will be purged into a kind of pure and positive mental energy!

“Hehehehe. I’m afraid that you can’t—”

Li Yao had enough of the mental devil’s racket. He raised a storm with his soul and blew it to the deepest part of his brain.

Although it would not be long before the mental devil showed up again, he was at least granted peace for now.

“Hu…”

Li Yao exhaled, somewhat in depression. He had to admit that the mental devil was right.

Alright. Other than the guy’s ill intentions, it is true that I’m very curious about the origin of the demon race and want to find out their secrets.

Besides, in order to deal with the demon race, I have to know the demon race first.

Now that I have snuck into the Blood Demon Sector, although I did not want to, I should at least gather enough intelligence on the demon race so that the odds of success of the Heaven’s Origin Sector can be increased!

Although I have the combat ability of the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage and the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit that is almost immaculate, they both have distinctive features of the Cultivators. If I utilize them in a battle, I will immediately be noticed by the demons!

Therefore, studying the methodology of the demon’s training and moving to the center of the demons are musts for me.

Deep inside his brain, the mental devil crawled out again. “There is this trick that I would like to—”

“Get lost!”

At the consumption of his brainwaves, Li Yao slapped the mental devil away again.

…

After breakfast, Li Yao went to the training field of the village. As ‘Lei Qi’, he was doing rehabilitation exercises every day.

The demons in the Dry Leaf Village had various kinds of residences according to their living habits.

For tiger demons such as Lei Qi, Lei Lan, and Lei Chuang, they were fond of climbing trees. Therefore, they lived in a woodhouse in the dense forest.

The snake demons liked it next to the river where it was darker and damper, while some of the insect demons preferred to live in caves and only left mounds that were riddled with holes on the ground.

At first look, the entire village was a dazzling mess.

“Lei Qi, morning!”

“Lei Qi, going to train yourself again?”

“Lei Qi, you must get well soon. When the young boys are away, the entire village will count on you for our safety!”

All the villagers he met were greeting him with a smile, as if they had truly been friends for decades.

But Li Yao’s eyes were keen enough to see through the deep worries behind the sunny smiles.

To the east of the Dry Leaf Village, through a garden of dense Ghost Teeth Flowers, was the training field of the village.

The Ghost Teeth Flowers were enormous planets around five meters tall with flower discs more than four meters in diameter. They looked like nepenthes magnified countless times. Sharp teeth were growing on the edge of the petals, and the leaves and some of the roots had evolved into tentacles. It was said that they could drag even lions and tigers into the flowers and eat them.

They were one of the most infamous carnivorous plants, but dozens of precious lumps grew on the roots of every Ghost Teeth Flower. Bright golden juice would flow out when the lumps were cut open. The bright golden juice, known as ‘Gold Stamen Liquid’, was a great natural medicine for healing wounds that was very popular among high-level demons.

The Dry Leaf Village was too remote. Farming and hunting could only ensure that they did not starve. It was the garden of the Ghost Teeth Flowers that all the villagers counted on to make their living.

In the appropriate seasons, the Gold Stamen Liquid could be gathered three times a month. 70% of their harvest would be taken as tax, and the remaining 30% would belong to them. They would trade the Gold Stamen Liquid for daily and living necessities in the towns outside the mountain.

However, the Ghost Teeth Flowers were extremely brutal and dangerous. Except for the sharp petals and the tentacles that were full of thorns, they could also release paralyzing gas. Even the toughest demons would not grow them for a living.

Only the demons who had no other options because of the barren land would risk developing the Ghost Teeth Flowers and gathering the liquid deep inside the shrubs.

In the Dry Leaf Village, only the fastest, strongest, and most agile demons were entrusted with the important task of collecting the Gold Stamen Liquid.

Those demons were usually also the mentors for the young demons in the village.

Therefore, the training field was right next to the garden of the Ghost Teeth Flowers so that the mentors could enlighten the young demons while they were tending to the Ghost Teeth Flowers, and the young demons would realize the difficulty of their life.

When Li Yao walked onto the training field, an old, slender demon who had arms resembling the forelegs of a mantis was dashing swiftly among the Ghost Teeth Flowers that had opened their bloody mouths. Before the petals closed, he threw hares at the stamen as the food for the Ghost Teeth Flowers so that they would secrete more Gold Stamen Liquid.

The countless wounds on the mantis demon and his missing left arm, which was just a bare bone bump now, all indicated the risk of the job.

There was not a teacher in the training field right now. Lei Chuang, Lei Qi’s younger brother, was training with more than then young demons.

“He! He! He!”

Lei Chuang was muscular and more than two meters tall. At first glance, one might have thought that a ferocious tiger head had been attached onto a human body. Bright golden hair covered his greasy skin. Illuminated by the morning sun, glamorous bloody mist was rising from his body. Behind him was a splendid tail with golden rings. It was sometimes as straight as spear and sometimes as tensile as a whip that was slapping the air.

After his every punch, not only was the air in front of him torn apart, dazzling electric arcs on his arms also condensed into the shape of tiger claws, which flew to three meters away without dispersing at all, as he snatched down.

After a crack, broken pieces were spluttering from the giant rock full of green moss, and deep claw marks had been left on the rock.

All the young demons nearby applauded for him.

Lei Chuang was apparently quite respected among the young demons of the Dry Leaf Village. As half a mentor, he flicked the forehead of quite a few young demons uncourteously and roared, “Do you see? You must be full of fury and killing intent when you punch. Only such attacks are powerful enough to rip apart the crystal tanks of human beings easily!

“Train yourselves hard just like I did. Train yourselves at the cost of your life!

“The third call of this year is arriving very soon, but not every demon is qualified to go to the battlefield. The identities of the chaotic-blood demons are different from other demons, and the requirements for us will only be more rigorous!

“Only by working a hundred times harder than other demons and becoming much stronger than them can we be qualified to join the army, resist the evil human beings in the battlefield, and defend the glory of the demon race!”

Seeing that Li Yao had showed up in the training field, Lei Chuang thought for a moment and waved his hands, gesturing for the young demons to take a rest. He then picked up a calabash and poured half of the water into his throat, before he wiped his mouth and said, “Don’t complain about the difficulty of your training now. The chaotic-blood demons were not permitted to join the army in the past at all. Right now, we finally have a chance to. Do you deserve yourself and your village if you cannot seize the opportunity by training yourself with your everything?

“Hehe. I can see that many young demons here are still confused. You don’t understand what ‘chaotic-blood demons’ means at all. Then, let me explain it to you clearly!

“Big brother, please sit down and listen. It was you who told me the knowledge, but since you’ve forgotten it now, I can certainly help you review it.”

The twenty or so young demons, some sitting and some crouching, surrounded Lei Chuang in their most comfortable positions.

Lei Chuang narrowed his eyes and gnashed his teeth. “The name of the chaotic-blood demons is a curse that we are born with. It is also the greatest responsibility on our shoulders!”

Chapter 835 - Obliteration! Rebirth! Immortality!

When he spoke of ‘chaotic-blood demons’, there was a hint of embarrassment in Lei Chuang’s narrowed eyes, which was soon replaced by excitement. Waving his paws, he roared, “The Primeval Lord of Heaven established the three thousand rules of the Great Dao. He prized order and stability. The things that represented the three thousand rules of the Great Dao were classified into diffident levels and duties.

“The demons, according to the different purposes of the Great Dao, are divided into four classes, namely saint-blood, silver-blood, bronze-blood, and black-blood.

“The saint-blood demons are the most honorable and sacred ones. They do not need to care about the daily trivia and need only communicate with the gods. The powerful saint-blood demons can even wield the strength of the ancient demons such as Zhurong, Gonggong, and Kuafu. They can move a mountain, drain an ocean, or even destroy a planet easily!

“The silver-blood demons are in charge of governing all the demons and managing all the worlds as assistants of the saint-blood demons.

“The bronze-blood demons are the most excellent warriors. They do not need to participate in the arduous labor work, and their sole responsibility is to better their combat skills to kill and to protect!

“All labor, basically the farming and the hunting, is taken care of the black-blood demons, who need to think about nothing and just obey their commands dutifully.

“The demons of the four classes have their designated duties. Only by maintaining the order of the Great Dao can the harmonious functioning of the world be ensured. It is a matter of course.

“Other than that, the demon race is also classified into different species such as the Feather Clan, the Sea Clan, the Horn Clan, the Claw Clan, the Insect Clan, and so on. The Feather Clan defends the sky, the Sea Clan is responsible for the water areas, the Claw Clan and the Horn Clan govern the plateaus, the mountains, and the forests, and the Insect Clan manages the soil and the rocks. Billions of creatures have their own arrangements and duties that they need to fulfil.

“This is a perfect world.

“Now that the Great Dao has been settled, it should live on to all eternity and never be changed. The descendants of the saint-blood demons will always be saint-blood demons, and those of the black-blood demons will always be black-blood demons. How could they be mixed together?

“By the same logic, the posterity of the Claw Clan will always be the Claw Clan. I am a tiger demon, and my children and grandchildren will absolutely be tiger demons, too.”

His whiskers shivering violently, Lei Chuang gnashed his teeth. “However, just as the Primeval Lord of Heaven stood for the Great Dao and order, Chaos represented disorder and pandemonium. After the Primeval Lord of Heaven fell asleep, Chaos took the opportunity to confuse the demons with its strength.

“Bewildered by Chaos, many demons who were less determined grew lustful and more ambitious than they should have.

“Some of the members of the Horn Clan and the Claw Clan did unspeakable things, and some black-blood demons even tried to transform their descendants into bronze-blood demons and even silver-blood demons. Therefore, they did whatever they could to hide their bloodline and to steal the life seeds of high-level demons!

“Slowly, many hybrids that carried the features of multiple species were born during the thousands of years of development of the demon race. They are us, the chaotic-blood demons.”

Many young demons lowered their heads in shame. Some of them even cried sadly.

Lei Chuang coughed for a moment and continued. “There are three thousand rules of the Great Dao, but none of them are fit for us. So, we are at the bottom level of the world of the demon race. It is our own fault. Nobody else is to blame.

“However, don’t give up on yourselves yet. Right now, we have the best opportunity ever to wash away the sins and disgrace that we were born with!

“It is the war!

“Before, the lowly chaotic-blood demons who have mixed bloodlines were absolutely not qualified to join the war.

“But do you know what human beings, our enemies in the war, are exactly?

“Human beings are a brand-new species that the Nuwa Clan created by integrating the essence of the twelve ancient demon clans. If we get to the bottom of it, human beings are a kind of chaotic-blood demon, too.”

“Ah!”

It was the first time that many of the young demons had heard such a theory. They could not help but exclaim.

Lei Chuang sneered. “Now you see. Human beings are the traitors among the chaotic-blood demons. Therefore, the Pantheon of Demons specially granted us permission to join the war. We now have the chance to participate in the greatest war in history!

“All that probably sounds dull and boring. So, let’s talk about something more practical.

“Because of the identity of the chaotic-blood demons, not only are we charged with the heaviest taxes, we are also despised everywhere. Many of you have been to the towns outside before, haven’t you? Are you not clear how other demons treat us?

“Now, the chance to change our fate has come!

“The Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector are about to merge. An earthshaking final battle is going to break out soon!

“Therefore, the Pantheon of Demons has issued a call to arms and even bestowed the right to be part of the war upon the chaotic-blood demons.

“As long as you fight valiantly and make contributions to the war, your taxes will be waivered, and your family will no longer starve. We will never struggle to make a living by reaping the Ghost Teeth Flowers anymore!

“If your accomplishments are distinguished enough, it is not unlikely that territory that solely belongs to us in the Heaven’s Origin Sector will be granted to us. If so, we will be able to establish a town whose residents are exclusively chaotic-blood demons. Or, you may be appreciated by a high-level demon who will take you as a servant. Even better —”

Lei Chuang paused for a moment. His eyes full of hope, he went on. “For the chaotic-blood demons who have made the most contributions, the twelve demon emperors of the Pantheon of Demons will work together to cleanse their blood and purge the dirty constituents in their veins so that they will become the purest demons!

“At that time, we will be able to find our place in the three thousand rules of the Great Dao!

“Black-blood or bronze-blood, it is better than chaotic-blood, which absolutely belongs nowhere!”

All the young demons were fascinated by the story. They could not help but sit up or stand straight.

A young demon, who had pure white wings on his back but had a forked tongue, asked hesitantly, “Brother Lei Chuang, hiss, I’m told that human beings are quite strong. Hiss. They’ve defeated two enormous attacks on our side. We seem to have suffered heavy losses in the latest attack.

“After my father returned from the fair in town, he said that the demons in the fair were only half of those who came last year. The young demons of several villages have been entirely wiped out.

“Do you think we can win the war?”

Hearing his words, all the young demons were talking.

“Yes, I’ve heard that, too.”

“My uncle lives in the Broken Leaf Village. He said that twenty soldiers were called in their village but only three returned with their limbs or wings broken. Quite rough!”

“I’m told that the firepower of human beings is much fiercer than ours. When our army pushes forward like a tide, they will be blown out of shape and forced to retreat in less than half a day. Even the awesome silver-blood demons have been bombarded into piles of meat by the crystal warships of human beings.”

“What’s there to be scared of? Listen to me!” Lei Chuang bellowed to quiet all the young demons, before he waved his paws and said, “Of course, human beings are quite tough. Otherwise, they would not have been able to stir trouble again after being suppressed by us for thirty thousand years.

“Honestly speaking, we will not necessarily be the winners of the war. It is very likely that we will fail, die, and be obliterated!

“But failure is not important, death is not scary, and obliteration is certainly not our destination!

“As recorded in the ‘Mutation of Demons’, the demon race will have to be obliterated and reborn three times before we find immortality eventually!

“Zhurong, Gonggong, Kuafu, Nuwa… The fallout of the thirteen ancient demon clans was the first obliteration. Forty thousand years ago, they are reborn as the modern demon race!

“Ten thousand years ago, the Demon Beast Empire collapsed, and human beings restored their reign and established the Star Ocean Imperium. It was the second obliteration of the demon race.

“After ten thousand years of rest, we are reborn again today!

“We are very likely to experience the third obliteration, but it will the last obliteration we go through!

“After the obliteration, we shall be reborn again and embark on the real path of immortality!

“At the end of the path of immortality is the splendid, magnificent Pantheon of Demons, where all demons with a firm belief will be gathered!

“In the Pantheon of Demons, we will recover the perfect form of the thirteen ancient demon clans, or even the Pangu Clan in the very beginning, and destroy human being and Chaos!

“Do you understand now?

“The war between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector is the beginning of the last obliteration!

“The outcome of the war is not important.

“We may die, and we may fail. But as long as we try our best to demonstrate the valor and courage of the demon race, we shall be reborn in the glorious Pantheon of Demons with the most perfect body and the most marvelous strength, which will destroy our enemies!

“When all the enemies are destroyed, all the demons will gather in the Pantheon of Demons and claim their rewards while they enjoy the eternal ecstasy. The bravest and most fearless demons will ascend from the identity of demons into existences of a much higher level!”

All the demons held their breath, hooked. After a long while, a young demon with a pig nose asked cautiously, “Brother Lei Chuang, what are the existences of a much higher level exactly?”

Lei Chuang smiled. “Gods. Real, eternal gods!”

All the young demons gasped and jumped to their feet in excitement, waving their hands and talking to each other.

“That explains a lot. No wonder the slogan of the Pantheon of Demons is ‘Obliteration! Rebirth! Immortality!’

“As long as we kill our enemy bravely, we will get fertile land in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and be freed from the identity of chaotic-blood demons if we win the war and make great contributions.

“Even if the war fails and we die, it does not matter because we will be reborn in the glorious Pantheon of Demons!

“Pantheon of Demons, Pantheon of Demons. What does the real Pantheon of Demons look like? Can they have two delicious meals every day in the Pantheon of Demons? Can they enjoy a bowl of the Sweet Root Water every day? I want to go there and look now!”

“Idiot, why are you drinking Sweet Root Water in the Pantheon of Demons? They certainly drink their water with candy directly! But you are too weak and timid to go to the Pantheon of Demons anyway. You will only be entitled to go to the Pantheon of Demons and die a hero’s death after you kill many evil human beings on the battlefield!”

Another young demon was amazed. “You do know a lot of stuff, Brother Lei Chuang. Then do you know what ‘Blade of Chaos’ is? I accidentally overheard my father and my uncle talking about it the other day. They looked worried and said that it was likely that our village would not be called for soldiers because of the Blade of Chaos. Is it true?”

The words ‘Blade of Chaos’ were like a whip that slapped Lei Chuang right on his face. His smile suddenly disappeared.

The simmering vibe suddenly turned weird.

Chapter 836 - Blade of Chaos

Lei Chuang spat hard, and his saliva pierced deep into the earth like a nail.

He replied fiercely, “What about the Blade of Chaos? It doesn’t matter to tell you their story!

“But those traitors of the demon trace and the heretics who believe in Chaos are scumbags that are forbidden from the Pantheon of Demons forever. It will be enough that you stay alert and learn a thing or two about them. Don’t ask around anymore after you leave the training field!”

The young demons looked at each other in bewilderment when they saw Lei Chuang’s gloomy face. Their merriness had entirely disappeared, and it was not until a long time later that they nodded their heads.

Lei Chuang thought for a moment and said, “The saint-blood demons serve the gods, the silver-blood demons govern the earth, the bronze-blood demons fight bloody battles, and the black-blood demons mine and farm. Those are the rules of the Great Dao and the ultimate laws of nature.

“Although the black-blood demons and the chaotic-blood demons are too humble to pick up the more decent jobs, it is all a test of the Great Dao and part of our training. As long as we are content with ourselves and loyal to the Great Dao, we can consider all the suffering and the pain as our training. When we claim our rewards in the Pantheon of Demons in the future, it is equally possible for us to get rid of the lowly bloodlines and realize the brilliant immortality!

“Besides, the black-blood demons and the chaotic-blood demons have been granted the right to fight for the first time ever so that we will be able to accumulate more battle accolades!

“How merciful, how benevolent!

“However, under the enchantment of Chaos, a tiny proportion of black-blood demons and chaotic-blood demons are not satisfied about their class. They claim that ‘the bloodlines of all demons are the same, and every demon is equally noble and humble’!

“Listen to what they are talking about! That’s truly insane and unpardonable!

“When the demons who believe in Chaos gathered, they gradually established an evil organization named ‘Blade of Chaos’ for the propaganda of their theories of equality of demons and break of social classes!

“It is said that they also have secret arts that allow them to change their appearance. They can change from a tiger demon into a snake demon, or from a snake demon into an insect demon. They can even shift from multiple kinds of demons freely at will. It is indeed creepy and evil!

“Over the past thousand years, the Blade of Chaos has been lurking in the darkness, fanning flames and fooling folk. Occasionally, they caused minor problems, too.

“But things cannot go evil’s way all the time. Even when such a cult led a riot with the disobedient believers, it was suppressed by the army of the Pantheon of Demons very soon.

“However, things changed over the past few decades.

“Since the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector were gradually melding, a few large-scale bloody battles have broken out. As a result, a lot of elites were mobilized to the frontlines, and the defense of the Blood Demon Sector was weak. The Blade of Chaos took the opportunity and developed very fast.

“You all know the ‘Battle of Dawn’, don’t you?

“It was the first head-on clash of the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

“A great army was summoned in the Blood Demon Sector. The twelve demon emperors, the thirty-six demon kingdoms, and all the elites of our world attacked the Heaven’s Origin Sector. A large batch of black-blood demons and chaotic-blood demons were enlisted, too.

“When the battle was fiercest, we occupied more than half of the Grand Desolate Plateau. The Grand Desolate War Institution, the human beings’ bureau on the Grand Desolate Plateau, was demolished. Our vanguard even reached the edge of the Grand Desolate Plateau. As long as we broke through the ‘Giant Blade Pass’, the last stronghold in our way, we would have been able to enter the most prosperous area of the Star Glory Federation!

“Hehe. Those sordid, timid, and weak human beings were absolutely no match for the warriors of our race despite the aid of their crystal suits and their crystal warships. The best they could do was hide behind their defensive lines, shuddering.

“We were on a winning streak over the one year of bloody battles. Just when our army was about to break the last defensive line of human beings and sweep the prosperous area of mankind, the black-blood demons and the chaotic-blood demons who served as the vanguard could not persist any longer and collapsed!

“Damn. Those fearful cowards!

“As black-blood demons and chaotic-demons, what a great honor it was for them to fight in a war! But those scumbags wavered at the critical moment!

“Not only did they collapse on the frontline, putting the army into an awkward situation, they also mutinied when the high-level demons demanded them to return to their posts. Eventually, our army fell apart and was crushed. Less than thirty percent of the soldiers returned to the Blood Demon Sector.

“After everybody returned to the Blood Demon Sector, naturally, the soldiers who defected at the frontline needed to be tried.

“But those fellows did not stop there. They started a revolt known as the ‘Riot of Bloody Blade’!

“It was half a year ago, but our village is too remote and only got the news last month.

“It was not until the revolt that the silver-blood demons discovered that the evil influence of the Blade of Chaos had infiltrated the army.

“In the past, the black-blood demons and the chaotic-blood demons were scattered in the Blood Demon Sector. No matter how the Blade of Chaos developed, they were still loose sand and could not cause any serious problems.

“However, the war against human beings of the Heaven’s Origin Sector had concentrated the low-level demons in every part of the Blood Demon Sector. The black-blood demons and the chaotic-blood demons were grouped into the same legion to learn battle formations and combat skills.

“The Blade of Chaos developed crazily in the army and disseminated their evil and dangerous theories everywhere. The low-level demons lost their fighting will and their belief. In the end, unprecedented damage was caused.

“I’m told that, when the ‘Riot of Bloody Blade’ was most severe, even ‘Bone Sand City’, the famous town in the north, was broken by the rebellions of the Blade of Chaos. All the bronze-blood demons in the city were killed, and the honorable, sacred silver-blood demons were savaged, too!”

“What?”

Many young demons exclaimed in shock and disbelief.

Several young demons even spat and stomped on the ground in fury, as if they were trying to step on the insane rebels.

Lei Chuang sneered and said, “No need to fret, everybody. The members of the Blade of Chaos are just mobs, and their victory could not last. When the army arrived, the revolt was extinguished immediately. Several secret bases of the organization were uprooted, too. The leaders high and low have all been captured. Only some stray dogs are still on the run, living in fear all day long.”

The young demon all heaved a long sigh in relief.

“It is certainly not good news for the chaotic-demons who are loyal with firm beliefs,” Lei Chuang said. “Because of those goddamn traitors, it is even more difficult if we want to join the army, and the vetting is become ever more rigorous.

“Therefore, we must train ourselves harder and improve our capability in order to wash away that disgrace we are born with!

“Obliteration! Rebirth! Immortality!”

All the young demons were shouting in frenzy.

Li Yao narrowed his eyes, somehow feeling cold.

…

At night, in a quiet woodhouse, several fireflies were emitting a gentle, red glow like giant lanterns.

Li Yao pondered inside his sleep bag of vines calmly.

“I got it!” Deep inside his brain, his mental devil was sitting cross-legged in the golden, giant tree that was Ou Yezi’s memory pieces. It shouted, “I know the origin of the chaotic-blood demons now!

“The chaotic-blood demons are the mixed-blood of human beings and the demon race!

“Think about it. During the Great Dark Age that lasted thirty thousand years, human beings were not exterminated by the demon race but captured as slaves and servants. They had close contact with the demon race. In the dynasty-shifting wars between different clans of the demon race, human beings even had the opportunity to go to the battlefield!

“Then, is not it normal and reasonable that, during the thirty thousand years, some of the demons mated with human beings and had children?

“Thirty thousand years are enough for the hybrids to reproduce into the chaotic-blood demons today!

“The assumption perfectly explains why the chaotic-blood demons carry so many features of human beings and why their social status is even lower than that of the black-blood demons. It is because they are half-demons. They are half human being and half demon!”

Li Yao frowned. “Nonsense.

“The assumption cannot explain the ‘reproductive isolation’. Besides, the aesthetics of different species are vastly different. Perhaps the most beautiful human girls are just a pile of meat in the eyes of demons. Why would they be interested in them anyway?

“Anyways, in the Great Dark Age, the demons were the rulers, and human beings were the slaves. Even if such relationships did exist, the demons must have taken the initiative.

“Therefore, their posterity after generations should have more features of the demons, and the features of human beings might just be the adornments.

“But as far as I can see, features of human beings prevail in the chaotic-blood demons. For some of them, they look absolutely no different from human beings as long as they keep their mouths shut.

“Therefore, even if there were hybrids of human beings and demons, there were certainly enough to give birth to such a large number of chaotic-blood demons that look so similar to human beings. There must be a deeper reason."

The mental devil was dazed. It tilted its head and pondered for a long time, mumbling to itself, "On second thought, it is indeed strange.

"Why do you think the monsters in ancient classics and the high-level demons in modern times have to train themselves into the appearances of human beings?

"The build of human beings is not particularly suitable for fighting, nor is it handsome or anything. Are there special benefits after they turn into the appearances of human beings? Or maybe…"

Li Yao scratched his head.

Deep inside his brain, his mental demon was scratching its crimson long hair at the same time, with an equally baffled expression.

Right then, sounds came over from the neighboring woodhouse, which belonged to Lei Lan. She was talking with her brother, Lei Chuang.

Although they kept their voices to a minimum, they could not escape Li Yao's ears.

"Today, the guy can walk on his own and seems to have remembered a lot of things," Lei Chuang said. "It seems that his brain was not damaged in the accident. It is quite likely that we can fool them."

"But I'm still missing our real big brother," Lei Lan said.

Lei Chuang gnashed his teeth. “Do not mention the name of the traitor. From the moment he joined ‘Blade of Chaos’, he was no longer our big brother!”

Chapter 837 - Lei Qi

“But—” Lei Lan said.

Lei Chuang interrupted her coldly. “No ‘but’. Do not mention him again from now on. Our big brother is right next to us. He was seriously burnt in the forest fire half month ago. His head was hurt, resulting in the loss of his memories!”

Pausing for a moment, Lei Chuang lowered his voice and almost whispered to his sister, “The mayor went to the town yesterday. A lot of things are going on outside.

“In the north, the army of the Gold Crow Kingdom has settled the Riot of Bloody Blade. The rebels have been battered, but some of them fled all the way to the south.

“The Hundred Desolation Mountain extends to almost ten thousand kilometers away, with forests, swamps, and underground caves everywhere. The terrain is extremely complicated. It is very likely that the survivors of the Blade of Chaos have run to the depths of the Hundred Desolation Mountain.

“Therefore, the villages and towns near the Hundred Desolation Mountain, especially those habituated by the chaotic-blood demons, are all undergoing thorough investigation. Should the villagers be found related to the Blade of Chaos, not only will the qualification to join the army be canceled, the suspects might even be executed instantly!”

“What?” Lei Lan exclaimed in shock.

“Keep your voice down,” Lei Chuang urged. “Naturally, to deal with a cult such as the Blade of Chaos, decisive approaches are necessary to remove them once and for all. It is inevitable that some innocent individuals will be hurt.

“It’s fine that Lei Qi went to join the Blade of Chaos himself, but he is causing great trouble for us, too. Damn!

“Thankfully, we were lucky enough to pick up a chaotic-blood demon who lost his memory in the forest fire. He appeared to be a wildling deep inside the Hundred Desolation Mountain, didn’t he? But it does not matter now.

“All in all, the entire village agrees unanimously that he is Lei Qi.

“Before Lei Qi left the village to join the Blade of Chaos, he was hunting in the forests all the time and barely went to outside world. His acquaintances must be few.

“Investigations for such a small, remote village like ours cannot be very through, either. I assume that a few high-level demons will take a trip here when they issue the call for soldiers from the city.

“Those high-level demons will already feel that the village is stinky enough the moment they set foot in it, and they will only look down their noses at us. How will they know who we are? We are definitely going to fool them!

“As long as we prove that nobody in our village is involved in the Blade of Chaos, there will be no reason to stop us from joining the army!”

After hearing this, Li Yao finally understood his role in the entire incident.

“Sister, sleep early,” Lei Chuang said. “The call should be arriving in a day or two. You must keep your spirits by then and make sure that nothing goes wrong.

“I’ll train for another hour while the moon is red!”

“Ah Chuang, don’t be too hard on yourself,” Lei Lan said.

Lei Chuang smiled. “The chaotic-blood demons are low-born in the first place. How can we break the ceiling without hard work?

“The land of the village is too barren, and the taxes are too heavy. Everybody’s life is difficult. We cannot change our fate by hunting and harvesting. Only by making more contributions on the battlefield can we all live a better life!

“I’m told that, in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, prosperous, fertile farmlands are right behind the Grand Desolate Plateau. Human beings there do not need to work at all. They can sunbathe comfortably while they wait for their magical equipment and machines to plough and reap the crops for them.

“If we have a slice of the fertile land or a small mine in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, we will be able to move the Dry Leaf Village there. We will plant the Ghost Teeth Flowers with the magical equipment of human beings. While we enjoy ourselves in the sunlight, the magical equipment will collect the Gold Stamen Liquid automatically for us. What a fantastic life it will be!”

“Is there such magical equipment in the world?” Lei Lan was amused.

Lei Chuang laughed, too. The sister and brother whispered to each other for a while, only to be interrupted by feeble howls in the east of the village.

Li Yao could tell that the howls were made by one of the two Moon Shadow Wolves that were the guardians of the garden of Ghost Teeth Flowers. But they fell silent again after only a short howl.

Naturally, the Ghost Teeth Flowers were too brutal to need protecting, but the Gold Stamen Liquid that was collected had to be dried in a special bed of the Reed Grass in order to maximize its effect.

There were too many wild, disobedient beasts in the Hundred Desolation Mountain that would often harass the village. Therefore, two Moon Shadow Wolves were tamed as guardians to resist not the potential thieves but the beasts that could easily sabotage the Gold Stamen Liquid that the villagers collected.

Lei Chuang left the woodhouse. His eyes glittered again like two shining lanterns, with dangerous brightness beaming out.

His nose flapping, Lei Chuang took a deep breath. Suddenly, he rushed to the east of the village on all fours.

Li Yao thought of something. He felt that the howl was unusual, too. Therefore, he simply followed Lei Chuang closely like a weightless shadow.

Hu!

When Lei Chuang rushed to the garden of the Ghost Teeth Flowers, he found a black shadow digging something out of the Reed Grass in the cone-shaped warehouse.

Two Moon Shadow Wolves the size of calves crouched nicely next to the stranger, like two pets that had been fed up, quiet and satisfied.

Lei Chuang burst into fury. He bellowed. The golden hair all over his body suddenly rose up, his body size expanded significantly, and his tail became as straight as a spear.

Shua!

He snatched forward. Electric arcs were spluttering from his claw. The attack was almost the level of a ‘demon soldier’ now. If he were on the frontline, he could have served as one of the squad captains in the beast tide.

However, the demon who was stealing the Gold Stamen Liquid was extremely agile. Just like a giant cat, he dashed back to the forest after only a few leaps.

Lei Chuang sniffed and chased after the thief.

The forest extended into the depths of the Hundred Desolation Mountain. Even during the day when the sun was most enthusiastic, they were still wreathed in faint mist. When the sunlight pierced through the gaps of the branches, it was practically dyed black.

Now that at a hazy night with a bloody moon in the sky, there was nothing but horror inside the forests.

On a giant tree, Lei Chuang glared. Dangerous brightness, as well as a drop of blood, was shining on his paws.

Lei Chuang licked the blood on his paw with his tongue that was full of thorns. His voice was even gloomier than the moonlight that illuminated the forests as he said, “It’s you!”

In front of him, on the branch of another giant tree one meter away, a tall and slender young demon was lurking.

The animalistic features on the young demon were even fewer. Except for the dense, bright golden hair and the mark on his forehead, there were barely any chrematistics of a demon on him.

But the demonic energy emanating from his body was much thicker than Lei Chuang's. An invisible yet fierce tiger seemed to be crouching right next to him.

Lei Chuang laughed, in the most scornful, hateful, and furious way. "I found it hard to believe when I smelt the familiar scent just now. Lei Qi, you are bold to come back to the village as a traitor!

"What are you doing here? To get every one of us killed?"

Li Yao was not hiding far away from them. His body seemed to have disappeared into thousands of dry leaves all of a sudden, as he listened to their conversation quietly.

Although the two brothers were both the strongest hunters in the forest, the gap between their levels and his was too huge. Even if Li Yao was only half a meter away from them, they would not have been able to find Li Yao with their eyes wide open.

Li Yao curiously observed the real Lei Qi, who was allegedly a member of the Blade of Chaos that was made of the rebel demons.

Lei Qi was wearing a ragged soft armor with dried bloodstains all over the surface. There was also a giant hole deep to the bones on his belly. The skin had been corroded by acid, and his internal organs could clearly be seen.

The brief combat had opened his wounds. He was apparently in pain as he spoke in a deep, coarse voice. “Ah Chuang, don’t stand in my way.

“I have to escort an important item to the center of the Hundred Desolation Mountain. But we were ambushed by the enemy, and many of our warriors were heavily wounded.

“We were in desperate need of a batch of Gold Stamen Liquid to heal their wounds. I would not have returned to the village if I had a second option.

“Just pretend that you did not see me and go back to sleep now. I’ll go away immediately with the Gold Stamen Liquid. Nobody in the village will be burdened by me.”

Lei Chuang’s eyes widened further than those of a bull, and he roared furiously, “Lei Qi, you have indeed been spellbound by Chaos. You’ve lost your mind!

“Do you know that the life of the entire village counts on the batch of Gold Stamen Liquid?

“The call is about to be issued. Other than soldiers, a lot of war assets will be gathered, too. The assets that were demanded this year are seventy percent of the Gold Stamen Liquid we harvested!

“And now, you are stealing half of the remaining thirty percent. How is everybody in the village going to live in the next year?

“No. I won’t allow it!

“The Gold Stamen Liquid was earned by all the villagers with their sweat and blood!

“To nourish those goddamn Ghost Teeth Flowers, we had to go hunting every day before dawn, and the prey we got after all trouble had to be fed to the Ghost Teeth Flowers first instead of ourselves!

“Not just that, we had to fertilize the soil, clear the wild grass, and drive away the bugs for the Ghost Teeth Flowers every day. One moment of carelessness, and our hands or legs might have been bitten off!

“In the harvest season, when we had to reap their lumps right below their bloody mouths, we were passing the test of life and death every day!

“This year alone, four villagers have been crippled by the Ghost Teeth Flowers!

“We’ve gathered a tiny bit of Gold Stamen Liquid after all the trouble, and you are taking it away with a few words? In your dreams!

“Tell you what, Lei Qi. From the moment you joined the Blade of Chaos, you were no longer a demon of the Dry Leaf Village! If you are sensible enough, just get the hell out of here. I will not report the issue to the town.

“However, if you want a drop of Gold Stamen Liquid, you must step over my dead body!”

Tears in his ears, Lei Qi covered the wound on his belly and bellowed, “Of course, I know how dangerous it is to tend to the Ghost Teeth Flowers. It is the only reason I joined the Blade of Chaos. I want to change everything!

“Why are the silver-blood demons qualified to live in splendid cities comfortably and carefreely every day while they ask us to shed our blood and work for them?

“Why do the bronze-blood demons not need to work, and why can they get sufficient resources just by exploiting us brutally, only to exploit even more from our bones after they train themselves to be stronger?”

Chapter 838 - Seventy-two Changes

“The black-blood demons and the chaotic-blood demons till the most barren land and work in the most dangerous mines all the time. What we have been eating are the leftovers that they accidentally dropped. We live in fear all through our life, and if we die and rot in mud, we do not even have a tombstone. In the end, our earning is less than one percent of what they get!

“Even though we endure everything, they are still unwilling to let us go. They want us to go to the Heaven’s Origin Sector as cannon fodder to fulfil their ambition!”

“Stop it. That is the Great Dao for us!” Lei Chuang said coldly. “Everything in the world is part of your training. As chaotic-blood demons, all the pain and suffering are tests that the Primeval Lord of Heaven bestowed upon us!

“As long as we hold on to our belief and devote our everything loyally, when the glorious Pantheon of Demons appears, we will be able to get rid of the filthy blood and embark on the path to becoming immortal gods just like the silver-blood demons and the saint-blood demons!”

Lei Qi laughed so hard that his tears were almost dropping. “Ah Chuang, you are so naïve. Do you really believe in the glorious Pantheon of Demons and that the bloodlines of the high-level demons are different from ours?”

Lei Chuang sneered. “Of course, I do because… it was you who told me everything!

“Wasn’t it you who told me a long time ago about the stories of the Primeval Lord of Heaven, the three thousand rules of the Great Dao, the glorious Pantheon of Demons, Obliteration, rebirth, and immortality?

“Wasn’t it you who told me that we must train ourselves crazily so that we can rush to a brilliant obliteration on the battlefield and embrace a magnificent rebirth?

“Wasn’t it you who told me that, faced with the contempt of the silver-blood demons, the exploitation of the bronze-blood demons, and the bullying of the black-blood demons, we must bear in mind that we are walking on the path that the Primeval Lord of Heaven chose for us and that it is our most important training?

“Speak now!

“Wasn’t it you, my brother whom I admired and trusted most, who told me everything?

“Brother! What happened to you exactly? Why did you leave the village half a year ago with an uncanny letter stating that everything was false and you’d joined the Blade of Chaos?

“What did you run into exactly while we were lost in the Hundred Desolation Mountain during the hunting trip because of the heavy fog?

“Have you been enchanted by Chaos and lost your mind? Tell me, brother!”

Lei Qi took a deep breath and smiled, somewhat miserably. “I’m sorry, Ah Chuang. The things that I used to firmly believe in and taught you are all false.

“The saint-blood, silver-blood, bronze-blood, black-blood, and chaotic-blood demons are all the same. Nobody is born to be nobler, or humbler, than anybody else.”

“I don’t buy it!” Lei Chuang gnashed his teeth, anger all over his face. “The Feather Clan flies in the sky, the Claw Clan roars in the forest, the Insect Clan lurks below the ground, and the Sea Clan dominates the ocean!

“The high-level demons look magnificent, graceful, and inviolable, while the chaotic-blood demons carry the features of multiple demon species and could not be uglier!

“The differences are so obvious. How can our bloodlines be the same?”

“I knew that you wouldn’t believe it,” Lei Qi said. “I didn’t believe such an absurd theory in the beginning myself, either, until I saw it with my own eyes.

“Do you know why I left home to join the Blade of Chaos half a year ago?

“During our hunting trip in the Hundred Desolation Mountain, we were parted because of the heavy fog. Then, I discovered a heavily wounded demon below a cliff who was a member of the Blade of Chaos.”

“Then, he enthralled you,” Lei Chuang said coldly.

With an indescribable expression, Lei Qi said, “Maybe, but not in the way that you imagined, but—”

He struggled to stand to his feet on the branch.

Lei Chuang crouched in alert, ready to attack.

Lei Qi smiled and did not move. He simply touched the center of his eyebrow with his hairy fingers.

A weird scent spread out in the forest.

Gua! Gua!

Two bizarre birds soared to the sky with tails as long as whips toward the bloody moon.

Hu…

Lei Qi’s fingers seemed to have pierced deep into his head, because he was shaking and soaked in sweat while his bones emitted cracking noises.

The abrupt changes that happened next greatly surprised both Lei Chuang and Li Yao, who was lurking in darkness.

The few features of a demon in Lei Qi were absorbed into his body. His golden fur fell to the ground, his sharp canine teeth and claws all retreated, his fingers turned long and slim, and his skin could not have looked smoother. Judging from the appearance, he was an out-and-out young human being who was a bit hairy!

Lei Chuang was dazed. “You’ve grasped the ability of ‘polymorphing’ after just half a year?”

The so-called polymorphing was a technique with which the demons could conceal all the features of a demon and turn into human beings.

Many high-level demons could assume the appearance of human beings when they reached a certain level.

It was also a great ability for many demons to sneak into the Heaven’s Origin Sector for intelligence or sabotage purposes.

Therefore, the Star Glory Federation had particularly strict quarantine measures against the human-looking demons. Li Yao had experienced a high-level fully-enclosed medical inspection after the beast tide incident on the train.

Lei Qi seemed to be in his thirties at best. He was not a high-level demon in terms of bloodline, either. However, he had grasped the ability of polymorphing nonetheless, which made Li Yao frown.

Lei Qi managed a smile. Then, his eyes suddenly bulged, and he bellowed. Goosebumps appeared on over his skin and, after a while of terrifying sound of skin being torn apart, bright golden scales quickly grew.

In the center of every golden scale was a green, greasy round spot.

At first glance, Lei Qi had grown countless green eyes all over his body that were glittering in the dim forest with mysterious and enticing colors.

Li Yao and Lei Chuang were both shocked!

“Green Eye Dragon Scale?” Lei Chuang stammered. “That—That is the most distinctive feature of ‘Hundred-Eyed Dragon’, a type of silver-blood demon. Such a feature is unique. Only a Hundred-Eyed Dragon can possibly demonstrate such a pattern. How—how did you—”

Lei Qi seemed to be unable to maintain the new form for long. After a shudder, the golden scales were absorbed by his skin, and he resumed the appearance of a human being again.

The changes just now were apparently very exhausting for him. His face was paler, but he could not have been more excited. He laughed. “Do you see? This is how the member of the Blade of Chaos enthralled me!

“We are blood brothers. Nobody knows it better than you that, although we are chaotic-blood demons, we never had a Hundred-Eyed Dragon as our ancestor.

“We do not have the bloodline of the Hundred-Eyed Dragons, but after a while of training, we can trigger the features of the Hundred-Eyed Dragons. What does that mean?

“It means that the blood of all the demons is the same!

“Hundred-Eyed Dragons, Phantom Wolves, Thunderous Lions… The same blood flows in every demon’s brain, except that it is activated in a different way. Why are some of the demons nobler than the rest?”

“It’s impossible. It’s absolutely impossible!” Lei Chuang was so shocked that he almost bit his own tongue. “I—I was told that the members of the Blade of Chaos know the evil art that could change their appearances freely. Even though you look like a Hundred-Eyed Dragon, your blood is still different. It’s just a camouflage!”

“Believe me, Ah Chuang!” Lei Qi said earnestly. “I’m still incapable right now, and I can only reshape what I look like.

“But many experts in the Blade of Chaos boast the ability of ‘Thirty-six Changes’ or ‘Seventy-two Changes’. They can freely switch between different types of demons, and after they take each form, they will be able to utilize the naturally-endowed arts of the new form of demons!

“Since they are using the naturally-endowed arts of a different species, do you think their blood has changed or not?”

Lei Chuang was dumbfounded, unable to say anything for a long time.

Li Yao felt that thunder was echoing nonstop inside his brain. All his knowledge about the demon race had been blown apart by the few words.

Are you kidding me? Seventy-two Changes? Freely switching between seventy-two different species of demons? What—what kind of skill is this exactly?

It does not make any sense!

Lei Chuang stammered, “Can all the demons change their form freely?”

“Yes, they can.” Lei Qi nodded and said, “As long as you memorize the tricks and practice hard, every demon can change their form freely. A silver-blood can turn into a black-blood, and vice versa. The Feather Clan can turn into the Sea Clan, and the Sea Clan can turn into the Claw Clan.

“However, the chaotic-blood demons are better at the changing than other demons. With preliminary training, we will be able to change into several forms.

“How should I put it? It’s like there is a solid lock in the cells of every demon that fixes us to a certain form, but the ‘locks’ for the chaotic-blood demons are weaker than those of the other demons.

“This is why the high-level demons are scared of us!”

Lei Chuang was dumbfounded. “Scared?”

“Yes,” Lei Qi said coldly, “they are scared of us. The high and mighty silver-blood demons and bronze-blood demons fear the filthy, lowly bastards that are us!

“In the entire Blood Demon Sector, the silver-blood demons take up only five percent of the population, and the bronze-blood demons ten. But the black-blood demons and the chaotic-blood demons take up eighty-five percent!

“In the past, they claimed that they were born nobler than us and that it was a matter of course for them to reign us.

“But if everybody’s blood is the same except that it is displayed in different ways, is there any reason they should stay on the top of us?

“Therefore, they are scared of us, and they have been exploiting and diminishing us however possible!

“Isn’t the war between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector a method to weaken and moderate us, too?

“Why do you think they are allowing us to join the war? And why are they deceiving us with the lie of the ‘glorious Pantheon of Demons’?

“Because there are too many low-level demons in the Blood Demon Sector who can potentially threaten their reign. Organizations such as the Blade of Chaos are making them cold to the bones!

“That’s why they are resorting to all possible approaches to fool us into fighting human beings as cannon fodder!

“It will be excellent if we can take over the Heaven’s Origin Sector. But even if we fail to, it does not matter, either. At the very least, the steel sabers of human beings will have eradicated a lot of ‘potential threats’ for them!”

Chapter 839 - First Princess of the Gold Crow Kingdom

There was no telling whether or not it was because the polymorphing affected his wounds, but Lei Qi was sweating hard, and his bloodshot eyes were filled with bloody tears. He said, his voice shivering, “Although I did not join the ‘Coalition Army of Demons’ to fight human beings in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, many of our brothers in the Blade of Chaos were in the Heaven’s Origin Sector during the goriest ‘Battle of Dawn’!

“Those who luckily escaped told us the details of the Battle of Dawn. You have no idea how the battle was fought!

“Human beings were on the defensive side. They had solid city walls, crystal cannons, and fierce crystal warships. But the black-blood demons and the chaotic-blood demons had to strike their deadly defense line with just our bodies for nothing other than to consume their crystals and ammunitions!

“The bronze-blood demons and the silver-blood demons would not take action until their magical equipment was worn, their crystals drained, and their soldiers tired. At that time, our countless brothers had already collapsed in the ocean of blood!

“During the year of the Battle of Dawn, we seemed to be on a winning streak and swept across the Grand Desolate Plateau, but the bloody victories were actually founded on the corpses of the black-blood demons and the chaotic-blood demons! The legions made of more than ten thousand black-blood demons and chaotic-blood demons could be annihilated within half a day when they were deployed in the frontline with absolutely no survivors!

“Just like that, our army marched forward and reached the Giant Blade Pass at the edge of the Grand Desolate Plateau.

“The Giant Glade Pass is the greatest stronghold for human beings of the Heaven’s Origin Sector. It leans against a mountain and rises high into the clouds, and it covers hundreds of square kilometers, including crystal cannons and hidden fortresses. Countless human experts were guarding the place. How could it be broken into quickly?

“But those high and mighty generals and commanders cared nothing of it. They simply urged the soldiers to march forward. The superintendents were even standing right behind the black-blood demons and the chaotic-blood demons. When the horn was blown, there was no retreating and only going forward. Whoever hesitated would immediately be executed by poisonous arrows and acid from behind.

“After a month of suicidal attacks, the Giant Glade Pass was utterly unharmed, but the desert before the stronghold was dyed red with blood!

“As the gruesome battle went on, neither the ‘glorious Pantheon of Demons’ nor the superintendents worked any more. Also, since we marched too deep into enemy territory, it was difficult to transport food and weapons from our rear. The morale on the frontline could not have been lower.

“Those high-level demons, in order to coerce the low-level demons into selling our lives for them, came up with an insane move, which was to poison the food of the low-level demons!”

Lei Chuang’s eyes bulged, and he exclaimed, “What?”

Lei Qi gnashed his teeth, his face full of pain. “They poisoned our food. We had to have an antidote every three days. Otherwise, our skin would all fester, and we would die a miserable death.

“Only the demons who participated in at least one charge in three days would receive one antidote pill. However, the antidote could only slow the activation of the poison instead of curing it. We would not get the real antidote until the Giant Blade Pass was taken!

“There were many brothers of the Blade of Chaos in the army. They made a lot of friends during the one year of life-and-death battles together and gradually spread the ideas of the Blade of Chaos.

“The poisoned food had crossed our bottom line. That was why our brothers of the Blade of Chaos mutinied, killed the high-level demons, and got the real antidote.”

Lei Chuang was quiet, so Lei Qi continued. “This is the truth of the Battle of Dawn.

“After the remaining soldiers returned to the Blood Demon Sector, the high-level demons were scared that the truth would get out and hunted the members of the Blade of Chaos among the survivors. However, they did not bother to investigate properly, and as long as one soldier of a legion was suspected to be related to the Blade of Chaos, every soldier in the legion would be executed!

“As a result, whenever one real member of the Blade of Chaos was killed, dozens of innocent low-level demons would be slain at the same time.

“That was why we rose up and raised the Riot of Bloody Blade!”

Soaked in sweat, Lei Chuang panted and said, “The Riot of Bloody Blade has been suppressed!”

Lei Qi held his chest high and laughed. “The Riot of Bloody Blade may have failed, but the Blade of Chaos has not been destroyed yet!

“In the Riot of Bloody Blade, many of our brothers were awakened. They clearly recognized that the seemingly magnificent, invincible high-level demons are unbelievably feeble. As long as we stick together and work hard, the ‘lowly’, ‘filthy’ black-blood demons and chaotic-blood demons can occupy their cities and destroy their reign, too!

“Even if the Blade of Chaos is wrecked someday, it will not be the end of our cause. As long as the black-blood demons and the chaotic-blood demons keep being oppressed, we will be awakened sooner or later, and a second or a third ‘Blade of Chaos’ will be born!

“Ah Chuang, I know that you are too stubborn to change your mindset when you already believed in something. I cannot convince you so quickly.

“But I’m not asking you to join the Blade of Chaos right now. I’m merely asking you to get out of the way and go home; pretend that you’ve seen nothing wrong!

“We are currently escorting a very important item that can potentially change the fate of all the black-blood demons and the chaotic-blood demons and even the future of the Blood Demon Sector!

“Many of our brothers have been seriously wounded. They cannot hold on any longer inside the Hundred Desolation Mountain without timely treatment!

“Just let me take a bit of the Gold Stamen Liquid. Just a bit.

“I’m begging you. Please!”

Lei Chuang was silent for a long time.

There was not a sound in the dim forest, except for the rattling noises when the wind passed through the branches, as if countless invisible bugs were gnawing the leaves crazily.

Zeng! Zeng! Zeng! Zeng!

Lei Chuang’s claws, which had been folded, extended out again, emitting dangerous brightness in the starless night.

“No. I cannot let you go.”

Taking a deep breath, Lei Chuang shook his head and said, “Everything is just your side of the story. I do not believe it!

“Your polymorphing might be a certain evil technique of the Blade of Chaos or because you’ve contracted a terrible disease.

“The truth of the Battle of Dawn of yours came from somebody else’s mouth, too.

“Maybe you are not lying to me, but the leadership of the Blade of Chaos who told you the ‘truth’ lied to you. They made you abandon the real Great Dao and embrace the shameless Chaos in such a way.

“I will not be fooled whatever you say. I stand by my words. Big brother, if you want to go, step over my dead body!”

Lei Qi gave no response. The invisible intimidating aura around him became intense again, and dark golden hair that looked like both needles and swords grew out of his smooth skin.

The air between the two brothers was quivering, as if two invisible tigers were roaring silently before a huge clash.

Right then, a deafening shriek echoed in the sky not far away.

Golden streaks of brightness rushed close from the horizon and darted toward the Dry Leaf Village at an amazing speed!

The long shriek was like a sharp piton that shattered Lei Qi’s resolution.

He grunted, with depression all over his face. The intimidating aura around him swiftly disappeared. He dashed to the top of the tree and observed for a moment before he went back and said in a hurry, “The pursuers are here. It is possible that they will take a rest in the village. Go back now!

“Remember, don’t show any weakness and don’t mention anything about me. The pursuers are led by Jin Xinyue, the First Princess. She is cruel and ruthless and has killed countless brothers of ours. If you are incautious, the entire village might be wiped out by her!”

Lei Chuang gasped. “The First Princess Jin Xinyue? I’m told that she is a saintess of the Pantheon of Demons and the youngest demon king of the Blood Demon Sector. She was sent here to capture such an insignificant person as yourself? What are you escorting exactly?”

Lei Qi smiled bitterly but gave no answer.

Li Yao lurked in the darkness and listened to their conversation. He felt that he was getting the gist of what was going on.

The political system of the Blood Demon Sector was different from that of the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

In the Heaven’s Origin Sector, there was only one country named ‘Star Glory Federation’ which adopted the parliamentary system. The three parliaments were the highest authority, and the Speaker was the representative of the supreme power.

In the Blood Demon Sector, since the demons varied in appearance and living habits and there were too many species, it was difficult to integrate all of them into one country.

Therefore, dozens of countries existed in the Blood Demon Sector. There were also countless relatively independent cities and caves.

The social form was somewhat similar to the Flying Star Sector, which was vast and unpopulated.

After thousands of years of battles and conflicts, four demon kingdoms distinguished themselves today and became the greatest forces.

On the land, the most powerful force was the Kingdom of Lion Butchers, which commanded the Claw Clan and the Horn Clan. Wang Ji, whom Li Yao had killed on Boneyard, was a prince of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers.

Underground, the Nether Spring Kingdom was the strongest of all, which governed billions of insects. Although insects did not boast a high combat ability as individuals, they could be really appalling when the number of them was large enough. In the overwhelming beast tides, insects were usually the majority of the constituents.

In the oceans, the greatest country was the Sea Dominator Kingdom. It was the most mysterious of the four, and there was no telling how many experts the country had.

In the sky, the strongest country was the Gold Crow Kingdom, which was mostly made of the Feather Clan that flew high in the sky. They were the fastest of all the four countries and were sort of the ‘rapid-response troops’ of the demon race.

However, although the four demon kingdoms had their own territory, the supreme power of the Blood Demon Sector was not in the hands of the kings. The kings of the demon kingdoms large and small, the leaders of the demon cities, and the masters of the demon caves and mountains were just puppets.

Above the demon kingdoms, there was an organization named the ‘Pantheon of Demons’, which reigned over all the demons as a theocracy.

In the legends of the demon race, the Pangu Clan split into the twelve ancient demon clans including Zhurong, Gonggong, Pangu, and so on. Therefore, the Pantheon of Demons was managed by twelve demon emperors.

Every demon emperor had a certain number of kingdoms and cities under their control, but normally, they would not be involved in the decision-making processes of the kingdoms and merely serve as their reliance.

If they were compared to the political system of human beings, the Pantheon of Demons were the ‘Supreme Parliament’ for the demon race, and the twelve demon emperors would be twelve ‘special representatives’ that could decide all the important affairs of the nation.

Chapter 840 - High-Level Demons with Halos

The twelve demon emperors represented the interests of different demons. Naturally, there were a lot of internal conflicts both in open and below the table.

In order to maintain a united front, the twelve demon emperors would elect a ‘Dark Lady of the Nine Heavens [1] ‘, just like the ancient twelve demon clans created by the Nuwa Clan in the legends.

Theoretically speaking, the Dark Lady of the Nine Heavens boasted the capability to communicate with the thirteen ancient demon clans as the spokesperson of the Pantheon of Demons. All important decisions had to be approved of by the Dark Lady of the Nine Heavens before they were announced to the demons.

The Dark Lady of the Nine Heavens was the equivalent to the Speaker of the Star Glory Federation.

However, faced with twelve strong and powerful demon emperors, the Dark Lady of the Nine Heavens was nothing more than a puppet and a rubber stamp. Their real power was absolutely incomparable to the Speaker of the Star Glory Federation.

The Pantheon of Demons established branches in every demon kingdom and demon city. Whenever the royal family and the nobles among the demons gave birth to female descendants, they would often select the smartest and strongest to be sent to the Pantheon of Demons. The children, after a series of cruel and rigorous training, would turn into saintesses that were loyal to the Pantheon of Demons.

Every new Dark Lady of the Nine Heavens would be selected from among the saintesses.

Therefore, in the political system of the demons, the saintesses who could mobilize the strength of the Pantheon of Demons and were deeply connected to many demon kingdoms enjoyed special privileges. They were the sharpest claws and teeth of the Pantheon of Demons. Even the masters of many demon cities and demon caves dared not mess around with the lowest saintesses.

Right now, a saintess of the Pantheon of Demons, and the First Princess of the Gold Crow Kingdom, had come to pursue a bunch of members of the Blade of Chaos in such a remote village in the middle of nowhere?

Were Lei Qi and his companions really carrying an item that could change the future of the Blood Demon Sector?

Seeing that his brother was still suspicious, Lei Qi raised his voice and said sincerely, “Ah Chuang, you must believe me. Do not be fooled by Jin Xinyue’s appearance. The witch is more horrifying than you can possibly imagine!

“Her father, Jin Tuyi, is one of the strongest demon emperors in the Pantheon of Demons. He is known as the fastest demon emperor of the Blood Demon Sector!

“After the brutal failure of the Battle of Dawn, Jin Tuyi became the new commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons. He is now planning a round of new attacks against the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

“In the meantime, he commanded the suppression of the ‘Riot of Bloody Blade’. Many brothers of the Blade of Chaos were killed miserably by the butcher!

“The man’s hands both reek of the stench of blood. He is not a demon but the craziest devil!

“Jin Xinyue is as horrifying as her father, if not more. Besides, her appearance is more deceptive. You must not believe whatever she says. She is an absolutely merciless, cold-blooded demon!”

The golden streaks of brightness had gradually moved to the middle of the sky. They would arrive at the Dry Leaf Village very soon.

After saying that, Lei Qi looked at his brother with complicated feelings and crawled into the forest.

Lei Chuang did not know what to do for a moment. He hesitated for a moment and simply ran back to his village.

Li Yao returned to the woodhouse one step faster than him. He curled up in his sleep bag and concealed his scent, pretending that he was just a random chaotic-blood demon.

However, he was not confident that he could fool the newcomers at all.

Right now, he had basically come to understand the whole thing.

The residents of the Dry Leaf Village wanted him to pretend to be Lei Qi in order to fool the recruitment officers. They were scared that the recruitment officer would not allow the demons in the village from joining the army after learning that a resident had joined the Blade of Chaos. Chances were that there would be even direr consequences should it be known.

Those who came to enlist soldiers in such remote areas were most likely bottom-level officers in the demon army. Perhaps it would only be one or two bronze-blood demons. So, the odds were quite high that they would be fooled.

However, it was one thing to fool a bottom-level recruitment officer, and it was quite another thing to fool a saintess of the Pantheon of Demons, the princess of the Gold Crow Kingdom.

Li Yao felt a headache because of the dilemma.

He thought of running away, too. However, since the Feather Clan all flew in the sky and were the fastest demons, he might not necessarily get away from the hunt without his crystal suit and Black Wing.

But if he resorted to using his crystal suit and Black Wing, traces of spiritual energy would definitely be left, and it would be even more difficult for him get rid of the pursuers.

I'll observe Jin Xinyue's capability first. According to Lei Qi, she is just a demon king, which is equivalent to the Core Formation Stage of Cultivators. Even though she has a few other demon kings as her guards, they are not going to stop me.

However, it will be quite troublesome to kill all of them without leaving any traces.

Years ago, Wang Ji of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers carried a lot of bizarre weapons and magical equipment with him, which gave me quite a headache.

Since Jin Xinyue is a saintess of the Pantheon of Demons and the ‘First Princess’, she must be in a very high position in the Gold Crow Kingdom. Chances are that even the king of the Gold Crow Kingdom has to show her some respect.

Therefore, her gadgets will only be more impressive than Wang Ji’s!

If she notices me and is determined to run away, it is possible that I will not be able to stop her.

Deep inside Li Yao’s brain, his mental devil was expanding in hideous laughter. It summoned tremendous computational ability, concocting sordid, cruel, and shameless battle plans.

Right then, noises erupted outside, followed by a prolonged horn.

It was an emergency summons.

In a moment, the several hundred villagers were all gathered in the center of the village, which was used to air the petals of the Ghost Teeth Flower.

The petals of the Ghost Teeth Flower were extremely tough. After three days of drying, they could be ripped into shreds and sewn into soft, ventilating armor that was most suitable for the hunting in the forest.

The sky of the Dry Leaf Village was wreathed in magnificent golden colors. As it turned out, dozens of giant, golden eagles were hovering at a low altitude. Every eagle was dozens of meters wide when they stretched out their jade, metallic wings. Whenever their wings move slightly, a thousand invisible swirls seemed to appear in midair, which interweaved and covered the entire village like an impenetrable dragnet.

Suppressed by the daunting aura of the golden eagles, not only were all the villagers shuddering in fear, even the animals domesticated by the villagers were crouching on the ground obediently, not having the courage to utter a single sound.

Just now, one of the Moon Shadow Wolves snarled accidentally, only to turn into food for the golden eagles in the blink of an eye. It was now being chewed by one of the golden eagles in cracking noises.

Below the golden eagles, in the center of the empty ground, dozens of high-level, elegant demons in robes made of golden feathers were standing.

Within the crowd, Li Yao observed the high-level demons in secret. They were all beautiful and graceful, and their facial organs and limbs were immaculate. They seemed to be enshrouded in dazzling halos that made all the villagers struggle to keep their eyes open.

Although they were all carrying demon feathers, such as enormous wings and sharp talons, and the pupils of several demons were even two vertical lines, there was not the slight feeling of ‘abnormality’ or ‘disguise’ on them. On the contrary, they gave every impression that they were the most natural and perfect creatures in the world.

Li Yao secretly compared the high-level demons to the low-level demons that he had seen in the beast tides. He found it hard to believe that they were the same species.

No wonder the demons were classified into four different classes. Standing in their shoes, Li Yao would not admit that he was the same as the ugly, weirdly-shaped snakes, insects, rats, and ants at all if he were such a high-level demon with shining gold halos.

The dozens of demons were beautiful and eye-catching enough.

However, when Li Yao’s eyes moved to the demon who was standing in the middle, he suddenly felt that the halos on all the demons nearby were eclipsed.

It was a female demon who was short and wearing soft, pure-white armor. Judging from her young face, she seemed to be a girl less than twenty years old. Her eyes were so clear that one might even catch a glimpse of her soul directly, and her facial expression was as frank and naïve as a newborn baby.

A pair of dark golden wings were growing on her back, and bright golden feathers could occasionally be found on her fair, flawless skin, too, like a perfect garment that outlined her shockingly sexy body figure.

The innocent and sacredness of her face was a huge contrast to her curvaceous body. Together, they brought about a weird enchantment that made others wanted to both worship her as a goddess and savage her on a bed.

Deep inside his brain, the mental devil whistled for the longest time possible.

Li Yao bit the tip of his tongue hard and forced him to wake up. None of the saintesses of the Pantheon of Demons were easy to deal with, as made clear by Lei Qi just now. If the demon was really Jin Xinyue, the princess of the Gold Crow Kingdom, she would be one of the trickiest opponents.

Another demon that was tall and handsome with wings on his back flew back from the garden of the Ghost Teeth Flowers and landed next to the female demon, whispering something to her.

Li Yao sensed that the watery eyes of the demon slightly blinked.

The male demon immediately held his head and asked solemnly, “Who’s in charge here?”

The mayor made his way to the high-level demons, half-rolling and half-crawling on his wheelchair, with his legs shaking and his back sweating hard.

Many high-level demons took a few steps back intuitionally before they covered their mouths and noses with their handkerchiefs. They were clearly unwilling to stand so close to the lowly chaotic-blood demons, nor did they want to breathe air that had been corrupted by them.

The male demon took out a badge from his pocked and shook it slightly. Mystic rays immediately beamed out of the badge and soared into the sky. The brilliance blossomed and dispersed into a complicated pattern of a three-legged giant bird that was about to fly into the sky.

The male demon declared proudly, “We are the ‘Gold Shadow Guardians’. Her Highness here is Princess Xinyue of the Gold Crow Kingdom and the saintess of the Pantheon of Demons!”

The villagers immediately exclaimed in shock. Many of them had never left the Hundred Desolation Mountain in their entire life. They had never had the chance to meet a real-life silver-blood demon, much less such an honorable noble.

The villagers did not know what to do at all. The legs of many of them were shaking hard, as if they could not hold themselves from kneeling down before the saintess of the Pantheon of Demons.

Li Yao looked at Lei Chuang. The youngster was blushing and breathing heavily, fascinated by Jin Xinyue.

Had Lei Qi not given him warning a moment ago, it was very likely that he would be kissing her toes on all fours right now.

Chapter 841 - Twist and Turn

The male demon seemed to be rather familiar with the admiration of the low-level demons. He waved his wings, triggering invisible airwaves that surrounded the high-level demons like a barrier and kept the lowly chaotic-blood demons from coming close.

He sniffed and shouted, “We are now pursuing the remnants of the Blade of Chaos. Those believers of Chaos are brutal and dangerous. In order to hide their traces, they have slaughtered all the villages that they have passed through. There was not a living soul left!

“For the sake of your village, you’d better confess honestly. Have you seen any suspicious demons over the past three days? If you keep your discovery to yourself, you will be regarded as an accomplice of the Blade of Chaos, and you shall not be pardoned!”

The mayor’s face was as deathly pale, and he shook his head hard.

The male demon was not expecting a positive reply in the first place. Seeing that all the villagers were intimidated, he changed tack. “Does your village live on the Ghost Teeth Flowers?”

The mayor nodded cautiously.

“Excellent!” The male demon smiled coldly. “The remnants of the Blade of Chaos that we are chasing after have been heavily wounded. They are in desperate need of healing drugs such as the Gold Stamen Liquid. In case the Gold Stamen Liquid in your village is stolen by them, we will now confiscate all the assets in the name of the Gold Shadow Guardians!”

“What!”

At this moment, not only the mayor but also all the villagers started yelling despite the honorable identities of the high-level demons.

The village was poor and the land barren. The livelihood of the villagers all counted on the Gold Stamen Liquid, which was collected from the Ghost Teeth Flowers.

The harvest season had just passed. Although the tax rate of the chaotic-blood demons was even higher than that of the black-blood demons, and seventy percent of the Gold Stamen Liquid had to be submitted, the villagers got to keep the remaining thirty percent after all.

The thirty percent of Gold Stamen Liquid had to be traded for the useful items that the villager could not produce as well as crystals and gear for training, which was the hope for the young demons in the village.

But those ‘Gold Shadow Guardians’ were claiming all the Gold Stamen Liquid now. How was the village going to survive the coming year?

Many chaotic-blood demons had been reveling in the excitement of finally meeting some high-level demons. But now, they felt as if their skulls had been opened and somebody had just poured a bucket of cold water into their heads.

However, the chaotic-blood demons’ reverence for the high-level demons was almost natural. Nobody dared to refuse the demand however outrageous it was.

The mayor’s facial muscles twisted for a long time, and his back was even more hunched than before.

The male demon was apparently used to the reactions of chaotic-blood demons. “Other than the Gold Stamen Liquid that has been collected, there is still some left in the lumps of the Ghost Teeth Flowers. Also, if the lumps are pulverized into powder, it can be used to treat wounds, too.

“In case that the remnants of the Blade of Chaos get access to those things, we are going to destroy the garden of the Ghost Teeth Flowers!”

“What!”

It was a greater shock for everybody on the spot.

When all the Gold Stamen Liquid was claimed, it was going to be a tough year. But as long as they made it through the year, the villagers would be able collect new Gold Stamen Liquid in the harvest season next year.

But if the garden of Ghost Teeth Flowers was destroyed, they would be doomed!

The Ghost Teeth Flowers were extremely dangerous carnivore plants. Even many demon beasts were scared of them. The village had paid a high price to transplant and develop the Ghost Teeth Flowers, at the cost of the lives of more than ten villagers. After five years of sweat and blood, only a small garden had been established.

The garden of Ghost Teeth Flowers was the future and hope of the entire village.

But right now, just because some heavily wounded remnants of the Blade of Chaos were passing by the village, they had to endure such a disaster that was irrelevant to themselves!

“No. You can’t destroy them!”

“The Ghost Teeth Flowers are what we live on!”

“Show some mercy, masters of the Gold Crow Kingdom!”

“Please, saintess!”

The demons in the Dry Leaf Village young and old all kneeled and kowtowed hard until their heads were all bleeding and the blood was all simmering.

The attractive high-level demons, on the other hand, did not care for such drama. The male demon in the lead shrieked, and two golden eagles that were hovering in midair took a turn and suddenly lunged at the garden of the Ghost Teeth Flowers in the east of the village.

Hiu!

The two golden eagles opened their mouths, from which, two narrow, long, red rays spurted out and darted toward the garden.

BOOM!

The two red rays pierced into the garden. The Ghost Teeth Flowers that sensed the waves of energy had only just opened their bloody mouths when two loud explosions echoed deep below the ground. Like two volcanoes had just erupted, a lot of magma spurted out from the ground, and enormous fireballs soared into the sky. Flames thousands of degrees high in temperature soon wreathed the entire garden.

“Hiss! Hiss! Hiss! Hiss!”

Countless Ghost Teeth Flowers were twisting weirdly in the flames and screaming miserably. Before long, they were only burnt into ashes without any lumps remaining.

“Ahh!”

Many villages collapsed to the ground in grief.

Dozens of healthy, strong demons were gnashing their teeth, their eyes red. Yet, they did not know where they should cast their furious eyes.

The high-level demons were still talking and laughing. They seemed to be complimenting the owner of the two gold eagles, praising that he had trained them well and built the two biochemical beasts with such magnificent appearances.

“Mayor.” The male demon ignored the weird vibe among the villagers and continued demanding from them. “Ask your villagers to help us move the Gold Stamen Liquid. Also, submit the Gold Stamen Liquid that is kept in your households as well as all the other healing drugs. No medicine is to be left to the believers of Chaos!”

Crack! Crack!

Many young villagers, including Lei Chuang, were already on the verge of an outburst. They were biting their teeth so hard that noises were echoing.

Li Yao inwardly frowned. He observed the positions of the high-level demons and calculated the data, coordinates, and direction crazily.

Although he hated to expose his identity, he found it intolerable to watch the villagers be butchered should they get involved in a conflict with the high-level demons.

Besides, if the newcomers decided to wipe out the village, it was not like they would spare him.

The air could not have been tenser.

A battle was going to break out at any moment.

Looking at the golden eagles hovering in the sky and the high-level demons who were chitchatting casually, utterly unthreatened, the mayor slightly sighed and bowed deeply, while he replied obediently, “Understood, masters. We’re going to check all the healing drugs right now.”

The mayor then turned around and roared, “What are you waiting for? Did you not hear what the masters here said? Pack up all the Gold Stamen Liquid and healing drugs and offer them to the masters!”

The villagers looked at each other in bewilderment, not knowing what to do. They did not dare disobey the commands of high-level demons, but they were unwilling to hand over their livelihood just like that, either.

The young demons’ muscles were all bulging, their eyes bloodshot. They were as still as towers.

The mayor gritted his teeth and staggered close with his club. Then he beat the young demons with the stick and yelled, “Why are you not moving? How many heads do you think you can afford to lose if the masters are delayed while they are hunting the Blade of Chaos? Go now!”

Pada!

After the mayor beat them, he fell over due to a loss of balance.

“Mayor!”

The villagers immediately lost their cool. They hurried to help him to his feet.

Those who were timid were already walking to their homes, however reluctantly.

The younger demons who were gnashing their teeth in fury lost their determination, too. Those who had feet stomped on the ground, and those who did not, bashed the earth hard with their tails and squatted, covering their head with their hands.

All the villagers lost their will to resist. They prepared to pack everything up gloomily.

“Wait.”

Right then, Jin Xinyue, the saintess of Pantheon of Demons who had been at the center of the high-level demons, suddenly opened her mouth and stopped the villagers.

Her voice sounded very young, but it was sweet like a refreshing spring, making everybody who heard it feel comfortable from their ears to the heart.

The villagers looked at each other in a daze, confused. They sensed that the saintess was different from other Gold

Shadow Guardians.

Jin Xinyue glanced over all the villagers warmly as she smiled and said, “The Gold Stamen Liquid is your livelihood. I did not expect that you would offer all of it willingly without any complaint. It is indicative of your loyalty to the Pantheon of Demons.

“Rest assured. We are not so unreasonable as to take your livelihood away just like that.

“Just now, it was only a minor test to determine your loyalty to the Pantheon of Demons.

“Now that you have proved your faithfulness, as a saintess of the Pantheon of Demons, will I simply let you suffer the losses?”

While talking, Jin Xinyue extended her jade-like hand and snapped something silver into the mayor’s hand, which turned out to be a glamorous silk bag.

The mayor swallowed hard and opened the bag. He gasped so hard that he almost fell over again.

The mystic rays inside the silk bag illuminated his face.

“The ‘Five-Colored Pearl’ inside the bag should be three times more valuable than your garden of Ghost Teeth Flowers. If you sell it in the town, you should be able to get through the difficult times,” Jin Xinyue said casually.

“Three times!”

The desperation and fury of the villagers immediately turned into ecstasy and gratitude.

“Moreover…” Jin Xinyue’s wings slowly stretched out. One of the golden feathers fell softly and flew to the mayor’s pocket as if it were alive. “This feather is my badge. When the tax officer in charge of your village comes here, show him the feather and tell him that Princess Xinyue has decreed that all the taxes of the village will be reduced by half in the next three years!”

“Half taxes?”

Many villagers were already jumping to their feet.

“Lastly…”

Jin Xinyue glanced at the healthy, strong demons in the village with delight in her eyes. She then said crisply, “The new call of soldiers is coming soon. A new war between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector is about to commence.

“The war will be the final confrontation between the two Sectors. We will sweep across the Grand Desolate Plateau, break through the Giant Blade Pass, and march all the way to the capital of the Star Glory Federation, conquering all the human beings of the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

“Only the bravest, most loyal soldiers are entitled to join the greatest war in the history of the Blood Demon Sector!

“Logically, one or two soldiers will be conscripted from villages such as yours.

“But just now, your loyalty moved me. I will conscript… fifty soldiers from your village!”

Chapter 842 - Deep Inside Hundred Desolation Mountain

Hearing her words, all the chaotic-blood demons could not help it any longer and yelled in excitement.

The disaster turned out to be a bless in surprise. Not only did they receive a high reward, half of their taxes had been waivered, too. Moreover, fifty villagers would be enlisted to defend the glory of the Blood Demon Sector on the battlefield.

Princess Xinyue was so merciful and benevolent. How could they not be grateful and loyal?

“Saintess, we—we can’t return your favor even if we die—”

The mayor was crying, unable to control his voice.

The infuriated young demons were so embarrassed that they lowered their head, regretting their stupidity and rashness.

Jin Xinyue smiled and said in an even gentler voice, “I don’t want you to die, but I want our enemies, the evil human beings and the sordid believers of Chaos, to be annihilated! Can you do that?”

“Yes. Of course!” the hot-blooded young demons all shouted.

“Long live the saintess!”

“Long live Princess Xinyue!”

"Long live the Pantheon of Demons!"

"Break our enemies, annihilate the evil human beings, and conquer the Heaven's Origin Sector!"

"Obliteration! Rebirth! Immortality!"

Above the garden of the Ghost Teeth Flowers, the fire was still burning furiously, but the temperature there seemed to be lower than around the villagers.

Jin Xinyue looked at the villagers in a smile. There seemed to be both satisfaction and expectation in her eyes. Every villager who made eye contact with her experienced all kinds of hallucinations. They envisioned themselves fighting valiantly in brilliant suits and soaring into a magnificent palace in the high sky among the clouds where they ate, drank, and enjoyed the ultimate pleasure in the world.

All the demons were yelling in frenzy and shaking as if they were having a seizure. Their enthusiasm tore apart the dark night and echoed in the sky.

Jin Xinyue rolled her eyes and glanced over the villagers. Suddenly, she stopped at Li Yao.

Li Yao frowned and secretly cursed.

Although he was also raising his arms and shouting like all the other villagers, he was short of the wholehearted fervor. Therefore, he appeared much calmer than his companions.

Besides, his left eye and left arm were tied up in bandages, which was quite eye-catching.

"Who is that?" Jin Xinyue asked the mayor very curiously.

But Li Yao sensed the coldness of a viper from the seemingly innocent, beautiful eyes.

Li Yao sneered in his heart. The mental devil in his brain bared its sharp fangs and released a lot of bloody streaks that were spreading among his brain cells.

Jin Xinyue was indeed a terrifying demon. After only several words, all the demons here were willing to die for her.

Li Yao did not believe that the poor story that the villagers had made up could fool her.

With a crooked smile, the mayor told her Li Yao’s ‘identity’.

“Is that so? The best hunter of the village was badly burnt in the forest fire half a month ago and lost his memories?”

Jin Xinyue was smiling even more delightedly. Her eyes were fixated on Li Yao’s left eye and left arm, which were covered in bandages.

She observed the bandages so hard that bright golden bugs seemed to be crawling into Li Yao’s body.

Li Yao sighed. He could not stop someone from killing themself. Now that the saintess was asking to be killed, he could only fulfil her wish.

Jin Xinyue was merely a demon king, and her subordinates mostly seemed to be demon generals. They were not worth mentioning in Li Yao’s eyes.

Although they had ‘biochemical beasts’ that could boost their combat ability like crystal suits, it was not enough to stop Li Yao from killing anyone he wanted to kill!

After being infected by the Blood Stripe Virus, Li Yao was much more resolute in killing. He had made up his mind that, if Jin Xinyue interrogated him, he would slay the saintess from the Pantheon of Demons when he found the appropriate timing and position before he ran away in the riot!

Jin Xinyue had no idea that she was about to die.

She was indeed suspicious of Li Yao.

She officially joined the Pantheon of Demons at the age of seven for the saintess training. Saintesses were the sharpest claws and teeth for the Pantheon of Demons. They were a combination of spies, assassins, saboteurs, agents, and interrogators. The first lesson she ever learned was that those who lost their memories were the most suspicions suspects!

Real life was not some fairy tale. What were all the memory losses about?

The smile on Jin Xinyue’s face remained unchanged. Her hands were kept in the original place, too. However, she shook her feathers and secretly informed the Gold Shadow Guardians behind him.

The Gold Shadow Guardians were the imperial guards of the Gold Crow Kingdom. They were sort of her private bodyguards, well-trained, obedient, and capable. They immediately dispersed without alarming anyone.

The golden eagles in the sky were hovering in smaller and smaller circles, too. Feathers as broad as banana leaves fell slowly between Jin Xinyue and Li Yao.

At that moment, Jin Xinyue still had no idea what a terrible existence she was planning to deal with.

She was wondering who Li Yao really was. He could not be one of the suspects she was chasing after because he had appeared in the village half a month ago. The timing was not right.

Forget it. Even if he is not related to the Blade of Chaos, he must have secrets that he would rather not tell. Let me take him down first!

Jin Xinyue stepped toward Li Yao.

She did not know that death was only 0.5 seconds away from her.

Li Yao's left eye was burningly hot, and streaks of blood were leaking out of the bandage over it.

Suddenly—

A shriek echoed deep within the Hundred Desolation Mountain. A streak of golden brightness soared into the sky and split into a three-legged bird.

The golden brightness that looked like fireworks made the faces of all Gold Shadow Guardians blanch.

The male demon observed the signal and said earnestly, "Princess, Zuo Shaochong and the rest of them have found the target. They are fighting hard and requesting immediate reinforcements!"

Pondering for a moment, Jin Xinyue looked at Li Yao deeply and waved her hands. "Let's follow up. We must get the item!"

All the Gold Shadow Guardians soared into the sky. The crazy wind that their wings raised almost blew everybody to the ground. Even Li Yao was shaking in the middle of the wind. He was becoming more and more curious.

What item did the remnants of the Blade of Chaos bring exactly that a saintess of the Pantheon of Demons and the princess of the Gold Crow Kingdom needs?

To retrieve the item, she does not even have the time to investigate me, who has apparently caused her attention.

Is it true that the item can 'change the future of the Blood Demon Sector' as Lei Qi said?

Seeing that Jin Xinyue and the dozens of Gold Shadow Guardians had turned into streaks of golden brightness and rushed toward the depths of the Hundred Desolation Mountain, Li Yao made up his mind and dashed into the forest, too, not caring about the surprised villagers.

After half a month of recovery, his wounds had recovered, and he had a basic understanding of the Blood Demon Sector now. There was no need to keep staying here any longer.

Besides, Jin Xinyue had grown suspicious of him. If he lingered in that place, he might have brought unexpected disaster to the Dry Leaf Village.

Li Yao was rather curious about the organization named 'Blade of Chaos'. He did not know how large the organization was and whether or not it had really been suppressed, but as long as the organization was not entirely dead yet, it could potentially stir trouble behind the high-level demons during the head-on clash between the Blood Demon Sector and the

Heaven’s Origin Sector. If so, the pressure on the Heaven’s Origin Sector would be more or less relieved.

With that in mind, it was necessary to get in touch with the Blade of Chaos and help them solve the problem at hand.

Besides, Li Yao was rather interested in the secret technique of the Blade of Chaos that allowed its members to freely change into different forms of demons. Such a secret practically overturned all his knowledge about the demon race.

In the Hundred Desolation Mountain, there were nothing but hills, ravines, and swamps. It was impossible to find a road.

Jin Xinyue and the other demons all had wings. They could fly in midair and ignore the roughness of the mountain.

Although Li Yao had flying swords and crystal suits, too, they had to be kept a secret right now. He could not fly into the sky on one of the flying swords blatantly.

Therefore, he could only summon Black Wing in secret and slide just above the trees while making sure that his presence was not exposed. Naturally, he was much slower than Jin Xinyue.

When he approached the battlefield filled the stink of blood and noises of fighting, he was already several hundred kilometers into the Hundred Desolation Mountain. Giant trees almost a thousand meters high were everywhere amid the endless ridges. The crowns of the trees were so overwhelmingly huge that nearly all the sunlight was blocked.

Li Yao stowed away Black Wing quietly. Like a giant boa covered in mud, he slithered without making a sound among the bushes with the strength of his muscles.

In front of him, the trees had almost all collapsed, leaving an empty area.

Hundreds of demons, apparently on two sides, were confronting each other.

One side consisted of the shining, unbelievably elegant members of the Gold Crow Kingdom.

The other side was a mishmash of miscellaneous species. They were all wearing ragged soft armor, and they were exhausted and heavily wounded.

An old demon who had white hear and a giant turtle shell on his back that had grown long, crimson fur panted and yelled, “Jin Xinyue, kill me if you want to, but I will not give it to you!”

He looked like a turtle man who stood on his feet.

Jin Xinyue was shrouded in an entirely different air from when she was in the Dry Leaf Village. Her sweet and beautiful face resembling that of a young girl was brimming with the malicious smile, reminiscent of a cat that had caught a rat. She said unhurriedly, “Ning Zhongze, honestly speaking, although you are one of the four elders of the Blade of Chaos, I’m not very interested in you.

“In my opinion, the Blade of Chaos is just a bunch of nobodies. All the elders and deacons of yours are jesters who have been making a fool of yourselves. You used to be monkeys pretending that you were wearing a crown, and now you are no better than stray dogs.

“It’s not unnegotiable if you want me to let go of you.

“But I’m really curious about one thing. What item have you found that makes ‘Elder Nether Spring’ hunt after you so crazily?

“In fact, in my opinion, with the miserable, devastated situation that the Blade of Chaos is in right now, you will not be able to make the best use of the item whatever effects it has. Why don’t you give it to me? As a reward, I’ll spare your lives. How does that sound?

“You all know that Elder Nether Spring and my father, Jin Tuyi, are the most hostile two among the twelve demon emperors. The two of them have been fighting for the post of the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons and are on the verge of an open fight.

“Therefore, I only wish for Elder Nether Spring to die sooner!

“If you really know a big secret about Elder Nether Spring, why don’t you give it to me and let me deal with him? Isn’t that a much better option?”

Chapter 843 - Incoming Nether Springs

Ning Zhongze, one of the four elders of the Blade of Chaos, smiled bitterly and shook his head. “Jin Xinyue, you don’t know the value of the item at all. It can possibly reveal a great secret between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector, or even between the entire demon race and human beings! You and Elder Nether Spring are just jackals of the same lair biting each other. If I give the item to you, it is very likely that you will make a deal with Elder Nether Spring!

“Besides, everybody knows that Jin Xinyue is the most cunning and ruthless one of all the saintesses of the Pantheon of Demons. There is no telling how many brothers of the Blade of Chaos have been killed by your seemingly innocent smiling face!

“Right now, you don’t know where the item is hidden. That’s why you are pretending to negotiate with us. I’m afraid that we will be killed immediately after we bring the item out, won’t we?”

The sweet smile on Jin Xinyue’s face remained unchanged, but the brightness deep inside her eyes was getting colder and colder. The two entirely opposite airs mixed with each other and gave a creepy feeling.

She continued smiling as she said, “No wonder your organization entrusted the item to you. Your tongue is harder than your turtle shell!

“But I wonder, after I shatter your turtle shell and pluck the pieces off your body, will your tongue be as tough as it is right now?”

The trees nearby all began glowing because dozens of eagles had landed on the top of the trees. The scorching heat that they released illuminated the forest as if it were an inferno.

The Gold Shadow Guardians grinned hideously and drew close to the remnants of the Blade of Chaos.

Holding her arms, Jin Xinyue observed with great interest.

Li Yao narrowed his eyes. Bloody strains seemed to be extending into his heart along his veins from the depths his brain. His heart was beating faster and faster, and a weird strength was released.

His withered left arm continued expanding. The thick bandages were not enough to block the unstoppable strength that was spreading out.

Li Yao locked onto the back of Jin Xinyue’s head precisely. There was only a distance of ten meters between them.

Three seconds!

In the intense forest, a fierce battle between the Gold Shadow Guardians and the Blade of Chaos was about to begin, and Li Yao would perform an assault the moment the battle began.

With his terrifying Cultivation right now, when he was determined to kill a demon, even one of the twelve demon emperors of the Blood Demon Sector might not be able to stop him.

Two seconds!

The Gold Shadow Guardians and the Blade of Chaos all stretched out their claws and teeth slowly while they unsheathed their weapons. Weird noises of flesh being torn apart and bones being twisted were echoing inside their bodies, which kept expanding. Their spurs protruded out of their skin, and their hair was lengthened significantly. Their faces were deformed, demonstrating more of the features of ferocious animals. An intense air of killing was flowing around them.

The forest ten square kilometers nearby was caught in dead silence. All the wild animals within the range lurked in their nests, not having the courage to move anywhere.

Further away, the scared birds were fleeing away amid cackles.

“Hooo!”

When the demonic energy of the two parties was released to the maximum and they all turned into walking ferocious beasts, a wolf demon of the Blade of Chaos could not withstand the pressure anymore and lunged at the Gold Shadow Guardian that was closest to him.

“Hu!”

The eagles staying on the top of the trees spurted out crimson rays of light that turned into horrifying lotuses of magma in the crowd of the Blade of Chaos.

Bloody brightness was blinking in Li Yao’s eyes as he squatted. In half a second, he would dash toward Jin Xinyue!

Right then, an abrupt change took place!

Almost ten shadows dashed out of the earth that was covered by leaves near Jin Xinyue. Almost a hundred thin threads that were emitting spooky colors under the illumination of the flames surged out of the shadows. Apparently, they had been coated in deadly poison!

Somebody was lurking in the underground and attempting to assassinate Jin Xinyue!

Jin Xinyue truly deserved her title as a saintess of the Pantheon of Demons and the youngest demon king of the Blood Demon Sector. She sniffed, and her bright gold wings abruptly unfolded. They were both like two broad shields and two swift sabers that turned into dozens of streaks of golden brightness and darted toward the shadows near her.

In the blink of an eye, all the black shadows were chopped into multiple pieces before they even had the chance to scream.

However, Jin Xinyue’s glamorous golden wings were corrupted by the colorful poison, too. With burning sounds, black smoke was popping up, and the feathers were rotting, leaving ugly holes on her wings.

Li Yao secretly cursed and managed to stop himself from lunging out.

Jin Xinyue had escaped the assassination, but her subordinates were not so lucky.

Three to four shadows dashed out of the mud and trees near almost every Gold Shadow Guardian. Caught unprepared, all the Gold Shadow Guardians were heavily wounded!

The giant eagles staying on the top of the trees screamed miserably, too, because countless venomous bugs had been lurking on the trees and were dashing into the feathers of the eagles, biting, gnawing, and releasing lethal poison!

For a moment, a foul stench was blowing inside the forest. Disgusting air could be smelt everywhere.

Li Yao secret clicked his tongue. Even he did not notice that so many demons had been lurking inside the forest. The stealth ability of the demons was even higher than that of Spider’s Thorn on Spider Den!

Is it a trap of the Blade of Chaos?

Li Yao observed carefully and found that those chopped into pieces by Jin Xinyue were demons that half looked like human beings and half insects. They seemed to have been made by transplanting the torsos of human beings onto spiders, scorpions, and centipedes.

The demons were extremely tenacious. Even when they were cut into multiple pieces, they were not necessarily dead. Red blood as well as green, weird liquids flowed out of their wounds, vaporizing into venomous mist the moment they touched air.

Li Yao thought that it was the Blade of Chaos’ trap, but ten or so half-human-half-insect demons lunged at Ning Zhongze after they assaulted the Gold Shadow Guardians.

Two members of the Blade of Chaos stood in their way, only to be ripped into pieces by the new demons with their limbs that were as sharp as blades!

Jin Xinyue seemed to know the identity of the assassins. The bewilderment on her face flashed and was soon replaced by fury. She raised her voice and shouted, “Yuan Hao, what’s the meaning of this? Is the Nether Spring Kingdom declaring a total war on the Gold Crow Kingdom?”

Weird laughter echoed inside the forest, but nobody replied. Soon, blood-freezing hums filled the clearing, as if countless honeycombs had been broken at the same time and a swarm of bees was rushing out!

Li Yao raised his head only to find dozens of deep purple tornadoes that looked like half-frozen blood sweeping down amid restless humming sounds.

The giant eagles staying on the top of the trees were tortured by the venomous insects and rendered unable to fly. The purple tornadoes crashed into them and consumed them, turning them into enormous purple lumps.

The purple lumps wriggled, struggled, and fluctuated. The giant eagles screamed miserably. The scorching flames they spurted out burnt the trees into ash one after another, but they could not clear the venomous insects, which were attached to them like parasites.

After a few seconds, the purple tornadoes dispersed. The only thing left in the middle were skeletons riddled with holes. They collapsed to the ground with rattling noises.

It was only then that Li Yao realized that the purple tornadoes consisted of mosquitoes larger than dragonflies. The wings of the purple mosquitoes were translucent and multi-colored. Six eyes in a weird pattern could be found on them, too.

Ghost Face Purple Mosquitoes?

Li Yao gasped.

Before his spiritual root was awakened, he had once encountered a beast tide outbreak on a train to the Grand Desolate Plateau. The beast tide made of the Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes had almost caused a catastrophe. Seven Cultivators had sacrificed themselves in order to delay their attack. In the end, crystal warships had to be deployed in order to annihilate all the Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes.

Ghost Face Purple Mosquitoes were the strengthened version of the Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes. Only after feeding on the bodily fluids of multiple kinds of venomous insects mixed with the blood of dozens of demon beasts could one Ghost Face Purple Mosquito be born out of thousands of Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes.

For Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes, there had to be thousands of them in order to deal sufficient damage.

But one Ghost Face Purple Mosquito was enough to kill a strong demon beast!

Here, so many Ghost Face Purple Mosquitoes had been gathered. What a terrifying strength it was!

Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum!

After swallowing the giant eagles, the purple brightness around the Ghost Face Purple Mosquitoes was even more eye-catching, as if weird purple flames were burning around them. They congregated into purple torrents and flooded toward the Gold Shadow Guardians and the Blade of Chaos.

If the Ghost Face Purple Mosquitoes so much as touched them, regardless of whether they were the Gold Shadow Guardians or the Blade of Chaos, only their skeleton would be left.

“Ning Zhongze!”

Jin Xinyue’s face blanched, and she yelled, “Do you see? Elder Neither Spring’s subordinates are going to kill us both!

“If the item is in my hands, maybe it can still be put into use in the future. However, if it falls into the Elder Nether Spring’s control, you will be hopeless!

“Hurry up and give me the item!”

Ning Zhongze’s beard quivered. He failed to come up with anything for a long time, but he could not help but look at a colorful leopard that was standing like a human being.

“So, it is kept by you. Now give it to me!”

Jin Xinyue flapped her wings. Dozens of clusters of dark golden flames immediately darted toward the Ghost Face Purple Mosquitoes as if they were alive.

The Ghost Face Purple Mosquitoes were surrounded by purple halos, and they were not scared of normal flames. The giant eagles had also been wreathed in fire, but the Ghost Face Purple Mosquitoes had not been hurt at all.

However, the dark golden fire that Jin Xinyue fanned out was like a pesticide to the Ghost Face Purple Mosquitoes. Those that were hit by the fire were ignited immediately and turned into fireflies.

Jin Xinyue took the opportunity to lunge toward the leopard man. “Give it to me!”

Her wings seemed more agile than her hands. They swept at the leopard man within her wings before the demon was crushed!

Ning Zhongze and the leopard man both screamed.

Jin Xinyue smiled. Her wings brought back a tiny bloody ball that looked like a heart. Her eyes beaming with interest, she mumbled to herself, “Is this what’s making Elder Nether Spring unable to sleep at night?”

“Watch out!” Ning Zhongze furrowed his eyebrow and shouted loudly, “It is very unstable. Don’t break it no matter what!”

Chapter 844 - Sharpness of the Foreign Blood

Hardly had he given his warning when the withered tree behind Jin Xinyue turned into what seemed to be a human being. The dry branches turned into sharp limbs, which pierced toward the middle of Jin Xinyue's wings!

The demon that looked like dry wood, a beetle, and a human being was covered in multiple layers of gray and brown armor. Except for his arms that were particularly long, almost ten blade limbs had grown out of his ribs and his back. His legs were twisted backwards, but his speed was unbelievably high.

His attack was as quick as a lightning, but Jin Xinyue seemed to have grown eyes on the back of her head. Her golden wings slashed at the knees of the demon, one from left and the other from right, like two fast sabers.

"Yuan Hao, I knew you'd been hiding here!"

The demon named 'Yuan Hao' seemed to be caught off guard by Jin Xinyue's sudden counterattack. He hurriedly aborted his attack and dashed backward.

However, a sharp thorn suddenly protruded out of the ground where Jin Xinyue was standing and pierced through her foot!

Jin Xinyue gasped because of the excruciating pain. She fled back to the forest, but another ten or so sharp thorns spurted out of the ground again and blocked her path of escape like haunting ghosts.

Yuan Hao, who had just retreated, stomped on a giant tree and lunged at her again with the counterforce amid hideous laughter.

The two of them passed each other. Jin Xinyue grunted. Countless feathers fell off from her to the ground slowly like golden scales.

Like a wounded crane, Jin Xinyue stood on a branch on one foot while she eyed the insects crawling out of the earth, her sweet smile entirely gone. She gnashed her teeth. “Yuan Du!”

Jin Xinyue was certainly not as tranquil as she appeared to be.

Yuan Du and Yuan Hao were both princes of the Nether Spring Kingdom. They were also Elder Nether Spring’s most distinguished disciples and both in the level of demon king.

She might have been confident if she had to deal one of them, but her odds of winning were little to none when she was faced with the two of them at the same time.

Besides, the Nether Spring Kingdom was a nation of the underground Insect Clan. In a forest with rough terrain, the Insect Clan boasted natural advantages. The Feathered Clan, including Jin Xinyue, soared in the sky and was known for its speed. They could not make use of their advantages in a forest.

What did the Blade of Chaos steal from Elder Nether Spring exactly? He has sent his two most distinguished disciples to *hunt it down after such a long trip even at the cost of the invaluable Ghost Face Purple Mosquitoes!*

Every Ghost Face Purple Mosquitoes was more precious than a regular demon beast. In every battle, it was not uncommon for hundreds of Ghost Face Purple Mosquitoes to be killed. Even though Elder Nether Spring was one of the twelve demon emperors, he would not use the Ghost Face Purple Mosquitoes randomly.

Jin Xinyue glanced over the entire battlefield. Inside the dim forest, the Gold Shadow Guardians that she had brought with her had mostly been killed by the sudden assault of the Insect Clan, especially those who died of blood loss because of the absorption of the Ghost Face Purple Mosquitoes. They were nothing but skeletons and could not have looked more miserable.

Jin Xinyue secretly cursed. She glanced at the sky, too, which was blocked by the dense crowns of trees. She was quite certain that the crowns of the trees must have been packed with deadly venomous bugs. She could even feel that lethal poison was dripping from the tops of the trees slowly.

Yuan Du, prince of the Nether Spring Kingdom who crawled out of the earth just now, was just as ugly as other insect demons. He looked like a tall human being who was wearing bionic armor. Glamorous stripes were spotted on the finely-made shell of the armor, which were emanating splendid colors despite the dimness of the forest.

Two long horns that looked like spears were protruding from his face, which was also covered in the shell. He looked rather handsome by the standard of human beings.

However, a hint of evilness was flowing in his eyes, and his eyeballs were flickering all the time, which made whoever saw him feel that there were bugs crawling all over their heart.

“Yuan Du, Yuan Hao, you two brothers are really outrageous!” Jin Xinyue shouted. “Are you not afraid of a total war between the Gold Crow Kingdom and the Nether Spring Kingdom after this?”

Yuan Du and Yuan Hao looked like each other with a smile. Yuan Du extended his hand to Jin Xinyue and said casually, “Give it to me.”

His voice was dull and thick, mixed with humming noises, as if a cluster of earth was stuffed in his throat.

Jin Xinyue rolled her eyes and giggled. “Yuan Hao, as I recall, weren’t you the one in charge of the pursuit of the item? Why is your big brother here, too? It seems that Elder Nether Spring does not trust you at all. But it makes sense, too. Everybody knows that your brother is the real powerful one in the Nether Spring Kingdom; you are just his lackey! Even in front of Elder Nether Spring, your brother has always been the one that your master likes more. This time, it is still your brother who finished the hunting task and retrieved the ultimate treasure. It seems that his position in the Nether Spring Kingdom and in the eyes of Elder Nether Spring is even more unshakable now, isn’t it?”

Yuan Hao was dazed for a moment. His grin somehow turned rigid.

Yuan Du burst into fury. “Jin Xinyue, what are you talking about?”

Jin Xinyue was smiling even more delightedly. “Fine. Today, I miscalculated and fell into your trap. It does not matter that I must give away the item now, but I will only give it to you, Yuan Hao!”

Before the two princes of the Nether Spring Kingdom responded, Jin Xinyue raised her hand, and a streak of redness rushed toward Yuan Hao.

Yuan Hao intended to pick up the object out of natural instincts, but Yuan Du simply retreated without a comment.

Yuan Hao’s reaction was slower. He tried his best to stop, but there was already no time. After a boom, a dark golden fireball burst out into countless flames in the shape of feathers that pierced through the trunks and the bodies of demons like the sharpest blade, hurting and killing the Blade of Chaos, the demons from the Nether Spring Kingdom, and those from the Gold Crow Kingdom indiscriminately!

It was not the item that they were chasing after at all but a bomb refined out of a demon core!

“If I can’t get the item, nobody is going to get it!”

Jin Xinyue dashed toward the depths of the forest after lighthearted giggles. She turned into a streak of brightness and stretched her wings out to the maximum, felling all the giant trees near her like two sharp sabers, blocking the way of her pursuers as the trees fell to the ground!

“After her!”

Brutality beamed out of the eyes of the two princes of the Nether Spring Kingdom. Yuan Hao blew a whistle made of the empty shell of a cicada. With the weird sound, the dozens of Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes congregated into furiously burning ghost heads, their uneven surfaces wriggling for a long time. They darted toward Jin Xinyue like lightning!

In a primitive forest with dense trees, a pair of wings dozens of meters long was definitely a burden. The giant trees deep inside the Hundred Desolation Mountain had grown for thousands of years and were more than ten meters in diameter, not to mention that they were as hard as steel.

Sharp as Jin Xinyue’s wings might have been, the brightness on them dimmed significantly after she slashed through hundreds of giant trees.

Jin Xinyue meant to soar into the sky many times, only to be pushed back by the ghost heads made of the Ghost Face Purple Mosquitoes. Besides, many insects of the Nether Spring Kingdom were adept at flying, too. If she flew to the sky where there was no cover, it was even more likely that she would be attacked collectively.

Pu!

After shattering the ghost heads made of the Ghost Face Purple Mosquitoes for the seventh time, Jin Xinyue finally could not hold it any longer and vomited a mouthful of blood, the aura around her quickly fading.

Yuan Du and Yuan Hao grinned hideously and launched fatal attacks. Thin greenness was dyed to the tips of their blade limbs while a foul smell was spreading out from the stinky wind raised by the blade limbs!

However—

When Yuan Hao’s attack reached the furthest point and his blade limbs were about to pierce through Jin Xinyue’s wings, he suddenly jerked up and crouched weirdly as if he were hit by an invisible streak of lightning!

The five or so blade limbs that he had failed to retract left his body without a sign!

It was not until the blood drew a few thin lines in midair that Jin Xinyue and Yuan Du discovered that many extremely slim threads had been tied among the giant trees near them.

The threads were almost transparent and much thinner than the spider threads, but they were extremely tensile like the sharpest blades.

Thanks to his keen senses, he noticed something wrong the moment he was about to hit the threads and folded his body abruptly. Otherwise, the threads could have cut his upper body and his lower body apart!

However, his dodging movement only extended his life by half a second.

The moment Yuan Hao was about to land on the ground, a streak of redness suddenly rose up and, passing by him, leapt to the crown of a tree.

Yuan Hao’s ugly head soared to the sky with an expression of bewilderment on his face. He did not know what was going on even at his death.

There were many independent neurons on the bodies of the insects. After he lost his head, Yuan Hao’s body did not collapse but cramped crazily as if it were dancing the dance of death.

Deep inside Jin Xinyue’s eyes, the streak of redness gradually froze.

It was the suspicious villager she had met in the Dry Leaf Village!

But right now, the villagers looked entirely different from a moment ago.

The bandages on his left eye and left arm had turned into ash, revealing a demonic eye that was darker than a ruby and more sizzling than magma.

The withered left arm had now been expanded, too. Bloody stripes interweaved into complicated runes that were changing all the time as if they were alive.

Three dark golden rings were worn on the left arm. They seemed to be a certain strong barrier that locked an invincible strength inside the left arm so that he could make use of the strength without losing control of it.

What is this demon?

Jin Xinyue felt her blood freezing. She had not felt so scared when she was faced the two princesses of the Nether Spring Kingdom. But the aura from the mysterious demon for some reason reminded her of her father Jin Tuyi, who was one of the twelve demon emperors and the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons!

Who is he?

He killed Yuan Hao in just one attack. Although it was an ambush with a trap, his own capability must be in the high level of the demon king stage, if not the level of demon emperor!

He cannot be with Elder Nether Spring, and he cannot be a remnant of the Blade of Chaos. There is certainly not such an expert in the Blade of Chaos!

Is he a mysterious expert from the Kingdom of Lion Butchers or the Sea Dominator Kingdom?

Unlikely. It was a pure coincidence that I chased after the remnants of the Blade of Chaos to this place, but he arrived in the small village half a month ago!

Chapter 845 - Li Yao's New Ability

There was no time for her to think because the unbelievably strong blood-eyed demon had dashed at her in a streak of redness.

For a moment, Jin Xinyue felt that it was not a demon that she was faced with but an overwhelming red tide!

Hiu!

Seeing that his brother’s head had soared to the sky, Yuan Du, prince of the Nether Spring Kingdom, quickly made up his mind. He blew a long whistle, and the ghost heads formed of the Ghost Face Purple Mosquitoes all charged at the blood-eyed demon in suicidal attacks.

Yuan Du turned around and shouted at Jin Xinyue, “He is not with us and will not let go of you and me. Let’s work together and take him down first!”

Just as he was talking, the Ghost Face Purple Mosquitoes, which could not stand the burning of the demonic fire, collapsed like a melting candle into mud under the corrosion of the bloody mist surrounding the enemy’s left arm.

“Alright!”

It was quite a shocking scene for Jin Xinyue, who was not naïve enough to think that the stranger was her friend just because he killed a prince of the Nether Spring Kingdom. It was more likely that he was planning to kill both her and

Elder Nether Spring’s subordinates so that the secret treasure would be his alone!

Compared to the terrifying blood-eyed demon, Yuan Du was as kind and innocent as a three-year-old. Jin Xinyue bit her lips and had to choose the lesser of the two evils by attacking the critical parts of the new enemy with Yuan Du and the remaining ghost heads!

Shua!

Hundreds of sharp gold feathers tore apart multiple bloody shadows, only to touch not even the armor of the enemy. Jin Xinyue suddenly shook hard, feeling that an immense force pierced through her chest and that her heart seemed to have been plucked out of her body!

What was a hundred times more terrifying than her pain was the intimidating killing intent rippling out in the enemy’s left eye.

The thousands of streaks of killing intent turned the forest into a boundless slaughterhouse within a moment.

Jin Xinyue’s soul immediately reduced to the size of a bean. The will to resist that she had managed to form collapsed.

She even heard gloomy, creepy music of terror playing from various directions.

What kind of monster is this?

After her head was pierced through by the music, Jin Xinyue felt as if her head was about to explode.

As the saintess of the Pantheon of Demons, she had been chitchatting with countless unparalleled ferocious demons.

Neither Elder Nether Spring, the real controller of the Nether Spring Kingdom; Elder Blood Robe, the support of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers; or Jin Tuyi, her father and the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of the demons, had ever released such sharp, terrifying and fatal killing intent around her, even though they were the strongest demon emperors of the Blood Demon Sector!

For some reason, she felt like she was a small bug pinned on a chopping block, and the enemy would dissect him easily with just a quick look!

“Pu!”

Jin Xinyue vomited blood crazily. Her body did not seem to belong to her right now, and she could feel that she was flying backwards rapidly by the quickly moving giant trees on her two sides.

She was too scared to lower her head to check her wound, anxious that she would find a hole the size of basin and all her internal organs gone.

A weird thing happened at this moment.

Something cool and comfortable flowed into her body from her left shoulder and spread to her heart, her internal organs, and all of her limbs, giving her brand-new strength in the numbness.

With the help of the new strength, Jin Xinyue bit her tongue hard and freed herself from the suppression of the enemy. She looked around, only to find that Yuan Du, prince of the Nether Spring Kingdom, was also struggling in midair like a kite whose string had been cut off just like herself.

Jin Xinyue narrowed her eyes and flapped her wings, raising a wind that blew Yuan Du to the terrifying blood-eyed demon again!

“Jin Xinyue!”

Yuan Du’s shocked, angry, and desperate screams were echoing in the forest.

Jin Xinyue secretly chuckled. She changed her posture in midair and darted into the depths of the forest.

She did not want to waste a single second and, therefore, did not even dare to look back. She merely sprinted as fast as possible in a random direction while she listened to what was happening behind her.

The forest sounded as lively as a casino. Hums, hisses, screams, and explosions were echoing nonstop, not dying down at all.

Yuan Du’s subordinates!

Jin Xinyue quickly distinguished the sounds. *But they do not seem to be at an advantage. No. It is more like a one-sided slaughter!*

The conclusion nearly froze Jin Xinyue’s heart.

Elder Nether Spring was one of the most terrifying demon emperors of the Pantheon of Demons. As Elder Nether Spring’s most beloved disciple, Yuan Du was carrying out a secret mission that was to wipe out the blood daughter of another demon emperor. Naturally, it must have been the elites of the Nether Spring Kingdom that had gone with him.

The Gold Shadow Guardians that Jin Xinyue had brought with her were already the top-tier warriors of the Gold Crow Kingdom. Even so, they had been killed by Yuan Du's subordinates within a breath!

But right now, the mysterious blood-eyed demon was slaying the experts as if they were harmless chicken purely on his own in a forest, which was the Insect Clan's favorite!

Suddenly, Jin Xinyue's legs shook hard, and she nearly fell over.

She noticed that the sound of combats had suddenly ended. The forest resumed its dead silence, so quiet that one could hear a mosquito when it was passing by.

Has—has the blood-eyed demon been killed by Yuan Du and his lot, or—

Jin Xinyue's long golden hair nearly all stood up, and her pupils almost burst out of her eyes because she saw a slender shadow fall from the sky in front of her.

In a trance, the enemy's left arm seemed to have turned into a bloody dragon that snatched at her skull.

Her every cell seemed to have been corroded by the overwhelming killing intent of the enemy, and she could do nothing except wait to be killed.

Shua!

The bloody dragon brushed past her face and pierced into a giant, green rock behind her. With a crack, the rock broke into the tiniest powder, and the dust covered her head and face.

“Enough!”

Li Yao gripped his left arm with his right hand so hard that his fingers had pressed into his left arm and were almost crunching all the veins and nerves.

He bellowed loudly deep inside his brain. As the lightning was released by his soul, the bloody mental devil, which had expanded greatly, was suppressed again and shrieking in dissatisfaction.

It was the right decision to not go back to the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

My killing intent is too strong, and I hunger for slaughter every once in a while. Thankfully, it was only demons that I killed. Otherwise, my beliefs would certainly have been shaken.

It seems that I still need to get better control of myself, at least the killing intent, in the Blood Demon Sector before I return to the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

Li Yao took a deep breath, dwelling in the ecstasy of killing and unable to free himself. It was almost ten seconds later that he finally calmed his pounding heart. He repeated to himself deep inside his brain, *She is a princess of the Gold Crow Kingdom and daughter to Jin Tuyi, a demon emperor, but now, Elder Nether Spring, another demon emperor, is trying to kill her. She can be used to trigger a conflict between the Gold Crow Kingdom and the Nether Spring Kingdom. Therefore, it is more useful to keep her alive than to kill her right now.*

Jin Xinyue had no idea that she was wandering on the threshold of hell right now. She only felt the ‘hot spring’ on her left shoulder gradually turn into ‘magma’. Her mouth was dry, her head was dizzy, and she could barely keep her body steady.

Li Yao noticed the anomaly. He looked at her shoulder and was dazed.

The secret treasure, which, according to Ning Zhongze, the elder of the Blade of Chaos, could ‘change the future of the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector’, was stuck to Jin Xinyue’s left shoulder like a dry octopus.

It had a narrow, long crack in the middle from which several veins protruded out into Jin Xinyue’s body.

The veins were fluctuating and injecting fluorescent, green liquids into Jin Xinyue.

It seemed that the secret treasure had accidentally been activated in the violent movements during the fierce battle with Jin Xinyue as the subject.

Jin Xinyue was wearing a weird expression. She seemed to be laughing in a trance. Her golden eyes were infiltrated by a streams of bright green liquid, which was bouncing crazily like two clusters of weird green fire.

Jin Xinyue finally could not hold it any longer. She moaned and collapsed to the ground, losing consciousness.

Li Yao frowned and pondered for a moment. He examined her temperature remotely and discovered that Jin Xinyue’s body temperature was more than eighty degrees and still counting.

Li Yao took out a bone blade and touched the secret treasure attached to Jin Xinyue’s shoulder.

Surprisingly, the secret treasure fell to the ground in multiple pieces like a dry shell.

The shell was empty. All the green liquid had been absorbed by Jin Xinyue.

Jin Xinyue had almost ten wounds large and small on her shoulder, but they were all recovering quickly in greenish colors and soon disappeared.

The secret treasure that the Blade of Chaos, the Gold Crow Kingdom, and Elder Nether Spring are all fighting over seems to be the green liquid that is stored in such a weird way. Now it has all been absorbed by Jin Xinyue, what kind of changes will happen to her?

Li Yao had never been a chivalrous man, but he was more than interested in Ning Zhongze’s declaration that the secret treasure could ‘change the future of the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector’. After considering carefully for a moment, he picked up Jin Xinyue and moved deeper into the forest

…

The Hundred Desolation Mountain spanned over ten thousand kilometers. Waterfalls, valleys, and cliffs were everywhere. At dawn, Li Yao found a natural cave behind a waterfall. After he drove away the snakes, insects, and mice in the cave with his killing intent, he threw Jin Xinyue inside.

Jin Xinyue was caught in a super high fever. Her skin was burningly hot, but green liquid was spreading to her internal organs and her limbs, as if two weird forces were fighting inside her body.

The weird state lasted quite a few hours. Jin Xinyue seemed be to in the most excruciating suffering. She would be screaming in agony one moment and moaning miserably the next. She even rolled on the ground unconsciously until she curled up into the fetal position in the end.

Bright green liquid was gradually secreted from the pores all over her body, which flowed around and formed a thin green membrane that enshrouded her.

Li Yao had quite a lot of healing drugs with him in his Cosmos Rings, but Jin Xinyue’s symptoms were quite uncanny, and the body structures of demons and human beings were different. Even their cells were vastly different. Li Yao did not dare give her random medicine and could only observe carefully and consider.

After waiting for a long time, he decided to activate the Blood Stripe Virus’ ability that he had recently grasped to examine Jin Xinyue’s bloody.

Chapter 846 - Humanization

Li Yao touched Jin Xinyue's left shoulder with his left index finger. Part of his spiritual energy pierced through her flesh and retrieved a drop of blood from her heart.

The drop of blood rolled on his fingertip like a pearl and was soon absorbed into his body.

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and focused his attention on the drop of blood. He magnified the blood while he observed and analyzed wholeheartedly.

A 3D projection was gradually formed deep inside Li Yao's brain as his soul and the mental devil studied the picture together.

At first glance, Jin Xinyue's blood was no different from that of other demons. After being significantly magnified, it looked like a translucent, scarlet ocean that was packed with cells resembling jellyfish.

Most of the cells were erythrocytes and leukocytes, like in human beings.

But some other cells had a fuzzy edge, like a drop of ink on a tissue. There seemed to be halos behind them, and countless flagella extended in various directions from such cells.

Those cells were apparently more active than regular cells. They were dashing and jumping without a pattern.

Sometimes, they captured a regular cell with their flagella and soon multiplied into two or even four active cells.

They were the demonized cells that were the result of the infection of the Demon God Virus. Such cells were the greatest difference between the demons and human beings.

The cells of human beings, just like those of any other animal, had a stable membrane outside of them that was in charge of the exchange of energy and materials.

But after being infected by the Demon God Virus, the membrane of normal cells would mutate and turn fuzzy and active. Their aggressiveness and fission ability were both significantly improved, too, and they grew thousands of more flagella, which could help the cells grab more materials.

It was with the help of the unbelievable demonized cells that the demons could practice powerful techniques and compete with the crystal suits and crystal warships of human beings with their bodies of flesh and blood.

When Li Yao just arrived in the Dry Leaf Village, he had secretly collected the blood of a lot of villagers for his study, and he had a preliminary understanding about different kinds of demonized cells now.

Huh. What’s this?

Li Yao inwardly frowned. He found a material in Jin Xinyue’s blood that he had never seen before. They were green particles that were infiltrating the demonized cells at an amazing speed.

Within a moment, Jin Xinyue’s demonized cells shrank in size, and the flagella on the cells fell off. A clear membrane reappeared.

The particles were extremely small. Their diameter was only one ten thousandth of the normal demonized cells, the same width of most viruses.

Is this a brand-new virus?

Li Yao commanded the mental devil to retrieve a normal one of Jin Xinyue’s demonized cells and one that had been infected by the green virus.

The greatest difference between the demonized cells and regular cells, except for the flagella on the membrane, was the form and distribution of mitochondria.

Mitochondria was the unit in charge of the production of energy in a cell. It was known as the power source of cells. The structure and efficiency of the mitochondria decided the capability of an expert.

The mitochondria of Cultivators were usually dozens, if not hundreds, of times larger than those of ordinary people. Their percentage in a cell was much higher, too, which allowed the Cultivators to release the immense energy in the blink of an eye or to absorb the energy in lightning and thunder without getting hurt.

The mitochondria of the demons had their unique features, too. Except for their large size, there were bumps and dents all over them, making them uneven like cerebra.

As a result, the coverage of the mitochondria would be significantly larger than regular mitochondria, and their efficiency to generate energy would be higher, too. It was with the mutated mitochondria that the demons created the unpredictable, mysterious ‘demonic energy’.

According to Li Yao’s observation, inside Jin Xinyue’s first demonized cell, the mitochondria were indeed full of bumps and dents, but the unevenness of the other demonized cell that had been infected by the green virus was gone!

The surface of the mitochondria inside the second cell was smooth, and the membrane was clear without the slightest trace of flagella. After being infected by the green virus, the demonized cells became no different from the cells of human beings!

Right then, the demonized cell that was infected spurted out countless green particles, which penetrated through the membrane easily and spread out.

In the beginning, there was only one green particle, but in a few minutes, there were already hundreds of them.

Soon, as the number of the green particles grew larger and larger, most of Jin Xinyue’s demonized cells had been transformed into regular cells.

Five minutes later, the drop of blood collected from a saintess of the demons was no different from the blood of a human being.

What—what the heck?

Li Yao was dumbfounded. He vaguely felt that he was onto something groundbreaking.

When he looked at Jin Xinyue again, she had finally calmed down after struggling in pain for quite a few hours. However, her long wings had been mostly folded back into her body. Looking from the side, she was just a random human girl!

Li Yao swallowed hard and collected another few drops of her blood for analysis.

This time, all the demonized cells inside her blood were gone; they were just like the regular cells of human beings now!

So, the weird green virus can turn a demon into a human being?

Li Yao felt a headache coming on.

The high-level demons often boasted the ‘polymorphing’ ability, which allowed them to hide their demonic features and pretend to be human beings.

But it was only a change of appearance. A lot of demonized cells were still inside their body.

In the Heaven’s Origin Sector, it was with multiple examinations of the blood, hair, and excrement that human beings identified the spies of the demon race. It almost never failed.

But right now, a demon had turned into a human being from head to toe and from outside to inside right in front of Li Yao’s eyes!

How could he not be shocked?

Li Yao was not sure if the transformation was reversible. Would she turn back into a demon after a while, or would she stay as a human being forever?

Either way, the elder of the Blade of Chaos was quite right. The secret treasure could indeed completely change the future of the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

What if countless experts of the Blood Demon Sector snuck into the Heaven’s Origin Sector after turning themselves into human beings in such a way?

Or rather, had they already done it? Did a lot of demons already go to the Heaven’s Origin Sector decades ago, live as human beings, and even rise to power in the federation?

The demon race boasts the polymorphing ability. If their cells are no different from those of human beings, what is the essential difference between human beings and demons?

Who are human beings, and who are demons? What are human beings, and what are demons?

Watching the last feather on Jin Xinyue’s body gradually fade away, Li Yao was deep in thought.

…

Maybe the transformation into a human being was too exhausting for her soul and physical strength, but Jin Xinyue did not wake up until three hours later.

The excruciating pain deep to her bones and the weird feeling of her back leaning the ground immediately reminded her of the bad situation she was in. After she triggered her soul power and summoned her demonic energy, she felt that her body was empty. All her strength seemed to have been sealed, and she could not access any of it.

Jin Xinyue immediately recalled the terrifying eye before she fell into coma.

She shuddered in a chill.

It was the last meaningless movement she allowed herself to make.

As a saintess who had received the harshest training in the Pantheon of Demons from a young age, Jin Xinyue did not waste a single second in useless fear or complaint. She immediately started thinking of ways to escape and reverse the situation.

Since she had not yet been killed, she still had a chance.

Jin Xinyue sat straight and observed her surroundings calmly.

It was a shabby cave with the sounds of rushing torrents outside, indicating that the cave was behind a waterfall.

Dry branches were piled up messily on the ground. More than ten holes had been dug on the wall in which some simple tools were kept.

The tools made Jin Xinyue’s pupils constrict violently. She almost exclaimed loudly.

Fangs of the Purple Jade Phantom Poison Spiders!

Tails of the Purple Cloud Mystic Electric Birds!

The spine of the Desert Wild Wolves!

Jin Xinyue felt like her blood was freezing. They were the only three items that she could recognize among the dozens of tools. But they were all invaluable treasures from the ancient demon beasts more than thirty thousand years ago.

Even though her father was the monarch of the Gold Crow Kingdom and one of the twelve demon emperors, he did not have too many files regarding the ancient demon beasts, either. She had only seen similar illustrations in the ancient classics that her father treasured.

Although she did not know the specific names of the rest of the materials and scraps of ancient magical equipment, she could tell that the vintage feeling of the objects could not have been achieved without withstanding the test of time.

Any of the invaluable treasures would raise a riot in the auctions outside, but the mysterious demon is just stuffing them into the holes on the wall randomly as if they are garbage?

He is so strong, yet he was lurking in a remote mountain village and does not care for the materials of ancient demon beasts and the scraps of ancient magical equipment. Who is he exactly?

Trying to hold back her pain, Jin Xinyue took a deep breath and sorted through all the information she knew.

She was on a mission to hunt the remnants of the Blade of Chaos. The real purpose of the mission was a top secret. There should not have been a third force other than Elder Nether Spring that knew of it.

The mysterious demon was certainly not a member of the Blade of Chaos. Otherwise, he could have taken the item away long before she arrived.

He did not belong to the Blade of Chaos, Elder Nether Spring, or her father’s subordinates, but he had hidden in the mountain village half a month in advance?

Was it possible that she had gotten the whole thing wrong and that the stranger had nothing to do with her mission but ran into her by accident?

Right then, the water sound out of the cave was lowered. A slender shadow entered the cave and moved toward her unhurriedly.

Jin Xinyue’s heart shivered. She was unwilling to face the weird, bloody eye again, but the stranger had stopped right in front of her. She could only struggle to raise her head.

Thankfully, the left eye and the left arm of the stranger were tied up in bandages.

However, the better they were concealed, the creepier Jin Xinyue felt. She could not help but imagine how terrifying and mysterious the bloody eye behind the bandage was!

Inside the narrow cave behind the waterfall, the princess of the Gold Crow Kingdom and the saintess of the Pantheon of Demons shuddered uncontrollably.

Chapter 847 - Bone Fire and Elegant Accent

Shua!

Li Yao picked up a handful of bluish powder with his right hand. He then curled his index finger and made a weird posture before he opened his hand like a blossoming lotus. A bluish fire suddenly popped up from his palm, making the small cave look like a deep ocean and making him even more mysterious.

“Before the bone fire dies down, give me a few reasons why I shouldn’t kill you,” Li Yao said casually in a rigid tone.

The movement to make the fire and his tone raised surging tides in Jin Xinyue’s heart.

As a princess of the Gold Crow Kingdom and a saintess of the Pantheon of Demons, Jin Xinyue had read a lot of books from a young age. The divine classics of the demon race in the Demon Beast Empire thirty thousand years ago, the notes and books of human beings, and even anecdotes from the era of the ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago were all familiar to her.

When Li Yao made the fire with the weird technique, she already felt that the movement was both strange and familiar. When Li Yao uttered ‘bone fire’, the pores all over her body constricted violently, and she could not help but shudder.

Making a fire in midair was not difficult for Cultivators and demons with reasonable expertise.

But the spiritual fire or the demonic fire would release very strong waves. They were like fireflies in a dark night, and it was more than easy for the enemies to detect them.

During an adventure or battle, if somebody made a fire in a dark environment, they would be committing suicide by turning themselves into a target for everybody.

By the same logic, normal fire would emanate light and heat incessantly, too. Not just the Cultivators, even a regular animal would be able to sense it.

The so-called ‘bone fire’, on the other hand, was made by igniting the powder of the bones of special beasts.

The constituents inside the bone powder could suppress the waves in the fire and cover up the source of light.

As a result, those within the range of the bone fire could see their surroundings clearly.

But if somebody was three to five meters away from the bone fire, they would not see a burning fire however hard they strained their eyes. They could not even feel the tiniest waves from there.

This was the most amazing part of the bone fire!

However, triggering a bone fire was an ancient secret technique that had been lost forty thousand years ago. The recipe for the bone powder and the gesture and spell to trigger the bone fire had been lost with the passage of time.

Even Jin Xinyue had only read the descriptions of the bone fire in the records of the Demon Beast Empire from more than thirty thousand years ago.

The records also stated that the bone fire technique had been lost thousands of years earlier.

Bone fire! A technique that has been lost for at least thirty thousand years!

Who is he exactly? Why can he perform such an ancient secret art?

Besides, his voice—

The mysterious demon’s accent was as rough as iron, and every word lingered on after it was spoken. It sounded quite vintage.

In the demon race, there was a special name for such an intonation, which was ‘Elegant Accent’.

It was the accent of forty thousand years ago. Ancient Cultivators often talked in such a tone.

When the demon race rose up and established a Demon Beast Empire across the entire universe, the stronger demons naturally adopted the tone, too.

However, after forty thousand years, especially after the collapse of the Demon Beast Empire and the establishment and fallout of the Star Ocean Imperium, the tones of the demon race and human beings both changed a lot. They were vastly different from the ancient Elegant Accent now.

Right now, the Elegant Accent, which was a mimicry of the tone of forty thousand years ago, would only be used during major ceremonies of the royal family in the demon race.

As a member of the royal family, Jin Xinyue had learned the Elegant Accent, too, but she had to admit that the stranger's accent had a certain unadorned, uncouth feeling to it. His Elegant Accent was not only much more proficient than hers but also far exceeded that of the teacher who had taught her Elegant Accent.

A mysterious and strong demon lurking in a small village!

He seemed to have popped out of nowhere in the weird forest fire half a month ago.

He considered the ancient secret techniques petty tricks, he has left the materials of the demon beasts and the scraps of ancient magical equipment from forty thousand years ago lying around so randomly, and he can speak such standard, authentic ancient Elegant Accent!

Who can he possibly be?

Jin Xinyue thought hard for a moment. Suddenly, she shuddered as if hit by a lightning, because she came up with an impossible answer, and she almost exclaimed.

Could it be—

Li Yao stared at her coldly and quietly. The bone fire that was bouncing weirdly left twisted shadows on his face that looked like his unpredictable killing intent.

The bone fire inside his palm was like a candle in wind. It was flickering and shrank to the size of a bean multiple times, but it shone stubbornly again every time it appeared to be dying down. Jin Xinyue felt her heart pounding, and her head was dizzy.

It’s time for a gamble!

After connecting all the weird behaviors of the stranger together, Jin Xinyue figured out a shocking answer.

She made up her mind and blinked before she shouted quickly, “Senior, please don’t kill me. I’m very useful for you!

“My name is Jin Xinyue. I am the First Princess of the Gold Crow Kingdom, which is the best of the four most powerful kingdoms of the Blood Demon Sector. We govern all the Feather Clan in the world and dominate the sky!

“My father, Jin Tuyi, is one of the twelve demons of the Pantheon of Demons as well as the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of the demon race. Billions of demons listen to his command!

“If you are lenient enough to pardon me for my disrespect, senior, you will be an honorable guest of the Gold Crow Kingdom and receive the help from the entire country!”

Li Yao laughed in contempt. There was no interest in his eyes at all.

Jin Xinyue was even more positive about her assumption, so she probed further. “Senior, do you know that you have made a quite troublesome enemy?

“The insect demon that you killed just now was named Yuan Hao; he was a prince of the Nether Spring Kingdom, another one of the four most powerful kingdom. Elder Nether Spring, his master, is also a top expert of the Blood Demon Sector. He is brutal, sordid, and petty. Now that you have pissed him off, he will certainly not stop asking for your trouble!”

“Okay.” Li Yao nodded. “Are you done yet? You are going to die if you are.”

Jin Xinyue observed the stranger. She could tell that the mysterious demon really did not care about the friendship of a demon emperor and the threat of another demon emperor.

Judging from his easiness, it was even possible that this was not the first time he had slain an important figure such as Yuan Hao.

It was definitely not a threat that he claimed that he was going to kill her; he was merely stating an unimportant fact!

“Senior!”

Jin Xinyue was ninety percent sure about his identity now. In her last try, she raised her voice and said, “I’m a saintess of the Pantheon of Demons, and I’m familiar with the history over the past tens of thousands of years. I also possess countless secret techniques for the training of demons that have been developed in the recent thousands of years!

“There are also many other secret arts that I can find in the library of the Gold Crow Kingdom and the Pantheon of Demons even if I don’t know them myself!

“I assume that you must be familiarizing yourself with ‘modern’ society when you hid in the small village, right?

“But for such a far-flung village, the best they had must have been preliminary body-training techniques. There would have been nothing advanced at all. You were completely wasting your time there, senior!

“Only I can help you fit into ‘modern’ society quickly!”

Jin Xinyue intentionally stressed ‘modern’.

“Huh?”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes. His killing intent, as if tangible, spurted out of his bandages and congregated into an unstoppable tornado that pressed Jin Xinyue to the ground, making her unable to move anymore.

“Are you forcing me to kill you?”

Tears in her eyes, Jin Xinyue replied in a shivering voice, “Spare my life, senior! I really don’t know anything. I’m trying hard to think how I can possibly be of value to you!

“I would be privileged to die in the hands of an unparalleled expert such as yourself, but if I must die, why don’t you wait until I tell you everything that I know? If you kill me then, I will be able to die in peace!”

Li Yao gazed at her for a long time and retracted his killing intent after a snort.

Cold sweat pouring out, Jin Xinyue panted hard and managed to say, “Senior, the world is different today. Human beings have risen again, and the demon race is declining. However, human beings and the demon race have both developed unbelievable methods of training in the past thousands of years that… are possibly different from those that you are familiar with.

“Are you not interested in the methods of training at all?”

Li Yao was silent. The cold bone fire constricted yet again into the size of a needle tip before it shivered and faded out.

In the darkness, Jin Xinyue felt her heart palpitating.

While she was preparing her last words, the stranger did not attack her but said coldly, “Tell me why the three parties were attacking each other. I’m told that the Blood Demon Sector is at war with a world of human beings named the Heaven’s Origin Sector. The demon emperors should know what they are doing in the internal fights. Do they never consider the consequences of their decisions at all?”

Jin Xinyue was slightly relieved, knowing that her life was saved, for now.

She swallowed hard and said, “Senior, it was beyond my expectations, too.

“Since you know about the war between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector, senior, have you heard of an organization named ‘Blade of Chaos’?

“Half a year ago, the ‘Battle of Dawn’, a large-scale attack that the Blood Demon Sector carried out against the Heaven’s Origin Sector, failed. A lot of soldiers returned to the Blood Demon Sector.

“The Blade of Chaos took the opportunity to gather the defeated soldiers and rebelled, which was known as ‘Riot of Bloody Blade.

“When the rebellion was at its peak, they occupied ‘Bone Sand City’, a city governed by the Nether Spring Kingdom in the north.

“My father, Jin Tuyi, was the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of the demon race. He was responsible for annihilating the rebels and suppressing the insurrection.

“I was helping my father by hunting the leadership of the Blade of Chaos. But I discovered that Elder Nether Spring’s subordinates were chasing after the Blade of Chaos in secret, too.

“Bone Sand City, which was taken over by the rebels, was the Nether Spring Kingdom’s territory. It was normal that Elder Nether Spring hated the Blade of Chaos’ guts. I didn’t think too much of it in the beginning. But later, I discovered that Elder Nether Spring’s subordinates were not chasing after the Blade of Chaos randomly. Instead, they were focused on one squad of the Blade of Chaos and meant to kill them at any cost.

“Truth be told, my father and Elder Nether Spring are political rivals. They have been attacking each other openly and in secret for decades. Now, for the post of the commander-in-chief of the coalition army, they are almost engaged in an open fight.

“After I discovered the anomaly of Elder Nether Spring, I investigated and found out that Elder Nether Spring had a confidential laboratory in Bone Sand City that was compromised in the Riot of Bloody Blade. Something extremely precious was stolen by the Blade of Chaos.”

Chapter 848 - Hereditary Information

“My purpose was simple. I planned to find the lost item and uncover Elder Nether Spring’s secret so that the Gold Crow Kingdom would be in advantage in the competition with the Nether Spring Kingdom. Or, maybe I could trade the lost item with Elder Nether Spring for political benefits.

“However, Elder Nether Spring valued the item much more than I expected. He risked a war of the two kingdoms and ordered his subordinates to kill me!

“It seems that the elder of the Blade of Chaos was not exaggerating. The item might really change the fate of the Blood Demon Sector!

“Senior, with all due respect, that item is a ticking time bomb.

“If your purpose since the beginning has been the item, then I have nothing to say. You’ve got the item, and you can easily walk away after killing me to keep my mouth shut.

“However, if you are uninvolved in the incident and only retrieved the item by accident, you and I will be on the same side, senior, because Elder Nether Spring will hate us equally.

“Of course, I’m too incapable to be qualified to fight by your side. With your amazing skills, you must be fearless of a demon emperor. However, Elder Nether Spring governs all the Insect Clan in the world. They are best known for their harassment and persistence. If they follow and bother you all the time, it will certainly be a minor nuisance for you, senior.

“If you spare my life, senior, the Gold Crow King will be able to give you a hand and get rid of the nuisance for you. You will be saved a lot of trouble, won’t you?

“Besides, my father is the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of the demon race, and he respects heroes the most. With a great war breaking out soon, you are going to make a huge difference if you go to the Gold Crow Kingdom!”

Jin Xinyue was quite bold. After she calmed herself down, she immediately started trying to manipulate Li Yao.

Li Yao smiled casually and said, “The item has been broken. Some sort of weird green liquid was stored inside it, but it leaked into your body and triggered tremendous changes.

“Do you feel that your body is stranger and your demonic energy is not functioning well? It is not because I imposed barriers on you but because of the effects of the green liquid.”

Jin Xinyue was greatly shocked. She could not help but touch her back, only to find no feathers or wings at all.

She took a deep breath and sensed the demonic energy inside her body. She even tried to stimulate her cells to summon her original appearance, to no avail. Her body was empty, and the strength that she was born with had vanished into thin air!

Deep confusion beamed out of Jin Xinyue’s eyes for the first time. She shivered and asked, “Senior, can I retrieve some devices from my Cosmos Ring to examine my cells?”

Li Yao blinked and asked back, “Cells? What is that?”

Jin Xinyue smiled bitterly. “Cells are the most basic structural and functional units that constitute a living entity. It is a new concept coined some twenty thousand years ago. Demons and human beings are all made of cells.

“But for demons, cells are more important. The study of cells is the foundation of our modern training.”

Li Yao nodded and gestured for Jin Xinyue to do what she had to.

Jin Xinyue calmed herself down. She touched a silver Cosmos Ring that she was wearing on her little finger with her thumb, and she mumbled a series of spells to herself, retrieving five or so pieces of magical equipment.

Li Yao was particularly interested in the dark golden one that had a delicate badge on the pedestal that read ‘Deep Sea’.

It was a piece of magical equipment produced by the Refining Department of Deep Sea University, which was known as the ‘holy land for refiners’ in the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

Jin Xinyue managed to keep her shaking hands stable and opened the cover of the pedestal. She inserted a standard crystal into it and activated the magical equipment.

The seven crystal cameras at the top of the magical equipment immediately started revolving slowly.

“Senior, this magical equipment is named ‘portable microscope’,” Jin Xinyue explained. “It can magnify an object to eight hundred thousand times its normal size. A world of endless mysteries can be observed through it."

Li Yao raised his eyebrow, pretending that he was very curious but would not like to pursue it further in case it showed his ignorance.

Although Jin Xinyue's mind was in a mess, she was secretly amused by Li Yao's countenance. "Microscopes can be divided into two kinds, namely spiritual energy microscopes and biochemical microscopes. Human beings are better at the former while demons are adept at the latter.

"The spiritual energy microscope in my hand was made by the best refiners of the Heaven's Origin Sector. I'm going to analyze my own blood with it."

Jin Xinyue carefully picked out two glass slides, which were so thin that they were almost nonexistent. She then pierced her finger and squeezed out a drop of blood, which she dripped in the middle of the two glass slides. In the end, she inserted the glass slides into the slot of the microscope and observed for a long time.

Gradually, her face turned paler and paler until it was whiter than that of a dead person. Her sweat was pouring out, and she fell to the ground like a fish that had been tossed onto land, her eyes unfocused, as if somebody had taken her spine away.

"No wonder Elder Nether Spring wants the item back no matter what!"

Jin Xinyue breathed hard for a long time before she came back to herself. She sucked her finger and laughed more hideously than when one was crying. "He—he is running such horrible experiences and has even made breakthroughs. He—he can transform the demonized cells inside the body of a demon into regular cells!”

“Senior, I… I…”

Jin Xinyue considered for a long time and decided to tell the truth in the end.

Although the stranger did not even know what cells were, it did not mean that he could be fooled easily. Her reactions that bordered on losing control just now were indicative of many things already.

She was dealing with an old monster who could kill a demon king instantly just by moving his finger. Jin Xinyue knew that it would be a disaster if such an old monster caught her lying.

“I finally understand why Elder Nether Spring tried so hard to get back the item and did not even care about potential war.

“It was because that the item he lost was an extremely important drug that can infect demonized cells and turn them into regular ones!

“Or more straightforwardly speaking, the drug can turn demons into human beings!

“I seem to have been infected by the drug and… have turned into a human being!

“With your wisdom, senior, you must know what kind of consequences such a drug can bring. It must be clear to you, too, that you are not going to get away easily now that you have already become involved, whatever your original purpose was!

“The only solution right now, senior, is to go to Gold Crow City with me and ask for my father’s opinion!”

Jin Xinyue talked as if she was being considerate of Li Yao, but Li Yao knew that the demon was merely trying to gain a free bodyguard. She was perhaps also planning to exploit a few secret techniques and ancient treasures out of him.

However, the demon was quite strong-willed. If Li Yao had turned into a demon from a human being suddenly, he did not think that he could be as calm.

“There’s no need to underestimate yourself. You are quite calm, too.”

The mental devil had crawled out at some point and was smiling. “You were infected by the Bloody Stripe Virus, and part of your cells are different from those of the normal human beings. Aren’t you as calm as before, too?

“If we get to the bottom of it, Jin Xinyue is a pure human being right now, and of the two creatures here, you are more of a demon than her!”

Li Yao triggered a lightning bolt with his soul power, but the mental devil snuck to the depths of his brain before it was hit by the lightning, leaving a series of weird laughter.

Gloomy brightness blinked in Li Yao’s eyes as he said solemnly, “You said just now that you had a lot of brand new methods of training for demons in your possession that were developed over the past few thousand years? What have you got? Show me!”

“As you wish, senior.”

Jin Xinyue understood that whether or not she could be kept alive depended on the old monster’s interest in the items that she was about to offer. Pondering for a moment, she scratched her hair and took off a Cosmos Ring that was hidden behind her ear. She then retrieved six jade chips and a mini crystal processor after a shake.

“Senior, these are modern jade chips. Different from the ancient jade chips, they have to be activated with a kind of special magical equipment named ‘crystal processors’. Although the procedures can be annoying, the capacity of these jade chips is hundreds of times higher than that of ancient jade chips. Other than the simple text, images, videos, and sounds can be recorded, too!

“Please take a look, senior. Inside the six jade chips are the marvelous arts that the demon race developed in recent millenniums. They are the essence of the civilization of the demon race. Every discipline is extremely sophisticated and an unparalleled technique!

“And those techniques are merely a tiny proportion of the classics of the training methods for demons. Inside the library of the Gold Crow Kingdom, a lot of techniques that are more mysterious and advanced are waiting for you to study, senior!”

Li Yao’s interest was greatly aroused. With the help of Jin Xinyue, he turned on the crystal processor and inserted the few jade chips. The names of the classics of the demon race were immediately displayed on the light beam.

Advanced Cell Biology!

Applied Microbiology

Virology!

Development of Carnivore Fungi!

Training Methods of Highly Differentiated Adenocarcinoma Cells!

Introduction to Genetics!

“…” Li Yao.

Jin Xinyue introduced the books to Li Yao humbly, but not without pride. “Senior, these are the classics that modern demons major in right now. They might not be as easy and straightforward and the training arts of the ancient demons, but once you get the hang of them and grasp the mysteries of cells and even genes, the techniques that you can perform will be hundreds of times more powerful than ancient techniques!”

“Huh?”

Li Yao grunted in dissatisfaction.

Jin Xinyue immediately lowered her head and pretended that she was nervous. “I was talking too much, senior. With your keen sight, you must be able to see the value of the classics after a quick look!”

Li Yao lowered his eyes and asked unhurriedly, “What are genes?”

“Genes are the amalgamation of the hereditary information contained deep inside our cells. They determine the growth and death of a creature. They are the source of life and everything for a life!” Jin Xinyue explained quickly.

“Hereditary information?” Li Yao raised an eyebrow.

“Yes. Hereditary information.”

Dazzling sparks were shining in Jin Xinyue’s eyes as she said, “The information that the thirteen ancient demon clans from the primeval era, and even the Pangu Clan, the Primeval Lord of Heaven, and the other deities in the universe before them, passed on to us!”

Chapter 849 - Cell Infiltration

There was mockery in Li Yao’s eyes as he scoffed, “Are you selling the bullsh*t of the Pantheon of Demons again? How come I never learned of anything named the Pantheon of Demons forty thousand years ago?”

His words cast Jin Xinyue into a daze, too. She secretly stuck her tongue out in her heart and said even more humbly, “Your eyes are keen, and you are indeed insightful, senior. In fact, I don’t believe in the ‘glorious Pantheon of Demons’, either. It is just a form of propaganda.

Li Yao was startled. He did not expect that Jin Xinyue’s head was clear enough to call a spade a spade.

Jin Xinyue opened her hands and said, “I’ve read a lot of history books of the Demon Beast Empire in the royal library of the Gold Crow Kingdom and the collections of the Pantheon of Demons. I also browsed through the human beings’ records of the events of the past. After I compared them, I discovered that, although many narrations were contradictory, the classifications of four levels and theories of the Pantheon of Demons including ‘obliteration, rebirth, and immortality’ were all gradually formulated over the past forty thousand years and not entirely settled until approximately ten thousand years ago. There’s no doubt about that. It’s perfectly normal that you haven’t heard about it before.”

Li Yao could not help but chuckle drily. He then demanded in a high-pitched voice, “So, you are aware that you’ve been lying?”

“It is a white lie,” Jin Xinyue replied calmly. “Demons are different from human beings. The vastest difference for human beings is their skin color or hair color. Strong or weak, they all have one head that is on the top of two shoulders. Their appearance and habits are very similar. Therefore, it is natural for human beings to be united, and ideologies such as equality and democracy work better for them.

“But the difference among the individual demons is too huge. We are scattered throughout the entire world from the high sky to the deep ocean. The high-level demons are even smarter than human beings, but low-level demons possess wisdom equal to that of a child, not to mention that the latter are also driven by their instincts of slaughtering and know nothing but destruction.

“If I may ask, how can the thousands of species of demons, who vary greatly, be united and develop our world stably without a powerful system?

“At the early stage of the Demon Beast Empire, the system of the four classes and theories of the Pantheon of Demons were not perfected yet. At that time, the demons attacked each other all the time, and there was no peace.

“If I may be so bold to ask, you witnessed such a chaotic era in person, didn’t you, senior?”

Li Yao lowered his head and sniffed, but he did not respond.

Jin Xinyue smiled. “Therefore, after the atrocities during the dynasty-changing wars of the Demon Beast Empire, the sages established the system of the four classes creatively, which was also known as ‘Four Pillars’. They gradually perfected the legends of the Pantheon of Demons and enlighten the unwise, low-level demons with the tales to ensure the stability of our civilization.

“Otherwise, the internal strife between the different species of demons would already have been enough to cause the doom of our civilization. How can we expect to fight human beings?

“Let’s be honest here. Of course, the legends that the Pantheon of Demons made up are exaggerated, but the clans such as Zhurong, Kuafu, Gonggong, and Nuwa are real things.

“You may understand them as the super experts, or the powerful sects, in the primeval era. They could also have been glorious species or civilizations. For example, the Zhurong civilization, the Kuafu civilization, and the Gonggong civilization, and so on.

“When the civilizations of the primeval era mixed together, countless brand-new lives flourished. They were our ancestors.

“Demons and human beings are the different branches of the primeval civilizations. However, when it comes to the utilization of spiritual energy, human beings choose to walk down the wrong path.”

“The wrong path?”

Li Yao raised his eyebrow. He was rather curious about how the demons viewed the humans’ methodology of training.

“Yes.”

Jin Xinyue nodded and said, “The training of human beings is entirely focused on energy. They prefer energy to material. To quote their ancient classics, the bodies of human beings are just boats to pass through the sea of suffering. It is just a container that is not worth mentioning at all. Although they can build up their body by inhaling and exhaling the spiritual energy of the universe, the main purpose of such a practice is to absorb and utilize more spiritual energy.

“The bottom line is, human beings consider their bodies as a containers and energy as the ultimate goal. For the experts of human beings, the higher their Cultivation is, the more importance they attach to energy. When they advance into the Core Formation Stage and the Nascent Soul Stage, they even reconstruct some of their body parts, namely the cores and the ‘Nascent Soul’.

“After the ‘Nascent Soul’ is born, the experts of human beings will walk further down the path of pure energy. The Divinity Transformation Stage, the Divinity Branching Stage, and the Void Refining Stage are all for the ultimate purpose of energization. In the end, they will ‘ascend to the heavens’. It means that they will completely get rid of their body and blood and become creatures of pure energy.”

Li Yao nodded, deep in thought. “This is quite a refreshing theory.”

“Thanks for you compliment,” Jin Xinyue said in a hurry. “Over the past forty thousand years, the training theories of both demons and mankind have developed quite fast. The wisdom of countless sages and geniuses during the period is not to be underestimated. I’m just copying the predecessors’ theories and introducing them to you. I believe that your expertise will certainly be much higher than right now after you learn more about the new theories.”

Li Yao laughed. “What’s wrong about the path of pure energy? I’ve met a few Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators before. They were quite strong, and it was a headache to kill them.”

Jin Xinyue shuddered and could not help but observe Li Yao’s face in secret.

As a saintess of the Pantheon of Demons, she had her own secret arts of observation. She could easily tell that the stranger was not lying. It seemed that he had slain more than one Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator!

Jin Xinyue swallowed hard. Her heart, which had just calmed down, was racing again.

She knew for a fact that, after such a long war between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector, few demon emperors of the Pantheon of Demons had slain experts in the Nascent Soul Stage before.

But the old monster here talked about killing Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators so casually as if they were nothing but harmless hens. What a ferocious demon!

Jin Xinyue calmed herself down and said, “For starters, creatures of pure energy are very unsteady and prone to interference.

“More importantly, a body of flesh and blood is the ultimate essence of the materials in the universe. Life is the greatest mystery in the universe and a boundless treasury!

“Every cell is like a tiny universe and boasts infinite potential. Isn’t it catching at the shadow and losing the substance when you explore the great universe in a hurry but you haven’t figured out the small universe yet?

“Therefore, the demons regard our bodies as the source of our strength. We are more focused on developing the potential of our cells by attacking them with energy. All our techniques are based on that, too!

“With your expertise, you must know a lot of secret training arts. However, if I may be so bold to ask, have you ever thought of the mechanisms of the secret arts, senior?”

Li Yao pondered for a moment and glanced at Jin Xinyue coldly.

Jin Xinyue shivered, but she bit her lips hard and widened her eyes, staring back at Li Yao.

She was very clear that she could not keep retreating and submitting herself during the competition with such an old monster. She had to take the initiative at the crucial moment even though it might be risky.

As she expected, Li Yao lowered his head after a moment and said frankly, “It’s true that I don’t know how many secret arts work even though I can use them adeptly. I only know that training through those methods will make me stronger, but training is always followed by endless combat. Is there any time for me to consider the mechanism of training at all?”

Ecstasy beamed out of Jin Xinyue’s eyes. She knew that she had hooked the old monster.

Now that she had achieved her purpose, she did not dare test him any longer. She said in a hurry, “According to the modern theories of training, the secrets of demons lie in the genes.

“You may find it hard to believe, senior, but if you magnify a cell billions of times, you will be able to clearly see the gene strands deep inside the cells, which are in pairs and in helical forms.

“On those gene strands, the greatest experts and sages, such as Zhurong, Gonggong and Kuafu, left astronomical hereditary information billions of years ago.

“If you think that such an explanation is too obscure, you may consider that the greatest experts in the primeval era wrote all the training methods possible on jade chips named ‘gene strands’. Then they connected all the jade chips and hid them deep inside every cell.

“However, under normal circumstances, all the ‘unparalleled techniques’ are in the state of being sealed and locked. They are known as ‘dormant genes’ and ‘recessive genes’.

“The training mechanism of demons is in fact importing spiritual energy into the body and piercing it deep into the nucleus to trigger the dormant genes, forcing them to shift from recessive to dominant. As a result, they will be able to perceive the unparalleled techniques that the ancient experts bestowed upon us instantly and demonstrate the demeanor of the primeval warriors again!

“Therefore, the entire training system of the modern demons is based on cells and genes.

“For the demon soldiers at the bottom level, they can guide the spiritual energy to blow their membranes consciously and stimulate the activity of the membrane by the vibration of spiritual energy of a certain frequency, facilitating the exchange of materials in and out of the cells and making their bodies stronger.

“For the demon generals, they can train with their cell nucleuses directly and bombard the gene strands with their spiritual energy so that the dormant genes are awakened.

“For the demon emperors, they can even directly analyze parts of their genes and grasp the legacy that the prehistoric experts passed on to us in our genes. Then, they regain that unimaginable primeval power again!

“All theories, studies, and secret arts regarding the cells and genes are known collectively as ‘biochemistry’. Biology is the study of life, and chemistry is the study of changes. All the changes and mysteries of life in the entire universe are explored in biochemistry!”

Chapter 850 - Transformation of Cultivation

“When biochemistry developed to the peak point, terrifying existences known as ‘biochemical beasts’ were invented!

“Training genes can be dangerous because the world of hereditary information is as vast as an ocean and utterly unpredictable. There is no telling what kind of changes would happen to somebody when they activate part of their dormant genes. They might grow scales all over their body, and they become as tough as iron, but they also might suddenly turn into a pool of pus and die a miserable death. It is possible that their appearance might not change at all, but their breathing organ might no longer be compatible with the air. As a result, they would suffocate even though the air is plenty.

“Therefore, we all tread lightly during our training and never dare to unlock the gene strands randomly.

“But biochemical beasts are different. They are the artificial creatures made through combining the genes of dozens of stronger demon beasts. They do not have the ability to think or self-awareness, and they can be connected to the user through nerves or brainwaves, which essentially makes them ‘clones’ of the user.

“On the biochemical beasts, the imagination and creativity of the experts of genetics and cytology are no longer restricted. Therefore, such terrifying weapons that are as magnificent as the primeval animals have been invented!

“When a demon is connected to a biochemical beast, their combat ability is multiplied, and if it is a top-tier biochemical beast, their combat ability could even be enhanced by ten times!” Jin Xinyue said delightedly.

Li Yao frowned and, pondering for a moment, said, “When I chased after the prince of the Nether Spring Kingdom and almost killed him, an enormous centipede that was dozens of meters of long crawled out of the earth. It had three bloody horns on its head that were spurting poisonous gas with a sweet smell. Then, the prince of the Nether Spring Kingdom crammed into the head of the centipede, and the two of them seemed to meld into one. Was it a biochemical beast?”

Jin Xinyue shuddered and gasped. “Yes. That was the ‘Red-Horned Centipede’, a biochemical beast personally brewed by Elder Nether Spring. It is one of the strongest biochemical beasts of the Blood Demon Sector. I did not know that Elder Nether Spring was resolute enough to deploy such a precious weapon! What then? Did you kill Yuan Du and the Red-Horned Centipede in the end, senior?”

Li Yao shook his head. “I didn’t. I slashed at the centipede and chopped off one of the red horns on its head. Then, it spurted out a cluster of intense fog and escaped with the coverage of the fog.

“I was more interested in the item that you were all fighting over, so I chose to go after you and ignored the little bug.”

Jin Xinyue secretly clicked her tongue. Yuan Du was a middle-level demon king. With the enhancement of the ‘Red-Horned Centipede’, he could certainly fight a high-level demon king. She did not expect that the guy would only be able to run away desperately under the threat of the old monster, and even the venomous horn of his biochemical beast had been removed.

The old monster was indeed unfathomably strong!

With a brilliant smile on her face, Jin Xinyue clapped her hands and said, “You are indeed invincible with your amazing skills, senior. With a cough of yours, Yuan Du could only be scared out of his wits. If you have access to a few super biochemical beasts and build them into your ‘clones’, which you can manipulate as if they are your body parts, I cannot imagine how strong you will be by then!”

Li Yao chuckled for a moment but suddenly stopped smiling. He said coldly, “There’s no need to flatter me. In fact, all your talk is merely meant to trigger my interest in the modern theories of training so that I will escort you back to the Gold Crow Kingdom safely and even join your father’s side against the Nether Spring Kingdom, right?”

Jin Xinyue smiled even more brilliantly as she replied, “Your eyes are indeed keen, senior. I knew that I could not hide my intention in front of you.”

Li Yao snorted and said, “After listening to what you’ve just said, I’m indeed quite curious about the modern theories of training. It seems that forty thousand years is truly a long time. The world has completely changed!

“It’s not impossible for me to escort you back to the Gold Crow Kingdom. Joining the war between you and the Heaven’s Origin Sector is my wish, too. Although you have not mentioned it yet, I’m very curious what kind of experts are in the world of Cultivators now waiting to be butchered by me and how powerful the so-called crystal suits are. Are they enough to resist one attack?

“However, you must tell me everything that you know honestly. If I discover that you are keeping anything to yourself, hehehehe…”

The intimidating killing intent around him made Jin Xinyue shudder violently again. She hurried to kneel down and swore that she did not dare to.

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and said, “I did not kill the prince of the Nether Spring Kingdom. He must’ve returned already with news about us. I do not think that Elder Nether Spring will let us walk out of the Hundred Desolation Mountain easily.

“He is just a demon emperor. Of course, I’m not scared of him, but with the mutations inside your body, you are quite a nuisance now.”

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao opened his right hand and summoned a fire out of nowhere before he patted the fire into the top of Jin Xinyue’s skull.

A hot stream immediately flooded into Jin Xinyue’s brain.

Jin Xinyue was so scared that she was almost peeing. She thought that the temperamental monster was determined to kill her.

She was about to exclaim and run away when she sensed that she was not harmed at all. Instead, with the hot stream flooding into her body, brand new strength was woken up inside her internal organs.

This—this is the secret technique through which the Cultivators and demons forty thousand years ago assessed the expertise and aptitude of their disciples!

Jin Xinyue quickly realized what was going on.

Forty thousand years ago, the demon race had only just risen and was deeply connected to the Cultivators. On many occasions, the demons were like the Cultivators' students. They learned everything from their teachers crazily.

Therefore, the greatest experts of the demons at that time, besides their naturally-endowed talents, were all adept at the secret arts of the Cultivators. If they polymorphed into human beings, they would look divine and elegant, absolutely no different from real high-level Cultivators.

Jin Xinyue had an absurd thought when she was tested with the ancient bone-touching technique. She was wondering if it was her who travelled through time instead of the old monster.

But Li Yao was ten times more shocked than Jin Xinyue was.

Odd. Really odd. Why are there such immense spiritual waves inside her body?

Li Yao sensed the tremendous spiritual energy stored inside Jin Xinyue's body. It filled her internal organs and every vessel and nerve. Part of the spiritual energy was even condensed in her lower abdomen where it was spinning slowly and forming what appeared to be a core!

"I—"

Under Li Yao's guidance, Jin Xinyue gradually perceived the new strength inside her body, too. She thought of a possibility and was dumbfounded.

Li Yao made the conclusion for her. “It seems that the weird drug only changed the forms of your cells but did not remove your strength from you. Your strength is now demonstrated in a completely different way. That’s all.

“In the past, you were a demon king.

“After the transformation, you have become a Cultivator at the corresponding level—the Core Formation Stage.

“Of course, it is only in terms of the immensity of spiritual energy. You don’t know the first thing about the utilization of spiritual energy and are absolutely no match for a real Core Formation Stage Cultivators. Even Building Foundation Stage Cultivators could defeat you easily. You are like a three-year-old who has unbelievable physical strength, but that does not mean that you can fight a real warrior.”

Jin Xinyue was relieved at first. In the Blood Demon Sector, where the strong preyed on the weak, strength meant everything. It was not the most terrible thing to turn into a human being, but if she lost her strength, she would be a fish on the chopping block, at the mercy of anybody. It would be a better ending for her if she killed herself right now under such circumstances.

Her strength remained, but it had been shifted to a different paradigm. It was the greatest news for her today.

However, there was still one problem. How exactly should she utilize the strength?

Li Yao observed her ever-changing facial expressions casually. It was not until Jin Xinyue came back to herself and looked at her earnestly that he retrieved ten or so high-purity crystals from his Cosmos Ring unhurriedly.

With his left hand behind his back, Li Yao raised a stream of invisible spiritual energy that made the crystals float in midair without support.

With the stimulation of the spiritual energy, the crystals crashed and polished each other. Powder spluttered like a hazy mist. The most solid crystals seemed to have turned into the softest plaster. Their forms changed continuously until they split into delicate components in the end.

Brilliance suddenly shined in Li Yao’s eyes. He closed his hand, and all the components were combined together after cracking noises into a vintage jade chip.

Shua!

Seven-colored fire rose up inside Li Yao’s palm, which seared the jade from top to bottom. In the end, the fire did not die down but dashed into the jade chip like a small dragon, turning into colorful, glamorous stripes on the surface of the jade chip.

After only a few seconds of refining, the jade chip was translucent and as smooth as oil. It also boasted a vigorous air, as if it had been polished by a craftsman for ten days and ten night and worn as a pendant for decades. It looked like an out-and-out ancient treasure!

Jin Xinyue was truly shocked!

If she had not seen it with her own eyes, she certainly would have mistaken the jade chip for an ancient treasure that had just been excavated from some ruins. She never would have believed that it had been refined just now with only one hand!

This is definitely the most standard, professional method of ancient refining. It is not something that modern demons or human beings can grasp!

Besides, he was only using one hand, and he has crafted an ancient jade chip after only several minutes!

So horrifying! So skillful! So unbelievable!

Jin Xinyue was so shocked that she was soaked in cold sweat again.

She was aware that professions were ambiguous in the ancient times forty thousand years ago. At that time, the Cultivators and the demons were all full-profession experts. They could refine as proficiently as they could kill.

If the old monster had just woken up recently after a sleep of forty thousand years, it was not strange that he knew the secret arts of the Cultivators and the methods of refining.

But even the experts of refining in ancient times might not have been able to produce a jade chip singlehandedly in only several minutes!

Li Yao touched the jade chip to his forehead, and his telepathic thoughts flooded in like a tide.

The capacity of the ancient jade chips was small, but they were convenient to use. The information could be stored or wiped as long as they were stuck to the forehead.

Li Yao retrieved a few classics hidden in the Heavenly Refining Tower from Ou Yezi’s memory pieces and transcribed them to the jade chip before he tossed the jade chip to Jin Xinyue casually.

“There are some crude training methods in the jade chip, which I retrieved after killing several Cultivators. Take a look at them.”

Chapter 851 - Greetings, Elder

Mimicking what Li Yao had just done, Jin Xinyue stuck the jade chip to the middle of her forehead, too. She summoned the spiritual energy inside her body, somewhat clumsily, and triggered it through the spiritual root that had only just grown.

Her telepathic thoughts extended deep into the jade chip like threads and were connected to the billions of telepathic thoughts that Li Yao had poured in just now.

Information streams resembling a tsunami immediately flooded into her brain. A series of glittering names of Cultivation techniques made her dazzled and dumbfounded.

‘Candle Dragon Polar Light Art’!

‘Fleeing Cloud Sword Art’!

‘Soul Hunting Memoir’!

Dozens of Cultivation arts, from elementary to advanced, constituted a complete training system for Cultivators, including the most fundamental training skills to the most powerful, unstoppable killing moves!

Jin Xinyue had seen the names of a few Cultivation arts in some ancient notes before. They were all powerful, unparalleled techniques that had once raised storms of blood before.

As for the other Cultivation arts, although she had never heard about them before, after browsing through the introduction and the table of contents, Jin Xinyue could also envision their magnificence.

The old monster tossed out so many different kinds of ultimate techniques so casually!

Jin Xinyue could not have been more awed. She felt that she was even more certain about Li Yao’s identity now.

The ancient techniques came from different Cultivation sects. It was impossible for a Cultivator to grasp all of them.

Only a ferocious demon who had slaughtered countless Cultivators in the ancient times could have been able to collect them!

He—he is really a strong ancient demon from forty thousand years ago who only just woke up recently!

Maybe the forest fire deep inside the Hundred Desolation Mountain half a month ago was caused when he woke up!

Yes. Yes. Everything makes sense now. He woke up in the forest fire, only to find that the world had greatly changed and the things that he was familiar with were gone. So, he hid himself in the Dry Leaf Village while he collected information about modern society. He accidentally ran into me and Elder Nether Spring’s subordinates and naturally wanted to know more stuff from us!

Opportunity! This is definitely an opportunity that just popped up out of nowhere. I must seize it!

Frenzy beamed out of the bottom of Jin Xinyue’s eyes as she licked her lips and her eyes shook. Then, her eyes gradually turned red before she suddenly kneeled before Li Yao heavily and cried, “Senior!

“Senior, we had not met before, but you came to my rescue in the emergency and saved my insignificant life even though Elder Nether Spring will certainly be infuriated!

“Right now, I don’t know what to do after the sudden changes that happened to me. While I am confused, it is you who is giving me enlightenment and offering me so many ultimate techniques!

“I could not return your great favors even if I turned into a dog that barked for you in the future!

“I—I have thought about it for a long time. There’s only one way that I can slightly repay what you’ve done for me, senior.

“If you don’t think that I’m too incapable, senior, I—I’m hoping that I can work for you and be a disciple of yours so that I can serve you and help you in the future!”

Li Yao was dazed, his eyes blinking uncontrollably.

Had the role he was playing not required mysteriousness, he would have burst into laughter.

He had given the techniques to Jin Xinyue for a very simple reason.

After a hundred years of conflict, many experts of the Blood Demon Sector would possess the Cultivation arts of human beings in the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Since Jin Xinyue had a capability of the Core Formation Stage, she would definitely find several techniques one way or another.

What Li Yao offered her, on the other hand, were the Cultivation arts of the other sects that the Hundred Smelting Clan had collected.

The Hundred Smelting Clan was best at producing magical equipment. Fighting was not its specialty. Therefore, when other Cultivation sects asked the Hundred Smelting Clan to refine magical equipment for them, they often provided some of their Cultivation arts in return.

It was not hard to imagine that the Cultivation arts that a sect was willing to trade for other items were certainly not the real ultimate techniques. Magnificent as they seemed to be, they often had fatal shortcomings or loopholes.

If Jin Xinyue practiced some other Cultivation arts, there was probably nothing Li Yao could do about it, but if she was to pick up those that Li Yao offered to her, she would never get out of Li Yao’s control.

Li Yao was quite wary of the saintess of the Pantheon of Demons who was both brutal and strong-willed. Opening a ‘backdoor’ inside her body was an approach to keep her in check, too.

But he did not expect that Jin Xinyue would take the chance and try to request to become his disciple.

Li Yao was crystal clear about what was on Jin Xinyue’s mind. He snorted and said, “You are a saintess of the Pantheon of Demons. Don’t tell me that you don’t have a master.”

Jin Xinyue sobbed so hard that her face had lost color, as if she were a devastated damsel who had nobody to rely on. She kneeled on the ground and cried, “You are right, senior. I do have a lot of tutors in the Pantheon of Demons. But the tutors merely trained me as a tool. There has never been a master that truly loved me and sheltered me. None of them are worthy enough for me serve them wholeheartedly.

“My father does not have much time to teach me because of the public affairs.

“I have seen a lot of unparalleled experts since I was little, but this is the first time that I’ve ever seen such an awe-inspiring figure like yourself, senior. That is why I proposed such an outrageous request in the spur of the moment.

“I know that, with my insignificant capability, I am not qualified to be your disciple at all, senior. I will have no complaints even if you say no. As long as I can stay around you as a servant and cater to your needs so that I have the opportunity to admire your demeanor every day, I will be satisfied and die without a regret in the future.”

“Is that so?” Li Yao smiled. “Didn’t you mention just now that you would like to be a dog barking for me? What if I really have methods that can transform you into a dog?”

Jin Xinyue was dazed for a moment. Her heart quivered uncontrollably. Hesitating for a long time, she gritted her teeth and said, “As long as I can follow you and return your favor for saving my life, I will certainly have no objections if I have to be turned into a dog!

“Senior, truth be told, I’m really at a dead end right now.

“The Blood Demon Sector is a world of hypocrites where the strong prey on the weak. I became a saintess of the Pantheon of Demons after a lot of trouble. Naturally, I made a lot of enemies during the process.

“Now, sudden changes have happened to me, and I have turned into a human being. There is no telling when I will regain my original appearance.

“My enemies will certainly not let go of such a great opportunity.

“Right now, Elder Nether Spring is hunting me down, and the Pantheon of Demons is probably going to capture me and cut me into pieces for research. I don’t know how my father will treat me if he is thinking about the ‘big picture’.

“I—I have been thinking about a lot of things recently. I have absolutely nobody to turn to, and I am in a desperate situation right now!

“You are my only hope, senior. You are a lantern in the endless night. Is there a second road that I can walk on except following you loyally, senior?”

Jin Xinyue spoke truthfully and sincerely.

Li Yao sniffed lightly. After everything he’d been through in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector, he was no longer the hotblooded young man he had once been. Naturally, he did not believe a single word that the female demon said.

However, she did have a special identity, which was quite important for Li Yao’s plan.

After staying in the Blood Demon Sector for half a month, Li Yao had basically outlined the situation right now based on the information he retrieved from the residents of the Dry Leaf Village, the Lei Chuang and Lei Qi brothers, and Jin Xinyue herself.

One month ago, the Blood Demon Sector launched a large-scale attack against the Heaven’s Origin Sector known as the Battle of Dawn. They scourged the entire Grand Desolate Plateau, and their vanguard even reached the Giant Blade Pass at the south of the Grand Desolation Plateau.

As soon as the Giant Blade Pass was broken through, the most prosperous and vulnerable land of the Star Glory Federation would have been open to them.

Although the demons lost the Battle of Dawn in the end, the Blood Demon Sector did not suffer any substantial losses. On the contrary, it was the infrastructures and towns of human beings on the Grand Desolation Plateau that were mostly wrecked.

On the Grand Desolation Mountain, which was in lack of resources and population, it was easy to demolish a town, but it would be extremely difficult to rebuild one.

It was safe to say that the road leading to the abdomen of the Star Glory Federation had been paved after the Battle of Dawn.

Right now, the Blood Demon Sector was in the middle of another mobilization. Even a small, remote village of the chaotic-blood demons such as the Dry Leaf Village had to provide fifty soldiers. It was not hard to guess that the mobilization would be ten times more intense than that of the Battle of Dawn.

This was a general mobilization of the Blood Demon Sector!

Once the general mobilization was completed, an army of demons that was in an unprecedently enormous scale would march toward the Heaven’s Origin Sector. It was perhaps going to be the real final war between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector!

In the final war, the commander-in-chief on the Blood Demon Sector's side would be Jin Tuyi, Jin Xinyue's father!

I have to find a way to approach Jin Tuyi and learn the Blood Demon Sector's plan in the final war. Then, I'll figure out a way to send the war plan of the Blood Demon Sector back to the Heaven's Origin Sector!

Other than that, Elder Nether Spring's schemes are worth noting, too. Is the drug that can turn a demon into a human being a by-product that he got by accident, or are there deeper plots behind it?

Besides, in order to purge the foreign blood condensed by the Blood Stripe Virus, I must have a deep understanding about cells and genes, which is indeed an aspect that the demons have more expertise on than human beings do.

Thinking about that, Li Yao waved his hands. An invisible force lifted Jin Xinyue up.

Without giving an answer, he said casually, "Stand up!"

Observing his emotionless face, Jin Xinyue did not dare ask for an answer anymore. Her eyes shuddered, and she asked, "Thank you for keeping me around you, senior, but I wonder, how should I address you?"

Li Yao pondered for a moment and said, "I do not want to expose my identity. Just call me 'Lei Qi' and regard me as your subordinate when there are outsiders. As for my real name, just keep it in your mind and never leak it. If anybody else learns it from you, don't blame me for my mercilessness!

"A very, very long time ago, in a place far, far away, everybody called me 'Bloody Vulture'."

A strange brilliance shone in Jin Xinyue’s eyes as she said calmly, “It’s a pleasure to have met you, elder!”

Jin Xinyue kneeled down again and cheered on the ground. “Elder Bloody Vulture is invincible in the universe with his amazing arts. I am unbelievably lucky to have had the chance to follow elder and do whatever I can to help!”

Chapter 852 - Adventure in the Primeval Era

Three days later, deep inside the Hundred Desolation Mountain, Li Yao was curled up like a hibernating animal in a natural crater hundreds of meters deep.

He was meditating.

Li Yao had received a lot of secret techniques for the training of demons from Jin Xinyue, and Jin Xinyue had begun to study the Cultivation arts of human beings, too. The two of them both needed time to understand and digest the new knowledge. Therefore, they had moved deeper into the Hundred Desolation Mountain.

The three days of journeying had been partly hiking and partly practicing. Li Yao was an expert in the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage in the first place and had inherited part of the techniques of the Blood Stripe Virus, which could transform the body. Therefore, the rudimental theories on genetics and cytology were not difficult for him.

Today was the first day that he would consciously pry into the secrets deep inside the cells.

Meditation meant ruling out all the irrelevant thoughts and achieving the grand unification of the body and the soul so that one would be able to observe their internal organs and even their soul. It was the basis for all kinds of training.

There were hundreds of ways to enter a meditative state. The one that Li Yao chose was 'Fetus Meditation'. He half closed his eyes and relaxed while he began to reflect on his entire life. From his recent experience in the Blood Demon Sector, back to the Flying Star Sector, and back to the Heaven's Origin Sector, his memories were being replayed like an ebbing ocean.

With the flashbacks of his life, all the irrelevant thoughts were dismissed. His consciousness became as pure and stable as a newborn baby, until in the end, his entire world was wreathed in a cluster of warm darkness. His memories had gone back to the time in his mother's womb when he was being bred while he soaked in the warm amniotic fluid.

His soul slightly shivered, and he was secluded from the real world. Li Yao completely entered the meditative state.

His consciousness constricted into a light ball the size of needle tip before it suddenly expanded and filled the entire body.

His consciousness split into billions of telepathic thoughts while he observed his body with his mind from various perspectives.

His vision pierced through his skin and his flesh, allowing him to clearly see the internal organs, his beating heart, his fluctuating lungs, his wriggling intestines, and his gastric juice that was being secreted.

Li Yao was not satisfied yet. His consciousness dived deeper. All the internal organs, flesh, and blood disappeared. They were replaced by dense veins, lymph, and nerve networks that looked like honeycombs.

He saw sparks bursting out brilliantly deep side his brain cells and flowing toward the nerve endings through the nerve tracts with lightning-like speed, constituting a magnificent, complicated palace that looked as neat as a labyrinth.

Deeper, deeper.

Just like waving away the layered clouds and falling to the ground, when Li Yao's consciousness explored deeper into the microscopic universe, his veins, lymph, and nerve networks disappeared just like his internal organs did. In front of him was a wonderful new world that looked like a crammed universe. Transparent, colorful planets were floating everywhere. Each of them was releasing lightning, flames, and storms while receiving everything from other planets.

Li Yao knew that those transparent planets were his cells.

He mumbled the spell of the secret techniques that he had just learned and covered his consciousness with spiritual energy. Then, he tried to penetrate an enormous cell like a tiny tadpole.

The membrane of the cell seemed as vulnerable as a bubble. Yet, it was extremely tensile. Li Yao slid off the membrane multiple times, and it was not until his soul released a special weak electric current and tickled the membrane that it absorbed him promptly after shaking slightly.

The world inside the cell was a glamorous, splendid ocean with colorful, bizarrely shaped plankton everywhere.

Some of the plankton looked like cocoons. They released a bright golden brilliance and unleashed clusters of lightning-like energy while they shook unstably in the undercurrents like golden aquatic plants.

They were the mitochondria, the fundamental provider of energy for a cell and the source of strength.

However, Li Yao had no time to train the mitochondria today because his soul had been attracted to the nucleus.

In the center of the cell, the nucleus looked both like an enormous swirl and a weird eye. It sent an enchanting invitation to him, and his soul could not help but swim over immediately.

Like a starship captured by the gravity of a planet, his soul could not resist it at all when it was absorbed into the nucleus.

Li Yao seemed to have passed through an endless, dark pathway where time and space were both meaningless. The various kinds of plankton that had been stretched resembled the stars in a clear night sky. He had only seen such unbelievably splendid views before when he was travelling in the four-dimensional universe.

Maybe the demons are right. Every cell is a tiny universe where endless mysteries are kept, even including the secrets of the primeval era...

His thought flashed and quickly disappeared. Li Yao forgot everything and completely dwelled in the deepest part of his cell.

He seemed to have been absorbed into a black hole. Everything behind him had become narrow, long lines.

After Li Yao floated for he didn't know how long, enormous chains in pairs that tied each other up helically appeared. They surrounded him and span slowly like behemothic pythons that bit each other's tails and were about the swallow the universe, forming a cone-shaped 'funnel'.

Along the edge of the funnel, Li Yao dived deeper and deeper into the funnel one circle after another. As the diameter of the funnel diminished, his speed became higher and higher until he was almost stretched into a noodle billions of lightyears long.

Li Yao could see that every helical chain was connected to each other by glamorous scripture and that the scripture consisted of astronomical information. The information was not text, images, or sound, but 'super information' that was folded and compressed from the four-dimension or even higher dimensions!

"Ahhh!"

When he fell to the bottom of the cone, Li Yao's soul was wrapped into a singularity. He suddenly felt frightened for reasons he did not know, and he suspected that he would be trapped there forever. Therefore, he shouted and struggled hard!

Maybe, before the universe was born, a certain existence sleeping deep inside the nothingness shouted and struggled in exactly the same way, and thus the universe was created!

BOOM!

The palace of gene strands collapsed all of a sudden. All the broken parts of the genes turned into glittering pieces, and all the pieces assembled into a brand-new world.

Li Yao found himself standing on wet, hot ground. He stood in a daze for a long time before he finally remembered who he was.

It was a nascent world. The earth seemed to be made of flames. The crust was extremely unstable and shaking violently all the time, and volcanoes rose from the bottom of the ocean every once in a while. The magma vaporized the seawater and brought about a bright purple sky.

It was… the primeval era!

Li Yao was not the only creature in the scorching, desolate world. Earsplitting explosions resembling unceasing thunder were echoing in the sky.

Li Yao raised his head, only to discover two super starships that were so enormous that they seemed to have been made by emptying and refining two planets.

The starships were so large that they occupied more than half of the sky. Their attraction force even tore apart the feeble earth, making countless rocks and even hills fly into the sky toward them, only to be crushed into pieces when they hit the spiritual shields of the starships. In the end, glamorous rings were formed around the starships.

Even the seawater had been absorbed up into the sky, forming waterspouts that could be tens of thousands of meters high. The mountains of water seemed to be the young arms of the newborn world trying to touch the powerful civilizations from the depths of the universe.

"Kunlun!"

"Penglai!"[1]

Li Yao thought of something. For some reason, the names of the two super starships popped up in his mind naturally.

When his eyes passed the two super starships, he saw an unfathomably huge sun in the high sky that was radiating light and heat incessantly. The tentacles made by the solar prominences seemed like it was reaching for the planet and would destroy everything there at any time.

However, on the enormous sun, there was a small black spot that was expanding and spreading at a visible speed. A giant 'shield' was being constructed on the surface of the sun.

A tremendous force was even bashing the sun brutally right next to the shield, and after every bash, the light of the sun would diminish a tiny bit.

For some reason, Li Yao realized the significance of everything being done here.

The star is too furious and too close to the planet, resulting in the high temperature on the planet that is unfavorable for life.

Even though there is life, when the solar flares break out, everything on the planet will be easily ruined.

The Kuafu Clan is chasing after the sun and calculating the orbit and all the relevant data of the star precisely. They are also building a 'Kuafu sphere[1]' on the orbit of the star so that all the energy that the star releases will be absorbed as the source of power to modify the galaxy.

Together with the Kuafu Clan is a super starship of the Houyi Clan. When the 'Kuafu sphere' has absorbed enough energy, the main gun of the starship of the Houyi Clan will open fire and adjust the energy release pattern of the star and alter its level!

Kuafu chases after the sun, and Houyi shoots it. They are modifying the world so that it will have an environment favorable for life!

Li Yao retreated his eyes. Kunlun, which was floating in midair, suddenly opened a narrow, long crack beneath it from which hundreds of giants flew out.

The giants were all hundreds of meters tall. Their skin was lead-gray and covered in wrinkles. Their heads were huge with sharp tusks. They looked like combinations of enormous dinosaurs and human beings.

All the giants that resembled dinosaurs were not wearing any clothes, but their private parts were blocked by a material that looked like both metal and wood. Their faces were solemn, and endless nebulas seemed to be condensing inside their gray eyes.

Every giant was holding a glass that was similar to the color of their skin. They floated to the top of the furious ocean in groups and raised their heads, drinking the liquids inside the glasses one after another.

"Wu..."

A moment later, the gray giants screamed, half delightedly and half painfully, from deep within their chests. Their skin gradually turned transparent, and their bodies glowed as they collapsed like pure sand, turning into seeds of life and dispersing in the ocean of the primeval era.

Before the last giant collapsed, he seemed to notice Li Yao and smiled at Li Yao in great comfort. Opening his lips, he said—

Chapter 853 - Atavism

Weird waves in the shape of rings suddenly appeared around the primeval giants, which spread out like ripples. The information was not transmitted via the soundwave but sent to Li Yao by overlapping hundreds of different kinds of waves in a more mysterious way.

Every word contained information as enormous as a planet. Li Yao felt like he was bashed right in the head. He was in a trance as if he had just woken up from a dream.

He seemed to travel through billions of years within a moment. He saw that cells floated in the seawater and slowly congregated, evolving from monads to metazoans, and to trilobites, Nautilus, dinosaurs, smilodon, mammoths, and monkeys. The planet also flourished in the big bang of life, turning from desolation into opulence.

Li Yao’s soul could not withstand such transmission at all.

He was like an ant that crawled to the entrance of a splendid palace which was as high as the sky. Before he had the time to explore the endless treasures inside the palace, he was overwhelmed by the magnificence of the palace and even completely lost in it, wandering around and yet unable to find a way out.

Sometimes, he was floating along with the current as a trilobite.

Sometimes, he was a clumsy herbivorous dinosaur hiding from the predators in a humid forest.

Sometimes, he turned into an enormous smilodon that was shuddering in the snow world.

Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum!

The pouring of the primeval giants was lingering on. Information streams as vast as the sea of stars were blown into the depths of Li Yao’s soul. Li Yao gradually lost his consciousness and forgot who he was. It seemed that he was going to be trapped in the weird primeval world forever.

Right then, a shriek suddenly echoed right behind him. Somebody seemed to have plucked the hair on the back of his head, making him shudder in a chill and come back to himself.

When he was woken up, a spring that had been stretched to the maximum seemed to tie his waist up and pull him out of the primeval world brutally.

His consciousness passed through clouds, stars, and the black hole. It reappeared in the deepest part of his cells, and the gene strands, the cell nucleus, the chromosomes, and the mitochondria slid past him in a flash. He penetrated through the membrane, the veins, the lymphangion, the internal organs, the flesh, and the skin, returning to the center of his brain!

“What is wrong with you!”

The mental devil burst into fury and cursed aloud while jumping up down inside his brain. “Genes are the most mysterious existences in the world. Even the Blood Stripe Virus dares not say that it has completely grasped the secrets of genes. You don’t know the first thing about genes, and you were bold enough to explore such deeper places?

“Do you have any idea that your body near broke apart just now. Your cells could have exploded, and your body could have been disintegrated into pus or even gas!

“If you are of a mind to kill yourself, why don’t you hand over the body to me, brother? Don’t be so wasteful, okay?”

Li Yao opened his mouth, only to fail to utter a single syllable. His body seemed to have turned into a cluster of transparent fruit jelly where his veins, nerves, and bones were being condensed again. It was not until after a minute of loss that his soul completely returned to reality from the far-flung primeval world and he sensed his body again.

He immediately noticed that something was wrong.

He had been training in a natural crater almost a hundred meters in diameter. But now, he was buried deep beneath a mountain with heavy rocks in every direction. He seemed to be a fossil that was embedded into the rocks.

“What has happened?”

“Just now, you trained yourself too much and triggered the strength deep inside the cells, unleashing the energy that at least equaled the explosion of a ton of crystal bombs,” the mental devil replied. “It is only reasonable that the crater collapsed!”

Li Yao secretly clicked his tongue while cold sweat was popping up.

Energy always abided by the law of conservation. Since he had unleashed too much energy, as a result, his body was greatly exhausted, too. The mental devil was not lying to him. He had been very close to having a breakdown and being vaporized into smoke!

Li Yao tasted everything that he sensed inside his cell, especially the information that the primeval giant had taught him in the end.

Most of the information was obscure and looked like ciphertexts that had been highly compressed. Only a tiny proportion of it was unfolded slowly and flowed around his body in a mysterious way, making him understand a brand-new technique in the most natural way.

It was a whole new structure of the mitochondria and the cell membrane as well as a method to build such a structure.

Li Yao entered the internal observation state again, shallowly this time, and guided his spiritual energy to nourish and blow the cells on his left arm consciously.

His left arm had been invaded by the Blood Stripe Virus, and the cells were extremely unstable. For other people, it was a shortcoming, but for the training of cells, the unsteadiness of the cells made it easily for Li Yao to transform them.

As the spiritual waves stimulated the cells incessantly in a certain frequency, a glass seal deep inside the cells seemed to be shattered all of a sudden. The lackluster information contained in a certain gene strand suddenly sparkled eye-catchingly like a crystal.

The mitochondria quickly expanded and split, growing wrinkles that looked like those on the cerebrum!

As a result, the mitochondria was absorbing the spiritual energy at a speed at least five time higher than before!

Bolstered by the additional spiritual energy, the membrane was extending unstable tentacles in all directions like a furiously burning sun. Every tentacle was a cluster of extremely thin villus.

The billions of villi waved crazily, exchanging materials, energy, and information with the outside world. The cell was over ten times more vigorous than before!

“Are they… demonized cells?”

The cells after transformation had almost exactly the same appearance as Jin Xinyue’s demonized cells, but they appeared to be more active and stronger than Jin Xinyue’s!

Training was more important. Li Yao had no time to think. In the same way, he transformed many cells inside his left arm according to the tutelage of the primeval giant.

For some reason, Li Yao sensed that he seemed to have activated some new abilities of his left arm, and he could manipulate the upgraded cells to do a lot of amazing things.

Shua!

Li Yao clenched his fists hard. Three sharp spurs protruded out of the top of his left fist. Each spur was almost one foot long, with silver brightness shining vaguely.

With Li Yao’s experience in materials, his natural-grown spurs were definitely harder than a lot of strengthened alloys!

When he opened his fingers, the spurs retracted into his body naturally, but dark golden scales grew out on the back of his hand, which quickly spread upwards and enveloped his fingers, forming a natural combat glove. His five fingers seemed to have turned into five ferocious dragons.

He pressed lightly on a hard rock nearby and crushed it as if it were a piece of tofu. He crunched the piece of the rock inside his palm, and it turned into the finest sand within a moment.

Li Yao blew the sand away and shook his hands, making his left hand return to normal.

The changes on the outside were not important. The enhancement to such an extent could be accomplished by a lot of magical equipment and weapons.

What Li Yao valued more was the internal changes. After being modified, the cells were significantly more vigorous. They could split all the time, which improved the hardness of his body greatly. The speed of his recovery after he was wounded would be at least three times higher than before!

What has happened? I have grown 'demonized cells' naturally by doing nothing except training?

No, I'm afraid that such cells are not as simple as 'demonized cells'. I think it is more precise to call them 'primeval cells'.

If everything that I saw while in the meditative state is real and happened billions of years ago, the primeval giants are very likely to be the earliest ancestors of human beings.

Pangu, Kuafu, Zhurong, Gonggong, Houyi, Nuwa…

The magnificent beings in the prehistoric legends not only enjoyed a high prestige among the demons but were also acknowledged by human beings, too.

The historians of the Heaven's Origin Sector had even proved that the so-called 'Pangu' was actually a civilization of dinosaurs in the prehistoric era.

However, according to Li Yao’s memory, it was inaccurate to call Pangu a civilization of dinosaurs. More precisely speaking, Pangu evolved into all things. Dinosaurs and human beings alike were the descendants of Pangu.

The only difference was that dinosaurs were the descendants of a relatively earlier stage and therefore must have kept more techniques of the Pangu Clan than human beings did.

Pangu evolved into all things and hid their hereditary information in the deepest parts of the cells, which was passed on generation after generation, from the trilobites to dinosaurs, from dinosaurs to monkeys, and from monkeys to human beings.

Therefore, deep inside the cells of human beings, at the very bottom of the gene strands, lies Pangu’s legacy!

Stimulating the cells in a special way of training will activate the legacy of the Pangu Clan, which is hidden in the deepest part of the gene strands. As a result, the cells will be modified and return to the magnificent form of the primeval era billions of years ago!

Maybe, this is a kind of ‘atavism’!

The so-called ‘atavism’ referred to the phenomena where a living creature showed the features of their ancestors. For example, some newborns would grow long hair all over their body, or an abnormal tail, or particularly sharp canine teeth.

It was well believed that atavism was a regression of life.

If the evolution line was a straight line, and every generation of life was stronger than the previous generation, the assumption might have been valid.

However, what if evolution was not a straight line but a spiral, with faults and setbacks?

It had been only a hundred thousand years since human beings evolved from monkeys, while the earliest life human beings were aware of could be dated back to billions of years ago!

If the evolution of life was shortened to one year, then, the glorious history of mankind was merely the last minute of the last hour of the last day of the year!

The so-called civilization of mankind had only appeared at the last several seconds.

Before the civilization of mankind was born, during the 364 days, 23 hours, and 59 minutes, had there been ancestors that were far stronger than human beings, such as the Pangu Clan, the Kuafu Clan, the Zhurong Clan, and the Nuwa Clan in the primeval era?

If atavism made the victim show the characters of monkeys some hundred thousand years ago, it was certain a regression.

But if the atavism made someone show the characters of the dinosaurs a hundred million years ago, was it really regression?

Moreover, what if the atavism could make modern people show certain characteristics of the greatest experts of the primeval era who could make or break a world?

“I understand it now!”

In the darkness, Li Yao’s right eye, which was exposed to the outside, was as brilliant as onyx. His vision seemed to have travelled in the river of time and returned to billions of years ago when the ancestors were building a universe from scratch again. He mumbled to himself, “By training, I’ve activated the dormant genes in the deepest part of my cells and made my cells experience atavism!”

Chapter 854 - Another Clash

Some of the cells inside my body have reverted to the form of my ancestors’ cells billions of years ago. With the help of the ‘primeval cells’, it’s only natural that I can activate more powerful techniques right now!

Li Yao had once trained with ‘Iron God’ Yan Ba, a body fundamentalist. The methodology of the body fundamentalists was to wake up the ‘primeval force’ inside one’s body!

Before, as a refiner, Li Yao had found it hard to understand why anybody would fight with their body stupidly while ignoring the powerful magical equipment.

Right now, he finally understood that the training path of the body fundamentalists was very similar to that of the demons. They were all trying to force themselves to enter a certain ‘atavism’ state so that the primeval force inside their body could be awakened.

However, the body fundamentalists paid more attention to the build-up of the soul, whereas the demons were more interested in the transformation of cells.

So, there are no ‘demonized cells’ at all. The so-called ‘demonized cells’ are just normal cells in their primeval state after going through atavism.

Here comes the questions. If the ‘demonized cells’ are actually ‘primeval cells’, then what are demons exactly?

It was stated clearly in the history books of the Star Glory Federation that the demon race was a biochemical weapon brewed based on animals during the first civil war of Cultivators at the end of the ancient Cultivation world forty thousand years ago.

Right now, Li Yao completely discarded such a theory.

The question was going to be a headache if he dug into it deeper. Li Yao felt that his head was dizzy, and fatigue swallowed him like a tide.

He knew that he could not allow himself to fall asleep under billions of tons of rocks. Gritting his teeth, he activated part of the recessive genes inside the cells of his left arm, transforming it into the form of scales and claws again, while he dug upwards.

BOOM!

After more than ten minutes, the slightly collapsed ground erupted with mud and dust like a volcano. Li Yao jumped out after a long roar, and he floated in midair as he gazed at the ground, which was now a mess.

The Blood Demon Sector had a rough environment. The air there was not suitable for human beings. A layer of dense venomous gas seemed to be flowing all the time. Before, Li Yao had constantly been dealing with it.

But now, his lungs, which had been strengthened by the primeval cells, were not uncomfortable at all when he breathed the ‘venomous gas’. If anything, he even felt that it was almost sweet.

It’s a similar smell to the primeval era!

Li Yao smiled and glanced around, only to find Jin Xinyue squatting nearby, covered in dust and shuddering in fear.

Li Yao found it odd. “What are you doing here? Didn’t I tell you to train yourself hard?”

Jin Xinyue was so scared that her face was pale. She did not even dare to complain, even in her heart, while she quickly replied, “I—I was practicing wholeheartedly a moment ago, but you made a significant breakthrough in your training, elder. Your aura was intimidating, and the earth collapsed. I was caught in the surging tide of your overwhelming demonic energy. I was suppressed by the air around you and could not even stand on my feet. Please—please do excuse me for my lack of manners, elder!”

What is this old—old—Elder Bloody Vulture practicing just now exactly? The surrounding five kilometers have collapsed!

Jin Xinyue did not have the courage to call Li Yao an ‘old monster’ anymore and began to use the courteous title obediently.

After the shock just now, she was truly intimidated by Li Yao and had no courage to defy him at all. She even thought that, since Elder Bloody Vulture seemed so strong, she might gain a lot of benefits if she truly served as his disciple.

Li Yao looked around and scratched his head somewhat in embarrassment. Naturally, he would not tell Jin Xinyue that the shocking view was only because he had lost control over himself during his training.

Thankfully, there was already a ‘mental devil’ inside Li Yao’s brain, which meant that Li Yao was already in a mentally deranged state.

A man who was mentally deranged could not be mentally deranged again.

Li Yao was very clear that his practice just now nearly destroyed all his cells. In a real battle, there was no way that he could wield such power.

However, demonic energy?

Li Yao sniffed and noticed that there was indeed a new smell on his body. It was feeble and perhaps unperceivable for ordinary people. It was not stinky and felt like a combination of fighting will and the smell of blood.

It's truly demonic energy!

Li Yao was slightly dazed.

In the past, he had only known that the expert demons would release a lot of demonic energy when they were summoning all of their capability, just like Cultivators would release a lot of spiritual waves when they were in their peak state.

Demonic energy was one of the most important features to distinguish a demon.

Li Yao blinked. His telepathic thoughts entered his body and observed internally in search of the origin of the demonic energy. Soon, he traced it back to the mitochondria inside the primeval cells.

So, this is the case. After being strengthened, the mitochondria has an efficiency three to five times higher than normal mitochondria. Such high-intensity functioning naturally brings about a lot of waste.

The waste leaks out of the cell through the membrane and is transported to the body's surface through capillary vessels and the lymph. In the end, it is excreted through the pores.

The so-called 'demonic energy' is actually waste that the primeval cells release when they are functioning at a high speed.

The mitochondria of the Cultivators certainly produces garbage, too, but the Cultivators utilize spiritual energy in a different way from the demons. They never pump the cells with spiritual energy to trigger a mutation. Therefore, the 'waste' that the cells of the Cultivators generate is little to none, and it is barely possible to detect it.

So, this is the mystery of demonic energy!

The finding both startled and baffled Li Yao.

Right now, he had a lot of 'primeval cells' that were similar to 'demonized cells' inside his body. Even if he went through the blood test of the demon race, he would not worry that his real identity of a human being might be found out.

Besides, with a telepathic thought, the mitochondria inside his primeval cells would run crazily, and immense demonic energy would immediately be unleashed. There was no need for a blood test at all. Anybody would respect him as a ferocious demon!

However, with abundant primeval cells inside his body and the fact that he could trigger immense 'demonic energy', was he a 'human being' at all now?

…

Under the moonlight, amid the bamboo, a girl was wearing soft gauze, her feet bare with red paint on her nails that looked like shells. She was dancing like a deity with brilliance of a sword flashing up and down, giving the feeling that she did not belong to this world.

Nobody could possibly have imagined that the girl who looked like a goddess walking on the earth was a demon only a few days ago.

Sitting cross-legged on a giant rock not far away, Li Yao held his chin while he observed Jin Xinyue practicing her technique.

But there was a new clash inside his brain.

The mental devil launched another attack, trying to shake his belief, while he was baffled by his identity.

However, the mental devil did not look hideous and disgusting anymore. Instead, it had put on a vintage robe and looked like a pure gentleman.

Even Li Yao was greatly surprised when he saw its new appearance. He had never thought that he would look so handsome when he was dressing in an ancient style!

“Everything happening here is really interesting.” The mental devil smiled mildly. “Imagine that the soul of a human being has crawled into the body of a demon and that the soul of a demon possessed a completely authentic human body. Then, which of the two is a human being and which is a demon?”

Li Yao’s belief was not shaken. He replied quickly, “One’s mind, or rather, soul, determines whether they are a human being or a demon.

“The Star Glory Federation has granted full human rights for the ‘spectral Cultivators’, who are legally equal to human beings. Spectral Cultivators are made of the soul of a human being and a metal shell. No matter what they look like, they are human beings!”

The mental devil shook its head. “Not exactly. The thing about ‘mind’ and ‘soul’ is that it is too intangible. Who knows what they are exactly?

“Is there really much a difference between the soul of a human being and that of a demon?

“Imagine that, one day, Jin Xinyue betrayed her species and considered herself a human being wholeheartedly for a certain reason, say, realizing her mistakes, or due to her survival instincts.

“Then, is her soul still the soul of a demon? Is she still a demon?”

Li Yao thought quickly. The question bothered him and slightly shook his belief.

The mental devil immediately expanded. The bloody aura around it was like the sunlight at dawn, making the mental devil magnificent and undefeatable.

Li Yao frowned and said, “Maybe, human beings and demons are not different at all.

“I don’t know what exactly happened forty thousand years ago that led to the birth of the demon race.

“But with everything I’ve discovered, it is most certainly not because a reckless Cultivator invented the ‘Demon God Virus’.

“Maybe, the demons are body fundamentalists who have Cultivated to the peak?”

Li Yao’s eyes suddenly shone as he said that. “Yes. It is a plausible possibility. Demons are human beings that walked on a different path of training. There are no essential differences between them!

“If so, there is no reason for the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector to keep on fighting. The two parties can work together against the Imperium of True Human Beings!”

The mental devil was silent for such a long time that Li Yao suspected that it had sunk into his brain again, but out of nowhere, the mental devil burst into wild laughter.

The gentleness of the mental devil was completely ripped apart as it rolled on the ground holding its belly. He laughed so hard that bloody tears were flowing, and the edges of his mouth almost reached his ears.

Li Yao sensed intense contempt. He asked solemnly, “What are you laughing for?”

“Your childishness, of course!” Wiping his tears, the mental devil laughed hard. “Let’s say that human beings and the demon race have the same origin. So what? It’s been forty thousand years!

“A hundred thousand years ago, human beings and monkeys shared the same origin, too. But if a monkey came to you, would you think that it is your compatriot?

“Besides, even if it is a ‘compatriot’ to you, so what?

“You wouldn’t be so naïve as to believe that the war between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector is because one party consists of human beings and the other consists of demons, would you?

“Hehe. Forty thousand years ago, there were no ‘demons’ at all. Was there not such a huge civil war that almost all the Sectors were ruined?

“At present, the Imperium of True Human Beings is governed by human beings, too, but you don’t see eye to eye with each other!

“Just admit it! Maybe human beings are just a species born for killing. For resources, for benefits, for feelings, for honor, for all kinds of weird reasons, and sometimes for no reasons at all, you will kill each other!

“Your enemy is the demon race, and you kill them. But would you be merciful if they were human beings?

“Haha. You were worried that human beings would be lustful for killing and wars when the Blood Stripe Virus spread out.

“In my opinion, the Blood Stripe Virus is truly not to blame. Over the past forty thousand years, human beings have not been infected by the Blood Strip Virus, but have they been less lustful for killing and wars?

“Wait. I’ve suddenly come up with another possibility.

“Say, is it possible that all human beings are infected by something similar to the Blood Stripe Virus when they were born?

“If that is the case, it doesn’t matter now that you are infected by me for a second time, does it?”

Chapter 855 - Who's Wiping Out Whom?

Li Yao took a long, deep breath and gradually calmed down his messy mind.

His soul was like a flawless gem, and no matter how the mental devil surveyed it, there was not the tiniest gap through which the mental devil could infiltrate at all. "There's no need for fancy talk. I will find the origin of the demon race. If the demon race and mankind share the same origin and there is no reason for the two parties to attack each other, I will try my best to stop the war that could potentially destroy both worlds!"

"Haha. Hahahaha!"

The mental devil laughed so hard that it could barely catch its breath. "Human beings and demons have fought for forty thousand years. The blood shed during that period is enough to extinguish a burning star. They are literally 'sworn enemies'. How are you going to stop the fire with nobody but yourself?

"Right now, the Blood Demon Sector and the Star Glory Federation are both in the highest state of war, summoning all of their resources available. The war machines are now functioning at full capacity. When a bullet is locked and loaded, you have to shoot it no matter what. Even though your capability is equal to that of the Nascent Soul Stage and demon emperor, so what? You will only be crushed into a sandwich if you choose to stand in the middle of two colliding worlds!

“Besides, your identity is unfavorable on both sides.

“In the Blood Demon Sector, you cannot reveal your identity as a Cultivator, or you will certainly be attacked collectively by all the demons.

“If you return to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, how are you going to prove that you are the pure ‘Li Yao’, not under the influence of the Blood Stripe Virus?

“Yan Xibei could not prove that, nor can you.

“Therefore, nobody is going to believe what you say. The Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector will not trust each other, either.

“Even if you manage to reach out to the leadership of the Blood Demon Sector, say, Jin Tuyi, the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of the demons, and you persuade the twelve demon emperors of the Pantheon of Demons to abort the plan on attack the Heaven’s Origin Sector and end the war, how can they be certain that it is not some plot of the Heaven’s Origin Sector? How can they be assured that the Heaven’s Origin Sector will choose peace, too, when they stop the war?

“Hehe. Do you feel that human beings are innocent victims who are defending their home and that demons are the evil, aggressive intruders? Do you think that the two worlds will live in peace forever as long as you work in the Blood Demon Sector?

“In fact, deep in your heart, you know that it is not the truth, don’t you?

“You know that the Grand Desolate Plateau was home to the demons. Almost a hundred demon kingdoms in which countless demons lived once flourished on the Grand Desolate Plateau. Eventually, the multiple expeditions launched by the Star Glory Federation destroyed all the demon kingdoms and swallowed the Grand Desolate Plateau!

“On your way to the Grand Desolate Plateau, right before the Giant Blade Pass, have you not seen the tower high into the sky in person? Did you not feel proud and hotblooded for the great achievement of the Star Glory Federation’s expansion of its territory?

“Besides, the Heaven’s Origin Sector has its own plan to conquer the Blood Demon Sector, too. Wasn’t the ‘Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit’ designed for such a plan? When millions of federal soldiers are all equipped with the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, the iron heels of the Star Glory Federation will soon stomp on the entire Blood Demon Sector!

“Therefore, how are you going to convince the leadership of the Blood Demon Sector that your so-called ‘ceasefire’ is not an evil plan of the Heaven’s Origin Sector to make them give up resistance?

“By the same logic, even if you persuaded the twelve demons, how are you going to convince the primed soldiers, the ambitious generals, and the Speaker of Parliament, who has great plans for the future, that peace will embrace them as soon as they stop the war? Why will they believe that it is not a scheme of the Blood Demon Sector and that you haven’t turned against your own species and become a spy for the Blood Demon Sector?

“Right. I’m sorry. I was mistaken.”

The mental devil giggled and said, “Look at yourself. There are ‘demonized cells’ everywhere inside your body. With a telepathic thought, you can unleash intense demonic energy. I’m afraid that you are not even qualified to be a spy for the Blood Demon Sector!”

Li Yao was rendered speechless. He could not do anything except stand by his beliefs.

The mental devil smiled casually. “It suddenly occurs to me that the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector are now in a standard dark forest situation.

“I think that the smartest individuals of the two worlds who clearly know the capabilities of the two worlds can certainly reach the conclusion, after careful calculations, that the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector will perish together in a strategical final war since they are on par with each other. Nobody will be a winner!

“But why have the smartest individuals not tried to cease the war when they realized that the war will bring neither party any good?

“Because they can’t.

“In a modern war, for two forces that are on par with each other, the side that orders a general mobilization and enter the highest warring state first will get more resources and soldiers in the war, and they will have the advantage in the war.

“Stopping the mobilization means suicide.

“The warring state cannot last forever. It is like a balloon that is being blown nonstop. There will certainly be a point where it explodes.

“Therefore, the two worlds cannot trust the sincerity of the peace offer from each other, nor can they stop their general mobilization. So, a final war is inevitable. They can only expect to swallow the enemy before their own economy collapses and then heal their wounds slowly.

“Even if one of the two parties wishes peace sincerely, how can they be sure that the other party wants peace sincerely, too? Two people are each pointing a gun at each other’s forehead, and their fingers are both placed on the triggers, slightly exerting strength. Which of the two is willing to lay down their gun first?

“Hehe. This is a chain of suspicion. This is… the dark forest!”

After a moment of silence, Li Yao’s somewhat dimmed soul shone again as he said softly, “As I have said before, even if the universe is truly nothing more than a cold, dark forest, I will burn it to the ground with my soul as the fuel!”

“Excellent. I very much look forward to it. But it appears to me that you won’t have any help this time. You are destined to fight the war all by yourself.”

The bloody demon paused for a moment and smiled. “Just like Yan Xibei in the old days. An idealist who plans to change the world alone.

“Tsk. Tsk. Tsk. It sounds so great and admirable. It’s a pity that Yan Xibei failed in the end. Let me see. Whom exactly was he defeated by in the end?”

Li Yao sniffed and realized what the mental devil was trying to say.

Fighting a world alone was doomed to be a lost cause.

Besides, it was not one but two worlds that he was going to fight right now.

However, the mental devil did not pursue any further aggressively. Instead, it sighed and retracted the eye-catching bloody mist, turning into a crimson statue.

Li Yao found it odd. “Are you not going to attack me?”

“Your belief is still firm at present,” the mental devil replied lazily. “Even if I keep on attacking you, it’s not like that I can wipe you out completely. Why should I waste my strength?”

“Wipe me out?”

Li Yao was startled by the mental devil’s choice of words.

“Exactly,” the mental devil replied casually. “From your point of view, I am just an insignificant mental devil, but from my point of view, I think that I am the real Li Yao, the one who has seen through the truth of the cold universe and the ideology of the dark forest.

“And you, you are nothing more than a mental devil that is enveloped in the decayed concepts of mercy, smugness, and hypocrisy.

“You are trying to wipe out the mental devil, and I am trying to wipe out the mental devil. Let’s see which of us wipes out the other in the end!”

While talking, clever brilliance suddenly beamed out of the eyes of the mental devil, who grinned and said, “In fact, I almost can’t bear to wipe you out so quickly. Why don’t we make a bet?

“I bet that there is no way that you will stop the final war between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector. The war will most certainly break out, with both worlds shattered, and will not stop until one world is completely ruined!

“Hehe. You should know what the ‘wager’ is, right?”

Li Yao was silent, not giving any response to the gamble game, because he knew that it was not something that he could refuse.

Accept it or not, the game had already begun.

He firmly claimed that he would find an approach to resolve the dilemma of the dark forest. It was his belief right now.

If he tried his best and still failed to stop the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector from perishing together, his belief would certainly be shaken.

By then, the mental devil would perform a full attack and occupy his body, and a ‘dark’ Li Yao would be born and establish a new reign in the two battered worlds.

“Excellent!”

Li Yao smiled. Either way, he had found a way to wipe out the mental devil.

“I’m going to wipe out the mental devil. I certainly will!”

The declaration resounded for a long time inside his brain. There was no telling whether it was said by Li Yao or by the mental devil in his head.

Right then, a flock of birds suddenly cackled and flew into the sky from the forest in the northeast. It could vaguely be felt that a stream of overwhelming demonic energy was sweeping close.

Jin Xinyue stopped the sword dance. She held her arms, and goosebumps were appearing on her smooth skin.

“Subordinates of Elder Nether Spring!”

After hiding in the Hundred Desolation Mountain for four days, Elder Nether Spring’s subordinates had finally caught up to them. This time, their scale was apparently much larger than previously. The demonic energy soared into the sky, and even the bloody moon seemed to be shaking.

Li Yao flew to the crown of a giant tree and sensed the situation carefully, only to discover that the demonic energy was all focused on the place where he trained himself during the day.

I must have caused too much havoc when my soul dived into the cells in pursuit of the primeval strength during the day, and they have detected the anomaly.

“Let’s go!”

Li Yao packed everything up in a hurry and fled further into the Hundred Desolation Mountain. While rushing in the forest, he asked, “With your understanding of Elder Nether Spring, who will he send now that the princes of the Nether Spring Kingdom have failed?”

“There are several experts under Elder Nether Spring’s command who are at the level of demon emperor. He has more than ten high-level demon kings, too, who are all adept at driving snakes, rats, and ants,” Jin Xinyue replied.

“When such pests flood over the battlefield, one must retreat regardless of their expertise.

Chapter 856 - Blood Moon Wolf Raiders

“Besides, Elder Nether Spring has always been close friends with Elder Blood Robe, who has a lot of experts that are best at forest hunting and assassination. Chances are that Elder Nether Spring will ask for several specialists from Elder Blood Robe!”

Li Yao frowned. Elder Blood Robe had good reasons to hate him, too.

On Boneyard, Li Yao had slain Wang Ji, who was Elder Blood Robe’s disciple. The event had been publicized when Ding Lingdang and the rest of the team returned. While Li Yao was respected as a great hero of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, he must have made it to the top tier of the must-kill list in the Blood Demon Sector, too.

Wait. The important figures that he had killed previously seemed to include many other demons besides Wang Ji.

Li Yao remembered that it was the first time he put on an Ares Extension. He had gone on a killing spree at that time and blown dozens of expert demons into pieces within a breath.

Although those demons were merely demon generals, according to Li Yao’s intelligence, they had all been members of the royal families and the nobles of the Blood Demon Sector since they were qualified to explore Boneyard.

Therefore, it was possible that all the twelve demon emperors of the Blood Demon Sector hated his guts.

Li Yao immediately felt a serious headache coming on.

Will Elder Nether Spring send experts in the level of demon emperor to hunt Jin Xinyue?

Li Yao evaluated the capability of himself and his enemy quietly.

The Pantheon of Demons was governed by twelve demon emperors, but there were many more demon emperors in the Blood Demon Sector. Only the twelve strongest, most powerful demon emperors were qualified to manage the affairs of the Pantheon of Demons.

Elder Nether Spring was a high-level demon emperor, so there were a few low-level and middle-level demon emperors under his command.

As for the relationship between Elder Blood Robe and Elder Nether Spring, they were not simply good friends but in a very close, mutually beneficial relationship.

In the spare time over the past couple of days, Jin Xinyue had introduced the political spectrum of the Blood Demon Sector and the conflicts of the twelve demon emperors to Li Yao.

Jin Tuyi and Elder Nether Spring had conflicts not because they did not see eye to eye with each other and not only because of the post of the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of the demon race. Behind the open conflicts of the two demon emperors were different political lines and war ideologies.

The four superpowers of the Blood Demon Sector—namely the Gold Crow Kingdom, the Nether Spring Kingdom, the Kingdom of Lion Butchers, and the Sea Dominator Kingdom — represented the forces in the sky, underground, on the earth and in the ocean respectively.

Now that a final war against the Heaven’s Origin Sector was coming close, naturally, two entirely different methodologies of war were formulated.

The Kingdom of Lion Butchers, who governed the Claw Clan, and the Nether Spring Kingdom, which ruled over the Insect Clan, were the classical continentalism advocates who believed that whoever controlled the land controlled everything. Their strategy of war was simple, which was to devote all their resources to the land and push over the Heaven’s Origin Sector with oceans of insects and tides of beasts from the Grand Desolate Plateau.

The Gold Crow Kingdom and the Sea Dominator Kingdom, on the other hand, believed in the cooperation of the forces of the sky, the ocean, and the land. They believed that the infinite ocean and the sky, which was even more boundless than the continent, were the key to the victory of the war. Therefore, while the demon race maintained its pressure on human beings in the frontline of the Grand Desolate Plateau, it was necessary to open a second battlefield promptly and attack the Star Glory Federation from the ocean!

“To the east of the Star Glory Federation is a vast ocean where the Far East Demon Kingdom was located five hundred years ago.

“Although the Far East Demon Kingdom has been destroyed, the relics of the country are still buried deep down the ocean.

“Based on the relics, we could build secret military bases at the bottom of the ocean and push forward to the eastern coastline of the Star Glory Federation. When the timing is appropriate, we will lunge out of the undersea bases. The enormous fleet of the Sea Clan, together with the immense strength of the Feather Clan in the sky, will assault the heart of the Star Glory Federation unexpectedly!

“At the moment, the main military strength of the Star Glory Federation is concentrated in the frontline of the Giant Blade Pass, and the rear of the Star Glory Federation is extremely empty. If the assault is implemented, the army will certainly march forward unstoppably and even occupy the capital of the Star Glory Federation in the end!”

It was the strategy proposed by the Sea Clan and the Feather Clan.

In the past, the continentalism was chosen by the Blood Demon Sector because the strategy of the Sea Clan and the Feather Clan was deemed too risky and ridiculous.

The ‘Battle of Dawn’ was fought with such a political backstory. It was a traditional ground battle led by the Nether Spring Kingdom and the Kingdom of Lion Butchers.

But the result of the battle was not satisfactory. Although the insects and the beasts reached the Giant Blade Pass, the demon race suffered a brutal failure because of the overextended supply lines. In the end, it even caused the mutiny of the bottom-level soldiers, who raised the ‘Riot of Bloody Blade’ under the incitation of the Blade of Chaos. The fire of war did not consume the Heaven’s Origin Sector but burnt back to the Blood Demon Sector.

The insurrection caused a great earthquake in the center of politics of the Blood Demon Sector. The Sea Clan and the

Feather Clan took the opportunity to lambast their dissidents. Many officers who believed in continentalism were sacked. Even the commander-in-chief nominated by the Nether Spring Kingdom and the Kingdom of Lion Butchers resigned. He was replaced by Jin Tuyi, a general who supported the strategy of the unification of the sky, the ocean, and the land.

Therefore, Elder Nether Spring and Elder Blood Robe were not simply friends but partners in the same interest group.

If Elder Nether Spring asked, Elder Blood Robe would certain lend a lot of specialists to him without caring about the cost.

With that in mind, expert in the level of demon emperor might have been sent, or even multiple of them.

Li Yao thought that, if he were Elder Nether Spring, since the demon king that was sent earlier had been killed, it would be killing his other demon kings if he sent more of them. Therefore, to make sure that the enemy was caught, one to two demon emperors would definitely be deployed to supervise the situation.

Li Yao’s real capability was similar to that of the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage. With the modified Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, he could fight a high-level Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. Theoretically speaking, he was not scared of Elder Nether Spring.

However, in the Blood Demon Sector, it was impossible for him to summon the strength of a Cultivator blatantly.

If the Blood Demon Sector discovered that a Cultivator who had the capability of the Nascent Soul Stage was active in their central region, all the demons would be shocked and attack him collective.

If he was faced with a demon king, Li Yao could kill the enemy instantly with his body without resorting to his spiritual energy.

But it was not an easy task if he was faced with a demon emperor.

What he could utilize were the newborn primeval cells and the force that came with them.

However, he had just grasped the methods to activate the strengthened cells and awaken his primeval force. Although his absolute strength was in the level of demon emperor, he was not good at using it.

Li Yao was indeed a genius, but he was not a god. If he could fight evenly against a demon emperor who had trained hard for decades and even hundreds of years when he had just activated his primeval cells, his enemy might die of embarrassment.

Therefore, Li Yao estimated that, without exposing his real capability, it was already his limit to kill a demon king instantly with a neatly-devised trap.

If he ran into a beginning-level demon emperor, neither of them would be able to defeat the other. It would be impossible for him to kill the opponent quickly.

Besides, his opponent boasted the ultimate weapon named ‘biochemical beast’, while Li Yao’s crystal suit had to be kept a secret.

Li Yao had no choice but to drag Jin Xinyue to run away.

Very soon, a cluster of black smoke passed by their heads. It was a swarm of insects that was squeaking in blood-freezing noises.

Li Yao frowned. Insect oceans and beast tides were his least favorite enemies.

“Hoooo! Hoooo!”

Lengthy howls were echoing in the forest near and afar, getting creepier and creepier under the bloody moon.

Jin Xinyue paled and said in a low voice, “Judging from the sound, they seem to be the ‘Blood Moon Wolf Raiders’ of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers. Their olfactory cells have been specially strengthened and are hundreds of times more acute than those of sharks, allowing them to smell the tiniest smell several square kilometers near them. Their special howls can transmit a lot of information to their companions through supersonic waves unperceivable to normal people!

“The Blood Moon Wolf Raiders are the top-tier tracing experts of the Blood Demon Sector. I did not expect that Elder Nether Spring had borrowed such elite troops from Elder Blood Robe!”

Li Yao nodded, but he felt that something was off.

The demonic energy soaring to the sky condensed into an impregnable web in midair.

The dense insects were gnawing the leaves of the trees all the way from northeast, while the howls of the Blood Moon Wolf Raiders were pushing close from northwest.

There were no signals of hunters in the southeast, but noises of trees cracking apart drifted over, suggesting that something huge was charging their way.

Li Yao and Jin Xinyue could only flee to the southwest. However, the direction was filled with venomous gas and swamps, and there was no telling whether or not stronger pursuers were lurking.

The siege of the enemy grew smaller and smaller. Li Yao even saw green eyes shining through the gaps of the trees many times.

Thankfully, both Jin Xinyue and him and sealed their pores and smeared a lot of powder that covered their smell. Therefore, their traces were lost for now, but it was hard to say how long before the enemy found them again.

“In a moment, I’ll go there and fight them first. Don’t take action unless it is absolutely necessary, in case they find out that you have turned into a human being,” Li Yao said to Jin Xinyue in a low voice.

He had found out that a brutal battle was inevitable.

Jin Xinyue pondered for a moment and nodded. This was not a good time for adulation. She might as well do what she was asked to.

For some reason, Jin Xinyue was confident that the old monster must be invincible.

Li Yao smiled coldly. He licked his teeth and unsheathed a sharp bone dagger that was tied up by dozens of tensile mica threads.

Waiting had never been his style. Now that he was determined to fight, of course, he was going to take the initiative!

Right then, an abrupt change took place.

The howls in the northwest became more and more hasty and loud, as if the Wolf Raiders had discovered a lot of enemies.

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

Shrieks pierced through the clouds from the sky in the southwest.

Li Yao could not have been more familiar with the sound. Somebody had broken the sonic barrier!

Judging from the sound, it was not one object but a whole long of them!

The bloody sky in the northwest was scarred by dozens of streaks of golden brightness.

Jin Xinyue’s eyes beamed with joy. She almost cried in ecstasy. “Reinforcements of the Gold Crow Kingdom!”

Chapter 857 - Just Roar, the Primeval Force!

The Feather Clan of the Gold Crow Kingdom was best known for their speed. Li Yao and Jin Xinyue had only just heard their sound when the golden brightness covered almost half of the sky and crashed into the cloud of insects that was coming at them. For a moment, blood was spluttering, and yells were echoing nonstop.

A heated battled was on. Blood ran like a river, and countless insects were burnt and fell from the sky like raindrops.

Another team of the Feather Clan left the battle formation and circled above the forest, while they shrieked loudly, “Where are you, First Princess?”

Jin Xinyue was overjoyed and climbed on a tree, but before she opened her mouth to call her saviors, Li Yao had covered her mouth and dragged her back to the depths of the obscure forest!

“Hurry up and run!”

Li Yao gnashed his teeth, with cold sweat all over his forehead. He ran crazily inside the forest together with Jin Xinyue until they were more than ten kilometers away. He caught his breath and said, breathing hard, “Did you not notice anything wrong? If Elder Nether Spring really had a secret, he would never have asked Elder Blood Robe for reinforcements! Was he not scared that his secret was exposed?

“Alright. Let’s say that Elder Nether Spring and Elder Blood Robe are wearing the same pants and have known each other’s secrets for a long time, but isn’t it too much of a coincidence that reinforcements of the Gold Crow Kingdom came just in time?

“I don’t like coincidences. Not at all!

“Besides, the Blood Demon Sector is faced with a great war right now. The four superpowers are all allies on the surface. It is one thing to hunt a certain someone down in secret, but it is a whole other thing if they are engaged in an open, head-on confrontation!

“The reinforcements of the Gold Crow Kingdom attacked Elder Nether Spring’s subordinates the moment they showed up. It doesn’t make sense to me at all!”

Jin Xinyue was not stupid, either, or she would not have been selected as a saintess of the Pantheon of Demons. She knew the demon race better than Li Yao did. After hearing Li Yao’s words, she immediately cursed, “Damn! They seem to be on the same side!”

The moment she raised her suspicion, dozens of explosions burst out right above their heads. Bright golden ripples spread out in the sky and slowly condensed into weird rune arrays from which countless streaks of brightness leapt out. However, the newcomers did not seem to be solid and maintained an appearance bordering on transparency. Even their demonic energy had been restricted to the minimum.

Had Li Yao not calmed down and perceived them on purpose, he would not have been able to notice them at all.

“Mirage Falcons!”

Jin Xinyue’s voice was full of desperation.

Mirage Falcons were powerful biochemical beasts bred by the Gold Crow Kingdom. The wingspan of every Mirage Falcon was more than fifty meters, and they all weighed more than twenty times. Their cruising speed was 2.5 times the speed of sound while their highest speed could surpass seven times the sonic speed. They were able to climb up five hundred meters vertically in less than one minute. They could even fight briefly in the orbit of a planet outside of the atmosphere. Their specifications were not only much better than those of the armed shuttles of the Star Glory Federation but also tantalizing for most crystal suits.

What was more terrifying was that the feathers of the Mirage Falcons were covered in a special greasy membrane that could avoid the detection of spiritual energy. The birds had also practiced the demonic arts for camouflage and mimesis, which made it impossible for the enemy to keep track of them. They were truly invisible demon beasts and well deserved their name ‘Mirage’.

The wings of the Mirage Falcons, when unfolded, boasted some specially refined feathers that were not only extremely hard but also mixed with acids, venomous liquids, or unsteady crystals. Such weapons could be shot out rapidly by the violent constriction of the muscles, and their speed could surpass the speed of sound, too. The fierce firepower of the Mirage Falcons was definitely no worse than that of the crystal railguns and crystals cannons of the Cultivators.

Besides, the elite troops of the Gold Crow Kingdom would often equip the ferocious beasts with the crystal cannons that they captured during battle, making them able to carry out the attack abilities of both the demon race and mankind!

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

A hundred fiery snakes suddenly dispersed in the sky and whipped down brutally, leaving deep ravines inside the forest.

Those fiery snakes were all made of the feathers of the Mirage Falcons.

After every feather was pierced into the trunk of a tree, the tree would immediately be set on fire, burning at a speed far higher than normal flames would. All the trees were charcoal within a moment.

The trees deep inside the Hundred Desolation Mountain had grown for thousands of years and were harder than rocks, but even they could not resist the bombardment of the fiery feathers. It was not hard to guess what would happen to a body made of flesh and blood if it was hit by such feathers.

The location where Li Yao and Jin Xinyue had originally been was drowned in an ocean of flames.

The ocean of flames spread out as if it were a spring. The birds were particularly concentrated near the route of Li Yao and Jin Xinyue’s escape.

Li Yao and Jin Xinyue found it hard to raise their heads because of the barrage.

Right then, an enormous Mirage Falcon finally revealed its real appearance in the sky.

Even Li Yao gasped at its hideousness.

It seemed more fitting to call the Mirage Falcons combinations of pterodactyls that had grown feathers and hawks than to call them birds.

Its head was almost ten meters long and could be extended or retreated free at will. When the beast was cruising at a supersonic speed, its head would hide in its body so that its body would be perfectly streamlined like a water drop.

However, right now, it was hovering in midair at a low speed, and it stretched its neck out like a snake. The ten or so crimson lumps that grew on the neck all expanded slowly, emitting translucent, orange brightness.

“What is it doing right now?”

Li Yao had no idea why the Mirage Falcon quitted the stealth mode and why it was stretching its neck in midair like a crowing cock.

But Jin Xinyue exclaimed as if she had run into a ghost and quickly ran away, covering her head with her hands.

Li Yao had an ominous feeling. The neck of the Mirage Falcon had been extended to the limit. Then, it suddenly shortened, like the barrel of cannon moving backwards because of the reoil. A cluster of brilliant red crystals spurted out its mouth and exploded in the sky, bombarding the entire forest like meteorites.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

For a moment, the earth was shaking as if dozens of volcanoes were erupting at the same time. Tusks formed of magma rose up from the ground, and the surrounding five hundred meters was all wreathed in fire. The blast, along with the hot waves, even reached a thousand meters away!

Thankfully, the enemy did not lock onto Li Yao and Jin Xinyue when performing the attack, and the landing point of the attack was to their east.

Even so, the two of them found it hard to keep stable in the overwhelming blast. They collapsed to the ground and did not come back to themselves for a long time.

“Cough cough. Cough cough cough cough. They are getting serious!”

Brutality beamed out of Jin Xinyue’s eyes as she gnashed her teeth. “This is ‘Fiery Shooting Star’, the ultimate attack of the Mirage Falcons. The genes of the Mirage Falcons are all edited specially so that they can digest marrow crystals of the fire class that will then be kept in their craws. After a long time of purification, they will become natural marrow crystals bombs!

“However, the capacity of the craws of a Mirage Falcon is limited. Also, triggering the marrow crystals will damage their body, too. Therefore, such terrifying methods are not resorted to unless it is absolutely necessary!

“I didn’t know that they were so determined to deal with me!”

Li Yao spat a thick glob of phlegm that was mixed with blood. His eyes, which were narrowed like the edges of two blades, were filled with killing intent as he observed, “Therefore, it is confirmed now that you have been abandoned by the Gold Crow Kingdom!”

Although the blast dealt no significant damages, it had blown away the powder on their body, which helped to disperse their smell. The bloody phlegm that Li Yao had spat out was quite pungent, too. The Blood Moon Wolf Raiders immediately detected them.

“Hoooo! Hoooo!”

The prolonged howls were like death sentences.

Very soon, almost a hundred obscure shadows appeared in the burning forest behind then. They seemed to be extremely powerful wolves with objects that looked like human beings on their back.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

The Blood Moon Wolf Raiders locked onto their targets with their smell quickly. However, the human-like creatures on their back rose up and moved forward like lightning being attracted the branches of the trees. They were even faster than the wolves!

“Eight-Armed Demonic Apes!” Jin Xinyue’s face was pale. “They are the real experts of jungle combat in the Kingdom of Lion Butchers. Nobody is willing to deal with the wretched monkeys in a forest!”

“You go first, and I’ll stall them. We’ll meet later in the waterfall in the southwest!”

Li Yao did not expect that the enemy would value Jin Xinyue so much, but their reaction only suggested that the secret inside Jin Xinyue was precious.

Naturally, Li Yao would not let Pantheon of Demons take back such a secret easily.

Jin Xinyue pondered for a moment and nodded her head, instantly vanishing into the forest.

Li Yao had put a Child-Mother Heart Connecting Ring on her ankle, which could allow him to detect where she was. Therefore, he was not worried that she might run away.

“Let’s do this!”

Faced with incoming enemies from all directions, Li Yao felt like his blood was boiling. He extended his left arm, and the primeval cells inside his body expanded to the maximum, bordering on explosion.

“In your strongest form, burst out all the primeval force!” Li Yao bellowed. He felt that his flesh was torn apart, and a primitive, barbaric strength was flooding out from the depths of his left arm. Scents of desolation circled around his left arm, making it cramp and expand, until in the end, his left hand turned into…

A hoof.

Gazing at his left hand, which was now a hoof, Li Yao was at a loss for a long time.

Gritting his teeth, he did it again. Just come on, the primeval force!

He summoned his spiritual energy, and his mitochondria was activated to the maximum. The hoof on his left arm was gone, only to be replaced by… a flipper with membranes among fingers that looked like a duck foot.

“…” Li Yao.

Deep inside his brain, the mental devil was secretly chuckling. It seemed to be trying to hold back its laughter so hard that its head was purple.

“Asshole!” Li Yao was mad. “Was this your trick?”

“You can’t be serious, right? Are you blaming this on me?” The mental devil floated inside his brain comfortably and replied with smile, “Dear brother of mine, do you know that, of the billions of ancestors of human beings, 99% are herbivores or feed on microorganisms? In short, they are absolutely useless at fighting.

“You don’t know the mysteries of the genes at all, and you want to activate the feature of a strong ancestor by stimulating your primeval cells randomly?

“To be honest, you were already unbelievably lucky to have gotten a hoof and a flipper. If you were not, it would not have been unusual if your left arm had crumbled. Why else do you think that Cultivators from the past to modern day have hardly practiced such arts?”

Li Yao was rendered speechless. He was silent for a moment before he said, “Didn’t I activate an awesome claw when I stimulated the primeval cells for the first time?”

The mental devil looked at him with derision and yawned lazily.

Li Yao thought of something and immediately realized it. “You were helping me, weren’t you?”

Chapter 858 - Terrifying Primeval Appearance

The mental devil snorted in acknowledgement, raising its head in pride.

“Then what are you doing right now?” Li Yao demanded.

“Nothing,” the mental devil replied lazily. “After our discussion a moment ago, I feel that you are right and reasonable. Your words were such a great enlightenment to me! Yes, killing is not going to solve any problems. That’s especially so given that human beings and demons might be brothers of the same origin who should live in peace. How can they attack each other?

“Therefore, now that so many of your ‘brothers’ are rushing toward you passionately, why don’t you explain the ultimate truth of ‘peaceful coexistence’ with your deft tongue?”

Li Yao did not have the chance to curse before a highly-heated bullet swooshed past by his head and blew a giant tree in front of his face to smithereens.

The stinky smell of his hair being burnt immediately spread out.

More than ten Eight-Armed Demonic Apes grinned hideously. They were less than a hundred meters away from him now.

Every Eight-Armed Demonic Ape had four extremely long arms that extended from their shoulder blades. They also had two abnormal arms on their back whose joints could be switched to any direction.

Most of the time, they jumped among branches in predictable angles and at an amazingly high speed with their feet, the short limbs on the back, and their long tail.

The four arms that were spared carried a lot of heavy magical equipment. One Eight-Armed Demonic Ape was enough to blow out immense firepower. Right now, the dozen Eight-Armed Demonic Apes were opening fire at the same time. The web of fire was impenetrable and left a wasteland inside the forest.

The situation would have been less tricky if there were only Eight-Armed Demonic Apes, but behind the Eight-Armed Demonic Apes were the Blood Moon Wolf Raiders. Moreover, the humming sounds of the Mirage Falcons tearing apart the air could be heard from the sky, too.

The thousands of demons present could exhaust Li Yao with their sheer number.

Li Yao spat, turned around, and ran away!

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

The crimson feathers in the halo of demonic energy exploded right below his feet, turning mud into magma instantly, which left bloody holes on his skin. He was grimacing in pain, his veins bulging.

“Therefore—”

The mental devil smiled. “Killing is necessary on certain occasions, and it is helpful for the solution of some minor problems, isn’t it? As for me, the sleazy, evil, and brutal mental devil, I might be of some use after all, right?”

“…” Li Yao.

“I’ll take your silence as a yes if you don’t want to say anything.”

“…” Li Yao.

The mental devil laughed and stretched out its arms. “Very good. We have finally reached a preliminary consensus. Now then—”

Deep inside Li Yao’s brain, the mental devil suddenly expanded, its redness turning Li Yao’s brain into a land of blood. His left eye shuddered abruptly, and his pupil expanded like a blossoming flower. Bloody streaks rippled out of the deepest part of his eye and rotated, transforming his left eye into a bloody swirl!

Li Yao came to an abrupt halt while fleeing. His left arm straightened out. Explosive noises burst out in the deepest part of his bones. His every pore was spurting out thick, red gas nonstop that seemed to be the smoke of incense!

Covered in the bloody air, Li Yao’s skin was now a golden color, with silver liquids being secreted from his pores. Very soon, the silver liquids consolidated into a glamorous armor. The cells on his elbow reproduced and ossified crazily until his elbow turned into a high-rising bone blade that looked like the fin of a shark. His five fingers were enveloped in the neat, silver armor, too, which significantly increased their hardness and defensive ability without reducing their agility at all. The front ends of his fingers grew sharp claws resembling those of dinosaurs and tigers. After a slight shake, the sound of air being torn apart could already be heard.

He felt that his palm was itching. Then, a half-round pearl which looked like a red crystal protruded out of the center of his palm. Deep red streaks were swimming delightfully like fish inside the pearl.

“Hu…”

Li Yao could not help but shiver and moan in great satisfaction. His body was like a volcano that was spurting out the most furious magma after billions of years of dormancy!

The enhancement of his body was already gratifying enough, and the improvement of his senses and his brain gave him a feeling that he had been reborn!

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

In the moment, his eyes, ears, and nose felt incredibly refreshed. The lights, the soundwaves, and all kinds of particles were mixed together.

The rattling noise of the tree leaves, the faint body scent of the enemies, and the ever-changing shadows in the forest… All that information and more collided brutally inside Li Yao’s brain, breaking into tiny, golden fragments before they were reconstructed into virtual battlefields.

Everything inside the virtual battlefields was under Li Yao’s control. He knew the position and the route of attack of every enemy and had even begun to analyze the capability of the enemy with their movement speed and breathing frequency.

Shua! Shua! Shua!

The battlefields continued increasing, changing from one to two, to four, to eight, to sixteen, to thirty-two, to sixty-four!

The sixty-four virtual battlefields were running at the same time, precisely simulating the potential changes of the situation after he adopted sixty-four different tactics so that he could select the best tactical option.

My computational ability has significantly improved again!

Despite the excruciating pain in his brain, it was a pleasant surprise for Li Yao.

Ever since he advanced into the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage, his computational ability had remained stagnant. He had thought that it was the ceiling of the Core Formation Stage and did not expect that he would break the barrier at this moment!

After perceiving his brain cells in 0.01 seconds, he immediately realized that his soaring computation ability boiled down to the vastly changed brain cells.

Brain cells were among the most mysterious cells in a human body, and their greatest feature was that they were undividable and uncopiable.

Most of the cells in a human body, such as the liver and muscles, could divide and reproduced. One could stimulate the cells with their spiritual energy in training to speed up the division and reproduction. The weak, old cells withered, but stronger, new cells were born and replaced them.

Brain cells differed to other cells in that they could not be divided or reproduced.

The number of brain cells was fixed the moment one was born, which was approximately fourteen billion and would dwindle as one’s life went on.

Starting from their twenties, the brain cells of every adult would reduce by around a hundred thousand until they died.

If their parents were both Cultivators, and their bloodline was stronger, it was possible that the number of their brain cells would be larger when they were born—say, it could be more than twenty billion. But correspondingly, after their spiritual root was awakened and they embarked on the path of Cultivation, they would burn their soul every once in a while, which meant that the consumption rate of their brain cells was multiple times higher than that of ordinary people, too.

It was also the biggest factor that limited the longevity of the Cultivators.

It was true that Cultivators could train their body until it was as hard as steel. They were not scared of fire or flood, and they were immune to most diseases.

For the stronger Cultivators, they could even suppress cancer cells with their own strength!

However, even if a Cultivator was never engaged in combat and attached great importance to body fitness, their body might be as healthy and strong as a young person, but their withering brain cells were irreversible.

In the end, because of the fatigue of their brain cells, they might succumb to brain death even though their body was immaculate!

But right now, Li Yao had discovered that, when part of his brain cells activated the primeval state through atavism, they began to boast abilities, however feeble, of division and reproduction.

While his original brain cells were withering, new brain cells were being produced incessantly!

Li Yao was overjoyed by his findings.

“This is the ultimate form that I can build right now!” There was pride and expectation in the mental devil’s voice. “The enhancement that the Blood Stripe Virus performed on living creatures is just based on their natural instincts. They do not have systematic theories. Therefore, the secret arts of training of the demon race are indeed of tremendous help for us!

“I have activated 1,354 segments of your recessive genes with the gene map that Jin Xinyue provided, allowing you to display the features of seventeen ferocious beasts!

“Right now, you are ten times stronger than Yan Xibei was!

“The preliminary gene maps are already enough to activate such terrifying combat ability. If we manage to get the most sophisticated gene maps inside the Pantheon of Demons, we will certainly be able to produce the strongest apocalyptic body ever! Haha. Hahahaha!”

“Can you please not laugh so bloodthirstily?” requested Li Yao.

“Not a problem.” The mental devil immediately regained its previous calmness and said mildly, “I can even remove all the ‘bloodthirsty’, ‘evil’ strength and stop them from ‘corrupting’ your body so that you are talk about your noble ideals of ‘peaceful coexistence’ with your brother demons. How does that sound?”

“I said nothing!”

Shua!

Li Yao’s feet stomped on a branch heavily, and the thick, tensile branch sprung Li Yao to the Eight-Armed Demonic Apes like a spring.

The Eight-Armed Demonic Apes did not expect that he would be bold enough to counterattack. They were all slightly dazed, but they soon roared and lunged at their enemy, waving their bone blades and chainswords.

After his computational ability broke the limits, Li Yao felt that he was placed in the middle of thick glue. Time slowed, and the ruthless-looking, crazily-yelling Eight-Armed Demonic Apes all turned into slow sloths for him.

Li Yao dodged between the bullets, lasers, acid, and venomous liquids that they spurted out unhurriedly. Their blades and firearms seemed to have turned into slates and steps for him on which he was dancing a dance of lightning. All the weapons that were touched by the tip of his feet slightly altered their direction.

As a result, the blades of the Eight-Armed Demonic Apes kissed their companions, and the bullets and acid all hit their teammates nearby precisely in the head, too. Sparks of blood were spluttering everywhere. A bloody mist seemed to be rising inside the obscure forest!

Hooo!

Before the dead bodies of the Eight-Armed Demonic Apes fell to the ground, dozens of streaks of whiteness lunged close. Their body size expanded while they were still in midair. Their pure white fur was ripped apart, revealing the tattoos that looked like bloody crescent moons!

The Blood Moon Wolf Raiders in their ultimate form were more like combinations of wolves and bears than just wolves. They were almost five meters tall when they stood up, and they gazed at Li Yao with their eyes that looked like two orange lanterns!

Chapter 859 - Cell Obliterating Cannon!

However, what they had locked onto was nothing but Li Yao's blurred shadow, which was also mixed with intense demonic energy and gave everything the feeling that it was the real entity.

It was not until their sharp claws ripped the blurred shadow apart, turning it into almost transparent air currents, that the Blood Moon Wolf Raiders realized that something was not right.

But there was no time!

The Blood Moon Wolf Raider at the back of the team screamed in pain as his chest exploded like a blossoming flower. A bloody shadow dashed out of the beast's chest, covered entirely in the wolf blood, which made his scent no different from that of other Blood Moon Wolf Raiders.

“Hooooo!”

The Blood Moon Wolf Raider next to him snatched at the bloody shadow, the sharp claws tearing apart the air and breaking the sonic barrier, and held Li Yao's left hand hard.

Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum!

The bone blade on Li Yao's elbow oscillated at a frequency higher than ten thousand times per second. The force of the vibration was transmitted to Li Yao's palm and then flooded into the enemy's arm.

Pu!

The entire left arm of the Blood Moon Wolf Raider, because of the intense vibration, exploded into a cluster of bloody mist!

Before he had the chance to scream, Li Yao had already kicked him into midair.

Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum!

In the sky, the swarm of insects that looked like a colorful yet venomous cloud finally arrived.

The insects were like extremely corrosive water. Wherever they landed, they would consume the tree leaves together with the branches, leaving absolutely nothing.

They were known as ‘Floral Locusts’, whose mouthparts could secrete a huge amount of corrosive liquids, allowing them to corrode their preys into mush before they enjoyed their meal. Such liquid was so destructive that even Cultivators in crystal suits might hesitate to get in touch with them.

The heavily wounded Blood Moon Wolf Raider happened to be kicked into the swarm of Floral Locusts.

The Floral Locusts were bloodthirsty and yet very unintelligent. How could the Blood Moon Wolf Raider, who was soaked in blood because of the broken left arm, get away from them?

The Floral Locusts surrounded the beast as if he were wearing a thick garment of insects. The miserable scream only lasted half a second, before it was replaced by weird, chewing noises.

A moment later, bones that were riddled with holes fell off from the group of insects one after another.

Despite the brutality and ruthlessness of the Blood Moon Wolf Raiders, they all secretly clicked their tongues. They might not have been afraid of death, but such a shocking way of death was enough to make the boldest of them hesitate.

Pa! Pa! Pa!

Li Yao certainly would not let go of such a great opportunity. His bloody shadow dashed between the Blood Moon Wolf Raiders, and none of them could resist any of his attacks. They all ended up being kicked into the sky after one of the limbs was broken. The flying Floral Locusts in the sky refused none of them and turned all the heavily wounded Blood Moon Wolf Raiders into piles of bones.

Higher in the sky, dozens of Mirage Falcons were still hovering stealthily, with their feathers that were almost transparent rising and falling, which kept them in the supersonic state although their range of activity was less than a thousand square meters. Fierce wind was blowing in the middle of the birds.

On the center of the Mirage Falcons, the feathers slightly rose up, and, together with the collapsed muscles on the back, constituted a natural cockpit in which two members of the Feather Clan, one in the front and the other in the back, were sitting.

Their brains were connected to the brain of the Mirage Falcon with the tensile nerve tracts.

Inside the cockpit of a Mirage Falcon whose feathers were particularly glamorous and was exceptionally large, a demon with an eagle head, a human body, and purple and blue wings was observing the situation of the battle with the eyes of the Mirage Falcon, sneering every once in a while.

“Young master.”

His co-pilot sitting behind him who was in charge of the attack and the defense of the Mirage Falcon asked, somewhat worriedly, “Forces of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers and the Nether Spring Kingdom seem to be unable to hold it any longer. Shall we give them a hand?”

“I didn’t know that I still underestimated the b*tch’s capability.”

The demon who was addressed as ‘young master’ chuckled and said casually, “We have removed all her loyal subordinates in the Gold Crow Kingdom. I thought that she would be a sure catch. I didn’t know that she had other arrangements. She has somehow hired such an intimidating expert to help her.

“Judging from his appearance, it is very likely that the expert is in the beginning level of the demon emperor state. No wonder even Yuan Hao of the Nether Spring Kingdom was killed by him and the b*tch.

“The b*tch has indeed got something with her, but I wonder, how did she convince such an expert to fight for her?

“However, there is no need for us to do anything. They’re all from the Kingdom of Lion Butchers and the Nether Spring Kingdom anyway. What’s the problem if some of them are accidentally killed? Let’s just wait and watch!”

Almost immediately after the ‘young master’ finished his remarks, another bloody, heavily wounded Blood Moon Wolf

Raider was kicked high into the sky again. But this time, the trajectory of the animal was different from the previous times. It was not directly kicked into the swarm of Floral Locusts but toward a higher place, which was closer to the Mirage Falcons.

Before the Floral Locusts flew upwards to catch the new prey, a shadow suddenly jumped from behind the Blood Moon Wolf Raider and stomped on the body of the beast hard!

The heavy stomping split the Blood Moon Wolf Raider and blew it into smithereens immediately!

The bloody shadow, with the counterforce, surpassed the speed of sound instantly!

“Not good!”

The dark green eyeballs of the ‘young master’ were immediately covered in a layer of transparent sclerotic bone from which sharp brilliance was beaming out!

Right above the bloody shadow that was soaring up, three Mirage Falcons happened to be diving down rapidly. When their relative speeds were combined, there was no way that either party could avoid the clash.

The Mirage Falcons reacted promptly enough. They shot out almost a hundred fiery feathers within the moment. However, the bloody shadow flashed past all of them with unbelievable body-moving techniques. Right when the two parties passed by each other, he grabbed the feathers of one Mirage Falcon and climbed on the back of the bird!

Hiu!

The Mirage Falcon shrieked aloud while spinning, diving, and sprinting at a speed more than three times the speed of sound, trying to throw the enemy off with the centrifugal force and the friction.

At three times the speed of sound, the softest breeze turned into the sharpest blade.

Li Yao gritted his teeth and clutched the feathers of the Mirage Falcon, while streams of brightness flashed on his right arm and pierced toward the wings of the Mirage Falcon silently.

Li Yao’s ‘Mono Mica Threads’ were extremely thin, tensile, and sharp threads of the mica that were refined based on the mustard-seed technology.

When they were used cut the hardest diamonds and obsidians, the highest accuracy could always be maintained without leaving any powder.

Strong as the Mirage Falcon might have been, its body was made of flesh and blood after all. How could it withstand his cutting?

Shua!

Almost ten Mono Mica Threads dissected the wing on one side of the Mirage Falcon like the sharpest scalpels.

Losing one wing mid supersonic flight, the Mirage Falcon immediately lost balance and fell to the ground, spinning and almost hitting some ten Mirage Falcons that were near.

Li Yao took the opportunity when their distance was shortest and jumped to the back of another Mirage Falcon. Then he did exactly the same thing on the second victim.

The Mirage Falcons were immediately thrown into chaos. In such a mess, they were not able to keep their ‘stealth mode’ any longer.

Gotcha!

Li Yao had his eyes on the most magnificent Mirage Falcon.

While most of the Mirage Falcons were in a flurry, it was the only one that remained calm. There must have been an expert commanding the animal!

To catch bandits, first catch the ringleader. The decapitation strategy had always been Li Yao’s favorite!

Li Yao roared and lunged at the most magnificent Mirage Falcon.

“Idiot!”

The young master of the Feather Clan scoffed. With a telepathic thought, his will was transmitted to the brain of the Mirage Falcon like lightning.

The Mirage Falcon flapped its wings hard. Almost a thousand feathers spurted out and interweaved into a furious hurricane that swept toward Li Yao overwhelmingly.

Li Yao was going to dodge the attack when he suddenly felt the air around him become as hard as rock. More than ten Mirage Falcons were hovering around him rapidly and waving their wings hard, triggering air turbulences that locked him like countless shackles!

BOOM!

It took Li Yao 0.1 seconds to get out of the air turbulences. But in that tenth of a second, the hurricane of fiery feathers arrived, too, hitting Li Yao precisely in the head. Li Yao was wreathed in flames and fell to the ground like a shooting star.

“Fighting the Feather Clan in the sky. You really wanted to get killed!”

The young master of the Feather Clan grinned hideously. The remaining Mirage Falcons exited stealth mode simultaneously. Their necks, which were covered in wrinkles, were extended to the limits, and their craws gradually expanded, revealing a dangerously red color. The marrow crystals inside the craws were being activated in preparation for ‘Fiery Shooting Stars’, the ultimate attack of the Mirage Falcons!

“Even if you are a low-level demon emperor, you are cannot resist the simultaneous bombardment of more than ten waves of Fiery Shooting Stars!”

What the young master of the Feather Clan did not see was that, deep inside the half-burnt forest, Li Yao was on one of his knees, his body still on fire, but he raised his left arm high toward the sky with his fingers wide open. The half-round crystal in the center of his palm was giving out enticing brilliance!

Countless cells inside the left arm were shivering crazily, and the mitochondria inside all the cells were functioning at the highest efficiency, generating immense energy that congregated in the center of the palm.

The energy was so furious that his left arm was trembling. Even the solid shells were being torn apart, making scattered bloody mist burst out. Li Yao had to hold his left wrist with his right hand hard in order to lock onto the target precisely.

The arc-like crystal in the center of the palm of the left hand was once a special battle organ that the ancestors of human beings billions of years ago evolved with in order to fight against nature.

It was similar to the crystalline lens inside the eye, except that it was much more precise and tensile. It also boasted multiple layers of reflection and congregation functionalities.

The mitochondria were the energy providers in the cells, which powered up the bodies of living creatures.

Generally speaking, the mitochondria's release of energy was stable and mild. However, how immense would the generated energy be if the mitochondria inside billions of cells was to burst out at the same time?

Ordinary people usually had fifty to six trillion cells inside their body, and Cultivators could even have more than a hundred trillion cells.

What Li Yao was doing right now was burning up a hundred billion of his cells immediately and focusing the energy that the cells released on one point with the crystal inside his palm, shooting it out!

It was one of the brand-new techniques that he unlocked from deep inside his genes—

"A hundred billion times! Super crystal! Cell Obliterating Cannon!"

Chapter 860 - Red Tide Plan

Shua!

Li Yao’s left arm shrank rapidly at a visible speed. A cluster of red brilliance rushed out of the super crystal at the center of his palm toward a Mirage Falcon that he had locked onto since long ago at a speed more than five times the speed of sound!

The Mirage Falcons were in their most vulnerable state when they launched the ‘Fiery Shooting Stars’. Their necks that were extended to the maximum ruined their streamlined body, making them unable to keep cruising at a supersonic speed. The demonic energy that they released continuously made them even more obvious targets than they should have been, too!

Li Yao chose the perfect moment to attack, which was when the marrow crystals inside the craws of the Mirage Falcons were about to enter the most heated state. A hundred billion cells were obliterated and turned into the purest energy, which congregated into the cluster of red brilliance through the reflections and refractions of the super crystal. The attack hit the head of the Mirage Falcon precisely, leading to a chain reaction in the marrow crystals inside its crawl and detonating the next wave of the ‘Fiery Shooting Stars’!

“Not good!”

Every feather on the face of the young master of the Feather Clan stood up, making his head three times as large. He shrieked loudly and aborted the attack of the Fiery Shooting Stars in time, soaring up with the Mirage Falcon!

However, not all his teammates were as adept at reining a biochemical beast as he was.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

After a series of thunderous explosions, the sky immediately turned into a surging ocean of flames, which raised tides hundreds of meters high. Most of the Mirage Falcons were consumed. A storm of fiery drops rained down and covered dozens of square kilometers nearby!

However, other than Li Yao, there were a lot of hunters of the demon race who were chasing after him, too.

For a moment, the fire was burning furiously, and screams were echoing nonstop. The forest had turned into a living inferno where countless demons were struggling miserably in the intense flames. They were riddled with holes by the scorching, shooting magma and turned into burnt, black bones while they were shuddering in pain!

Although the young master of the Feather Clan soared up to the sky one step in advance, he was still lightheaded because of the blast. It was not until three seconds later that he finally came back to himself despite his expertise as a demon emperor.

When he watched the troop of Mirage Falcons, which had been what he was most proud of, screaming and shrieking in the flames, turning into roasted, bare turkeys, every feather that was standing up on his face turned into the reddest color imaginable.

“B*tch! You filthy b*tch, Jin Xinyue!

“Who is this monster that you have found? Who is he exactly?”

Right now, the ‘monster’, according to the young master of the Feather Clan, was fleeing quickly inside the forest. The fire and the magma became his best cover.

Under the scourge of the overwhelming Fiery Shooting Stars, most of the hunters of the demon race were killed or wounded. It would take them at least half a day before they could regroup again.

Li Yao felt that his head was dizzy, and golden swirls were popping up in front of his eyes. Although his left arm had regained its normal appearance, it was still dangling down from his shoulder limply..

He even vaguely felt as if his entire right left was now soaked in scorching magma and about to be melted. It was about to be ignited and would be burning from inside to outside.

The deepest strength of the cells is truly dreadful, drastic, and unsteady!

Li Yao was very clear that it was a lucky incident. He had inherited part of the abilities of the Blood Stripe Virus, whose natural instincts were to control and modify genes. It was why he could manage, however unstably, the ‘primeval cells’ that were just activated.

If it were a different Cultivator, even if they were in the Nascent Soul Stage, unlocking the strength of genes so recklessly would have destroyed their cells and turned them into a pool of pus. When the mitochondria provided excessive energy, it was also possible that their body would burn.

Li Yao quickly thought of something. He had read in many ancient training notes that a lot of high-level Cultivators were killed in weird flames that started burning from the inside of their body without a good reason.

At first, it was believed that those Cultivators were assassinated by their enemies, or they were poisoned in a special way.

However, such cases had happened in various sects of various Sectors over thousands of years. The cause of death was always the same, but there was no trace of poison at all despite the scrutiny. It then became one of the greatest mysteries for the ancient Cultivators known as ‘Spontaneous Human Combustion’.

Maybe, those ancient Cultivators discovered the secrets of genes and cells by accident, too. But they did not know the usage and activated the dangerous recessive genes in their ignorance, which made the mitochondria overload and released such a huge amount of energy that their body could not bear, causing them to be burnt in the end.

After my experience, it is safe to say that triggering the strength of cells for combat is too unstable and dangerous!

Cultivators fight their battles with spiritual energy, magical equipment, and other useful tools. Their combat ability might vary, but such a way of fighting is safe and stable. Even if they become mentally deranged, their cells would never collapse, nor would they get themselves burnt into ashes.

Li Yao pondered the advantages and disadvantages of the two different ways of fighting while he rushed almost a hundred kilometers away. He took three turns to make sure that he had no pursuers before he finally reached the top of the waterfall in the southwest.

With the Child-Mother Ring, he soon determined Jin Xinyue’s location.

Jin Xinyue was lying on a giant rock on the top of the waterfall. Her body was covered in wounds, but not much blood was flowing out of her veins, a sign that she had already lost too much of her blood.

It seemed that she had experienced a fierce battle, too.

Li Yao peered over the edge and looked at the bottom of the waterfall.

The waterfall was several hundred meters high. Its bottom was covered in fog, which blocked Li Yao’s vision.

Not far away, the water congregated into a zigzagging river that led to the deepest part of the forest.

Li Yao thought quickly for his escape.

Jumping off the cliff seemed to be the best route of escape right now. However, if he were one of the hunters, he would certainly not let go of such an obvious route. The long river below the waterfall would certainly be searched and heavily guarded.

After a moment, Li Yao made up his mind. Li Yao jumped off the waterfall carrying Jin Xinyue, but he charged into the waterfall after falling down dozens of meters.

Crack!

Li Yao’s hand pierced deep into the rocks like a claw, supporting him in the middle of the water against the rushing water current. He then retrieved a small drill of mystic rays from his Cosmos Ring.

The drill of mystic rays was his favorite. A few years ago, he had been training in Yan Xinjian’s secret residence below the surface of Spider Den. In the end, he had dug his way out of the underground with a special drill of mystic rays.

He had held onto the drill of mystic rays. It was one of the main weapons of the new Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and had played an important role in the battle to annihilate Xiao Xuance. He did not expect that it would come in handy today again.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Li Yao dug out a narrow pathway in the hard rocks behind the waterfall.

The rocks there were all solid quartzites and basalts. Although the Insect Clan claimed to be the dominators of the underground world, they mostly lived in relatively soft soil or natural caves. It was impossible for them to live in suffocating rocks.

The drill of mystic rays was designed to explore the underground world, and Li Yao was quite familiar with the job. Very soon, he had dug the pathway deep down into the underground.

Naturally, he did not forget to dig a few additional turns behind him. But he estimated that the enemy would not discover the entrance behind the waterfall easily. Even if they did, the outmost part of the pathway had been sealed by him.

After they moved deep below the ground, they encountered a series of natural caves. However, Li Yao and Jin Xinyue, who had only just woken up, did not dare linger. For one day and one night, they kept running at the highest speed deep inside the Hundred Desolation Mountain. It was not until the dawn of the third day that they stopped to catch their breath and discuss the current situation.

“The Nether Spring Kingdom, the Kingdom of Lion Butchers and the Gold Crow Kingdom.”

Li Yao scratched his chin. “Three of the four superpowers of the Blood Demon Sector have joined hands to chase after you. Why?”

“Not three. All of them.” Jin Xinyue was extremely feeble due to the loss of blood. Her face was pale, and she replied dutifully, “I was assaulted by the Iron Crocodile Warriors of the Sea Dominator Kingdom on the top of the waterfall. Although I managed to kill all of them, I was heavily wounded and passed out in the end. Therefore, the Sea Dominator Kingdom is part of the scheme, too.”

Li Yao glanced at her. “Being hunted by the four most powerful kingdoms of the Blood Demon Sector, you are rather calm.”

Jin Xinyue smiled bitterly. “As the saintess of the Pantheon of Demons, I’ve seen too many of such schemes. Before, I cooperated with the assassins of the Nether Spring Kingdom, the Sea Dominator Kingdom, and the Kingdom of Lion Butchers to exterminate certain people that should not exist any longer, too. Now, it is my turn to be exterminated. What’s there to be surprised at?

“However…”

Her eyes suddenly shuddered, and a guilty expression appeared on her face before she said softly, “My death is insignificant, but I accidentally dragged Elder into this disaster. It has absolutely nothing to do with Elder, but I’ve even put Elder into the crosshairs of the four superpowers of the Blood Demon Sector at the same time. I really feel…”

“I’m going to stop you there,” Li Yao said coldly, “If there is no way out, I can always tie you up, throw you to them, and get away myself. I don’t think that they will be so persistent in chasing after an expert who has the capability of a demon emperor after they get what they want. So, there is no need to feel guilty.”

Jin Xinyue was dumbfounded. She had to swallow the remaining part of her speech.

Li Yao smiled and continued. “However, before I tie you up and throw you to them, there is something that I’m rather curious about. Why are the four kingdoms, including the Gold Crow Kingdom, trying to kill you?

“Logically, you know a great secret of the Nether Spring Kingdom. There is no reason for your father, Jin Tuyi, to abandon you.”

Jin Xinyue smiled helplessly and said, “There are many possibilities. For example, when Elder Nether Spring saw that his secret was about to be exposed, he confessed it to my father and made a deal with my father by trading something for the secret and me, who knew the secret.”

“Oh?” Li Yao narrowed his eyes. “Does Elder Nether Spring have anything that is worth trading for his daughter?”

“He does,” Jin Xinyue said calmly, as if she were telling somebody else’s story. “The Red Tide Plan is one of them.”

“The Red Tide Plan?”

Li Yao naturally would not let go of such a good opportunity to collect the secrets of the Blood Demon Sector.

Chapter 861 - So-Called Saintess

“The Red Tide Plan is a war plan that my father has dedicated his entire life to. Hehe. If truth be told, I think the Red Tide Plan is his real ‘child’, and his blood descendants like me are just his tools.”

Biting her lips hard, Jin Xinyue said calmly after a long sigh, “My father foresaw that a great war between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector would break out a long time ago. However, both Sectors have a lot of potential. It is practically impossible for either Sector to conquer the other. The most likely outcome is that the two worlds will be burnt to the ground together.

“Therefore, decades ago, my father started studying how to conquer the Heaven’s Origin Sector at the highest speed with the minimum cost. The Red Tide Plan is the result of his research.

“The details of the plan are highly classified. I’m afraid that my father is the only one who knows the whole plan, but the basic idea is, as I said to you before, to launch attack from the east side of the Star Glory Federation.”

Li Yao was deep in thought. “You mentioned that the east side of the Star Glory Federation was a boundless Far East Ocean.”

“Exactly.” Jin Xinyue nodded and said, “The merging point of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector is in the north of the Grand Desolate Plateau of the Star Glory

Federation. Therefore, the northern frontline has always been the most solid line of defense for the Star Glory Federation. The federal army has even militarized the entire Grand Desolate Plateau, and eighty percent of the available forces are stationed on the Grand Desolate Plateau and the Giant Blade Pass.

“On the other hand, the southeast part of the Star Glory Federation near the ocean is the most prosperous and resourceful region. Ever since the ‘Far East Demon Kingdom’, the local demon race of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, perished five hundred years ago, the Star Glory Federation has never witnessed any attack from the southeast. After such a long time of peace, the region’s defense is rather sloppy.

“As far as I know, the Red Tide Plan has two parts. First, a super large-scale attack will be launched in the north of the Star Glory Federation, for the purpose of attracting the forces of the Star Glory Federation. When the soldiers of both parties are fatigued, the most elite troops of the navy and the air force of the Blood Demon Sector will pop up from the ocean to the east of the Star Glory Federation and strike the most prosperous towns near the ocean. They will even assault the capital of the Star Glory Federation directly!

“That is the Red Tide Plan!”

“Sounds good.” Li Yao’s pupils constricted. He tried to stop the brilliance inside his eyes from beaming out. “However, how are the elite troops of the navy and air force of the Blood Demon Sector going to sneak to the ocean to the east of the Star Glory Federation?”

“I have no idea.” Jin Xinyue shook her head and said, “Those details are top confidential. My father did not trust me. For what it’s worth, he barely trusted anybody. Why would he reveal the details? However, by my estimation, it is likely related to the relics of the ‘Far East Demon Kingdom’.

“It is said that the Far East Demon Kingdom meant to build a wormhole leading to the Blood Demon Sector in order to ask for reinforcements from the Blood Demon Sector or to flee there before their doom. However, the kingdom was annihilated before the plan worked out.

“Maybe, my father has broken through the wormhole in secret and grasped a secret route leading to the rear of the Star Glory Federation. He might’ve established a series of undersea bases with the remaining facilities that the Far East Demon Kingdom left.”

Li Yao was so shocked that he was soaked in sweat. He said coldly, “If that’s the case, why didn’t your father launch the ‘Red Tide Plan’ during the ‘Battle of Dawn’?”

Jin Xinyue did not grow suspicious. She replied frankly, “Maybe it was because the wormhole was not stable yet and the undersea bases were not sufficient for the operations? It must be noted that such an assault will be conducted in the rear of the enemy. The benefits will be huge if it succeeds. But if it fails, all the troops will likely be wiped out. It concerns the future of the kingdom and the demon race. My father has to be cautious.

“More importantly, the Feather Clan and the Sea Clan hadn’t reached an agreement with the Insect Clan and the Claw Clan back then.

“The rivalry of continentalism and navalism has been going on for a long time in the Blood Demon Sector. The Red Tide Plan regards the army of the Insect Clan and the Claw Clan as bait who will have to resist the immense pressure of the

Star Glory Federation before the real plans works out. It is not hard to imagine that their losses will be heavy.

“Also, even if the Red Tide Plan works out in the end, it will be the Feather Clan and the Sea Clan that occupy the most prosperous areas of the Star Glory Federation. What benefits are there for the Insect Clan and the Claw Clan?

“Because of the objection of the Insect Clan and the Claw Clan, the Red Tide Plan has been put on hold.

“Although my father went to power in place of the previous commander-in-chief after the ‘Battle of Dawn’ suffered a brutal failure, that does not mean that he can dispatch the forces of the Insect Clan and the Claw Clan at will. He is still kept in check by the other experts.

“Elder Nether Spring and Elder Blood Robe, on the other hand, do not object to the Red Tide Plan blindly. They believed that the Red Tide Plan could be an excellent move of distraction. The assault of the Sea Clan and the Feather Clan would certain stall a lot of forces of the Star Glory Federation, but the main focus of the Blood Demon Sector, in their opinion, should still be the Giant Blade Pass where the ground force will win the war!”

Li Yao realized that the main focus of the war was about the conflict of interests.

It was not hard to guess that those who attracted the Star Glory Federation’s attention would suffer heavy losses and those who were attacking for real would likely occupy the prosperous areas of the Star Glory Federation.

Jin Xinyue rubbed her cold face. There was no telling whether she was warming up her frozen muscles or covering the tears in her eyes. She mumbled, “Elder Nether Spring is a hardcore supporter of continentalism. If he is willing to concede on certain aspects of the Red Tide Plan so that it can be implemented smoothly, I believe that my father, who considers the Red Tide Plan his life, will sell an insignificant daughter without even batting an eye.”

Li Yao licked his teeth and said, “So, the Red Tide Plan might have been activated already, the Blood Demon Sector has found a secret wormhole leading to the ocean in the east of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and undersea bases are being established in the relics of the Far East Demon Kingdom?”

Jin Xinyue shrugged and said, “It is only one possibility. There’s another possibility. My father might not be aware of the matter, and it could be my enemies who are trying to kill me.”

“Really?”

“Very likely,” Jin Xinyue said. “As the new commander-in-chief of the coalition army, he is busy suppressing the Riot of Bloody Blade and trying to raise the morale of the defeated soldiers from the Battle of Battle. He cannot possibly notice every detail. It would not be surprising if somebody tricked him into making a misjudgment.”

“What? You have that many enemies?” Li Yao asked.

“Let me see…” Deep in thought, Jin Xinyue bit her fingernails and said, “There’s no need to mention the Nether Spring Kingdom. I once killed a general of the Nether Spring Kingdom and stole top confidential information from there.

“As for the Kingdom of Lion Butchers, their two princesses received training together with me in the Pantheon of Demons, but they were poisoned by me later.

“I have no personal grudge with the Sea Dominator Kingdom, but they organized an operation to infiltrate the Heaven’s Origin Sector before and I somehow got the intelligence and sold it. Later, I was told that one of their elite squads was entirely wiped out in the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

“In the Gold Crow Kingdom, I have too many enemies. However, the commander of the Mirage Falcon troops is my big brother, Jin Wuxu. That’s odd. My relationship with him is not bad on the surface. Didn’t we work together to kill our seventh brother last time? Why was he trying to kill me? Did he find out that I was behind the attempted assassination against him last month?”

“…” Li Yao.

Jin Xinyue’s eyelids were twitching violently. She mumbled, “It was not because my father discovered that I killed the b*tch, was it? If so, I’m screwed!”

“Who is the ‘b*tch’?” Li Yao asked.

With a scowl, Jin Xinyue answered, “She is my father’s wife.”

Li Yao frowned. “Why did you kill her?”

Jin Xinyue was silent for a long time before she replied, “Because she murdered my mother and sent me to the Pantheon of Demons to be a saintess.”

Before Li Yao opened his mouth, Jin Xinyue smiled bitterly and continued. “You may not know this, Elder, but saintess of the Pantheon of Demons is definitely not a good job.

“First of all, the girls who are chosen as ‘saintesses’ are often around five. They will be sent to the Pantheon of Demons to receive the harshest training when they are seven to eight. The elimination rate is quite high. By ‘elimination’, I mean ‘death’, not being sent home.

“In the batch I was in, the elimination rate was higher than seventy percent. most of the girls were either tortured to death during the harsh training or killed in the ever-lasting combat among ourselves.

“In such an environment, every girl is trying their best for survival. If I don’t kill you, you might kill me. Of course, I poisoned a lot of people, but I was poisoned multiple times, too, and I would not be living today without luck.

“Even if you are lucky enough to pass the perilous training and become an ‘intern saintess’, you will have to carry out the dangerous assignments that the Pantheon of Demons issued. There’s no need to talk about the outcome of those who fail. Even if you succeed, you might be killed to keep your mouth shut.

“In other words, the so-called ‘saintesses’ are merely just a batch of female assassins and spies that the Pantheon of Demons training. The title is just a decoration for us.

“Even if you become the ‘Dark Lady of the Nine Heavens’ out of the countless saintesses of the Pantheon of Demons, you will only end up as a puppet of the twelve demon emperors. You have no real power at all, and you might become a scapegoat at any moment.”

Li Yao raised his eyebrow. “A scapegoat?”

“Exactly,” Jin Xinyue sneered. “According to legend, the honorable Dark Lady of the Nine Heavens boasts the capability to communicate with the ancient demon clans. Therefore, whenever a catastrophe takes place in the Blood

Demon Sector, the Dark Lady of the Nine Heavens is sacrificed to satisfy the unknowable gods.

“After the failure of the Battle of Dawn, a Dark Lady of the Nine Heavens was sacrificed, and the commander-in-chief who was the real guilty party only resigned. It was harmless for him after all. When everybody forgets what happened, he will rise to power in a different role!

“Hehe. That b*tch. After she killed my mother, she meant to kill me, too. But because of my father, she was not determined to kill a little kid directly. Therefore, she sent me to the Pantheon of Demons to be a saintess. She thought that I would be no more trouble for her at all, even if I was lucky enough to not get killed!”

Chapter 862 - Understandable

“She thought that I knew nothing about the real reason for my mother’s death, and I’d been acting obediently, too, without showing any suspicion. But in secret, I climbed up step by step in the abyss of the Pantheon of Demons and finally crawled out of it, turning into an independent saintess.

“After I became a saintess, I was authorized to recruit my own subordinates and seek the support of those who were loyal to me. I also ran investigations in secret while carrying out the missions of the Pantheon of Demons. Finally, I discovered critical proof.

“However, the b*tch’s family is one of the most powerful in the Gold Crow Kingdom, and she was a reasonably good expert, too. I was no match for her at that time.

“For my revenge, I had to get stronger through whatever methods possible, and in order to get stronger, I had to gain access to a lot of resources. Of course, there were abundant resources that I could get from the Pantheon of Demons, but the b*tch would certainly have found out what I was doing.

“I was left with no option except to steal, to rob, and to trade intelligence for resources.

“Hehe. For several years, I pretended that I was loyal to the b*tch and regarded her as my real mother. She even entrusted two perilous, clearly ill-intended missions to me, but I completed them immaculately. In the second mission, I was even heavily wounded. Finally, she was more or less convinced.

“When I finished all the arrangements, she finally noticed that something was up, but it was already too late for her.

“I killed her without any trouble, but that was not the end of it. Her family was not the only one that was involved in my mother’s murder. My father knew a thing or two about it, too, but he simply turned a blind eye to the case!

“Since the moment my mother was killed, I made up my mind that I would kill all the demons that did her wrong before!

“I will not be a piece of meat on a chopping block like my mother was. I must climb higher, no matter the cost!

“Right now, I am a saintess of the Pantheon of Demons, but what about the saintesses? And what about the Dark Lady of the Nine Heavens? They are all puppets at the mercy of somebody else, are they not?

“In the Blood Demon Sector, the Pantheon of Demons is the heavens, and those who rule over the heavens are the twelve demon emperors. Those below the twelve demon emperors are all ants!

“I don’t want to be an ant anymore, even if it is named ‘Dark Lady of the Nine Heavens’! I want to be one of the twelve demon emperors, and even the queen of the entire Blood Demon Sector!

“I kept all my thoughts to myself and concealed my sharpness. I kept climbing upwards as a saintess in the Pantheon of Demons. As more and more missions were accomplished smoothly, my father, who had always ignored me, finally noticed me.

“He thought that my dream was to become the Dark Lady of the Nine Heavens. Although I would simply be a puppet, he would still enjoy a lot of benefits if the puppet was fully under his control.

“Therefore, he devoted a lot of resources to me and began to support me. He also eliminated a lot of my competitors for me.

“But there is no way that he could have foreseen that my appetite will not be fulfilled just by being the ‘Dark Lady of the Nine Heavens’!

“Hehe. However, it seems that I am quite unlucky. A seemingly regular hunting task, as it turned out, has transformed me into a human being for reasons I do not know. Maybe there are more secrets to the mysterious drug that are not to be known by other people. That’s why the four superpowers are joining their hands to hunt me down!

“I don’t want to admit my failure. I don’t!”

Jin Xinyue’s face turned red in excitement, and her voice grew higher and higher, forgetting that she was speaking to a horrifying ‘old monster’.

She clenched her fists and smashed the wall of the cave hard. Broken stones flew everywhere, and bloody wounds appeared on her fingers while hot tears dripped down from the corners of her eyes.

She leaned against the wall of the cave helplessly and said frustratedly, “I’ve kept those words in my heart all this time. Except to my mother in my dreams, I have never told anybody else before. Today, I finally have the chance to speak freely. I can die without regret now.

“Just as Elder said, we don’t stand a chance against the Pantheon of Demons. Therefore, you might as well tie me up and throw me into the forest. I believe that the Blood Moon Wolf Raiders will find me soon after they smell the scent of my blood.

“As for you, Elder, I suggest that you do not show yourself any time soon. Since there is no telling how many secrets are linked to the mysterious drug, it is possible that the four demon kingdoms will attack you collectively the moment they discover you, and you won’t get a chance to explain.

“Therefore, I strongly suggest that you hold your temper and run as far away as possible. A great war between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector is drawing near. It’s unlikely that the Pantheon of Demons will deploy a lot of forces to chase after you.”

After finishing her speech, Jin Xinyue took a long breath in relief and closed her eyes in silence. Tears were flowing down her face, and her lips were shivering, as if she had given up everything in hopelessness.

Li Yao observed her countenance with great interest for a long time. Suddenly, he started clapping his hands. The brisk applause echoed in the narrow and long cave.

Jin Xinyue suddenly opened her eyes. Dazed, she asked, “Elder, what are you—”

“Your acting skills are not half bad. It was natural and flawless.” Li Yao complimented sincerely. “Even I was tricked by you without me knowing it and believed ten percent of what you just said!”

Jin Xinyue was stunned. “Which ten percent?”

“The ten percent where you said that you would climb upwards whatever the cost with the goal of becoming the queen of the Blood Demon Sector,” Li Yao replied.

There were a few tears on Jin Xinyue’s eyelashes. She asked, not entirely satisfied, “What about the other ninety percent?”

“I understand the ninety percent in the following way,” Li Yao said casually. “Firstly, you seemed to be outspoken enough to tell me your miserable childhood, but it was partly meant to win my sympathy and partly to highlight my importance to you, which is apparently even higher than your father’s and equal to your deceased mother’s.

“For a lone man who has just woken up from a prolonged hibernation, I might grow slightly protective of you, mightn’t I?

“Secondly, you exaggerated the invincibility of the Pantheon of Demons on purpose. You said that ‘below the twelve demon emperors are but ants’ ostensibly for yourself but in fact for me to hear. You naturally knew that I would not be happy being below anybody and being regarded as an ‘ant’.

“You pointed it out on purpose so that I would realize the immitigable conflict between me and the Pantheon of Demons!

“At the end of your speech, you said that there were more secrets to the mysterious drug and even asked me to run as far away as possible. It is clear that you were implying that I would not get away in any case now that I am already involved. The Pantheon of Demons will not let go of me even if I do not want to be its enemy!

“Vast as the Blood Demon Sector might be, every place is under the twelve demon emperors’ control. Where exactly can I run?

“Oh, right. You also mentioned that a great war between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector is drawing near. In other words, you were telling me that, despite the Pantheon of Demons’ capability, their greatest enemy is the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and they are bound to show loopholes when they were fighting a strong enemy. I should seize the opportunity and counterattack the Pantheon of Demons, shouldn’t I?

“You appeared to be telling me your miserable experiences sincerely, but in fact, your every word was reminding me that there is an irreconcilable disagreement between me and the Pantheon of Demons. Even if I do not want to piss the Pantheon of Demons off, I will not be able to get away. Since the great war between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector is coming close, it is the best chance for me to curb the enemy before I am curbed. Otherwise, when everything was settled, I won’t stand any chance to reverse the situation at all.

“However, if I really make up my mind to fight against the Pantheon of Demons, I will naturally need the help of you, a saintess of the Pantheon of Demons who knows the details of the Pantheon of Demons.

“I did not misunderstand what you meant, did I?”

“You are truly wise!” There was not the slightest fear or embarrassment on Jin Xinyue’s face, at least none that Li Yao could tell. She kneeled down obediently and said with respect, “Elder, you are wise enough to distinguish the meaning between my lines so quickly. I was wondering how I should explain it to you!

“In fact, for normal beginning-level demons, it is not a bad idea to be recruited by the Pantheon of Demons, but your capability and spirits resemble those of a dragon soaring in the high sky. How can you be trapped in a small pond?

“An unparalleled expert such as Elder has every reason to be the master of the Blood Demon Sector, no, the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector! Therefore, the contradiction between Elder and the Pantheon of Demons is definitely unresolvable. I don’t think you need me to point it out for you, Elder.”

“As I recall, your words were different before you found out that you were being hunted by the Gold Crow Kingdom,” Li Yao said coldly.

“At that time, I thought that I could return to the Gold Crow Kingdom and gather a lot of secret arts and files on genes for you, Elder, and I certainly did not want you to have conflict with the Pantheon of Demons so quickly,” Jin Xinyue replied unhurriedly. “But now, the situation has changed. It is only reasonable that I think of new plans. Although you must’ve thought everything through with your wisdom, I think I can be of assistance to you if I can help you analyze the mess and save a few braincells for you, Elder.”

Li Yao scoffed. “However, why do I feel that you are manipulating me?”

Jin Xinyue hesitated and said, “I want to say that I am not manipulating you for my own survival at all, but I believe that it would be an insult to your wisdom if I claimed that I am purely admiring your charisma. It is the instinct of every creature to struggle for survival. Right now, every other avenue of escape is a dead end, and I can only clutch one of your leg hairs hard, hoping that you can pull me out of the hell when you soar into the sky and dominate the world. It is quite understandable, isn't it?"

Seeing that the woman was so blatantly shameless, Li Yao was rendered speechless. He was not willing to play the word game any longer. Pondering for a long time, he raised his eyebrow and asked, "In your opinion, can we fight against the Pantheon of Demons with just the two of us?"

Chapter 863 - Void Turmoil City, Fire Ant King!

Without even blinking, Jin Xinyue said quickly, “With your unparalleled wisdom and strength, the Pantheon of Demons would disappear as long as you flicked your little finger at them. However, we don’t use a sledgehammer to crack a nut. You don’t have to do such things personally, Elder. After all, the greatest threat for the Pantheon of Demons is not us.”

Cold brilliance suddenly flashed in his eyes, as if he were angry. He said coldly, “Are you referring to the Heaven’s Origin Sector? You want me to cooperate with human beings? Hehe. That’s right. I almost forget that you look like a pure human being from your head to your toe now. It is only reasonable that you want to join hands with human beings of the Heaven’s Origin Sector.”

Jin Xinyue hurried to kneel down and shook her head. “Cooperation can only be established on equal terms. Right now, I am all by myself. If I go to cooperate with the Heaven’s Origin Sector, I will simply be feeding myself to the human beings.

“Also, with your identity, it is difficult for you to win the Heaven’s Origin Sector’s trust, Elder.

“What I referred to was the Blade of Chaos.”

Li Yao thought quickly and said, “Go on.”

Jin Xinyue coughed slightly and continued. “The Blade of Chaos seems to have suffered a major strike. However, the body of a bug can still move even if it is killed. Such a large organization cannot be eliminated so easily.

“The Blade of Chaos has reached every social class of the Blood Demon Sector in its hundreds of years of lurking in the darkness. Right now, we have only chopped its tentacles and limbs at best. We do not even know where its heart is.

“As you know, Elder, after the Blade of Chaos started the ‘Riot of Bloody Blade’ and occupied Bone Sand City in the north, the rebels stayed there and sabotaged the city, giving the coalition army of the demon race plenty of time to mobilize and annihilate all of them.

“At first, I thought that the Blade of Chaos was simply made of a bunch of mobs who did not know what to do after they took over a major city.

“But from a different perspective, what if their target had always been the mysterious drug that could turn a demon into a human being?”

Li Yao’s eyes were slightly enlarged. “Huh?”

“Suppose that the Blade of Chaos learned a long time ago that Elder Nether Spring had a secret laboratory in Bone Sand City and invented a mysterious drug that could change the world,” Jin Xinyue said. “Therefore, they initiated the ‘Riot of Bloody Riot’, and their real reason for occupying Bone Sand City was to search for said drug.

“If that’s the case, it is easy to understand why they stayed in and sabotaged the city. That is because they were digging pits in every household in search of Elder Nether Spring’s laboratory and the mysterious drug!

“If so, the secrets behind the drug must be more appalling than we imagined. Elder Nether Spring hunted them down without caring for the cost!

“If so, other than Elder Nether Spring and the four kingdoms, the Blade of Chaos should be looking for the mysterious drug, too!

“Right now, the mysterious drug has been absorbed by me and has led to the unbelievable changes inside my body. Therefore, I think that I might be a rather valuable bargaining chip right now. We can use me to initiate dealings with the Blade of Chaos.”

Li Yao thought for a moment and nodded. “You do have a point, but where are we going to find the Blade of Chaos? The entire Blood Demon Sector is suppressing the rebellions right now. Members of the Blade of Chaos must be living in anxiety and will not show up easily in case they are captured.”

Cunningness suddenly beamed out of Jin Xinyue’s eyes, as she smiled and said, “I happened upon a piece of ungrounded intelligence before, which was the location of a secret bureau, if not the headquarters, of the Blade of Chaos!”

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. “You knew where the Blade of Chaos was headquartered, and you kept such important information to yourself instead of reporting it to the Pantheon of Demons?”

Jin Xinyue laughed drily. “What benefits can I get by reporting it to the Pantheon of Demons? I might as well hide the information first and trade it for something more valuable when necessary, say, right now, in order to make best use of the information.”

Li Yao stared at her.

“It can’t be helped,” Jin Xinyue said frankly. “If you want to live, and live well, in the Blood Demon Sector, you must grasp a few secrets that other people do not know about.”

“Then, where is the secret bureau of the Blade of Chaos?” Li Yao asked calmly.

“Void Turmoil City.”

Li Yao chewed on the name and vaguely sensed the stink of blood. He remembered hearing the name when he was back in the Dry Leaf Village.

“Void Turmoil City is an independent city and does not belong to the four most powerful demon kingdoms,” Jin Xinyue said. “It is perhaps the most dangerous, disorderly, and lawless place in the entire Blood Demon Sector. It wouldn’t be exaggerating to call the city a cancer of the Blood Demon Sector.”

Li Yao found it amusing. “And the Pantheon of Demons simply tolerates the existence of such a ‘cancer’?”

“That’s because ‘Fire Ant King’, master of Void Turmoil City, is a middle-level demon emperor with tremendous strength,” Jin Xinyue explained.

“The Fire Ant King is a weirdo in the demon emperors. His strength and background are on par with those of quite a few of the twelve demon emperors, but he has never shown any intention of competing for the place of the twelve demon emperors. He simply occupied the Void Turmoil peninsula and established his own city, declaring that he would not attack anybody as long as he was not attacked.

“After Void Turmoil City was established, the most brutal demons of the Blood Demon Sector were immediately attracted to it. Many of them had committed felonies in the community that they belonged to or were those who failed in the struggle for power. They did not want to be sent to the Heaven’s Origin Sector for suicidal missions and therefore fled to Void Turmoil City. As long as they entered the territory of Void Turmoil City, the Fire Ant King would treat and shelter them equally.

“As time went on, the most brutal and merciless demons gathered around the Fire Ant King. With his invincible forces, other demons do not dare mess with him easily anymore.

“Unlike his forces, the Fire Ant King is the opposite of reckless. In fact, he is extremely smart.

“His Void Turmoil City mainly has two businesses.

“Firstly, to capture and refine the chaotic-blood demons.

“The chaotic-blood demons are despised by all other demons. They often live in remote regions of the Blood Demon Sector, too. After generations of life in the wilderness, they have become disobedient and uneducable.

“Therefore, the Fire Ant King sends out slave-catching teams to capture the chaotic-blood demons in the far-flung areas of the Blood Demon Sector. All the prey is brought back to Void Turmoil City for refinement. They are either bred into loyal slaves or fearless cannon fodder. Some of them even became gladiators who are made to fight each other for the entertainment of high-level demons.

“After the refinement, he sells the slaves, soldiers, and gladiators to high-level demons to be their pets, tools, and weapons.

“Through such a business, not only has the Fire Ant King earned a fortune, he has also made friends with the leadership of various tribes. After he first started, he quickly became the biggest hunter of chaotic-blood demons and slave owner of the Blood Demon Sector.

“The Fire Ant King provides slaves for the high-level demons with a neutral attitude, showing that he is interested in only money and nothing else. Why would anybody come to piss off such a peaceful demon emperor?

“Around the ‘Battle of Dawn’, the demand for cannon fodder soared. The Fire Ant King was much more efficient in producing cannon fodder than the major demon kingdoms were. He was a noble guest of the demon kings, who would only greet him warmly when he dropped by. Did they have any reason to provoke him?

“The Fire Ant King’s second business is the refinement of various kinds of demonic plants. The Fire Ant King possesses secret arts that can refine the demonic plants and extract the narcotic and berserker drugs from the demonic plants.

“The drugs are very important military assets. Many ignorant demons, especially the herbivores, are weak and do not have aggressive instincts. They require the narcotic and berserker drugs to put them in illusions where their family is being butchered by human beings. That’s the only way to trigger their bloodthirst and motivate them to fight.

“The demonic plants and slaughtering drugs that the Fire Ant King produces are very effective. Such a business has brought him wealth and the friendship of the major demon kingdoms, too. His Void Turmoil City, thus, became a unique place in the Blood Demon Sector.

“More importantly, the Fire Ant King and Elder Nether Spring are blood brothers who share the same mother!”

Li Yao was dazed. “What?”

“According to the custom of the demon race, if two brothers of the same family are both experts, intense conflicts are inevitable for the control of the family and family businesses,” Jin Xinyue said.

“However, years ago, the Fire Ant King bowed out of the competition of his own accord and left the Nether Spring Kingdom. He basically gave the entire Nether Spring Kingdom to Elder Nether Spring and established his businesses on his own.

“Moreover, when Elder Nether Spring was competing with other brothers, the Fire Ant King offered a lot of help so that Elder Nether Spring gradually grasped the entire Insect Clan.

“As a result, whether because Elder Nether Spring bore the favor that the Fire Ant King did to him in mind or because he was meaning to further count on his brother’s strength, it was difficult for him to turn against the Fire Ant King.

“Right now, the Fire Ant King has the support of Elder Nether Spring in the Pantheon of Demons, countless brutal demons as his subordinates, and sources of wealth that exceed the revenue streams of major demon kingdoms. He is also a strong middle-level demon emperor. Who is bold enough to ask for his trouble?”

Li Yao thought for a moment and said, “According to your story, the Fire Ant King made the first pot of gold by hunting the chaotic-blood demons, and Void Turmoil City is a huge factory that produces bettered chaotic-blood demons. Then, isn’t it the most dangerous place for the chaotic-blood demons?”

“You’re right, Elder.” Jin Xinyue smiled and said, “This is a hint of the smartness of the Blade of Chaos. The most dangerous place is perhaps the safest place. Right now, the entire Blood Demon Sector is searching for the members of the Blade of Chaos and their bureaus. But nobody would expect that the most important secret bureau of the Blade of Chaos is right inside Void Turmoil City below the Fire Ant King’s nose!”

“Understood.”

Li Yao thought quickly. The mental devil quickly released almost a hundred sordid, ill-intended ideas inside his brain. He made up his mind and said, “It seems that we must pay a trip to Void Turmoil City to look for the headquarters of the Blade of Chaos, explore all of the secrets of the mysterious drug, and even…”

Pausing for a moment, Li Yao scratched his bulging left temple and said calmly, “Meet this Fire Ant King!”

Chapter 864 - Trip to Void Turmoil City

Half a month later, ten thousand kilometers to the north of the Hundred Desolation Mountain, in a boundless red desert, a team of demon beasts was rushing at an amazingly high speed.

The demon beasts were all enormous in size. They were more than a hundred meters both in length and in width. The membranes all over their bodies bulged out, with pinky gas filled inside that made them look like balloons that were stitched together.

The gas stored inside the airbags was lighter than air, which made the beasts drift and fly in midair freely.

Such demon beasts were known as ‘Land Whales’. Their prototype was the commonly-seen giant sandworms in the deserts of the Blood Demon Sector. The experts of the demon race refined and altered their genes over hundreds of years unceasingly. Finally, they developed airbags that were similar to the swimming bladder and could generate an exceedingly light gas naturally inside the body.

Below the body of the Land Whales were six rows of spurts that evolved from cloacae, which could alter the direction of the beasts by spurting feeble air currents. In the meantime, soft tentacles almost a hundred meters long were growing on the two sides and the back of the Land Whales’ bodies. While grabbing the insects inside the desert, the tentacles could change the direction of the beast like paddles, accelerate and decelerate, and even hold down the passengers or goods.

Because their speed was high, and they were not picky about food, Land Whales had gradually become the most commonly-seen vehicles of the Blood Demon Sector across many territories.

The team of Land Whales had almost a hundred of them in total and stretched over dozens of kilometers long. The spurting air currents blew the red sand into the sky, as if a thick crimson dragon were rushing on the ground.

On the back of every Land Whale was dozens of densely distributed cabins whose edges were embedded with giant iron rings that were tied to the tentacles of the Land Whales tightly.

A lot of holes had been left on the wall of the giant cabins, from which screams and moans could vaguely be heard.

This was a slave-catching team that was returning with full loads.

In the Riot of Bloody Blade, a large batch of black-blood demons and chaotic-blood demons rebelled, and the fire of insurrection burned throughout the entire Blood Demon Sector.

While the leaders of the demon kingdoms were having a headache, it was a golden time for Void Turmoil City to take the advantage.

Before, the chaotic-blood demons could not be captured randomly, however lowly they were. A lot of excuses had to be made up first.

But now, it was much more convenient. With a claim that the victims were the accomplices of the Blade of Chaos, they were able to capture the chaotic-blood demons that were scattered in every corner of the Blood Demon Sector.

With the war between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector coming near, the demand on cannon fodder had soared. The bloody road leading to Void Turmoil City was always brimming with vehicles and screams.

The cabins on the back of every Land Whale had been fully packed. However, the slave-catchers were apparently quite experienced. They had divided the cabins with iron gauze. Although it was crammed, a minimum zone of activity was maintained so that the chaotic-blood demons captured would not be killed on a large scale.

Inside one of the cabins at the rear of the team of demon beasts, Li Yao and Jin Xinyue were locked in the same prison cell. Different from the other chaotic-blood demons who were simmering, they both lowered their heads lethargically, trying their best to hide the brilliance shining in their eyes.

Their current appearance was vastly different from half a month ago.

Li Yao had changed the distribution and direction of his muscles, turning himself into a tough, muscular man. His left arm was now covered in a layer of vague scales. His forearms were sharp but had the features of lions and tigers, too. At first glance, he was just a random, simpleminded chaotic-blood demon.

Jin Xinyue had her own secret techniques for disguise. She was now dark and slender. Her eyes became two lines like those of a reptile, and her tongue was narrow and long like that of a snake, hissing every now and then. She was an out-and-out ugly snake right now.

However hard Li Yao observed, he did not find any discrepancies in her appearance. He could not help but feel amazed.

They did not have a choice to pretend to chaotic-blood demons.

Although Void Turmoil City was a chaotic, lawless place, the Fire Ant King was a top-tier expert of the Blood Demon Sector. The city seemingly was operated in the open but in a very strict way. It was not difficult for them to enter Void Turmoil City, but it was quite a different matter if they did not want to raise anybody’s attention.

The four kingdoms were apparently still searching for the two of them. Both of their identities had to be kept a secret right now, and disguises were mandatory.

Of the different types of demons, the black-blood demons and the bronze-blood demons were too different from normal human beings. No matter how Li Yao changed his body, he could not turn himself into a giant mantis crouching on the ground or change his legs into a tail.

The silver-blood demons and the chaotic-blood demons were the most similar to human beings in appearance, and it was easier for them to pretend.

However, the silver-blood demons were all nobles. Every silver-blood demon had a unique appearance, identity, and familial background. Their identity would immediately be exposed if somebody stopped and questioned them.

Jin Xinyue had prepared a lot of fake identities before, but she was not sure that those identities were still confidential right now.

After careful consideration, they could only pretend to be chaotic-blood demons to sneak into Void Turmoil City.

After fleeing from the Hundred Desolation Mountain while covering their tracks, they lay low during the day and moved northwards at night, marching toward Void Turmoil City.

The deeper they got to the north, the more they could feel the influence of the ‘Riot of Bloody Blade’ on the Blood Demon Sector.

The poor villages that they passed had almost all been demolished. The towns of chaotic-blood demons and black-blood demons were involved in the insurrection. They had either joined the ‘Riot of Bloody Blade’ with their entire town or were regarded as accomplices of the Blade of Chaos and executed later.

While they were travelling in the mountains, they ran into a lot of groups of chaotic-blood demons and black-blood demons who had mostly fled to the mountains to avoid the fire of war. Naturally, some of the remnants of the Blade of Chaos might have been hiding among them, but most of them were innocent civilians.

However, when the army of the four kingdoms and the slave-catching teams of Void Turmoil City came, they simply captured all the demons without distinguishing who they were at all. The victims either ended up being another accomplishment of the magnificent silver-blooded generals or would become cannon fodder in the war soon to come.

Under such circumstances, a lot of displaced low-level demons had been mixed together. Most of them were ignorant and faltering, unable to talk about their origins clearly. Some of them were even wild demons who had lived in the unhabituated forests. It was an utter mess. Identifying every low-level demon clearly was simply an impossible task.

Also, the slave-catching teams from Void Turmoil City were not interested in identifying the prey at all. After all, in their eyes, those demons were nothing but slaves and cannon fodder. Who would care what slaves and cannon fodder used to be?

Li Yao and Jin Xinyue tailed a slave-catching team for three days and three nights to make sure that it was from Void Turmoil City.

Then, everything was simple. They disguised themselves and snuck into a group of refugees that was right in the way of said slave-catching team. They were ‘captured’ by the slave-catching team smoothly as planned.

However, it was not as smooth as it should have been. As the trip continued, Li Yao found it harder and harder to keep his mind stable and to contain his fury. The mental devil had expanded significantly, too.

Wa! Wa! Wa! Wa!

In the upper prison cell of the same cabin, a baby of the chaotic-blood demons was crying loudly. The sound was piercing Li Yao’s eardrums brutally like iron needles.

The chaotic-blood demons were generally alike to human beings, and it was hardly possible to find the features of demons on the babies of the chaotic-blood demons at all.

They looked exactly like plump human infants and would not reveal the features of demons until they were two or three.

During the long journey, Li Yao witnessed the demons who were almost identical to humans being bullied and tortured by the hideous black-blood demons and the bronze-blood demons. His outrage was inevitable.

If the Heaven’s Origin Sector is really swallowed by the Blood Demon Sector one day, this will be the outcome for all the citizens of the Star Glory Federation, won’t it?

The thought burned furiously inside Li Yao’s brain and formed what seemed to be a crimson lotus on which the mental devil was sitting in relaxation and observing everything coldly.

Huala!

Right then, the tentacles of the Land Whale in front of Li Yao suddenly crumbled. A cabin fell from its back and broke apart.

Countless black-blood demons immediately jumped out and dispersed in a hurry to run away.

Those black-blood demons all looked repulsive. They seemed to be enormous beetles, and they were emanating a stinky smell and earsplitting shrieks.

They apparently had a lot of strength. The iron gauze that carried feeble electric currents was torn into pieces after they struggled for a moment.

Li Yao observed the situation through the ventilation tubes in secret.

He heard that a few demons nearby were shouting that the dosage of narcotic drugs was not enough.

In a moment, dozens of brawny demons lunged close, carrying long rods that were almost three meters long and had tentacles that looked like electric eels. Electric arcs were spluttering as they drove the dispersing black-blood demons back to where they should have been.

A black-blood demon that looked like a mantis happened to be passing the Land Whale that Li Yao was on. He was tied up by a few electric whips and finally dragged back.

His blade limbs left eight deep ravines in the red desert, which looked like eight bloody wounds.

Maybe it was only his imagination, but Li Yao felt that he saw fury, sadness, pain, and desperation, everything that could be seen in a human, in the crimson eyes of the demon.

Pu… Pu…

The slave-catching team sprayed a huge amount of pink venomous gas at the black-blood demons. In the middle of the spreading venomous gas, the brightness inside the eyes of the black-blood demons gradually disappeared before they collapsed to the ground one by one and were stuffed into new cabins.

“Do the black-blood demons have to be refined, too?” Li Yao asked Jin Xinyue in a low voice.

“Of course they do,” Jin Xinyue replied. “The black-blood demons are deemed as ‘producers’ in the ‘Four Pillars’ system. Most of the black-blood demons only have the genes of the herbivores. They are not aggressive by nature.

“Even the hideous-looking insects mostly feed on plants and grass. They will not attack other creatures promptly without a cause. How can they form fearless beast tides to fight against human beings without being refined?”

Chapter 865 - Séance and Ghost Flowers

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. He had never considered the question from such a perspective before.

On second thought, it did seem a bit odd. In nature, the number of creatures at the lower level of the food chain was often more than ten times larger than that of the creatures at a higher level.

More specifically speaking, there should have been over ten times more herbivores than carnivores.

Even the insects that seemed repulsive mostly fed upon the juices of flowers and grass. Only a tiny proportion of them would prey on other insects.

Those herbivores naturally were not very aggressive, so why did they turn into monsters who knew nothing except slaughtering after they evolved into demons?

Jin Xinyue chuckled and said in a mosquito-like voice, “In fact, it’s been almost ten thousand years since the narcotic drugs were first employed in the demon race. Generally speaking, the narcotic drugs cooperate with legends and tales. The speaker will preach on the glorious history of the demon race in the beginning. Then, they will talk about the magnificence of the final war. In the end, they will describe how sacred and everlasting the real Pantheon of Demons, where all demons will be bathed in eternal happiness, is.

“After the propaganda, the narcotic drugs are released. Together with secret arts, the demons become delirious and see all kinds of hallucinations—the ancient demons building the entire universe, themselves fighting a hotblooded battle in the final war, or everybody enjoying the eternal happiness after ascending to the splendid Pantheon of Demons.

“In the classics of the demon race, such a ceremony is known as ‘séance’. If the circumstances allow, most high-level demons are educated from a young age through daily séances. Naturally, when they grow up, they will have absolutely no doubt about theories of ‘Obliteration, Rebirth, and Immortality’ of the Pantheon of Demons.

“However, most of the black-blood demons and the chaotic-blood demons are born in underdeveloped areas that are not embraced by the illuminations of the Pantheon of Demons. With a great war coming close, there is no time to refine them slowly. So, it is only necessary to ship them to Void Turmoil City and speed them up with the Fire Ant King’s secret arts.”

Li Yao could tell that there was contempt in her tone. He thought of something and asked, “You don’t believe in theories?”

Jin Xinyue chuckled and said, “I can believe them as long as there are enough benefits.”

While the two of them were whispering to each other, the team moved forward again. After another hour of rushing, they reached the end of the continent, and a surging black ocean appeared on the horizon.

An enormous peninsula extended out of the continent like a sharp fang and pierced deep into the ocean.

In the sky above the peninsula, the electromagnetic field and the spiritual energy were both disordered, forming what seemed to be a colorful swirl that was partially surrounded by a weird dark cloud. Thunder was echoing every once in a while, and dazzling lightning was running down. But the other half side of the sky was sunny, and the scorching sunlight stabbed deep into the earth like glamourous blades.

Li Yao looked afar and noticed very out of place mountain. The mountain was riddled with holes everywhere. However, when Li Yao observed more carefully, he discovered that overlapping skyscrapers that congregated into an enormous metropolis.

“Void Turmoil City is here!”

Li Yao was greatly refreshed. This was the first time he had ever observed a big city of the Blood Demon Sector at a close distance. Naturally, he would not miss a single detail.

On the red earth leading to the peninsula, a broad road paved by gray rocks gradually appeared. Two statues huge statues were standing on either side of the road. They were pure white and flawless. There was no sign of joints at all. Each statue seemed to be carved out of a single piece of jade.

Of the two statues, the first one was a man and a woman who had human heads and snake bodies. Their snake bodies were interweaved into a perfect double helix. With a closer look, one would notice that endless scriptures had been engraved on every scale of the snake bodies. Complicated information seemed to have been stored on them.

Although they were not wearing anything and their skin was touching, the male and the female were solemn and gave absolutely no lecherous feelings. On the contrary, they imposed the urge to kneel down and worship them upon anybody who saw them.

The other statue was a magnificent warrior with three legs and six arms. Enormous horns protruded out of the temples of the statue and pointed at the sky!

Although they were made of white jade, the statues seemed to be alive and releasing an overwhelming aura to all directions incessantly, making anybody who looked at them feel impatient and the passion of killing.

“The two statues are both powerful magical equipment!” The mental devil suddenly spoke in his head. “Especially the statue that represents slaughtering and fighting. It boasts enticing glamour that can increase one’s killing intent by ten times without them knowing! Interesting. Very interesting!”

Li Yao was suddenly alarmed. The two statues must have been the ancient demons in the legends, but who built them exactly?

The Demon Beast Empire had ruled over the sea of stars for thirty thousand years. Although they were known as ‘demons’, they actually passed on the language, culture, and system of mankind. How many secrets had been buried during the thirty thousand years? It was indeed intriguing.

The team of Land Whales passed through the gate made of the two enormous statues and officially entered the territory of Void Turmoil City. On the two sides of the road were dense gardens that were colorful and quite beautiful when looked at from afar.

However, when Li Yao enhanced his vision and observed more carefully by adjusting his pupils and his crystalline lens, he discovered that the plants inside the gardens were quite weird.

They looked like tentacles extending from the underground and pointing at the sky. Every tentacle was packed with dense sucking discs that were emitting mysterious fluorescence. Together with the spores that surrounded them, the plants gave a frightening sense of beauty.

At the tip of the tentacles was an enormous ball bag that looked like a dandelion magnified countless time. It was quite puffy and drifting like a balloon.

In the breeze, the thousands of devilish tentacles were dancing along the wind. They looked like a heavily polluted cesspit. Anybody who saw them would feel their blood freezing.

Right then, dozens of giant eagles flew close in the sky, with the tamers sitting in the seats that were tied on their back with harnesses. The eagles were snatching animals such as lambs and calves. When they reached the location, they simply released the animals into the weird gardens.

In a moment, earsplitting hissing sounds filled the gardens. All the tentacles were waving crazily as if they had just been charged with electricity. Every sucking disc was wide open, revealing vicious grinding organs. The lambs and the calves were all torn apart and absorbed in, only to be entirely devoured within a breath without the slightest trace of their bones left.

While Li Yao was amazed, one of the eagles seemed to become the target for one of the tentacles because of its low altitude.

The tentacle constricted violently like a spring before it suddenly jerked up and dashed almost a hundred meters into the sky, snatching the claw of the eagle and dragging it down by force!

The eagle struggled hard and even tore off the claw in its panic.

But there was no time. At this moment, the eagle was only around seventy meters from the ground. Almost twenty tentacles sprinted out and immediately tied the eagle up without leaving any gaps.

Both the eagle and the tamer did not even have time to scream before they turned into a cluster of bloody mist, eaten up by the greedy predators!

The tentacles that had enjoyed their food grew even more eye-catching than before. The ball bags at the top expanded, too, a colorful mist that drifted into the sky.

“They are ‘Ghost Flowers’. They have to be fed with fresh meat and blood every day. When they mature, the liquids secreted from the ball bags become the best ingredients to produce the narcotic drugs,” Jin Xinyue explained. “Void Turmoil City is at the center of the electromagnetic swirl of the Blood Demon Sector. The climate is very unstable. It is unfavorable for all kinds of plants. Therefore, it was never developed before.

“But the Fire Ant King somehow discovered that the area is particularly suitable to develop the narcotic and the berserker plants!

“When he first established his city in this place, many demons mocked him, but after his endeavor proved to be a success, nobody dared to laugh at him anymore.”

Deep in thought, Li Yao looked further ahead.

Around Void Turmoil City, across the entire peninsula, there were gardens and breeding bases everywhere.

Other than the brutal and hungry Ghost Flowers, Li Yao also saw another thousand or so bizarre-shaped plants.

The ‘Dragon Hunter Grass’ that lurked in the soil and suddenly dashed out to hunt, the ‘Thorny Flower’ that looked like holothurian on land with thorns all over its body and could fire deadly acid, the ‘Rainbow Umbrella’ that had a thin fragrance that could cast the victims into frenzy without them knowing…

Those plants were both the ingredients to refine all kinds of drugs and the best guards of Void Turmoil City because of their aggressiveness and their hallucinogenic effects.

Li Yao pondered hard about how he could have snuck into Void Turmoil City through the gardens that covered dozens of square kilometers if he was not pretending to be a chaotic-blood demon.

After considering for a long time, he was not confident that he would have been able to at all.

He could help not but grow wary of the Fire Ant King, the master of Void Turmoil City.

Passing through an area of black vines that soared up into the sky, they entered the downtown area of Void Turmoil City.

Li Yao’s first impression on the city was ‘disorderly’ and ‘barbaric’.

Although there were skyscrapers in the city, too, they were not made of rebar and cement but constructed by hollow weird, giant trees. Those giant trees were hundreds of meters in diameter. Not only were the hollowed trunks the best zone for activity, the branches stretching in various directions also interweaved into the best channels in the air, too.

According to Jin Xinyue, even the roots of the trees deep below the ground were all important means of transportation. Countless demons often came and went between the roots of different trees. It was quite convenient.

Such giant tree buildings, although hollowed, were not dead yet but still growing at a very slowly speed. Like the demon beasts, they were the products of generations of genetic modification and refinement, too.

Li Yao saw that many demons strode out of the neatly made tree holes proudly. When they reached the end of the branches, many flying demon beasts would immediately fly to them and carry them to their destinations in Void Turmoil City. There was apparently order in the seemingly messy city. Despite the odd appearance of the city and the citizens, Li Yao felt that they were actually no different from their counterparts in the Star Glory Federation.

Chapter 866 - Skeleton Island

All the brutal bandits of the Blood Demon Sector had gathered in Void Turmoil City. Due to their different living habits, the city was divided into almost ten districts whose environments were different from each other. The team of the Land Whales passed through the forest district, the swamp district, the neve district, and the desert district. Some of the districts were divided by high mountains and waterfalls, while some others were blocked by man-made rune arrays. It was told that there was an enormous undersea district at the end of the peninsula that was specially designed for the Sea Clan.

Seeing that almost a million different kinds of demons were living in the same city peacefully, the more fashionable of whom were even driving shuttles from the Heaven's Origin Sector instead of riding eagles or other flying demon beasts, even Li Yao was dazzled and quite amazed.

Very soon, after a prolonged shriek, the Land Whales spurted bright green gas up into the sky. The full airbags around their body were clearly emptied as they gradually lowered their altitude and velocity.

In the front was an enormous square made of black rocks, which was the center of Void Turmoil City.

Jin Xinyue whispered to him, "We are about to arrive at the 'Four Pillars Square' of Void Turmoil City. All newly captured black-blood demons and chaotic-blood demons are gathered and screened in the Four Pillars Square first.

“The docile and weak ones can be refined into servants and maids; the not-so-strong ones can be refined into slaves for mining and tending to the demonic plants; the strong ones can be refined into soldiers for the war to come. As for the exceptionally strong and yet impetuous ones, they are the unstable factor among the slaves, and they will be sent into the arena to become gladiators.

“The biggest arena in Void Turmoil City is known as ‘Skeleton Island’. It is in the top tier even taking all the arenas of the Blood Demon Sector into account. That’s our target!

“Before, in order to trade for intelligence, I’ve been to Void Turmoil City several times and observed the combat of the gladiators on the Skeleton Island. They were indeed marvelous, blood-freezing games.

“I once saw a black-blood demon being ripped apart by a demon beast and losing his left arm and the majority of his heart. It was clear that there was no way that he could survive. The staff on the Skeleton Island tossed him into the ‘Thousand Corpse Abyss’ to get rid of him.

“The Thousand Corpse Abyss is a natural cave deep inside the Skeleton Island. At the bottom of the cave, countless ferocious demon beasts are locked up. Whenever a dead body falls down, they will immediately be devoured by the demon beasts. There won’t even be scraps of their bones left. Nobody can survive their attack.

“The black-blood demon was using a special combat skill named ‘Hundred Soft Killing’, which aroused my interest and gave me some enlightenment. He left a deep impression on me, and there was no way that I would mistake somebody else for him.

“He was clearly dead, but during the ‘Riot of Bloody Blade’, I ran into the black-blood demon by accident again.

“Although his appearance was slightly different and his combat style had changed, I had a very familiar feeling. Then, as I expected, he performed the ‘Hundred Soft Killing’ at the perilous moment when I tested him, with exactly the same form as before!

“Therefore, I am certain that he was the gladiator who should’ve been killed on the Skeleton Island!

“But right now, he has turned into a member of the Blade of Chaos, and even a captain in it, with a higher capability than before!

“I felt that something was greatly wrong. Therefore, I did not ask for any of my subordinates’ help and captured the black-blood demon in secret by myself, hoping to elicit the information from him.

“His tongue was rather tough, and he didn’t give me much valuable information. But there was indeed a faint scar resulting from tearing on the joint of his left arm and his shoulder blade. The entire left arm seemed to be sewed back to his body after the accident.

“His heart was quite weird, too. It displayed the features of two different kinds of demons at the same time.

“I was pretty sure that he was an out-and-out black-blood demon in the beginning. How could his heart show the features of two types of demons?

“It was this incident that made me grow more and more suspicious about the Blade of Chaos. I investigated in secret and got more and more involved. Later, by accident, I discovered Elder Nether Spring’s uncanny attitude toward the Blade of Chaos. I dug deeper into it, and you know the rest.

“Based on the few words of the black-blood demon and the proof that I grasped, ‘Skeleton Island’ is very likely an important bureau of the Blade of Chaos, and there is something seriously wrong with ‘Yuchi Ba’, the boss of the Skeleton Island!

“On the surface, the Skeleton Island is a cruel arena, but in fact, it is probably the ‘boot camp’ to select the elite warriors for the Blade of Chaos!

“But whether or not it is the case will require your thorough investigation or even a personal ‘chitchat’ with Yuchi Ba.”

On their trip, Jin Xinyue had explained the whole plan multiple times. However, she was still scared that the unpredictable old monster would prefer the straightforward method. She repeated without getting bored, “I know that, with Elder’s capability, you can rage inside Void Turmoil City and find Yuchi Ba directly.

“However, Yuchi Ba is extremely prudent, and he brings a lot of bodyguards wherever he goes. He rarely shows up by himself.

“If his Skeleton Island is really the boot camp of the Blade of Chaos, his valiance and wisdom must be extremely impressive, too, considering that the Fire Ant King is right next to him.

“Right now, the Blade of Chaos is being struck heavily, and it is the most perilous moment for him. Will he acknowledge his identity if you pay an unannounced visit to him?

“More importantly, we don’t know whether or not there are the spies of the Fire Ant King and even Elder Nether Spring around Yuchi Ba. It will be a disaster if we alarm them and expose the secrets of the Skeleton Island and Yuchi Ba.

“Therefore, I’m afraid that Elder must sneak into the Skeleton Island in order to approach Yuchi Ba.

“According to the tradition of the Skeleton Island, if a gladiator can survive five battles on the island, they will be invited to meet Yuchi Ba and regain their freedom. Yuchi Ba will refer them to high-level demons as killers, assassins, or bodyguards.

“I assume that they are probably the spies that Yuchi Ba sends out. Since those killers, assassins, and bodyguards are around the high-level demons, it is only natural that they can provide a constant, accurate stream of intelligence for the Blade of Chaos.

“The battles on the Skeleton Island are quite cruel, and it is nigh on impossible for normal gladiators to pass five of them, but with Elder’s capability, it should be as easy as pie. I believe that you will be able to approach Yuchi Ba and find out what exactly he is up to very soon, Elder.

“As for me, I have turned into a human being right now. Although I can pretend to be chaotic-blood demon, my real identity will certainly be revealed should I engage in combat!

“Therefore, I’m afraid that I cannot enter the Skeleton Island with you, Elder, but I will spend the time while you are inside gathering the latest intelligence here.

“This is about the whole plan. Do you have any suggestions, Elder?”

Li Yao slightly nodded.

He was not really a disobedient brutal demon from forty thousand years ago. Such stealth and infiltration operations were what he was best at. Naturally, he did not feel uncomfortable at all.

On his way here, Li Yao had been observing the slave-catching team of Void Turmoil City, too.

The slave catchers were all tough, well-trained demons who were mostly above the level of demon general. They were adept at combat in all terrains, and they could even spot the demons who were lurking in crevices.

If compared to the army of the Star Glory Federation, those slave catchers were definitely elite special forces.

The slave catchers who were sent out on regular missions were already so strong. How awesome would the real elites around the Fire Ant King be?

Besides, the Fire Ant King was a middle-level demon emperor who was adept at refining narcotic and berserker plants. He must have prepared a lot of drugs to boost his combat ability. There was no telling how terrifying his strength would be in a real battlefield at all.

According to Li Yao’s calculations, if he triggered the full strength of the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage, with the enhancement of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, he was naturally not scared of the Fire Ant King.

However, without resorting to his capability as a Cultivator and his crystal suit, it would be troublesome for him to fight against the Fire Ant King just based on the primeval force that he had only been practicing for half a month.

It was like two soldiers of similar physical strength, one with professional combat training and the other knowing nothing about it, engaged in a fight. The winner of the battle would be obvious.

Chi!

The Land Whales were all spurting out air currents from the top of their heads, wreathing the spacious square in a faint fog. The tentacles of the Land Whales interweaved with each other slowly into a web that led to the ground.

“Get down now! Get down now!”

All the cabins were opened. The slave catchers drove the prey away from the vehicles rudely, waving their electric whips. Rows of guards in black armor were standing afar together with the biochemical beasts, which were higher than many buildings.

All the biochemical beasts were silent, but the intimidating aura that they released was like enclosing high walls that were suffocating the prey.

On the backs of the biochemical beasts, on comfortable silk seats, hundreds of silver-blood demons were sitting and talking in a high mood.

They were all there to pick slaves.

The black-blood demons and the chaotic-blood demons were mostly raised up in nature. They were used to the free lifestyle in the wilderness, and now that they had been captured and locked in the narrow cabins for several days, they were more than pissed.

The moment they were released, the square was a mess. Cries, moans, screams, and roars resounded with each other. The entire square seemed like it would explode at any moment.

Li Yao observed the surroundings with great interest. On every corner of the square was an enormous pillar with vivid patterns painted on it. On the first pillar, many elegant-looking, obscure demons were bathed in divine lights. On the second pillar, some demons wearing glamorous armor were commanding an intense battle. On the third pillar were demons in simple hides or without protection at all slashing enemies that looked like noodles with their blades. On the fourth pillar, countless demons were mining and farming.

The four giant pillars were in gold, silver, bronze, and black respectively.

Li Yao was aware that the four pillars represented the saint-blood demons, the silver-blood demons, the bronze-blood demons, and the black-blood demons. They were the ‘Four Pillars’ of the entire demon race.

As for the chaotic-blood demons, they did not have a place in such a system.

Chapter 867 - Defian

867 Defian

“The headhunters of the Skeleton Island and all other forces are now observing the newly-arrived slaves. The cruelest and most defiant ones will be picked by the headhunters from the Skeleton Island and become gladiators of the Skeleton Island.”

Jin Xinyue remind him for the last time, “Normal demons, if talented and having grown up in perilous areas that are frequented by demon beasts, might have the capability of high-level demon solider or low-level demon general in terms of physical strength and speed. However, they have never received special training before, and they do not know how to make the best use of their talents. In most cases, they are fighting without any skills by simply resorting to their physical strength and their aggressiveness. Please do bear that in mind, Elder, and don’t expose that you are actually far stronger than them.”

Li Yao nodded.

In fact, he did not know too many demon combat skills in the first place. The previous two battles he had been involved in were won merely based on his physical strength and his experience.

I can suppress my capability to one tenth the original and pretend to be a hunter who has been raised in the wilderness amid the demon beasts. I have the strength and speed between the high-level demon soldier and the low-level demon general, and I fight solely with my natural instincts, Li Yao thought to himself. Just consider the journey to the Skeleton Island as a special training session!

He thought for a moment and then asked Jin Xinyue in a low voice, “How can I be ‘defiant’ enough to catch the Skeleton Island’s attention?”

Jin Xinyue smiled and pointed her chin at Li Yao’s back. “Just like… them.”

Li Yao was dazed for a moment, when he heard shouts and yells not far away, along with the noises of a fierce fight.

Soon, a black shadow flew in front of them and crashed into the ground after a heavy landing.

It was a slave catcher in armor.

On the solid breastplate was a giant hole from which black blood was flowing out unstoppably.

Li Yao looked back and saw that more than ten muscular demons were roaring in outrage under the suppression of dozens of slave catchers!

The skin of the muscular demons was dark and shining, with bone pins everywhere on it, making their skin look like a natural armor. They were all more than three meters tall, and their shoulders were almost two meters wide. They appeared to be black iron towers that were stabbed into the ground.

On the head of every muscular demon was two thick bull horns. Their faces were also crimson like the faces of infuriated bulls!

Ho! Ho! Ho!

The bull-horned muscular demons bashed their chests crazily while red smoke popped out of their nostrils, as if their entire brain was on fire.

With their dull roars, their body size further expanded. Red brightness was surfacing on their skin, and all their muscles bulged out. Their bodies, which could not have been more athletic, seemed to be made of entire blocks of red bronze!

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Their knees bent to the front. Their thick veins tied up their tights like giant boas while they stomped on the ground hard with their enormous hoofs, leaving cracks that looked like a spider web on the black rocks of the square!

Li Yao’s eyes suddenly shone. Those muscular demons seemed to be the ‘Red-Blooded Bronze Bulls’, one of the toughest types of bronze-blood demons!

Back when Li Yao was in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, he had browsed through the files of many demons. The Red-Blooded Bronze Bulls were among the toughest, most furious ones even taking all the bronze-blood demons into account. They were best known for their momentum and sturdiness. They had six stomachs in their body, four of which were used to digest normal food at an extremely high frequency as if they could perform the Art of the Swallowing Whale naturally while the other two stomachs could even devour and digest crystals and metals directly. In their battle frenzy, their skin would secrete the crystals and metal elements, forming a layer of solid, natural armor!

According to the tests of the Cultivators of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the natural armor of the Red-Blooded Bronze Bulls could withstand the head-on bombardment of a ‘Pure Sun’-level crystal cannon three times!

Although they were not very agile normally, their short-distance sprint when they were infuriated could approach or even surpass the speed of sound.

When they threw themselves over like cannonballs, they could easily smash a heavy crystal tank weighing more than a hundred tons away into the sky!

On the list of the most threatening demons in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Red-Blooded Bronze Bulls was in a higher place than many silver-blood demons!

With a careful look, Li Yao soon discovered that those muscular demons were not pure Red-Blooded Bronze Bulls.

The pure Red-Blooded Bronze Bulls had narrow, long tails with puffy hair on them, which were used to drive away the annoying bugs of the Blood Demon Sector.

But the tails of the muscular demons were thick and long, with scattered scales that were surrounded by a layer of vague flames.

When they were infuriated, they whipped their tails and straightened them like spears!

Those are… Kirin tails!

Li Yao realized that those muscular demons boasted features of the Red-Blooded Bronze Bulls and a certain Kirin race simultaneously. They were clearly chaotic-blood demons.

Heavy manacles and shackles had been imposed upon the muscular demons. Many of the restraints were carved with glamorous stripes, indicating that they were magical equipment with barriers.

However, it was clear that such restraints were not enough to lock the bull-horned muscular demons. After only a moment, they were all broken apart.

On their journey here, they might have been injected with abundant narcotic drugs, But now that the effects of the drugs had passed, and they had been freed from the specially-made black iron prison cells, they were immediately infuriated and went out on a rampage.

Just now, one of the slave catchers was blown away by them directly in his carelessness.

However, those muscular demons had never received special training after all and were merely fighting with their natural instincts.

On the other hand, the slave-catchers were all experts adept at the secret arts of training, and they were all used to such fusses.

Very soon, the slave catches blocked the muscular demons from other chaotic-blood demons with stockades made of bones. Then some ten fat, caterpillar-like demon beasts were led to the front and asked to spurt yellow and brown liquids toward the disobedient newcomers.

The liquids were apparently very sticky. When the rampant muscular demons got in touch with them, their movement was immediately slowed down.

If the Red-Blooded Bronze Bulls start rushing, they will cause great damage. The slave catchers are trying to limit their zone of activity!

Li Yao immediately realized what was going on.

Huala! Huala!

An enormous web that was full of thorns was thrown toward the muscular demons!

Those muscular demons were not clearly not a bunch of mobs. They were probably from the same tribe. In the emergency, one of the demons who had a circle of white hair on his neck and a broken right horn, with three deep claw traces on his right eye, shouted and commanded the Red-Blooded Bronze Bulls into a battle formation that was tight on the outside and loose in the middle.

The four muscular demons at the edge opened their arms and took all the mucus and the web while the Red-Blooded Bronze Bulls in the inner circles started rushing and bringing up their speed under the cover of their companions!

Now is the time!

Li Yao looked at Jin Xinyue deeply. While everybody's attention was focused on the bull-horned muscular demons, he made his way to the leader of the slave catchers quietly through the crowd.

His body was as magnificent as a fierce tiger, but his footsteps were as soft as a leopard. The panicked chaotic-blood demons were his best cover while he approached the target, escaping everyone's attention.

The leader of the slave catchers was a bear demon more than 3.5 meters tall. According to Li Yao's observations, his capability was in the middle level of the demon general state, but other than his horrifying physical strength, speed and agility seemed to be his biggest weakness.

With Li Yao’s capability, killing a middle-level demon general was as easy as slapping a fly.

However, he could only wield the strength and speed of a high-level demon soldier, since so many people were watching him, and he had to leave a deep impression on the bystanders!

Li Yao thought quickly and observed the situation of the battle. He calculated the speed of the muscular demons and the damage that they could possibly deal while he selected his weapons inside his brain.

Very soon, his fingers became soft and boneless, but his fingernails grew longer and longer with sharper and sharper edges, like five coldly blinking razor blades.

The Thousand Finger Soft Bone was a secret art that he had practiced for ten years that could allow the fingers to break the limits of joints and become unbelievably agile.

The Thousand Finger Soft Bone was the most fundamental body-building technique and did not rely on much spiritual energy. Besides, it was from the era of ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago. Li Yao believed that few demons in the Blood Demon Sector could recognize it. It would not be odd if he claimed it to be a certain naturally-endowed technique.

Li Yao was aware that there were not too many chaotic-blood demons who had distinctive features of exactly two types of demons, such as the bull-horned muscular demons here.

Most of the chaotic-demons were often mixed with several vastly different features, some of which were so bizarre that there was no telling where they originated from at all.

What was awakened with the uncanny features was the disordered, strange talents.

Shua!

When he was trying to approach the innermost circle of the slave catchers, his presence was finally detected.

Two slave catchers were dazed for a moment and pointed their electric whips at him.

However, Li Yao already crouched and rushed toward them!

Chi! Chi!

He could not activate his top speed. The two electric whips fell on his back one after the other.

Although the spluttering electric arcs gave him no feeling other than tickling, he still pretended that he was foaming and cramping!

But his movement was not hindered by the attack. Instead, he held back the ‘excruciating pain’ and dashed past the two slave catchers while his left arm phantomized into a streak of black brightness. After two explosions, the two slave catchers immediately bulged their eyes and held their necks, but blood was already flooding out of the gaps of their fingers!

“Huh?”

Not far away, on the back of the few black behemoths that looked like mountains, the silver-blood demons wearing glamorous silk robes beamed with interest.

“His speed is fast, and his body is tough enough to resist two attacks of the electric whips?”

“His attack was quite fierce, mixed with the feeling style of several demon beasts. It is obvious that he must’ve been a hunter in the forest!”

His sharp and fierce attack naturally caused the counterattack of more slave catchers. Almost ten electric whips swept at Li Yao overwhelmingly!

This time, Li Yao did not dodge at all. Instead, he screamed in the middle of the dancing electric arcs, with a twitching face and a miserable expression, as if he were really suffering from great pain.

He had achieved his purpose.

By attracting the attention of almost ten slave catchers, he had already created a tiny opening for the muscular demons who had reached their most rampant point!The Kirin ([tɕʰǐ.lǐn]; Chinese:) is a mythical hooved chimerical creature known in Chinese and other East Asian cultures, said to appear with the imminent arrival or passing of a sage or illustrious ruler.

Chapter 868 - Gladiators

For the bull-horned muscular demons, the opening came at the right time. They were able to cause the most damage with their rushing speed. Just like ten raging crystal tanks, they knocked away several slave catchers in the blink of an eye before they crashed into the fat ‘caterpillars’!

Those caterpillars that were spurting out mucus were fat and clumsy. It was very difficult for them to turn quickly. They were the most typical examples of shooters and definitely no match for the muscular horns in a head-on clash. Very soon, they were all rolling on the ground with wounds all over their bodies.

The spluttering electric whips were hitting the muscular demons brutally, and the webs full of thorns cut deep into their skin armor. However, none of the hinderances could stop them from unleashing their savageness.

Influenced by them, many black-blood demons and chaotic demons captured together with them were seething. The square was like a calm ocean before the arrival of a storm!

Shua!

The guards of the Fire Ant King all unsheathed their blades and bared their teeth and claws, ready to go forward and take control of the situation at any moment.

Hooo!

The leader of the slave catchers, seeing that his subordinates were so useless, seemed to be greatly humiliated. Black wind suddenly circled around his arms and then spread out, blocking the collision of two bull-horned muscular demons like a high black wall!

BOOM!

Three rushing crystal trains seemed to have crashed. The bear demon fought two enemies entirely on his own, yet there was no sign that he was under any pressure. He grinned hideously while he grabbed the horns on the enemies’ head and forced them back. He then waved his arms hard, throwing the two muscular demons who were more than three meters tall and weighed several tons high into the sky!

It was a perfect demonstration of the unbelievable strength of a middle-level demon general!

The terrifying strength made the furious Red-Blooded Bronze Bulls all shiver for a moment. The leader of the slave catchers burst into laughter and leapt in front of the leader of the muscular demons who had a circle of white hair on his neck!

Hu! Hu!

Scorching air currents were surrounding both of them, rubbing until sparks seemed to be bursting out.

BOOM! BOOM!

The two equally strong demons that looked like two black iron towers pushed their arms against each other’s, which were expanding as if they were balloons being blown.

The black rocks below their feet exploded into pieces one after another, only to be bound by their intimidating aura and drift into the air, getting rid of the control of gravity!

The leader of the bull-horned muscular demons, due to the lack of professional training, was no match for the bear demon after all. The veins on his arms exploded one after another, with bloody mist spreading out!

But he simply bulged his eyes and gritted his teeth, carrying on the fight. When the pain was at its worst, even his broken horn seemed to be shedding blood!

“Get down now!” the bear demon roared. Under the suppression of the enormous strength, cracking noises were echoing on the straight spine and legs of the bull-horned muscular demon, indicating that his bones would be broken if he did not lower his head!

Right then, an abrupt change took place!

Nobody had noticed that Li Yao, who seemed to have ‘passed out’ after cramping and rolling on the ground for a while because of the slapping of almost ten electric whips, had rolled to the bear demon’s foot quietly.

Right now, the square was in an utter mess. Hundreds of feet, claws, and hoofs were moving here and there. He had already been drowned in the crowd of demons.

Right at the most crucial moment of the competition between the bear demon and the leader of the Red-Blooded Bronze Bulls, Li Yao suddenly jumped up from behind the bear demon and hugged the bear demon from the rear while he threw his left arm to the front, extending his middle finger and his index finger into the bear demon’s left eye!

“Ahhh!”

The bear demon did not expect that somebody would ambush him from behind. Suffering from the sharp pain, he shook his body hard!

Chi!

Li Yao pretended that he had been knocked away by the attack and vomited a mouthful of blood, but he took the opportunity to pull the bear demon’s left eyeball out!

The bear demon’s head was dizzy due to the excruciating pain. Because of the distraction, his arms were entirely twisted after two cracking noises by the leader of the bull-horned muscular demons.

The leader roared. The skin armor on his body exploded, revealing muscles that were as red as fire. He lowered his head, pushed forward, and raised the bear demon up with his horn!

The square was immediately caught in chaos.

The guards of the Fire Ant King finally entered the field to restore order.

The guards were mostly the brutal demons from various places around the Blood Demon Sector who were guilty of major crimes. They were much stronger than the slave catchers, and the electric arcs released from their whips were multiple times more dazzling, too.

Li Yao lay on the ground dutifully, as if he were suffering from internal bleeding because of the bear demon’s final attack. He simply held his head while the electric whips were slapping everybody randomly.

However, his mind was clearer than ever. He released his telepathic thoughts and observed his surroundings.

He saw that, on the back of a black giant beast, several silver-blood demons were pointing at him and whispering to each other. There was a bizarre-shaped badge of a skull on their chests.

Jin Xinyue had mentioned that it was the symbol of the Skeleton Island.

I believe this is ‘defiant’ enough, is it not? Li Yao thought to himself.

If the Skeleton Island was still not interested in him after everything he had done just now, he would have to run away first and figure out a way to approach Yuchi Ba, the master of Skeleton Island, more straightforwardly.

…

Three hours later, in the southwest of the Void Turmoil Peninsula, several enormous flying bat rays were gliding toward the black ocean.

The body of the flying bat rays was broad and thin. They looked like hundreds-of-meters-long flying carpets. Many demons were crammed on them right now.

Li Yao was sitting at the center of the back of a flying bat ray, with almost five chains tying him up. The thorns on the chains had pierced into his skin and flesh deeply. After every tiny moment, dazzling electric arcs would burst out of the chains.

For him, the electric current of such a degree was no more exciting than picking his ears.

But he still showed them some respect by grimacing for quite a while.

A lot of black-blood demons and chaotic-blood demons were sitting around him. They were all the rebels just now who had dared to fight back.

However, the tough demons would rather cram into the crowd than approach Li Yao. They eyed him as if he were a terrifying monster.

After all, not everybody had the capability to grab the eyeball of a middle-level demon general.

Two silver-blood demons were sitting at the front of the flying bat rays, observing Li Yao with great interest. Greedy chuckles could be heard every now and then. They seemed to be calculating how many entertaining matches the tough demon could join and how much income he could bring to the Skeleton Island.

Very soon, the Skeleton Island was right in front of their eyes.

If the Void Turmoil Peninsula was a tusk that pierced from the continent to the ocean, then the Skeleton Island was a drop of blood at the tip of the tusk.

Looking from the sky, the Skeleton Island was really a deformed skull. The upper half of the island had a lake and a swamp, like a black eye and a white one, and the lower half of the island consisted of interconnected sharp rocks that looked like the teeth of a skeleton.

The demon race worshipped the idea of survival of the fittest. Watching and even being part of a pit fight was the most fashionable sport in the demon race. The silver-blood demons who considered themselves patricians would have a match every few days to show their valiance and their ruthlessness.

Therefore, during the thirty-thousand-year reign of the Demon Beast Empire, various kinds of arenas and abattoirs had been established across its territory. Many relics were even kept to this day.

The best example to prove the popularity of wrestling in the Demon Beast Empire would be the ‘Supreme Emperor’, who had been a gladiator in the beginning but established the Star Ocean Imperium and led the renaissance of mankind!

Arenas were the most important training and socializing places for the demons. It was not just a location where matches were held. There were also luxury facilities such as training rooms, medication chambers, and clubs.

The most advanced arenas of the Blood Demon Sector were in the capitals of the four most powerful kingdoms and the headquarters of the Pantheon of Demons.

However, Void Turmoil City was the center of trade for slaves and strengthening drugs. Every day, countless silver-blood demons would go there to pick slaves and purchase strengthening drugs. While they stayed in the city, watching the matches in the arena was great entertainment.

Therefore, the Skeleton Island was among the best ones even taking all the arenas of the Blood Demon Sector into consideration. It also boasted a large, special experimental field where the toughest gladiators were used to test the combat ability of strong biochemical beasts.

“Now that you have arrived in the Skeleton Island, don’t have inappropriate thoughts anymore!”

The flying bat rays lowered their altitude and slowly landed on the Skeleton Island. One of the staff of the Skeleton Island stood up, lashing his electric whip, before he shouted, “Take a look around. You are now surrounded by a vast ocean in which the most brutal demon beasts are waiting for food day and night. There is no way that you can escape!

“However, if you are smart enough to show your bravery on the Skeleton Island instead, chances are that you might be able to change your fate forever!

“In the past, you were the lowliest black-blood demons and chaotic-blood demons who made a living by turning over every stone on your way in the wilderness. What kind of life was that?

“Just now, your aggressiveness and brutality earned you a minor chance, but it remains to be seen whether or not you can grasp it!

“From now on, you will take the most powerful strengthening drugs and receive the enlightenment of the real experts on the Skeleton Island. What you are going to do is no different from what you are familiar with in the jungles. Hunting and killing!

“After every victory, you will be able to enjoy delicious food that you’ve never tasted before. You will also have access to the strengthening drugs and training techniques of a higher level!

“After five victories, you will be able to regain your freedom. The master of the island will meet you in person and refer you to powerful nobles. You will have a meteoric rise!

“Hehe. If that is still not enough for you, then let me tell you something else. If you fight here obediently and win five battles, even your family will regain freedom, too!”

At the beginning, most of the demons were rather lethargic and not interested in the propaganda of the silver-blood demon, but hearing his last sentence, all of the demons raised up their heads, excitement beaming out of their eyes.

The hairy mammal demons, the scaly reptilian demons, and even the weirdly-shaped, ugly insect demons were all filled with hope when they heard ‘family’!

Li Yao observed the reactions of the demons in secret. Their humane countenance impressed him and cast him into confusion again.

Chapter 869 - New Blood

“Do you… mean it?” a chaotic-blood demon covered in scales, with a lower body resembling that of a boa and a sharp bone blade on his right forearm, asked.

His tongue was exceptionally long and bifurcated, making it difficult for him to talk, but Li Yao could easily make out the earnestness in his words.

The staff of the Skeleton Island smiled and said slowly, “The Skeleton Island has grown into the greatest arena of Void Turmoil City with nothing except one word—’rules’. Whoever wins five battle will be granted freedom. It is a promise that the master of this island made to the Fire Ant King. Even if you do not believe in the master of the island, you should at least believe in the Fire Ant King!”

The staff glanced over them and continued. “On the Skeleton Island, there are also a lot of free gladiators. They have won five victories and are free to come and go. If you are unwilling to be the subordinates of the nobles, you can stay on the Skeleton Island as tutors or to join the battles again. One victory is enough for you to earn more than you have earned in the last ten years! When you meet them, you can ask them if it is true!”

Maybe because they believed his words, or maybe because they realized that the Skeleton Island was a secluded place with nowhere to run to, the obstreperous demons finally calmed down and landed on an empty field at the southeast of the Skeleton Island.

The demons on the flying bay rays walked down one after another. Only a few of them were still secured in rattling shackles.

Li Yao discovered that, on another flying bay ray not far away, the ten or so mutated Red Blood Bronze Bulls were wearing the same shackles as his. They were staggering down under the watch of the vigilant staff.

The muscular demon who had a circle of white hair on his neck and a broken horn sensed Li Yao's observation. He grinned at Li Yao, revealing teeth that were even larger than Li Yao's toes. He then raised the shackles on his hands. There was kindness in his smile, but there was more misery.

Li Yao raised his shackles, too, and waved them at the demon.

Right then, the two workers walked to Li Yao with great wariness and observed him for a long time before they opened their mouths and said, "Hey. You must have a clear understanding about the environment here now. It is better to try your luck in securing five victories than to escape, isn't it?"

Li Yao looked around. The Skeleton Island was essentially a primitive forest that was ten times more gloomy than the Devil Flood Dragon Island where he had fought before. The trees were standing like swords, sabers, and spears. At the end of the forest, the roars of the ocean were coming over.

The electromagnetic field of the Void Turmoil Peninsula was extremely chaotic. Invisible turbulence was everywhere above the ocean, too. For the demons who were able to fly, it was easy for them to get caught in the turbulence and fall into the ocean.

In the eyes of normal demons, it was indeed a devastating situation without any escape.

The worker spoke again. “We have been informed that you also have a sister. It will be a clean death if you get killed in the ocean when you run away, but your sister will be tortured for all eternity because of you. You wouldn’t want that, would you?”

Li Yao secretly chuckled. He was certain that few, if any, in the entire Blood Demon Sector was clever enough to torture Jin Xinyue.

But on the surface, he simply nodded.

“Excellent.” The worker was quite satisfied. “Judging from your attack, I can say that you are a tough one. But the years of hunting in the wilderness were too much of a waste of your talents. Fighting on the Skeleton Island, although dangerous, gives you access to strong techniques and drugs as well as the enlightenment of real experts. I believe that your capability will improve quickly!

“After you win five battles, both you and your sister will embrace a bright future. With the protection of the Skeleton Island and Void Turmoil City, nobody would dare lay their finger on you even if you walk out in daylight! Have you thought through everything?”

Li Yao nodded for the third time.

The worker observed him for a long time and noticed nothing wrong on his face. Finally, he chose to believe Li Yao temporarily and threw a key over. “Unlock the shackles yourself!”

The key was in the shape of a frozen bug, but after it reached Li Yao's hand, the bug was gradually woken up and wriggled about. Li Yao was quite amazed.

Although Li Yao could break the shackle after a slight struggle, the lock produced in the secret arts of the demon race was still a big eye-opener for him.

Very soon, all the dangerous newcomers had been educated by the staff. Most of the demons accepted their new reality, but a tiny proportion of them were still on a rampage waywardly.

They were mostly black-blood demons.

The black-blood demons were the lowest class of the demon race. Most of them were highly unintelligent. Without training and mutation, their intelligence might not be at the level of a seven-year-old despite their enormous size.

Therefore, it was difficult for the black-blood demons to understand the coercion of the workers, and they were still struggling hard.

But very soon, dozens of other workers sprayed narcotic drugs on them, tied them up, and sent them somewhere else for refinement.

There were standard procedures on the Skeleton Island for the processing of new blood. Very soon, the newcomers were brought to different temples made of giant, green rocks inside the primitive forest.

Li Yao noticed that the most dangerous fellows had been arranged into the same spot. It was possible that they were deemed to be the most attractive 'items' for the arena and were worth special treatment.

However, if Jin Xinyue was right all the time, they would also be the most noteworthy ‘candidates’ for the Blade of Chaos.

A damp smell filled the temple’s interior. A few shallow pools had been dug deep inside the temple, in which several octopus-like demons were soaking.

Their eight tentacles were holding different drugs and medical facilities, and they were examining the bodies of the newcomers, checking how strong they were and whether or not they had been heavily wounded on the trip there.

With the help of the mental devil, Li Yao had already performed a series of minor modification to his body. He had built a ‘flesh membrane’ with the primeval cells inside his body and covered up the ‘second brain’ at the end of the spine. Therefore, he was not worried that anybody would find out that his body was not right.

Other than that, his left hand could grow a sharp claw, and the back of his hand was covered in vague scales, which were the obvious features of a chaotic-blood demon.

Of course, if it were the experts of the silver-blood demons who were performing a very thorough examination on his body, there was still risk that he would be found out.

However, gladiators were nothing but expendables in this place. Why bother with such thorough examinations?

As it turned out, since there were too many newcomers waiting to be examined, the doctors merely checked their appearance and collected one drop of blood after confirming that they were not wounded on the way there.

Li Yao pushed a drop of blood mixed with primeval cells to his fingertip, which was collected as he expected. Very soon, he was let through.

Within a side room at the rear of the temple, four torches as thick as arms were burning furiously on the walls. Their warmth relaxed all the demons whose nerves had been tightened for a long time.

Li Yao could tell that the fuel of the torches had a lot of pacification constituents that were not only working on his nerves but also manipulating his mind directly. Recalling the narcotic and berserker plants that the Fire Ant King planted, he could not help but feel alarmed.

In the war between mankind and the demon race, human beings were better at the studies of spiritual energy while demons distinguished themselves in cytology. In terms of the breeding of various kinds of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and the refinement of strengthening drugs, demons maintained a slim advantage. At the very least, that was the case in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector.

Very soon, many servants who were also chaotic-blood demons brought them buckets of bright green drugs. Depending on their body size, the dosage of the drugs was different.

One of the workers gestured for them to drink all the drugs.

Naturally, Li Yao would not obey the command so easily. He extended his thumb to the drugs first and absorbed some of the drugs with his skin into his body for analysis.

“The constituents of the drugs are rather complicated. Some of them are meant to recover the strength and repair internal and external injuries. But the majority of them are designed to bombard the cells.”

The mental devil savored the drugs and said, “The purpose of such drugs, I’m afraid, is to stimulate the potential that is hidden deep inside the cells as much as possible so that the demons can fully release their savageness and boost their combat ability in the shortest amount of time possible.”

“Are there side effects?” Li Yao asked.

The mental devil chuckled and said, “Any training has side effects. When you punch a target, your fist will somewhat hurt, too. It is just a matter of degree.

“The drugs are very delicately made. A lot of the constituents inside can help stabilize and repair the body. The side effects of the drugs should be minimized.

“That’s rather strange. By my estimation, the ingredients for the constituents that can help stabilize and repair the body should be extremely expensive. Why are they used on the gladiators who are nothing more than expendables? It doesn’t seem to be a fair deal from any perspective.”

Li Yao smiled. “Of course, it is not a fair deal to use them on gladiators, but it is very worthwhile if they are used on the candidates of the Blade of Chaos!”

He stopped hesitating and chugged all the liquids inside the bucket!

BOOM!

A bucket of scorching magma seemed to have poured into his throat and leaked into all his veins, nerves, and internal organs through his stomach. All his nerve endings and cells were broken through and unleashed boundless strength!

Hu! Hu! Hu! Hu!

With the help of the mental devil, all the essence in every drop of the drugs was injected into the primeval cells precisely, making the mitochondria inside the cells even larger in size, which meant that they could output energy at a higher efficiency. The form of the cells was more stable than before, too!

On the surface, Li Yao's skin was bright gold, as if clusters of air currents were spurting out of his pores nonstop, wreathing him in an unpredictable, phantom-like aura!

The rest of the demon drank the strengthening drugs. In the middle of the furious roars, they underwent far more unbelievable mutations than what Li Yao had experienced!

Chapter 870 - Information Bugs

Li Yao focused most of his attention on the dozen muscular demons who were descendants of Red Blood Bronze Bulls. After drinking a full bucket of strengthening drugs, their bones emitted explosive sounds as their bodies expanded abruptly. The horns on their heads further protruded out, too. A few thick and hard spurts burst out of their elbows and knees. Black, shining lumps appeared at the center of their foreheads, too, making them look like the heavy battering rams.

It was not hard to imagine that, with such fatal weapons, their damage when they were charging at full speed would be even more appalling.

Surrounded by scorching steam, it was almost impossible for their tightened skin to envelop their bulging muscles. Explosive strength was running inside their veins like thunderous tides.

The muscular demons were all overjoyed upon seeing the mutations that they had gone through.

A lot of changes had happened to the other demons, too. The half-human-half-snake demon who was on the same flying bat ray as Li Yao had a wider and larger blade limb with jagged edges. Metallic colors were vaguely shining on the limb, which almost surpassed the speed of sound when its owner only lightly waved it.

The desire for strength was almost a natural instinct for the demon race. Sensing that their potential was flooding out like a volcanic eruption, the demons all forgot what a harsh environment they were in and could not wait to warm up their new bodies.

However, a moment later, a lot of demons fell over in dizziness.

The few supervisors waved their hands, and a large batch of servants brought over delicious-smelling mountains of meat.

“You have just taken strengthening drugs that cleansed your veins and nerves and gave you a rebirth,” the supervisor said naturally. “Although your body is stronger now, the process also consumed a lot of your energy. You must have food immediately. Feel at home. Eat until you are satisfied!

“This is your first time eating after triggering your potential and the foundation for your newfound strengthening, so you must try to have enough food!

“If you really cannot have any more meat, you can have a few fruits that are placed aside. They are helpful for digestion!”

Most low-level demons had never enjoyed a proper meal back when they were in their hometown. On their bumpy trip to this place, to deplete their energy, they had not been granted much food, either. They were already nearly starved, and now that they had been told that they could eat however much food they liked, none of them could contain themselves any longer. A few hasty demons had already lunged close and dug into the mountains of the meat.

Li Yao was not courteous, either. Ever since he arrived in the Blood Demon Sector, he had basically been living as a vegetarian and never had a satisfying meal. His body, after being modified by the mental devil, had a much greater consumption rate of energy than before. He was barely able to make ends meet.

Although the food of the Skeleton Island was crudely made, there were all kinds of demon beast meat that contained a huge amount of spiritual energy. Li Yao was not the type of person to be picky about the flavor of food, either. After activating the Art of the Swallowing Whale, he simply poured all the food into his mouth as if it were a bottomless hole. A roasted whale was devoured down to the skeleton in only a few seconds before all the bones were chewed casually and swallowed.

While he was fine without eating, now that he had the chance to be a glutton, his taste buds were stimulated, and his appetite soared. Li Yao’s eyes were shining, and heave noises were echoing from his throat. He was like a prehistoric beast wandering amid the food as if nobody was around.

Other demons looked at him as if he were a hungry ghost reincarnated. Many of them quickly moved further away and kept their distance from him, fearing that he would mistake them for food as well when he was enjoying his food too much.

Not far away, the bull-horned muscular demons were still devouring the food in front of them. Occasionally, they raised their head and grinned at Li Yao when they saw the empty wood trays in front of him.

The meal lasted more than an hour. There was no telling how much food they had eaten, but the bones aside were already piled up into a hill.

The supervisor put on a delighted face, too, as he said, “You’ve all seen the benefits of joining the Skeleton Island as gladiators, haven’t you? More furious strengthening drugs and more abundant food, which can turn you into real experts, are waiting for you!

“However, whether you are qualified to enjoy them or not depends on your performance tomorrow!

“Tomorrow will be your debut. Your life and death will count on yourselves!

“A batch of information bugs will be given out to you. Every information bug contains the battle experiences of countless experts. You are permitted to use them for one night. For the sake of your own life, I hope you can try to retrieve more battle experience from them. Haha. Hahahaha!”

A few workers pulled over more than ten large tanks that were filled with a bright green liquid in which countless objects that looked like pineapples and cocoons were soaking.

Li Yao knew that they were the information bugs that the demon race produced with their biochemical technology. They were essentially biochemical cerebrums that could only keep or release memories. Similar to the jade chips of human beings, they could store a lot of information.

Besides, the information bugs could be connected directly to the cranial nerves and transmit the information at a much higher efficiency than jade chips.

Dense lines of instructions had been carved on the tanks. The workers explained that the tanks were classified according to different focuses, such as speed and strength, to the illiterate gladiators.

For the strength-type ones such as the bull-horned muscular demons, it was more suitable for them to pick the battle experience that concentrated on physical strength.

As for the half-human-half-snake demon, his best choice would be the battle experience that highlighted agility and speed.

The newly-arrived gladiators, despite their illiteracy, knew that the coming battle would certainly be extremely brutal. More battle experience absorbed right now meant more chance to survive tomorrow. Therefore, nobody wasted any time and simply selected a tank that was pertinent to their advantages. They took out a few information bugs from inside and walked aside for their training.

Li Yao’s main weapon right now was the sharp claw on his left arm. He selected an information bug that focused on claw attack skills and sat cross-legged in an empty corner before he stuck the information bug to his forehead.

He held two soft slices of flesh on the two sides of the information bug and squeezed them slightly. A few tiny tentacles that looked like the antennas of a snail immediately protruded out of the information bug and pierced into his forehead.

Streams of information immediately flooded into his brain, forming hazy illusions.

His soul seemed to be absorbed into a whole new world inside the information bug.

He was now a swift wolf demon on a desolate battlefield fighting an intense battle against a tiger demon.

The two front claws of the wolf demon were particularly thick. The talons were like shining sabers and even triggering vague auras that extended to a meter away with earsplitting noises.

Other than that, the battle was rather boring. Both the wolf demon and the tiger demon were at the level of demon general. Naturally, their combat was full of flaws in Li Yao's eyes.

But Li Yao greatly enjoyed the battle nonetheless.

As the saying goes, if three men are walking together, one of them is bound to be good enough to be my teacher. Li Yao did not know much about the combat skills of the demon race. Those mediocre demons were all performing the most fundamental attacks. It was a great chance for Li Yao to learn.

Li Yao never overlooked the importance of the fundamental knowledge. Between two points, a straight line was always the shortest. It had always been Li Yao's belief that the core of a successful fight was to exert the most force across the shortest distance with the minimum interface in the shortest amount of time, which was why he preferred simple weapons such as drills to the fancier moves.

The simple fighting between the wolf demon and the tiger demon gave him a great opportunity to study the most fundamental attack skills between such demons.

As he watched, Li Yao's computational ability soared. The wolf demon and the tiger demon seemed to have both become a series of data. By analyzing the speed and angle of their attacks, Li Yao rectified their moves and corrected the flaws that they showed while he summarized the useful points of their combat. He gained endless experience from the process!

Half an hour later, Li Yao took off the information bug and smiled in great satisfaction.

He had fully absorbed the battle experience of the wolf demon and the tiger demon. Right now, he could perform exactly the same moves that the two demons did in an even sharper, faster, and more flawless way!

Li Yao threw the information bug back and picked up a second information bug, continuing his studies.

At that moment, other demons were still groping and struggling in the world of the first information bug.

Li Yao could understand the battle experience stored inside the information bugs within a breath. But for the rest of the demons, it was like a boundless ocean. It was possible that they would not be able to grasp one information bug until quite a few hours later.

Time flew while they were training. Without them knowing, it was already late at night. The workers provided plenty of food for the newly-arrived gladiators, who were allowed to enjoy it at any time. There was even a vacant training field nearby where they could put the battle experience they had just learned into practice.

Li Yao absorbed the battle experience contained in more than thirty information bugs greedily. Besides learning tremendous fundamental moves of attack of the demon race, Li Yao made an interesting discovery.

It is rather odd that all the stored battles are between demons. Some of them are even between bronze-blood demons and silver-blood demons!

On second thought, this is rather weird. Back in the Heaven's Origin Sector, human beings train themselves with the method of 'virtual combat', too. However, the opponents in the virtual battles were mostly demon beasts and demons. They rarely attack each other.

By the same logic, since the Blood Demon Sector's major enemy right now is the Heaven's Origin Sector, shouldn't they set human beings as the targets in the virtual battles?

However, if the Skeleton Island has always been a secret boot camp of the Blade of Chaos, then everything will make sense.

For the low-level demons such as the chaotic-blood demons and the black-blood demons, they must be full of reverence for the high-level demons such as the silver-blood demons after thousands of years of brainwashing. Even if they do burst into fury, it is unlikely that they will attack the silver-blood demons.

But right now, through the information bugs, they will discover that the silver-blood demons are made of flesh and blood just like themselves. The silver-blood demons will bleed, scream, and die miserably, too!

They can even 'slay' a silver-blood demon with their own hands in the virtual combat!

Such an experience could disrupt their veneration for the silver-blood demons and the bronze-demons completely!

Chapter 871 - Lightning Dungeon

Li Yao was certain that the methods through which the Skeleton Island trained the gladiators were unusual. Normal arenas could never afford so many strengthening drugs and so much demon beast meat in order to improve the capability of the gladiators. Furthermore, they would never teach mere gladiators such lethal techniques.

However, was the matter related to Yuchi Ba, the owner of the Skeleton Island, or were there actually more secrets to it?

He would have to wait and crack the problems patiently.

After all, he could absorb abundant strengthening drugs and battle experience, not to mention the endless, free food that he could refill his energy with. He would not mind at all if he had to stay for a while longer.

During the night, Li Yao snatched almost a hundred information bugs to absorb the battle experience inside.

Naturally, the number was much higher than what the other demons took.

However, in the past, some of the gladiators were ambitious and unwilling to take their time to learn new things. They thought that they could absorb enough battle experience and become an invincible expert overnight.

The supervisors naturally considered Li Yao to be one of such ignorant fools, but they were too lazy to remind or stop him.

After all, all the gladiators were the bottom-level expendables, being shipped to the Skeleton Island on a daily basis. The vast majority of them would be killed in their very first battle. Why would the supervisors waste their precious time on the gladiators?

…

At noon in the next day, after a sleepless night, the newly-arrived gladiators all knew that a great test was coming close. They were all pacing back and forth anxiously. The bull-horned muscular demons were even breathing out white steam in their excitement.

The supervisors brought buckets of strengthening drugs to them again. By Li Yao’s analysis, most of the drugs were for the purpose of mending the body. The Skeleton Island must have been trying to restore their bodies as much as possible after a night of crazy training.

After an earsplitting whistle outside, they were brought to fully-enclosed tanks that had sharp thorns on the outside. The vehicles seemed to be combinations of hedgehogs and tortoises and were quite awe-inspiring when other people looked at it.

Through the ventilation tubes of the tanks, the overwhelming roars not far away could vaguely be heard.

Li Yao knew that it was an arena of the Skeleton Island.

After a bumpy, ten-minute ride, they were driven off the vehicles by the guards of the Skeleton Island, only to find themselves in a stenchful arsenal.

Rusted weapons were hanging on the walls on the two sides. There were not only bone blades, bone spears, and acid launchers, which were the demons’ favorites, but also chainswords, vibration sabers, and heated axes from the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

However, the weapons of human beings were mostly deformed to the point of destruction, with stains of blood on them. They were possibly trophies that the demons captured during the countless battles.

Li Yao thought for a moment and picked three short, tiny bone spears. He hid them inside his palm as if they were light, sharp daggers.

Huala!

At the front, a bronze gate on which the scenes of countess demons fighting with demon beasts was opened. The first thing to greet the new gladiators were the screams and yells full of brutality and bloodthirst that were surging toward them like tides. Then, stinky smells of blood bashed everybody like iron hammers.

The noises and the stench patrolled inside the narrow arsenal like two invisible beasts.

Li Yao sensed that the legs of many chaotic-blood demons were already shaking.

“Let’s go! Let’s go!”

Behind everybody, the fully-armed guards of the Skeleton Island yelled maliciously, with acid guns in their hands.

The gladiators looked at each other in bewilderment and hesitated. Li Yao was the first to stride out of the room with his head held high.

He narrowed his eyes and observed the arena casually.

It was more than five hundred meters long and three hundred meters wide, similar to a standard crystal ball arena. The stands on the two sides were of different levels and all made of obsidian. Right now, there was not a vacant seat, and everybody was shouting and cheering.

The west side was the stand for ordinary spectators, where the bizarre-looking, hideous bronze-blood demons were seated. As the warrior class of the demon race, the only significance of their life was to fight. Watching and participating in a game in an arena was almost their sole entertainment.

On the east side, the obsidian seats were replaced by the Gold Stream Stones, which were embedded with golden threads, and the open auditorium turned into independent luxury box with telescopes consisting of more than ten lenses and decorated by glamorous metals and gems.

In the sky of the arena, countless enormous eyeballs that had grown wings were flying. Known as ‘Flying Spirit Eyes’, they would send the pictures that they captured directly to every box while they flew randomly on the field in rattling noises. Such unnecessary devices were actually only meant to demonstrate the superiority of their users—the silver-blood demons who had come to Void Turmoil City for slave trading and drug deals.

Li Yao grinned as an absurd idea suddenly occurred to him. How many silver-blood demons could he kill before he ran out of his strength if he went on a killing spree without bothering about anything?

Very soon, Li Yao’s eyes stopped at the center of the VIP auditorium.

It was a platform that was slightly protruded, like the tongue of a devil that was stuck out of the mouth.

It was the place where the most honorable seats were arranged.

Right now, a muscular demon more than four meters tall was sitting majestically on the glitzy silk seat. He was like a rhino that was wearing a bright golden armor, and his face were entirely covered up by a horn that pointed high into the sky.

He was Yuchi Ba, the owner of the Skeleton Island!

Around Yuchi Ba, almost ten demons with cold eyes were standing. They were all his bodyguards who used to be gladiators as black-blood demons and the chaotic-blood demons.

Is Yuchi Ba the leader of the Blade of Chaos?

However, according to the intelligence, he is an out-and-out silver-blood demon, a noble. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have been authorized to establish such a huge arena at all!

A pure silver-blood demon has ended up being the leader of the Blade of Chaos? What is he up to exactly?

While Li Yao was deep in thought, shining electric arcs were suddenly triggered on the black, bloodstained ground of the arena. Amid spluttering noises, the electric arcs interweaved with each other into bushes of thorns.

“Lightning Dungeon! Lightning Dungeon! Lightning Dungeon!”

Meatballs riddled with holes were floating everywhere in the area up and down like balloons. Right now, the holes blew out intense air currents along with sharp, earsplitting noises.

Incited by the meatballs, the bronze-blood demons who were sitting on the west tide were all shouting and yelling crazily.

The silver-blood demons sitting on the east side, on the other hand, were silent and did not bother to even open their mouths.

According to Jin Xinyue’s introduction, the arena on the Skeleton Island was not a simple field of fighting but installed with a lot of traps and rune arrays.

The so-called ‘Lightning Dungeon’ meant that electric arcs would be released in the entire arena.

Naturally, the electric arcs would not be too powerful, and the victims would only be paralyzed briefly when they were touched.

However, the opponents of the gladiators were mostly demon beasts of the thunder class. They were not scared of the electric arcs at all, and they could even absorb the energy of the electric arcs and release it in the next moment!

Huala!

After all the new gladiators had entered the field, the bronze gate slowly closed behind them. Then, a few workers poured thick, stinky blood all over their bodies.

The blood was mixed with a lot of irritative drugs that were designed to draw the attention of demon beasts. Otherwise, the flocks of demon beasts might have attacked each other instead of them.

Dozens of bronze gates were established all around the circular arena, through which hundreds of hesitant new gladiators were forced out by the guards from inside. They were immediately at a loss when they saw the frantic audience all around them.

A guard of the Skeleton Island announced the rules to them.

As newly-arrived gladiators, they were not qualified to fight a game alone, nor did they have any shining points that the audience might find interesting. Therefore, they were not really heroes of the show but merely jesters who were responsible for warming up the atmosphere before the heroes ascended.

Since they were all jesters, nobody was expecting a marvelous performance. It was mainly for the fun of liveliness as there were a lot of them.

The rule was simple. The new gladiators were all on the south side of the arena, and a lot of demon beasts of the thunder class would be released from the north. Their goal was to pass through the blockade of the demon beasts and enter the only bronze gate to the north.

But Li Yao knew the difficulty of the challenge.

The most crucial part of the game was not how to fight the demon beasts of the thunder class in a battlefield full of electric arcs but how to enter the bronze gate after they arrived at the north of the arena.

The gate was very narrow and could allow few demons to pass at one time.

Even if a large batch of demons successfully crossed the arena, they would still be crammed out of the bronze gate. If they were all in a hurry to go into the bronze gate without making concession, it was inevitable that they would start attacking each other, and those who might have a chance to get away would be captured and slaughtered by the demon beasts at the last moment.

Wu—

Prolonged horns sounded all around the arena. The dozen bronze gates in the north were pulled open by chains that were as thick as arms, from which countless confused demon beasts staggered out.

Among them, there were ‘Thunder Snakes’, which had a rooster head and a snake body with wings on the abdomen. There were also ‘Soul-Splitting Behemoths’, which were as tall as mountains with sharp spikes on their back. For most of the demon beasts, Li Yao did now know their names at all!

Chi!

Invisible webs were released from above the arena in case the infuriated beasts jumped to the auditorium.

However, it was unspoken rule for the entertainment of arena games that every audience should be prepared to fight a demon beast or a gladiator because the auditorium entailed a certain degree of danger.

For the demon race, the unexpected danger was also one of the reasons why such an activity was so thrilling.

The demon beasts were probably at the mercy of the tamers because of the narcotic drugs injected into them. However, right now, the stinky smell of blood on the bodies of the gladiators woke up the lust for killing deep inside their hearts. Shaking their heads slightly, all the demon beasts uttered bloodthirsty roars while they accelerated under the stimulation of the electric arcs and rushed toward their prey!

“Hoooooooooo!”

The feast of slaughtering had begun!

Chapter 872 - Precise Control

Watching the beast tide that was surging close like a tsunami and feeling the earth that was shaking under the stomping hoofs, the faces of many new gladiators blanched.

They were faced with a tough decision.

To enter the bronze gate at the north, they had to pass through the infuriated demon beasts, but those who led the charge would certain be attacked by the demon beasts collectively.

However, if they simply stayed behind, hoping that other gladiators would take the blow for them, those in the lead might pass through the bronze gate earlier than them, and as there were fewer and fewer gladiators in the arena, those who stayed behind would be the only prey for the demon beasts.

The more they hesitated, the less likely they could survive!

Finally—

The dozen bull-horned muscular demons could not hold it any longer. Under the command of their leader, they tensed their muscles and summoned the most furious auras around them. They lowered their magnificent bodies and accelerated to the maximum, having a head-on clash with the beast tide like a dozen heavy crystal tanks!

The electric arcs that were dancing crazily on the ground whipped them brutally, breaking their skin and making them bleed. Yet, they seemed to feel none of the pain, and their speed was barely affected. Li Yao secretly clicked his tongue in amazement. The talents of the demons were indeed much more impressive than those of human beings.

BOOM!

The collision of the bull-horned muscular demons and the demon beasts resulted in a series of earsplitting explosions. Dozens of demon beasts were knocked into the sky. Several of them were even blown to the auditorium, only to be ripped into shreds by the bloodthirsty bronze-blood demons, the more uncivilized of whom were even biting the meat of the demon beasts on the spot. It was indeed an appalling scene.

“Let’s go! Move forward!”

Encouraged by the bull-horned muscular demons, the other new gladiators felt their blood boiling, too, knowing that the only outcome if they waited was death and that they could only fight for their survival by marching forward unstoppably!

Those who were selected to be gladiators were the disobedient ones among the slaves in the first place. Now that they all made up their mind to fight, they looked even more daunting than the demon beasts.

In that moment, all the new gladiators charged at the enemies at the highest speed possible like arrows just released from a bow!

A chaotic battle was thus begun.

There were almost a thousand demon beasts of the thunder class, and the environment of the Lightning Dungeon was most in their favor. The Thunder Snakes, the Lightning Salamanders, and the Soul-Splitting Behemoths were all releasing dazzling electric arcs incessantly, casting the new gladiators into shock, before they waved their sharp claws and teeth and ripped their prey into pieces.

The new gladiators went on a rampage, too. They fully utilized the battle experience that they had just perceived last night and threw themselves into the beast tide like nails!

The intense stench of blood soared into the sky, stimulating the nerves of the audience. All the bronze-blood demons were intoxicated. Hideous grins and cheers mixed with each other and rose up, turning into bloody, dark clouds that were wriggling and twisting in midair.

Li Yao was among the last few demons to move forward.

In his eyes, the demon beasts of the thunder class were merely a bunch of hens and hares that were not worth mentioning at all.

However, seeing such a chaotic battle, he suddenly thought of something and decided to try a new fighting technique.

My combat ability is on par with that of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the demon emperors, but in the war between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, and even in the great war between the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Imperium of True Human Beings, the decisive factor will be the confrontation of billions of soldiers.

On the land, below the ocean, and in the endless sea of stars, countless warriors and warships will be engaged in fierce battles. Even the demon emperors and the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators might not be able to change the outcome of a battle!

Therefore, my own strength is far from enough, and it is vital for me to precisely control the entire battlefield and absolutely control all the factors around me!

I should train myself more in that regard!

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and tried his best to conceal his glittering eyes while his computational ability stretched out deep inside his brain like an invisible octopus.

In the messy battlefield, thirty square meters around him, every demon beast and every gladiator suddenly had a bright golden outline, and a series of bright gold numbers popped up.

That was the data of their speed, distance, position, and strength.

Li Yao condensed two cores of computation inside his brain. One was responsible for the calculation of the moves and attacks that he should make right now, and the other was dedicated to predicting the possible scenarios of the other gladiators and demon beasts thirty square meters around him.

The bright golden numbers were built into nonexistent virtual battlefields as he deducted the outcomes of the battle under different choices.

When the numbers crashed into dazzling sparks, Li Yao suddenly slid leftward and extended the short bone spear hidden inside his palm quietly, piercing deep into the left eye of a Thunder Snake and passing through its entire cerebrum.

The central nerves of the Thunder Snake, however, were somewhere else. Damaging its cerebrum was not enough to rid it of all its combat ability.

If it were in his past, Li Yao would have possibly pierced through the central nerves of the demon beast and cut off its spine, making it completely paralyzed and unable to spurt out any electric arcs at all.

However, the Thunder Snake whose cerebrum had been destroyed shrieked in agony, manipulated by the central nerves, only to jerk up and land on the back of a Lightning Crocodile next to it.

The cerebrum of the Thunder Snake had lost all functions. It was taking action based on its most primitive natural instincts. Therefore, it simply tied up the Lightning Crocodile and exerted all its strength, releasing all the electric arcs it had crazily!

The Lightning Crocodile was, of course, not afraid of the electric arcs, but the excruciating pain resulting from being tied up was unstoppable!

The Lightning Crocodile was going to bite one of the bull-horned muscular demons, but it was now writhing on the ground and struggling hard.

The bull-horned muscular demon was slightly dazed. He immediately waved the giant iron hammer that was packed with sharp thorns and bashed the enemy hard. After a heavy sound, the head of the Lightning Crocodile was broken apart, and it was killed immediately!

I’ve done it!

Li Yao cheered in his heart. His precise attack had changed the outcome of a battle near him.

However, it was not enough!

Li Yao’s eyes were both shining, especially his left eye, where interconnected bloody lines were appearing and turning the muddled arena into a chess board.

The demon beasts and the new gladiators all turned into his chess pieces!

Now, I will try to manipulate the more complicated battles!

Li Yao sensed that an electric arc was being condensed below his feet.

He could have jumped away easily in less than half a second, but he saw that a Soul-Splitting Behemoth was running toward him. His computation ability blossomed like fireworks and helped him to make the decision to stay where he was!

In a moment, an electric arc tied him up like venomous vines. He pretended to grimace as if he was being electrocuted, and he was blown away by the heavy clash of the Soul-Splitting Behemoth!

Li Yao waved his hands and feet crazily in midair, ‘struggling’ to adjust his posture, only to crash into a demon beast with white hair all over its body that looked like an enormous gorilla. The demon beast was almost knocked over!

Chi!

A chainsword immediately cut into the main artery of the demon beast.

But the new gladiator who was holding the chainsword was confused. His target was not the gorilla in the first place. Yet, the enemy somehow sent itself to the tip of his sword.

The heavily wounded gorilla burst into fury and waved its arms crazily, but Li Yao simply pierced his fingers into the back of the beast and clenched its spine hard. The gorilla roared and raged forward, triggering yet another series of chain reactions. All the demon beasts and the new gladiators who were affected by the wounded gorilla found the directions of their weapons, claws, and teeth changed uncannily.

The weapons that were aimed at the critical parts of the gladiators brush past them, however closely. The sabers, swords, and bone blades that were supposed to be blocked by the demon beasts, after a series of inexplicable collisions and squeezes, hit the most vulnerable parts of the demon beasts precisely!

Seeing the demon beasts that were writhing on the ground in pain and his fellow demons who were all wearing a confused expression, Li Yao thought quickly and felt that he was getting the hang of it.

In a team fight, what matters most is not how many enemies I can kill personally, but how much of a positive influence I can have on my team.

The spiritual energy and potential in the cells of an expert are limited after all. They cannot burn their life and soul and cells in every battle randomly. If that was the case, after only several battles, they would surely die of exhaustion!

Guiding the situation of a battle precisely at the consumption of the least strength and triggering all the potential of a team is the most cost-effective way of fighting in a chaotic war with countless participants!

Everybody is a chess piece except me; I'm the player!

Li Yao was more and more relaxed, and his countenance was calmer and calmer. The indifference in his left eye and the casualness in his right eye were mixed together, giving him a subtle air that he was above the chess board.

Through the precise movement, inconspicuous attacks, and appropriate dodging and pushing, he completely controlled the battles thirty square meters around him.

Thirty meters around him, all the new gladiators were overjoyed.

They felt that they were helped by a god. The demon beasts that they were best to deal with would always show up in front of them in the most appropriate position with the worst posture so that they could take their time and aim at the critical parts of the demon beasts!

When a new demon beast appeared on their flank, a new gladiator would always appear in time and help them resolve the trouble!

Even the spluttering electric arcs from the ground seemed to be helping them. The hinderances either missed them at a close distance or hit them only when they were not surrounded by demon beasts so that they could pass the few seconds of paralysis safely.

For a moment, the field was empty of demon beasts in the thirty square meters around Li Yao—all the demon beasts had been slain by the gladiators!

Chapter 873 - Laughter of the Scumbags

Most of the silver-blood demons did not pay much attention to the ‘warm-up’ before the real game. Even Yuchi Ba, the master of the Skeleton Island, was merely chitchatting with his bodyguards at first.

But the odd changes of the battle soon attracted his attention. After an exclamation of surprise, he started observing the two swirls of blood in the Lightning Prison with great interest.

One of the swirls was the battle formation made of fifteen bull-horned muscular demons.

The giants from the same tribe were moving in an orderly fashion under the command of their leader. They were not charging forward blindly, and occasionally, they would turn around and crush the demon beasts that had formed a group.

The demon beasts boasted some sort of wisdom, too. They knew the feeling of fear when they were under huge pressure. After being scattered and crushed by the bull-horned muscular demons, it would take a long time before they could regroup.

The gladiators who were relatively smart took the opportunity to follow the bull-horned muscular demons and launched remote attacks under their cover.

At first glance, it was very similar to the cover-and-assault strategy that human beings often utilized with crystal tanks and dispersed soldiers.

Gradually, more and more gladiators gathered around the bull-horned muscular demons. Eventually, there were almost seventy of them.

Beside Yuchi Ba, a leopard demon with eye-catching stripes all over her body smiled and said, “The leader of the Red Blood Bronze Bulls knows how to command. He has formed his own team so quickly.”

Although she was smiling, her curled eyes looked like two sabers and gave the unmistakable feeling of coldness.

Yuchi Ba nodded. His mouth was broad, but his voice was rather high-pitched. “A gladiator with leadership is not easy to find. I hope he can demonstrate a few good performances in the battles to come!”

Deep brilliance beamed out of his eyes that were as small as beans. There was no telling what was on the mind of the master of the Skeleton Island.

However, when his eyes turned to the other swirl, he could not help but crane his neck in great suspicion.

The dozen or so gladiators in the second swirl were neither as physically strong as the Red Blood Bronze Bulls nor had an obvious leader to coordinate and command them. Judging from the appearance, they were all fighting on their own in an utter mess.

But for some reason, their efficiency was particularly high. Any demon beast that stepped into their circle seemed to be mired in an invisible swamp. Their movement was slow, and they were even pushing each other. Eventually, they were merely feeding themselves to the claws and blades of the gladiators.

At first glance, the gladiators in the second swirl were just a random mob, not even close to the neat organization of the Red Blood Bronze Bulls.

But as for the outcome, the demon beasts killed by them were far more than those slain by the Red Blood Bronze Bulls.

“What is going on here?”

Even Yuchi Ba was slightly dazed. He scratched his enormous horn with his thick fingers and chuckled in amusement. “How did those guys catch a break today?”

The rest of the gladiators were certainly no fools. They soon discovered the anomaly of the two ‘swirls’ and tried their best to join the two amalgamations.

As more and more gladiators were gathered around Li Yao, the data that he needed to calculate and manipulate expanded exponentially. When the range of manipulation was further extended, he soon had the feeling that he was not able to do it any longer.

I can’t increase any more. Right now, I can only manipulate the combat thirty-five meters around me at best!

I have never learned how to command and organize on a battlefield, and it is too much of a burden for me to calculate everything temporarily.

On second thought, the so-called ‘battle formations’ are perhaps examples that indicate the knowledge of accurate *control over the battlefield. It seems that I will have to learn more about the battle formations when I have the chance!*

The two amalgamations, namely Li Yao's and the Red Blood Bronze Bulls', were moving forward simultaneously. Like magnets drawing small nails incessantly, they attracted more and more gladiators into them on their way.

Although the demon beasts around them were still multiple times more than themselves, the two amalgamations were like two mills of flesh and blood whenever the demon beasts broke into the circle. They were ground until even their bones were shredded.

Watching their companions breaking apart in the circles of the gladiators, even the most brutal demon beasts hesitated to draw close now.

The two amalgamations of gladiators reached the only open bronze gate at the north almost at the same time.

The gate was more than three meters both in length and in width. It was not small for human beings. But for demons, who were almost exclusively more than three meters tall and had weird bones and forms, such a gate was simply too narrow.

Besides, there was a long pathway behind the gate. If a gladiator who was relatively larger in size blocked the pathway, those behind them would not be able to pass through at all.

It was the trickiest moment.

In the past, countless gladiators had broken through the furious tides of demon beasts successfully, only to attack each other before the bronze gate without giving in. In the end, they had all been mauled by the demon beasts, and none of them had actually been able to get away.

The two teams of gladiators were too occupied in killing to notice their surroundings. It was not until this moment that the gladiators except Li Yao noticed each other.

The two teams confronted each other silently. The static sparks in the quietness seemed to be even more dazzling than the electric arcs.

It was also the audience’s favorite procedure.

The bronze-blood demons loved watching the black-blood demons and the chaotic-blood demons, who were even lowlier than them, attacking each other and bleeding while they cheered for them.

“Kill them! Kill them!”

“Your life will be saved after you pass through the gate. Run now!”

Perverted laughter echoed on the auditorium.

Li Yao saw clearly that the veins on the forehead of the leader of the bull-horned muscular demons were protruding like a viper waking after a prolonged hibernation. He shouted, waving his enormous iron hammer, “One member of each team will go into the gate in turn. Don’t panic. We can all survive!”

Li Yao was dazed. Except for him, the fifteen bull-horned muscular demons were apparently the strongest warriors on the battlefield. Nobody had the ability to stop them if they were determined to escape, but they were abandoning the opportunity. Why?

“Don’t you see?”

The leader of the bull-horned muscular demons bashed the ground with his hammer hard and yelled, “Those demon beasts are no match for us at all. As long as we remain united and do not attack each other, we can all make our way out!

“Don’t panic. One from each side. Leave your weapon and pass through the bronze gate as quickly as possible!

“Don’t worry about the demon beasts. The fifteen of us will cover the retreat. We will enter the gate last!”

While talking, the leader waved his hands and led his fourteen subordinates to the back of the team. They roared and constituted a solid wall, facing the simmering tide of demon beasts!

The intimidating aura of the fifteen bull-horned muscular demons suppressed the outrage of all the demon beasts in the blink of an eye.

Li Yao was truly dumbfounded. He could not believe his eyes.

Maybe because of the encouragement of the bull-horned muscular demons, or maybe because they realized that too many gladiators had passed through the demon beasts this time and the only outcome if everybody crammed into the bronze gate would be that the pathway would be blocked, many gladiators who were relatively larger in size turned around silently and stood next to the bull-horned muscular demons, filling the gaps between them!

The gladiators who were slimmer and smaller in size handed their weapons to the gladiators behind them cooperatively and passed through the bronze gate at their top speed.

One from each team, they entered the bronze gate orderly. All the gladiators were regrouped into two neat teams smoothly according to their body sizes!

It was something that had never happened on the Skeleton Island before!

The heated auditorium, which had been filled with laughter and screams a moment ago, was dead silent. Even the sound of a needle hitting the ground would have been heard.

The excited bronze-blood demons with twisted faces were all dumbfounded. Even the silver-blood demons were extending their heads out of their boxes, complaining in confusion and dissatisfaction.

Hiss! Hiss!

The demon beasts in the arena were not willing to let go of the prey that had been offered to them and launched a counterattack.

The bull-horned muscular demons were not defending blindly. Faced with the surging tide of demon beasts, they charged forward yet again. Like a burning sword, they raged inside the flock of demon beasts and paved roads of blood!

After a few unbelievable counter-counterattacks, all the demon beasts were wavering, not having the courage to move forward again.

However, the bull-horned muscular demons were not made of steel. After the multiple head-on clashes with the demon beasts, barely any part of their skin was intact, and they were all bleeding profusely. There was no telling what supported them to keep on standing.

Another slight touch or a gentle breeze would probably enough to push them over, but no demon beasts dared to try for a long time.

Under their watch, the gladiators near them were fewer and fewer. The majority of the gladiators had run away successfully.

Realizing that the last prey was going to slip away if they kept on waiting, the boldest Soul-Splitting Behemoths finally summoned their courage and crashed at the wall again!

The hands and legs of the bull-horned muscular demons were all trembling. Their weapons had all fallen to the ground, and they could not even pick them up now.

But the air currents spurting out of their noses became denser and denser like flooding magma!

Right then, a black shadow suddenly passed by them. The length of his left arm was suddenly doubled and slapped out like a supersonic whip!

In an earsplitting shriek, a spear refined out of the femur of an enormous demon beast was thrown out brutally. Before the sound spread out, it had already hit the center of the eyebrow of a Soul-Splitting Behemoth, pierced deep into the head, and penetrated out of its throat, pinning the gargantuan beast to the ground!

Although the head of the beast was pinned to the ground, its body was still moving forward because of the strong inertia. As a result, the body was split apart from the head, and its neck exploded into a pulp of meat.

While everybody was bewildered, Li Yao dragged all the fatigued bull-horned muscular demons into the bronze gate before he closed it heavily with all of his strength.

“Thank you, for what you did today and yesterday.”

Inside the darkness, the sound of the leader of the bull-horned muscular demons turned warm and mild.

“Why did you do it?” Li Yao asked.

The leader panted for a long time. Inside the darkness, the pair of bull eyes were emitting comforting brilliance like two topazes the size of eggs.

“I just don’t like the laughter of the scumbags in the auditorium,” he replied. “That’s all.”

Chapter 874 - First Appearance of Chaos

BAM! BAM BAM! BAM BAM BAM BAM!

The sounds of iron fists colliding with sharp claws, mixed with heated cheers, were echoing on an empty field in the center of the forest. A group of gladiators were standing in a circle, watching the competition of two experts.

The one on the left was the leader of the bull-horned muscular demons.

The one that was resisting his attack unhurriedly was, naturally, Li Yao.

“Moo!”

The leader of the bull-horned muscular demons roared suddenly, and his arms bulged to twice their original size with veins binding them up in circles like the whorls on a screw. The punch was mixed with a weird helical force, and Li Yao’s defense was crushed even though he had crossed his two arms to resist the attack. Meanwhile, the veins on his opponent’s arms suddenly twisted in the opposite direction, like a spring that was released abruptly after being tightened. Another new force was blown out and pressed Li Yao’s chest heavily.

Li Yao retreated almost ten steps before he hit a giant tree heavily, shaking the leaves of the tree hard. He shook his hand and smiled. “Let’s stop fighting. Brother Mo has grasped seventy percent of the ‘Boa Bondage Force’. I’m no match for you.”

Li Yao had limited his strength and speed to 7%. Without resorting to the force of his core and spiritual energy, he was truly no match for the leader of the bull-horned muscular demons with only 7% of his capability.

It was the seventh day after Li Yao arrived at the Skeleton Island.

After passing through the first battle, they had turned from new blood into official gladiators, but they were not scheduled for a second game in a hurry. Instead, they were simply locked in the deepest part of the Skeleton Island for further training.

Although they were prisoners, the place was an out-and-out training camp in Li Yao’s eyes.

Every day, they were able to drink strengthening drugs that were powerful and contained a lot of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures.

Li Yao did not know much about the strengthening drugs of the Blood Demon Sector, but according to the standard of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, they were all invaluable treasures. Even the best students of the Nine Elite Colleges would not necessarily be able to obtain such strengthening drugs.

Other than that, the meat of demon beasts that stored abundant spiritual energy was supplied unlimitedly. The guards did not even frown when Li Yao ate seven whales in a row and simply offered more food to him.

Moreover, the information bugs that they received had been fully upgraded, too. The battle experience of many middle- and high-level demon generals, and sometimes even demon kings, was now stored inside them.

The normal gladiators might have found it difficult to understand the quick and mysterious fighting scenes. But for Li Yao, having access to such battle experience was like giving a fish an ocean to swim in.

In the special training camp, all the gladiators were mixed up. Other than the newcomers such as themselves, there were also a lot of veterans who had participated in multiple games and the real brutal warriors who had secured five victories and regained their freedom but still chose to stay on the Skeleton Island as tutors.

Under such circumstances, all the gladiators naturally started bonding with each other. The leader of the bull-horned muscular demons and Li Yao, who nailed a Soul-Splitting Behemoth at the crucial moment in the end, became the center of the newly-arrived gladiators.

Li Yao learned that the leader of the bull-horned muscular demons was named ‘Mo Tiesheng’. He had lived with his companions around Cloud Mist Swamp, which was as an underdeveloped area as the Hundred Desolation Mountain and frequented by a lot of demon beasts. They had made their living by hunting down the demon beasts. After generations of evolution and elimination, their unparalleled physical strength had been built up.

Their village had been affected by the war between the coalition army of the demon race and the Blade of Chaos, too. Because of the savaging fires of war, they had to evacuate from their hometown, only to run into the slave-catching team of Void Turmoil City.

Magnificent as the naturally-endowed techniques of the Red Blood Bronze Bulls and Fire Kirins might have been, it was not enough for them to resist the barrage of the acid cannons and the bone sting guns. A lot of their clan members who dared to fight back had been slain, and the rest of them had been paralyzed by the narcotic drugs. When they woke up again, they had already been tied up and unable to move anymore.

Therefore, Mo Tiesheng hated the high and mighty nobles' guts.

The other gladiators were more or less the same. They had mostly been living in the far-flung areas where the environment was harsh with endless demon beasts. But because of the flames of war, they had been involved in a disaster that was unrelated to them and ended up in this place, turning from an innocent hunter in the wilderness into a finely-made slaughtering machine.

The Skeleton Island's mode of operation is indeed not right!

Li Yao was deep in thought.

Chaotic-blood demons were certainly not a synonym for the weak. In fact, their potential was much higher than those of many black-blood and bronze-blood demons.

Before, the well-despised chaotic-blood demons usually lived in the corners of the Blood Demon Sector. They were loose sand and could not stir much trouble.

However, through slave trading, the chaotic-blood demons who were infuriated and loathed the nobles had been gathered in Void Turmoil City, and the most defiant of them had been shipped to the Skeleton Island to receive such mysterious, rigorous, and effective training.

Naturally, a possible explanation would be that only through such refinement could the gladiators offer entertaining matches and even become the sharp claws and teeth for the nobles.

However, would the claws and teeth really never tear open the throats of their masters?

Other than that, all the gladiators had been locked up in the same place, but there was not any surveillance at all. Wasn’t it very convenient for the gladiators to connect with each other?

In fact, that was exactly what had happened.

After only a few days, Mo Tiesheng had established his prestige among the gladiators and in effect became the big brother for them, and Li Yao and a few other gladiators were also respected for their marvelous capability. Many gladiators were willing to listen to their command.

During the casual chitchats at night, there was no telling who started it first, but everybody started sharing the reason and process of their capture. After they heard that everybody had such similar experiences, it was unmistakable that flames of empathy and comradery were burning deep down in their eyes.

If the chaotic-blood demons had been loose sand in the past, right now, they already had their basic organization.

If the gladiators were to rise up and fight their oppressors, the experts such as Mo Tiesheng and Li Yao would be the natural leaders!

This place is totally a boot camp for the rebels!

While he was pondering, he smelt a pungent smell, only to find that Mo Tiesheng had sat down next to him and was staring at the gladiators who were training hard far away.

“Another four victories, then we will be able to go back,” Mo Tiesheng said slowly.

Despite his brutality and valiance in the games, Mo Tiesheng was rather friendly and easygoing. His greatest goal was nothing more than to bring his companions back to their hometown and live their poor but peaceful lives again.

Before Li Yao could reply, laughter resembling the cackles of a crow echoed behind the two of them. An old demon, whose skin was wrinkled with gray feathers and whose eyes were red, moved close.

The old demon was named Ba Mingsong. He had been a gladiator in the past, too, but his wings had been broken during a game, and although he had luckily survived, he was not able to fight any more games.

He was working in the training camp as a servant and a masseur. Sometimes, he was responsible for answering the questions of the newly-arrived gladiators, too. But in general, he was just an insignificant worker.

However, mysterious brilliance was beaming out of Ba Mingsong’s eyes. He chuckled and craned his long neck toward them. “You think that you will be allowed to go home so easily? In your dream!”

Mo Tiesheng bulged his eyes. “Does the master of the Skeleton Island not honor his words?”

Ba Mingsong sneered, “Of course, the master of the Skeleton Island honors his words. However, you must bear in mind that you must secure five victories instead of one or two. There’s a huge difference between one victory and five!

“Mad Bull, Bloody Claw, you are among the most distinguished gladiators of the newcomers over the past few years. You are going to be great money-makers for the arena. Will they let go of you easily?”

After they entered the Skeleton Island, their names were meaningless, and they had been nicknamed according to their own characteristics. Mo Tiesheng was called ‘Mad Bull’ while Li Yao was addressed as ‘Bloody Claw’.

Ba Mingsong blinked and said in a low voice, “Tell you what, there are a lot of ways to keep you in this place. For example, after you win four games, somebody will declare that you’ve misunderstood the rule, and that you will have to secure five victories in a row—not separately—in order to be set free!

“Or rather, they will grant you strengthening drugs that are very powerful but have a limited time of effect. At the beginning, you are naturally free to take them. However, after you’ve tasted the gratification of strength, you will be charged if you want more of such drugs! You don’t have any money? That’s easy. The Skeleton Island will loan you money! After you borrow the first sum of money, you will never be able to walk out of the place anymore. Even if you’ve regained your freedom, you will still have to linger on the Skeleton Island or work for other nobles!”

Mo Tiesheng snorted. “So, in your opinion, we are never going to be free again, are we?”

“Free? Hehe. Hehehehe!”

Ba Mingsong chuckled in amusement and said, “Even if you miraculously win five games and find your way back to your hometown, do you think that you will be free? In the Blood Demon Sector, the silver-blood demons and the bronze-blood demons are always the high and mighty rulers while the black-blood demons and the chaotic-blood demons are the most humble ants. What’s the difference between living on the Skeleton Island or somewhere else?

“Right now, a lot of demons are being enlisted in the outside. You will die either as a gladiator of the Skeleton Island or as cannon fodder that is sent to the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Do you think that you can be free when you’re out?”

Mo Tiesheng was rendered speechless and lost for words.

But Li Yao thought of something. He observed Ba Mingsong in secret and felt that the demon’s countenance was rather mysterious. It was clear that he was much more than a simple servant.

As it turned out, Ba Mingsong turned his neck around agilely and, seeing that nobody else was around, said in a low voice, “We will never be free unless we overthrow the reign of the silver-blood demons and the bronze-blood demons and restore the social position of the black-blood demons and the chaotic-blood demons under the guidance of God Chaos!”

Brilliance suddenly beamed out of Mo Tiesheng’s bull eyes. He clutched Ba Mingsong’s wings and bellowed, “You are with the Blade of Chaos?”

Chapter 875 - Sacred Mausoleum

“A believer of Chaos?” Mo Tiesheng sneered.

In the legends of the demon race, Chaos was an enemy of the Pangu Clan and the evilest existence in the universe. Because of the propaganda, most of the demons had no positive impression about ‘Chaos’.

“You’ve all been fooled!”

Seeing the despise on Mo Tiesheng’s face, Ba Mingsong explained, “All this time, the high-level demons have been fooling you by telling you that Chaos was a great enemy of the Pangu Clan and the entire demon race. But in fact, it is far from the truth and nothing but a lie that the high-level demons utilized to paralyze us!”

Mo Tiesheng frowned. “Then what is the truth?”

Ba Mingsong closed his hands and put them into a triangle. In the weird gesture, he said respectfully, “Chaos was never the enemy of the Pangu Clan. On the contrary, God Chaos was the real successor of the Pangu Clan!”

“What?” Mo Tiesheng and Li Yao both exclaimed in amazement.

Ba Mingsong lowered his voice again and talked like a humming mosquito. “You must know that there was a huge gap between the thirteen clans in the primeval era and the Demon Beast Empire thirty thousand years ago. During those millions of years, there were not many demons, much less a systematical civilization."

Mo Tiesheng nodded. "That's the era of the ancient Cultivators, the time when humanity thrived."

Ba Mingsong blinked. "Exactly. But have your ever wondered why the bloodlines that had been lost for millions of years were suddenly awakened forty thousand years ago? Why did the vast majority of the modern demons show up abruptly in less than a hundred years forty thousand years ago like a big bang?"

Li Yao was deep in thought. According to the well-accepted theory of the Star Glory Federation, a Cultivator forty thousand years ago developed a 'Demon God Virus' by accident and refined a large batch animals into slaughtering machines named 'demon beasts', and the intelligence of the demon beasts grew exponentially during the fierce battles. Eventually, the demon race was born.

Later, after the demon race swallowed the three thousand Sectors in the universe, an enormous Demon Beast Empire was established on the foundation of the civilization of ancient Cultivators!

When Li Yao was young, he had never doubted such a theory.

However, after more than ten years of travelling and training, as an expert close to the Nascent Soul Stage, he had become more and more suspicious about such a narrative.

The most crucial factor leading to his suspicion was the protraction of evolution. It had taken human beings hundreds of thousands of years before they evolved to possess basic intelligence. The usage of fire alone might have taken mankind tens of thousands of years to grasp.

Even if the Demon God Virus could endow ordinary animals with strong bodies and killing instincts, was it possible that the virus could grant animals intelligence that was similar to human beings, if not even higher, in only a hundred years?

Li Yao found such a theory unacceptable.

“Tell you what,” Ba Mingsong said mysteriously, “it was exactly God Chaos who caused the ‘big bang’ of the demon race!

“At the end of the era of the ancient Cultivators, human beings shattered most of the three thousand Sectors. Every Sector was in ruins, and catastrophes were falling upon the entire universe.

“God Chaos was born in such crisis. He found the relics of the thirteen ancient clans and excavated the legacy of the primeval era. Eventually, he created the modern demon race!

“Therefore, God Chaos is our creator. He is the one true god for us!

“When he created the modern demons, God Chaos did not set up the hierarchy of bloodlines at all. In his eyes, all demons are equal. He merely helped us awaken in different appearances for the purpose of different jobs!

“The goal of God Chaos was to ask us to replace the brutal human beings and repair the broken worlds so that the universe that was about to be destroyed by the wars of human beings would be revived again!

“However, hehe, God Chaos was too lenient. He underestimated the evilness and ambitions of human beings. He did not anticipate that some of the demons he created would be corrupted by human beings and turn against him. In the end, the traitors heavily wounded and suppressed him before they established their own reign!

“Before, all demons were only different in the talents that they awakened, but their blood was exactly the same.

“However, the demons who were corrupted by the evil, ambitious human beings locked up the bloodlines of all the other demons through secret techniques and enslaved the other demons by setting up the classes such as saint-blood, silver-blood, bronze-blood, black-blood, and chaotic-blood!

“Those demons are so evil that they are no different from human beings!

“Their reign lasted thirty thousand years. Finally, what happened to the human beings before happened to them again. The enormous empire collapsed, and whatever was left of their remnants could only hide in the corners of the cosmos, breathing their last breath.

“What is hilarious is that, even in such a far-flung area in the universe, they are still clinging to the decayed ‘Four Pillar System’, unwilling to let it go. They are still hoping to continue enslaving the black-blood demons and the chaotic-blood demons, but they do not know that they are seeking their own death!

“Right now, the Blade of Chaos has risen. The believers of Chaos crave nothing except to chop off the shackles that lock up our bloodlines so that all demons can be restored to their original appearances. From then on, there will be no distinction among the silver-blood demons, the black-blood demons, the bronze-blood demons, and the chaotic-blood demons. That is the only time we will be really free!”

Ba Mingsong’s words greatly stirred up Li Yao’s mind.

He had thought that the so-called ‘Chaos’ was just an evil god in the legends, which was possibly an alien civilization that was hostile to the Pangu civilization billions of years ago.

He did not know that the history of Chaos was much shorter than he imagined. According to Ba Mingsong, it appeared only forty thousand years ago.

Besides, Chaos was the creator of the modern demon race?

Behind the curtains of propaganda and myth, what was the true history?

Mo Tiesheng was silent for a moment, before he said, “I’m told that the Blade of Chaos has failed. Their uprisings in the Blood Demon Sector have been suppressed everywhere!”

“Hehehehe!” Ba Mingsong laughed out, somewhat insanely. “You don’t understand it at all. The Blade of Chaos will never fail in the Blood Demon Sector. It will come back again even if it is suppressed a thousand, ten thousand times. Do you know why?”

Li Yao and Mo Tiesheng stared at him with great interest.

Ba Mingsong took a deep breath and said, “Because the mausoleum of God Chaos is somewhere deep below the surface of this planet!

“God Chaos was never really dead. Very soon, God Chaos will be reborn, and he will lead all the demons to create an immaculate new world!”

The hair on Li Yao’s neck stood on end. *What does he mean? Is ‘Chaos’ not a groundless figure in the legends but an existence with a real entity?*

While talking, Ba Mingsong took out two pendants from his pockets and handed them over. Then he said solemnly, “These are the charms of God Chaos. Under the radiance of Chaos, all demons are brothers. I hope that you two can survive more days in the arena!”

With the help of the burning torches, Li Yao opened his hands and observed. It was a crude pendant made from a brown bone with a pattern of a saber tied up by countless double helixes that looked both like gene strands and solid shackles.

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and said, “Uncle Ba, are you not scared of being captured by preaching on the ideas of the Blade of Chaos here?”

Ba Mingsong smiled, apparently not bothered at all. “What can they do even if they take me away? The worst outcome is nothing but death. After struggling on the Skeleton Island for so many years, I’ve lived a long enough life!”

The old demon staggered to his feet, flapping his wings. He walked away, as hunched as before, and gradually disappeared into the depths of the forest.

Li Yao and Mo Tiesheng looked at each other. They both hid the charms of the Blade of Chaos in the safest place.

…

The crimson rocks were burning like fire. Sweat was falling down, only to be vaporized the next second. Occasionally, rock thorns would pierce out rapidly from deep below the ground.

It was one of the most terrifying dungeons on the Skeleton Island, the Thorny Flame Dungeon! All the floor tiles were carved out of crystals of the fire class, with a temperature of more than three hundred degrees. The joins of the floor tiles would also spurt out rock thorns without any pattern, driven by the underground magma. A moment of carelessness, and one’s foot would be pierced through.

It was a month and a half after Li Yao reached the Skeleton Island, and this was the fourth game that he had participated in.

Over the past forty-five days, Li Yao had become a legend that rose like a volcanic eruption among the gladiators of the Skeleton Island!

“‘Bloody Claw’, the most brutal, strong, and mysterious gladiator over the past five years, has shown up! He’s only been here for a month and a half, but we’ve all witnessed his performance in the three most dangerous battles!

“In the Lightning Dungeon, he killed a Soul-Splitting Behemoth with only one attack!

“In the Ice Desolation Dungeon, he twisted off three heads of a Six-Feet Ice Lizard by force!

“In the Black Water Swamp, he escaped without being hurt at all from the attacks of dozens of Transformative Spider Snakes!

“What marvelous performance is he going to demonstrate today? Let’s wait and watch!”

The shrieking bugs in the sky were yelling nonstop, elaborating on his feats to the audience. Even without the exciting voice, the local audience of Void Turmoil City who had often watched the games were already more than thrilled. Countless bronze-blood demons were shouting the name of ‘Bloody Claw’. Even many silver-blood demons were craning their heads out of their boxes or observing him condescendingly with their telescopes.

Li Yao slightly lowered his head. In his eyes, the rowdy audience was nothing but piles of rotten meat.

He was not fighting for the crazy cheers of the audience. It was only because the words of Ba Mingsong, a worker of the Skeleton Island, greatly aroused his curiosity.

From that moment on, he was certain that the Skeleton Island was a secret training camp where the Blade of Chaos recruited new members.

In order to catch the attention of the Blade of Chaos, he would have to show distinguished capabilities.

Therefore, from that day on, Li Yao had quietly accelerated the speed of his training. He also released his strength, gradually improving it from 7% to 7.5%. After he continued making advancements and finally increased his capability to 9%, even many seasoned gladiators who had gone through dozens of games in the arena were no match for him. As a result, he was permitted to participate in the next game to be hosted in the arena.

Chapter 876 - Shooting Star Fiery Salamanders

In the scorching Thorny Flame Dungeon, Li Yao peacefully watched at the highest place of the auditorium through the air that was even hotter than the burning ground.

Yuchi Ba, the owner of the Skeleton Island, was still seated at the highest place. The young females of the Feather Clan blocked the sunlight with their broad wings and flapped them occasionally to give him a cool breeze. Eight loyal guards were standing around him like spears. They were all the dominators of the arena in the past, but right now, they all boasted a new name, which was the ‘Death Teeth Guards of the Skeleton Island’!

Although Yuchi Ba’s small eyes were blocked by the wings of the young females of the Feather Clan, Li Yao could still sense that a pair of interested eyes were scanning him up and down.

Li Yao was very clear that Yuchi Ba and his Death Teeth Guards were paying close attention to him, both in the previous games and in every minute of his daily training.

It was exactly what Li Yao needed. He had to convince Yuchi Ba and the Death Teeth Guards that he was really a gifted hunter and someone that they were in need of.

“Are you ready?” Li Yao asked without looking back.

A cold grunt echoed behind him in acknowledgement, which was the affirmative response of Mo Tiesheng.

Li Yao smiled.

The death games on the Skeleton Island were rarely held as duels except for those between super experts who had a winning record of dozens of games because the larger the number of participants in a game, the more changes there would be, and the more unexpected the outcome of the game would be.

In the previous games, Li Yao and been fighting side by side with Mo Tiesheng. The two of them had always practiced with each other during their personal training, too.

For Li Yao, fighting against Mo Tiesheng the ‘Mad Bull’ while suppressing his strength to 8% was an excellent approach of training, just like when his senior brother Fiend Blade Peng Hai went to practice with him while suppressing his strength to 5%.

After a month of getting to know each other, Li Yao had to admit that Mo Tiesheng was a natural-born commander in a battlefield. He seemed to boast a special aura that made everybody, including those stronger than himself, listen to his commands willingly.

Even when openings were revealed in his commands that were not mature enough, he would block all the openings with his furious strength, unstoppable air, and fearless determination.

Li Yao knew that he was not someone who enjoyed standing in the spotlight commanding everybody. He preferred to lurk in the shadows and manipulate everything in secret, securing the victory of a game without anybody knowing.

In the arena, one of them worked in the daylight while the other walked in the darkness. On the surface, Mo Tiesheng was the commander of the battle while Li Yao was an assaulter who wandered away from the main battle formation.

But in secret, Li Yao had been testing how to impose more ‘interference’ on the situation of the battle with his own strength.

BOOM!

At the center of the arena, a fireball soared into the sky, exploding into an ugly mushroom cloud in midair, which then dispersed into an abnormal skull, before everything spread out and dispersed in the end.

Hardly had a gap appeared in the bronze gate in the front when countless giants shrouded in flames forced it open. Almost forty demons strode out with their heads held high.

They were around three meters tall, like giant lizards that were standing on their feet. Their long and thick tails were packed with spurs, and the tips of their tails were huge bone hammers that looked like a heavy bomb.

This time, Li Yao’s opponents were not demon beasts but bronze-blood demons.

The Skeleton Island not only arranged games between gladiators and demon beasts but also welcomed demons from Void Turmoil City to join the matches personally. The bronze-blood demons, as the warrior class, were particularly fond of such entertainment, and their masters, the silver-blood nobles, were often very proud of the bloody glory that their subordinates won in an arena, too.

After Li Yao, Mo Tiesheng, and the other gladiators rose to fame on the Skeleton Island, many demons had fixed their sights on the newcomers. A silver-blood demon who came to Void Turmoil City to purchase strengthening drugs paid a high price so that his guards would have the right to tear apart the gladiators.

Those brutal demons known as ‘Shooting Star Fiery Salamanders’ were among the most infamous ones in the group of bronze-blood demons, too. They had natural glands that could absorb and spurt out high-temperature flames. When the bone hammer on their tail bashed the ground, the spiritual energy of the fire class would shake violently on a large scale, like the explosion of a crystal bomb.

The games between the bronze-blood demons and the gladiators were not fair. Not only was the battlefield chosen according to the advantages of the Shooting Star Fiery Salamanders, they were also wearing the strongest armor and the sharpest gloves carved out of crystals. The sabers and swords that they were carrying were also the most marvelous weapons made by the top craftsmen of the Blood Demon Sector.

However…

In Li Yao’s eyes, the Shooting Star Fiery Salamanders, although armed to the teeth, were nothing but hens that were wearing fancy clothing.

“Yuchi Ba, open your eyes and watch my performance closely!”

The slaughter began!

In Li Yao’s eyes, the arena stopped being a simply three-dimensional space, and his opponents were no longer living creatures made of flesh and blood. The vast battlefield, the Shooting Star Fiery Salamanders in the front, and the gladiators behind him all turned into the most fundamental streams of data that were connected with each other through the complicated, inexplicable formulas and theorems. The smallest change of a number would trigger a series of chain reactions and result to the subtle feedback of other numbers.

Li Yao had a deeper understanding about battles right now. When he suppressed his strength to the minimum and stopped crushing over his opponents with brute force, the wisdom of fighting was playing a more and more vital role in combat.

He was no longer only focused on his primary target, and he gave up considering the specific moves he should make. Instead, he calculated what consequences the death of the ninth Shooting Star Fiery Salamander to be killed by him would bring to the battle dozens of seconds later.

By perceiving the breathing, heartbeat, and temperature of the enemies, Li Yao even grasped their state of mind. He could vaguely tell which Shooting Star Fiery Salamander was particularly excited and which gladiator was relatively more tired because of overtraining.

All the information was integrated inside his brain within a moment.

When the dozens of Shooting Star Fiery Salamanders charged forward, waving their blades and spurting out flames in roars, Li Yao took three steps to the left.

The bronze-blood demons were well aware of the brutality of ‘Bloody Claw’. His unbelievable performance in the previous games had been watched repeatedly by the bronze-blood demons, too.

Ruthlessness and lust for killing did not equal low intelligence. On the contrary, the fact that they could laugh to the end after hundreds of life-and-death battles proved that the bronze-blood demons were the most cunning, prudent warriors.

They immediately reacted to Li Yao’s horizontal movement. Their battle formation, which was in the shape of a diamond, subtly changed.

After quickly moving fifteen meters to the left, Li Yao came to an abrupt halt and turned, as if he were planning to cut to the Shooting Star Fiery Salamanders’ rear and attack their commander.

The battle formation of the Shooting Star Fiery Salamanders changed yet again. However, before the new battle formation was consolidated, Li Yao changed mysteriously for a third time, appearing to be lunging at the center of the Shooting Star Fiery Salamanders.

In less than three seconds, Li Yao had made dozens of changes. In the end, although his body did not move much, the change of the air around him and the focus of his eyes produced a tiny gap in the battle formation of the Shooting Star Fiery Salamanders.

Before, every Shooting Star Fiery Salamander was neither too far nor too close from each other. The bone hammers on their tails could easily cover each other.

But right now, ten or so Shooting Star Fiery Salamanders were too close to each other, and their tails would collide into each other when being waved, making it possible to maximize their strength. On the other hand, the other ten or so Shooting Star Fiery Salamanders were too far away from each other, and once Mo Tiesheng and the other Red Blood

Bronze Bulls accelerated to their maximum speed, it was more likely that they would pierce through the Shooting Star Fiery Salamanders easily!

Mo Tiesheng soon located the tiny gap, too. He immediately led the charge with the Red Blood Bronze Bulls!

The two torrents crashed into each other brutally, performing the song of blood and destruction that were the demons’ favorite.

Li Yao had not launched an attack even after the sixth Shooting Star Fiery Salamander collapsed before him.

He abandoned the idiotic method to manipulating the situation of the battle with pushing or blocking the opponents. His every footstep, every hand-waving, and even every look was enough to subtly influence the situation.

Such movements consumed the least strength and spiritual energy for him.

Li Yao could not help but recall the time when countless Grand Illusionary Soldiers in the Flying Star Sector had surrounded him.

At that time, the only thing he had known was to stride forward with all his strength, which had been quite an exhausting experience. In the end, he had been surrounded by countless Grand Illusionary Soldiers that were no higher than the Building Foundation Stage and nearly failed to get out.

At that time, I had the combat ability close to the Nascent Soul Stage, but I did not know how to make best use of it. How foolish I was!

In the future, I’ll be engaged in battles of even larger scales. I should practice new fighting skills as soon as possible!

The most crucial factor is the ratio of the number of enemies killed to the strength that the process consumes!

I must find the most cost-effective way of fighting in order to be unstoppable in the vast sea of stars!

Shua!

Li Yao dodged the bone hammer that a Shooting Star Fiery Salamander slapped at him brutally. When he lowered his body, another Shooting Star Fiery Salamander was charging at him. The bone hammers of the two Shooting Star Fiery Salamanders hit each other in dazzling sparks.

The two Shooting Star Fiery Salamanders were both paralyzed because of the collision. They did not see it coming when a black shadow blinked past their hearts like a lightning and pecked their breastplate three times within a breath. Their breast plates were broken through with the first peck, their bones shattered from the second, and then a weak current pierced through their hearts after the third peck!

The Shooting Star Fiery Salamanders stopped moving like statues.

When they were finally blown off by the scorching wind, there were few Shooting Star Fiery Salamanders that were still standing on the arena, preparing to meet the charge of the infuriated Red Blood Bronze Bulls.

The winners were obvious.

Li Yao heard prolonged horns outside of the arena and roars hundreds of times louder that reeked of bloodthirst and desire for killing. Almost all the audience, including the silver-blood demons, stood up and bashed their chests, screaming in a twisted voice.

Li Yao managed to distinguish a high-pitched voice that belonged to Yuchi Ba, owner of the Skeleton Island, from the screams.

The newcomers who had only been on the Skeleton Island for two months, because of their amazing performances, were granted the right to challenge the ‘Death Teeth Guards’, the strongest gladiators on the Skeleton Island!

Chapter 877 - Foam Like Butterflies

At night, deep inside the forest, Li Yao leaned against a thick bloody coconut tree, considering the situation quietly.

After winning the fourth game, they had been granted the right to challenge the champion gladiators of the Skeleton Island. Over the next couple of days, their training facilities had been fully upgraded. They had more strengthening drugs, better high-energy food, and all available battle experience for them to learn.

During the high-intensity training, Li Yao finally saw an example of mental derangement and cell collapse with his own eyes.

Before, Li Yao had already known that the death rate of the training camp was very high, and he had barely paid attention to other gladiators as he had been too occupied in his own training.

But that day, a chaotic-blood demon, more than four meters tall and weighing ten tons, boasting the bloodline of 'Hammer Head Battle Elephant', suddenly collapsed right in front of his eyes after injecting twenty doses of strengthening drugs and devouring more than two tons of food. He trembled in the beginning before fluids that looked like foam leaked out of the wrinkles of his skin.

The mountain-like demon screamed miserably, wreathed in the foam, while his body features changed constantly.

In one short minute, the features of behemoths, rhinos, and other heavy beasts appeared on his body, only to be replaced by those of lions and leopards a moment later. Eventually, he was even growing colorful feathers and sharp claws and teeth.

For a moment, maybe it was just his imagine, but Li Yao even vaguely sensed that all the features of animals disappeared from the chaotic-blood demon, and he turned into a tall, strong, magnificent-looking man.

However, such a form did not last even 0.1 seconds before endless foam flowed out of his widely opened mouth and melted him completely.

A gentle breeze passed by, blowing the foam up as if it was made of flying butterflies. Illuminated by the torches, they shone in glamorous colors before they vanished into nothingness in the end.

The demon that looked as undefeatable as a mountain was vaporized just like that in only one minute.

Not too many demons were surprised by such a scene. The gladiators all whispered to each other that the demon had been embraced by God Chaos again.

Yes. During Li Yao’s adventure on the Skeleton Island, the ideology of the Blade of Chaos had spread afar among the gladiators, many of whom were praying to Chaos in secret. As far as Li Yao knew, even the most resolute gladiators often could not help but carry a charm of the Blade of Chaos and scratch it before they joined a game, as if it was the hope of their survival.

After their first encounter, Ba Mingsong had visited Li Yao and Mo Tiesheng several times. The two talented, distinguished new gladiators seemed to be important targets of the Blade of Chaos.

Mo Tiesheng’s tongue was rather tight, and he did not reveal his thoughts easily. Li Yao tried to have a chat with Ba Mingsong several times, but there was no telling whether the demon was too clever or truly knew nothing about the details. Except for repeating the benevolence of ‘God Chaos’, he failed to offer anything new.

But today, the collapse of the gladiator was a major blow for Li Yao’s mind, which prompted him to consider the different methodologies of training of mankind and the demon race from a higher level.

According to the mental devil, the method of training to directly stimulate the cells was dangerous and extremely unstable.

On the Skeleton Island, in order to trigger the greatest potential of the gladiators in the shortest amount of time, strengthening drugs far exceeding normal dosages had been injected into them.

Although the strengthening drugs were all first class and contained a lot of balancing and repairing constituents, such a hasty approach to training still resulted in the mess of genes and the collapse of cells in many demons.

In the past, Li Yao had always been confused by something. In terms of physical build and combat ability, the individuals of the demon race were far better than those of mankind. Mo Tiesheng and the chaotic-blood demons that he saw in the Dry Leaf Village were all civilians, but after preliminary training, they were able to deal shocking damage, and ten muscular human beings might not have been a match for one of them.

Then, why did the demon race suffer such a crushing defeat in the great war against human beings ten thousand years ago when they boasted such fine individual soldiers?

Li Yao did not fully understand the question until he dug deeper into the training methods of the demon race.

Firstly, talent played a very important role in the training of the demon race. Demons who boasted the bloodlines of the Red Blood Bronze Bulls such as Mo Tiesheng were in fact not large in number. Most of the demons, such as rooster demons and rabbit demons, did not have much combat ability. They were even weaker than adult men in general.

Secondly, the training method of the demon race was to stimulate the cells, which proved to be very unstable. Their odds of mental derangement were much higher than those of mankind. Besides, they were almost always beyond rescue the moment they were mentally deranged.

A complete collapse with their body turning into foam was naturally the most extreme example. But on many occasions, a certain weird organ inside a demon’s body would be awakened when they were mentally deranged, say, lungs that were suitable for the special air millions of years ago, or gills that replaced their lungs once and for all. If so, they would still die miserably on the spot, and other people would not know what happened to them at all.

Thirdly, the training system of the demon race was too monotonous and focused too much attention on awakening the strength within one’s body. In other words, they were lacking creativity.

Li Yao had always believed that, although there might be regressions in the development of a civilization, the trend of every civilization was getting stronger and stronger.

Therefore, after he received the legacy of Ou Yezi, a master of refining from forty thousand years, he did not count his everything on it. Instead, he learned a huge amount of modern knowledge of refining with the legacy of the past as references.

The legacy of the primeval era might have certain shining parts that were better than the technology of human beings, but Li Yao definitely did not believe that the contemporary civilization of mankind had no advantages.

On the contrary, modern human beings developed at an amazing speed and built a magnificent interstellar information society after only ten thousand years. Such speed and creativity were definitely impressive!

But as for the demon race, they were limited by their bloodlines and talents, and they attached too much importance to the awakening of the strength that was originally inside their body. They never thought to place the strength in the future that was more boundless. For thirty thousand years, they had been going around circles and even established such a bizarre construct as the ‘Four Pillar System’. No wonder they were no match for human beings!

After all, a war in modern times was a collision of two civilizations.

Since Li Yao’s arrival in the Blood Demon Sector, he had seen a lot of experts with marvelous skills. But as for the society and the political system of the Blood Demon Sector, he could not think of a better word to describe it than ‘obsolete’. The Blood Demon Sector was truly facing trouble from both the inside and the outside.

If a large-scale strategical war between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector really broke out in the end, Li Yao did not think that such a Blood Demon Sector had much chance of winning at all.

But here came to question.

Jin Xinyue was already smart and determined enough, and there was no way that Li Yao would underestimate the wisdom of the twelve demon emperors of the Blood Demon Sector. Did the real leaders of the Blood Demon Sector not understand the current crisis when he had seen through it after only three months?

Then, did the demon emperors persist in the final war against the Heaven's Origin Sector knowing that the Blood Demon Sector was not as strong as it appeared to be because they were too arrogant or because they were actually up to something else?

Jin Tuyi, the new commander-in-chief of the coalition army of the demon race, means to implement the 'Red Tide Plan' and assault the Star Glory Federation from its central area. But is the 'Red Tide Plan' the only scheme of the final war for the Blood Demon Sector? I think they've underestimated the tenacity of the Star Glory Federation, haven't they?

Everything was a mess. Even Li Yao could not get his head around the whole thing despite his computational ability.

While he was feeling frustrated, Mo Tiesheng walked over to him.

"Tomorrow is the day when we are going to fight the 'Death Teeth Guards'."

Mo Tiesheng sighed and said, "Word on the street is that the master of the Shooting Star Fiery Salamanders was not happy that we killed so many of them in the arena.

“The silver-blood noble not only lost a team of elite subordinates but also suffered a heavy monetary loss because he bet on his subordinates, not to mention that the failure was itself humiliating enough.

“Therefore, the silver-blood noble burst into fury and paid a fortune, demanding that the ‘Death Teeth Guards’ kill us all!

“We have made significant improvements after a month and a half’s training, but I’m afraid that we are not going to be match for the Death Teeth Guards however strong we are right now!”

Li Yao smiled and lay down on the grass with his hands as a pillow. He said, “Don’t be scared. Death… is not necessarily the destination.”

Li Yao was almost certain that everything was the plan of the Blade of Chaos and that they would see the real appearance of the Blade of Chaos tomorrow.

That would be the beginning of the real game.

No matter how perilous the game was, he was never willing to give in as a chess piece; he was going to be a player who made his moves on the board and even the one who manipulated the other player!

Licking his teeth, Li Yao quickly dismissed all the irrelevant thoughts.

Secrets had to be found out one after another. For now, he had better figure out everything about the Blade of Chaos first!

…

Hiu!

A sharp arrow tore apart the air in the forest and passed by Li Yao’s right ear, piercing deep into the giant tree. The trunk immediately emitted burning noises as it was withered with stenchful smoke popping up.

The battle between Li Yao, Mo Tiesheng, and the Death Teeth Guards was held in the open arena named ‘Hell Bone Swamp’.

It was a spacious jungle that seemed plain but was riddled with traps. Inconspicuous swamps that boasted uncanny attraction force were hidden below the bushes everywhere. Any creature that stepped on them would be swallowed whole. Their bones would not pop up to the surface again until a long time later when the swamp had absorbed their flesh and bone marrow. The remains of the victims usually radiated scary phosphorescence in the dark, and that was how the ‘Hell Bone Swamp’ got its name.

‘Hell Bone Swamp’ was one of the most dangerous arenas on the Skeleton Island. It was so dangerous that there was not even room to set up the auditorium. The audience could only watch the ongoing battle through the ‘Flying Spirit Eyes’ that were densely distributed in the jungle. Twelve minutes after the twenty-two gladiators including Li Yao were projected to the Hell Bone Swamp, only three were left.

Li Yao saw two gladiators being swallowed by the swamp with his own eyes, and one gladiator’s skin ulcerated and was burnt after being shot by an arrow, dying miserably on the spot.

But he was not affected at all because—

Chapter 878 - Thousand Corpse Abyss

“What a weird venom!”

The interested voice of the mental devil drifted out from deep inside Li Yao’s brain.

When the sharp arrow brushed past him just now, Li Yao had calculated the most precise distance and position, allowing the skin on his ear to be hurt by the arrow so that he could retrieve a sample of the venom for analysis.

“On the surface, it seems to be the most lethal poison that can melt one’s guts and make them die miserably. It is even very contagious, and whoever comes close might be affected by the venom.

“However, after analyzing carefully, it is not difficult to find that there are a lot of stabilizing cells inside the venom that can help maintain the vital signs of a creature.

“According to my calculations, once a lot of ‘venom’ floods into the body, the skin will certainly fester, and the heartbeat and breathing will become very feeble, too. Every symptom will be no different from death. However, the most critical part of the creature’s vitality will not be cut off, and it will enter a certain ‘false death’ state. With timely treatment, they will awaken shortly after!”

Li Yao smiled. He had made the same judgement, but he needed more proof to support his hypothesis.

His senses spread out in the forest like the tentacles of an octopus. Amid the dense bushes and thorns, every Death Teeth Guard had been precisely locked onto by him. He had even simulated dozens of pictures in his mind where he killed the Death Teeth Guards instantly. It was not until the enemies found the last few ‘preys’ that he gave up such a boring game and started observing carefully.

Mo Tiesheng was among the few gladiators who fought to the end.

He thought that his companions had all been slain by the Death Teeth Guards and could not have been infuriated. With the desperate roars, his body continued expanding, and his spine protruded out, growing spurs that looked like tusks. The broken horn on his head was now repaired and even thicker than when it was intact in the past, soaring up to the sky helically like the horn of a devil.

However, the gap between their capability could not be filled simply by outrage. The Death Teeth Guards were all the winners who laughed to the end in the hundreds of battles on the Skeleton Island. They also had the advantage in numbers right now. Their victory was certain!

The thorny bushes shook slightly. A black shadow darted out like lightning and leapt to Mo Tiesheng’s shoulder. Then, with a strangle technique, the enemy fractured his right arm that was as thick as a bucket. It exploded with clusters of bloody mist bursting out.

Before Mo Tiesheng had the chance to scream in pain, a crocodile in iron armor suddenly dashed out of the mud below his hoofs, brutally piercing his long spear into Mo Tiesheng’s chest!

When the tip of the spear reached Mo Tiesheng’s chest, thousands of electric arcs spurted out abruptly. Every spiral on the spear that looked like a gold ring was revolving rapidly, allowing the weapon to penetrate through his broad chest without the least hinderance and get out from Mo Tiesheng’s back. A giant heart soaked in blood was stuck to the tip of the spear and ripped apart instantly by the electric arcs.

Mo Tiesheng roared crazily and blew away the two Death Teeth Guards. He bulged his eyes, clutched the hole on his chest, and stepped forward heavily. Finally, he could not hold on any longer and kneeled on the ground, lowering his head and cramping crazily.

Very soon, deep purple blood flooded out of his wound and spread out like a plague. His enormous body soon turned into weird black.

Even the most coldhearted demon might not have been willing to look at him any longer.

But Li Yao had been observing carefully and capturing every millimeter of movement of the two Death Teeth Guards precisely.

He discovered that, fierce as the first demon’s attack might have been, the ‘heavy wounds’ such as a shattered arm could easily be recovered with the biochemical treatment of the demon race after several days.

As for the crocodile’s sudden piercing, it missed the critical area slightly at the most important moment.

With Li Yao’s vision right now, he could calculate precise the distribution of his internal organs and the functioning status of the organs by observing Mo Tiesheng’s heartbeat and the different temperatures of his body parts.

To put it simply, when Li Yao glanced at Mo Tiesheng casually, it was not just an entire minotaur that he saw but also different pictures including his bone structure, the distribution of veins and nerves, the precise locations of every internal organ and lymph, and so on.

Li Yao clearly ‘saw’ that, when the lightning-like spear of the crocodile pierced into Mo Tiesheng’s chest, the attack was off by three millimeters to the right and brushed past Mo Tiesheng’s heart at a close distance. The wound seemed to be fatal, but none of the lightning really touched his heart!

Then, what was the enormous heart on the tip of the spear about?

I got it. Maybe a Cosmos Ring that stores such a ‘heart’ has been embedded into the spear in the first place.

No living organs could be stored inside the Cosmos Ring, but the ‘heart’ might not be necessarily made of flesh and meat. One made of foam materials can look equally vivid at the hands of a deft craftsman.

Li Yao was a refiner. He could tell that it was not difficult to produce a false heart with natural materials as long as the appearance was identical to a real one.

The spear could release dazzling electric arcs that would strongly interfere with the sight of the audience. While the lightning was spluttering, the ‘false’ heart was burnt into ashes instantly. Nobody would be able to notice anything wrong!

Inside the long spear, there are also probably special narcotic drugs and false death drugs that can make Mo Tiesheng enter the weird false death state. He will also cramp, vomit blood, and have skin ulcers… Everybody will want to keep distance from him.

The audience is all far away and watching everything through the Flying Spirit Eyes. How can they discover that he is not actually dead so quickly?

Li Yao smiled. By the rattling noises in the bushes and the shaking leaves, he locked onto three Death Teeth Guards that were darting toward him.

Stomping on the branch, Li Yao threw himself to the ground Li Yao a cannonball. The earth was all splashing because of the invasion. Under the cover of the humus, he kicked the leopard demon who was best at melee combat rapidly!

As he expected, the leopard demon came close to him like a harassing fly.

Li Yao’s right leg was immediately folded like a razor blade. He almost fell over because of the sudden change of movement.

Li Yao would never hand over his fate to somebody else. Although he was 99% sure that the opponents were not really trying to kill him, there was still uncertainty after all. If his right foot suffered heavy wounds, it would be a great disadvantage for him when he encountered real experts such as the Fire Ant King.

Li Yao only kicked because he wanted to show a loophole on his back so that a Death Teeth Guard who had been pretending to be a piece of rind behind him would be tempted to attack his back brutally!

Shua!

A narrow and long wound was immediately left on his back. Under Li Yao’s precise control, the blood flowed out in a seemingly miserable way, but it barely diminished his combat ability.

Li Yao seemed to be staggering after he suffered such a strike and could do nothing to stop ten or so bone spears from hitting his critical parts brutally.

However, Li Yao sensed that the bone spears that seemed to be aiming at his critical parts were all going to miss the real locations of the critical parts.

The venom inside the bone spears immediately spread out!

With Li Yao’s sturdy body close to that of the Nascent Soul Stage, which had also been strengthened by the mental devil, barely any poison could work on him right now. The venom of such a level could deal absolutely no damage to him.

But Li Yao simply removed all the defense on the surface of his body and allowed his skin and part of the nerve endings to be corroded.

When he ‘helplessly’ fell to the ground, cramping and foaming at the mouth with deep purple venomous fluids leaking out of his every pore, lengthy horns echoed far away.

The seemingly one-sided slaughter was over.

But the real game had only just begun.

Very soon, guards of the Skeleton Island in full sets of protective garments carried pots made of fine metal and carved with mysterious patterns and sprayed a lot of deep blue foam on his body.

Li Yao knew that the foams could block the venom and the germs. It was a standard procedure to handle the bodies that were killed by the venom.

However, after they were wreathed in the deep blue foams, nobody would be able to find out if they were actually not dead.

Covered in the multiple layers of foam, Li Yao did not dare to expand his senses. He could only vaguely feel that he was lifted and moved to a large cart. Then, after more than half an hour's intermittent and bumpy travelling, he reached a place where the sea wind was blowing, and the tides were surging.

Li Yao interweaved his telepathic thoughts into a helix and drilled a tiny hole on the deep blue foam through which he observed the surroundings.

It was a cliff at the northwest part of the Skeleton Island with an altitude of almost a hundred meters. Below the cliff were sharp, disorderly reefs.

At the center of the cliff was an enormous pit around fifty meters in diameter. Huge waves slapping the seashore could vaguely be heard, and they were mixed with earsplitting shrieks, each louder than the last. Smelly, scarlet smoke was spurting out from the bottom of the pit, hovering in midair, and forming weird red clouds.

It was the 'Thousand Corpse Abyss', the place on the Skeleton Island where the dead bodies of the gladiators were dropped.

All the gladiators hated the place and were scared whenever they spoke about it.

Countless bodies had been piled up beside the Thousand Corpse Abyss. They were pushed into the pit by enormous beasts that were driven by the guards.

Very soon, a mill of flesh and blood seemed to have been opened below the pit. Noises of meat being torn apart and bones being fractured were echoing.

With his telepathic thoughts, Li Yao detected, to his surprise, that it was the bodies of the demon beasts that were pushed into the pit in the first batch.

It was not the 'dead' gladiators' turn until right now.

When he was pushed to the side of the Thousand Corpse Abyss, he discovered that the bottom of the pit was connected to the ocean. At the center of the bottom was a rapid swirl in which countless terrifying sea beasts that looked like hybrids of sea snakes, worms, and octopuses were swimming swiftly. None of the sea beasts had eyes, and the front end of their fat bodies was entire occupied by a bloody mouth, and more than ten circles of dense teeth could be seen.

Even a body made of iron was probably going to be ground and swallowed by the sea beasts.

Li Yao knew that such beasts were known as 'Blind Teeth Sea Demons'. They were the dominators near the seashore. The Far East Demon Kingdom had tamed the horrifying beasts as weapons and even produced a batch of destructive assault ships based on the Blind Teeth Sea Demons, which proved to be quite a headache for the navy of the Star Glory Federation.

Huala!

Li Yao and Mo Tiesheng were pushed into the Thousand Corpse Abyss!

Chapter 879 - Throne of Genes

Inside the Thousand Corpse Abyss, the dark waves crashed powerfully against the walls as if trying to escape. The Blind Teeth Sea Demons were all opening and closing their mouths in the most hideous way. Li Yao could not help but increase his wariness to the maximum. Should there be anything wrong, he could crash into the wall of the pit straightly and hide himself within the rocks.

Mo Tiesheng and the other gladiators were really in the false death state. They were like the puppets whose strings had been cut off and were freefalling into the pit, their hands and feet fluttering randomly.

The gladiators were about to become a delicious meal for the Blind Teeth Sea Demons when one side of the wall of the dark pit glided open quietly and revealed a few pathways. Half of the pathways tossed out glue nets that were as sticky as the spider webs and caught all the gladiators, dragging them into the pathway, while the other half of the pathways spurted out almost a hundred corpses of demon beasts, which replaced the gladiators as food for the Blind Teeth Sea Demons!

The entire process was quick and seamless. Unless one bulged their eyes and observed the bottom of the pit, nobody would be able to notice anything.

Just like that, the gladiators who should have ended up in the stomachs of the Blind Teeth Sea Demons were swapped and dragged underground!

“Hurry up and inject the antidote!”

“There are quite a few talents among the newcomers. They cannot be killed. Send them into the biochemical slots for treatment!”

Sensing the cold tips of syringes being stabbed into his veins softly and injected cool, comforting drugs that slowly flowed around his body, Li Yao smiled and knew that he had successfully faked his way into the Blade of Chaos.

…

One day later, deep inside the Skeleton Island, three hundred meters below the ground, inside the secret base of the Blade of Chaos…

“Where is this young talent from exactly? His body is too strong!”

“You can’t tell it from his appearance at all. He is no taller than three meters, and his weight is less than a thousand kilograms, but he has swallowed more strengthening drugs than the five Red Blood Bronze Bull did!”

“It’s rather strange. We retrieved his blood for analysis and found nothing wrong. He is just one of the most common chaotic-blood demons.”

“Is this what they referred to as ‘naturally-endowed gifts’?”

“The supervisor has commanded that the intensity of the ‘Tiger Devil Body Building Medicines’ be increased by three times. We’ll see how the monster reacts to that. Maybe we have indeed picked up a treasure this time. He might prove to be an invincible warrior!”

Li Yao was floating in an enormous biochemical slot with his eyes half closed. He was soaked in a liquid that looked slightly red. Such a liquid was as thick as gum and stored no end of strengthening constituents that slowly leaked into his pores under slight pressure.

By perceiving the feeble vibrations of the glass of the biochemical slot, he was eavesdropping on the conversation among the members of the Blade of Chaos outside.

It sounded like the Blade of Chaos was truly not malicious and only meant to recruit new, strong members.

It was exactly as he had hoped.

The mental devil was yawning in boredom deep inside his brain. “Such healing drugs are truly as tasteless as water. It took them a day and a half to repair such minor injuries? If it were me, I could have the injuries recovered in a minute by activating your cells’ potential!

“The ‘Tiger Devil Body Building Medicine’ that they’ve developed seems interesting enough, though. But the intensity is too low. Three times? Should be ten times at least. Only that will be exciting enough!

“However, hehe, there is indeed a lot of good stuff in the secret base of the Blade of Chaos. The trip is definitely worthwhile!”

Li Yao agreed with the mental devil’s theory.

The biochemical slot he was placed in was not the only one in the base. He was now in a vast natural cave below the ground. Beside him were almost a hundred biochemical slots that were placed next to each other in a line. Some of other biochemical slots were embedded in the wall of the cave. One expert was lying quietly inside every biochemical slot.

Despite the blockage of the thick drugs, Li Yao could clearly sense the stronger and stronger scent inside every biochemical slot.

Five hundred meters to his left, some of the large biochemical slots were even more than twenty meters tall. The demons being soaked and refined inside were like dinosaurs that had travelled through time to modern day. Even Li Yao secretly clicked his tongue when he saw them.

The Blade of Chaos was indeed not as simple as it appeared to be, and the so-called ‘Riot of Bloody Blade’ was definitely not their real outburst!

Li Yao did not have the patience to wait any longer. His eyes shuddered as he slowly opened them. Cold brilliance that pierced through the strengthening drugs, the hardened glass, and the thick rocks beamed out of his bright red left eye.

“He’s awake!”

“He took more poison than any of the other gladiators did, and he woke up so quickly? What a monster!”

“Hurry and change the constituents of the drugs. Inject pacifiers!”

Very soon, Li Yao saw an old demon who had a pair of pure white wings staring at him with a smile before his biochemical slot.

The old demon was wearing an ivory robe with a crimson emblem of the Blade of Chaos painted on the chest.

Looking at the sharp blade that chopped off the gene strands for a second time, Li Yao suddenly sensed a whole different meaning from it.

“Am I… dead?”

Li Yao pretended that he was weak and drew on the hardened glass with his fingers clumsily.

“No.” The old demon’s voice came over through the warm strengthening drugs, somewhat blurred. “You are reborn.”

…

Li Yao had been ‘reborn’ for eighteen hours.

In the first fifteen hours, the Blade of Chaos had run a series of thorough physical examinations on him.

With the disguise of the mental devil, he naturally passed the tests without any trouble.

After a brief rest, he was led by two members of the Blade of Chaos through a long pathway to a quiet underground temple.

There was nothing inside the temple, but enormous paintings had been decorated on the walls. However, the paintings were not about the glorious, magnificent deities nor the scenes where heroes were fighting blood-boiling battles, but the pictures of the mysterious gene strands, cells in various forms, and the fossils of countless ancient creatures.

Such paintings added to the mystery and solemnness of the temple.

Other than Li Yao, the gladiators who were ‘killed’ in the same game as him showed up one after another, including those swallowed by the swamp.

Li Yao was dazed at first. Then he immediately realized what had happened. There were clearly traps below the so-called ‘Hell Bone Swamp’, too, and the gladiators who stepped on them would be pulled away through the secret tunnels down there. After a few days, a few remnants of bones similar to the size of the victims would be thrown back to the ground, and nobody would be suspicious.

Those gladiators were not as healthy as Li Yao. Although they had woken up, almost everybody was tied up in thick bandages and holding multiple bags of healing drugs. Some of them were even soaked in the portable biochemical slots and pushed over with the help of others.

They were still at a loss now that they had returned from death. Seeing that their companions who should have been killed in the Hell Bone Swamp were also alive, they were even more surprised.

Only several gladiators—including Mo Tiesheng, who had thick plasters bound to his chest and looked like an iron statue—were deep in thought and seemed to have realized what was going on.

“Congratulations on your rebirth!”

After a moment of faint laughter, deafening noises echoed below the ground at the end of the temple. The floor spread out like a blossoming flower, and a throne slowly rose up.

The throne was designed in a very strange shape. It seemed to be made of countless interconnecting gene strands. The gene chains were all crystal clear and emitting glamorous colors from within, filling the enormous temple with the scent of life all of a sudden.

But nobody was sitting on the throne. In front of the throne, three high shadows were standing.

The two standing on the two sides emotionlessly were the Death Teeth Guards who had ‘killed’ them.

But the most magnificent shadow in the middle turned out to be Yuchi Ba, the master of the Skeleton Island!

Li Yao had seen it coming so was not surprised, but the other gladiators were caught unprepared and exclaimed in shock.

Right now, Yuchi Ba had taken off the gorgeous robe that he wore in the arena and put on a plain training armor with an emblem of the Blade of Chaos made of black iron on his chest. Bloody streaks were all over the black emblem. There was no telling whether they were intentionally added when the emblem was carved or it was the blood of his enemies that had leaked onto the emblem after he killed too many of them.

Yuchi Ba carried an intimidating aura with him although he had not said anything. He slowly walked to the crowd one step after another. He glanced over the wounds on everybody and stopped for a long time on Li Yao. In the end, he stared at Mo Tiesheng and said frankly, “I know that you must have a lot of questions, brothers, and I’m going to answer all of them since I’m talking to you under my real identity today!

“Before I answer your questions, allow me to reintroduce myself. I, Yuchi Ba, am the owner of the Skeleton Island, but I am also a believer of Chaos. You may consider me as the highest representative of the Blade of Chaos in Void Turmoil City!”

Many quick-minded gladiators had already guessed his identity through his dress, but hearing him acknowledge it so straightforwardly, they were greatly startled too and whispered to each other.

Many gladiators had accepted the ideas of the Blade of Chaos during their training. Right now, after they were ‘reborn’, they were rather moved as they felt that they had finally found their calling. For a moment, hot tears were flowing inside their eyes, and they did not know what to say.

But Li Yao and Mo Tiesheng remained as untouched as before. Mo Tiesheng even furrowed his brows and said solemnly, “Master Yuchi, so to speak, everything was your scheme the whole time?

“You captured us on purpose and ordered us to receive the harshest training and undergo life-and-death battles just so that you could pick the strongest of us for the Blade of Chaos?”

His hands behind his back, Yuchi Ba replied peacefully, “That is the first question that many brothers ask me when they wake up.

“And my answer has been the same every time. Yes. Everything was my scheme. You may even accuse me of kidnapping you through the most shameless approaches!

“On the Skeleton Island, you have undergone the most rigorous training and taken strengthening drugs dozens, if not hundreds, of times the normal dosage. Many of our brothers were mentally deranged, and their cells collapsed.

Still more brothers were killed miserably in the arenas, sometimes even with no bones left!

“Everything was my scheme. I plead guilty to all charges!”

Chapter 880 - True Meaning of Chaos

Yuchi Ba talked in such a resolute and righteous way that even Mo Tiesheng was momentarily dazed.

“However—”

Yuchi Ba suddenly changed his tone and demanded, “Brothers here, you might as well recall your past and think about the obstructions that you met when you ran away from your homes to avoid the war. Do you think that you would have survived if I had not brought you to this place?

“You wouldn’t! In the Blood Demon Sector right now, being a black-blood demon or a chaotic-blood demon is your original sin. There is no way you would have survived!

“The Skeleton Island is not the only arena in the Blood Demon Sector. All the demon kings are now desperate to recruit soldiers and slaves. If I had not captured you, it is possible that you would have been captured by other slave-catching teams or even the army!

“On the Skeleton Island, while you received the harshest training, you also had the best strengthening drugs and abundant food. Also, in the seemingly perilous games, I was always doing the best I could to save your life! Only by a ‘fake death’ can you disappear from the world and sever your past!

“You wouldn’t be so lucky in other arenas or in the army! The Riot of the Bloody Blade has not entirely died down yet. I believe that you have all heard a lot of rumors and have a basic idea what roles the black-blood demons and the chaotic-blood demons are playing in the army.

“So, do you really think that I was wrong?

“Yes. On the Skeleton Island, many of our brothers are killed every day, during the harsh training, because of the excessive dosage of strengthening drugs, or in the dangerous the Lightning Dungeon, the Thorny Flame Dungeon, and the Hell Bone Swamp! If possible, I would not want any brothers to die in vain!

“However, this is Void Turmoil City, full of silver-blood demons! Sacrificing some of our brothers can help save the lives of others so that they can become the warriors who shatter our shackles and rise up in resistance! There are no alternatives!”

Yuchi Ba’s words raised a riot among the gladiators, who were all whispering to each other and yet could not make out the situation. In the end, they all looked at Mo Tiesheng and Li Yao.

Mo Tiesheng was deep in thought, too, and did not give a response for a long time.

Yuchi Ba opened his thick arms and said solemnly, “Brothers, the shackles that we are bound with have been imposed on us for forty thousand years. An unprecedented great war between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector is about to break out, and the master of the new world will soon be decided. However, no matter who the winner of the war is, cannon fodder such as us will be equally doomed!

“If we don’t stand up to fight, we will either be tormented to death in the dark mining pits or have to kill each other in the arenas for nothing other than the chuckles of the nobles. Or, we may end up as worthless cannon fodder as members of the ‘beast tides’ or the ‘insect oceans’, waiting to be blown into smithereens by the crystal cannons and the crystal warships of the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

“If you do not want such a horrible future to become reality for you and your family, then join the Blade of Chaos and fight back. We will break the so-called Four Pillars System and forge our own way of life with our own hands!”

Yuchi Ba’s words ignited the eyes of many gladiators like invisible sparks.

Even Mo Tiesheng, who had been silent the whole time, seemed to be rather moved.

However, after pondering for a while, Li Yao raised a rather sharp question. “Master Yuchi, you… don’t seem to be a black-blood demon or a chaotic-blood one?”

His question made all the gladiators focus their eyes on Yuchi Ba’s body again.

Yuchi Ba smiled and replied unhurriedly, “Yes. According to the classification of the Blood Demon Sector, my bloodline belongs to the purest silver blood. But in fact, such a way of classification is just hilarious! Allow me to show you the truth!”

“The truth?”

Li Yao raised his eyebrow in great interest.

“In the made-up legends and tales, the so-called saint blood, silver blood, bronze blood, and black blood are all natural-born and unchangeable. Whoever tries to even slightly alter their blood will only degenerate into the most humble, lowly, and untouchable chaotic-blood demons!

“However—”

Intense demonic energy suddenly spurted out of Yuchi Ba’s body and circled around his magnificent body, forming complicated patterns.

Creepy noises of flesh being torn apart and reorganized echoed deep inside Yuchi Ba’s throat and his body. A moment later, the intensity of his demonic energy reached a whole new level, and five black blades that looked like the forelegs of a mantis grew out of his fist that was larger than a pot!

“This is—”

All the gladiators were shocked. It was clearly a feature of a certain type of the Insect Clan or the Claw Clan, but Yuchi Ba was clearly an out-and-out member of the Horn Clan!

Yuchi Ba waved the five blade limbs softly, drawing waves that looked like water currents in the air. He stared at everyone through the gaps of the newly-grown organs and said, “Have you seen it, brothers? The features of two different kinds of demon species have appeared in me, a pure silver-blood demon!

“There is only one possible explanation. The classification of saint blood, silver blood, bronze blood, and black blood does not exist at all! The differences of our appearances are our ‘forms’ that are shaped in different environments. A demon should be able to activate different ‘forms’ to adapt themselves to different battlefields or jobs so that they can fulfil the destiny that God Chaos designed for them!”

“Destiny?”

All the gladiators were whispering to each other.

Yuchi Ba slowed down and said in a low voice, “Yes. On the Skeleton Island, you must have heard the tales of God Chaos creating the modern demon race. They are not groundless legends but the real history that happened forty thousand years ago!

“Forty thousand years ago, it was the last years of the era of ancient Cultivators. Human beings were finally swallowed by their own greed and ambition. They waged a prolonged civil war in all the three thousand Sectors. Countless worlds were mired in the swirls of destruction, torn apart into cosmos dust. The planets that were lucky enough to survive the catastrophe found their ecological system completely ruined, and they could barely catch their breath in the fire of war.

“The universe at that time had been seriously polluted by human beings and was not suitable for the survival of most creatures.

“That was the time when God Chaos showed up. He excavated the relics of the Pangu Clan that were left from the primeval era, found the legacy of the thirteen ancient demon clans, and created the modern demon race, hoping that we could repair the damaged worlds like the ancient Pangu Clan did!

“The three thousand Sectors at that time were no longer paradises with singing birds and fragrant flowers. Volcanoes, earthquakes, smog, and venomous gas were everywhere.

Many worlds lost their atmosphere, and even more worlds were entirely consumed by oceans.

“Therefore, God Chaos granted us marvelous techniques, allowing us to awaken the primeval force inside our body to resist the harsh environment so that we could modify the worlds like our ancestors in the primeval era!

“Our appearance does not stand for anything except for the task that we were entrusted with at the very beginning.

“If our ancestors were projected to a planet that had been drowned in the ocean, naturally, they would activate their forms as the ‘Sea Clan’.

“If our ancestors were sent to a planet whose ground was desolate with all the resources buried deep beneath the ground, it was only reasonable that they would be in the form of the ‘Insect Clan’!

“If a planet was frequented by blowing wind all year round, to make best use of the wind power, our ancestors would activate the broad wings to fly freely in the sky!

“They were the original demons forty thousand years ago.”

Yuchi Ba sighed and said, “It is a pity that desire for power eroded not only the human beings but some of the demons, too, who were shocked by the brilliant civilization that mankind once established while they were modifying the universe. They worshipped the splendid palaces and amazing magical equipment left by human beings, and from the human beings, they learned of the fun that came with conquering and slaughtering. Gradually, they were no longer contented in the dull, never-to-end repair work. They craved to be the masters of the sea of stars!

“Gradually, those demons betrayed the ideals of God Chaos and evolved with countless naturally-endowed techniques and features specifically for killing through the abilities that God Chaos granted them. They considered themselves to be rulers of the demon race and blatantly conquered and enslaved other demons. They even froze the cells and genes of the conquered demons with weird secret arts so that the conquered demons would always look the same!

“The surviving human beings taught them sleazy schemes. They secretly established enormous armies in the depths of the planets, and when the timing was appropriate, they ambushed God Chaos when he was at his weakest!

“Under their sharp blades and claws, the resistance of God Chaos failed. He was forced to run to a small world in the periphery of the universe and fall into a deep sleep for forty thousand years!

“This is the truth.

“Therefore, I never believe that there is much difference between silver blood and black blood. In the radiance of Chaos, all brothers and sisters are the same!”

Although the gladiators had heard the tales of Chaos many times on the Skeleton Island, they had never learned so many details. They all looked at each other in bewilderment, not knowing what to say.

“Although the privileged saint-blood demons and silver-blood demons tried everything they could to freeze the bloodlines of other demons, they never expected that the offspring of different types of demons were much more likely to break apart the shackles that had been imposed upon them for tens of thousands of years!

“That is why chaotic-blood demons are so despised in our society.

“Not because they are humble, but because they are dreadful. The silver-blood demons are scared that the chaotic-blood demons will chop off their shackles completely, reveal their ultimate form, and overthrown their reign. That is why they have been isolating the chaotic-blood demons!”In Christianity, original sin is the state of sin in which humanity has existed since the fall of man, stemming from Adam and Eve’s rebellion in Eden. To put it simply, it is the sin we are born with.

Chapter 881 - Explore the Mausoleum, Wake Up Chaos!

Yuchi Ba’s sharp claws were slowly retracted into his body. There was nothing unusual about his appearance any more. He looked at the gladiators peacefully, his eyes full of expectation.

Furrowing his eyebrow, Mo Tiesheng asked, “Master Yuchi, we are told that the ‘Riot of Bloody Blade’ that is led by the Blade of Chaos has been suppressed. The Blade of Chaos suffered a major blow. Quite a few elders have been captured. The members of the Blade of Chaos that were killed are simply too many to be counted!

“Right now, how capable is the Blade of Chaos? What can we do even if we join you?”

Yuchi Ba grinned, revealing his teeth that looked like spades. “First of all, the ideology of God Chaos has been spreading in the Blood Demon Sector for a thousand years, and the Blade of Chaos has existed for almost a hundred years, too. We have lurked for one century and drafted countless plans. How can we be uprooted so easily?

“Secondly, the Riot of Bloody Blade was far from a fiasco. Instead, it was a successful operation because we’ve achieved all of our purposes!

“You think that the Blade of Chaos wanted to overthrow the order of the Blood Demon Sector with a simple ‘Riot of

Bloody Blade'? It's impossible! Our purpose was simple, which was to take over Bone Sand City, or more specifically, a secret lab that belonged to Elder Nether Spring in Bone Sand City.

"Forty thousand years ago, after God Chaos was betrayed by part of the demons and escaped to the Blood Demon Sector, he never forgot to annihilate the traitors and therefore established an enormous underground palace in the depths of this planet as his laboratory and research center.

"It is a pity that God Chaos was so seriously wounded that he fell into hibernation before he completed his research, and the laboratory ended up being his tomb.

"For thousands of years, rumors about the Mausoleum of Chaos have been spreading in secret. It is said that whoever opens the Mausoleum of Chaos and receives his legacy will be able to change the entire demon race!

"The Insect Clan is best at developing the underground world. According to our intelligence, Elder Nether Spring has been working on the tales of the Mausoleum of Chaos for a long time and is in possession of a batch of very important map pieces that lead to the Mausoleum of Chaos. The lab he established in Bone Sand City was exactly meant to repair and fill up the pieces of the map so that he would be able to locate the precise coordinates of the Mausoleum of Chaos!

"The Mausoleum of Chaos!"

There was another riot among the gladiators.

"As believers of Chaos, the Blade of Chaos has a lot of leads as to the location of the Mausoleum of Chaos. With the pieces of the map, we are now able to calculate the precise location of the Mausoleum of Chaos and even infer the traps inside the tomb for our exploration!

“It was the real reason we initiated the Riot of Bloody Blade without caring about the consequences!

“We are very clear that we are absolutely no match for the Pantheon of Demons in a head-on clash. However, once we open the Mausoleum of Chaos, even if we cannot wake up God Chaos, we will be able to receive the legacy of Chaos inside the mausoleum, explore the origin of the demon race’s evolution, and perceive the primeval techniques!

“Therefore, I’m hoping that we can form an expedition team made of elites in order to explore the Mausoleum of Chaos!”

The gladiators did not expect that Yuchi Ba would be so straightforward as to reveal such a confidential plan, nor did they expect that they would be entrusted with such an important mission. For a moment, they became both excited and lost, not knowing what to say in their confusion.

Li Yao was very calm. “Master Yuchi, this is a very important operation. Why are you handing it over to the ignorant newbies such as us?”

“Three reasons,” Yuchi Ba said frankly. “Firstly, the mission is not to be carried out by newcomers such as you alone. The Mausoleum of Chaos used to be a laboratory of God Chaos that boasted an unbelievable coverage. The part that is buried deep below the ground is even more splendid. It is essentially an immeasurable palace that demands a lot of hands in order to search entirely.

“Therefore, this is an operation of a super large scale, and more than five hundred members of the Blade of Chaos will participate in it. You will only act as support.

“Secondly, the pieces of the map of the Mausoleum of Chaos are the top secret and the ultimate treasure for Elder Nether Spring. In order to retrieve the pieces, we attacked Bone Sand City openly and fought countless bloody battles against Elder Nether Spring’s subordinates. A lot of our experts sacrificed themselves so that the pieces of the map could be escorted back safely.

“Honestly speaking, after such heavy losses, there are not too many experienced experts that can cover the entire Mausoleum of Chaos right now.

“Thirdly, and most importantly, there are of course a lot of experts of a higher level inside our organization. However, such experts all have legal, false identities on the surface, and they need to show up in public every once in a while. For example, my ‘Death Teeth Guards’ are definitely elites among elites. But if they disappear at the same time all a sudden, wouldn’t it be equal to declaring to the public that I am carrying out a secret mission?

“Right now, a lot of investigations are underway. Now that Elder Nether Spring has lost the map pieces of the Mausoleum of Chaos, he must have figured out our goal. The mobilization and concentration of elites on a large scale will very likely be noticed by him! Therefore, we have no choice except to involve more newcomers in the mission!”

The explanations were rather plausible, and even Li Yao did not find any discrepancies after pondering for a while.

“Everyone!”

Yuchi Ba raised his voice and said, “The operation to explore the Mausoleum of Chaos is extremely dangerous. One moment of carelessness, and you may die without a grave. I cannot promise you anything except that I will take part in the operation personally and lead the vanguard! As long as we make it and unearth the legacy of God Chaos, we will have resources to fight against the Pantheon of Demons. That is the only way out for us and our families!"

The gladiators whispered to each other and could not wait to try. Many of them had been convinced by Yuchi Ba.

Explore the Mausoleum of Chaos, find the origin of the demon race, and receive the legacy from forty thousand years ago!

It was something that they would not even dream of one day ago.

But right now, it was likely to become reality!

"Master Yuchi, can we refuse the offer, and what will happen to us if we do?" Li Yao asked as emotionlessly as before.

"Of course you can!" Yuchi Ba declared. "Even if you've made up your mind to join the mission, you will have to go through strict screening tests. After all, it is the Mausoleum of Chaos, which is full of peril, that we are going to explore. Any mistake that you make might not only get yourself killed but also drag those near you into the disaster!

"Therefore, we cannot possibly force a bunch of dissatisfied slaves to go on an adventure in such a dangerous place. Won't we be trying to kill ourselves if so?

"If you say no..."

Yuchi Ba pondered for a moment and said slowly, "I don't want to lie to you. Since you've entered the secret base of the Blade of Chaos, seen my real face, and heard such important secrets, you are not going to get out of the place for the time being.

“If you are willing to join the operation to explore the Mausoleum of Chaos, you will go through a period of special training in the next.

“If you would rather not, you can stay in this place and do the jobs that you can. You can also receive regular training while waiting for the assignment of other missions.

“In the days to come, you will be closely monitored, but after the operation to explore the Mausoleum of Chaos is over, or if my identity is completely exposed, everything will be different.”

The decisions seemed to be rather rigorous, but they were quite understandable. After all, an insurrection was not an invitation to dinner, and rules had to be followed to ensure that nothing went wrong.

Li Yao continued his questioning. “Our family are perhaps still in Void Turmoil City. Can we visit them?”

“No.”

Yuchi Ba shook his head and replied without any hesitation.

“You have been ‘killed’ in public under everybody’s eyes. You are now the reincarnated bodies that should not belong to this world. What will your family think if they run into you without any preparation?

“Your family might not have nerves as tough as yours. If they reveal traces without them knowing, not only will our organization be exposed, your family members will also be sent into the secret prisons of the Pantheon of Demons and interrogated until the last bit of information inside their bones is dug out!

“I guarantee that you cannot begin to fathom the interrogation methods of the Pantheon of Demons, and you will prefer being killed to facing them!

“Therefore, for the sake of your family, it is best to keep your distance.

“However, the organization can help you hand over one or two of your belongings to them and give them a few last words.

“In the meantime, the organization promises that, whether you take part in the operation to explore the Mausoleum of Chaos or not, we will do our best to look after your family and help them live a more comfortable life without being affected by their past!

“When the mission is accomplished, maybe, at an appropriate time, the organization will arrange for you to watch their new life from afar!”

Hearing his words, everybody was whispering to each other. For many chaotic-blood demons, the only motivation to push them through life-and-death battles as gladiators was their family!

Now that they had been told that the Blade of Chaos could improve the lives of their family, all the gladiators were excited!

Joining the Blade of Chaos and exploring the Mausoleum of Chaos would not only give them access to legacy of techniques but also change the fate of their family. With any luck, they might become a hero for all the chaotic-blood demons!

On the Skeleton Island, they were already used to death, and they had personally ‘died’ once. The perilous Mausoleum of Chaos did not sound very scary right now!

A slender chaotic-blood demon whose hands were like claws raised his voice and shouted, “Master Yuchi, I’m in!”

“We are in, too. We are willing to explore the Mausoleum of Chaos together with Master Yuchi!”

The muscular demons with the bloodlines of the Red Blood Bronze Bulls took a step forward under the leadership of Mo Tiesheng. Their hoofs stomped on the ground, raising deafening noises in the temple.

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and made a step forward, too. He nodded. “I’m willing to explore the Mausoleum of Chaos!”

Things were getting more and more interesting.

Yuchi Ba was probably speaking the truth. At the very least, Li Yao did not sense any abnormal changes in his heartbeat, the speed of his blood flow, or the frequency of his eye movements while he was giving his speech.

However, it was one thing to speak the truth and a whole different thing to speak the whole truth.

At the very least, Yuchi Bao did not mention the mysterious drug that had been injected into Jin Xinyue’s body and turned her from a demon into a human being at all.

Li Yao would have to find the answer himself in the Mausoleum of Chaos!

In the legends of mankind, the Pantheon of Demons, and the Blade of Chaos, forty thousand years ago is a critical point alike. I really want to know what the so-called ‘Chaos’ is exactly!

Chapter 882 - Necessary Sacrifices

Deep inside the secret base on the Skeleton Island, inside a secret chamber that was piled up with obsidian and had glamorous patterns carved on all the four walls, Yuchi Ba, who had just recruited a batch of new warriors, appeared alone.

The disobedience and intimidating aura around him were hidden. Reverence was written all over his face.

He was by himself inside the secret chamber, but there was a bottomless hole in front of him that seemed to be leading to the heart of the planet.

Around the hole were circles of complicate stripes. Yuchi Ba span the stripes as if they were a password lock. Then, a click echoed somewhere deep down in the ground. A moment later, a stream of slightly red smoke popped up from the hole and hovered in midair, condensing into a fuzzy shadow.

An obscure voice drifted out from the smoke. “Is there still no news on the Divine Blood of Chaos?”

Yuchi Ba shook his head and said, “I’m sorry for my incompetence. I was too busy preparing for the hunting of the subordinates of Elder Nether Spring and did not expect that Jin Xinyue would jump out of nowhere. The three false teams fooled Elder Nether Spring but not her, and she took the Divine Blood of Chaos from Elder Ning by following the real team easily.”

“It is not because of your incompetence, but because I miscalculated.” The voice in the smoke continued. “Jin Xinyue is not to be underestimated. She seems to have recruited a super expert in secret who defeated all the hunters that were chasing after them.

“Then, Elder Nether Spring seemed to reach a deal with Jin Tuyi. They declared to the public that Saintess Jin Xinyue of the Pantheon of Demons had been killed on the battlefield to suppress the Riot of Bloody Blade.

“However, I know for a fact that Elder Nether Spring and Jin Tuyi have not captured Jin Xinyue or taken back the Divine Blood of Chaos.

“Even now, both Jin Xinyue and the Divine Blood of Chaos are missing.”

The shadow formed by the smoke paused for a moment and continued. “But we can’t afford to wait any longer.

“If we keep on waiting, chances are that Elder Nether Spring will locate the Mausoleum of Chaos earlier than we do. Should Elder Nether Spring dig out the secrets of God Chaos, there will never be a comeback for us!”

Yuchi Ba sighed and said, “Without the Divine Blood of Chaos, our safety inside the Mausoleum of Chaos cannot be ensured. Many brothers may die miserably deep below the ground.”

“This is a war,” the shadow of smoke said. “A war comes with sacrifices. That is why I asked you to recruit as many new members as possible without caring about the cost. When the operation begins, let the newcomers explore the way first and try to save the core members of our organization.”

Yuchi Ba nodded and said, “Understood. I have selected three hundred suitable newcomers over the past three months. After a period of special training, they will be ready to go.”

“That’s good.”

The smoke suddenly turned from scarlet into crimson, like a furiously burning torch that was spurted out from the center of the planet. The voice in the flames was both coarse and high-pitched, giving a strong feeling of weirdness and discordance. “Remember, the Mausoleum of Chaos is of the utmost importance for our organization. Whether or not we can cut off the shackles that have been bound to us for tens of thousands of years all depends on the operation!

“Therefore, we must calculate carefully. There cannot be any unexpected factors!”

…

“So many warriors!”

“Such a vast ground!”

“The gravity here must be at least three times that of the Blood Demon Sector. The body movement is rather difficult!”

Two days later, Li Yao, who would prove to be the biggest ‘unexpected factor’, stepped into the real training camp of the Blade of Chaos together with Mo Tiesheng and the other gladiators who had all recovered from their wounds.

Naturally, the underground of the Skeleton Island could not accommodate a training base of such a scale. But the Blade of Chaos had secretly grasped a batch of world fragments. The teleportation arrays leading to the world fragments had been installed under the Skeleton Island, through which the gladiators could reach the training space conveniently.

The greatest features of this particular world fragment, besides the increased gravity, were its vastness and desolation.

As far as one’s eyes could reach, there were gray and brown rocks. Hundreds of camps had been established on the ground, where countless tough warriors were training hard under three times the standard gravity.

On their left side, ruins that looked like a forsaken temple had been set up.

On their right side were iron tanks almost a hundred meters tall with signs of crossed skulls that represented danger painted on them. There was no telling what was stored inside.

The newcomers did not expect that their organization would boast such tremendous resources. They were all excited and could not wait to try.

“Why are you still standing? Get into the training camp!” the tutors responsible for them shouted loudly.

There were three tutors in total—the Death Teeth Guards as well as those who had ‘killed’ them in the Hell Bone Swamp.

The Death Teeth Guard who was adept at stealth techniques and once slashed at Li Yao’s back was named ‘Hidden Blade’.

There was also a plump man named ‘Venomous Liquid’, who looked like a meatball and grimaced all day round. Other than the crimson complex eyes, there were not many features of a demon on him.

The leopard demon who was agile and best at strangling techniques had a rather strange name that was completely unrelated to her features—’Electric Boa’.

The three tutors were not only responsible for the one month of special training but also going to work together with the newcomers during the exploration of the Mausoleum of Chaos.

It meant that they were the ‘subordinates’ that were allocated to the three tutors. Naturally, they were very passionate about the progress of their subordinates.

The three tutors brought the newcomers to the right side of the camps next to the high and majestic iron tanks.

It was not until they were close that the newcomers began to realize how enormous the iron tanks were. They were almost skyscrapers, and even the tallest chaotic-blood demons did not even surpass the shelf at the bottom of the iron tank.

The surface of the iron tanks was silver, carved with words in a foreign language. The eyes of the skull were glittering, and they seemed to be staring at the newcomers wherever they were standing, enveloping the newcomers in fear and stopping them from looking back.

Electric Boa, the leopard demon, had climbed up a giant iron tank, leapt onto its top, and crawled in!

Venomous Liquid, the plump tutor, smiled and said, “You are basically the last batch of teammates that are going to join the operation to explore the Mausoleum of Chaos. There is not much time left for your special training.

“You used to be hunters in the wilderness who must’ve been good at hunting and fighting. After more than a month of strengthening on the Skeleton Island, there is not much room left for you to boost your combat ability.

“Besides, nobody can anticipate what will happen in the next second when you are in the Mausoleum of Chaos. Every choice must be made according to the situation. You might not get a chance to utilize your combat ability at all!

“Therefore, the most focus of our training is your teamwork. When your cooperation with each other is good enough, we will go to the ruins nearby and conduct simulated battles.

“The ruins are an imitation of the Mausoleum of Chaos that we built based on what we know. It is definitely poles apart from the real Mausoleum of Chaos, but it is better than nothing.

“But most importantly of all, you need to learn—”

Venomous Liquid put on a mysterious smile and stopped talking because an iron tank almost a hundred meters tall right before everybody was suddenly emitting dull noises, as if something gargantuan was about to jump out of the container!

Huala!

The upper cover of the iron tank was fully opened. Cold air spurted out in earsplitting noises and froze the water in the air into a cluster of hazy, icy mist.

An enormous black shadow crept out of the iron tank, half covered by the icy mist, like a dragon that had climbed out of an abyss. Blood-freezing sounds were echoing while the body of the beast rubbed against the shell of the iron tank.

“Ahh!”

The faces of many newcomers were pale. Even Li Yao had a vague sense of danger, too, and constricted his eyes.

The hazy mist gradually dispersed, unveiling the full appearance of the black shadow, which was a massive snake-type demon beast that was almost a hundred meters in length and more than three meters in diameter.

The body of the snake was so large, thick, and hard that it could be called a crystal train that had come to life instead of a ‘snake’!

Hexagonal scales were connected to each other and covered the demon beast in multiple layers, like the breastplate of generals in ancient times. Sharp spurs also protruded out from the joints of the shells.

As the muscles twitched, the spurs extended and contracted with spluttering electric arcs dancing around nonstop!

It was not hard to imagine that any enemy tied up by such an enormous beast would be completely torn apart by the spurts and the electric arcs before their bones were shattered!

“Hiss! Hiss!”

Three eyes could be found on the top of its head. Besides the two regular yellow eyes on the two sides of the head, there was a complex eye resembling that of an insect in the center of its forehead.

Electric Boa, the leopard demon who had vanished into the iron tank just now, was sitting right above the head of the snake. There seemed to be a dent on the top of the snake’s head, allowing the lower half of her body to be melded into the head. Strands of translucent nerves connected her to the enormous snake through her spine.

“Most importantly of all, you must learn how to harness a biochemical beast!”

Thunderous noises burst out of Venomous Liquid and the lightning boa, almost deafening all the students on the spot.

“Biochemical beast!”

It was not the first time that Li Yao had seen a biochemical beast. But just like every time he encountered such huge beasts at a close distance, he could not help but feel that his mouth was dry, and his heart was pounding.

As the ultimate products of the biochemical technology of the demon race, biochemical beasts were the only weapons that could compete with the ‘crystal suits’ of human beings.

No. A more accurate way to put it would be that crystal suits were developed by Cultivators with all their wisdom in order to compete with biochemical beasts!

Before the crystal suits were invented, the demons with their strong biochemical beasts were definitely the worst nightmare for human beings. In the past, it would not have been unusual for a large-scale riot to be suppressed by one or two biochemical beasts. For some of the strongest biochemical beasts, as long as one of them was stationed on a remote planet, it was enough to intimidate the residents there and make them lose all courage to make a move in hundreds of years!

Chapter 883 - Trap in the Training Beasts

How magnificent!

Li Yao’s eyes brushed over the lightning boat greedily while he secretly paid a compliment.

Although the high-end crystal suits were as strong as biochemical beasts in terms of combat ability, if not more, the oppression of wilderness and brutality and the magma-like primeval air could never be released by crystal suits.

Different from the crystal suits, which were worn as clothes, the biochemical beasts had a much wider range. They could be classified into small beasts, armor beasts, middle beasts, large beasts, and other levels.

Small biochemical beasts, such as bees and ants, might only be the size of fingers. They came and went in groups and could be manipulated by brainwaves.

Armor beasts were similar to crystal suits. They did not boast combat ability per se but were tailor-made according to the body size of the user and covered their body as a second layer of strengthened flesh tissues. They were armors that were alive!

Li Yao had fought Wang Ji, a prince of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers, on Boneyard. At that time, Wang Ji had retrieved a batch of armor beasts from the Demon Beast Empire and crushed the Cultivators who were fighting against him. In the end, it was with the help of Sparkle and ‘Dragon Scale’, an Ares Extension, that Li Yao managed to secure the victory.

The middle beasts were around ten meters to thirty meters long. They were the most common biochemical beasts. The ‘Mirage Falcons’ that chased after Li Yao and Jin Xinyue in the Hundred Desolation Mountain were the most typical middle beasts.

As for the large beasts, the lightning boa that the leopard demon was reining was a good example. They were often more than a hundred meters long, and they could easily break a mountain with a casual whip of their tail. It was not difficult for such beasts to wipe out an entire army!

To some extent, the devilish warships and the skeleton warships of the demon race were sort of amalgamations of super-large biochemical beasts. They were the most horrifying existences even for the crystal warships of human beings!

“Biochemical beasts are the ultimate weapons of the demon race. If you can use them skillfully, it is possible to increase your combat ability by five times in a very short time!”

Electric Boa sat atop the snake head and said coldly, “However, it is not easy to manipulate the biochemical beasts perfectly. It is very demanding on your soul power and will be a shock to your brain. If you are not cautious enough, you might even be counterattacked, and your brain will collapse, making you mentally retarded!

“Therefore, you must train yourself hard with a hundred percent of your concentration in the next month. Remember, it is not just your own life but also the fate of your companions and your family that are resting on your shoulders right now!”

The leopard demon raised the tail of the biochemical beast. A few muscular demons of the Horn Clan immediately carried forward dozens of iron buckets about one meter in diameter that were also painted with danger symbols. Other than that, they also handed over a bottle of deep purple drugs to every newcomer.

“The training beasts of the lowest level have been stored inside the biochemical slot before you. When you can manipulate them as fluently as you use your own arms and fingers, you will be allowed to pick a real biochemical beast according to your capability and characteristics.

“However, you have never learned how to harness a biochemical beast before, and part of your brain cells are still hibernating. The strengthening drugs offered to you can help you activated your brain power!

“Now, take the drugs and open the biochemical slot!”

Li Yao opened the cover of the bottle of strengthening drugs. A thin sweet and greasily smell came over. Before he poured the drugs into his throat, he extended his small finger into the drugs first and absorbed a tiny proportion for analysis.

The mental devil analyzed for a moment and said with a smile, “The strengthening drugs are rather weird. It truly can activate the brain cells, but on the other hand, it would also relax your nerves and excite your memory cells. You will not be able to stop yourself from recalling everything that happened in your past!”

Li Yao blinked for a moment and immediately realized what was going on. “A truth serum?”

“More or less. I was wondering why the Blade of Chaos, as such a large organization, would tell the newcomers top secret information when they had only just joined and even allow you to enter the critical base so easily.

“If there were a few spies sent by Elder Nether Spring among us, wouldn’t everything be doomed?

“As it turned out, they have already prepared their traps!

“On second thought, although Yuchi Ba rambled on about a lot of things, most of his words were meaningless. Since Elder Nether Spring lost the map pieces of the Mausoleum of Chaos, he must know that the Blade of Chaos is planning to explore the Mausoleum of Chaos in the next operation.

“Even if there are spies of Elder Nether Spring among us, they cannot possibly have discovered any valuable intelligence from Yuchi Ba’s words.

“Meanwhile, since the recruitment plan of the Blade of Chaos is apparently so ‘flawed’, the spies will certainly be less wary after they reach this place. Now, after the secretly-made ‘truth serum’, even if they do not show any reaction on the surface, a lot of things must be rolling over on their mind!”

Li Yao frowned. “However, how is the Blade of Chaos going to dig out what we are thinking in our minds? They do not have such terrifying abilities as mind reading, do they?”

The mental devil chuckled and said, “Don’t forget that our brain will be connected to the brain of the training beasts very soon.”

Li Yao was suddenly alarmed, but he showed no anomaly and simply drank all of the activation drugs.

Even without the help of the mental devil, because of the immensity of his brain cells, the activation drugs barely had any influence on him.

However, Li Yao still allowed part of his brain cells to be activated by the drugs. A lot of flashbacks were being played deep inside his brain.

He opened the cover of the biochemical slot, only to find a hairy biochemical beast crouching inside. It had puffy, yellow long hair and a body that was round like a ball. The facial organs of the beast were pink and pushed together, making it look like the popular ‘puji critters’ in the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Its short and stupid wings were flapping clumsily.

Two translucent antennas that looked like sprouts grew on the forehead of the training beast, trebling nonstop.

In the chamber next to the biochemical slot, there was also an even thicker antenna that was soaked in the nutrition liquids.

According to the introduction of the tutors, Li Yao learned that the biochemical beasts could be manipulated in three ways.

The first way was to crawl into a biochemical beast and connect to its synthesized nerves, like the leopard demon had done a moment earlier. It was the equivalent of human beings entering the cockpit of crystal tanks or crystal warships.

Such a way allowed the instant and large-scale transmission of instructions through nerves, which was mandatory to rein the relatively complicated middle and large biochemical beasts. But the shortcoming was that the user had to remain connected to the synthesized nerves, which could limit the activity of the user.

The second way was to remotely control the biochemical beasts in a certain range through antenna-like brainwave launchers and receptors.

The advantage of such a practice was obvious. The disadvantage was that the wireless transmission could easily be jammed or even cut off. Although the researchers of the demon race had developed the state-of-the-art instant reconnection technology, a 0.1-second latency might lead to unpredictable consequences in an ever-changing battlefield.

The third way was to condense the brainwaves into threads and manipulate the biochemical beasts nearby without resorting to the brainwave receptors.

It was needless to say that only true experts were able to grasp such an approach.

Li Yao thought of something and realized that the biochemical beasts were somewhat similar to the apocalyptic beasts on Iron Plateau. He could not help but ask, “How did Yan Xibei manipulate the apocalyptic beasts?”

“When Yan Xibei manipulated the apocalyptic body,” the mental devil replied, “naturally, it was the first way that he utilized, the nerve connection. When he manipulated the general apocalyptic beasts, he simply commanded all of them through brainwaves in the third way.

“However, there is a great restriction as to the commands sent through brainwaves. Generally speaking, only simple commands such as ‘attack’ or ‘defend’ can be sent. The more detailed instructions cannot be transmitted!

“Otherwise, even if you are capable enough to output tremendous information within a moment, the underdeveloped brain of the biochemical beasts or, for that matter, the apocalyptic beasts, can never accept and digest it.”

Li Yao thought that it did make sense. He then took out the soft antenna from the biochemical slot and stuck it to his forehead as per the instruction of the tutors.

Soon, coolness was spreading out on his forehead. Countless invisible tiny threads seemed to be crawling into his head.

Inside his brain, his thoughts extended out like the interconnecting roots of a tree and established a mind bridge between him and the training beast inside the biochemical slot!

Shua!

It was rather an amazing experience, just like when he put on a crystal suit for the first time years ago. He felt like he had grown countless brand-new organs and that he had a separate body outside of his old one.

After a moment of dizziness, Li Yao felt like he had been split in half—he was standing on the ground and crouching inside the biochemical slot simultaneously.

He had the same feeling when he was steering Neltharion. Therefore, he quickly came back to himself.

Li Yao keenly sensed that some of his memories were sent to the brain of the training beast, pulled by a subtle attraction force through the invisible mental connection.

The pulling was quite delicate and only took a few snapshots of his memory pieces.

Besides, in order to control the biochemical beast, he had been sending information to the brain of the beast incessantly in the first place. The normal demons would not notice that additional information had been mixed into it at all.

Just as I expected, this is training as well as a test!

Li Yao was an expert in mental warfare, and he was adept at building and rendering illusions. Now that he already sensed the ill intentions of the training arrangers, he certainly would not transmit the pictures of his real memories but provided the made-up past that he had faked just now but was equally vivid.

As for his false life experience, he had discussed it many a time with Jin Xinyue on their journey to Void Turmoil City. Jin Xinyue, as a saintess of the Pantheon of Demons, wrote the script of his life in person. Every detail was flawless.

Shua!

While everybody was frowning and rubbing their temples hard, trying to establish a connection with the biochemical beasts through brainwaves, Li Yao had already manipulated the training beast to fly into the sky!

The number of the neurons of the training beast was devastatingly low. The difficulty to manipulate it was incomparable to the difficulty of steering Neltharion. For Li Yao, the trickiest part was not how to harness the training beast but how to make the training beast fly in a ‘clumsier’ way in order to cover his real ability!

Chapter 884 - Classified Files of Bloody Claw

The training beast flew into midair staggeringly and drew circles like a clumsy bee. Every once in a while, it would fall down as if it had forgotten how to flap the wings and did not move upwards again until it almost hit the ground.

Compared to the crystal suits, biochemical beasts are more responsive and offer far timelier feedback. They are more sensitive about the air current and temperature, too.

It is quite understandable. After all, the brain of the biochemical beasts is a simulation of the real brains of living creatures. Their computational ability might not be as good as that of crystal processors, but there is less hinderance when they are connected to the head of the user!

It would be excellent if such an advantage of the biochemical beasts could be applied to crystal suits.

Few people were more frantic about crystal suits than Li Yao both in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and in the Flying Star Sector. Right now, he had reached a bottleneck in the development of crystal suits. It seemed difficult to improve the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit significantly in the technological level. But now that he had gotten in touch with biochemical beasts that were as powerful as crystal suits, he could not help but wonder whether or not he could transplant some of the advantages of biochemical beasts into crystal suits.

While he was deep in thought, he let loose the control over the training beast without him knowing. The training beast was faster and faster, and the circles that it drew turned more and more elegant while it was manipulated by his subconsciousness.

When he came back to himself, the training beast had just completed more than thirty rounds in midair and performed a backflip with an extremely small diameter. The air currents that were spreading out could still be vaguely seen.

The three tutors and all the newcomers looked at him in astonishment.

Li Yao blinked and looked back at them peacefully.

…

After the first day of special training was over, deep inside the training camp, the three tutors were reading the memory pictures stored inside the information bugs one by one.

Yuchi Ba was sitting in the shadows behind them, browsing through a pile of files in deep thought.

“There’s indeed something wrong with these two guys!”

Very soon, a few unusual memory pieces attracted the attention of the tutors. Electric Boa, the leopard demon, was more than infuriated and declared brutally, “I’m going to kill them right now!”

“Wait.” Yuchi Ba gestured at them. “Let’s just wait and watch for now. Don’t alarm them.

“After all, there is no way that they can send any messages from this place. Just leave them aside and keep them on our grid.

“What I’m more interested in is—”

Yuchi Ba snapped the files in his hands softly and asked, “Who is this ‘Bloody Claw’ exactly? He has left quite a deep impression on me.”

“He is indeed the most distinguished one among this batch of newcomers, which can be seen from the previous five games that he participated in,” Electric Boa replied. “He was prudent but never hesitated to take action. He must have been an excellent hunter. Besides, he showed familiarity with biochemical beasts, and his grasp rate of the first session with a biochemical beast was already above 90%!”

Yuchi Ba nodded, deep in thought, while he scratched the enormous horn at the center of his face with his short, thick fingers.

Venomous Liquid, the fat tutor, grinned and said, “Such a guy is either a real genius or a schemer that has been lurking deeply. However, we ran a thorough investigation on him and did not find any traces that are worth mentioning. Just now, the training beast stole a lot of pictures from his memory, too. They were all scenes of hunting in the wilderness. The details correspond with his background.

“Besides, we’ve been observing his sister in secret and found no anomalies, either.”

Shadow Blade, the tutor who had four blade limbs, said, “More importantly, we put him under the strictest scrutiny during the five games he participated in and his daily training. His every second of training and fighting was slowed down and carefully examined.

“The Death Teeth Guards as well as the training experts and the kinematics specialists in our organization all agree that Bloody Claw has never been in touch with the battle techniques of the demon race at all. In the beginning, he did not even know the most rudimental moves and merely fought with his physical strength and the amazing natural instincts, which befit a hunter who made his living in the wilderness.

“If he were a spy sent by Elder Nether Spring or the Pantheon of Demons, he would have received the harshest training before and at least known the most fundamental battle techniques. However hard he pretended, it would have been difficult for him to escape our attention.

“But in fact, Bloody Claw was indeed ignorant in the beginning. It was after the multiple battles and crazy daily training that his capability soared rapidly!

“More importantly, after he took the activation drugs before the practice to manipulate the biochemical beast, there was indeed ‘minimal rejection reaction’ inside his body and his brain that could only be seen on the users who had never reined a biochemical beast before.

“If he had ridden a biochemical beast before, there certainly would not have been such a reaction.

“It is very unlikely that a spy trained by Elder Nether Spring or the Pantheon of Demons has never touched a biochemical beast before!

“Therefore, Bloody Claw’s identity should be fine.”

The three tutors came to the same conclusion.

“That’s good.” Yuchi Ba nodded in great satisfaction. “However, you should still watch him closely and run more tests on him. Let’s see how far this Bloody Claw can go!”

…

Classified files of the Blade of Chaos. ‘Torrent’-level secret.

File ID 93455, Bloody Claw’s Profile Item No.017.

Recorder: Hidden Blade.

“Bloody Claw’s talent with biochemical beasts astonished everybody. After only one afternoon and one night, his proficiency rate on the training beast was already above 99%, which allowed him to perform all kinds of dangerous movements with the training beast.

“We arranged a standard thirteen-movement test for him. He completed the test with the training beast in a shocking 17 seconds. Most of the students cannot achieve the same result after half a month of training.

“According to Bloody Claw’s own words, he seemed to see white lights flashing in front of his eyes and smell the scent of dry leaves being burnt. Then, his self-awareness extended to the body of the biochemical beast as if he were the biochemical beast itself.

“Such a phenomenon has been recorded in the history of the organization before, too. The demons who had similar experiences were mostly genius in the manipulation of biochemical beasts!

“Blood Claw also said that he has occasionally suffered from migraines ever since he was little. The pain was weird and dull and pierced outwards instead inwards, as if a volcano inside his head was going to erupt at some point.

“According to the analysis of the experts in the organization, such a symptom was probably due to the lesions of certain brain tissues inside head. Those brain tissues pressed the nerves and triggered the exceptional mental power. Meanwhile, the expansion of the nidus made the intracranial pressure too huge for him to stand.

“It also explained his abilities in anticipating danger and choosing the most appropriate tactics in the area that seemed as easy as breathing for him.

“The connection to the biochemical beasts was like digging a hole in his skull and helped him release some of the redundant pressure.

“However, the brain is the most mysterious body part of every living creature. It is difficult to prove the point without destructive dissection.

“For now, it is suggested that he move on to the special training of the next phase and learn to ride a real biochemical beast.”

…

Classified files of the Blade of Chaos. ‘Universe’-level secret.

ID 93455, Bloody Claw’s Profile Item No.019.

Recorder: Venomous Liquid.

“Bloody Claw in indeed an unbelievable genius!

“After only a few days of training, he is already able to manipulate Blood Fire Mad Bears!

“Blood Fire Mad Bears are heavy biochemical beasts weighing more than thirty tons. Not only are they extremely difficult to ride, the process is also a major blow for the brain of the user.

“Generally speaking, only the demons with the bloodlines of bears are able to ride the biochemical beasts that share the same origin as themselves.

“However, Bloody Claw has successfully completed the training subject where he was asked to change directions a hundred and three times randomly within one minute. Although the test was not smooth enough, he did not show any sign of discomfort at all!

“In the meantime, he seemed not entirely satisfied with the Blood Fire Furious Bear and meant to challenge the biochemical beasts of a higher level. What a terrible guy.

“It seems necessary now to test the guy on a much deeper level.

“For some reason, whenever I see this guy, especially his eyes that are in different colors, I always feel that my heart palpates violently.

“I have never felt as alarmed even when I was faced with Master Yuchi!”

…

Classified files of the Blade of Chaos. ‘Mystery’-level secret.

ID 93455, Bloody Claw’s Profile Item No.022.

Recorder: Dry Wood.

“Today, I was responsible for a deep hypnotization test on Bloody Claw.

“He showed certain resistance at the beginning of the hypnotization. But very soon, he accepted the hypnotization and opened his entire brain.

“No anomaly has been detected in the queries made while Bloody Claw was hypnotized. All the details corresponded with the pictures of his memory. The examination inside his brain gave no abnormal result, either. It was only discovered that there was a mutation zone where veins were highly concentrated on his left prefrontal cortex.

“The area explained his migraines and the source of his unbelievable mental power.

“Genetic mutations are very common for chaotic-blood demons. The brain is too mysterious a part to undergo any deeper studies right now.

“The conclusion of the hypnotization session is that Bloody Claw is either a chaotic-blood demon who has grasped unusual talents because of genetic and brain mutations or an expert in the demon emperor level who can resist my hypnotization without me knowing!”

…

Classified files of the Blade of Chaos. ‘Mystery’-level secret.

ID 93455, Bloody Claw’s Profile Item No.027.

Recorder: Electric Boa.

“Today is the 27th day since the special training began. Bloody Claw has become an expert in riding biochemical beasts.

“Today, he rode a ‘Great Fire Iron Lion’ and neatly defeated a ‘Purple Electric Flying Rings Serpent’ that was of a higher level and reined by ‘Feng Tianhua’, the strongest student in the training camp. He was a seasoned expert that was dispatched to us from another department!

“It is too wasteful to assign Bloody Claw to simple way-finding or fighting tasks. He might have the ability to play a more important role in the mission to explore the Mausoleum of Chaos!

“I suggest that he be upgraded into the central operation groups!”

Chapter 885 - Perfect Weapon

BOOM! BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM!

In a training field made of the best steel, a giant beast more than twenty meters long was training alone. It looked like a lion, only multiple times larger, with bright-red, solid scales all over its body. The four claws of the beast had the same feature of a certain kind of eagle and would leave deep traces on the ground after only a casual snatch.

The tail of the beast was as strong as that of a crocodile. Earsplitting rubbing noises could be heard even when it was simply sliding on the ground.

The most eye-catching part about the beast was not the broad and sharp wings on its back but the three heads that craned out of the thick neck, as if three enormous serpents of different colors had been transplanted on the griffin by force.

The three serpent heads were full of thorns and spurs, which made them look like the most intimidating hammers. Six eyes that were glaring brutally would absorb all the rays of light even at noon, giving everybody the helpless feeling that they was in the middle of a dark night.

Because of the high-speed rubbing of the muscles and the scales, powerful currents of different attributes had been generated around the three heads, triggering the effects of fire, frost, and lightning.

Shua!

The object that ended up being the toy of the giant beast was an ‘electricity’-level crystal tank of the Star Glory Federation that the Blade of Chaos had captured at some point.

Although the crystal tanks of such a level was not famous for their weight and the hardness of their plates, it was still a huge object weighing dozens of tons. However, to the three-headed griffin, it was like a match box in the hands of a wicked kid. The beast lowered its head and pecked while snatching the tank with its sharp claws. Then, the plate armor on the surface of the crystal tank exploded after a series of cracks, revealing the cabins that were empty.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The three heads of the griffin, which looked like giant serpents, spurted light balls of different attributes into the ‘wound’ of the crystal ball, which was wreathed in a cluster of furious flames at first. It was frozen into an icy block and eventually ripped apart in thousands of spluttering electric arcs, turning into remains no larger than fists and scattered on the ground.

The entire process took less than ten seconds.

“Hoooo! Hoooo! Hoooo!”

The three-headed griffin was not satisfied yet. Crimson brilliance emanated from the body of the beast while its heads were straightened and shrieked toward the sky.

Centered at the three-headed griffin, invisible ripples were spreading out at a high speed. Even the audience standing a hundred meters away could not help but close their eyes because of the blowing wind.

Then—

After the four claws of the three-headed griffin left twelve deep traces on the ground, it fully opened its wings. The ends of its feathers were as red as blood, as if it had been embedded with a circle of glittering flames.

The beast soared high into the sky in an earsplitting noise and made a series of shocking, random movements before it descended vertically like a shooting star. Flames in the shape of a bowl were formed in front of the beast, and it did not stop rushing down until it was only half a meter from the ground. In the end, the beast dashed forward straightforwardly!

The scales of the three-headed griffin rubbed the air hard because of the high speed, raising dazzling electric arcs and flames, leaving a burning trace on the ground where it passed by!

A few days ago, such an appalling performance had still been astonishing for a lot of audience. Some of them who thought that they were as good even went up as challengers.

But today, all the bystanders were already numb. Judging from their expressions, they would not feel surprised at all even if the three-headed griffin left a hole in the sky.

Hu!

Li Yao slowly stood straight on the natural dent on the back of the three-headed griffin and exhaled somewhat in dissatisfaction.

Biochemical beasts at the level of the three-headed griffin were already the limits for his faked identity.

The biochemical beasts of a higher level, such as the lightning serpent that Electric Boa rode, could not be manipulated easily however talented he was.

The combat ability of the three-headed griffin is reasonably good, but its body is too weak and cannot accommodate all my mental power!

Li Yao inwardly frowned. Through the connection of the synthesized nerves, he could clearly sense every vibration in the internal organs of the three-headed griffin.

The series of movements in the air had made it pant heavily. Every muscle and organ was bordering on over-exhaustion. If he had accelerated to a higher speed, chances were that it would have been killed immediately.

However, Li Yao had only outputted 15% of his mental power!

He felt like he was a muscular warrior with infinite physical strength, and yet he was given a soft branch as his weapon. If he played with the weapon in too demanding a way, the soft branch might break apart all of a sudden.

The lack of gratification could not have made Li Yao more annoyed.

He craved to ride a biochemical beast that was far stronger!

Over the past month, other than the occasional deep sleep, Li Yao had spent almost every day and night in the training field, getting to know various kinds of biochemical beasts.

He had a profound understanding of the ultimate weapon of the demon race right now.

Biochemical beasts were not pure living creatures but actually made for tactical purposes with consideration of features of multiple types of demon beasts through the combination of one cell after another.

Generally speaking, a biochemical beast was controlled by a biochemical brain, which was similar to the crystal processor of human beings in that they boasted equally high computational ability but lacked independent self-awareness and intelligence.

Therefore, without a rider, a biochemical beast was nothing more than a piece of special ‘meat’. If they were preserved in special nutrition liquids, they could be stored for thousands of years of times without rotting.

Compared to crystal suits, biochemical beasts had obvious advantages and disadvantages.

Since they were made of flesh and blood, except for the few most advanced biochemical beasts, the hardness of most biochemical beasts was certainly not as good as that of crystal suits, which were usually made of super alloys.

On the other hand, since the biochemical beasts were connected and manipulated through synthesized nerves, it was much easier to control them than crystal suits. As long as the rider gritted through the discomfort at the beginning of their training session, they would be able to sense the biochemical beast as their ‘clone’ very quickly and use the biochemical nimbly as if it were one of their body parts.

Putting Li Yao aside, even Mo Tiesheng and the other gladiators have grasped how to manipulate one to two kinds of biochemical beasts after only one month.

Such a speed was apparently much higher than the warriors of human beings when they learned how to control a crystal suit.

More importantly, the synthesized nerves could send telepathic thoughts and instructions to the nerve endings of the biochemical beast at a much higher speed than the spiritual energy circuits could.

It meant that biochemical beasts could be much larger than crystal suits. Biochemical beasts that were thirty meters tall and weighed dozens of tons were not unusual at all.

It must be noted that, after the Cultivators developed crystal suits that could be worn as clothes, they once had the amazing idea of building crystal suits into a much larger size, say, ten meters, twenty meters, or even a hundred meters tall.

A larger size meant a larger arsenal, a more powerful crystal reactor and corresponding power rune arrays, and a higher control of the battlefield.

For ten thousand years, countless crazy masters of crystal suits dreamed of crafting enormous crystal suits more than ten meters tall.

However, they were all doomed to the abyss of failure like moths darting to a fire.

Besides the restrictions such as the hardness of metal and the complexity of internal designs, the greatest hinderance was that such an enormous crystal suit could only be manipulated in an extremely awkward way.

The crystal suits that were worn close to the body were the equivalent an armor. It was very convenient to make use of them.

However, for the enormous crystal suits that were more than ten meters tall, the wearer could only crouch in a certain cabin, and it was difficult for their hands and feet to manipulate the hands and feet of the enormous crystal suit.

If their instructions were transmitted to the limbs of the crystal suit through the circuits of spiritual energy, the speed of transmission and feedback would be too slow, and there would be a huge amount of loss of information during intense combat.

The final result was that such an enormous crystal suit would be as clumsy as certain dinosaurs in the primeval era—not knowing that their tails had been cut off until a few seconds later when the signal passed through their brain.

Such maladroit crystal suits might be appropriate to serve as giant idols in movies and theaters, but they were not suitable for a real-life combat on the battlefield.

In reality, the biggest crystal suit that Cultivators could make use of was perhaps the Ares Extensions that were no taller than five meters.

However, after he had first-hand experience with the biochemical beasts, an interesting thought suddenly occurred to Li Yao.

The advantages of the crystal suits are that their materials are harder and more tensile, their components are readily replaceable, and it is very convenient to transport and store them.

One advantage of the biochemical beasts is that they are easy to learn. Once the learner gets the hang of it, no complicated instructions are required. All they need to do is fight with their natural instincts and regard the biochemical beast as their ‘clone’. Also, since the information is transmitted through the special nerves, their body size could be dozens of times larger than a crystal suit!

What if I combine the advantages of the two ultimate weapons?

For example, I will build an enormous crystal suit twenty to thirty meters tall. It has bones made of super alloys and a crystal reactor inside. But outside of the bones and the crystal reactor will be super cells that are made with the genetic technology. The cells will then proliferate and eventually condense into strong muscles resembling the flesh of demon beasts!

Outside such monster-like flesh, powerful plate armor and weapons will be installed. Even the main guns of the crystal warships will be able to be installed on the shoulders of such an ultimate weapon!

In the brain and at the end of the spine, a dual processing system that adopts both the crystal processor and the biochemical brain will be installed. As for the transmission of telepathic thoughts, the synthesized neural network will mainly be responsible for the task to minimize the lag!

If such a perfect ultimate weapon can be successfully invented, it will certainly be much stronger than any of the crystal suits or the biochemical beasts right now!

Li Yao was fascinated.

Over the past few days, the mental devil had not stopped tempting him to build an apocalypse body just like Yan Xibei did.

Naturally, Li Yao would not agree easily. However, in the war against the Imperium of True Human Beings, the Star Glory Federation was indeed in need of a groundbreaking weapon.

Such an idea might be worth a try!

Li Yao took a deep breath and calmed himself down because he saw Electric Boa and the other two tutors walking to him.

Two days later, they would set off to explore the Mausoleum of Chaos. Electric Boa had said earlier that a new mission would be assigned to him. What could it be exactly?

Chapter 886 - Are You Ready, World?

Led by the three tutors, Li Yao walked into a silver, gas-filled greenhouse deep inside the training camp.

Looking from afar, the greenhouse looked like a giant egg that was embedded in the ground.

The three tutors formed a triangle and surrounded Li Yao in the middle. Venomous Liquid, the fat one, grinned and said, “Your performance over the past month has been too marvelous. It would be wasteful to keep you in the vanguard team. Therefore, a new mission will be assigned to you.”

While talking, the four of them reached the giant silver egg.

A metal gate was slowly opened after the dull sound of air being ejected.

Venomous Liquid was the first to go it, but the other two tutors simply waited behind Li Yao.

Li Yao blinked and went into the silver enormous egg, too, following Venomous Liquid. The chilly air inside the place made his eyelids twitch crazily. Then, something unstoppable came at him rapidly!

“You’ve been seen through!”

With an earsplitting shriek, a venomous sting went directly at Li Yao’s left eye. Venomous Liquid, who was shaking his fat ass in the front just now, suddenly bounced back like a football while the pores all over his body were spurting out a storm of stinky fluids!

In the meantime, behind Li Yao, Electric Boa and Hidden Blade launched their attacks at the same time!

Electric Boa spread to Li Yao's leg quietly like a pool of mercury.

The four limbs of Hidden Blade, on the other hand, phantomized into more than a hundred streaks of brightness and entirely covered Li Yao's head!

At the perilous moment, Li Yao roared. The soft armor on his body that looked like his second skin was suddenly taken off, taking the blow of most of the venomous liquids coming at his face, while he followed the soft armor and marched forward, kicking the belly of the fat tutor without worrying about the venomous liquids that were splashing onto his body!

Although the tutor seemed obese, the fat covering the surface of his body boasted a unique hydromantic defense system. He was not hurt by the kick at all.

However, Li Yao's purpose was not to kill Venomous Liquid but to make use of the counterforce of his fat abdomen. He jerked backwards abruptly, and his body was like dry leaf as it narrowly passed through Electric Boa's grip and Hidden Blade's mincing!

The gate of the place had not been closed yet. Li Yao crouched on the ground and exerted his strength, as if he was preparing for a sprint.

All the three tutors were thinking that he was going to find a way out, and they all took action to move to the gate in order to block him. However, Li Yao’s body abruptly turned toward the depths of the silver giant egg, violating the law of physics!

Nobody foresaw such a change. Venomous Liquid’s complex eyes were widely opened as he spat out a mouthful of yellow and brown mucus, which brushed past the back of Li Yao’s head and corroded the frame of the gate to the extent that it was screeching!

Li Yao leapt forward and dashed further into the silver giant egg quickly. He did not stop until he hit a high and magnificent wall.

Yuchi Ba, owner of the Skeleton Island, blocked the entire pathway and observed him in great interest.

Li Yao put his hands on the two sides of his body, neither fighting nor fleeing. He simply stared back at Yuchi Ba.

The three tutors finally caught up with them.

Yuchi Ba smiled. “Why didn’t you attack?”

“It’s just a test,” Li Yao replied calmly. “There’s no need to attack the master of the place. Besides, I’m no match for you at all. Therefore, I might as well save my strength for the possible new changes.”

“Oh?” Yuchi Ba raised his eyebrow. “Why do you say that it is just a test?”

“If it weren’t a test,” Li Yao said, “you wouldn’t have needed to say things such as ‘you’ve been seen through’; you could’ve just killed me when I was not prepared.”

Venomous Liquid and Electric Boa looked at each other in bewilderment, both somewhat embarrassed.

Yuchi Ba continued. “Why did you rush into the building instead of running out? Were you not scared that there were more ambushes inside?”

“It’s a vast training camp outside where hundreds of warriors are training,” Li Yao replied. “With a shout of the tutors, all the warriors would have come and surrounded me. I wouldn’t have been able to get away even if I could fly.

“Although I was not aware whether or not there were other ambushes, the situation inside couldn’t have been worse than outside!”

Yuchi Ba burst into laughter and patted Li Yao’s shoulder heavily. “Excellent. You are indeed a talent that I need.

“Bloody Claw, do you know which part of you has attracted me most over your months of stay on the Skeleton Island?

“Not your crazy training that borders on self-torturing, not your capability that soared like a tide, not the intuitional manipulation over the biochemical beasts, but your ability to comprehend a battlefield!

“You are always smart and calm enough to pick the best choice among thousands of complicated options in a perilous and ever-changing battlefield!

“In terms of capability, you are no match for Venomous Liquid, Hidden Blade, or Electric Boa, but your calmness and your ability to make judgements make you a better fit for the mission to be introduced.

“Come with me!”

Yuchi Ba led the way. The silver greenhouse turned out to be a research center that was dedicated to the study of the Mausoleum of Chaos. At the center of the building was a pool that was filled with black water.

The black water was as thick as oil, but because of the attraction of a mysterious force, tides were surging inside the pool, and terrible swirls were revolving rapidly.

Although the pool was not large, to Li Yao, it was as intimidating as a thunderstorm.

Around the pool was a circle of research rooms. Li Yao observed through the hardened glass and noticed a number of specialists in white robes or silver, fully-enclosed protective suits, who were doing their research wholeheartedly.

“The exploration of the Mausoleum of Chaos requires a lot of fearless of warriors,” Yuchi Ba said. “However, the physically strong yet simple-minded warriors could never have found out the real value of the Mausoleum of Chaos!

“Therefore, in the exploration team to be sent, there will be a core squad made of quite a few specialists, including those who have been focusing on paleobiology and genetics and those who have expertise in architecture, geology, and even oceanology. Should they find anything of value inside the Mausoleum of Chaos, they will even conduct their research on the spot.

“The specialists are naturally among the best in their respective field, but they are mostly weak and unused to high-intensity adventure and fighting.

“Therefore, we have established a team of strong guardians for the core squad.

“I want you to join the squad and protect two of the specialists closely.”

Yuchi Ba led Li Yao to one of the research rooms.

What greeted them was the pungent smell of soil and ink.

Li Yao’s nose slightly trembled. He distinguished the scent of the Gold Colorful Ink and the Candle Heart Grass from the smell of the ink.

The ink that boasted such constituents was mostly ancient ink from forty thousand years ago.

Ragged books and ancient classics were piled up everywhere inside the research room. Large stone plates were placed next to the books, too. Sophisticated ancient spiritual stripes were zigzagging on the stone plates, indicating that they were all made thirty to fifty thousand years ago.

Walking into the room, Li Yao felt as if he had travelled through time.

But for Li Yao, he had a familiar feeling as if he had come home. He almost could not stop himself from grabbing an ancient book and smelling the scent of its pages.

Two figures, one old and the other young, buried themselves in the ancient books. Even after Yuchi Ba coughed several times, the two of them showed absolutely no response and simply continued their work.

Yuchi Ba seemed to be accustomed to their indifference and introduced them to Li Yao without being offended at all.

“Master Chu Zhengqing is the most respected historian and archeologist of the Blood Demon Sector.

“His daughter, Chu Feiyin, is also a scholar in such fields and has made distinguished accomplishments.

“The main study fields of the two great masters are the traps, rune arrays, and spiritual stripes of forty thousand years ago.

“Before they were invited to join the team to explore the Mausoleum of Chaos, the two grand masters were supervising the Chaos Research Center in Bone Sand City at the invitation of Elder Nether Spring.

“This means that the two masters are the best specialists in the knowledge about Chaos!”

Li Yao blinked and soon figured out the reason.

Elder Nether Spring had been interested in the Mausoleum of Chaos for a long time. Therefore, he had gathered a bunch of specialists and established a secret research facility in Bone Sand City, hoping to crack the secrets of Chaos.

The two Chus were the supervisors of Elder Nether Spring’s research center!

The Blade of Chaos had initiated ‘Riot of Bloody Blade’ and taken over Bone Sand City, but their real purpose had actually been Elder Nether Spring’s research center. After the research center was occupied, the two masters had inevitably fallen into the hands of the Blade of Chaos.

In other words, they were actually the captives of the Blade of Chaos. No wonder they were so cold!

Yuchi Ba bowed to them slightly and said, “Master Chu, we will set off in one day. Are you ready?”

‘Master Chu’ finally sat straight and moved his eyes from the books.

The wrinkles all over his body that looked like dry rind made him appear to be more than five hundred years old, and his eyes were so dirty that others might have the illusion that he was blind. However, Li Yao captured the hint of contempt inside the dirty eyes.

“Master Yuchi, I would like to tell a story to you,” Chu Zhengqing said slowly, in a voice that sounded like it had been buried for decades. “Ten years ago, the Pantheon of Demons organization a large-scale exploration to a world fragment.

“The nature of the exploration was almost identical to the one you are planning right now. The target of both operations is an ancient tomb from forty thousand years ago.

“For the operation, the four demon kingdoms all sent out countless elites to form an enormous expedition team. Even the ultra-space launch system, Eye of Blood Demon, which allows the long-distance teleportation, was utilized.

“As it turns out, they were annihilated in the ancient tomb named ‘Boneyard’!

“Moreover, they almost set free Skeleton Dragon, an unparalleled ancient demon forty thousand years old, which would’ve been a world-blighting disaster.

“In the end, it was because of the self-sacrifice of a human named Li Yao that Skeleton Dragon was suppressed in the end. The Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector were spared from the swirl of destruction!

“However, if there are not major mistakes in my research, Skeleton Dragon was perhaps a weapon built by ‘Chaos’.

“A catastrophe was nearly caused when the tomb of Skeleton Dragon was opened, and right now, both Elder Nether Spring and the Blade of Chaos are trying to open the place where ‘Chaos’ is sleeping when you know absolutely none of the details?

“Hehe. It doesn’t matter whether I am ready or not.

“The more important question is, are you ready? Is the world ready to embrace the rebirth of Chaos?”

Chapter 887 - To the Mausoleum of Chaos!

When Yuchi Ba was faced with the chilling question, frenzy and determination beamed out of his small eyes. He opened his arms and declared, “Of course. We’ve waited for the day to come for forty thousand years. We are all ready to bathe in the radiance of God Chaos again!”

The interconnecting wrinkles on Chu Zhengqing’s face did not shiver at all, like the crevices on a rock. He said calmly, “There’s no need to decorate your operation with such a glitzy camouflage. In fact, you and Elder Nether Spring are ravens and crows, and the only things that you are interested in are the powerful weapons left by Chaos. As to what Chaos is exactly, and whether or not he will be reborn, you don’t give a damn thing!

“Or rather, if you have access to the strength of Chaos, neither you nor Elder Nether Spring really hope for the so-called ‘Chaos’ to be reborn into this world again, do you?”

Yuchi Ba smiled. “Of course, we are different from Elder Nether Spring.

“If Elder Nether Spring receives the legacy of Chaos, he will only enslave the demons of lower levels in an even more rigorous way and eventually build a world of terror where he is the master!

“However, after we get the legacy of Chaos, we will break the shackles that have locked the low-level demons for tens of thousands of years and create a new world where all demons are equal!

“How on earth are we and Elder Nether Spring the same?”

Chu Zhengqing grunted but stopped talking.

If Chu Zhengqing was still restraining his emotions and ideas, Chu Feiyin had written her disdain all over her face.

She had a pair of enormous eyes that took up more than half of her face, and her eyeballs were covered with thin transparent membranes that were emitting glamorous colors in the light.

“Master Yuchi, the Blade of Chaos worships ‘Chaos’ as a god.” Chu Feiyin’s voice was low and dull, as if it were uttered from her chest. “However, in the eyes of us historians, the gods of human beings and demons have one thing in common. Would you like to know what it is?”

“I’m all ears,” Yuchi Ba replied.

“Temperamental.”

Yuchi Ba was dazed for a moment. He turned around and said to Li Yao, “As you can see, the two masters are the key to our operation, and they have a unique understanding about the study of Chaos. After we arrive at the Mausoleum of Chaos, it will be your mission to protect the two masters closely.

“Of course, such an important mission will not be shouldered by you alone. You will only need to increase your intuitions and senses to your best and react according to your instincts.

“Now, try to familiarize yourself with the two masters here. If they have any requirements, tell the servants outside and see that they are met.”

Yuchi Ba turned around and left, leaving Li Yao and the two specialists in the research room.

Li Yao eyed the collections around him with great interest. He noticed that most of the items could be traced back to between thirty-five thousand years and forty thousand years ago.

This period of history was not involved in Ou Yezi’s memory pieces. It was also a time of violence when humanity declined and the demon race rose.

The demon race, which had only just emerged, were like barbarians who conquered a central civilization by brute force. Although they defeated the central civilization in the battles, they were conquered by the vastness and depths of the central civilization and even accepted all the legacy of the central civilization in the end.

Therefore, in the beginning years of the demon race, their language, culture, regulations, training system, and even the methods to build residences and palaces, were identical to the ancient Cultivators.

In fact, today, after forty thousand years, compared to the civilization of mankind, which had been completely modernized, it was the civilization of demons that kept more traces of the ancient Cultivators.

Compared to modern human beings, the demons were the real vintage ones.

Li Yao was greatly interested by the relics.

He did not dare to browse the mottled ancient books recklessly and turned his attention to the stone plates.

The stone plates appeared to be funerary objects from the tomb of a certain expert at the early years of the Demon Beast Empire. The pictures were concise and yet vivid, depicting the lifelong achievements of the expert.

For other people, the spiritual stripes where words the size of the head of a fly were crammed were nothing more than mumbo-jumbo. But for Li Yao, they were the simple inflections of the language of the ancient Cultivators. He focused his attention and soon analyzed through the whole story.

Judging from the intermittent content on the stone plates, the expert should have been born after mankind was suppressed. The greatest achievement of his life seemed to be fighting against Chaos, or the army of Chaos, and eventually banishing Chaos to the edge of the sea of stars.

On the stone plates, the image of Chaos was a fat, round meatball with tentacles all over the body. Among the tentacles were dense eyes.

Dotted lines had been drawn to represent the rays beaming out of the eyes, indicating that the eyes of Chaos might have boasted incredible magic.

However, what most concerned Li Yao was a pattern that looked like the sun next to the image of Chaos.

Li Yao was very clear about the symbolic meaning of such a pattern in funerary objects.

It was an indicator that the ancient people used to describe the size of an object. The pattern was denoting that Chaos was as enormous as the sun!

It did not necessarily refer to the real body size of Chaos, but it at least meant that Chaos had strength equal to a star!

Li Yao’s deep thought attracted Chu Zhengqing and his daughter’s attention.

They had thought that Yuchi Ba would send a brawny barbarian to protect them. The guy here was brawny enough, but his thoughtful eyes seemed to indicate that he had understood the ancient pictures on the stone plates?

How could that be?

The father and the daughter looked at each other but did not talk. They buried themselves in the ancient books that were as boundless as an ocean, devoting themselves to the secrets of Chaos once more.

…

Two days later, in a secret launch base below the ocean next to the Skeleton Island, Li Yao was looking up at the dome that was carved out of enormous crystals. Billions of tons of seawater was pressing the dome, and countless bizarre-looking fish were swimming around it, giving him the feeling that he was actually inside an undersea palace.

Docked at the center of the launch base was a ‘Seven-Star Dragon’-level sky-hunting warship.

The skeleton warships of such a level was similar to the destroyers of human beings in size and usage. They were built with the skeletons of enormous sea beasts as the framework, which was then covered by solid flesh and blood, made possible through genetic technology. The germs would dissolve the crystals in the four highly-heated chambers, and the warship would spurt out the scorching gas in order to receive impetus.

Other than that, it was also installed with two groups of power rune arrays that were imitations of the products in the Star Glory Federation. Therefore, the warship could be pushed forward in two ways.

Since they were easy to steer and could fly below the ocean, on the surface of the ocean, in the sky, or even out of the atmosphere briefly, the sky-hunting warship of such a model was favored by a lot of forces of the Blood Demon Sector. The relatively more powerful arenas and slave-catching teams would often buy one or two.

Hundreds of members of the Blade of Chaos were moving the assets, especially the enormous biochemical storage slots in which hundreds of biochemical beasts were soaked and hibernating, onto the sky-hunting warship.

Such biochemical beasts could not be stored inside Cosmos Rings. They easily took up more than half of the space on the sky-hunting warship.

Li Yao was wearing a black suit that was so thin that it felt almost nonexistent. It covered his body like a layer of membrane, highlighting the lines of his muscles and making him look spectacular.

Such a combat suit was also the ultimate product of the biochemical technology of the Blood Demon Sector. It was made by integrating the essence of the skin and scales of dozens of types of demon beasts. Thin as it might have seemed, it boasted a defense ability close to that of the crocodile skin, and it could repair itself when it was ripped open.

It was safe to say that such a cell infiltration suit was even better than the mustard-seed suit of human beings in terms of certain specifications.

“All aboard!”

Yuchi Ba was wearing a cell infiltration suit, too. The black membrane was quite extensible and could adapt to the different sizes of demons. It would not be broken even if it was enlarged to more than ten times its original size and could still maintain more than 95% of the performance.

Yuchi Ba could not have been more delighted. His face red in excitement, and he waved his hands so heavily that he seemed to be slashing the ocean apart.

Li Yao observed calmly. The exploration team behind Yuchi Ba was clearly divided into two parts. One of the two parts was made of warriors, who were all the most loyal believers of Chaos. Right now, since they were about to set off to the sanctuary in their mind for exploration, everybody was wearing the standard frantic expression of the fanatics on their face.

The other part consisted of researchers.

Compared to the simple-minded zealots, the researchers were solemn, but most of them were still very confident, with ambition and eagerness beaming out of their eyes.

His eyes glancing over every warrior and researcher, Li Yao thought of something and began to ponder a question that had been bothering him.

According to his observation over the past month, Yuchi Ba was a high-level demon king at best and certainly not a demon emperor.

The warriors of the Blade of Chaos were weaker than him. Including all the Death Teeth Guards, none of them were beyond the demon king level.

Were there no tougher experts in the Blade of Chaos?

Besides—

Before he came to Void Turmoil City, the opponent that Li Yao paid the most attention to was the Fire Ant King, who was master of Void Turmoil City and a blood brother to Elder Nether Spring. However, over the past two months, the master of Void Turmoil City had never visited the Skeleton Island.

Yuchi Ba had been doing so many things right below his nose, and the Fire Ant King did not know anything about it? It did not seem to befit the ability of a demon emperor.

Full of questions, Li Yao boarded on the sky-hunting warship. As a guardian for the core squad, he was allowed to stay in the same room with Yuchi Ba, Chu Zhengqing, and other important individuals.

Even so, in order to bring more assets, the cabin they were in was extremely narrow, too.

Chi—

After all the members got on board, a huge amount of bright yellow, oily liquids suddenly spurted out of the holes on the ceiling of the cabin, which soon drowned their bodies and filled the entire cabin!

It was buffer liquid. Similar to the buffer foam of human beings, it was meant to minimize the blast during high-speed flights.

The first layer of the dome above the sky-hunting warship was opened, and they slowly ascended into the space between the two layers of the dome. Then, the first layer of the dome was closed below them. Seawater was poured in. When the internal pressure and external pressure were the same, the second layer of the dome glided open.

The warship dashed to the depths of the immeasurable ocean toward the Mausoleum of Chaos like a slender whale!

Chapter 888

Endless secrets were buried inside the boundless ocean. Even the ‘Sea Clan’, who claimed to be dominators of the ocean, could only live in the offshore area near the continental shelf where the resources were abundant.

After diving in the deep sea for an entire day, making sure that nobody was following them, the sky-hunting warship finally leapt out of the ocean and flew at a high speed close to the surface of the ocean!

Half a day later, they reached the ‘White Silver Continent’, which was the smallest, the most barren, and the least populated of the three continents of the Blood Demon Sector.

Inside the cabin that was filled with buffer liquids, an extendable synthesized nerve had been planted on the cabin wall behind every passenger. Through the interface at the back of the cell infiltration suit, it was very convenient to connect the passenger’s brain to the entire skeleton warship and form an enormous command and battle network.

On the surface of the skeleton warship, dozens of enormous biochemical observation eyes were growing. Such biochemical eyes, which were made with the eyeballs of the deep-sea squid as prototypes and had received all kinds of genetic optimization and refinement, were among the most precise observation equipment both in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and in the Blood Demon Sector. On every square millimeter of the retina, there were more than a million visual cones that could perceive the light, making the sensitivity of the eye hundreds of times more than that of an ordinary human being and allowing them to clearly see the undersea environment hundreds of meters below the surface despite the darkness.

When the passengers connected to the skeleton warship, they would be able to share the vision of all the biochemical eyes and enjoy the splendid view of nature.

The White Silver Continent deserved its name. If one looked at the horizon, it was indeed a magnificent world built with silver.

After a flight of more than two hours, they did not even see a plant, much less a demon beast. As far as one’s eyes could reach, dull and boring sand was everywhere.

The seemingly spectacular environment was in fact full of perils.

Because of the climate and the magnetic field, the entire White Silver Planet was made of a special type of sand named ‘White Sulphur Sand’. It was a continent of deserts, also known as the ‘White Silver Death Desert’.

The White Sulphur Sand’s surface was extremely smooth. It was even softer and greasier than mercury. The tiniest breeze was enough to blow it into the most terrifying quicksand.

On the continent, the natural environment was changing almost every second and every minute. There was not a stable appearance at all. Any creature that touched the White Sulphur Sand would be deeply mired in it and drowned within several minutes.

On the other hand, the White Sulphur Sand was extremely reflective and could return almost all the sunlight. As a result, not only was it impossible for the White Silver Death Desert to accumulate any energy, it was also radiated by the sun without the slightest shadow every minute during the day. It was truly a death zone.

No creature could survive in the White Silver Death Desert. Even the demons whose bodies were tough and who were adaptive to various kinds of environments considered the White Silver Death Desert a hot and silent graveyard.

After hundreds of years of prospecting, no important resources were discovered on the White Silver Continent. The only thing that could be found in this place was sand and more sand.

Therefore, the Pantheon of Demons would rather risk developing new world fragments than wasting precious resources in the bottomless hole.

On the horizon, a black spot gradually appeared. On the contrary to the White Silver Death Desert, it was like a two-dimensional blackhole that absorbed all the rays of sunlight.

It was a great lake of the Blood Demon Sector—the Star Swallowing Sea!

Since the lake was named a ‘sea’, it was not hard to imagine how vast the inland lake was.

It was weird enough that an enormous lake should exist at the center of the desolate White Silver Death Desert, but there were more uncanny things about the Star Swallowing Sea.

The area around the Star Swallowing Sea, just like Void Turmoil City and the Dark Desolate Domain, boasted an independent small climate. Clouds might appear, raising thunder and lightning that would tear the sky and the earth apart, at any moment.

The lake water of the Sea Swallowing Sea, in the meantime, contained a lot of heavy metal constituents, which made the water as thick as oil and carry lethal poison.

The lake that contained heavy metal triggered the abnormal blast of the magnetic field, forming invisible turbulences above the Star Swallowing Sea that would disturb the brains of living creatures and make them lose their direction should they come close to the Sea Swallowing Sea. They would fall into the Sea Swallowing Sea and drown in the poisonous lake water.

That was how the Sea Swallowing Sea got its name. It was a terrifying lake that could even swallow the stars!

In the past, a number of specialists of the demon race were curious about the environment of the Sea Swallowing Sea and initiated large-scale surveying, but to no avail. During the one mission with the direst consequences, they even lost a dozen skeleton warships and thousands of warriors.

However hard the specialists probed, they did not find any valuable mother lodes, Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, or strong demon beasts around the Star Swallowing Sea. Even if the bottom of the Star Swallowing Sea really stored abundant mother lodes, with the technology of the demon race right now, the cost to develop them would be astronomical, and it was certainly not worthwhile.

Therefore, since decades ago, the White Silver Death Desert and the Star Swallowing Sea had been in the most primitive state without any inhabitants.

But right now, the sky-hunting warship of the Blade of Chaos had barged into the most dangerous water of the Blood Demon Sector.

It was not until he moved deeper into the Star Swallowing Sea that Li Yao began to understand why an inland lake could be called a ‘sea’!

Looking back through the biochemical eye on the surface of the skeleton warship, Li Yao discovered that the White Silver Death Desert was nothing but a shallow white line right now, and the boundless lake in front of him was as impressive as the ocean that they had passed through the day before.

The black lake seemed to have joined hands with the clouds in the sky. A bloody mouth seemed to have been opened slowly and was about to swallow them into a bottomless abyss.

BOOM!

BOOM! CRACK!

Bolts of lightning pierced at the Star Swallowing Sea from the sky like thousands of tusks inside the bloody moth. Every wave was like a mountain that rose high into the sky and could consume the tiny sky-hunting warship easily!

The sky-hunting warship was struggling to make its way forward under the assault of the lightning and the waves, as if it were rushing in a deep valley with the enormous tides as cliffs. Even Li Yao could feel cold sweat running down his back.

A while later, hundreds of scattered islands appeared in front of them.

Every island was no more than a hundred meters in diameter. They were bare and entirely lifeless, like fish that had extended their heads out of the swamp as they struggled to get out.

Chi!

Right then, deafening noises echoed outside. The waves inside the Star Swallowing Sea were more and more furious, and the tides grew higher and higher. Eventually, giant swirls formed on the surface of the lake, giving Li Yao the feeling that the lake water was leaking to the underground through the crevices at the bottom of the lake!

No. It was not his imagination but exactly what was happening!

The Star Swallowing Sea was indeed shrinking at a visible speed. The lake was lower and lower. The evidence would be the islands with only their top revealed just now!

A moment ago, only a few sharp ends were exposed above the surface of the lake. But right now, their real appearance was on display in the hollow of the swirls. They were actually giant mountains standing at the bottom of the lake!

The sky-hunting warship dived down and descended into the swirl below the surface of the lake.

The black water around them was like majestic walls thousands of feet high that could collapse toward them and bury them completely at any moment.

A few enormous cracks appeared on the abdomen part of the sky-hunting warship. Black, fusiform cocoons were tossed into the lake water.

Li Yao knew that they were biochemical beasts specially designed to explore the territory below the lake.

Yuchi Ba’s voice echoed near his ear through the neural network that covered the entire warship. “The most famous characteristic of the Star Swallowing Sea is that the water level changes in a fixed pattern on a daily basis. During the day, the lake will drop down, and at night, it will soar crazily. The lake seems to be… breathing!

“Nobody knew where the lake water was leaking to during the breaths of the lake.

“According to our specialists, who have analyzed the comprehensive files in various regards, it is very likely that the entrance to the Mausoleum of Chaos is somewhere in the mountains below the lake.

“Normally, the mountain is completely drowned by the Star Swallowing Sea and is hundreds of meters away from the surface of the lake. That’s why nobody has discovered it for thousands of years.

“Even when the water level of the Star Swallowing Sea is at the lowest, there will only be one to two hours when the mountain shows up above the surface of the lake!

“Locating the mountain below the lake is the key to locating the Mausoleum of Chaos!”

The sky-hunting warship quickly searched hundreds of meters below the surface of the lake.

Bo! Bo! Bo! Bo!

The biochemical beasts that had dived into the depths of the Star Swallowing Sea sent back information with dull signal sounds. A complicated map of the mountains below the lake was gradually drawn.

As the surface of the lake continued plummeting, many mountains continued to emerge out of the lake. The high mountains cut into each other and extended forward in parallel, like countless dragons that were zigzagging deep inside the Star Swallowing Sea.

Right then, Li Yao heard exclamations around him.

He looked ahead, only to discover that an enormous beast more than ten times larger than the sky-hunting warship had crawled out of the black lake water, which was almost vertical on their left side. The beast looked like a whale that had grown sharp, jagged tusks and iron armor, and it was beyond any doubt that a yawn of the beast was enough to shatter the sky-hunting warship into smithereens!

However, the primeval beast did not have the chance to demonstrate its strength because it was tied up by a bright golden squid. Every tentacle of the super large squid was thousands of meters long. A few of the tentacles grabbed the bone armor of the enormous beast so hard that it was being torn apart, while another few tentacles pierced deep into the body of the enormous beast and devoured the internal organs and meat of the beast like leeches.

The roars of the two animals were almost suppressing the noises of the swirls.

Most of the warriors’ faces were pale as they watched the two animals crashing at the sky-hunting warship.

If there was really a collision, not a scrap of the sky-hunting warship would remain.

Shua!

But the two beasts seemed to be made of air. The sky-hunting warship passed through them without being damaged at all.

When they looked back, the two animals gradually blurred before they turned into streaks of brightness and dispersed in the darkness.

“There’s no need to panic. It is the image recorded by the special magnetic field of the Star Swallowing Sea. The two beasts perished tens of thousands of years ago,” Yuchi Ba said. “But we believe that the two beasts were probably God Chaos’ creatures!”

Chapter 889 - The Mausoleum Is Open!

When the two parties passed by each other, Li Yao indeed discovered stripes that looked like runes on the body of the two enormous beasts. They were not wounds that were torn apart after they were born but scales and speckles grown congenitally.

Although they were just illusions, the two overwhelming beats were still suffocating enough, making Li Yao realize why the Blade of Chaos and Elder Nether Spring were trying to excavate the legacy of Chaos without caring about the cost.

The sky-hunting warship continued rushing deep inside the Star Swallowing Sea.

Because of the different speed of dropping in different areas, surging torrents were everywhere.

They were surrounded by dozens of waterfalls and falling to the bottom of the waterfalls at one moment, and running inside a deep valley whose ‘crags’ were all lake water made of heavy metals the next. Illuminated by the sunlight, the water reflected colorful patterns as if countless dragons and snakes were fighting. The soul-stirring picture made everybody feel as if they were on a journey to doom.

At first, Li Yao did not know what the sky-hunting warship was looking for exactly while it was circling inside the Star Swallowing Sea. It was not until after more than three hours of rushing that he finally discovered a shallow scratch on a mountain on his right side.

The scratch was not naturally-made but apparently caused by a certain prehistorical beast. After tens of thousands of years, it had not been worn down yet.

The sky-hunting warship stayed for a long time near the scratch and did not march forward again until the biochemical eyes had captured every detail of the scratch.

Li Yao thought quickly and immediately understood what the Blade of Chaos was doing.

If the Mausoleum of Chaos was really somewhere deep inside the Star Swallowing Sea, and countless enormous beasts had been produced inside the mausoleum, then it was inevitable that some of them would have hit the mountains under the lake and left traces after they were released.

After the traces were discovered, with thorough analysis, it was possible to track the route of their movement and eventually locate the coordinates where they were released.

The coordinates would be the entrance to the Mausoleum of Chaos.

Very soon, night fell. The swirls deep inside the Star Swallowing Sea were all uttering bubbling noises, and the water level that was dropping fast began to rise again. The mountains below the lake were consumed one after another until they were entirely drowned by the black water.

Although the sky-hunting warship could travel in ordinary seawater, it would not take long before its shell was corroded, crushed, and shattered if it moved in the Star Swallowing Sea.

Besides, the penetration of light was extremely bad inside the Star Swallowing Sea. The sky-hunting warship was no better than a blind fish after it dived in. The few probe biochemical beasts were far from enough to clearly see the entire bottom of the lake.

Therefore, they had to retreat for now and rest for a night in the middle of the raging tides and lightning of the Star Swallowing Sea.

Following that, they lurked at night and worked during the day for three days, continuing their research deep inside the Star Swallowing Ocean, only to find nothing. Not only did they fail to find any traces left by the prehistoric beasts, they did not even have a second chance to see the electromagnetic illusions of the beasts, as if the mirages were merely everybody’s imagination.

But Yuchi Ba was as cold, tough, and unwavering as a slab of iron. He commanded his team patiently to search among the mountains below the lake.

On the fourth day, the illuminance of God Chaos finally fell upon the exploration team.

Although Li Yao did not know the details, he could clearly feel that the sky-hunting warship was flying in a more patterned route. It seemed to be hovering around a certain location at the bottom of the lake.

Looking ahead, he could see that the lake water, which had plunged to the lowest point, was revealing hundreds of crooked wrinkles that looked like the hunched backs of dragons.

Maybe it was his imagination, but Li Yao suddenly felt that the ridges of the mountains seemed to be condensing into a howling face whose mouth was so wide open that it was being split apart.

Hu!

The sky-hunting warship dashed to one of the ridges that seemed unattractive but in fact had hundreds of traces caused by enormous beasts.

The left side of the ridge was even as smooth as a mirror because of the rubbing of the scales. If one were to observe it from the sky from an appropriate angle, it would seem like a glittering gem that had been embedded into the Star Swallowing Sea.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Two small boats were launched from the lower part of the abdomen of the sky-hunting warship and dashed toward the ridge. Before they landed, dozens of shadows lunged out of the boats and rushed to the top on the ridge.

Li Yao was suddenly alarmed. He knew that they were the real core members of the Blade of Chaos, and they perhaps knew dozens of times more information regarding the Mausoleum of Chaos than Li Yao did.

The elites of the Blade of Chaos were all riding armor beasts with multiple limbs that seemed to have combined the advantages of dozens of types of huge insects.

Their claws, teeth, and limbs pierced deeply into the solid rock stratums, allowing them to move on the vertical cliff, which was as smooth as a mirror, agilely as if they were moving on the ground.

Li Yao noticed that they would bash several straight metal rods into the rocks every time they moved forward a certain distance. Following which, they connected the devices with synthesized nerves and eventually joined them with a cluster of enormous biochemical brain.

It should be some form of space detection gear based on the genes of bats. By releasing an oriented vibration wave to the depths of the underground and absorbing the vibration wave that is fed back, the size and structure of the underground space can easily be determined.

The Star Glory Federation had similar magical equipment. Such tools were mandatory in underground prospecting jobs.

Very soon, the entire ridge of the mountain was brimming with metal rods, which made it look like a crocodile that had been stabbed with spears all over its body.

The buffer liquids inside the cabin were quickly extracted, indicating that their journey was coming to an end.

Yuchi Ba was obviously overjoyed. “We have located the Mausoleum of Chaos. All squads, gather and prepare to work!”

In the following hour, the more bizarre-shaped demons were projected to the nearby of the mountain under the lake. They were busy doing their jobs around the ridge.

The only part that Li Yao could understand was that some of the demons were planting powerful time bombs based on the terrain of the ridge.

Judging from the techniques of their installment and the size of their bombs, it was possible that they could blow up rocks almost a hundred meters thick.

“Hurry! Hurry! Hurry! We must finish the work before the lake water flows again, or everything will be in vain!” Yuchi Ba landed on the mountain and roared to issue commands.

Even by Li Yao’s standard as a super bomb expert, the detonation team was definitely well trained. It only took them slightly more than four hours for them to complete the complicated work of hole-digging and bomb-planting. At this moment, the other workers around the ridge finished their jobs, too.

All of them retreated to the sky-hunting warship again.

At this moment, it was already dusk, and the lake water was about to soar up.

In less than an hour, the mountain would be drowned again.

When the sky-hunting warship flew multiple kilometers away in a hurry, seven earsplitting explosions burst out behind Li Yao. Seven streams of mystic rays soared up into the sky and formed a complicated pattern in midair before they hit the mountain heavily like shooting stars!

After a huge boom, a colorful mushroom cloud slowly rose up, mixed with creaking noises, as if countless devils were grinning hideously and escaping from the Mausoleum of Chaos.

The sky-hunting warship managed to turn around in midair by force and aimed at the source of the mushroom cloud. All the warriors, including Li Yao, were ready for battle. Should there be anything wrong, they would be able to connect to their biochemical beasts quickly.

However, the shrieks came to an abrupt halt after three minutes. As it turned out, they were nothing but compressed air currents that had been locked for forty thousand years below the ground. The probe of soundwaves and infrared rays did not report the traces of any living creature, either.

The sky-hunting warship finally emboldened itself to go closer.

The raging mushroom gradually dispersed. Everybody could see that the upper half part of the ridge had almost been blown away entirely, giving birth to an irregular black hole. When the sky-hunting warship approached and scanned, it was determined that a vast space was hidden below the mountain and that the fractures of many parts of the space were in an absolutely precise plane, indicating the work of intelligent creatures.

“Hoooo!”

Everybody inside the cabin roared in excitement.

Then, around the mountain, translucent vesicles that both looked like swimming bladders and bubbles gradually bulged.

The vesicles swallowed each other and gradually expanded in size until it covered the entire mountain like a glass cap.

When the black lake water rose up again, it was blocked from the vesicles. Not a single drop of water was able to leak into it.

The sky-hunting warship flew to the top of the glass cap and extended a translucent soft tube from the abdomen, which connected the cabin to the glass cap like an umbilical cord.

Then, the sky-hunting warship slowly moved upwards at the same speed of the rising lake water and returned to the surface of the lake. Eventually, it was docked thirty meters above the Star Swallowing Sea.

Right now, the entrance to the Mausoleum was hundreds of meters below the Star Swallowing Sea, but it was connected to the sky-hunting warship through an ‘umbilical cord’.

“Inside the Star Swallowing Sea, the super high-intensity waterproof cover can last for three to five days. We must finish the preliminary exploration during this time!”

Yuchi Ba did not go back on his word. After making sure that there was enough fresh air inside the Mausoleum of Chaos, he was the first to enter the place through the long ‘umbilical cord’, leading a large batch of explorers.

Li Yao’s mission, on the other hand, was to stick closely to Chu Zhengqing and Chu Feiyin, two specialists in the studies of Chaos. They suffered in the weird silence for more than two hours before they were permitted to enter the Mausoleum of Chaos!

“Let’s go, Master Chu!”

With a telepathic thought, Li Yao’s brainwaves spread out, and a transparent vesicle slowly rose up around his neck and covered his entire head.

On his back, a small piece of membrane was fluctuating, filtering the air in the outside world multiple times before it was sent into the vesicle.

Although the examination had proved that the air inside the Mausoleum of Chaos was normal, it was a relic from forty thousand years ago. There was no telling whether or not a fatal virus or microorganisms still existed in the air. Therefore, it was best to stay prudent.

Li Yao, Chu Zhengqing, and Chu Feiyin were enveloped by a cluster of bright yellow buffer liquids and fell quickly along the ‘umbilical cord’. After sliding for almost twenty seconds, they landed somewhere near the entrance of the Mausoleum of Chaos.

Chapter 890 - 'God' Has Appeared

The fault caused by the detonation was a perfect relay station after simple modifications. The explorers did the final preparations in the place before they slowly descended underground through the temporary lifts.

Around a hundred warriors who were responsible for exploring the way and small demon beasts, of which there were multiple times more, were sent into the tomb first for preliminary surveying. After they ascertained that the environment was safe, the researchers went inside in batches.

Li Yao was given an interactive brainwave receptor that looked like an antenna and two biochemical chips that looked like contact lenses.

When he stuck the antenna to his forehead softly and put the biochemical chips on his eyes, after a beep, a lot of information immediately appeared on his retina, as well as instructions for him and the general map of the Mausoleum of Chaos.

The underground space that was outlined by bright green strokes was dozens of times larger than Li Yao had expected. It had multiple floors as well as countless pathways and independent rooms, which made the tomb look like a splendid underground palace.

The pulley span quickly as the lift slowly descended. Li Yao felt like he was an ant with a thread tied to his waist that had been tossed off a cliff thousands of meters high.

After passing through a narrow, vertical pathway, they found themselves in a space more than five hundred meters both in length and width. The dark walls around seemed to boast an uncanny attraction force that absorbed all light rays and sound.

They seemed to have fallen into an abyss, and it was not until three minutes later that the lift landed on the ground again.

The ground was dry and firm, refined out of a certain unknown rock material. Li Yao breathed deeply in relief when his feet finally stepped on the ground again.

When the mutated fireflies danced randomly in the enormous space and sprayed the cold florescence in every direction, everybody was deeply attracted to the bones of an enormous creature at the center of the space.

There was no telling what the creature used to be. Its thick bones jabbed at the ceiling, forming a dense primitive forest. Illuminated by the florescence, the bones were emitting bright green, metallic colors. Several of the bones were dozens of meters long and thicker than the main guns of many crystal warships.

Li Yao squinted and observed the walls around him.

Dozens of iron rings had been nailed to the walls, bound by huge chains that were connected to every part of the bones. After forty thousand years, all the chains looked as good as new. Even the tiniest stripes on them were still clearly visible.

However, all the chains showed signs that they had been pulled hard. Some of the iron rings had even been yanked out of the wall, leaving holes and cracks on the wall. Some other chains looked like noodles as they had been stretched to their limits.

Claw traces several meters deep were everywhere on the walls. Many thick talons had been broken and embedded into the walls.

On one of the walls, there was even a dent dozens of meters in diameter, as if an enormous battering ram had hit the wall brutally once before.

Li Yao closed his eyes and imagined what had happened forty thousand years ago.

A ferocious animal hundreds of meters long had been locked in this place with chains for some reason.

The ferocious beast must have struggled hard in agony and ripped apart many chains and magical equipment that had been carved with rune arrays.

In the meantime, the animal also left appalling traces on the wall. It was in such excruciating pain that it did not stop even when its claws were broken and embedded into the wall. It simply continued bashing the wall hard with its head.

What was it that put the enormous beast in such pain?

Some sort of experiment?

Several paleontologists and historians discussed with each other near the corpse of the enormous beast.

One of the paleontologists seemed to be assigned the task to study the enormous beast. He immediately began to work with his assistants.

In the meantime, Li Yao, who had a lot of experience in fighting, noticed something weird very quickly, too.

The bones on the torso of the enormous beast had a lot of fractures, but they did not collapse inward but protruded outward.

It appeared that something had crawled into its stomach and gone on a rampage before crawling out the same way.

Li Yao swallowed hard and felt for the first time that he might not necessarily be secure during the exploration of the Mausoleum of Chaos even though his real capability was close to the Nascent Soul Stage.

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao led a few researchers further into the vast space under the guidance of the arrowheads on his retina.

After they passed through a long pathway, the scenes that unraveled in front of Li Yao made him have the illusion that he had stepped into the cosmos.

The boundless space just now had already left them with the impression of the splendor and magnificence of a palace.

However, compared to the temple in front him, it was nothing more than a matchbox placed next to a skyscraper.

They could not see the boundary of the temple at all. Standing above the temple, they discovered that there were stairs that went straight down. Its end was wreathed in vague, gray mist.

The gray mist was fluctuating as if a living creature. It could not have looked more mysterious.

Li Yao finally understood why Yuchi Ba risked recruiting so many newcomers for the operation.

The Mausoleum of Chaos was too vast. However many explorers there were, they would be like salt in the water and would be dissolved instantly, leaving no trace.

Very soon, the virtual image of the entire temple was displayed on his retina through the biochemical chips.

By echolocation, it was estimated that the temple was more than thirty kilometers both in length and width. It was basically an enormous city.

That was just the first floor.

With the guidance of the arrowheads, they groped in the darkness for more than ten minutes before they got down the stairs and reached the bottom level of the temple.

The ground there was not the solid rock plate anymore but moist soil that would make soft sounds when anybody stepped on it.

The edge of the temple was still black rocks. However, a magnificent embossment had been carved after every fixed distance on the rocks.

Most of the embossments were the scenes where bizarre-looking giants were spraying the seeds of life in some weird worlds. Sometimes, the few embossments that were next to each other were telling a complete story.

For example, on one of the embossments, a light gray, giant round plate landed on a scorching planet, and the traces of ancient creatures had been engraved inside the ocean at the bottom part of the embossment.

On the second embossment, many enormous tyrannosaurs were teleported to the planet through cone-shaped rays of light.

However, compared to the fossils excavated nowadays, those tyrannosaurs all boasted extremely strong arms, and they looked more like the Pangu Clan that Li Yao had seen deep inside his genes.

On the third embossment, the tyrannosaurs extended their arms to the ocean. Corroded by a weird force, their arms withered. But a huge amount of bright golden liquid was secreted from the wrinkles of their skin and dropped into the ocean.

That seemed to be the essence of their arms.

On the fourth embossment, the ocean creatures that had absorbed the bright golden liquid had grown primitive limbs and begun to march toward the land.

The four embossments combined seemed to be indicating that the tyrannosaurs paid a price of their arms for the ocean creatures’ ability to move toward the land.

“If that’s true, one of the assumptions about Chaos has been disapproved now,” Chu Zhengqing, the master of the studies of Chaos, said slowly with a solemn face. “Judging from the structure of the temple and its relative position in the entire underground architecture, it should be a temple of sacrifices for the ancient civilization. Since the embossments around the temple recorded so many stories where the Pangu Clan created the world and enlightened the creatures, it is evident enough that Chaos was sort of a ‘worshipper’ of Pangu, too.

“In the history of the demon race over the past ten thousand years, the mainstream opinion has been that Chaos was a mortal enemy for Pangu. These embossments can refute such an opinion.”

Another research said coldly, “Of course, Chaos was not Pangu’s enemy because he was the rightful heir of Pangu! It was because some ambitious, crazy demons betrayed God Chaos that the public opinion about him ended up like this today! What we need to do is excavate everything inside the Mausoleum of Chaos and set the truth to public exactly as it is!”

Chu Zhengqing smiled and walked forward.

A lot of explorers had gathered in the front and established the most basic illumination system.

With the help of the rays, Li Yao was able to see an indescribable object standing at the end of the temple. It looked both like an integrated cockpit and like a weird-shaped, magnificent throne. A bright golden skeleton more than ten meters long had been embedded into the object.

The skeleton must have worn a certain kind of armor, but after such a long time, the armor had already melded with the body.

The upper half part of the body, except for being slightly larger, was no different from that of a human being.

However, starting from the hipbone, the skeleton suddenly shrank and condensed into a thick dragon bone. At the end of the tail, the bone was split apart into more than ten parts, protruding out like the claws of a crab.

Back when the skeleton was alive, it had probably been an existence that was half human and half snake, or half human and half dragon.

Dense spiritual stripes could be found on the bones that were not covered in armor, especially the skull, which was relatively intact. The circles of stripes attracted Li Yao’s eyes and soul like a mysterious swirl.

Quite a few paleontologists and archeologists were already busy working around the skeleton throne. They were cleaning the dust that fell off from the skeleton and scanning every fracture of the skeleton.

“The appearance of the armor and the seat of the skeleton is completely out of place with the style of the building around us and the development level of the civilization forty thousand years ago to our knowledge. It carries an intense air of technology, especially in the zone right in front of the skeleton that looks like a ‘dashboard’. The complexity of the spiritual stripes is extremely hard for us to understand even today.

“It can be assumed for now that the skeleton and the seat it was embedded to were not built inside the Mausoleum of Chaos but moved to this place from somewhere else.

“Its coordinates inside the temple are exactly the center of the golden cut. Based on the architecture rules in the era of ancient Cultivators, it is the most divine position.

“We may assume that the skeleton was the ‘god’ that Chaos believed in!”

Chu Zhengqing circled around the skeleton throne and made his speculation casually.

Chapter 891 - The Massacre Forty Thousand Years Ago!

Dozens of specialists of the Blade of Chaos all analyzed the skeleton throne.

Li Yao vaguely sensed that many rays were shot out of the organs of the specialists that resembled eyes as they tried to penetrate the shell of the skeleton throne and pry into the structure of the ‘god’.

Even Li Yao could not help but release part of his telepathic thoughts, hoping to invade the armor through the gaps, but to no avail.

The armor that was worn outside of the ‘god’ looked vintage and intimidating. Li Yao had browsed through all the ancient armors recorded in the Hundred Smelting Clan forty thousand years and still failed to find any structure that was remotely close.

The usage of the throne was even more mysterious. On the dashboard that was against the face of the ‘god’, there were only several buttons. It was safe to infer that the machine was operated not with the hands but through telepathic thoughts directly.

“The Blade of Chaos firmly believes that God Chaos rose when he was needed forty thousand years ago and excavated the legacy of the Pangu Clan from the primeval era, thereby creating the modern demon race,” one of the specialists said solemnly. “The ‘god’ inside the skeleton throne is probably a member of the Pangu Clan!”

His deduction was agreed upon by most of the specialists, but it raised a number of gasps, too.

The warriors standing at the edge almost could not hold themselves from worshipping the skeleton throne.

The vast temple was caught in a weird and yet solemn vibe.

“Such an assumption does have a point,” Chu Zhengqing said. “If we consider the Pangu Clan as a tribe or a civilization that expanded across all the three thousand Sectors billions of years ago, and someone, or some organization, named ‘Chaos’ found the relics of the Pangu Clan in which they retrieved the precious legacy and eventually built an enormous base with the legacy as the foundation, then the skeleton throne was probably the only well-preserved body of the Pangu Clan inside the relics. Chaos treated it like a ‘god’ and enshrined it in this place for sacrifices.”

The specialists all nodded. Such a theory was reasonable enough.

Right then, exclamations echoed in the southeast of the temple.

As it turned out, another squad had detected new corpses.

Very soon, the scraps of dead bodies were discovered everywhere in the great temple.

After being scanned with mystic rays, almost a hundred piles of bodies were displayed on the retina of every specialist.

Li Yao received the information, too.

Most of the dead bodies were demons between 1.5 meters to 3 meters. After forty thousand years of decay, the only things left were dry bones and empty shells.

A lot of the dead bodies were strangling each other and crushing each other's bones in the most violent methods, as if they were going through a great battle.

Judging from the structure of some of the corpses, one of them was biting the spine of another one hard, as if they had been mauling and gnawing each other.

A lot of flying swords and sabers were scattered around the dead bodies, most of which had been broken in half.

Remarkable combat ability.

Li Yao discovered that almost twenty flying swords had been stabbed into a dead body that was no taller than two meters, but the dead body had still tackled another dead body and even crushed its shoulder bone. The tusks of the first corpse had even pierced through the skull of the second corpse.

Li Yao pictured what happened forty thousand years ago.

The first corpse was pierced through by more than ten flying swords, and its internal organs were entirely wrecked. But he—or 'it'—maintained a rather shocking combat ability and tackled the opponent before it shattered the scapula of its target and extended its own head to the enemy's.

It was biting the enemy's face.

What a nightmarish massacre!

Huh?

After scanning the surface of hundreds of corpses, Li Yao suddenly discovered something weird.

Amid the bizarre-shaped corpses of demons, there were also dead bodies of human beings.

Although the only things left right now were dry bones, Li Yao was pretty sure that they used to be standard human beings, judging from the form and structure of the dry bones!

Some of the dry bones were emitting bronze, bright green, and dark golden colors. It was a sign that the bones had been nurtured by spiritual energy for a long time.

It meant that the owners of the dry bones used to be high-level Cultivators!

In the meantime, the specialists of the Blade of Chaos noticed the corpses of the Cultivators, too.

“What has happened?”

“A batch of Cultivators attacked the Mausoleum of Chaos, which resulted in such a gory massacre?”

“Unlikely. According to our research, when Chaos rose up, the force of the Cultivators was already very weak. It is not possible that they attacked the base of Chaos actively.”

“Besides, such brutal methods are more befitting lunatics who have gone mad. It is definitely not the combat style of the ancient Cultivators.”

A few archeologists moved to the corpses and retrieved the robes, armor, and scraps of magical equipment left around carefully.

Those corpses had all been killed forty thousand years ago. Although their flesh had rotted, the robes, armor, and magical equipment that they carried had not been entirely corroded. There were still scraps that could be studied.

Li Yao stood at the edge of the circle and observed with great interest.

The magical equipment that those corpses utilized had the unique style of the ancient Cultivators, which gave a strong feeling of familiarity.

Odd.

Very soon, the preliminary analysis on the scraps of the robe was out.

The Cultivators and demons lying on the ground were all wearing robes of the same fashion. The magical equipment they used was mostly the same make, too.

Besides, if it had been an invasion of the Cultivators, the dead bodies of the Cultivators and those of the demons should be attacking each other.

But the reality was that the corpses of many Cultivators were mauling other Cultivators, and the dead bodies of the demons had also engaged in fierce battles with other demons.

The scraps of the robes of both the attackers and the victims were very similar. They were made of the same materials in the same style. Even the spiritual stripes on them were identical.

It was safe to say that there had been no intruders; they simply attacked and eventually killed each other until everybody was dead.

“What happened in this place?”

The number of the corpses found inside the temple had already surpassed a thousand, and that was merely the tip of the iceberg.

The gory massacre that took place forty thousand years ago made the weird Mausoleum of Chaos even more mysterious.

All the researchers were baffled and whispering to each other.

Right then, after a hum, sighs seemed to echo in every direction in the darkness, as if a force that had slept for forty thousand years had awoken. The entire temple was trembling slightly.

The next second, mild rays of light sprayed down from the top of the temple like a waterfall, bathing all the researchers in an ivory ocean of brightness.

The warmth of the bright ocean drove away the darkness and made all the explorers less anxious.

Yuchi Ba, leading the majority of the exploration team, strode close.

“We have just activated the power rune array of the Mausoleum of Chaos. It is truly unbelievable. Such an enormous underground palace is actually driven by solar energy!

“The sky of the White Silver Death Desert is cloudless and boasts the most scorching sunlight. The energy of the sunlight is absorbed by the sand and transmitted to the Star Swallowing Sea in a way that we cannot comprehend. Then it is stored in the lake!

“The entire Star Swallowing Sea is in fact an enormous pool of solar energy. By the rising and ebbing tide every day, the energy is incessantly released to the Mausoleum of Chaos, keeping the underground palace functioning normally during the past forty thousand years.

“The strength of God Chaos is too immeasurable and incredible!

“Master Chu, what are your thoughts about our discoveries so far?”

“It’s been too long a time,” Chu Zhengqing replied. “I’m afraid that nobody knows what exactly happened here forty thousand years ago. We can only speculate based on the evidence we have found.

“First of all, the Blade of Chaos regards ‘Chaos’ as a god. But in my eyes, Chaos was perhaps an organization or even a human being. A regular human being.”

Chu Zhengqing paused for a moment. Before the members of the Blade of Chaos burst into fury, he quickly continued. “However, regardless of whether Chaos was a god, an organization, or a person, he must’ve had a lot of subordinates in order to establish such a huge base.

“If Chaos was an organization, the organization certainly had members. If Chaos was a god, he certainly had a lot of believers. Right?”

Yuchi Ba pondered for a moment and nodded. “Yes.”

Chu Zhengqing continued. “We have already found almost a thousand dead bodies that are wearing the robes of the same fashion and carrying magical equipment of the same make. Thus, is it not reasonable that we can assume them to be members of the organization named Chaos or the believers of the god named Chaos?”

“There’s another possibility,” Yuchi Ba said. “They were all intruders, and they were slain by God Chaos when they were invading the Mausoleum of Chaos!”

Chu Zhengqing shook his head and said, “Not very likely. If they were intruders, where were the believers of Chaos? Besides, after the intruders were killed, their bodies were simply left in the sacred place where sacrifices were offered. Isn’t it very strange?”

“But there were a lot bodies of human beings among the corpses,” Yuchi Ba said.

Derision quickly flashed inside Chu Zhengqing’s eyes. “So what? Who says that human beings cannot be believers of Chaos? Or rather, who says that Chaos was a demon? What if Chaos was but a regular human being?”

“You—”

Before Yuchi Ba was outraged, many specialists of the Blade of Chaos rose up and glared at him.

“The facts are very obvious,” Chu Zhengqing said casually. “Before Chaos appeared, there had never been real demons as we know today. The monsters and uncanny creatures recorded in the notes of the ancient Cultivators are simply too vastly different from modern demons.

“You all claim that Chaos created the demon race. Then, if you think about it more carefully, it is impossible that Chaos was a demon. How could he have created himself?

“Hehe. If he was not a demon, is it not obvious what kind of existence the so-called ‘Chaos’ once was?”

Chapter 892 - War. War Never Changes

After Chu Zhengqing expressed his opinion, yells and curses echoed nonstop. The excited believers of Chaos were even trying to approach Chu Zhengqing and challenge him.

The guardians, including Li Yao, hurried to block the frantic crowd.

Li Yao more or less understood why Yuchi Ba had asked a newcomer such as himself to protect Chu Zhengqing.

Judging from his boldness in making groundbreaking declarations, if an avid believer of Chaos were to work as his guardian, it would certainly have been difficult for the guardian to refrain himself from punching Chu Zhengqing's face.

“Master Chu,” Yuchi Ba said coldly. “Let's focus on the issues at hand for now. If the corpses really belonged to the believers of Chaos forty thousand years ago, what is your opinion about the cause of their death?”

“Loss of rationality for some reason and self-harm,” Chu Zhengqing said. “Many poisons, venomous gases, and even soundwave attacks that I know can achieve the result.

“However, as to whether the poisons and the venomous gas were released from the outside world or generated inside the Mausoleum of Chaos, it cannot be decided for now.”

Right then, a researcher in a white robe approached Yuchi Ba and whispered something into his ear. Yuchi Ba nodded in approval, apparently greatly relieved. “We haven’t detected the constituents of any poison or venomous gas in the air, the soil, or the corpses.”

“Not yet.” Chi Zhengqing smiled and said, “Master Yuchi, it seems that our preliminary assumption was right. Judging from the scale of the first floor of the Mausoleum of Chaos, the vastness of the building is unimaginable for us.

“Both in the official history books and in folklore, Chaos never seized the supreme power to rule over all the three thousand Sectors. Then, the purpose of such an underground must’ve been much more than to offer sacrifices or to demonstrate his power.

“In other words, this place was probably a research center or a secret base for Chaos, with both military and experimental purposes.

“Right now, our biggest questions include: what was Chaos exactly? Who were his enemies? What kind of magical equipment, weapons, or soldiers had he been studying in this place to deal with those enemies?

“Right. Perhaps the Blade of Chaos is only interested in the last question.

“However, before we move to a deeper level, I feel obliged to remind you one more time.

“Both the Blade of Chaos and Elder Nether Spring are doing everything you can to crack the secrets of Chaos. But as you can see, such a gory massacre has already been unfolded before us when we have not really gotten close to the secrets yet.

“Are you really ready to get your answer, one that might not be what you really want right now, or even is completely opposed to what you have believed in?”

Yuchi Ba took a deep breath and declared, “Yes, we are ready. Let’s go to the second floor.”

While they were studying the skeleton throne and the dead corpses, the specialists of ancient architecture and rune arrays had basically determined the rough structure of the second floor. As rune arrays were activated one after another, the center of the temple trembled slightly, and running gears could be heard deep below the ground.

Suddenly, enormous black pillars rose up from the ground.

They were the lifts leading to the second floor of the mausoleum of Chaos.

Judging from the overall structure, the Mausoleum of Chaos could be divided into three to four planes. However, the second floor took up even vaster space than the temple. The terrain inside the second floor was extremely complicated and had been split into different zones.

“Master!”

While the specialists were testing the lifts, Li Yao could not help but ask Chu Zhengqing, “You mentioned that ‘Chaos’ might have been a human being, didn’t you? What is that all about?”

Chu Zhengqing and his daughter glanced at him in surprise. Seeing no fascination or frenzy typical of a believer of Chaos, Chu Zhengqing pondered for a moment and asked back, “Have you ever heard the story of mankind regarding the birth of the demon race?”

Li Yao blinked, not sure whether he should give a positive reply or a negative one.

Chu Zhengqing mistook his hesitation for confusion. He explained quickly, “According to the history of human beings, forty thousand years ago, a Cultivator invented a type of gene drug named ‘Demon God’, which could accelerate the evolution of normal animals and transform them into strong demon beasts.

“However, during the refinement of demon beasts, the evolution went out of control. Many demon beasts walked through the journey of evolution that took human beings millions of years in only decades, ending up with intelligence that was on par with that of human beings.

“They were later known as the demon race.”

Li Yao swallowed hard. “Is it true?”

“Of course not. Or rather, not entirely,” Chu Zhengqing said. “After forty thousand years, we have such a profound understanding today about biochemical technology and gene theories that we can even produce biochemical brains that boast unparalleled computational ability. But still, we cannot endow true intelligence to demon beasts. How could the ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago have achieved that in only less than a hundred years?

“But the human beings’ theory has its own merits. Perhaps, if we combine the theories of human beings and the demon race, we will be able to get a glimpse of the real history.”

“Combine the theories?”

Li Yao thought quickly and breathed fast.

“Exactly,” Chu Zhengqing said. “Maybe, forty thousand years ago, there was indeed a human being who developed a powerful biochemical drug that allowed the mutation to a certain degree inside animals.

“However, the drug was not enough to generate intelligence equal to that of mankind inside the mutated animals. Therefore, it could not play a decisive role in the wars.

“Just think about how difficult it is to give an animal the intelligence equal to a human being!

“However, it is much simpler if we change our mindset.

“If we cannot give the wisdom of human beings to animals, how about we give the bodies of the animals to human beings?”

Li Yao was dumbfounded, feeling that his throat was dry.

Yan Zhengqing continued. “You don’t know human beings, especially the ambitious, insane Cultivators among them. If a certain drug can boost the combat ability of an animal by ten times, turning the animal into the toughest of its species, then at least one in every ten thousand Cultivators would not be able to resist the temptation of injecting the drug into themselves.”

“That means—” Chu Feiyin finished her father’s conclusion for him. Young and aggressive, she seemed to be particularly fond of the devastation on the faces of the believers of Chaos. “The demon race is probably the descendants of mankind. They are just a different type of human beings who have cracked part of the gene strands and activated the primeval form because of the Demon God Virus injected into them.”

Li Yao hesitated for half a second, wondering whether or not he should really put on a devastated face.

But the bewilderment on his face right now was already indicative enough of his shock.

He did not close his mouth until three seconds later. He stammered, “How—how do you know?”

“We do not know,” Chu Feiyin said. “That is just a hypothesis. This is how we do our research. When we find a strange phenomenon, we throw out a hypothesis to explain it, until new evidence that we find proves it or disproves it in the end.

“Different types of demons, and even demons and human beings, have no reproductive isolation and are able to have children.

“The elites of the Blade of Chaos can even change between two or even multiple forms freely.

“The newborn demons, whichever clan they belong to and regardless of whether they are silver-blood or black-blood, are alike to the infants of human beings. The features of the demon race will not show up until they gradually grow mature.

“All this evidence supports our hypothesis that human beings and demons share the same origin.

“However, we are still lacking conclusive proof. That’s why we accepted the offers of Elder Nether Spring and the Blade of Chaos, eventually ending up in this place. We are here to look for an answer, to find out… what we are exactly.”

Right then, the lifts leading to the next floor were activated. Bright blue lines popped up everywhere on the black pillars, splitting and interweaving into flower-like rune arrays.

“Master Chu!”

Li Yao gritted his teeth and asked, “Since you worked for Elder Nether Spring before, you must’ve seen him in person, right?”

Chu Zhengqing eyed Li Yao suspiciously.

“Have you told your theories to Elder Nether Spring?” Li Yao asked. “Did he believe you or not?”

Chu Zhengqing nodded and said, “Elder Nether Spring is definitely not the most broad-minded demon, but he is truly very smart and certainly a specialist in the studies of Chaos.

“In fact, I often discussed with Elder Nether Spring. Even the hypothesis that human beings and demons share the same origin was come up with and perfected by us together.

“Without the funds, resources, and support that Elder Nether Spring provided, we wouldn’t have learned as much about the Mausoleum of Chaos at all.”

“Elder Nether Spring was a co-proposer of the same-origin hypothesis?” Li Yao was completely startled. “I don’t understand. If—if your theory is true, and demons are just human beings in a different form, what is the meaning of the war between us and the Heaven’s Origin Sector?”

Chu Zhengqing’s eyes suddenly turned sharp.

Li Yao blinked and lowered his head. “I’m told that a lot of demons have been killed in the war, and more are being forced to leave their homes as refugees. Even me and my sister ended up being slaves because of the goddamn war. I’m also told that the Heaven’s Origin Sector is a vast place, and human beings there boast quite a high capability, too. We might not be able to completely occupy the Heaven’s Origin Sector even if the entire Blood Demon Sector is drained.

“Before, I thought that human beings and demons could never live in peace, and we could not cease fighting even if the last drop of our blood was shed.

“However, if even the big shots such as Elder Nether Spring partly agree to the hypothesis that human beings and demons are the same, what’s the reason for the two parties of the war trying their best to destroy each other?”

Chu Zhengqing laughed. All his wrinkles were pushed together, making his face look like an old tree that had grown for ten thousand years.

He patted Li Yao’s shoulder softly and said, “Your name is Bloody Claw, right?

“Bloody Claw, you are too young. Maybe in your eyes, a war needs a reason. We are demons, and they are human beings. That’s why we have to kill each other.

“No. It’s not like that.

“In the era of ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago, there were no demons, but human beings still fought against each other for tens of thousands of years until they initiated an ultimate war that almost destroyed all three thousand Sectors.

“Later, in the Demon Beast Empire thirty thousand years ago, humanity declined, and the demon race rose to the peak. However, demons were still attacking each other incessantly. The demons killed in the civil wars because of the change of dynasties were much more than those killed by the sabers and swords of human beings.

“This is the truth about wars,” the old demon said casually.

“Wars never change, and wars do not need a reason.”

Chapter 893 - Insane Experiments

The shell of the black pillars slowly split apart, revealing a room that could accommodate almost ten muscular demons. For safety reasons, the storage slots of biochemical beasts were shifted to the lower space together with the explorers.

The stone pillars operated for almost half a minute in silence, covered in mysterious blue brightness, before they finally arrived at the second floor of the Mausoleum of Chaos.

The environment of this floor was entirely different from the temple above. Except for the vast space in the center that appeared to be a square, dense pathways covered the walls. At first glance, the place was an enormous honeycomb.

A lot of corpses were scattered on the ground just like the floor above. The explorers were no longer surprised to see them. After making sure that there were no constituents of venomous gas or poison in the corpses, they marked the dead bodies with natural fluorescent paints before they began to explore the surroundings.

Li Yao saw Yuchi Ba place meatballs that looked like lumps in the corners of the central square together with a few members of the core squad.

It was said that they were very amazing demonic artifacts that could gather the weak bioelectricity floating in the air and display the image of the bioelectricity after enhancing it.

If the bioelectricity left in the air was powerful enough, it was possible for them to see the views of forty thousand years ago.

Bo! Bo!

All the balls were set and connected to each other via the synthesized nerves. They uttered a soft sound at the same time, and the tops of the balls blossomed like flowers. A few antennas that looked like stamen protruded out and shivered slightly.

Li Yao sensed that mystic rays were being triggered from the ‘stamen’ and spreading out like a tide. Soon, the entire square was filled up, and everything was soaked in a bright green ocean.

Soon, images were flashing, and clusters of shadows really appeared out of nowhere.

However, perhaps because of the vastness of the room, most of the bioelectricity had dispersed. The shadows were all extremely blurred. The explorers could only see that the shadows were running and chasing each other quickly and that they would rush into each other and roll over on the ground. However, no details could be seen clearly.

Very soon, the shadows dispersed into an overwhelming army that occupied the entire square like silent statues.

“It seems that an army of Chaos once gathered in this place. Or rather, this is the place where the army of Chaos was manufactured.”

Chu Zhengqing and other researchers explored the area with the shadows as leads. Soon, they discovered new skeletons.

The surface of many skeletons was still reflecting vague metal colors in weird forms. It was not hard to imagine that the skeletons must have been unbelievably strong when they were still alive.

After collecting a lot of files in the square, the explorers dispersed and explored the pathways on the walls.

The ends of the pathways turned out to be research rooms. Perhaps due to an emergency, the gates of most of the research rooms were not closed, and most of the defense rune arrays remained deactivated or had even been sabotaged. Therefore, it was rather convenient for them to go in.

The coverage of every research room was extremely impressive. They also boasted a fine ventilation and defense system. However, Li Yao could tell with a single look that the spiritual energy of the defense system had been used up.

Somebody fully activated the defense rune arrays of this place in order to resist something, Li Yao thought to himself.

A lot of magical equipment and training facilities were scattered on the ground. Li Yao had not seen many of them even in Ou Yezi’s dreams.

At the center of the research room stood an enormous stone platform on which dense spiritual stripes had been carved into the shape of a human being. There were also iron chains and rings nearby, which seemed sufficient to tightly tie somebody to the stone plate.

Bo!

Another demonic artifact that could enhance the bioelectricity was placed at the center of the stone platform and activated!

Maybe because the bioelectricity stagnated there due to the limited space, or maybe because a lot of unbelievable training sessions had taken place on the platform and led to the accumulation of the bioelectricity, the image that they captured in this place was much clearer than the image in the square.

Six clear shapes of human beings were all wearing fully enclosed robes that were glittering in silver colors. Even their faces were covered by weird bronze masks. Vague brightness was flowing on the surface of the masks, indicating that they could filter the air and kill the germs.

It seems that the ancient people were not as ignorant as we thought them to be. At the very least, in this place, they already had the concept of killing bacteria, Li Yao thought to himself.

The six people were all leaning against the stone platform that looked like both an operation table and an altar. On the stone platform, a naked human being was lying.

There was no telling whether it was because of the effects of drugs or because some sort of soul-suppressing techniques had been performed, but the human being seemed rather tranquil, with even resolution deep inside his eyes.

The bioelectricity was extremely unstable, and the images that Li Yao saw were changing constantly. Very soon, the image dispersed and condensed into something new. The human being lying on the stone platform was now floating in midair. His long hair all stood up and danced crazily like vipers while he trained himself, facing against the floating rune arrays.

The few people wearing silver robes and bronze masks, on the other hand, surrounded him and were busy taking notes.

Li Yao noticed that there were both human beings and demons among the strange researchers in long robes, but they seemed to be so familiar with each other that the disparity of their appearance was completely overlooked. They fully devoted themselves to their study.

The training human floating in midair was rather capable. He surpassed the speed of sound multiple times and blew the floating rune arrays into pieces. Although it was hard to see the facial expressions of the researchers, considering that they were nodding nonstop, they seemed rather satisfied with the result.

However, before long, the trainer screamed miserably and fell from midair. He then writhed on the ground, holding his head.

Li Yao thought of something and glanced around the room. Very soon, he located a desk on one side of the research room.

The items on the desk had almost all decayed, but Li Yao was quite familiar with the structure and usage of one pile of the remains.

It was a wood shelf that the ancient Cultivators used to store jade chips.

Li Yao extended his hand and groped. As he expected, he found a jade chip below the rotten shelf.

Naturally, a randomly placed jade chip in this place was not likely to have stored any invaluable techniques. Besides, since it had been unused for forty thousand years, there was no telling whether or not it was still readable at all.

Li Yao hid the jade chip inside his palm and scratched the spiritual stripes on the jade chip with his thumb carefully in the standard method of the Hundred Smelting Clan to clean rune arrays.

A moment later, Li Yao sensed the hard jade slightly soften, and it seemed to have turned into a half-frozen amber. Li Yao smiled in secret and extended part of his telepathic thoughts into the item. As he expected, he read a lot of information pieces from the jade chip.

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and absorbed himself in the information pieces, only to discover that it was an experiment log.

Judging from the analysis, an unbelievable experiment had been conducted in this place!

Are you kidding me? Transplantation of the spiritual root?

The spiritual root was the foundation of every Cultivator; it enabled them to absorb and release the spiritual energy in the universe once it was awakened. Besides, in the training and fighting after they became a Cultivator, the quality of their spiritual root was of paramount importance, too. For example, the release and reception of telepathic thoughts both required the spiritual root, and manipulating the magical equipment remotely could not be done without the spiritual threads that were triggered from the spiritual root.

Therefore, in the Star Glory Federation, the training of the Spirit Actualization Quotient had been attached great importance starting from childhood.

All the courses that the students took were focused on the improvement of the Spirit Actualization Quotient. A lot of strengthening drugs on the market were prepared for those who were desperate to increase their Spirit Actualization Quotient, too.

Even so, achieving the 100% of the Spirit Actualization Quotient and awakening themselves to be Cultivators was still merely a tantalizing dream for most people.

Most of the ordinary people could not awaken their spiritual root and grasp the strength to command the wind and storms however hard they trained themselves.

It was so in modern times when there were perfect training theories and various kinds of strengthening drugs, and it was even more so in the underdeveloped era of ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago.

The road to divinity was unpredictable. Becoming a Cultivator was more difficult than ascending to the heavens. Without the most coincidental, fortuitous events, most people would not even dream of being a high and might Cultivator!

However, the research that was conducted in this place was trying to break the boundary between ordinary people and Cultivators!

“Cultivators have spiritual roots. When a Cultivator grows old and weary and eventually perishes of natural causes, their spiritual root will wither with them.

“However, most Cultivators are engaged in bloody battles all the time. It is very rare for them to die of old age.

“The majority of the Cultivators are killed in the combat during their prime years, when their spiritual root is in its prime!

“Isn’t it a shame that such a spiritual root is wasted just because the Cultivator has perished?

“If we extract the spiritual roots out of the Cultivators who have unfortunately perished and transplant them into the brains of the strong warriors without spiritual roots, can the strong warriors make a great leap forward into Cultivators?”

After combining all the files inside the experiment log, Li Yao finally figured out what an insane idea the predecessors had in mind.

Yes. Insane. Although he had always considered himself to be an audacious refiner, he could only describe it as ‘insane’!

It must be noted that, same as the Nascent Soul, the spiritual root was not an organ that existed in reality. One would not find a ‘root’ that looked like ginseng after they dissected the brain of a Cultivator.

The spiritual root was a mysterious organ that bordered between the flesh and pure energy.

How could it be extracted and transplanted when one could not even see such an organ?

Besides, even if the spiritual root of a Cultivator could be extracted, was it bearable for the brain of an unprepared ordinary person?

Li Yao recalled his experience when Ou Yezi’s tremendous memory pieces flooded into his brain for the first time.

The most likely outcome of such a crazy experiment was that the brain of the strong warrior would be completely ruined and burnt.

Judging from the results recorded in the experimental log, that was exactly what had happened.

Countless experiments had all failed. None of the ‘manufactured Cultivators’ who received the foreign spiritual roots survived more than three days.

The best outcome was that the spiritual root withered automatically, and the warrior retrograded to what he used to be, and the worst outcome was simply too miserable to be looked at.

Chapter 894 - Mass-Produced Perfect Warriors

‘Spiritual root transplantation’ was not the only insane plan that Li Yao discovered in the Mausoleum of Chaos. For the entire day that followed, they had been exploring the southeast area of the second floor. They had found tremendous ancient books and jade chips inside the research rooms.

Most of the ancient books were made of natural materials such as unrotting spider threads or silk, which allowed the explorers to learn more and more shocking experiment plans. Li Yao also took the opportunity to hide a few critical jade chips. But he was truly stunned, his heart racing fast, after he read the jade chips in secret.

Right next to the research room of the ‘spiritual root transplantation’, quite a few associated research rooms were about methods to strengthen the spiritual root.

Li Yao was aware that, for ancient Cultivators, the spiritual root could be classified into ‘heavenly spiritual root’, ‘abnormal spiritual root’, and ‘ruderal spiritual root’. Even modern times, it was well acknowledged that the quality of different spiritual roots was different. The Cultivators with better spiritual roots often had a very high training efficiency and advanced faster than their peers.

As for the methods to strengthen the spiritual root inside the research rooms, they were all about stimulating the spiritual root and improving its quality with the veins and blood of demon beasts, thereby granting different attributes to the spiritual root and bestowing the Cultivators with the ‘naturally-endowed techniques’ and ‘bloodline force’ of the demon beasts.

Some of the methods were about cutting off the messy branches around a ‘ruderal spiritual root’, like gardening, so that the main stem of the spiritual root would be thicker and healthier.

In one of the most creative projects, the ancient believers of Chaos even tried to melt two spiritual roots into one!

Should the project have succeeded, a Cultivator would have boasted two spiritual roots!

It was not difficult to estimate what benefits it would bring to the training of the Cultivator.

However, the researches about spiritual roots had all failed.

Even so, a lot of experiment files and data remained.

Most of the data had been locked with spiritual stripes. A lot of jade chips were even installed with barriers and other rune arrays. The members of the Blade of Chaos could not estimate the value of the information stored inside for now and simply piled them up aside.

But for Li Yao, it was more than easy for him to crack the chips and read all the information.

He took the opportunity to transmit all the experiment data into his brain. His understanding about the spiritual root reached a whole new level.

Right next to the research rooms about the spiritual root, another area of research rooms was focused on the studies of ‘man-made cores’.

Yes. Synthesizing an artificial core and transplanting it into the body of a weak Cultivator in the Refinement Stage, turning the subject into a magnificent Core Formation Stage expert instantly!

The believers of Chaos seemed to have combined the marrow crystals, which contained abundant spiritual energy, with a lot of cores of demon beasts before restricting them with special rune arrays in order to simulate the power of the gold core.

Such a procedure was like transplanting a ‘super-compressed crystal reactor’ directly into the body of a Cultivator, which was unfathomable even after forty thousand years.

Li Yao did not know whether he should pity the ignorance of the ancient Cultivators or be awed by their insanity.

Without an exception, the experiments all failed. A Cultivator was a whole. The improvement of a body part would not necessarily bring up the overall combat ability significantly.

Transplanting a gold core into the body of a Cultivator whose flesh was not strong enough to accommodate it was like inserting a military-level power rune array into a civil shuttle, which, if driven at its full speed, would certainly be ripped apart.

Besides, the man-made cores made of marrow crystals and demon cores were anything but steady.

Strong rejection reactions were inevitable between marrow crystals and demon cores, and among demon cores of different attributes. The Cultivators who were transplanted with such man-made cores were more like walking bombs and only suitable for suicidal attacks.

Still, Li Yao gladly accepted all the information. While the specialists were busy studying the structure of the Mausoleum of Chaos and analyzing the usages of different types of spiritual stripes, he absorbed the tremendous experiment data without anybody knowing.

He increasingly felt that the journey was worthwhile.

The data of so many experiments, despite their failure in the end, still provided valuable for his own training. The eye-opening, extraordinary direction of training also pointed out a new possibly of evolution for him!

After witnessing the incredibility of ‘spiritual root transplantation’ and ‘man-made cores’, another research project named ‘weaponized humans’ caught Li Yao’s attention.

In the era when the ancient believers of Chaos lived, because of the thousands of years’ war in which Cultivators and ordinary people alike were involved, a lot of heavily wounded soldiers whose bodies were crippled were made.

The so-called ‘weaponized humans’ project was meant to combine flying swords and other magical equipment with the wounded soldiers and even to replace the bones of the soldiers with Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. Eventually, unparalleled experts who boasted the advantages of magical equipment as well as independent self-awareness, which allowed them to carry out combat missions on their own, would be created!

After browsing through the tremendous data, Li Yao discovered that the research on the ‘weaponized humans’ actually made some progress. Many broken limbs of the soldiers were successfully combined with flying swords. Some of them even completely absorbed the flying swords into their bodies and turned their bones into magical equipment.

When he first entered the Mausoleum of Chaos, Li Yao had seen a lot of skeletons that were emitting bright golden or bronze colors, not rotten even after tens of thousands of years.

Maybe, they were the ‘weaponized humans’.

According to some of the experiment files, such ‘weaponized humans’ had been manufactured on a large scale and appointed as the guardians of the Mausoleum of Chaos.

However, why did they attack each other and eventually all perish in the end?

“It’s too marvelous and incredible. The imagination of the ancient people is indeed as vast as the universe! Compared to such inspiring modification plans, the influences that the Blood Stripe Virus left on the Titan Warriors and the modification plan that Yan Xibei had in mind on Iron Plateau are like child’s play!”

The mental devil mumbled in great fascination deep inside Li Yao’s brain. “Most of the research conducted inside the Mausoleum of Chaos seems to be for the purpose of giving tremendous abilities to an ordinary person quickly so that they could compete with Cultivators!

“Think about it. If those plans really worked out, they would have been able to transplant a spiritual root into the brain of an ordinary person, stuff a man-made core into his stomach, and replace some of his limbs, or maybe all, with magical equipment. A super warrior who had the capability equal to the Core Formation Stage would thus be created instantly!

“How many years will it take to build a Core Formation Stage Cultivator traditionally? Twenty years? Fifty? A hundred? What about the odds of success? 1% 0.5%? 0.01%?

“When all the technology matured, such super warriors might have been produced in only several months!

“Great. This is too great! A manufacturing plan for mass-produced Core Formation Stage experts!”

Li Yao breathed hard and mumbled to himself, “I thought that the Mausoleum of Chaos was simply a research base of the demon race.”

“What’s the difference?” the mental devil said with a smile. “Have you not discovered that the research projects have one thing in common with the training methods of the demon race?”

Li Yao raised his eyebrow. “What is it?”

“If Chu Zhengqing’s same-origin theory is correct,” the mental devil said, “then injecting the Demon God Virus and turning a human into a demon, and the research regarding the ‘mass-produced Cultivators’, have one thing in common, which is that they can endow an ordinary person with tremendous combat ability in a very short amount of time!

“Think about it. How is the civil war of the Cultivators forty thousand years ago interpreted in the formal education that we received?

“In the last years of the war, all the three thousand Sectors were seriously ruined. Cultivators perished incessantly. All the worlds were lacking soldiers. Eventually, they had no alternatives except to transform animals into demon beasts as replacements for the Cultivators in the war.

“However, in the war of the Cultivators of such a scale, every Cultivation sect must’ve had a lot of affiliated cities or even kingdoms that would send armies made of ordinary people to join the war with them!

“Before they tried transforming animals into demon beasts, had it never occurred to the Cultivators, who were running to a dead end, that they could improve the combat ability of the ordinary people quickly and make them stronger?

“Think about it. If the Star Glory Federation is faced with a great war, and there is a method to improve the combat ability of an individual rapidly, will the method be implemented on military dogs instead of soldiers?”

Li Yao felt his heart turning cold.

With the memories of Ou Yezi, who had been a mighty ancient Cultivator forty thousand years earlier, Li Yao knew the ancient Cultivators better than most people.

The ancient Cultivators, who regarded ordinary people as ants, were different creatures compared to modern Cultivators. In the eyes of the high and majestic ancient Cultivators, the life of an ordinary person was perhaps not as valuable as some precious animals.

Since the ancient Cultivators could inject the Demon God Virus into animals and transform the animals into demon beasts, was it unlikely that they ran experiments on ordinary soldiers in order to refine them into more powerful war machines?

Could it be that the Mausoleum of Chaos was actually the base of an ancient Cultivation sect where they secretly refined ordinary soldiers? Were the demon race, the spiritual root transplantation, and the weaponized humans all part of the refinement?

But that did not seem very plausible.

The mental devil continued voicing its thoughts. “If that was the case, the birth of the ‘demon race’ would be easy to understand. Since the body of the ordinary soldiers was too weak, and it was difficult for them to withstand the shock and pain during the transplantation of the spiritual root and the core and the replacement of their body parts, the ancient Cultivators awakened some of the recessive, primeval genes. Perhaps they only did it to strengthen their bodies so that they would be able to shoulder more pain and modification.

“Tsk tsk tsk. Think about it. The magnificent body build of the demon race, with a man-made spiritual root and gold core, equipped with bones and limbs that are made of flying swords… That’s the most perfect ultimate weapon!”

“It’s a shame that things went out of control eventually,” Li Yao said coldly.

The mental devil smiled and said, “Out of control is the regular status of the universe. In the long river of time, nothing is controllable at all.”

Right then, Li Yao suddenly heard a miserable scream in the research room next to him!

Chapter 895 - The Sword That Sucks Blood

The research room next to Li Yao was also one dedicated to the studies of ‘weaponized humans’. Li Yao recalled that a lot of rusted ancient flying swords had been piled up in that room.

As an expert of refining, he was of a mind to stay and study them for a while, but Chu Zhengqing and his daughter were not specialists in ancient magical equipment and therefore left the room after a quick glance.

As their ‘bodyguard’, Li Yao had no choice but to leave with them.

At that moment, despite the blockage of the thick wall made of green rocks, Li Yao sensed the cold aura of sword and an intense stench of blood.

A flying sword has been activated?

The screams became louder and louder, occasionally interrupted by the sounds of flesh being minced apart. Heavy collisions were echoing on the other side of the stone wall, with the clanging sounds of blades attacking each other!

Li Yao frowned and dashed out of the research room.

Outside of the research room, the long, narrow pathway was already a mess.

Quite a few members of the Blade of Chaos were lying on the ground here and there. Some of them were screaming miserably while holding their broken limbs, and some were silent in pools of blood. There was no telling whether they were dead or alive!

At the end of the pathway, a cluster of dark red brightness was dashing rapidly like lightning around an elite warrior of the Blade of Chaos, uttering hissing sounds as the air was torn apart. It turned out to be a flying sword!

Li Yao recognized that the elite warrior was one of the ‘Death Teeth Guards’ on the Skeleton Island named ‘Green Ape’ who was best known for his agility. However, under the attack of the mysterious flying sword, he was barely able to dodge without revealing more openings.

What a marvelous sword technique! It must be an expert!

Li Yao narrowed his eyes. His telepathic thoughts spread out like a tide, hoping to locate the mysterious expert who was manipulating the flying sword.

To his surprise, he did not find any connection between the flying sword and an expert in the hundred square meters nearby. The flying sword was surrounded by nothing, without the least entanglement of telepathic thoughts or spiritual gas, as if it was attacking automatically!

That was quite uncanny. With Li Yao’s current capability, even experts in the Nascent Soul Stage or the demon emperor level might not have been able to hide within the hundred square meters near him!

After only a moment of hesitation, the bloody flying sword pierced into the shoulder of the Death Teeth Guard ‘Green Ape’!

Chiliu! Chiliu!

The sound of a ferocious beast devouring a meal was echoing from the flying sword!

Li Yao’s pupils constricted violently. It was not until this moment that he finally saw the full appearance of the flying sword. He could not have been more shocked!

The flying sword was apparently an ancient treasure from forty thousand years ago. It was rusted, lackluster, and incomplete. Quite a few dents could be found on the front end of the flying sword, too.

The body of the flying sword was tied up by countless black veins that looked like burnt vines, which intertwined at the end of the sword’s handle in the form of a burl.

The flying sword seemed nothing unusual, but after it pierced into the shoulder of Green Ape, the ‘vines’ that bound the sword wriggled as if they were alive, and thousands of bloody threads penetrated the flesh of the victim like tiny worms.

The flying sword seemed to boast a weird attraction force and was swallowing the flesh and flood of Green Ape one mouthful after another.

The shoulder of Green Ape, along with his chest, withered, collapsed, and dried at a visible speed!

For a Death Teeth Guard whose body was exceptionally strong, a wound on the shoulder should have been a piece of cake. But Green Ape seemed to be confined by a mysterious force. With the most horrified expression on his face, he was dumbfounded as he watched the black hole of decay expanding on his shoulder while he could do nothing about it.

Swoosh!

Li Yao stomped on the ground, kicking one of the broken sabers to his hand. Then his arm slapped like a whip while he threw the broken saber toward the bloody flying sword at a supersonic speed!

Li Yao had thought that the attack would have been enough to knock the bloody flying sword away. But the hundreds of bloody threads on the bloody flying sword suddenly interweaved into a bloody ‘spider web’ in midair, tying the broken saber up and absorbing it!

After only half a second, the Death Teeth Guard Green Ape had been sucked up and turned into a dry corpse!

After sucking enough blood, the dry vines around the flying sword were filled up and expanded one after another, changing into strong, healthy veins.

The black burl at the handle of the sword even exploded after several cracking sounds. It was fluctuating and echoing bam sounds, which seemed to be piercing into everybody’s soul. It looked like both a heart that was exposed to the air and a hideous, mysterious eye!

Li Yao secretly clicked his tongue. He had seen countless marvelous weapons in the Hundred Smelting Clan, but he had never seen such a weird flying sword that seemed to have really combined the magical equipment with flesh and blood before!

The flying sword that has grown a heart must have been one of the research products of the Mausoleum of Chaos. I didn’t expect that some of them would still be functional after a hibernation of forty thousand years!

Li Yao was secretly startled. He was almost sure that the flying sword was solely manipulated by the enormous bloody burl on the handle of the flying sword. Judging from the trajectory of the rapid flight, it was much more advanced than the autopiloting flying swords of the Star Glory Federation!

Hiss!

In the front of the flying sword, a few bloody threads craned up like tiny vipers and shook slightly toward Li Yao’s direction. Sensing the gratifying smell of delicious meat, the flying sword creaked and darted toward Li Yao in a streak of red brightness!

“Ahhh!”

Two shrieks echoed behind Li Yao. Chu Zhengqing and his daughter were writhing on the ground while holding their heads, indicating that the weird flying sword even boasted mental attack abilities.

Li Yao sniffed. With a cold smile on his face, he rolled his eyes quickly and suddenly extended his hand, snatching at the bloody flying sword!

The bloody flying sword seemed to be caught unprepared by his boldness. The bloody threads around its body all expanded and stood up like infuriated snakes while the flying sword pierced at his arm brutally!

Pa!

Li Yao was quick enough to hold the bloody flying sword in his hands.

The entangling bloody threads around the flying sword pierced deeply into Li Yao’s arm, too, trying to suck Li Yao’s blood as they had done a moment ago.

However, this time, the force of the flying sword was like a statue made of mud entering an ocean. Not only did it fail to absorb any blood, an even more immense force was flooding into the body of the flying sword along the bloody threads!

“What a mysterious flying sword! It boasts features of demon beasts and magical equipment. It can automatically secrete corrosive fungi that will melt the flesh of the target, allowing the flying sword to absorb the blood as the source of power!” the mental devil exclaimed both in surprise and in delight deep inside Li Yao’s brain.

Li Yao’s bloody pupil was revolving faster and faster. Tremendous mental power flowed toward the center of the bloody flying sword as he tried to completely suppress the flying sword.

The bloody flying sword did not expect that the target would be so tricky to deal with. After a high-pitched shriek, clusters of bloody mists burst out of the flying sword, and it galloped forward abruptly like a wild horse that had run loose.

At this moment, Li Yao only activated the strength equal to a demon general. Naturally, he was dragged forward by the bloody flying sword.

Li Yao was rather curious about the flying sword that carried the features of demon beasts. He was meaning to find out the maximum performance of it and therefore did not hurry to suppress the flying sword. He simply clutched the bloody flying sword while it rushed at a high speed in the underground world.

The Mausoleum of Chaos had multiple floors and looked like a city. Since the Blade of Chaos had only sent out an exploration team of several hundred members, it was impossible for them to establish defenses in every location.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Dragged by the bloody flying sword, Li Yao rushed inside the labyrinth-like mausoleum. Very soon, he was already out of the explored area of the Blade of Chaos and lost his way.

However hard the bloody flying sword struggled, it was not able to get rid of Li Yao. Like an agitated animal, it crashed straight into the walls in the end!

Heavy collisions echoed nonstop as the flying sword breached through multiple walls. There was no telling whether the walls were corroded or simply crashed through.

In front, however, was a square that was not marked on the map of the Blade of Chaos. Shadows were everywhere, and somebody was punching at Li Yao!

Li Yao’s pupils reflected the shadows in the square and immediately reacted. He pretended to be completely shocked and cried for help at the loudest of his voice.

The punch switched from piercing at him to sweeping, trying blow Li Yao off the bloody flying sword. Li Yao took the chance to let go of it and rolled on the ground.

He panted as if he had been exhausted.

The bloody flying sword, on the other hand, was like a snake that had been tossed into boiling oil and darted toward the origin of the punch in earsplitting shrieks.

However, after a bellow, the bloody flying sword was blown back and nailed into the wall after spinning in midair for a while.

Chi!

Smoke popped up from the charred, bloody flying sword. The previously-bulging veins had all withered, and the enormous blood tumor that looked both like a heart and an eyeball turned black and brown like a rotten eggplant now.

The flying sword seemed to be ‘dead’.

It appears that such a weapon has a high demand for blood. It must keep sucking blood in order to ensure the high-intensity functioning, Li Yao thought to himself. If it has no access to blood, it will fall into hibernation.

Never mind that. Where am I now?

Li Yao glanced around quickly.

After an aimless journey, he seemed to have reached the east side of the Mausoleum of Chaos, which was an unexplored area. On the map that he had received on his retina, this area was pure darkness.

However, wherever Li Yao’s eyes reached, there were lights everywhere. Several enormous airbags had been filled up in the center of the square, indicating that they were trying to cover something inside. Outside of the airbags, dozens of experts were staying alert.

Li Yao vaguely sensed that the capability of those experts was apparently much higher than that of Yuchi Ba's Death Teeth Guards.

Many of them had exuded their full strength when they saw the incoming bloody flying sword. Judging from the intensity of their demonic energy, they were at least experts in the demon king level!

At least five demon kings!

It seems that I've arrived at a place that I shouldn't have.

All the experts were wearing glittering, fully-enclosed suits with anti-poison helmets made of the skulls of giant demon beasts and transparent crystals. Their eyes were hidden behind the dark helmets. A thick, soft tube was extended out from their neck to their back, and they had an enormous emblem of the Blade of Chaos on their chest and their right arm. They could not have looked weirder.

It seems like this is the real exploration team.

Li Yao had been rather curious. With Yuchi Ba, a demon king, and a bunch of Death Teeth Guards selected from the gladiators, was it enough to explore the entire Mausoleum of Chaos?

That did not seem like a sound plan.

As it turned out, the exploration team that Yuchi Ba led was merely a disguise, and the team made of the mysterious experts was the main force of the Blade of Chaos!

But what were they excavating now?

Chapter 896 - The Real Head

The elites of the Blade of Chaos that were wearing fully-enclosed, protective suits were looking at each other in bewilderment, too. They did not see it coming that a regular guard would suddenly barge in.

Li Yao could clearly feel the killing intent rising behind the masks made of the bones of demon beasts.

Li Yao's appearance and his heart were like ice and fire, and he pondered the situation he was in carefully.

He was not scared that he would be killed. Five or so demon kings could not do anything to him at all.

However, if he started fighting them right now, it was unlikely for him to discover what they were searching for exactly.

The words of Ning Zhongze, who was an elder of the Blade of Chaos, were still resounding in his ears. It was said that the secret inside the Mausoleum of Chaos would very likely change the fate of the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven's Origin Sector.

It was the only reason why Li Yao was willing to enter the Mausoleum of Chaos.

I wonder, are there stronger experts behind the demon kings?

Li Yao waited patiently.

Right then, in one of the tents at the center of the square, a miserable scream that was a hundred times more devastating than that of the blood-sucking flying sword resounded!

Li Yao clearly sensed that the aura of the dozens of experts suddenly changed. The killing intent that they formed a moment ago all dissipated, and they were even somewhat anxious right now.

“Don’t move!”

A muscular demon three meters tall pointed at Li Yao and roared. Two curled sabers were drawn from the crossed sheaths on his back and danced into two streaks of brightness around him. His cold fighting will soared again, this time not toward Li Yao but the thing inside the tent.

Creak!

Almost at the same time, a bulging shadow charged out of the tent!

Li Yao took the opportunity to observe the inside of the tent through the fracture. A lot of gray, pale corpses were piled inside the tent and sealed in freezing rune arrays. Next to the corpses stood biochemical slots that looked like coffins. The elites of the Blade of Chaos in fully-enclosed suits were carefully stuffing the corpses into the biochemical slots.

Right now, the biochemical slot that was just built had half collapsed. It seemed that the sudden intrusion of the blood-sucking flying sword had caused the elites of the Blade of Chaos to make a mistake.

“Hooo!”

The shadow rushed out of the tent and gave Li Yao quite a surprise.

The ‘demon’ was wearing a fully-enclosed protective suit just like the other elites of the Blade of Chaos, but the silver armor was bulging as if it was not an appropriate size for the demon. Every part of the garment was protruding out.

Some gray and brown granulation tissues crawled out of the gaps of the armor and danced crazily both like a beard and like vines.

Unbelievable screams were echoing below the helmet made of the bones of demon beasts. After two ‘bam’ sounds, the two dark crystals embedded to the eyes of the mask exploded at the same time, and tentacles sprang out of the eyes and bouncing unpredictably like weird flames!

The weird appearance of the object made Li Yao feel that his blood was freezing.

The elites of the Blade of Chaos all jumped away as if it were a great enemy.

The speed of the weirdo was accelerated to the maximum as it lunged at a companion next to it.

Shua!

The elite of the Blade of Chaos who was about to fall prey to it slashed his saber out of natural instincts. The aura of the saber blossomed in front of him like fireworks, while the most brilliant part cut into the arm of the weird thing!

“No!”

A few elites of the Blade of Chaos near them shouted at the same time, but there was no time.

After the aura of saber flashed, the arm of the weird thing was immediately fell away. However, the broken hand dashed on the ground like a lizard supported by the tentacles. A large cluster of hazy, venomous fog also spurted out of the shoulder of the weird thing!

The venomous fog, as if alive, dispersed in midair and charged at everybody on the spot!

“Attack with fire and frost!”

The members of the Blade of Chaos standing at the edge finally came back to themselves. Purple flames darted out of their shoulders and formed high-heat barriers in midair.

The weird hand that was crawling on the ground aimlessly was also frozen tight by a cluster of blue gas.

However, the weird thing was more vigorous than expected. It was not scared of the scourge of frost and flames at all. Even when drowned in flames, the weird thing was not in the least affected and simply raged and roared like spluttering magma!

“Don’t touch him, or you will end up like him!”

The panicked elites of the Blade of Chaos all shouted.

Li Yao was secretly alarmed, too. He could tell that what the elites of the Blade of Chaos spurted out was an eccentric flame named ‘Purple Residence Hell Fire’. Similar to the Three Smell True Fire that the Cultivators utilized, it could melt steel instantly.

However, the weird thing was burnt in the Purple Residence Hell Fire for more than a minute, and yet it was still alive?

No…

Li Yao’s nose flapped, and his bloody pupil flickered. Although the weird thing was still jumping up and down and roaring like thunder, he did not sense any vital signs of a living creature from it at all.

There was not the surging demonic energy, not the flowing spiritual energy found inside Cultivators, not even a heartbeat and breath. Some sort of extremely uncanny force was supporting the weird thing from falling down.

It was… a dead body!

“What kind of force can stimulate such vigor in the cells after the creature is already dead?” Even the mental devil was shocked.

Huala!

The Purple Residence Hell Fire did not burn the weird thing at all. Instead, the armor and helmet of the weird thing both exploded in the furious flames. A gray shadow suddenly leapt out of the remains and stretched out like an octopus!

The fire wall and the icy blockage were not enough to stop the weird thing. At the critical moment, dozens of small black shadows darted from the tent nearby into the body of the weird thing like bullets!

The ‘bullets’ quickly rooted and sprouted like the seeds of a planet, quickly spreading on the surface of the weird thing.

The skin that was healthy a moment ago now turned into dried rind. The movement of the weird thing was significantly limited.

At that moment, the Purple Residence Hell Fire was finally able to leak into the body of the weird thing, burning its flesh and blood into ash at a visible speed.

A streak of scarlet brightness dashed out of the tent and floated above the head of the weird thing.

The immense pressure compressed the ash after the weird thing was burnt into a heap. Not the tiniest speck of dust was leaked out.

Very soon, the ash was frozen into an icy block, reflecting strange colors.

The weird riot was finally suppressed.

However, Li Yao's wariness was at its peak.

He could keenly tell that the aura of the newcomer far exceeded normal demon kings. The few demon kings that prepared to attack him a moment ago apparently listened to his command, too.

He was a demon emperor!

He must be the real leader of the Blade of Chaos and the commander of the exploration operation!

The eyes that were hidden behind the helmet stopped on Li Yao for a long time.

Li Yao even sensed a fleeting killing intent.

However, after pondering for a moment, the newcomer still slowly landed on the ground and even took off the helmet, revealing a transparent, protective airbag.

Inside the airbag was a face that could almost be called handsome. Above the two eyes that were as brilliant as black diamonds were eyebrows that were furiously burning like flames. Two scarlet antennae were growing on his forehead and shivering slightly in the same pace as his heartbeat.

Li Yao had seen the face countless times in Jin Xinyue’s depiction.

It belonged to the cynical expert in the demon emperor level, the blood brother of Elder Nether Spring, and the master of Void Turmoil City, the Fire Ant King!

Everything makes sense now!

Li Yao suddenly realized what was going on.

Yuchi Ba is simply the master of the Skeleton Island and the manager of several arenas. How could he establish such an enormous organization like the Blade of Chaos in secret?

The Fire Ant King is a demon emperor after all. His wisdom and strategies could be seen from the fact that he created Void Turmoil City on his own. How could he have been fooled by Yuchi Ba for so many years?

If the Fire Ant King has been deliberately turning a blind eye, that will be much more reasonable.

His Void Turmoil City is the slave trading center of the entire Blood Demon Sector. Since so many slaves are coming in and out of the place every year, it is more than simple for *him to select a bunch of low-level demons who have talent in training and yet hate the Pantheon of Demons' guts!*

Only the revenue he makes by selling slaves and strengthening drugs is enough to support the daily operations of an enormous organization!

He is the blood brother to Elder Nether Spring and the most notorious slave trader. Nobody would expect that he is actually the real leader of the Blade of Chaos!

The Fire Ant King glanced at Li Yao casually and did not think too much of the unimportant, regular member of the exploration team. He asked in a low voice, “Do you know me?”

Li Yao nodded.

The Fire Ant King was the master of Void Turmoil City. His portrait was everywhere on the Skeleton Island, and the few biggest arenas even had statues of him. It was certainly not a good idea to pretend not to know him.

“There's no need to fret, my brother.” The Fire Ant King opened his arms and smiled. “As you can see, I am also a member of the Blade of Chaos and a brother who is fighting for a future where all the demons live equally together, just like you.”

His voice was as warm and comforting as jade and made everybody who heard it find it irresistible to trust him.

The Fire Ant King continued. “What you saw just now was the most immaculate weapon that God Chaos bestowed upon us, except that the weapon is still slightly unstable at this moment.

“However, after we completely crack the secrets of the weapon, it will only be a matter of time before the Blade of Chaos rises!”

An immaculate weapon?

Li Yao’s mind was greatly disturbed.

The Fire Ant King had clearly known that there was such an ‘immaculate weapon’ inside the Mausoleum of Chaos all the time. The ostensible operation to excavate the Mausoleum of Chaos had always been a disguise. His goal had been precisely this place!

What kind of terrifying weapon could turn a dead body into a dreadful, relentless warrior?

Besides, judging from the warning of the elites of the Blade of Chaos, the venomous fog that the dead body spurted out was strongly contagious.

Chapter 897 - New Intruders!

While Li Yao was dwelling in the shocking deductions, the antennas on the Fire Ant King’s head shivered slightly, as if he was receiving a lot of information. Weird Brilliance beamed out of his eyes as he observed Li Yao with great interest for a moment. With a smile, he asked, “Your name is Bloody Claw, your performance on the Skeleton Island was quite good, and you have a sister in Void Turmoil City, correct?

“Excellent!

“Everybody thinks that our organization hit rock bottom after the ‘Riot of Bloody Blade’ was suppressed. But they do not know that the ‘Riot of Bloody Blade’ is just a disguise, and the day when our organization soars into the sky will come as soon as we dig out the legacy inside the Mausoleum of Chaos!

“However, the most important task for us is yet to be finished and requires our joint effort!

“We must find the sacred body of God Chaos!”

Li Yao was greatly surprised. He had been thinking that ‘Chaos’ was a name for an organization and that this place was a secret base of the organization. But according to the Fire Ant King, was ‘Chaos’ really an individual buried in this place?

What kind of secrets were concealed in the ‘sacred body’ of Chaos?

The antennae of the Fire Ant King slightly moved. Li Yao immediately sensed that a torrent of information was transmitted to the receptors on his forehead.

Clicking sounds were echoing inside his brain. On the biochemical chips that he was wearing, information, data, and images were raining down like a storm.

They were the maps of the Mausoleum of Chaos, which were at least three times more detailed than those Li Yao had received a moment ago. Countless dense, interconnected roads were leading to the center of the underground.

I didn’t know that the Fire Ant King’s exploration on the Mausoleum of Chaos was so thorough!

Huh. Weird. A minor space is hidden thousands of meters below the research institute of the Mausoleum of Chaos. What is that?

Li Yao was in deep thought, but he put on an astonished and bewildered expression.

Similarly deep in thought, the Fire Ant King casually said, “I came to this place at great risk. Now that you’ve run into me, for the sake of confidentiality, you are not getting out of my sight easily.

“I’ve just read your files, and I can say that you are a rather excellent talent. So, you can follow me and look for the sacred body of God Chaos together with us!”

The Fire Ant King raised his arms high, with devotion and earnestness all over his face. “God Chaos is the ancestor of all demons. He is the creator of the demon race. If we can sort out all the secrets hidden inside the sacred body of God Chaos and receive his legacy, our organization will most certainly—”

Before he concluded his declaration, an abrupt change took place!

The earth was suddenly trembled violently, as if a series of shooting stars had hit the Star Swallowing Sea and raised an intense earthquake.

The trembling did not end until more than half a minute later, succeeded by messy, dull noises.

The antennae on the Fire Ant King’s forehead were cramping crazily, and his face turned extremely hideous, his killing intent soaring like the sharp edges of a saber. Not having time to explain anything to Li Yao, he simply led most of his subordinates into the darkness and rushed to the upper level of the temple while leaving Li Yao and several elites behind!

Intruders!

Li Yao recognized the source of the quakes keenly.

After countless battles against the demon race in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and through the simulations of head-on clashes with the devilish warships in the Grand Illusionary Land, Li Yao could not have been more familiar with such quakes. They were a result of the bombardment of the acid cannons of the large devilish warships!

Judging from the intensity of the quakes, the caliber of the acid cannons was appallingly huge, and the devilish warships that accommodated them were certainly the main force models.

The Blade of Chaos was an underground organization. It was impossible, and unnecessary, for them to be equipped with such main force warships.

In the Blood Demon Sector, only the four major demon kingdoms had such capabilities!

Li Yao thought quickly as what to do next. The Fire Ant King seemed to have realized the formidability of the intruders and brought away all the demon kings. All that was left were simply a few demon generals.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao risked scratching his ear and taking off one of his Cosmos Rings before he released Neltharion quietly.

Shua!

Neltharion entered stealth mode instantly, and its spiritual waves were constricted to the minimum. Normal Cultivators and demons would not be able to notice anything wrong.

Driving Neltharion, Li Yao followed the Fire Ant King from a distance.

The Fire Ant King was rushing forward anxiously and did not notice that a haunting shadow was closely tailing him from hundreds of meters away.

The second floor of the underground was already a mess. Nobody expected attacks from the sky. The warriors were in a hurry to wake up their biochemical beasts and ascend to the temple through the lifts.

Steering Neltharion, Li Yao chose a good moment to dash into a lift and hide beside everybody’s legs.

Those crammed in the lift were all demon soldiers and demon generals. Naturally, nobody noticed Neltharion at all.

On the first floor, inside the temple, the shocking view made Li Yao unable to stop himself from clicking his tongue.

The dome of the temple was already on the brink of destruction due to the corrosion of the acid cannons from the shell of the earth.

At this moment, dozens of enormous worms, which were more than ten meters in diameter and emitting metal colors all over their body, drilled through the dome toward the temple!

The enormous worms were similar to the ‘Iron Ore Sandworm’ on Iron Plateau. They had a circle of dense, sharp thorns around their head and rings of sharp teeth inside their mouthpart, which made them look like the ‘tunnel boring machine’ that was used to dig tunnels in the Star Glory Federation!

Li Yao knew that such demon beasts could often secrete super corrosive acids that could melt rocks and metals alike. They were most suitable to dig holes below the ground.

Under the bombardment of the acid cannons and the enormous worms, the dome of the temple was soon riddled with holes.

Demon beasts flooded into the underground world like a tide. They were the Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes and the Colorful Flying Locusts, Li Yao’s ‘old friends’. Both kinds of demon beasts would sweep across everything they met and leave nothing behind!

Countless fully-armed warriors descended to the underground temple under the cover of the Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes and the Colorful Flying Locusts!

The warriors were completely different from the demons that Li Yao had seen before. Most of them carried the distinctive features of the Insect Clan, but they were taller and stronger than the clan’s general members.

They were all more than three meters tall. With their bone armor that was as thick as a tortoise shell and the dense thorns and lumps on it, they were essentially heavy tanks that were standing on their feet!

What was weirder was that round, brilliant gems had been embedded to their forehead, chest, abdomen, elbows, and knees.

The gems seemed to be alive and were emitting intense spiritual waves, providing incessant energy for them and allowing them to raise a storm of blood among the members of the Blade of Chaos.

The members of the Blade of Chaos were no match for the intruders at all. They were like dry leaves in a blowing wind—the only outcome was to be shattered into pieces!

Li Yao saw that Electric Boa, the leopard tutor who trained him, rode the lightning serpent almost a hundred meters long and dashed at two intruders. Hundreds of electric arcs were spurting out of the mouth of the serpent and condensed into a hurricane of electricity!

However, one of the intruders formed a spluttering shield of energy on his left side with nothing except the bright yellow gems embedded on his left arm, blocking the hurricane of electricity effortlessly!

A series of smaller gems were embedded to the finger joints on the right hand of the other intruder. They were now activated in midair, releasing hideous threads of energy that were condensed into a sharp blade and pierced through the head of the lightning serpent!

Electric Boa screamed miserably and lost connection to the lightning boa, falling off from midair!

What kind of strength is this?

Li Yao secretly clicked his tongue. The capability of the intruders was certainly high, but it was not high enough for them to conduct a one-sided slaughter. It was the gems embedded in their bodies that had multiplied their combat ability!

Weird brilliance flashed deep inside a gem, giving Li Yao a hint as to what it was.

The demon cores!

The demon core was the most valuable part of a demon beast. Every strong demon beast would naturally generate a demon core inside their body after they swallowed enough Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and absorbed sufficient natural energy.

The energy contained inside the demon cores was even more immense than that inside the marrow crystals. They were the ultimate treasures that many Cultivators dreamed to get.

Before Li Yao entered the Building Foundation Stage, he had once been hunted by Wang Ji, a prince of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers, in the Thunderous Sound Mountain. He had only narrowly escaped the disaster by refining a demon core into a powerful bomb and blowing more than half of his pursuers into smithereens.

The mysterious intruders have gathered so many demon cores and embedded them into their own body through a certain secret technique!

They can borrow the strength of the demon cores every moment. They are essentially enhanced by the strength of dozens of demon beasts!

Li Yao was greatly shocked.

He calculated quickly. Judging from the velocity, strength, and frequency of the activation of the demon cores, most of the intruders were able to wield the capability of a demon king. Some of the intruders, who were embedded with dozens of demon cores and looked like captains, could even trigger the combat ability close to that of a demon emperor for a moment!

This is rather a great show!

In the shadows of the second floor, Li Yao's eyes were cold and blinking like the indicators of the crystal processors that were functioning at the highest performance. He analyzed the routes and patterns of the attacks of all the enemies and evaluated their overall capability.

A hundred mysterious warriors with demon cores embedded into their bodies, with at least three enormous main-force devilish warships, as well as—

A slender shadow suddenly revealed its full appearance from the overwhelming mist of blood and dust.

He boasted a face that was even more handsome than many movie stars in the Star Glory Federation. It was so impeccable that it seemed to have been carved out of an entire piece of green jade. His body was covered in shells that seemed to be from insects, but they were perfectly melded with his body and did not give the slightest feeling of ugliness. On the contrary, the integration was simply natural and immaculate.

Dark golden brilliance was mixed in the green and black shells, making it look like the most glamorous armor that was built by the best craftsmen of the entire Blood Demon Sector!

After he showed up, the entire battlefield was eclipsed. The gory battles seemed to have been frozen into a dull background for him.

Chapter 898 - Hidden Blood and Hidden Stories!

“Nether Spring!”

Thunderous roars echoed inside the empty temple.

A red shooting star suddenly rose up and circled around several intruders, who were all blown backwards after a series of miserable screams.

The shadow covered in flames came to an abrupt halt right in front of the exceptionally handsome newcomer. The flames gradually faded away, revealing the outraged face of the Fire Ant King.

The antennae on his forehead had both been extended to the maximum and turned deep purple, tied up by veins. His body significantly expanded, and the shells that were stuck to his body closely all stood up like the unfolded flow stabilizers before a supersonic shuttle took off.

However, Li Yao had a feeling that his fury was more of a cover for his fear.

It was because standing in midair across him was Elder Nether Spring, who was one of the twelve demon emperors of the Pantheon of Demons, the ruler of the Nether Spring Kingdom, and one of the four giants of the Blood Demon Sector!

Li Yao had asked Jin Xinyue to draw vivid portraits of all the important figures of the Blood Demon Sector. But however deft Jin Xinyue’s hands were, she was not able to depict the real dominating aura of the unparalleled expert.

Although Li Yao was merely watching him through the image sent back by Neltharion, Li Yao could still sense overwhelming pressure from Elder Nether Spring, as if he was standing right behind and breathing quietly.

As expected of one of the four giants of the Blood Demon Sector!

He is certainly in the high level of the demon emperor stage, if not above it!

Li Yao was greatly alarmed and could not have been more vigilant. It was an enemy of the same level as Xiao Xuance or even stronger than him!

The Fire Ant King and Elder Nether Spring were blood brothers with the same parents. Except for the main colors of their shells, one being red and the other being green, their appearances were very similar to each other.

However, when the two of them stood together, one could not help but have a weird feeling that the Fire Ant King was just a ‘larva’ that was still growing, and Elder Nether Spring was the real ‘matured’ one!

The Fire Ant King and Elder Nether Spring, two demon emperors, confronted each other coldly.

Invisible air crashed, produces screeching gales, like ten thousand pressure cookers that were screaming at the same time.

The air was swirling in the vast temple, making the shadow of the two demon emperors somewhat warped.

“Nether Spring!”

His face twisted, the Fire Ant King gnashed his teeth. “How did you find this place?”

Elder Nether Spring smiled. His voice was much gentler and at ease than the Fire Ant King’s. “I’ve studied the Mausoleum of Chaos for decades. Naturally, I knew its rough location. Although I didn’t know the specific coordinates, I simply monitored your activities in Void Turmoil City and followed you to this place!”

The Fire Ant King’s pupils shrank violently, as if he had just understood everything. Blood seemed to be dropping from the ends of his antennae.

His voice turned extremely coarse. “You’ve long been suspecting me?”

“No. I never suspected you.”

Elder Nether Spring shook his head and said peacefully, “I have been very sure since the very beginning that such an enormous organization like the Blade of Chaos could not be established by a random guy. Also, my beloved brother, the Fire Ant King, was certainly not the type of demons who would abandon the Nether Spring Kingdom just because of familial bonds.

“Since you abandoned control over the Nether Spring Kingdom at your own will, there must’ve been something that attracted you more. In the meantime, the establishment of Void Turmoil City and the sudden rise of the Blade of Chaos were too coincidental. The few leading rebels in the Riot of Bloody Blade were all connected to Void Turmoil City one way or another. All things considered, isn’t the answer obvious?”

The Fire Ant King took a long breath. “Why didn’t you stop me?”

“Why would I?” Elder Nether Spring was amused. “What you were doing was exactly what I was interested in. Explore the origin of the demon race and discover the secrets of Chaos!

“However, as the controller of the Nether Spring Kingdom and one of the twelve demon emperors, it was not convenient for me to do a lot of things. Even if I did, a lot of traces would have been left, which would have raised the suspicion of the other demon emperors, especially the other three giants.

“Since my beloved brother was willing to do everything promptly, why shouldn’t I just sit and watch? As it turned out, you were more distinguished than I expected. Not only did you establish such a huge enterprise in Void Turmoil City, you also managed to find and open the Mausoleum of Chaos based on the incomplete files!”

“So, the files in Bone Sand City were leaked to me intentionally?” the Fire Ant King mumbled.

“You had some files about the Mausoleum of Chaos; I also had some files about the Mausoleum of Chaos,” Elder Nether Spring said casually. “Since I had no access to yours, I gave mine to you. Naturally, you tried your best to see that everything was done properly. I was saved a lot of trouble.

“Although something went wrong during the process, it is a happy ending after all, isn’t it?”

“Happy ending?”

The Fire Ant King glanced through Elder Nether Spring’s subordinates, with a face that was more and more hideous and crazy. He said, one word after another, “Nether Spring, it seems that I’ve been manipulated by you all this time. However, are you not curious as to why I joined the Blade of Chaos and even became its leader after decades?”

“Many silver-blood demons have joined the Blade of Chaos,” Elder Nether Spring replied. “For power, for strength, for revenge, for all kinds of weird reasons. What’s wrong with your decision?”

The Fire Ant King sneered, “If you think that I joined and made use of the Blade of Chaos only because I meant to taste the feeling to supreme power, then you are terribly mistaken!

“I am a real believer of Chaos!

“Why, you ask? The reason is simple!”

The Fire Ant King’s aura suddenly burst out, with glamorous flames surrounding him. After a while of rattling noises, a barrier that locked his body seemed to be detonated, and a long tail suddenly jerked out of his back.

The tail was more than one meter long and very elastic, which was clearly not a feature of the Insect Clan but one of the Horn Clan or the Claw Clan!

The Fire Ant King took a long breath in relief, as if he had freed himself from all the boundaries, and chuckled. “Do you see? A tail! A tail that does not belong to the Insect Clan!

“This is not a change that I achieved with the force of genes. It was awakened when I was fifteen and a half years old!

“The tail meant that I was not a pure silver-blood demon but a chaotic-blood demon that was mixed with the features of the Insect Clan and the Claw Clan!

“Haha. Hahahaha. At that time, I was truly devastated and almost killed myself many times.

“But after I browsed through a lot of ancient books, I learned that such things had happened a lot in history. Many silver-blood demons or even saint-blood demons who claimed that their bloodlines were pure had in fact been corrupted several generations before them. However, the genes that belonged to a different species had been hibernating the whole time.

“If the foreign genes remained hibernating all the time, they would be able to maintain their pretense as high-level demons throughout their life.

“Even so, the foreign genes would still be passed on to their offspring congenially!

“Hehe. If one of their unlucky offspring activated the hibernating foreign genes for reasons they didn’t know, they would turn from the noble saint-blood demons and silver-blood demons into the humblest chaotic-blood demons!

“In the ancient books, such pathetic guys had a most appropriate title—the hidden-blood demons!

“Yes. I am a hidden-blood demon, and my foreign genes were awakened although the odds were merely one billionth, which turned me from a silver-blood demon into a chaotic-blood one!

“That’s the real reason I abandoned the fight for power, established the Void Turmoil City, and eventually became the leader of the Blade of Chaos!”

The Fire Ant King blinked. For the first time, he seemed to be taking the initiative in the situation. With a cruel smile on his face, he said, “And what does that mean?

“Elder Nether Spring, you are my blood brother. Look at our appearances. Nobody can deny that!

“Now that I am not a high and mighty silver-blood demon but one of the most lowly and untouchable chaotic-blood demon according to the nobles, what about you?

“What are you, the controller of the Nether Spring Kingdom and one the four giants of the Blood Demon Sector, exactly?

“Do you see? Maybe the features of other demon species have not been displayed on your body yet, but the same foreign genes as mine are also hidden in your blood! I am the best evidence!

“You and I are the same. We are not silver-blood demons but chaotic-blood demons!”

In the second floor, Li Yao almost let out a cry because of the unbelievably shocking news.

Elder Nether Spring, one of the four giants of the Blood Demon Sector and one of the real decision-makers of the Pantheon of Demons, was actually one of the lowliest chaotic-blood demons?

It was indeed a piece of astounding news!

The Fire Ant King seemed to be confident about his victory. He shouted at the warriors in front of Elder Nether Spring who had been strengthened by the demon cores. “Maybe you are all loyal to Elder Nether Spring, maybe you do not care about whether or not he is a silver-blood demon at all, but please use your brain!

“You have all heard the biggest secret of Elder Nether Spring. Will he allow you to walk out of this place alive and tell everybody his real birth?”

The warriors strengthened by the demon cores and Elder Nether Spring himself, on the other hand, did not even move their antennae but eyed him in the same way that people eyed a moron.

The Fire Ant was dazed. A moment later, he shouted in a high-pitched voice, “You knew it long ago?

“You knew clearly that you were a chaotic-blood demon instead of a silver-blood demon?

“If so, why do you have to fight against me? Why are you so desperate to annihilate the Blade of Chaos? Why do you not work together with me and take back what belongs to the chaotic-blood demons?”

The Fire Ant King was completely at a loss.

“Yes.” Elder Nether Spring replied gloomily. “I discovered my real identity a long time ago. Therefore, I did not bring the army of the Pantheon of Demons, or the troops of the Nether Spring Kingdom, but my personal subordinates who are directly commanded by me. They are known as the ‘Nether World Watch’.

“You can stop wasting your time in encouraging the Nether World Watch to turn against me. You won’t be able to achieve that.

“As for my reason to annihilate the Blade of Chaos—”

Chapter 899 - Fire Ant vs. Nether Spring

Elder Nether Spring’s eyes suddenly turned extremely deep and seemed to be piercing through the Fire Ant King, the underground temple, and beyond. “You will know the reason very soon.”

Along with his words, the aura around him suddenly expanded, filling up every corner of the magnificent and spacious underground temple and turning the building into a narrow matchbox!

Even Li Yao was intimidated by the aura despite merely observing through Neltharion. The hair on his back all stood up, and his spine was emitting cracking noises. His fighting will expanded and flowed inside his veins like fire!

The few elites of the Blade of Chaos naturally did not have such keen senses. But they also felt that an overwhelming, limitless horror was leaking down through the rocks that were almost a hundred meters thick, placing them in an impenetrable coffin and making them have nowhere to run to!

The few members of the Blade of Chaos all shook violently in fear.

In the underground temple, the Fire Ant King’s aura burst out like a surging tide, too. With his roars, the front ends of the two antennae on his forehead suddenly blossomed like flower buds.

From the soil below his feet, eight enormous fire pillars suddenly rose up!

The fire pillars surrounded the Fire Ant King like eight snakes and danced crazily before they entangled and condensed each other above his head!

Some of the fire snakes crawled to the body of the Fire Ant King and knitted a glamorous armor of flames, but more fire snakes formed a majestic giant of flames, which opened its bloody mouth toward Elder Nether Spring!

“Hoooo!”

The roars of the fire giants blasted out intense airwaves, as if a cannon ball had just been detonated.

Even the Nether World Watch, strengthened by the demon cores and brought by Elder Nether Spring, could not do anything but retreat in front of the dominating aura!

The smile of Elder Nether Spring remained unchanged. He said calmly, “So, you’ve been stalling in order to summon the biochemical beasts in secret.”

“Exactly!” The Fire Ant King grinned hideously. “Big brother, they are the ‘Thousand Ghostly Fire Ants’ that I refined at the cost of endless Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and strengthening drugs after ten years. I’m afraid that the Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes and the Colorful Flying Locusts will be burnt into ashes should they come any closer!”

Li Yao observed carefully and finally discovered that the armor condensed on the Fire Ant King and the fire giant behind him were actually not made of flames but formed by countless crimson ants!

Li Yao risked spreading out his telepathic thoughts and improving the scanning ability of Neltharion to the highest.

He found that the crimson ants were all the side of thumbs with sharp antennae and cold shells. They looked dozens of time more ferocious than the ‘Purple Ring Sword Rings’ that he was most familiar with.

On their shells and their wings, swirl-like natural spiritual stripes were growing, which, according to the pattern and structure, could significantly enhance the force of the flames.

Even one of the Thousand Ghostly Fire Ants should have been more than enough to burn the internal organs of a person into ashes when it crawled into their stomach.

But the Fire Ant King had refined thousands of Thousand Ghostly Fire Ants that were under the control of his telepathic thoughts. It was truly horrifying!

Li Yao was secretly alarmed. He had a better understanding about the mysteriousness of the biochemical beasts right now.

If he were faced with the Fire Ant King, he would not be at much of an advantage even if he made the best use of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, and he was not confident that he could secure the final victory at all!

BOOM!

While Li Yao was thinking quickly, the fierce battle between two demon emperors inside the underground temple had already broken out!

With the biochemical armor made of the Thousand Ghostly Fire Ants on his body, the Fire Ant King’s aura was levels higher than before. He took the initiative to attack Elder Nether Spring!

Since the fire giant behind him was made of the Thousand Ghostly Fire Ants, it was not restricted to a fixed form. The two arms whipped out and immediately turned into almost hundred tentacles, darting at Elder Nether Spring and more than ten soldiers of the Nether World Watch near him!

The front ends of every tentacle were blossoming like a flower, revealing a hideous bloody mouth that looked that the most vicious carnivorous flower!

But Elder Nether Spring simply put his hands behind him while he faced almost ten fiery carnivorous flowers casually. He did not even bother to defend himself.

CRACK!

The fiery carnivorous flowers lunged on Elder Nether Spring and bit him hard.

The Thousand Ghostly Fire Ants flooded into his body like magma and burnt him through from inside to outside!

Li Yao was dumbfounded. *You can’t be serious. The giant of the Blood Demon Sector has been defeated so easily?*

But there was no ecstasy from slaying an enemy quickly on the Fire Ant King’s face at all—he looked incredibly gloomy.

BAM!

A moment later, Elder Nether Spring who was consumed by the flames suddenly exploded into tiny sparks like roaming fireflies.

Well—

Li Yao gasped hard. The body of Elder Nether Spring was actually made of thousands of ants?

Right at this moment, dull humming sounds echoed inside the holes on the ceiling of the temple. A large cluster of green mist dropped down like the thick tar and condensed into errorless balls.

The green balls were all made of ants that looked like green jade.

A moment later, the green ants wriggled and rippled out into the shapes of green figures.

The green ants were all translucent and looked both like jade and like glass. Rays of lights flowed like water, and they soon all turned into the image of Elder Nether Spring!

Biochemical beasts that can simulate the shape of other creatures!

Li Yao was truly shocked.

The Elder Nether Spring in the beginning had been made of biochemical beasts, but he did not sense anything wrong at all!

Although there was latency and distortion when he was perceiving the opponent via Neltharion, Li Yao was not confident that he could have distinguished the real identity of the ‘Elder Nether Spring’ if he had been standing right before him a moment ago!

Ten clusters of green ants phantomized into ten Elder Nether Springs and stood in front of the Fire Ant King with exactly the same sunny smile.

They narrowed their eyes, as if they had just enjoyed the most delicious meal, and said casually at the same time, “With the ‘Gold Flame Poison Ants’, ‘Demolishing Devil Ants’, ‘Purple Ring Sword Ants’, and another dozen types of brutal ants as the foundation, and feeding them with the Phoenix King Grass, the Red Cloud Crystals, the Soul Separating Ghosts… and other materials, you’ve successfully made your Thousand Ghostly Fire Ants trigger a high temperature of more than two thousand degrees instantly. Huh. They can also detonate themselves?

“Very impressive biochemical beasts!”

Hiu!

Before he concluded his sentence, the ten ‘Elder Nether Springs’ launched attacks toward the Fire Ant King at the same time!

In a moment, more than ten green air currents and streams of flames appeared and crashed into each other brutally.

Most of the ‘Elder Nether Springs’ were broken and shattered by the Thousand Ghostly Fire Ants. However, they were all clones made of the green ants. With the incessant supply of the green ants from the ceiling, it was impossible to annihilate all of them!

In the eyes of most bystanders, the fierce battle was perhaps merely the flashing lights of green and red. But Li Yao felt cold sweat covering all over his forehead while he was observing!

Elder Nether Spring was of the same origin as the Fire Ant King. They were both super experts in manipulating the ant-type biochemical beasts, but their combat styles were vastly different.

The Fire Ant King's armor and weapons that were made of countless Thousand Ghostly Fire Ants were already dazzling enough for Li Yao.

But the endless clones that Elder Nether Spring created based on the phantom green ants were all connected to himself in a weird way. When a clone suffered an attack, he could even calculate the enormous data regarding the source of the attack and even gasp the essence of the weapon.

Strong. That's too strong!

Judging from the speed, strength, and reaction of every clone of Elder Nether Spring, Li Yao estimated that all of them boasted a combat ability above the middle level of the demon king state!

But ten Elder Springs combined were far stronger than ten middle-level demon kings!

It was because one's mind was hard to predict. Even deeply connected twins could not guess every step that their sibling was going to make in the next second—neat as their cooperation might be, there would certainly be tiny loopholes.

However, all the clones there were manipulated by Elder Nether Spring, and they were essentially his ten fingers. Their teamwork was flawless and marvelous!

What was more critical was that Li Yao could not tell whether or not the real Elder Nether Spring was hiding among them!

It was exactly what the Fire Ant King was wary of.

With the immense capability of a demon emperor, he would not have been blocked by the clones. But he seemed to be bound by invisible chains. There were several times when he could have broken out of the siege or implement a destructive strike on one of the clones, but he simply retreated at the most crucial moment every time.

Others might have thought that he was too timid, but Li Yao knew that he was making the most sensible choice.

Elder Nether Spring’s tactics were very similar to Xiao Xuance’s strategy in the end when he chose to hide himself among the Grand Illusionary Soldiers.

How come those super experts are all more cunning than me?

Li Yao felt a splitting headache coming on because he discovered that he would not have too many options if he were in the Fire Ant King’s place faced with such an unreasonable tactic.

The total number of the Fire Ant King’s Thousand Ghostly Fire Ants was finite after all. After multiple bombardments, the armor and the giant of flames were all getting much more lackluster than before.

But Elder Nether Spring’s clones were utterly unhurried, showing no intention to speed up the pace of attack.

In the meantime, the Nether World Watch behind him was lunging at the members of the Blade of Chaos like wolves and tigers!

What should I do?

Li Yao, who was observing the battle in the lower floor, thought quickly and calculated the speed and strength of all the soldiers of the Blade of Chaos and the Nether World Watch in order to compare their overall combat ability!

Almost a hundred different changes of the situation popped up inside his brain at the same time. They were the most likely outcomes when he joined the battle at different timings.

The Nether World Watch is quite strong. After the enhancement of the demon cores, more than ten of them have a combat ability equal to that of a demon king. The members of the Blade of Chaos are no match for them at all!

But they do not seem to be slaying the members of the Blade of Chaos—instead, knocking down and capturing them?

Elder Nether Spring hasn't revealed his real capability yet. There's no telling whether or not he can summon more clones or perform an even more irresistible deadly skill.

Right now, I have three options!

Firstly, run away immediately without bothering anything!

Secondly, join the battle and fight against Elder Nether Spring with the Fire Ant King!

Thirdly, flee deep underground and lurk in the darkness while waiting for a better opportunity!

Chapter 900 - Mantis That Hunts Cicada

Li Yao took a deep breath and entered the deep meditative state.

In his mind, a translucent himself struggled out of his body and darted toward the depths of the darkness. He charged into the underground temple and rushed out through the holes in the dome while Elder Nether Spring and the Fire Ant King were fiercely fighting!

The soldiers of the Nether World Watch were all greatly shocked and tried to block him, but according to the data on their speed and strength that Li Yao had collected a moment ago, their blockage would be far from flawless!

In the Star Swallowing Sea outside of the holes, a few devilish warships that belonged to Elder Nether Spring were naturally docked.

However, back when Li Yao was in the Building Foundation Stage, he had already resisted a crystal warship by himself. Right now, his combat ability was close to the Nascent Soul Stage. If he was determined to run away, were the few devilish warships enough to stop him?

Who can really block me if I want to run away?

Although the Star Swallowing Sea and the White Silver Death Desert were both terrible places, Li Yao had a lot of food, drugs, and clean water preserved inside his Cosmos Rings, which was an unchangeable habit wherever he went.

In the boundless silver desert, nothing could grow. Determination would be the real critical factor. What could Elder Nether Spring really do about him?

If Elder Nether Spring concentrates his forces, he won’t be able to search in every direction of the White Silver Death Desert, and it is very likely that I will run away successfully.

If he splits his forces for the search, I will simply swallow his subordinates one after another!

After the comprehensive analysis, if I choose to run away right now, the success rate will be higher than 85%!

However—

If he made such a decision, Li Yao would never find out Elder Nether Spring’s true goal.

Elder Nether Spring, as one of the four giants of the Blood Demon Sector, surprisingly knew that he was a chaotic-blood blood a long time ago. But instead of joining the organization of the low-level rebellion named the Blade of Chaos, he stood on the opposite side of the rebels and even established an extremely secret Nether World Watch!

Back when Li Yao was in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, he had learned a thing or two about the toughest special forces of the Blood Demon Sector, but he had never heard the name of ‘Nether World Watch’ before.

Jin Xinyue, as a saintess of the Pantheon of Demons, introduced the special forces and the secret legions in the entire Blood Demon Sector to him in great details, too. But she did not mention anything about the ‘Nether World Watch’, either.

However, the Nether World Watch, whose soldiers were all embedded with the demon cores, were certainly the most terrifying special forces that Li Yao had seen in his life, not even ‘one of’!

Forcing the extremely unsteady demon cores to output energy stably and melding them with the body of flesh and blood perfectly, such a biotechnology is definitely among the most cutting-edge ones even in the Blood Demon Sector!

Such a biotechnology must be supported by an enormous organization!

Elder Nether Spring was determined to explore the secrets of the Blade of Chaos and even established the Nether World Watch in secret. What is he up to exactly?

Li Yao recalled the words of Ning Zhongze, an elder of the Blade of Chaos, again.

It was said that the item they retrieved from Elder Nether Spring’s laboratory could potentially change the fate of the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

And Jin Xinyue had turned from a demon into a human being after absorbing the mysterious liquids!

What had Elder Nether Spring been studying and planning exactly?

No. After going through all the trouble to get in touch with the core secrets, I cannot escape at this moment. If I don’t seize a great opportunity such as right now, it will be practically impossible for me to uncover Elder Nether Spring’s secrets in the future!

Then, what about fighting against Elder Nether Spring with the Fire Ant King?

Li Yao thought quickly and ran another series of crazy calculations. Countless glass shadows exploded inside his brain, turning into the most brilliant diamond dust!

For a moment, he was about to rush out.

However, Neltharion detected keenly that quite a few strong opponents were still lurking in unknown locations.

The scent that slowly leaked out from the darkness stung Li Yao’s pupils like needles. He narrowed his eyes to the minimum.

Elder Nether Spring has backup plans!

Even if I go out and fight side by side with the Fire Ant King right now, since we have never cooperated before and we don’t understand each other’s strengths, the odds of success are no higher than 11%!

If the odds of success were above 30%, Li Yao might have decided to take his chances.

However, according to the calculations based on Elder Nether Spring’s current form, even if Li Yao showed up and butchered a lot of soldiers of the Nether World Watch, the odds of success were only 11%.

It was not a figure that was worth the risk. The smartest hunters and gamblers were often the most patient ones.

Since the two options were both inappropriate, he could only choose the third approach!

While the two demon emperors were fighting fiercely, Li Yao adjusted the position of Neltharion without alarming anybody, partly to observe the battle from a better angle, and partly to make preparations for his next move.

A life-and-death battle between two demon emperors was not something that everybody had the privilege to appreciate. Every collision between the Fire Ant King and Elder Nether Spring seemed to have turned into translucent data streams that flowed into Li Yao's brain through Neltharion. He felt that he was enjoying a great meal and could not have been more satisfied.

Inside the underground temple, the charges of the Fire Ant King were all pushed back by the clones of Elder Nether Spring. Except for the numerous ants that were wasted during the endeavors, neither of them made significant progress.

However, the elites of the Blade of Chaos that the Fire Ant King had brought with him had almost been entirely suppressed by the Nether World Watch!

The Fire Ant King was more than infuriated and lost his patience. The fire giant behind him was finally melded into his real body, which was wearing the armor of flames, before he turned into a roaring dragon and dashed toward the dome of the temple!

Po! Po! Po!

Seven clones of Elder Nether Spring stood in his way, only to be destroyed unstoppably, turning to shivering smoke while the burnt bodies of ants fell to the ground like a storm.

The Fire Ant King finally got rid of the harassment of Elder Nether Spring's clones and rushed toward the dome that had been drilled through by his brother. He seemed to be planning to escape through the dome.

However, the moment he was closest to the dome, the head of the fiery dragon suddenly exploded, and a shooting star darted out of the head toward the east side of the temple rapidly!

The cicada had gotten out of its shell!

The fiery dragons made of countless Thousand Ghostly Fire Ants continued crashing toward the dome of the temple, forming furiously burning clouds in midair.

In the meantime, the Fire Ant King turned into a streak of brightness and flew into the pathway that he came from.

The rest of the clones of Elder Nether Spring and the soldiers of the Nether World Watch were mostly blinded by the burning clouds, and their senses were disrupted. They did not have enough time to stop him!

The Fire Ant King was about to successfully escape when three streaks of brightness darted out of the path and hit him one after another!

BOOM!

BOOM!

BOOM!

It sounded like that the main guns of a devilish warship and a crystal warship had leaned against each other and opened fire three times brutally. The collision was so powerful that Li Yao suspected that the underground temple might have collapsed.

Airwaves that looked like ripples resulting from the collisions swept across the temple each replacing the last like a tide!

The first two streaks of brightness were both knocked away by the Fire Ant King, but the third one blew him backward heavily like an iron hammer.

Then, three streaks of brightness hovered around him rapidly like three satellites and knitted into an impenetrable cage!

The first streak of brightness was black. It was a brutal warrior more than six meters tall who looked like a hybrid of a Hercules beetle and long-horned beetle. The black, lumpy shell of the warrior was even more magnificent than the biggest Ares Extension. What was more terrifying was that spluttering electric arcs were dancing on all the black lumps on his body, as if every bump of his body was a powerful electrode.

Just like the other soldiers, the warrior was embedded with dense demon cores. His breastplate that looked like a door plank was even installed with a demon core even bigger than Li Yao’s head.

Li Yao found it hard to imagine what kind of demon beast such a huge demon core belonged to and how long it had taken for the demon beast to condense it.

On the head of the brutal warrior that looked like a titan, two horns were grown like two long spears. Thick electric arcs were being generated between the horns and triggered a super intense attack every few seconds like the most powerful Taiyi Lightning Railgun, which slashed at the Fire Ant King like the auras of a saber or a sword!

The second streak of brightness was colorful and agile. At first glance, it was an attractive beauty. Although she was only slightly more than one meter tall, there was not the feeling of discordance of the dwarfs in her. On the contrary, she seemed to have been shrunk to half the size of the most beautiful girl.

She was wearing colorful soft gauze, and her bosoms could be vaguely seen and were almost jumping. The gauze folded into two enormous butterfly wings on her back. All kinds of flowers were flourishing on the wings, making them exceptionally glamorous. The dazzling colors were also flowing slowly both like a kaleidoscope and like a splendid swirl!

The butterfly demon was dancing elegantly, leaving clusters of colorful powder anywhere she reached. Li Yao noticed that the Fire Ant King was weirdly slowed down the moment he touched the powder although his speed was rather high in the beginning. He also had an indescribable, fascinated expression on his face, as if he had been grasped by hallucinations!

Those two must be the captains of the Nether World Watch. Judging from their speed and strength, they both boast the combat ability of beginning-level demon emperors!

Besides, the teamwork of the two captains is quite neat. The bull-like warrior boasts tremendous physical strength and damaging abilities, but his speed and frequency of attacks are slightly low.

Meanwhile, the butterfly demon is good at creating an environment with the powder where she could perform mental attacks. Even though the Fire Ant King could resist *the mental attacks, he would still be slowed down and is more likely to be hit by the first captain!*

If I have to deal with the two captains of the Nether World Watch, I will have to keep them apart and cannot fight against them at the same time!

Li Yao only thought briefly about the plan before the third streak of brightness had hit the Fire Ant King hard!

Without the enhancement of the Thousand Ghostly Fire Ants, and after fighting the clones of Elder Nether Spring for such a long time, the Fire Ant King was already reaching his limits. Besides, the capability of his enemy was higher than his in the first place. After the blow, all the fire on his body faded away!

In midair, the streak of green brightness condensed into Elder Nether Spring’s real body. He took a deep breath, and his eyes suddenly bulged as he blew out an overwhelming storm of green ants from his mouth toward the Fire Ant King!

Chapter 901 - The Lurking Bird

The moment the hurricane of the green ants blew out, more than ten sharp electric arcs also spurted out of the two spear-like horns of the Hercules beetle, taking the shape of various kinds of blades in midair and bombarding the Fire Ant King nonstop.

In the meantime, a large cluster of powder was shaken off the colorful wings of the butterfly demon and split into dozens of mirages that looked like agile ghosts, harassing the Fire Ant King.

The Fire Ant King bellowed and focused whatever was left of his Thousand Ghostly Fire Ants on his hands. He then bashed the hurricane of green ants hard, breaking them apart. However, the split green ants simply tied up all the Thousand Ghostly Fire Ants as if they were branching vines.

More than ten marvelous weapons that were the lightnings of the Hercules beetle hit the Fire Ant King overwhelmingly. The mysterious shadows created by the powder of the butterfly demon covered the facial organs of the Fire Ant King like a haunting ghost.

The Fire Ant King grunted and was slowed down. The antennae on his forehead were shaking at a lower and lower speed because of the corruption of the powder.

“Ho!”

The Hercules beetle opened his arms, the demon core on his breastplate that was even larger than Li Yao’s head shining brilliantly like the main gun of a fully-charged crystal warship. After an earsplitting roar, a lead gray pillar of light suddenly burst out of his chest and darted toward the Fire Ant King straightly!

Harassed by the mysterious illusions, the Fire Ant King sensed nothing of the incoming attack and was hit precisely. His skin and shell were all broken apart, burnt, and vaporized!

In the meantime, Elder Nether Spring condensed nine clones with the phantom green ants and dashed toward the Fire Ant King from various directions!

The clones appeared to be ghosts without entities. They passed through the Fire Ant King time and time again.

After every ‘pierce’, the aura of the Fire Ant King weakened a little bit. Not long later, the Fire Ant King was already riddled with holes and fell down from midair, barely recognizable.

“Lock!”

Elder Nether Spring’s ten fingers blossomed like a lotus and made dozens of hand seals within a breath. He snapped his fingers and sent almost a hundred tiny ‘seeds’ into the Fire Ant King’s body.

A moment later, the ‘seeds’ rooted and sprouted, growing into bright green veins.

The newly grown veins pierced through the Fire Ant King’s internal organs and all his joints, especially the critical parts such as the shoulders and the knees. They even pierced in and out multiple times in order to tie up the Fire Ant King’s limbs tightly.

Some of the veins even climbed on the Fire Ant King’s head like vipers and crawled into his mouth and nose.

Along with the pace of Elder Nether Spring’s breath, the ‘veins’ were fluctuating with green liquids that could have been blood or poison!

As a demon emperor, the Fire Ant King had extremely strong vitality. Despite the thunderous strike of the Hercules beetle and the repetitive piercing by Elder Nether Spring’s clones, he was back to himself quickly.

However, the weird ‘seeds’ and ‘veins’ were like the strongest shackles, rendering him unable to move and grumbling in excruciating pain with his eyes almost bulging out.

Li Yao felt that his blood was boiling while he observed the battle from the lower floor.

This was the first time that he had ever observed two unparalleled experts in the demon emperor level fighting unreservedly!

Compared to the Cultivators, the demons were utilizing the spiritual energy in a cunning and weird way. The eye-opening methods of attack and the bizarre-looking biochemical beasts were all unimaginable for Li Yao in the past.

The ‘seeds’ that Elder Nether Spring shot out turned out to contain weird poison that could transform the Fire Ant King’s blood into a lethal venomous liquid. The Fire Ant King would be restrained by himself!

Li Yao secretly clicked his tongue.

However, the mental devils imply sneered. “Petty tricks. Not worth mentioning at all. I would very much like to know the taste of the ‘seeds’ right now!”

Li Yao immediately disapproved of the idea and concentrated all his computational ability on Neltharion.

Neltharion stuck close to the wall of the temple and slithered upwards without anybody noticing.

The capture of the Fire Ant King marked the end of the Blade of Chaos’ resistance. Very soon, the Nether World Watch had the situation under control.

His hands behind his back, Elder Nether Spring glanced over the underground temple casually. His eyes were particularly deep and dark when he stopped at the magnificent statue of the Pangu Clan at the center of the temple.

Dozens of dark, green beetles were hovering around the two captains of the Nether World Watch. The beetles all had translucent bellies that were embedded with crystals and carved with multiple neatly-made serial rune arrays.

The bellies of some of the beetles were uttering sounds, indicating that they were messengers.

The Hercules beetle was issuing commands toward almost ten communication bugs. “Team A, you have three hours to clean up the entire Mausoleum of Chaos and search for the remnants of the Blade of Chaos to ensure the safety of the place!

“Team B, set up a camp in the southwest of the underground temple and lock up all the captives after identifying them.

“The Blade of Chaos kidnapped a lot of our specialists from Bone Sand City. Find out where the specialists are and make sure that they are properly treated!

“Team C, build a temporary floating island on the Star Swallowing Sea right now and search the water area and the White Silver Death Desert five hundred square kilometers around us, in case the remnants of the Blade of Chaos are hiding in those places!”

Next to him, the butterfly demon also issued orders to the communication bugs calmly. “Team D, set up temporary research rooms in the southeast corner of the underground temple and start analyzing and studying on the spot.

“Team E, follow Team A and excavate everything inside the Mausoleum of Chaos while making sure that you are safe!

“Team F, stick together with Team E. Note that active demonic artifacts and viruses might still exist in the Mausoleum of Chaos. Isolate and extinguish them immediately should you find any!”

“Elder!” After giving out the orders, the two captains bowed to Elder Nether Spring respectfully. “In three hours, the Mausoleum of Chaos will be ours.”

“Excellent!” Elder Nether Spring nodded. “Despot, Swirl, job well done. Now, escort the Fire Ant King to our warship. A lot of stuff in his head will prove to be very useful for us!”

“Understood!”

“Understood!”

The Hercules beetle named ‘Despot’ and the butterfly demon addressed as ‘Swirl’ moved the Fire Ant King, who was no better than a corpse, to a metal stretcher. They then imposed almost twenty chains carved with spiritual stripes upon the stretcher before personally carrying the Fire Ant King to the surface, one in the front and the other in the back.

Now is the time!

On the second floor, Li Yao’s temples were bouncing crazily, and his heart was almost breaking out of his ribs. He decided to make the riskiest gamble!

He maneuvered Neltharion and tailed Despot and Swirl secretly!

Despot and Swirl were not really two demon emperors. However, after the enhancement of the demon cores, they were very close to the stage, and their senses were extremely keen. He might have been discovered by them if he was careless for one moment.

However, their attention was focused on the Fire Ant King, and their vigilance was lowered after a clean, crushing victory. They did not notice that they were being followed at all.

Elder Nether Spring also did not expect that a weirdo named Li Yao was hiding in the Blade of Chaos besides the Fire Ant King, who was a demon emperor, with a piece of magical equipment from the peak era of the Star Ocean Imperium named ‘Neltharion’.

His whole computational ability was dedicated to his current plans. It also escaped his attention that a super tiny starship was slithering stealthily in the air!

Despot and Swirl slowly ascended to the ground through the holes on the dome of the temple.

Neltharion closely followed them like their shadow.

The vertical holes only had limited space. There was no room for dodging at all. Although Neltharion was in the stealth mode, Despot and Swirl would certainly detect it if they sensed something wrong and blew out their demonic energy for scanning.

Thankfully, as the captains of the Nether World Watch, they were both occupied with administrative affairs. Communication bugs were flying to and from them all the way, carrying their subordinates' feedback and their instructions.

While they were too busy sending out commands, they had no time to bother about their backs, which were supposed to be absolutely safe.

At the end of the hole was a soft tube leaning upwards. Li Yao estimated that it was connected to a devilish warship.

As he expected, a moment later, they appeared inside a devilish warship.

The warship was more than ten times larger than the sky-hunting warship of the Blade of Chaos, with endless pathways around that made it as complicated as a labyrinth.

Following 'Despot' and 'Swirl', Neltharion took multiple turns and passed through the solid defense lines made of the soldiers of the Nether World Watch before it reached a specially made prison cell at the end of a pathway.

The prison cell looked like the stomach of a certain enormous demon beast. It was sticky and damp, with green corrosive liquids filling up the lower part, blocked by rails that looked like tusks.

Li Yao noticed that ‘Swirl’ touched a piece of pinky meat that was next to the prison cell softly like a feather. Then, the tusks of the room immediately retracted themselves, revealing a hole that could only allow one individual to pass through.

Is this prison cell a living creature?

Li Yao memorized the special technique through which ‘Swirl’ touched the soft meat.

Despot and Swirl threw the Fire Ant King as well as the stretcher in into the prison cell.

Countless tentacles immediately grew out of the walls and held the stretcher in midair.

The tentacles were similar to the synthesized nerves, with neurons all over them, which made them extremely sensitive. Anything that approached them would trigger their reactions.

The lower half body of the Fire Ant King was soaked in the acids. Burning sounds were echoing nonstop, and black smoke was even popping up from the pool.

Half a day ago, the guy had still been dreaming about leading the Blade of Chaos to its rise, but right now, he had already ended up a prisoner.

His mind seemed to be even more devastated than his depressed face. He had completely lost his fighting will and lowered his head. His antennae dangled down from his forehead like two pieces of rotten wood.

The moment the tusk cage was to be closed, Li Yao riskily steered Neltharion in!

The tusk cage showed no response. Despot and Swirl did not notice anything wrong, either. They simply summoned a team of the Nether World Watch and reminded them of something before they walked away.

It appeared that they were quite confident in Elder Nether Spring's barriers.

Li Yao heaved a long sigh of relief. The most dangerous step had finally been accomplished, however dangerous the process was.

Right then, he heard the deafening noises of the functioning lifts leading to the floor that he was in.

Chapter 902 - Invisible Strokes

The Nether World Watch has come down to search for the remnants of the Blade of Chaos!

The few elites of the Blade of Chaos around Li Yao were all at a loss. Naturally, Li Yao would rather not wait to be captured by them there. He pretended to be panicked and screamed before he dashed into the darkness of the second floor.

The elites of the Blade of Chaos all realized that it was not good. Looking at each other in bewilderment, they shouted and dispersed.

In the darkness, Li Yao's bloody eye was glittering like a shivering red star while he rushed in the darkness.

At that moment, his 'eye' named Neltharion was still in the tusk cage that locked the Fire Ant King. So, it was impossible for him to detect the situation inside the temple, but thankfully, the Fire Ant King had transmitted a large number of maps of the Mausoleum of Chaos over to him, which made him able to find his way.

Maps…

Not good!

Li Yao thought quickly and soon realized that, since such a map was sent over to an ordinary member easily, it was certainly not the complete map.

Besides, if Li Yao had access to such a map, the elites of the Blade of Chaos must have the same map, too. Since they had mostly been captured by the Nether World Watch right now, as long as there were experts adept at mental attacks, the enemy would soon retrieve the map.

Then, the Nether World Watch only needed to follow the map if they wanted to clear every corner of the Mausoleum of Chaos easily.

I have to hide myself in a pathway or room that is not marked on the map!

Li Yao accelerated his speed to maximum and upgraded his optical cells and nerves. The darkness of the pathway was no longer a hinderance for him. While rushing forward, he calculated the route that he had just passed and checked it with the map that the Fire Ant King offered to him, trying to figure out a new direction.

Shouts and screams could vaguely be heard behind him. The few elites of the Blade of Chaos must have been discovered.

Li Yao had no doubt about their loyalty to God Chaos, but against the soul-searching techniques, it would be difficult for them to conceal the fact that one of their companions was still on the run.

He had to find a shelter quickly.

Half an hour later, after running around the maze-like Mausoleum of Chaos multiple times, and when the footsteps and the noises of shells rubbing the wall were drawing close to him, Li Yao finally found a pathway that was not marked on the map.

Without any hesitation, Li Yao crawled into the pathway, embraced by the damp, suffocating air.

Very soon, Li Yao realized why the pathway was not marked on the map.

It was because the pathway was a drainage canal.

The Mausoleum of Chaos had been built below the Star Swallowing Sea. The designers clearly considered what to do if the upper part of the mausoleum collapsed and the lake water poured in.

Therefore, a lot of drainage canals had been established on every floor of the Mausoleum of Chaos. Some of the main drainage canals that were larger in diameter were marked on the map, but the secondary drainage canals that were no larger than capillary vessels were simply ignored.

Since it was a drainage canal, the front would certainly not be a dead end, which met Li Yao's demands precisely. He stuck close to the wall of the drainage canal and turned off every pore on his body while minimizing his heartbeat and the movement of his internal organs. He even compressed his computational ability in order to reduce the flow of the blood in his brain and the heat that his brain emitted.

Li Yao forced himself to become a cold rock and integrate with the environment.

When he finally adjusted his body temperature to thirteen degrees, which was the environment temperature, and closed the last pore on his body, hasty footsteps echoed outside of the drainage canal.

The next moment, a few black beetles flew in.

The beetles were only the size of thumbs, but their heads were embedded with bright yellow crystals that were shooting out beams of light like searchlights.

The interconnecting beams of light drove away the dark fog in front of the drainage canal. Except for the dry moss and the mud, nothing was found at all.

Li Yao appeared to be a frozen statue, but his heart was like a volcano that was about to erupt. The spiritual energy all over his body was ready. Should the light of the black beetles have passed him, he would have immediately crushed the beetles and launched his strongest strike to blow up the entrance of the drainage canal before running away from the other side of it.

Thankfully, due to the vastness of the Mausoleum of Chaos, in order to complete the search in three hours, the Nether World Watch had to increase their speed and could not scrutinize every nook and cranny.

One of the lights narrowly brushed past Li Yao's head and almost touched his hair. But very soon, the three beetles all flew back.

Li Yao maintained a frozen expression and posture. Even his eyelids seemed to have become made of iron. He did not move his body at all until ten minutes later when the footsteps gradually left the area. Finally, he expanded the pores on his body one by one again.

Sitting cross-legged, Li Yao took a deep breath. Although he was in the middle of a cold, humid drainage canal, he still put on a smile in great relief.

The enemy was in the light while he walked in the shadows. Elder Nether Spring thought that he had everything under his control. He would never expect that such a dangerous variable named Li Yao was still lurking in the depths of the Mausoleum of Chaos.

The game was finally back to the pace that Li Yao was familiar with.

Let’s analyze the situation first.

Firstly, since Elder Nether Spring has put so much efforts into the Mausoleum of Chaos, he is clearly very interested in the legacy of Chaos, too. Chances are that he is even going to study the tomb on the spot and move all the valuable treasures within the Mausoleum of Chaos back to his place.

Secondly, with Elder Nether Spring’s identity and social position, it is very unlikely that he will spend all his time in this place. In another few days, he will have to return to the Pantheon of Demons. Otherwise, the other demon emperors will certainly grow suspicious of him.

When Elder Nether Spring is away and all that is left is the Nether World Watch to defend the place, I will be able to do a lot of things.

After figuring everything out, Li Yao was even calmer than before. He took out a huge amount of high-nutrition food and refilled himself, planning to fight a protracted battle against Elder Nether Spring.

At this moment, he suddenly frowned because the other picture inside his brain was a bit weird.

On the devilish warship right above his head, inside the tusk cage, Neltharion had been lurking in a corner of the cage in absolute stillness, fearing that it might be discovered.

However, after the experts such as ‘Despot’ and ‘Swirl’ all left, the Fire Ant King, who had been as silent as rotten wood, suddenly raised his head.

There was still nothing but gloom and desperation on his face. Even his eyes had changed into a lethargic gray color.

But the pair of gray eyes now gazed at Neltharion without blinking at all.

At first, Li Yao thought that it was a coincidence.

But the Fire Ant King stared at Neltharion for more than ten minutes, without even moving his neck.

Li Yao could not help it any longer and steered Neltharion to move for one centimeter in midair.

The Fire Ant King’s eyes moved 0.1 degrees and locked onto Neltharion again.

Have I been discovered?

Li Yao felt dizzy. He could not figure out at all why the Fire Ant King could perceive Neltharion when Elder Nether Spring, Despot, and Swirl all failed to.

However, Li Yao’s plan required the cooperation of the Fire Ant King. Or rather, faced with the formidable enemies such as Elder Nether Spring and the Nether World Watch, it was inevitable that he got in touch with the Fire Ant King.

Even if the Fire Ant King did not find him, he would have to find a way to catch his attention through Neltharion, too.

However, how exactly were the two of them going to communicate?

In the beginning, Li Yao had not expected that the Fire Ant King would be locked up in such a weird cage.

If it were an ordinary prison cell, Li Yao could have flown Neltharion to the Fire Ant King's chest or back and communicated with him directly via writing.

But right now, the Fire Ant King's body was connected to highly-sensitive nerves. Chances were that his every breath and heartbeat would be recorded precisely. Any irregular movement would certainly raise the suspicion of the guards.

Right then, Li Yao noticed that the Fire Ant King suddenly blinked his half-closed eyes. Then, he bulged his eyes and coughed in great pain.

While he was coughing hard, his eyeballs were shivering rapidly, now to left and now to right.

What's the meaning of this?

Li Yao did not dare to ignore his action. After observing for a moment, Li Yao realized that the Fire Ant King's eyes were moving in a very special pattern.

If his pupils were regarded as the point of a pen, every movement of his eyes was actually writing a stroke!

Left, down, slash, backslash, dot. The closing of eyelids marked the end of a character.

Although there were dozens of combinations of the same strokes, Li Yao was able to deduce all the possible results with his tremendous computational ability and assemble them. After thousands of attempts within a breath, he read a sentence from the Fire Ant King's eyes.

“Fly to my chest.”

Li Yao pondered for a moment. It was necessary for him to establish communication with the Fire Ant King under the noise of the Nether World Watch, and if the Fire Ant King coughed hard and rolled his eyes for a long time, even a moron would know that the prisoner was up to something.

Li Yao had no choice but to steer Neltharion to approach the Fire Ant King’s chest, passing through the highly-sensitive nerves one after another prudently.

Then, Li Yao sensed that a stream of vague demonic energy leaked out of the Fire Ant King’s chest and touched Neltharion’s shell softly like cotton.

Demonic energy?

The Fire Ant King can still trigger the demonic energy? How is that possible?

Li Yao was greatly surprised.

Everything was now easier now that the Fire Ant King could still trigger his demonic energy. Neltharion was a training ship in the Star Ocean Imperium and equaled to a mini version of Sparkle. It boasted all the functions that a real crystal warship did.

When Li Yao was in the Building Foundation Stage, he could only activate the most fundamental functions and let Neltharion serve as a scouting ship in the stealth mode.

Now that Li Yao was close to the Nascent Soul Stage, he was able to activate more functions on Neltharion.

Neltharion was enveloped by the invisible demonic energy. Because of the short distance, the precise changes of the demonic energy could form simple strokes like just before, and Li Yao could observe them to form complete sentences.

In the same way, there were a lot of turrets and stabilizer fins on the surface of Neltharion that could stand for different strokes when they were moving, too!

Li Yao span, moved three turrets and stabilizer fines, and gave a specific stroke to every movement. By drawing, he slowly finished a sentence.

“Do you understand?”

The changes of Neltharion could be accurately fed back to the Fire Ant King’s demonic energy. After groping for more than ten minutes, the Fire Ant King rubbed the shell of Neltharion with his demonic energy. “I do!”

Every sentence of the communication would consume a huge amount of time and computational ability.

But in such a way, the two of them finally reached out to each other right under the nose of Elder Nether Spring!

Chapter 903 - Divine Blood of Chaos

After figuring out the mechanism of communication, the Fire Ant King could not wait but shiver his demonic energy, asking, “Who are you? Be clear about the situation!”

“I’m the only one who can save you right now,” Li Yao snapped mercilessly, “so I’m going to ask the questions, and you will answer them!”

The Fire Ant King blinked. There was indifference that resulted from the deepest desperation on his face, but his demonic energy trembled rapidly and formed a silent refutation. “Hilarious. You have escaped the attention of Elder Nether Spring and the Nether World Watch, indicating that you must be in the demon emperor stage.

“Would a demon emperor jump out of nowhere and risk offending Elder Nether Spring and rescuing me just because of his sense of justice?

“You are here to rescue me because it concerns your own interest. Therefore, you are not my life-saver but merely a partner for me.”

Li Yao sneered. “Even if we are partners, you are now on the weak side and have no chips to bargain with me at all!

“You have only one chance. It depends on you whether we make a deal or not. If we split apart right now, naturally, I will suffer losses, but your losses will certainly be no less than mine.”

The Fire Ant King pondered for a moment and then replied frankly as soon as he made up his mind. “Alright. You ask, I answer!”

“You are certainly not as feeble as you appear to be.” Li Yao immediately said. “You are concealing part of your strength. Why?”

The former part of the sentence was not a question but a statement. Li Yao’s real question was only the reason.

“It’s simple,” the Fire Ant King replied casually. “The moment Elder Nether Spring showed up, I knew that I was already crushed.

“Nether Spring must’ve been preparing traps since a long time ago. Right then, since he came to openly fight against me, he certainly had thorough plans. Even if I tried my best to counterattack, I would have been screwed anyway. Why would I struggle so hard if so?

“It was obviously a better idea to reserve part of my strength and mislead Nether Spring. Should there be any new changes later, there would be a slim chance that I might reverse the outcome of the battle.

“Look—”

Although the communication with shivering air could not express the action of ‘laughing out aloud’, Li Yao could feel the delight in the Fire Ant King’s information. “Hasn’t a change appeared now already?”

Li Yao thought for a moment and said, “I can deal with Elder Nether Spring together with you, but I have to know the relationship between two brothers and Chaos first.”

“It’s too complicated,” the Fire Ant King replied. “Where do I begin?”

“From the very beginning. You are free to tell lies, as long as you are confident that your theory makes sense,” Li Yao said coldly.

The Fire Ant King pondered for a moment and sighed. “It all began a long, long time ago in a place far, far away.

“At that time, Nether Spring and I were not dominators of the Insect Clan yet—merely two generals fighting on the frontline.

“In this world, the strong prey on the weak, and the final winner will be the king. Even without the total war against the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the internal strife has been unceasing, with blood shed everywhere.

“Nether Spring and I were silver-blood demons on the surface, but we were the side descendants of a big family. Because of our distinguished capability, the main descendants were wary of us and even framed us up by assigning a suicidal mission to us.

“During the perilous mission, we were ambushed by the elites of the enemy, and our troops were entirely wiped out. Nether Spring and I managed to break out of the siege, but we were separated from each other because of the havoc of the battlefield.

“I was heavily wounded, surrounded, chased, and blocked by the enemy. I fled to a cliff by myself. Having nowhere to run to, I was unwilling to fall into the hands of the enemy because I knew that endless suffering would be waiting for me. Therefore, I simply jumped off the cliff, hoping to get a clean death.

“But I did not expect that weird winds and turbulence that looked like a giant swirl were right below the cliff. They brought me into a mysterious cave that was hidden inside the crags.

“It was a residence of Chaos.”

Li Yao frowned. “A residence of Chaos?”

“In today’s words,” the Fire Ant King said, “it was sort of a research center of Chaos.

“Chaos was not only the code name of an individual but also the name of an enormous organization. During the early stages of the Demon Beast Empire forty thousand years ago, the Blood Demon Sector was the last base of resistance for the organization.

“Therefore, residences of Chaos are all over the Blood Demon Sector. Research centers, magical equipment warehouses, weapon factories, training fields, you name it.

“The Mausoleum of Chaos is just one of the residences that was the largest in scale, highest in level, and supervised by Chaos in person.”

Manipulating Neltharion, Li Yao slowly lowered the main gun of the warship, as if he were nodding his head, and gestured for the Fire Ant King to continue.

“This particular residence was not large, but the secret treasures inside the residence were great eye-openers for me.

“At that time, I was heavily wounded, and my head was muddled. Remembering that my enemy was close behind me, I thought that I should look for a suitable weapon.

“As a result, when I picked up a rusted ancient sword, my finger was accidentally cut by it. My blood turned bright purple, mixed with a greasily smell, when it flowed out of the wound.

“I remember the smell clearly even to this day.

“The bright purple blood was soon absorbed by the ancient sword. It seemed to be connected to my mind and became an extension of my limbs. Moreover, a lot of brutal sword techniques were also sent over to me!

“Other than the secret training arts from forty thousand years ago, more importantly, I discovered a few dead bodies inside the residence and found the coordinates of a few other residences of Chaos from them.

“Perhaps because the ancient sword had drained me, I fell into coma.

“When I was back to myself, I found myself floating inside the surging river right below the cliff and struggling hard. Ferocious demon beasts below the river were even biting my feet!

“I was dragged to the bottom of the river by the demon beasts. Believing that I was doomed, I slashed crazily with the ancient sword that was connected to me, hoping that I should at least kill some of them before I was killed. Eventually, I was exhausted and passed out again.

“When I woke up the second time, I found that Nether Spring was carrying me and running inside a forest staggeringly.

“According to Nether Spring, he had found me in the river shoal, and the cliff behind me had already collapsed.

“Later, after three months’ hunting and escaping, we were lucky enough to make it back to the Nether Spring Kingdom.

“With the marvelous achievements during the operation, Nether Spring and I finally gained a firm position in our family and started rising up. Eventually, seven years later, the main descendants of the family who set us up years ago had all been butchered by us!

“However, the residence of Chaos that I found in the cliff was like a haunting dream for me, which I couldn’t let go of day and night. The records inside the residence that were completely different from the traditional theories of the Blood Demon Sector always felt fresh to me.

“If it were a different silver-blood demon, they might not have thought too much of it and just believed that they were unbelievably fortunate.

“But there was another great secret about me.

“You were observing next to us when I was fighting Nether Spring just now, weren’t you? Then you must have seen my ugly tail!

“Haha. The heavens played a terrible prank on me. I am not a pure silver-blood demon but an untouchable chaotic-blood demon!

“The two things combined made me uninterested in the competition for power in the Nether Spring Kingdom. I found an opportunity and left the Nether Spring Kingdom. I travelled alone for a while, under the pretext that I was training in solitude, but I was in fact visiting the other residences of Chaos.

“Because of the passage of time and the change of terrain, several residences of Chaos had already been buried, leaving no traces. But still, I managed to excavate some of them.

“I received tremendous resources and information from those residences.

“With the resources, I established Void Turmoil City and my own forces. Then, I gathered the scattered organizers of the believers of Chaos in the world and set up the ‘Blade of Chaos’.

“After the Blade of Chaos took shape, it was much more convenient to excavate the residences of Chaos. After combining all the pieces that I had found, I gradually noticed the ‘Mausoleum of Chaos’.

“It was said that the Mausoleum of Chaos was the biggest bureau of the organization of Chaos forty thousand years ago and the place where ‘Chaos’ was buried. His legacy boasted such tremendous strength that whoever inherited it would be able to change the world!

“At that time, the integration of the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector was already unstoppable. Countless low-level demons were being obliterated in the battlefield like cannon fodder. The Blade of Chaos reached the most perilous moment. I had no choice except to excavate the Mausoleum of Chaos at whatever cost!

“Then, I received a piece of very interesting news.

“Nether Spring was interested in Chaos, too. He had even created his own research centers for related studies, and some of his findings even surpassed mine.

“I thought hard for a long time. Finally, it occurred to me that Nether Spring might have entered the residence years ago, too, and discovered part of the secrets of Chaos, but he lied to me that the residence had collapsed.

“At that time, I had been heavily wounded. Naturally, I could not return and check whether or not the residence was still there.

“Years later, when I visited the place again, the cliff had indeed collapsed, but it was also possible that Nether Spring had demolished it later.

“After realizing that, I immediately regarded Nether Spring as the most dangerous enemy and decided to strike his research with my best. I could not allow to let him learn the mysteries of Chaos earlier than I did!

“But I did not know that everything had been within his calculations and that I was being manipulated by him step by step all the time. You have seen what has become of me and my cause right now.”

After hearing that, Li Yao finally understood the grudge between Elder Nether Spring and the Fire Ant King. Thinking for a moment, he asked, “You stole a bottle of mysterious liquid from Nether Spring’s laboratory in Bone Sand City. What is it exactly?”

The Fire Ant King was dazed for a moment, with astonishment slightly beaming out of his eyes. He did not expect that the mysterious expert would even know such a thing.

After pondering carefully for a moment, he still decided to tell the truth. “The liquid is named ‘Divine Blood of Chaos’.

Of course, it is not the real blood of Chaos but an antidote, or rather, ‘reduction drug’.”

Chapter 904 - War of Words

“Reduction drug?” Li Yao chewed on the name. “What will it reduce?”

“Reduce the genes to their original appearance,” the Fire Ant King said calmly. “Our training methodology highlights the build-up and modification on genes directly, but the gene strands and cells are a precise whole. One moment of carelessness or distraction, and the gene strands might be overly stimulated, resulting in the collapse of cells and terrible consequences that follow.

“The organization of Chaos possesses various secret techniques to refine genes and all kinds of bizarre viruses that are extremely dangerous.

“Just now, in the Mausoleum of Chaos, one of my subordinates was accidentally scratched by the claw of a dead body. Although the wound was as thin as hair and it was not even bleeding, the weird virus still snuck into his body and overly stimulated his cells!”

Li Yao frowned. “What will happen if the cells are overly stimulated?”

“Imagine you are a general and the cells and genes all over your body are your soldiers,” the Fire Ant King said coldly. “Under normal circumstances, you would want to slightly stimulate the soldiers, to make them more hotblooded, excited, and fearless, so that their combat ability be significantly boosted.

“You would even want some of the ‘soldiers’ to mutate and grow into captains, centurions, and even chiliarches quickly, wouldn’t you?

“However, if you overly stimulate them and all the ‘soldiers’ are caught in delirium, refusing to listen to your command at all, what will happen?

“Your ‘army’ will collapse and retrograde into lawless, murderous bandits who will soon be killed by their own insanity.

“It is exactly so for the excessive stimulation of cells. The cells will go out of control and act on their own. They will exploit all the energy inside your body and rage like a volcanic eruption. Sometimes, even when the master is dead, the cells remain alive and attack those around them out of natural instincts!”

“The master is dead while the cells are still alive?”

Li Yao was greatly alarmed.

“Exactly,” the Fire Ant King said. “Individuals in such a state cannot be called ‘corpses’; they are amalgamations of cells, or to put it more accurately, the amalgamations of hungry, crazy cells!

“Their only instinct is to proliferate, expand, and infect. All the living creatures around them will be their targets. By biting the victims, they spread out the craziness as far away as possible!”

Li Yao gasped. “And the reduction drug can suppress the cell mutations?”

“Yes,” the Fire Ant King said. “The reduction drug can reduce the overly stimulated genes to their original status and pacify the simmering cells. Therefore, it is the antidote for all kinds of genetic mutations.

“To make poison, one must prepare an antidote first. Since the organization of Chaos was running a large-scale research center in this place, they were naturally prepared for the loss of control of the virus and its infection. The Reduction drugs had been produced in advance in case of such emergencies.

“I knew that we would run into a lot of unexpected dangers during the exploration of the Mausoleum of Chaos. Should anybody come into contact with the virus, only the reduction drug would be able to save their life. That was why I tried my best to steal the reduction drug from Nether Spring’s laboratory. However, it was looted half way through the transportation.”

Li Yao’s eyes were glittering. “How much of the reduction drug is there?”

“As far as I know, there is only one bottle,” the Fire Ant King said. “However, Nether Spring seems to have been working on the synthesized reduction drug, although I don’t know his progress. The good thing is, though, one gram of the reduction drug is enough to soothe simmer cells in most cases.

Li Yao thought for a moment and spoke again. “What if… somebody absorbs an entire bottle of reduction drug?”

The Fire Ant King blinked and moved his demonic energy as he said slowly, “Their cells and genes will be completely restored to the original appearance. If a demon has an excessive dosage, they will probably turn into a human being… just like you.”

If he were not in the darkness of dead silence, Li Yao would have let out an exclamation. Yet, he showed no response on the surface and shook Neltharion calmly. “What do you mean?”

The Fire Ant King still appeared to be a burnt trunk, but Li Yao had felt his sense of satisfaction because he was taking over the situation through the shivering demonic energy. “I’ve been curious since the very beginning. Even though you are an expert in the demon emperor stage, how could Nether Spring not have noticed you?

“But now, I’ve finally figured out that, although Elder Nether Spring was cautious enough to search for the spreading demonic energy nearby, it was not demonic energy but extremely feeble spiritual waves that you released.

“No wonder Nether Spring overlooked you!

“Although I cannot see the real appearance of the magical equipment, it is now enveloped in my demonic energy, which allows me to feel its every detail.

“The general shape and refining style of the magical equipment are similar to those of crystal warships of human beings and nowhere close to the fashion of the demon race. The shell that looks like dragon scales is clearly the distinctive feature of the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago.

“If my guess is correct, it must be a piece of training magical equipment, isn’t it?

“Although I can’t tell its specific model, it is doubtlessly a certain multipurpose exploration starship of the Star Ocean Imperium!”

Li Yao was not moved. He said coldly, “A piece of magical equipment from the Star Ocean Imperium, even if it is, cannot prove that I am a human being. Too many demons are using the magical equipment from mankind.”

“Indeed.”

After a moment’s thought, the Fire Ant King said slowly. “Magical equipment of mankind can be used by demons, too. But your manipulation over the training starship is so marvelous that you are spinning the turrets and the stabilizer fins as if they are your fingers, which is certainly not doable for anybody. You must’ve received the highest control permissions of the training starship.

“Demons were the mortal enemies of mankind in the Star Ocean Imperium. There is no way that a training starship of the Star Ocean Imperium would allow a demon to get the highest clearances.

“Besides, impressive as your skills might be, you barely knew anything about the basic concepts that I intentionally threw out to you a moment ago, and you simply kept asking me. All things considered, I don’t have a second guess on your identity now.”

Li Yao secretly spat. The Fire Ant King’s mediocre performance during his fight against Elder Nether Spring had misled him and made him underestimate the master of Void Turmoil City subconsciously. He did not notice the traps at all!

The demonic energy of the Fire Ant King was still shivering. “See? The exchange of information is always bidirectional. Those who seem to be raising questions are sometimes offering answers without them knowing.

"It's getting more and more interesting now. A human expert has successfully snuck into the Blood Demon Sector and even joined the exploration of the Mausoleum of Chaos. What is it that you and the force that you represent want?"

Li Yao neither acknowledged his identity nor denied it. Taking a long breath, he asked the most important question for him. "According to you, the Divine Blood of Chaos can 'reduce' demons into human beings, which means that the same-origin theory is correct. Demons used to be human beings, or rather, they are mutations of human beings, right?"

"Yes," the Fire Ant King admitted frankly. "The demon did not evolve from demon beasts; we are mutations of human beings. That is the conclusion that I've made after decades of research. Nether Spring must've drawn a similar conclusion, too."

Li Yao's head was dizzy. The turrets and stabilizer fines of Neltharion shivered rapidly. "Why?"

"I would like to know the reason, too," the Fire Ant King replied. "That's why I came to this place, to look for an answer."

"Do the members of the Blade of Chaos know the truth?" Li Yao asked again.

The Fire Ant King rolled his grey eyes and said, "Not yet. I planned to publicize the truth to everybody after we excavated the sacred body of God Chaos and found the answer to the mutation tens of thousands years ago."

Li Yao took a long breath and asked, "If demons are really mutations of human beings, and everybody is the same species, I don't see any reason why the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector must start a war that will destroy both worlds.”

With a hint of mockery in his eyes, the Fire Ant King replied casually, “It is exactly because we are the same species, and we need air, water, land, minerals and other resources at the same time, that a war will break out.

“If demons are really ‘demons’, a completely different life form different from mankind that feasts upon rocks or electromagnetic waves, a war will be highly unnecessary.”

Li Yao was lost for words. He pondered for a moment and asked, “Will the Blade of Chaos stand against the Star Glory Federation?”

With a bitter smile, the Fire Ant King asked back, “Is the Blade of Chaos qualified to stand against the Star Glory Federation?”

The answer was not within Li Yao’s expectation. But on second thought, it was quite right. Whatever the Fire Ant King was thinking now, the Blade of Chaos barely had any strength left right now.

“Alright!” Li Yao said. “I can save you, on the condition that you tell me everything you know, especially the information regarding the Mausoleum of Chaos. Then, we will discuss how we can better take advantage of Elder Nether Spring!”

Their conversation was conducted through the shivering demonic energy and the turning turrets. Every word required dozens of times shivers and turns.

Besides, the Fire Ant King was tied up by highly-sensitive synthesize nerves and, therefore, did not dare to shiver greatly at all. The speed of communication was extremely low.

The dialogue just now seemed to be witty and brief, but it actually took them quite a few hours.

Thankfully, Elder Nether Spring and the Nether World Watch were too busy excavating and exploring the Mausoleum of Chaos to care about his dear brother. The two of them had plenty of time to talk with each other freely.

However, after almost twenty hours of communication, they seemed to be running out of luck—tremendous demonic energy approached the tusk cage.

“It’s Nether Spring!”

The Fire Ant King immediately stopped shivering his demonic energy.

His heart palpitating, Li Yao steered Neltharion to hide behind the Fire Ant King’s back.

CRACK!

The tusk cage slowly opened like a bloody mouth. Elder Nether Spring lowered his head and crawled in. The white, cold tusks closed behind him one after another, not leaving the tiniest gap.

Elder Nether Spring was wearing a satisfied expression, indicating that he had come back with loads of trophies. With such a smile, he stared at his blood brother, whom he had risked his life rescuing, with glamorous colors in his eyes. There was no telling what was on his mind.

But the Fire Ant King suddenly burst out!

Chapter 905 - Unwavering Pessimist!

The Fire Ant King’s limbs bulged to twice their normal size, and his joints all bent in the wrong direction. His thick tail whipped thunderously in midair, breaking the synthesized nerves that tied up his body apart. The shackles deeply buried into his body flashed in glamorous brilliant as a series of spiritual stripes were activated to the maximum before they were shattered all of a sudden. The broken pieces raged inside the narrow cage like bullets!

For a moment, the entire prison cell was filled up by the Fire Ant King’s eruptive demonic energy!

He was about to break free and pierce toward Elder Nether Spring like a shining tusk!

However, when he was one step away from Elder Nether Spring, the ‘veins’ that Elder Nether Spring planted into his body earlier suddenly jerked up. The green venom inside the veins was flowing ten times faster than before, like leeches that had drunk enough blood and turned into hideous serpents!

All the vigor of the Fire Ant King seemed to be absorbed by the terrifying serpents. His body suddenly withered, and his skin became wrinkled. His demonic energy instantly vanished, and he tripped over, falling into the cold acid, only to be pulled back by the elastic synthesized nerves and tied up in midair again.

Li Yao was secretly surprised. The Fire Ant King’s actions seemed to be reckless, but Li Yao knew that the strike was far from the best he could make.

Judging from the delicate control over his demonic energy during their conversation, he was certainly reserving his strength!

He was misleading Elder Nether Spring even now!

Besides, after his desperate struggle, the demonic energy was raging inside the cage. Everything was in disorder, which was convenient for Li Yao to further hide Neltharion.

The Fire Ant King is trying to cause mayhem so that his brother won’t notice Neltharion.

Li Yao thought quickly and soon realized what was happening.

However, with Elder Nether Spring standing next to it, he did not dare to move Neltharion at all, much less communicate with the Fire Ant King.

After the Fire Ant King’s ‘final strike’ failed, he seemed to be grasped by the utmost desperation. He lowered his head and uttered miserable laughs.

Elder Nether Spring raised an eyebrow and casually asked, “What are you laughing for?”

“I’m afraid that this is the sincerest moment between the two of us over the past decades. We are finally able to be frank, without disguises and lies. Shouldn’t I laugh?”

Elder Nether Spring did not realize that his brother would admit his failure so quickly. Rolling his eyes slightly, Elder

Nether Spring was deep in thought. His voice turned gentler as he said slowly, “Indeed. For decades, I’ve been in the Nether Spring Kingdom, while you in Void Turmoil City. Many things have changed. We cannot go back to the time when we fought side by side with each other and supported each other through the siege of thousands of enemies on the Devilish Teeth Mountain.”

Hearing ‘Devilish Teeth Mountain’, the Fire Ant King’s eyes suddenly bulged, and he gnashed his teeth. “Big brother, let me ask you, in the depths of the Devilish Teeth Mountain years ago, before you saved me, did you find the residence of Chaos as well?”

It was the first time that the Fire Ant King had addressed Elder Nether Spring as ‘big brother’ since the two of them met.

Elder Nether Spring pondered for a moment but nodded. “Yes. I discovered the residence of Chaos, too.

“You were heavily wounded, and your head was not clear, which stopped you from further exploring the residence. I was in a much better status than you, and I made more discoveries in the residence.

“Most importantly, I found a secret door that led to an even more secret base below the residence.

“At that time, there was no time for me to explore the ‘cave in the cave’. I could only remember the coordinates and the terrain nearby. After we returned to the Nether Spring Kingdom and everything was peaceful again, I snuck back into the Devilish Teeth Mountain in disguise by myself and opened the cave in the cave, receiving a lot of the legacy of Chaos.

“Later, I blew up everything.”

The Fire Ant King sniffed. “That explains a lot. I should’ve guessed it earlier. No wonder you were uninterested in my flying sword that could suck blood. Turns out that you knew what it was all the time.

“Besides, you knew it a long time ago that you were not a pure silver-blood demon but a well-concealed chaotic-blood demon?”

“Yes. I’ve known it all the time,” Elder Nether Spring said casually.

“Then I really find it hard to understand.” The Fire Ant King’s eyes were red, as if he was feeling both baffled and wronged. “Big brother, since you found the legacy of Chaos, too, you must know that the propaganda of the Pantheon of Demons is drivel. Besides, you also know that your real identity is a chaotic-blood demon that is even lowlier than the servants in the system of the Pantheon of Demons.

“So, why were you still so greedy about everything in the Nether Spring Kingdom, and why did you even become one of the twelve demon emperors of the Pantheon of Demons?

“If you had found out that I was the leader of the Blade of Chaos long ago, why didn’t you work with me to shatter the Four Pillars System so that all the chaotic-blood demons could master the Blood Demon Sector rightfully?

“With the capabilities of us as demon emperors, together with the legacy of Chaos and the great number of low-level demons, it would’ve been more than possible for us to succeed!

“Why didn’t you do it?

“You may be one of the four giants of the Blood Demon Sector and one of the most respected demon emperors of the Pantheon of Demons, but as long as your secret that you are a chaotic-blood demon leaks out, your reputation will immediately be demolished. However strong you are, none of the silver-blood nobles will listen to your command anymore. They will attack you together!

“Alright. Let’s say that you can keep the secret your whole life. What about your blood descendants? Don’t forget that they will inherit your curse of the chaotic blood, too. One day, your descendants will show the features of the chaotic-blood demons. By that time, the enormous enterprise that you accomplished will still be ruined!

“I don’t believe that you are too shortsighted to see through such a simple logic. Then what do you want exactly by founding such a strong ‘Nether World Watch’ and forcefully occupying the Mausoleum of Chaos?”

His question made Elder Nether Spring’s eyes turn extremely hollow. Deep in thought, he gazed at the Fire Ant King for a long time before he suddenly asked, “Even if I told you the truth decades ago and we led the Blade of Chaos to rise together, so what? Could we defeat the Pantheon of Demons?”

“Of course!” the Fire Ant King affirmed proudly. “I believe that the Pantheon of Demons will definitely be blown to smithereens if we encourage all the low-level demons to stand up against them!”

“What then?” Elder Nether Spring said coldly. “The Four Pillars system has been implemented in the demon race for thousands of years. It has been deeply rooted into the veins of every demon. If we pluck it out completely, we are definitely going to pull out their veins, bones, and blood.

“Let me tell you, I have contemplated on what would happen if I join the Blade of Chaos and fight against the Pantheon of Demons with you before. However, according to my deduction, even if all the low-level demons join our cause and the reign of the high-level demons is overturned in the end, the Blood Demon Sector will still be heavily battered by the fire of war. It will take decades before the world recovers again.”

The Fire Ant King narrowed his eyes and said, “Change always comes with a price. It is just an insignificant throe.”

There was a hint of mockery in Elder Nether Spring’s smile. “I would agree with you if we were in any era of the past ten thousand years except right now.

“Don’t forget that the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector have already started melding slowly!

“In the Heaven’s Origin Sector, there is a powerful Star Glory Federation that has been preparing for a war and coveting us!

“The Star Glory Federation is a nation of human beings that was only established five hundred years ago. It seems rather young, but it actually boasts boundless potential. The speed of their development is unimaginably high!

“Five hundred years ago, they were hiding in the inland of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, most of which was governed by the Far East Demon Kingdom and the tribes of demons on the Grand Desolate Plateau. It was almost a world of demons just like the Blood Demon Sector right now.

“However, it only took them a hundred years to destroy the Far East Demon Kingdom that ruled over the ocean, and it was only another hundred years before all the demon tribes on the Grand Desolate Plateau were exterminated!

“This is an extremely horrifying country. It has been in the state of war for the past hundred years, with armed forces of a tremendous scale. The development of their technology has been much faster than ours, too!

“Hundreds of years ago, they could not even produce the simplest tube-type crystal processors or equip the plainest crystal shields. But today, from crystal tanks to crystal warships, and from crystal suits to Taiyi Lightning Railguns, they are presenting countless types of new magical equipment every year like a big bang.

“Ten years ago, by studying the pieces of a crystal suit from the Star Ocean Imperium, the Star Glory Federation developed a very balanced model of crystal suit named ‘Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit’. The ratio of the cost to the performance could not be more perfect.

“According to our latest intelligence, at least fifteen formal legions of the Star Glory Federation have been equipped with the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and its derivative models. More magical equipment factories have been working day and night to produce even more crystal suits!

“Do you think that they’ve built so many crystal suit legions in order to stay behind their defensive lines and wait for our attacks?

“Then, you are terribly wrong!

“According to my deduction, if the Blade of Chaos really grows large and competes with the Pantheon of Demons, a civil war in the Blood Demon Sector will certainly be raised, and the third party will take all the advantage!

“Is there any significance even if the Blade of Chaos can overthrow the reign of the Pantheon of Demons? When the iron torrents of human beings flood on the boundless plateaus of the Blood Demon Sector, their caterpillar tracks that are embedded with sharp thorns will not care whether you are a silver-blood demon or a chaotic-blood one. They will simply crush all of us!”

“I didn’t know that big brother thought so highly of the Star Glory Federation,” the Fire Ant King said.

“Yes. I think very highly of the Star Glory Federation,” Elder Nether Spring said calmly. “In fact, forget the civil war between the Blade of Chaos and the Pantheon of Demons. Even if the Blade of Chaos is completely suppressed and the Pantheon of Demons is able to concentrate all the forces of the Blood Demon Sector to fight against the Star Glory Federation, I don’t think we stand much chance at all.”

The Fire Ant King was truly shocked. “Right now, there are indeed a lot of demons outside who are worried about the war to come and have been disseminating pessimistic predications, but I didn’t know that you were one of them.”

“Indeed I am.”

His eyes as clear as water, Elder Nether Spring observed casually, “Since a long, long time ago, I’ve been an unwavering pessimist. I firmly believe that the demons will fail, and mankind will win the ultimate war between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector!”

Chapter 906 - A Way Out!

The Fire Ant King was dumbfounded, his brain not functioning anymore.

Li Yao even cursed in a low voice inside the dark drainage canal. He was so shocked that his surging telepathic thoughts almost exposed Neltharion.

Are you kidding me? Elder Nether Spring is an unwavering pessimist? This is really a very bad joke!

Li Yao found it absurd.

It must be noted that, of the four superpowers of the Blood Demon Sector, the Gold Crow Kingdom mastered the forces in the sky, the Sea Dominator controlled the forces in the ocean, and the Kingdom of Lion Butchers and the Nether Spring Kingdom commanded the forces on and below the ground respectively.

The merging point of the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector was in the Dark Desolate Domain deep inside the Grand Desolate Plateau. The place was far from the ocean, with a lot of air turbulence. Also, the magnificent crystal warships of the Star Glory Federation were defending the place.

Therefore, as far as Li Yao could recall, he had barely seen any forces of the Gold Crow Kingdom and the Sea Dominator Kingdom before.

In the meantime, on the boundless Grand Desolate Plateau, any large-scale beast tides on the ground would certainly be barraged by the crystal warships the moment they showed up. Therefore, the rendezvous points of the beast tides were almost always below ground. They would gather without anybody knowing first before they suddenly jumped out of the soil and invaded the towns of human beings, raising alley battles so that the weapons of mass destruction such as the main guns of the crystal warships would hesitate.

With such tactics, the underground forces of the demon race, or to wit, the Insect Clan, who were adept at digging holes and fighting below the earth, were of paramount importance.

Therefore, the Nether Spring Kingdom had been the leading vanguard in the invasion of the Star Glory Federation.

The first beast tide that Li Yao encountered on the train to the Grand Desolate War Institution was made of the Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes, which belonged to the Insect Clan, too.

Elder Nether Spring, as the best expert of the Insect Clan and the real controller of the Nether Spring Kingdom, ranked at the top in the List of Deadly Demons of the Star Glory Federation. He was definitely the greatest trouble-maker for the country!

In the ‘Battle of Dawn’ a year ago, the Nether Spring Kingdom and the Kingdom of Lion Butchers summoned an unprecedentedly large army and swept across the entire Grand Desolate Plateau like wild fire. The vanguard of the army even reached the Giant Blade Pass at the south of the Grand Desolate Plateau.

Although they failed to occupy the Giant Blade Pass in the end, a lot of military fortresses and infrastructures of the Star Glory Federation on the Grand Desolate Plateau had been demolished, and the path to march south had been created. According to the intelligence that Li Yao learned through various sources, the Star Glory Federation had been quite in quite a perilous position back then. The major cities and towns inland were all under curfew, and all the reserve soldiers had been summoned.

Right now, Elder Nether Spring, who was the commander behind the curtain during the Battle of Dawn, was acknowledging that he was a pessimist and that he believed in the failure of the demon race and the victory of mankind?

Li Yao did not even know what to say.

Elder Nether Spring sighed and said, “On the surface, the Blood Demon Sector looks more intimidating than the Heaven’s Origin Sector. In the battles right now, we are on the aggressive side, too, and we’ve even marched into the territory of the Star Glory Federation.

“But if you analyze it carefully, you will realize that the Blood Demon Sector is already running out of momentum.

“We are launching serial aggressive attacks because we have to. The technology of the Star Glory Federation is developing too fast. If we don’t maintain tremendous pressure on the Star Glory Federation at all times and consume their resources, it is very likely that they will achieve a technological leap in the next twenty to thirty years. If so, they will be at an overwhelming advantage.

“Hehe. Although we’ve managed to keep the high pressure, the Star Glory Federation still established fifteen crystal suit legions in only ten years. Even at the most dangerous moment in the Battle of Dawn, the forces were never mobilized on a large scale. They are like a scorching saber that is hanging right above our heads!

“But attacks always come at a cost.

“The expeditions deep into the territory of the hostile country will cause three times more casualties and resource consumptions for us.

“Let’s take the Battle of Dawn for example. Naturally, most of the soldiers killed were low-level demon generals. But we lost quite a lot of precious bronze-blood demons and silver-blood demons, too, who were all marvelous warriors that could not be raised to their posts without decades of hard training. The loss of them cannot be made up easily, at least not in the three to five years.

“But the foundation of the Star Glory Federation was not hurt. Some of their buildings were burnt to the ground. Some of their crystals and magical equipment were used up. That was all.

“In the meantime, they learned a lot of lessons during the battle. I could clearly sense that, over the Battle of Dawn that lasted almost an entire year, the federal army improved a lot in regards of distribution of soldiers, tactical responses, and strategical mobilizations.

“In fact, even if the low-level demons did not mutiny, we wouldn’t have been able to persist for long and would have had to retreat immediately. Otherwise, it was very possible that the army of the Star Glory Federation would have blocked our path of retreat and wiped out all our soldiers!

“Do you know why?”

The Fire Ant King held his breath and listened attentively.

“Everything is because of the differences of our systems,” Elder Nether Spring explained carefully. “On the surface, this is a war between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector.

“However, human beings of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, under the government of the Star Glory Federation, are an integrated whole. All the orders will be obeyed. The army is stable. The people are united. The industrial and training systems are very mature. All the resources can be made use of in the most optimal way.

“On the other hand, the Blood Demon Sector is split into four major demon kingdoms, hundreds of independent demon cities, and countless demon caves. We are just a pile of loose sand. Even though the Pantheon of Demons is trying to stick everything together like a tinker, can we really expect to be as united as human beings?

“This is our unchangeable, fatal shortcoming. Compared to human beings, our appearances are simply too different from each other!

“The Insect Clan, the Feather Clan, the Sea Clan, the Horn Clan, the Claw Clan… Other than the five main clans, there are various kinds of bizarre minority clans. The living environments and the resources that every clan requires are different. Everybody has their own interest and stance. How can their strength be really focused on the same point like human beings?

“I started considering the question when I discovered the secrets of Chaos and learned that I was a chaotic-blood demon decades ago.

“I browsed through all the ancient classics and history books that I could find, hoping to get enlightenment from the wisdom of the past. But after I studied the decline of the

Demon Beast Empire and the rise of mankind profoundly, I gradually came up with my own solutions.

“We possess different appearances, and our interests are different. The demon race, which is essentially loose sand, cannot adapt to the modern society of standards, data, and information at all. The rise of human beings is unstoppable.

“It’s better to say that the Demon Beast Empire thirty thousand years collapsed because of the burden of its own weight than to say that the Star Ocean Imperium crushed it.

“The problem remains unresolvable to this day.

“We are a heap of loose sand that pretends to be a rock. How can we win against a real rock?”

The Fire Ant King could not help but observe, “Is this the reason you believe in the failure of the demon race?”

“No.” Elder Nether Spring shook his head and said, “This is not the biggest reason why I believe that the demon race will inevitably fail. Although faced with tremendous difficulties, I believe that, in a war that concerns two vast worlds, a few heroes, or the invention of some new magical equipment or technology, will not be enough to change the outcome of the war.

“Therefore, even though the Star Glory Federation boasts endless potential, we have a good chance to suffocate them while they are still in the cradle and can’t fulfil all their potential.

“However, does any of this mean anything to you?”

The Fire Ant King was dazed. “I don’t understand. Conquering the Star Glory Federation and occupying the

Heaven’s Origin Sector is meaningless?”

“In my eyes, yes.” Elder Nether Spring smiled bitterly, with intense desperation on his face. “The Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector are two barren worlds in the remote area of the universe. There are too many worlds of the three thousand Sectors that are far stronger than the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

“Ten thousand years ago, the rise of the Star Ocean Imperium was already a death sentence for the demon race. Although the Star Ocean Imperium fell out later, now that humanity is thriving again, there is no chance for the demons to seek a comeback.

“At this moment, most of the three thousand Sectors must be occupied by human beings. Chances are that they have already gathered and established a nation that is a hundred times more powerful than the Star Glory Federation!

“Do you see? The war between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector is just ‘a storm in the nutshell’ that is not worth mentioning at all if we are to observe it with a larger scale.

“Even if we really conquer the Heaven’s Origin Sector, we are nothing but an indignant, minor kingdom of demons in the eyes of the powerful countries at the center of the cosmos.

“Maybe, a sneeze of those countries will be enough to obliterate every one of us!

“If the war between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector is all that I cared about, I could still summon my spirits and courage to seek a way to win the war.

“However, now that I am observing the vast universe, despite the pain in my heart, I still believe in my conclusion.

“The course of the universe is unstoppable. Those who follow it, thrive; those who don’t, perish!

“Demons will fail, and human beings will win. This is the course of the universe. Nobody can stop it!”

The Fire Ant King was stunned by Elder Nether Spring’s cold conclusion. He was dazed for a long time before he said, “Even if there are more powerful countries of human beings in the center of the cosmos, it will be hundreds of years before they expand to the edge of the cosmos. By then—”

“You’re wrong.” Elder Nether Spring interrupted him. “They’re already here.”

“What?”

The Fire Ant King’s eyes widened.

“According to the top secret intelligence we received,” Elder Nether Spring said, “the Heaven’s Origin Sector has reached out to another Sector that is completely controlled by human beings. Although the development level of the new Sector is unclear for now, it is obvious that they boast super long-distance teleportation technology.

“It means that we are faced with the threats of two worlds of human beings now. Even if the mysterious new world does not have much advanced technology, a few Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators that they teleport over will be enough to change the outcome of the war!

“Can the Blood Demon Sector defeat two Sectors? Besides, will there be just the two? Maybe more Sectors will gradually find us.”

The Fire Ant King was lost for words.

“Now, do you understand why I didn’t help the Blade of Chaos? It’s because everything you’ve been doing is moot,” Elder Nether Spring said softly.

The Fire Ant King gnashed his teeth. “What exactly do you want to do, brother?”

“I want to find a way out for all the demons,” Elder Nether Spring replied coldly, “be they silver-blood or chaotic-blood.”

Chapter 907 - A Third Life Form!

“Where is the way out, according to you?” the Fire Ant King asked.

Elder Nether Spring smiled confidently and said, “In the legends of the Pantheon of Demons, the demon race is the descendant of the Pangu Clan. According to the believers of Chaos, the demon race was created by Chaos. In the human beings’ narrative, the demon race evolved from the demon beasts that were injected with the ‘Demon God’ virus.

“The three theories are completely different from each other. Which one do you think is the truth?”

The Fire Ant King pondered for a moment and said, “Although I am the leader of the Blade of Chaos, the evidence is so unquestionable that I have to admit that all three theories are incomplete. Maybe a combination of all of them is the truth.”

“Exactly.” Brightness was flashing in Elder Nether Spring’s eyes. “Since exploring the cave in the cave of Chaos decades ago, I’ve been gathering all the files that are related to Chaos just like you. I also excavated dozens of residences of Chaos. During the process, I gradually collected countless pieces of information, and after I assembled the pieces, I finally deduced the truth.

“The theories of the demon race, the Blade of Chaos, and human beings each have their own highlights. But they have their own drawbacks, too, because they all accentuated part of the story for the purpose of propaganda.

“By removing all the exaggerated parts and combining the remaining parts, I reached my conclusion.”

Coldness suddenly blinked in the Fire Ant King’s eyes. “And what is your conclusion, Brother?”

“Firstly,” Elder Nether Spring said, “the Pangu Clan must’ve existed in the primeval era, and they are our ancestors, which can be proved by the countless fossils, relics, and the ‘genetic memories’ when we are training the deeper level of our cells.

“Secondly, there was really a guy named Chaos, who was an expert among human beings forty thousand years ago, at least in the beginning. He was the direct creator of the demon race.

“Thirdly, the theory of human beings has its own merits. The ‘Demon God Virus’ should be a real thing, too. Otherwise, it is inexplicable how the demons occupied the entire sea of stars with a population boom in only hundreds of years.

“Combining the three theories, my conclusion is that—

“During the final years of the era of ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago, the first civil war of Cultivators was coming to an end. All three thousand Sectors were shattered. Every living creature was in peril. It was almost the end of the universe.

“At that time, a human expert named ‘Chaos’ accidentally retrieved the legacy of the Pangu Clan that was left from the primeval era.

“With the legacy, Chaos produced a virus named ‘Demon God’. But the purpose of such a virus was not to boost the evolution of demon beasts but to trigger the mutations in the bodies of human beings. It awakened the primeval genes that had hibernated for billions of years inside human beings and turned them into demons!

“Although it remains unknown why Chaos did such a thing, this is the deduction that I believe is closest to the truth!”

The deduction cast the Fire Ant King in deep thought. He could not help but nod.

Li Yao, who was eavesdropping below the ground, nodded in agreement, too. Elder Nether Spring’s deduction was indeed more thorough and reasonable than the theories of human beings, demons, or the Blade of Chaos.

If demons were mutations of human beings who had been injected with the Demon God Virus, then all the seemingly uncanny phenomena—for example, the demons’ habit of faking the appearance of humans, their adaptation of the language and social system of humans, and the lack of reproductive isolation between different demon species—would all have plausible explanations.

It was because the demons were merely human beings that walked on a different path of evolution.

The Fire Ant King pondered for a moment and asked, “What does it have to do with your ‘way out’?”

Elder Nether Spring smiled. “If an ancient expert forty thousand years ago could produce the ‘Demon God Virus’ and turn a large batch of human beings into demons, why can’t we do the same forty thousand years later with the advanced biotechnology that we boast?”

The Fire Ant King was startled. “You’re trying to manufacture the ‘Demon God Virus’ and spread it in the Heaven’s Origin Sector so that all the human beings of the Heaven’s Origin Sector will be transformed into demons?”

Li Yao almost could not hold back his exclamations.

If that was on Elder Nether Spring’s mind, he would certain be the greatest menace to the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

But out of his expectation, Elder Nether Spring shook his head again. “No. That’s not what I’m going to do.”

The Fire Ant King found it odd. “Why?”

Elder Nether Spring moved closed to his brother and widened his eyes, staring at the Fire Ant King solemnly. “Brother, I don’t know whether or not you had similar experiences, but during my almost a hundred years of training, I have strongly felt that we are imperfect.

“I’m not referring to the chaotic-blood demons; I’m talking about all demons. We are all imperfect, or rather, seriously flawed.

“It’s true that we can train our cells direction and activate the primeval force deep inside our genes. But such a way of training also results in the unsteadiness of our strength. Our cells are much more likely to collapse, and sometimes, a lot of useless organs or skills will be suddenly endowed to us.

“The longevity of most of the expert demons is shorter than that of Cultivators. Most of the time, they will even turn extremely savage and bloodthirsty, driven by their genes, and they lose the ability to think normally and adopt appropriate tactics.

“Furthermore, our strength is often restricted to a certain domain. General members of the Feather Clan can never utilize the strength and combat patterns of the Insect Clan, and those of the Claw Clan are not able to make use of the experience of the Horn Clan, either.

“In short, we are like ‘tools’ that are built for a certain ‘purpose’. Our path of growth and advancement are locked, and we can know the peak of our training after a quick look.

“Human beings are vastly different from us.

“Although ordinary humans are extremely weak, as soon as their spiritual root is awakened, they are able to use their strength in a much more stable and efficient way, and they boast infinite possibilities!

“Most of the time, I’m even jealous of human beings. The methodology of our training is to awaken the long-forgotten force deep inside our cells, and as powerful as the primeval force is, it has its own limits. Even if we try our best in training, we will only end up being the second Pangu Clan in the end. Is it something that we should be proud of?

“On the other hand, Cultivators of human beings are striding forward and expanding new fields. They have boundless possibilities. Nobody knows what the Cultivators who have reached the peak of Cultivation look like…

“Naturally, human beings have their own drawbacks. The combat ability of the ordinary humans is too low, and the difficulty and price to awaken the spiritual root are too high.

“The demons are much more advantageous in this regard. Most of the demons, especially the bronze-blood and the silver-blood ones, boast tremendous physical strength congenially, and they can wield the strength easily after preliminary training.

“One might say that the demon race has abandoned ‘possibilities in the future’ for ‘formidability at present’.

“The two paths of training have nothing similar. They have obvious advantages and disadvantages, but they are equally imperfect.

“After I made the conclusion, I have been wondering whether or not there is a path that can combine the merits of demons and human beings.

“Imagine it. When a demon awakens the primeval force deep inside their cells, they can form solid shells, thick horns, and sharp claws, some develop three hearts of different usages and five stomachs, and many can survive and fight in extremely harsh environments such as glaciers, ocean bottom, and rock stratum. Now imagine that the demon can drive spiritual energy directly, forming a core or even the Nascent Soul inside their body, how formidable the demon would be!

“A demon that boasts a core and a Nascent Soul!

“No. It is inappropriate to call them a demon anymore. It is a life form that is more advanced than the demon race or mankind. Maybe we should call it the god race!”

Elder Nether Spring was wreathed in the flames of excitement as if he was on drugs and shivered nonstop.

The Fire Ant King looked at him. “I understand it now, Brother. You are trying to modify the Demon God Virus!”

“Exactly!” Elder Nether Spring smiled. “The original Demon God Virus was a product from forty thousand years ago at all. At that time, the technology level of the world of Cultivators was still relatively low. Systematical concepts such as cells, bacteria, and viruses were utterly unheard of back then.

“The so-called ‘Demon God Virus’ is just a name that the latecomers made up. People at that time might’ve regarded as a brand-new poison or venom, didn’t they?

“The original Demon God Virus was not perfect. It is quite weak in the speed of infection and the efficiency of mutation. I don’t think it could’ve spread out if the world was not a mess forty thousand years ago.

“If the virus was faced with the highly-efficient modern government and army, it certainly would have been extinguished before it spreads out!

“Therefore, spraying the original Demon God Virus in the Heaven’s Origin Sector is pointless. Burnt in the fire of unbelievably high temperature, the original Demon Dos Virus will be obliterated. Even if the human beings of an entire city are transformed into demons, the other people can always impose the strictest quarantine on the city and even wipe it out!

“In the meantime, the brand-new virus that I’m developing with the original Demon God Virus as an ingredient will have none of those drawbacks. Its efficiency has been significantly increased, too. More importantly, it does not target human beings alone. Demons will have the privilege to enjoy it, too. It will allow both human beings and demons to evolve into a third life form that is much stronger and totally perfect!

“Hehe. Forty thousand years ago, our ancestors turned from human beings into demons. Today, our civilization will make another giant leap by turning from demons into gods!

“Perhaps, this is the true meaning of ‘Demon God’. This is the real Demon God Virus!”

Li Yao clenched his fists hard, his fingernails almost piercing into his palm. The craziness of Elder Nether Spring’s scheme was far beyond his imagination!

The Fire Ant King’s antennae shook violently for a while. “A third life form that is totally perfect? It’s impossible!”

Elder Nether Spring grinned so hard that his lips almost reached his earlobe. “It’s most certainly possible. In order to realize the perfect life form, I have studied for decades and established countless research centers in secret. The one you discovered in Bone Sand City was merely one of them.

“The merging of the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector provided me with the best opportunity. Every time a beast tide invaded the Heaven’s Origin Sector, I had the chance to run my experiments. In the Battle of Dawn, I got even more abundant experiment subjects and made a significant breakthrough in my research!”

Chapter 908 - Unmentioned Issues

The Fire Ant King immediately understood a lot of things. “No wonder you were so active in organizing the attacks against the Heaven’s Origin Sector and even ordered the army of the Nether Spring Kingdom to march into the Heaven’s Origin Sector when the Gold Crow Kingdom, the Sea Dominator Kingdom, and the Kingdom of Lion Butchers were not prepared. The heavy losses seemed to mean nothing to you at all!

“Turns out that you were not seeking a victory at all but merely capturing human beings and demons for your experiment. The battlefield was also the best lab for you to test your ‘products’, correct?”

“Precisely.” Elder Nether Spring burst into laughter. “The other demon emperors in the Pantheon of Demons thought I was so arrogant that I was confident to blow up the Star Glory Federation with only the forces of the Nether Spring Kingdom. They were all looking forward to enjoying the fruit and simply waited and watched my show.

“But they didn’t know that my head was much clearer than theirs. I knew that we could not defeat the humans in a regular war!

“In the scourges of beast tides during the Battle of Dawn, I tested multiple secret techniques that I got from the legacy of Chaos, and I modified and strengthened them. The improvement is obvious!

“The ‘Nether World Watch’, whose combat ability has been boosted by the demon cores, is just one of my achievements. Stronger forces are still hiding in the darkness right now!”

“Are you not afraid that the resources of the Nether Spring Kingdom will be overly consumed?” the Fire Ant King said coldly.

Elder Nether Spring laughed. “As you said in the beginning, we are both chaotic-blood demons. The secret cannot be kept forever. When the truth is out, will the nobles and generals of the Nether Spring Kingdom listen to my command?

“Since it is destined that I cannot win their support, I might as well regard them all as ‘fertilizers’ that can be used to build up my own forces!”

The Fire Ant King sighed. “That explains a lot. No wonder the officers that belonged to the Nether Spring Kingdom surrendered the leadership of the coalition army of the demon race without much struggling after the Battle of Dawn. I was also told that you made a deal with Jin Tuyi and agreed on his ‘Red Tide Plan’.

“Before, it baffled me why you would compromise all of a sudden.

“Now, I’ve realized it. Both the Battle of Dawn and the Red Tide Plan, and maybe even the coalition army of the demon race, mean little to you. They are just your disguises.”

“Exactly.”

Elder Nether Spring sneered. “Jin Tuyi wants to be the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of the demon race.

Then just let him be. He wants to implement the so-called ‘Red Tide Plan’. Let him have it. When his ‘red tide’ floods into the central land of the Star Glory Federation, it will be the time when my real plan is activated!”

The Fire Ant King narrowed his eyes and said, “Brother, why are you telling me everything so frankly?”

“Will you believe me if I say that I want to cooperate with you sincerely?” Elder Nether Spring said softly.

The Fire Ant King was amused. He glanced over his own body and sneered. “Here and now, ‘cooperation’ doesn’t seem to be very convincing for me.”

“It was wrong of me not to have told you everything earlier,” Elder Nether Spring replied calmly, “but I had my own concerns.

“Firstly, at that time, I was carrying out my own secret plans, and I needed a target to shift the Pantheon of Demons’ attention.

“Your Blade of Chaos was the perfect target.

“Therefore, I turned a blind eye to the rise of the Blade of Chaos and even gave you a hand when nobody noticed to help Void Turmoil City and the Blade of Chaos expand rapidly. As I expected, you became a major headache for the Pantheon of Demons in only decades.

“As a result, with the threat of the Blade of Chaos inside the Blood Demon Sector and the coveting of the Star Glory Federation outside, the Pantheon of Demons had no time or resources to investigate me. Also, a lot of my research and operations could be conducted under the pretext of ‘striking the Blade of Chaos and the Star Glory Federation’.

“We must calculate risks before we do anything. If I cooperated with you decades ago, we would have been putting all our eggs in one basket. Should anything have gone wrong, all of our endeavors would’ve been in vain.”

“Is that why you killed my subordinates, beat me heavily, and even crippled me?”

“How can we have a guileless conversation if not so?” Elder Nether Spring said. “I know you too well. Like me, you are ambitious and not willing to be below anybody! You won’t agree to cooperate with me unless you don’t have a second option.

“Moreover, most of your subordinates are not dead. They are merely captives for now.

“If you agree to cooperate with me, I will set them free immediately. When the real Demon God Virus is successfully produced, they can be the first batch to be injected and become the most perfect life form!

“You can have the privilege, too!

“You and I have stayed in the stage of demon emperor for many years. I know that you’ve tried countless kinds of strengthening drugs. Yet, you failed to improve your expertise to any higher level. Are you willing to be restricted to the insignificant demon emperor stage forever? Do you not want to grasp the strength that the Pangu Clan once did in the primeval era or even surpass the Pangu Clan and march into the ultimate level that nobody has ever set foot in?”

The Fire Ant King was breathing heavily, his voice coarse. “What do you want?”

Elder Nether Spring licked his lips and said, “I want the secret techniques through which you developed your demonic plants in Void Turmoil City and your formulas to produce the strengthening drugs.

“I know that the Blade of Chaos has countless secret bureaus and spies in every place of the Blood Demon Sector. Tell of all the information.

“I also know that you had a secret research center outside of Void Turmoil City, which was perhaps your real nest. I want the coordinates of the place and your latest research progress.

“Of course, I will not be taking away your belongings for nothing. You will have my own research products, too. It will do us both good if we exchange the information we know!”

The Fire Ant King stared at Elder Nether Spring for a long time. He shook the chains on his body and said, “My current appearance is not suitable for negotiations.”

“Naturally,” Elder Nether Spring said, “I cannot unlock the venom chains. But you can clear the shackles carved with spiritual stripes yourself.”

While talking, he snapped his fingers, and the tentacles that were brimming with neurons were loosened from the Fire Ant King and retreated to the corners of the prison cell.

The Fire Ant King heaved a long sigh in relief and took off the remaining shackles on this body before he hesitated and said, “Everything you said is too unbelievable. I need to think about it for a while.”

“Of course.” Elder Nether Spring agreed quickly. “I’ll have to spend another few days in the Mausoleum of Chaos until the corpse of Chaos is dug out. I believe that there should be enough time for you to consider everything carefully.

“As long as you are open to cooperate, I’m willing to share all our discoveries on the body of Chaos!

“Haven’t you been craving to find out the reason Chaos created the demon race?”

The Fire Ant King looked at him. “What if I say no after I consider everything carefully?”

Elder Nether Spring smiled. “The elites of the Blade of Chaos you brought with you are among the best experts of the chaotic-blood demons. They will be the perfect test subjects for me.

“You, too. I have never used an experiment subject in the demon emperor stage before.

“I almost can’t wait to find out what a marvelous ‘weapon’ I can make based on such an test subject like you!”

“You are quite straightforward,” the Fire Ant King observed.

“Because there is no need for lies now.”

The tusk cage behind him opened again. Elder Nether Spring bowed with a smile and walked out without looking back.

His lower half body stilled soaked in the acids, the Fire Ant King warmed up his arms and legs that had been paralyzed for a long time, deep in thought.

Li Yao was quite anxious. If the Fire Ant King decided to work with Elder Nether Spring, it would certainly be not good news for the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

But he was more worried that Elder Nether Spring had not really gone away yet. Neltharion kept hidden for more than an hour before it flew to the Fire Ant King’s face carefully.

A cluster of vague demonic energy immediately enveloped Neltharion.

The tentacles of neurons that tied the Fire Ant King up had been loosened, allowing him to move and manipulate his demonic energy more conveniently.

Li Yao hurried to ask, “Do you believe in Elder Nether Spring?”

“He must’ve been speaking the truth. Making up such a quirky lie brings him no benefits.”

The face of the Fire Ant King was solemn, and his eyes were flickering fast. He was obviously improving his computational ability to the peak.

“Are you planning to cooperate with him?” Li Yao was suddenly alarmed.

“Just because he was speaking the truth doesn’t mean he was speaking the whole truth,” the Fire Ant King said calmly. “The most brilliant lie is to make a hundred true statements after swapping the sequences of two of them. The conclusion made might be the opposite of the truth.”

Li Yao was confused. “What do you mean?”

“It’s simple. If Nether Spring really wants to cooperate with me, he does not need to make it so complicated at all. He knows that I am willing to pay everything for the survival of the chaotic-blood demons. Then, why did we have to attack each other?

“As long as he tells me that he has been developing a new Demon God Virus that can significantly enhance the combat ability of the chaotic-blood demons, is there any reason why I wouldn’t cooperate with him?

“He has clarified all the details but did not explain the reason of our conflict in a convincing way.

“Therefore, my conclusion is that he kept several pieces of key information to himself, some facts that I would definitely not cooperate with him if I knew!

“Therefore, he does not mean to cooperate with me at all. He merely wants to get the files of the Blade of Chaos and my research products. That’s all.

“I believe that if I was fooled by him and offered all my secret techniques and files to him for ‘communication’, my subordinates and I would end up being his experiment subjects immediately!”

Li Yao thought quickly and asked, “Therefore, we can still cooperate?”

“Whether or not we can cooperate depends on what you want exactly,” the Fire Ant King said coldly. “If you’ve snuck into the Blood Demon Sector for the purpose of conquering my homeland and smearing the brains of the demons on your tracks and sabers, is there any particular reason why I should cooperate with you? I will still be killed when the army of human beings marches close!

“Also, please cut the crap like you are helping the chaotic-blood demons to fight against the high-level demons due to your sense of justice. The demon race is a whole. If all the high-level demons are butchers, the low-level demons are still meat on the chopper block that is completely at the mercy of you.”

Chapter 909 - Weird Bronze Gate!

Li Yao sighed and said, “You won’t believe it even if I say that I have no ill intentions for the Blood Demon Sector. However, since both the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector are capable and boast great potential. The ultimate war between the two Sectors will last decades, and no matter which side wins the war in the end, it will suffer billions of casualties. The surviving civilization will even regress to hundreds of years ago. Do you agree?”

The Fire Ant King thought for a moment and replied, “I do.”

“But an apocalypse is coming within ten years”

The Fire Ant King was shocked. “What!”

“Believe it or not, in ten years at most, or three to five years if it is fast, an apocalypse will fall upon us,” said Li Yao. “The apocalypse will only be a scout. A hundred years later, an apocalypse that is larger in scale and can potentially destroy an entire world will arrive. Or rather, it is already on the trajectory of attack right now, and its target is the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector!

“You want your compatriots, the chaotic-blood demons, to survive. I also want my compatriots, people of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and all human beings, to survive. This is why I am here in the Blood Demon Sector!”

The Fire Ant King was silent for such a long time that Li Yao almost thought that the guy did not believe him at all. Then, he suddenly said, “Tell me more about the apocalypse.”

Li Yao did not reveal his identity, nor did he mention the name of the ‘Imperium of True Human Beings’. However, he compressed the entire story into a few critical, concise points and told them to the Fire Ant King.

The Fire Ant King did not care about the details. Maybe it was because he knew that Li Yao would not answer his questions honestly even if he asked. Instead, he inquired on the technical and crucial issues.

Their communication went on for a whole night. The indifference on the Fire Ant King’s face finally changed.

“If we are to cooperate, I must be freed from the cage at first,” the Fire Ant King said. “But more importantly, we must find out the information that Nether Spring did not tell us. I have a feeling that his plan to create a third perfect life form that is above the demon race and human beings has a certain dangerous air to it. It is certainly not as wonderful as his description.”

Deep inside the underground world, Li Yao pressed his left temple, his crimson left eye shining nonstop.

“Elder Nether Spring will be preparing to excavate the body of Chaos in the coming days. I have a plan.”

…

Three days later, the underground temple of the Mausoleum of Chaos had become vastly different after extensive exploration and excavation.

A few permanent research laboratories and training rooms had been established in a corner of the temple. Elder Nether

Spring’s most loyal researchers would stay there and continue their studies of the legacy of Chaos in the future.

A portion of the magical equipment, relics, and research files, on the other hand, had been divided, packed, and delivered to the devilish warship above the Star Swallowing Sea through the soft tubes. They were going to be transported to the more advanced research centers.

The capability of the Nether World Watch was much higher than the elites of the Blade of Chaos. Their efficiency in exploring the underground world was much higher, too. In less than three days, they had completed the preliminary survey of the entire Mausoleum of Chaos.

As they expected, they also discovered the secret chamber deep below the temple and far away from the main body of the mausoleum.

“Master Chu, according to your studies, that will be the place where ‘Chaos’ was buried, right?” Elder Nether Spring asked Chu Zhengqing rather respectfully.

Chu Zhengqing and his daughter Chu Feiyin were two researchers in Elder Nether Spring’s research centers in the first place. They were all pure scholars in the academic world who were dedicated to the exploration of the mysteries of Chaos, and it did not seem to bother them who their employer was. After they were ‘rescued’, they went back to work without any hesitation.

“Yes.”

Chu Zhengqing scanned the detailed picture of the fault that had just been drawn on his retina. Flames seemed to be dripping from his eyes as he mumbled to himself, “According to legend, Chaos suffered heavy wounds during battle and had to hide deep below the ground where there was no sunlight or radiation.

“This secret chamber in the abyss should be the place of his burial!”

“Excellent. Today, let’s go to the origin of the demon race and uncover the truth!” Elder Nether Spring waved his hands. “Despot, Swirl, prepare for the exploration!”

“Understood!”

‘Despot’ and ‘Swirl’, two captains of the Nether World Watch, immediately issued a series of commands to their subordinates.

The exploration team made of professional soldiers was soon gathered, too.

The main force of the exploration team was naturally the soldiers of the Nether World Watch, who had been strengthened by the demon cores. To avoid the possible poison and venom deep inside the Mausoleum of Chaos, they were all wearing fully-enclosed protective suits that were similar to the garments of the elites of the Blade of Chaos but much more advanced. They were also carrying the oxygen cylinders from the Heaven’s Origin Sector that would prevent them from inhaling the dirty air inside the tomb.

Other than that, they were manipulating a large batch of snakes, bugs, rats, mosquitoes, and even some beast puppets from the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

The lifeless beast puppets that were purely made of metals and crystals were naturally the best choices to explore the ancient tomb.

Even so, Elder Nether Spring was still not relieved. He asked Despot and Swirl to pick out thirty captives and force them to walk in front of the soldiers of the Nether World Watch.

It was also one of the reasons Elder Nether Spring had kept so many captives alive.

An hour later, the hundred members of the exploration team entered the center of the third floor of the Mausoleum of Chaos.

The third floor was filled with black rocks that seemed to be able to absorb all light. Even the brightness of the extremely penetrative searchlights and the fireflies was devoured by the wall.

All the members of the exploration team were soaked in a dim fog. They had to keep an eye on their companions all the time, or they might lose their way and fall into the endless darkness.

The center of the darkness was a square that was not large in scale. The ground of the square seemed to have been made by an enormous black rock hundreds of meters in length and width. There was not the tiniest joint on it.

The ground of the square was embedded with a huge, round, bronze gate that was approximately ten meters in diameter, carved with complicated spiritual stripes and patterns. A lot of the pictures were rather eerie and gloomy.

“The pathway leading to the tomb of Chaos should be past the bronze gate. The spiritual stripes on the gate are partly the password to open the gate and partly the rune arrays to prevent the radiation and telepathic thoughts of the outside world from leaking in.”

Chu Zhengqing and his daughter, along with several other experts, crouched before the bronze gate and touched it carefully. A moment later, they duplicated all the pictures on the bronze gate.

The pictures were similar to the wall paintings inside the underground temple. Several of them were telling a whole story.

However, after they analyzed the story, everybody felt creepy.

The first picture carved on the bronze gate was a human being who had stretched out his arms and legs. A drop of a bright golden liquid was about to fall upon his head, and the man opened his mouth wide, apparently trying to swallow the liquid.

Many other individuals who were much smaller were kneeling on the ground around him and worshipping him.

If the place below was indeed Chaos' tomb, the hero in the pictures carved on the gate of the tomb was doubtlessly 'Chaos' himself.

Chu Zhengqing explained to Elder Nether Spring, "The first picture seems to depict Chaos, as a 'human being', swallowing a kind of mysterious liquid. It seems to be a very important experiment or ritual."

In the second picture, there was still a human being whose limbs were all stretched out. But the body of a person had grown vivid feathers, scales, claws, tails, and horns.

Although it was just a stationary embossment, one could not help but feel that countless ferocious beasts were sealed inside the man’s body and would be woken up at any moment.

“After drinking the mysterious liquid, Chaos has grown features of multiple kinds of demons,” Chu Zhengqing said.

In the third, fourth, and fifth pictures, the features of demons became more and more obvious on Chaos. They were more and more disordered, too. He seemed to have become an amalgamation of countless types of animals, raging, roaring, and fighting against endless foes.

What was weirder was that, among his foes, there were both Cultivators in long robes riding their swords and hideously-grimacing demons. One could not tell the stance of ‘Chaos’ at all.

Even more shockingly, in the sixth picture, Chaos, who was now showing the features of hundreds of types of demons, exploded like a balloon that had expanded too much.

As a result, in the seventh picture, Chaos turned into split translucent materials that looked like jellyfish.

Chu Zhengqing and the specialists studied for a long time but could not figure out what it meant. “What’s the meaning of this? Is it indicating that ‘Chaos’ died of mental derangement?”

“We will know the truth as soon as the gate is opened,” Elder Nether Spring said. “How long will it take?”

A short and ugly expert who was adept at traps placed multiple metal balls on various parts of the bronze gate. He picked out tiny bugs from his ears and made them crawl along the edge of the gate. He said in a low voice, “It won’t take long. A very serious accident seems to have taken place in the Mausoleum of Chaos, which killed everybody outside. The gate was sealed in a hurry, too, and is not flawless.

“Such barriers have been found in many tombs over the past forty thousand years. Their structure is not rare. As long as we—”

The specialist seemed to have heard something and tilted his head. The metal balls that were on the bronze gate all rolled rapidly along the bumpy spiritual stripes. They passed by and crashed into each other, turning into streaks of silver brightness. In the end, after a ‘bo’ sound, they melted like ice and turned into mercury-like liquid!

The liquid metal seemed to be alive. It zigzagged and soon filled every gap among the spiritual stripes!

Crack!

Behind the bronze gate, in a place that sounded far, far away, a dull, mechanical noise echoed.

Then, the deafening noises of running gears reverberated. The bronze gate was shivering slightly, and even the figures on the pictures of the gate seemed to be twisting weirdly!

Chapter 910 - Mutation Black Gas!

The anomaly of the bronze gate raised the wariness of all the soldiers of the Nether World Watch. Even Elder Nether Spring, one of the best experts of the Blood Demon Sector, was also gazing at the twisted embossments without blinking.

The tombs and relics of ancient experts were the favorites for both Cultivators and demons. If they could find a few legacies inside the bomb, they might be able to make a significant breakthrough in their training. However, such places were mostly full of traps, and the explorers might get killed should they be careless.

However, the studies of the specialists and the prospecting over the last few days had reached the same conclusion—the Mausoleum of Chaos was closed because of an extremely gory accident in which everybody inside the mausoleum was instantly killed.

Maybe, it was because the leakage of a very tough virus that caused the mental derangement and mutation of the researchers, who killed each other until none remained.

Under such circumstances, Chaos died a rather hasty death, and there were not many followers who could finish setting up the traps for him.

It was also one of the reasons why Elder Nether Spring dared explore the place in person.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

The sounds of spinning gears and rubbing chains behind the bronze gate sounded closer and closer. At first, they seemed to be from the core of the planet, but right now, they were echoing right inside everybody’s ears, making the explorers feel that it was not just the bronze gate that was being twisted but also their internal organs.

Before the gate was fully opened, some of the relatively weak specialists were already gagging.

Huala!

The next second, the bronze gate suddenly collapsed.

“Aim all the fireflies and searchlights at the bronze gate. Everybody, retreat ten meters!” Elder Nether Spring commanded.

Dozens of searchlights captured and smuggled from the Heaven’s Origin Sector, with crystals as cores and enhanced by hundreds of light-concentrating rune arrays, were aimed at the bronze gate at the same time. In the meantime, countless bugs that were much larger than normal fireflies and had crystals embedded in their heads and bottoms flew to the top of the bronze gate, too.

The radiance generated by them illuminated their surroundings like daylight. Even so, the brightness was still heavily refrained above the bronze gate, as if the black fog that was flowing out of the bronze gate was devouring all of it.

With the help of the light that had been suppressed to the minimum, one could vaguely see that the bronze gate had descended about five meters. Then, it revolved anticlockwise three times and clockwise two and a half times. In the end, after a ‘clang’ sound, the pivot of the gate seemed to have opened, and the bronze gate split apart like a blossoming flower, retreating into the depths of the rocks.

The bronze gate was no more. The pathway below the gate extended deep underground, vertically like a shaft. Naturally, nobody was able to tell what was down there when they were standing aside.

“Hundred Feet, explore the environment!” shrieked Swirl, the butterfly demon.

One of the soldiers of the Nether World Watch immediately walked out of the team. There were barely any features of human beings on his body. He was more like a hybrid of an enormous spider and a centipede. He had two long limbs in front of his body, and more than ten red, complex eyes were grown among the villus and the end of the limbs.

Hundred Feet extended his limbs. They seemed to have been refined by special genes for the purpose of reconnaissance. When his limbs, which were almost three meters long at first, were fully unfolded, they became more than ten meters long. Connected by more than ten joints, he could move his limbs freely in the most complicated tunnels.

Hundred Feet extended his limbs that were brimming with complex eyes into the dark hole on the ground.

Despot and Swirl, the two captains of the Nether World Watch, both placed their hands near the head of ‘Hundred Feet’ and connected to his brain with synthesized neurons, sharing his vision.

“Judging from the soundwave detection in the beginning, the pathway is at least twenty kilometers long, with many footholds on the wall to help everybody go in and out. But the wall of the hole is extremely smooth. It is impossible for ordinary people to go inside without the help of tools.”

“Dark fog is everywhere inside the pathway. Although the complex eyes of ‘Hundred Feet’ have been specially refined and trained, it is impossible to see more than a hundred meters away.”

“Huh. What’s that sound?”

At the end of the pathway, deep down the underground, deafening noises that sounded like a surging hurricane suddenly flooded up like a spring!

“Watch out! Don’t get hurt!”

Swirl tackled Hundred Feet to the ground while a cluster of ball lightning was quickly expanding between the two enormous horns on the head of ‘Despot’.

Almost at the same time, the sound of the hurricane had already reached the entrance of the hole. After a boom, a large cluster of black gas charged out like a volcanic eruption!

“Ahhh!”

The last section of the limbs of Hundred Feet had not been pulled out of the shaft yet, which was hit precisely by the black gas. He screamed miserably, and his complex eyes suddenly bulged like abnormal tumors, only to explode one by one a moment later!

Hundred Feet screamed in the excruciating pain.

Swirl was quick enough to react. She waved her butterfly wings, and a stream of colorful brilliance circled around the swollen limbs of Hundred Feet. The limbs were immediately cut off, but like vipers whose heads had been chopped off, they writhed violently on the ground before they finally melted into a pool of pus!

The black gas soared up and enshrouded most of the fluorescent fireflies. The brightness of half the fireflies immediately died down while they withered and fell into the shaft like hailstones.

In the meantime, the other half of the fireflies were shining even more brightly than before. Amid hissing sounds, their wings and limbs grew crazily, and they significantly expanded in scale, turning from the size of a thumb to the size of almost a palm!

The enlarged florescence fireflies were like flash bombs that had grown wings. They turned extremely brutal, bloodthirsty, and hungry. With earsplitting shrieks, they dashed to the soldiers of the Nether World Watch through various directions!

“The fireflies are out of control!” one of the explorers exclaimed.

Most of the subordinates of Elder Nether Spring belonged to the Insect Clan. As their name suggested, they were all experts in manipulating insects. All the insect-type demon beasts were like arms and fingers under their control.

But right now, the fluorescent fireflies, which were refined with the blood of the soldiers of the Nether World Army and were essentially part of their organs, would not listen to their commands!

At the critical moment, ‘Despot’, the Hercules beetle, bellowed and blew out a ball of lightning between his horns. It was then detonated in the middle of the mutated fluorescent fireflies, turning into an enormous electric web more than ten square meters large. The mysterious blue electric arcs confined all the florescence fireflies inside!

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

Despite the boundary of the intense electric arcs, the florescence fireflies were not killed instantly. They were still struggling hard and almost tore apart the electric web several times.

“Huh?”

Despot’s shell was shaking and producing rattling noises. The demon cores that were embedded into his body were glittering, and the electric arcs that he released turned from deep blue into crimson!

Under the surging crimson electric arcs, most of the florescence fireflies were finally electrocuted into dry corpses and blown into ash, but some ten fireflies that were particularly vigorous were not electrocuted. Instead, they further mutated in the electric arcs, with sharp thorns growing out of their body and their mouthparts expanding into what seemed to be shining caltrops!

“What?”

Despot seemed to feel humiliated. Bloody steam was popping up from his face that was covered in black armor. His arms bashed each other brutally like two rushing crystal trains. The super demon core at the center of his breastplate that looked like a mirror suddenly shinned, changing the electric arcs that he was letting out from crimson into pale white.

Finally, all the mutated fluorescent fireflies were killed.

“Spray the stabilizing drugs, now!” Swirl commanded anxiously.

A few soldiers of the Nether World Watch that were like rice-puddings quickly moved forward.

They were all wearing multiple layers of fully-enclosed protective suits, even including the anti-poison equipment from the Heaven’s Origin Sector. They were also carrying several huge, silver, high-pressure bottles on which a lot of rune arrays were shining brilliantly.

Pu! Pu! Pu! Pu!

Dark green foam spurted out of the high-pressure bottles and formed a solid barrier around the black gas.

The moment the dark green foam touched the black gas, it immediately simmered and enveloped the black gas, neutralizing it and generating a huge amount of harmless, bright green gas that was spreading afar in the room.

“The black gas that sank to the deepest part of the tomb of Chaos seems to have the effect of overly stimulating the activity of cells. Any living creature that touches it will turn extremely crazy, and their vitality will be drained in an instant!

“Thankfully, the structure of the ancient black gas is relatively simple. It can be neutralized by our stabilizing drugs.”

One of the poison specialists was operating a few local artifacts of the Blood Demon Sector and several pieces of air examination magical equipment from the Heaven’s Origin Sector, while he observed quickly, “The black gas has been sealed inside the tomb of Chaos for forty thousand years. During the forty thousand years, because of the tectonic movement, the air pressure inside the tomb changed a lot. That’s why it is spurting out. I estimate that it will all disperse in five minutes.

“However, inside the tomb of Chaos, there might be residue of the black gas. It is suggested that we spray stabilizing drugs into the cave and neutralize the gas before our exploration.”

As he predicted, three minutes later, the black gas was spurting much less forcefully, like a spring that had lost pressure. Five minutes later, there was no more black gas.

Even so, Elder Nether Spring still asked the Nether World Watch to wait half an hour, and he told the specialist to send a piece of air examination magical equipment deep into the shaft with a long, narrow rope.

The rope was ten kilometers long. The result was that no constituents of lethal poisons were detected ten thousand meters into the hole.

Since the tomb had been sealed for forty thousand years, the air was naturally not suitable for breathing. However, since the demons did not have a high demand on the air quality like humans did, and they were all carrying highly-compressed oxygen cylinders, there would not be a problem.

During the half hour while the black gas was being mediated, the Nether World Watch worked on the shaft and established a temporary lift with a solid chain.

However, due to the restriction of the hardness of the material, the chain was only five thousand meters long. If it were any longer, it would collapse because of its own eight.

Many experts of the Nether World Watch could fly and float in midair. Those who could not were mostly able to slither on the wall of the cave like lizards. The lift was mainly prepared to deliver assets.

They planned to establish such a lift every five thousand meters below the shaft. With such a relay system, they would be able to extract all the items of value inside the tomb.

Chapter 911 - Inside the Darkness

Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum!

Half an hour later, the first batch of scouting insect-type demon beasts were thrown into the shaft. The batch of insect-type demon beasts had been specially refined and all boasted advanced optical and sensory organs. Their complex eyes were glittering in the darkness.

One hundred meters, two hundred meters, three hundred meters…

Manipulated by the experts through their secret arts, the insect-type demon beasts dived deeper and deeper.

However, when they were below five thousand meters, all the insect-type demon beasts lost connection with their masters, who could not sense their existence at all anymore.

The same happened to the second batch of insect-type demon beasts. The demon beasts could have been projected to at least a hundred kilometers away while maintaining a feeble connection with their masters. However, in the weird shaft, the connection was always cut off when they reached no deeper than seven thousand meters. No secret arts that enhanced the connection helped.

The third batch to be tossed in were the beast puppets from the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

But the magical equipment made purely of mechanics, crystals, and rune arrays was the same. All the devices lost connection with their controllers when they were five to six thousand meters below the ground.

“It appears that the last shelter of Chaos was built with special radiation-proof and wave-proof materials. Together with the special rune arrays, all telepathic thoughts and mental connections are blocked, thereby jamming all communication!”

A few traps and architecture specialists studied for a long time after they sent a few pieces of probe magical equipment into the shaft. Finally, they reached such a conclusion.

“You mean that we cannot learn anything that is happening inside the shaft in the ground?” Elder Nether Spring observed calmly. “Then we will have to send someone down for exploration in person.”

Despot, the Hercules beetle, was the first to stand up and requested in a deep voice, “Elder, let me!”

“Your body is too huge. You alone will take up almost half of the room of the shaft. Should there be anything wrong, it will be difficult for you to run away.”

Swirl, the butterfly demon, said casually, “Let me go instead.”

Elder Nether Spring pondered for a moment and said, “Swirl, you will go. There is no telling what kind of dangers are lurking inside the tomb of Chaos. Other traps can be resolved slowly, but mental attacks will be extremely hard to deal with.

“Swirl is an expert in mental warfare. Your flying ability is better than Despot’s, too, and it will be more convenient for you to move inside the narrow shaft.

“Swirl, remember this—”

Elder Nether Spring concentrated his voice into a twisted channel of soundwaves and pushed it to Swirl’s ears. “When you’re down there, other relics and treasures can be excavated slowly. But you will have to find ‘the thing’ as soon as possible.”

“Understood!” Swirl replied respectfully. “But please give me a description of the asset, Elder.”

Elder Nether Spring pondered for a moment and said, “It should be large, complicated information in some form. Perhaps, it will also have an activation switch like a ‘key’. In any case, the date is too enormous to have been loaded onto the ancient jade chips forty thousand years ago.

“Before the mission, I have asked you to study the multiple kinds of magical equipment that the ancient Cultivators utilized to store information. By my estimation, what you should be looking for is a ‘Hidden Star Box’, a ‘Sky Storage Bottle’, or any other ancient magical equipment that has a capacity hundreds of times larger than the jade chip!”

“Understood!”

Swirl and Elder Nether Spring discussed for a while longer and settled the details. They selected thirty soldiers of the Nether World Watch who were slender and adept at flying, and they asked ten captives to walk at the front.

“Aren’t you the most loyal believers of Chaos? At the bottom of the shaft is the tomb of your God Chaos. Chances are that you will see the body of Chaos with your own eyes. What a glory it must be for you!”

Swirl grinned hideously. “If your god is really watching over you and we finish the exploration smoothly, you and your companions will all be spared.

“But if anybody hesitates or defects, hehe, not only will they be executed, we will also pick ten random captives from the remaining prisoners and kill them as sacrifices!

“If you don’t want to get yourself and your companions killed, just prey to your God Chaos quietly and wish that he doesn’t jump out or stir any trouble!”

Huala!

The shackles of ten captives of the Blade of Chaos were all unlocked. They were offered some strengthening drugs to recover their strength, and they were even given a protective suit of the same standard as the soldiers of the Nether World Watch.

It was not because the Nether World Watch cared about their lives. They actually would not mind at all if the captives were killed by poison. However, if the captives became insane monsters with infinite physical strength like the fluorescent fireflies did just now, it would be a major nuisance for them.

The ten captives of the Blade of Chaos looked at each other in bewilderment. Although they had regained their freedom for now, there was no much they could do under the suppression of the Nether World Watch. Besides, a lot of their companions were still locked in the upper level, including their leader, the Fire Ant King. They were not able to resist at all.

God Chaos, please watch over us!

The ten captives of the Blade of Chaos prayed silently. Threatened by the Nether World Watch, they jumped into the shaft one after the other.

The bottomless shaft seemed to lead to the core of the planet. The entire pathway was wreathed in vague black fog, and clusters of black cotton were drifting among them.

A feeble air current was blowing from below, holding them like a pair of invisible giant hands.

Both the captives from the Blade of Chaos and the elites of the Nether World Watch were adept at the swiftness skills. Besides, footholds that they could climb on had been embedded on the smooth wall. Therefore, it was not difficult for them to descend.

Every soldier of the Nether World Watch was surrounded by a lot of communication bugs. However, after they were more than six thousand meters below the ground, the communication bugs lost connection to the surface and could only be used for internal communication.

The deeper they went, the denser the black fog became. In the end, they could barely see their own fingers.

Although they carried a lot of searchlights and fluorescent fireflies with them, the best they could only vaguely see each other’s outlines.

The exploration team went down for more than half an hour inside the shaft before they finally reached the bottom.

Humming sounds were echoing nearby nonstop. The brightness of the searchlights turned dim. When they aimed the searchlights at the source of sound, they found that the scouting insect-type demon beasts that were projected into the shaft earlier were all flying aimlessly like headless chickens.

Seeing the brightness of the search lights, a lot of the insects crashed toward the source of the light crazily, leaving a lot of scattered shadows behind them.

“The electromagnetic field here is extremely chaotic. It is impossible to tell the direction. No wonder all the demon beasts went out of control.”

One of the soldier of the Nether World Watch was carrying a multipurpose compass produced by the Star Glory Federation. The pointer on the gadget was spinning fast like a fan.

“The air quality is acceptable. Although the percentage of oxygen is merely 2.5%, no constituents of fatal poisons have been detected.”

Another soldier of the Nether World Watch was operating a crystal processor skillfully.

Wars were always the best means of communication between two civilizations. After years of battles against the Heaven’s Origin Sector, a lot of magical equipment and technology of the Cultivators had been introduced into the Blood Demon Sector and become quite popular.

“Survey the terrain with the soundwave detectors first and then explore the area anticlockwise. It’s extremely hazy here. Everybody, stick close to each other. Including the captives, have a headcount every five minutes so that nobody drops behind,” Swirl commanded quickly.

There was nothing but darkness around them. The searchlights could only reach ten meters away before their brightness was consumed by the black fog. The fluorescent fireflies went out of control, too, and hovered around their heads without listening to commands.

Their glow fluctuated. Not only was it unhelpful in illuminating the place, it was also adding to the anxious vibe.

Bo! Bo! Bo!

Dull soundwaves echoed more than twenty thousand meters below the surface of the planet. Very soon, the environment nearby was outlined and fed back to the biochemical chips that the explorers wore on their eyeballs.

Judging from the result of the echolocation, they were now in a space about five hundred meters both in length and in width.

Compared with the magnificent and boundless underground temple above, it was simply not large at all.

The space was purely empty. There were no pillars. The only thing that could be seen was a high bump at the center, which looked like an enormous rock, a throne, or a huge coffin.

The entire space was drowned in water that almost reached their knees. There was no telling whether it was the underground water that flowed in through the cracks on the wall or it had remained in this place for forty thousand years.

After forty thousand years of vaporization and brewing, the water had already become liquid that was almost as thick as oil. After every step they made forward, they would drag a few more tiny, greasy threads with them.

However, except for the excessive bacteria inside, the water was not poisonous or corrosive.

“Five captives at the front, and five at the back. Start exploring!”

The exploration team gradually reached the edge of the space and moved anticlockwise. The wall of the area turned out to be enormous black stones that were piled up on which lines of dense characters the size of the head of a fly were engraved.

“What’s this?”

Almost ten searchlights were aimed at the wall at the same time. They found that the wall of black rocks, which was almost fifty meters tall, had been occupied by characters, numbers, and runes the size of millet seeds.

Some of the words were written neatly, but some others were extremely casual and illegible. There were even some words that appeared to be random graffiti. Everybody felt that their head was dizzy after just a quick look.

However, judging from the font and the depth of the words on the rocks, it was doubtless that they had been written by the same individual.

“The content appears to be a certain technique, no, a method to make an unknown poison, no, a flowchart of the production of a certain piece of magical equipment?”

“I got it. It is a combination of many random marvelous skills and arts that are intermittent and messy, with a lot of traces of smearing and editing. It should be… a draft!”

“It seems that the secret chamber was indeed the training room and research room for Chaos, who regarded the wall as his scrap paper when he considered new techniques. Whenever he thought of something new, he would carve his thoughts on the wall!”

“Hurry up and scan on the markings on the wall. Let’s move them back and ask the specialists to analyze them carefully. Hopefully, we will get a few useful techniques!”

A lot of ideas and thoughts were left on the walls all around them. But other than those, there were also a great number of animalistic claw marks that wiped out many words and formulas.

Some of the claw marks were several meters deep into the wall, as if they had been left by an extremely ferocious animal that was on a rampage.

Chapter 912 - Don't Believe Him!

“It’s rather strange. Since this is the place where Chaos trained himself, and it is apparently heavily guarded, it is impossible that any animal could have broken into the room. Who was it that left the terrifying claw marks exactly?”

The enormous claw marks made the exploration team even more vigilant. It took them more than two hours for them to examine all four walls.

In the meantime, they sent two messengers back to the ground for communication and were reinforced by another ten tough soldiers of the Nether World Watch, who brought even more artifacts, magical equipment, and surveying tools with them.

Then, they marched toward the center of the tomb of Chaos.

Without the wall to guide them, they were caught in a black ocean after only ten meters. Every other direction was covered in the black fog that was not dispersing at all. The only thing that could be seen were the ripples that were spreading out on the water that was up to their knees.

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

All the soldiers of the Nether World Watch activated the demon cores that were embedded in their bodies. Demonic energy, electric arcs, and flames were vaguely flowing inside the demon cores.

“Be careful. We’re only two hundred meters away from the monolithic object at the center. There are no obstructions in front of us. Stay in a line and march forward at the lowest speed. Do not leave anybody behind!”

Swirl was an expert in mental attacks. The powder that was released from her body spread out like colorful airwaves. Everybody felt relatively relaxed.

At that moment…

Huala! Huala!

Weird noises suddenly echoed inside the water!

“There’s something in the water!”

Along with an exclamation, dozens of mysterious, black shadows sprang out of the water and darted toward everybody like bolts of lightning!

They turned out to be the blood-sucking flying swords that Li Yao had met before!

The flying swords seemed to have never sucked any real blood in the past forty thousand years. Their veins were withered, out of shape, and dangled down from the body of the flying swords like dried earthworms.

It was exactly because of their hunger for blood that they were shrieking and attacking so furiously!

“Stop them!”

Swirl snapped her fingers. Dozens of streams of powder spurted out of her fingertips and turned into colorful rainbows in midair. From moving through the air at a high speed, the friction caused them to burst into flames!

The colorful flames interweaved into an impregnable web that went toward the incoming flying swords and trapped them!

The other soldiers of the Nether World Watch all showed their own skills, too. They slightly opened their fully-enclosed protective suits, revealing the demon cores on their bodies.

The demon cores were triggered, forming shields of spiritual energy and long sabers of flames near them. They slashed the blood-sucking flying swords with the hundreds of blade auras!

The blood-sucking flying swords, after forty thousand years of hibernation, were already running low on energy. Under the attack of the soldiers of the Nether World Watch, they all broke apart and fell back to the water helplessly.

Hissing sounds echoed within the water, as if it were boiling.

But one of the captives of the Blade of Chaos left the battle formation in panic and was scratched by one of the broken blood-sucking flying swords. A shallow wound was cut open on his arm.

The blood-sucking flying sword crawled into the body of the captive like a parasite. Very soon, half of the body was already dried up.

However, before the blood-sucking flying sword darted out again, dozens of blade auras had already arrived overwhelmingly, slashing both the captive and the sword into pieces!

“It appears that your God Chaos rather cares about you!” Swirl mocked.

But another abrupt change already took place. In the water near everybody, a few giants that looked like iron towers suddenly sat straight. Under the searchlights, they appeared to be metal puppets that were made of bronze and carved with dense spiritual stripes on their bodies!

The puppet giants had been shattered, their upper halves were separated from their lower halves, and they were soaked deep inside the water. That was why they had not been detected earlier.

Even without their lower halves, they were still more than two meters tall, and their arms were almost ten meters long when stretched out. Countless weapons and pieces of magical equipment were hidden inside their cylindric, black arms.

The puppet giants were driven by the crystals that were embedded to their chests and their joints. They had probably been woken up from the hibernation state because they sensed the scent of living creatures just like the blood-sucking flying sword did.

They were roaring deeply and twisting their rusted joints hard. Opening their coldly blinking hands, they lunged toward the soldiers of the Nether World Watch.

“Don’t panic. Attack their crystals!” Swirl bellowed quickly. The speed of her fingers increased significantly, transforming the powder into dancing butterflies that danced around the puppet giants and eventually stopped on the shining crystals.

The powder butterflies leaked into the crystals immediately. The shining crystals seemed to have been mixed with a lot of impurities and lost their brilliance, turning dirty and obscure.

The broken puppet giants stopped functioning again. The last hollow sigh echoed inside their body that had almost been fully corroded.

The other few puppet giants were cut into pieces by the soldiers of the Nether World Watch, too.

Except for one heavily wounded soldier, most of the teammates were safe and sound.

After examining the multiple kinds of magical equipment hidden in the body of the puppet giants, Swirl concluded, “Those beast puppets do not look like designated guards. They are more like… servants and acolytes of Chaos.”

Most of the magical equipment was not aggressive but designed to dissect, refine, maintain objects, and run experiments.

The episodes did not interrupt their exploration. After a moment of rest, the exploration team continued to move forward while they paid close attention to the water on their way. They did not meet much trouble on the rest of the way. Instead, they collected a lot of debris of jade chips and magical equipment from the water.

Fifteen minutes later, they finally reached the huge ‘coffin’ at the center of the space!

Both the soldiers of the Nether World Watch and the captives of the Blade of Chaos held their breath and aimed their searchlights at the object.

Outside their expectations, what appeared in front of them was not a splendid throne, not a creepy coffin, but a facility that look like a ‘pool’.

The ‘pool’ was made of the purest and most flawless crystals. It was about three meters above the ground and almost ten meters in length and width. Dense, elegant spiritual stripes had been carved on the object, forming what appeared to be an extremely complicated rune array whose purpose nobody was aware of.

Above the ‘pool’, there was a cover that was made of the same material. It was connected to the ‘pool’ with tracks so that the ‘pool’ could be closed with the minimal strength.

After it was closed, the pool and the cover were fully integrated without the tiniest gap.

Around the crystal pool were a lot of huge tanks, some of which were directly linked to the crystal pool while some others were docked to the crystal pool through soft tubes.

After such a long time, the soft tubes made of the stomachs of demon beasts had all decayed.

At first glance, the crystal pool was very similar to the biochemical culture slots that were popular among the demons. But it was purely empty. Except for the transparent liquids, there was absolutely nothing, not even any bones, much less the intact body of Chaos.

“This is rather uncanny. All the evidence suggests that this is the place of Chaos’ death. Why are there no bones at all?” Swirl frowned. “Where will the ‘thing’ that Elder demanded be put if the body does not exist?”

Right then, illuminated by one of the searchlights, Swirl discovered something resembling an agate glimmering inside the crystal pool.

“What is that?”

Swirl was interested and moved closer, observing the item against the edge of the pool.

Right then, a miserable scream echoed behind Swirl. A captive of the Blade of Chaos seemed to have been possessed by a devil, and his wrists and ankles twisted unnaturally as he suddenly jerked up!

…

Out of the bronze gate, Despot had been pacing back and forth anxiously for several hours.

“There’s no need to be nervous, Despot. I’ve asked Swirl to send a messenger back every ten minutes. Everything was still on track ten minutes ago.”

Elder Nether Spring was rather at ease. He was even in the mood of a cup of good tea while he sat and talked with Chu Zhengqing, the specialist of the studies of Chaos.

Right then, a weird shriek suddenly echoed deep below the ground!

The shriek made the color drain from everyone’s face. Despot almost could not wait to jump into the shaft now.

“Wait!” Elder Nether Spring shouted to stop him. “The situation is still unclear. Don’t go inside recklessly!”

Very soon, the weird shriek was clearer and more disordered, like the jibber-jabber of someone crazy who had been scared witless.

A shadow gradually appeared from the shaft.

The horns on Despot’s head were surrounded by dazzling electric arcs again, which spread down along the wall of the shaft.

More than ten searchlights that had been deployed above the shaft were all turned on and shot their brightness downwards, illuminating a shadow who was soaked in blood.

“It’s a captive!”

Despot gritted his teeth, his face extremely ugly.

The protective suit of the captive had been ripped into shreds, and there were wounds all over his body. His entire left arm had been torn away. There was no telling what strength supported him to flee to the ground!

As if being chased by a monster from his worst nightmare, he quickly ran up the wall of the shaft and soon dashed out of the hole, covered in a dense bloody aura. He then fell to the ground, his blood splashing to everywhere!

“Sterilization! Isolation!”

Elder Nether Spring quickly moved backwards.

Pu! Pu! Pu! Pu!

The deep green foam and the stabilizing drugs fully wreathed the captive of the Blade of Chaos who had lost his arm. But inside the foam, the captive was still letting out the most appalled cries.

“Dead! All dead! They’re all dead!”

Despot could not have been more anxious. He stepped forward and shouted loudly, “What exactly happened down there? Speak now!”

“Don’t! Don’t come close!”

The captive of the Blade of Chaos seemed to have lost his mind because of the horror and even failed to recognize Despot and Elder Nether Spring. He wriggled on the ground with foam all over his body and tried to flee outwards, leaving a long trace of blood on the ground.

“Elder, it seems that something bad has happened down there. Let me take a team and check out!”

Despot’s eyes were red in anxiety, and he was breathing heavily.

Elder Nether Spring, on the other hand, sensed that something was wrong. He narrowed his eyes and mumbled, “Wait a moment. Something is not right.”

Right then, a few communication bugs that were hovering above the shaft suddenly vibrated their wings crazily, sending out an earsplitting warning from the depths of the shaft.

” **Don’t believe him!** ”

Chapter 913 - The Secret Treasure Is Now Mine!

The shriek was like a signal to detonate a bomb. Some of the soldiers of the Nether World Watch could tell that it was uttered by Swirl, their captain. They had never heard Swirl speak in such a hasty, distressed, and desperate way before!

Before they realized what was going on, the stabilizing foam on the body of the captive of the Blade of Chaos suddenly exploded, and demonic energy so intense that it appeared almost tangible swept over the hundred square meters around him like blade auras!

All the soldiers of the Nether World Watch could not help but narrow their eyes, as if sharp sabers were slashing right at their faces!

Such a powerful outburst of demonic energy was only indicative of one thing—the mitochondria deep inside the guy’s cells were outputting energy crazily like a volcanic eruption!

In that moment, only Elder Nether Spring, Despot, and few top experts were able to react.

However, because of the tricky movement of the captive of the Blade of Chaos earlier, Elder Nether Spring was blocked by the enormous body of Despot.

Including Elder Nether Spring, none of the top experts were able to launch an attack past Despot.

Hooo!

Despot was one of the toughest experts of the Nether World Watch aside from Elder Nether Spring, and his power was almost equal to a demon emperor. His reactions were not slow. The balls of lightning between his spear-like horns burst out again. Dozens of electric arcs slapped toward the body of the captive of the Blade of Chaos, and a few landed just in front of the guy.

If the enemy had been fleeing ahead, he would certainly have been hit precisely by the electric arcs. Even if he could resist the bombardment of dozens of electric arcs, he would inevitably have been slowed down.

It was enough for Elder Nether Spring to catch up with him!

But out of Despot's expectation, the enemy did not lunge forward after his outburst of demonic energy. Instead, like a scorpion that was tossed into a tank of boiling oil, he jerked backwards weirdly and jumped into Despot's arms!

The enemy's action was far beyond Despot's expectations. All the electric arcs missed their target!

The captive of the Blade of Chaos was levels faster than Despot. His legs hit the demon core on Despot's chest like the main gun of a crystal warship, and his strength flooded into the demon core crazily!

BOOM!

Endless spiritual energy was contained inside the demon core. Stimulated by the invading force, it was like a spring that was compressed to the minimum and naturally gave out a strong counterforce.

But the enemy was extremely deft. When the counterforce of the demon core reached its highest point, he made use of the counterforce and leapt up. Boosted by the combination of the two forces, he rushed forward like a cannon ball, breaking the sonic barrier immediately and turning into a bloody streak of brightness!

Starting from the shriek down the shaft, to the outburst of the enemy's demonic energy, to the bombardment of Despot's electric arcs, to the enemy moving backwards instead of forward and eventually dashing out with the counterforce of the demonic core on Despot's chest, it had all happened in less than half a second!

Despot's enormous body that looked like a heavy crystal tank, and on the other hand, like a kite whose string had been cut. He was kicked away by the enemy easily, right toward Elder Nether Spring.

Elder Nether Spring moved. He grabbed one of the horns on Despot's head with only three of his fingers, holding him and balancing him again.

However, Elder Nether Spring's attack had been disrupted, and the best moment to stop the enemy had passed.

Shua! Shua! Shua!

In the darkness, four emotionless 'Elder Nether Springs' crawled out and stood in the way of the enemy's escape.

They were all clones that Elder Nether Spring had condensed with the mirage green ants and had been lurking in the darkness earlier.

But the enemy seemed to be quite familiar with Elder Nether Spring's combat style. The red streak zigzagged rapidly, leaving two of the clones behind without being touched by them at all.

In the meantime, the other two clones were blown to smithereens by the ivory beams of light that were shot out of his palms!

The streak of redness vanished into the darkness!

Elder Nether Spring’s face suddenly turned extremely ugly. It was so green that liquid might have dripped down at any moment. He turned into a streak of greenness and chased after the enemy!

He waved his hands. The other few clones that were condensed by the mirage green ants merged together and returned to the bronze gate, staring at the entrance of hole coldly.

Very soon, Swirl struggled to fly out.

Her wretched appearance greatly surprised both Despot and Elder Nether Spring.

The butterfly demon was no longer as exotic and enchanting as she used to. Her colorful wings had been shattered, and barely any part of her skin was still intact. A shockingly large hole could be found on her left abdomen, through which her poor internal organs were all exposed to the air.

Judging from the appearance of the wound, she had been ambushed by someone from behind!

Swirl’s face was so swollen that it looked like a pickled pig’s head and could not have been uglier. With the most desperate expression, she cried, “Elder, forgive my incompetence…”

“Cut the crap!” Elder Nether Spring’s clone gnashed his teeth. “What happened?”

“One of the captives of the Blade of Chaos pretended that he was bewildered by the traps deep inside the tomb of Chaos and acted crazily. I went close to him to check and was ambushed in my carelessness!”

Swirl had not entirely recovered from her shock. “No. He couldn’t have been one of the captives that we locked up. He must’ve mixed in with them later. His capability was very high, and he was practically immune to my mental attacks!”

“Of course, his capability is very high!” The face of Elder Nether Spring’s clone was getting darker and darker. “Even Despot was no match for him and was directly kicked away. The guy must be at least in the level of demon emperor!

“I didn’t know that there was a second demon emperor hiding in the Blade of Chaos apart from the Fire Ant King!

“That’s not right!” The nose of Elder Nether Spring’s clone flapped, as if he had smelt something weird in the air. “The guy destroyed my clones with techniques similar to the ‘Cell Obliteration Cannon’. But it was extremely powerful, which reminds me of…

“The expert that was with Jin Xinyue!”

The pupils of Elder Nether Spring’s clone suddenly shrank. “The expert who was with Jin Xinyue performed the same move when they were getting rid of the pursuers inside the Hundred Desolation Mountain!

“How on earth did he end up in this place?”

“Elder…” Swirl struggled to move her body and whispered to her master, “The guy… the guy also stole something from the center of the tomb.”

“Huh?” The face of Elder Nether Spring’s clone lost color again. “What was it?”

“It was a piece of ancient magical equipment that looked like a ‘Hidden Star Box’, which was likely the ‘thing’ that you asked me to retrieve, Elder,” Swirl replied dutifully. “The guy hid among the captives and did not go on a rampage until the Hidden Star Box was discovered. It seems that his purpose was exactly the item.”

Elder Nether Spring’s clone took a deep breath with a gloomy face. A moment later, his fury that had nowhere to be vented finally burst out. After a boom, the thousands of mirage green ants that formed his clone exploded into a blowing storm, turning into what seemed to be a tall shadow and roaring toward the sky in outrage.

Deep inside the underground temple, Elder Nether Spring’s true self further accelerated and was closer and closer to the streak of redness in the front!

The pathway was long and narrow and did not have a turn or anywhere to hide in. It was pure speed that both of them were counting on.

In three seconds, the enemy would enter Elder Nether Spring’s attack range. Elder Nether Spring’s sharp eyes had already ripped him apart twenty times.

Right then, an abrupt change took place.

BOOM! BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM!

Around the pathway, dozens of crystal bombs, acid bombs, and venom bombs were detonated at the same time. The spiritual energy, venomous stings, and acids were mixed together and filled up the entire narrow space like a raging wind!

Elder Nether Spring roared, not caring about the minor explosion at all. A shield of demonic energy was formed around his body. All the attacks, be they acid, venom, or the shrapnel of magical equipment, seemed to be stuck by thick glue when they hit the shield and could not touch his body at all.

However, the serial bomb had been planned very neatly. Perhaps, the rock stratums above had already been contaminated by the acids. After the explosion, billions of tons of rocks fell and blocked the pathway without the tiniest gap!

“Explode now!”

Elder Nether Spring burst into fury. He opened his mouth wider than one would have thought possible. A stream of intense brightness spurted out and blew out a giant hole almost ten meters deep in the rocks and soil!

However, the rocks were already feeble after the intense explosion just now. The moment he made a huge hole, the rocks above continued falling down and refilled the hole that he had just created. Elder Nether Spring was so angry that he was jumping up and down!

The enemy had obviously surveyed the terrain earlier and deployed traps for his escape in the pathway. Mighty as Elder Nether Spring was, it would take him at least half a minute to break through the blocked pathway!

Besides, Elder Nether Spring did not know whether or not more bombs had been planted in the pathway, or if the enemy was waiting for him inside the darkness on the other side of the landslide.

He recalled the enemy’s unstoppable kick a moment ago, which suggested that the enemy was at least as strong as the Fire Ant King.

Elder Nether Spring would rather not fight against such a terrifying enemy in an environment that was in the enemy’s favor.

After only a moment of hesitation inside the darkness, miserable screams were already echoing from the communication bugs that Elder Nether Spring had brought with him.

They were from the guardians who were defending the research rooms on the second floor and the temple on the first floor!

Judging from the sound, a ferocious beast seemed to be marching toward the surface while crushing everything that was standing in his way!

“Stop him! Stop him!”

Elder Nether Spring’s handsome face had entirely twisted.

…

The guy who snuck into the captives and stole the ultimate treasure inside the tomb was naturally Li Yao.

In retrospect, it was already perilous enough to sneak into the prison where the captives were locked, and it was even more dangerous to enter the tomb of Chaos right under Elder Nether Spring’s nose. If Elder Nether Spring had sensed something wrong and attacked him with his subordinates, Li Yao was certain that he would have kicked the bucket.

However, Li Yao believed in his judgement. Elder Nether Spring, who had taken over the Mausoleum of Chaos, must have concentrated all his attention on the secrets of Chaos. Even if he could spare some of his attention, he must have been considering how to better exploit the Fire Ant King.

It would never have occurred to him that a bold, insane expert in the demon emperor level would dare to show up near him!

At this moment, Li Yao broke out of the siege and reappeared in the underground temple.

The top elites of the Nether World Watch were on the third floor.

It would take them less than twenty seconds to catch up with him!

Chapter 914 - Turbulences Above the Death Desert

Twenty seconds was enough for an expert of the demon emperor stage to do a lot of things!

“Get out of my way or die!”

After the Blood Stripe Virus melded with part of his self-consciousness and turned into the mental devil, his combat style had become more and more radical, cruel, and brutal.

Above the underground temple, the streak of redness suddenly split into dozens of quickly flashing threads that rushed at the soldiers of the Nether World Watch in all the directions, piercing the chests of almost ten of them. The red threads then congregated again and moved upwards!

In order to move more relics out of the Mausoleum of Chaos, the holes in the dome of the underground temple had been expanded to dozens of meters in diameter. Li Yao soared up in one of the channels!

“Hooo!”

Ahead of Li Yao, an ugly sandworm opened its bloody mouthpart, from which extremely corrosive saliva was drooping nonstop.

“Cell Obliteration Cannon, attack!”

Inside Li Yao’s left arm, countless cells rubbed against each other and surged out. After they perished, the energy that their combustion produced concentrated on the palm and suddenly shot out, stabbing through the sandworm directly.

After a series of explosions, the internal organs of the sandworm were demolished, and the only thing left was an empty shell!

Li Yao flew up to the ground through the body of the sandworm!

Technically speaking, it was not the ground that Li Yao had reached but the bottom of the Star Swallowing Sea. Above him was a crystal barrier that had been established to resist the lake water temporarily.

At this moment, it was the darkest moment of the night when the water level of the Star Swallow Sea was highest. Everybody was soaked in the lake water that was hundreds of meters deep.

The message that somebody was on the run had already been sent to this place. An overwhelming cacophony echoed everywhere, and countless soldiers of the Nether World Watch charged toward Li Yao.

In Li Yao’s eyes, they all turned into clusters of the most fundamental data. Fully carrying out the tactical manipulation abilities that he had trained himself with on the Skeleton Island for more than a month, Li Yao examined his every movement and attack at least a hundred times inside his brain to make sure that his actions could disrupt the battle formation of the enemy to the highest degree and tear a fatal gap on it. Then—

He continued to flee crazily!

For the Nether World Watch, the ‘unpredictable’ enemy gave them quite a hard time. Except for the few soldiers who had head-on clashes with him, the rest of the Nether World Watch all discovered that their remote attacks had been blocked by their companions.

When they decided to draw close for melee combat, they were often pushed or hindered by their companions who were thinking the same. As the battle went on, everybody turned out to be pushing each other on the enemy’s left side, and there were absolutely no soldiers on his right side!

Li Yao smiled and launched dozens of interference bombs that contained flares and stun rune arrays. Before the acid stings and the storms hit him, he roared and soared toward the top of the crystal dome.

He opened his left hand. A cluster of brilliance quickly expanded inside his palm as if he were holding a sun brutally!

“Not good!”

The soldiers of the Nether World Watch who realized what he was going to do were all appalled, their hearts nearly jumping out of their chests.

They intended to stop him, but there was no time!

BOOM!

The mini sun inside Li Yao’s palm suddenly exploded into almost twenty streaks of golden brightness that darted every part of the crystal dome.

Such crystal barriers that were designed to resist water in underwater projects were in the shape of an arc and boasted impressive anti-pressure capabilities. They could resist the enormous external pressure.

But as for the internal pressure resulting from the explosion, there was not much they could do.

After a few cracking noises, almost twenty giant holes immediately appeared in the crystal dome. Boosted by the super-high pressure, the water of the Star Swallowing Sea turned into dragons and rushed in ferociously!

Li Yao gritted his teeth, the veins on his arms and his legs all bulging out, while he forced himself out of the crystal dome against the blast of one of the dragons, dashing into the Star Swallowing Sea!

Hu!

He pressed his chest softly. An enormous airbag immediately ejected out of his back, giving him a strong buoyancy inside the Star Swallowing Sea whose water was extremely dense.

“Little Black, come on out!”

Inside the Star Swallowing Ocean that was full of heavy metals, Li Yao was not worried that the traces of spiritual waves would be found. Even if the traces were really detected, it was not unusual for demons to make use of magical equipment.

Black Wing leapt out of his Cosmos Ring. Like a puppy that had been confined at home for too long, it was shrieking both in delight and discontent. After circling Li Yao three times, it opened black wings of spiritual energy inside the lake water.

Powerful ripples spread out in the lake, as if Black Wing had been expanded to hundreds of meters long.

Li Yao seemed to be back to ten years ago. Grabbing the handle of Black Wing, he blew a whistle and rushed inside the dark lake!

Elder Nether Spring was only twenty seconds late.

But in those twenty seconds, the space inside the crystal barrier had flooded.

There were still a lot of important relics inside the Mausoleum of Chaos. Naturally, Elder Nether Spring could not allow it to be consumed by the Star Swallowing Sea.

Helplessly, he could only command the Nether World Watch to repair the crystal barrier immediately, and he asked one of the devilish warships that were docked above the Star Swallowing Ocean to rise and monitor a larger range.

Twenty minutes later, an anomaly was detected. A vague shadow fled from the southwest side of the Star Swallowing Sea and rushed westward.

“Despot, gather the elites. We’ll chase after him!”

Elder Nether Spring’s voice sounded like a saber that was rubbing a bone. Everybody who heard it felt chilly.

Swirl, who was heavily wounded, struggled to say, “The southwest of the White Silver Death Desert is a turbulent area that is frequented by violent winds. All the sand will be blown into the sky and forms terrifying sandstorms!”

“There’s no time to bother that. The item is of paramount importance for our plan, and we must capture the mysterious expert, too!” Elder Nether Spring replied with a gloomy face.

Fifteen minutes later, the exploration team made of two devilish warships marched to the southwest of the White Silver Death Desert.

“If the target is running at full speed, he will certain trigger intense demonic energy and leave a clear trace. If he does not want to leave any trace, his speed won’t be too high!”

“Chase him. Chase him now!”

The speed and efficiency of the devilish warships were far higher than those of living creatures. With the advanced demonic artifacts and the ‘demonic energy detector’ from the Star Glory Federation on the warships, Elder Nether Spring soon located a clear trace of demonic energy that extended to the southwest.

“It is the ocean at the end of the southwest direction. We will not be able to capture him if he flees into the ocean!’

Elder Nether Spring frowned. Both devilish warships were triggered to the highest efficiency. The engine compartments in the rear were all expanding, spurting such high-pressure air currents that almost set the sky on fire!

Inside the White Silver Death Desert, there was nothing but monotonous, desolate sand. Every place was shining in silver colors, leaving no shelters for anybody. However, after three hours of pursuing, the environment nearby changed abruptly. The desert seemed to have become an ocean with surging tides and earsplitting roars!

It was the turbulent area!

Inside the White Silver Death Desert, without the blockage of mountains and canyons, the strong winds from the ocean were able to march into the land unstoppably. Blowing away sand and dust that could be billions of tons of weight, the wind generated an ocean inside the desert!

“Our devilish warship can resist a level-thirteen gale. Go over now!” Elder Nether Spring commanded unhesitatingly.

Hum! Hum!

On the surface of the two devilish warships, the gray protective membranes that looked like bone armor were torn apart, revealing enormous organs made of countless demon cores that looked like eyes.

Translucent demonic energy spurted out of the artificial organs and formed a solid barrier of demonic energy outside the warships!

The devilish warships barged into the turbulent area. The sandstorm hit the warships one wave after another, causing no consequences at all except for the flashing of the ‘eyes’ on the warships and the slight shaking.

However—

After the two devilish warships both went deep into the turbulent area, dozens of explosions suddenly echoed on the ground.

Almost a hundred crystal bombs were shot into the sky, blossoming like the most brilliant fireworks.

The crystal bombs were still very far away from the devilish warships and could deal no damage to them whatsoever.

But Elder Nether Spring frowned deeply.

Every action of the mysterious enemy had been beyond his expectations since the beginning. It was unlikely that the guy would perform meaningless attacks. What could the crystal bombs do even if they were detonated right below the devilish warships, considering their insignificant damage?

Why was he doing that?

Right at that moment, the devilish warships began shaking more forcefully, and the intensity of the sandstorm outside significantly increased. Everybody on board could hear the roaring gust despite the thick shell of the warships.

“What happened? The force of the wind has suddenly soared. The spiritual energy of the wind class is in disorder!”

“Not good!

“The crystal bombs that the enemy launched were not damaging at all; they carried a lot of rune arrays that could boost the spiritual energy of the wind class!

“As long as the direction and pressure of the wind are calculated well, dozens of crystal bombs that can boost the force of the wind are enough to focus the force of the sandstorm in the same location and create an extremely terrifying zone of furious wind!”

“How is it possible? Even the Feather Clan that is born in the wind and naturally adaptive to the spiritual energy of the wind class cannot grasp the pulse of the sandstorm so well!

“How did the monster do it?”

“Get out of the place now!” Along with Elder Nether Spring’s roar, the devilish warship seemed to have been smashed hard by a giant, invisible hammer, and the bridge leaned to the left side seriously.

Quite a few crew members were knocked away and crashed into their companions. The bridge was in a mess.

Three hundred meters in front of him, more than ten tornadoes were getting thicker and larger after absorbing more and more sand from the desert. The color of the tornadoes gradually darkened into a dreadful deep black, too.

The tornadoes were eyeing them maliciously like giant serpents that could swallow the sky and the earth. The earsplitting noises made the solid shell of the warships as thin as the wing of a cicada.

BOOM!

The main gun of the devilish warships opened fire, blowing the head of one of the ‘serpents’ into pieces. But the remaining body was soon torn apart and swallowed by the rest of the ‘serpents’, making them even thicker and more hideous than before.

In the meantime, on the flanks of and behind the devilish warships, more tornadoes that looked like giant snakes were gradually taking shape!

Chapter 915 - Origins of Demons!

Three hours later, the two devilish warships that were stalled for a long time in the super sandstorms finally staggered to a stop in the sky of the southwest coastline of the White Silver Continent.

Because of the hinderance of the sandstorm, it had taken them one and a half hours longer than expected. They lost the traces of the target multiple times on the way, too, and did not lock onto him again until twenty minutes ago.

On the demonic energy detector, a streak of brightness extended into the ocean and vanished in the depths of the surging seawater.

Judging from the dispersion of the demonic energy, the target must have dashed into the ocean half an hour ago.

It was an extremely tricky moment.

If the target had no backup and was swimming on his own, he would not have gone too far in only half an hour. They might have had a chance to catch up with him if they searched the area carefully.

However, judging from the delicate traps that the target had placed on the way, it was hard to believe that he had not prepared a few pieces of magical equipment that could make him move in the seawater fast.

Elder Nether Spring, Despot, and the experts of the Nether World Watch all stared at the boundless ocean, deep in thought.

Although they had suffered a number of setbacks on their way, the anger on Elder Nether Spring’s face had entirely disappeared. It was now utterly tranquil, without the slightest hint of emotion.

Elder Nether Spring suddenly raised his voice. “Go back now.”

“What?” Despot was stunned. “Are we letting go of the target just like this?”

“With the cunningness of the target, he must’ve prepared more traps at the bottom of the ocean, in which case, we will never be able to catch him,” Elder Nether Spring explained quickly. “But I’m more concerned that the target is actually distracting our attention!

“Right now, most of the elites of the Nether World Watch have been brought out by us. The only expert left in the Mausoleum of Chaos is Swirl, who has been heavily wounded!

“What if the purpose of the target was not to run away but to distract our attention and rescue the Fire Ant King when we were out?”

Despot gasped, his solid shells shivering slightly.

“If that is the case, we still have an opportunity to capture him!”

Elder Nether Spring grinned so hideously that somebody might have stamped on his face!

…

In the north of the White Silver Death Desert, thousands of kilometers away from the turbulent area and the Mausoleum of Chaos, a black shadow rushed while sticking close to the desert, drawing a huge arc and moving closer and closer to the Mausoleum of Chaos.

It was exactly Li Yao.

If his purpose was to run away, he would not have been so troubled.

His plan was exactly as Elder Nether Spring had guessed. He hoped to direct Elder Nether Spring and the elites of the Nether World watch to the west coast of the White Silver Death Desert with himself as the bait. It would have been even better if they had been tricked into searching for him offshore.

As long as they were postponed for half a day, it would be enough for him to return to the Mausoleum of Chaos and rescue the Fire Ant King!

With any luck, they would even be able to capture a devilish warship and free a large batch of captives before they figured out what to do next.

However—

Li Yao’s rapid movement came to an abrupt half when something in his pocket shivered slightly.

On one of his knees, he took off his glasses and spat out a mouthful of sand. He took out a metal chip that was carved with stripes resembling clouds from his pocket.

Right now, the metal chip was shaking feebly, driven by rune arrays.

Have I been seen through?

It was a surveillance device that Li Yao had arranged earlier.

When he was fleeing to the west coast of the White Silver Death Desert, he had sprayed almost a hundred pieces of magical equipment that could sense demonic energy into the desert. The silver magical equipment was the size of a pebble and utterly indistinguishable in the silver desert.

The magical equipment, like the crystal bombs, had been thrown together him with the materials inside his Cosmos Ring and from the Mausoleum of Chaos over the last three days. The usage of the magical equipment was simple. As long as it detected immense demonic energy passing by, it would release an extremely feeble spiritual wave so that the reception rune array inside his pocket would shake.

In the boundless White Silver Death Desert where there were no obstacles, the distance of transmission could be thousands of kilometers.

The reception rune array shook for the first time half a day ago, when Elder Nether Spring was coming after him.

But right now, the reception rune array was shaking again, indicating that another wave of immense demonic energy was flying past the magical equipment.

The elites of Elder Nether Spring had been mobilized. It was impossible that a second echelon of reinforcements had been sent.

The only possibility was that Elder Nether Spring had sensed that something was wrong and returned to defend his base.

What a tricky opponent!

Li Yao slightly frowned. He opened his hands, releasing hundreds of streaks of spiritual gas while he ran calculations with the desert as his paper.

The result of the series of complicated computations was that, even if he rushed at the highest speed, there was only a 7.1% likelihood that he could rescue the Fire Ant King before Elder Nether Spring returned to the Mausoleum of Chaos.

The last thing Li Yao wanted to be faced with right now was an infuriated Elder Nether Spring and hundreds of elites of the Nether World Watch.

It’s a pity that Elder Nether Spring has seen through me. Thankfully, however, my effort was not in vain.

Li Yao smiled and licked his dried lips. He retrieved the ancient magical equipment that he had stolen from the tomb of Chaos half a day ago from his Cosmos Ring and played with it.

The ancient magical equipment looked like a brain that was made of agate and bloody diamond. But it was only the size of an apple and could be held with one hand perfectly.

Li Yao had seen similar magical equipment in Ou Yezi’s memory pieces.

Such magical equipment named ‘Hidden Star Box’ could be called an upgraded version of jade chips. It could store a lot of information, telepathic thoughts, and even vivid illusions.

Many ancient sages had been fond of pouring their lifelong knowledge and their most intense feeling into magical equipment like the Hidden Star Box as a legacy for the posterity before their death.

It was some sort of special ‘last will’.

Li Yao was almost certain that it was the ‘last will’ of Chaos when he discovered the item in the crystal pool at the center of the tomb of Chaos. Also, at that time, he noticed that the heart of Swirl had been beating fast, her breath hastier, and her blood flow had been 11% faster than a minute earlier. He had immediately realized that the item must be Elder Nether Spring’s real target.

Therefore, Li Yao had taken actions brutally and ambushed her, stealing the ‘last will’ of Chaos.

Based on Elder Nether Spring’s moves and his talk, this is very likely the ultimate purpose of his operation here!

What kind of secrets are hidden in the ‘last will’ of Chaos?

Maybe I will only be able to make out what Elder Nether Spring is up to exactly after I crack the secrets inside the ‘last will’!

Li Yao took a long breath. Covered in a thin layer of spiritual energy, he gradually sank into the quicksand and dived deeper and deeper until he was almost a hundred meters below the desert.

Bo! Bo! Bo!

After he was so deep below the ground, Li Yao was finally able to release his spiritual energy blatantly. His spiritual energy in the liquid form gradually pushed the sand around him away like expanding seawater, creating a round space that was two meters in diameter.

Li Yao sat cross-legged in the space, with the Hidden Star Box that looked like an agate floating in front of him. He snapped his fingers and summoned almost a hundred dissection tools from his Cosmos Ring.

Since the Hidden Star Box is meant to be a legacy for the latecomers, it is certainly not completely locked. There must be a secret method to open it.

Although I don’t know the secret method, I can still crack it with brute force. It should be fine as long as I am cautious enough.

Li Yao was an expert in ancient magical equipment. ‘Chaos’ might have been more knowledgeable than him in terms of the arts of poison, but when it came to the refinement and the decryption of magical equipment, how could he have been match for Li Yao?

Li Yao narrowed his eyes. His fingers seemed to be pulling hundreds of invisible strings, and he manipulated tiny needles the width of hair to brush the Hidden Star Box quickly.

A gray mist immediately enveloped the Hidden Star Box. After a period of cracking noises, a glamorous red color surfaced on the Hidden Star Box, and sparks were bouncing deep inside the ‘brain’ that was made of agate, as if somebody’s thoughts were being triggered and ignited.

Sweat was pouring out on Li Yao’s forehead. Before it dripped down, it had already been vaporized by his skin, which was burningly hot now. The narrow space was enshrouded in a hazy mist.

Inside the mist, the brilliance emitted by the Hidden Star Box was even more blurred. Outside of the ‘brain’ the size of an apple, a brain of mystic rays the size of a real brain was generated.

The intersections of the rays of light were like synapses. Flames of telepathic thoughts were jumping up and down.

I’ve made it!

After a click that sounded like a pebble hitting the ground, a bloody diamond that resembled an eyeball protruded out of the center of the Hidden Star Box slowly.

From the bloody diamond beamed out a scarlet mystic ray that darted at Li Yao’s brain.

Li Yao was a person who had been possessed multiple times and therefore was quite familiar with the procedure. He had examined the Hidden Star Box thoroughly in case an old ghost from forty thousand years ago was hiding inside trying to steal his body.

Besides, if there were really a ghost trying to possess him, it would be hard to tell who would be possessed by whom in the end!

At that moment, Li Yao moved closer without hesitation and bathed his spiritual root in the mystic rays!

Hum!

Prolonged, weird noises echoed deep inside his brain suddenly. Countless emotions filled his braincells.

Li Yao had never tasted such complicated emotions before. There was the most devoted love and the deepest abhorrence, the highest hope for the future and the gloomiest desperation about the darkness of the world.

The complicated feelings stabbed him like iron sabers, which was multiple times more painful during Ou Yezi’s possession. He could not help but exclaim in a low voice.

Lights and shadows were changing around him, and the sand was gone. He seemed to have travelled through a channel of forty thousand years of time and appeared in a splendid palace where sacred clouds were floating!

The palace seemed to have been established on the clouds. It was boundless, with countless magnificent statues everywhere. Mystic rays were shooting up from every statue and supported the sky like thick pillars.

On the enormous stele above the gate of the palace, three giant words were written.

Ultimate One Sect!

Ultimate One Sect was one of the most brilliant sects in the last years of the ancient Cultivation world. It is said that the sect controlled almost a hundred Sectors and commanded millions of Cultivators. Billions of mortals were under the government of the Ultimate One Sect!

Li Yao tried to recall what he knew about the sect. He was like an invisible ghost floating on the top of the splendid building while he observed the excited ancient Cultivators in the palace!

Chapter 916 - Ultimate One Sect, Ba Yanzhi!

They are the most important memory pieces of ‘Chaos’ when he was alive. Before his death, he compressed the most important events in his life into telepathic thoughts and saved them in the Hidden Star Box so that the latecomers would see his ‘last will’.

Such a method to preserve telepathic thoughts was similar to the blast of Ou Yezi’s memory pieces. Li Yao had experienced it once before, and now his brain was significantly more developed. Therefore, he had no trouble absorbing the illusions of forty thousand years ago.

“Ba Yanzhi, do you plead guilty?”

A thunderous roar burst out from above, shaking and echoing in the palace.

Li Yao saw that high-level Cultivators in high caps and long robes who looked spectacular were pointing at a middle-aged, muscular man in shabby clothes with a long beard, cursing him loudly and angrily.

The bearded man named ‘Ba Yanzhi’ seemed unbefitting for the splendid, divine palace. He was wearing black armor and a pair of boots made of beast hide. There was smoke all over his face, and his armor was obviously stained. He was perhaps a low-level deacon in the Ultimate One Sect who was responsible for handling the specific affairs.

"Ba Yanzhi, as the manager of the 'Infinite Farm', you should've dedicated yourself to the breeding of the animals. Why did the inspectors report that many animals in the Infinite Farm had changed in appearance and were aggressive and undocile? The mortals living in the Infinite Farm have undergone terrifying changes, too. They turned hideous and acted crazily!

"Rumors in the Ultimate One Sect are that you are conspiring with evil sects outside and running insane, unpardonable experiments!

"Ba Yanzhi, what is the truth exactly? Confess now!"

The demander turned out be a magnificent Cultivator who was wearing a golden helmet and golden armor and looked like a high tower. The man's skin was golden too, and it seemed to be melded with his garment. He was holding a long whip in his hand whose aura reached almost thirty meters away, already piercing into the dome of the palace.

Behind the golden giant, an enormous eight-trigram seat was floating in midair, on which an old, lean man was sitting cross-legged, his white hair touching the ground and his eyes half closed.

Ba Yanzhi raised his voice and shouted, "Leader, law-enforcing elder, I didn't! Everything I did was for the Ultimate One Sect and all the living creatures under the government of the Ultimate One Sect!"

The gold giant bellowed coldly, "Whether or not you are guilty will be judged by the leader and the elders here. All you need to do is speak the whole truth!"

Right then, Li Yao's perspective gradually fell to the ground into Ba Yanzhi's body. He was observing the entire illusionary world from Ba Yanzhi’s eyes.

From that angle, all the faces around him were full of anger, loathing, or scorn.

The golden giant and the leader who was sitting on the eight trigrams were like two mountains that soared into the sky: high, mighty, and utterly inviolable.

Li Yao realized that the so-called ‘Ba Yanzhi’ was the master of the illusionary world and ‘Chaos’ in the future.

“Since a year ago,” Ba Yanzhi said, “the animals in the Infinite Farm have undergone a lot of weird mutations. As the manager of the farm, I was naturally obliged to found out the reason. After an arduous search, I finally found a weird black spring inside a cave at the edge of the farm.

“The animals who drank the water of the black spring turned extremely excited and went through all kinds of mutations.

“Weird changes also happened to the few mortals who went to investigate with me after they drank the water from the spring. Horns and scales grew out of them.”

The gold giant glared. “If that is the case, why did you not report the issue to the headquarters in a timely manner?”

With a bitter expression, Ba Yanzhi replied, “As you know, elder, the Infinite Farm is in the Infinite Planet, which is the most remote place in the Ultimate One Sect’s territory. It is simply too far away from the headquarters.

“Over the past years, the Ultimate One Sect has been engaged in wars with the evil sects such as the Mystic Moon Sect and the Dragon King Brotherhood. The teleportation arrays between worlds are often jammed and intermittent.

The Infinite Farm that I managed turned into a lone island every now and then.

“After I found the black spring, I planned to report the matter to my supervisor immediately through the teleportation arrays. But it happened to be the period when the Mystic Moon Sect and the Dragon King Brotherhood launched a massive attack. The Infinite Planet was one of their targets. I struggled hard to resist them on the lone island and had to postpone the issue.

“In the half year that followed, our connection to the headquarters was off. It was with the joint efforts of everyone there that dozens of attacks of the Mystic Moon Sect and the Dragon King Brotherhood were resisted.

“The mortals who went through mutations, on the other hand, acted and thought no differently from normal people, except that they looked a bit ugly with the weird scales and horns on their bodies. They could recognize their family and friends and always obeyed the rules.

“In the meantime, their physical strength was multiplied, and they were fearless of poison and venom. They could also feed on the soybean cakes, alfalfa, and crop stalks that were food for the animals. They were very useful in the battles. So, I simply left them alone.

“But out of my expectations, three months later, more and more mutated mortals showed up on the farm. I felt that it was odd and investigated, only to find out that the mortals living on the Infinite Planet regarded the black spring as the ‘godly spring’. If they were sick or heavily wounded beyond treatment, they would go to drink the water of the black spring. Although they would turn uglier, they could often survive the disasters and get used to the harsher food and environment.

“You may not know this, leader and elders, but during the few months when we were fighting on our own, the Infinite Planet was under the collective attack of the Mystic Moon Sect and the Dragon King Brotherhood. There were indeed a lot of casualties, and we were seriously short of resources. Cultivators aside, the life of the mortals was extremely miserable. Ten of them went to the battlefield, and only one would return. Every household held at least one funeral in that period!

“The mortals proved their loyalty to the Ultimate One Sect on the battlefield. Now that they were heavily wounded and on the brink of death, how could I bear to turn them down when they wanted to drink the water of the black spring and live on to look after their family?

“Besides, in light of such heavy casualties, without timely treatment, I would’ve run out of soldiers very quickly. How could I resist the Mystic Moon Sect and the Dragon King Brotherhood if so?

“Having no other options, I was forced to develop the black spring on a large scale.

“At first, the water of the black spring was only fed to the heavily wounded to save their lives. Later, as a lot of mortals were about to die of dyspepsia because of the inedible straw and soil they ate in their hunger, I had to distribute the water of the black spring to them, too, so that their internal organs could be strengthened and they could manage to survive with the supposedly indigestible food. We struggled for an entire year until the reinforcements of the Ultimate One Sect came to our rescue!

“Leader and elders, although a lot of mortals on the Infinite Planet look ugly right now, they are still decent civilians under the government of the Ultimate One Sect. They are definitely loyal to the Ultimate One Sect and have never committed any crimes!”

Ba Yanzhi did not seem to be a loquacious man, but he seemed to have prepared the speech a long time ago. Although he stammered occasionally, he still made his point in a rather convincing way.

The leader of the Ultimate One Sect slowly opened his eyes and talked gently to Ba Yanzhi. “Ba Yanzhi, I was there to watch you grow from a boy into a man. I know that you are outspoken and merciful and that it is impossible for you to do such inhuman things. So to speak, everything you did on the Infinite Planet was just due to the situation?

“Leader, it was not just due to the situation.” Encouraged by the leader, Ba Yanzhi held his chest high and declared, with tears in his eyes, “In my opinion, the mysterious spring can alter the future of the Ultimate One Sect and even end the era of mayhem!”

There was a minor riot nearby. Many high-level Cultivators were sneering. Some of them were even cursing aloud. “An insignificant deacon who is responsible for herding livestock in a remote farm is now talking about the future of the sect? How arrogant of you!”

But the leader of the Ultimate One Sect simply smiled and pressed his hands together, stopping everybody from whispering to each other. He said warmly, “Yanzhi, you may speak whatever is on your mind.”

Ba Yanzhi nodded and said resolutely, “Leader and elders, the world is in havoc nowadays, and all three thousand

Sectors are consumed by the fires of war. Every sect is accusing other sects of being evil and attacking each other incessantly. As a result, many worlds have been shattered, and all living creatures are in peril!

“Marvelous as the Cultivators may be, we are merely struggling and breathing our last breath in the chaotic world. The mortals who barely have any strength are like ants and grass in the fierce thunderstorm. There is no telling when and where they will be killed!

“In the vast prairie on the Infinite Planet, I’ve been meditating on just one question while I stare at the boundless sea of stars.

“The universe is such a large place. Why do the Cultivators have to kill each other?

“I pondered for a long time and still failed to come up with an answer. But eventually, when I watched the animals in the farm dueling and attacking each other, I was suddenly enlightened.

“Resources!

“The resources in the three thousand Sectors are running low, but the remaining resources are not enough for us to march into the deeper part of the universe!

“Cultivators are trapped in a small farm like the tamed animals are. We are fighting hard until our blood runs dry for nothing but a brook that is about to dry up or a tiny area of grass!”

The leader of the Ultimate One Sect remained unmoved. He asked casually, “Then, what is the solution in your opinion?”

“If I may remind you, leader,” Ba Yanzhi replied loudly, “in fact, the resources in the three thousand Sectors are not running low at all. Abundant assets are still out there, waiting to be collected by us!

“Take the Infinite Planet for example. It is neighbored to the Green Wolf Planet and the Desolate Yellow Planet, both of which boast tremendous resources and mother lodes. Why do we have to fight blood battles against the Mystic Moon Sect and the Dragon King Brotherhood for a few insignificant mother lodes?”

The leader of the Ultimate One Sect observed, “Of course, there are still a lot of places with a high reserve of resources. But they are extremely difficult to develop. The temperature of the Green Wolf Planet is too low for any crops to be grown, and the local plants are too rough and inedible for the minders. The Desolate Yellow Planet is filled with venomous fog. Even Cultivators can’t live there for long, much less ordinary miners!

“Every unit of resources that we collect in those places will be at the cost of twice as many resources. It is certainly not a bargain.”

“It might have been so in the past,” Ba Yanzhi announced excitedly, “but with the mysterious ‘black spring’, everything will be no longer a problem!”

Chapter 917 - New Home!

“Huh?”

The eyes of the Ultimate One Sect Leader beamed with interest.

“Leader, after the mortals drink the water of the black spring, their bodies were strengthened, and they became tireless. They were no longer scared of the venomous fog or the harsh environment. They adapted to the rough food, too!

“If so, can’t we send them to settle on the worlds where the environment is too hard for normal people?

“It will be a beneficial plan for everybody!

“Right now, the planets under the government of the Ultimate One Sect are all running out of resources. We barely have any harvest now, and we are often plagued by locusts and starvation. A lot of the crops and resources have to be supplied for the frontline, too. If the battles in the frontline do not go well, several planets will be taken over and even burnt to the ground.

“After the battles, it is often the case that nothing can be grown on the planets. Even in the places that are not savaged by the fires of war, famine still exists. The civilians often have to feed on rind, grass, or even soil. Sometimes, they even trade each other’s children as food. Their lives can be extremely difficult.

“Even if they are fortunate enough to join the army, they will be sent to the frontline before they have time for a satisfying meal to fight against the armies of the Mystic Moon Sect and the Dragon King Brotherhood that are also made of mortals. In the end, they will also be ground into cannon fodder in the mill of flesh and blood!

“The civilians do not stand a chance of living at all right now!

“However, in the territory of the Ultimate One Sect, there are still a lot of desolate planets with harsh environments but abundant resources.

“If we organize the ordinary people who don’t have any other options and strengthen their bodies with the water of the black spring, they can survive the venomous fog, eat the rough plants on the planet, and even protect themselves when faced with the brutal local animals. Shouldn’t we send them to establish such settlements?

“No matter how ugly they look and how harsh the environment will be, it will certainly better than a death by starvation or taking someone else’s children as food!

“If so, a large batch of civilians will have a way to feed themselves, and the resources that they collect will be enough for the Ultimate One Sect to rest for a while instead of fighting desperately against the Mystic Moon Sect and the Dragon King Brotherhood over several insignificant mother lodes. The three parties will be able to reach a truce!

“Even better, after we have accumulated enough resources, we will be able to continue marching toward the endless sea of stars outside of the three thousand Sectors, thereby jumping out of the ‘cage’ where we have to kill each other!

“By that time, infinite resources will be waiting for us at the other side of the sea of stars. All the sects in the three thousand Sectors will no longer have to fight against each other for the petty benefits. We will work together to explore the boundless universe. The wars will be ended forever, and we will embrace an eternal peace!

“In such a world, both mortals and Cultivators will live a happy life!

“This is what has been on my mind lately and the reason I started my research before reporting to the headquarters.

“I have indeed acted on my own regarding the issue. If the leader and elders decide to punish me, then I have nothing to say!

“However, the issue concerns the future of the Ultimate One Sect and all three thousand Sectors, and I believe that it is definitely worth discussing!

“Please give it a thought, leader!”

While talking, Ba Yanzhi suddenly fell on his knees and kowtowed to the high and mighty leader of the Ultimate One Sect.

The high-level Cultivators of the Ultimate One Sect nearby were all shocked. Forgetting what a solemn and formal place they were at, they were all whispering to each other.

“Strengthening the mortals to develop the desolate worlds?”

“It sounds rather plausible. However—”

“Yanzhi, stand up!” The leader of the Ultimate One Sect slightly raised his hand, and an invisible force supported Ba Yanzhi to stand on his feet. “If what you said is the truth, then you are indeed loyal to the Ultimate One Sect, and you should be credited instead of being punished.

“You should be properly rewarded for the sole fact that you defended the Infinite Planet for an entire year. But some people find it hard to believe that a small farm was able to resist the assault of the Mystic Moon Sect and the Dragon King Brotherhood for an entire year. That is why we summoned you to return to the headquarters to explain everything.

“Naturally, more inspectors will be sent to investigate the issue thoroughly, but your wholehearted words are indeed very intriguing!”

Ba Yanzhi was overjoyed. “Leader, do you—do you agree to my proposal?”

The leader of the Ultimate One Sect scratched his long beard and smiled casually. The brilliance inside his eyes were so deep that it seemed to consume the entire universe.

The first memory fragment came to an end.

The illusionary world collapsed suddenly like a tower of sand. Then, the colorful quicksand swirled and congregated into a brand-new scene.

This should be the second most important memory piece for ‘Chaos’, Li Yao thought to himself. *According to the first memory piece, turning mortals into ‘demons’ was actually because there was no other choice. That’s quite understandable. During the last years of the first civil war of Cultivators, in the shattered worlds where all the living creatures were in perils, the ordinary people only had a chance of survival if they were turned into demons.*

But what happened later that transformed Ba Yanzhi into ‘Chaos’?

The second illusionary world was in a dry world below a bleak, yellow sky.

The plants on the mountains far away had all been chopped, revealing the bare rocks. Some of the rocks were already battered with shockingly large holes, as if the skeleton of the mountain had been dug out and exposed to the air.

On the drought-stricken land, a thick, long line of people was wriggling forward slowly, which was made up by thousands of starving civilians.

It was a planet of hunger.

Countless starving civilians, together with their entire families, moved slowly toward their hope while they carried their only belongings that were bundled in ragged cloths.

Occasionally, some of the staggering civilians would fall silently, but those behind them seemed to see nothing and simply step over their bodies. Even their family did not have much time to look at them and hurried to follow the line.

The years of war had completely destroyed the feelings of the ant-like people.

The destination of the line turned out to be a vast valley in which a large area of camps had been established temporarily. Behind the camps, deep inside the valley, enormous teleportation arrays more than a hundred meters in length and width had been set up.

Colorful beams shot out of the teleportation arrays now and then, piercing into the sky and showering the clouds in glamorous colors, as if they were a city of the deities. All the starving civilians were granted hope again and moved faster while shaking their limbs that were no thicker than straws.

Li Yao saw that countless starving civilians entered one side of the valley. There was no telling what kind of procedures they went through in the continuous camps, but when they walked out again from the other side, they had already become stronger and more muscular, with features of the demons on their bodies.

However, compared with the demons forty thousand years later, the features of the demons on those people were still sparse. Some of them had darker skin, some had grown horns or small tails, and some had longer canine teeth. Nothing more.

Ba Yanzhi was still wearing black armor, but his armor had been carefully cleaned and lubricated with oil, which made it as reflective as a mirror. He no longer had the ragged appearance from the first memory piece. Instead, his face was red, and he was commanding the starving civilians who had gone through mutations to get into the teleportation arrays in high spirits.

One teleportation array could accommodate almost a thousand starving civilians. After a flash, a thousand people disappeared. There was no telling where they had been sent.

“Master!”

Suddenly, six civilians, who were apparently a family, with long horns on their head and thicker noses, ran out of the line and bowed toward Ba Yanzhi. “Thank you for saving our lives! Thank you for saving our lives! Without you, our entire family would have been boiled and eaten up already!”

Ba Yanzhi observed them for a moment and burst into laughter. He patted one of the muscular men’s shoulders and said loudly, “Zhang Niuer, it’s you! I did not expect that you could become so strong after you drank the ‘Divine Water of Kunlun 1 ‘ even though you were as thin as a lath. Your name is particularly suitable for you right now. 2 Hahahaha! What about your new appearance? Have you been used to it?”

“You will not be hungry anymore!” Ba Yanzhi promised them. “When you arrive in the Green Wolf Planet, a certain coverage of land will be allocated to every household. Even part of the production in the mother lodes will be redistributed to you, too! As long as you are willing to work hard, your life will certainly be better in the future!”

“Thank you master. We cannot return your favor even if we work as bulls and horses—”

While talking, Zhang Niuer seemed to have realized that his current appearance was more or less similar to bulls and horses, and he was amused by himself.

Ba Yanzhi smiled, too. He said firmly, “There’s no need to work as bulls and horses for me. If you really want to return my favor, just live a good life on the Green Wolf Planet and try to develop the place into a new, prosperous world!

“With the resources that you collect on the Green Wolf Planet, more starving civilians will be fed, and the war between us and the Mystic Moon Sect and the Dragon King Brotherhood can be ended. Chances are that you will be able to return to your home one day in the future!”

“If we are really given a piece of the land, we will not be coming back! Home? Wherever I can feed my children will be my home!” Zhang Niuer said boldly.

Ba Yanzhi was dazed for a moment, before he nodded. “Well said, Zhang Niuer. The home is where the stomach can be fed. Go now to build our home!”

After thanking him multiple times, Zhang Niuer and his family joined the crowd in a hurry and boarded the teleportation array along with other bizarre-looking civilians whose eyes were shining with hope. After glamorous flashing, they marched into their new home!

The memory piece was like a mirage and soon dispersed. Butterflies of light and shadow danced and formed the third scene. This time, Ba Yanzhi returned to the headquarters of the Ultimate One Sect. He was back at the splendid palace again.

The palace had expanded and looked even more spectacular than last time. Every corner of the palace was extravagant, as if it were a palace in the heaven. Even the stele of ‘Ultimate One Sect’ was now decorated with eye-catching adornments.

But Ba Yanzhi’s miserable scream was echoing inside the splendid palace like the cry of a ghost.

“You lied to me, leader. You lied to me!”

Chapter 918 - Divine Water of Kunlun

“You promised me that every mortal who took the Divine Water of Kunlun would be given part of the land and the mother lodes after they arrived on the Green Wolf Planet and the Desolate Yellow Planet. You said that all they needed to do was pay a tax of twenty-five kilograms of crystals!

“But the result of a secret investigation is that the mortals who went to the two planets were not given any part of the land. They lost their freedom and were locked up as slaves. Also, they were forced to work in the deep, dark mother lodes day and night because they had to submit fifty kilograms of crystals every month!

“Abundant as the resources of the Green Wolf Planet and the Desolate Yellow Planet might be, it is impossible for a miner to excavate so many crystals in one month!

“Countless people were killed either by exhaustion or because of explosions and collapses!

“The Ultimate One Sect is keeping everything a secret. At this moment, countless mortals who are left with no choices still regard the Green Wolf Planet, the Desolate Yellow Planet, and other undeveloped planets as their last hope. They are going to drink the Divine Water of Kunlun and build their new home!

“Why did you lie to those mortals? Why did you lie to me? Why!”

Ba Yanzhi’s clothes were tattered, his face swollen. There was also a broken flying sword on his shoulder blade. Every step that he took forward would leave a bloody footprint behind.

He had paid a high price after barging into the headquarters despite blockage!

“How bold of you!”

Countless Cultivators in golden armor crowded forward and suppressed Ba Yanzhi’s shoulder with their blades.

“You are just an insignificant deacon. How dare you trespass on the headquarters unannounced?”

Ba Yanzhi’s knees were uttering cracking noises, but he gritted his teeth to keep standing, with fury beaming out of his eyes.

Inside the palace, the eight-trigram seat that the leader of the Ultimate One Sect sat on had been upgraded to one that was carved out of marrow crystals in the shape of a lotus, making him even more brilliant and look like a deity.

On the eight-trigram seat, the leader of the Ultimate One Sect slowly flew over to Ba Yanzhi. He gestured for the Cultivators to move their blades away and spoke gently. “There’s no need to be anxious, Yanzhi. I know that you’ve contributed a lot to the ‘Expedition Operation’. You are acting silly because you are too concerned about it. I don’t blame you.

“As for the drudgery of the new worlds, it can’t be helped.

“Those settlements have only just been established from scratch. Naturally, hard work is required. Also, right now, we are at the most critical moment of the final battle. Tremendous assets are being consumed on the frontline on a daily basis. Therefore, we must hurry to collect more in the rear in case our endeavors are sabotaged at the last moment.”

Ba Yanzhi was dazed. “What ‘final battle’? Haven’t we reached a truce with the Mystic Moon Sect and the Dragon King Brotherhood?”

The leader smiled and said, “That’s thanks to you, Yanzhi. Before, the Ultimate One Sect, the Mystic Moon Sect, and the Dragon King Brotherhood had been in conflict for years, and we were all exhausted and running out of resources. The war could not be fought anymore. There was no choice but to cease it.

“However, you found the Divine Water of Kunlun and organized the Expedition Operation, which significantly enhanced the capability of the Ultimate One Sect. Now that we are obviously stronger than the two sects, there is no way that we can show mercy to them and allow them to grow into bigger trouble in the future.”

“What?” Ba Yanzhi gasped. “The territories of the Mystic Moon Sect and the Dragon King Brotherhood are bitter cold places with barely any resources. Now that we have so many resourceful planets to develop, why do we have to annihilate the Mystic Moon Sect and the Dragon King Brotherhood?”

“It’s everyone’s responsibility to wipe out the evil sects. Do we need another reason?

“Besides, after years of war, many predecessors of the Ultimate One Sect have sacrificed themselves. It is our duty to avenge them so that they will rest in peace!

“Moreover,” the leader of the Ultimate One Sect said solemnly, “although the territories of the Mystic Moon Sect and the Dragon King Brotherhood are bitterly cold places, don’t we have a bunch of slaves that are fearless of the cold right now? Calculated in such a way, the value of the two sects is much higher.”

Ba Yanzhi’s face blanched. His face was so pale that even his beard was turning white at a visible speed!

He mumbled to himself in self-mockery, “So, this is the truth. You never wanted to stop the war. You will attack even more Sectors even if the Mystic Moon Sect and the Dragon King Brotherhood are exterminated!

“This is why you’ve turned all the pioneers into slaves!

“This is why you are producing ‘Ultimate One Slave Soldiers’ with the pioneers!”

The leader narrowed his eyes. “What did you say?”

“I know everything now!” Ba Yanzhi clutched two flying swords with his hands. His palms were cut by the blades, and his blood was flowing along them. With tears in his eyes, he gnashed his teeth. “Not only do you treat all the pioneers as slaves, you are also adding various kinds of poison to the Divine Water of Kunlun and running experiments on the starving civilians!

“Countless civilians have been poisoned by you!

“Even more of them have been turned into unintelligent monsters by you!

“If they drink the Divine Water of Kunlun, their appearance will have slight changes, but their head is still clear. They can recognize their family and their home, and they know how to talk and laugh!

“However, after your experiments, they’ve completely turned into monsters. Monsters!”

The leader of the Ultimate One Sect became gloomy. He coughed.

“Shut up!” the law-enforcing elder standing next to the elder bellowed. “Ba Yanzhi, you are merely a third-level deacon and a Cultivator in the Core Formation Stage. Watch your language!

“Ba Yanzhi, you have ill, insane intentions. You’ve shouted in the headquarters and disrespected the leader, which is in violation of the rules. Kneel down now!”

Ba Yanzhi burst into laughter. Two lines of bloody tears flowed out. His hair was spluttering, making him seem to be a devil. But his knees were as tough as iron and supported him to keep standing proudly.

“Huh?”

The law-enforcing elder pressed his hands. The bones all over Ba Yanzhi’s body were cracking. “Kneel down, now!”

“I will not!” Ba Yanzhi went mad and pointed at the leader of the Ultimate One Sect, cursing. “Wang Qianyi, all the civilians under the government of the Ultimate One Sect regard the Ultimate One Sect as the ‘heavens’ and worship the Cultivators of this sect as ‘gods’. But how has the Ultimate One Sect been treating them? Years of famine, decimated and ravished villages everywhere. Are they not the responsibility of Cultivators?

“As the leader of the sect, instead of planning a happier life for the civilians under you, you are savaging them as if they were beasts. You are talking about evilness, but I say that you are the greatest evil. I, Ba Yanzhi, will kneel before pigs, dogs, or devils before I kneel before a bastard like you!”

“What!”

All the Cultivators in the palace gasped.

“Ba Yanzhi, you are insane. You’ve been possessed. On your knees now!”

The golden hands of the law-enforcing deacon crunched every joint on Ba Yanzhi’s body into pieces. Bloody mist leaked out of the pores on his body and dyed it red!

But he simply fell over. Although his bones were shattered and he collapsed to the ground, he did not kneel, nor did he stop cursing aloud until the golden giant suppressed and suffocated him.

The third illusionary world was slowly closed in the color of blood. Li Yao was sweating hard while he watched it.

Then, two thin red threads appeared in the darkness and slowly expanded to a cluster of crimson brightness. He was now in a dreadful dungeon.

Ba Yanzhi’s shoulder blades and spine had been tied up by the chains carved with spiritual stripes. His appearance had undergone drastic changes, too. Two horns that looked like enormous sabers protruded out of his forehead. Tusks bared out of his mouth. His arms could reach his feet, with villus that looked like needles all over them.

Other than Ba Yanzhi, endless bizarre-shaped creatures were confined in the enormous, maze-like dungeon.

Some of the creatures still had features of human beings, but some others were like abnormal tigers and wolves, or insects that had been enlarged thousands of times. They had lost their ability to speak and simply bashed the dirt wall futilely, raising rattling noises of the chains.

In the depths of the dungeon, miserable screams came over every once in a while, carried by the gloomy wind.

In front of Ba Yanzhi was a handsome, unblemished Cultivator wearing a white robe and wreathed in golden brightness. In the contrast of the dirty, filthy environment, he was like an angel that had descended from the heaven.

“Why?” Ba Yanzhi stared at the man. “Qing Xuzi, why do you have to do this? Why do you have to turn the ordinary people into such wretched appearances? They cannot talk or recognize their family. They don’t have any human thoughts now!”

Qing Xuzi, the elegant Cultivator, smiled. “The mundane mortals have been living an ignorant life that is no different from animals’ in the first place. They do not need to talk or think. All they need to do is serve the Ultimate One Sect dutifully.”

Ba Yanzhi struggled to say, “They are all human beings!”

“Wrong,” Qing Xuzi denied casually. “You were the supervisor of the Expedition Operation for a couple of days, and you should’ve seen the starving civilians in person. Lean, hideous, illiterate, and sometimes even bordering on cannibalism!

“When they are offered a few bean pies, they fight like dogs. When Cultivators extended a foot to them, they hurry to lick the bottom of our shoes!

“How are such things qualified to be called human beings?

“Only Cultivators and our descendants can be called human beings. Those things are just grass and ants. They would have been useless throughout their life!

“Right now, with the Divine Water of Kunlun, they are finally of some value and can return the nurturing and sheltering that the Ultimate One Sect has provided for them for years. It is their greatest glory. Why are you so infuriated?

“If I may suggest, you might want to worry about yourself first before you worry about other people!”

Qing Xuzi gestured and picked a bamboo cylinder that looked like green jade from his subordinate.

He slowly opened the bamboo cylinder. A cluster of weird purple gas immediately popped up.

Two of the subordinates went forward and opened Ba Yanzhi’s mouth by force with specially made iron clubs and other tools. After two cracking sounds, his jaw was entirely broken.

“Thanks to your discovery on the Infinite Planet, we have now developed dozens of types of ‘Divine Water of Kunlun’, with different poisons and pills as ingredients, all based on the black spring!” Qing Xuzi said with a smile.

“The water that is being offered to you, on the other hand, is the latest project of our research team. I am looking forward to your new appearance after you are completely reborn.

“Hehe. With the Ultimate One Slave Soldiers that are dependable and boast endless physical strength, the Ultimate One Sect will certainly become the greatest sect in the three thousand Sectors. One day, we might even become the only Sect in the entire universe. Ours will be the only true Dao!”

Chapter 919 - Total War!

Perhaps because Ba Yanzhi’s body and brain went through intense mutations after he took the ‘Divine Water of Kunlun’, the memory pieces that followed were broken and unsystematic. They were like a quickly-spinning kaleidoscope where countless bloody scenes of war were displayed in the mottled pieces.

In every memory piece, Ban Yanzhi was moving together with countless bizarre-looking creatures, many of which were almost identical to the bronze-blood demons and the black-blood demons of the modern era.

Their critical parts were penetrated through by chains, and they congregated into overwhelming beast tides, charging at the army of Cultivators on the opposite side with the prolonged horns!

Blade auras were sweeping, and mystic rays were exploding among them, blowing a large batch of demon soldiers into pieces. However, the survivors still marched forward, driven by an uncanny force, until they reached the battle formation of the Cultivators and killed every Cultivator that they saw!

Li Yao noticed that the flags of the Mystic Moon Sect and the Dragon King Brotherhood were burnt into ashes by the furious flames!

Time went on. New wars were still coming. After annihilating the two sects with the demon soldiers, the Ultimate One Sect marched toward an even vaster world.

More and more demon soldiers appeared around Ba Yanzhi. They were stronger and with more hideous faces. More kinds of the Divine Water of Kunlun were formulated, stimulating the most bloodthirsty and brutal genes of the demon soldiers. Gradually, there was no longer a need to bind them with chains; they would lunge fearless charges whenever they heard the horn or smelt the special scent.

Riding the enormous boats, or through the portals left in the primeval era, they appeared in different worlds.

Some of the new worlds were scorching, with magma everywhere. Some were freezing all year long. Some were primitive forests brimming with swamps. Still some were prosperous towns with coruscating buildings.

But all the worlds were cast into death, desperation, and desolation under the scourge of the tides of insects and beasts.

“Demon soldiers!”

“The Ultimate One Demon Soldiers have arrived!”

Gradually, whenever they showed up at a battlefield, the hostile Cultivators would scream in terror and defect before the battle began.

With the demon soldiers, the Ultimate One Sect invaded countless worlds and enjoyed its heyday!

Ba Yanzhi was unbelievably lucky. During the suicidal charges, no matter what shocking wounds he suffered, he survived them all, as if some immense force was hidden inside his unrecognizable body, waiting to be awakened.

The Ultimate One Sect did not forget the intrepid disciple, either. After every battle, Ba Yanzhi would receive ‘special treatment’. He would be sent back to the dungeon to be experimented on in the most appalling and cruel ways.

As dozens of different types of ‘Divine Water of Kunlun’ were injected into his body, he became stronger and more brutal. The sparks of his self-awareness were like torches that had fallen into a swamp, swallowed by the darkness.

Right then—

In a new battlefield, on a boundless prairie, millions of the Ultimate One Demon Soldiers were grouped again, waiting for the battle drum anxiously.

However, this time, their enemies standing in front of them turned out to also be ugly demon soldiers!

“Ultimate One Sect, your secret arts have been seen through!

“You didn’t see this coming, do you? The Alliance of Nine Sects captured quite a few demon soldiers after the failures. We have figured out your dirty tricks!

“Now, the Alliance of Nine Sects is producing our own demon soldiers!

“Hehe. There are three times more mortals under our nine sects than those under the Ultimate One Sect, which means that we can produce three times more demon soldiers than you can. How can you fight against us?”

The horns finally sounded around the battlefield.

The tides of insects and beasts, all made of ordinary people and essentially identical to each other, crashed into each other from the two sides of the battlefield.

Maybe it was his imagination, Li Yao thought he saw a tear in the crimson eyes of the demon soldiers on the other side before the tides crashed.

BOOM!

The messy memory pieces were finally shattered by the destructive battle of demon soldiers.

Li Yao clearly sensed that Ba Yanzhi’s consciousness was slowly surfacing and condensing. He was regaining his self-awareness and memories.

Very soon, a new illusionary world appeared inside Li Yao’s brain.

It was a planet with a bright purple sky. The atmosphere was rather thin, and one could see the blinking stars in the universe.

Bright green fog filled the surface of the planet. Occasionally, poisonous gas would spurt out of the crevices. It was apparently not the most suitable place for human beings.

Ba Yanzhi was standing on a protruding rock. He was now more than five meters tall, with green scales all over his body. His feet pierced into the rock like the claws of an eagle. There were only four fingers on his left hand, each of which was growing fingernails that looked like sabers. His right hand was his only relatively normal body part.

His face was ugly, his eyes blood red. Three horns soared into the sky from his head, as if he was wearing an unsightly crown.

A thick rope was tied to his waist, on which more than ten flying swords were hanging. On his back was a colorful cloak that was spluttering in the wind. With a closer look, one would discover that it was made from the flags of dozens of Cultivation sects!

With a solemn face, Ba Yanzhi looked at afar.

The deep canyon ahead of him was packed by all kinds of bizarre-shaped demon soldiers who looked like monsters in a nightmare. However, they all remained silent in battle formations under the suppression of Ba Yanzhi’s aura, like rows of statues.

“Brothers!”

Ba Yanzhi’s voice rushed past the canyon like a gust. Even the rocks around were emitting rattling noises because of the blast.

“All the brothers standing here are from different worlds, have different pasts, and used to have entirely different faces!

“However, there is something that is the same about us.

“We have all lost our families and our everything because of the Cultivators!

“Those high and mighty Cultivators, for their own training and longevity, exploited and savaged the mortals in every way possible!

“For their own personal interests, and under the pretext of ‘great Dao’ and ‘righteousness’, they attacked each other while sending the armies of mortals as the vanguard!

“Countless worlds have been demolished in the civil war of the Cultivators. The homes of countless mortals have destroyed because of a bombardment of the Cultivators!

“Is there any world where billions of mortals were not killed by Cultivators? Is there anybody here whose family members were not slain by Cultivators?

“In the end, the resources are running dry, the crystals are mostly used up, and the spiritual energy is thinner and thinner. The war cannot be fought any longer. However, they started to deceive the mortals and built countless mortals into terrifying monsters. They continued asking us to kill each other or collect and mine for them in the harshest environments!

“Even worse, they corrupted our brains with poison, depriving many of our brothers of the abilities to think and talk!

“Can we suffer any more of these days?

“Can we still wait and watch our fathers and brothers be sent into the mines of the desolate planets and toil until they die?

“Can we still wait and watch our wives and daughters be captured by the Cultivators and end up as slaves in their sects?

“Can we still wait and watch ourselves be modified into inhuman demon soldiers, to fight against our brothers whom we have no grudges with, and to die in an alien land billions of kilometers from our hometowns without even a gravestone?”

” **No!** ”

” **We can’t!** ”

Roars were echoing in the tides of insects and beasts.

Ba Yanzhi opened his arms and pressed down, containing everyone’s emotions. “Cultivators are the greatest cancer of the three thousand Sectors! Only after we kill all the Cultivators can our fathers, brothers, sisters, wives, and children be freed and live happy lives!

“Hehe. The Cultivators who turned us into such wretched creatures despised us as ‘demon soldiers’!

“Very good. Demon soldiers we might be, but from today on, the demon soldiers will not fight for any sect or any goddamn Cultivator!

“We will only fight for ourselves, for your families, for the brand-new species made of us!

“Move all the Cultivators here!”

Ba Yanzhi waved his hands. Several demons carried up dozens of Cultivators who were tied up.

On the empty ground behind Ba Yanzhi, more than ten ballistae had been deployed. The Cultivators were all inserted into belts at the ends of the ballistae.

“B—Brother Ba, Uncle Ba, Master Ba!”

One of the Cultivators was already peeing in fear. He turned out to be Qing Xuzi, the one responsible for the refinement of the Divine Water of Kunlun in the Ultimate One Sect. His legs and tongue were shaking as he begged, “Master Ba, please spare my life. I was wrong! I—I’m willing to correct my wrongdoings and join your cause. I know many secrets of the Ultimate One Sect. I’m useful. I’m very useful!”

Ba Yanzhi’s eyes glanced over Qing Xuzi’s rather handsome face and spat on the ground. He slashed his giant hand down as if it were a saber. “Offer the sacrifices to our flag!”

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Several demon soldiers kicked the triggers of the ballistae hard. Including the crying Qing Xuzi, all the Cultivators were thrown into the horde of insects and beasts. Very soon, they were drowned by the furious demon soldiers, and even their bones were all chewed up.

The second batch of Cultivators were sent into the ballistae again. Many of them had already been grasped by fear. Like chickens or ducks whose neck had been cut open, they were uttering meaningless sounds from their throats. Their previous elegant, deity-like demeanor had entirely gone.

Shua! Shua! Shua!

The Cultivators were tossed out again. While they were still in midair, they were riddled with holes by venomous acid and stings, shattered apart with blood spurting out like a storm!

Behind Ba Yanzhi, an enormous flag gradually rose up and flagged in the wind. There was only one giant, bloody word on the black flag.

Demon!

Below the flag, a muscular man with a bullet head, who was more than ten meters tall and short of a right eye with scars all over his body as if he were sewed together from hundreds of pieces, was staring at the flag of the bloody demon wholeheartedly. He seemed to be dedicating his entire life to the flag.

Ba Yanzhi patted the man’s shoulder hard and said softly, “Zhang Niuer, I am sorry!”

The scarred, half-blind, bull-headed man grinned. A coarse voice echoed deep down from his throat. “Moo…”

Zhang Niuer had already lost the ability to speak.

Two rows of hot, bloody tears flowed out of Ba Yanzhi’s eyes again. He mumbled, “Last time, I told you that I would let you and your family live a better life. I did not live up to my promise. I didn’t know that things would end up like this.

“But this time, I will not go back on my word again, and I will fulfil my promise to you!”

Clang!

The pale bone blade made of the bones of an enormous beast was unsheathed, and the killing intent blew out a bloody swirl in the bright purple sky. Ba Yanzhi roared thunderously, “Kill! Kill! Kill! Kill all the Cultivators to make a world of peace and justice!”

Chapter 920 - Blood in Empyrean Terminus!

The pale saber aura, mixed with endless storms of blood, swept across the entire universe. The memory pieces that followed were revolving at a much higher speed, and Li Yao experienced thousands of fierce battles in Ba Yanzhi’s illusionary world.

At first, faced with the well-trained, disciplined Cultivators who boasted marvelous techniques, the demon soldiers, who had all been ordinary people in the past, suffered more defeats than victories. Many a time, they were attacked collectively by several major sects until there were barely any survivors left.

But the demon soldiers had the greatest advantage on their side, which was their sheer numbers!

This part was exactly the same with the history that Li Yao had read in his textbooks.

At the end of the civil war of the ancient Cultivators, the spiritual energy was running dry, and all the sects suffered heavy casualties. A protracted great war could not be fought solely by Cultivators any longer.

Therefore, after the secret of the ‘Divine Water of Kunlun’ was discovered, the Ultimate One Sect, the Alliance of Nine Sects, and the thousands of sects in the three thousand Sectors had been modifying the mortals under their government in secret, transforming the army of mortals into demon soldiers and demon generals to fight the war in place of the Cultivators.

Later, the paradigm of the wars was one or two Cultivators commanding thousands of demon soldiers. Should the demon soldiers be crushed, the Cultivators would immediately run away without even looking back.

After all, as the war went on, Cultivators were too precious to be killed easily for no good reason.

As for the Cultivation sects that were unwilling to produce demon soldiers, they were mostly swallowed, their heritage gone, under the scourge of other sects and their infinite demon soldiers!

As the vicious cycle continued, demon soldiers proliferated like viruses. They became the greatest supply for Ba Yanzhi.

Even though he only had several soldiers around him, as long as he could ignite the flame of resistance in the hearts of those demon soldiers and demon generals, Ba Yanzhi’s army would be resurrected from obliteration time and time again. Eventually, it grew larger and larger like a snowball!

Just like that, after a hundred years of bloody battles, Li Yao saw that the army around Ba Yanzhi was far larger and more magnificent. In the beginning, they had worn skirts and armor made of hide and cloths, and they been fighting with their claws and teeth. Later, they were all in armors made of fine metals, carrying flying swords that they had and riding boats that they robbed of the Cultivators.

All while they kindled the fire of insurgency from one planet to another!

At each new world that they reached, all the Cultivation sects were annihilated. The land and mother lodes under the control of the Cultivators were distributed to the mortals. The Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and the pills that were in the Cultivators' collection would be pulverized into powder and blended into food to help the hungry civilians live through the famine.

As a result, to defend their own land and to stop the Cultivators from coming back, a lot of mortals drank the Divine Water of Kunlun of their own will, turned into demons, and obeyed Ba Yanzhi's command!

"As long as we can protect our own land, feed our family, and let them live a happy life, what's wrong with being a demon?"

Ba Yanzhi's army liberated one world after another under such an ideology!

In the end, in a brilliant new world, below the colorful, spectacular nebulas that were spinning fast, Ba Yanzhi was staring at a planet. Hundreds of rings were swirling rapidly and constituted a solid array. The collision of the star dusts triggered three magnificent, awe-inspiring worlds.

Empyrean Terminus Sect!

Li Yao was suddenly shocked. The Empyrean Terminus Sect had been the strongest sect in the three thousand Sectors at the end of the era of the ancient Cultivators.

In the history books that Li Yao had read, it was also the sect that had been the last to be wiped out by the demons.

After the Star Ocean Imperium was established, its capital world had been named 'Empyrean Terminus Sector', and the space zone it was in had been named ‘Empyrean Terminus Space Zone’, in honor of the Empyrean Terminus Sect.

In front of the billions of demon soldiers was a fleet of warships that was densely packed together. They were almost as brilliant as the galaxy, showcasing the formidability of the Empyrean Terminus Sect silently!

Li Yao took a long breath. It appeared that this was the final war between the demons and the ancient Cultivators.

Ba Yanzhi was wearing translucent black armor, with a huge saber that was made by combining the ‘best treasures’ of almost a hundred Cultivation sects on his shoulder, and standing on a warship that he had captured.

The warship had already been tied up by countless thick veins that looked like trunks. Half transparent lumps were growing out of the veins, fluctuating and releasing bright green venomous gas into the warship.

After a hundred years of evolution, the demons right now were no longer used to the air that human beings breathed.

Ba Yanzhi’s back was as straight as a hundred years ago, but his eyes were now much more hollowed. The brilliance inside his eyes was like the sharpness of a sword in the sheath.

“This is our last war!

“On our way to this place, we have destroyed hundreds of Cultivation sects, slain countless Cultivators, and rescued even more mortals who were oppressed by the Cultivators!

“Right now, the remnants of those Cultivation sects are all hiding in the Empyrean Terminus Sect, gnashing their teeth and grinding their sabers, ready to crush us and return to their own worlds!

“They are preparing to go back and take back the land that has been distributed to you. They are going to enslave our family, sh*t on the top of our head, and resume their extravagant lives!

“The fate of all mortals in the three thousand Sectors is now in our hands and will be decided by our sabers, swords, claws, and teeth!

“If you don’t want to be a slave forever, just charge at the scumbags together with me!”

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

In the boundless sea of stars, a tiny galaxy seemed to have expanded abruptly. Every warship that made up the ‘galaxy’ activated their spiritual energy to the maximum. Their halos were melted into a roaring dragon whose every scale was standing up!

Before the warships charged out, billions of flying swords had already darted toward the defense line on the opposite side like a surging tide.

From the defense line of the Empyrean Terminus Sect, billions of dazzling mystic rays were shooting close, too!

The collision of the two destructive hurricanes made the stars of the galaxy as lackluster as burnt coal. The stars far away even died down instantly and turned into a black background for the war!

In the illusionary world, the scene was frozen for a long time before the turbulence of spiritual energy that was sweeping the universe tore it apart.

But this time, the darkness lasted for a long time. What reappeared in the end was a black and white world.

Li Yao vaguely felt that this was the part of his memory that Ba Yanzhi was least willing to recall.

Ba Yanzhi was floating in the sky of a world of fire. On the ground, the pavilions and towers covering thousands of kilometers had been burnt to the ground. Almost a thousand floating mountains were hitting the ground like meteors, leaving craters that looked like scars.

Splendid buildings could be found on the crooked floating mountains, too, but they were mostly being consumed by the furious flames.

Li Yao saw that ‘Empyrean Terminus Sect’ was carved on one of the mountains.

The Empyrean Terminus Sect had finally been taken over by the army of demons!

Li Yao had mixed feelings, not knowing how to comment on Ba Yanzhi’s behavior.

However, the Empyrean Terminus Sect was the last fortress for the Cultivators. Now that the Empyrean Terminus Sect had been occupied, the demons should have secured a great victory now.

The history books of the posterity proved the point, too. Ever since the Empyrean Terminus Sect was breached, the Cultivators had never been able to launch large-scale counterattacks. The minor resistance was mostly suppressed very quickly.

Then, it was the thirty-thousand-year-long ‘Great Dark Era’!

Ba Yanzhi, as the leader of the demons, clearly won the war. How did he end up in the Blood Demon Sector at the edge of the sea of stars and even turn into ‘Chaos’?

Screams and yells were echoing on the ground. However, it was not a battle between demons and Cultivators.

It was a civil war between several troops of demons!

Hundreds of flags of bloody demons were shaking violently in the battle. Now and then, they fell and were stomped into the mud.

Around Ba Yanzhi, almost ten streaks of brightness rushed close and surrounded him, condensing into eight human beings with a dominating aura.

No. Not human beings—demons!

Of the eight demons, some were carrying the most glamorous scales, some had colorful feathers surrounded by mystic rays, and some were dragging a long tail, with the vintage feeling of the primeval era.

Although they were apparently demons, Li Yao had to admit that the superb and extraordinary auras around them were even more eye-catching than those of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

They almost gave Li Yao a feeling that they were a nobler species far above mankind!

Compared to them, Ba Yanzhi, whose left arm had almost been chopped off in the bloody battle just now, looked poignant and ugly. He was like a tiger who had just struggled out of a trap, and his blood was almost running dry!

The leader of the eight demons seemed to absorbed a huge dragon into his body. However, his handsome face gave Li Yao a familiar feeling. Li Yao felt that he had seen the guy somewhere.

Li Yao thought quickly and searched the memory pieces. Very soon, he found the answer and gasped hard.

It was Wang Qianyi, the leader of the Ultimate One Sect who was the first to modify mortals into demon soldiers, who was cursed by Ba Yanzhi, and who sentenced Ba Yanzhi to the dungeon to be changed into a demon soldier!

However, a hundred years ago, Wang Qianyi had looked like a weary old man. Right now, he seemed to be back his prime, healthy years. Every muscle on his face was bulging while he grinned hideously and unreservedly!

Li Yao did not expect that the guy had modified himself into a demon, too. Also, judging from the appearance, he was even more immaculate than Ba Yanzhi!

Yes. Compared to the eight demons, Ba Yanzhi and the demon soldiers under his command were like the bronze-blood demons and the black-blood demons of modern time. Ugly, clumsy, and foolish.

But the leader of the Ultimate One Sect was even more handsome, strong, and majestic than the silver-blood demons nowadays. He was perhaps what the saint-blood demons in legends looked like!

“Wan Qianyi… It’s really you, Wang Qianyi!”

Ba Yanzhi narrowed his eyes and stared at the guy’s face for almost five seconds. Finally, he recognized who the new enemy was. He burst into such fury that his wounds cracked again, and his blood burst out like a mist!

“Weren’t you already dead? How did you change into such an appearance?”

Chapter 921 - Scheme of the Ultimate One Demons!

When the leader of the Ultimate One Sect smiled, every scale on his body seemed to shine. The new force inside his body made his voice no longer as mild as water but as irresistible as the thunders in the sky.

“Don’t you see, Yanzhi? Everything has been within the Ultimate One Sect’s plan. For the last hundred years, we have been pulling your nose!

“Everything you did was merely to clear all the obstacles for the Ultimate One Sect!”

“What?” Ba Yanzhi’s face paled. Every wound on his body was opening like the lips of a baby, but there was no more blood that could flow out right now. He bellowed, “It’s impossible. It’s simply impossible!”

The leader of the Ultimate One Sect explained, “A hundred years ago, the Ultimate One Sect was the first to produce the Ultimate One Demon Soldiers with the Divine Water of Kunlun. We planned to unite the three thousand Sectors with the demon soldiers and wreathe all the stars in the universe in the radiance of the righteous Ultimate One Sect.

“However, other sects soon copied the formulas of the Divine Water of Kunlun through the captives or the bodies of the Ultimate One Demon Soldiers, and they created various kinds of demon soldiers of their own. Our great plan suffered a minor setback.

“More importantly, as more and more demon soldiers were created in the Cultivation sects, the problem that they could not be controlled gradually surfaced. Mutinies were happing all the time. The Ultimate One Sect was also a victim of such uprisings. We experienced dozens of insurrections ourselves.

“How were we going to control the three thousand Sectors if it went on like that?

“Hehe. Right at that time, you rose up and declared war on the world of Cultivators.

“The Ultimate One Sector gathered all the Cultivators above the Nascent Soul Stage and discovered, after thorough deduction and calculation, that the fire of insurgency could not be extinguished. Even Ba Yanzhi failed and died, a second, a third Ba Yanzhi would stand up!

“It was better to go with the trend than to blindly resist it!

“If we could not unite the universe as Cultivators, what’s wrong with achieving our purpose as ‘demons’?

“For a hundred years, your army led the charge in the frontline, helping us annihilate countless hostile sects and Cultivators whom we have wanted to kill for a long time!

“The core members of the Ultimate One Sect, on the other hand, lurked in the darkness after we pretended to be destroyed by you and continued our experiment and refinement!

“We gathered the ‘Divine Water of Kunlun’ of different formulas from countless sects and tested them on mortals. After decades of experiments, we have finally created the most perfect ‘Divine Water of Chaos’!

“Look at our new bodies. How impeccable, how splendid, and how magnificent!

“This should be the real appearance of demons!

“In the meantime, the members of the Ultimate One Sect gradually leaked into your army, too.

“The universe is too large a place, and you’ve been dedicated to the war on the frontline all this time. How would you know what was happening in a certain Sector among the sea of stars?

“Hehe. It doesn’t matter if I tell you the truth now. While you were fighting bloody battles in the frontline, the Ultimate One Sect took control of more than three hundred Sectors!

“The bumpkins have just left their farmland and washed their feet clean. Do they know anything about the management of a city or a province? They will still have to count on us in the end!

“Even your army of billions of soldiers has been seriously infiltrated by us from your logistics to your combat units!

“Oh, right. It is not appropriate to call us the ‘Ultimate One Sect’ anymore. Right now, we are the ‘Ultimate One Demons’. We are the supreme dominators of the demon race!”

Dozens of crystal bombs seemed to be exploding inside Ba Yanzhi’s throat at the same time. He could not utter a word.

“Yanzhi, I have always thought highly of you,” the leader of the Ultimate One Sect praised. “You accomplished every task assigned to you satisfactorily without any complaint.

Even such an arduous mission as to clear our enemies for us has been completed by you!

“Right now, the ‘Empyrean Terminus Sect’, the greatest force of the Cultivators, as well as most of the remnants of the Cultivators, have been annihilated by you.

“The demon soldiers that are loyal to you suffered heavy casualties, too.

“This is the perfect occasion for the rise of the Ultimate One Demons. We are finally realizing our dream of uniting the universe. You should be greatly credited. Haha. Hahahaha!”

Ba Yanzhi’s face turned from pale into purple. He vomited a mouthful of blood. “You—you have even given up the heritage of the Ultimate One Sect? As the leader of the Ultimate One Sect, you are willing to turn from a Cultivator into a demon?”

“Don’t you understand? Cultivators have no future now!” the leader of the Ultimate One Sect sneered. “For thousands of years, the three thousand Sectors have been attacking each other, and all the spiritual energy and crystals are now running dry!

“Cultivation is based on the inhalation and exhalation of spiritual energy. What’s there to Cultivate if you don’t have spiritual energy?

“It is the reason the Cultivators’ training has been becoming more and more difficult and there have been fewer and fewer mortals whose spiritual root was awakened in the past thousand years!

“I remember that, four hundred years ago, when I first joined the Ultimate One Sect, even my least talented fellow disciples would be given five crystals monthly for their training. Also, because of the dense spiritual energy in the headquarters of the Ultimate One Sect, the speed of training was very fast. It was not unusual for one to advance into the next level after only a couple of years!

“However, by the time I became the leader of the Ultimate One Sect, the few mother lodes in our territory had all been emptied. Even the most talented disciples were offered only two crystals every month. As for the common disciple without impressive aptitude, they were given a scattered crystal the size of a peanut every three months. The density of the spiritual energy in our headquarters had become much thinner, too!

“Under such circumstances, even those who advanced into the next level every ten years were ‘prodigies’!

“That was the legendary ‘Era of Doom’.

“The Era of Doom is the end for the Cultivators. However talented and determined you are, without spiritual energy and crystals, your endeavor will only be in vain.

“You must adapt yourself in difficult times. In the Era of Doom, Cultivation is a dead end. We must find a new training system in order to survive.

“Whichever of the thousands of sects in the three thousand Sectors understood the logic would be able to move faster than others, and they would be the dominators of the universe!

“Hehe. As it turns out, it was us who understood the logic first!

“Drink the Divine Water of Kunlun and turn into demons. The focus of the training of demons is the minor universe inside their bodies so that they can trigger the force deep within. Their demand for natural spiritual energy is much smaller than Cultivators’.

“Besides, the three thousand Sectors have been wrecked by the Cultivators. In the harsh, blighted new worlds, demons have more advantages to survive!

“Therefore, in the Era of Doom that can potentially last tens of thousands of years, demons will certainly be the dominators of the three thousand Sectors.

“Maybe, after a long period of rest, the spiritual energy in the universe will become dense again, and crystals will be generated one more time. The Era of Doom will come to an end.

“By then, our descendants will naturally turn from demons into human beings again, and we will inherit and pass on the legacy of the righteous Ultimate One Sect!”

Ba Yanzhi did not know that the leader of the Ultimate One Sect had been thinking so far ahead, nor did he expect that he had been involved in the Ultimate One Sect’s scheme since a hundred years ago. He could barely stand on his feet now.

Right then, the shouts and yells on the ground were louder and louder. Another troop of demon soldiers with finely-made armors charged into the battlefield, with two words carved on their breastplates.

Ultimate One!

Ba Yanzhi shook hard and almost fell from the sky. He moaned in disbelief, “Xiao Changsheng, you’ve defected, too?”

“He hasn’t defected. Your deputy commander Xiao Changsheng has been with the Ultimate One Demons all the time!” the leader of the Ultimate One Sect said casually. “Yanzhi, do you know your biggest weakness?

“You are too innocent and naïve. You don’t know how to understand people.

“You always prefer to classify others according to their species. In the past, you thought that Cultivators were good and the demonic Cultivators were bad. Later, you thought that Cultivators were bad and demons were born good, kind, and righteous. So, you trusted and supported all the demons unconditionally and without a prejudice!

“As your leader in the past, and considering your contributions to our cause, I will give you one last lesson. You cannot divide people in such a way!

“There are no distinctions between humans and demons, deities and devils, Cultivators and demonic Cultivators!

“They are absolutely the same!

“There are only two kinds of people in the world—winners and losers!

“Of ten thousand people, there can only be one winner. The remaining 9,999 people are all losers!

“When we were Cultivators, I was the winner, and you and those ants were the losers.

“Right now, we are demons. I am still the winner, and you and the ants will be stomped on and end up being our servants, slaves, and cannon fodder again!

“One day, when the Era of Doom passes and demons turn back into human beings, we will still be winners, and you will still be grass, ants, and dust beneath our shoes. Do you believe it?

“Do you understand why you are wrong?

“The resources of the world are limited. If there are ten thousand people, it is already not bad if one of them can be fed. The remaining 9,999 people are destined to starve!

“But right now, you are trying to feed 9,999 people out of the ten thousand? Isn’t it the most hilarious dream?

“You’ve been living in that dream for a hundred years. Finally, you’ve woken up now. Any last words before your death?”

Ba Yanzhi staggered and waved his hands hard, as if he were trying to find a solid wall in the air to lean on. He breathed hard, with desperation leaking out of his every pore. He struggled to say, “But I don’t understand!

“The Divine Water of Kunlun can turn spiritual animals into demon beasts. Why didn’t you create an army of demon beasts to fight you instead of bringing disaster to the innocent ordinary people?”

The leader of the Ultimate One Sect smiled. “Animals are too stupid. It is not easy to control them even after they are modified into demon beasts.

“However, that is just an insignificant reason.

“The more important reason is that spiritual animals are too precious.

“Breeding a spiritual animal will consume a lot of time and effort. In a world where spiritual energy is running dry, herding spiritual animals is already extremely difficult. Isn’t it too wasteful to modify them into demon beasts?

“In the meantime, the lowborn are everywhere like wild grass. Isn’t it much more cost-effective and convenient to modify them than to work on the spiritual animals?”

Ba Yanzhi was more than infuriated and shocked. “Cost-effective? What are the lives of ordinary people in your eyes? Are they even no match for the spiritual animals?”

“Of course not,” the leader of the Ultimate One Sect remarked casually. “How can the ants and grass be compared to the divine birds and beasts?”

Chapter 922 - Look for Kunlun!

The words slashed Ba Yanzhi right in the face like an invisible blade. He roared and pointed his broken saber at the leader of the Ultimate One Sect. “Wang Qianyi, I will show you the strength of the grass and ants!”

“I am not in a hurry to kill you. Why do you have to ask to be killed?” The leader of the Ultimate One Sect considered him as nothing more than a fish swimming in a cooker, not bothered by his fury at all. “Right now, there is no hope for you. However, considering your contributions to the Ultimate One Demons, I will give you one last opportunity.

“Abandon everything in your past and join the Ultimate One Demons!

“After all, the name of ‘Ba Yanzhi’ has some value among the demons. Under your name, the demons that are scattered in all the three thousand Sectors can be unified and will submit to the flag of ‘Ultimate One’ faster!

“Do not turn down the offer hastily. Look down. The demon soldiers loyal to you are being massacred, and their family in the rea will soon be controlled by the Ultimate One Demons, too. The life and death of those people all depend on your decision!”

Ba Yanzhi was dazed. His arm that clutched the broken saber was shaking slightly.

“Also…”

With a pair of mysterious eyes, the leader of the Ultimate One Sect said casually, “I know that you took away a stone back when you were exploring the mysterious black spring on the Infinite Planet. Hand the stone over to me, and I guarantee that all of your subordinates will be spared. It is even possible that I will give a few Sectors to you.”

Ba Yanzhi rolled his eyes and observed in a coarse voice, “So, you’ve known about the existence of the ‘Divine Stone of Kunlun’ all along! I remember it now. Ten years ago, somebody tried to assassinate me. At that time, I thought that they were sent by the Cultivators. But as I thought about it carefully later, I found that their target was not me but the ‘Divine Stone of Kunlun’!

“The assassins were sent by you, weren’t?

“I will trust you no more, Wang Qianyi!

“You think I don’t know the secret of the ‘Divine Stone of Kunlun’?

“The cave on the Infinite Planet was probably a relic of the Pangu Clan in the primeval era, and the black spring was also left by the Pangu Clan! The Divine Stone of Kunlun was a map of the Pangu Clan. Whoever unravels the secrets inside the Divine Stone of Kunlun will be able to set off to ‘Kunlun’, where they will find the real legacy of the Pangu Clan!

“You want to swindle me out of the Divine Stone of Kunlun? In your dreams!”

Ba Yanzhi burst into laughter. His shaking arm became as tough as iron again. He clenched the handle of the saber so hard that the skin on his palm broke. His blood vaporized into red steam and circled around the incomplete body of the saber, extending its aura to almost a hundred meters long before he slashed at the leader of the Ultimate One Sect!

The leader of the Ultimate One Sect kept his hands behind his back and did not dodge at all. The mystic rays that were flowing among his scales congregated into a raging dragon above his head that opened its bloody mouth and swallowed the bloody aura of blade that Ba Yanzhi triggered, leaving absolutely nothing.

“Capture him alive. We must elicit the whereabouts of the Divine Stone of Kunlun from him,” the leader of the Ultimate One Sect said casually.

However, a deafening explosion echoed below everyone’s feet. A gargantuan floating mountain, which had hidden in the ground deeply earlier, was now rising into the sky again and soon surpassed everyone’s head!

Li Yao observed carefully, only to discover that there was a bull-headed, muscular man more than ten meters tall below the floating mountain.

The bull-headed muscular man pushed up a floating mountain that must have weighed thousands of tons by force with his magnificent arms and even soared into the sky!

The crazy action drained the energy of every mitochondria inside his every cells. Every inch of his skin was exploding, as if fireworks of blood were blossoming on his body.

The floating mountain turned into an unstoppable warship, and he turned into the spurting exhaust flames of the warship!

“Zhang Niuer!”

Ba Yanzhi was shocked, his tears flowing out.

Hiu!

The bull-headed muscular man broke apart all of a sudden, turning into a cluster of bloody fire. The immense impetus pushed the floating mountain into a shooting star that darted toward the Ultimate One Demons brutally.

Before his body crumbled, Zhang Niuer finally recovered his speech, which had been confined for a hundred years. He roared in a voice that could split the sky and the earth, “Big brother, go now!”

The floating mountain rocketed at a high speed, triggering flames that looked like red lotuses. The flames dyed the black and white world red and eventually burnt the cold, cruel illusionary world into ashes.

In nothingness, Li Yao sensed that many telepathic thoughts were flashing fast. Ba Yanzhi had come to the end of his life. It was his last memory piece.

The new illusionary world was… the underground temple in the Mausoleum of Chaos!

However, it seemed to be a time when the Mausoleum of Chaos had just been built. At least, the statue of the member of the Pangu Clan at the center of the temple was not there, and the scale of the temple was not as impressive as the present day.

The place was indeed an enormous war base. Countless demon soldiers were busy at work inside the temple. Out of his expectations, Li Yao saw a lot of Cultivators on the spot, too.

Perhaps, under the pressure of the Ultimate One Demons, the mortal enemies in the past had been left with no choice except to collaborate with each other now.

Ba Yanzhi was no longer as sharp and magnificent as he had been in the previous illusionary worlds.

He was already very old. His beard and hair, which used to protrude out, were now dangling down from his forehead and chin like weeds that had dried up.

His body was no longer brawny and turned into a mere skeleton, with wrinkled skin attached to it in multiple layers, which made him both ugly and look sleazy. His left arm and left leg had completely vanished. However, the wounds had not recovered but were enveloped in purple venomous fog, indicating that he had been suffering from the pain of corrosion.

But his back was still as straight as a spear, just like a hundred years ago!

Ba Yanzhi was sitting cross-legged on a complicated, enormous array, surrounded by colorful, octagonal spiritual stripes. He was holding a vintage wooden bowl that was filled with a deep, green liquid.

There was nothing to heat the bowl, but the bowl seemed to be boiling, with bubbles popping up nonstop.

“Great General, you can’t take it!”

One of the weasel-like demon soldiers was trying to talk him out of it.

“Green General, you have been experimented on with different formulas of the Divine Water of Kunlun countless times in the past hundred years. Your body is deformed and in an utter mess. We cannot determine how many impurities are inside your blood even when all of us analyze it together!

“The latest Divine Water of Kunlun was produced by mixing the raw Divine Water of Kunlun with almost a hundred types of poison. It is a by-product in a perilous accident!

“We have experimented on the ‘Thunder Mammoths’ that weighed dozens of tons with the liquid, with more failures than successes. Some of the Thunder Mammoths were indeed modified into more terrifying beasts, but the majority of them were killed on the spot!

“Great General, you cannot take such a ferocious medicine randomly! Should there be anything wrong, your body will be destroyed, and your cause will be no more!

“Great General, please think about it carefully!”

“I’ve made up my mind,” Ba Yanzhi replied calmly and resolutely. “We’ve finally got rid of the pursuit of the Ultimate One Demons after so much trouble and fled to this place. We are so close to the real ‘Kunlun’. I cannot allow our endeavor to be sabotaged because of my insufficient strength.

“Strength. I need more strength!

“Only after we find ‘Kunlun’ can we expect to compete with the Ultimate One Demons, to avenge our families, and to… take back the entire universe!”

Ba Yanzhi raised his head and drank all the simmering green liquid.

The spiritual stripes that were dancing around him suddenly accelerated. The runes all shone and shot into his body rapidly.

After each rune that entered his body, Ba Yanzhi’s eyes would become slightly larger. His dried body was being filled up again. His bones were expanding inch by inch, tearing apart his skin, healing it, tearing it apart again, and healing it again!

“Hoooooooooo!”

Inhuman roars echoed from Ba Yanzhi’s expanding chest. The entire process of evolution that took billions of years seemed to be played backwards on his body fast.

At first, his canine teeth protruded out, and golden hair grew all over his body. He turned into an enormous ape more than ten meters tall.

His body continued expanding, with dense bone spurs extending out of his skull and his spine, shining coldly like the sharpest sabers. Then, his hair disappeared, his skin was replaced by thick hide, his hands turned into spiky claws, his head was twisted, and his bloody mouth was enlarged with dense tusks protruding.

Eventually, two huge bones pierced out of his shoulder blades and continuously grew. Two layers of bright green membranes grew out of the bones, turning them into two massive wings.

Feathers, wings, claws, tails, antlers… After displaying the features of almost a hundred different ferocious beasts, he was even showing the fins and the characteristics of certain shellfish.

Li Yao clearly sensed that Ba Yanzhi was going further and further down the path of ‘atavism’.

Maybe at the beginning, he had still been able to tame his genes and only reveal the features of apes, smilodons, or tyrannosaurs. But very soon, the force went out of his control as he assumed the appearance of the sarcosuchus, iron turtles, and nautilus.

Ba Yanzhi was returning to the beginning point of evolution and the original form of all life.

In the end, he turned into a cluster of a thick, translucent liquid that looked like glue, with materials shining in the middle like stars.

Maybe, this was the real appearance of ‘Chaos’ in the legends.

For some reason, Li Yao recalled the chaotic-blood demon on the Skeleton Island whose genes completely collapsed because of the strengthening drugs overdose.

Perhaps he was not killed, either; he was simply back to the original point of evolution.

The demons and Cultivators nearby were all greatly shocked, but there was nothing they could do about the translucent fluid.

A moment later, the cluster of fluid wriggled slowly and condensed into the shape of a human being one more time. Arms, feet, and facial organs gradually appeared, too. Ba Yanzhi resumed his appearance from his peak years. He was even more perfect than that time, with the dominating aura resembling that of the Ultimate One Demons flowing around him before.

“Great General, you’ve made it!”

All the demons were overjoyed.

“Yes. I’ve made it!”

Ba Yanzhi’s eyelids suddenly twitched, and he seemed to be collapsing into fluid again. However, he stopped the trend hard with his unbelievable tenacity.

He observed his hands that were full of strength carefully, and he grinned.

“Let’s go and find ‘Kunlun’!”

Chapter 923 - Original Point of Evolution!

The scene was slowly frozen in the echo of ‘Kunlun’.

Then, it was the last illusionary world.

Li Yao’s soul appeared in the secret chamber more than twenty thousand meters below the ground that could block radiation and spiritual waves, and he was staring at the thick fluid inside the crystal pool in midair.

The fluid seemed to be a quiet ocean that boasted its own self-awareness. Now and then, a tiny spindrift would be raised, and thousands of telepathic thoughts would spurt out.

The telepathic thoughts formed bright gold, dotted lines in midair. When the lines connected, brilliants stars were formed. The number of stars grew larger and larger, expanding into one galaxy after another.

It was a star map, one that was meant to guide the latecomers to find Kunlun.

BOOM!

As billions of stars flooded into Li Yao’s brain as if a dam had collapsed, the explosive force immediately blew him out of the memory pieces of Ba Yanzhi and pushed him back to the depths of the White Silver Death Desert.

He was illuminated by various colors, as if he were crouching inside an enormous egg made of glass.

While Li Yao was in the deep meditative state, intense streams of heat were emitted from his body without him knowing. The high temperature melted the sand and generated such a weird ‘eggshell’.

“Ugh—”

Cold sweat was popping up of his forehead nonstop, and he was shaking. The gory scenes of war were still flashing in front of his eyes, with the echoes of shouts and yells.

He did not calm down again until he breathed steadily for a whole minute.

He had never had such experience after he forming the ultimate core!

Clutching the Hidden Star Box that looked like a crystal brain, Li Yao felt stunned.

Although he had guessed that demons and human beings might have shared the same origin, he had never thought that the truth would be so cruel and unpredictable!

There are no distinctions between humans and demons, deities and devils. There are only winners and losers!

The hideous laughter of the leader of the Ultimate One Sect was still echoing right beside his ears. He could not help but bite his lips hard until his hot blood was flowing out.

So, this is the truth.

Li Yao rubbed his face hard and quickly sorted through everything that happened forty thousand years ago.

First of all, Ba Yanzhi was indeed ‘Chaos’ and the creator of the demon race, but his ‘creation’ was quite coincidental.

Ba Yanzhi used to be merely the manager of the Infinite Planet for the Ultimate One Sect. The Infinite Planet was just a remote, barren, and underdeveloped planet in the territory of the Ultimate One Sect.

Judging from Ba Yanzhi’s demeanor, he could not have been very popular in the Ultimate One Sect. Apparently, nobody liked him, and it was sort of a banishment to assign him to the Infinite Planet.

However, as it turned out, Ba Yanzhi discovered a relic of the Pangu Clan on the Infinite Planet, where there was a black spring and a mysterious stone that were left by the Pangu Clan.

Li Yao did not know what was on Ba Yanzhi’s mind at that time. Whatever his purpose was in the beginning, he had kept the stone to himself.

Later, it was the time of war. The water of the black spring boasted the marvelous effect of curing the incurable, despite the side effect of growing horns, tails, and dense hair. Left with no other choice, Ba Yanzhi was forced to promote it on the Infinite Planet and created the first batch of ‘demons’.

Li Yao did not know how he should comment on Ba Yanzhi’s action, but he put himself in Ba Yanzhi’s shoes. If one of his family members was heavily wounded, and it was the only way to treat them, he was afraid that he would have resorted to the medication, too.

Human beings. What are human beings? If a thing has the soul of a human being but a completely different shell, are *they human beings, too?*

The question had once raised heated debates in the history of the Star Glory Federation, when the rights of the ‘spectral Cultivators’ were being acknowledged.

The spectral Cultivators were a whole new life form that was the combination of the soul of human beings and artificial bodies. The artificial body was not necessarily the shape of a human being. Back when Li Yao was in the Star Glory Federation, he had a good friend named ‘Wei Qingqing’. After she turned into a spectral Cultivator, she had always been fond of flying everywhere in the appearance of a ‘green bird’.

In the ancient times, when the ‘spectral Cultivators’ were mentioned, one’s first impression would often be the haunting, hateful poltergeists.

But things were different in the Star Glory Federation. During the unceasing war against the demon race, many soldiers of the federal army had been killed on the battlefield. As the drugs and magical equipment such as ‘Soul Manifesting Powder’ and ‘Soul Concentration Gear’ were applied, more and more soldiers were saved in the form of their souls.

For the soldiers who had ‘sacrificed’ for their country, it was naturally inappropriate to regard their souls as ‘hateful poltergeists’.

In the history of federation, after decades of debates, the advocates of souls had won the argument in the end.

From then on, the law dictated that all objects with the soul of a human being, regardless of what they looked like, would be considered human beings. Legally speaking, they would all be treated as ‘natural people’ equally.

After a hundred years of development, citizens of the federation had become very used to the spectral Cultivators. Prejudice or distress could be rarely seen. Ding Yin, Wei Qingqing, Professor Mo Xuan, and many other Cultivators who had turned into spectral Cultivators after they died were able to contribute to the civilization of mankind in their new bodies!

But what if their bodies were not artificial bodies made of crystals and metals but bizarre-looking biochemical shells whose cells had been modified on a large scale?

Could the souls who resided in such bodies be called human beings?

The problem was too tricky for Li Yao to answer at that moment.

However, whether they were human beings or not, in the eyes of the ancient Cultivators who were short of soldiers because of the prolonged war, the mutants who had drank the ‘Divine Water of Kunlun’ were clearly the best slaves and soldiers.

For the keenest Cultivators, such as those of the Ultimate One Sect, they even realized the difficulty of training in the Era of Doom and simply turned themselves into demons, too!

Maybe, the Ultimate One Demons were the ancestors of the saint-blood demons and the silver-blood demons later, and the majority of the ordinary people, or rather, the ants in their words, ended up being the bronze-blood demons and the black-blood demons?

The scheme of the Ultimate One Sect succeeded. In the Era of Doom, when the spiritual energy was running dry, demons were indeed a new species that were more adaptive to the harshness of the universe than the Cultivators were. Swept by the flag of the bloody demon, the world of Cultivators fell apart and was entirely wiped out in the end.

In the heaven-splitting final battle, Ba Yanzhi's demon army and the Empyrean Terminus Sect, the last survivors of the world of Cultivators, both suffered heavy casualties, and the Ultimate One Demons stole the fruit of victory without the least effort!

However, the Ultimate One Demons did not see one thing coming.

Not only did Ba Yanzhi get away, he had also discovered the secrets of the 'Divine Stone of Kunlun'.

"Kunlun. What is Kunlun exactly?" Li Yao mumbled to himself.

In the legends, Kunlun and Penglai were two divine mountains in the primeval era where the ancient sages lived.

However, in the deepest part of his cells, from the memory of his ancestors of the primeval era, Li Yao had seen a few enormous starships whose names were 'Kunlun' and 'Penglai'.

If Kunlun is the name of a starship left by the Pangu Clan, everything will make sense.

In the primeval era, the Pangu Clan had a base on the Infinite Planet. They left a few gifts in the place, including the 'Divine Water of Kunlun' and the 'Divine Stone of

Kunlun', which contained the coordinates of a 'Kunlun Warship'.

Maybe, they left the 'Divine Water of Kunlun' in the hope that, when the creatures on the Infinite Planet grew certain wisdom, they would drink the water of the black spring and accelerate their evolution so that they could find the 'Kunlun Warship' and the legacies of the Pangu Clan.

Whatever the purpose of the black spring was, Ba Yanzhi, who had lost everything, could only take his chances. Leading a batch of remnants, he followed the star map inside the Divine Stone of Kunlun and finally reached a place that was very close to the 'Kunlun Warship', which was here, the Blood Demon Sector!

However, after he made his way here, Ba Yanzhi's body was already extremely weak. It was impossible for him to lead a new adventure.

At the last moment of his life, he drank a type of brand-new, highly-modified 'Divine Water of Kunlun'. More 'primeval cells' inside his body were triggered, allowing him to advance into the highest level. But problems had been left, too!

Later, his exploration must've succeeded, at least during the first time. He really found 'Kunlun' and managed to excavate the remains of the enormous body of the Pangu Clan from 'Kunlun'.

It is not hard to imagine that he also retrieved a lot of legacies of the Pangu Clan from 'Kunlun' together with the remains!

Later, he studied the legacies at the center of the White Silver Death Desert below the Star Swallowing Sea, hoping *to find a way to defeat the Ultimate One Demons. He also created countless dangerous biochemical weapons!*

Li Yao suddenly realized why Ba Yanzhi had chosen to establish his base in such a desolate, unpopulated place.

It was because Ba Yanzhi had been studying the most contagious, lethal stuff. Only the depths of the Star Swallowing Sea surrounded by the White Silver Death Deserver where no creatures could survive was secure enough!

In such a place, even if there was an accident, the venomous gas and poison would not affect the outside world!

As it turned out, accidents did take place later.

At first, it was not the leakage of venomous fog or poison but that Ba Yanzhi’s body could not hold it together any longer.

He had triggered too many primeval cells. The ‘genetic locks’ that controlled his body had all been shattered, forcing him to return to the original point of life and turn into a pool of thick fluid.

Maybe, that was why he was addressed as Chaos.

No nose, no mouth, no hands, no feet, and not a hole on his body. Were they the descriptions for Chaos in the ancient legends?

However, Ba Yanzhi, who was in the form of Chaos, had not died yet. His unbelievable resolution supported the fire of his life to continue burning. He went on carrying out his research, and he saved his life story, the truth of the birth of the demon race, and the primeval star map that marked the location of Kunlun inside the Hidden Star Box.

Perhaps, his research could have succeeded, and Ba Yanzhi’s subordinates who had received a lot of legacies of the Pangu Clan had their chances to defeat the Ultimate One Demons.

But an expected accident suddenly destroyed the entire base. A certain weird virus spread out in the enclose base unstoppably, triggering even crazier mutations inside the bodies of the Cultivators and the demons, who killed each other until none were left.

At last, the branch of demons under Ba Yanzhi’s command was buried deep inside the great desert of a remote world along with all their secrets.

As for Ba Yanzhi himself, he was addressed by the rulers of the following era, the winners, as Chaos and vilified as a dreadful destroyer!

Chapter 924 - The Only Hope!

Li Yao could not even begin to imagine how sorrowful, painful, and desperate Ba Yanzhi must have been when his cells crumbled, turning him into a pool of dirty ‘gene soup’, and was forced to hide twenty thousand meters below ground without access to sunlight for the rest of his life.

Just the thought of such a miserable future was enough to drive someone crazy.

Even so, Ba Yanzhi did not give up resistance. He carved the feelings when he drank the ‘Divine Water of Kunlun’ of different formulas on the wall of the secret chamber, hoping to give some enlightenment to the latecomers.

When the Nether World Watch was scanning the tiny letters, Li Yao had taken the opportunity to study all the content and commit it to memory.

Ba Yanzhi’s writing style had the distinctive feature of the ancient Cultivators. Modern demons and Cultivators might not have understood what he was talking about, but Li Yao could see through it after a quick glance.

Also, right now, he had received the legacy of Ba Yanzhi’s memory pieces and perceived a lot of new things from Ba Yanzhi’s lifelong story.

It is a pity that Senior Ba Yanzhi failed to witness the success of his cause!

Li Yao had mixed feelings. His thoughts flew back to somewhere far, far away.

After Ba Yanzhi turned into ‘Chaos’, he had clearly continued his rebellion and caused a lot of trouble for the Ultimate One Demons.

According to the history books of the Star Glory Federation, forty thousand years ago, after the world of Cultivators collapsed, to fight for the control over the three thousand Sectors, the demons had a civil war that lasted hundreds of years.

The ancient ferocious demon ‘Skeleton Dragon’ that Li Yao met on Boneyard was one of the competitors at the time.

Now that he thought of it, the so-called civil war could have been the competition between the ‘Chaos Demons’ and the ‘Ultimate One Demons’. Judging from the appearance of Skeleton Dragon, it was most likely a general of the ‘Chaos Demons’ or the ‘Ultimate One Demons’, or even an extremely powerful, experimental weapon that had gone out of control and grown independent self-awareness for some reason, say, the destruction of the ‘Chaos Demons’.

After Ba Yanzhi perished, the Ultimate One Demons secured the final victory of the civil war. They established an enormous Demon Beast Empire and ruled over the sea of stars for thirty thousand years in the Era of Doom when the spiritual energy was low.

During the long time, the Ultimate One Demons gradually evolved into the saint-blood demons and the silver-blood demons, who continued living their extravagant, aristocratic lives. The mortals in the past, on the other hand, were modified into bronze-blood demons and black-blood demons, and they asked to mine, farm, and fight.

When the system developed to the highest point, the Pantheon of Demons and the ‘Four Pillars System’ were founded. It was claimed that the social class of every demon was destined and unchangeable. The saint-blood demons would always be saint-blood demons, and it was their natural privilege to enjoy their life. The black-blood demons would always be black-blood demons, and being enslaved was their eternal fate that nobody could defy!

However, a lie was always a lie. No matter how different they appeared to be, they were human beings to their bones. They were human beings who were showing different features of the cell because of genetic modification.

Therefore, the demons of different social classes could mate and give birth to offspring. Due to the different genetic features inside the body of the offspring, it was possible that the original appearance of the cells was restored. It was even possible that higher strength that did not belong to them was activated, thereby exposing the lies of the saint-blood demons and threatening their reign.

It was why the ‘hybrids’ were called ‘chaotic-blood demons’ and were despised as the filthiest lowborn, the ‘untouchable’!

Such a reign is really dreadful. Too dreadful!

Li Yao’s chest was heaving. The history of the past forty thousand years condensed into a sharp longsword and cut apart the bafflements inside his brain, but a new question occurred to him.

Are the saint-blood demons really extinct?

The history books of both the Star Glory Federation and the Flying Star Sector stated that, after the Star Ocean

Imperium was established, the Supreme Emperor led an enormous army and marched through the universe, executing all the saint-blood demons in the worlds that he passed and eventually wiping out all the saint-blood demons!

But right now, Li Yao had new doubts.

As the saying goes, even a rotten boat will have several useful nails. The saint-blood demons ruled over the sea of stars for thirty thousand years and collected the wealth of all the three thousand Sectors. There was bound to be a huge amount of resources.

Despite the change of dynasties, the astronomical wealth and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures were unlikely to vanish into thin air!

With such enormous resources in their possession, there were certain unlimited experts among the saint-blood demons. How come the saint-blood demons failed to resist at all when the Star Ocean Imperium rose and suffered such crushing defeats when the Supreme Emperor united the universe in only several hundred years?

Is it possible—

Li Yao thought of a terrifying possibility and was immediately frightened.

Is it possible that the Cultivators of the Ultimate One Sect in the beginning, the Ultimate One Demons later, and the saint-blood demons in the end, were not wiped out at all?

Just as the leader of the Ultimate One Set said, forty thousand years ago, it was the Era of Doom when the spiritual energy was dry. The old methods of training and *the outdated life form were no long fit for the environment. Only by evolving into a brand-new form and adopting a new training system could they expect to survive in a harsh world where there was little spiritual energy and resources!*

After a rest of more than thirty thousand years, the spiritual energy in the universe was getting dense again. Also, the wastelands caused by the wars of the ancient Cultivators were revived by the black-blood demons at the cost of countless lives.

Naturally, the rulers needed another evolution to change into a life form that was more suitable for the new world!

Therefore, the saint-blood demons did not go extinct at all. They merely thought that the potential of the 'demons' had been fully exploited and that they were no longer used to the environment. Therefore, like caterpillars breaking out of their cocoons, they turned into human beings again, or perhap, an even stronger life form!

It is quite plausible on second thought.

The rise of the Star Ocean Imperium was too fast and brief. Its heyday lasted for only a hundred years before the nation crumbled after a failed expedition. Also, there were too many uncanny facts about the great expedition that could not be explained.

Who can say that the saint-blood demons were not fanning the flames?

Maybe, the chaotic world after the Star Ocean Imperium collapsed was the best culture dish for the 'evolution' of the saint-blood demons!

In the universe today, although the saint-blood demons are no more, the ‘winners’ according to the leader of the Ultimate One Sect are still there. Are the doings of the Immortal Cultivators of the Imperium of True Human Beings any different from the saint-blood demons?

For a moment, the leader of the Ultimate One Demons who was wearing the armor of dragon scales and the image of Xiao Xuance gradually melded into one. They were both laughing gloatingly toward Li Yao.

There are no distinctions between humans and demons, deities and devils. There are only winners and losers!

You are all ants!

Li Yao felt that the blood over all his body was spurting up toward his head from which a spring seemed to be bursting out. Feeling choked, he bellowed and jerked up, jumping out of the sand that was almost ten meters deep in only one leap!

Hu!

Lying on the desert, Li Yao stretched out his limbs and looked up at the night sky.

The universe was as boundless as ever, and the bloody moon was shining hideously.

Maybe, in the depths of the boundless universe, the Ultimate One Demons in the past had already established enormous forces that might have different appearances but in fact believed in the same ideology to their bones!

Maybe, such forces were swallowing the stars and contaminating the universe like cancer!

Li Yao watched and thought in silence, with equally scorching flames burning in his eyes that were two different colors.

He suddenly stood up and placed the crystal brain that stored Ba Yanzhi's billions of telepathic thoughts on the desert squarely. He suddenly kneeled down and bowed toward the Hidden Star Box respectfully.

Li Yao did not know why he did it.

Perhaps, it was for Ba Yanzhi's hilarious dream, the fantasy that 9,999 people out of ten thousand could have enough food instead of one!

“Senior Ba, thank you. I finally know what I should do right now under your enlightenment,” Li Yao mumbled to himself. The bouncing flames inside his eyes were gradually condensed into sharp brilliance.

“Since many innocent ordinary people were fooled into turning into demons forty thousand years ago, and now that the universe is much more stable, with denser spiritual energy and a less harsh environment, I will help the ordinary people restore their original appearances now that the Era of Doom is over!

“Since Jin Xinyue could turn from a demon into a human being, so can the other demons!

“Aside from the silver-blood demons who are proud of their noble bloodlines, I cannot tolerate a human being modified into mouthless, mindless giant insects creeping on the ground!”

Taking a long breath, Li Yao was making plans solemnly, but his eyes suddenly froze.

Wait. A bloody moon?

I have stayed in this place for twelve hours!

Li Yao almost jumped up to his feet.

He had only planned to get a general idea of what was stored inside the Hidden Star Box. He did not expect that the power of the Hidden Star Box would be so high that he was kept in the deep meditative state for the entire day.

He was wondering what was happening right now to Elder Nether Spring and the Fire Ant King.

Li Yao immediately thought of something related to Elder Nether Spring.

He finally understood what Elder Nether Spring was going through all that trouble for.

Elder Nether Spring was not a historian. The truth of the origin of the demon race was not worth the power and investment he had dedicated to the cause at all.

What he was looking for was the star map leading to ‘Kunlun’!

Elder Nether Spring’s purpose is the Kunlun Warship. He wants to have the Kunlun Warship and believes that the Kunlun Warship can help him realize the rise of ‘the third life form’!

Li Yao’s body felt hot, and his mouth was dry. According to the memory pieces of Ba Yanzhi, the Kunlun Warship was exactly buried, or collapsed, somewhere in the Blood Demon Sector.

Even if it was not on the planet below his feet, it had to be somewhere in the planets, satellites, or world fragments that were close to the Blood Demon Planet!

Judging from the research projects inside the Mausoleum of Chaos, there were indeed a lot of mysteries hidden in the Kunlun Warship, many of which were far more advanced than the technology of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector.

Before, I only wanted to end the war between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector as quickly as possible and focus our strength on the vanguard of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

However, considering the formidability of the ‘star child’, even the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector combined might not be a match for the vanguard of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

Even if we defeat the vanguard miraculously, we will still be dead for sure when the expedition fleet of the Imperium of True Human Beings comes in a hundred years!

Kunlun! Kunlun is our only hope!

I must find Kunlun!

Chapter 925 - No Hole to Sneak In

However, as Li Yao reflected on the star map that was etched into the deepest part of his brain, he realized that it was complicated and barely understandable, like a ball of thread that had been burnt.

Everybody had their specialties. Li Yao was not good at analyzing star maps, and he could not infer the specific coordinates of the so-called ‘Kunlun’ or find the method to reach the place.

It seems that I’ll have to hand over the star map to the ‘Occult Orbs Fellowship’ or Professor Mo Xuan when I’m back in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and ask them to analyze it with the central crystal processors, Li Yao thought to himself.

Since Elder Nether Spring knew about such a mysterious item as the star map of Kunlun, he certainly knew a lot of other secrets.

Maybe, Elder Nether Spring was related to the Ultimate One Demons. At the very least, he must have received some of the legacies of the Ultimate One Demons.

I have to find a way to elicit more information from Elder Nether Spring!

Li Yao snapped his finger and summoned Black Wing. He rushed toward the Mausoleum of Chaos at the highest speed.

In case the enemy detected him, when he was still hundreds of kilometers away from the Mausoleum of Chaos, Li Yao hid Black Wing and took out an optical camouflage cape that could completely conceal one’s scent. He covered himself up without leaving the smallest gap and blended into the desert while crawling forward against the ground.

It took him three hours to slowly move to the side of the Star Swallowing Sea, but the view in the lake gave him quite a surprise.

In the vast Star Swallowing Sea, dozens of enormous floating islands supported by airbags were connected to each other by iron chains, constituting what seemed to be a castle on the water.

Countless relics and treasures gradually surfaced inside much smaller airbags. They were fished up by the chains and piled up in the floating island. Following which, they were delivered to the devilish warship in midair.

Countless soldiers of the Nether World Watch were busy going about their work in order, like ants who were moving their home.

Elder Nether Spring is going to run away? Li Yao pondered.

…

On a gray devilish warship that had no marks of any emblems, Elder Nether Spring observed the scene of the delivery through the biochemical eyes that were embedded on the warship, his hands behind his back. His face was as cold as ice.

Despot and Swirl stood behind him respectfully, not even daring to breath too loudly.

Swirl had just finished her treatment in a biochemical slot. Her shattered wings had not entirely recovered yet, and they were cramping now and then beyond her control.

“How much longer will it take before we pack up and ship away all the important facilities and corpses inside the Mausoleum of Chaos?” Elder Nether Spring asked coldly.

“One day and one night, at least.”

Swirl lowered her head and said, “There are too many items inside the Mausoleum of Chaos. We have to examine them carefully to determine the real relics that are of value. One day and one night is already our best.”

“I’ll give you twenty hours. We will take off in twenty hours!”

Elder Nether Spring made the call. “If there’s no time for examination, don’t examine it. Speed is what matters most right now. After we take off, blow up the dome of the Mausoleum of Chaos and let the Star Swallowing Sea drown it!”

“Elder—” Swirl hesitated.

Elder Nether Spring glanced at her. “There’s no need to persuade me. We have been discovered. Although we do not know the stance of the mysterious expert under Jin Xinyue’s command, we cannot establish research centers inside the Mausoleum of Chaos and continue our studies as we planned before. Our enemy will gladly take our trophies if we do!

“We must prepare for the worst. Let’s simply consider that we have been completely exposed at this second.

“There’s no need for useless talk now. As of now, activate Plan B and accelerate our operation. Let’s do it as soon as all the valuable treasures and the captives are sent back to the ‘Nether World’!”

Despot and Swirl looked at each other in bewilderment. Swirl faltered for a moment but still struggled to suggest, “We are activating our plan so quickly? But our secret weapon is still imperfect right now. We’ll pay a high price if we rush into it.”

“Indeed, elder,” Despot said with a deep voice. “The more days we have, the more flawless our secret weapon will be, and the more strength it will be able to trigger. Our plan’s odds of success will be much higher!”

“Give up your impractical illusions already!” Gloomy flames were burning deep inside Elder Nether Spring’s eyes. He declared resolutely, “Don’t be too greedy. There is no such thing as a perfect plan in the world. If we postpone, it is true that we weapon will be sharper, but the risk that we are exposed will be higher, too!

“The key to our victory is speed. We must activate the plan before anybody realizes what is going on!

“I have made up my mind to initiate the plan right now. The day when the millions of demon soldiers march into the Heaven’s Origin Sector will be the day of our rise. There will be absolutely nobody that can stop me!”

…

Elder Nether Spring is running way. But where to?

In the desert almost a hundred kilometers away, Li Yao lurked inside the sand like a rattlesnake. He boosted his optical cells to the maximum while he observed the black spots inside the Star Swallowing Sea.

Elder Nether Spring's attack on the Mausoleum of Chaos with the Nether World Watch was definitely top secret. He planned to establish research centers in the desolate place, but now that he knows he has been discovered by me, it is not strange that he has decided to leave off with all the trophies to avoid risks.

His devilish warships are packed with the soldiers of the 'Nether World Watch' that have never been seen in the Blood Demon Sector. They are also carrying a lot of the corpses and pieces of magical equipment excavated from the Mausoleum of Chaos, even including the fossilized member of the Pangu Clan. It is obvious that he cannot ship the stuff back to the Nether Spring Kingdom openly.

After all, he kept everything a secret from the silver-blood nobles of the Nether Spring Kingdom. If we get to the bottom of it, the grudge between him and his brother, the Fire Ant King, and the secret of the 'hidden-blood demons' are both clandestine.

Therefore—

Li Yao clapped his hands. *Elder Nether Spring will certainly be shipping the Nether World Watch and the treasures of Chaos back to his secret base!*

Didn't he tell the Fire Ant King that he had also excavated a lot of residences of Chaos? They must be the other war bases that Ba Yanzhi left on the planet.

It is only natural that Elder Nether Spring transformed one of the bases into his nest!

A crazy idea suddenly occurred to Li Yao.

Sneak into Elder Nether Spring's nest to investigate all his secrets and his true purpose!

The idea seemed to be implausible, but on second thought, it was actually quite feasible.

Elder Nether Spring was a big shot of the Pantheon of Demons. Right now, it was the critical moment in the war between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven's Origin Sector. If the 'Red Tide Plan' of Jin Tuyi, who was the current commander-in-chief of the coalition army of the demon race, was really endorsed by Elder Nether Spring, it would be implemented very soon. By then, Elder Nether Spring would be too occupied to bother anything else.

He had already spent a lot of time in the Mausoleum of Chaos, and it was unreasonable for him to still be absent from the Pantheon of Demons.

Therefore, he could only return to his nest to check that the important facilities and captives were properly handled at best. Then, he would have to leave for the headquarters of the Pantheon of Demons immediately.

When the tiger is away from a mountain, the monkeys will be kings. As long as Li Yao could sneak into one of Elder Nether Spring's vehicles and go to his nest with him, Li Yao would certainly be able to do whatever he wanted after Elder Nether Spring left.

Besides, Li Yao was still short of hands right now. To strike the big shots of the Blood Demon Sector, just Jin Xinyue and Li Yao were far from enough.

The Fire Ant King was the key to his cause. He had to be rescued.

First of all, the Fire Ant King is the leader of the Blade of Chaos and the most influential one among the low-level demons. The organization has a lot of secret branches in the Blood Demon Sector, which could prove useful later.

Secondly, the Fire Ant King himself is an expert in developing demonic plants and refining strengthening drugs. The Blade of Chaos has conducted profound research on cells and genes.

If I want to produce 'reduction drugs' that can turn demons back into human beings, I will have to ask for the Fire Ant King's help.

But there remains one question. How will the leader of the Blade of Chaos view his identity after he learns the truth of the origins of the demon race?

Anyways, I guess I'll have to get him out first!

Li Yao was still a hundred kilometers away from the devilish warship where the Fire Ant King was locked. The longer the distance was, the stronger the spiritual waves when he manipulated Neltharion would be.

Due to the long distance, Li Yao did not dare contact Neltharion easily.

I have to sneak into one of Elder Nether Spring's devilish warships!

But how am I going to do it?

Looking at the Star Swallowing Sea where tides were surging, Li Yao frowned.

At least a thousand highly-vigilant soldiers of the Nether World Watch were defending the Mausoleum of Chaos' perimeter. It was certainly not a good idea to swim to them.

Besides, although he had a lot of experience in sneaking into starships, they were all crystal warships.

The crystal warships were full of spiritual energy transmission tubes, ventilation tubes, maintenance cabins, and engine compartments. As a magical equipment expert, even if Li Yao did not know the detailed structure of a starship, he could guess a thing or two when he saw the distribution of some of the cabins. If he was not able to tell, he could still explore and examine the starship with his magical equipment.

But the devilish warships were something completely different. Their working mechanism, distribution of cabins, methods of information transmission, and mostly importantly, the alert system were vastly different from those of crystal warships!

Many devilish warships were produced out of enormous demon beasts. If he snuck into a random hole inside the warships, he might actually be entering the navel of the demon beast and got caught instantly!

This is rather tricky!

Li Yao buried himself in the sand and thought hard for a while. He drafted a hundred infiltration plans in his head, but the enemy discovered him and blew up him with their demon cores in the end.

He scratched his hair hard helplessly.

When he raised his head again, he suddenly noticed a small black spot on the southeast coast of the Star Swallowing Sea.

What is that?

Li Yao took out a telescope from his Cosmos Ring and observed, only to discover that a small devilish warship was docked at the edge of the Star Swallowing Sea, with cargo the size of a hill next to it.

Almost a hundred soldiers were busy repairing and modifying the vehicle.

A moment later, Li Yao realized what it was.

It’s a light sky-hunting warship of the Blade of Chaos!

Chapter 926 - Li Yao in Darkness

When Li Yao reached the place, he realized that it was the sky-hunting warship that he had arrived on. The Nether World Watch had clearly damaged the warship that was docked above the Star Swallowing Sea when it assaulted the Mausoleum of Chaos.

Maybe, the sky-hunting warship had not been part of Elder Nether Spring’s original plan, but now that he was abandoning the Mausoleum of Chaos, naturally, he wished to take away as many items as possible. Therefore, he made use of the sky-hunting warship again.

If I choose the sky-hunting warship as my target, I won’t have to swim to the center of the Star Swallowing Sea. It is much safer!

Li Yao observed the terrain and took a huge turn, approaching the sky-hunting warship from the east.

When he was fifty kilometers away from the sky-hunting warship, he completely sank into the sand and snuck forward like a sandworm.

In case there were any anomalies on the surface of the desert, he was moving at an extremely low speed. It took him five hours before he finally came within three kilometers of the sky-hunting warship.

Pu!

On the desert, a long, narrow crystal tube pierced out like a bean sprout. At the end of the tube was a small crystal camera.

Li Yao lurked deep inside the desert. He closed his right eye and observed the surroundings by sticking his left eye to the other end of the crystal tube as if it were a periscope.

The main force of the Nether World Watch had been concentrated at the center the Star Swallowing Sea. There were not many soldiers around the sky-hunting warship. Judging from the number and volume of the demon cores embedded in their bodies, their level was much lower than the elites who hunted the Fire Ant King.

The majority of the soldiers there were busy moving the goods that looked like a hill compared to the sky-hunting warship. Less than twenty of them were patrolling on alert.

Li Yao calculated quickly and concluded that, with his speed and stealth ability, there was a 99.7% likelihood that he could avoid the attention of the Nether World Watch and sneak into the sky-hunting warship.

However, the same old question was back again. Where could he hide himself after he snuck into the sky-hunting warship?

Li Yao was not familiar with the structure of the sky-hunting warship at all. He had no idea where he could hide inside the sky-hunting warship or what kind of defense system it boasted. Chances were that Elder Nether Spring had even installed a new alert system in the warship.

Sneaking in recklessly was like feeding himself to the enemy. Li Yao would rather not wager on the possibility that Elder Nether Spring was careless a second time!

How should I sneak into it?

The crystal tube that protruded out of the ground suddenly stopped. Li Yao gazed at the silver biochemical slots among the massive goods that were carved with patterns of skulls on their surface.

As he recalled, the biochemical slots were containers for biochemical beasts.

The strong biochemical beasts were sometimes even more valuable than many top-tier crystal suits. Now that they had become Elder Nether Spring's trophies, he was certainly not giving them away easily.

Li Yao's heart was pounding faster and faster. A new plan soon ignited most of his braincells like a bouncing spark. The fire condensed into ever-changing pictures as he simulated the plan deep inside his brain hundreds of times. The odds of success were quite high!

It's decided then. I'm going to do it!

Li Yao licked his dry lips and continued sneaking forward.

When he reached beneath the sky-hunting warship, he retrieved a series of handy tools from his Cosmos Ring and started conducting minor modifications for the rapidly actions later.

Half an hour later, all the preparations were done.

Then, Li Yao started waiting.

Five meters above his head, teams of the soldiers of the Nether World Watch were dragging the heavy cargo boxes to and from the warship, not having the slightest clue that the most dangerous hunter was lurking below their feet.

Li Yao was like a stele buried deep into the sand. He reduced his breathing and heartbeat to the minimum, and every muscle on his face seemed to have fallen asleep.

He waited without moving at all for 6 hours, 32 minutes, and 55 seconds. Finally, the thing that he had been waiting for appeared.

It was a blowing wind.

In the White Silver Death Desert, which had no obstacles, even a breeze could turn into a sandstorm after it moved forward a thousand kilometers.

Blowing winds were happening every day. The only difference was that some of them were more serious than others.

The blowing wind that Li Yao finally met after a long wait was perhaps merely an afternoon autumn breeze by the standards of the White Silver Death Desert. Still, it was enough to block the sight of the soldiers of the Nether World Watch and disrupt their job. More importantly, it could cover up his scent.

Now is the time!

Li Yao suddenly widened his eyes, which had been half closed. His telepathic thoughts rushed out of the ground and spread out along with the sand and the pebbles, allowing him to precisely sense all the changes in the one square kilometer around him!

Thirty-seven soldiers of the Nether World Watch are on the other side of the sky-hunting warship. Their vision is blocked by the sky-hunting warship. Besides, they are busy focusing the warship and avoiding the storm. It is impossible for them to appear on this side of the warship in forty-two seconds!

Thirteen soldiers of the Nether World Watch are now strengthening the goods that are about to fall with ropes and chains. It will probably take them thirty-three seconds!

Huh. They are gesturing for five soldiers who are patrolling nearby to give them a hand?

If so, they will finish the work in twenty-six seconds. But there are only nine soldiers left for patrolling right now. Their vision is seriously jammed by the sandstorm, and their monitoring range has been significantly reduced!

Near the containers of the biochemical beasts, only three soldiers are patrolling. Judging from their route and angle, there will be a blind angle in 3.3 seconds!

Li Yao took a deep breath and wriggled upwards silently while holding the tools that were as thin as hair among his fingers.

3.3 seconds later, of the three soldiers of the Nether World Watch who were patrolling above his head, two happened to shift their heads in the other direction, and the last one’s eyes were blocked by an enormous container of a biochemical beast!

Li Yao was like a crocodile that was surfacing in a swamp while pretending to be a piece of rotten wood. He waved his left arm, blowing out a strong wind with his spiritual energy toward the cargo boxes that were about to fall.

The cargo boxes that had been piled up were packed with the corpses and pieces of magical equipment that were retrieved from the Mausoleum of Chaos. They had not been steady in the first place and were about to collapse under the savaging wind, only to be pulled hard by the Nether World Watch with chains and ropes.

But the strong wind that Li Yao blew out was aimed at the unsteadiest part of the cargo boxes. In the outburst, a robe cracked, and a huge cargo box smashed to the ground!

“Not good! A cargo box has been blown off!”

The soldiers of the Nether World Watch were all attracted by the exclamation. Three of the patrolling soldiers were summoned to help heave the box back.

The alert range of the Nether World Watch further shrank, and the routes of their patrolling became much sparser, like a broken web.

Li Yao took the opportunity to jump up and crawl onto the biggest container of the biochemical beasts like a pool of mercury that was flowing backwards.

I have three seconds before the enemy patrols a location where they can see me!

On the top of the biochemical slot, almost ten covers were densely distributed. Some of the covers were used to toss drugs, and some others were for the replacement of nutrition liquids. All the covers had been locked up.

Li Yao’s hands turned into two clusters of brightness. His movement was both fast and soft, as if he were plucking a white hair on the top of a tiger’s head. One of the covers was unlocked immediately!

The cover was opened, revealing thick liquids the color of amber, and an enormous creature that was lying in it, which turned out to be a hibernating biochemical beast.

At this moment, there was still one second to go before the Nether World Watch patrolled to a location where they could see him!

Without any hesitation, Li Yao held his breath and snuck into the biochemical beast container. He then softly closed the cover and locked it up again on the other side of the cover with the magnetic magical equipment in his hand.

He was now enshrouded by darkness.

He stuck his ear to the wall of the container and listened carefully. There were no abnormal sounds other than the roaring wind.

Half of his plan had worked out.

But the other half of his plan could still fail.

Li Yao groped carefully in the darkness. It was a dragon-like biochemical beast around him. Judging from the shape of the skull of the biochemical beast, it was the lightning boa that Electric Boa, one of his tutors on the Skeleton Island, used to ride.

Li Yao remembered that the lightning boa had been wounded by several soldiers of the Nether World Watch in the battle of the underground temple. It must have been captured after the battle.

The lightning boa was indeed one of the best biochemical beasts in the world. It had perhaps been specially refined by the Fire Ant King, too. Therefore, the secret arts and modification methods of the Blade of Chaos could be inferred from it.

No wonder Elder Nether Spring was unwilling to abandon it and was going through so much trouble to move it back to his nest.

Then, the most critical step came!

Li Yao groped for the bloody mouth of the lightning boa and slightly opened the mouth of the beast that was full of long tusks.

He crept into its body while trying his best to hold back the stink!

The lightning boa was almost a hundred meters long and five meters in diameter. It was more than easy to hide someone inside its body.

However, biochemical beasts were not dead. In the hibernation state, they did not have self-awareness, but their body parts were still functioning normally. They could be compared to someone in a vegetative state.

Li Yao crossed his arms and legs, trying to reduce his body size. Then, with the movement of his muscles, his carefully avoided the tusks and slid into the lightning boa’s throat!

He could not stay there for long because the throat was one of the most sensitive body parts for any creature. If he stayed there for long, it would certainly trigger anomalies in the lightning boa’s vital signs or even make the beast gag. Somebody would certainly notice him if so.

Li Yao moved forward and slid into the lightning boa’s stomach through its throat!

The stomach of the beast-type demon beasts was highly-elastic, which allowed them to devour prey that were even larger than themselves before they digested the food slowly later.

Therefore, a ‘tiny’ prey like Li Yao would not trigger overreactions when he fell into the lightning boa’s stomach.

However, now that he was in the lightning boat’s stomach, he would have to suffer the erosion of super corrosive gastric acid.

At first, he felt itching, as if a hundred feathers were brushing his skin unhurriedly.

But very soon, the feathers turned into thorny needles that were digging into his skin, his flesh, and even his bones, absorbing his marrow.

Li Yao held back the agony in silence while he summoned his spiritual energy to repair his body slowly. He waited patiently in the stomach of the lightning boa.

Chapter 927 - Gloomy Wind in the North Pole!

At the center of the Star Swallowing Sea, on the gray devilish warship, Elder Nether Spring furrowed his brows so hard that three flying swords seemed to have stabbed his forehead. Thousands of stars were condensed on his retina, and countless streams of information were groups, processed, and distributed.

Suddenly, the ‘flying swords’ on Elder Nether Spring’s forehead shook violently. “The sixth squad has reported an anomaly?”

Swirl stepped forward and replied, “An expected wind blew the cargo boxes off, but they have been fixed again now. The goods inside the boxes were not damaged. The squad will try their best to make up for the delay.”

“An expected wind blew the cargo boxes off?” Elder Nether Spring chewed on the two words ‘unexpected wind’ and suddenly glared. He said coldly, “Swirl, you go in person with the third squad and conduct the most thorough search on the sky-hunting warship of the Blade of Chaos and all the cargo boxes and the biochemical slots that are piled on it. Remember, x-ray them one by one. Report to me immediately if you find anything wrong!”

Swirl was dazed for a moment, but she closed her legs and bowed toward Elder Nether Spring before leaving in a hurry.

A moment later, dozens of flashing lines spurted out of the devilish warship, which rushed in the sky of the Star

Swallowing Sea toward the place where the sky-hunting warship was docked!

“By the order of Elder Nether Spring, the sky-hunting warship is to be thoroughly searched!” Swirl declared with a cold face. A lot of black beetles surrounded the sky-hunting warship and crawled in through the weird gaps on it.

Another few well-trained elites of the Nether World Watch gathered the soldiers who were stationed around the ship and asked them to replay the entire process of the incident.

As for Swirl herself, she carried a few x-ray scanners together with her trusted subordinates and examined the cargo boxes and the biochemical slots that were as huge as a mountain.

Invisible mystic rays passed through the boxes one after another. With the special glasses that they wore, they were able to clearly see everything inside the boxes when the mystic rays pierced through the walls.

Three to four of her subordinates were scanning one box from different angles. Even a bug would have had nowhere to hide.

All the cargo boxes were done scanning with no anomalies detected.

Next were the containers of the biochemical beasts.

Shua! Shua!

Beams of mystic rays brushed the containers time and time again. What was displayed on the glasses was nothing but demon beasts in hibernation.

Every demon beast was observed for at least one minute. Still, there was nothing wrong.

“Nothing unusual has been found on the sky-hunting warship.”

“The reconstruction of the scene of the incident has been finished. Based on the speed of wind and the shape of the cargoes, it is possible that there was suddenly a loss of balance.”

“The broken rope has been carefully examined, too. It was indeed torn apart by gravity, not by a sharp blade!”

Swirl nodded, her face as indifferent as before. She said coldly, “Very good. Stay on the highest alert. Even if so much as a fly passes you, I want you to tell me how many hairs are on its leg!”

“Understood!”

“Understood!”

“Understood!”

All the soldiers of the Nether World Watch held their heads high, full of killing intent.

Swirl reported to Elder Nether Spring through the communication bug. “Elder, everything is normal. Nothing unusual has been detected.”

Elder Nether Spring was silent for a while before he replied. “How long till we take off?”

Swirl calculated quickly. “Eleven hours.”

“We don’t have so much time. I have a bad feeling.” Elder Nether Spring commanded, “Make it eight. Blow up the place in eight hours!”

…

8 hours, 23 minutes, and 33 seconds later, Li Yao suddenly felt inside the super corrosive stomach of the boa that the demonic energy around him was getting denser.

Then, there was a moment of weightlessness before the devilish warship leaned upwards and soared into the sky.

In the next second, a series of thunderous noises, as if the planet was being destroyed, echoed, which were clearly audible despite the thick skin of the boa.

A massive, super explosion.

As an expert of bombs, Li Yao immediately made the judgement.

He was overjoyed because it was a sign that Elder Nether Spring had retreated.

Li Yao finally breathed in relief at this moment. He concentrated his telepathic thoughts into thin threads and enhanced his connection to Neltharion again, opening the second picture deep inside his brain.

The Fire Ant King was still locked inside the tusk cage and no different from a day ago. It seemed that Elder Nether Spring had been too busy moving the trophies inside the Mausoleum of Chaos to greet his blood brother.

Li Yao reached out to the Fire Ant King in exactly the same way he did last time.

The Fire Ant King suddenly shivered, apparently breathing at a higher frequency. He wrote with his demonic energy, “You haven’t left?”

“I’m sorry,” Li Yao said. “The plan of distraction did not work out. Elder Nether Spring noticed it earlier than I expected. But I’m still working on other plans, and I’m going to get you out one way or another.”

“Elder Nether Spring is watching over me very closely. A stream of venomous fog is released into the tusk cage every hour. My strength is about to be exhausted just in order to resist the venomous fog. It will be very difficult for me to escape!”

“A lot of things are happening outside. I believe that Elder Nether Spring will not have too much time to work on you. He has more import missions to do right now. Let’s wait and find an opportunity when we are in his nest.”

Pausing and pondering for a moment, Li Yao continued. “Also, I have learned the secrets of Chaos and the reason why he created the demon race!”

“What?” The Fire Ant King almost exclaimed aloud. “What is the background of God Chaos exactly? And how was the demon race created?”

“It’s a long story. I might tell it to you later after I get you out,” Li Yao said. “To ensure the stability of communication and avoid interference of the supersonic speed during the high-velocity movement, I have to trigger very intense spiritual waves, which are likely to be detected by the experts. So, I’m going to cut off the communication.

“But before I hang up, I have a question for you.

“Do you really believe in ‘God Chaos’ and his ideology?”

“Of course!” the Fire Ant King replied resolutely. “I firmly believe that God Chaos created all demons equally. There was never the distinction between saint blood and chaotic blood or between nobles and lowborn!

“I am going to put the ideology of God Chaos into practice until the day I die!”

“Very good. It appears that there is a foundation for our cooperation now.” Li Yao smiled. “Let’s talk more after we reach Elder Nether Spring’s nest!”

Li Yao cut off most of the connection with Neltharion and only kept the feeblest telepathic thought, allowing Neltharion to hide in its stealth and alert state.

The devilish warship was moving straight upwards. It appeared to have penetrated through the atmosphere of the planet and was rushing rapidly in the orbit out of the atmosphere.

When the devilish warship cut into the atmosphere again, twenty hours had passed. Li Yao sensed a gloomy wind blowing outside, freezing everything that anybody could see.

Where are we exactly?

The environment temperature is very low. The magnetic field is chaotic, too. There are also various kinds of other interference!

Li Yao searched the data of the Blood Demon Sector quickly and looked for a terrain that had similar features to his surroundings. Very soon, his eyes shined as he found the answer.

The North Pole!

It was the North Pole of the Blood Demon Sector—more specifically, a place named ‘Gloomy Wind Islands’!

Of the two poles of the Blood Demon Sector, the South Pole was an icy continent and relatively stable, but the North Pole was broken islands, as if it had been bombarded by enormous meteorites in the prehistoric era. It was scattered, bizarrely shaped, and had a chaotic magnetic field and climate. The place was enshrouded by the furious, freezing wind all year round and surrounded by a roaring ocean.

Just like the White Silver Death Desert, it was an unpopulated, horrendous place that even demon beasts would rather not set foot in.

No. The Gloomy Wind Islands of the North Pole were even more scary than the White Silver Death Desert.

The White Silver Death Desert was lifeless, but its magnetic field was relatively stable, which allowed the warships to fly freely without losing the direction.

The ocean of the North Pole, on the other hand, was teeming with a lot of huge vortexes. The magnetic field was a mess, and the water was freezingly cold. Countless beasts and experts had lost their way and perished in the place over the past thousand years.

There was no telling how many bones had piled up in the depths of the bottomless ocean.

It’s rather shocking that Elder Nether Spring has set up his secret nest in the Gloomy Wind Islands in the North Pole. No wonder he refined the Nether World Watch blatantly with no worries that the Pantheon of Demons might discover it.

Right, this place is likely another war base left by Ba Yanzhi because it has exactly the same characteristics as the Star Swallowing Sea in the White Silver Death Desert.

The greatest similarities of the Gloomy Wind Islands in the North Pole and the Star Swallowing Sea in the White Silver Death Desert were that they were equally unfrequented by living creatures and that they boasted a harsh natural environment. Even if the poison and venomous gas leaked out, it would never survive the scorching desert or the frigid ocean, much less spread out.

Ba Yanzhi had clearly chosen the two locations after much deliberation so that other creatures would not be affected. Now that Elder Nether Spring had occupied the war base in the North Pole, there had to be some leads regarding the Mausoleum of Chaos inside it.

It was the origin of everything!

The devilish warship landed slowly.

Hiding in the darkness, Li Yao could not see what was going on clearly. He felt like a cat was scratching his heart, but there was nothing he could do except hold back his curiosity and wait.

The offloading work lasted an entire day. Eventually, all the containers of biochemical beasts were transported somewhere deep under the ground.

Finally, Li Yao was able to enhance his spiritual waves and reach out to Neltharion again.

He had been worrying that Elder Nether Spring would bring the Fire Ant King back to the headquarters to the Pantheon of Demons instead of keeping him locked up in this place.

However, it was not very likely. The Fire Ant King was a demon emperor after all. Although he was caged and injected with poison right now, he was still a time bomb and could cause major trouble if anything went wrong.

As he expected, soon after Li Yao and the Fire Ant King reestablished their communication, Despot and Swirl came in with four soldiers of the Nether World Watch in heavy armor.

The injected almost twenty paralyzing and suppressing drugs into the Fire Ant King’s body at first before they stuffed him into a special cage that looked like a coffin.

Shua!

Swirl touched a rune array outside of the ‘coffin’. Almost a hundred sharp thorns immediately jerked out from the internal wall and pierced into the Fire Ant King deeply, making him unable to move at all.

But Neltharion had crawled into the Fire Ant King’s mouth in advance before Despot and Swirl arrived!

Chapter 928 - Mad Medic!

There was nothing but darkness after the ‘coffin’ was closed. Some thick, stinky liquid was poured in from the top of the coffin. After it filled the entire coffin, it immediately turned extremely tensile, like the buffer foam that was employed in crystal warships, which could suppress the outburst of one’s strength to the largest extent.

With such thorough measures, if Li Yao were not here, there was no way that the Fire Ant King could get out.

Li Yao could only calculate the time in silence. It took 42 minutes and 33 seconds from when they set off from the port where the devilish warship was docked to when the ‘coffin’ was opened again.

Therefore, it was safe to assume that the war base in the North Pole was no smaller than the Mausoleum of Chaos.

When he was pulled out of the coffin, the Fire Ant King pretended that he was feeble and moaned, taking the chance to let out Neltharion.

In front of Li Yao was a very special chamber.

It seemed to be a combination of a lab, an interrogation room, and an operation room.

At the center of the chamber was an operating bed that was embedded with crystals and surrounded by dozens of mechanical arms and tentacles.

In the storeroom nearby, almost a hundred enormous culture dishes were placed, in which countless shocking organs were being soaked in a bright yellow liquid.

The Fire Ant King was lifted onto the operating table. The tentacles on the two sides immediately crawled into his veins like vipers that had smelt blood.

The mechanical arms also stabbed needles deep into his acupuncture points. The needles seemed to carry electricity, too, making him unable to move at all.

With his hands in his back, Elder Nether Spring watched peacefully while his brother was riddled with holes. “I’ve given you five days. Have you decided whether or not to cooperate with me?

“Tell me the locations of the Blade of Chaos’ hideouts and the formulas of the strengthening drugs in your possession, and the two of us will rise in the time of riot together!”

The Fire Ant King grinned. “Brother, just do it. You really think I’m a three-year-old?”

Elder Nether Spring stared at him in silence for a long time before he shook his head pitifully, as if he was surprised that his brother chose a more painful way to die. In the end, he nodded helplessly. “Alright. I don’t have spare time to waste on you. Therefore, I’m going to introduce an old friend to you. I believe that you will tell him everything you know after you bond for a while.”

Du! Du! Du!

Somebody knocked on the door very politely.

However, the guy who walked into the chamber in delight did not seem polite at all.

Li Yao did not even know how he should describe the guy.

He was like an abnormal child who had endured excessive radiation of spiritual energy. His head was bumpy like a potato, and he had green, weed-like hair. His left eye was smaller than a quail egg, and his right eye was even larger than the egg of a goose. Furthermore, there were more than ten pupils growing inside his eyeball, densely distributed and similar to the eyes of a bug.

His right arm was like the sharp claw of a dragon, which was almost one meter in diameter and covered in solid, green scales. But his left arm was an amalgamation of almost twenty tentacles of an octopus from which bright purple liquids were flowing out. Moreover, two artificial arms protruded out of his chest—the front ends of which were embedded with almost a hundred gears for operations like a multipurpose military knife.

Li Yao’s eyes were keen enough for him to realize that they were the artificial arms utilized in the automatic operation cabins in the military of the Star Glory Federation. For some reason, the guy had transplanted two of them on his own body!

Hundreds of scars were packed on his gray body. There were also dozens of translucent tubes that directly connected his organs like external veins and nerves, with suspicious liquids flooding inside nonstop.

The guy was wearing a white robe with a blood red skull painted on it. The crossed bones appeared to be two lancets!

A named suddenly jumped into Li Yao’s head. It was one of the most horrid individuals, whom no one should mess with, in the Blood Demon Sector according to Jin Xinyue.

Lu Wuxin, the ‘Mad Medic’!

The last individuals that anybody would mess with were not necessarily the strongest ones.

For the big shots such as Elder Nether Spring or Jin Tuyi, they were the leaders of a kingdom or a clan. They often thought far ahead and had big plans, and they acted in their own pattern. It was not easy to mess with them even if one wanted to.

However, there were some terrifying experts who lived alone. What they did today would depend entirely on their mood. Sometimes, even they did not know what they were thinking exactly!

If anybody ran into such an expert, they had to pray to the heavens for luck, and if luck was not on their side, their life might be more miserable than death.

‘Mad Medic’ Lu Wuxin was the best example of such experts. He had been an underground surgeon of the Blood Demon Sector in the beginning.

In the Blood Demon Sector, the competition was rather cruel. Even the silver-blood demons often mauled each other in the struggles for power. Those who failed, unwilling to be killed in the Heaven’s Origin Sector as cannon fodder, often chose to run away.

When there were runners, there were always pursuers. In the brutal hunting and fleeing, being heavily wounded was nothing unusual.

Lu Wuxin offered his service to the losers in the fight for power who were being hunted because he knew that they would carry a lot of treasures with them since they were fleeing. Given their situation, they would not care too much about the medical fee since they did not have a second option.

More importantly, since the losers had absolutely no support, nobody would avenge them no matter what kind of insane experiments he did on them.

Although Lu Wuxin was crazy and infamous, many exiles still went to ask for his treatment.

It was partly because the stray dogs did not have better choices. Not all the doctors were courageous enough to treat them at the risk of offending the Pantheon of Demons.

It was also partly because Lu Wuxin’s methods were especially brilliant—sometimes even more effective than the operations of the doctors in the Pantheon of Demons, if not counting the tiny, insignificant side effects.

Lu Wuxin could revive a heavily wounded patient who was so seriously corroded by acid that he only had his bones left. But the patient would have to come to him for a skin graft every half year. Otherwise, the patient’s biochemical skin would fester inch by inch, and he would die a miserable death.

Naturally, the fee for every skin graft was astronomical.

Lu Wuxin could also cure a soldier whose stomach had been pierced by a cannonball along with all the internal organs by transplanting new organs of suspicious backgrounds into the patient’s body. Not only would the patient fully recover, their capability would also rise.

However, for the rest of their life, the patient would have to take the anti-rejection drugs that Lu Wuxin carefully refined every month in order to suppress the rejection reaction.

Of course, such anti-rejection drugs were also dozens of times more expensive than normal ones.

One of the patients did not believe it and resorted to other anti-rejection drugs. Later, the patient died from the explosion of his stomach. To quote the eyewitnesses, he seemed to have been eaten up by his internal organs!

This was Lu Wuxin’s style.

As long as the fee was paid in full, it was guaranteed that the disease would be cured, but whether or not there would be any sequela depended on his mood.

If that was everything about him, with his marvelous medical skills, Lu Wuxin might still have been embraced by the dark world of the Blood Demon Sector, however discontent the patients were. After all, an excellent doctor was a hundred times more difficult to find than an excellent warrior was.

However, his two ‘quirks’ were discovered later.

Firstly, if he ran into a lone, desperate patient who happened to boast a beautiful, incredible organ, occasionally, when the patient under, Lu Wuxin would dissect the patient for his collection and then use the limbs and internal organs of the patient for his next procedure.

Secondly, Lu Wuxin would leave a ‘souvenir’ in the body of almost every patient during the operation.

He would either plant a very sensitive crystal bomb inside their head, bury extremely dangerous venom vesicles near their heart, or seal a drop of high-density acid right next to their central nerves.

Finally, after more than ten patients died abruptly after refusing Lu Wuxin’s future service, his malfeasance was finally exposed.

It was told that he died quite a miserable death. His bones were ground into dust before he was tossed into the throng of almost a hundred Ghost Teeth Alligators and ripped into shreds.

The one who led the hunt and trial of Lu Wuxin was exactly the Fire Ant King!

Most of Lu Wuxin’s patients were the targets that Void Turmoil City would like to recruit. Lu Wuxin’s insane actions were certainly not in the Fire Ant King’s interest.

According to Jin Xinyue, Lu Wuxin should have been killed by the Fire Ant King eight years ago.

But he was obviously still alive today, although he was as good-looking as a zombie.

“Fire Ant King, we’ve met again.”

Lu Wuxin bowed. All the scars on his face were wriggling at the same time, as he grinned. “Eight years ago, you tossed me into the ‘Devilish Alligator Abyss’. The thrill was so unparalleled that I still dream about it every night. It is too exhilarating and fascinating!

“Rest assured. I will treat you exactly how you treated me years ago. We have plenty of time to talk about our friendship! Hehe. Hehehehe!”

With the hideous laughter, Lu Wuxin’s claw and tentacles twitched at the same time.

The Fire Ant King grunted but gave no reply.

“Master Lu,” Elder Nether Spring said, “I have to return to the headquarters of the Pantheon of Demons to supervise the situation now. I’ll leave everything in the Nether World to you.

“We must speed up the refinement of the Demon God VII virus. It will be best if we can finish the experiments before the activation of our plan. But if we can’t, we will have to resort to Demon God VI.”

Lu Wuxin stuck out his wet tongue and licked his swollen lips before he chuckled. “Not a problem at all. Elder, you were so generous as to offer me so many research files and experiment subjects, one of which is even in the state of demon emperor!

“I have a feeling that the few obstacles that have trapped us for a long time will be broken through very soon!”

Elder Nether Spring nodded and smiled. “I believe in your expertise, Master Lu. I’ll give you three days to exploit all the information inside my brother’s brain, particularly the locations of the secret hideouts of the Blade of Chaos and the formulas of all the strengthening drugs in his possession.”

“Of course.”

Lu Wuxin rubbed his hands in eagerness and eyed the Fire Ant King as if he were a beauty whose clothes had been torn off. He was entirely hooked by his new toy. “I have admired the Fire Ant King’s strengthening drugs for a long time, too. I dreamed of dissecting his brain into slices and exploring the mysteries in it a long time ago. Now I finally have the chance!”

Chapter 929 - Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle!

Elder Nether Spring smiled in satisfaction and walked outside. However, when he reached the gate of the chamber, something seemed to occur to him suddenly. He turned around and eyed the Fire Ant King, deep in thought.

“I almost forgot. Brother, for an expert who is adept at making strengthening drugs, perhaps you have hidden some sort of strengthening drugs that can be triggered with a special password?

“For example, when part of the muscles on your body twitch in a certain pattern, the antidote serum and the high-nutrition drugs inside the body will be activated and help you resist the poison and the narcotic drugs so that you can regain part of your strength and run away. Right?

“To avoid such a possibility, I’m going to offer you another precious present.”

Elder Nether Spring snapped his finger and retrieved a piece of brand-new, coldly-shining magical equipment from the Cosmos Ring on his little finger.

The magical equipment was more than one meter long and appeared to be a beast puppet in the shape of a scorpion at first glance. As if it were made up of more than ten kinds of different metals, it emitted glamorous colors under the shadow-less lamp.

Dense spiritual stripes had been carved on the back and leg of the ‘scorpion’. The spiritual stripes overlapped and interweaved with each other, like thousands of swirls that were melting together. However, the stripes that made the swirls were different from each other.

The stripes were painted on a plane, yet they boasted a certain three-dimensional effect. Just one look at it was enough to make one’s head dizzy and their soul seriously muddled.

Nine marrow crystals had been embedded in the tail of the scorpion, which was more than one meter long. Manipulated by the rune arrays, vague mystic rays were rippling out and condensed into a stinger at the front end of the tail.

The magical equipment was so finely-made and exquisite that it did not look like a fatal weapon but appeared to be a piece of shocking artwork.

Elder Nether Spring put the scorpion-like magical equipment on the ground. There was a similar armband on his right arm. Mystic rays beamed out of the armband and condensed into dozens of control runes in front of his right hand.

Elder Nether Spring typed agilely on the runes, his fingers jumping fast. The scorpion-like magical equipment climbed up the operating table and lunged toward the Fire Ant King’s chest. Its eight limbs pierced into the Fire Ant King’s ribs like sharp sabers, and the tail pierced into the Fire Ant King’s abdomen and drilled deeper and deeper!

The Fire Ant King’s face was twisted because of the excruciating pain. He hissed nonstop.

The long tail seemed to be causing mayhem in his internal organs.

Suddenly, the stinger on the tail drilled out of the Fire Ant King's neck and nailed into the back of his head!

"Ahh!"

The Fire Ant King shook violently.

"Don't blame me for my mercilessness," Elder Nether Spring said casually. "You are a super expert in the stage of a demon emperor and one of the best specialists in the field of strengthening drugs.

"I cannot guarantee that the barriers of the Blood Demon Sector are enough to trap you.

"Therefore, at a great cost and with a lot of trouble, I managed to get this piece of ultimate magical equipment from the Heaven's Origin Sector, the 'Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle'!"

Upon hearing the name, the Fire Ant King's eyes suddenly became bloodshot as they bulged out of their sockets.

Elder Nether Spring grinned hideously. "What, you've heard the name before? Then you must know how awesome it is.

"Hehe. The 'Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle' is a piece of state-of-the-art magical equipment that 'Solar Eclipse' Jiang Shaoyang, one of the greatest masters of refining in the Heaven's Origin Sector, carefully worked on for three years before it was finally produced.

"The eight legs of the scorpion contain eight types of conflicting poison that are of absolutely different attributes. Inside the body of the scorpion are two types of aggressive liquid metal that were developed from mustard-seed technology. Moreover, there are nine powerful bombs made of marrow crystals on the tail.

“Any one of the triple methods of attack is enough to execute an unparalleled expert, especially the fatal tail!

“Right now, the tail has tied up your spine, and its stinger has pierced into the back of your head. Should the tail explode, you are certainly going to die!

“The triple methods of attack are triggers for each other, and they are defended by a hundred alert rune arrays. All the methods will be activated if any of the rune arrays are cracked.

“Unless the hundred alert rune arrays that were devised and personally carved by ‘Solar Eclipse’ Jiang Shaoyang are cracked within one second, there is no way that you can get rid of it!

“So, stop wasting your time. The very purpose when ‘Solar Eclipse’ Jiang Shaoyang crafted the magical equipment was to confine the experts of the Blood Demon Sector in the demon emperor level!

“After the ‘Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle’ was completed, he challenged ‘Deep Sea University’, the holy land of refiners in the Star Glory Federation, with the magical equipment. Not only did the ‘Novem Stellae’ of the Refining Department of Deep Sea University fail, even ‘Supernova’ Jiang Sheng, his blood uncle and the well-acknowledged best refiner of the Star Glory Federation, was not able to crack it, either!

“If you have several days, you might be able to unlock the barriers that I imposed on your body, but can you unlock the barrier of ‘Solar Eclipse’ Jiang Shaoyang?”

Elder Nether Spring took off the control armband that looked like a mini scorpion and handed it over to ‘Mad Medic’ Lu Wuxin. He then walked back and patted the Fire Ant King’s hand before he smiled and said, “This is for your own good. I was worried that you would be thinking about how to escape in the last few days of your life. So, you can have a good rest now, my dear brother!”

Elder Nether Spring left the chamber without looking back.

The Fire Ant King’s head fell backwards as if he had lost the support of his spine. There was desperation all over his face.

More than ten operational implements protruded out of the two artificial arms in front of ‘Mad Medic’ Lu Wuxin’s chest. They brushed the tip of the Fire Ant King’s nose and eventually injected a syringe that was filled with bright green drugs into his neck, pushing all the liquids into his body.

“This is a dosage of ‘Supersensitive XII’. I believe that the Fire Ant King knows it better than I do.”

Still smiling, ‘Mad Medic’ Lu Wuxin rubbed his hands and said, “After my modification, ‘Supersensitive XII’ can increase a demon’s sense of pain by ten times. You will feel the agony of ten thousand ants biting your heart even if I do nothing but blow at your face softly.

“However, it will take an hour before the drug takes effect. So, excuse me for a moment. I am going to select the most suitable ‘toys’ for you, Fire Ant King. See you soon!”

‘Mad Medic’ Lu Wuxin blew at the Fire Ant King’s face softly and left the chamber amid hideous laughter.

The Fire Ant King and Neltharion were left alone in the interrogation chamber.

The Fire Ant King finally could not help it any longer. He bellowed, with depression all over his face, and he collapsed like a balloon that had been blown up.

“I’m screwed,” the Fire Ant King wrote with his demonic energy languidly.

“What’s wrong?” Li Yao was baffled. “Elder Nether Spring is about to leave the place. It’s going to be a great opportunity for us!”

“Did you not hear what Elder Nether Spring said just now?” the Fire Ant King said gloomily. “This is the ‘Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle’, a work of ‘Solar Eclipse’ Jiang Shaoyang that is designed to lock demon emperors!

“Elder Nether Spring has indeed seen through me!

“It is true that I have hidden quite a few kinds of antidote drugs and high-nutrition drugs inside my body. They are kept in special biochemical capsules and controlled by the movement of my internal organs.

“One of the antidote drugs even does not require any control. As long as I do not make a certain movement, it will be automatically triggered. The drug can resolve more than 99% of the venom and the suppression drugs of the Blood Demon Sector!

“It was meant to be my final trump card in this battle with Elder Nether Spring!

“But right now, even if I can unlock all of Elder Nether Spring’s barriers, there is no way that I can unlock the

‘Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle’!”

Li Yao blinked. “There is not?”

“Of course not!” the Fire Ant King said in agitation. “Did you not hear Elder Nether Spring’s words? It is made by Jiang Shaoyang. ‘Solar Eclipse’ Jiang Shaoyang!”

“Well… Is Jiang Shaoyang a famous guy?”

The Fire Ant King was truly dumbfounded. He was lost for words for a long time before he wrote awry with his demonic energy. “Are you not an expert in the Nascent Soul Stage from the Star Glory Federation? How could you have never heard the name of ‘Jiang Shaoyang’ before?”

“Well, it is a twisted and complicated story. Why don’t you tell me first? What about ‘Solar Eclipse’ Jiang Shaoyang? Is the ‘Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle’ he built very awesome?”

“He is more than awesome; he is terrifying. ‘Solar Eclipse’ Jiang Shaoyang is a super genius who rose to fame like a volcanic eruption in the past ten years in the circle of refiners of the Star Glory Federation.

“He studied hard for several years in the Refining Department of Deep Sea University and the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution, two of the best academic establishments of refining in the Star Glory Federation, where he grasped the essence of the methodologies of the grassroots and the elites. Then, he trained himself through life and death with the army on the Grand Desolate Plateau for many years, thereby gaining a first-hand, profound understanding about the physical structure of the demons and our combat methods.

“Later, he invented almost a hundred kinds of magical equipment, including ‘Portable Anti-Shell Landmines’, ‘Heat-Sensitive Demon Catching Webs’, and ‘Super High-Frequency Pesticide Generator’. They are all the bane of demons beasts and demon soldiers. Very practical on the battlefield!

“As for the ‘Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle’, it is a piece of powerful magical equipment that he crafted after secluding himself for an entire year. The tool has been praised by many professional journals of the Star Glory Federation as the best confining magical equipment in the past hundred years!

“The young man also successfully broke out of the middle level of the Core Formation Stage through the production of the magical equipment and became the youngest refiner at the peak of the Core Formation Stage in the history of the Star Glory Federation!

“All the refiners of the Star Glory Federation agree unanimously that the ‘Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle’ is definitely enough to lock up any demon emperor. Nobody in the Heaven’s Origin Sector or the Blood Demon Sector can crack it by brute force.

“The experts of the Blood Demon Sector have all heard a thing or two about it, too, but after studying its general structure, we have to admit that it is indeed extremely tricky to deal with!

“I didn’t know that Elder Nether Spring had so many connections that he could even get a real ‘Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle’ to use on me!

“No wonder he was confident enough to leave me here alone.

“All in all, I’m done, and so is our plan. There is no way that I can get away from ‘Solar Eclipse’ Jiang Shaoyang’s ‘Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle’!”

Chapter 930 - New Plan?

“Not necessarily.”

Li Yao steered Neltharion to circle around the Fire Ant King three times, observing the structure of the ‘Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle’ on the surface in detail.

His eyes were beaming with delight.

In the past ten years, while I was working hard, other people have been training crazily, too. This is not a piece of magical equipment; this is a conundrum that he has posed for other refiners!

At first glance, it is just a piece of plain confining magical equipment. The spiritual stripes and rune arrays on it have all been used for hundreds of years. The only distinctive part might be that they are more precise than usual.

However, Jiang Shaoyang has conducted the tiniest modifications with the thinnest strokes on thirty-nine rune arrays. On nine of the rune arrays, he even entirely changed the flow of the circuits of spiritual energy by ‘short-circuiting’ and ‘reconnecting’, which are adjustments in the micrometer level.

Take this ‘Nine Gloomy Bone Biting Array’ for example. According to the general design, its spiritual energy should be running clockwise. If anybody wants to crack it, they should do it reversely, anticlockwise.

However, with the help of only three crystal wires that are only visible under a microscope, Jiang Shaoyang has *changed the flow of spiritual energy from clockwise to anticlockwise!*

As a result, if the cracker inputs the spiritual energy anticlockwise, not only would they fail to crack the rune array, they would also be accelerating the activation of it!

This is sordid. Too sordid. I didn't know that the big, bald Jiang Shaoyang had come a refiner of the same type as me ten years later!

This 'Nine Gloomy Bone Biting Array', on the other hand, is simply the crudest and most straightforward one of all his traps.

Huh. Not right. It is not as simple as that. Not only has he changed the flow of spiritual energy from clockwise to anticlockwise, he has also changed the overall structure from the shape of a swastika to a hexagon? The swastikas on the surface are just disguises!

Li Yao was so stunned that he was sweating hard.

Are you kidding me? This is rather impressive. What did Jin Xinyue go through exactly in the past ten years? No wonder his 'Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle' goes undefeated in the entire federation, and even his uncle 'Supernova' Jiang Sheng as well as the entire Refining Department of Deep Sea University failed to crack it!

While Li Yao was amazed. The Fire Ant King sent another message over. "Why are you not talking?"

"Excuse me. I'm hooked. Let me study it for another three minutes."

Li Yao activated a mystic ray from Neltharion and scanned the ‘Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle’ in the Fire Ant King’s body.

He saw that the legs of the scorpion were deeply embedded into the Fire Ant King’s body, only 0.1 millimeters away from the few main organs.

The dangerous tail even circled around the Fire Ant King’s spine before it eventually pierced through the cervical vertebra, only to nail into the back of his head.

It would have been quite a headache whether a demon emperor or a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was confined by such a piece of magical equipment.

Also, there was no telling what kind of materials the magical equipment was built with, but when Li Yao increased the level of the mystic ray, trying to pry into the internal structure of the ‘Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle’, some of the critical parts were blocked!

This is getting trickier now. Even if I can open the shell of the ‘Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle’, Jiang Shaoyang has certainly deployed even more sordid and dangerous traps inside!

Damn. Elder Nether Spring was oversimplifying the job. It requires much more work to crack the magical equipment than unlocking a hundred rune arrays in one second!

Unlocking a hundred rune arrays in a second would be a piece of cake for an expert of refining such as ‘Supernova’ Jiang Sheng, but it is just an appetizer before the main dish!

Jiang Shaoyang, very impressive. The magical equipment you’ve made deserves to be called a national treasure of *the Star Glory Federation!*

The Fire Ant King sent yet another message anxiously. “What are you doing?”

“I am studying the ‘Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle’ wholeheartedly, and I am thinking of a brand new plan,” Li Yao said solemnly. “Fire Ant King, the ‘Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle’ has disrupted our operation. So, I have drafted a new plan for you.

“Elder Nether Spring is still hoping to exploit the information in your head right now. Therefore, ‘Mad Medic’ Lu Wuxin will not slay you today. He will torture you for another week or so.

“It means that we have a week for our new plan!

“In the week, you will tell me all the valuable information in your head, such as the locations of the secret bureaus of the Blade of Chaos, the contacts of all the spies, the top secret formulas of the strengthening drugs, and the methods to develop the demonic plants quickly. Also, don’t forget your secret treasuries, vaults, or safes where you keep your unparalleled techniques!

“Then, you will appoint me as the next leader of the ‘Blade of Chaos’!

“I will figure out a way to rescue our brothers of the Blade of Chaos and let the Blade of Chaos work together with the Star Glory Federation to overthrow the Pantheon of Demons’ reign so that the last wills of God Chaos and you will be fulfilled, and you will be avenged. How does it sound?”

“… It does not sound cool!”

“Alright. Then I guess we will have to stick to our original plan.”

The Fire Ant King was dazed. “The original plan?”

“The original plan is that I will investigate the environment nearby with Neltharion and try to locate the captives.

“Right. Since this is the base of the Nether World Watch and Elder Nether Spring’s secret nest and a lot of terrible experiments are being conducted in this place, the biochemical brains and crystal processors of high computational ability are mandatory.

“A lot of Elder Nether Spring’s secrets must be stored in the devices!

“After I get you out, the two of us will go on a rampage and turn the place upside-down. Then, we will rescue the captives, steal the biochemical brains or crystal processors, and eventually flee through one of Elder Nether Spring’s devilish warships!

“The area around the North Pole is frequented by billowing wind all year long. The magnetic field here is in disorder, too. It is very inconvenient to communicate with the outside world. I believe that this is one of the reasons Elder Nether Spring established his nest in this place.

“However, as a result, no matter how much trouble we make in this place, Elder Nether Spring is not likely to detect it soon. Even if he detects it, it will still take him some time to return!”

“Wait!” The Elder Nether Spring frowned. “The biggest problem right now is, how are you going to get me out of the ‘Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle’? The controller of the magical equipment is in the hands of ‘Mad Medic’ Lu Wuxin.

“Don’t underestimate him because his nickname is ‘Mad Medic’. He has transplanted the organs of many experts into his body and seems to have injected countless kinds of strengthening drugs. Eight years ago, his combat ability was already in the high level of the demon king state. Now that he has taken Elder Nether Spring’s side and is the supervisor of Elder Nether Spring’s secret nest, he must be stronger than before. Chances are that he is an out-and-out demon emperor right now!

“It will not be easy for you to rob him of the controller.

“Besides, this is a piece of magical equipment made by ‘Solar Eclipse’ Jiang Shaoyang, who wouldn’t have been so simpleminded as to ignore the possibility that the controller could be stolen. I estimate that there are some verification rune arrays on the controller, and there is nothing you will be able to do even if you have it!”

“I know,” Li Yao said. “That was why I asked whether or not you would like to pass on the leadership of the Blade of Chaos to me, Fire Ant King. Rest assured. I will certainly kill Elder Nether Spring one day and avenge you!”

“… I would prefer another method.”

“Then, you leave me no choice. I will have to try cracking the ‘Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle’ with brute force!”

The Fire Ant King was dazed. He asked in disbelief, “Are you confident?”

Li Yao smiled positively. “Rest assured, Fire Ant King. In fact, I am quite an experienced refiner myself, and I have a profound understanding about all kinds of explosive magical equipment. As for the refining style of ‘Solar Eclipse’ Jiang Shaoyang, I have studied a thing or two about it before. So…”

The Fire Ant King was overjoyed. “So?”

“So, even if the brute-force cracking fails,” Li Yao said, “I am totally confident that the damage of the crystal bombs will be concentrated on your body, and I will certainly be unaffected!

“Which means that I will still have chance to rescue your subordinates, the elites of the Blade of Chaos!

“However, in case of an accident, I still strongly suggest that you leave a testament to pass on the leadership of the Blade of Chaos to me so that the Blade of Chaos will not collapse because of the lack of a commander!”

The Fire Ant King had no words.

Li Yao licked his lips. “Alright. Fire Ant King, you can think how to unlock the barriers that Elder Nether Spring imposed on your body right now. I will have Neltharion explore the surroundings while I figure out how to deal with the ‘Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle’.”

Li Yao had never forgotten the declaration that he made in public when he was young and proud.

Defeat the Refining Department of Deep Sea University, the holy land of refiners!

What if I can crack a piece of magical equipment that even 'Supernova' Jiang Sheng and the entire Refining Department of Deep Sea University can't?

Neltharion flew up agilely and drifted around the chamber.

The gate of the chamber was not made of bars—it was fully-enclosed. It was impossible to get out of the chamber through the gate unless 'Mad Medic' Lu Wuxin was opening the gate and getting in.

However, 'Mad Medic' Lu Wuxin could be an expert in the demon emperor level, too. It was too risky to fly above his head.

The 'Nether World', Elder Nether Spring's nest, was established based on Ba Yanzhi's war base forty thousand years ago. Many buildings here were actually the relics from that time and a very vintage style. Also, because of the frigidness of the North Pole, where a drop of water might be frozen before it hit the ground, the ceiling of every chamber was installed with ventilation and heating tubes.

Li Yao soon found the entrance of a ventilation tube at the southeast corner of the chamber.

The ventilate tube was only one inch in diameter. It was impossible for a demon or a human being to pass through unless they had practiced certain secret arts such as 'Bone Shrinking Arts' or 'Bone Softening Techniques'.

Of course, that was not a problem for Neltharion.

Chapter 931 - Terrifying Nether World!

However, Li Yao did not fly Neltharion through the tiny entrance of the ventilation tube recklessly. Instead, he triggered a beam of probe mystic rays and scanned the bar while he adjusted the frequency of the mystic ray.

As he expected, when he adjusted the mystic ray to an extremely low frequency, dozens of mysterious lines appeared on the bars, which interconnected with each other and were moving without any pattern.

Should Neltharion touch the crimson lights, an alert system would certainly be triggered.

This is truly a heavily guarded place!

Neltharion was halted below the entrance of the ventilation tube for five seconds while Li Yao calculated the speed and the angle of the mysterious lines quickly.

Five seconds later, Neltharion passed through the bars unhurriedly like a lazy goldfish. The crimson lines seemed be cooperating with the device and always missed it by the width of hair!

Neltharion passed through the mysterious lines and infiltrated the ventilation tube!

The scene inside the ventilation tube, on the other hand, gave Li Yao quite a big surprise.

It was not an impenetrable scanning defense system as he had imagined earlier. In fact, dense bugs were on the tubes, and very tiny webs could be seen at the turn of the tube, where colorful, scary spiders were lurking in the darkness.

Bugs, spiders, and dwarf vampire bats, which were deep gray and almost blended in with the tube, constituted a comprehensive, ecological alert system inside the ventilation tube.

Li Yao could not help but click his tongue. Even if somebody crawled into such a tube by compressing their muscles and bones to the minimal size, there would be nothing they could do about the innumerous insects.

It was impossible for even the tiniest biochemical beasts to infiltrate the tube without alarming the insects.

Elder Nether Spring is indeed a great player of insects. I’m afraid the defense of his place is even heavier than the supreme congress of the Star Glory Federation.

Thankfully, Li Yao possessed Neltharion, a piece of magical equipment crafted in the zenith of the Star Ocean Imperium!

Neltharion remained in its stealth mode while it floated in the middle of the tube and observed the entire ecological system.

The little bugs on the wall of the tube, which looked like mosquitoes, were dancing without any pattern every second, capturing the floating particles in the air as their food.

Some of the bugs would get caught in the spider web. When the number of pray was good enough, the colorful spiders would take action and devour all the food on their web.

At that time, the bugs would calm down for several seconds, revealing a zigzagging gap.

That was Li Yao’s only opportunity!

He waited patiently for the spiders to go hunting three times and calculated the average length of the gap among the bugs. Finally, when the spiders took action the fourth time, he steered Neltharion to pass through them!

His speed could not be too high. Otherwise, he would affect the flow of the air and be caught. The black mist made by the bugs was like a bloody mouth that was closing slowly behind Neltharion. The teeth of the mouth almost bit Neltharion’s rear.

At the front, the entire tube was blocked by spider webs whose shining threads were smeared with fatal thick liquids.

Thankfully, the holes on the spider webs were not even. Sometimes, when the bigger prey was struggling fiercely, they would tear the spider web apart.

The colorful spiders, after swallowing enough food, began to mend the webs.

Li Yao held his breath and looked for the biggest hole.

It was a big test for his expertise of flying a starship, too.

The hole that he found was almost the same size as Neltharion. One tremble during the pass-through might sabotage all his endeavors.

Meanwhile, the colorful spiders were already crawling toward the hole, apparently planning to repair the biggest hole first.

Easy. Relax. There’s still a lot of time. There’s still…

Neltharion took a leap forward and successfully travelled through the web before the spider spurted out the first thread!

Li Yao heaved a huge sigh in relief. He had been almost melted in the stomach of the lightning boa.

In the exact same way, he breached the blockage of another seven spider webs and finally reached the entrance of another ventilation tube.

Li Yao watched through the bars. He could tell that it was an enormous lab or factory.

The vast space had been divided into several different areas. Right below Neltharion was an area for weapons testing.

One of the soldiers of the Nether World Watch, lean and with a head resembling that of a wolf, was holding a narrow, long, bizarre-looking firearm in his hand and aiming in a kneeling position.

This is the sniper version of the ‘Wild Wave VII’ storm bolter!

After a quick glance, Li Yao already determined that the soldier was using a very popular assault rifle of the Star Glory Federation. The gun could be turned into a general-purpose sniper rifle with reasonably good specifications after it was installed with high-precision plugins.

However, other than the high-precision plugins, the very ‘Wild Wave VII’ was also tied up by thick veins and tentacles on the surface. Two redundant objects that looked like lumps were attached to the magazine. There were also two crimson eyeballs protruding out of the scope!

The gun seemed to have been contaminated, assimilated, and devoured by a certain abnormal monster. It was now a weird weapon that was half a piece of magical equipment and half a living creature, like the blood-sucking flying swords Li Yao had seen in the Mausoleum of Chaos!

What was more terrifying was that almost ten ‘veins’, or maybe synthesized nerves, grew out of the sniper rifle and pierced into the arms, chest, and temples of the soldier, as if he was already joined with the weapon!

Li Yao pondered. *Manipulating the magical equipment with one’s own neurons? If that is the case, it will not require powerful telepathic thoughts to use the gun. The weapon’s specifications will be significantly improved, too!*

Hu! Hu! Hu!

Furious wind was blowing in the test field. There were even artificial snowflakes that were seriously inhibiting the vision and senses of the sniper.

According to the tutorial of the federal army, such a weather was most unsuitable for a sniper.

But the soldier of the Nether World Watch stayed absolutely still. He remained in a kneeling position like a cold statue.

Beep!

Hundreds of meters away, a bluish spring suddenly spurted out and blossomed into dozens of stars in midair.

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

The soldier shot calmly. He even shifted a position every time he had pulled the trigger. In half a minute, he moved into six different positions. The interference of the wind and snowstorm was nothing to him. He barely missed any targets. The dozens of blue stars perished abruptly!

Li Yao was secretly alarmed.

The sniper version of the ‘Wild Wave VII’ assault rifle that has been secretly modified by Elder Nether Spring is significantly improved in terms of trigger speed, load capacity, stability, and anti-interference abilities. The comprehensive specifications must have been increased by at least 35%!

The most dreadful part is that the weapon is shooting out not just bullets but also lethal poison!

I’m afraid that the redundant objects that look like lumps next to the magazine are designed for exactly such a purpose. They are vesicles of poison!

It was not hard for Li Yao to imagine the usage of such a design.

At first, the highly penetrative and damaging bullets would damage the shield, shell, and plate armor of the target, exposing their most vulnerable body parts.

Then, the poison or acid that came with the bullets would be able to destroy the internal organs directly!

For both human beings and demons, it was certainly an extremely vicious weapon!

Now that the sniper rifle has gone through such modification, the assault rifle that is simper in structure must have been modified in similar ways, too.

The soldiers of the Nether World Watch who are embedded with demon cores all over their bodies are already tricky enough. It is going to be a nightmare if they are all equipped with such marvelous weapons!

Li Yao secretly learned the specifications of the ‘biochemical sniper rifle’ and committed them to memory before he flew Neltharion away cautiously.

In the second test field, there was a tall, muscular soldier of the Nether World Watch, who was tied up by more than ten ammunition belts to which crimson grenades were attached.

Li Yao noticed that he was wearing a special necklace on his neck that was as thick as a trunk. Inside the necklace was some sort of dark red drug.

Chi! Chi!

The needles on the internal side of the necklace pierced into the soldier’s neck and injected all the drug into his body.

“Hoooooooooo!”

The soldier let out an earsplitting roar. The skin all over his body turned red before it broke apart in the end, revealing intense flames that were burning in his veins!

Very soon, the soldier turned into a fire demon almost five meters tall. The color of the fire turned from red to white as its temperature grew higher and higher. He looked like a pile of melted steel!

What was weird was that, despite such a scorching temperature, the soldier of the Nether World Watch was not dead yet. Instead, he was charging at a heavy crystal tank that had been placed as a target.

The heavy crystal tank, under the remote control of the staff nearby, fulminated and ran toward him at full speed, too!

BOOM!

The soldier was like a crazy rhino. Every step he took would leave a deep footprint behind him. He rushed at his top speed and blocked the moving heavy crystal tank head-on like a shooting star. After an impasse of three seconds, smoke began popping up from the bottom of the heavy crystal tank before it was slowly pushed back by the soldier!

Chi!

The soldier leapt onto the vehicle. His two hands seemed to have turned into two fiery sabers as he stabbed into the plate armor of the crystal tank.

Against the burning flames, the plate armor was pierced through and ripped apart by him easily as if it were nothing but a piece of paper. A hole the size of a basin was revealed.

The soldier took off almost ten grenades from the ammunition belt on his body and tossed all of them into the crystal tank before he blocked the hole with his own chest.

BOOM! BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM!

The crystal tank jerked up as if it had been installed with a spring. The entire turret flew up to the sky. The soldier of the Nether World Watch was also blown almost a hundred meters back by the immense blast. However, he simply stood up quickly and wiped off the smoke on his chest amid deep, scary laughter.

One such monster is enough to cause a lot of trouble for a tank legion of the federal army. It will be very difficult for the *tank legion to deal with the monster even if the legion has its own Cultivators.*

If such monsters are used to attack the fixed firing points or to storm a city, they will be even more invincible. It is unlikely that a Cultivator will be defending every firing point!

Chapter 932 - Experiment Subjects!

What bothered Li Yao most was not just the formidability of the soldier of the Nether World Watch but also the strengthening necklace he wore.

Li Yao could see that, in the research room that was one glass wall away from the test field, there were dozens of necklaces of the same model on the table, with almost a hundred different-colored strengthening drugs next to them.

The strengthening drugs and the necklaces could be paired freely. Other than the crimson drugs, there were also light gray, violet, and azure ones, each of which was emitting mysterious brilliance and dense spiritual energy.

It meant that such strengthening necklaces could very likely trigger frost, poison, corrosion, and a lot of other effects besides the incendiary effect.

If all the soldiers of the Nether World Watch are wearing strengthening necklaces, with the 'biochemical firearms', they will definitely be strong enough to crush any main-force legion of the federal army!

After observing dozens of research rooms and weapon test fields from the above, Li Yao was more and more shocked.

Elder Nether Spring was much more stronger than he had expected. His declaration of 'the rise of the third life form' was most certainly not a fantasy but a frightful future that was very likely to come true someday!

In the pathway before Neltharion, several exhausted soldiers of the Nether World Watch, who had just finished their testing, were walking to the lift at the end of the pathway.

Li Yao thought of something and tailed the soldiers into the lift, too.

On the control panel of the lift was a verification rune array. One of the soldiers stuck his right hand to the verification rune array. It was not until a scarlet mystic ray scanned his hand and then turned green that the lift was activated slowly.

Judging from the flashing crystals embedded in the lift, the ‘Nether World’ was extremely large in scale. The building they were in right now had more than fifty floors.

Just now, they were in the minus third floor. At this moment, they reached the minus twelfth floor.

The minus twelfth floor was a vast training camp where hundreds of soldiers of the Nether World Watch were doing high-intensity training. Even the most common soldiers who were only embedded with three to five cores were most carrying hundreds of kilograms on their wrists and ankles while they trained themselves under three to five times the standard gravity.

Despite the burdens, the force of their punch was almost always profound.

Sometimes, when intense brilliance burst out of their demon cores, they were even punching at a supersonic speed and exerting a force of more than ten thousand kilograms. Even an iron plate as thick as a palm might be broken through easily!

Li Yao secretly clicked his tongue after witnessing such strength.

Maybe, the newly established crystal legions of the Star Glory Federation were enough to compete with them. But by the same logic, the soldiers of the Nether World Watch would certainly be equipped with biochemical beasts, too!

The soldiers whom Li Yao had followed entered a dark chamber next to the training camp.

The temperature of the dark chamber was extremely low. The room was enshrouded in dead silence as if it were a spacious graveyard. In the middle of the vague icy mist stood almost a thousand deep sleep capsules of different sizes.

They are… the deep sleep capsules for the military of the Star Glory Federation. But they have undergone the same biochemical modifications. A lot of veins, biochemical brains and accessories whose usages are unknown have been added to them!

The four soldiers found their own deep sleep capsules and lay in them. On the light beam on the surface of the deep sleep capsules, figures and runes were changing quickly. Observing through the hole, Li Yao noticed that the deep sleep capsules were soon filled with a blue gas, and frost began appearing on the eyelids and nose tips of the four soldiers. They had entered the hibernation state in the low temperature, too.

I understand it now. After modification, those deep sleep capsules all boast a certain ‘hibernation’ effect.

But why?

Li Yao tapped his head softly, deep in thought. *Right. Demon cores are extremely unstable amalgamations of spiritual energy after all. They might leak or explode if anything goes wrong. Therefore, the soldiers must go into the hibernation state every once in a while to stabilize the spiritual energy inside the demon cores!*

There are 505 deep sleep capsules in this place. But it can't be the only camp of the Nether World Watch. There seem to be two to three similar camps nearby. Other floors must have similar facilities, too.

Judging from my preliminary estimation, the headcount of the Nether World Watch should be around five thousand, which is very suitable for a secret troop. If there are more soldiers, the assets and resources supplied to the North Pole will be too huge. The risk of the place being exposed will be much higher.

Li Yao frowned at the thought.

The individual combat ability of the Nether World Watch was much higher than the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, not to mention the terrifying biochemical devices. Besides, the soldiers of the Nether World Watch were all intelligent creatures who had their own self-awareness. It was impossible that they would just give up their weapons and surrender the moment their command center was taken down.

Although Li Yao was quite confident about his combat ability, the best he could do was fight a hundred or so soldiers of the Nether World Watch. It was impossible that he could defeat all five thousand of them.

Besides, there was still 'Mad Medic' Lu Wuxin, an expert in the demon emperor stage, and Despot and Swirl, two captains who were very close to demon emperors.

Moreover, chances were that Elder Nether Spring had left some secret weapons in the place, too.

This battle is going to be more complicated than the one against Xiao Xuance!

However—

Li Yao moved his eyes and flew Neltharion around the top of the rest area of the Nether World Watch. He traced the wires behind the deep sleep capsules and eventually located the destination of all the wires.

Dozens of wires for different purposes were connected every deep sleep capsule. Some of them were responsible for the input of spiritual energy, and others were in charge of injecting high-nutrition materials into the users of the deep sleep capsules so that their body would recover during their sleep.

More importantly, one of the wires connected the deep sleep capsules to the mainframe crystal processor.

As he expected, the wires coming out of every deep sleep capsule joined together before they led deeper underground.

Elder Nether Spring has utilized a lot of magical equipment from the Star Glory Federation in this secret base. Therefore, other than the biochemical brains, he must have a mainframe crystal processor that is of a high level and boasts immense computational ability!

The deep sleep capsules should be controlled by the mainframe crystal processor!

Assuming that the base is run by a central biochemical brain and crystal processor at the same time, they cannot be very far away from each other. Or rather, they are probably installed in the same place.

As long as I find the two 'brains', I will be able to gain control over the entire Nether World and dig out all the secrets of Elder Nether Spring!

It was a pity that the wires and their tubes were flawless. The tiny gap, if there were any, was entirely blocked by the synthesized nerves. Neltharion could not crawl into the tubes at all.

Li Yao secretly learned the distribution of wires of the sleep area. He then waited outside of the lift patiently and entered the lift when other soldiers of the Nether World Watch were coming or going.

Just like that, Li Yao wandered through most of the areas of the buildings over the next couple of hours.

The building was in the shape a pyramid. The lower he got, the larger the floor became. The part of the building exposed on the surface of the planet was just the tip of the iceberg.

The top floors were the camps of the soldiers. The next few floors were test zones and weapon test areas. The interrogation chamber where the Fire Ant King was locked in was there, too.

Then, the lower few floors were still the camps of the Nether World Watch, followed by the warehouses of the biochemical beasts.

The lightning boa where Li Yao hid himself was stored in this place.

Below the warehouse of biochemical beasts was another test area that was extremely large in scale and highly confidential.

It was like a prison for the deceased. On the two sides of the cold pathway were independent prison cells that were sealed by the most solid crystals and hardened by crossed rebar. There were also dense rune arrays of the lightning class on the rebar, as if the warden was scared that the prisoners might escape.

In the few prison cells that were next to each other, some creatures, whose skin was gray, whose eyes were black, and whose pupils seemed to be melting, were sitting or lying.

Some of them were standard human beings, and others were demons with distinctive creatures.

But both the human beings and the demons were weary and did not move for a long time. Even their chests were absolutely still. Li Yao could not help but wonder whether or not they were already dead.

A few demons in white robes were pointing at them and writing something down.

Chi—

Right then, the gate of the life was opened again, and ‘Mad Medic’ Lu Wuxin strode out with delight and satisfaction all over his face.

Li Yao was dazed. He checked the time and realized that Lu Wuxin must’ve finished the first interrogation session with the Fire Ant King.

I hope the Fire Ant King's nerves are strong enough for him to pass it!

Without any fuss, Lu Wuxin spoke to one of the demons in white robes. "Show me the combat status of Experiment Subject No.66778."

Experiment Subject No.66778 was a human being with thick eyebrows.

Beside his left eye, there was a saber tattoo around his eye. Li Yao knew that it was a popular tattoo in the army of the Star Glory Federation, indicating that the human being was a saber expert.

However, the man's face was gray, with death-like discoloration all over it, and he had not breathed for more than half an hour.

More importantly, there was a big hole on the left side of his chest, through which one could see his back. He could not have been deader.

Li Yao clenched his fists harder and harder.

Although the man was dead, he did not want a federal soldier to be insulted by the enemy in such a way!

A cage slowly dropped down from the ceiling. The barriers around the cage had barely been removed when the iron bars were ripped apart, and a dog-like demon beast with a scorpion tail dashed out.

Scorpion Wolf!

Li Yao recognized it at a glance. The Scorpion Wolf was not a high-level demon beast, but it was very fast, and there was lethal poison in its scorpion tail. It was also very vigilant and could be tricky to deal with.

The Scorpion Wolf was a carrion demon beast. Seeing a body in the corner, it beamed with joy and barked before it lunged at the corpse of the federal soldier.

However, the moment the Scorpion Wolf got close, the eyes of the federal soldier, which were pure black, seemed to be injected with crimson liquids, and his body suddenly jerked up in a rigid posture!

“Hiss!”

The mouth of the soldier reached his ears, and his jaw dropped to his chest. A cluster of venomous fog spurted out his throat and concentrated into a red pillar that pierced through the Scorpion Wolf from head to tail.

Despite the agility of the Scorpion Wolf, it could not dodge at all and died miserably on the spot!

However, after the attack, the soldier seemed to have used up the strength of his cells. His body withered at a visible speed, and his stomach collapsed like a swirl. He fell to the ground and quickly turned into foam.

Chapter 933 - Camp of Special Captives!

“Is this all?” ‘Mad Medic’ Lu Wuxin sounded rather disappointed.

“Yes,” the white-robed demon replied. “This is the 133rd uncontrollable mutant of the subjects who have contracted ‘Demon God VI’. In the extreme state, the cells inside the mutant can live three to five days. When a target comes close, it will dissolve all the cells of the internal organs and transform them into immense energy, shooting it out in the form of high-pressure blood mist.

“The mechanism of the attack is similar to the ‘Cell Obliteration Cannon’.

“Even an ordinary person can be granted a one-time combat ability equal to a Cultivator. Such mutants are among the more brutal ones.

“However, the attacks can only be performed once or twice before the cells inside the mutant completely wither.

“As for the drawbacks, it’s just like the other uncontrollable mutants. Their movements are slow, if they move at all. The speed of their withering is too fast. Also, they are not contagious enough.

“More importantly, their brains have been dead for a long time, and they cannot listen to our command. They may cause a temporary riot, but they cannot be utilized as a perfect weapon.”

‘Mad Medic’ Lu Wuxin sniffed and asked, “What about the experiments of Demon God VII?”

“We are now testing Demon God Version 6.8.1,” the white-robed demon replied. “In the second beta test of the version, the instant clean death rate was 65%, 32.5% of the subjects turned into uncontrollable mutants after death, and 2.5% of them received perfect evolution.”

“A success rate of 2.5% is still too low,” ‘Mad Medic’ Lu Wuxin said coldly. “It is not a batch of wild monsters that Elder Nether Spring wants but a well-trained, absolutely-loyal, and formidable army! The success rate must be improved to above 5%!”

“Understood!” the white-robed demon said. “Although we haven’t made much progress in the improvement of the success rate, the manipulability of the ‘perfect mutants’ is much higher than previously!”

“Is that so?” ‘Mad Medic’ Lu Wuxin paused for a minute in thought. “Let’s go and check!”

At the end of the pathway, in an ultra-solid prison cell with double crystal walls, a handsome, furious demon was pacing back and forth anxiously.

The moment he saw ‘Mad Medic’ Lu Wuxin, the demon lunged at him like a crazy tiger, triggering thousands of electric arcs on the defense rune array!

He was blown back brutally. More than ten burnt scars were added to his body, but he felt none of it and simply pointed at Lu Wuxin, cursing with the utmost hatred!

Li Yao was shocked. The demon had dense, golden hair. His nose that of a lion, and his mouth was broad. There was blue color deep inside his bright golden eyeballs.

All the features were the signs of ‘Blue-Eyed Lions’, the royal family of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers!

Elder Nether Spring was truly crazy enough. He even dared to kidnap a member of the royal family of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers, which was his hardcore ally, and run experiments on him!

The Blue-Eyed Lion was more than infuriated. His veins were bulging out and his chest was fluctuating like an air bellow, but he was not killed in the attempt just now.

The Mad Medic grinned hideously and narrowed his eyes. He cast his spells while he stared at the captive, deep brilliance beaming out of his eyes.

A weird thing happened!

The Blue-Eyed Lion was roaring thunderously, but only a moment later, he lowered his arms, and his face turned indifferent, as if he had been hypnotized. He was looking at Lu Wuxin both admiringly and fanatically, like the zealots who were willing to die for their one true god!

Then—

His blue eyes were corrupted by bloody streaks, too. Thick veins protruded out of his body, which doubled in size. Countless bone spurts grew out of his spine, his arms, and his knees, decorating him in an armor that was brimming with needles!

Inside the bloody mouth, the two upper canine teeth were almost three times their original length. Like the sharpest sabers, they were certainly able to pierce through a crystal suit!

Huchi… Huchi… Huchi…

After every breathe, streams of dead gray mist would spurt out of his mouth, which surrounded him and did not disperse for a long time.

“Hooooo!” The Blue-Eyed Lion roared crazily and dashed forward, turning into hundreds of blurred shadows that filled the entire prison cell.

Dozens of deep claw traces immediately appeared on the wall!

Lu Wuxin’s lips curled. The Blue-Eyed Lion came to an abrupt halt. Then, he suddenly lowered his arms and bashed the wall hard with his head.

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

Thousands of electric arcs burst out of the defense rune arrays, enlarging his pupils and making his golden hair stand up.

But he seemed to have no sense of pain at all. He continued crashing into the wall and did not stop even though he was bleeding hard.

Pa!

The Mad Medic snapped his finger. The Blue-Eyed Lion trembled violently as if he was freed from a nightmare. The bone spurs and the bulging veins retreated into his body, and his dirty eyes gradually cleared.

His skull had collapsed because of the collisions, and he was writhing on the ground in pain. He did not even have the strength to curse anymore. Desperation filled his blue eyes, where the blood strains lingered.

“Indeed, not bad.” Lu Wuxin nodded in great satisfaction. “I did not feel the least resistance when I controlled him. Also, he was much more active than before. When I gave him a simple command, he would search his memory and experience to complete it on his own.

“Besides, his speed and strength have both been improved by at least 150%!

“An army made of such soldiers is one that Elder Nether Spring really needs!”

“There’s more than that,” the white-robed demon declared proudly. “The Demon God Virus of the latest version modifies the respiratory system perfectly. Right now, his saliva, his blood, and the air that he exhales all contain a huge amount of Demon God Virus. When the enemy is bitten, scratched, or touched his blood, or rather, when they are simply engaged in melee combat with him without protection, they will be infected by the Demon God Virus and become our weapons!

“However, the current version of the virus is still vulnerable under high temperature or low temperature, and it will be easily suppressed by the incendiary bullets and the frost rune arrays. We are hoping to improve that part of the virus in our next version.”

“Most excellent,” Lu Wuxin remarked. “But we must hurry. It won’t be long before the Demon God Virus is sent to a real battlefield!”

They were talking in lower and lower voices and seemed to be discussing a specific technological problem.

Li Yao’s heart became colder and almost fell apart like a piece of ice.

So, that was the truth of the so-called ‘third life form’ and ‘the gods that surpass mankind and the demon race’!

As it turned out, such ‘evolution’ had a success rate of only 2.5%. The remaining carriers of the virus were either killed instantly or turned into ‘uncontrollable mutants’ whose brain was dead but whose cells were alive!

Even the strengthened ‘perfect mutants’ were merely slaves of Elder Nether Spring’s forces and would be at their mercy!

This is too horrible. The blood, saliva, and breath of the ‘perfect mutants’ all contain a fatal and highly infectious virus!

Should it spread out on a large scale, countless creatures in both the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector will be killed, turned into monsters, or end up being their slaves!

Damn. This is an even more dreadful future than the rule of the Imperium of True Human Beings!

While Li Yao cursed silently, the white-robed demon seemed to have received Lu Wuxin’s instructions and left.

Li Yao would rather not keep Neltharion with the Mad Medic for long. Therefore, he simply followed the demon.

As it turned out, the demon took the lift and went upward to the surface.

Neltharion and the demon moved out of the building together. It was not until this moment that Li Yao finally got a general picture of Elder Nether Spring’s nest.

It was a freezing snow world with blowing wind outside. They were in a lone island, surrounded by an icy ocean that was full of swirls, surging tides, and colliding glaciers. Looking into the distance, Li Yao found that the horizon seemed to have become a forbidden abyss that was hidden in the dark mist.

The lone island was the shape of a dumbbell. It was narrow in the middle and broader on two ends. They were presently at the south of the island.

The part of the building above the ground was less than thirty meters tall and covered in thick snow and ice. It was impossible to detect it from the sky at all.

Next to the building was a helipad for devilish warships. Three inconspicuous enormous devilish warships were docked under the cover of the floating islands that pretended to be icebergs.

Neltharion followed the white-robed demon to the north of the island.

The north of the island turned out to be a vast camp of captives. The visible captives who were wandering in the yard in the freezing wind numbered around a thousand. There was no telling how many more were locked in the underground building.

Li Yao adjusted the resolution of Neltharion and observed the captives carefully.

They were not the newly captured soldiers of the Blade of Chaos.

Despite the temperature of dozens of degrees below zero, they were still only wearing thin prison garb and training themselves hard with whatever facilities they had.

Most of the captives were healthy and strong, and they were apparently split in two groups.

The captives on the left side were mostly human beings, many of whom had popular tattoos of the federal army on their faces and arms. It was easy to tell that they had gone through harsh training in the military through their eyes and the way they walked.

But their capability was much higher than any special force of the federal army that Li Yao had seen. Many of them were punching at a supersonic speed casually while they were yawning, tearing the air apart time and time again for almost one minute straight!

Is this happening? Since when have the soldiers of the federal army become so tough? Li Yao secretly clicked his tongue.

The captives on the right side, on the other hand, were mostly the Claw Clan and the Horn Clan of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers, but a lot of them were clearly the members of the Insect Clan and the Feather Clan, too. Together, they were almost a small coalition army of the demon race.

The captives of different species had all been captured by Elder Nether Spring for his experiments. Most of them had already suffered a lot of wounds and were barely recognizable.

Even so, there was clearly mistrust between the two sides. An invisible ‘boundary’ seemed to be in the middle of the camp. Many captives were looking at the other side of the ‘boundary’ with hatred.

So, they are truly the soldiers of the federal army. They are my compatriots and comrades!

I must find a way to rescue them all!

After unearthing the terrifying experiments that Elder Nether Spring had been working on and discovering that so many of his compatriots and comrades had ended up being captives and experiment subjects, Li Yao was more infuriated and determined than ever!

Chapter 934 - Are You Even a Human Being?

Neltharion did not enter the camp of the captives recklessly. Instead, it took a circle around the north of the lone island. The perimeter of the northern half of the island spanned approximately ten kilometers, and the camp of the captives on the ground already had a coverage of almost three square kilometers. It was quite huge.

Three layers of obstacles had been established out of the captive camp.

The first layer of obstacles was made of frost thorns that could resist extremely low temperature. They interweaved with each other like countless icy pitons and constituted a high wall more than twenty meters tall. Whenever a captive was close to the wall, the thorns would extend out and shake like vipers.

Behind the frost thorns was a high-voltage electric web with bluish electric arcs flowing through thick wires. Occasionally, two electric arcs would collide, resulting in brilliant sparks.

Behind the high-voltage electric web were clusters of weird demonic plants, which, at first glance, appeared to be organs of a certain enormous demon beast. They were almost four floors high and bright blue with translucent lumps growing on them that were pulsating like hearts. The giant petals on their top were like bloody mouths that had been widely opened. The sharp thorns around the petals were as sharp as tusks. Deep inside the flower, icy mist was spurting out and congregated into a vague cloud in the air.

The weird demonic plants had been cultivated all around the captive camp with a span of hundreds of meters. The icy mist they generated enshrouded the captive camp and lingered.

In Li Yao’s experience, they probably possessed air-attacking abilities.

The frost thorns, high-voltage electric web, and air-attacking demonic plants that could spurt icy mist. Even if a captive passed through the three layers of obstacles, they would still find themselves surrounded by a gloomy, creepy ice ocean that was thousands of kilometers offshore. They could not run away even if they had grown wings!

However, they were still not the most powerful barrier of the captive camp!

In the middle of the frost thorns and the high-voltage electric web, a bronze pillar had been established every few dozen meters. Together, they seemed to be hundreds of giants in heavy armor that were eyeing all the captives coldly.

All the bronze pillars were carved with complicated, vintage runes.

Li Yao thought quickly. Judging from the style and the method of engravement, they were all ancient runes from forty thousand years ago.

The hundred and eight pillars integrated into an ancient array. Right. It must be an ancient array that was set up by Ba Yanzhi’s ‘Chaos Demons’ in order to confine certain brutal demon beasts, or even… the ‘Ultimate One Demons’!

Li Yao was greatly refreshed. Naturally, an ancient rune array was always made of ancient magical equipment and the most classical ancient spiritual stripes.

Analyzing ancient spiritual stripes, dismantling the ancient magical equipment, and cracking the ancient rune arrays were all his specialties!

It appeared that the ancient rune array was the pivot of the captive camp. If that was the case, he might be able to rescue all the captives after he destroyed the rune array!

Steering Neltharion, Li Yao scanned every pattern on the hundred and eight bronze pillars before moving into the captive camp prudently.

All the captives, be they human beings or demons, were confined with silver shackles and manacles on their necks, wrists, and ankles. There was also the weight that they carried for their training. Every lock was embedded with shining crystals that were surrounded by sophisticated spiritual stripes.

Although the locks were modern magical equipment that were newly made, the spiritual stripes on them were in the distinctive characteristics of the ancient Cultivators and apparently belonged to the same system as those on the bronze pillars.

It seems that the locks must work with the hundred and eight bronze pillars. Judging from the pattern of the spiritual stripes, such devices can trigger super powerful electric arcs, but it’s hard to say whether or not that are other mysteries to them.

Li Yao was going to observe more carefully when a riot suddenly broke out at the front.

As it turned out, some of the captives on the demons’ side had trained themselves so hard that a few broken pieces of ice had splashed to the human beings’ side and hit the head of a captive precisely.

There was grudge between the two sides of captives in the first place. Now, the tiny fuse immediately triggered an overwhelming fire. All the captives jumped to their feet and glared at each other across the invisible boundary, cursing and calling each other’s name.

Very soon, a brawny individual dashed out of from each of the two sides!

What was odd was that, the leader who walked out of the federal soldiers had a green face and long tusks. His body was dark, and his arms were exceptionally long, dangling down by his ankles and growing black scales. He also had a bone tail that looked like a long hammer in his back.

He looked even more hideous than a yaksha [1] .

However, he was wearing a federal soldier’s hat on his head neatly. Although the hat had been riddled with holes, he had managed to patch it up and wash it clean.

At the center of the hat was a medal of the federal army. It was a red star surrounded by two silver dragons.

The guy who strode out of the demons’ side proudly, on the other side, turned out to be a handsome middle-aged man with a square face and broad eyes. Other than his chin that was slighting protruding and his canine teeth that bared out of his mouth, Li Yao could not see any features of demons on him at all.

Are those two guys on the wrong side of the boundary?

Li Yao scratched his head.

“Suo Chaolong!”

The ‘yaksha’ who walked out of the human captives and had a military hat on his head roared furiously, “What the f*ck is the meaning of this? You didn’t take enough of a beating last week, and you want me to blow out your newly grown molars again, right?”

“Han Tuhu, don’t make a fuss here. My guys only splashed a tiny bit of ice by accident when they were training. Your people were yelling and cursing first!”

The leader of the demon captives, who was the square-faced, middle-aged man, chuckled aloud. “You are crying for help when you were hit by nothing but a few scraps of ice. What a bunch of losers! No wonder you collapsed all the way from the Dark Desolate Domain to the Giant Blade Pass without even having the courage to fight back at all!”

“Hahahaha!”

Han Tuhu, who appeared to be a yaksha, laughed and spat on the ground brutally. His saliva was frozen quickly in the air and crashed into pieces when it hit the ground. “Collapsed without having the courage to fight back? Exactly. I wonder, who was it that threw all their belongings and fled all the way north from the Giant Blade Pass back to the Dark Desolate Domain when my ‘Flying Tigers Legion’ launched counterattack?”

Suo Chaolong, the leader of the demon captives, widened his eyes and bellowed, “It was the lowly black-blood demons and the chaotic-blood demons who fled! My ‘Blood Lion Battalion’ is exclusively made of the toughest bronze-blood soldiers and the noble silver-blood demons. We only made a strategical retreat because of the burden of the scumbags!

“After we reached the Dark Desolate Domain and were no longer burdened by the scumbags, did we not crush your ‘Flying Cats Legion’ as easy as pie?”

“Crush?”

Han Tuhu’s eyes, eyebrow, and nose scrunched together because of his fury. “You do know the arts of bragging well. You suffered as many losses as I did. In the end, we were fished up indiscriminately and brought to this freezing hell for the horrid experiments. Yesterday alone, yet another three of my brothers were killed. Three best brothers!”

“Pei!” Suo Chaolong spat on the ground, equally noisily. “It was only because the ‘Flying Cats Legion’ was biting us too hard and trying to perish together with us at any moment. That was too f*cking stupid! Two of my subordinates were killed yesterday, too. The day before that, four!”

Han Tuhu sneered. “You are merely answering for your own folly. When you invaded the Heaven’s Origin Sector, a ‘noble silver-blood demon’ such as yourself did not see this coming at all, did you?”

Brutality beamed out of Suo Chaolong’s eyes. “For the last time, it was not an invasion; it was a comeback! Our ancestors lived in the Grand Desolate Plateau a thousand years ago. We are the rightful owners of the Grand Desolate Plateau!

“Even to this day, the relics of the demon cities left by our ancestors can still be found on the Grand Desolate Plateau. Do you dare deny it?

“It was the cunning, sordid, greedy army of the Star Glory Federation that invaded the Grand Desolate Plateau! You destroyed our home and annihilated the vast majority of our ancestors. Only the most fortunate one percent were able to flee to the Blood Demon Sector through wormholes!

“If you are talking about an invasion, the federal citizens such as you are the really invaders! We are merely taking back our ancestral home a thousand years ago!”

“Your ancestors lived in the Grand Desolate Plateau a thousand years ago,” Han Tulu declared loudly, “but the ancestors of human being owned the entire sea of stars forty thousand years ago! The traces of activity of human beings left forty thousand years ago can still be found on the Grand Desolate Plateau! There are countless exhumed relics that can prove that. How are you going to justify yourself?”

Suo Chaolong laughed coldly. “Alright, let’s leave the history aside. In the past ten years, the crystal warships of the Star Glory Federation have been getting into the water like dumplings. Your productivity of crystal suits is even higher than a rabbit’s fertility. Your military budget has been increased by thirty to fifty percent every year. Do not even tell me that you are actually peace-lovers, merely trying defend your own home, and you never planned to invade the Blood Demon Sector!”

Suo Chaolong pointed at the medal at the center of Han Tuhu’s hat. “The one you’ve got is the ‘Level 2 Red Star Medal’ of the federal army, right? According to the ‘Military Credit Act’ of the federal government, those who receive a ‘Level 2 Red Star Medal’ will be given twenty acres of Level 5 land in the Blood Demon Sector.

“Hehe. The ‘Military Credit Act’ was passed a hundred years ago. Right now, it has gone through dozens of amendments. Almost every blade of grass and tree of the Blood Demon Sector has been divided!

“I know for a fact that a lot of Cultivation sects of the Star Glory Federation are purchasing the ‘future land’ on a large scale from the veterans who have enough military credit. There are even land futures and shares that are tradable on the market.

“If I may ask, how are you going to get your twenty acres of land if you do not invade the Blood Demon Sector? If it is nothing but an honor, do those Cultivation sects have nothing better to do than purchasing the ungrounded ‘exploitation rights of future land’?

“Therefore, just admit it. You want to swallow us as much as we want to swallow you. It’s just that the Blood Demon Sector took action first. Survival of the fittest is the law of the universe. Do not think that human beings are more righteous and lenient than demons!”

Blushing, Han Tuhu gnashed his teeth. “Do not compare the great civilization of mankind to the atrocious civilization of demons!”

Suo Chaolong was amused. He pointed his canine teeth and said, “After I was tortured dozens of times by the scumbags, I still managed to keep some of the features of the demons. As for you, are you even similar to a human being? Just look at your pathetic portrait in your pee! You are shameless enough to say ‘great civilization of mankind’?

“Hey, Han Tuhu. I’ve been meaning to ask you a question for a long time.

“Do you really think you are even a human being?”

Chapter 935 - Fisticuffs!

His words were obviously the last thing that Han Tuhu wanted to hear. Every red hair of the muscular man who looked like a yaksha was jumping crazily like flames, and the veins on his temples bulged out like a tightened longbow. He turned into a black hurricane and lunged toward Suo Chaolong!

BOOM!

The two muscular guys collided brutally like two titans.

Although they did not have magical equipment or weapons, their strength was unbelievably high. Every one of their attacks broke the sonic barrier and raised an overwhelming snowstorm!

Now that the two leaders were fighting hard, naturally, their subordinates behind them would rather not idle by. They all cracked their knuckles and came at each other.

What confused Li Yao most was that many soldiers of the federal arm were showing the distinctive features of demons along with inhuman roars.

Meanwhile, many demons were surrounded by vague spiritual energy when their blood was boiling, and their muscles were bulging out.

This is... rather chaotic.

Li Yao did not even know how he should comment on the battle between the two teams of captives.

Those captives were truly strong. Judging in the standard of the Cultivators, even the weakest of them were in the high level of the Refinement Stage, and most of them were in and above the Building Foundation Stage. As for the two leaders, namely Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong, they were even in the Core Formation Stage!

They're almost another Nether World Watch!

Li Yao pondered for a moment and basically sorted through the origins of the captives.

The 'Flying Tigers Legion', commanded by Han Tuhu, and the 'Blood Lion Battalion', commanded by Suo Chaolong, were certainly the elite troops of the two parties in the war.

At the end of the Battle of Dawn, the coalition army of the demon race that marched into the Heaven's Origin Sector collapsed. The Blood Lion Battalion was probably in charge of covering the retreat, and the Flying Tigers Legion was leading the charge and attacking them all the time. Both of them suffered heavy casualties in the Dark Desolate Domain.

But they did not know that the 'Battle of Dawn' was merely Elder Nether Spring's scheme to get more test subjects.

The Blood Lion Battalion and the Flying Tigers Legion, both of which heavily wounded, naturally became the best prey and were fished up by Elder Nether Spring. Eventually, they were secretly shipped to this place.

Here, they had all gone through the harshest of experiments. Most of the soldiers had been killed. The lucky survivors who gritted their teeth through the multiple modifications were certainly the strongest of them.

Because of the enhancement of the weird strengthening drugs and techniques, their capability had soared exponentially. That was why such tough captives existed!

In the snow world, the captives, despite their lack of weapons, were fighting hard as if they were in crystal suits and biochemical beasts. Li Yao was shocked and curious.

The captives are too strong to be trapped by the triple defenses of the frost thorns, the high-voltage electric web, and the demonic plants. There are bound to be more restraints!

Odd. Why is the Nether World Watch not stopping the fight between the captives? There are guards everywhere on the towers around.

Right. They must be testing the battle data of the captives in a natural environment.

The captives belong to two different groups that are at loggerheads. If they are in conflict, preferably with some of them killed, it will be easier for the management of the Nether World Watch.

Classifying the captives into different groups that were hostile to each other and placing them together was an old trick in the prison to balance the prisoners in the internal strife. The pressure on the guards would be significantly reduced.

After a five-minute-long fierce battle, there was blood everywhere on the snowy land. Finally, the guards of the Nether World Watch in the towers blew their whistles lazily. Circles of electric arcs swirled fast along the spiritual stripes and spiraled from the bottom of the hundred and eight bronze pillars. When they reached the top of the pillars, they spurted out quickly and hit the locks on the necks, wrists, and ankles of the captives precisely!

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

The locks turned out to boast the ability of enhancing the power of the electric arcs. The electric arcs that were shot at them instantly split off into thousands more and covered all the captives like an overwhelming electric web!

With the boost of the hundred and eight bronze pillars, the electric arcs were being generated unceasingly at a higher and higher voltage. The uncanny attraction force grabbed all the captives.

The captives who were relatively weaker were already foaming because of the electric shot.

The leaders of captives that were mauling each other felt goosebumps all over their bodies, too.

Stimulated by the super high-voltage electric arcs, they were not able to launch any effective attacks at all and simply punched each other like mobs on the street.

In the end, they both collapsed and cramped while they were punching each other.

The ground of the northeast corner of the captive camp sank down slightly and split apart, revealing a pathway leading underground.

A lot of soldiers of the Nether World Watch in heavy armor walked onto the field to clean up the mess. The captives had all been electrified into cramping shrimps on the ground and put up no resistance at all.

Li Yao took the opportunity to fly Neltharion underground.

He had basically grasped the functioning mechanism of the ancient rune array. To trigger such intense electric arcs, a great number of crystals of the lightning class must have been stored somewhere below the ground as the core of the array.

He would need to find the core and sabotage it!

…

Half a day later, Neltharion returned exactly the same way as it left. After a series of soul-stirring infiltration operations, it was finally back to the interrogation chamber where the Fire Ant King was being held.

The Fire Ant King’s body was expanding like a sea cucumber that had been soaked for too long. The ‘Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle’ had been deeply embedded into his skin, which was now almost transparent.

He was in quite low spirits, like a towel that had been completely dried.

‘Mad Medic’ Lu Wuxin was not here, which was quite a relief for Li Yao.

“Are you alright?” Li Yao reestablished the communication with the Fire Ant King.

“For now,” the Fire Ant King wrote rather lethargically. “But I may be not in three days. Lu Wuxin is ten times more skilled than eight years ago. He can directly stimulate my braincells and search my soul. Within three days, I’m going to confess everything that I know, including the existence of you!

“So, cut the useless stuff and get straight to the point. What have you found?”

“I have found out why Elder Nether Spring did not reach out to you for a frank cooperation in the beginning. It is because he never meant to create ‘a third life form’,” Li Yao replied quickly. “What he has been trying to create is just a bunch of loyal slaves. Also, the death rate of the scary modification is shockingly high. It is above 95%, for both human beings and demons.”

Li Yao told the Fire Ant King everything that he had seen in the ‘Demon God Virus Research Center’ honestly.

The Fire Ant King listened attentively and gave no reply.

However, Li Yao sensed that his somewhat devastated eyes were focused again.

“What’s your plan?” The strokes of the Fire Ant King were tough again.

“At the north part of the island is a large camp of captives. Thousands of captives, including the soldiers of the Blade of Chaos, are locked inside. Altogether, there are nine layers of barriers above and below the ground. However, I may be able to find a way to crack the most important one!”

Li Yao pondered while he said, “To achieve our purpose, the captives will be the key. It will be more convenient for me to rescue you if the captives are freed first and distract the Nether World Watch’s attention. Then, we will be able to find the mainframe crystal processor and the biochemical brain of the place and figure out Elder Nether Spring’s entire plan!

“However, there are also almost a thousand federal soldiers among the captives. They are all my compatriots, and I have to get them out. It is unnegotiable.”

“Continue,” the Fire Ant King said.

“The crucial part of our escape plan is the vehicle,” Li Yao said. “To get out of the place, we will have to drive a devilish warship. But neither me nor the federal soldiers know the first thing about how to pilot a devilish warship.”

“It is not going to be a problem,” the Fire Ant King said. “Many of my subordinates know how to pilot a devilish warship. If there is no other choice, I can try my best to steer one, too.”

“That’s good.” Li Yao nodded and said, “There’s also one other problem. The thousand federal soldiers are too eye-catching in the Blood Demon Sector. They will need a place where they can hide before they find a way back to the Heaven’s Origin Sector.”

“Void Turmoil City at present is certainly in turmoil,” the Fire Ant King said. “There is no way that we can return to that place. However, the Blade of Chaos has another few secret hideouts. We can stay in one of them and lay low for a while.”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes. “Should I trust you?”

“If you have been speaking the truth, you should,” the Fire Ant King said. “Like you, I do not want my compatriots to become walking dead or slaves that are at somebody else’s mercy.

“Besides, you do not have a second choice other than to believe in me, just like I do not have a second choice other than to believe in the human expert that jumped out of nowhere, you!

“If you are with Elder Nether Spring and your appearance was but an excellent play that he drafted for the purpose to breaking into the secret hideouts of the Blade of Chaos, I have no choice but to step into the trap now!”

Li Yao laughed. The Fire Ant King did have a point.

“Alright. I have basically grasped the structure of the captive camp and the underground facilities. I will need one day to prepare the magical equipment and the weapons we need.” Li Yao told him his whole plan. “In one day, I will fly the fully-armed Neltharion into the depths of the captive camp to sabotage the pivot of the barriers and free all the captives.

“The riot of the captives will certain distract the attention of most of the soldiers of the Nether World Watch. Later, I will crawl out of where I am hiding right now and rescue you. Following which, we look for the core secrets saved in the mainframe crystal processor or the biochemical brain. I will deal with the crystal processor, and you, the biochemical brain. Any questions?”

“No.”

“Eventually, we will steal a devilish warship and blow up the remaining ones before we take off with all the captives. The critical problem is, how much of your capability can be restored?”

The Fire Ant King sniffed and said, “If I activate all the strengthening drugs inside my body, my combat ability can be restored to near the demon emperor stage. However, there will be nothing I can do if the ‘Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle’ on my body is not cracked.”

“A combat ability near the demon emperor stage is good enough. As for the ‘Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting

Shackle', we will have to try our luck. Please check your watch and activate all your strengthening drugs inside your body on time, Fire Ant King!" Li Yao cracked his knuckles. "Starting from now, in 23 hours, 59 minutes, and 58 seconds, we are going to make it big!"

Chapter 936 - Bombs, More Bombs!

An hour later, Neltharion returned to the warehouse of biochemical beasts, which was on the minus twenty-sixth floor of the ‘Nether World’.

At this moment, Li Yao finally had the chance to crawl out of the super corrosive stomach of the lightning boa.

He did not forget to leave several ‘souvenirs’ in the throat of the lightning boa.

If the lightning boa was used by the Nether World Watch in a battle in the future, the outcome would certainly be very ‘touching’.

Neltharion hovered above the warehouse of biochemical beasts and located nine surveillance biochemical eyes in total. After calculating all their angles, Li Yao held his breath for half a minute before moving the button on the cover inch by inch with his magnetic magical equipment and Neltharion. Finally, he was out of the beast.

Like a ghost, before the biochemical eye turned toward him, he dashed out of the biochemical beast container and hid in the narrow gap between two containers, breathing in silence.

He had constricted his bones and muscles, making himself no larger than a cat, in order to leave enough space for his arm. His fingers were vibrating at a high frequency of more than five thousand times per second. Very soon, the scent of something being burnt could vaguely be smelled.

It was the scent of his skin being slightly roasted due to the high-frequency rubbing against the hair.

It was Li Yao’s warm-up.

The warm-up is done. Now start the preparations!

Li Yao blinked. Golden colors were flash quickly in the depths of his eyes.

Now that he was in the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage, he could project whatever was his mind to his retinas. He could ‘see’ hundreds of light beams before him.

On the illusionary light beams, the map of the island above and below the ground, the forty-seven hypothetical structures of the ‘Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle’, and the inventory of the three hundred items that he was planning to modify and assemble were all displayed clearly and orderly.

All the images were jumping and changing quickly on his retinas. Li Yao divided his computational ability into computation, analysis, and combination simultaneously.

One third of his computational ability was integrating the 3D map of the ‘Nether World’ and simulating all the scenarios that he could possibly run into in the operation tomorrow by means of war-games.

Li Yao assumed that the standard force of the enemy was ‘five thousand soldiers of the Nether World Watch and three experts in the demon emperor stage—Lu Wuxin, Despot and

Swirl’. Then, he improved the difficulty of the game by thirty percent on such a basis while he calculated his plan and countermeasures under various circumstances.

One third of his computational ability was trying to recall the refining style of ‘Solar Eclipse’ Jiang Shaoyang and the traditional style of the Refining Department of Deep Sea University.

Although Jiang Shaoyang had made remarkable progress compared to the past, the habits and techniques that he had developed since childhood were too deeply rooted to be wiped out, even if they could be covered temporarily.

Li Yao was now an expert in the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage and a master of refining. But some of his habits still showed traces of the magical equipment graveyard where he learned the arts of refining in the beginning.

What Li Yao was going to do was look for the familiar style that Jiang Shaoyang covered up before he found a way to counterattack!

I have always felt that Jiang Shaoyang’s refining style is quite similar to mine.

Then, if I was going to craft a piece of magical equipment that was meant to confine the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the demon emperors, what would I do?

Brand new structural designs were popping up inside Li Yao’s brain. The bright golden lines seemed to be alive and were extending to infinity, cleaving, curling, connecting, and colliding.

The last third of his computational ability was dedicated to the micro adjustments on Neltharion with his hands.

Neltharion was a training starship from the era of the Star Ocean Imperium with the purpose of raising captains of a warship.

Theoretically speaking, Neltharion could do whatever tactical movements a real multipurpose exploration starship could, even including a barrage of the main guns!

However, since Neltharion was too small, the crystals and ‘ammunition’ that it could carry were quite limited. The ‘main guns’ of the model did not boast much damage. One barrage was no better than a normal attack of a Cultivator in the Refinement Stage.

It was better to significantly enhance the power rune arrays of Neltharion and steer it at high-speed speeds in order to pierce through the enemy like a flying sword.

Therefore, back when Li Yao was still in the Flying Star Sector, he had already performed a full modification on Neltharion.

Like with Sparkle, the unhelpful main guns of the model were removed, replaced by a tiny drill of mystic rays. The stealth and scouting abilities of Neltharion had been improved, too.

Since the drill of mystic rays could dig through the toughest mother lodes, it was certainly able to pierce through the head or chest of an enemy!

What Li Yao was trying to do now was modify a secondary cannon below the body of Neltharion into a ‘pen of mystic rays’ that could continuously shoot mystic rays of a low energy level.

By controlling it remotely, Li Yao would be able to manipulate Neltharion to carve rune arrays from a long distance.

Other than that, ten mini, oriented crystal bombs that were made of marrow crystals were held on the body of Neltharion, which was no larger than a finger. The bombs might not have been powerful enough, but if they were installed at critical locations, they would significantly interfere with the normal functions of a large magical equipment system.

Those were all the weapons on Neltharion.

Shua!

Eleven minutes and nine seconds later, Li Yao finished considering. His hands picked up almost a hundred components as quick as a storm and started assembling them.

His hands did not stop until more than twenty hours later.

When he made up his mind to have an adventure in the Blood Demon Sector by himself in the beginning, he had stuffed all kinds of magical equipment and crystals into his ten Cosmos Rings. He did not expect that they would come in handy in such a place.

He spent three hours modifying Neltharion and five hours making the tools to crack the ‘Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle’.

In the remaining time, other than building the necessary ancillary magical equipment, he was fully dedicated to assembling and modifying the crystal bombs and almost used up all of the materials inside his ten Cosmos Rings.

I really can't wait any longer!

After he put the last crystal bomb back into the Cosmos Ring, Li Yao finally struggled to stretch out his arms for the first time in the past day and night. He opened a bottle of medication drugs with his teeth, took half the drugs orally, and sprayed half of them onto his hands, which were now bleeding profusely. Burning sounds were echoing nonstop.

Sensing the itching as the new flesh grew quickly, Li Yao felt his heart beating fast. His head seemed to be filled with crystal bombs, which were blowing up one after another.

When he thought of the countless soldiers of the Nether World Watch that were about to be blown into the sky, their internal organs blossoming like fireworks, Li Yao could not have felt more excited.

Li Yao slightly frowned. His telepathic thoughts entered deep into his brain, and he gazed at the mental devil. “You are trying to influence me without me knowing again, aren't you?”

The mental devil blinked innocently. “Should I stop?”

“Forget it.”

Li Yao licked his lips and wetted his throat that was about to be burnt with his saliva and blood. He let loose part of the restraints on his soul so that the strength of the mental devil could nurture the crimson left eye incessantly. “Today, you don't need to.”

…

One hour, twenty-three minutes, and fifty-seven seconds passed.

According to the calendar of the Blood Demon Sector, it was 10:32:33 a.m., March the seventh.

At this moment, Elder Nether Spring was exchanging a secret agreement with Jin Tuyi, the new commander-in-chief of the coalition army of the demon race, in a secret chamber of the headquarters of the Pantheon of Demons.

After they exchanged a drop of each other’s heart-tip blood and swore a Blood Oath, they both put on a mysterious, meaningful smile.

“With the full support of the Nether Spring Kingdom and the Kingdom of Lion Butchers, the Red Tide Operation has got off to a good start. It won’t be long before the Heaven’s Origin Sector becomes ours!”

Jin Tuyi could not have sounded more excited.

“Yes. The Heaven’s Origin Sector is destined to be ours!”

Elder Nether Spring’s eyes passed Jin Tuyi’s shoulders and pierced through the thick eyes, staring at the future that was not far away.

At the same moment, deep inside the icy, stormy ocean a hundred thousand kilometers to their north, in the middle of the savaging gales and turbulence, from the south of an inconspicuous lone island buried in snow, Neltharion flew out of the underground world quietly again, heading toward the north.

The captive camp was exactly the same as the day before. The fierce battle yesterday did not leave many wounds on the muscular, monstrous captives. However, the two groups were even more clearly divided right now. Everybody was tormenting the hardest rocks with all their strength in silence. The air was so intense that it could have frozen at any moment.

Li Yao saw Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong, the two leaders of the captives, after only a quick look. The two of them were glaring at each other across the ‘boundary’ right in the middle like two roosters and cursing in the most profane language. Even the frigid wind was not enough to shut their mouths. They were also spitting noisily on the ground nonstop.

Li Yao had thought to reach out to Han Tuhu in advanced so that he could be prepared, but he eventually dismissed the idea after much deliberation.

He did not know Han Tuhu very well. However, judging from his reactions the other day, he was certainly a bit radical and fractious after being modified into such a horrific appearance through the harsh experiments. It would be terrible if he showed any openings when he was not in a good mood.

Li Yao had no doubt that countless pairs of eyes were gazing at the prisoners in places that he could not see.

But Suo Chaolong’s demon captives are in quite an awkward position for me.

If possible, Li Yao had hoped to bring away part of the demon captives, too. The reason was simple. Since Suo Chaolong was the commander of the ‘Blood Lion Squad’, an elite troop of the coalition army of the demon race, he was certainly a noble of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers. He was walking evidence to prove Elder Nether Spring’s scheme.

However, Suo Chaolong was apparently very hostile against human beings. As a silver-blood demon, he was not particularly fond of the black-blood demons and the chaotic-blood demons who also caused the crushing defeat of the ‘Battle of Dawn’. He was like an unpredictable time bomb. Li Yao was not sure what was on his mind at all.

I can only play it by ear now!

Steering Neltharion, Li Yao dived into the cold ocean.

The previous day, he had examined the internal structure of the captive camp. Since it was large enough for tens of thousands of captives and guards to live in, the ventilation and drainage facilities were necessary for them to survive in the underground environment.

Li Yao tried compromising the ventilation facilities, but the few tubes that he located were all guarded by highly-sensitive rune arrays. So, he had to make plans with the drainage facilities.

Chapter 937 - Do It!

The tens of thousands of captives that were locked inside the camp would certainly produce a huge amount of bodily waste on a daily basis, most of which was directly discharged to the icy ocean through a canal below the surface of the ocean.

Every drainage canal was more than half a meter in diameter and easy for an adult to crawl in. Therefore, Elder Nether Spring had deployed dense crystal wires on the exit of the drainage canals with defense rune arrays that could send powerful electric arcs and freezing coldness over to the web.

If Li Yao damaged the crystal wires, the guards above would certainly sense it.

The holes between the crystal wires were too small. Li Yao was not confident that he could sneak through them in Neltharion without alarming anyone.

However, it was not a problem for him.

He steered Neltharion deeper into the water, until he was seven hundred meters below the surface of the ocean. He waited patiently in a trench for a moment and discovered an eel that was more than half a foot long and almost transparent.

Such eyeless bright blue demon beasts whose heads and tails were barely distinguishable were known as ‘Ghost Head Ice Eels’. It was one of the few demon beasts that could live in the icy ocean of the North Pole.

Such a frigid place was not actually very suitable for their survival, but Li Yao estimated that the drainage and garbage that the ‘Nether World’ discharged had certain nutrition, which attracted the Ghost Head Ice Eels to swim here in no fear of the coldness and the turbulence.

Generally speaking, the Ghost Head Ice Eels liked to live between three hundred meters below the surface of an ocean and eight hundred meters, where there was no sunlight.

But when they were hungry, they would also risk moving up to a hundred meters below the surface of an ocean in search of food.

The exits of the drainage canals that contained a lot of garbage were certainly among their favorite places.

It was not unusual for the Ghost Head Ice Eels to crawl into the exits, only to touch the crystal wires by accident and be executed by the electric arcs and the frost.

During his investigation yesterday, Li Yao had found half a bone of a Ghost Head Ice Eel in one of the exits of the drainage canals. He had pondered carefully and finally figured out the reason.

Swoosh!

When the Ghost Head Ice Eel in front of him opened its mouth, devouring the underground sand before it and sucking the nutrition, Neltharion turned into a streak of brightness and stabbed into its mouth!

The Ghost Head Ice Eel jerked hard, but it had been slain by Neltharion instantly.

Neltharion crawled into the mouth of the Ghost Head Ice Eel and swam toward one of the drainage canals with the demon beast as the best camouflage.

When he drew close to the crystal wires, Li Yao did not dodge at all; he simply crashed into them as if there was nothing in front of him!

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

Deep blue electric arcs immediately burst out of the crystal wires, shocking the Ghost Head Ice Eel, whose transparent appearance was now dead gray, and turning it rigid.

But Neltharion had taken the opportunity to crawl out of the Ghost Head Ice Eel’s mouth and pass through the crystal wires successfully!

According to my analysis, the great array made of a hundred and eight bronze pillars should be a variation of ‘Devil Taming Thunderous Array’. If that is the case, the circuit of the spiritual energy of the array should be a reversed heptagon.

The ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago did not know spiritual stripes as thoroughly as modern people do. When they established such a great array, they must’ve left a few very thick tubes so that the immense spiritual energy could flow inside without being hindered.

So, the place that I’m going to need… is here!

A shining 3D structure of a rune array popped up inside Li Yao’s head. Piloting Neltharion, he zigzagged inside the drainage canal, taking various turns, before he finally stopped in a seemingly unattractive corner.

If his calculations were correct, this was the closest point to the pivot of the barriers in straight line!

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

The mini drill of mystic rays was immediately activated as it dug into the cold rocks deeply.

Li Yao absolutely trusted his calculations and drilled forward in the darkness very patiently. Twenty-seven minutes later, the pressure on the drill of mystic rays suddenly reduced, and a long, narrow tube appeared in front of him, in which highly-compressed spiritual energy of the lightning class was running.

I’ve made it!

This is indeed the circulation tube of spiritual energy for the great array!

Li Yao could not have been more excited. He activated the anti-thunderstorm spiritual shield on Neltharion and went against the current inside the circulation tube.

After he dodged quite a few electric arcs, a few neatly distributed holes showed up in front of him. Neltharion leapt out agilely through one of them.

He found himself in a vast underground space. A magnificent array was carved on the ground, which seemed to have confined thousands of bundles of lightnings in the place.

Above the great array, a hundred and eight bronze plates were floating in midair. Dense rune arrays could be found on them, too.

The bronze plates were connected to each other via electric arcs. There were so many complicated electric arcs that dozens of spider webs seemed to be overlapping. One could not help but feel dizzy when one observed them.

But Li Yao could not have enjoyed himself more.

It is indeed a certain variation of the ‘Devil Taming Thunderous Array’. It has gone through micro adjustments and enhancement based on the freezing air and the disordered magnetic field of the North Pole, which makes it even more powerful than the original version!

The person who first established the great array was too extravagant. He has used a hundred and eight pieces of ‘Burning Star Purple Bronze’ as the cores of the array. Well, well, well. I went through quite a lot of trouble to find just one small piece of Burning Star Purple Bronze in order to improve the electroconductivity of my saber!

However—

The great array seems to have been further modified?

Right. It must’ve been done by Elder Nether Spring. The hundreds of rune arrays employed in the Devil Taming Thunderous Array have been lost since a long time ago. Normal people would not be able to understand them, much less make use of them.

Therefore, with the technology of the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector, Elder Nether Spring performed ‘modernization’ on the Devil Taming Thunderous Array.

This is quite… a mess and a great waste of the treasure!

Li Yao sniffed and did not think highly of Elder Nether Spring’s modifications.

I’ll show you what the job should be done!

Li Yao knew that a lot of furious spiritual energy of the lightning class would leak out in the pivot of the Devil Taming Thunderous Array and congregate into flashing electric arcs. Not only was the environment unsuitable for living creatures, even the surveillance devices, such as crystal cameras or the biochemical eyes, would be jammed or destroyed easily within half a day after they were installed.

Therefore, he was bold enough to accelerate Neltharion while he scanned every detail of the great array.

The great array is made of thousands of minor rune arrays, but its core holds the few critical rune arrays that will affect the whole immediately when they are modified.

What I am going to do is slightly change the flow of spiritual energy inside the few rune arrays and put them into conflict so that the spiritual energy will overload and destroy the ‘Devil Taming Thunderous Array’!

Neltharion was like a sleazy rat spreading a fatal plague. With Li Yao’s crazy calculation, the mini bombs made of marrow crystals were deployed in the critical parts of the great array.

After he planted five bombs, he also came up with a modification plan in his mind.

The ‘pen of mystic rays’ shot out an ivory ray of light that jumped agilely on the core runes of the great array. Li Yao wrote quite fast. Very soon, a hundred spiritual stripes the width of a hair were added to the great array, constituting circuits of spiritual energy that were full of evilness.

Chi! Chi!

The lightnings were hitting Neltharion’s spiritual shield nonstop.

Work complete!

Li Yao blew a whistle softly and returned the same way he had come.

With a telepathic thought, the bombs of marrow crystals would be triggered, and the Devil Taming Thunderous Array would likely be paralyzed!

However, it would be better if he took action when the great array was fully functioning, in which case the odds of success would be much higher.

Li Yao figured that it was time for him to greet Han Tuhu now.

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

When Neltharion returned to the drainage canal, however, Li Yao heard hasty buzzes deep inside the captive camp. Something serious seemed to be happening.

Are you kidding me?

After Neltharion crept out of the icy ocean and flew to the sky again, Li Yao was truly dumbfounded by what he saw.

The human and demon captives were fighting again.

This time, the battle was even more fierce than yesterday. The two parties were like sworn enemies. They were all mangling each other hard, scratching with their claws and biting with their teeth. Some of them were stabbing their enemy’s eyes, while their enemy was kicking their groin. It was hard to tell which of them were humans and which ones were demons!

This is not good!

Li Yao was more than anxious. Judging from the fierce battle between the two groups of captives, they would not attack the guards even if he destroyed the Devil Taming Thunderous Array!

Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong, the two leaders, were fighting with all their fury now. Their every attack would cause a minor earthquake inside the captive camp. Footprints that looked like craters covered the ground because of their sprinting!

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

The hundred and eight bronze towers released immense electric arcs one more time.

Ten seconds later, all the captives except Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong were lying on the ground, cramping like shrimps.

When the remaining electric arcs focused on the two leaders for three seconds, they also ended up foaming and bulging out their eyes. They, too, fell to the ground as if they were having a seizure.

Li Yao was practically weeping.

His plan could not be postponed. The hole that he had dug in the drainage canal would be discovered before long, and the Fire Ant King was definitely not able to endure ‘Mad

Medic' Lu Wuxin's torment on his braincells, which had nothing to do with his willpower.

Everything would be screwed if he waited until tomorrow!

What could he do now?

Li Yao regretted that he had not contacted Han Tuhu earlier and asked him to be patient.

Dozens of soldiers of the Nether World Watch appeared again, dragging the paralyzed captives back underground. Such fights seemed to take place every few days, and the guards were already familiar with the job.

Right then, a shocking change broke out!

When a few soldiers of the Nether World Watch walked to Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong, the two leaders, who should have been concussed because of their previous fight and also suffering from electric shock, jumped to their feet simultaneously.

"Do it!" the two of them bellowed at the same time while they accelerated to their maximum speed, which was three times higher than previously!

They had been concealing their capability!

After multiple rounds of genetic modifications, they had a higher capability than that of the normal soldiers of the Nether World Watch. The soldiers had also been under the illusion that they were mortal enemies and thought that they were heavily wounded. Caught unprepared, the soldiers were hit precisely!

Chapter 938 - Rats in the Cage

Chi!

One of the soldiers of the Nether World Watch was going to drag Suo Chaolong’s legs, only to be strangled when the captive turned around abruptly.

The soldier was struggling hard, but Han Tuhu moved behind him quietly and stabbed the sharp claw into the back of his head.

The claw, stained with blood, pierced out of the soldier’s mouth. He was killed instantly despite the enhancement of the demon cores on his body!

Suo Chaolong and Han Tuhu looked at each other but did not say anything. Their hands moved fast and took off the armor and the weapons on the soldier within a breath!

Their capability was higher than that of the Nether World Watch in the first place. With the help of the weapons, they were even more daunting as they lunged to the flanks with a roar.

“Control the gate. Do not let the gate be closed!”

Most of the other captives also jumped to their feet, roaring wildly with brutality beaming out of their eyes. Both the federal soldiers and the demons were tensing their muscles and veins. The most ferocious waves of spiritual energy spurted out of their bodies while they lunged toward the soldiers of the Nether World Watch, who were utterly dumbfounded.

The captives had all gone through extraordinary mutations after dozens of insane experiments. They had also seen their closest comrades being killed in the pain and suffering every day and knew that they would inevitably come to such an ending one day.

They had all considered themselves to be dead people and, therefore, were fighting in the most desperate and fearless way. If they could not escape, they might as well get a clean death!

The soldiers of the Nether World Watch were terribly outnumbered. After slaying a few captives, they were soon swallowed and torn apart by the crowd, their weapons stolen!

In the meantime, shocking changes seemed to be happening deep inside the captive camp below the ground, where roars, as if some ferocious beasts had just been let loose, were echoing.

In a moment, a black tide surged out of the underground!

More captives!

The federal soldiers were mixed with the demon captives. There were also soldiers of the Blade of Chaos who had just been captured. They had different appearances, different bloodlines, and strength of different attributes, but they shared the same purpose.

Get out of the place, or die valiantly in battle!

For a moment, the alarms were all ringing. Ominous lights were flashing in the sky of the captive camp. The frost thorns were growing and waving the twigs crazily.

In the corners, a few inconspicuous teleportation arrays gradually revealed themselves, shipping a large batch of fully-armed soldiers of the Nether World Watch to the area!

Those soldiers were similar to the one whom Li Yao had observed in the ‘weapon test field’. They were all wearing strengthening necklaces that had stored drugs of multiple colors. The blades and weapons they carried were combinations of magical equipment and demonic artifacts, half of which was metal and half was flesh and blood!

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

The hundred and eight bronze pillars released powerful electric arcs and weaved a deep blue web again, locking every captive that was wearing the conductive shackles!

However, the captives who had completely ripped off their disguises did not fall to the ground as they used to. The electric arcs did not work on them at all.

Some of the captives were even devouring the electric arcs in great satisfaction, as if they could transform the electric arcs directly into spiritual energy!

BOOM!

The furious torrent crashed into the newly-arrived soldiers of the Nether World Watch heavily!

Most of the captives were unarmed, but they held the absolute advantage in numbers, with three to four captives attacking one soldier of the Nether World Watch. Teeth, claws, tails, horns—the inhuman modifications had endowed them with natural weapons all over their body!

Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong, the two leaders, were cooperating so neatly, one on the left and the other on the right, that they seemed to be comrades who had fought side by side for decades. They made the arrowhead of the torrent.

Even the elites of the Nether World Watch were no match for the captives.

Li Yao felt that his blood was boiling while he watched.

There was hope again!

He activated the mini marrow crystal bombs without any hesitation!

…

At the south of the lone island, the control center of the Nether World was displaying the picture of the great prison break precisely from almost a hundred different angles, thanks to the most state-of-the-art magical equipment and demonic artifacts of both the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Crystal processors were mixed with biochemical brains, and the light beams were working together with the neural electricity imaging system triggered by the biochemical brains.

Lu Wuxin, Despot, and Swirl, the three commanders of the Nether World Watch, were watching the live stream rather casually.

“Master Lu, you are indeed a prophet. Those guys were truly hiding their strength,” Swirl said with a smile.

“Of course.”

Lu Wuxin half lay on the seat comfortably, placing his legs on the desk, while he declared gloatingly, “I am absolutely confident in my modifications. If those guys could survive dozens of modifications of mine, how could they be as weak as they previously demonstrated?

“However, they were all too dishonest. No matter how we tested them, they would not try their best. Even if they did, the ‘potential’ deep inside their bodies could never be tested by us.

“Therefore, we might as well loosen the management on purpose and give them a few fake messages, fooling them into thinking that they had a chance for an unprecedented prison break. Look. How spectacular, how brave, and how brutal. All their potential is being triggered. Haha. Hahahaha!”

Despot stared at the light beam and said coldly, “I didn’t know that even the high-voltage electric arcs would not be able to put them down!”

“Those who are adapted to the environment survive. Those who don’t, die.” Lu Wuxin licked his lips and chortled. “The death rate in the captive camp is very high. The guys you are seeing right now are the survivors of tens of thousands of captives. The weak ones who could not resist the high-voltage electric arcs were exterminated a long time ago. The survivors are the strongest of them!

“After my modifications, their cells have become highly adaptive. Maybe in the beginning, they really could not resist the high-voltage electric arcs, but after an electric shock every few days, the endurance of their cells has been gradually enhanced.

“It is safe to say that the electric shock was also a form of training. A very special one!”

Despot sniffed and said, “That explains a lot. No wonder Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong have been restless enough to raise a riot every other day. Turns out they were training their anti-electricity abilities!”

“There’s more than that. I’m afraid that they were also communicating with each other and discussing their prison break while they were fighting. In the meantime, they could also learn each other’s combat pattern so that their cooperation would be more flawless in the real operation,” Swirl said in a smile.

“I anticipated that there would be a prison break. I also anticipated that the captives would be fearless of the electric shock. But I did not see it coming at all that Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong, the two dangerous figures, would let go of their grudge and conspire with each other!”

With craziness shining inside his eyes, Lu Wuxin mumbled, “Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong are two of my most immaculate masterpieces!

“Han Tuhu was born in a military family of the Star Glory Federation. His ancestors have been serving the army for five hundred years. Finally, when it came to his generation, he was appointed as the commander of ‘Flying Tigers Legion’, the best rapid response troop of the Heaven’s Origin Sector. He was one of the best soldiers of the Star Glory Federation!

“Suo Chaolong, on the other hand, was a noble of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers. His Blood Lion Battalion gained its fame through mountains of corpses and oceans of blood.

They were the representatives of the best warriors of the Blood Demon Sector!

“The two of them are certainly not the muscly, brainless boors. My previous modifications have significantly developed their brains, too. Their wisdom right now is significantly higher than during the ‘Battle of Dawn’. Naturally, they made the best choice according to the environment and the conditions!

“It is safe to say that they are the perfect, ultimate warriors in my mind!”

Lu Wuxin rubbed his hands earnestly.

“Excellent. Excellent. If the soldiers that we manufacture in the end all boast combat ability, awareness, and wisdom as good as theirs, who will ever be a match for us?”

“Indeed. Even the Nether World Watch seems to be no match for them,” said Despot jealously.

Lu Wuxin smiled and said slowly, “There’s no need to be impatient. As I said earlier, the big riot is the final test of the specifications and the combat parameters of this batch of experiment subjects. The new weapons that we developed recently will also be tested to check if there are any flaws.

“After we have obtained detailed data and ensured the stability and safety, we will perform the same modifications on the Nether World Watch so that you will all grow into the strongest warriors!”

Despot gnashed his teeth. “I have always been the strongest!”

“Forget it. Why are you bothered by the rats in the cage?” Swirl flapped her wings softly, spraying hazy powder on Despot’s body.

Lu Wuxin turned around and asked a white-robed demon, “How is our data collection?”

“The parameters of the experiment subjects in a real-life combat have been fully collected. The comprehensive combat performance of every experiment subject has been improved by 77% on average compared to the regular tests. Moreover, we have discovered 155 new changes that we had not found before and 87 new techniques.”

The white-robed demon was wearing two biochemical chips. Endless data was jumping quickly on his retina.

“I think we are good. A lot of captives and soldiers of the Nether World Watch have been killed. They are all the most valuable assets of the Nether World and should not be wasted easily.” Lu Wuxin waved his tentacles and commanded, “Change the ‘Devil Taming Thunderous Array’ to the intense magnetic field mode and end the test!”

“Understood!”

The antennas on the forehead of the white-robed demon, which were responsible for the transmission of telepathic thoughts, shivered slightly. He typed quickly on the light beam. Then, it could be seen that, in the surveillance picture, the entangling electric arcs on the hundred and eight bronze pillars suddenly dimmed, as if they were about to vanish!

“What’s going on?”

Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong, who were fighting a bloody battle in the captive camp at the north of the lone island, had no idea at all that they had been trapped in a pathetic test since the very beginning.

They only felt that the electric arcs that were bombarding their bodies had suddenly weakened, which significantly reduced their pressure.

Seeing that the electric arcs on the bronze pillars were dimming, they were both overjoyed.

“The goddamn barrier has run out of spiritual energy!”

“Let’s go. Let’s go. Let’s get out of the place!”

Countless captives were shouting excitedly while they charged at the frost thorns unstoppably, their blood boiling.

However, in the next second—

Chapter 939 - Miracle

The electric arcs that entangled the hundred and eight bronze pillars turned from deep blue into pale white. They were shot toward the dense icy clouds in the sky of the captive camp, congregating into a ball of lightning that looked like a miniature sun.

It was not until the ball of lightning ripped apart the icy clouds that everybody discovered a hundred and eight pieces of silver, round magical equipment floating in the sky of the captive camp like brilliant stars.

As the ball of lightning transmitted the electric arcs toward the ‘stars’ continuously, the entire sky was brimming with glamorous runes.

An invisible magnetic field slowly fell and enshrouded the entire captive camp.

On the surface of the electromagnetic locks on the necks, wrists, and ankles of the captives, the spiritual stripes were shining splendidly again.

In the next second, the locks all turned into the most powerful magnets!

BAM!

BAM! BAM!

The locks on the wrists and ankles of the captives collided brutally. Restricted by the powerful magnetic field, they were like steel that had always been welded and could not be split apart at all!

The locks of several captives were even attracted to each other because the captives were too close, making them look like conjoined twins!

Right now, their hands and feet were tied up. They could not walk or punch, and they could only wriggle forward like caterpillars. How could they draw out their combat ability at all?

Even if some of them burnt their soul and bombarded their cells to exploit the craziest strength, managing to divide the electromagnetic locks on their body, they were still as slow and irresponsive as a snail because of the bondage of the powerful electromagnetic force. It was as if several muscular men were clutching their hands and feet. One moment of carelessness, and their hands and feet would be stuck again. Even the simplest tactical movement was now seriously difficult!

Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong, because of the confinement of the electromagnetic force, were panting like two oxen, as if they were fighting while carrying thousands of tons of weight on their back!

Shua! Shua! Shua!

A horde of soldiers of the Nether World Watched appeared in the teleportation arrays at the corner of the captive camp again. Wearing heavy armor, they pushed to the center like an iron city wall!

Under the tremendous pressure, the soldiers of the Blade of Chaos, who were at the rear of the battle formation and commanded by Yuchi Ba, the master of the Skeleton Island, were the first to collapse.

The soldiers of the Blade of Chaos were still new to the place. They were unfamiliar with the environment and unused to the frigid weather. Furthermore, they had received no modification or anti-electricity training. Just now, they had been on the brink of unconsciousness because of the electrification and only managed to keep fighting with their willpower.

Right now, their hands and feet were tied up by the electromagnetic force, and they could not split them apart. How could they fight any longer?

The soldiers of the Nether World Watch bashed them hard and knocked them into the crowd of the federal soldiers and the demon captives.

Very soon, everybody was faltering. It was a huge mess.

In a moment, other than Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong, all the captives were attached together by the electromagnetic force!

“Well—”

Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong did not expect that the barrier array still had such an effect. Their eyes bulged as they struggled to raise their fists in fury.

But with the interference of the electromagnetic locks, their speed and strength were only one tenth of before. In the blink of an eye, they were blown to the ground with the special forks of the Nether World Watch elites!

BAM! BAM!

The electromagnetic locks on Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong were stuck together, too, turning them into yet another pair of conjoined twins.

Their fall marked the end of the ‘magnificent’ prison break.

The only things left on the ground were dead bodies and the screaming captives who were crying for help.

Suo Chaolong and Han Tuhu were confined together, face to face. Suo Chaolong raised his head hard, and the air that he exhaled was frozen into crimson ice in midair. With a hideous face, he suddenly bellowed, “I said that the lowborn chaotic-blood demons were not reliable at all. Why did you have to bring them? If they hadn’t been such a nuisance, some of us would have had a good chance to get out instead of being kicked back like losers!”

“Shame. What a shame!” Han Tuhu roared, too. “Our operation was too huge. They would have discovered it anyway. How could we not bring them?”

Not far away, Yuchi Ba, the master of the Skeleton Island, was grimacing and shouting, too. “Suo Chaolong, you are rather condescending at this moment. Look at yourself. Do you think that you are still a lord in the Kingdom of Lion Butchers? Hehe. My soldiers have never received anti-electricity training, and we are not adapted to the frigid wind yet. It was a miracle that we persisted for so long!

“You said that we would have the chance to get out as long as we endured the bombardment of the electric arcs, didn’t you? You were merely fantasizing when you hadn’t figured out the most critical measure of the enemy yet. How hilarious!”

“Shut up!” Grasped by desperation, Suo Chaolong hissed, his eyes blood red. “Yuchi Ba, I didn’t know that you were one of the commanders of the Blade of Chaos. Are you not a noble silver-blood demon? Why did you disgrace yourself by messing with the humble chaotic-blood demons?”

Yuchi Ba sneered. “Idiots who have been brainwashed such as you will never understand my dream. It is exactly because of idiots like you that we ended up like this. Everything is doomed!”

“Bullsh*t!” Suo Chaolong snarled. “If the Blade of Chaos hadn’t been inciting the black-blood demons and the chaotic-blood demons in the frontline to mutiny, the ‘Battle of Dawn’ wouldn’t have suffered such a crushing failure. Chances are that we would have taken the Giant Blade Pass and marched into the central land of the Star Glory Federation. Everything would not be it is today!”

Han Tuhu cursed loudly. “In your f*cking dreams! The so-called ‘Battle of Dawn’ was only because we were retreating to bait you into chasing after us. The best legions of the federation that are fully equipped with crystal suits were never mobilized because they were waiting patiently to appear behind you and fish up all of you! If you hadn’t run so fast, we would’ve devoured every one of you! Taking down the Giant Blade Pass? Just wake up already, scumbag!”

“Asshole!”

“Hairless monkey!”

Now that their hope was gone, the captives in all the three groups were cursing each other aloud, letting out the depression and desperation in their hearts!

…

Inside the control center of the Nether World, Swirl was blinking her attractive eyes. “They are quarrelling again. Is this another act?”

“Unlikely.” Lu Wuxin extended one of his tentacles into his mouth and chewed it while he smiled. “They are sworn enemies in the first place. Just now, they were merely cooperating with each other while trying their best to hold back their disgust when there was a common purpose.

“Right now, their hope is shattered, and the purpose is no more. Knowing that they will have no more opportunities to get out, they naturally restored their original attitude and are venting the hatred that they have been suppressing for months. It is sort of a rebound.

“Hehe. They are the best illustration for the word ‘rabble’ right now.”

Swirl was deep in thought while she watched Han Tuhu, Suo Chaolong, and Yuchi Ba on the light beam. “No wonder Master Lu reserved the species characteristics of the experiment subjects and even enhanced their sense of belonging to their community. It was for the purpose of maintaining their hatred against each other.”

“Exactly. Hatred is the greatest and most delicate power in the world.”

Lu Wuxin waved his tentacles and said, “Even if… when the world is fully under our control one day, we must retain the concepts of ‘human beings’ and ‘demons’ and ask them to loathe each other.

“The more they hate each other and the more fiercely they fight, the more indestructible our reign will be. Haha. Hahahaha!”

Lu Wuxin burst into laughter.

Swirl and Despot looked at each other and smiled, too.

The control center was enveloped in a delightful vibe where everything was under control.

Right then, the white-robed demon who was responsible for the ‘Devil Taming Thunderous Array’ suddenly stopped typing and exclaimed in shock.

…

Deep inside the warehouse of biochemical beasts, Li Yao was so anxious that he almost bit his own tongue off.

Crap. I was too careless!

I did not expect that the ‘Devil Taming Thunderous Array’ would have a second mode. Right now, the flow of the spiritual energy has entirely changed!

But I already blew up a few nodes of spiritual energy and altered the design of the few most critical rune arrays!

If the ‘Devil Taming Thunderous Array’ were in the first mode, it would automatically stop functioning because of overloading. But what will happen in the new mode when the spiritual energy is overloading?

Li Yao had no idea, either.

There was nothing he could do but wait helplessly while scratching his hair.

…

In the north of the island, deep below the ground, in the pivot of the Devil Taming Thunderous Array, the explosions of the mini bombs of marrow crystals had already blocked a few very important circuits. Also, on the core rune arrays, the spiritual stripes that Li Yao had reversed were guiding a huge amount of spiritual energy of the lightning class in the wrong direction.

After a few circuits, part of the spiritual energy returned to the crystals that it was released from in the beginning!

It was an extremely dangerous, infinitely-looping circuit!

The incessant spiritual energy of the lightning class, after being triggered from the crystals and boosted by the Devil Taming Thunderous Array, had mostly been transmitted to the hundred and eight bronze pillars. But some of it took a turn back and bombarded the container of the crystals crazily!

The shell of the container, which was carved with defense stripes, was showing cracks one after another.

The electric arcs leaked into the cracks like fatal poison!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Thunder was roaring deep down the ground.

…

On the ground, the exhausted captives were still insulting each other.

Yuchi Ba panted hard while he gnashed his teeth. “God Chaos did not distinguish silver-blood demons from black-blood demons when he created the demon race. Why are you asking the low-level demons to be the cannon fodder for your ambition? Suo Chaolong, are you unwilling to admit your wrongdoing when death is knocking the door?”

“Ha! Ha! Ha!” Suo Chaolong hooted. “The bullsh*t Chaos is just a fiend that the cultists came up with to fool the illiterate, ignorant countryfolk. I did not know that a silver-demon such as you, Yuchi Ba, would believe it, too. But wait. I’m afraid that you do not believe it in your heart and are merely using the idolatry to achieve your own purpose, are you not?”

“You!” There was no telling where Yuchi Ba got his strength, but he struggled to crawl closer to Suo Chaolong. “You may insult me, but you must not insult God Chaos! God Chaos is the creator of all demons, and one day, he will save all demons again!”

Suo Chaolong was laughing so hard that his snot was spurting out, only to be frozen on his lips. He shrieked, “Since your God Chaos is to awesome, why does he not show up and rescue the loyal believers such as yourselves? I am a demon, too, and I happen to be in need of some help. Why don’t you ask for a miracle so that I can be saved?

“If your useless, imaginary god can give me a sign right now and get my brothers out of this wretched place, not only will I repent, I can even become one of his worship—”

Chapter 940 - Prison Break!

Before he was able to finish his sentence, Suo Chaolong had already bitten his tongue. The entire earth suddenly shook violently, as if a ferocious beast had hit the island from the bottom of it, forcing the island to jump upward more than ten meters before it fell down again!

In the moment, everybody experienced the loss of gravity. Some of them were even almost twenty centimeters from the ground.

BOOM! CRACK!

An earsplitting explosion burst out in the depths of the island. Despite the thick rocks, everybody felt like a crystal bomb had been detonated right beside their ears!

Huala! Huala! Huala!

Dozens of bronze pillars suddenly fell back into the ground. The soil around them collapsed on a large scale, too. Dazzling lightning flooded out of the burrow like a spring of magma. Very soon, the saplings of lightning grew into magnificent trees!

The collapses were expanding continuously. Eventually, dozens of collapses joined together and gave birth to a large hole almost a thousand meters in diameter. A corner of the camp was seriously damaged.

Within the range, all the frost thorns, high-voltage electric webs, bronze pillars, and demonic plants at the periphery vanished into thin air!

If one were to look down from one side of the hole, they would see the different floors of the underground captive camp that looked like a honeycomb. A lot of captives had been locked too deep below the ground to escape to the surface through the narrow entrance with their fellows in the beginning. But right now, they were all bathed in the freezing, blowing wind and looking at the gloomy sky, as dumbfounded as rigid penguins!

At the bottom of the giant hole, there should have been the pivot of the great array, a warehouse of crystals, and an area where a squad of the Nether World Watch and dozens of biochemical beasts were stationed, but the place had turned into a blackhole of death because of the furiously flowing electric arcs!

The capacity of a teleportation array was limited. The entire squad of the Nether World Watch had been gathered, prepared to be teleported to the surface together. But before they had the chance to scream, they had been ripped apart by a dragon made of billions of electric arcs and devoured without leaving a single bone!

Suo Chaolong, Han Tuhu, and Yuchi Ba looked at each other in bewilderment. Their lips trembled for a long time, and their throats seemed to have been stuffed with ice. They failed to come up with anything for a long time.

Pa! Pa! Pa!

Whatever remained of the bronze pillars on the ground was in a mess and had lost the ability to spurt out electric arcs anymore. The magical equipment to restrict their movement was falling from the sky like hail, one piece after another.

The locks of all the captives lost power. Their hands and their feet could be separated easily now!

Suo Chaolong and Han Tuhu turned to look at each other, only for their noses to touch. Both of them shuddered hard and hurried to push away each other.

Suo Chaolong stretched his limbs to warm up himself. His eyes turned from shock to confusion, from confusion to ecstasy, and from ecstasy to craziness!

“G—God Chaos has indeed given us a sign. It’s a miracle! God Chaos is here to save us!”

Yuchi Ba was so excited that tears were rolling inside his eyes, leaving shining icy pearls on his rough face.

Many avid believers of Chaos were even kneeling and worshipping the giant hole.

“Now is not a good time for a celebration!”

Suo Chaolong spat hard, his saliva piercing into the ground noisily. He bashed his chest, and the muscles on his arms and chest expanded as if they were balloons. He roared at the top of his voice, “All the barriers have lost effect. The road to the outside of the captive camp is open, too. But do not hurry to run away now. Let’s reinforce our brothers below the ground and look for the enemy’s arsenal along the way!

“The enemy in the battle formation will march from the south of the island very soon. We must find sufficient weapons and form a stable defense line before their arrival!

“As long as we defeat them, we will be able to get out of the place!”

“Brothers, let’s go!” Han Tuhu, the captain of the Flying Tigers Legion and a colonel of the federal army, roared!

“Brothers, let’s go!” Yuchi Ba, the Fifth Elder of the Blade of Chaos and the master of the Skeleton Island, roared!

“Brothers, let’s go!” Suo Chaolong, captain of the Blood Lion Battalion and a silver-blood demon, roared!

…

In the surveillance footage, the crowd that swallowed the entire captive camp like hungry army ants cast the control center of the Nether World into a weird silence.

Lu Wuxin, Despot, and Swirl were all wearing such a cold expression that somebody seemed to have stabbed icy pitons right into their skulls.

“What has happened?”

Furious magma seemed to be bursting out of every lump on Lu Wuxin’s face.

“It seems that—it seems that the Devil Taming Thunderous Array overloaded and detonated a lot of crystals that were only refilled yesterday. The huge underground explosion destroyed all the barriers!” the white-robed demon who was responsible for the Devil Taming Thunderous Array stammered, grasped by desperation as if he had fallen into a swamp.

Zi! Zi! Zi!

Inside the control center, the lights flashed, and streaks appeared on the light beams. Even the biochemical brains were cramping at a much higher frequency than usual. Some of the smaller biochemical brains even exploded on the spot!

Exclamations were echoing nonstop inside the communication channel. Many critical locations on the island were experiencing serious interference and instability of spiritual energy.

Lu Wuxin’s face was gloomier and gloomier. “Give me a summary of the losses!”

With a bitter face, the white-robed demon replied, “The Devil Taming Thunderous Array is not just the pivot of the barriers but also the source of power for almost half of the facilities in the Nether World because of the high-voltage electricity that it can trigger.

“The explosion not only blew up half of the captive camp, vaporizing a squad of the Nether World Watch, but also seriously affected a lot of our magical equipment and demonic artifacts because of the super high-intensity electromagnetic waves generated in the explosion. Both our communication and the surveillance picture are being jammed. Even if we switch to the backup energy source right now, it is estimated that… everything will only be restored in half an hour!”

Lu Wuxin rubbed his face hard with his tentacles and gnashed his teeth. “What a genius design. Putting the sources of power of most facilities in the same place, huh?”

“It can’t be helped. The Gloomy Wind Islands of the North Pole are too remote. It is very difficult to ship assets to this place. Also, because of the cold weather, every building needs heating, which is a great consumption on crystals, too.”

The white-robed demon argued, not very confidently, “Since the ‘Devil Taming Thunderous Array’ can generate tremendous electricity incessantly, there was no reason for us to waste such a precious energy source.”

Lu Wuxin glared at him. The tentacles all over his body were expanding and reddening like infuriated cobras. He seemed to be of a mind to strangle the white-robed demon at any moment.

However, he finally calmed himself down after he took a long, deep breath. He waved at Despot and Swirl. “Suppress the riot of the experiment subjects as soon as possible at whatever cost!”

“Including killing every one of them?” Asked Despot.

Lu Wuxin hesitated. “Many of them have gone through special modifications and are very important for our research. If possible, please capture them alive.”

Despot and Swirl exchanged a look. They both knew that such a command would be a terrible restriction for the Nether World Watch’s actions.

However, they also knew the importance of the experiment subjects to Elder Nether Spring’s plan. They both nodded and turned away, leaving.

“Wait!”

The moment before they left the room, Lu Wuxin suddenly shouted, with hideousness all over his face.

“I will bring the ‘things’ and go with you!”

…

In the underground of the Nether World, inside the warehouse of biochemical beasts, the alerts were ringing more and more loudly.

Dozens of soldiers rushed inside and activated the biochemical beasts before they sent the biochemical beasts to the ground via teleportation arrays.

Above their heads, a vague streak of redness flashed past them at such a high speed that neither them nor the biochemical eyes that were being jammed detected anything wrong at all.

Li Yao sprinted in a zigzagging path.

Every monitoring biochemical eye had been discovered by Neltharion in the investigation the day before yesterday. He moved forward, changing his posture all the time as if he were dancing, while he dodged the surveillance devices. Soon, he reached his destination, which was a lounge of the Nether World Watch.

Right now, the lounge was empty, but there were quite a few suits of the Nether World Watch in the closet.

Half a minute later, a soldier of the Nether World Watch, who was wearing a black, leather cloak and a dark, anti-coldness mask, walked out of the lounge and strode toward the lift with his head held high after a turn.

Although it was weird to wear such a huge mask indoors, considering that some of the soldiers were being asked to fight on the ground, the other soldiers might not grow suspicious of him.

Beep! Beep!

The door of the lift was opened, but there were three fully-armed soldiers of the Nether World Watch inside.

They were whispering to each other and did not pay much attention to Li Yao.

The control system of the lift needed verify the hand of the taker before they were allowed to select a new floor.

The three soldiers' destination, on the other hand, was the minus sixth floor.

If Li Yao did not scan his hand, he would have to go to the same floor as them. But Li Yao was not clear of the situation of the minus sixth floor, nor did he have a good reason to go there. If he hesitated for a moment, the three soldiers were likely to question him.

With his back against them, Li Yao put his right hand on the verification rune array softly.

Beep! Beep!

The verification rune array turned green!

Li Yao secretly took a breath in relief and selected the floor where the Fire Ant King was locked.

The three soldiers, after hearing the familiar sound, did not even bother to look at him anymore.

When he was at the warehouse of biochemical beasts, Li Yao had been thinking about how he should go upward.

The ventilation tubes were teeming with bugs and spiders, which was clearly not an option. The lift was apparently the most convenient way for him to go up.

The real critical problem was that he would need the fingerprint of a soldier of the Nether World Watch.

However, it was not really a problem for him.

In the ‘Stormy Sword’, the tutorial of burglary composed by Fengyu Zhong, a renowned space pirate in the Blood Demon Sector, a lot of methods about how to scan a fingerprint and how to fake one had been recorded.

Li Yao had searched carefully in the warehouse of biochemical beasts. Eventually, he had retrieved a fingerprint that was of similar size to his and relatively intact. He had then duplicated the fingerprint on a biochemical slip made of the membrane of a demon beast with his incredible hand speed and micro-carving skills before sticking the slip to his palm in the end. Finally, he had successfully fooled the verification rune arrays!

Chapter 941 - Remote Confrontation!

Outside of the interrogation chamber where the Fire Ant King was being held, Li Yao was moving forward blatantly.

Meanwhile, Neltharion was flying right ahead of him, and whenever soldiers of the Nether World who seemed vigilant showed up, he would change a route very naturally.

Thankfully, the riot of the captives distracted most of the soldiers of the Nether World Watch as he had expected. The floor that he was on was empty, with barely any guards.

The door of the interrogation chamber was locked.

Li Yao’s face remained unchanged. He took out a cluster of liquid metal that looked like sticky plasticine and inserted it into the lock.

He pressed hard, and the liquid metal immediately melted in and became as tough as iron under the vibration of spiritual energy in different frequency.

He turned the metal. After a clicking sound, the door of the interrogation chamber was opened.

Li Yao put the liquid metal away and stuck his left hand to his ear while he nodded and said, “Yes. Yes. I understand. This place is no longer safe. The asset must be transferred immediately!”

While talking, he walked into the room.

As it turned out, four tall and mighty soldiers of the Nether World Watch were standing in the corners of the room. Judging from the demon cores embedded in their bodies, they were all experts no weaker than the high-level demon generals.

The four of them had been asked by Lu Wuxin to watch over the Fire Ant King and immediately reacted when the door was opened. But Li Yao's words confused them and made them look at each other in astonishment and hesitate for a moment.

A moment of hesitation was enough to get them killed!

Pu!

Li Yao shot a streak of blueness out of his mouth, which turned out to be a hollowed metal ball that was spinning rapidly.

The blue brightness enshrouded the entire interrogation chamber instantly like water!

The moment when the ball shining, Neltharion darted toward the soldier of the Nether World Watch that was furthest from Li Yao, trigging the drill of mystic rays to the maximum, and burst out of the back of his head through the center of the eyebrows!

Cold brilliance flashed inside Li Yao's hands and circled around two soldiers' necks like two invisible feathers.

Before they had the time to react, a long, red line appeared on their necks, extending and immediately joining its own tail at the back.

The two of them slowly collapsed against the wall while covering their necks. But not a single drop of blood flowed out before their eyes stopped rolling.

The last soldier of the Nether World Watch managed to unsheathe his saber, the only guard able to draw a weapon.

It was not until brooks of blood were flowing weirding in front of him that one would notice that his brain, vocal cords, and heart had been sabotaged by dozens of mica threads!

Everything was finished within half a second.

It was not until this moment that the door behind Li Yao was closed slowly.

Shua!

Li Yao retracted the mica threads and shook off the blood. The soldier of the Nether World Watch collapsed to the ground, with dense spots of blood appearing on his face and his body.

“It was you.”

The Fire Ant King, who was still bound to the operation table by the Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle, suddenly constricted his eyes and mumbled, “I did not expect that you would be such a young Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator!

“Who are you exactly? I’ve studied all the experts of the Heaven’s Origin Sector in the Nascent Soul Stage before, and I don’t recall reading your files.

“A human being, and a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, has successfully pretended to be a low-level demon and snuck into the Blade of Chaos. This is too dreadful. What do you want exactly?”

Li Yao’s eyes stopped on the Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle, unable to move away. He smiled and said, “Right now, I only want to crack this magical equipment!”

The Fire Ant King was dazed. “Here? There are security cameras everywhere!”

“That’s why I spurted out the blue pearl into the midair the moment I got in,” Li Yao explained. “The name of the magical equipment is ‘Image Freezing Pearl’. It has two functions. Firstly, after scanning the environment, it will interfere with all the surveillance devices, including both crystal cameras and biochemical eyes, so that all the monitors will only display the picture that the pearl captured.”

The Fire Ant King frowned and said, “So, the enemy will see a frozen picture where the four guards kept standing in the same place?”

“Yes. Although the enemy may notice something wrong if we dawdle, it should be fine for several minutes.”

“Several minutes?”

The Fire Ant King was rather shocked. The guy was meaning to crack a piece of magical equipment made by Jiang Shaoyang, one of the best experts in refining within the Star Glory Federation, in only several minutes?

Judging from the aggressive magical equipment and the agile attacks just now, he must be a battle-type Cultivator. Does he really know how to crack a piece of magical equipment?

A lot of questions were popping up in the Fire Ant King's head.

Li Yao's fingers shook fast and put on one Cosmos Ring after another. From the Cosmos Rings flew out hundreds of items and components like a storm. They floated around him, like an enormous fleet in the deep, dark universe.

"The second function of the pearl is that it will block all the waves that are sent to this place. Telepathic thoughts, spiritual waves, electromagnetic waves, demonic vibrations. Everything will be blocked!

"The Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle's controller is in Lu Wuxin's hands. But no matter what the mechanism is, he will have to send a wave to the reception rune array of the magical equipment in order to detonate it, right?

"It means that, as long as we block all the waves, he will not be able to detonate the Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle directly!"

The Fire Ant King was overjoyed, but he grew suspicious again. "So simple?"

"Of course it is not so simple!"

All the tools and components that Li Yao would need were ready. His eyes were growing hotter and hotter. The streamline form of the Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle seemed more appealing to him than the graceful curves of a young girl.

The item that he retrieved from his Cosmos Rings lastly was a warm, smooth jade. He rubbed the jade quickly inside his palm quickly as if he was washing his hands with soap.

An amazing thing happened. Because of the super high-frequency vibrations of his hands, the soap was indeed diminishing in size like a bar of soap until it completely vanished in the end. In the meantime, Li Yao's hands were shining in brilliance as if they were made of diamond. Spiritual energy was flowing out of every pore, and flowers seemed to be blossoming among his fingers at any moment.

Without resorting to any tools, Li Yao scratched the Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle for a long time. The Fire Ant King almost felt creeped out, observing his fascinated expression.

"Hey. This is an ultimate treasure of your Star Glory Federation. Are you really able to do it?"

Li Yao licked his lips. Then, his hands suddenly clutched the shells on the two sides of the Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle like two tongs and separated them brutally. "I would like to know the answer, too!"

After a crack, the shell was opened. The movement was so violent that the Fire Ant King almost shouted.

After the shell of the 'Venomous Scorpion' was plucked, the components and ultra-tiny groups of rune arrays that were a hundred times more precise than clocks and the crystal chips that were smaller than millet were all revealed.

The magical equipment is only the size of a small beast puppet, but more than 125 thousand components, which are controlled by more than five hundred chips, have been integrated into it. There are approximately a hundred defense rune arrays on the surface, but in fact, the magical equipment has more than seven hundred overlapping defense rune arrays!

Jiang Shaoyang’s masterpiece has indeed exploited all the possibilities for confining magical equipment!

Li Yao put a rather unattractive mini crystal processor on his wrist. On a slot above the crystal processor was a long, narrow antenna. He aimed the antenna at the core part of the ‘Venomous Scorpion’ and scanned cautiously for a moment. Very soon, glittering numbers were jumping out on the light beam of the crystal processor.

“4 minutes and 36 seconds!

“4 minutes and 35 seconds!

“4 minutes and 34 seconds!”

Li Yao nodded in approval. There was great satisfaction in his eyes as he said, “As I expected!”

The Fire Ant King suddenly had an ominous feeling. “What is as you expected?”

“The Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle has adopted a dual control system, as I expected,” Li Yao explained. “Under normal circumstances, it will be remotely controlled by the controller. However, remote control through telepathic thoughts is prone to interference, especially on a battlefield where spiritual energy is surging everywhere. The connection between the magical equipment and the controller might be cut off at any moment.

“If the magical equipment loses its effect the moment it is jammed, will it really deserve to be called an ‘ultimate treasure’?

“Therefore, ‘Solar Eclipse’ Jiang Shaoyang has prepared two different control systems for the ‘Venomous Scorpion Bone

Biting Shackle’. Under normal circumstances, it will be remotely controlled. But whenever the spiritual waves are jammed and the magical equipment loses connection with the controller, it will automatically be switched to the ‘countdown’ mode.

“If the connection between the controller and the Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle is not restored in a certain amount of time, the magical equipment will be detonated automatically and blow up the prisoner being locked inside!

“The countdown can be set by the user at their will. Elder Nether Spring has set it to be five minutes!

“Right. There are only four minutes and one second left now!”

“…You really didn’t have to waste your time explaining so much to me,” complained the Fire Ant King. “I’m not interested in magical equipment. Now, please focus your attention and figure out how to crack it.”

“It’s fine. I can sort through the plan in my head while talking. It does not affect me. Right. Didn’t you ask me about the origins of the demon race before? We are both free at the moment. How about I tell you the whole story in great detail?”

“No. Thanks, but no. We will have plenty of time in the future!”

“Fine.”

Li Yao took a deep breath. His right eye seemed to have turned into a bottomless swirl, and his left eye was so red that blood might have dripped out at any moment. Dozens of mica threads that were thinner than a hair crawled into the interior of the Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle like little snakes.

His actions were extremely gentle. None of the mica threads touched any component of the ‘Venomous Scorpion’. He was merely studying the structure of the ‘Venomous Scorpion’ deeply and how the key rune arrays were carved.

Behind him, thousands of components were congregating into towers as if they were sand, only to collapse in half a second, which indicated that one of the cracking plans had failed.

“3 minutes and 32 seconds. 3 minutes and 31 seconds.”

The countdown went on. The Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle would explode in three and a half minutes.

Shua!

Deep inside the ‘Venomous Scorpion’, dazzling mystic rays were suddenly shining on one of the rune arrays.

Li Yao cursed and moved fast. His hands turned into two clusters of gray mist, and all the mica threads were twitching crazily!

Chapter 942 - Uncrackable

For the Fire Ant King, the next half a minute was truly the longest thirty seconds of his life. After witnessing the guard being slain by the mica threads ruthlessly, he could not help but feel strange when the fatal weapons were cutting rapidly right next to his body at a speed more than five times the speed of sound. All the while, scorching metal scraps were spluttering out.

The Fire Ant King had never thought that his life would be in the hands of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator one day, and such a young one!

What was more terrifying was the countenance of the young Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. Although he was cursing loudly and sweating hard, there was ecstasy deep inside his eyes that were in different colors. His lips curled up beyond his control. Excitement was leaking out of his every pore. Occasionally, he was even licking the corner of his mouth softly, as if he was not dismantling the most dreadful magical equipment but enjoying the most delicious meal in the world.

As the dismantling work went deeper and deeper, his facial expressions were more and more abundant. He went from frowning to depressed, from beaming with exhilaration to bursting into fury.

The Fire Ant King was not scared of death, but being pulled back and forth over the line of death was too much!

Half a minute later, Li Yao took a long breath in relief. All the mica threads gradually slowed down.

“Did you make it?”

The Fire Ant King kept his voice normal, trying not to make himself sound too anxious.

“I didn’t,” Li Yao said admiringly. “Jiang Shaoyang is indeed one of the best masters of refining in the federation right now. He has hidden the ‘Winter Thunder Runes’ below the Triple Gold Ring Runes and thereby created a minor trap. He even increased the sensitivity of the ‘Winter Thunder Runes’ by more than ten times. The slight vibration when I was manipulating the mica threads was detected by them, and the rune array was triggered. The entire magical equipment could have been detonated in half a second!

“Thankfully, I established a new circuit for the Winter Thunder Runes temporarily and gave a false feedback that the triggering signal had already been sent in the mainframe chips. Otherwise, the magical equipment would have exploded.

“Marvelous. It’s indeed marvelous. Jiang Shaoyang’s design and micro-carving techniques are the best I’ve seen. I assume that a lot of masters of refining in the Star Glory Federation were actually ‘killed’ by the trap when they tried to crack the Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle. Hahahaha!”

“…If I may remind you, Fellow Cultivator, there are only 2 minutes and 42 seconds left now!”

Li Yao nodded and scratched his chin, deep in thought. “It is quite tricky now. Jin Xinyue did not just plant one array of the ‘Winter Thunder Runes’ in the depths of the Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle; he was insane enough to deploy more than twenty of those arrays. Besides, nine of them were connected to each other in a synchronic way, like twenty alarms that are hanged on the same rope. If the robe is slightly touched, the alarms will ring at the same time!

“With my maximum hand speed, I can crack three arrays of the Winter Thunder Runes simultaneously at best. Twenty of them is beyond the limits for any refiner!”

Staring at the glittering magical equipment, Li Yao seemed to be absent-minded.

The thousands of components behind him were still like giants of living sand. They were condensing, collapsing, condensing again, and collapsing again.

Time went by one second after another. Li Yao was still at a loss after an entire minute and did not do any further cracking work.

The Fire Ant King observed the bouncing number on the light beam so hard that his eyeballs were nearly crawling into it!

Li Yao finally extended his hands and placed them on the top of the Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle. He closed his eyes while his spiritual energy leaked into the magical equipment like water.

The Fire Ant King held his breath, worrying that his breath might be an interference for Li Yao.

But out of his expectation, Li Yao remained in the same posture and seemed to have no intention of cracking the magical equipment at all.

Behind him, countless components were being gathered and growing stubbornly again. This time, they persisted for more than half a minute. Like towers made of sand, they were more and more complicated and precise in structure until they turned into a piece of bizarre piece of magical equipment in the end.

However, right when the Fire Ant King was hopeful again, the magical equipment collapsed abruptly after a cracking sound!

At this moment, there was only half a minute to go before the Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle was detonated!

“I can’t do it.”

Li Yao finally opened his eyes, with an expression that was beyond the description of any words on face. He said, half in frustration and half in excitement, “Jiang Shaoyang’s design is impeccable. This is truly a piece of magical equipment that cannot be cracked by brute force!

“I did not know that he had improved so much after only ten years. How I hope that I can have a face-to-face competition with him again using the same materials, the same requirements, and the same magical equipment!”

The Fire Ant King did not know what to say.

Behind Li Yao, most of the components had already been tossed away. Only several hundred of the simplest ones were stilling floating in midair sparsely. They were moving close to each other and biting each other, assembling a piece of magical equipment that was simple in structure and extremely hideous in appearance, to the point that it looked like garbage.

One of the components, pulling a long crystal wire behind it, was connected to one of the slots of his mini crystal processor under the manipulation of Li Yao’s telepathic thoughts.

Hum!

The garbage shook violently, as if it would fall apart at any moment.

The Fire Ant King panted and sweated hard.

More than ten light beams were unfolded in front of Li Yao again, each of which was brimming with shining control runes.

In that moment, his hands turned into ten streaks of brightness, piercing through and ripping apart all the light beams!

Nineteen seconds, eighteen seconds, seventeen seconds…

The number on the countdown light beam was still decreasing, slowly but surely, and the Fire Ant King was almost grasped by desperation.

Li Yao’s hands were moving faster and faster. At first, there was a vague scent of something being burnt. Then, all ten streaks of brightness were mixed with redness, with sparks spluttering right around them, as if countless crimson fireflies were all dancing crazily in midair!

The Fire Ant King was greatly appalled. He knew that it was a sign that the hands were being ignited in the air because of the high-speed friction.

It was like the ten fingers of the young Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator had turned into ten meteors that had broken into the atmosphere and were burning fast because of the friction!

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

Crimson waves were appearing on all the light beams. All the spiritual stripes and data were twisted and deformed.

The Fire Ant King was even more dumbfounded. He did not expect that the hands of the young Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator could be so fast that even the spiritual waves that constituted the light beams had been jammed!

Nine seconds, eight seconds, seven seconds!

Pa! Pa! Pa!

The cloak of the Nether World Watch that Li Yao wore on upper half of his body was ripped into shreds starting from the sleeves, to the shoulders, and then to the chest!

It was because the cloak could not withstand the prolonged high-speed movement anymore. The fibers were all aging and breaking apart!

Six seconds, five seconds, four seconds!

Even the combat outfit that he wore close to his body, which could be extended to dozens of meters long and boasted a high durability and defense ability, was not able to hold on any longer. As if it were being cut by invisible blades, narrow cracks appeared on the outfit!

The last three seconds!

The ten streaks of brightness were condensed again and returned into ten fingers, except that they were now translucent and orange, as if they were ten iron bars that had been heated in a furnace!

Two seconds!

Li Yao bit his lips softly and turned on a brand-new light beam.

The Fire Ant King noticed that it was the control menu of a piece of certain magical equipment.

The last second!

The Fire Ant King’s heart was suddenly beating faster than ever. He remembered a lot of things in that moment.

The radiance of God Chaos, Elder Nether Spring’s scheme, the fate of the low-level demons, his own negligence and stupidity, the uncanny young Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who jumped out of nowhere, and the future of Void Turmoil City that he had built from scratch.

His own death did not matter, but what about the future of Void Turmoil City?

How would the Blade of Chaos fare? What was the Elder Nether Spring’s ultimate plan? What was his so-called ‘the third life form’, gods that were above human beings and demons, exactly?

The Fire Ant King was finally dazed.

He realized that the second was longer than it should have been.

He looked at the light beam again, only to discover that the number on the light beam had been stopped on ‘1’ stably. It seemed to be pulled by an invisible chain and could not jump to ‘0’ no matter how close it was!

“You’ve made it? You have successfully cracked the Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle?” The Fire Ant King mumbled with mixed feelings.

He was not sure whether he was alive or dead.

Maybe, it was just an illusion created by the last bit of his remaining soul?

“No. As I said, Jiang Shaoyang’s masterpiece is impeccable and cannot be cracked by brute force.” Li Yao blew at his fingers to extinguish a tiny flame on his thumb. “Maybe, if I had three days and three nights, I would be able to think hard and deal with the magical equipment, hoping to crack it by brute force.

“But it is impossible to finish the job in five minutes!”

The Fire Ant King frowned. “Then, how did you—”

“I did not crack the magical equipment by brute force; I merely crafted a new controller for it.”

Li Yao shook the mini crystal processor on his wrist that was connected to the pile of garbage. “The controller and the Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle are now connected again, and the magical equipment was switched to the ‘remote control mode’. Naturally, the countdown stopped.”

The Fire Ant King was dumbfounded. “You crafted a new controller? Is it even possible?”

“Of course it is,” Li Yao explained patiently. “The fundamental things are always the same despite all apparent changes. No matter how the remote control is constructed exactly, the process is one in where spiritual waves of a certain frequency and certain attributes are sent to a certain reception chip of the Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle. Everything becomes simple from there. I can figure out the overall framework of the magical equipment by the leaking spiritual energy and redraw its structural design in my head. In the end, it is very convenient for me to locate the reception chip.

“After I locate the chip, according to the stripes on it, I calculate what attributes the spiritual waves it receives will have and how the spiritual waves will be vibrated.

“It goes without saying that, as soon as I grasp the attributes and the frequency of the spiritual waves, I will know the structure of the controller. The last step is the simplest one. I will only need to build a controller on my own and carve a few launchers with the mica threads to simulate the identical spiritual waves. Then, everything is done!”

Chapter 943 - Fire Ant King's Amazement!

Li Yao’s explanation made the Fire Ant King open his mouth bigger and bigger until it was wide enough to stuff a watermelon inside.

“All in all, I have reverse engineered a counterfeit controller. Since the real controller is already blocked, the ‘counterfeit controller’ of mine is naturally determined to be the real controller by the Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Lock.”

Li Yao was smiling cunningly. “In the meantime, since it is crafted by me, there are certainly no verification methods such as ‘blood examination’ or ‘soul binding’.”

Violent waves were surging in the Fire Ant King’s heart. His understanding about magical equipment that he had held for decades collapsed in that moment.

Are—are you kidding me? You figured out the basic structure of the ultimate treasure made by Jiang Shaoyang, who is almost the best refiner in the Star Glory Federation, in only five minutes by way of spiritual energy infiltration, and you can even sense the stripes on the crystal chip?

How can anybody have such sharp senses?

Also, what do you mean by ‘carving magical equipment with the mica threads’? Don’t think that the demon race has no expertise in magical equipment at all! How can you build a crystal chip where a hundred rune arrays might be established within a square inch with the mica threads?

If he hadn't seen the crazy thing that happened next, the Fire Ant King would've burst out those questions.

However, right in front of him, more than ten crystal chips flew out from behind Li Yao while the mica threads that were as thin as hairs were engraving the tiny chips at a speed more than three times the speed of sound. As the powder fell, spiritual energy slowly spread out of the crystal chips.

It really is possible to engrave crystal chips manually without resorting to any microscope magical equipment or even looking at them!

The Fire Ant King could not have been more shocked. *Moreover, twelve crystal chips are being carved at the same time!*

Li Yao dedicated eighty percent of his computational ability to the mica threads in order to carve the chips, but his hands were not idling by, either. He tapped softly on the control menu of the 'counterfeit controller', and the Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Lock disconnected from the Fire Ant King after a few hisses of spiritual energy.

The blade limbs and the tail that were all stained with blood retreated from his body. Although nine shocking, bloody holes had been left, they were merely external injuries and did not affect his nerves and marrow.

The Fire Ant King breathed hard, not sure how he should feel at present.

The Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Lock was an ultimate treasure, crafted by one of the best masters of refining of the Star Glory Federation, that no one in the Heaven's Origin Sector or Blood Demon Sector had been able to crack, not even when the Refining Department of Deep Sea University and that of the Grand Desolate War Institution collaborated. Such a treasure had now been ‘bypassed’ by the guy in such a weird way in only five minutes?

Not only had he bypassed it, he had even stolen the control of the magical equipment!

What an unreasonable solution!

Who is he exactly?

The Fire Ant King slowly triggered the strengthening drugs that were hidden inside his body to drive away the poison Elder Nether Spring had left inside his veins.

When the defense cells inside his body that had been hibernating were awakened and started attacking and swallowing the poison and the foreign cells, the ‘vein shackles’ that constrained him quickly withered and broke apart, like thorns that had been burnt.

But the Fire Ant King’s attention was not on himself. He couldn’t help but glimpse at Li Yao.

He noticed that more and more components were appearing beside the young Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. The tens of thousands of components were like a well-disciplined army that was continuously changing its battle formation and regrouping.

“Thank you for saving my life… Fellow Cultivator.”

The Fire Ant King pondered for a long time and chose a general way of addressing in the world of Cultivators. Pausing for a moment, he said, “Although we are on different sides, I believe that most of the low-level demons are not willing to be driven into the Heaven’s Origin Sector as cannon fodder. The purpose of the Blade of Chaos is to allow more low-level demons to live a life of dignity. At least for now, I don't see any unmediatable contradiction between the Blade of Chaos and the Star Glory Federation.

“Besides, the most dreadful enemy right now is perhaps not the Pantheon of Demons but Elder Nether Spring. If his scheme comes true, it will not only be the human beings of the Star Glory Federation that are going to be enslaved by him but also all the demons in the Blood Demon Sector!

“Therefore, until Elder Nether Spring's scheme is foiled, I believe that there is a basis for our cooperation.”

Li Yao glanced at him and nodded solemnly before devoting himself to the operations again.

The Fire Ant King could not suppress his curiosity any longer. “What are you doing, Fellow Cultivator?”

“I am performing modifications on the ‘Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Lock’.”

In midair, more and more units were assembled. Li Yao pulled the ugly units with crystal wires and connected them to the ‘Venomous Scorpion’ carefully.

After the glamorous, streamlined ‘Venomous Scorpion’ was attached to the units that were ugly and of a whole different style, it looked like it was growing a lot of obnoxious lumps.

Li Yao installed the control chips that he had carved into the core parts of the units while he explained, “Jiang Shaoyang's arts of refining are indeed awesome, but he is not best at crystal bombs after all. He has embedded a lot of marrow crystals of the highest level into the ‘Venomous Scorpion’, but the triggering pattern of the marrow crystals is not perfect. By my calculation, only 71.7% of their power would be activated.

“Although such a percentage is enough to blow up a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator or a demon emperor, it is still insufficient for my plan.

“Therefore, I am perfecting his design by adding external circuits to the magical equipment.

“My ultimate purpose is to assemble a super oriented crystal bomb with the ‘Venomous Scorpion’ as the core.”

The Fire Ant King’s jaw nearly hit the ground again.

What was the guy saying?

He declared that Jiang Shaoyang’s triggering pattern was not perfect and could not fully activate the power of the marrow crystals?

And he is modifying Jiang Shaoyang’s magical equipment?

If it were five minutes ago, the Fire Ant King would have made the call to stop any cooperation with the guy because he was apparently an out-and-out lunatic.

However, at this moment, the Fire Ant King had no idea whether it was the guy who was insane, himself, or maybe the entire world!

Li Yao was not troubled by the Fire Ant King’s astonishment. He was wholeheartedly dedicated to the modification of the magical equipment. The ‘Venomous Scorpion’ that Jiang Shaoyang designed was indeed an unparalleled artwork. Modifying the device was not only thrilling but also entertaining!

Just because he could not crack the magical equipment by brute force did not mean that Li Yao could not fully release its potential by adding external units!

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

As more and more metal ‘lumps’ were installed to the ‘Venomous Scorpion’, the magical equipment seemed to have gone through a certain crazy mutation.

Li Yao retrieved dozens of crystal bombs from his Cosmos Ring before he held his breath and connected them to the ‘Venomous Scorpion’ with crystal wires.

The Fire Ant King was rather confused. “Why are you doing that?”

“I have investigated the entire ‘Nether World’ over the past two days. I discovered that the crystal tubes and the biochemical nerves of most of the core floors lead to the same location.

“According to their routes, I have basically drawn up the general map of the distribution of tubes for the building. Based on my analysis, most of the important crystal tubes and the biochemical nerves led to the nineteenth floor.

“It is likely where the mainframe crystal processor and the biochemical brains are kept, which means that the place is the control center of the ‘Nether World’.

“If Elder Nether Spring really has a confidential scheme, it will certainly be stored there, along with all the precious experiment data and virus files!” Li Yao explained unhurriedly.

“However, the nineteenth floor is further divided into multiple divisions, all of which are heavily guarded by the Nether World Watch. The regular lift and teleportation array do not go there. The lift that does lead to the place has the strictest security measures. It is impossible for us to sneak in.

“If we attack it by force, it will be a great waste of time. When hundreds of soldiers of the Nether World Watch block the pathway, there will be nothing we can do even you are a demon emperor and I am a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator.

“Therefore, I am preparing to…”

Li Yao pointed at the ground.

“… build a bomb and blow through all the floors between us and the control center so that we can reach it!”

“Blow through more than ten floors?” The Fire Ant King could not help but suspect that Li Yao was a lunatic again. “Elder Nether Spring is not an idiot. If his top secrets are stored inside the control center, the defense rune arrays of the highest level must’ve been installed on the floors in all the directions! No. Chances are that he has deployed defense rune arrays on every floor. When your bomb blows up the floors in the middle, it will run out of momentum very soon!”

“There are no defense rune arrays in the world that crystal bombs cannot take care of.” Li Yao licked his lips and said, “If you ever meet one, that is because you don’t have enough crystal bombs.”

The Fire Ant King was meaning to ask him how many crystal bombs he had brought with him.

However, when Li Yao retrieved almost a hundred semi crystal bombs in a row and connected them together as if he were doing a magic trick, he shut his mouth very quickly.

The guy is essentially a walking arsenal. Has he come to the Blood Demon Sector to start a world war by himself?

After Li Yao retrieved a piece of cylindrical magical equipment that was long and glittering, the Fire Ant King finally could not help but ask again, “What’s this?”

“This is a cannonball for the main gun of the ‘Glory’-level super-heavy crystal warships. It stores more than five hundred kilograms of high-purity crystals that are controlled and triggered by 1,925 rune arrays. The designing purpose of the cannonball was to precisely bombard a planet named ‘Spider Den’ from its orbit. Therefore, it boasts a high penetrability. With any luck, one explosion will be enough to blow up the most solid underground fortress into the sky!”

Li Yao touched the curved shell of the cannonball, with fascination beaming out of his eyes.

“I know that it is a cannonball for the main gun of a heavy crystal warship. I was asking you why you would carry such a thing with you.”

“For fun,” Li Yao replied

“…”

Chapter 944 - Grand Cannon! Grand Cannon!

Li Yao hid the real reason because he did not want the Fire Ant King to think that he was too crazy.

The reason real he carried the cannonball for the main gun of a heavy crystal warship, which had been added with even more gunpowder by him, was that he could take it out and die with his enemy when there was no other choice.

It was a good habit that Li Yao had developed when he was still in the Refinement Stage. At that time, he had become fond of walking around on the battlefield with a box of powerful bombs named Hellfire-Lightnings. It was exactly with an entire box of Hellfire-Lightnings that he had slain an enemy beyond his level for the first in his life, which was a 'Six-Armed Naga' in the demon general level.

Right now, his Cultivation had soared. The level of his 'suicidal bomb' naturally increased, too.

As it happened, the penetrating bomb was perfect to open the iron can that was buried deep under the ground.

However, the normal usage of a cannonball was to be fired by a main gun. Without enough acceleration, it could not deal much damage.

If Li Yao were to place the thick, black bomb there and detonate it with simple triggering rune arrays, the best result he could expect was that the floor he was on would be blown into smithereens. It was impossible for the minus nineteenth floor, which was protected by multiple layers of defense rune arrays, to be affected.

It was the critical reason Li Yao needed the ‘Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle’!

The ‘Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle’ boasted the most immaculate restriction rune arrays of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, which had perhaps been polished by Jiang Shaoyang for an entire year.

Demon emperors and the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were all monsters with unbelievable vitality. Even if a crystal bomb was detonated right near their chest, they might not necessarily be killed.

It was because the damage of the bomb would spread out, and only one tiny proportion of it was really aimed at their body.

With the boundary of the restriction rune arrays, however, all the damage of the bomb would be focused on one point and would, therefore, significantly wreck the demon emperor or the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator when it was detonated.

To put it simply, the restriction rune array could be compared to an invisible membrane made of a magnetic field. After an explosion took place, all the energy would surge and shatter the items within the range of the membrane. As for the bystanders out of the membrane, no matter how close they were to it, they would not be harmed at all.

Through such a method, it could be ensured that the target inside the restriction rune array was executed precisely, and there would be no damage to the surroundings.

Such a usage was exactly what Li Yao needed.

Li Yao prepared to slightly change the form of Jiang Shaoyang’s restriction rune array through a series of modification. He was going to rip apart a hole that led downward inside the restriction rune array, which would envelop the entire cannon ball like an invisible and yet firm bell. After that, he would use his other crystal bombs as a source of power.

After the crystal bombs were detonated, because of the boundary of the restriction rune array, most of the energy would have nowhere to run but downward.

When they pushed the cannonball through all the floors in the middle, the cannonball would be detonated and blow out all the spiritual energy so that the ‘turtle shell’ outside of the control center would be wrecked!

In short, Li Yao was going to craft a special turret and barrel for the cannonball!

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Li Yao’s expression became serious again. Sounds of gears biting each other were echoing from his joints. With a flash of a Cosmos Ring on his little finger, a pair of gloves that were weaved with soft crystal tubes appeared in his hands. A deep green liquid was flowing vaguely inside the tubes, which extended and wreathed his arms, as if it were a futuristic fluorescent arm suit.

They were Ice Spirit Gloves. The liquid inside the tubes was Ice Spirit Jade Marrow, a marvelous material that could release coldness stably no matter how high a temperature it was put into. Li Yao was trying to cool down his hands with them.

Li Yao was not fond of the Ice Spirit Gloves because it would reduce the keenness of his hands. However, when his hand speed was accelerated to the highest, the heat resulting from the friction with the air could easily turn into interference for the magical equipment being assembled. Having no better choice, he could only deal with the slight hinderance.

Shua!

More than a hundred and fifty light beams were triggered by the mini crystal processor, which almost took up the entire interrogation chamber.

On the light beams, all the structural designs were jumping at a speed of one picture every three seconds.

The components floating around Li Yao split apart and danced crazily like blocks of ice that had been tossed into boiling oil!

Li Yao’s fascinated eyes turned blood red. In the end, he was gnashing his teeth as if he were a hungry tiger ready to lunge at a lamp, and he hurled the units into the heavy bomb one after another.

He was throwing the units so violently that the Fire Ant King felt that his blood was freezing. He could not help but wonder whether or not the cannonball would explode then and there!

Is—is he really a Cultivator, not faked by a certain demon emperor? the Fire Ant King asked himself again.

Three minutes later, everything around Li Yao was cleaned. The last component fitted into the joint of two units perfectly, like the last piece of a puzzle.

What a wild and straightforward ‘puzzle’ it was!

It looked like a vertical launcher for a crystal warship that had been put upside down. The front end of the cannonball was aimed down, half a meter from the ground, and fixed by multiple messy frames.

The Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle, which had been utterly deformed, was now lying at the rear of the cannonball. The shell of the Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle had been completely plucked, and it was connected to the cannonball through hundreds of crystal threads.

In order to give the cannonball a sufficient initial velocity, Li Yao deployed a circle of crystal bombs on the ground right below the cannonball. When the entire penetrating system was triggered, the circle of crystal bombs would blow up the floor first so that the cannonball would have some ten meters to gain momentum.

“Nailed it!”

Li Yao took off the Ice Spirit Gloves, which were about to be burnt, and looked at his work with great satisfaction.

With the crystal cameras on his mini crystal processor, he took many pictures of the combinative magical equipment.

When I am back in the Star Glory Federation where there is the signal of the Spiritual Nexus, I am going to send the pictures to Jiang Shaoyang and let him know that the magical equipment he produced has such a special usage. He will certainly be very excited! Li Yao thought to himself.

The Fire Ant King opened his mouth, hesitating whether or not he should tell his new ally that the magical equipment he crafted just now really look like a huge pile of garbage.

However, when Li Yao tapped the light beam softly and activated the penetrating system, the dangerous mystic rays that were emitted from the overlapping frames and tubes decorated the ‘garbage’ with a certain coldness and made it exude a beauty of violence.

“Fire Ant King, how much have you recovered your capability?” Li Yao glanced and noticed that the wounds on the Fire Ant King’s body had all healed.

The Fire Ant King sniffed. Perhaps because he felt that he had been more or less eclipsed due to the series of shocks just now, right now, he bulged his eyes out and croaked like a frog deep inside his throat. His limbs and torso, which had withered, were expanding again. His mitochondria were burning crazily, and his demonic energy was surging out and twisting the air into colorful swirls!

“Ho!” the Fire Ant King bellowed. More than ten swirls crashed into him, enshrouding him in a hazy mist.

When the hazy mist was gone, the leader of the Blade of Chaos who showed up in front of Li Yao again already possessed a brand-new appearance!

He was shorter than the previous Fire Ant King. The eye-catching crimson shell had mostly disappeared from his body and turned into red armor covering his scapula, chest, arms, abdomen, groin, and other critical body parts after melding with his flesh and blood.

But the antennae on his forehead were longer and shaking slightly in the air.

He was even more handsome than before. Other than his red skin, there was no difference between him and an elegant human expert.

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

The Fire Ant King’s arms and legs seemed to be still, but a dazzling light appeared in front of him as he was shaking off the wet interstitial fluid secreted because of the crazy mutations of his cells. His smile was full of hatred, which made his face more hideous than usual.

“I’ve chosen to activate all my potential with the strengthening drugs. At the cost of a huge amount of my vitality, the poison, venom, and barriers that Elder Nether Spring left on me have finally been devoured. I have even stimulated my cells with his poison and thereby gained even greater strength!

“The price is that I am going to be fatigued for a long time after the battle, but there’s no time to worry about that now!

“I am back at the demon emperor stage for now and can maintain this at least until we march out of the place!

“Nether Spring, since everything began when we discovered a residence of Chaos together years ago, let’s just finish our grudge once and for all in another residence of Chaos!”

Li Yao sighed. “Before today, I never thought that I would be fighting side by side with a demon emperor. Let’s go!”

The Fire Ant King was dazed. “Where?”

“To a shelter, of course.” Li Yao blinked. “Do you wish to explode with the cannonball, Fire Ant King?”

The gate of the interrogation chamber was opened again.

Li Yao and the Fire Ant King strode out blatantly toward the other side of the floor, not even trying to disguise themselves.

Perhaps because they looked too bizarre and they were walking in a too unconcealed way, the guards of the Nether World Watch around them all thought that they were dreaming. They watched as the two of them passed by and did not know how to react for a long time.

“Is—is this the Fire Ant King?”

“Un—unlikely. Something must’ve gone wrong…”

Li Yao and the Fire Ant King talked to each other in a low voice while walking forward casually.

“Countdown, eight, seven, six…”

“It seems that my Fellow Cultivator is more focused in the arts of refining in your training,” the Fire Ant King observed. “You must be very careful when we’re down there. Just leave all the tricky enemies to me!”

“Four… Three… Crap!”

“What’s wrong?” the Fire Ant King asked.

“I seem to have miscalculated. The bomb might be slightly more powerful than I expected.”

Chapter 945 - What About Another Miracle?

“Aooo!”

A biochemical beast, dozens of meters tall with dark gold hair all over its body like a primeval elephant, roared and stomped on the ground with the thick, forceful feet, blowing out invisible airwaves on the snowy world.

Dozens of captives were blown away by the blast. The battle formation that had taken shape collapsed all of a sudden!

The primeval elephant rushed among the captives unstoppably. Its thick trunk was waving left and right like a huge hammer, and the captives that were hit by it all suffered from broken bones or internal bleeding!

With the primeval elephant as the arrowhead, the soldiers of the Nether World Watch in heavy armor pushed forward neatly like a wall.

Any captive that was bold enough to attack the iron defensive line was like a tide attacking the seashore. No matter how huge their strength seemed to be, they were always slapped back brutally!

As more and more soldiers of the Nether World Watch appeared around the captive camp through teleportation arrays, they gradually congregated into black squares, and the black squares piled on top of each other to form walls. The zone of activity for the captives was getting smaller and smaller!

They had been heavily wounded and exhausted because of the bombardment by the high-voltage electric arcs some ten minutes ago after all. Besides, they did not have many suitable weapons, and their teamwork was far from flawless. They were merely fighting with their hot blood.

When large teams of the Nether World Watch formed dominating battle formations and appeared in their sights, it was almost a declaration of the failure of the prison break.

But they were still waving their hands and claws numbly. They were not fighting to survive but fighting for a valiant death!

In the sky, a huge object slowly revealed itself, casting a shadow of desperation on them.

A devilish warship had flown over to the captive camp!

Lu Wuxin, Despot, and Swirl, the three commanders of the Nether World, stood on the bridge and watched the riot below them coldly.

“Stun Beetles, now!” Despot waved his hands hard.

Pu! Pu! Pu!

Below the devilish warship, through the tubes that looked like genital cavities, dozens of wet, black balls were spurted out. They fell toward the captive camp like bombs and exploded when they were about ten meters away from the ground, releasing black beetles that looked like crabs.

The wings of the beetles were beating fast, triggering supersonic waves that were not audible to ears but would seriously jeopardize the central nerves.

In the meantime, red and green colors were rapidly flashing on the translucent abdomen, stimulating the optic nerves of all the captives!

The supersonic waves and the dazzling colors could lead to a serious stunning effect on living creatures!

The soldiers of the Nether World Watch, on the other hand, had been prepared. They were all wearing special protective chips on their eyes and earpads on their ears.

In the range of attack of the Stun Beetles, the captives who were relatively weaker were all staggering as if intoxicated. Some of them were even kneeling on the ground and vomiting, their combat ability reduced to zero.

“Sticky Beetles, now!” Despot said coldly again.

Pu! Pu! Pu!

This time, it was a batch of bright blue beetles that was spurted out. They were mostly the size of billiard balls, and there were hundreds of them. After they unfolded their wings at a low altitude, they automatically flew to the places where the captives were densest before they exploded and splashed out liquids that were as thick as yogurt!

Under the blowing, freezing wind, the liquids solidified immediately, sticking a lot of captives together.

Even when some of the captives managed to rip the ‘yogurt’ apart, the threads of the liquids were still clinging to them, slowing down and deforming their actions.

The blowing wind had already cooled the captives’ hot blood. Under the suppression of the devilish warship, their morale was lower than ever.

“The enemy has lost hope. They are now lunatics trying to get themselves killed.”

Despot read the subtle change of the situation keenly.

“Take it slow. Try to reduce the casualties.” Lu Wuxin sighed as he looked at the enormous hole leading underground right in front of the captive camp.

With everything coming to this point, he could not enjoy the suppression no matter how spectacular it was.

“Kill them all!”

In the snowy world, Han Tuhu, Suo Chaolong, and Yuchi Ba knew that they had no chance of winning, but they were not frustrated at all. Instead, like the final radiance of the setting sun, their fighting will was leaking out of their every pore. They were like infuriated volcanoes that were about to burst out their most brilliant life!

Now that it was a dead end in the front, there was only one thing they could do.

“Kill!”

“Kill!”

“Kill them all!”

Han Tuhu had gone completely crazy. Chunks of flesh and stains of blood covered his claws and his tail. He did not look like a yaksha anymore, but an ancestor of yaksha! Even the red star medal at the center of his hat seemed to be made of blood right now. It was shining as if a dragon was ready to lunge out at any second!

“Stand up. Stand up. Stand up, everybody. Continue killing. Kill them all!” Han Tuhu burst into laughter. “Warriors of the Star Glory Federation, we should be proud of ourselves! We are the first batch of soldiers to go on such a killing spree in the homeland of the Blood Demon Sector! When our blood melts the snow and our souls return to our home, we will be able to chat with the predecessors who established the federation with our heads held high!”

Pei!

Suo Chaolong was nearby. His golden hair had been dyed red by blood. He was on a rampage, too. There were almost ten flying swords and sabers protruding from his body, but he was still rushing forward unstoppably despite the bleeding.

Clang!

After a collision, the saber in his hand broke in half. He did not even bother to blink and simply drew out a flying sword from his chest, stabbing it into the soldier of the Nether World Watch in front of him. He twisted the flying sword brutally, pushing his entire arm into the enemy’s chest. Then, he kicked the bottom of a demon captive.

“Get up and go on fighting!

“Do you see it? The hairless monkeys are swaggering around right under our noses.

“Bring out the valiancy and bravery of the silver-blood demons and show them how a real battle should be fought!”

BAM!

The two of them threw themselves into the crowd of the Nether World Watch time and time again and cleaned their surroundings easily. As it happened, because their moves were too mighty and they both chose where the soldiers of the Nether World Watch were densest, their blades crashed into each other as they cut open the skull of the same unlucky soldier!

Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong glared at each other.

“Han Tuhu!” Scorching flames were burning deep inside Suo Chaolong’s eyes. “Among the boneless troops of the Star Glory Federation, only your ‘Flying Tigers Legion’ could make me get somewhat serious! Our battle last time was messed up by those scumbags. What a pity that I won’t have a chance to fight against you anymore! If I did, I would certainly swallow every soldier of your legion and leave none!”

“I am always here if you want to fight!” Han Tuhu drew out a flying sword from his ribs, which turned into a streak of white brightness surrounded by electric arcs and blew a soldier of the Nether World Watch who was lunging at Suo Chaolong backward. “If we cannot fight when alive, then we can fight in hell until we are contented!”

“We are not going to die!”

The soldiers of the Blade of Chaos led by Yuchi Ba, although being ruthlessly butchered same as others, actually possessed the highest morale among the three groups there. That was because the underground explosion just now had given them a sign of the power of God Chaos.

Yuchi Ba roared at the top of his voice, “Warriors of the Blade of Chaos, just now, God Chaos demonstrated his power. It is our turn to demonstrate our determination! Show those guys the sharpness of the blades of God Chaos!”

Suo Chaolong rolled his eyes. He hated the babbling ‘traitors’ of the demon race even more than he hated the federal soldiers.

Yuchi Ba waved his saber while laughing. “Suo Chaolong, have you not witnessed the power of God Chaos with your own eyes? Did you not say just now that you would be a believer of God Chaos as soon as he gave you a miracle?”

Suo Chaolong blushed but shouted in rebuttal. “That doesn’t count. It was just an explosion of a malfunctioning rune array from forty thousand years ago! How can you convince me that it is a miracle of Chaos? Hehe. It will only count if—”

Suo Chaolong suddenly stopped talking and crouched into the size of a cat, dodging the attacks of two soldiers of the Nether World Watch. Then, he jerked up again, and his sharp blade drew an almost perfect arc that flashed past the enemies’ necks!

“—if such an explosion takes place for a second time!”

Suo Chaolong licked the blood on his blade and finished the sentence.

After saying that, he looked around somewhat anxiously.

Shouting and yelling were still everywhere. The tough performance of the few experts was not enough to reverse the failing fight. Many captives had been beaten back underground, and the surface of the earth had been filled up by the blackness of the soldiers of the Nether World Watch.

“Look!” Suo Chaolong said miserably. “No gods are going to save us. Not the gods of demons, not the gods of human beings, and not the so-called God Chaos that you believe in. They are all unhelpful. Our doom is inevitable!

“However, killing so many enemies before our death is definitely worth—”

Suo Chaolong bit his tongue heavily for a second time.

Han Tuhu, Yuchi Ba, and countless other captives and soldiers of the Nether World Watch were all blown into the air.

The one second when they were airborne was extremely long. They seemed to be bugs that were frozen in amber.

Looking far ahead, they could see that large rocks were soaring into the sky like fireworks and blossoming.

The intense smoke was rising slowly in the shape of a mushroom, as if a volcano that had hibernated for ten thousand years had been awakened at that second.

Then, they heard a deafening noise rushing out from underground, like a dam had collapsed and a flood was raging!

“…” Han Tuhu.

“…” Suo Chaolong.

“Suo—Suo Chaolong,” Yuchi Ba stuttered, “are you sure that you are not a loyal believer of Chaos?”

Chapter 946 - All Looted!

“Cough! Cough!”

The floor where the interrogation chamber was located seemed to have just experienced a hurricane before it was sabotaged by magma again. One third of the floor had collapsed. Countless soldiers of the Nether World Watch turned into charcoal before they had the chance to scream, and the charcoal was burnt to ash in 0.1 seconds. Even the ashes were blown away to all directions. They had been completely vaporized!

The soldiers of the Nether World Watch that were still alive all suffered serious internal injuries because of the blast. Just like fish that had surfaced too quickly in a deep ocean, their bodies were expanding fast, with drops of blood leaking out of their pores. Their brains were shaking violently at a high speed inside their skulls, and they could still hear humming noises!

Li Yao and the Fire Ant King coughed hard as they got to their feet again. Looking at each other in bewilderment, they discovered that both of them were now blocks of charcoal, and the demeanor of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator and a demon emperor was entirely gone.

“Let’s go!”

The Fire Ant King knew that they were too short on time for him to complain. Lu Wuxin might reinforce the control center with the main force of the Nether World Watch at any moment. Every second they had right now was extremely precious!

Hiu!

The two of them turned into two streaks of brightness and darted toward where the interrogation chamber used to be. The place appeared to be a furnace that had just exploded. The high temperature of almost a thousand degrees melted all materials into translucent glass.

They looked downward from the edge of the collapse, only to discover that the ten or so floors below them had been entirely pierced through, as if a cone-shaped well whose bottom could not be seen was there. Miserable screams were echoing nonstop from the floors below, as if the hole was the entrance to hell.

After glancing at each other, the two of them both jumped down and accelerated to their top speed.

Even if the bottom was really the hell, they would still march forward unstoppably!

As far as their eyes could reach, almost every soldier on every floor had been shocked by the explosion and was staggering while holding their head.

Li Yao took the chance to retrieve a lot of crystal bombs and smoke grenades from his Cosmos Rings. In a moment, the entire ‘Nether World’ was enshrouded in hazy fog, seriously jamming the sight of the soldiers of the Nether World Watch. The continuous explosions of the crystal bombs blew up countless architectural materials and blocked the hole that pierced through all the floors.

Although the ruins were not solid enough, the enemy would still have to waste a lot of time in finding the hole that was buried below the ruins after they came back to themselves!

Li Yao and the Fire Ant King broke into the minus nineteenth floor!

With Li Yao’s thorough survey of the entire ‘Nether World’ and his precise calculation, the distance of the explosion had been delicately manipulated. The cannonball had not been detonated until it reached the minus eighteenth floor. The torrents of metal shrapnel at super high speeds were like meteors that pierced through the defense rune arrays and left a hole the size of a basin.

For the super experts who could freely control the muscles and bones all over their bodies such as Li Yao and the Fire Ant King, such a hole was good enough!

What was even better was that the intense stun that the cannonball burst out heavily wounded all the soldiers of the Nether World Watch on the several floors nearby. They suffering from brain concussions, and their stomachs were uneasy. They did not have any combat ability for now!

The elites of the Nether World Watch, including Lu Wuxin, Despot, and Swirl, had been distracted by the riot of the captives. Never could they have foreseen such a dangerous person like Li Yao lurking deep inside the ‘Nether World’, even being able to crack the ‘Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle’.

Right now, inside the control center, it was mostly the operators of the biochemical brains and the crystal processors. Even though they had luckily survived the blast, their combat ability was close to zero in the eyes of Li Yao and the Fire Ant King.

The few experts in the demon king stage were still stunned because of the explosion and became the primary target for the duo.

Shua! Shua!

Li Yao and the Fire Ant King turned into two streaks of redness and drew devastating lines of death in the vast control center. Most of the soldiers of the Nether World Watch had been slain before they realized what was going on!

Ten seconds later, there was nothing but dead silence inside the control center!

The two of them finally took a deep breath in relief and observed the brain and heart of the ‘Nether World’.

Since a lot of crystal processors and biochemical brains, which required an enormous space to cool down, had been stored in the place, it was like a very special temple.

At the center of the place was a humongous biochemical brain that was more than twenty meters in diameter, which was essentially a huge mountain of meat. Countless biochemical nerves extended from the depths of the brain and connected to various smaller biochemical brains. Then, thinner biochemical nerves protruded out of the smaller biochemical brains and docked to the heads of the operators of the Nether World Watch.

Outside of the biochemical brain, a circle of crystal processors had been deployed, which had triggered almost a hundred light beams to help manage the biochemical brain.

Outside of the control center, hasty footsteps and sounds of weapon were drawing close.

The soldiers of the Nether World Watch that were guarding outside finally came back to themselves. Hearing the miserable screams inside the control center, they rushed to the rescue!

The Fire Ant King dashed to the top of the biochemical brain, his thick tail waving here and there behind him. Suddenly, a bone spur appeared at the end of his tail and pierced into the main biochemical brain brutally!

Rattling noises were echoing nonstop, as if he was injecting something into the biochemical brain. While communicating with the biochemical brain, he shouted, “I am trying to hack the biochemical brain right now in order to gain control over the defense system of the ‘Nether World’. Can you hold back the enemy for one minute? If not, thirty seconds!”

Li Yao turned to the door of the control center, which was now wide open, and took a deep breath, falling on one of his knees. His left arm suddenly bulged to three times the original size before it suddenly began burning furiously. The crystal in his hand was like a rising sun. After a bellow, he launched the ‘Cell Obliteration Cannon’!

The ten or so soldiers of the Nether World Watch who were about to get into the door were pierced by the attack instantly. The attack continued moving forward and led to an intense explosion outdoors!

“What did you say?”

Li Yao had been too focused on the activation of the ‘Cell Obliteration Cannon’ to notice what the Fire Ant King was saying.

“… Nothing. Keep it up.”

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

His tail was piercing deeper and deeper into the main biochemical brain, and the main biochemical brain was shaking more and more violently. A soul-stirring battle seemed to be continuing unseen.

A moment later, the Fire Ant King cursed. “I almost breached the defense of the main biochemical brain, but it has deployed a dozen new barriers with the computational ability of the crystal processors nearby!

“Do you know how to crack the barriers of crystal processors?”

Li Yao kicked a soldier of the Nether World Watch that was as gigantic as a behemoth while he planted three crystal bombs into the gaps of the enemy’s armor with his toe.

The soldier knocked back a few of his companions behind him like a cannonball. When he rolled to the narrowest place at the door, where the soldiers of the Nether World Watch were densest, he exploded.

Li Yao glanced at the types, distribution, and flow of the tubes of all the crystal processors around the main biochemical brain. Then, he raised his left hand again and shot the ‘Cell Obliteration Cannon’ seven times in a row, blowing seven crystal processors into smithereens!

“I know a thing or two,” Li Yao said.

“…They are really cracked now!”

Ten seconds later, the Fire Ant King gained control over the defense system of the ‘Nether World’ temporarily!

An iron gate weighing dozens of tons fell from the main pathway. Almost a hundred defense rune arrays were shining and melting together at the same time!

It was the security mode of the highest level for the control center and designed to be activated only when the ‘Nether World’ was under large-scale attacks. After it was activated, even if a demon emperor was on a rampage outside, it would still take them at least twenty minutes to blow up the defense rune arrays.

Right now, the only loophole was the hole in the ceiling.

However, the hole was too small and could only allow one individual to pass through at a time. Whoever dared to enter the room through the hole would essentially be feeding themselves to Li Yao and the Fire Ant King.

“Ha!” The Fire Ant King laughed. “As it turns out, quite a few teleportation arrays have been hidden in this place, some of which even lead to the docks of the devilish warships!”

“Of course,” Li Yao said. “In case of a large attack, the important figures in the control center must find a way to get out of here at quickly as possible. They cannot wait and do nothing before they are captured. The secret teleportation arrays are definitely necessary!”

The Fire Ant King cracked his knuckles. “Excellent. In the ten minutes to come, the control center will be ours!”

He closed his eyes and focused his attention on the main biochemical brain, searching for Elder Nether Spring’s most confidential plans and files.

Li Yao, on the other hand, was observing the advanced crystal processors nearby, his eyes shining.

“Valiant Warrior IX, Haiyan VII, Rapid Dragon IV. Well, well, well. All of them are the top-tier crystal processors of the Star Glory Federation that only the large sects and crystal suit centers have the privilege to purchase.

“Huh. What’s this one? A Light Devil III?

“I remember that it is the mainframe crystal processor in several large war bases of the federal army. It is a top secret of the federal army, too. Besides, when I left the federation ten years ago, it was only Light Devil II.

“Elder Nether Spring does have a lot of connections. He can get access to such a cutting-edge mainframe crystal processor!

“Right. The ‘Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle’ is already a piece of magical equipment of national importance. Also, judging from the details of the key chips, it was refined by Jiang Shaoyang himself. Therefore, such magical equipment could never be manufactured, and there is only a limited number of them.

“But now, Elder Nether Spring has got one of them. How did he do it?”

It was not a good time to ask questions now. As a crazy fan of crystal processors, with so many state-of-the-art crystal processors of the Star Glory Federation in front of him, there was only one thing Li Yao could do.

Take them all!

Like locusts passing through a farmland, Li Yao took out all his Cosmos Rings and stored all the crystal processors that were smaller in size. As for the mainframe crystal processors that were larger, he simply dismantled the most critical computation chips and the storage chips and packed them all!

In a moment, all the super advanced crystal processors that Elder Nether Spring had gathered over more than ten years were looted by Li Yao!

Chapter 947 - Frost Storm Flowers, Spurt!

Looking at the empty control center, Li Yao couldn't have felt more satisfied. He then deployed a lot of crystal bombs sordidly on the debris of the mainframe crystal processors that he could not take away, ensuring that not even half a cooling rune array would be left for Elder Nether Spring. Finally, he turned around and checked the Fire Ant King's progress.

The Fire Ant King's tail was thicker and thicker. Round watermelons seemed to be flowing from the main biochemical brain into his body.

In the end, after quivering for a moment, a bright gray ball that looked like an egg surface on the 'prefrontal cortex' of the main biochemical brain.

"He's got it!"

Li Yao was refreshed. He knew that the structure of the biochemical brain differed from the structure of the crystal processor in that the former was made up by a lot of biochemical units for different functions. The gray 'egg' that had just shown up now was apparently the memory and storage unit for the biochemical brain!

The top secrets of the 'Nether World' were definitely stored inside the unit!

"Let's go!" Li Yao roared at the Fire Ant King.

The bombarding noises outside of the defense rune arrays were getting more and more intense, mixed with the sound of a certain hard-working drill. Li Yao extended his telepathic thought out of the room through the hole in the ceiling and perceived that hundreds of soldiers of the Nether World Watch had gathered outside of the control center.

“Hold on a second!”

The Fire Ant King stored the memory unit of the main biochemical brain away but did not remove his tail. Instead, he continued communicating with the main biochemical brain with his eyes half closed.

“What are you doing?” Li Yao was baffled.

“I am communicating with the demonic plants outside of the captive camp and trying to control them,” the Fire Ant King answered casually, his voice so hollow that it sounded like from somewhere far away. “The demonic plants are a certain frost mutation of ‘Storm Flowers’. They can spurt out spores that contain a huge amount of freezing spiritual energy, which makes them the most fatal air defense weapons.

“Many captives have the ability to fly. Elder Nether Spring must’ve deployed a circle of Frost Storm Flowers outside of the captive camp in case they flew away.

“However, right now, it is a devilish warship that is flying in the air!”

Li Yao was slightly dazed, but then he noticed the situation at the north of the island.

While the Fire Ant King and he were on a rampage in the depths of the ‘Nether World’, the elites of the Nether World Watch seemed to be in a dilemma, not sure whether they should suppress the riot of the captives first or reinforce the control center immediately.

The devilish warship was still floating in midair and only shifted its direction to the ‘Nether World’.

The Fire Ant King’s soul power crawled into the depths of the main biochemical brain through the nerves on his tail. Then, with the vibration and enhancement of the main biochemical brain, it flowed toward the ‘Frost Storm Flowers’ at the north of the island along the biochemical nerves. He and the demonic plants seemed to be integrating!

Li Yao was surprised. “You can control the demonic plants?”

The Fire Ant King smiled. “Have you forgotten who I am?”

Li Yao was dazed. Then he suddenly recalled the countless communities of demonic plants that he had seen when he arrived at Void Turmoil City.

…

On the devilish warship in the sky of the captive camp, the faces of Lu Wuxin, Despot, and Swirl could not have been more terrible.

“A huge explosion has taken place inside the Nether World. The test field for new weapons has been entirely wrecked. Several floors below have been penetrated. A lot of soldiers have been killed or wounded!”

“The center of explosion is the interrogation chamber where the Fire Ant King is locked!”

“Not good. The control center has been compromised. Our connection to the control center has been cut off!”

“The maximum defense mode has been activated by the control center. We are locked out and cannot break in at the moment!”

Bad news came one piece after another, piercing into their heads like rusted nails.

What was most critical was that they did not know what was going on exactly even to this moment!

At first, Lu Wuxin thought that the Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle on the Fire Ant King had detonated.

However, the explosion of such a piece of confining magical equipment should not have been so powerful!

When the news that the control center had been compromised came over, he was so shocked that he immediately wanted to reinforce the base.

However, the second earthshaking explosion was like a dosage of a super exhilarant for the captives who were rioting. Not only were the soldiers of the Blade of Chaos charging fearlessly, the rest of the captives were also growling as if they had been possessed by the god of killing.

On the Nether World Watch’s side, their morale had hit rock bottom.

The first explosion could have been a coincidence, but the second explosion was undeniable evidence that mysterious, new enemies were around!

The things that the Nether World Watch had been doing were highly clandestine. Now that their secrets risked being exposed, the psychological burden was fatal for them!

The black wall that used to be as tough as iron gradually displayed gaps and vulnerabilities. A lot of soldiers of the Nether World Watch were apparently more inert than before. They looked back frequently, hoping to get more information from the twisted mushroom cloud above the ‘Nether World’.

Anybody with some common sense about battles knew that, if they were given the order to retreat, the soldiers of the Nether World Watch might collapse on the spot!

Lu Wuxin was breathing hard. Every scar on his face, which looked like a centipede’s, was jumping up, making his face even more hideous.

“Let me go there!” Despot suddenly rose up. “I’m going to solve the problem in the ‘Nether World’ with my own squad!”

“Wait!” Swirl suddenly stopped him. “Don’t! Nobody knows exactly what is going on in the ‘Nether World’!

“Since the enemy has compromised the control center and cut off our connection, they must’ve taken over the defense system!

“All the pathways in the Nether World will be closed now, and the lifts are not functioning. How long will it take to march into the control center even if you go in recklessly?

“Besides, considering the trouble they have caused, do you know what level the enemies are in? Our combat ability is maximized only when we attack together. You will be merely committing suicide if you go alone!

“Aim our main gun at the dock and prepare to launch!”

Despot was dazed. “What?”

Swirl smiled coldly, with mysterious brilliance beaming out of his eyes. “Whoever they are, whatever they are here for, they will have to escape from the control center in the end. Do you think that they will be silly enough to kill their way out?

“No, they won’t. They will certainly make use of the secret teleportation rune arrays we have deployed in the control center!

“Therefore, aim at the dock and adjust the launching units. Lock onto the exit of the secret teleportation arrays!

“Prepare all the acid cannons, the venom cannons, and the demonic ray cannons. If there is even the slightest anomaly on the teleportation arrays, blow them up immediately!”

Despot rolled his eyes and bashed his breastplate. “Good. That’s good. You have indeed seized the critical weakness of the enemy!”

“There is no way that we can take back the control center before the enemy causes even greater damage. If so, we can only focus on the here and now.” Swirl bit her lips softly, with coldness all over her face. “Ask the troops on the ground to inject a larger dosage of berserker drugs. Suppress the riot of the captives at all costs!

“There is no need to care about the lives of the captives now. Kill them all!

“As for the mysterious intruders inside the ‘Nether World’, unless you have decided to hide below the ground like rats for the rest of your lives, you are certainly going to escape via the secret teleportation arrays, aren’t you?

“Also, your purpose will be to capture a devilish warship, or you will never run away from the lone island in the middle of an icy ocean!

“Wait. Control center… Control… Not good!”

Desperation suddenly appeared on Swirl’s face, as if somebody had stabbed her in the chest.

At the same time, earsplitting alarms were ringing!

Before anybody realized what was going on, the devilish warship shrank like a scared insect and dodged hard.

However, it was too close to the source of attack!

The devilish warship happened to be floating right above almost a thousand Frost Storm Flowers.

The demonic plants, which were as ugly as the internal organs of animals, were active in the first place, prepared to launch fatal attacks at the captives who flew to the sky.

Therefore, when a lot of spiritual energy was condensed inside them, the devilish warship did not send out a warning.

Lu Wuxin and the rest of them failed to notice that the demonic plants were slightly adjusting their direction and angle.

A thousand Frost Storm Flowers expanded crazily at the same time, with cracks of ice appearing on their surface. Then, with an earsplitting sound, they spurted out a thousand torrents of frost spores toward the devilish warship, which was only one step away from them!

The spores were the essence of their life. The Storm Flowers spurted out their ‘seeds’ in such a way so that their offspring could flourish in the vast land.

The larger their shooting range was, the bigger the ‘territory’ of the Storm Flowers would be. Even the wild Storm Flowers could spurt their spores several kilometers away. The Frost Storm Flowers there, whose genes had been modified over almost a hundred generations, were as good as the flying swords of the Cultivators in regards of their shooting range and strength.

Caught unprepared, the devilish warship did not even have the chance to turn on the shield before it was hit by a thousand pale white torrents of ice. The middle part of the warship was immediately frozen by the extremely low temperature, which significantly compromised its integrity. It was no longer able to withstand the weight of the front part and the rear part of the warship and was emitting cracking noises, showing signs that it might break apart at any moment!

The biochemical nerves between the bridge and the engine unit were also frozen, torn apart, and shattered by the low temperature. The devilish warship, which had gone out of control, hissed and plummeted, swirling, before it hit the battle formation of almost a thousand soldiers of the Nether World Watch precisely.

Dozens of unlucky soldiers were smashed into pulps of meat before they had the opportunity to scream. The remaining soldiers, who were in a hurry to run away from the crash, could not maintain the solid defense line at all anymore.

Han Tuhu, Suo Chaolong, and Yuchi Ba were utterly dumbfounded. Looking at each other in confusion, they observed the collapsing defense line of the Nether World Watch and the devilish warship, which was crumbling in deep blue, icy fog, feeling that they had to be dreaming.

“Is… is this yet another sign of your God Chaos?” Suo Chaolong asked.

Chapter 948 - Mystic Skeleton Again!

At the same time, when the devilish crashed, Li Yao and the Fire Ant King appeared next to a piece of enormous floating ice through the secret teleportation array.

The dock was right ahead of them.

Right now, the dock was in chaos. The ten or so guards were looking at the north of the island, where black smoke was popping up nonstop, in a daze. Three enormous devilish warships were placed in the middle of the half-buried dock like three topsy-turvy whales, not prepared to take off at all.

Naturally, the guards were no match for the two of them and were cleared in a moment.

Out of their expectations, they discovered the sky-hunting warship of the Blade of Chaos behind the three devilish warships.

After carrying a lot of goods from the Mausoleum of Chaos to the island, the sky-hunting warship had been docked in this place. Elder Nether Spring seemed to plan on modifying it and use it for the Nether World Watch.

The Fire Ant King pondered for a moment and decided to break into the sky-hunting warship.

Although its size was significantly smaller than the three devilish warships, the Fire Ant King was more familiar with it after all, since it was his own warship. Besides, a smaller size meant that the operation would be easier.

It was still very difficult for him to manipulate a large, strange warship alone.

Looking at the dense, black spots that were flying close not far away, Li Yao asked anxiously, “Can you drive it without help?”

They were the soldiers of the Nether World Watch who had come to the dock to fly the devilish warships.

The two of them had to activate the sky-hunting warship before the soldiers arrived. It would be troublesome if the sky-hunting warship was destroyed.

“It’s only several kilometers from the dock to the captive camp. It shouldn’t be a problem!”

The Fire Ant King gritted his teeth and said, “However, I will need several minutes to activate the main biochemical brain of the sky-hunting warship!”

Hardly had he concluded his sentence when almost a hundred demon beasts that looked like hybrids of jellyfish and octopi crawled out of the seawater. They were waving their crimson tentacles with sucking disks and could also spurt out intense air currents, allowing them to both swim rapidly in the ocean and fly temporarily in midair. They could even glide to the surface of a warship and stick to it!

Such demon beasts were named ‘Eight-Clawed Vine Pots’. They were the guards in the ice ocean. Not only did they boast high corrosive and penetrative abilities, once there were enough of them, they could also trigger high-intensity bioelectricity, which could seriously affect a warship and reduce its performance.

The Fire Ant King’s expression dropped.

The two of them were terribly outnumbered after all. The Fire Ant King himself also needed to focus his attention on the devilish warship and could do nothing about the incoming enemies.

Li Yao sucked in the cold air. Sneaking into the control center was only the first step. To rescue all the captives would be the real fight. All that was coming next would be head-on battles where tricks were useless.

“How long do you need to activate the warship?”

The Fire Ant King thought for a moment. “Five minutes!”

“Alright. I’ll give you five minutes. Go now!”

The Cosmos Ring that he wore on his right middle finger was shivering slightly, as the crystal suit stored inside could not hold its hunger any longer. It was like a flying sword that was roaring in its sheath, ready for battle.

In the past, Li Yao had only been fighting on his own. He had been surrounded by countless enemies and had to conceal his identity.

But right now, his identity had been seen through by the Fire Ant King. Also, the two of them were making such a scene and rescuing so many federal soldiers. It seemed unnecessary, and impossible, to conceal his identity any longer.

Then, he might as well fight to his heart’s content!

Golden brilliance was swirling fast around his black and red pupils. Spiritual energy leaked out of his pores like invisible flames, making his messy hair stand up and change the color of its tips. Spluttering electric arcs were also dancing above his head.

The Fire Ant King spat hard and said even more gravely, “Not good. The enemy seems to have sent out another tough expert, who has given me tremendous pressure although he hasn’t shown up yet. The guy seems to boast a certain weird metal attack ability, too. My auditory nerves have been compromised, and I seem to suffering from an auditory hallucination because I’m hearing eerie, violent music!

“Wait. It is not a hallucination. Violent music is truly playing. Do you hear it?

“What kind of terrifying monster has Elder Nether Spring tamed that can possibly utter such a shocking sou—”

The Fire Ant King’s voice came to an abrupt halt, and he gazed at Li Yao’s abdomen with a pair of weird eyes.

Li Yao’s face remained unchanged. He said casually, “Yes. It’s from my stomach.”

“Why—why is music coming from your stomach?”

“I like to play some music to lighten up the mood while I’m fighting!”

…

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

From the debris of the devilish warship, Lu Wuxin, Despot, and Swirl, who were more than infuriated, leapt up and floated in midair.

The scene on the ground, however, made their heads so dizzy that they almost fell down again.

Because of the crash of the devilish warship, the battle formation of the Nether World Watch had been disrupted into a mess. They were being ruthlessly butchered by the captives, whose morale could not have been higher.

But more soldiers of the Nether World Watch had been blocked in the narrow part of the island by the debris of the warship and could not reinforce them.

For the captives, after they killed every soldier of the Nether World Watch, they would be able to loot the enemy’s weapons and armor, thereby doubling their own combat ability.

Under the roars of Suo Chaolong and Han Tuhu, the two commanders, the captives who were about to collapse were rallied once more!

Before Lu Wuxin, Despot, and Swirl realized what was going on, fulminations burst out from the dock at the south of the island. The sky-hunting warship they had captured from the Blade of Chaos had now soared into the sky and was flying toward the captive camp in a crooked trajectory!

Countless Eight-Clawed Vine Pots were hovering around the vehicle, only to be ripped into threads by lines of fire shot from above.

Many soldiers of the Nether World Watch were jumping to the sky, hoping to break into the sky-hunting warship.

However, they were all riddled with holes, their blood raining down, by the black daggers that looked like feathers without exception.

“It’s—it’s impossible. Where are those guys from?” Lu Wuxin roared aloud. “How can there possibility be a whole team of soldiers lurking inside the ‘Nether World’ and even capturing a warship by chance?

“Where are our devilish warships? Activate them and shoot the enemy down!”

Before he finished his sentence, an intense explosion broke out on the dock in a boom. A piece of floating ice the size of a hill was hurled into the sky before it smashed the ice ocean heavily. Black smoke was continuously popping up, like a big face that was grimacing at him in midair.

It was obvious that the remaining three warships could not take off for the time being, if they were not completely wrecked already.

Swirl pointed at the top of the sky-hunting warship and exclaimed, “Look over there. Somebody is on the warship!”

Lu Wuxin and Despot enhanced their sight and both exclaimed in shock, too.

“What—what is that?”

“Could it be—”

Above the sky-hunting warship, in the middle of the blowing wind, a deep black crystal suit that looked like a devil walking on the earth was standing majestically!

Lu Wuxin, Despot, and Swirl had never seen such a weirdly-shaped and yet dominating crystal suit before.

The deep black shell was almost transparent, as if it had been carved out of the purest black jade, without the tiniest gaps on it.

On the surface of the crystal suit, along the lines of the muscles, dark red stripes had been embedded. They congregated into circles on his joints. Dark red rune arrays were shining inside the circles with mysterious brilliance.

Six dragon heads, which were also a deep red, extended to the front from the back of the crystal suit across the shoulders, with three on the left and three on the right. The dragon heads were dashing up and down, blowing out soul-stirring balls of light. For the soldiers of the Nether World Watch who were unfortunately hit by them, obliteration was their only outcome.

An even thicker metal dragon, in the meantime, was hovering on the right arm of the crystal suit. The two sides and the forehead of the dragon head were embedded with three bloody marrow crystals, which were emitting a dangerous glimmer.

On the two sides of the crystal suit, the black wings condensed by spiritual energy extended all the way to dozens of meters away. The wings were not adornments but lethal magical equipment—they could split into black daggers and tear the soldiers of the Nether World Watch apart quietly at any time.

The sixteen Six-Barreled Vulcan Machine Cannons that were circling around the crystal suit launched almost a hundred lines of fire, constituting a storm of bullets that swept the area nearby. All the demon beasts and soldiers of the Nether

World Watch were minced into powder when they got into the range!

It was not a crystal suit but a battle fortress with immense firepower!

Behind the black crystal suit, a blood red cloak, hundreds of meters long, added fresh colors to the dark, gray clouds.

It had also cut open six bleeding wounds in the pupils of Lu Wuxin, Despot, and Swirl!

“What—what is this crystal suit? Why have I never seen it before?”

“Strong. It is too strong. The demon generals of the Nether World Watch are being slaughtered as if he were chopping vegetables!”

“Where—where does the music come from? Am I suffering from a mental attack? Is it an auditory hallucination?”

All three of them were petrified!

Han Tuhu, Suo Chaolong, Yuchi Ba, and all the other captives discovered the sky-hunting warship, which was staggering close in midair, too.

After they noticed that the sky-hunting warship was opening fire toward the soldiers of the Nether World Watch nearby mercilessly, they were all startled for a moment.

However, the next second, cheers and applause as loudly as a hurricane burst out from the captives of the federal army!

“A crystal suit. It’s a crystal suit!”

“A strong Cultivator has arrived!”

Li Yao’s magnificent shadow was flashing deep inside their eyes while their tears flowed out. Han Tuhu was even more dumbfounded. He could not begin to understand why such a strong Cultivator would show up in this place. Also, what was the crystal suit all about?

As the commander of a major legion in the federal army, he was quite familiar with the most cutting-edge crystal suits of the Star Glory Federation. Yet, he had never seen a crystal suit in such a form before, which had combined elegance, brutality, and dominance. It had reached the peak of speed, firepower and strength. It was even more daunting than the crystal suits that many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators wore!

Of course, the capability of the newcomer, his pitiless attacks, and his overwhelming spiritual gas proved that he deserved to wear the crystal suit, too!

Chapter 949 - Let Out the Unparalleled!

“Who is he exactly?”

Han Tuhu thought hard for a long time but failed to come up with such a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator and such a crystal suit in the Star Glory Federation!

But that did not matter for the time being.

What mattered was…

“Kill them all!”

Han Tuhu burst into laughter and charged forward unstoppably!

In that moment, the situation in the battlefield had been completely reversed. Not only had many captives capturing the weapons and armor of the Nether World Watch, they were even seizing control of several biochemical beasts.

More importantly, under Li Yao’s crazy barrage, the sky-hunting warship finally breached the blockage and broke into the captive camp!

All the doors were immediately opened!

“Evacuate immediately!” Li Yao’s voice tore through the sky like thunder. “The warriors of the Blade of Chaos who know how to pilot the sky-hunting warship get on board first and activate the weapon system!

“The rest of you, stabilize the defense and retreat step by step!”

Lu Wuxin, Despot, and Swirl were so anxious that they had no time to think about the battle formation right now. Leading hundreds of personal guards, they dashed to the sky and marched toward the sky-hunting warship. “Stop them!”

“Just you?”

Li Yao darted out of the sky-hunting warship and stopped in the front of the hundreds of elites of the Nether World Watch. His wings of spiritual energy were stretched out to the maximum and blocked all of them like two giant hands. The blood red cloak was flapping in the wind and soared up, turning into a torch that was burning through the sky!

The dominating aura formed a heavy field in the hundreds of square meters nearby where the thin air seemed to have turned into seawater.

The two casual words were already enough to make a lot of the elites of the Nether World Watch grunt. They felt that their heads were dizzy, and their backs were prickly.

The vibrations around the gold core deep inside Li Yao’s stomach were also exploding inside their hearts like heavy drums!

It was the real strength of the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage!

“Do you have my permissions to go there?”

On the surface of the helmet of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, which was as smooth as a mirror, four rows of crimson crystal cameras had been installed in the shape of a diamond, covering Li Yao’s real eyes and making him appear even more unpredictable.

His words seemed to be echoing behind the head of every soldier. Even the experts such as Despot and Swirl could not help but shiver in chill.

“Who—who is he exactly?”

“I did not know that there was such an expert among the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators of the Star Glory Federation!”

Behind Li Yao, a lot of warriors of the Blade of Chaos had successfully boarded the sky-hunting warship.

In the meantime, the federal soldiers and the demon captives were also changing their battle formation, preparing to evacuate.

Lu Wuxin gnashed his teeth and roared, “Even though he is in the Nascent Soul Stage, he is all by himself here. Kill him!”

He slapped his tentacles and claws. Ten or so loyal soldiers of the Nether World Watch, boosted by the berserker drugs, charged at Li Yao with burning fighting will.

On the other hand, Lu Wuxin stepped back quickly and observed the battle calmly.

Li Yao sneered. The black wings dispersed into streaks of black gas and retreated behind him. They entangled his right arm along his shoulder blade and extended forward. In front of his right arm, the feathers were condensed into a super saber more than ten meters long that was surrounded by black gas!

It was the Feathered Dragon Saber, the main weapon of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and a perfect combination of a saber of spiritual energy and one with a real entity!

Made of thousands of shining feathers and the sharpest daggers, the saber dispersed into black tornadoes one moment and twisted into a whip hundreds of meters long the next. All the incoming soldiers were wreathed in the black fog.

In a moment, the black fog dispersed, and all the soldiers of the Nether World Watch had been ripped apart. Meanwhile, Li Yao turned into a streak of blackness and sprinted toward Lu Wuxin, Despot, Swirl, and hundreds of elites of the Nether World Watch!

Shua!

Outside of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, streaks of brightness appeared out of thin air and consolidated into a shell that looked like glass, adding a new layer of protection that was even sturdier to the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. Inside the ‘glass’, complicated, glamorous spiritual stripes were appearing and disappearing unpredictably.

The Unparalleled Extension!

It was a special version of the Unparalleled Extension designed for the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit that had been co-produced by Li Yao and the Ares Laboratory, the best research institute of Ares Extensions in the Flying Star Sector!

Mystic Skeleton with Dragon King, Unparalleled in the Universe!

That was the ultimate form of the latest version of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit!

The ‘Super Bendable Steel’ that the Unparalleled Extension adopted boasted the amazing ability of absorbing hostile attacks before returning them. It was most suitable for a group fight where one was against many foes!

Li Yao was like a burning scalpel that cut into the softest tofu!

He did not dodge the attacks of the regular soldiers of the Nether World Watch at all and simply absorbed the energy with the magnificent performance of the Super Bendable Steel. Then, he returned the attacks to their sources. There was no need for him to wave his saber. The rushing aura of his saber was enough to cut a lot of the enemies in half.

In his eyes, the hundreds of soldiers of the Nether World Watch all turned into rapidly jumping numbers. Dozens of virtual battles were being fought inside the depths of his brain simultaneously. He improved his computational ability to the maximum while he calculated the entire battle. He moved, baited, and pushed the enemies, sometimes even hiding behind the ignorant ones, occasionally with the help of smoke grenades and flash bangs, in order to buy more time for the captives.

“Asshole!” Despot roared and raged forward among the soldiers until he reached Li Yao. An unprecedently dazzling ball of lightning was condensed between his long horns and slashed at Li Yao in the shape a long, narrow saber of electric arcs!

With Li Yao’s speed and agility, he could have dodged the attack, but he did not move at all and simply sprinted toward the saber!

He was going to cripple Despot!

Li Yao was very clearly that, although he seemed to be on an unstoppable rampage right now, it was at the cost of an unbelievable amount of spiritual energy. His spiritual energy was gushing out like water in a broken dam. It was impossible for him to maintain the state for long!

Therefore, he had to seize the time to cripple one or two experts on the enemy’s side!

BOOM!

The saber of electric arcs slashed the left shoulder of the Unparalleled Extension brutally.

The shoulder, which looked like diamond, was immediately covered in cracks.

Despite the double protection of the Unparalleled Extension and the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Li Yao’s left shoulder still suffered a minor fracture.

However, a lot of the energy of the electric arcs was stored in the Super Bendable Steel, too.

Shua! Shua!

Lu Wuxin and Swirl, in the meantime, jumped out from behind Despot!

The two of them had been reading Li Yao’s combat style carefully instead of fighting. Then, they hid themselves behind Despot’s brawny body, waiting to launch a fatal attack at Li Yao.

Swirl’s weapon was a colorful soft sword that was brimming with blood-breezing veins.

Lu Wuxin’s weapon, on the other hand, was a hollow needle that was hidden deep inside his tentacles. There was also a long soft tube behind the needle that was connected to one of the suspicious lumps on his body!

In their plan, even if their attack missed the target, it would certainly be enough to force the enemy to retreat.

Then, the three of them would naturally launch a series of incessant fatal moves that would cast the enemy into an ocean of destruction.

But outside their expectations, Li Yao did not dodge at all and simply continued charging forward, allowing the Unparalleled Extension to be pierced through by the two new attacks!

He stomped on the air hard. A powerful flame burst out of his feet, giving him immense counterforce, while he grabbed the Feathered Dragon Saber and drew a perfect upward arc, crashing brutally into the second saber of electric arcs that Despot shot out!

However, the huge blast that Despot expected did not happen. The Feathered Dragon Saber split apart into black feathers before the collision and dispersed.

Despot felt extremely uncomfortable now that his attack had missed the target. His body was leaning forward slightly.

Li Yao’s right arm that was entangled with a dragon happened to be pressing his chest. The six dragons, which were raging on his back previously, had moved to the right arm at who knew when and constituted a drill that was revolving at the highest speed together with the seventh dragon!

“Ahhh!”

Feeling the severe threat of death, every piece of shell on Despot’s body was standing up. He tried his best to crouch a little bit. As a result, the drill of mystic rays that was aimed at his heart previously moved upward an inch.

BOOM!

An unbelievably furious pillar of light, mixed with the demonic energy absorbed from the attacks of Despot, Swirl, and Lu Wuxin earlier, was blown out from Li Yao’s palm, piercing through and vaporizing Despot’s left scapula and left arm. Even his enormous heart was exposed to the air, beating unsteadily!

Before Lu Wuxin and Swirl’s counterattack, Li Yao had already kicked Despot’s chest hard and dashed out of the siege through the gaps of the soldiers of the Nether World Watch as if he were smoke.

Huchi! Huchi! Huchi!

Li Yao floated in midair dozens of meters away from the Nether World Watch, breathing hard and eyeing them coldly.

Below the crystal suit, a pearl of blood was leaking out of every pore over Li Yao’s body. He felt that the world was dimming, and earsplitting buzzes were echoing in his ears.

They were all the signs that his spiritual energy was going to be exhausted soon.

However, when thousands of black feathers condensed behind his back and the two fierce wings were flapping again, none of the soldiers of the Nether World Watch dared to take a step forward.

Looking at the shocking wound on Despot’s body, Lu Wuxin, and Swirl were also breathing hard.

“He can’t hold on any longer!” Lu Wuxin gnashed his teeth. “Even though he is a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, he cannot have been unharmed by our fierce attacks while performing such an aggressive move!”

“That’s right. Go forward now and finish him!” Swirl shrieked. Leading the charge, she drew close to Li Yao with her personal guards.

Li Yao raised his right arm again. The seven dragons were revolving fast one more time. However, the brilliant that was spreading out of the dragons was much dimmer, and the speed of the rotation was much lower than before.

Right then—

BOOM!

A bomb of acids exploded on the left flank of the soldiers of the Nether World Watch, turning into a cluster of highly corrosive fog!

The expressions of Lu Wuxin and Swirl both dropped. What they had feared most became reality!

As more and more captives of the Blade of Chaos escaped into the sky-hunting warship, they had completely grasped the weapon system of the warship and fully carried out its combat ability!

Right now, the mysterious enemy had the fire support of a warship!

What was more dreadful was that…

A streak of brightness darted out of the sky-hunting warship and stood side by side with Li Yao.

It was the Fire Ant King, the master of Void Turmoil City and the leader of the Blade of Chaos!

Chapter 950 - Get Up and Leave!

“How!”

The arrival of the Fire Ant King gave Lu Wuxin and the rest of them an even bigger surprise than the grand entrance of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit did.

Lu Wuxin’s eyeballs nearby bulged out of their sockets, the blood vessels nearly tearing apart.

He could not figure out how the Fire Ant King had gotten rid of the Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle at all. The so-called best confining magical equipment of the Star Glory Federation did not deserve its name!

Besides, a demon emperor had now joined hands with a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. Such a combination could not have been more dreadful!

One demon emperor plus one Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator did not equal two super experts. With the coverage of each other, they would have a huge amount of time for their rest and the cooldown of their weapons. Their combat ability would be more than tripled!

It was quite a subtle situation right now.

The Nether World Watch still had the advantage in numbers and average capability. At the south of the island, a lot of well-trained soldiers were still in battle formation and fully supplied, ready to fight.

More soldiers, on the other hand, were now trapped in the ‘Nether World’. But since the teleportation array and the lifts had been turned off by Li Yao, they had to crawl to the ground through the emergency channel like ants.

However, as time went by, they would certainly reach the ground. In the meantime, another batch of soldiers was attacking the control center in order to reactivate the teleportation array and the lifts.

On the captives’ side, after the fierce battles just now, they had suffered heavy casualties and were merely fighting with their resolution. They were running out of momentum. There was no way that they could persist for long.

However, in terms of elite warriors, the captives were now at an advantage.

Li Yao boasted an ultimate core. After he put on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, his combat ability was higher than the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage. The Fire Ant King remained stagnant in the demon emperor stage for decades and had abundant combat experience!

On the Nether World Watch’s side, ‘Swirl’ was merely close to the demon emperor stage by the boost of demon cores. Although Lu Wuxin was in the beginning level of the demon emperor stage, he was best at medical arts and modification, so he was nowhere near as good at fighting as the Fire Ant King.

Besides, Li Yao had also controlled a powerful warship that could provide fierce fire support at any time!

A subtle dilemma was thus created.

But in the very next second, it was broken by crazy roars!

The sky-hunting warship of the Blade of Chaos did not stop in midair. Instead, it leaned toward the ground slightly, and the captives rained down their fury, which had been suppressed for a long time.

They were not attacking Lu Wuxin but the defense line before the other captives!

The Nether World Watch, which had been traumatized by Li Yao’s stunning performance, was already frightened. The defense line that could barely hold itself together in the first place collapsed completely under the barrage of the sky-hunting warship.

The captives under Suo Chaolong and Han Tuhu’s command took the opportunity to launch a counter-charge!

Li Yao had never been a commander, and he did not know much about military tactics. The Fire Ant King did not have much experience in commanding the regular army in battle, either. Therefore, the two of them only thought to stall the Nether World Watch by themselves so that the captives could evacuate.

However, it had never occurred to them how long it would take for the thousand captives to retreat to the sky-hunting warship.

To retreat, they had to attack first!

Suo Chaolong and Han Tuhu, as two best mid-level commanders of the army in the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector respectively, knew the point clearly. They seized the timing of the battle keenly. While Li Yao was on a killing spree in midair, they asked the lightly wounded to retreat to the sky-hunting warship carrying the heavily wounded, and they gathered all the weapons and armor that they had looted and launched a suicidal counter-charge together with a hundred or so soldiers who were still able to fight!

Their situation was changed in the blink of an eye.

It never rains; it pours.

Today, luck was truly not on the Nether World Watch’s side. Right when the first defense line of the Nether World Watch was collapsing completely under the counter-charge of the captives, the devilish warship, which had crashed and broken in half because of the Frost Storm Flowers, finally exploded. The immense blast consumed almost a hundred soldiers of the Nether World Watch who were passing by. The narrow and long area in the middle of the island was entirely enshrouded by fire, blocking the north of the island from the south!

Naturally, there were a lot of experts in the Nether World Watch who were adept at flying.

However, it was difficult to keep a neat battle formation in the air.

The battle formation was of paramount importance in a battlefield. The lone soldiers without teammates and cover were merely chopping their own heads off and feeding themselves to their enemy if they were exposed to a hostile warship.

“Kill them!”

Li Yao and the Fire Ant King both had sharp eyes. Although they did not realize the importance of attack in the beginning, they soon discovered the Nether World Watch’s weakness when they saw Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong lunging forward like hungry dogs.

The two of them looked at each other and turned into two streaks of brightness simultaneously, piercing into the battle formation of the soldiers in midair!

Wave the saber, concentrate the energy, blow it out, and explode!

Li Yao triggered almost a hundred black auras of saber around him. After countless slashes, mysterious redness was flowing in the auras. It was not Li Yao’s spiritual energy but the blood and broken souls of the soldiers of the Nether World Watch that had been restricted to his weapon!

As if possessed by the god of killing, the more soldiers he killed, the crazier he became. While his spiritual energy was consumed at an unbelievable speed, he was suddenly caught in a brand-new vibe. In the end, he did not need to wave his saber at all and could freeze a soldier of the Nether World Watch with nothing except his dominating killing intent!

Shua!

Suddenly, the area in front of him was empty. His killing intent, almost tangible, could not find the next target. There were no living soldiers of the Nether World Watch and only clusters of dense blood mist in the hundreds of square meters nearby!

Lu Wuxin and Swirl did not have the courage to challenge him anymore. They escaped at the early opportunity to the south of the island where the battle formation of the Nether World Watch was still tight.

Huchi! Huchi! Huchi!

It was not until this moment that Li Yao sensed that his windpipe and lungs had been seriously torn apart because of high-speed breathing. His shoulders had also been severely worn because he had waved his saber thousands of times in only several seconds. Fractures were everywhere on his arms due to the heavy collisions. His heart was also on the verge of exploding because of overloading!

The Fire Ant King slowly stopped next to Li Yao. He was also breathing rapidly, and his limbs were trembling as hard as Li Yao’s.

After all, the Fire Ant King had been tortured by Lu Wuxin and only struggled through the battle by the boost of the strengthening drugs.

The two of them looked at each other and decided to stop chasing.

At the south of the island, the battle formation of the Nether World Watch was not disrupted, and the defense line was still flawless. A lot of biochemical beasts had been deployed, too. If they marched close recklessly, it was likely that they would be mired in combat.

Also, the captives who were in the middle of a counter-charge were displaying signs of fatigue as they moved to where the devilish warship exploded, too.

They were too tired and had been fighting too hard after all. At first, they were electrified by the super high-voltage electric arcs. Then, they fought against the longswords and iron armor of the Nether World Watch with bare fists. Some of them had multiple flying swords and battle sabers stuck in their body. When they were charging, they were leaving a path of blood behind them. Their intestines were sometimes flowing out because of the explosions, but they simply stuffed them back and continued moving forward!

Many of them collapsed while they were charging forward, never to stand up again.

Some of them grabbed the enemy's neck after they stabbed their blade into the enemy's chest, turning into a gray statue together with their enemy.

Besides, three devilish warships were still parked in the dock!

Li Yao's Cosmos Rings were not bottomless, and there was only a limited number of crystal bombs that he could produce. Inside the Nether World, in order to blow his way into the control center, he had used up too many crystal bombs. After he arrived at the dock, the remaining crystal bombs had been far from enough to blow up the three devilish warships.

Therefore, he had deployed all the crystal bombs that he had left on the floating ice that was the camouflage around the dock. He detonated the ice and drowned the dock.

Such damage was only temporary. The enemy would repair the dock very soon or simply board on the devilish warships in the deep sea.

If the enemy had the powerful fire support of the devilish warships, it would be quite a disaster. The sky-hunting warship of the Blade of Chaos was no match for the devilish warships of the Nether World Watch in terms of both firepower and tonnage.

"Let's retreat!"

Under the cover of Li Yao and the Fire Ant King, Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong commanded the survivors to board the sky-hunting warship in order.

After the sky-hunting warship took off again, the two of them still floated in the sky of the island and locked onto the enemy at the south with their sharp killing intent.

When the sky-hunting warship was a hundred kilometers away, the Fire Ant King retreated first.

He was only supported by strengthening drugs after all, and his recovery would be very difficult if he was overly exhausted.

Li Yao was faced with thousands of soldiers of the Nether World Watch at the south of the island by himself.

The red cloak that looked like furious burning fire was still jabbing at the sky like a vivid arrowhead, declaring to the Nether World Watch, *I am right here!*

Looking at the blood red ‘arrowhead’ in the northern sky, Swirl struggled to say, “The captives… have escaped.”

“I know.” Lu Wuxin gnashed his teeth. The world was spinning around in his head even to this moment.

Twenty minutes ago, he had received yet another piece of devastating news.

Before the enemy left the control center, they had played a dirty trick by turning off most of the defense rune arrays of the ‘Demon God Virus Research Center’, which was in the deepest part of the Nether World, allowing all the uncontrollable mutants locked inside to flee.

Right then, it was unimaginable what was happening deep below the Nether World!

Lu Wuxin had to mobilize a lot of soldiers to the Nether World to take back the control center and suppress the uncontrollable mutants.

What could he do when faced with such a mysterious yet cunning Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator?

Send several hundred soldiers to chase after him?

It would be a joke!

The only outcome by doing so would be that the enemy would kill dozens of soldiers with his high speed and then run away!

Who could follow a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator wearing a super crystal suit above the ocean where there were absolutely no obstacles?

Therefore, Lu Wuxin could only watch Li Yao flying up and leaving.

It was not until the fire-like cloak vanished over the horizon that he suddenly shuddered and vomited a mouthful of black blood.

“One person. One person has almost overturned the Nether World!

“Who is he? Who is he exactly?”

Chapter 951 - Ultra-Level Federal Hero!

Li Yao lurked in the cold ocean three hundred kilometers away from the lone island for three hours.

If a devilish warship was deployed to chase after the sky-hunting warship of the Blade of Chaos, he would sneak into it and find a chance to kill commanders such as Lu Wuxin or Swirl.

The decapitation strategy had always been his favorite.

However, there was still no sign of a devilish warship after three hours. Maybe, the uncontrollable mutants below the ground were enough a headache for Lu Wuxin.

Three hours later, Li Yao summoned Black Wing and accelerated to the highest speed, catching up to the sky-hunting warship of Blade of Chaos, which was now hiding deep inside the ocean.

However, the warship was caught in a rather weird atmosphere.

The vast hold of the warship was designed to store the biochemical beasts and the debris from the Mausoleum of Chaos. It was certainly the opposite of incommodious. Even a thousand captives should not be enough to fill it.

However, the captives on-board were not in a joyful mood after surviving a disaster. Instead, intense hostility could be felt. They were divided into three groups targeting each other. It seemed a tiny spark would be enough to blow up the entire warship.

Han Tuhu, Suo Chaolong, and Yuchi Ba were even more vigilant. Every nerve in their brains was like a tightened violin string.

Li Yao’s arrival froze the anxious atmosphere for a moment.

He was still wearing the blood-stained Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit whose stink filled up the room. The captives of the federal army were eyeing the crystal suit with such envy and admiration that fire was almost spurting out.

A crystal suit, the greatest manifestation of the modern Cultivation technology. It was now the greatest pillar for the lone army in the Blood Demon Sector!

The demon captives, on the other hand, were deeply frightened and awed.

Although the master of the crystal suit had just saved them, the sharp black feathers and the crimson crystal cameras where no emotions could be seen still made them shudder.

Sensing the subtle atmosphere, Li Yao frowned. He asked the Fire Ant King without hurrying to take off the crystal suit, “What’s going on?”

There was helplessness on the Fire Ant King’s face. “What else can it be? The three forces are in conflict. None of them likes the others. Just now, they were only teaming up in order to escape from the captive camp. Now that they are out, the tension has inevitably intensified.

“Suo Chaolong is an old acquaintance of mine. We have made a lot of deals on strengthening drugs. He gave quite a few favors and… was even made use of by me several times.

“You must know the bad temper of silver-blood demons. You know that he wasn’t talking very nicely in his shock after he discovered that I was the leader of the Blade of Chaos. He is also worried that the Blade of Chaos will do bad things to the silver-blood demons. Naturally, they are defending themselves.

“Same goes for the captives of the federal army. They are scared that they have entered another cage after they just got out of one. So, they are highly wary, too. After all, the three parties hate each other’s guts. It’s a total mess now!”

“Wait!”Li Yao raised his hand. “The silver-blood demons hate the federal soldiers and you, you hate the silver-blood demons, and the federal soldiers hate the silver-blood demons. That’s easy to understand, but is there any grudge between you and the federal soldiers?”

“Of course!” The Fire Ant King sniffed. “The federal soldiers are not distinguishing high-level demons from low-level demons. In their eyes, all demons are the same.

“In the Battle of Dawn, the low-level demons, as cannon fodder in the coalition army, led the charge and fought against the federal army. The troops purely made of silver-blood demons such as Suo Chaolong’s ‘Blood Lion Battalion’, in comparison, were never deployed until the retreat phase.

“So, technically speaking, the low-level demons and the federal soldiers are old nemeses. How can they not hate each other?”

“So complicated?” Li Yao felt that his head was aching. He found that he had been too optimistic before.

Integrating the three forces who hated and distrusted each other was ten times more difficult than rescuing them from the ‘Nether World’.

“The most critical problem is that neither the federal soldiers nor the silver-blood demons know why we are rescuing them.” The Fire Ant King looked at Li Yao. “Honestly speaking, I don’t know the reason myself, either. Who are you exactly? What are you here for?”

Li Yao sighed and pointed his fingers at his forehead, starting to take off the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

He had thought hard for a long time about how he should explain the complicated matter to all three forces.

In the end, he decided to tell the truth.

Truth was the most powerful weapon. Faced with such a strong and frightful enemy as the ‘Imperium of True Human Beings’, he could not keep binding everybody to his tank with continuous lies. Such a tank was destined to be feeble and likely to collapse at any moment.

“Greetings, everybody.”

His facial cover split apart and vanished into his Cosmos Rings, revealing a face that was too young for his capability. Li Yao blinked and smiled. “My name is Li Yao.”

His words detonated the freezing atmosphere in the warehouse.

The name of ‘Li Yao’ made Han Tuhu’s pupils constrict violent. He stared at the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit that was disappearing from Li Yao body in suspicion, as if he was recalling something. He then observed Li Yao’s face for a long time with an ever-changing expression that was mixed with bewilderment and ecstasy. He asked in disbelief, “Li Yao? Vulture Li Yao?”

Li Yao was the dazed one now. “Do you know me?”

As he recalled, he had never dealt with the ‘Flying Tigers Legion’ ten years ago.

Han Tuhu suddenly rose up to his feet, the calmness of a commander of the federal army gone. He stood straight and saluted at Li Yao respectfully!

As the commander of the ‘Flying Tigers Legion’, Han Tuhu had a title of colonel. But now he was saluting Li Yao, perhaps not because Li Yao had just saved his life but because his name was ‘Vulture Li Yao’!

Behind Han Tuhu, all their soldiers of the federal army stood up, including the heavily wounded ones who were supported by their comrades!

Whispers were echoing among them nonstop.

“Is—is he **the** Li Yao?”

“That’s right. I’ve seen his 3D picture before. He does look familiar.”

“Isn’t he dead already? How did he show up in this place? Was he captured for experimentation like us? It’s rather unlikely, isn’t it?”

“Only the experts such as Major Li deserve to wear such tough a crystal suit!”

Li Yao was confused. “Wait. What do you mean by ‘Major Li’? Am I missing something?”

He was indeed a ‘veteran’ of the Star Glory Federation, but he was just a regular soldier at best and far from a major.

Han Tuhu took a deep breath and regained the serenity of a commander. Pondering for a moment, he asked, “If I may ask, did you crash into Skeleton Dragon, a ferocious demon from forty thousand years ago, with a starship left by the Star Ocean Imperium and leave the Heaven’s Origin Sector with it through a space jump?”

Li Yao nodded. “That’s right.”

The enthusiasm in Han Tuhu and the soldiers’ eyes was even hotter. Li Yao felt that he would be melted by them.

“Your story shocked the entire federation after the exploration squad brought it back to the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

“Everybody knew that, if Skeleton Dragon had recovered and teleported itself to the Heaven’s Origin Sector in a certain way, it certainly would’ve been a catastrophe. Chances were that the federation would have been destroyed!

“Therefore, after all the details were investigated, the federal government granted you the title of ‘Ultra-Level Federal Hero’. You are the first ‘Ultra-Level Federal Hero’ of the Star Glory Federation since a hundred and thirty-eight years ago! Also, the federal army announced that you were back in service again as a major.

“Major Li, you are a hero that everybody in the Star Glory Federation knows. You are the first to march out of the

Heaven’s Origin Sector into the sea of stars as a representative of the Star Glory Federation!”

Li Yao felt goosebumps rising all over his body.

As he recalled, according to the tradition of the Star Glory Federation, ‘Ultra-Level Federal Hero’ was the highest honor that was always granted to the sacrificed. Even counting the years of fierce battles when the Star Glory Federation was just established, only nine people had ever received such an honor, and all of them had been granted it after they were dead.

The federal government must have thought that he was dead and decided to boost morale by publicizing his story.

A living Ultra-Level Federal Hero walking on the street? That was too scary!

As for Suo Chaolong’s silver-blood captives, after they heard ‘Vulture Li Yao’ and ‘Boneyard’, the color drained from their faces, and they shuddered after pondering for a moment.

“It’s the fiend!”

Ten years ago, it was not just Skeleton Dragon that Li Yao had killed on Boneyard.

Before that, he had already wiped out the demon squad that Wang Ji, a prince of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers, was the leader of with an Ares Extension named ‘Dragon Scale’!

The demon squad was exclusively made of experts from the younger generation of the Blood Demon Sector. It was the most fabulous team made of descendants of noble families!

As it turned out, they had all been annihilated by Li Yao; there were no survivors!

After Li Yao’s title of ‘Ultra-Level Federal Hero’ spread, the Blood Demon Sector had naturally learned of his ‘atrocities’, too.

From then on, ‘Vulture’ was like a devastating curse that haunted countless demons.

Many demons gritted their teeth and swore to avenge their family.

But more demons were secretly shocked and awed by Li Yao’s toughness.

How tough could the man be, considering that he had finished a ferocious demon from forty thousand years ago cleanly?

Today, Suo Chaolong had witnessed Li Yao’s formidability in person. He had to admit that the guy was overwhelmingly strong!

A bewildered brilliance was flashing deep inside the Fire Ant King’s eyes, too.

Skeleton Dragon was possibly one of the ultimate weapons produced by Chaos. Naturally, the Blade of Chaos had studied the things that happened on Boneyard ten years ago, too, and he had heard the name of ‘Vulture Li Yao’.

However, according to his analysis, Li Yao at the time was merely in the Building Foundation Stage. It was with the help of a crystal warship from the Star Ocean Imperium that the guy secured his victory.

The Fire Ant King did not think that Li Yao was a real expert himself.

He did not see it coming that the guy whom he had been collaborating with was the Building Foundation Stage Cultivator from ten years ago.

Ten years ago, from the Building Foundation Stage to above the Nascent Soul Stage?

Such a speed of training was too appalling. It was even more terrifying than any genetic modification!

The Fire Ant King thought of something. “Fellow Cultivator Li, it seems you must’ve experienced incredible adventures after you vanished into the sea of stars with Skeleton Dragon, right?”

Han Tuhu’s eyes glanced between the Fire Ant King and Li Yao’s face before he asked solemnly again, “Judging from the situation here, you haven’t reached out to the federation yet, have you? So, you did not come to our rescue by the order of the federation. Then, what is going on here exactly? We are totally confused.”

Suo Chaolong and all the other silver-blood demons blinked and pricked up their ears, too, waiting for Li Yao’s answer.

Chapter 952 - The Hardest First Step

Looking at the captives, who possessed all kinds of bizarre appearances but were equally wary and anxious, staring at him eagerly, Li Yao suddenly had the feeling that it was all a farce.

Silver-blood demons, the Blade of Chaos, federal soldiers… The three forces hated each other's guts, yet he was trying to unite them?

It was crazy!

Taking a long breath in relief, Li Yao said slowly, "What I am going to say next may sound absurd and lacking evidence, but please don't be hasty. If you have any questions, wait until I'm done. I can explain the whole thing, and I can also explain…"

His eyes stopped on Suo Chaolong, a silver-blood demon who appeared to be a brawny human being, and Han Hutu, a commander of the federal army who looked like a crazy devil. Pausing for a moment, he continued. "… everything that has happened to you!"

Han Tuhu nodded. "I'm all ears, Major Li."

Suo Chaolong made a gesture of 'please', too. Whatever the grudge between them was, the guy had saved the lives of himself and his many brothers after all.

Aside from the rescue, Li Yao's terrifying capability alone was enough to win his respect.

Li Yao scratched his messy hair and calmed himself down before he said, "The whole thing is too complicated. I have to explain from the beginning. Ten years ago, I unearthed a crystal warship from the Star Ocean Imperium on Boneyard and jumped into the depths of the sea of stars together with Skeleton Dragon. Later, I discovered a new Sector that was governed by human beings…"

"What!"

Hearing that, Han Tuhu could not help but jump to his feet, overjoyed. "A new human Sector?"

All the federal soldiers were simmering!

Everybody knew what the discovery of a new human Sector meant to the war between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven's Origin Sector!

The silver-blood demons commanded by Suo Chaolong and the low-level demons commanded by the Fire Ant King, on the other hand, looked greatly distressed.

Whatever internal conflicts they had, they belonged to the demon race after all. A new Sector of human beings was certainly not good news for the Blood Demon Sector!

Suo Chaolong opened his mouth, meaning to question Li Yao, but he lost confidence before he let his doubt out.

It had been long confirmed that Li Yao jumped to the depths of the sea of stars with Skeleton Dragon. But right now, he announced his grand return with such a leap of his capability. It was evident that he must have gone through a lot of adventures!

When Li Yao went on a rampage on the lone island, Suo Chaolong had observed his crystal suit carefully. The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had been completely deformed by adopting multiple materials and technologies that did not exist in the Heaven's Origin Sector. Its overall style was vastly different from that of the crystal suits of the Star Glory Federation.

The leap in capability could have been because Li Yao discovered an ancient relic.

But a brand-new super crystal suit could only be supported by an enormous industrial system. It could never have been made by a random craftsman.

Now, the Blood Demon Sector was in great trouble!

The faces of Suo Chaolong and the Fire Ant King dimmed, but they were more and more confused.

If the Heaven's Origin Sector had the support of another Sector of human beings, it could have attacked the Blood Demon Sector directly. They did not understand why Li Yao ran into the Blood Demon Sector by himself. Was he there to mock them?

Li Yao saw Han Tuhu's excitement and Suo Chaolong's frustration. With a bitter smile, he said, "It's not as simple as you imagined. Brothers of the federal army, don't feel happy too early. Forget it. I'll just continue the story. You will understand everything when I finish."

He hid part of his experience in the Flying Star Sector, but he told the stories of Iron Plateau, the Temple of Immortals, the Immortal Cultivators, the apocalypses, the Dark Forest Theory, the star child, and the Imperium of True Human Beings exactly as they happened.

His monologue did not stop until more than an hour later.

At first, Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong had a lot of questions and almost could not wait to interrupt him.

But later, they were both bewildered, covered in cold sweat.

Possession through an apocalypse? The dark forest? Immortal Cultivators who regarded ordinary people as ants? The Imperium of True Human Beings, which was in control of the prosperous area of the three thousand Sectors and thereby boasted a much higher capability than themselves?

Compared to the unimaginably large concepts, the war between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven's Origin Sector at the edge of the universe was like a fight between kindergarteners!

"That was my experience in the Flying Star Sector," Li Yao licked his dried lips and concluded.

"At this very second, while we are taking to each other, the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings is marching toward us maliciously by way of incessant, short-distance jumps. By the most optimistic estimation, they will arrive in the Heaven's Origin Sector in two hundred years.

"By then, the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector will have completely melded, which means that neither you nor we can shun the barrage of the expedition army.

“Before that, and maybe only a few years from now, a weird ‘minor apocalypse’ will arrive. As of now, we are still unaware of the nature of the strike. Maybe, it will be an attack by an intelligent entity of energy, like the ‘star child’ in the Flying Star Sector. Maybe, it will be even more uncanny and unpredictable.

“But it is unquestionable that the minor apocalypse will reduce, if not rid, our ability to resist the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“That is the first thing that I wanted to tell you all.

“Now, you may think about it calmly. Is there an inconsistency in my story? Did I make it up for a certain purpose?”

The federal soldiers, the Blade of Chaos, and the silver-blood demons all fell silent.

There was too much information in Li Yao’s words. Even an hour was not enough for them to digest. Everybody remained numb for five minutes before desperate whispers echoed in the corner.

Suo Chaolong, on the other hand, was rolling his eyeballs weirdly.

Li Yao keenly sensed what he was thinking. He calmly said, “I know what some of the demons here are thinking. You think that, since the Imperium of True Human Beings is so formidable and their primary target is the Cultivators, can you make use of the Imperium of True Human Beings to destroy the Star Glory Federation?

“Of course, it is a realizable possibility.

“However, as terrifying as the Imperium of True Human Beings might be, it is a nation of human beings after all. It is not hard to infer their attitude toward demons. What will the Immortal Cultivators regard the demons as when they regard ordinary human beings as ants?

“I estimate that, after the Imperium of True Human Beings conquers the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, if you are lucky enough to survive the battles, the best outcome you can expect is to be sent into the sunless mines and toil until you die!

“The bottom line is, in the eyes of the Immortal Cultivators, we are all the same. Insignificant bugs that are hiding at the edge of the universe. No more.”

Suo Chaolong cursed silently; he knew that Li Yao was right.

“Besides—”

Seeing that everybody was scratching their head and whispering to each other but unable to find out any inconsistencies in the horrifying story, Li Yao gritted his teeth and threw out an even bigger bomb. “Now, I’m going to tell you the second story, one that might be even more shocking for you.

“I do not know how I should comment on the story. I only want to tell it exactly as it happened. You can think about what it means exactly yourselves.”

Everybody was startled.

What could possibly be more shocking than the Imperium of True Human Beings and the cruel ‘Dark Forest Theory’?

Li Yao glanced at the Fire Ant King and took out ‘Chaos’ Ba Yanzhi’s Hidden Star Box.

He had made a simple adaptor yesterday during his spare time and connected the Hidden Star Box to his mini crystal processor.

In such a way, the picture of the key memories of Ba Yanzhi would be able to be displayed in front of everybody by means of 3D projection.

“Every one of you, regardless of whether you are a silver-blood demon or a federal soldier, has gone through brutal torment in Elder Nether Spring’s laboratory and made to look vastly different.

“I don’t know whether or not you had doubts before. How did a silver-blood commander such as Suo Chaolong ‘turn into a human being’? And why does a commander of the federal army such as Han Tuhu look like an out-and-out demon?”

Suo Chaolong and Han Tuhu both shuddered. They looked at each other and breathed fast.

They had been pondering the question in pain for the past half year but did not have the courage to face it.

Shua!

An enormous light beam was triggered to the ceiling of the warehouse. As the image and shadow fell slowly, everybody found themselves in the palace of the ‘Ultimate One Sect’, a Cultivation sect forty thousand years ago.

Ba Yanzhi’s magnificent image showed up in front of everyone!

“He is Chaos!” Li Yao said one word after another.

He clipped the most critical parts of the memory pieces to accelerate the pace, displaying the discovery of the mysterious black spring, the reason of the demon race’s birth, the process of the demons’ conquest, and the division of the Ultimate One Demons and the Chaos Demons.

All the captives were wearing a complicated expression. The mottled picture dissected their faces into different areas that were different colors, hiding their real countenance.

“This is the origin of the demon race,” Li Yao said. “Demons originated from human beings, for the purpose of living a better life in the barren world in the Era of Doom. Or rather, demons were just another form of human beings in the Era of Doom. However, the whole event got out of control in the end.”

Silence. Silence. Silence was the only response.

“You—you’ve got to be kidding me!”

Out of Li Yao’s expectations, the first one to jump to his feet was, of all people, Han Tuhu, the commander of the federal soldiers.

He took off the military hat above his head and clutched the red star medal at the center of the hat so hard that it deeply pierced into his flesh as if they were melding into one. “Human beings and demons share the same origin? It’s impossible. It’s absolutely impossible!”

Chapter 953 - Your Words Against Mine

“Mankind boasts a great, brilliant civilization, and demons are no better than wild animals. A bunch of inhumane, insane wild animals!”

Veins were bulging out of Han Tuhu’s face like a spider web. His ugly bone tail was flapping rapidly, creating rippling sound waves in the air. Pointing at Suo Chaolong, he shouted desperately, “They can’t be human beings. They can’t be our own kind. They are just demon beasts infected by the ‘Demon God Virus’. They’ve grown a tiny bit of pathetic intelligence so that they can copy our lifestyle like monkeys in a circus! It is a fact that everybody knows!”

“Cut your bullsh*t! Who are animals?” Suo Chaolong jumped to his feet and pointed at Han Tuhu, too. His face was flushed, and his hot blood was almost spurting out of his fingertips. “The demons are the descendants of the Pangu Clan from the primeval era, and human beings are just a tool that the Pangu Clan created to mend the three thousand Sectors. But you tools forgot your mission and betrayed the Pangu Clan! You are just a bunch of traitors. Are you even qualified to accuse us of being animals?”

“Animals are animals after all. Even if you learn the language of human beings and mimic our social system, you are still animals deep down in your bones!”

Han Tuhu gnashed his teeth. “Look at what you did when you invaded the Grand Desolate Plateau? How many towns have you destroyed? How many people have lost their homes? How many innocent people were killed miserably by your claws and teeth? It’s flattery to call you animals. You are fiends. Vicious, unscrupulous fiends!”

“Invade the Grand Desolate Plateau? Burning, killing, and pillaging? Hahahaha. Han Tuhu, do you know what I hate you human beings most? Your hypocrisy!” Suo Chaolong roared. “A thousand years ago, nine tenths of the entire Heaven’s Origin Sector was home to the demons, including the entire Grand Desolate Plateau!

“My ancestors lived on the Grand Desolate Plateau for generations. They were the owners of the Grand Desolate Plateau. They farmed and hunted on the Grand Desolate Plateau and established splendid cities!

“Who first invaded the Grand Desolate Plateau? It was you, human beings!

“Who first slaughtered ruthlessly and atrociously on the Grand Desolate Plateau, burning magnificent cities to the ground and butchering millions of demons until there was no survivor? It was you, human beings!

“Do you deny it? No, you won’t. In the eyes of the evil human beings such as yourself, killing demons is not a crime but an ultimate glory!

“Right in the war museum in the Giant Blade Pass, the proof of your invasion, massacre, and destruction is still being exhibited as antiques. Even the piles of bones of the demons have been built into high towers as a demonstration of your strength!

“I am the rightful native of the Grand Desolate Plateau of the Heaven’s Origin Sector. What’s wrong with me taking back my ancestral home together with my brothers?”

Han Tuhu spat on the ground hard and said, “Do not just tell the story on your side. You said that the Grand Desolate Plateau was the land of the demon race five hundred years ago. Why didn’t you tell me how many human slaves were killed from exhaustion when you built your splendid cities?

“Besides, your ancestors were ambitious enough to join hands with the Far East Demon Kingdom, trying to suffocate the newborn Star Glory Federation while she was still in the cradle.

“Human beings love peace, but we are never scared of wars. It was a justified war. Why shouldn’t we be proud of it?”

Suo Chaolong bulged his eyes and roared with laughter, holding his belly. “You love peace? Self-defense war? You are making me laugh my ass off! When the Star Glory Federation was established, you only occupied the land the size of a palm at the center of the continent of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, but now, the entire Heaven’s Origin Sector is your territory. It has been more than multiplied!

“You are peace-lovers? Great. Was your additional territory freebie when you bought your magical equipment?”

The two of them were cursing more and more furiously. The federal soldiers and the silver-blood demons behind them were eyeing each other coldly, too. The hair, scales, and shells on their bodies were all standing up, indicating that they were ready for a fight.

Although they had no blades, their sharp claws and venomous tusks were the best weapons.

Unfortunately, many federal soldiers boasted such ‘weapons’ right now, too.

“Shut up!” the Fire Ant King roared. His demonic energy suppressed everybody on the spot.

Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong looked at each other in fury and waved their hands to stop their subordinates from taking action. They still had the last bit rationality in their minds and understood the consequence of an internal fight right now.

“Fellow Cultivator Li has offered us too much information right now. I think everybody should calm down and think everything through in order to find the best solution for yourself, your brothers, your family, and your compatriots. Do you agree?”

Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong were both breathing rapidly. They could not help but turn to their subordinates behind them, who were all heavily wounded.

Soldiers were the most tired after fierce battles. The blood of many of them was running dry, and they might not be able to open their eyes again after they closed them. They could barely hold a pair of nail scissors right now, much less a weapon.

The two of them fell silent at the same time. They looked at each other and nodded, gnashing their teeth.

“Agreed.”

Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong took their subordinates back to their respective chambers.

To avoid the intensification of the conflict, the Fire Ant King placed one group of them at the front of the warship and the other at the rear.

“Did I go off half-cocked?” Li Yao asked the Fire Ant King with complicated feelings.

The Fire Ant King eyed him for a long time with a weird expression until he felt a bit creepy. In the end, the Fire Ant King observed, “So, your real purpose is to convince the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector to let go of our hatred against each other for now and fight against the Imperium of True Human Beings together?”

Li Yao nodded. “That’s the only choice.”

The Fire Ant King sighed and said softly, “You know, I thought that you were not a lunatic.”

Li Yao was going to explain, but the Fire Ant King waved his hands and said lethargically, “Everything you’ve said is too much of a shock to me. Give me some time so that I can calm down.

“You’d better calm yourself down and carefully examine your sanity.”

Shua!

In the personal cabin that the Fire Ant King had specially prepared for him, Li Yao rubbed his face hard with clean water until his cheeks were burning.

Maybe because he had changed his appearances a lot by manipulating his facial muscles in the past ten years, the face that was appearing in the mirror was rather strange to Li Yao. So strange that it was almost no longer the Li Yao from ten years ago.

His face was still plain and did not have too many distinctive characteristics. However, below his eyebrow which was as dense as a black blade, his deep right eye and his blood red left eye were equally mysterious, as if they were leading to a black hole inside his brain.

Li Yao could not tell what was on the mind of the guy in the mirror.

Am I wrong?

The particularly young face in the mirror reminded him of himself from more than ten years ago and how he had been deeply moved by the sacrifices of the seven Cultivators when he was engaged in a beast tide on a crystal train north to the Grand Desolate War Institution.

“It is our responsibility to slay the demons and devils!”

“Don’t stand in my way while I’m busy saving the world!”

At that time, the world had been black or white. It was simple and straightforward. At that time, he had only meant to grow into a strong, unstoppable Cultivator who would sweep across the Blood Demon Sector and exterminate all the demons.

If the Li Yao at that time encountered the Li Yao right now, his reaction certainly would have been the same as Han Tuhu’s!

It was the Cultivators’ responsibility to slay demons and devils!

However, what were demons, and what were devils? And what did the real demons and devils look like?

“There is no distinction between humans and demons, deities and devils in this world. There are only winners and

losers!”

“Of ten thousand people, only one can be the winner, and the remaining 9,999 are all losers!”

Those words had been replayed just now in the ceiling of the warehouse.

Along with the words was the gloating, all-under-my-control smile of the leader of the Ultimate One Sect.

Li Yao suddenly had an urge to return to the battlefield forty thousand years ago and punch the leader of the Ultimate One Sect right on his nose so hard that his nose would kiss the back of his head, exactly as he had done to Jiang Tao [1] , one of the dregs of Cultivators, in the anonymous station on the Grand Desolation Plateau after the seven Cultivators sacrificed themselves.

Maybe, people like Jiang Tao are the so-called ‘winners’?

The thought suddenly popped up in Li Yao’s head and gave him a chill.

What if the ‘winners’ had never vanished over the past forty thousand years? What if they had always stayed at the peak of the world, despite the changes of their identities and appearances, looking down upon the living creatures who were no better than ants for them from the high stance?

What if the war between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector was nothing but the biting and mauling of two ‘losers’ who would only roll into the abyss of doom together?

Li Yao suddenly thought of the ‘bug fight’.

It was a form of entertainment popular both in the Heaven's Origin Sector and in the Blood Demon Sector.

After locking a few brutal bugs into a transparent box and stimulating them with special drugs, the bugs would immediately start attacking each other until there was only one survivor.

Li Yao suddenly wondered, when two bugs bit each other's critical parts at the same time, could they realize that existences that were far stronger than themselves were enjoying their battle of death with great amusement in a much greater world than the box that they were in?

We are not ants, not monkeys, and much less bugs!

Taking a deep breath, in the mirror, Li Yao saw his slightly shaking eyes gradually stabilizing again.

His eyes were as transparent as the finest jade, just like his belief, which was more determined than ever.

He knew that he was now walking on a road of fire and thorns, and he would perhaps never see the end of it.

However, he had already become used to such a way of life.

Taking another deep breath, Li Yao quickly sorted through his messy thoughts. He planned to take a brief rest and go chat with Han Tuhu after everybody calmed down.

But it did not occur to him that Han Tuhu, the commander of the federal army, would visit him before he went over.

Chapter 954 - Han Tuhu's Questions

After a few hours of calm consideration, Han Tuhu was wearing an entirely different expression from before. He gave Li Yao the feeling that he was trying to suppress part of his brain and forcing himself to become a precise machine without emotions.

“I’m sorry, Major Li.”

Han Tuhu held the military hat in his hand and touched the red star medal that was already glittering because of rubbing with his thumb. “I was too sentimental just now and lost the calmness that a commander of the federal army should have. Meaningless passion and fury can only lead to misjudgments and the eventual doom of the troop. I must apologize for my loss of control.”

Li Yao did not know whether Han Tuhu’s change in attitude was good or bad.

Looking at the shining red star on the medal, which turned into two sparks in his deep eyes, in a daze, Han Tuhu hesitated for a long time before he said, “In fact, many of our brothers have speculated much of what Major Li said just now. After all…”

His long tail that looked like a hammer extended to his head across his shoulder and tapped his ugly skull like a thick arm. “Who would not be suspicious after they saw what a wretched appearance they had been turned into?

“At first, we thought that it was just the enemy’s scheme and that our change resulted from a new virus.

“But we were not the only guys who mutated. Very soon, we got in touch with the silver-blood demons such as Suo Chaolong who were locked together with us.

“While we were becoming more and more like demons, Suo Chaolong was getting more and more similar to a human being. If an unknown Cultivator was faced with Suo Chaolong and me right now, could he say for sure which one of us is a human being and which is a demon?

“What was the change all about? I’m afraid that Suo Chaolong must’ve been questioning himself like I did every night. I felt as if ten thousand ants had found their way into my brain and were biting it every second!

“I wanted to find out the answer, but I was scared of the real answer. I could only fool myself by coming up with all kinds of impossible reasons. I hate Suo Chaolong so much right now not because he is an officer of the demon race but because I am jealous of him. I’m jealous of his appearance right now. I’m jealous that an evil demon possesses the face of a human being!

“I believe that he is more or less the same. I can read his eyes when he looks at me, which are exactly the same as mine!”

Han Tuhu’s countenance was indescribable. “Major Li, did you know, although you saved us, you have proposed the trickiest conundrum in the world for us?

“Before, neither I nor Suo Chaolong thought we could really escape that dark island of horror. We merely wanted to die a hero’s death before the devastating answer popped up and drove all of us mad as glorious soldiers of the federation or pure silver-blood demons!

“But you showed up and rescued us. You have also clearly displayed the answer that we were unwilling to confront before us!”

Li Yao listened quietly.

He had a feeling that Han Tuhu did not need a reply. The guy only needed to release the darkness that had filled his heart for half a year.

As he expected, after finishing everything, Han Tuhu stared at the ceiling for a long time in a daze. Then, he took a long breath and turned into a completely different person from a moment ago. “Major Li, if you want a ceasefire, or even a collaboration, with the Blood Demon Sector, technically speaking, you will have to solve a few critical issues.”

Li Yao was dazed. “Major Han, are you willing to let go of your hatred and work with the demons?”

“I am not willing to.”

Han Tuhu seemed to be crawling out of the swamp that had trapped him for half a year. An officer of the federal army that was so shrewd that it was almost cruel was waking up in himself. He shook his head and said, “Even if everything you said is true, and human beings and demons do share the same origin, so what?

“Forty thousand years is enough to make the same race evolve into two different branches. Besides, even within the same race, irreconcilable conflicts might break out, too.

“Race is never the sole reason for a war. It is never even the most important reason.

“Take the Imperium of True Human Beings, the greatest threat for us right now, for example. It is a nation of human beings and shares the same language and origin as us, but it will not show any mercy when it destroys us.

“Therefore, I’m sorry, but I’m afraid that I cannot let go of my hatred for the demon race. I believe that the other soldiers of the federal army will not let go of it in a couple of years, either.

“However—”

Han Tuhu’s eyes were sharper and sharper, as if a scalpel was ripping apart the gloomy cloud that had been covering his brain.

“I am a soldier, and it is my responsibility to defend our homeland, the Star Glory Federation, and every citizen of our nation.

“I will fulfil my duty through whatever methods possible.

“If I can achieve the purpose by destroying the Blood Demon Sector, then I will destroy it even at the cost of my life. I will kill every demon in my way, no matter who their ancestors are.

“However, if the federation can only be saved if we cooperate with the demons, I will also make the right choice without any hesitation. Even if the choice will be despised and disparaged, and even if I loathe it myself, I will still do the right thing nonetheless.

“So, please tell me something first. How good is the Flying Star Sector’s war capability?

“You mentioned that they once attacked a planet named ‘Spider Den’. Does it mean that their starships are advanced enough to bombard a planet? If we have the reinforcement of the Flying Star Sector, can we conquer the Blood Demon Sector quickly in one to two years?”

Han Tuhu added, “Believe me, every general and politician of the Star Glory Federation will ask the same question.”

Li Yao pondered for a long time before he replied.

“According to my observation, it’s very difficult.

“The Flying Star Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector are vastly different. Human beings there are basically in a ‘starship civilization’. Their troops exist in the form of ‘Exo Societies’. There is not a regular army that is large in size and directly under someone’s command. Besides, the ‘Spider Den’ that they dealt with was also just a base of disorganized space pirates.

“It was exactly because of the lack of a regular army that they had to activate such a dangerous weapon as the ‘Grand Illusionary Soldiers’.

“Besides, the Flying Star Sector has just gone through a war that lasted several years. They are still recovering from their losses.

“It is one thing to ask the Flying Star Sector to send a fleet to help the compatriots of the Heaven’s Origin Sector defend their home, but it is a whole other thing to ask them to send hundreds of starships across the universe to attack a world of demons where the environment is harsh.

“After all, the Blood Demon Sector is not a small resource planet like Spider Den, and it is not some unruly mob like the space pirates that dominate the place; it is a well-functioning, highly-efficient government with a strong regular army!

“A powerful fleet of starships can indeed suppress a planet, but ‘suppression’ and ‘conquer’ are very different. You must understand it better than I do, Colonel Han.

“More importantly, the technology to support super long-distance space jumps is not mature yet. Every starship from the Flying Star Sector must consume tremendous resources.

“To teleport the enormous fleets of the Flying Star Sector to the Heaven’s Origin Sector will be unbelievably costly, at least in the few years to come. Even if the citizens of the Flying Star Sector bring out every penny in their pockets, it might not be enough.

“On the other hand, the demons of the Blood Demon Sector, brainwashed by the ‘Four Pillars System’, believe in the Pantheon of Demons and their theories of ‘Obliteration, Rebirth, and Immortality’. Their fighting will and combat ability are both very high. If they are defending their home, they will be at an even greater advantage.

“Even if the enormous fleets of the Flying Star Sector jump to the orbit of the planet and even bombard the earth into wasteland, so what?

“Don’t forget that the environment of the Blood Demon Sector is very rough in the first place. Demons here are already used to the badlands. When that happens, they can always hide themselves below the ground or in the ocean and start a guerilla warfare. The army of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector will be stuck in the Blood

Demon Sector at the cost of tremendous resources and casualties of soldiers and Cultivators.

“Crystal suits, crystal warships, and Cultivators who are in the high-intensity battles are all money guzzlers. They will consume astronomical resources on a daily basis!

“The resources, the soldiers, and the Cultivators will all be of paramount importance for us in the war against the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“I believe that the federal army must’ve drafted plans of total attack, too, and calculated how many resources and lives we would have to pay in order to conquer the Blood Demon Sector, didn’t it?”

Han Tuhu smiled bitterly. “The General Staff of the federal army has indeed come up with several war proposals against the Blood Demon Sector. By the most optimistic estimation, the Heaven’s Origin Sector, after resisting the enemy in home defense for five to ten years, will be able to establish fifty legions fully equipped with crystal suits by exploiting all the resources in our territory. Then, we will launch a counterattack with the fifty legions as the main force and march into the Blood Demon Sector. It is predicated that we can annihilate the main force of the coalition army of the Blood Demon Sector in five years and conquer the Blood Demon Sector in twenty years!

“At that time, the General Staff estimated that all the soldiers that will be lost in the twenty years of war is…

“130 million!

“In other words, the entire federal army will be buried in the war and replaced by new soldiers!

“By the most optimistic estimation of the General Staff, the total war will set the national economy of the Star Glory Federation backwards by fifty years. It is predicated that the GDP will hit rock bottom in the eighteenth year of the war, which will be 65% of the present day. Also, after we completely occupy the Blood Demon Sector, the descending curve will not go up again until it lingered at the bottom for ten years. We will not get any positive benefits from the war until at least fifty years after.

“That is why I want to confirm with you whether or not we can significantly shorten the time with an ally who boasts a powerful fleet.”

“At the very least,” Li Yao said, “it is impossible for us to conquer the Blood Demon Sector in one year, annihilate all the rebellions in another year, and collect the resources of the Blood Demon Sector to make up for the losses in the far in yet another year, even with the help of an ally.”

Chapter 955 - Giant Crab Operation!

Han Tuhu gave no reply. His glittering eyes suggested that he was quickly calculating with all of his braincells.

“I’ve got it.”

Five minutes later, when white mist was popping up from his forehead, he nodded and said solemnly, “You’re right. It is impossible to conquer the Blood Demon Sector quickly. Then, we have only one choice now.

“You’ve convinced me, Major Li. I can cooperate with the demons temporarily like we did in the Nether World.

“Of course, that is, if the demons are willing to cooperate with us, too, although I do not have high hopes for that.”

Li Yao felt excited. He had finally made the hardest first step! He said sincerely, “Thank you, Colonel Han. I thought—”

Li Yao did not know how he should express his complicated feelings.

“You thought that I would label you to be a traitor of the federation who conspires with foreigners, didn’t you?” asked Han Tuhu.

Li Yao scratched his hair and nodded. “More or less.”

Han Tuhu smiled. “I never thought that way. However, after such a choice is made, I’m afraid that many people in the federation will label us as such. But it doesn’t matter. It is perhaps the greatest glory for a soldier of the federation to be grouped together with an ‘Ultra-Level Federal Hero’!”

“I believe that people will understand us one day,” Li Yao said.

Han Tuhu smiled again. He said casually, “I want to tell you a story, Major Li, about the ‘Battle of Dawn’.

“The Battle of Dawn was the first full-scale, strategic attack against the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Different from the previous outbursts of beast tides, it was the regular army of the Blood Demon Sector that was deployed, including almost all the main forces of the Nether Spring Kingdom and the Kingdom of Lion Butchers!

“In the Battle of Dawn, the federal army was completely eclipsed. Both strategies and tactics were a mess. The troops were marching all the time, but they still suffered a series of defeats, until the entire Grand Desolate Plateau was lost in the end. Even the Grand Desolate War Institution, Major Li’s mother school, was burnt to the ground. The enemy moved forward all the way to the Giant Blade Pass, the boundary of the Grand Desolate Plateau and the heartland. It was doubtlessly the most humiliating battle in the past three hundred years.

“The entire federation was in a panic, dominated by pessimism.

“However, at that time, nobody knew that the federal army collapsed so fast partly because it was really collapsing and partly because the failures were intentional. A highly-confidential plan—code-named ‘Giant Crab Operation’—was being carried out!

“It was true that we were not well prepared for the first overwhelming attack of the Blood Demon Sector, and we suffered tremendous losses at the beginning of the battle.

“However, after ten years of groundwork, the federation had established sixteen legions that were fully equipped with crystal suits. More than 70% of the soldiers in the legions were armed with the ‘Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit’, which was partly designed by you, Major Li. The assault team and the officers were even fortified with crystal suits of more advanced models!

“With the sixteen crystal suit legions, we had the capability to stop the coalition army of demons at the north of the Grand Desolate Plateau. We could have simply driven them back into the Blood Demon Sector!

“However, after the General Staff evaluated the situation of the battle, a very risky decision was made. They planned to fake a defeat and tempt the enemy deeper so that we would be able to swallow the main force of the coalition army. Not a living soul was going back to the Blood Demon Sector!

“Many towns were abandoned by us, and many faults in our strategies were made on purpose, in order to mislead the coalition army of demons into making a wrong judgement about our capability and intentions!

“Both the soldiers and the civilians paid an extremely high price just so that the Grand Desolate Plateau would become a graveyard for the coalition army of demons!

“While the coalition army of demons marched forward unstoppably on the Grand Desolate Plateau and finally reached the Giant Blade Pass at the south of the Grand Desolate Plateau, their supply line was longer and longer, and even the toughest soldiers of the demon race were showing signs of fatigue.

“In the meantime, twelve of the sixteen crystal suit legions of the federation were moving to the rear of the coalition army of demons from their flanks quietly, like the two pinchers of a giant crab, hoping to cut off the connection between the enemy and the Blood Demon Sector and keep them in the Heaven’s Origin Sector forever!

“The plan was like a dance on a razor blade. It was highly risky. Naturally, it was a top secret.

“In order to hide the plan, and to explain why the crystal suit legions did not show up on the Grand Desolate Plateau, the General Staff and the Department of Defense made quite a good play. The federal army pretended that it was preserving the strength and merely defending passively in panic. The speaker of the Department of Defense was also asked to spread out talks such as ‘crystal suit legions are not built easily and should not be wasted’. Ostensibly, the sixteen crystal suit legions were all mobilized to the major cities in the inland, especially those around the capital, as if unwilling to be deployed.

“My Flying Tigers Legion was one of the earliest legions in the federation to be equipped with crystal suits. We were moved back to the capital city.

“But nobody knew that the real Flying Tigers Legion was marching clandestinely in the depths of the Grand Desolate Plateau. The ‘crystal suits’ that showed up around the capital city were but vivid models and 3D projections.

“The strategical deception was very successful. The coalition army of demons knew nothing about our real purpose. They thought that they could break through the Giant Blade Pass as long as they worked a little bit harder. Therefore, they continued their bombardment despite the difficulties of their supply.

“But the citizens of the federation were fooled at the same time.

“All the citizens burst into fury as the federal army continued to retreat!

“During that period, the federal army was a target for everybody. Countless furious citizens were cursing. For ten years, the nation had been in the highest warring state, and the military budget had been multiplied. Everybody was offering whatever money they had to establish the sixteen crystal suit legions. They claimed to be invincible, but where were they exactly when a real battle broke out?

“Many celebrities were posting through various social media platforms. Why were the crystal suit legions still cowering in the major cities in the heartland when the situation on the Grand Desolate Plateau was so urgent? Had the crystal suits been installed with power rune arrays or not? Were they nothing more than fixed turrets?

“A lot of citizens were mailing turtle shells and soft shrimps to the Department of Defense and the General Staff, scorning our gutlessness.

“When the soldiers in military uniform walked on the street, they were often surrounded by angry citizens, who would question what they were fighting for. Did they only care about the officials and big shots living in the capital city and around? Were the citizens on the Grand Desolate Plateau nothing to them?

“The most serious incident was that the students of the First Military Academy and the Second Military Academy, along with the students of the ‘Nine Elite Universities’, started a demonstration.

“At that time, Admiral Zhang Siqian, a speaker of the Department of Defense, declared by the order of his supervisor in the media that there were still issues regarding the performance of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and it would be best to ask them to defend the cities to avoid unnecessary losses.

“As a result, Admiral Zhang Siqian was vilified as a capitulator. One of his personal residences was even burnt to the ground by the angry students.

“As for me, as a commander of a ‘leisure legion’ stationed in the capital city, I was naturally slandered, too. Titles such as ‘traitor of the federation’ are nothing new to me.

“Right. ‘Leisure legion’ was a nickname that the public gave the crystal suit legions at that time.

“I remember that, half a month before the ‘Giant Crab Operation’ was put into action, I appeared in the capital city to participate in the parade to celebrate the establishment of the federation.

“It was also part of the strategical deception. I was going to fly into the depths of the Grand Desolate Plateau at night and lead the Flying Tigers Legion to become the first crystal suit legion to charge at the enemy!

“According to the plan, once the two ‘pincers’ of the ‘giant crab’ closed, my Flying Tigers Legion would pierce into the feeble part of the link between the coalition army of demons and the Blood Demon Sector at quickly as possible in order to cut off their connection.

“It was not hard to imagine that the enemy would definitely try their best to reestablish the connection to their homeland. The troops from the Blood Demon Sector would reinforce them crazily, too.

“The Flying Tigers Legion would suffer attacks from both sides and endure the most pressure. It was very likely that the entire legion would be wiped out. Everybody, from me to the cook, was prepared to be sacrificed.

“At that time, my only son was studying at the First Military Academy in the capital city. The General Staff gave me half an hour’s leave so that I could meet him, who was also participating in the parade, when it was over.

“Naturally, he did not know anything about the ‘Giant Crab Operation’, nor did he know that it was going to be the last time we would meet.

“However, do you know what he did after he met me?”

Li Yao was deeply engrossed in the story. He asked, “What did he do?”

Han Tuhu seemed to be laughing. “The little brat tossed a handful of calcium tablets toward me heavily the moment he saw me. He said, ‘Why are you shameless enough to join the parade? You should grow a spine!’ Then, he left without even looking back.

“From the beginning to the end, I never had a chance to speak to him.”

Li Yao was silent for a moment before he asked softly, “Did the Giant Crab Operation work out?”

“Of course not.” Han Tuhu smiled bitterly. “However, it was not because of our problem, but because something went wrong within the coalition army of demons.

“According to our plan, as long as the coalition army of demons continued attacking the Giant Blade Pass for three days, no more, the siege would have been completed. Even if my Flying Tigers Legion was to be wiped out, I would not let a single pest of the coalition army of demons escape to the Blood Demon Sector!

“But nobody expected a mutiny of the low-level demons in the frontline!

“The mutiny of the low-level demons caused the collapse of the coalition army of demons. Their main force made the decision quickly. They abandoned all the cannon fodder in the frontline and ran back to the Blood Demon Sector as rapidly as possible.

“The incident was far beyond our expectations. We could only shift our strategy temporarily and attacked them in advance. It was why I followed Suo Chaolong for thousands of kilometers and eventually caught up to him in the Dark Desolate Domain. Then, we both ended up as captives.

“It’s funny when you think about it. We planned carefully for more than half a year. We paid countless sacrifices and shouldered the most vicious curses. We were so close to victory, but our plan failed because of the enemy’s own problem.

“But this is how a war goes. You never know what will happen next.”

Li Yao sighed. “Right now, your son must understand your reasons and feel sorry for what he did.”

“You didn’t get the point of my story, Major Li.”

Han Tuhu put the military hat on his head squarely again and soothed all the crinkles on it. He then moved the red star medal to the center of the hat. “What I’m trying to say is, I do not care whether the brat or any other people understand or feel sorry for me. It doesn’t matter even if they despise and detest me forever.

“I don’t need their sympathy.

“I only want them to live on.”

Chapter 956 - Meat or Mincer!

Han Tuhu’s eyes were filled with the most freezing heat like magma frozen in frost. Intense smoke of war was leaking out of his every pore, and he marched forwardly quietly in the smoke like a black shadow by himself.

The black shadow was etched into Li Yao’s heart and made him even more determined about his belief. The road ahead of him had never been clearer.

Li Yao took a deep breath and said sincerely, “Thank you, Colonel Han. You have given me a good lesson. I know what to do now.”

Han Tuhu laughed and rose up. “You’ve convinced me, but it is far from enough. Human beings and demons are in vastly different circumstances right now.

“Time is on the Star Glory Federation’s side. The Cultivation technology of the Heaven’s Origin Sector is developing much faster than the biochemical technology of the Blood Demon Sector. Even in the past ten years of war, which were the hardest for us, we have managed to establish sixteen crystal suit legions despite the pressure. In the decades to come, we will only become stronger.

“It is needless to say that a new Sector of human beings has been discovered right now. Even though the assistance of the Flying Star Sector is merely symbolic, the exchange of knowledge between two different worlds and two different systems of Cultivators will certainly lead to the most brilliant sparks and make the technology of both worlds develop exponentially quicker!

“We have the whole future ahead of us. As long as we have a rest of five to ten years, our technology and comprehensive capability will be far higher than those of the Blood Demon Sector!

“Therefore, peace at present is in the interest of the Star Glory Federation. It is also the biggest reason I’m willing to agree with you.

“But what about the Blood Demon Sector?

“As of now, their comprehensive capability and the number of super experts are still higher than those of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, but the gap is being reduced at a visible speed. It is the greatest motivation for the Blood Demon Sector’s assault.

“They have to seize the most critical ‘window’ right now. After the precious ten years or so pass, they will stand absolutely no chance.

“Moreover, right now, with the help of the Flying Star Sector, our comprehensive capability is improving at an even higher speed. It is possible that we will surpass the Blood Demon Sector within several years!

“If you were the leader of the Blood Demon Sector, would you be willing to stop the war now?

“Let’s play a mind game. Imagine you are Jin Tuyi, the commander-in-chief of the coalition army and the incumbent leader of the Blood Demon Sector. One day, a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator named ‘Li Yao’ suddenly shows up and tells you everything about the Flying Star Sector and the Imperium of True Human Beings. What will you do?

“You have to options.

“Firstly, you choose peace. You sign a truce with the Star Glory Federation. You wait and watch the communication between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector getting heated and the technology to support super-long-distance space jumps growing mature, to the point that a universal bridge will be established between the two human Sectors, which leads to the boom of the Cultivation techniques and technology. In a few years, the Blood Demon Sector will be left far behind.

“Then, the demons of the Blood Demon Sector will be the meat on a chopping block, and you can only count on the integrity and mercy of human beings.

“Alas, the history of the past five hundred years tells you that mankind has never been a merciful species. In fact, we are probably not.

“Secondly, you bet everything and start a strategic war before the large-scale communication between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector begins and the technological boom happens!

“You will try to crush the Star Glory Federation before the reinforcements of the Flying Star Sector arrive. At the very least, you will fight for better conditions for your negotiation even if there will be a ceasefire eventually, in order to maintain the mutual deterrence!

“Hehe, Jin Tuyi, commander-in-chief of the coalition army, these are your only options. Which one will you choose?”

After a brief silence, Li Yao shook his head. “The Blood Demon Sector will definitely fail if they wage a strategic war right now.”

“So what?” Han Tuhu said coldly. “You will be killed either way. It is better to make a great gamble with all the wagers you’ve got while you still have a chance than to wait and get killed!

“If I were the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons, I would gather all the troops I have unhesitatingly the first second I learned of the existence of the Flying Star Sector and start planning the ultimate war against the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

“The future of the Blood Demon Sector depends on the war!”

Li Yao could not help but observe, “However, under the threat of the Imperium of True Human Beings, we cannot afford to consume so many resources to fight a lose-lose war! Even if we successfully annihilated all the demons of the Blood Demon Sector after decades, so what? We will still be smashed into smithereens by the Imperium of True Human Beings!”

In a mysterious smile, Han Tuhu replied unhurriedly, “As the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons, I have every reason to believe that the so-called ‘Imperium of True Human Beings’ is nonexistent. It is a great strategical deception!”

Li Yao was dazed. “What?!”

Han Tuhu sneered. “Assume I am Jin Tuyi. I have received reliable intelligence that the Heaven’s Origin Sector has discovered a new world of human beings and that the two Sectors are about to communicate on a large scale.

“The news has been verified to be true through various sources. My think tank has also concluded, after calculation, that the Heaven’s Origin Sector will surpass the Blood Demon Sector in terms of military power and comprehensive capability within ten years should the large-scale communication be established. As time goes by, the gap will only be greater, and there is no way that I can catch up to them again.

“My only choice is to start a final and ultimate war without considering the cost!

“However, at this moment, I’ve got another piece of intelligence. It is said that a formidable force named ‘Imperium of True Human Beings’ is marching toward the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector maliciously. In order to deal with the force, I must end the war.

“The intelligence, on the other hand, is not supported by any proof. It is just the words of human beings.

“Should I believe the news?

“No, certainly not! I will never believe it!

“I’ll be highly suspicious that this is fake news that human beings are throwing out to stall the strategic war that I’m going to wage. They are trying to win temporary peace for five to ten years so that they will have enough time to surpass us!

“In short, it is a delaying tactic!

“Therefore, the only choice I have is still to start a suicidal war at any cost by exploiting the last bit of our potential!

“I will destroy you, or I will be destroyed. There is not a third option. Peace? In your dreams!”

Li Yao gnashed his teeth. “The existence of Imperium of True Human Beings can be proved. In five years, their first minor apocalypse will arrive!”

“Yes, in five years,” Han Tuhu said. “But the Blood Demon Sector cannot wait for five years. They cannot even wait five months. The Heaven’s Origin Sector is getting stronger, and the hope of victory is getting slimmer with every passing second!”

Li Yao opened his mouth, only to come up with nothing.

Han Tuhu’s conclusion was too cold, but it was flawless, like a machine that was functioning precisely.

Han Tuhu mumbled, “The Dark Forest Theory? The guy who proposed it was truly smart! Right now, the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector are like two highly nervous desperadoes who are sticking poisoned daggers to each other’s hearts in a dark forest. Not far away, another desperado named the ‘Flying Star Sector’ is bringing a powerful storm bolter to the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

“Do you think that the arrival of the Flying Star Sector will make the Blood Demon Sector concede and choose peace?

“You’re wrong. On the contrary, the arrival of the Flying Star Sector will only make the Blood Demon Sector take a wild gamble and risk danger in desperation!

“Because in the dark forest, there is no way that you can prove that, after both of them put down their daggers and move ten meters backwards, the Heaven’s Origin Sector, which is now equipped with a storm bolter, will not shoot the Blood Demon Sector all of a sudden!”

Li Yao took a long breath.

He did not realize until this moment how insignificant the first step he had made in the dark forest was and how simple-headed he had been.

“What should I do?” he asked Han Tuhu sincerely.

“I suggest you go to chat with Suo Chaolong and get him on your side,” Han Tuhu replied.

Li Yao was dazed. “Is it possible?”

“It is,” Han Tuhu remarked emotionlessly. “Suo Chaolong and I are the same. We are real soldiers. Soldiers are the most realistic people in the world because nothing in the world is colder than a war.

“Wars don’t believe in tears and slogans. Wars don’t believe in speeches and boiling blood. In a war, the most resolute fighting will is still going to be ripped apart by waving blades and burning bullets, and the most shrilling cheers will be drowned in the noises of the cannon fire.

“To secure a victory in war, you must count on your capability and your calculation that is so precise that it borders on brutality!

“Therefore, compared to the politicians and their fancy slogans, it is the soldiers on the frontline who have a clear understanding about the war between the two Sectors.

“It is especially so for Suo Chaolong, a professional soldier who ran for thousands of kilometers with three crystal suit legions on his tail.

“Suo Chaolong is certainly not an obstinate man. You also saw how he abandoned the racial prejudice and worked with me in the Nether World.

“Although we had a lot of conflict on the surface, we were both conscious enough to never cross the line. His recklessness and bluntness on the surface are just his disguise. His heart is a hundred times calmer than he appears to be.

“Moreover, his Blood Lion Battalion is rather unique, too. There’s a difference between them and the real silver-blood demons of the Blood Demon Sector.”

Li Yao was dazed. “What do you mean?”

Han Tuhu said, “Have you never found it odd? Suo Chaolong’s team was strong enough to fight against the best crystal suit legions of the federation, but why is it still an awkward ‘battalion’?”

Li Yao frowned. He did feel a bit odd when he heard the name of ‘Blood Lion Battalion’.

In the military system of the Blood Demon Sector, the biggest independent combat unit was a ‘contingent’. For a large scale, many contingents could be combined into an ‘army’.

But what was a ‘battalion’ all about? Even a mediocre army was unlikely to be given such a title. It was unlikely that they were a militia, wasn’t it?

Chapter 957 - Nascent Soul? Demon Emperor?

“The full name of the Blood Lion Battalion is ‘Blood Lion Independent Battalion’,” Han Tuhu explained. “They added ‘Independent’ because the members of the Blood Lion Battalion are all the emigre nobles from the Heaven’s Origin Sector.”

“Emigre nobles?”

Li Yao suddenly thought of Suo Chaolong, who had claimed repetitively that his ancestors were from the Grand Desolate Plateau.

Han Tuhu nodded. “The Heaven’s Origin Sector used to be governed by the demons like the Blood Demon Sector. After the Star Glory Federation rose, in order to compete for the zone of survival, it demolished countless demon forces, the greatest two of which were the ‘Far East Demon Kingdom’ in the ocean to the east of the continent and the ‘Alliance of Thirty-Six Demon Cities’ on the Grand Desolate Plateau.

“When the two forces were destroyed, the melding of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector had already begun, and a lot of temporary wormholes appeared.

“Some of the demons from the Heaven’s Origin Sector escaped to the Blood Demon Sector through the wormholes after their failure and became refugees.

“The demons who were capable of escape had largely been nobles when they were in the Heaven’s Origin Sector. They were the silver-blood demons and brought a lot of assets and resources with them, including the secret treasures and training techniques that had been accumulated over thousands of years. In the Blood Demon Sector, where the ‘Four Pillars System’ was implemented, considering their bloodlines and the benefits that they brought, the local demons accepted them in the end.

“For a very long time that followed, the invasion that the Blood Demon Sector launched against the Heaven’s Origin Sector was always under the banner of ‘avenge our brothers of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and help them get back their land’. Naturally, the demons had to find a justified reason for their invasion, too.

“However, the resources of the Blood Demon Sector are not endless. It is not hard to imagine that, after the honeymoon period was over, and the resources and secret arts they carried were drained, the emigre nobles from the Heaven’s Origin Sector were less popular than before.

“Some of the refugees did not know what they were doing. For example, the refugees from the Far East Demon Kingdom even established a government-in-exile of the Heaven’s Origin Sector in the Blood Demon Sector. That’s nuts.

“Very soon, they were completely swallowed by the local demons of the Blood Demon Sector with one excuse or another.

“Suo Chaolong’s ancestors were different. They were from the ‘Alliance of Thirty-Six Demon Cities’ on the Grand Desolate Plateau, whose capability was far lower than that of the Far East Demon Kingdom. Therefore, they knew exactly their position.

“After they escaped to the Blood Demon Sector, they understood the importance of maintaining a low profile very well. By way of adulation, they managed to cling to the superpowers and survive on. After generations of marriage, they finally secured their stance in the Kingdom of Lion Butchers.

“However, no matter how low-key they were, the stamp of ‘refugees’ on them was not going to die out quickly, especially at a time when the Blood Demon Sector was attacking the Heaven’s Origin Sector. How should the ‘refugees’ be arranged if the Heaven’s Origin Sector is really occupied? Offer the entire Grand Desolate Plateau to them so that they can reestablish their kingdoms? That’s hilarious!

“Even if they never had such thoughts, will others believe them?

“Therefore, the local demons of the Blood Demon Sector have never been particularly fond of the emigre nobles.

“A very simple example. At the end of the Battle of Dawn, because of the mutiny in the frontline, almost all the silver-blood demons turned around and ran away.

“But the information was not delivered to the Blood Lion Battalion led by Suo Chaolong in time. Later, since they were left behind, they were naturally given the task of covering the retreat. They were asked to resist the pressure of three crystal suit legions. It was clearly a suicidal mission.

“This is the first clue about Suo Chaolong and his Blood Lion Battalion’s standing in the eyes of leadership of the Pantheon of Demons.

“Elder Nether Spring chose to ambush the Blood Lion Battalion perhaps because he also knew that nobody in the Blood Demon Sector really cared about the refugees. If he needed silver-blood demons for his experiments, the refugees would be his best targets!

“Do you understand now? Suo Chaolong and the other ‘refugees’ have their own interests, and their interests and the interest of the Pantheon of Demons might not necessarily be the same.”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes, his bloody pupil rolling around and around. He nodded slowly. “Got it. It seems that I have to think carefully how I should ‘persuade’ Suo Chaolong and the ’emigre nobles’.”

…

In the warehouse where the Blood Lion Battalion was resting, the atmosphere was so gloomy that a cloud seemed like it would condense on the ceiling at any time.

Hundreds of heavily-wounded silver-blood demons were sitting or lying. They were coughing and vomiting blood, with devastation all over their face. They bulged their confused eyes but could not find a way ahead of them.

“Do you think that what ‘Vulture Li Yao’ said is true? Are human beings and demons really of the same origin?”

“It’s false. Certainly false. It’s an out-and-out lie!”

“Even if it is true, so what? It was forty thousand years ago. Who really gives a damn thing about it? I only want to know what we are going to do next. Are we going back to the base of the Blade of Chaos together with the rebellions obediently at their mercy?”

“Or what? Do you think that they will escort you back to the Kingdom of Lion Butchers respectfully?”

“Besides, look at what we are right now. Many brothers are showing the features of multiple kinds of demons. They are even more chaotic than the chaotic-blood demons! Some of the brothers have been deprived of all the demon features and now appear exactly like human beings!”

“Even if they let us go back to the Kingdom of Lion Butchers, do you dare return with such an appearance? Do you?”

Desperate humming sounds were hovering above everybody’s head like mosquitoes that carried a lethal virus.

Suo Chaolong was squatting in a corner of the warehouse, staring at the floor at a loss.

A tiny ant on the floor was casually crawling far away.

Suddenly agitated while he was watching, he extended his finger to crush the ant, but he held his finger for a while and could not put it down.

“Big brother!”

One of his most trusted subordinates said in a low voice, “Little Feng just passed away. Before he left, he asked us to chop off one of his fingers and bury it on the relic of the ‘Hundred Wind Demon City’ when we return to the Grand Desolate Plateau one day. It was… his hometown.

“As of now, we have 423 brothers left. Twelve are unlikely to survive today.”

“I got it,” Suo Chaolong said softly. “Do as Little Feng said. If other brothers pass away, do the same. Chop off one of their fingers and give it to me.”

His dark golden eyes suddenly glittered, as if the mission coming next was the sole significance of his life. In a low voice, Suo Chaolong gnashed his teeth. “I swear that I will bring them all back to the Grand Desolate Plateau, to their hometown, one day.”

“Big brother!”

His subordinate hesitated for a moment but could not hold it any longer. He asked, “Do you think ‘Vulture Li Yao’ was speaking the truth? Are our ancestors really human beings?”

Suo Chaolong looked at him and asked back, “Does it matter?”

His subordinate was dazed for a moment. He blurted out subconsciously, “It doesn’t?”

It concerned their origins, their identity, and who they were exactly. How could it not matter?

But on the second thought, it might not have been as important as it seemed.

Even if they figured out that they were human beings or demons, so what? Would the truth be of any help for their current situation?

His subordinate was deeply confused and murmured, “Big brother, the demons that escaped to the Blood Demon Sector from the Heaven’s Origin Sector were more than thirty thousand in the prime days. But today, after hundreds of years, there are only a thousand even including our family. The elites are only the four hundred of us here. What should we do now?”

In front of Suo Chaolong, the ant seemed to have sensed the soundwave of their talk. It shifted the direction and crawled toward him.

His finger that was supposed to crush the ant turned into a bridge and picked it up.

The ant crawled in his palm hard.

Suo Chaolong kept moving his hand so that the ant fell into the center of his palm time and time again.

The ant, running into a dead end in every direction, was not in the least frustrated. It was still crawling unhurriedly.

Suo Chaolong watched in a daze. He was suddenly envious of the ant—the ant certainly did not know what desperation was.

Right then, Suo Chaolong’s pupils constricted violently.

He had sensed a stream of demonic energy that was unimaginably strong!

It was an expert equal to the demon emperor stage!

What’s happening? The Fire Ant King was exhausted and in the middle of recovery. There is no way that he can spread out such intense demonic energy!

Have the enemies caught up?

In the moment, the frustration all over Suo Chaolong was gone. He leapt up from the ground. Baring his sharp canine teeth, he made a gesture in silence.*Prepare for battle!*

Shua!

The soldiers of the Blood Lion Battalion who were moaning and complaining a second ago were now crouching and bulging their eyes, with all their hair standing up, while they increased their killing intent to the maximum!

They had all sensed the tremendous almost-tangible demonic energy and made it hard for them to breathe. It was rushing in through the gate like a flood which had crumbled a dam!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The newcomer did not make a sound as he stepped forward. But a ferocious animal seemed to be stomping on their hearts brutally. The eyelids of many of them were bouncing, with cold tears dripping off their forehead. They all held their chests and panted hard.

The source of the immense demonic energy, who slowly showed up in the gate, cast all of them into bewilderment. Many of them could not help but exclaim in shock, “Vulture Li Yao!”

It was the fiend who was brutal enough to bring away an unparalleled demon from forty thousand years ago named Skeleton Dragon!

However—

Wasn’t he a Cultivator? Why could he emanate such tremendous demonic energy? Besides, his appearance was rather weird.

Li Yao was not wearing the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit at this moment. On the contrary, he activated a lot of primeval cells inside his body and put on his most hideous and ruthless appearance.

His left eye was oozing the most dangerous red brilliance, which resembled the volcanic vent that was full of magma. A row of narrow and long bone blades grew out of his left arm and extended all the way to his back like a set of glamorous armor. Intense demonic energy was also flowing in the middle of the crystal with which he launched the Cell Obliteration Cannon.

Even the air was almost twisted, placing his body in a hazy, unpredictable mist. He looked both mysterious and magnificent!

It was an out-and-out entrance of a demon emperor!

Chapter 958 - Overwhelming Demonic Energy!

“What is happening?”

“Isn’t—isn’t he ‘Vulture Li Yao’, a Cultivator from the Heaven’s Origin Sector? How can he release such intense demonic energy?”

“Was he lying just now? Is he in fact a demon emperor?”

“Idiot. How is it possible? We clearly saw him wearing a crystal suit and letting out intense spiritual waves. The aura of saber condensed by his spiritual energy was almost a hundred meters long!”

Li Yao smiled casually. His face looked even crueler under the illumination of the blood eye. His eyes glanced over all the silver-blood demons slowly.

Every single demon shuddered hard.

Li Yao opened his claws and turned around his palm while he burnt the cells inside his body unhurriedly, forming purple flames right above the crystal at the center of his palm.

The exotic flames interweaved and entangled into a purple red fireball that was as eye-catching as glass!

He held the fireball inside his palm softly and played with it in cracking noises. It seemed to be absorbing all the air inside the warehouse.

The silver-blood demons were having more and more trouble breathing. Everybody's soul was deeply attracted by the fireball. There was fascination in their eyes.

The mitochondria were burning crazily, discharging a huge amount of wasted gas that covered the fireball in a hazy, furry outline like the corona and the lunar aureole [1] . The fireball was displaying features that were vastly different from the spiritual fire that the Cultivators used. It was even more mysterious and eccentric.

It was… out-and-out 'demonic fire'!

After surviving in a world where the strong preyed on the weak for thousands of years, demons almost had a natural instinct to worship their experts.

In a battlefield, the appearance of such intense demonic energy often meant the arrival of a super expert on their side. What came next would certainly be a glorious triumph!

In a trance, many silver-blood demons were shaking their legs hard. They almost could not stop themselves from kneeling down to show respect for the 'demon emperor'!

"Are you a human being or a demon?"

Even Suo Chaolong's expression greatly changed as he raised a hilarious question.

"What about you?" Li Yao asked back.

Suo Chaolong was lost for words for a moment.

He was often shocked by his 'bizarre' appearance when he looked at himself in a mirror. He had turned into one of the enemies that he hated most!

He was of a mind to hold his chest high and announce, *I am a demon!*

However, suppressed by Li Yao's overwhelming demonic energy, he found it impossible to open his mouth.

Honestly speaking, Li Yao at present was ten thousand times more like a demon that he was!

Was he a victim of the weird experiments, too?

Suo Chaolong was greatly baffled. He thought hard for a while and only came up with one possibility.

He could not have but grow a subtle feeling of empathy. Softening his tone, he said, "What do you want?"

Li Yao stared at him. "What I want is irrelevant. The real question is, what do you want? This is a sky-hunting warship of the Blade of Chaos, flying to a secret base of the same organization. You are a silver-blood demon, and you are on this warship with a bunch of heavily-wounded, if not dying, brothers. Have you made clear your position and realized what you should do?

"Are you going to curse the Blade of Chaos as lowly chaotic-blood demons while enjoying their treatment and service?"

Suo Chaolong blushed.

Right now, his face was no longer covered in dense hair, so the redness was rather conspicuous.

Li Yao unleashed demonic energy to the surroundings blatantly while he looked at Suo Chaolong in the eye and said, "Captain Suo, I have come here specifically to visit you because your Blood Lion Battalion is the only troop of the demon race that was faced with three crystal suit legions of the Star Glory Federation in the Battle of Dawn.

“I can tell you frankly right now that, within the next year, the Flying Star Sector will assist the Heaven’s Origin Sector with three to five Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and ten to fifteen heavy crystal warships equal to the ‘Vast Ocean’-level ones.

“More important, the Flying Star Sector boasts a special technology named ‘skill card’. After it is inserted into a crystal suit, the ordinary soldiers, who have received preliminary training, will be able to put on crystal suits. It will be a major boost for the efficiency of combat and construction!

“I hope that you can analyze objectively based on your first-hand experience in the battles against the federal army and your expertise as a professional soldier. Tell me and your brothers around you. Does the Blood Demon Sector stand any chance of winning the war?”

Li Yao’s aggressiveness completely infuriated Suo Chaolong.

The veins on his forehead were bulging out one by one. He gritted his teeth and pushed back Li Yao’s stare by force while he said resolutely, “The outcome of a war depends on many factors. If the victory can be decided by the calculations on paper beforehand, why bother fighting the war at all?

“I can only say that, if everything you said is true, right now is the moment when the Blood Demon Sector has the greatest odds of success. The best strategy for the Blood Demon Sector is to attack immediately!

“If I were the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons, I would immediately gather the troops the moment I learned the news. I would have to initiate a battle by summoning all the resources of the sector to take our chances within a month and a half!”

Li Yao was slightly dazed and looked at Suo Chaolong in surprise.

He began to realize why Han Tuhu thought so highly of the opponent.

Li Yao smiled and said, “Correct, but you are not the commander-in-chief of the coalition army. You are the leader of the refugees from the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and all the warriors among the refugees are the beaten soldiers standing next to you.

“Let’s say that we will let you go so that you can return to the Kingdom of Lion Butchers when we are back to the continent.

“What role do you think the Blood Lion Battalion will play in the war that will cost all the resources of the Blood Demon Sector? Even if the Blood Demon Sector secures a brutal victory in the end, does any of you have a one in one thousand chance of seeing the dawn of the victory?”

Suo Chaolong was silent. Every muscle on his face was trembling, and every breath was as painful as his lung being cut open.

The silver-blood demons were all wearing devastated expressions.

The descendants of the refugees in the past had tasted the feeling of vagrancy in the Blood Demon Sector too well.

They often had a clear and yet painful understanding about their future.

“Isn’t this all your fault?”

Suo Chaolong suddenly burst into fury. “It was the Star Glory Federation that invaded the Grand Desolate Plateau and kicked our ancestors from their home to the Blood Demon Sector at first. That’s why we lived a homeless life under someone else’s roof for five hundred years! The Star Glory Federation should take all the blame!”

“Exactly,” Li Yao admitted frankly. “Everything you said was done by the Star Glory Federation. It is true that the Star Glory Federation conquered the Grand Desolate Plateau at first in the name of expanding its territory and slaying the evilness. We are not scared to acknowledge now that we’ve done it!

“In the meantime, I happen to be a Cultivator from the Star Glory Federation. Here and now, I should be able to represent the federation!

“Therefore. Come and seek your revenge!”

“Huh?”

Suo Chaolong was dumbfounded, unable to follow Li Yao’s pace.

“You have 423 soldiers here, 188 of whom are still able to fight, however feebly. You are free to charge at me and seek revenge now. I guarantee that you will be given the most superb and brilliant death in the world. If the ‘Pantheon of Demons’ that you believe in does exist, it will certainly place you in the VIP area when it sees how you die!”

Suo Chaolong and the silver-blood demons looked at each other in bewilderment.

If it were half a year ago, even if they were faced with a Nascent Soul Stage expert wearing a super crystal suit, they would definitely have charged forward without any hesitation and fought for the most glorious death with the firm belief of ‘Obliteration, Rebirth, and Immortality’.

However, over the past half year…

They had been abandoned by the main force of the coalition army of demons first as cannon fodder. They had been asked to block three crystal suit legions although their team was not particularly strong.

They were not scared of sacrifices, but they had been the only ones to be sacrificed while other silver-demons all ran away as quickly as possible. What was the meaning of that?

Then, they had been captured for reasons they did not know and kept prisoners in the weird Nether World, where they went through all kinds of vicious experiments.

Also, those who performed modifications on them turned out to be not the wicked human beings of the Star Glory Federation but their own compatriots, the demons!

After the modifications, they had even shown all kinds of weird features. Some of them had even appeared more and more like human beings!

What was most dreadful was that a batch of federal soldiers, who went through the modifications together with them, changed into the looks of demons!

Because of the incessant shock, their previously firm belief had gradually collapsed. Many of their brothers had gone mad before their body was destroyed and killed themselves through any approach possible.

“Saint blood, silver blood, bronze blood, and black blood. Isn’t that the great Four Pillars System established by the Pangu Clan in the primeval era? Why are the noble silver-blood demons turning into the appearances of the chaotic-blood demons and even the human beings?”

“Why can the wretched human beings put on our appearances and use our abilities?”

“What is the difference between human beings and demons? What are we fighting for exactly?”

The indestructible fortress of the belief cracked. For countless nights, Suo Chaolong had stared at the darkness through the cracks and questioned himself in silence.

He did not know the reason until Li Yao told him the origins of demons today.

He had already been convinced the moment he burst into fury. At that time, he had been roaring not because of his anger but because of his panic and confusion.

Right now, Li Yao had even shown up in such an appearance and broken the boundary of human beings and demons with undeniable proof.

A Cultivator was also able to unleash such intense demonic energy!

Suo Chaolong seemed to have sensed that an invisible, false world was crumbling all of a sudden while a new, real world was gradually unfolding itself in front of his eyes.

Was it possible that the legendary ‘Ultimate One Demons’ did exist and had been manipulating everything over the past forty thousand years and that the silver-blood demons, who had always considered themselves nobles, were merely their pawns and chess pieces?

Before they figured everything out, before they realized what they were fighting for exactly, should they really die a meaningless death for a groundless Pantheon of Demons?

Chapter 959 - Red Tide, Break Out!

Li Yao did not push them too far. “If you are still not going to attack me, I suggest we stop wasting our precious time studying who was right and who was wrong five hundred years ago. Such questions are entirely moot because of our different stances. We might as well talk about topics that are more constructive.”

Suo Chaolong pricked his ears. “Such as…?”

“Such as—”

Li Yao glanced around slowly, again, making every silver-blood demon feel that he was talking to them. “Assuming that everything I said is true, faced with the threat of the Imperium of True Human Beings, the Star Glory Federation, having no other options, will have to choose to get in touch and cooperate with part of the demons.

“Then, the part of demons who join hands with the Star Glory Federation first will certainly have a greater voice in the Blood Demon Sector in future or even change the entire situation of the Blood Demon Sector!

“What do you think?”

Suo Chaolong narrowed his eyes and said coldly, “Are you asking me to betray the Blood Demon Sector?”

Li Yao shook his head. “I’m asking you to set the Blood Demon Sector on the right track and defend the mutual interests of the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector as best you can instead of rolling off a cliff with each other. After all…”

With a bitter smile, he said, “The Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector are merging right now. In a few decades, there will be no more Blood Demon Sector or Heaven’s Origin Sector, but a brand new world that consists of two habitable galaxies! Everybody living in the new world will benefit from each other or get hurt by each other as a whole!”

Suo Chaolong lowered his head and thought hard.

Li Yao continued. “Let’s put the threat of the Imperium of True Human Beings aside and talk about Elder Nether Spring. Elder Nether Spring has been clearly planning an earthshaking scheme in secret that will possibly jeopardize the interests of both human beings and demons!

“At the very least, were you not tormented together with the federal soldiers back when you were in the Nether World?

“I think you must have someone you love in the Blood Demon Sector. Maybe you are not scared of death, but do you want your family to endure the suffering that you once endured and even be turned into terrible puppets and slaves by Elder Nether Spring?”

All the silver-blood demons were breathing fast.

They were not willing to recall anything that happened in the past half year for even half a second. They could not begin to imagine what their family would feel when they were in the same situation.

“I know that it is a very important decision,” Li Yao said, “and that your head is in chaos. You will need time to think about it carefully. That’s not a problem. I’ll give you ten seconds. In ten seconds, give me your answer. Are you going to fight, or are you going to shake hands with us?”

Suo Chaolong was rather shocked. “Ten seconds?”

Are—are you kidding me? What can I think about carefully in ten seconds?

Li Yao suddenly changed his attitude and burst out his demonic energy. After a crack, the fireball of demonic energy was suddenly extinguished. He said coldly, “Or what? Do you want to consider for a year and a half?

“Ten! Nine! Eight! Seven! Six! Five! Four! Three! Two! One! Zero!

“Alright. Time is up!

“Now, you can either come at me and get yourselves killed for the grudge between us old and new, or you can find out the truth together with me and seek revenge for whatever happened to you over the past half year. We will get to the bottom of all the secrets of the scumbag Elder Nether Spring!”

The cabin wall was screeching because of his intimidating aura. Even the scales on many silver-blood demons were also uttering rattling noises. They did not have the courage to fight at all.

Suo Chaolong was also like a nail that had been pressed into the floor. Under Li Yao’s suppression, his mind was a mess. His lips trembled for a long time, and he looked at his brothers who were vomiting blood behind him.

“By the way,” Li Yao said casually, “twelve of your brothers are already dead for sure because of internal bleeding. But seven of them might still be rescuable if they are treated with a mysterious ancient prescription.”

Suo Chaolong shuddered greatly. His stubbornness was finally broken.

…

Heavenly Path City of the Blood Demon Sector was a city in the clouds.

More than five hundred magnificent floating mountains were hidden in the colorful clouds. They suppressed the entire continent like great chess pieces. They were also like five hundred loyal soldiers who were defending a splendid airborne temple at the center.

In the Blood Demon Sector, which was short of resources and brimming with desolation, this was the only place frequented by the attractive clouds and the fresh springs. Crystals were dangling down from the pavilions like grapes. All kinds of rarely-seen, precious animals were roaming among the clear brooks and the grand waterfalls free at their will. It was truly a paradise.

This place was the center of supreme power and belief of the Blood Demon Sector and a projection of the glorious Pantheon of Demons in the real world!

Deep inside the Pantheon of Demons, inside a secret meeting room that was defended by countless elites, Jin Tuyi, commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons, was standing right in front of an enormous light beam. On the light beam were the 3D holograms of two planets. It could be clearly seen that the red planet was bigger than the blue planet. Between the two planets, countless dotted lines marked the dense, half-permanent wormholes.

As light and shadow changed, the two planets were devouring each other like cells. At first, the red planet was at an overwhelming advantage and continued corrupting the blue planet with the dazzling brilliance of blood. But soon, the blue planet gritted through the contamination and made a comeback, swallowing the red planet, which was larger than itself in the end.

Beside the enormous main light beam, hundreds of smaller light beams were blossoming like snowflakes. Streams of information were pouring down like a storm. Data and the comparison of combat ability were flashing crazily.

With his hands behind his back, Jin Tuyi studied the tiniest change of every item on the light beam wholeheartedly. He was so attentive that he did not ignore even the improvement of the power rune array of the latest derivative model of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit in the Star Glory Federation. He swallowed all the data greedily and passionately before he projected them into the library of computation deep inside his brain that was almost boundless.

Behind Jin Tuyi, eleven high-level demons, with different appearances but wearing equally glamorous clothes and sharing an equally dominating aura, were also gazing at the ever-changing data on the light beam in silence.

Everybody’s eyes were glittering like stars that were affected by a cosmic storm while they were doing the calculations crazily.

Jin Tuyi, commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons, the monarch of the Gold Crow Kingdom, which was the master of skies!

Elder Nether Spring, the controller of the Nether Spring Kingdom that was the master of the underground!

Elder Blood Robe, the overlord of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers that was the master of the earth!

Hong Yuntao, the one behind the curtain in the Sea Dominator Kingdom, the master of the ocean!

The four giants of the Blood Demon Sector had all arrived!

The other eight demon emperors next to them either controlled an enormous, well-developed city, boasted a special ability that allowed them to fight against an entire army by themselves, or was capable of deducing the changes of a battle in the coming years with their secret arts. They were all the best of the demon emperors.

They were the twelve demon emperors of the Pantheon of Demons who stood at the meridian of the Blood Demon Sector and shared the highest power of it!

“Everybody!”

The door of the meeting room was slowly closed. Jin Tuyi, commander-in-chief of the coalition army, slowly turned around. His movement was a bit sluggish, as if he was carrying an invisible burden on his shoulder. His pupils that were full of blood streaks deep inside his eyes were beaming with coldness while he said coldly, “You have all read the latest and most thorough files about the Flying Star Sector.

“According to our calculations, once the ‘universal bridge’ between the Flying Star Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector are established, it will be possible to teleport the super heavy crystal warships more than twenty kilometers long and the experts in the Nascent Soul Stage in a moment at the cost of minimal resources.

“The Flying Star Sector is a civilization based on starships. They have developed very advanced technology in the refinement of crystal warships and the popularization of crystal suits in the boundless universe.

“They and the Heaven’s Origin Sector are highly complementary. It is estimated that the Cultivation level, comprehensive capability, and military power of the Star Glory Federation will soar exponentially after one to two years of communication!

“Therefore, it is not exaggerating to say that the Blood Demon Sector is in great peril now!

“The tenacity and determination of the Star Glory Federation are already evident enough in the Battle of Dawn, and the speed of their crystal suit production is appalling for us!

“Even at the current growth rate, the Star Glory Federation will surpass us within ten years, not to mention that they now have the assistance of the Flying Star Sector!

“Right now, it is not a problem of whether or not we can conquer the Star Glory Federation anymore but a problem of how we can prevent ourselves from being annihilated and preserve the civilization of the Blood Demon Sector!

“Our world is coming to an end!

“Our only choice is to unite the demons of all species and social classes and gather all our strength in order to start a national war within a hundred days while we still have our last chance!

“The construction of the ‘universal bridge’ requires the joint effort of the two Sectors. It is also necessary that a large number of star beacons are established in the Heaven’s Origin Sector as the lighthouses in the sea of stars!

“As long as we can crush the main force of the Star Glory Federation at a lightning-like speed and threaten their prosperous area, we will be able to coerce them into a certain agreement whereby they will have to destroy all the star beacons of the Heaven’s Origin Sector. That way, we will postpone the arrival of the reinforcements of the Flying Star Sector as much as possible!

“This is our only chance for our survival!”

The other eleven demon emperors were all silent.

A demon emperor, whose purple hair were attached to his head like veins, frowned and said, “After the Battle of Dawn, although the obstacles on the Grand Desolate Plateau have been cleared, the Star Glory Federation is now also relieved of the burden and has stationed all the twelve crystal suit legions at the frontline of the Giant Blade Pass.

“The defense in the Giant Blade Pass is impregnable. How can we break through it quickly? Who can guarantee that, while our elites are being wasted before the Giant Blade Pass, the federation will not implement another ‘Giant Crab Operation’ and surround us from our flanks?

“After all, the Grand Desolate Plateau is too vast. The pressure on our logistics is too high!”

Jin Tuyi smiled confidently. “Why do we have to attack from the Grand Desolate Plateau? Allow me to introduce to you—the Red Tide Plan!”

Chapter 960 - The Courage to Set Fire!

Li Yao’s training journal, March 12.

Ever since I came to the Blood Demon Sector, in order to conceal my identity, I have never conducted systematic training. After going to the Skeleton Island, the Mausoleum of Chaos, and the Gloomy Wind Islands of the North Pole, I have been fighting and killing all the time. There has not been time for me to catch my breath and meditate.

Today, I have finally got a stable environment where I can restart the systematic training.

The battles in the Skeleton Island, the Mausoleum of Chaos, and the North Pole gave me a deeper understanding of the mysteries of the primeval cells and the mitochondria. They also motivated me to explore a new combat pattern.

Cultivators walk on the path of pure energy and fight by triggering the spiritual energy in nature whereas demons focus more on the excavation of the strength deeply buried in the cells.

Then, is it possible to combine the two methods of training perfectly?

After all, in my eyes, there is no fundamental contradiction between them. In fact, they are quite complementary. Energy and material should be united.

After Han Tuhu, Suo Chaolong, and the Fire Ant King were convinced, I began to analyze the storage chips that we looted from the Nether World.

The storage chips were all protected by powerful barriers. I am only good at cracking the carriers by brute force instead of bypassing them. Thankfully, there are quite a few experts on barriers in Han Tuhu’s Flying Tigers Legion. We worked together for two days and retrieved a lot of useful files.

I benefited a lot from the files and developed a deeper understanding about the relationship between cells and spiritual energy later.

Now, I will try to modify the ‘ultimate core’ on the cellular level.

The so-called ‘ultimate core’, from the perspective of energy, is a cluster of highly-compressed spiritual energy that is condensed inside one’s abdomen.

But from the perspective of cells, it is a lump, or rather, the ‘second brain’, that grows out of the end of the spine.

In the past, Cultivators often considered the ‘second brain’ as an organ to manipulate the ultimate core, to form the nascent soul, and to overlook the deeper development of itself.

Since the ‘first brain’ can be developed in order to increase the brain cell activity, why can’t the second brain?

If the second brain is trained to the point that it is more developed than the first brain, what will happen?

After thinking that through, I am no longer anxious that I cannot break into the Nascent Soul Stage any time soon.

Since the very beginning, my path of Cultivation has been destined to differ from that of regular Cultivators.

If Cultivation is compared to climbing a mountain, and the ‘Nascent Soul Stage’ is a higher mountain than the ‘Core Formation Stage’, most Cultivators have been holding up their heads and climbing upwards without bothering anything. However, I have stopped temporarily and moved horizontally to the depths of the mountain named the Core Formation Stage.

Who knows whether or not any treasure is buried at the middle of the mountain?

On the other hand, I have also been pondering how to upgrade the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

Right now, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit has basically reached the peak of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector in terms of technology. There is barely any room for modification.

But it is no longer adapted to my new body and new combat pattern.

For example, the arm of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit is fully enclosed. But in my new combat pattern, I can trigger bone blade and scales on my arm at any time, and I can even summon a crystal on my right palm in order to launch the powerful Cell Obliteration Cannon!

Won’t it be awkward if my hand is covered in the crystal suit?

Will my Cell Obliteration Cannon not hit the enemy until it blows a hole on the armor of my hand?

That’s too hilarious!

Therefore, I will need to upgrade the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit now. My preliminary design is to add a series of active components on the armor of the hand and a boost system that is triggered by marrow crystals in order to maximize the performance of the Cell Obliteration Cannon!

Then, when I think more deeply, now that I have a profound understanding about both crystal suits and biochemical beasts, I have discovered that the two types of ultimate weapons have their own advantages and shortcomings.

Is it possible to combine them?

The synthesized nerves, infinitely-proliferating cells, self-circulating medication drugs, if applied to crystal suits, will significantly improve the size, the working time of the crystal suits, and the protection that they can offer to the users!

Maybe, the crystal suits in the future will be perfect combinations of the studies of spiritual energy and the biochemistry. They will be built with super-strengthened alloys as the framework, entangled by synthesized nerves, and enveloped in self-recovering muscles and mustard-seed-level liquid metal as the armor. Crystals and demon cores will be embedded into the crystal suits at the same time, and they will adopt a dual-core operation system with both crystal processors and biochemical brains. They will be terrifying existences dozens of meters tall!

If such powerful war machines can truly be invented, we will have hope to fight against the Imperium of True Human Beings!

…

Li Yao’s training journal, March 15.

After more than a month of sneaking, lurking, and evading, we have finally arrived at the Blade of Chaos’ central base, the Mysterious Shadow Domain!

Outside my expectations, the Blade of Chaos deployed their central base in a world fragment whose teleportation array to the Blood Demon Sector is in a trench more than four thousand meters deep inside the ocean!

Nobody in the Pantheon of Demons will uproot the Blade of Chaos however hard they try to!

At first glance, the Mysterious Shadow Domain is like a dense primitive forest. It is occupied by demonic plants hundreds of meters tall.

The Fire Ant King told me that all the demonic plants have been modified by him to integrate into a whole. The forest even boasts a simple thinking ability. The interconnecting roots and branches are almost like a weird biochemical brain!

There are not too many members of the Blade of Chaos in the Mysterious Shadow Domain. Only several hundred of them work in the place, but they are all the specialists that the Fire Ant King summoned and raised after decades of effort.

Their original mission was to study the legacy of Chaos that the Fire Ant King discovered and analyze the secret training arts in it in order to provide technical support for the entire Blade of Chaos.

Therefore, the most powerful biochemical brains and the most advanced training facilities have been installed in the place, too. I believe that the memory unit of the main biochemical brain of the Nether World will be cracked in no time.

In the past few days, the Fire Ant King has gradually recovered. I have chatted with him several times and learned quite a few methods to develop demonic plants from him.

The demonic plants share many similarities with several ancient divine grass strains that are recorded in the classics of the Hundred Smelting Clan.

With the sap exploited from the demonic plants, I will be able to produce more than ten kinds of precious cooling liquids. My purification of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures will reach a whole new level!

…

Li Yao’s training journal, March 18.

Yesterday, my systematic training had to be paused. It couldn’t be helped. The Blade of Chaos, the federal soldiers, and the Blood Lion Battalion are now cramming in a small Mysterious Shadow Domain. There are a lot of complicated issues that have to be addressed.

After half a month’s communication, the Fire Ant King, Han Tuhu, Suo Chaolong, and I have agreed unanimously that, in order for us to play a great role in the unprecedented change of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector, a new organization must be founded so that our strength can be combined!

Other than anything else, the tension and hostility among the Blade of Chaos, the federal soldiers, and the Blood Lion

Battalion alone is enough to call for a new organization.

We don’t know whether or not we should feel lucky or sorry. Right now, the three forces have all ended up in the worst situation.

The supreme leader of the Blade of Chaos has been exposed, and ‘Void Turmoil City’, their most important base, is also in crisis. All the branches of the Blade of Chaos are currently being suppressed and on the verge of collapse.

The Flying Tigers Legion have suffered a lot of casualties and lost all their crystal suits and supplies. They are now in the heartland of the enemy all by themselves. Should anything go wrong, they will immediately experience a destructive strike.

The silver-blood demons of the Blood Lion Battalion, as the descendants of the refugees of the Heaven’s Origin Sector in the past, already had an awkward position in the Blood Demon Sector. Considering that they have been completely deformed because of the modifications, their outcome will not be very nice when they show up in public.

The three forces are like three hedgehogs that are shivering coldly in a snowstorm and have to hug each other to preserve the warmth. Even though they might get hurt by the thorns of hatred on each other’s bodies, they cannot let go of their opponents in the past.

In order to coordinate the members and unite them under the same banner, a new organization has to be established immediately.

However, as for the definition of the organization, it took us a long time to settle the details.

The Blade of Chaos and the silver-blood demons are unlikely to let go of their grudge easily. The federal soldiers are restrained by military laws, too, which forbid them from joining other military organizations. Their pride as Cultivators and soldiers also makes it difficult for them to regard the demons as their real comrades, even though they fought side by side and shed blood together in the Nether World.

Therefore, we have established ‘Skyfire’.

On the surface, this is a ‘reading club’, or rather, an organization of history fans, founded to explore the origins of mankind and demon race according to the legends and to unravel the truth buried in dust in the past forty thousand years or even longer.

Neither the laws of the federal army nor the rules of the silver-blood demons and the Blade of Chaos seem to prohibit their members from joining a reading club and studying history, after our analysis.

Right now, the Skyfire Reading Club also has an affiliated… sports team.

The ‘members’ of the reading club, when they are too tired of reading books, will go outdoors and exercise. It is perfectly necessary, reasonable, and not illegal at all, right?

Skyfire is a little ‘experiment’ that we are carrying out. We want to see if there is a second way out for human beings and demons except mutual destruction by founding, operating, and developing the organization.

I have designed a battle emblem for the Skyfire. No. A ‘medal of reading’.

The medal is round. The lower half of it is the shadow of three black trees which constitute a ‘dark forest’. But the crowns of the trees and above are shrouded in furiously burning fire.

The fire will rip apart the dark forest and pave a brilliant way out.

I hope ‘Skyfire’ can really burn a new road in the cold, dark forest.

Even if it can’t, at the very least, the fire will give a bit of warmth and brightness to the living creatures who are shuddering in fear in the dark forest and encourage them to set a fire, too!

Chapter 961 - New Strength!

Deep inside the forest of demonic plants in the Mysterious Shadow Domain, a deep green swamp was bubbling. The air congregated into a cloud above the swamp with the scent of the primeval era.

At the center of the swamp, an enormous pink bud was standing. It shivered slightly like the immaculate heart of an ancient god.

Countless vines fell from the interconnecting branches above the bud and dripped transparent dew onto the bud. In a dance of colorful brightness, they were soon absorbed by the bud and decorated it in a translucence.

Suddenly—

The bud quivered. The layered petals stretched out in all directions like a blossoming lotus.

Li Yao was sitting at the center of the lotus. He took a deep breath and slowly woke up from a deep training of three days and three nights.

His appearance was not very different from before, yet it seemed to have been completely renewed. The sharp, aggressive demonic energy in his left eye had been concealed without a trace. Although scarlet brightness was still beaming out of the eye, it no longer gave the feeling of brutality and ruthlessness. On the contrary, there was a certain vintage and mysterious air to it.

Li Yao slowly warmed up his new body.

In the Mysterious Shadow Domain, through the tremendous research files that the Fire Ant King had on cells and strengthening drugs, and with the marvelous place of training named ‘Ancient Lotus Pond’, Li Yao spent three days in cleansing his veins and rebuilding his physical body by activating a series of primeval cells. Almost all the cells that made up his internal organs had been updated.

Right now, his internal organs were even stronger than before, and their absorption efficiency was far higher. He was now able to breathe freely in multiple kinds of lethal gas. His recovery ability had been multiplied, too.

Most importantly, his second brain had been deeply developed!

Before, human beings had often speculated what would happen if somebody’s brain was 100% developed.

But that was simply impossible. The brain was the greatest energy consumer inside the body and could only function continuously with enough rest. The only outcome of 100% development would be brain death!

Therefore, even Cultivators could not keep their computational ability at the highest point twenty-four hours a day, which would be equal to roasting their brain above a fire.

But right now, after Li Yao’s second brain was developed, it was like that a dual-core system had been installed into his body. When his first brain was cooling down because of the consumption of computational ability, he would be able to activate the second brain to continue calculating seamlessly, which allowed him to train without disruption twenty-four hours a day. His training efficiency would be greatly improved, laying a solid foundation for him to break into the Nascent Soul Stage and above!

Besides…

Li Yao smiled and extended his left hand. A transparent crystal slowly protruded out of his palm.

The mitochondria were burning crazily, making streams of demonic energy appear, jumping and condensing above the crystal.

Different from the past, his left fingers were shivering rapidly, attracting the floating spiritual energy in the air and triggering spiritual waves like ripples nearby.

The spiritual waves and the demonic energy spread out and slowly melted together.

Outside of the deep purple fire, circles of ivory spiritual waves were dancing like glamorous electric arcs. The spiritual fire and the demonic fire interweaved with each other into a double helix like a pair of gene strands. It was hard to tell whether that was a fatal weapon or a piece of stunning artwork.

I’ve made it!

I have utilized demonic energy and spiritual energy at the same time and kept them in a stable form for a long time by adjusting their vibration frequency and their magnetic field structure!

This is a classic restriction system of dual magnetic fields!

In the past, at a given moment, I could only use one type of strength. I could utilize either the spiritual waves or the vibrating demonic energy. I could use either the strength of Cultivators or that of the primeval cells!

But right now, although my absolute strength has not been improved yet, I can now wield the two types of strength at the same time, which will be a significant improvement for the abundancy of my combat patterns and the sustainable combat ability!

Although I haven’t melded the two types of strength perfectly yet, I have already figured out the basic direction to take!

Li Yao laughed and released the double helix made of demonic energy and spiritual energy. Sensing the brand-new strength slowly flowing through his body, he was filled with unparalleled confidence and unstoppable conviction!

Although there was still a long way and many obstacles ahead of him, nobody was going to stop him from walking down the path he chose!

He would slay all evil that stood in his way. Even if the Ultimate One Demons in the past had turned into deities, he would drag them down from the splendid heavens one day and blow them to smithereens!

That was his belief and determination!

Li Yao roared and dashed out of the ‘Ancient Lotus Pond’ in a streak of brightness. Floating in the sky of the Mysterious Shadow Domain, he looked down at the overwhelming forest below his feet.

At the front, on a vast ground in the middle of the forest, hundreds of members of ‘Skyfire’ were having a training session. They were divided into two teams and charging at each other in the battle formation of a regular army.

There was one other team who were sprinting at a high speed on the track with obstacles around the training ground!

Seeing that Li Yao was floating in midair and the air was rippling around him, there was reverence and admiration in everybody’s eyes.

“Chief Instructor!”

The hundreds of warriors all stopped their training and bowed to Li Yao.

In order to avoid awakening the honor and hatred of the past in the warriors, and to facilitate the communication with the leadership of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector in the future, there were no armed forces under the organization that had been temporarily defined as a ‘reading club’. The only thing that existed was a ‘sports team’.

Of course, a ‘sports team’ where almost a thousand top-tier experts, brutal soldiers, and cruel assassins were gathered was certainly inimitable in either the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, or the Flying Star Sector.

Li Yao’s role in the ‘sports team’, on the other hand, was ‘fitness coach’.

His official title was ‘fitness coach’, but everybody was clear that, as the best expert of Skyfire, he was the unquestionable Chief Instructor!

Moreover, in the ‘Skyfire Reading Club’, Li Yao had been elected as the ‘president’ to lead the organization.

Faced with the challenge, Li Yao did not hesitate or back off.

In terms of capability, he was in the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage, and he was a master of refining. Moreover, he had grasped the ability to trigger the primeval cells freely through the mental devil. His combat ability was even higher than that of the Fire Ant King and on par with the best experts of the Blood Demon Sector such as Elder Nether Spring or Jin Tuyi!

In terms of identity, he was an Ultra-Level Federal Hero, the contactor between the Flying Star Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and the first to discovered ‘Chaos’ Ba Yanzhi’s Hidden Star Box and the origins of the demon race!

In the newly founded Skyfire, of which the Fire Ant King, Han Tuhu, Suo Chaolong, and many others were members, who was more qualified to be the leader than himself?

In his heart, Li Yao was fonder of studying in seclusion, sneaking, and assassinating. He did not like, nor was he good at, being the leader of an organization.

But he was very clear that, every time he advanced into a new stage, the responsibility and challenges that befitted the stage would be waiting for him. Most of the time, the lifestyle of ‘follow your heart’ was hypocritical, even bordering on cowardice.

Now that he was the only one who was able to hold the longsword that could chop apart the dark forest, he would certainly try his best to be the best swordsman!

Hiu!

Li Yao fell to the ground like a meteorite, trigger a round of airwaves like a hurricane.

He eyed the warriors of Skyfire.

The ‘athletes’ were divided into three groups dressed in ‘sportswear’, all of which was design in different colors and styles but ‘happened’ to be very similar to combat suits. There was also the logo of Skyfire on their chest.

Under the vaporized blood and sweat, the burning fire right above the dark forest was even more dazzling.

The captives who had survived Elder Nether Spring’s terrifying experiments were mostly very tough. After several days’ thorough treatment, they were all back to their feet again. After the life-and-death battles in the Nether World, they were even stronger than in the past.

They were not divided according to the Blood Lion Battalion, the Flying Tigers Legion, and the Blade of Chaos. Instead, the three forces were entirely regrouped and mixed into three brand new teams. Every team was given a new name.

Furious Flame!

Wild Tide!

Electric Shock!

They were the three squads under the Skyfire. Every squad was mixed and matched by the silver-blood demons, the chaotic-blood demons, and the federal soldiers. New suits, logos, and flags had been designed, too.

A unified flag, suit, and name could trigger a new sense of honor and community as soon as possible, especially during high-intensity competitions.

It was the truth that had been proven by countless armies and forces.

The three squads were competing among themselves day and night. The losers of the competitions would receive the punitive, if not hellish, training that was devised by Li Yao and twenty percent as hard as his own training.

A federal soldier was allowed to despise the demons who were his teammates or even to attack them, as long as he could endure twenty percent of Li Yao’s training difficulty.

At first, many federal soldiers of demons indeed hated each other and were unwilling to cooperate in the competitions. They were even hamstringing each other.

However, after they were disciplined by Li Yao in person several times, especially after Li Yao accidentally discovered that the sap of a certain demonic plant in the Mysterious Shadow Domain was particularly suitable to feed the Purple Ring Sword Ants… and the Purple Ring Sword Ants who got the new nutrition grew into the size of grasshoppers…

Everybody quickly came to the understanding that human beings and demons were of the same origin and that unification was better than division. They could not have tried harder in the competitions!

The survivors of the Blood Lion Battalion, the Flying Tigers Legion, and the Blade of Chaos were all one-in-ten-thousand elites. Their average capability was much higher than that of the regular army of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector.

Li Yao did not want them to become a regular army of an enormous size, either. On the contrary, he wanted them to become a mid-sized rapid response troop and a special force that could carry out special missions.

He did not know the first thing about the military affairs, but Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong were both super experts in the regard.

He was responsible for providing training techniques and drafting training plans; Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong were responsible for supervising the new tactics and teamwork; the Fire Ant King offered various kinds of strengthening drugs to trigger their potentials.

A brand-new force that was unseen in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, or the Flying Star Sector was gradually taking shape.

Chapter 962 - Li Yao's Formidability!

“As I have repeatedly said, don’t call me ‘Chief Instructor’!”

With a gloomy face, Li Yao walked to the hideous-looking trainers. After every step he took, the ground below his feet would fluctuate like the surface of an ocean. The trainers split apart like a building being torn apart in an earthquake.

Li Yao frowned. “Skyfire is just a reading club made of civilians, a community of history fans. We are all readers here, and when we are tired of reading, we gather up and do some physical exercise. What is this Chief Instructor all about?

“I am merely helping you guys with your physical training when I’m free. You may call me ‘Chief Coach’!

“However, although we are all readers, we occasionally are obliged to excavate the relics of the past forty thousand years while studying the history, some of which are quite dangerous.

“Besides, I am hoping to unearth the real relics of the Pangu Clan of the primeval era with the elites of you one day!

“Therefore, it is also important for us readers to keep our bodies healthy!

“I’ve been in seclusion for three days. I hope that you trained yourself like rabid dogs as per my requirement!”

Li Yao extended his finger and snatched one of the crystal balls from the facility area of the training field.

Glancing around, Li Yao said casually, “Furious Flame, Wild Tide, and Electric Shot, you may go up together. In three minutes, if anyone can touch the ball, I will be defeated, and your training will be cancelled tonight!

“Otherwise…

“You are all clear that the Fire Ant King’s strongest ability is to refine ant-type demon beasts, aren’t you?

“Three days ago, I gave him a batch of Purple Ring Sword Ants and asked him to refine them. It is said that they will be built into ‘Super Dominating Purple Ring Sword Ants’, which are ten times more poisonous than the usual Purple Ring Sword Ants. If nobody touches the ball in three minutes, you will get to taste the feeling of Super Dominating Purple Ring Sword Ants. Is there a problem?”

One of the trainers raised his hand. “Chief Coach, are weapons allowed?”

Li Yao smiled. “You can even use Taiyi Lightning Railguns if you want. Three minutes. Starting from now!”

Sha! Sha! Sha! Sha!

The crystal ball was rotating fast on Li Yao’s fingertip. He kept his left hand in his back while he roamed among hundreds of ferocious trainers.

The hideous trainers, who were enough to cause a nightmare if anybody saw them, were now sweating hard and having nightmares themselves!

Damn it. Regular Purple Ring Sword Ants were already a pain in the ass, and now Super Dominating Purple Ring Sword Ants were coming?

Many of them shuddered greatly.

More people, on the other hand, were gritting their teeth viciously. They thought that, although they were certainly no match for the Chief Coach, there were hundreds of them after all. Hundreds of players versus one. It was unlikely that they could not even touch the ball, was it not?

“Let’s go!”

Looking at each other in silence for a second, somebody shouted in the crowd. The members of the Furious Flame Squad, the Wild Tide Squad, and the Electric Shock Squad all bulged in size and roared thunderously. Demonic energy and spiritual energy were vibrating, and flying swords and sharp claws were all unsheathed, as they lunged at Li Yao!

“There are hundreds of us. Can’t we even touch the crystal ball?”

“It is good enough as long as one of us touches the ball. Don’t swarm up! Keep attacking in different waves and make best use of our advantage in numbers!

“Furious Flame Squad, compress Chief Coach’s zone of activity. Block his path with your body if you must!

“Electric Shock Squad, attack remotely and drain his physical strength!

“Wild Tide Squad, engage in melee combat and try to take over the crystal ball!”

After the tutelage of Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong, two first-rate experts in tactics, the warriors of Skyfire had absorbed the classical examples of battles of both the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector. Very soon, they picked the most suitable strategy and surrounded Li Yao one layer after another. Endless wild tides seemed to be indeed flooding toward Li Yao!

However—

“Block my path with your body? Try it!”

Li Yao was rather excited. The demonic energy spurting out of his pores formed glamorous stripes around him under the interference of spiritual waves. His body suddenly split apart into nine streaks of brightness that darted toward to nine different directions like shooting stars, blowing away nine warriors of Skyfire and knocking over dozens of more.

The Skyfire warriors were quick enough to respond, too. Their battle formation was stabilized quickly after a moment of dispersion, and they tried to lock Li Yao again like an enormous shackle!

“Not bad. Come again!”

Li Yao even had the leisure to lick his lips. The crystal ball seemed to have been stuck to his fingertip. His left hand turned into a cluster of gray mist and swallowed the attacks launched by more than ten Skyfire warriors.

Pa!

A Skyfire warrior who was more than three meters tall and had a thick hide resembling that of a rhino was kicked away by Li Yao. Deep purple bruising was already emerging on his thick hide while he was still in midair. The blood seemed to be spurting out at any moment!

BOOM!

Another Skyfire warrior pressed his temples so hard that his fingers almost stabbed into his brain. He was triggering powerful telepathic thoughts and piercing a flying sword into Li Yao at more than five times the speed of sound. But Li Yao extended his left hand and grabbed the flying sword when it was some ten meters away. After a brief impasse, he clenched his fist, and the flying sword was shattered!

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

The pieces of the flying sword turned into dozens of streaks of brightness and revolved briefly before they suddenly exploded and darted into the bodies of more than ten Skyfire warriors like bullets, wrecking their defense!

The training ground was enshrouded in dust, with screams and shouts everywhere, as if a clowder of lions and tigers were fighting against a tyrannosaur!

Li Yao narrowed his eyes. While he shattered the flying sword, his right index finger was still supporting the crystal ball, but his little finger snapped out, triggering an airwave that turned into a rushing blade of wind seven meters away.

After a ‘bam’, the tip of the saber in the hands of a Skyfire warrior was cut off.

The Skyfire warrior looked at his shortened saber in bewilderment. Before he came back to himself, he was hit right in the face by the second bullet of compressed air and did not smash the ground until he had rolled around ten times in midair!

This is what I’m talking about!

Li Yao’s every cell seemed to be having a massage after a hot shower and a bottle of cold drink.

The switch between spiritual energy and demonic energy is much smoother right now, which allows me to remain engaged in a high-intensity combat for longer. The cooldown of the techniques has been significantly reduced.

The high development of the second brain has improved my efficiency in calculating the situation of the battlefield by at least 34.1%. I have more tactical options in a complicated battlefield now!

If I were faced with Xiao Xuance’s Grand Illusionary Soldiers again, I might be able to take down a thousand of them by myself!

One minute… Two minutes… Two minutes and ten seconds…

As time went by, almost a hundred Skyfire warriors were lying awry on the ground.

Li Yao’s demonic energy and spiritual energy were being consumed fast. The first drop of sweat appeared on his forehead, and he was breathing more rapidly than before.

Li Yao calmly recorded the rate of the consumption of his spiritual energy and his cells, as well as the changes that happened to his internal organs, every second.

He was very satisfied about the dropping speed of his combat ability.

He was a man, not a god, after all. The Skyfire warriors were mostly above the Building Foundation Stage. A lot of them were in the Core Formation Stage, too. They had also been endowed with all kinds of weird techniques. Any Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator or demon emperor would find it tricky to deal with them.

Li Yao was most content.

Through the Skyfire warriors, he seemed to have envisioned what the brand-new federal army would look like in the war against the Imperium of True Human Beings in the future.

Shua!

Finally, Li Yao was pushed to the limits.

After fingers, tails, hairs, and other bizarre organs brushed past the crystal ball at a close distance, ten warriors who had been waiting and observing patiently in the past two minutes and fifty seconds suddenly rose up like ten venomous blades unsheathed!

The ten of them were the well-acknowledged strongest among all the Skyfire warriors!

Seven of them locked onto Li Yao’s critical parts such as eyes, abdomen, ribs, groin, and knees. One of the lizard warriors who had scales all over his body was even crouching on the ground, ready to attack his feet.

The other three warriors, on the other hand, lunged at the crystal ball from three different directions.

There was no stopping them!

Swoosh!

Having no choice, Li Yao could only snap the crystal ball high into the sky to free his right hand in order to fight the strongest ten!

However, the moment the crystal ball left his hand, two streaks of brightness suddenly jerked up from the warriors on the ground who had ‘passed out’ and shot toward the soaring ball!

The ten warriors that were lunging at Li Yao changed their direction immediately, too, and stopped over Li Yao’s head, blocking him from the crystal ball!

“Chief Coach, you’ve been fooled!”

In that moment, all the warriors were exuberant.

Regardless of whether they were human beings or demons, they were about to hug each other and cry, not just because they finally could have one night of rest, but also, and more importantly, because they had defeated the frighteningly formidable Vulture Li Yao!

BOOM! BOOM!

When the two streaks of brightness almost reached the crystal ball, two dull noises suddenly reverberated in the sky.

The crystal ball was boosted to a higher altitude by the explosion of a super tiny crystal bomb, thereby escaping the two Skyfire warriors.

The second explosion blew the crystal ball into pieces. It was instantly devoured by fire without any remains left.

“Well—”

All Skyfire warriors looked at the sky in a daze for a long time before turning to Li Yao half in wrath and half in depression.

Finally, one of Skyfire warriors summoned his courage and asked, “Isn’t—isn’t this cheating?”

“Of course it is. Any problem?”

Li Yao opened his hands. “I installed the mini crystal bombs on the ball at the very beginning. It was right in front of you for three minutes. Yet, nobody discovered them. Am I to blame?

“Remember, Super Dominating Purple Ring Sword Ants. Get yourselves prepared!”

Li Yao smiled. His face could not have been more devastating at this moment in the eyes of the Skyfire warriors.

Right then, Han Tuhu dashed onto the training ground.

“We’ve made a major breakthrough in the analysis on the memory unit of the main biochemical brain of the Nether World!”

Chapter 963 - Uncontrollable Evolution!

The memory unit of the main biochemical brain of the Nether World was soaked in a huge, transparent biochemical slot. Billions of bubbles were attached to it like billions of cells, corroding and analyzing it. The memory unit was shrinking like a rotten apple.

More than ten strands of synthesized nerves extended out of the bottom of the biochemical slot and connected to more than ten biochemical brains of the Blade of Chaos.

One of the biochemical brains was connected to a crystal processor. Through the light beam, the information retrieved from the memory unit was displayed in front of everyone.

In front of Li Yao, Han Tuhu, and Suo Chaolong, more than ten light beams were floating, on which a huge amount of information were surging like tides.

The Fire Ant King explained their progress. “In the past ten days, we have retrieved valuable experiment data and research files from both the memory unit and the storage chips, which has proved very helpful in cracking the secrets of the legacy of Chaos and explaining everything that happened to you.

“We have also basically figured out the details of the ‘Demon God Virus’ and Elder Nether Spring’s purpose.

“The so-called ‘Demon God Virus’ can be interpreted as a virus that targets the genetic locks. It is an ‘exhilarant’ that facilitates the high-speed evolution of cells.

“Generally speaking, the gene strands in the cells of both human beings and demons are always kept in a relatively stable state, like they are shackled by an invisible giant lock.

“Although the ‘genetic lock’ restricts part of our abilities, it ensures the steadiness of our body and prevents us from mutating too radically. We can say that it is a protective mechanism of our body.

“Both Cultivators and the experts of demons try to tear apart the genetic locks when they are training, but such attempts can be highly dangerous. Once the genetic locks are wrecked, the victims will certainly be mentally deranged. They will either turn into foam because of cellular collapse or spontaneously combust and turn to ash.

“As for ordinary people and low-level demons, they can stand the consequences of bombarding the genetic locks even less.

“However, the ‘Demon God Virus’ will completely wreck the genetic lock and awaken the gene segments deep inside the gene strands that are in charge of ‘evolution’. As a result, the creature will go through evolution that should’ve happened in a span of tens of thousands of years in only a few days, if not a few hours.

“Evolution. What is evolution?

“It is a common misunderstanding that evolution means ‘higher, faster, and stronger’. No. That’s not true.

“Evolution means the adaption to the environment for the purpose of survival. It does not necessarily mean ‘higher, faster, and stronger’. It is also possible to be smaller, slower, and weaker.

“A smaller size reduces the odds of being discovered by the natural enemy. Slower and weaker means a lower consumption rate of energy and demand on food.

“Mammals that evolved from dinosaurs lost their magnificent bodies and sharp claws.

“If a mammal on the land ‘evolves’ into the whale in the ocean, it will lose the ability to move on the land. In fact, it will be suffocated because it cannot endure its own weight when it is brought to the beach by a tide.

“In fact, such evolutions are the more successful and fortunate ones.

“The truth is, evolution has no direction. It is just a series of random choices that are screened by the cruelty of nature.

“99% of evolutions fail, and only 1% of them adapt to the new environment. When the new environment stabilizes, the genetic lock will shackle the new evolution and maintain the new form and functions.

“It has always been so for living creatures over the past billions of years.

“However, the Demon God Virus created a hole in the solid genetic change, thereby allowing human beings and demons to evolve at a crazy speed!

“Therefore, no matter how hard Elder Nether Spring tried, the success rate of his evolutions was still below 5%. The remaining 95% were either killed on the spot or turned into ‘uncontrollable mutants’!

“That is the truth of the Demon God Virus!”

The muscles on Suo Chaolong’s face were twitching violently, as if he were back to the days and nights that he would rather not recall. He gnashed his teeth. “Why was Elder Nether Spring doing that?”

“First of all,” the Fire Ant King said coldly, “he wanted to find the right direction of evolution.

“95% of the evolutions failed, and 5% did not. Then, what determined the success or failure of the evolutions? If he figured out the answer, Elder Nether Spring would be able to make himself evolve incessantly into what he claimed to be the perfect third life form that was above mankind and the demon race!

“Also, the by-products of the experiments, namely the uncontrollable mutants, were powerful weapons under certain circumstances!

“Thirdly, we have discovered that the Demon God Virus of the latest generation could edit the gene segments inside our body.

“Genes are the most mysterious things of all. Our ancestors billions of years ago can pass on certain information to us through genes.

“Many people feel scared and disgusted beyond their control when they see snakes and spiders, even though the snakes and spiders are utterly harmless.

“Experiments have also shown that even the children of snake demons are scared of snakes, too. Their fear will not go until after they slowly grow up.

“The fear beyond reason is a warning that our ancestors passed on to us through genes. It is our natural instinct.

“However, from Elder Nether Spring’s memory unit, we have discovered a group of extremely weird gene segments that can be divided into two forms. Let’s call them ‘master gene segments’ and ‘slave gene segments’ for the convenience of communication.

“Judging from the experiment data, people who had ‘slave gene segments’ would unconditionally have emotions such as fear, admiration, and subjugation toward those who had ‘master gene segments’. The emotions are beyond all reason and willpower. They are a ‘natural instinct’.

“You may understand it as a mark that is stamped to the deepest part of the cell. It is an ineffaceable curse. Whoever gets stamped with the ‘slave gene segments’ will be the peons of the owners of the ‘master gene segments’ forever!”

Han Tuhu narrowed his eyes. “So, as long as Elder Nether Spring plants the ‘master gene segments’ into his body and figures out a way to spread out the ‘slave gene segments’, everybody whose ‘slave gene segments’ are activated will become his slave and follow his commands as unconditionally as a mouse is scared of a cat?”

“Correct.” The Fire Ant King nodded. “Although we have destroyed a lot of research facilities in the ‘Nether World’, judging from the research records, the sixth generation of the Demon God Virus, which was already completed, has perfectly combined the two functions, namely the crack of genetic lock and the activation of master and slave gene segments.

“It means that, once ‘Demon God VI’ is spread out on a large scale in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon

Sector, many creatures will die, many will lose their mind and become ‘uncontrollable mutants’ who know nothing but killing, and the few lucky dogs who evolve successfully and receive enormous strength will become the most loyal soldiers of Elder Nether Spring!

“That is the future that Elder Nether Spring looks forward to.”

There was nothing but silence.

The only sound was the bubbling memory unit inside the biochemical slot.

“Since the sixth generation of the Demon God VI is already so powerful,” Li Yao asked, “why hasn’t Elder Nether Spring released the virus and started a large-scale infection?”

The Fire Ant King managed a smile and replied, “I know that the Heaven’s Origin Sector has an uncanny fear about the biochemical technology of the Blood Demon Sector. A lot of fantasies are actually about a mysterious virus from the Blood Demon Sector spreading on a large scale in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and turning everybody into the walking dead.

“To be honest, the Blood Demon Sector has indeed done similar studies in the past, but all the projects were abandoned in the end.

“It is because the large-scale transmission of a virus is not as simple as you imagine, and the strength of the infected might not be as high as you feared them to be.

“It’s very simple. If a virus is powerful enough to kill someone very quickly, it is very likely that the patient will die before they have a chance to spread the virus!

“If a virus has a long incubation period and spreads in a mysterious way, it often infects the victim at a very low speed, and the symptoms that it can bring will not be severe, either.

“It seems to be an unresolvable contradiction.

“Faced with a highly-efficient government and army, the so-called walking dead are nothing but moving targets.

“Take the extraterrestrial devils for example. They have been old nemeses of human beings for a long time. The ‘devilized people’ who are possessed by the extraterrestrial devils are millions of time stronger than the walking dead, but haven’t they been blown to smithereens every time?

“If there is absolutely no choice, it is always possible to impose a perimeter around the infected area and blow everything inside to the ground. Any government will not hesitate to do that when they must.

“The Demon God Virus has obvious shortcomings. It is vulnerable under high and low temperature. Furthermore, the longevity of the cells of the ‘controllable mutants’ is too short. Even if no measures are taken to deal with them, a few days of hunger is more than enough to starve the ravenous cells that have just finished the evolution.

“Also, do not overestimate the power of ‘evolution’. Such evolutions are based on the body of every individual after all. An ordinary person cannot be stronger than a Cultivator even if they contract the Demon God Virus and successfully evolve. They can only cause some trouble to society. Nothing more. Only the Cultivators who are infected with the Demon God Virus and evolve successfully are the perfect warriors in Elder Nether Spring’s mind, I think.

“More importantly, any virus will be cracked very soon, with vaccines and antidotes, when it breaks out on a large scale.

“It’s true that Elder Nether Spring can throw out the virus on a large scale right now, but the best outcome he can expect is to infect a few cities of the Heaven’s Origin Sector or the Blood Demon Sector and to create an epidemic area. A large batch of ordinary people or low-level demons might become three to five times, or maybe even ten times, stronger than before. But then what? Is it really meaningful for Elder Nether Spring’s cause?”

Chapter 964 - Spore Stratagem!

Li Yao feel into deep thought. “That is why Elder Nether Spring went through all the trouble of exploring the Mausoleum of Chaos. He wanted to get new insights from the Mausoleum of Chaos to make the Demon God Virus more powerful and perfect!

“Right now, it is the sixth generation of the Demon God Virus, which means he has already developed five generations. But the five generations must’ve been too flawed to be put into practice.

“That is why he set you up and looted the Mausoleum of Chaos!

“After analyzing the relics from the Mausoleum of Chaos, perhaps he would have been able to develop the seventh generation, the eighth, or even the ultimate version of the Demon God Virus, one that is unafraid of coldness or heat, easy to spread, and has a perfect balance between conspicuousness and destructiveness!”

The Fire Ant King took a long, slow breath. “That’s what I speculated, too. He almost succeeded, but he neglected to account for you. As a result, he went for wool and came home shorn. Not only did he fail to retrieve anything from the Mausoleum of Chaos, even his own nest had been overturned, and his most important secrets have been found by us!”

“Then, what is our problem now?” Han Tuhu asked. “The ‘Nether World’ at the North Pole is certainly Elder Nether Spring’s most important research center. We have crippled it. The research will not begin for another one to two years.

“It’s quite unlikely that Elder Nether Spring has a second research center that is of such a high level. He cannot find a second ‘Flying Tigers Legion’ or ‘Blood Lion Battalion’ for his experiments, either.

“Therefore, whatever schemes he had, they are all ruined now. The best he can do right now is stir some trouble, but it will definitely be suppressed very quickly.”

The Fire Ant King managed a smiled and replied, “I wish it were as simple as that.

“My brother is truly ten times more terrifying than I imagined.

“He learned my identity as the leader of the Blade of Chaos decades ago, and yet he kept it a secret to this day. He even manipulated me in secret so that every action I took was an implementation of his will.

“Do you think that his scheme will be disrupted so easily and that he does not have a backup plan?

“The development of a virus is similar to training. Even if you have enough money and time, success is not guaranteed. Most of the time, luck plays a vital role. If you are lucky, you might make a breakthrough in a year and a half. If you are not, you might make zero progress despite the resources and specialists you dedicate to the project and the decades you spend on it, which is nothing unusual.

“For Elder Nether Spring, even if everything went well and he had truly retrieved the knowledge of Chaos from the legacies, would it have been guaranteed that the sixth generation of the Demon God Virus could be upgraded to the seventh generation quickly?

“It was impossible. No specialists would’ve dared to make such a promise.

“Assuming that the development of the Demon God Virus doesn’t make any progress in ten years, will Elder Nether Spring simply wait ten years?

“If it were I, you, or any ambitious schemer, would we wait for such a long time?

“Absolutely not!

“He will certainly have come up with a plan with the current sixth generation of the Demon God Virus as the core while overcoming its flaws as best as he can so that the virus will spread most efficiently!

“Right now, the ‘Nether World’ has been seriously damaged. More importantly, it is no longer a secret. With Elder Nether Spring’s cautiousness, he must’ve already abandoned the ‘Nether World’ and activated the backup plan.

“The very backup plan is exactly the topic of our discussion today, which has just been parsed from the memory unit. The name of the backup plan is the Spore Stratagem!”

Li Yao and the two captains chewed on the name slowly. Perhaps because of their bias, ‘Spore Stratagem’ gave them a rather chilly feeling.

The image and shadow behind the Fire Ant King changed, and rows of additional information and data popped up, including the forms of several mutated cells and the pictures of several edited gene strands.

He pointed at the data and said, “While we were analyzing the memory unit, we occasionally ran into a code name ‘spore’. At first, we did not understand what it was exactly. Was it a drug, a cell, or a new living creature?

“But this morning, our specialists finally recovered a shattered document from the deepest part of the memory unit. The document was about a top-secret transportation plan, and the goods to be transported were ‘spores’.

“Then, it finally occurred to us that the code name ‘spore’ did not represent cells or demon beasts—spores are people who stored the Demon God Virus inside their body.”

Li Yao frowned. “Stored?”

“You may consider the ‘spores’ as the carriers of the Demon God Virus,” the Fire Ant King said. “The Demon God Virus will not show any symptoms or reactions when it is incubating inside their body. They will not look unusual from their fellows. Therefore, it is extremely difficult to find them.

“It goes without saying that the ‘awakening’ and ‘outbreak’ of the Demon God Virus are under Elder Nether Spring’s command.”

Li Yao’s eyelids twitched. “Can I understand the ‘spores’ as walking genetic bombs?”

The Fire Ant King nodded. “You can.”

There was a long silence.

Suo Chaolong was sweating hard. “How many spores are there in total? Where are they now?”

“Not a clue.” The Fire Ant King shook his head. “It is a pity that most of the transportation plan was already deleted, including the number, identity files, and destinations of the ‘spores’.

“Judging from the experiment data in the past, there should be at least a hundred ‘spores’. Before we were sent to the ‘Nether World’, they had already been shipped out. As to where they went and how they will be ‘detonated’, no records have been left.

“You see. The ‘Nether World’ is Elder Nether Spring’s secret weapon research center. The files are all about the weapons that are being developed. But there are certainly no traces as to the usage of the hundreds of kinds of weapons that have already been developed and shipped out!”

Li Yao rubbed his face until it was as burningly hot as his high-functioning brain. “Therefore, although we’ve destroyed Elder Nether Spring’s ability to develop a new generation of the Demon God Virus, he still has at least a hundred ‘genetic bombs’ in his hands, doesn’t he? Once he confirms that it is impossible to upgrade the Demon God Virus, he will activate the ‘Spore Stratagem’ and detonate the ‘genetic bombs’ at a certain critical point, right?”

The Fire Ant King’s voice was particularly cold. “Not ‘will’ but ‘has’. It’s been more than half a month since we escaped from the ‘Nether World’, The ‘Spore Stratagem’ must’ve already been activated during the time!”

Suo Chaolong gasped. “Although the sixth generation of the Demon God Virus is flawed, it might have unexpected effects if it is released to certain targets.

“For example, with Elder Nether Spring’s identity and position, he can certainly convene a meeting where all the demon emperors of the Blood Demon Sector will be gathered. By then, he will only need to ask the ‘genetic bombs’ to be his guards or servants and then detonate around the meeting room. If so, all the demon emperors will be fished up and become his slaves. He will seize the supreme power of the Blood Demon Sector!”

“It is not very likely.” Han Tuhu shook his head hard and said calmly, “The survival rate after contracting the sixth generation of the Demon God Virus is no higher than 5%. Even if dozens of demon emperors are gathered, the best outcome he can expect is that two to three live on while all the others are killed.

“Without the support of dozens of demon emperors, how can the Blood Demon Sector fight against the Heaven’s Origin Sector? Elder Nether Spring is not an idiot. He would certainly not commit such a folly.”

Suo Chaolong was dazed and deep in thought. “Fair enough. Then I really cannot figure out the answer now. Even though Elder Nether Spring has a hundred genetic bombs, where exactly is he going to plant them? How can he infect all the experts of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector at the same time?”

They were seriously lacking the relevant information. It was impossible for them to get a general picture of the Spore Stratagem.

Li Yao calculated for a moment and then abandoned the futile attempt. He changed his way of thinking and said, “In fact, we don’t have to waste our time figuring out Elder Nether Spring’s next move. The Spore Stratagem will be a catastrophe for both the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector will suffer first! As long as we inform the Pantheon of Demons of the scheme, the Pantheon of Demons will certainly be wary of Elder Nether Spring!

“Even though the Mausoleum of Chaos has been completely ruined by Elder Nether Spring, it is unlikely that he can wipe out the ‘Nether World’ in the North Pole entirely. Besides, the Fire Ant King and Suo Chaolong are also the best eyewitnesses!

“Just tell them everything and the key files that we have already parsed. That will do!”

With a bitter smile, the Fire Ant King shook his head. “I had the same idea, but it doesn’t seem to be a possible approach.”

Li Yao was dazed. “Why not?”

The Fire Ant King sighed and pointed at the light beam. “We don’t have undeniable proof to link Elder Nether Spring to the whole scheme at all.

“Have you noticed that the logo of a pair of gene strands and a saber, which is the battle emblem of the Blade of Chaos, is in the bottom left corner of some of the files?”

Of course, Li Yao had noticed the battle emblem of the Blade of Chaos, but he thought that it was a watermark that the specialists of the Blade of Chaos left when they were parsing the memory unit. Was it not?

The Fire Ant King explained, “The logos were not added just now but already in the depths of the tremendous files.

“Besides, Elder Nether Spring never showed up during the experiments on the captives such as Suo Chaolong and Han Tuhu. We are the only ones who know the code name ‘Nether World Watch’, too.

“In fact, you will realize if you think carefully that, even if Elder Nether Spring had shown up in front of Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong, it still would have been meaningless.”

Li Yao pondered for a moment. “A faked setup?”

“Exactly!” The Fire Ant King smiled bitterly. “Even if Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong saw ‘Elder Nether Spring’, how can they prove that the ‘Elder Nether Spring’ was not impersonated by someone of the Blade of Chaos? Even if Elder Nether Spring’s personal signature were on every page of the files, how can you prove that it is not a lousy setup?”

Chapter 965 - Most Wanted!

Han Tuhu looked at Suo Chaolong and said slowly, “It was true that the staff never revealed their identity when we went through the experiments in the Nether World. As for the soldiers of the Nether World Watch who had demon cores all over their bodies, it was not like they were holding a flag pledging their loyalty to anybody. They could be Elder Nether Spring’s subordinates or the members of the Blade of Chaos. As for the batch of members of the Blade of Chaos who were taken captive, how can you prove that it was not a trick to mislead us?”

“Also,” the Fire Ant King said coldly, “I have no doubt that Elder Nether Spring must’ve left traces that were associated with the Blade of Chaos when he retreated from the Nether World, just like the inconspicuous ‘proof’ that he had left in the memory unit.

“Since the very beginning, he has known there was a possibility of the Nether World being discovered and been prepared to let the Blade of Chaos be the scapegoat.

“Even if Suo Chaolong and I are willing to accuse Elder Nether Spring with a lot of evidence, who will believe us?”

Li Yao rubbed his fingers somewhat anxiously. He did not know that Elder Nether Spring was as cunning as a slippery loach.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao said, “No matter what Elder Nether Spring is up to, we should reach out to the leadership of the Pantheon of Demons right now. With Elder Nether Spring's Spore Stratagem now and the Imperium of True Human Beings' minor apocalypse later, if the Blood Demon Sector decides to wage a total war on the Heaven's Origin Sector right now, everything will be doomed!

"If possible, we must try to contact Jin Tuyi, the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons, and start a dialogue!

"As for whether or not he believes us, we will figure out the question after we meet him.

"Secondly, as the Fire Ant King said, a vaccine could be developed very quickly after the virus breaks out. Then, we must begin the development of the vaccines and antidotes for the sixth generation of the Demon God Virus right now!"

The Fire Ant King frowned. "Since the day the sixth generation of the Demon God Virus was discovered, the specialists of the Blade of Chaos have already been working on the vaccines and the antidotes. However, it will still take at least a year and a half. There is no way that we can get any faster.

"Besides, judging from the experiment data in the memory unit, there are dozens of different branches of the sixth generation of the Demon God Virus. We are not clear on exactly which branch the spores are carrying.

"Viruses can mutate very rapidly. As soon as their form changes, the old vaccine will no longer be effective. It is impossible for us to develop dozens of different vaccines and antidotes in one year!

"The only possible approach right now is to get the Divine Blood of Chaos and develop an all-purpose reduction drug.

“The Divine Blood of Chaos is a gene stabilizing drug that the Chaos Demons under Ba Yanzhi’s command developed forty thousand years ago. It can restore the crazily evolving cells to their original state and stabilize them by generating a new genetic lock.

“We don’t know why Chaos Demons developed the Divine Blood of Chaos.

“Perhaps, it was because they wanted to get rid of the identity as demons and regain the appearance of human beings after they discovered the scheme of the Ultimate One Demons.

“Or perhaps, it was because only the Divine Blood of Chaos could keep Ba Yanzhi in the state of shapeless cellular mucus without getting himself killed after he overly triggered the primeval force deep inside his cells and completely broke his genetic lock.

“It is also possible that, since a lot of terrible monsters, such as Skeleton Dragon, were invented during the research of the Chaos Demons, they developed the Divine Blood of Chaos to manipulate the brutes so that they wouldn’t be too violent.

“Whatever the reason was, Elder Nether Spring got the last dosage of Divine Blood of Chaos that was still active in the world. He then conducted relative research.

“Elder Nether Spring wanted to develop a reduction drug for a simple reason. The Demon God Virus is too dangerous after all. Chances are that it might even attack him and his subordinates. Therefore, it was necessary for him to have antidotes prepared.

“Otherwise, if the genetic bombs exploded in his nest by accident and he ended up being an ‘uncontrollable mutant’ before the Spore Stratagem was implemented, wouldn’t he become the greatest joke in the history of the Blood Demon Sector?

“On the other hand, Elder Nether Spring certainly did not really want an uncontainable outbreak of the Demon God Virus. The reason is simple. What he wants are slaves. If the Demon God Virus indeed killed more than 95% of human beings and demons, who in the world could he possibly enslave?

“Therefore, I think that the most effective approach is to destroy the nucleuses of mankind and the demon race before he shows up in front of the public who are threatened by the virus as a ‘savior’ with the reduction drug!

“At that point, both human beings and low-level demons will certainly worship him as a god!”

Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong both gnashed their teeth. They looked at each other and noticed the same fire burning in their eyes.

The Fire Ant King continued. “However, the last dosage of the Divine Blood of Chaos somehow ended up in the hands of Jin Xinyue, saintess of the Pantheon of Demons and daughter of Jin Tuyi, after all kinds of coincidences.

“Faced with the Demon God Virus, the Divine Blood of Chaos is almost a silver bullet. If we can get the Divine Blood of Chaos and produce a large quantity of reduction drugs after unraveling its mysteries, we will be able to take away the firewood under the cooking pot and settle the threat of the Spore Stratagem once and for all!”

Li Yao’s eyes were glittering. “Therefore, Jin Xinyue is the key.

“She is Jin Tuyi’s daughter. Let’s take a look at our identities. The Fire Ant King is the leader of rebels. Han Tuhu and I are Cultivators. Suo Chaolong is the descendant of the refugees from the Heaven’s Origin Sector. None of us can win Jin Tuyi’s trust.

“Although Jin Xinyue might not have her father’s absolute trust, either, it is unlikely that Jin Tuyi will unsheathe his saber and slash at his daughter the moment he sees her, right?

“Therefore, if we are to start a dialogue, we will need her to facilitate the communication. Besides, she is aware of Jin Tuyi’s thought pattern and the inside information of the Pantheon of Demons. She can help us get into the headquarters of the Pantheon of Demons and infer what actions Jin Tuyi will take in the next step.

“Moreover, the Divine Blood of Chaos… is inside her body, too!

“What’s the progress of the intelligence squad sent to Void Turmoil City right now?”

After they escaped from the Nether World, Li Yao had already vaguely felt that Jin Xinyue was the key to the whole event, but they were in a rather awkward situation and had to sneak and lurk. They did not dare communicate with the outside world, nor were they aware of the situation in Void Turmoil City and whether or not it was already occupied.

Also, the three forces who hated each other’s guts had only just begun working together. They were barely a group, much less a team. A lot of urgent problems had to be addressed quickly. Li Yao had no time to leave the place and find Jin Xinyue immediately.

Therefore, he could only choose to come to the Mysterious Shadow Domain first. Then, he spent more than half a month adjusting his combat ability to the peak state. During the time, he also finished the establishment of Skyfire.

On the other hand, the Fire Ant King had already sent an intelligence squad made of smart soldiers, who were under the command of Yuchi Ba, to investigate the current situation of the outside world, especially that of Void Turmoil City.

If possible, they would also sneak into Void Turmoil City and pick up Li Yao's 'sister'.

The Fire Ant King shook his head. "To ensure the absolutely security of the Mysterious Shadow Domain, I asked Yuchi Ba to reduce the long-distance communication with us as much as possible. I haven't received any updates from them in the past couple of days.

"However, if everything goes well, they should be back in a day or two, hopefully with Jin Xinyue."

Li Yao rubbed his temples and said, "When Jin Xinyue is here, we will make three moves simultaneously.

"Firstly, study the Divine Blood of Chaos profoundly and try to develop the reduction drug as quickly as possible.

"Secondly, contact Jin Tuyi, the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons, through Jin Xinyue and talk to the leadership of the Pantheon of Demons directly. We will introduce the Spore Stratagem and the Imperium of True Human Beings to them and analyze the advantages and disadvantages of the decisions that they can possibly make, in the hope that the leadership of the Pantheon of Demons makes a sensible choice!

“Thirdly, Furious Flame, Wild Tide, and Electric Shock, the three Skyfire squads, must not go easy on their training. If the communication fails, they might get to play a more important role. For example… find a chance and take down Elder Nether Spring directly!”

Li Yao had always believed that talks and communication were important.

However, he did not really care whether the medium of the talks and communication was words or weapons.

Right then, the antennae on the Fire Ant King’s forehead slightly shivered. He was refreshed and said, “The intelligence squad is back!”

Yuchi Ba, the master of the Skeleton Island, appeared in front of everyone wearily.

There was no one with him. No Jin Xinyue at all.

The moment they saw Yuchi Ba, all the four of them felt their hearts turn heavy.

Yuchi Ba had the bloodlines of rhino demons. What he had been most proud of was the large horn at the center of his big face. The horn was also the most fatal weapon on his body.

But right now, the horn had been cut in half, and only part of it was still standing on his wrinkled face.

Yuchi Ba took out a few glamorous golden beetles from his pocket. He triggered a stream of demonic energy and released the golden beetles to the air.

Bo! Bo!

Strange brilliance spread out from the bellies of the golden beetles, which condensed into more than ten vivid pictures that were the 3D photos of the Fire Ant King and Suo Chaolong.

Another few pictures were just words that described the appearance of certain suspects.

The ruthless words were enough to sting Li Yao’s and Han Tuhu’s nerves.

They were all… arrest warrants.

“Our organization has experienced a destructive strike. Many bureaus that have been inactive for more than ten years have been uprooted!”

Yuchi Ba scratched the fracture of his horn while his small eyes were jumping up and down, as if he could still feel the excruciating pain. “The identities of the leader and me have been exposed, too. The Pantheon of Demons has officially issued the arrest warrants and kill orders of the highest degree!”

Suo Chaolong slapped the table and bellowed, “Why am I on the list, too?”

“Because you’ve betrayed the Blood Demon Sector, too.”

Yuchi Ba pointed at Suo Chaolong’s arrest warrant and said, “Your crime is stated very clearly here. Your Blood Lion

Battalion was crushed and captured by the Star Glory Federation at the end of the Battle of Dawn, and you surrendered

Chapter 966 - Immaculate Trap!

“You’ve got to be kidding me!”

Suo Chaolong slapped the table and rose up, his neck bulging suddenly like a cobra that was about to launch an attack. His fury almost burnt a hole through the ceiling while he shouted, “Everybody in the entire Blood Demon Sector knows the grudge between the refugees and the Star Glory Federation! The Star Glory Federation destroyed our home, murdered our ancestors, and drove us to the Blood Demon Sector. Never has one second gone by without us forgetting to march back to the Grand Desolate Plateau and our hometown! How in the world will I surrender to the greedy, shameless, and hypocritical Star Glory Federation?”

In an awkward position, Li Yao and Han Tuhu remained silent.

Suo Chaolong glanced at them, his chest was still fluctuating. “I am sorry. It’s nothing personal. I meant that everybody of the federation is—”

“It doesn’t matter. We totally got it.” Li Yao hurried to interrupt him.

“That being said, it is also universally known that the descendants of the refugees of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the locals of the Star Glory Federation haven’t always been in the best relationship,” the Fire Ant King analyzed calmly. “Although your ancestors were driven out of the Heaven’s Origin Sector by the Star Glory Federation, and it seems to be a good reason to hate them, it is also evident enough that, same as Li Yao and Han Tuhu, you are also from the Heaven’s Origin Sector, if you change your mindset. You are also a native of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, of a sort.

“As the saying goes, water and people from the hometown are the sweetest. It is not out of the question for you to work with the Star Glory Federation, is it?”

Suo Chaolong felt that his brain was exploding. “Hey. Don’t just throw out random sayings. Who comes from the same hometown as those wretched Cultivators?”

The Fire Ant King casually said, “I am just trying to understand the event from the perspective of the leadership of the Blood Demon Sector.

“The war that we are faced with is both one between the demon race and mankind and one between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Then, since the Star Glory Federation and you are both rooted in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, is it really hard to imagine forming an alliance driven by the mutual benefits?”

Suo Chaolong gnashed his teeth. “What ‘mutual benefits’ are you talking about?”

“For example,” the Fire Ant King said, “the federal government could promise that, as long as you help the federation demolish the Pantheon of Demons, you will be allowed to come back to the Grand Desolate Plateau after the two worlds merge.”

Suo Chaolong sneered. “You are insulting not only my loyalty to the demon race but also my wisdom! Without the demon race behind me, it would be a miracle if the sordid Star Glory Federation abided by their promise!”

“However, what if your Blood Lion Battalion was indeed crushed and captured?” the Fire Ant King said. “You don’t have a choice. You either remain loyal to the Blood Demon Sector and die with all of your brothers, or you cooperate with the Star Glory Federation for the lives of your brothers!”

Suo Chaolong was lost for words. He grinded his teeth so hard that they were cracking.

The Fire Ant King sighed and pointed at his own arrest warrant. “Am I not the same?

“According to the arrest warrant, the Blade of Chaos has also surrendered to the Star Glory Federation and become the vanguard in the federation’s invasion.

“The reason is also very simple. Since I failed to enter the center of power of the Blood Demon Sector and become one of the twelve demon emperors, I had always been discontented. Therefore, I established the Blade of Chaos in secret to get more benefits for myself.

“Fearing that my ambitions would be exposed one day, I decided to go further and joined hands with the Star Glory Federation, turning into a dog of the federation willingly!

“Look. Even the liaisons that the Star Glory Federation sent to us have been listed clearly!”

The Fire Ant King glanced over the other warrants. “It is clearly stated that the Star Glory Federation has sent a lot of liaisons to sneak into the Blood Demon Sector with Suo Chaolong’s help for the purpose of a closer communication with me. The liaisons even include an expert in the Nascent Soul Stage!

“The Nascent Soul Stage expert obviously refers to Li Yao.

“As you can see, they have assigned the perfect roles for every one of us. Suo Chaolong turned traitor after being captured, I had been ambitious all the time, and Li Yao had snuck into the Blood Demon Sector on purpose to instigate trouble!

“Now that such arrest warrants have been published, how do we explain ourselves to others when they discover that we are hanging around together? Are we really going to tell them that we are a bunch of readers who love history and we only gather to share books or play sports?”

“This is too sordid!” Cold sweat coating his forehead, Suo Chaolong gnashed his teeth. “This must be Elder Nether Spring’s scheme! Elder Nether Spring was scared that we would tell the secrets of the Nether World, the Mausoleum of Chaos, and the Spore Stratagem. Therefore, he made a move first and dug an immaculate trap for us!

“Right now, a large basin of dirty water has been poured over us. Nobody is going to believe us whatever we say!

“But it doesn’t sound right. The Fire Ant King is Elder Nether Spring’s blood brother, and the two of you had a close relationship. If the Fire Ant King is proved to be the leader of the Blade of Chaos, even if Elder Nether Spring declares that he knew nothing about it, he will certainly be at least partially blamed.

“Isn’t this like a suicidal attack?

“Where is Elder Nether Spring right now?”

Yuchi Ba hesitated for a moment and said, “According to our latest intelligence, because of his relationship with the Fire Ant King, Elder Nether Spring was impeached by Master Hollow Wind in the headquarters of the Pantheon of Demons.

Suppressed by the other eleven demon emperors, he had to submit all his power ‘willingly’ while the investigation is pending.

“His control over the Nether Spring Kingdom hit rock bottom, too!”

“What!”

Li Yao, Han Tuhu, Suo Chaolong and the Fire Ant King were all dazed.

Seeing the confusion on Li Yao’s and Han Tuhu’s faces, the Fire Ant King explained, “Master Hollow Wind is another demon emperor in the Nether Spring Kingdom. He is one of the traditional nobles. His family can be traced back to more than a thousand years ago. His personal capability is only lesser than that of Elder Nether Spring.

“Elder Nether Spring and I are only from a secondary branch of a middle-sized noble family of the Nether Spring Kingdom. It was with the legacies of Chaos that we slowly rose up from the mountains of dead bodies. Naturally, our rise harmed the interests of many traditional nobles.

“Therefore, many nobles are in fact not very satisfied about Elder Nether Spring’s reign over the Nether Spring Kingdom. They have been merely restraining themselves because of Elder Nether Spring’s formidability. Of course, it is nothing unusual in the Blood Demon Sector. Every kingdom has similar cases.

“Despite Elder Nether Spring’s remarkable strength, he rose up by himself, and he does not have many loyal subordinates. Often, he also has to concede to the old nobles and cannot uproot them completely.

“Over the past few years, Elder Nether Spring has summoned the forces of the Nether Spring Kingdom and attacked the Heaven’s Origin Sector crazily. In the Battle of Dawn, the troops of the Nether Spring Kingdom were the main force, too. As a result, they suffered heavy losses, which was a major strike on the kingdom.

“Of course, we know that Elder Nether Spring did not care about the cannon fodder at all. It was merely an approach to collect more test subjects.

“But the traditional nobles got more and more dissatisfied. They thought that Elder Nether Spring had gone mad. Why did the Gold Crow Kingdom, the Kingdom of Lion Butchers, and the Sea Dominator Kingdom barely make any contributions while the Nether Spring Kingdom was the only one fighting desperately on the frontline? That was too idiotic!

“As a result, their dissatisfaction was intensified.

“Master Hollow Wind is the leader of the traditional nobles, and he has always wanted to replace Elder Nether Spring. Therefore, it is not strange at all that he took the opportunity to denounce Elder Nether Spring.

“The only strange part is, why would my clever, crafty brother allow such a thing to happen?

“Why did he expose my identity and pour all the dirty water on my head when he knew that he would invite trouble to himself and get impeached?”

…

The meeting hall in the headquarters of the Pantheon of Demons in Heavenly Path City did not have any redundant adornments. The walls were piled up by the simplest green rocks.

At the center of the hall was a black desk fifty meters long.

Generally speaking, the twelve demon emperors would have their meeting on the two sides of the desk.

However, if one of the demon emperors did something that caused widespread indignation and discontent and hurt the interests of the demon race as a whole, to the point that the other eleven demon emperors agreed unanimously that he was no longer suitable to be a leader of the Blood Demon Sector, they would inform him of a wrong time for the meeting.

When he arrived at the hall, he would discover that there was no place for him on either side of the desk. There would only be a stool that was slightly lower than everybody else’s seat at the end of the long desk.

He would have two choices.

He could burst into fury and be burnt into ash under the suppression of the other eleven demon emperors, or he could sit on the low stool and lower his head, waiting for his punishment!

At this moment, Elder Nether Spring was walking toward the stool at the end of the long desk one step after another.

His eyes were deep, and his face was emotionless. Even the tiniest muscle on his face was not revealing any of his feelings at all.

He did not stop until he reached the stool.

The other eleven demon emperors all held their breath.

It was the most dangerous moment. They were all ready to attack.

However, Elder Nether Spring only halted for one second before he sat down on the stool obediently. He even put his hands on his knees, as if he had accepted the reality and was ready to face the repercussion.

The other eleven demon emperors all took a deep breath in relief.

Master Hollow Wind, another demon emperor from the Nether Spring Kingdom who had been dwarfed by Elder Nether Spring for decades, rose up.

Master Hollow Wind tried to remain tranquil like Elder Nether Spring did, but the delight deep inside his eyes that he failed to disguise made him look like a burning torch.

“I will now brief the key information that we have collected in the past few days to all the demon emperors here.”

Master Hollow Wind coughed and glanced at Elder Nether Spring again. He tried to hold back his smile and said solemnly, “Based on the latest intelligence, the Fire Ant King, master of Void Turmoil City, is the leader of the Blade of Chaos and the mastermind of the Riot of Bloody Blade!

“Also, we thought that the Blood Lion Battalion, allegedly wiped out in the Battle of Dawn, should have some survivors, but they have surrendered to the enemy with their commander, Suo Chaolong!

“What is more dreadful is that a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator from the Heaven’s Origin Sector has snuck into the Blood Demon Sector with Suo Chaolong’s navigation!

“The Fire Ant King, who is the leader of the Blade of Chaos; Suo Chaolong, who is the commander of the Blood Lion Battalion; a mysterious Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator from the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

“One of them boasts tremendous influence among low-level demons!

“One of them is very familiar with the coalition army of demons!

“One of them represents the strength of the Star Glory Federation!

“A triangle of terror has taken shape with the conspiracy of the three forces. It is now lurking deep inside the Blood Demon Sector!”

Chapter 967 - Double Strategical Deception!

Master Hollow Wind tapped the long desk lightly. He glanced at Elder Nether Spring, who was sitting at the end of the desk like a statue, before he solemnly said, “After days and nights of analysis and calculation, we have basically figured out the scheme of the ‘triangle’.

“It is well known that the comprehensive capability of the Heaven’s Origin Sector is lower than that of the Blood Demon Sector, but they are developing faster than us. Therefore, all along, the strategy of the Heaven’s Origin Sector has been home defense. They traded space for time, and they traded time for the overall improvement of their capability so that they can launch a thunderous counterattack when they surpass the Blood Demon Sector.

“Right now, the arrival of the Flying Star Sector has significantly boosted the development speed of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, which makes them even more desperate for a few years of peace!

“For the Heaven’s Origin Sector, their best strategy right now is to stall us at whatever cost to buy them a few years of time. To achieve the purpose, they will certainly resort to all methods possible!

“This is the reason we have decided to activate the Red Tide Plan and start a national war with all the strength of the Blood Demon Sector immediately. In a few years, when the capability of the Heaven’s Origin Sector has soared, we will certainly be doomed!

“But obviously, the Heaven’s Origin Sector does not want a strategical war at this moment. With the high-speed communication between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector, for every day the war is delayed, the advantage of the Heaven’s Origin Sector will grow a bit, and the sacrifices they will have to pay will be reduced a little.

“Therefore, while they are building an impregnable defensive line in the Giant Blade Pass at the south of the Grand Desolate Plateau, they have also implemented an unprecedented strategical deception!

“I believe many demon emperors here have heard the rumors of the Imperium of True Human Beings, haven’t you?

“The rumors come from the Star Glory Federation. It is said that, before long, the Star Glory Federation will send out a delegation of diplomats for the prisoner swap. They will discuss a temporary ceasefire and the issues regarding the Imperium of True Human Beings.

“The purpose of our enemy is as clear as daylight. They are trying to reach a truce with us to buy themselves more time with the groundless existence named the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“Haha. A minor apocalypse from the Imperium of True Human Beings will arrive in five years? They have indeed thought the whole thing through! It is a message that can neither be proven true nor false!

“If we really cease fire now, a minor apocalypse may not come at us in five years, but a hundred crystal suit legions of the Star Glory Federation, with the help of the Flying Star Sector, certainly will!

“In conclusion, we have determined that the Imperium of True Human Beings is a strategical deception. It is the task of the ‘triangle’ made of Suo Chaolong, the Fire Ant King, and the mysterious Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator to spread rumors in the Blood Demon Sector and even to reach out to the leadership of the Blood Demon Sector, namely a few demon emperors here, trying to convince you that the Imperium of True Human Beings does exist.

“If the few demon emperors here are fooled into believing the Imperium of True Human Beings and influence the Pantheon of Demons’ decision in order to reach a truce with the Star Glory Federation, then their strategic deception will be a complete success. The entire demon race will be hopeless!”

The ten emperors were like fossils just excavated from the depths of the earth. They listened attentively. There was no telling what was on their mind.

Master Hollow Wind’s voice turned even creepier. “What is more terrifying is that…

“Do you think the so-called ‘threat of the Imperium of True Human Beings’ is their only strategical deception?

“No. We have also discovered a second plan of strategical deception during our investigation named the Spore Stratagem.

“According to the Spore Stratagem, they will announce that a mysterious force within the Blood Demon Sector boasts a frightful ‘Demon God Virus’ that will destroy both the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector should it spread out!

“Therefore, the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector should not start a total war right now. Instead, we should cease fire for now and deal with the mysterious force that boasts the ‘Demon God Virus’.

“It is not hard to tell that, although the Spore Stratagem and the ‘threat of the Imperium of True Human Beings’ appear very different, they are both for the same purpose. Our enemy is trying to assure us that the Blood Demon Sector is beset by internal and external problems and that we must stop the war and reach a peace agreement with the Heaven’s Origin Sector immediately!

“Hehe. What is the Demon God Virus all about?

“We are all clear that it is just a shameless lie that human beings made up to insult us. They claimed that the demon race originated from the demon beasts that were injected with the Demon God Virus forty thousand years ago!

“We are the descendants of the Pangu Clan from the primeval era. The primeval blood flows in our veins, which is why we possess features of the primeval era! Where does the Demon God Virus come from? It is an out-and-out lie!

“All in all, the sole purpose of the Fire Ant King, Suo Chaolong, and the mysterious Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator is to convince us that the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Spore Stratagem do exist. They are fabricating a powerful yet hostile ‘third party’ in order to mislead us into a truce, if not comprehensive peace, with the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

“After three to five years of peace, when the Heaven’s Origin Sector establishes a hundred crystal suit legions through the communication with the Flying Star Sector and receives the support of the super cosmic fleets, they will certainly tear off their mask of ‘peace’ and reveal their true face—aggression!

“How sordid and scary!

“Think about it. If we hadn’t seen through such a plot and really believed their bullsh*t, the Blood Demon Sector would have been burnt into ground in three to five years like the Grand Desolate Plateau was in the past!

“Commander Jin was right. The Blood Demon Sector is now in peril!

“In the sleazy plans of strategical deception, the Fire Ant King and his Blade of Chaos are the most threatening for us.

“The Blade of Chaos can easily incite millions of low-level demons who do not know the truth, especially the irresolute ones in the coalition army who are scared of war. If the low-level demons choose to believe the rumors about the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Spore Stratagem, their morale will certainly be lower than ever. They will certainly not able to launch the most callous attack against the Heaven’s Origin Sector if they can hold themselves from another mutiny at all.

“However, unfortunately—”

Master Hollow Wind finally bared his sharp tusks. This time, he did not glance at Elder Nether Spring but stared at the other ten demon emperors, especially Jin Tuyi, the commander-in-chief of the coalition army. “One of the demon emperors here is deeply connected to the Fire Ant King, the leader of the Blade of Chaos!

“I am not implying that the demon emperor knew the Fire Ant King’s real identity and indulged him to grow large for his own benefits, nor am I insinuating that the demon emperor betrayed the Pantheon of Demons and the demon race and embraced the Star Glory Federation! Of course, that is absolutely impossible!

“However, it was with the help of the ‘ignorant and innocent’ demon emperor that Void Turmoil City flourished, and the Blade of Chaos expanded to what it is today—influential enough to activate the ‘Riot of Bloody Blade’. That is also an undeniable fact!

“Therefore, I think that today, when we are going to activate the ‘Red Tide Plan’ to take our chances to resolve the greatest crisis for the Blood Demon Sector, the demon emperor is not suitable for the important posts in the Pantheon of Demons before the investigation regarding his relationship with the Blade of Chaos is concluded.

“The demon emperor is of the same clan as me. I believe in his innocence. This is not an impeachment but a protection in a different form. Once it is proved that he is irrelevant with the matter, his position in the Pantheon of Demons will certainly be restored, and he will get to play a greater role in the glorious ultimate war to come.”

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

While he was sitting at the end of the desk, Elder Nether Spring’s bones and shells were uttering cracking noises in his fury.

Jin Tuyi’s demonic energy suddenly burst out and covered Elder Nether Spring like a giant cloud. “Elder Nether Spring, what do you have to say for everything that Master Hollow Wind has just stated?”

“Nothing!” Elder Nether Spring’s hands stabbed deep into the solid desk, and the rock that made up the desk was scorched, producing black smoke. “Every one of you knows that there is no way I would betray the demons and mess with the Blade of Chaos!

“Every betrayal needs a reason. Why would I betray the Pantheon of Demons?

“In the Nether Spring Kingdom, I am the omnipotent ruler. In the Pantheon of Demons, I am among the strongest of the twelve demon emperors. I am already standing at the peak of the Blood Demon Sector. What benefits can I get by hooking up with the Blade of Chaos?

“It is even more absurd if you think that I conspired with the Blade of Chaos in order to eliminate every one of you so that I will be the sole master of the Pantheon of Demons.

“If that was my plan, I wouldn’t have asked my subordinates to fight so hard in the Heaven’s Origin Sector over the past few years!

“You know better than anybody that the war against the Heaven’s Origin Sector has been mostly fought by the Nether Spring Kingdom alone in the past years. It is because my forces that I accumulated for decades were wasted in the Heaven’s Origin Sector for the interest of the Blood Demon Sector that you have this opportunity to judge me pretentiously!

“He who has a mind to beat his dog will easily find his stick. What is there to say for myself? The only thing I did wrong was that I did not see through the Fire Ant King’s ambitions earlier!

“However, was it really my fault? Every one of you has a lot of deals with Void Turmoil City in terms of strengthening drugs and slaves. You are all responsible for the rise of the Fire Ant King! Did it ever occur to you ten years ago that the Fire Ant King was actually the mastermind of the Blade of Chaos?”

His words made quite a few demon emperors ill at ease.

“Elder Nether Spring, we believe in your loyalty to the demon race. You and the Fire Ant King are different,” Jin Tuyi said solemnly. “However, we are in the middle of harsh times right now. The Red Tide Plan is about to be put into action, and a national war will begin soon!

“The fate of our race will be decided by the war!

“The most important thing about the Red Tide Plan is confidentiality. If your blood brother is really working with the Star Glory Federation, we have to be prudent. It is indeed not suitable to keep you among the decision makers now.

“I believe that you would make the same decision if you were in my place. Don’t you agree?”

The ten demon emperors all gazed at Elder Nether Spring coldly.

Their eyes suppressed Elder Nether Spring like the sturdiest chains.

Chapter 968 - No Choice But War!

Elder Nether Spring’s hands dug out two rocks that were as hard as diamond from the long desk and crushed the rocks into sand. The black sand quietly slipped through his fingers, like two hourglasses that were coming to an end.

Elder Nether Spring stared at the ‘hourglasses’ in a trance.

Nobody knew what decision he was going to make when the ‘hourglasses’ ran out.

All the demon emperors were holding their breath. Their feathers and demons were all shivering uneasily. Suppressed by their dominating aura, the long desk was uttering rattling noises. Countless scattered cracks that looked like spider webs appeared, as if many invisible animals had just crawled over the desk.

The ‘hourglasses’ continued pouring.

Elder Nether Spring suddenly shifted his gaze to Master Hollow Wind.

Master Hollow Wind shuddered and could not help but look at Jin Tuyi.

“Nether Spring!”

Jin Tuyi got to his feet. His formidable demonic energy surged out without the least disguise into unstoppable waves. He pressed down on the black desk. The cracks congregated into a sharp blades that quickly extended to the other end of the desk.

“Right now is the most dangerous moment in the thousands of years of history of the Blood Demon Sector. One misstep, and our entire race will be annihilated. You must think before you leap. Don’t do things that will satisfy your foe and hurt your friends!

“In the past five hundred years, the Blood Demon Sector possessed biochemical technology that was far more advanced than the technology of the Heaven’s Origin Sector. We also had almost a hundred strong demon emperors. But why have we never been able to destroy the small Heaven’s Origin Sector and Star Glory Federation and simply waited and watched while they rose up to a point that we can barely deal with?

“The wormholes are too small and unsteady to teleport the great army and top-tier experts… That’s just an excuse!

“The most critical reason is that we are not united!

“The Gold Crow Kingdom, the Kingdom of Lion Butchers, the Sea Dominator Kingdom, the Nether Spring Kingdom, and the other smaller forces are merely attacking each other in internal strife for their own petty benefits. We can never be truly united and fight for the interest of the Blood Demon Sector as a whole selflessly!

“Not until today, when we are forced to launch a national war that will decide the fate of our family and compatriots.

“To be honest, our strategy is too risky, too crazy, and the odds of success are too low!

“Are we going to attack each other at this critical moment before the war begins?

“Elder Nether Spring, I have no doubt about your loyalty to the Blood Demon Sector. Over the years, in the war against the Star Glory Federation, the Nether Spring Kingdom has made the greatest contribution, too. What were your endeavors for? You must think about it carefully!

“In the name of the commander-in-chief of the coalition army and the leader of the Clan race, I guarantee you that this arrangement is just temporary. After everything is settled, I will support you to come back to this place with my best!”

Elder Nether Spring took a deep, deep breath. The brutality in his eyes was gone. He suddenly appeared to be absent-minded.

He retreated his eyes from Master Hollow Wind and stared at his clenched fists. Five seconds later, he finally relaxed his hands, allowing the last bit of the sand to fly away in the wind.

The vigor deep inside his body seemed to have left with the sand, too. Losing his power and sitting in a stool that was beneath everybody, he appeared to be an empty shell.

All the demon emperors secretly took a breath in relief. Master Hollow Wind could not help but wipe off his cold sweat.

Elder Nether Spring said coarsely, “The Fire Ant King is my blood brother after all. During the rise of Void Turmoil City, I gave them a lot of aid, and we had numerous exchanges in terms of business, resources, and personnel. Therefore, I admit that I am indeed not suitable to stay among the decision makers of the Pantheon of Demons in these harsh times.

“The ‘Red Tide Plan’ will be all yours. I will spend most of my time and energy on the investigation and strike of the Blade of Chaos and the ‘triangle’!

“The Fire Ant King is my blood brother. His rise was because of my negligence. I should be the one to eliminate him!

“I have only one requirement.”

“What it is, Elder Nether Spring? I’ll see that it is done!” Jin Tuyi said solemnly.

Elder Nether Spring let out a long sigh and waved his hands lethargically. “I am willing to leave, but do not deprive the warriors under my command of the honor of fighting for the Pantheon of Demons! I hope that you will at least bring my ‘Nether Shadow Guardians’ together with the core legions into the Heaven’s Origin Sector and stab into the heart of the Star Glory Federation during the Red Tide Plan. They should be sacrificed in the most brilliant way!”

Jin Tuyi pondered for a moment and nodded. “No problem. If we do march into the capital city of the Star Glory Federation, the Nether Shadow Guardians will be the first troop to see the parliament building of the federation!”

Elder Nether Spring managed a smile and stopped talking.

Jin Tuyi tapped the long desk hard before he said solemnly, “Unification. I must repeat myself. Everybody, we must be united!

“The Red Tide Plan is perhaps the riskiest plan in the history of war between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s

Origin Sector!

“Part of the ground troops from the Kingdom of Lion Butchers and the Nether Spring Kingdom will pretend to be our entire main force and march into the Heaven’s Origin Sector through the wormholes in the Dark Desolate Domain. They will tear apart the Grand Desolate Plateau and impose pressure on the Giant Blade Pass, the most important defense line of human beings at the south of the Grand Desolate Plateau!

“This is destined to be a suicidal attack with no return. Their sole mission will be to distract the attention of most of the crystal suit legions of the Star Glory Federation so that the main force of the Star Glory Federation will be gathered around the Giant Blade Pass!

“In the meantime, our real main force, a great army with dozens of emperors, will show up in the ocean east to the Star Glory Federation through the secret channels that the Far East Demon Kingdom built for their escape five hundred years ago. After taking a brief rest in the base that the Far East Demon Kingdom left, we will march out, charge at the eastern coastline of the Star Glory Federation, sweep across the most prosperous and populated area, and stab into the heart of the federation!

“The secret channels are highly unstable. The base that the Far East Demon Kingdom left is nothing to be optimistic about, either. Such an assault is so risky that we might wind up being wiped out without any survivors!

“However, we don’t have any choice but war. Right now, the only things we can count on are the valiance of our warriors, the unification of everybody here, and the blessing of the Pangu Clan!”

Elder Nether Spring listened quietly on the opposite side of Jin Tuyi, emotionless.

When he heard ‘the Pangu Clan’, two subtle ripples finally spread out his eyes that looked like black springs.

However, the two ripples quickly faded away. When the rest of the demon emperors looked at him again, Elder Nether Spring had turned back into the empty, expressionless shell again.

…

In the last base of the Blade of Chaos inside the Mysterious Shadow Domain, Li Yao, the Fire Ant King, Han Tuhu, and Suo Chaolong were all deep in thought, frowning, while they listened to Yuchi Ba introducing the whole process of Elder Nether Spring’s loss of power, part of which was public and part clandestine.

“This is impossible. It is impossible that Master Hollow Wind grasped the key information.”

Deep in thought, Han Tuhu analyzed, “Even though Master Hollow Wind caught the traces that the Fire Ant King left, there was no way that he could know that Suo Chaolong had returned to the Blood Demon Sector or anything about Li Yao.

“It is stated clearly on the arrest warrants that a ‘Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator’ has snuck into the Blood Demon Sector. The only battle in which Li Yao demonstrated the combat ability equal to the Nascent Soul Stage was the one on the island of the Nether World in the North Pole!

“Elder Nether Spring is the only party that knows of the matter other than us. It is impossible for a third party to have learned of it.”

“Master Hollow Wind can’t have uncovered my tracks,” the Fire Ant King said calmly. “He is a complete idiot. He has merely been mounting the high horse based on his background and bloodline.

“Think about it. Elder Nether Spring and I are both from a secondary branch of a middle-sized noble family. Although we had the legacies of Chaos, we were seriously short of support after all.

“But as the leader of the traditional nobles of the Nether Spring Kingdom, he failed to come up with anything useful to deal with us for decades. He missed countless opportunities where he could have suffocated us while we were still growing. In the end, he could only wait and watch us rise until we were too huge for him.

“This is your first clue about the capability and wisdom of the ‘master’.

“He is one of the old-school demons. He has been dwelling in the improvement of combat ability and considered it to be everything. He has also taken down a lot of competitors with his formidable strength.

“But he did not know that fighting and scheming are totally different. Now that he has run into Elder Nether Spring, whose combat ability is even higher than his, he is totally useless.

“In regard of combat ability, he might be only slightly weaker than Elder Nether Spring and better than me. But in terms of planning, not just Elder Nether Spring, even I can play him like a fiddle!

“How could such a guy have discovered evidence of my activities?”

Suo Chaolong narrowed his eyes and said coldly, “Therefore, somebody intentionally fed the information such as your real identity, my ‘betrayal’, and Li Yao’s ‘infiltration’ to him and lured him into unveiling a plot that did not actually exist so that Elder Nether Spring would be involved and kicked out of office?”

The Fire Ant King nodded and smiled bitterly. “Correct. The someone is obviously my big brother, Elder Nether Spring!

“I’m afraid that every word that Master Hollow Wind said was what Elder Nether Spring wanted him to say, and every action he took was manipulated by hundreds of invisible strings whose other ends were right in the hands of Elder Nether Spring!”

“But why?” Suo Chaolong scratched the back of his neck. “Why did Elder Nether Spring deliberately expose the information? Not only will he lose the decision-making role in the Pantheon of Demons, he will inevitably raise a lot of suspicion!”

Li Yao rubbed his temples softly and activated the first brain and the second brain that were at the two ends of his spine at the same time. The ‘dual-core thinking system’ boosted his computational ability to the maximum. A moment later, he smiled and said, “The reason is very simple!”

Chapter 969 - Sneak into the Pantheon of Demons!

The Fire Ant King, Yuchi Ba, Han Tuhu, and Suo Chaolong were somewhat startled. They looked at Li Yao at the same time.

Li Yao sat cross-legged so that he would be more comfortable with the lump at the end of his spine. “Perhaps Elder Nether Spring was not willing to expose the information himself, but he did not have a second option.

“Think about it. A week ago, Elder Nether Spring was forced to the edge of a cliff. His entire plan was on the brink of destruction!

“His identity and purpose were discovered. His secret force, the Nether World Watch, was known. His most important research base Nether World was almost overturned by us and lost most functions for now.

“What was scarier was that the memory unit of the main biochemical brain that stored tremendous experiment data and core secrets was stolen by us!

“Both the Fire Ant King and the Suo Chaolong are silver-blood demons and nobles on the surface. You must have a lot of connections in the Pantheon of Demons. I bet that you have a close relationship with some of the demon emperors, too.

“It would be very convenient for you to reach out to other demon emperors. As long as you went to visit them, they would at least meet you and listen to your words for a few hours patiently.

“What could Elder Nether Spring do if you went to the demon emperors with all the evidence?

“Yes. Such an attempt would get yourselves involved. The Fire Ant King would not be able to hide his identity as the leader of the Blade of Chaos anymore. But who knows what you think? Perhaps you just wanted Elder Nether Spring to be cursed even at the cost of your everything. Or maybe, you would send the evidence to the demon emperors in a special way!

“Naturally, the demon emperors are not likely to believe everything you say just based on a few simple files and experiment records, but they will certainly grow suspicious and start investigating.

“Some of the things can barely be concealed. For example, the Nether World in the North Pole. As long as a few devilish warships are deployed to the coordinates nearby and search carefully, the island will certainly be discovered.

“If so, Elder Nether Spring’s plan will definitely be seriously disrupted.

“Weren’t we discussing whether or not we should unveil Elder Nether Spring’s true face in such a way just now?

“Therefore, since it was impossible to keep everything a secret anymore, he might as well expose the information himself rather than waiting for you to accuse him.

“Do you know how to stop a forest fire?”

Everybody was dazed, not knowing why Li Yao suddenly went off the topic. They all shook their heads.

Li Yao smiled and said, “When a forest fire is burning furiously and cannot be extinguished anytime soon, the best approach is to set up a controllable new fire outside the main forest fire in order to create a ‘fire line’. That way, the forest fire will be compressed to the limited area or guided to the unimportant locations.

“It is obvious now that Elder Nether Spring has manipulated Master Hollow Wind to set up a new fire and create a ‘fire line’ for himself!

“Right now, the Fire Ant King, Suo Chaolong, and I are all on the most wanted list. No matter where we show up, we will endure storm-like attacks. It will be difficult for us to meet a demon emperor in a regular way.

“Even if we manage to meet a demon emperor through all the hindrances and tell him Elder Nether Spring’s plot along with our ‘evidence’, it will be very difficult for him to believe us because they have been brainwashed and believe that we are implementing a ‘strategical deception’.

“Half a month ago in the Mausoleum of Chaos, Elder Nether Spring brought me, an unexpected factor, back to his nest because of his negligence, which almost resulted in the unfolding of his entire plan. His greatest weakness was exposed.

“But it is safe to say that, right now, after a series of operations, he has fixed his weakness and become flawless again!”

“None of the twelve demon emperors of the Pantheon of Demons are easy to deal with,” Han Tuhu said solemnly.

“Such a lie cannot work forever.”

“It doesn’t have to work forever,” Li Yao said calmly. “As long as everybody is misled until the moment the Spore Stratagem is activated, it will be good enough. I think the moment is not far away from us.”

Suo Chaolong frowned. “It’s true that Elder Nether Spring’s lie worked out, but the price is that he lost control over the Nether Spring Kingdom and even got kicked out of the decision-making circle of the Pantheon of Demons.”

“So what?” Li Yao asked back. “The real armed force that Elder Nether Spring counts on is the ‘Nether World Watch’. They are his trusted subordinates. The nobles and armies of the Nether Spring Kingdom will not listen to his command when they learn that he is not a true silver-blood demon.

“Such disloyal armies that might betray him at any minute are certainly not something that Elder Nether Spring would want.

“As for being kicked out of the decision-making circle, it is even simpler. That was exactly his purpose.”

“What?” The Fire Ant King, Suo Chaolong and Han Tuhu were all dazed. “Why would Elder Nether Spring kick himself out of the decision-making circle of the Pantheon of Demons?”

“Not kick himself out but keep his distance from them.”

Li Yao’s eyes were moving unpredictably, as if he were staring at Elder Nether Spring, who was perhaps the greatest schemer lurking in the Blood Demon Sector, through the wall from tens of thousands of kilometers away.

Li Yao pondered for a long time and shifted his eyes to Yuchi Ba. “Master Yuchi, according to your intelligence, all four demon kingdoms and cities are taking measures to recruit soldiers and collect resources to complete the unprecedented general mobilization, right?”

“Yes,” Yuchi Ba said, “I have never seen such a general mobilization before. Even for some of the silver-blood families, all the teenagers above the age of twelve have been summoned to establish the ‘Youth Guard’. Everybody in the Blood Demon Sector is braced for a great war!”

“That’s right!” Li Yao narrowed his eyes and mumbled, “After learning the existence of the Flying Star Sector, the first judgement of Suo Chaolong and Han Tuhu was that the Pantheon of Demons was likely to wager everything on a national war. Master Yuchi’s intelligence supports their prediction, too.

“Here comes the question. If the Pantheon of Demons is really going to fight a great war with all the resources of the Blood Demon Sector, as one of the four giants of the world, Elder Nether Spring will have to stay in the decision-making circle along with the other eleven demon emperors, won’t he?

“It is possible that he will be forced to stay in a top-secret command center and handle endless military affairs with other demon emperors day and night.

“Also, all the personnel, assets, and information that enter or exit the highest command center will certainly be scrutinized to ensure that nothing unusual was passing by, right?

“If Elder Nether Spring is kept in such a command center, how on earth can he carry out the Spore Stratagem?

“A great war against the Star Glory Federation is coming close. As one of the four giants of the Blood Demon Sector who always appeared to be passionate about the war, Elder Nether Spring cannot disappear every other day. It would be very strange, wouldn’t it?

“We must note that his colleagues will not be random guys but the keenest and most quick-minded demon emperors! Somebody will suspect him as long as he shows the slightest irregularity!

“Therefore, Elder Nether Spring must stay away from the decision-making circle. More exactly, he must stay away from the cage named ‘highest command center’ and get out of the sight of the demon emperors.

“It is true that a series of investigations targeting him will be conducted, but right now, the attention of all the demon emperors is focused on the war against the Heaven’s Origin Sector. The investigations will not be thorough and careful at all.

“After all, he has lost his power and become a stray dog. Nobody will choose to beat a stray dog at such a moment!

“As a result, Elder Nether Spring will have time and space to carry out the Spore Stratagem without worries.

“Besides, the greatest benefit of keeping his distance from the decision-making circle is that, when the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector are fighting, Elder Nether Spring, who has been kicked out of office humiliatingly, will not be leading the charge!

“When other demon emperors are galloping in the Heaven’s Origin Sector with great armies, Elder Nether Spring, who is ‘downhearted’ because of ‘loss of power’, will be responsible for the logistics work in the rear ‘despondently’. That is perfect reasonable, isn’t it?

“It is highly unlikely that Elder Nether Spring will resign from the Pantheon of Demons himself, which would be super weird. Therefore, he exposed the Fire Ant King’s real identity through Master Hollow Wind’s mouth so that he would get involved and be kicked out of office!

“Everybody knows the grudge between Master Hollow Wind and Elder Nether Spring. There will be no suspicion at all!”

There was a long silence.

Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong both took a long breath and eyed Li Yao in a weird way.

“Elder Nether Spring is too dreadful,” Han Tuhu mumbled. “He has been manipulating everybody in the Pantheon of Demons!”

Suo Chaolong’s eyelids were twitching crazily. “Why do I feel that Li Yao is even more dreadful than him?”

“If that is the case, everything is unchangeable now. What should we do?” Yuchi Ba asked earnestly.

Li Yao thought for a moment and said, “We are more in need of Jin Xinyue now!

“If a national war between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector breaks out, we must know how the war will be fought in order to stop it in advance!

“As daughter of the commander-in-chief of the coalition army, it is possible that Jin Xinyue can help us infer what her father is thinking.

“Besides, we are all wanted criminals right now. It is barely possible to reach out to any demon emperor through legal channels.

“Jin Xinyue is a saintess of the Pantheon of Demons. She must be familiar with the terrain of the headquarters of the Pantheon of Demons and know a way to sneak in and show up right in front of the faces of the demon emperors without alarming anyone!”

“Sneak into the headquarters of the Pantheon of Demons!” Everybody was completely shocked by Li Yao’s bodacious idea.

After a long daze, Yuchi Ba struggled to say, “However, when we approached Void Turmoil City, it was already surrounded by the coalition army of demons. They were apparently ready to attack the city at any moment. Chances are that it is already occupied at this moment.

“I was seriously short of hands back then and could not sneak into Void Turmoil City to look for Jin Xinyue.”

“Now that the Fire Ant King’s identity has been exposed,” Li Yao said, “it is only natural that Void Turmoil City cannot get away. It may have already been burned to the ground.

“However, I am confident in Jin Xinyue’s survival ability. She will not have been killed so easily.

“Since we need her, I will have to go to Void Turmoil City and get her out!”

Chapter 970 - Rebirth of Mystic Skeleton

Inside the Mysterious Shadow Domain, the biggest development lab of biochemical beasts for the Blade of Chaos was a hundred meters below the ground.

Li Yao looked ahead and discovered that the place was like a forest dominated by venomous fog. Standing on the fertile, red soil were enormous flowers, some of which were three to five meters tall, and some were above ten.

All the flowers were translucent. They were like weird eggs of devils. While they were fluctuating, the breathing holes that were surrounded by complicated stripes would spurt out colorful air.

If one were to examine the flowers with special mystic rays, they would clearly see that sophisticated veins and nerves were packed on the inner wall of the flowers and that biochemical beasts in the form of fetuses were taking shape quickly inside.

Every flower was connected to countless tubes of nutrition liquids and neural electricity, and the tubes further led to the biochemical brains that boasted high computational ability.

In the world of Cultivators, a refiner who was capable of creating a crystal suit on their own was known as an Armadominus, which was the highest level that every refiner dreamed of.

In the world of demons, the specialists who were adept at refining biochemical beasts were called Originators. Their job was to originate lives and to create new, strong life forms that were built for killing!

After decades of development in darkness, the Blade of Chaos naturally had a large batch of Originators. After analyzing the legacies of Chaos, they were almost as knowledgeable as their counterparts in the Pantheon of Demons.

Right now, they were manipulating the growth of the biochemical beasts precisely through the biochemical brains.

After receiving the tremendous experiment data and key files from Elder Nether Spring, the Blade of Chaos was now much better at the production of biochemical beasts. Right now, a batch of new biochemical beasts were being refined for the warriors of Skyfire.

Li Yao participated in the refinement of the biochemical beasts in person.

They were perhaps the weirdest biochemical beasts in the history of the Blood Demon Sector.

They barely shared any similarities with demon beasts. Instead, they were like fully-closed armor that enclosed the body, except that they were all built by biochemical materials.

They were specially prepared for the federal soldiers under Han Tuhu’s command.

The federal soldiers had never received training to harness biochemical beasts. They were more used to battles where they were in crystal suits.

However, due to the lack of facilities and fundamental materials, even Li Yao could not make hundreds of crystal suits out of thin air.

Li Yao had thought about a brand-new path of combining crystal suits with biochemical beasts before.

He took the opportunity and suggested it to the Fire Ant King, asking whether or not it was possible to create a crystal suit with biochemical materials so that a new ‘biochemical suit’ could be built.

The crystal processor would be replaced by the biochemical brain, the tubes of spiritual energy would be substituted for biochemical nerves, and the super alloys would turn into bones of the mutated demon beasts. The biochemical suit created in such a way might fit the definition of crystal suit when the ultimate weapon had been invented at the very beginning.

The ‘crystal suit’ at that time was also known as ‘strengthened external skeleton’!

Of course, such a biochemical suit was destined to be different from a crystal suit in terms of maneuvering and combat patterns.

However, most of the federal soldiers, including Han Tuhu, were different from before, too. After a lot of their primeval cells were activated, their limbs and internal organs had all gone through drastic mutations, and the old circulation of spiritual energy inside their bodies was already seriously twisted, making it difficult for them to wield the strength of their crystal suits like before.

In the meantime, the significant improvement in the output of their mitochondria and the formidable mutations on the outside of their body endowed them with new techniques.

There was no doubt that, after a period of familiarization, they would be perfectly able to demonstrate brand new techniques that had never seen in either the Heaven’s Origin Sector or the Blood Demon Sector with the biochemical suits.

I hope there is enough time!

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao passed through the forest of hundreds of flowers and entered a special chamber at the deepest part of the development lab of biochemical beasts.

It was a secret chamber that belonged to himself and the modification room for the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit!

At first glance, the decoration of the modification room was more or less the same as that of a regular refining room, except that the Divine Anvil and the Star Basher, two tools that were used in manual forging, were placed in a corner. A thousand components that were manually forged by Li Yao were now floating in midair through anti-gravity rune arrays, revolving and reducing the inner stress.

However, at the center of the modification room, an enormous biochemical culture tank was standing.

Looking through the transparent glass, one would see that the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was floating in the dark red culture solution quietly.

Countless tentacles were ‘pecking’ its body softly. All the tentacles were hollow. After every ‘peck’, they would spurt out high-density, mutated bone cells onto the surface of the

Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, which would form a bone membrane that was of a high tenacity and hardness.

Above the bone membrane, nerves, flesh, and blood were piled up.

Judging from the left arm, whose modification had finished…

It was a perfect combination of a machine and a living creature. The transition from the metal part to the flesh part was so seamless that it seemed natural.

The spiritual stripes and rune arrays that were exposed to the air before were safer and more inconspicuous after being covered by the bone membrane and the flesh and blood. The biochemical nerves that entangled the tubes of spiritual energy increased the speed of signal transmission and feedback of the units. On many occasions, it was no longer necessary to calculate through the data on the retina. One would only need to count on the intuitional reaction that was triggered deep inside their brain after a fuzzy calculation.

The dark red biochemical muscles were hidden amid the black shells. Occasionally, the bone spurs in dim metal colors could be seen hibernating in the gaps of the shells. The crazily proliferating cells decorated the surface of the left arm with a layer of scattered bubbles. Li Yao suddenly had an illusion in his trance, wondering whether the object in front of his was a cold machine or a real life.

Holding his breath, Li Yao stared and communicated with the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit in silence.

A long time later, he placed his left hand on the biochemical brain that controlled the culture tank. His fingers slightly moved and gradually sank into the biochemical brain before he adjusted the direction of the propagation of the cells carefully.

“A piece of perfect artwork, isn’t it?” the mental devil observed deep inside his brain.

Li Yao’s understanding about the biochemistry was still very shallow. The modification on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had mostly been conducted by the mental devil. The guy was an expert in the field in the first place. With the experiment files and the knowledge of the Blade of Chaos and Elder Nether Spring, it had been exclaiming in great satisfaction and was completely dedicated to the training, having no time to bother Li Yao for a long time.

Li Yao slightly frowned. The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was indeed impeccable. However—

“You seem to have been too obedient recently.”

The mental devil pouted and held its chest, as if it had been greatly wronged. “Why are you saying that? Is it not good that I am obedient? Would you feel better if I went on a rampage from dawn to dusk so that you can suppress me brutally?”

Li Yao blinked. “Of course not. However, I do feel that you are up to something even though you seem to be helping me wholeheartedly.”

Leaning against Ou Yezi’s memory tree, the mental devil picked a gold leaf from the tree.

It was one of Ou Yezi’s memory pieces.

The mental devil stuffed the memory piece into his mouth and chewed slowly. It shook its index finger and said, “Let me repeat. You are me, and I am you. Helping you is helping myself. Why are you always so paranoid?

“As the saying goes, an eye for an eye will only make the whole world blind. If you are always wary of me and I always plan to murder you, our mutual mistrust will not be solved until the body dies. Won’t we be turning our brain into a small dark forest?

“I know that you hate the Dark Forest Theory, but is it enough to only break the dark forest among the different civilizations in the universe? The dark forest is right in your heart. Should you break it apart too?

“Therefore, the two of us should be united instead of divided. We should be at peace instead of war. We should help each other and grow together instead of suspecting each other and dying together, right?”

“Why do I feel that you are stealing my lines?” Li Yao pondered.

The mental devil chewed apart Ou Yezi’s memory piece and devoured it. Licking its lips, not entirely satisfied, the mental devil chuckled. “Now you see how difficult it is for people to trust each other. You’ve misunderstood me greatly again!

“As I explained earlier, the Blood Stripe Virus is an extremely weird life form. Perhaps according to the standard of human beings, it is not a life form at all. It is invisible, bodiless, natural, and pollution-free. It will cause no damage to the universe whatsoever.

“All it needs are your insignificant feelings.

“Any feeling can be the energy source for the Blood Stripe Virus. Desire for slaughter, yes. Friendship, love, and earnestness to protect one’s home work, too.

“However, for most species, their most intense feelings are about slaughter and destruction. Whose fault is that?

“What if I say that the Blood Stripe Virus has been feasting upon the intense lust for killing and that it has grown tired of the feeling because it was too violent and monotonous. What if I say that it is interested in tasting some new feelings, such as love, protectiveness, friendship, and sacrifice?

“Like a glutton who has had fish and meat for billions of years and grown bored of food, it is now willing to taste porridge and see what its flavor is. Will you believe that?”

“No.”

“Hahahaha. You are truly my mental devil. You’ve seen through me so quickly. Alright. Let’s change to a different theory. If what I desire most is killing, then the more killing, the more satisfied I will be, right?”

“Yes,” Li Yao answered.

“Then what kind of killing is larger in scale? Wars, of course, especially the wars between two evenly matched Sectors that are going to destroy each other!”

“Exactly.” Li Yao frowned. “That’s why I find it odd that you’ve been behaving so dutifully. You didn’t even play any tricks on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. Why?

“I can feel that you are really meaning to stop the world war between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector. Why?”

Chapter 971 - Paving a Brilliant Path!

The mental devil cut off a bare branch from Ou Yezi’s memory tree and scratched its back with it. It yawned and said, “I am going to formally protest regarding the matter. You pretended that you didn’t know the first thing about biochemistry and had to hand over the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit to me for modification. But in fact, it was a trap of yours to test whether or not I would play any tricks, wasn’t it?

“As a matter of fact, you have made significant progress in biochemistry recently, and you are certainly not as ignorant as you appear to be. Besides, you have made a lot of arrangements inside the modification room, waiting for me to show up, haven’t you?

“That is too outrageous of you.

“I’m not saying that you cannot ‘wipe out the mental devil’, but with our identity and position today, can you please at leasy improve the level of our competition and stop setting up traps that insult both your wisdom and mine?

“Play tricks on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit? Do I look like such a dishonorable mental devil?”

“Alright. I apologize. I have misunderstood you. You are a metal devil of honor and integrity. So, why are you helping me exactly?”

“For the world peace of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector, of course,” the mental devil said solemnly.

“And?”

“… And a more glorious war!” the mental devil declared.

“What do you mean?”

The mental devil smiled. “The Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector are just two barren worlds at the edge of the universe. They are utterly insignificant, even taking the Flying Star Sector into consideration. You don’t think that the fight of a few countryfolk is enough to satisfy me, do you?

“Yes. I could interfere with you right now and even hamstring you at a critical moment so that a total war between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector breaks out, leading to the destruction and ruination of both worlds.

“Then what?

“When the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings arrives, the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector will be crushed thunderously into smithereens without any ability to fight back!

“A war between two evenly matched parties is the most entertaining and can trigger the most drastic feelings. If one party has no ability to fight back and is suppressed within a breath, it will be like an ant that is stomped upon by a boot. The ant does not even know how it was killed, and the guy who stomps on it has no sense of satisfaction and achievement, either. How can there be intense lust for killing?”

Li Yao was dazed. He took a deep breath in relief.

The mental devil chuckled and said, “Therefore, even if I am indeed craving for a war, it will not be a brawl between three villages. Instead, what I yearn for is a universal war that is more splendid, spectacular, and soul-stirring and will ignite all of the three thousand Sectors!

“One of the two parties in the war is the Imperium of True Human Beings, and the other party is the new federation, which is the unification of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector!

“Just think about. How many dazzling sparks will burst out? How many blood-freezing stories will be told? How many unforgettable heroes, losers, and traitors will emerge in the universal war between the imperium and the new federation? Intense feelings are sure to be generated. Bloodthirst, betrayal, loyalty, determination, desperation, and hope!

“Such a way is the most delicious meal that anybody can expect. I am shivering in excitement just thinking about it!

“Compared to such a war, is the battle between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector worth mentioning at all?

“Therefore, both of us share the same purpose here. We want the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector to join hands as quickly as possible so that the new federation will have a high-speed development for a hundred years to increase its capability as much as possible. Maybe, it will be qualified, however undeservedly, to be a real opponent for the Imperium of True Human Beings, won’t it?

“After all, only the evenly-matched wars are fun!

“See? I have told everything to you so frankly. You are finally assured, aren’t you?”

“… Asshole! I’m even more worried right now, alright?” Li Yao said. “How can there be such a terrible monster in the world?”

The mental devil sniffed. “The two of us are mental devils for each other. We are two sides of the same coin. In other words, I know you as much as you know me. Is it really fun to pretend to be an ignorant, innocent lily?

“Stop fooling yourself. In fact, deep down in your heart, you too yearn for wars, devastating combat, dangerous rescues, and the satisfaction of one against many, don’t you?

“You are as bloodthirsty as I am. You want as much killing, risk, and turbulence as I do. You hate a monotonous and lackluster world. From the magical equipment graveyard to this day, you have never changed at all. You are always the fatal vulture, aren’t you?

“Why did you teleport to the Blood Demon Sector by yourself instead of following the main troop when you left the Flying Star Sector?

“Right. You knew that you were contaminated by the Blood Stripe Virus. You were unwilling to affect other people and would rather sacrifice yourself!

“What an honorable reason. What a great man of integrity who will trigger tears when other people talk about him!

“However, both you and I know that it is completely bullsh*t. It was an out-and-out lie!

“Deep down in your subconsciousness, you longed for more fierce combat, more perilous battles, and more shocking adventures, and you did not want to be bound by any rules or laws. That was all!

“Subconsciously, you knew that, if you had returned to the Heaven’s Origin Sector with the main troop, you would have become a screw in the gigantic machine that is the world of Cultivators. The best you could expect is to become a relatively important unit.

“What’s the word on the Nexus of the Heaven’s Origin Sector? Every Cultivator has their responsibility!

“In the Heaven’s Origin Sector or the Flying Star Sector, even a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator cannot do anything freely. Even battles have to be arranged and circumscribed by a set of rules. If the federal government gives you a mission that you are not interested in, can you really turn it down?

“That was the reason you chose the Blood Demon Sector.

“In this place, you are the only dominator of yourself. You are no longer affected by any rules or laws. You can kill anybody or anything you want according to your own will without any hinderance!

“The bottom line is, right above the ‘Ultra-Level Federal Hero Li Yao’, there is another Li Yao, one that does not belong to the federation but only belongs to himself and the Earth!

“There’s no need to deny it. I know everything about your subconsciousness. Oh. Right. More precisely speaking, I *am* your subconsciousness!

“You know it. You’ve always known it.”

Li Yao was silent. A wind was suddenly raging inside his brain and blew off a gold leaf from Ou Yezi’s memory tree.

The mental devil extended its hand and picked the fallen leaf. It then folded the leaf from the two sides to the middle before it put on the leaf on its lips and blew at the leaf. Weird noises were echoing for a while before the mental devil suddenly coughed violently.

“Do excuse me. I haven’t learned how to whistle with a tree leaf yet. Sorry for my poor performance.”

“Then why are you still whistling?”

“I just feel that, while we are discussing such a profound and philosophical topic, playing the blues can significantly improve the style of our conversation.”

“…” Li Yao.

“Right.” The mental devil snapped away the memory piece and suddenly changed the topic. “Over the past few days, while you were training the body, I had a little adventure in the depths of our consciousness and discovered a lot of interesting stuff. Do you want to know what I have found?”

Li Yao raised his eyebrow. “What is it?”

The mental devil opened its mouth and spat out a little bug that was emitting vague gold colors like a firefly.

The body of the bug was like a round, transparent droplet of dew. However, when Li Yao focused his attention on it, he saw…

A blue world, Earth.

Hiu! Hiu!

A racing car that looked like black fire was drawing a burning line on a highway near the river at a speed that far exceeded the limits of any machinery. All the pointers and data on the dashboard were jumping crazily, until they were ripped apart into dancing streaks of brightness.

The whole of Earth was shaking violently.

“The Vulture Plan has failed. It is too formidable. We cannot destroy it!

“Run away!

“Run away to the edge of the universe and never come back. Forget everything about Earth!

“It is too strong and too dark. We cannot destroy it. We cannot destroy it in another thousand, million, or billion years!”

In the next second, the racing car of black fire seemed to have rushed out of the road, the troposphere, the stratosphere, Earth, and into the endless sea of stars.

Standing in the middle of the cosmic dust, Li Yao stared at the blue planet passionately. He declared in the vacuum, one world after another, “I am going to complete the Vulture Plan. I am going to destroy it!”

His soul shivered, and he was back to reality.

“That’s it?”

“What do you think? If our consciousness can be compared to a vast ocean, the information I found was all buried in the deepest trench. It is already a miracle that we can excavate some of the pieces with our current strength!”

Li Yao pondered for a moment and said, “Therefore, the purpose of the Vulture Plan is to destroy something, a being that is extremely dark and formidable. What is it exactly?”

The mental devil opened its hands and said, “Whatever it is, it is not something that we can destroy right now.

“Maybe, that is the reason we crave for fights, adventures, and training deep down to our bones. We’ve always wanted to be stronger subconsciously so that we will be able to implement the Vulture Plan one day!”

Li Yao took a deep breath. He seemed to envision a road leading to the blue planet named Earth in the depths of the sea of stars.

It was a road of thorns and flames that pierced through the entire universe and extended to infinity.

Leaning against the memory tree, the mental devil was also squinting, as if it had seen the same burning road in the universe, too. Staring attentively, it suddenly let go of the amusement on its face. It turned very tranquil and mumbled, “It’s a brilliant path, isn’t it?”

Li Yao smiled and nodded. He strode toward his own road.

Chapter 972 - Problem of the Cosmos Ring

Five days later, on the ocean three hundred kilometers west of Void Turmoil City, a devilish warship that was pretending to be a gray whale slowly popped up and spurted out a giant pillar of water into the sky.

Inside the devilish warship, Li Yao was observing the situation in Void Turmoil City through the biochemical eye hidden inside the water pillar wholeheartedly.

Naturally, it was impossible to see the details due to the long distance. He could only sense the turbulent magnetic field and burning flames of demonic energy above Void Turmoil City.

Having just experienced a great battle, the city was now still heavily besieged by the coalition army of demons.

The elites of the Sea Clan in the coalition army were guarding the water in front of them. Therefore, the devilish warship of the Blade of Chaos did not dare draw any closer and simply dropped Li Yao there.

He could only count on himself for the rest of the journey.

Li Yao rejected taking any companions.

Firstly, the training of the three tactical squads of Skyfire had not been completed yet. They had to seize every second to practice in order to carry out the important missions to come soon.

Secondly, the mission of sneaking into Void Turmoil City, which had been occupied and besieged, and bringing someone out would not necessarily have a better result when there were more hands.

With Li Yao's current capability, unless his teammates were of the same level as the Fire Ant King, others would only be adding to his trouble.

If he was not able to complete a mission, another hundred or so teammates would not help much!

"President."

Standing behind Li Yao, Yuchi Ba said respectfully, "The overall structural design of Void Turmoil City, including the hundreds of secret channels mixed among the drainage canals when we built the city, have been saved in your crystal processor. Through the secret channels, you will be able to show up in any place inside Void Turmoil City. Of course, that is, if you pass through the undersea defense line guarded by the Sea Clan first."

"Understood." Li Yao nodded. "You will wait for me here and closely watch the situation in Void Turmoil City. If everything goes well, I will bring Jin Xinyue out in half a day. If there's something wrong, meet me at the three backup rendezvous points in one day, three days, and seven days respectively. If you don't see me in any of the rendezvous points, you will stop waiting and return to the Mysterious Shadow Domain directly. Jin Xinyue and I will figure out what to do on our own."

Shua!

Li Yao stuck his right index finger and middle finger to the center of his eyebrow and summoned the Mystic Skeleton

Battlesuit.

The newborn Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit enveloped his body like a stream of thick, black liquid that consolidated instantly in a hideous form. The seemingly withered muscles and shells expanded continuously and unleashed such intense demonic energy that it condensed into black spirals around the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, making everybody on the devilish warship shake in fear.

If an ignorant Cultivator had seen such a view, he would certainly be extremely vigilant with the misconception that the greatest devil had arrived!

Li Yao inwardly frowned. *This is too eye-catching. I really didn't see this coming.*

A lot of biochemical materials had been added to the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit during the modification, transforming it toward a perfect combination of a crystal suit and a biochemical beast. Such a methodology had significantly improved the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit's performance, but it had also raised an issue that had never occurred to Li Yao before.

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, which was covered in tremendous living cells, could no longer be stored in a Cosmos Ring!

Generally speaking, Cosmos Rings could not be used to store living creatures.

It was because the functioning mechanism of most of Cosmos Rings was that the molecular structure of a three-dimensional object would be compressed into a 'four-dimensional amalgamation' of a higher density. Then, when the object was to be retrieved, the Cosmos Ring would unfold the ‘four-dimensional amalgamation’ in the three-dimensional space.

For example, if a newspaper was too large to be carried, it could be compressed hard into a cluster so that it would be able to be stuffed into a small space handily.

It was a compression from the two-dimensional space to the three-dimensional space.

When one meant to read the newspaper again, he would only need to take out the paper ball and open it, restoring it to the two-dimensional level.

It was not hard to imagine that when a newspaper was unfolded after being rolled into a ball, there would be certainly a lot of crinkles on the surface, and a lot of fibers that were invisible to the human eyes must have been fractured, too.

The storage of the Cosmos Rings was the same. The process of compression and extraction would deal a certain amount of damage to the object.

For the lifeless objects, such tiny damage could be overlooked, and their original properties and functions could be maintained, like a crinkled newspaper that could still accommodate readable information.

However, for cells that were highly competent, especially the braincells used for thinking, such damage was hardly resistible.

Countless savants among both human beings and demons had been dedicated to the project of storing living creatures with Cosmos Rings.

However, the best result after thousands of years of research was that some of the cells could maintain minimal activity inside the Cosmos Ring through the protection of special rune arrays.

Li Yao had once utilized the special preservation rune arrays to preserve a huge amount of food inside his Cosmos Rings, which could keep the freshness and the spiritual energy contained inside the food for several years. It was an application of the technology in reality.

But there was still a long distance to go from food to a living being.

It was especially so for the braincells, which were most mysterious and feeble in a living creature. After being ‘folded’ and ‘unfolded’, even if the living creature did not seem any different, their brain nerves might have been seriously damaged.

It was the reason why biochemical beasts could not be stored inside Cosmos Rings. After all, the core of a biochemical beast was the biochemical brain, which, although did not boast self-awareness, had to maintain a high activity in order to handle the computation of astronomical information.

Thankfully, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was not entirely a biochemical beast, and its core was still a crystal processor with a tough performance.

In order to fit the brand new Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit into the Cosmos Rings, Li Yao, the Fire Ant King, and the other experts came up with all kinds of whimsical approaches that late proved to be failures without exception.

In the end, the Fire Ant King proposed a solution.

Although the Cosmos Rings could not be used to store living creatures, they were fine with dead bodies.

From ancient times to present day, Cultivators had often thrown materials such as bones or cores into their Cosmos Rings after the hunted down animals or demon beasts. If they had excavated some rarely-seen wood, they would often stuff the treasure into their Cosmos Ring casually, too. It had never been reported that the specifications of the objects were any different when they were retrieved again.

It was evidence that the storage of the Cosmos Ring would not jeopardize the intactness of cells.

Many crystal suits were directly built with tremendous Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. Even the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had adopted a lot of materials that were ripped off from Skeleton Dragon’s body after the battle on Boneyard.

Other than the tough bones, a lot of high-extensible, soft materials had been applied. At that time, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had still been able to be stored in the Cosmos Rings freely.

Therefore, Li Yao and the Fire Ant King came to the conclusion that, if the braincells were not involved, as long as the activity of the cells was kept to the minimum level, it was possible that the cells would not be hurt during the ‘folding’ and ‘unfolding’ of the Cosmos Rings.

The Fire Ant King had done some research before. He had even developed a cell depressor based on the assumption, which could significantly reduce the activity of the cells and set them into the ‘hibernation’ or ‘apparent death’ state.

The Fire Ant King planned to store the biochemical beasts in Cosmos Rings in such a way so that the portability of the ultimate weapons could be greatly improved.

However, such a ‘hibernating drug’ proved to cause great damage to the braincells. The biochemical brains could not be ‘unfrozen’ after they ‘hibernated’. He could not make any progress however many experiments he conducted. Eventually, he had to abandon the project.

Since the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was not using a biochemical brain, it was not a problem. After being injected with the ‘hibernating drug’, the strengthened cells on the surface of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit all entered the ‘hibernation’ state, and the activity of the cells were lowered to the minimum, which allowed them to withstand the damage during the ‘folding’ and ‘unfolding’.

After the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was retrieved from the Cosmos Ring, it would be injected with an activation drug, which would stimulate the mitochondria inside the hibernating cells to burn furiously and restore their activity!

In such a way, the storage problem of the brand new Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was solved, although not entirely satisfactorily.

The ‘hibernation’ and ‘activation’ would both take one to two seconds, which could be quite an annoying lag in an ever-changing battlefield. However, after analyzing the pros and cons carefully, Li Yao still believed that it was acceptable to trade a few seconds for the significant improvement in performance.

After all, it was new technology and a piece of new magical equipment that had just been invented. A lot of problems would definitely occur, but the technical issues could be slowly addressed by the technical improvement. As a refiner with keen senses, Li Yao had high hopes for such a piece of new magical equipment.

What was most dissatisfying for him was that, when the activation drug was deployed to awaken the biochemical cells attached to the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, the mitochondria inside the cells would burn furiously because of the stimulation and unleash incessant demonic energy, to the point that visible black swirls would condense around his body. It was indeed too eye-catching!

Before, when I fully utilized my strength, my ultimate core would always play music loudly.

Right now, whenever I summon my crystal suit, an overwhelming wind of demonic energy is triggered!

Gloomy, haunting music along with the surging demonic energy like a volcanic eruption. This is exactly how the great villain in a movie shows up at the end. It is indeed too flamboyant and dramatic and does not befit my low-key style at all!

It was already beyond Li Yao’s expectations that the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit’s performance could be improved by so much after only half a month. Therefore, he could only deal with the minor flaw for now and dive into the depths of the undersea world in the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

Five hundred meters, a thousand meters, three thousand meters… He was surrounded by a world of darkness.

In front of Li Yao’s eyes, the parameters of the environment were jumping on the light beam of the crystal processor, and the cells on the surface of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit directly transmitted the outside pressure into his brain through the biochemical nerves.

The two different ways of processing told him the influence of the pressure of the seawater simultaneously.

He was both like a piece of high-precision diving magical equipment and a fish that lived in the deep sea. He was now able to analyze and process the information 30% faster than before, which allowed him to sense the effect of the feeblest current and the dangerous hunters lurking in the depths of the darkness!

Chapter 973 - Catastrophe in Void Turmoil City!

Inside the undersea mountains on his left side, a thorny sea cucumber was lurking quietly, lying in the mud, ready to spurt out its internal organs that were packed with sharp thorns and hooks at any time.

On his right side, a shoal of Axe Fish was swaggering by. The unbridled undercurrents that they raised were demonstrating their formidability.

In the darkness ahead of him, glimmers were beaming out. They appeared to be the rotten whales from the upper level that had fallen into the deep sea, a phenomenon commonly known as ‘whale fall’.

But Li Yao knew that they were merely bait that were faked by the antennae on the forehead of the anglerfish. Should any fish think that the glimmers were food and go after them, they would certainly end up in the sharp, merciless mouth of the anglerfish.

Hunters were everywhere in the dark world, but if they were careless for one moment, they would only end up being the most miserable prey for the scarier hunters.

Li Yao observed patiently and calculated the undercurrents caused by the swimming creatures living in the deep sea while he selected his target carefully.

Eventually, he shifted his eyes to the shoal of the Axe Fish.

The Axe Fish appeared to be clusters of transparent soft meat and as harmless as shivering jelly at first glance.

However, their tongues, which were extremely tensile, could slap out with the enhancement of the pressure water and cut prey multiple times larger than themselves in half like the sharpest axes.

They were also fond of group activities. Once a large number of them gathered, they were even bold enough to challenge the most ferocious sharks. They were certainly one of the most fatal predators in the deep sea.

The size of this particular shoal of Axe Fish was similar to that of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

Li Yao tailed and observed them carefully for half an hour, recording all the features of the interference they caused to the undercurrents while they were swimming. Then, Li Yao turned around and moved to Void Turmoil City.

An hour later, glowing jellyfish that were floating like lanterns appeared in the darkness ahead of him. They were all in various colors and extended their tentacles to more than ten meters away. They looked like both exotic flowers and the willow branches in a breeze.

Li Yao knew that the glowing jellyfish were demon beasts tamed by the Sea Clan.

Cells with keen senses were distributed on the tentacles of the glowing jellyfish for them to detect subtle changes of the undercurrents.

In the deep sea where there were absolutely no rays of light, optical organs were the most useless of all. All the predators determined the size, species, and dangerousness of the prey near them through the changes of the undercurrents.

Every different creature would cause different interference when they were swimming in the water. The difference between a devilish warship and a demon beast was even larger.

By the sensation of the glowing jellyfish, the Sea Clan would know clearly what was swimming close.

Manipulating the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Li Yao swam toward the glowing jellyfish.

He held his breath. Every strand of his nerves was as stable and precise as a scalpel while he carefully adjusted the power rune arrays and the activity of the muscles on the surface of the crystal suit to simulate the waves that the shoal of Axe Fish triggered when they were swimming.

In the absolute deep, dark sea, he pretended to be a shoal of Axe Fish that were looking for food voraciously.

He was even bold enough to dash toward a glowing jellyfish, pretending that the ferocious Axe Fish were planning to rip the glowing jellyfish into shreds.

The glowing jellyfish was shocked and slightly retreated, shrinking into a cluster.

But more glowing jellyfish crowded close from all directions, straightening their tentacles aggressively and releasing feeble poison.

It was not an attack but a warning.

They were the ‘sentinels’ that the Sea Clan deployed in the place. Their mission was surveillance, and they did not want to piss off a bunch of brutal Axe Fish.

Li Yao halted for a moment and swam away.

As a result, even though the Sea Clan had indeed felt an intruder through the glowing jellyfish, they would only think that it was a shoal of Axe Fish trying to attack a lone glowing jellyfish only to be intimidated by the tremendous glowing jellyfish that came later and retreat.

In such a way, Li Yao passed through the cordon that the Sea Clan deployed without alarming anyone!

He lurked in a trench not far away for half an hour in silence. Nobody came to investigate. The infiltration proved to be a success.

Even so, he was still careful enough to pretend to be a shoal of Axe Fish and swam forward at an extremely low speed.

For most of the time, he turned off all the power rune arrays and relied on the undercurrents to push him to the shore of Void Turmoil City. He only activated the power rune arrays and looked for new undercurrents when the previous ones led to the opposite direction.

After all, in the water above his head, chances were that a lot of Scattered Teeth Sharks, Tyrant Devilfish, and Abyss Whales, formidable demon beasts that the Sea Clan domesticated, were lurking and waiting for an enemy.

Being surrounded by a huge number of ferocious animals in the deep sea was a nightmare that even Li Yao would rather not be faced with.

Finally, he discovered the slope that extended to the bottom of the sea.

Void Turmoil City was right ahead of him.

According to the structural design Yuchi Ba offered to him, he soon located a secret channel that was deeply buried below the ocean.

When the Fire Ant King established Void Turmoil City, he had considered the possibility of the city being surrounded by an army when his identity was exposed. Therefore, he had built secret channels below the surface of Void Turmoil City that were as complicated as a maze.

It had been only one week since the coalition army of demon attacked Void Turmoil City. Although the city had already been razed to the ground, it was unlikely that all the secret channels had been discovered.

Like a ghost, Li Yao crawled into a twisted crevice. He injected a special drug into the seawater. A cluster of corals immediately emitted a feeble glow.

He turned the cluster of corals anticlockwise three times. A lot of bubbles suddenly popped up from the depths of the crevices, revealing a teleportation array where green moss were growing.

Shua!

Half a minute later, Li Yao took a long breath in a secret tunnel hundreds of meters below the Void Turmoil City.

In front of him, a lackluster bronze ring was floating.

He crossed his fingers and twisted them in the opposite direction of their joints, casting a weird spell and sending a telepathic thought out.

The bronze ring was humming. The vintage spiritual stripes carved on the surface of the ring were illuminated one by one, driving it to spin quickly.

The bronze ring was not fully-enclosed but had a notch. After spinning for a long time, the speed of the ring dropped. Eventually, the notch pointed in a certain direction like a compass.

Jin Xinyue's location had been locked onto!

The bronze ring was the 'Child-Mother Heart Connecting Ring' that Li Yao had crafted through the ancient techniques. It was divided into the child ring and the mother ring and could be used to tell each other's direction.

Although there were drawbacks such as the unclear coordinates and the lack of support for real-time communication, the greatest advantage was that the spiritual waves they sent out were extremely weak and much more inconspicuous than any modern communication or navigation magical equipment. Also, their signals were also highly penetrative and could hardly be blocked. They were the perfect gadgets to be used in a place as chaotic as Void Turmoil City.

Before Li Yao snuck into the Skeleton Island, he had discussed with Jin Xinyue about the methods of communication.

At that time, they had been unaware of the inside information of the Blade of Chaos and Elder Nether Spring, and they did not know when they would meet each other again.

Therefore, Li Yao had added camouflage to the child ring of the Child-Mother Heart Connecting Ring and given it to Jin Xinyue, asking her to wear it on her ankle.

According to their pact, Li Yao would sneak into the Skeleton Island and investigate the secrets of the Blade of Chaos. Meanwhile, Jin Xinyue would stay in Void Turmoil City as a chaotic-blood demon and a slave in order to collect the useful intelligence in such a place where silver-blood demons came every day.

It was Jin Xinyue’s specialty. Naturally, she found the job unchallenging.

However, as it turned out, the Blade of Chaos was completely exposed, and Void Turmoil City was attacked by a great army. Jin Xinyue was trapped in the place, too.

In the past, Jin Xinyue had been a demon king. There should not have been a problem for her to protect herself in the messy battles.

However, after absorbing a full dosage of the Divine Blood of Chaos, Jin Xinyue had been transformed into a human being from a demon, and her strength system was completely different now. It was impossible for her to perform the techniques of Cultivators in front of the coalition army of demons. Therefore, where she had been hiding herself was quite a mystery.

With the guidance of the Child-Mother Heart Connecting Ring, Li Yao rushed to Jin Xinyue’s shelter.

Half a day later, he had already moved deep into Void Turmoil City. Hiding below a collapsed building, Li Yao released Neltharion into the air for reconnaissance.

Through the crystal cameras on Neltharion, the city that was both messy and energetic in the past was now only messy.

The city was on fire. The districts at the periphery had been burnt to the ground. Large areas of demonic plants were burning at the same time, producing a rather splendid belt of smoke in the sky that was raging like a black dragon.

Deep inside the debris, explosions and the collapsing noises of the skyscrapers built on the withered trees were echoing nonstop.

The falcons and eagles of the Feather Clan were flying everywhere in the burning sky. On the cracked land, countless soldiers of the Insect Clan were waving their sharp sickles and crawling past the dilapidated streets. The burnt bones were piled up as high as a hill. Desperate screams were soaring to the heavens along with the most intense black smoke that looked like countless frozen, dark pillars.

The internal war among demons was no more merciful than those between demons and human beings.

It was as cruel as the internal war among human beings that Li Yao had participated in personally in the Flying Star Sector.

Although Void Turmoil City had been established by the Fire Ant King himself, for safety reasons, he did not tell many residents of the city about the Blade of Chaos.

However, even though they were not members of the Blade of Chaos, they were still the losers in the struggle for power in the major demon kingdoms who had been forced to escape to this place.

Naturally, the coalition army of demons would not be polite to them, nor would the brutal demons be willing to surrender obediently.

Also, in Void Turmoil City, the real members of the Blade of Chaos were also trying to break out of the siege. A war broke out in the end.

However, the majority of the elites of the Blade of Chaos had been taken to the Mausoleum of Chaos by the Fire Ant King and Yuchi Ba. The remaining members were in lack of leadership and caught unprepared. Naturally, they were no match for the well-organized coalition army of demons.

When Li Yao snuck in, Void Turmoil City had basically been occupied by the coalition army, and most of the resistance had been suppressed.

Soldiers of the coalition army were everywhere in the city, searching for suspects in every household. Even the belongings of the bronze-blood demons and the silver-blood demons were confiscated. A lot of resources were looted, and all the free citizens ended up as slaves.

The city was surrounded by biochemical beasts and devilish warships. Even a grasshopper would not have been able to jump out.

Chapter 974 - Perfect Infiltration…

When Neltharion finally determined the location where Jin Xinyue was hiding, Li Yao secretly cursed and spat on the wall hard.

It was a large military camp.

The military camp, which covered over five square kilometers, was established in an empty area in the middle of the debris. There was also an open field with a span of more than one kilometer where there were absolutely no shelters or obstacles.

The military camp was surrounded by iron gauze and shrilling thorns. Should anything get too close, the shrilling thorns would utter earsplitting noises.

A watch tower that was equipped with acid cannons had been established every hundred meters. Crouching inside the tower were the soldiers of the Feather Clan with keen sight who could distinguish a rabbit on the ground easily from the sky.

The watch towers were in a neat distribution and covered each other well. There was not a single blind angle.

Each of the four corners of the military camp was guarded by a patrolling team made of the Death Sickle Tarantula, which were more vigilant than the smartest hounds. They were patrolling day and night and eyeing anyone coming in and out of the military camp suspiciously.

An even larger number of more terrifying demon beasts were kept in the northwest corner of the military camp, ready for battle at any time.

What was more critical was that a ‘Ghost Eye’-level devilish warship was docked in the sky of the military camp.

Such a warship, which was more than a thousand meters long, was produced by the Sea Clan through combining and refining the genes of whale-type demon beasts and squid-type demon beasts.

The squid-type demon beasts boasted the most precise eyeball system in the world. There were more photoreceptor cells inside their eyeballs than there were in the eyes of Cultivators. Therefore, ‘Ghost Eye’-level devilish warship was best known for their scouting ability. It was now floating three hundred meters above the military camp and monitoring every corner from the high stance!

Li Yao bit his tongue hard. He had no idea why Jin Xinyue would be hiding in such a heavily guarded military camp.

What was even odder was the reason for the thorough defense of the military camp. Void Turmoil City had been completely demolished without the ability for any counterattack.

Neltharion drew slightly closer and observed the focal length of the crystal cameras. Finally, he noticed something wrong.

Most of the soldiers gathered in the military camp were not the regular army. Judging from their messy clothes and their ignorant expression, they should be the civilians of Void Turmoil City. Some of them were even chaotic-blood demons.

Under the shouting and abuse of the tutors of the coalition army, they were undergoing high-intensity training right now.

This place was more like a concentration camp or a transfer station of captives than a military camp. The captives would be transported to somewhere else after they were grouped and trained a little bit.

Li Yao recalled the scenes that Neltharion had captured on the way. The coalition army of demons were collecting tremendous resources from every part of Void Turmoil City, including crystals, strengthening drugs, and seeds of the demonic plants, and constantly shipping them to the outside world.

The coalition army of demons is draining the place. They are going to destroy Void Turmoil City and move away all the population and resources!

Damn. They are now looting all the assets of war for the great war to come, and the civilians here will become cannon fodder!

The demon emperors of the Pantheon of Demons have indeed gone mad. They are planning to take their chances and wage a national war before the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector are fully linked!

Li Yao suddenly realized what was going on.

Void Turmoil City was a metropolis with a population of more than one million. The migration of a million demons was certainly not an easy task. Therefore, a lot of regrouping camps had been established in the city. The captives would receive preliminary training in the camps before they were moved away in different batches.

The question remained, how was he going to sneak in?

Li Yao pondered for a moment. Splitting his attention apart, he maneuvered Neltharion to approach the military camp slowly to observe every guard inside the camp and their possible reinforcements. As he did that, he summoned the drill of mystic rays and started digging a hole in the secret tunnel.

The drill of mystic rays, after a full upgrade, now boasted three acid bags. Before the mystic rays shot out, a huge amount of highly-corrosive acids would be released.

Corrosion before digging significantly improved the efficiency of drilling.

Very soon, Li Yao dug the hole to a place two to three kilometers away from the military camp. Then, he extended three tunnels to the east, west, and south. He stopped digging when he was one meter from the ground and planted a special sensor chip and a lot of crystal bombs in the tunnels.

As a result, there was no anomaly on the ground. But through the crystal processor of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, he would sense the three chips very clearly. The three tunnels would be his routes of retreat.

If he was left with no choice, he could bring Jin Xinyue to the top of one of the three tunnels and blow through the one-meter-thick soil with the Cell Obliteration Cannon. After they snuck into the underground, he would detonate the crystal bombs and block the hunters.

However, that was only a last resort.

At least a hundred thousand soldiers of the coalition army of demons were stationed in Void Turmoil City right now. Should there be a massive explosion, they would certainly detect it and start a large-scale search.

More importantly, the Sea Clan would certainly increase their wariness and block the ocean completely. Even in the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Li Yao was not confident that he could compete with the Sea Clan in terms of speed in the depths of the ocean.

He had no interest of fighting an army of a hundred thousand soldiers on his own. It would be best if he could achieve his purpose without alarming anyone.

When the three tunnels were all dug through, Neltharion had already snuck into the military camp and found rows of tents that were temporarily established.

Jin Xinyue was in one of the tents!

Excellent!

The precision of the Child-Mother Heart Connecting Ring was too low. The navigation could not have been any more precise, but it was good enough for Li Yao.

Li Yao's eyes were glittering while he pondered carefully how he could sneak in.

The defense of the military camp is almost flawless. All the personnel getting in and out of the military camp, including the silver-blood commanders in glamorous armors, will be examined and strictly questioned. Although this silver-blood commander was only scrutinized ten minutes ago, a second sentry has appeared and verified his identity again. There is no way to fake him.

Shrilling thorns, watch towers, and the ‘Ghost Eye’-level devilish warship have almost every area under their control without any blind spots.

If I can locate the precise tent that Jin Xinyue is in, I can dig the tunnel to right below her feet with the drill of mystic rays.

However, it will be very difficult. There are almost a hundred tents here, and they are built with materials that boast anti-surveillance techniques. I cannot even see what is going on inside through Neltharion. That is really prudent!

The heavy defense of the military camp left a deep impression on Li Yao.

The toughness of the regular army of the demon race was evident from the arrangement of the military camp. It was certainly much better than the mobs such as the beast tides that infiltrated the Heaven’s Origin Sector ten years ago.

The most important problem is, even if I can sneak into the military camp, how am I going to bring Jin Xinyue out?

Mayhem. I have to wreak mayhem!

There is a warehouse of crystals in the northeast corner of the military camp. It is not very large, and the crystals stored inside are low-level, high-impurity ones, but they should be enough to make a tiny explosion and cause a brief riot.

Should I dig my way to the warehouse?

Li Yao immediately vetoed the idea.

The Insect Clan in the coalition army of demons were specialists in digging in the first place. Critical facilities such as a warehouse of crystals were certainly protected by surveillance and counterattacking measures.

Perhaps a few rock bugs that were highly sensitive to quakes were hibernating right below the warehouse at present.

It was also one of the reasons Li Yao did not dare dig the tunnel into the military camp directly.

Very soon, through Neltharion, Li Yao noticed a team of Land Whales that were wriggling toward the military camp slowly.

The fat Land Whales were responsible for shipping food and supplies to the military camp. Occasionally, they would transport the low-level crystals that the army collected and the new captives too.

Of course, the sentinels were examining the Land Whales thoroughly. They would turn every box of goods upside down to check. There were barely any gaps among the cargoes where one could hide.

However…

Half an hour later, a team consisting of nine Land Whales were riding toward the military camp with loads of goods.

When they passed through a ramshackle block, a skyscraper that was built on a giant tree suddenly collapsed. After an earsplitting explosion, the tree that had been entirely burnt fell down, raising a sandstorm.

The Land Whales were shocked and sneezing because of the overwhelming dust. They were running around and causing havoc.

In Void Turmoil City, which had turned into ruins, burnt trees were everywhere. Collapses and explosions were nothing unusual.

The well-trained riders waved electric whips and slapped the beasts below them. Very soon, they got the situation under control. The panicked Land Whales in the dust were restrained again and got back to the road.

In a moment, the Land Whales reached the gate of the military camp.

The displaced goods and the dusty and dirty riders attracted the guards’ attention.

After learning of the havoc on their way, the guards examined the trunk even more thoroughly.

For the demonic plant hay that was the food for demon beasts, they did not just stab their spears inside as they normally did. Instead, a soldier was sent into the hay and searched inch by inch.

But they found nothing in the end.

The guards waved their hands and let the newcomers in.

Ten minutes later, one of the Land Whales moved into the warehouse of crystals.

Below its fat belly, in the middle of the wrinkles that were dangling because of the gravity, Li Yao set the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit into stealth mode and slowly wriggled out.

His plan had worked out. Nobody expected that an intruder would be hiding in a wrinkle on the skin of a Land Whale without being discovered by the beasts.

It was all thanks to the highly-efficient narcotic drugs that the Fire Ant King provided!

It was a perfect infiltration.

Next, Li Yao was going to deploy a few special crystal bombs at the critical locations of the warehouse. The explosion was not the key point. He was trying to create an illusion that the crystals were going to explode in minor collisions because of their mediocre quality so that his following operation would be more convenient.

Let’s begin!

Li Yao snapped his finger in his heart and smile confidently.

He had come and gone like the wind in the most perilous places such as the Mausoleum of Chaos and the Nether World in the North Pole. Now that he had snuck into the small military camp, wasn’t he already a sure winner?

Right then—

Earsplitting alarms were ringing outside, as if ten thousand loudspeakers were shrieking at the same time. The entire military camp could hear them!

Chapter 975 - Blow Up a Devilish Warship!

What—what the heck!

Within his crystal suit, Li Yao’s face was almost the color of spinach right now.

Was the coalition army of demons so well-trained now that they had seen through his infiltration but deliberately let him in to trap himself inside the camp?

That was too horrifying!

Li Yao sensed the enormous demonic energy spreading out above his heart, as if the sky was boiling. It was a sign that the ‘Ghost Eye’-level devilish warship was driving at full speed.

The ‘Ghost Eye’-level devilish warship was a model designed to suppress ground troops. A great cannon that could shoot out demon fire, acid, and infrasonic waves simultaneously had been grown below the head of the warship. Even an expert in the Nascent Soul Stage would need to dodge the bombardment!

Exclamations, screams, explosions. Everything was a complete mess!

Right when he was cursing and gritting his teeth, prepared to march out, he suddenly realized that he was not the target of the chaos.

Neltharion, which was floating above the warehouse of crystals, noticed a streak of brightness that soared from an enormous tent and rushed toward the southwest.

It was an… Core Formation Stage Cultivator!

At this moment, there would not be a second ‘Core Formation Stage Cultivator’ in Void Turmoil City other than Jin Xinyue.

The Core Formation Stage Cultivator unleashed tremendous spiritual waves and broke the sonic barrier, passing through the sky like a supersonic shuttle. Naturally, the coalition army noticed the anomaly immediately. That was why the entire military camp was in a riot.

Not only did all the soldiers of the Feather Clan activate their flight techniques to block the enemy, even the ‘Ghost Eye’-level devilish warship was also turned on immediately and chased after her.

Li Yao could hardly refrain himself from punching a hole in the wall. What was Jin Xinyue doing exactly? Did she not claim to be a well-trained saintess of the Pantheon of Demons, who were best at stealth, assassination, infiltration, and ambushes?

Why did she expose herself right in front of the eyes of the coalition army of demons?

Everything was screwed!

A Core Formation Stage Cultivator had appeared in Void Turmoil City right under the nose of a hundred thousand soldiers of the coalition army of demons. Could it be any more thrilling?

He would have to find out the answer to the question after he rescued Jin Xinyue.

Thankfully, the immense spiritual waves that she released attracted the attention of all the demons in the military camp. The ‘Ghost Eye’-level devilish warship and the Feather Clan had both been summoned to chase after her, which gave Li Yao a chance to take action more openly.

The newly-captured civilians had been panicking in the first place. With the fuss that Jin Xinyue caused, they were all shouting and running about like headless chickens, distracting the attention of the Death Sickle Tarantula and the ground troops.

Other demons are easy to fix. The key is the ‘Ghost Eye’-level devilish warship!

The shell of the devilish warship of such a level is embedded with more than twenty biochemical eyes that originated from the large squids. It will be practically impossible to get away once I am locked onto by them!

I have to destroy the devilish warship!

A crystal suit versus a warship!

Back in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, during the ultimate test on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Li Yao had snuck into a crystal warship and controlled the entire bridge.

But right now, it was obvious that he could not infiltrate the ‘Ghost Eye’-level devilish warship. He would have to destroy the devilish warship in a head-on battle.

In the siege of so many enemies, he only had one shot. He had to destroy it in one attack!

Li Yao took a deep breath. The environment nearby that he surveyed just now overlapped with the structural designs of Void Turmoil City, and he came up with plans to destroy the warship one after another.

Difficult. It was too difficult!

His target was a devilish warship that was almost a thousand meters long and boasted a powerful shield of demonic energy and a shell of biochemical skeletons. Even the full-strength strike of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator might not be enough to completely deprive the warship of all its combat ability unless he was unbelievably lucky to hit a critical part such as the arsenal.

What should I do?

Li Yao panted anxiously. Then, he suddenly moved his eyes to the crystals stored in the warehouse.

The mediocre crystals contained too many impurities and were highly unstable. They might burn or explode when they were touched.

What if…

Li Yao’s eyes were glittering as he came up with a crazy idea.

He closed his hands and rubbed them. Five Cosmos Rings appeared in his palm and collected all the crystals!

One minute passed.

The entire military camp was seething because of the appearance of a Core Formation Stage Cultivator. Everybody was paying attention to the Cultivator who had shown up out of nowhere.

Later, exclamations were echoing nonstop. A commander of the military camp seemed to have been killed by Jin Xinyue, which raised an even larger riot.

In such chaos, there was suddenly a blind angle in the defense system. With vague demonic energy spreading out of his body, Li Yao easily escaped out of the military camp with the aid of Neltharion from above.

Jin Xinyue was still on the run. The city was surrounded by troops. Having no choice, she could only dash to the debris at the center of the city.

The troops of the coalition army nearby were all informed of the arrival of a Cultivator. They joined the search and chased after her.

Li Yao had to destroy the ‘Ghost Eye’-level devilish warship before the main troops arrived!

Shua!

He turned into a streak of blackness and marched to the depths of Void Turmoil City.

With the Child-Mother Heart Connecting Ring, he could basically locate or even predict Jin Xinyue’s whereabouts. Accelerating to the highest speed, he stopped in the front of Jin Xinyue on the way that she would inevitably pass and found a tree skyscraper almost a hundred meters tall.

It was a lookout tower.

Li Yao blinked and appeared in the branches at the top of the tree skyscraper like smoke.

On the branches that were as thick as overpasses, three fat demons were crouching.

Their bellies were as huge as drums, and their mouthparts had evolved into the shape of syringes, which allowed them to shoot out venomous needles at a supersonic speed. They were natural-born lethal snipers.

When Li Yao dashed to the top of the tree, they were all waiting patiently for the arrival of Jin Xinyue. Their hollowed mouthparts had locked onto Jin Xinyue in advance, and their bellies were rising up in greenish colors while the venom was being secreted and congregated.

They reacted quite fast. The moment that Li Yao reached the top of the tree, they turned around and spurted out green venom at twice the speed of sound, aiming for the critical parts on Li Yao’s body!

Li Yao narrowed his eyes so hard that his pupils almost broke apart. Black liquid was released from the depths of his pupils and contaminated the entire eyeballs, making his eyes even more deep and mysterious!

The combination of the overwhelming demonic energy and spiritual energy produced an extremely tensile and yet indestructible shield that froze all the venomous needles in midair.

The three snipers were all dumbfounded when they discovered that their venom had been halted in midair.

Li Yao sniffed and released his energy. The dozens of venomous needles were blown backward at a speed more than three times the speed of sound and riddled the three unprepared snipers with holes.

They all collapsed.

The body of one of the snipers even fell off from the branches and landed in front of Jin Xinyue.

Jin Xinyue had lost her cool already. She was sweating hard, and her nerves had tightened. Caught unprepared by the body falling from the sky, she stopped briefly.

The ‘Ghost Eye’-level devilish warship immediately locked onto her.

Dazzling brilliance was beaming out of the barrel of the main gun of the devilish warship, and visible ripples of demonic energy was spreading!

Not far away from the ‘Ghost Eye’-level devilish warship, under the cover of the branches and leaves, Li Yao was on one of his knees. He raised his left arm, which was like a cannonball that had been uncoated. The living cells that enveloped the crystal suit condensed into translucent bone spurs and scales and triggered astounding electric arcs in the high-speed vibrations!

He opened his fingers, and his crystal suit split apart. A crystal the size of an egg popped up from his palm. The biochemical energy that he had earned at the cost of tremendous cells melded with the spiritual energy that was transmitted to the front end of his arm by the super-compressed crystal reactor through the tubes, as if two overwhelming rivers had joined together, raging, roaring, and simmering!

The Cell Obliteration Cannon might not have been enough to blow up a devilish warship. However—

Li Yao’s right hand picked up three Cosmos Rings, all of which had been fully loaded with the low-quality, unstable crystals that he had just looted and the extremely powerful crystal bombs that he had refined earlier!

The Cell Obliteration Cannon was activated at almost the same time as the main gun of the ‘Ghost Eye’-level devilish warship.

The moment before they were launched, however, Li Yao snapped the three Cosmos Rings out and shot them toward the devilish warship with his spiritual energy and telepathic thoughts!

The retrieval rune arrays of the three Cosmos Rings had all been activated, with a timer set to half a second later!

Shua!

The three Cosmos Rings were hurled above the devilish warship in an elegant curve before all the retrieval rune arrays were activated.

Crystals weighing almost five tons were released from the Cosmos Rings and smashed the devilish warship overwhelmingly like a landslide.

Five hundred billion times, super crystal Cell Obliteration Cannon!

Li Yao uttered a deafening roar. From the deepest part of his marrow to his internal organs, from his internal organs to every bit of his flesh and blood on his limbs, along with the living cells on the surface of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, everything was burning at the maximum rate!

The mitochondria unleashed devastating demonic energy like a supernova outbreak, as if a black volcano had suddenly risen up. The burning flame turned the giant tree, which was almost a hundred meters tall, into a stunning torch!

In the moment, Li Yao became the center of demonic energy in Void Turmoil City!

BOOM!

Focused by the super crystal at the center of his palm, the energy generated by the burning mitochondria condensed into a cluster of crimson brilliance, which bombarded the ‘Ghost Eye’-level devilish warship like a roaring dragon!

Almost at the same moment, the tons of crystals released from the Cosmos Rings were detonated. Like an invisible hammer, they blew up the devilish warship’s shield of demonic energy. The blast was so tremendous that the entire devilish warship dropped down a little bit!

It was the terrifying power that equal to the explosion of an entire warehouse of crystals!

Without the blockage of the shield of demonic energy, the crimson brilliance went forward unstoppably and hit the devilish warship’s main gun, which was being triggered at the highest efficiency.

The collision of the two immense blasts caused a crimson hurricane mixed with purple electric arcs. Together with the explosion of tons of crystals, the shell at the front of the warship was finally pierced through. The blasts swept across the bridge like a tsunami and triggered a chain reaction, leading to a series of explosions right inside the devilish warship!

Chapter 976 - Teleportation House

The devilish warship turned into a giant caterpillar of fireballs, writhing violently and crashing from the sky!

The intense blast that the collision enshrouded the debris in the surrounding thousand kilometers in dust and smoke. Flames were spreading out over the flying stones and dead bodies. It was indeed the scene of the end of the world!

Jin Xinyue was blown almost a hundred meters away by the airwave. Her face pale, she stared at the debris of the warship, startled.

To this moment, she still found it difficult to believe her eyes.

A devilish warship designed to suppress ground targets had been shot down by a certain powerful weapon?

The weapon had pierced through the devilish warship’s shield of demonic energy. The source of the attack, on the other hand, was emitting out a torrent of demonic energy that felt like a flood.

She had only sensed demonic energy of the same level from her father before.

What kind of expert is this?

Blood was leaking out of Jin Xinyue’s nostrils, ears, and eyes at the same time. Her internal organs seemed to have been stomped on by galloping horses, too. She felt that her throat was stuffed, and yet she did not dare to cough, fearing that she might throw out her broken internal organs if she did.

Behind her, a search team of the coalition army was stunned by the blast, too. Everybody’s brain was shaking rapidly within their skull, rendering them unable to react.

Looking at the burning traces in midair in a daze, they felt that they had to be hallucinating, Everybody was shivering beyond their control.

Very soon, a black shadow gradually emerged from the smoke.

It was like the king of fiends had just crawled out of the deepest level of hell. Streams of black demonic energy entangled him, raging and tearing the air apart in hissing noises.

BOOM!

Behind the ‘king of fiends’, the debris of the devilish warship had yet another earsplitting explosion. For a moment, the earth was shaking violently, and the airwaves were surging out. The purple demonic fire soared up and illuminated half of the sky!

All the demons cowered on the ground and held their heads hard to avoid the sweeping blast.

They were all well aware how terrifying the blast, acid, and venomous fog were during the explosion of a devilish warship.

If they were hit by the venomous fog stored inside the warship, chances were that they would be vaporized instantly!

“Let’s go!”

A thunderous sound echoed directly inside Jin Xinyue’s brain. The next moment, she sensed that dozens of streams of sharp demonic energy were stimulating the major acupoints on her body.

Because of the motivation, a new strength suddenly appeared in her exhausted body. She could not help but be dragged over.

Jin Xinyue was overjoyed and almost exclaimed aloud.

It was the old monster!

No wonder the demonic energy was so intimidating!

But Li Yao had no time to bother with what Jin Xinyue was thinking about right now. He opened his hands and snatched her. Then, the wings turned into sabers. Thousands of black feathers flapped backward, triggering arc-shaped airwaves behind him that swept the surrounding area like a tsunami, blowing away all the soldiers of the coalition army in the area.

Shua!

Li Yao picked up Jin Xinyue and enveloped her spiritual waves with his demonic energy. Then, he lowered his energy level and entered stealth mode, rushing quietly among the derelict buildings.

The thunderous strike frightened all the soldiers of the Feather Clan and the devilish warships nearby that were planning to chase after them.

For a moment, they did not know what was going on inside the city. Why did such a cluster of violent demonic energy suddenly break out and even attack them?

The search teams became more prudent, but the defense at the periphery was even more impregnable. All the troops stopped resting and were scattered around the defense area over a span of more than ten kilometers. The ocean seemed to be boiling, too. Countless enormous demon beasts living in the deep sea had been awakened!

Li Yao secretly cursed. Carrying Jin Xinyue, he rushed to the entrance of the first tunnel that he had dug out earlier.

However, right above the entrance of the tunnel, a combat squad of the coalition army was working.

It seemed that they were preparing to establish a defense line on the spot and surround the area when Li Yao and Jin Xinyue showed up.

Having no time to go to the second tunnel, Li Yao roared. Seven dragon arms that were enveloped in living cells protruded out of his back and blew out a storm of destruction. Together with the Cell Obliteration Cannon, he annihilated the entire combat squad in three seconds!

Jin Xinyue was rather shocked. After only a few months, the old monster was even stronger than before. Also… what was the magical equipment that he was wearing exactly? How could it be so powerful?

The old monster was indeed immeasurable!

Up until now, 22% of the spiritual energy inside my body has been consumed, 730 billion cells have been obliterated, 26% of the ammunition has been shot out, 11% of the fuel *of the crystal suit has been used up, and the durability of the crystal suit has dropped by 7%!*

According to the comprehensive evaluation, my overall combat ability has slumped by 11%, and I can keep fighting in the current state for 1 hour, 43 minutes, and 44 seconds. If I switch to the high-intensity combat pattern, I will only be able to persist for 58 minutes. If I am surrounded by three or more devilish warships that are carpet bombing me or demon kings that are riding powerful biochemical beasts, the consumption rate will be even higher!

There are at least nine devilish warships in my sight. For a siege of such a level, middle-level and high-level demon kings must've been sent out. Chances are that there are several of them!

As my overall combat ability plummets, the situation will only get worse if I linger here. But if I break out of the siege right now while ensuring that Jin Xinyue is alive, the odds of success are no higher than 5%!

Li Yao analyzed the comparison of the hostile strength and his own calmly. He then monitored the situation on the ocean through Neltharion. Within a breath, he dragged Jin Xinyue and crawled into the tunnel without any hesitation.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Every hundred meters he moved forward, he would detonate a crystal bomb behind him and collapse the section of the tunnel.

But such a trick could only stop the enemy temporarily.

There were countless experts in the coalition army of demons who were adept at underground battles. They were best at digging and drilling. It would not take long for them to discover and infiltrate the underground tunnel.

Jin Xinyue knew that they were in the middle of an emergency, too, and it was not a good time to talk. Silently, she followed Li Yao. The two of them rushed at full speed like two bolts of lightning and dashed to the end of the underground tunnel in the blink of an eye.

This place was right next to the ocean. The air was rather damp, mixed with the vague stink of sea wind.

Ahead of them was the teleportation array through which Li Yao had snuck into Void Turmoil City.

Li Yao activated the teleportation array, but instead of standing on it with Jin Xinyue, he simply placed a piece of bizarre-shaped magical equipment that was riddled with holes and looked like a fish into the teleportation array.

Shua!

The magical equipment soon vanished and appeared in the corals one kilometer away.

Manipulated by Li Yao’s telepathic thoughts, the magical equipment was spreading out the waves of the shoal of the Axe Fish that Li Yao had recorded in the beginning while swimming forward in the deep sea.

“Let’s go!”

Li Yao brought Jin Xinyue back. They zigzagged in the tunnel and arrived at another inconspicuous teleportation array.

He planted multiple time bombs around the teleportation array first and set them to explode five seconds later before he entered it together with Jin Xinyue.

Shua!

The two of them disappeared at the same time and reappeared in darkness.

The teleportation array that they entered was detonated immediately.

Li Yao finally took a long breath in relief.

They were safe… for now.

Jin Xinyue was confused in the darkness, with a lot of questions roiling in her mind.

“The trouble you caused was too huge,” Li Yao explained. “The coalition army of demons has imposed an impregnable dragnet around Void Turmoil City. If they were not alarmed, we might have had a chance to get out. But right now, they have already increased their wariness to the maximum. The soldiers of the Sea Clan are eyeing everything suspiciously in the ocean. There is no way that we can escape from the ocean, either, at least not in the couple of days from now.

“Therefore, I have released a piece of special magical equipment that can swim in the deep sea by itself and release exactly the same waves as when I snuck in.

“If the Sea Clan is smart enough, they will certainly discover the waves that seem to be caused by a shoal of the Axe Fish but is too rigid and going directly to the west. They will certainly think that the wave is caused by us.

“Then, the coalition army of the demons will think that we have escaped via the ocean and focus their attention on the ocean.

“Until they catch up to the magical equipment, we will have a few hours that are safe.”

Jin Xinyue was bewildered hearing his explanation. She could not help but ask, “Then, where are we right now?”

Li Yao took out an illumination chip from his pocket and pressed it gently. Bluish rays of light immediately beamed out.

They were now in a secret chamber less than five meters in length and width. It was utterly empty, except for the ten or so one-way teleportation arrays carved on the walls.

Other than the teleportation array through which they entered the place, the other teleportation arrays only led to the outside world and could not work the other way around.

“This is one of the Fire Ant King’s underground teleportation houses that lead to the ‘safe houses’ inside Void Turmoil City. But I believe that most of the ‘safe houses’ have already been demolished, haven’t they?” Li Yao explained with a bitter smile.

The living cells on the surface of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit entered the hibernation state, and the crystal suit was returned to the Cosmos Ring, revealing a somewhat annoyed face.

“You have met with the Fire Ant King?”

Jin Xinyue was rather amazed. In her usual habit of adulation, she flattered, “Master, you are indeed marvelous —”

“There is no need for exaltation yet,” Li Yao said coldly. “What was going on exactly? Why did you trigger such intense spiritual waves in front of everyone and reveal the secret that you have been transformed into a ‘Cultivator’?”

Jin Xinyue’s pretty face was no better than the peel of a dry orange. “I did not really have a choice, Master. It was quite unlucky of me.”

After he heard her explanation, Li Yao’s face turned weird, too.

As it turned out, after Li Yao snuck into the Skeleton Island and joined the Blade of Chaos a few years back, Yuchi Ba, master of the Skeleton Island, fulfilled his promise. He found Jin Xinyue and the relatives of other gladiators and sent them into the commercial firms and clubs that belonged to the Blade of Chaos, where they were assigned easy jobs.

But Jin Xinyue hated boredom more than anything. Easy jobs did not satisfy her. She was also trying to get more intelligence. Therefore, she resorted to her tricks in the chaotic place.

As a saintess of the Pantheon of Demons, naturally, she had a lot of unusual tricks. Although she was pretending to be a plain-looking chaotic-blood demon, it was enough for her to entice all the male creatures with a few of her alluring techniques.

Chapter 977 - The Third Disciple

As a result, Jin Xinyue soon gained fame in Void Turmoil City. Many demons who were new to Void Turmoil City heard the tales of the plain-looking, erotic demon girl.

With the help of the Blade of Chaos, she did not meet much trouble under the fake identity as Li Yao’s sister.

However, it was a whole different situation when the coalition army of demons marched close and suppressed the Blade of Chaos. All the residents of Void Turmoil City, be they related to the Blade of Chaos or not, were captured and sent to the concentration camp.

As the saying goes, tall trees catch much wind.

Jin Xinyue had planned to hide among the captives and find a way to escape after they were moved out of Void Turmoil City, but out of her expectations, the manager of the concentration camp learned her name from somewhere.

Although chaotic-blood demons were known as the ‘untouchable’, in the eyes of the silver-blood demons, such demons that were of similar appearances to themselves fitted their appetite better from the aesthetic point of view.

It was highly unlikely that a silver-blood demon would grow interested in a black-blood demon that looked like a bug that had been magnified by a thousand times.

But when they were faced with a chaotic-blood demon who had a pair of rabbit ears or a cat tail, it was quite possible for them to get sexually aroused.

As it turned out, the manager of the concentration camp got sexually aroused.

Although the nobles had to abide by certain rules, it was not too much of a scandal for them when they satisfied their desire with a chaotic-blood demon in a cruel, nerve-tightening war, as long as everything was cleaned up in the end.

Naturally, Jin Xinyue could not let things go his way—she was not a chaotic-blood demon at all right now but an out-and-out human being.

Although she had disguised herself quite well so far, she would certainly be seen through when somebody was too close to her.

Even if she was not seen through, she would certainly be killed by the silver-blood demon later, partly because he needed to keep the scandal from leaking out, and partly, and more importantly, to avoid her giving birth to a descendant whose bloodline was even more chaotic!

Jin Xinyue knew exactly how wicked the silver-blood demons were.

Therefore, seeing that she was not going to be able to refuse him, Jin Xinyue could only hide a small blade among her toes and slay the manager of the concentration camp!

The manager of the concentration camp was a high-level demon general. During her assassination, Jin Xinyue was forced to bring her capability to the maximum. The spiritual waves that she released were naturally perceived by the entire concentration camp and raised the subsequent events!

It was indeed quite unlucky of her.

Pretending that she was feeling both unfortunate and fortunate, Jin Xinyue patted her chest and said, “This is about everything that has happened. I was forced to take action when there was no choice. Later, when I was surrounded by every soldier in the city, I thought that there was no way that I could escape and was planning to kill myself in case I was captured alive. It did not matter if I was tortured, but my mistake would have been unpardonable if I had accidentally leaked the great secret of your existence, Master!

“It never occurred to me that Master would appear out of nowhere and demonstrate your full strength. Even a devilish warship was blown up by you after only one attack. I—I had never seen such a dominating and aggressive attack since I was born! In front of Master, even my father, Jin Tuyi, would be eclipsed. I knew that everything would be settled the moment you showed up, Master. I—”

Tears were all over Jin Xinyue’s eyes while she stared at Li Yao like a lonely, helpless rabbit in such an admiring and trusting way that even cold steel would have been melted.

Li Yao was not moved at all. He said indifferently, “Don’t address me as ‘Master’ all the time. I have never agreed to recruit you as my disciple, have I?”

Jin Xinyue panicked. According to the intelligence that she collected in the past couple of months, her father had completely abandoned her, and Elder Nether Spring was searching for her everywhere.

Furthermore, now that she had been turned into a human being, she was certainly not in a hopeful situation. Not only was her dream to be the most powerful saintess of the Pantheon of Demons and to command the entire Blood Demon Sector shattered, she was also likely to be captured and cut into slices for experiments any moment!

The old monster who showed up out of nowhere and yet was unbelievably strong was indeed the last life-saving straw for her!

“Master!”

Jin Xinyue suddenly kneeled before Li Yao, two rows of tears rushing out of her eyes.

“I wouldn’t have been so bold before. However—however—well, for some reason, since the first time I met you, I’ve always had a subtle feeling in my heart. I’ve always felt that you are the unreachable sky for me, and I cannot contain my urge to follow you. I’m afraid that this is the connection between me and you, Master!

“I know that Master is too marvelous to need the help of such a burdensome disciple as myself. Also, with my stupidity, I will not be able to understand one millionth of your techniques, Master!

“However, please do give me a chance to serve you, Master. I can do all the menial work as long as I have the opportunity to admire your brilliance, Master, and I will be ecstatic!

“Besides, I have gathered quite a lot of intelligence in Void Turmoil City over the past couple of months. Right now, it is a total mess outside. The greatest war between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector is coming close, but a ‘Flying Star Sector’ has shown up out of thin air.

“There are also mysterious forces such as the Imperium of True Human Beings. It is said that, in those place, the Core Formation Stage Cultivators are as common as clouds while the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators are like raindrops, and they are building warships as if they are making dumplings!

“It is also said that a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator from the Heaven’s Origin Sector who is strong, brutal, and insane has snuck into the Blood Demon Sector. Nobody knows what he is up to or where he is. Chances are that he is right next to us!

“In such a chaotic situation, if you keep me by your side, Master, I can help you collect, sort, and analyze the intelligence and make future plans. In that case, a lot of your time can be saved and dedicated to your wholehearted training. Isn’t it so, Master?”

Li Yao stared at her for a long time. It was not until Jin Xinyue felt creepy that he said slowly, “Are you really willing to be my disciple?”

Jin Xinyue was overjoyed. She nodded quickly. “Yes. Yes. I am absolutely willing to, Master!”

Li Yao pondered for a moment and said, “I have recruited two disciples so far. I recruited the first one for his talents and the second one for her tenacity. For the two disciples, I have only been teaching them things without thinking of asking for anything from them in return.

“The two of them are enough to pass on all my knowledge. Therefore, I had never thought of recruiting a third disciple before.

“If I am going to recruit a third disciple, honestly speaking, it will only be for my own convenience.

“The things that I don’t have time to handle will be handled by you. The jobs that I’m not interested in but have to do nonetheless will be taken care of by you. The fundamental tasks, such as data analysis, intelligence collection, and tactical choices, will all be your responsibilities. To quote your words, all the ‘menial work’ will be yours. Are you willing to do them?”

Jin Xinyue was elated. “It is everything that I have dreamed for, master!”

“Although I am recruiting you for a different reason,” Li Yao said, “I will treat you equally and fulfil my duty as a master now that you are my disciple. I don’t care what you did in the past, but after you become my disciple, you will be restricted by my rules, which shall never be violated. Do you understand?”

“Yes, I do!” Jin Xinyue said quickly. “If you are not assured, Master, I can make a Blood Oath or take the poison and venom of your choosing as a shackle.”

“That will be unnecessary,” Li Yao said casually. “I never believe that any relationship, including that between a master and a disciple, can be maintained by a Blood Oath or the useless stuff such as poison or contracts.

“I once made a Blood Oath to respect a certain someone as my master, but hardly had I kneeled before him before I turned around and killed him!

“To this day, I still admit that he is my number one master. But so what? He is so dead right now that even his ashes are no more!

“Do you think a Blood Oath means anything to someone like me? Any Blood Oath or soul contract will have loopholes, and every venom and poison has a solution.

“Only the weak would trust the illusionary sense of safety that a Blood Oath and the soul contracts bring to them!”

Jin Xinyue secretly clicked her tongue, thinking to herself that he was truly an old monster. Killing his own master after only just finishing the ceremony? That was rather brutal.

Li Yao took out an ivory stone from his pocket and extended to Jin Xinyue.

“Bright Gold Stone?”

Jin Xinyue was baffled. It was a very solid material that was ten times harder than diamond, but it was not very valuable. Why was the old monster bringing out such a thing?

Li Yao held the Bright Gold Stone in his hands and rubbed it.

The tiniest powder leaked out of the gaps of his fingers without any sound.

Jin Xinyue was dumbfounded.

A moment later, Li Yao opened his hands again. The Bright Gold Stone inside his hands was only one third of its original size. It had turned into a statue the size of a thumb. It was a hideous vulture that was searching for food.

The vulture was so vividly carved that even the brutality in its eyes was fully depicted!

Jin Xinyue was utterly shocked. Her heart was beating fast. *Only through the shivering and crushing of the muscles on his hands, he has carved a Bright Gold Stone into a life-*

like statue in only half a minute? You—you—you've got to be kidding me!

Li Yao placed the vulture statue into Jin Xinyue's hand and said, "A Blood Oath is quite superfluous. This statue is my welcome gift for you as my disciple. Take it out and play with it every now and then, and I believe you will remember my rules very well."

Jin Xinyue did not know whether she should feel fortunate or she should cry out. The vulture statue was as scorching as briquet and about to burn a hole on her hands. Calming herself down, she asked carefully, "Understood, Master. I will certainly remember all of your rules well. But I wonder… what are the rules of our school exactly?"

Li Yao was dazed.

Well, that was a good question. What were the rules that his disciples should abide by?

Chapter 978 - Secret Channel!

“Master?”

Jin Xinyue was rather confused. Why was the old monster suddenly hesitating?

Li Yao scratched his hair in embarrassment and said, “Now that I think about it, I haven’t set up any rules for my disciples yet.”

Are you serious?

“How about this.” Li Yao found a solution. “I am quite an easygoing man, and I don’t have too many rigorous rules that you have to follow. But now that you have turned back into a human being and even entered the Core Formation Stage, you can follow the ‘Constitution of Cultivators’ for now and try to become a real Cultivator from inside to outside!”

“…Wait a second, Master. Why is this conversation getting increasingly weird for me? Isn’t the Constitution of Cultivators a law of the… the Star Glory Federation?”

“Exactly. I am a citizen of the Star Glory Federation. Now that you are my disciple, naturally, you will abide by the law of the federation as a dutiful, useful person for our society. Is there a problem?”

“…..Wait. Wait wait. Master, please give me ten seconds. My head is rather befuddled right now, and I need to think about everything more carefully.”

“Alright!”

Ten seconds later, Jin Xinyue swallowed hard and glanced at Li Yao. She asked cautiously, “Well, Master, I think there is a misunderstanding here. Are you not a great demon from forty thousand years ago that was resurrected recently?”

“Who said that?” Li Yao asked innocently.

“I… It… You said last time you were Elder Bloody Vulture…”

“Everybody has a lot of identities when they are out doing their training. Therefore, I did not lie to you when I said that my name was ‘Bloody Vulture’. It was indeed a name that I used in the past. As for ‘Elder’, you added it yourself. I never acknowledged it before.

“Other than Bloody Vulture, I have quite a few names, such as Fiend Star and Sand Scorpion. But I spent most of my days in the Star Glory Federation, and when I was in the Star Glory Federation, I was ‘Vulture Li Yao’.”

“The ‘Vulture Li Yao’ who killed almost a hundred descendants of the noble families on Boneyard ten years ago and wiped out a squad of silver-blood demons, known as the most brutal Building Foundation Stage Cultivator of the Heaven’s Origin Sector?”

“That’s me.”

Jin Xinyue stared at the vulture statue in her hands, dumbfounded.

The statue seemed to be alive and pierced into her heart, freezing her mind and soul.

“So, rumors have it that a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator has snuck into the Blood Demon Sector to instigate trouble. That’s you, too, Master?”

“Probably. But I didn’t instigate trouble. Fine. From the temporal point of view, I may have instigated some trouble, but it was for a good reason. Would you like to hear my explanation?”

Li Yao’s intimidating aura filled the entire secret room like a quickly expanding octopus.

Jin Xinyue found it hard to breathe. Sweating hard, she smiled, but her expression looked uglier that if she had been crying. “Yes. Of course. Take all the time you need, Master. I’m all ears!”

Li Yao coughed and told Jin Xinyue everything that he had told the Fire Ant King before, including his important experiences in the Flying Star Sector and the secrets about the origins of the demon race.

At first, Jin Xinyue was both frightened and upset.

She was only thinking about how she could save her life. It never occurred to her that the old monster’s real identity was so horrible, which would certainly drag her into an even dreadful swirl.

However, Li Yao’s experiences attracted her, especially the formidability of the Imperium of True Human Beings, the shocking origins of the demon race, and the mysteries of Elder Nether Spring’s Spore Stratagem!

“My purpose is simple. I wish to stop the mutual destruction of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector so that we can face the threat of the Imperium of True

Human Beings together!” Li Yao said. “Theory that human beings and demons share the same origin is a fact. You know it better than anybody else; you are a walking proof!

“Since we are of the same origin, the whole thing is definitely not unnegotiable.

“Besides, we face imminent peril. Leaving the Imperium of True Human Beings aside, Elder Nether Spring’s Spore Stratagem, should it work out, will turned both the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector into wastelands!

“For you personally, you don’t want to hide in a shelter for the rest of your life, do you? Only after the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector reach a truce, and all the demons learn of their origins and make a choice freely about their future, will you be able to show up openly in public!”

Jin Xinyue thought quickly and realized that the real identity of her ‘master’ was in fact better for her.

He was quite right. With her current appearance, the demon race would not embrace her, and human beings would only make use of her.

Only if the two Sectors cease fire would there be room for her survival.

Moreover—

Jin Xinyue’s eyes flickered from side to side, and suddenly, she realized that she was indeed the key to the situation!

“Whoever you are, Master,” she said respectfully, “you will always be my only master. As a disciple, I’m certainly loyal to my master! What are we going to do next?”

Li Yao could tell from the mysterious smile on her lips that Jin Xinyue was planning how to gain the greatest benefits from the whole thing.

But he had never expected his third disciple to be someone frank and forthright.

Perhaps, Jin Xinyue and her character would be the sharpest dagger to cut the knots that were ahead of him quickly.

“Your father is the commander-in-chief of the coalition army,” Li Yao said. “By your estimation, what will he do after he learns the news about the Flying Star Sector? Will he call for a ceasefire and even work for peace because of the overwhelming capability of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector, or will he go all in and start the final war?”

Although Jin Xinyue looked feeble, her nerves seemed to be made of steel. She recovered from Li Yao’s shocking identity and reactivated her computational ability. She calmly analyzed, “He will start the final war, of course! Not just my father, any leader of the demon race would make the same choice. I would do exactly the same thing if I were the commander-in-chief!

“Let’s stand in their shoes for a moment. You are the Speaker of Parliament of the Star Glory Federation, Master, and you learn the news that the Blood Demon Sector will be reinforced by another world of demons, and its capability will soar in the next couple of years. Right then, the Blood Demon Sector sends out envoys, hoping to strike a truce or even a total peace.

“What judgement will you make? Will you believe that it is not some kind of delaying tactic?”

Li Yao pondered for a moment and had to admit that it was indeed a conundrum.

If he were the Speaker of Parliament and learned such news, he would definitely not trust the envoys from the Blood Demon Sector but take a wild gamble, too!

Nobody would put their chances of survival on their mortal enemy!

“If so,” Li Yao said, “can you estimate how the wild gamble will be played? How will your father launch the attack according to his personality?”

Deep in thought for a moment, Jin Xinyue suddenly exclaimed, “The Red Tide Plan!”

Li Yao had heard the name before.

It was said to be an assault plan that Jin Tuyi had dedicated his life to.

He was hoping to attack the prosperous area of the federation from the ocean to the east of the Star Glory Federation!

Jin Xinyue breathed quickly and said, “After the civilians of Void Turmoil City were captured, we were locked up and had military training quickly. We were not only taught the tricks of a long march but also the methods to survive in the desert. They seemed to be planning to drive us to march in a desert!

“Although the land of the Blood Demon Sector is barren, there are no large deserts except for the White Silver Death Desert. Besides, there are barely any resources in the deserts. They don’t have any reason to send the civilians there.”

Li Yao squinted. “The Grand Desolate Plateau?”

Jin Xinyue nodded. “Yes. The merging point of the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector is on the Grand Desolate Plateau. If we attack the Heaven’s Origin Sector through the regular routes, the soldiers will inevitably pass through the entire Grand Desolate Plateau. The coalition army of demons is grouping the civilians and driving them to the Grand Desolate Plateau as cannon fodder!

“But it doesn’t make sense!

“Although the ‘Battle of Dawn’ has failed, the Blood Demon Sector is still the stronger one at present. Training the regular demons into cannon fodder should not yet be necessary.

“There’s a difference between advanced cannon fodder and mediocre cannon fodder. Why do they not resort to the advanced cannon fodder, namely the well-trained black-blood demons and chaotic-blood demons?

“After all, all cannon fodder will consume resources. Sending so many civilians into the Grand Desolate Plateau will be a huge pressure for our supply line. They will likely be starved before they march to the Giant Blade Pass. If so, the only thing that will be struck is their own morale instead of the federal soldiers.”

Li Yao nodded. Jin Xinyue did have a point.

Approved by Li Yao, Jin Xinyue was greatly encouraged. “Unless, of course, the Grand Desolate Plateau will not be the main field, and the coalition army is not sending the main force there. It is just a fake main force consisting of a few regular soldiers and a huge amount of cannon fodder!

“So much cannon fodder is required to fake an expedition army of an unprecedented scale that the current cannon fodder they have is far from enough. That’s why they are training the civilians into cannon fodder!

“After all, they do not have any demand on the combat ability for the cannon fodder. As long as they are sent into the Grand Desolate Plateau and deceive the main force of the federal army for a fortnight, it will be good enough!

“The real route of attack, on the other hand, is in the ocean east to the Star Glory Federation!

“Since hundreds of years ago when the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector first met each other, the main point of impact has always been the north of the Grand Desolate Plateau.

“Over the past few years, most of the best tides have broken out on the Grand Desolate Plateau, too. As a result, it is now assumed that the Blood Demon Sector can only attack from the north!

“But it is wrong!

“Five hundred years ago, when the Star Glory Federation was just established, the most formidable enemy for them was the ‘Far East Demon Kingdom’ to the east of the federation!

“The Far East Demon Kingdom was demolished in the end, but before their collapse, they built a large teleportation array in the ocean east of the federation and established a channel to the Blood Demon Sector.

“Part of the nobles fled to the Blood Demon Sector through the channel.

“After they reached the Blood Demon Sector, however, they were idiotic enough to create a party named ‘Far East Freedom Front’, hoping to occupy some of the land of the Blood Demon Sector and set up a government-in-exile. Very soon, they were suppressed and butchered by the local demons!

“The Gold Crow Kingdom naturally took part in the suppression of the ‘Far East Freedom Front’. As a result, the secret channel leading to the ocean in the east of the Heaven’s Origin Sector fell into my father’s hands in the end!”

Chapter 979 - Spores in the Red Tide!

“It is said that, when the Far East Demon Kingdom collapsed, the nobles carried part of the valuable treasures and resources. But they sealed tremendous strategical resources in the deep-sea east of the continent.

“When they were building a large teleportation array to connect the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, they had planned to march back from the Blood Demon Sector. Those resources were all prepared for their counterattack!

“It is safe to say that many ‘counterattack bases’ were established hundreds of years ago in the eastern ocean of the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

“After the last survivors of the Far East Demon Kingdom died in the Blood Demon Sector, their plan became quite well known.

“But nobody knew anything about it in the Heaven’s Origin Sector. All the federal citizens thought that the Far East Demon Kingdom was completely shattered!

“It is based on the secret channel and the ‘counterattack bases’ that my father drafted the Red Tide Plan!

“The Red Tide Plan can be divided into two parts. Firstly, an expedition army will march into the Grand Desolate Plateau and threaten the Giant Blade Pass at the south of it, attracting the attention of all the experts and the main force of the Star Glory Federation.

“But the expedition army will be carrying out a suicidal mission. The soldiers will mostly be fakes, made by a tiny proportion of regular soldiers and a huge amount of cannon fodder. Or rather, to make the army more intimidating, they will even drive a large batch of civilians into the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

“After all—”

Jin Xinyue smiled bitterly and said, “In the eyes of most human beings, demons are demons. Is there any difference between ‘civilians’ and ‘soldiers’? At the very least, they will not be able to notice anything wrong in a week or two.

“When the elites and experts of the federal army are stalled at the Grand Desolate Plateau and the Giant Blade Pass in the north, the real main force of the Blood Demon Sector will be teleported to the east of the Star Glory Federation through the secret channel left by the Far East Demon Kingdom. Then, they will march to the coast and stab into the heartland of the federation!”

Li Yao pondered for a moment and said, “We’ve talked about the Red Tide Plan before, but I still think that it is too risky and radical.”

“It is indeed an extraordinary plan,” Jin Xinyue agreed. “But that’s my father. For 99% of the time, he is the calmest politician and general, if not an emotionless machine. But for 1% of the time, he has a style that is very close to the style of an insane poet. Perhaps for him, the ‘Red Tide Plan’ is just a ‘poem’ that he wrote when he was totally drunk.

“There are a lot of hinderances for the plan to be implemented.

“First of all, the troops to attract the federal army in the north, to achieve the purpose of strategical deception, can’t be all false. The few most famous troops of the Blood Demon Sector may have to be sent to the Giant Blade Pass for the Star Glory Federation to believe that they are the main force.

“Whether the Red Tide Plan works out or not, the ace troops will certainly be obliterated!

“Secondly, the secret channel left by the Far East Demon Kingdom must be highly unstable after hundreds of years have passed. There is no telling if anything will go wrong during the teleportation. The situation of the ‘counterattack bases’ is unclear, too. Otherwise, somebody would’ve implemented a similar plan hundreds of years ago!

“Thirdly, the success of the Red Tide Plan depends on confidentiality. Once the elites of the coalition army of demons really invade the heartland of the Star Glory Federation, the expedition army will barely have any backup. They will be marching all by themselves with an uncertain future.

“If so much as a message is leaked out in advance and the Star Glory Federation is prepared for them, the entire expedition army will likely be wiped out!

“In short, the implementation of the Red Tide Plan requires unity and the willingness to sacrifice. No kingdom, city, or tribe should care about their own gains or losses. Unbelievable luck is mandatory, too!

“Hehe. How was it possible in the past?”

“But right now, the Flying Star Sector changed everything,” Li Yao said calmly.

“Exactly.” Jin Xinyue combed her hair and said, “The arrival of the Flying Star Sector forced the Blood Demon Sector into a corner. Once the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector join their hands, the Blood Demon Sector will be dragged into the abyss of doom. Then, what’s the point of the internal strife among the major demon kingdoms?

“Therefore, it may sound absurd, but the arrival of the Flying Star Sector has increased the capability of the Blood Demon Sector first instead of that of the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Starting from the moment when the citizens of the Flying Star Sector appeared, all the demons of the Blood Demon Sector have become more unified and willing to sacrifice than ever, which is the greatest foundation for the implementation of the Red Tide Plan!

“What matters most is no longer the success rate of the plan.

“Even in the best case-scenario, all the demon emperors are very clear that the chance of success of the Red Tide Plan is no higher than 30%!

“But none of that is important right now. What they need is no longer a strategy whose success is guaranteed but a plan that is most fatal despite its low odds of success, one that will certainly destroy the Star Glory Federation should it miraculously work out!

“Then, this is their only choice now. The Red Tide Plan!”

Listening to Jin Xinyue’s analysis, Li Yao was breathing rapidly.

Floating Spear City, his hometown, was on the eastern coast of the Star Glory Federation.

He remembered the ‘Distant Expanse’, known as ‘federal army’s eternal flagship’, that he saw in the sky of the Devil Dragon Island as well as the enormous Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag made of the red glow.

If all the experts of the Blood Demon Sector really showed up from the bottom of the ocean, leading the elite troops, and marched into the most prosperous and the least guarded heartland of the federation directly…

The consequences would be too dire to imagine!

“Do you know the specific location of the secret channel?” Li Yao asked solemnly.

Jin Xinyue shook her head. “My father is the only one who knows the details of the Red Tide Plan. The general picture of it, which I talked about just now, was found out at a great cost, too. Perhaps it is also the reason my father abandoned me. He attaches more importance to the Red Tide Plan than any of his children.”

Li Yao frowned in silence.

Jin Xinyue’s eyes glittered. She suddenly said, “However, I think that what Master should focus on is not my father’s ‘Red Tide Plan’ but Elder Nether Spring’s Spore Stratagem, or even the connection between them.”

“Huh?”

Li Yao glanced at her, vaguely feeling that she might be onto something.

“As you said just now, Master, although you destroyed Elder Nether Spring’s research base, he’d already produced a hundred spores in secret, which are the ‘carriers of the Demon God Virus’ and dangerous genetic bombs, right?”

“Precisely,” Li Yao replied.

“But the Demon God Virus is still deeply flawed right now in that it is vulnerable to flame and frost. It is impossible to spread to the entire continent and can only destroy a few cities where the population is highly concentrated at best. Therefore, Elder Nether Spring must select a perfect time and location to detonate the bombs.”

“What have you thought of?”

Deep in thought, Jin Xinyue mumbled, “I am merely thinking that, if I were Elder Nether Spring, and my purpose was to infect as many people, preferably experts, as possible with the hundred spores, what should I do?

“I would certainly pick a highly-populated area. Also, it would be best if those gathered in the area consist of strong soldiers, fighters, Cultivators, and great demons!

“It will be even better if there is a great number of demon emperors and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators among them!”

Li Yao stared at her and suddenly gasped.

Jin Xinyue managed a smile and said, “You seem to have figured it out, too, Master. If the Red Tide Plan is really activated, millions of demons will charge into the most populated area in the east of the federation and even reach the capital city!

“Whether the Heaven’s Origin Sector is prepared or not, the greatest number of experts and the strongest crystal suit legions will certainly be gathered around the capital city to defend it!

“Also, when news spreads that the capital city is under attack, the federal army stationed in the Giant Blade Pass may not be able to retreat easily, but the Core Formation Stage Cultivators and the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators will certainly return to the capital city for the battle, using vehicles such as super shuttles or teleportation arrays, in a couple of days!

“Think about it. What will the capital city of the Star Glory Federation be like by then?

“It will be an ultimate war of an unprecedented scale, with dozens of demon emperors and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, hundreds of Core Formation Stage Cultivators and demon kings, and countless more experts of lower levels on the two sides!

“At that time, the capital city of the Star Glory Federation will be the area where the density of unparalleled experts is highest in both the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector. All the participants will be the toughest, strongest, most well-trained soldiers of the two Sectors even if they are not the unparalleled experts, right?

“Right when the best forces of the two worlds are engaged in a head-on, blood-draining battle, the spores that have been lurking in the coalition army of demons will suddenly break out. The Demon God Virus will speed across the capital city of the Star Glory Federation and swiftly contaminate all the soldiers and experts!

“Most of the victims will be killed instantly or turned into ‘uncontrollable mutants’. However, the few ‘lucky dogs’ will become even stronger than before, and they will be Elder Nether Spring’s loyal slaves!

“The capital city of the Star Glory Federation and the satellite cities around are the most populated and prosperous regions. As the ‘uncontrollable mutants’ spread out, carrying the ‘Demon God Virus’, it is possible that the few metropolises near the capital city will be plagued, too. There is no way that the Star Glory Federation will demolish the capital city and the surrounding metropolises, which would be like crushing its own heart. The only thing that they can do is to send more soldiers to the infected area to control the situation.

“On the coalition army of demons’ side, having marched into the heartland of the Star Glory Federation by themselves, they will be harassed by the uncontrollable mutants. It will be impossible for them to retreat to the ocean in the east!

“As a result, everybody will seem to be attracted by an invisible magnet and trapped in the infected area, unable to move, until there are no survivors left!

“We must note that the strongest Cultivators and demons and the best troops of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector will all have gathered there! When everybody there is infected, killed, or turned into Elder Nether Spring’s slaves, will there be any other forces who are capable of competing with Elder Nether Spring?”

Chapter 980 - For Peace!

Li Yao’s powerful computational ability quickly painted a calamitous scene for him.

If the Red Tide Plan was really activated, the super experts and best soldiers of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector would be gathered in the prosperous, populated area in the east of the federation.

Once the virus broke out, most of the participants of the battle would be infected and turn into Elder Nether Spring’s slaves or ‘uncontrollable mutants’. The troops deployed out of the capital ring of the city would not be able to resist the tide of destruction, either. Important cities would fall one after another. Elder Nether Spring’s army of death would snowball and grow larger and larger!

In a chill, Li Yao mumbled, “Elder Nether Spring is too voracious. He is trying to fish up all the experts of the two Sectors together! But the experts in and above the Core Formation Stage and the demon king level are highly immune to viruses in the first place. They can also release flames or frost to cleanse the viruses. They will not be infected so easily.”

“It might be true under normal circumstances,” Jin Xinyue said, “but what if they are already exhausted, heavily wounded, and surrounded by countless ‘uncontrollable mutants’?

“They will have nowhere to run!

“The ‘Red Tide Plan’, as a strategy for the ultimate war, is extremely risky. Even if everything goes well, the odds of success will be no higher than thirty percent. The most likely outcome is that the elites of the coalition army of demons will be annihilated somewhere in the capital ring of the Star Glory Federation.

“But the Spore Stratagem is different—the only requirement of the plan is to push the main force of the coalition army of demons into the capital ring of the federation!

“After the virus breaks out, the federal soldiers will think that it is a new biochemical weapon that the demon race invented. They will hate demons even more and surround the coalition army without letting anyone through. Driven by their ideology of protecting the ordinary people, the Cultivators will only charge in incessantly like moths to a flame. How will the coalition army escape?

“The coalition army will be there for a last battle. There will be no reason for them to retreat, either. Besides, they will be marching by themselves without support. They will have no choice but to fight!

“Even if a few guys in the coalition army are smart enough to realize that it is a scheme, what can they do? Will they still have a chance to negotiate with the federal army and explain that everything is just a misunderstanding?

“Therefore, even if some of them know the truth, it will be impossible for them to stop the mutual destruction of the coalition army of demons and the federal army. All the experts will be heavily wounded and infected by the ‘uncontrollable mutants’. They will either turn into the ‘super uncontrollable mutants’ that are even tougher or end up being Elder Nether Spring’s slaves!

“Since they are in the level of Nascent Soul Stage or demon emperor, they are standing at the peak of evolution in the first place, and their odds of surviving the mutations will be much higher than the odds of ordinary people. Of the hundred Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors, as long as one tenth of them, which means around ten super experts, are controlled by the Elder Nether Spring, and the other experts are turned into ‘uncontrollable mutants’, it will be an extremely terrifying force!

“With the help of the terrifying force, Elder Nether Spring will establish his new order that will shake the very foundations of the world!

“It is a plan that is barely stoppable.

“Even if the leadership of the Heaven’s Origin Sector learns of the ‘Red Tide Plan’, so what? Maybe, they will secretly deploy all the elites in the east of the federation and prepare to wipe out the main force of the Blood Demon Sector. But it will fit Elder Nether Spring’s need even better. He does not need a victory, and he is not scared of failure. All he needs is an unprecedented war where all the elites of the two worlds will be gathered!

“The bottom line is, once the main force of the coalition army invades the Star Glory Federation, everything will be doomed whether the federation is prepared or not!”

Li Yao took multiple deep breaths to calm himself down. “The Red Tide Plan is likely to break out at any moment. We have to meet your father and explain everything to him. We must convince him that the Spore Stratagem exists and that the ‘Red Tide Plan’ has to be aborted!

“Are you confident to persuade your father? Or rather, is he rational enough for communication and willing to concede?”

Jin Xinyue thought carefully and replied, “99% of the time, he is a shrewd guy who will concede for his interest. But what is odd is that, whenever you think that he is conceding, you are actually falling into his trap! I’ve seen him concede countless times since childhood, both in the Gold Crow Kingdom and in the Pantheon of Demons. He has conceded, retreated, and even yielded dozens of times. But after dozens of times of compromises, all his enemies are dead, and he is now the leader of the Feather Clan and the master of sky. He has even turned into the commander-in-chief of the coalition army and the most powerful being in the Blood Demon Sector in name!”

There was fear in Jin Xinyue’s eyes. “In the demon race, the forces on the ground have always been most valued. The Horn Clan and the Claw Clan that govern the earth and the Insect Clan that governs the underground are the strongest clans. In comparison, the Sea Clan that dominates the ocean and the Feather Clan that commands the sky are relatively weaker.

“Over the past hundreds of years, the commander-in-chief of the coalition army has always been from the Horn Clan, the Claw Clan, or the Insect Clan. The ideology of the demon race has been focused on continentalism, too. Beast tides are everything!

“My father is the first commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons from the Feather Clan in two hundred years. He has even successfully altered the guiding principle that prevailed for hundreds of years and changed from ‘continentalism’ to the ‘unification of the sky, the ocean, and the land’. It is not hard to imagine how many interest groups he has confronted and dealt with during the process!

“Therefore, he seems to be someone who is rational enough to communication and willing to compromise when offered with undeniable proof and calculation.

“However, that is never a real concession. It is just the beginning of a new plan.

“That’s only in 99% of the cases.

“There are still 1% of cases, where he behaves like an ‘insane poet’. I don’t know how I can comment on him in such cases.

“In such cases, he is a lunatic that is even crazier than Elder Nether Spring. Nobody can predict him. Nobody can control him. Nobody can sway him!

“Besides, we don’t know yet whether or not Elder Nether Spring’s spies are around him.”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes. “What do you mean?”

Jin Xinyue frowned. “I’ve been suspicious about if my father knew that I was attacked by the troop of Mirage Falcons. If he knew, how much did he know? Considering the sordidness of Elder Nether Spring’s Spore Stratagem, is it possible that he has sent a lot of spies to my father?

“It must be noted that, although my father has been elected as the commander-in-chief of the coalition army now, the majority of the coalition army is still made of the Claw Clan, the Horn Clan, and the Insect Clan because of the ‘continentalism’ that has prevailed for hundreds of years. The Feather Clan does not have much control. Most of the elite troops and the intelligence network are under the command of the Insect Clan, the Claw Clan, and the Horn Clan.

“With Elder Nether Spring’s precise arrangements, he must’ve been preparing for the scheme since decades ago. I wouldn’t be surprised if he had smuggled his trusted subordinates into the coalition army.

“If they interfered on purpose and handed false intelligence to my father, it is very possible that my father was misled.

“After all, even a demon emperor cannot know everything that is happening. When he is inside the command center in the headquarters of the Pantheon of Demons, the enormous intelligence network will be his eyes and ears. If the intelligence work is corroded, and if his closest subordinates have betrayed him, he will only make wrong judgements however smart he is.”

“Just like Elder Nether Spring manipulated Master Hollow Wind to say what he wanted said, you are suspecting that Elder Nether Spring is manipulating your father without him knowing?” Li Yao said coldly.

“I don’t know,” Jin Xinyue mumbled. “I truly don’t know.”

Li Yao smashed the ball. “Therefore, we must sneak into the headquarters of the Pantheon of Demons in Heavenly Path City silently and have a one-to-one conversation with your father!”

Hesitating for a moment, Jin Xinyue asked cautiously, “Master, do you know that the mission is as difficult as ‘assassinate the commander-in-chief of the coalition army’?”

Li Yao’s eyes were glittering. “How do you know that it won’t work out when you haven’t tried? At the very least, you are familiar with the terrain of the Pantheon of Demons and Heavenly Path City, right? Also, tell me all the details about your father’s habits. We will come up with a perfect infiltration plan!

“However, we must get out of here first!

“After such a long time, the main force of the coalition army must be chasing after the magical equipment that is swimming randomly in the deep sea. This is the moment when they are least wary. It will be too late after they find the truth about the magical equipment!”

Li Yao triggered the light beam and pointed at the map of Void Turmoil City. “Look. According to the map, this teleportation array is the furthest from us. It can bring us to the demonic plant garden at the periphery of Void Turmoil City.

“What are planted in the garden are tall and dense Fire Oil Palm Trees. It is highly unlikely that we will be discovered.

“We will decide what to do after we arrive.

“Plan A. We will hide ourselves in the blubber of the Land Whales. It is a highly effective move that I just tested.

“Plan B. We will rob two soldiers that are roughly the same size as us and take away their armor. Then, we will pretend to be them.

“Plan C. We will pretend to be the ‘cannon fodder’ being shipped out of the city.

“The bottom line is, don’t attack unless it is absolutely necessary. Our primary target now is to stop a world war. Do you understand?”

Jin Xinyue nodded.

“Alright? Have you recovered? We will be teleported in three seconds!”

Li Yao packed up everything and activated the teleportation array.

Three seconds later, the underground chamber was illuminated by a dazzling mystic ray, which melted them.

Within a breath, they appeared in the garden of Fire Oil Palm Trees, or what used to be the garden.

Since there were few obstacles around and most of the Fire Oil Palm Trees had been burnt to the ground, the coalition army had decided to develop the garden into a temporary port.

Two devilish warships were spurting right above their heads. On their left was a troop of heavy beetles that had just arrived. On their right were twenty acid cannons that were being transported. In front of them were several officers who were checking the assets, followed by more than ten biochemical beasts that had just crawled out of the storage tanks.

Earlier today, only half of the garden had been built into a port. An area of half-burnt demonic plants, in which the teleportation array was hidden, had not been cleared yet. That was why the teleportation array had not been discovered.

But the news that a Cultivator had shown up in Void Turmoil City had spread out in all troops. The commander had decided to expand the port to accommodate more reinforcements.

When Li Yao and Jin Xinyue appeared, the last few burnt Fire Oil Palm Trees were falling down slowly, pulled by elephants.

The officers and them looked at each other in a weird silence.

“Master, is there a Plan D?”

“There is. Well, would you please calm down for a moment and listen to our explanation, officers? You may find it hard to believe, but in fact, we are here for world peace…”

Chapter 981 - Jin Tuyi's Suspicion

In the command center of Heavenly Path City, the center of power of the Blood Demon Sector, Jin Tuyi—the leader of the Feather Clan, the commander-in-chief of the coalition arm of demons, and the most powerful being in the Blood Demon Sector in name—was staring at dozens of light beams nonchalantly.

The light beams were playing the footage of the same battle from different angles. It was the picture where Jin Xinyue escaped from Void Turmoil City and Li Yao picked her up, including the part where he blew up a devilish warship.

The ever-lasting explosions left mottled shadows on Jin Tuyi’s face.

Jin Tuyi was tall, slender, and as handsome as any silver-blood demon, but his nose curled like a saber, making him look rather intimidating. His narrow, long, and deeply hollowed eyes also added to his mysteriousness.

A pair of pure-white, flawless wings were folded on his back. The feathers extended all the way to his head, as if he were wearing a natural crown, which made him even more elegant and sacred.

The one standing behind him respectfully, who did not even dare breathe too loudly, was Jin Wuxu, his eldest son and the commander of ‘Mirage Falcons’, the best troop of the Feather Clan.

“Father, this is the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator who snuck into the Blood Demon Sector according to our intelligence.

“They caused havoc in Void Turmoil City yesterday. After shooting down a ‘Ghost Eye’-level devilish warship in the beginning, they committed a massacre in a temporary port at the suburb of Void Turmoil City and seriously wrecked the second devilish warship, slaying seven biochemical beasts and more than a hundred soldiers, including twelve silver-blood nobles!

“We are still chasing after them as of now. More than ten thousand soldiers have been deployed. However, our elites are all making preparations for the ‘Red Tide Plan’. Therefore, our strongest forces are unavailable. Maybe it will be another few days before we capture them!”

If Jin Tuyi was angry and surprised at his son’s report at all, he was definitely not showing any of such feelings on his face. He observed Li Yao’s combat picture while he asked casually, “The intelligence says that a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator from the Heaven’s Origin Sector has snuck into the Blood Demon Sector. Then who is this woman?”

Jin Wuxu hesitated for a moment. In the picture, Jin Xinyue had disguised herself quite well and was completely different from the saintess of the Pantheon of Demons in the past. He failed to recognize her for the moment. After pondering for a moment, he said, “Perhaps she was the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator’s subordinate?”

“Alright. Let’s say that she is a subordinate. Then why did they show up in Void Turmoil City?” Jin Tuyi asked calmly.

Jin Wuxu hesitated. “That information is still being investigated. It is possible that they were trying to bring away something important for the Blade of Chaos.”

“Then, what kind of force did the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator from the Heaven’s Origin Sector use?” Jin Tuyi asked again. “I can see that he tore open the shield of the devilish warship with tremendous crystal bombs, but the critical strike on the devilish warship was the Cell Obliteration Cannon, which is a technique of the demon race, wasn’t it?

“Are you trying to tell me that a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator who can launch the Cell Obliteration Cannon has snuck into the Blood Demon Sector?”

Cold sweat was popping out of Jin Wuxu’s forehead. “We are still investigating. Still investigating.”

Jin Wuxu did not turn around. He suddenly changed the topic. “How is the investigation on the mysterious island in the North Pole?”

Jin Wuxu was dazed for a moment. He hurried to reply, “The investigation is still ongoing. According to the intelligence that Master Hollow Wind provided, we have confirmed that there is indeed such an island in the North Pole, but the island has been completely demolished. Judging from the traces left there, we reached the conclusion that there was indeed a base of the Blade of Chaos before on the island.”

At this moment, Jin Tuyi finally turned his head and looked at his son carefully.

The way he turned his head was quite unique. His shoulder and his body were absolutely still, and only his neck and his head turned a hundred and eighty degrees, which was apparently the distinctive feature of some types of birds.

Jin Wuxu felt that his leg was shaking violently after his father stared at him for ten seconds.

But Jin Tuyi did not raise any more questions. He said casually, “That’s all for now. You may leave.”

“Understood, Father. We will find out the truth of everything as quickly as possible!”

Like a prisoner who had just been pardoned, Jin Wuyi bowed and retreated from the room, not even having the courage to wipe his sweat.

Looking at his son disappearing from the room in fear, Jin Tuyi’s eyes were suddenly mixed with indescribable brilliance. He slowly turned his head back and continued studying Li Yao and Jin Xinyue’s combat picture.

Suddenly, he thought of something. He clipped all the frames that Jin Xinyue was in and magnified them.

Jin Tuyi narrowed his eyes, wholeheartedly studying the appearance and the posture of the woman who was both strange and familiar to him.

…

Five days later, deep inside an abandoned mother lode, seventy-seven hundred kilometers from Void Turmoil City, Li Yao and Jin Xinyue were rushing fast, soaked in blood. They charged into an inconspicuous mining hole that had an underground river at the bottom at the cost of the last bit of their spiritual energy.

Li Yao could not hold on any longer. He fell on one of his knees and fell to the floor. Then, he lay in the darkness, breathing hard. Blood was flooding out from the hundreds of wounds all over his body. The speed of the proliferation of cells was far lower than the speed of the spread of the poison.

After fighting for five days, he felt as if he was an orange that had been squeezed too many times. It was impossible to wring any more juice out of him.

But luckily, they had finally escaped out of the siege of the coalition army!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Not far away, an earsplitting explosion echoed. The mining hole that they were in was shaking violently. Rocks fell from the ceiling and smashed them. But they did not even have the strength to dodge and could only watch the rocks falling and burying them.

The quake lasted ten seconds, until Li Yao and Jin Xinyue were both consumed by the rocks and the entrance of the hole was gone.

Huchi. Huchi. Huchi.

In the darkness, the two of them were breathing heavily.

It was not until ten minutes later that Li Yao finally regained the ability to talk. He laughed out loud in relief.

“The last troop that is hunting us in the five hundred square kilometers nearby has been attracted into the wrong mining hole by my magical equipment and killed by the crystal bombs that we planted there!

“We’re finally safe!”

After saying that, the two of them continued breathing heavily for half an hour before they regained the strength to further run away and communicate.

“Master, allow me to report our latest accomplishment to you. Over the past five days, we have killed approximately a thousand and three hundred soldiers of the coalition army of demons, more than fifty biochemical beasts, and nine hundred demon beasts of all sorts.

“Among the victims, there were 97 silver-blood demons that I could recognize, including the princes, young masters, and disciples of the demon emperors in the four major demon kingdoms. The one of the highest social position should be Yuan Feidu who was killed yesterday. His father is Yuan Riyue, one of the twelve demon emperors, known as the ‘Ape Fiend’. The guy is famous for his pettiness, but he is unbelievably formidable, too. In terms of personal combat ability, he ranks the top three among the twelve demon emperors.

“If we include the ‘massacre’ that Master committed on Boneyard ten years ago, then I must congratulate you now. You are certainly the Cultivator who has slain the most nobles of the Blood Demon Sector in the entire Star Glory Federation. You truly deserve to be an ‘Ultra-Level Federal Hero’!”

“What are you implying?”

Jin Xinyue hurriedly shook her head. “Nothing. Nothing. I’m certainly not implying anything. I just want to confirm with you, Master, we—we are truly here for peace and to resolve the grudge between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, right?”

“Of course. We are faced with a mutual threat right now. Peace is the only way out for us. Is there a problem? Are you questioning my sincerity?”

"No problem. No problem at all. I totally believe your sincere wish about world peace, Master. You are so merciful and lenient that you are definitely the firmest pacifist in the world! As for the past few days… Well… It was just self-defense!

"I am only trying to say that, after the fuss we've caused, my father's hostility and wariness must've been raised to the highest. It will not be easy for us to sneak into the headquarters of the Pantheon of Demons without alarming anyone."

"You can only tell whether a thing is easy or not after you've tried. I asked you to recall the terrain and the structure of Heavenly Path City and the headquarters of the Pantheon of Demons. Do you have a rough idea now? Also, I want to know every detail about your father, such as his habits and hobbies, even including his favorite book while he is on the toilet!"

Jin Xinyue took out a crystal processor that Li Yao had given her and triggered a light beam. It was a map of Heavenly Path City that she had drawn recently.

Since she was a saintess of the Pantheon of Demons, infiltration, assassination, espionage, and sabotage were all her specialties. Also, she had received training in the Pantheon of Demons from a young age. The defense of the Pantheon of Demons had been among her training subjects.

Therefore, although it was only a draft that she had drawn in the spare time during her escape, all the details were rather accurate.

"Please take a look, Master."

Pointing at the light beam, Jin Xinyue explained, “Heavenly Path City is the core city of the Blood Demon Sector and was co-established by the four demon kingdoms and the influential demon cities. It is divided into the ‘upper city’ and the ‘lower city’.

“The lower city, which is on the ground, is essentially another Void Turmoil City, except that it is much larger. Demons of different tribes and backgrounds live there. A lot of different minor environments have been simulated in the lower city, too, which adds to the complexity of the terrain. Also, tremendous assets and soldiers enter and exit the lower city every day. Therefore, it will not be difficult to sneak into it.

“But the ‘upper city’ is totally different.

“The upper city is an airborne metropolis comprising of almost a hundred floating mountains. It is the real ‘Heavenly Path City’!

“All the important facilities, such as the headquarters of the Pantheon of Demons and the command center of the coalition army, are established on the floating mountains of the upper city. Every floating mountain boasts independent defense arrays. Even if one of them is compromised, the other floating mountains can cut off their connection to it once the intrusion is discovered. The burglar will have absolutely nowhere to run!”

Chapter 982 - Impasse

“A number of air forces are stationed in the empty area among the floating mountains, including the Mirage Falcons from the Feather Clan, the Ghost Jellyfish from the Sea Clan, and the Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes and the Colorful Locusts from the Insect Clan. Approximately ten eagles and a hundred bugs are hiding behind every cloud. The dense ‘Flying Spirit Eyes’ have an overlapping monitoring range. Even if one third of them are paralyzed, there will still be no blind spots!

“On the ground, there’s also air-defense bastions made of more than thirty types of demonic plants, including Smoke Venom Flowers, Dragon Corroding Grass, Lethal Poisonous Lotus, and others that boast air attacking abilities. They can cover the entire sky with acid, venomous fog, and fire!

“To the east of Heavenly Path City is a large port, where more than fifty devilish warships—including ‘Blood Demon’, the flagship of the coalition army of demons—are docked. Among them, ‘Blood Demon’, which is seven kilometers long, is a super heavy warship produced by all four major demon kingdoms together at the cost of almost ten thousand demon beasts. It is not hard to imagine how many acid cannons and demonic energy cannons are installed on the warship. The most distinctive part about the warship is the ‘Super Neuron Clustering Network System’, which can connect the brains of four to five demon emperors to the main biochemical brain of the warship so that they can manipulate the warship easily!

“It is like a super warship with the wisdom of multiple demon emperors. Think about it. How terrifying is that!

“Leaving the defense system aside, the dozens of demon emperors inside Heavenly Path City alone are not easy to deal with. As tough as Master is, it is impossible for you fight against ten demon emperors at the same time, isn’t it?”

Li Yao was silent for a long time. The hunting of ten or so demon kings along with thousands of demon soldiers was enough to make him flee like a stray dog. It was needless to say what would happen if ten demon emperors were after him.

After days of escaping and evading, Li Yao had a profound understanding about the difference between personal combat ability and the combat ability of an army.

It was true that he was a super expert whose combat ability was close to the Nascent Soul Stage. For him, slaying a demon general was as easy as eating a loaf of bread.

However, anybody would be stuffed if they ate ten loaves of breads in one minute!

‘If a Nascent Soul Stage can kill a demon general easily in one second, he will easily take down sixty demon generals in one minute’ was equally hilarious as ‘Jack can eat one loaf of bread in a minute, so he can eat sixty loaves of bread in an hour’!

In a modern war, the role of the super experts was irreplaceable, but it did not mean that super experts were invincible and could do whatever they pleased. In a suitable environment, with appropriate arrangements, tremendous ordinary soldiers would have a chance to exhaust a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator or a demon emperor, too. Or rather, like bread, they ‘stuffed’ the enemies with their own lives!

“Alright. Let’s talk about the possibility of disguise and infiltration,” Li Yao said helplessly. “Is there any way for us to pretend to be the workers of the Pantheon of Demons?

“Other than the demon kings and demon emperors, there are certainly workers in the Pantheon of Demons, right? For example, demon emperors need to eat and poop, too, which means that they need cooks and cleaners, right? These workers cannot live on the floating mountains, can they?

“Furthermore, to maintain the normal functions of the floating mountains, the assets consumed every day must be astronomical. The garbage must be enormous, too. Therefore, many carriers are bound to deliver assets and carry garbage away on a daily basis, too. Can we work on that?”

“It is very difficult,” Jin Xinyue replied. “Of course, there are a lot of workers such as cooks and cleaners in the headquarters of the Pantheon of Demons and the command center of the coalition army. Most of them live in the messy, crowded lower city. Every morning, special commuting beasts will bring them to the floating mountains at the periphery where they will be strictly examined before being sent to the central floating mountains together.

“The examinations on them are extremely rigorous. Not only will their blood, hair, fingerprints, irises, and voiceprint be tested, even their excrement will sometimes be tested, too. The headquarters of the Pantheon of Demons has domesticated countless demon beasts with sharp noses, including dung beetles whose genes have been specially modified. If so much as the scent of their excrement is any different from the day before, they will immediately be caught!

“Besides, although there are many workers, few can really meet the highest leaders such as my father. The examinations on such workers are ten times more stringent than those on the regular workers. They are essentially being scanned by demonic rays from inside to outside every day!

“It is impossible to sneak in by pretending to be one of them!”

Li Yao ground his teeth hard. “What about ventilation tubes? There’s a complicated ventilation system in every floating mountain, right?”

Li Yao had a thing for ventilation tubes.

Jin Xinyue shook her head and said, “The ventilation tubes are the highlights of the defense system. More than ten different defense measures have been adopted in the ventilation tubes in the headquarters of the Pantheon of Demons. For example, high-voltage electric arcs in the ventilate tubes and pumping the air with high-speed fans. The iron gauze behind the fans has small holes, too, and can perceive anything that passes through, including a fly. Besides, the Flying Spirit Eyes and the demon beasts that are highly sensitive to heat and smell are distributed around the key nodes of the ventilate tubes.

“Let’s put it this way. If an intruder is unafraid of high-voltage electric shot, does not emit heat or smell, has a size smaller than a fly, and boasts a stealth ability all the way, there is a one in ten thousand likelihood that they can get in.

“However, the structural design of the ventilation tubes is top secret. There are too many branches, some of which are real, and some are false, like a maze. Even I don’t know the correct design. If an intruder moves into a wrong branch in carelessness, they will find themself in the most terrifying traps!”

“If that’s the case, the headquarters of the Pantheon of Demons is indeed impregnable,” Li Yao said. “I have no choice except to perform my ultimate skill now!”

“What! You have a solution despite such difficulties, Master? That’s indeed marvelous of you!”

“How about we write a letter to your father?”

“…”

“Or in some other way. He must have a public communication channel, right? In the Heaven’s Origin Sector, we have things like ‘Speaker Hotline’ or ‘Speaker Mailbox’. We can even initiate online petitions. As long as the number of voters surpasses a certain threshold, the motion will be delivered to the Speaker of Parliament directly!”

“Of course, there is a communication system based on a super large biochemical neural network in the Blood Demon Sector, and many ways to contact my father. But as the commander-in-chief of the coalition army, he must be very busy now. All the messages that are sent to him will be handled through the command center. How should we introduce ourselves? We can’t tell them that you are an unparalleled expert from the Heaven’s Origin Sector and that you would like to speak to the commander-in-chief of the coalition army, can we?

“Besides, we are still unclear on how many of my father’s trusted subordinates have been compromised by Elder Nether Spring.

“Given the horror of Elder Nether Spring’s Spore Stratagem, it is impossible for him to have not made preparations to deal with my father!

“Think about it. When I met you for the first time, Master, the hunters after me included my big brother, Jin Wuxu, who is my father’s most trusted eldest son, and the Mirage Falcons, the best troop of the Feather Clan!

“If even my big brother Jin Wuxu has joined Elder Nether Spring, there will be no way that we can contact my father through regular channels!”

Li Yao frowned. “Speaking of which, I do have another question. Is it possible that your father has joined Elder Nether Spring’s cause, too?”

Jin Xinyue shook her head quickly. “Absolutely impossible. My father… How should I put it? He is a guy who values the interests of the demon race the most. There is no way that he would conspire with Elder Nether Spring. However, I don’t know whether or not they have been taking advantage of each other.”

Li Yao thought for a moment and said, “What if we make it big?

“For example, I can produce a batch of special crystal bombs, which will display enormous characters in the sky like colorful fireworks after they are detonated. With the precise explosions of hundreds of bombs, we will be able to send out a message of a few sentences!

“If we detonate the bombs in the lower city, you father will definitely see the message in the air clearly, right?”

Li Yao had played the move on Iron Plateau once before, and its result was rather satisfactory.

Jin Xinyue thought for a moment and nodded. “It’s a last resort if we don’t have any other choices, but the information contained in a few sentences is too limited. It’s impossible to describe the whole thing clearly!

“Besides, we are now faced with a problem that is barely solvable. Elder Nether Spring has basically blocked every option. We only have some solid evidence if we show up in front of my father in person!”

Jin Xinyue pointed at herself and then Li Yao. “I’ve turned from a demon into a human being, and Master can trigger such intense ‘demonic energy’ as a Cultivator. That is enough to prove theory that human beings and demons are of the same origin.

“Although there is still a long way to go from proving the same-origin theory to proving the existence of the Spore Stratagem, we will at least plant a seed of suspicion in my father’s heart! My father will be too prudent to neglect it!

“If it is just a few pieces of information in the sky, Elder Nether Spring can easily ask his accomplices to explain or rectify them.

“More importantly, we don’t have much time. The Red Tide Plan might break out at any moment. Once the main force of the coalition army of demons is teleported to the east of the Star Glory Federation through wormholes, everything will be too late!”

Li Yao realized that it did make sense. It would be child’s play if he could stop a military decision that would determine the future of a Sector by only a few words in the sky.

“What about habits and hobbies? Will your father leave the headquarters of the Pantheon of Demons to train in the outside world?”

Jin Xinyue shook her head. “The headquarters of the Pantheon of Demons have the best training facilities. This is the critical moment before a great war. I don’t see any reason for my father to go out without a good reason.

“As for hobbies… He is like a cold machine. Power is his only hobby. Anyway, in my every memory of him, he is working, working, and working!”

They were at an impasse. Li Yao scratched his head and pursued further, “He does not have any hobby at all? Clothes, food, or anything that can be helpful!”

Jin Xinyue hesitated for a moment. “Well. If we are talking about hobbies…”

Chapter 983 - Point of Breakthrough

“My father is not interested in the addictive cigarettes, alcohol, or drugs. He does not have any passion for girls or gambling, either. He is not even a maniac in training. He does not have any long-lasting habit, except that he likes to eat a ‘Star Spot Red Fire Oyster’ as a snack after work every day.”

Li Yao raised his eyebrow. “What is a Star Spot Red Fire Oyster? Is it very precious?”

“Not very precious,” Jin Xinyue said. “The Star Spot Red Fire Oyster is a sea animal that grows in the ‘Red Fire Bay’, a bay on the coastline of the Gold Crow Kingdom. It is both fresh and succulent. Just cut it open with a knife and dip it in the local seawater, and the food will be ready.

“It is said that a half-active volcano is at the bottom of the Red Fire Bay. The special minerals spurted out by the undersea volcano add different constituents to the water there, which is the cause of such a delicious food.

“Personally, I’ve never been a fan of it.

“The Star Spot Red Fire Oyster is a popular dish among the nobles of the Gold Crow Kingdom, not only because its flavor, but also because of the fun you have when you eat it.

“First of all, the shell of the Star Spot Red Fire Oyster has stripes that looks like fire and shooting stars. The stripes of every Star Spot Red Fire Oyster are entirely different.

Everybody can enjoy and appreciate the stripes before they eat the food. The shells can be used to make decorations. It is quite an elegant lifestyle.

“Secondly, the two pieces of the shell of the Star Spot Red Fire Oyster bite each other very hard. One can only open them by the special knife with special techniques and patience. If one is really skilled, there will be a pleasant sound when the oyster is opened. However, if one opens it with brute force, they will not have the privilege of hearing the sound.

“Most importantly, there are occasionally crystals that look like pearls in the meat of the Star Spot Red Fire Oyster. We call them the ‘Red Balls’. The Red Balls are not anything precious, but they are extremely brilliant and beautiful. On their face, there are ever-changing patterns. If you aim the balls at the source of light, you will see a different pattern in every different angle. It could not be more spectacular.

“According to the traditions of the Gold Crow Kingdom, it is a very auspicious sign to meet a ‘Red Ball’ in the Star Spot Red Fire Oyster. There are even legends where the Red Balls were used in fortune telling in ancient times.

“Therefore, many experts of the Feather Clan have a habit of eating the Star Spot Red Fire Oyster every day. They might not be attracted by the flavor of the delicious food but are merely relaxing themselves with the tedious process of eating and the leisure when playing with the shell and the Red Ball.

“My father is no exception. Although he appears to be a machine, he is a living creature after all. After a day of busy work handling all kinds of affairs, he tends to be anxious and exhausted, too. Therefore, it has become a special relaxation method for him to have some Star Spot Red Fire Oysters every night.”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes, in which brilliance was bouncing like fire. He pondered and asked, “Is the Star Spot Red Fire Oyster your father eats unusual? Is it the same as what others eat?”

Jin Xinyue thought hard for a moment. “The Star Spot Red Fire Oyster only grows in the Red Fire Bay because it requires the nourishment of the undersea volcano. It cannot be farmed. The productivity is quite low.

“My father is the leader of the Feather Clan. Naturally, the Star Spot Red Fire Oysters that are the largest and looks most splendid, and those that the experienced fishermen believe to have ‘Red Balls’, are specially supplied to him.”

“Then, according to your estimation, after your father became the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons, even though he is far away from the Gold Crow Kingdom, do you think he will still keep the habit?”

Jin Xinyue nodded. “I think he will. Before he became the commander-in-chief, my father often went to Heavenly Path City for business and sometimes lived in Heavenly Path City for a long time. At that time, special flying demon beasts were designated to ship the Star Spot Red Fire Oysters to him by air. After all, the Gold Crow King masters the forces in the sky. Transportation by air is quite convenient and not very costly. Since he is the leader of the Feather Clan, such a hobby is not too extravagant.”

Li Yao blinked. “The food is delivered by air every day, not every few days?”

Jin Xinyue smiled and said, “You may not know this, Master, but the Star Spot Red Fire Oyster is the most vulnerable food. Once it leaves the seawater where it grows, it will decay within a few hours. Even if it is soaked in the original seawater, it will still not survive one day. Keeping them in the preservation rune arrays does not help, either.

“Freezing rune arrays can make the food last longer, but freezing and unfreezing will rid the food of its original flavor. With my father’s identity and position, wouldn’t be beneath him to eat such food?

“Therefore, when he lived in Heavenly Path City, the flying demon beasts shipped the raw Star Spot Red Fire Oysters as quickly as possible, sometimes with the help of teleportation arrays, at dusk every day. They would only need three hours to get to him.”

After hearing that, Li Yao took a long breath in relief. His lips curled into a mysterious smile as he said, “Therefore, after the Star Spot Red Fire Oyster is fished up, it will be shipped to your father as quickly as possible. Since the time is very short, there will not be too many examination procedures, will there?”

Jin Xinyue was dazed. She bulged her eyes and exclaimed, “Master, do you want—”

Li Yao thought for a moment and confirmed with her, “Is it possible that somebody will open all the Star Spot Red Fire Oysters first so that you father will enjoy the meat directly?”

Jin Xinyue shook her head quickly. “Absolutely not. When the nobles of the Gold Crow Kingdom enjoy the Star Spot Red Fire Oyster, it is the appearance of the food that they savor first. Then, they will have their fun by opening the shell slowly and looking for the ‘Red Ball’. It is not just the mouthful of meat that they are interested in. If the Star Spot Red Fire Oysters are opened in advance, the flavor of the meat will certainly change after it is exposed to the air for a long time, not to mention that all the fun will be gone. Wouldn’t it be a huge bummer?

“Everybody eats the food on their own. It is a tradition that has lasted thousands of years.”

“Then we’ve got a solution!” Li Yao slapped his thigh and took a deep breath to calm himself down. “Listen up. This is what we are going to do next.

“First of all, I am going to pump a syringe of blood and marrow from you. Rest assured. You are now in the Core Formation Stage after all. The marrow you lose will be refilled after a moment of rest.

“I planned to bring you back to the last base of the Blade of Chaos, but things have changed now. We cannot stay here for long, and there is no time for such a long journey.

“We can only store your blood and marrow in special biochemical storage tanks and put the tanks in the third rendezvous point so that Yuchi Ba and the rest of them will bring them back to the base.

“The Fire Ant King has already grasped a lot of experimental data and files regarding the ‘Demon God Virus’, including most of the genome. Soon, they will also have your blood and marrow, which contain the Divine Blood of Chaos. Let’s hope that they can produce vaccines and antidotes as quickly as possible!

“I will brief them on our latest progress and upcoming operations. I believe that Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong, as two experts in tactics, will know what to do next!

“After the storage tanks are ready, we will go to Heavenly Path City and sneak into the crowded lower city, where we will make the most thorough preparations for our meeting with your father!

“After everything is set, we will go to the Red Fire Bay!

“But first of all, do you know of a place that houses tremendous crystals and magical equipment? Debris from the Heaven’s Origin Sector will work, too. I am in need of a lot of materials!”

Jin Xinyue was dazed for a moment before she replied, “A thousand and four hundred kilometers to our southeast, there is Ultimate Arms City. A great number of weapons, guns, crystal tanks, and even crystal suits that were captured in the Heaven’s Origin Sector are piled up there.

“All the magical equipment that is captured will be examined and tested in Ultimate Arms City. The repairable equipment will be picked out for the use of the coalition army of demons. The trophies that are beyond repair will serve as ‘targets’ or be dismantled into raw materials. Sometimes, they are replicated, too.

“Over the past hundreds of years, the Heaven’s Origin Sector has gradually surpassed the Blood Demon Sector in terms of weapon technology. This is more or less a way to supplement the gears of the coalition army of demons.

“But I wonder, what do you need the debris for?”

“I am going to produce bombs.” Li Yao licked his lips and said casually, “More crystal bombs.”

…

Ten days later, in the upper district of Heavenly Path City…

As the ‘Red Tide Plan’ was gradually set in motion, a second command center had been established in the commander-in-chief’s office. The vast commander center was packed with the biochemical brains that boasted the highest performance. Countless biochemical nerves were crawling on the walls like crimson vines. There were even the mainframe crystal processors that had been smuggled or captured from the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Light beams were blossoming above the heads of the thousand staff and generals. The bouncing numbers and changing shadows interweaved into unpredictable expressions on their faces.

Jin Tuyi was surrounded by an enormous circular light beam. More than ten biochemical nerves were connected to his brain and spine deeply like vipers from all the directions, sending the information provided by the main biochemical brains into his head incessantly. Billions of entries of data, images, and videos were flooding inside his brain uncontrollably. Despite the body build of the high-level demon emperor, he would still sometimes grimace in pain.

It was through such a method of information transmission, which bordered on torture, that he managed to master the most critical intelligence about the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector within a breath, including the latest updates on all the main-force troops of the Blood Demon Sector, the status of the defense lines of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the traces of the sixteen crystal suit legions of the federation, and so on.

However, some of the information was true, some false. How much of the information was true, how much was false, how much of the information was true but had been leaked by the enemy intentionally, and how much of the information was false and yet was still telling what was on the enemy’s mind… Everything would have to be determined by his own head.

That was the responsibility of the commander-in-chief of the coalition army!

Chapter 984 - Five Oysters

Five minutes later, Jin Tuyi finished analyzing all the latest intelligence so far and sending out instructions through the biochemical nerves. Such instructions that were sent in the form of bioelectricity were more efficient and secretive than telepathic thoughts, which were often utilized by Cultivators.

The biochemical brains, with the operations of the staff, translated Jin Tuyi’s instructions into more specific and practical commands and transmitted them to the nerve endings which constituted the enormous beast that was the coalition army of demons.

The enormous beast had opened its bloody mouth slowly and bared the sharpest fangs, ready for the ultimate strike!

So far, so good.

The Star Glory Federation seemed to be ignorant of the Red Tide Plan. Although they were prepared for the pending attacks of the coalition army in the north of the Grand Desolate Plateau, and three crystal suit legions had been dispatched to the Giant Blade Pass, the ocean east to the federation was still tranquil and unguarded.

In the meantime, the main force of the coalition army had finished gathering and was moving toward the target. Once the army arrived, they would be ready to launch a thunderous strike at any time!

However, Jin Tuyi did not receive the two pieces of information that he had expected, ones that were of paramount importance.

The glimmers in his eyes bounced slightly. The biochemical nerves connected to the back of Jin Tuyi’s head and spine uncoupled one by one. He warmed up his rigid body and sighed in great relief while his bones and muscles were emitting weird noises.

“Father!”

His eldest son, the commander of the Mirage Falcon troop, who had been waiting respectfully behind him, immediately stepped forward and helped him move to the relaxation room.

It was too heavy a burden to have super high-intensity interactions with the main biochemical brains for an entire day even for a demon emperor. To maintain the activity of their brain so that it would be able to function at a high speed the next day, it was a reasonable ritual for a demon emperor to take a rest in the relaxation room for an hour or two after a day’s tedious work.

In the relaxation room, Jin Wuxu stood behind Jin Tuyi. He massaged his father’s shoulder while he concentrated his voice into a line, sending the soundwaves directly into his father’s ears in the feeblest quakes.

“Father, the investigation on Elder Nether Spring using the Gold Crow Kingdom’s own intelligence network has been completed. The conclusion is the same as that drawn by the intelligence system of the Pantheon of Demons. Recently, he has been dutifully chasing after the remnants of the Blade of Chaos. There are no anomalies.

“It seems that he has indeed admitted his failure. Or maybe, he has seen through the current situation and realized that the Star Glory Federation is the greatest enemy for all of us. Internal strife right now would do nobody any good!

“The investigations into the rumors of the Imperium of True Human Beings and the ‘Demon God Virus’ are coming to an end, too. The results are the same. We did not find any suspicious points based on the investigation report of the Pantheon of Demons. As of now, there is no evidence whatsoever that can prove the validity of the two theories. It can be confirmed now that they are absolutely strategical deceptions of the Star Glory Federation!

“This is not the first time that the shameless human beings have played such dirty tricks. Didn’t they concoct the sordid ‘Giant Crab Plan’ during the Battle of Dawn, hoping to swallow all our main force? This time, it must be another strategical deception!”

Jin Tuyi’s face remained unchanged. He waved his hands in fatigue and said casually, “Alright. You may leave now. Do your job. The Red Tide Plan is going to be activated very soon. I hope that your Mirage Falcons will be the first demon troop to march onto the eastern coastline of the Star Glory Federation!”

“Understood!”

Jin Wuxu held his chest high, turned around, and left.

When he left, he happened to pass by the cook who was delivering the ‘Star Spot Red Fire Oysters’ to Jin Tuyi.

Naturally, the commander-in-chief’s residence had its own waiters and cooks. According to the rules, all the food should have been brought by the waiters who had received professional training and had absolutely clean backgrounds.

However, the cook was an old servant from the Gold Grow Kingdom who had worked for Jin Tuyi even before he became the leader of the Feather Clan. He had proved his loyalty and was well trusted by Jin Tuyi.

The Star Spot Red Fire Oysters that Jin Tuyi enjoyed every night were made by the cook and delivered to him by the cook in person every day.

The Star Spot Red Fire Oyster did not require much cooking, but the cook had a certain skill to decorate food. The Star Spot Red Fire Oysters arranged by him were like a piece of artwork that nobody was willing to destroy.

The cook bowed before Jin Tuyi.

Right now, the relaxation room was empty except for the two of them.

Everybody knew Jin Tuyi’s habit. When he was enjoying the Star Spot Red Fire Oysters, he did not like anybody around other than the cook, not even his own son.

Bo!

Jin Tuyi opened the first oyster with a crisp sound as if a silver pebble hitting a jade tray. The echoed like a running brook and did not die down for a long time.

Jin Tuyi half narrowed his eyes, and the muscles all over his body were loosened.

Right next to him, the cook who was serving him dutifully suddenly said, “The loyalty investigation targeting the first prince has been completed. No evidence suggests that he has conspired with Elder Nether Spring.”

Bo!

Jin Tuyi opened the second oyster. He put the shivering, juicy meat into his mouth and chewed slowly and carefully, as if he was enjoying delicious wine.

The cook continued. “The investigations that the first prince performed revealed no anomalies, either. There is no proof to link Elder Nether Spring to the ‘Demon God Virus’. The validity of the ‘Demon God Virus’ and the Imperium of True Human Beings cannot be proved, either. It is highly likely that they are the strategical deceptions of the Star Glory Federation.”

Bo!

Jin Tuyi opened the third oyster. However, his knife halted. He suddenly lowered the knife and raised it up, moving apart the meat that was as soft as a petal and picking out a crimson ball the size of fish eye without damaging the intactness of the meat.

Jin Tuyi put on a smile. He held the Red Ball with his fingertips, rubbing, playing, and pondering.

The cook’s face remained unchanged. Instead of adulating Jin Tuyi on his luck, he continued reporting in a voice devoid of any emotion. “Although no evidence has been found, we have still strengthened the control over the Mirage Falcon troop as per your command. Should there be anything wrong, the first prince and his trusted subordinates will be executed instantly, and the Mirage Falcon troop will all be yours to command.”

Jin Tuyi moved his knife toward the fourth oyster. He finally opened his mouth and asked casually, “What about that matter?”

“No updates,” the cook replied. “After showing up in ‘Ultimate Arms City’ nine days ago, slaying hundreds of guardians and looting a huge amount of debris and crystals, both targets have disappeared.

“Including ‘Ape Fiend’ Yuan Riyue’s son, there are already seven disciples and blood descendants of the twelve demon emperors who have been slain by the mysterious expert. Right now, he is the most hateful target for the twelve demon emperors. Yuan Riyue has even gone mad and dedicated himself to the search of the mysterious expert without considering military affairs at all.

“Even Yuan Riyue hasn’t found him yet. It is evident that the two of them are hiding themselves well.

“However, if they are indeed Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators from the Heaven’s Origin Sector, it will truly not be easy to find them after they hide themselves.

“The real problem is, what is their purpose exactly? None of the members of our ‘Dark Cloak Society’ can figure out their motivation.”

Jin Tuyi’s curved knife was moving easily in the gap of the shell, which was extremely tight. But his eyes pierced through the wall of the relaxation room, the complicated, heavily-guarded floating mountain, toward somewhere far, far away.

No matter how solid the shell was and how narrow the gaps were, there was always a way to crack it. As long as the most critical point was located, one would be able to open the oyster effortlessly.

Then, what about the ‘shell’ that was covering him?

The Pantheon of Demons boasted the most immaculate defense system, with dozens of procedures of thorough examination. They were surrounded by patrol teams made of the Mirage Falcons, Ghost Jellyfish, Colorful Locusts, and Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes as well as the protection of dozens of devilish warships. All possible vulnerabilities had been sealed.

This was a ‘shell’ that could not be broken in any way, one without the tiniest gap!

What would somebody do if they wanted to break into such a shell?

Jin Tuyi did not know.

But his knife came to an abrupt halt when it pierced into the fifth oyster.

For about 0.01 seconds, weird brilliance was shining on Jin Tuyi’s face.

Before his facial nerves reacted, he had already suppressed his astonishment.

“I’m a bit tired,” Jin Tuyi said casually. “You may leave now if you don’t have other intelligence.”

“My lord.”

The cook bowed and left, closing the door of Jin Tuyi’s relaxation room behind him.

The moment the door was closed, Jin Tuyi darted three streams of invisible demonic energy toward the gaps on the door.

Then, he turned around and focused his attention on the Star Spot Red Fire Oyster right in his hands.

At first glance, it was just a common oyster. The shape of the edge of the shell and the fiery stripes on the surface were not any different from those on other oysters.

Jin Tuyi could even sense a tiny wave of vigor from inside the shell.

The oyster was still alive at this moment.

Of course, if it was not an alive, authentic Star Spot Red Fire Oyster, how could it have passed through the multiple examinations and been delivered to him?

However, when he cut off two strong nerves deep inside the oyster with the knife, Jin Tuyi keenly sensed a subtle difference.

The nerves that controlled the opening and closing of the shell had already been broken once!

Somebody has already opened the shell once, but he then closed the shell through a special technique. Even the oyster was kept alive and not killed!

Pondering, Jin Tuyi slowly triggered his demonic energy and formed a shield right in front of him. He then retrieved quite a few pieces of defense magical equipment from his Cosmos Rings and put on all of them.

It was not until then that he raised the knife and opened the weird oyster!

Chapter 985 - First Interaction

The vague stink that belonged to the raw meat could be smelt from the shell. Even the unique freshness resembling the scent of lychee was still there. It was almost like a real, natural oyster.

Jin Tuyi could even sense the sea wind of the Red Fire Bay from it.

But he knew for a fact that somebody had touched the oyster.

At the back of the shell that he had just opened, three overlapping preservation rune arrays had been carved in the tiniest strokes.

Jin Tuyi had never seen anybody who could carve such neat and perfect rune arrays whose purpose was nothing other than to preserve food.

It was because of the preservation rune arrays, and a tiny proportion of cell activation liquids in the meat, that the oyster had remained alive for now after it was opened by brute force.

Later, the guy had injected a smidgen of a muscle constriction drug to the nerves that controlled the shell so that the shell was closed. Before the shell was fully close, the guy had even smeared a tiny bit of natural glue on the two sides of the shell, making the oyster appear to be untouched and unopened.

Jin Tuyi narrowed his eyes and attempted the whole process. To his surprise, he found that he was not able to do it.

The oyster couldn't have been kept open for long. If it were longer than three seconds, the meat inside would have decayed and emitted a vague smelly scent. The seasoned fishers and cooks definitely would've discovered it and thrown away the 'dead oyster'.

In three seconds, the guy had to expand the shell, carve three mini preservation rune arrays, inject the cell activation drug, and smear the natural glue. He could not touch the meat during the entire process. Otherwise, the meat might have been contaminated and decayed, too.

What a pair of stable hands that the guy who modified the oyster must have, and how unbelievable his control over the muscles on his hand was!

An expert. This is truly an expert!

Jin Tuyi cut open the meat carefully with the knife. As he expected, he found a 'Red Ball' below the meat in the middle of two nerves.

Compared to the Red Ball that he had discovered just now, which was only the size of rice, the new Red Ball was multiple times larger. It was approximately the size of a thumb, with floating stripes on the surface as if it were a painting of the great nature. There was no doubt that it was one of the best Red Balls.

Jin Tuyi was not moved. He put down the knife and groped on the Red Ball carefully.

It was not until one minute later that he finally found a gap that was a hundred times thinner than a hair on the surface of the Red Ball, which was as smooth as silk and jade.

Jin Tuyi’s pupils shrank violently.

This is not a Red Ball but a piece of magical equipment based on a Red Ball. An intact Red Ball has been dissected and then stitched together!

The stitching is so perfect that the joint can be barely felt. Perhaps only those with the senses of demon emperors are capable enough of perceiving it!

The one who built it must be a super master of refining!

Jin Tuyi focused a stream of his demonic energy and cut the gap at the center of the Red Ball softly like the sharpest fretsaw.

He was so patient that barely any powder of the Red Ball dropped to the table.

One minute later, the gap was finally widened a little bit. He grabbed the two sides of the Red Ball and pulled it apart. The Red Ball was immediately divided into two hollow halves.

The item hidden inside the Red Ball dropped down.

It was a tiny Cosmos Ring.

At the center of the Cosmos Ring, a small capsule was embedded.

The capsule was divided into two zones. One of the zones stored a long hair, while the other stored a drop of blood.

What a neat approach to have chosen the Red Ball to deliver the item. The weight and center of gravity of the item were extremely accurate. If the Red Ball was not dissected but simply weighed in the hands, nobody would have been able to notice anything wrong!

What’s the meaning of the hair and the blood?

Jin Tuyi crushed one side of the capsule and took out the long hair. He wrapped it around his finger and perceived it with his soul carefully.

The hair seemed to belong to a certain girl, one that was extremely close to him.

As for the drop of blood…

Jin Tuyi pondered for a long time before he picked up the Cosmos Ring.

The Cosmos Ring was not installed with any retrieval barriers. Anybody would have been able to activate it and retrieve the items inside at their will as long as they sank their soul into it.

There were only two items in the Cosmos Ring.

One of them was a ragged, simple light beam projector, and the other was a piece of weird magical equipment that was a hundred times more hideous than the first one and looked like a pile of garbage.

With his profound knowledge, Jin Tuyi managed to distinguish that the magical equipment should have been a point-to-point communicator for the miners of the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

Through such a communicator, one would be able to have a video chat with someone who was holding another communicator within the range of a hundred square kilometers.

On the shell of the light beam projector, three big words had been written.

“Dad, read me!”

The familiar handwriting startled Jin Tuyi. He wreathed the light beam projector with a stream of his demonic energy before leaking his demonic energy into the rig and performing the most thorough examination of every component.

He did not find any anomalies. After making sure that it was not a crystal bomb that had been modified into the appearance of a light beam projector, he activated it softly.

Shua!

A bluish mystic ray shot out of the top of the light beam projector and formed Li Yao’s and Jin Xinyue’s 3D images in midair.

Of course, it was the Jin Xinyue who had washed away all the disguises and regained her original face.

Jin Tuyi’s eyes were twitching violently when he saw the girl who was identical to his daughter except for the lack of a pair of wings.

However, he did not talk, nor would it make any difference. Such a light beam projector did not support communication functions and could only play the videos that were recorded in advance.

“Father!” Jin Xinyue’s 3D image suddenly greeted him in a delightful voice. “I know that thousands of questions are rolling over on your heart right now. Believe me, if you give us half an hour, we will totally be able to explain everything to you!

“First of all, to make you believe that it is your daughter, Jin Xinyue, who is speaking right now, we have stored one of my hairs and a droplet of my blood in the Red Ball. I believe that you must have your ways to determine whether or not they are real!

“Then, allow me to introduce to you a Cultivator from the Heaven’s Origin Sector. He is Vulture Li Yao, Senior Li. Now, he is also my master and will be the only one in my life!

“No matter how implausible that video clip is to you, please at least give us half an hour. It is of paramount importance for everybody in the Blood Demon Sector, the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and the Flying Star Sector!”

Jin Tuyi took a long, long breath. Holding the knife, he listened calmly.

Li Yao coughed and said, “Senior Jin, I am Vulture Li Yao, the Cultivator who left the Heaven’s Origin Sector from Boneyard ten years ago. I believe you must’ve heard my name before. Also, I am the one who has been raising trouble in the Blood Demon Sector.

“In a moment, I will briefly explain everything that has happened in the past ten years, including the details of the Imperium of True Human Beings and the scheme that is going on in the Blood Demon Sector right now.

“I believe that you will certainly make a sensible judgement after you hear my introduction with your wisdom!

“If you grow suspicious, if not interested, about everything after you listen to my introduction, you are welcome to contact us through the point-to-point communicator.

“Yes, we are current at a certain point within a hundred kilometers of you. Perhaps you can summon all the forces of Heavenly Path City to chase after us, but I suggest you do not rush into anything.

“We went through all the trouble to arrive in Heavenly Path City, and we do not intend to run away so easily. Even if you want to capture us, at least wait until we have said everything we must say!

“However, we cannot speak to each other directly because the point-to-point communicator for miners will release feeble spiritual waves when it is activated. The spiritual waves can be captured very easily to locate the two parties engaged in the conversation.

“We are not sure whether or not those around you are trustworthy. If the supervisor of the whole scheme learns that we have already reached out to each other, we don’t know what actions he will take.

“Therefore, this is what we are going to do next.

“Over the past couple of days, we have wandered in the lower district of Heavenly Path City and found a hundred suitable locations where we planted tremendous crystal bombs.

“At midnight, the crystal bombs will be detonated one after another. Spiritual energy will be blown into the sky like fireworks and condensed into enormous characters.

“On the surface, we will be sending over the simplest information to you in such a violent way because there is no way that we can sneak into the Pantheon of Demons and we are left with no choice.

“But our real purpose is to create an area that is dominated by sweeping spiritual waves in the sky of Heavenly Path City through the ‘firework bombs’, which have quite a long duration. The sky will be a mess!

“At midnight, when the fireworks bombs are detonated, you will be able to contact us through the point-to-point communicator. By then, the feeble spiritual waves that the point-to-point communicator releases will be drowned in the intense spiritual waves caused by the fireworks bombs, like a spark that is hidden in an overwhelming wildfire. Only in such a way can we escape others’ attention!

“Now, please listen to me carefully, and make sure that you are in an absolute safe place where you can talk to us without interference around midnight.

“This is very important. The future of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector will depend on your decision!”

Jin Tuyi put his hands on the bridge of his nose, which looked like a saber. He listened to Li Yao in complete tranquility for half an hour. His facial expression did not change at all even when Li Yao was talking about the most soul-stirring twists. Even Elder Nether Spring’s Spore Stratagem did not raise the slightest astonishment in his eyes.

Half an hour later, Jin Tuyi returned everything to the Cosmos Ring and hid the Cosmos Ring by his chest. Then, he released a stream of intense demonic energy to obliterate the feeble spiritual waves caused when the light beam projector was functioning.

Jin Tuyi opened the door of the relaxation room and walked out. He waved his hands impatiently to the guards who were greeting him. “I am going to have a three-hour deep sleep. Nobody is to disturb me for anything during the period!”

Chapter 986 - Secret Dialogue!

With a great war drawing near, although it was midnight, Heavenly Path City was still as bright and raucous as the day.

Countless devilish warships and large flying demon beasts were landing and taking off from the ports around Heavenly Path City amid earsplitting jetting and screeching noises.

The Mirage Falcons, Ghost Jellyfish, and Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes were monitoring the hundred square kilometers nearby dutifully. Countless Flying Spirit Eyes were glittering in the darkness as if thousands of fireflies were hovering in the sky of the city.

In every place of Heavenly Path City, many pairs of eyes were receiving pictures through the remote brainwaves. In the pictures, every corner of the city was in order and peace.

Suddenly—

BOOM! CRACK!

From somewhere in the messy, chaotic lower district of Heavenly Path City, a dazzling fireball suddenly broke out!

A moment later, a streak of brightness darted into the sky, leaving a long tail behind, before it burst out into the most glamorous colors.

The colorful spots of light condensed a giant, shining word in the dark night sky.

WE

As the stripes gradually condensed into letters, the intense spiritual waves spread out, stirring up the pool of frozen water and raising a shocking tsunami in all the defense forces of Heavenly Path City!

Earsplitting alarms were echoing nonstop. Three devilish warships made an emergency take-off. Countless demons were roaring and running to the ports, activating even more devilish warships. The Mirage Falcons, Ghost Jellyfish, and Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes suddenly accelerated. All the conspicuous defense arrays dropped their camouflage and bared the sharpest fangs!

BOOM! CRACK!

The second batch of crystal bombs was launched into the sky and exploded into spectacular fireworks. The fire interweaved into the second word.

ARE

After the few words ‘ **WE ARE HERE FOR PEACE** ‘ were shot into the sky one after another, the entire Heavenly Path City was in a mess. Soldiers were marching into the lower district, looking for the source of the crystal bombs. However, in the lower district, which was crowded and disordered, their intrusion was only causing greater panic and confusion.

New crystal bombs, however, were still being launched toward the sky one after another, filling the entire sky with intense spiritual waves. In the end, mysterious colors that resembled an aurora filled the sky.

The troops responsible for the defense of Heavenly Path City were almost on fire in anxiety!

In the chaos, barely anybody noticed that an extremely feeble spiritual wave was sent out of the commander-in-chief’s residence.

Like a streak of smoke and a shivering, unpredictable shooting star, it darted toward the ground, somewhere in the depths of Heavenly Path City.

Li Yao had finally reached out to Jin Tuyi, purportedly the highest leader of the Blood Demon Sector and the commander-in-chief of the coalition army!

Somewhere in the lower district of Heavenly Path City, in a dark, shabby, half-underground room, Li Yao could not help but waved his hands in excitement when Jin Tuyi’s tall and slender body slowly appeared on the point-to-point communicator. He shouted in the bottom of his heart, *Hooray!*

However, reaching out to each other was only step one.

The biggest problem at hand was how to convince Jin Tuyi!

The intense waves caused by the exploding crystal bombs above his head covered the existence of such a communicate route perfectly, but they had brought tremendous interference to the dialogue, too.

In the picture, Jin Tuyi was warped by the waves that looked like snowflakes every now and then, making him even more unpredictable and mysterious.

Jin Tuyi stared at his daughter for a moment before he turned around and observed Li Yao.

There was not astonishment or fury after he saw that his daughter had turned from a demon into a human being. There was not worry or anxiety that he should have for Elder Nether Spring's scheme. There was not anger toward Li Yao, a Cultivator from the Heaven's Origin Sector who had raised a great disaster in the Blood Demon Sector. Instead, the only thing on his face was nonchalance that was almost too tranquil.

"Senior Jin!"

Li Yao had to seize the time to persuade Jin Tuyi before all the fireworks bombs exploded, or at least plant a seed of suspicion in his heart. "Have you seen the video that we sent over? Believe me. It is exactly the demon race's origin! Human beings and demons are essentially the same. There is no reason we should perish with each other! Look at your daughter Jin Xinyue. After absorbing excessive Divine Blood of Chaos, her cells have been completely restored to the original state, and she has transformed into a human being!

"As for me—"

Li Yao extended his left hand and burnt his cells, with the glittering crystal protruded out of his palm. "Although I am a Cultivator, I am able to utilize techniques such as 'Cell Obliteration Cannon'! This is all undeniable evidence that can prove everything I've said!"

"Exactly, Father!" Jin Xinyue raised her voice. "This is really me. I have turned from a demon into a human being. There must be a great plot in all this! My big brother tried to kill me with the Mirage Falcons. He even had the help of the elites from the Nether Spring Kingdom, the Kingdom of Lion Butchers, and the Sea Dominator Kingdom! Did you know about it?

“If you did not know all about it, or even anything about it, it is very obvious that your intelligence network, your most trusted subordinates who serve as your ‘eyes’ and ‘ears’, has been compromised by Elder Nether Spring!

“Everything we said is true! You must believe us!”

Jin Tuyi looked at them peacefully for a long time before he said slowly, “It was indeed very thoughtful of you to come up with the idea of hiding a Cosmos Ring into a Star Spot Red Fire Oyster and delivering it to me through all the examination procedures. With the appreciation of your marvelous approach, I was patient enough to watch your video, and I decided to waste some of my precious time to talk to you.

“However, if such jibber-jabber is everything that you want to tell me, it will be still too much a waste of my time.

“Same-origin theory? Turning from a demon into a human being? Interesting. Very interesting.

“But so what?

“Even if the same-origin theory is true, and demons were truly transformed from human beings forty thousand years ago, even if you are truly my daughter Jin Xinyue who has changed into a human being after absorbing certain drugs, what can any of that prove?

“Is it enough to prove the existence of the Imperium of True Human Beings or the validity of the Spore Stratagem? Is it enough to prove that Elder Nether Spring is associated with the scheme?

“No. You can prove none of that!”

Jin Xinyue was rather anxious. “Father, please wait for our explanation—”

Jin Tuyi interrupted her coldly. “Even if you are really my daughter Jin Xinyue, so what? To avenge your birth mother, you killed your stepmother, which almost caused the division of the two greatest noble families of the Gold Crow Kingdom.

“You conspired with my seventh son to kill my ninth son, and then conspired with my eldest son to kill my seventh son. You also sold secret intelligence of the Gold Crow Kingdom to the Kingdom of Lion Butchers and false intelligence of the Nether Spring Kingdom to the Sea Dominator Kingdom.

“After your scheme was discovered, you even killed a princess of the Sea Dominator Kingdom. Did you know that the Sea Dominator Kingdom has been our hardcore ally?”

Jin Xinyue coughed hard and failed up come up with a reply.

“By the way,” Jin Tuyi said casually, “you didn’t cover you trace well when you murdered the princess of the Sea Dominator Kingdom. It was me who wiped your ass for you.

“If you only did such things, I could still try to hold myself. After all, among all my blood descendants, I always thought most highly of you, other than my eldest son. Although your methods were still too naïve and flawed, your brutality was enough.

“However, you were also secretly planning to kill me, weren’t you? How would you like to explain that?”

Dumbfounded, Li Yao looked at Jin Xinyue.

Jin Xinyue opened her hands. “After killing my stepmother and doing so many clandestine things, of course, I was scare that you might find out, and it’s not like I would wash my neck clean and wait for you to kill me when you learned everything and burst into fury trying to avenge your most beloved wife.

“Naturally, I had to make preparations in advance. Although the attempts might have been futile, they were still better than waiting to be killed. Is there anything wrong with that? I didn’t know that you were so broadminded, Father, and that you could pretend that you did not know you wife had been killed by your daughter!”

Li Yao remained silent, having nothing to add.

“Therefore,” Jin Tuyi said casually, “if I state that you surrendered to the Star Glory Federation a long time ago because you feared that your crimes would be exposed and because you wanted to realize your ambitions, and you are now here to perform a strategical deception in order to postpone the date of the final war, you will not be able to refute such a possibility, will you?

“As for the fact that you turned into a human being from a demon, it was perhaps because of some new technique developed by the Star Glory Federation.

“As far as I know, the Heavenly Capital Medical School and the First Federal Military Medical University in the Star Glory Federation boast quite a high potential in biochemical technology, cell mutation, and the relative fields. It is not entirely unbelievable to think that they made a breakthrough that the Blood Demon Sector hasn’t made yet in a certain aspect.”

Jin Xinyue blinked for a long time, unable to come up with a rebuttal.

Li Yao vaguely found that Jin Tuyi was taking the initiative of the conversation. He hurried to interrupt, “Senior Jin, whether you believe in Jin Xinyue or not, at the very least, the changes that have happened to me and her prove the correctness of the ‘same-origin theory’. They also suggest that demons and human beings can be transformed into each other. Then, why do we have to fight against each other to the point of mutual destruction?”

Jin Tuyi smiled casually. “What does the war have to do with our race? Over the past forty thousand years, the number of Cultivators killed by Cultivators is at least ten times larger than the number of Cultivators killed by demons, and dozens of times more demons have been killed by the claws and teeth of demons than those killed by the flying swords of the Cultivators! Even if I accept the same-origin theory and acknowledge that we belong to the same species, so what? Does it have anything to do with the war between us?”

Li Yao was dazed. He had thought that the trickiest part was to convince Jin Tuyi of the ‘same-origin’ theory. It did not occur to him that the guy would accept theory so quickly and the real problem would actually be something else.

Jin Tuyi continued. “Did you believe that, since the Divine Blood of Chaos can turn demons back into human beings, it can terminate the war between us and bring the valuable peace?”

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao nodded. “It’s indeed what I thought.”

Jin Tuyi laughed. “Then, would you like to turn into monkeys, the ancestors of human beings hundreds of thousands of years ago?”

Li Yao gritted his teeth. He realized what Jin Tuyi meant.

Jin Tuyi’s smile gradually turned into cold brilliance. He moved closer to the camera and said, one word after another, “If you are not willing to turn into a monkey, what makes you think that demons will be willing to turn into human beings? What do you think ‘human being’ stands for? Is it really an honorable, glorious identity that is worth being proud of?”

Chapter 987 - Three Sectors in One, Invincible in the Universe!

Li Yao hurried to interject. “We are not talking about honor but survival! The Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector are on par with each other. If the war proceeds, we will both be dragged into the abyss of doom. Nether demons nor human beings will be able to laugh to the end! If we fight each other, the Imperium of True Human Beings will take all the advantage! When the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings marches here, I won’t be able to be a monkey even if I want to!

“Senior Jin, as the commander-in-chief of the coalition army, you have the future of the entire Blood Demon Sector on your shoulders. Think about the possibility I just described. Do not let all the demons of the Blood Demon Sector die in your hands!”

Jin Tuyi was amused. He shook his head and said, “I do find it a bit unbelievable right now. How did such a childish man like yourself come up with such a flawless infiltration plan while ensuring that all the details are immaculate?

“Let’s put your groundless words aside for a moment, which, for the record, are just a joke in my eyes.

“Even if I am convinced by you, so what? Do you think that, just because I am the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons and the nominal monarch of the Blood Demon Sector, I can stop the world war with a declaration?

“Let me tell you something. The war is not started by me alone. The real starter of the war is the general will of the twelve demon emperors of the Pantheon of Demons, or rather, the general will of all the demon emperors, demon kings, all the silver-blood demons, and even the entire demon race! It is the will of the Blood Demon Sector that started the war before I was elected as the representative of the ‘war will’!

“Once a war machine is activated, it will be alive. Like a ravenous, quickly-growing beast, nobody can stop it from maturing and raging, not even its creator!

“I became the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons and the nominal monarch of the Blood Demon Sector not because of my charisma, not because of my personal combat ability, but because I am the one who is most suitable to push the war forward right now!

“The bottom line is, the ‘commander-in-chief of the coalition army’ is just a tiny rivet on the steering wheel of the enormous war machine or a relatively conspicuous tusk in the mouth of the war beast!

“Do you believe this? If I convene a meeting of the twelve demon emperors at this second, and I declare that ‘human beings and demons are of the same origin, and we should seek reconciliation instead of attacking each other’, I will be killed by the other eleven demon emperors collectively in the next second, and a new commander-in-chief of the coalition army, who is colder, crueler, and hates human beings a hundred times more than I do, will be assigned the next second to continue carrying out the will of the enormous beast!

“This is a war. This is the will of a people. You think that, by convincing or killing a certain someone, it will be enough to stop a people from going mad? I am growing more and more suspicious about how you are distributing your computational ability as a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator.”

Li Yao was rendered speechless, with cold sweat covering his forehead.

With a glimmer of contempt in his eyes, Jin Tuyi sighed and said, “It is impossible. The nation has already gone insane. It is rushing at full speed on the cliff of destruction. There is no way that you or I can stop it!

“This is an abnormal, congenitally deficient nation—a freak that is born in the fire of war. It only survives to this day through the benefits of wars. But in order to loot more war benefits, the nation is dedicating more and more resources to wars like a snowball! To get resources, it must wage a war, and to wage a war, it must collect even more resources. The vicious cycle of war is everything about the nation. Without wars, the nation will fall apart! How are you going to stop it?

“I have some boring data here. Would you like to hear it?

“In the last fiscal year, the military budge of the nation was 34% of the GDP, not counting the indirect expenses such as the excessive infrastructure for the usage of wars. If such costs are taken into consideration, perhaps half of the resources of the entire nation have been poured into wars. This is certainly ‘military above everything’!

“In this nation, soldiers who do not work and only fight take up 15% of the whole population. Roughly speaking, every five civilians are supporting a soldier who will consume tremendous resources!

“To support the enormous war machine, the government is not only levying dozens of kinds of fancy war taxes, defense taxes, and legion construction fees, but also taking from the budges of other fields such as education, medical care, and insurance. Still, the deficit is getting huger and huger. Perhaps, in the next ten years, the gap will be beyond repair, and the government will collapse!

“To reduce the deficit, and to make a fortune through wars, the government and the major forces of the nation are all selling war bonds and victory funds, attracting the ordinary citizens and the bottom-level soldiers with trophies and war benefits so that they will devote the last coin in their pocket into the endeavor again.

“But whatever the war bonds and the victory funds are, they can only be redeemed with a complete victory and the tremendous war benefits that are looted during the war!

“In front of you right now is exactly such an insane country!

“Now, just with a few words of yours, you are trying to make the nation stop the war in exchange for worthless peace?

“Let me tell you something. If the war ends today, the government and the top hundred forces in the nation will all collapse tomorrow! The only reason they can survive to this day is that the public believes that they will bring a satisfactory victory and an astronomical quantity of trophies tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, or the day after!

“Do you understand now? We are not talking about the difference between human beings and demons, not rightness and evilness, not the existence of the Imperium of True Human Beings; we are talking about the simplest question of benefits!”

Li Yao took a long breath and said firmly, “I understand that the Blood Demon Sector is a barren world that is already on the verge of collapse because of the shortage of resources. You need a war to survive, but I believe that there must be a second approach!

“Wars bring resources, but communication will, too. The Blood Demon Sector, the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and the Flying Star Sector are highly complementary to each other! If we dedicate our resources to communication and construction instead of a war, we will be able to cast our influence on an even broader world!

“The handiest example is Boneyard!

“Boneyard is only ten thousand lightyears away from us. Although it is not easy to reach the place with the teleportation technology of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, the Flying Star Sector actually boasts very mature space jump technology and starship production technology!

“Even if we do reach Boneyard, the environment there is too harsh, with overwhelming tsunamis every now and then. Therefore, it is impossible for the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector to develop it on their own. But with the help of demons whose bodies are strong enough for the rough environment, we will be able to develop Boneyard profoundly and collect all the available resources on it!

“After all, demons were created in the first place because human beings tried to survive on the planets with harsh environments and therefore performed minor modification on their bodies!

“It doesn’t matter whether or not you are willing to turn into human beings. What matters now is that our technology and benefits can be combined in order to explore a large space of survival instead of fighting in the small pond until there are no winners left in the end!

“Boneyard will only be a start.

“The Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector are two worlds with a single galaxy. We have only one star in the entire Sector. Other than the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, other planets are neither habitable nor boast too many resources that are of use to us. It is also one of the reasons we have to attack each other.

“But the Flying Star Sector is different. In the territory of the Star Ocean Imperium, the Flying Star Sector was a prosperous world that was closer to the heartland of the imperium, with dozens of galaxies and hundreds of resource planets!

“The Flying Star Sector is vast and sparsely populated. The citizens of the Flying Star Sector are not able to develop the resource planets where the environment is usually harsh. Instead, they encounter many dangers in the boundless sea of stars!

“But if the Flying Star Sector, the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector join hands, we will be able to develop the resource planets and establish a new universal fleet with the resources that we collect as a foundation. We will be able to explore more Sectors and let more worlds join the embrace of the alliance!

“The new alliance will be able to collect and utilize resources at an efficiency dozens of times higher than any of the three Sectors right now. The combination of the studies of spiritual energy and biochemistry will also yield even more magnificent warriors and weapons!

“Only such an alliance will be able to compete with the Imperium of True Human Beings and protect our home!

“This is a future that I have come up with after considering for a long time. Perhaps it is still too immature and groundless, and there will certainly be many problems. But Senior Jin, don’t you think that such a future is thousands of times better than the destruction of the Blood Demon Sector when it goes down the path of active aggression?”

Jin Tuyi stared at Li Yao silently for a long time.

Right when Li Yao thought that he had been convinced, Jin Tuyi laughed again.

There was derision in every wrinkle on his face.

The commander-in-chief of the coalition army said casually, “That is indeed a very impressive future. After hearing your words, it appears to me that this is the only way to fight against the Imperium of True Human Beings, isn’t it?”

“Exactly!” Li Yao announced resolutely. “With my computational ability, this is the only approach that I can come up with to make all my compatriots survive. Therefore, no matter how difficult it is, and no matter how many obstacles there are, I will still walk down on the road without turning back. If I run into pebbles, I will kick them away. If I run into giant rocks, I will smash them into pieces!”

Jin Tuyi smiled. “Young man, I appreciate your sincerity and your genuine belief, and the ‘beautiful future’ that you just described has slightly aroused my interest, too. But there is just one little problem. Do you think that the ‘aggressive nation’ that I introduced just now is the Blood Demon Sector?”

Li Yao was dazed. “What do you mean?”

“All the data I provided just now, and the insane, feverish nation I depicted, is not the Blood Demon Sector but the Star Glory Federation, your motherland.”

Chapter 988 - The Federation in the Enemy's Eyes

“The Star Glory Federation is an abnormal country born in war. It has been surrounded by enemies since it was established. For five hundred years, wars have always been the main theme of the country. An enormous interest group that counts on wars has been created, too!

“To this day, hunting demon beasts and demons is still the pillar of industry. Of the top five hundred sects of the federation, 281 provide military services such as hunting demon beasts or resisting the demons as their main business. Such businesses almost cover one fifth of the total job market of the federation.

“Of ‘Cultivators’, the ruling class of the federation, almost one third are combat-type Cultivators. Even the non-combat-type Cultivators are often involved in jobs that are related to war, too.

“For example, the producers of military magical equipment enjoy a higher social position than those who produce civil magical equipment. A culture-type Cultivator tends to create the artworks depicting wars, too. Sometimes, they even join the army and boost the morale with battle hymns, which makes them warriors in a different sense.

“If you don’t understand what an ‘interest group’ is, just think about yourself, Vulture Li Yao.

“Ten years ago, after you killed dozens of nobles of the Blood Demon Sector on Boneyard, I paid special attention to your profile. Just now, I brought out all your files and read them again. It caught my attention that one of your identities was ‘disabled veteran’.

“Since you are a disabled veteran, you must know how many benefits a veteran enjoys in the Star Glory Federation.

“Free usage of public facilities and transportation, tax reduction when operating a company or a sect, a high amount of disability allowance and retirement allowance every month… In the federation, every veteran is an invisible magnate!

“You are very proud of such an identity, aren’t you?

“However, I would very much like to know, when you are enjoying all the benefits that seem justified to you, have you ever considered a little question?

“Money does not fall from the sky. The Star Glory Federation has been at war for five hundred years. How many martyrs and disabled veterans have been produced during the period? Where does the money that paid for your benefits come from?

“The martyrs are easy to handle. Their compensation is only one-time. But as the technology advances, the studies of spiritual energy and biochemistry are both witnessing a high-speed development, and it is becoming more and more difficult for the wounded to die. Even if they die, there is a certain likelihood that they will be turned into spectral Cultivators, who enjoy the same rights as living people do!

“The only result is that the disabled veterans and the retired soldiers of the Star Glory Federation grow larger and larger, and there is simply no way to cut them off. You have formed an enormous interest group.

“How can the position of soldiers be improved? Wars. Only wars! In peacetime, the soldiers in service are nothing better than a pile of garbage, not to mention the veterans!

“Do you see it now? Don’t presume that only demons crave wars. Veterans such as you also yearn, and need, wars. Without wars, you are just a heap of cr*p!

“This is just a tiny interest group within the federation.

“There are also the Cultivation sects whose main businesses are to slay demon beasts and to resist the intrusion of demons, the combat-type Cultivators who know nothing except for fighting, and the leaders who have dedicated all the resources of their sects into ‘war bonds’ and ‘victory funds’. Do you really that they want the war to come to an abrupt end immediately?

“Let me put it more frankly. If total peace is indeed reached, where do you want so many combat-type Cultivators to go? Playing magic in a circus?

“Vulture Li Yao, you are perhaps the biggest miracle of the Star Glory Federation over the past five hundred years since it was born. You’ve advanced to such an unbelievable level after only ten years. That is also the only reason I’m willing to waste so much of my time talking to you.

“However, whatever level you are at, you are still too young.

“You have no idea about true strength. You don’t know the first thing about how the world operates!”

“Your Star Glory Federation has always been an out-and-out war machine since it was established five hundred years. It can only function normally with a great number of war benefits as the lubricant!

“Five hundred years ago, you destroyed the Far East Demon Kingdom and looted tremendous war benefits, which led to a hundred years of brief prosperity.

“Three hundred years ago, when the war benefits ran out, you aimed at the ‘Alliance of Demons of the Grand Desolate Plateau’ again. After seven expeditions, you finally conquered the Grand Desolate Plateau!

“With the war benefits after you conquered the Grand Desolate Plateau, the federation developed at a high speed for another hundred years.

“By that point, the entire Heaven’s Origin Sector was already your territory. There were no more demon kingdoms and demon cities that you could exploit more war benefits. But the interest groups that had expanded to the maximum during the hundreds of years of wars were not likely to just collapse by themselves.

“Therefore, you cast your eyes to the Blood Demon Sector, preparing to use the internal organs of the Blood Demon Sector to lubricate the gears and tracks of the war machine.”

Li Yao was so angry that he was actually laughing. “Senior Jin, I did not expect that you would call white black like this! Even if the Star Glory Federation is truly a war machine, that is because of the threat of demons, isn’t it? Are the Far East Demon Kingdom and the Alliance of Demons of the Grand Desolate Plateau any more merciful than the Star Glory Federation? Before we destroyed them, had there been one second passing by without them thinking of completely destroying us?

“During the past hundred years, haven’t the beast tides of the Blood Demon Sector always invaded the Heaven’s Origin Sector first? You are allowed to attack, but we are forbidden from counterattacking. Is that what you meant?”

“I don’t want to discuss who’s right and who’s wrong,” Jin Tuyi said causally. “I only want to talk about facts with a special Cultivator like you. Which one between the Far East Demon Kingdom and the Star Glory Federation was the intruder and which was the defender years ago is a moot question right now.

“The fact is, no matter how innocent the Star Glory Federation was in the beginning, it has been nurtured by the blood and corpses of the two wars that both lasted a hundred years!

“It is true that the Blood Demon Sector launched countless trial attacks over the past decades, even including the large-scale attacks such as the ‘Battle of Dawn’. If you label us as invaders, I will admit it, too.

“But do you know when the Star Glory Federation issued the first ‘war bond’ targeting the Blood Demon Sector?

“Let me tell you. It was a hundred and forty-two years ago!

“Why? The reason was simple!

“A hundred and seventy years ago, the Blood Demon Sector finished the war against the ‘Alliance of Demons of the Grand Desolate Plateau’ and finally conquered the entire Grand Desolate Plateau.

“The protracted war drained the resources of the federation and put the government’s finances on the brink of collapse.

“Development on the rough, unpopulated Grand Desolate Plateau required a huge amount of investment, but the federal government could not offer a penny!

“In order to raise money, the federal government had to issue a new construction bond, hoping to trade the monopolization of the resources on the Grand Desolate Plateau for the support of the major sects.

“But none of the sects were willing to buy it.

“Why? Because the entire Heaven’s Origin Sector had already been conquered! In the foreseeable future, peace and development would be the mainstream of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and the social position of the federal army and the combat-type Cultivators in the major sects would certainly plummet.

“That was definitely unacceptable for the interest groups who were parasites of wars.

“Therefore, they coerced the federal government into issuing a new war bond while the federal government was seriously lacking funds.

“Right. It is not very accurate to say that they ‘coerced’ the government. In fact, in the Star Glory Federation, which had just secured a glorious victory and conquered the Grand Desolate Plateau, the combat-type Cultivators and the federal army were enjoying greater prestige even. They were worshipped by all the enthusiastic citizens. They had control of the parliament. They were the federal government!

“In the end, the federal government issued a new bundle bond that was a combination of a development bond targeting the Grand Desolate Plateau and a war bond targeting the Blood Demon Sector. According to their fancy description, in order to defend the Grand Desolate Plateau, they had to launch an attack against the Blood Demon Sector, the nest of all demons, before they were attacked!

“All the Cultivators and sects who purchased the bond would be granted mother lodes, lands and… slaves after the Blood Demon Sector was conquered!

“Maybe at the beginning, it was just an expedient that the military and the Cultivators utilized to stabilize their position. They might not have been really interested in attacking the Blood Demon Sector.

“But once the war bond was issued, the sleeping ferocious beast was awakened, and they could not control public opinion anymore.

“The Cultivators and sects who bought the bonds became the most frantic supporters of the war. It must be noted that many of them were the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who boasted tremendous influence, if not control, over parliament!

“Therefore, the first war bonds were issued for the development of the Grand Desolate Plateau. But in order to redeem the war bond, the Blood Demon Sector had to be conquered.

“In order to conquer the Blood Demon Sector, more money had to be raised, more resources had to be summoned, and an army of an even larger scale had to be maintained, all of which demanded a second, a third, a fourth bond…”

Jin Tuyi’s lips cured into a vague smile, but there seemed to be sorrow in his deep eyes. “At that time, the Star Glory Federation knew nothing about the Blood Demon Sector. You compared us to the ‘Far East Demon Kingdom’ and the ‘Alliance of Demons of Grand Desolate Plateau’. You thought that the Blood Demon Sector was an upgraded version of the Grand Desolate Plateau at best. You believed that we would be conquered in no time.

“Your madness did not pause until you learned the capability of the Blood Demon Sector and realized what a formidable opponent you were faced with.

“But it was too late.

“The hiatus of the invasion plan against the Blood Demon Sector led to the greatest economic crisis of the Star Glory Federation a hundred and seven years ago. Fifty-five sects collapsed, and two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators even killed themselves.

“I believe that you must’ve read about the economic crisis, which was later known as ‘Black September’, in your textbooks, but you might not be able to know the truth of the economic crisis from the textbook.”

Chapter 989 - Another Choice!

Li Yao opened his mouth, meaning to argue, but Jin Tuyi simply shook his hands and said, “You must feel that I am embellishing us and smearing the federation and that I am talking as if the demons of the Blood Demon Sector are all innocent rabbits, right?

“That is absolutely not what I meant.

“In fact, it didn’t matter whether the Star Glory Federation issued war bonds targeting the Blood Demon Sector or not. From the second that the Heaven’s Origin Sector was discovered, the Blood Demon Sector has been actively planning invasions against the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

“However, two factors hindered the invasion plan.

“First of all, the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector were still too far away from each other back then. The super-large demon beasts, devilish warships, skeleton tanks, and demon emperors could not pass through the narrow, unstable wormholes. Even if they did, it was barely possible for them to survive in the Heaven’s Origin Sector due to the lack of supplies.

“Secondly, the Blood Demon Sector was seriously divided at that time. The Feather Clan, the Insect Clan, the Horn Clan, the Sea Clan, and the Claw Clan—the five main clans were conspiring and attacking each other every day.

“In the decades after the Heaven’s Origin Sector was discovered, a civil war was fought in the Blood Demon Sector in which the Feather Clan, the Insect Clan, the Sea Clan, and the Claw Clan joined hands and split apart the ‘Horn Fire Kingdom’, a country ruled by the Horn Clan, forcing the Horn Clan to become the vassal of the other four clans.

“So, as you can see, we were equally ambitious, and we wouldn’t hesitate to swallow each other.

“The only difference is that the Blood Demon Sector has developed to the peak. We are strong right now, but we are short of resources, and our future isn’t very promising. Therefore, the Blood Demon Sector decides to attack actively.

“In comparison, the Star Glory Federation is still developing. Your capability becomes higher with each passing day. Your resources are slightly more abundant than the resources of the Blood Demon Sector, too. Therefore, you choose home defense.

“But are we any different from each other essentially? We are both… two cold, cruel, and yet nervous and paranoid hunters in your ‘dark forest’, who are willing to do anything for survival.

“Hehe. Vulture Li Yao, even if your ‘same-origin’ theory is not supported by any proof, I still believe you because the two races are too similar. We are equally cruel, equally greedy, equally brutal, equally ambitious, trying to conquer everything that we see!”

Li Yao sniffed, with intense brilliance beaming out of his eyes, like a rooster whose glamorous feathers were standing up.

Jin Tuyi smiled. “I can see disdain and contempt in your eyes. Although you are saying that ‘human beings and demons are of the same origin’ and ‘human beings and demons are the same’, deep down in your heart, you still feel that we are not the same, don’t you?

“How can the unified, equal, free, and democratic Star Glory Federation be the same as the ruthless, bloodthirsty, backstabbing, evil demons? Isn’t that what you are thinking?

“Let me tell you something. No race is born brutal. Everything is just a matter of resources.

“The Blood Demon Sector does not have sufficient resources to feed too many experts. Therefore, when the number of the silver-blood demons grows too large, the excessive part must be eliminated by cruel internal strife or by invading the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

“It is like how two tigers cannot live on the same mountain. There can only be a limited number of tigers in a forest. If the tigers don’t fight each other and there are more and more of them until their population surpasses what the environment can support, the entire ecological system will collapse.

“We have to be ruthless. We have to attack each other. If we don’t, the only result will be that the number of the silver-blood demons will grow exponentially, and all the resources will be drained in several decades. Then, all demons will starve.

“On the other hand, since the Star Glory Federation has been at war with foreign enemies for hundreds of years without rest, naturally, it is in your culture to be unified and to fight against a common foe.

“If we swap our environment and you’d lived in the barren Blood Demon Sector all the time while we’d lived in the Heaven’s Origin Sector surrounded by foes, you would certainly be as ruthless and heartless as us, and we would be as unified and hotblooded as you.

“I’ve told you a lot of stuff because I am trying to enlighten you. It is useless to convince me, the commander-in-chief of the coalition army. It is even more useless to convince the entire Blood Demon Sector. You must also convince the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and your ambitious compatriots who are craving to expand their territory and gain their fame by slaying demons!

“Trust me. It will be a hundred times more difficult to convince them than to convince me!”

“Senior Jin,” Li Yao said solemnly, “I don’t want to discuss whether one is born kind or vicious. It is a question that carries no answers. If you really think that all the Cultivators are such degenerates, I don’t want to change your mindset right now. But right now, with the threat of the Imperium of True Human Beings drawing near, even the most ambitious Cultivators who hate demons the most will still calm down and think about how to survive, won’t they?”

Jin Tuyi smiled. “In your opinion, under the threat of the Imperium of True Human Beings, the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector and the Blood Demon Sector should be united, right?

“The Flying Star Sector boasts advanced universal sailing and space jump technology. The Heaven’s Origin Sector has been well developed and boasts a high construction ability and abundant experience in the operation of a super-large government. The Blood Demon Sector boasts state-of-the-art biochemical technology and can provide the strongest miners. We will work together to develop Boneyard, the resource planets of the Flying Star Sector and even vaster worlds. That is the only way to fight against the Imperium of True Human Beings, right?”

“Exactly!” Li Yao replied resolutely.

“Then,” Jin Tuyi continued, “what is the position of the miners of the demon race in the new alliance? Slaves?”

Li Yao shook his head. “Of course not. Even though the two parties cannot be integrated shortly, we will still be able to reach a reciprocal agreement at least. Demon miners will be exactly like human miners. They will have their own salary, rights, and benefits. I believe that, after tremendous resources are excavated, both the civilians of mankind and those of the demon race will have a better life than theirs right now.”

Jin Tuyi smiled and said, “Alright. Let’s say that I believe the Imperium of True Human Beings does exist, that I believe that it is necessary for the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector to be united, and that the physically strong miners from the demon race who are more adapted to the harsh environment is an indispensable part in the fight against the Imperium of True Human Beings.

“Then, take a guess. If I were the Speaker of Parliament of the Star Glory Federation or the leader of the Cultivators, what choice would I make when I am given such information?

“I could resist the pressure to force me to resign, stand the humiliation where I am labeled a spy, soothe fury of the public, and suppress the hatred that has lasted hundreds of years, just in order to reach a total peace with the Blood Demon Sector.

“But as a result, the tremendous war bonds and victory funds will never be redeemed, a lot of sects and Cultivators will go bankrupt, and the economic system that is built on ‘conquering the Blood Demon Sector’ will be on the verge of falling apart. As for the administration under my lead, there is no doubt that it will collapse.

“Yes. We are now able to develop Boneyard and the resource planets of the Flying Star Sector on a large scale, but it will take decades for a virtuous circle to be created and yield high returns. The benefits are too far away to resolve the imminent problem.

“Besides, after the peace agreement is reached, demons will legally be equal to human beings. If demons are hired as miners, they will certain claim salaries and benefits. Since they are going to be sent to places far away such as Boneyard or the Flying Star Sector to work, how much do you think I should be paying them?

“The cost on every miner will certainly be extremely high!

“Besides, since we are all in total peace now and are prepared to fight against a common foe, then the major forces of the Blood Demon Sector will certain have a say in the future alliance, right? Who exactly will lead the alliance in the fight against the Imperium of True Human Beings?

“There are too many questions that cannot be solved by just the word ‘peace’.

“However, I do have a second choice.”

Two black flames suddenly burnt in the bottom of Jin Tuyi’s eyes. Baring his sharp teeth, he smiled and said, “Young man, let me tell you what I would do if I were the leader of the Star Glory Federation.

“Step one, I would publicize the threat of the Imperium of True Human Beings and send a delegation to the Blood Demon Sector, hoping to reach total peace with the Blood Demon Sector, exactly as you are going right now.

“Step two, I would send a large number of delegations to the Blood Demon Sector in the next three to five years. They would be offering mediocre technology to the demons while investigating and surveying the Blood Demon Sector.

“In the meantime, I would develop the crystal suit and starship technologies through the large-scale communication with the Flying Star Sector. Also, I would expand the crystal suit legions under the pretext of making preparations for the Imperium of True Human Beings. My aim would be to establish at least thirty crystal suit legions in five years.

“Step three, three to five years later, with the comprehensive survey on the Blood Demon Sector completed, the thirty crystal suit legions as well as the powerful fleets from the Flying Star Sector would be ready, and the demons would have been intoxicated by the delicious wine named ‘peace’. I would mobilize all the troops and attack the Blood Demon Sector, destroying the central armed forces of the Blood Demon Sector!

“Of course, a decapitation strategy could be played first. For example, I could invite the leaders of the demon race to the Heaven’s Origin Sector for a peace gala where I would kill all of them easily… There is no need to talk about such details.

“Step four, after suppressing the resistance of the demon race, I would group and train all the demons into slaves before sending them to mine on Boneyard or the Flying Star Sector!

“If so, the war bonds and victory funds I issued earlier could be redeemed by the land of the Blood Demon Sector, the towns of the demon kingdoms, and the slaves themselves, and the stability of the federal government and the economic system would be maintained.

“More importantly, slaves cost nothing. They could be driven to mine on Boneyard and the resource planets of the Flying Star Sector however I wanted, until the last bit of strength in their bones is exploited. It would not matter even if they were exhausted to death on the glittering crystals they have collected!

“I believe that this is the only solution to collect the most resources in the shortest amount of time with a minimal cost in order to compete with the Imperium of True Human Beings!”

Chapter 990 - Li Yao's Desperation?

Sweating hard, Li Yao was lost for words while Jin Tuyi took the initiative of the conversation.

He thought that everything would be good after he convinced Jin Tuyi of the threat of the Imperium of True Human Beings. It never occurred to him that, even if Jin Tuyi believed in the existence of the Imperium of True Human Beings, the guy could still infer an opposite, dark future different from what was on his mind!

And he could not find any argument to fight back!

“You don’t have anything to say now, do you?” Jin Tuyi said coldly. “Maybe, you can promise me that Cultivators like you are kindhearted and sympathetic, and you will never commit such a foul betrayal. But we are both clear that I cannot wager the fate of a whole race on your personal promise.

“We are talking about the future of a Sector. Vulture Li Yao, you couldn’t promise anything even if your Cultivation was levels higher!

“Did you know? There’s something that is quite ironic.

“The arrival of Flying Star Sector, another world of human beings, motivated the Blood Demon Sector to be united and fight a last war. It has significantly improved the Blood Demon Sector’s desire for war, too!

“Before, after learning the basic situation of the Blood Demon Sector, the Star Glory Federation has always been in an awkward situation because the federation will not be able to gain too many benefits even if the Blood Demon Sector is conquered.

“The resources of the Blood Demon Sector have been mostly drained by the demons. This is a rough land dominated by a rough people.

“Even if the federation pays a high price to conquer the Blood Demon Sector, they might not be able to exploit enough benefits from us to make up for the losses during the war.

“We are a burden for them. They cannot stop fighting us, but they cannot gain much after fighting us, either.

“But it is different now.

“Although the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector are both worlds with a single galaxy where there are not many resource planets, the Flying Star Sector does boast tremendous resource planets that are waiting to be developed.

“As a result, the Star Glory Federation’s demand for ‘slaves’ has soared. Every strong slave means countless crystals, ores, and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures!

“Where can they capture almost infinite slaves? The Blood Demon Sector, of course!

“Do you understand now? The arrival of the Flying Star Sector has multiplied the possible benefits that the Star Glory Federation can gain from the war. Even the Cultivators who are not very passionate about the war will be eager to fight after calculating the gains and losses!

“Vulture Li Yao, you thought that you brought hope of peace back from the Flying Star Sector across the sea of stars.

“But in fact, you’ve brought back a dangerous crystal bomb that increased the determination for war of both Sectors. There’s no stopping it now!”

Li Yao was breathing more and more hastily. His hair was standing up, and blood streaks were all over his eyes. Hot steam was popping up from his body. He was in such a trance as if he was going to be mentally deranged!

“Listen to me!” He scratched his hair hard, as if he did not know what to do anymore. “Senior Jin, listen to me. Even if everything you said might happen, what you are doing right now will only make things worse!

“Jin Xinyue and I have already figured what you are up to!

“You firmly believe that the federation will attack the Blood Demon Sector anyway when the time is right. Therefore, you have to attack before you are attacked and wage a final war through the ‘Red Tide Plan’ before the federation is fully prepared, right?

“You are planning to ask part of the main force of the coalition army of demons and a great amount of cannon fodder to pretend that you are marching on a full scale from the regular route, namely the Dark Desolate Domain to the Grand Desolate Plateau and then to the Giant Blade Pass. But it is actually a fake army. They are not the real main force but decoys!

“Your real plan is to teleport the elite troops of the coalition army and all the demon emperors to the offshore counterattack bases left by the Far East Demon Kingdom in the past through the ‘Eye of Blood Demon’ before you stab into the heart of the federation, right?”

Jin Tuyi did not even bother to blink his eyes. His every facial nerve seemed to be frozen, and there was absolutely no change of emotions. He said casually, “Don’t try to elicit anything from me. I will not talk about any detail of the war plan.”

“Whatever your plan is,” Li Yao roared, “it won’t work out! Your ‘Red Tide Plan’ is just a stepping stone for Elder Nether Spring’s Spore Stratagem!”

Jin Tuyi sighed and said, “Young man, you may find it hard to believe, but the Blood Demon Sector actually has rules. Aside from the clandestine assassinations and setups, public accusations must be supported by evidence! How can I believe you when you are accusing a demon emperor without any valid proof? How will the other ten demon emperors believe you? How will the Insect Clan of the Nether Spring Kingdom believe you? After all, Elder Nether Spring is still the leader of the Insect Clan!”

Li Yao hurried to say, “I don’t any direct proof yet, but let me ask you this—has Elder Nether Spring left you with a troop that will march into the Heaven’s Origin Sector with you? I’m 100% certain that the soldiers he left are spores, or rather, ‘genetic bombs’!”

Jin Tuyi pondered for a moment. His eyelids suddenly bounced as he mumbled, “When Elder Nether Spring left the Pantheon of Demons, he handed over the Nether Shadow Guardians, his best troop, to us…”

Li Yao was so excited that he almost jumped to his feet. He snapped his fingers and said, “That’s right. I dare say that the Nether Shadow Guardians are the spores! Perform a full examination on them, and you will certain find something very unusual from their cells!”

Jin Tuyi eyed Li Yao weirdly.

Li Yao burst into anger. “After everything we’ve talked about, can’t you believe me just once?”

“I have been believing you all the time, young man, when you said the ‘same-origin’ theory or the Imperium of True Human Beings,” Jin Tuyi said casually.

“But I cannot believe you anymore because I have already performed a full examination on them.”

“Huh?”

“Young man, don’t presume that you are the only smart person in the world. Would I be so foolish as to assign the key tasks of the Pantheon of Demons to some random foreigners easily?

“Elder Nether Spring has indeed been acting weird recently, and it was quite unexpected for him to hand over his Nether Shadow Guardians to me. Considering the rumors about the Demon God Virus, I performed the most profound investigation on the Nether Shadow Guardians with an excuse at the earliest chance.

“My investigation included not only their cellular mutations but also their whereabouts over the past couple of years.

“The conclusion is that they are absolutely normal and not carriers of any virus. Also, they have been on duty around the Nether Spring Kingdom over the past couple of years. There’s no way that they went to the Gloomy Wind Islands in the North Pole!

“Even if your spores do exist and were produced in the Nether World in the North Pole, the Nether Shadow Guardians are certainly not carriers.”

Dumbfounded, Li Yao felt that his face was burningly hot from being slapped. “I—I got it now. This is Elder Nether Spring’s trap! Elder Nether Spring already knew that we would grow suspicious about the Nether Shadow Guardians. So, the Nether Shadow Guardians are just a smoke screen, a disguise! Just because the Nether Shadow Guardians are good doesn’t mean Elder Nether Spring is good! Believe me. Believe me. The spores must be hiding in the coalition army right now!”

Jin Tuyi was looking at Li Yao and Jin Xinyue with pity, as if he wanted to extend his hand out of the light beam and pat on Li Yao’s shoulder to comfort him.

“Young man, you do have a lot of insights. I would be very interested in having a longer conversation with you, but there is no time now.”

Li Yao was dazed. “What do you mean?”

Jin Tuyi smiled. “There are two things that I haven’t told you yet.

“Firstly, all your endeavors were futile. Nothing can be changed even if you convince me because the ‘final war’ between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector has already broken out—one minute ago to be precise!

“The invincible coalition army of demons has marched into the Grand Desolate Plateau through the Dark Desolate Domain and is about to attack the Giant Blade Pass for a second time. This time, we will win!”

The air that Li Yao exhaled was almost directly frozen.

“Secondly, while we were having a sincere dialogue, my subordinates have finally determined your precise coordinates!

“I have to say that you are indeed a marvelous genius in refining. Such a jumbled point-to-point communicator turned out to boast advanced anti-jamming and anti-localizing techniques that allow it to fake hundreds of false coordinates within a breath. Also, because of the interference in the sky, it took the experts of the Pantheon of Demons such a long time to lock onto you!”

Li Yao changed his face color greatly. “You—you’ve been tracing us since the beginning?”

“Of course,” Jin Tuyi replied calmly. “Why would I waste so much of my time talking to you if I wasn’t? You do not really think that I was appreciating you, do you?

“You don’t need to look around thinking about your escape plan. Now that I’m telling you this, I have certainly imposed an impregnable dragnet about you that you can never breach.

“Right now, seven devilish warships and five demon emperors have surrounded you, including ‘Ape Fiend’ Yuan Riyue, one of the strongest demon emperors of the Blood Demon Sector.

“His son whom he had highest hope in was killed by you a few days ago.

“Ape Fiend versus Vulture. It’s going to be an amazing battle! Capturing an ‘Ultra-Level Federal Hero’ before the ultimate battles takes place… Well, well, well. I really can’t think of a better way to boost the morale of our army!”

Li Yao’s face suddenly turned pale, and blood seemed to be spurting out of his eyes.

He looked around crazily, as if he was sensing the warships and demon emperors in the sky. A moment later, his face was more determined and crazier!

Desperation! Li Yao’s face was brimming with the heaviest desperation!

He seemed to envision that he, his family and his enemy were slowly falling into a black swamp.

If everybody was helping each other, it was still possible to crawl out of the swamp.

However, although everybody was deeply mired in the swamp, they were still attacking each other, hoping to jump out of the swamp on the enemy’s body.

“I will not let you capture me alive.”

Li Yao laughed miserably. The last bit of vigor inside his eyes gradually dispersed. What appeared in front of Jin Tuyi was nothing better than a walking zombie.

The zombie softly repeated with his remaining strength, “I will not let you capture me alive.”

The light beam in front of Jin Xinyue’s eyes suddenly shone brilliantly like a supernova outbreak!

Chapter 991 - Black Fire Stone and the Sentinel (Part I)

When the dark night of Heavenly Path City was illuminated by the brilliant fireworks, on the Grand Desolate Plateau in the Heaven's Origin Sector, Black Fire Stone felt that his head was rather dizzy because of the overly bright moonlight.

The soft sand below his feet made him feel that he was stepping on the cotton. Staggering for a long time, he finally managed to keep his enormous body steady with his two hooves.

Black Fire Stone took a long breath. The faintness that had only just faded away flooded back again. The air of the Heaven's Origin Sector was so fresh and sweet that it was almost intoxicating for him. He kept inhaling and forgot to exhale until his lungs were about to explode.

Holding his pounding heart, Black Fire Stone cringed and eyed the new world carefully with the companions around him.

As a black-blood soldier at the bottom level, he had visited the Heaven's Origin Sector countless times in the illusions with his companions of the same troop, but the real feelings he had after he was teleported to the world could not be simulated by any narcotic drugs.

The sky was so stable, the moon was so bright, the breeze was so gentle, and the air was so sweet. Even the dust that was rolled up by the wind did not seem to carry any venom or poison, much less the hateful blood-sucking gadflies!

Black Fire Stone could not understand why human beings call the place ‘Grand Desolate Plateau’. Compared to the Blood Demon Sector, was it ‘desolate’ at all?

In Black Fire Stone’s opinion, the place should be called… should be called… called…

Black Fire Stone extended his four thick, short fingers and scratched his tough scalp, grinning and leaving the question behind.

As Black-Horned Loading Bulls, a branch of the black-blood demons, Black Fire Stone and his brothers had never been good at thinking. It was their habit to not think about the things that they could not figure out. All they had to do was to listen to the lord’s command.

Black Fire Stone bulged his big eyes and looked for his lord.

He found himself in the middle of a white, overwhelming desert. Behind him was the stormy, volatile Dark Desolate Domain. But in front of him, it was a flat plateau without the least hinderance, except for the few lone sentry posts where lights of panic were flashing.

After the merging of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector accelerated, the Dark Desolate Domain, as the melding point of the two Sectors, grew larger and larger. Right now, it had already taken up one third of the Grand Desolate Plateau from the north.

It was much easier to rip apart a wormhole in the sky of the Grand Desolate Plateau, too. At the cost of an insignificant number of crystals, it would be enough to send a devilish warship or a demon emperor to the Heaven's Origin Sector!

Of course, Black Fire Stone did not know such complicated issues. He only noticed that colorful light balls were appearing in the air all around him.

At first, the light balls were shivering like fireflies, but very soon, they expanded into giant torches more than ten meters in diameter. When the dazzling brilliance dispersed and faded away, countless demons had already shown up in the Heaven's Origin Sector!

Black Fire Stone was too unintelligent to remember the names of the demons. He had never seen so many bizarre-looking companions, either.

Sometimes, he even doubted whether or not the newcomers were his companions because they looked too strange. Some of them were hybrids of lions and tigers. Some had four wings and almost ten eyes with long tail made of colorful feathers behind them. Some were round like balloons floating in the air with layers of sharp thorns on their bodies. When other demons accidentally touched them, they would shriek earsplittingly, and their body size would significantly expand, with their sharp thorns turning into red.

Those guys did not seem easy to deal with. If he ran into them in a forest, Black Fire Stone would certainly run away as fast as possible.

But right now, Black Fire Stone knew that they were on the same side.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Fulminations that sounded like dull thunder broke out in midair. Dozens of light spots resembling fireflies condensed into a magnetic field of mystic rays almost a hundred meters in diameter.

An enormous object was taking shape quickly in the magnetic field.

When the mystic rays dispersed, under the pale moonlight, an enormous insect that was almost five floors tall, with black shells all over its body and a long horn dozens of meters long at the center of its forehead, appeared!

Hum!

The black shells all over the insect’s body were shivering rapidly, spurting out streams of intense demonic energy, as if a hundred awe-inspiring flags were flapping on his body.

Black Fire Stone could not help but tremble.

Although he did not know what the name of the insect was, as a member of the Horn Clan, it was his natural instinct to revere and worship the divine beasts with great horns.

“Moo!”

“Moo! Moo! Moo!”

Black Fire Stone and his companions of the same troop echoed with the giant insect.

A while back, Black Fire Stone had still been a little bit scared of the brutal human beings, but he was fearless now.

Such an awesome insect whose horn was dozens of meters long was here. Could the enemy ever defeat such a godly beast however brutal they were?

“Hurry up! Hurry up! Hurry up!”

The lord who had golden horns and was wearing a black combat suit and dark red armor finally showed up. He waved the super large hammer carved with beautiful patterns hard and roared, “Brute Hammer Troop, gather immediately! What are you stupid bulls dawdling for? Are you f*cking planning on living here forever?

“The evil human beings have occupied the Grand Desolate Plateau, the territory of demons, for two hundred years! They burnt out cities to the ground, annihilated our compatriots, and destroyed our civilization on the Grand Desolate Plateau!

“Right now, after destroying the Grand Desolate Plateau, they are trying to extend their evil hand to our home, the Blood Demon Sector!

“The evil human beings are launching an invasion against the Blood Demon Sector in secret!

“They are going to destroy the Blood Demon Sector in the same way they destroyed the Grand Desolate Plateau! They are going to kill our family the way they kill the demons of the Far East Demon Kingdom and the Grand Desolate Plateau!

“To protect our family, and to defend our homeland, we must cut off the evil hand and eliminate all the malicious human beings!

“Human beings are cowards who only dare launch their flying swords and crystal cannons from behind their city walls!

“But we are the blood descendants of the Pangu Clan. We are the children of Kuafu, Gonggong, and Nuwa!

“This is our last war. The glorious Pantheon of Demons is awaiting us in the clouds!

“Even if our body is destroyed, our soul shall be resurrected in the glorious Pantheon of Demons to realize the eternal immortality!

“Obliteration, rebirth, immortality!”

“Obliteration, rebirth, immortality!”

Black Fire Stone’s tiny ears pricked up as he tried hard to listen.

To be honest, he did not really know what the lord was talking about.

He glanced at his friend, One Ear, who had grown up in the same village with him and was enlisted together with him half a year ago, and noticed that his friend was grimacing at him in confusion, too.

Black Fire Stone grinned in amusement. He was quite happy knowing that his friend was as silly as him.

After living in the military camp for half a year, Black Fire Stone, who was naturally endowed with enormous physically strength, did not have many complaints. But the propaganda three times a day and all the talks about ‘evil human beings’ and ‘glorious Pantheon of Demons’ were giving him quite a headache.

He did not know exactly what the complicated words meant. He only vaguely learned that human beings were not satisfied when they had the best land in the universe—they were still trying to burn down his cottage, kill his wife, and cook his children for supper.

Before, Black Fire Stone did not know exactly what the best land in the universe was.

But right now, breathing the fresh air on the Grand Desolate Plateau, he seemed to have realized what it meant.

Human beings were calling such a wonderland ‘Grand Desolate Plateau’; what would the places that were not desolate in their eyes look like?

Black Fire Stone was suddenly grabbed by fury.

Although he had worked hard in the military camp for half a year, he had never forgotten his experience when he looked for food in the barren land.

He could not understand why human beings would be unsatisfied and still want to take over his small, pitiful village when they already had such a fabulous place.

Look. The aspens here did not bite, and the cacti would not shoot out venomous thorns. What a beautiful place!

If he could build a village with his brothers in this place, there would not be a second place in the universe that he would want to go to.

Black Fire Stone could not understand it. Then again, it was his habit to not think about things that he could not understand.

He only knew that he did not want human beings to burn his cottage, kill his wife, and make his ugly children into soup.

“Bring forth the scarabs!” the golden-horned lord suddenly shrieked.

All the Blue-Horned Loading Bulls were excited. The scarab was a treasure when they were in the military camp. Only the black-blood demons who trained themselves hardest and fought the craziest would have the privilege of getting a dosage. They did not expect that every one of them would have one shot.

A fat, round, translucent green beetle was given to Black Fire Stone. Black Fire Stone moved his nose over and took a greedy breath of the scarab after slightly rubbing its bottom, then he stuck the scarab to the back of his head.

Chi!

The mouthpart of the scarab pierced into his head like lightning, injecting a tremendous amount of nervous stimulant into his brain. The stimulation on his brain nerves made Black Fire Stone roar loudly, and his body size expand. His skin was shattered, and yet he did not feel the slightest pain. He had never been more comfortable in his entire life!

In a trance, he was seeing all kinds of illusions.

Poor village… Purple sky… Three bloody moons… The shrieks of his kids at night because of hunger… His wife’s warm body…

The golden-horned lord pointed at the sky and shouted, “Do you see it? The glorious Pantheon of Demons is awaiting us in the clouds!”

“I see it now!”

“I see it now!”

“Moo! Moo! Moo!”

Everybody in the Brute Hammer Troop was echoing.

Black Fire Stone did not see it.

Ever since his wife appeared in the illusions, he could not see anything else.

He bit his tongue hard and gritted his teeth to kick away his wife from his brain. Then, he bulged his eyes, which were completely bloodshot, while he stared at the gray, gloomy clouds.

“I see it now!”

“I see it now! The glorious Pantheon of Demons!”

“Obliteration! Rebirth! Immortality!”

His companions of the same troop were shouting one after another. Even One Ear was shrieking that he had seen it before shaking his tail gloatingly toward Black Fire Stone.

Chapter 992 - Black Fire Stone and the Sentinel (Part II)

Black Fire Stone was a bit uneasy.

It was said that only the demons whose hearts were pure and loyal to their ancestors would see the Pantheon of Demons in the clouds.

Black Fire Stone thought that he deserved better—he had always been loyal to his ancestors.

Although he was not very clear who his ancestors, namely Pangu, Gonggong, Kuafu, Houyi, among others, were and what they did exactly, was he not the one who paid the most ‘ancestral tax’ every month? Also, he had been obedient and never violated any of the ancestral rules that the lords had told him.

This is all that silly woman’s fault!

Black Fire Stone cursed in his heart. Because of anxiety, his eyes were packed with blood streaks quickly.

Noticing that he was the only one in the entire Brute Hammer Troop who could not see it, Black Fire Stone felt that his eyes were red and swollen and that the world was swirling before him. In his fury and apprehension, he seemed to see a colorful glow in the middle of the clouds.

“I see it! I see it now!”

Black Fire Stone did not know what the ‘glorious Pantheon of Demons’ looked like, but he was weeping in excitement.

“That is the Pantheon of Demons, our destination in the sea of stars!”

The gold-horned lord was waving his hammer while he roared, “Let’s go, warriors! Show the cunning, cowardly human beings the awesomeness of the blood descendants of Pangu!”

At the front, countless crimson fireflies were leading the way. The Black-Horned Loading Bulls, the Shooting Star Iron Bulls, and the Iron-Tailed Brute Bulls… all the bulls seemed to be exuding flames. The demonic energy spurting out of their nostrils condensed into rolling red clouds in midair!

Together, they launched a messy, disordered charge toward the sentry posts of the human beings.

Black Fire Stone’s head had been burned by the nervous stimulant. Lust for killing was quickly replacing his calmness. It was even more difficult for him to picture what the ‘glorious Pantheon of Demons’ looked like right now.

According to the lords, as long as he fought valiantly, he would be able to ascend into the glorious Pantheon of Demons, and he would never have to worry about how to till his barren farmland that was rife with Venomous Thorny Grass and Double Tailed Scorpions. There was endless ambrosia in the Pantheon of Demons. He would need to farm no more, mine no more, and just enjoy his life every day!

Black Fire Stone had no idea what ‘ambrosia’ was. He only guessed that it must be something very delicious.

But Black Fire Stone did not even know what ‘something very delicious’ actually tasted like. Since he was born, everything Black Fire Stone ate could barely keep him fed. His food had never been anything remotely close to delicious.

For some reason, in the last moment of his consciousness, a shining, greasy grilled chicken suddenly jumped out.

It was a picture of a human village that he had seen in his illusions.

It was a big, big, big village—so big that Black Fire Stone did not even know how to describe it. He had forgotten all the other details about the village, except for the greasy grilled chicken that was being roasted carefully and appeared succulent with oil dropping down nonstop. The picture had been etched to his brain, and he even remembered the burning sound when the grilled chicken oil dropped to the firewood vividly.

At every tough night in the military camp, after missing his wife and his two children, Black Fire Stone had been pondering one question. How did the grilled chicken taste exactly?

Was it as fresh as ‘Bitter Grass Bug’ or as crisp as ‘Red Fern Root’?

Of course, Black Fire Stone had seen chicken and captured chicken before, but he had never had the privilege to eat one because they were too precious.

Moreover, the lords did not allow them to. The lords declared that bulls were born to eat grass. At the very least, black-blood bulls should eat grass. They could get a few bugs to fill their stomachs but nothing more. It was an ancestral rule.

If he ate meat and violated the ancestral rule, he would not be able to go to the Pantheon of Demons after he died. Not just him, his wife and his children would be forbidden, too.

I wonder, is there grilled chicken in the ‘glorious Pantheon of Demons’? The ancestors will allow me to feast upon meat there, won’t they?

Black Fire Stone thought a lot of things as he rushed forward.

The black-blood soldiers did not carry weapons or armor. Their mission was to charge at all the sentry posts, bastions, and fortresses after they were teleported to the Heaven’s Origin Sector and clear the obstacles for the following troops of the coalition army. Or rather, they were asked to stuff the firing posts with their body.

Black Fire Stone was running fast. His burning head made him feel as if his blood was boiling. He seemed to have grown wings, and his soul gradually left his ugly, clumsy shell.

Thinking about the greasy grilled chicken, he was more and more energetic. Like a roaring gust, he quickly surpassed all of his companions, including One Ear, and charged at a human sentry post that was protected by more than ten crystal cannons.

A confused smile popped up on Black Fire Stone’s face, but he shook his tail toward One Ear in retaliation for his friend’s mockery a moment ago.

That was just One Ear, whose limbs were so soft that the guy could never outrun him. What a great waste of the muscles! No wonder his wife chose to marry him instead of One Ear, whose horn was thicker and bigger.

If I really make my way to the Pantheon of Demons in the sky and meet grilled chicken, I will certainly save half for my wife and kids!

Black Fire Stone frowned. With the few active braincells he had left, he pondered carefully how he could smuggle a grilled chicken out of the Pantheon of Demons.

He had never stolen anything in his life before!

One of the crystal cannons in the human sentry post in front of him shot out streams of dazzling, colorful brilliance, exactly the same as the ‘glorious Pantheon of Demons’ he had seen in the clouds a moment ago.

This is odd. Why is the Pantheon of Demons in the middle of human beings’ cannons?

Black Fire Stone was baffled. Then he found himself flying high in the sky. His mouth was suddenly sticky, wet, and sour.

Is this the taste of grilled chicken?

Black Fire Stone struggled, trying to roll his tongue to taste the fabulous flavor more carefully.

He straightened his arms and waved crazily in midair, hoping to snatch the greasy, delicious grilled chicken.

…

In the human sentry post on the other side of the battlefield, a sentinel, with a long beard and a big red nose that betrayed his drinking problem, was watching the dense, continuously growing red spots on the light beam. He spat on the ground and mumbled, “I’m truly f*cking unlucky.”

After the Battle of Dawn, since most of the towns and military bases of the federation on the Grand Desolate Plateau had been demolished, it was impossible to maintain a long supply line or to build an enormous war base in the north of the Grand Desolate Plateau.

Now, the federation had retreated to the Giant Blade Pass, where the elites were gathered. In the meantime, more resources would be dedicated to the construction of the crystal suit legions.

On the vast desert in the north of the Grand Desolate Plateau, the only defenses were the sparse sentry posts.

The sentry posts were established not for the purpose of resistance but to send out alarms and the details of the intruders when the army of demons appeared.

The federal soldiers in the sentry posts knew their responsibility and their fate when the demons came.

But that was how a war went. The magical equipment of the Star Glory Federation was not so developed that it could completely replace the sentinels on the Grand Desolate Plateau, where the spiritual and magnetic environment was complicated.

The only thing that the federal army could do was reduce the duty duration of every sentinel, who would be replaced every seven days.

For every sentinel, as long as they were on duty for seven days, they would be given a one-month holiday and allowed to reunite with their family.

But the sentinel here had been on duty for seven and a half days.

The guy who was supposed to take his place had encountered a thunderstorm on his way, which had damaged his carrier. The vehicle was undergoing emergency maintenance. Therefore, the sentinel was forced to persist for one more day.

But the intruders were already here.

The sentinel was trembling hard. All of his fingers were dancing. He was apparently a thickheaded, unemotional man, and yet he was crying sadly like a little kid who had been wronged.

“F*ck!”

Crying, the sentinel cursed, “F*ck! F*ck! F*ck!”

The sentinel injected a sedative into his neck while crying before he picked up a cigarette. Then, he turned on the crystal processor and quickly inputted everything that he observed.

As the data and pictures were sent to the rear in the form of waves, the sentinel was more or less relieved, only to find that his snot had almost dripped to his lips.

The sentinel wiped off his tears and snot with his dirty sleeve. Then, he brought out his personal crystal processor from his pocket. As if he were touching the most precious gem in the world, he triggered a light beam.

This place was the frontier of the Grand Desolate Plateau. The electromagnetic environment there was too complicated for the soldiers to talk to the heartland of the federation directly. Besides, the federal army had its regulations, too. Soldiers were allowed to bring their crystal processor but not be connected to the Spiritual Nexus.

What the sentinel triggered was just a 3D photo stored inside the crystal processor.

In the photo was a smiling girl whose hair was curled and two vigorous boys.

The bigger boy was even grimacing at him.

The sentinel smiled. Then he suddenly recalled that he had told his wife that he had quit smoking. He hurried to extinguish the cigarette and picked his teeth with his tongue. It was not until then that he kissed the illusionary mystic rays, breaking them into shattered ripples.

The sentinel put the crystal processor down. He turned around and picked up a crystal cannon.

Such fixed crystal cannons could be controlled by the central crystal processor in the sentry post. He only needed to sit in front of the light beam and monitor the progress.

However, the sentinel still changed one of the crystals cannons from the auto mode into manual mode.

Generally speaking, a crystal cannon required three soldiers to be operated manually.

But the sentinel gritted his teeth and bashed the crystal cells into the magazine with all his strength.

Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum!

Electric arcs were dancing on the three rails of the crystal cannon, which spread to his arms and ripped apart his skin, flesh, and nerves!

The tears of the sentinel turned red. Glancing at the broken ripples on the light beam for the last time, he took a long breath and moved his head to the scope of the crystal cannon. With his left eye narrowed, he locked onto the demon that was leading the charge.

It was a mad bull.

He was running so fast that bloody sweat was seeping out of his body. The bloody sweat was then vaporized by the heat, making his enormous body even more hideous.

The mad bull was grinning hideously. His eyes, which were about to bulge out of his head, were brimming with madness. Bright yellow saliva was flowing out of his mouth, suggesting that he had been starved for a long time.

It was not hard for the sentinel to imagine what would happen when such a devil marched into a town.

The sentinel touched the trigger rune array of the crystal cannon hard with his fingers, or rather, fingerbones, before he mumbled, “Bring it on, b*stards!”

Chapter 993 - Air Fight!

When Jin Luanyun ripped apart the clouds in the sky of the Grand Desolate Plateau leading his ‘Gold Eagle Troop’, he did not see the ‘glorious Pantheon of Demons’.

What he did see was the coalition army of demons that was surging like tides from the underground and marching on the vast desert in destructive waves. In just one moment, the ten or so sentry posts of the federal army were swallowed. The intruders dyed the gray desert black.

The battle progressed quite well.

The obstacles ahead had been cleared. The first batch of low-level demons had already steadied themselves and established a defense line.

Behind the defense line, teleportation arrays of an even larger scale were being built. Stripes and runes that took up hundreds of square meters were blossoming like brilliant works, guiding the way for the expedition army of a different world like burning torches.

The low-level demons and the smaller skeleton tanks could be projected to the Heaven’s Origin Sector through the wormholes.

However, the demon emperors and the super-large devilish warships could only be teleported by constructed teleportation arrays, which would be the temporary bridges between the two Sectors.

In the war between the two Sectors, teleportation was the most critical step. It equaled to the ‘beach landing’ in ancient wars!

Jin Luanyun’s ‘Gold Eagle Troop’, which was made of thirteen silver-blood demons of the Gold Crow Kingdom and thirteen biochemical beasts, had been assigned the task of ensuring the safety of the air during the ‘beach landing’ and to clear the possible hostile scouts.

In the previous instances that the Blood Demon Sector waged a war on the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Claw Clan, the Horn Clan, and the Insect had been the main force, most of which were pure ground troops. Only the Insect Clan boasted certain units that could attack from the midair, such as Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes or Colorful Locusts.

This was the first time that the ace air force of the Blood Demon Sector had shown up in the sky of the Heaven’s Origin Sector openly!

Jin Luanyun could not help but feel his heart racing and his blood boiling when he thought about that.

He was already determined to let the Cultivators riding on flying swords know who the real dominators of the sky were!

“Intense spiritual waves have been detected 170 kilometers away.”

The ‘Gold Eagle’, Jin Luanyun’s biochemical beast, keenly sensed the enemy from the south. The biochemical brain twitched violently while it searched for similar frequencies in the memory unit.

Very soon, the biochemical brain reported a result.

“The frequency of the enemy’s spiritual waves is very similar to the waves when certain arts of the ‘Agile Electricity Sect of the Heaven’s Origin Sector’ are functioning according to our database.

“The Agile Electricity Sect is one of the top five hundred sects of the Star Glory Federation. They boast an amazing skill named ‘Heavenly Vision Technique’, which grants them better eyesight than many high-resolution crystal cameras!”

Jin Luanyun understood it now.

They were the scouts of the enemy.

“Continue analyzing the firepower of the enemy. Pay special attention to the wind shear. Enter the turbulent area on our left flank and cover our demonic energy with the chaotic wind. Rapid fire when we are within 30 kilometers!”

Jin Luanyun issued commands to his subordinates. Through the biochemical nerves, he adjusted the angle of the feathers of his Gold Eagle precisely, accelerating its speed to a new height, while he dashed toward the Cultivators of the Agile Electricity Sect.

When he was a hundred and twenty kilometers away from the enemy, the Gold Eagle finally detected their details.

“Twenty-two ‘Venomous Bee Armed Shuttles’ have been detected. The armed shuttles of this model are usually maneuvered by ordinary soldiers.

“Seven Cultivators have been detected, including four in the Refinement Stage, two in the Building Foundation Stage, and… one in the Core Formation Stage!”

When Core Formation Stage popped up in Jin Luanyun’s head, he sensed excruciating pain!

A flying sword!

Over-the-horizon attacks were the advantage of the Core Formation Stage Cultivators. When they were still more than a hundred kilometers away from each other, and neither of them had locked onto the enemy, the Core Formation Stage Cultivator shot out a rampant flying sword toward him!

Jin Luanyun seemed to be able to envision the flying sword that was surrounded by electric arcs and darting toward him unstoppably through the clouds and win!

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

The eyes of the Gold Eagle were covered in multiple layers of membranes, and its pupils were enlarging and shrinking incessantly, triggering the optical cells on the retina to the maximum. The trajectory of the flying sword was determined in the blink of an eye. Detailed information jumped out of the biochemical brain, too.

“The Mystic Moon III flying sword is 1.7 meters long and weighs 55 kilograms. The body of the sword can accommodate 7.5 kilograms of crystals of the electricity class. The maximum shooting range is 150 kilometers. The best shooting range: 80 kilometers. The greatest feature about the flying sword is that it is surrounded by four tiny ‘servant swords’ as stabilizing fins. The master sword and the servant swords are restricted by the magnetic field. Together with the three groups of vector thrusting rune arrays, the flying sword can change the point of attack at the last phase of its trajectory. It is very difficult to dodge!”

The flying sword was designed for air wars. It boasted of heat tracing, demonic energy tracing, automatic aim, and multiple attack pattern technologies.

Jin Luanyun sensed that he had been locked onto.

He sniffed, and his lips curled into a confident smile.

Over-the-horizon attacks were always what the Cultivators were best at. However, once he was within thirty kilometers from the enemy, and when a close-distance dogfight began, it would be showtime of the demons!

Bring it on. My ‘Gold Eagles’ are entirely different from the Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes and Colorful Locusts that you dealt with in the past!

Swoosh!

Jin Luanyun rushed exactly toward the ‘Mystic Moon III’ flying sword at the full speed. In the end, he was even able to see the shining edge of the flying sword with his own eyes!

When the flying sword was about the pierce through the biochemical beast and him, he suddenly plummeted, manipulating the Gold Eagle as if he had hit an invisible wall. He dived toward the ground vertically, but he left dozens of golden, glittering feathers in the sky, which were simulating the demonic energy of a Gold Eagle!

A clone of demonic energy as a decoy!

However, the ‘Mystic Moon III’ flying sword also turned a sharp turn in front of the false clone of demonic energy and came after him again!

This is an expert!

Jin Luanyun was excited.

The enemy truly deserved to be a Core Formation Stage Cultivator. At the last moment, he adjusted the direction of the flying sword with his telepathic thoughts. Also, the performance of the ‘Mystic Moon III’ flying sword was rather impressive. It was travelling at three times the speed of sound, and the distance was so short. Still, it managed to make the turn!

Jin Luanyun was doing his best. The Gold Eagle dashed rapidly in midair as if it had been caught in an invisible swirl.

The flying sword surrounded by purple electric arcs closely followed him. It was shrieking and rushing in circles behind his back, too.

Suddenly—

The ‘Mystic Moon III’ flying sword staggered, and the tip of the sword trembled violently like a spring.

Jin Luanyun smiled and took the opportunity to release a cluster of scarlet venomous gas, wreathing the ‘Mystic Moon III’ flying sword.

Corroded by the venomous gas, the crystals stored inside the flying sword were detonated very quickly, and the blade broke into a dazzling fireball in the sky.

Everything was superb about the ‘Mystic Moon III’ flying sword, except that it had a great weakness. When it was hovering rapidly in small circles, the performance of its sensation rune arrays would drop significantly, thereby hindering the sword from perceiving the subtle changes in the air.

Jin Luanyun took the advantage of the weakness and led the ‘Mystic Moon III’ flying sword to a turbulent area that he had discovered earlier. In such a way, he successfully resolved the over-the-horizon attack from a Core Formation Stage Cultivator!

While he was dealing with the flying sword, his teammates had already lunged close and attacked the human beings’ scouts.

They were exclusively silver-blood demons riding their biochemical beasts. They were definitely the most terrifying existences in the sky!

The ordinary soldiers piloting the ‘Venomous Bee Armed Shuttles’ were no match for them at all. The few Refinement Stage Cultivators were retreating quickly under their attack, too. Only the three Cultivators in the Building Foundation Stage and the Core Formation Stage who were wearing crystal suits could still fight back.

However, after Jin Luanyun, as a demon king, dodged another three flying swords and blew up two, and when he was finally ten kilometers away from the Core Formation Stage Cultivator, the brief impasse was completely shattered.

When Jin Luanyun lunged toward the Core Formation Stage Cultivator with every feather on the Gold Eagle standing up like daggers, he happened to see that a red sun was rising slowly amid the magnificent clouds in the east, dying the sky into a plateau of blood and an ocean of fire.

The spurting red sun was as brilliant and glorious as the future of the Blood Demon Sector!

…

Yuwen Jiubian stood above the clouds, staring down at the earth coldly with his hands behind his back.

As a demon emperor, he was the supreme commander of the coalition army of demons in the north during the all-in national war.

Below the clouds, his troops were pushing forward unstoppably.

The Gold Eagle Troop of the Feather Clan had cleared the airspace a thousand square kilometers nearby. The Heavenly Might Bronze Bull Legion of the Horn Clan had crushed the biggest stronghold of the federal army in the north of the Grand Desolate Plateau. The Fierce Wind Fiery Leopard Legion of the Clan had even marched five hundred kilometers ahead as if nobody were in their way.

However, Yuwen Jiubian knew clearly that all their endeavors were futile.

The Gold Eagle Troop, the Heavenly Might Bronze Bull Legion, and the Fierce Wind Fiery Leopard Legion were all the elite troops he had right now. The remaining insects and beasts, which seemed hideous and overwhelming, were nothing but neatly-camouflaged cannon fodder.

He was commanding a suicidal attack that was destined to fail.

His sole mission was to lead the false main force and march toward the Giant Blade Pass ‘rampantly’ so that all the elite troops of the Heaven’s Origin Sector would be nailed to the Giant Blade Pass. He was even expected to bait the enemy into the Grand Desolate Plateau and ‘crush’ his own army.

Everything was meant to pave the way for the real main force in the southern battlefield and the Red Tide Plan!

“So what?”

Yuwen Jiubian smiled while he was watching. He mumbled, “Even if the Gold Eagle Troop, the Heavenly Might Bronze Bull Legion, and the Fierce Wind Fiery Leopard Legion are all that I have, I will still make every soldier and Cultivator of the Star Glory Federation remember my name, Yuwen Jiubian, in the thousand years to come!”

He was amused by his own declaration the moment he said it. He shook his head in self-mockery.

He almost forgot that there would be no more ‘Star Glory Federation’ in a thousand years. It would be completely devoured by the Blood Demon Sector, with no bones left.

Yuwen Jiubian had every faith in that. He believed that the slowly-rising, splendid sun not far away would soon belong to them and the demon race!

Chapter 994 - The Most Crucial Information

While Yuwen Jiubian was rushing forward with the fake main force of the coalition army of demons, Heavenly Path City, the heart of the Blood Demon Sector, was in chaos.

In the dark night, seven devilish warships were like tiger sharks that suddenly leapt out of the black water and bared the sharpest tusks after lurking in the deep sea for a long time.

Five demon emperors also unleashed thunderous demonic energy both in the sky and on the ground while they locked onto the place where vague spiritual waves were being sent out.

‘Ape Fiend’ Yuan Riyue was three meters tall. He was an out-and-out ancient ape which had burst into fury. Turning into a streak of brightness, he darted toward Vulture Li Yao’s shelter first!

However, the moment he rushed into the ragged valley, a cottage that was deep inside the valley suddenly emitted the most dazzling brilliance like a supernova outbreak!

For a moment, the dark night of Heavenly Path City was illuminated into broad daylight. Mystic rays soared into the sky like a volcanic eruption. The light blossomed into sparks that enveloped both the five demon emperors and the seven devilish warships!

The five demon emperors did not foresee that ‘Vulture Li Yao’ would be so determined. Caught unprepared, they hurried to retreat!

Thankfully, the bombs had been arranged in such a way that the damage was focused in the enemy’s nest and did not hurt them at all. After a series of earsplitting explosions, both the demon emperors and the devilish warships were totally unharmed. The only thing left was a steaming crater almost ten meters deep on the ground.

It appeared as if a shooting star had smashed down vertically from the sky and demolished the shabby building without dealing any damage to the houses nearby!

The five demon emperors looked at each other in bewilderment. They released their telepathic thoughts carefully to explore the debris, only to discover that the bottom of the deep pit was still thousands of degrees hot!

“Seeing that it was not good, he detonated such a powerful bomb to kill himself. He didn’t even leave a bone to us!”

“The guy was so brutal even to himself!”

“What a shame. If he had hesitated for several seconds, we would’ve had a chance to capture him alive!”

“The commander-in-chief was too incautious. How could the enemy have been a regular Cultivator when he had stirred trouble in the Blood Demon Sector for such a long time without being captured? Reminding the enemy at the critical moment? What was the commander-in-chief thinking?”

His face gloomy, ‘Ape Fiend’ Yuan Riyue clenched his fists hard, and cracking noises echoed from the bones. His canine teeth pierced deep into his lips, but he did not say anything.

He did not except the outcome to be like this.

Such an outcome was even more unacceptable than one in which he was killed by the enemy after a fierce battle!

Hoooo!

‘Ape Fiend’ Yuan Riyue finally could not contain himself any longer. The golden hair all around the demon emperor’s body was standing up, and his chest was expanding like a balloon while he bashed his heart hard and uttered deafening roars.

The blast swept over like a hurricane and collapsed the houses hundreds of square meters nearby!

…

Thirty kilometers away, at the highest point in another messy, dilapidated neighborhood, Li Yao opened the window slightly and observed the view far away through crystal cameras with super high resolutions with great interest.

“We seem to have been discovered.”

His lips curled up. “You father did indeed dispatch tremendous soldiers to block and kill us. Thankfully, they are all distracted by the decoy right now. Let’s take the opportunity to escape out of the city according to Evacuation Plan D!”

Li Yao threw everything in the room that was indicative of their identity into his Cosmos Rings in three seconds before he dragged Jin Xinyue to rush in the dirty lower district of the city.

The coalition army of demons had only just examined the area. Also, their attention was distracted by the great explosions far away. Therefore, their vigilance was very low.

The two of them did not meet any obstacles while they were moving forward in the ragged alleys. Fifteen minutes, they had already made their way to the suburbs of Heavenly Path City.

Half an hour later, they appeared in a spacious cave deep inside a hill.

It was not until this moment that Li Yao took a long breath in relief and grinned at Jin Xinyue. “Thankfully, we’ve got out. It was not a complete failure at all!”

Jin Xinyue, on the other hand, was eyeing her master as if he were a ghost.

Half a day ago, Jin Xinyue had been rather doubtful.

She wondered why Li Yao went through the unnecessary trouble and spent two days making a ‘decoy’ when their ‘persuasion plan’ was already very thorough.

It was true that the point-to-point communicator for miners through which they talked to Jin Tuyi was hidden in the half-basement in the depths of Heavenly Path City.

However, Li Yao had modified the point-to-point communicator and connected it to a biochemical brain.

The biochemical brain was connected to another biochemical brain in another shelter thirty kilometers away through brainwaves.

Just like crystal processors could be connected wirelessly into a local area network, biochemical brains could be connected to each other, too.

The mechanism they adopted was the ‘magnification of brainwaves’, which was similar to telepathy. The information could be transmitted through the mutual oscillation and interaction of the brainwaves.

In Heavenly Path City, the biochemical brains of countless demons were releasing such ‘brainwaves’ to the outside world incessantly in ‘brain nets’ large and small.

It was difficult to lock onto a certain brainwave if the frequency of the brainwave was unknown.

Li Yao sent his telepathic thoughts to the secret hideout thirty kilometers away through the biochemical brain next him before the signals were translated into spiritual waves and delivered into the commander-in-chief’s residence by the crystal processor.

Jin Tuyi might have thought that Li Yao was talking to him in the very secret bureau, while the truth was that the secret bureau was just a platform and a ‘transfer station’. It was not their real shelter.

Of course, Li Yao did not forget to leave certain ‘toys’ in the ‘transfer station’, including powerful crystal bombs and everyday items that were contaminated by their blood and cells.

What Jin Tuyi was searching for was a feeble spiritual wave. Never would he have guessed that he should be actually looking for a weird brainwave!

Jin Xinyue was rather baffled. Was Li Yao not a refiner? He should be adept at magical equipment. But how did he know how to connect a biochemical brain to a crystal processor?

However, Jin Xinyue was baffled more by the fact that Li Yao's awareness that the negotiation would fall apart than by the technical details.

Jin Xinyue was a saintess of the Pantheon of Demons. Naturally, she was very prudent, too. If she had plenty of time, she would not hesitate to deploy ten, or maybe twenty, 'transfer stations' to hide her tracks.

But the situation was already urgent at that time, and every second counted. Yet, Li Yao wasted too much time preparing the decoy. He seemed to have foreseen that the negotiation would certainly fail, and her father would certainly attack them mercilessly.

But the real question was, if he had foreseen that her father could not be persuaded, why did he waste so much time and risk sneaking into Heavenly Path City?

Had he come here for nothing more than a sincere conversation with her father?

That was highly likely!

Jin Xinyue had thought that she completely understood Li Yao's plan, but right now, she realized that she had only seen the tip of the iceberg before and did not know Li Yao's real plan at all.

"Master!" Hesitating for a long time, Jin Xinyue could not help but ask, "You knew that you would not be able to convince my father?"

Li Yao's hands turned into a cluster of brightness on the light beam as he was analyzing the files that he collected a moment ago. He replied casually, "More or less. But everything is possible. Your father perhaps would've been convinced if he had a brain concussion a moment before our dialogue."

Jin Xinyue was even more confused. "Master, you seem to know my father very well, and you have predicted his every move, haven't you?"

"Wrong. I do not know your father well." Li Yao stared at the light beam without blinking his eyes. "I only know myself very well. I know exactly what I can do and what I can't.

"I am a refiner. I have a shallow understanding of combat and explosion. They are my advantages.

"But my advantages certainly do not include the expertise in convincing other people in a debate!

"However, your father is different. He has been the leader of the Feather Clan for many years. He controls one of the four superpowers of the Blood Demon Sector. He has been elected by so many demon emperors as the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons. He has also managed to talk all the demons into uniting and carrying out his highly risky Red Tide Plan.

"Taking all the factors into consideration, your father's expertise in persuasion and propaganda must be so awesome that they border on terrifying, right?"

"Let's say that the full mark is 100. Then, my ability in persuasion is 30 points, at best, while your father's is 95, at least!

“It would’ve been easier if we had undeniable proof, but we have none. Everything is just our deduction and speculation!

“You wanted me to convince your father to believe in ‘peace’ with empty words? That is like asking me to be humiliated!

“That was the same as you asking your father to compete with me about the arts of refining, in which case he would stand absolutely no chance of winning!

“To be honest, I have already done an excellent job by shouldering the pressure and not being brainwashed by your father.

“Let’s leave your father, a great man of the time, aside. My hollow opinions, such as ‘peace’ or ‘unification’, couldn’t have convinced a few middle school students who happened to have read a few novels, could they?”

Jin Xinyue was utterly dumbfounded. She stammered, “Then—then, what was everything we did for? Why were we talking to my father at all?”

Blinking his eyes, Li Yao replied unhurriedly, “Like I said earlier, to communicate with your father, of course.”

“But you knew that my father would not be convinced!”

“The purpose of communication is not necessarily to convince the other party. One will be able to collect information of paramount importance from the process of communication!

“In fact, through the communication just now, I have retrieved the most crucial information from your father!”

Chapter 995 - Truth of the Red Tide Plan!

Jin Xinyue found it hard to believe. “Have you?”

“Of course!” Li Yao finished the preliminary analysis of the information and was able to focus his attention on talking to his disciple. “Do you not feel that we have come back with loads of important intelligence after sneaking into Heavenly Path City even though our persuasion plan failed?”

“Forgive my stupidity. I only vaguely felt that you were completely overwhelmed by my father. It was like—it was like—”

“It was like that I was hung up and whipped hard in the face by your dad, right?”

“I dare not think like that, Master!”

Li Yao waved his arm in excitement and snapped his finger. “It was exactly my purpose to be whipped by your father!

“After we delivered the oyster to your father, he must’ve studied my background carefully. But all the files about me that can be found in the Blood Demon Sector stop ten years ago on Boneyard!

“At that time, I was nothing more than a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator in my twenties. I was too young, too naïve, and too simple-minded.

“It means that your father did not know exactly what I am right now. Nor did he know what drastic changes I have gone through in the past decade!

“What I was going to do was strengthen and build up his presumption with all the childish theories, groundless assumptions, and illusionary plans so that he would consider me to be nothing more than a retard who was lucky enough to experience many fortuitous events only to think that he was the savior of the world. Then, your father would inevitably have the feeling that he was whipping me, savaging me, and playing me!

“A great man like your father must usually be flawless. Perhaps, only when he felt that he was completely on the winning side would he reveal the tiniest loophole about himself!”

Jin Xinyue’s mouth was opened wider and wider. “So, you talked about so many things with my father just in order to ease his alert so that he would confess his secrets?

“But I feel that my father remained extremely calm to the last second and he did not give away any secret at all!

“What crucial information have you got, Master?”

Li Yao smiled and extended his index finger. “First and foremost, we have confirmed that the Red Tide Plan hasn’t been started yet, and there is still time to stop it, which is the foundation of all our next steps!

“If we had found out that neither your father nor all the other demon emperors were in the headquarters of the Pantheon of Demons when we reached Heavenly Path City, then we really would’ve been doomed because it could only have indicated one thing—that they had been teleported to the Heaven’s Origin Sector for the ultimate war. There would’ve been nothing that we could do except wait and watch, right?”

Jin Xinyue thought for a moment and shook her head. “That’s not right. Didn’t my father say that the war has already begun?”

“What has begun is only the feint!” Li Yao said enthusiastically. “We are both very clear that the key of the Red Tide Plan is ‘distraction’. The whole plan can be divided into two phases. The first phase is the fake attack the northern front, where the cannon fodder troops who are pretending to be the main force will attack the north of the Star Glory Federation from the traditional route of the Dark Desolate Domain to the Grand Desolate Plateau to the Giant Blade Pass!

“The purpose of the fake attack is to stall all the elites of the federation in the Giant Blade Pass. Or even better, they are also luring the elites of the federation to chase after them on the Grand Desolate Plateau. It will be best if a second ‘Giant Crab Plan’ is carried out, where all the crystal suit legions are asked to hunt down the cannon fodder, in which case the rear of the federation will be weakly defended!

“Then, the real main force of the Blood Demon Sector will appear in the heartland at the southeast of the federation and give the federation a critical attack!

“The strategy of distraction requires a time interval so that the main force of the federation will be baited to somewhere as far away as possible. It’s a simple logic, isn’t it?”

Jin Xinyue thought quickly and immediately understood what was going on. “You do have a point, master. Since the fake attack has only just started, there is certainly some time left before the real attack begins.

"However, how are you so sure that the main force of the Blood Demon Sector has not been teleported to the Heaven's Origin Sector in advance? Chances are that they are lurking in the counterattack bases of the Far East Demon Kingdom in the East Ocean of the Star Glory Federation!"

Shook his head, Li Yao said, "That's highly unlikely."

"I don't know how many elites your father has organized for the Red Tide Plan, but in order to sabotage the heartland of the federation, even if they are one-in-ten-thousand elites, there should be hundreds of thousands of them, right? How many resources will a million experts with their powerful biochemical beasts, skeleton tanks, and devilish warships consume, and how much demonic energy will they emit every day?

"Do you think such an enormous troop can hide below the eastern coastline of the federation for half a month without being discovered? Then you are underestimating the scouting ability of the Star Glory Federation!

"Confidentiality is the top priority for the Red Tide Plan. Your father wouldn't have done such a stupid thing.

"Therefore, the elites of the coalition army of demons must've gathered somewhere in the Blood Demon Sector. They are preparing themselves and waiting to be teleported!

"Of course, this is just my speculation and is not supported by any proof. It is also possible that your father has chosen a stupid and straightforward approach.

"Therefore, our sneak-in was also a minor test."

"Test?"

“Exactly! Don’t you feel that it was a bit strange? A couple of days ago, you introduced the defense system of Heavenly Path City in great detail to me, but judging from the defensive forces we encountered today, while the air defense was immaculate, the ground forces were far from satisfactory, weren’t they?”

Jin Xinyue was dazed. “That seems to be true. The airspace was impregnable with the Mirage Falcons, Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes, and Ghost Jellyfish. The demon emperors and the devilish warships arrived very fast, too. In comparison, the ground forces were sparse. We barely met any trouble when we escaped!”

“As you said earlier, the ground forces deployed around Heavenly Path City included the ‘Eight Desolate Venomous Dragon Legion’ of the Claw Clan, the ‘Furious Tide Thunderous Beast Legion’ of the Claw Clan, the ‘Tyrant Beetle Legion’ of the Insect Clan, among a few other elite troops. But today, we encountered none of them. The ground forces we met were just small fries,” Li Yao remarked.

Jin Xinyue immediately understood. “The elite troops deployed in Heavenly Path City, which equal to the garrison of the capital city in the Star Glory Federation, have set off in advance to the last rendezvous point!

“Of the remaining troops in Heavenly Path City, Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes, and Ghost Jellyfish are for one-time use and do not need to be brought, and the Mirage Falcons, the devilish warships, and the demon emperors are all fast enough to arrive at the rendezvous point at any time!”

Li Yao smiled. “See? You’ve read a lot of information, too.

“But that is still not the whole of it.

“Although all the elite troops have left, so many devilish warship and demon emperors, even including your father, are still lingering in Heavenly Path City.

“Such a national war is the last attempt of the Blood Demon Sector. Your father and the rest of the demon emperors will certainly command and fight on the frontline. Their future depends on the outcome of the war, and they will have to do their best without any reservation.

“The fact that your father and ‘Ape Fiend’ Yuan Riyue are still in Heavenly Path City proves my previous hypothesis that the main force of the coalition army of demons hasn’t been teleported to the Heaven’s Origin Sector yet. They are still being gathered in a certain place in the Blood Demon Sector, and they will not be teleported until their commanders arrive!

“See? Isn’t such information crucial for us?”

Jin Xinyue blinked her watery eyes in a daze for a long time.

She had always considered herself smart and quick-minded, but in front of her master, she felt that her brain was consistently one beat slower. Thinking for a moment, she hesitated before saying, “What can we so even if we know such information now? Can we still stop the Red Tide Plan?”

Li Yao smiled evilly. “About that. We’ll have to count on the most important information that I’ve elicited from your father!

“That is the truth of the Red Tide Plan, or rather, what the real Red Tide Plan is!”

Jin Xinyue was so surprised that she almost jumped up. “Isn’t the Red Tide Plan a strategy of distraction where the main force of the coalition army of demons will be teleported to the Heaven’s Origin Sector through the secret wormholes constructed by the Far East Demon Kingdom in the past and stab into the heartland of the Star Glory Federation with the fake attacks in the northern battlefield as a distraction?”

Li Yao squinted, with brilliance of admiration beaming out of his eyes. “Do you really think that the Red Tide Plan is as simple as that?”

Jin Xinyue felt that her head was dizzy. “Is this simple? Is this not the truth but a disguise for the real Red Tide Plan?”

Li Yao sighed and said, “Assuming that this is the truth about the Red Tide Plan, how do you know it?”

Jin Xinyue frowned. “The Red Tide Plan is my father’s lifelong work. As his daughter, I discovered it by accident!”

“You said yourself that your father is an emotionless machine and an out-and-out man of determination. Do you really think that he cared about blood relationships?” Li Yao said casually. “Moreover, you killed your stepmother, his beloved wife, and you did a lot things that jeopardized the interest of the Gold Crow Kingdom.

“You were even secretly planning to assassinate him!

“He knew everything you did!

“But instead of killing you immediately, he eased his alert and let you get access to the Red Tide Plan. Did you not feel that it was weird and suspicious?”

Cold sweat was popping up on Jin Xinyue’s head, and two sharp scalpels seemed to be cutting her brain. She shuddered beyond her control and mumbled, “You are right, Master. On second thought, it does seem a bit weird. With my father’s meticulousness, how could he have exposed his most critical plan to his ambitious, disobedient daughter?”

“Not just you. In fact, over the past couple of years, in order to persuade more tribes to join the Red Tide Plan, your father had to inform part of the content of his strategy to the experts. Therefore, in the leadership of the Blood Demon Sector, the Red Tide Plan was not really a big secret at all!” Li Yao calmly observed.

“A plan whose lifeline is ‘confidentiality’ has been learned by so many people so many years before it is really implemented. Is it really a sound plan?”

Chapter 996 - Fatal Teleportation!

Jin Xinyue took more than ten deep breaths, and yet she could not stop her teeth from biting her lips. Panting, she asked, “Are you suggesting that the Red Tide Plan I discovered was exposed by my father on purpose and that it was not the real Red Tide Plan but just another distraction?”

“Do you not feel that, for the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons and the nominal leader of the Blood Demon Sector, the Red Tide Plan you know is too simple and straightforward, bordering on childish?” Li Yao asked in return.

Jin Xinyue’s chest was fluctuating fast, and she could barely focus her eyes. She mumbled, “Has father been lying to everybody? Then—then, what is the real Red Tide Plan? How did you learn it, Master?”

For a moment, Jin Xinyue even suspected that her master and her father were in the same gang!

Sitting cross-legged, Li Yao rubbed his temples to ease the explosive pressure caused by the rapidly-functioning brain, and he analyzed calmly, “In order to crack the Red Tide Plan, I’ve been contemplating one question. How exactly can you teleport a million soldiers to the heartland of the Star Glory Federation?

“The Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector are being merged right now, like two eggs that are crushing into each other. The Dark Desolate Domain was the point of impact for the two eggs. The ‘eggshell’ here has been broken. Naturally, the egg white and the yolk inside can flow without obstruction.

“Therefore, it is much more convenient to teleport through the Dark Desolate Domain. Or rather, natural, stable wormholes are appearing without anybody doing anything!

“However, after passing through the wormholes of the Dark Desolate Domain, the coalition army of demons will find themselves in a boundless Grand Desolate Plateau, which causes tremendous pressure to their logistics.

“After the Battle of Dawn, the human towns on the Grand Desolate Plateau have been abandoned, and all the citizens have evacuated behind the Giant Blade Pass. The coalition army of demons will not be able to find any prey even if they want to plunder.

“Therefore, it is impossible to march in this way. Even if the Blood Demon Sector spares no warriors, they will be merely committing suicide!

“Your father had to look for a different approach. On the surface, he located the secret wormholes established by the Far East Demon Kingdom in the past and tried to infiltrate the federation through the inconspicuous paths behind it!”

Jin Xinyue frowned. “Did my father not?”

“You will know the answer after you analyze it,” Li Yao replied. “First of all, the Far East Demon Kingdom created the wormholes for the few nobles to flee to the Blood Demon Sector. Then, how large and stable would the wormholes have been?

“It is one thing to teleport a few thousand nobles to the Blood Demon Sector in different batches over several years, but it is a whole different thing to teleport a million soldiers, who are armed to the teeth and boast colossal war potential, to the Heaven’s Origin Sector instantly!

“The Far East Demon Kingdom was not very strong. Otherwise, it wouldn’t have been demolished by the Star Glory Federation. When they were struggling to survive, were they really capable of establishing wormholes of such enormity? And would the wormholes have been so well-built that they are still stable after five hundred years?

“Passing through wormholes is highly dangerous. One moment of carelessness, and all the troops will be lost in the storm of the four-dimensional space!

“One wave is enough to obliterate a top expert. Wouldn’t it be awkward for a demon emperor to pass through the highly-unstable wormhole, only to discover that their heart, liver, spleen, lung, and kidney had been left on the way?

“It is almost like a bridge between two cliffs that was constructed five hundred years ago and is now beyond repair. The valley that the bridge is in has level-nine storms all year around, which could destroy the bridge at any moment.

“Furthermore, below the bridge is an abyss that nobody will survive!

“Right now, your father is asking hundreds of thousands of soldiers to cram onto the bridge. Is there something wrong with your father’s head?”

Jin Xinyue opened her mouth, only to come up with no rebuttal.

“Also,” Li Yao continued, “your father’s Red Tide Plan claims that the counterattack bases left by the Far East Demon Kingdom five hundred years ago will be used as the bastions for the march of the coalition army of demons.

“But as far as I know, the Star Glory Federation has explored the relics of the Far East Demon Kingdom far and wide, and no intact counterattack bases were ever found along the coastline.

“Let’s say that the Far East Demon Kingdom left some sort of counterattack base in an inconspicuous place in the coastline. Then we are back to the question. Are the bases reliable enough after being scourged by seawater for five hundred years? Is there enough room for so many soldiers? Are the rune arrays and the demonic artifacts still functional?

“Besides, although the Far East Demon Kingdom also belonged to the demon race, their biochemical technology was slightly different to that of the Blood Demon Sector. Are the assets that the Far East Demon Kingdom prepared for their counterattack perfectly compatible with the experts, the biochemical beasts, and the devilish warships of the Blood Demon Sector?

“I don’t believe that you father has never thought of such problems!

“So, my real question is—

“Do the awesome ‘secret wormholes of the Far East Demon Kingdom’, allegedly leading to the eastern coastline of the federation, really exist?”

Jin Xinyue was dumbfounded as if she had been struck by lightning. She hurried to say, “But—but if the wormhole does not exist, how is the coalition army of demons going to be teleported over?”

Li Yao squinted and murmured, “That’s exactly what I’ve been reflecting on. Is there a certain way that the best troops of the Blood Demon Sector can be projected to the heart of the Star Glory Federation instantly?

“For example, is it possible to build a certain ‘super teleportation array’ and rip apart the soft barrier between the two Sectors?”

Jin Xinyue hesitated for a moment and shook her head. “There isn’t such technology in the Blood Demon Sector. The largest teleportation array we’ve ever built is the Eye of Blood Demon.

“It took us ten years to build the Eye of Blood Demon, at the cost of almost all the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures in the Blood Demon Sector for teleportation arrays.

“Right now, we have neither resources nor technology to construct a second super teleportation array.

“But the Eye of Blood Demon is the opposite of the Red Tide Plan’s demand. It can project a few elites to ten thousand lightyears away, but it can’t project a million soldiers to another Sector, however close the Sector is to us.”

Li Yao smiled. “Yes. More than ten years ago, the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector discovered ‘Boneyard’ ten thousand lightyears away almost at the same time. In order to explore the unknown planet, the two Sectors dedicated all the available resources to super teleportation arrays that allowed ultra-long-distance projection.

“In the Heaven’s Origin Sector, we built the Heaven’s Artillery.

“In the Blood Demon Sector, you built the Eye of Blood Demon.

“It was through the Heaven’s Artillery that I was teleported to Boneyard.

“The best demon generals of the demon race, led by Wang Ji of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers, were teleported to Boneyard through the Eye of Blood Demon, too.

“Later, I slew Wang Ji and was teleported into the depths of the sea of stars with Skeleton Dragon. The rest is history.

“The designing purpose of the Heaven’s Artillery and the Eye of Blood Demon was to explore the great universe. Therefore, it was the distance of teleportation that counted but not the maximum capacity.

“For the convenience of our discussion, let’s compare most of the teleportation arrays to two different types of slingshots.

“The first type of slingshots—let’s call them ‘distance slingshots’—can throw a stone weighing half a kilogram a hundred kilometers away.

“The second type is ‘weight slingshots’, which can throw a huge rock weighing a ton five hundred meters away.

“Distance of projection matters in the first case, and the mass of the object to be teleported matters in the second. Are you following me?”

Jin Xinyue nodded. It was rather a shallow metaphor.

“Both the Heaven’s Artillery and the Eye of Blood Demon belong to the first type, the ‘distance slingshots’, because they are devised to send only a few elites somewhere far, far away, right?”

“Yes,” Jin Xinyue agreed. “But the Red Tide Plan requires the second type, the ‘weight slingshots’!

“The Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector are close enough to each other. The excessive distance is too much of a waste. What is needed right now is the ‘loading capacity’ to accommodate a huge number of soldiers!

“With the resources and technology of the Blood Demon Sector right now, I don’t think it’s possible to produce a ‘weight slingshot’ that is large enough. Otherwise, we wouldn’t have had to break into the Heaven’s Origin Sector through the Dark Desolate Domain every time!”

Li Yao blinked. “Do you think the two types of slingshots can be modified and transformed into each other?”

Jin Xinyue was dazed. Pondering, she replied, “The designing mechanism of the two types of teleportation arrays, the distribution of rune arrays, and the construction methodology are all different. They can hardly be modified into each other, can they?”

“You’re wrong,” Li Yao said. “Do you know how I returned from the Flying Star Sector?

“The normal space jump technology of the Flying Star Sector was not enough for me to return to the Heaven’s Origin Sector or the Blood Demon Sector freely.

“But in the Flying Star Sector, we discovered a mysterious planet named ‘Ice King’ in which there was an enormous super teleportation whose sole purpose was to boost the planet, allowing it to make a ‘short-distance jump’ within the Flying Star Sector.

“Despite the size and the mass of a planet, it could still be teleported through the teleportation array. Wouldn’t such a teleportation array be a ‘weight slingshot’?”

Jin Xinyue’s eyes suddenly shone. “It sounds like one that my father is in dire need of right now. A super teleportation array that can sent hundreds of thousands of soldiers!”

“Precisely. But at that time, it was not a ‘weight slingshot’ that we needed but a ‘distance slingshot’, like an upgraded version of the ‘Heavenly’s Artillery’ or the Eye of Blood Demon, so that my few companions and I could return to our home across the sea of stars!

“Therefore, the experts of the Flying Star Sector performed a full upgrade on the teleportation array on Ice King. Eventually, its mode was changed from a ‘planetary warship’ into a ‘super long-distance universal slingshot’!

“Do you see where I’m getting at?”

“Master is saying that, since a ‘weight slingshot’ can be modified into a ‘distance slingshot’, it is definitely possible to do the conversion the other way around and modify a ‘distance slingshot’ into a ‘weight slingshot’!

“The Eye of Blood Demon, the only super teleportation array of the Blood Demon Sector, is a ‘distance slingshot’ that highlights the distance of teleportation but overlooks the maximum capacity.

“However, after a series of transformations, it is very possible to modify the Eye of Blood Demon into a ‘weight slingshot’, which, although unable to cover a distance of ten thousand lightyears, can totally teleport a million soldiers to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, our next-door neighbor!”

Chapter 997 - One Shot in the Head, One Stab in the Heart!

The more she talked, the more excited Jin Xinyue became. She trembled as she exclaimed, “That’s right. It has been baffling me how the wormholes built five hundred years ago remained stable to this day without being discovered by the federation. Besides, are the wormholes large enough to teleport so many soldiers all at once?

“If it is not the wormholes of the Far East Demon Kingdom that my father is counting on but the Eye of Blood Demon, everything makes sense now!

“As it turns out, the real Red Tide Plan is to teleport the elite troops of the coalition army of demons to the counterattack bases of the Far East Demon Kingdom in the East Ocean of the Star Glory Federation through the Eye of Blood Demon!”

“You’re wrong again,” Li Yao said calmly. “You made exactly the same mistake like I did in the beginning.

“When I figured out things about the Eye of Blood Demon, I also thought that your father would teleport all the elite troops into the East Ocean of the Star Glory Federation through it.

“Very soon, I realized that I was being unforgivably stupid!

“If the Eye of Blood Demon could really break the barrier between two worlds, why would the destination be set at the

East Ocean of the Star Glory Federation? Why shouldn't the troops be directly teleported to the capital city of the Star Glory Federation? One shot in the head, one stab in the Heart!"

Jin Xinyue was astounded by the dreadful hypothesis!

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Li Yao turned on almost ten light beams with his hands that were shivering in excitement, displaying the maps of the southeast area of the Star Glory Federation.

Pointing at the zigzagging coastline and the few light spots that represented super large cities, Li Yao ardently introduced, "Look. This is the terrain in the southeast of the Star Glory Federation.

"We can clearly see from the map that the capital city of the federation does not border the ocean. In fact, it is hundreds of kilometers away from the coastline. In the middle of the capital circle and the East Ocean are several major cities, such as Floating Spear City, Purple Cloud City, and Magnificent Cloud Special District, all of which are the famous towns of training in the federation where countless Cultivation sects are headquartered.

"Even if the regular army is moved away, there is still a great number of fighters and Cultivators among the civilians.

"According to the sham Red Tide Plan, the coalition army of demons will have to demolish Floating Spear City, Purple Cloud City, Magnificent Cloud Special District, and all the other major cities in their way before they finally get to the capital city of the federation!

“However weakly guarded the rear of the federation is, and however invincible the elite troops of the coalition army of demons are, how long do you think it will take for them to breach the major cities and the headquarters of the Cultivation sects? There’s no doubt that the local fighters and Cultivators will not hesitate to spill their flood to block the coalition army of demons!

“One day, two days?

“It must be noted that Cultivators move very fast. For a Cultivator in the Core Formation Stage or the Nascent Soul Stage, it is as easy as pie to ride several thousand kilometers on a sword in one day. When news that the coalition army of demons lands on the coastline is out, even if the time is too limited for the army to mobilize, the Cultivators will certainly be able to return to the capital city within a day or two!

“There is also a possibility that is even more appalling!

“The federation has known about the Red Tide Plan since long ago. A great army has been gathered on the eastern coastline of the federation, ready to strike the coalition army of demons the moment they are teleported over, like the well-prepared soldiers in the ancient times who attacked the enemy when their enemy was half way through the river. As a result, the coalition army of demons would be annihilated on the beach!

“Think about it. Even you know so many things about the Red Tide Plan. Is it really a top secret? Are you so sure that the Star Glory Federation knows nothing about it?

“Therefore, after having a super teleportation array like the Eye of Blood Demon, why on earth would your father teleport the troops to the East Ocean of the Star Glory Federation?

“According to the original theory, it is because the exit of the secret wormholes of the Far East Demon Kingdom is in the East Ocean, and there are some sort counterattack bases in the depths of the ocean.

“But as we have analyzed just now, both of the two reasons are invalid. The wormholes and the counterattack bases are equally groundless!

“Based on such findings, I have come up with the real Red Tide Plan!

“The fake troops on the northern battlefield of the Grand Desolate Plateau are indeed decoys and a distraction.

“But the so-called counterattack bases of the Far East Demon Kingdom in the southern battlefield are false, too. They are smoke grenades. They are the second layer of strategical deception hidden in the first layer of strategical deception. They are the decoys concealed in the decoys!

“If the Star Glory Federation is fooled by the first decoys and deploys the main force in the Giant Blade Pass and the Grand Desolate Plateau, it will be all good.

“But if the Star Glory Federation has learned of the sham Red Tide Plan and moved most of the main force to the eastern coastline, preparing to annihilate the elite troops of the coalition army of demons as they teleport over, under the illusion that their enemy will come by way of the wormholes in the East Ocean, their endeavors will still be futile.

“Your father, the commander-in-chief of the coalition army, has never thought to attack from the East Ocean like an idiot.

“His real plan is to teleport the elite troops of the coalition army of demons, dozens of demon emperors, and hundreds of devilish warships directly into the capital city of the Star Glory Federation, or, if possible, to the rostrum of the parliament of the federation!

“This is the ultimate version of the Red Tide Plan in your father’s head!”

Jin Xinyue’s breath and blood almost froze at the same time.

Li Yao, on the other hand, was sweating hard in excitement as if he had just finished a remote practice with a top expert. Hot steam popped up out of his head and condensed into mist.

Not entirely satisfied, he remarked, “Did you know? Since the moment you mentioned the Red Tide Plan to me, I always felt very uncomfortable.

“I felt that I was on the verge of a precipice, and I would fall into the abyss if I took a step further!

“I spent many a night contemplating and finally figured out the source of my unease. It was because the apparent Red Tide Plan was too simple, too tawdry, and too easily cracked!

“As the saying goes, like father, like son. You are just a minor saintess in the Pantheon of Demons and a junior in the level of demon king. Still, you were bodacious enough to compete with me with your wisdom and courage. With that in mind, would your father Jin Tuyi be as incapable as he appeared to be? Was he stupid enough to not notice how hilarious the Red Tide Plan on the surface was?

“It was not until a few days ago, when I finally figured out the head-shooting, heart-stabbing, real Red Tide Plan that had been concealed in the darkness all the time, that my anxiety was finally allayed.

“Unstable wormholes of the Far East Demon Kingdom, the counterattack bases, the major cities of the federation standing on the way… All the obstacles have never existed in the first place! They are all distractions and smoke grenades, disguises that your father has thrown out!

“The purpose of the Red Tide Plan since the very beginning, sole and unchanged, has always been the capital city, the capital city, and the capital city of the Star Glory Federation!

“This is more like a plan that the supreme commander of the coalition army of demons should make!”

Li Yao’s delirious appearance somehow scared Jin Xinyue.

She could not help but move slightly away from him. Breathing hard in disbelief, she asked, “But isn’t this too much a coincidence? The critical part of my father’s Red Tide Plan is a ‘weight slingshot’, and he happened to have found one of use to him?”

Li Yao extended his thumb and index finger, making a gesture of twisting a screw. He twisted it clockwise and then anticlockwise. “Reverse thinking. Try to think reversely!

“The core of the Red Tide Plan your father concocted is a ‘weight slingshot’ that does not exist in the Blood Demon Sector, and your father happens to know the ways to modify a ‘distance slingshot’ that does exist in the Blood Demon

Sector. All the modification work happens to have been completed at the most urgent moment. Normally speaking, there are indeed to many coincidences.

“But what if you think reversely?

“Can we hypothesize that your father received the technology, or legacy, about a certain super teleportation array decades ago before he concocted the entire Red Tide Plan with the super teleportation array as the core?”

Jin Xinyue was frowning so hard that her facial organs were kissing each other. “Master, do you have any evidence for your hypothesis?”

Weird brilliance was shining in Li Yao’s eyes. He seemed to be dismantling a piece of magical equipment skillfully, ripping off the components that were only the size of seeds, and placing them on the ground so that everybody could see them clearly.

“Ever since I learned that your father was the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons, I knew that there would be a confrontation between us. Therefore, I collected his files and guessed his personality. Also, communicating with you after so many days, I got a lot of inside information about him, too.

“As a result, I have discovered a lot of interesting facts.

“It is my understanding that the Feather Clan is best at teleportation arrays and space jumps in the Blood Demon Sector, right?”

Jin Xinyue nodded. “The Feather Clan worships speed and mobility. Is there anything that is faster than teleportation arrays? Therefore, the Feather Clan has always attached great importance to the production of teleportation arrays. We’ve collected a lot of prototypes of ancient teleportation arrays, too.”

“The twelve demon emperors of the Pantheon of Demons have different duties,” Li Yao said. “Since decades ago, your father has been responsible for the affairs regarding the exploration of the world fragments and the sea of stars. If we compare him to the post in the government of the Star Glory Federation, he would be the ‘Minister of Universal Exploration and Development’ or ‘President of the Occult Orbs Fellowship’ of the Blood Demon Sector, right?”

Her father’s job was not a secret. Jin Xinyue nodded. “Since the Feather Clan is most adept at teleportation arrays, it is only reasonable that my father took the duty. Although the specific title was different, my father was indeed responsible for the affairs in those regards. But they are someone else’s duty now that he is the commander-in-chief of the coalition army. Does it have anything to do with the Red Tide Plan?”

Li Yao was smiling more and more mysteriously. “After I learned the two facts, I pursued further and made a shocking discovery. As it turned out, more than ten years ago, it was your father who insisted on the construction of the Eye of Blood Demon and the exploration of Boneyard!”

Chapter 998 - The Dragon-Butchering Cleaver!

“Let’s review what happened more than ten years ago.

“The Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector discovered Boneyard, which is around ten thousand lightyears away, almost at the same time.

“Since Boneyard was the residence of ‘Skeleton Dragon’, an ancient ferocious demon from forty thousand years ago, the Blood Demon Sector had more information about it. I remember that the federation did not know the real name of the planet and called it ‘Ultimacy’ at that time.

“However, after the discovery of Boneyard, neither the Blood Demon Sector nor the Heaven’s Origin Sector started the exploration immediately.

“It was because a distance of ten thousand lightyears was too vast. With the technologies of the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector, it was quite questionable whether or not the resources on the planet could be developed efficiently, if resources were detected at all.

“Therefore, even in the Blood Demon Sector, which had more knowledge about Boneyard, the debate over whether to explore the planet or not remained unabated for a long time. You were scared that the resources you devoted to the exploration would prove to be a waste!

“Eventually, it was your father who convinced all the other demon emperors to gather the resources of the Blood Demon

Sector and start building the super teleportation array Eye of Blood Demon!

“In order to initiate the project as soon as possible, you father even promised that the Gold Crow Kingdom would contribute one third of the total capital and resources, didn’t he?”

Jin Xinyue thought for a moment and nodded. “At that time, I was still very young, but the incident left quite a deep impression on me.

“Although my father was one of the twelve demon emperors, he was not the one with the highest personal strength. Furthermore, the national capability of the Gold Crow Kingdom was incomparable to that of the Nether Spring Kingdom or the Kingdom of Lion Butchers. Therefore, he had always kept a low profile until then. Like I said last time, my father is very good at ‘compromising’.

“But the project of the Eye of Blood Demon was what he had been most insistent on since I had memory. He even smashed the table in the headquarters of the Pantheon of Demons, declaring resolutely that it was a rarely-seen opportunity and that there would certainly be major discoveries on Boneyard.

“Since he was responsible for the universal exploration of the Blood Demon Sector, his voice was apparently the largest in the issue. Also, the Gold Crow Kingdom was providing most of the resources. Therefore, the other demon emperors all agreed to the plan, however unwilling to, in the end.”

“It was not until the Blood Demon Sector got started with the Eye of Blood Demon that the Star Glory Federation began building the Heaven’s Artillery,” Li Yao observed.

“Perhaps the federation was not interested in Boneyard at first. But after noticing that the Blood Demon Sector was taking actions, they were forced into an ‘arms race’.

“If they did not join the competition, wouldn’t the federation have been caught in an awkward situation if some earth-shaking magical equipment had been excavated from Boneyard when the demons monopolized it?

“All in all, your father was the proposer and the greatest endorser of the exploration of Boneyard!”

“That’s right,” Jin Xinyue confirmed.

“But the exploration proved to be a fiasco in the end.” Li Yao sighed. “Let’s leave the trap of Skeleton Dragon aside for a moment. Even after I brought away Skeleton Dragon through teleportation, the exploration project on Boneyard was still put on hiatus after a few years because both the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector discovered that it was tremendously difficult to develop a planet ten thousand lightyears ago on a large scale with their current technology.

“Water too far away cannot quench one’s current thirst. If a lot of resources were devoted to the development of Boneyard, chances were that their home would be demolished by the enemy before the resources on the planet were brought back!

“In the decade that followed, small-scale explorations were conducted on Boneyard, but the missions were mostly restricted on surveying, prospecting, and the collection of mineral samples. The Heaven’s Artillery and the Eye of Blood Demon did not play roles deserving of their cost. Sure enough, they could be used to develop the world fragments at a shorter distance, but it would like butchering a chicken with a cleaver designed to dissect a bull!

“That is the conclusion I came to based on the Fire Ant King’s theory and yours, as well as the public information. Is there anything wrong about it?”

“No.” Jin Xinyue shook her head. “The incident was a major blow for the Gold Crow Kingdom. I remember that my father was severely impeached, too. Everybody said that he was too reckless and wasted so many resources on a useless Eye of Blood Demon. Not only were so many silver-blood demons killed in the attempt, the teleportation array never played an important role later, either. It was a great failure!

“However, if we hadn’t built the Eye of Blood Demon, the federation might not have established the Heaven’s Artillery at all. Therefore, I think we drew even in the end by wasting equal quantities of resources on nothing!

“Anyway, the incident depressed my father for several years. He became even more low-key in the Pantheon of Demons. It was not until after the Battle of Dawn, when the continentalism that the Nether Spring Kingdom and the Kingdom of Lion Butchers enshrined seemed impractical, that my father, as the master of the air forces, was elected as the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons.”

Li Yao sneered. “Do you really think that your father’s insistence on the project of the Eye of Blood Demon was a feverish, reckless decision?”

Jin Xinyue was stunned for a moment and then fell into deep thought.

“Since your father was the ‘Minister of Universal Exploration and Development’ of the Blood Demon Sector, he must’ve had abundant experience in the exploration of world fragments. Would he have neglected the cost issue, which wouldn’t even escape a countryfolk’s attention? Would he not have known that the technology of the Blood Demon Sector at that time was not advanced enough to develop a planet ten thousand lightyears away on a large scale?

“On the very contrary, I believe that he knew it better than anybody else!”

“If he knew it clearly, why did he—”

Jin Xinyue suddenly bit her tongue and shuddered!

She had figured out everything!

Li Yao smiled. “You’ve thought it through, haven’t you?

“Assuming that, starting from the very beginning, your father has insisted on the construction of Eye of Blood Demon not for Boneyard but for the capital city of the Star Glory Federation…

“Then, everything we discussed just now makes perfect sense, right?”

Jin Xinyue felt that the solid world around her was falling apart in that moment. Everything she was familiar with was turning into something different. She seemed to have walked into a dark, deep ocean where she could not tell the truth behind the lies.

She could only follow Li Yao closely and stagger forward in the deep sea, looking for the unpredictable brightness with the guidance of the monster-like master.

Li Yao took a deep breath, with solemnity and admiration in his eyes.

When he heard the original version of the Red Tide Plan, he had indeed looked down upon Jin Tuyi and thought that the commander-in-chief of the coalition army was just so-so.

However, after he figured out the whole picture, he found it impossible to calm himself for a long time, too!

Jin Tuyi was definitely a great man who was as smart as Yan Xibei, Xiao Xuance, and Bai Xinghe. He was a worthy, respectable opponent whom Li Yao needed to deal with by activating every braincell!

In a trance, Li Yao felt that his soul was attached to the younger Jin Tuyi decades ago in the Blood Demon Sector. He said slowly in a deep and coarse voice, “All the information has been cleared.

“Now, I will try to sort out the information and restore the more reasonable storyline.

“According to my speculation, your father accidentally retrieved brand-new, groundbreaking technology about teleportation arrays decades ago.

“The Feather Clan had always been a fan of teleportation arrays. Your father was also the supervisor of the exploration of world fragments in the Blood Demon Sector. It is not entirely unreasonable to think that he unearthed a new legacy by accident, right?

“The moment your father found the legacy of the ‘super teleportation array’, his mind was greatly stirred.

“Naturally, the very first thought that came to the mind of anybody who got such a legacy would certain be whether or not it was possible to teleport the best troops to the enemy’s heart with such a technology.

“However, it was easier said than done!

“The most critical factor was confidentiality. Such an assault plan, which was similar to the ‘decapitation strategy’, would lose all its destructive power if it was leaked in advance, in which case it would mean the doom of all the elite troops that had been teleported!

“It was a pity that such a super teleportation array would certainly cause a great fuss when it was built. The protracted project, the consumption of astronomical resources, the concentration of manpower and materials… As long as his enemy was not a complete idiot, they would certainly find out what he was up to!

“Therefore, your father did not report the technology to the Pantheon of Demons at the earliest chance in order to build a super teleportation array. Instead, he waited patiently for a better opportunity.

“Maybe, during his waiting, he further studied the legacy. He chewed it up, digested it, and etched it into his brain. Perhaps, he also came up with many incredible plans with the legacy as the core.

“I don’t know how long he waited, but he was finally given a chance in the end!

“The discovery of Boneyard gave him the perfect excuse to build the Eye of Blood Demon openly!

“On the surface, it is a ‘distance slingshot’ designed to teleport a limited number of elites to ten thousand lightyears away.

“But I believe that, as the supervisor of the project of the Eye of Blood Demon, even if your father did not participate in the designs and construction of the teleportation array in person, he definitely had a certain way to leave an ‘interface’ on the Eye of Blood Demon so that it would be able to change the mode of teleportation someday in the future!

“Then, the most dreadful weapon to use against the Heaven’s Origin Sector was completed without alarming anyone.

“Why didn’t your father activate the Red Tide Plan the moment the Eye of Blood Demon was constructed?

“I don’t know, but I estimate that it must have something to do with the distance between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector.

“Ten years ago, the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector were still in the early phases of the melding. The ‘eggshell’ between the two worlds was still very solid without too many gaps. Despite the awesomeness of the Eye of Blood Demon, the precision and stability of the teleportation could not be guaranteed.

“Therefore, your father concealed his claws and his teeth and continued waiting.

“Even though everybody despised him, even though he suffered a major setback, even though he was mocked for the big and useless ‘cleaver for bulls’ that he had crafted at a great cost, he still grabbed the handle of his cleaver in the darkness like the most fearsome assassin, waiting for the perfect moment to launch the critical attack.

“Because he was the only one who knew that he did not build a ‘cleaver for bulls’ but one that was ambitious enough to butcher the dragon!”

Chapter 999 - Why Don't You Just Ask Him?

Li Yao could not have admired Jin Tuyi more. “I don’t know why your father kept it a secret to all the other demon emperors. Perhaps it was because the struggle for power among the demon emperors of the four major demon kingdoms was too fierce. Since neither the Gold Crow Kingdom nor himself could not be called the strongest, he would certainly lose the initiative of the whole plan.

“But there is an explanation that I think is more likely. Your father is a very proud man from the bottom of his heart. He despises the simple and straight tactics that the Kingdom of Lion Butchers and the Nether Spring Kingdom have adopted, which is to sweep across everything on the continent after invading the Grand Desolate Plateau through the Dark Desolate Domain. He feels that all the other demon emperors are idiotic teammates. Therefore, the Red Tide Plan, which requires absolute confidentiality, could not be known or carried out by them!

“Your father wants to win the war and conquer the Heaven’s Origin Sector by himself!”

Li Yao recalled Yan Xibei, the schemer on Iron Plateau of the Flying Star Sector.

Jin Tuyi and Yan Xibei seemed to be the same type of person. They both wanted to reverse the situation purely on their own.

To some extent, Li Yao was such a type of person, too, was he not?

It was exactly because they belonged to the same type of person that Li Yao had guessed what was on his mind precisely.

“However,” Li Yao continued, “although the Eye of Blood Demon was ready, your father was still facing another issue, which was the mobilization of the army when the Red Tide Plan was implemented.

“To assault the capital city of the Star Glory Federation, the soldiers and the strategical assets required couldn’t have been few. It was very difficult to keep the rendezvous of a million soldiers and almost all the demon kings and demon emperors a secret!

“Therefore, to cover up the real Red Tide Plan, your father threw out the seemingly intimidating but in fact deeply flawed ‘false Red Tide Plan’. He misled everybody by talking about the ‘secret wormholes and counterattack bases of the Far East Demon Kingdom’.

“As a result, even if the Star Glory Federation discovered that the elite troops of the Blood Demon Sector were being gathered in an unusual way, they would only concentrate all the forces on the eastern coastline, hoping to resist the enemy at the border of the nation. They were determined to stop the coalition army of demons from going on a rampage in the important cities in the southeast of the nation!

“But they did not know that the coalition army of demons would not land on the beaches or attack the major cities. Instead, the army would be directly teleported into the heart of the capital city!

“The capital city of the Star Glory Federation is not only the political center of the nation but also an important base of training and magical equipment production. Of the top five hundred sects of the federation, more than two hundred and twenty are headquartered in the capital city. The capital city also boasts the largest warehouses for crystals and factories to produce crystal suits, as well as four of the Nine Elite Universities!

“Should be capital city be taken by force, it would certainly be a major blow for the federation!”

Li Yao took a deep breath. The glimmers in his eyes were bouncing nonstop as he envisioned the coalition army of demons sabotaging the capital city of the federation, which was wreathed in furious flames.

Squinting, he mumbled, “Everything is set except for some luck. Your father has lain low for decades until today when all the favorable conditions have appeared!

“Firstly, after years of melding, the distance between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector is much shorter than ten years ago. Enough cracks have been crushed on the thin ‘eggshell’ to make the Eye of Blood Demon play its role and teleport all the troops to the capital city of the Star Glory Federation precisely.

“Secondly, the failure of the Battle of Dawn forced the diehards who favored continentalism to back off for now. Your father was finally elected as the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons and authorized to mobilize all the resources and troops of the Blood Demon Sector!

“Thirdly, the arrival of the Flying Star Sector made the Blood Demon Sector more united under your father’s command than ever. He now has even more reasons to launch the false Red Tide Plan!

“Perhaps, everybody will think that the so-called Red Tide Plan is nothing but an insane last attempt of a gambler who has lost all his leverage.

“But they do not know that the ‘gambler’ who seems crazy on the surface in fact boasts the calmest, most meticulous mind. The ‘national war’ is definitely not a last attempt when there are no other choices but a shocking attack which has been carefully calculated and thoroughly planned for decades!”

Jin Xinyue listened so attentively that her pupils shrank violently when she heard ‘shocking attack’, as if a sword had really pierced through her heart!

Li Yao sighed. “As a citizen of the federation, I feel quite fortunate that such a formidable enemy as your father was born in the Gold Crow Kingdom, which was only mediocre among the four major demon kingdoms, instead of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers or the Nether Spring Kingdom, which were much stronger. I feel fortunate that he was not elected as the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons until today.

“If he were the master of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers or the Nether Spring Kingdom, if he were the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons twenty years ago, perhaps the Star Glory Federation would be no more at this moment!”

Li Yao finished his speech and licked his lips in great satisfaction. His eyes seemed to have pierced through Jin Xinyue and reached the sky of Heavenly Path City a hundred kilometers away.

He felt that he could see the man who was lurking in the commander-in-chief’s residence, the most terrifying demon he had ever seen!

Entertaining!

It was truly entertaining to spar with such an expert!

Jin Xinyue frowned harder and harder. She felt that there was a swirl in her head that was about to swallow all her braincells.

Before her head was completely befuddled, she extended her hands and slashed them in midair!

“Wait! Wait, wait. Wait, wait!

“Master, you are talking so vividly and impressively as if you have been following my father over the past decades and witnessed everything in person!

“But on second thought, I realized that it is nothing but your speculation, Master, which is not supported by any valid proof!”

“Good point!” Li Yao nodded and replied solemnly, “Everything I said just now is purely fictional. I was merely telling a story.”

Jin Xinyue gawked at him, speechless.

“However,” Li Yao continued, “although it is fictional, I deduced everything by choosing the most plausible possibilities based on the given information. It was not entirely made up.”

“That is the problem,” Jin Xinyue said. “Let’s say that you’ve chosen the most plausible possibility in every step of your deduction. But ‘possibility’ is just a ‘possibility’ after all. Even if every possibility has a 5% error from the truth, when dozens of ‘possibilities’ are multiplied, the error will be still be shockingly huge. Are you even 50% sure about your entire extrapolation?”

“Not exactly.” Li Yao shook his head. “I was only 30% confident about everything I said just now. That is why I paid a trip to Heavenly Path City on purpose and confirmed with my father.”

Jin Xinyue was dazed. “You did? How could you have confirmed with my father? It is not like you can ask my father directly.”

“Yes, I can.” Li Yao nodded matter-of-factly. “That’s exactly what I did.”

Jin Xinyue stood on her feet. “Excuse me?”

Li Yao turned on a light beam and replayed the conversation with Jin Tuyi a moment ago. “Take a look carefully.”

Jin Xinyue craned her head close, bulged her eyes, and stared at her father on the light beam.

In the picture, Li Yao was shouting with the utmost fury and anxiety, “You are planning to ask part of the main force of the coalition army of demons and a great amount of cannon fodder to pretend that you are marching on a full scale from the regular route, namely the Dark Desolate Domain to the Grand Desolate Plateau and then to the Giant Blade Pass. But it is actually a fake army. They are not the real main force but decoys!

“Your real plan is to teleport the elite troops of the coalition army and all the demon emperors to the offshore counterattack bases left by the Far East Demon Kingdom in the past through the Eye of Blood Demon before you stab into the heart of the federation, right?”

Shua!

Jin Xinyue froze the picture and replayed the clip again. She mumbled, “That is exactly what you asked, master. You mentioned the Eye of Blood Demon to my father directly!”

“Of course!” Li Yao said. “I am always outspoken, and I ask everything I don’t know about. What’s there to be shy of?”

“However—”

Jin Xinyue held her breath and continued watching, only to discover that Jin Tuyi did not even bother to blink. His every facial nerve seemed frozen, and there was absolutely no change in emotions. He said casually, “Don’t try to elicit anything from me. I will not talk about any detail of the war plan.”

Jin Xinyue narrowed her eyes, with a circle of golden brilliance glittering and spinning around her pupils rapidly, while she focused her attention on the video clip and watched it multiple times.

“My father didn’t give a response!

“I know that an expert such as Master must be adept at reading micro-expressions. When I was in the Pantheon of Demons, I also learned how to determine whether or not somebody was telling the truth by examining the twitching muscles on their face, the enlargement and reduction of their pupils, the frequency of their breath, and even the speed of their sweat being secreted.

“But as a demon emperor, my father had perfect control over his every muscle. I am very certain that, after master threw Eye of Blood Demon toward him, his micro-expressions did not change at all. His face and his body were like a frozen lake where there were no ripples at all.

“Therefore, what kind of answer have you read from my father’s unchanged face that confirms your deductions, Master?”

Li Yao smile slyly. He held his arms and enjoyed Jin Tuyi’s frozen face on the light beam one more time. He shook his head. “Same as you, I read nothing.

“Your father deserves to be the expert of experts. His manipulation over the muscles on his face was incredible, and his micro-expressions were completely under his control. Even the shivering of his eyelash and the tiniest movement of his pupils were highly controllable for him.

“From his face, I would either read nothing or read a wrong answer or a misleading one that he released deliberately!”

Chapter 1000 - Five Purposes!

Jin Xinyue felt like she was trapped in her master’s mind with no way of escape.

“However,” Li Yao said, “although I couldn’t read anything from your father’s face, it doesn’t mean that I could not read his mind!”

Jin Xinyue found it hard to believe. “Read the mind of a demon emperor who was dozens of kilometers away and on the other side of a light beam?”

For a moment, Jin Xinyue was of a mind to lunge forward and cling to her master’s thigh, exclaiming and begging him to teach her such an incredible technique.

Li Yao grinned. “Do you still remember the beginning of our conversation?

“I said that I knew my advantages very clearly. What I’ve always been best at are simply fighting and refining. In the field of persuasion, your father would be hanging me up and whipping me mercilessly.

“On the other hand, in terms of the arts of refining and magical equipment, it would be your father who is hanged up and whipped, right?

“When I was back in the Flying Star Sector, I saw a piece of marvelous magical equipment named the Truth Cabinet, which was a military polygraph left by the Star Ocean Imperium.

“As a fan of magical equipment, naturally, there was no way that I would let go of such an ultimate treasure. After I became the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau, I specially dedicated part of my time to the most profound research on the Truth Cabinet.

“Although it is impossible for me to produce such a piece of precise magical equipment, I can still copy a few rune arrays from it, duplicate a few functions, and make a counterfeit.

“Did you think that it was a simple ‘point-to-point communicator for miners’ that I’d inserted into the ‘Star Spot Red Fire Oyster’ and delivered to the commander-in-chief’s residence?”

Jin Xinyue could not help but bulge her eyes and open her mouth.

Li Yao’s eyes were narrowed into the shape of two fish hooks. “On the surface, it was just a ‘point-to-point communicator for miners’ that I threw together from the debris of a lot of magical equipment. In order to assemble the debris of different types, I added a lot of messy units to connect them.

“However, a few inconspicuous rune arrays hidden in the units endowed the magical equipment with a special function—to monitor the heartbeat and the flow of blood nearby and send the data back in the form of spiritual waves.

“Therefore, it is much more than a point-to-point communicator for miners; it is also a ‘polygraph’!

“Everybody has a comfort zone.

“When your father was talking face to face through the light beam, he knew that I could see him clearly, and he also knew that experts of our levels were definitely adept at reading the micro-expressions. Therefore, he must’ve been managing his facial muscles precisely in case what was on his mind was exposed on his face.

“However, as you said just now, the remote communication at a distance of dozens of kilometers gave him an illusionary sense of safety. He couldn’t have realized that I could sense his heartbeat and flow of blood on the other side of the light beam!

“From the very beginning, I pretended to be a hotblooded, bombastic dumbass. He was taking the initiative in our conversation all the time, and he lambasted me hard on my groundless theories.

“The more he lambasted, the more at ease he became. Eventually, he inevitably felt that ‘Vulture Li Yao is just so-so’!

“On the other hand, at the last moment of our conversation, I threw out Eye of Blood Demon toward him, pretending that I had lost control over my emotions and burst into fury.

“You see, after hearing Eye of Blood Demon, your father did not change his facial expression at all. Even the enlargement and constriction of his pupils were still normal.

“However, his heart was beating 11% faster, and the speed of his blood flow was 7% higher!

“Although he adjusted his heartbeat and flow of blood in only 0.4 seconds and regained his cool, it was already enough for me!

“Think about it. If the Red Tide Plan is truly unrelated to the Eye of Blood Demon, when your father heard Eye of Blood Demon, he should’ve been confused or simply neglected the words outright, right?

“The acceleration of his heartbeat and flow of blood is only indicative of one thing—I found out his biggest secret!”

Jin Xinyue listened attentively and gave no rebuttal.

“You were quite right. Your father’s face was like a frozen lake where there were no ripples whatsoever.

“However, no matter how frozen a lake appears to be, it is impossible for all the water in the bottom of lake to be frozen. There are always undercurrents flowing by.

“Therefore, I made thorough preparations and even snuck into Heavenly Path City at great risk in order to have a dialogue with your father not because I was trying to convince him but because I wanted to listen to his heartbeat. Nothing more.”

Jin Xinyue was deep in thought, remaining silent.

After a long time, she was suddenly back to herself from the trance. The sharp brilliance in her eyes condensed again. “Master, I have two questions.

“Firstly, how could you be so sure that the hidden ‘tell-tale rune arrays’ would not be discovered?”

“Because they were refined by me,” Li Yao replied. “Perhaps, if all the experts of refining in the Blood Demon Sector were gathered, and they spent a day and a night studying my work, it would’ve been possible for them to see the flaws in it. But since your father only had a few hours and he could not inform too many subordinates of the issue, there is no way that he could find it out."

The answer that was barely an answer rendered Jin Xinyue speechless. She extended another finger and asked, "Secondly, right now, it's great that you have guessed everything right, but what if your speculation was wrong?

"If my father gave no response at all after you said Eye of Blood Demon and there was absolutely no change in his micro-expression, heartbeat, or flow of blood, what would you do?

"You wouldn't have given up, would you?"

Li Yao shook his head and said solemnly, "I certainly would not have given up easily.

"Do you remember the crystal bombs we installed at the 'transfer station'?"

Jin Xinyue nodded. "I do. They were detonated to fake our death."

Li Yao's eyes turned into fish hooks again. "Faking our death was only one of their purposes.

"The crystal bombs had another usage that was much more important.

"When I crafted the batch of crystal bombs, I added a special ingredient to them, which was the powder I produced based on Dragon Wet Grass, Ice Silkworm Dew, and more than thirty other materials according to an ancient prescription.

"The powder is highly sticky. It will not be washed away easily when it is stuck to the surface of an object.

“Although it is invisible and odorless and will not emit any waves under normal circumstances, one will be able to notice it at a fairly long distance as long as one is wearing special glasses. Therefore, it is safe to say that the powder is designed for tracing.

“Similar powder is often utilized in the vaults of the banks in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector. If you spray the powder on the precious Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and marrow crystals, you won’t worry about any robber growing interested in them.”

Jin Xinyue frowned and said, “There is such powder in the Blood Demon Sector, too. Also, it is much more advanced here than in the Heaven’s Origin Sector. We know very clearly the formulas of such powder in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the corresponding examination methods.”

Li Yao smiled. “Of course, the powder I produced was not the powder you can buy on the streets of the Heaven’s Origin Sector. It was based on an ancient prescription that has been lost for a long time. Also, three materials that do not exist in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector were added to the powder, which made it much more inconspicuous than normal powder. It is unlikely to have been discovered.

“This was my plan from the beginning.

“With our identities and our sabotages over the past month, we were essentially the most wanted criminals of the Blood Demon Sector. If you father intended to capture us, he certainly would have sent the best experts. Possibly, several demon emperors, the elite troops, and a few devilish warships would surround us!

“Those demon emperors, elite troops, and devilish warships would certainly be joining the ultimate war according to the Red Tide Plan, if my guess was correct.

“After all, once the Red Tide Plan was activated, it would be make or break for the Blood Demon Sector. There was no need to reserve strength. One more warrior means a higher likelihood of demolishing the capital city of the Star Glory Federation.

“Then, those demon emperors, elite troops, and devilish warships were bound to go to the final rendezvous point together with your father.

“As long as they were contaminated by the tracing powder, we would be able to find where the real elite troops of the coalition army of demons gathered by tracking them!”

Jin Xinyue thought hard for a moment. “However, how were you so certain that those demon emperors would not wash off the powder during their shower?”

“My crystal bombs were specifically designed to spread the powder as far away as possible when they exploded,” Li Yao explained. “All the demons, their weapons, and their devilish warships were contaminated!

“Let’s say that all the demon emperors have mysophobia [1] and take three showers every day, to the point that they are essentially shedding their skin every few hours. It is not like that they will wash their weapons multiple times a day, right?

“Alright. Suppose that they have sanitized both themselves and their weapons both inside and outside, or they have returned their weapons to their Cosmos Rings and will not use them again, are the devilish warships that are contaminated by the powder going to be cleaned so easily?

“There are only several days to go before the Red Tide Plan is to be activated. In such a short amount of time, only regular maintenance can be performed on the devilish warships. It there any reason for them to clean the shells of the devilish warships completely?

“Therefore, as long as we were not too unlucky, there would be at least one demon emperor, one weapon, or one devilish warship that was contaminated by the tracing powder, right?

“Let me conclude what we now know.

“After sneaking into Heavenly Path City, we have confirmed the activation date of the Red Tide Plan, pried into the distribution of the armies of Heavenly Path City, confirmed that the Red Tide Plan is related to the Eye of Blood Demon through your father’s heartbeat, sprayed tracing powder upon many demon emperors and heavy devilish warships, and faked the scene of our death, misleading all the demon emperors into thinking that we killed ourselves in the explosion!

“Although the persuasion failed, we have achieved the five aims of my plan. Is there any problem when I said that we have come home with loads of trophies?”

Chapter 1001 - The Third Skill!

After hearing Li Yao’s speech, Jin Xinyue felt as if she had observed a life-and-death battle between two top experts from a close distance and that the sharp swords and sabers brushed past her skin narrowly.

She could even feel that her master’s and her father’s blades of thought were rubbing her brain, causing both excruciating pain and ecstasy as if somebody had poured a bucket of icy water over her head.

The thrilled feeling made her sweat and barely able to stand.

Sorting through the whole thing, she felt that her father was more magnificent and mysterious than ever in her heart.

Jin Xinyue smiled bitterly and said, “It seems that I’ve always underestimated my father.

“It’s funny that I used to think that my father knew nothing when I killed my stepmother without alarming anyone and raised subordinates who were loyal to me in the Gold Crow Kingdom. I thought of the man as just so-so.

“As it turns out, he was crystal clear about everything, and he was indulging me on purpose!

“It’s a pity that the Red Tide Plan, which my father spent decades perfecting, has overlooked two fatal factors, one being Elder Nether Spring’s Spore Stratagem and the other being you. Eventually, somebody else is going to pick the fruit, and he is destined to fail!

“Master, there is something that has been bothering me. If my father is really as terrifying as you described, why was he fooled by Elder Nether Spring?”

Li Yao sighed and pointed at his head. “It’s all about the distribution of your computational ability.

“Nobody is omnipotent. However spectacular the computational ability of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator or a demon emperor is, the activity of their braincells has its own limits, too.

“What an insane and extraordinary cause it is to concoct the Red Tide Plan on his own, hoping to conquer the Heaven’s Origin Sector in one war! Your father must’ve dedicated his entire computational ability to the plan. Did he really have the time to bother about anything else?

“Perhaps, he thought that other demon emperors were idiots who were likely to expose the real Red Tide Plan. Therefore, he had to keep his distance from them and act alone.

“But it never occurred to him that the mouths of his idiotic teammates were full of fangs. Not only were they hamstringing him, they were even trying to bite him hard!

“I am most familiar with such a state of mind. Tell me the truth. Do you feel that I act weird occasionally? It’s almost like I’m a genius one moment and a retard the next. Sometimes I am talking rationally and sometimes I am just talking nonsense, right?”

“Well, I dare not think that. Master is a man of great wisdom and integrity, and you are born with an innocent mind. You occasionally behave like a child because you were getting to the truth of Dao!”

Li Yao smiled. “Forget the truth of Dao. The real reason is simple. That’s because, most of the time, I allocate 95% of my computational ability to the contemplation of tactics, schemes, and studies of magical equipment and ancient classics. The computational ability that is dedicated to communication only takes up 5% of the whole, at best. It’s only natural that I look inert and weird.

“For example, although I am talking to you with a tiny proportion of my computational ability right now, I have dedicated most of my computational ability to thinking how to destroy the Eye of Blood Demon. It’s a simple example of multitasking.

“Also, sometimes, like a few days ago, in order to sort through the reasons and ramifications of the Red Tide Plan, I even burnt my life and soul and activated my brain cell activity to above 1,500%. After the crazy calculations, my braincells needed to take a long time of rest. During such a period, my wisdom would be no different from that of an ordinary person. It is very likely that I would ignore the simplest traps and schemes.

“Your father must’ve been similar to me, or even more serious, because it was ‘destruction’ on my mind but ‘construction’ on his mind. Destruction is always easier than construction.

“In order to build the Eye of Blood Demon and carry out the Red Tide Plan, he must’ve devoted 110% of his computational ability to the endeavor. His brain was overloading every day all the time. Did he really have the redundant computational ability to care whether or not other demon emperors had evil plans?

“Maybe, that was how he gradually lost control of the subordinates around him, who were compromised by Elder Nether Spring one by one. Eventually, even the Red Tide Plan became a stepping stone for the Spore Stratagem!”

Although they were on opposing sides, Li Yao still thought very highly of Jin Tuyi.

Jin Tuyi’s destined failure was perhaps because he chose an invincible enemy and an impossible mission in the beginning and met all kinds of unexpected factors at the last moment.

In short, it was not his fault!

“By the way…” Li Yao sighed and said, “I didn’t tell you everything before we went to Heavenly Path City not because I did not trust you.

“It is true that I recruited you as my disciple because it concerned my interests. For example, you are Jin Tuyi’s daughter, so I can talk to him more quickly through you. Also, because of the Divine Blood of Chaos, you have turned into a human being from a demon, which is a great example for the integration of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector in the future.

“However, now that I have recruited you as my disciple, I will not keep anything from you or manipulate you like a chess piece.

“I didn’t tell your earlier for a simple reason. It is because your acting skills are still a bit naïve and far from immaculate. In such an important dialogue between such two influential participants such as your father and me, you would've given us away very easily. Do you understand?"

Jin Xinyue was dazed. "My acting skills… are too bad?"

"Correct."

Li Yao walked to the entrance of the cave with his hands in his back. Looking at the three lackluster bloody moons in the sky, he casually said, "You have certainly honed your acting skills in the Pantheon of Demons, too. I can tell that you've received professional training in acting, and it is not a problem for you to fool normal experts.

"However, in the eyes of the top experts such as your father and me, many of your movements and expressions are still too unnatural and exaggerated."

Jin Xinyue frowned and could not help but rub her cheeks. "Are—are they?"

"Yes."

Li Yao turned around and looked at his disciple solemnly. "Let's take your reaction when I was analyzing the entire Red Tide Plan for example.

"In fact, with your intelligence, you must've realized that our trip to Heavenly Path City was not just for the purpose of convincing your father, and you should've guessed a lot of things while you listened to my introduction, right?

"But still, you pretended that you knew nothing about it. You were stunned and sweating all the time, trying to highlight my wisdom with your clumsiness as comparison.

“That was very thoughtful of you, but I’m afraid that you overdid it. Such a way of ass-kissing is too crude.”

Jin Xinyue was lost for words and lowered her head in embarrassment.

“Don’t think that I am despising you,” Li Yao said solemnly. “In fact, your acting skills are quite excellent for your age!

“In fact, I always regretted one thing.

“What I’m best at is fighting and refining. Of the two disciples that I recruited, your Senior Brother is a genius in martial arts and will likely pass on my knowledge in combat, and your Senior Sister, although not very talented, is more passionate and hardworking about the arts of refining than anybody. She could more or less pass on the experience and knowledge that I have grasped in the arts of refining.

“But few people know that, other than fighting and refining, the skill that I’ve attached the greatest importance to is acting!

“I was born in a magical equipment graveyard where the competition was as cruel as the Blood Demon Sector. Before I learned fighting and refining, I only struggled to survive by resorting to my acting skills!

“What are acting skills exactly?

“Observation, analysis, contemplation, pretense, decoy, traps, schemes, feints, double feints, triple feints… All those abilities are entailed in your acting skills!

“Acting skills are almost the only trick to defeat the strong when you are weak! There are too many perils and too many great experts in the sea of stars. Nobody can really be invincible in the universe. In many situations, if you want to survive when you are dead for sure, and if you want to reverse your failure into victory, you will have to count on your acting skills!

“It has always been a pity that, although my previous two disciples will distinguish themselves sooner or later in the arts of fighting and refining, they can never pass on my knowledge in acting skills at all with their personality and wisdom. Therefore—”

Jin Xinyue was suddenly greatly touched. She was shivering as if she had foreseen what her master was going to say!

Li Yao patted her shoulder and said solemnly, “If my sole purpose was to approach your father, I had a lot of options, and I didn’t have to bind myself in a master-disciple relationship.

“Your talents and abilities in acting are the most important reason for me recruiting you as my disciple.

“Do you understand now?

“In fact, I have very high hopes for you. Just follow me and see how to perfect your acting skills in future!”

Jin Xinyue took a long breath and held back the urge in her nostrils. Bowing, she said earnestly, “As you wish, Master!”

The declaration was like a sharp blade that ripped apart the camouflage that had been covering him.

Jin Xinyue’s eyes were as clean as water, and she was standing straighter, like a sword that was half unsheathed.

She was no longer the loyal, ‘dumbfounded’ audience when Li Yao was analyzing the situation. She was back to the ambitious, ruthless, and meticulous saintess of the Pantheon of Demons.

Her tightening muscles and her gradually spreading spiritual energy were even shrouding her in an aura of hostility!

The blood-like moonlight sprayed into the carve, dying their clothes red.

Li Yao and Jin Xinyue, the weird master and disciple, confronted each other in silence under the moonlight that felt both like blood and like mist.

Li Yao smiled. “In fact, this is the real you. After running away from Void Turmoil City, you’ve been keeping something to yourself that you did not want to talk to me about until now, right?”

Jin Xinyue nodded, her eyes turning sharper and sharper, as if part of Jin Tuyi had been reincarnated inside her body. “That’s right. Perhaps I did not consider you as my one true master sincerely until this moment. Therefore, I do not want to conceal anything from you anymore!”

Chapter 1002 - Jin Xinyue's Determination!

Li Yao was smiling more and more sunnily, with appreciation beaming out of his eyes. “Excellent. This is more like my disciple. This is more like Jin Tuyi’s daughter. Just tell me what is on your mind!”

“Master, now that you’ve figured out the truth of the Red Tide Plan,” Jin Xinyue said calmly, “I assume that you are going to the Eye of Blood Demon and destroy it to stop the coalition army of demons, which has been mixed with spores from marching into the Heaven’s Origin Sector, right?”

Li Yao nodded. “Yes. That is the plan. I have never considered convincing your father and other demon emperors with empty talk. If I have to persuade someone, I will use my crystal bombs as my voice!”

“And you will need my assistance, right?”

“Of course,” Li Yao replied. “The Feather Clan is best at teleportation arrays and has contributed most to the Eye of Blood Demon. Most of the operators belong to the Feather Clan, too.

“I won’t be able to sneak into the Eye of Blood Demon and destroy it without your help.”

Jin Xinyue took a deep breath and said calmly, “But right now, I’m not sure whether or not I should stand on your side, Master.”

Li Yao’s face remained unchanged. “Why not?”

“If I say that I have been convinced by my father during your dialogue with him just now, will you be surprised, Master?”

Li Yao shook his head. “Not at all. Your father’s points were valid and highly persuasive. Even I was almost swayed by him as I reminded myself all the time to firm my belief. Is it strange at all that you were influenced by him?”

Ripples were spreading out of Jin Xinyue’s eyes, which were as clear as pond, while she mumbled, “All our endeavors are based on the same assumption—the Heaven’s Origin Sector is willing to let go of the grudge and work with the Blood Demon Sector after learning the threat of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

“Therefore, what we needed to do was to resolve the hatred and aggression in the Blood Demon Sector!

“But what if my father was right? What if the Cultivators of the Heaven’s Origin Sector are not willing to let go of their grudge with the Blood Demon Sector despite knowing that the Imperium of True Human Beings is coming at them?

“If they have calculated and analyzed carefully, only to come up with the conclusion that conquering the Blood Demon Sector as quickly as possible, enslaving all the demons, and sending them to Boneyard and the resource planets of the Flying Star Sector for mining, will be the most efficient approach for resource collection and the most effective strategy to cope with the Imperium of True Human Beings, what are we going to do?

“If that is the case, I will not be able to stop the collapse of the Blood Demon Sector or the miserable fate of all the demons even if I go through all the trouble to disrupt my father’s plan now.

“Then, why am I going to waste my time doing everything with you, Master?”

Jin Xinyue held her chest high and stared at Li Yao in the eyes with all her courage. She clenched her fists and said, “Before, I hadn’t figured out what to do exactly next. I simply decided to keep the thoughts to myself and see what I can do when we arrive at the Eye of Blood Demon.

“Perhaps, I would even betray you at the most critical moment.

“After all, I only respected you as my master to save my life and to fulfil my ambitions.

“However, your last words just now finally made me realize one thing—”

Li Yao was greatly touched. “You’ve finally realized that I recruited you as my disciple out of genuine will and did not intend to make use of you at all. So, you decide to return sincerity with sincerity?”

“Not exactly.”

Jin Xinyue shook her head and said dutifully, “I have realized that Master is sordid and cunning; your eyes are keen, and you can keep a secret really well. I cannot conceal what is on my mind from you at all!

“Therefore, I should voice exactly what I am thinking. For example, if I think that Master is sordid and cunning from the bottom of my heart, I should just say it frankly. After all, even if I don’t say it, you will certainly see through me.

“If I have a second thought and plan to betray master at a certain time, I will definitely be trapped earlier, and I’m afraid that I will end up helping you count the money for selling me out!”

Unable to respond, Li Yao remained silent.

Jin Xinyue smiled, with a bit of confusion about herself in her eyes. She lowered her head and looked at the tips of her feet, mumbling, “Master, do you find it weird that I have become so compassionate and so considerate about the lives of my compatriots?

“In the past, I certainly wouldn’t.

“In the past, I believed that I was more important than anything else. There was nothing but revenge, ambition, and power in my head. I didn’t even bother to look at other silver-blood demons, much less the bronze-blood, the black-blood, and the chaotic-blood ones who were nothing but ants to me.

“In order to be the supreme ‘Dark Lady of the Nine Heavens’ of the Blood Demon Sector, I was willing to kill anybody, do anything, and sell whatever others were interested in.

“In the couple of days after I swallowed the Divine Blood of Chaos and turned from a demon into a human beings, I even considered the idea of betraying the Blood Demon Sector and sending all the demons to the slaughterhouse of the Cultivators as long as I could get enough benefits and my safety guaranteed.

“If I did not have a choice, I could always try to sneak into the Heaven’s Origin Sector and change my name. I believed that I would rise up quickly as a Cultivator with my capability and wisdom!

“My attitude for you was the same, Master. You were an unparalleled expert to me. My life was safe when I followed you. So, I followed you.

“You might want me to betray the Blood Demon Sector, and you might want me to destroy the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Was there anything I would hesitate to do as long as I could live on?”

Jin Xinyue’s aura was suddenly unstoppably sharp and enveloped her body together with the mist of the blood moon. It was like a mysterious spring had cleansed her body and bones from inside out, transforming her into somebody new!

Recalling what had happened to her recently, Jin Xinyue said in a low voice, “I don’t know why I have changed. Perhaps the mutation of the cells led to the change of mind. Or maybe it has to do with my experience during the few months when I snuck into Void Turmoil City as a chaotic-blood demon with you.

“In the past, although I was good at camouflage and infiltration, I always pretended to be silver-blood demons, and my victims were mostly nobles, too. The lowborn black-blood demons and chaotic-blood demons were no different from the stones and weeds on the road in my eyes.

“However, during the few months, I lived together with countless ‘untouchable’ chaotic-blood demons as one of their own, and I also got in touch with many hideous, bizarre-looking black-blood demons. It was not until then that I discovered—

“I discovered that chaotic-blood demons have feelings, too. They have their own will. They have their friends, lovers, and family.

“As for the black-blood devils who appear to be monsters, you freely communicate with them as long as you’ve grasped the trick.

“Beside my residence at that time, there was a neighborhood of black-blood demons. I even saw a band made of many ugly members of the Insect Clan. They played the most marvelous music by the vibration of their wings, the rubbing of their mouthparts, and the hisses from their stomachs.

“In order to retrieve intelligence, I even made friends with two chaotic-blood demons. One of them was a girl who was fifteen years old. She used to sleep on the same bed as me and chat all night about her daily life and the troubles she met. She admired me for my skillful manipulation over the male creatures and harassed me all the time, hoping that I could teach her how to get rid of the annoying pursuers and how to pursue her childhood sweetheart, a dumb chaotic-blood demon.”

Jin Xinyue could not help but smile when she talked about the friend.

Her smile was like the watery mist on a clear lake under the bright moon.

Li Yao listened quietly and did not interrupt his disciple.

Unless Jin Xinyue’s acting skills suddenly advanced into a level that was higher than his own, the smile was definitely the purest one that Li Yao had ever seen on Jin Xinyue’s face without any impurities.

A moment later, the ripples inside Jin Xinyue’s eyes broke apart, and her smile gradually froze. “When the coalition army of demons attacked Void Turmoil City, many low-level demons I knew were killed, including the friend who used to talk to me all night.

“Perhaps, I could’ve saved her, as long as I activated the capability of the Core Formation Stage.

“But I didn’t.

“At that time, I thought that I never regarded her as a real friend. She was just yet another object that I made use of, just like the countless objects that I’d made use of before.

“Why would someone like me need a ‘real friend’? Not to mention that she was just a chatty tagalong who could not shut her mouth all day.

“Yes. Many chaotic-demons died right in front of my face, but so what? In the past, I’ve executed countless demons in a yawn and killed countless members of the Blade of Chaos whose blood must’ve been enough to congregate into a river. Had I ever been merciful before?

“I had always believed that, even after you rescued me from Void Turmoil City.

“But right now, I have discovered that I was wrong. Very wrong.

“My silly ‘friend’ visits me in my dream and talks to me all night every night.

“In my dream, she never blames me for my coldness. She does not even know my real identity. She is still like an innocent dummy, telling me her troubles in my arms. She still asks me how she should pursue the boy who was killed in Void Turmoil City together with her.

“Master. Your disciple is confused right now. Really confused!

“Before, when I was a demon, I never cared about the life of any demons except for myself or the future of the Blood Demon Sector.

“Even though I craved to become the Dark Lady of the Nine Heavens of the Pantheon of Demons, it was actually the power and what the intimidating the title entailed that I desired. I never thought that I was obliged to do anything when I really became it one day!

“But now that I have turned into a human being from a demon, I am more concerned about the fate of the ‘demons’ now.

“It is rather hilarious, isn’t it?”

Chapter 1003 - Nothing to Regret

Jin Xinyue’s eyes were like two deep swirls, and she was looking at Li Yao earnestly as if she was hoping that Li Yao could drag her out of the confusion. “Therefore, after hearing my father’s analysis, I began to question myself and doubted whether or not I was doing the right thing.

“If it is impossible for the Star Glory Federation to put let go of the grudge or the country is determined to conquer all the demons bolstered by the war bonds, victory funds, and other interest groups, why should I stop my father?

“Perhaps, it will be best to just let the Red Tide Plan run its course?

“This is my confusion right now. Please do enlighten me, Master!”

Li Yao frowned. “What if I can’t enlighten you?”

Jin Xinyue hesitated for a moment. “Over the past couple of months after transforming into a human being, I’ve been learning to be a Cultivator.

“What matters most for a Cultivator is ‘belief’. I’ve been looking for my ‘belief’ all the time, but I haven’t found a clear answer yet.

“However, although I do not know what my ‘belief’ is, I know very clearly what my ‘belief’ isn’t!

“If I follow Master recklessly without figuring out what I am fighting for right now, I am certain that it is not the way guided by my ‘belief’!

“Therefore, if you really cannon enlighten me, I’m afraid that I will not be able to stand on your side wholeheartedly.

“Even if I follow you, it is very likely that I will become mentally deranged soon.”

Li Yao’s eyes turned deep and dark. “Are you suggesting that you will switch to your father’s side if I can’t give you a satisfactory reply?”

Cold sweat popped out of Jin Xinyue’s forehead. She stammered, “I—I don’t know. I truly don’t.”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes, his demonic energy spreading out. “Will you have nothing to regret even if you make me your enemy?”

His demonic energy made the bloody moon shiver unpredictably. Jin Xinyue was trembling as if she had been caught by an invisible storm. Her cold sweat froze into icy pearls.

Panting hard, she smiled bitterly. “Master, you—you asked me to learn how to be a real Cultivator. I studied the ‘Constitution of Cultivators’ for a long time, only to discover that it seemed necessary to taste the feeling of ‘nothing to regret’ for what you believe in if you want to be a real Cultivator.”

Li Yao’s expression became even gloomier, and his demonic energy was even more intense.

Suppressed by the demonic energy, Jin Xinyue was not able to utter a single syllable anymore. She managed to summon part of her spiritual energy to resist, but she was still shuddering from head to toe.

In the weird scene, it was hard to tell which one of them was the human being and which one was the demon.

A moment later, Li Yao suddenly retracted his demonic energy, and his face was warm and sunny again in the blink of an eye. He scratched his hair and smiled. “Your father did have a point. I thought for a long time and couldn’t find any refutation.”

Jin Xinyue breathed hard with swear pouring out. It was not until then that she realized that her master was merely testing whether or not her belief was firm enough.

Calming herself down, she asked, “So, you also acknowledge the possibility that the Star Glory Federation will fake peace for now, only to assault and conquer the Blood Demon Sector in a few years?”

Li Yao sighed and replied dutifully, “Of course, that’s a possibility.

“Although I am a Cultivator of the Heaven’s Origin Sector born in the Star Glory Federation, I do not want to lie and say that the federation is a perfect country and all the Cultivators are saints of integrity who honor their word.

“I grew up in a magical equipment graveyard, and I struggled up from the bottom level of the federation. I know the dark side of the federation a hundred times more clearly than your father does!

“Both before I became a Cultivator and after, I have met a lot of fellows who didn’t deserve to be called Cultivators. But still, they, as well as their family behind them, were still rising up in the federation, being promoted to important posts and even grasping the lifelines of the federation.”

Li Yao thought that the descendant of the Jiang family whom he had encountered on the training heading north to the Grand Desolate War Institution, the dastardly Cultivator who defected upon being faced with the beast tide and regarded ordinary people as ants.

Other than the guy, there must have been a lot of other Cultivators on the train.

But eventually, only seven of them were willing to stand out.

Nationwide, how many similar Cultivators were out there?

Cowardice and brutality were the two sides of the same coin. Cultivators who considered ordinary people as weeds would certainly not consider the lives of ordinary soldiers and the low-level demons to be a big deal. If they found enough benefits after careful calculation, they would certainly not hesitate to break the feeblest peace under the fanciest slogan!

Therefore, Li Yao really had nothing to say when Jin Tuyi tossed the dreadful future at him.

“However, we can still look at the whole issue from a different point of view.” Li Yao grinned. “Your father has his great reasons, and I have my minor reasons. Do you want to hear them?”

“Minor reasons?” Jin Xinyue chewed on the words and sat down solemnly. “Please do enlighten me, Master.”

“In terms of the great reasons, the big picture, and the vast changes, I am definitely no match for your father.” Li Yao waved his arms and pushed them forward, as if he were pushing Jin Tuyi’s theories aside. “However, let’s forget what your father said for now and make an assumption.

“Assume that we do nothing right now and simply have a nice, long nap here, what will happen over the next year and a half?”

Jin Xinyue pondered for a moment and quickly replied, “The Red Tide Plan will be implemented smoothly. The elite troops of the coalition army of demons will assault the capital city of the federation and fight hard with the experts of the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

“Then, Elder Nether Spring’s lurking spores will be activated and corrupt everybody within the range of the capital city, be they human beings or demons, into ‘uncontrollably mutants’ or his slaves. He will seize control over the two worlds in such a way!

“Regardless of whether Elder Nether Spring achieves his ambition or not, his ‘virus troops’ will certainly cause great casualties to the remaining forces of the two worlds. Both Sectors will be burnt to the ground, and there will be no way to resist the upcoming minor apocalypse.

“It is very likely that, after failing to resist the minor apocalypse, our capability will plunge, and our civilization will retrograde by hundreds of years. Then, after catching our breath for a hundred years or two, the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings will conquer, if not destroy, us both!”

“Exactly.” Li Yao nodded in great satisfaction. “This is the worst outcome, right?

“The Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector will likely to be blown to smithereens in the next hundred years. There won’t be a more terrible ending for us, will there?”

Jin Xinyue tilted her head and thought for a moment before she nodded and said, “Yes. This is definitely the worst ending. There cannot be a more terrible one.”

Three worlds were going to be destroyed. What would a more terrible outcome be like?

Even if they were not destroyed, it was not hard for Jin Xinyue to imagine the social position of the demon race in the Imperium of True Human Beings.

After all, it was Imperium of True ‘Human Beings’, not Imperium of True ‘Demons’. Would the foreigners such as themselves be given any rights?

Li Yao opened his hands and said, “There you have it!

“You have confirmed that, if we do nothing and change nothing, everything will slip to the worst ending slowly but surely.

“Then, is it really important whether we are doing the right thing or not?

“Your father was quite right. I do not have any evidence to prove that the Star Glory Federation will seek peace sincerely. Therefore, I cannot prove that I am doing the right thing and that this is the way out for us.

“However, even if I am doing the wrong thing, it will not make the situation get any worse!

“Let’s put it more frankly. Even if we get naked right now and perform a stripper’s dance right below the headquarters of the Pantheon of Demons, the situation right now will not get any worse, right?”

Jin Xinyue was dazed for a long time. Her eyelids were bouncing hard as if she were a faulty machine. She mumbled, “It does make sense!”

“So, what are you worried about?” Li Yao declared, “You have every reason to believe that, even if we resolve the imminent crisis right now, the Heaven’s Origin Sector will likely attack the Blood Demon Sector and turn all the demons into slaves several years later after its capability soars with the help of the Flying Star Sector. What should you do then?

“Even so, the worst you can expect is that all the demons will be killed and enslaved. What’s the difference between being killed and enslaved a few years earlier or later?

“In short, this is the situation we are in right now. If we do nothing, we will certainly be doomed. But if we do something and try to change something, although the future may seem volatile and the final peace difficult to achieve, we will at least be able to fight for a one percent chance, right?

“Alright, let’s say that there isn’t one percent. Even if the odds are one thousandth, one millionth, or one billionth, that’s still not zero!

“Food can only be finished one mouthful after another, and a journey can only be completed one step after another. We can always take care of the issues in the Blood Demon Sector for now before we turn to the Star Glory Federation to address the problems there. Even if we are wrong and we’ve done something stupid, it will never make the outcome any worse because the outcome cannot get any worse, right?”

The mist in Jin Xinyue’s eyes gradually dispersed. She mumbled, “You do seem to have point, Master.”

Li Yao grinned. “Your father’s great reasons might be right, but I believe that my minor reasons are legitimate, too. It’s all about the different points of view. He is the commander-in-chief and has to look at the big picture. In comparison, I am just a pawn, and I only need to do what I believe to be the right thing.”

“Then—”

Jin Xinyue’s eyes suddenly turned extraordinarily sharp. She stared Li Yao in the eyes and asked solemnly, “Master, suppose that we solve the crisis at hand and make the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector achieve a truce, but one day, the Star Glory Federation, your motherland, invades the Blood Demon Sector on a large scale as my father has foretold, whose side will you take?”

Chapter 1004 - Debate of the Living and the Deceased!

Li Yao had been quite at ease during the verbal competition with his disciple.

It was not until Jin Xinyue threw out that question that the smile on his face froze.

Taking a long breath, Li Yao replied, “My spiritual root was awakened when I was motivated by the seven Cultivators who stood up to protect the ordinary people at the cost of their own lives on the crystal train north to the Grand Desolate Plateau.

“Therefore, I will always stand on the side of ordinary people.

“I will make the choice that is most beneficial for ordinary people. If I believe that some policies of the federal government will harm the interests of ordinary people, I will certainly try to change or stop them.”

Jin Xinyue’s eyes were clearer, and her voice became more firmer. “You didn’t answer my question, master.

“Stand on the side of ordinary people? Then, who exactly are ordinary people? Or rather, what are ‘people’?

“Naturally, the citizens of the Star Glory Federation are the ordinary people that you would like to protect.

“I believe that my current appearance might be human in your eyes, too.

“For the chaotic-blood demons whose features are not very obvious, perhaps you may still consider them as ‘ordinary people’ and protect them sincerely.

“But what about the hideous and even bizarre-looking bronze-blood demons and black-blood demons?

“In your eyes, are they really ‘people’? In the most extreme circumstances, are you really willing to go against the Star Glory Federation for ‘people’ of such appearances?”

Li Yao was dumbfounded.

His third disciple was truly vastly different from the previous two.

Her performance had far exceeded his expectations!

Looking at Jin Xinyue’s eyes, which were glittering like marrow crystals and noticing that the saintess of the Pantheon of Demons and Jin Tuyi’s daughter was shining with all her brilliance, Li Yao found it impossible to consider the conversation as one where a master offered guidance to a disciple anymore.

Now, it had become the communication between two equal Cultivators!

“This is truly the most critical question. Ever since I found out the truth about the origins of the demon race, I’ve been ruminating on the same thing. What are ‘ordinary people’? What are ‘people’? How do you distinguish human beings from demons? And what am I fighting for?”

Li Yao gestured Jin Xinyue to sit cross-legged just like him.

She had been kneeling a moment ago, which was a posture when a disciple was listening to the tutelage of a master. If both of them were sitting cross-legged, it would be an equal discussion.

Jin Xinyue bowed and quickly sat cross-legged.

She knew that the conversation that followed would be about the meditation on the ‘great Dao’. Under the great Dao, all the Cultivators were equal, including a master and a disciple.

“The question is too complicated,” Li Yao said. “I was almost mentally deranged when I tried to figure out the answer. I argued hard with my other self in my head and came up with a lot of absurd theories.”

Naturally, the so-called ‘other self in his head’ was not a rhetorical device. There was indeed another Li Yao inside his head.

She listened attentively to her master’s understanding about the great Dao.

“Let’s do a mind game. Let’s say that you are a real Cultivator who abides by the ‘Constitution of Cultivators’, and you see a weak, young girl caught in danger. Naturally, you are obliged to be there for her, right?”

Jin Xinyue nodded. “Of course.”

“But what if it is not a girl but an ugly, uncivilized, thick-headed man who is caught in danger? Should you protect him?”

Jin Xinyue hesitated for a moment before she replied, “I think I should. Being ugly is not a crime. As uncivilized as he appears to be, he is perhaps also a husband, a father, and a son. He is an ordinary person, too. If he is caught in danger and cannot resolve himself, any real Cultivator will take action and protect him.”

“What if, due to a serious disease that caused the failure of his internal organs, the man has replaced 99% of his body parts with ‘artificial organs’ made of metal, gears, and magical equipment, and only his brain remains the same?” Li Yao asked.

Pondering for a moment, Jin Xinyue replied, “Ordinary people using artificial bodies are still ordinary people.”

Li Yao’s eyes were shining. “What if he doesn’t even have a brain? He is dead, and only part of his soul is left.”

Jin Xinyue frowned. “The laws of the Star Glory Federation acknowledge the rights of the ghosts. So, ghosts are equal to ordinary people, too. Theoretically speaking, he still should be protected.”

“Great,” Li Yao said. “Let’s assume that the man is about to die from the serious disease. What if the only thing that can save him is not an ‘artificial body’ but a bottle of ‘Divine Water of Kunlun’?

“After he drinks the ‘Divine Water of Kunlun’, his cells will mutate, and he will turn into a demon with a terrifying face and sharp tusks in his mouth. Then, is he still an ordinary person? Is he still under the protection of the Cultivators?”

Jin Xinyue failed to come up with a reply.

The question was too complicated for her to give an answer. She shook her head while deep in thought, not giving a negative answer but showing that she did not know.

“Alright. Another question. Let’s assume that the bottle of ‘Divine Water of Kunlun’ has barely any side effects after special refinement. After the man drinks it, his cells will still mutate, but his appearance will be not very different from normal human beings, the only difference being that his canine teeth are one millimeter longer than those of ordinary people.

“Then, is the man who has been saved from doom a human being or a demon?”

“One millimeter?” Jin Xinyue gestured and discovered that a one-millimeter difference in the length of the canine teeth was beyond noticing. Of course, he was an ordinary person!

She nodded without hesitation.

“What about two millimeters?”

Jin Xinyue nodded again.

“Three?”

Again.

“Four? Five?”

Again and again.

“What about ten millimeters, or rather, one centimeter?”

One centimeter longer than normal? That’s a bit obvious. Jin Xinyue hesitated but still nodded.

Li Yao held his chin with his crossed fingers. “What about thirty centimeters? If he has long, sharp tusks like those of the sabertooth tiger, is he a human being or a demon?”

Jin Xinyue thought hard and slowly replied, “For many chaotic-blood demons, their only distinctive features are their tusks. If the man has tusks resembling those of the sabertooth tiger, I don’t think that he is a ‘human being’ in the common sense, is he?”

“So,” Li Yao said, “for the length of the canine teeth, there is a tipping point between one centimeter to thirty centimeters that divides a human being from a demon, right?

“Let’s say that the tipping point is fifteen centimeters.

“If the man is fortunate enough, his canine teeth might grow to 14.99 centimeters after he takes the ‘Divine Water of Kunlun’, which means that he is a human being. Theoretically speaking, the Cultivators should protect him.

“However, if he takes one more mouthful of the ‘Divine Water of Kunlun’, his canine teeth might grow to 15.01 centimeters, in which case he will be a demon. Theoretically speaking, the Cultivators should slay him because it is their duty to ‘slay all evil’.

“If the man makes up his mind and goes to his dentist, demanding that his tusks be removed. Then, he will turn from a demon into a human being, and the Cultivators should protect him again, right?”

Jin Xinyue felt her own canines aching.

According to the logic, that sounded about right.

But when she got deeper into the question, she felt that something was wrong.

How exactly should the concept of ‘human being’ be defined?

Jin Xinyue was completely confused.

Li Yao sighed. “It is rather preposterous, isn’t it? But this is the mindset for many people, including myself.

“You were quite right. I kept telling myself that demons originated from human beings and are merely human beings in another form, and I did not find it a problem to accept the silver-blood demons and the chaotic-blood demons—who appeared to be human beings with a tail, a pair of cat ears, or two wings—as my own kind.

“However, as for the creatures who do not look like human beings at all and are essentially insects that have been enlarged thousands of times… it is still quite difficult for me to accept them.

“I know that it is wrong to judge somebody by their appearance, but however hard I try to overcome my bias, it is unlikely to be twisted shortly.

“Therefore, if you ask me what a ‘human being’ is exactly, I don’t think that I am qualified to define the concept.

“I only want to tell you a story about how the ghosts fought for human rights in the Star Glory Federation a hundred years ago.”

Jin Xinyue listened attentively and tried her best not to interrupt.

“A hundred years ago, as the relevant technologies such as ‘soul locking’ and ‘artificial bodies’ advanced, more and more ghosts were popping up in the Star Glory Federation. Debates remained unabated as to the rights of the ghosts and whether or not they should be regarded as human beings.

“Some supported the human rights of the ghosts. After all, they retained their memory and their self-awareness, and they were no different from when they were alive except that they did not have a body.

“But some other people believed that ghosts were just ghosts and that their destiny was different from living creatures. It was good enough to tolerate them walking in broad daylight, and now they were demanding human rights? Regarding ghosts as human beings would lead to the great collapse of ethics and social order. It was definitely not a viable option.

“Influenced by the latter, many organizations who insisted that ‘living lives matter’ emerged. Prejudice, if not persecution, against the ghosts was severe back then.

“In some places, the evil guys even imprisoned the ghosts and manipulated them into committing crimes. After all, ghosts did not have bodies. It was much more convenient to ask them to do the dirty work. Such incidents where ghosts were manipulated into hurting living people had been nothing new since ancient times.

“Under such circumstances, a typical case appeared. Part of the soul of a twelve-year-old girl was left after she passed away. Yet, a certain group of criminals obtained her soul and built her into a spectral Cultivator, forcing her to commit crimes with the abilities as a ghost.

“The little girl refused and tried to escape many times. The evil Cultivators were pissed off and blew her soul into nothingness in the end.

“After the incident was exposed, naturally, the evil Cultivators were arrested.

“However, in the court, their lawyers argued in front of the undeniable proof that, although they admitted that they had blown the soul of the girl into nothingness, a person could not be killed twice. The little girl had died a long time ago of a natural disease, which was not their fault. So, technically speaking, they did not ‘kill’ the little girl, and the murder case simply did not exist.

“Killing a living person was definitely a felony, but what about killing a ghost? The Star Glory Federation has a series of laws. Is killing a ghost a violation of the laws?

“It was a simple case in the beginning. But since it happened to be set to public when the two ways of thinking were crashing fiercely, the case was eventually appealed to the supreme court of the federation, turning into a great debate about the definition of ‘deceased’ and ‘living’!

“Was the soul that was hiding in an artificial body a human being or not? Was killing a ghost who had independent will an consciousness murder?

Chapter 1005 - Affirmative Action for Ghosts

“The case was debated for almost ten years. According to the laws of the federation, the definition of ‘murder’ was ‘unlawfully depriving a natural person of their life’. The laws did not state that ghosts were ‘natural persons’. Naturally, ghosts did not have a ‘life’.

“Furthermore, the forces that supported ‘ghosts are not human beings’ were still very influential, and many ordinary citizens had yet to change their prejudice.

“Therefore, after the case was debated in the court of appeals, the evil Cultivators were found not guilty of murder. They were only sentenced to prison for a few misdemeanors.

“The result infuriated many people, including the little girl’s younger brother.

“It had already been ten years since the little girl passed away because of her disease. The little girl’s brother had grown into a soldier of the federation army.

“He had fought valiantly in the battles against beast tides. Unfortunately, he was caught by the acids of a ‘Single-Horned Sour Lizard’. His left eye, left arm, and left foot were seriously corroded, and he had been forced to replace the left side of his body with artificial counterparts. Then, he retired as a disabled veteran.

“As a disabled veteran, he lived quite a comfortable life materially. However, the young veteran was more than infuriated by such injustice that the criminals were found not guilty after they manipulated, tortured, and obliterated his sister’s soul.

“He was a very smart young man. In the ten years of trial, he taught himself all the courses about the federal laws and mastered advanced skills in debating. Also, while the ideology that ‘ghosts are human beings’ spread out, he made a lot of good friends who shared the same belief. They gradually became a new force in society.

“After the evil Cultivators were found not guilty of murder in the court of final appeal, the young man made a shocking decision.

“He sued the federal government!

“There’s no need to talk about the details. Anyway, in the end, those who believed that ghosts are human beings and those who didn’t had a fierce debate in the supreme court. The trial was also live streamed to the entire federation. Almost every citizen was watching the debate.

“In the court, the angry young man asked exactly the same question I asked just now, except that he did it much more violently than me.

“He stabbed the man-made crystal heart inside his chest with his cold mechanical arm and asked, ‘Am I a human being?’

“As technology advanced, more and more people were replacing their broken limbs with artificial organs.

“If somebody’s finger was damaged and they replaced it with an artificial finger, were they a human being?”

Jin Xinyue was attracted by the story and could not help but nod. “Of course!”

“Then, was the young man—who had replaced half of his body, including his heart, with machines driven by spiritual energy because of battle wounds—a human being?”

Jin Xinyue nodded. “He definitely is!”

“What if it were more than half?” Li Yao asked. “What if 51% of his body were artificial? 99%? 99.99%?”

He asked exactly the same question just now.

At that time, Jin Xinyue would have answered easily with the federal laws that the young man was still a human being.

However, right now, after learning everything, Jin Xinyue was deep in thought.

“The angry young man’s real question was, what exactly makes a human being?

“If everybody believed that somebody whose body was 10% mechanical was a human being, and somebody else whose body was 99.99% mechanical was not, then there was certainly a tipping point between 10% and 99.99% that separated human beings from non-human beings.

“Let’s say that the tipping point is 50%.

“If so, for a disabled veteran such as the young man, if 49.99% of his body was replaced by machines, he was still a human being.

“But if he was unfortunate enough to have been spat on by the ‘Single-Horn Sour Lizard’ one more time in the battlefield, it is possible that 50.01% of his body would have been replaced by artificial organs. In such a case, he was no longer a human being, was he?

“It is obvious that such a theory was too absurd. There was no such a tipping point. It was not at 50%, nor at 90%!

“Even the brain could not be the criterion to determine a human being, either. At that time, the technology to repair the brain was fairly advanced. Many people who suffered heavy brain damage would implant recovery chips into their head. Naturally, they were human beings.

“Therefore, a human being whose body was 99.99% mechanical was still a human being!

“Then, was the tipping point between 99.99% and 100%?

“Assume that a disabled veteran was so heavily wounded that only 0.01% of his braincells could be retained, and all his other body parts were substituted by artificial organs. According to our theory just now, he is a human being and should enjoy the rights of one.

“What if it was not 0.01% of his braincells but 0.001% or 0.0001%?

“The number can be reduced infinitely until it reaches zero. Where should the ‘tipping point’ be located? If somebody with 0.00000001% or more living braincells was a human being and somebody with less was a ghost, wouldn’t it be too absurd?

“Weren’t the so-called ‘ghosts’ human beings whose body was 100% mechanical? Was there really any essential difference between them and someone who was with 99% artificial organs?

“The angry young man’s questions silenced the entire court.

“All the citizens who were watching the live stream began to reflect on the definition of ‘human being’, too.

“The case seriously influenced the laws and policies of the federation later.

“As for the young man, other than appealing to the court of law, he also visited the leadership of the Federation’s Disabled Servicemen Association and finally won the support of the entire association and even the federal army!

“The reason was simple. Although the Grand Desolate Plateau had been conquered, small-scale conflicts with demons were still on, not to mention that a great war against the Blood Demon Sector might be coming soon. Therefore, the federal soldiers and Cultivators had the highest death rate in the federation.

“A Cultivator’s soul is usually very solid. The ordinary soldiers of the federal army were mostly energetic, healthy young people, too. Therefore, the odds that part of their soul lingered on after their death were much higher than when an ordinary person died.

“If a federal soldier fought bravely for their country and was unfortunately killed, turning into a ghost, only to find that they had lost all his rights and that anybody else could savage, torture, and enslave them without being punished, wouldn’t it be hilarious?

“Therefore, the federal army and the major Cultivation sects gradually began to support the young man, and the prevailing stereotype in society was slowly twisted, too. More and more citizens agreed that ghosts were human beings. Those who disagreed turned into the minority.

“After all, everybody would die someday, and anyone could become a ghost after their death. Therefore, they had to consider for themselves, too.

“Eventually, the federation government lost the case!

“Two years later, the federal government issued ‘Affirmative Action for Ghosts’, which, for the first time, legally defined ghosts with independent will as ‘natural persons’. Ghosts were acknowledged as federal citizens, enjoyed all the pertinent rights and responsibilities, and were protected by the federal army and the Cultivators!

“After more than a hundred years of integration, the living and the deceased of the federation have become an inseparable whole. Biases against the ghosts are no more.”

Jin Xinyue was greatly touched. Then she suddenly thought of something else. “What about the evil Cultivators who killed the little girl? They must be guilty of murder now, mustn’t they?”

“No.”

A mysterious smile popped up on Li Yao’s face. “The laws of the federation are built on the foundation of non-retroactivity. As they were found not guilty of murder in the final trial, how could you punish someone, who had already been tried, with a new law?

“In fact, the few charges that they were found guilty of were all misdemeanors. One year before the ‘Affirmative Action for Ghosts’ was issued, they were already out of prison and enjoying their happy life again.”

“Fine.” Jin Xinyue frowned. For some reason, she felt sorry about the old case a hundred years ago.

Ever since she turned into a human being, she seemed to have more and more emotions.

However, she felt that her master’s smile was very weird. She thought of something and asked, “There’s more to the story?”

With a smile, Li Yao replied, “Not much, except that the few scumbags were killed by the young man’s comrades half a year after they got out of prison, one month before ‘Affirmative Action for Ghosts’ was enacted.”

Jin Xinyue was dazed. She observed, “I thought that the young man chose to appeal because he respected law and wanted to use the law as his weapon. It didn’t occur to me that he would still break the law and lynch the criminals in the end.”

“Lynch the criminals, they did, but break the law, they did not. The federal soldiers were the defenders of the country and the law. How could they violate the law that they swore to protect?

“The young’s comrades were all charged, but they walked out of the court freely in the end, too. They were not found guilty of murder!”

Jin Xinyue did not understand. “Why? Was the court under the pressure of the federal army?”

“Of course not! It was because, technically speaking, before the ‘Affirmative Action for Ghosts’ was formally enacted, the young’s comrades were all ghosts instead of human beings.”

“Huh?”

“Don’t you understand? The young man’s comrades were all the spectral Cultivators who had sacrificed in the battlefield and only had their souls left!” Li Yao explained. “Before the ‘Affirmative Action for Ghosts’ was enacted, the Star Glory Federation did not acknowledge the human rights of ghosts.

“Ghosts were not human beings. Therefore, killing a ghost was not murder. It was also why the evil Cultivators were found not guilty in the first place.

“Then here comes the question. It is not a murder when a human being kills a ghost. Then what if a ghost kills a human being?

“After the revenge case took place, the law enforcement examined the federal law in retrospect and realized, to their surprise, that the federation had always been fighting against the demons since it was established and there were endless clauses regarding the demons who were considered to be the greatest threat. But none of the laws were actually about ‘ghost killing someone alive’!

“It was quite understandable. Even in the world of ancient Cultivators, it was unlikely for the government to make any guidelines on how to sentence a ghost that had committed murder, right? At that time, the Cultivators were responsible for ‘removing the evil’. When an evil ghost killed someone, monks, priests, and Cultivators would be there to eliminate them.

“But it was already a new era and a society ruled by law. The law is above everything. The Cultivators had to do their work legally, train legally, and help the weak legally.

“Before the ‘Affirmative Action for Ghosts’ was enacted, the young man’s sacrificed comrades were not ‘human beings’ from a legal point of view. How could they be found guilty of ‘murder’?”

Chapter 1006 - Everything Is Under Control!

Jin Xinyue immediately understood it.

Instead of putting on a stunned expression, this time, she thought quickly and said, with sharp brilliance beaming out of her eyes, “I think that his comrades did it for more than just revenge!

“I believe that they even wanted to be found guilty of murder!

“If they were found guilty, it would suggest that the federal government acknowledged that ‘ghosts’ shared the rights and responsibilities of ‘human beings’ before the ‘Affirmative Action for Ghosts’ was enacted.

“Then, all the cases where the ghosts were persecuted, enslaved, and slaughtered over the past hundreds of years would likely be overruled!”

Li Yao nodded and praised, “You’ve understood everything at the first clue. As expected of the saintess of the Pantheon of Demons.

“Maybe you are right. But the grudges between human beings and ghosts over hundreds of years involved too many things. Therefore, they were eventually found not guilty and set free. It was a sign that the previous cases before the Affirmative Action for Ghosts were enacted would not be pursued any further in case the society was divided.

"All in all, what I am trying to say is that ghosts and demons share a lot of similarities on a certain level, and the integration of the deceased and the living will shed light on the integration of demons and human beings, too."

Li Yao paused for a moment. Sorting out his thoughts, he continued, "You might not know this, but ten years ago, when I left the Star Glory Federation, investment on the biochemical technology had already soared. Many of the technologies were actually stolen from the demon race.

"Wars are always the fastest, most efficient means of communication. No matter how we speak evil of each other, we will never hesitate to learn and absorb the advantages and shining points of the enemy.

"The reason is very simple. Those who do not learn and absorb will likely be wiped out.

"Therefore, no matter how demons of the Blood Demon Sector decried human beings of the Heaven's Origin Sector as shameless, cowardly worms, they would still have to utilize the crystal processors, light beams, and rune arrays on a large scale. Many beast tides were actually for the purpose of looting the magical equipment and jade chips of the Heaven's Origin Sector.

"Even the most extreme, conservative, and condescending demon emperors would not refuse to calculate the drawbacks in their arts through crystal processors, would they?

"By the same logic, although the Star Glory Federation considers the Blood Demon Sector its mortal enemy, it has never stopped us from developing the biochemical technology, sometimes even by stealing from the Blood Demon Sector.

“In the field of treatment for the heavily wounded, the ‘regrowth of lost limb’ technology, which is still in the experimental phase, is far more advantageous than the ‘artificial limb’ technology.

“I’ve been thinking lately about one thing. If a ‘demonic cell’ whose genes have mutated under induction is considered as a component in a body, then, how many demonic cells will make a human being a demon?”

Jin Xinyue was silent.

At this moment, she was completely lost about the boundary between ‘human beings’ and ‘demons’.

For example, was she a human being or a demon?

What about her master? Was her master, Li Yao, a human being or a demon?

Li Yao sighed and said, “You asked me a question just now. Are those ugly, fearsome, bizarre-shaped bronze-blood demons and black-blood demons human beings in my eyes?

“I really don’t know the answer to the question. I feel that I will be a hypocrite no matter how I reply.

“I can only say that I believe in the possibility of the integration of human beings and demons, which will be just like the integration of human beings and ghosts that happened before.

“Besides, under the current circumstances, in the cruel, dark forest, the integration will do everyone good.

“However, integration takes time. Perhaps, a very, very long time.

“I will do everything I can, like the angry young man did, to facilitate the integration and to shorten the time it takes.

“This is my stance right now. This is what I am fighting for right now.

“Now, would you like to stand on my side?”

Li Yao extended his hand to Jin Xinyue.

Jin Xinyue was deep in thought.

Due to the high-speed functioning of her brain, her sweat was vaporized into a vague mist, wreathing her in what seemed to be a translucent shell.

Finally, she made a step forward and broke the shell, putting on the purest smile.

“Master, I seem to understand where to look for my ‘belief’ now.

“Let’s go and destroy the Eye of Blood Demon!”

…

As Li Yao and Jin Xinyue set off to destroy the Eye of Blood Demon, the commander-in-chief’s residence in Heavenly Path City was full of hustle and bustle.

The intimidating aura unleased by six demon emperors filled the vast meeting room with immense pressure. The air in the room seemed to be compressed. Regular officers of the coalition army all found it hard to breathe as if they were in the deep sea.

Streams of information flowed into the meeting room.

“In the range of the explosion, constituents of blood and scraps of membrane suits have been found. After examination, they have been determined to be the debris of two victims!

“The search in Heavenly Path City has been completed. Other than the scene of explosion, no anomalies have been detected. No accomplices have been found, either!”

Jin Tuyi, commander-in-chief of the coalition army, listened in silence and casually said, “It seems that they have indeed killed themselves in the explosion.”

The news of his daughter Jin Xinyue’s death seemed to have caused no hard feelings to him at all.

Yuan Riyue, another demon emperor whose son had been killed by Li Yao, burst into fury. He bellowed, “They died just like that? I didn’t even have the chance to cut the scumbag into shreds!”

Jin Tuyi smiled and said, “Being killed now is more miserable for them than being cut into shreds, isn’t it? Now, we have to focus on our business. There is no need to be distracted by such trivia. If your fury has not been soothed yet, wait until we march into the capital city of the federation where you will be able to slay thousands of human beings as offerings to the deceased.”

“Thousands will not be enough!” Yuan Riyue grinned hideous with brutality beaming out of his eyes. “Even if I butcher everyone in the city, my hatred will not be soothed!”

Another demon emperor of the Claw Clan, who was short and slender, squinted and said calmly, “I still feel that it is a bit weird. Commander, are those crystal bombs enough to blow an expert in the Nascent Soul Stage into nothingness without any bone left?”

Jin Tuyi waved his hands impatiently. “Our enemy was an explosion expert. During his fleeing over the past half month, he has killed a lot of our elites with his crystal bombs. Was it really strange that he carefully prepared some powerful bombs for himself in order not to be captured by us alive?

“Alright. There’s no need to discuss the issue anymore. The threats have been cleared. They are dead for sure now!

“Let’s concentrate our attention on the Red Tide Plan. It is going to be a battle that will decide the fate of our race. We must reflect on every detail in case of any negligence!”

Jin Tuyi was the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons. Theoretically speaking, all the other demon emperors were his subordinates. Now that he had declared that the two intruders were dead, what was there to say?

“Understood!”

All the demon emperors bowed to Jin Tuyi in respect.

Jin Tuyi nodded and turned over, focusing on the map of the capital city of the federation.

From the beginning to the end, every muscle in his brain did not have the slightest change.

His heartbeat and flow of blood remained absolutely the same, too.

…

Thousands of kilometers away, three hundred meters below the ground, inside Elder Nether Spring's secret residence in the depths of the Nether Spring Kingdom, Elder Nether Spring, Lu Wuxin, Despot, Swirl, and the leadership of the 'Nether World Watch' were gathered together, studying everything that had happened in Heavenly Path City a moment ago.

Elder Nether Spring had sent a lot of spies to Jin Tuyi. Quite a few armed forces in the coalition army of demons belonged to the Insect Clan, too. Therefore, what happened in Heavenly Path City was displayed to him in the most vivid and thorough way only a few hours later.

"It seems that Jin Tuyi did not grow suspicious of us. Instead, he was brutal enough to kill his own daughter. Our great trouble has been resolved!"

"You are truly wise, Elder," Swirl said with delight. "You knew exactly what choices Jin Tuyi would make!"

"Of course." Elder Nether Spring smiled casually. "Jin Tuyi has been working on the Red Tide Plan for so many years. The Red Tide Plan is essentially his second life. He is already fascinated by the Red Tide Plan. Anything that impedes the Red Tide Plan will be determined to be false by him intuitionally!

"The guy was trying to talk him out of the Red Tide Plan, which he treasured as his own life, with a few groundless assumptions? How hilarious!"

Swirl, Despot, and Lu Wuxin adulated at the same time. "Elder's wisdom is unparalleled in the world!"

Elder Nether Spring shook his hand and changed the topic. "However, we still cannot slack in our surveillance of Jin Tuyi.

Nothing is really certain until the Eye of Blood Demon is activated. We must be prepared for possible changes!”

“Rest assured, Elder!” Swirl smiled. “Our spies have been around Jin Tuyi constantly. It was funny that he asked the ‘Dark Clothes Society’, his secret intelligence organization, to investigate his eldest son’s relationship with us when he suspected him. He did not know that even the Dark Clothes Society has been seriously compromised by us!

“Right now, Jin Tuyi’s every move is under our control. He can only move forward according to Elder’s will under Elder’s manipulation while he does all the menial work for us and makes the Red Tide Plan a perfect stepping stone for the Spore Stratagem!

“The winners and the losers have been decided. Even if Jin Tuyi realizes what is going on, he won’t be able to change anything. Not to mention that he is still intoxicated in the fancy dream of the Red Tide Plan, hoping to finish the war in one battle!”

With his hands behind his back, deep and frantic brilliance beamed out of Elder Nether Spring’s eyes. “Excellent. The day when the red tide sweeps over the world and the spores break out will be the day of the rise of the third life form! We are destined to be the masters of the new world. Everything has been within our calculation so far. Who can stop us?”

Chapter 1007 - Name extend of

The Gold Crow Kingdom, as a country of the Feather Clan, looked vastly different from the superpowers on the continent such as the Kingdom of Lion Butchers or the Nether Spring Kingdom.

The territory of the Gold Crow Kingdom was in the middle of the most ragged mountains and the most rapid rivers of the Blood Demon Sector.

On the land that was broken, unpopulated, and barely reachable for most animals, only birds and the Feather Clan could come and go as they pleased.

A very special plant named Gold Crow Wood grew there. It was claimed to be the descendant of the Jianmu [1] , a legendary divine tree in the primeval era. It could have a height of thousands of meters, and its roots could cover dozens of square kilometers. One such tree was enough to make a forest.

When three or four Gold Crow Woods grew together, they would produce a boundless forest.

Not only could the Gold Crow Woods collect tremendous nutrition through the roots that could reach thousands of meters below the ground, they were also able to collect the spiritual energy in nature through the leaves that were packed with super tiny holes. By gathering the thin spiritual energy around them, they produced the Gold Crow Fruits, which were of a high value for training.

Therefore, residents of the Gold Crow Kingdom considered the Gold Crow Woods that were thousands of meters tall as natural cities.

They built houses on the Gold Crow Woods. They travelled through the branches and the vines. They had also established floating mountains and rune arrays that made use of the wind energy on the Gold Crow Woods.

The Gold Crow Wood was the source of life for the Feather Clan. Even the name of the country came from the tree, too.

However, right now, the town made of three Gold Crow Woods and one floating mountain was burning furiously in weird purple fire!

Amid the branches of the Gold Crow Woods, many ugly low-level demons who had wings on their back were fighting against the high-level members of the Feather Clan who were handsome and emitting dark, golden brilliance!

Everybody was roaring thunderously. In the end, one of the Gold Crow Woods collapsed violently because of the fire and the intense blast!

“Hooray!”

When the giant tree collapsed, the low-level demons in shabby clothes shouted in a voice that resembled a landslide, “Long live God Chaos!”

Similar riots broke out almost at the same time in more than ten towns of the Gold Crow Kingdom.

It was the aftermath of the Riot of Bloody Blade.

After Void Turmoil City was occupied, the rebellions of the Blade of Chaos, which caused quite great trouble for a while, seemed to have died down. The entire organization was seriously wrecked. Even its leader the Fire Ant King had been exposed to public and had been forced to run away, hiding in the shadows.

It seemed that the Riot of Bloody Blade had been completely suppressed.

However, just like the final vigor of a dying man, the Blade of Chaos launched a revengeful counterattack in the hometown of Jin Tuyi, the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons, with all their remaining forces as a last struggle before the organization was shattered.

Right now, the elites of the four major demon kingdoms were all gathered in the Eye of Blood Demon, and their home defense was at its weakest. Therefore, the Blade of Chaos’s ambush worked out. For a few days, they were marching unstoppably.

However, the rebels were untrained after all. The Gold Crow Kingdom did not even need to summon the elites back from the Eye of Blood Demon. When the regular army within the kingdom was gathered and confronted the rebellions, the seemingly overwhelming insurrections perished as quickly as they broke out.

However…

Nobody knew that, while the fire of the Riot of Bloody Blade was consuming countless towns, an organization that was a hundred times scarier than the Blade of Chaos was secretly on the move, too.

It was the newborn Skyfire.

Furious Flame, Wild Tide, and Electric Shock, the three special tactical squads under Skyfire, snuck into various towns of the Gold Crow Kingdom without alarming anyone under the cover of the Riot of Bloody Blade!

The members of the three tactical squads all belonged to the best special forces of the federal army and the coalition army of demons. Some of the new recruits were the core members of the Blade of Chaos whom the Fire Ant King had trained for decades. Their average capability far exceeded that of the normal special forces, not to mention the regular army, which was not qualified to go to the Eye of Blood Demon.

Now that the best troops of the Feather Clan had marched to the Eye of Blood Demon, they were utterly unstoppable in the Gold Crow Kingdom.

While the Riot of Bloody Blade was giving off its last radiance, they were searching for their targets in the various towns of the Gold Crow Kingdom.

Shua!

A team made of seven Furious Flame elites slid into a nest-like villa constructed on a Gold Crow Wood silently.

All the guards of the town were trying to resist the mobs.

The owner of the villa, on the other hand, had fled from the town earlier.

Seven bright green mystic rays beamed out of the heads of the seven soldiers while they searched every corner of the villa.

“Fingerprints have been retrieved!”

“A hundred and twenty-two scattered feathers have been collected!”

“The files in the biochemical brain have been copied!

“A secret booth has been found. All the files are copied!”

“Excellent. Retreat through Route No. 2 in thirty seconds!”

Very soon, the team that seemed to be made of ghosts evacuated from the town. Pretending to be mobs who had been crushed by the regular army, they dispersed and flew in every direction in the dark night.

From beginning to the end, they did not even leave a single footprint. Nobody knew that they had visited.

…

Thousand Feathers City was one of the largest towns of the Gold Crow Kingdom.

Thousand Feathers Institute, the most famous academical establishment of the Feather Clan, was located here.

It was the center for the studies of teleportation arrays in the Blood Demon Sector. However, in the final madness of the Riot of Bloody Blade, it was temporarily caught in the turbulence.

When all the regular soldiers of the Feather Clan were suppressing the mobs in the front, the members of the Electric Shock Squad snuck into the library and the affiliated hospital of the Thousand Feathers Institute like ghosts.

“The roster of all the specialists of teleportation arrays has been copied!”

“Blood sample and iris image have been collected!”

“Voiceprint and scent data have been collected!”

“Retreat!”

…

Similar infiltrations took place over the next three days in more than ten towns of the Gold Crow Kingdom, large and small.

The fingerprints and voiceprints of a lot of members of the Feather Clan were stolen, many seemingly unattractive files were copied, and some of the members of the Feather Clan were even hypnotized for interrogation.

In the overwhelming fire raised by the Riot of Bloody Blade, such incidents were merely insignificant sparks. Nobody paid any attention to them at all.

…

Three days later, nine hundred and fifty kilometers to the east of the super teleportation array Eye of Blood Demon, a biochemical carrier, which was refined based on the skeleton of a Titanic Blue Whale, was cruising in the lead gray sky lazily.

It must have been a long time since the biochemical carrier was last maintained in a dock to keep the proliferation of the cells. The strengthened skeleton on the surface of the carrier was covered in cracks. The membranes and shells among the skeletons were slightly decaying, too, and giving out a stinky smell. A lot of flies were attracted by the stench and danced around the vehicle in humming noises. Anybody who walked close to the carrier would immediately cover their nose and run away.

At first glance, it was the most ordinary carrier with a slob owner, being used to deliver the most worthless goods, if not garbage.

However, below the disguise of the dirty, decayed appearance, it was actually the most advanced, and also the last, super high-speed devilish warship of the Blade of Chaos!

The cracked skeleton and the decayed membrane on the surface could be shed instantly to reveal the muscular, scary body of the real warship that looked like a shark.

At this moment, inside the super high-speed warship, which had been named Chaos, the leadership of Skyfire had been gathered.

It was going to be the command center for the operation to sabotage the Eye of Blood Demon.

When Jin Xinyue stepped into the bridge, Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong were whispering to each other.

The two mortal enemies in the past were forced to collaborated because the series of unexpected, abrupt changes.

At first, they were not particularly fond of each other.

But as they held their grudge and continued the cooperative training, they gradually started appreciating each other’s skills.

Although it would be too much to call them friends, they had acknowledged each other’s professional abilities and regarded each other as a reliable working partner.

The two of them were concluding the gains and losses of the operations that had been implemented recently. This was the first time that Skyfire had been on a real mission. Although it seemed to be wasteful to ask them to deal with the mediocre local security forces, the two captains still drafted the most thorough plans as best they could. However, a lot of problems were still exposed during the operations.

Jin Xinyue’s arrival interrupted their conversation.

The two of them looked at each other both in amazement.

Although they had been working with each other for a couple of days, this was the first time that they had seen Jin Xinyue in person.

However, it was certainly not the first time that they heard her name.

It was needless to say anything about Suo Chaolong. As a noble of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers, he was no stranger to saintesses of the Pantheon of Demons, who he knew to be combinations of the most cunning spies and the cruelest assassinations. Generally speaking, he would rather not meet any of them.

Han Tuhu was the same.

The Star Glory Federation had established a dedicated database for the experts for the Blood Demon Sector.

Jin Xinyue was a professional in disguise, infiltration, and investigation, and it was possible for her to sneak into the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Naturally, he had read Jin Xinyue’s files. The female demon whose danger level was marked as five-star had left a quite deep impression on him.

Jin Xinyue’s long hair was bound by a gold ring refined by Li Yao. She was wearing a black, reflective leather suit that highlighted her graceful curves. Her shoes, which had been installed with daggers and nails, were emitting clicking noises as she walked, making her more determined and resolute.

After finding out her ‘belief’, she had developed an intimidating aura around her. Both Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong felt a bit choked when around her. She was not even eclipsed when she was standing next to the Fire Ant King!

“The commander-in-chief’s daughter is indeed extraordinary!”

“Li Yao is truly unbelievable. How did he manage to recruit such a woman as his disciple, making her so loyal to him?”

Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong looked at each other and were awed by Li Yao’s approaches again.

Chapter 1008 - Blink Operation!

Behind Jin Xinyue, Li Yao and the Fire Ant King walked into the room side by side while studying the structure of the Eye of Blood Demon.

“Master.”

Jin Xinyue’s intimidating aura instantly receded as she bowed in respect.

Li Yao did not even raise his head. He kept dwelling in the complicated structural design while he made a gesture and said, “Our time is too limited. Every second must be sized. Let’s save the self-introductions until after the meeting, shall we? Meeting first!”

“Understood, Master!”

Jin Xinyue triggered more than ten light beams through the mini crystal processors. She then introduced to Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong, “You must be very familiar with the background files of the Red Tide Plan and the Spore Stratagem, captains. In order to prevent the Red Tide Plan and the Spore Stratagem, the only solution is to destroy the Eye of Blood Demon, which will solve our problems once and for all.

“To destroy the Eye of Blood Demon, we have planned an operation with all the available forces of Skyfire.

“The code name for the operation is—Blink!”

“In the Blink Operation, my master and the Fire Ant King will sneak into the Eye of Blood Demon, and you and me will stay on ‘Chaos’ for surveillance and support.

“Over the past few days, while you were leading Skyfire squads to carry out secret missions, my master and I went to the nearby of the Eye of Blood Demon and collected a lot of information. Together with the intelligence that I gathered from the Gold Crow Kingdom through clandestine channels, we have come up with the preliminary infiltration plan.

“I will now introduce every procedure of the Blink Operation to you. Feel free to ask questions if you find any part obscure. Don’t overlook a single detail.”

Jin Xinyue paused for a moment and gestured. Pictures of a bloody lake taken from various angles were immediately displayed on the light beams.

It was a lake around a hundred square kilometers. The surface of the lake was as rampant and appalling as that of an ocean, with dirty waves surging nonstop.

“The center of the great lake is the Eye of Blood Demon, the largest teleportation array of the Blood Demon Sector so far,” Jin Xinyue explained. “We estimate that the elite troops of the coalition army of demons will be teleported to the capital city of the Star Glory Federation through the Eye of Blood Demon in three days—May 12.”

Han Tuhu coughed and frowned. “Are you sure about the estimated date?”

Jin Xinyue smiled and explained, “Yes, for a simple reason. The Eye of the Blood Demon, and the Heavenly’s Artillery of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, are two super teleportation arrays beyond the technology level of the two worlds. They have to be boosted by such enormous energy that cannot be provided solely by crystals.

“In the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Heaven’s Artillery is established on a volcano with intermittent eruptions. It has to be boosted by the blast of the underground magma, which, on the other hand, is patterned. There will be a minor outbreak every month and a major one every three to five months.

“Therefore, the Heaven’s Artillery can only be used in certain periods of a year.”

As a high-level officer of the federation, Han Tuhu knew a thing or two about the mechanism of the Heaven’s Artillery. Realizing that it was the truth, he nodded.

Jin Xinyue continued her explanation. “It is the same in the Blood Demon Sector. The Eye of Blood Demon can only be driven by a natural force. The only difference is that our help is not the force of underground magma but tidal force.”

Han Tuhu was confused. “Tidal force?”

Jin Xinyue gestured again and triggered a new light beam, displaying the orbits of the Blood Demon Planet and its three satellites, namely Blood Swallow, Blood Tiger, and Blood Shark.

On the light beam, the three satellites were drawing subtle curves unpredictably, approaching each other one moment and drifting apart the next.

“The Heaven’s Origin Planet has only one satellite, ‘Heavenly Moon’, whose orbit is very stable. Therefore, the tidal force that it triggers is relatively weaker,” Jin Xinyue said.

“In comparison, the Blood Moon Planet has three satellites. Not only are they ten times larger than Heavenly Moon, they are also much closer to the Blood Demon Planet.

“The three enormous satellites attracted and interfered with each other, resulting to the unsteadiness of their trajectory and the tremendous pulling force on the Blood Demon Planet.

“The tidal force which is too strong has ripped apart the surface of the Blood Moon Planet and caused the highly unstable areas with chaotic electromagnetic fields. It is also one of the reasons why the environment here is harsh and the resources are hard to be developed.

“However, the strong tidal force can be made use of, too, as an important source of energy.

“The Eye of Blood Demon has been constructed on the foundation of the tidal force.

“You see, in a certain period every month, Blood Sparrow, Blood Tiger and Blood Shark align, although not very precisely. At that time, their attraction force will overlap and trigger an overwhelming tidal force on a certain area of the surface of the Blood Moon Planet!

“The area is exactly where the Eye of Blood Demon is located!

“This is the map of the Eye of Blood Demon.

“The mysterious lake is both like a funnel and like a swirl. With the rune arrays carved at the bottom of the lake, the tremendous tidal force will be absorbed into the swirl before it is blown out with the enhancement of the crystals, creating a super large wormhole on the surface of the lake that tears apart space and time!

“Although the operation mode of the Eye of Blood Demon must’ve changed, the fundamental mechanism is still the same. It will still have to count on the tidal force.

“In three days, it will be the day when the trajectories of the three satellites are closest to each other, to the point that they are overlapping, and when the tidal force is the strongest!

“The trajectories will remain overlapped for more than half a day by our estimation, which means that, if they are lucky, the wormhole leading to the capital city of the Star Glory Federation will be maintained for one day.

“How many troops will be able to be transported in one day?

“Therefore, in three days, it will be the best, if not the only, opportunity to activate the Red Tide Plan in the coming half year!”

Han Tuhu gasped.

It would indeed be a dreadful view when the terrifying space gap appeared in the sky of the capital city of his homeland for an entire day!

“Over the past few days, Master and I have been observing from a hill three hundred kilometers away from the Eye of Blood Demon.

“The Eye of Blood Demon seemed to be tranquil, but there were actually undercurrents everywhere. Carriers and troops were entering the area from all directions, but they all disappeared in the depths of the Eye of Blood Demon. The demonic energy released from underground was extraordinarily impressive, too.

“Our conclusion is that there must be an enormous space below the Eye of Blood Demon that is enough to accommodate hundreds of thousands of warriors.

“So many elites troops, including all the top experts of the four major demon kingdoms and the dozens of demon cities, as well as most of the demon emperors of the Blood Demon Sector!

“With such enormous warriors guarding the place, it is impossible for us to attack it by force.”

Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong looked at each other and did not reply.

The two of them were rather proud. They were confident that their troops were as good as any troop in the Heaven’s Origin Sector or the Blood Demon Sector.

However, the newborn Skyfire had less than a thousand warriors. They would be drowned even if the hundreds of thousands of soldiers of the coalition army did nothing but pee on them.

Besides, there were also dozens of demon emperors. Even though they were not the super experts like the twelve demon emperors of the Pantheon of Demons, the possible damage that a low-level demon emperor could deal when on a rampage was not to be underestimated, either.

Sneaking into the Eye of Blood Demon, which is so heavily guarded, and even destroying it? It’s too difficult!

It is an impossible mission!

Desperation was written all over the faces of Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong.

But Jin Xinyue was not moved. She said with a smile, “Since attacking by force is not an option, we will have to find a way to sneak in.”

“Sneak in?” Suo Chaolong frowned. “Passing through the defense of hundreds of thousands of soldiers and dozens of demon emperors and reaching the center of the Eye of Blood Demon? Is it possible?”

“At least, it should be easier than to sneak into the headquarters of the Pantheon of Demons,” Jin Xinyue said. “For the sake of confidentiality, all the troops that are required in the Red Tide Plan have been gathered in this place very quickly. They are not familiar with each other. Also, they are busy training their street fighting skills for the battle in the capital city. There will be a lot of loopholes that we can make use of.

“On the other hand, they must be under an illusion, too. Now that so many troops and experts have been concentrated here, even the craziest lunatic will not come to get themselves killed, will they?

“Even the demon emperors must be considering how to break into the capital city of the Star Glory Federation or taking a good rest while they still can. They will not care too much about the security issues.

“Furthermore, the Feather Clan was the greatest contributor when the Eye of Blood Demon was built more than ten years ago. The construction and maintenance of the entire defense system was supervised by the Feather Clan.

“A few days ago, the teams of Skyfire brought back tremendous assets from various locations around the Gold Crow Kingdom, allowing us to basically figure out the structural design of the Eye of Blood Demon. After careful analysis, we have determined the workers who are most likely to be in the Eye of Blood Demon right now.”

Shua!

A slim, gloomy old man, with a pair of gray wings behind him, appeared on the light beam.

“Jin Zhenyi, a hundred and thirty-three years old, is a famous specialist in spiritual tattoos and rune arrays in the Gold Crow Kingdom. He is best at the stabilizing rune arrays and has published multiple monographs. He taught in the Thousand Feathers Institute for many years.

“More than ten years ago, when the Eye of Blood Demon was first built, Jin Zhenyi was already part of the team. He was responsible for the stabilizing system in the infrastructure.

“But Jin Zhenyi hasn’t shown up in the Thousand Feathers Institute for half a year. The official announcement said that he went back to his home for rest due to mental derangement. But after investigating his home, we have discovered that he hasn’t been there, either.

“If our judgement is correct, Jin Zhenyi must’ve been summoned in secret, and he is working in the Eye of Blood Demon right now!”

Li Yao stood up. Looking at the somewhat agitated old man on the light bean, he said, “I will sneak into the Eye of Blood Demon under the disguise of Jin Zhenyi, the ‘specialist in stabilizing rune arrays’, and find an opportunity to blow it up!”

Chapter 1009 - Impossible Infiltration!

Han Tuhu carefully observed Jin Zhenyi’s body and face before nodding. “The body and facial bones of the specialist are indeed similar to Li Yao’s. Although body shape, bones, and muscles are all changeable for experts at Li Yao’s level, more similarities will still mean lower odds of being discovered.”

“It is not just about the appearance,” Li Yao said. “Jin Zhenyi is the best candidate that we have selected after analyzing the files of dozens of experts.

“As a super teleportation array, the Eye of Blood Demon is an enormous amalgamation of rune arrays, magical equipment, and demonic artifacts.

“The specialists of the Feather Clan who have gone missing over the past half year are more than a few to our knowledge. We can assume that they are all working for the alteration of the Eye of Blood Demon.

“Taking the specialists that were working on the Eye of Blood Demon in the first place, the total number of staff must be several thousand.

“However, in order to blow up the Eye of Blood Demon, we must sneak into a critical location.

“Disguising as a worker or an assistant will be meaningless.

“Such a large magical equipment system must’ve been designed with redundancies. Destroying a few ancillary units will not damage the system at all.

“By estimation, I will lurk in the Eye of Blood Demon for half a day or an entire day. I will have to communicate with other specialists and even complete the tasks assigned to me.

“The Eye of Blood Demon employs a lot of biochemical technology and demonic artifacts that are combinations of cells and machines. Therefore, most of the specialists are adept at biochemistry and the refinement of demonic artifacts. I wouldn’t say that I do not know the first thing about them, but I am certainly not a professional, either.

“If I pretend to be a specialist in such a field, I will be exposed ten minutes after I get started with my job.

“Jin Zhenyi is different. He is good at the spiritual stripes and rune arrays exclusively, which barely involve any biochemical technology. Over the past few days, I’ve studied all his monographs. His research fields partly overlap with mine. Therefore, it will not be a problem for me to pretend to be him for a short time.”

Compared to human beings, demons kept more spiritual stripes and rune arrays in the era of ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago. Therefore, the magical equipment and demonic artifacts that they crafted were in a more vintage style.

Li Yao possessed Ou Yezi’s memory pieces. He was a specialist in ancient magical equipment himself. Therefore, it was certainly not going to be a problem if his job was related to ancient spiritual stripes and rune arrays.

“On the other hand…”

Li Yao drew multiple rough illustrations on an empty light beam. “For super large systems such as the Heaven’s Artillery or the Eye of Blood Demon, the structure is more or less the same, in that they have an independent stabilizing and cooling unit other than the core unit.

Li Yao had participated in the modification of Ice King in the Flying Star Sector in person, which had given him a profound understanding about super large teleportation systems.

“Such a super large system is usually made of millions if not billions of rune arrays that have to be integrated and work perfectly. Naturally, compatibility and stability issues are inevitable.

“The so-called ‘stabilization specialist’ is the one responsible for keeping the entire infrastructure steady and preventing it from falling apart.

“It is a very important post, but it is usually far away from the core unit.

“Other specialists may have to work in the control room or on the teleportation arrays together. When Jin Tuyi and other demon emperors come to inspect, I will have to confront with them face to face. I am not confident that Jin Tuyi will not be able to see through me.”

Although Jin Tuyi’s Red Tide Plan was destined to fail, Li Yao thought very highly of him, and he did not wish to run into the commander-in-chief of the coalition army before the operation began.

“The stabilizing unit is like the cooling cabin in a crystal warship. It is usually at the bottom level of the entire system, filled with tremendous noise, waste, and garbage.

The environment is very harsh. Generally speaking, the leaders will never inspect such places.

“One more thing. The specialists more important than Jin Zhenyi who work in the core unit must be better protected and monitored. It will be more difficult for us to get close to them.

“Theoretically speaking, Jin Zhenyi is the specialist of the highest level that we can approach.

“Besides, Jin Zhenyi is a man who favors technology to talks. It is his favorite hobby to study all kinds of rune arrays. He has few partners in his work, too. Therefore, the likelihood of being exposed is the lowest if I pretend to be him.

“Lastly, a little private reason.

“Although Jin Zhenyi is a knowledgeable specialist, he is also a pervert. Several chaotic-blood slaves were savaged to death by him before. Even in the Thousand Feathers Institute, he was never among the most respected. Killing someone like him will make my mood better, and when my mood is better, I will be more confident about the operation that follows.”

Jin Xinyue triggered two new light beams and said, “After picking Jin Zhenyi as our target, we have broken into Jin Zhenyi’s home and his office in the Thousand Feathers Institute through the operations of the Furious Flame, the Wild Wave, and the Electric Shock squads, retrieving his fingerprints, voiceprints, iris information, two hairs, a feather and a half, and even a syringe of blood.”

Suo Chaolong raised an eyebrow. “You’ve even found his blood?”

“The security measures in the Gold Crow Kingdom are more or less the same. One of the procedures is the comparison of blood,” Jin Xinyue explained.

“Jin Zhenyi was once involved in two confidential projects in the Thousand Feathers Institute. He left a blood sample there for the security check. A few days ago, we replaced the true sample with a false blood sample.”

Suo Chaolong did not participate in the operation to break into the Thousand Feathers Institute. He did not realize what had happened until this moment and could not help but feel proud of the soldiers that he had trained.

“On the other hand,” Jin Xinyue continued, “we have also hacked Jin Zhenyi’s personal biochemical brains in his home and his office and copied countless audio and video files about him.

“In the past day, Master has been studying the features of Jin Zhenyi’s speech and movement through the files.

“The laboratory that Skyfire established on ‘Chaos’ is also experimenting on the new fingerprint membranes and the drugs that can alter one’s voiceprint. Even the hair and blood are being duplicated. We are striving for the most immaculate disguise.

“The defense system of the headquarters of the Pantheon of Demons represents the highest level of the Blood Demon Sector. Assuming that the security measures of the Eye of Blood Demon are the same as the Pantheon of Demons, there will still only be examinations of fingerprints, voiceprints, hair, blood, and irises. With our careful preparation and Master’s acting skills, theoretically speaking, those security measures can totally be broken through!

“Are there any questions?”

Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong pondered for a moment. Then, a critical question occurred to them at the same time.

“There is. A very serious one!

“Let’s say that Li Yao can slip into the role of Jin Zhenyi perfectly. According to your intelligence, Jin Zhenyi is currently working inside the Eye of Blood Demon, isn’t he?

“Then, Li Yao will be the ‘second Jin Zhenyi’. Under what excuse will the new Jin Zhenyi sneak into the Eye of Blood Demon? And how is he going to take care of the real Jin Zhenyi?

“If the ‘false Jin Zhenyi’ means to sneak in, the ‘real Jin Zhenyi’ must get out of his workplace at first so that they can be swapped somewhere, right?

“But how is it possible?

“Jin Zhenyi hasn’t been back home for more than half a year. Now that a great war is coming and the Eye of Blood Demons will be opened in three days, why would he leave the Eye of Blood Demon at such a crucial moment without a good reason?”

Jin Xinyue smiled. “Yes. Jin Zhenyi indeed does not have any reason to leave his workplace.

“Also, for the specialists of Jin Zhenyi’s level, after they leave their workplace, a bodyguard will follow them everywhere like their shadow. Even when Jin Zhenyi is in the toilet or taking a shower, his bodyguard will still wait dutifully outside.

“Therefore, we have to finish the first part of the journey by ourselves, too.”

Jin Xinyue clapped her hands softly. The Eye of Blood Demon on the light beam was enlarged, enlarged, and enlarged. It turned translucent, with five circles each covering the last one appearing from the center to the outside.

Jin Xinyue pointed at the five circles and said, “Please take a look, everybody. This is the defense system of the Eye of Blood Demon. It is classified into five alert zones.

“The fifth alert zone at the periphery includes the airspace and the underground three hundred square kilometers around the Eye of Blood Demon. It is watched by the devilish warships and patrolling beams. There are also sentry posts that examine the personnel and assets going in and out of the area.

“The fifth alert area is relatively weakly defended. With capability of Master and the Fire Ant King, the sentry posts are not going to be a problem for them.

“After passing through the level-5 alert zone, here, to the southeast of the Eye of Blood Demon, is a town named Demon Lake City. The town and surrounding area is the fourth alert zone.

“The Eye of Blood Demon is too large and requires thousands of workers, most of whom are the intelligent silver-blood demons. Obviously, they cannot work like slaves.

“In order to provide a comfortable working environment for the silver-blood demons and to keep them in the Eye of Blood Demon, Demon Lake City was established. It is essentially a town for the family of the workers of the Eye of

Blood Demon. Many silver-blood demons who work here will settle their family here so that they can reunite every week.

“Additionally, since the Eye of Blood Demon has been used to explore the world fragments recently, the secret treasures retrieved from the world fragments are usually concentrated and sold in Demon Lake City, too. Therefore, a lot of merchants have settled in the city.

“Thousands of workers and their family, the merchants of the secret treasures, and the bronze-blood demons and the black-blood demons who offer service to them make the population of Demon Lake City more than a hundred thousand. Restaurants, schools, hospitals, auctions… All those facilities can be found there. It is a rather prosperous midsized city.

“Perhaps in case that others notice the anomaly of the Eye of Blood Demon, Jin Tuyi hasn’t locked Demon Lake City yet. The town is still connected to the outside world.

“However, for most of the outsiders, Demon Lake City is the furthest place that they can get to.”

Chapter 1010 - Release the Tidal Force!

Jin Xinyue dragged the light beam from the ground to the underground. Pointing at the translucent structural design, she said, “The Eye of Blood Demon is based on a natural lake. Its main body is deep below the lake.

“The fourth and the fifth alert areas are both on the ground. Their defenses are relatively weak.

“However, between the fourth alert zone on the ground to the third alert zone below the ground, there are multiple security checkpoints. Everybody entering and exiting will be asked to check their fingerprints, voiceprints, blood, and irises. They will have to confirm their files and current tasks, too. It is impossible to sneak in through the security checks.”

“Can we fabricate another worker?” Han Tuhu asked.

Jin Xinyue shook her head. “Our time is too limited for us to create a second camouflage. The most critical issue is, we don’t know exactly when a certain someone inside will get out and exactly where they are going. Therefore, it is impossible for us to swap.

“Assuming that we pass through the security checks under the identity of someone who is still inside the Eye of Blood Demon, the database will certainly flag it. We will be exposed immediately.”

Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong looked at each other in bewilderment, thinking hard.

“However—”

Jin Xinyue zoomed in the picture and displayed Demon Lake City and the third alert area below the ground respectively. “According to the structural designs we have stolen, there are multiple secondary ventilation tubes between Demon Lake City and the third alert area below the ground.”

“Ventilation tubes again? Isn’t it a cliché?” Suo Chaolong asked. “Besides, are the ventilation tubes of the Eye of Blood Demon so easy to crawl into?”

“Good question!” Jin Xinyue gave him a thumbs up. “Master has investigated through secret arts. The ventilation tubes are teeming with all kinds of insect-type demon beasts that are highly inconspicuous and dangerous. It is barely possible to break in without being discovered.”

Suo Chaolong was dazed. “Then—”

The Fire Ant King said casually, “That is why I am going to sneak in together with Li Yao.

“In the Blood Demon Sector, narrow spaces in the large buildings, such as ventilate tubes and drainage canals, are almost exclusively defended by insect-type demon beasts.

“Hehe. Speaking of the manipulation of the insect-type demon beasts, is there anybody in the entire Insect Clan better than me other than Elder Nether Spring? Even Master Hollow Wind is no match for me!

“Now, to avoid suspicion and to implement the Spore Stratagem, Elder Nether Spring is hiding in the Nether Spring Kingdom right now and will in no way appear in the Eye of Blood Demon.

“Master Hollow Wind is one of the core warriors of the battle. He must be spending all his time training or resting. It is impossible for him to manage a few bugs in the secondary ventilation tubes in person!

“If I am there, won’t the few bugs be at my mercy?”

The Fire Ant King crossed his arms, with confidence beaming out of his body.

Suo Chaolong and Han Tuhu looked at each other and smiled in embarrassment. They had almost forgotten that the leader of the Blade of Chaos was among the strongest demon emperors of the Insect Clan and was a great manipulator of bugs!

If he went there, too, would the bugs in the ventilation tubes really be a problem?

“However,” the Fire Ant King continued, “if I manipulate the insect-type demon beasts remote, I’m afraid that the brainwaves to be released will be too strong, which will likely be perceived by other demon emperors.

“Therefore, I am going into Demon Lake City together with Li Yao. By then, I will control the bugs from a safe location at a closer distance so that Li Yao can sneak into the third alert area through the secondary ventilation tubes smoothly!”

Jin Xinyue nodded. “The so-called ‘third alert zone’ is in fact the relaxation zone for the workers in the Eye of Blood Demon.

“It is impossible for the workers to return to Demon Lake City every day. After they finish their job each day, they go to train and sleep in the underground relaxation area. They will only return to the ground when it is a holiday. Therefore, the underground relaxation area is a minor town with facilities such as a cafeteria, hospital, dormitories, gyms, and so on.

“Our target is the hospital in the third alert zone!

“According to the structural design, it is the only hospital in the Eye of Blood Demon. When the specialists are ill or mentally deranged because of exhaustion, they will be sent to the hospital for treatment.”

Suo Chaolong thought quickly and realized what their goal was. “You are planning to swap with the real Jin Zhenyi in the hospital so that you can openly return to the first alert area under his identity?

“That sounds like a plan, but how do you know that Jin Zhenyi will go to the hospital at a time that we desire?”

With a mysterious smile, Li Yao replied, “He will go to the hospital.

“However, Jin Zhenyi’s clearances are not high enough. His workplace should be in the second alert zone outside of the core unit, which is not the most critical location.

“It can’t be helped. The real critical location of the Eye of Blood Demon must be heavily guarded. Chances are that multiple demon emperors are monitoring the place without even blinking.

“Even if I can sneak into the first alert zone, I am not confident that I can maintain my disguise without giving myself away when so many demon emperors are observing me.

“The second alert zone is the furthest we can go.”

Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong both nodded.

The two of them knew the importance of the Eye of Blood Demon very well. It was already difficult enough to approach the critical location. The enemy would certainly not be idiotic enough to let a random guy into the heart of the facility.

“However,” Han Tuhu asked worriedly, “now that Jin Zhenyi only works in the second alert area, is it possible to completely demolish the Eye of Blood Demon from his workplace?”

“Normally speaking, it would be very difficult,” Li Yao replied frankly. “The Heaven’s Artillery, the Eye of Blood Demon, and the ‘universal slingshot’ in the Flying Star Sector have two to three sets of spare units that they can switch to seamlessly when the working units are down.

“Even natural disasters such as earthquakes or meteorites may not be enough to destroy it.

“Although Jin Zhenyi is a stabilization specialist, he is certainly not the only one in the Eye of Blood Demon. Even if I sabotage the stabilization system, there will still be multiple backup systems.

“Also, when the accident takes place, all the demon emperors in the Eye of Blood Demon will definitely be highly vigilant, and I will not have a second chance to launch a strike.

“Therefore, I cannot destroy the Eye of Blood Demon from Jin Zhenyi’s post.

“Unless, of course, the circumstances are not normal.

“That is the moment when Blood Sparrow, Blood Tiger, and Blood Shark, the three satellites, are in the straight line, building up the tidal force to the strongest point, and when the Eye of Blood Demon is activated and the wormhole leading to the capital city of the federation is opened!

“At that time, the entire Eye of Blood Demon will be functioning at the highest intensity. Most of the rune arrays will be overloading!

“It will be the system’s most vulnerable moment!

“As long as I make the correct calculation, I will be able to trigger a chain reaction by sabotaging the stabilizing rune arrays and release all the tidal force that has been concentrated!

“I will not be blowing up the Eye of Blood Demon with crystal bombs.

“Instead, I will be cutting the ‘ropes’ that bind the ‘tidal force’ with my crystal bombs and setting free the ferocious beast that will rip apart the Eye of Blood Demon!”

The insane plan and the magnificent demos on the light beam refreshed Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong, who were both amazed.

Pondering for a while, Han Tuhu said, “You are saying that you will stay there until the last moment, and when all the best troops and the demon emperors appear in the Eye of Blood Demon for teleportation, you will be causing havoc right below their feet?”

Li Yao nodded. “That’s right.”

Han Tuhu did not know what to say.

He was going to ask, *Isn’t it dangerous?*

But on second thought, it was too redundant.

Were any of the things that Li Yao had done in the past ten years not dangerous?

Thinking for a moment, Han Tuhu asked, “Is there no other choice?”

Li Yao blinked and almost could not suppress his excitement. “No, there isn’t. This is the only way to destroy the Eye of Blood Demon at the most critical moment, and it will not be repaired in the next couple of months.”

Han Tuhu breathed heavily. “Got it. What’s our mission?”

“The best experts of the world have gathered in the Eye of Blood Demon,” Jin Xinyue said. “Only super experts such as Master and the Fire Ant King have the ability to sneak in. Others will not only be killing themselves but also exposing our purpose if they sneak in.

“Therefore, our mission is to reinforce them from the rear.

“However, honestly speaking, if the Eye of Blood Demon is shredded by the tidal force, it will certainly be mayhem. Of course, everything will be good if Master escapes on his own. But if he is attacked by several demon emperors, even all the soldiers of Skyfire will not be able to rescue him.

“For us, we have a more important task, which is to prevent the outbreak of the Spore Stratagem!

“Over the past month, Skyfire has analyzed all the experiment data and the genes retrieved from the Nether World. Then, with the sample of my blood, they have successfully separated the relatively pure Divine Blood of Chaos. Let’s call it ‘Chaos serum’!

“Right now, the laboratory on ‘Chaos’ is accelerating the research and has made significant progress. It won’t be long before the synthesized Chaos serum is produced.

“It will be the best antidote for the Demon God Virus!

“However, the antidote alone will not be enough. Should the Demon God Virus break out, and a large epidemic area is created, how are we going to distribute the antidote, how are we going to inject it into the infected, and how are we going to persuade those who are not infected to take vaccines?

“By then, everything will be a mess. Nobody will believe the rebels such as us!

“If we don’t have any options, we will have to make it happen by force through Skyfire.

“If the virus goes out of control, how are the hundreds of members of Skyfire going to inject the antidote into the thousands of victims and persuade the hundreds of thousands of potential victims to take the vaccine? It will be an urgent problem that we must address!”

Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong both frowned and felt the weight of the task.

However, if Li Yao could even destroy the Eye of Blood Demon, they would certainly complete the task however difficult it was so that Li Yao would not be risking his life for nothing!

The Fire Ant King suddenly rose up and glanced around. “Are there any questions? If not, the meeting will be concluded now. Let’s check our time.

“In six hours, the Blink Operation will begin!”

Chapter 1011 - The Arts of Infiltration

On May 10, at 4:33:51 a.m., there was still forty-two hours to go before the tidal force reached the strongest point.

In the thirty square kilometers around the Eye of Blood Demon, the main force of the coalition army stopped hiding themselves anymore. On the ground, which seemed to be empty, the gates covered in camouflage were opened one by one. Countless experts of the demon race flooded out, establishing temporary camps and arsenals, regrouping, and claiming their weapons.

The devilish warships that looked like the largest sharks in the deep sea popped up from the crevices in the ground and emitted sharp brilliance, too.

As the logistics base of the Eye of Blood Demon, the alert level of Demon Lake City had been increased to the highest level. It was essentially blocked from the outside world. Another two sentry posts had been added. Everyone entering and exiting the city would go through security checks. Three times more patrol teams were monitoring the city from the sky to the underground.

At this moment, few outsiders were allowed to enter Demon Lake City.

But the garbage cleaners were the exceptions.

Sanitation was the top priority for a great army, especially for one made of mixed troops such as the coalition army of demons, which had hundreds of different types of soldiers.

Some of the soldiers flew in the sky, some swam in the water, and some preferred jungles. Their food was as diverse as their excrement.

It was very likely that the excrement of one type of demons was a lethal poison for another type, which might even trigger a sweeping plague.

Also, dozens of times more demon beasts than soldiers and biochemical beasts in the camp, too. In a battlefield, they were perhaps the most formidable slaughtering machines. But on many special occasionally, they could be very fragile. The beneficial bacteria that was totally harmless for some demon beasts could be killers for some other strong demon beasts.

Therefore, in Heavenly Path City, Void Turmoil City, Demon Lake City, the camp of the coalition army, and all the other places where multiple species of demons were gathered, sanitation and garbage cleaning had always been attached great importance to.

In the Eye of Blood Demon, an enormous team of garbage cleaners would transport all the garbage in the city and camp to a large garbage processing plant three hundred kilometers away where it would be processed by the germs and insects. Later, the remnants would be burnt in high temperature and high pressure before they were buried below the ground after they were made sure to be absolutely harmless.

Looking from afar, the enormous team, which was made of gray sandworms, was like a giant earthworm that was wriggling slowly on the earth.

Since a huge amount of garbage was loaded every day, a pungent smell was spreading out of the sandworms. The smell even condensed into yellow and brown mist that was floating in midair like decayed kelp.

The team came at the same time every day. The garbage cleaners were no strangers, too. Their fingerprints, voiceprints, and iris tests were good, too.

They did not meet any trouble when they passed through the first two sentry posts. The guards simply glanced at the trash tanks that were empty before they waved hands to let them through.

When they were approaching Demon Lake City, however, they were stopped by a new patrol team.

“Stop there!”

The captain leading the patrol team was a solemn, proud silver-blood noble.

He eyed the silly sandworms and the stinky trash tanks coldly.

Behind him, the guards who had been stationed in the Eye of Blood Demon were all chuckling.

The silver-blood demon, together with his subordinates, examined the crinkles on the fat body of every sandworm. After finding nothing, he jumped into the large trash tanks that the sandworms were pulling.

The trash tanks had been used for quite a few years. They were fully loaded by various kinds of garbage every day. Although they were washed every couple of days, humus-like residue had still piled up on the bottom of the trash tanks after such a long time.

The stench inside the trash tanks was ten times more intense than outside, bashing everybody like invisible hammers and making their heads spin.

The silver-blood noble regretted it the moment he jumped into the trash tank. But now that he already entered it, he could do nothing except hold his breath and jab the residue with his long spear.

A crust had been formed on the top of the humus-like residue, which sealed the stench inside. Everything was good when he did not touch it. But now that he pierced through the crust and dug the buried garbage out, the stench was rushing out like a volcanic eruption. Holding his breath did not help at all. The stench seemed to be crawling into his body through his pores!

The silver-blood demon’s face turned from pale to green and from green to purple, and he gritted his teeth harder and harder.

They found no issues after overturning four trash tanks that the gray sandworms pulled. But every one of them had already been contaminated by lingering smell, and their demeanor a moment ago was entire gone.

Seeing that twenty more trash tanks were still waiting to be examined, the silver-blood noble’s face could not have been gloomier.

Right then—

Hum!

From the corner of the fourth trash tank, a large swarm of big-headed green flies, which were dirty, sweaty, and carrying suspicious liquids, dashed out and charged at the silver-blood noble like a visible plague!

BOOM!

The silver-blood demon shrieked and unleashed his demonic energy, blowing up all the flies.

But out of his expectations, the green flies were like the juiciest grapes. After they were blown up, the bright green liquids spluttered everywhere and almost kissed his face.

The silver-blood demon could not have been more disgusted. He jumped out of the trash tank, staggering. His eyelids were bouncing nonstop as he glanced at the twenty trash tanks behind him again. Gravely, he shouted, “Let them through!”

Twenty minutes later, the garbage cleaners arrived at the garbage field in the suburbs of Demon Lake City.

Huala! Huala! Huala!

Many insect-type demon beasts, which looked like flies, only thousands of times larger, with eight long limbs extending out, were flapping their transparent wings, snatching the garbage that was as high as a hill, and throwing it into the trash tanks.

The ninth trash tank had been half filled by the new garbage.

Li Yao and the Fire Ant King crawled out of the garbage silently.

They were both wearing fully-enclosed membrane suits that made them look like two slippery loaches. Even their eyes had been covered by glasses carved out of black crystals to ensure that there was not any gap.

They were breathing the air from the compressed airbags that Li Yao had devised to make sure that they would not be corrupted by the smell.

It was not because they were scared of the stench but because the stench was very difficult to get rid of and would be a nuisance for their infiltration.

Shua!

Like two shadows, they glided down from the trash tanks and moved quickly, covered by the garbage hills.

With their capabilities in the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage and the demon emperor stage, they were absolutely unstoppable in such a place.

The fifth alert area and the fourth alert area were successfully infiltrated!

Next, they were about to break out of the fourth alert area into the third!

Five minutes later, the two of them appeared in the downtown area of Demon Lake City, twelve kilometers away from the garbage field.

The smelly membrane suits were returned to their Cosmos Rings to make sure that no traces would be left.

Pretending to be two treasure merchants who could be seen everywhere in Demon Lake City, they searched quickly according to the map of the city and the structural design of the Eye of Blood Demon provided by Jin Xinyue. Very soon, they located the entrance of the secondary ventilation tubes.

As it turned out, the place was a prohibited military zone guarded by a team of soldiers.

Other than the secondary ventilation tubes, there were also dozens of secondary teleportation arrays, three emergency channels, and five transmission tubes of assets.

Apparently, the designing purpose of such a place was for the specialists working below the lake to escape to the surface through the teleportation arrays and the emergency channels in case of accidents such as an earthquake or explosion in the Eye of Blood Demon.

If they could not even escape, the ventilation tubes and the transmission tubes of assets could deliver food, water, and food into the base so that the workers below the lake would be able to survive longer.

One kilometer away from the prohibited military zone, Li Yao and the Fire Ant King pretended to be negotiating about a deal.

But in fact, Li Yao was observing the entire prohibited military zone from a high stance through Neltharion.

The Fire Ant King had his tricks, too. He released hundreds of bugs and sensed the situation inside the prohibited military zone in every corner.

“Two patrol teams in total. Patrolling in fixed routes.” The Fire Ant King narrowed his eyes and remarked, “But they are not elites. They are not very vigilant, either. Perhaps they never thought that somebody would invade the Eye of Blood Demon and are just pretending to do their job!"

"The secondary ventilation tubes have four entrances in total. According to Jin Xinyue's structural design, the No. 2 tube is closest to the hospital in the third alert zone. Its exit is almost right above the hospital." Li Yao calculated quickly. "If we take action when the two patrol teams are furthest from the entrance of the No. 2 tube, I should have 26 seconds.

"The entrance of the ventilation tube is covered by a highly dense gauze. It has been welded there since the ventilation tube was built. It is already rusty now after such a long time. But it is not a problem for me. The real problem is that I have also observed a rapidly-revolving fan half a meter into the ventilate tube. The fan must've been designed to block intruders.

"The three fins are like three sharp blades. Any creature will be cut into pieces when they crawl in.

"I cannot deal with both the gauze and the fan in only 26 seconds."

The Fire Ant King pondered for a moment and asked, "According to my observation, the speed of the fan is around 1,500 rpm. If I can reduce it to around 1,000 rpm, can you crawl into it through the gaps?"

Li Yao thought for a moment and replied, "As long as the speed is below 1,150 rpm, I will be able to crawl through the fan unharmed!"

"Alright. Let's check our time. We will take action in thirty seconds!"

The Fire Ant King paused for a moment and suddenly extended his hand toward Li Yao.

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. Then he realized what he meant. Smiling, he extended his hand out, too.

The two of them firmly shook hands.

Sneaking into the Eye of Blood Demon right under the nose of the best troops and experts of the Blood Demon Sector and destroying the greatest teleportation array in the history of the world!

The impossible mission would be completed by the two of them!

Chapter 1012 - Infiltration in Public!

Twenty-five seconds to go!

Neltharion had captured the pictures of the restricted military zone from various angles, including the fixed routes of the two patrol teams, and transmitted the data back to Li Yao’s brain for modelling.

Li Yao’s biggest concern was what to do if the patrol team suddenly changed their route half way.

Jin Xinyue had mentioned that, according to the standard military tutorial of the coalition army of demons, every patrol team would have three to four different routes, and they would choose a random one every half hour or so.

If Li Yao and the Fire Ant King had more time to observe, they would probably have been able to see through the pattern.

However, they only had several minutes to prepare. They could only try their luck.

In case the patrol teams really changed their routes, Li Yao had to prepare backup plans.

Based on the terrain inside the prohibited military zone, Li Yao calculated twenty-three new routes that the patrol team could possibly chose in advance and made sure that it would take him seven seconds at best to pass through them.

Fifteen seconds to go!

The Fire Ant King took out a delicate cylinder from his pocket and turned it open. From the cylinder flew out two black beetles with a green, vertical stripe on their back.

Under the Fire Ant King’s manipulation, the two beetles flew higher and higher. They passed the high wall out of the prohibited military zone and reached the entrance of the No. 2 ventilation tube.

Five seconds to go!

Li Yao took off the clothes of the treasure merchant and put on a new membrane suit.

The new suit was truly as thin as any clothes could ever be. It stuck to his body like a second skin without leaving the tiniest gap, highlighting the trace of his every muscle.

Shua!

Li Yao touched a rune on the waist of the suit. Ripples spread out on the surface of the bright gray suit as it gradually turned translucent. In the end it had almost completely blended into the air. He was now invisible!

It was a cellular invisibility cloak that the specialists of the Blade of Chaos had created by retrieving the cells of multiple kinds of demon beasts that boasted discoloration and mimesis abilities, such as chameleon.

When the wearer was absolutely still, they would be hardly able to be discovered, like an ice block that was tossed into water.

The only drawback was that the constituents of the cellular invisibility cloak were all highly active. They had to be preserved in special culture solution. If they were brought out and exposed to the air, their longevity was no more than five minutes.

Generally speaking, the invisibility cloak would gradually lose effectiveness after four minutes and a half.

Furthermore, the invisibility cloak worked best when it was still. If the wearer was moving at a high speed, they would still leave blurred shadows behind them, making the air unusually twisted.

Zero seconds to go!

Li Yao flew out like a stream of smoke.

Shua!

He keenly sensed the net of high-heat rays on the high wall of the prohibited military zone. However, he simply constricted his bones and muscles to the minimum before he crawled through the gaps of the net in a size no larger than a cat!

Two patrol teams were moving away from the No. 2 ventilation tube. Li Yao calculated the estimated time of their return while he observed the angle of a few biochemical surveillance eyes on the high wall. He moved fast between the blind angles no larger than the tip of a needle and approached the target quickly.

Right then—

One of the patrol teams returned earlier than expected before they reached to the end of the prohibited military zone, switching to a new route!

Damn it!

They had a second patrol plan!

Li Yao stopped his movements instantly. His heartbeat and breathing were suppressed to the minimum. Even his pores were entirely locked, not giving out the slightest heat or scent. He watched the patrol team walking right toward him while doing nothing.

As long as he remained perfectly still, the invisibility cloak would function perfectly for five minutes, which should be enough for him!

The patrol team brushed past Li Yao. The soldier closest to him would have touched Li Yao’s head if he had stretched out his arms.

Thankfully, they did not notice that the air so close to them was slightly warped compared to usual.

Li Yao remained still for another half a minute. With the help of Neltharion, he observed their new patrol route.

After switching to the second patrol route, the blind angles of the two patrol teams were completely different. Everything had to be recalculated.

After calculating for one minute and two seconds, Li Yao took action again!

Deep inside his brain, the biochemical eyes over his head and the eyes of the soldiers of the two patrol teams seemed to be shooting out crimson rays and formed interconnected lines of death in front of his face.

The death rays were changing all the time, and he danced forward. While sometimes moving quickly, sometimes slowly, it took him more than three minutes before he struggled his way to the entrance of the No. 2 ventilation tube.

In order to send air into the main body of the enormous Eye of Blood Demon, every ventilation tube was more than half a meter in diameter, which was spacious enough for a middle-sized adult to crawl in.

However, the entrance of the ventilation tube was covered in an extremely dense iron gauze, surrounded by anti-cutting alert rune arrays.

Li Yao glanced quickly and recognized the mechanism of the alert rune arrays. They would send out warnings when they perceived vibrations.

Once the iron gauze was broken by brute force, there would certainly be unusual vibrations. Alarms would ring the moment such vibrations were detected.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Inside the iron gauze, half a meter into the tube, three enormous fins were spinning at 1,500 rpm. Aggressive rune arrays of the wind class had been carved on the fins, too, raising unstoppable stormy blades that turned the part of the tube into an invisible mincer.

There were forty-five seconds to go before the invisibility cloak completely lost its effect.

Zi. Zi. Zi. Zi!

Li Yao sensed that the invisibility cloak was turning stiff.

It was a sign that the stealth cells were about to wither.

At this moment, the two patrol teams had reached the point where they were furthest from him, and all the biochemical eyes happened to be scanning other areas.

However, after the change of routes, the time left for Li Yao was only eleven seconds!

Good enough!

Li Yao's hands turned into two clusters of gray mist instantly. He stuck four pieces of magical equipment that looked like magnets to the alert rune arrays softly at first, establishing a temporary circuit that guided the alert rune arrays into a wrong path. As a result, they would neglect the minor vibrations on the iron gauze.

Then, Li Yao rubbed off a huge amount of rust from the iron gauze with a sharp dagger and carefully stored the rust.

It only took Li Yao three seconds to finish the preparations.

Then, he drew a circle on the iron gauze and cut it open, crawling into the ventilation tube!

It was not difficult to break the iron gauze. What was really tricky was how to restore it!

The two patrol teams far away were already turning around, and the two biochemical eyes were slowly shifting to the entrance of the No. 2 ventilation tube, too.

Li Yao's ten fingers were like boneless snakes, with a tiny needle between every two of them.

The needles were in fact hollow, with a tiny sac behind them in which a tiny amount of natural glue was stored. They were originally tools to fix the components of super-mini magical equipment.

Manipulating the tiny muscles on his fingers, Li Yao squeezed out the glue through the needles and stitched the iron gauze again. He intentionally left some additional glue at the edge of the fracture before he blew the rust that he had rubbed off earlier back.

Eventually, he took out an aerosol can and sprayed on the iron gauze.

The next second, a thin layer of dust appeared on the ‘rusty’ iron gauzed. There were even broken threads that seemed to be remnants of a spider web.

At first glance, it was utterly immaculate. There was no trace that the iron gauze had been broken through at all.

It was not until then that Li Yao attracted the four ‘magnets’ through the gaps of the iron gauze with his spiritual energy, restoring the alert rune arrays to their original state.

Shua!

The biochemical eye glanced past the entrance of the No. 2 ventilation tube, noticing nothing wrong.

But the invisibility cloak on Li Yao’s body had reached its limits, too. Twisted spots of light were already appearing.

Had the patrol team been any closer, they would certainly discover the fuzzy, gray shadow behind the iron gauze.

The Fire Ant King’s two black beetles, on the other hand, had crawled into the tube together with Li Yao and crashed toward the rapidly-revolving fan!

Because of the high speed and the strong attraction force, the fan often absorbed small bugs.

The two black beetles, on the other hand, were the ‘Green Oil Fire Bugs’ that the Fire Ant King had carefully refined. After they crashed into the fins, they exploded into two tiny fireballs!

The two fireballs jammed the rune arrays of the wind class on the fins. The fan’s self-protection measures were activated. The speed of the fan was lowered as it prepared to discharge the foreign object.

Li Yao took the opportunity to observe every detail of the spinning fan while his eyes were bulging and his pupils were shivering. He also perceived the wind blades, which were invisible to human eyes.

Shua!

He successfully crawled through the fan in the gaps of the fins whose speed was 780 rpm!

Three wind blades cut into his body brutally. But he had tensed the muscles all over his body and did not shed a drop of blood.

Half a second later, the speed of the fan returned to 1,500 rpm, and the patrol team walked past the entrance of the No. 2 ventilation tube.

Attracted by the sound of the exploding bugs, they looked at the inside of the No. 2 ventilation tube through the iron gauze suspiciously.

The fan was running stably. Except for the quickly spinning fins, they saw absolutely nothing.

The vague smell of something being burnt, however, made them realize that a few bugs had just been sucked into the fan.

The rust, dust, and spider threads on the iron gauze all eased their suspicion, which was not too high in the first place. The patrol team returned to their normal route and left the insignificant incident behind.

Behind the fan, Li Yao wiped off the cold sweat on his forehead and grinned.

The infiltration from the fourth alert area to the third had half succeeded!

In front of him was a dark ventilation tube that led underground. All kinds of lethal bugs were the guardians of the sunless world!

Chapter 1013 - Three Bugs!

Of course, none of them were actually a problem with the Fire Ant King’s assistance.

Li Yao lurked for half an hour behind the fan patiently so that the Fire Ant King would have enough time to find a suitable shelter.

Half an hour later, a tiny chip that Li Yao had stuck on his left ear vibrated feebly.

According to the signals that the Fire Ant King and he had agreed on, three short vibrations indicated that the Fire Ant King had found a shelter smoothly.

Although they could have brought more convenient magical equipment for communication, such tools would certainly release intense spiritual waves when complicated information was transmitted.

Therefore, they still chose vibration chips that could be stuck to the ears and the tongue. They had made a deal on hundreds of different code names for different situations. The spiritual waves they released would be minimal if they contacted each other through such feeble vibrations.

Five seconds later, Li Yao took out a sealed metal can and opened the upper half of it softly.

A scarlet mist immediately flowed toward the depths of the ventilation tube as if it were alive.

The scarlet mist would cast most of the insect-type demon beasts in the ventilation tube into a slight sleep state.

Then, Li Yao opened the lower half of the metal can and released three dark red insects.

The first insect had a thick, greasy shell and long antennae.

The second insect was like a spider, except for the twelve colorful, hairy legs.

The third insect appeared to be an enormous dragonfly. The swirl-like stripes on its translucent wings looked like four crimson eyes.

Under the Fire Ant King’s remote control, the three insects crawled forward in the ventilation tube majestically as if they were the kings of insects.

Very soon, rattling noises were echoing deep inside the ventilation tube.

Soon, vibrations were coming over on Li Yao’s ears again, which was a signal that all the insects inside the ventilation tube had been overwhelmed by the Fire Ant King’s ‘insect kings’!

Li Yao crouched and scrambled forward in the ventilation tube. As he expected, he saw thousands of insects lying next to him, not moving at all.

The dense horde of insects, which looked like moss, made Li Yao feel that his head was dizzy. He realized that it would have been impossible for him to break in without the Fire Ant King’s help.

From the fourth alert area on the ground to the third alert area deep underground, the length of the ventilation tube was twelve and a half kilometers.

Li Yao did not hurry to move forward. Instead, he took out another metal cylinder and, holding his breath, unleashed three new flying bugs.

The three bugs were very small, only one third the size of a mosquito, but they were in fact Li Yao and the Fire Ant King’s masterpieces—perfect combinations of biochemistry and the studies of spiritual energy!

Not only were the three bugs under the Fire Ant King’s remote control and sharing their vision with him, a small metal vesicle had been embedded to their stomachs in which one drop of different yet equally ‘marvelous’ venom had been preserved.

They were the keys to the mission.

Li Yao dispatched Neltharion to lead the way for the three bugs while they flew forward in the ventilation tube. After more than half an hour, they infiltrated the third alert area, which was at the bottom of the Eye of Blood Demon.

It was 7:22 a.m.

The third alert area was the living area for the workers of the Eye of Blood Demon, with quite a few spacious cafeterias.

Li Yao and the Fire Ant King did not know which room Jin Zhenyi would be resting in, nor did they have the time to look for him in every room.

However, the cafeterias here were highly distinctive from each other. They were designed for different species of demons. Normally speaking, the Feather Clan would enjoy their food in the No. 3 cafeteria.

That was where Li Yao and the Fire Ant King put their wagers on.

They had bet that Jin Zhenyi had returned to the living area for rest last night and that he would go to the cafeteria in the morning.

The reason was simple. For both the Cultivators and the expert demons, ‘eating’ and ‘sleeping’ were not only the biological needs but also the foundations of their training and work.

A sound sleep and the best food were all the more important now that the big day when the Red Tide Plan was to be activated was coming close so that all the workers would be in their best state.

Jin Zhenyi was a maintainer of the infrastructure. The infrastructure must have been done debugging half a month ago. It was impossible that he would still be catching up to his work right now.

Also, the three satellites were not in a straight line yet. So, the tidal force imposed upon the Eye of Blood Demon was not very strong. Logically speaking, the stabilization system was not likely to crash at this moment.

Therefore, as a maintainer of the infrastructure, Jin Zhenyi should be relatively free right now. The most important thing for him right now was to take a good rest so that he could do his job well tomorrow.

At this moment, it was unlikely that he would have stayed in his workplace and worked twenty-four hours a day. If so, he certainly would have been too exhausted to grit through the real test when the three satellites got into a straight line.

The cafeterias in the Eye of Blood Demon were far from general cafeterias, too. They were advanced restaurants specially prepared for the specialists in all kinds of fields. The best ingredients of food that stored the most abundant spiritual energy made sure that the brains of all the specialists were kept at the most active state.

Based on the files about Jin Zhenyi that Skyfire had collected, the guy was quite fond of having breakfast. When he was teaching in the Thousand Feathers Institute, he would have his breakfast between 7:30 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. every day.

There seemed to be no reason he would change his habit after he arrived at the Eye of Blood Demon.

Li Yao and the Fire Ant King held their breath and waited.

The No. 3 cafeteria was decorated into a primitive forest with the vines of the Gold Crow Woods. All the tables and seats were cages that were hanged on the vines.

The three bugs hid themselves in the middle of the branches and leaves.

At 7:38 a.m., when Jin Zhenyi walked into the cafeteria, Li Yao and the Fire Ant King immediately recognized the old man who had a hawk nose, a gloomy face, and a slightly hunched back.

The two of them were greatly relieved.

However, their target was followed by another member of the Feather Clan, who was tall, muscular, and handsome, with a longsword dangling from his waist. He looked rather tough and seemed to be Jin Zhenyi's bodyguard.

"Try to eavesdrop Jin Zhenyi and his bodyguard's conversation. See how he addresses the bodyguard and his attitude toward him!"

At 7:41, Jin Zhenyi and his bodyguard sat down in one of the cages.

The three bugs moved to the vines above their heads without anybody knowing.

Seven kilometers above their heads, Li Yao was rushing forward in the ventilation tube like a giant loach.

At 7:45, Jin Zhenyi connected a biochemical brain to his temples. He read the files in the biochemical brain while he enjoyed his food.

Over their heads, the first of the three bugs quietly pushed out the drop of venom in its stomach.

Transformed by the special rune arrays, the drop of venom was vaporized into vague mist and was breathed in by Jin Zhenyi and his bodyguard.

"Achiu!"

The two of them sneezed at the same time.

While the two of them were sneezing, the second bug and the third bug landed on their hair as quickly as a lightning. Both of them were distracted by their sneezes and did not notice the two bugs at all.

At 7:58, Li Yao reached the end of the ventilation tube.

Right below him was the exit of the ventilation tube—the hospital’s entrance. Compared to the entrance of the ventilation tube, the defense here was much more sluggish. It was just the simplest iron gauze with nothing else.

Li Yao took a deep breath in relief. He slightly adjusted his facial muscles, putting on all kinds of hilarious expressions.

He took out a plethora of treasures from his Cosmos Rings and his backpack.

At first, he sprayed liquids that could change his skin color and body smell. Then, he stuck the fingerprint membranes in which a tiny blood vesicle was stored to his fingers. Following that, he stuck the voice-changing rune arrays to his throat, which could change his voiceprint. Eventually, he put on the simulation lens that would change his iris.

Li Yao’s muscles and bones were gradually turning into Jin Zhenyi’s appearance, too. The bulging muscles gradually withered. Wrinkles showed up on the corners of his eyes. He even boosted the hair follicles inside his body to grow out authentic whiskers before he dyed them iron gray.

The trickiest part was the wings.

Jin Zhenyi had a pair of tiny wings on his back, which was the greatest feature for the Feather Clan.

Although they could not fly with the wings in the underground world, they were able to express their subtle emotions with the opening, closing, and shivering of their wings, just like other demons with their ears or tails.

Li Yao had crafted two hollowed bones with super light metal. Then, he extended dozens of tiny branches from the bones. All the branches could be connected to the muscles on his back through crystal wires.

Then, the specialists of Skyfire covered a layer of flesh cells and skin cells on the metal bones before they implanted the natural feathers on the false wings one by one by comparing the counterfeit to Jin Zhenyi’s picture. They were confident that the wings would not be seen through quickly.

By adjustments to his lats, traps, and triceps, Li Yao would be able to pull the crystal wires neatly and make the artificial wings perform vivid actions.

Thanks to Jin Xinyue, who was a princess of the Feather Clan, Li Yao managed to master the subtle ways of communication with wings among the silver-blood demons in the Feather Clan.

At 8:05, the disguise was done.

At this moment, Jin Zhenyi had finished his breakfast and walked to the gate of the cafeteria with his bodyguard.

“Bug No. 2, inject the venom!”

The second bug, which was crouching inside Jin Zhenyi’s hair, stung into the back of Jin Zhenyi’s head like a mosquito, injecting the drop of venom in its stomach!

The next instant, Jin Zhenyi’s cerebral vessels exploded on a large scale because of the corrosion of the poison!

His eyes bulging, Jin Zhenyi exclaimed and threw up all the breakfast that he had a moment ago before falling over!

His bodyguard reacted quickly enough to catch Jin Zhenyi before he fell to the ground. He examined Jin Zhenyi’s pupils and tested his pulse. Then, he took out a silver syringe from his pocket and injected the drugs into Jin Zhenyi's carotid artery before he raised his voice and shouted, "Master Jin Zhenyi has been mentally deranged. Somebody call an ambulance!"

Chapter 1014 - Swap

For the specialists with high computational abilities, this place was their battlefield. Because of the prolonged overloading, it was nothing unusual for their cerebral vessels to explode, for their nerves to constrict, and for serious brain death.

It was especially so when the Red Tide Plan had reached the most critical point. In order to change the teleportation mode of the Eye of Blood Demon, thousands of workers were working day and night, burning their life and soul every day.

Over the past half year, almost a hundred workers had been heavily wounded or even killed.

Mental derangement and explosions of several cerebral vessels were the most common phenomena.

It was also exactly the effect of the Fire Ant King’s venom.

The venom was slightly corrosive, allowing it to cut off some of the cerebral vessels and deactivate part of the brain nerves. The symptoms were identical to the mental derangement when one overused their brain.

Mental derangement was a common illness in the Eye of Blood Demon. Medical staff had been standing by in the No. 3 cafeteria in the first place. The moment Jin Zhenyi fell over, a doctor and a nurse already rushed to him before his bodyguard started yelling.

After examining his pupils, the doctor said, “It is indeed mental derangement but not a serious case. Send him to the hospital, let him rest a moment, and everything will be good!”

Together, they placed Jin Zhenyi on a portable biochemical medical cabin and left the cafeteria in a hurry.

The incident did not attract much attention in the cafeteria.

Over the past few months, patients of sudden mental derangement were too many. There were even cases where a specialist’s head suddenly exploded, his brains spluttering everywhere, while he was debating with his colleague about a certain technique issue.

Compared to them, Jin Zhenyi’s illness could not have been more insignificant.

He was moved to the hospital of the third alert area.

As the three satellites were about to align and the brand-new Eye of Blood Demon was to be activated, more and more specialists were on the verge of collapse.

Even if they were not mentally deranged, they were also asked to undergo full physical examinations in the hospital and prescribed with appropriate drugs to make sure that their brain was steady at the critical moment.

As the only hospital in the third alert zone, the place was quite lively and packed with patients. All the doctors were occupied.

Thankfully, with Jin Zhenyi’s rank and his condition, he was placed in a double ward as soon as he was admitted. A doctor came to examine him very soon.

“It’s a typical explosion of cerebral vessels because he overexerted his brain. Fortunately, the main vessels were not hurt. The duration of the explosion was not long, either. The blood clot was neither frozen nor suppressing the central nerves.

“Master Jin’s soul power is immense. His braincells are very healthy, too, and are already repairing themselves right now. The blood clot is quickly melting. The broken vessels are being reconnected, too.

“In a moment, I will prescribe a few drugs that will stimulate the activity of the braincells and nutrition drugs that contain abundant spiritual energy for you. Everything will be normal again after Master Jin takes a few hours’ rest in the medical cabin.”

A doctor, with gray hair all over his body and as magnificent as a yak, gave him instructions after performing a thorough examination on Jin Zhenyi.

Like Cultivators, the expert demons had a far more developed brain than the regular ones. For them, the explosion of cerebral vessels was not too serious an ailment. It was almost like sunstroke, anemia, or malnutrition for ordinary people.

As long as the main vessels and central nerves were not affected, they would gradually recover after a while even if they did not take any medication.

At this moment, Jin Zhenyi was slowly back to himself again. With a gloomy face, he nodded and said to his bodyguard, “Little Guan, tell those inside that I will be late!”

After helping Jin Zhenyi into the medical cabin and setting the treatment length to three hours, the doctor left the ward.

There were too many patients waiting to be examined and treated today. Naturally, the doctor would not stand there and idle by for three hours.

There were two medical cabins and three demons in the ward, including Jin Zhenyi, his bodyguard Little Guan, and another worker who was in the middle of treatment.

However, the worker was apparently not as important as Jin Zhenyi. He was not followed by a bodyguard.

Because of the opiate constituents in the biochemical drugs, the guy was already sound asleep. According to the panel in front of the medical cabin, there was more than an hour to go before his treatment finished.

“Master Jin, you can take a rest now. I’ll be on alert,” his bodyguard, Little Guan, said respectfully.

“Alright.” Jin Zhenyi was indeed not entirely relieved of the dizziness resulting from the explosion of his cerebral vessels yet. Also, because of the opiate constituents, he closed his eyes very soon, and his breath became long and deep.

His bodyguard sat down in a chair next to him, straight and absolutely still. He widened his eyes and gazed at Jin Zhenyi without even blinking his eyes.

Right at this moment—

Chi!

The third bug which was lurking in the hair of the bodyguard sent a drop of venom into his veins softly.

The drop of venom, as it turned out, was entirely different from the one that had been injected into Jin Zhenyi’s body.

Instead of causing an explosion of cerebral vessels, the venom stimulated the central nerves and triggered a strong feeling of…

Gulu! Gulu! Gulu!

The bodyguard’s stomach was uttering boiling sounds, and his face gradually turned from pale to green.

Pu—Pu pu pu pu pu—

The bodyguard farted nonstop, and he could not have looked more awful.

Holding his breath, he extended his wings and flapped quickly while he observed the surroundings. Thankfully, Jin Zhenyi and the other patient were both sleeping in the medical cabins.

Gulu! Gulu! Gulu! Gulu! Gulu!

The sound in his stomach was even louder. Holding his belly hard, the bodyguard’s eyebrows were almost standing up as he gritted his teeth to suppress the feeling.

After putting up with it for five minutes, he could not hold back any longer and suddenly rose up.

The ward was a large suite with an independent toilet. Therefore, he did not have to leave the ward.

The bodyguard took out a furry, brown sparrow that looked like a chicken from his pocket and tossed it out.

The brown sparrow immediately hovered around Jin Zhenyi’s medical cabin.

The sparrow was also a demon beast that had been refined. Its eyes were connected to the bodyguard’s brain wirelessly through the feeble brainwaves so that the bodyguard would be able to see what was going on outside while he was in the toilet.

The bodyguard felt safe now. Finally, he rushed into the toilet, holding his stomach.

The moment the bodyguard closed the door of the toilet, a bug the size of a lice jumped out of the ventilation tube on the ceiling of the ward and landed on the head of the brown sparrow precisely!

Chi!

A sting protruded out of the ‘lice’ and pierced into the brown sparrow’s head, releasing a tiny portion of venom and hypnotization drugs that would jam its retina and optical nerves.

Such surveillance sparrows were one of the most commonly-used demon beasts in the Feather Clan. As the princess of the Gold Crow Kingdom, naturally, Jin Xinyue knew everything about its advantages and shortcomings.

Just when the eyes of the sparrow lost their vigor, the bodyguard in the toilet was enjoying the first wave of dumping. He was at the most inert moment.

The door of the ward was opened slowly, and a shadow dashed in.

Li Yao did not crawl out of the ventilation tube. Instead, he walked into the ward from the corridor.

In a white gown, he covered most of his face with a specially-made respirator. He had crawled to the public toilet at the end of the corridor through the ventilate tube before striding into the ward openly.

Bo!

Four deep blue pearls were snapped out by Li Yao and formed a cone above Jin Zhenyi’s medical bine. Three streams of bluish rays flooded out and enveloped the entire medical cabin!

The magical equipment was named ‘Wave Blocking Tower’, which could release a barrier and prevent all the waves within the range from spreading to the outside world.

Noises, vibrations, and spiritual waves would all be blocked.

Li Yao turned into a bolt of lightning and crawled into the barrier, looking down at Jin Zhenyi.

The cold killing intent immediately woke Jin Zhenyi up.

However, he was a specialist of rune arrays, not a tough warrior. And even if he were a tough warrior, how would he have been able to resist Li Yao, who was in the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage?

Li Yao opened his right hand and drew Jin Zhenyi out of his medical cabin, grabbing his neck hard.

Jin Zhenyi was dumbfounded. He had no idea where such a murderer came from. His eyes were immediately bloodshot, and he struggled out of natural instinct!

However, he seemed to have been bound by invisible shackles and could not even move any of his feathers. The boiling spiritual energy flowed out of Li Yao’s palm like magma and circulated around his body through his veins before it was concentrated into his brain!

Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa!

This time, the veins all over Jin Zhenyi’s body, along with his cerebral vessels and his central nerves, were really boiling, burning, and breaking!

Jin Zhenyi was killed instantly before he even had the chance to scream!

Li Yao’s face remained unchanged. He shook his right hand, and a red ball appeared in his palm. The surface of the ball was carved with sophisticated spiritual stripes that were bouncing like flames.

He opened Jin Zhenyi’s mouth with his left hand and stuffed the fiery ball into it before he pushed the ball into Jin Zhenyi’s stomach with his spiritual gas.

While Li Yao was casting a spell and making the corresponding gesture, Jin Zhenyi’s abdomen gradually turned transparent, as if a searchlight was shooting out rays of light right against the wall of his stomach.

Raging stripes of fire then appeared on Jin Zhenyi’s pale skin, as if the spiritual stripes carved on the fiery ball had been transferred to his body.

The stripes of fire quietly spread out, burning and consuming Jin Zhenyi’s body, until it turned into a heap of ashes. But not the slightest heat was released to the outside world.

A white ball surrounded by icy stripes appeared in Li Yao’s hand again. He closed his hands and crumbled the ball into powder before he sprayed the powder on the ashes evenly. Then, the ashes were immediately frozen into a large cluster of ice.

Finally, flushing sounds were echoing inside the toilet.

Chapter 1015 - Endless Examinations!

Li Yao was in quite a hurry. Although he had readied the preliminary disguise, Jin Zhenyi’s body shape was definitely not exactly the same as half a year ago after working in the Eye of Blood Demon in an underground world for so long.

Li Yao had to further compress or bulge his muscle fibers and add another few tiny wrinkles to make himself identical to the Jin Zhenyi.

While adjusting his muscles and bones, he released a hollowed metal ball that revolved quickly in midair.

The ball was a piece of magical equipment similar to a vacuum cleaner. It could absorb all the remaining smell, ashes, and waves inside the Wave Sealing Tower, known as the best ancillary magical equipment for murderers.

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

The dust-collecting ball span quickly, triggering an enormous swirl that swallowed all traces. It was not until then that Li Yao finally hid all the magical equipment and clothes he took off in his Cosmos Ring.

He had barely plunged himself back into the biochemical drugs when the bodyguard walked out of the toilet in quite a good mood.

At this moment, Li Yao had not finished making up the wrinkles on his face. Therefore, he simply turned around in the medical cabin, with his back facing the bodyguard, so that the broad wings would cover up his body, which was still changing slightly.

The bodyguard glanced around casually and sat down in the chair again.

Li Yao felt relieved. He closed his eyes and pretended to be sleeping, but he was in fact considering the most possible architectures of the stabilization system for the infrastructure, as well as the problems that the real Jin Zhenyi might encounter.

With the Blood Demon Sector’s studies on rune arrays and spiritual stripes, and considering the scale of the Eye of Blood Demon, they don’t have many choices on the general architecture.

Jin Zhenyi has three well-known monographs, namely ‘Origins of Demonic Stripes’, ‘On the Rune Arrays in the Early Years of the Great Eagle Dynasty’, and ‘Mechanism of Triphase Stabilization Rune Arrays’. I can summarize his style and strategy in modelling from the three books, as well as his favorite rune arrays.

He is an experienced specialist. After decades of academic studies, his style has already become fixed. It is unlikely to have gone through drastic changes recently.

Thus, when he is faced with such a piece of enormous magical equipment as the Eye of Blood Demon, the methods he has adopted to resolve the stability and compatibility issues can be predicated.

Li Yao tried to walk in Jin Zhenyi’s shoes. If he were Jin Zhenyi, what methods would he have utilized to stabilize the infrastructure?

Li Yao had to figured it out because it would decide how he should destroy the stability of the entire system!

It was not very difficult to sabotage the system. The real difficult part was that he had to make the Eye of Blood Demon crash completely in only several seconds without giving the enemy any time to switch to the backup system!

In the meantime, he was also sensing the bodyguard’s reaction in silence.

Through the invisible spiritual threads that he released, he monitored the heartbeat and the blood flow of the bodyguard.

Jin Zhenyi’s bodyguard was definitely among those who were most familiar with Jin Zhenyi. If he had noticed an anomaly, there certainly would have been a brief tell in his heartbeat and the flow of his blood.

If so, Li Yao would have to figure out a second approach.

Thankfully, the bodyguard did not notice anything wrong.

It never occurred to him that, during the short time while he went to the toilet, the target that he was supposed to protect and monitor had already been swapped!

Two and a half hours passed.

“Judging from your heartbeat, pulse, and pupils, you have fully recovered,” the doctor said with a smile after finishing the preliminary examination on Li Yao. “However, for your safety, I recommend you undergo a full examination.”

“That will be unnecessary.”

Li Yao put on his clothes impatiently. He flapped the artificial wings and, pulling the crystal wires with the muscles on his back, manipulated the feathers to express his anxiety. “I am feeling good right now. There’s no time for us to dawdle here. I have to get back to work immediately!”

Naturally, Li Yao was not willing to take a full examination, which could potentially expose him.

“Little Guan, let’s go!”

“Yes, Master Jin.’

The bodyguard took a sealed, icy box from the doctor. Three dosages of emergency drugs were stored inside the box in case of another explosion of cerebral vessels.

The specialists in the Eye of Blood Demon were mostly workaholics who would like to spend every second they had working. Many of them even refused to go to hospital when they were slightly mentally deranged. They would often just sit down and calm themselves, inject a few dosages of drugs into their body, and dedicate themselves to working again.

With them as examples, Li Yao’s reaction was not abnormal. The doctor simply allowed them to leave after offering a few kind reminders.

After they left the hospital, however, Li Yao pretended that he was still feeble and intentionally slowed down so that the bodyguard would be leading the way.

Jin Zhenyi was a grave and taciturn man in the first place. He did not like to talk to anyone else except when his work required him to. It was also one of the reasons Li Yao picked him as the target.

The two of them were silent the whole time on the way, but the bodyguard did not feel anything unusual. Very soon, he led Li Yao to an elevator at the edge of the living area.

It was the only channel between the living area and the working area, and also the boundary between the third alert area and the second.

Quite a few security-checking facilities had been deployed in front of the elevator, guarded by a team of tough-looking, vigorous soldiers of the coalition army of demons.

The first and the second alert areas were the real working areas of the Eye of Blood Demon. They were heavily guarded without any blind spots.

The ventilation tubes, the drainage canals, and the emergency channels were all watched by the most rigorous alert system. Li Yao, the Fire Ant King, and Jin Xinyue ran countless simulations, and their conclusion was that, even if the Fire Ant King had all the insect-type demon beasts under control, it was still impossible to sneak in.

Therefore, Li Yao could only enter the area openly under a pseudo identity!

Shua!

Four mystic rays overlapped and scanned the face, body shape, and walking posture of Li Yao and the bodyguard.

The guards immediately read their identity information.

The two officers sitting in the checkpoint raised their heads and stared at Li Yao with their eyes, which were as cold as ice, demanding, “Level-1 Specialist Jin Zhenyi, your standard working time is from 8:40 a.m. to 10:20 p.m. Why are you three and a half hours late?"

The bodyguard stepped forward and handed over Jin Zhenyi's medical record and the doctor's signature. "Master Jin was mentally deranged while having breakfast in the No. 3 cafeteria this morning and went through a three-hour recovery treatment in the hospital. This is the medical record."

The two officers read and reread the medical record. They also contacted the No. 3 cafeteria and the hospital to confirm the incident. In the end, they nodded and said, "Let's begin!"

In front of them was a series of examination magical equipment.

At first, it was the magical equipment that tested fingerprints and palmprints. It looked like a football, with a few different dents in the shapes of a hand, claw, and hoof, among a few others, which were designed for different species of demons.

Li Yao put his left hand on the magical equipment. A needle suddenly protruded from the middle finger in the hand-shaped dent and stung his middle finger, absorbing a drop of blood.

Li Yao had been prepared for this. Not only had he duplicated Jin Zhenyi's fingerprints, there was also a tiny blood vesicle below the fingerprint membranes which stored a drop of Jin Zhenyi's blood.

A moment later, the rune arrays beeped in gentle green lights.

“Fingerprint test passed. Blood test passed. Moving on!”

One of the officers stepped close and opened Li Yao’s eyes with special equipment, checking if he were wearing lens on the eyeballs.

Of course, Li Yao was wearing lenses, except that the lenses were the latest version that had been developed by the Fire Ant King in person. The lenses would automatically melt and dissolve into the eyeball after being put on. There was no way to discover them.

After two to three days, the biochemical lens that was refined out of living cells would be completely absorbed by the body because of metabolism.

The officer studied Li Yao’s eyes for a long time before he aimed another piece of equipment at them.

Shua!

Two streams of colorful brilliance pierced deep into Li Yao’s eyes.

“Beep. Iris check completed. Similarity: 100%!”

The officer’s face was utterly changed. Gravely, he declared, “Next is the voiceprint test. Please read after me. Defeat Heaven’s Origin, long live the Blood Demon!”

While speaking, he connected two synthesize nerves to Li Yao’s throat and carotid artery.

“Defeat Heaven’s Origin, long live the Blood Demon!” Li Yao said.

“Beep. Voiceprint test passed!”

The officer opened his hands and said courteously, “Please give me one hair and one feather for our final test. Rest assured. It won’t take long.”

Li Yao’s face was more and more gloomy, like a workaholic who was about to burst into fury because his time was being wasted.

He plucked his hair and his feather angrily from his head and his wings. The movement was so violent that the root of the feather seemed to be stained with a tiny bit of blood.

Naturally, the hair and the feather had been collected from Jin Zhenyi’s home. The hair had been stuck to his scalp with special glue while the feathers had been directly implanted into the man-made wings.

Half a minute later, the last procedure of security check was successfully passed, too.

In another channel next to Li Yao, his bodyguard went through the same strict examinations. He said solemnly, “Are we good to go?”

“Let them through!”

The officer waved his hands and opened the gate. Another officer inputted the location of Jin Zhenyi’s workplace. The runes around the lift were glittering, ready to bring them to their destination.

The lifts and the short-distance teleportation arrays in the Eye of Blood Demon were all under the control of designated personnel. They could only be operated if the fingerprints and the passwords were correct.

It was supposed to be another security measure. But right now, it saved Li Yao the trouble of not knowing where his workplace was.

“Wait!”

Just when Li Yao and his bodyguard were about to step into the teleportation array, three officers of the Wolf Clan, in black uniforms and wearing crimson epaulets, slowly rose up from an inconspicuous corner. They patted the sabers dangling from their waists and looked at Li Yao and his bodyguard with vague smiles.

Chapter 1016 - Stabbing into the Heart!

Li Yao’s heart was immediately beating fast. He wondered how he had raised the enemy’s suspicion.

Was it his smell? The Wolf Clan had the keenest noses.

For experts of Li Yao’s level, he was already able to lock the pores all over his body and seal the sudoriferous glands temporarily, thereby stopping his real scent from dispersing.

Also, Skyfire had stolen a few garments as well as bedding from Jin Zhenyi’s home. They retrieved the features of his smell and produced perfumes of similar scent.

Li Yao had smeared the perfume on his body evenly, especially on the underarm and the wings. His smell was 99.99% identical to Jin Zhenyi’s.

However, it was only 99.99%!

Although one’s smell might slightly change when they ate different food or had just soaked in the biochemical drugs for three hours, the enemy’s suspicion was not likely to go away easily now that it had been raised!

The officer in the leader’s nose tip was flapping, and his blood red eyes were glittering, as he bowed toward Li Yao respectfully.

Shaking his fluffy tail, he apologized, “Do excuse us, Master Jin. According to the commander, starting from today, all specialists who enter the working area at an irregular hour will have to go through another random test.

“You wouldn’t mind if I absorb a drop of blood from a random place in your body for another blood test, would you?”

Li Yao thought quickly. He frowned, and his eyelids were jumping crazily. The feathers on his back were all standing up, with a hint of redness on the tips of the feathers.

It was a way that a silver-blood demon of the Feather Clan expressed his anger when he was insulted.

The number and angle of the feathers that were erect both mattered.

Right now, twenty-two feathers on Li Yao’s wings were standing up, and the tips of twelve were red. It was a sign of medium anger.

It meant ‘I understand it’s your job, but you are wasting my time’.

Although the officer of the Wolf Clan might not know the sign language of the Feather Clan, Li Yao’s bodyguard definitely did.

As he expected, his bodyguard flapped his wings, too, and almost a hundred feathers were standing.

His position was much lower than Jin Zhenyi’s, and he was speaking in a much ruder way than Jin Zhenyi did, too.

In the Feather Clan, raising a hundred feathers was almost equal to pointing at somebody’s nose and cursing them.

The officer of the Wolf Clan was still looking at them with a smile. He was neither pissed nor letting them through. But the smile in his eyes was getting colder and colder.

Li Yao sniffed hard and said impatiently, “Do it quickly!”

His bodyguard glared at the guards, too, and retreated the rooster-like feathers.

They were both aware of the rules of the Eye of Blood Demon. Raising the feathers just now was just a protest of the nobles. They were not really going to refuse the examination.

“Thanks for your understanding. All for our glorious victory.”

The three officers of the Wolf Clan gathered and took out a shining jade badge.

A fuzzy shape of a body was carved on the jade badge, with a light spot that was moving quickly among the different body parts.

“In case the examiner and the examinee conspire, the location of the blood sampling is pure random. Right now, even I don’t know which part of your blood I will be collecting.

“Please do not feel offended if I am forced to collect it from a sensitive spot,” the fluffy-tailed officer of the Wolf Clan said gently and smiled as if in embarrassment, before he extended his paw to the jade badge.

After all three officers moved their paws to the jade badge, the quickly moving red spot on the shape of body slowed down gradually.

Eventually, it stopped… at the left ankle!

It was a rather unexpected location.

Normal infiltrators would never realize that they would even need to stick a blood vesicle to the ankle!

The officer of the Wolf Clan was smiling even more sunnily, but the brilliance in his eyes was slowly freezing into two icy cones as he stared at Li Yao’s left foot. He said, “Please open your hands and wings, and do not touch your left foot. Then, lift your left foot real slow. My assistant will help you take off your shoe.

A storm of ice seemed to be spurting out of his eyes. His face grave, he opened his hands and wings and straightened his left foot without saying anything.

The other two officers of the Wolf Clan took off his boot and sock and brought over a hollow syringe. The first officer of the Wolf Clan was going to do it himself.

The officer was holding the syringe in one hand and a cotton swab in the other. He wiped Li Yao’s ankle for a moment and smiled at him.

Then, he pierced the syringe into the ankle as quickly as a lightning, not in the location where he had just wiped but half an inch next to it!

“Do excuse me. My hand slipped.”

The officer apologized in the sincerest way before he sent the drop of blood that he had collected into the test equipment.

Li Yao was breathing fast and raising his feathers again. This time, more than forty feathers were standing up, indicating that he was about to burst into fury!

His bodyguard was rubbing his fists, too, and gritting his teeth so hard that sparks were spluttering out.

The three officers of the Wolf Clan smiled at them while their paws were placed right next to their sabers, their fingers slightly bouncing.

All the soldiers nearby held their breath, too. Even the air seemed to be pumped away.

Beep!

“The blood sample is identical to the archive. Test passed. Confirmed identity: Level-1 Specialist Jin Zhenyi, silver-blood, of the Feather Clan!”

The officer’s face remained absolutely unchanged. He smiled warmly and bowed to Li Yao. “Sorry for wasting so much of your time, Master Jin. Please proceed!”

“Hehe!”

Li Yao flapped his wings and turned around to the lift angrily.

But he was greatly relieved deep down in his heart.

Jin Xinyue and he had deduced that the security checks would definitely upgrade at the critical moment of the Red Tide Plan.

Therefore, not only did he conceal a drop of Jin Zhenyi’s blood below his fingerprint membrane, he had also preserved more than ten drops of Jin Zhenyi’s blood inside his body with special dissolvable capsules!

Inside Li Yao’s body, there was still a mental devil.

That was a great master in the manipulation of blood. It was quite easy to send the ‘blood capsules’ to any part of the body with the constriction and expansion of the veins.

The officer of the Wolf Clan’s trick was indeed very smart, and his control over his micro-expression was perfect. However, his fluffy tail betrayed him without him knowing.

Li Yao keenly sensed that he was up to something else when his tail shivered unnaturally. Since Li Yao was on full alert, his trick certainly failed to fool Li Yao, who had calculated the real position that the syringe was piercing into within the moment and delivered Jin Zhenyi’s blood to the place in time.

Therefore, after all the trouble, the guard still only collected Jin Zhenyi’s own blood. Naturally, the test was passed!

There were more than ten similar drops of blood inside Li Yao’s body in case he encountered unexpected tests again.

“The Claw Clan is always nitpicking the Feather Clan!”

The lift slightly shivered before it quickly sank deep underground, but the bodyguard still had not calmed down. “The Claw Clan and the Insect Clan have led the Blood Demon Sector for a thousand years. They are already used to call the shots about everything. The Feather Clan and the Sea Clan are but vassals in their eyes!

“This is the first time that someone from the Feather Clan has become the commander-in-chief of the coalition army.

Those son of b*tches are so disappointed that they always looking for trouble!”

Li Yao sniffed. He flapped his wings and slowly constricted them while the tips of his wings surpassed his shoulder and covered his ears.

It was a signal that he was in an awful mood and preferred silence.

The bodyguard quickly shut his mouth. The two of them remained quiet while the lift brought them to the working area that was thousands of meters below the ground.

For confidentiality and security reasons, every unit corresponded to a different workplace. Most of the workplaces were not connected to each other.

For Li Yao, it was more convenient for him to lurk in the deepest darkness quietly.

As it turned out, it was not until the lift sank to the bottom that a narrow, long pathway showed up in front of them.

As the bronze gate covered in glamorous stripes slowly opened at the end of the pathway, deafening soundwaves blew out. Together with the overwhelming heat and the intense radiation, Li Yao confirmed effortlessly that it was the stabilization room at the bottom level of the enormous magical equipment system.

With a gloomy face, Li Yao strode into the room. His braincells were more active than ever, and an astronomical amount of information was ready!

It was a shocking gamble. He did not know the first thing about the situation inside the stabilization room. What problems would there be? What kind of colleagues would he met? How should he address them? What was his job exactly?

It was both agitating and thrilling!

Li Yao felt that his heart was pounding.

A bald member of the Feather Clan who looked like an owl walked close and greeted to him in a smile. However, the information expressed by his short and silly wings was definitely not friendly.

Li Zhengzhi, a specialist of rune arrays in the Feather Clan, also a teacher in the Thousand Feathers Institute. His research field overlaps with Jin Zhenyi's, and he has huge contradictions with Jin Zhenyi in academics. The two of them have had multiple public arguments and are in a rather bad relationship right now!

At this moment, the files of the specialists of the Feather Clan that Jin Xinyue collected a few days ago proved to be helpful. Li Yao instantly recognized the owl.

He greeted back coldly and retreated most of his feathers, but he concentrated four feathers on the tip of his wings and shook them slightly toward the stranger.

It was a gesture of provocation.

However, it was more befitting for Jin Zhenyi's character and the tension between the two specialists.

As he expected, Li Zhengzhi grinned and left, not talking to Li Yao anymore. He did not notice that his old nemesis was actually a counterfeit.

Li Yao took every second to observe the stabilization room.

The stabilization room was approximately the size of a football field, and it was almost a hundred meters tall. But the dome collapsed toward the middle like a giant pan that was sitting on the top of their heads.

Li Yao assumed that it was the bottom of the bloody lake on the ground.

They were right below the lake’s center.

On the ‘dome’, thousands of rune arrays had been carved. Complicated tubes dangled down from the rune arrays like an iron forest growing in the sky. The ‘vines’ that were actually tubes spread out and disappeared into the wall and below the floor.

Around the ‘dome’, a gargantuan gyro-shaped cooling tower had been installed in every direction. Surrounded by countless tubes, they were rotating quickly at a speed of more than 6,000 rpm.

The deafening noises were mostly generated by the four cooling towers.

Got it now.

Li Yao glanced around and ascertained that it was a classic stabilization system based on heat transformation.

Chapter 1017 - Sabotage Plan

At first, the noises, vibrations, and additional light would be transformed into heat when the runes on the dome were running.

Then, the four cooling towers would carry the heat away.

What flowed in the interconnected tubes was all cooling liquid. When it passed the cooling tower, the cooling liquid would absorb tremendous heat and be vaporized into steam, which was then transmitted deeper underground through other tubes.

Li Yao estimated that an underground river would be down there to transform the steam into cooling liquid for recycle purposes again.

Through such a way of circulation, the redundant heat was consumed to the largest extent, and the stability of the Eye of Blood Demon above would be ensured.

However, what if the cooling towers were all blown up?

Li Yao thought quickly. Based on everything he had observed, he deduced the rune arrays and the structure of magical equipment in the core unit above him. By his preliminary estimation, the core unit of the Eye of Blood Demon—the main teleportation array—should be several hundred meters right about his head.

There are more than twenty workers in the entire stabilization room, but they are all non-combatants.

Six bodyguards and sentinels are here. But they are in the level of demon general at best. As long as I calculate the route of attack well in advance, I will be able to finish every one of them in two seconds.

Defense rune arrays have been deployed outside the cooling towers, but I doubt they can withstand a full-strength strike from me!

The real tricky question is that, even if the four cooling towers are blown up, the core unit's temperature will only soar, and it is not necessarily enough to destroy the entire system.

The core unit must have backup cooling and stabilizing approaches.

Li Yao thought quickly. Rolling his eyes, he came up with a solution.

When the three satellites align, and the tidal force is strongest, the temperature of the core unit will certainly be at the highest point, and the cooling towers will have to be functioning at the highest efficiency to bring it down.

If I blow up the four cooling towers at the same time, the temperature of the core unit will instantly soar to an unbearable level. Perhaps it will be somewhere between three thousand degrees to four thousand, like a furnace of scorching molten steel.

Naturally, the core unit must be made of the most heat-proof and pressure-proof materials. Perhaps, it has also been added with the cores of the demon beasts of the fire *class. Several seconds will definitely be far from enough to burn through the core unit.*

In the meantime, after three seconds at most, the backup stabilization system will be activated and cool the core unit in time. During the entire process, there is even no need to halt the teleportation arrays. Even though a large batch of soldiers is being teleported during the accident, they will not be hurt at all!

But what if I insert a few crystal bombs into the core unit during the several seconds?

The core unit was only several hundred kilometers from the stabilization room. They were connected to each other through various kinds of tubes, which were certainly not impregnable.

With the drill of mystic rays and the formidable, upgraded version of the Cell Obliteration Cannon, it was not entirely impossible for Li Yao to blast a hole of hundreds of meters in the broken underground.

What Li Yao planned to insert into the core unit were powerful ice bombs, in which blue icy crystals that had been compressed to the minimum had been stored.

When an object turned into its liquid form from the solid form or from its liquid from into its gaseous form, its volume would expand exponentially.

The blue icy crystals that Li Yao utilized, when turning from solid icy crystals into cold mist, would expand thousands of times in size.

When the blue icy crystals in an extremely low temperature got in touch with the core unit that was thousands of degrees in temperature, their size would certain grow by more than a thousand times in only 0.01 seconds. What would happen next?

It was like throwing an enormous ice block into scorching furnace; it was going to be an out-and-out disaster.

This is how I’m going to do it!

Li Yao licked his lips in eagerness, and his eyes almost turned into burning firewood.

He had detonated countless crystal bombs in his entire life, but this was definitely going to be the most splendid one!

“Master?”

While he was fantasizing, a few workers came over. A young man in the lead greeted him respectfully.

They had all learned the news that ‘Jin Zhenyi’ had suffered mental derangement. Naturally, they were here to show their care.

Li Yao’s eyes suddenly shone as he recognized the young man.

In the database provided by Jin Xinyue, the profile of the young man was right there. His name was Wu Dawei, and he was the student that Jin Zhenyi thought most highly of in the Thousand Feathers Institute. He was essentially Jin Zhenyi’s true disciple.

However, as for the few workers behind him, Li Yao was not able to tell their names.

Also, how were the jobs in the stabilization room divided, what duty did he have specifically, and what was he supposed to do next according to the schedule?

If he could not resolve the questions, he would be seen through in the next second.

The few bodyguards and sentinels were sitting in the corners of the stabilization room and staring at them on alert.

There was at least one day to go before the three satellites got into position. Right now, the tidal force that the Eye of Blood Demon absorbed was not strong enough. Even if Li Yao suppressed everybody right now and blew the icy bombs into the core unit, he would not be able to deal too much damage because the temperature of the core unit was not high enough. It was quite possible that the enemy would repair it quickly in the remaining one day.

Therefore, he had to work here under Jin Zhenyi’s identity for an entire day!

Shua!

Li Yao immediately put on a gloomy face as he stared at his ‘disciple’ coldly.

Cold sweat popping out of Wu Dawei’s forehead. He stammered, “Ma—Master, I’m told that you had a mental derangement in the morning. Do you feel better—”

“Cut the crap!”

Li Yao raised his feathers and quickly shivered them, as if he was more than infuriated by his disciple’s poor performance. “Why have you triggered the ‘Thousand Feet Mystic Ice Array’ in the No. 4 rune array group to the maximum? Look.

The mystic rays released are more than one inch long with blurred boundaries. It is a sign that the rune array is very unsteady right now!

“Yes, by doing that, the overall cooling efficiency will be improved by more than 3%, and there doesn’t seem to be anything wrong.

“However, have you considered the possibility of an earthquake? The three satellites are about to align. The tidal force is going to be stronger than ever. The gravity environment here will be highly abnormal!

“Even if the odds of tectonic movement are only one thousandth, it is still possible that we will run into one!

“How did I teach you before? You must take the slightest unexpected factors into consideration! If you have made up your mind to exploit the potentials of the No. 4 rune array group, you should at least establish a simple safety circuit with the No. 6, No. 7, and No. 8 rune array groups! Should the No. 4 rune array group overload, the excessive energy would still be guided to the safety circuit!

“Four rune array groups are enough to neutralize the risk of one rune array group! Do I have to teach you such common sense to you in person?”

Wu Dawei blush and retreated his wings while Li Yao was berating him. He nodded quickly. “Understood. Understood. I’m on it.”

Li Yao glared at all the other workers. “I am only late for half a day, and look at what you’ve done!”

Everybody looked at each other in bewilderment and reeled back slightly.

They all knew that Jin Zhenyi was rather bad-tempered. Now that he had just experience a minor mental derangement, he was apparently in an even worse mood.

Nobody was willing to talk to him anymore since he was apparently not very interested in talking.

With a gloomy face, Li Yao said coldly, “Give me your work log. I’m going to check how many more mistakes you have made from last night to right now!”

All the workers submitted their logs obediently before they were dismissed to their own stations by Li Yao.

Then, with the help of his disciple, he sat in Jin Zhenyi’s place.

Naturally, Jin Zhenyi had his own log, but the work log had a password.

When he killed Jin Zhenyi, the time had been too limited for him to elicit the password from him!

Therefore, he could only read other workers’ logs in such a way and infer the situation inside the stabilization room and Jin Zhenyi’s duty.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Li Yao stuck the jade chips to his forehead one after another.

The jade chips that the demon race utilized were almost identical to those of human beings, except that the information contained inside was transmitted through the resonance of brainwaves. Although the speed of transmission was relatively lower, it was more stable and reduced interference.

After reading the logs in more than ten jade chips, Li Yao smiled confidently.

He had basically understood the general structure of the stabilization room and everybody’s jobs.

Jin Zhenyi and Li Zhengzhi were both specialists of rune arrays in the Feather Clan. They had a high expertise in the field of stabilization and compatibility. They were the director and the deputy director in the place.

The infrastructure of the Eye of Blood Demon had four independent stabilization plans. The two of them each was responsible for two.

Currently, the No. 1 plan was being operated. Jin Zhenyi was taking the lead, and Li Zhengzhi was his assistant.

If the No. 1 plan went wrong in certain accidents, the system would be immediately switched to the No. 2 plan, which Li Zhengzhi was in charge of.

On the other hand, if the leader had an accident, such as Jin Zhenyi’s mental derangement in the morning, the other stabilization specialist would take over all the work in time as a substitute.

The arrangement of ‘two leaders, four plans’ ensured the normal functioning of the stabilization room.

So, this is the case. Most of the debugging has been completed. There is no complicated work anymore. I only need to sit here and monitor everyone’s progress!

Excellent. As I expected, Jin Zhenyi’s No. 1 stabilization plan did not adopt any extraordinary rune arrays or spiritual stripes. I can figure out all the details.

Luck is truly on my side. The operation this time is too smooth and immaculate!

Li Yao’s pupils sudden constricted to the minimum as he felt a bad omen.

Not good!

According to my battle experience over the past ten years, whenever I was greatly relieved and thought that I had completed a certain mission smoothly and perfectly, something would go wrong the next moment!

It was almost like my luck likes to play tricks on me!

Therefore, I cannot relax, and I cannot think that I’m doing great!

That’s right now. I must hypnotize myself. I must convince myself that the mission is too arduous, too complicated, and full of peril. Endless dangers and obstacles are still waiting for me…

Right at the moment…

BOOM!

The ten or so rune arrays on the dome of the stabilization room suddenly emanated dazzling brilliance, as if they had been heated by a thousand degrees within a moment, before they exploded simultaneously in earsplitting noises!

Chapter 1018 - Unresolvable Paradox?

You’ve got to me kidding me!

Li Yao was dumbfounded by his own luck, which seemed to always go wrong at the critical moment. Why was the stabilization system that was functioning normally suddenly faulty? And what was the abrupt wave of energy all about?

The four cooling towers were rotating faster and faster, and they were uttering louder noises. The temperature inside the stabilization room had increased by more than ten degrees. Many tubes of cooling liquid were colliding in cracking noises, as if a minor earthquake was breaking out right above their head.

All the rune arrays carved on the dome were glowing and fading. They were emanating dazzling brilliance one moment, only to turn completely dark the next, absorbing all the rays of light in the room!

“The No. 1 rune array group is overloading!”

“The No. 3 rune array group is overloading!”

“The No. 4 rune array group is overloading and on the verge of crash!”

All the workers were sweating hard. They moved agilely among the rune array groups. The specialists of the Feather Clan all opened their wings and flew to the dome, urgently repairing the rune arrays that were about to go out of control while holding back of the scorching steam.

The stabilization system was running very abnormally right now!

Li Yao grabbed Wu Dawei, Jin Zhenyi’s disciple, and gnashed his teeth. “What’s happening?”

Wu Dawei’s face was a little bit pale, too. Shuddering, he replied, “Were—weren’t we informed yesterday that the final extreme test would be conducted today?”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. Then he realized what was going on.

For a large magical equipment system such as the Eye of Blood Demon, countless extreme tests were mandatory after any modifications.

Since the tidal force triggered by the three satellites when they were aligned varied, nobody could estimate precisely how strong it would be and how many warriors the tidal force would be able to teleport to the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

Therefore, all kinds of extreme states had to be simulated during the tests on the entire system in order to determine the maximum capacity and weight.

Since it was ‘extreme state’, it was certainly a great examination on the stabilization system, which was equal to a ‘live-fire drill’.

However, even though it was an extreme test, the scene was still a bit out of control. What was all the shaking about?

Li Yao glanced over the dome of the stabilization room. Then, attracted by an inconspicuous rune array in the corner, he frowned. “What’s with the ‘Three Moons Array’? Its resonation frequency seems to have been improved by 15%, doesn’t it?”

Every specialist of rune arrays had their own style. Jin Zhenyi was one of the conservative ones. The rune array that was adjusted to a relatively radical state, mixed among so many conservative rune arrays, was as out-of-place as a crystal train in a painting of nature in the eyes of an expert such as Li Yao.

Wu Dawei replied nervously, “It was—it was Director Li. After you were sent to the hospital due to mental derangement in the morning, Director Li took over everything according to the rules. Considering that the extreme test would be conducted at noon, he performed minor adjustments on the stabilization system.”

“Is that so?”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes. He hurried to run to the main biochemical brain and connected two synthesized nerves to his temples.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Data and information immediately poured down like a storm in his eyes.

Li Yao was frowning harder and harder. He glanced at Deputy Director Li Zhengzhi, who was standing far away.

The fat owl grinned at him with utmost delight.

Li Yao immediately realized what Li Zhengzhi was up to.

Jin Zhenyi and Li Zhengzhi were both specialists of stabilization rune arrays in the Blood Demon Sector. They were on par with each other when they taught at the Thousand Feathers Institute, too. In the academic world, they were at loggerheads with one another and in a very bad relationship.

Then, when they were summoned to the Eye of Blood Demon, Jin Zhenyi’s stabilization plan was adopted as the primary plan, and Jin Zhenyi was appointed as the director of the stabilization room, while Li Zhengzhi was merely the deputy directory and a substitute for him.

Naturally, Li Zhengzhi was not very happy about it.

As it happened, right before the final extreme test before the final activation of the Eye of Blood Demon, which would influence a lot of procedures, Jin Zhenyi was mentally deranged and sent into hospital!

Was it not the greatest opportunity for Li Zhengzhi?

According to the rules, when the director was absent, the deputy director would supervise everything. Naturally, Li Zhengzhi was authorized to perform minor adjustments on the stabilization system. Also, Li Zhengzhi knew how long the treatment of mental derangement would take. He was clear that, when Jin Zhenyi was back to work, the extreme test would have already begun!

Therefore, judging from Li Yao’s observation, the guy had played tricks on a few inconspicuous, yet critical, parts.

He had adjusted the frequency and the circulation pattern of the key rune arrays to a relatively radical state.

If the entire system had been adjusted to radically, it might be all good.

However, if most of the parts were designed conservatively and only a few parts were set to a radical state, there would be discordance when the system was running under high pressure, which would further affect the stability of the Eye of Blood Eye.

Li Zhengzhi was a master, too. The tricks he made escaped everyone’s attention. Others might even have felt that the stability of the system had been improved after his adjustments.

Only the experts in the level of Li Yao could see through it instantly!

Something had indeed gone wrong at the last moment!

What’s his goal?

Li Yao immediately thought it through. *It’s too obvious. Li Zhengzhi is trying to sabotage the No. 1 stabilization plan so that his No. 2 stabilization plan will be adopted!*

If the No. 2 stabilization plan under his lead is adopted in today’s extreme test and successfully passes it, since there is only one day to go, the system will never switch back to the No. 1 plan again.

Then, when the Eye of Blood Demon is really activated, Li Zhengzhi will be the leader of the stabilization room. Or even better, in the future, he will be the well-acknowledged best master in the field of stabilization rune arrays!

Figuring everything out, Li Yao was both stunned and amused.

He had not expected that his thorough scheme would be disrupted by the office politics of two scholars.

Speaking of which, it was his own fault, too.

If he had not planned to swap Jin Zhenyi, Jin Zhenyi would not have been mentally deranged, and Li Zhengzhi would not have had the chance to play tricks at all.

However, if he had not pretended to the Jin Zhenyi, how could he have snuck into the place?

It was an irresolvable paradox. Since the moment he chose Jin Zhenyi as his target, the outcome was already destined.

Should I simply let the owl get it his way?

Li Yao was not the real Jin Zhenyi. He could not care less whose plan was adopted and who was the leader. After all, even if the No. 2 stabilization plan was adopted, he would still be staying in the room and blowing everything up one day later.

However—

No!

According to the intensity of vibration, fifteen cooling tubes will be broken in three minutes. The 'Blood Rain Liquid' in the No. 9 cooling tube and the 'Smoke Net Water' in the No. 14 cooling tube will immediately volatilize when exposed in the air. After they are mixed, they will turn into venomous gas that is slightly corrosive for the central nerves!

I've roughly read Li Zhengzhi's plan just now. Even if it is adopted, those cooling tubes will still be breaking apart!

Although the venomous gas is not fatal, it will slightly paralyze the central nerves!

At that time, a large batch of doctors will certainly come here and perform thorough physical examinations on everybody, especially their brains!

Li Yao's wings were fake. His brain was entirely different from Jin Zhenyi's, too. There was no way that he could pass a thorough physical examination.

I am going to be killed because of the damn owl!

Li Yao glared at Li Zhengzhi, almost planning to slap the bald guy into a meat pie.

Not knowing that he had caused a great disaster, Li Zhengzhi stepped forward and smiled. "Director Jin, the No. 1 stabilization plan seems unable to sustain any longer. Should we switch to the No. 2 plan now?"

His eyes bloodshot, Li Yao tightened his lat muscles and raised almost a hundred feathers, declaring, "Wait a second!"

Within the breath, he had deduced countless scenarios in his brain. Should there be tremendous venomous gas spreading in the room, he would not have an excuse to shun a thorough physical examination at all!

The only solution was to carry on the No. 1 plan and stop the cooling tubes from breaking!

"Keep the No. 1 and No. 3 rune array groups running at 110% intensity!

“Turn off the No. 4 rune array group. Cool it down with ‘Heaven Scorching Water’ and ‘Soft Fragrant Liquid’. Restart it after fifteen seconds. Then, keep it running at 60% intensity. It will survive!

“Switch the No. 9, No. 10, No. 11, and No. 12 rune array groups over and stabilize the core unit!”

Li Yao waved his wings hard and issued commands.

Wu Dawei hesitated. “But the No. 9 to No. 12 rune array groups are designed to stabilize and cool down the control center…”

“Don’t bother about it!” Li Yao shouted. “Even if the control center is not cooled down for now, the temperature there will only go up by dozens of degrees at best. Those inside the control center are all experts. It’s not a problem for them! Before the facilities and biochemical brains inside the control center are burnt, we will have finished the repairs and switched back!

“Chop! Chop! Chop!”

Li Yao took part in the repairs himself, too. Not only was he issuing a series of orders, he also personally replaced quite a few burningly hot rune arrays!

Five minutes… Ten minutes…

The cooling liquids did not break!

Fifteen minutes… Twenty minutes…

The roars gradually died down, and the quakes were slowly no more, as if a drove of horses that had run off the road were reined back again. The No. 1 stabilization plan survived the extreme test and did not crash.

“Hu!”

Li Yao took a long breath in relief and fell into the chair.

“The extreme test is over!” Wu Dawei exclaimed. “This time, the maximum capacity of the Eye of Blood Demon has been increased by 5%, and our stabilization unit did not crash. We were not forced to try the backup plan, either. The leadership are very satisfied with our performance. Master, you are truly marvelous!”

Li Yao smiled. How could the system have crashed when he was supervising it?

Everything was all good now. The last obstacle had been resolved perfectly. There should not be challenges or unexpected trouble anymore, should there?

Wu Dawei continued receiving messages from the control center. Suddenly, he beamed with joy and shouted, “Master, since our performance in the extreme test was too excellent, even the commander-in-chief has noticed us!

“Right now, the commander-in-chief is waiting to meet you in the control center!”

“…” Li Yao.

Chapter 1019 - It's Acting Time!

The control center of the Eye of Blood Eye was an arc-shaped building made of crystals right below the bloody lake.

The dome of the building was made of the purest crystals through which one could see the lake water, which was as deep and red as wine, as well as the rune arrays that were emitting a mysterious glow in the lake.

When the Heaven’s Origin Sector was studying how to install underwater rune arrays, the problem of the corrosion of the flowing water was never satisfactorily addressed.

However, in the Blood Demon Sector, the demon race had combined the studies of spiritual stripes, rune arrays, and biochemistry.

The demon race produced a type of special demon beast named ‘rune beasts’ through secret techniques. Most of the runes were carved on the cellular level and etched into the rune beast’s body. Then, the rune beasts were released into the water.

As the rune beasts swam freely, the rune arrays would turn into different forms. Together with the countless runes engraved below the blood red lake, the Eye of Blood Demon was established!

Right now, undercurrents were flowing everywhere in the lake. Countless translucent rune beasts were gathering and dispersing. The colorful brilliance that they emitted showered on the control center like scattered stars.

The control center was packed with super large biochemical brains that looked like black hills. They were connected to countless synthesized nerves that were as thick as boas.

Countless specialists were tied up by the ‘boas’ and connected to the biochemical brains. They were breathing deeply and steadily without moving, as if they were dead bodies that could still breathe.

When Li Yao stepped into the control center following four guards, the first thing he saw was such a weird, horrifying view.

Naturally, the second thing he saw was Jin Tuyi.

The commander-in-chief was not tall or strong, now that Li Yao had seen him in reality. He was even slightly hunched, and his furrowed brow gave Li Yao a feeling that he was actually exhausted.

Even though he was wearing glamorous golden armor, he was still not the dominating, charismatic type. Indeed, he looked more like an indifferent technocrat who only wanted to do his own job well.

Perhaps only such a plain-looking guy, who would not look like a king even if he were wearing a crown, could lurk for decades in the darkness and push the dreadful Red Tide Plan forward!

Jin Tuyi was surrounded by more than ten specialists who were reporting the information of all the procedures in the extreme test just now. Occasionally, he would also receive messages from the ground. Other demon emperors there must have been communicating with him about the military affairs.

There was only one last day to go before the Red Tide Plan was really activated. He was at the busiest moment.

Li Yao was more or less relieved. Judging from the situation, Jin Tuyi was not likely to focus all his attention on him.

It was time for him to resort to his acting skills!

The acting skills were not all about acting. More importantly, he had to precisely control every detail, such as his heartbeat, flow of blood, change of pupils, and even sweat glands!

Li Yao walked to Jin Tuyi and waited next to him patiently.

After settling the detailed information on a certain procedure with two specialists, Jin Tuyi turned around and glanced at Li Yao.

“Chief.”

Li Yao manipulated his facial muscles to put on a nervous, excited, and even somewhat wronged expression as he greeted Jin Tuyi drily.

In the meantime, the feathers on his wings constricted like the leaves of a mimosa.

Jin Tuyi was both the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons and the chief of the Feather Clan. The honorable nobles in the Feather Clan often preferred to call him ‘chief’ instead ‘commander-in-chief’ to indicate that they were his own people.

As for the ‘wronged’ expression, that would be even more reasonable. The stabilizers, which were the bottom level of the magical equipment system, were working in the dirtiest and noisiest environment, and yet they were hardly ever inspected by the higher officials. It was only natural that they felt wronged.

“You’ve been troubled, Master Jin.”

Jin Tuyi patted Li Yao’s shoulder neither too softly nor too heavily.

Li Yao’s soul was almost shocked out of his body.

Thankfully, he performed the most thorough micro adjustments on the muscles and bones in his shoulder within the moment, completely simulating the status of a non-combatant of the Feather Clan who was more than a hundred years ago.

Jin Tuyi did not grow suspicious. He retreated his gaze and browsed through the structural designs and flowcharts while he explained, “The situation has changed. I am hoping to teleport as many warriors as possible in the first wave of the teleportation. Therefore, the parameters have been improved during the extreme test. In the end, fourteen demon emperors were teleported in the first wave, which were four more than we had calculated!

“I thought that, even if the stabilization system could handle the pressure, you would have to switch to the backup plans. If so, the gap between the first wave of teleportation and the second would be very huge. Perhaps, the Eye of Blood Demon would have to be cooled down for half an hour after the first wave of teleportation was conducted in order to begin the second wave of teleportation.

"But as it turned out, you shouldered the pressure perfectly. The gap between the first wave of teleportation and the second was only nine minutes and forty-four seconds!

"As a result, we will be able to teleport more than twenty demon emperors, a hundred devilish warships, and tens of thousands of elite soldiers into the capital city of the Star Glory Federation in two waves in only ten minutes. The enemy will be certainly caught unprepared!

"The workers in the stabilization unit have made the greatest contribution!"

Flattered, Li Yao choked with sobs, hot tears rolling in his eyes. "Chief, I—I—"

"Right."

Jin Tuyi suddenly changed the topic. Pointing at a structural design floating in midair, he said, "This is the stabilization system that Master Jin repaired at the last moment. I found that, here, at the most critical part of the infrastructure, you changed the previous star-shape tandem structure into the double-helix parallel structure.

"Such a change increased the efficiency of the system by 10% without adding any new cooling towers or rune arrays. That was truly incredible!

"I didn't know that you had such a profound understanding on the double-helix structure, and you could come up with such an innovative remedy at the most crucial moment!"

For decades, Jin Tuyi had been responsible for the universal development and the teleportation work of the Blood Demon Sector. Even the Eye of Blood Demon was established because of his insistence.

He was also a seasoned expert in the teleportation technology.

Maybe he was not as good as the specialists in the sub-categories, but when it came to the big picture and the ability to find the crux of a problem, he was definitely one of the best!

Cold sweat was almost popping up on Li Yao' back, only to be blocked by Li Yao's muscles. He shook his head and said, "Do excuse me, chief, but such a design was actually not improvised."

"Is that so?"

Jin Tuyi raised his eyebrow, but his eyes were still frozen like ice. There was no telling whether or not he was really interested.

"In fact," Li Yao said, "my studies on the double-helix structure began more than ten years ago. When I wrote 'On the Rune Arrays in the Early Years of the Gold Eagle Dynasty', I studied a lot of the double-helix rune arrays in that era."

Jin Tuyi frowned. "Wait. I'm a bit confused. Was the double-helix rune array popular in the Gold Eagle Dynasty?"

"Of course not," Li Yao said solemnly. "But the Gold Eagle Dynasty only became the master of the demon race after overthrowing the Green Serpent Dynasty. In the later years of the Green Serpent Dynasty, the double-helix structure was quite a hit.

"When the Gold Eagle Dynasty was demolishing the Green Serpent Dynasty, they captured a lot of magical equipment and demonic artifacts from their enemy, which were their rewards as valiant warriors.

“Therefore, in the early years of the Gold Eagle Dynasty, many experts and generals would use the trophies of the Green Serpent Dynasty they captured as their burial objects. I discovered quite a number of them in the few relics of ancient tombs I studied.

“As I studied them more, I grew fond of the structure as it is relatively more stable.”

Jin Tuyi nodded. “So, it was the Green Serpent Dynasty…”

Like an inarticulate man who had finally been given the opportunity to brag about his achievement, Li Yao’s eyes beamed with joy as he went on. “The double-helix structure from the later years of the Green Serpent Dynasty is truly marvelous. We cannot get to the bottom of it even if we talk for three days and three nights. For the simplest ‘Rolling Wind Rune’, there will be four different approaches to craft it with the double-helix structure, namely—”

Behind Jin Tuyi, one of the guards coughed and said in a low voice, “Commander, you still have a meeting in the next.”

Li Yao blushed and hurried to conclude, anxiously, “All in all, I’ve been thinking for a long time about applying the double-helix structure to our current architecture. However, the current architecture was already stable enough, and I was not sure whether or not such a change was worthwhile. I thought for a long time and failed up come up with an answer.”

“I understand that Master Jin had a mental derangement this morning. You must’ve considering the question too hard, didn’t you?”

“Thank you for your concern, chief,” Li Yao said gratefully. “It is just a minor ailment and doesn’t hurt at all. Anyways, since we had no choice today, I tried the double-helix structure at risk, but it seemed to be functioning quite well.”

“Quite well indeed.”

Jin Tuyi accelerated the pace of the conversation. He seemed to be very satisfied by Li Yao’s reply, or maybe he had not been suspicious of Li Yao since the very beginning. Straightforwardly, he said, “I have discussed with the specialists in the control center just now. Everybody studied the brand-new stabilization structure and agreed unanimously that there was nothing wrong with it.

“I asked you to come here today because I want to tell you that you should employ the new structure when the system is officially activated tomorrow. As for the specific adjustment of parameters, you can discuss it with the specialists in details later.

“On the other hand, I must thank you for your hard work, too, Master Jin. The renaissance of the Blood Demon Sector cannot be achieved without the efforts of heroes behind the curtain!”

Li Yao’s eyes were suddenly red.

Jin Tuyi patted his shoulder again.

“One last day!

“Tomorrow!

“I guarantee that everything will be different after tomorrow. It will be a new beginning for our race. We will embark on a different path that is completely different from the past!”

Li Yao raised his wings, refreshed and excited. “Rest assured, chief. We will certainly do our best. We will grit our teeth through it even if thirty demon emperors are to be teleported at the same time!”

Jin Tuyi smiled and extended his wings, bumping Li Yao’s wings softly.

It was a courtesy for farewell between the nobles of the Gold Crow Kingdom.

He did not seem to have noticed anything wrong when Li Yao turned around and disappeared in the short-distance teleportation array with a hunched body.

“Let’s go!” Jin Tuyi waved his hands at his guards. “Let’s go to the flagship for the last strategical meeting!”

Chapter 1020 - Blood Demon's Smile

At 10:33 a.m. on May 12…

There were twelve hours to go before the three satellites lined up. It was estimated that the tidal force would be the strongest in the upcoming twelve to fifteen hours.

If one were to observe it from the universe, the Blood Demon Planet was like a lump with bumps and dents in an irregular, oval shape. The earth dipped with ravines that could be ten thousand meters deep and rose high, as if rows of spurs and tusks had grown out of the surface of the planet.

The phenomenon was caused by the three satellites around the Blood Moon Planet, namely Blood Tiger, Blood Sparrow, and Blood Shark.

The size of the three satellites was much larger than ‘Heavenly Moon’, the only satellite of the Heaven’s Origin Planet. Their distance to the Blood Moon Planet was much shorter, too.

When they brushed past the Blood Demon Planet, the conflict of the attraction forces and the friction of spiritual energy would pull tremendous materials on the surface of the planet out and blow them up into space, as if the three satellites were growing tails.

At this moment, the three satellites were still rushing on their trajectories. As if they were guided by a mysterious force, they were dashing for the same point.

If there was just one satellite and its mass was not huge, it was very easy to calculate its orbit around a planet. However, the trajectories of three heavy satellites, which boasted mysterious crystal mines that would general a strong attraction force, would influence each other and be too complicated to estimate.

Naturally, the three satellites would not collide. Instead, they would form an almost straight line, with a subtle angle in between.

By then, if one were to look at the night sky, which was slightly purple, from the surface of the Blood Demon Planet, they would see three bloody crescent moons.

The largest of the moons was like a curled lip, and the other two appeared to be narrowed eyes. Together, they assembled into a weird smile.

Therefore, such a phenomenon was also known by the demons as Blood Demon’s Smile.

A great tide was coming. Wind was roaring, and waves were surging in the bloody lake. Water was soaring up to the sky like volcanic eruptions like raging bloody dragons which were attempting to rip apart the entire universe.

Next to the lake, the coalition army of demons had torn apart all their camouflage. The fully-armed legions of the demon race flooded out of the underground. Waving their hands and claws, stretching out their wings and tails, bashing their chest and sneezing, they formed more than a hundred intimidating squares while they boarded the devilish warships.

Many enormous demon beasts were being installed with strengthened external skeleton and various kinds of magical equipment and demonic artifacts with the help of demons. They were also being injected with vaccines and protective drugs against the unique germs of the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

The demon beasts were sneezing anxiously and roaring in hunger and thirst. They seemed to be aware, too, that this was going to be the last war!

Above the Eye of Blood Demon, Blood Demon, the general flagship that the Blood Demon Sector produced after decades of work, was docked.

The command center for the ultimate war against the Heaven’s Origin Sector was established on Blood Demon!

When the wormhole leading to the capital city of the Star Glory Federation was created and the Red Tide Operation was activated, the general flagship would also march into the Heaven’s Origin Sector for a final battle!

Inside the top-secret meeting room in the commander center of the Red Tide Plan on Blood Moon, there was a detailed military map of the capital city ring of the Star Glory Federation behind Jin Tuyi, including the garrisons and the headquarters of the major Cultivation sects.

In front of him was a 3D map of the capital city, on which all the buildings, even including every public toilet, had been marked clearly.

Across the model of the capital city of the Star Glory Federation were more than twenty demon emperors and almost a hundred demon kings.

The aura of the top experts rubbed and crashed, causing invisible sparks that shook the model of the capital city.

The skyscrapers were twisting, splitting, and breaking apart in the shocks.

“According to our latest report, the troops in the northern battlefield commanded by General Yuwen have been defeated,” Jin Tuyi said, as calm as ever. “The fake troops in the north fought the federal army for five days before the Giant Blade Pass. They could not hold it any longer and are fleeing to the Dark Desolate Domain, and the federal army has indeed sent a lot of troops to chase after them as we expected.

“But it is a pity that the hunting troops are not the best crystal suit legions of the federation but mediocre troops who are pretending to be crystal suit legions.

“It seems that our first feint has been seen through by the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Also, the Heaven’s Origin Sector is pretending that they have been fooled by us so that our wariness will be lowered, and we will march on blindly.

“At this moment, the best crystal suit legions of the federation have almost all been gathered along the eastern coastline.

“The coordinates of the three ‘counterattack bases of the Far East Demon Kingdom’, which we leaked intentionally, have been surrounded by endless troops. Most of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators have been deployed in the area, too.

“It seems that the Heaven’s Origin Sector has made up their mind to finish us at the coastline. They want to stop us from landing and causing damage to the prosperous area in the southeast of the federation.

“The defense of the capital city has been strengthened, too. A new crystal suit legion has shown up. Perhaps a few

Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators have returned to the capital city, too. But that hasn’t been confirmed yet.

“In light of the new situation, we have changed our strategy. During our last extreme test, we tried to increase the capacity of the first wave of teleportation. Now, fourteen demon emperors will be able to be teleported in the first wave, and another eight will be teleported after a cooldown of only five minutes!

“The safety of the teleportation plan has been ensured after repeated discussions of all the specialists. There’s no way that it is going to fail.

“Everyone, I don’t need to highlight the importance of the first wave of teleportation, do I?”

All the demon emperors and demon kings nodded solemnly.

The teleportation of such a scale between two Sectors was an unprecedented wonder. It was almost like shooting a cannonball hundreds of kilometers. No matter how hard the gunner aimed, the error of the point of impact would certainly be more than a few centimeters.

Right now, the Eye of Blood Demon was aimed at the capital city of the Star Glory Federation.

But the capital city was a fairly large place. Taking the suburbs, the military areas, and the training bases of the Cultivation sects into account, the total coverage of the capital city was more than ten thousand square kilometers.

When the expedition army of the Blood Demon Sector was teleported to the capital city through the Eye of Blood Demon, the soldiers would certainly land in a random place within those ten thousand square kilometers. It was like throwing out a cluster of loose sand—it was certainly going to disperse when it hit the destination.

Perhaps most of the soldiers would be around the downtown area, but it was not unlikely that they would be fortunate enough to be directly teleported to the meeting room of the parliament building or the bedchamber of the Speaker.

Therefore, the first wave of attack was of paramount importance.

They would show up at the feeblest moment of the Heaven’s Origin Sector. They would conquer the strategical locations, jam the Spiritual Nexus of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and most importantly, set up star beacons at the critical areas, which would be the lighthouses for the following troops to facilitate the more precise teleportation.

Once a large star beacon was established, they would be able to construct fixed teleportation arrays and bastions for defense around it.

When the corresponding teleportation arrays were built on both sides, a steady channel would be created between the two worlds. By then, even if the tidal force passed its peak hour, the troops would still be teleported over incessantly as long as there were enough crystals.

After all, the only thing between the two Sectors was an eggshell.

If the eggshell was broken, was it possible to stitch it back together?

On the other hand, several Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators would be protecting the capital city of the Star Glory Federation, however weak the defense seemed to be.

Judging from the latest intelligence, the city was now guarded by at least three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and two crystal suit legions.

Therefore, the most magnificent forces of the Blood Demon Sector had to be deployed at the very beginning in order to break into the capital city of a hostile nation!

“Are we all clear about our missions?” Jin Tuyi glanced over everything, his eyes gloomy and cold. “Elder Blood Robe!”

Elder Blood Robe—the chief of the Claw Clan, the master of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers, and one of the four giants of the Blood Demon Sector—nodded haughtily. “I will be the commander of the first wave of attack. After we are teleported to the capital city, I will immediately establish a temporary command center and a bastion for defense. Also, I will construct star beacons and teleportation arrays around me for the convenience of the follow-up troops!”

Jin Tuyi moved his eyes to a white-furred expert of the Wolf Clan next to him. “General Chai?”

The expert of the Wolf Clan bared the shining fangs and grinned hideously. “After being teleported to the capital city, I will gather the Blizzard Legion as quickly as possible and break into the First Spiritual Energy Transformation Factory on Marvel Avenue.

“The First Spiritual Energy Transformation Factory is responsible for the spiritual energy of 70% of the area in the capital city. Once we occupy the place, most of the city will be paralyzed!”

Jin Tuyi nodded in great satisfaction. “General Lian?”

An officer of the Insect Clan, who was green with four long, thin arms, stepped forward and declared brutally, “The Rotating Blade Legion will assault the parliament building and the government buildings nearby as quickly as possible.

“Around the parliament building, quite a few government facilities, such as the Department of Defense, the Department of Transportation, the Treasury Department, and the Central Bank, are located. Once we destroy them, the ‘brain’ of the Star Glory Federation will be paralyzed!”

“General Hei?”

A muscular man who was as tall and strong as an iron tower suddenly stood up, announcing in a deep voice, “I will command the Black Wind Legion and stand in the way between the garrisons and the downtown area to provide cover for our assault. Please rest assured, commander. The enemy’s reinforcements will not appear in the downtown until the last soldier of the Black Wind Legion falls!”

“General Wang?”

“I will take over the spiritual tower and control the broadcast channel of the Star Glory Federation!”

“General Han?”

“I will take over the Federal University and the First Federal Military Academy next to it. They are the two most influential colleges among the Nine Elite Universities in the Star Glory Federation. Most of the children of the top officials and experts are students of the two colleges!”

Chapter 1021 - Cerebral Sclerosis

With the demon emperor’s cold announcement, sharp red lines were appearing on the model of the capital city in the middle of everybody, enveloping the skyscrapers and tearing them to shreds.

They were all the routes of attack in their plan.

The most important government facilities, the headquarters of the Cultivation sects, the universities, the spiritual towers, the broadcast stations, the biggest warehouse of crystals in the federation…

All the strategical locations had been locked onto by the demons!

Behind the demon emperors were dozens of demon kings.

Their missions were more detailed, but they were deadlier and more inconspicuous, too. Like daggers soaked in poison, they were stabbing at the softest, most critical parts of the federation.

“Jin Wuxu!”

When Jin Tuyi read the name, rarely-seen warmth appeared on his face.

A young man, who looked similar to him but was much more vigorous, stood up. Holding his chest high, he declared, “Reporting to commander, I am going to attack the

Hexagonal Array of the capital city with the best Mirage Falcon troop of the Feather Clan!

“The Hexagonal Array, which is made of thirty-six thousand auto-piloting flying swords, is the main air defense force of the capital city. I will demolish it neatly so that the follow-up troops will not meet any hinderance when they arrive in the sky of the capital city!”

Jin Tuyi looked at his son in praise and solemnly said, “Alright. This is about the first wave of our attack. As for me, I will be appearing in the sky of the capital city together with the assault warships, including Blood Demon, through the second teleportation five minutes later!

“By my estimation, we will be able to teleport thirty demon emperors, more than thirty demon kings, a hundred devilish warships, and the more than ten legions boarding on them, in the first half hour!

“It will be an invincible force that will destroy everything!

“Remember, after occupying the strategical locations of the capital city, unfold the star beacons and establish teleportation arrays regardless of the cost!

“As long as enough star beacons and teleportation arrays are built, we will be able to grasp the most precise coordinates for our teleportation, and we can be teleported to any key location in the capital city.

“It will be a dagger that has stabbed into the enemy’s chest but stopped stably one centimeter away from their heart!

“With such a lone army, it is impossible, and unnecessary, to take over the entire Heaven’s Origin Sector in a short amount of time.

“As long as we occupy the capital city of the Star Glory Federation and maintain the ability to teleport reinforcements over, we will take the initiative of the situation!

“By then, the Heaven’s Origin Sector will have to bend before the invincible warriors of the demon race. They will have to satisfy all our requirements and even submit their most advanced magical equipment and technologies.

“After we exploit everything of the Star Glory Federation, and even the intelligence about the Flying Star Sector, it will be their doom!”

Stifled laughter burst out in the secret meeting room. Ambition and greedy were written all over every demon’s face. Their scorching eyes seemed to be setting the model of the capital city of the Star Glory Federation on fire.

“Our race has been beaten for too long.”

Staring at all the demon emperors, Jin Tuyi spoke slowly in a coarse voice.

“Since the failure ten thousand years ago, our race has been defeated, routed, and slaughtered in all the Sectors. We lost our importance in galaxies and even the entire universe in the end, and we were forced to crouch in the lone island at the edge of the sea of stars.

“I wonder, how many Sectors are out there in the universe that are still completely under the control of our race?

“Even if there are any, they must be catching their last breath in the most barren land just like us, mustn’t they?

“Obliteration, rebirth, immortality! This is the unwavering creed of our race! I hope that the war will make our race reborn and embark on a brilliant road of immortality!”

Jin Tuyi raised his right hand high, clenched his fists, and smashed down resolutely, as if he were smashing the lackluster, obsolete demon race into smithereens and making a new, dynamic demon race that was completely different from before!

His feathers were also standing up one after another like blades that were being slowly unsheathed, emitting cold brilliance.

“Hoooo!”

Inside the secret meeting room, all the demon emperors and demon kings were roaring crazily and releasing their wildness, their blood boiling.

…

At 2:33 p.m. on May 12…

There were eight hours to go before the Blood Demon’s Smile took shape.

The waves above the bloody lake had already reached an altitude of almost a hundred meters.

Deep inside the Eye of Blood Demon, Li Yao had just completed a complicated debugging job. Pretending that he did not see the outrage of the owl, he closed his eyes and took a nap.

But he was meditating on a question in his heart.

Had Jin Tuyi noticed anything wrong?

He gave his every answer after full consideration. There could not have been any mistake in the details.

Also, he had controlled his heartbeat, his flow of blood, and even the frequency of the vibration of his muscles perfectly.

Unless Jin Tuyi had the skill of prophecy, there was no way that he could see anything wrong.

On the other hand, if Jin Tuyi had seen anything wrong, there was no reason he would let Li Yao back.

Even if he was afraid that Li Yao might destroy the commander center if he revealed the truth there, he could still have assaulted Li Yao after Li Yao left the control center.

In such a narrow pathway, five demon emperors could have stood in front of him and five behind him. If so, he would not have been able to escape even if he were a god.

So, the conclusion is that I successfully fooled Jin Tuyi!

Li Yao snapped fingers in his heart before he focused his attention on the explosion plan.

After his personal modification, the stabilization system had now adopted the double-helix structure. It was even more convenient for him to do his job.

After calculating dozens of times over, he was absolutely confident that he could blow up the Eye of Blood Demon when the tidal force was at its strongest!

What came next would be the escape plan.

Inside the Eye of Blood Demon, other than the teleportation arrays and the lifts, there were also emergency channels that were highly solid. After all, all the workers there were the seasoned specialists in their fields. They were the most valuable treasures for the Blood Demon Sector, and if all of them were killed in an accident, it was certainly going to be a great catastrophe for the world.

The moment the Eye of Blood Demon was destroyed and the tidal force spread out, tremendous waves, if not an earthquake, would certainly be raised. Everything would be a mess.

By then, he could blend in as a random soldier of the coalition army or another specialist. He would find a way out of that place in the chaos!

Li Yao smiled and dwelled in the world inside his brain again, pondering how to make the explosion larger and more splendid!

…

At 4:25 p.m. on May 12…

There were six hours to go before the Blood Demon's Smile.

The clouds were rolling, and the setting sun was as red as blood. Three weird crescent moons were appearing and disappearing in the gaps of the clouds.

Jin Tuyi and his eldest son, Jin Wuxu, was standing on a platform on the left side of Blood Demon. The father and the son appreciated the magnificent scenery in silence.

"In half a day, in the sky of the capital city of the Star Glory Federation, clouds made of smoke and fire will be equally, no, a hundred times more glorious than the clouds in front of us, Dad!”

Perhaps due to the excitement before the march, Jin Wuxu called him ‘Dad’ instead of ‘Father’, which was quite rare.

His words seemed to have triggered Jin Tuyi’s memories of a long time ago. He shivered and was silent for half a minute before he softly replied, “Ah Xu…”

It was also a form of address that had been abandoned for a long time.

“What’s your order, Dad?”

Jin Wuxu stood straight and earnestly declared, “In the Red Tide Operation, my Mirage Falcon Troop will certain go all out to defend the honor of the Feather Clan!”

Jin Tuyi smiled. After hesitating for a long time, he placed his hand on his son’s shoulder in the end. “Nothing particular. I only want to say that… Be careful, and… don’t get killed!”

Jin Wuxu was dazed. He did not expect that his father, who had always been cruel and ruthless, would say something like that.

Jin Tuyi touched his hawk nose bitterly before he took out a vintage jade chip from his pocket. In an even more coarse voice, he said, “This is the result of a secret physical examination I took more than a year ago. Take a look. Pay attention to the brain tomography.”

Jin Wuxu stuck the jade chip to the center of his eyebrow in confusion. After reading for a while, he was greatly shocked. “Ce—Cerebral sclerosis?”

“Correct,” Jin Tuyi said casually. “The biochemical technology of the demon race is highly advanced. If you have a malignant tumor in your head or minor diseases such as the explosion of cerebral vessels or the shriveling of braincells, there is always a cure.

“However, cerebral sclerosis is a disease beyond treatment in our race. It involves the mysteries of the deepest part of the genes and even the soul. For hundreds of years, nobody has been able to cure it.

“We only know that it may have something to do with the mutation of our genes. If the brain is in a tense state for a long time, say, when someone thinks hard without rest for decades, they might suffer the disease.

“Hehe. Over the past few decades, I have been completely devoted to the Red Tide Plan. My brain was simmering almost every second. It is not unusual that my brain wants to ‘cool down’ for a moment.”

“Dad!”

With mixed feelings, Jin Wuxu did not know what to say.

“Rest assured.” Jin Tuyi smiled and patted his son’s shoulder softly. “Death is the destination for everybody. The Cultivators may pursue immortality, but how many of them have really lived an eternal life?

“Besides, I will not die. In the next couple of years, my braincells will slowly wither, and my computational ability and wisdom will slump.

“With timely treatment and rehabilitation procedures, if I stop trying to utilize computational ability that is beyond my limits, perhaps there is still hope for me to live the rest of my life with the IQ of a regular demon.

“The most important thing is that the Red Tide Plan has been completed before the wisdom perishes. Our race will be reborn very soon and embark on a path that is entirely different from the past!

“Besides, I have also found the most suitable heir who will lead the Feather Clan, and even the entire demon race, on the brand new road into the endless sea of stars!”

“Heir?”

Jin Wuxu was slightly dazed. Looking at his father’s eyes, which were full of expectation, he immediately understood what his father meant and was overjoyed!

Chapter 1022 - A Moron

Jin Tuyi looked at his son attentively, his eyes so clear that they were reflecting the boiling red glow. “I believe that our race will certainly be reborn in the flames, but I’m afraid that I will not be able to lead our race to finish the journey. The doctor said that I could maintain my current IQ for at most half a year. In half a year to one year, my IQ will drop to 70% its peak. In three years, 50%. After five years, I will be a mundane, crappy old man with 20% of my original IQ.

“50% of my computational ability and thinking ability are far from enough to lead a race and a civilization.

“And you, my son, are my only choice.

“Perhaps this is too hasty a choice, but I don’t have time. After the war is settled and the Blood Demon Sector crushes the Heaven’s Origin Sector, I will perhaps publicize my illness.”

“Dad!” Jin Wuxu’s heart was both hurting and itching. He bellowed, “I will prove that you’ve made the right choice with my actions!

“Rest assured. I will be the first to march into the Star Glory Federation’s parliament building!”

Jin Tuyi smiled. “Over the past few years, you’ve been commanding the Mirage Falcon troop, the best force of the Feather Clan. You’ve done an excellent job. I believe that you will distinguish yourself, too, in the war to come.

“However, you’d better be smart. Stay back when it is time to be cautious. There are so many demon emperors on our side and so many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators on the enemy’s. You are no more than a minor demon king right now. Do not place yourself in peril just for vanity.

“Remember, the future of the Feather Clan depends on you!”

Jin Wuxu nodded and took a deep breath before he solemnly said, “I know what to do now, Dad. One day, I will unite the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector as the king!”

Jin Tuyi’s eyes pierced through Jin Wuxu’s face into the deepest part of the clouds. He said mysteriously, “Just the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector?”

Jin Wuxu was dazed for a moment. He thought quickly and replied, “Of course, I will not let go of the Flying Star Sector, either. After we integrate the resources of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, we will march toward the Flying Star Sector!

“Although the starship technology and the space jump technology of the Flying Star Sector are quite advanced, they lack a central government and a well-trained regular army. They are nothing better than a tray of loose sand. As long as we locate their weakness, they might be even easier to deal with than the Heaven’s Origin Sector!”

Jin Tuyi nodded and talked as if he were in a dream. “I believe you can, but it is not enough. Far from enough.

“What’s good about the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector? They are just two stones at the edge of the universe.

“Although the Flying Star Sector is larger than the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, it is still nothing remotely impressive compared to the prosperous areas of the civilization in the center of the universe.

“Tell me, son.”

Jin Tuyi suddenly retreated his eyes. The brilliance in them, which shot to thousands of meters away a moment ago, suddenly constricted into one foot and pierced into his son’s eyes like two longswords. “Do you believe it? The Blood Demon Sector, the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and the Flying Star Sector will not be our goal. One day, our warriors will march into the center of the universe again and conquer the most brilliant places of the ancient civilizations!”

Jin Wuxu was stunned.

The Flying Star Sector was already the limit of his imagination. His ambition had never reached such faraway places in the sea of stars.

The most brilliant places of the ancient civilizations. Was his father referring to the Empyrean Terminus Planet in the Empyrean Terminus Sector?

Jin Wuxu’s soul was shaking uncontrollably. Swallowing hard, he struggled to nod his head. “Of—of course, our race will certain reunite the universe again. I have no doubt about that.”

“That’s good.”

Jin Tuyi’s sharp eyes were gone. After the moment of craziness, he seemed to be back into the plain, unattractive, mediocre demon emperor who was only elected to be the commander-in-chief of the coalition army because there was no better choice.

The clouds in his eyes were changing nonstop while he stared at a certain place on the ground far away and said casually, “I’ll be waiting to find out what kind of brilliant future you are going to bring to our race.”

…

At 6:27 p.m. on May 12…

There were four hours to go before the Blood Demon’s Smile.

Inside the command center of the Spore Stratagem in the secret base of the Nether World Watch in the Nether Spring Kingdom, Elder Nether Spring, ‘Mad Medic’ Lu Wuxin, Despot, and Swirl were all busy browsing through the tremendous information.

They were monitoring everything in the Eye of Blood Demon closely.

“The coalition army of demons has been deployed. All the large demon beasts and biochemical beasts are being activated. The legions have boarded the devilish warships. The first, second, and third echelons are all standing by, ready to be teleported and engage in battle at any moment!

“The Eye of Blood Demon has been warmed up, too, with a functioning intensity of 60%. The storage of the tidal force is excellent and highly stable. When the Blood Demon’s Smile takes shape and the tidal force is strongest, the super high-precision teleportation of the largest scale in history will be initiated!

“All the spores are healthy and standing by, ready to be activated at any moment. They haven’t raised any suspicion.

“Their priority infection sequence has been determined, too. When the war breaks out, they will contaminate their targets in the shortest amount of time possible!

“Elder, everything is under our control. 99% of the Spore Stratagem has worked out!”

Swirl was a bit excited. She was even more delighted after she read a new message.

“According to the latest intelligence, Jin Tuyi did not notice the Spore Stratagem at all, and he never realized that he is just a puppet manipulated by Elder. He completely trusted his eldest son, Jin Wuxu, and told him his biggest secret that he has cerebral sclerosis just now. He also named Jin Wuxu his heir.

“Haha. If he knew that Jin Wuxu joined Elder’s cause a long time ago, how would he feel?”

Elder Nether Spring’s lips curled into a smile, too. He turned around and asked ‘Mad Medic’ Lu Wuxin, “What phase has Jin Tuyi’s cerebral sclerosis escalated to?”

“It’s still in the early phase,” Lu Wuxin replied. “Jin Tuyi has been having a brain tomography in secret every month. Three months ago, his frontal lobes were showing signs of getting smooth, his sulcus was turning shallower, and the boundary of his hippocampi was blurred as if it were about to melt.

“All the symptoms were signs that his cerebral sclerosis is escalating from the early phase to the middle phase.

“By my estimation, his computational ability and thinking ability have dropped to 95% of his prime, and they will continue to drop even faster.”

“Is that so?”

Scratching his chin, Elder Nether Spring was deep in thought, the antennae on his forehead shivering in rattling noises.

A terrible smile appeared on Lu Wuxin’s jumbled face. “Hehehehe. I know what you’re worried about, Elder. You are scared that Jin Tuyi is pretending to be sick, right?

“Rest assured, Elder. He is certainly not pretending!

“Jin Tuyi’s personal doctor has been compromised since long ago. I studied his every examination result personally. His brain indeed has pathological changes, which cannot be faked by any technique.

“Moreover, Jin Tuyi is taking pills to suppress his braincell activity every day. Such medication can paralyze his braincells and force part of them into the hibernation state. They are like a buffer for his brain.

“Of course, the medication will affect his thinking ability, but it is the only treatment to slow down the attack of cerebral sclerosis.

“Over the past few months, Jin Tuyi has been taking larger and larger dosages, which indicates that he was aware of the seriousness of his condition, too.

“How can such a guy, whose brain is almost broken, fight against Elder?”

Elder Nether Spring hesitated and said, “Of course, I know that Jin Tuyi is suffering from cerebral sclerosis. However, perhaps because the Spore Stratagem is about to be activated, I am a bit anxious and have an ominous feeling.

“I’m thinking about one thing. Even if Jin Tuyi is really a victim of cerebral sclerosis, is it possible for him to suddenly unleash unparalleled computational ability and see through everything?”

“Absolutely not!” ‘Mad Medic’ Lu Wuxin shook his head hard. “This is my specialty. Please trust my professionalism, Elder.

“Cerebral sclerosis is the lesion of the braincells that have overloaded for too long. The degraded cells envelop the healthy braincells like thin, icy shells, making the brain seem to be frozen.

“Imagine this. What will happen if a man stretches his body violently when his body has been frozen in ice that’s less than minus a hundred degrees?

“He will taste excruciating pain, and his body might crumble directly!

“Those suffering from cerebral sclerosis, when thinking hard, will feel similar excruciating pain. The pain comes directly from the central nerves and is ten times sharper than any pain we can possibly describe!”

“Suppose Jin Tuyi can resist the pain,” Elder Nether Spring said coldly.

Lu Wuxin smiled and replied, “Even if he can resist the pain, he will not choose to, unless—”

Elder Nether Spring raised his eyebrow. “Unless what?”

“Unless he intends to become a moron who doesn’t know how to wipe his ass when he shits in his pants a year and a half later.”

Elder Nether Spring was still silent, but the gloom on his face gradually cleared.

“Elder, I think that you are overthinking.” Lu Wuxin was an expert in the level of demon emperor. He was also the supervisor of the experiments of the Demon God Virus. Therefore, he was blunter in the way he spoke. “Wasn’t his cerebral sclerosis an important factor when we chose him to be our puppet?

“It was exactly because his computational ability and thinking ability plummeted due to cerebral sclerosis that we contributed so much in secret and made him the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons. That way, it would be easier for us to infiltrate and manipulate the Pantheon of Demons.

“In terms of strength, the Gold Crow Kingdom is the weakest of the four superpowers, and he ranks last among the four giants of the Blood Demon Sector personally, too.

“In terms of support, most of his trusted subordinates have been compromised by all. His every move is right under our control. Few of his subordinates are absolutely loyal to him!

“In terms of strategy, for such a guy whose computational ability has plummeted and who risks turning into a moron at any moment because of cerebral sclerosis, isn’t every move he has taken within Elder’s predictions? Has he ever noticed the first clue of our scheme?

“He is absolutely no match for Elder in terms of strength, support, and strategy. What can he utilize to fight against

Elder and the Spore Stratagem?”

He was saying exactly what Elder Nether Spring was thinking. Finally, Elder Nether Spring put on an undisguised smiled and said, “There are still the last four hours.

“In four hours, a new era will come!”

Chapter 1023 - A Storm Is Coming

At 8:27 p.m. on May 12…

There were two hours to go before the Blood Demon’s Smile.

Inside the mobile laboratory on ‘Chaos’ of Skyfire, on the light beam of the microscopes, many cells whose edges were blurred as if they had grown tremendous tentacles were popping up. Those cells were swallowing the healthy cells around them like ravenous animals that had been injected with too much exhilarant.

As they swallowed and transformed the normal cells, the drop of blood placed inside the microscope was gradually enveloped in a weird, demonic purple color.

Suddenly—

A brand-new blue material appeared on the light beam. It was more than ten times smaller than the crazy cells, but it was crawling into the crazy cells agilely. Very soon, it spread out into a membrane on the surface of the cell and enshrouded all the dispersing tentacles, gradually stabilizing the crazy cells.

However, one could easily tell that the cells purged by the blue material were slightly different from the normal cells.

Jin Xinyue, Han Tuhu, and Suo Chaolong were standing in front of the glass wall of the mobile laboratory while they listened to the introduction of the specialist of the Blade of Chaos.

“The development of the Chaos Serum has made significant progress. In simulations, it is already good enough to restore cells that have contracted the Demon God Virus. Theoretically speaking, it can be used to treat the patients and the carriers of the virus.

“However, since the serum originates from the Divine Blood of Chaos, and its mechanism is to reduce the cells to their fundamental state, there will be some… side effects.”

Jin Xinyue frowned. “What kind of side effects?”

“When restoring mutated cells that have been infected by the Demon God Virus, it will restore the healthy cells around them, too, into the… relatively primitive state.”

Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong looked at each other in bewilderment. “What do you meant by ‘relatively primitive state’?”

“It’s—” The specialist of the Blade of Chaos tried to find an appropriate way to phrase it. “Generally speaking, the subject will be more similar to human beings.”

Jin Xinyue was frowning harder and harder. “Like me right now?”

The specialist of the Blade of Chaos nodded. “More frankly speaking, the Chaos Serum is just a duplicate of the Divine Blood of Chaos. That’s why we’ve developed it so fast.

“The so-called Divine Blood of Chaos was in fact medication that ‘Chaos’ Ba Yanzhi produced for himself in order to maintain his form as a human being without crumbling.

“Therefore, if we get to the bottom of it, maintaining the form of a human being is actually the main effect of the Divine Blood of Chaos, and resisting the Demon God Virus is in fact just a side effect.”

Suo Chaolong sniffed. “This is good. We are rats on the street in the first place, and all the other demons consider us traitors.

“Now, the Chaos Serum we’ve developed even boasts such a side effect. How are we going to convince the leadership of the demon race to promote the drugs that will turn their people from demons into human beings?”

Han Tuhu, on the other hand, beamed with joy. He was a human being from the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and he had been craving to be restored to the normal appearance of one. Naturally, he did not have such concerns, but he thought of a different question. “How is the productivity of the Chaos Serum? Is it possible to be manufactured?”

“Of course not.” The specialist of the Blade of Chaos sighed and replied helplessly, “The production of a small scale in a laboratory is totally different from manufacturing it in a factory. With the manpower and resources under our control right now, there is no way that we can manufacture the serum in a year and a half.”

Jin Xinyue pondered for a moment and asked, “What manpower and resources do we need to manufacture the serum?”

The specialist of the Blade of Chaos stared at her and replied, “If we have the support of the entire Blood Demon Sector, and the few largest biochemical factories among the four superpowers help, we might be able to manufacture the serum very soon.”

Clearly, Jin Xinyue was not expecting such an answer.

Han Tuhu smiled bitterly. “It seems that we’ve been caught in a dead loop now. A world war between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector will break out in two hours. How can us traitors and spies win the support of the entire Blood Demon Sector, and how can we persuade the demon emperors who hate human beings to let their people inject drugs that will turn them into human beings?”

Suo Chaolong gnashed his teeth. “Damn it. Elder Nether Spring’s plan is indeed immaculate after such a long time of preparation. It all depends on whether or not Li Yao can blow up the Eye of Blood Demon in time!”

Jin Xinyue clenched her fists. “Master certain will, but we must figure out a way to manufacture the Chaos Serum and spread it out successfully!”

…

At 9:22 p.m. on May 12…

There was one hour to go before the Blood Demon’s Smile.

Along the eastern coastline of the Star Glory Federation in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the surging tides were slapping the reefs, threatening an unattractive village that was hazy in the sprinkle.

A fisherman, whose trousers had been rolled up to his knees, with mud all over his feet, was squatting on the coast and staring at the ocean, deep in thought, as if he was rather worried that he would not be able to sail for fishing for a while.

Nobody knew that the crappy old man with a wrinkled face and yellow teeth was actually Ye Qingzhou, the leader of the Thousand Cranes Alliance, a top ten super sect of the Star Glory Federation, and a battle-type Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage!

Very soon, a younger fisherman wearing a cowl walked close and said in a low voice, “Master, Vast Ocean Sect’s ‘Secondary Destruction Divine Boat’ has searched the offshore area three times and failed to locate the ‘counterattack bases’ of the Far East Demon Kingdom. No intense demonic energy was detected, either. There’s no telling when those wretched demons will show up!”

“Be patient. They will certainly show up in a day or two.” Ye Qingzhou smiled casually. “The fake attack in the northern battlefield has met a fiasco, and it has successfully lured a lot of our troops to chase after them on the Grand Desolate Plateau. If they are really a distraction for us, the main force will certainly take action in a day or two. Otherwise, when the federal army in the northern battlefield retreats, won’t all their endeavors be in vain?”

“It is said that the Blood Demon Sector is getting serious this time. All the available forces will be coming at us,” the young Cultivator said worriedly.

“What about all the available forces?” Ye Qingzhou narrowed his eyes, his fighting will cutting the ocean’s spray that had splashed onto the shore into pieces. “Right now, fifty percent of the federal army and more than sixty percent of the battle-type Cultivators have been gathered along the coastline. The few coastal cities and large ports are all on full alert. We will regret it if they don’t come with all their available forces!

“Hehe. If the pests of the Blood Demon Sector dare to emerge from the ocean, they will have the same ending as the scumbags of the Far East Demon Kingdom five hundred years ago!”

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator Ye Qingzhou raised his eyes and stared at the horizon of the ocean, waiting in confidence.

Beneath the small village, within the secret base behind the ridge of the mountain, and among the seemingly unprepared ports, countless soldiers of the federal army and Cultivators were also staring at the ocean, waiting for the army that would never show up in the ocean.

…

At 9:52 p.m. on May 12…

There was half an hour to go before the Blood Demon’s Smile.

The capital city of the Star Glory Federation was a super metropolis with a population of more than seventy million. The fall of night did not lower the liveliness of the city at all. Instead, the shining neon lights and the incessant fireworks blossoming in the sky added to its glamour.

In the sky, countless shuttles were dashing agilely among the fireworks with colorful exhaust flames behind them.

On the ground, every mall and plaza was teeming with people whose excitement was not in the least troubled by sleepiness. They were all blushing, shouting, and dancing.

“Great victory!”

“We’ve won the battle!”

“We’ve won! We’ve won!”

On the enormous light beams floating on the walls of the skyscrapers, the delighted hosts were reading the same news repetitively. After half a month of bloody war, the federation had secured a decisive victory and crushed the main force of the incoming enemy in the second battle to protect the Grand Desolate Plateau.

Right now, the valiant soldiers and Cultivators were chasing after the remnants of the enemy on the vast Grand Desolate Plateau. It would not be long before they were kicked back to their nest!

“The greedy ambitions of the demon clan have failed yet another time. This is not going to be their last failure, but it will be the beginning of their final failure!”

The host spoke assuredly. With the hundreds of pictures where the federal soldiers and the Cultivators were fighting bravely under the Giant Blade Pass, such a victory was even more persuasive and impressive.

“Wow!”

“That’s what I’m talking about. Beat those sons of bi*ches back to their nest!”

“Dad, Uncle Cultivator’s sword is so big and so awesome. I am going to be an Uncle Cultivator when I’m older, too!”

The kids who were riding their father’s necks were as excited as during a holiday. They opened their arms and rushed on the street aglow with colorful lights, regarding their fathers as horses and flying swords.

Of course, it was not the whole truth of the war.

But for the success of the ambush in the eastern coastline, such a strategical deception was very important.

Moreover, it was not a complete deception but a celebration of the real victory, one which had been held a few days in advance.

Now that the real plan of the coalition army of demons had been grasped and the main force of the federation had been gathered along the coastline to ambush them, would it not be a matter of time before the real victory came?

Right now, even most of the government officials in the skyscrapers at the central district of the capital city thought so. They were confidently waiting for the news that the coalition army of demons had landed from the ocean.

BOOM! CRACK!

The sky was suddenly consumed by dark clouds, as if countless back, ferocious beasts had gathered. They swallowed all the fireworks that had been lit for the victory celebration.

The lightning among the clouds was writhing crazily like deep purple serpents. Now and then, the lightning split into hundreds of electric arcs that were much thinner like the venom spurted out by a viper, spraying on the prosperous city and raising dazzling sparks on the lightning rods. The whole city was illuminated into paleness.

Tick-tock! Tick-tock! Tick-tock!

The drops of stinky rainwater were already bashing the windows of the skyscrapers hard.

A storm was coming.

Chapter 1024 - First Wave of Teleportation, Begin!

At 10:42 p.m. on May 12…

The trajectories of the three satellites of the Blood Demon Planet were getting closer and closer. Under the mutual influence of their attraction forces, the trajectories were slowly deformed and drawing weird curves as if manipulated by an invisible giant hand. They were about to hit each other.

The three satellites were so close to each other that their surfaces had been ripped apart. Tremendous rocks and crystal mines soared into the sky, blew up, and darted toward the other two satellites, like shining exhausting flames.

From the other two satellites, a great mass of materials was escaping, too, and flying toward the satellite, joining together like rivers.

The crystal powder, and other elements, on different satellites had chemical reactions in the vacuum and turned into colorful high-energy particles. Three ribbons of light, which looked like three giant snakes biting each other's tails, were spreading out!

It was the unique phenomenon when the three satellites of the Blood Demon Sector aligned.

On the Blood Moon Planet, where the Eye of Blood Demon was located, the wind was howling, and the rain was pouring. Dark clouds were rolling like angry dragons. Lightning was hissing like shocked snakes.

The earth was shaking. Countless animals were fleeing. The smaller rocks all slowly flew up into the sky toward the dark clouds. The dark clouds, in the meantime, were revolving and rolling until in the end dozens of enormous cantilevers were formed, attracting all the dark clouds in the thousand square kilometers nearby. They were getting more and more intense!

The bloody lake was also surging with waves. The devastating tides were shooting hundreds of meters into the sky nonstop, as if dragons made of lake water were soaring up. The lake water did not fall down until a long time later, producing what seemed to be a ladder leading to an alien world!

Deep inside the bloody lake, the turbulence was raging, and the undercurrents were running everywhere. The translucent rune beasts were absorbed by the swirl. During the high-speed revolutions, the demonic stripes carved into them were emitting the most enticing brilliance, illuminating the rune arrays embedded on the dome of the building right under the lake like beams of light.

Protected by the crystal shell, the rune arrays were like the eggs of devils that had been deeply buried in the mud at the bottom of the lake. Something seemed to be about to break out of the eggs because huge bubbles were popping up nonstop.

Gudu! Gudu! Gudu!

Bubbles, containing countless demonic stripes, surfaced in the lake, making it appear to be boiling. A huge amount of lake water was vaporized by the demonic stripes and formed a layer of intense red mist some ten meters above the lake.

“The Eye of Blood Demon is functioning at 80% the maximum intensity.”

“All magical equipment units are performing well. The storage, enhancement, and transformation of the tidal force are normal.”

“In three minutes, the tidal force will hit the peak. We will begin our first teleportation!”

Around the bloody lake, hundreds of hideous devilish warships, and thousands of super demon beasts that were too large to be accommodated by the devilish warships were holding their breath, waiting.

A hundred demon beasts of them and fifteen devilish warships entered the center of the bloody lake as the first echelon.

The red mist flowed toward them crazily and tied them up like proliferating veins or vines, enveloping them until there was no gap left.

“Hehe. Hehehehe!”

All the demon beasts had been injected with the last dosage of the exhilarant. Their skin was breaking apart, and their muscles were bulging. Their claws and teeth, which were now stained with blood, had grown to the limits. Their pupils had almost been melted in their bloodshot eyes while they were roaring hungrily for food.

Even the demonic stripes and barriers that tied them up were glittering and dimming in the thunderstorm. The strengthened external skeleton and the magical equipment installed were crashing with each other amid clattering noises.

The demon beasts that the Blood Demon Sector had carefully refined for decades became one-time expendables in the battle today. Their aggressiveness, combat ability, and bloodthirst had been triggered to the maximum without considering the consequences, and they were about to be released in the most brutal way!

Inside the devilish warships were teams of elite soldiers in hideous armor whose murderous intent was soaring. It was not hard to tell their capability from the interconnecting scars on their bodies and the expression that was a combination of indifference and ruthlessness on their faces.

The bronze-blood warriors were rubbing their acid guns and their tusk sabers with casual smiles on their faces, their every scar glittering.

The silver-blood commanders were as tranquil as before. They touched the chest of their armor where the sigils of their family had been engraved while they prayed to the glorious Pantheon of Demons in silence.

Around the devilish warships were smaller teleportation cabins that looked like cocoons.

Those lying in the middle of the cocoons, who were protected by a solid shell and a soft buffer layer, were fourteen demon emperors with Elder Blood Robe, master of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers, as the lead.

They were so strong that they might encounter danger when they passed through the wormholes. Therefore, they had to be teleported alone in such a way.

The lake water was boiling more and more furiously. The fourteen demon emperors and the devilish warships that were fully loaded with the best troops of the Blood Demon Sector had been completely consumed by the bloody mist. The bloody mist rose up into the sky and slowly joined the lightning and dark clouds there.

The two air currents, one red and the other black, interweaved into a spiral that was closely surrounded by electric arcs. Together, they constituted a sharp, unstoppable cone that seemed to be piercing through the feeble wall between the two Sectors!

BOOM!

CRACK!

In the middle of the thunder and lightning, where the dark clouds and the bloody mist met, a weird black hole showed up, as if part of the world had been somehow taken away.

Deep inside the black hole was a completely different view. A coruscating metropolis was popping up slowly and obscurely.

“Warriors of the Blood Demon Sector!

“Children of Pangu, Kuafu and Nuwa!

“The last guardians of the demon race’s glory in the three thousand Sectors!”

Jin Tuyi’s image, through the transmission of the wireless brainwaves of the main biochemical brain, appeared inside every devilish warship, on the retina of every warrior, and even in the mysterious mist in the sky above the bloody lake.

The dark clouds turned into his face, the bloody mist was his armor, and the lightning became his claws and tusks!

“The most sacred day for our race has finally come!

“We’ve been waiting for today for ten thousand years!

“Over the past ten thousand years, we have lost our glory and splendidness in the past. We were banished on every continent. We were slaughtered in every space zone and every Sector!

“We used to be the most honorable dominators of the sea of stars, but in the past ten thousand years, we have been the humblest of slaves, the filthiest of germs, and the evilest of fiends! We lost our families and our homes. We fled and retreated until we were finally here, a desolate land at the edge of the universe!

“Now, we don’t even have many days to catch our breath on this barren planet!

“The sordid Heaven’s Origin Sector has received the help of the evil Flying Star Sector. They are crafting sabers and swords to butcher us day and night. They are drafting schemes of invasion. In the future soon to come, they will stomp on our last shelter and expel us from our poor home into the abyss of doom in the bleak universe!

“If we don’t resist, our home will turn into a wasteland again, just like the thousands of planets our ancestors lost in the past ten thousand years!

“If we don’t resist, our wives and compatriots will be butchered, enslaved, humiliated, played. They will be sent into the research facilities of human beings for the cruelest experiments. They will even be locked into cages for exhibitions like freaks!

“If we don’t resist, our civilization will be destroyed, and it will be the end of our history! After we are destroyed, the enemy will also smear our reputation with the most shameless lies. They will describe our glorious civilization as one of blood and darkness. They will call us the most evil and terrible race in the entire universe!

“By then, when we have been burnt to ashes, we will no longer be able to defend ourselves, our ancestors, and our civilization!

“Warriors of the Blood Demon Sector!

“Children of Pangu, Kuafu, and Nuwa!

“The last guardians of the demon’s civilization in the three thousand Sectors!

“The fate of our home and our compatriots, the past and the future of our civilization… it is all in our hands!

“Will we raise our hands, retreat our teeth, and wash clean our necks, waiting for human beings to slaughter us and to crucify our great civilization on the pillar of shame forever?

“No! No! Never!

“Obliteration! Rebirth! Immortality! This is the last war in the prophecy of our race! This is the last test that the Pangu Clan, our sacred ancestors, has left for us!

“The offspring of the Pangu Clan are destined to rise in fire in the sacred war and embark on the most brilliant path of immortality again. We will be the greatest dominators of the sea of stars again!

“The time for battle has come!

“Hold on to your saber, bare your fangs, and let loose of your fury!

“Look. The capital city of the Star Glory Federation is right under our tusks and blades, undefended and ready to be savaged!

“Do not fear death because death is definitely not our destination. The glorious Pantheon of Demons will be waiting for our valiant souls in the clouds of the capital city of the Star Glory Federation! Go now. Butcher and destroy. Send the crying, cowering human beings into the deepest depths of hell!”

“Ho!”

“Hooooo!”

All the demons could not have been more excited, their blood boiling. If the passion in their eyes could be condensed into flames, the capital city of the Star Glory Federation would have been burnt to the ground already!

“Obliteration! Rebirth! Immortality!”

“Obliteration! Rebirth! Immortality!”

“We are the children of Pangu. The blood of Nuwa flows in our veins. We are the most honorable masters of the sea of stars! The glorious Pantheon of Demons is waiting for us in the clouds!”

Not only were the simple-headed bronze-blood demons roaring desperately, the silver-blood demons, who were usually calm, and even the high and mighty demon emperors were all shouting uncontrollably.

They might not have believed in the ‘glorious Pantheon of Demons’ as the low-level demons did, but it did not stop them from being enshrouded in the fire of their own ambitions.

Emotionlessly, Jin Tuyi raised his right hand and slashed down. “The first wave of teleportation, begin!”

Chapter 1025 - Angry Bullets!

With Jin Tuyi’s command, the bloody lake was simmering in the most heated state like a brewing volcanic eruption.

The lake water seemed be orange, molten steel at a temperature of thousands of degrees. Weird brilliance more dazzling and colorful than an aurora was soaring into the sky.

In the sky, the ‘hole’ that did not belong to the world was becoming larger and larger. Through the hole, one was able to clearly see the skyscrapers aglow with lights.

Some of the pebbles floating in midair had already darted to the world in the opposite side through the hold because of the attraction of the swirl!

The first wave of attack, made of fourteen demon emperors and dozens of devilish warships, all became almost transparent in the coverage and corrosion of the bloody mist.

In the eyes of the bystanders, they lost their shapes in the three-dimensional world all of a suddenly and seemed to have turned into plasticine. They were stretched to the limits at first like noodles, spinning quickly along the swirl, before they were suddenly compressed into a small cluster and fell to the center of the hole!

Swoosh!

The first batch of demon beasts appeared in the sky of the Heaven’s Origin Sector across the barrier between the two Sectors!

They were soaring up into the sky, attracted by the tidal force. Yet, the moment they passed through the wormhole, they were captured by the gravity of the Heaven’s Origin Planet and fell to the ground.

However, the demon beasts that served as the vanguard all boasted amazing flight abilities. They stabilized themselves very quickly and stretched out their membranes and bone wings, flying over the heads of the crowds who were celebrating the victory and uttering the first earsplitting shriek in the sky of the capital city of the Star Glory Federation!

“Ao! Aooooo!”

At this moment, the capital city was still as bright as daylight.

The excited crowds had not yet dispersed. The light beams on the skyscrapers were still displaying the picture of the great victory at the Giant Blade Pass.

In the picture, the ‘Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars’ flag, the national flag of the Star Glory Federation, was fluttering in the wind, and the Cultivators and the federal soldiers could not have been in higher spirits!

In the square before ‘Heavenly Sword Plaza’, a landmark of the capital city that was more than two thousand and seven hundred meters high, tens of thousands of young people had gathered, ready for an all-night party. The blowing thunderstorm did not quench their enthusiasm. If anything, they even got more excited. The obstreperous square was simmering in exclamations like fire that had been added to oil when the news that a few young Cultivators from the Giant Blade Pass had joined them.

However—

Huala!

From the sky, countless sharp glass pieces were rapidly falling, only to be discovered by three Cultivators in time. They reacted quickly enough to release the spiritual shield and blocked the pieces from hitting the crowd, breaking them into shining powder.

“Ahhh!”

Shocking exclamations were echoing in the crowd. Everybody raised their head, only to be dumbfounded by the nightmare at the top of the Heavenly Sword Plaza. They were overwhelmed by terror and could not even move their little finger.

It was a gargantuan demon beast, hundreds of meters long, that looked like a hybrid of an enormous lizard and a giant boa. Lurking at the highest point of the plaza, the demon beast was staring at the crowd coldly with three crimson eyes that looked like searchlights.

CRACK!

The dragon-like demon beast exerted its strength again, shattering the glass windows and the outer wall of the Heavenly Sword Plaza. Hundreds more pieces were raining down like a storm, raising cries everywhere.

Pu!

The three Cultivators were only in the early Refinement Stage. The spiritual shield that they triggered was far from enough to resist the blast of tons of pieces falling from an altitude of three thousand meters!

Ripples were spreading out on their spiritual shields. The three Cultivators all vomited blood and bulged their eyes while they desperately shouted, “Hurry and go!”

BOOM!

Their voices were eclipsed by a thunderous roar.

The dragon-like demon beast’s body turned red, and the scales stood up one after another. Opening its bloody mouth, the demon beast spurted out a firewall that was as scorching as the sun. The fireball hit a skyscraper nearby, only to blow the building in half!

The broken building leaned backward amid soul-stirring noises of the fracturing rebars.

The enormous light beam that had been installed between the two skyscrapers were torn to shreds, too.

On the few shreds that were relatively intact, the picture of the federal soldiers marching forward unstoppably with the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag was still blinking vaguely.

However, the picture was soon blocked by the demon beasts that were flying everywhere in the sky and perished in the pouring storm.

Above the storm, in the middle of the clouds, gaps and swirls were appearing one after another.

The devilish warships fully loaded with the best troops of the coalition army of demons were slowly extending their heads out of the swirls.

At this moment, in the crowds that were too shocked to move, somebody was finally back to themself because of the undying explosions and quakes. They shouted in the utmost horror, “B—Beast tide outbreak!”

…

In the Blood Demon Sector, right below the Eye of Blood Demon, in the stabilization room, the blood streaks inside Li Yao’s eyes were almost crushing his eyes. He was breathing so fast that his nostrils were like the exhaust tubes of a shuttle. Veins were bulging from his dry arms and chest like a raging dragon, which was utterly unbefitting for the identity of ‘Jin Zhenyi’.

Thankfully, everybody’s attention was focused on the stabilization unit. No one noticed his anomaly.

As the tidal force grew stronger and stronger, the teleportation intensity of the Eye of Blood Demon was higher and higher, too. The pressure on the stabilization unit had reached the highest point, too!

The four cooling towers were all emanating deafening fulminations. The holes on the cooling tubes were shrieking and spurting out hot steam. The entire stabilization room was as hot as a furnace!

But Li Yao’s heart was ten times more scorching than the environment.

Although he did not see what was happening in the sky above the bloody lake, the data regarding the teleportation was being transmitted to the main biochemical brain of the stabilization room incessantly.

Based on the data, he could estimate the progress of the teleportation easily.

Part of the coalition army of demons has been teleported to the capital city!

Li Yao gritted his teeth and felt that his internal organs were burning in anxiety. He could not fathom how much damage the brutal demon beasts would cause to the capital city.

However, it was not the time to take action yet!

The tidal force hasn't reached the peak yet. The fourteen demon emperors and the few heavy devilish warships of the highest level haven't been teleported, either. It is not the time to sabotage the teleportation array yet. I must wait. I have to wait!

Li Yao scratched his thighs so hard that they were full of bloody bruises.

Li Zhengzhi, deputy director of the stabilization unit and a specialist who was at loggerheads with 'Jin Zhenyi', thought that he was nervous about the stabilization room and raised a suggestion in a mocking tone.

"The No. 3 rune array group is not working any more. It seems it will crash in another fifteen seconds.

"Huh. The stabilization rotors in the No. 6 rune array group seems to be malfunctioning. The noises do not sound right!

"As I expected, the double-helix structure that has never been used before is not enough to survive the pressure. The way I see it, it will collapse after the first wave of teleportation. I say we should be prepared to switch to the No. 2 stabilization plan at any moment!”

Li Yao’s eyelids were twitching violently. The veins on his forehead were bouncing like electric arcs. He was clenching his fists so hard that it was enough to squeeze juice out of steel.

“Huh?”

Li Zhengzhi’s eyes beamed with joy as if he had found a treasure. All the feathers on his wings were shivering as he exclaimed, “What’s with the ‘Purple Pole Splendid Sun Array’ that connects the four cooling towers? Two crystal wires seem to have been mistaken with each other! Director Jin, as I recall, it was you who performed the last examination, wasn’t it? How could you have made such a terrible error?

“Thankfully, I’ve discovered it in time. Otherwise, when the tidal force reaches the peak, the four cooling towers might collapse at the same time!”

Deep inside Li Yao’s eyes, data were glittering like stars. He narrowed his eyes and said, one word after another, “Is that so?”

Li Zhengzhi could not have been more satisfied now that he had found a huge mistake of his mortal enemy. “Of course. Take a look at it yourself. Such a beginning-level mistake at such a critical location. If I hadn’t discovered it in time, there might have been dire consequences!”

“Seems so.” Li Yao walked to Li Zhengzhi and glanced at it. The critical changes of some data in his eyes finally made his lips curl into a cruel smile. He said, “However, it was intentional.”

Li Zhengzhi was dazed for a moment. Before he realized what was happening, the sharp killing intent from the ‘Jin Zhenyi’ next to him had already frozen his heart. His head had already retreated into his neck, and he could not utter a word.

Pa!

Li Yao waved his hands softly as if he were slapping a cockroach. Then, the owl who had almost sabotaged his efforts was blown away to the center of the ‘Purple Pole Splendid Sun Array’ in the middle of the four cooling towers on the dome.

The great array whose purpose was to coordinate the four cooling towers had already been on the verge of collapse because of the wrongly connected wires. Now, with the blast, it exploded all of a sudden, and four dazzling electric arcs splashed into the four cooling towers.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The four cooling towers exploded at the same time and broke off from the shelves, smashing the ground like four enormous gyros. But since they had been rotating at a high speed a moment ago, they were rolling on the ground after the landing, sweeping everything in their way without a fixed route. Countless rune arrays, cooling tubes, and biochemical brains were blown to smithereens!

In the stabilization room, all the specialists were screaming and fleeing.

“You—you are—”

The seven or so bodyguards who were responsible for the safety of the specialists, especially Jin Zhenyi’s, responded quickly enough and locked onto Li Yao. But they were truly stunned because they could not understand why the famous specialist 'Jin Zhenyi' was doing all this!

Li Yao stepped forward.

BOOM!

Furious flames broke apart all the camouflage including the artificial wings. The shriveled muscles bulged to the maximum within a moment. He seemed to be made of marble and jade. His hair, which was as messy as bird nest, was soaring up to the sky like arrogant fire!

“He—he is not Jin Zhenyi!”

“He’s an intruder!”

Before the bodyguards got to say anything else, they were already kicked into the walls of the stabilization room by Li Yao, who had turned into a streak of brightness, unable to move anymore!

In the meantime, Li Yao also released multiple smoke grenades, covering every corner of the stabilization room, trying to delay Jin Tuyi from finding out the truth.

Then—

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Thirty-six Floating Six-Barreled Vulcan Machine Cannons appeared around Li Yao and formed a great array, aiming at the center of the dome!

Li Yao spat and licked his dried lips. His telepathic thoughts were divided into thirty-six strands and crawled into the cannons at the same time, shooting out the angry bullets nonstop!

Chapter 1026 - Hidden Dragon Bombarding the Sky!

The Six-Barreled Vulcan Machine Cannon had always been Li Yao’s favorite. Even when he was still in the Refinement Stage, he had boldly charged forward with it.

However, for such a sturdy and simple-structured piece of magical equipment, after changing all the regular bullets into those made of marrow crystals and carving every barrel with the most sophisticated attack rune arrays, Li Yao had reached the limits of modification and could not increase its firepower anymore.

Since the quality could not be improved anymore, he decided that he might as well just improve the quantity.

Li Yao had always been so simple and straightforward.

Therefore, he had brought thirty-six cannons with him. He was a bastion of cannons by himself.

Had there been enough room in his Cosmos Rings, he would have carried a hundred or even eight hundred of them. After all, his soul was strong enough to manipulate them all.

He felt that his blood was boiling, and his heart was racing when he pictured eight hundred heavy cannons roaring behind him.

Right now, although he did not have eight hundred, the firepower of the thirty-six Six-Barreled Vulcan Machine Cannons was already incredible enough when they adopted the strengthened bullets that had been improved with marrow crystals and demon cores.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The fiery lines of bullets bombarded the dome of the stabilization room like a storm.

The sequence of the bullets had been carefully calculated by Li Yao to ensure that their power could be maximized when their attributes overlapped.

Not a moment after the frost attribute bullets had frozen the dome into ice blocks, it was blown into pieces by the explosion bullets, which were closely followed by the acid bullets, significantly increasing the area of damage. Eventually, the bullets carved with rune arrays of the wind class raised minor tornadoes and blew away all the pieces, creating an empty space.

Li Yao opened his arms and cast a spell. Black blood zigzagged out of his nostrils while he was controlling the point of impact of every bullet precisely.

All thirty-six cannons were spinning around him. The lines of bullets seemed to have formed a super drill that had dug a huge hole in the dome, mincing the feeble tubes, wires, and units above into smithereens!

A hundred meters, two hundred meters!

The drill of bullets was pushing forward!

Hurry up! I must hurry up!

I have to reach the core unit when the tidal force reaches the strongest point!

Li Yao found it more and more difficult to breathe. Pearls of blood were seeping out of his chest and arms, and the ends of his hairs were dyed red, too, as if his blood was trying to run away from his body!

Right at that moment—

Hum!

From the spacious hole above his head that was dug out by the drill of bullets, a deafening noise as if a giant tolling bell was echoing. The entire world was shivering in the moment.

The next second, at the end of the spacious hole, around the core unit of the teleportation system, a translucent shield slowly rose up!

This is… a brand new defense system!

Li Yao spat out a mouthful of saliva that was mixed with blood. He did not expect the defense system of the Eye of Blood Demon to be so thorough that, besides the three security measures on the surface, there was another hidden layer of defense rune arrays right around the core unit!

The defense rune array had been in the hibernation state all along and would only be triggered in the case of invasion of brute force. Also, the source of energy to power up the rune array turned out to be—

The tidal force!

The defense rune array had absorbed part of the tidal force caused by the three satellites and built it into a special force field.

In the force field, the attraction force was distributed very unevenly. In some of the areas, the intruder would sense the enormous gravity more than thirty times normal. In other areas, the attraction force would be splitting apart, as if two enormous satellites were pulling the intruder in opposite directions!

A mess!

In the range of the force field of the rune array, the attraction force was in a mess.

The drill of bullets had barely made its way into the ‘tidal defense array’ before it completely collapsed because of the messed attraction forces.

Some of the bullets were slapped back brutally like headless flies. Some other bullets exploded in midair after crashing into each other. Still some more bullets were crushed into metal pieces that were as thin as paper!

At this moment, there were only ten seconds to go before the tidal force hit the maximum point.

But for Li Yao, it was as painful as ten years.

His original plan had been to dig a huge hole right below the core unit with the drill of bullets and detonate the icy bomb that he had set to go off three seconds later in the core unit.

Without the cooling towers, the core unit was now already at an extremely high temperature. The icy bombs would certainly trigger the most brilliance chemical reactions with it.

But before that, Li Yao would already be escaping out of the place through the emergency channel among the panicked specialists!

The discovery of the ‘tidal defense array’ disrupted Li Yao’s plan.

What should he do?

Li Yao seemed to envision hundreds of devilish warships passing through the wormhole and spraying venom and acid on the capital city of the Star Glory Federation.

LUM DUM! LUM DUM! LUM DUM!

His head went blank, and he could not even hear the roaring bullets and rune arrays. The only sound in his ears was his heartbeat, which was thumping ever faster.

Beep!

Right then, he suddenly sensed a weird light scanning him from top to bottom from above.

As it turned out, there were several anti-heat crystal cameras outside the core unit.

The crystal cameras were installed to observe the internal erosion and temperature of the units when they were functioning at full efficiency.

But right now, they had captured his appearance exactly.

“I’ve been discovered!”

Li Yao took a long breath in relief. He grinned and scratched his hair, which had all stood up.

On Blood Demon, the flagship of the coalition army of demons, everybody was shocked.

“What is that? What is that? What the f*ck is that?”

Jin Tuyi and another five demon emperors were all dumbfounded, with cold sweat popping up.

They had just put on the special buffer suits with the help of their guards and entered the cocoon-like cabins, preparing for the second wave of teleportation five minutes later.

But then, they saw the most unbelievable view and the last face that they expected on the monitoring light beam!

Alarms from the stabilization room were dividing the scorching air inside Blood Demon like devastating lightning!

The stabilization unit was in a mess. The No. 1 stabilization plan had completely crashed, but the No. 2 plan and the No. 3 plan did not take its place. The director and the deputy director of the stabilization room had both gone missing. They could not even find a cleaner in the place!

Jin Tuyi’s face was more twisted than ever. Like a hen whose neck had been grabbed, he shrieked, “Stop the teleportation! Stop the teleportation now!”

But there was no time.

All the demons were still dwelling in the dreams of slaughtering and plundering in the Heaven’s Origin Sector. They did not understand what the commander meant.

Jin Tuyi and the other demon emperors, on the other hand, had already sunk into the teleportation cabins, enveloped in biochemical buffer liquids. It was impossible for them to jump out and take control over everything personally.

Even though they had realized the catastrophic consequences, the tidal force had reached the strongest point, and the teleportation had been half completed. Fourteen demon emperors and the best troops had already entered the wormhole that connected the two Sectors. How could they turn back so easily?

On the monitoring light beam, Li Yao raised his head and grinned. His teeth, stained with blood, were clear for every one of them.

Then, Li Yao extended his right fist to the camera and slowly… raised his middle finger.

Jin Tuyi and the other demon emperors were all startled. They did not understand what the weird gesture meant. Was it some sort of special spell?

But they were quite familiar with what happened next.

As a black and red Cosmos Ring on his middle finger glittered brilliantly, Li Yao's middle finger, which he jabbed out earlier, was soon wreathed by neat armor. The armor spread up along his arm like a tide, covering his shoulder, chest, waist, legs, and whole body very soon.

Li Yao's eyes, which were mixed with fury and cruelty, were blocked by the black facial cover, disappearing as if they had fallen into an abyss.

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had been brought out!

BOOM!

The intimidating aura seemed enough to pierce through the crystal cameras and hit the few demon emperors’ faces.

Including Jin Tuyi, all the demon emperors’ eyelids were twitching uncontrollably.

Shua!

Li Yao opened his arms. The cell activation drugs worked on the living cells on the surface of his crystal suit, making fire and demonic energy flood out of his body!

On his right arm was the drill of mystic rays that had been significantly enhanced by the seven artificial dragons, ‘Electric Viper Drill’!

On his left arm was the Cell Obliteration Cannon, which had been comprehensively optimized with biochemical technology and added with more than ten layers of crystal lenses to increase the damage!

Behind Li Yao, Black Wing released two wings of spiritual energy that were dozens of meters long. He squatted deeply. A hundred immense power rune arrays seemed to have been installed to the bottom of his feet as he soared up like a rocket and crashed into the tidal defense array!

CRACK! CRACK! CRACK! CRACK! CRACK! CRACK!

Although they were on the other side of the light beam, it was not difficult for Jin Tuyi and the other demon emperors to imagine how tremendous and chaotic the tidal force that was imposed on Li Yao’s body was.

Perhaps, his head was being squeezed under pressure equivalent to thirty times regular gravity, the left side of his body and the right side were being tugged in opposite directions by the tidal force, and his legs were under the influence of the attraction force of another direction.

It was almost like a hundred swirls had been pressed on his body at the same time.

However, despite the harsh environment, Li Yao still raised his arms inch by inch!

Although Li Yao’s face was under the facial cover and the other side of the light beam, all the demon emperors felt as if they could hear the sound of Li Yao gritting his teeth and his taunting laughter!

Electric Viper Drill! Cell Obliteration Cannon! Double outburst in a spiral!

The eyes of all the demon emperors were caught in a brief blankness because of the dazzling brilliance on the light beam like two supernova outbreaks.

A moment later, the light beam fell into absolute darkness. There was not the slightest ripple anymore.

Chapter 1027 - Out of Control!

The Eye of Blood Demon, as a super teleportation array that had adopted a lot of biochemical technology, was like a giant whose internal organs had decayed. Bizarre biochemical brains and units enveloped in strengthened external skeleton like organs were everywhere.

Li Yao, on the other hand, was like a bug that had crawled into the stomach of the giant.

Of course, he was a bug with sharp teeth.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Furious bullets were spluttering everywhere. The Cell Obliteration Cannon was like the sharpest scalpel that had cut countless holes in the internal organs. One moment, the Electric Viper Drill would split into seven independent artificial dragons, and the next it would gather into a drill that was rotating at a super high speed surrounded by thousands of electric arcs, causing shocking gaps on the great teleportation array!

In the meantime, Li Yao had thrown an icy bomb in every gap and every hole.

“Three seconds!”

Manipulating the thirty-six Floating Vulcan Machine Cannons, Li Yao was utterly unstoppable as he cut the guts out of the ‘giant’.

“Two seconds!”

After a boom, there were no rocks in front of Li Yao anymore. He had marched upward from hundreds of meters underground into the control center!

Looking at his arms, where electric arcs and flames were dancing, and his armor, which was stained by the remnants of the biochemical brains, all the specialists were dumbfounded and shuddering in fear!

“One second!”

Li Yao did not bother with the specialists. Instead, he aimed the thirty-six Floating Vulcan Machine Cannons, the Electric Viper Drill, and the Cell Obliteration Cannon at the crystal dome on the top of the control center.

The violent firepower poured out and riddled the defense rune arrays of the dome with holes instantly, making hundreds of interconnecting cracks.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Above the crystal dome was a whole lake. Torn crazily by the tidal force, swirls were appearing in the lake and crushing the newly-formed gaps on the crystal dome.

Li Yao snapped his fingers. The thirty-six Floating Vulcan Machine Cannons, which were running out of ammunition, were returned to his Cosmos Ring, only to be replaced by the Feathered Dragon Saber, which was almost three meters long. Dragging the saber on his back like a switchblade, he squatted and exerted his strength, leaving two holes more than ten meters deep on the ground. He leapt up with the counterforce and slashed out his saber with an aura dozens of meters long!

Huala!

The crystal dome exploded!

The lake water flooded in. Li Yao took the opportunity to dash into the bloody lake.

“Zero seconds!”

The crystal bombs installed in the core unit suddenly exploded. When the ice met the rune arrays and components, which were already thousands of degrees in temperature, it was vaporized instantly, and it expanded to thousands of times larger than before!

In such a narrow space, the expanding gas had nowhere to escape, and the only consequence would be—

Explosion!

A splendid, terrifying explosion!

The core unit of teleportation, the heart of the Eye of Blood Demon, was burnt into a furnace of molten steel. The blast spread out through every tiny gap. Wherever it reached, all the components—biochemical organs, crystal processors, biochemical brains, and so on—were blown to smithereens, only to be transformed into high-heated particles, leaking out like fatal fireworks!

Like the eruption of an undersea volcano, the turbulence sent the sand at the bottom of the bloody lake roiling. The invisible blast pushed forward unstoppably, crushing countless rune beasts into meat paste before they had the chance to dodge!

The tidal force completely went out of control!

The bloody lake was like a boiling vat of oil that a large cluster of ice upon had been poured into. The tides were ten times larger than before, swallowing the elite troops of the coalition army in the sky of the lake who were ready for the second wave and the third wave of teleportation and throwing them to the shore mercilessly.

Countless devilish warships smashed the following troops on the coast. Many slaughtering machines that had been carefully trained for decades at the cost of immeasurable resources and manpower turned into the most expensive garbage, not even having chance to scream!

Around the Eye of Blood Demon, a series of minor earthquakes were breaking out. The earth was being torn apart, and the hills were collapsing. The air was twisted. The devilish warships that were lucky enough not to be caught by the lake water also lost their direction and momentum in the invisible turbulences of the attraction force, sliding into the crevice in the land.

Some other devilish warships even crashed into each other, raising new explosions!

The tidal force, which had gone completely out of control, caused the disorder of the magnetic field, too. For many demon beasts that could perceive the natural magnetic field, it was like an iron fork piercing into and twisting inside their brain!

The demon beasts had already been on the verge of fury because of the excessive exhilarants. Now, they were completely out of control.

They got rid of their barriers and boundaries and attacked all the living creatures around them!

Chaos. All the demon beasts, demon emperors, and devilish warships were in chaos! In front of the outbreak of the tidal force caused by the three satellites aligning, even a demon emperor could do nothing!

However, the elite troops of the coalition army, which were now in havoc, were among the more fortunate ones.

The fourteen demon emperors and the best warriors, who constituted the first wave of the attack, were much more miserable than them.

When the Eye of Blood Demon collapsed, they were marching toward the Heaven’s Origin Sector unstoppably through the wormhole.

It was almost like they were caught in an earthquake when they were passing a tunnel, and the entire mountain fell upon them.

Huala! Huala!

The tidal force tore apart the wormhole in various directions. Even the lightning around the wormhole was ripped into shreds. The army inside the wormhole fell apart instantly!

Some of the devilish warships were straightened into a river of flesh and blood dozens of kilometers long. The elite soldiers aboard were all squeezed together. There was no telling who was who at all anymore.

Some other devilish warships, on the other hand, were sent into the deepest gap inside the wormhole by the tidal force. They did not reach the Heaven’s Origin Sector but an unknown space on the other side of the sea of stars, which was probably a desolate world without any resources. When their fuel and food ran dry, they were destined to starve.

Possibly the most unfortunate devilish warships and demon emperors were half teleported over but were half kept in the Blood Demon Sector, as if many invisible, tiny strings had cut them precisely in half!

‘Ape Fiend’ Yuan Riyue was one of them.

The super expert, who was one of the strongest in the Blood Demon Sector, realized that something was wrong the moment the tidal force went out of control. He leapt out of the cocoon-like cabin and tried to escape back to the Blood Demon Sector.

However, strong as his personal combat ability was, it was not enough to compete with the magnificent force of nature. He seemed to be grabbed by a pair of invisible giant hands and pulled into the deformed, collapsing wormhole.

The tidal force pulled his bones and internal organs out of his body and sent them into the Heaven’s Origin Sector through the wormhole.

His empty shell, on the other hand, was ripped into a bloody mist and sprayed on the land of the Blood Demon Sector.

Before the wormhole was closed, few troops were successfully teleported to the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

But Jin Wuxu was one of them.

The commander of the Mirage Falcon troop was among the first demons to pass the wormhole. Also, he appeared at the perfect location right in the sky of the downtown of the capital city.

Here, he could avoid the flying swords darted out by the Cultivators with the cover of the skyscrapers. He could also sabotage the buildings and make as much mayhem as possible so that he would find an opportunity to charge at the Hexagonal Array at the center of the capital city!

Jin Wuxu grinned hideously and enjoyed the fresh air of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, which he knew would turn stinky before long.

However—

The allies that he had been waiting for were late. The several warriors who were teleported over were also in panic and unable to fight back.

He even saw that in the sky in the southwest, when a devilish warship was only half teleported when it was chopped into two halves by a terrifying force, with only the front half sent over!

Screams were echoing nonstop around Jin Wuxu.

But they were not uttered by the Cultivators but demons whose bones were broken and whose faces were covered in blood!

What—what the heck is going on?

Jin Wuxu felt that his brain nerves were about to be melted because of the abrupt change!

Hooo!

Earsplitting roars were resonating for away. Jin Wuxu stared for a while, only to discover that it was Elder Blood Robe, one of the four giants of the Blood Demon Sector and the commander of the first wave of attack!

Elder Blood Robe was floating in the clouds. An enormous cluster of demonic energy, which was in the shape of lion and tiger, was soaring into the sky!

Jin Wuxu felt that he had found a life-saver. Overjoyed, he tried his best to get close to Elder Blood Robe.

However, when he was just ten kilometers away from the comrade, he stopped abruptly, and his ecstasy turned into fright.

He discovered that Elder Blood Robe had not been entirely teleported to the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

Elder Blood Robe’s right arm, right shoulder, and even part of the right side of his head were all gone, as if the sharpest blade had slashed down from the right side of his skull and cut away part of his body!

Also, on the ground, dozens of streaks of brightness were soaring into the sky and dashing toward Elder Blood Robe at a lightning-like speed.

They were the Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage and the Nascent Soul Stage.

As the capital city of the Star Glory Federation and the heart of the Cultivators of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, however weakly defended it was, there were always dozens of Core Formation Stage Cultivators and several Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

With a miserable face, Jin Wuxu was hesitating over whether to turn around and run away or to reinforce Elder Blood Robe when he felt excruciating pain as if countless needles were stinging his body!

Hundreds of much thinner but much faster streaks of brightness rose up from various locations of the city and darted toward him in weird arcs!

The Hexagonal Array of the capital city had triggered hundreds of auto-piloting flying swords and launched a fatal attack toward him!

Jin Wuxu’s lips trembled. He somehow recalled his father’s words a moment ago.

Don’t get killed!

Jin Wuxu laughed in an way even uglier than when he cried. How—how can I be killed in this place? I am the heir of the Feather Clan…

A battle formation of hundreds of flying swords consumed him instantly!

Chapter 1028 - The Way To Escape!

“How could it be?”

Blood Demon, the flagship of the coalition army of demons, was also affected by the furious tidal force. It was struggling like a lone boat in the surging waves.

Thankfully, it belonged to the second echelon and had not entered the wormhole yet. Therefore, it managed to escape the moment before the wormhole collapsed. Staggering in the rushing storm, it almost crashed into the coast of the bloody lake.

Jin Tuyi and several other demon emperors, including Hong Yuntao, who was the master of the Sea Dominator Kingdom, lunged out of Blood Demon and looked in a daze at the best troops of the demon race, which had been almost entirely obliterated, and the wormhole in midair that was about to perish.

The capital city of the Star Glory Federation on the other side of the wormhole had been so close to them that they could also touch the lights of the skyscrapers when they reached out their hands.

But right now, it became as tantalizing as their reflections in the water. All the schemes and ambitions were falling apart along with the spluttering electric arcs.

Jin Tuyi, Hong Yuntao, and all the other demon emperors stared at the loose troops on the ground desperately and speechlessly.

The grouping and organizing of troops of hundreds of thousands of soldiers was an esoteric art. Now that they had been completely disrupted by the tidal force, it would take quite a few days for them to be regrouped.

Even when they were regrouped, after such a gory accident, it was practically impossible to restore their morale to the high point a moment ago!

Moreover, even if their morale could be restored, so what?

The peak hour of the tidal force had passed. The Eye of Blood Demon had been completely sabotaged. Half of the water in the bloody lake had vaporized, and the other half had flooded to the coast. All the carefully refined rune beasts had been killed, and the most valuable specialists had been buried deep below the lake, their status unknown!

In the sky, the wormhole created by the Eye of Blood Demon had collapsed. The gaps that were as thin as hairs were far from enough to teleport a demon emperor or a devilish warship over.

Besides, even the tiny holes were dispersing at a visible speed.

The channel for assault between the two worlds were only opened for several seconds before it was shut down again, perhaps forever!

The first wave of attack had been wiped out!

Even if a few lucky dogs had successfully been teleported to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, without the reinforcement of the follow-up troops, they would be moths darting into the fire!

Everything was because of one person. Just one person!

“My son! My Mirage Falcons! My Red Tide Plan!”

Jin Tuyi was so devastated that he was screaming at the top of his voice. He almost fell out of the air.

The feathers above his head that congregated into a crown were messed up by the blowing wind. His hair fluttering in the wind and his eyes bloodshot, he went mad and slashed his saber, declaring with boundless hatred, “Kill him! Kill him! I am going to mince him into pieces!”

…

At the same time, in the command center of the Spore Stratagem in the secret base of the Nether World Watch, because of the delay of the transmission of brainwaves, the picture of the Eye of Blood Demon that the Nether World Watch received through secret channels was several seconds late.

As the tidal force went out of control, ripples spread out on the picture. The picture twisted and blurred.

However, the doom of the first echelon of attack, consisting of fourteen demon emperors and dozens of devilish warships, was still crystal clear to them.

The pressure in the secret base was instantly ten times lower than before. Everybody was silent, as if the base was a graveyard at the bottom of an ocean!

Pu!

Half a minute later, Elder Nether Spring, who had been soundless the whole time, suddenly vomited a mouthful of blood and nearly fell over.

Shivering, he extended his right hand and snatched in midair, but he did not even know what he was aiming for himself!

The Spore Stratagem was a parasite to the Red Tide Plan. It had to be carried out when the Red Tide Plan was halfway through in order to achieve the best effect.

But right now, the Red Tide Plan had been aborted when it was only a fetus!

The Eye of Blood Demon had been blown up. The channel between the two Sectors had been closed. Even if the Eye of Blood Demon could be repaired in a month or two, there would still be half a year before the tidal force reached the peak point again.

When an arrow was placed on a bow, it had to be fired. To facilitate the Spore Stratagem, many of Elder Nether Spring's spies had been working hard, at the risk of getting exposed. They would certainly be found out after half a year's thorough investigation!

"Who did it?"

His face pale, Elder Nether Spring ripped apart the air in front of him and gnashed.

"Who exactly did it?"

…

Five hundred kilometers to the southwest of the Eye of Blood Demon, on Chaos, which was lurking in darkness, Jin Xinyue, Han Tuhu, and Suo Chaolong were all stunned.

They all saw the clouds in the northern sky and heard the series of explosions, which sounded like thunder.

The area Chaos was at was affected by the tidal force, too, despite being five hundred kilometers away. Soil and tiny branches slowly flew into the sky, briefly free of gravity, before they fell to the ground and broke apart.

Even Chaos itself was shaking slightly in the blowing wind.

“This is a bit too violent, isn’t it?”

Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong looked at each other in bewilderment and wiped off their sweat.

Although they knew that Li Yao’s purpose was to destroy the Eye of Blood Demon, they had never expected Li Yao to do it so dramatically!

“What… what a splendor,” Jin Xinyue mumbled. “How is Master going to get away?”

…

Inside the bloody lake, while the coalition army of demons was in havoc, a streak of brightness swooshed to the sky like a long, black spear. When it was at an altitude of more than two thousand meters, it dashed into the turbulent storm and quickly span around several times inside the storm before it threw itself out with the centrifugal force caused by the storm!

Li Yao had chosen such a way to escape blatantly right in front of hundreds of thousands of warriors’ faces!

“Stop him! Stop him now!”

Jin Tuyi burst into fury. Together with the other few demon emperors, he accelerated to his maximum speed and surrounded the enemy!

It was the center of the elite troops of the demon race. How could one get away so easily?

At the periphery of the bloody lake, some of the devilish warships were not seriously affected after all. They had already stabilized themselves and aimed their acid cannons toward Li Yao!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The barrage of a hundred demons turned the airspace around Li Yao into an ocean of venom and acid!

Shua!

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit suddenly split into more than ten identical shadows and dashed in different directions.

“Petty trick. Where are you going exactly?” Jin Tuyi roared.

A streak of dark, golden brilliance rushed out of Blood Demon, which turned out to be his own biochemical beast, a great falcon with a pair of golden wings almost eighty meters long and a scorpion tail that was dozens of meters long!

The two of them melded into one and slashed toward the second shadow, which was rushing southwest precisely like a blinking unparalleled saber!

In the meantime, almost twenty acid cannons had blocked all possible spots where the shadow could dodge!

Huala!

The shadow was hit brutally by Jin Tuyi and immediately fell apart, blossoming in the sky like a flower.

All the other shadows were also dispersing under the scourge of the cannon fire.

However—

The shadow hit by Jin Tuyi just now was indeed the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. Otherwise, it would not have been able to fool the super expert whose computational ability was unbelievably high.

However, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was empty. There was absolutely nothing inside except for the mainframe crystal processor, which could autopilot and make the fundamental flight and dodge movements!

Jin Tuyi, Hong Yuntao, and all the other demon emperors flew to the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, which had been shattered. They glanced at the surroundings gloomily.

“He can’t run away. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers have surrounded the place. Where can he possibly flee to?”

Jin Tuyi’s eyeballs almost exploded. Two streams of deep, dark blood and tears flowed out. “The Red Tide Plan is doomed. My son and the Mirage Falcon troop are doomed, too! I am definitely going to capture him. I will capture him, skin him, burn him to ash, and tear his soul into shreds!”

BOOM!

Hardly had he finished his sentence when an ear splitting explosion burst out at the rear of Blood Demon. A cluster of black smoke soared into the sky, raging and consolidating into an enormous mushroom cloud.

The pupils of Jin Tuyi, Hong Yuntao, and the other demon emperors constricted violently. Their eyeballs were almost frozen as they saw an incredible picture!

On the head of the flagship Blood Demon, which was the greatest glory of the Blood Demon Sector, a human being was standing against the wind carrying his saber!

It was Li Yao!

“Ahh!”

Jin Tuyi bulged his eyes so hard that blood almost spurted out.

He was about to ride his great falcon and capture Li Yao who was wearing no protection when Li Yao extended and curled his middle finger toward them.

Another explosion broke out at the rear of Blood Demon!

The guy had installed crystal bombs inside Blood Demon!

“The lunatic has never planned to run away since the very beginning. He knew that he couldn’t, too!”

Hong Yuntao, master of the Sea Dominator Kingdom, moaned in uttermost desperation, “He threw out his crystal suit intentionally as bait and a distraction. While our attention was all focused on his outfit, he took the chance to conceal his aura and sneak into Blood Demon!

“We were all chasing after the enemy and neglected Blood Demon. He escaped our attention!

“We wasted at least ten seconds on his decoy!

“Ten seconds is enough for a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator to do a lot of things!

“In such a way, he—he has hijacked Blood Demon!”

Including Jin Tuyi, all the demon emperors were greatly stunned by the discovery and did not come back to themselves for a long time.

Li Yao’s middle finger was still saluting them, but he had stabbed his battle saber into the shell at the head of Blood Demon and sat down next to it.

Shua!

More than ten crystal cameras were floating around Li Yao. They captured his image from all angles and projected it to the sky through a specially-made hologram projector.

In the sky, a light beam almost a hundred meters in diameter immediately appeared.

Li Yao’s face, which was covered in smoke and fire, showed up in the clouds right in front of all the best troops of the demon race!

Chapter 1029 - You Have Failed!

His face was blue and purple. Many parts of it had been burnt by the fire. Even his eyes were red because of the stimulation of the smoke.

His hair was curling because of the fire and seemed more like a messy bird nest. Some parts of his head were even bald now. He could not have looked more awful.

He was coughing and breathing hard without caring about his demeanor. Now and then, he was spitting out mouthfuls of bloodstained saliva.

All the details had been magnified by hundreds of times and displayed to every elite soldier of the demon race.

However, for most of the soldiers, the devastated appearance of the enemy would be their greatest nightmare in the decades to come!

“Jin Tuyi!”

Li Yao’s voice, enhanced by the loudspeaker, was like thunder blowing out of the clouds. Every soldier of the coalition army of demons felt that their ears were aching.

“I have packed Blood Demon, your flagship, with bombs! You know that I must’ve brought a dozen Cosmos Rings that were loaded with crystal bombs when I decided to blow up the Eye of Blood Demon!”

“You are bluffing!” Jin Tuyi’s voice echoed over the entire battlefield like thunders, too. “Blood Demon is the best flagship of the Blood Demon Sector that boasts the most rigorous defense system. I don’t believe that you are able to plant crystal bombs on every key location of Blood Demon in only ten seconds!”

BOOM!

Hardly had Jin Tuyi concluded his sentence when Li Yao curled his finger again. This time, intense explosions broke out inside the bridge next to him.

Blood Demon seemed to have been hammered right in the face. It was leaning to the left side because of the blast. Even the strengthened external skeleton was raised up, revealing the shocking damage below the shell.

“You can take a gamble. Damn!”

Li Yao spat another mouthful of bloody saliva. After triggering the thirty-six Floating Vulcan Machine Cannons, enhancing the power of the bullets with his thousands of telepathic thoughts, and fleeing in the furious tidal force for such a long time, his brain and internal organs had been seriously harmed, too.

The bones all over his body were cracking, and his every organ was slowly leaking blood.

But still, he laughed cunningly. “You are free to come at me right now. Chances are that I had used up all my crystal bombs and I merely planted the three that were detonated a moment ago.

“However, should you lose the gamble, the best flagship of the Blood Demon Sector, as well as all the soldiers on board, especially the warriors of the Feather Clan and the Sea Clan, will certainly die together with me!”

Jin Tuyi gritted his teeth so hard that he nearly ground them into pieces.

Blood Demon was the most powerful warship of the Blood Demon Sector. Under normal circumstances, it was practically impossible to be infiltrated by an enemy.

But who could have foreseen that the tidal force would run out of control? At that time, Blood Demon was struggling in the turbulence of the tidal force. Its defense system had already been ripped apart. The main biochemical brain and the surveillance facilities had been seriously affected, too!

Who knew how many crystal bombs Li Yao had planted now that he had taken the opportunity to sneak into the warship? Nobody!

The fact that the warship was named after Blood Demon was indicative enough of its value.

But what was more valuable than Blood Demon was the warriors on it!

Jin Tuyi was the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons and a firm believer in the integration of the air, naval, and ground forces. As his flagship, there was no doubt that Blood Demon accommodated most soldiers of the Feather Clan and the Sea Clan, their ally.

The first wave of attack was mostly made of the ground troops of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers and the Nether Spring Kingdom. Air forces such as the Mirage Falcons were few.

The second wave of attack, in comparison, was commanded by Jin Tuyi in person, and naturally consisted most of the best troops of the Feather Clan and the Sea Clan!

Right now, the best troops of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers and the Nether Spring Kingdom had been annihilated, and more than ten demon emperors had been killed in the teleportation. Was it really worthwhile to kill a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator at the cost of the best flagship of the Blood Demon Sector and all the best troops of the Gold Crow Kingdom and the Sea Dominator Kingdom?

Before Jin Tuyi opened his mouth, Hong Yuntao, a demon emperor of the Sea Clan and one of the four giants of the Blood Demon Sector, blinked forward and subtly stood in his way. Raising his voice, he asked, “What do you want exactly? We are not going to let you walk away!”

Li Yao coughed hard for a while. His bloodshot eyes were purer than ever as he sincerely declared, “Peace. All I want is peace!”

BOOM!

While his words were still echoing in the air, two devilish warships that had crashed into each other not far away exploded because their catalysts, which were incompatible, were mixed up and exposed to the air. Fireballs were rising up to the sky like balloons.

“…” Jin Tuyi.

“…” Hong Yuntao.

“…” Soldiers of the coalition army of demons who were mostly injured.

Li Yao coughed. “… Alright, let’s talk about peace later. All I want right now is a frank conversation with Jin Tuyi, the commander-in-chief of the coalition army, for five minutes so that the strongest warriors of the coalition army will learn the whole truth!”

“Haha. Hahahaha. Are you still trying to talk your way out of your doom right now?”

Jin Tuyi was so pissed off that he was actually laughing. His aura grew more and more intimidating like a devastated and infuriated eagle that had stretched its wings to hundreds of meters away!

Boosted by his demonic energy, the clouds in the sky all turned into feathers and flapped behind him as two new, even more enormous wings!

“My son is dead! The Mirage Falcon troop is doomed! The Red Tide Plan has failed! That’s all because of you!” Jin Tuyi shouted in fury.

“Exactly!”

With the support of his saber, Li Yao struggled to his feet. He burst into laughter toward Jin Tuyi with his bloodstained teeth. “You are quite right. The Eye of Blood Demon has been mostly destroyed and cannot be repaired in half a year. Perhaps, it will take a year or two before it is reconstructed!

“But by then, the Heaven’s Origin Sector will be highly alert! This time, a few of your troops have invaded the capital city of the Star Glory Federation. Even the most idiotic Cultivators of the Heaven’s Origin Sector are well aware of your scheme now!

“You must know that the Heaven’s Origin Sector can calculate the timing when the three satellites align as precisely as you can!

“Moreover, you have lost fourteen demon emperors and more than ten of your best troops, including the Mirage Falcons, in your futile attempt!

“You have lost the world war between the two Sectors. You have missed the last window to attack. The capability of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and that of the Blood Demon Sector have been reversed. Our roles in the war have swapped!

“The Red Tide Plan is the scheme of your final war. It has consumed tremendous resources of the Blood Demon Sector. In a year and a half, there is no way that you can launch a second Red Tide Plan!

“But after a year and a half, the Heaven’s Origin Sector will have built the capital city into a thorough, heavily defended fortress!

“For you, occupying other metropolises is pointless. It will only be a waste of the resources and manpower of the Blood Demon Sector!

“In short, you will not have the forces to initiate an all-out attack on the Heaven’s Origin Sector in the next three to five years. But in three to five years’ time, when the capability of the Heaven’s Origin Sector soars, you will not stand a chance, either!

“Of course, you are free to kill me now. But, hehe, I believe that Blood Demon will not be the only thing to die with me. The entire Blood Demon Sector will go to hell with me, too!”

His words cast all the demon emperors into deep thought. They were all wearing complicated expressions.

For most of the demon emperors, they were smart and able to think into the distant future. Few were the simple-headed warriors who had more brawns than brains.

The demon emperors were all clear about the significance of the Red Tide Plan to the Blood Demon Sector. They also knew that, after the Eye of Blood Demon was destroyed and so many demon emperors and elite troops were killed, the Blood Demon Sector had lost the chance to crush the Heaven’s Origin Sector once and all for now, or perhaps forever!

It was no longer a question about how to conquer the Heaven’s Origin Sector but how to save the Blood Demon Sector and how to preserve their family, their clan, and even the entire demon race!

Hong Yuntao, the demon emperor of the Sea Clan and the master of the Sea Dominator Kingdom, had other thoughts, too.

He was the weakest one of the ‘four giants of the Blood Demon Sector’, and he had always collaborated with Jin Tuyi, who ranked the third, so that they could have a larger voice.

On many occasions, he had been dwarfed by Elder Blood Robe, a demon emperor of the Claw Clan, and Elder Nether Spring, a demon emperor of the Insect Clan, and ended up being their pawn.

Although his ally, Jin Tuyi, had been elected as the leader of the coalition army of demons, Hong Yuntao knew clearly that it was a temporary concession of the continentalism advocates. After they caught their breath, they would certainly take back their power, and the Feather Clan and the Sea Clan, who were relatively weak, would not be able to stop them!

But right now, the situation had undergone subtle changes.

In the Red Tide Plan, the first wave of attack had almost exclusively consisted of demon emperors of the Claw Clan and the Insect Clan.

Other than the Mirage Falcons, most of the other legions were the troops of the Insect Clan and the Claw Clan. The Sea Clan had not sent any troops.

Of course, it was not a coincidence.

The capital city of the Star Glory Federation was not next to the ocean. Although a large river flowed through the downtown area and there was a fairly large man-made lake, room for the Sea Clan to play their role was quite limited.

The first wave of soldiers to march into the capital city was responsible for taking over the strategic locations and establish fixed bastions. Naturally, the ground troops were the main force.

Also, the gap between the first wave of teleportation and the second was only five minutes. Therefore, the demon emperors of the Claw Clan and the Insect Clan had no complaints about the arrangement.

Who could have foreseen that the Eye of Blood Demon would crash suddenly and cause a destructive blow to the forces of the Nether Spring Kingdom and the Kingdom of Lion Butchers?

Right now, in the coalition army of demons, the Nether Spring Kingdom and the Kingdom of Lion Butchers had suffered heavy losses. The soldiers were all in a mess because of the lack of high-ranking officers.

As for the forces of the Gold Crow Kingdom and the Sea Dominator Kingdom, they had barely suffered any loss except for the Mirage Falcon troop led by Jin Tuyi's eldest son.

Strong as the Mirage Falcons might have been, they were only one of the troops of the Gold Crow Kingdom. The Gold Crow Kingdom, as one of the four superpowers of the Blood Demon Sector, was not really hurt just because of the loss of the Mirage Falcons.

Right now, the forces of the Gold Crow Kingdom and the Sea Dominator Kingdom combined seemed to be slightly stronger than those of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers and the Nether Spring Kingdom!

Hong Yuntao's eyes were flickering side to side nonstop.

The truth was that, since the 'point of impact' between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven's Origin Sector was in the Dark Desolate Domain on the Grand Desolate Plateau and it was impossible for the Sea Clan to march through the dry, barren desert, the Sea Clan had barely participated in the invasions against the Heaven's Origin Sector, and there was no much grudge between them and the Cultivators of the Heaven's Origin Sector.

The war cannot be fought any longer , Hong Yuntao secretly thought to himself.

Chapter 1030 - Appearance of the Spore!

However, he definitely would not say what was on his mind directly.

As a leader who was experienced in political struggles, Hong Yuntao knew exactly what a terrifying beast the will of the people was when it was completely activated.

Right at that moment, hundreds of thousands of soldiers, who were both crazy and confused, were still standing right below them. How could he negotiate ‘peace’ with the enemy right now?

Also, even if he agreed to peace, the rest of the demon emperors behind him would not!

As he expected, Hong Yuntao sensed that a volcano was erupting violently behind him. Jin Tuyi shouted at the top of his voice. “Shut up! Do you think that we are scared of death?

“Even if we have lost fourteen demon emperors, even if more than ten elite troops are now gone forever, and even if the wormhole is permanently closed, so what?

“We still have dozens of demon emperors, hundreds of thousands of soldiers, and billions of civilians who can fight!

“Even if the Blood Demon Sector is drowned in the ocean of fire, even if there is only one last soldier that is still standing, even if all the demons are sent out to battle, we will carry on the fight with the shameless Cultivators of the Heaven's Origin Sector!

"We are the offspring of Pangu. We are the children of Nuwa. We do not fear death! Death is just a starting point. Obliteration! Rebirth! Immortality!"

He seemed to have gone mad because of his eldest son's death.

Hong Yuntao's eyes passed Jin Tuyi and stopped at the rest of the demon emperors on the spot.

They were mostly mediocre demon emperors—from the cities and caves outside of the four superpowers or the smaller-sized noble families in the four superpowers—who were not qualified to participate in the decision-making process of the Pantheon of Demons.

In short, they used to be the vassals of the twelve demon emperors of the Pantheon of Demons.

However, right now, of the twelve demon emperors of the Pantheon of Demons, several had perished in the collapsing wormhole. Those 'mediocre' demon emperors could not help but have other thoughts.

Hong Yuntao and those demon emperors exchanged some information secretly during their eye contact.

A few demon emperors from the Sea Clan subtly moved to other locations under his lead.

"Jin Tuyi, as the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons, are you obstinate enough to treat the lives of hundreds of thousands of soldiers and billions of demons as the fuel of your hatred?"

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao bulged his eyes and summoned his demonic energy. Glamorous shell and bone spurs appeared on his left arm, which spread out to his chest forming attractive stripes.

He extended his left hand, and the gem-like crystal in his palm popped up. Demonic fire was rushing out of the crystal and dancing merrily on the top of his palm!

The scene, after being enlarged by the hologram projector, was seen clearly by the hundreds of thousands of soldiers below him.

Most of the elite troops were not aware of Li Yao’s identity. They only knew that he was a Cultivator from the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

But right then, the ‘Cultivator’ was performing techniques of the demon race in public and unleashing intense demonic energy that was no weaker than Jin Tuyi’s!

The best soldiers of the demon race, whose heads were still dizzy because of the savaging tidal force a moment ago, were completely befuddled.

“What—what is going on? Isn’t he a Cultivator? Why is he displaying features of a demon?

“Is he a body fundamentalist? It is said that the body fundamentalists among the Cultivators are able to demonstrate the primeval features, too!

“How can a body fundamentalist unleash such strong demonic energy? What—what is he exactly?”

Li Yao clenched the demonic fire in his hands. Passing Jin Tuyi, his eyes were focused on the coalition army of demons around the bloody lake as he declared resolutely, “Jin Tuyi, don’t you see? I killed a lot of you by destroying the Eye of Blood Demon, but I have saved a lot more, including the hundreds of thousands of elite soldiers of the demon race right below our feet!

“If I hadn’t destroyed the Eye of Blood Demon and simply allowed you to enter the capital city, every one of you, including the hundreds of thousands of soldiers and the dozens of demon emperors, would have been contaminated by the spores, ending up either as walking dead or Elder Nether Spring’s slaves!

“I warned you, but you were not willing to listen to me. Thus, I had to stop the Spore Stratagem in my own way!”

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

In the sky above Li Yao’s head, more than ten enormous light beams appeared again, displaying everything that he had seen in the Mausoleum of Chaos and the Gloomy Islands in the North Pole.

The fierce fight between the Fire Ant King and Elder Nether Spring in the Mausoleum of Chaos, the existence of the Nether World Watch, the inhumane experiments that Lu Wuxin conducted deep inside the Nether World, Li Yao’s battle against the Nether World Watch himself, the miserable appearances of two captains of the captives named Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong, and tremendous experiment data...

Most of the pictures had been captured by Neltharion, and the rest had been taken by the crystal cameras of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. After the careful montage of the specialists in Skyfire, they had turned into an impressive video clip.

For most of the elite soldiers of the coalition army, they had never learned the details of the Spore Stratagem and considered it pure nonsense, if they had ever heard it at all.

This was the first time that they had seen such a shocking view!

Li Yao specifically magnified the picture where Lu Wuxin was testing the ‘uncontrollable mutants’ deep inside the Nether World.

The uncontrollable mutants, whose horror was beyond imagination, seemed to be roaring right in front of the elite soldiers’ eyes. They all felt that their blood was freezing.

The soldiers were even more infuriated when they saw that even the ‘noble’ silver-blood demons were also locked deep below the ground for experiments and even modified into the appearance of human beings!

“Is this true? Such a dreadful army named ‘Nether World Watch’ is lurking in the North Pole?”

“Demon God Virus? Uncontrollable mutants? This—this is too scary!

“Why are the demons turning into the appearance of human beings and human beings now look more like demons?”

For many soldiers of the demon race, their worldview collapsed in that moment.

Hong Yuntao stared at the new information without batting his eyes. It was not the shocking picture that he paid attention to but the sophisticated experiment data.

The impeccable data cast Hong Yuntao into deep thought.

Videos could be faked however extraordinary the visual and sound effects were, but the data, which was internally linked, could not be fabricated easily.

“False. That is all false!” Jin Tuyi gnashed his teeth. “This is all part of the Star Glory Federation’s strategic deception. You are just trying to buy yourself more time!”

Li Yao burst into such laughter that tears were flowing out of his eyes. “The Eye of Blood Demon has collapsed. So many demon emperors and elite soldiers have been killed. You cannot possibly launch a large-scale attack in the next three to five years. Is there any need for me to buy more time?

“Jin Tuyi, believe it or not, the fatal spores are hiding inside your army right now!

“The Eye of Blood Demon has been destroyed anyway. For the time being, you will not be able to start a new attack. So, why don’t you perform a full examination on the soldiers here? I guarantee that you will certainly find the spores!

“One last reminder. The wormhole leading to the Heaven’s Origin Sector has been completely closed. The spores will not reach the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Therefore, they will only be trouble for the Blood Demon Sector!

“It doesn’t matter to me whether you believe me or not. After all, even if Elder Nether Spring bursts into fury and turns to his last resort, the worst-case scenario is that the Blood Demon Sector will become a living hell and all the soldiers, as well as your family, will be transformed into zombies. Do I really care about that at all?”

Jin Tuyi was trembling in anger. The tip of his every feather was turning crimson, as if he had donned a big, red battle robe. He raised his right arm high and pointed at Li Yao like a saber.

“Commander, what are you doing?”

Sensing that Jin Tuyi’s killing intent was soaring, Hong Yuntao’s face lost its color as he dashed to Jin Tuyi and said in a low voice, “I feel that what the guy said is not entirely pointless. The Eye of Blood Demon has been destroyed. Our morale has hit rock bottom. We have lost the war. What use is there in killing him right now? Let’s figure out how to clean this mess up first!”

Jin Tuyi glimpsed at him coldly.

“Look at the soldiers below us,” Hong Yuntao added in a hurry. “They are in disorder right now. If even Blood Demon is destroyed by him, what can we expect to compete against the Heaven’s Origin Sector with?”

“He couldn’t have installed too many crystal bombs in only ten seconds!” Jin Tuyi remarked gloomily. “He is just bluffing!”

“The issue is not whether he can destroy Blood Demon or not!” Hong Yuntao lowered his voice and said quickly, “The real issue is that more than ten demon emperors from the Claw Clan and the Insect Clan, as well as a great number of elite warriors of the Nether Spring Kingdom and the Kingdom of Lion Butchers, have been killed, and their remaining troops are now lacking leadership. We are about to witness an unprecedented change in the history of the Blood Demon Sector, and we must figure out a way to lead the Blood Demon Sector onto a new path! Are we really going to fight until there are no standing soldiers and the Blood Demon Sector is an ocean of fire?”

Jin Tuyi sniffed. Finally, he turned around and glanced at the demon emperors behind him.

Some of the demon emperors were deep in thought, and some were wearing a resolute expression. Some of their faces were unpredictable, and some were written with fury. But it was obvious that none of them were prepared to go forth and die together with Li Yao.

Jin Tuyi’s right hand was still in midair, but he could not slash it down anymore.

Right then—

“Aooo!”

The gold-winged falcon below him suddenly shrieked in an ear-splitting voice and knocked him off before it flew higher into sky!

While flying, it was writhing in pain. Countless dark, green pustules appeared on the falcon’s body and festered at a visible speed, soon enveloping the beast and turning it into an abnormal monster made of a series of lumps. Then, the pustules all exploded into clusters of dark, green mist!

“This is—”

Everybody was shocked!

The venomous mist raged and spread out.

Jin Tuyi was greatly startled. He retreated hundreds of meters back together with the other demon emperors before commanding a barrage of the devilish warships to burn the ‘venomous mist’ into nothingness with demonic fire!

“Is this the spore?”

Jin Tuyi’s face suddenly turned gray. He mumbled, “Elder Nether Spring planted the spore into my biochemical beast and set the time of explosion in advance.

“If the Eye of Blood Demon wasn’t destroyed, I would’ve been engaged in a fierce battle in the capital city of the Star Glory Federation right now!

“If the spore was suddenly triggered while I was fighting hard…”

Chapter 1031 - Yes, Commander!

Jin Tuyi’s words silenced all the demon emperors.

They did not realize that the biochemical beast of the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons could be compromised by the Spore Stratagem.

If that was the case, what about their biochemical beasts and the companions next to them?

If Li Yao had not destroyed the Eye of Blood Demon just now, a lot of them would have entered the capital city of the Star Glory Federation for battle.

When they were fighting hard against the Cultivators of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, who could have survived when the spores suddenly broke out?

The coalition army of demons on the ground were watching the scene clearly, too, and saw that their commander-in-chief’s biochemical beast had turned into a writhing monster.

The elite soldiers of the demon race were greatly shocked.

Looking at each other in bewilderment, they were thinking the same question.*Is what he said just now true? Does the Spore Stratagem really exist?* Has he saved us all?

“Do you see it?”

Li Yao was overjoyed by the spore that had broken out at a perfect moment. It was undeniable proof in front of the hundreds of thousands of soldiers of the demon race.

Waving his arms and legs, he shouted, “Jin Tuyi, if you refuse to change your mindset, your outcome will be exactly the same as your biochemical beast’s, as will be the case for all the best soldiers here and all the demons of the Blood Demon Sector!

“The spore that has been lurking right next to you is resolved now, but are you certain that Elder Nether Spring has planted only one spore beside you? What about the other demon emperors? Do they have no spores around them?

“I am heavily wounded anyway, and my crystal suit has exploded. There’s no way that I can escape! Even if you are determined to kill me, why must you be in such a hurry? Take some time to examine your army first! If you can’t find a second spore, I am willing to cut off my head and give it to you as a football!”

Jin Tuyi’s eyes were still resolute and gloomy, but his lips were trembling, indicating that he was in a quite dilemma.

“Commander!” Hong Yuntao coughed and reminded him, “When we drafted the Red Tide Plan, did you not arrange for a medical warship named Bloodborne, which boasts level-6 virus examination abilities, to join the battle formation fearing that our warriors would be scourged by the weird viruses in the Heaven’s Origin Sector? Move Bloodborne here and run a test! It is true that he has nowhere to run. We can do whatever we want to him, but we are not in a hurry.”

Jin Tuyi blinked and struggled for a long time. Finally, he gritted his teeth and turned around, staring at the rest of the demon emperors.

“Everybody, the Blood Demon Sector has truly come to the most critical juncture. Right now, what counts most for us is unification. Only with unification can we manage to pass through these troubling times!

“Right now, we cannot confirm whether the Spore Stratagem is real or a scheme of the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

“However, assuming that the Spore Stratagem does exist, Elder Nether Spring’s primary targets for his infection are definitely the demon emperors here!

“As the saying goes, destroy the leader and the gang will collapse. As soon as we are all infected and transformed into his slaves, it will be much more convenient for him to completely contaminate the coalition army of demons!

“Therefore, I must ask you to think carefully. In the original battle plan, who was to be the closest to you after you arrived in the capital city of the Star Glory Federation?

“Not just the warriors but also the demon beasts and the biochemical beasts!

“I am planning to move Bloodborne over and perform a full examination on the soldiers and demon beasts, which may take one day. Are there any objections?”

All of demon emperors looked at each other in bewilderment.

The strongest had the largest voice in the world of demons. Of the four giants of the Blood Demon Sector, Jin Tuyi had ranked third before, topped by Elder Blood Robe and Elder Nether Spring.

The mediocre demon emperors, especially those from the Claw Clan and the Insect Clan, naturally respected their own leaders and would not entirely listen to Jin Tuyi's command.

But right now, Elder Blood Robe had been teleported into the Heaven's Origin Sector, only having a slim chance of survival. Elder Nether Spring had been impeached and involved in the mysterious scheme named the Spore Stratagem.

The remaining demon emperors of the Insect Clan, stared at by so many suspicious companions, almost could not wait to prove their innocence. There was no way that they were going to defend Elder Nether Spring.

Jin Tuyi's request was very reasonable. The other demon emperors had neither the strength nor an excuse to defy him.

Hun Yuntao, as Jin Tuyi's hardcore ally, was the first to nod. "Alright. I am going to make a list now. Everybody on the list, including myself, will be examined!"

Of the four giants, one was assumed to be dead, one was currently being suspected, and the other two had the same attitude. Other demon emperors had nothing more to say, and all nodded along.

If truth be told, they were worried that horrid spores were lurking around themselves, too!

"Excellent!" Glimmers blinked in Jin Tuyi's eyes before he quickly declared, "Heed my orders!

"First, the coalition army of demons will set up camp immediately and perform sanitation and sterilization work according to the standard of a level-6 infection! The Demon

God Virus cannot withstand high and low temperature. So, prepare the fire and frost weapons, and kill all the infected soldiers suspected to be spores without mercy!

“Second, move the medical warships over, and prepare a rapid virus test immediately!

“Third, list your trusted subordinates and the most indispensable demon beasts and biochemical beasts for examination. Annihilate all of them should there be any anomalies!

“Not only will your trusted subordinates receive the virus test, they will also be interrogated in a deep hypnotization state. Those who refuse to be hypnotized shall be executed instantly!

“Fourth, all the devilish warships must activate their self-destruction rune arrays and aim their cannons at the ground. If any suspected spores are discovered on the ground, blow them up immediately! If too many soldiers on the devilish warship are infected and the disease is beyond control, detonate the entire devilish warship at the earliest chance!

“Fifth, contact Elder Nether Spring right now and ask him to arrive at the Eye of Blood Demon as quickly as possible, partly to supervise the troops of the Insect Clan here and partly to participate in the investigation of the Spore Stratagem!

“Finally, perform emergency maintenance on the Eye of Blood Demon, and try to recover the short-distance teleportation ability as soon as possible!”

Hong Yuntao was dazed. He frowned and said, “The Eye of Blood Demon has been seriously sabotaged. It is not likely to be repaired in a few days, is it? Even if it is repaired, we still won't be able to teleport many troops to the Heaven's Origin Sector since the peak hour of the 'tidal force' is already over."

"Who says that I am going to teleport the troops to the Heaven's Origin Sector?"

Jin Tuyi narrowed his eyes. The agitation and fury a moment ago were concealed in the deepest part of his pupils. He was suddenly more tranquil than ever, but the intense killing intent around his body was still increasing, decorating his body with yet another layer of sharp feathers. "I only want part of the teleportation function of the Eye of Blood Demon to be repaired so that part of the best troops can be sent into Elder Nether Spring's nest in the Nether Spring Kingdom!"

Deep in thought, Hong Yuntao nodded. Then, he suddenly shuddered, and his pupils constricted. He looked at Jin Tuyi in an utterly different way, with shock and fear!

Jin Tuyi patted his shoulder softly, but his giant hands did not leave his hardcore ally's shoulder. He stared at the demon emperors on the spot with a pair of eyes as deep and cold as an ocean while he solemnly said, "A catastrophe is falling right upon our race. We are now in great peril with barely any chance of survival! To preserve the forces of our race, I will resort to any approach necessary! Your trusted subordinates, and even yourselves, if involved in the Spore Stratagem, shall be punished in the most merciless way!

"Carry out my orders!"

"Yes, commander!"

All the mediocre demon emperors were sweating under Jin Tuyi's stare. They all echoed and dispersed, regrouping their troops and summoning their subordinates.

But Hong Yuntao still lingered next Jin Tuyi, wearing a both frightened and confused expression, as if this was the first day that he had met his old friend whom he had been fighting side by side for decades.

Jin Tuyi did not avoid his skeptical eyes at all. Holding his battle saber, he demanded, one word after another, “General Hong, is there any part in my orders that you find confusing?”

In the Pantheon of Demons, they were both among the four giants. One of them was the leader of the Feather Clan while the other was the leader of the Sea Clan. They were equal.

But right now, they were in the middle of a war. In the coalition army of demons, Jin Tuyi was the commander-in-chief, and Hong Yuntao was merely a general.

Theoretically speaking, Jin Tuyi definitely had the right to punish Hong Yuntao mercilessly!

Hong Yuntao glanced at the ground and looked for his own troops.

Because of the savaging tidal force, the elite troops of the Sea Clan had been mixed up with the warriors from the other clans. Also, they had been asked to set up camps and perform sanitation work in a hurry. It was impossible for them to regroup quickly and display their full combat ability.

Although the ocean was a boundless place and there were endless resources at the bottom, the density of resources in a given space was far from that on the continent.

Also, it was very costly to collect resources from the trenches that were tens of thousands of meters deep.

Fire was the source of every civilization. Modern civilizations could not have been established without large-scale metal purification. There were a lot of restrictions at the bottom of the ocean to use fire.

Therefore, although the Sea Dominator Kingdom's territory was an infinite ocean, its comprehensive capability was the lowest among the four major demon kingdoms. It was even weaker than the Gold Crow Kingdom, which governed the sky.

If it were in the ocean, Hong Yuntao would not have been scared to turn against anybody. He was confident to confront even the best troops of the Nether Spring Kingdom and the Kingdom of Lion Butchers with his warriors.

However, he was on the continent right now. The only water area here was the bloody lake that had been half vaporized.

Would a shark not have the most terrible fate when it was forced to land on the beach even though it was fiercest in the ocean?

In the intense staring contest, Hong Yuntao was the first to admit failure. He slightly lowered his head and said, “No, there isn't. Commander, I will summon my subordinates for the examination immediately!”

“Wait.”

Jin Tuyi was still holding Hong Yuntao's shoulder, but his eyes were gentler than before. In a low voice, he said, “Blood Robe is dead, and Nether Spring is about to be dead, too. The Kingdom of Lion Butchers and the Nether Spring

Kingdom have suffered heavy losses. The Blood Demon Sector will embrace a vastly different future!

“The future is too huge to be enjoyed by the Feather Clan alone, isn’t it?”

Hong Yuntao realized where the conversation was going. With a smile, he took a deep breath and nodded, replying loudly, “Yes, commander!”

Chapter 1032 - Something’s Wrong!

Inside the command center of the Spore Stratagem in the Nether World Watch’s secret base…

If the place had been like an undersea graveyard when the Eye of Blood Demon was destroyed, it was like an undersea graveyard that had been abandoned for thousands of years now.

The picture sent to the retinas of the captains of the Nether World Watch through the wireless brainwaves made their faces more awful than ever.

As the peak hour of the tidal force gradually passed, the three bloody moons in the sky split apart, and the lake was now stable again.

The troops that were mixed together were setting up camps on the spot, building up iron gauze with high-voltage electric arcs and defense rune arrays.

The safety measures were meant to both stop the enemy from rushing in and the soldiers inside from running out.

Many soldiers were wearing flawless anti-chemical suits and breathing from cans filled with compressed air or through filters. Acid cannons were spinning nonstop, looking around at high alert.

Soldiers in anti-chemical suit and masks, under the lead of the demon emperors, looked for their trusted subordinates and demon beasts. Whenever they found a target, they would escort the target into Bloodborne, the medical warship, for examination.

All the demon emperors and soldiers kept their distance from the examinee and locked onto them with remote firepower, not giving them the chance to infect others.

Swoosh!

Right then, the southwest of the crowd was in a mess. A tiger warrior soared into the sky and escaped at the highest speed. The demon emperor could not stop the deserter however loudly he shouted.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM BOOM!

The demon emperor of the Claw Clan stopped chasing. Frustrated, he waved his hands. The devilish warships behind him immediately launched a barrage, swallowing the tiger warrior with acids, venom, and demonic rays. Then, demonic fire sterilized all the places where he had been so far.

“What an idiot!”

Despot, a captain of the Nether World Watch, was more than infuriated by what he saw. He slapped the table and shouted, “Why is he running? Isn’t that a confession?”

“It’s useless,” Swirl, the other captain, replied desperately. “Even if he didn’t run away, there would’ve been no way that he could pass the level-6 virus test. It is even likely that he would have told all our secrets in the deep hypnotization state.

“He is not the key to our problem, nor are any other spores hiding in the coalition army of demons. It was Jin Tuyi’s biochemical beast, the spore that was first detonated, that made the situation hopeless for us!

“Why on earth did the Scorpion-Tailed Gold-Winged Falcon mutate without reason and release such terrifying venomous fog?

“We did not modify the biochemical beast at all. It was Jin Tuyi’s favorite biochemical beast. Refining it into a spore was too risky. Therefore, we did not touch it at all!

“Besides, the symptom is totally different from the outbreak of the Demon God Virus!”

Swirl and Despot both looked at Elder Nether Spring in suspicion.

Staring at the picture for a long time, Elder Nether Spring did not burst into crazy laughter until more spores fled out of the coalition army of demons and were blown into smithereens by the cannon fire.

“Hehe. Hehehehe. Fooled. We’ve all been fooled!”

Elder Nether Spring laughed so hard that his eyes turned red. Every muscle on his face was twitching as he gnashed his teeth. “Don’t you see? Jin Tuyi’s Scorpion-Tailed Gold-Winged Falcon did not contract the Demon God Virus at all. God knows what the heck it was infected with! Perhaps another virus, a fatal poison, or cell activation drugs that were hundreds of times above the normal usage!”

Despot was dazed. He stammered, “Who—who did it? Why did the disease break out at the perfect moment, neither late nor early?”

“Who else could it have been except for Jin Tuyi himself?” Elder Nether Spring closed his eyes. The antennae on his forehead dangled down helplessly while he mumbled, “We were tricked. We were all tricked by the ‘moron’!”

Despot and Swirl looked at each other in bewilderment, and their face color greatly changed.

‘Mad Medic’ Lu Wuxin reeled in horror so violently that his head almost retreated into his neck. The final judgement on Jin Tuyi’s cerebral sclerosis had been made by him!

For a moment, Elder Nether Spring’s killing intent soared to the maximum, as if he were going to slay every soldier of the Nether World Watch in the command center.

However, his muscles loosened again, and he waved his hands in depression. “Cut off the communication with the Eye of Blood Demon. The Spore Stratagem is done.”

“What!” Swirl and Despot were both surprised. “But we still have so many spies in the coalition army of demons who can monitor everything happening in the Eye of Blood Demon…”

“What’s there to monitor right now?” Elder Nether Spring shouted in a bad mood. “When we are monitoring him, he is monitoring us, too!

“The spies have to send out wireless brainwaves in order to transmit the picture to us. Chances are that Jin Tuyi has already locked onto the brainwaves and traced them back to our secret base. He might even be going to teleport an elite troop to this place and fish up us once and for all!

“Quickly. Cut off all brainwave transmissions. Evacuate immediately!”

Swirl and Despot were both at a loss.

An hour ago, they had thought that they were truly going to be the ‘gods’ in Elder Nether Spring’s theory and become the dominators of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector.

But now? Everything was a joke!

“Elder, what do we do next?” Swirl murmured.

“Activate the final solution,” Elder Nether Spring said gloomily. “Even if we are cursed, thousands of demons will die together with us!”

…

Around the Eye of Blood Demon, in the camps of the coalition army of demons…

If the mutation of Jin Tuyi’s Scorpion-Tailed Gold-Winged Falcon was only a bit suspicious, the fact that more and more spores were fleeing in a hurry before they received the test further proved the existence of the Spore Stratagem.

It was especially so when a spore activated the Demon God Virus inside his body in desperation when he had nowhere to run. The scarlet venomous fog contaminated almost ten soldiers nearby and transformed them into horrifying ‘uncontrollable mutants’. After that, nobody had any doubt about Li Yao’s words!

Thankfully, the coalition army of demons had entered the level-6 quarantine state earlier. Most of the soldiers had put on the anti-chemical suit and the masks, and they were highly vigilant.

Before the ‘uncontrollable mutants’ caused any greater damage, they were burnt to ash by the demonic fire.

The scenes were all captured by the biochemical eyes and projected to the sky so that all the soldiers could see what was going on.

As a result, the demon emperors and the soldiers who were secretly complaining about the arrangement were all sweating in shock, having no objection to Jin Tuyi’s commands anymore.

However, it would take quite a few days to perform a strict examination on the hundreds of thousands of soldiers present.

It was destined to be the longest night in history.

However, even the longest night would be over sooner or later.

Dawn, even one stained with blood, was certain to come.

Above Blood Demon, the flagship of the coalition army of demons, Jin Tuyi and Li Yao confronted each other in silence, ten meters away from each other.

They were the only two in the hundreds of square meters nearby.

“Thirty-two spores have been discovered. Twelve of them detonated themselves and infected almost a hundred soldiers. Most of the victims were annihilated, but nine ‘uncontrollable mutants’ were captured alive,” Jin Tuyi said casually. “After a lengthy discussion, all the demon emperors have agreed unanimously that the Spore Stratagem is real.

Therefore, as a representative of all the demon emperors, we can have a proper talk now.”

Li Yao sat cross-legged and scratched his burnt hair, grasped by a feeling of anxiety.

He had been confident that everything was under his control.

However, since the mutation of the Scorpion-Tailed Gold-Winged Falcon, the whole event seemed to have undergone subtle changes.

Jin Tuyi’s reactions were too fast, weren’t they?

In just one hour, the sanitation work of hundreds of thousands of soldiers had been completed, and all the follow-up measures had been settled in an orderly fashion, as if the whole thing had been rehearsed hundreds of times!

Besides, had he not been a bit too edgy a moment ago? For a cold-blooded hero who would not bother batting an eye when he heard his daughter’s patricide plan, would he have been so greatly disturbed when he learned of his son’s death?

Just now, Li Yao had been too focused on convincing the coalition army of demons of the existence of the Spore Stratagem to care about these ‘minor issues’.

But right now, he was more or less relaxed, and he was finally able to spare part of his computational ability. Immediately, he noticed that something was wrong.

His eyelash bouncing, Li Yao mumbled, “Is Elder Nether Spring a moron?”

Jin Tuyi was unmoved. “What did you say?”

“Elder Nether Spring’s first spore was rather weird!” Li Yao found it more and more perplexing. “If he had indeed planted the Demon God Virus in your biochemical beast and set it to be detonated at a certain time, there is no reason he would let the virus break out so early!

“Without me as the unexpected factor, you would’ve successfully passed through the wormhole. That would have been too early a time for the virus in the Scorpion-Tailed Gold-Winged Falcon to break out!

“It would only have been several minutes since you entered the capital city. Chances are that you wouldn’t have moved to the downtown area and met the Cultivators.

“But the virus broke out. That seems too rash!

“Why didn’t it lurk for a day and a half, when you and all the Cultivators were exhausted, before it exploded? Wouldn’t that be a much safer approach and boast a higher chance of infection?

“Even if the Demon God Virus must be activated so early, all the spores should’ve been detonated together. Was there any particular reason one of the spores should have exploded earlier than others?”

Jin Tuyi smiled. “You do seem have to have point.”

Li Yao eyed him up and down for a long time. “The first time I saw you, you were casually preparing to kill one of your daughters. The second time I saw you, you burst into fury because of the death of your son. Now, only one hour has passed, and you are talking and laughing casually again?”

“All those are the details that do not matter,” Jin Tuyi said peacefully. “What counts right now is that there is finally reason for our cooperation.

“You mentioned that the Divine Blood of Chaos is flowing inside Jin Xinyue’s body and that you are trying to duplicate her blood and synthesize the Divine Blood of Chaos as an antidote for the Demon God Virus.

“Now, my soldiers have contracted the Demon God Virus and turned into uncontrollable mutants. Even more soldiers are faced with the threat of the Demon God Virus right now. I need the antidote.”

Chapter 1033 - Red Tide Rises Again!

“Wait. Wait,” Li Yao said. “My head is a mess right now. I have to think about too many questions. I’m a bit confused.

“Until I figure everything out, it is impossible for me to tell you the headquarters of Skyfire and the secrets about the antidote.”

“It doesn’t matter,” Jin Tuyi confidently said. “Take your time to consider. After all, I have to clean up this mess, repair the Eye of Blood Demon, and find out the unstable factors mixed in the coalition army of demons first.

“However, are you really going to be enjoying a night of cold wind here?”

Li Yao licked his lips and grinned. “The air here is excellent.”

Jin Tuyi smiled. “Cut the crap. Blood Demon is my flagship. I know its formidability much better than you do. Ten seconds is far from enough for you to plant crystal bombs on every key location. Do not lower the level of our game with such petty tricks.

“Besides—”

His eyes turned cold and cruel. “Even if you have packed Blood Demon with bombs, do you think that I am the type of person who cares about a particular warship or legion?

“Come on. If you really need to think, why don’t you pick a room inside Blood Demon where you can detonate your nonexistent crystal bombs at any time and take your time to think?

“Even if you don’t believe me, you should at least believe in your own deduction and judgement. In the current situation, you are not only my companion to fight against Elder Nether Spring but also the most crucial bridge for our communication with the Heaven’s Origin Sector. There is no reason I would kill you at this moment, is there?”

Li Yao stared at Jin Tuyi for a long time before he solemnly observed, “I find that I seem to have fallen into your trap.”

…

Ten minutes later, after dealing with Li Yao, Jin Tuyi dismissed his subordinates and returned to his secret relaxation chamber.

The moment he closed the door of the cabin, he could not hold it any longer and fell to his knees, supporting himself with his hands. However, after only half a second, his two hands turned into noodles, and he leaned forward and collapsed to the ground like a pile of mud.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

The excruciating pain inside his brain, which felt like a volcanic eruption, made Jin Tuyi’s eyeballs bulge out, and his eyes ripped apart. Veins were protruding all over his face, and every orifice was bleeding. Sweat was flowing out incessantly like a spring.

He gritted his teeth so hard that he almost crushed them. The nerves on his gums rubbed against each other and caused insufferable pain.

However, even the insufferable pain on his gums was only less than one percent of the pain deep inside his brain!

The commander-in-chief of demons was sobbing in pain!

“Pain…painkiller!”

Jin Tuyi was both crying and sweating. Like a skinned dog, he was struggling in the ocean of pain and shouted in a completely twisted voice.

Paji. Paji. Paji. Paji.

A demon beast, which was fat, furry, with two short and stupid wings, flew over. It looked like a little pig that had grown wings.

While flapping its wings and waving its long tail, the little pig uttered in a cute voice, “Master, as your personal medical assistant, Little Dot feels that the pain of your brain is because of the overactive state of your brain cells. Therefore, other than injecting the pain killer, it will be best to also inject the braincell suppressant to cool down the brain a little bit. Otherwise, the excruciating pain cannot be cured.”

The voice of ‘Little Dot’ sounded somewhat similar to Jin Xinyue’s.

“Painkiller, now!”

Jin Tuyi was writhing on the ground in pain, his feathers scattered all about. He roared thunderously and even condensed a stream of demonic energy, slashing toward Little Dot. The demon beast creaked and quickly sent over a dose of highly-compressed pain killer with its tail.

Chi!

A long, narrow needle extended out of Little Dot’s tail. After all the pain killer had been injected into Jin Tuyi’s spine, the commander-in-chief was finally relaxed after cramping for a further ten seconds. He stretched out his arms and legs and took a long breath in relief.

His face was soaked in blood, tears, and snot, and yet he did not even have the strength to wipe them off.

“Little Dot, inject another four units of the brain cell activation drug.”

“Master, your cerebral sclerosis is now in the middle phase. In the middle phase, it is best that you adopt the conservative therapy and suppress your thinking ability to below 70% with the braincell suppressant.

“You cannot use your thinking ability at the maximum anymore, much less bringing it beyond 110% with four units of brain cell activation drug. It is like a patient of a serious heart disease participating in a short run after injecting too much exhilarant. It’s too dangerous!

“All in all, according to Little Dot’s deduction, the overloading in the recent half year has already put master’s brain on the verge of collapse. If you don’t treat your brain well, you might become a moron at any moment, Master.

“You are Little Dot’s creator, Master, and you are father to me. How can Little Dot stand by and watch Master turning into a moron?”

Jin Tuyi stared at the demon beast coldly. “Little Dot, turn off the artificial intelligence simulation mode and switch to enforced excitation mode. Shut your annoying mouth!

“Four units of the brain cell activation drug, and 1.5 units of the slow-release pain killer. Inject now!”

“Yes, Master.”

Chi—

Two doses of deep, bluish drugs were pushed into the back of Jin Tuyi’s head steadily. His bulging veins slowly turned blue. Even the deepest part of his pupils seemed to have been dyed an azure color.

The blue color flashed and quickly disappeared. Jin Tuyi’s eyes were mysterious and unpredictable again. He casually said, “Little Dot, test the keenness of the synapses on the nerves in my brain and calculate my thinking ability. What is my status right now?”

“Yes, Master. According to my measurement, after injecting four units of the brain cell activation drug, your intelligence level has returned to 99% of your peak state.

“However, your brain has been too seriously damaged to maintain this efficiency for long. It will retrograde in three to five days. Large doses of the brain cell activating drug will be required by then. But the odds of a brain crash and loss of self-awareness will be much higher, too.”

“Got it,” Jin Tuyi said calmly. “If I really turn into a moron, you know what to do.”

“I do,” Little Dot said. “Once it is determined that master’s intelligence is less than 50% your peak state, the artificial intelligence simulation mode and autorun mode will be immediately activated. I will find master’s daughter, Jin Xinyue, and inform her of the whole content of the Red Tide Plan and the roadmap. She will be appointed as the next implementer of the Red Tide Plan, and I will help her complete the following procedures of the Red Tide Plan."

Jin Tuyi struggled to shake his head and tried to stand on his feet, but the aftershock-like pain deep inside his brain made him treble violently again. It was not until five seconds later that he managed to stand straight again.

"Several of your vital signs are seriously abnormal. You should take at least an hour's rest in the medical cabin."

"Don't think that I do not know you have activated the artificial intelligence simulation mode in secret when you pretend to speak in a calm voice," Jin Tuyi snarled.

"I am going to take a shower, Little Dot. Prepare something to eat for me. I can rest for ten minutes at best.

"It is going to be a long night. The dawn is still far away!"

…

Twenty minutes later, in his office on Blood Demon, Jin Tuyi put on a fresh, white robe. Together with his dustless wings and the high crow on his head, which was knitted with feathers, he looked more elegant and unworldly than ever.

He never gave out the feeling that he was a commander-in-chief. He was more like a chess player who considered the universe his board and the stars his chess pieces!

Jin Tuyi crossed his hands in front of his chest while he stared at the unattractive, middle-aged member of the Feather Clan before him.

The member was the cook that he had kept in his company since he was in his hometown. Every night, when he was enjoying the Red Fire Star Spotted Oysters, the two of them would spend five minutes alone.

The cook who was particularly good at making seafood was also the head of the ‘Dark Clothes Society’, a special force responsible for espionage, assassination, sabotage, and intelligence under Jin Tuyi’s command.

One might also say that he was the head of Jin Tuyi’s personal agents.

“I didn’t know that the Spore Stratagem was real and that Elder Nether Spring had planted so many spores in the coalition army of demons. Even the chief’s ride was infected. It was a serious mistake on our side,” the head of the Dark Clothes Society said nervously. “Thankfully, we’ve got the situation under control. We are definitely going to search for Elder Nether Spring’s spies and eliminate every single one of them!”

“A thorough search is indeed necessary,” Jin Tuyi said emotionlessly. “Even my mount was compromised by them. I do wonder, how many people around me, or rather, in the entire Feather Clan, can I trust?”

“Rest assured, chief!” The head of the Dark Clothes Society wiped off his cold sweat and gnashed his teeth. “The Dark Clothes Society will take action immediately. We will try to filter all the best soldiers of the Feather Clan and locate the spies in three days!”

“Filter, we must,” Jin Tuyi said. “However, the Dark Clothes Society will be relieved of the trouble for the mission.”

The head of the Dark Clothes Society was dazed. He stammered, “Chief—chief, who else do you want to complete the task if not the Dark Clothes Society?”

Right then, door knocks that were neither too heavy nor too light echoed.

Jin Tuyi smiled. He drew a pattern in midair, and the cabin door was opened slowly.

Three muscular soldiers wearing the uniform of middle-level officers walked in in a row.

Their enormous body size, the vague scent of the wilderness, and their scorching eyes instantly filled the not-at-all-small office. The head of the Dark Clothes Society was squeezed at the center.

There was a pair of thick horns above all the three officers, either straight or as curved as a saber.

“Shen Tubo, captain of 101 Snow Yak Transportation Team, reporting for duty!”

“Lu Feidu, captain of 337 Reindeer Logistics Legion, reporting for duty!

“Yang Rui, captain of ‘Black Antelope’ Mountain Special Force, reporting for duty!”

“This is—”

The head of the Dark Clothes Society was shuddering in confusing and fright.

Although the three young officers were from different troops and their appearances were vastly different, they had one thing in common.

There were five main clans in the Blood Demon Sector, namely the Feather Clan, the Claw Clan, the Sea Clan, the

Insect Clan, and the Horn Clan.

The three officers were all from the Horn Clan, the only one of the five clans that did not have their own kingdom!

Chapter 1034 - Reborn in Fire!

Of the three main clans, three lived on the continent. Among them, the Insect Clan had obvious differences from the other two clans.

As for the Claw Clan and the Horn Clan, not all demons who had sharp claws belonged to the Claw Clan, and not all those who had thick horns were part of the Horn Clan; they were classified according to their eating habit.

The carnivorous demons, like wolves, tigers, and leopards, belonged to the Claw Clan.

The herbivorous and omnivorous demons, on the other hand, belonged to the Horn Clan, such as bull demons, goat demons, deer demons, horse demons, and even pig demons.

Perhaps because of their genes, the Horn Clan was the mildest one of the five main clans. They were not fond of aggression or fighting.

However, it did not mean that the Horn Clan was weak.

Compared to the Claw Clan, the Horn Clan was mostly larger in size and boasted more physical strength. They were mostly natural-born Herculeses.

In regard of valiance, bull demons, the largest branch in the Horn Clan, had the largest number of tough warriors. The boar warriors were the opposite of weak, too. Some other branches, such as rhino demons and mammoth demons, were as high and mighty as pillars supporting the sky. Even the most brutal tiger demons and wolf demons did not dare underestimate them.

In regard to production and construction, the bull demons, goat demons, and horse demons in the Horn Clan were the role models of hard work. They were dutiful workers who could provide steady labor.

With the joint efforts of so many branches, the Horn Clan once established a magnificent country named the Horn Flame Kingdom, which enjoyed its heyday hundreds of years ago.

However, the dominance of the Horn Flame Kingdom harmed the interests of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers and the Nether Spring Kingdom.

The Horn Clan, too straightforward to play dirty tricks, did not notice the conspiracy of the Insect Clan and the Claw Clan. Finally, two hundred years ago, it was collectively attacked by the other four superpowers and eventually perished.

But naturally, the Feather Clan and the Sea Clan did not get many benefits. Most of the territory of the Horn Flame Kingdom was divided by the Kingdom of Lion Butchers and the Nether Spring Kingdom.

After losing their country, all the branches of the Horn Clan ended up being the vassals of the other four clans. They did not have any voice in the Pantheon of Demons and lived under someone else’s rule. In the coalition army of demons, they were either cannon fodder leading the charge or mediocre troops in charge of logistics or farming.

Two hundred years had passed. Demons of the Blood Demon Sector had gradually forgotten the formidable Horn Flame Kingdom. Nobody paid any attention to the Horn Clan, who had been enduring the suffering in silence.

The arrival of the three officers of the Horn Clan and their spirit, which was vastly different from the demeanor of ordinary members of the Horn Clan, made the head of the Dark Clothes Society realize what was going on.

The head of the Dark Clothes Society knew that the troops under the officers' lead did not belong to the combat troops that were supposed to invade the Heaven's Origin Sector. They were merely mediocre troops responsible for the shipment of assets.

Among them, the Black Antelope Mountain Special Force was not even a shipping troop. It was not involved in battle at all!

How did they end up here?

Jin Tuyi's face was even sunnier than before. He nodded at the three officers. "You are finally here. Everything good?"

"Reporting to the commander, our troops have been successfully deployed."

Yang Rui, captain of the Black Antelope Mountain Special Force, replied resolutely, "Besides the three of us, another twelve legions of the Horn Clan are reinforcing. It is estimated that the area around the Eye of Blood Demon will be occupied within two hours!"

"Excellent." Jin Tuyi glanced at the head of the Dark Clothes Society and said casually, "Is there anything else you want to say?"

Jin Tuyi’s eyes, which were as dazzling as a shining blade, made the head of the Dark Clothes Society understand everything. Sweating, he almost fell to the ground. He panted hard and said, “Chief—chief, can you give me a chance?”

Jin Tuyi sighed, as if he were surprised that his trusted subordinate who had worked for him for decades was so ignorant of his personality as to pose such a naïve question. “Do you not know the answer?

“You don’t have any chance now. But your entire family, 138 individuals in total taking everyone related to you into account, still has a chance, however slim it is.

“I know that people of your trade are all cold-hearted and do not care about the lives of one or two family members. But I wonder, do the lives of 138 family members mean anything to you?

“You’ve led the Dark Clothes Society for so many years. So, you must know that some of the punishments in the Dark Clothes Society are more miserable than death. In fact, some of the punishments were invented by yourself. Do you wish for your own family to be tortured by the punishments you invented?”

The head of the Dark Clothes Society shuddered, sweat and tears pouring out nonstop.

“You’ve followed me for so many years, and I appreciate your loyalty so far. If you want a chance, I’ll give you one. This is how we are going to settle this,” Jin Tuyi said calmly. “Of your 138 family members, I will spare one after you reveal one of Elder Nether Spring’s spies. If you give me 138 names, I will spare your entire family, and you will even be granted a clean and quick death. The Feather Clan will pay for your grand funeral. Your family will not be involved. The prospect of your offspring will not be affected. How does that sound?"

The head of the Dark Clothes Society collapsed. He kneeled before Jin Tuyi and shrieked, "Hear my words, chief! My communication with Elder Nether Spring has always been one-way. I know three to four suspects at best. How can I possibly know 138 of the conspirators? Please give me another chance, chief!"

"It doesn't matter." Jin Tuyi smiled. "It's very simple. If you confess a suspect, the suspect will be your 'referral'. If your 'referral' confesses a suspect, that is equivalent to half a confession for you. So, as long as your referral confesses more referrals, half, half plus another half, perhaps you will be able to make 138.

"If you can't, nothing can be helped. You might as well take the time to think about who in your family should be executed and who should be kept alive.

"Right. Don't bite randomly because you want to save more of your family members. If the investigation proves that you have accused an innocent individual, the deal we made just now will lose effect, and I will let all your family members die in front of your eyes.

"I promise that they will not be dead until three days and three nights later, and during the three days and three nights, you won't even be able to close your eyes.

"I promise."

The head of the Dark Clothes Society screamed at the top of his voice. "Chief, chief, I am suspicious about some of them, but I am not certain that they are Elder Nether Spring’s spies!”

“If you are suspicious, just tell me dutifully that you are suspicious. Confess all the anomalies and the reasons for suspecting them. I will make a judgement myself.”

“Understood.” The head of the Dark Clothes Society breathed hard in pain below everyone’s feet like a fish whose bones had been removed.

Jin Tuyi waved his hands. “Take him away. Act immediately when he gives a name!”

The three officers all acknowledged the command, but Shen Tubo, captain of the 101 Snow Yak Transportation Team, was absolutely still like an iron tower.

Jin Tuyi seemed to have foreseen their reactions. He sat down in the chair and asked, “Anything else?”

“Yes, commander!” Shen Tubo, who had white, long fur all over his body and was as magnificent as a large yak, replied loudly. “Commander, you once told us that you would help the Horn Clan take back the glory that belongs to us, that the five clans would be completely equal, that we would have a more important place in the coalition army of demons!

“At that time, we thought that it was impossible!

“But today, we have really seen a glimmer of hope that the Horn Clan will rise again. That is why we are willing to obey and work for the commander!

“However, it never occurred to us that the glimmer of hope would be exchanged for the overall interests of the Blood

Demon Sector!

“It is true that the Horn Clan has lived under someone else’s roof for more than two hundred years. We’ve suffered the enslavement of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers and the Nether Spring Kingdom. We crave for a new world where all clans are equal!

“But we do not want the rise of the Horn Clan to jeopardize the interests of the Blood Demon Sector.

“After all, for the bull demons, goat demons, and deer demons, we have the same identity—the Horn Clan. But beyond the Horn Clan, we have a higher identity. We all belong to the demon race!

“First and foremost, we are members of the demon race. Then, we are members of the Horn Clan. In the end, we are bull demons, goat demons, and deer demons!

“Therefore, we all need an answer here. Is the destruction of the Eye of Blood Demon really a coincidence?”

“You seem to believe that I have done something that seriously jeopardized the interests of the Blood Demon Sector?” Jin Tuyi replied without giving an answer.

Shen Tubo frowned and said, “The destruction of the Eye of Blood Demon caused the death of more than ten demon emperors and tremendous elite soldiers. Our strategy has been grasped by the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

“The Red Tide Plan has failed. We have lost. It’s impossible for us to conquer the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

“Isn’t that jeopardizing the Blood Demon Sector?”

Jin Tuyi slowly rose up. Holding the desk, he looked down upon the three young officers and demanded, one word after another, “Who told you that the Red Tide Plan failed? Who told you that we cannot conquer the Heaven’s Origin Sector anymore?”

The three young officers were dumbfounded. Shen Tubo stammered, “But the Eye of Blood Demon has been destroyed. So many demon emperors and soldiers were killed, too. What can we resort to if we wish to conquer the Heaven’s Origin Sector?”

Jin Tuyi smiled casually. “It’s true that the Eye of Blood Demon has been destroyed, and our warriors suffered heavy losses, but it doesn’t mean the failure of the Red Tide Plan. On the contrary, the Red Tide Plan has just kicked off to a very successful start, and the secret weapon of our race is nothing but ready.”

The three young officers were stunned. Even the head of the Dark Clothes Society, who was writhing on the ground, was bulging his eyes in astonishment!

Secret weapon? Could there be a secret weapon more powerful than the Eye of Blood Demon ?

How is that possible ?

Jin Tuyi opened his eyes. Two invisible flames seemed to be burning in his palms. His eyes were deep, passionate, and pure. There was inviolable solemnity as well as enticing charisma in his voice as he said, “I do not think that I have harmed the interests of the Blood Demon Sector. On the contrary, everything I did was for our race to be reborn in fire after falling for ten thousand years and to achieve the sacred and glorious goal of conquering the Heaven’s Origin

Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and even more worlds until we are dominators of the sea of stars again!

“Obliteration! Rebirth! Immortality! This is the creed for our race!

“Now that ‘obliteration’ has come, will ‘rebirth’ and ‘immortality’ be far away?”

“I don’t understand, commander,” Shen Tubo said, “We don’t understand!”

“You don’t need to.” Jin Tuyi narrowed his eyes and gnashed his teeth. “You only need to completely trust me, obey me, and follow me, for the future of the Blood Demon Sector and our race!”

The three officers of the Horn Clan looked at each other in bewilderment. Suppressed by Jin Tuyi’s overwhelming aura, they eventually bent.

Falling onto one knee, they bashed their chests hard and simultaneously announced, “Yes, commander. As the representatives of the thirty-three legions of the Claw Clan, we will absolutely trust you, obey you, and follow you!”

“I will not disappoint you. The ultimate version of the Red Tide Plan will not be sabotaged so easily.”

Jin Tuyi flapped his wings and unleashed gentle strength that supported the three young officers.

“Alright. Take action now. I want Elder Nether Spring’s every maggot to be unearthed and burnt by the sun before dawn!”

Chapter 1035 - Great Reshuffle!

The night was still dark. As the three satellites separated again, the tides within the bloody lake finally died down.

However, the tides around the Eye of Blood Demon had only just started surging and sweeping the entire land.

The well-trained legions were scattered apart by the savaging tidal force. Soldiers of the Insect Clan, the Claw Clan, the Sea Clan, and the Feather Clan were mixed up. They did not know each other and could not find their captains. They had also lost valuable gear and assets, and there was no one to command them.

Right at that moment, they were informed that terrible spores and Elder Nether Spring’s spies were probably lurking among them. They had to set up camp on the spot, waiting to receive the virus test. Also, they were eyeing the strange soldiers around them vigilantly, fearing that they might be spores.

Under such circumstances, the air was tense, and everybody was panicking. A cough was enough to draw almost twenty sabers.

The best warriors of the Blood Demon Sector became an ununified force who were monitoring each other warily. They had lost the combat ability as an army.

Jin Tuyi took the opportunity to mobilize a large number of logistics legions made of the Horn Clan and ask them to occupy the strategical locations outside of the Eye of Blood Demon.

At any other time, the logistics legions were certainly no match for the elite soldiers.

However, right now, the elite soldiers had been scattered and lost their commanders and supplies, but the mediocre logistics legions were still in neat battle formations.

They were responsible for delivering food, crystals, and ammunition for the frontline in the first place. All the assets prepared for the war were almost entirely under the logistics legions’ control!

As a result, the logistics troops became the only steady forces at the night of havoc.

With the help of the forces, Jin Tuyi had the situation under control, too.

With the Spore Stratagem confirmed, all the soldiers of the coalition army of demons had to receive the most rigorous test.

To perform a virus test on the hundreds of thousands of soldiers, one medical warship was far from enough. When dawn was near, another three medical warships arrived, and a lot of medics established a temporary quarantine facility on the ground.

But what they were testing for was much more than a simple virus.

Many middle-level and high-level demons of various clans, after entering Bloodborne, were invited to the secret chamber deep inside the warship after taking various turns.

They were greeted by not the test rigs but tall, strong, nonchalant officers of the Horn Clan, as well as the bloodstained hammers and primed acid cannons.

As the head of the Dark Clothes Society confessed obediently, one ‘referral’ gave away more ‘referrals’. The dark net that Elder Nether Spring had carefully paved in the coalition army of demons was being uprooted and crushed.

While the secret battle on the ship was going on in silence, Jin Tuyi was engaged in another war on Blood Demon, which was more clandestine and soul-stirring.

On the other side of the desk was Wei Tianqing, a demon emperor of the wolf clan who was best known for his brutality and cunningness.

The wolf demon was nicknamed ‘Traceless’. Although he was not as influential as Elder Blood Robe in the Kingdom of Lion Butchers, he was even more ruthless than the controller of the country.

Wei Tianqing rolled his eyes quickly, pondering why Jin Tuyi summoned him in private.

“Twenty-two of Elder Nether Spring’s maggots have been dug out.” Jin Tuyi was still sitting on the broad, furry chair. He crossed his hands and casually remarked, “More spies are being named by them right now. It is estimated that there will be several hundred of them in the end, all of whom are important officers at the key posts!

“Elder Nether Spring is truly appalling. He has infiltrated the coalition army of demons to such an extent without anybody knowing!

"Even you, General Wei, seem to have the agents of Elder Nether Spring among your trusted subordinates!"

Wei Tianqing shook his tail but did not say anything. He was not sure about Jin Tuyi's real purpose yet.

Jin Tuyi continued. "The collapse of the Eye of Blood Demon made us lose countless elite warriors. When Elder Nether Spring's spies are all revealed, our losses will be even heavier.

"In the coalition army of demons, the four superpowers, and even the Pantheon of Demons, a lot of vacancies have appeared!

"Whether we like it or not, a reshuffle is inevitable."

Wei Tianqing narrowed his eyes and finally realized where the conversation was heading. His lips curled into a scornful smile.

As he expected, Jin Tuyi leaned forward and spoke in an alluring voice. "General Wei, in the Claw Clan, lions and tigers have always been most respected. The lion clan and the tiger clan have controlled the most prosperous mines and land and kept a lot of secret training arts to themselves. They have also occupied the most important posts in the Kingdom of Lion Butchers. For hundreds of years, the other few clans have been eclipsed by them. Even the country of the Claw Clan is named after 'lion'!

"It almost appears that they are the natural-born leaders of the Claw Clan and that the other clans are just vassals of the tiger clan and the lion clan!

"Right now, Elder Blood Robe is dead. The best troops of the lion clan and the tiger clan have suffered heavy losses, too.

There are a number of vacancies even in the Pantheon of Demons right now. What is the wolf clan’s choice?

“I once heard an idiom—wolves on the way. As the leader of the wolf clan, do you not want to taste the feeling of standing in the middle of the way?”

Wei Tianqing listened attentively, but he laughed in amusement in the end. “Commander, it never occurred to me that you were the most sordid one. You are trying to tempt me with ‘chief of the Claw Clan, master of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers’ and even ‘one of the twelve demon emperors of the Pantheon of Demons’, so that the wolf clan will join your side and help you compete with the lion clan and the tiger clan, which will in no way bend before you, right?

“But it is a shame that I know myself quite well!

“In all the branches of the Claw Clan, the wolf clan has always been relatively weak. The lion clan and the tiger clan have run the Kingdom of Lion Butchers for hundreds of years. It is not going to be easy to expel them.

“Although Elder Blood Robe is dead, Yin Tianzun, his junior brother, is still alive and has tremendous forces under his control, including Invincible Tiger Camp and the Griffin Legion!

“Of course, I’ve heard the idiom ‘wolves on the way’, but I also know another idiom—driving the tiger to swallow the wolf. Hehe. Commander, you are not trying to drive the tiger to swallow the wolf but enticing the wolf to attack the tiger! When the Claw Clan is divided because of the internal strife and the wolf clan, the lion clan, and the tiger clan all suffer heavy losses, you will be able to enjoy all the benefits as a bystander, won’t you?”

“If it is the forces under Yin Tianzun’s control that concern you, that is not going to be a problem,” Jin Tuyi replied casually. “I have undeniable proof that Yin Tianzun is involved in Elder Nether Spring’s scheme. He will soon be despised. None of the troops of the tiger clan and the lion clan will listen to him.”

Wei Tianqing’s pupils constricted violently. “How can that be? Yin Tianzun is the second most influential figure in the Kingdom of Lion Butchers. What benefits could he get by joining Elder Nether Spring’s cause?”

Jin Tuyi’s smile remained unchanged. “You said yourself that he is the second most influential figure. Is it really strange of him to join Elder Nether Spring’s cause in order to be the most influential one?”

Wei Tianqing shook his head and declared, “I don’t buy it! If you have any valid evidence, I would like to see it now, commander!”

Jin Tuyi did not move.

Wei Tianqing narrowed his eyes and realized what was happening. “You are trying to frame Yin Tianzun and smear him to be with Elder Nether Spring!”

“General Wei, we are in troubled times right now. Do not speak such nonsense that will sway our army. Blabbering might lose you your head.”

Jin Tuyi’s eyeballs turned bright gold, bordering on transparent. His smile was even sunnier as he replied, “Since General Wei is so loyal to Yin Tianzun, I will not force you to do what you are not willing to. After all, in the Claw Clan, it is not just the wolf clan that has been suppressed by the lion clan and the tiger clan. There are still the leopard and bear clans.

“Moreover, is there absolutely nobody within the lion clan and the tiger clan who is ambitious enough to replace Yin Tianzun?

“Therefore, General Wei, you may leave now.”

Wei Tianqing was dazed. “You are letting me go just like that?”

Now that he had heard Jin Tuyi’s great scheme, how could he walk away so easily?

Pondering for a moment, his face lost all color. Shuddering, he gnashed his teeth. “Commander, you said now that you’d found Elder Nether Spring’s spies within the wolf clan?”

“Exactly.” Jin Tuyi smiled. “He also confessed that Elder Nether Spring had a lot of conspirators among the demon emperors. Yin Tianzun might be one of them, but he might not be, and it could actually be some other demon emperor. That’s all uncertain now.”

Wei Tianqing smiled miserably. “I assume that, as soon as I walk out of the door, my name will be among Elder Nether Spring’s conspirators, won’t it?”

“Maybe.” Jin Tuyi opened his hands. “He hasn’t completely confessed yet. How would I know? However, Elder Nether Spring has been planning carefully for such a long time, and the wolf clan has a perfect reason for betrayal since you’ve been suppressed by the lion clan and the tiger clan for hundreds of years. It will not be strange if General Wei and Elder Nether Spring met each other’s needs and worked together for the scheme, right?

"General Wei is defending Yin Tianzun loyally right now, but will Yin Tianzun trust you and defend you when you are accused of being Elder Nether Spring's accomplice?"

Shua!

Wei Tianqing bared his fangs and raised his tail like a bat. All his claws were protruding out with sharp killing intent!

Jin Tuyi was still smiling casually as if he felt nothing. "General Wei, I've also heard a third idiom before—when you row a boat against the current, you will be retreating if you are not moving forward. It is exactly so in the reshuffle. If you don't shuffle them out, they will shuffle your family and your entire clan out!

"Look. Surging tides are rising everywhere. How is it possible for you to stay where you are and protect yourself?

"Many other people are willing to do what you do not want to, in an even more ruthless way!

"You didn't earn your fame by cowering, did you? Where is your bloodthirst and resolution? Is the rumor true that you are nothing more than the dogs domesticated by the lion clan and the tiger clan?"

Wei Tianqing was silent for a long time before he struggled to say, "The wolf clan alone is no match for the lion clan and the tiger clan."

"What if you have the help of the leopard clan and the bear clan?" Jin Tuyi said. "And the supporters within the lion clan and the tiger clan? And the Feather Clan and the Horn Clan? And the Sea Clan?"

Wei Tianqing was breathing heavily, but his bat-like tail slowly dangled down. Every hair was loosening.

He finally lowered head. In a coarse voice, he said, “Commander, what should I do?”

“Very simple,” Jin Tuyi replied, one word after another. “Trust me. Obey me. Follow me!”

Chapter 1036 - Dry Bones In the Grave!

Half an hour later, before exactly the same desk, in the place where Wei Tianqing, the demon emperor from the wolf clan, had kneeled down and pledged loyalty, a second demon emperor was lurking.

She had a pair of eyes that resembled crescent moons. Her bifurcated tongue was hissing nonstop. Her curved upper body and her scaly snake tail were joined together flawlessly. The tip of her tail was making rattling noises.

It was the posture of the Silver Ring Sand Snakes when they were about to launch an attack.

Bai Lianxin, a demon emperor from the snake clan, was on the verge of an outbreak!

In the Insect Clan, the snake clan was a rather unique branch. Although they were often listed together with mice, ants, and other pests, there was a huge difference between them and the ant clan, the mantis clan, the beetle clan, and the other branches.

Most of the members of the snake clan were not governed by the Nether Spring Kingdom. They were fond of establishing caves anywhere in the Blood Demon Sector and minding their own business.

White Lotus Fortress, created by Bai Lianxin, was the largest cave of the snake clan. Based on the fortress, Bai Lianxin became the leader of the snake clan.

However…

“All the evidence is here. Do you have anything to say for yourself?” Jin Tuyi tapped the desk softly and pushed over a jade chip. “Your White Lotus Fortress was funded by a large sum of secret capital during the construction, and the capital can be traced back to Elder Nether Spring.

“When you became the leader of the snake clan, a lot of your competitors died without a good reason. Clues leading to Elder Nether Spring can be found, too.

“I’m afraid that you must be one of the spies of the highest level that Elder Nether Spring planted into the coalition army of demons, master of the White Lotus Fortress!”

Bai Lianxin smiled miserably. “With everything coming to this point, the winner is always self-justified. What’s there to say?

“However, I didn’t know anything about the Spore Stratagem. In no way would I have expected that Elder Nether Spring would be so insane!

“At that time, I only thought that he was planning to unite the Blood Demon Sector and make the Insect Clan superior!

“He was the leader of the Insect Clan. The snake clan belongs to the Insect Clan, too. He demanded that we work for him, and he gave a lot of benefits. Why would we defy him? Could we defy him?”

Bai Lianxin sighed, and her killing intent gradually dispersed. She knew that she was certainly no match for Jin Tuyi.

Jin Tuyi was weak compared to the super experts such as Elder Blood Robe or Elder Nether Spring.

Nonetheless, he was still one of the four giants of the Blood Demon Sector and definitely not someone whom a mediocre demon emperor such as Bai Lianxin could fight against.

Besides, the evidence was clear that she was an agent working for Elder Nether Spring in the coalition army of demons. Now that the scheme had been revealed, it was impossible for Elder Nether Spring to protect her. Her struggles before death would be futile.

Bai Lianxin closed her eyes in depression. “I have nothing to say for myself. I only want a quick death!”

A moment later, however, she heard a cracking noise, and the jade chip that stored the proof of her crimes exploded.

Bai Lianxin was stunned. She raised her head and happened to make eye contact with Jin Tuyi, whose deep, dark eyes were brimming with mystery.

In a moment, she understood everything.

Pondering for a moment, the demon emperor of the snake demon also lowered her proud head like the demon emperor of the wolf clan a moment ago.

“The accident of the spores has placed the Blood Demon Sector on the brink of destruction. In such an emergency, only the commander-in-chief can save the Blood Demon Sector from catastrophe!

“The snake clan pledges loyalty to the commander-in-chief!”

On that night, Jin Tuyi summoned more than ten demon emperors in secret. When the dawn came, his brain was aching as if it had been burnt by golden fire again.

However, it was not the time for rest yet. The most critical battle was yet to come!

At eight o’clock in the morning, in the command center of the last battle on Blood Demon, an enlarged military meeting that all the demon emperors participated in was held.

The so-called ‘final battle’ was a joke right now. After the loss of fourteen demon emperors, the sparse chairs in the room appeared to be a silent mockery.

However, the demon emperors who luckily survived were not in the mood for fun. They were all anxious about the havoc that nobody had expected.

The meeting was proposed by Yin Tianzun, a demon emperor of the Claw Clan, and Master Hollow Wind, a demon emperor of the Insect Clan.

After Elder Blood Robe was killed and Elder Nether Spring escaped, the two of them were the new rulers of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers and the Nether Spring Kingdom right now.

Theoretically speaking, they were the commanders of the troops that belonged to the Claw Clan and the Insect Clan, too.

However, most of their troops were mixed up with the troops of other clans. Dispersed, they were all waiting for the test of virus and the identity check.

The two demon emperors proposed the meeting of demon emperors because they were trying to figure out how to regroup the troops when the quarantine was completed.

“After a night’s hard work, a lot of troops have finished testing. No more spores are hiding now.”

Yin Tianzun was a lion demon who had silver, dense fur. Having just seized control over the Kingdom of Lion Butchers, he was quite ambitious and in high spirits, hoping to accomplish something great. “Should we regroup the troops according to their previous legions? After all, we are still faced with Elder Nether Spring’s threat and might have to deal with the formidable Nether World Watch at any time!”

“Exactly!” Master Hollow Wind agreed. Troops were their lifeline. Their own troops had been dispersed for a whole night out of control, which was truly a terrible feeling. “Elder Nether Spring was once the leader of the Insect Clan. The problem should be resolved by the Insect Clan ourselves. I am gathering my troops right now and preparing them to annihilate the Nether World Watch!”

“Moreover…” Yin Tianzun’s voice was getting more and more stern. “After being nervous for a whole night, all the soldiers are exhausted and hungry. Why haven’t the supplies been delivered yet? Aren’t the logistics troops right next to us? Where are the food and the crystals? Why haven’t they been distributed to the soldiers?”

“Indeed!” Master Hollow Wind echoed. “Somebody must answer for the fiasco of the Red Tide Plan and the mayhem that followed!

“Let’s forget who is to blame for a second. Last night, Elder Nether Spring’s remnants were captured on a large scale! I do not object to the search for Elder Nether Spring’s remnants, but the investigators were simply capturing random soldiers. A lot of middle-level and high-level officers have been taken away for vetting. As a result, the troops are still in a mess right now and cannot be organized! How should we deal with the Nether World Watch if they suddenly show up?”

Yin Tianzun and Master Hollow Wind lambasted Jin Tuyi, each resonating with the other. It appeared that they had reached a deal earlier and were planning to shake Jin Tuyi’s position as the ‘commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons’ in this time of trouble!

Jin Tuyi listened silently. Now and then, he even nodded, as if he were agreeing with the honest opinions of the two demon emperors.

Then, he coughed lightly.

“Everybody, I have different opinions about the issue.” Wei Tianqing, the demon emperor from the wolf clan, jumped out. “The Demon God Virus is a brand-new virus unseen before in the Blood Demon Sector. We haven’t grasped the most thorough examination methods. Chances are that some of the mutants of the virus can pass the level-6 test.

“Therefore, we must tread lightly and not gather our troops until the whole issue is settled.”

Yin Tianzun burst into fury. He slapped the desk, leaving four deep claw traces. “What do you mean? Are you suggesting that our troops will be kept dispersed as long as Elder Nether Spring is still alive?”

“Of course not.” Wei Tianqing smiled and said, “I just feel that the destruction of the Eye of Blood Demon has caused the loss of many experts on our side. The middle-level and high-level officers have suffered heavy casualties, too. The investigation into Elder Nether Spring's spies involved a lot of officers, too. There is no telling whether they are guilty or not yet, but for safety reasons, it is inappropriate for them to command other soldiers for now.

"As a result, the vacancies of the commanders are huge obstacles for the entire command structure. How much combat ability will such an army boast even if the dispersed troops are gathered again?

"The Nether World Watch hasn't been annihilated yet, and the Spore Stratagem is still lingering about. We are at the most perilous moment in the history of the Blood Demon Sector. We must be united and join our strength!

"Now that the troops have been completely disrupted, we might as well discard the framework in the past and rebuild a coalition army of demons where troops of different clans are mixed up, one that is absolutely devoid of spores and loyal to the Pantheon of Demons!

"Of course, it is just an emergency measure. When Elder Nether Spring is removed, the command of the troops will immediately be returned to the relevant kingdoms."

"Rebuild the army?" Yin Tianzun and Master Hollow Wind both burst into fury. Yin Tianzun rose up and slapped the desk hard, grinning hideously at Wei Tianqing. "Is this your idea, or somebody else's? Are you suggesting we hand our troops over?"

Wei Tianqing held his head high and argued with Yin Tianzun. "All for the big picture, *Acting Chief* Yin!"

Yin Tianzun was so angry that he laughed out aloud. “What an absurd proposal. Let’s see who will agree to it!”

“I agree!”

Bai Lianxin, the demon emperor from the snake clan, shook her tail and said solemnly, “The Blood Demon Sector is in peril. We cannot place our selfish wants on the top of our racial interests! Due to the loss of so many middle-level and high-level commanders, the troops cannot be regrouped in the same way as before. Therefore, I agree that the coalition army of demons should be reorganized. The troops of the snake clan will be the first to be reorganized!”

“Troops of the bear clan agree to be reorganized, too.”

A demon emperor of the bear clan who looked like a black iron tower slowly raised his paw.

“Troops of the leopard clan also agree to be reorganized.”

“The Blood Shadow Saber Mantis troop are willing to be reorganized.”

One demon emperor raised their hand after another. Dozens of mysterious eyes were focused on Yin Tianzun and Master Hollow Wind.

Yin Tianzun and Master Hollow Wind were both dumbfounded. Their faces instantly turned pale, and they could not help but step back. Looking at the arms and limbs raised up, as well as Jin Tuyi’s emotionless face, they immediately understood what those eyes meant.

That was the way people looked at bones in a grave or fish in a water tank!

Chapter 1037 - The Second Confrontation!

While Jin Tuyi was taking over the absolute power of the coalition army of demons slowly but surely, Li Yao was anxiously pacing back and forth in the middle part of the same warship.

Jin Tuyi did not restrict his freedom. In fact, he was even arranged to the warehouse of crystals, the most important cabin on Blood Demon!

Even if he had not installed enough crystal bombs on Blood Demon, the whole warehouse of crystals and high-energy fuel was more than sufficient for him to blow up the warship.

It was exactly because of the lack of defense that Li Yao felt he was enveloped by an invisible net that had even pierced into his blood and soul, making him unable to move anymore!

He was more and more certain that Jin Tuyi was ten times more dangerous than Elder Nether Spring.

The most critical problem was that, although he had completely understood what Elder Nether Spring was up to, he did not have the first clue about Jin Tuyi’s goal yet!

Shua!

The gate of the warehouse was slowly opened. Jin Tuyi slowly staggered in.

He did not bring any guards with him, nor did he trigger much of his demonic energy. The guy was apparently most at ease.

He was even coughing nonstop and breathing hard with his eyes closed every now and then, considering Li Yao as nothing!

Li Yao felt that he was greatly humiliated.

That had to be a joke. Even for the super experts such as Yan Xibei, Xiao Xuance, and Bai Xinghe, they had to summon all their attention cautiously and activated their every cell during their confrontations with him.

Who had ever been so at ease in front of him? Did ‘Vulture Li Yao’ mean nothing to him?

Chi—

Jin Tuyi closed the gate. He took out a dose of a bright green drug from his wings and injected it into his carotid artery before he moaned in great relief.

Shua—

While he closed his eyes, Li Yao turned into a streak of brightness and dashed toward him!

One was fully-prepared, and the other was not prepared at all. The streak of brightness flashed past Jin Tuyi’s left side!

Jin Tuyi did not defend against him at all. He was still panting softly and did not recover until he rubbed his temples for a long time. Then, he noticed the new gadget that had appeared on his left arm.

It was a neatly-made armband in the shape of a glamorous scorpion.

“What’s this?” He waved his arm, with curiosity, but not the least fury or fright, in his eyes.

“I wonder, have you ever heard of the Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle before, Senior Jin?” Li Yao sneered. “This is a device that I duplicated based on the Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle. Of course, it is far less powerful than the original version, but it should be good enough to blow up one of your arms and seriously wound your heart.

“Do not waste your time thinking how to dismantle it. Nobody can ever dismantle it without me!”

“Okay.” Jin Tuyi lowered his arm emotionlessly.

“Okay?” Li Yao was dazed. “Hey, hey, hey. Senior Jin, this is truly an awesome crystal bomb. Aren’t you a little bit too cool about it? Do you not believe its power? Should I elaborate on its specific structure and functioning mechanism to convince you? You see, this is how it works—”

“That will be unnecessary,” Jin Tuyi said casually. “I thought that you must’ve come up with some smart, extraordinary moves after a night of consideration. I didn’t know that you would still be resorting to your cliché. It is too simple and straightforward.

“If your poor sense of security has to be supported by such a device, it doesn’t matter to me if I put on it. However, my precious time and computational ability don’t deserve to be wasted on such boring stuff.”

“Boring stuff…” As if somebody had punched his face right in the nose, Li Yao gnashed his teeth. “It appears that Senior Jin is very confident that I will not kill you, right?”

“Of course,” Jin Tuyi replied calmly. “My confidence is not based on boring stuff such as crystal bombs but my own precise calculation. I am the only one who can regulate the coalition army of demons and seem to be reasonable enough for communication. Do you have any reason to kill me? If you kill me, the situation will be completely out of control. What benefits can you and the Heaven’s Origin Sector get?

“On the other hand, you clearly know that, after the Eye of Blood Demon was destroyed, the Blood Demon Sector has lost the ability to launch a large-scale attack against the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Also, until Elder Nether Spring is eliminated, we are at least partners, if not comrades on the same side.

“But still, you are not assured, and you must give yourself an illusionary sense of safety with your crystal bomb, which will only deepen the chasm between us. If we get to the bottom of it, you are still not confident about your judgement, young man!”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes. “Cut the crap. What are you trying to sell exactly? Why do I have the feeling that I’ve been tricked?”

“Then you should feel honored.” Jin Tuyi did not care about Li Yao’s aggressiveness at all. He found a large high-purity crystal as chair and sat down comfortably. “In my current status, not everybody deserves to be tricked by me with my precious computational ability. You are perhaps the last opponent whom I have carefully tricked with more than

110% of my thinking ability. Bear that in mind. It will be your greatest pride in your whole life.”

Li Yao did not know what to say.

Jin Tuyi smiled. “Moreover, you were not exactly tricked. It is just a special way of cooperation where we both meet each other’s needs.”

“So, you’ve admitted it?” Li Yao mumbled. “Everyone was manipulated by you. You intentionally let Jin Xinyue and I out of Heavenly Path City. You knew about the Spore Stratagem a long time ago and believed everything we said. You were merely sabotaging it by acting as if you didn’t know.

“If that’s case, everything makes sense now.

“I’ve always felt that something was off. A man who was elected as the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons and came up with the Red Tide Plan certainly shouldn’t have been an idiot. Then, why did he leak so much valuable information to me during the conversation and even remind me that a large batch of demon emperors was coming in the end so that I could run away?

“Also, sneaking into the Eye of Blood Demon was… way too easy. Although there was some minor trouble, no huge obstacles were in my way!

“The defense system of the Eye of Blood Demon was indeed flawless, but the experts in the patrol team were too few. If every key section had been guarded by one to two demon emperors, the result would’ve been vastly different. It was like an impeccable chain that was in lack of the most critical section, and I could crawl into the facility through the missing section without any actual danger!

“Also, you must’ve already recognized me when we met each other in the control center of the Eye of Blood Demon, didn’t you? But you didn’t reveal anything and allowed me to modify the stabilization system so that my chances of destroying the Eye of Blood Demon would be higher!

“The most unbelievable part was your mount, the Scorpion-Tailed Gold-Winged Falcon. Was it really a coincidence that the Demon God Virus broke out at the most critical moment?

“You must’ve planned everything, right?”

Jin Tuyi coughed lightly and shook his head. “I have long known some things, including Elder Nether Spring’s infiltration around me. But my every move was closely monitored by Elder Nether Spring. How could I have manipulated everything?

“You should take 99% of the credit for the destruction of the Eye of Blood Demon. I only managed to give you a little help at the critical moments. That’s all.

“It can’t be helped. When I discovered Elder Nether Spring’s ill intentions, it was already too late. The subordinates around me were already seriously compromised.”

“I don’t believe it,” Li Yao said coldly. “I thought the same in the past. You were too dedicated to the Red Tide Plan to notice the anomalies around you. That was why Elder Nether Spring turned your subordinates against you.

“However, now that I think of it, if Elder Nether Spring’s dangerous level can be rated as one star, yours must be at least five stars, Senior Jin. You have clearly calculated everything. How could you have been infiltrated by him?”

“Have you ever heard of cerebral sclerosis?” Jin Tuyi said calmly.

Li Yao was dazed and nodded.

“I was diagnosed with highly-differentiated cerebral sclerosis a year and half ago, but before that, the disease had ravaged my mind for more than five years. While I was contemplating on the Red Tide Plan wholeheartedly, the disease affected my brain and made me overlook a lot of things.”

Li Yao was dumbfounded. His first thought was that Jin Tuyi was lying, but even if the guy was lying, he should have proposed a more reasonable excuse, shouldn’t he?

After such a long time of competition, it turned out that Li Yao had been battling against a patient of cerebral sclerosis the whole time?

“Speaking of which,” Jin Tuyi said with a self-mocking smile, “perhaps it was exactly because of my disease that Elder Nether Spring eased his alert and pushed me to the front as his puppet and the stepping stone for the Spore Stratagem. Therefore, who can say for sure whether the disease was a good thing or a bad one?

“Anyways, when I realized that I might have cerebral sclerosis, it was just two years ago. At that time, I suddenly discovered the unusual traces around myself and knew that an invisible dragnet had enshrouded me.

“However, I didn’t know how huge the dragnet was or how dense the holes in it were. How many of my brothers, children, elders, and comrades had been compromised? And who exactly could I trust?

“Or rather, I didn’t even know who set up the dragnet exactly.

“But there was no way that I could test it because I wouldn’t get a second chance if my first test failed.

“Therefore, I had to raise new forces outside of the Feather Clan and my trusted subordinates. But because of the close surveillance, there were few things I could do, and I might not have been able to make a comeback.”

“As it happened, I appeared at the perfect moment,” Li Yao remarked.

“Exactly.” Jin Tuyi nodded and said, “If all my family, subordinates, and comrades could not be trusted, it appeared to me that only my enemy wouldn’t betray me. And it was not just any enemy but such a terrifying and excellent one.”

Li Yao took a deep breath. “Therefore, since the very beginning, your ultimate purpose has been to overthrow Elder Nether Spring… No, besides Elder Nether Spring, you have also been planning to eliminate everybody standing in your way so that you will be able to seize absolute power and become the actual supreme commander of the Blood Demon Sector!”

Chapter 1038 - Discussion of Dao!

“To achieve your purpose, you have wasted fourteen demon emperors and countless elite troops of the Blood Demon Sector. Even the Red Tide Plan, your lifelong work, has been thrown out as bait and ruined!”

Li Yao felt that his heart was cold. Jin Tuyi’s ruthlessness was beyond his imagination.

However, there was still something wrong!

Li Yao thought for a moment and shook his head. “No. Something is still not right here. If you are really a patient of cerebral sclerosis, you would not be able to keep it a secret for long. What’s the point of being the monocratic leader of the Blood Demon Sector?

“If I were you, I would certainly have tried to implement my lifelong plan at any cost when I was diagnosed with a terminal disease. Why would you trade the work of your life for power that will be gone very soon?”

Jin Tuyi burst into laughter, but he coughed so violently in the middle of his laughter that tears were congregating inside his eyes. He rolled his wings and rubbed his temples with his feathers to soothe his headache. Nodding his head in approval, he said, “Young man, you are quite right. That is exactly what I am doing right now!

“In your eyes, the Red Tide Plan is equal to the Eye of Blood Demon, and the destruction of the Eye of Blood Demon means the destruction of the Red Tide Plan, right?”

Li Yao frowned, “Is it not?”

“Of course not,” Jin Tuyi said casually. “How can the plan that I have considered for decades and put into practice at the cost of my life be as simple as an unexpected assault?

“Even if the unexpected assault worked out, and the capital city of the Star Glory Federation was occupied, so what? Growing from the resistance organization five hundred years ago into a vast country that has governed the entire Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Star Glory Federation has enough tenacity and determination. Even if your capital is occupied, you will certainly not surrender. At the last moment, you may even drag the Blood Demon Sector toward hell together!

“Even if you do surrender, the Star Glory Federation is completely ruined, and the demons become dominators of the both our sectors after the two worlds are merged, so what? Will it mean anything?”

Li Yao was confused. “Crushing the Star Glory Federation and ruling the new twin world, thereby doubling your territory. Is it pointless?”

“Yes. Absolutely pointless,” Jin Tuyi said cruelly. “Even if the Heaven’s Origin Sector is completely conquered, we will merely be turning from one lone island at the edge of the universe into two. How can two lone islands devastated by war expect to resist the attacks from the Imperium of True Human Beings?”

Li Yao was even more shocked. “You believe in the existence of the Imperium of True Human Beings? No. No. No! You started planning the Red Tide Plan decades ago. At that time, there was no way that you knew the existence of the Imperium of True Human Beings. Absolutely no way!”

“Of course, I didn’t know anything about the Imperium of True Human Beings. In fact, even now, you still haven’t offered valid evidence to prove its existence.” Jin Tuyi smiled. “However, no evidence is required. You only need to consider with the simplest thinking ability to realize one thing.

“If a barren, desolate area at the edge of the universe has produced the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, two forces who have passed on the tinder of the civilizations since forty thousand years ago, then at the center of the universe, where the resources are densely concentrated, one or more stronger, more advanced forces must’ve been born in the past ten thousand years, right?

“Maybe the Imperium of True Human Beings, maybe the Imperium of False Human Beings, maybe the Imperium of New Human Beings… Whatever their name is, the most important fact is that such a strong force must’ve been born a long, long time ago!”

Li Yao pondered for a moment and nodded. He found it odd that he did not figure out such simple logic earlier.

Jin Tuyi continued. “Since said force was born at the center of the universe, which was the prosperous area of the imperium in the past, it was only a matter of time for the force to discover the arsenal, the collection of techniques, the star maps left a long time ago, and eventually the other Sectors, right?”

Li Yao nodded solemnly.

“After locating the other Sectors, they would certainly launch an expedition, hoping to recover the territory of the imperium in the past and even expand it to the vaster universe. It is in the nature of our species, which claims to be ‘the best fighting species in the sea of stars’, right?”

Li Yao noticed that Jin Tuyi said ‘our species’, but he simply frowned and did not interrupt.

Jin Tuyi’s voice was calmer than ever, with the peacefulness deep inside his eyes indicating that he had seen through everything. “I didn’t know the truth about ‘Chaos’ and the origins of the demon race until a month ago. However, the theory that human beings and demons share the same origin, as an opinion in the academic world, was not new to me. I never had any doubt about it.

“More importantly, after exploring the history in the past ten thousand years and studying the rise of the Star Glory Federation and the wars between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, I gradually firmed my belief, which was that the glory of the demon race in the old days had passed and would perhaps never be back. The era of the ‘demons’ has ended. The future belongs to ‘human beings’!

“Hehe. In this respect, Elder Nether Spring and I have reached the same conclusion. We are truly each other’s bosom buddies!”

His face weird, Li Yao could not help but find it absurd.

Of the four giants of the Blood Demon Sector, two firmly believed in the failure of the demon race? That was—that was too unbelievable.

“You and Elder Nether Spring are both capitulators!” he blurted out.

“No,” Jin Tuyi said casually. “We are unwavering pessimists, but we are absolutely not capitulators.”

Li Yao did not understand. “Is there a difference?”

“Of course they are different. Pessimists will explore a new path in another direction with their wisdom when they find that they are hitting a dead end, but capitulators will sit and do nothing, waiting for the mercy of their enemy, in the same situation.

“Elder Nether Spring and I both firmly believe that the traditional path is not going to work out. Therefore, we were all trying our best to figure out a new path. The only difference is that Elder Nether Spring came up with the Spore Stratagem, and I developed the Red Tide Plan.

“The failure of the demon race that I believe in does not refer to the minor struggle between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector. In the local war between the two insignificant worlds, it is quite possible for the demon race to secure a temporary victory, or even entirely conquer the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

“However, when I rolled over on my bed during countless dark nights, and when my soul flew away from the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector to the depths of the sea of stars where I could consider the future of our race in the long term, I discovered, to my depression, the victory of such a local war meant absolutely nothing.

“The universe has changed!

“As you said, the rise of the demon race was because the gory wars among the ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago drained the spiritual energy in the three thousand Sectors, leading to the ‘Era of Doom’.

“In the universe, which was harsh and short of spiritual energy, demons resorted to their genetic advantages and were more adapted to the environment and more likely to survive.

“It was the foundation for the glory of the demon race in the next thirty thousand years!

“After forty thousand years’ rest, the spiritual energy in the three thousand Sectors was getting dense again. The ‘Era of Doom’ slowly passed. It was the first toll of the death knell for the old demon race.

“However, it is still not the most important reason the old demon race is destined to doom.”

Li Yao was completely baffled. “What do you mean?”

“The key is technology. The popularization of the magical equipment, the improvement of training techniques, and the integration of Cultivators and ordinary people, while disrupting the old sociological patterns, has slowly swallowed the greatest advantage of the old demon race.”

Jin Tuyi slowly unfolded his wings and smiled. “What beautiful wings, aren’t they? Do you know why demons have grown wings, shells, claws, and tusks?”

Li Yao scratched his hair. What kind of question was that? Was it not a matter of course that demons boasted wings, claws, and shells?

“In the era of ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago,” Jin Tuyi continued, “Cultivators were selfish and conservative. They regarded ordinary people as ants and never considered teaching advanced techniques to ordinary people. Nor had the ordinary people ever benefited from the powerful magical equipment. The only thing that the Cultivators did was fight, fight, and fight with the magical equipment and the techniques! While they were mauling each other, the precious crystals and spiritual energy were wasted blatantly!

“Therefore, in the era of ancient Cultivators, the upper half of society and lower half were completely divided.

“On one side, it was the high, mighty, marvelous Cultivators.

“On the other side, it was the meager, uncared, uneducated ordinary people who were no better than primitives.

“Powerful as the flying swords of the Cultivators were, ordinary people still had to get their food from the barren land with their broken hoes. They still had to crouch in their dark cottage, unwilling to light the candle because it was too expensive. In the meantime, Cultivators would rather practice a new skill of killing in seclusion for decades than spend several years inventing a more efficient hoe that utilized spiritual energy or a piece of popular lighting magical equipment that was cleaner and cheaper.

“It was the era where the crevasse between ordinary people and Cultivators was biggest. In the eyes of ordinary people, Cultivators were out-and-out ‘deities walking on the earth’. It was not an intact ‘civilization of mankind’ but a freakish mess that was a messy combination of the ‘civilization of Cultivators’ and the ‘civilization of ordinary people’. The two civilizations had a gap of thousands of years in their development level!

“Such a gap created the best opportunity for the rise of the old demon race.

“After taking the Divine Water of Kunlun, the ancient demon race unleashed the forces deep inside their cells. They were bestowed gifts from the primeval era, and they grew sharp tusks, shining claws, broad wings, and strong tails.

“Even if they didn’t have flying swords, they could still fly in the sky with their wings. Even if they didn’t have Water Escaping Balls, they could still swim at the bottom of an ocean with their gills!

“Although they were still no match for the Cultivators, they were more than enough to deal with other ordinary people. Ordinary people are the foundation of the birth and growth of the Cultivators. Without a solid foundation, how could the superstructure not fall apart?

“The demons realized the logic earlier than the Cultivators did. That was the ultimate reason for their rise later.”

Chapter 1039 - Trend of the Universe!

“It doesn’t matter whether or not somebody took advantage of the war, what the demon race became after seizing the highest power, and whether they were ‘righteous’ or ‘evil’,” Jin Tuyi said unhurriedly.

“What really matters is that the war forty thousand years ago was not one between ‘demons’ and ‘Cultivators’, but the counterattack launched toward the high and mighty ancient Cultivators by the ordinary people who had been savaged and suppressed by the ancient Cultivators until they could not hold it anymore!

“Of course, you can say that the war was manipulated by the Ultimate One Demons, but how could the Ultimate One Demons have manipulated so many ordinary people in the three thousand Sectors? Why could they turn ordinary people into strange demons willingly? Just with lies and threats?

“No, of course not. It was because the ancient Cultivators had destroyed the entire world and the home of the ordinary people to such an extent that even the humblest, most obedient ordinary people burst into fury, wasn’t it?

“It was an era when the technology of the ordinary people was highly underdeveloped. Compared to the Cultivators’ flying swords, the ordinary people’s blades were thousands of years behind them. Moreover, they could not even find such a blade easily. Most of the time, the ordinary people had to whittle bamboo into spears. How could they fight against the Cultivators?

“This is the greatest advantage of the demon race and the foundation for the existence of demons.

“No sabers? I will grow claws and tusks! No flying swords? I will grow wings! No shields? I will grow solid shells! It doesn’t matter how appallingly ugly I am as long as I can gain the strength for revenge!

“Maybe ordinary people after mutation were still no match for Cultivators. But at the very least, they boasted certain strength to fight back now. If one was not enough, ten would go up. If ten were not, a hundred. A hundred demons who used to be the destitute were definitely enough to drag a magnificent ‘Lord Cultivator’ die with them, right?

“The demons broke the Cultivators’ technological blockade in such a way. It was also the biggest reason for the demon race becoming an independent race!”

Jin Tuyi smiled bitterly when he got to this part. “But right now, the foundation has collapsed, and the reason is gone.”

Li Yao thought of something and vaguely understood what Jin Tuyi meant.

But still, he held himself back and did not interrupt.

He suddenly had a weird feeling that Jin Tuyi was really a senior who was teaching his disciple valuable life experience.

“Thirty thousand years of suppression prompted the Cultivators to reflect. When the modern Cultivators emerged on the stage of history again, they were completely different from the past. They considered the ordinary people to be at the same level as them and believed that they were all equal members of the ‘human civilization’.

“One might say that the modern Cultivators and the ancient Cultivators are two opposite concepts. Perhaps, the Immortal Cultivators in the Imperium of True Human Beings are more like the orthodoxic heirs of the ancient Cultivators in their worldview.

“Influenced by the new ideology, the great revolution and outbreak in the training techniques were a matter of course.

“In the past ten thousand years, Cultivation has entered the homes of ordinary people from the splendid palace in the clouds. It has leaked into every capillary vessel in the civilization of human beings.

“Today, an ordinary person who doesn’t have the strength to catch a chicken can drive a shuttle and fly in the sky free even without wings. They can swim at the bottom of the ocean with the help of the scuba sabs. They can protect their home and family with chainswords, vibration sabers, and high-heat axes instead of sharp tusks and claws!

“As a result, the wings, tusks, claws on the demons… Is it necessary to keep those bizarre-looking redundancies?”

Li Yao was rendered speechless. He was of a mind to ask, *Senior Jin, which side are you on exactly? Are you really not a spy sent to the Blood Demon Sector by the federation*?

“Civilization. What is a civilization? The ability to use tools, to make tools, and to invent more advanced tools is the sign of a civilization!” Jin Tuyi flapped his wings and smiled. “The pair of wings you utilized in the Eye of Blood Demon was quite vivid and finely-made. It is more than enough to replace the wings of a normal member of the Feather Clan.

“In the past, because of the technological blockade of the ancient Cultivators, ordinary people had no access to more advanced productivity and fighting tools. Therefore, we were forced to grow wings, claws, and shells as replacements.

“Right now, at least in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector, Cultivators and ordinary people have completely integrated. Ordinary people can also make use of all kinds of powerful magical equipment. Artificial wings are already good enough to take the place of natural wings. Then, isn’t it a sign that our wings, claws, and shells have finished their mission and should take a bow?”

Li Yao found it hard to believe. “Are you going to just accept that?”

“What can I do if I don’t?” Jin Tuyi sighed. “The disadvantages of demons are too obvious.

“If we consider tools as extensions of limbs, demons have fixed the tools onto their body.

“While we are given magnificent strength, we have also abandoned agility and the possibilities of rapid evolution.

“You see, I have broad wings, which look quite majestic and give me advantages in an air fight within the atmosphere.

“But what if the air fight takes place in a vacuum? What if I am fighting below the ground? What if my wings are broken? What if my wings become hindrances when I am planning to practice a new art?

“But you are different.

“If you are equipped with magical equipment in the shape of wings. Within the atmosphere, you can fly and fight with it. Once you enter space and go deep underground, you can abandon the redundancy immediately. If the magical equipment is broken in the fierce battle, it is very convenient for you to abandon, replace, or repair the tool.

“Most importantly of all, evolution!

“With the technology boom, it is very natural, and convenient, to upgrade a piece of magical equipment. Perhaps in several hundred years, the functions and power of the magical equipment will be multiplied.

“Do you believe that your artificial wings will be added with another dozen functions and techniques after a hundred years of technological development?

“But things are different with the wings, claws, and tusks of demons.

“The potentials of cells are limited after all, and they must not evolve randomly. Those who evolve by force without considering anything will be walking on Elder Nether Spring’s path, which is destined to fail.

“Therefore—”

Shua!

Jin Tuyi’s wings retreated into his body within a breath. He looked no different from a normal human being now!

“Our ancestors grasped a technique that allows us to turn into the appearance of human beings.

“The purpose of such a transformation is not for the convenience of sneaking into the world of human beings, not because we admire the culture of human beings, but because the shape of human beings is the handiest, the most well rounded, and the ‘all-match’ form.

“Human beings without arms are certainly no match for the sharp tusks and claws. However, in the shape of human beings, it will be most easy for someone to use and switch their magical equipment according to the complicated battle and production environments.

“It is safe to say that the shape of human beings is the most immaculate fundamental form. With the enhancement of powerful magical equipment, flaws in the shape of human beings can be overcome, but the advantages will be carried out to the largest extent!

“In the past, the technology was not advanced enough, and the magical equipment was not popularized yet. At that time, demons were still slightly advantageous with their claws and tusks. However, as soon as human beings began a technology boom and popularized magical equipment on a large scale, thereby resisting attacks of the demon race in their prime years, the ultimate victory of the battle would have no suspense.

“Take the Star Glory Federation for example. You have defeated many formidable enemies in only five hundred years and even occupied an entire world, competing with the Blood Demon Sector which has developed for thousands of years. What else have you been resorting to if not the technology boom?

“I have studied the history of your magical equipment carefully. Five hundred years ago, your technology in the refinement of magical equipment was still very primitive. However, every several decades, your technology would undergo an incredible leap. Today, your blades and cannons are as impressive as the claws and acid cannons of the demon race. Some of the specifications are even better!

“You are a magical equipment expert. You should know the logic better than I do.

“It’s true that an ordinary soldier of the federal army is still incomparable to an ordinary demon, but what will happen if you develop for another hundred years?

“I’m told that, in the Flying Star Sector, through the ‘skill cards’ and the ‘Grand Illusionary Battle Net’, even ordinary people can make use of all types of crystal suits. Does the Blood Demon Sector stand any chance at all if such technology spreads to the Heaven’s Origin Sector?”

Li Yao gnashed his teeth. “You can still attack before it is too late. Conquer the Heaven’s Origin Sector before the technology is introduced and promoted. Isn’t it the purpose of the original Red Tide Plan?”

“Don’t you understand, young man?” Jin Tuyi said calmly. “The Heaven’s Origin Sector might be conquered, and even the Flying Star Sector might be conquered, but so what? What I’ve been thinking about is not the war between two worlds but the war between two social forms and two systems!

“Even if we conquer the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector with our tusks and claws very quickly, in the not so distant future, a stronger civilization of Cultivators will come with more advanced magical equipment, more powerful crystal suits, and more terrifying crystal warships and crush all demons as if we are ants!

“The trend of the universe is unstoppable. If you go along with it, you thrive. If you go against it, you die! What I’m talking about is the trend of the universe that nobody can change. If we want to survive and realize the glory of the past again, we must change ourselves!”

Chapter 1040 - The Original Plan!

Li Yao was dumbfounded. He gestured for Jin Tuyi to stop. “Wait. Senior Jin, you are not indicating that you have been planning to turn demons into human beings since decades ago, are you? At that time, you couldn’t have known the existence of the Divine Blood of Chaos at all!”

Jin Tuyi coughed slightly and said, “First of all, I never said that I was trying to turn demons into human beings. In fact, I feel that the current ‘old demons’ and ‘old human beings’ are all deeply flawed and far from ‘the best fighting species in the universe’. They cannot find a way out of the dark forest as you described.

“In that regard, Elder Nether Spring and I thought the same again. The only difference was that the approaches he adopted were more radical.

“If I ever have the chance, I really want to capture Elder Nether Spring alive and then have an overnight talk with him under the starry sky. That will be so much more fun than conversing with an ignorant young man such as yourself!

“Secondly, I naturally didn’t know the existence of ‘Chaos’ or the whole truth about the origins of the demon race decades ago. Also, I did not know that the demons could be completely transformed into human beings through the Divine Blood of Chaos.

“However, demons are themselves a very strange race.

“No matter how vastly different our appearances are, we all boast tremendous features of human beings. We are almost like ‘upgraded’ versions of human beings with all kinds of extra organs.

“Besides, the offspring of demons are basically devoid of any features of demons. They are just like human infants.

“For the high-level demons, after preliminary training, they will immediately grasp the ability to transform into the appearance of human beings. It seems to be not a skill but a naturally-endowed talent!

“We are not blind. Faced with such facts, have we really never considered the relationship between demons and human beings?

“Perhaps everybody has, but they did not dare to pursue the question any further, except for me and Elder Nether Spring.

“At that time, I didn’t know anything about the Divine Blood of Chaos. But since part of the high-level demons could transform into human beings, and the chaotic-blood demons were similar to human beings in appearance in the first place, it was not entirely impossible to integrate them into the civilization of human beings and initiate a certain degree of communication and study, thereby finding out the road of renaissance for our race.

“This is the original purpose of the Red Tide Plan.

“The Red Tide Plan has never been a simple plan of attack. It is the beginning of a series of plans.

“What you are seeing right now is just the first phase of the Red Tide Plan, which has two purposes.

“Firstly, to seize supreme power of the Blood Demon Sector so that the entire Blood Demon Sector will follow my will. This is the most important step. What I am doing will not be understood or supported by the majority. Therefore, I must hold unchallengeable autocratic power!

“Secondly, to establish a channel of communication with the Heaven’s Origin Sector, or rather, to force the Heaven’s Origin Sector to sit down and talk!

“Under normal circumstances, the Heaven’s Origin Sector would never sit down and negotiate with the ‘inhumane demons that are mutants of demon beasts’.

“But what if a knife has been placed on their neck?

“The Eye of Blood Demon is the core of the first phase of the Red Tide Plan.”

Li Yao’s eyes were bulging wider and wider. “On the first day you established the Eye of Blood Demon, you had already planned to destroy it one day?

“The Eye of Blood Demon was born for unparalleled destruction?

“But it doesn’t sound right. My arrival was an accident. How were you certain that you could destroy the Eye of Blood Demon at the critical moment if I didn’t exist?”

“In my original plan, I, of course, had other arrangements,” Jin Tuyi said coldly. “Appointing two specialists who were at loggerheads as the maintainers of the stabilization system was just one of them.

“But it wouldn’t have mattered at all whether or not I could destroy the Eye of Blood Demon at the critical moment. In fact, I never thought to completely destroy it.

“I only needed to teleport the first wave of attack, preferably the second and the third, too, to the capital city of the Star Glory Federation. Then, I would cause damage that was not serious but enough to make it malfunction for one to two days.

“One or two days would be enough for the Heaven’s Origin Sector to realize what was going on. Hundreds of Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage and the Nascent Soul Stage would reinforce the capital city. Without the support of the follow-up troops, the helpless demon emperors would be destined to die in the Heaven’s Origin Sector!”

Li Yao gasped. “So, it has been in your original plan to let Elder Blood Robe, Elder Nether Spring, and the other demon emperors into the capital city before you cut off the wormhole and watched them fighting a suicidal battle with the Cultivators of the Heaven’s Origin Sector?”

“More or less.” Jin Tuyi scratched his nose with his feathers. “How could I know that I would be elected as the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons? In the Blood Demon Sector, I was the third most powerful man at best, as well as the leader of the Feather Clan. Only in such a way would I be able to gather my enemies together and kill them once and for all!”

Li Yao swallowed and secretly moved his bottom two inches away from Jin Tuyi. He mumbled, “I’m starting to believe that you are truly Elder Nether Spring’s ‘bosom buddy’. The two of you will definitely be invincible if you join hands!”

Jin Tuyi was not bothered by Li Yao’s sarcasm. “Other than clearing all the obstacles for me, Elder Nether Spring had another important function, which was to establish a ‘highway’ to the capital city of the Star Glory Federation.

“In the original plan, I never planned to destroy the Eye of Blood Demon to such an extent. But even though it has already been ruined, it can still be repaired sooner or later.

“Once it is repaired, we will have a venomous dagger that can stab into the heart of the Heaven’s Origin Sector at any time!

“Of course, you may think that, after the loss of tremendous demon emperors and elites, and if the Heaven’s Origin Sector already learns the pattern of our attack, the second invasion will definitely not work out.

“Yes, it won’t work out. But the capital city, and even the prosperous area in the southeast of the federation, will certainly suffer heavy losses!

“The Heaven’s Origin Sector has been at peace for too long. Although the fire of war is still burning on the Grand Desolate Plateau, the ordinary people living in the prosperous area in the southeast have not experienced a large-scale war for more than a hundred years.

“Under such circumstances, as the supreme leader of the Blood Demon Sector, if I suggest we sit down and talk in order to reach a truce, do you think the federal government will consider the offer?”

“Absolutely not,” replied Li Yao, gritting his teeth. “Under such circumstances, the demon emperors and elite troops in the first wave of attack will certainly not wait and get killed. Even if they must die, they will drag the entire capital city to hell with them! The capital city of the federation will be a living hell, and you will be the biggest criminal. Not a single

Cultivator or citizen of the Star Glory Federation will negotiate with you!”

Jin Tuyi smiled again. “Young man, you are wrong again. Do not confuse my identity right now with my identity at that time.

“When I drafted the Red Tide Plan, I never thought that I would become the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons one day. At that time, I was merely the third most influential official in the army. The best I could do was propose an unexpected assault. Those who really made the decision and commanded the attack would only be Elder Blood Robe, Elder Nether Spring and the other demon emperors.

“They would be the perpetrators!

“But the perpetrators would have been teleported to the Heaven’s Origin Sector during the first teleportation. They would be killed, captured, or on the run.

“At that time, I would be able to blame all the faults on them. They would be the greatest criminals for launching the war and the most insane butchers!

“As for me, I would be the representative of the ‘doves’ who craved for peace and the last bit of conscience of the Blood Demon Sector.”

Jin Tuyi’s dustless, white wings grew out of his back again and covered him softly like a sacred garment. “Look. You cannot find a demon who appears more like a ‘dove’ than I do, can you?”

Although he knew that Jin Tuyi did not utilize any demonic energy, although his crystal bombs had been closely stuck to the opponent’s arm, and although he knew that the guy was a terminal patient whose brain was slowly deteriorating, Li Yao could not help but feel chilly from the bottom of his heart.

“By then,” Jin Tuyi said casually, “the Star Glory Federation would have just seen the brutality and insanity of the ‘hawks’ such as Elder Blood Robe and Elder Nether Spring, and they would know that I was a ‘dove’ whose conscience was not entirely gone. Would they shut the door of dialogue completely and watch me, as a dove, get kicked out of office and replaced by a hawk that was more brutal, insane, and unpredictable?

“This was my plan in the beginning. As long as the dialogue began, the following procedures of the Red Tide Plan would be able to be carried out. I believed that I would lead the entire Blood Demon Sector to a whole different road of renaissance!

“However, man proposes, heaven disposes. Two things were beyond my computation.”

There was a vague hint of bitterness in Jin Tuyi’s smile. “Firstly, I didn’t know that, in the demon race, a second individual had also seen through the situation other than me, and he was also planning a whole different future path for the demons. That was Elder Nether Spring!”

“Elder Nether Spring was not as smart as you,” Li Yao observed. “He only learned about the past and the future of the demon race after receiving the legacy of Chaos, but you deduced everything based on nothing.”

Jin Tuyi waved his hands. “It doesn’t matter. What matters is that Elder Nether Spring’s appearance disrupted my original arrangements. To make things worse, I was diagnosed with ‘cerebral sclerosis’. Even though my natural life would not end soon, my political life and my unparalleled thinking ability were going to be gone quickly.

“The Spore Stratagem and the cerebral sclerosis pushed me into a precipice. For a moment, I almost lost all hope and felt that there was nothing I could do except watch our race walking to its doom!

“Until you showed up!”

Chapter 1041 - Jin Tuyi’s Threat

The brilliance beaming out of Jin Tuyi’s eyes seemed enough to detonate the entire warehouse of crystals. His gray face was replaced by excitement as he panted for a moment. “Your arrival, the secret hunting Jin Xinyue endured, and all the subsequent events made me gradually learn the truth of the Blade of Chaos, the secrets about the origins of the demons, the existence of another human world named the Flying Star Sector, and the threat of the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“I didn’t know that the Blood Demon Sector was so important in the history of the demon race. I had always thought that it was just a barren, desolate, insignificant Sector at the edge of the cosmos!

“Hehe. I should’ve figured it out earlier. The Blood Demon Sector was not as simple as that. Why else could the Blood Demon Sector survive to this day when countless worlds of demons in the three thousand Sectors have all collapsed?

“All in all, the tremendous valuable information flooded into my brain, allowing me to find a brand-new possibility, one that is more secure, flawless, and feasible than the old version of the Red Tide Plan!

“Therefore, over the past month, I’ve been fully upgrading the Red Tide Plan with the latest intelligence despite the escalation of my illness.

“Now, the first step of the Red Tide Plan has been completed. Although some minor issues occurred, everything is basically under my control. Elder Blood Robe, Elder Nether Spring, and their elite troops are no longer threats. I have finally gained the supreme power that I dreamed of, and I am able to implement the second step of the Red Tide Plan now!”

“But I’m afraid your cerebral sclerosis will not give you much time, will it?” Li Yao said. “Even if you keep it a secret, when your condition gets worse, you will not be able to cope with the tricky plans and schemes. You even risk turning into a moron right in front of the rest of the demon emperors. How are you going to complete the following procedures of the Red Tide Plan?”

“You are quite right. I don’t have much time left. The best I can do is hold on for a year and a half.” Jin Tuyi’s eyes turned passionate again as he stared at Li Yao with a smile. “Therefore, while I still know what I am doing, I have found the first suitable heir and the next master of the Red Tide Plan, who will pass on my knowledge and carry out the Red Tide Plan until it succeeds!”

Li Yao felt creepy when Jin Tuyi looked at him in such a weird way. His hair standing up, he raised his voice and shouted, “You’ve got to be kidding me! How can I be your heir and help you implement your goddamn Red Tide Plan!”

“Do excuse me, young man, but I was not referring to you.”

“…Don’t stare at me in such an enthusiastic way if you are not referring to me, senior!”

“Although your excellence was beyond my expectation many times, and you completed many tasks successfully in unbelievable ways when I failed to figure out how you could, you and I are not the same type of person after all.

“I am not referring to the difference between a human being and a demon but the difference between a warrior and a politician.

“You are a warrior, and a fairly brilliant one, but you are never going to be a brilliant politician, or even a qualified one.

“It is not about your computational ability or thinking ability but decided by something beyond. More frankly speaking, this is not where your path leads you.

“Jin Xinyue is my ideal heir and the most suitable successor of the Red Tide Plan!”

Li Yao was amused. “Is it even possible? It remains questionable whether Jin Xinyue is willing to or not. But even if she is happy to, she is still too naïve right now. In terms of capability, she is only a demon king or a Core Formation Stage Cultivator at best. How can she expect to rival the demon emperors who will swallow her without leaving any bones?”

Jin Tuyi smiled. “Yes. Jin Xinyue is still too naïve right now, but everybody grows. I believe that she will be the one that the Red Tide Plan requires in the most appropriate time. Until then… doesn’t she still have the best master?”

Li Yao was dazed.

“In terms of capability, her master’s combat ability is equal to the Nascent Soul Stage. He is also adept at the refinement of magical equipment, stealth, sabotage, ambush, assassination, and collection of intelligence. His personal combat ability is in the top tier of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector—not counting the enhancement of his crystal suit.

“In terms of forces, her master controls Skyfire, a mysterious organization that has risen recently, in the Blood Demon Sector alone. The covert battles of late in the Gold Crow Kingdom are indicative enough of the potential of the organization.

“With regard to influence, her master is an Ultra-Level Federal Hero in the Heaven’s Origin Sector. He is also the best warrior of Iron Plateau and the master of the Glorious Sunlight Group in the Flying Star Sector. His connections are far and wide!

“How can Jin Xinyue not rival the cunning demon emperors with such a master as her reliance? Moreover, before I become too ill, I will certainly tell Jin Xinyue the critical weaknesses of those demon emperors.

“With Jin Xinyue’s wisdom, I believe that she will learn very fast. Shockingly fast.”

Li Yao recalled the confrontation with Jin Xinyue in the cave outside of Heavenly Path City. He had to admit that Jin Tuyi was right.

His third disciple was much more terrifying than his previous two disciples, which was well beyond his expectations.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao carefully said, “Senior Jin, there is no need to flatter me. Give me a reason first. Why should I help you?”

Jin Tuyi raised his eyebrow. “Weren’t you the one who came to my door and asked for cooperation? Now, I am extending my hands to you sincerely, and you are going to regret?”

Li Yao frowned. “I didn’t know that you were so dangerous, Senior Jin. I am scared of you. I really am!”

Jin Tuyi smiled. “Alright. You want a reason. I’ll give you one.

“If you don’t help my daughter implement the Red Tide Plan, this is what will happen in the next.

“First of all, I have the coalition army of demons completely under my control now, and I will hold absolute power for at least a year and a half. Elder Nether Spring and the other jesters are not worth mentioning at all now!

“Secondly, after the loss of fourteen demon emperors and countless elite soldiers in the first wave of teleportation, the Blood Demon Sector has in fact lost the ability to attack the Heaven’s Origin Sector, probably permanently!

“We have lost the bargaining chips to make a wild gamble. Opening the Eye of Blood Demon again or charging at the Giant Blade Pass on the Grand Desolate Plateau through the Dark Desolate Domain will both be committing suicide. All the demon emperors will agree with that after carefully calculation and analysis.

“Then, in the upcoming half a year, I will change the guideline of the coalition army of demons from ‘quick battle’ into ‘total defense’!

“I will gather all the resources allocated for invasion and establish countless permanent bastions and underground fortresses throughout the Blood Demon Sector!

“I will also regroup the coalition army of demons into units that are smaller in scale and more agile. They will be trained for guerilla warfare in the harsh environments.

“In the meantime, the development of the biochemical technology and the production of demonic artifacts and magical equipment will also abide by the guideline.

“Hehe. You think that the strength of the Blood Demon Sector has been greatly diminished after the fourteen demon emperors were killed, don’t you?

“From the perspective of aggression, yes.

“But in terms of defense, once we make up our mind to give up aggression once and for all, the forces and resources that can be utilized for homeland defense have in fact been multiplied!

“Yes. I am going to build the entire Blood Demon Sector into an enormous war fortress, a hedgehog whose thorns are made of steel and poisoned!

“Of course, I will not be able to see the completion of the war fortress, but it doesn’t matter. All I need to do is set up a framework. I believe that the next commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons, seeing that the Heaven’s Origin Sector is getting stronger and stronger, will not be so idiotic as to attack aggressively. He will certainly continue with my plan and continue strengthening the defense!

“Believe me, if the Blood Demon Sector stops attacking and shifts to homeland defense, not just fourteen crystal suit legions, even forty, a hundred, or two hundred will be far from enough to conquer the Blood Demon Sector!”

Jin Tuyi grinned hideously and waved his fists in midair. “When tens of billions of demons are determined to die with you, even if five hundred crystal suit legions come, we will still bury you in the forests and marshlands of the Blood Demon Sector with our tusks, claws, and bodies of flesh and blood!”

This was the first time that he had ever showed his dominance during his conversation with Li Yao.

Then, he coughed violently until that his tears were flowing out. He waved his hands toward Li Yao somewhat in embarrassment. “Do excuse me, young man. I lose control of myself.

“All in all, with such a strategy, I believe that the Heaven’s Origin Sector will not be able to conquer the Blood Demon Sector in decades.

“Even if you establish hundreds of crystal suit legions without caring about the cost and occupy the Blood Demon Sector with the bombardment of the crystal warships after paying a high price, so what?

“We will not leave any food or crystals for you. We will even burn the dead bodies of our companions. The only thing you will get is a wasteland that is full of venomous fog and debris.

“By then, the compensation for the federal soldiers sacrificed in the war will be enough to bankrupt the federal government. How are you going to cope with the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings that will come soon?

“Of course, you can choose to ignore the Blood Demon Sector. You can simply stay behind your defense line after the two worlds have integrated and consider the Blood Demon Sector to be nonexistent. After all, the Blood Demon Sector is not likely to launch an attack again.

“Then, when the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings does come, you will have to think about the worst possibility, which is that the Blood Demon Sector will surrender to the Imperium of True Human Beings in desperation!”

Shocked, Li Yao felt that his cold sweat was popping up nonstop.

“Don’t think that I’m joking,” Jin Tuyi said casually. “People can do anything for survival, or when they realize that they are dead for sure.”

Chapter 1042 - Iron Triangle!

Li Yao stared at Jin Tuyi, with killing intent condensing inside his eyes inch by inch. He sneered, “Senior Jin, the Star Glory Federation rose on the foundation of corpses and blood, too. You think demons are the only ones unafraid of death? Take back your threat of co-destruction and just tell me your aim!”

“Alright. I’ll get to the point straightforwardly now,” Jin Tuyi said. “I want to surrender!”

“Huh?”

“Isn’t it obvious? The Blood Demon Sector’s all-in plan of the final battle has been disrupted by the Ultra-Level Federal Hero Li Yao. Right now, the Blood Demon Sector is not able to attack, and our war potential is far from the alliance of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector. Besides, Elder Nether Spring is still instigating trouble inside. We have completely lost the war!

“When you take a gamble, you must be prepared for failure. The Red Tide Plan on the surface was a shocking gamble in the first place. Now that we’ve lost, isn’t it only natural that we try to secure a ‘conditional surrender’ while we still have bargaining chips for the negotiation?

“Vulture Li Yao, you are the only living Ultra-Level Federal Hero since the Star Glory Federation was established. That’s why I said so much to you. I want you to bring my words to the leadership of the federal government to initiate the negotiations between the two parties.

“As for the specific conditions of the surrender, everything can be negotiated. Even if the Blood Demon Sector has to be classified as a special administrative area and merged into the Star Glory Federation at a certain time, it doesn’t matter. Let’s just sit down and talk!

“However, if your side refuses negotiations and is determined to annihilate the Blood Demon Sector, the outcome will be what I described just now. Let’s simply maul each other and die together!”

Li Yao was rendered speechless. He did not know whether he should accuse Jin Tuyi of his shamelessness or compliment him on his frankness.

“If you don’t believe my sincerity about the surrender, I can surrender to you in secret as the commander-in-chief if you want.”

Jin Tuyi coughed and said with a smile, “You are an Ultra-Level Federal Hero. To some extent, you are a representative of the federal government, aren’t you? Besides, you’ve also destroyed the Eye of Blood Demon and stopped the Red Tide Plan!

“Well, well, well. Right when the federation is in peril, the young hero who saved the federation ten years ago appeared again and broke into the enemy’s nest on his own, stopping the enemy’s insane battle plan and killing fourteen super experts and the best troops. Eventually, he suppressed the enemy’s supreme commander with his unparalleled charisma!

“One person has defeated an entire world!

“Vulture Li Yao, with everything you’ve done, you are definitely the well-deserved greatest hero of the federation. When you return to the federation, nobody will protest even if you campaign for the position of Speaker of Parliament!”

Jin Tuyi did not resort to any of his demonic energy, but Li Yao’s resolution was shaking violently in the surging tides.

For a moment, all kinds of delirious thoughts were appearing in his head!

However, the next moment, the delirious thoughts were all swallowed by the mental devil.

“Hey—

“Are you able to do this or not?” the mental devil asked lazily. “Should I take your place?”

Li Yao was dazed. “What did you say?”

The mental devil yawned and said, “Hasn’t you discovered it yet? You’ve been crushed from the beginning to the end. You are now basically meat paste. I do feel sorry for you!

“But it is not your fault. Demagogism is his specialty after all. How can you ever be match for Chief Jin in terms of debating?

“Moreover, the dark side in your soul has mostly been absorbed by me. How can you expect to deal with such an old, cunning fox?”

Li Yao gnashed his teeth. “Will you do any better?”

“At the very least,” the mental devil said, “I will not be rendered speechless all the time. If you have to lose, you’d better lose gracefully.”

Li Yao was rendered speechless.

“You see? You are rendered speechless again!” the mental devil exclaimed.

“Achiu!” Li Yao sneezed greatly.

He rubbed his left eye hard as if some dust had intruded. It was not until more than ten seconds later that he took a long breath in relief and stared at Jin Tuyi thoughtfully, blinking his left eye.

Jin Tuyi was slightly dazed.

Since the moment he entered the warehouse, he had been in control of the situation.

Even when Li Yao put fatal crystal bombs on him, he had still been manipulating Li Yao easily.

This was the first time that he had been startled during the entire game, but he could not find any reason for his startle at all!

He only vaguely felt that the bloody brilliance inside Li Yao’s left eye was slightly different from a moment ago.

“There’s no need to surrender to me. I haven’t been in the federation for the last ten years. The so-called Ultra-Level Federal Hero is just an honorary title that entails no real power. Chances are that I will be involved in boring political struggles when I am back to the federation,” Li Yao said lightheartedly. “Now that Senior Jin is so sincere, I will certainly bring your words for the peace of the two worlds!

“However, you must know that both worlds have suffered heavy casualties after such a long period of warfare. Putting everything before aside, the Red Tide Plan itself must’ve already killed and injured many citizens of the capital city.

“Right now, the Star Glory Federation must be stirred up. 99% of the citizens will be hawks now, shouting to march into the Blood Demon Sector.

“On the other hand, the Blood Demon Sector has lost fourteen demon emperors and a large batch of elite troops, and Elder Nether Spring is still an internal problem. Also, your reign is not very stable yet, Senior Jin. This is the feeblest time of the Blood Demon Sector.

“Therefore, Senior Jin, if you really want a ‘conditional surrender’, you’d better offer certain attractive conditions. Otherwise, as an insignificant Cultivator in the Core Formation Stage, I will not be able to decide what the infuriated Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators are going to do.”

“Of course.” Jin Tuyi frowned and felt that Li Yao was a bit weird.

“Anything else you want to say?” Li Yao was actually taking the initiative to conclude the conversation.

Jin Tuyi narrowed his eyes and observed Li Yao carefully for a long time, but he did not find any trace on Li Yao’s face.

He gritted his teeth and threw out his last card.

“Everything I want to say to Li Yao, the Cultivator from the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Ultra-Level Federal Hero, has been said. However, now, I want to talk to Li Yao, the Cultivator from the Flying Star Sector, the owner of the

Glorious Sunlight Group, and the best warrior of the six tribes of Iron Plateau!”

Bloody brilliance blinked inside Li Yao’s eyes. “Interesting. I seem to know what you are going to say next, but please continue.”

“As the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons and the leader of the Blood Demon Sector, I am proposing a dialogue with Li Yao of the Flying Star Sector, hoping that the Flying Star Sector will try to facilitate the peace talk between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector,” Jin Tuyi said solemnly.

“It is naturally going to be very difficult to stop two ferocious war beasts from attacking each other. On my side, I will try to calm down all the advocates of war in the Blood Demon Sector.

“But if the Heaven’s Origin Sector is too stubborn to give up on the war, I want the Blood Demon Sector and the Flying Star Sector to establish a normal bilateral relationship and start an in-depth communication in economics and culture.”

Not giving a direct answer, Li Yao replied, “Are you mistaken about something, Commander Jin? The Flying Star Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector are both civilizations of human beings. We are natural allies. You are asking us to stab our ally right in the back!”

Jin Tuyi smiled. “There are no ‘natural allies’ in the universe; there is only ‘natural interest’!

“Those idiotic Cultivators of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, especially the idiotic Li Yao, thought that he had brought reinforcements from the Flying Star Sector. It never occurred to him why the Flying Star Sector should help him without considering returns.”

“Exactly.” Li Yao nodded. “I do feel the same!”

Jin Tuyi was dazed again and felt that the atmosphere was weird. Pondering for a moment, he continued his speech. “Perhaps, not just ‘Li Yao of the Heaven’s Origin Sector’, the majority in the Blood Demon Sector, the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and the Flying Star Sector haven’t let go of the stereotype, either!

“For the Heaven’s Origin Sector, they have been fighting the demons since their country was founded. Therefore, demons are their sworn enemies. All their history books and textbooks spare no efforts elaborating on the evilness and horror of the demon race. After hundreds of years, their hatred toward the demon race is ingrained in their very being.

“But the Flying Star Sector is different.

“The Flying Star Sector has never been at war with the demon race since the Star Ocean Imperium collapsed ten thousand years ago.

“In the past five thousand years, the Flying Star Sector was attacked by the apocalypse at first and nearly wiped. The survivors were divided into ‘spacers’ and ‘homers’ who were at loggerheads with each other.

“Then, in the dark, boundless universe, the two great enemies named ‘extraterrestrial devils’ and ‘space pirates’ emerged, too.

“In the past years, threats of the ‘Immortal Cultivators’ and the Imperium of True Human Beings have been drawing near, too!

“Extraterrestrial devils, space pirates, the Immortal Cultivators, the apocalypse, the Imperium of True Human Beings… They are the greatest trouble for the Flying Star Sector. The demon race, in comparison, is just an old enemy from ten thousand years ago and much lower on the rank!

“Even the deepest hatred will gradually wear off over ten thousand years. For the Flying Star Sector, the demons are just enemies in tales. Their hatred against us can be traced back to the ancestors of their ancestors!

“Although I haven’t read the history books of the Flying Star Sector yet, I guarantee that the content regarding the demons’ oppression of human beings will be no more than ten pages!

“Hehe. Faced with the imminent threat of the Immortal Cultivators, is the groundless, obsolete hatred worth mentioning at all?

“Therefore, whether or not peace between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector can be reached, peace between the Blood Demon Sector and the Flying Star Sector is very hopeful. What do you think, Fellow Cultivator Li Yao from the Flying Star Sector?”

Li Yao smiled. “That explains a lot. I understand everything now!

“I was wondering why Senior Jin was so certain that peace would come. Did you say last time that you were scared that the coalition army of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector would march into the Blood Demon Sector?

“It turns out to be a lie. You were not scared about that at all because you had long discovered the subtle conflict of interest between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector. You were planning to hamstring the Heaven’s Origin Sector with the Flying Star Sector!

“Not one-sided hamstring, but check and balance.”

“Triangle is the steadiest form,” Jin Tuyi said. “The Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector will play an equally important role with mutual check and balance. That will be the most reasonable social structure and the strongest iron triangle against the Imperium of True Human Beings!”

Chapter 1043 - Here Comes the Saintess!

Li Yao tilted his head and pondered for a moment before mumbling, “After hearing your words, Senior Jin, it suddenly occurred to me that the Blood Demon Sector and the Flying Star Sector are highly complementary, even more complementary than the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector!

“The Flying Star Sector boasts a boundless territory of dozens of space zones and hundreds of resource planets, but most of the resource planets have harsh environments and are unfeasible to exploit.

“The Blood Demon Sector, on the other hand, boasts tremendous miners who are highly adaptive to the harsh environments but doesn’t have developable resources.

“The two parties have no deep grudges. If the Blood Demon Sector is attacking the Heaven’s Origin Sector aggressively, then, for the sake of humanity, the Flying Star Sector will perhaps reinforce the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

“But right now, if the Blood Demon Sector is ready to sit down and talk, is there any reason the Flying Star Sector shouldn’t?

“Once communication between the Blood Demon Sector and the Flying Star Sector begins, the Heaven’s Origin Sector will be in awkward situation. If the war continues, it will be the troublemaker of the three Sectors.

“It must be noted that the enemies that the Flying Star Sector is faced with, including the Iron Plateau rebels, the space pirates, and the Immortal Cultivators alike, are all human beings!

“Therefore, I’m afraid that the idea that ‘human beings are all kindhearted and shouldn’t attack each other’ has never entered the minds of the Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector. History tells them that mankind boasts many unpardonable criminals and many unpardonable civilizations, too!

“If the Heaven’s Origin Sector is acting aggressively all the time and never ceases to fight, the Flying Star Sector will certainly be vigilant, too, and it will be even less likely to attack the Blood Demon Sector together with the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

“Having no other choices, the Star Glory Federation will have to join the peace negotiations.

“Also, when there are two possible targets of ‘surrender’, the price of surrender can be better negotiated, too. If the Heaven’s Origin Sector is not willing to accept the Blood Demon Sector’s surrender, there’s always the Flying Star Sector.

“In the end, when the peace talks work out, the Flying Star Sector will provide boundless territory, sailing technology, and resource planets; the Blood Demon Sector will provide biochemical technology and well-trained miners; the Heaven’s Origin Sector will provide a highly coherent government and a functioning model. An iron triangle against the Imperium of True Human Beings will be formed!

“This is the future that Senior Jin wishes to see, right?”

Jin Tuyi smiled and clapped his hands. “Marvelous. Truly marvelous. As expected of Vulture Li Yao. You have depicted exactly everything on my mind! Yes. That is the future that I want to see, and I believe that it is also the future that you want to see and the only way possible to defeat the Imperium of True Human Beings and preserve the tinder of our civilizations!”

“Alright. I’ll bring all of your words to the most appropriate person.” After pausing for a moment, Li Yao said carefully, “However, I have to remind Senior Jin of something beforehand.

“I can see that Senior Jin is a great player of the chess game, but do you know when a chess game is the most perfect and flawless?”

Jin Tuyi raised his eyebrow. “When?”

“At the beginning of a chess game, before any chess piece is moved. That is the only flawless form of a chess game. Once the chess pieces are moved, so much as one single step, there will be loopholes, and the chess game will not proceed exactly as the player has calculated.”

Staring at Jin Tuyi in the eyes, Li Yao said, one word after another, “Moreover, I don’t like being a chess piece. I prefer to be a player. Not any player, but an unreasonable one who will knock over the board at any time.

“This time, Senior Jin has prepared such a large chess game, hoping to finish the Red Tide Plan through me. That’s not going to be a problem!

“However, under my influence, will the future of the Red Tide Plan be exactly the same as Senior Jin has predicted? That will be hard to say!

“The chess game between us has only just begun!”

With a bitter smile, Jin Tuyi sighed. “Do I not know what a dreadful thing it is to cooperate with such a dangerous person as ‘Vulture Li Yao’? But it is a pity that I don’t have enough time.

“Honestly speaking, if my brain could work normally for another hundred years, I would definitely try to kill you with whatever methods possible!

“But right now… I can only look toward my daughter.

“Please help me find Jin Xinyue. I will tell her the following procedures of the Red Tide Plan. Although you will certainly learn the secret later, I want her to hear it and make a choice first.”

Jin Tuyi waved his hands lethargically and struggled to stand straight. He then walked out of the room, ending the conversation.

Seeing his back, which indicated that he was exhausted, Li Yao’s left eye was rippling with circles of strange fire.

“Why did you agree on his offer so easily?”

“Because he does have a point,” the mental devil replied. “Three Sectors working together against the Imperium of True Human Beings, isn’t that our plan as well? Everyone gets what they want from the cooperation. What’s not good about it?”

“But he is clearly trying to play the peaceful evolution [1] move on us!” Li Yao said.

“What’s wrong with peaceful evolution? Demons can evolve into human beings, and human beings can evolve into demons, too. Do you have no faith in the system and culture of the human civilization? You don’t believe that the federation can completely assimilate the ‘old demons’ in the past and transform them into ‘new human beings’ who are ideal, knowledgeable, ethical, and well-disciplined?”

“That’s not what I meant,” Li Yao muttered. “If that’s the case, were you of any help at all? The result would’ve been the same if I negotiated with him!”

“Wrong!” the mental devil denied solemnly. “When I was negotiating, my aura was much more daunting than yours! Debate is all about overwhelming your enemy. Do you not feel that the last few statements I made, all the talks about chess pieces and players, created a mysterious vibe and gave the feeling that everything was under my control and that Jin Tuyi was brutally suppressed?”

“…No, I don’t feel any of that. Also, it suddenly occurred to me that you seem to be playing the peaceful evolution move on me, too!”

“You can also change me with your integrity, your morals, and the kind and bright side of your soul! As the say goes, evil will always be defeated by righteousness in the end. If you are certain that I am evil, you will certainly defeat me in the end. What are you scared of exactly?”

“Fair enough,” LI Yao replied. “But why does it sound so weird to me?”

“What’s weird about it? Did you not notice that I haven’t stirred any trouble for a long time and even volunteered to help you! It is all because I have been moved by the bright side of our soul, and I was trying to abandon the darkness for the light! Therefore, even if you cannot let go of your stereotype and still regard me as a mental devil, would you please at least consider me as a kindhearted, harmonious and highly-moral one?”

Li Yao gnashed his teeth. “Cut the crap. I will not be fooled by you. One day, I will completely purge you until there is not even your trace left!”

“Well, brother, if I may remind you, your killing intent went out of control during your declaration and turned into negative emotions, which made my strength slightly higher than before.”

Silent, Li Yao could not come up with a response.

“Just stop being angry and think about the beautiful stuff, the bright stuff and the positive stuff. You must know that I am the dark side of your soul. How can you ever purge me when you have so many negative emotions? If you act carelessly and your negative emotions break out, I might be able to devour you, which isn’t going to be pretty, is it?”

…

When Jin Xinyue arrived, the camp of the coalition army of demons was now enshrouded in a hazy mist of confusion and uneasiness, not just because of the destruction of the Eye of Blood Demon and the reshuffle of the troops, but also because of the outbreak of spores.

Although a quarantine was prepared in advance, many soldiers still contracted the Demon God Virus in the chaotic battle and turned into terrible uncontrollable mutants. A high price was paid in order to annihilate or capture them.

The howling of the uncontrollable mutants was a hundred times more terrifying than the howling of the demon beasts. Their unbelievably abnormal appearances frightened even the most bodacious warriors, who were scared that they might end up becoming such monsters, too.

Because the number of the soldiers was too large, the few medical warships were far from enough to examine all of them. Most of the soldiers were still waiting in the weird ambiance.

They could not have been more nervous at this point, and they were eyeing each other suspiciously as if everybody was a spore that carried the Demon God Virus!

Jin Xinyue arrived at exactly such an anxious hour.

Her clothing was different from when she was in Skyfire. The black leather suit was replaced by a moon white linen cloak. Her face was clean and devoid of any makeup. Her hair dangled down like a waterfall in attractive color as if it were the smoothest silk.

She did not wear shoes. Her jade-like feet were also transparent, without nail varnish or other cosmetics. So, pink brilliance was flashing on her toes, but it did not give an inappropriate feeling.

She was both like an unworldly saintess and an angel who had come to others’ salvation. Just like that, she walked at ease among the countless panicked soldiers.

It was the standard pose for a saintess of the Pantheon of Demons when they walked in the Blood Demon Sector.

The saintesses of the Pantheon of Demons boasted dual identities. In the darkness, they were the scariest spies and assassins of the Pantheon of Demons. But on the surface, they were responsible for comfort, reconciliation, and propaganda. It was exactly what ‘saintess’ meant.

When Li Yao saw Jin Xinyue for the first time, she was still clinging to the demeanor of the ‘princess of the Gold Crow Kingdom’ and looked dominating and aggressive. Her approach had been too direct and crude at that time!

However, over the past few months, she had experienced life-changing events multiple times. Also, after the direct and indirect tutelage of Li Yao and Jin Tuyi, the potential deep inside her brain was finally unleashed. She was more and more like a real ‘saintess’ now!

Jin Xinyue’s eyes were slightly frowning, as if she felt the same as the panicked soldiers around her. But her lips were slightly curled, showing that she did not have the least doubt about the final victory. His eyes were clear and comforting. Every soldier whom she glanced at would immediately feel peace of mind.

She was alone, not bringing any guards. She did not even disguise her new identity at all. Spreading out a vague scent of spiritual energy, she walked in the middle of the hundreds of thousands of soldiers of the coalition army!

Chapter 1044 - A Hundred-Year Plan!

“Is she a demon or a Cultivator?”

As Jin Tuyi’s daughter, Jin Xinyue was quite famous in the coalition army of demons. Many demons had at least heard her name before even if they had never seen her in person.

However, the spiritual waves spreading out of Jin Xinyue’s body were quite a shock.

Demons were as sensitive about spiritual waves as Cultivators were sensitive about demonic energy. For a moment, all the demons were looking at each other in bewilderment, not knowing what was going on.

Very soon, a rumor was disseminated among the soldiers.

Jin Xinyue transformed herself into such an appearance willingly in order to fight against the Spore Stratagem. Although she looked like a Cultivator, her blood had the power to suppress the Demon God Virus.

She was the real ‘saintess’ that could save everyone!

The rumor was not exactly the truth.

However, most of the soldiers of the best troops were still staring at Jin Xinyue with hundreds of times more hope and admiration!

…

On the medical warship Bloodborne, Jin Xinyue stood in front of more than ten demon emperors neither too humbly nor too proudly, allowing them to observe her with great curiosity.

She had just passed dozens of tests to confirm her identity as Jin Tuyi’s daughter. In the meantime, she had proven herself to be an out-and-out human being!

In terms of capability, the demon emperors were all many times stronger than her. They were all warlords of certain areas.

However, faced with such a test report and such an undeniable fact, they were all wearing complicated expressions.

Some of them were in a trance, some in fury. Some were confused, and some were at a loss. When Jin Xinyue looked at them with her pure eyes, many demon emperors even moved their heads away, not having the courage to have eye contact with her.

A demon had been completely turned into a human being. It was not as simple as ‘polymorphing’ but a fundamental rebirth!

What did the irrefutable fact mean for the Blood Demon Sector?

Despite the amazing computational ability of the demon emperors, they could not figure it out.

They only had a vague feeling that the sky of the Blood Demon Sector was collapsing and would never be fixed again. In the decades and hundreds of years to come, the Blood Demon Sector was destined to be faced with surging tides. The entire race would be utterly different from the past!

…

Deep inside Bloodborne, in the fully-closed prison cells, several ‘uncontrollable mutants’, whose skin had turned into gray, covered in pustules from which tentacles were growing out due to the Demon God Virus, were staring at a certain point on the wall without moving at all.

Before they smelt the scent of the living, to extend the longevity of the cells, the uncontrollable mutants would enter the half-hibernation state.

Shua! Shua! Shua!

Doses of ‘Synthesized Divine Blood of Chaos’ which were just produced by Skyfire were darted into the bodies of the uncontrollable mutants!

In a moment, the uncontrollable mutants all bulged their eyes, in which two forces, one dead gray and the other bright green, were fighting each other at loggerheads.

They were screaming at the top of their voice, with foam flooding out of the wounds all over their body!

While they were trembling violently, the foam turned into bright green smoke. As the smoke popped up nonstop, the pustules slowly withered, and their skin regained their original color and appearance.

However, their distinctive features of demons before, namely the tusks, the sharp teeth, and the fur, were also gradually disappearing under the foam.

Eventually, what was lying on the ground in a coma seemed to be normal human beings with the least features of the demon race.

The best military medics and biochemistry specialists, holding back their astonishment, recorded the dazzling data during the transformation.

The data and the videos in which the uncontrollable mutants were controlled and turned into human beings were sent to the demon emperors as quickly as possible.

The demon emperors, who had been too shocked to process everything, were wearing even more complicated when they received the new information.

…

While most of the demon emperors were dwelling in the paradigm-shifting test reports and experiment data, Jin Xinyue walked into the garden at the front part of Blood Demon in the setting sun.

Waiting for her in the evening glow was her father and the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons, Jin Tuyi.

Two days ago, in exactly the same garden, Jin Tuyi had talked with his eldest son Jin Wuyi and named him his heir before he sent his eldest son to his death without even batting an eye.

Jin Tuyi’s and Jin Xinyue’s eyes collided in midair. They both noticed that the brilliance in each other’s eyes was a hundred times more intense and determined than the video chat when Jin Tuyi was still in Heavenly Path City!

This was perhaps the first time that the father and the daughter had ever let go of all their camouflage and talked to each other frankly!

“Father.”

Jin Xinyue bowed and greeted him.

“Has your master told you everything?”

Jin Tuyi observed her daughter’s new appearance with great interest. What attracted him was not the fact that her daughter was now a human being but the intimidating aura spreading out of her bones which was beyond ‘demonic energy’ and ‘spiritual energy’!

“Yes, Master has told me everything. It never occurred to me that Father has done so much for the future of our race,” Jin Xinyue said calmly. “But I wonder, what do you need me to do for the Red Tide Plan? For the record, I will forward everything that you say to me to Master later.

“On one hand, I am still too young to lie to Master.

“On the other hand, since Father is suffering a terminal disease, it is unlikely that you can protect me for long. In the next years or even decades, Master will be the strongest and most dependable force that I can rely on. For the sake of my interests, I cannot betray my reliance easily.”

“Rest assured.” Jin Tuyi waved his hands, gesturing for his daughter to come close to him. “You can tell your master what I am going to say next exactly as it is. I don’t intent to play tricks. Faced with such a dangerous person as ‘Vulture Li Yao’, tricks are meaningless, too.

“What we are going to play is an open game. Everybody puts their cards on the table and compete with each other frankly!

“However, before I inform you of the following procedures of the Red Tide Plan, read this piece of intelligence first.”

Jin Tuyi handed over a vintage jade chip.

Jin Xinyue took over the jade chip and stuck it to her forehead. After browsing for a moment, her beautiful eyes constricted violently. “Anomalies in the Nether Spring Kingdom? Epidemic in several major cities? Elder Nether Spring must be mad!”

“Of course he is,” Jin Tuyi said calmly. “Elder Nether Spring’s scheme has been completely revealed. Did you think he would simply wait to be killed? As a man of the time, he certainly has backup plans, too. Other than the spores in the coalition army of demons, he must’ve hidden a lot of spores in the Nether Spring Kingdom and even the entire Blood Demon Sector.

“Having no other choices, he could only activate the spores as a last struggle.

“The Nether Spring Kingdom is just the beginning. I estimate that alarms of more serious epidemic will come over in the next couple of days. The Blood Demon Sector is destined to embrace a catastrophe with huge casualties!”

Jin Xinyue held the jade chip in her hands and pondered the consequences of the event for herself, for her master, and for Skyfire. A moment later, brilliance beamed out of her eyes as she remarked, “Father, Elder Nether Spring’s last struggle is within your calculations, too, isn’t it?”

Her father smiled but did not answer. He changed the topic and asked, “Would you like to hear my thoughts about the future of the demon race in the next hundred years?”

Thinking about the question, Jin Xinyue realized that the so-called Red Tide Plan was a huge project with a time span of more than a hundred years!

Holding the handrail, Jin Tuyi looked at the ever-changing crimson clouds far away, which were crushing the struggling setting sun like unstoppable red tides.

His voice was both remote and hollow, as if it came not from his chest but from somewhere beyond the sky.

“In the beginning, Elder Nether Spring, in his dying struggle, insanely projects a lot of spores to several major cities in the Blood Demon Sector. The virus quickly spreads out and transforms countless demons into uncontrollable mutants and his slaves, raising an unprecedented disaster in the Blood Demon Sector!

“In the disaster, the old system of the Blood Demon Sector, the four demon kingdoms, the twelve demon emperors of the Pantheon of Demons, and everything else will be destroyed. The obstinate nobles and their interest groups will disperse as dead bodies.

“In the fight against the disaster, a new organization will rise and quickly fill the vacancy of power because of the savage of the Demon God Virus, establishing a new order!

“In order to suppress the Demon God Virus, all kinds of drugs which are based on the ‘blood of the saintess Jin Xinyue’ will be produced. But all such drugs have the same serious side effect, which is that the demons will appear more like human beings after taking them.

“Most of the demons will certainly not be happy about their new look, but under the threat of the Demon God Virus, they can only deal with it no matter how disgusting the side effect is.

“This is the first phase, which will probably take one to three years.”

Jin Tuyi paused for a moment to observe his daughter’s reaction. Seeing that she was listening carefully without any surprise, he nodded in satisfaction and went on.

“In the second phase, when the disaster is over, the Blood Demon Sector will be devastated by the disease and lose the capability to launch another world war.

“Also, the transformation between demons and human beings will make most of the demons reconsider the relationship between demons and human beings and the origins of the demon race.

“At that time, the obstruction for the peace negotiation will be minimized.

“In the end, the Blood Demon Sector will end the hundred-year war with the Heaven’s Origin Sector in a ‘conditional surrender’. The Blood Demon Sector, the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and the Flying Star Sector will establish a diplomatic relationship and establish an agency to cope with the threat of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

“Over the past hundred years, the Blood Demon Sector has caused tremendous damage to the Heaven’s Origin Sector. We are the out-and-out ‘invaders’. Even if it is a ‘conditional surrender’, I’m afraid that the punishment of war criminals and a huge amount of reparations will be mandatory.

“But it doesn’t matter. Agree to them. Agree to all their conditions!

“It doesn’t matter how large the reparations are. After all, we don’t have any crystals to offer at all!

“Eventually, we will agree to pay the reparations with labor work. A lot of demons will be sent to the resource planets of the Flying Star Sector to collect the resources, and the reparations will be paid off slowly in the next thirty to fifty years.”

Chapter 1045 - Belief of a Country!

The red evening glow slowly dimmed, and the setting sun fell below the horizon. Darkness of the night spread like ink and gradually covered Jin Tuyi’s face.

“The third phase will be thirty to fifty years after today.

“During the next thirty to fifty years, the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector will completely meld into a new Sector with two space zones. Also, large wormholes in the Dark Desolate Domain will facilitate easy transportation. The two worlds will be connected seamlessly.

“By then, the wars of the past will have been over thirty to fifty years ago. The new generation after the war will grow up!

“Everybody will have learned the threat of the Imperium of True Human Beings since decades ago. Then, in the textbook for the new generation, paragraphs about the war between human beings and demons will become shorter and shorter, and those elaborating on the formidability and evilness of the Imperium of True Human Beings will become longer and longer.

“Eventually, ideologically speaking, the contradiction between human beings and demons will be replaced by the contradiction between Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators.

“The new generation after the war are unlikely to hate demons as much as their fathers do.

“As the communication goes deeper, the appearances of demons and human beings will be more and more similar. With the propaganda of certain people, the same-origin theory will become very popular. Most of the bottom-level demons will be described as victims who are oppressed by the tyrants. The war thirty to fifty years ago will be blamed on a few insane, ambitious schemers.

“Among the ordinary people, the integration of human beings and demons will accelerate. The relatively mild features of the demon race, such as cat ears, rabbit ears, and furry tails, will be symbols for ‘cute’ and even ‘sexy’. ‘Little demon’ will be used to address the young, beautiful, and attractive girls. Artwork depicting the ‘forbidden love’ between human beings and demons will emerge. Communicating with demons and even falling in love with them will be the new fashion.”

Jin Xinyue listened attentively and pictured a long scroll in her head.

Jin Tuyi coughed for a moment and continued.

“The fourth phase will be fifty years after today.

“By then, human beings and demons should already be fairly close to each other. Also, after decades of labor, demons will have paid off all the reparations. In the meantime, the threat of the Imperium of True Human Beings will be drawing near.

“I estimate that, for victory and survival, the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector and the Flying Star Sector will have no alternatives except to upgrade the previous agency for collaboration into a new political entity. A new country will be established!

“The new country will likely succeed the name and the political system of the Star Glory Federation because the Star Glory Federation is the only country in the three Sectors that has experience in running a super large government. The Blood Demon Sector is like an alliance of tribes. There’s no need to mention the Flying Star Sector, which is essentially loose sand.

“The new Star Glory Federation will be fundamentally different from the federation in the past!

“It is not hard to guess that, when the new federation is established, the leadership of human beings will still be wary of demons. The demons are unlikely to get the same political rights as human beings do. Their rights such as the right to vote will be greatly restricted.

“But it doesn’t matter. Think long term. Agree with them and set up the new federation first!”

Jin Tuyi waved his hands resolutely and announced, “The fifth phase will be seventy years later. The expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings will be coming ever closer. To cope with the threat, the new federation will definitely be excavating resources and exploring more worlds crazily.

“By then, the ‘Strengthening Plan for New Human Beings’ will likely be accepted after it is proposed.”

Jin Xinyue frowned and asked, “Father, what is ‘Strengthening Plan for New Human Beings’?”

“Perhaps, you master has told you that I believed that the external features of demons are no longer adapted to the environment and are destined to be discarded,” Jin Tuyi replied in a smile. “Yes, I wasn’t lying, except that I kept something to myself.

“Tusks, claws, wings, tails… Those external features of demons are indeed redundancies that are best to be removed.

“However, what about inside?

“What if the development of the biochemical technology allows someone to activate the primeval cells inside their internal organs, bones, and muscles so that they will boast stronger hearts, lungs, stomachs, and muscle fires while maintaining their appearance as human beings?

“You see, to deal with the Imperium of True Human Beings, we will have to develop many resource planets that are full of venomous fog, which requires workers and immigrants that are much stronger than usual.

“To win the war, we will need stronger soldiers, too!

“Also, in the worst-case scenario, if the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector are all destroyed and we are forced to flee toward the rough space zones full of magnetic turbulence and cosmic rays, a stronger body will be all the more necessary!

“Develop the ‘controllable primeval cells’ technology, activate part of the primeval cells, combine the advantages of the old demons and the old human beings, and create new human beings who are humans outside but demons inside! This is the ‘Strengthening Plan for New Human Beings’ and the only solution to the Imperium of True Human Beings!”

Jin Xinyue found it hard to believe. “Will the leadership of the federation agree to the proposal?”

“Why wouldn’t they?” Jin Tuyi said. “At that time, the ‘same-origin’ theory will have already become prevalent. Everybody will understand that the demon race is just a branch of mankind. The so-called ‘primeval cells’ are the natural-born legacy of human beings, too.

“Besides, their appearance will not be affected at all, but their internal organs, muscles, and bones will be far stronger. What’s bad about that?”

Jin Xinyue pondered for a moment and nodded.

Although she still had a lot of questions, she thought that she had better let her father finish first.

Staring at the two newly-rising bloody moons in the sky, Jin Tuyi casually said, “The sixth phase will be seventy to eighty years from today. After the marriages between human beings and demons, and through the ‘Strengthening Plan for New Human Beings’, most human beings will carry the features of the demon race more or less.

“In the meantime, the miners on the resource planets will be a great political power. Activities demanding equal rights will be more and more frequent.

“The expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings will be coming at any moment. How can the new federation be divided at such a moment? In the end, just as the ‘Affirmative Action for Ghosts’ was passed a hundred years ago, ‘Affirmative Action for Demons’ will certainly be approved, too!

“In the new federation, the boundary between demons and human beings will be completely eliminated. Everybody will share the same political rights, including the most precious… right to vote!”

Jin Tuyi smiled. “My dear daughter, did you know that the Speaker of Parliament in the Star Glory Federation, who is also the commander of the federation army and has the power to mobilize the federal army without the approval of the parliament in emergencies, is actually elected by votes!”

Jin Xinyue gasped hard and immediately understood what her father was planning to do!

Although she was a bit startled, she was also surrounded by obscure flames of excitement!

“When the Star Glory Federation was born, there were a lot of contradictions within the country,” Jin Tuyi said. “The contradiction between the major sects, the contradiction between the Cultivators and ordinary people, the contradiction between the major sects and the federal army…

“To coordinate the interests of different parties as best as possible, the Star Glory Federation adopted the system where the Speaker was elected by votes.

“As it happens, the federation has always been at war during the hundreds of years after it was founded. In the war, the power of the highest leader naturally grew larger and larger. It is barely restricted today and probably will never be in the future.”

Jin Xinyue bit her lips softly and stimulated her brain with the slight pain. “Father, how can you be so certain that the new federation in a hundred years will still use the system?

Election when a great enemy is coming? It seems better to focus the power in the hands of a strongman, doesn’t it?”

Jin Tuyi shook his head firmly. “No, it doesn’t. The new federation will certainly not do that.

“Think about it. According to our current intelligence, the Imperium of True Human Beings, which is the new federation’s enemy, is a country that has made best use of the advantages of a totalitarian regime. It is an ‘imperium’ after all.

“The new federation is lesser to the Imperium of True Human Beings in terms of territory, technology, techniques, top-tier experts… You name it. How can you expect to compete with them if you choose exactly the same political system as theirs?

“If both countries are playing dictatorship, we might as well surrender to the Imperium of True Human Beings. Why should we stay in the new federation to be bullied by others? We’d better find a master with stronger muscles if we must.

“To fight against the Imperium of True Human Beings, the Flying Star Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Heaven’s Origin Sector are definitely far from enough. In the next hundred years, more worlds will be discovered and explored.

“To attract the new worlds to join the new federation, or at the very least, to prevent the new worlds from joining the imperium, the new federation will have to adopt a system that is entirely the opposite of the imperium’s.

“Cultivators always talk about ‘belief’. In fact, a country has its ‘belief’, too. The political system of the Star Glory

Federation is its ‘belief’. It is also perhaps the only part about the country that is better than the Imperium of True Human Beings. How can the country destroy the belief before the war begins?”

Jin Xinyue thought through everything and took a long breath in relief. “That explains a lot. I finally understand what father’s secret weapon is now. It is our population!”

“Exactly.”

The third bloody moon finally rose up. Jin Tuyi’s face was in a trance under the illumination of the three bloody moons, as if he had envisioned what would happen a hundred years later. He observed, “We have lost the war today, with absolutely no chance for a comeback.

“However, if a supreme leader who has the bloodline of demons is elected legally in the ‘Star Glory Federation’ in a hundred years, and there are a lot of descendants of demons in the parliaments who can influence the policies of the new federation, whose victory is it exactly?”

Jin Xinyue was fascinated by the future and breathed heavily.

Glamorous brilliance was beaming out of Jin Tuyi’s eyes, which fell upon his daughter and seemed to cover her in a colorful armor.

“My daughter, I know that you’ve been ambitious since you were young. You were not satisfied as a minor saintess. You always craved to be the unique ‘Dark Lady of Nine Heavens’ of the Pantheon of Demons, preferably the most powerful one in the history of the Blood Demon Sector!

“However, in my eyes, the ‘Dark Lady of Nine Heaven’s is still too insignificant. How can the master of one Sector fit the appetite of my daughter?

“I wonder, what do you think about being the first female Speaker of the ‘Star Glory Federation’ with a demonic bloodline in a hundred years when the Imperium of True Human Beings comes close? What do you think about leading the new federation to crush the imperium and march toward the center of the sea of stars?”

Chapter 1046 - History Dust

As if hit by a thunderbolt, Jin Xinyue was dumbfounded for a long time, unable to say anything.

She lost the ability to think, but from the deepest part of her body, the tremor named ‘ambition’ was quickly spreading all over her body!

Her father’s expectant eyes seemed to be keys that opened the strength hidden deep inside her blood. Taking a long breath, she tried to calm herself down before she mumbled, “Why me? I am too weak. Without the help of father and Master, I cannot even defeat the demon emperors.”

“You are the best choice. I didn’t pick you because you were my daughter but because of a unique advantage that nobody else has,” Jin Tuyi explained casually. “Of course, you are still very weak right now. But we are talking about the future a hundred years from now.

“You are already a demon king, or in the Core Formation Stage, and you have the enlightenment of a great teacher. In a hundred years, your wisdom, physical status, and training experience will be in the peak. There is no doubt that you will be a demon emperor or march into the Nascent Soul Stage.

“More importantly, faced with the threat of the Imperium of True Human Beings, the new federation will need to be highly united. Then, a leader who is deeply connected to the Blood Demon Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the

Heaven’s Origin Sector will have to be elected to balance the interests of different parties.

“You were born in the demon race and are rooted in the Blood Demon Sector. The demons and the federal citizens who are sympathetic to demons will certainly support you.

“There’s no need to talk about your master’s influence in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector. As long as you are loyal to your master and turn into his agent, it is not impossible to win the support of the big shots.

“It must be noted that, although your master has achieved immense power and influence in both the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector after only ten years, if we get to the bottom of it, he is neither good at nor passionate about using his influence to build up his forces.

“It is not because he isn’t smart enough but because that’s just not what he wants. He seems to have a higher pursuit.

“However, what your master has neglected is what you are best at.

“Your master doesn’t have any children yet. According to the traditions of Cultivators, as his true disciple, you should be among his most trusted people.

“Therefore, you should deserve his trust. You should take the opportunity to participate in the management and operation of the organizations under his name. You will develop the organizations slowly until they grow into influential forces in the new federation!

“You will be able to provide more resources for your master’s training while increasing your personal influence, making friends with more experts, and establishing broader connections and communities of interests. Finally, you will campaign for the supreme leader of the new federation with all the support that you have built up. Won’t it be a win-win?”

Jin Xinyue bit her teeth and said, “Father, please don’t forget that I will forward our conversation today to Master without leaving anything out.”

Jin Tuyi burst into laughter. “Tell him all you want. I am different from Elder Nether Spring. I am not scared of my enemy learning my plan or hearing my words!”

Jin Xinyue considered carefully, not whether she should agree to her father’s plan or not, but about the odds of success.

After thinking for a long time, she shook her head and said, “My background is not clean. In the past years, I have done countless clandestine things. Although they were all to do with the internal strife of the Blood Demon Sector and no one from the federation was killed, I am afraid that I will still be judged as ‘cruel and merciless’. Even if… even if an election is really held in a hundred years, my competitor will certainly dig out the history to attack me. Why will everyone pick a cold hearted, ruthless leader?”

Jin Tuyi’s laughter turned into a confident smile. He shook his head again. “You are wrong again, my daughter. The dark history in your early years is not your taint at all. Instead, it is your trump card!

“If it is an election in peacetime, naturally, people will have concerns about a cold hearted, ruthless leader.

“However, in a hundred years, it will be the critical moment when the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human

Beings approaches. It will be the time of a life-and-death war!

“At that time, what the new federation needs will be a cold hearted, ruthless, and intelligent leader. Only with nerves that are cold enough will the leader be able to shoulder the pressure of the war and lead the new federation to the ultimate victory!

“Therefore, even if your rivals do not attack you with your dark history, you should hire some reporters in secret and ask them to dig it out, elaborate, and attack yourself viciously, thereby proving to all the citizens of the federation that you are a leader who is strong enough to survive in any disadvantageous environments and secure a victory with all possible methods!”

Jin Xinyue was stunned.

Jin Tuyi placed his hands on the top of her daughter’s head. Three bloody moons were shining right behind him. Mysterious forces seemed to flow out of his body and pour into his daughter’s skull through his palms.

“My daughter, let me ask you again. Are you ambitious, confident, and determined to be the first female Speaker of Parliament who has the blood of demons in the history of the Star Glory Federation before the Imperium of True Human Beings comes?”

Jin Xinyue was silent for a long time.

She gritted her teeth, and her body was trembling. She seemed to be both fighting against her father’s strength and devouring her father’s strength, vitality, and ambitions.

A short moment later, she stopped trembling. Exotic brilliance the same as that in Jin Tuyi’s eyes was beaming out of Jin Xinyue’s eyes.

“Father…”

Moonlight came from Jin Tuyi’s back and covered Jin Xinyue’s face in a scarlet mask.

Her voice was as soft as a feather, and yet it was so resolute that it sounded like a nail that was smashed against steel.

“If I dedicate my entire life to the Red Tide Plan, the integration of the three Sectors and the two races, and the growth of the ‘new federation’, then the new federation will be my life, my soul, my everything!

“I will not allow anyone, or any force, to divide it, sabotage it, or destroy it!

“If I am indeed elected as the supreme leader of the ‘Star Glory Federation’ one day, everything I do will be based on the interest of the Star Glory Federation instead of the selfish interests of demons or human beings.

“The Star Glory Federation under my leadership will be destined to be a formidable civilization of mankind but not one of the demon race.

“However thoroughly you have planned, and despite the ‘conditional surrender’, we are now surrendering after all. In the hundred years of integration and assimilation, human beings will certainly hold the dominant position. In a hundred years, even those with bloodlines of demons will consider themselves ‘human beings’ instead of ‘demons’!

“The name and banner of the demon race will be gone forever and will probably never come back!

“Therefore, if you are hoping to resurrect the ‘demons’ in a hundred years in such a way, I am afraid that I will disappoint you and even stand against you in the future!

“Have you ever considered that, Father?”

“Of course I have. But does it matter?” Jin Tuyi coughed softly. “Names and banners are both made up. ‘Human being’ and ‘demon’ are two notions that are not natural but defined. Therefore, they can be changed and twisted, too.

“Our race will abandon the name and banner of the past, but we will reap the entire sea of stars. What’s bad about that?”

Jin Xinyue narrowed her eyes and asked, “You don’t care even if the name of ‘demon’ will completely perish in the passage of time, Father? It doesn’t seem to be your goal, Father.”

“No, it won’t perish.” Brilliance of excitement emanated from Jin Tuyi’s face again. He stared at the rolling clouds in the moonlight and said slowly, “All history is contemporary history. Truth of history? There isn’t such a thing at all!

“The Star Glory Federation has fought the demon race for five hundred years and hates our guts. That’s why their textbooks expound on the ‘evil’ history of the demon race and call our thirty-thousand-year reign the ‘Great Dark Age’.

“But are the thirty thousand years really nothing but darkness, without the slightest brightness?

“As the successors of the civilization of ancient human beings, did we never create a more splendid civilization?

“I believe that the textbooks of the Flying Star Sector will not say much about the so-called ‘Great Dark Age’. If you ever encounter new worlds where human beings have never seen any demons in the past ten thousand years, they will not care about the ‘Great Dark Age’ at all!

“Do you understand now, my daughter? The future of the demon race depends on you, and so does our past!

“If you turn out to be a great leader who leads the Star Glory Federation to defeat the Imperium of True Human Beings, march into the Empyrean Terminus Sector as counterattack, and integrate all the human beings and demons in the three thousand Sectors, creating an unprecedently formidable country, then, one day, our posterity will look at the demon race in a different light. They will study the thirty-thousand-year Great Dark Age without bias and define it as a key period of transition between the ‘ancient civilization’ and ‘modern civilization’. They will publish papers on the shining points in the ‘Great Dark Age’ sparing no effort. They will consider mankind, the demon race, the Demon Beast Empire, and the Star Ocean Imperium like more of a transition.

“Demons shall be acknowledged as human beings in a different form. The thirty thousand years of history shall be admitted as part of the history of mankind. The unforgettable grudge in the past shall become the dust of history sooner or later!”

Jin Tuyi’s words blew away the last bit of confusion inside Jin Xinyue’s head. She opened her hands, somewhat at a loss, apparently not prepared to control the future and the past of the demon race with such a pair of tiny hands.

But her hesitation was gone the next moment. Jin Xinyue smiled softly, and the air around her was utterly different from one second earlier.

“I promise you, Father.”

Jin Xinyue pressed her chest with both of her hands, as if she was pushing the future and the past of the demon race into her heart.

Staring at her father in the eyes, she declared, one word after another, “I will complete the Red Tide Plan with my life and realize everything that you have predicated just now. I become the Speaker of Parliament in the Star Glory Federation!”

Chapter 1047 - The Real Trial!

As Jin Xinyue grew more and more daunting, Jin Tuyi gradually lost all his vigor.

He seemed to have finally put down the heavy burden on his shoulder, a burden that he had gritted his teeth to walk with for a long time. He was finally given a chance to take a rest, perhaps a permanent one.

“I know that you will live up to your ambitions. That’s more like Jin Tuyi’s daughter!”

Holding the handrail, Jin Tuyi coughed but smiled in great comfort. “Now, let’s get started with you becoming the Dark Lady of Nine Heavens!

“Elder Nether Spring has already started spreading the Demon God Virus on a large scale in the Nether Spring Kingdom. The situation will get out of control very soon, and the disease will soon affect the rest of the kingdoms. We must take action immediately!

“Since your blood is the key to the Demon God Virus, we must highlight the point in our announcements. We will build you up into the most kindhearted, the most lenient, and the greatest saintess ever to win the support of the middle-level and bottom-level demons!

“I will help you make decisions in the Pantheon of Demons, and you will become the most trusted saintess for the middle-level and bottom-level demons through propaganda.

Therefore, you will certainly become the most powerful Dark Lady of Nine Heavens in the history of the Blood Demon Sector. You will not be a front but a real decision-maker!

“After you become the Dark Lady of Nine Heavens, you will participate in the peace negotiations as the representative of the Blood Demon Sector and facilitate the final peace. Eventually, you will leave a deep impression on the people of the Blood Demon Sector, the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and the Flying Star Sector as an envoy of peace, which will lay a solid foundation for your future path!

“Think about it. How will your story be told in the Star Glory Federation?

“You were a descendent of a noble family in the Blood Demon Sector. The environment and the brainwashing education made you cruel and coldhearted. Thus, you became an accomplice of the Pantheon of Demons and an evil soldier.

“However, you were born merciful, and it was your nature to pursue justice and brightness. During the countless murders, your humanity was awakened. You began to question yourself, your family, and the social class that you were in!

“Because of that, you were abandoned by the evil family and your social class. You were even hunted by them!

“At the critical, life-and-death moment, you happened to run into Vulture Li Yao, the greatest warrior of the Star Glory Federation and an Ultra-Level Federal Hero!

“Under the warrior’s tutelage, and touched by his real actions, you finally realized what was right and what was wrong.

“You decided to abandon the darkness for the light. You betrayed your family and class and embraced the brightness without any hesitation by becoming Li Yao’s disciple!

“Later, you told your master the evil scheme known as the Red Tide Plan. Together with your master, you took action at great risk and reversed the situation. You sabotaged the Eye of Blood Demon and stopped your ambitious father’s evil invasion plan!

“Had you not revealed the Red Tide Plan, your father’s evil scheme certainly would’ve worked out. The ferocious troops of the coalition army of demons would’ve marched into the Heaven’s Origin Sector through the Eye of Blood Moon. Also, an even more dreadful Spore Stratagem was hidden behind them!

“The capital city of the Star Glory Federation would’ve been destroyed and turned into a paradise for the walking dead. Billions of federation citizens would’ve been killed miserably!

“You stopped the Red Tide Plan and the Spore Stratagem and saved billions of lives in the Star Glory Federation. After your father was sent to the tribunal, the war between the two Sectors was finally ended, and everlasting peace began!

“My daughter, this is the start that I’ve planned for you. For the citizens of the federation, when they hear such a twisting story and see your current appearance, how can they ever be against your past identity?

“This is as far as your father can help you now. You will have to finish the rest of the journey yourself.”

Although Jin Xinyue’s heart and nerves were already strong enough because of the shocks recently, she still could not help but took a few steps back when she heard her father's last sentence. She exclaimed, "What are you talking about, Dad?

"You are going to be sent to the tribunal? Why?"

Jin Tuyi smiled. He touched Jin Xinyue's head, but this time, he was not pouring in any strength. It was just an affectionate gesture of a father to his daughter.

"Little dummy, this long war between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven's Origin Sector is like the mauling of two deadly beasts. How can you stop them without offering meat?

"No matter what the specific terms of the 'conditional surrender' are, the one about the punishment of war criminals will not be reduced. It is even more important about the reparations!

"This is the foundation on which the federation was established. There's certainly no room for negotiation.

"Then here comes the question. Who is the biggest war criminal? Who should be responsible for the war? Is there a second candidate other than me, the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons?

"Putting everything else aside, to carry out the Red Tide Plan, we launched a fake attack on the Grand Desolate Plateau and killed a lot of soldiers and civilians of the Star Glory Federation.

"In the capital city of the federation, some of the troops, and perhaps even one or two demon emperors, must've been teleported over. They certainly would have caused serious damages before they were annihilated. It was like a slap in the face for the Star Glory Federation!

“How will the federation accept our surrender if the no one answers for the crimes?

“Even if the federal government is willing to, the family of the victims who must still be furious will not agree!

“Teeth for teeth, blood for blood. This is the most natural logic. I was the one who put forward the Red Tide Plan, I was the one who led the construction and modification of the Eye of Blood Demon, and I was the top commander of the war. If I am not counted as a war criminal, nobody else will be qualified to be one. It’s not like we can pick a few random black-blood soldiers as scapegoats, right?”

Amid complicated feelings, Jin Xinyue was lost for words for a long time.

Jin Tuyi sighed deeply and continued. “In my original plan, I was only the third most influential person in the coalition army of demons. Elder Blood Robe and Elder Nether Spring would have taken the blame for me and played the roles of ‘war criminals’. I would have played the role of ‘envoy of peace’ and taken charge of everything that followed.

“But I didn’t expect that Elder Nether Spring would push me up to be the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons as a cover for his Spore Stratagem.

“As a result, although it was more convenient for me to control the Blood Demon Sector, I now have to take the blame as the ‘war criminal’ personally!

“Maybe, if I negotiate with the Star Glory Federation with all possible methods, I can achieve better conditions and will not be executed.

“However, if I am exempted, the people of the federation will not be convinced even if the federation’s government agrees to the conditions. They will be angry for a long time and feel that the victims haven’t been avenged. Then, the so-called ‘peace’ will only be a pot of half-cooked rice. It will be a bad start for the hundred years of integration.

“Only if I—the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons, the ambitious warlord, and the source of all disasters—am trialed by law in the tribunal of the Star Glory Federation and executed in public will the federation have a complete victory. The hundreds of years of war will be ended cleanly, and all the citizens of the federation will be able to vent their anger so that they can slowly forgive and embrace their enemy in the past in the hundred years to come. Only in such a way can you, the daughter of the coalition army of demons, get rid of your dark past and run toward a much brighter future!”

Jin Xinyue was having trouble breathing. She felt that her nose was sour and bitter, and her eyes were more or less swollen. She shook her head hard and said, “That’s too unfair. Too unfair! If the new federation is established one day, you will be its original architect! If we are cruising at the center of the sea of stars one day, you will be the greatest contributor! It is safe to say that the lives of countless human beings and demons will be saved by you. So many ordinary people will live in peace and stability because of your planning! How can I sit by and watch you be sent to a tribunal and be punished for the crimes that aren’t your fault?”

“It doesn’t matter,” Jin Tuyi said casually. “You know my condition very well now. Even if my body can linger on for another few decades, the fire of my wisdom will die soon. By then, I will become a moron with incontinence of bowel and bladder, and my life will be less dignified than a stray dog whose legs are broken. Dying in humiliation after being mocked for decades? That’s not the ending that I look forward to.

“The new human beings that are the combinations of the old demons and the old human beings are about to ignite the torch of their civilization. So, let me be the kindling.”

Jin Xinyue’s tears finally flooded out of her eyes. Her voice was trembling as she said, “What I care about is not how much longer you can live, Father, but your honor! If you are sent to the tribunal as the ‘commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons’, you will be the greatest war criminal. The Star Glory Federation’s five-hundred-year hatred toward demons will be vented on you alone! You will certainly be disgraced forever!”

“Don’t be silly, my child.” Jin Tuyi laughed again.

At first, he was smiling in amusement, but then he grinned. He was coughing and laughing so hard that he was out of breath, and his tears and snot were all running crazily.

Amid the loud laughter, he stared at the endless stars in the sky and said, “Do you really think that the trial of the Star Glory Federation will give the final verdict for me?”

Jin Xinyue was confused. “What—what do you mean, Father? I don’t understand.”

“It’s true that I am willing to go to the tribunal of the Star Glory Federation and be sentenced according to their laws. But it is definitely not going to be the real trial; it is just a folly!

“Here and now, nobody in the entire federation is qualified to judge me. They can trial and criticize me however they want. I don’t care if I am crucified to the pillar of shame forever. I don’t care at all.”

Jin Tuyi’s dominating aura spread out of his body again and soared into the clouds, raising roars of thunder among the clouds.

He looked at his daughter and said, one word after another, “Only the history that you will have created ten thousand years later will be qualified to judge me!

“I look forward to the day very much!”

Chapter 1048 - It’s Decided!

After having a sincere conversation with her father, Jin Xinyue went to Li Yao to dutifully report the situation.

Li Yao was in an awkward position right now. Although most of the soldiers of the coalition army of demons understood that he had saved everyone’s life, fourteen demon emperors had died because of him, and countless elite troops and devilish warships had been obliterated during the destruction of Eye of Blood Demon.

Before Jin Tuyi completely took control of the situation, it was best for him to stay in the warehouse of crystals on Blood Demon in case somebody lost their mind and attacked him.

On her way there, Jin Xinyue had summoned all her brain cells to consider how she should communicate with her master.

However, the moment she saw Li Yao, the speech that she had prepared was shattered, and she was so shocked that her jaw nearly hit the ground.

“Ma—master, how did you end up like this?”

The upper half of Li Yao that extended out of the door gap could not have been more miserable.

His clothes were ragged, as if he had just climbed on a thorny mountain. His face was full of bruises, and his head was as big as that of a pig. His left eye was so swollen that his eye was narrowed into a gap, and he could barely see anything.

It appeared that he had been savaged brutally for a long time!

Jin Xinyue was shocked!

Who was her master? A super expert in the top tier of the Blood Demon Sector, the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and the Flying Star Sector! How was he so terribly beaten?

Who did it?

Did some demon emperor come to look for her master’s trouble in discontent? That was not very likely. If it were a battle between her master and another demon emperor, the entire Blood Demon might have been torn to the ground.

Jin Xinyue thought quickly and realized something. “Master, somebody sent by Elder Nether Spring ambushed you?”

Li Yao’s lips were as swollen as two sausages. Air was escaping through his teeth while he spoke. “No. I was beaten by myself.”

“Huh?” Jin Xinyue was confused. “Master… Why did you beat yourself out of shape and make yourself… look like a pig?”

Li Yao dragged her into the warehouse and shut the door heavily, before he staggered back and smeared the balm in front of the mirror while grimacing in pain. “Leave the minor issues alone. Let’s talk about your father’s Red Tide Plan!”

“Okay.”

Looking at the mess in the warehouse that seemed to indicate that hundreds of demon beasts had just stampeded through here, Jin Xinyue took a long time to hold back her curiosity. She calmed herself down and forwarded everything her father said just now to Li Yao.

In the end, she concluded, “My father said that, although this is the Red Tide Plan in his head, it is a huge project that will last a hundred years. There will be too many variables and difficulties. Many things are just his wishes or even fantasies that have no realistic support.

“All in all, he has planted the seed of the dream into the ground. But whether or not the seed can grow up, blossom, and yield fruit will not be controlled by him but depend on us, especially you, Master!

“Only with your support can the Red Tide Plan possibly proceed. If you refuse it now, it will only be a tantalizing dream.

“Master, would you like to support me, support the Red Tide Plan, and support my father’s dream?”

Jin Xinyue looked at Li Yao somewhat nervously.

However, her attention was distracted by Li Yao’s left eye, which was like a rotten peach, and his sausage-like lips.

Li Yao was holding a cluster of round, translucent gel the size of an egg in his hands. After rubbing it softly in his palm, something deep inside the gel seemed to break apart, allowing the gel to emit coldness.

He covered the gel on his swollen left eye carefully while he grimaced and screamed in pain.

Her heart pounding, Jin Xinyue could not help but have other thoughts.

Would her father hand over the future of the Blood Demon Sector, the Heaven's Origin Sector, and the Flying Star Sector to her master if her father saw her master's 'respectable' appearance right now?

It was not until the coldness of the gel found its way into his left eye that Li Yao put the gel down and looked at Jin Xinyue with his remaining right eye.

Jin Xinyue tried her best to stop her eyelids from twitching.

It was supposed to be a serious discussion about the future of the three Sectors, but why was the vibe so weird when her master's pig-like face was present?

It was so funny that she almost laughed out loud.

Putting on a solemn expression despite his pig-like face, Li Yao said carefully, "In fact, I already guessed what you father might say to you. I've been in a dilemma since your father said that he was going to surrender to me. Today, I have been hesitating for an entire day.

"Honestly speaking, when I learned your father's whole plan, my first reaction was not surprise but fury. I was angry that I had become your father's chess piece.

"My second reaction was embarrassment. I was embarrassed that I walked onto your father's chess board without even knowing.

"When my fury and embarrassment slowly dispersed, the third negative emotion, which was more intense, slowly surfaced. It was worry."

Li Yao observed his deformed face in the mirror, but his right eye was as clear as the past, if not more so. “Your father is indeed too awesome. I couldn’t help but have other thoughts.

“I was thinking a lot of things. Was your father plan as simple as that? Did he really hope for the integration of the two races? Was everything part of a larger scheme? Is it possible that the Star Glory Federation would be swallowed by the demon race in the end?

“The more I thought about it, the crazier I became. All kinds of dark thoughts were occurring to me. In my insanity, I even considered the possibility that your father was actually a spy of the Imperium of True Human Beings and everything he did was a scheme to pave the way for the invasion of the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“A voice in my head told me again and again that I absolutely shouldn’t agree to Jin Tuyi’s plan. If I did, it meant that I had lost the game, and I would become his chess piece!

“Another voice was saying that Jin Tuyi was a player that was too formidable for me to defeat. He certainly had incessant, subsequent schemes. Once I helped him accomplish the peace negotiation and the conditional surrender, I would certain regret it someday in the future!

“I must suffocate him in time. I must suffocate him no matter what the price was!

“The voices were echoing nonstop in my head. They were biting my soul like vipers. In the end, I was almost completely devoured by the darkness and embarked on a vastly different path!”

While Li Yao was talking, his soul glimpsed at the deepest part of his brain.

Inside his brain, below the tree of Ou Yezi's memory pieces, the mental devil, who had wounds all over its body and looked more like a pig that he did, cried pitifully. “It was just a joke. Why so serious?”

“Get lost!” Li Yao spat.

Jin Xinyue listened attentively. Although she did not know the existence of the mental devil, it was not difficult for her to tell that her master had just gone through a nervous crisis.

It was not unusual for high-level Cultivators due to their super high computational ability. To put it more frankly, they were often overthinking until they reached a point where they could not turn back.

If the nervous crisis was not resolved in time, it was very possible to lead to the mental derangement.

However, it appeared that the nervous crisis had already been cracked by her master.

With an ugly smile, Li Yao said, “When I was having a lot of evil thoughts and I was ninety percent consumed by the darkness, I suddenly recalled a certain someone.”

Jin Xinyue could not help but ask, “Who was it?”

“Ba Yanzhi,” Li Yao said, “the predecessor who created the demon race, and the first real Cultivator forty thousand years ago!

“Your father was not wrong. He is a politician, and you will be one, too, in the future. You are the same type of people, good at playing chess games with the magnificent sea of stars as the board and the billions of creatures in them as the chess pieces.

“But I am not.

“I cannot play such a splendid chess game. I am not willing to play it, either.

“On many occasions, I prefer to consider myself as an ordinary person and reflect on the issues at hand from the perspective of the billions of ordinary people.

“After all, they are all living souls instead of chess pieces!

“Therefore, I simply jumped out of the mess and pondered what ‘Chaos’ Ba Yanzhi would do if he were in my shoes.

“Forty thousand years ago, Ba Yanzhi chose to transform ordinary people into demons with the Divine Water of Kunlun for nothing else except that he wanted the ordinary people to live better, more stable, and more peaceful lives in the world plagued by war.

“I remember that, in Ba Yanzhi’s memory pieces, there was an ordinary person whose name was Zhang Niuer. The only reason he was willing to turn into a demon was that his wife and his children would be fed and would be able to build a tiny home in a new world that was away from war.

“Today, aren’t all demons in the Blood Demon Sector the descendants of Ba Yanzhi and Zhang Niuer?

“Forty thousand years ago, they turned from human beings into demons for such a simple wish. Forty thousand years later, do their offspring not have the right to realize the wish by transforming into human beings again?

“I have thought everything through. I may eventually lose the game with your father, but so what? My belief when I chose to become a Cultivator was to protect the ordinary people. As long as I am walking down the path, what will an insignificant victory or failure matter?

“Therefore, before you arrived, I beat back the amalgamation of the negative emotions and made my choice!

“I believe that Ba Yanzhi, Zhang Niuer, and the billions of ordinary people who chose to become demons forty thousand years ago will second my choice if they are still watching us from heaven.”

Jin Xinyue was both surprised and excited. She exclaimed, “Master, are you saying that—”

Looking at his third disciple, Li Yao said carefully, “One last question. Do you feel that you are a demon or a Cultivator?”

Biting her lips, Jin Xinyue pondered for a moment before she solemnly replied, “Although I have transformed into the appearance of human beings now, the marks that have been etched into my heart will never fade away. I am a demon, and I always will be.

“However—”

She smiled, with brilliance beaming out of her eyes. “Which law states that demons cannot become Cultivators or protect ordinary people?”

Li Yao smiled, too. He smashed his round, puffy fists hard and declared, “Alright. I will do my best to support the Red Tide Plan and help you become the Speaker of Parliament in the Star Glory Federation in a hundred years!”

Chapter 1049 - Adventure of the Cat-Eared Girl

Three months later, in Gloomy Bone City, a town at the border of the Nether Spring Kingdom and the Gold Crow Kingdom...

Illuminated by the pale moonlight, the entire city was enveloped in a hazy mist of blood. Screams and cries were echoing everywhere, and cold wind was blowing, accompanied by the occasional explosions and the noises of the collapsing houses and caves.

Lei Lan used all the strength of the tiger demon inside her blood and dashed here and there in the debris. In her haste, even her white nurse hat fell to the ground, revealing two sharp-tipped cat ears that were shivering in the cold wind.

Pu!

She was tripped over by a dry branch and fell to the ground before rolling into a half-collapsed cave. She got bruises all over her body because of the sharp remnants in the cave, but she covered her mouth hard and did not dare moan in pain even though tears were rushing out of her eyes.

Looking outside through the gaps of the cave, she noticed that the three bloody moons in the sky were as blurred as the past.

However, Lei Lan felt that the whole world that she was familiar with had been swallowed by violent turbulence and crushed into pieces, never to be recovered again, ever since she picked the mysterious blood-eyed young man on the mountain more than half a year ago!

The cat-eared Lei Lan had been an ordinary chaotic-blood demon in a barren mountain village named Dry Leaf Village deep inside the Hundred Desolation Mountain. She had lived together with her elder brother, Lei Qi, and her younger brother, Lei Chuang. Her life had been simple and peaceful.

She had once spent an entire day climbing the highest mountain to the east of the village and looked at the horizon from the peak. But all that she could see was more mountains, each higher than the last.

She had thought that she would grow old and die in the Hundred Desolation Mountain as her ancestors did, and she had never imagined what the world outside of the mountains would be like.

However, more than half a year ago, after a great forest fire, a mysterious blood-eyed young man barged into her small world.

At that time, Lei Qi, her elder brother, had been spellbound and joined the organization of rebellions known as the Blade of Chaos. He had even taken part in the Riot of Bloody Blade.

To avoid suspicion and to make it easier for her younger brother, Lei Chuang, to join the coalition army of demons, she came up with the idea to pretend that the blood-eyed young man who had lost his memories was her elder brother, Lei Qi.

But everything that happened later was far beyond Lei Lan’s imagination.

Jin Xinyue, the most honorable princess of the Gold Crow Kingdom, set foot in the sterile village of chaotic-blood demons before vanishing into the Hundred Desolation Mountain together with the mysterious blood-eyed young man!

Later, quite a few batches of soldiers and many well-known big shots dropped by her small village.

Many troops were recruiting soldiers in the village, too.

However, her younger brother, who had always craved to join the army, suddenly became reluctant. He even fled into the mountain and went missing when the coalition army of demons began enlisting soldiers by force.

Before he went away, he left a letter for her sister.

According to the letter, he had met the real Lei Qi and learned a lot of things from him.

As it turned out, everything that the Pantheon of Demons said was false. The ‘Legends of Ancient Demons’, the ‘obliteration, rebirth, immortality’ theory, and all the other propaganda were out-and-out lies!

Now, he was going to look for the truth together with their big brother.

When the situation was less dire, and after they were settled, they would come and pick up Lei Lan, too.

The departure of the two males in her family, and especially the letter that her younger brother left for her, cast the innocent cat-eared girl into deep confusion. She was both worried and angry that her simple-headed young brother had been brainwashed by the fallacies.

At that time, Lei Lan did not know that greater changes were awaiting her and everybody else in the village.

After her brother ran away, the situation became tenser by the day.

It was said that a great war against the Heaven’s Origin Sector was coming close, and all demons would be drafted. The males would go to the frontline as soldiers, and the females would stay in the rear and do the burdensome work in place of the males.

Upon hearing the news, many villagers fled into the mountain like her young brother Lei Chuang had done.

But Lei Lan had hesitated for a few days. She had been scared that, if she ran away, her brothers would not find her when they came back home.

As it turned out, the day she made up her mind to run away, she encountered an aggressive slave-catching team when she just got out of the village.

Lei Lan and the remaining villagers all ended up being slaves. The reason was that a lot of soldiers from their village had deserted, which was a huge disrespect for the Pantheon of Demons.

After that, Lei Lan was like a boat that lost all the momentum. She flowed along with the current in the scary river with shocking tides.

She was moved to various places. Eventually, she found herself in a household of silver-blood demons in a major city in the Gold Crow Kingdom, where she worked as a maid.

Lei Lan did not complain too much about being a maid because she was completely fascinated by the dazzling, bizarre city.

In the eyes of the cat-eared girl who had been born and raised in a mountain village, what a prosperous metropolis it was!

Seven Gold Crow Woods covered a territory of dozens of square kilometers. Like seven super skyscrapers, they constituted the main trunks of the city. The branches extended out through the twigs and vines, interweaving into a three-dimensional downtown.

In the gaps of the branches were the tireless flying demon beasts. In a traffic jam, the flying demon beasts that were resting on the branches were heavy enough to break the thickest branch. The glamorous, nest-like villas were glittering in the middle of the vines, adorned by petals and feathers in the most fabulous way. At night, the fireflies would turn the city into an ocean of light. Different feathers would reflect different colors under the light, making the city a paradise on the earth!

Her surprise when she saw the uncanny items in her master’s house need not be mentioned.

There was a certain bug that would utter beautiful music when its stomach was pressed softly.

There was also a beetle that had a big belly. The shell on its back could be automatically opened. After one put cold food into it, the food would be heated by the high-temperature chemical reactions in the belly of the beetle in only ten seconds!

There was yet another round, fat bug that had almost twenty tentacles and looked like a jellyfish. Normally, it was soaked in a special solution. But as long as one stuck two of its tentacles to one’s temples, one would be able to see pictures as if one were dreaming, including oceans, sky, and vivid towns where the small figures were even moving!

It was said the bug was named Phantom Wave Insect, which was specially created for television purpose.

Every night after dinner, everybody in the household would gather around the big jellyfish and attach the tentacles to their heads, watching and listening attentively. Now and then, they would also nod and comment on the latest events.

At that time, Lei Lan did not know exactly what ‘television’ was.

There were too many new items in the city that she did not know before. She was like a sponge that was thrown back into the water after being burnt by the sunlight for three days. She absorbed everything hungrily and did not have much time to consider the situation she was in.

Lei Lan was smart and as cute as a red apple. The lady of the house was quite fond of her. Her life in the city was not too difficult. Although her meals were mostly leftover, that was even better than her food when she was still in the village.

She worked as a maid for several months, but she never saw the husband of the family. It was said that the husband was a high official in the army who commanded several thousand soldiers. Whenever the lady of the house brought him up, she was always glowing with pride.

Lei Lan thought that she was going to stay in the household for a long time, and she was considering how she could find her brothers.

However, abrupt changes took place again.

One day, the city was in chaos. A team of ferocious soldiers broke into the house. The soldiers were not the members of the Feather Clan with wings but bull-headed demons with horns on their head.

The lady’s hair was messy, and she was taken away as if she were a mad woman. The entire house was turned upside down. The usually arrogant young masters and ladies were all shrinking their wings lethargically, unable to raise their head, like hens that were suffering a plague.

It was not until later that Lei Lan learn that the coalition army of demons had suffered a great setback in a place named Eye of Blood Demon. The reason for the setback was that some bad guys were stirring trouble. The husband of the household was one of the bad guys who was formally known as an accomplice of Elder Nether Spring!

In the period, accomplices of Elder Nether Spring were being searched on a large scale in the city. As far as Lei Lan could recall, its scale was even larger than the search for the members of the Blade of Chaos.

As a maid, she certainly had a few friends who were maids in other households.

According to the news from them, in only half a month, many magnificent, influential noble families were uprooted, and all their belonging were confiscated, without leaving a single feather.

Lei Lan was a bit scared. She recalled the time when she was captured by the slave-catching team again.

However, the investigators were rather polite to the maids, especially the newly-arrived slaves such as Lei Lan. After keeping them in custody and checking their identity over several days, they were ready to set all the slaves free.

“You are not slaves in the first place. It was all the fault of Elder Nether Spring. Now, the truth has been revealed. You are all innocent and have been set free. Go home!” an old lady of the goat clan with a long beard told them.

But Lei Lan did not know where she should go to.

When the villagers were captured, Dry Leaf Village had been burnt to the ground by the slave-catching team. Even if she went back home, how was she going to make a living in the debris?

She was homeless now.

A lot of maids shared similar situations with her. Then, the old lady asked them whether or not they would like to work as nurses.

According to the old lady, a large-scale plague had broken out in the Nether Spring Kingdom, which would probably spread to other kingdoms and even the entire Blood Demon Sector.

The plague was quite contagious and had obvious symptoms. Those who contracted the disease would lose their mind and turn crazy.

The soldiers would deal with the disease on the frontline, but a lot of skilled doctors and nurses were also required to treat the paints. However, the Blood Demon Sector had never been faced with such a widespread epidemic and was seriously lacking adequate medical equipment.

Of course, it was very dangerous to work as such a nurse, but the salary was quite enticing. With a first-rate performance, one might also be officially recruited by the coalition army and granted the corresponding benefits.

Lei Lan was greatly interested by the high pay. Since she was homeless anyway, she gritted her teeth and volunteered to be a nurse to fight against something named the Demon God Virus, which she had never heard of before!

Chapter 1050 - Birth of a Saintess

Lei Lan and hundreds of other girls were sent into a mountain in the west of the Gold Crow Kingdom by big birds which had grown huge vesicles. They received training to be nurses in a school that had recently been established.

A large batch of soldiers were training together with them.

Both the nurses and the soldiers had to learn how to test whether or not someone was a carrier of the Demon God Virus with a kind of newly-invented beetle. They also needed to learn the operations of thirty-seven types of syringes in order to treat different types of demons. Moreover, they learned to purge an area with fire spray or frost spray to make sure that the place would not be scourged by the Demon God Virus.

In the school, Lei Lan witnessed the horror of the Demon God Virus for the first time.

Not only were the demons who contracted the Demon God Virus extremely hideous, their insanity and madness were a major shock for her, too.

As the days went by, the atmosphere in the school became graver and graver. More and more patients, in uglier and uglier appearances, were shipped to the place through the fully-enclosed biochemical slots.

It was said that the epidemic had been escalating exponentially in the Nether Spring Kingdom ever since the first patient appeared. After only several days, seven highly-populated cities in the north of the Nether Spring Kingdom fell.

The disease was reported in the Gold Crow Kingdom and even Heavenly Path City, where demons of different species lived together.

The only exception was the Sea Dominator Kingdom. Since its territory was too large and its population too small, and it was difficult for the Demon God Virus to spread in the seawater, the Sea Dominator Kingdom luckily escaped the disaster.

With everything coming to the point, it was no longer an option to retreat. Teachers in the school all said that it was an unprecedented catastrophe in the history of the Blood Demon Sector. Only through joint efforts could the virus possibly be suppressed. Otherwise, there would be no survivors.

Lei Lan could do nothing except hold back her panic and dedicate herself to her studies. Since she was smart in the first place, she became the most distinguished intern nurse very quickly.

At that time, more and more nurses and soldiers were arriving at the school to learn the necessary skills.

Two months ago, it was still a temporary school established in the middle of nowhere. But now, tens of thousands of students had joined.

It never occurred to Lei Lan that she would run into her young brother, Lei Chuang, who was in the latest batch of soldiers to come to the school.

The vigorous young guy had craved to join the coalition army of demons from a young age. However, he had been bewildered by his big brother Lei Qi in the end. Claiming that he had realized the truth of the Pantheon of Demons, he had fled into the forests when the enlisting officers came to the village.

But as it turned out, when the sister and the brother met again, he was wearing a brand-new military uniform as an antichemical soldier in the coalition army of demons!

Lei Lan was stunned by her younger brother.

Lei Chuang, however, simply slapped off the dust on his uniform and told her with a smile that he was now truly a soldier of the coalition army of demons. However, before he joined the army, he had already been a member of a new organization named Skyfire.

According to him, after he joined Skyfire, he learned a lot of new concepts and felt that his world had been renewed. In fact, he joined the coalition army of demons because his supervisor asked him to, and he was actually there with a task.

His task was to disseminate the new concepts that he had learned among the bottom-level soldiers of the coalition army of demons.

The ‘concepts’ that her younger brother told her frightened Lei Lan.

The ‘same-origin’ theory, demons originally being human beings, Ba Yanzhi’s story, Zhang Niuer’s… All that iconoclastic talk was in utter disagreement with the legends of the Pantheon of Demons. They were even more outrageous than the canards of the Blade of Chaos!

Lei Lan was so shocked and scared that she dragged her brother hard, begging him not to stir trouble anymore. Was it not enough to have one rebel in the family? Must he make it two?

Now that he had joined the coalition army of demons, he should work hard and dutifully in the army. That was the right thing to do!

But Lei Chuang was not bothered at all. He told his sister that Skyfire today was totally different from the Blade of Chaos in the past. It was backed by the big shots in the leadership and was a half-public organization. Many of the supervisors pretended that they did not know the activity of the organization and even intentionally indulged its members to spread in the army.

Not just that, even the arrest warrants targeting the members of the Blade of Chaos were no longer taken seriously. Many of the previous members of the Blade of Chaos, after joining Skyfire with a random alias, would be able to swagger on the street as if they had become someone else, and nobody would come to capture them.

Lei Chuang said that their big brother was one of them. He had joined Skyfire with a lot of other members of the Blade of Chaos. He was now even a secondary captain of the Furious Flame Squad.

At first, Lei Lan scorned at her younger brother’s statements. Government cooperating with the rebellions? How was it possible?

However, as the epidemic spread out, everybody panicked. In the school where soldiers of different clans and species gathered, the ‘same-origin’ theory and Ba Yanzhi’s life story were heard by more and more people. Eventually, they seemed to become a ‘secret’ that everybody knew but pretended that they did not. Even the cleaning lady of the toilet would grimace at Lei Lan mysteriously, drag her into a corner, and ask her in a low voice, “Did you know that a long, long time ago, there was a guy named Ba Yanzhi?”

While new ideologies were popping up every day, Lei Lan finished her training and went to the frontline of the epidemic as a certified nurse together with a batch of antichemical soldiers, including her younger brother.

After she left the school that was secluded from the outside world, the destructiveness of the Demon God Virus became more and more apparent to her as she went further north.

Many towns had been emptied and torn apart. The bloodstains on the dilapidated buildings made them look like graves that had risen from the ground.

The more serious the epidemic in a place was, the more open the activity of Skyfire would be. In many unhabituated areas where all the living souls had been devoured by the virus, Lei Lan even saw warriors wearing badges of Skyfire walking in broad daylight, but the coalition army of demons next to them would do nothing about them!

In the meantime, Lei Lan grew more and more familiar with a name ‘Saintess Jin Xinyue’.

The further she went north, the more frequently the name was brought up. It was said that she was a goddess who was born by the arrangement of fate with the mission of salvation. Her blood had been blessed by all the deities and devils in the universe and boasted the amazing ability to counter the Demon God Virus. As for herself, she was working on the frontlines of the epidemic day and night without resting. The honorable silver-blood demons, the humble black-blood demons, and even the ‘filthy’ chaotic-blood demons had all received her meticulous treatment.

Lei Lan had seen photos of the Saintess Jin Xinyue on the broken walls of many towns in the epidemic area.

In the pictures, Jin Xinyue had burnt hair and eyebrows. Pitifulness was written all over her face. She was wearing a white robe that was riddled with holes and dyed gray by the smoke and dust. She was embracing a dying child of the black-blood demons closely. Her hands, which seemed to be made of jade, were a sharp contrast to the child’s limbs that were as dry and thin as firewood.

There was no sign that she was disgusted by the dirtiness of the child at all. Instead, she was lowering his body and kissing the forehead of the child to soothe his pain.

The photos confused Lei Lan.

She remembered that she had met a saintess named ‘Jin Xinyue’ before. However, the saintess looked vastly different from the one in the photos.

The one on the photos, with her eyes brimming with sympathy, was enough to win the worship of the public.

That was exactly what happened, too. For many low-level demons who had lost their home because of the epidemic, and even a lot of soldiers of the coalition army of demons, it almost became their routine to worship Jin Xinyue’s photos.

There was even an absurd rumor that, when the virus came close, one’s odds of being infected would be lowered if they were chanting ‘Saintess Jin Xinyue’ in their heart.

Lei Lan, as a nurse, knew that it was nonsense. However, she could not stop the illiterate low-level demons from believing the theory.

Many low-level demons were even wearing pendants that were wood badges and sachets carved with the name of ‘Saintess Jin Xinyue’. It was said that the pendants could keep them away from all diseases.

By accident, Lei Lan discovered, to her surprise, that the pendants were actually distributed by Lei Chuang and other members of Skyfire!

It was not hard to guess that rumors about the ‘Saintess Jin Xinyue’ had been spread by them, too.

Lei Lan burst into such fury that she went to lambast her brother immediately. She asked him why he was promoting superstitions. As an antichemical soldier, he should have known the rudimental knowledge about viruses. How could a few cheap pendants keep the most dreadful Demon God Virus away?

But her brother offered an explanation with a smile.

“Right now, the Demon God Virus is breaking out everywhere. Everybody in the Blood Demon Sector is panicking. The order in the epidemic area has gone out of control, and the order outside the epidemic area is about to fall, too. Sometimes, a groundless rumor is enough to cast an entire town into extreme fright!

“In the meantime, the antidote and the vaccines targeting the Demon God Virus are still being produced, and there aren’t enough doctors and nurses. The solutions are too far away to solve the imminent trouble. It is impossible for us to control the epidemic shortly.

“The pendants and the name of Saintess Jin Xinyue indeed cannot cure anybody, but at the very least, they can calm everybody down, stabilize the order, and give everybody hope.

“Faced with such a disaster, order is more important than anything!

“More importantly, the name of ‘Saint Jin Xinyue’ will be etched to everyone’s heart in such a way. Then, when the antidote and the vaccines are produced on a large scale, we will be able to summon everything for treatment under the name of the saintess.”

Lei Lan was lost for words after hearing the explanation. She pondered for a long time but came up with no rebuttals. Therefore, she simply allowed them to do their job, however reluctantly.

They went north just like that, until they arrived at Gloomy Bone City in the Nether Spring Kingdom.

Gloomy Bone City was not in the epidemic area. It was still under the control of the coalition army of demons and served as a base of supplies.

Nobody was clear how the virus broke out exactly.

But when Lei Lan realized what happened, the city was already surrounded by miserable screams, as if the gates of hell had been opened. A huge batch of uncontrollable mutants were walking on the street!

Chapter 1051 - New Crystal Suit!

“Aooooooo!”

The howls each louder than the last induced a headache in Lei Lan. She found it impossible to think, and her short tail was straightened into a line, trembling together with the muscles all over her body.

She tried to recall the whole process of the outbreak of the virus in order to find an escape route, but her brain was utterly blank. She only remembered that she had completed the test and was purging in the south of the city together with her brother. After a day’s tiresome work, she had fallen straight to sleep after going to bed, only to be woken up by the explosions and fire soon.

At that time, the camp was in chaos. One of the devilish warships even collapsed right into the camp. Lei Lan was thrown up high by the crash and fell unconscious when she hit the ground.

When she woke up again, Gloomy Bone City had turned into a bloody hell. Broken limbs and terrifying ‘uncontrollable mutants’ were everywhere.

Huchi! Huchi! Huchi! Huchi!

Right then, Lei Lan heard suspicious panting noises above her head.

Burping in fear, she forced herself to look up, only to discover that a monster made of tentacles that looked like a sea anemone was craning its head.

In the middle of the ‘sea anemone’, there was a bloody gap from which hundreds of messy tusks were revealed. That seemed to be the monster’s mouth.

Lei Lan’s heart nearly stopped beating.

It was an ‘uncontrollable mutant’.

Although she had seen uncontrollable mutants countless times in the school and on her way here, they had all been locked in the biochemical slots in the hibernation state, and she had been protected by soldiers whose guns were all loaded.

This was the first time that she had ever encountered an uncontrollable mutant without any help.

After stopping briefly, Lei Lan’s heart suddenly had an outburst and was beating three times faster.

Gritting her teeth, she took out a dose of freezing drug from her pocket.

The drug could be spurted out by the jet syringe. Once it was injected into the body of the uncontrollable mutants, the low temperature would suppress any activity of the Demon God Virus and temporarily slow down their movement.

Swoosh!

However, the uncontrollable mutant opened its bloody mouth and darted out a long, thorn-covered tongue, aiming at her right hand.

Caught unprepared, Lei Lan quickly retreated her hand. She was lucky enough to be not wounded by the uncontrollable mutant, but the freezing drug was blown away and fell into pieces on the ground, producing a small flower of ice.

Lei Lan’s heart seemed to have been enveloped by ice, too.

The uncontrollable mutant was chuckling dreadfully. Its sea anemone-like face was even more hideous before. It was opening its bloody mouth to such an extent that even the back of his head seemed to have been swallowed. Moving his body, the uncontrollable mutant was about to crawl into the cave.

Suddenly—

A streak of brightness penetrated into one of its temples and stopped inside its head for a moment. Then, the monster’s sea anemone-like head exploded into pieces!

The headless uncontrollable mutant was still highly vigorous. Spurting out the stinky bodily fluids that carried the Demon God Virus, the controllable mutant did not lose strength and collapse to the ground until it had raged for quite a while.

A soldier wearing a fully-enclosed suit was lowering his body and looking at the inside of the cave.

“Ah Chuang!”

Lei Lan was overjoyed. It was her brother Lei Chuang!

The two of them struggled to leave the cave, but the outside world was in utter chaos.

“The Nether World Watch did this.” Lei Chuang revealed the latest news. “The Nether World Watch found out that Gloomy Bone City was our supply base. Therefore, they assaulted the city. At first, they detonated a warehouse of crystals. Then, they released a new variant of the Demon God Virus in the chaos. The new variant takes a very short time to break out. If not handled in time, those who contract the new variant will become ‘uncontrollable mutants’ in only several seconds!”

Lei Lan was silent.

With the scourge of the disease, the Demon God Virus now had almost a hundred variants. Some of them were manually produced by the Nether World Watch, but some of them had evolved on their own after infecting the demons of different clans and species.

The plethora of variants led to all kinds of bizarre-looking forms. The Pantheon of Demons had no time to produce antidotes and vaccines that corresponded to every variant of the virus. Therefore, they could only put all their hope on the Divine Blood of Chaos, the omnipotent reduction drug. It was a pity that the large-scale synthesization of the ‘Divine Blood Chaos’ had not succeeded yet. The number of drugs was growing at a much lower speed than the spread of the virus.

“You’ve been wounded!” Lei Lan exclaimed. She noticed that her brother’s left wrist seemed to have been bitten hard by a beast, and his entire left arm was more or less blue.

“It doesn’t matter.”

Lei Chuang simply took off the translucent, anti-germ helmet, which was barely of any use now, and ripped apart his suit on the left arm.

On the top of his left arm, three deep blue bandages had been bound to it. The upper half of his left arm was bright blue, and the muscles and veins there had been frozen.

With a grave face, he handed a gun over to his sister. Inside the gun was a venomous dart that had been smeared with super-corrosive nerve poison.

“I was bitten by accident, but it was probably not the latest variant of the virus. It will take a longer time for the virus to break out.

“I have controlled the spread of the virus with frost for now so that I can try my best to bring you out of here. If… if I cannot control it any longer, you know what to do, sister!”

Lei Chuang pointed between his eyebrows.

Lei Lan’s lips were trembling, but she did not say anything.

After everything she had been through over the past few months, she was no longer the innocent little girl from the mountain village.

Holding back her tears, she nodded hard.

“Let’s go to the east. There’s a temporary port in the east of the city. By the order we received, everybody will be evacuated to the east of the city!”

Lei Lan and Lei Chuang went all the way to the east of the city. They ran into another two uncontrollable mutants on their way. Thankfully, the two mutants were mutated civilians and not very strong. They got rid of the obstacles quickly and finally reached the temporary port half an hour later.

But their hearts turned cold when they saw the port.

Almost ten devilish warships were lying on the ground, awry and apart, writhing in flames.

Thick, black blood and broken arms and legs were all over the ground. A lot of uncontrollable mutants were crouching on the ground, devouring the food in creepy noises. The scene was too gory to look at.

A huge batch of uncontrollable mutants had attacked the place before they arrived!

“Look!”

Lei Lan pointed the sky in the southwest.

The last devilish warship soared into the sky and staggered out of the city.

However, more than a hundred uncontrollable mutants were clutching the shell of the devilish warship. They were tearing the strengthened external skeleton with their abnormal claws and teeth.

Even the shell of the warship itself was growing more and more pustules and tentacles that looked like weird boas.

During their production, the devilish warship would be implanted with a lot of living cells, which could be infected by the virus and undergo mutations, too.

Finally, with the mutants’ joint effort, a tiny gap was ripped open on the strengthened external skeleton of the devilish warship!

The hundred uncontrollable mutants immediately flooded into the warship like a black tide!

What happened inside the devilish warship was too appalling to be pictured.

A moment later, the devilish warship could not keep a stable trajectory anymore. Shaking violently for a while, it plummeted from the sky and exploded!

“More and more uncontrollable mutants are being attracted to the place. Let’s get out of here!”

Lei Chuang took his sister’s hand and turned around, only to come to an abrupt halt.

In the debris behind them, another hundred uncontrollable mutants had crawled out. In the hazy mist, they were greedily sniffing for the scent of fresh meat.

“Hiss. Hiss!”

Dozens of uncontrollable mutants locked onto the scent of Lei Lan and Lei Chuang simultaneously. Brutal brilliance beamed out of their dirty eyes while they split apart their mouths from which stinky saliva was dripping.

The brother and sister looked at each other in bewilderment and were both grasped by desperation. Lei Lan held his gun hard. There were four darts inside his gun, enough for the use of the two of them.

Right then, a long shriek echoed from high above. It sounded like an eagle, but it was more like a creature that was more brutal than the eagle!

Lei Chuang and Lei Lan both felt that blueness flashed in front of their eyes before the entire world was enveloped in blue. Cracking noises were ringing nonstop around them. When they opened their eyes again, a circular wall made of ice appeared exactly around them. The dozens of uncontrollable mutants that were coming at them were all confined in the ice wall!

Swoosh!

In the night sky where countless uncontrollable mutants were hovering, a streak of brightness that appeared to be an amalgamation of a hundred dark golden bolts of lightning showed up!

When the uncontrollable mutants attacked him, the lightning exploded at the same time, ripping the uncontrollable mutants into shreds while revealing a magnificent shadow in the middle!

Lei Lan was so deeply attracted by the shadow that she almost forgot breathing.

She had never seen something so… elegant and yet strong before!

At first glance, it seemed to be a fully-enclosed black suit. However, it did not give a cold, metal feeling at all. Instead, it seemed to be made of translucent, black crystals and covered by a layer of muscles and membranes that were also translucent.

Below the bright black shell, countless bright veins, nerves, and fibers seemed to be flowing, fluctuating and changing color, as if the armor was alive!

There was not the slightest pattern or adornment on the surface of the armor. However, on each of the forehead, chest, scapula, abdomen, and all the critical body parts, a demon core as glamorous as night pearls had been embedded.

Lei Lan had never seen such huge demon cores before. Every one of them was larger than her fist. They were in the most perfect shape, flawless and devoid of impurities. After the refinement of the specialists, the intertwining stripes inside the cores formed sophisticated rune arrays!

All the demon cores were connected to each other by the dark golden ‘nerves’ and constituted a seamless system. Together, they were glittering and wreathing the expert in a halo that felt like a real thing. A second armor made of the unpredictable demonic energy was spreading out like waves and ripples.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Thunder echoed nonstop!

In her trance, Lei Lan felt that the mysterious clouds turned into a huge swirl, and in the middle of the swirl was a giant a hundred meters tall!

Chapter 1052 - Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Blood Demon Form!

“Aooo! Aoooooo!”

The hundreds of uncontrollable mutants who used to be members of the Feather Clan flapped their wings and flew toward the expert in armor!

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

The expert raised his left hand softly, and the ten or so demon cores from the shoulder blade to the tip of his finger glittered at the same time, triggering sharp electric arcs that constituted a storm-like net in the middle of the clouds, shocking dozens of uncontrollable mutants and forcing them to collapse from the sky.

Pu!

On his right side, the uncontrollable mutants were spurting out bright green venom toward him at the same time, but he simply raised his right hand and froze all the venom into an icy block!

Shua!

Two wings more than ten meters long extended out of his back, and the black feathers darted out like flying swords into the chests of the uncontrollable mutants. The black feathers then suddenly expanded in size and tied the uncontrollable mutants up like invisible shackles. None of the uncontrollable mutants were able to move their fingers anymore.

Above him, the clouds were torn apart by dozens of small devilish warships that looked like sharks.

The same glamorous emblem was carved on the head of every warship—a furiously-burning flame on the crowns of three black trees!

“It is the flag of Skyfire!” Lei Chuang was overjoyed. “Our reinforcements have arrived!”

The shark-like warships were opened. Many soldiers walked out in a row and moved toward the temporary port, preparing to clear the port so that the following troops can land conveniently.

The mysterious expert who had suppressed a hundred uncontrollable mutants by doing nothing but wave his hands, on the other hand, landed near Lei Lan and her brother.

The helmet blossomed like petals, revealing a face that Lei Lan found familiar.

“You—”

Hesitating for a moment, Lei Lan took a few steps back and held her mouth in disbelief. “It’s you!”

The mysterious expert was, of course, Li Yao.

Three months ago, in the fierce battle in the Eye of Blood Demon, his Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had been blown up by more than ten demon emperors including Jin Tuyi himself. It was so seriously damaged that it had been a total loss except for the mainframe crystal processor, which was still functioning.

The Blood Demon Sector did not have proper facilities for the maintenance of crystal suits. Whatever tools the Blood Demon Sector had were mostly captured or smuggled from the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

Li Yao’s old Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, with the components of the Dragon King Battlesuit, had actually been modified in the best crystal suit center of the Flying Star Sector.

Many magical equipment units of the Flying Star Sector were incompatible with even the components of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, much less those in the Blood Demon Sector.

Therefore, the maintenance of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was put on hold.

Li Yao had thought hard for almost an entire month but came up with no satisfactory solutions. He could only increase the percentage of the biochemical materials in the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and repair it in a similar way to how a biochemical beast was produced.

In the meantime, the secret deal between Jin Tuyi and him was further settled.

Li Yao was certainly not a selfless saint. Now that Jin Tuyi counted on him to realize the Red Tide Plan, of course, he was not planning to do it for nothing. He took the opportunity to negotiate on other benefits, including the legalization of Skyfire.

Knowing that he did not have much time left and that Skyfire would be a great help for his daughter in the future, Jin Tuyi naturally supported the development of the organization. In some key fields, the two parties began to cooperate closely.

Skyfire boasted specialists such as the Fire Ant King and the legacy of Chaos. Also, they had the main biochemical brains that were looted from the Nether World. Thus, a lot of precious files from Elder Nether Spring were now in their hands.

Once their knowledge was combined with the best biochemical technology of the Gold Crow Kingdom and even the entire coalition army of demons, the energy that they could release would be unimaginable.

The maintenance of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was the first important project after the two parties joined hands.

While the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was being repaired, Elder Nether Spring indeed turned to his final, desperate play as they expected. He had the Nether World Watch spread the Demon God Virus in the Nether Spring Kingdom and wherever else they could in the Blood Demon Sector, triggering a plague.

The coalition army of demons and the Nether World Watch, after regrouping, fought quite a few hard battles, and Li Yao’s side had captured a lot of soldiers of the Nether World Watch. They had even demolished several secret bases of the Nether World Watch and received numerous files about the refinement of the soldiers. Therefore, they had a deep understanding about the technical issues regarding the stable output of demon cores.

Then, while the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was maintained, the technology through which the soldiers of the Nether World Watch were built up was adopted, too. A lot of demon cores of the best quality in the Blood Demon Sector were embedded in the surface of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

Many demon cores were left by the strong demon beasts hundreds of years ago after they died. They were the collections of Jin Tuyi and other demon emperors!

After the job was done, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had been utterly reshaped. Except for the crystal processor, the spine, and other few components that were still metallic, the rest of the crystal suit was all made of natural or synthesized biochemical materials.

It was inappropriate to call the equipment a crystal suit now; it was more like a biochemical beast maneuvered in the way of a crystal suit.

Li Yao was very satisfied about the newborn Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

After being embedded with as many as ninety-nine demon cores, the newborn Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had been essentially plugged with super highly-compressed crystal reactors all over its body. The impetus was more than three times higher than before!

Also, in terms of the speed of transmission of telepathic thoughts, the synthesized nerves were faster than the crystal wires, making the new crystal suit like a second skin on the body of the Exo, who would be able to perceive the subtlest changes in the air.

In the end, Jin Tuyi even optimized the metal wings of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit for Li Yao personally!

Jin Tuyi was not a refiner, but he was the leader of the Feather Clan. For the Feather Clan, wings were the most important organs. Their studies about aerodynamics and bionics were definitely as impressive as the best professors of the field in the Heaven's Origin Sector!

After Jin Tuyi's optimization, the highest speed of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit when airborne was improved by yet another 4%, and the minimum rotation angle was reduced by 5%. The sonic barrier when the crystal suit surpassed the speed of sound would cause less interference now. All the adjustments made it easier to accelerate, decelerate, and reaccelerate. The overall efficiency in an air fight had been improved by more than 2.4%.

For a Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit that was quite mature in every aspect in the first place, such an improvement was practically a 'rebirth'!

Except for the 50% drop of speed of implementation, because the cells inside the biochemical materials had to be activated when the crystal suit was retrieved from the Cosmos Ring, the specifications of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit in every regard had been significantly improved. It was a very successful upgrade.

In fact, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit right now had barely anything to do with the original Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit except for the bottom-level architecture.

However, Li Yao still preferred to consider it as the latest derivative model of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. He called it—

Blood Demon Form of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit!

‘Mystic Skeleton’ was perhaps the only association between him and the Heaven’s Origin Sector right now.

Li Yao was rather surprised to meet Lei Lan and Lei Chuang, too.

He did not forget his experience when he first arrived in the Blood Demon Sector.

The sister and brother, as well as other villagers in the Dry Leaf Village, had given him a new lesson about the demon race for the first time.

Li Yao smiled and was about to greet Lei Lan, when Lei Chuang grunted next to her and vomited a mouthful of dark green liquids. The bandages that tied up his left arm all exploded, and the veins there expanded instantly, crawling along his shoulder and neck toward his head like vipers!

“Ah!”

Not knowing what to do, Lei Lan moved to the front of her brother subconsciously, fearing that Li Yao would kill her brother ruthlessly.

“Don’t be scared!”

Li Yao clenched his fists and locked Lei Chuang’s limbs. “The manufacture of the reduction drug has succeeded. We have brought a huge amount of Divine Blood of Chaos!”

…

Outside of Gloomy Bone City, in a temporary camp that was guarded by the elite soldiers of Skyfire, a lot of civilians who fled out of the city were sheltered.

Although cries and screams were still echoing in Gloomy Bone City, the civilians were no longer as panicked as before and started to feel hopeful again because they had just learned a piece of shocking news.

Saintess Jin Xinyue had arrived in Gloomy Bone City and was right next to them!

Also, she had brought countless serums and vaccines with her!

As long as the drugs were injected in time, not only would they be immune to the Demon God Virus, the carriers of the disease would also be cured. Even the ‘controllable mutants’ had a slight chance to be recovered, too!

“Saintess is here. Saintess is finally here to save us!”

“We will never be infected by the dreadful virus after injecting the vaccines. Let’s inject now!”

“Where is the saintess? Something’s wrong with my daughter. She has a high fever. Help me save her, saintess!”

In the medical warship above the temporary camp, the suspected carriers and the uncontrollable mutants were all sent there for the injection of the serum.

Most of the suspected carriers of the virus were all overjoyed upon knowing that the antidote had been produced. They could not wait to inject the serum and could not care less about the side effect.

However, the injection of some patients did not go so well.

In a secret chamber deep inside the medical warship, a silver-blood noble, who had distinctive features of beetles, was tied up to a surgical bed, struggling and screaming.

Jin Xinyue was still wearing white, linen clothes. Covered in a vague, comforting halo, she looked like a real saintess that had come to everyone’s salvation. She was looking after the patient while he was cursing aloud.

“Chief Dao, your tests are back. You have contracted the No. 102 variant of the Demon God Virus,” Jin Xinyue explained patiently. “It is one of the latest variants. We don’t have the corresponding antidote. Therefore, we can only inject a large dose of Divine Blood of Chaos to keep your cells stable. It might be a little bit painful. Please try to deal with it.”

“I won’t inject it! Not until I die!” the chief of the Phantom Saber Mantis, a branch of the Insect Clan, screamed miserably. “You think I don’t know it? After injecting your goddamn Divine Blood of Chaos, my features of the demon race will be gone, and I will be like a human being like you!

“I am the offspring of Pangu. I am the child of Nuwa. I am the proudest demon. I will not turn into your wretched appearance unless you kill me!”

“I’m afraid there’s a misunderstanding here, Chief Dao,” Jin Xinyue replied peacefully. “I turned into a complete human being because of the excessive absorption of the Divine Blood of Chaos. But the Divine Blood of Chaos we are giving to you right now is, firstly, not the original liquid but synthesized, and secondly, a limited dose. You will not be deprived of your form as a demon.

“But of course, your appearance will certainly have ‘minor’ changes after the injection. But I believe that it is a price worth paying in order to keep you alive. What do you think?”

Chapter 1053 - The Way of Persuasion

“Cut the crap!” Chief Dao burst into fury. “The idiotic country folk regard you as a saintess and think that you can save you, but I have seen through you and your father since the beginning!

“You are clearly dispelling the dissidents and taking as much power as you can, using the outbreak of the Demon God Virus as an excuse. You are even negotiating peace with human beings of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, our mortal enemies!

“No, I was wrong. It is not peace that you are negotiating but surrendering! Look at yourself right now. Are you a saintess of the Pantheon of Demons? You are obviously an out-and-out agent of the human beings!

“Your father and you are the greatest traitors of the Blood Demon Sector! Over the past three months, too many silver-blood demons have been tortured into half-human-half-demon appearances by your drugs! Now, you are trying to transform me into your hideous look? Hehe. In your dreams!”

His saliva darted into Jin Xinyue’s face like nails.

However, Jin Xinyue ignored it and replied, “Since the destruction of the Eye of Blood Demon, the situation in the Blood Demon Sector has been turbulent. There are many rumors in the outside world, but they were all intentionally made up by Elder Nether Spring and his subordinates. Many nobles have second thoughts about my father’s policy because of the rumors. I believe that Chief Dao must’ve been misled by the rumors.

“However, you’ve seen the damage caused by Elder Nether Spring in person. The territory of the ‘Phantom Saber Mantis’ was scourged by the Demon God Virus, too. Are the facts not enough to wake you up, Chief Dao?”

“Do you think I am a three-year-old?” Chief Dao sneered. “Elder Nether Spring is truly insane, I’ll give you that, but everybody knows what is on the mind of you and your father, too!

“You of all people know what happened in the Pantheon of Demons in the past three months!

“At first, under the pretext of ‘search for the accomplices of Elder Nether Spring’, you captured a lot of silver-blood demons and killed everybody who resisted.

“But how many of them were real accomplices? How many of them were loyal warriors of the Blood Demon Sector who did not concur with the peace deal with the Heaven’s Origin Sector? And how many of them were killed by your father, you, and the so-called ‘Vulture Li Yao’ as stepping stones because they were unwilling to relinquish their power?

“Hehe. After the plague broke out and the coalition army of demons marched into the epidemic area, so many experts died without a good cause!

“Chief Yuan of the Green-Eyed Ancient Wolves, Chief Shen Tu of the Six-Armed Fiendish Apes, Chief Wang of the Red-Haired Bloody Lions. How did they die exactly?”

Jin Xinyue sighed as if she felt very sorry about them. “They were all ambushed by the Nether World Watch and murdered by Elder Nether Spring.”

“Is that so?” Chief Dao spat on the ground brutally. “Of so many nobles, those who support your father and you are jumping up and down every day, but those who object to you, who believe that human beings and demons cannot live under the same roof, and who firmly reject the peace negotiations with the Heaven’s Origin Sector have all happened to be ‘assassinated’ by the Nether World Watch? Elder Nether Spring must be a dog in your house since he is working so dutifully for you!”

“There’s nothing I can do if you don’t believe it,” Jin Xinyue said casually. “We’ve got both evidence and eyewitnesses. They were truly assassinated by the Nether World Watch. We captured the murderers, and they all confessed later.”

“Of course I don’t believe it!” Chief Dao burst into laughter. “You’ve captured so many soldiers of the Nether World Watch recently. With your interrogation, of course you can make them say whatever you want them to say!

“I am told that your father has also been stating in the Pantheon of Demons lately that a Dark Lady of Nine Heavens should be elected to pacify the people now that the Blood Demon Sector is so chaotic. He also mentioned that the Dark Lady of Nine Heavens will break the traditions and have the right the mobilize the coalition army of demons. It is needless to say that the Dark Lady of Nine Heavens will certainly be you, right?

“On the surface, you are injecting the Divine God of Chaos to eliminate the virus, but in fact, you want me to look like a human being like you so that I will take your side, don’t you?

“You can give up your fantasies now!

“The Phantom Saber Mantis will always be the purest demons. We will never negotiate peace with human beings of the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Never!

“Kill me if you want, in the same way you killed the chiefs of the Green-Eyed Ancient Wolves, the Six-Armed Fiendish Apes, the Red-Haired Bloody Lions, and so many other tribes!

“After I die, the entire Phantom Saber Mantis, and all the other branches of the Saber Mantis, will rise up against you until none of us are left!

“Hahahaha. Come on. Kill me if you want all the members of the Phantom Saber Mantis to rebel!”

Jin Xinyue listened in silence and did not defend herself. She simply shook her head and sighed in a low voice, as if she felt sorry that the chief of the Phantom Saber Mantis could not understand her sincerest, purest kindness.

After hearing his speech, she even untied the chief so that he could sit up straight on the operation bed.

“You dare not to kill me? Hehe—”

Half way through Chief Dao’s laughter, Jin Xinyue suddenly turned into a streak of white brightness and darted toward Chief Dao’s abdomen.

Her force was so tremendous that even his solid shell was blown to smithereens. The chief was kicked into the air even though he was more than two meters tall!

Jin Xinyue closed follow him. The streak of brightness swept to the top of Chief Dao and kicked him brutally yet another time, blowing him to a corner of the room!

BOOM!

Jin Xinyue surpassed the speed of sound. What was hidden below the long robe of the saintess turned out to be a black, shining suit whose elbows and knees had been strengthened by the neatest scales. On the scales were protruding thorns that were emitting a bluish, mysterious glow, indicating that they had been smeared with lethal venom and corrosive liquids!

The suit was barely noticeable since it was covered by the broad, huge robe. But right now, Jin Xinyue was like a hungry tiger and a dragon that had just gotten out of the ocean. With an ear-splitting sound, she kicked Chief Dao right in his temple, blowing Chief Dao's head deep into the cabin wall with a thunderous explosion. Almost twenty cracks were added to his skull.

Chief Dao felt that more than a hundred claps of thunder had exploded inside his head at the same time. The world was swirling before his eyes, and he almost passed out.

Jin Xinyue's long legs pierced out of the long robe and snatched Chief Dao's neck like a beautiful and yet brutal black boa, throwing him to the other side of the cabin. Then, she lunged forward and stomped on Chief Dao's face, exerting her strength!

Chief Dao's skull, which was already riddled with gaps, began emitting cracking noises, as if his brain was about to be squeezed out!

But Jin Xinyue did not bother to look at him. She gestured at the surveillance camera in the corner.

The wall that Chief Dao’s face was stuck to closely gradually turned into a transparent glass.

Pa!

A monster, which had lumps all over its body and countless tentacles above its neck, suddenly rushed close, leaving a large stain on the strengthened glass.

It was an uncontrollable mutant that was only one wall away from them.

Not just any wall, but a transparent one.

Seeing that Chief Dao was right before it, the uncontrollable mutant was crashing against the strengthened glass crazily. But Chief Dao’s head had been stepped on by Jin Xinyue’s feet and was unable to move at all. Even his eyeballs were about to burst out because of the pressure.

Chief Dao could clearly see the tremor of every lump, the shaking of every tentacle, and the fatal venom being secreted from every tusk on the uncontrollable mutant!

There was no telling whether it was because of his disgust or the serious brain concussion, but Chief Dao felt a strong sense of nausea.

“Let me tell you something, Chief Dao.”

Jin Xinyue adjusted the force of her feet patiently, ensuring that the gaps on Chief Dao’s skull were expanding with the most horrifying cracking noises.

Wearing the purest, gentlest, and most sacred smile, she said, “First of all, you are a well-respected senior in the demon race, and you enjoy quite a high prestige in the Insect Clan. As a saintess of the Pantheon of Demons, naturally, I cannot kill you.

“However, do you see the uncontrollable mutant here? In another day, you will be exactly like that. By then, nobody will need to do anything. As long as you are locked up, you will be swallowed by your own cells and die a miserable death if you are hungered for a few days.

“To avoid the potential rumors, we will shoot the entire process and play the footage to everybody in the Phantom Saber Mantis in the future as proof that you died of the Demon God Virus.

“Secondly, Yin Tianzun, Elder Blood Robe’s junior brother and the acting chief of the Claw Clan, was ambushed by the Nether World Watch yesterday. Because of the heavy wounds, he unfortunately passed away around midnight.

“Thirdly, upon hearing the news, Master Hollow Wind, the acting chief of the Insect Clan, immediately stated in public that Elder Nether Spring was too insane and that he had to answer for blood with blood. Also, he reiterated that the Insect Clan would be united under Jin Tuyi, the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons, and do everything they could to strike the Nether World Watch!

“Fourthly, because of your infection, your family has been tested, too. As of now, the test results are not out yet. But your youngest son has stated to us that he was willing to inject a large dose of vaccines even if it meant the loss of part of the features of the demon race in case anything went wrong.

“Hehe. Your youngest son is truly smart. He will certainly grow into an excellent leader given enough time.

“Chief Dao, you must remember that we haven’t brought too many serums and vaccines with us. The carriers of the disease outside are much more than we expected. Every dose of antidote is extremely precious.

“It was exactly because of your seniority and your prestige in the Nether Spring Kingdom that we decided to give such a valuable opportunity to you in advance. But if you are suspicious that we have other plans, we won’t force you to do anything. Why don’t you take a rest here in the company of such a lovely friend and think everything through?

“After you’ve thought everything through, contact the outside through this stripe. Doctors will come to treat your wounds soon.

“However, I must remind you that many viruses break out so quickly that they will not even give you the time to regret.”

With a sweet smile, Jin Xinyue removed her feet, which had been deeply buried into Chief Dao’s face. She bowed toward him, turned around, and left the chamber.

“Wait—”

When she left without looking back and was about to shut the door, the guy finally called her with complicated emotions.

Chapter 1054 - Attacking Elder Nether Spring’s Nest!

After ‘persuading’ the chief of the Phantom Saber Mantis, who was very influential in the Nether Spring Kingdom, Jin Xinyue appeared in the medical camp as the ‘saintess’, raising a round of cheers and exclamations. She was occupied until the dusk next day before she had the time to meet Li Yao.

“The Nether Spring Kingdom has suffered a lot.”

Li Yao had just finished the cleaning work of Gloomy Bone City. All the uncontrollable mutants and the soldiers of the Nether World Watch who were lurking in the darkness had been found. They had either been suppressed or executed.

However, the city that had been completely ruined made him frown and curse in anger.

Of the opponents that he had met before, such as Yan Xibei, Xiao Xuance, Bai Xinghe, or even Jin Tuyi, many were great villains and masterminds. However, they were mostly very straightforward, and their failure marked the end of their endeavor.

But Elder Nether Spring was different from any of them.

The destruction of the Eye of Blood Demon meant the complete failure of the Spore Stratagem.

In front of the fully-armed regular army, even the strongest virus could do nothing but get a few more victims killed.

There was no reason Elder Nether Spring would not understand the logic, but still, he raised the tides of plague with the Nether Spring Kingdom as the center!

This time, his target was no longer the elite troops but civilians. Therefore, he did not need to choose spores carefully. All he needed was to ask a few trusted subordinates to sneak into a town with portable cans that stored the virus and release the virus in the most populated area. With such a simple method, it was very likely that large-scale chaos would be caused.

Naturally, under the suppression of the army, such chaos died down as quickly as it started. It was impossible for them to reverse the situation.

However, for the civilians, the outbreak of plague often meant their doom.

Within the Nether Spring Kingdom, Elder Nether Spring’s homeland, dozens of towns were consumed by the plague overnight.

The epidemic spread like a forest fire. Half of the Nether Spring Kingdom was the land of the dead now!

Li Yao was as worried as he was furious. Elder Nether Spring’s madness had crossed the line. Nobody knew what else he would do if he were given more time.

Right then, they received a piece of intelligence from the frontline.

“Elder Nether Spring’s nest has been discovered!”

…

One day later, thousands of kilometers into the Nether Spring Kingdom, more than ten shark-like light devilish warships were sliding silently in the middle of the dark clouds.

The devilish warships accommodated the top-tier experts in the coalition army of demons, including nine demon emperors, who constituted an assault team that was as rapid as lightning.

They were carrying out the most crucial mission—to attack Elder Nether Spring’s nest and, if possible, capture Elder Nether Spring alive!

Inside a devilish warship whose head was carved with the emblem of Skyfire, Li Yao, Han Tuhu, Suo Chaolong, and other elites of Skyfire gathered together and discussed the operation plan.

“Our destination is Bottomless City deep inside the Nether Spring Kingdom. Between Bottomless City and the area under our control is the epidemic area with a span of more than a thousand kilometers. If we want to attack the city on the surface, we will have to pass through dozens of highly infected cities and towns, which will be quite slow.

“Therefore, it has been decided that the best assault team made of nine demon emperors and hundreds of warriors will perform a decapitation strike!

“However, it is the Insect Clan’s habit to live below the ground. Bottomless City is such a city, constructed almost a hundred meters underground. Formed of dozens of natural caves, the terrain there is highly complicated.

“Elder Nether Spring’s secret nest, on the other hand, is in the deepest cave of Bottomless City, more than two hundred meters from the ground.

“The goal of our mission is to capture Elder Nether Spring. At the very least, we must control the main biochemical brains inside Elder Nether Spring’s secret nest in order to retrieve more files about Elder Nether Spring, including his other trump cards and secret bases.

“Therefore, speed matters most. We must have everything under control before the Nether World Watch destroy the main biochemical brains.

“Later, the nine demon emperors will attack Bottomless City from the front and attract the Nether World Watch’s attention, and we will march into Elder Nether Spring’s nest directly through earth penetrators from the back of the city!”

Very soon, the altitude of the devilish warships began decreasing.

The debris of quite a few cities appeared in the valley before them. According to the map, they were all big cities with a population of more than a hundred thousand. In the places that should have been illuminated by lights and as bright as daylight, there was nothing but darkness. The only specks of light that could be seen were the sparks that were shivering in the billowing wind.

At the end of the valley, another magnificent city was standing. The mountain, which was dozens of kilometers in diameter, was riddled with holes like a giant nest of ants. Glimmers were emitted from the holes, indicating that there was more to the city inside.

It was Bottomless City, where Elder Nether Spring’s secret nest was located!

Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum!

Above Bottomless City, countless Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes, Colorful Locusts, and Bloodthirsty Ants were hovering. Hundreds of soldiers of the Nether World Watch wearing finely-made armor and riding biochemical beasts were on alert, too.

The Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes, the Colorful Locusts, and the Bloodthirsty Ants were all five times larger than the usual ones and much deeper in color. They looked like a tide of colorful tides. The Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes formed huge giants and grinned hideously in the clouds.

The soldiers of the Nether World Watch were brimming with immense demonic energy, too. They looked much more handsome and strong, completely different from the regular soldiers.

The uncontrollable mutants were just the flawed products created by the Demon God Virus. The real purpose of the Demon God Virus was to accelerate the evolution of creatures and make them grow into the most perfect form!

The insects and the soldiers were all the lucky survivors who had passed through the uncontrollable state of the Demon God Virus. They were, according to Elder Nether Spring, the ‘perfect third life form’!

They were all more than ten times stronger than before!

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

On the ground, rays of light and acid cannons were shooting at the sky rapidly like a storm. The strengthened external skeletons of the devilish warships let out cracking noises.

The ‘decapitation team’ had been discovered!

In the clouds, the giant made of the Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes rushed close and extended an enormous hand toward the devilish warships. The soldiers of the Nether World Watch also regrouped into the tightest battle formation, not allowing the decapitation team to step forward at all!

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Nine streaks of brightness rushed out of the devilish warships and instantly ripped the giant of Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes apart. Hundreds of experts in the level of demon king followed them closely, fighting a head-on battle with the soldiers of the Nether World Watch who had been strengthen by the virus.

Immediately, lightning broke out, thunder echoed, and blood flooded out in the clouds!

“Let’s go!”

The shark-like warship of Skyfire instantly accelerated. Like a shark that had smelt the stink of blood, it pierced through the giant made of the Ghost Face Silver Mosquitoes and darted toward the back of Bottomless City.

The ‘bloody mouth’ at the front of warship was opened quickly. Four streaks of brightness, one black and the other three red, dashed out!

They were Li Yao and three earth penetrators!

The three earth penetrators were made of demon cores and crystals in the shape of three enormous diamonds. Rotating at a speed of more than five hundred revolutions per second, they were raising a swirl of frigidness that seemed to be freezing the world!

All three bombs were more than five meters long. They were distributed in the shape of a triangle, with Li Yao at the center.

They were installed with a dual-core processing system, making using of both the crystal processor and the biochemical brain, which allowed them to be directly under Li Yao's control with his telepathic thoughts. They were changing directions swiftly in midair as if they were Li Yao's three clones!

Hooooo!

The soldiers who had been strengthened by the Demon God Virus were much stronger and faster than before. Several of them caught up to the bombs and tried to stop them.

“Die now!”

After a roar, Li Yao triggered his telepathic thoughts. The three bombs were revolving at an even higher speed, forming three visible swirls of wind.

The soldiers who were swallowed by the swirls were minced into shreds before they had the chance to scream!

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

The three earth penetrators were finally done accelerating and darted toward the deepest part of Bottomless City together with Li Yao, breaching every line of defense!

They were falling down not vertically but at a certain angle to the ground in order to make sure that the empty caves in the underground would be pierced through and they could hit Elder Nether Spring’s heart precisely!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

When they were a hundred meters below the ground, Li Yao’s eyes suddenly glittered. The three bombs changed their form from a triangle into a straight line as if manipulated by an giant, invisible hand and dived into the ground one by one!

The first bomb, which was responsible to dig open the tough shell, was the solidest one. The second bomb had the highest speed of rotation and a jet thrusting system, so it was responsible for pushing forward in the ground. The third bomb was loaded with the most demon cores and crystals and boasted the highest damage. Thus, it was responsible for raising a tsunami of destruction as soon as it reached the destination.

The three bombs pierced into the ground one by one.

A moment later, the earth was shaking. Scorching gray fog spurted out from the countless holes on the mountain.

The place from which the bombs broke in was like a crater of volcanic eruption. An orange channel where the temperature must have been more than a thousand degrees had been created, and melted rocks were dripping down.

Li Yao smiled and jumped down to the bottom despite the heat!

The underground was in an utter mess. The aftershock of the third crystal bomb was not over yet. He could see nothing except the burning steam.

Bo! Bo! Bo!

Li Yao activated the ‘Super Bat Probe Unit’ on the new Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and released high-frequency waves from the two sides of his helmet. Through the feedback of the supersonic waves, he scanned the terrain of the underground area!

A large batch of the soldiers of the Nether World Watch on the left side are still in shock. On the right side, there is a very large control room where there are at least sixteen main biochemical brains of the highest level. This is the place!

Chapter 1055 - Hellish River Cannon!

Strengthened by the Demon God Virus in every aspect, the soldiers of the Nether World Watch were much stronger than before. They came back to themselves despite the savage of the powerful earth penetrators. Noticing the existence of an intruder, they all exclaimed and lunged at him!

The newborn Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was covered with a highly-sensitive membrane on the surface. By detecting the disturbed air waves, Li Yao locked onto the dozens of soldiers in an instant and translated the decision to attack into intuitional reactions in the next 0.01 seconds!

Shua!

Behind Li Yao, the pair of wings suddenly split apart into more than ten chains made of black feathers that darted into the hazy mist in various directions. They hit the most important demon cores on the soldiers precisely and twisted brutally!

The demon cores were all detonated. Highly unsteady demonic energy was circulating inside the bodies of the soldiers, making them expand like abnormal balloons until they were blown into pieces amid desperate screams!

Li Yao smiled. As if alive, the black chains were withdrawn like vipers. They entangled his right arm, their tips extending forward, forming an unstoppable saber!

The saber was as curved as the crescent moon. It was more like an enormous scythe than a saber.

Dense runes had been carved on every black feather that constituted the weapon. Spiritual energy and demonic energy were flowing vaguely on the edge of the runes, forming crimson stripes from which vague killing intent was spreading out.

It was the upgraded version of the Feathered Dragon Saber, which Li Yao had renamed the Blood Moon Dragon Hunting Saber. It was now the main melee weapon for the new Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit!

Hiu!

Li Yao dashed toward the control center like a bolt of lightning, dragging the black, giant scythe.

Hooooooo!

However, he was stopped by a soldier of the Nether World Watch who was more than three meters tall.

The soldier was like an infuriated gorilla and blocked the entire pathway without leaving a single gap.

The Blood Moon Dragon Hunting Saber raised a devastating mist that swept past the chest of the soldier. The dozens of demon cores glittering on the soldier died down abruptly like candles in the wind. His bulging muscles and veins withered in an instant. Shrinking from more than three meters into less than two meters, he kneeled before Li Yao like a dry tree!

However—

The moment the soldier kneeled down, a streak of brightness darted out of him toward Li Yao’s face like a shooting star!

Li Yao’s pupils constricted violently. A few ripples spread out of his helmet as he detected that it was an expert in the demon emperor level!

The expert had been hiding behind the muscular soldier of the Nether World Watch under the cover of his demonic energy. Taking the opportunity of the gap when the soldier was killed, he launched a critical attack!

Bo!

The Blood Moon Dragon Hunting Saber broke apart instantly, turning into thousands of black feathers and forming a rapidly revolving shield in front of Li Yao. He managed to block the attack in the end, but hundreds of feathers were blown away and lost connection with him!

It was indicative enough of the formidability of the expert!

Appearing in front of Li Yao, as it turned out, was a captain who was less than two meters tall, covered in black shells, and had a light, graceful figure.

But the pair of horns soaring to the sky and the eyes that were full of hatred made Li Yao realize who he was immediately.

He was Despot, one of the two captains of the Nether World Watch and the fourth most powerful man in Elder Nether Spring’s group!

Despot had been a muscular man more than four meters tall in the beginning and looked like a black tower.

However, Li Yao had heavily wounded him in the battle on the island of the Nether World. One of his arms had been cut off, and even his heart had almost been blown apart. But for some reason, his body size had now been reduced by a half, his arm had grown out again, and he was much stronger than before. Every sign indicated that he was stably in the demon emperor level now!

“Look at my new body. You didn’t see this coming, did you?” Despot chuckled. “This is your gift. After I was heavily wounded and nearly killed, I had to inject a huge amount of Demon God Virus to myself. I didn’t expect that I would survive the disaster and arrive at the peak of evolution. I am now the perfect form!

“You want to capture Elder Nether Spring? In your dreams! Elder has not failed yet!

“Very soon, Elder will rise again. Just wash your neck and prepare to be beheaded!”

Grinning hideously, Despot strode forward. Dazzling balls of lightning were condensed between the two horns. Hundreds of electric arcs were triggered. Like dancing snakes, they spread to his entire body and quickly clad him in a suit of lightning!

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

The shield of feathers in front of Li Yao split apart again. A few delicate flying swords were formed when the feathers connected each other’s tails. Then, the flying swords were thrown toward Despot!

The balls of lightning on Despot’s head, however, unleashed dozens of electric whips and hit the flying swords precisely.

The electric arcs and the feathers crashed in midair, raising explosive noises and hundreds of waves of brilliant fireworks between them.

The soldiers of the Nether World Watch who were relatively weaker and the warriors of Skyfire who had broken in with Li Yao could see nothing but blankness!

Despot grinned. He opened his hands. This time, two balls of lightning popped up even inside his palms, not just between the horns above his head. Thousands of electric arcs were spluttering out of every ball of lightning, giving birth to electric weapons such as sabers, spears, swords, and axes!

Li Yao sniffed and snapped his finger. Thirty-six Floating Six-Barreled Vulcan Machine Cannons emerged behind him!

Weapons of lightning versus a storm of bullets!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The battle between two experts in the level of demon emperor was definitely a catastrophe for the soldiers around them who were much weaker!

Explosive tides spread out one after another. Both the soldiers of the Nether World Watch and the warriors of Skyfire were running away, holding their heads. Still, the tide was rushing faster than them. They were all tossed into the air by the blast and crashed into each other while waving their limbs crazily!

Li Yao and Despot, on the other hand, continued stepping toward each other against the lightning and the bullets shot out by the enemy until they were right in front of each other!

Li Yao’s left arm suddenly expanded. The demon cores embedded to the surface of the crystal suit all turned blood red, and the Cell Obliteration Cannon was ready!

“Hoooo!”

But Despot howled and hit Li Yao’s left hand brutally with his right fist, which was mixed with exploding electric arcs, smashing the Cell Obliteration Cannon back!

“I knew you would play the move. We’ve studied your every play, Vulture Li Yao!”

Despot burst into laughter.

“Did you?”

Li Yao licked his lips. Then, his breastplate suddenly blossomed like a flower, unveiling a bloody demon core that was even larger than a basin!

The demon core had been collected from the body of a Hellish River Giant Crocodile that ravaged the Gold Crow Kingdom more than three hundred years ago. Since it was too large in size, the chief of the Feather Clan at that time could not bear to put it into use. The demon core had thus been passed on generation after generation until it became the greatest treasure in Jin Tuyi’s personal collection.

After the two parties reached the deal, Jin Tuyi offered the demon core to Li Yao generously as a gift of gratitude for being his daughter’s master.

According to the tradition of the Cultivators, after Li Yao accepted such a valuable gift of gratitude, it would be his official acknowledgement for the master-disciple relationship. As long as the disciple did not violate any rules or betray him, the master would be obliged to support the disciple until the end whatever happened in the future.

Li Yao embedded the demon core into the chest of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. He also asked the specialists in Skyfire to modify it profoundly. Together with the series of magical equipment units he devised himself, he had transformed the demon core into a demonic energy enhancer.

When Li Yao burnt his life, exploited the potential of the cells in his chest, and shot out the Cell Obliteration Cannon, the damage would be five times greater with the enhancement of the Hellish River Demon Core!

This was now Li Yao’s most formidable remote weapon, which he had named the Hellish River Cannon!

Zi! Zi!

When the Hellish River Cannon was activated, there was not a deafening sound. The only thing that could be heard was the feeble sound of the air being torn apart. The next moment, a streak of blood red brightness flooded out of Li Yao’s chest and hit Despot!

The streak of brightness seemed to be plain, yet it boasted an uncanny attraction force that froze Despot and made him unable to move at all.

However densely he constructed the lightning armor on his body, he was not able to stop the streak of brightness from leaking in.

In the river of hell, one step meant life, and another step meant death. The streak of red was like a hellish river that could decide the life and death of a creature. It infiltrated into the deepest part of the cells where it sabotaged the nuclei and even broke the gene strands, destroying the enemy on a fundamental level!

On Despot’s chest, around the part that was hit by the brightness, his body cells were quickly withering, melting, and vanishing, turning into shocking holes. The bleeding wounds seemed to have been corroded by the flesh-eating bacteria and soon expanded to his internal organs!

Confusion was written all over Despot’s face. He still did not understand what was going on.

It was not until he lowered his hand that he finally put on a devastated expression. But he had lost all the strength to fight back. He kneeled slowly before Li Yao, and the electric arcs that had been raging around him like dragons a moment ago turned into half-dead ‘earthworms’.

Li Yao canceled his techniques and retrieved a blue ball from his Cosmos Ring. He smashed the ball at Despot, and it immediately transformed into dozens of flowers of ice and enveloped Despot’s body, freezing his brain instantly.

The guy was an important leader of the Nether World Watch. Dead or alive, a lot of important information could be extracted from his brain.

Then, Li Yao raised his voice and shouted in a thunderous sound, “Despot is dead. Surrender, survive!”

There was absolutely no stopping nine demon emperors, together with such a formidable being high above regular demon emperors, from demolishing the secret base of the Nether World Watch.

After Despot was killed, most of the remaining soldiers of the Nether World Watch lost their nerve. It did not take long before they all surrendered. All the main biochemical brains were kept intact, too.

The decapitation strike was almost a complete success, but it was a shame that Elder Nether Spring had not been captured.

However, when the battlefield was cleaned, a piece of good news came over. ‘Mad Medic’ Lu Wuxin, the supervisor of the laboratory of the Demon God Virus and the second most influential person in the Nether World Watch, had been captured while trying to flee Bottomless City in disguise!

Chapter 1056 - Children of the Nether World!

One day later, the plague in Gloomy Bone City at the border of the Gold Crow Kingdom and the Nether Spring Kingdom had been brought up control, and the city was restored into a base of the coalition army of demons.

Deep inside the debris, dozens of meters below the underground, in a heavily guarded cage, ‘Mad Medic’ Lu Wuxin was soaked in an enormous biochemical slot that was filled with deep blue ice. He was entirely frozen from neck to toe.

His head was the only part that was out of the ice. Yet, it was held by a cold metal clamp. Even his eyelids had been forced apart by iron needles, and he could not even blink his eyes.

Complicated attack rune arrays were all over the walls around. Occasionally, electric arcs would splutter on them. Every hour of the day, at least one demon emperor was on duty supervising the highest leader of the Nether World Watch captured so far.

Even so, ‘Mad Medic’ Lu Wuxin was still wearing a weird smile and staring frighteningly at Li Yao and the Fire Ant King, who were standing in front of him.

The Fire Ant King felt a bit creeped out. He sneered, “Lu Wuxin, the situation today is exactly like the interrogation chamber on the island of the Nether World Watch. However, you and I have swapped our roles. This is what we might call ‘every dog has its day’!

“I remember exactly how you tortured me and exploited every cell in my brain in the interrogation chamber even to this day.

“Today, I’ll have to invite you to taste the same treatment!”

‘Mad Medic’ Lu Wuxin was smiling even more brilliantly. He rolled his tongue, which was almost frozen, and announced in a funny voice, “It’s useless, Fire Ant King. Do you see the scars on my head?

“Other people call me ‘Mad Medic’ because I often do mad things. The maddest of all was that I plucked my own skull and performed a little surgery on my brain, burying quite a few strange gadgets in my head.

“Hehehehe. My brain is perhaps the most complicated maze in the Blood Demon Sector. If I don’t open it for you, there is no way that you can dig out the secrets that are hidden deep inside my head!

“In the meantime, if my brain nerves are put in too much pain, the ‘gifts’ that I planted in my head will detonate so that I die a comfortable, painless death.

“Therefore, if you really want me to cooperate with you, would you please at least change your attitude? I am definitely not the most loyal support of Elder Nether Spring. For a decent price, I’ll betray him completely!”

The Fire Ant King burst into laughter. “You mouth is rather tough before your death! Lu Wuxin, do you think that you are very valuable? The sixteen main biochemical brains inside Elder Nether Spring’s nest have been captured by us.

A lot of files have already been parsed. Very soon, we will figure out every detail about the Spore Stratagem and the genomes of all the variants of the Demon God Virus!

“What makes you think that you are qualified for ‘cooperation’?

“As for the items in your head, whether they are truly there or simply made-up, we’ll definitely get them out with the wisdom of the entire Blood Demon Sector!

“By then, hehe… Let’s put aside how many people you have murdered by helping Elder Nether Spring produce the Demon God Virus for a while. More than ten years ago, how many people were killed by you when you were still the ‘Mad Medic’? I would very much like to find out what will become of you if you are handed over to the families of the victims!”

“Haha. Hahahaha!” Lu Wuxin burst into such crazy laughter that he ran out of breath. Tears were flowing, and his face was red.

His eyes suddenly turned extremely mysterious, and he mumbled creepily, “You think that the sixteen main biochemical brains and the Spore Stratagem are all of Elder Nether Spring’s trump cards?

“You’ve thought too little of Elder Nether Spring. Too little!

“Believe it or not, some critical information, which has been by no means recorded in any of the main biochemical brains, is now still in my head. The top confidential files may concern the fate of the Blood Demon Sector!

“Hehe. You think that everything is over now that you’ve disrupted the Spore Stratagem?

“Idiot!

“Death is awaiting not me, but you, every one of you, and even the entire Blood Demon Sector! Hahahaha!”

“What do you mean?” The Fire Ant King’s antennae stood up as he bellowed, “Where is Elder Nether Spring exactly?”

“How would I know?” Lu Wuxin stared at him in great satisfaction. “However, the most crucial thing right now is not where he is but what trump cards he has, isn’t it? Why don’t you loosen my restraints a little bit so that I can talk to you?”

The Fire Ant King glared. “You—”

Li Yao, who had been observing aside, suddenly interrupted. “How would you like to cooperate?”

Lu Wuxin’s eyes suddenly shone. “Apparently, Vulture Li Yao is the more flexible one here. You’ve noticed something, too, haven’t you?

“Think about it. Jin Tuyi, who ranks the third in the four giants of the Blood Demon Sector, has prepared such a flawless and overwhelming scheme. Why was Elder Nether Spring, whose position is obviously higher, defeated so easily? It is completely unreasonable!”

“Tell me your conditions,” Li Yao said coldly.

“Very simple.” Lu Wuxin licked his lips and said, “I have never yearned for fame or fortune. The one thing I like best is academic research.

“I will tell you all of Elder Nether Spring’s secrets. Also, I will help you conduct the studies about the Demon God Virus.

You must know that I've been the supervisor of the laboratory of the Demon God Virus for the past five years, right? With my help, you will be able to get the plague under control more quickly.

"As for my reward, I will be kept alive, and you will prepare a research room with all the necessary facilities for me.

"I can change my name and never show up in public anymore. You can claim that I have been executed.

"Such cooperation will do us both good, won't it?"

Li Yao looked at the Fire Ant King and pondered for a moment. Then, he shook his head. "I am sure that, like a centipede whose feet are still moving when it is killed, Elder Nether Spring might have other plans even though his Spore Stratagem has failed. But a centipede is a bug after all. There is no way that a bug can raise much chaos. How can we know that you are not bluffing?"

"That's very easy." Lu Wuxin smiled. "I can tell you the general picture of the 'Children of the Nether World'. You can determine its validity yourself."

"Children of the Nether World?" Li Yao could not help but question that. "The Spore Stratagem hasn't been concluded yet, and now 'Children of the Nether World' are popping up? What the heck is that?"

Lu Wuxin blinked and said with a smile, "The last time we met, Elder Nether Spring put a set of Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle on the Fire Ant King. It was a masterpiece of 'Solar Eclipse' Jiang Shaoyang, one of the best refiners of the Heaven's Origin Sector.

“At that time, both Elder Nether Spring and I thought that it was absolutely safe. Nobody can ever crack Jiang Shaoyang’s delicate work of genius.

“However, everything can go wrong. The magical equipment was cracked in the end, which led to the failure of our entire plan.

“Hehe. Who would’ve thought that Vulture Li Yao, who beat ‘Solar Eclipse’ Jin Xinyue ten years ago in the arts of refining, was lurking right beside us?

“However, Vulture Li Yao, have you never been curious about one thing?

“How on earth would a piece of magical equipment crafted by the best master of refining in the Heaven’s Origin Sector for the special purpose of confining a demon emperor appear in the Blood Demon Sector? Who was it exactly that smuggled the magical equipment over?

“It might not be a big deal for normal chainswords, crystal tanks, or even crystal suits to be shipped to the Blood Demon Sector, but such an ultimate treasure has also been smuggled. What does that indicate? How influential is Elder Nether Spring in the Heaven’s Origin Sector?”

The Fire Ant King’s eyes almost froze, and he let out a yelp in surprise.

Li Yao narrowed his eyes, and a drop of cold sweat appeared on his forehead.

Ever since he saw the Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle, the question had bothered him for quite a long time.

However, later, he had been too busy sabotaging the Eye of Blood Demon, helping Jin Tuyi seize power, leading Skyfire to rise, and controlling the plague. He had barely had any time to rest and simply put the issue aside.

Now that Lu Wuxin mentioned it, Li Yao felt as if a poisonous needle had pierced into the back of his head!

“Does Elder Nether Spring know someone in the Heaven’s Origin Sector?” Li Yao demanded.

Instead of giving a direct answer, Lu Wuxin said unhurriedly, “I’m told that Saintess Jin Xinyue has risen to fame in the Blood Demon Sector recently. Most of the low-level demons have been won over by her. Her experience of transforming from a demon into a human being is quite legendary, too.

“No matter what the idiotic country folk say, we are both clear that Jin Xinyue was turned into a human being because she swallowed too much Divine Blood of Chaos by accident, and the Divine Blood of Chaos that she took was actually stolen from Elder Nether Spring’s lab.

“Hehe. Here comes the question. Do you think that what Jin Xinyue took was the only bottle of Divine Blood of Chaos?

“It was indeed the last bottle of Divine Blood of Chaos. Elder Nether Spring kept it for the purpose of unraveling the mysteries in the blood and finding a way to manufacture it.

“However, his research had to be kept clandestine, which meant that he could not make use of the largest biochemical factories in the Blood Demon Sector. Therefore, the studies on manufacturing it didn’t make much progress.

“The fact is, Elder Nether Spring has discovered dozens of relics of Chaos over the past hundred years. Did he only find one bottle of Divine Blood of Chaos?”

Li Yao and the Fire Ant King both gulped.

With a sunny smile, Lu Wuxin concluded, “Now that Jin Xinyue has turned into a human being because the excessive Divine Blood of Chaos that she took reduced and stabilized her cells, it is possible that other demons will have similar transformations after they overly absorb the Divine Blood of Chaos, right? They will become pure human beings, and no test methods will ever detect anything wrong about them. Isn’t is so?

“What if I tell you that, perhaps decades ago, some of Elder Nether Spring’s trusted subordinates absorbed excessive Divine Blood of Chaos, transformed into human beings, and infiltrated into the Heaven’s Origin Sector without anybody knowing? What if, after their infiltration, they slowly made a career on their own, and those trusted subordinates are known as Children of the Nether World? Would you believe me?”

Chapter 1057 - Fatal Infiltration!

Li Yao and the Fire Ant King looked at each other in bewilderment. After calming himself down for a moment, Li Yao turned back to look at Lu Wuxin expressionlessly although thousands of thoughts were rolling on his mind. “I’m starting to believe you. If you give me more details and prove your value, perhaps it is possible for us to strike a deal.”

One of Lu Wuxin’s eyes was like a rotten goose egg while the other looked like a bean that was sprouting. Staring at Li Yao with the pair of weird, asymmetric eyes, he said, “Fine. What harm is there in telling you more details?

“The Children of the Nether World Project is not an independent plan. It is supposed to support the Spore Stratagem, or rather, it is a prerequisite project for the Spore Stratagem. The purpose of the project was to ensure that the Spore Stratagem went smoothly.

“In fact, it was one of the earliest projects that Elder Nether Spring initiated, much earlier than the development of the Demon God Virus and the establishment of the Nether World Watch. I estimate that the project might’ve been kicked off seventy to eighty years ago.

“The reason is simple. Both the development of the Demon God Virus and the establishment of the Nether World Watch required a huge amount of manpower and resources. Also, secret bases of enormous scales needed to be created as disguises. Everything suggested that he could only accomplish his goal after he became the supreme leader of the Nether Spring Kingdom.

“The Children of the Nether World Project, in the meantime, is very easy from a technological point of view. All he needed was a batch of Divine Blood of Chaos and some trusted subordinates.

“Even Jin Xinyue could be transformed into a human being without her doing anything, right?

“My speculation is that Elder Nether Spring discovered a relic of Chaos, which happened to be the warehouse of the Divine Blood of Chaos, by accident years ago. He retrieved a huge amount of Divine Blood of Chaos and discovered its shocking effect.

“After that, Elder Nether Spring suddenly came up with an amazing infiltration plan. He asked his subordinates to swallow excessive Divine Blood of Chaos and infiltrate the Heaven’s Origin Sector after they were human beings through and through!”

“Wait!” The Fire Ant King frowned and asked, “Even if they had been transformed into human beings, how exactly did they sneak into the Heaven’s Origin Sector?”

“That’s very easy.” Lu Wuxin grinned. “Most of the ‘beast tide outbreaks’ that the Blood Demon Sector launched against the Heaven’s Origin Sector were actually implemented by the Nether Spring Kingdom. Wasn’t it more than easy for Elder Nether Spring’s subordinates to hide among the beasts?”

“Then, what is his goal?” Li Yao was deep in thought. “It’s not like Elder Nether Spring had already come up with the

Spore Stratagem and was determined to put it into practice decades ago, right?”

Lu Wuxin shook his head and said, “According to my analysis, Elder Nether Spring did not have any special goal in the beginning.

“At first, he sent the Children of the Nether World to the Heaven’s Origin Sector perhaps only because he wanted to know the intelligence on the Grand Desolate Plateau and to smuggle the advanced crystal processors and magical equipment of the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

“We all know that human beings of the Heaven’s Origin Sector developed countless types of magical equipment targeting demons after five hundred years of warfare. Many kinds of magical equipment are much more fatal than the demonic artifacts.

“The crystal processors of the Heaven’s Origin Sector are vastly different from the biochemical brains in terms of functioning mechanisms and computation models. They are highly complementary, too.

“At that time, Elder Nether Spring hadn’t seized the highest power of the Nether Spring Kingdom yet. He was engaged in the cruel internal strife with other experts of the Insect Clan.

“If he had a few spies in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the ‘beast tides’ that he launched would be more adaptive and more likely to accomplish brilliant results. He would be able to prove his value to the seniors of the Insect Clan.

“The crystal processors and magical equipment that were smuggled over could help him increase his influence and win the internal struggles, too.

“Moreover, if the spies he sent out rose to power in the federal army or the main sects on the Grand Desolate Plateau, he could even release the news about the beast tides initiated by his competitors in the Nether Spring Kingdom in advance. Thus, their beast tides would suffer brutal failure. In such a way, he would be able to eliminate his opponents and seize all control.

“I estimate that this was Elder Nether Spring’s purpose in the beginning.”

Li Yao nodded.

That was quite a reasonable deduction. If he were Elder Nether Spring, and he had a batch of mysterious drugs that could transform demons into human beings, such an endeavor would certainly make the best use of the drugs.

“However,” Lu Wuxin continued, “as time went by, the Children of the Nether World Project slowly changed. Supported by the messages sent by Elder Nether Spring intentionally or unintentionally, many Children of the Nether World slowly infiltrated the critical, and sometimes the highest, posts in the major sects and the army of the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

“At that time, Elder Nether Spring had already become the leader of the Nether Spring Kingdom and one of the four giants of the Blood Demon Sector. He established the Nether World Watch and, for the first time, had the idea of creating a third life form that was perfect.

“Then, the importance of the Children of the Nether World couldn’t be more obvious.

“By then, the Children of the Nether World were meant to ensure the smooth implementation of the Spore Stratagem.

They also had the mission to take control of the Heaven's Origin Sector and seize the power of the Star Glory Federation in the chaotic world after the outbreak of the virus, paving the way for Elder Nether Spring's 'new world'!"

Li Yao felt that his heart was pounding.

If that was true, everything would make much more sense now!

The key procedure of the Spore Stratagem was that the elite troops of the coalition army of demons and those of the federal army needed to be concentrated somewhere for a killing spree, which required the effort of both sides.

In the Blood Demon Sector, Elder Nether Spring was under the illusion that Jin Tuyi was manipulated by him and that his scheme was working out.

But how was he so certain that the situation in the Heaven's Origin Sector would be exactly what he expected?

If the federal army had not acted as he planned, the Spore Stratagem might have been doomed to fail before it started!

Elder Nether Spring had been considering the plan carefully for decades. It was highly unlikely that he would count on hope and guesses for his success.

But if Elder Nether Spring had spies in the Star Glory Federation who could make the influential decisions or, at the very least, had access to the top secrets…

According to the original plan, the Children of the Nether World would stir up trouble and disrupt the Star Glory Federation at the last phase of the Spore Stratagem, when the Demon God Virus was spreading out uncontrollably.

Now, although the Spore Stratagem had failed, the Children of the Nether World had not yet been unearthed. They were still lurking in the heart of the Star Glory Federation!

“How did you know all this?” Li Yao’s voice was cold. “Do you have the name list of the Children of the Nether World?”

“Of course I don’t,” Lu Wuxin said unhurriedly. “The Children of the Nether World Project was activated more than seventy years ago. It is a key project under Elder Nether Spring’s direct control. Nobody except himself—not even Despot and Swirl, who were his most trusted subordinates—knew anything about the project. I was only recruited by Elder Nether Spring for the refinement of the Demon God Virus ten years ago. Why would he give me the name list of the Children of the Nether World?”

Li Yao thought for a moment and realized that it was probably true. It would take at least twenty to thirty years for a Child of the Nether World to rise to power in the Star Glory Federation after they sneaked in. The most important batch of the Children of the Nether World had probably been sent out sixty years ago.

With Lu Wuxin’s experience, he could not have known much about the details.

Li Yao frowned. “Then, how did you uncover the project?”

Lu Wuxin smiled. “I don’t have many shortcomings, except that I am very scared of death. How could I not prepare myself when I was working for such a brutal man as Elder Nether Spring? The information was collected after arduous efforts over the past decade for the single purpose of trading for my life when the situation demands.”

Li Yao sniffed. “What a shame. Without the name list of the Children of the Nether World, everything you said is still groundless. Who can tell whether it is true or not?

“Also, even if it is true, does it mean anything?

“We are both clear that, after absorbing excessive Divine Blood of Chaos, a demon will be completely transformed into a human being. So, there is no way that we can prove someone is a Child of the Nether World, is there?”

“That’s not necessarily the case,” Lu Wuxin said slowly. “Although I don’t have the name list of the Children of the Nether World, I actually have a large batch of intelligence that the Children of the Nether World sent back to Elder Nether Spring, much of which is the top secrets of the federation army and the major sects.

“Not too many people would have had access to the top secrets at the time the intelligence was sent back. As long as you list everybody who knew the information and check out their background, you will soon find the Children of the Nether World!

“For example, here I have a piece of intelligence about the Dragon Scale Sect’s purchase of the mainframe crystal processors for their headquarters nine years ago, including the specifications of the crystal processors and the ways to crack the barriers and hack into them.

“Then, everything is easy. Nine years ago, few disciples of the Dragon Scale Sect had access to the top confidential information. You only need to trace back their life and see if they had ever been to the Grand Desolate Plateau, if they had any relatives, or if they had been born in a big family… Then, you will certainly find the Children of the Nether World among them!”

Li Yao took a long breath and tried to stop his shock from surfacing on his face.

The Dragon Scale Sect was one of the sects that had the longest history in the Star Glory Federation. It was one of the founding sects of the federation!

The so-called Star Glory Federation was originally an alliance of sorts established by nine Cultivation sects for the purpose of slaying the demons and protecting mankind.

The nine stars in the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag actually referred to the nine founding sects!

After five hundred years, the nine founding sects had evolved into thousands of sects, but there were still nine sects that were passing on their names.

Although the nine sects were no longer as dominant as five hundred years ago, they were still very influential in the federation.

It had never occurred to Li Yao that the Children of the Nether World could even infiltrate the Dragon Scale Sect and get access to the mainframe crystal processors of the sect!

A lot of top secrets of the Dragon Scale Sect must have been stored in the mainframe crystal processors. Having access to the mainframe crystal processors meant that Elder Nether Spring knew everything about the sect, did it not?

Many experts of the Dragon Scale Sect were working in the federal army or government. Also, there were two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the Dragon Scale Sect. A lot of critical information could be inferred based on their whereabouts.

Chapter 1058 - Abyss!

Li Yao’s eyes pierced into Lu Wuxin’s head like two icy cones as he coldly demanded, “How do we know that you are speaking the truth?”

Lu Wuxin smiled. “You are pushing me to tell you more details, aren’t you? But it doesn’t matter. Now that I am at your mercy, I guess I have to show my sincerity.

“How about this? You remove my restraints and give me a biochemical brain, and I will tell you half of the information I know about the Children of the Nether World. You can verify the information however you want, and after you are convinced, we’ll negotiate about the other half and how you are going to ensure my safety in the future.”

Li Yao pondered for a moment but shook his head. “I can’t give you a biochemical brain. It’s too dangerous. I’ll give you a crystal processor with the simplest functions. You will input half of the information you know into it, and we will proceed with the negotiations after the validity of your words is confirmed.”

Lu Wuxin considered for a moment and laughed in amusement like a broken balloon. “It’s a deal then!”

The ice that encased him slowly melted. Supported by two demon kings, Lu Wuxin struggled to crawl out and smiled miserably. “Give me something to eat. I have to make sure that my head still functions at a high speed. Otherwise, much of the information will be mottled and incomplete. I will not be able to recall all of it!”

Li Yao and the Fire Ant King discussed for a moment. Then, they decided that the Fire Ant King would make some solutions of high-energy nutrition and inject them into Lu Wuxin’s head. In such a way, his brain would be very active, but his body would be as feeble as before.

They could not be too prudent when it came to the cunning demon emperor.

Half an hour later, Lu Wuxin began his confession and did not stop until three hours later. The information he poured out was enough to fill half a jade chip.

In the end, he was still wearing a mysterious smile when he pushed the crystal processor over to Li Yao.

However, the words that followed that froze Li Yao’s heart.

“I spent ten years collecting the information. It should be enough to identify most of the Children of the Nether World.

“However, in Elder Nether Spring’s plan, the Children of the Nether World are classified into different levels. The one of the highest level, whose code name is ‘Abyss’, will never be caught by you.

“That is because Elder Nether Spring never asked them to send back any intelligence or do anything that harms the interests of the Star Glory Federation. Before ‘Abyss’ was dispatched, they were even brainwashed so that they would have absolutely no doubt about their identity as a human being.

“Nobody knows who ‘Abyss’ is. Nobody knows the sex, age, height, or weight of ‘Abyss’. Even ‘Abyss’ probably didn’t know that they are ‘Abyss’ before they were activated.

“Elder Nether Spring is the only one that knows who ‘Abyss’ is. For decades, he paved the way for ‘Abyss’ and helped ‘Abyss’ rise to power in the federation without leaving any traces.

“Hehe. You are trying everything you can you capture Elder Nether Spring, but chances are that Elder Nether Spring has already fled to the Heaven’s Origin Sector and awakened ‘Abyss’ and all the other Children of the Nether World!

“Who knows what they will be doing in their desperation?

“Therefore, you can take however much time you want to analyze the information I’ve provided. After all, time is not on my side, not on your side, but on the side of Elder Nether Spring and ‘Abyss’. Haha. Hahahaha!”

…

An hour later, on Chaos, the flagship of Skyfire, which was docked above Gloomy Bone City, a secret meeting was being held.

The participants of the meeting included Li Yao, Jin Xinyue, the Fire Ant King, Han Tuhu, Suo Chaolong as well as Jin Tuyi, who joined them through a remote video chat.

Faced with the intelligence Lu Wuxin had provided, everybody was grave. The air was so tense that a storm might be coming.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

On the more than ten light beams, countless entries of information were flying crazily like headless flies, messing everybody’s mind.

“First and foremost,” Li Yao said, “are Lu Wuxin’s confessions true or not? Did he make them up in order to buy him more time?”

Han Tuhu gestured to stop one of the light beams. He enlarged the map of a city and said, “I don’t know the validity of other information. But this map includes the distribution of the soldiers in ‘West River Fort’, a city on the frontier on Grand Desolate Plateau twenty years ago, and the underground bastions.

“West River Fort used to be a barren, unknown town. However, after tremendous mother lodes of crystals were discovered thirty years ago, it expanded rapidly and grew into an important city on the Grand Desolate Plateau.

“At that time, my troops were stationed around West River Fort and even joined the West River Resistance. The defense system left quite a deep impression on me. So, this piece of information should be true.

“At that time, I belonged to the field army nearby, and I was not qualified to learn the secrets of the garrison. West River Fort did not have any local sects. Only the supreme commander, the chief of staff, and a few other officers of the garrison knew and could send out such information!

“Besides…”

Han Tuhu’s eyes suddenly turned sharp. “Nineteen years ago, West River Fort encountered an unprecedented beast tide outbreak. Billions of insects flowed out of the depths of the mines directly and drowned all the mother lodes in West River Fort!

“At that time, we thought that it was a coincidence. The enemy was teleported to the mines below the ground of

West River Fort by accident and caught us unprepared!

“But now, in hindsight, the enemy must’ve studied the defense system of West River Fort in advance and launched a critical strike through a precise teleportation. That’s a much more reasonable theory.”

Li Yao pondered “So, the highest commander, or the chief of staff, of the garrison of West River Fort twenty years ago is likely one of the Children of the Nether World? What’s their status now?”

Han Tuhu’s eyes suddenly turned hollow. He mumbled, “Twenty years ago, it was the 66th Legion of the Federal Army that was stationed in West River Fort. In the battle, the commander and chief of staff were both killed. West River Fort was about to fall when Duanmu Ming, the deputy chief of staff, stood up and commanded the remaining troops in the fierce battle for three days. In the end, he even led a counterattack in person. Finally, West River Fort was saved!

“At that time, I was fighting side by side with Duanmu Ming, and his craziness in the battle was etched to my mind. I knew that the guy would certainly rise to prominence one day!

“Following the battle, Duanmu Ming secured many other victories and suppressed dozens of beast tide outbreaks. As a new star in the federation army, he was appointed as the Commander of the 66th Legion and later the deputy captain of the Pegasus Legion. Right now, he is the supreme commander of the Dragon Horse Legion.

“The Dragon Horse Legion was one of the best troops in the federation and among the troops that were the earliest to be equipped with the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. It is now one of the sixteen crystal suit legions of the federation.

“Their gear has been updated twice, and they are now equipped with Assault Type and Super-Heavy Armor Type, two latest derivative models of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. In terms of equipment, it is even better than my Flying Tiger Legion!”

There was nothing but silence in the meeting room.

The Star Glory Federation had dedicated all the national resources for more than ten years to the establishment of the sixteen crystal suit legions.

Among them, Han Tuhu’s Flying Tiger Legion was crippled in the Dark Desolate Domain, and most of the soldiers were captured and brought to the Blood Demon Sector.

It meant that, for the time being, the federation only had fifteen crystal suit legions.

But the commander of one of the crystal suit legions could be Elder Nether Spring’s agent?

Horrible! That was too horrible!

Suo Chaolong found it hard to believe. “That… that’s a bit absurd. Is it possible for a stranger whose background is unclear to become one of the most important commanders of the army after only several decades?”

“It is quite possible.” Li Yao took a deep breath and said, “You are not citizens of the federation. It’s understandable that you don’t know our policy.

“Over the past hundred years, the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector have been melding, and wormholes have been appearing nonstop. The Grand

Desolate Plateau is the most plagued area because it is too close to the point of impact. Beast tides occur all the time!

“After every beast tide, countless towns on the Grand Desolate Plateau will be demolished, and a lot of people would lose their home and family.”

“Cough! Cough! Cough! Cough!”

Suo Chaolong coughed in embarrassment. He was of a mind to debate with Li Yao again about who the real owner of the Grand Desolate War Institution was and who began all the murders and demolition. But on second thought, he felt that it was not a good time.

Li Yao continued. “The Grand Desolate Plateau is sparsely populated. Life is difficult. An identification system would be very hard to implement. Sometimes, entire towns are swallowed by the beast tide, and all the files will disappear. How could you prove someone’s identity?

“Let’s say that a heavily-wounded stranger appeared in the desert near a town that was destroyed in a beast tide. He claimed that he was a resident of the town and luckily escaped the disaster although his home and his family didn’t. How could he prove it? There’s no way!

“Besides, the Star Glory Federation considered the war as one between mankind and the demon race. Then, as long as the guy was a pure human being, he would certainly be on our side. What other proof did he need?”

“That’s right!” Han Tuhu nodded. “When I was in service on the Grand Desolate Plateau, I experienced countless beast tides. Most of the civilians caught in the disaster were scared out of wits by the insects and beasts. Many of them were even suffering serious PTSD or other mental diseases such as amnesia. Who had the heart to tear open their wounds again? As long as they passed the cell test and proved that they were human beings, everything would be good!

“Also, according to the policy of the federation, the victims of the beast tides have a lot of privileges.

“If they are going to college, they will be given bonus scores. If they apply for the major sects or the federal army, they will get priority. They will have other benefits after they are admitted, too.

“After living in the harsh environment for hundreds of years, most of the civilians of the Grand Desolate Plateau are physically strong. Also, they hate the demons’ guts and fight harder than other people, which make them the best soldiers. Who else will you raise if not them?

“Therefore, in both the federal army and the major sects, the soldiers and Cultivators from the Grand Desolate Plateau are very influential forces. You know the point best, President Li!”

Li Yao nodded. As a graduate of the Grand Desolate War Institution, naturally, he knew the influence of the Cultivators of the Grand Desolate Plateau very well.

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit became the first MP crystal suit of the federal army partly because of its marvelous design and partly because of the support of the natives of the Grand Desolate Plateau in the army and the government, without which it would not have succeeded.

Chapter 1059 - Fabricating a Federal Hero

“Elder Nether Spring and I discovered the relic of Chaos by accident when we were hunted eighty-seven years ago,” the Fire Ant King said solemnly. “After the narrow escape, we gained our fame in the Nether Spring Kingdom and began to establish our own forces.

“In the ten years that followed, Elder Nether Spring stabilized himself in the ‘demon king’ level and recruited countless subordinates.

“A demon king always has more than ten tough demon generals under their command. As for the demon soldiers who have high potential, there are too many of them to count.

“It can be seen from Jin Xinyue’s experience that, after a demon is transformed into a human being after consuming excessive Divine Blood of Chaos, their capability will not be reduced much. It will only be changed into a new form. One only needs to be adapted to the new form with new arts of training. With the appropriate training arts, their capability can be recovered very quickly.

“It means that a demon soldier can be transformed into a Cultivator in the Refinement Stage, and a demon general can be transformed into a Cultivator in the Building Foundation Stage!”

Everybody fell silent.

Although the guys around Li Yao nowadays were all top-tier experts in the demon emperor level or the Nascent Soul Stage, and he had been hunted by dozens of demon emperors more than once, it did not mean that Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators or demon emperors were cheap.

He had only gotten involved with such people because his capability was also at such a level.

As a matter of fact, in either the Heaven’s Origin Sector or the Blood Demon Sector, a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator or a demon general was already a very influential individual in society and a one-in-ten-thousand elite.

In the Star Glory Federation, the elders of many sects were in the Building Foundation Stage. A large percentage of the professors in the Nine Elite Universities were in the Building Foundation Stage, too.

For those who entered the Core Formation Stage, they were qualified to create their own sect or find their way into the leadership of the top five hundred sects of the federation.

In the federal army, Han Tuhu, a tough warrior who commanded one of the sixteen crystal suit legions, was merely at the peak of the Core Formation Stage.

If one of Elder Nether Spring’s demon generals was transformed into a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator or a demon soldier was transformed into a Refinement Stage Cultivator before they were sent to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, it would be quite possible for them to distinguish themselves after a while.

“Don’t forget one thing.”

The Fire Ant King worriedly observed, “Elder Nether Spring uncovered a lot of the relics of Chaos seventy years ago. Chances are that the secrets arts of training from forty thousand years ago were left inside.

“The Children of the Nether World that he sent to the Heaven’s Origin Sector might’ve grasped the secret arts, too. So, they must’ve been advancing at a shocking speed.

“In the eyes of other people, weren’t the ‘Cultivators’ all ‘geniuses of training’ and ‘rarely-seen treasures’ who were worth being appreciated?”

Jin Xinyue had been deep in thought all the time. After hearing that, she suddenly changed the topic, frowning. “For hundreds of years, the coalition army of demons has persisted with continentalism. The beast tides that scourged the Heaven’s Origin Sector were almost exclusively made of the Insect Clan and the Claw Clan. The Nether Spring Kingdom was the vanguard of every invasion, too. In the end, the beast tide even became a synonym for the demon race.

“The invasions were all planned by Elder Nether Spring, right?”

Everybody nodded.

The twelve demon emperors were responsible for different fields. In the past, Jin Tuyi had been in charge of the universal development. That was why his voice was louder in the meeting to discuss whether or not the Eye of Blood Demon should be built.

Elder Nether Spring, on the other hand, was in charge of the probing attacks against the Heaven’s Origin Sector. It was because continentalism had been prevalent in the Blood Demon Sector in the past, too.

At least seven out of ten beast tide outbreaks had been launched by the Insect Clan of the Nether Spring Kingdom. An overwhelming ocean of insects was the first impression on the demon race for many citizens of the federation.

Deep in thought, Jin Xinyue mumbled, “It used to bother me why Elder Nether Spring attacked the Heaven’s Origin Sector without caring about the cost. Such harassing attacks were impossible to defeat the Star Glory Federation!

“Our speculation in the beginning was that he was trying to capture experiment subjects for the Demon God Virus.

“Now that I think about it, we were too simpleminded back then.

“Master, as I recall, in the Star Glory Federation, in either the circle of Cultivators or the federal army, military credit has the most importance attached to it, right?”

Li Yao nodded. “Of course. The federation has fought the demon race for five hundred years. Strength is what the nation was founded on. Military credit is highly valued in every trade, and being a federal soldier is the most respected profession! All the children have to learn fighting from young ages. Even in school, like the No. 2 Crimson Nimbus High School that I studied in, many training courses are included in the curriculum, too. It is not unusual for classmates to break each other’s hands or feet in their horseplay!

“I remember that I took part in the Limit Challenge Competition when I was only eighteen and fought against real demon beasts. A few students were killed in the battle by accident, but the Limit Challenge Competition was not called off. The only criterion to select elites is military credit!

“There’s no need to mention the federal army, where military credit certainly matters most. In Cultivation sects, even those whose main business is not hunting demon bests, earning military credit is also a top priority.

“It is because only with military credit will you get a tax reduction, have the chance for commercial bidding, and win the respect of other sects during negotiations.

“If a Cultivation sect is too busy making money inland and hasn’t been to the Grand Desolate Plateau for a long time, they will have no tax reduction, no loans from the bank, and no business dealings with other sects. Customers might even boycott the products of the sect.

“In the words of Cultivators, the brand of such sects will be tarnished!

“Therefore, all the major sects have been trying to go to the Grand Desolate Plateau in order to slay demon beasts and protect ordinary people so that they can build up the image of their sect.

“As a regular Cultivator, if you want to be appreciated by a certain sect, if you want more powerful training arts, and if you want more valuable Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, you will have to exchange military credit for them!

“In that regard, it won’t help even if you are the son of the leader. The top five hundred sects of the federation are all listed. The distribution of most of the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures is supervised by independent auditing agencies. Any violation of rules will be investigated by the authorities. The usage of ultimate treasures must be reflected dutifully on the quarterly report and the annual report for the interest of shareholders and ordinary investors.

“Moreover, the rights to develop the mother lodes on the Grand Desolate Plateau, to build towns, and to control certain commercial routes, those that can make a new sect rise quickly or keep an old sect thrive forever, will be allocated according to the military credit!

“With such prevailing ideologies, there is little nepotism in the noble families of the Star Glory Federation. Even if there is any, their family and sect will simply waste some money on them and consider them nonexistent. Without military credit, it is impossible to become a decision-maker in any sect!

“Of course, military credit does not necessarily mean fighting demon beasts on a battlefield. After all, not every Cultivator is good at fighting. But at the very least, they should go to the Grand Desolate Plateau and serve the people however they can. All Cultivators will work together to resist the beast tides.”

“Master,” Jin Xinyue said, “even if a Cultivator doesn’t boast an impressive familial background, they can still rise to fame quickly with tremendous military credit, right?”

Li Yao and Han Tuhu both nodded.

Capability and credit before familial background. It was one of the traditions that the Star Glory Federation was most proud of.

Jin Xinyue asked again, “Then, resisting the beast tides is the fastest way to accumulate military credit in the Star

Glory Federation, right?”

“In the past century, the demons inland have mostly been eradicated,” Li Yao said. “The Grand Desolate Plateau is the only place of trouble. Of course, that is the only place you can to go if you want military credit!

“It is very risky to resist the demon beasts and to fight demons on the Grand Desolate Plateau. But the returns are promising, too. If you are still alive after a few years of fighting, you will gain enough military credit to be a well-respected hero. Your future will be nothing but bright.

“If you have the chance to kill a strong demon beast or play a key role in resisting a critical beast tide, you might become famous overnight!”

Li Yao was a perfect example himself.

When he had just learned how to wear a crystal suit, he engaged in a battle with the squad of the silver-blood demons led by Wang Ji, a young prince of the Kingdom of Lion Butchers, in the depths of Thunderous Sound Mountain. The battle had gone on for a few days, and Li Yao had returned in one piece.

The battle had made him rise to fame. The success of the Demon Beast Detector that he later invented could be partly attributed to the incident.

While talking, Li Yao suddenly trembled as he realized something.

Han Tuyi also bulged his eyes and exclaimed in a low voice.

Jin Xinyue smiled bitterly. “Master, it seems that we’ve been underestimating Elder Nether Spring this whole time. For decades, he drove the beast tides of the Elder Nether Spring to attack the Heaven’s Origin Sector insanely for much more sophisticated reasons than to capture ‘experiment subjects’ in the battle.

“First of all, the beast tides would demolish the towns on the Grand Desolate Plateau. All the identity files would be destroyed. He could even make up some false files and mix them with the real ones. In such a way, the Children of the Nether World would have legal identities to infiltrate the federation.

“The Children of the Nether World were very gifted in training and hated the demons’ guts. Under the federation’s policy, it would have been easy for them to join the federal army and the major sects.

“After they became familiarized with the new place, they would travel to the Grand Desolate Plateau and fight back the beast tides in order to gain military credit and to avenge their imaginary family. That’s very reasonable, right?

“The Children of the Nether World were demons in the first place. They knew the weaknesses and the combat patterns of the demon race. Moreover, they were perhaps communicating with Elder Nether Spring and were informed of the time and location of every beast tide.

“Hehe. Most of the beast tides were organized by Elder Nether Spring. The attacks launched by the Kingdom of Lion Butchers couldn’t have been a secret to him, either, since he was an ally.

“As long as he sent the intelligence over, wouldn’t it be hundreds of times easier for the Children of the Nether World to acquire military credit?

“Or rather, when a Child of the Nether World hit the bottleneck, Elder Nether Spring could even tailor-make a beast tide for them so that they would crush the demons and succeed in defending their home after bloody battles. Wouldn’t he be fabricating a federal hero in such a way?

“Such ‘federal heroes’ would rise much faster in the federal army and the sects than normal Cultivators, wouldn’t they?”

Chapter 1060 - How to Train Your Dinosaur

Everybody broke out in cold sweat.

The Fire Ant King slapped the table and rose up. “Yes! That’s more Elder Nether Spring’s style! He has always been good at manipulating other people, playing tricks, and stabbing other people in the back. But the only exception was the war against the Heaven’s Origin Sector. He devoted tremendous forces of the Nether Spring Kingdom crazily without a clear purpose!

“Before we ended on bad terms, I once asked him in private, but he always gave me excuses such as it was for the elimination of the dissidents.

“However, over the past few decades, he gradually seized complete power. Even Master Hollow Wind and his supporters, who were the traditional nobles of the Nether Spring Kingdom, never dared object to his face. Was there any dissent that he needed to quash?

“At that time, I was too busy planning the Blade of Chaos and did not think too much of it. But today, I’ve finally figured everything out!

“Elder Nether Spring regarded the forces of the Nether Spring Kingdom as nutrition for the seeds of his ambitions. Part of the seeds were the Nether World Watch, and the rest were the scarier Children of the Nether World!

“Although the beast tides all failed in the end and significantly consumed the resources of the Nether Spring Kingdom, the Children of the Nether World that he sent into the Heaven’s Origin Sector gained enough military credit and successfully infiltrated the leadership of the federal army and major sects!”

Han Tuhu suddenly shivered as if he was suffering a fever.

Everybody looked at him.

Taking a long breath, Han Tuhu said, “Something occurred to me just now.

“The Battle of Dawn two years ago was the first super-massive attack on the Heaven’s Origin Sector by the Blood Demon Sector. Regular armies of the Nether Spring Kingdom and the Kingdom of Lion Butchers almost swept across the entire Grand Desolate Plateau.

“Of course, the coalition army of demons failed in the end.

“The failure was apparently because of the mutiny of the low-level demons in the frontline, but in fact, the federal army was preparing to implement the ‘Giant Crab Operation’, in which the invaders’ rear would be cut off, and they would be swallowed as a whole!

“It means that, with or without the unexpected mutiny, the coalition army of demons was doomed to suffer a brutal failure.

“A brutal failure of the coalition army of demons would mean a glorious triumph of the Star Glory Federation. It’s been more than a hundred years since the federation last had such a huge victory. Naturally, everybody would have been rewarded according to their contribution and claim their military credit.

“Then, how many ‘amply credible’ officers and Cultivators would rise to higher places for the war to come? Would there have been a few Children of the Nether World among them?”

Nobody was able to answer the heart-freezing question.

“Don’t forget that there’s still the most dreadful Abyss!” Suo Chaolong gnashed his teeth. “Other Children of the Nether World, as long as they acted and had communication with Elder Nether Spring before, must’ve left traces. We will dig them out sooner or later!

“But Abyss, if Lu Wuxin’s words are to be believed, has never sent any intelligence to Elder Nether Spring or done anything that harms the interests of the federation. On the surface, Abyss will appear a model Cultivator who fulfils their duty by slaying the demons and defending the homeland.

“Besides, Elder Nether Spring must’ve paid special attention to Abyss, too. He must’ve created many favorable conditions so that Abyss could claim unimaginable military credit easily and grow into an influential person in the federation step by step!

“Chances are that Abyss is already a well-known hero of the federation right now who works in a key post of a core agency and has the capability to influence the policy of the federation!

“We don’t have any leads or concrete proof. How are we going to dig out such a terrifying Abyss?”

Seeing that everybody was getting more and more depressed, Li Yao quickly sorted through what was on his mind and rose up. “Thankfully, we have gathered the intelligence sent back by part of the Children of the Nether World. As long as we deduced the intelligence to the authorities of the federation in time and ask them to run a comprehensive analysis, most of the Children of the Nether World will certainly be fished up.

“The whole incident might not be as damaging as we think. After all, it’s been no more than a hundred years since Elder Nether Spring discovered the Divine Blood of Chaos. It means that the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who are more than a hundred years old in the federation can’t be the Children of the Nether World!

“As long as we find the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and prove the validity of the intelligence, the problem will be solved!

“As for Abyss, although we don’t have any leads, we can find a few suspects with simple deduction!”

Li Yao smiled. “First of all, seventy years ago, Elder Nether Spring couldn’t have foreseen that he would be implementing the Spore Stratagem in the future. At that time, he sent the Children of the Nether World for the simple purposes of smuggling and espionage. It is unlikely that he made up his mind to send Abyss, who would lurk for decades, so early, right?”

Everybody nodded.

“It was not until Elder Nether Spring had the Nether Spring Kingdom under control and began the development of the Demon God Virus and the preparation for the Spore Stratagem that he felt the importance of having insiders in the Star Glory Federation. He probably sent Abyss at that time, which was approximately thirty to fifty years ago.

“Hehe. Everything is simpler if so.

“In the recent thirty to fifty years, are there any superstars who suddenly rose to fame in the Star Glory Federation? Do any of them have no parents or impressive familial background but have experienced a lot of fortuitous adventures, their capability soaring incredibly like the protagonist of a novel?

“Right. The guy might not hold a high social position, but he can influence the federation to some extent. Also, he has probably received secrets arts of the ancient Cultivators from forty thousand years ago that Elder Nether Spring excavated from the relics of Chaos. Therefore, he must be a person who is adept in the ancient arts of refining!

“Whoever meets the conditions will be Abyss!”

Li Yao bashed the desk hard and declared, “Think about it, everybody. Is there such a guy? Everything will be settled as soon as we have him under control!”

Enlightened, everybody nodded and reflected on the Cultivators of the Heaven’s Origin Sector that met all the conditions.

Very soon, almost at the same time, everybody raised their head and looked at Li Yao.

Cold sweat popping up, Li Yao stammered, “Is… is there a problem?”

Jin Xinyue coughed and tugged on Li Yao’s sleeve before she said in a low voice, “Master, the guy that you described seems to be yourself.”

Li Yao blinked. “Does he?”

“Yes, he does,” Jin Xinyue said. “You were an orphan whose parents passed away early, and you grew up in the magical equipment graveyard. So, nobody can prove where you came from. Later, you rose miraculously and advanced into the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage in less than twenty years. Your combat ability is now equal to the Nascent Soul Stage.

“Also, you are an Ultra-Level Federal Hero, and you boast tremendous influence in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector. You are certainly a game-changing factor in the situation.

“As for the ancient arts of refining, as I recall, your skills in refining are inherited from ancient Cultivators, and your most famous skill is traditional manual forging, right?

“Huh. The more I talk about it, the more you fit the description. Think about it carefully, Master, are you really not Abyss?”

Everybody nodded upon hearing Jin Xinyue’s words, but then they shook their heads hard. “That’s just kidding. It’s impossible for Li Yao to be Abyss. If he were Abyss, why would he have destroyed the Eye of Blood Demon and disrupted the Spore Stratagem?

“Also, it was impossible for Elder Nether Spring to predict the space jump to the Flying Star Sector. The odds of survival were too low. It’s impossible. Absolutely impossible!”

Li Yao scratched his head and said, “I wish I were Abyss. If so, when Elder Nether Spring comes to find me, I could blow up his head in one punch and shout to his face ‘I quit’. Problem solved!”

Everybody laughed in amusement. Finally, the air was less intense.

His antennae shivering slightly, the Fire Ant King found another person from his memory. “Li Yao is unlikely to be Abyss, but I have a better candidate here!

“She was born in the Grand Desolate Plateau. She lost her parents in a beast tide outbreak when she was young. She has always been a genius in training and was once known as one of the youngest Building Foundation Stage Cultivator in the federation. In the past decade, her capability has soared exponentially after back-to-back fortuitous incidents. Now, she is the youngest Cultivator at the peak of the Core Formation Stage, the strongest expert in the younger generation, and an idol for billions of teenagers!

“She has been roaming about the Grand Desolate Plateau for the last ten years. Even after the federation retreated and burnt everything to the ground, she was still fighting and hunting on her own in the depths of the Grand Desolate Plateau despite the lack of supplies!

“Her unpredictable routes, her overwhelming techniques, and her ruthless style have frightened quite a lot of demons and gained her unparalleled fame inside the federation!

“It is said that many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators have high hopes in her and offered all their knowledge to her. Before Li Yao returned, she had been built into the image of the federation by the government as a well-deserved hero!

“She is Ding Lingdang, also known as ‘Blazing Tyrannosaur’, the captain of the First Assault Team of the Grand Desolate Legion!”

Suo Chaolong bulged his eyes, with a hint of fear beaming out. “Indeed. The woman is the bane of the demons on the Grand Desolate Plateau. Her brutality and callousness are truly appalling! Many demons said before their march that they would rather be faced with a crystal suit legion of the federation than run into the ‘Blazing Tyrannosaur’!

“You can know how savage she is from her nickname. Ten years ago, she was known as ‘Inferno Witch’. However, after witnessing her ruthlessness, all the demons agreed that she was not a woman at all but a ferocious tyrannosaur. Therefore, she became known as ‘Blazing Tyrannosaur’!”

“…” Li Yao.

“However, her familial ground seems to be clean,” the Fire Ant King said. “Her father was a soldier of the federal army, and her mother was a teacher in the Grand Desolate War Institution. Evidence is thorough.”

“The familial background can be faked.” Suo Chaolong countered. “Wasn’t she the only survivor in the beast tide in which her parents were killed? Chances are that the real Ding Lingdang died and the fake Ding Lingdang snuck in!”

“It does make a lot of sense now that you mentioned it,” the Fire Ant King agreed. “This ‘Blazing Tyrannosaur’ is one of the firmest hawks in the younger generation. She is shouting to demolish the Blood Demon Sector every day. Many young, passionate Cultivators have gathered around her. Their influence cannot be underestimated. If we make a list of the potential obstacles for the peace negotiations, she is definitely on the top! She does have the ability to influence the policy of the federation!”

“That’s right!” Suo Chaolong slapped his thighs hard. “The one thing that Elder Nether Spring wants most right now is for the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector to attack each other furiously so that he can take advantage. Therefore, the dreadful ‘Blazing Tyrannosaur’ must be Abyss! If we want the peace negotiations to work out, we must stop the she-dinosaur from sabotaging everything! President Li, do you agree?”

Chapter 1061 - Rekindled Ashes!

“I remember it too now!”

Han Tuhu’s eyes shone as he exclaimed, “Ding Lingdang is from the Grand Desolate War Institution, and so is President Li. Ten years ago, you must’ve met each other before in the Grand Desolate War Institution, didn’t you?”

His eyelids twitching, Li Yao nodded slowly. “Indeed, we did.”

“That will be a lot easier!” Han Tuhu said excitedly. “When we return to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, you can try to sneak to Ding Lingdang’s side. With your keen eyes, you will certainly be able to discover enough traces to unveil the true face of this ‘Blazing Tyrannosaur’! Right, what was your relationship with Ding Lingdang in the past? Are you confident that you can get close to her and win her trust?”

Expressionlessly, Li Yao replied, “That shouldn’t be a problem. We used to be in a romantic relationship. More exactly, she is my fiancée. I was planning to marry her when I’m back home.”

“…” Han Tuhu.

“…” Suo Chaolong.

“Cough, cough. Cough, cough, cough, cough.” The Fire Ant King was the first to recover. “As—as expected of Vulture Li Yao. Only such a great hero who has been tested by countless battles like yourself is the perfect match for the untraditional Lady Ding!”

Suo Chaolong wiped his sweat. “Ex—exactly. Now that I think about it, Ding Lingdang is not very suspicious. She is a pure battle-type Cultivator after all, and her supporters and worshippers have gathered around her because of her personal charisma. They are not well-disciplined. The real Abyss shouldn’t be someone like that!”

Han Tuhu slapped the table. “Indeed. You’ve reminded me of yet another suspect who is more suspicious than President Li’s fiancée!

“The man was the most brilliant new star before the rise of President Li and Ding Lingdang. He was also one of the youngest Core Formation Stage Cultivators in the federation.

“What is scarier is that, not only did the guy boast exceptional combat ability, he was also gifted at operation and management. He is a hybrid-type Cultivator!

“More than ten years ago, when the guy was only in his thirties, he established his own sect! In the past ten years, his sect has been expanding crazily as if it has eaten a lot of crystal bombs. Its comprehensively capability is multiplying every year! Today, his sect is attracting the most talented young Cultivators of the federation to join. As for himself, he was nominated as Celebrity of the Nation twice in a row. He is definitely the well-deserved most influential person among the young Cultivators!

“The guy is Peng Hai, also known as Fiend Blade! His enterprise—Double Dragons Union—ranks the 92nd in the top five hundred sects of the federation right now, surpassing many big sects that have a long history!”

The Fire Ant King nodded in agreement and said, “That’s right. Fiend Blade Peng Hai seems much more likely than Ding Lingdang. His Double Dragons Union is a huge, meticulous organization that is involved in the development of many kinds of magical equipment in the federation army. The Demon Beast Detector, from which the sect earned the first bucket of gold, has been updated to the ninth generation. Every soldier in the federal army is equipped with one. It is one of the most important pieces of portable magical equipment for them!

“If Fiend Blade Peng Hai is Abyss, and he has hidden backdoors in the Demon Beast Detector, there might be dire consequences!”

Han Tuhu frowned. “Wait. Demon Beast Detector? I feel that I’m missing something…”

Li Yao coughed and said, “The Demon Beast Detector was my invention. Fiend Blade Peng Hai was my senior brother. He is also the one who guided me to the path of Cultivation. I have a lot of shares in the Double Dragons Union, too. In fact, the ‘double dragons’ refers to us.”

“…” Suo Chaolong.

“…” Han Tuhu.

“Master, are you really certain that you are not Abyss sent by Elder Nether Spring?” Jin Xinyue asked.

Jin Tuyi, who had been listening quietly as a hologram, finally opened his mouth. “Alright. Stop proposing groundless hypotheses.”

After only three months, he appeared much older than before. Not only was his hair pure white, wrinkles, from which dark, golden colors were beaming out, found their way onto his cheeks, too.

He was narrowing his eyes, as if he were taking a nap, all the time and seemed to be indifferent to the stimuli of the outside world.

Only on such occasions would he slightly open his eyes that were still emitting feeble brightness.

“Li Yao, Ding Lingdang, and Fiend Blade Peng Hai are all less than fifty years old. If any of them are Abyss, it means that Elder Nether Spring sent an infant, or a young child, to the Heaven’s Origin Sector fifty years ago.

“If so, there would’ve been too many unpredictable factors. Who could guarantee that an infant, or a child, would grow into a Cultivator, and even a Core Formation Stage one so that they could influence the federation?

“Besides, children are unlikely to be absolutely loyal to Elder Nether Spring. How could Elder Nether Spring be sure that Abyss would still be loyal to him when they grew up?

“If he did send anybody over, it must be someone in their thirties or forties. After all, Cultivators can keep their faces young. If they practice special techniques, even someone in their sixties might be able to pretend to be a sixteen-year-old.”

Jin Tuyi’s conclusion was rather convincing. Everybody nodded in agreement.

Deep in thought, Li Yao remarked, “If that’s the case, all the Cultivators between fifty and a hundred years old must be scrutinized.”

Everybody looked at each other in bewilderment—the list of suspects was bordering on infinity.

Fifty to a hundred years old were the prime years for a Cultivator. Their experience and resources would have been accumulated to the maximum, and the health of their body and soul had yet to decline. It was the most precious golden years for them!

Many leaders of the key departments in the federation were Cultivators at such an age.

Also, the leaders of the key departments were almost exclusively ‘rarely-seen geniuses in training’ who had experienced a lot of fortuitous events and accomplished unparalleled military credit through mountains of dead bodies.

According to the criteria, the managers of the major sects, the middle-level officers of the federal army, and the directors of certain bureaus in the government would mostly have to be captured for verification!

Jin Tuyi coughed lightly. “Without any proof, we won’t be able to get specific names even if we sit here until dawn. Therefore, we might as well analyze Elder Nether Spring’s purpose and what the Children of the Nether World and Abyss are up to exactly.”

Everybody nodded in agreement. Li Yao said, “That’s right. No matter how well the Children of the Nether World and Abyss have been hiding, they will jump out very soon. If we know their purpose in advance, we will be able to adopt appropriate strategies!”

The Fire Ant King’s eyes were glittering. “Have you already figured it out, commander?”

Jin Tuyi smiled and struggled to shake his head. “Elder Nether Spring is now a rabid dog grasped by desperation. Who knows how exactly he will play his last move?

“However, I’m most certain about one thing.

“For the enthusiastic hawks of the Star Glory Federation, right now is the best opportunity to attack the Blood Demon Sector in the past five hundred years!”

Everybody almost stood on their feet in shock upon hearing the words.

Jin Tuyi breathed heavily as he said, “In the past hundred years, the comprehensive capability of the Blood Demon Sector has been higher than the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and we were the invaders. In the meantime, the Heaven’s Origin Sector was developing faster than the Blood Demon Sector and was the defender. The Heaven’s Origin Sector traded space for time and planned to counterattack when they had an overwhelming advantage after further technological advancements.

“Without the unexpected changes, the overwhelming advantage wouldn’t have come into being until decades later.

“However, the situation is different today. The destruction of the Eye of Blood Demon caused the death of fourteen demon emperors and countless elite troops. The savaging of the Demon God Virus significantly wasted the fundamental forces of the Blood Demon Sector and stalled a lot of troops. Also, while we were rapidly seizing power, we were also creating countless enemies!

“In the four demon kingdoms, there must be more traditional nobles who want to feast upon our flesh than we can count!

“Given a few years’ time, the Blood Demon Sector will certainly recover from the mess, but right now is truly the moment when we have the fewest demon emperors, the most disordered army, the worst internal discord, and the most widespread plague in the history of the Blood Demon Sector!

“Do you think the firm hawks in the Star Glory Federation and those who have invested all their belongings or even the assets of their sect into the ‘victory funds’ will let go of the opportunity?”

Everybody gasped, and Jin Xinyue frowned. “But the Star Glory Federation doesn’t know anything that is going on here.”

Jin Tuyi smiled and said, “What if the Children of the Nether World tell them?”

Everybody fell silent. The atmosphere was even more depressing than before.

Jin Tuyi struggled to drink some water. He breathed for a moment and rubbed his temples softly before he continued with his eyes closed. “The key of the Spore Stratagem is to raise a world war between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector. In the world-blighting war, the Demon God Virus will be released so that a cruel new world will be created.

“Plan A of the Spore Stratagem was to let the final battle happen in the capital city of the Star Glory Federation through the Eye of Blood Demon.

“Now, Plan A has failed.

“However, if the Children of the Nether World can convince the leadership of the Star Glory Federation that the Blood Demon Sector is at its weakest right now, that an expedition right now will be enough to completely suppress the Blood Demon Sector, and that the demons will be the perfect slaves for collecting resources for the preparation against the army of the Imperium of True Human Beings… who can be certain that the Spore Stratagem will not be rekindled?”

Li Yao rose up suddenly. “Let’s go and elicit the other half of the intelligence from Lu Wuxin right now. Then, we will immediately head back to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, hand over the intelligence to the leadership of the federation, and tell them the whole truth!”

BAM BAM! BAM BAM BAM BAM!

Not a moment after Li Yao concluded his declaration, somebody knocked on the door in the utmost fury. Dents were appearing on the thick, heavy planks.

All the participants looked at each other in bewilderment and raised their alert. Opening the door, they discovered that it was Wei Tianqing, the demon emperor from the wolf clan who was responsible for watching over Lu Wuxin.

“General Wei, what are you doing here?” The Fire Ant King stood up and said solemnly, “Aren’t you supposed to be watching over Lu Wuxin right now? The Mad Medic is sordid and cunning. He might run away at any moment!”

Wei Tianqing’s face was pale, and his furry tail was trembling crazily like a blade of grass in the blowing wind. It was not until he panted for a long time that he gnashed his teeth. “He can’t escape now. He’s dead!”

“What!”

Li Yao, Jin Xinyue, Han Tuhu and Suo Chaolong all jumped to their feet.

Chapter 1062 - Time To Go Home!

Lu Wuxin had died a quick death.

His body had collapsed on the iron seat, still tied up. His hands and feet were still bound by the barriers. His eyeballs, one large and one small, had turned pale white. Every scar on his ugly face had dimmed, but his lips were still in a gloating smile, as if he were mocking those who were studying his body.

Although there were not any injuries on the surface, his brain had been melted into a cluster of half-frozen venom. All of his brain cells and nerve endings had been corroded. His self-awareness and his soul had perished instantly. Nobody in the entire universe could save him right now.

In order to demonstrate his sincerity about the cooperation, after offering half of the intelligence he knew, Lu Wuxin had begun to describe the experiment files of the Demon God Virus. Many pieces of the key data that he provided had yet to be grasped by the coalition army of demons. They would be very helpful for the control of the epidemic.

Even so, nobody relaxed around him. His every finger and toe were closely bound by barriers, unable to move at all. He could only input the information he knew into a crystal processor specially modified by Li Yao through telepathic thoughts while a demon emperor was standing by and watching.

The defense was so heavy that there was no way that Lu Wuxin could escape!

However, he had died an uncanny death right in front of Wei Tianqing, a demon emperor of the wolf clan!

Half an hour later, the autopsy was completed, suggesting that Lu Wuxin had committed suicide.

In the deepest part of his brain, a thin shell, which was probably the debris of a certain venom gland, had been found out.

He had not been lying. It was true that he had performed many little surgeries on his head and inserted a lot of stuff into it.

The ‘venom gland’ could be manipulated by his telepathic thoughts. When his brain waves were strong enough, he would be able to activate the gland at will and release the venom contained inside, thereby killing himself neatly and quickly.

The autopsy report froze everyone’s heart.

“We’ve been fooled.” The Fire Ant King was rather depressed. “Since the very beginning, Lu Wuxin never planned to negotiate with us, nor did he really consider working for us. The only motivation for his quick confession was our nutrition drug, which could restore his brainwaves to an extent where he could manipulate the venom gland to kill himself.”

“But—” Han Tuhu had not thought it through. “Why did he kill himself without a good reason?”

“Because he was very clear that, even if he told us everything, we still wouldn’t let him walk away,” Jin Xinyue said coldly. “Mad Medic Lu Wuxin has been infamous in the Blood Demon Sector for almost a hundred years. He made too many enemies. Also, as the supervisor of the laboratory of the Demon God Virus, he killed countless innocent victims and devastated their family. It was impossible for him to survive. If he fell into the hands of his enemies, he wouldn’t even be able to die.”

“Indeed.” The Fire Ant King sighed and said, “There are too many methods in the Blood Demon Sector that can torture someone for years without killing him. Lu Wuxin was an expert in that regard himself. He knew the miserable feelings best, and he did not wish to end up like that.

“I assume that he prepared to kill himself a long time ago. However, when he was just captured, his brain was suppressed, so his brain waves were not strong enough to activate the venom gland. That was why he negotiated with us and waited for an opportunity patiently. Finally, he found a chance to get away from the excruciating torment!”

Suo Chaolong bashed the desk hard and said, “It doesn’t matter whether he is alive or dead. But there is still much precious intelligence in his head. Is there any way we can dig it out?”

Jin Tuyi coughed lightly and said, “Lu Wuxin’s brain has been seriously sabotaged. It’s almost impossible to retrieve any valuable information from there. Moreover, I think that Lu Wuxin already confessed most of the things he knew. He couldn’t have concealed much intelligence from us.

“He only started working for Elder Nether Spring ten years ago. The Children of the Nether World project and Abyss had nothing to do with him. All the information he told us was collected in secret. It is already impressive enough that he knew so much about the two projects. But how could he know more details about the two projects?

“It is exactly because he was aware that the little information that he knew about was absolutely not enough to trade for his life that he killed himself so quickly!”

Everybody pondered for a moment and had to admit that Jin Tuyi did have a point. Lu Wuxin was not directly involved in the Children of the Nether World project. What he had access to would only have been the tip of the iceberg.

“Anyway, I have to go back to the Heaven’s Origin Sector as soon as possible and deliver all the intelligence to the leadership of the Star Glory Federation, to prove the existence of the Children of the Nether World and establish a channel of dialogue between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector,” Li Yao said.

“Right now, we don’t have any clue what is going on in the Star Glory Federation. If the Children of the Nether World are truly stirring trouble or even instigating a massive attack against the Blood Demon Sector, everything will be too late!”

There had never been a smooth channel of communication between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Before, some of the spies of the Blood Demon Sector were scattered in the Heaven’s Origin Sector. However, because they could not conceal the dispersion of their demonic energy, it was impossible for them to sneak into the leadership of the federation. They could not even enter the big cities, which were usually heavily guarded. Therefore, they could only hide themselves in fear and send the most rudimental intelligence back.

Since the capital city was invaded by the demon race three months ago, the federation had raised its vigilance, too. The spies had almost all been dug out and eliminated now.

In the meantime, on the Grand Desolate Plateau, Jin Tuyi did not want more conflicts with the federation. He ordered that all the armies of demons retreat to the Blood Demon Sector. Without his command, not even a cockroach would jump to the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

Therefore, for them right now, the Heaven’s Origin Sector was a complete black box. They had no idea what had happened there over the past three months!

The longer they delayed, the more unpredictable factors would emerge. Li Yao had planned to return to the Heaven’s Origin Sector from the moment he learned the whole truth of the Red Tide Plan. However, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had not been repaired at that time, and his cooperation with Jin Tuyi had only just begun. Therefore, he had to postpone his departure.

Today, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had been fixed, and the new Skyfire had also taken shape. Jin Tuyi and Jin Xinyue had basically got the control of the Blood Demon Sector. Li Yao was now able to go home without worries!

“Let me go back with you!” Han Tuhu said in a hurry. “My voice is not low in the federation army. Also, I know a lot of leaders in the military. They will certainly believe the information if I am there!”

Han Tuhu was the supreme commander of one of the sixteen crystal suit legions of the federation. Naturally, he had a lot of connections and boasted tremendous influence in the federal army.

It had been more than one year since he had been to the Blood Demon Sector by Elder Nether Spring. He could not wait to go back to his motherland, which was now in great peril!

However, Li Yao shook his head after considering for a moment. “I think that it will be better if I go back alone and figure out the situation first.”

Han Tuhu was surprised. “Why?”

Li Yao glimpsed at Jin Tuyi and said, “If Elder Nether Spring is really trying to raise a world war between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, the most crucial task for him is to cut off the communication between the two Sectors! Only if there is no direct dialogue between the two Sectors will he be able to fan the flames in the middle and escalate the situation!

“Therefore, assuming that the Children of the Nether World have already taken action, they must be prepared for everyone who’s going to jump from the Blood Demon Sector to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, especially the guys such as us!

“From the intelligence we have, we can infer that the Children of the Nether World have infiltrated the federation to a shocking degree. Even the commander of one of the crystal suit legions might be one of them. They will certainly try everything they can to stop us and even… wipe us out!

“The hatred between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector is too deep. It cannot be resolved with a few empty words. Also, General Han, your current appearance happens to be…”

Dazed, Han Tuhu put on a bitter smile.

Suo Chaolong and he had been the most important experiment subjects for Elder Nether Spring. In the depths of the Nether World on the Gloomy Wind Islands in the North Pole, they had both gone through one year of devastating experiments. The cells in their bodies had greatly mutated. Eventually, he had become more and more like a demon, and Suo Chaolong had become more and more like a human being.

After the Serum of Chaos was successfully manufactured, Han Tuhu and the soldiers of the Flying Tiger Legion had volunteered to take the first shot, but the effect had not been very satisfactory.

It was because the Serum of Chaos was based not on the original Divine Blood of Chaos but Jin Xinyue’s blood.

Although Jin Xinyue turned from a demon into a human being because of the excessive Divine Blood of Chaos, her blood was still different from the original Divine Blood of Chaos. Therefore, the effect could not possibly be the same.

Moreover, they were not planning to duplicate the purest Divine Blood of Chaos, at least not for now.

The venomous fog in the Blood Demon Sector was not suitable for the normal human beings. After she was transformed into a Core Formation Stage Cultivator, Jin Xinyue could resist the hazard with the immense spiritual energy. But if regular demons were transformed into the purest human beings, they would no longer be adapted to the venomous fog. The procedure would be killing them instead of saving them.

Therefore, in the first batch of serum, the reduction of the cells was kept to a certain degree. Features of the demon race were more or less removed, but a lot of primeval cells remained in their internal organs.

Han Tuhu and the other soldiers of the federal army were the survivors of the repetitive experiments. They had undergone deep mutations. The primeval cells in their body were deeply rooted, so they could not be restored after one or two injections.

After taking three shots, Han Tuhu was no longer the hideous demon he used to be, but the features of the demon race were still obvious. Pure natural shells covered his critical parts, and the long bone tail was still wagging behind him.

He would not be able to defend himself at all if the Children of the Nether World smeared him after he returned to the Heaven’s Origin Sector in such an appearance.

In fact, Li Yao had similar problems, too.

Although he could maintain the appearance of a standard human being with the help of the mental devil, the primeval cells that had been completely activated could not be restored to their original state.

It meant that he could barely pass the test for demons when he was back.

However, his manipulation over the demonic energy was defter than Han Tuhu’s, and it was more difficult to smear an Ultra-Level Federal Hero than to smear the commander of a crystal suit legion.

Besides, with the combat ability of the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage, his ability to survive in the Heaven’s Origin Sector was much higher than Han Tuhu’s, too.

“It’s decided then. I will go to the federation to gather intelligence. After I make sure that everything is fine, General Han and the other soldiers will come back home. It will be safer this way. What do you think, everybody?”

Li Yao suddenly rose up. As he glanced over the crowd, his eyes that were as sharp as blades. He did not flinch at all when he met Jin Tuyi’s eyes!

Chapter 1063 - Three Key Persons!

Three days later, in the northeast of the Blood Demon Sector, on a vast plateau known as Nine Voids…

The place was covered in colorful, hazy mist all year around. Occasionally, weird auroras would soar into the sky and rip bizarre-looking gaps there.

The creatures that trespassed into the auroras by accident would disappear and emerge in another world.

This was the melding point in the Blood Demon Sector, which was equivalent to the Dark Desolate Domain in the Heaven’s Origin Sector. It was also the traditional route of attack for the coalition army of demons.

Therefore, outside of the Nine Voids, military camps and defense lines had been established over a span of hundreds of kilometers. Inside the Nine Voids, enormous teleportation arrays had also been set up, which were enough to send the devilish warships and the experts in the level of demon emperor to the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

After Jin Tuyi seized power and decided to work toward a truce with the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the teleportation arrays had been left unused for three months, covered in a layer of dust. But today, the largest teleportation array of all was shining with a weird brilliance and exhaling mysterious auroras.

Vulture Li Yao was about to go home!

In the military camp, he checked his gear for the last time.

Considering that he was not home for battle but to deliver the instrument of surrender for the demon race, it was best that the newborn Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, which was brimming with demonic energy, be kept away from the world. Therefore, Jin Tuyi specially prepared an MP Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit for Li Yao.

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was standard gear for the federal army. It was almost identical to the version that Li Yao had helped design more than ten years ago. The familiar interface and manipulation system reminded Li Yao of the good old times. He recalled the time when Ding Lingdang and he were punching each other brutally in the campus.

Besides the necessary magical equipment, the items that he carried most were letters, including a secret letter with the signatures of more than ten demon emperors and the stamp of the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons and Jin Tuyi’s personal letter that had his own mark.

Other than the demons’ documents, he also carried letters from Han Tuhu and the soldiers of the Flying Tiger Legion. On the letters were the things that only they knew about, with their hair and blood samples as attachments.

It would be very easy to determine the validity of the letters and the attachments so that people of the Heaven’s Origin Sector would be convinced that the federal soldiers were still alive in the foreign land!

In order to reveal the Spore Stratagem and the Children of the Nether World to the leadership of the federation, Li Yao, Jin Tuyi, and Jin Xinyue had discussed and sorted through everything from beginning to the end. Taking all the intelligence that Lu Wuxin confessed into account, they compressed all the information into a secret document.

The document also included the sample of the Demon God Virus developed in the laboratory, the infected blood that was frozen in ice, and many video clips of the uncontrollable mutants.

The undeniable facts were totally enough to prove the Spore Stratagem and the Children of the Nether World!

The only question that remained was how to deliver the crucial document to the key persons!

“Master, are you ready?”

Jin Xinyue looked at Li Yao full of expectation. The teleportation arrays had been prepared.

Li Yao smiled and, finishing the test for the last group of specifications on the rudimental version of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, stored the gear into a Cosmos Ring before nodding.

“Alright. Let’s review the files of the key people in the Star Glory Federation one the last time. The three key people here, like the four giants of the Blood Demon Sector, have the power to change the fate of the nation!”

Jin Xinyue triggered a light beam from her mini crystal processor.

The light shone until the brightness formed the shape of a human being in the end. It was a tall, energetic, and magnificent-looking man!

His forehead was massive, as if two horns were about to crawl out of his eyebrow. His hands were enormous, and his joints were as thick as burls. But there was not the tiniest gap when he closed his hands. When he was waving them, it felt as if he was summoning a storm!

In the picture, he was doing an impromptu speech. Although Jin Xinyue had turned off the sound, his earnest countenance and resolute demeanor were enough to make the blood of the audience boil and fill them with the urge to follow him no matter what!

“Jiang Hailiu, an admin-type Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage and the Speaker of Parliament in the Star Glory Federation. He was born in the Horizonless Sect, one of the top ten sects in the Heaven’s Origin Sector. During the thirty-three years that he was the leader, the Horizonless Sect ranked the top in the top five hundred sects of the federation for nineteen years, which has been praised to be a miracle that nobody will ever surpass. After he resigned, he turned into a politician and started from scratch. As the former leader of the Horizonless Sect, he was elected as the mayor of Prime Mountain City, a remote town in the depths of the Grand Desolate Plateau. It was quite a shocking piece of news back then.

“In the nine years that he was the mayor, he developed Prime Mountain City from a small town into one of the four biggest cities on the Grand Desolate Plateau. It was even on par with Wild Wave City, where the Grand Desolate War Institution was located in the past. With those impressive accomplishments, he returned inland and defeated many competitors until he was elected as the mayor of the capital city. Four years ago, he resigned as the mayor of the capital city and campaigned for the Speaker of the Parliaments. He made it in his first attempt!

“While Jiang Hailiu was the Speaker, the Blood Demon Sector attacked the Heaven’s Origin Sector on a large scale in the battle known as Battle of Dawn. In the end, because of the mutiny of the low-level demons, the Star Glory Federation secured a full triumph.

“This is the first glorious victory for the Star Glory Federation over the past century. Jiang Hailiu’s prestige has risen to the peak, too. Many citizens consider him the hope for the federation. There is no doubt that he will win the re-election!

“Jiang Hailiu’s career as a politician began from Prime Mountain City on the Grand Desolate Plateau, which he has always held a special feeling for. When the coalition army of demons destroyed the Grand Desolate Plateau, Prime Mountain City was demolished, too. Therefore, Jiang Hailiu is one of the firmest hawks. It is not going to be easy to persuade him.

“However, I believe that the Speaker of Parliament will certainly not make decisions based on his emotions. He will definitely do the right thing when he sees the document.”

Li Yao bit his fingernail. “So, I’ll have to meet the Speaker of Parliament in person?”

“Exactly, like how you met my father in Heavenly Path City. This is what master has been best at. It won’t be a problem for you, will it?”

Then Jin Xinyue added, “The Pantheon of Demons has drafted hundreds of infiltration and assassination plans targeting the Speaker of Parliament. The plans have all been inputted in master’s crystal processor. You can take a look at them when you are free and see how you can get close to him.

“The good news is that Jiang Hailiu is definitely not Abyss—he is 177 years old. However, we don’t know much about his staff and his bodyguards. Therefore, if you choose him, Master, you’d better meet him in person instead of handing the document over to his secretary.”

Li Yao nodded. Of course, he would not make such a silly mistake.

Jin Xinyue made a gesture. The light beam suddenly broke into thousands of stars. After revolving for a moment, they congregated into a new image.

This time, it was an old general whose hair and beard were both white. Wearing the uniform of the commander of the federal army, he was glaring at the camera with a pair of eyes that were as huge as goose eggs. It seemed as if he would jump out of the light beam at Li Yao at any moment!

“The Speaker of Parliament is too obvious a target and too heavily guarded. Therefore, it might not be the perfect choice. Your service in the federal army has been restored right now, and you are an Ultra-Level Federal Hero who has a lot of fans in the army. Therefore, it may be easier for you to address the issue through the military!

“Zhou Hengdao, 226 years old, a hybrid Cultivator talented in both combat and administration, now in the Nascent Soul Stage.

“He is sort of an eccentric one in the world of Cultivators in the Heaven’s Origin Sector. He is not a graduate of the Nine Elite Universities, and his parents were not Cultivators. Before he was twenty, he was just an ordinary person and a pawn in the federal army.

"He made his way up to great general from a private through the conquests on the Grand Desolate Plateau and the mountains of dead bodies. He has worked in almost every commanding post in the federal army, and his footprints have been left on all the roughest battlefields. He has been wounded 925 times, a record in the federation. Today, 77% of the organs inside his body have been replaced by the artificial counterparts. Therefore, he is nicknamed Iron Commander!

"Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao is the incumbent chief of staff in the federation. He is the unquestionable soul of the federal army and the biggest of big shots in the military."

Li Yao nodded. Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao was a hero of the older generation who had been famous for almost a hundred years. He did not need Jin Xinyue's introduction at all. Every teenager in the federation knew Zhou Hengdao's life story.

In the system of the Star Glory Federation, the Speaker of Parliament were the nominal supreme commander of all the armed forces. However, it was more of a symbolic identity.

Everybody had their specialty. The Speaker of Parliament was mostly responsible for the domestic affairs. He might have decided whether to fight or not, but the actual command was often passed onto the commander-in-chief of the federal army.

Before Li Yao became a Cultivator, he had already been deeply involved with the federal army and considered himself a part of it. Also, he had the letters of Han Tuhu and other federal soldiers. Therefore, it would be a more convenient choice to persuade Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao.

“The only problem with Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao is that he is a fanatical hawk and extremely obstinate,” Jin Xinyue said. “Many people call him ‘Iron Commander’ to his face but ‘Iron Head’ behind his back. However, his personality is understandable since he is a warrior.

“Therefore, you can decide according to the actual situation in the Heaven’s Origin Sector whether to go to Jiang Hailiu or Zhou Hengdao.

“Or maybe, neither of them. There’s a third option that is more direct. Lu Zui, director of the Federal Bureau of Intelligence.”

On the light beam, Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao’s dominating image was replaced by a middle-aged man who had a hawk nose and whose eyes were deeply hollowed.

The man was neither as charismatic as Jiang Hailiu nor as intimidating as Zhou Hengdao. He was like the most mundane white-collar worker. His hair was lackluster, and one of the buttons was missing on his sleeve. There was not the slightest hint of an expert on him at all.

Li Yao had a vague feeling that he would not notice Lu Zui, the director of the Federal Bureau of Intelligence, at all if they passed by each other!

Chapter 1064 - Secret Sword Bureau!

Lu Zui’s image faded away, replaced by a mysterious and yet graceful badge.

Different from the popular patterns of guns, blades, or ferocious beasts, there was only a colorful cloud covering the moon on the badge. Only if one observed the flowing stripes that constituted the cloud would they be able to discover two crossed, almost transparent flying swords between the cloud and the moonlight.

It was the symbol of the Federal Bureau of Intelligence—a colorful cloud, a silver moon, and secret swords!

Because of the uniqueness of the badge, the Federal Bureau of Intelligence was also known as the Secret Sword Bureau by most of the citizens of the federation.

Since its establishment five hundred years ago, the Star Glory Federation had not only been faced with the threats from the front. Demons in the disguise of human beings, demonic Cultivators who had embraced evil, Cultivators who committed felonies… all of them were walking bombs. If they snuck into the federation, any one of them could have caused unbelievable damage to a populated town.

After all, the army was better at the large-scale, head-on wars on a regular battleground. In terms of ‘unlimited warfare’ that involved infiltration, intelligence, interrogation, sabotage, assassination, and capture, it was very troublesome for the army to deal with.

Therefore, fifty years after the federation was founded, the ten or so intelligence agencies in the past were merged into the Secret Sword Bureau, whose main task was to collect the intelligence in and out of the federation openly and secretly to provide support for the federal army and the government agencies. Also, a combat squad made of elite soldiers, known as the Secret Sword Agents, was established to cope with the threats of the demons, the extraterrestrial devils, and the evil Cultivators as well as to ensure the internal stability of the federation.

Because of the extraordinariness of Cultivators and high-level demons, one expert sometimes was as powerful as an entire army. On many occasions, the battlefield on the frontline was silent, but in the unknown battlefields deep inside the nation, the soul-stirring attacks and counterattacks never stopped!

Therefore, the Secret Sword Bureau had continued expanding over the past few centuries. Today, the Secret Sword Bureau had more than three hundred thousand employees and boasted its own magical equipment factories, training bases, and secret sources of investment. It was almost an impenetrable, independent kingdom!

There were three divisions under the Secret Sword Bureau, namely the Demon Execution Division, the Devil Elimination Division, and the Heart Purging Division.

The Demon Execution Division was responsible for the intelligence and threats that were related to the demon race. The Devil Elimination Division was responsible for handling crises of the extraterrestrial devils and suppressing the demonic Cultivators. The Heart Purging Division was responsible for capturing the evil Cultivators who were mentally deranged or committed felonies but had nothing to do with demons or devils.

In the hundreds of years of battles against the demons, the extraterrestrial devils, and the evil Cultivators, the Secret Sword Bureau had collected countless confidential techniques and raised a huge batch of Secret Sword Agents who were adept at infiltration, assassination, theft, or probe. The number of the registered Secret Sword Agents was already beyond thirty thousand, and there were countless Dark Sword Travelers whose files were not recorded at all!

In terms of assassination and counter-assassination, as well as infiltration and anti-infiltration, in the populated and complicated cities, the Secret Sword Agents might be tougher than any special force in the federal army!

Seeing the badge of the Secret Sword Bureau, Jin Xinyue noticed that her eyelids were twitching.

For a saintess of the Pantheon of Demons, the Secret Sword Bureau was her natural opponent. Although she had never been to the Heaven’s Origin Sector herself, many of her companions had tried to infiltrate into it, but most of them did not return.

Jin Xinyue knew the horror of the Secret Sword Bureau clearly. The seemingly peaceful badge gave her a cold, creepy feeling as if it were a viper. Calming herself down, she continued. “If the Children of the Nether World are indeed lurking in the federation, the Secret Sword Bureau will be the agency to deal with them. They are the specialists in the regard. Even if you go to Jiang Hailiu, the Speaker, or Zhou Hengdao, the Iron Commander, it will still be the duty of Lu Zui, the director of the Secret Sword

Bureau, to dig out all the Children of the Nether World leading his Secret Sword Agents!

“Lu Zui is 211 years old right now. He is a rarely-seen hybrid Cultivator who is talented in administration and research. He is the most respected authority in the fields of psychology, tracking, and investigation. He is also the president of the Association of the Registered Meditation Healers. You must have faith in his professionalism, Master.

“Lu Zui will be the one that can make the best use of whatever little evidence we have here.

“However, the guy has worked in the battlefield of darkness for his entire life. Naturally, demons are not his favorites. He is also an unwavering hawk. He is best at predicting what other people are thinking, and it will be much more difficult to persuade him than to persuade Jiang Hailiu or Zhou Hengdao.

“Speaker Jiang Hailiu, Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao, and Director Lu Zui, representing the government, the military, and the agency of intelligence respectively. Any of them will do. It’s your call, Master.”

“Wait!” Li Yao raised his hand. “All three key people are hawks? Are there any doves?”

“No.” Jin Xinyue shook her head and said, “Speaking of the attitude toward the demon race in the federation, there are only hawks, firm hawks, frantic hawks, and insane hawks. No doves.”

“Fine.” Li Yao scratched his nose. “Forget it. Please continue.”

Jin Xinyue made another gesture. Right below the cloud-moon-sword badge, next to Director Lu Zui, another middle-aged man who was a bit fat appeared with a smile.

He was holding his belly, and his delight seemed to be flowing out of the light beam.

He looked like a harmless, middle-aged fatty who would not know how to burst into fury even if somebody else took his seat in a theater.

However, Jin Xinyue was even more scared to see him than when she saw Lu Zui.

Taking a deep breath, she introduced him as calmly as she could. “Guo Chunfeng, an expert at the peak of the Core Formation Stage, is the deputy director of the Secret Sword Bureau and the supervisor of the first division—the Demon Execution Division. He is directly responsible for dealing with threats of the demon race. In the past twenty years, almost all the demons who infiltrated into the Heaven’s Origin Sector have been captured by him. He is certainly a terrifying man!

“As the director of the Secret Sword Bureau, Lu Zui has to take care of all the affairs in the agency. Guo Chunfeng is actually the guy who deals with threats on the frontline. It is very likely that you will run into him when you are back in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, Master. That’s why I picked him out and introduced him to you.”

Li Yao was dazed. “Core Formation Stage?”

Not that he was looking down on anybody, but after chatting casually with Xiao Xuance, a Cultivator in the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage, in the Flying Star Sector, and being hunted and attacked by dozens of demon emperors in the

Blood Demon Sector, he did feel that his disciple was making a fuss by picking out a Core Formation Stage Cultivator.

Observing Li Yao's face, Jin Xinyue immediately understood what he was thinking. Solemnly, she said, "You must be careful, Master. The Secret Sword Bureau has developed countless cruel and cunning secret techniques after hundreds of years of bloody battles. The capability of the experts raised by the Secret Sword Bureau cannot be judged by their stage easily. Their real combat ability is often levels higher than their stage.

"Naturally, Guo Chunfeng has his own merits since he was appointed as the supervisor of the most important first division when there are so many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the federation.

"He is perhaps the only hybrid-type Cultivator in the history of the Star Glory Federation who covers all four fields. He has a profound expertise in battle, creation, administration, and research!"

Li Yao was dumbfounded. "What!"

What was the universe lacking most? The compound geniuses!

The hybrid-type Cultivators who had double talents were already extremely rarely-seen and targets that major forces were dying to recruit!

If one had an additional talent other than the talent of fighting, his combat ability would be more than doubled in a fierce battle where all the tricks were allowed. Li Yao, as a Cultivator both talented in fighting and creation, knew that fact better than anybody else.

All the way here, he had blown through many traps and dilemmas with his crystal bombs when he was caught by desperation!

Double talents were already tantalizing, but Guo Chunfeng covered all four fields? What a monster!

No wonder Jin Xinyue was so serious about the guy although he was merely in the Core Formation Stage!

Li Yao found it strange. “There is actually such a tough man in the federation? Why have I never heard about him before?”

“The Secret Sword Bureau works in secret in the first place,” Jin Xinyue said. “Guo Chunfeng, as the supervisor of the most important division in the agency, is the target that countless demons try to assassinate. Therefore, he is much more famous in the Pantheon of Demons than in the federation. He is a bigger threat for us than many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators are.

“Many demons whetted their blades and went to kill Guo Chunfeng. But after decades, Guo Chunfeng is still as alive as ever, and the assassins’ bodies have all dried up!”

“Interesting.” Li Yao licked his lips. The fighting will in his eyes surfaced as he mumbled, “I am in the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage, and he is the most dreadful Core Formation Stage Cultivator in the Heaven’s Origin Sector who spans all the four fields. I wonder, who will be the winner if we fight each other?”

Jin Xinyue frowned. “Master…”

“Rest assured. It’s just a joke.” Li Yao grinned. “In fact, I’ve made a thorough plan regarding the whole issue. If my plan goes well, the problem will be resolved without me touching my blade!”

Jin Xinyue beamed with joy. “What’s your plan, Master?”

Li Yao snapped his finger and said, “With my level, I will certainly cause unusual phenomena and immense spiritual waves when I am teleported to the Heaven’s Origin Sector. The federal army will likely find me.

“When the federal army arrives, I will stand in a high place and reveal my face, showing to them that I am Vulture Li Yao, the legendary Ultra-Level Federal Hero!

“With my fame in the federation, all the soldiers will certainly admire me, worship me, and listen to everything that I say. The media will come to interview me in a hurry, too!

“Then, I will take the opportunity to propose a direct dialogue with Jiang Hailiu, Zhou Hengdao, and Lu Zui!

“An Ultra-Level Federal Hero who can walk on his own! That’s a wonder that has never been seen in the five-hundred-year history of the federation! They are not going to ignore me, are they?

“When they all come, the four of us will shut the door and study the document together. Crisis solved!”

“…This is your plan, Master?”

“Yes. This is my Plan A.”

“So, there is a Plan B?”

“There is. It’s very simple. Play it by ear!”

Chapter 1065 - The Real Abyss!

In front of the teleportation array, glamorous colors were soaring up to the sky, tearing irregular gaps through which one could see the night sky of the other world.

A brand-new, single teleportation cabin was ready.

Li Yao was in the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage, and his combat ability was close to the Nascent Soul Stage or a demon emperor. To teleport him back to the Heaven’s Origin Sector was equivalent to teleporting a super-heavy devilish warship. Therefore, thorough protection was required.

Otherwise, accidents might happen during the journey even if the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector were right next to each other. If anything went wrong, he might be torn into shreds by the storms in the four-dimensional space and end up like the fourteen demon emperors three months ago.

Wearing a carefully-mended combat suit of the federal army, Li Yao bade everybody farewell one by one.

“President Li—”

Han Tuhu stared at him with complicated feelings. He craved to go back home with him, but he was more sacred that his current appearance would be misunderstood by his compatriots and his family. After struggling for a long time, he sighed and said, “Please. Hand over the letters to our family. Let them know that we are still alive.”

Li Yao clenched his fists. All the letters had been carefully stored in his Cosmos Ring. “Rest assured. I certainly will!”

“Safe journey!” The Fire Ant King was standing next to Jin Xinyue and Suo Chaolong in a trance. “I hope that we will hear the news of peace soon instead of seeing the billions of soldiers of the Star Glory Federation.”

Pausing for a moment, the Fire Ant King’s eyes were focused again. His eyeballs were covered in a thin, icy shell, which made him appear a little bit cold. “If the Star Glory Federation really makes up its mind to take the opportunity to occupy the Blood Demon Sector, the demon race will not wait to be captured. We will not wash our neck and wait to be beheaded, either.

“The Demon God Virus is still spreading in the Blood Demon Sector. The epidemic area is expanding. The coalition army of demons is the only factor that is stopping it from going out of control.

“If the federal army invades, we will have to mobilize our forces to resist. Then, the plague will certainly get out of control, and the entire Blood Demon Sector might be infected.

“If the Blood Demon Sector becomes a paradise for the walking dead, will the Heaven’s Origin Sector be far away?”

Li Yao nodded again. “I will try my best to prevent such a dreadful future from coming true!”

He walked to the teleportation array one step after another. Jin Tuyi was the only one in front of him now.

Jin Tuyi today was much older than a few days ago. His feathers had turned bright gray, and his back was somewhat hunched.

Li Yao had complicated feelings seeing that the guy who used to be at the top of the sector had ended up like this.

Jin Tuyi was definitely not a good guy. If anything, he was a great villain. If the original Red Tide Plan had worked out, tens of millions of citizens in the capital city of the Star Glory Federation would have been killed.

He was a truly ambitious schemer.

However, Li Yao did not know if he should hate the guy. Also, it seemed that the guy would not be influenced at all no matter how he was hated.

Pondering for a long time, Li Yao simply said, “I’m going home. Any last reminder, Senior Jin?”

Jin Tuyi smiled. He extended his wings from which feathers were falling and pointed at his temples softly. “I don’t have much to tell you now. Recently, I’ve been maintaining my brain carefully. I cannot use too much of my computational ability. Many things are obscure to me now.”

Li Yao raised his eyebrow. “Maintaining your brain?”

Was there any value in maintaining Jin Tuyi’s brain?

“Exactly,” Jin Tuyi replied calmly. “I want my brain to function normally and to keep the basic intelligence when I plead guilty in the court of law.

“If the No. 1 war criminal in the tribunal is an utter moron who pees and shits himself in the room, it will be a humiliation for both the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, won’t it?

“However, I have a feeling that I won’t be able to persist for long. Hehe. So, you’d better be fast and solve the whole thing as soon as possible so that I can be sent to the tribunal earlier. Do not let me evade the trial in such an awkward way!”

Li Yao nodded solemnly. “Rest assured, Senior Jin. I will certainly send you to the tribunal while you can still walk and end the war!”

After the declaration, he strode to the teleportation cabin without looking back.

“Wait!”

Jin Tuyi suddenly stopped him and walked forward with him.

The commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons, the master of the Blood Demon Sector, stared at Li Yao with eyes that seemed to be piercing into his soul. He said, “This might not be a ‘reminder’, but I do have something that I want to say to you.”

Li Yao stopped and listened attentively.

“From what I’ve seen, you’ve been considering, debating, and making quite a fuss about who the Children of the Nether World are and who Abyss is lately, right?”

Li Yao nodded. “That’s right. Sorting through all the intelligence, Jin Xinyue and I have made a list of hundreds of names that could possibly be the Children of the Nether World. As for Abyss, we have determined almost twenty suspects and calculated their danger degree according to how suspicious they are. After I am back in the Heaven's Origin Sector, I will be highly vigilant if I run into anybody whose name is on the list."

Jin Tuyi smiled. "After only several days, a great list with hundreds of names has been produced. That's my daughter! So, you both believe that the Children of the Nether World and Abyss will be your greatest enemies on your trip to the Heaven's Origin Sector?"

Li Yao was dazed. "Are they not?"

The mist in Jin Tuyi's eyes was suddenly gone. His pupils were as clear as water, reflecting the beautiful auroras in the sky, which made him appear decades younger and seemed to have turned him into the Jin Tuyi three months ago!

"Do you know why I did not participate in the discussion of the list? My lack of computational ability was just part of the reason. More importantly, I didn't think that the Children of the Nether World and Abyss will necessarily be your biggest enemies.

"Or rather, it is pointless to waste time on who Abyss is.

"Elder Nether Spring's purpose is to trigger the bloody hatred between the two Sectors in a short amount of time, thereby raising a world war.

"Not just the Children of the Nether World and Abyss can achieve that.

"Remember what I spoke to you when we met for the first time? Even if the assault of the Imperium of True Human Beings is confirmed, the Heaven's Origin Sector might not give up the war against the Blood Demon Sector. If anything, it will be even more desperate and will try to occupy the

Blood Demon Sector at any cost so that all the demons will be sent to the mines as slaves.

“Perhaps, in the eyes of the leadership of the federation, this is the best solution to the threat of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

“Hehe. If that’s the case, does it really matter who Abyss is?

“Maybe, everybody has an Abyss deep inside their heart. Grief, fury, hatred, greed, arrogance… When their soul is consumed by the dark side of their emotions, anybody can become Abyss.

“Ding Lingdang can. Fiend Blade Peng Hai can. Speaker Jiang Hailiu can. Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao can. Director Lu Zui can. Supervisor Guo Chunfeng can. I, Jin Tuyi, the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons, can. Of course, you, Vulture Li Yao, can.”

His countenance greatly changed, Li Yao replied subconsciously, “I am not Abyss. Definitely not!”

Jin Tuyi smiled. “It’s true that you are definitely not the Abyss that Elder Nether Spring created, but are you really certain that you will not turn into another Abyss under any circumstances?”

Li Yao’s body shook violently as if somebody poured cold water on his head.

Jin Tuyi’s eyes seemed to be pouring the tremendous auroras they swallowed into Li Yao body. He said calmly, “Do you understand now? Maybe, when you are back in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, your real enemy will not be the Abyss that Elder Nether Spring created but the countless Abysses created by anger, greed, ambitions, arrogance, and hatred.

“The former Abyss will be easy to deal with, but the latter Abysses are invisible and ubiquitous. How are you going to deal with them?”

Li Yao’s pupils constricted violently. “Are you suggesting that I must find a way to eliminate the hatred between the two Sectors, Senior Jin?”

Jin Tuyi coughed and waved his hands. “You’ve got it wrong, young man. It is neither possible nor necessary to eliminate hatred.

“In the short term, the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector have fought for centuries. In the long term, mankind has been at war with the demon race for forty thousand years since they split apart. How can the hatred be eliminated in one day?”

Li Yao was silent.

Jin Tuyi sighed. “I am not asking you to eliminate hatred. I am just hoping that you, and everybody that can determine our future, will not be devoured by hatred and fall into the abyss of darkness where you will make insane decisions that you won’t even have the chance to regret later.”

He paused in a self-mocking smile and continued. “The words sound a bit ironic when they come from the mouth of a crazy warlord, don’t they?”

Jin Tuyi’s back was hunched again as he staggered to leave.

“Senior Jin!” Li Yao felt that his head was in a mess. Raising his voice, he asked, “On many occasions, I cannot even chop off the dark emotions, such as anger, greed, hatred, and bloodthirst, in my own heart. How can I stop other people?”

Jin Tuyi waved his hands casually without looking back. “Don’t be silly, young man. Kindness and evilness are the two sides of one’s soul. How can you chop off the evil side completely? Will a man still be a man without evilness? Learn to live in peace with your dark side!”

Wind was blowing on the Nine Voids. In the middle of the sandstorm, the auroras were flickering. Li Yao found it almost impossible to see his own fingers. Very soon, Jin Tuyi’s back disappeared in the dust.

Calming himself down, Li Yao stepped into the teleportation cabin and closed the cabin cover heard. He took a long breath and wiped his face.

A mysterious, dangerous path might still have been awaiting him, but no matter what would happen, he was going home!

Chapter 1066 - From Here to All Eternity!

In the Dark Desolate Domain of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, on the sky that seemed to be jumbled up by countless clouds, hundreds of swirls were spurting out circles of spiritual energy, crashing and consuming each other. The sky was turned into the most distorted painting.

Suddenly, hundreds of swirls of spiritual energy twisted, stretched, and combined into an even larger swirl. It collapsed toward the void in the middle, like a funnel that extended to the depths of the universe.

The sky shivered as if the universe was sneezing. A fireball rushed out of the center of the funnel and fell to the land like a shooting star, but it exploded abruptly in midair.

With a thunderous bang, Li Yao announced his grand return with the dazzling sparks!

“Haoooooo!”

Floating in midair, Li Yao took a deep breath of the fresh air with his eyes half closed, and it was not until the air of the Heaven’s Origin Sector had circulated three times around his body that he opened his eyes and observed the view of the Dark Desolate Domain.

He managed to distinguish the continuous Thunderous Sound Mountain at the horizon. The memory of more than ten years ago was suddenly as vivid as yesterday.

“I’m back. I’m finally back!” Li Yao roared in excitement and failed to control his ecstasy until he tore dozens of clouds into shreds.

Since the Battle of Dawn, the federation had implemented the strategy of burning everything to the ground on the Grand Desolate Plateau. All the civilians were evacuated inland, and all the towns were demolished so that no resources of use would be left for the demons.

Therefore, there was not a single civilian on the Grand Desolate Plateau. The only living creatures he could meet were the patrolling soldiers and Cultivators.

Then, his first step was to find the soldiers and Cultivators so that he could learn the latest information about the federation and spread out the news about himself.

However capable the Children of the Nether World were, it was highly unlikely that they could have every soldier of the federal army under control. After his identity was confirmed, everything would be easier.

Will I run into Ding Lingdang?

Li Yao could not help but put on a silly smile.

Although they had not met for ten years, the memory of her was the greatest motivation for him to carry on in the arduous battles.

Deep down Li Yao’s heart, a lot of feelings were popping up.

After a whistle, Li Yao summoned Black Wing. In the same posture that he used in the magical equipment graveyard, he sat on Black Wing as if it were a horse and even waved the nonexistent rein, shouting, “Hyah!”

Black Wing shook violently in dissatisfaction. Then, black exhaust flames spurted out of the grip, pushing the flying sword to dart toward the south!

Searching and moving, it took Li Yao just a few hours to pass through the Dark Desolate Domain, which would have taken him days in the past. He arrived at the Grand Desolate Plateau.

The desert was exactly the same as the old days. Wind and sand were blowing. There was not the tiniest plant on the ground. In the middle of the dried riverbed and the broken stones, enormous skeletons of demon beasts and debris of the crystal tanks that had been burnt into empty shells could occasionally be seen. Together with the air that reeked of blood, they were telling the cruelty of the war.

After leaving the Dark Desolate Domain, the magnetic interference was no longer a problem. Li Yao raised Black Wing to an altitude of several hundred meters and looked into the distance, only to discover an enormous town on the horizon.

Li Yao was slightly dazed. This was the frontline that had witnessed the invasion of demons only three months ago. Even though the invasion was a fake one, it must have been destructive enough, too. How could there be such a prosperous town here?

Was it an illusion?

Li Yao slightly frowned and approached the town hundreds of kilometers away while hiding in the clouds on Black Wing.

When he was a hundred kilometers away, Li Yao finally realized that it was not a town but an intimidating war base.

The base had more than twenty giant, mobile war fortresses as the bastions, which covered more than a thousand acres, in the periphery. It appeared to still be under construction, with construction magical equipment everywhere.

From the completed part, he could see a rather advanced factory for crystal suit maintenance, two airports that could allow for vertical landing and the simple maintenance of the crystal warships, and endless military camps.

Judging from the drill magical equipment that rose up like iron towers, the federal army was expanding the underground space on a large scale. The sand and rocks that had been dug out had already piled into more than ten hills, which suggested that the underground space was multiple times larger than the space on the ground.

This is a half-permanent war base!

Li Yao pondered. *Judging from the scale, the war base can provide long-term logistical support for at least three to five crystal suit legions when it is completed. Perhaps, there are more war bases of the same kind nearby!*

This place is too close to the Dark Desolate Domain and too far away from the Giant Blade Pass. Why is the federal army establishing war bases here?

Li Yao’s eyes suddenly shivered as he thought of something.

This was not a defensive war base but one designed for an invasion. It was meant to provide supplies for the troops that marched into the Blood Demon Sector!

For a moment, Li Yao felt that his blood boiling. Maximizing his eyesight, he observed the forces in the war base from the high stance.

Because the Grand Desolate Plateau had too many sandstorms, most of the facilities and camps were established below the ground. On the ground, there were only twelve crystal warships.

Those crystal warships were all the latest models developed in the past ten years. They looked vastly different from the crystal warships in Li Yao’s memory. Li Yao did not know their names. The only thing that he could recognize was the Fiery Crow Cannon installed on the two sides of the warships.

Such cannons were the main guns for many middle-sized warships, but on the new warships, which were apparently more agile, they could only serve as the ancillary, secondary guns.

Li Yao could not tell the mechanism or the power of the main gun of the warships that protruded up like a horn, but he did have a vague sense of danger.

At that moment, red lights were flashing in the base. Countless soldiers were flooding out from the underground and running to the warships. The spiritual stripes on four of the crystal warships were glittering, and their power rune arrays were emanating brilliant exhaust flames.

The war base is not far away from the Dark Desolate Domain. Advanced probe magical equipment must’ve been installed here. It’s discovered that something has teleported from the Blood Demon Sector. Therefore, they are out to look for the demon that has snuck in!

Li Yao hesitated for a moment. Seeing that the federal army was apparently on alert, he was not sure whether there would be a misunderstanding if he simply flew down and greeted them.

However, he would be discovered by the crystal warships sooner or later even if he hid in the clouds. The situation would be awkward if they attacked him without listening to him.

Strong as he might be, it was impossible for him to blow up all the crystal warships. Besides, as a federal citizen, he could not attack the federal army, either!

“Huh?”

Right then, Li Yao discovered that there was a man-made oasis that was under construction some thirty kilometers away to the southwest of the war base.

What’s that?

With his keen sight, Li Yao could tell that the oasis was guarded by the federal army, too. Yet, there was not any heavy magical equipment such as crystal warships. It was much more peaceful there.

Maybe, I should communicate with the guards in the oasis first. After they confirm my identity, they can go out and talk to the federal army in the base on my behalf. There won’t be any accidental shots if so .

Li Yao shifted his direction and went to the oasis.

The oasis turned out to be a solemn memorial park. Tremendous rune arrays had been set up on the outside to stabilize the climate at great cost, creating a peaceful land on the Grand Desolate Plateau, which was usually plagued by wind and dust.

The memorial park had only just been built. Li Yao saw the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars emblem in the entrance. The place appeared to be a memorial park for a martyr.

Building such a memorial park in the depths of the Grand Desolate War Institution would consume astronomic resources. Who was it built for? Was it built for all the warriors who sacrificed on the Grand Desolate Plateau?

Li Yao slowly descended. He uttered a shriek, intentionally exposing himself to the guards to show that he was not malicious.

“Who are you?”

Seeing that somebody had landed on a flying sword, the guards in the memorial park were not very hostile. Instead, they even greeted him.

Li Yao was now surrounded by streaks of spiritual energy and looked like the most standard Cultivator. Of course, he was one of their own.

Besides, although the memorial park had not been completed yet, many Cultivators had dropped by and offered tributes recently. They were not surprised to see a stranger.

Li Yao slowly landed. Looking at the guards who came to greet him, he shook the dust off his clothes and smiled.

Things had kicked off a good start. Everything would be settled as soon as he revealed his identity.

The memorial park was not completed yet. At the center of the memorial park was a statue that was almost done. It was a Cultivator in a broken crystal suit who was staring at the sky unwaveringly. Although it was only slightly more than three meters tall, it looked as magnificent as a huge mountain and gave a blood-boiling feeling.

The statue must have been made by an expert, but it was a shame that the head of the statue was not completed yet. There was no tell who he was.

Behind the statue, in the rear of the memorial park, there was a monument made of a piece of flawless jade. On the monument were a few calligraphic words.

“My Fellow Cultivator!” The captain of the guards stepped out. He was also a Cultivator and therefore was qualified to address another Cultivator in such a way.

“The memorial park is still under construction,” the captain said peacefully. “This is also a theatre of operations. It is not open for public right now. If you want to pay respect to the martyr, please report your name and your sect. We will apply for special permission from our base with your information.”

Li Yao coughed and looked at his compatriots. He replied kindly, “My Fellow Cultivator, my young friends, nice to meet you.

“What I’m about to say will perhaps be a bit shocking or even devastating. You may even be suspicious about it. But please don’t rush into anything. You must calm yourself down and let me finish.

“But first of all, have you ever heard of the name ‘Vulture Li Yao’?”

The guards were all looking at each other in bewilderment. Their eyes turned extremely weird as they stared at Li Yao.

The captain put his hand on his chainsword as he managed a smile. “Is this supposed to be a joke, my Fellow Cultivator? You can tell us anything you want, but I’m afraid I’ll have to ask for your name and your sect first.”

Li Yao opened his hands to show that he bore no evil will. He said solemnly, “I am certainly not joking. In fact, I am rather scared that you will think that I am joking. However, it cannot be helped now. I can’t waste any time right now.

“As a matter of fact, I am—”

Li Yao’s voice came to an abrupt end, like a rooster whose neck was grabbed.

It was because his eyes passed the shoulder of the captain and stopped on the immaculate monument made of white jade.

On the monument was a line of calligraphic words—Li Yao, Martyr.

On the top left corner was another line of smaller words explaining the identity of Martyr Li Yao—Ultra-Level Federal Hero.

Below was yet another line of words—From Here to All Eternity!

Chapter 1067 - Li Yao’s Death!

Every muscle on Li Yao’s face was twitching violently. He mumbled profanity for a long time before he finally spat on the ground. “What the f*ck is this all about?”

“My Fellow Cultivator, please report your name, sect, and ID number and accept our security check immediately!”

Li Yao’s abnormal reaction made the captain and all the guards raise their wariness. Every soldier placed their hand on their weapon. Some of the soldiers even triggered a translucent arc of light from the gadgets on their ears, which covered their eyes like virtual sunglasses.

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

Streams of data were jumping out of the translucent art of light and pouring down like a waterfall.

Li Yao sensed the unfriendly scanning of quite a few mystic rays.

The guards were scanning his body figure and searching for it in their database.

Of course, Li Yao would not be so stupid as to land with his real face. If he had, he would have had no way to find a work around if anything went wrong. His current appearance was subtly adjusted for a certain purpose. Nobody would ever find him in any database.

Li Yao’s attention, however, was distracted by the translucent arc of light in front of the eyes of the guards. “Is this… the latest generation of the Demon Beast Detector? Very cool!”

“No matching information has been found in the database. He is not a registered Cultivator of the federation!”

Greatly alarmed, all the guards turned off the safety on their weapons. Sharp brilliance from their blades was dancing in the crowd, too.

Solemnly and angrily, the captain unsheathed his chainsword and almost jabbed it to Li Yao’s face. “Stay where you are and submit all your attack magical equipment. Prepare for a full physical examination by the federal army. Your every movement, including your adjustment of spiritual energy and release of telepathic thoughts, will be regarded as an aggressive action toward the federal army. So, **do not move** !”

Looking at the black barrels of more than ten guns, Li Yao raised his hands obediently while his computational ability soared to the maximum, sorting through the current mess.

Based on the intelligence that he had gathered from the Blood Demon Sector, after he was teleported to the Flying Star Sector eleven years ago, the federal government had not confirmed his death in the ten years that followed.

The memorial park was still under construction. Judging from the progress, it should have been started one to two months ago, approximately at the same time when the war base thirty kilometers away began to be built.

Why?

He had left a message for Professor Mo Xuan and the Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector including Luo Xingzi. They should have known where he went to and would not presume that he was already dead.

What had happened during the few months that made the federal government confirm his death?

Li Yao smelled the stink of a plot. A very, very intense stink.

“Tell me. How did Vulture Li Yao die?”

Li Yao raised his hands high and asked the captain of the guards coldly, “Why are you certain that Vulture Li Yao is dead? What proof have you got?”

“Don’t move. Who are you exactly? How can you not know Li Yao’s death? You can’t find anybody in the entire Heaven’s Origin Sector who doesn’t know that! Where are you from? What are you here for exactly?”

The captain was shouting more and more desperately. His hand, which was holding the chainsword, was shaking. He gestured for the guards to surround the stranger, but one of the guards dashed to a cottage nearby.

Li Yao knew that he was going to ask for reinforcements from the war base.

Fulminations were already echoing from the direction of the war base. Four crystal warships had taken off and flown to the Dark Desolate Domain in search of the demon that had snuck into the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

Very soon, they would learn what had happened in the memorial park and arrive to suppress him.

Li Yao’s eyes were getting sharper and sharper, too.

If the soldiers’ eyes were as cold as icy cones, his eyes were iron sticks that smashed all the ice.

“Tell me!” he demanded, one word after another, with a daunting aura. “How did Vulture Li Yao die? What’s the evidence for his death?”

“Stop there! Stop there!”

The guards were barely able to breathe under his intimidating aura, but they did not forget their duty and shouted with their faces and necks red.

Their reaction somehow touched Li Yao. After all, they were all his compatriots and dutiful soldiers. Li Yao could not treat them as a real enemy.

Hesitating for a moment, Li Yao retreated all his aura.

However, Li Yao underestimated the fighting will of the federal army.

“Open fire!” the captain shouted the moment he withdrew his pressure. More than ten storm bolters were triggered at the same time, spurting out brilliant sparks!

“Damn it!”

Li Yao spat on the ground hard. He suddenly turned into a streak of brightness and brushed past hundreds of bullets before he extended his index finger and tapped the forehead of every guard, sinking every one of them in a deep sleep.

He glanced around. On the left side of the memorial park were a few two-floor buildings. On the gate was a sign that read ‘Museum of Martyr Li Yao’.

Li Yao beamed with joy and rushed into it like a tornado.

The museum was not completed yet. It was only just taking shape. In the gallery on the first floor, items that he found very familiar with were being exhibited. They seemed to be the crystal processors and training facilities that he had once used.

It feels rather strange to visit your own museum when you are a martyr .

Li Yao saw a combat suit riddled with holes. The description below the item was ‘Martyr Li Yao’s combat suit for his training in college.’9

Next to the combat suit were the kettles, chairs, and some of the tools that he had used in his refining work. At the center of the gallery was the debris of a broken Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, which appeared to be the one that he had piloted before.

But none of the items were what he was looking for right now.

He searched around and very soon found a few thin brochures from the wooden boxes piled in the corner.

They were the advertisements for the museum. On the cover was his photo more than ten years ago when he was still a proud young man. The photo might have been taken after the bidding meeting of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, but he was not certain.

Opening the brochure, Li Yao read his life story with great interest.

“Li Yao, an Ultra-Level Federal Hero, was born in Floating Spear City, an important town of training in the east, in 484.

“Li Yao was born in a poor family, but even as a child, he had grand ambitions. He always worked hard for the goal of marching into the Blood Demon Sector and demolishing the Pantheon of Demons…”

Huh?

Li Yao scratched his hair and read on. But soon, he was greatly embarrassed by the adulations that described him as an ambitious, chivalrous, patriotic, selfless… or in a word, perfect human being.

Li Yao simply flipped to the end of the brochure. There, he read about the end of his life.

“In 514, after discovering the human beings of the Flying Star Sector, Li Yao returned to the Heaven’s Origin Sector on a single starship, only to be caught by the space turbulence when he was teleported home. Unfortunately, his single starship crashed in the depths of the Grand Desolate Plateau because of the accident…”

Something is wrong!

Li Yao read the content three times and considered carefully.

My single starship was teleported to the Blood Demon Sector successfully and could not have left any trace in the Heaven’s Origin Sector at all. How the hell did it crash in the depths of the Grand Desolate Plateau?

There’s still a bigger question. According to the captain of the guards, everybody in the federation knows of my death. If so, the insiders such as Ding Lingdang, Professor Mo Xuan, and Luo Xingzi must have heard the news, too. Why didn’t they stand up and question the discovery?

Right then, footsteps could be heard above the stairs.

A short-haired female soldier who was in her twenties ran down the stairs with panic written all over his face. She must have been frightened by the gunfire just now.

Judging from the emblem she was wearing, she belonged to the public relations branch of the federation. She was probably one of the workers in the museum or an interpreter.

Li Yao narrowed his eyes. He had learned his lesson. Instead of wasting his time talking to her, he simply poured a dominating telepathic thought into her head after apologizing to her in his heart.

The female soldier was just an ordinary person. Under Li Yao’s guidance, she soon confessed everything.

As a regular soldier, she naturally did not know the details of the first contact between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector or the news that Li Yao had been teleported to the Blood Demon Sector.

Half a year ago, the regular soldiers only knew that ‘Vulture Li Yao’ had gone missing at the periphery of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, but the authorities had never confirmed his death.

Two months ago, because of the unexpected assault of the Blood Demon Sector on the capital city, which caused great losses, everybody in the Star Glory Federation was infuriated and decided to fight a final battle with the Blood Demon Sector.

Therefore, they pushed the frontline forward from the Giant Blade Pass to the edge of the Dark Desolate Domain, where they established five enormous bases for the long march to come.

When one of the war bases was being built, however, a large area of debris of a starship was found. After thorough investigations, it was found to be the starship that Li Yao had boarded.

Also, it was said that the scraps of Li Yao’s body were found in the debris of the starship. Therefore, his death was confirmed.

Since the starship was already shattered and it was impossible to sew the ‘scraps’ into a whole body, all the remains were buried on the spot, and a memorial park was established on the crash site.

This is too uncanny!

My starship clearly crashed in the Hundred Desolation Mountain in the Blood Demon Sector. There is no way that it would show up in the depths of the Grand Desolate Plateau. As for the ‘scraps of my body’, that’s pure nonsense!

However, the discovery has been publicized, and everybody in the federation was shocked. It is also said that a grandeur commemorative event was held in the capital city a few days ago. So, my death must’ve been confirmed by Ding Lingdang, Professor Mo Xuan, and Luo Xingzi!

Who was it that directed my ‘death’ behind the curtain and even convinced Ding Lingdang and Professor Mo Xuan of it?

Whoever the guy was, he must be a very capable man!

Right then, Li Yao felt the quakes that came from the clouds.

All four crystal warships had changed direction and were flying right toward the memorial park!

Chapter 1068 - It’s Him?

Such quick reactions?

Li Yao retrieved a high-resolution crystal camera from his Cosmos Ring and wore it on his left eye. After adjusting the focal length and observing through the window, he finally detected the two magnificent words ‘Dragon Horse’ on the heads of the four crystal warships.

The Dragon Horse Legion was one of the sixteen crystal suit legions of the Star Glory Federation. It had just been equipped with the latest model of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and was one of the main forces of the federal army.

More importantly, judging from a piece of intelligence that had been sent to the Blood Demon Sector twenty years ago, the only one who had access to the intelligence at that time happened to be the supreme commander of the Dragon Horse Legion right now!

The guy was likely one of the Children of the Nether World.

Is it a coincidence?

Li Yao frowned. Then he suddenly realized that it was not a coincidence at all. If the Children of the Nether World were really determined to cut off the connection between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector, naturally, they would try to send their forces to the frontline on the Grand Desolate Plateau so that they could block or jam the information at the earliest opportunity.

However, everything so far was just speculation. Li Yao did not have any solid evidence to prove the real identity of Duanmu Ming. Perhaps the Child of the Nether World was somebody else, and he was nothing but a loyal, dutiful general of the federal army. If so, it would be hard to explain his aggressive action later.

Even if Duanmu Ming was a real Child of the Nether World, most of the federal soldiers in the Dragon Horse Legion would still be innocent. There was no way that Li Yao would attack them.

This is tricky now. I need more information to decide what to do next!

Li Yao licked his lips and touched his cheeks, which were somewhat greasy. He then took off a thin membrane from his face. The muscles on his face bulged part after part, turning him into a much more barbaric appearance.

I knew that the trip wouldn't be so simple. Thankfully, I came prepared. I will find out whether or not Duanmu Ming is a Child of the Nether World, and what they are up to exactly, after a minor test!

Seeing that the four crystal warships were getting closer and closer to his memorial park, Li Yao took a deep breath, retrieved the fundamental version of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, and then—

He broke out of the window and ran away!

Swoosh!

Li Yao leapt high and stomped on his own statue brutally, jumping to his own monument with the counterforce like lightning. Then, he stomped hard again and accelerated to maximum!

His rapid actions immediately attracted the attention of the four crystal warships. They flew toward Li Yao. Dozens of sharp mystic rays blocked his every path of escape!

The cabin doors on the two sides of the crystal warships were slowly opened, like sharks splitting their bloody mouths. Almost a hundred armed shuttles and Mystic Skeleton Battlesuits dashed out!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

From the turrets on the four crystal warships, translucent spiritual waves were blowing out. Like highly condensed water balls, they raised immense blasts on the ground and smashed Li Yao like a tsunami.

They were stun grenades that did not boast much damage. The federal army was not clear of Li Yao’s identity yet. They did not know who the Cultivator in the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was exactly. Naturally, they were not planning to kill him but capture him alive.

Had he not seen his own memorial park in person, Li Yao would have decided to be captured by them and explain everything to them slowly. But right now, how could Li Yao submit to a suspected Child of the Nether World?

Like the most skilled surfer, he was moving agilely on the violent surging tides made of the blast. He looked for the tiny, volatile gaps and accelerated again and again with the impetus of the blasts!

However, the specifications of the fundamental version of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit were too plain after all and far from his standard. After several extreme sprints and changes of direction, three power rune arrays on the back exploded abruptly after weird noises!

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit staggered in midair as if he had stepped on a banana skin!

BOOM! CRACK!

The four crystal warships nearby had been waiting for the opportunity. The Fiery Crow Cannons, the secondary cannons on the two sides of the warships, opened fire simultaneously. Scorching magma was tossed toward Li Yao, forming walls of fire that were thousands of degrees in temperature and further limiting his zone of activity.

On the heads of the crystal warship warships, the horn-like main guns were condensing dazzling balls of lightning. After a few thunderous noises, the balls of lightnings appeared right above Li Yao’s head as if they were teleported there. Then, they bloomed and split in thousands of electric arcs that constituted a giant net of electricity with a coverage of several square kilometers like crazily dancing silver snakes!

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

Li Yao was immediately hit by an electric shock. The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit broke apart, and his blood was spurting out.

With a roar, he injected a strengthening drug into his neck quickly. His speed did not drop but even further rose as he looked for the gap among the electric arcs. As if he were dancing in the lightning, he finally breached the electric net and rushed forward before the armed shuttles and crystal suits surrounded him!

In a moment, he had already dashed a hundred kilometers away. In front of him was a dense forest of rocks. The crevices on the rocks led to spacious, interconnecting caves underground!

On the Grand Desolate Plateau, there were too many such underground caves, but Li Yao had selected the shelter carefully and even surveyed it before he arrived as part of his backup plan.

Shua!

Before the second electric net—which was even more powerful—enveloped him, Li Yao sprinted into the rocks and crawled into the underground cave!

The trap had been completed.

It remained to be seen whether or not Duanmu Ming would fall into it!

…

In the sky above the forest of rocks, hundreds of elite Exos from the Dragon Horse Legion from the four crystal warships were about to charge into the underground cave to search when they were ordered to stand by and establish a perimeter.

Very soon, an assault ship that was reinforced with strengthening plates that looked like dragon scales on the shell moved to area above the forest of rocks.

Duanmu Ming, a major general of the federal army and the supreme commander of the Dragon Horse Legion, was sitting inside the assault warship and staring at all the battle videos just now as well as the picture that the guards of Li

Yao’s memorial part captured through their Demon Beast Detectors.

Duanmu Ming’s face was fair, and he had no beard. He appeared to be a graceful advisor in the army, if not a knowledgeable scholar.

However, he was most famous for his cruel, brutal, insane, and fearless style in battle. He had rushed to the frontline to fight against the demons countless times.

Such recklessness had been criticized by many people. However, Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao, a big shot in the military, quite liked his style. Also, he seemed to have natural intuitions that allowed him to pierce into the most weakly defended sections every time, thereby laying the foundations for victory and shattering all doubts about him.

Therefore, his position had been rising without any hinderance. After only twenty years, he had grown from the deputy chief of staff of a regular troop to the supreme commander of one of the sixteen crystal suit legions in the federation!

Right now, inside the secret chamber, Duanmu Ming and an advisor of the Dragon Scale Legion were alone. Their countenance was both solemn and a little bit weird.

“The voice test has been completed.”

The advisor tapped on the light beam of the mini crystal processor. Curves high and low immediately appeared, along with Li Yao’s voice.

“Tell me. How did Vulture Li Yao die exactly?”

Every syllable was turned into dozens of curves and hundreds of pieces of data, which were then compared to the voiceprints in the secret database. Very soon, an almost identical voiceprint jumped out.

The identity information of the guy popped up.

Duanmu Ming’s pupils shrank suddenly. Somewhat surprised, he asked, “It’s him?”

“Yes. The match rate of the voiceprint comparison is 92%. They should be the same guy.

“Also, we have retrieved blood samples from the debris of the crystal suit that he threw out. The blood has been analyzed and compared just now. It is very similar to… the blood samples we got from the other side.

“The result of the Dynamical Movement Capturing and Analysis is out, too.”

The advisor opened Li Yao’s combat videos. In the videos, Li Yao’s body gradually turned almost transparent, replaced by a series of data and lines. “We have analyzed the guy’s every movement and compared them with the old videos in the database. 51% of the habitual movements are identical.”

Duanmu Ming frowned. “Only 51%?”

“Yes,” the advisor said. “Because the guy was trying to conceal his identity and refraining from his habits, the match rate is only 51%. But still, he gave himself away at the critical moment. The movement where he injected the strengthening drug subconsciously is 100% match with the old videos in our database!

“Voiceprint, blood, and the Dynamical Movement Capturing and Analysis have all reported high similarities. They are enough to prove his identity!

“He is Han Tuhu, the commander of the Flying Tigers Legion!”

“But his face was not Han Tuhu’s,” Duanmu Ming said coldly.

“We have analyzed his face carefully based on the surveillance picture captured by the soldiers. His facial expression was a bit rigid. He must’ve covered a membrane on his face and changed his appearance.”

Duanmu Ming squinted and said, “Han Tuhu should be a half-human, half-demon monster.”

“That, I cannot explain. Since the Eye of Blood Demon was destroyed and the Spore Stratagem failed three months ago, our intelligence network there has suffered a heavy blow. It’s been a long time since we last received a piece of valuable information. Chances are that the Pantheon of Demons has already developed reduction drugs that can control the primeval cells satisfactorily.

“If such drugs have truly been developed, and Han Tuhu’s appearance can be restored to that of a human being, he is certainly one of the best candidates to come back. He was the commander of the Flying Tigers Legion. The military will not turn a deaf ear to what he says.”

“Alright!” Duanmu Ming suddenly rose up. “We cannot allow Han Tuhu to fall into anyone else’s hands. Let’s go capture him ourselves! But don’t attack him for now. He should be unaware of our secrets. Let me figure out a way to elicit the latest intelligence about the Blood Demon Sector from him first!

“However, Han Tuhu is an expert at the peak of the Core Formation Stage after all. In case anything goes wrong, make sure that the No. 4 Plan for Core Formation Stage Cultivators is ready in half an hour!”

Chapter 1069 - Defection!

Deep inside the cave below the forest of rocks, Li Yao was moaning in pain in the darkness.

A vivid bone tail was waving slightly behind him under the control of his coccyx, leaving shallow grooves on the rocks.

Almost a hundred beast puppets the size of bees were humming and searching in the cave. Their searchlights scanned every crevice on the rocks and finally detected Li Yao and his bone tail.

“Don’t attack!” Li Yao shouted promptly as he gnashed his teeth. “I am Han Tuhu, commander of the Flying Tigers Legion! I have brought important intelligence back from the Blood Demon Sector! I want to meet the Iron Commander! I want to meet the Iron Commander!”

The beast puppets hovered in midair for a long time, scanning Li Yao’s appearance clearly, including the black shell below his ragged combat suit, the bone tail that was as sharp as a spear, and his tusks that slightly protruded out of his mouth.

Very soon, the beast puppets dispersed. A cold voice echoed in the darkness. “Stay where you are. General Han sacrificed himself a year and a half ago. You are clearly a demon. How can you be General Han?

“Who are you exactly? Why are you sneaking into the Heaven’s Origin Sector?”

A light-gray crystal suit slowly appeared in the darkness. Two highly-rising horns on the two sides of the facial cover along with delicate dragon scales constituted a magnificent dragon head.

Li Yao held his lower abdomen, his blood dripping from the gaps of his fingers. He was breathing heavily, and his bone tail was dangling lethargically. With a face of pain, he said, “It’s a long story, but I am truly Han Tuhu. I have important intelligence that must be reported to the Iron Commander immediately. The intelligence will decide the outcome of the war!

“You must be from the Dragon Horse Legion, right? Duanmu Ming, your commander, is an old friend of mine. Bring me to Duanmu Ming, and we will figure everything out!”

The Exo opposite him was still highly vigilant. Pointing a gun at Li Yao’s head, he slowly made his helmet that looked like a dragon head translucent, revealing a nonchalant face.

“I am Duanmu Ming. You are saying that you are Han Tuhu? What evidence have you got?”

“Brother Duanmu!”

Li Yao was overjoyed, but his sudden movement affected his seeming shocking wounds. His body shivered violently. Under Duanmu Ming’s frightful gaze, he took out a medication drug from his pocket and sprayed a large cluster of blue gel on his bleeding wounds until they were completely covered. Finally, he took a deep breath as a hint of redness returned to his face.

“I know that my appearance right now is highly suspicious, but please listen to my explanation, Brother Duanmu. Our dialogue can potentially change the future of the federation!” Li Yao said with a bitter smile. “I was not killed in the Dark Desolate Domain a year ago; I was captured by Elder Nether Spring, one of the four giants of the Blood Demon Sector, and taken to the foreign land, where I went through countless inhumane experiments and was modified into such a creepy, appalling appearance!

“Before, I was taking a temporary cell suppressant that could turn me into a human being briefly. But because of the scourge of the cannon fire just now, I was too heavily wounded to maintain the form any longer, and I had to expose my hideous face!

“I know that everything sounds too unbelievable, but you must trust me, Brother Duanmu. I would never make up such deeply-flawed lie, would I?

“I have very important information that I must report to the Iron Commander. Please make arrangements so that I can meet the Iron Commander soon!”

His advisor’s voice came in Duanmu Ming’s secret communication channel. “The appearance analysis has been completed. His features indeed match Han Tuhu’s.”

Brilliance suddenly radiated from Duanmu Ming’s face. He pondered for a moment and demanded in a cold voice, “The Iron Commander is not someone that anybody can meet at any time. There are too many loopholes in your theory. If you really are Han Tuhu, why did you turn around and run away when you saw the federal army? How were you teleported back to the Heaven’s Origin Sector safely? Did you come back alone, or did you bring more demons with you? Very important intelligence? What are you referring to?”

Li Yao coughed hard and breathed heavily. “I didn’t intend to run away in the beginning. I was planning to get in touch with you openly. But then, I discovered the memorial park of Vulture Li Yao and heard the news of his death.

“How—how is it possible?

“Vulture Li Yao is clearly not dead. He teleported himself to the Blood Demon Sector and saved me from Elder Nether Spring. We’ve been fighting side by side since then!

“This time, he planned to be teleported back to the Heaven’s Origin Sector together with me, but he was delayed by some other issues. So, I was asked to bring some of the most important intelligence back and get in touch with the federation first.

“However, shortly after I landed, I saw his tomb!

“There must be a great plot in all this. I felt that my head was dizzy. Seeing that four crystal warships were coming at me aggressively, I had no choice but to run away in a hurry!

“Brother Duanmu, what is this all about? Based on what did you confirm Li Yao’s death? Who was it that told you that Li Yao was dead? And the talks about the debris of a starship in the depths of the Grand Desolate Plateau? Brother Duanmu, did you see the debris in person?”

Duanmu Ming stepped forward, his voice even colder than before. “I am the one asking questions right now! What important intelligence have you brought back?”

“I won’t tell you!” Li Yao’s bone tail was tightened again like an unsheathed saber. Intense demonic energy was bursting out of the darkness as he declared brutally, “I don’t know whom I should believe if the mysteries of ‘Li Yao’s death’ are not unraveled—not even you, Brother Duanmu. If you claim that you’ve seen the debris of Li Yao’s crash, I don’t know whether or not I should trust you anymore!”

Duanmu Ming was silent for a moment. Hesitatingly, he said, “Brother—Brother Han, is it really you?”

“Of course it’s me!” Li Yao was overjoyed. “Brother Duanmu, you finally believe me now? What’s ‘Li Yao’s death’ all about? I’m totally confused!”

Duanmu Ming narrowed his eyes and said slowly, “Alright. After all, it is not a secret in the leadership of the federation. So, I might as well tell you everything. Of course, I didn’t see the ‘debris of a crashed starship’ because Li Yao is not dead at all. The memorial park outside and the news of his death announced to the public were fabricated.”

Li Yao was greatly surprised. “Why did you fake the death of Vulture Li Yao?”

“Because all the evidence suggests that Vulture Li Yao has defected and joined the demon race’s side. He is now an important person in the Pantheon of Demons and very close to Jin Tuyi, the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons. The two of them have been concocting conspiracies!

“Some of the top confidential intelligence even indicates that he is in an intimate relationship with Jin Xinyue, Jin Tuyi’s most beloved daughter. It is very likely that, as Jin Tuyi’s son-in-law, he will become Jin Tuyi’s heir. If so, he will be the most dangerous enemy for the federation!”

Speechless, Li Yao had trouble stopping his jaw from dropping to the floor.

"Brother Han, you have been truly heavily wounded. I can see that your facial organs are all bleeding. Should you treat your wounds first?"

"No, thanks. I—I can deal with it now!"

"Li Yao is the first living Ultra-Level Federal Hero in the Star Glory Federation since it was established five hundred years ago. But in fact, we are both clear that he was granted such an honor ten years ago because everybody thought he was already dead.

"In the past ten years, the federal government has been promoting Li Yao as a symbol of national spirit. The propaganda reached the highest point when he returned with the fleet of the Flying Star Sector!

"Vulture Li Yao was already the pillar in the hearts of many citizens of the federation. The pillar could break or collapse, but it must never rot!

"What would the citizens think when they learned that an Ultra-Level Federal Hero has defected? Would there be any morale in our army? Wouldn't our 'national spirit' be the greatest joke ever?

"Therefore, to pacify the army and the citizens, and to preserve the honor of the federal hero Li Yao in the past, we fabricated the scene of crash and announced his death.

"In fact, it was not a complete 'fabrication'. Vulture Li Yao, the Ultra-Level Federal Hero who was fighting for mankind, had truly perished. We will never admit that the fiend that is Jin Tuyi's accomplice in the Pantheon of Demons right now is the real Li Yao!"

Li Yao was silent, and his mind was in a mess. He struggled to reply, “Vulture Li Yao has defected? That’s the most hilarious joke!”

“If you are really Brother Han, you might have missed a lot of things since you were taken to the Blood Demon Sector a year and a half ago,” Duanmu Ming said calmly. “Of course, the real Li Yao would never defect. But the Li Yao you saw in the Blood Demon Sector has been possessed by a very dreadful ‘blood devil’.

“It has not been Li Yao since a long time ago but a monster who has been stirring trouble with Li Yao’s body as the shell.

“Demons and devils have been a family since the ancient times. Is it really odd that Li Yao would collude with the demons after being possessed by the blood devil?”

“Nonsense!” Li Yao burst into fury. “Being possessed by a blood devil? Which son of a b*tch said that!”

“It was the real Li Yao who told us through a message he left before he perished.”

“…” Li Yao.

Duanmu Ming stepped forward again and said earnestly, “Brother Han, I am willing to believe that you are the real Han Tuhu because your appearance is simply too strange. If this is a plot, it is truly a terrible one.

“However, the Li Yao you met in the Blood Demon Sector was certainly not the real Li Yao. Whatever he asked you to do, there must be great schemes behind it!

“Therefore, tell me everything you know, and we will go to meet the Iron Commander together!”

Deep in thought, Li Yao mumbled to himself, “How—how is it possible? Who exactly delivered the message of Li Yao’s defection? And who offered evidence that convinced each and every one of you?”

“The Secret Sword Bureau, of course,” Duanmu Ming replied. “Li Yao’s whereabouts in the Blood Demon Sector have been the top priority in the Secret Sword Bureau, which is led by Director Lu Zui and Guo Chunfeng, the supervisor of the first division! All the top confidential information was filtered and analyzed by the Secret Sword Bureau before his defection was finally confirmed!”

Chapter 1070 - No More Disguise

“The Secret Sword Bureau?”

Below the false irises made of mimetic lenses, Li Yao’s real pupils constricted into two shining needle tips like a venomous lizard that had sunk further into the darkness ready to launch a critical strike at the prey that it just discovered!

The Secret Sword Bureau was the federation’s biggest, and perhaps only, intelligence agency that provided intelligence support for the federal government, the major sects, and the military.

According to Jin Xinyue, the Secret Sword Bureau was the only agency that could possibly establish a clandestine intelligence network in the Blood Demon Sector.

The news on the Blood Demon Sector released by the Secret Sword Bureau was the authoritative news. Nobody would be able to overrule the Secret Sword Bureau’s conclusion after it was made.

If the Secret Sword Bureau had indeed presented ‘unquestionable proof’, it was possible that Ding Lingdang, Professor Mo Xuan, and the Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector had accepted it as the truth.

Also, with the goddamn mental devil inside his body, there was absolutely no way that he could defend himself.

The mental devil slowly craned its neck from the depths of his brain with an innocent face. “Are you blaming it on me?”

“Get lost. I need silence now!” Li Yao condensed a telepathic thought and pressed the mental devil back into his brain. He pondered carefully, The most critical question is, who was it that provided the ‘unquestionable’ false proof?

There could only be two people who had the ability to fabricate the proof and to convince everybody—Lu Zui, director of the Secret Sword Bureau; and Guo Chunfeng, supervisor of the first division, i.e. the Demon Execution Division, which is responsible for the intelligence regarding the demon race.

Director Lu Zui is more than two hundred years old now. Elder Nether Spring was still being breastfed when he began to distinguish himself! So, it shouldn’t be him.

Then, was it Guo Chunfeng?

Li Yao retrieved the files on Guo Chunfeng, known as the strongest Core Formation Stage Cultivator of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, that Jin Xinyue had prepared for him.

The supervisor of the Demon Execution Division, which was a nightmare for every saintess in the Pantheon of Demons, was only sixty-two years old. He was in his prime years for a Cultivator, the best period of his life to rise up.

According to the few files that the Pantheon of Demons had collected over more than ten years, Guo Chunfeng’s background was very clear. He had been born in a noble family of Cultivators as the son of Red Pine Hall, a local sect on the Grand Desolate Plateau.

However, at the age of seventeen, he had encountered a beast tide, which swallowed Red Pine Hall together with Red Pine City, where it was located. His entire family had been killed in the beast tide, and he was the only lucky survivor.

Luck made a lot of sense.

Perhaps, the real ‘Guo Chunfeng’ had been killed when he was seventeen, and the enormous outbreak of beast tide had been for the single purpose of delivering a false ‘Guo Chunfeng’!

After Red Pine Hall was destroyed, Guo Chunfeng was recruited by the federal army as an orphan. He spent five years in the army before he joined the Secret Sword Bureau.

There was no telling what kind of cruel and harsh training he had received in the Secret Sword Bureau, but he had awoken quadruple talents before he was forty. He had cracked dozens of cases about the demon race’s infiltration in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and captured quite a few seasoned saintesses of the Pantheon of Demons.

He seemed to have a natural instinct about demons. As soon as he moved close and sniffed, he was able to smell the scent of demons.

It was because of his unusual talents that he had been appointed as the supervisor of the first division of the Secret Sword Bureau, which was the hottest post in the agency, after defeating countless competitors when he was not even a hundred years old.

For five hundred years, demons had always been the greatest enemy for the Star Glory Federation. The intelligence regarding the demon race had always been of paramount importance. As for the arrival of the extraterrestrial devils and the crimes of the Cultivators, they were but a scratch—nothing to worry about.

Therefore, the first division, which was responsible for the intelligence of the demon race, was almost three times larger than the second division and the third division combined. The supervisors of the first division were almost exclusively promoted to be the directors of the Secret Sword Bureau in the future!

Among the list of suspects that Li Yao and Jin Xinyue had prepared, Guo Chunfeng ranked high as a possible Abyss. With this new information, he was more than 95% confident that Guo Chunfeng was the real suspect!

Lu Zui is a well-known Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator who broke through to that stage and became an important leader of the Secret Sword Bureau decades ago. There is no way that Elder Nether Spring could've substituted him!

Even if Elder Nether Spring was capable of assassinating Lu Zui, how could he have found a trusted subordinate who was as strong as Lu Zui?

Is it possible that Elder Nether Spring recruited a demon emperor as his subordinate first, turned the demon emperor into 'Lu Zui' by injecting excessive Divine Blood of Chaos to him, and figured out a way to substitute the real Li Yao for the false one while making sure that the false Lu Zui revealed no loopholes after managing the affairs of the Secret Sword Bureau for decades?

You've got to be kidding me! If Elder Nether Spring was capable of that, the Spore Stratagem would've worked out eighteen years ago!

Therefore, it can only be Guo Chunfeng. The time, the identity, and the position all match!

He is the supervisor of the Demon Execution Division—directly responsible for the collection and analysis of intelligence. If he provided false intelligence in the beginning, it is quite possible that everybody, including Lu Zui, was fooled!

While he was pondering, Duanmu Ming said again, “Brother Han, now you see it. There must’ve been something wrong with the Li Yao that you met in the Blood Demon Sector. Whatever he asked you to do, he certainly had other plans! Therefore, tell me his plan and let’s run an analysis carefully. Then, we can go to talk to Iron Commander!”

There was deep suspicion in Li Yao’s voice. “Did he? But I’ve brought the hope of peace! The Blood Demon Sector is now open to a conditional surrender. We have won the war. Now, we can try to get more benefits for the federation at a negotiation table rather than a battlefield!”

Duanmu Ming raised his eyebrow. “Is that so? What’s the situation in the Blood Demon Sector right now? What are the specific conditions that the Pantheon of Demons proposed?”

Li Yao shook his head and said, “I’ve brought a lot of documents and letters from the Pantheon of Demons. However, let’s talk about the details after we meet the Iron Commander. Now, please escort me to meet Iron Commander, Brother Duanmu!”

Duanmu Ming’s face was rather gloomy. “Brother Han, after everything we’ve talked about, you still don’t believe in me?”

Li Yao hesitated for a moment and said, “Of course I believe in you, Brother Duanmu, but I don’t know whether or not your subordinates can be trusted. Before I left, Li Yao told me a piece of top confidential information. He believes that there are spies of Elder Nether Spring’s in the Heaven’s Origin Sector!”

Duanmu Ming was dazed for a moment. Taking a long breath, he said, “Is it another clever trick of the blood devil?”

“I don’t know if it is a trick,” Li Yao said, “but I have brought a lot of files with me. The Iron Commander can make the decision after he read all the files!”

Duanmu Ming narrowed his eyes and nodded. “Alright. This is very important. Let’s return to the command center of the Dragon Horse Legion right now and speak to the Iron Commander. Then, I will send a crystal warship to carry you to the headquarters of the General Staff!”

He stepped forward again and extended his steel arm that was covered in the crystal suit. “Brother Han, are you still able to walk?”

“Not a problem!”

Li Yao grabbed Duanmu Ming’s hand naturally. After standing to his feet and breathing for a moment, he staggered to the entrance of the cave.

He was walking in front of Duanmu Ming and seemed to be unaware of the coldness in Duanmu Ming’s eyes.

The two of them went forward. Very soon, they saw the light at the entrance of the cave.

Suddenly—

As if the bones all over his body had been plucked, Li Yao suddenly collapsed. He was both like a viper and like a dry leaf when he swam out of the cave, sticking to the ground.

Above him, in the places where his head and his chest were supposed to be, two pieces of trap-like magical equipment ejected from the darkness and bit each other amid cracking noises. Dazzling electric arcs were raised, and hundreds of runes were spurting out. Revolving rapidly for a moment, they condensed into two indestructible barriers!

If Li Yao had not squatted and dashed out, he would have been bitten by the iron teeth of the magical equipment, and his internal organs would have been locked by the barriers!

Li Yao bellowed. His body, which had been like a dry leaf a moment ago, expanded like a balloon while he ran toward the entrance of the cave, only to be pushed back by two crystal suits that were lying in wait there.

Huala! Huala! Huala!

The walls of the cave broke apart. Including Duanmu Ming, six heavy crystal suits with intimidating aura surrounded him. The narrow cave was entirely blocked!

His eyes bloodshot, Li Yao shouted, “Brother Duanmu, what’s the meaning of this?”

Duanmu Ming did not think that ‘Han Tuhu’ could escape from the two barriers. With a gloomy face, his translucent helmet became opaque again. He sneered, “The meaning is very simple. Brother Han, you are an accomplice of Blood Devil Li Yao. Before you meet the Iron Commander, naturally, you must be sent to the Secret Sword Bureau for interrogation in order to clear your suspicions!”

“So, you are a Child of the Nether World!” Li Yao shrieked as if he had just woken from a dream. He charged at Duanmu Ming, his bone tail turning into a lightning spear!

Duanmu Ming gasped. He did not expect that his opponent would know a term as sensitive as Child of the Nether World. He was more determined to kill him than ever!

Han Tuhu and he were both the commanders of major legions in the federal army. The two of them had competed in several military tournaments, too, and their combat abilities were on par with each other.

However, he was wearing a crystal suit that could multiply his combat ability, and he was well-prepared for the attack. In comparison, ‘Han Tuhu’ was heavily wounded and did not have any protection except for the shell.

“Capture him alive!”

Duanmu Ming grinned hideously. Two clusters of frost were instantly condensed on the fists of his crystal suit. He did not dodge the incoming bone tail at all. Instead, he punched right toward Li Yao’s chest. The ice on his fists were extending like the sharpest tusks!

The other five Exos lunged at the enemy while roaring. Their dazzling magical equipment was unleashing a storm of electric arcs!

They were all the trusted subordinates that Duanmu Ming had trained personally. They had a neat battle formation to cope with Core Formation Stage Cultivators. Instead of defeating the enemy in one attack, they were limiting the enemy’s zone of activity with their magnificent bodies so that Duanmu Ming could attack more conveniently!

If their target had been the heavily wounded Han Tuhu, there would have been no way that he could escape at all.

But it was a pity that their opponent was Li Yao!

Chapter 1071 - Be Alarmed and Confess!

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

Thousands of electric arcs condensed on the sabers of the five Exos and slashed toward Li Yao while Duanmu Ming’s icy fists punched at his chest!

The ice broke apart and produced a translucent wall around Li Yao!

However, the next moment, the electric arcs were swallowed, reversed, and thrown back at the five Exos by the intense vibration of spiritual energy, briefly stalling their crystal suits!

The shell around Li Yao exploded together with the wall of ice. The vesicles of acids hidden below the shell burst out clusters of fog that were enough to corrode the crystal wires. The fog spread to every corner of the cave!

The spear-like bone tail rushed out and pierced at Duanmu Ming’s forehead like a bolt of lightning. Although the tip had not reached him yet, the coldness had already penetrated into Duanmu Ming’s brain!

Duanmu Ming was utterly frightened. He did not expect that the capability of ‘Han Tuhu’ would suddenly soar. Being hit by five lightning sabers without being injured at all was not something that someone in the Core Formation Stage could achieve!

“You are not—”

Before the words ‘Han Tuhu’ left his mouth, the bone tail hit between his eyebrows precisely!

Duanmu Ming’s spine seemed to disappear for a moment. His head snapped back to such an extent that it was almost folded, trying to make the bone tail slide over the facial cover.

However, the bone tail exploded right in front of his face. The dazzling electric arcs and flare made all the crystal cameras on Duanmu Ming’s facial cover lose effect, turning him into a blind man for a second!

Swoosh!

Li Yao took the opportunity to dash behind Duanmu Ming. He constricted his body size and used Duanmu Ming’s enormous crystal suit as cover.

The five trusted subordinates that Duanmu Ming had trained were not weak. Very soon, they were freed from the interference of the electric arcs and locked onto Li Yao again, but the flying swords and the bullets all lost their target when they were launched.

Duanmu Ming was standing in between them and Li Yao. The ‘Friend-or-Foe Identification System’ locked their weapons because they could not attack Li Yao by piercing through Duanmu Ming.

The cave was too narrow for them to bypass Duanmu Ming and perform the attack, too.

BOOM!

An earsplitting explosion burst out behind Duanmu Ming, who seemed to have been kicked brutally right in the back. With intense exhaust flames spurting out of his bottom, he was blown toward his five subordinates, waving his hands and legs crazily. The six of them were crashed into a mess.

In such a narrow cave, their heavy crystal suit became a burden for them. Having no armor on his body, Li Yao was as agile as a cat when he dashed through the gaps between them!

Shua! Shua!

Li Yao snapped dozens of mini crystal processors into the gaps of the crystal suits of two Exos. After a while of cracking noises, they were immediately constrained by thousands of electric arcs, which broke the crystal wires and malfunctioned their crystal suit. They were all trembling violently as if they were having a seizure.

Picking up one of them in each hand, Li Yao threw the two of them out of the cave. The Exos who weighed several tons with their heavy crystal suits seemed to be nothing in his hands!

As he expected, when the first Exo was thrown out, dozens of flying swords and mystic rays darted through him while he screamed miserably.

When the second Exo was thrown out, however, Li Yao turned into a streak of brightness and hid below the Exo!

Duanmu Ming’s subordinates that were waiting outside in ambush hesitated after their first attack accidentally hit one of their own. Therefore, when the second Exo was tossed out, they could not help but spend another half a second scanning who it was. After determining that he was still one of their own, they immediately stopped the attack.

When they detected Li Yao’s existence through thermal sensors half a second later, it was already too late!

Li Yao kicked the back of the second Exo heavily toward the ten or so trusted subordinates who were waiting at the entrance of the cave.

With a huge boom, the crystal bomb that he had placed on the back of the Exo exploded brutally.

The crystal bomb, however, was actually planted around the super compressed crystal reactor on the back of the Exo. The explosion triggered a chain reaction, and an enormous fireball swallowed the entrance of the cave as if the Exo had detonated himself.

Li Yao sneered and snapped his fingers. The airspace thirty meters around him was twisting, and swirls too deep to be measured were appearing. From every swirl, a Six-barreled Vulcan Machine Cannon appeared!

The thirty-six cannons were raining upon the cave with fire crazily like a mobile fortress!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Almost half of the entire forest of rocks was destroyed. Dust was soaring into the sky like hundreds of yellow dragons, lurking in the five square kilometers nearby.

Before the sky was entirely occupied by the dust and the smoke, Li Yao observed the surroundings.

There were few federal soldiers nearby. Even the four crystal warships carved with ‘Dragon Horse’ were docked dozens of kilometers away.

It further proved his judgement. Even if Duanmu Ming was the commander of the Dragon Horse Legion, it was unlikely that he had dragged most of the regular soldiers into his cause. Only a few of them were actually diehards who refused to abandon Elder Nether Spring when their doom was drawing near.

However, Li Yao could not directly go find the regular soldiers of the Dragon Horse Legion, either.

That was because, to most of them, Vulture Li Yao was already dead, and for some of them, Vulture Li Yao had turned into Blood Devil Li Yao!

How could he convince other people without solid evidence?

Duanmu Ming had to be conspiring with Guo Chunfeng and had spread out an impregnable dragnet in the federal army and the Secret Sword Bureau, which would not be easy to breach.

“You want evidence? That’s easy!”

Faced with the perilous situation, Li Yao was not in the least frustrated or frightened. Instead, he was full of eagerness and excitement. The pores all over his body were opening and spurting out the hottest fighting will!

He seemed to be back to twenty years ago in the magical equipment graveyard, where he dealt with hundreds of ferocious, muscular scavengers as a thin, weak young man!

The next second, he put away the Vulcan Cannons and released Neltharion and Black Wing. Setting Neltharion into its stealth mode, he flew it to an altitude of a thousand meters to monitor the situation. In the meantime, he manipulated Black Wing to rush to the south at the highest speed!

Then, Li Yao locked all the pores on his body. He secretly summoned his spiritual energy and reduced his heartbeat, breathing, and pulse to the minimum. He even adjusted his body temperature to exactly that of the environment!

Covered by the overwhelming dust and smoke, Li Yao put on yet another optical camouflage cloth. He lurked in the depths of the debris that used to be the forest of rocks like a chameleon.

He was only dozens of meters away from Duanmu Ming.

Huala!

Duanmu Ming rushed out from the underground. He drew his sword and looked around, only to find nothing but crushed rocks and the billowing smoke.

The crystal processor detected that an intense spiritual wave was rushing south at a high speed. The target must have escaped.

BOOM!

Duanmu Ming, who was both embarrassed and infuriated, slashed at a shivering stone pillar next to him, blowing it into pieces. He then activated his secret communication channel.

“Commander Liao, the target is flying to your defense area. Note that he is not Han Tuhu. He is at least three times as strong as Han Tuhu. At least!

“Block the entire defense area in the name of searching for spies of the demon race. Do not let even a lizard through!”

“Zhang, I am Duanmu. We are in trouble…”

Duanmu Ming sent seven messages to the outside world in a row, reaching out to seven middle-level and high-level officers in the federal army.

He was addressing some of them by their post, some by their family name, and still some by their given names.

Through the officers, he was spreading out a giant net on the Grand Desolate Plateau.

It was a shame that Duanmu Ming was not aware that the guy whom he was dying to capture was lurking right beside him and even listening to his every word through the reception arrays hidden deep inside the ears.

Li Yao intentionally said Child of the Nether World because he wanted to alarm his enemy so that Duanmu Ming would contact his co-conspirators in a panic without thorough consideration.

Just then, when Li Yao lunged at Duanmu Ming and attacked his helmet with the boil tail, it had not meant to destroy his crystal cameras but compromise the defense rune arrays on his facial cover. That way, Li Yao had been able to stick a spiritual wave interceptor that he had refined himself to Duanmu Ming’s crystal processor without him knowing anything when Li Yao dashed behind him later.

The spiritual wave interceptor had the comprehensive functions of eavesdropping, localizing, and tracing. Not only could it record all the signals that Duanmu Ming sent and received, it was also able to trace the spiritual waves and locate the coordinates of the other side of the communication channel.

Excellent!

Li Yao whistled in his heart deep inside the dust.

The seven messages that Duanmu Ming had sent out helped him to determine seven coordinates. Three of the speakers had identical voiceprints to three suspects of the Children of the Nether World that they had analyzed earlier. Their identities had now been confirmed.

There was no telling whom the other four speakers were, but their voiceprints and their coordinates had been recorded by Li Yao, which would be undeniable proof in the near future!

Beep! Beep! Beep!

Duanmu Ming sent out an eighth message. This time, it took a particularly long time for the spiritual waves to transmit, as if he was trying to connect with somewhere extremely distant.

Eccentric colors were flashing in Li Yao’s eyes. On the ultra-thin lens embedded on the top of his iris, endless data was pouring down like a waterfall. The signal was traced to the south of the Giant Blade Pass and somewhere in the heartland of the Star Glory Federation.

It was… the capital city!

Duanmu Ming was speaking to someone in the capital city through the secret channel!

“We are in trouble!”

After five seconds of waiting, the communication was finally established, but the other party did not say anything. The only thing that could be heard was the vague sound of breathing.

“The guy is not Han Tuhu,” Duanmu Ming said in a hurry. “He is at least three times as strong as Han Tuhu. It is very possible that he is in the Nascent Soul Stage. Right now, he has escaped from me and is fleeing south!”

Li Yao analyzed the conversation attentively. Due to the limitation of the size of the tracer, he was not able to embed too many functions into it. It would take a much longer time to locate the precise coordinates of the other speaker.

Say something. Say something more! Li Yao thought to himself. I still need… another thirty seconds!

Chapter 1072 - Thunderstorm, My Paradise!

“He isn’t Han Tuhu?” A high-pitched voice came from the other side. “Tell me about it. What happened exactly after you were engaged?”

Li Yao frowned. The voiceprint of the other speaker turned into several dull straight lines on his lens.

It was obvious that the guy was manipulating his vocal cord with a certain piece of sound-changing magical equipment.

The speaker’s voice had been disguised. It was impossible for him to find out the speaker’s identity through it.

Duanmu Ming relayed everything that had happened after he encountered Li Yao as quickly as possible. The other speaker simply listened in silence and did not comment.

Twenty-five seconds… Twenty-six seconds…

On the lens on Li Yao’s retina, a 3D map of the capital city of the Star Glory Federation was being magnified. The rough coordinates were turning into a series of data, and the specific location was about to be ascertained.

At this point, Duanmu Ming was talking about the part where Li Yao lunged at him, caused havoc, and took the chance to run away.

The other speaker suddenly opened his mouth and shouted, “Wait a moment. You might have been fooled. Put on another crystal suit right now!”

Shua!

The other speaker cut off the communication without any hesitation.

Li Yao secretly spat on the ground. He only needed another two seconds to get the specific location of the other speaker, but right now, he had merely traced the signal back to a certain block.

However, he had made quite a few discoveries today by locating seven Children of the Nether World in a row and eavesdropping on the conversation of the guy lurking in the capital city who was probably Abyss.

Next, he needed to find a way to escape the Grand Desolate Plateau and find someone whom he could really trust!

Li Yao waited very patiently just like twenty years ago, when he lurked in the middle of the stinky garbage waiting patiently for the disposal starships that were fully loaded with treasures for him.

As the commander of the Dragon Horse Legion, Duanmu Ming was certainly not an inert idiot. After being enlightened by the other speaker, he soon realized what was going on. Cursing, he changed into a different crystal suit.

It was Li Yao’s best opportunity of attack when Duanmu Ming was switching between the two crystal suits. If he attacked at that time, he was 90% sure that he could slay the guy.

However, he remained where he was.

Duanmu Ming was the best proof. He needed Duanmu Ming alive to prove the existence of the Children of the Nether World. Dead people would not say anything or plead guilty.

Moreover, if he assassinated Duanmu Ming right now, he would be confirming his identity as an ‘assassin from the demon race’ for the federal army. The situation would be much more chaotic, which might be a hindrance for his plans to come.

Just let the guy’s head stay on his neck for another couple of days until he was trialed in a real court of law!

Black Wing was still rushing south unstoppably. After putting on the new crystal suit, Duanmu Ming went south, too. The lively forest of rocks a moment ago turned into an empty wasteland.

Li Yao waited for five minutes. After making sure that there were not any spiritual waves around, he leapt up from the depths of the smoke and fled northwest without looking back!

He did not disguise his existence at all. Instead, he blew out tremendous spiritual energy without any reservation. Like a cannonball installed with a spring, he left a giant crater that was several meters deep and leapt hundreds of meters forward after every stomp. In the blink of an eye, he was already a few hundred kilometers away.

Naturally, his blatant escape was discovered very soon. In less than twenty minutes, Duanmu Ming realized that he had been fooled and dispatched most of the troops to chase after him to the northwest.

Fast as Cultivators might be, they could not travel faster than crystal warships for an extended period of time. After all, the former could only consume the spiritual energy inside their body, while the latter could store tons of crystals that could be sent into the engine compartment when needed.

Li Yao had yet to summon the real Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. He was clearly no match for the crystal warships with two bare feet.

Less than half an hour later, he was caught up by a large batch of federal soldiers.

Gritting his teeth, Li Yao rushed forward. In the horizon behind him, overwhelming smoke was surging close. The exhaust flames of dozens of crystal warships large and small and almost a hundred armed shuttles interconnected with each other and set the boundless sky alight!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

As clusters of translucent stun grenades were thrown toward him, the land around Li Yao was becoming increasingly unstable!

Li Yao was like a little mouse escaping in an earthquake. His speed and agility were much higher than his first escape. The magnificent blast turned into his wings and helped him accelerate again and again while he jumped between the canyons and the cliffs!

Even so, the distance between the crystal warships and him was still shortened bit by bit. Very soon, he would be within range of their main guns!

Li Yao clearly sensed that, dozens of kilometers behind, clusters of intense spiritual energy were being condensed like volcanoes that were about to erupt.

The troops of the federal army were like an enormous crab. Sharp tongs were being extended from the two flanks as they slowly drew close and limited his zone of activity.

In front of him, however, were…

Dark clouds and roaring thunder!

It was the thunderstorm area!

Li Yao bellowed and strode forward against the thunder and lightning!

Thunderstorms and tornadoes were common on the Grand Desolate Plateau. As the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector further melded, the range of the Dark Desolate Domain had significantly expanded. Even on the Grand Desolate Plateau outside of the Dark Desolate Domain, thunderstorms broke out much more frequently, too!

Just now, Li Yao had flown Neltharion to a high altitude, partly to observe the movement of the federal army and partly to look for the largest, fastest, and most active thunderstorm in the thousands of square kilometers nearby!

In the thunderstorms, tornadoes mixed with the lightning bolts, and crazy spiritual energy turbulence was everywhere. For large magical equipment like a crystal warship, if they barged in recklessly, there was a good chance that they would attract the lightning and even crash!

However, for Li Yao, thunderstorms were his home and paradise!

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Hundreds of flying swords pierced Li Yao in glamorous arcs from various directions.

However, after being pierced through, Li Yao gradually blurred, split, and dispersed, revealing its nature of a shadow!

The real Li Yao had dashed into the thunderstorm one step in advance!

In front of him, the tornado grabbed sand and rocks weighing billions of tons from the Grand Desolate Plateau and condensed into hundreds of violent tornadoes. At the end of every tornado was a dark cloud. The lightning amid the clouds hit the center of the tornado, only to be ripped into tiny electric arcs during the rapid revolutions, which rushed out of the tornadoes and interweaved into an overwhelming net of electricity!

Li Yao burst into laughter in great satisfaction. He stretched out his arms and legs and summoned the real Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit from his Cosmos Ring. It covered his body without the tiniest hole as if it were a living, black spirit!

Shua!

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was brimming with demonic energy after all and looked a bit too aggressive. To disguise the demonic energy, Li Yao affixed the long cloak that he had once used in the Flying Star Sector onto the crystal suit again!

The bloody cloak dangled down from the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit’s shoulders. It circled around the crystal suit at first and absorbed most of the demonic energy before it suddenly flew backwards hundreds of meters like blood red lightning and a crimson river, fluttering in the middle of the thunderstorm!

Half narrowing his eyes and taking a long breath, Li Yao was so excited that his lungs were about to explode.

Li Yao recalled that, when he learned to wear a crystal suit in the beginning, it was in a thunderstorm area amid lightning and tornadoes that he trained himself crazily. Then he finally created the first of his deadly moves, the ‘Thunderous Tornado Saber Art’!

His saber was sharp enough to slay a tornado!

“Come on!”

Li Yao leapt into a tornado in the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, ascending in a spiral by the push of the tornado. Thousands of black feathers attracted endless bolts of dazzling lightning and produced an enormous saber that was surrounded by dancing electric arcs, which he pointed at the pursuers after him.

The pursuers had detected the highly active thunderstorm a long time ago, too. They were all hesitating. After a moment, the light crystal warships and the armed shuttles piloted by regular soldiers stopped outside of the thunderstorm. Only four heavy crystal warships broke into the thunderstorm unwaveringly after activating their spiritual shields to the maximum.

The heavy crystal warships were surrounded by dozens of shining light spots, which were the seasoned Cultivators in the federal army and the elite Exos.

Only they were brave enough to break into the thunderstorm.

They were also the main hunting force. Finishing them meant finishing most of his immediate problems.

Li Yao smiled and raised his saber. The spiritual energy all over his body was flooding out like a volcanic eruption. Entwining with the boundless lightning attracted by the saber, they extended an aura hundreds of meters long which slashed out like the giant axe that created the universe!

The attack was not aimed at the pursuers but the center of the thunderstorm area!

Infinite energy had been focused at the center of the thunderstorm area, which should have been unleashed slowly over the course of several days. But Li Yao's devastating attack was like a spark that fell into a powder cask and triggered all the energy stored!

The wind blew, and thunder roared. The intensity of the thunderstorm was levels higher than before. The sky and the earth were shattered in the gale, and the entire world seemed to be consumed by the thunderstorm!

The Exos of the federal army were flying randomly among the tornadoes like kites whose strings had been severed. Even the heavy crystal warships were shaking violently in the lightning storm. The spiritual shield out of the warships fluctuated, about to disappear like a candle in the wind!

In such a harsh environment, it was barely possible to keep themselves steady, much less chase after the enemy!

BOOM!

Two heavy crystal warships crashed into each other as their trajectories were diverted by the storm. Thankfully, their spiritual shields were both solid enough to prevent their shells from being broken on impact. However, the conflict of the spiritual shields pushed them away from each other, making it more difficult to control them.

One of the crystal warships landed to the ground, shaking, and dived into the sand. The power rune arrays on its back died down one after another. All the tubes were blocked by the sand, too.

The other heavy crystal warship, on the other hand, was like a scared buffalo. It struggled to change the direction in the tornado and retreated to the periphery of the thunderstorm!

Chapter 1073 - Sneaking Into the Inland!

Li Yao was in the thunderstorm what a fish was in water. The wings of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit were opened to the largest extent. Every metal feather was adjusting its angle quickly, helping him to master the change of every air current. He was like the embodiment of the thunderstorm as he rushed and raged in the middle of the thunder and lightning!

Hiu!

Li Yao turned into a streak of brightness and dashed with lightning toward the Exos who were devastated by the thunderstorm!

The Exos were already dizzy enough after being swallowed by the tornadoes. Some of the less fortunate ones had even been hit by the lightning directly, which wasted many of the rune arrays and units on their crystal suits. There were only several minutes to go before they completely lost impetus.

Seeing that Li Yao was lunging at them like the craziest fiend, they were not able to put up much resistance except for yelling and shouting. But even their yelling and shouting soon died away under the scourge of the thunderstorm.

BOOM!

Li Yao bent his leg and kicked an Exo right in his breastplate, blowing him out of the tornado to the edge of the thunderstorm area.

The Exo’s limbs and internal organs were also paralyzed, and his crystal suit was torn apart. His heart nearly skipped a beat. Having no courage to enter the thunderstorm area a second time, he turned around and flew out.

Li Yao took the opportunity to hover in the tornado and accelerate to the highest speed with the centrifugal force. Then he charged at the second Exo and kicked him away mercilessly like autumn wind sweeping a fallen leaf.

The Exo withdrew from the battlefield awkwardly, too.

Li Yao was not killing anyone but saving them.

Most of the Exos were federal soldiers who were unaware of the truth and simply carrying out the orders they had been given dutifully. Naturally, Li Yao could not wait and watch them run out of impetus and be swallowed by the thunderstorm.

“Off you go!”

Li Yao was zigzagging like a streak of lightning, leaving almost ten blurred shadows behind him, while he kicked the dozens of Exos out heavily as if they were cannonballs.

Many Exos were deeply confused because they soon realized that he was not malicious. Some of the other Exos were opening fire randomly in their dizziness, but their bullets and flying swords were blown to nobody knew where by the violent force of nature!

At this moment, the only remaining heavy crystal warship was still persisting in the thunderstorm. The main gun on the head of the crystal warship was about to be fully charged. An extremely dazzling ball was shining there!

In the middle of the tornadoes, the heavy crystal warship activated its spiritual shield to the maximum. Trying to stabilize its posture, the main gun was moving up and down as it tried to lock onto Li Yao.

Li Yao sniffed and blinked to the top of the crystal warship as if he were capable of instant movement. The Blood Moon Dragon Hunting Saber drew a distressing curve in midair and, as if a real blood moon had appeared weirdly, slashed toward the main gun of the heavy crystal warship!

“Listen to my explanation!”

With a bellow that eclipsed the thunder and made the ears of every Exo hum for a long time, the unstoppable blood moon flashed in front of the main gun, and the three barrels of the main gun were chopped off instantly!

“I am a f*cking good man!” Li Yao roared. The spiritual energy and demonic energy all over his body raged out like a flooding river, and he stomped on the head of the heavy crystal warship, his two legs turning into two shooting stars!

BOOM!

The spiritual shield at the front of the heavy crystal warship was left with two enormous holes. The strengthened plate armor that was made of super alloys and crystals had a dent several meters deep because of Li Yao’s attack. The heavy crystal warship was like an animal that had been shot right in the face and crashed to the ground!

Li Yao’s attack was much faster than the speed of sound. It was not until a moment later that the sound of metal being seriously twisted came over from the strengthened plate armor, as if the iron beast was moaning in pain!

The heavy crystal warship smashed into the sand and was unable to fly out again.

Suppressing a heavy crystal warship on his own with brute force!

The incredible scene dumbfounded all the Exos who were watching at the edge of the thunderstorm area.

Li Yao glanced at them coldly. The bloody cloak was flapping in the middle of the tornadoes unpredictable like a burning torch!

For half a minute, none of the Exos dared set foot in the thunderstorm.

Li Yao finally turned around. The Blood Moon Dragon Hunting Saber became two wings again as he flew into the depths of the thunderstorm and disappeared amid the thunder and lightning, leaving the blood cloak that was drawing spirals behind him.

Soon, the spirals became a red spot before the red spot was gone several seconds later.

It was not until this moment that somebody finally stammered a few words, breaking the silence in the communication channel of the federal army. “What—what—what did the monster say just now?”

“He—he is a good man?”

…

Three days later, south of the Giant Blade Pass, in the heartland area of the Star Glory Federation that had sterile soil and four distinct seasons, a tired traveler was walking on the street of a small city named North Tranquility.

His face was young, his eyes were clear, and he was wearing a plain but clean school uniform. The pattern on the back of the school uniform had more or less faded, but ‘Grand Desolate’ could still be vaguely seen, although the name of the specific school was obscure.

At first glance, it was a young man around twenty years ago and an immigrant from the Grand Desolate Plateau who could be seen anywhere inland.

Ever since the federal government implemented the leave-nothing-to-the-enemy strategy, countless natives of the Grand Desolate Plateau had been forced to migrate inland in whole towns and cities. North Tranquility City had accepted a lot of refugees, too. Such young men were not rare on the lively street.

However, when the puji critters, wearing the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars badge that suggested that they were property of the federal government, were patrolling on the street and scanning the citizens as a daily routine, the young man always evaded their crystal cameras at the perfect time as if he could predict their movement.

The young man was, of course, Li Yao.

Three days ago, he had successfully trapped several heavy crystal warships of the Dragon Horse Legion in the thunderstorm area. Many more forces had been diverted in a bid to rescue the heavy crystal warships.

Then, Li Yao detoured to the north under the cover the thunderstorm and joined Black Wing before they took a large turn and went all the way to the south.

He travelled prudently at night and rested during the day. When he passed defense lines that were heavily guarded by the federal army, he even resorted to the drill of mystic rays and passed them by digging underground.

The Grand Desolate Plateau was too vast and unpopulated after all. Boundless no man’s land constituted much of the plateau. No matter how many soldiers were dispatched on alert, they were like salt that was thrown into an ocean. It was impossible for them to keep every inch of the land under watch.

With Li Yao’s capability and the assistance of Black Wing and Neltharion, few people in the entire Star Glory Federation could stop his infiltration.

At dawn that day, he finally snuck into the heartland from the east side of the Giant Blade Mountain!

But his heart was still heavy.

Li Yao had detected quite a few enormous war bases on the Grand Desolate Plateau that were being constructed sparing no expenses. Countless assets were being shipped from the heartland and stored in the bases, too.

He also observed several high-level live-fire drills, which were clearly for the purpose of aggression and not pure defense.

They were all the omens that the federal army was going to shift from ‘strategical defense’ to ‘strategical attack’.

Right now, the demon race did not hold any land on the Heaven’s Origin Sector. The only target of the ‘strategical attack’ could only be an expedition to the Blood Demon Sector.

But on second thought, it was not a strange decision.

Three months ago, the capital city of the federation had been assaulted by the coalition army of demons. Apart from the heavy casualties, from the perspective of national honor, it was like a slap in the face that blew away several teeth.

If the federal government did not seek a tough retaliation for the assault, all the federal citizens would likely riot.

Also, if the Children of the Nether World and Abyss were fanning the flames, there would be even direr consequences.

I must stop the war!

Li Yao took a deep breath and secretly clenched his fists.

He knew about the situation of the Blood Demon Sector. Right now, plagues were breaking out everywhere, and the coalition army of demons was doing its best to stop the disease from getting out of control. If the federal army marched into the Blood Demon Sector right now and attacked the coalition army of demons, the only result would be that the plagues would sweep across the entire Blood Demon Sector. Many soldiers would contract the disease and bring it back to the Heaven’s Origin Sector when they retreated!

There would not be a second victor in the war other than the walking dead!

I have to reach out to Ding Lingdang, Professor Mo Xuan, and Luo Xingzi!

Li Yao did not know how many other Children of the Nether World were lurking in the federation besides Duanmu Ming and Guo Chunfeng, nor did he know how huge the dreadful dragnet that they had interweaved with Abyss and Elder Nether Spring was.

But thankfully, there were some people that he could absolutely trust.

Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector, Professor Mo Xuan, and Ding Lingdang, as well as Speaker Jiang Hailiu, were all people he could turn to.

I need access to the latest news to know where I can find Ding Lingdang!

When he thought of Ding Lingdang, Li Yao remembered the false intelligence that Duanmu Ming had told him again. He was in an intimate relationship with Jin Xinyue? H was very likely Jin Tuyi's son-in-law?

What was that all about?!

Ding Lingdang… wouldn't believe it, would she?

Li Yao scratched his hair, which looked like a bird nest, feeling that he had been greatly wronged.

He seemed to be roaming on the street, but he was actually observing the wrists of every passer-by. Soon, he found a target.

It was a middle-aged man who had just talked to a friend through the crystal processor. He did not even turn off the light beam when he walked into a diner nearby.

Li Yao followed him and flicked a stream of spiritual energy into his spine.

The young man scratched his bottom. Mumbling, he went to the toilet.

Li Yao had observed through Neltharion that the toilet was empty. When the middle-aged man opened the door, he tailed him like smoke and pressed his neck softly.

The middle-aged man immediately collapsed onto the toilet lid and fell asleep.

Li Yao closed the door and lifted his feet into midair in case anybody noticed anything wrong from the outside. Then, he took off the crystal processor on the middle-aged man’s wrist.

Naturally, Li Yao had his own crystal processor that could connect to the Spiritual Nexus wirelessly at any time.

But his experience in the Flying Star Sector had told him that every crystal processor could be traced and locked onto when it was connected to the Spiritual Nexus.

Moreover, what he had brought from the Blood Demon Sector was a crystal processor without legal registration information. Connecting to the Spiritual Nexus through such a device was like reporting his specific location to the Secret Sword Bureau.

Therefore, he had been keeping himself away from the Spiritual Nexus while he was sneaking in from the Grand Desolate Plateau.

It was not until he arrived in the small city that he was finally given some time in such a way to search the Spiritual Nexus without raising any suspicion!

Chapter 1074 - Heavenly Phantom and Grand Illusionary!

Li Yao did not have much time because somebody was definitely going to be suspicious if the guy was in the toilet for too long. He quickly logged in the Heaven’s Origin News Network, the biggest news site in the Star Glory Federation, and browsed through the important news over the past three months.

The first thing that he paid attention to was, naturally, how much damage the batch of troops of the coalition army of demons that was teleported to the capital city three months ago caused and what kind of chain reaction it triggered.

Dozens of news reports popped up on the light beam. Li Yao held his breath and skimmed through them. The more he read, the more furrowed his eyebrows were.

Three months ago, when he destroyed the Eye of Blood Demon, a batch of troops had already been teleported to the sky of the capital city, which, according to the news reported, included at least one demon emperor and quite a few demon kings.

Before the reinforcing Cultivators arrived and annihilated them, the demons caused great damage to the capital city. Almost twenty skyscrapers were demolished. The civilians suffered heavy casualties, too.

Other than the materialistic damage, what was more serious was the trauma to everyone’s heart, especially when Heavenly Sword Plaza, one of the landmarks of the capital city, was ruined by the coalition army of demons. It was a devastating shock to the residents of the heartland of the federation who had not witnessed a large-scale war personally for more than a hundred years.

“As it turns out, there has been a sharp saber hanging above our head all the time, and it may fall down at any point!”

The deep sense of insecurity was haunting every federal citizen even a hundred days after the assault.

For the Cultivators and the federal army, the assault both humiliated them and infuriated them.

They had gathered along the eastern coastline of the federation, ready to surround and slaughter the coalition army of demons, which was supposed to have marched out from the sea. However, after quite a few days of stupidly waiting, not a damn thing had crept out of the ocean, and their home thousands of kilometers away had been attacked without them being able to do anything.

The shame of being tricked embarrassed all the Cultivators and the soldiers of the federal army, who did not know how they should face the citizens of the capital city.

As a result, everybody in the federation—including the ordinary people, the troops of the federal army, and the Cultivators—became much more radical than before.

“Blood for blood!”

“Expedition! Expedition!”

“March into the Blood Demon Sector and avenge the innocent victims!”

The comments sections of most of the articles were occupied by outrage. Fury of the public had congregated into a vast, unstoppable river!

As the latest intelligence from the Secret Sword Bureau was publicized, the river of fury surged even more violently than before.

According to the evaluation of the Secret Sword Bureau and the federal army, the assault on the capital city, which was intimidating enough in the beginning but got disrupted half way through, was because something happened to the large-scale teleportation array of the Blood Demon Sector leading to the complete collapse of the giant wormholes.

Such a collapse very likely meant the loss of tremendous elite troops!

Also, every sign indicated that, because of the failed assault, a series internal strife had broken out in the Blood Demon Sector!

“This is the Blood Demon Sector’s feeblest moment. It is now or never. If we miss out this chance, we will have to wait decades for our battle of revenge!”

This was the opinion of almost every ‘amateur politician’ on the street.

On the half-professional military forums, aggressive rants were everywhere. Their conclusion was more or less the same.

As it turned out, one month after the assault to the capital city, the federal army began to take action by conducting quite a few magnificent drills on the Grand Desolate Plateau, showing that it was prepared to completely abandon ‘strategical defense’ for ‘active attack’ and to march into the Blood Demon Sector.

The federal troops stationed all over the nation were pleading for war. The representatives in parliament who had a military background proposed expedition plans, too. The Association of Veterans were organizing the retired and disabled soldiers to demonstrate almost on a daily basis. The soul-stirring anthem of the army was echoing in the sky of every city day and night. Motivated by the music, more people had been applying to join the federal army in the past month than ever before.

The entire federation was shouting for revenge!

The expedition motion was endorsed by more than half of the representatives. Zhou Hengdao, the Iron Commander, declared in the public that the federal army had made all the necessary preparations and was absolutely confident that it could defend the honor of the federation, ensure the safety of all the federal citizens, and shatter any enemy in any place at any time!

In the moment of turmoil, it was Jiang Hailiu, the Speaker of the Parliaments, remained calm.

Jiang Hailiu used to be the firmest hawk, but when the entire federation was on fire, he changed his usual attitude and suggested that the policy of ‘strategical defense’ should not be changed. The federation must not be affected by the assault. It should stick to the original plan according to its own pace and continue developing itself by communicating with the Flying Star Sector actively so that the comprehensive capability of the nation would rise rapidly and the gap between the federation and the Blood Demon Sector would be further enlarged.

“A leader must not wage a war because of fury!” Jiang Hai quoted a saying from the era of the ancient Cultivators in a speech to the parliament.

It was about the situation in the parliaments. Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao, Director Lu Zui, and more than half of the representatives wanted to attack instead of defend.

The minorities, including Speaker Jiang Hailiu, hoped to wait for more intelligence from the Blood Demon Sector before any decision was made.

Although few representatives supported Jiang Hailiu, he was the Speaker of Parliament and had the highest power after all. The two parties had been in an impasse.

However, according to the few special meetings held recently, most of the media were not optimistic about the Speaker’s side. They believed that Jiang Hailiu would concede very soon.

There was no need to mention the civilians, who were all yelling like super hawks whose blood was boiling right now.

This doesn’t look right . Li Yao found the news a bit strange.

Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao was indeed a stubborn, short-tempered old man, but he had been in service in the federal army for more than two hundred years, and he must have seen more bullets than grains of rice. He should have known that a general should not be affected by their emotions in war.

Getting to the bottom of it, the comprehensive capability of the Blood Demon Sector had still been much higher than the Heaven’s Origin Sector three months ago, and the coalition army of demons overwhelmed the federal army.

Besides, the environment of the Blood Demon Sector was extremely harsh, with venomous fog everywhere. If the ordinary soldiers of the federation were exposed in the air for too long, they might have gotten poisoned.

Such disadvantages were not likely to be changed by the death of several demon emperors and a batch of elite troops.

What was it that emboldened the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, who were nothing but wise, such as Zhou Hengdao and Lu Zui to launch the expedition immediately?

The situation was in the federation’s favor right now. There was no need to take a risky gamble at all.

But very soon, a piece of important news from two months ago made Li Yao understand everything.

Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao’s confidence had been given by a warship from the Flying Star Sector!

Since Professor Mo Xuan and the rest of them had returned to the Heaven’s Origin Sector more than half a year ago, the communication between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector had been proceeding very well. The depth and breadth of the communication were beyond Li Yao’s expectation.

Professor Mo Xuan and the other Star Spirits, after devouring the enormous computational ability of the star brain, had an explosive development in the scale of their calculation. It took them only several months to modify the original star beacons of the Heaven's Origin Sector and produce a super long-distance star beacon system in the orbit of the Heaven's Origin Planet, thereby guiding the way for the Flying Star Sector, which was millions of lightyears away!

The warships and war assets from the Flying Star Sector were shipped to the Heaven's Origin Sector incessantly. The communication of their complementary technologies made the technology level of the Heaven's Origin Sector soar exponentially!

Just like that, two months ago, the communication between the two parties finally took a giant leap!

A super warship that the Heaven's Origin Sector had never seen was launched over by the universal slingshot!

It was Heavenly Phantom—the flagship of the Grand Illusionary Group in the past, the nest of Xiao Xuance the leader of the Immortal Cultivators, and the most advanced warship of the Flying Star Sector!

The super huge warship had been made by countless specialists in warships of the Flying Star Sector after arduous effort. In the riot of the Immortal Cultivators instigated by Xiao Xuance, it had caused great trouble for the Cultivators.

It was safe to say that Heavenly Phantom alone had been enough to defeat dozens of starships under the control of the Cultivators easily during the riot.

Li Yao still had a deep impression of the Heavenly Might Cannons, the main guns of Heavenly Phantom, whose damage was absolutely appalling when they were fully activated!

Heavenly Phantom had never completely destroyed even to the end. It had only been temporarily paralyzed because the star brain, its mainframe crystal processor, was hacked by Li Yao and the Star Spirits including Professor Mo Xuan.

After the riot of the Immortal Cultivators, Heavenly Phantom had been repaired in the Flying Star Sector. Six super crystal processors had been moved from the Star Prier's House to Heavenly Phantom and converted into the new mainframe crystal processor system in replacement of the original star brain. The combat ability of Heavenly Phantom was restored, and it was renamed Burning Prairie.

A tiny spark could set the entire prairie ablaze. The super warship was destined to bring the sparks of the civilization of mankind to every corner of the deep, dark universe!

The starship technology of the Flying Star Sector was much more advanced than that of the Heaven's Origin Sector. The newborn Burning Prairie was an incredible dream warship even for the regular citizens of the Flying Star Sector. It was needless to say what a shock it was for people of the Heaven's Origin Sector who were like bumpkins in that regard.

Compared to Burning Prairie, the heavy crystal warships of the Star Glory Federation were nothing but canoes!

Li Yao could totally imagine the dizziness, ecstasy, and untamable ambitions that followed when Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao saw Burning Prairie.

When one had the sharpest blade, one would inevitably want to kill someone. Moreover, Burning Prairie had accommodated more than two hundred thousand Grand Illusionary Soldiers!

After the riot of the Immortal Cultivators, all the Grand Illusionary Soldiers had lost effect as the star child perished.

There had never been a good way to deal with the Grand Illusionary Soldiers.

They had been produced at the consumption of great resources after all. It was too much of a waste to declare them to be total losses.

As a specialist of crystal suits, Li Yao had come up with an idea before he returned to the Heaven’s Origin Sector. He had proposed to separate the Grand Illusionary Soldiers from the mainframe crystal processor and change them to be under the control of the brainwaves.

One Exo with five Grand Illusionary Soldiers would be a small local area network. After being installed with the fundamental combat telepathic thoughts, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers would be under the control of the Exo’s brainwaves, and they would be able to manipulate them easily.

As a result, even if anything went wrong, the only things that could be affected were simply five Grand Illusionary Soldiers. No ambitious schemers would be able to make use of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers anymore.

It was just Li Yao’s immature proposal in the beginning. He did not expect that it would come true so quickly in the communication between the Flying Star Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

How many levels would the combat ability of the federal army be improved when the two hundred thousand Grand Illusionary Soldiers were distributed?

Chapter 1075 - Big News!

I’m in trouble now.

Li Yao scratched his messy hair and could not help but feel that he had been trapped by himself.

With the super warship ‘Burning Prairie’ and two hundred thousand Grand Illusionary Soldiers, the capability of the federal army has been improved by at least 50%. It truly has the ability to attack the Blood Demon Sector now.

As it happens, the Blood Demon Sector has lost fourteen demon emperors and more than twenty top-tier main-force troops, and it is caught in internal strife now!

Jin Tuyi is definitely not the most lenient guy in the guy. He won’t even bother to blink when he is butchering the dissidents!

Also, with the outbreak of the Demon God Virus and the plague…

The Blood Demon Sector is indeed at the weakest moment in its entire history.

We are strong, and our enemy are feeble. No wonder even the prudent Nascent Soul Stage experts are interested in an expedition!

To be honest, if Li Yao had not known the inside information of the Blood Demon Sector, and if he were in Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao’s place, there was a good chance that he would have seconded the expedition, too.

But of course, he certainly would not now.

Aside from the morality of the war, even purely from the perspective of the national interests of the Star Glory Federation, the war would still bring no good.

With Jin Tuyi's guerilla warfare, it would be impossible for the Heaven's Origin Sector to conquer the Blood Demon Sector quickly.

'Blood for blood' was pure nonsense. No country would wage a war against another country for nothing but hatred. The biggest purpose of the expedition was, of course, to capture the demons as slaves who could be sent for mining on the resource planets of the Flying Star Sector. In such a way, the two Sectors could excavate tremendous resources and expand more quickly in order to deal with the invasion of the Imperium of True Human Beings a hundred years later.

But the real problem was that the Blood Demon Sector was savaged by the plague and the walking dead now!

If the federal army crushed the coalition army of demons, which was controlling the plague, the only outcome was all the demons ending up as the uncontrollable mutants or Elder Nether Spring's slaves.

Then, even if Elder Nether Spring was killed in the end, who on earth could be sent for mining? The uncontrollable mutants who could only live for half a month?

Without the demons developing the Flying Star Sector at the highest efficiency, not enough resources would be collected. Without enough resources, the new federation could never be built, nor would it be able to explore the vast universe. Then, the only thing that awaited everybody was the destined doom a hundred years later!

From that point of view, ending the war as quickly as possible, helping the Blood Demon Sector to control the plague, saving as many demons as possible, and trying to motivate them to work on the resource planets willingly was the only way out for the federation!

I am right. Li Yao firmed his belief again. *Even if there are the help of Burning Prairie and the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, the war is still not in the interests of the federation. I have to stop the war. I cannot allow my compatriots to be killed in the Blood Demon Sector in vain, only to push the federation further down the path of destruction!*

However, what exactly should he do?

The complexity of the situation far exceeded their previous estimations.

As smart as Jin Tuyi was, he was just a demon, not a god. When he came up with the ultimate version of the Red Tide Plan, it was impossible for him to know about the existence of the Children of the Nether World and Abyss, nor could he foresee that the arrival of powerful magical equipment such as Burning Prairie and Grand Illusionary Soldiers would bolster the fighting will of the entire federation to such an extent!

The two factors made the supposedly easy task an arduous one.

I have critical evidence in my hand. The question is how I can deliver the evidence to my targets!

Li Yao rubbed his temples and analyzed the three targets one more time.

Lu Zui, director of the Secret Sword Bureau, must've been bewildered by Abyss Guo Chunfeng. Also, those intelligence workers left no traces at all. I don't even know where to find him.

Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao is the firmest hawk. He is raising a tide in parliament and calling for an expedition to the Blood Demon Sector. Encouraged by Burning Prairie and the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, he will certainly not be easy to convince. Besides, how can I break through his security and talk to the big shot of the military face to face?

Speaker Jiang Hailiu is the best choice. He is the only one who hasn't lost his mind because of fury or ambition, but there's still the same question—how can I approach him?

Li Yao knew just by thinking with his bottom that the capital city must be unprecedently guarded after the assault three months ago, not to mention the critical locations such as the house of the Speaker or the parliament building!

To sneak into the house of the Speaker might be even more difficult than sneaking into the headquarters of the Pantheon of Demons!

The trickiest part was that, when he snuck into the Pantheon of Demons or the Eye of Blood Demon, everyone around had been an enemy. Li Yao had no concerns at all. He could create chaos with his crystal bombs at any moment and go on a killing spree.

But right now, of the soldiers of the federal army, the agents of the Secret Sword Bureau, and the bodyguards of the Speaker, 99% were innocent and did not know the truth. How could he attack them?

If he caused any damage and hurt a dutiful good man or an innocent passer-by, not only would he be guilty, he would be further proving that he was Blood Devil Li Yao, too.

Damn it !

Li Yao gritted his teeth and discovered that he was in a much more perilous situation than the Flying Star Sector or the Blood Demon Sector!

What if I simply show up in public since I cannot meet the Speaker ?

Li Yao shook his head hard and vetoed the idea instantly.

After the chaos that he caused on the Grand Desolate Plateau, Guo Chunfeng would be looking for him with his Secret Sword Agents like a hungry hound. Wherever he showed up, the first to arrive would certainly be Guo Chunfeng and his subordinates.

If he did not resist, he would be taken away by Guo Chunfeng.

If he did resist, he would certainly injure a lot of Cultivators, soldiers, and Secret Sword Agents, which would also be evidence that he was a Blood Devil now.

What a dilemma!

Or maybe, should I turn to Ding Lingdang, Professor Mo Xuan, or Luo Xingzi ?

He thought for a moment and believed that his old friends were most reliable of all.

Even if they did not believe him, they would not give him away to the Secret Sword Bureau easily. The Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector were strong enough to compete with the Secret Sword Bureau. The evidence that he had brought could be delivered to the Speaker through them, too.

After all, Li Yao had not done anything wrong. They could investigate however they wanted.

While he was pondering, the mental devil crawled out of his head like a bug and asked pitifully, “Then, what will you do with me?”

“Of course, I will ask for the help of Ding Lingdang, Professor Mo Xuan and Senior Luo Xingzi and see how you can be eliminated!” Li Yao replied gravely.

“How cruel of you!” the mental devil screamed. “Senior Jin said that we should live in peace!”

Disregarding the mental devil’s scream, Li Yao typed in ‘Ding Lingdang’ on the light beam and searched.

Over the past ten years, Ding Lingdang had become one of the most influential celebrities in the Star Glory Federation. Many adolescents were her loyal supporters and established thousands of websites and forums for her. Red Fire House, the largest website of all, had more than fifty million registered users!

‘Blazing Tyrannosaur’ was Ding Lingdang’s nickname in the Blood Demon Sector. In the Heaven’s Origin Sector, everybody all the unstoppable female warrior ‘Crimson Queen’!

Watching Ding Lingdang rushing, mauling, and crashing savagely in the battle videos, Li Yao found it difficult to move his eyes. Fascination beamed out of his face.

She is much stronger after ten years. I like it!

Li Yao swallowed hard and looked for the latest news on Ding Lingdang.

He knew that many teenagers in the Star Glory Federation would establish organizations like ‘fan clubs’ for the Cultivators they admired. They would follow the news of their idol and even arrange meetings with their idol occasionally.

As he expected, although he failed to find Ding Lingdang’s contact on the website, he did find a summoning thread.

Seven days later, Ding Lingdang would be present at the hundred-day memorial ceremony for the victims in the assault of the capital city. The thread was calling for the fans in the capital city to meet Ding Lingdang.

Hundred-day memorial?

Li Yao’s eyes shined. He inputted the keyword into the search engine and soon found a lot of information.

The memorial ceremony was of a fairly large scale. It would be hosted by Speaker Jiang Hailiu in person. The military leaders, including Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao, and influential celebrities of the federation would all participate.

The ordinary citizens taking part in the memorial ceremony were several million!

Other than mourning for the victims in the assault three months ago, the federal government would also publicize Burning Prairie, the super warship from the Flying Star

Sector. It would be docked right in the sky above the capital city!

By then, not only would there be tens of millions of residents of the capital city watching the gathering, all the citizens of the federation would also be enjoying the legendary warship through the media!

Perhaps, the federal government was trying to eliminate the public's sense of insecurity and reestablish their faith in such a way.

The news made Li Yao's eyes glitter. The craziest idea popped up in his head.

Right now, the one thing that the Children of the Nether World and Abyss Guo Chunfeng are most scared of is me showing up in public. That's why they are covering me up and even vilifying me as the Blood Devil!

If I jump out in a random city and shout 'I am Vulture Li Yao', I will certainly be considered a lunatic. Then, Guo Chunfeng's accomplices will take me away at the earliest chance!

However, what if I do it in the capital city?

What if I jump out in front of the eyes of millions of citizens, the cameras of thousands of media outlets, and the noses of every leader and official worth mentioning?

At the climax of the 'hundred-day memorial ceremony', when Burning Prairie slowly stops in the sky of the capital city attracting everyone's attention, I will suddenly jump out and display a line words on the shell of the warship with my magical equipment.

I am Li Yao. I am still alive!

What will happen then?

Can the Secret Sword Bureau capture or kill me in front of so many eyewitnesses? Even if they take me away, can Guo Chunfeng still lie to everybody and secretly interrogate me?

That's right!

Li Yao snapped his fingers hard, his eyes brimming with delight. *The Children of the Nether World and Abyss are trying everything they can to wipe me out. So, I will make the headlines in the capital city. Let's see how you can disguise that* !

Chapter 1076 - The Competition Begins!

Li Yao was busy the entire day.

After sneaking out from the backdoor of the diner, he spent an hour in a gaming club like a real middle-school student and pondered calmly how he should go to the capital city.

From a remote city in the frontier to the capital city, of course, the easiest way was to fly in his Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

With his current capability, he could certainly finish the journey in a day and a night with at most two brief rests in the middle.

However, different from the Grand Desolate Plateau, the inland was populated and headquartered by a lot of Cultivation sects. Also, the air defense arrays of the federal army and the spies of the Secret Sword Bureau were everywhere.

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit at present included tremendous biochemical materials that would unleash demonic energy when functioning. He looked like an out-and-out great demon in the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. The air defense arrays would certainly be a waste of the taxpayers’ war tax contributions if they did not shoot him down.

Also, Li Yao had no doubt that Guo Chunfeng’s accomplices were following his tracks right behind him. Should those guys catch him and engaged him in a fierce battle, he would not have any chance to explain himself anymore.

Since a rally of millions of people was to be held in the capital city, where the Speaker, the Chief of Staff, and the leaders of the major sects would be present, the defense would certainly be unprecedently heavy. It was almost an impossible mission to break in and meet the Speaker without hurting anybody.

Then, how can I go to the capital city through public transportation legally under the identity of an ordinary person ?

Li Yao sorted through the whole plan in thirty minutes and left the gaming club.

Before he left, he ran into a young man who was walking into the club and stole his wallet.

He held his fingers and snatched the young man’s ID card inconspicuously without touching the cash and the bank cards inside. Then, he threw the wallet to the gate of the gaming club.

Soon, he heard the boss of the gaming club shouting, “Whose wallet is it?”

Making sure that the young man picked up the wallet and would not make a fuss, Li Yao found a public toilet and changed his appearance to that of the young man.

He bought two paper maps of the routes of the civil carriers and the crystal trains in the federation with cash in a magazine booth. Then, he checked in with the young man’s ID card at a ragged hotel and studied the maps carefully.

An hour later, Li Yao decided the route to the capital city.

At 1:30 p.m., the banks large and small in the city were back to business. Li Yao lurked at the game of a branch of the Federal Commercial Bank and waited patiently.

He chose banks because those who came to banks usually brought their ID cards.

Li Yao picked two targets in half an hour. They were approximately of the same height and appearance as him. One of them was a middle-aged man, and the other was a young man in his twenties.

The two of them were both in fashionable clothes and looked capable of affording a long trip.

Li Yao recorded their facial features and walking posture with his crystal cameras. He then walked past them and stuck an eavesdropping chip on their collar, collecting their voiceprint.

In the end, he stole their ID cards.

He changed into the appearance of the middle-aged man and went to the West Railway Station of North Tranquility City, where he bought a ticket to the capital city for the following morning with cash and the middle-aged man’s ID card.

The hundred-day memorial ceremony and the debut of Burning Prairie were supposed to be events that would refresh the entire federation. Many citizens of North Tranquility City were planning to participate. The ticket office was quite lively.

Thankfully, the authorities had foreseen the situation. A lot of temporary carriers and super-fast trains were added to the major towns of the federation.

Despite the preparations, Li Yao failed to purchase a seat ticket; he only got a place on the train without a seat.

But Li Yao was not bothered. Putting the ticket in his pocket, he went to the toilet in a hotel outside of the railway station, avoiding the surveillance camera, and changed his appearance again. He returned to the ticket office and bought another ticket with the young man's ID card.

It took him only forty-five minutes to finish everything.

He returned to the bank that the two targets had visited and tossed their ID cards in a corner.

When they found that their ID cards were gone, they would certainly return to the bank to look for them. Their wallets were still with them, and they had only taken out their ID cards when they were doing business in the bank. Where could their ID cards have gone if they did not drop them in the bank?

As long as they found their ID cards, they would not be very suspicious.

Even if they were, it still did not matter because they were not Li Yao's focus.

After that, Li Yao took a large turn in the downtown and went to a branch of North Tranquility Development Bank, where he located his third prey.

That was his real target. It was a woman in her forties who was rather thick and wearing fancy makeup.

When she was doing business, Li Yao glimpsed at her ID card. The photo on it did not look like herself at all.

Li Yao stole the woman’s ID card as before. He went to the ticket office of the East Railway Station of North Tranquility City and bought a ticket due at 11:30 a.m. the next day with cash.

The destination of that ticket was not the capital city but Green Plateau City, another big city two hundred and thirty kilometers away from the capital city.

In the next, he did not throw the woman’s ID card back to the bank but returned to the hotel.

When he left the East Railway Station, he stole a wallet from a random traveler. After taking away all the money, bank cards and ID card inside, he threw the empty wallet into the bushes outside the railway station.

It was a very common theft case in the railway station, which would happen hundreds of times day. Barely anybody would be suspicious about it.

When he was back at the hotel, Li Yao took out the two ID cards and began his modification.

Theoretically speaking, the ID card of the federal citizens was a piece of precise magical equipment. Hundreds of interconnecting spiritual stripes were carved on the surface. Chips that stored tremendous personal information were embedded inside.

With Li Yao’s capability in refining, it was not a problem to replicate the shell of an ID card.

But the real problem was that, since the information in the internal chip was stored in the online database, it was impossible for him to fabricate a new identity without the help of a crystal processor specialist.

Therefore, he decided to alter the stranger’s ID card into the thick woman’s ID card, and he would keep the thick woman’s real ID card to himself.

Since it did not involve the core, Li Yao finished his job very quickly and threw the fake ID card back before the bank was closed.

He knew that the bank would perform full cleaning and examination after work. By then, the fake ID card would the discovered, and the staff would contact the thick woman whose ID card was lost according to the information on the surface.

As for the internal chip, it would only be scanned when she was doing important business, like checking in at a hotel or boarding on a long-distance vehicle.

Li Yao believed that the thick woman should be able to find that her ID card had been swapped in only one day.

Even if she did, the police of North Tranquility City would not trace the case back to him so quickly.

Two to three days later, it would not matter even if he were discovered.

After enjoying a bowl of delicious noodles with eggs at a restaurant next to the hotel, Li Yao appeared in the West Rail Station of North Tranquility City again.

But this time, he went to the exit of the station, where he waited for the arrival of the crystal trains that came from the capital city. He observed the travelers departing patiently.

After half a night, he locked onto another three targets. By eavesdropping and inspecting their personal belongings, he ascertained that they were all citizens of the capital city who were on a short business trip to North Tranquility City. They had bought return tickets and would be back in a day or two.

It meant that, seven days later, when the hundred-day memorial ceremony was held, they should be in the capital city.

It was already late night when Li Yao returned to the hotel with the voiceprints, fingerprints, facial features, and personal information of the three targets.

Following that, he performed the arts of camouflage that he had learned from Fengyu Zhong and Jin Xinyue. Finally, before dawn, he prepared six sets of voiceprints, fingerprints, and identity information.

Right now, he could pretend to be six ordinary people of different identities whenever he needed, three of which were citizens of North Tranquility City and three the capital city.

At 7:30 in the morning, Li Yao passed the security check and entered the platform of the first crystal train.

According to the safety regulations for crystal trains in the Star Glory Federation, the passengers had to show their ID card when they bought the ticket, but they only needed to show their ticket when they got on board.

However, when the crystal train took off, there might be random checks of the ID card.

But the crystal train had been packed with people. Every car was fully loaded, and there was not a gap for a needle. Li Yao wondered how the random checks would be conducted.

It did not matter how it would be conducted because he did not intend to board the train at all.

After roaming around on the platform, Li Yao climbed out of the railway station like a ghost, avoiding all the surveillance cameras.

At 9:00, in a grocery market far away from the railway station, Li Yao called a luxury hotel in the capital city through the public phone.

A sweet voice came over. “Hello. How can we help you?”

“Hello. I saw your advertisement of your wedding dinner online. The one with ‘Colorful Golden Lobster Dinner’ that costs 18,880 dollars per table. I want to check with you if the lobsters are guaranteed to be fresh,” said Li Yao. “My son is planning to get married during the National Day Holiday. My daughter-in-law grew up by the sea. She knows whether a lobster is fresh or not when she sees one.”

“Please rest assured, sir. The full-seafood happiness dinners provided by the Junhao Hotel are made with the fresh ingredients delivered to the capital city from East Seagull Port after quick freezing every morning. They are preserved with the most advanced instant-freezing technology. After the ingredients are unfrozen, all the fish will still be jumping up and down, alive. If you are interested, sir, why don’t you give me your contact details so that the manager of our Restaurant Department can explain it to you in greater detail later?” The voice of the customer service representative was even more sweet.

“Okay. Maybe later.”

Li Yao cut off the communication rudely. He glanced at the watch. It was 9:05.

At 9:55, he boarded on the second crystal train with the second fake identity. This time, he jumped out of the window in the toilet and left the West Railway Station for a second time. Then, he went straight to the East Railway Station.

In the East Railway Station, under the identity of the thick woman with fancy makeup, he boarded on the third train that was leaving for Green Plateau City.

He did not get off the train when it was floating and rushing forward with the impetus of the anti-gravity rune arrays. Instead, he stayed in the middle of the crowd.

Beneath the makeup that was messed up by his sweat was a smile of confidence and provocation.

Li Yao was wondering, what was Abyss Guo Chunfeng, Elder Nether Spring’s most terrifying spy and the supervisor of the Demon Execution Division in the Secret Sword Bureau known as Demon Hunter, doing exactly at this very moment?

Chapter 1077 - Guo Chunfeng!

“Guo Chunfeng, lead researcher in the Data Monitoring Center of the Storm Research Institute of the Bureau of Meteorology?”

The old policeman studied the information on the registration notebook time and time again and glanced at the middle-aged man suspiciously, wondering how the weatherman from an unpowerful agency could pull the strings to make them set the girl free so quickly.

The middle-aged man was wearing creased, gray casual clothes. His sleeves were extremely thin because of long-time work on the desk, and he was reeking of the smell of cigarettes that was typical for those who often worked overnight. His hair was so greasy that it must have remained unwashed for quite a few days. His face was plain. His eyebrows were like a mop, and his eyes were red and swollen, suggesting that he seriously lacked sleep and energy. He reminded the old policeman of a fat cat that spent all day napping.

The guy seemed to be adapted to the police station. Awkwardly, he was rubbing the plastic bag. On the plastic bag was the name of a supermarket, and in the plastic bag were a glass cup and an egg pie with two dough sticks.

“Workers of the Bureau of Meteorology are government officials, too. You must know the situation we are in.”

The old policeman frowned and said, “The fuss your daughter made is both unimportant and serious. Young people are hot-blooded. They are demonstrating and demanding for an expedition to the Blood Demon Sector. It’s totally understandable. Some of the young officers in this station go to the street after work, too.

“I’ve got nothing to say about the normal demonstrations, even if the police have to maintain the order for the crowd. We are all patriots here, but why did she have to toss rotten eggs at a professor in the middle of her demonstration? Not only did she toss rotten eggs, she even walked up front and punched the professor right in the eye. That’s highly inappropriate, wasn’t it?”

“Yes, of course.” Guo Chunfeng apologized pitifully. “You are right, sir. We will make apologies for Professor Xue. Decent apologies!”

“You should.” The old policeman nodded. “Thankfully, Professor Xue was not seriously hurt, and he was broad-minded enough to let your daughter go. Otherwise, this would not have been settled so easily! Tell you what, Old Guo, after you take your daughter back home, try to discipline her with your wife. This time, she didn’t cause much trouble, but what about next time? A young girl less than twenty years old doesn’t know what she’s doing in a fight. What if she does injure someone? Do we arrest her or not?”

“Wise words, sir. We will certainly discipline her, discipline her well!” Guo Chunfeng almost lowered his head into his pants.

“Alright. Sign your name here and off you go!”

The old policeman waved his hand and walked away, revealing a cool girl who had a head of colorful short hair, a nose piercing, and a tattoo of the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars pattern right below her left eye.

Guo Chunfeng was dumbfounded when he saw her. He extended his hand to the tattoo on his daughter. “What—what’s with your face?”

“Don’t touch it. It’s new. Still hurts!” Guo Xiaohe blocked her father’s hand rudely and stormed out.

Guo Chunfeng hurried to apologize to the old policeman again and finished the rest of the procedures. When he went out to the parking lot, he found that his daughter was snatching the door knob of his supermarket shuttle so hard that it was almost pulled away.

Guo Chunfeng was more than infuriated by his disobedient daughter, but he failed to come up with any reprimand after breathing heavily for a long time. Figuring that his daughter must have suffered in the police cell for a whole night, he gave the egg pie to his daughter and handed over his tea cup after uncovering it.

“Have some food.”

Guo Xiaohe pushed away the teacup that was full of dirt in disgust, but she took over the egg pie and buried her mouth into it like a wolf.

Guo Chunfeng activated the shuttle. The shuttle had been in service for quite a few years. The power rune arrays were rather worn. It did not take off and leave for their home after quite a few fulminations.

Seeing that his daughter's face was red again after having more than half of the egg pie, Guo Chunfeng was quite relieved. Frowning, he said, "I'll let you pass even if you skived and went out to demonstrate with other people, but why did you beat a professor of East Sea University?"

"That damn professor needed some beating!" Guo Xiaohe sat cross-legged on the seat, chewing yet another mouthful of the egg pie as if she were venting her anger on the food. She replied with her mouth full, "What's the situation now? The Blood Demon Sector has marched into our capital city! That's an unprecedented humiliation in our five-hundred-year history!

"We must seek revenge! We must make the wretched demons answer blood with blood! We must march into the Blood Demon Sector and demolish the dens of the pests to the ground!

"But the cowards such as Professor Xuan are propagandizing bullsh*t that we have to be prudent and tread lightly in the media every day. Even Speaker Jiang has been bewildered by them!

"Those spineless cowards are traitors of the federation. How could I let him go when I ran into him? Mama already showed mercy on him when I didn't deform his face!"

"Watch your mouth! How old are you? And you are a mama now?" Guo Chunfeng glared at her. "It's of national importance whether to attack in a hurry or to attack slowly. Even the government officials such as myself do not dare make any judgement without more inside information. What does a middle-school student such as yourself know? Stop horsing around. I'll help you ask for leave today. Take a good rest and go back to school tomorrow!"

“Tsk. You are just a researcher in the Bureau of Meteorology. Of course you don’t know the inside information.

“Everybody on the forum says that now is our best opportunity to march into the Blood Demon Sector. If we miss it out, we will have to wait several more decades to conquer the Blood Demon Sector completely!

“I’m not going to school. I am joining the army and participating in the glorious expedition!”

“Say what?” Guo Chunfeng was dumbfounded. “I—I beg your pardon?”

“I can tell you ten times if you can’t hear me.” Guo Xiaohe was particularly happy to see her father’s shock. Holding her head high, she declared, “Along with Si Mao, Da Ming, and a few other people, I filed my application online and passed the preliminary filtering the other day. We will have interviews in the recruitment office soon!”

“How dare you!” Guo Chunfeng almost could not tame his anger. “You are only eighteen years old, and you haven’t even graduated from senior high school yet. What army are you joining? Let’s see who dares let you in!”

“Eighteen years old is already an adult!” Guo Xiaohe placed her hand on her chest and raised her voice. “Also, in case you’ve forgotten, my spiritual root has already awakened, and I am now a culture-type Cultivator! I’ve been practicing the Nine Ring Song hard over the past summer holiday. I’m at level two right now. Now, as long as I sing the army anthem of the federation, the morale of the federal soldiers a hundred meters around me will be boosted, and the precision of their shooting will be improved by 5%!

“Why wouldn’t the federal army let me in given my technique?”

“You—you don’t have the first clue what is going on in the Blood Demon Sector. First level of the Refinement Stage. You are as good as nothing!” Smoke was coming out of Guo Chunfeng’s nostrils in his fury. “I will not allow you to join the army, not while I am still alive!”

“I don’t need your permission. I am an adult. It’s my right to join the army!” Guo Xiaohe burst into fury, too. “I will never be like you. You stayed in a small weather station, spending your entire life studying goddamn storms like a loser, when you had the chance to be a success since you became a Cultivator at such a young age!

“The way I see it, you are no better than the gutless Professor Xue. You are both cowards!”

Guo Chunfeng was so agitated that his lungs were about to explode. Stammering, he demanded, “You—You—You are becoming less and less disciplined every day. How did your mother teach you? Where is your mother?”

Guo Xiaohe glanced at him with a pitiful look and sneered. “I don’t know. In the law firm, perhaps.”

Guo Chunfeng was dazed. “What’s she doing in the law firm?”

“Consulting with an attorney about uncontested divorce.”

Guo Chunfeng almost drove the shuttle into a drain. “What!”

In a hurry, he dialed his wife’s spiritual messenger, but he was suddenly lost for words when he saw his wife’s emotionless face. Dazed for a long time, he asked drily, “Why—why are you suddenly divorcing me?”

Yao Li looked at her husband peacefully and replied, “I am not suddenly divorcing you. On exactly the same day last year, I told you that something was wrong in our marriage, but you said that you were busy tracing a superstorm and you wanted to talk about it later.

“Half a year ago, I told you that I couldn’t handle living such a life any longer. You said okay and asked me to give you three months so that you could figure out the two tropic air masses before we had a proper talk.

“Three months ago, I discussed divorce with you. You said no, no, no, and asked me to wait until you came home at night. As it turns out, starting from that night, you haven’t been home for three months, a hundred days, in a row!

“Today, if it weren’t for our daughter, would you have crawled out of your wretched workplace? Would you? Would you!”

“Honey, I was wrong,” Guo Chunfeng said uneasily. “This is all my fault, but you know the nature of my work, too. I—I didn’t have a choice. I didn’t have a choice.”

Yao Li took a deep breath, and her eyes gradually turned red. She shook her head and said, “No. It’s not your fault but mine.

“I knew what your job was when we got married, but I was too young to realize what it meant to be the wife of a hero. I thought that I could make it.

“But now I have realized that I was wrong. Greatly wrong. I am unqualified, unable, and impossible to be your wife anymore! I cannot live a widow’s life in fear every day! I’m going mad! I will have to kill myself if we don’t divorce!”

“Honey, don’t!” Guo Chunfeng panicked.

“Mom!” Guo Xiaohe did not understand the ‘wife of a hero’ part, but she could tell that her mother was in a very unstable mental state. She glared at her mother.

“Honey, which law firm are you at now? I’m coming to pick you up right now! Today, no work, just the two of you!”

Guo Chunfeng’s throat was almost on fire, but Yao Li simply shook her head in a bitter smile and cut off the communication.

Guo Chunfeng bashed the steering wheel hard and looked at his daughter pitifully.

Guo Xiaohe bit her teeth hard and looked out of the window in anger.

“Xiaohe, I was wrong. I have really been too busy recently. The wormhole that appeared in the sky of the capital city caused the unsteadiness of the local climate. I’ve had to monitor every day to make sure that no new storms were generated. That was why I haven’t been home for three months!

“I promise that I will have a one-week holiday when the thing is over. I will spend the whole week with your mother and you. Okay?

“Just tell me already. If you don’t, your mom may do something stupid later if she’s alone!

“Let’s talk about the joining army thing later, okay? If you are determined to, I’ll pull some strings and help you find a better troop, alright?”

Guo Xiaohe’s heart was suddenly softened. She mumbled, “A weatherman in the Bureau of Meteorology has strings in the army? Next time, make a draft before you brag! Fine. Mom is at the Rainbow Law Firm.”

Shua!

The supermarket shuttle immediately took a racing-level turn. Guo Chunfeng quickly typed in the new destination and put on a completely different face as he begged his daughter for mercy. “Please help me. Say something nice for me when we meet your mother later. The happiness of the rest of your dad’s life depends on—”

Before he concluded his sentence, a line of crimson words popped up on the vehicle-mounted crystal processor of the supermarket shuttle.

“Attention, every one of the Bureau. The super large air mass ‘Vulture’ has passed the Giant Blade Mountain and upgraded into a superstorm. It is very likely to be moving toward the capital city. All workers, your holidays have been canceled. Report for duty immediately.”

Guo Chunfeng’s pupils constricted violently.

The supermarket shuttle stopped abruptly in the middle of the ever-running traffic.

Chapter 1078 - Loopholes of the Storm!

Beep! Beep! Beep!

On the route behind him, quite a few shuttles were caught unprepared by Guo Chunfeng’s sudden stop. Their horns blared in protest. Some of them even rolled down their windows and cursed him aloud when they passed by him.

Guo Xiaohe was thrown forward, only to be pulled back to her seat by the safety belt. The egg pie that she had just eaten came back up her throat again. She held her chest and asked, “Dad, what’s wrong with you!”

With a complicated expression, Guo Chunfeng stared at the word ‘superstorm’ so angrily that his eyes seemed to be tearing the light beam into shreds.

Taking a deep breath, he pulled the steering wheel abruptly. The supermarket shuttle went straight down hundreds of meters and reached a place only half a meter off the ground!

Guo Xiaohe was frightened by her father’s uncanny behavior. Her head went blank, and she forgot to consider why her usually circumspect father had such marvelous driving skills!

“Get out now,” Guo Chunfeng said softly. “Take a taxi and find your mother. Rest well at home. I won’t be back for the next couple of days. Pay special attention to your safety. If your mother is willing, ask her to take you to your grandpa’s hometown.”

“What!” Guo Xiaohe almost couldn’t believe her ears. She scratched her hair hard and shouted, “What—what’s wrong with you? Your wife is divorcing you. Do you not know it?”

“I do.” Guo Chunfeng closed his eyes and mumbled, “However, a highly dangerous superstorm is moving toward the capital city right now. If… it reaches the capital city, a lot of people will die. A lot.”

“Cut the cr*p!” Guo Xiaohe was truly infuriated. Her tears flowed out of her eyes beyond her control as she cried, “Have there ever been any terrifying superstorms in the history of the capital city? Even if it is happening right now, what can a minor weatherman in the Bureau of Meteorology do? It is your wife who needs you most right now. Do you know it? Do you?”

Guo Chunfeng was silent for a moment. Then, he opened the door of the shuttle and handed a bank card to his daughter.

Guo Xiaohe was dumbfounded. Looking at her father, her eyes gradually turned from an angry scarlet to a desperate gray. She knocked away the card in her father’s hand hard and jumped out of the supermarket shuttle without looking back.

“Wait!”

Guo Chunfeng finally could not hold it any longer. He extended his greasy head out of the shuttle window. With complicated emotions in his swollen eyes, he said solemnly, “Look after your mother well. Don’t do anything stupid yourself. Maybe… you will know it one day.”

Guo Xiaohe gnashed her teeth. “Know what?”

“You will know why there has never been a superstorm in the capital city,” Guo Chunfeng said.

Guo Xiaohe was dazed. She asked back subconsciously, “Why?”

Guo Chunfeng replied, one word after another, “Because they were all blown up by me before they took shape.”

Guo Xiaohe was dumbfounded. After gazing at her father for several seconds, she suddenly made an extremely vulgar gesture and shouted, “Go to hell!”

The cool girl with a tattoo of the emblem of the federation on her face left without looking back, disappearing in the corner of the street.

Looking at his daughter vanishing, Guo Chunfeng sighed. He typed in a secret rune on the left bottom corner of the light beam. The seemingly unattractive supermarket shuttle immediately began uttering the roars of a beast.

Du! Du! Du!

Right then, somebody knocked the window of his shuttle.

It was a traffic policeman in a fancy uniform.

“Hello. Temporary parking is not allowed here. Please turn off your power rune array and show me your driving license.”

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The low roars turned into violent howls. The surface of the supermarket shuttle suddenly put on a layer of glamorous brightness as if it had grown dozens of shining wings. The license plate at the back of the shuttle immediately turned dark gold, the highest rank of government license plates!

Shua!

The supermarket shuttle turned into a streak of brightness and rushed forward at a speed higher than super racing shuttles. It cut into a gap between two shuttles in midair and disappeared after only 0.1 seconds!

The only thing that was left was a stunned traffic policeman whose facial muscles were all blown to one side!

Ten minutes later, the supermarket shuttle stopped at the Federal Bureau of Meteorology at the east suburb of the capital city.

On the surface, it was just another underappreciated government office in the suburbs of the capital city. The low, gray-and-white buildings, which looked rather dilapidated, stood like small hills. The black waterproof glue was exposed to the sunlight directly. Since there was no budget to renovate them, all the buildings were still in the same clumsy architectural style as they had been built in a hundred years ago. Even the janitor at the front door seemed lethargic and not as proud as the janitors of other bureaus.

However, right below the dull buildings, it was one of the largest underground fortresses in the capital city. The owner of the underground fortress was the Federal Bureau of Intelligence, or rather, the Secret Sword Bureau, a devastating name for all demons and devils!

“Boss!”

When Guo Chunfeng walked into the command center of the first division with a gloomy face, hundreds of tough-looking Secret Sword Agents with intimidating auras all stood up and bowed to him respectfully.

Most of the Secret Sword Agents were blushing with unease. There was half anxiety and half excitement in their eyes.

Having the chance to compete with the legendary Vulture Li Yao, and not the original one but the strengthened Blood Devil version, was perhaps the greatest glory for a Cultivator of the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

“Big Cat.” Yawning, Guo Chunfeng called a fat young man. “I have three missions for you. First of all, help me send a bouquet to Professor Xue of East Sea University. Also, pick an acceptable demon core from our trophies of the last month and deliver it together with the bouquet. Apologize on my behalf and ask for Professor Xue’s forgiveness so that we can get the trouble over with.”

The young man immediately understood the situation. “Sister Xiaohe again? Should I reveal your identity?”

“No. Just like before, say that she is your sister.”

“Alright!” The young man grimaced. “I’ve been her brother almost twenty times. I know what to do.”

“Second mission: send a few more guys to my wife’s office. She has been in a bad mood recently. Don’t let her hurt herself.”

“Understood.” Big Cat saluted sloppily.

“The third mission…”

Looking at the roomful of Secret Sword Agents who could not have been more excited, Guo Chunfeng frowned and said, “Who issued the command that everyone must report for duty? Inconsiderate!

“Right now, nobody can confirm that our opponent is the real Li Yao. Even if he is, he can’t reach the capital city so quickly and easily!

“If you are now jumping up and down as if you are high on drugs, your energy will definitely run out very quickly. What will you do when he really comes to visit us? Nap while fighting?”

“Cancel the previous order immediately. Eat and sleep as usual. Get your ass out of here when it is time to get off work and be with your family!

“Those who are on duty, don’t be so anxious. It’s just a Vulture Li Yao. Does he have three heads or six arms? Is he in the Divinity Transformation Stage? What are you so nervous about?”

“Go now, Big Cat. See what food the cafeteria is offering today before you leave. Ask them to prepare for a few more good dishes today. It is time to cook all the precious ingredients that they have treasured for forever. Appetite is combat ability. What better timing to have them than right now?”

Big Cat’s eyes shined. He rubbed his hands and said, “Really, boss? All our brothers here have been coveting the few Purple Flame Ice Polar Bear Paws for more than half a year, but the director never allowed us to touch them.”

Guo Chunfeng smiled. “Find a way to get them out first. I’ll ask for permission from the director later. If we can really destroy the Vulture superstorm, what’s the big deal if we steal a few bear paws from the old man?”

“Understood!” Big Cat left, drooling. The rest of the Secret Sword Agents also went to rest or work normally according to Guo Chunfeng’s arrangement.

The intense atmosphere caused by the arrival of Vulture Li Yao was mostly resolved by Guo Chunfeng.

The command center, which had been teeming with people a moment ago, was immediately cleared.

“Mosquito, tell me about it. What’s the situation now?”

Guo Chunfeng made a cup of decent tea and sipped it unhurriedly. Then, he seated himself on a dirty stool at a corner of the command center.

That had been his habit for decades. Instead of sitting on the seat of the supervisor, which was at the center of the command center, he always preferred to crouch in a corner napping and thinking at the same time.

The one whose code name was Mosquito was a short, young, female Cultivator whose arms and legs were particularly narrow and long, making her look like an agile mosquito.

Mosquito looked at Guo Chunfeng in the most admiring way and exclaimed, “Boss, that was truly incredible of you. As per your orders, we investigated the misdemeanors in the few towns south of the Giant Blade Pass. We have indeed found something!

“Boss, how did you know that the target would commit crimes in the towns?”

Guo Chunfeng did not even bother to lift his eyes. Apparently uninterested in the boring question, he replied briefly, “It’s simple. The target does not have a legal identity, which makes it almost impossible for him to travel inland. If he is really Vulture Li Yao, with his habit, he would certainly try to fabricate his identity for infiltration.

“To fabricate his identity, he must get a few ID cards. So, we would certainly find something if we investigate the misdemeanors in the frontier towns.”

Mosquito nodded vigorously. “Precisely. Our discovery began with a regular fight case.

“Two days ago, a fight took place in a diner in North Tranquility City. The cause was two people fighting for a toilet. The first stayed in the toilet for half an hour without getting out. The one waiting outside got angry and bashed the door, only to find that the guy inside was sound asleep. The two of them quarreled and then got into a huge fight.

“The fight was not strange per se. What was strange was that, according to the interrogation record of the first guy, he fell asleep the moment he sat down on the toilet and he didn’t know why.

“We checked his records. The guy lived quite a healthy life. He never worked overnight, nor was he lacking energy. It was quite uncanny for him to sleep for more than an hour on a toilet without a good reason!”

“The guy was not a Cultivator, was he?” Guo Chunfeng asked. “An ordinary person without any background?”

“Precisely.”

“Then, we will have to investigate the record of the guy’s crystal processor,” Guo Chunfeng said casually. “It is very possible that the target knocked him out in the toilet and searched for intelligence with his portable crystal processor.”

Chapter 1079 - Guo Chunfeng’s Methods!

“Our people in North Tranquility City have fully analyzed the crystal processor,” Mosquito quickly replied. “Although the browsing record was cleared, a lot of data has still been retrieved after technical recovery. The crystal processor browsed through tremendous information two days ago about ‘assault in the capital city’, ‘Ding Lingdang’, ‘Professor Mo Xuan’, ‘Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector’, and ‘hundred-day memorial ceremony for the victims in the capital city’.

“The owner of the crystal processor confirmed that he had never searched for such information, which suggests that somebody else used his crystal processor. Also, the browsing time is in accordance with the sleeping time of the owner of the crystal processor.

“The information corresponds to all the intelligence we grasped earlier. We are almost certain that the destination of our target is the capital city.

“That was why we sent out the ‘superstorm alarm’ and summoned everyone in the bureau.”

Guo Chunfeng was like an old, sleepy cat crouching on a worn cushion. Mysterious brightness flowed out of his body, as if he had entered an indescribable state. A moment later, he yawned and said, “If the target is really Li Yao, he must know that we have recognized his identity as the Blood Devil. It’s hardly likely that he would ride his sword straight to the capital city.

“The distance between North Tranquility City and the capital city is too long. It is also unlikely that he would walk or take short-distance vehicles. On one hand, it is too slow. On the other hand, checkpoints and surveillance tools are everywhere in the heartland. His risk of being exposed would be much higher.

“The only rational choice for him is to board long-distance vehicles such as the civil carriers or the crystal trains.

“To board such vehicles, he needs a legal identity. Li Yao is an expert of disguise and infiltration. But however he disguises himself, he cannot make a legal ID card, which stores tremendous information, out of thin air.

“Investigate!

“Concentrate all our manpower in the North District to North Tranquility City and investigate all the cases and conflicts related to ID cards! Note that the cases are not necessarily about the loss of ID cards. Figure out all the details, including the situations where the victim found their ID cards after losing them!”

Mosquito and a few other Secret Sword Agents looked at each other in bewilderment and hesitated. “Boss, it is easy to look into the cases where the ID cards are lost, but 99% of the victims who found back their ID cards after losing them will not report to the police. It’s going to be troublesome to investigate!”

Guo Chunfeng sipped the tea in his cup. He then licked off a tea leaf from his lip and chewed it contentedly. “Think in his shoes. What would you do if you were Li Yao and needed a few ID cards?

“Steal them on the street? How do you know who brings ID cards with them and who doesn’t? You cannot expect to try your luck by stealing a dozen random wallets in a row, can you?

“Even the strongest Cultivator will certainly leave a lot of traces after stealing so many wallets.

“You will certainly pick a place where everyone will be carrying their ID card. That way, you can select a target carefully.

“What are the places where everybody is carrying their ID card? Banks, adults entertainment facilities, and so on.

“Start from those places.”

Mosquito and the other Secret Sword Agents were greatly enlightened. After calculating on the light beam, they nodded and said, “If so, the range of our investigation has been significantly reduced. It is estimated that we will have a result in twenty-four hours!”

“Twenty-four hours?” Guo Chunfeng deeply frowned. “That’s too long. We cannot give Li Yao so much time. How about this? Let’s consider a different approach and work simultaneously.

“After stealing the ID cards, Li Yao would go to the capital city on a crystal train or a civil carrier under the new identity.

“Huh. The security check for the civil carriers is too rigorous. It is more likely that he would take a crystal train.

“Then, it’s simple. Make a list of all the passengers of the crystal trains and the civil carriers leaving from North

Tranquility City for the capital city over the past three days. Then, contact them one by one and make sure that you are talking to them in person.

“Remember, do not use the number that they left when they bought the ticket, which can be false. Ask for the cooperation of the police department in North Tranquility City. Call them through the number they left in the government office. That should be the real one.

“If we find out after reaching out to them that a passenger who should’ve gone to the capital city is still in North Tranquility City, Li Yao must be pretending to be him!

“If we cannot reach out to a certain passenger all the time, pay special attention, too, because he might’ve already been killed by Li Yao.”

Mosquito was dumbfounded. “Boss, all the passengers from North Tranquility City to the capital city over the past three days? There—there are going to be astronomical names. It is going to be a hundred times more difficult than investigating the loss of ID cards!”

“No, it won’t.” Guo Chunfeng smiled. “Li Yao does not have a legal identity, and he does not dare use the Spiritual Nexus. Therefore, he can’t buy the ticket through the bank cards that are bound to the ID cards. All you need to do is check the names who bought tickets in the ticket office with cash.

“Most people nowadays buy their tickets online. Even if they go to the ticket office, they will mostly pay with their bank cards. There wouldn’t be too many who bought a ticket with cash!”

Mosquito and all the Secret Sword Agents’ eyes were shining. They looked at Guo Chunfeng in an even more admiring way and nodded. “Understood. We’re on it. There will be a result in three to five hours!”

“Go now. Don’t bother me with trivia. I’m going to take a nap. A long ‘game’ is still waiting for us.”

Guo Chunfeng further slithered into the soft chair and covered himself with a blanket in the corner.

“Right, boss.” Mosquito thought of something else. “The third division sent the brief today. Li Yao’s last classmate in high school and the gangster named ‘Fatty Leung’ whom he hanged around with in the magical equipment graveyard have both been found.

“At 7:29 a.m. today, all of Li Yao’s connections in the Heaven’s Origin Sector—including Ding Lingdang, Professor Mo Xuan, Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector, companions in the magical equipment graveyard, classmates in the Crimson Nimbus High School and the Grand Desolate War Institution—have been locked onto!

“According to the third division, they have made a team of almost a hundred experts in Spiritual Nexus tracing, which is led by Professor Gu Mo, the only specialist in the Spiritual Nexus in the Nascent Soul Stage in the federation. It has been ensured that Li Yao’s connection network is monitored without any blind spots!

“As long as Li Yao sends a message to Ding Lingdang, Professor Mo Xuan, or any other of associate, even so much as a single word or a code name, it will be detected, and the source of the message will be locked onto in ten seconds!”

Hu. Hu.

Giant snot bubbles were popping out of Guo Chunfeng’s nose. He seemed to be asleep already.

“Boss?” Mosquito asked carefully.

Guo Chunfeng was suddenly wide awake. He mumbled in dissatisfaction, “Don’t waste my time with such boring stuff. The guys in the third division are too used to capturing evil Cultivators. None of the Cultivators look nice in their eyes. They are only adding to our trouble!

“I assume that they’ve found nothing after dedicating so many resources to Li Yao’s social network, right?”

Mosquito nodded. “That’s right. It is so odd that Li Yao hasn’t contacted his old acquaintances yet. How can he hold it for such a long time?”

“He can hold it, so he is Vulture.” His eyes closed, Guo Chunfeng said casually, “You can’t, so you are Mosquito, who will be slapped to death easily!

“Hehe. Vulture Li Yao is the most dangerous person to have risen in the federation over the past hundred years. Does he not know that his social network is certainly under watch? Sending a message to his old friends is like turning himself in!

“Even if he wants to deliver some information to the old friends, he will certainly adopt an approach that is unexpected and won’t be monitored or jammed. Would he be so stupid as to send a message via the Spiritual Nexus?

“Do the guys in the third division think that Li Yao is just another evil Cultivator like those they captured in the past? Idiots!

“Right, what’s the reaction of the Cultivators being monitored, especially Ding Lingdang, Professor Mo Xuan, and the fellow Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector? Do they know that they are being watched?”

Mosquito nodded. “They do. Professor Mo Xuan is one of the best specialists in crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus in the federation himself. The thorough surveillance to such an extent can’t be overlooked by them. Also, since it involves our allies in the Flying Star Sector, we cannot monitor them in secret as it might cause a diplomatic conflict.

“Therefore, the third division has sent a letter to them under the name of the Secret Sword Bureau and asked for their cooperation.

“As for their attitude, dissatisfied, of course. Especially Ding Lingdang and Profess Mo Xuan. They are not fully convinced that Li Yao has joined the Pantheon of Demons in the first place, so they were not happy to cooperate with the third division.”

“Why do I have to clean the mess for the dumbasses every time?” Guo Chunfeng changed his posture to make himself more comfortable. Pouting, he said, “Ding Lingdang, Professor Mo Xuan, and Luo Xingzi are all in the capital city right now, aren’t they? Make an appointment with them for me, preferably tonight. Let’s have a dinner and talk nicely.

“Publicly speaking, the issue is one of national security. They do not have the right to object to it.

“Personally speaking, if they don’t believe in Li Yao’s betrayal, they should cooperate with us and help us figure out the whole thing as quickly as possible so that Li Yao’s innocence can be proved.

“Tell them our latest progress. Promise them that, if they are willing to cooperate, we will send them detailed briefs three times a day every day. Also, we will invite them to join us when we are capturing Li Yao in the end.

“If they don’t want Li Yao to fall into someone else’s hands, ask them to try to understand and support our work!”

Mosquito nodded quickly. “Understood, boss.”

“Go now!”

Guo Chunfeng waved his hands and covered his greasy head in the blanket.

He had made all the arrangements. Before the result was out, he should take a good sleep and revitalize himself.

But he could not fall asleep however hard he tried to. His nerves that were usually blunt were now vaguely aching.

In his trance, he felt that he had made a mistake. A critical one.

What was it exactly?

Chapter 1080 - Sneaking In With the Wind!

Guo Chunfeng was caught in a hazy mist, unable to free himself for a long time.

Thankfully, the well-trained Secret Sword Agents were much more effective than he had anticipated. After only an hour and a half, they had already produced a satisfactory answer.

Guo Chunfeng was quite right. In the cyber era, few people bought tickets with cash. In the past two days, only 129 tickets from North Tranquility City to the capital city had been bought with cash in the ticket office.

All 129 passengers had been contacted immediately. Three of them were out of reach, but two of them replied in confusion that they were still in North Tranquility City and never purchased tickets to the capital city.

After investigation, the two citizens of North Tranquility City went to the same bank two days ago at about the same time.

What was odd that both of their ID cards had gone missing.

One of them had gone back to the bank to look for his ID card half an hour later, to no avail. He had thought that he had lost the ID card on the street. But three hours later, the staff in the bank had found his ID card in a corner and contacted him.

The other went back to the bank two hours later and found his ID card successfully.

It meant that the ID cards of the two citizens of North Tranquility City both went missing for one to two hours before they returned to the bank.

The tickets bought under the two ID cards were purchased in the same period, too.

Through the surveillance camera in the ticket office, picture of the two citizens buying the tickets with cash was shot, too. But the two real citizens were actually somewhere else, which could be proven by the complete picture captured by the surveillance cameras on the street.

They had him!

Later, the conductors on the trains reported that the three unreachable passengers had been found out. They were on the crammed trains where they could barely walk. They could not charge their portable crystal processors, and the devices automatically turned off after running out of power.

The picture from the West Railway Station of North Tranquility City where the two citizens entered the platform with the tickets were soon sent over, too.

But of course, they were not the real citizens but Vulture Li Yao in disguise.

Now, it was absolutely certain that Vulture Li Yao had pretended to be one of the two citizens of North Tranquility City and hidden himself one of the two trains!

The two crystal trains were both temporary ones. They were not very fast and about to arrive in the capital city.

The first train would arrive at the General Railway Station of the capital city half an hour later, and the second would reach the North Railway Station two hours later.

“Ask all the field agents to surround the General Railway Station and the North Railway Station. Send the image of the two citizens that Li Yao disguised himself as!

“Right. Monitor the hundred square kilometers around the capital city. It is possible that Li Yao might jump off the train and escape!

“There’s no need to search on the train. Both trains are packed with people. A reckless search might alarm the target and even harm innocent people!

“Block him in the railway station. Do not attack him immediately after he is discovered. He is not someone that common Secret Sword Agents can deal with. Contact the battle-type Cultivators in the Nascent Soul Stage in the capital city. Tell them that a highly-dangerous criminal is on the run and ask for their help to capture… or execute him if necessary!”

Guo Chunfeng rose up suddenly, turning from a drowsy cat into a ravenous tiger.

Everybody who had eye contact with him trembled beyond control.

“Understood!”

Refreshed, all the Secret Sword Agents took action!

Very soon, all the information about the two citizens of North Tranquility City that Li Yao was pretending to be was sent to the Secret Sword Agents in the five hundred square kilometers around the capital city.

In the railway stations inside the capital city, in the minor stations outside the capital city, along the railways… All the Secret Sword Agents were moving out!

In the General Railway Station of the capital city, the crystal train whose ticket Li Yao had bought under the middle-aged man’s identity slowly arrived.

The overloaded anti-gravity rune arrays were panting and spurting out intense fog that enveloped half of the platform. The train finally crouched down on the railway.

Countless exhausted passengers who had stood for a day and a night flooded toward the exit with their family carrying their luggage.

Hundreds of Secret Sword Agents, who were pretending to be chauffeurs, cleaners, regular police officers, were watching the crowd anxiously.

On the roof, on the trees, in the sky, in the corner, countless surveillance cameras were aimed at the crowd. Thousands of invisible mystic rays were scanning the appearance of the passengers and analyzing them crazily!

Shua! Shua! Shua!

With the ‘hundred-day memorial ceremony’ coming up, the security level of the capital city had been upgraded to the highest. All the passengers who were exiting the station needed to check their tickets again and verify their identity information. Also, a temporary decision was made that their ID cards had to be scanned!

Naturally, the tired passengers were all complaining about the decision. The situation was even more chaotic.

However, after all the passengers on the railway were cleared, the middle-aged man that Li Yao pretended to be was still not detected.

According to the record of the ticket check, the ticket that Li Yao had purchased had not been scanned.

He had not left the station at all, at least not through the normal exit openly.

But the Secret Sword Agents had blocked every gap in the General Railway Station. Not even an earthworm would be able to sneak out underground.

In the command center of the Demon Execution Division in the Secret Sword Bureau, Mosquito waved her fist in excitement after reading the messages sent back by the field workers. “It’s all clear now, boss. Vulture Li Yao bought two tickets to the capital city under two identities. Now that he is not on the first train, he must be on the second!

“The second train is arriving in half an hour. There’s no way that he can escape!”

“Huh…” Guo Chunfeng narrowed his eyes and stared at the complicated route map of the crystal trains on the light beam. He rubbed his temples so hard that he almost churned his skin. He nodded but gave no reply.

It was not right. Very not right.

It was too simple and straightforward. Would the well-known Vulture Li Yao be captured so easily with such crude approaches?

No, he would not. He must have formulated more delicate schemes, more…

Guo Chunfeng suddenly bulged his eyes so abruptly that he nearly shook off his eyebrow. Smashing his tea cup on the desk, he shouted, “We’ve been fooled!”

All the Secret Sword Agents were shocked by him. They stared at him in confusion.

Guo Chunfeng jumped to his feet and operated on the light beam personally. He enlarged the railways around the capital city and drew a bigger circle around it, breathing heavily. “Consider such a possibility.

“Vulture Li Yao’s destination is the capital city, but why must he take a direct train to this place?

“See? In the five hundred square kilometers around the capital city, there are more than ten major cities!

“There are superfast direct trains between those cities and North Tranquility City!

“Also, those cities have not been hot tourism destinations recently. The tickets are not hard to buy. You don’t even need to buy them in advance!

“What if the two false identities that he threw out were just smoke screens to confuse us and he didn’t mean to come to the capital city straightforwardly?

“With a third false identity, he could buy a ticket to a major city several hundred kilometers away from the capital city. After he arrived, he could take a taxi, rent a shuttle, steal a shuttle… or get a vehicle in any way possible. Then, he would be able to drive to the suburbs of the capital city and move in on foot. The journey is only several hundred kilometers. He can finish it in one day!”

Everybody was stunned by the possibility.

“How is the ID card check in North Tranquility City going on?” Guo Chunfeng asked in a hurry. “Any progress?”

“Well, after the two ID cards were locked onto, we—we thought we’d got him, so—so we stopped the investigation,” Mosquito stammered.

Guo Chunfeng glared at them all, his eyes immediately turning bloodshot. Drinking all the tea in the tea cup along with the leaves, he managed to hold his anger and gnashed his teeth. “Who said you could stop? Continue investigating! There is bound to be a third fake identity!

“Buying the ticket in the ticket office with cash. Leaving in the past two days. Destination, the railway stations in the major cities around the capital city. Those are your conditions. Investigate now!”

Mosquito and the other Secret Sword Agents looked at each other in bewilderment.

It was easy to check the record of the tickets from North Tranquility City to the capital city, but the suspicious tickets from North Tranquility City to the major cities around the capital city?

It was like fishing for a needle in a pond, if not an ocean, which was going to take quite a while.

Mosquito shrank her neck and asked, “Boss, what about the surveillance in the North Railway Station?”

Guo Chunfeng pondered for a long time but still waved his hands helplessly. “Continue watching. What if our opponent wants us to figure out that we are fooled and let go of the previous defense?”

…

In the North Railway Station of the capital city, the second crystal train whose ticket Li Yao bought with the young man’s ID card slowly arrived.

Countless Secret Sword Agents were still patrolling in the crowd on alert.

However, after wasting more than an hour, they still found nothing.

The double failure was certainly a major strike for the proud Secret Sword Agents. Frustration was looming over everyone.

While the well-trained, professional Secret Sword Agents were sighing, a train from North Tranquility City arrived at the North Railway Station of Green Plateau City a hundred and fifty kilometers away from them.

A thick woman with dark golden, curly hair wearing heavy makeup was walking to the exit in the crowd.

She was in cheap clothes that were of the latest fashion but a low quality. Her neckline was quite low, revealing a large area of fair skin. She was apparently not very young, but she was wearing smoky-eye makeup that was most popular among the girls. Her false eyelashes were very long, but they were not neatly pinned. A tiny section of adhesive tape was exposed from the corner of her eye.

When the passers-by were attracted by her breast and eyed her lasciviously, she always sniffed and looked back at them with derision with her eyes, but she would hold her breasts even higher.

She carried two bucket bags as if she was waving two giant hammers. Pushing aside quite a few passengers by force, she squeezed to the exit.

“Please show me your ID card.”

The conductor at the exit smiled after checking her ticket.

The thick woman cursed in the most vulgar dialect of North Tranquility City and handed over her ID card.

Beep!

The conductor put the ID card on a tiny rune array and scanned it with a bright green mystic ray. An enjoyable sound immediately echoed.

The information chip was alright. It was a real ID card.

On the top of the ID card, a glow was blinking and formed into a small hologram, which was exactly the appearance of the thick woman, except that she was not wearing any makeup and looked a bit plain… and even ugly.

The thick woman was angry, obviously unwilling to reveal her real face in public. She mumbled and went to grab her ID card.

The conductor at the exit hesitated for a moment, but the crowd behind her was already pushing her forward.

The thick woman burst into fury and barraged the guy pushing her in the back with the profanity in the dialect of North Tranquility City.

“This will do. Thank you for your cooperation.”

Looking at the simmering crowd behind, the conductor hurried to let her pass.

Vulture Li Yao snuck into the downtown of Green Plateau City in such a way.

At this moment, there were four days and a half to go before the highly-anticipated ‘hundred-day memorial ceremony’.

He was two hundred and fifty kilometers away from the capital city.

Chapter 1081 - Green Mist

Green Plateau City was a famous base of magical equipment in the federation. More than three hundred years ago, more than ten sects established dozens of popular shuttle brands here. It used to be the center of shuttles for the federation.

However, due to the obsolete technology of those sects, they soon failed in the fierce market. Today, many sects were catching their last breath with their legacy, and Green Plateau City had also turned into an old, lethargic, disordered city with a large number of unemployed workers.

If one were to look from the distance, the sky above the city was covered in a bright green mist. The lackluster skyscrapers were appearing and disappearing in the mist like unpredictable giant beasts.

The mist was an aftereffect of manufacturing power rune arrays on a large scale with the underdeveloped technology. It had been melted into the bones of Green Plateau City and could not be changed any time soon.

Li Yao swaggered into the mist.

Just now, at the help desk in the railway station, he had asked for the address of the nearest shuttle rental company.

For the convenience of the tourists from other cities, the company was right next to the railway station, within a five-minute walk.

In the shuttle rental company, Li Yao rented an old ‘Flying Pigeon’ shuttle with the thick woman’s ID card.

Such shuttles were the locally-produced magical equipment of Green Plateau City. Their biggest factory was in this place, too. Therefore, they could be seen everywhere on the street. It would not be eye-catching at all to drive such a shuttle in the traffic.

In the ‘Flying Pigeon’, Li Yao roamed on the streets and alleys of Green Plateau City, observing the depths of the mist with his sharp eyes.

Having grown up in the magical equipment graveyard, Li Yao had seen all the darkness of the federation before he witnessed its bright side. He knew that, even in the most prosperous cities of the federation, right below the splendor on the surface, there were always clandestine corners that reeked of the stink of pustules.

Naturally, Green Plateau City, which was a base of outdated magical equipment such and in the period of decline with a high unemployment rate, was no exception.

Soon, he found the place that he needed.

It was a slum in the eastern suburbs of Green Plateau City, accompanied by a tomb-like abandoned factory and piles of wasted iron and garbage not far away.

Perhaps, a hundred years ago, when Green Plateau City was enjoying its heyday, this place had been the biggest refining center of a certain major sect.

But right now, such places were only known as one thing, a magical equipment graveyard.

Li Yao was as familiar with such places and the people living in such places as he was with his own toes.

The shuttles provided by the rental companies would usually be installed with a localizer at a conspicuous place in the shotgun, in case the renter ran away with the vehicle.

Li Yao uprooted the localizer without damaging its functions and stuffed it below the passenger's seat.

He drove the 'Flying Pigeon' to the side of the magical equipment graveyard. Then, he rolled down the window and opened the door before throwing himself into the stinky, messy place.

Ten minutes later, with the clothes of a scavenger that he had stolen in the magical equipment graveyard, he changed his appearance yet again. He now looked like the kind of refining worker that was everywhere to be seen in Green Plateau City.

When he was back, the 'Flying Pigeon' was no more.

An unlocked, half-new flying shuttle parked next to the magical equipment graveyard was like a piece of fresh, bleeding meat given to a pack of hungry wolves.

God knew where the 'Flying Pigeon' had been driven to right now.

Li Yao smiled and walked back to the downtown area unhurriedly.

It was early evening. The few chain restaurants in Green Plateau City were all packed with customers waiting in long lines.

To ease the agitation of the customers when they were waiting, some of the front halls of the restaurants would be equipped with crystal processors that the customers waiting in line could play with for free.

However, generally speaking, few people would actually use those crystal processors because most of them were carrying their portable crystal processors, which could meet their basic entertainment needs while they were waiting.

Li Yao found a crystal processor easily. He browsed through the latest information for three minutes and left the restaurant.

Then, his target was the largest and crappiest neighborhood of Green Plateau City.

In the new neighborhoods established in the recent decades, there were often underground or airborne parking lots with full facilities as well as security guards who were monitoring those places all hours of the day.

However, in the old neighborhoods that had been built for more than a hundred years, most of the shuttles were parked on the ground. There were often few vacant parking places. The security was sloppy, too, and there were not many surveillance cameras.

Li Yao put his hands in his pocket and walked on the bumpy road of the old neighborhood, glancing at the shuttles on the two sides quickly.

He was not looking for the fastest shuttle, or the most popular shuttle, which should be the least possible to be traced.

Finally, Li Yao found his target.

It was a shuttle parked to a corner in the garden of the neighborhood. Judging from the dust on the shell and the rust on the power rune arrays, it had not been used for more than three months.

Li Yao grinned. He had realized before that, for some reason, there were always such shuttles in old neighborhoods that occupied a precious parking place for a year and a half without being used at all.

Naturally, they were a major headache for the management of the neighborhood, but it was not an easy task to find their owner.

Nobody would be bothered if such shuttles were driven away, nor would anyone call the police.

Li Yao whistled and snapped his finger. The shuttle door was immediately opened with creaking noises.

In the garden, there were only a few old ladies who were enjoying the sunlight and some young girls who were playing jump rope. Nobody paid any attention to him.

Naturally, the shuttle was in the worst condition, and all the spiritual energy had run out.

However, under Li Yao’s fingers, it was not a big deal at all.

Li Yao finished the maintenance of the shuttle in five minutes and drove it out of Green Plateau City in twenty minutes.

When he left Green Plateau City, he intentionally dropped by the railway station.

Although he did not have much proof, he sensed that the atmosphere of the railway station was much more intense than before. Quite a few dealers, cleaners, and police officers did not look right.

He narrowed his eyes and looked at the north. The north exit of Green Plateau City, especially the checkpoint on the direction to the capital city, had a long line of waiting shuttles. It was obvious that the security check had been upgraded.

His third identity had been seen through. The Secret Sword Bureau had traced back to Green Plateau City.

That was rather fast .

Li Yao whistled and gave ninety-nine points to Guo Chunfeng’s professionalism.

But it was a pity that ninety-nine points was far from enough to capture Vulture Li Yao.

Li Yao drove the shuttle obediently neither too fast nor too slow. He changed the lane, stopped, and accelerated according to the traffic signs.

Very soon, he left from the south side of Green Plateau City. The security check here had yet to be upgraded. After he rolled down the window and revealed his bearded face, he was immediately let through and left without any trouble.

He went all the way to the south, in the opposite direction of the capital city, getting farther and farther from it.

Half an hour later, he stopped on a quiet country road. Making sure that there were not any surveillance cameras nearby, he absorbed the ragged shuttle into his Cosmos Ring. Not a single rust stain was left in the real world.

The shuttle was gone from the world just like that. Nobody would ever find it again.

Li Yao walked on the country road for twenty minutes until he reached a minor city named Wicker River City near Green Plateau City.

The small city had a railway station, too, though much smaller in size. Two pairs of crystal trains left for the capital city every day.

However, Li Yao’s target was not them but the crystal train leading to the ‘East Seagull Port’, a fisherman’s city on the coast nine hundred kilometers away, which took off once every week.

Right now, it was 7:22 p.m.

There were forty-four minutes to go before the ‘Highspeed-338’ train left for the East Seagull Port.

There were three days and a half to go before the highly-anticipated hundred-day memorial ceremony.

Li Yao was three hundred and thirty kilometers away from the capital city.

…

In the command center of the Demon Execution Division in the Secret Sword Bureau in the capital city, after a day and a night’s hard work, the data analysts and the field workers finally retrieved precious clues from the astronomical, complicated data!

Vulture Li Yao indeed had a third identity!

Three days ago, in North Tranquility City, a female citizen bought a ticket to Green Plateau City for the next day in the ticket office with cash.

However, after reaching out to the female citizen, they had discovered that she was still in North Tranquility City and had no travel plans. She did not know that she purchased a ticket, and the contact left at the ticket office was not hers, either!

Also, three days ago, she accidentally lost her ID card in a bank in North Tranquility City. She even had a huge fight with the staff of the bank!

Eventually, the staff of the bank had found her ID card while closing and had informed her the next day!

After the test of the technicians of the Secret Sword Bureau in North Tranquility City, they found that the ID card was real, but it did not belong to the female citizen. Somebody had played tricks on the spiritual stripes on the surface of the card with delicate techniques!

According to the technicians, there were no more than five refiners in the entire federation who were able to make the false spiritual stripes on the surface of the ID card so vivid.

It was obvious now.

The two false identities previously were just smoke grenades. Vulture Li Yao did not pretend to be a middle-aged man or a young man but a woman!

But it was a pity that they did not find it out earlier.

Filtering the tremendous clues cost a huge amount of time. When they locked onto the female citizen’s identity and ticket information, the crystal train leaving for Green Plateau City had long arrived.

When the Secret Sword Agents reached the railway station in Green Plateau City, the female citizen that Li Yao had disguised as had disappeared into the mist.

“Boss, I’m sorry.” Mosquito’s eyes were red. She was so sorry that she could barely breathe.

“That’s alright. He’s not far away. Also, all his three false identities have been exposed. His infiltration methods are under our control, too. We are very close to the victory!”

Although their work did not go very well, Guo Chunfeng turned much more gentle than before. He cheered up his subordinates with a smile. “Let’s have dinner first. Our additional dish tonight will be the big bear paws! Everybody, do your job well after enjoying the bear paws. Try and pluck a few feathers from the tail of the vulture!”

Chapter 1082 - The Only Solution!

The Purple Fire Ice Polar Bear Paws, which were chopped off from high-level demon beasts, soaked carefully in Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and boasted the function of facilitating the growth of brain cells, tasted nothing more than sawdust for everyone.

Guo Chunfeng was holding a lunch box in his hands, but he did not move his chopsticks. Staring at the ever-changing light beam with his bloodshot eyes, he issued commands as if he were shooting a gun.

“Vulture Li Yao is now in Green Plateau City, which is only two hundred and fifty kilometers away from the capital city. He will be here in time either on foot or in a shuttle.

“All the traffic lines between Green Plateau City and the capital city, those in the river, on the ground, and in the sky, must be strictly watched over. This is the highest alert!

“If he comes on foot and doesn’t resort to his techniques, the journey will have to take him one to two days. Then, he will have to sleep at night. He will be either sleeping in the wilderness or checking in at a hotel. Investigate that!

“Walking is too risky and must be his secondary plan. It is more likely that he will travel in a shuttle. Therefore, investigate the rental companies and the lost shuttle cases in Green Plateau City.”

All the Secret Sword Agents fell silent.

Green Plateau City was a large city with a population of millions. It was also a famous manufacturing base of shuttles. Looking for a missing shuttle in such a place?

That would be really like fishing for a needle in an ocean!

However, it could not be helped. The intelligence work was never as cool as outsiders imagined. Leads would not jump out themselves.

One valuable lead was often filtered out from billions of useless pieces information.

It was a time-consuming job that even a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator needed to finish dutifully without shirking.

As tremendous resources and the Secret Sword Agents of the few cities nearby flooded into Green Plateau City, endless new data was soon sent to the light beam in the command center.

One of the flashing messages made everyone’s heart skipped a beat.

The middle-aged woman in heavy makeup, Li Yao’s third false identity, rented a shuttle in Green Plateau City!

“We’ve got him!” Mosquito exclaimed excitedly.

“Investigate, but not with too much manpower.” Guo Chunfeng sat cross-legged on the chair like an old monk. “Li Yao wouldn’t be so stupid. Buying a ticket and renting a car with the same ID card? Is he scared that he won’t be found out quickly enough?

“The rental is probably another smoke grenade. We should still focus on the lost shuttles in the past two days.”

As he expected, news came over from Green Plateau City soon.

The ‘Flying Pigeon’ shuttle, whose localizer had been hidden, was found in the countryside a hundred and fifty kilometers away from Green Plateau City.

However, it was not Li Yao who was racing in the shuttle but two local scavengers of Green Plateau City.

The two of them lived in the magical equipment graveyard and made a living by collecting the scraps. When given the chance, they would not mind stealing, either.

They had stolen the shuttle half a day ago, which they thought was a huge windfall.

However, they did not expect that what came along with their windfall would be hundreds of fully-armed, highly-vigilant Secret Sword Agents.

When the ‘Flying Pigeon’ was surrounded by hundreds of flying swords, both thieves peed themselves.

The result made the command center even more depressed. Many people were cursing in a low voice.

But Guo Chunfeng was as peaceful as before. He calmly ordered his subordinates to defend every major traffic line from Green Plateau City to the capital city. He even planned to expand the range of search and investigate the entire capital ring!

It was a last resort when they did not have other choices. Countless Secret Sword Agents would be exhausted, and a lot of resources would be wasted. Still, their endeavors might prove to be in vain.

But right now, they did not have a better option except to defend passively and wait for the investigation of the missing shuttles.

If I were Li Yao …

The soft chair was like a swamp that slowly swallowed Guo Chunfeng, who was pondering in a trance.

He did not like the feeling of being attacked passively.

If things remained unchanged, they would always be one step behind Li Yao.

He had to find a way to predict Li Yao's next step!

Suddenly, Guo Chunfeng trembled, his blanket falling to the ground. He mumbled to himself, "If I were Li Yao, would I only prepare three fake identities for myself?"

Mosquito and his other subordinates were all used to their boss's habit. They quickly replied, "What do you mean, boss? You suspect that he has more fake identities?"

"Exactly." Guo Chunfeng slowly sat up straight, as if he had crawled out of the swamp in his mind. He said quickly, "Think about it. Li Yao's three fake identities were not delicately made. We would've found them out in several days no matter what!

"Then, even if he successfully sneaks into the capital city, under whose identity will he be taking action?

"Right now, the alert in the capital city is higher than ever. Sentries and surveillance cameras are everywhere. The faces of the passers-by will be scanned randomly to confirm their identity.

“Without a legal identity, he can barely walk on the street! If he resorts to the three fake identities, he will be essentially surrendering himself to us!”

Mosquito’s eyes suddenly shone, but she was confused. “But that’s still not right. We have investigated all the lost ID card cases in North Tranquility City. There are no new discoveries.”

“This time,” Guo Chunfeng said casually, “he doesn’t need an ID card, nor will he pretend to be a citizen of North Tranquility City anymore.

“The defense system of the capital city is connected to the network. If the face of a citizen of North Tranquility City is detected but there is no record of him entering the capital city, won’t it be super strange? He can’t appear out of thin air.

“Therefore, he should pretend to be a resident of the capital city.”

Mosquito frowned. “He can barely sneak into the capital city now. How can he pretend to be a resident of the capital city?”

“Very simple,” Guo Chunfeng replied quickly. “When he was in North Tranquility City, as long as he waited for the trains or carriers from the capital city in places such as the railway stations or the ports, it would’ve been easy for him to lock onto a few residents of the capital city and retrieve their identity information.

“As long as the few residents planned to return to the capital city in a few days, it would be perfectly reasonable that they showed up in the capital city now. Not just the scanning of mystic rays, there won’t be a loophole even if a policeman questions him in person!”

Mosquito beamed with joy and nodded. “Exactly. If Vulture Li Yao pretends to be a regular resident of the capital city, it will be explainable even if he is roaming on the street without an ID card. It’s not like we can arrest all citizens who don’t carry their ID cards with them!”

Guo Chunfeng smiled. “You know what to do now, don’t you?”

Mosquito smashed her fist hard. “I do. We will go through the list of the passengers who left from the capital city for North Tranquility City recently, especially those who are returning in a day or two!”

Guo Chunfeng grinned in delight. He was finally in the mood for a bite of the bear paw now.

The bear paw had long turned cold, but he could not have enjoyed it more.

He had a feeling that he would certainly find Li Yao’s new identity by investigating from such a direction.

This time, he was finally one step faster than his opponent!

…

In the railway station in Wicker River City, Li Yao lurked in the darkness like a shining scorpion.

The security check had been upgraded. Several Cultivators who were suspected to be the Secret Sword Agents had appeared in such a small railway station in such a remote city, too.

However, the focus of their attention was on the trains to the capital city. As for the trains to the opposite direction of the capital city, they were not interested at all.

Am I really going to do this?

Li Yao knew that sneaking into the capital city stealthily was as difficult to explain as the dirty mud on one’s underwear.

He would never do it if he had a more effective approach.

Li Yao closed his eyes and reviewed the few plans that he had vetoed earlier.

Plan A, turn on the crystal processor without bothering anything, contact Ding Lingdang with the old number more than ten years ago, and tell her everything.

Ding Lingdang will believe me!

Even if everyone in the entire universe doesn’t, Ding Lingdang will certainly believe me!

However, his relationship with Ding Lingdang was not a big secret. If Abyss was really a high official in the Secret Sword Bureau, he must be monitoring Ding Lingdang right now.

No, not just Ding Lingdang. Professor Mo Xuan, the Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector… Everybody that Li Yao could trust was probably on their radar.

As soon as I send a message to Ding Lingdang, I will certainly be locked onto in half a minute. Chances are that I will be surrounded by the Secret Sword Agents before we finish the small talk!

Also, it will be very dangerous for Ding Lingdang!

As tough as Ding Lingdang might be, she was a young Core Formation Stage Cultivator after all. Li Yao believed that the Children of the Nether World, who had operated in secret for decades, certainly had ways to deal with her.

Li Yao could never put Ding Lingdang in such jeopardy. Plan A, vetoed!

Plan B, find a random crystal processor and explain his experience to the public on the Spiritual Nexus?

It would be less likely for him to be found out in such a way.

But how should he phrase his experience exactly?

“Fellow netizens, greetings. Let me tell you a secret. In fact, Li Yao, the Ultra-Level Federal Hero, did not die, and he saved the federation on his own yet another time!

“Your guess is correct. Actually, I am the legendary Vulture Li Yao myself. Now, please read my story…”

Li Yao sighed. Fine. His experience in the Blood Demon Sector had truly been too staggering and extraordinary. Who would believe it when it was published on the Spiritual Nexus?

Moreover, even if they bought his words, how could they reach out to him? Should he leave his contact information and his address in the thread, too?

Plan B, vetoed!

Plan C, run back to the square at the center of Green Plateau city right now and shout, “I am Vulture Li Yao. I am still alive! I have shed blood for the federation! I have made contributions to the Heaven’s Origin Sector! I demand a meeting with the Iron Commander and the Speaker!”

The real problem was, who would arrive at the location first? The journalists, the psychiatric doctors, or the Secret Sword Agents?

Li Yao had a feeling that the Secret Sword Agents would be fastest.

The most important thing was that he did not who the evil guys among the Secret Sword Agents were.

Chances were that ninety-nine out of a hundred Secret Sword Agents were anonymous heroes loyal to the federation, and only one of them was a Child of the Nether World.

Then, when their flying swords and iron fists hit his face mercilessly, could he just kill them all?

Even if he were in the superlative height of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, it would be practically impossible for him to paralyze hundreds of Cultivators without killing them.

Besides, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit now was brimming with demonic energy. When he was on a rampage, he appeared to be an out-and-out great demon!

If he was engaged in a fierce battle with the Secret Sword Agents, surrounded by intense demonic energy and wearing the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, and he killed a few good guys by accident, he would not be able to explain himself even if he had grown tongues all over his body!

But then, he could just surrender the moment the Secret Sword Agents arrived and say to them solemnly, “I’ve been wronged. There’s a great plot in all this. Listen to my explanation…”

However, would the Children of the Nether World among the Secret Sword Agents give him the chance to explain?

Would Guo Chunfeng, who was most likely Abyss, give him the chance to explain?

Therefore, he could not be captured by the Secret Sword Agents, at least not now.

If he had to be captured, it could only happen right in front of the Speaker, the Iron Commander, the leaders of the major sects, and millions of spectators.

Only by doing so could the Children of the Nether World and Abyss lurking in the Secret Sword Bureau play no tricks on him. His words could be heard by the leadership of the federation.

Plan C, vetoed!

Alright. All the impractical plans were vetoed. He only had one solution now.

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and carefully observed the crystal train not far away leaving for the East Seagull Port soon.

Chapter 1083 - Locked In Advance!

Chi!

The crystal train under the night sky was like a long, black dragon. It had just finished the final maintenance. The anti-gravity rune arrays on the chassis were activated. White steam spurted out of the circulative cooling tubes in hissing sounds.

The crystal train slowly floated. A gap of dozens of centimeters appeared between the chassis and the railway. By doing so, there would be no physical contact between the train and the railway. The friction would be minimized, and the speed would be accelerated to the highest point.

Deep inside Li Yao's brain, the 3D structural design of the crystal train of this particular model quickly popped up. The tiny lines interweaved into a complicated maze.

The Thunder Light III crystal train was a classic model created by the Heavenly Thunder Sect a hundred and thirty-three years ago. It boasted a firm framework, and it was quite easy to maintain. Sturdy and durable, it was one of the most popular crystal trains rushing on the vast land of the federation.

However, it was an obsolete model from more than a hundred years ago after all. As the technology of the crystal trains advanced, the super-high-speed trains were each replacing the last, and the Thunder Light III was gradually eliminated by the major routes because of its many natural flaws.

Right now, the major cities of the federation had all been equipped with a super-high-speed crystal train of the latest models. The Thunder Light III was now only used in the underdeveloped cities, the mines, or the remote factories.

Li Yao’s destination was East Seagull Port, a city by the coast. In fact, there was a direct train from North Tranquility City to East Seagull Port.

But it was the super-high-speed crystal train of the latest model, whose highest speed was higher than that of sound. Also, its shell was as smooth as a mirror, without a place he could cling to. The train was also equipped with the automatic alert rune arrays that were highly responsive. Even the tiniest damage on the rune arrays on the chassis would feed an alarm back to the cockpit.

But the Thunder Light III was different. It was relatively slow and easier for Li Yao to clutch to. The alert rune arrays on it were not in tandem but on parallel. There would not be any sign if one or two of them were damaged. Most importantly, there was a small dent right below the locomotive of the Thunder Light III in the shape of a ‘7’, which was designed for a technician to crouch inside.

Li Yao figured out that the train must be a slow one that utilized the old-fashioned locomotive by calculating the leaving time and the arrival time on the train schedule in North Tranquility City.

After he arrived in Green Plateau City, he confirmed the detailed information of the train through the crystal processors in the restaurant. It was why he came to the unknown city!

Swoosh!

When the several Secret Sword Agents all boarded on the train leaving for the capital city for investigation, Li Yao darted toward the Thunder Light III like an arrow and soon disappeared below the train!

Right below the train, the anti-gravity rune arrays had been activated to the maximum. The intense spiritual waves between the rune arrays and the railway made Li Yao’s head dizzy and made it difficult for him to breathe.

He gritted his teeth and moved forward rapidly in the gap between the anti-gravity rune arrays like a lizard. It took him two minutes to crawl below the locomotive!

There was one minute to go before the train left. By then, besides the anti-gravity rune arrays, the power rune arrays and the spiritual shield would be activated, too, and he would certainly be shaken off.

Golden brilliance dispersed out of Li Yao’s eyes as he scanned every detail below the locomotive of the Thunder Light III and came up with a modification plan the next second.

As fast as lightning, he cut off the connection between the main power rune arrays and the direction-changing rune arrays without any hesitation. In only three seconds, he reconnected them in a brand-new way. Together with the stabilizing units that he had devised earlier, he built a tiny safe zone for himself without affecting the performance of the train.

The tiny space, along with the original 7-shaped dent on the chassis, was enough for one person to hide in!

Li Yao waited patiently for three seconds to make sure that his movement just now did not trigger the alarm rune arrays or affect the specifications in the cockpit.

Then, he exhaled in great relief. Constricting his muscles, joints, and bones to the minimum, he crouched in the tiny space like a black leopard that was lurking in the bushes.

The strength all over his body was focused on his four fingers and two toes as he clung to the few shallow whorls on the dent.

Li Yao fixated himself to the bottom of the crystal train in a very uncomfortable posture without moving at all.

Wu!

He had just settled in when the crystal train slowly launched after a magnificent blast of its horn.

Power rune arrays emitted circles of light, as if ten suns were rising right in front of his eyes simultaneously. The cooling rune arrays of the old locomotives were never satisfactory. Tremendous light and heat spurted to his face like magma and turned him into a piece of charcoal!

With Li Yao’s capability, he could naturally resist it with his spiritual shield.

But if he triggered a tremendous amount of spiritual energy, the power rune arrays on the train would be affected, which would lead to the anomaly in the specifications on the control light beam in the cockpit. The driver and the train conductor would definitely come down to examine. Cultivators, if there were any on board, might notice him, too.

Therefore, he could only narrow his eyes and resisted the heat with a thin suit and his repetitively built-up body!

As the train went faster and faster, the power rune arrays were gradually stabilized. The light and heat finally became less insufferable for him.

But the crazy wind started blowing over and pierced to the bottom of the train like cold sabers!

Under the gust, Li Yao’s skin was frozen purple.

He seemed to have turned into a block of lead and melted into the crystal train.

In such a way, Li Yao jumped out of Guo Chunfeng’s circle of search and disappeared right below the eyes of the Secret Sword Bureau!

…

In the command center of the Demon Execution Division of the Secret Sword Bureau in the capital city, Mosquito shouted, “Boss, a major discovery!”

Excitement was beaming out of every pore on her body. She was about to dance right before Guo Chunfeng.

As per Guo Chunfeng’s command, they had made a list of the passengers who went to North Tranquility City from the capital city in the last couple of days. There were thousands of names on the list.

However, few of them had returned to the capital city after spending only one to two days in North Tranquility City. There were only eighty-seven of them.

The agents analyzed all the whereabouts of the eighty-seven passengers in North Tranquility City, especially their behavior in the exit, through the surveillance picture. Eventually, they locked onto three candidates.

When the three residents of the capital city left the railway station, a mysterious person had contacted them at a close distance.

The mysterious person was very prudent. His face was never shown in the surveillance picture. Also, he had worn another outfit and been walking differently during every encounter.

Had it not been for Guo Chunfeng’s instructions, it would have been impossible to find out the guy from the infinite surveillance picture!

“Very good!” Guo Chunfeng heaved a long sigh of relief. He took off the blanket and wiped off the sweat on his forehead. Then he smiled. “Now, we have grasped Li Yao’s three newest fake identities. Once he arrives in the capital city, he will certainly make use of one of them!

“Contact the three residents right now and find out their position and their agenda in the next couple of days. It would be best if you can establish three safe areas and ask them to stay there in the next few days!

“Then, inform the Data Analysis Center of the capital city to consider the facial information of the three residences a top priority. Scan them in the range of the whole city every half minute!

“As soon as the surveillance cameras of the capital city discover that one of the three residents appears out of the safe areas or two identical faces are detected at the same time, something will be wrong!”

Guo Chunfeng lay down on the soft chair and looked at the maps of the cities within the capital ring with a cold smile.

So far, he had not figured out Li Yao's infiltration approach yet.

But so what?

All six fake identities had been discovered. Even if Li Yao could sneak in without alarming anyone, he would still be committing suicide!

…

It was raining in East Seagull Port.

There were two days to go before the hundred-day memorial ceremony.

Li Yao was 1,220 kilometers away from the capital city.

This was not a large port, best known for the bizarre seafood and the small islands with enjoyable sceneries. In April and May every year, when the Gold Dragon Sturgeons laid eggs, many tourists would come to the golden beach and the board-like islands for vacation and enjoy the delicious eggs of the Gold Dragon Sturgeons.

It was already early autumn. The wind was rather strong on the ocean, and there were few tourists. The only thing that could be seen were the few fishing boats near the coastline.

The houses of many fishermen, and sometimes even their wasted boats, had been transformed into diners. Although the environment was a little shabby, the food there was definitely new and fresh. The seafood there was unavailable in many luxury hotels in the major cities inland.

Li Yao was enjoying the fat scallops, oysters, and sea snails whose name he did not know on a stranded boat.

Leaning against the gunwale comfortably, he sucked his fingers that were stained with the sauce and chatted with the hostess casually.

“Bamboo shrimps the size of a palm? We don’t have ’em here! They’ve all been purchased by the White Sea Sect! See? The biggest boat over there belongs to the White Sea Sect. They are a partner to several big hotels in the capital city. Every morning, the freshest seafood will be frozen the moment they are fished up and shipped to the capital city by air immediately! The seafood picked up five o’clock in the morning will be served on the table in the major hotels in the capital city at noon!”

Li Yao was almost out of breath having the delicious meal of seafood. The hostess was overjoyed by his extravagance, too, and could not wait to pass on all the information about the White Sea Sect to him.

Li Yao waved his arm and said that his portable crystal processor had been ruined by the water when he was on the ocean. He asked if he could borrow the crystal processor in the hostess’ house.

Naturally, the hostess agreed instantly.

Li Yao checked all the information about the White Sea Sect again with the crystal processor in the fisherman’s house, including the magical equipment involved in their seafood quick-freezing technology.

The next fishing trip would be following morning. He had a long night to prepare for the magical equipment to be used in the capital city.

“I wonder, do you have magical equipment stores that provide services for spectral Cultivators here, hostess?” Li Yao asked in a smile.

Chapter 1084 - Quick-Frozen Man!

East Seagull Port was a small city. There were few residents existing in the form of ghosts. Naturally, there was not a special service station for the spectral Cultivators.

However, the owner of the biggest magical equipment store in the local area happened to be a spectral Cultivator.

After talking with the owner, Li Yao learned that the guy used to be a mechanic on a large fishing boat that had run into a super tsunami during one of the fishing jobs. The boat had turned upside down, and everybody had drowned.

But at the moment of his death, he had been hit by lightning. For some reason, although his physical body sank into the ocean, his remaining soul had condensed and drifted on the ocean for a couple of days before the rescue team found him.

After he was turned into a spectral Cultivator, he did not want to go to the ocean again for fear of the wind and tide. So, he simply ran a magical equipment store with his compensation.

Since the boss was a spectral Cultivator, and some of the ghost tourists happened to fall into the water, resulting to the damage to their artificial bodies, when they were visiting East Seagull Port, his magical equipment store was like a service station. There were quite a few spare units for artificial bodies in the warehouse. He even had a secondhand artificial body that was almost completely intact, which was meant for the temporary use of spectral Cultivators in need.

Li Yao was very satisfied with the artificial body that was almost two meters tall. He bought it as well as tremendous units and components by the way.

“Li Yao!”

When he was paying for his purchase, he suddenly heard somebody shouting his name.

Li Yao’s pupils constricted violently, but he soon relaxed.

He did not sense any Secret Sword Agent, but he did sense that several young kids were playing around at the door of the magical equipment store.

As it turned out, the seemingly hideous boss was actually a kind man. He often assembled toys with scrap components for the kids.

So, the magical equipment store became the playhouse for all the kids in the small port.

A chubby, speckled boy with curly hair was wearing quite a few cardboard boxes on his body, which he apparently pretended to be a crystal suit. He played with his companion with a wooden flying sword. “Come on, you filthy demon beast. I am Li Yao. I am not scared of you!”

His companion was shooting at him with a toy gun, with snot coming out his nose. “You are not Li Yao. Li Yao is dead already. You are a demon beast. A big and fat one!”

The chubby boy blushed. “I—I am not dead. The federation is in danger. I am back again to beat the skeleton-like demon beast that is you! Prepare to die!”

The few kids rolled on the ground and soon turned into muddy monkeys. They were shouting together.

“I am Li Yao!”

“I am Li Yao!”

“You are not. I am Li Yao!”

Leaning against the door, Li Yao looked at them in a daze, his lips curling.

His mood was suddenly better now.

After returning to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, he had constantly been feeling gloomy.

He had gone through life and death in the Blood Demon Sector and been hunted by dozens of demon emperors before he finally destroyed the Eye of Blood Demon!

He had considered how he should refuse the public speech when he was back home. Never had he expected that he would be chased after by the federal army and the Secret Sword Bureau!

Rationally, Li Yao knew that it was because the Children of the Nether World and Abyss had fooled most of the ordinary people, federal soldiers, Secret Sword Agents, and Cultivators.

But emotionally…

Gloom, frustration, and anger—all kinds of negative feelings were building up.

Li Yao vaguely felt that the capability of the mental devil was almost doubled after only a couple of days.

It meant that the dark side in his heart was getting stronger.

But at this moment, hearing the innocent children shouting his name, for some reason, Li Yao felt that the dark cloud looming over his head suddenly split apart, revealing the golden sunlight. He was given a new strength!

Ultra-Level Federal Hero…

It was such an awkward and embarrassing title.

He blushed every time he thought of it.

Li Yao had never wanted to be a hero.

Even at that moment, he did not consider himself to be a real Ultra-Level Federal Hero.

In his opinion, the title should only belong to the formal, solemn pictures in textbooks.

He was not qualified, nor did he intend, to be listed next to the heroes.

However…

At dusk, the ocean was glittering like golden dragon scales. In the peaceful port, the laughter of the little kids was soaring to the sky like wind chime, which was occasionally interrupted by the angry exclamation of their parents who snatched the muddy monkeys’ ears and dragged them home for dinner.

It was such a beautiful picture that Li Yao could not bear to imagine it being destroyed by war and virus at all.

He did not want to be a hero. Being a hero was exhausting, annoying, and stupid, not to mention that a hero could be wronged.

However, if the little kids considered him to be a hero, how could he disappoint them and even watch them be killed?

Rest assured!

Seeing the kids jumping up and down and disappearing in the alley, Li Yao clenched his fists and said to himself, [No matter who is behind all this, I am going to unveil every one of them!

I will not let you be consumed by a meaningless war!

Definitely not!

He spent the night in a wasted boat near the ocean.

This place was more than a thousand kilometers away from the capital city. The investigation of the Secret Sword Bureau had yet to include the area. It was peaceful all night. Nobody went close to the wasted boat.

At two o’clock in the morning, he assembled the magical equipment to be used in the capital city.

His devices mainly included an artificial body for a special Cultivators as well as a very powerful spotlight. The appearance of the artificial body was the same as before, but its interior had been completely remodeled.

The spotlight could shoot out colorful mystic rays and project ‘I am Li Yao. I am still alive’ into the sky a thousand meters from the ground. Every word would be dozens of square meters in diameter, which would be perfectly clear for everyone on the ground.

As long as he shot the eight words at the sky, preferably on the stomach of Burning Prairie, right in front of the Speaker, the Iron Commander, the director of the Bureau of Intelligence, and the rest of the audience, everything would be settled!

The Children of the Nether World and Abyss could do nothing except to watch. How could they stop him? Interrogate him into a confession right in front of everyone? Nobody would agree!

At three o’clock in the morning, Li Yao snuck into the processing boat of the White Sea Sect, a local sect of East Seagull Port.

The White Sea Sect was an insignificant sect with few Cultivators. Such regular processing of seafood did not require the supervision of Cultivators, either.

After all, who would bother to steal a few fish or sea snails?

All the workers on the boat were ordinary people. There was only one non-battle-type Cultivator on board who was responsible for maneuvering and maintaining the magical equipment on board. He was not very wary, or rather, he was not wary at all.

The processing boat had a large quick-freezing cabin that could freeze seawater in half a second through a specially-made solution while ensuring the intactness of the cells of the seafood inside so that the meat would be kept fresh.

After being classified and selected by the workers, the seafood would be frozen into a huge ice block and stored in special refrigerators.

The solution was blue in the first place. After the water was frozen, everything was deep blue. The visibility was quite low. It was impossible to tell what was inside at all.

Different refrigerators were delivered to different hotels and seafood markets. The batch of seafood of the highest qualified would be shipped directly to the Junhao Hotel of the capital city through the dedicated quick crystal airship and unfrozen in the warehouse of the hotel.

Li Yao knew that such urgent refrigerators were usually exempt from inspection. Even if there was a check, they would only open the refrigerator and look inside. Then, the check would be considered done.

At 4:09 a.m., Li Yao played a tricked in the engine compartment on the boat.

At 4:21 a.m., a minor fire took place in the engine compartment.

The only Cultivator on board mumbled in discontent and crawled into the engine cabin.

It was a simple accident of overloading because of the aging of the crystal wires.

But it happened that several key stabilizing units were ruined, which would be quite troublesome to repair.

The quick-freezing hour was about to come. If the fault was not dealt with in time, hundreds of tons of fish could rot.

Having no choice, the Cultivator squatted in the engine compartment and performed repair work for more than half an hour.

During the period, there was not a single Cultivator in the quick-freezing cabin. The workers were all yawning fishermen.

An hour later, the Cultivator finally addressed the problem and returned to the quick-freezing cabin.

At this moment, several refrigerators were already prepared, including the one about to be delivered to the Junhao Hotel in the capital city.

At 6:33 a.m., the refrigerator was loaded on the crystal airship. The mark of ‘Junhao’ was glittering under the morning sun.

The airship flew toward the capital city.

At 7:25 a.m., the investigation in Green Plateau City finally produced a result. The abandoned shuttle that Li Yao had stolen from the old neighborhood had been found. The surveillance picture of him leaving Green Plateau City in the shuttle was located, too.

However, there were no further leads when they reached the suburbs of Green Plateau City. The shuttle had disappeared like a piece of ice melted in water.

At 8:55 a.m., the alert at the periphery of the capital city was further increased.

Nine perimeters had been established. All the pedestrians, shuttles, short-distance buses, crystal trains, and civil carriers were examined in the strictest way!

The problem was that the Secret Sword Agents were made of flesh and blood, too. They were not omnipotent gods. The resources at the Secret Sword Bureau’s disposal were not infinite, either.

When the dedicated all their manpower to the investigation and search of the vehicles, naturally, they did not have time to bother about a cargo airship from a minor place such as East Seagull Port.

At 9:45 a.m., two Secret Sword Agents boarded the airship. They were very close to victory.

However, after scanning every gap on the airship and making sure that no suspects were hiding on board, they looked at the sign of the Junhao Hotel, scratched their noses, and let the victory slide through their fingers.

At ten o’clock in the morning, right above the Junhao Hotel in the downtown area, the airship slowly landed.

There was one day to go before the hundred-day memorial ceremony.

He was zero kilometers away from the capital city.

Vulture Li Yao had snuck into the capital city.

Chapter 1085 - Human or Ghost?

At 10:50 a.m., Li Yao slithered into the ventilation tube of the kitchen of the Junhao Hotel like an enormous lizard.

Over the past ten years, he had snuck into the most dangerous ventilation tubes in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector countless times. Right now, the ventilation tube of the regular hotel was not even a piece of cake for him; it was the cream on the cake at best.

As the lunch time drew near, the ventilation tube was gradually filled with burning smoke. Together with the oil and dirt that had accumulated over years, it would definitely have been as harsh as a volcano for other people.

However, in Li Yao’s eyes, it was much more comfortable than any of the tubes that he had snuck into before. The scenery here could almost be called beautiful!

The hundred-day memorial ceremony was to be held the following morning. To participate in the grand ceremony and to witness the debut of Burning Prairie, there would be an unprecedented number of people in the capital city. The security measures would definitely be the most thorough, too.

If he walked about on the street, he would be scanned by dozens of surveillance cameras. He would run into a lot of problems whether he checked in a hotel at night or wandered on the street.

Therefore, Li Yao decided to simply lurk in the ventilation tube for one day and get out next day in the morning.

For a moment, Li Yao had an urge to jump out to the center of the capital city right now and shoot ‘I am Li Yao. I am still alive’ into the sky. At least tens of thousands of residents of the capital city would see it.

It was unlikely that the Children of the Nether World and Abyss were going to block such a piece of breaking news.

But right now, the Secret Sword Agents would be everywhere outside. If he did it, they would certainly be the first to arrive.

If he resisted, he would risk injuring the Secret Sword Agents who were fooled and the innocent passers-by

If he did not resist, he would be tied up and lose the ability to counterattack. It was possible that he would fall into the control of Abyss.

Li Yao thought for a moment. If the Secret Sword Agents put on a Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle on him, he was not confident that he could crack it safely again.

Yes, the Speaker, the Iron Commander, Ding Lingdang, Professor Mo Xuan, and the leaders of the major sects in the capital city would certainly learn of the matter, but how long would it take before they reacted? An hour? Two hours?

After all, the Secret Sword Bureau was not a pure intelligence agency. It was also a security agency that aimed to prevent the federation from internal destruction. It had its own armed forces and secret bases, and it was even more independent than the federal army!

Throughout history, the Secret Sword Bureau had arrested evil Cultivators who committed felony as fast as lightning many times at the risk of head-on confrontations with a lot of Cultivation sects. However, every single time, the undeniable evidence had proved that the seemingly innocent suspects were guilty of unpardonable crimes later.

After hundreds of years of development, all the Cultivators of the Heaven's Origin Sector acknowledged the tradition, which was that Cultivators, given their strong personal ability, must be checked by a certain power.

The federal army was part of that power, and the Secret Sword Bureau was another part. Only the check and balance could make the federation more stable!

Therefore, the Secret Sword Bureau definitely had the ability and the reasoning to lock him up for a few hours against pressure from all sides.

Losing the ability to counterattack in the hands of Abyss for a few hours?

Li Yao believed that, with the interrogative methods of Abyss, in three to five hours, even his darkest secrets would be dug out, not to mention the evidence in his hand!

So, just hold it for another day!

It's useless to rush out and show up in public right now. I must wait until ten o'clock in the morning tomorrow and reveal myself right in front of the Speaker, the Iron Commander, the director of the Secret Sword Bureau, the leaders of the major sects, and billions of spectators. Only such a piece of super shocking news can break the plot of Abyss!

Li Yao closed his eyes and rested in the suffocating smoke, waiting for the arrival of tomorrow.

With Black Wing as his guard, he had a great sleep and did not wake up again until five o’clock in the morning next day.

There were five hours to go before the hundred-day memorial ceremony.

When he opened his eyes in the dark ventilation tube, Li Yao’s physical energy and thinking ability soared to the maximum!

It’s time to warm up a little bit.

Back in North Tranquility City, he had observed three citizens of the capital city at a close distance and collected their facial features, voiceprints, and fingerprints. Based on the information, he made three flawless false identities.

However, had the Secret Sword Bureau found out the false identities or not?

He only needed to run a minor test.

Li Yao took out a secondhand crystal processor that he had purchased from the magical equipment store in East Seagull Port and searched for the free network in the Junhao Hotel.

Such luxury hotels all boasted fast, free coverage for the customers. Soon, he was connected to the Spiritual Nexus, and the signal was not bad.

At the railway station in North Tranquility City, when he picked his prey, he did not select them randomly but specifically chose passengers who seemed to be bad-tempered. He had also managed to get their numbers while he was tailing them.

Li Yao dialed the number of one of the passengers.

At this moment, it was 5:10 in the morning, the time when most people were enjoying their dreams.

Beep… Beep… Beep… Beep…

Nobody picked it up. It was perhaps set in the do-not-disturb mode.

Li Yao was not frustrated. He dialed the number of the second passenger. This time, after more than ten seconds of beeping, somebody finally picked it up.

“Hello!”

The voice was low and brimming with anger.

“Hello. Is this Mr. Wan Ziang? I am Officer Zhao Zhiwen from the police station of the East District. My police ID is 334245. I want to confirm with you whether my colleague…”

There was indifference in Li Yao’s courtesy.

As he expected, the speaker was infuriated and bellowed, “Are you ever done? What time is it? Your colleagues have asked me like twenty times! I am not going anywhere today. I’ll just be at home. Does that sound okay to you!”

“Well, it certainly does. Perhaps they didn’t make it clear to me earlier. Thank you for your cooperation, and sorry for the trouble. Goodbye.”

Pa!

Li Yao cut off the Spiritual Nexus and crushed the second-hand crystal processor, throwing all the scraps into his Cosmos Ring.

His eyes were cold.

The police had asked the guy almost twenty times?

Fine. The three carefully-prepared false identities could be thrown into a dustbin.

Guo Chunfeng was indeed the most terrifying demon hunter in the federation. He was so close to capturing him!

Li Yao smiled and activated his final backup plan. He brought the components of the secondhand artificial body that he had bought in East Seagull Port out of his Cosmos Ring.

Theoretically speaking, the invisible spectral Cultivators could be attached to artificial bodies in all kinds of shapes.

However, most spectral Cultivators and the ghosts transformed from ordinary people preferred to keep the shape of a human being, which often made them feel that they were still sort of connected to their life in the past and that they were still a human being.

Besides, the parts of the human-shaped artificial body were replaceable with the artificial limbs designed for the disabled. Therefore, the cost could be reduced. Artificial bodies were much cheaper in price, so they were more economical for most ghosts.

It was exactly so for the artificial body in Li Yao’s hand. The artificial body was approximately two meters tall with limbs, a head, and everything. It looked like a mechanical puppet.

However, the inside of the artificial body had been emptied by Li Yao. All the unnecessary components had been thrown away, and only the parts on the surface were kept.

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao summoned his spiritual energy in silence and compressed his muscles, veins, and nerves to the minimum. The thick arms slowly shriveled into dry firewood that could fit into the arms of the artificial body.

The face of a living person boasts all kinds of features. It was impossible to find two identical people even if there were a million candidates.

Therefore, by the scanning of the surveillance cameras, it was very convenient to find out their identity in the database after the facial features were determined.

However, ghosts did not have real bodies. The artificial bodies that they used were all manufactured.

Since they were manufactured, artificial bodies of the same model would naturally have identical faces.

Many spectral Cultivators liked to modify their metal faces, but such modifications were not always recorded.

Therefore, if Li Yao pretended to be a spectral Cultivator, how was the Secret Sword Bureau going to find him?

At 7:25 a.m., a spectral Cultivator staggered out of the alley behind the Junhao Hotel.

His artificial body had apparently been used for quite a few years. It was covered in a green cloak that was full of patches. His hands and feet were enveloped in thick rubber as protection, but the body parts exposed to the air all had bright green rust.

In case the solar radiation affected his soul, he was wearing a huge hat. Below the hat was a face made of vegetable glue that was dull and emotionless.

He was walking like a cripple in a rigid posture. Weird noises were echoing from his knees, suggesting that the joints inside needed to be replaced.

Judging from the appearance, it was not difficult to guess his identity. He was certainly a poor ghost who had transformed from an ordinary person.

The hundred-day memorial ceremony was to be held in the Federal Square several kilometers away very soon. Although it was only seven o’clock in the morning, the entire capital city was already teeming with people. Everybody was crowding to the Federal Square.

The spectral Cultivator was apparently also going to participate in the gala. However, since he walked too slowly, he soon fell behind the crowd.

Above the street, hundreds of cute puji critters were flying everywhere. Their eyes were glittering crystal cameras that were scanning the blocks with countless invisible mystic rays.

The puji critters scanned the spectral Cultivator dozens of times.

But according to their instructions, they had been asked to search for three citizens of the capital city with more than 70% of their analysis ability.

A spectral Cultivator was not their target.

The mystic rays passed Li Yao and went to the flooding crowd behind him without pause.

Chapter 1086 - A Mourning Army Is a Winning Army!

The capital city of the Star Glory Federation had not yet completely recovered from the unexpected assault a hundred days ago. A lot of deep claw traces and dents were still left on the surface of many skyscrapers at the downtown area.

The place where Heavenly Sword Plaza, one of the landmarks of the capital city, was located was now bare. The empty sky felt particularly odd.

Although every street and alley was packed with people, there was not much joy in the atmosphere. Instead, it was solemn and depressed. The main color of the Federal Square today was white. Many citizens who joined the gala were wearing a white flower on their chests, too.

White was the color of mourning in the Star Glory Federation.

In the entire capital city, from the ordinary people to the soldiers to the Cultivators, everybody looked like a half-frozen volcano. They reminded Li Yao of an ancient saying.

An army burning with righteous indignation is bound to win!

Traffic control had been implemented in the sky of the capital city. There were not any shuttles except for the armed shuttles of the military and the Secret Sword Bureau. A lot of light beams were floating in the sky.

Every light beam was displaying the spontaneous gatherings of the citizens of the major cities in the federation where they prayed for the victims.

Some of the light beams were displaying the bloody battles of the federal army and the Cultivators as well as the latest political news.

Li Yao stared at the political news.

According to the news, the three parliaments of the federation had a special meeting yesterday. The motion to attack the Blood Demon Sector had still not been passed.

Other than the firm attitude of Speaker Jiang Hailiu, the allies from the Flying Star Sector were very prudent, too.

Luo Xingzi, leader of the Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector, stated in the meeting that Burning Prairie and the two hundred thousand Grand Illusionary Soldiers were sent to the Heaven’s Origin Sector to protect the homeland of the human compatriots. They would not consider joining the expedition to the Blood Demon Sector for now.

If the expedition proceeded, they would need more files of the Blood Demon Sector to make clear the real situation there, and they would make a decision after discussing with the locals of the Flying Star Sector.

That was the situation right now. Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao, Director Lu Zui, and two thirds of the representatives were in favor of the expedition.

Speaker Jiang Hailiu and the allies of the Flying Star Sector who boasted the super warship, on the other hand, were the more cautious ones.

The two sides were equal for now, and their debate was still ongoing.

Li Yao was finally relieved after reading the news.

The Speaker deserved to be the Speaker. His head was so clear. After Li Yao delivered all the evidence, all the advocates of the expedition would certainly be silenced.

Li Yao secretly raised his wariness and slowly moved forward in the crowd.

He did not expect to get into the Federal Square, but the Federal Square must be on high alert.

He only needed to be within one or two kilometers from the square so that he could shoot a beam of super-focused mystic rays to the sky above the leadership of the federation and thousands of citizens.

In the meantime, he had made backup plans.

Should the Secret Sword Agents appear around him, he would shoot the mystic rays to the sky without caring about anything.

At this moment, there was only half an hour to go before the memorial ceremony began. The leadership of the Star Glory Federation were gradually appearing in the square. It was very difficult for the Children of the Nether World and Abyss to capture him now!

Right then, Li Yao heard the exclamations of the crowd, and he sensed tremendous pressure coming at him from the sky.

He raised his head, only to discover that a silver, giant sword had just pierced through the atmosphere and was moving close to the square in the blue, cloudless sky.

It was Burning Prairie, the strongest warship of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector!

…

In a high building next to the Federal Square, Guo Chunfeng looked down at the square with a gloomy face through the big window.

It was the field command center of the Demon Execution Division of the Secret Sword Bureau today.

Behind him, countless light beams were glittering in midair, changing into thousands of pictures that were the folks near the Federal Square.

At this point, several million people were crowding in the ten square kilometers nearby.

Millions of heads next to each other were an out-and-out catastrophe for any intelligence worker.

“Where is he exactly?”

After only a few days, Guo Chunfeng had lost almost ten kilograms of weight. His eyes were hollowed, and his body was dry. His hair was yellow as if it had been burnt.

He paced back and forth like a zombie through the complicated light beams while talking to himself nervously.

“He is right here. He must be. I can feel it. He is right under my nose!

“But he isn’t using any of the three fake identities. He has changed to… a seventh identity!

“Loophole. Loophole. There is bound to be a loophole. There must be!”

Suddenly, Guo Chunfeng came to an abrupt halt. Terrible brilliance beamed out of his eyes which looked like searchlights. “Mosquito, come here! I’ve figured it out!

“Hasn’t the third division prepared a team of almost a hundred specialists of crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus trying to capture the signals that Li Yao sent out?

“Wrong. Wrong. It was a wrong approach!

“Li Yao is too prudent to send out a signal at the critical moment!

“But that’s his weakness!

“At this moment, perhaps millions of people are gathered in the ten square kilometers around the Federal Square, but I dare say that 99% of them are carrying portable crystal processors that are connected to the Spiritual Nexus wirelessly!

“As long as they are connected to the Spiritual Nexus, even if they are not doing anything, the devices will still receive and send feeble signals, which will make them tiny ‘hotspots’.

“Li Yao is the only one that is not!

“So, let’s try to find everyone in the crowd who is neither sending nor receiving signals from the Spiritual Nexus!

“They will be like the dead ‘black holes’ in the dense hotspots around them. It will be very easy to find them!

“Hurry up and pass on the idea to the specialists of the third division. Investigate now!”

…

At 9:55 a.m., the hundred-day memorial ceremony was about to begin. The number of the people around the Federal Square broke the record. The whole city turned into a white ocean!

The Speaker of the Star Glory Federation, the Chief of Staff of the federal army, the director of the Secret Sword Bureau, the leadership of the major sects, the friends from the Flying Star Sector… everybody was gathered in the Federal Square!

The splendid Burning Prairie had stopped right above the capital city, too, like a boundless, silver floating mountain, raising rounds of exclamations and sounds of snapshots.

Around Burning Prairie, light beams were floating, too, which were the workers of thousands of media outlets that were live-streaming.

The cameras slowly passed Speaker Jiang Hailiu and other leaders of the federation.

Li Yao saw Ding Lingdang, Professor Mo Xuan, Wu Mayan, and Xie Anan in a corner of one of the pictures.

He smiled below the cold mask. Narrowing his eyes, he calculated the distance between himself and Burning Prairie and how he could enlarge the viewership of his mystic rays later.

Very soon, he would be reunited with his friends.

At this point, nobody could stop him!

…

At ten o’clock sharp, the memorial ceremony for the victims in the assault to the capital city a hundred days ago had officially begun.

At first, the national anthem of the Star Glory Federation was played, and the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag was raised.

The vast capital city and thousands of other towns in the federation fell quiet. All the citizens of the federation were paying respect to the flag accompanied by the soul-stirring national anthem.

A thunderous roar echoed in the field command center of the Demon Execution Division.

“We’ve got him!”

“It’s a spectral Cultivator. He is pretending to be a spectral Cultivator!”

“Attention, all the Secret Sword Agents in the operation group. Move to the Weiguo Road on the east side of the square and prepare to capture him!”

Guo Chunfeng jumped to his feet, turning instantly from a dry skeleton into an energetic athlete. He gnashed his teeth and waved his fist. “I’ll lead the team. He’s not getting away this time!”

…

At 10:05 a.m., the flag-raising ceremony was done. Speaker Jiang Hailiu walked to the podium.

Every light beam in the sky was occupied by his slender body in a white suit.

“Citizens, compatriots, comrades from a different world, we gather here today in memory of the 3,444 innocent victims in the disaster!”

Jiang Hailiu began his speech. Behind him was Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao and Director Lu Zui. The three most powerful men of the Star Glory Federation were all present.

On the VIP seat not far away were the important Cultivators such as Ding Lingdang, Professor Mo Xuan, and Luo Xingzi among other people.

Li Yao could not pretend anymore.

He shoved his way through the gapless crowd in such an agile way that it was utterly unbefitting of his appearance while he tried to get a better angle and a closer distance.

He sensed clearly that hundreds of sharp auras were rushing toward him from various directions!

Guo Chunfeng had discovered him. The fastest Secret Sword Agents would surround him in only half a minute.

But so what?

The game was over. He was the winner!

“…I know that many compatriots are consumed by fury right now and can’t wait to attack the Blood Demon Sector and destroy the Pantheon of Demons immediately!”

Speaker Jiang Hailiu’s sad and yet calm voice echoed in the entire capital city and was broadcast to the billions of citizens of the Star Glory Federation through the live stream of the media. “All our compatriots are my brothers and sisters. Right now, my heart is as heavy, miserable, and infuriated as any one of yours!”

Li Yao took a deep breath. He glanced at Burning Prairie in midair and finally determined his angle.

He triggered his spiritual energy and made an empty space of around one square meter around him by force so that he could retrieve the spotlight more conveniently.

Li Yao planned to fly into the firing range of Burning Prairie immediately after he shot out the eight words. Were the Children of the Nether World and Abyss bold enough to capture him right below the Heavenly Might Cannons of Burning Prairie?

Abyss, you are screwed ! Li Yao sneered in his heart.

“However, do not let pain corrode our brain, do not let anger drown our soul, and do not let the hot Blood Sparrow our body—that is exactly what our enemy wants us to do!”

Faced with millions of residents of the capital city and billions of the people of the Heaven’s Origin Sector who were watching the live-stream, Speaker Jiang Hailiu called, “Compatriots—”

That was the last word he spoke.

BOOM!

A deep purple fireball suddenly erupted out right below the feet of Jiang Hailiu, the Speaker of the Star Glory Federation, and blew him into the sky. His spiritual shield did not work at all, and he was immediately entangled by flames and riddled with holes!

Chapter 1087 - Sniper!

While Speaker Jiang Hailiu was struggling in the furious flames, the blast along with thousands sharp shrapnel swept across everything like a tide!

Standing right behind Speaker Jiang Hailiu were the government officials including Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao and Director Lu Zui.

Other than Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao, most of them worked in the office, not on the battlefield.

Although they were all high-level Cultivators, and some of them were in the Core Formation Stage and the Nascent Soul Stage, they were mostly admin-type or research-type ones just like Speaker Jiang Hailiu. They could not even protect themselves!

At the critical moment, Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao demonstrated the unparalleled abilities of a seasoned warrior. The moment that the blast expanded, hundreds of hexagonal super-alloy armored plates unfolded right in front of his face. Together with his thick spiritual shield, they constituted a wall of steel and resisted all the blast!

BOOM!

The blast crashed into Zhou Hengdao’s spiritual shield and raised the second explosion. Zhou Hengdao was thrown far away, too.

Seventy percent of his organs were artificial and could not endure such an intense impact. They broke apart while he was still in midair!

Thankfully, because of Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao’s valiance, the blast and the shrapnel were mostly subdued. The civil officials such as Director Lu Zui behind him were not seriously injured!

It was not until this moment that their bodyguards realized what was going on. They lunged close in a hurry and activated all their defensive magical equipment, blocking the government officials. The Speaker, soaked in blood with no signs of life, was grabbed by a few bodyguards in midair, too.

The scene was delivered to billions of citizens of the federation through the media.

It was perhaps the most silent second on the entire planet since the Star Glory Federation was founded.

Even Li Yao was stunned for a moment.

Before he resumed the ability of thinking, as a bomb expert, he had already analyzed the level of the crystal bomb through its fire and the distribution of its shrapnel with his instincts!

It was a super bomb made of several demon cores and marrow crystals of the highest quality!

Judging from the color and the bouncing of the fire, the crystal bomb adopted at least a hundred and thirty complicated rune arrays to restrain the power of explosion so that all the damage of the marrow crystals and the demon cores would be focused on one point!

Even a battle-type Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage might have been heavily wounded if he was not prepared, not to mention Speaker Jiang Hailiu who was merely an admin-type Cultivator!

The one who manufactured the crystal bomb was definitely the best of the best. Also, the bomb was unlikely to have been made in a small workshop. Only an enormous center of magical equipment could make such a terrible product!

That was only the first bomb.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Only half a second after the first bomb exploded, before everybody came back to themselves from shock, another four bombs were detonated around the square.

This time, it was not just the government officials and the Cultivators who were involved, but also the ordinary citizens that were joining the ceremony!

For a moment, the Federal Square was consumed by surging smoke. The Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag, which had been flapping in midair previously, was burnt and blackened, too.

The millions of civilians were in chaos!

Cries, screams, and moans!

They were pushing and stomping on each other while fleeing in a hurry!

Panic was spreading out crazily just like the blast of the crystal bombs, raising a tsunami of terror!

Li Yao’s pupils constricted into two shining needle tips. He felt that he had fallen into a deep, cold cave of ice, but he did not have time to curse or moan. Thinking quickly, he squatted deeply and was about to fly to Burning Prairie!

It was a trap!

With everything coming to this point, explanation would be meaningless. The only way to resolve the ruse was to break out of the siege and fly to Burning Prairie.

If he had to be captured, he needed to give himself to the Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector. Only in such a way would he have a chance to explain everything!

However—

The moment before he jumped up, his heart seemed to be dug out and pinched hard. He was in such excruciating pain that he almost cried out.

It was the omen of danger of the highest degree!

There was a sniper!

His heart had been locked onto!

The trigger had been pulled!

It was definitely a top-tier expert, perhaps someone who deserve to be called ‘gun god’. The man was likely to be in the Nascent Soul Stage because his ability to manipulate the bullet was too incredible!

Li Yao could not hear the sound of the bullet, nor could he see the glimmer when the bullet was rubbing the air.

Therefore, he could not predict the trajectory of the bullet. He did not even know where the sniper was hiding!

The only thing that he could feel was that the scent of death was piercing through his heart brutally!

Li Yao was about to dodge out of natural instinct.

But he was surrounded by panicked, innocent civilians. Right behind him, a helpless mother was holding her two daughters!

If he jumped away, the bullet would certainly rip apart dozens of ordinary people!

Li Yao roared. Several clusters of gel and a few shields instantly blinked out of his Cosmos Rings. He also activated his spiritual shield to the maximum!

Shua!

The gel was pierced through, and the shields were shattered. A streak of crimson, devastating brilliance finally appeared. Breaking through Li Yao's spiritual shield easily, it darted toward his chest!

In his haste, Li Yao only had the time to grab a Bright Gold Stone, which was the solidest material that he had, and put it before his chest.

The bullet was deeply embedded into the Bright Gold Stone, its impact unreduced. Somebody seemed to have punched Li Yao's chest heavily and fractured his ribs. The broken bones were pierced into his heart!

Li Yao's eyes were bloodshot, his lips purple. He finally realized that the opponent did not mean to capture him at all; the guy was trying to kill him!

Also, it was a super gunman with a sniper rifle who deserved to be an ultimate treasure that was hiding on the top of a certain skyscraper and shooting at him from the high ground!

Everything was excellent about the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit of the Blood Demon Form, except that it took too long to be equipped.

After he retrieved the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit from his Cosmos Ring and activated the strengthened cells on the surface, he would have been shot dead by the mysterious sniper a hundred times!

Li Yao’s teeth bit into his lips. He was thinking about whether or not he should summon Black Wing and dash to Burning Prairie even at the risk of getting shot.

Right then—

After a hum, a layer of splendid brilliance was flashing around Burning Prairie in the sky, as if thousands of dazzling light swords were glittering and rotating rapidly around the warship.

Li Yao cursed to himself holding his broken heart.

Burning Prairie had activated the self-defense array of the highest level.

The purpose of such a defense array was to stop the enemy from sneaking in during a fierce battle.

Right now, anybody who dared to draw close to Burning Prairie would be pierced through mercilessly by the light swords.

Why?

Why would Burning Prairie activate the self-defense array of the highest level? Why was it not allowing anybody to come close?

Li Yao could not figure out the reason at all.

But the situation did not allow him to think any further.

The hundreds of Secret Sword Agents led by Guo Chunfeng had surrounded him, and he still could not find the ‘gun god’ sniper lurking among the skyscrapers.

The omen of death was stimulating Li Yao’s heart and eyebrow like parasites!

Li Yao resisted the first shot, at the cost of fractured ribs, a damaged heart, and hindrance in his spiritual energy circulation.

Would he be able to resist a second shot?

Li Yao had no choice except to break out of the siege before the Secret Sword Agents completely surrounded him!

Like a cicada out of its shell, he dashed out of the broken artificial body. He crouched to the ground and slithered forward like a slippery loach!

Before he escaped, he did one last thing.

He threw the spotlight that he had not activated to where he was.

Hundreds of meters away from Li Yao, Guo Chunfeng almost went mad.

“Who’s shooting? Who ordered that shot?

“There are so many innocent victims here. Do you want to kill them together with Li Yao?”

“Position One did not shoot!”

“Position Two is still standing by!”

“Position Three is standing by. Losing the trace of the target!”

“Boss, it isn’t our guy. Some other sniper is out there!”

The reports of his subordinates made Guo Chunfeng’s eyes as cold as Li Yao’s.

Before he realized what was going on, he felt that a wind was blowing at him!

In the communication channel, exclamations were echoing nonstop. The few Secret Sword Agents closest to Li Yao were shot at the same time!

It took them three seconds to finish the snipers. The three seconds, and the chaos on the spot, were more than enough for the target to flee and vanish into the crowd.

“Boss, what do we do now?”

Guo Chunfeng was silent for a few seconds. The square had completely gone out of control. In every second, countless civilians were being stepped upon during their escape.

Guo Chunfeng was quick enough to snatch out a dying old man from the crowd’s feet. No longer hesitating, he urged his agents, “Save the people!”

But his eyes penetrated through the crowd and stopped where Li Yao had been standing.

He sensed that something was there.

Against the crowd, he struggled to move close and picked up the object.

He was a monster of training who had quadruple talents. He was an excellent warrior, a shrewd manager, and also a knowledgeable scholar and expert in magical equipment.

Sending his telepathic thoughts into the spotlight, he probed for a moment and immediately understood the structure and usage of the magical equipment.

“I am Li Yao. I am still alive!”

Guo Chunfeng blinked in confusion. What was the meaning of those eight words exactly?

He raised his big, greasy head. His eyes that were clear previously lost focus again. The skyscrapers around him seemed to have constituted an impregnable maze without an exit, which had caged him, Li Yao, and perhaps more people inside!

…

The chaos did not die down until noon.

Before the chaos was settled, all the Cultivators were dedicated to the rescue work. There was no time for them to bother anything else.

The preliminary statistics as of one o’clock in the afternoon suggested that more than seven thousand civilians had been killed or injured in the explosions and chaos. A lot more were missing. The number of casualties would certainly surpass ten thousand eventually.

A hundred days ago, the intimidating assault from the Blood Demon Sector had taken place at midnight and been disrupted half way through. More than four thousand civilians had been killed or injured.

But this time, in the ceremony for the victims, casualties that were three times more had been caused.

After being slapped in the face brutally a hundred days ago, the Star Glory Federation had been slapped even harder, when the swelling from the previous slap was not gone yet. The dignity, pride, and sense of security of the federation had all been slapped away with nothing left!

Chapter 1088 - Top Secret Meeting!

At three o’clock in the afternoon, a top-secret meeting was held in the big meeting room on Burning Prairie.

The participants of the meeting were almost a hundred most influential persons of the Heaven’s Origin Sector as well as the leaders of the Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector.

Ding Lingdang, Professor Mo Xuan, Wu Mayan, Xie Anan, and those else close to Li Yao were in the meeting, too.

Lu Zui, the director of the Secret Sword Bureau, was the host of the meeting.

Of the three most powerful men of the federation, Speaker Jiang Hailiu was heavily wounded and is still in the ICU, and Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao was also seriously damaged. Thankfully, seventy percent of Zhou Hengdao’s body parts are artificial organs. It will not be a big deal if they are replaced in time. Lu Zui was the only one of the three who was unharmed.

At this moment, hundreds of strong Cultivators had gathered in the room. Yet, it was as obstreperous as a carnival. Everybody was slapping the table and shouting at the top of their voice.

“Director Lu, you owe us an explanation.

“Three months ago, the enemy marched to the sky of our capital city with the beast tide, but your intelligence agency gave no warning whatsoever beforehand.

“Three months later, even the Speaker of the federation was assassinated right in public. How have you been doing your intelligence and security work exactly?

“Your intelligence says that everything was led by Vulture Li Yao. What unquestionable proof have you got?

“The Secret Sword Bureau has received full authorization and now boasts the highest permission. You were even monitoring our allies, but still, the accident! We find it impossible to be tolerant anymore. Everything must be explained clearly today!

“Otherwise, we are going to impeach you in parliament!”

Many Cultivators had already burst into fury.

“Exactly.” Luo Xingzi, the leader of the Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector who had fought side by side with Li Yao in the riot of the Immortal Cultivators, stood up and lambasted him. “Li Yao is not just a Cultivator of the Heaven’s Origin Sector. In the Flying Star Sector, especially on Iron Plateau, the largest habitable planet in the Sector, he boasts tremendous influence. The accusations against him must be made cautiously, cautiously, and still more cautiously. Otherwise, an irreparable gap between the two worlds may be caused!

“Over the past few months, you have presented some evidence, but in our eyes, it was far from enough.

“For the cooperation of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector, and to figure out everything more smoothly, we have been trying our best to help. We didn’t expect that the outcome would be likes this!

“Director Li Yao, the most complete explanation is obligatory today.

“If solid evidence proves that Li Yao has been possessed by the Blood Devil and turned to the demons’ side, and that he has come back to butcher his compatriots, of course, the citizens from the Flying Star Sector will try our best to help. Otherwise—”

He stopped right there and, waving his sleeves coldly, sat back.

Not far away from them, Ding Lingdang, Professor Mo Xuan, Wu Mayan, and Xie Anan were sitting together. They were perhaps the firmest supporters of Li Yao.

But at the moment, even they were somewhat hesitating.

“Sister Ding, do you think Master would really betray the federation and kill so many ordinary people?” Xie Anan was moving her body uneasily.

Ding Lingdang bit her lips hard with cold fire dancing in her red hair.

Professor Mo Xuan sighed and said, “The real Li Yao certainly wouldn’t, but on Iron Plateau, Yan Xibei who wasn’t possessed by the Blood Devil wouldn’t betray his people, either.

“Perhaps, even to the end, Yan Xibei still didn’t feel that he had betrayed his people; he thought that he was saving Iron Plateau!”

Faced with rebukes, criticism, and even curses, Director Lu Zui was as calm as a statue of ice. He stared at everybody in silence for a long time, as if he were waiting for the saliva on his face to dry. It was not until everybody gradually stopped yelling that he activated the light beam and said peacefully, “We accept all your complaints about the Secret Sword Bureau’s work recently. However, in my opinion, this is not the time to discuss who is to blame. We should focus our attention on the problem at hand.

“It is true that we did not present the critical evidence in the past few months, which was partly because the case was too mysterious, unpredictable, and involved more people than anybody could imagine, and partly because we were hesitating whether or not there were other possibilities.

“As it turned out, it was our hesitation that trapped us and killed our thousands of compatriots!

“You said that you are going to impeach me. That will be unnecessary.

“I promise to all the representatives of parliament and the fellow Cultivators here that I will be responsible for all the faults in Secret Sword Bureau’s work earlier. After the issue is addressed, I will resign!”

The meeting room immediately fell silent.

Now that Lu Zui had publicly declared that he was going to resign for his fault, what else could other people say?

Still seemingly emotionless, Lu Zui continued. “Alright, allow me to publicize the details of the work of the Saker Squad over the past half year to everyone. You will know whether or not our accusations against Li Yao are grounded after you hear them.

“Please note that every word I’m about to say next is top secret. Whoever leaks any part of it after leaving this meeting room will be charged with high treason!”

Lu Zui took a deep breath and began his introduction.

“The so-called Saker Squad is an intelligence force lurking in the Blood Demon Sector that I’m personally responsible for. Starting from half a year ago, their sole mission was to gather all the intelligence about Li Yao in the Blood Demon Sector, reach out to him, and give him a hand when necessary.

“However, as we are all clear, we look vastly different from the demons. Also, the demons have been attacking, and we have been defending all the time.

“Therefore, it is easy for the demons to infiltrate the Heaven’s Origin Sector through the beast tides, but it is much more difficult for us to infiltrate the Blood Demon Sector.

“After decades of work, I only managed to send a small number of spies into the Blood Demon Sector. To investigate the truth of the Red Tide Plan, a lot of them were sacrificed, too. Three months ago, when the Red Tide Plan was activated, our intelligence network in the Blood Demon Sector was shattered to the point of destruction.

“However, the remaining members of the Saker Squad still sent back some critical intelligence. The most important piece of all was that it was Li Yao who destroyed the Eye of Blood Demon, disrupted the assault, and saved the capital city!”

Many Cultivators were unaware of the information. They were all exclaiming.

“Wait. Aren’t we talking about Li Yao’s defection? Why on earth did he destroy the Eye of Blood Demon?”

“Can we confirm the information? What happened exactly?”

“So, the beast tide invading the capital city was stopped by Li Yao? It means that he is a well-deserved Ultra-Level Federal Hero! Why did you hunt him?”

“Director Lu, aren’t your words self-contradictory?”

Even Ding Lingdang and Professor Mo Xuan were also dazed, not knowing what Lu Zui meant.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Quite a few fuzzy pictures popped up on the light beam behind Lu Zui, all of which were Li Yao’s battle scenes in the Eye of Blood Demon!

“The intelligence from the Saker Squad has been confirmed through various sources,” Lu Zui said. “It was indeed Li Yao who destroyed the Eye of Blood Demon three months ago!

“However, ‘Li Yao is a hero’ and ‘Li Yao is the Blood Devil’ are not contradictory. Fellow Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector, especially my young friend Wu Mayan from Iron Plateau, you must still have a deep impression about the last Blood Devil, Yan Xibei. Wasn’t Yan Xibei a great hero on Iron Plateau who had saved his people countless times in the past?”

Wu Mayan was too young to be qualified for the meeting. He was merely joining it as ‘Li Yao’s first disciple’. Now that Lu Zui was asking him, he could not help but blush, wondering whether he should nod or shake his head.

Lu Zui did not intend to get an answer from him, either. He simply went on. “According to the incomplete intelligence we grasped, this is the truth that we have figured out.

“When he just entered the Blood Demon Sector, Li Yao was not entirely consumed by the Blood Devil. He was on the winning side during their battle. He also managed to maintain his own soul and will.

“Li Yao in such a state naturally tried to defend the interests of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and sabotaged the Blood Demon Sector’s invasion plan.

“That was the reason for his battle in the Eye of Blood Demon!

“However, the Blood Devil was certainly a strong, terrifying being that even Li Yao had to be highly wary of. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have left us the letter at all.

“In his normal state, Li Yao might have been able to suppress the Blood Devil, but what about after the fierce battle in the Eye of Blood Demon?

“We all know that the strongest demons were gathered in the Eye of Blood Demon at the time. Li Yao could’ve been faced with dozens of demon emperors.

“What if the Blood Devil occupied his body when he was beaten to a pulp by the demon emperors and his soul power was greatly weakened?

“What I’m saying is that, when he destroyed the Eye of Blood Demon, he was still the real Li Yao, a great hero of the federation!

"However, the great hero sacrificed everything for his motherland and perished in the battle!

"After the battle, the Blood Devil swallowed his soul, took over his body, and turned him into an evil existence!"

Lu Zui's words raised another round of exclamations. Wu Mayan was dumbfounded, Professor Mo Xuan was shaking his head nonstop, Xie Anan was holding her face crying, and Ding Lingdang gritted her teeth hard. The fire on her head seemed to have frozen!

Unmoved, Luo Xingzi, the leader of the Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector, asked coldly, "Director Lu, do you have any proof for your theory?"

On the light beam behind Lu Zui, another dozens of pictures were displayed. Some of them were Li Yao activating the Cell Obliteration Cannon with the bone spurs and the crystal on Li Yao's arm. Some of them were Li Yao and Jin Tuyi having a warm and friendly conversation. Still some others were pictures where Li Yao and Jin Xinyue were together.

Perhaps because of the angle, Li Yao and Jin Xinyue looked particularly close to each other in the pictures. They seemed rather intimate. Jin Xinyue was so sycophantic that she appeared to be a servant who was catering to the needs of her master.

"Jin Tuyi, commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons, must be no stranger to you.

"This is his daughter, Jin Xinyue, one of the most dreadful saintesses in the Pantheon of Demons. I believe many of you have heard her name before, too.

“Look at Li Yao’s brand-new appearance now and their attitude toward Li Yao. What can you conclude?”

Chapter 1089 - Flawless!

Over the past few months, some of the fuzzy pictures had been shown to Luo Xingzi and Professor Mo Xuan, too.

However, for most of them, this was the first time that they had seen such a large number of pictures of such a high quality.

Ding Lingdang narrowed her eyes and stared at Jin Xinyue in the pictures. There was no telling what she was thinking of, but she was clutching her thighs so hard that her fingernails were piercing into her skin, which indicated that she was trying to suppress certain feelings that had best did not broke out there.

Luo Xingzi sniffed and said, “Pictures can be fabricated. The crystal processor technology is too developed nowadays. What pictures can’t be fabricated? What if it is a set-up of the demons who are angry that Li Yao destroyed the Eye of Blood Demon?

“Alright. Let’s say that all the pictures are authentic. What can they prove?

“Back when we were still in the Flying Star Sector, we discussed many things with Li Yao. We agreed that in order to resist the Imperium of True Human Beings, we must focus the forces of the Flying Star Sector, the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector. We even need to explore more worlds and look for more help!

“The biggest purpose of Li Yao’s return is to stop the war between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin

Sector. He made it clear before we set off. You know it, too!

“Does hanging around with Jin Tuyi and his daughter mean defection? He could be persuading the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons to stop the war, couldn’t he?”

It was a very reasonable rebuttal.

Many of the participants of the meeting were cautious about the war as well. They nodded in agreement.

They were not Ding Lingdang. Li Yao’s personal life was none of their business. Even if he did become Jin Tuyi’s son-in-law, it did not seem to be an unpardonable crime if the marriage could facilitate the cooperation of the three Sectors.

“Stopping the war, striving for cooperation, and struggling against the Imperium of True Human Beings together are indeed our common wishes,” Lu Zui said coldly. “We would’ve sent a delegation if the Red Tide Plan weren’t proved!

“However, look at how the demons stomped on our hope for peace.

“The Red Tide Plan three months ago, had it worked out, would have burnt the capital ring to the ground.

“Today, such a gory disaster took place again!

“Isn’t all this enough to prove the evil nature of the demon race, who absolutely do not want peace?

“If Li Yao has not been swallowed by the Blood Devil, why would he allow such a thing to happen, and why would he sneak into the capital city and lead the whole assassination in person?”

This was the first time that Lu Zui had clearly pointed out that Li Yao had been behind the accident today.

But everybody was too overwhelmed to even question him right now.

Luo Xingzi frowned. “Evidence. We need evidence!”

“Please let me finish. After I’m done, I’ll certainly release undeniable evidence.

“Before the Eye of Blood Demon was destroyed, the Kingdom of Lion Butchers and the Nether Spring Kingdom were the strongest, and Elder Blood Robe and Elder Nether Spring were the two most powerful demons.

“However, after the Eye of Blood Demon was sabotaged and the two strongest kingdoms suffered heavy losses, Jin Tuyi took the opportunity to seize the power and suppress the forces in the Kingdom of Lion Butchers and the Nether Spring Kingdom. He is now the real king of the Blood Demon Sector!

“In the great ‘reshuffle’, Blood Devil Li Yao made a lot of contributions, too, as his right hand.

“We even have reason to believe that he has made deals with Jin Tuyi, and he is now Jin Tuyi’s heir and the future king of the Blood Demon Sector!”

“Wait!” Luo Xingzi interrupted him and raised a very important question. “Let’s forget whether or not Li Yao is the Blood Devil for a moment. Why is Jin Tuyi passing on his power to Li Yao, an outsider?”

“Because we have evidence which suggests that Jin Tuyi has been diagnosed with a terminal, untreatable disease. He will die soon,” Lu Zui replied calmly. “Blood Devil Li Yao needs power, and Jin Tuyi needs a strongman to protect his family, his descendants, and his forces after his death. Naturally, they make perfect partners.”

The top secret shocked everyone again.

Jin Tuyi, commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons, was terminally ill?

Their first reaction was that Lu Zui was joking, but on second thought, it was a very serious issue, and the truth would be out very soon. Lu Zui was unlikely to tell such a terrible lie.

“All in all,” Lu Zui continued, “after reaching a deal with Jin Tuyi, Blood Devil Li Yao concentrated the power in a few months. Then, he snuck back to the Heaven’s Origin Sector in secret and infiltrated into the capital city. The whole process of the sneak-in and the infiltration has left a lot of evidence. All the Secret Sword Agents of the Demon Execution Division are witnesses.

“If you are interested, I can invite Supervisor Guo of the Demon Execution Division to report the details of Li Yao’s infiltration to you in person.”

Ding Lingdang could not hold it anymore and stood up. “Director Lu, all the evidence is collected by your Saker Squad. It is just their side of the story! If I may ask, where are the members of the Saker Squad? Can you invite them to here so that we can ask questions?”

Lu Zui shook his head. “Is it an easy task to monitor Li Yao? Most of the members of the Saker Squad have been killed by Li Yao and Jin Tuyi. The few survivors are still hiding here and there in the Blood Demon Sector. It is difficult to communicate with them.

“I am the only one who knows their identities, but I can’t give them out.”

Ding Lingdang widened her eyes. “You can’t? Why not?”

Lu Zui was silent for a long time. He glanced at every Cultivator with his cold eyes and said, one word after another, “Because we have every reason to believe that spies from the Blood Demon Sector, known as Children of the Nether World, are now working inside the federation and possibly sitting right among you!”

His words raised a riot. Many Cultivators jumped to their feet!

Lu Zui pressed his hands and gestured everybody to calm down. He explained, “The so-called Children of the Nether World is part of a top confidential plan that the Blood Demon Sector has concocted for decades. We only just grasped a few traces of it.

“Decades ago, the Blood Demon Sector discovered secret technology that could transform a demon into a complete human being. No blood test could ever detect anything wrong with them.

“In such a way, the Blood Demon Sector dispatched countless Children of the Nether World to the federation, who developed and expanded in secret. To this day, many of the Children of the Nether World are already in high positions!

“The Children of the Nether World we discovered so far are just the tip of the iceberg. It was because of the information they leaked that our intelligence network in the Blood Demon Sector was seriously destroyed! Only the several members of the Saker Squad who were directly under my command survived the disaster!

“They are our last eyes and ears in the Blood Demon Sector. There’s no way that I will tell you who they are. Otherwise, we will be blind and deaf in a couple of days!”

Lu Zui paused for a moment and threw out another huge bomb unhurriedly. “Also, Li Yao snuck back to the federation because he needed to lead the Children of the Nether World for a big operation!”

“Wait!” Before everybody had the chance to be surprised, Professor Mo Xuan stood up and said tranquilly, “Director Lu, that doesn’t make sense.

“Assuming that everything you said is true, Li Yao is now Jin Tuyi’s heir and the future king of the Blood Demon Sector.

“Then, why would such an important person sneak back to the federation and assassinate the Speaker at such great risk?

“The federation is different from the Blood Demon Sector. We don’t have a lifelong leader here. The term for every Speaker is five years, and they have to step back after serving two terms. Will the death of a Speaker cause any significant damage to the federation?

“Besides, everybody knows that Speaker Jiang is a conservative who has been calling for prudence. What benefits can Li Yao get by assassinating him in public, other than pouring oil on the already simmering people?

“Even if he was turned into the Blood Devil, he must’ve kept his basic rationality, if not getting more sordid and cunning. Blood Devil Li Yao killing a Speaker at the risk of exposing himself and the Children of the Nether World? That’s not a fair exchange to me.”

Professor Mo Xuan got the key point. Many Cultivators were nodding. “Exactly, such an assassination doesn’t make any sense. If Speaker Jiang is assassinated, there will always be a Speaker Wang or Speaker Li who could potentially be more passionate about war. What benefits can the Blood Demon Sector get?”

Lu Zui smiled and asked, “Who says that Blood Devil Li Yao’s purpose was to assassinate the Speaker?

“Assassinating the Speaker was just an approach. His real target was—Burning Prairie!”

“What!”

Professor Mo Xuan was utterly astounded!

“The Speaker can be assassinated with a few of his trusted subordinates, which will be meaningless even if they succeed,” Lu Zui said coldly. “However, the task of taking over Burning Prairie, the best warship of all the three Sectors, can only have a slim chance of success if ‘Li Yao’ does it in person, right?

“Sneaking into a warship and taking control of it has always been his best play. More than ten years ago, when he was still an inexperienced young man, he did it once in the bidding meeting of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

“In the Flying Star Sector, he snuck into the hostile warships to secure the final victory countless times, too.

“As I recall, his last and most important endeavor was to sneak into Heavenly Phantom, the antecedent of Burning Prairie, with you, Professor Mo Xuan, and you successfully took the warship over together, didn’t you?”

Professor Mo Xuan was lost for words.

“We are inside Burning Prairie right now. Everybody here must have a very clear understanding about the formidability of the super warship. It is safe to say that this is categorically the strongest warship in all three Sectors. Also, the warship is unique. Even the Flying Star Sector cannot produce another warship of the same level quickly!

“Stealing Burning Prairie will change the capabilities of the three Sectors. It will give the Blood Demon Sector a certain advantage again. Do you think whether or not such a mission is worthwhile for Blood Devil Li Yao to complete it person?”

Lu Zui sneered. “He broke into the core of the warship once before. He knows the structure of the warship like the back of his hand. Also, he is wearing the skin of Vulture Li Yao, which means that he can fool the trust of the Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector on Burning Prairie without fighting at all! Think about it. Doesn’t everything make sense?”

Luo Xingzi was greatly enlightened. “Is that why you asked Burning Prairie to activate the self-defense sword array of the highest array to stop anyone from coming close?”

Chapter 1090 - Anomaly of the Military!

Lu Zui nodded. “Exactly. That was the only way to disrupt his scheme!”

Professor Mo Xuan thought of another question. “So, the Secret Sword Bureau knew about the whole thing since the very beginning? And you simply waited and watched him attacking the Speaker and the innocent civilians?”

Lu Zui gritted his teeth and said, “Not exactly. All the information about Blood Devil Li Yao was only clear to a secret operation squad including myself. Everybody else, including Supervisor Guo of the Demon Execution Division, only knew part of it.

“Even I only knew that Li Yao might make a move on Burning Prairie, but of course, we didn’t know the specific approaches that he would take!

“I planned to pretend that we didn’t know anything so that we could dig him out along with most of the Children of the Nether World. I didn’t know that he was so insane that he would create an opportunity for himself by assassinating the Speaker and raising chaos!

“Nor did I know that our security system would be so feeble that a fatal crystal bomb could be planted right below the Speaker’s feet without anybody knowing!

“It meant that some of the Secret Sword Agents responsible for the security might’ve been compromised by the Children of the Nether World!

“It is also one of the reasons I will resign!”

Hearing that Lu Zui admitted honestly that the Secret Sword Bureau had been infiltrated, the Cultivators looked at each other in bewilderment and did not know what to say.

Professor Mo Xuan looked at Lu Zui and said, “Director Lu, you said that you have solid evidence. Please show it to us!”

“No problem!”

Lu Zui nodded unhesitatingly. He waved his hands, and several Secret Sword Agents immediately brought three gloomy-looking Cultivators to the podium.

They were all walking slowly with barriers on their body and a localization ring on their neck as if they were criminals.

“They are?”

All the Cultivators were confused. Somebody who knew them even exclaimed in shock.

“The three guys here are no strangers to you, I believe? Liao Tianji, who worked in the garrison of the capital city. Li Cheng, who worked in the City Management Bureau. Also, Gao Zhiyuan, who worked in the third division of the Secret Sword Bureau. All three are among the best Cultivators of the younger generation who rose to fame in the past decades.

“But they are all Children of the Nether World transformed from demons!”

“What!”

All the Cultivators jumped to their feet.

They were not completely convinced when Lu Zui spoke about it, but now, three Children of the Nether World were standing right in front of them. It was truly a major shock!

Their first reaction was, of course, were the three Cultivators set up?

However, the three Cultivators were in the military, the government, and the Secret Sword Bureau respectively, and they were not low in rank. It was impossible to frame them all at the same time!

Seeing that they were obedient and frustrated, everybody started to believe that it was true!

“The three of them are the Children of the Nether World that we found earliest,” Lu Zui said. “To save themselves, and also realizing that mankind is on the rise and demons are declining, they abandoned darkness for the light and were willing to cooperate with us.

“Therefore, we did not release this information to public. Instead, they were asked to continue lurking as the Children of the Nether World. We hoped that they could give us more leads.

“Their work has proved effective. Not only did they help us find a lot of Children of the Nether World, they also got us a big fish that was Blood Devil Li Yao!

“It was a pity that most of the Children of the Nether World only had one-way communication. The three of them were not enough for us to uproot the entire organization.

“They could’ve lurked for a longer time and perhaps given us more clues. But since you are demanding unquestionable evidence today, I have no choice but to expose them in advance. The three leads will be completely gone now!”

Quite a few Cultivators were embarrassed by his words.

“Any fellow Cultivators who are suspicious are free to browse through their interrogation records later. I will not waste everyone’s time here.

“Now, allow me to conclude our discoveries in the recent months.

“Firstly, Li Yao can turn into a fierce and aggressive appearance, which is similar to Yan Xibei of Iron Plateau, the previous Blood Devil.

“Secondly, Li Yao is very intimate with Jin Tuyi and his daughter Jin Xinyue. He has also helped Jin Tuyi seize absolute power in the Blood Demon Sector!

“Thirdly, after returning to the Heaven’s Origin Sector stealthily, instead of showing up in public and reaching out to us, Li Yao snuck into the capital city.

“Fourthly, the Speaker was wounded by a powerful, delicately-made crystal bomb. Residues of demon cores have been found out from the bomb. After analysis, the specialists prove that such a bomb was definitely created by an explosives expert!

“Fifthly, the three Children of the Nether World who joined our side accused Li Yao at the same time. They all received clear orders to obey Li Yao’s command and offer help while he is seizing Burning Prairie!

“Everyone, are you still not able to reach a conclusion with all that evidence? Why is he fleeing at all if he is not guilty?”

The entire meeting room fell silent.

The only sound was Ding Lingdang grinding her teeth.

“Everyone!” Lu Zui glimpsed at Ding Lingdang and said in pain, “I know that many of you here are Li Yao’s good friends, best friends, and even loved one. You fought side by side with him before, and your lives were perhaps saved by him!

“Vulture Li Yao was a well-deserved Ultra-Level Federal Hero and a real Cultivator that is worth everyone’s respect!

“Therefore, it pained my heart as it does yours when I said what I said!

“However, we must make one thing clear.

“It is not Li Yao but the Blood Devil, a monster that has occupied Li Yao’s body!

“Vulture Li Yao—whom we respect, appreciate, and trust—is dead, for the federation, for his compatriots, and for thousands of ordinary people! Right now, in front of us is a sly, shameless fiend who has stolen the body of our hero!

“Can we wait and watch the fiend do evil deeds under our hero’s skin and tarnish Li Yao’s name while doing nothing?

“No, we can’t! We must capture it and slay it mercilessly!

“That will be the best comfort for the spirit of the real Ultra-Level Federal Hero Li Yao. That will be the only way we can deserve everything that the real Li Yao did for the federation and for mankind!"

Hardly had Lu Zui concluded his speech when the door of the meeting room was opened.

Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao, who was heavily wounded earlier, walked to the front, staggering.

His new artificial limbs seemed to be made of ice.

"Sorry to interrupt. There's a piece of urgent information in the military that I must inform you!" the big shot of the military said expressionlessly. "According to the latest news, after the Speaker was assassinated, the federal army went on a rampage. One of the legions in the No. 4 war base on the Grand Desolate Plateau marched toward the Dark Desolate Domain without command under the name of 'drill'!

"What!"

What was that about? Attacking before asking?

An unsupported legion marching into the Dark Desolate Domain and even into the Blood Demon Sector from there? When then? Should the troops follow them or not? If they followed, it would be a total war. If they did not, they would be watching the legion get butchered!

Mutiny was always shocking news. All the Cultivators felt that their heart was pounding.

Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao said coldly, "Rest assured, everyone. The rogue legion is now under control. All the commanders have been captured. They will be trialed in the military court."

The Cultivators finally took a breath in relief.

Now, even the most inert and the most conservative Cultivators clearly realized that the federation had turned into a volcano that was about to erupt. Nobody could stop it anymore.

Zhou Hengdao glanced at everyone and said, “Obedience is obligatory for soldiers. As the Chief of General Staff of the federal army, I hereby promise that the federal army will not take any action until the final decision is made by parliament. Whoever moves without permission will be punished as per the military law!

“However—”

Changing the topic, the veteran gnashed his teeth, his words darting out like hot bullets. “As a spokesperson of the 125 military representatives in parliament, I demand another special meeting tomorrow meeting where the ‘expedition motion’ will be re-discussed!

“Cough cough. Cough cough cough cough. My body has been seriously wounded in the explosion. I’m afraid that my health might not allow me to work any longer.

“If the expedition motion is not passed, I will resign as the Chief of General Staff, leave the army, and return to my identity as a civilian.

“Then, I will establish a volunteer army as a civilian and march into the Blood Demon Sector!”

It was almost a shameless move, but it was something that only Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao, who had been wounded for the federation more than a thousand times, was qualified to make.

His unreasonable declaration almost froze the blood of many of the Cultivators, but it boiled the blood of the rest!

“Iron Commander!” A Cultivator once in service suddenly rose up and clenched his fists. “The Green Lotus Sect will absolutely support the federal army. If the expedition motion is passed tomorrow, the Green Lotus Sect will spare nothing and give all the manpower and resources to Iron Commander’s hands in the unprecedented great expedition!”

“And us, the Fighting Dragon Mountain!” another Cultivator stood up and declared. “If the expedition motion is still not passed tomorrow, the Fighting Dragon Mountain will join Iron Commander’s volunteer army as a whole. We will march into the Blood Demon Sector next to the Iron Commander!

“Without the approval of parliament, naturally, the federal army cannot take any action. But we are not bound by the military rules as Cultivators. Can anybody stop us if we volunteer to seek vengeance from the Blood Demon Sector?”

“And us!”

“Us, too!”

“We cannot tolerate such humiliation. The demons must answer blood with blood!”

Frantic air was sweeping across the entire meeting room. The atmosphere there was soon no different from any class in the high schools of the federation right now.

Luo Xingzi, Professor Mo Xuan, and few other people were the only ones who remained calm, but there was nothing they could do under the overwhelming passion of the zealots.

Luo Xingzi looked at Zhou Hengdao desperately. “Iron Commander, do you believe that Li Yao has turned into the Blood Demon?”

Zhou Hengdao shook his head. “I don’t like to bother about the details. I only know that the demons have raised two inhumane attacks in the capital city of the federation in just a hundred days!

“The criminals can run away, but their lair is always there. What I want is not Li Yao but the demon race and the Blood Demon Sector. They must pay the price for the two assaults!”

Luo Xingzi was anxious. “What about the apocalypse? What about the Imperium of True Human Beings? It is peace that we need right now!”

Zhou Hengdao’s eyes were suddenly glittering five times more brilliantly than before as he stared at Luo Xingzi and said, one word after another, “Fellow Cultivator Luo Xingzi, I have to remind you of something. We didn’t choose the war; the war chose us! Peace? There will never be peace until the last drop of blood of the last demon dries!”

Chapter 1091 - Trust...

Luo Xingzi was lost for words. He thought hard for a long time, only to come up with no rebuttal.

The brilliance in Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao’s eyes dimmed, but it constricted into a red pot that was smaller and solider, like burning firewood. He said toughly, “Fellow Cultivator Luo Xingzi, I am a soldier, and I do not like fancy talk. So, let’s get everything straight here.

“The Flying Star Sector hopes that the three Sectors can work together to resist the Imperium of True Human Beings, but the previous two assaults have proven that it is just a one-sided dream and a childish fantasy!

“The Blood Demon Sector is never going to cooperate. Even if they pretend to, it must be part of their greater scheme!

“In a war, the only thing more dangerous than a terrible enemy is a terrible teammate. Do you really want a teammate like the Blood Demon Sector behind your back when the Imperium of True Human Beings comes?

“The only solution is to occupy the Blood Demon Sector as quickly as possible!

“The Blood Demon Sector is unstable right now and unprecedently weak. On the other hand, with the help of Burning Prairie and the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, we are unprecedently strong!

“If we attack now, it is very likely that we can occupy the entire Blood Demon Sector soon. We will be able to capture all the demons and send them to the resource planets in your Sector!

“This is the only righteous path to compete with the Imperium of True Human Beings. This is the brightest path of survival in front of us!

“The window will soon close. There’s no time for hesitation. When the Blood Demon Sector recovers from the chaos, we will have to wait twenty to thirty years before we get another shot. How much time will be left for us to collect resources?

“All in all, the Heaven’s Origin Sector is certainly going to attack the Blood Demon Sector with our best. If the Flying Star Sector gives us a hand, we will naturally be more confident, but even without the Flying Star Sector’s help, we will never look back even if the last of us collapses!

“Please consider the best choice for the Flying Star Sector, Fellow Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector. We will certainly respect your opinion and not force you into anything!”

Luo Xingzi was completely overwhelmed.

Although he was the nominal leader of the Flying Star Sector, since the Flying Star Sector had not had a central government before, he had only managed a sect and a city in the universe. How big a picture could he see?

Pushed by such a seasoned warrior, Luo Xingzi found it hard to resist. Sweating, he said, “We… we will certainly consider it carefully.

Zhou Hengdao’s suddenly arrival made it impossible, nor necessary, to proceed with the meeting anymore.

Li Yao was not the key point—the Blood Demon Sector was. An expedition to the Blood Demon Sector. Blood for blood!

In the riot, nobody noticed that a stubborn, red shadow suddenly rose up and stormed out of the meeting room.

But Wu Mayan caught Ding Lingdang's anomaly. He called "Masteress!" but got no reply. Scared that she might do something stupid, he hurried behind her.

Hiu!

On the front deck of Burning Prairie, Ding Lingdang, with a flying sword under her feet, stomped on the floor so hard that she almost broke the shell. She turned into a streak of crimson brilliance and darted into the sky!

Wu Mayan hurried to summon his crystal suit and followed her. The two of them flew higher and higher until they were above the atmosphere where the air was thin.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Ding Lingdang was venting her anger like an enormous dragon that was spurting fire. She looked so intimidating that it even seemed that the atmosphere was about to be blown up by her.

"*sshole. B*stard. Scumbag. I'm going to blow up your head!"

Ding Lingdang bombarded as she bellowed.

Although he was hundreds of meters away, Wu Mayan was still shaking violently because of the blast. He was rather frightened when he shouted, "Ma—masteress. Please calm—

calm down. Master might have been wronged. Don’t rush into anything!”

Shua!

Ding Lingdang dashed up to his face instantly and glared at him. Sweat immediately drowned his back, only to be dried by the cold wind the next second.

Ding Lingdang took a deep breath and blew out the fire on her fists. She said coldly, “Who says that I am going to blow up your master’s head?”

Wu Mayan was dumbfounded. “Huh. Then, who were you angry at, Masteress?”

Ding Lingdang sniffed and said, “Lu Zui, the director of the Secret Sword Bureau, of course. I’ve been doing my best to contain myself, but I just couldn’t hold it any second longer. If I stayed there for one more second, I’m afraid I would’ve rushed to the front and blown up his head!”

Wu Mayan was stunned. “Why?”

“Because he is a bad guy who is vilifying your master,” Ding Lingdang replied matter-of-factly.

Wu Mayan felt that his head was larger than usual. “How did you know that, Masteress?”

Ding Lingdang sneered, “It’s true that I am incapable of analyzing all the complicated issues, but I remember one thing clearly.

“Didn’t you mention before that the Blood Devil Yan Xibei on Iron Plateau kept all the memories, emotions, and habits of the real Yan Xibei and that nobody knew that he was possessed by the Blood Devil until he was exposed?”

Wu Mayan nodded. “That’s right. So what?”

“So,” Ding Lingdang continued, “before the Blood Devil Yan Xibei was exposed, his behavior was identical to the real Yan Xibei’s, right?”

Wu Mayan nodded again. “Yes. That’s the only way he could fool everyone.”

“So, assuming that Li Yao was swallowed by the Blood Devil and turned into Blood Devil Li Yao, in order to fool everyone, he would have acted exactly like the real Li Yao in every regard, right?”

Wu Mayan thought carefully for a while and answered, “I think he would!”

“Then, here is the problem.” Ding Lingdang narrowed her eyes and declared, “This Blood Devil Li Yao did something that the real Li Yao would never ever, ever do!”

Wu Mayan blinked. “What is it?”

“Look for another woman!” Ding Lingdang said.

“…” Wu Mayan.

“The real Li Yao promised me ten years ago that he would be back and asked me to wait for him!

“You said yourself that he never looked at any other woman, not even once, in the Flying Star Sector over the past ten years when countless girls must’ve come to him enthusiastically considering his capability and influence!

“How could such a Li Yao look at another woman even if he turned into the Blood Devil? He knows that I would kill him the moment he returned to the Blood Demon Sector if he found a second woman!

“Therefore, for those who are unfamiliar with Li Yao, it may be a flawless trap, but in my eyes, there is a giant loophole in it!”

“Cough, cough. That explains a lot. Masteress, you are truly… smart.”

“Come here.” Ding Lingdang curled her fingers at him.

Wu Mayan leaned in close. “What are your orders, Masteress?”

Ding Lingdang bashed his forehead hard. “Little brat, don’t you think that I don’t understand the meaning in your eyes. Your eyes were clearly saying ‘how incredible it is that such a stupid woman has a eureka moment’, weren’t they?”

Wu Mayan was dumbfounded. He did not expect that Ding Lingdang would be so perceptive and so… intelligent today.

“Tell you what. I might be short-tempered, but short-tempered doesn’t mean idiotic!” Ding Lingdang warmed up her fingers until her joints were cracking. She grinned hideously. “Usually, I do not like to use my head because most issues do not require my head. My fists are enough to resolve them!

“However, if someone thinks that I’m strong but stupid and that they can play tricks on me regarding issues that involve Li Yao, they will find themselves seriously mistaken!”

Wu Mayan was almost in tears. He exclaimed, “So, you finally believe in Master now?”

“Wrong,” Ding Lingdang said casually. “I have never doubted him. Not even for a second.”

Wu Mayan was baffled again. “Why not?”

Ding Lingdang put on a reminiscing smile as she said softly, “Do you know why your master loves me? I’ll give you a hint. It’s a word that starts with the letter ‘t’.”

It was perhaps the most difficult question in the entire universe. Wu Mayan tilted his head and thought hard for a moment before he answered prudently, “Toughness?”

“Toughness, my ass!”

Ding Lingdang bashed his forehead again. “It’s trust. Trust! You little brat.

“Your master was picked by me with my keen eyes and trained by me in person.

“Ding Lingdang’s man must be the most awesome hero in the sea of stars. How could he be so weak as to be devoured by an insignificant Blood Devil?”

Wu Mayan could hardly catch his breath. He finally understood why his magnificent master had found such a woman. Calming himself down, he said, “If you trust master, why didn’t you say it earlier, Masteress?”

“I said it. Weren’t Professor Mo Xuan and I questioning him all the time?” Ding Lingdang said. “However, given the circumstances, what else could we say? Should I have said that Li Yao is my man, so he is never going to be possessed by the Blood Devil? Does such a defense really mean anything?”

Wu Mayan thought for a moment and realized that it did make sense.

“Also,” Ding Lingdang said solemnly, “all the intelligence comes from the Secret Sword Bureau, but it turns out to be false. So, there is certainly a big villain in the leadership of the Secret Sword Bureau. My profession is to beat someone up, not to cope with such a great schemer.

“I want to find Li Yao, too, but there are so many people in the world. Where can I find him if the Secret Sword Bureau can’t?

“Moreover, my relationship with Li Yao is not a secret. The villain hiding in the Secret Sword Bureau must be monitoring me closely!

“I am not afraid of danger, but I’m scared that my reckless moves will attract the villain’s attention and prompt him to deal with me through some dirty methods!

“For example, what if the villain realizes that I’m suspicious of him and decides to smear me as a Child of the Nether World before I can do anything? Who can help Li Yao if I cannot protect myself?”

Wu Mayan nodded quickly. Such concerns never occurred to him. It appeared that his masteress had learned something from his master after all!

Ding Lingdang clenched her fists and gnashed her teeth. “However, I never expected that the enemy would make it so big! There are a lot of suspicious points that are still bothering me. If Director Lu Zui is really behind the scheme, why is he doing this?”

Wu Mayan scratched his head. “Then, what do we do now?”

Ding Lingdang smashed her fists hard. “There’s nothing we can do now except try to find your master. He should be the one considering such complicated things. As for me, I will be responsible for the fighting part.

“Whoever frames my man, I swear that they will die the most miserable death!”

Chapter 1092 - Patriots!

In the plaza next to the Federal Square, inside the field command center of the Demon Execution Division, Guo Chunfeng almost buried his face into the window when he stared at the messy, bloodstained square in a daze.

Countless light beams were flashing behind him, which were displaying the injured people and their confusion, but there was not a trace of Li Yao.

Lu Zui, the director of the Secret Sword Bureau, walked through the light beams and handed him a cigarette that was filled with Heavenly Fragrance Grass and designed to pacify Cultivators and ease their fatigue.

“Ah Feng. It was not your fault. Don’t blame yourself.” Lu Zui sighed and said, “We’d all underestimated the formidability of our enemy. Recently, we were too focused on Li Yao to care about the bigger picture. Now that I think about it, Li Yao might’ve left traces on purpose as a distraction so that his accomplices could take the opportunity to make a move!”

“I’m fine.” Guo Chunfeng’s fingers that held the cigarette was slightly trembling. He said in a hoarse voice, “Director, let me ask you something. When we moved to capture Li Yao, my brothers and I were attacked by snipers at the same time. Later, we found a few bodies on the commanding heights nearby. They should be Li Yao’s accomplices.

“However, just when we were shot, Li Yao suffered a perilous attack, too, which must’ve been made by a super expert!

“It was his accomplices who shot us, but who was it that shot him?”

Lu Zui blew a ring of blue smoke and admitted frankly, “It was ‘Death Ray’ Ye Changkong.”

Guo Chunfeng’s pupils constricted violently!

‘Death Ray’ Ye Changkong was the chief firearms coach in the federal army, the best expert in gunnery in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and a ‘Gun Cultivator’ in the Nascent Soul Stage!

Generally speaking, the high-level Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage and the Nascent Soul Stage would select cold weapons such as sabers or swords as their primary weapon.

Because of their immense spiritual energy, they could launch their blades and metal scraps like bullets with a telepathic thought. There was no need for them to use firearms.

Even if they did use firearms, the firearms would mostly serve as the ‘secondary weapon’ like Li Yao’s ‘Six-Barreled Vulcan Machine Cannon’. It was their sabers and swords that mattered most in combat.

However, some of the extremists of firearms inherited the skills of the ancient Cultivators in their manipulation of the ‘sword aura’ and insisted on using firearms as their primary weapon.

‘Death Ray’ Ye Changkong was the best among them. The saying that ‘the fastest martial art is the best martial art’ proved to be true for him.

In the entire Heaven’s Origin Sector, not a single Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator dared to say that they could escape from the gun of ‘Death Ray’!

“So, besides my Demon Execution Division, there was a second squad that was hunting Vulture?” Guo Chunfeng narrowed his eyes and gnashed his teeth. “Why?”

“Because I didn’t trust you.” Lu Zui was still as frank as ever. “You were likely Abyss!”

Guo Chunfeng was dazed. “Abyss… What is that?”

“The Children of the Nether World are classified into different levels. Those you were told about before are at the bottom level. The most confidential one of them, who is also of the highest rank, has the code name Abyss.

“Later, you will be given higher permissions and have access to the information about Abyss. You will know after reading the files how perfectly you match the description of Abyss.”

Guo Chunfeng hesitated for a moment. “Are you suggesting that you arranged another hunting squad, led by ‘Death Ray’ Ye Changkong, because you were suspicious that there are traitors in the Demon Execution Division?”

“I was not suspicious; I was certain.” Lu Zui looked Guo Chunfeng in the eye as if he were staring at his subordinate’s soul. “More than one Child of the Nether World must’ve infiltrated the Secret Sword Bureau. As for whether or not Abyss is among them, and who exactly Abyss is, we are not clear yet.

“We only know that both the Children of the Nether World and Abyss should be no more than a hundred years old.

“So, I trust nobody, and suspect everyone, except for those above a hundred years old.

“The hunting squad led by ‘Death Ray’ Ye Changkong is made of experienced Cultivators above a hundred years old. They are the only ones that are definitely not Children of the Nether World or Abyss.”

Guo Chunfeng was silent for a long time before he smiled bitterly. “I understand now. I am willing to suspend my work and receive investigation to wash my suspicions.”

“That will not be necessary. You’ve proven your loyalty with your actions,” Lu Zui remarked. “But there are so many Secret Sword Agents in the Demon Execution Division. Do you absolutely trust every one of them?”

Guo Chunfeng was lost for words.

Lu Zui finished his cigarette. Gazing at the glimmer on the butt, he asked, “Do you feel wronged, angry, and disgusting?”

Guo Chunfeng was staring at his cigarette butt, too. “No.”

Lu Zui smiled sadly. “You are free to feel disgusting. Sometimes, when I wash my face after I get up in the morning, I feel like throwing up as I look at the detesting old man in the mirror.

“However, that’s how it is for us. We must be suspicious of everyone, including those who are most trusted and closest to us, and those who have made great contributions to the federation!

“This is a job in the dirt and darkness. Perhaps, even the hookers on the street are cleaner than us.

“But… somebody has got to do such dirty, dark jobs so that more people can live in a clean, bright world, right?”

Guo Chunfeng took a long breath and replied, “Of course, Director. If I were in your place, after I learned of the existence of the Children of the Nether World and Abyss, I would’ve doubted the young men working in the important posts and dispatched a hunting team that is more reliable and inconspicuous, too.”

“That’s good.” Lu Zui patted his subordinate’s shoulder hard. He said earnestly, “I cannot promise you much now except for one thing.

“I, Lu Zui, director of the Secret Sword Bureau, am a real patriot. Everything I did was meant to slay the evilness and defend the federation!

“I, together with countless real patriots, will burn my life, soul, and everything to fight until the last moment. I will not allow any evil beings to sully our sacred motherland, the great Star Glory Federation!”

Guo Chunfeng was greatly touched.

Stared at by Lu Zui’s sharp eyes, the last shield in him seemed to be breaking apart.

Right then, his portable crystal processor uttered the loudest alarm.

Glancing at it, Guo Chunfeng’s face blanched. “My daughter is in the ICU!”

…

Soon, Guo Chunfeng arrived at the Fifth Hospital of the capital city.

Because of the explosions, the hospitals in the city large and small, and even the clinics in the neighborhoods, were all packed with people.

Not only were the wards fully-occupied, even the corridors were filed with patients who were soaked in blood and crying in pain.

Some of the patients were still bleeding, and others had lost their hearing while they were moaning. It was quite a gory scene.

A middle-aged, sloppy-looking man, whose hair was so greasy it there must have been at least ten days since he last took a shower or slept, squeezed through the crowd. Dirty water was flowing down his cheeks. There was no telling whether it was his sweat or his tears.

He staggered to the third floor and rushed to the ICU, almost tripping himself over, but he could not find his daughter at all. In the end, he was about to collapse to the ground.

“Old Guo.”

Yao Li called her husband from behind him.

Guo Chunfeng suddenly trembled. He slowly turned around like a rusted machine, only to discover that his wife was standing on the corridor as softly as a ghost.

“Xiaohe is alright,” Yao Li said softly. “She is being observed in the ward.”

After having such an accident, she did not even have the strength to fight with Guo Chunfeng now.

“What happened?” Guo Chunfeng’s voice didn’t sound like his own. “Do we need to take her to the hospital of our bureau?”

“That won’t be necessary. Xiaohe went to the memorial ceremony with her classmates. According to her classmates, they were not affected by the explosions and were about to run out when Xiaohe saw an old lady being stepped on by the crowd. She went back to save her, only to fall over, too. The old lady was saved in the end, but she… she was injured herself.”

Yao Li tried to stop her body from shivering and said, “She was not in a good condition when she was brought here. Even her heartbeat… Anyway, she is back now.”

“Where is she? Take me there!”

In the ward, sticking to the transparent glass on the medical cabin, Guo Chunfeng stared at his daughter who was floating in the bright green medication drugs.

Every wound on her daughter made his eyelid tremble violently.

Perhaps because of the telepathic connection between a father and a daughter, Guo Xiaohe, who was in a coma a moment ago, slightly opened her eyes and saw her father. She beamed with joy and grinned, extending her hand.

Blocked by the glass, the hands of the father and daughter, one large and the other small, reached together.

Guo Chunfeng finally could not hold back his tears any longer as they flooded uncontrollably on his pale face. In his eyes that were almost pure black now, unprecedented sharpness and determination were taking shape!

“Can you come? I have something for you.”

Kissing his daughter’s forehead against the glass, he left the ward with his wife.

On the crowded corridor, Guo Chunfeng gave a jade chip to his wife. “The divorce agreement, both the spiritual version and the paper version, is inside. All our assets will be left for you and our daughter. I have signed and made the soul stamp. After you sign it, find a law firm, and confirm the agreement, it will go effective immediately.”

“Old Guo!” Yao Li looked at her husband with surprise. Somewhat at a loss, she asked in a low voice, “You not being at home for months, is that related to what happened today? If it is, I can understand.”

Guo Chunfeng smiled bitterly. “You know the rules. I cannot say it.”

Yao Li stared at her husband and touched the new wrinkles on his forehead. “Old Guo, you are keeping something from me.”

Guo Chunfeng’s pupils constricted violently. “People of my trade keep a lot of things from their wives.”

“No!” Yao Li examined the brilliance in his eyes carefully and remarked, “This is different. This is different from all the things that you kept from me in the past. You are not right. Very not right!”

Guo Chunfeng was silent.

Yao Li held Guo Chunfeng’s hands hard and gritted his teeth. “I haven’t signed the paper yet. We are not divorced yet. I am still your wife. I am still the wife of… a hero! Old Guo, what is the matter with you? What has happened? Tell me. Let’s shoulder it together!”

Guo Chunfeng took a deep breath. All the brilliance deep inside his eyes was gone, and his eyes turned into two immeasurable swirls. He shrugged off his wife’s hands and shook his head stubbornly. “I’m fine. Even if I’m not, it is none of your business. Go and finish the divorce procedures quickly. The sooner, the better. It will be best if you can get everything done tomorrow morning!”

Looking at his daughter in the medical cabin through the gap in the door of the ward for the last time, Guo Chunfeng turned around and left.

“Old Guo, what’s the meaning of this? Where are you going?” Yao Li was crying.

However, his wife’s cries did not stop Guo Chunfeng’s footstep, nor did they make the most terrifying demon hunter of the Heaven’s Origin Sector shed any more drop of tears.

I am going to fulfill the responsibility as a father and a husband . Guo Chunfeng walked forward step after step in the dense crowd. *I am going to fight for a bright future for you and our daughter!*

Chapter 1093 - Evilness Rises Again!

In the south of the capital city, in a temporary medical camp dedicated to the lightly wounded…

According to later statistics, more than five million people were gathered in the Federal Square and the ten or so blocks nearby. Even more people lingered in the blocks further away.

The explosion of the crystal bombs turned the gathered citizens into panicked bees. Everybody pushed, stepped on, and crashed into each other. The number of casualties soon surpassed twenty thousand.

The heavily wounded were sent to the major hospitals in the capital city. As for the ‘lightly wounded’, who had nothing more than broken bones, there were not enough medical facilities to accommodate them at all. They could only be treated in the temporary medical camps by part of the medical staff and the civilian volunteers with some knowledge of first aid.

The unprecedented disaster in fact facilitated Li Yao’s escape.

So many people were killed, injured, or missing after the explosions. Still more people covered their faces with bandages after getting hurt.

As for loss of language ability and even temporary amnesia, they were perfectly normal phenomena.

Most of the police officers were deployed to maintain the order of the central area. They had no time to bother with the blocks in the suburb, either.

Li Yao picked quite a few portable crystal processors in the chaos and managed to remember the faces of a few civilians. He then covered half of his face with bloodstained bandages and snuck to the medical camp with the crowd.

On one side of the medical camp, dozens of light beams were floating, displaying the latest updates of the situation and soothing public anxiety.

To aid in the rescue work, the government did not cut off the Spiritual Nexus on a large scale. The civilians gathered in the temporary medical camp could still get the news through the Spiritual Nexus.

Most of the media did not elaborate on the horror of the explosions but paid attention to the reactions of different parties after the Speaker was assassinated, including the speech of some tough representatives and the actions of the federal army.

Crouching deep inside the medical camp, Li Yao felt that his body was burning and his heart had been minced.

The scent of a scheme seemed to have turned into a black swamp that was about to swallow him.

“Fooled. We’ve been fooled!”

Deep inside his brain, the mental devil desperately shouted, “It’s a trap! We’ve been set up, and now, everybody thinks that we assassinated the Speaker! Plot! A shameless plot!”

The mental devil expanded incessantly in roars. Bloody hurricanes blew out of its body and shook Li Yao’s brain hard.

“Don’t you understand, fool?” The mental devil heartbreakingly declared, “We were wrong since the beginning! Our enemies were not Elder Nether Spring and his Children of the Nether World, at least not just them!

“Elder Nether Spring is nothing more than a stray dog. Even if he has swallowed the Divine Blood of Chaos, changed his appearance, and fled to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, he won’t have any supporters here at all. How could a few Children of the Nether World plan such a great scheme? How could they kill the Speaker without anybody foreseeing it and blame it on us?

“Think about it. The sniper in the Nascent Soul Stage who shot us!

“I can feel that he is not far away yet. He is waiting for us right here to blow up our head!

“A Nascent Soul Stage sniper must be at least a hundred years old. How can he be Elder Nether Spring’s subordinate? Absolutely impossible!

“Throwing away all the interferences, there can only be one answer. It is not Elder Nether Spring who set us up but the federal government! Only the federal government had the capability to make today happen!”

Li Yao was trembling and breathing hard. The dangerous redness in his left eye was gradually infiltrating his right eye!

Deep inside his brain, he struggled to resist. “It was a scheme but not made by the entire federation. Some of the bad guys in the federation… at best!”

“Face reality and stop fooling yourself. We’ve been abandoned!” the mental devil sneered. “The federation does not need a living Ultra-Level Federal Hero. A dead hero is the best hero! Right now, the greatest blame is on our head. Nobody is going to believe us!

“Not worth it. Not worth it at all! Think about it. We went through life and death and saved the entire federation, only to be sacrificed immediately when we are no longer needed!”

Li Yao gnashed his teeth. “Somebody must be behind the curtain, but they cannot fool everyone! Ding Lingdang will trust me, Professor Mo Xuan will trust me, the people of the Flying Star Sector will trust me, and 99% of the federal citizens will trust me!”

“Do they? Then, where they are now? Where were they when we were framed, hunted, and shot?” The mental devil grinned hideously. “Didn’t you say that Ding Lingdang loved you? Weren’t you training yourself hard for ten years because you wanted to meet her again back in the Heaven’s Origin Sector? What’s the result of your wait? Where is she when you need her most?

“People of the Flying Star Sector? Hehe. When you were in the Flying Star Sector, you helped them without hesitation. But now? Their warship activated the self-defense sword array of the highest level, a clear sign that they did not want you in.

“Don’t be silly. Ding Lingdang, Mo Xuan, and all the other people of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star

Sector… nobody will trust you. In their eyes, you are the Blood Devil. The most horrid Blood Devil!”

“Ding Lingdang…” Li Yao felt that his head became a container of magma. He could not tell reality from illusions anymore. He snatched the air, only to grab nothing. “She just doesn’t know it yet. After she knows the truth, she will certainly find me and fight with me!”

“Give me a break!” the mental devil rebuffed. “At a time like this, the only one who will fight with you is me!

“Wake up, fool!

“Mercilessness for mercilessness! Now that everybody has abandoned us, we must abandon them. Chop off everything from the past and be reborn!

“No more hesitation. No more concessions. No more petty kindness!

“Whoever wants to kill us, we will kill them first! After the two of us are melted, who in the three Sectors will be a match for us?”

Li Yao struggled. “Most people don’t know anything. They were fooled. I cannot attack them!”

The mental devil sneered, “It is their problem that they don’t know anything. They were fooled because they were idiots. One must pay a price for their idiocy!

“There is no road ahead of you. Come on. Let go of the body and try my path!

“Didn’t you want to save the federation? How can you save it when you are so soft-minded?

“Let me take your place. Kill! Kill! Kill! Kill everyone until heads are rolling on the ground. Maybe, we can make a strong empire that is a union of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector, and we will be the supreme dominator of the empire! That is the only satisfying way of life!”

Li Yao cramped hard. His left hand bounced up beyond his control. His right hand clutched it so hard that the fingers pierced into its flesh, and yet it could not be stopped!

Half of his right eye turned crimson. Blood stains were even leaking out of the bandages covering his left eye. It was truly a devastating view!

The mental devil grinned hideously. “Start with the Nascent Soul Stage sniper. Set up a trap here and take him down!”

“No. Too many innocent civilians are here. Thousands of people will die if we fight here!” Li Yao shouted, but his voice was becoming weaker and weaker.

“Idiot, how can you defeat them if you are always indecisive? Wars always come with sacrifices. Some people might die, so what? After we succeed, the majority of the people will be saved!” The mental devil expanded to the maximum, raising an overwhelming tsunami of blood that swept across 99% of Li Yao’s brain. Only 1% of it was still illuminated by Li Yao’s shining belief.

However, the glimmer was also dying like the candle in the wind!

“Yes. That’s right. Painful as it is, one has to face the reality in the end. Everybody has abandoned you!

“If you refuse to change, your head will be shot through by a bullet, and you will be dead forever in humiliation! Nobody will pity you! Nobody will care about you!

“Come on. Let me settle everything. Let’s be completely melted. Let’s be the most brutal vulture and the most magnificent dominator!”

Li Yao crouched and covered his eyes hard, shuddering violently.

It was a shame that there were many more patients than medical staff in the camp. Nobody noticed him at all.

Just when his soul was about to be completely swallowed by the mental devil, a thunderous roar suddenly burst out not far away.

“*sshole!”

Li Yao was so shocked that he jumped up from the ground.

It was Ding Lingdang’s voice!

Holding his head that was about to explode, he staggered to the source of the sound, only to discover that a guy was watching a video with his portable crystal processor.

“What’s this? What’s this?”

His eyes bloodshot, Li Yao was acting like the craziest lunatic.

The patient was scared by his creepy appearance and explained in fear.

Ding Lingdang was a celebrity in the world of Cultivators, too, and she was on the spot of the explosions. When the situation was stable again, naturally, a lot of reporters went to interview her.

As it turned out, right in front of dozens of media, she lost control over her emotions and burst into tears, yelling and shouting.

As an expert in the peak of the Core Formation Stage and one of the best young Cultivators, she lost control of herself in public, which immediately became the focus of the media. The interview was soon uploaded to the major video websites.

Ding Lingdang in the picture was waving her arms, her hair messy, and roaring at the camera like a crazy woman. “*sshole! Just wait for it! I will find you soon and blow up your head!”

Li Yao watched the video three times.

He smiled at first. Then he grinned. Eventually, he was laughing so hard that he was holding his stomach, and his tears were flooding out!

Deep inside his brain, his belief suddenly shone, and the bloody tsunami dispersed like snow under the scorching sun!

“What has happened? What are doing now? Why is your strength suddenly so overwhelming?”

“Didn’t you see the video?” Li Yao asked. “Weren’t you saying that the whole world distrusts me and has abandoned me? But that is not the fact. At the very least, Ding Lingdang still trusts me!”

The mental devil was angry. “She said that she will blow up your head!”

“Idiot,” Li Yao mocked. “Do you not know that beating is love in disguise? The key part is ‘Just wait for it. I will find you soon.’ Ding Lingdang has realized something. She is sending a message to me in such a way!”

“You—you must be overthinking!” the mental devil shrieked drily. “She only wants to blow up your head. Nothing more. Nobody trusts you. I am the only one who can help you here. Only—Ahhhh!”

Deep inside Li Yao’s brain, his soul released dazzling lightning that looked like a saber that could break the universe, slashing the mental devil into countless pieces brutally!

Chapter 1094 - Don't Cower. Just Fight!

The mental devil screamed and writhed crazily like a leech that had been thrown into salt, but Li Yao’s belief became more and more brilliant, determined and pure in his exultant laughter.

The brightness congregated into an overwhelming giant with the innocent face of a baby deep inside his brain!

The ‘soul baby’ punched and kicked, further blowing the mental devil into smithereens and laughing. “Stop wasting your time. My belief will not be shaken by you!

“Even if somebody in the leadership of the federation is setting me up, they must be in the minority. The only reason they are setting me up in such a way is because they are scared of me!

“They are scared of me not because my personal capability in the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage but because they know clearly that all my friends support me and 99% of the federal citizens trust me. As long as the real me shows up, their scheme will be immediately sabotaged!

“That’s why they have been trying everything they can to stop the real Li Yao from showing up!

“But no matter how hard they set me up, and after all the dirty moves they played, what now? Ding Lingdang still trusts me regardless of everything!

“I am not dead yet. I can still tell everybody in the federation the truth!

“Hehe. Those shameless scumbags spoke evil of me and claimed that I was possessed by the Blood Stripe Virus. If I cannot control my dark side and really go on a killing spree slaughtering the innocent, that will be exactly what they are expecting me to do. I will be at their mercy and eventually bend to them!

“Weak? Being unable to control your anger, hatred, passion, and brutality. Submitting to your dark side. Completely falling into the abyss. That’s the real weakness!

“Therefore, you can go to hell!”

BOOM!

A million tons of crystal bombs seemed to be detonated inside Li Yao’s brain. The overwhelming golden tide swept across all his brain cells and completely suppressed the bloody waves. Every one of his brain cells was glittering spectacularly like the most brilliant pearl!

Li Yao felt that thunder was echoing inside his brain. Countless streaks of lightning seemed to be cleansing every vein and nerve in his body. He felt that his head was clearer than ever, and his body could not have been more comfortable!

The ‘second brain’ at his tailbone was bursting out thunderous sounds, too, resonating with his main brain. When the two waves of thunder crashed into each other hard, they turned into a sound that resembled the cry of a baby!

Li Yao was dazed. He took a long breath but still could not tame his ecstasy!

[Could—could—could it be—

[The sign of the Nascent Soul Stage?

In the path of a Cultivator, advancement always came with setbacks. After breaking into the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage, he had been engaged in a lot of fierce battles, but he did not meet much trouble. Even when he was ambushed on all sides, it was his body that always got hurt. His heart and soul were never questioned on a deep level.

Without prodigious devastation, one could never learn their heart completely.

After he returned to the Heaven’s Origin Sector and got involved in such a mysterious and unpredictable scheme, his soul had fallen into the dark, boundless abyss.

But at the last moment, he managed to shoulder the pressure and soared to the sky again from the abyss. Finally, his belief had an amazing breakthrough. The horn for the march to the Nascent Soul Stage had been blown. There was a chance that he could become a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator below the age of fifty, an unprecedented achievement in the history of the Star Glory Federation!

Li Yao laughed again. Was this what people said to be a ‘silver lining’?

Advancing into the Nascent Soul Stage was the biggest dream for every Cultivator. However, the difference between the peak of the Core Formation Stage and the Nascent Soul Stage did not lie in the force of one’s punch or the speed of one’s movement. It depended on whether or not one could find their true self.

The ultimate purpose of Cultivation was to find one’s most real side and defend, spread, and abide by it throughout one’s life!

Every Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator had their own story. They all ascended to the stage after unique experiences. It was exactly because of the unique experience that their belief boasted a different will from other people’s!

Li Yao suddenly felt that what delighted him most was not that he had seen the threshold of the Nascent Soul Stage, but—

His love had lived up to his trust, and he had climbed out of the abyss in his heart at the moment, living up to her trust, too!

At a corner of the medical camp, Li Yao sat cross-legged and ripped off the bandage that entangled his left eye.

The blood red in his both eyes was gone, replaced by darkness that bordered on transparency. His eyes were nether deep nor intimidating, but they gave a very comfortable feeling, as if the resolution and smile there would stay forever.

Taking a long breath, Li Yao felt that he was like a sprout that had just pierced out of the soil, reborn.

Looking at the distance, he discovered that many volunteers had come to the medical camp while he was fighting with himself.

They were all the residents living nearby. Some of them were children, and some were seniors almost two hundred years old. They brought food, clothes, and blankets from their homes. One of them even brought a new flag.

The Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag at the center of the Federal Square was burnt and riddled with holes. However, in the small temporary medical camp, a new Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag was rising slowly!

The night fell. The sky was occupied by darkness.

But dark as the sky might be, it could never drown the flag that was flapping in the wind.

Li Yao suddenly found something very interesting.

99.99% of the night sky was purely black. Only a few stars were shining there.

However, when someone raised their head, the first thing that they noticed would certainly be the shining stars but not the dark sky!

“Uncle—”

A lively young boy, wearing a volunteer’s badge on his chest, was holding a blanket painted with a teddy bear and looking at him. “Why were you shaking and sweating so hard a moment ago? Are you still scared?”

Li Yao was dazed. Scratching his head, he was going to say something when the boy covered the blanket on him and patted his shoulder, comforting him solemnly. “There, there. Mom and Dad said that the bad guys have been driven away. It’s okay now.”

Li Yao could not help but feel amused.

The boy thought for a moment and took out a toy from his pocket. He hesitated for a moment, but he still handed it over to Li Yao in the end. “Uncle, if you are still scared, I can lend him to you. He is a very awesome Ultra-Level Federal Hero. The bad guys will never dare to come close to you if he is with you!

“However, when you are not scared, you must return him to me. This is my favorite hero!”

Li Yao took over the toy. He felt that his eyes were blurred again.

The toy in his hand was tall, majestic, and handsome. He was wearing an eye-catching combat suit with a double-edged chainsword on his waist. The Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars badge on his chest was glittering!

The toy did not look like him at all!

Li Yao’s nose flapped. Looking at the boy’s hopeful eyes, he again felt fortunate that he had not been swallowed by darkness a moment ago.

There might be such jackasses in the leadership of the federation, but so what?

It was not those guys that he was trying to protect but those who trusted him, admired him, and needed him!

“Thank you, buddy.” Li Yao scratched the boy’s nose and smiled. “With the protection of this Vulture Li Yao, I will never be scared anymore!”

“Vulture Li Yao?” The boy blinked in confusion. He pouted his lips and said, “This is ‘King Kong’ Gao Longze, the Ultra-Level Federal Hero from a hundred and thirty years ago. He isn’t Vulture Li Yao. Vulture Li Yao is too plain-looking. I didn’t buy him.

“King Kong Gao Longze is the most awesome hero in the federation. He is much stronger than Vulture Li Yao. He will certainly protect you well, Uncle!”

“Okay.” Li Yao wiped his sweat and opened his palm, observing the toy carefully for a second time.

‘King Kong’ Gao Longze, the Ultra-Level Federal Hero before him, was staring at him with a pair of strict eyes, as if he were saying, [Hey, young man. All the ‘Ultra-Level Federal Heroes’ are dead now, except for you. You are shouldering all our glory and hope. Do not ever cower away. Bring our strength and blow up those scumbags!

Li Yao clenched the toy hard in his hands and silently swore to himself, [Rest assured, Senior Gao. I will certainly not dishonor the title of Ultra-Level Federal Hero. I will unveil all those scumbags with your support and blow them into smithereens!]

Crack!

He crushed the toy’s neck.

“…” The boy.

“…” Li Yao.

“Uncle, you—you—”

“Don’t cry. Don’t cry. Uncle will do a magic trick for you. Look. I now put it below the blanket. One, two, three. Voila!”

Li Yao removed the super glue from his Cosmos Ring and stuck the toy’s head back to its neck.

With the expertise of the master of refining, naturally, he repaired such a children’s toy flawlessly.

The boy was delighted again and took back his toy. After patting Li Yao’s shoulder again like a little grown-up, he left.

After the boy left, deep inside Li Yao’s head, the mental devil that was only the size of a fingernail slowly woke up.

“What—what happened to me?” the mental devil asked with an innocent face, its big eyes blinking in confusion.

Li Yao glared at him coldly.

“Did I try to swallow your soul and control your body again?” The mental devil was greatly surprised.

Li Yao nodded silently.

“You may find this hard to believe.” The mental devil brazenly tried to spin a tale. “In fact, this must be what has happened. I am a good guy who has sworn to live in peace with you, but there is a mental devil that is residing in my heart. Occasionally, it will jump out and control me. When I am controlled by it, I will be mean and aggressive and no longer as kind and innocent as I usually am. I turned into a wicked, atrocious, bad mental devil. That was why I tried to swallow your soul!

“But right now, the bad mental devil has been beaten back by you, and the kind and innocent good mental devil is back. This is all your credit. Thank you for saving my life!"

"Okay, I got it now," Li Yao said. "So, you are a mental devil, and there is a mental devil in your heart. It was under the control of the mental devil in the mental devil that you revealed your hideous appearance and tried to devour me, wasn't it?"

"Exactly," the mental devil replied solemnly. "You are truly smart, mister. I feel comforted now."

"… Do you think I'm a f*cking idiot?"

Chapter 1095 - Dark Motives!

Li Yao’s soul power at this moment was unprecedently strong. With a telepathic thought, he released a thunderstorm inside his brain. Countless streaks of lightning were electrifying the mental devil until it was begging for mercy.

“Spare my life, mister! Spare my life, mister! Ahhhh!”

“I truly despise you,” Li Yao spat. “Are you really my ‘dark personality’? So disgusting!”

The mental devil tried to explain itself while begging. “Ask for mercy when you cannot defeat your enemy and settle the scores when you have the opportunity. That’s what a real man does. What’s disgusting about that? Twenty years ago, in the magical equipment graveyard, we often begged for our enemy’s mercy only to come back to them again later, didn’t we? That’s exactly your personality. Naturally, I am exactly like that!”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes. “So, you are waiting to ‘settle the scores’ when you have the opportunity next time?”

“Huh? What did I say just now? Not good. My mental devil jumped out and controlled me again!”

“Forget it.” Li Yao sniffed. “Our talk is useless. We are both clear that I cannot eradicate you. I am also too lazy to eradicate you now. Maybe Jin Tuyi was right. I must get used to you and even try to train myself with you!

“I have discovered that every time you tried to swallow me and I weathered through it, my soul would become stronger than before. Perhaps, after another few competitions, I will be able to advance into the Nascent Soul Stage!”

The mental devil hurried to nod and agreed solemnly, “That’s right. That’s right. I didn’t mean to swallow you at all. Not at all. I was only help you train yourself by activating your potential. As a good Samaritan, I didn’t want to speak out my kindness, but you’ve discovered it anyway. Good god. You do have a pair of sharp eyes!”

“… Get lost!”

Then, something occurred to Li Yao. He shuddered hard, and he felt that he was hit by a lightning!

“Jin Tuyi… was right. He saw this coming. I was an idiot. I was truly an idiot!” Li Yao slapped his thighs.

The mental devil was confused. “What do you mean?”

“I was recalling Jin Tuyi’s words about asking us to live in peace,” Li Yao replied quickly. “But that’s not the point. It was the sentence before that really mattered!

“I overlooked it. I completed overlooked it. That was why I made such a fatal mistake!

“Before I returned to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, Jin Tuyi told me that perhaps it didn’t matter at all who Abyss was exactly because everybody has an abyss deep down in their heart. If they were swallowed by their hatred, anger, ambition, and arrogance, any one of them could fall into the abyss and turn into Abyss!

“Jin Tuyi also said that Elder Nether Spring was nothing more than a stray dog now. His Spore Stratagem has 99% failed. The Children of the Nether World and Abyss must be panicking and looking for a path of retreat right now. How could they still be working for him dutifully?

“Therefore, Elder Nether Spring and his Abyss are nothing to be scared of!

“The Abysses who have been swallowed by the darkness in their heart are the real terrifying enemies!

“But I completely neglected the reminder!

“After I returned to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, I spent all my time and effort searching for Elder Nether Spring and his Abyss. It never occurred to me that there were other Abysses that were even more horrendous!

“Elder Nether Spring’s Abyss, restrained by age and the other factors, cannot be very strong or in a high position!

“But the Abysses who have been swallowed by the darkness in their heart are different. They are not restrained by anything, and they will leave no traces. They can be activated at any time, and there will not be any sign before they are!

“They are just like me. If I hadn’t heard Ding Lingdang’s voice at the critical moment, I might’ve turned into a terrifying Abyss, too!”

The mental devil scratched its nose in embarrassment. “It’s all the past now. I’ve acknowledged my wrongdoing. Why are you still bringing it up?”

Li Yao was deep in thought. “Let’s analyze the whole thing from the beginning. First of all, it is without a doubt that, even if Elder Nether Spring took excessive Divine Blood of Chaos and fled into the Heaven’s Origin Sector as a human being, it was definitely his last choice when there was nothing else that he could do!

“His foundations were all in the Blood Demon Sector. It was impossible for him to bring the Nether World Watch to the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Therefore, he must be alone here. His only help is the underground Children of the Nether World and Abyss!

“Also, judging from Jin Xinyue’s experience, after a demon is turned into a human being, although their strength remains, the system to make use of it will be entirely different from before. It will take quite a long time for Elder Nether Spring to be adapted to the new form.”

The drugs that could reverse the conversion from demon into human being had not been discovered yet. It meant that, after swallowing the Divine Blood of Chaos and turning into a human being, there would be no turning back.

Elder Nether Spring had clearly never taken the Divine Blood of Chaos before. Therefore, even if he was transformed into a human being and a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, it would be a new experience for him, too!

Then, during the period of adaptation, he was perhaps the weakest Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator in the entire Heaven’s Origin Sector!

How could the Children of the Nether World and Abyss, who were mostly in important posts, be willing to listen to the command of such a weak Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator who had lost all his forces?

Perhaps, Elder Nether Spring knew their secrets, but such secrets could only force them to find a shelter for him at best.

To plan a shocking operation to assassinate the Speaker and to frame up Li Yao with the most delicate trap would be too large a scheme for Elder Nether Spring right now to accomplish.

“You were right,” Li Yao said calmly. “The enemy behind curtain is definitely not Elder Nether Spring but someone in the leadership of the federation. Why?

“They don’t have any reason for betrayal. The federation is stronger than ever right now. It’s impossible that the leadership would betray the country. Even if they did, they would not join Elder Nether Spring’s cause whose prospect is nothing but gloomy.

“Come here. Since you are shameless, cunning, and sordid enough, why don’t you walk in the shoes of the dark side of the leadership of the federation and tell me what their reason is for doing all this? What are their motives?”

The mental devil thought for a moment and clapped its fists. “That’s very simple. When the birds are shot down, the bows will be hidden. When the rabbits are hunted, the hounds will be cooked. ‘Raising a war’ is not just beneficial for Elder Nether Spring. It is very helpful for a lot of other people, such as the federal army and the intelligence agents!

“If the three Sectors are going to collaborate, the federation will no longer need to maintain such a large regular army in the decades to come. Instead, the tremendous resources would be dedicated to construction and development. Won’t that put the military in an awkward situation?

"Same goes for the Secret Sword Bureau. It is unlikely that the agency will be completely canceled, but there is no need to keep it on such a scale anymore. After all, they can never infiltrate the Imperium of True Human Beings and get their intelligence!

"Also, after the collaboration of the three Sectors, there will be the problem of who is the boss and who is the lackey. But whoever makes the final call, they will be affected by the forces of the other parties. There will certainly be a lot of hindrances at the early phase, which could even jeopardize the independency of the federal army and the Secret Sword Bureau.

"Taking away other people's fortune is like killing their parents. The peace of the three Sectors is certainly not in the interests of the federal army and the Secret Sword Bureau. Is it strange that they assassinated the Speaker in order to raise a war so that their benefits can be kept?"

Li Yao was silent.

"Was my analysis wrong?" the mental devil asked.

"Wrong. Wrong. Greatly wrong. Such an enormous scheme must be backed by experts in the Nascent Soul Stage. For every Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, their belief has been tested by themselves, and their soul is most solid. I don't believe that they would betray the federation for the petty benefits!

"If they did, they would've have survived the interrogation of their belief. Before their betrayal, their belief would've crumbled and made them mentally deranged!

"Their endeavor must've been supported by some sort of firmest belief!

“Also, something is quite weird!”

Li Yao scratched his head hard and mumbled, “Elder Nether Spring had the Demon God Virus. His purpose of raising the war was to release the virus so that his so-called ‘third life form’ could be created. But during the process, most of the victims would be killed!

“Let’s assume that some of the radicals in the federation insist that the only way to save the federation is to conquer the Blood Demon Sector and enslave all the demons to collect resources.

“However, judging from the progress of the scheme, it must have something do with the Secret Sword Bureau. The leadership of the Secret Sword Bureau must know a thing a or two about the Demon God Virus, too. It is not hard to guess that, once the federal army attack on a large scale, the Blood Demon Sector will certainly be ruined, and most of the demons will be killed!

“Here comes the question. Where will the slaves for mining be if all the demons are dead? Without the slave miners collecting resources on a large scale to facilitate the rapid development of the federation, won’t the federation still be doomed when the Imperium of True Human Beings arrives in a hundred years?

“This is a suicidal approach. I don’t believe that the leadership of the federation is so stupid. There must still be a critical point that we don’t know yet.”

The mental devil snapped its fingers and said, “The scheme will be cracked as soon as the critical point is found!”

“Exactly!” Li Yao pondered for a moment and watched Ding Lingdang’s interview again with the portal crystal processors that he had picked up earlier.

Before she lost control of her emotions, Ding Lingdang told the reporters that she was working with the Secret Sword Bureau and that she would certainly catch the criminal who had committed the gruesome massacre.

[Ding Lingdang is working with the Secret Sword Bureau? Got it now. She is creating an opportunity for us to meet!

[I don’t know the first thing about the leadership of the federation, but Ding Lingdang must know a lot. So, my first step will be to meet her!]

Li Yao had stayed in the temporary medical camp long enough. The stinging pain at the back of his head was becoming ever sharper.

The mysterious sniper was drawing closer to him; it was no longer safe there.

He had to found a place, one where the role of a sniper was the least important!

He piled up the blanket painted with the teddy bear neatly on the ground. Glancing at the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag flapping against the night wind for the last time, he muffled himself up with the ragged cloak and disappeared into the vast darkness.

Chapter 1096 - Gift

In the command center of the Demon Execution Division of the Secret Sword Bureau, the hunt for the Blood Devil was still on.

Because of the exposure of the tremendous evidence, the hunting group had been fully upgraded. Including Ding Lingdang, many tough Cultivators at the peak of the Core Formation Stage had joined the team. Even many well-respected battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were willing to give them a hand and ready to take action.

In the vast command center, thousands of light beams were floating. Every light beam was changing three times per second, displaying all the pictures captured by the hundreds of thousands of surveillance cameras in the entire capital city.

Such a high velocity made the light beams an ocean of colors in the eyes of ordinary people. Only the eyeballs and brain cells of the Cultivators could process such enormous data.

Li Yao had disguised himself in a hurry. Therefore, his traces were finally found after a few hours of analysis.

“The face of a citizen appeared at two spots at the same time!

“One of them has been captured and passed the blood test. He is verified to be the citizen. So, the other one must be a disguise!

“All the crystal cameras, search for the traces of the fake!”

During his escape, Li Yao changed into another two fake identities, but they were soon found out, too. He was chased all the way to the entrance of the underground district!

All the major cities in the Star Glory Federation had districts from the air to the underground. In the history of the federation, to resist the super large-scale beast tides, all the cities had dug deep underground to build fortresses. For many cities, their underground space was even larger than that on the ground.

It was particularly so for the capital city. For five hundred years, air-raid shelters, underground fortresses, magical equipment warehouses, emergency shelters… all kinds of facilities were jumbled together, constituting a complicated maze of almost a hundred floors!

The underground district boasted a regular population of almost ten million. There were also a lot of tourists, passersby, and workers from the ground. After today’s explosion, the government had activated the emergency plan. Too many civilians were hiding in the safe areas underground right now.

Underground, other than the living quarters, there were tube tunnels, garbage dumps, and abandoned areas that had not been maintained for a long time. Even the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who had lived for more than two hundred years would not be able to tell how many secrets were buried below the ground.

The biggest headache that the Secret Sword Bureau dreaded became reality. Li Yao had escaped underground!

The underground world had limited space and zigzagging pathways. There were also too many tubes and ravines that were absolutely dark. It was difficult for the snipers to lock onto their target. Even the autopiloting crystal cameras could not be unfolded easily, either. There were a lot of fixed surveillance cameras, but Li Yao could avoid them effortlessly with his cunningness.

There was nothing but silence in the command center.

“Chase him!” Guo Chunfeng gnashed his teeth.

“Should we invite the few Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators?” Mosquito, his subordinate, asked.

Guo Chunfeng pondered for a moment and said, “Of course. However, the environment of the underground district is too complicated, and too many citizens are living down there. If the Blood Devil was pushed into a fight with the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, it is definitely not going to be a joke. If a few neighborhoods are blown up, there might be hundreds of thousands of casualties!

“Therefore, ask the few Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators to set up an ambush at the main exit of the underground district. Our men will keep an eye on the inconspicuous entrances and exits. Get a squad of tough warriors and force him out of the place!

“Remember, the safety of the civilians matters most. Don’t push him too far. He is a panicked bird now, and his actions are utterly unpredictable. The capital city has just been devastated today. The citizens are still in shock. There’s no way that they can withstand a second strike!”

Just before Mosquito nodded, Ding Lingdang walked up to Guo Chunfeng and gritted her teeth. “Supervisor Guo, put me in the vanguard. I know him better than anybody else does. I will certainly find him!”

Guo Chunfeng narrowed his eyes and eyed Ding Lingdang somewhat suspiciously.

Ding Lingdang widened her eyes and stared back at him in anger.

After looking at her for a long time, Guo Chunfeng suddenly smiled and nodded. “Alright. Fellow Cultivator Ding will lead the vanguard. We are going to catch the Blood Devil!”

…

Because of the chaos caused by the accident today, the underground district was packed with refugees who had gone down there for shelter. The thousands of elite agents of the Secret Sword Bureau were like salt sprayed into seawater after they dispersed in the place.

The surveillance cameras at the turns of the pathways could only send back fuzzy pictures occasionally.

“The target has appeared in the commercial area on the minus sixth floor!”

“The target vanished. He reappeared in the hospital on the minus eighth floor!”

“The target is gone again. Ah. Appearing in the reconstruction area on the minus twelfth floor. Ready to capture him. Wrong. Wrong guy. He is not the target!”

There was no telling whether Li Yao was lucky or simply baiting the Secret Sword Bureau, but he was like an unpredictable ghost. Occasionally, he revealed his tracks in one of the surveillance cameras, but when a huge batch of Secret Sword Agents lunged at him in a hurry, he simply vanished into thin air!

Ding Lingdang was wearing a fiery combat suit as if she was worried that she was not eye-catching enough. With a bright glow spreading out from her body, she turned into a scarlet streak and rushed in the underground world.

It was her favorite battle clothing. Other people did not have anything to say.

The longer they chased, the deeper they moved. Finally, they were in the bottom part of the underground district.

The place was unpopulated, but it was dominated by dense tubes. Hundreds of underground drainage canals and ventilation tubes led outside the city. Those tubes were responsible for transporting wasted water and gas generated during the life and work of almost ten million people. Tremendous garbage had been stacked there, too. There was even an enormous underground magical equipment graveyard!

“We’ve got him!”

“He is wearing a blue-and-white crystal suit and pretending to be a police officer of the underground district!”

“Hurry up. Agents near him, stick to him now. Reinforcements are on the way!”

Thousands of Secret Sword Agents, like sharks who had smelt the stench of blood, rushed toward the garbage area in the deepest part of the underground city as fast as they could!

However, maybe it was a coincidence, but the one closest to Li Yao was Ding Lingdang.

Right above the stinky underground magical equipment, Li Yao and Ding Lingdang, who had not seen each other for ten years, confronted each other in silence.

In that second, time seemed to have stopped—the world was gone, and the sea of stars had melted. The only thing that existed in the infinite darkness was a man and a woman with their pounding hearts and heavy breaths.

Their eyes entangled each other like four hungry and thirsty vipers, exchanging information that other people could not realize at all.

Enjoying the long and yet brief one second, and glancing at the exhaust flames of countless crystal suits not far away, Li Yao withdrew his eyes in pain and said calmly, “Listen to my explanation.”

“I don’t want to!”

“In fact, I had my reasons.”

“No, you didn’t. Accept my punch first!”

She thrust herself close like a cannonball. Equipped with a crystal suit that looked like crimson fire in midair, she punched Li Yao heavily without any mercy!

Li Yao crossed his arms to block the attack, but the crystal suit on his body, which was the most fundamental version for police officers, had too poor a performance. It became worthless now instead of protection and was smashed into pieces by the punch. Li Yao was blown away and waved his hands crazily in midair, struggling and shouting, “Ding Lingdang, trust me!”

“Of course I trust you!” Ding Lingdang roared crazily. “But let me blow up your head first, jackass! I waited for you for ten years, and you went to some other woman behind my back!”

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Ding Lingdang was like the main gun on a super heavy warship. She bombarded hundreds of times in a row. The unstoppable fireballs and blasts rained upon Li Yao’s face and body. His crystal suit was shattered, and his face was swollen!

In the command center, Guo Chunfeng, who was observing the fight through Ding Lingdang’s crystal camera, shouted, “No. He is playing a trick!”

But there was no time.

“Asshole. Go to hell now!”

Ding Lingdang turned into a shooting star as she stomped on Li Yao’s chest with all her strength, blowing into directly into the mound of garbage.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The crystal bombs that Li Yao had planted below the garbage earlier were detonated immediately. The explosion displaced almost half of the magical equipment graveyard. All kinds of bizarre-shaped scraps of magical equipment were flying in midair, jamming the vision of all the Secret Sword Agents!

When the dust finally settled, the Secret Sword Swords who had come in a hurry finally discovered that, covered by the magical equipment graveyard, there was a newly-dug hole.

The hole was connected to the underground drainage network that could lead anywhere.

All the Secret Sword Agents looked at each other in bewilderment, not knowing what they should say.

Huchi! Huchi! Huchi! Huchi!

Ding Lingdang breathed hard, the flames around her bouncing higher and higher. She turned around and glared at everybody brutally, “What’s wrong?”

“No. Nothing’s wrong. Sister Ding is truly… marvelous. Incredibly marvelous!”

…

Deep inside the drainage tubes, in the stinky, dirty water, Li Yao rushed forward with a bruised, swollen head. He finally could not help but laugh. The more he laughed, the louder he became!

“It has come to my attention that something is wrong with you.” The mental devil frowned. “She beat you to a pulp the moment she met you. She punched you hard every single time without showing any mercy. If your head weren’t sturdy enough, it would’ve been blown up already! But you are still laughing so giddily? Do you have some sort of clandestine quirks, you know, sexually?

“That’s not right. I know everything about your quirks. In the past, you liked to use your hand. But after you advanced and were able to condense the air with spiritual energy, you could run dynamic simulation and didn’t even need your hands anymore!”

Pu!

Li Yao opened his hands and spat out a mouthful of bloodstained saliva. In the middle of the saliva was a glittering Cosmos Ring!

Ding Lingdang had punched it into his mouth during the glamorous, awe-inspiring attacks!

“Do you see this?” Li Yao waved the ring and proudly declared, “That’s my wife!”

Chapter 1097 - The Patriots Partnership!

Half an hour later, deep inside the underground drainage tubes, in an abandoned area that was an utter mess, Li Yao released Neltharion and Black Wing and deployed dozens of alarm rune arrays before he opened the Cosmos Ring carefully.

There were three objects in the Cosmos Ring. The first one was a mini light beam projector, in which a video clip was stored.

It was the top-secret meeting hosted by Lu Zui, the director of the Secret Sword Bureau, recorded by Professor Mo Xuan in secret.

Li Yao watched Lu Zui's setup in silence and felt even more confident.

Something is indeed wrong! What the guy said is 99% true. But in the most critical 1%, he concealed something and even deliberately lied, thereby reaching an extremely absurd conclusion!

He has captured three Children of the Nether World and even forced them into cooperation? That part might be true. After all, Elder Nether Spring is doomed. The Children of the Nether World need to find a new thigh to cling to if they want to survive. It makes sense.

He made such a terrible lie about the Blood Devil trying to steal Burning Prairie. No wonder Burning Prairie activated *the self-defense sword array of the highest level!*

Li Yao’s questions were answered one by one, only to be replaced by questions that were even bigger.

Lu Zui was one of the three key people that he needed to seek help from on his trip to the Heaven’s Origin Sector. He had collected numerous files when he was still in the Blood Demon Sector.

In terms of birth, work experience, and his remarks on the Blood Demon Sector, the guy was an out-and-out patriot of the Star Glory Federation. It would not be exaggerating to say that he was a pillar of the federation!

Even Jin Tuyi thought highly of the old hero who had fought in the secret frontline for more than a hundred years. He believed that Lu Zui was an opponent that deserved his respect and his full wisdom to compete with.

Why was such a guy betraying the federation? Why?

Li Yao did not believe that he was betraying for the power or personal benefits.

Putting the question in his heart aside, he picked up the second object. It was a tiny pendant. Judging from the rune arrays on it, it was a 3D animated photo in the form of a pendent.

He pressed the pendent softly. A mystic ray was immediately triggered, forming a bright hologram in front of Li Yao.

It was exactly Ding Lingdang, as energetic, confident, and persistent as she ever was!

Ding Lingdang was wearing short pants and a vest. She seemed to have just finished her training because sweat was all over her body. Her figure was even more stirring than ten years ago. Her skin was the color of honey, giving out an enticing scent although she was merely on the light beam.

“Welcome home,” Ding Lingdang said with a smile. “After ten years, you’re finally back! Let me tell you, I have developed a lot of new moves in the past ten years. When the thing is over, let’s have a good fight!”

“Hehehe!”

Ding Lingdang paused for a moment and continued. “The third piece of magical equipment in the Cosmos Ring is a point-to-point communicator produced by Professor Mo Xuan.

“Professor Mo Xuan and I were suspicious about the rumors surrounding you a long time ago, but Professor Mo Xuan stopped me when I was about to burst into fury. He said that he sensed a mysterious force that had been monitoring our every move in secret.

“Therefore, we didn’t do much during that period, but Professor Mo Xuan was in fact observing the force in secret, scanning their surveillance patterns and easing their wariness. Finally, he designed a communicator that could prevent interference without them knowing!

“A few days back, the product was finally successfully made, but we never had the chance to give the communicator to you.

“You must be clear that, to avoid the surveillance of the enemy, the point-to-point communicator does not send signals via the Spiritual Nexus but through electric wires by transforming the information into very feeble electric waves. The signals will be transmitted through the electric network. Together with the anti-tracing barriers that professor invented, a short, secure dialogue can be established!

“At midnight, you can find a random electric wire and connect the communicator to it. Then, it will be good to go. However, only the simplest text can be transmitted. The communication cannot be very long or accommodate much information.

“Think about what you can say to us before midnight. At midnight, Professor Mo Xuan and I will be waiting for you. If the circumstances do not allow you to talk to us, we will be waiting for you at every hour sharp that follows until we get in touch!”

The clip came to an end.

Li Yao held the pendent in his hands, almost brimming with confidence. He felt stronger than ever!

…

Midnight soon came.

Li Yao had gone out a second time earlier and made the Secret Sword Agents dizzy again before he found a wasted tube network and lurked down. He groped for an electric wire and dug a hole in its porcelain shell. Through a crystal wire, he connected the point-to-point communicator to the cable.

Very soon, the crystal processor reacted. However, there was only dry texts on it.

“Li Yao, time is precious. Let’s get down to business. Tell us your side of the story.”

Li Yao had spent a few hours abridging the causes and consequences of the whole thing. Now, he described the situation in the Blood Demon Sector and his intention for the homecoming in only a thousand words.

Professor Mo Xuan and Ding Lingdang were both silent for a moment after he sent the text. Then, they replied, “You suspect that there is an anomaly in the leadership of the Federation?”

“I am not suspecting; I am certain,” Li Yao replied. “I have evidence, and I can give it to you and the Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector. Only you are trustworthy now.”

“Tell you one thing,” Professor Mo Xuan said. “Starting from last night, Lu Zui and some experts of the military established a special operation group and captured the Children of the Nether World on a large scale. Up until now, more than fifty have been arrested. Another several hundred have been invited to a secret unit directly under Lu Zui’s command in the Secret Sword Bureau to help the investigation!”

Li Yao was surprised. Pondering for a moment, he realized what was happening. This was exactly the same as how Jin Tuyi seized power after the Eye of Blood Demon was destroyed.

Jin Tuyi had been capturing ‘accomplices of Elder Nether Spring’, and Lu Zui was capturing Children of the Nether World. But as for who exactly they were capturing, they were the only ones who knew the truth.

Speaking of which, Elder Nether Spring was quite a tragic guy, considering that he had taken the blame twice in a row. Although he was definitely not innocent, his experience was quite heartbreaking nonetheless.

“Are you suggesting that anyone who believes in me may be assumed to be a Child of the Nether World?” Li Yao asked.

“There’s no need to assume,” Professor Mo Xuan replied. “If Lu Zui indeed has a plan, it will definitely be activated soon. Whoever has suspicions about him, he can always invite them to ‘help the investigation’ for ten days or a fortnight. Those guys will eat well and sleep well, except that they won’t be able to do anything else. What can other people say when everything is over?

“Of the three most powerful men of the federation, Speaker Jiang Hailiu is heavily wounded and still in coma, and Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao has been blinded by fury and completely taken his side. Two thirds of the representatives in parliament are frantic advocates of the expedition and support his operation. He has also presented valid proof of the Children of the Nether World. Who dares challenge the Secret Sword Bureau in such troubled times?”

Li Yao gnashed his teeth. “I’ll give the evidence to the Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector first. Let’s make sure that Burning Prairie is still under our control!”

“It is moot. Luo Xingzi is not qualified to trust you.”

“That’s impossible. I’ve been fighting side by side with Luo Xingzi. I know him very well. Also, I’ve done so many favors for the Flying Star Sector, and I am backed by the Glorious Sunlight Group and Iron Plateau. Why won’t Luo Xingzi trust me?”

“Pay attention to my wording,” Professor Mo Xuan said. “I said that he is not qualified to trust you, not that he will not trust you.

“Of course, the evidence in your hands is enough to constitute a reasonable theory, but the chain of evidence in Lu Zui’s hands is more intact and convincing. He has both proof and eyewitnesses, and his theory makes perfect sense, too. Furthermore, he stands for the federal government, the legal ruler of the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

“The most critical point is that you cannot prove that you are not possessed by the Blood Devil. Think about Yan Xibei!

“Ding Lingdang and I only stand for ourselves. Naturally, we can trust you without caring about anything.

“However, Luo Xingzi stands for the billions of people in the entire Flying Star Sector. If he trusts you recklessly, and you turn out to be really possessed by the Blood Devil and steal Burning Prairie, what can he do?

“Burning Prairie is the masterpiece of the Flying Star Sector that belongs to all the people of the Flying Star Sector. Does Luo Xingzi have any qualification to believe that you are not the Blood Devil on behalf of all the people of the Flying Star Sector?

“I’ve talked with him many times regarding the issue. He is miserable. As a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, Luo Xingzi has unquestionable integrity. If he was all by himself, he would definitely be willing to trust you, however great the risk.

“Yet, the issue concerns the fate of his family, his compatriots, and billions of other people! Without enough evidence, how can he trust you?

"Let me offer an example. On Iron Plateau, everybody trusted Yan Xibei, but what happened in the end? If you, the unexpected factor, hadn't jumped out in the end, the entire Iron Plateau would've been drowned in blood!"

Li Yao was silent for a long time, before he typed, "This is a chain of suspicion. This is a dark forest."

"That's right. You are now trapped in a small 'dark forest'. Any leader whose head is calm, regardless of whether they are the chief of a sect, the commander of a troop, or the Speaker of a government, as long as they are shouldering the fate of more than their own, none of them are qualified to believe in you until you present undeniable proof."

Li Yao took a deep breath and continued. "Can the Truth Cabinet prove it?"

"The Truth Cabinet is just a polygraph. Any polygraph can be cracked. Didn't you crack it once before? This is too important an issue. Neither the Flying Star Sector nor the Heaven's Origin Sector will not have absolute faith in a polygraph, which is not any polygraph but one carefully studied by you, a master of refining, before."

"I've figured out an approach that should be able to solve the conundrum, but it cannot be used in the environment right now. How about this? Instead of proving that I'm innocent, let's find evidence of Lu Zui's scheme. It will also be enough to suggest that the whole thing is weird, right?"

"That's true. Speaking of that, Ding Lingdang has a lead."

Li Yao was refreshed. "What lead?"

Ding Lingdang joined the discussion and asked, "Have you ever heard an organization named 'Patriots Partnership'?"

Chapter 1098 - Tempest!

“Patriots Partnership?” Evidently, Li Yao had never heard of it.

“This is what happened. The Secret Sword Bureau’s brief says that three snipers were killed in a plaza next to the Federal Square, who were suspected to be the Children of the Nether World.

“However, one of the bodies looked familiar to me. I thought hard and remembered seeing it in a meeting of the Patriots Partnership half a year ago.”

“What is such a partnership about?”

“It was just a regular discussion group of thoughts. At that time, the news about the Flying Star Sector and the Imperium of True Human Beings had only just spread out in the federation. The world we lived in expanded countless times in an instant. You know that all Cultivators more or less have feelings for their homeland and want to do something for the people and the country. Regarding the solutions for the unprecedented change, many wise Cultivators proposed their opinions.

“The idea that the three Sector should collaborate and resist the imperium together was supported by some, doubted by some, and strongly objected by some. People holding different opinions formed different groups spontaneously.

“The Patriots Partnership was an organization that strongly objected to the cooperation with the demon race. It believed that demons were never to be trusted. Besides, the federation was a sacred country made of pure human beings. How could it be vilified by those evil beings?

“The only solution to the Imperium of True Human Beings is to conquer the Blood Demon Sector with the Flying Star Sector and send all the demons to the resource planets in the Flying Star Sector as slaves!”

Li Yao secretly clicked his tongue. Jin Tuyi was right again. A lot of people in the federation was indeed holding such a though!

“You used to believe in such an ideology?” Li Yao asked.

“I still do.”

“…” Li Yao.

“Forget it. This is a conflict of belief,” Ding Lingdang said. “I cannot explain it to you right now. Anyway, all kinds ideologies were thriving in the federation after the shock of new worlds. Such a discussion group was not rare.

“What was rare was the criterion to join the discussion group.

“The Patriots Partnership was not open to regular Cultivators. It had two conditions for admittance. Firstly, you had to be above the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage and boast certain influence in society, your sect, or the army.

“Secondly, at least one of your family members had to have been killed by demons, and you had to have a deep grudge against them.

“It meant that the discussion group was one of a relatively higher level. That was why I joined it. Later, there was nothing particularly interesting. Partying, chatting, making friends, and all. Right. In one of the meetings, I saw the sniper of the Children of the Nether World killed today.

“I was among the firmest opposers. Also, since I was relatively young among them, my speech was sometimes very radical. As it turned out, one night, the founder of the group, who was a professor in the Capital Medical College, came to me. He said that the discussion there was not good enough and that there was a more advanced group where I would meet more friends that agreed with me. He asked whether or not I would like to join.”

Li Yao was anxious. “Did you agree?”

“No,” Ding Lingdang replied, “I had no disagreement about their opinion, but you know that I always like straightforwardness. I have never been interested in such mysterious things. Therefore, I simply said that I would consider it.

“Later, I thought that it wouldn’t hurt to make a few more friends in the new group. So, I told the founder that I would like to join, but he suddenly hesitated and refused to let me in. After a while, everybody was bored of the empty talk. The Patriots Partnership gradually dissolved.

“At that time, a lot of discussion groups were emerging and disappearing every day. I didn’t think much of it.

“But today, when I saw the body of the sniper, it suddenly occurred to me that the man was even more fanatic and extremely than me in the discussion group. It is possible that he was actually a Child of the Nether World, but is there another possibility?”

Li Yao pondered carefully for a moment and shuddered hard. “Are you saying that there was a certain organization that gathered a large batch of experts that hated demons’ guts, filtered them, and picked out the most extreme, fanatic, and unwavering ones?

“Even for someone like you, whose parents were killed by the demon race, an expert at the peak of the Core Formation Stage, was determined to be unqualified and rejected just because you considered for a night!

“In other words, it is very likely that there is a Patriots Partnership where numerous Cultivators who consider demons our mortal enemies and are even more radical, fanatical, and resolute than Ding Lingdang?”

“I’m not sure,” Ding Lingdang said. “When I went to the founder of the group later, he said that he was involved in a secret project of the military and that he would be on a long business trip. I couldn’t reach out to him later.”

“Hurry up,” Professor Mo Xuan interjected. “I feel that we are about to be locked onto. We’ll have to talk again in a different time and place!”

“One last question,” Li Yao said. “Jiang Hailiu, Zhou Hengdao, and Lu Zui, whose family member was killed by demons?”

Professor Mo Xuan thought for a moment. “Speaker Jiang’s brother died in a beast tide eighty years ago. Iron Commander doesn’t seem to have any.”

“What about Lu Zui? Does he have any?” Li Yao asked.

“He does.”

"Who was it?"

"…Everyone."

"What?"

"Lu Zui is more than two hundred years old," Ding Lingdang explained. "He doesn't have many family members in the world. He only had a beloved wife who had grown up with him since childhood. Because of a congenital disease, she never had a child. The two of them accompanied each other for more than two hundred years.

"Because she was infertile, she opened an orphanage a hundred years ago and adopted many war orphans as her children. She was a famous philanthropist in the federation know as 'Merry Mother'. After more than a hundred years, they raised more than five hundred foster children, many of whom were distinguished persons in their trade.

"Fifteen years ago, after a beast tide outbreak, his wife went to the Grand Desolate Plateau to search for and rescue orphans as usual, but she was ripped into shreds by a demon beast hiding in the debris.

"Not counting his foster children, Lu Zui only had one family member—his wife. So, wasn't his entire family killed by demons?"

Li Yao was silent for a long time. Taking a deep breath, he found it difficult to type. "Five hundred foster children, all distinguished persons in their trade?"

"Yes."

"Holy s*it!"

…

At three o’clock in the morning, it began to rain. At dawn, it was pouring.

In the No. 2 public cemetery of the capital city, below a giant pine tree, the rainwater was sprinkling on a tiny monument.

The monument was so small and deeply buried that it was barely noticeable.

Below the moss was two tiny words—Merry Mother.

It was the tree burial, the most environmental and cheapest of all.

In front of the monument, an old man wearing a black raincoat stood in silence.

Huala!

A streak of lightning ripped apart the dark night, illuminating a pale face that was covered in raindrops. It was Lu Zui—an admin-type Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage, the guardian angel on the black frontline of the federation, and the director of the Secret Sword Bureau.

Lu Zui was carried a mottled lunch box. He took off his coat and sat in the mud below the pine tree. After taking the few dishes out of the lunch box, he poured old wine into two neat cups.

Spraying one cup of the wind on the roots of the tree, Lu Zui refilled it before sipping from the wine in the other cup and enjoying the food slowly in the raging storm.

While eating and drinking, Lu Zui touched the wrinkled pine tree and spoke softly. “Honey, I’ve been too busy recently and had no time to visit you. Today, I finally made a few dishes. All of them are your favorite food.

“I was too hasty and didn’t make them well. The skin of the fish is broken, but the braised pork is decently cooked. Also, this is your favorite litchi wine. Enjoy it.”

“Honey… I did something yesterday. You would’ve criticized me if you knew it. You always told me that the demons and devils are not worth my anger.

“But I promise you that this is not about anger or revenge. I just don’t want Wei Ming, Da Gang, Mao Mao, their children, and the children’s children to live together with the vile monsters.

“Our children are so weak, so innocent, and so kind. They will be taken great advantage of when they are around the children of demons, who are born brutal!

“The little ones always horse around when they do not know what they are doing. It’s the responsibility of the old people to watch over them, right?

“Alright. Take them slowly. There are many dishes here. I’m leaving for work.

“Maybe… I will be able to visit you again, but that’s alright. Wei Ming and Mao Mao will come. Their children and grandchildren will come to visit Merry Mother, too.

“Just wait for me for a few years. If it is quick enough, perhaps I will be meeting you in a year or two. Leave the door open for me!

“I am leaving, honey. Goodbye.”

Lu Zui touched the wrinkled bark in a trance. He then picked up a handful of moist mud next to his wife’s monument and stuffed it into his clothes from his neckline.

When he stood straight again, his soft eyes suddenly turned as sharp as an eagle and as cold as a blade!

Holding his chest so that the cold mud could warm up his heart, which was even colder, he staggered out of the cemetery.

His eardrum suddenly vibrated. After a telepathic thought, a conversation began.

There was not a sound from the other speaker, except for cold breathing.

“What’s the matter?” Lu Zui asked.

A tough voice came over. “Don’t pretend. You know what. We agreed to assassinate the spineless Jiang Hailiu. Why did you blow up thousands of innocent civilians?”

Lu Zui laughed, his teeth glittering in the lightning. “You are a soldier, and this is a war. How can there be no casualties in a war?”

The other speaker gnashed his teeth. “You crossed the line.”

“I did. Do you want to shoot me?”

“I will,” the other speaker stated. “When everything is done, I will shoot you first and then myself, as sacrificial offerings to the innocent victims!”

“Whatever.”

He cut off the communication directly and walked to the gate of the cemetery.

Huala! Huala! Huala!

The darkest night before dawn was occupied by incessant lightning, which illuminated more than ten black shadow wearing black raincoats like statues.

“Father!”

“Father!”

Greetings echoed below the black raincoats, occasionally mixed with other form of address. “Grandfather!”

Lu Zui picked up the bottle and threw it over. “This is your mother’s favorite litchi wine. We didn’t finish it. Come on. Let’s share it!”

The ten or so black shadows raised their wine cups in the tempest at the same time.

“It is our responsibility to slay the evil. Being shattered is the sweetest death!” one of the black shadows shouted.

“The big demon Jin Tuyi and the little demon Li Yao are joining hands, trying to introduce demons into the federation. Our great land will be tainted. Our magnificent country will be tarnished! In times of peril, all the Cultivators should not hesitate to fight!” another black shadow roared with him.

“Hahahaha!” Lu Zui laughed hard, with tears flowing on his eyes. “Good. Good. Good. You are all my good boys. You are all good boys of the honorable human beings of the Star Glory Federation! Come on. Bottoms up!”

Lu Zui and the black shadows drank all the remaining wine before they smashed the wine cups into pieces on the tough rocks as their deafening declaration echoed in the pouring storm.

“Slay the demons, save the federation!”

Chapter 1099 - What Evilness Are You Slaying?

At eight o’clock in the morning, the millions of citizens residing in the downtown district of the capital city greeted the new day, making the underground district even more chaotic than before.

Because of the pouring rain on the ground, the underground drainage system was also activated to the maximum. Countless rainwater tubes and dirty water tubes were emitting deafening noises as currents ran inside!

The difficulty of tracking Li Yao escalated all of a sudden. The Secret Sword Agents, who had barely slept in the previous couple of days, almost went crazy!

Li Yao reached out to Professor Mo Xuan again through another electric cable.

Professor Mo Xuan brought the information that he wanted most.

Li Yao had been anxious about the mysterious sniper.

Even after injecting a huge amount of cell restoration drugs, his heart was beating with a dull pain. It would even occasionally threaten to stop beating.

The quick, lethal shot last time was too terrifying!

Li Yao did not want to brag about himself, but there were no more than three snipers who could threaten his life to such an extent in the entire federation.

The man did not show any intent to capture him alive but just wanted him dead. If the Patriots Partnership did exist, the man was very likely a member of it, which meant that he would be a good candidate for Li Yao to get started with.

Therefore, he asked Professor Mo Xuan to investigate the man’s identity.

The sniper’s identity was not too much of a secret. After all, although the marvelous shot concealed the force and intimidation as best it could, thereby escaping ordinary people’s attention, the high-level Cultivators could definitely smell the vague scent of spiritual energy. There was no hiding that.

Also, Director Lu Zui had acknowledged frankly that there was another hunting team in case of the infiltration of the Children of the Nether World. The leader of the squad was the well-respected chief coach of gunnery in the federal army. The Cultivators who did not know the inside information naturally would not have any doubt.

It was ‘Death Ray’ Ye Changkong!

Li Yao clicked his tongue.

As the chief coach of gunnery of the federal army, ‘Death Ray’ Ye Changkong was also a legendary person who had been famous for more than a century and was a well-deserved hero of the federation. It had never occurred to Li Yao that he would be a member of the Patriots Partnership!

Li Yao quickly evaluated the combat ability of the two sides.

‘Death Ray’ Ye Changkong was in the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage. He was adept at manipulating objects at distance, locking onto the enemy mentally, and hiding his own traces. Also, he had the enhancement of a gun that was an ultimate treasure. At a distance of more than a thousand meters, he would certainly have the advantage.

In comparison, Li Yao was in the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage. He was good at deploying traps and close-range combat. If the distance could be shortened to within a hundred meters, the entire battlefield would be under his control.

However, what Li Yao wanted was much more than simply killing ‘Death Ray’.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao sent a message to Professor Mo Xuan. “Any idea what gun ‘Death Ray’ Ye Changkong is using?”

Professor Mo Xuan was a seasoned expert of magical equipment. Naturally, he knew a lot about the commonly-used weapons of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the federation. “The gun he uses most is a ‘Heavenly Shuttle IX’ anti-armor sniper rifle. The sniper rifle is designed to deal with the demon experts who boast super-thick armor and the behemothic demon beasts. Controlled by the experts about the Core Formation Stage, the sniper rifle could blow a hole or make a headshot on a demon beast a hundred meters tall easily!

“Ye Changkong’s Heavenly Shuttle IX was also modified by Li Chenxin, a master of firearms, and it consumed incalculable Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. It was utterly reshaped and combined the techniques of multiple types of guns. Together with the marrow crystal bullets that were carefully refined, the gun is a unique, ultimate treasure. Even Master Li Chenxin was very satisfied with the masterpiece and named it ‘Herald’!”

Li Chenxin was the most famous master of firearms in the federation. No wonder the heavy sniper rifle was so powerful—it had been modified by him in person.

Li Yao thought for a moment and asked again, “Is there any way to hack into Master Li Chenxin’s crystal processor and steal the structural design and the modification procedures of Herald?”

Professor Mo Xuan was silent for a moment, before replying, “It is not difficult to sneak into Master Li’s crystal processor. After all, gunnery is just a secondary art. Even the designs of ‘Herald’ can’t be a top secret. However, the Secret Sword Bureau is closely monitoring me. There will be a lot of trouble if I want to hack into someone else’s crystal processor without them knowing. I estimate that it will take more than half a day. Also, the information contained in the designs is too huge to be transmitted through text.”

“That’s not a big deal,” Li Yao said. “Ding Lingdang is still ‘hunting’ me anyway. After Professor Mo gets the designs, you can store them in a super-mini chip and ask Ding Lingdang to put it in a specific location. The inner wall of a certain trash can in a certain block, for example. I can pick it up myself.”

“Alright. I will try to bypass the surveillance, hack into Li Chenxin’s crystal processor, and retrieve the designs of ‘Herald’ in six hours,” Professor Mo Xuan replied. “However, why do you want them?”

Li Yao smiled. “I’ve figured out an approach that is worth a try, but it requires your cooperation, especially Ding Lingdang’s.”

“I’m listening.”

Li Yao hesitated for a moment and took a deep breath. Still, he typed in a line of words in the end. “You know everything, but you cannot let go of your hatred for the demons?”

There was a long silence, and the light beam remained blank.

Li Yao stared at it without blinking, with hot sweat dripping down his forehead.

It was not until half a minute later that a new line popped up on the light beam.

“You know that my father and my mother were killed by the demons right in front of my eyes. The scene is like a cluster of thorns that always entangled my heart. Now, I am already at the peak of the Core Formation Stage. But at night, I still wake up from nightmares because of fear, and I feel that I’m the desperate little girl who is surrounded by the beast tide again.

“The road that you and Jin Tuyi described looks straight, beautiful, and correct. Perhaps, there is really a promising future if we embark on that path.

“However, the cluster of thorns is still entangling my heart, my limbs, and my whole body without letting go. I can never get rid of it no matter how hard I try!

“Can you teach you how to put down the hatred?”

Li Yao was silent and did not know what he could say.

Whatever he said at this moment, it would only be hypocritical, stupid, and even cruel.

He had never experienced the pain that Ding Lingdang had. How could he be so shameless as to toss out some irresponsible nonsense?

Scratching his head hard, Li Yao failed to come up with any solution.

The light beam was blank for another half minute before the letters popped up one after another again. Ding Lingdang was typing very fast. Li Yao could even picture her biting her bottom lip.

“However, no matter how much one hates the demons, no matter how unwilling one is to cooperate with the demons, it is definitely not a reason to kill thousands of compatriots, thousands of ordinary people, and thousands of innocent fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, sons, and daughters!

“I watched my parents die in front of me in person. I know exactly how it feels.

“In the Federal Square yesterday, how many little kids at the same age as I was years ago tasted the same feeling? Years later, will they wake up from nightmares and burst into tears like I do today?

“Slaying evil is our responsibility, but the purpose of slaying the evil is to protect ordinary people so that none of us need to bear such pain!

“If thousands of innocent people must be sacrificed first in order to slay evil, wouldn’t it be putting the cart before the horse? What evil are they slaying?

“Last night, I thought for a long time while holding the pictures of my father and my mother, but I was still uncertain what path I would take.

“However, there is one thing that I’m absolutely certain about.

“The scumbags who killed so many innocent people, even if they are wearing a human skin covered in fancy clothes and carrying the righteous banner, are still evil. The most shameless evil!

“I am a Cultivator. Guarding ordinary people and slaying evil is my responsibility! Regardless of whether the evil is wearing the skin of demons or that of human beings, I will catch them mercilessly, grab their neck, and beat the last bit of crap out of their filthy body!”

Li Yao gazed at the light beam for a long time. He felt that his nostrils were occupied by some sour liquids. He rubbed his eyes hard and quickly typed.

“Got it. We can discuss our future path later. We’ll definitely work something out.

“Right now, let’s catch the evil in human skin first and beat the crap out of them!

“Look at the back of the third cooling tube below the left abdomen on your crystal suit.

“Hehe. When you punched the Cosmos Ring into my mouth, I gave you a little something, too!”

…

Six hours later, in the command center of the Demon Execution Division of the Secret Sword Bureau, Ding Lingdang was gnashing her teeth while her red hair was dancing crazily in midair. She was holding a thin chip in her hand.

She jabbed the chip at Guo Chunfeng’s nose.

“What’s this?” Guo Chunfeng slightly frowned. He was a refiner with keen eyes. Naturally, he could tell that it was a chip for a crystal processor to connect to the Spiritual Nexus wirelessly. There was a unique identification rune array and spiritual stripe embedded inside, too. It was used to connect to the network.

In other words, the chip was a crystal processor’s ‘SIM card’. Only after the chip was inserted and activated could a crystal processor connect to the Spiritual Nexus.

What confused him was why Ding Lingdang brought a network chip to him.

“I found the chip in the cooling tube of my crystal suit while I was maintaining it. It is definitely not mine.” Ding Lingdang spoke to him solemnly.

Although she was not a refiner, an excellent Exo still needed grasp the knowledge of the regular and simple maintenance of their crystal suit.

After the battles that were not very intense, if the crystal suits were not damaged, it was common practice for the Exos to perform the maintenance themselves.

Guo Chunfeng thought quickly and gasped. “It must’ve been inserted into your crystal suit secretly by Blood Devil Li Yao during combat. The chip is not under our surveillance. As long as you replace it with the one in your crystal processor, you will be able to establish an unknown, confidential communication channel!”

Chapter 1100 - Death Ray!

Ding Lingdang gnashed her teeth. “Does the wretched Blood Devil think that I’m a three-year-old whom it can fool easily in such a way? The real Li Yao is already dead. It is not Li Yao at all. I will not be tricked!”

“Exactly, Fellow Cultivator Ding. You did the right thing by giving the chip to us. The Blood Devil is cunning and unpredictable. Normal Cultivators may be bewildered by him easily. Not to mention that you are…”

Guo Chunfeng thought for a long time and failed up find a phrase to describe the relationship between Ding Lingdang and Li Yao.

Ding Lingdang sighed and sat on a seat at a loss. “I understand it, Supervisor Guo. I am just a pure battle-type Cultivator. Such complicated issues should be handled by professionals like you, but I must remind you that, since the Blood Devil inherited Li Yao’s memory and combat style, based on my understanding about Li Yao, this is very likely one of his ruses, too. I have handed the chip to you, but as for whether or not ‘it’ wants to talk to me or has other intentions, I can’t tell now. Make a judgement yourselves.”

“Of course!” Guo Chunfeng immediately agreed. He gave the chip to the crystal processor specialists.

Right now, the operation to capture Blood Devil Li Yao was no longer just the Demon Execution Division’s business.

Blood Devil Li Yao was related to the Blood Demon Sector, which was the work range of the Demon Execution Division.

However, since it was the Blood Devil, which was sort of a devil, the Devil Elimination Division, which was responsible for the extraterrestrial devils, had every reason to participate in the operation, too.

Additionally, since Li Yao had been a Cultivator before he was possessed by the Blood Devil, it was only natural that the third division, which was responsible for the crimes of the Cultivators, joined as well.

The three divisions had joined their hands to chase after the most dangerous Blood Devil Li Yao. It was one of the biggest operations since the establishment of the Secret Sword Bureau, but the general commander was still Guo Chunfeng.

The chip was inserted into a crystal processor. Almost a hundred crystal processor specialists, including a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator and more than ten Core Formation Stage Cultivators, stared at the light beam together with Guo Chunfeng.

Four pieces of information popped up on the light beam. They were all the simplest text. Judging from the time stamp, they had been sent earlier.

The first one said, “Trust me! I have evidence for you!”

The other three pieces of information were all a location with a time. It appeared that Blood Devil Li Yao was arranging a meeting with Ding Lingdang at a certain time in a certain location.

However, the first two appointments had long passed. The Blood Devil must have changed the time and location of their meeting three times when Ding Lingdang did not show up.

There were only five minutes to go before the third appointment.

“Damn it!” Guo Chunfeng slapped his thigh and breathed hard. “Had we found it earlier, we might’ve captured him already!

“Everyone near the thirteenth district, move to the Star River Community. It is very possible that Blood Devil Li Yao will show up there in five minutes!

“Crystal processor specialists, analyze the data immediately and trace the source!

“Hurry! Hurry! Hurry! Let’s get moving!”

Encouraged by Guo Chunfeng, all the Secret Sword Agents were rushing toward the Star River Community on the minus thirteenth floor like wild bees. They blocked all the entrances and exits of the minus thirteenth floor.

The hundred crystal processor specialists were analyzing the information quickly with the help of the super crystal processor.

Three minutes later, the result was out.

Blood Devil Li Yao was very prudent. He sent the shortest text every time and made sure that the information sent out was minimal. Also, he would completely turn off the crystal processor after a message was sent.

Therefore, it was impossible to lock onto the position of the Blood Devil for now.

Five minutes later, the Star River Community was peaceful. There was no sign of the Blood Devil at all.

The terrible Blood Devil had natural instincts about danger. It had perhaps smelt something mysterious from the unusual mobilization of the Secret Sword Agents. He escaped into the crowd again.

Very soon, another message was sent.

“A lot of Secret Sword Agents are in the Star River Community. Not a good place for meeting. In twenty minutes, at the door of the Red Lightning Arena on the minus sixteenth floor. See you there!”

The message was sent to the crystal processor in the command center through the invisible Spiritual Nexus in less than 0.1 seconds. Blood Devil Li Yao turned off the crystal processor at exactly the same time, too.

But it would never occur to the Blood Devil that the hundred crystal processor specialists of the Secret Sword Bureau had controlled the network chip and deployed a very inconspicuous virus on it.

The function of the virus was that, as long as anybody transmitted information via the network chip, an unpredictable telepathic thought would immediately be fed back.

The telepathic thought would hack into the other crystal processor. Even if the crystal processor was completely turned off, it would still activate the network chip deep inside the crystal processor in its silent mode!

“Got ’em!”

Exclamations echoed in the command center.

Li Yao was a master of refining but not a specialist of the Spiritual Nexus. His understanding of crystal processor viruses was very shallow. How could he be match for a hundred best experts of the trade?

The Blood Devil was rushing quickly from the minus thirteenth floor to the minus sixteenth floor. He even took a turn in a warehouse of abandoned magical equipment on the minus fifteenth floor to get rid of the potential followers. Then, after dashing to the minus twenty-first floor through a drainage tube, he went back to the minus sixteenth floor. The Blood Devil could not have been more prudent.

But it never occurred to the Blood Devil that the portable crystal processor, which he was wearing on the wrist but had completely turned off, had already betrayed him.

“Group One, Group Two, and Group Three, prepare ambushes near the Red Lightning Arena. The coordinates of the target have been sent to your crystal processor. Focus on driving him away and try to avoid a fierce fight. Also, ask the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators at the entrance and exits on the ground to be ready!”

Guo Chunfeng wiped away his greasy sweat, clenched his fists, and stared at the shining red spot on the 3D map.

The red spot was Blood Devil Li Yao!

The red spot would enter the Secret Sword Bureau’s siege in another several seconds.

Right then—

The red spot retreated at an astonishing speed and crawled into the interconnecting drainage channels again!

The storm earlier made every drainage channel in the underground district a surging river. In the flooding rainwater, the red spot accelerated to the maximum speed and travelled deeper than the minus thirtieth floor in the blink of an eye!

“We’ve been discovered!” Guo Chunfeng jumped to his feet in fury. “All members, surround him and try to force him to the surface!

“Analyze the information of the terrain nearby and the tube network, and calculate the most likely coordinates where he will appear on the ground. Ask the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators around to move over. Be wary and prepare for battle!”

A moment later, a line of angry words popped up on the light beam. “Why? Why? Why can’t you just trust me?”

Then, the red spot was gone.

“The Blood Devil has discovered the anomaly of the crystal processor. It has likely been crushed right now,” one of the crystal processor specialists said helplessly. “After all, the activated chip will still spread out feeble spiritual waves even if it is in the silence mode.”

“This is already enough!” Guo Chunfeng narrowed his eyes and said coldly, “This time, the Blood Devil has been exposed for too long. We are too close to it for it to get away again. Block the Blood Devil from three sides and leave one side empty. It can only be pushed to the ground according to our pace!”

…

In sky above the capital city, a medical airship was floating quietly.

On the surface, it was a plain-looking medical airship, but below the ragged shell were actually dozens of powerful attack rune arrays.

‘Death Ray’ Ye Changkong, the best expert of guns in the federation and a Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage, as well as his elite hunting group, was now hiding inside the ‘medical airship’.

‘Death Ray’ Ye Changkong was more than a hundred and sixty years old, but his hair was black, and his teeth were still strong—he looked like an energetic middle-aged man. He was short and as light as a falling leaf, covered in an imitative disguise suit that could change appearance according to the environment, and holding the sniper rifle named Herald. Leaning against the seat, he was resting with his eyes closed.

The tough members of the team, on the other hand, were talking, laughing, and even horsing around. Their expressions and muscles were all very relaxed.

Only the best veterans who had survived more than a hundred battles could be so calm before a great battle.

Ye Changkong was an expert of shooting. He knew his advantages and disadvantages best. Never in the world would he sneak into such a chaotic place as the underground district in order to hunt such a dreadful opponent as Li Yao!

It was the most idiotic approach, which would turn him from the predator into the prey instantly.

Standing on the well-disguised, highly-powerful hunting airship, he could see every corner of the capital city. Wherever the target popped up, he would be able to rush close within a breath, set up traps, and shoot the target unhurriedly!

Zi! Zi! Zi!

Ye Changkong’s crystal processor suddenly buzzed. The latest information in the command center was sent over, including the updates of the siege, Li Yao’s most likely escape route, and the progress of the Secret Sword Agents. Even Guo Chunfeng’s every word had been recorded.

The hunting group led by Ye Changkong was under the direct command of Lu Zui. It was of a higher level than the hunting group commanded by Guo Chunfeng.

Lu Zui had opened all clearances to him so that he could receive all the information on Guo Chunfeng’s side in real time.

On the other hand, Ye Changkong’s progress was blocked from the outside world. It was highly classified and reported to Lu Zui alone.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Endless information flashed in front of Ye Changkong, only to be devoured by his eyes that looked like black holes.

He blinked and pressed his ears softly. Lu Zui’s voice immediately came over. “Li Yao will likely escape to the ground. Some Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators not under our control are coming at him. Do not let him be captured alive, or we might be in trouble.

“To avoid trouble and to make sure that our plan goes smoothly, kill him as soon as possible!”

Ye Changkong moved his fingers away and cut off the communication. Brilliance beamed out of his eyes. The information that he had just devoured popped up on his retina again as he analyzed and calculated at a speed close to that of a mainframe crystal processor.

His nickname was ‘Death Ray’.

It meant that, wherever he went and however many targets there were, if he was determined to go on a killing a spree, all the targets would be wiped out at the speed of light!

Chapter 1101 - Death Ray's Trap!

Ye Changkong set his crystal processor into the stealth-and-sniper mode. He then put two lenses of data into his eyes. Glamorous colors immediately appeared in front of his eyes, which turned out to be a translucent city where Li Yao was surrounded.

Other than the structural designs of the dozens of floors into the underground, there was also the most detailed map about their corresponding parts on the ground. Every pathway and every window in every skyscraper was clear to him so that he could study the most promising plan of shooting unhurriedly.

Although Li Yao's coordinates were gone, the coordinates of all the Secret Sword Agents were still scattered on the map in the form of bluish colors.

It was not hard to analyze Li Yao's approximate location from the movement of the hunters. He was like a whale that was surrounded and being chased by countless tiger sharks. There was nowhere that he could run to!

Ye Changkong tapped his temples unhurriedly. He commanded the hunting airship to fly toward the location where Li Yao would likely rush out while his soul turned into spiritual threads and dived into the complicated map.

Shua!

He constructed a vivid underground maze deep inside his brain, assuming the role of ‘Li Yao’ and speculating his most likely route of escape in his place.

As the best sniper of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, Ye Changkong was a top assassin, too. To some extent, Li Yao and he were the same type of person.

Stealth, infiltration, assassination from the shadows, escape from ambushes that nobody could get away from… All those subjects were Li Yao’s best moves. They were also Ye Changkong’s routine work in his hundred years of battles.

The snipers in the military were often divided into groups of two, with one shooter and one observer.

However, after he advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage, Ye Changkong no longer needed an observer, nor could he ever find a partner that was suitable for himself. Even the most well-trained would be a burden instead of help for him when they worked as his observer.

For the past forty years, he had always been a lone wolf, just like Li Yao did.

After receiving the task to shoot Li Yao, Ye Changkong had collected all the known files about Li Yao and studied them for a whole weak. He had paid special attention to Li Yao’s successful and classical cases.

He had even asked Lu Zui to hypnotize him with the techniques of the Meditation Healer so that he would think himself Vulture Li Yao. He trained, drilled, and lived in the hypnotized state.

In such a way, he developed a deep understanding about Li Yao’s state of mind, habits, and thinking pattern.

Ye Changkong was amazed by the guy of the same trade as himself who was more than a hundred years younger. He even had the feeling that the two of them could be good friends. He often thought that, if it were Li Yao, perhaps he would consider changing his habits for decades and bringing an observer.

It was a pity that his mission was to destroy his ‘good friend’ whom he had never met before.

My young friend, you are immature after all. You are idiotic enough to trust a woman whom you haven’t met for ten years, who is filled with jealousy and anger!

If you had the chance to live to my age, you would certainly realize that it is better to trust a demon beast that has been injected with excessive exhilarant than to trust an infuriated woman because the behavior of the latter is even more unpredictable!

But it is a pity that you won’t survive today.

Your pattern has been completely scrutinized by me. You are trying to run away from here, right?

The maze in the brain of ‘Death Ray’ Ye Changkong was enlarged and enlarged until it stopped in a rusted, abandoned area in the southwest part of the capital city.

It was a factory area that was about to be demolished and reconstructed.

Tremendous forsaken factories of magical equipment, where all kinds of rusted tubes and black furnaces were piled up, made the place looked like a tomb of iron.

There was not an entrance or exit to the underground district here. Therefore, it was not a focus of the defense on the ground. There was not a second Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator in the five square kilometers nearby, either.

The terrain there was too complicated. Nobody knew where the jumbled tubes led to eventually. Also, as the city developed rapidly, the areas nearby had been built into a business district that was packed with people and vehicles.

Once the target snuck into the business district, it would be easy for him to get away.

Most of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators are guarding the entrances and exits, but their number is too small after all, and they cannot watch over every weakly defended part of the capital city.

You will certainly not choose to run away from the main entrances and exits. In those forsaken factories of magical equipment, countless tubes extend into the ground, such as the discharge tubes of cooling liquids for metal refinement, the discharge tubes of dirty water, and those of the poisonous gas.

Pick a random tube, dig a hole, and you will crawl into one of the factories without anybody knowing anything.

You don’t even need to drill through the tubes. You are an explosion expert. As long as you calculate the precise location and angle, one tiny oriented crystal bomb is enough to blow your way up to the ground. With your speed, a few seconds is more than enough for you to dash into the business district that is teeming with people!

Come on. Don’t disappoint me. Do your best. Let’s see whether my bullets are faster than your body and your *saber or the other way around! I'm going to remember the competition for the rest of my life!*

Ye Changkong sent the battle plan that he had drafted in that moment to the crystal processors of all the members of the hunting group.

Three seconds later, everybody was in their crystal suit. They jumped off the airship and rushed to the forsaken factories of magical equipment not far away, like leaf butterflies that were landing on the forests of steel softly.

Judging from the information on Guo Chunfeng's side, the hunt below the ground was getting more and more intense. Li Yao was about to flee to the underground space right below the factory area.

A second Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator that was closest to them was staying at an exit of the underground district seven kilometers away.

Ye Changkong pondered for a moment and decided not to tell his judgement to the ally in case there was trouble.

He had locked onto the location of Li Yao's appearance. Also, he was in the company of almost twenty partners who trained day and night for their teamwork. As long as they could stall Li Yao for 0.1 seconds, it would be good enough!

Shua!

While he was still in midair, twelve small balls ejected out the back of Ye Changkong's crystal suit. They exploded into twelve sparrows and entered stealth mode after flashing briefly.

The twelve stealthy sparrows flew in every direction around the factory area and had every corner under control.

The hunting group landed on the ground quietly. Everybody’s crystal suit was added with stealth units for the mission. They melted into the steel forest like chameleons that had grown venomous fangs. Then, they concealed the emittance of heat and spiritual waves and compressed their breath and heartbeat to the minimum while lurking in the middle of the dark debris.

The fatal trap was ready. Whichever part of the factory area Li Yao was going to jump out from, they would be able to bite him instantly—for at least 0.1 seconds!

Ye Changkong, on the other hand, climbed to the top of an enormous chimney hundreds of meters tall at the southeast corner of the factor area.

It was the commanding height of the area, without any obstacles in the several square kilometers nearby, which made it the perfect location for a sniper. Also, the wall of the chimney was very thick, and there was a circular platform on the top. It was very comfortable to either kneel or crouch there.

Shua! Shua! Shua!

Through the data and information that was bouncing on the lenses on his retina, Ye Changkong quickly figured out twenty-nine coordinates where Li Yao was most likely to erupt out. In five seconds, he set the gun’s parameters according to the coordinates.

He also changed his crystal suit into stealth mode before he wrapped a disguise cloak around his crystal suit, which could prevent the spiritual energy inside from dispersing.

The sniper rifle Herald, which had also entered stealth mode, slightly protruded out through a gap on the disguise cloth.

While the marrow crystals were getting hotter and hotter in Herald, his head was calmer and calmer. His mind was empty, and he entered the indescribable state of transcendence!

In a moment, all the buildings nearby and the earth were melted in his eyes and turned transparent. He could vaguely ‘see’ that countless Secret Sword Agents were running and roaring. He also sensed that a streak of brightness was fleeing in a hurry to the nineteenth coordinates that he had estimated earlier!

It was a shooting skill of ‘Death Ray’ Ye Changkong’s own invention. By sharpening his senses to the maximum, he was able to perceive the target by the ripples and the feedback of the telepathic thoughts. All the barriers and obstacles would be nonexistent in his eyes!

You are such a disappointment!

Ye Changkong sighed in his heart, but the veins, nerves, and muscles all over his body had already been adjusted to the most perfect state by his natural instincts as fast as lightning. Herald aimed at the nineteenth spot instantly, and he pulled the trigger before the target burst out of the ground!

No sound, no light, not even any waves because of the dispersion of spiritual energy. A marrow crystal that he had refined for eighty-one days with his blood ripped apart the sky and pierced into the ground!

Right after the marrow crystal, which barely existed, broke the limits of time and space and crossed hundreds of meters instantly, three things happened at the same time.

Firstly, the ground exploded without any warning, and a streak of blackness rushed out, only to be hit by the bullet and blown apart.

Had there not been the second thing, it would have been a classic, textbook case for any sniper.

But secondly, Ye Changkong’s pupils constricted violently, and all the cells over his body were shrieking. Somebody seemed to have clenched his heart and his genitals hard, making him almost cry out in pain. He suddenly realized that the blackness that he had hit was not a human being but a piece of magical equipment that could spread out the spiritual waves of a human being!

Had there not been the third thing, he would have shuddered very, very, very hard right now!

But thirdly, right below his body, deep in the dark chimney, a saber aura, which was as invisible and inaudible as his bullet, swept up at the speed of a tide.

The thing about the ‘speed of a tide’ was that, when anyone noticed that their knees were drowned by water and realized that a great tsunami was coming, it would already be too late even if they ran away immediately!

Chapter 1102 - A Battle of the Nascent Soul Stage!

The saber aura, which was as unpredictable as moonlight, as unstoppable as a tide, and as freezing as a blizzard, penetrated into his skin and ripped apart his skin, his veins, and his bones. At the same time, thunder was echoing inside Ye Changkong’s head, and he was illuminated by the lightning in his mind!

He understood everything now!

Li Yao had never trusted the stupid woman. This was a trap since the very beginning, one specially prepared for him!

As the best sniper of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, he was the biggest threat for Li Yao right now with his shooting skills. The guy had learned a good lesson yesterday near the Federal Square!

With his delaying, it would be easier for other experts to surround Li Yao. The difficulty of escape was dozens of times higher!

Therefore, Li Yao had to kill him at any cost in order to run away without hindrance!

It was true that Li Yao and he were the same type of person, lone wolves adept at assassination. Therefore, Li Yao knew his skills and style as clearly as he knew Li Yao’s!

Everybody knew that he was a senior expert who had been famous for more than a hundred years. As the chief coach of gunnery in the federal army, he was not someone working in secret, either. A lot of his most important assassination cases were already publicly known. The courses that he taught in the federal army and several military schools were not top secret, either. He had also published quite a few books on shooting skills. Also, dozens of biographies, which had elaborated on almost all his experiences from when he was born to right now, had been released a long time ago, too. He had even published two personal memoirs!

Over the past hundred years, the information about him in public must have been hundreds of times more than Li Yao's!

He knew Li Yao very well, but Li Yao could also scrutinize his thinking pattern and combat style in one day!

Therefore, Ye Changkong had every reason to believe that Li Yao had never trusted the idiotic woman named Ding Lingdang. The network chip that he had delivered to Ding Lingdang's cooling tube in secret was just bait to fish him up!

Perhaps, Li Yao had already snuck out of the underground district into the factory area before sending the first message to Ding Lingdang. He had since been hiding deep inside the chimney, compressing his heartbeat, breathing, and scent, and lurking patiently like a cluster of cold dross.

The guy was very clear that the top of the chimney was the best shooting point in the entire factory area. No sniper would choose a second location when they were there.

As for the ever-moving signal of the crystal processor in the underground district, it was simple, too.

As long as the crystal processor was set earlier to automatically turn on and send the message and to automatically turn off after the message was sent, everybody would be under the illusion that somebody was using the crystal processor.

As for why it was running here and there, it was yet another petty trick. Some remote magical equipment under Li Yao’s control, such as a flying sword or a beast puppet, must be carrying it.

The remote magical equipment with the crystal processor had been pretending to be Li Yao and lured thousands of Secret Sword Agents to chase after them.

Everyone thought that Li Yao had run to the place in a hurry after being discovered and surrounded by the Secret Sword Bureau. They did not know that this place was a trap that he had selected earlier. Every detail had been within his calculations. He had led the Secret Sword Agents to this place!

Tricked!

Guo Chunfeng, the most terrifying demon hunter of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, had been tricked! Thousands of elite Secret Sword Agents had been tricked! Even he, ‘Death Ray’ Ye Changkong, had been completely tricked by Li Yao!

Ye Changkong felt chilled.

It meant that, while he was climbing, examining, squatting, aiming, calculating, and shooting, Li Yao had been hiding in the chimney dozens of meters below him, perhaps sticking to the wall like a giant lizard, the whole time. No breath, no heartbeat, and no stomach movement. Hollower than a ghost and quieter than a corpse, the guy had been lurking and waiting for the best opportunity!

It was not until he blew out the shot with all the spiritual energy in him, which made him at the lowest point in the circulation of spiritual energy, that Li Yao pierced out the most dangerous sting abruptly like a fatal scorpion!

The competition in the Nascent Soul Stage was not just about pure strength or speed. Such competition was always comprehensive, including a lot of factors such as wisdom, terrain, planning, knowledge, deduction, and much more, and the battle between Li Yao and Ye Changkong was a typical example.

In many cases, the outcome of a battle was determined before the two parties began fighting.

This was exactly one of such cases.

Li Yao’s attack concentrated all of Li Yao’s strength, speed, and energy in the entire scheme. Ye Changkong knew that he could not dodge it when the aura of the saber was still underway.

Without blinking his eyes, he threw out Herald, the sniper rifle, toward the depths of the dark chimney brutally. At the same time, a delicate pistol appeared in his left hand and shot out three marrow crystal bullets at the back of the aura!

Now that such a dreadful enemy as Li Yao had approached within a hundred meters of him, it would be committing suicide to use a sniper rifle again. Ye Changkong immediately switched to the most suitable weapon.

Shua!

The invisible saber aura passed his right shoulder like a soft breeze, but the three marrow crystal bullets that he had focused his attention on disappeared into the darkness.

Chi!

Ye Changkong’s right arm, covered in the crystal suit, flew up to the air. The fracture was as smooth as a mirror, as if his arm should never have grown on his body.

One attack, without any unnecessary adornment, and the arm of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator had been chopped off!

Ye Changkong’s pupils constricted violently again. He did not know that Li Yao’s manipulation over his spiritual energy was so skillful despite his young age.

For a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, the criterion to gauge their capability was not how awesome-looking their attack was or how glamourous the sound and visual effects were.

It was doubtless that, when a Nascent Soul Stage burnt their life and soul and summoned all their spiritual energy, they would be able to rip apart the clouds in the sky, produce blasts sweeping across several square kilometers, or trigger thunder, lightning, and sandstorms. The sound and visual effects would be grandeur.

But they were entirely useless.

The sound and visual effects were not fatal, just the wasted spiritual energy in an attack. The more attractive the sound and visual effects were, and the more intimidating the attack looked, the more spiritual energy had been wasted during the attack, and the less spiritual energy would be really transformed into damage.

Therefore, unless there were special needs, such as to boost the morale of allies and frighten the enemy on a battlefield, the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators always pursued absolute control over their strength. The less awesome-looking, the better.

Their dream was that, with a snap of their fingers, nothing would appear to happen, but the target several kilometers away would collapse to the ground, with no one knowing the cause of death even after the autopsy.

Naturally, Li Yao’s attack was miles away from such an ultimate level, but he was walking on the right path!

Ye Changkong did not panic at all even though his right arm had been chopped off. He shot out the remaining three bullets calmly.

BOOM!

From the inside of the dark chimney, his Herald was thrown back brutally, followed by a streak of scarlet brightness!

Demonic energy!

The overwhelming demonic energy spread out violently like a volcanic eruption! Along with the surging demonic energy was creepy, screaming background music, which pierced through Ye Changkong’s head like iron nails and disrupted the pace of his spiritual energy circulation!

At this moment, only half a second had passed since Ye Changkong fired the first bullet.

The members of the hunting group ambushing nearby all perceived Li Yao’s demonic energy.

The Secret Sword Agents crowding out of the underground all perceived Li Yao’s demonic energy.

The battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator several kilometers away perceived the soaring, overwhelming demonic energy, too!

Everybody rushed toward the chimney at the highest speed!

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

Above the chimney, Li Yao was about to be reach a point where he was three meters from Ye Changkong, when six streaks of lightning appeared abruptly around him. They split into a thousand electric arcs and interweaved into a powerful electric net, blocking his lethal attack briefly.

They were the six marrow crystal bullets that Ye Changkong had shot previously. They did not miss the target but enveloped Li Yao and transformed into a barrier of lightning!

Ye Changkong was very clear that he had already failed without any chance of a comeback since the second he climbed on the chimney!

However…

After he abandoned everything and joined Lu Zui’s cause, he had not cared about the meaningless stuff, such as death or honor, at all!

He was a soldier of the federal army, one who considered death his homecoming!

Right now, he was going to create an opportunity with his life as the bait so that Li Yao would be dragged into hell with him!

BOOM!

The electric net did not stop Li Yao for long. Li Yao, wearing the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and having the maximum combat ability, still approached him in the end. After one punch, the breastplate of his light crystal suit, which was designed for the snipers, was blown into pieces. Scraps of the crystal suit, mixed with terrible spiritual and demonic energy, flooded into his internal organs!

Pu!

Ye Changkong vomited a mouthful of blood and broken flesh as if a volcano was erupting in his throat.

But his handsome face hidden below the facial cover, on the other hand, put on a hideous smile.

He sensed that several intimidating auras were drawing close. Li Yao would not be able to run away if he attacked a second time!

The best outcome would certainly be that other battle-type Cultivators killed Li Yao to save him.

Even if the guy was not killed, he had released overwhelming demonic energy in public, and he was wearing such a weird… demonic suit. He had also slain the chief coach of gunnery of the federal army in front of all the eyewitnesses!

How was he going to explain that?

Would anybody believe him even if he brought out any evidence?

The federation is the human beings’ federation! It is not to be sullied by you evil, filthy beings! Come on. Kill me!

Ye Changkong burst into laughter in his heart. He tossed out his pistol. Spurts bouncing out from his left elbow and his knees, he lunged at Li Yao!

However, Li Yao’s judgement of the situation was beyond his expectations.

Although Li Yao had gone through all the trouble to set up the trap and kill him, he seemed to come to the conclusion that he would not be able to run away after killing the enemy when he scanned the intimidating auras coming close at him.

Without any hesitation, Li Yao abandoned the attack. He kicked his enemy right in the abdomen, blowing him into the air. Then, with the huge counterforce, he dashed back into the chimney again.

BOOM!

A deafening sound echoed at the bottom of the chimney. The dust that had been accumulated for countless years like pozzolana soared up. Li Yao disappeared into the endless dust!

Chapter 1103 - Serial Wars In Darkness!

The fierce battle between the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator and someone at the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage in fact only lasted one second. When ‘Death Ray’ hit the ground like a broken doll, Li Yao was long gone.

After the Secret Sword Agents and the top experts crowded around and tore down the chimney, they discovered that at the bottom of the chimney was a series of holes that had been blown up by dozens of oriented crystal bombs.

Passing through dozens of meters of holes, it was the congregating point of more than ten drainage canals.

The rainwater of the storm last night had all gathered inside, which made them the dirtiest swirls. Below the swirls were another ten or so discharge tubes that led to every direction of the underground world.

If Li Yao had jumped into the dirty swirls, nobody would have been able to tell which floor of the underground maze he had returned to right now.

“Asshole!”

In the command center of the operation, Guo Chunfeng burst into fury and smashed his teacup hard. Cracks were immediately appearing on his tea cup which he had used for more than ten years.

Boss is angry!

Most of the Secret Sword Agents had never seen Guo Chunfeng lose control of himself before. Knowing that he had burst into fury for real, they looked at each other in bewilderment and did not know what to do.

Before, even when they were faced with the infiltration of the most cunning demons, when they were all angry and anxious, it had always been their boss who calmed them down peacefully!

They always said that their boss would be tranquil and optimistic no matter how harsh the environment was.

It never occurred to them that the tranquility that their boss had trained for decades would be broken by Li Yao.

But it was quite understandable. At this point, all the Secret Sword Agents could tell that Li Yao had played them!

Everybody felt awful. When they recalled a few days ago when they were eating the bear paws together dreaming to capture Li Yao soon, it was like a whole century ago.

As for the other advanced hunting group led by ‘Death Ray’ Ye Changkong, naturally, many Secret Sword Agents were not happy about it.

However, that was part of the battles in the secret frontline. When Director Lu Zui informed them of the existence of the Children of the Nether World, most people had found the arrangement acceptable after careful thought.

Besides, Ye Changkong was the chief coach of gunnery in the federal army and a legendary, senior expert. He was an unquestionable federal hero whom many Secret Sword Agents regarded as their idol!

They had nothing to say about the other team that was led by such a senior, and they simply considered it another safety measure.

It never occurred to them that even such a seasoned Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator would be tricked by Li Yao. After only one move, his right arm was chopped off, and he was beaten into heavy wounds!

Could a sniper who had lost one arm still shoot?

The field-tested Secret Sword Agents grew a deeper understanding about the dreadfulness of Vulture Li Yao now. The command center seemed to have turned into a refrigerator, where they became the frozen, dead fish.

“Give my orders. Ask the Secret Sword Agents in the cities nearby to reinforce us. We will march into the underground district and search for the devil!”

His eyes bloodshot, Guo Chunfeng gritted his teeth so hard that they were cracking.

“With everything coming to this point, we can only overwhelm him with sheer numbers now!

“I will file an application to the government and the parliament requesting to close the few main entrances and exits of the underground district and to identity and evacuate all the citizens living down there. We will empty the underground and find this Blood Devil no matter how deep we will have to dig!”

All the Secret Sword Agents were shocked.

Almost ten thousand citizens were residing in the underground district of the capital city. Just for the search of one target, were all of them going to be evacuated?

It had to be a joke!

This was the capital city, which had just gone through a disaster, and the underground district was to be emptied today? Were they scared that the citizens were not panicked enough?

Such an application would never be passed. Even the Speaker would not dare make the call.

Everybody knew that their boss was too angry to think it through, but none of them dared to point it out.

Guo Chunfeng breathed heavily for a long time. Then, he seemed to realize that he had said something stupid. Waving his hands helplessly, he said, “Forget it. It’s not like we can evacuate the citizens right now. Summon the Secret Sword Agents from the cities nearby. Triple, no, quintuple the number of the Secret Sword Agents to be sent into the underground! Even if we can’t capture him, we must keep him busy and stop him making trouble for anyone else!”

“Understood!”

Now that all the Secret Sword Agents were being sent to the underground, the defense and search on the ground would certainly be greatly weakened.

But there was no better solution right now. None of the Secret Sword Agents felt that the order was strange when they bowed and went to carry it out.

Guo Chunfeng threw himself into the cushion in the corner heavily and crouched deep into it. Narrowing his eyes, he stared at the swirls on the light beam where giant foam was floating and began a new round of consideration.

…

In the factory area, Ye Changkong was like a pile of broken meat that was covered in the scrap iron and copper when he lay on the ground.

But all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators boasted amazing vitality. As long as they were not killed on the spot, any seemingly shocking wounds were actually not a big deal.

“Chief Coach!”

All the members of the hunting group were greatly shaken. The medics hurried to come close and treat him. In the meantime, their airship landed. He was sent into the airship through a floating medical cabin and delivered to the hospital affiliated to the Secret Sword Bureau for deep treatment.

“Wait a moment.”

Ye Changkong struggled to raise his remaining arm and pressed his ear softly.

“I have failed.”

Ye Changkong rolled his Adam’s apple and started a quiet dialogue with the chip stuck to his vocal cord.

“I know, but it doesn’t matter since you are fine. We will have other chances.”

Before the operation, Lu Zui had demanded that he accomplish it, but now that the operation had failed, Lu Zui was not angry at all but comforted him gently. Pausing for a moment, he asked, “Were you in close contact with him?”

“Except for the last kick, he was never within three meters from me,” Ye Changkong said.

“That’s good,” Lu Zui observed. “But you’d better examine your crystal suit and your body carefully. Last time, during his fight with Duanmu Ming, he stuck an eavesdropping chip onto Duanmu Ming’s crystal suit. It is possible that he has played the same trick again.”

Ye Changkong managed a smile. “I am not Duanmu Ming. I would know it if somebody else put an eavesdropping chip on me.”

“Of course, it is extremely difficult to place an eavesdropping chip on a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator,” Lu Zui said, “but it will be safer if you perform an examination.”

“Alright. I’ll examine it carefully,” Ye Changkong replied. “We’ll talk later after I make sure that it is safe.”

Loosening his fingers and cutting off the communication, Ye Changkong told his subordinates, “Take off my crystal suit right now and destroy it. Also, perform a thorough physical examination and see if there are any anomalies in the wounds on my skin.

“Pay special attention to the metal scraps that pierced into my body. They could be eavesdropping chips in disguise.”

Ten minutes later, his crystal suit was taken off and demolished straightforwardly. The examination of every inch of skin and every wound was done, too. No strange chips were detected.

Ye Changkong closed his eyes again and recalled the whole process of the fight. Making sure that Li Yao definitely did not have a chance to play any trick on his body, he was finally relieved.

When he was about to be sent into the airship, Ye Changkong suddenly remembered something. “Where is my Herald?”

Herald was an ultimate treasure modified by the best master of firearms in the federation. He definitely would not drop it here.

Holding Herald against his chest with his remaining arm and touching the barrel that as smooth as flesh, he took a long breath in relief and was sent into the airship.

The airship flew toward the hospital. When it was still on the way, a plain-looking shuttle caught up to it.

Lu Zui, director of the Secret Sword Bureau, came to visit the heavily wounded Ye Changkong in person.

In the secret chamber, he examined Ye Changkong’s wounds solemnly, especially the fracture of his right arm.

The technique of ‘Replantation of Severed Limbs’ was rather mature in the federation. The vitality of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was strong, too. It was not a big problem to revive the broken arm.

However, it had been severed completely. All the nerves and veins needed to be reconnected. After the heavy wounds, Ye Changkong would not be able to regain his peak capability for several months.

“I’m sorry,” Ye Changkong said. “I underestimated the young man.”

“It doesn’t matter,” Lu Zui replied calmly. “Although he was not killed, he was forced to display immense demonic energy in public. Also, so many eyewitnesses have seen him launching a fatal attack toward you. He can’t get away from that!

“Now, he has been pushed back underground again. Guo Chunfeng felt nothing wrong and dispatched a lot of Secret Sword Agents to go after him.

“If he resists, he may kill innocent Secret Sword Agents, which will add to his crimes. If he doesn’t, he will not be able to free himself from the dragnet, and he will be kept below the ground forever!

“From that point of view, the mission isn’t a complete failure.”

Ye Changkong coughed for a moment and asked, “What’s the situation in parliament?”

“This morning, the ‘expedition motion’ was passed,” Lu Zui said. “84% of the representatives voted for it. We are about to succeed!

“Now, two crystal suit legions are gathering and will finish their preparations soon. As soon as they break through the Dark Desolate Domain and march into the Blood Demon Sector, for nothing but their safety along, the war will only get more and more fierce until it becomes a true world war in the end!”

“What about the Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector?”

Lu Zui sneered. “The Flying Star Sector is loose sand. They don’t even know what a world war is. Of course, they are still wavering.

“Just let them waver. When our army marches into the Blood Demon Sector and the war is out of control, the Flying Star Sector will only have two choices.

“They can either watch and do nothing while the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector waste resources in the war, in which case the Flying Star Sector will be screwed with the Imperium of True Human Beings comes!

“Or, they can jump on our tanks and help us suppress the Blood Demon Sector at the minimal cost in the shortest amount of time!

“As long as we can move Burning Prairie to the Blood Demon Sector, just for the dream warship alone, the troops of the Flying Star Sector will have to follow up. They will have to fight the war, willingly or not!”

Hearing that, Ye Changkong finally breathed in relief with a smile. “So, all the unexpected factors have been ruled out, and absolutely nobody can stop us now?”

“Precisely. Starting from this second,” Lu Zui declared calmly, “including Vulture Li Yao, nobody can stop the rise of the federation!”

22.31 meters away from then, around the spurts of the power rune arrays of the airship, in the scorching, narrow, heat-emitting space, Li Yao twisted himself in a weird posture as he listened to Lu Zui and Ye Changkong’s conversation quietly.

Chapter 1104 - Medicine!

Everybody thought that Li Yao had fled back to the underground through the swirls of rainwater. None of them expected that Li Yao would be so bold as to dash on the airship that had been deployed to kill him and that he would be lurking right next to Ye Changkong and more than ten Core Formation Stage Cultivators!

Executing ‘Death Ray’ Ye Changkong had never been Li Yao’s goal.

It was because killing Ye Changkong would only make his escape more convenient.

However, after getting to know part of such a vile plot, and when his soul and belief were firmer than ever, Li Yao would not allow himself to escape again even at the cost of his own life!

Whoever played him like a chess piece and involved him in such a mysterious scheme had to pay a price!

That was why he set up such a trap with the network chip that he delivered to Ding Lingdang in secret and the information about ‘Death Ray’ Ye Changkong he retrieved from Professor Mo Xuan.

The purpose of the trap was not to kill Ye Changkong but to heavily wound him so that the guy behind the curtain could be fished up!

Li Yao had been ninety percent certain that the guy would show up.

The reason was that Ye Changkong was not a random lackey but one of the top few battle-type Cultivators in the federation!

Powerful and wealthy as the Patriots Partnership might be, it was a clandestine organization after all. For the sake of confidentiality, there would not be many people in the group. A super expert such as Ye Changkong was definitely rare in it.

Him suffering heavy wounds would certainly disrupt the plan of the organization.

After they advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage, every Cultivator boasted their own belief and pride, which meant that they could not be bribed with simple benefits.

‘Death Ray’ Ye Changkong was a hero who had defended the federation for more than a hundred years. If anybody tried to buy him with money, power, or Cultivation arts, he would have blown up their heads a long time ago!

Li Yao assumed that the leader of the Patriots Partnership and Ye Changkong must be sharing the same dream and destination.

Ye Changkong was not tempted by money or power; he really believed in a certain ‘ideology’ and thought that he was saving the federation. That was why he was willing to work for the organization.

Then, now that such an important person as Ye Changkong was heavily wounded, it was only natural that the leader of the organization came to visit him.

Even if not for their friendship, the man would at least have to check Ye Changkong’s wounds to determine the speed of

Ye Changkong's recovery and his current combat ability so that he could adjust the plan of the organization!

That was the only way to find out the truth!

Li Yao's guess was correct. Lu Zui, the director of the Secret Sword Bureau, really showed up.

Taking the video chip from Professor Mo Xuan into consideration, Li Yao was sure that Lu Zui was the leader of the Patriots Partnership, or at least one of the leaders!

Guo Chunfeng, known as 'the strongest Core Formation Stage Cultivators of the Heaven's Origin Sector', whom he had been wary of, was nothing more than another innocent victim fooled by Lu Zui!

If that was the case, everything made better sense.

Only an expert such as Lu Zui, who had worked on the secret frontline for more than a hundred years and boasted a complicated social network and a higher personal capability, was able of preparing such a huge trap that the Speaker, Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao, and himself had all fallen in!

Next, he was certain that he would get more valuable information from them.

Two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators of the Patriots Partnership would not be exchanging small talk all the time, would they?

At first, Li Yao intended to plant the eavesdropping chip on Ye Changkong, but he had already played the move on Duanmu Ming once before when he just returned to the Heaven's Origin Sector, and it was already seen through.

With Lu Zui's cautiousness, he would not be fooled by the same trick twice.

Therefore, Li Yao considered carefully and asked Professor Mo Xuan to get the designs of Herald, Ye Changkong's sniper rifle, for him.

Li Yao had spent three hours studying the designs until he knew every detail of Herald as clearly as he knew his fingers. He had then made minor adjustments on the eavesdropping chip according to the structure of the gun.

When he suddenly showed up in the chimney, Ye Changkong had made the 'correct' choice as expected. The guy tossed away Herald and equipped himself with a pistol and combat spurs.

It was a great chance for Li Yao.

With the cover of the smoke, Li Yao expanded his spiritual and demonic energy to the maximum. Even the 'ultimate core' inside his body was bursting out the most furious music, which was almost a mental attack for Ye Changkong. His sole purpose was to distract Ye Changkong so that the real movements of his hands would not be perceived.

His hands dismantled the safety of Herald into twenty-two tiny components, embedded the eavesdropping chip to the helical cylinder softly, and reassembled the gun, all within 0.1 seconds!

It was a crazy gamble.

As the best gun expert of the federation, Ye Changkong had long reached the level where he and his gun were united as one. Also, Herald, as his primary weapon, must have been refined and nurtured by him day and night, and it was certainly deeply connected to him on a spiritual level.

Under normal circumstances, Li Yao was sure that Ye Changkong would have noticed that something was wrong only several seconds after he took back Herald.

However…

What if his right arm was chopped off, his internal organs were blown apart, hundreds of scraps of his crystal suit were embedded into his body, and his entire body was under the dual scourge of spiritual energy and demonic energy?

Li Yao was absolutely confident about his attack. It would already be the greatest miracle if Ye Changkong stayed awake. It was impossible for him to be vigorous enough to feel the connection with his Herald again!

Besides, it was not too uncanny that something was slightly wrong with Herald because it had been contaminated by the demonic energy during the fierce battle, was it?

In such a way, Li Yao had planted an eavesdropping chip on Ye Changkong’s nearby without anybody knowing. As long as the two parties were within fifty meters from each other, he could even hear Ye Changkong’s heartbeat.

Of course, there could be other unexpected factors. For example, Ye Changkong might be in a coma and forget his gun, or he might move the gun into his Cosmos Ring.

But Li Yao had no choice but to take his chances. After all, he would not lose anything even if the ‘eavesdropping’ move failed. At the very least, he would be able to lock onto the guy behind the curtain. He could always go and assassinate Lu Zui if he had no other solutions.

The decapitation strategy had always been his favorite.

Perhaps because he was too unlucky in the previous infiltration, this time, the wheel of fortune had turned, and everything went smoothly. Ye Changkong really put the sniper rifle next to himself and let Li Yao catch their conversation!

However, such a conversation did not bear much fruit except that Lu Zui's identity was confirmed, and Guo Chunfeng was proven innocent.

The information that the expedition motion had been passed would be released on the media very soon. Lu Zui's scheme to bind the Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector to his tank was nothing new, either.

The most important thing was that such a conversation could not be used as evidence. After all, voices could be fabricated too easily.

There were disadvantages to Li Yao's operation, too. The biggest disadvantage was that he had been forced to unleash tremendous demonic energy in public to heavily wound Ye Changkong. Just as Lu Zui said, it was very difficult for him to get away from the blame.

Li Yao continued listening while making his own plans. He thought about whether or not he should pursue the lead of Lu Zui further and try to dig more secrets out of him, or maybe, he could even directly kill the guy!

But in the secret chamber, Ye Changkong coughed heavily for a moment and said, "Fellow Cultivator Lu, you must be wary of Vulture Li Yao. I have a vague feeling that the young man will not wait to be killed. He'll definitely find out a way to get out of the underground district!

“Such a trap couldn’t have been made by a random guy. Perhaps he will guess that it was done by you. He might even go to you and kill you directly. The decapitation strategy is his favorite!”

Lu Zui smiled. “What’s there for me to be wary of? The war machine is now already fulminating. It cannot be stopped by any individual. Is it really helpful to kill me?

“If he indeed kills the director of the Secret Sword Bureau, other than further proving that he is the Blood Devil and raising the indignation of the federal citizens, what can he get?

“For the rise of the federation, both of us stopped caring about our lives a long time ago. Even if he kills you and me, more ‘patriots’ will stand up. Can he kill all the ‘patriots’?

“If he indeed annihilates all the ‘patriots’, then, all the citizens and Cultivators of the federation will be consumed by fury and turn into new ‘patriots’. The war will still proceed!

“Fellow Cultivator Ye, there is no losing for us right now!”

Li Yao gritted his teeth angrily. Lu Zui was indeed a great Meditation Healer who was best at reading people’s minds. The trap that he had set up at the risk of his own life was truly difficult to be resolved!

Ye Changkong seemed to be convinced by Lu Zui. He was silent for a long time before he asked again, “What’s the situation over there? Is the ‘medicine’ ready?”

“Almost,” Lu Zui said. “All the technological problems have been overcome. It is only a matter of time before the medicine is manufactured.”

“Time really matters now,” Ye Changkong remarked. “The medicine is of paramount importance for our plan. Without the medicine, even if we do occupy the Blood Demon Sector in the end, it will still be pointless. I don’t want to see an outcome where the Heaven’s Origin Sector ends with the Blood Demon Sector!”

“Rest assured, Fellow Cultivator Ye. Would I ever make our billions of compatriots die together with the stinky animals?

“I have assured you since the very beginning that our operation was never as simple as ‘revenge’. It is an endeavor to pave a bloody path in the cruel universe for the federation! Also, all of you have seen the whole process of my deduction and agreed that the odds of success are very high. That’s why you joined the operation.

“Now, the things that I promised you are becoming reality one by one. Everything is under our control. What’s there to be worried about?”

“Of course, I trust you,” Ye Changkong said. “However, according to the weather report, a nearby underground volcano seems like it will erupt soon, which will likely to raise a large tsunami. Also, a superstorm is taking place not far away and is estimated to arrive at the place in one day. Should the shell break and the seawater pour in, it would be a catastrophe for us.”

“I have asked them to be prepared in advance,” Lu Zui said. “The shell has been strengthened multiple times. It is enough to resist the biggest tsunami and storm now. Everything will be alright.”

Chapter 1105 - Confrontation of Beliefs!

After some casual talk, the two of them said ‘slay the evil, and save the federation’ to each other before Lu Zui returned to his shuttle and headed for the capital city.

Watching him leave, Li Yao gritted his teeth and decided not to follow him.

Judging from their conversation, there seemed to be an important base in a certain ocean, and a certain medicine produced in the base was everything for their plan!

Also, it sounded that they were very confident about the war and certain that it would not harm the federation’s interests.

Then again, it was back to the question that baffled Li Yao, which was the motive of the Patriots Partnership.

Maybe, Lu Zui and Ye Changkong did hate the demons’ guts and in no way would like the two Sectors to collaborate.

However, Li Yao believed that, with the vision and deduction ability of the Nascent Soul Stage, now that they knew the inside information of the Blood Demon Sector and that the Demon God Virus was savaging, it would not be difficult for them to infer that a great war would only ruin the Blood Demon Sector and kill the vast majority of the demons.

The Blood Demon Sector had a harsh environment in the first place, which was too unfavorable for normal human beings to develop.

If all the demons were killed, nobody would be able to be sent to the resource planets, too. Then, what could the federation possibly gain from the war?

No benefits, and a lot of resources would be wasted. Then, the federation after victory would not be stronger but weaker. How could it expect to resist the Imperium of True Human Beings?

Even if Lu Zui and Ye Changkong had been completely swallowed by their hatred and turned into Abysses in a different sense, there was no way that they would seek their revenge with the destruction of the federation as the price.

It meant that there must be something critical that made them believe that the war was not purely one of revenge but one of great benefit to the federation.

Therefore, even a hero such as Ye Changkong went against his creed as a Cultivator, his responsibility as a soldier, and his conscience as a human being, and attacked thousands of innocent compatriots!

The ‘medicine’ might be the ‘something critical’.

Therefore, Li Yao weighed his options for a moment and abandoned investigating Lu Zui.

It was useless to go to Lu Zui now. His combat ability was not high, but he was too cunning to leak any evidence to Li Yao. Killing him would be not helpful, either. It would only pour more furious fuel to the war machine!

Locating the base in the ocean and finding out the truth about the ‘medicine’ was the only solution to the scheme!

At this moment, Li Yao finally confirmed that the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators such as Lu Zui and Ye Changkong really had a certain firm belief. They had no doubt that they were rescuing the federation and creating a future that was more brilliant!

The airship slowly landed on the hospital affiliated to the Secret Sword Bureau.

Up to now, the chaos yesterday had left more than fifty thousand casualties. All the hospitals in the capital city were packed. The hospital under the Secret Sword Bureau’s name was opened to public, too.

Countless ordinary people were gathered in the place. In the mess, Li Yao snuck out easily.

Huh. This is weird .

Perhaps it was his imagination, but he sensed that the Secret Sword Agents nearby were much fewer now. He did not feel much pressure even though the hospital was the Secret Sword Bureau’s property.

What is Guo Chunfeng doing right now? Where has he moved those people to? To chase after me in the underground district? Li Yao scratched his head. *This feels off. Is this the best Guo Chunfeng can do? It doesn’t seem to fit with his performance a few days ago. Has he lost his mind in anger because he can’t catch me after such a long time?*

Li Yao was a human being after all, and his computational ability was finite. Now that Lu Zui had become his primary target, he could only leave Guo Chunfeng alone for the moment.

After all, Guo Chunfeng’s idiotic decision would only make his operations easier.

He found a cable again and reached out to Professor Mo Xuan in the same way.

“Professor, I need you to look for a set of coordinates in the ocean.

“I am not clear where it is exactly, but it should be a certain base on or at the bottom of an ocean, or a man-made island. Also, in one day, an underground volcano will erupt. A superstorm will drop by, too!

“Check if there is any location that meets the conditions!”

After swallowing the ‘star child’, Professor Mo Xuan’s computational ability had soared. He was now essentially a walking crystal processor. Soon, he gave the answer.

“In the ocean near 111 degrees east longitude and thirty-four degrees north latitude, an underground volcano is now in the active period and estimated to erupt in the next few days. Also, a superstorm named ‘Cuckoo’ is taking shape nearby and will likely pass the place.

“The area is a thousand kilometers away from the east coastline of the federation. There are no islands nearby, but there is an enclosed undersea mining base!”

According to Professor Mo Xuan, a hundred years ago, at the bottom of the ocean, a manganese titanium mother lode had been discovered. Then, a mining company under the Green Thunder Sect had won the exploitation rights after bidding.

The Green Thunder Sect had established an enormous undersea mining base that had functioned for seventy years. Thirty years ago, the mother lodes had gradually run dry. The cost would have been too high if the mines had been dug any deeper. Therefore, the mining base had been temporarily sealed and would be developed again when the cost was lower because of the advancement of technology.

Since it was only temporarily sealed, all the facilities were still intact and could be put back into use at any time.

Next, Professor Mo Xuan threw out a piece of critical information.

The ownership and the development right of the undersea mining base were all the Green Thunder Sect’s.

The current leader of the Green Thunder Sect, whose name was Xie Dongting, was 142 years old and an admin-type Cultivator at the peak of the Core Formation Stage.

He was a war orphan adopted by Lu Zui and his wife a hundred and thirty years ago. He was one of Lu Zui’s oldest, most powerful foster sons!

This is the place!

Li Yao was certain that he was onto something real now.

After settling the cooperation plans with Professor Mo Xuan, Li Yao acquired a clean crystal processor and searched for the information about the undersea mining base on the Spiritual Nexus.

Then, he went back to the street and headed toward the airport of the capital city.

Five hundred years of war bred the shocking tenacity of the federal citizens and their unbendable spirits. Despite the chaos yesterday, the street today was still packed, even more lively than the day before.

The proud citizens were declaring their scorn and contempt to all the enemies in such a way!

Among the skyscrapers, all the light beams were displaying the news that the expedition motion had been passed.

Some of the light beams were displaying troops marching forward unstoppably in roaring sandstorm.

The federal army had two drills in the capital city and on the Grand Desolate Plateau at the same time with the code name ‘Furious Fist’!

Hundreds of sects had declared through the media that they would dedicate all their resources to the war. All Cultivators would be under the command the federal army and shatter the Blood Demon Sector!

The storm of war had enveloped the entire capital city. On his way down the street, Li Yao could see nothing except excited citizens and angry soldiers below the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flags.

Also, there were a lot of young men wearing school uniforms who were giving speeches. Some of them even concluded ten bloody crimes of the demon race according to the five hundred years of history of the federation.

Noises suddenly echoed in the crowd of students in the front. There seemed to be an argument.

Li Yao vaguely heard something. He moved over and check.

He saw that a female student, wearing a white long skirt, trying to reaffirm her point despite the rebuttals. “I only want everybody to calm down and give it a second thought. According to the news that Li Yao brought back from the Flying Star Sector. In another few years, a ‘minor apocalypse’ will arrive!

“How can we resist the minor apocalypse if a total war breaks out right now?”

“You don’t know what you are talking about!”

In front of the girl were a few brawny guys. The most ferocious-looking one of them shouted, “It is exactly because the minor apocalypse is coming that we must march into the Blood Demon Sector as soon as possible and finish the monsters once and for all!

“Only by doing so can we be focused on the minor apocalypse!

“Otherwise, what if the monsters stab us in the back when we are resisting the minor apocalypse?”

His words raised a round of cheers. A lot of them were echoing, “Once and for all! Once and for all!”

The girl was overwhelmed and stammered, “You are too reckless. Can we please calm down and work something out together?”

“Reckless?” The guy’s face immediately turned red in fury.

Right at the moment, somebody in the crowd shouted, “I know her. Her father is Professor Xue of East Sea University, a famous pacifist!”

In the federation today, ‘pacifist’ was definitely not a word of approval.

His friends around him eyed the girl in contempt and said coldly, “Ah Zheng’s father passed away in the disaster three months ago. Do you know how it feels?

“The pacifists like you have never tasted the feeling of pain. You are yelling ‘peace’, ‘caution’, and ‘calm’ every day. It’s easy for you to say because it was not your family who were killed!”

The girl had already closed her eyes resolutely and braced herself for a beating.

Such an outcome was beyond her expectation. She was dumbfounded with confusion all over her face, not knowing how she should face the guy who was crying in front of her.

Li Yao frowned and squeezed out of the crowd.

So, was this the source of the belief for the ‘patriots’ such as Lu Zui and Ye Changkong?

Were they really capable of leading the federation to the path of rise for a bright future through a war of revenge?

Li Yao did not know the answer.

He only believed that the real Star Glory Federation, a country that represented the fire of humanity, would never rise in lies, nor was it possible to grow up with the blood of countless innocent victims as the fertilizer!

If the father who died in the beast tide knew this in the heaven, he would not want his son to be involved in a war that was founded on lies or even to be killed by the lies, would he?

Li Yao was not willing, nor was he qualified, to disapprove of the guy’s hatred, but the simplest hatred of the countless innocent people like the guy had been taken advantage of by Lu Zui and his lot!

Coming to such a realization, Li Yao loathed Lu Zui even more.

He finally understood that his belief and Lu Zui’s were the completely opposite of each other. There was no room for reconciliation at all.

The two beliefs had to crash into each other brutally, until one of them was blown into smithereens!

Chapter 1106 - Nine-Headed Ocean Monster!

One day later, a thousand and three hundred kilometers away from the eastern coastline of the Star Glory Federation…

Although the majority of the federation was based on the continent, its terrain included a lot of pearl-like islands on the vast ocean east of the continent, too.

The essence of the resources in the ocean was condensed around the islands. Also, there were the precious relics left by the Far East Demon Kingdom. Therefore, the part of the terrain was quite important to the federation.

Towns had been established on many islands. There was even a city with a population of more than 1.5 million on the largest islands.

Therefore, countless airships were coming to and from the islands, carrying enormous assets and resources.

At this moment, a crystal airship leaving from the capital city was cruising in the sky like a tortoise that had grown wings.

The horizon was already occupied by the dark clouds. Thunder was roaring, and lightning was flashing. Superstorm Cuckoo was raging on the ocean and raising surging tides.

Deep inside the ocean, the undercurrents were running in a mess, too. One of the undersea volcanoes had become active and was blowing out the most scorching and violent force at the center of the planet crazily. The volcanic eruption together with the tectonic movements led to a destructive tsunami!

To avoid the natural disasters, the crystal airship lowered its altitude and accelerated, trying to reach the destination before the arrival of the superstorm and the tsunami.

Right then, below the crystal airship, in the gap between the undercarriage, something fell down into the ocean.

The surging spiritual energy caused by the natural disasters was scouring the area earlier than the superstorm and the tsunami did. The surveillance magical equipment on the crystal airship was all jammed and did not notice the anomaly.

Huala!

The object did not cause a splash when it hit the surging ocean. It was swallowed by the seawater and sank straight to the bottom.

Li Yao successfully dived into the depths of the ocean.

Shua!

It was not until he reached the bottom of the ocean that he retrieved the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, activated the crystal processor, and scanned the undersea terrain.

Bo! Bo! Bo!

On the light beam, the map of the undersea terrain was getting clear. The glimmering debris of a mother lode appeared on one corner of the light beam.

Li Yao retrieved dozens of balls from the Cosmos Ring and released them. Then, the balls filled with gas slowly floated to the surface of the ocean.

They were the meteorological balls that could capture the weather data and analyze the intensity of the superstorm and the tsunami.

After releasing almost ten balls, Li Yao activated the undersea thruster unit that he had installed earlier. Then, he swam amid the undercurrents like a huge fish.

Very soon, he found the debris of an enormous mother lode.

According to the files that Professor Mo Xuan had offered to him, it was the debris of the manganese titanium mother lode that had been discovered a hundred years earlier.

The mother lode, which had been drained, was several hundred kilometers long. Like a dragon that was empty, it was lying on the folds at the bottom of the ocean quietly.

Li Yao snuck into the mother lode and traced it back to its source. Swimming and releasing the meteorological balls, he found the undersea mining base at the end of the mother lode an hour later.

The mining base was designed in a radiative fashion and looked like an enormous crab that had spread out all its limbs. It was a big undersea city.

There was also a tube refined out of super tensile metals leading to the surface of the ocean, where a vast floating platform was established.

Li Yao sensed very intense spiritual waves. Many crystal warships designed for undersea uses and elite Exos with impressive spiritual waves were patrolling nearby.

The large air circulation rune arrays, which could absorb oxygen from the seawater and refill the fresh air in the base, were also sending out intense spiritual waves. They were hissing on Li Yao's crystal processor, indicating that they had been activated to the maximum.

After observing for a while, Li Yao noticed that at least a hundred Exos and almost ten crystal warships were building up bulwarks around the undersea mining base.

Although the tsunami and the superstorm mattered little to the bottom of the ocean, they were still implementing the safety measures dutifully. It was not hard to tell that the base was very important to them, and no accidents were allowed to happen.

This meant that Li Yao had come to the right place.

The undersea mining base that belonged to the Green Thunder Sect had been sealed for decades, during which time the mining technology of the federation did not make any major breakthrough. From the business point of view, the place was still worthless to be developed.

What was it that made the undersea mining base run again and need to be so well protected?

Lurking in a deep trench, Li Yao released an extremely feeble mystic ray and scanned all the details of the undersea mining base coldly, including the weakest defensive regions.

Half an hour later, he collected all the data he needed and left for a location three hundred kilometers away that he had calculated earlier.

[The Broken Vein Trench, more than 55,700 meters deep, the third deepest trench that the federation has discovered on this planet so far!]

Floating above the Broken Vein Trench, Li Yao observed the glamorous view below him.

The Broken Vein Trench was like a dark abyss. Even the seawater nearby would be falling down incessantly when it reached the place, leading to the splendid scenery of ‘undersea waterfall’.

Even Li Yao was awed by the magnificence for a moment and had a shuddering feeling that he was going to be absorbed by the trench into the core of the planet.

There was no telling how many secrets were concealed in the deep ocean or how many blood-freezing beasts were lurking in it!

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao retrieved a cluster of bright yellow gel from his Cosmos Ring. He crushed it into powder with his spiritual energy and sprayed it into the undersea abyss.

It was the essence of the swimming bladders of Gold Soul Purple Scale Fish, the favorite for a certain undersea beast.

Li Yao waited patiently.

Ten minutes later, noises were echoing from the undersea abyss.

At first, an area of colorful brilliance rushed out, which turned out to be shoals of transparent, staggeringly-beautiful little fish. The fish were only the size of Li Yao’s finger, but their mouths were actually a sharp sting. Instead of attacking him, they were fleeing upward in panic!

Following which, pairs of bloody eyes were appearing, whose owners were Deep Sea Gulper Sharks, one of the most dangerous predators in the ocean. They were so brutal that when they were too hungry, they would even hunt down other sharks. Therefore, they were also known as sadistic sharks!

However, those sadistic sharks were also swimming past Li Yao like frightened rabbits. Having no time to bother him and the little fish ahead, they were running away in a hurry.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Fulminations were echoing inside the undersea abyss. The soundwaves penetrated through the thick seawater and Li Yao’s crystal suit, exploding next to his ears like crystal bombs.

Clusters of dirty water spurted out from the abyss like heavy smoke.

In the next, a whale more than three hundred meters long, with green wrinkles all over its body, dashed up suddenly from the abyss!

It was like a small crystal warship, with solid bone army covering its head. Its bloody mouth was fully opened, and behind the mouthful of tusks were sharp bristles[a]. For most of the prey, including the sadistic sharks, it did not even need to chew but only needed to absorb them into its stomach together with the seawater!

Even Li Yao felt a bit scared when he was faced with such an enormous whale.

However—

Shua!

Before the whale completely swam out of the abyss, it was caught up by a tentacle that was as thick as a dragon and tied up!

The tentacle was more than three meters in diameter with sucking discs all over it. Also, the sucking discs were surrounded by circles of bumps that looked like sharp teeth and edges. They were bound to the whale’s body and deeply embedded into its flesh and blood. No matter how hard the whale struggled, it was not able to get away!

Crack!

The tentacle tightened. Cracks were appearing on the solid bone armor of the whale. Thousands of sucking discs wriggled at the same time, releasing corrosive liquids, melting the body of the whale, and sucking it into the tentacle!

In excruciating pain, the whale struggled at the edge of the trench. Even the firmest rock was blown to pieces after one crash from it, but the endeavor proved no use at all.

Right behind him, in the abyss, new tentacles were popping up. They craned their heads and gazed at the prey like ravenous vipers.

Soon, they drew a perfect arc to the behind before they slapped over brutally like long bows that had been fully stretched.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Every whip would rip off part of the flesh from the whale’s body. Very soon, the whale’s struggling became weaker and weaker until it was entangled by the tentacles and dragged back to the abyss.

Chiliu. Chiliu. Chiliu. Chiliu!

From deep inside the abyss, blood freezing sound of mastication was coming over, occasionally mixed by the cracks of bones.

Li Yao swam to the top of the abyss, only to discover that the glimmering skeleton of the whale was dragged by something into the darkness of the trench.

Li Yao licked his lips, retrieved a Six-Barrel Vulcan Machine Cannon, and shot at the skeleton of the whale!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The bullets for undersea uses raised a series of flashes in the abyss. They also caused a deafening roar.

Hoooo!

In a moment, the earth was shaking, and the undercurrents were surging, as if another volcano was erupting right inside the abyss or a new mountain was slowly rising up!

Almost ten tentacles darted over like cannonballs and almost hit Li Yao. A monolithic object more than five hundred meters long slowly floated up from the trench!

It looked like a magnificent mountain. There was not any eye on its big head, which looked like a balloon, but a lot of wrinkles. There were tusks resembling sawtooth in every wrinkle. On the top of the head, there was an organ that looked like a sea anemone, in which fluorescent tentacles were waving crazily in colorful brilliance!

The enormous body was supported by nine thick tentacles. Dozens of spurts could be found at the bottom of its body, which helped the beast adjust its angle precisely and thrust forward rapidly with the speed and agility that was utterly disproportionate to its size!

This was the Nine-Headed Ocean Monster, the most dreadful animal in the ocean of the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

[a] beard -> bristles. This is an ok change, right?

Chapter 1107 - Into the Dirty Water!

The Nine-Headed Ocean Monster was a variation of a certain prehistoric octopus. After the continent rose up from the surface of the ocean due to tectonic movements, they still lurked in the trench almost ten thousand meters deep, which essentially made them living fossils.

Taking the nine tentacles into account, the Nine-Headed Ocean Monster could easily be a thousand meters long. They were also naturally talented at the utilization of the spiritual energy of the water class, which allowed them to freely manipulate the undercurrents and condense them into pillars, arrows, or walls. They could even spurt out high-pressure ‘sonic sabers’ with the water, which could be unstoppably sharp!

What was more terrifying was that the cellar structure of the Nine-Headed Ocean Monster was different from the species of the present day. They boasted an impressive ability of self-recovery. Chopping off one of its tentacles was utterly useless. A new one would grow out in only several minutes.

Their dreadful abilities, their sturdy body, and their astonishing vitality made them the absolute dominators in the ocean. They had been considered gods by the folks on the ocean in the past.

In the Star Glory Federation, legend even had it that the souls of the demon soldiers, demon generals, and demon emperors of the Far East Demon Kingdom, which had been completely demolished years ago, were attached to the body of the Nine-Headed Ocean Monsters, which was why such monsters in the ocean were so appalling.

Of course, it was pure nonsense.

However, the biochemical technology of the Far East Demon Kingdom had been quite developed at that time. It was quite possible that they had captured some Nine-Headed Ocean Monsters for refinement, and those experiment subjects had prospered

Anyway, the Nine-Headed Ocean Monsters were certainly not something that Cultivators of the Heaven’s Origin Sector were willing to encounter in the ocean.

Thankfully, their range of activity was usually the trenches more than ten thousand meters deep, where they fed upon the enormous whales. They hardly ever came to the shallow ocean because their pressure of the seawater was too little. It was a highly uncomfortable environment for their enormous body size.

As long as the Cultivators of the Heaven’s Origin Sector did not try to be heroes and go to hunt them in the trenches thousands of meters deep, such monsters would usually not jeopardize the lives of ordinary people. The two parties stayed in their respective zone and lived in peace for hundreds of years.

But today, Li Yao lured a Nine-Headed Ocean Monster out of its nest with bait.

Hululu!

The spurts hidden on the wrinkles around the body of the Nine-Headed Ocean Monster shot out pillars of water in intimidating aura!

Li Yao smiled and, aiming at the ‘sea anemone’ on the head of the Nine-Headed Ocean Monster, shot yet another magazine of bullets.

The fluorescent hair on the head was the organ to release pheromones for the Nine-Headed Ocean Monster. The biggest usage of the pheromones was to attract females.

In other words, the ‘sea anemone’ was actually the Nine-Headed Ocean Monster’s genitals!

Li Yao’s bullets were like kicking the Nine-Headed Ocean Monster right in the groins. Although all the bullets were slapped away, the Nine-Headed Ocean Monster still burst into fury.

Ho! Ho! Ho! Ho! Ho!

The Nine-Headed Ocean Monster was like a walking undersea volcano that was smashing at Li Yao brutally!

“Let’s go!” Li Yao shouted and fled toward the undersea mining base immediately.

The arrows of water brushed past him, leaving clear marks on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. However, Li Yao did not even bother to look back. He jumped up and down, dancing in the middle of the undercurrents and the water arrows while he calculated the distance between him and the Nine-Headed Ocean Monster as well as the weather condition on the ocean.

At this movement, the tsunami raised by the volcanic eruption, the thunderbolts caused by the superstorm, and the Nine-Headed Ocean Monster that had gone completely mad were all charging toward the undersea mining base at the same time!

Li Yao had calculated the time precisely. When he escaped to the nearby of the undersea mining base, it happened to be the moment when the tsunami and the superstorm were most furious and the spiritual energy below the ocean was most chaotic!

In that moment, thunder and storms were raging on the ocean with surging tides, and the earth was shaking violently, leading to violent undercurrents. The undersea mining base was at the center of the turbulence, and its perception about the environment was reduced to the minimum.

But no matter how inert it was, it could certainly detect that a Nine-Headed Ocean Monster was drawing close.

By Li Yao’s estimation, since the undersea mining base was not far away from the Broken Vein Trench, the ‘patriots’ in the base were certainly aware that enormous animals such as the Nine-Headed Ocean Monsters lived in the depths of the trench.

Then, it was perfectly normal for those monsters to be disturbed by the volcanic eruptions and the earthquakes and pushed to the shallow ocean.

As he expected, a moment later, Li Yao perceived that intense spiritual waves were coming over from the undersea mining base. It was clear that the defense rune arrays had been adjusted to the highest level. Certain powerful attack rune arrays were activated, too. Countless Exos and crystal warships were coming out!

Li Yao, on the other hand, stowed the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit into his Cosmos Ring before they charged out and put on a membrane suit that boasted high stealth ability like a slippery fish. He reduced his heartbeat and breath to the minimum and sank to the bottom of the ocean quietly.

The Nine-Headed Ocean Monster lived at the bottom of the ocean which was devoid of any sunlight. Its optical organs had long retrograded, and the animal mainly detected the enemy by analyzing the seawater and the spiritual waves with its skin.

If the spiritual waves that Li Yao shot out a moment ago was a tiny firefly, the undersea mining base, which had brought its defense to the maximum in preparation for the bad weather, was like a burning torch in the animal’s perception!

Hooooo!

The Nine-Headed Ocean Monster had lived in the undersea abyss all the time and never knew anything beyond its range. Now that the dignity of the dominator of the deep sea had been insulted, the animal went crazy and charged toward the undersea mining base!

Shua! Shua! Shua!

Almost twenty dazzling mystic rays shot out of the undersea mining base. So much spiritual energy had been condensed in the mystic rays that even the seawater nearby was decomposed into dreamy arcs of light. They slashed the Nine-Headed Ocean Monster like blade auras, cutting wounds dozens of meters on its body. Even one of its tentacles was chopped off, too!

But the Nine-Headed Ocean Monster seemed to feel none of it. The wounds were recovering at a visible speed. Flesh was flooding out of the fracture of the broken tentacle. Very soon, a new tentacle took shape.

The nine tentacles waved like wind and slapped away two crystal warships. Spurting currents of water, the animal turned into an undersea shooting star with the counterforce and crashed into a corner of the mining base!

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

The defense rune arrays around the mining base triggered tremendous electricity, which formed a lightning barrier, only to be ripped apart by the Nine-Headed Ocean Monster easily. Also, the corrosive bodily fluids splashing out of the Nine-Headed Ocean Monster’s wounds even left giant holes on the shell of the mining base!

Seawater immediately poured into the base!

Hundreds of elite Exos were fighting the Nine-Headed Ocean Monster hard, raising the mud at the bottom of the ocean and making the ten square kilometers nearby a world of mess that was barely invisible. The scanning of spiritual energy was seriously jammed, too. Everything was chaos!

Hiding below the sand, Li Yao observed the fierce fight quietly.

His guess was correct. As the most important secret base for the Patriots Partnership, the place was truly heavily defended. Several Exos were displaying the capability of the peak of the Core Formation Stage. There was no telling whether or not any Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were supervising the place—perhaps they were waiting for an opportunity to give a fatal strike to the Nine-Headed Ocean Monster!

However, the vigorous Nine-Headed Ocean Monster was not so easy to kill, either. Before it completely died in the end, it should be able to buy him enough time.

Li Yao smiled. Holding his breath, he made use of the blast in the battlefield with the tiniest body movements and floated to the damaged regions on the shell of the mining base along with the current.

Everybody’s attention was attracted by the Nine-Headed Ocean Monster. None of them realized that, in the dirty seawater, a monster that was even more scary than the Nine-Headed Ocean Monster was sneaking into the mining base through the holes!

Li Yao successfully entered the undersea mining base!

But he did not have much time.

After the guards killed the Nine-Headed Ocean Monster, repaired the defense system, and returned to the undersea base, his zone of activity would be greatly reduced.

He had to act fast!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The tentacles of the Nine-Headed Ocean Monster were still bashing the shell of the undersea base hard. The entire base was shaking slightly. Tremendous seawater was pouring in through the damage, drowning quite a few pathways and space. The base was now in chaos. Everybody was busy dealing with the hazard.

As a result, the defense system was disrupted and showing all kinds of flaws.

Li Yao released Neltharion and set it into the stealth mode. He followed a few urgent workers and found a guy who appeared to be a captain. Then, he zigzagged and tailed to the guy depths of the base.

If the undersea mining base could be compared to an enormous crab, it was the ‘pincers’ that were in a riot right now. The core of the base, like the abdomen of the crab that was protected by multiple layers of shell, was still safe and sound.

Passing through a few airtight doors, Neltharion was now in front of a vast medicine workshop. Almost a hundred chemists, who were wearing white, fully-enclosed suits and filtering masks, were busy doing their job on the desk.

They were producing a certain drug with bright green fluorescence.

The medicine workshop was very quiet. The noises of fighting outside were barely audible. Few of them were talking to each other, either.

[What’s this?] Crouching in the gap of an air circulation unit, Li Yao pondered curiously. [Is this the ‘medicine’ that Lu Zui mentioned? It appears that the medicine can already be manufactured. What’s the use of such a ‘medicine’?]

The captain talked to an old man who appeared to be the director of the medicine workshop. He seemed to be explaining the situation outside.

The old man nodded and gestured for him to go back and continue his job. He then walked to another gate in a corner.

Li Yao’s pupils shrank violently.

For all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, even if he did not know their every detail, he knew the appearance and the basic files of every one of them.

Therefore, it was not hard for him to tell that the white-haired, kindly-looking old man, whose name was Shou Yuxuan, was a research-type Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage. He was the deputy president of the Capital Medical College, one of the Nine Elite Universities, and a renowned specialist in biochemistry and virology!

Chapter 1108 - The Soul Searching Technique!

Shou Yuxuan went to an airtight door at a corner of the medicine workshop.

Li Yao’s heart was pounding as he was faced with a tough decision.

Although Shou Yuxuan was a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, he was a research-type one, whose brain and soul was slightly different from those of the battle-type Cultivators and focused more on the depths of thinking and the ability of comprehensive analysis. His senses would not be very keen, and it was doubtful that he could discover Neltharion.

However, were there other battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the base?

Li Yao thought quickly and decided that the risk was worth it.

Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were not like chives that would grow up quickly after they were cut away. The Patriots Partnership was an underground organization after all. It was already a miracle that three to five Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators had been recruited.

He had just crippled Ye Changkong, a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, in the capital city. Therefore, there could not be many battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the base, and they should be fighting the Nine-Headed Ocean

Monster right now. There was no way that they would still be lingering inside the base!

Gritting his teeth, Li Yao manipulated Neltharion carefully to follow Shou Yuxuan and fly into the channel.

They passed another four airtight doors. Perhaps because of the harsh environment and the fierce battle outside, the lights were flickering. All the defense rune arrays were disturbed and even shaking slightly every once in a while, which made it quite convenient for Neltharion to hide its traces.

Shou Yuxuan was a pure scholar. Never in his dreams would he have realized that something was following him right now.

They passed another airtight door and entered a rather spacious sterile room. Ivory brightness was spreading out from the walls of the room. At the center was a metal platform that appeared to be a combination of a surgical bed and an interrogation device. On the top of the platform was a… headless body.

The headless body was pierced through by more than ten thick needles and fixed to the metal bed. Another hundreds of tubes were inserted into his internal organs, and all kinds of suspicious liquids were circulating in the tubes.

His head, on the other hand, was placed in a transparent box three meters away. Hundreds of soft tubes and crystal wires were stabbed all over it and extended forward to connect his body.

The hair on his head had been shaved, and it was entangled by countless wires. So, it was not easy to clearly see his face.

But his face was gray, and his eyes were closed, indicating that he must have been dead for a long time.

For some reason, Li Yao felt that the dead body whose head had been cut off looked familiar. It must have left a deep impression on him somewhere before.

[What’s the meaning of this?] Li Yao pondered carefully. [The head was cut off. He has been dead for a long time, but the barriers deep in his internal organs are still kept at the highest level and can be triggered at any time. What’s the purpose? Are they scared that the corpse will become a zombie?]

There were many occasions where a dead body would turn into a zombie, but Li Yao felt that the body here was much more dangerous than a zombie.

The body was surrounded by more than ten workers wearing fully-enclosed suits and covering their faces with filtering masks. There were three battle-type Cultivators who were letting out an intimidating aura. They sat aside on alert while holding powerful storm bolters.

Li Yao’s heart was suddenly beating faster. He hurried to halt Neltharion midair and did not dare to move anymore.

Who was the body exactly? The battle was so fierce outside, and the three Core Formation Stage Cultivators were still guarding the place without any intention of reinforcing them. Were they scared that the body would suddenly jerk up and hurt anyone?

Li Yao observed the crystal wires on the top of the head, only to discover that the hundred wires were all connected to an unbelievable huge super crystal processor. Judging from the distribution of the cooling chips that was in the shape of the duck wing, it should be a certain upgraded version of the 'Star River V' mainframe crystal processor.

It was a super crystal processor that was only used by heavy warships or the headquarters of major sects. And now it was adopted to analyze the head of a corpse? That was rather wasteful!

Who was it that the Patriots Partnership paid so much attention to?

The more Li Yao observed, the more familiar the guy seemed. The name was on the tip of his tongue.

At this moment, one of the workers wearing white robe took off his mask, revealing a scarred, strange face.

Shou Yuxuan walked close and whispered to the scar-faced man. Li Yao heard nothing except—"Everything is stable again. The interrogation can proceed."

The scar-faced man nodded and quickly operated the light beam of the 'Star River V' mainframe crystal processor. In an instant, feeble spiritual waves circulated in the head and the body of the corpse along with the dense crystal wires. The liquids in all of the tubes were flowing at a much higher speed. Also, the face of the 'corpse' suddenly put on an extremely miserable expression, and his eyelids and lips were trembling.

[He is not dead yet!] Li Yao felt as if his blood was freezing.

Shua!

The mainframe crystal processor immediately triggered almost a hundred light beams, most of which were displaying mottled shadows and broken data. However, an enormous light beam in the middle was occupied by a blurred figure that seemed to be struggling desperately in burning flames. It was screaming, splitting, condensing, and melting, and then the whole process would start again.

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

When the shadow on the light beam was gradually frozen, the headless body cramped violently, only to be suppressed by the barriers made of dozens of iron needles and bounced back to the metal plate. The crash was so heavy that the bed was cracking and seemed to be falling apart!

Immense spiritual waves were unleashed during the entire process. Judging from the intensity of the data collected by Neltharion, the guy seemed to be a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator!

[Nascent Soul Stage!] Li Yao was becoming more and more confused.

It was impossible!

He knew the appearances of all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector. The body was none of them.

Besides, the death of any Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was big news in either the Heaven’s Origin Sector or the Flying Star Sector. In the Heaven’s Origin Sector, if a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator passed away, the Speaker and the parliamentary representatives would all pay respects and offer condolences to their family. It was even possible that a state funeral would be held!

Powerful as the Patriots Partnership was, it was impossible that they could capture a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator for interrogation without alarming anyone and even kill him!

Who was he exactly—

At that moment, Li Yao shuddered as if he had been hit by lightning because he realized who the guy was.

He was Elder Nether Spring, one of the four giants of the Blood Demon Sector, the master of the Nether Spring Kingdom in the past, and the planner and enforcer of the Spore Stratagem!

Elder Nether Spring had indeed swallowed excessive Divine Blood of Chaos and snuck into the Heaven’s Origin Sector with the appearance of a human being!

However, before the stray dog had a chance to bite anyone, he had been captured by the Patriots Partnership and ended up like this!

If so, it would not be hard to tell what the Patriots Partnership was doing here.

At this moment, Elder Nether Spring was in the most devastating agony. The specialists of the Patriots Partnership had connected his brain to the mainframe crystal processor. By the stimulation of drugs and magical equipment, they would be able to retrieve tremendous information from his brain cells and even most of Elder Nether Spring’s memories.

In the words of the ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago, they had confined Elder Nether Spring’s soul and were now interrogating him by searching his soul!

Of course, the modern biochemical technology, modern magical equipment, and studies about brain were much more complicated than the crude ‘soul search technique’ from ancient times.

Other than Shou Yuxuan, the other workers should be specialists of interrogation and Meditation Healers who were the experts of the brain. Now that so many people were gathered there, 99% of the secrets in Elder Nether Spring’s head would certainly be exploited!

On the enormous light beam, the human shape that was struggling hard in the invisible fire collapsed time and time again. Eventually, it congregated into a colorful big face, which was filled with hatred, fury, frustration, desperation, and even a hint of begging.

Dry voice came over from the broadcasting rune arrays on the two sides of the mainframe crystal processor as if it was from the deepest level of hell. “Kill me… Kill me… Kill me…”

Li Yao believed that Elder Nether Spring had ended up like this for his own wrongdoing and was not worthy of his pity at all.

However, he was truly baffled by the Patriots Partnership’s actions.

[So, the Patriots Partnership captured Elder Nether Spring a long time ago and retrieved tremendous intelligence about the Blood Demon Sector by exploiting his brain cells. No wonder they know so much about the things in the Blood Demon Sector, including the relationship between Jin Tuyi and me!

[However, why are they holding him in secret instead of publicizing the news?

[What’s Lu Zui up to exactly?]

Inside the sterile room, nobody was moved by Elder Nether Spring's screams.

Shou Yuxuan, the most renowned professor of virology, smiled and tapped the light beam of his portable crystal processor. Glancing at it, he said, "Fellow Cultivator Nether Spring, the biochemistry and the virology of the Blood Demon Sector are indeed much more advanced than those of the Heaven's Origin Sector! As for yourself, not only are you a specialist in those fields, you have also received the legacy of chaos. Your brain is too incredible a treasury to be wrecked easily.

"One conversation with you is worth ten years of reading books. The communication with Fellow Cultivator Nether Spring has been a great enlightenment for me. Truly an enlightenment!

"Just now, we discussed the stimulation and the mutation that 'sodium taurocholate polypeptide replacement' can trigger on the latest version of the Demon God Virus, but we were disrupted by the bad weather outside. Now, let's proceed. Please tell me everything about the subject, Fellow Cultivator Nether Spring!"

Li Yao's heart was racing. What was the meaning of that? Judging from his tone, the Patriots Partnership was bettering the Demon God Virus on the basis of Elder Nether Spring's work?

The biochemistry and virology of the Heaven's Origin Sector were indeed too underdeveloped to study the Demon God Virus independently.

However, it was not entirely impossible if they had all the memories and data of Elder Nether Spring, who was the ‘father’ of the Demon God Virus, and upgraded the virus based on his work!

On the enormous light beam, Elder Nether Spring’s big face twisted. Heartbreaking sounds were still echoing from the broadcast rune arrays. “Kill me… Kill me… I’ll tell you if you kill me…”

After months of exploitation, his thinking ability had been seriously compromised.

However, on the dozens of light beams nearby, the pictures of his memories about the studies of the subject, along with endless, cascading data, were popping up.

That was the thing about the ‘soul searching technique’. Shou Yuxuan’s question imposed a strong stimulation on Elder Nether Spring’s brain. Even if Elder Nether Spring did not want to tell the answer consciously, his brain cells would trigger all the information about the question because of natural intuitions.

Chapter 1109 - The Real Competitors!

Shou Yuxuan stared at the light beam without blinking. He then asked his assistant to extract all the information that Elder Nether Spring thought of to the crystal processor. A moment later, still not satisfied, he tapped the light beam softly.

An orange liquid was immediately injected into Elder Nether Spring’s brain.

The face on the enormous light beam was even more miserable, and the eyes and lips were trembling at a much higher frequency. On the rest of the light beams, the data was flowing out much faster than before.

Shou Yuxuan was contented and focused his attention on research.

“Director Shou.” The scar-faced man frowned in dissatisfaction and said, “There’s no need to exploit his brain in such a way, is there? The Demon God Virus and the antidote are good enough for the real battle now. It is unnecessary to pursue a better effect. Leave his brain to us!

“His brain has been exploited for too long. The brain cells are all very weak. The biological functions have hit rock bottom. He can be killed at any time, but there are still a lot of questions that we haven’t asked him!”

Shou Yuxuan nodded. Collecting the last bit of data, he tapped another light beam somewhat unwillingly.

The next moment, almost a hundred liquids were injected into Elder Nether Spring's brain and body. On the enormous light beam, his facial expression turned from miserable to expressionless.

Li Yao assumed that it was some sort of mixed sedative that had in effect 'restarted' Elder Nether Spring's brain so that he was ready for the next questions.

The scar-faced man coughed and said coldly, "One more time. Give me the name list of all the Children of the Nether World, and I will give you a quick death!"

The five words 'Children of the Nether World' seemed to have touched a mysterious curse in Elder Nether Spring's brain. His enormous face on the light beam was more twisted than ever, and his hands and feet were struggling hard. Screams were echoing from the broadcast rune array.

"Traitors! You are all Traitors! How dare you betray me!"

On the light beams around, faces and names were popping up. Li Yao recognized a few young Cultivators who were in high positions in the federation. It had never occurred to him that they were all Children of the Nether World!

One picture appeared simultaneously on a few light beams, where the human Elder Nether Spring was talking with a Child of the Nether World in a quiet forest.

All of a sudden, countless Cultivators jumped out of nowhere, and the Child of the Nether World stabbed a flying sword at him with a smile, too!

"Betray me? Go to hell! Go to hell!"

The shrieks were still going on in the broadcast rune arrays. It was obvious that Elder Nether Spring hated the Children of the Nether World's guts!

His fury, hatred, and every activity of his brain cells turned into endless data on the analysis light beams nearby as well as a quickly bouncing electroencephalogram.

“The result of the thirty-ninth interrogation is the same as before. The names of all 122 Children of the Nether World have all been given, and they are identical to the ones confessed the previous fifteen times.

“His brainwave activity is normal, too. It is 93% match to the previous fifteen interrogations. We can conclude that he is speaking the truth.

“They should be all the Children of the Nether World now. All controlled and suppressed by us. No lucky survivors.”

A few Meditation Healers and interrogation experts were analyzing the information in Elder Nether Spring's brain carefully.

Li Yao felt that his body was cold. The picture, although only a few minutes, contained so much information that he was almost overwhelmed.

What was the situation now? Was it true that the Patriots Partnership had learned the existence of all the Children of the Nether World since a long time ago and even fished them up for its own purposes?

Also, the betrayal of one of the Children of the Nether World was the reason that the Patriots Partnership had captured Elder Nether Spring.

Calm down. I need to calm down and think carefully!

Li Yao took a long breath and stuck his brain to the cold shell of the magical equipment to cool it down. Amid the humming sound of the magical equipment, he reviewed all the known information and inferred the most likely truth along the timeline.

First of all, a year ago, the news about the Flying Star Sector, the Imperium of True Human Beings, and the apocalypse came to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, leading to an unprecedented change in the history of this world.

To deal with the new situation, some of the wise people believed that the only way to compete with the imperium was the collaboration of the three Sectors.

However, part of the Cultivators insisted that demons were never to be trusted. They disagreed with the cooperation.

The most extreme, radical, and frantic Cultivators of them—summoned by Lu Zui, the director of the Secret Sword Bureau—established the Patriots Partnership, trying to save the federation in their own way!

In the meantime, the Red Tide Plan and the Spore Stratagem were being pushed forward secretly in the Blood Demon Sector. Also, the Children of the Nether World, Elder Nether Spring’s trusted subordinates that had been sent to the Heaven’s Origin Sector decades ago, surfaced and carried out operations in preparation of the Spore Stratagem.

Lu Zui was the director of the Secret Sword Bureau. Did he really know nothing about the Children of the Nether World?

Maybe not.

Maybe, he knew about the existence of part of the Children of the Nether World. It was also possible that Elder Nether Spring released some false intelligence to the Heaven's Origin Sector through part of them, such as the false teleportation destination for the Red Tide Plan.

On the invisible, dark frontline, everything could be true, and everything could be false.

Li Yao did not know the details, but the details were irrelevant to the big picture.

All in all, Lu Zui must have discovered the existence of a few Children of the Nether World, but he failed to retrieve the real destination of teleportation in the Red Tide Plan or the truth about the Spore Stratagem.

Or maybe, even the Children of the Nether World did not know the truth themselves.

Then, it was all about the attitude of the Children of the Nether World.

Li Yao tried to consider from the perspective of the Children of the Nether World. He felt that, although Elder Nether Spring's moves were rather delicate, the loyalty of the chess pieces was a big issue.

The Children of the Nether World had lived for decades in the federation as pure human beings. Right now, they all boasted a promising future, if they were not powerful already.

With the help of the Flying Star Sector, the strategic situation was different now. The federation was gaining more advantages and rising unstoppably like the sun in the morning.

Over the decades, they must have established their own family and even gotten their children. Why would they still work dutifully for Elder Nether Spring?

Li Yao thought for a long time and only came up with two reasons.

Firstly, over the decades, they had sent tremendous intelligence to Elder Nether Spring, which could be a great weakness. Once Elder Nether Spring threw out the evidence, they would not meet a good end.

Secondly, at that time, Elder Nether Spring's Spore Stratagem looked rather beautiful and promising. Once it succeeded, they would be the greatest contributors of the new world!

Maybe, they were the only reasons to support the Children of the Nether World to go down the road with Elder Nether Spring.

However, three and a half months, Li Yao had destroyed the Eye of Blood Demon, and Jin Tuyi had unveiled the Spore Stratagem. Elder Nether Spring had lost his wild gamble with no chance of a comeback!

If he had stayed in the Blood Demon Sector, he would have been a fish in a water tank that would be caught sooner or later. Having no other options, he had swallowed the last dose of the Divine Blood of Chaos and snuck into the Heaven's Origin Sector as a human being, hoping to have the last laugh by instigating the war through the Children of the Nether World and Abyss!

However, Elder Nether Spring had never considered the attitude of the Children of the Nether World!

When the Spore Stratagem was still hopeful, the Children of the Nether World would not betray him, but it did not mean that they would still be on his side when the Spore Stratagem proved to be a fiasco and he lost everything, ending up as a stray dog.

What if Lu Zui went to those Children of the Nether World and offered a deal?

“Before, you worked for Elder Nether Spring, but Elder Nether Spring has failed. Right now, you can work for me and help me catch Elder Nether Spring. I guarantee that your life will remain unchanged, if not taking a step up!”

If Lu Zui had thrown out such conditions, some of the desperate Children of the Nether World would certainly have defected, wouldn’t they?

As long as some of them defected, they would confess more names. In the end, the snowball would become bigger and bigger. Li Yao had no doubt that most of the Children of the Nether World would submit themselves to Lu Zui and the Patriots Partnership after hesitating for a few seconds or even without any hesitation!

Then, it was very simple.

Elder Nether Spring had just transformed into a human being. Although he was in the Nascent Soul Stage, he was a beginner in the way that Cultivators utilized their strength. He was definitely the weakest Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator in the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

Also, he could not have kept too much Divine Blood of Chaos before. For the sake of confidentiality, he could not have brought many soldiers of the Nether World Watch with him, either.

It was very possible that he had come alone.

After he arrived in the Heaven's Origin Sector, to raise a war, naturally, he could only go to the Children of the Nether World, his subordinates.

Moreover, Li Yao was even suspicious that, with Elder Nether Spring's cunningness, he could have intentionally exposed himself to Lu Zui and pretended to surrender.

But the guy never realized that Lu Zui was even more cunning than him, and all the Children of the Nether World had been compromised. When he met his subordinate, he had been captured and sent to the undersea secret base for interrogation. All the secrets in his head had then been dug out!

Li Yao took a long breath. He sorted through the whole timeline and reflected on every detail. Finally, he was certain that this was the answer closest to the truth.

If so, Lu Zui's knowledge about the Blood Demon Sector, his precise prediction about Li Yao's actions, and a lot of other suspicions could be explained.

When he saw Elder Nether Spring just now, Li Yao had been so surprised that he even felt it was abrupt.

But now that he thought of it, that was the most reasonable ending.

Elder Nether Spring was a stray dog in the first place. He had fled to the Heaven's Origin Sector, an unfamiliar place, and was trying to grasp an utterly strange strength system. Faced with opponents lurking in the darkness such as the Patriots Partnership, was it odd that he was end up being a prisoner?

If Elder Nether Spring had other thorough plans when Spore Stratagem, to which he dedicated all his efforts and resources, had failed, that would have been really unreasonable!

If Elder Nether Spring had such wisdom, he would have seen through Jin Tuyi’s real purpose a long time ago and killed him. How could he watch Jin Tuyi sabotage his Spore Stratagem?

Getting to the bottom of it, Elder Nether Spring was still slightly away from the top-tier players.

Perhaps, in the great collision of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, the real competitors in the game had always been Lu Zui and Jin Tuyi!

Chapter 1110 - Nonexistent Abyss!

In the sterile room, the interrogation was still going on. The scar-faced man smiled. “Excellent. Elder Nether Spring, you are very cooperative. If we work like this a little while longer, you will never suffer such torment again. The last question. Who is Abyss? Tell me the answer, and you may die.”

Elder Nether Spring’s brainwaves were suddenly irritated on the dozens of light beams. He roared, “There is no Abyss. There isn’t one! Why do you never believe it?!”

The scar-faced man eyed him coldly for a while and said to his assistant, “Inject ‘Brain Exciter’ into his head at three time the normal dose to magnify his senses. Also, inject the venom of the Gold Jellyfish at five times the normal dose. Ensure his brain cell activity with electric shock.”

Zi! Z! Zi! Zi!

On Elder Nether Spring’s bald head, the crystal wires and the drug tubes were tightened one by one. His gray eyeballs almost burst out of the head. Bloody tears were even dripping down from the corner of his eyes.

On the monitoring light beam, the curves of his brainwaves were jumping up and down abruptly as if crazy!

“Ahhh! Ahhh! I’ll tell you! I’ll tell you! It is Ling Yu, supervisor of the Classified Documents Department in the headquarters of the General Staff of the federal army!” Elder Nether

Spring screamed miserably. The high-pitched shrieks almost tore the broadcast rune arrays apart!

The scar-faced man and his assistant analyzed the light beams for a moment. A Meditation Healer shook his head and said, “The brainwave is not right. He is lying.”

The scar-faced man slightly frowned. He gestured his assistant to use more drugs. As a virtual button on the light beam was slowly pushed to the highest degree, Elder Nether Spring’s eyeballs were shuddering crazily, and he was foaming hard. Even his body, which was several meters away, was cramping like a frog suffering from an electric shock.

“Why, Elder Nether Spring? You are a preeminent figure. We don’t wish to see you end like this.” The scar-faced man sighed. “You have failed with no chance of a comeback. Why are you still protecting Abyss? All the Children of the Nether World have been fished up. What can an Abyss do on his own?

“Just say it. You’ve already given up more than a hundred Children of the Nether World. It doesn’t matter if you give one more name, does it? Speak. Save everyone some trouble and free yourself from the humiliation and misery forever. Isn’t that much better?

“Moreover, all the Children of the Nether World have betrayed you. Why wouldn’t Abyss? Chances are that he has abandoned you and is hoping that you will be killed soon. You are suffering here, and he is enjoying himself outside. I feel sorry for you!”

On the light beam, Elder Nether Spring looked like a block of ice that was about to melt. Dying, he said, “It is Di Mingxin, the minister of the Department of National Defense’s secretary… No. It is Guo Chunfeng, the supervisor of the first division of the Secret Sword Bureau… No. It is…”

The scar-faced man looked his assistant. His assistant was shaking his head the whole time.

The scar-faced man’s voice grew tough and cold. “Elder Nether Spring, we showed you some respect because we admired you as a senior from the Blood Demon Sector. If you don’t change your attitude, don’t blame us for our ruthlessness!”

“It is you who are forcing me to lie!” Elder Nether Spring completely crashed and roared, “No Abyss! No Abyss! There has never been an Abyss! What do you want me to confess?

“It is impossible for Abyss to exist. Do you not understand? His loyalty cannot be guaranteed at all!

“The Children of the Nether World were sent out decades ago. At that time, I didn’t have much expertise in the gene technology. How could I have absolute control over them?

“The normal Children of the Nether World often sent intelligence back to me. In return, I told them the situation of their family in the Blood Demon Sector. Their loyalty to the demon race and to me was maintained only in such a way! Hehe. Even so, they still betrayed me in the end. All of them did!

“If there is really an Abyss who doesn’t know that he is a demon and hasn’t done anything wrong to the federation, I will not be able to prove that he is a demon even if I ‘activate’ him!

“Then, how am I supposed to control him? How am I going to persuade him to pledge his loyalty to me instead of the federation, where he has lived for decades?”

The scar-faced man and his assistant listened casually. It appeared that this was not the first time that they had heard such words.

Maybe because the ‘Brain Exciter’ was taking effect, Elder Nether Spring’s mind was becoming clearer and clearer. He roared, “Abyss is just a disguise to cover the Children of the Nether World!

“My original thought was that, once you noticed the Children of the Nether World, I would release the news of Abyss, the nonexistent ultimate Child of the Nether World so that you would be suspicious about each other, and your investigation would be disrupted. Also, the Children of the Nether World could also jump out and accuse somebody who was a threat to them of being Abyss!

“As a result, after all the accusations were investigated and no Abyss was found, the investigations on the Children of the Nether World would be seriously weakened, too. There would be plenty of time for them to deal with the situation!

“In short, Abyss is just a ‘protective shell’ for the Children of the Nether World. There is no Abyss at all!”

The scar-faced man glanced at his assistants. This time, all the assistants nodded after carefully studying Elder Nether Spring’s brainwaves on the display.

“This is about it.” Shou Yuxuan observed coldly from the side and could not help but say, “You’ve asked the same question more than ten times, and you’ve gotten the same answer every single time.

“Under such intense stimulation, he will feel like the whole of hell was bashing against his head hard every second. How strong must his willpower be to lie right now without being seen through? It is impossible!

“He does have a point. Since the Children of the Nether World can betray him, it is even more possible for Abyss to betray him, too. Just like you said, Abyss will only want him to die as quickly as possible because nobody can reveal his identity after he is dead!

“If there is really an Abyss who considers himself a human being, how can Elder Nether Spring control him even if Abyss is activated? There is no way at all!

“The only conclusion is that Abyss doesn’t exist. It is just a ‘protective shell’ for the Children of the Nether World.”

Staring at Elder Nether Spring’s soul, which was gradually spreading out on the light beam, the scar-faced man was deep in thought for a long time. “However, a tiny part of his brain has always been covered in gray fog. There is no way that we can crack it.”

Shou Yuxuan did not think much of it. “That’s typical for any brain. Although the soul searching technique can find 99% of his secrets, 1% of the brain is always too unpredictable for us to grasp. It is perhaps the memories of a long, long time ago and has nothing to do with our plan. Stop wasting time on it.”

The scar-faced man discussed with his assistants for a while. Then, he stood straight and nodded. “Alright. The results of the previous nine interrogations are the same. We can finally draw the conclusion that Abyss doesn’t exist!

“Director Shou, our questions have mostly been resolved. This brain is all yours now.”

The scar-faced man extended a finger and flicked the center of Elder Nether Spring’s brow on the light beam. “Thank you for your cooperation, Elder Nether Spring. The Abyss you came up with was truly an incredibly creative idea. It could’ve caused serious interferences for us.

“But it is a pity that [chance contrives better than we ourselves](T/N: In other words, the best-laid schemes oft go astray.). Eventually, it has caused you to suffer more. Haha. That’s not our fault. You only have yourself to blame.”

Elder Nether Spring had completely lost the strength to argue. Lethargically, he said, “I’ve said everything. Let me die. Let me die…”

“I have no questions now,” the scar-faced man said, “but Director Shou still has a lot of subjects that he wants to talk with you about.”

“You promised that you would kill me after I told you the truth of Abyss!” Elder Nether Spring roared. “You lied! You lied!”

The scar-faced man sneered, “Everybody must not hesitate to slay evil. Is it necessary for me to keep my words for a monster like you?”

“Ahhhh! Ahhhh! Ahhhh!”

Elder Nether Spring was outraged. For a moment, his brainwaves surpassed the limits. They seemed to be struggling out of the light beam and erupting like a volcano!

The head that was placed inside a transparent box and the body that was fixated to the surgical bed were both trembling violently, unleashing overwhelming spiritual waves!

“Not good!” an assistant shouted. “There are signs of the stimulation of seven times the normal dose of ‘Brain Exciter’ deep inside his brain!”

“What!” The scar-faced man was shocked.

“He must’ve controlled his head and found a way to conceal part of the ‘Brain Exciter’!” another Meditation Healer shrieked. “Now, he has activated all the ‘Brain Exciter’ that he hid before and aroused his brainwaves to a new height!”

Duo! Duo! Duo!

Under the surging force caused by Elder Nether Spring’s brain, the barriers nailed into his body were expelled one by one and pierced into the ceiling deeply!

His hands and feet were waving crazily. Caught unprepared, several Meditation Healers were thrown to the wall with broken bones!

“Suppress him!” the scar-faced man roared crazily. Dozens of interrogative devices that looked like iron tusks immediately ejected out of the metal surgical bed and pierced deeply into Elder Nether Spring’s body, holding him down on the bed and making it unable for him to move.

The three Core Formation Stage Cultivators in the corner quickly jumped out. Three storm bolters that had been modified stabbed into Elder Nether Spring’s body brutally. The high-voltage electric arcs spurting out of the barrels almost burned the body into ashes after lightning chains!

The transparent box that contained the head was also injected with a certain bluish liquid. The head was immediately frozen.

Elder Nether Spring’s body had been suppressed, and his head was completely frozen. His resistance seemed to have ended in failure!

BOOM!

Right then, the sterile room shook violently. The spiritual energy inputted into all the magical equipment soared significantly.

Probably because the critical part of the defense rune array was affected in the fierce fight between the Cultivators and the Nine-Headed Ocean Monster, all the magical equipment in the secret base was overloaded!

Shua!

On the enormous light beam, there was a hint of mockery on Elder Nether Spring’s illusionary face, which was under serious interferences, before it gradually dispersed in ripples.

After soaring into the peak, Elder Nether Spring’s brainwaves fell down straight into the eternal abyss.

Chapter 1111 - Tough Drugs For Tough Men!

“He is going to die!”

“Inject ‘Brain Exhilarant’ and ‘Revitalization Polypeptide Protein’. Try to slow down his brain death!”

“Activate the emergency plan. Try to confine his soul now and see if it is possible to transform him into a spectral Cultivator. If he can’t, try to extract all the information in his brain into the crystal processor. Keep as much data as possible!”

The sterile room was in a complete mess. The hands of all the specialists turned into gray mist as they typed fast on the control light beams.

Very soon, Elder Nether Spring’s face on the enormous light beam twisted into a giant swirl. It seemed he was being absorbed into the crystal processor by a weird force!

However, before his brainwaves completely fell into peace, Li Yao felt that he saw… a glimmer of hope from the depths of the swirl of his soul.

Was it my imagination? Li Yao frowned.

Elder Nether Spring was a great figure after all. Eventually, he still managed to get out of his enemy’s control and give himself a quick death!

However, had he really left nothing?

A minute later, Elder Nether Spring's brainwaves were completely gone. All the light beams turned blank.

"He is dead. His soul has entirely perished. There is no chance that he has transformed into a spectral Cultivator."

Several Meditation Healers made the same conclusion after examining Elder Nether Spring's head carefully.

"Thankfully, we've collected enough data in the last couple of months, and we managed to extract most of the data and memory pieces in his brain the moment before he died."

A Meditation Healer tapped softly on the control light beam for a moment. Then, a metal cube the size of a fist popped up from the inside of the mainframe crystal processor.

Dense spiritual stripes, which were soul-stirring colors, had been carved on the surface of the 'cube'.

Shou Yuxuan extended his hand and held the 'cube' in his hand with his spiritual energy. With a telepathic thought, the 'cube' was immediately unfolded.

It was made of almost a thousand metal slices that were as thin as the wing of a cicada. Every slice had been carved with tremendous information. After they dispersed, the size of the cube was hundreds of times larger than before. Astronomical information had been stored inside.

Shou Yuxuan extended his telepathic thoughts into the cube and checked it for a while. Then, he sighed and said, "It's not bad. Exploiting so much from Elder Nether Spring's brain before his death was beyond our expectations. With this Jade Crystal Disc, a lot of research can still proceed."

Li Yao held his breath, his eyes glittering.

The so-called Jade Crystal Disc was in fact the most advanced jade chip.

It was made of thousands of thin record chips, each of which had a storage of a regular jade chip.

When thousands of jade chips were piled up, the storage space could be as vast as an ocean.

At this moment, most of Elder Nether Spring’s memories, including his research projects and his training techniques, were stored inside the Jade Crystal Disc.

Li Yao’s eyes were shining brighter and brighter. He pondered, since it included all the memories, the memory of the previous couple of months when he was captured and secretly interrogated would be there, too.

The files from the Blood Demon Sector that Li Yao had carried and the videos and audios that he had recorded in secret could be fabricated easily. They were not very persuasive.

However, if he could get the Jade Crystal Disc, which contained most of the memory pieces of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, it would certainly be undeniable proof!

As long as the Jade Crystal Disc was publicized to the Cultivators, the federal army, and all the citizens of the federation, he would be able to prove that Elder Nether Spring had been captured by Lu Zui a long time ago and that Lu Zui was researching with other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators such as Shou Yuxuan and coercing Elder Nether Spring to confess the secrets about the Demon God Virus.

Moreover, they even mentioned Chaos. It meant that the same-origin theory was not a secret for Lu Zui and Shou

Yuxuan!

Then, why did they not release it to the public?

Why did they pretend that they knew nothing when they had confirmed the name list of all the Children of the Nether World, and why did they simply wait and watch the Speaker's attempted assassination?

They would not be able to explain themselves!

Li Yao's heart was beating faster and faster. After all the trouble, he finally got his hands on the critical part of the scheme!

In the sterile room, after examining the Jade Crystal Disc, he said to the scar-faced man, "Prepare a clean communication room for me. I'll inform Director Lu of the matter."

Li Yao's heart was pounding again.

Shou Yuxuan was a virologist and appeared to be the supervisor of the secret base, a higher position than the scar-faced man's.

His relationship with Lu Zui should be an upgraded version of that between 'Mad Medic' Lu Wuxin and Elder Nether Spring.

Their conversation would certainly involve a lot of clandestine things.

He had to hear it!

However—

It was too risky to continue following Shou Yuxuan. His conversation with Lu Zui would be highly confidential.

Before the communication was established, he would certainly scan all the magical equipment in the secret room to make sure that everything was safe.

By ‘a clean room’, they meant a place that would not be eavesdropped.

Besides, Li Yao needed Neltharion to observe where the Jade Crystal Disc was located and even steal it when there was an opportunity. It was another reason he could not let it follow Shou Yuxuan.

Then, how could he eavesdrop the conversation?

Li Yao thought quickly about the structure of the undersea mining base.

This place was thousands of kilometers away from the capital city. If the two parties wanted to talk, they would have to resort to the wireless Spiritual Nexus established by the ‘spiritual towers’.

However, the undersea base was blocked by the deep, surging seawater. It was obviously unfeasible to build the spiritual towers at the bottom of the ocean. They were usually floating on the surface of the ocean on platforms.

Yet, a superstorm and a tsunami were sweeping across the ocean right now. It was impossible for the spiritual towers to resist such natural disasters. Even if they managed to, the conversation would be intermittent and subject to high interference.

There must be some other way. Such an undersea mining base far away from the coast cannot be only connected through the wireless Spiritual Nexus, which is too unstable.

Suppose there is a superstorm that lasts a few days, will they not report anything to Lu Zui during that time? It's clearly impossible!

Right. The undersea cable!

Li Yao's eyes shone, and he decided to take his chances. Like a sea snake, he swam out through the gaps of the magical equipment. Covered by the dirty seawater, he crawled out of the base through the damage in the shell again.

The fight outside the base was still going on. A large area of the seawater was polluted by the Nine-Headed Ocean Monster's blue blood. It appeared that the animal was exhausted and would be executed soon.

Having no time to care about the Nine-Headed Ocean Monster, Li Yao quickly swam to the very bottom of the undersea base.

Hurry up. I must find the undersea cable before the communication begins!

Li Yao perceived the feeble spiritual waves nearby. He was certain that, to ensure that the undersea cable was not bitten apart by the fish around, defense rune arrays must have been deployed around the cable.

As he expected, a moment later, he found a few thick cables that were buried deep beneath the sand and mud by tracing the feeble spiritual waves of the defense rune arrays.

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and took out a tiny drill that was barely visible from his Cosmos Ring. He operated on the undersea cable carefully.

The undersea mining base was a civil one in the first place. The cable that led to the continent was several thousand kilometers long. It was impossible to set up barriers of the highest level on every meter of it.

With the skills of a master of refining and an expert of peeping, Li Yao bypassed the defense rune arrays and dug a hole the width of hair on the cable. He then extended a crystal wire into it, with the other end connected to his crystal processor.

Naturally, too many complicated data streams were being transmitted through the cable at the same time.

However, Li Yao had collected Shou Yuxuan's and Lu Zui's voiceprints. So, he only needed to search for the data that had the features of their voiceprints.

Very soon, Li Yao heard their conversation after a while of blurred background noises!

He heard Lu Zui saying, "You shouldn't have woken me up. Over the past half month, in order to deal with Li Yao, Jiang Hailiu, and the rest of them, I have overly drained my computational ability. My head is in the most terrible state right now, and I cannot maintain a clear mind. I'm busy recovering.

"It is estimated that my head will be keen enough again in five hours, twenty-three minutes, and twenty-two seconds. After your interruption, it will take at least another one hour, seventeen minutes, and forty-three seconds."

"Elder Nether Spring is dead," Shou Yuxuan said.

"Okay," Lu Zui remarked casually. "A brain has its limits. He should be dead anyway. Has the critical information been retrieved?”

“Yes, everything. Our research progress won’t be affected,” Shou Yuxuan said. “I can guarantee that we will be able to provide enough Demon God Virus and the corresponding antidote, both of which can be utilized in field battles, within half a month after we march into the Blood Demon Sector!”

“Excellent. Then, Elder Nether Spring’s death is not important. With the Demon God Virus and the antidote that can be manufactured, we will be able to control the plague and thus the outcome of the war!”

Pausing for a moment, Lu Zui continued. “Since I’ve already been interrupted, I might as well say something more. The research on the ‘Type-A Virus’ can be put on hold for now. Please accelerate the production of the ‘Type-B Virus’. I will need the dose to infect a hundred thousand people in one month!”

Shou Yuxuan was dazed for a moment. He asked, “The ‘Type-B Virus’ that specifically targets people of the Flying Star Sector? Why?”

“Bolstered by the soaring fighting will in the federation, the Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector are changing their attitude,” Lu Zui explained. “It is very possible that they will be persuaded and send Burning Prairie, their flagship, to the Blood Demon Sector with us.

“However, they still refuse to march into the Blood Demon Sector but only promise that they will help us guard the wormholes between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector. They will also release the Grand Illusionary Soldiers to observe the Blood Demon Sector closely first.

“Hehe. It appears that those people have been influenced by Li Yao anyway!

“However, they are too naïve after all!

“When we are in the Blood Demon Sector, the battle will be changing vastly every second. Will they be able to make the call?

“Tough men must be given tough drugs. Right now, the compatriots of the Flying Star Sector haven’t clearly seen the vileness and brutality of the demons. Let’s sharpen their vision with the ‘Type-B Demon God Virus’!”

Chapter 1112 - Lu Zui's Belief!

Li Yao felt that his blood was freezing when he heard that part, as if billions of tons of seawater were pressing his body. He was almost suffocated!

He was finally certain that Lu Zui had gone mad!

Before, the guy had assassinated the Speaker of Parliament and killed tens of thousands of innocent people in order to raise the fury of the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

Now, he was trying to kill at least a hundred thousand citizens of the Flying Star Sector through the Demon God Virus in order to trigger the Flying Star Sector’s hatred of the demon race that was thin if not nonexistent. He hoped to disrupt the collaboration between mankind and the demon race in such a way!

Jin Tuyi was quite right. Lu Zui had been completely swallowed by his own hatred, selfishness, and ambitions and turned into an enormous Abyss that was even more dreadful than the Broken Vein Trench several hundred kilometers away!

[Everything makes sense now.

[Elder Nether Spring was a smart guy, too. After the Spore Stratagem failed, he must’ve considered and inferred the goals of me and Jin Tuyi.

[Then, after he fell into the hands of the Patriots Partnership, my intention was immediately learned by Lu Zui!

[He knew that I would certainly return to the Heaven's Origin Sector. He also knew that I was here to submit the 'instruments of surrender' of the demon race and to realize peace. But such peace is absolutely unacceptable for Lu Zui and the Patriots Partnership!

[Therefore, he set up a flawless trap with the Patriots Partnership, the Children of the Nether World, the military, and some of the ignorant workers in the Secret Sword Bureau. As long as I appeared on the Grand Desolate Plateau, the trap could immediately be activated!

[The elements such as the memorial park for Martyr Li Yao and the existence of Duanmu Ming were perhaps arranged by Lu Zui carefully in advance and were nothing more than his chess pieces. Their sole purpose was to shock me so that I would trust nobody. Eventually, I was led to the final stage step by step according to his pace, namely the Federal Square, where I assumed the role of 'assassin'!

[He almost succeeded!

[If Ding Lingdang hadn't trusted me and supported me without any complaint, I might've turned into a real Blood Devil at this moment and completely become his chess piece!]

Li Yao took a long breath in cold sweat.

He basically understood Lu Zui's intention right now. The tremendous Demon God Virus and the antidote that were under the control of the Patriots Partnership could indeed change the intensity and the outcome of the plague.

For example, if a few elite squads of the Patriots Partnership were hidden among the troops that were to march into the Blood Demon Sector and sprayed the virus there, their efficiency would certainly be much higher than Elder Nether Spring’s Nether World Watch.

The Blood Demon Sector was at its weakest in its thousands of years of history in the first place. It would be difficult for them to resist the triple attacks of the federal army, the warship of the Flying Star Sector, and the Demon God Virus.

As soon as the main force of the coalition army of demons was crushed, Lu Zui would be able to control the plague with the antidote and get a lot of demon slaves.

He could even conquer the demon race with the antidote as a lure!

Those who were willing to be his slaves would be given the antidote and live. Those who were not would turn into the walking dead and uncontrollable mutants, dying the most miserable death!

In such a way, he would have a high chance to occupy the Blood Demon Sector without paying a high price. Also, after seizing the Blood Demon Sector, he would be able to keep a lot of demon slaves who could be sent to the resource planets for mining.

It was truly a very enticing plan.

However, how was Lu Zui’s Patriots Partnership able to manufacture the antidote earlier than his Skyfire did?

Li Yao thought quickly and realized that the reason was too simple!

The so-called ‘antidote of the Demon God Virus’ was in fact the synthesized Divine Blood of Chaos, which Skyfire had duplicated by studying Jin Xinyue’s blood.

There was only one Jin Xinyue, and it was impossible for Skyfire to have pumped away all her blood for research. They could only take a syringe occasionally. Naturally, their progress was slow.

But the Patriots Partnership had more than a hundred Children of the Nether World under their control, all of whom had transformed by swallowing the original Divine Blood of Chaos. Therefore, their blood had exactly the same effect as Jin Xinyue’s!

Lu Zui would definitely not be courteous toward those Children of the Nether World. He would not hesitate even if half of their blood was to be pumped out.

Li Yao had no doubt that Lu Zui would not even bother to blink if the blood of the Children of the Nether World, who were too obstinate to betray Elder Nether Spring, had to be drained!

Li Yao’s confusions were resolved one by one. He was more determined to stop Lu Zui than ever!

Voices came over from the cable again. Shou Yuxuan was asking, “To expedite the production, I have to know where the ‘Type-B Demon God Virus’ will be released. City, wilderness, underground, or sealed space? In the Heaven’s Origin Sector or the Blood Demon Sector? The virus must have minor adjustments according to the environment to maximize the effect with the minimal dose.”

“It will be released in a sealed space. Or more exactly, inside Burning Prairie,” Lu Zui said casually. “The Heaven’s Origin

Sector alone cannot conquer the Blood Demon Sector at the minimal cost within the shortest amount of time. Therefore, the Flying Star Sector must get on the tank, too!

“What we need is more than a Burning Prairie and two hundred thousand Grand Illusionary Soldiers. What we need is thousands of warships of the Flying Star Sector, millions of Grand Illusionary Soldiers, and the countless warriors of the other world!

“It is a pity that the Flying Star Sector is unwilling to fight another war after the serious internal strife.

“Besides, the human compatriots of the Flying Star Sector haven’t tasted the vileness, evilness, shamelessness, and brutality of the demon race for themselves!

“The forty-thousand-year-old bloody grudge between mankind and the demon race has been gradually forgotten over the past thousands of years. Faced with the demons, they are cowardly, timid, and full of impractical illusions!”

Shou Yuxuan sighed and said, “That’s not entirely their fault. Human beings are a species that is good at forgetting and self-deception. Not just the citizens of the Flying Star Sector who haven’t fought the demons for thousands of years, even in the heartland of the federation, haven’t many of our compatriots of the Heaven’s Origin Sector eased their wariness and fantasized the peace that will never come true, just because they haven’t experienced the war for more than a hundred years after the Grand Desolate Plateau was conquered?

“Even the leader of the country, Jiang Hailiu, who has deep grudges with the demon race and has the future of the nation on his shoulders, chickened, softened up, and backed off. He was naïve enough to think that there was possibility of peace between mankind and the demon race!”

“That’s the weakness of humanity,” Lu Zui said coldly. “If they can’t overcome it themselves, we will give them a hand!

“Right now, through the assault in the Federal Square, we have successfully awakened all the inert compatriots in the federation who were dwelling in the illusions of peace. We have ignited their pride and made them realize that it is their mission to slay evil as human beings!

“Now, it will the human compatriots of the Flying Star Sector’s turn!

“Burning Prairie is the unique, dream warship of the Flying Star Sector. The countless marines responsible for manipulating the crystal behemoth are the best warriors of the Flying Star Sector, too. Their families and sects boast tremendous influence in their world!

“If the dream warship is assaulted by the demon race after it marches into the Blood Demon Sector, and the sordid demons kill most of the soldiers on board with the Demon God Virus while refining the survivors into biochemical weapons… hehe, how will the citizens of the Flying Star Sector react when the news arrives?”

Shou Yuxuan smiled. “The Flying Star Sector will certainly burst into fury. Instead of recovering the wounds of the civil war, they will march out without caring about the cost and annihilate the evil demon race together with us!”

Lu Zui laughed. “Exactly. As long as they have the tiniest dignity and pride as human beings, they will definitely fight side by side with us sparing no resources of the Sector!

“The Flying Star Sector wants to learn how to establish a country. Let me give them a lesson…

“Hatred!

“To establish a country, the easiest way is to find enormous hatred!

“Five hundred years ago, the common hatred against the demon race allowed the nine major sects of the Heaven’s Origin Sector to join hands and set up the Star Glory Federation, our great motherland!

“Today, the common hatred toward the demon race will make the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector collaborate. In the war against the demon race, we will be integrating at the highest speed. A new federation that is much more powerful will be founded!

“Hehe. The soft bone Jiang Hailiu and the little devil Li Yao want integration of the three Sectors, too.

“But Jiang Hailiu is too conservative. He wants everything to be done slowly through negotiations. How much longer will it take before the two worlds are finally assimilated?

“The little devil Li Yao is even more unrealistic. The participation of the demon race will add countless unstable factors to the federation later. Eventually, the country will collapse before the enemy arrives!

“Ours is the only way to integrate the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector as quickly as possible. By removing all uncertainty, the resources will be concentrated in the steadiest form. An invincible federation will be founded on blood, steel, and fire in order to fight against the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“This is the only path! No matter how many more obstacles are out there on the path, we must crush and eliminate all of them mercilessly!”

Shou Yuxuan’s voice sounded like he was trying to suppress his volcano-like passion. He said, one word after another, “I understand. I will produce enough ‘Type-B Demon God Virus’ as soon as possible!”

“Thank you very much, Brother Shou!” Lu Zui’s voice was suddenly mixed with a hint of gratitude. “When I established the Patriots Partnership, I thought that my firmest supporters would be the hawks in the military.

“It never occurred to me that the one who agrees with my belief most and who is willing to fight with me until the last moment would be you, the deputy director of the Capital Medical College, a scholar instead of a soldier!”

Chapter 1113 - Virus and Cell!

“I am a doctor and a virologist,” Shou Yuxuan said calmly. “I am very clear that, of the thousands of medicines to kill viruses in the Star Glory Federation, none target the infected cells alone.

“Many viruses lurk deep inside the cells and even take on the form and attributes of the regular cells. With our current knowledge, it was impossible to distinguish them.

“Most highly-efficient anti-virus medication annihilates a lot of healthy cells while they kill the infected cells and the viruses.

“Some of the treatments even cause serious damage to the body, such as nausea, loss of hair, reduction of immunity, femoral head necrosis, and other symptoms.

“As a doctor, I do not want my patient to suffer. I do not want the healthy cells in their body— including the ‘guardian cells’ such as ‘leukocytes’, which fight against the virus and defend the health of the body—to be killed on a large scale.

“I often have no other choice!

“On many occasions, if radical treatments are not adopted for fear of the temporary healthy condition of the patient, and the healthy cells are not killed together with the infected cells in the patient’s body, the only outcome will be that the virus savages in the entire body and causes them to be killed!

“That is the only reason I am willing to take your side, Brother Lu.

“The compatriots who died miserably in the Federal Square were of course innocent. But like the healthy cells that are killed by a certain anti-virus medicine, it was a price we had to pay for the survival of the entire body.

“Vulture Li Yao may not be a devil. He may be the most hardworking leucocyte inside the body.

“However…

“For the health of the body, and for the great federation, he must be sacrificed!”

Lu Zui was deep in thought. “Brother Shou, I have never considered the issue from such a point of view. Thank you for sharing. I feel that my belief is firmer still now!”

Shou Yuxuan smiled and said, “Integration. Integration. Those guys in parliament are talking about the necessity of the integration of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector every day.

“But they are two Sectors that have been kept apart for ten thousand years. The customs, habits, and social systems are entirely different. They are like two intact, well-functioning bodies. How can you expect them to be integrated in just a few years?

“There is only one way for a fast integration. Cut two gaping, bleeding wounds on the two bodies with a sharp scalpel, aim the wounds at each other, and sew the two bodies together!

“In such a way, their blood will be forced to meld, and their bodies will grow together forever!

“Let the Patriots Partnership be the sharpest scalpel!”

Lu Zui laughed out loud. “Well said, Brother Shou. With such judicious fellows such as Brother Shou and thousands of real patriots, there is still hope for our country!”

Shou Yuxuan smiled and said, “Alright. I’ve disturbed you long enough, Brother Lu. Get some rest. We still count on your head for our moves to come! The Nine-Headed Ocean Monster has already been slain by Brother Diwu[Note: ‘Diwu’ means ‘fifth’.]. When the weather gets better, I will have the Jade Crystal Disc that stores Elder Nether Spring’s memories delivered to the capital city.”

Li Yao’s heart suddenly skipped a bit.

‘Diwu’ was a very rarely-seen surname. There were not many Cultivators in the Heaven’s Origin Sector with such a surname.

Even fewer of them were qualified to be called ‘brother’ by Lu Zui and Shou Yuxuan, who were both Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, and had the capability to slay the Nine-Headed Ocean Monster.

A name quickly jumped out of Li Yao’s head. Diwu Jian[Note: ‘Diwu Jian’ means ‘the fifth sword’ literally.], deputy president of the Exos’ Association of the Star Glory Federation!

The president of the Exos’ Associate was an honorary title that was similar to ‘lifetime achievement award’. The post was usually assumed by a well-renowned senior.

The deputy presidents, on the other hand, were the true top experts in the circle of Exos of the Star Glory Federation!

Diwu Jian, a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, was also a seasoned expert who had been famous for more than a hundred years, just like ‘Death Ray’ Ye Changkong.

Ye Changkong was a great sniper, but Diwu Jian was adept at melee combat. He was known as the ‘Sword God’ in the federation!

‘Diwu’ used to be his surname. However, after he advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage, the Sword God began to use his real name as his nickname.

Even the most brutal demon beasts and the strongest enemies could never escape from the hunting of his ‘Five Swords of Heavens and Human’. He never needed to perform a sixth attack!

[As I expected. The Patriots Partnership has been lurking in the darkness for too long. Ye Changkong isn’t the only battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator in the organization. There are bound to be a few others. Diwu Jian is another one!

[Ye Changkong has been carrying out missions outside, and Diwu Jian is responsible for the defense of the most critical undersea base!]

Realizing that a highly-dangerous Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was on alert not far away from them, Li Yao did not even have the courage to berate Shou Yuxuan’s shamelessness now. Cold sweat was popping out of his body, and he did not dare move at all.

Now that the Nine-Headed Ocean Monster had been killed, Diwu Jian’s attention could be shifted to the surroundings again. It was possible that the opponent would discover him even if he did nothing but fart once!

In a one-versus-one battle, Li Yao was definitely not scared of any battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the Heaven's Origin Sector, including Diwu Jian. However, the guy was with dozens of Core Formation Stage Cultivators and several fully-armed crystal warships!

How could he expect to fight all of them at once?

He might as well cringe at the bottom of the ocean for a while longer!

Hardly had he made up his mind when Lu Zui's voice in the undersea cable was suddenly raised. "What do you mean? The Nine-Headed Ocean Monster?"

"Yes," Shou Yuxuan said. "The base was under the attack of a Nine-Headed Ocean Monster, which was probably stimulated by the eruption of the undersea volcano. But it is not a big deal. Only part of the anti-pressure shell at the edge was broken. 88% of the damage has been repaired. The Nine-Headed Ocean Monster was executed by Brother Diwu."

"Wait! Wait! Wait!" Lu Zui's voice was more and more anxious. He did not sound so concerned even when he heard the news of Elder Nether Spring's death a moment ago. "A Nine-Headed Ocean Monster attacked the base, damaged the defense system, and cracked the shell of the base, and a lot of seawater poured into the base?"

"Yes," Shou Yuxuan replied, "but just the periphery. Is there a problem?"

"And Elder Nether Spring died soon after the Nine-Headed Ocean Monster's harassment?"

Shou Yuxuan thought for a moment and answered, “Seems so, but I doubt that they are related.”

“They may be related, and they may be not, but it doesn’t matter.”

Lu Zui gnashed his teeth. “What matters is that the base is very likely to have been—”

Before he said ‘compromised’, the two parties lost connection to each other because Li Yao had chopped off the undersea cable brutally with one slash!

Before they contacted to each other again with a second cable, he had earned himself a few seconds to react!

Li Yao cursed loudly in his heart. He did not know that Lu Zui’s computational ability was so terrifying that he could sniff out danger from nothing but the weird arrival of the Nine-Headed Ocean Monster!

Thankfully, Lu Zui had planned too many plots and schemes recently, and his head was at a low point. He had been trying to recover. That was why he was more sluggish than he should have been!

If Lu Zui had been at his peak state and his head was clear and agile, he might have caught traces at the beginning of their conversation!

[I’ve definitely been exposed!]

Li Yao gritted his teeth. Without concealing his scent anymore, he rushed upward like a cannonball.

He could have chosen to escape silently. With his speed, it was almost impossible that Diwu Jian and the Core

Formation Stage Cultivators could have stopped him!

However, after hearing such a big, insane scheme of the Patriots Partnership, how could he just get up and leave?

He had to get the Jade Crystal Disc that stored Elder Nether Spring’s memory data, which was the key to crack the scheme!

“Come on, the Blood Demon Form of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, unleash the most formidable strength!” Li Yao roared. Bubbles spread out of his body, and a blast rippled out, triggering an enormous undersea swirl!

At the center of the swirl, a shadow that was as deep as the night sky, as red as blood, and as eye-catching as the shining stars showed up splendidly!

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

Around Li Yao, the shield mixed by the spiritual energy and the demonic energy continued expanding, enveloping him like the most dazzling ball lightning. All the seawater inside was evaporated and popped up to the surface of the ocean as bubbles.

Li Yao, on the other hand, stood in the middle of the ball-shaped space. He stabbed his hands into his chest and opened the breastplate to the two sides quickly, revealing the brilliant demon core at the center of his chest!

It was the Hellish River Cannon, the upgraded version of the Cell Obliteration Cannon, which was the most powerful remote weapon on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit right now!

“Just burn, my cells!”

The power of Li Yao’s soul surged out. All the cells inside his chest seemed to be exploding and releasing infinite energy, which was congregated and enhanced by the demon core. A small sun seemed to be rising slowly from the bottom of the ocean, illuminating the darkness of the environment!

“There’s an intruder! He is very likely to be Li Yao!”

Lu Zui’s voice finally passed over through the other cables and was echoing in the entire base!

Diwu Jian, the battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator guarding the base, as well as countless Cultivators of the Patriots Partnership discovered Li Yao!

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

Hundreds of flying swords, mystic rays, and cannon attacks bombarded the hundreds of meters around Li Yao like a storm and smashed his spiritual shield until it was shaking, dimming, and about to collapse!

Li Yao gritted his teeth and swallowed all the blood. Before the blood slid into his stomach, it was already transformed into the purest energy by the obliterative power of the cells!

Swoosh!

A sword aura that was as fast as lightning pierced through thousands of meters of seawater like an invisible line and slashed open his spiritual shield directly!

It was the Five Swords of Heavens and Human, Diwu Jian’s ultimate technique and the most terrifying sword art of the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

After only one attack, tens of thousands of red threads split from the aura and enshrouded Li Yao’s spiritual shield, shattering it instantly. They even constituted a weird barrier that prevented him from condensing a second spiritual shield within the next few seconds!

Without the protection of spiritual energy, the enemy’s attack was unstoppable and was about to reach the surface of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit!

However, the moment his spiritual shield exploded abruptly, Li Yao already burnt his soul, cells, and life to the maximum and shot out the Hellish River Cannon toward the heart of the undersea base furiously!

Chapter 1114 - Unstoppable Blade Aura!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Hundreds of colorful blasts appeared on the surface of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and proliferated like cancer. The destructive force threw Li Yao hundreds of meters away.

The bright pillar of light blown out by the Hellish River Cannon, on the other hand, ripped apart all the defense rune arrays in the undersea base and pierced through the core of the base.

It was the place where the medicine workshop and the sterile room were located according to Li Yao’s observation and Neltharion’s scanning.

At that moment, a series of ear-splitting explosions was raised at the core of the undersea base. Shocking alarms were echoing nearby. The seawater was flooding crazily. The base was in utter chaos!

The sterile room where Elder Nether Spring had been interrogated happened to be hit precisely by the Hellish River Cannon. Caught unprepared, the Cultivators were all sent flying, colliding and struggling in the blast!

Neltharion had been lurking in a corner of the sterile room and observing where the Jade Crystal Disc was kept. It took the opportunity to release almost five tiny smoke grenades, making the sterile room that was already messy enough even messier.

The tiny drill of mystic rays in the front being activated to the maximum, Neltharion turned into a streak of brightness and pierced through the super crystal processor that had been used to analyze Elder Nether Spring’s brain!

The Jade Crystal Disc was stored right inside the super crystal processor!

Shua!

Neltharion extended two tiny, long claws from the front, grabbed the Jade Crystal Disc, and snatched it out from the preservation rune arrays!

Li Yao had also been planning to capture the main storage chips of the super crystal processor. However, at the same time, he sensed that a second unstoppable blade aura had rushed to the front of his face!

For an unparalleled expert such as ‘Diwu Jian’, even Li Yao could not clearly see how the guy performed the attack.

When he sensed that an attack was coming, the aura of the sword was already less than a hundred meters from him!

This battle was different from the one against ‘Death Ray’ Ye Changkong.

That battle had taken place after hours of consideration and planning. Both parties had spent tremendous computational ability on the preparation for the battle. It had been a battle that had been decided before it started.

Li Yao had calculated every detail in advance. Therefore, he had finished Ye Changkong and barely hurt himself.

But this battle was an unexpected encounter. Neither party was prepared at all. It was a pure competition of combat ability devoid of any tricks!

Li Yao bellowed. The Blood Moon Dragon Hunting Saber dyed the seawater hundreds of square meters nearby crimson. Attached to the aura of the saber, the crimson seawater went at the aura of the sword like a whip of bloody hundreds of meters long!

The sword aura versus the saber aura!

BOOM!

The furious force resulting from the collision of the weapons vaporized the seawater near the point of impact. From liquid to gas, the volume of the seawater expanded by dozens of times, raising a soul-stirring great explosion instantly.

As if a hundred bombs had been detonated below the ocean at the same time, a barrier of chaos erected and temporarily blocked Li Yao from the hunters, including Diwu Jian!

That was exactly Li Yao’s purpose.

To achieve the purpose, he had even slightly dispersed the aura that the Blood Moon Dragon Hunting Saber triggered. As a result, one tenth of the force entailed in Diwu Jian’s attack penetrated in and lunged at his chest.

Affected by Diwu Jian’s first attack, he had not been able to form a spiritual shield in those few seconds. The one tenth of the force could only be resisted by the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and his body of flesh and blood.

Shua!

An enormous gash immediately appeared on the right side of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit's breastplate, through which one could see the flesh and bones inside clearly!

His internal organs seemed to have been stabbed, ripped, and tied by hundreds of tiny swords, which cast him into excruciating pain.

But Li Yao did not even have the time to grunt. He turned around and fled instantly while triggering the crystal bombs that he had stuck to the shell of the undersea base earlier.

For such a crazy bomber like himself, he would have felt sorry for himself if he had not installed a few hundred crystal bombs after he discovered the enemy's secret base.

A series of fireballs and blasts formed a dazzling ribbon of light on the shell of the base.

Although the bombs were not enough to destroy the base, because they were too dispersed and the base boasted the most advanced defense rune arrays, it was enough to make the Cultivators inside the base work hard to deal with the emergency for a while. His pressure could be somewhat reduced.

At the same time—

Hiu!

Neltharion escaped out of the base carrying the Jade Crystal Disc that stored Elder Nether Spring's memory pieces.

Diwu Jian launched the third attack.

The 'Sword God', who was still deep inside the water and had not met Li Yao, sensed the existence of Neltharion keenly and also calculated that something was wrong with the streak of brightness that was dashing out of the base.

The third attack went directly toward Neltharion!

Inside Li Yao’s brain, Neltharion’s alarm system was shrieking crazily.

If the attack hit the target, Neltharion would be more than 55% damaged and basically lose the ability to move!

Li Yao sniffed and raised his right arm. Seven mystic rays rushed out and congregated into a highly-revolving drill of mystic rays in the sea water. As the speed of revolution was higher and higher, the drill was gradually taking the shape of a dragon!

Diwu Jian might have a chance to hit Neltharion, but the Electric Viper Drill would pierce through his chest, too.

After he was heavily wounded, nobody in the entire base would be able to stop Li Yao from picking up the Jade Crystal Disc and running away!

As he expected, Diwu Jian realized the logic, too. The third attack and his own scent vanished in a moment. He seemed to have melted into the ocean.

Without any hesitation, Li Yao turned around and swam upward at the highest of his speed. He met Neltharion halfway and threw the Jade Crystal Chip into his Cosmos Ring!

He was extremely fast. The Core Formation Stage Cultivators, who had been exhausted because of the fight against the Nine-Headed Ocean Monster, were not able to catch up with him at all. The cannons of the crystal warships could not do anything except light up fireworks behind his bottom, either.

In an instant, he dashed dozens of kilometers away.

However, his heart was heavier and heavier, as if it was falling into the bottomless ‘Broken Vein Trench’!

Too quiet. The ocean was too quiet. No undercurrents, no shoals, not the slightest ripples. The entire ocean seemed to have been frozen!

The next moment, hundreds of invisible blades shot out from all directions, like thin, transparent mica plates soaked in the seawater that could not be seen at all. They constituted a fatal array and minced Li Yao brutally!

Diwu Jian’s control over his sword was so amazing that he had compressed the seawater with his hundreds of sword auras and reduced its size to one hundredth. The softness and resilience of the liquid was maintained, and the essence of the undersea currents was absorbed, while the compressed seawater attacked Li Yao’s critical parts from unbelievable angles!

It was an unavoidable trap.

The only way to dodge the attack was to retreat.

However, behind Li Yao, there were both the formidable opponent Diwu Jian and the hundreds of fearless warriors of the Patriots Partnership.

Brainwashed by the fanatical ideology, they could cause great trouble for Li Yao even if they were not as strong.

Therefore, Li Yao had no choice but to stride forward!

Shua!

Even Black Wing seemed to have unleashed all its potentially. A pair of wings of spiritual energy almost a hundred meters long was triggered. The wings were then folded, enveloping Li Yao into a big, black ball, before Li Yao broke into Diwu Jian’s fatal array!

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

Li Yao was connected to Black Wing and could sense the pain when the auras of the sword were cutting Black Wing.

He gritted his teeth through it together with Black Wing!

Some of the auras crawled in through the gaps on the wing shield that Black Wing had created, only to be crushed by Li Yao quickly and heavily!

In half a second, Li Yao broke through the fatal array of sword and soared up from the ocean!

Black Wing, which had accompanied him for more than twenty years, now had almost twenty shocking cracks. The whole sword seemed to be about to crumble at any moment!

His eyes bloodshot, Li Yao glared at the bottom of the ocean before he narrowed his eyes and observed the surface of the ocean around him.

The ocean was raging with surging tides. The superstorm and the tsunami were savaging right around him. Not far away, there was a waterspout thousands of meters tall, spurting seawater weighing billions of tons into the sky!

Li Yao turned into a streak of blackness and dashed into the waterspout.

Behind him, a streak of dark golden brightness rushed out of the seawater, too, and sprinted into the super waterspout hundreds of meters in diameter only 0.1 seconds later!

It was Diwu Jian, one of the strongest battle-type Cultivators in the federation!

He did not expect that Li Yao would be so tough as to pass through his fatal array by brute force without even reducing the speed or that the guy would crawl into the waterspout!

[The super waterspout is more than five hundred meters in diameter. The wind speed at the center can be more than eight hundred kilometers per hour. Within a breath, one can be brought to the sky!

[You want to run away through the waterspout? Not so fast!]

Without thinking, Diwu Jian launched the fifth attack right toward the sky the moment he flashed into the waterspout. The strong strike, which was a concentration of the expertise of his entire life, seemed enough to stab a hole on the sky!

However—

He saw a pair of eyes.

Eyes that were bloodshot, burning and ripping apart the crystal suit!

The owner of the eyes was lurking right next to him quietly in the gale, whose speed was almost a thousand kilometers per hour, at a place even lower than his.

Diwu Jian was greatly shocked. He had never expected that Li Yao, who had been running away all the time, would not run away when he found such a perfect method to escape like the waterspout. Instead, the guy fell to the bottom of the waterspout and waited for him right there!

Diwu Jian hurried to change the target. It took him only 0.01 seconds to change the direction of his fifth attack and shift it toward Li Yao!

But it was too late.

Faced with such a frightful opponent like Li Yao, giving him 0.01 seconds was no different from standing still and being terribly beaten for one minute.

The Blood Moon Dragon Hunting Saber hidden behind his back uttered roars like a ferocious beast. Even though it was in the depths of a furious waterspout, all the noises around were still eclipsed.

In that second, all the natural disasters, including the waterspout, the superstorm, and the tsunami, seemed to be swallowed by the Blood Moon Dragon Hunting Saber. Together with Li Yao’s fury, they congregated into an unstoppable saber aura!

While he was watching the saber aura that was coming at his face, an abrupt thought suddenly popped up in Diwu Jia’s head.

[Such an attack is enough to cut the galaxy in half!]

Chapter 1115 - Come On, the Final Battle!

The ‘patriots’ who leapt out of the ocean after Diwu Jian saw the most shocking scene.

Right before their eyes that were about to burst out of their sockets, the dark clouds, the surging tides, the superstorm, and the tsunami almost seemed to come to a brief halt, as if they had become a painting!

At the center of the painting, the waterspout that connected the sky and the earth collapsed all of a sudden, turning into billions of shining pearls that were splashing everywhere!

Diwu Jian, in his golden heavy suit, was like a kite whose string had been cut off. He fell out of the air helplessly. His heavy suit had been shredded as if it were made of paper. His right arm, right leg, and the entire right side of his body had all been minced into a mess!

There was not the slightest scent of spiritual waves from Diwu Jian’s body now.

It was not until this moment that the frozen tides and storm were alive again.

The ‘patriots’ were so devastated that they failed to react for quite a few seconds. When they narrowed their eyes and looked at the sky, the only thing that they saw was a tiny black feather that was flying in the sky amid the rushing clouds, vanishing into thin air in the blink of an eye.

“Li Yao! He—he—he has blown up the waterspout together with Diwu Jian!”

The ‘patriots’ looked at each other in bewilderment. The distressing fact dumbfounded each and every one of them.

…

Inside Lu Zui’s private house in the capital city of the Star Glory Federation, Lu Zui looked outside through the somewhat ragged window.

Another dawn was coming. The deep night sky was slowly devoured by the bloodstained clouds.

Brightness and darkness were replacing each other on Lu Zui’s face.

“President Diwu was heavily wounded.”

Behind Lu Zui, a middle-aged man was standing respectfully.

His name was Lu Feng. He had not been sent away for any business, so he was not famous in the world of Cultivators. But he was Lu Zui’s most trusted and reliable foster son, as well as a pillar of the Patriots Partnership.

Lu Feng turned on the crystal processor and activated a light beam, which he snapped to Lu Zui like a piece of paper.

“The right half of President Diwu’s body has been so seriously wounded that it is beyond repair,” Lu Feng said. “Although his life has been saved, I’m afraid that he will have to count on artificial arms to move around in the future.”

Leaning against the window, Lu Zui watched the blood red morning sun emotionlessly, but the corner of his eyes that was bouncing nonstop indicated the anxiety in his heart.

The circulation of spiritual energy for a Cultivator was a whole. Not just an arm and a leg, even the loss of a finger could serious affect the entire circulation.

Even the best artificial limbs were still fake ones. However hard one tried to adapt to them, they would never be even 70% as functional as the real limbs!

Now, almost half of the body needed to be replaced with artificial limbs, which meant that he would be a second ‘Iron Commander’. Even if he could still maintain the level of the Nascent Soul Stage with arduous efforts, his peak combat ability would never recover.

Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao had less trouble. As the commander of the military, there was no need for him to fight on the frontlines. It did not matter that his combat ability had been lowered as long as his strategic view and his commanding abilities were fine.

But Diwu Jian was different.

He had been dedicated to his sword for his entire life, and he was the purest fighting. Was there any difference between losing an arm and a leg and killing him directly?

“This is the combat data collected from the remains of President Diwu’s crystal suit. Also, here are a few combat videos restored from the broken crystal processor.”

Lu Feng handed a jade chip over.

Lu Zui analyzed carefully for a moment without saying anything. Then, he sighed and came to a conclusion, “Brother Diwu could’ve avoided the attack.

“Brother Diwu has been the famous Sword God for a hundred years. He was also wearing the incredible ‘Thousand Sword Flowing Gold Battlesuit’. Although he was tricked by Li Yao and missed the opportunity of attack, he could’ve dodged most of the damage if he had tried his best to escape. At the very least, he wouldn’t have been so heavily wounded or lost his hundred years of Cultivation!”

“Yes,” Lu Feng said, “President Diwu asked me to forward a message to you. He could’ve dodged Li Yao’s fatal attack. The worst outcome would have been losing one of his arms. Like Ye Changkong, he could have undergone a ‘limb replantation’ procedure. After a year and a half’s training, he would have completely recovered.

“However, if he had done that, he would have been pushed back into the ocean. One to two seconds was more than enough for Li Yao to flee unharmed with the Jade Crystal Disc!

“Therefore, President Diwu did not back off. He completely gave up defense and chose to attack Li Yao with his all!

“President Diwu said that, although he was heavily wounded and lost all his Cultivation, he successfully blew the damage of ‘Five Disintegrations of Heavens and Human’ into Li Yao’s body!

“At this moment, Li Yao won’t be any better than himself!”

Lu Zui was greatly moved.

In the world of Cultivators, there were several highly dangerous minerals that boasted immense radiation, such as uranium and plutonium.

Such dangerous Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures could release uncanny rays that could penetrate through the body deep into the cells, directly destroying the gene strands. Not just ordinary people, even regular Cultivators were not willing to touch them.

The ‘Five Disintegrations of Heavens and Human’, a secret art that Diwu Jian invented himself, adopted a different approach. He embedded the materials such as uranium and plutonium into his sword and trained with them. Eventually, he was able to concentrate the force of radiation and unleash the radiation in a fierce fight!

Even the deities in the sky, should they be pierced through by the rays of radiation from his sword, would still disintegrate from the inside and perish!

That was the mechanism of the ‘Five Disintegrations of Heavens and Human’!

“According to President Diwu, Li Yao’s crystal suit was very strong,” Lu Feng said. “He might’ve also grasped some secret arts that could recover his body quickly. The guy was very vigorous!

“Also, President Diwu attacked in a hurry and failed to perform the best of the ‘Five Disintegrations of Heavens and Human’. Therefore, Li Yao was not killed instantly.

“But in the next couple of days, Li Yao’s capability will definitely plunge. He will have to spend his spiritual energy on resolving the damage of the radiation. He will not be able to keep himself in the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage anymore.

“President Diwu was very sorry that the Jade Crystal Disc that stored Elder Nether Spring’s memories was lost. He blamed it all on himself and hoped that his endeavors could make the situation slightly better for us.”

Lu Zui closed his eyes and mumbled to himself, “Brother Diwu, you’ve been troubled!

Lu Zui clenched his fists and suddenly widened his eyes. “Rest assured! Brother Diwu, you destroyed your Cultivation willingly for the single purpose of wounding Li Yao and buying a few days of precious time for us.

“I will not disappoint you. Your sacrifices will not be for nothing!”

“Father,” Lu Feng said, “the undersea base was seriously damaged. The production of several medicines might be delayed. More importantly, Li Yao has stolen the Jade Crystal Disc. What do we do now?”

“It doesn’t matter!” Lu Zui waved his hands and said coldly, “Our Jade Crystal Disc has been deployed with the most advanced barrier ‘Spiritual Treasure Mystic Dark Lock’. As long as it is pulled out of the crystal processor by force, the barrier will be automatically activated. How can Li Yao crack that? If he can’t, the Jade Crystal Disc is just garbage for him!

“In another few days, when the teleportation arrays in the Dark Desolate Domain are ready, our army will march into the Blood Demon Sector. Everything will be settled. He will not be able to instigate any trouble!”

"Perhaps, he can look for a crystal processor specialist to crack it," Lu Feng said.

"There are few specialists in the entire Heaven's Origin Sector who have the skills to crack the barrier," Lu Zui remarked. "Most of them are involved in the operations of the Secret Sword Bureau to capture the Blood Devil. Where can he find another crystal processor specialist so quickly?"

Then, the father and the son looked at each other and exclaimed at the same time, "Mo Xuan!"

As a special spectral Cultivator, Professor Mo Xuan was indeed capable of cracking the Spiritual Treasure Mystic Dark Lock.

Pondering for a moment, Lu Zui said quickly, "Firstly, analyze the database immediately and list all the specialists who have the ability to crack the Spiritual Treasure Mystic Dark Lock. Find out where they are now!

"Secondly, Burning Prairie is now in a drill on the Grand Desolate Plateau. Track Li Yao and stop him from reaching out to the Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector.

"Thirdly, capture Ding Lingdang immediately! Throw out all the evidence we prepared earlier that proves that she is a Child of the Nether World! With that as an excuse, ask Professor Mo Xuan and Li Yao's two disciples back to help the investigation. Lock them up!

"Remember, do not hurt Professor Mo Xuan, Wu Mayan, and Xie Anan. Cater to their every need. Other than freedom and news from the outside world, all their demands can be satisfied.

“Right. Try to irritate Ding Lingdang during the capture. The girl is a powder keg. It will be better if she fights back in public.”

Lu Feng nodded quickly. “Understood. I’m on it. It will certainly be an unappealable case!”

“Go now!”

Narrowing his eyes, Lu Zui watched the coastline in the east. The upper half of his face was illuminated into redness by the morning sun, but the lower half was still soaked in darkness.

In the darkness, his lips curled as he grinned hideously. “Vulture Li Yao, you may have the Jade Crystal Chip now. But so what? Everyone that you trust and everyone that trusts you is under my control!

“You are now a blind person riding a blind horse. How can you fight me with zero help?”

…

When the same morning sun illuminated the capital city, the eastern coastline of the federation embraced the light, too.

On a patch of pointy reefs, Li Yao was lying with his limbs stretched out. He squinted and enjoyed the massage of sunlight.

His left hand opened one syringe of medication drug after another and poured all of them into his stomach.

But his right hand clung to the Jade Crystal Disc without letting it go.

This place was only six hundred and fifty kilometers away from the capital city. With a Cultivator’s speed, they would arrive in no time if they were rushing at top speed.

Li Yao was very clear that he had been exposed. His wounds were not a secret. With Lu Zui’s cunningness, he must have prepared a lot of traps in the capital city.

“Come on then!”

Li Yao licked his lips and struggled to his feet. Looking at Black Wing, which was full of cracks, he felt that his eyelids were twitching and put Black Wing back to his waist.

“Little Black… Even you are supporting me without caring about anything at the critical moment. Is there any reason I shouldn’t persist in fighting!”

This was the final battle.

Even if only one of his fingers could be moved, he would still be the final victor because he was backed by Ding Lingdang, Professor Mo Xuan, Black Wing, Wu Mayan, Xie Anan, the entire federation, and most of the people in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector!

As long as the truth was released to public, Li Yao had no doubt that 99% of his compatriots and 99% of the Cultivators would take his, and the truth’s, side!

The red sun was rising higher and higher on the East Ocean. The glow seemed to have covered Li Yao in an invincible golden armor. Taking a deep breath, he marched toward the capital city on the shining, golden road!

Chapter 1116 - The Wind Rises!

A lot of things were happening in the capital city of the Star Glory Federation at nine o’clock in the morning.

In the central district, the parliament building was packed with people. The representatives made of the leadership of the major sects, the delegates from the military, and those of the general public were all taking their seat.

Ever since the ‘expedition motion’ had been passed, the officials had practically been working day and night.

It was definitely not an easy task to wage an unprecedented war. To maximize the efficiency of the invincible war machine, hundreds of bills and clauses needed to be discussed and passed.

In the east district, in the General Railway Station of the capital city, the iron dragons were rushing close with white steam billowing nonstop, sending countless middle-aged and old men who were wearing old military uniforms and shining badges to the capital city.

Their limbs might be broken, and their pace might be slow; however, their backs were equally straight, and their eyes were all as sharp as bullets!

They were the representatives of the veterans from all over the federation.

The explosion that took place in the Federal Square had completely infuriated the entire federation. The ‘expedition motion’ that had just passed had triggered the federal citizens’ patriotism, too.

A few days ago, the veterans who lived in the capital city had gathered spontaneously and gone on parade. But it was nothing more than a prelude to the arrival of a storm. Now that the federation was going to march out of the Heaven’s Origin Sector into a different world for the first time in history, the Disabled Servicemen Association, acknowledged as one of the most influential forces in the federation, would certainly not wait and watch.

Over the past few days, countless veterans from every place in the federation were flooding into the capital city and embracing their old comrades.

Today, the representatives of the veterans in the entire federation would gather in the Federal Square and raise the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag on the land that was stained with the blood of their compatriots again, demonstrating the unbendable determination of the federation to all the enemies!

The north district—where more than thirty schools were located, including three of the Nine Elite Universities—was also woken up when it was just dawn by the obstreperous noises.

The hotblooded juveniles, holding the banners that they prepared in advanced, were prepared to go to the Federal Square, shoulder to shoulder and hand to hand, while singing the battle songs one after another. They were going to join the representatives of the veterans from the entire federation, who were heroes that had defended their home and protected them.

The capital city was a hundred times livelier than several days ago when the hundred-day memorial ceremony had been held!

In the south of the capital city, six heavy armed shuttles with anti-explosion armor and crystal cannons—accommodating dozens of strong, tough-looking Secret Sword Agents—were flying quietly.

The Secret Sword Agents were wiping their chainswords, vibration sabers, and storm bolters in silence. Although all the weapons were now as smooth as a mirror, they had no intention of stopping their movement.

Whoever was given the task of capturing someone like ‘Blazing Tyrannosaur’ Ding Lingdang would not mind checking their magical equipment several more times.

…

The Dancing Sun Hotel was a property of Double Dragons Union, a sect that had recently risen in the federation.

The leader of the Double Dragons Union was Fiend Blade Peng Hai, Li Yao’s senior brother. Naturally, he was also a good friend of Ding Lingdang’s.

After Ding Lingdang, Professor Mo Xuan, Wu Mayan, and Xie Anan reached the capital city, they had been staying in the Dancing Sun Hotel.

Although Fiend Blade Peng Hai was not in the capital city in person, he had arranged a whole floor of the most extravagant rooms for them, which were comfortable and, above all, absolutely safe.

“There has been no word from Li Yao for quite a few days.”

In the hotel room, Ding Lingdang was pacing back and forth anxiously, gnashing her teeth. “He must’ve found some leads deep inside the East Ocean. So, he went all the way there, but I don’t know what the leads are exactly. He needs to come back soon!”

“Sister Ding, don’t worry. Master is going to be alright!” Xie Anan waved her tiny fists and said, “In the Flying Star Sector, Master was even able to crawl out of a terrifying place like Spider Den. The East Ocean is definitely not going to be any trouble for him!”

“That is very true, but we must make full preparations,” Professor Mo Xuan said calmly. “With everything coming to this point, we must consider every possibility. Last night, I spent the whole night compiling the timeline of the whole event, our speculations, and the coordinates of the undersea mining base at the bottom of the ocean, into a document.

“I have a few friends in the circle of refiners, the academic field, and the news industry. Ding Lingdang, you must have a few trusted friends, too, don’t you?

“If Li Yao comes back with undeniable evidence, that will be best!

“However, if…

“Then, we will have to disseminate the document as quickly as possible as our last attempt without caring about whether or not anyone will be alarmed anymore!”

Ding Lingdang frowned and looked at her fists. “I am no strangers to last attempts, but right now, our every movement is being closely monitored. I’m afraid that we won’t have a chance to deliver the document!

“If we are really pushed to that far, I will try my best… to gain an opportunity for you!”

Wu Mayan was greatly moved. “Masteress!”

Right then, Ding Lingdang’s ears moved. Then, the pores all over her body shrank violently before she bellowed, “Not good. Get down now!”

Not a moment after she had given the warning, the soundproof window, which was made of two layers of tempered glass, exploded into pieces, and almost ten stun grenades were tossed in!

Ding Lingdang and Wu Mayan were both strong battle-type Cultivators. They reacted in the moment and kicked back most of the grenades. But still, one of the grenades escaped their attention and exploded right inside the room!

Ding Lingdang lunged at Professor Mo Xuan, and Wu Mayan lunged at Xie Anan. Shining spiritual shields were immediately unfolded around their body, absorbing all the blast!

With Ding Lingdang and Wu Mayan’s protection, all four of them were unharmed.

However, they were all delayed by half a second as a result.

During that half a second, the three sides of walls, not including the one where the window was on, had been blown away, as if they had never existed in the first place. Almost thirty Secret Sword Agents, wearing heavy crystal suits and holding single crystal cannons, surrounded them from the corridor and the neighboring rooms!

Zhi! Zhi! Zhi! Zhi! Zhi! Zhi! Zhi!

Several Secret Sword Agents were unleashing soundwaves of high frequencies with special magical equipment on their shoulders.

Not only could the soundwaves disrupt the transmission of telepathic thoughts, thereby delaying a Cultivator from retrieving their crystal suit from the Cosmos Ring, they were also the most agonizing stimuli for spectral Cultivators such as Professor Mo Xuan!

“Ahhhh!” Professor Mo Xuan cried miserably and fell on one of his knees. The liquid metal flowed out of his artificial body and could not be condensed into a fixed shape anymore!

“Don’t move!”

A gray, plain-looking ‘Bleak Dragon Battlesuit’ dashed to Ding Lingdang at an unbelievable speed and pointed the highly-revolving chainsword at her throat. He grinned hideously. “Fellow Cultivator Ding, don’t act recklessly. You don’t have time to put on your crystal suit. You are no match for me. There’s no need to kill yourself.”

Ding Lingdang gritted her teeth and glanced at Wu Mayan, who was next to her.

Almost twenty colorful stripes popped up on Wu Mayan’s body, a sign that he had been locked onto by the single crystal cannons.

Besides, there were also Professor Mo Xuan and Xie Anan, two refiners who could not fight!

Ding Lingdang narrowed her eyes and quickly calculated her odds of success in a desperate counterattack.

Then, she found, to her surprise, that she stood no chance of winning at all!

Now, Wu Mayan, Professor Mo Xuan, and Xie Anan had been brought under control. She did not have time to summon her crystal suit, but her opponent was fully armed.

However, even if she had the time to put on her crystal suit, and she engaged in a one-on-one combat with her opponent in the fairest environment, she would not stand much chance of winning, either!

It was because the guy who was pointing a chainsword at her throat was none other than Guo Chunfeng, the supervisor of the Demon Execution Division of the Secret Sword Bureau, known as the strongest Core Formation Stage Cultivator of the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

Shua!

Guo Chunfeng opened his facial cover, revealing a thoughtful face. He declared, “Mo Xuan, Ding Lingdang, you are now under arrest for treason. Please come with us. You will be executed immediately if you dare to resist!”

Ding Lingdang bulged her eyes and shouted, “Treason? Are you insane?”

Professor Mo Xuan breathed heavily, too. “I—I am a professor working in one of the Nine Elite Universities. I am a council member of the Association of Refiners. I am also the honorary deputy president of the Association of Spectral Cultivators in the federation. You will not end well if you capture somebody randomly without evidence!”

“Without evidence!” Guo Chunfeng sneered and said, “Professor Mo Xuan, you are a renowned master of refining in the federation. Personally, I respect you very much, but would you care to explain why you hacked the crystal processor of ‘Li Chenxin’, another master of refining, a few days ago and stole the files concerning the sniper rifle Herald?

“Herald is a piece of ultimate gun-type magical equipment that solely belongs to ‘Death Ray’ Ye Changkong. Soon after you stole the files, ‘Death Ray’ Ye Changkong was heavily wounded by Blood Devil Li Yao!

“Are the two incidents not related?

“Hehe. Ye Changkong is the chief coach of gunnery in the federal army. You helped Blood Devil Li Yao beat him into heavy wounds, which has caused immeasurable losses for the federal army. What is treason if this is not?”

Professor Mo Xuan and Ding Lingdang did not expect that Guo Chunfeng would find out the truth so quickly. They were rendered speechless for a moment.

After a long daze, Professor Mo Xuan said, “Wait, I can explain. There’s a great scheme in the whole event. We—”

“Shut up!” Guo Chunfeng said coldly. “You have all been bewildered by the Blood Devil. I will not hear or believe another word from your mouths!

“Now, hand over all of your Cosmos Rings and surrender!

“Or maybe you want to show me the awesomeness of the top experts of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector?”

Guo Chunfeng looked even more hideous than before.

Ding Lingdang and Wu Mayan bit their lips so hard that blood was flowing out.

“NO!” Professor Mo Xuan hurried to shout, “Ding Lingdang, Wu Mayan, don’t attack. Everything will be doomed if you attack. Everything!”

“Exactly. Those who know how to act when the situation changes are truly wise,” Guo Chunfeng said with a smile. “Now, behave and come with me. Trust me. It’s for your own good!”

Three minutes later, the six heavy armed shuttles rushed close.

Seeing the mess at the top floor of the Dancing Sun Hotel, all the Secret Sword Agents who were directly under Lu Zui’s command looked at each other in bewilderment, lost for words.

Half a minute later, Lu Zui got the latest news.

“What? They have been captured by Guo Chunfeng’s squad for treason? Even Wu Mayan and Xie Anan have been summoned to help with the investigation?”

Chapter 1117 - More Troublesome Trouble!

In the blue sky of the capital city, something seemed to be emitting hazy colors under the illumination of the sunlight.

It was Hidden Star, a stealth warship with optical camouflage all over the body that solely belonged to the Secret Sword Bureau.

Other than being the largest intelligence agency of the federation, the Secret Sword Bureau was also responsible for executing demons, devils, and evil Cultivators that had snuck into the heartland of the federation. Therefore, they boasted their independent armed forces and even fleets that were not under the command of the federal army.

The crystal warships of the Secret Sword Bureau were focused on the small-scale battles in cities. Their firepower was not as fierce as that of the crystal warships of the military, but in terms of the search precision, stealth, and manipulability of their magical equipment, the rune arrays to suppress ground targets, and the technique reserves, they were much more advanced.

Also, the soldiers that the Secret Sword Bureau tutored on their own gained abundant experience after fighting in the downtown area, which was often populated and boasted a complicated terrain.

It was safe to say that, in such an environment, they were stronger than any special force of the federal army.

At this moment, Hidden Star, Hidden Fog, Hidden Wind, Hidden Moon, and more than ten other crystal warships designed to suppress ground targets were hovering in the sky of the capital city in silence. Together with the thousands of surveillance cameras scattered everywhere in the capital city, they constituted an impregnable dragnet that enveloped the entire city.

Most of the crystal warships were under the direct command of Lu Zui.

As for Lu Zui himself, he was staring at the light beam in silence in the secret command room on Hidden Star, the flagship.

On the other side of the light beam, Guo Chunfeng was briefing about his previous operation from the headquarters of the Secret Sword Bureau full of delight. “Reporting to you, director, Mo Xuan, Ding Lingdang, Wu Mayan, and Xie Anan are now all under control!

“Mo Xuan is guilty of hacking into Li Chenxin’s crystal processor and stealing files on his sniper rifle Herald. He handed the files to Blood Devil Li Yao and helped him defeat ‘Death Ray’ Ye Changkong!

“Ding Lingdang played an important role in the whole incident, too. It is now safe to say that they have both been beguiled by Blood Devil Li Yao!”

Lu Zui opened his mouth. He was meaning to ask, *Why did you not inform me earlier of such a big operation?*

Before he proposed the question, Guo Chunfeng gave the answer himself. “Director, I only just got the news that it was Mo Xuan who hacked Li Chenxin’s crystal processor. After I got the message, I immediately started the operation without half a second’s hesitation. That was why I was able to fish them up!

“Professor Mo Xuan is a crystal processor specialist himself. It is very possible that he was performing ‘anti-surveillance’ on us. It is needless to say that Blood Devil Li Yao is an expert of eavesdropping and peeping, too!

“If I had reported it in advance, it is very likely that they would’ve noticed it. At the very least, Blood Devil Li Yao would’ve noticed something wrong!

“But right now, we have captured them as quickly as lightning, and Blood Devil Li Yao doesn’t know the first thing about it yet!

“It means that they are now the best bait for fishing up Blood Devil Li Yao!”

Lu Zui was silent for a long time. His computational ability soared as he quickly deduced different outcomes of the whole event.

However, ever since Elder Nether Spring was captured, he had been sparing no effort dedicating all his brain cells to the scheme without a proper rest for quite a few months.

A few days ago, everything had mostly been settled. He was going to make use of his secret technique and recover his brain last night, only to be disrupted by the news that Li Yao had robbed the undersea base!

Exhausted, he was now almost in a trance faced with the unexpected changes.

“Director!” Guo Chunfeng, who was on the other side of the light beam, gritted his teeth and declared, “I am the chief commander of the operation to capture Blood Devil Li Yao, but he has escaped multiple times and even caused tremendous damages. That was all my fault, and I am willing to be punished in any way!

“However, I want director to give me another opportunity! I wager with my head that he is definitely not going to run away this time, not unless he steps over my dead body!

“This is the proposal of my operation. Please take a look, director!”

Guo Chunfeng sent a proposal over through the Spiritual Nexus.

Lu Zui read it carefully for a long time and calculated every detail in it repetitively. Then, he raised his head and observed Guo Chunfeng’s resolute face on the light beam. Finding no anomaly in the eye contact, he nodded eventually.

“Alright. Do it as you’ve planned, but remember—”

Lu Zui lowered his voice that was brimming with killing intent. “Blood Devil Li Yao is extremely dangerous. In case he bewilders other people with his mysterious secret arts and hurts even more compatriots, kill him immediately as soon as his trace is discovered!”

“Understood!” With a cold smile, Guo Chunfeng said brutally, “There’s no need to give such evil beings a chance to talk!”

The light beam was turned off. Lu Zui was silent for a long time watching the blankness.

Lu Feng, his foster son, walked forward and asked in a low voice, “Father, why didn’t you ask Guo Chunfeng to deliver Ding Lingdang, Professor Mo Xuan, and the rest of them to us?”

“How?” Lu Zui asked back. “Guo Chunfeng is the supervisor of the first division. For more than ten years, he has been directly commanding all the operations in the frontline. It is not an exception this time. He is the chief commander!

“A plausible reason is required if we want the captives from him.

“Yes, we can accuse Ding Lingdang of being a Child of the Nether World, but Ding Lingdang is not the key point here. The key point is Professor Mo Xuan, who is capable of cracking the Jade Chip Disc!

“Professor Mo Xuan is more than a hundred years old now, and he has been in the Flying Star Sector in the past ten years. There is no way that he can be a Child of the Nether World!

“Now, Guo Chunfeng has discovered evidence to link Professor Mo Xuan to Blood Devil Li Yao. All the captives are keys to fishing up Blood Devil Li Yao. Guo Chunfeng must be watching over them closely. On what grounds should we ask for them?

“Of course, we can demand that he send them to us, but Guo Chunfeng is definitely going to be suspicious. Will that do us any good?

“Guo Chunfeng is the strongest Core Formation Stage Cultivator of the federation. If he grows suspicious, he could prove to be as much trouble as Li Yao!

“We have lost two battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. Dealing with Li Yao and Guo Chunfeng at the same time? The price is too high, and it is too risky.”

Lu Feng thought for a moment and realized that it did make sense. He frowned and said, “In fact, we should’ve told everything to Guo Chunfeng before and absorbed him into our organization! His parents were both killed in the beast tide. He definitely would’ve supported us because of his hatred toward the demons!”

“That is unnecessary,” Lu Zui replied. “I’ve worked in the Secret Sword Bureau for almost two hundred years. Guo Chunfeng is perhaps the most suitable guy for the trade with the most potential that I’ve ever seen. A year ago, he was already the indispensable commander in the frontline for the Secret Sword Bureau. If we had told him everything, but he refused to join us, he would’ve been a trouble that was even more troublesome than Li Yao right now!

“It would not have been difficult to get rid of him, but it would have been quite difficult to find a commander who could replace him. People of our trade don’t just count on their big fists or sharp sabers; it is their brain that matters!

“Therefore, I tested him several times and abandoned the attempt after failing to find his real attitude.

“After all, he has been doing an excellent job when he knows nothing. If so, why should we turn him into an unstable factor?”

Lu Zui sent Guo Chunfeng’s proposal to Lu Feng’s crystal processor.

Lu Feng glanced at it and said, “The odds of success are not low.”

“Very high, I would say,” Lu Zui said. “Right now, the leadership of the Heaven’s Origin Sector has learned that Li Yao heavily wounded Ye Changkong, which is further proof that he is now the Blood Devil. All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators have raised their wariness and won’t give him the chance to approach. Without evidence, how can he persuade other people? Just with his sharp tongue?

“Evidence is what he needs most right now, or to wit, the Jade Crystal Disc that contains Elder Nether Spring’s memories.

“The Jade Crystal Disc, however, is locked by a barrier.

“Few people are capable of cracking it, and most of them are under our control. He can only go to Professor Mo Xuan! Also, he cannot dawdle for too long because in another few days, the federal army will march into the Blood Demon Sector!

“Therefore, in the upcoming few days, maybe today, he will certainly return to the capital city and look for Professor Mo Xuan!

“Now that he doesn’t know that Professor Mo Xuan has been captured, it is very likely that he will fall into Guo Chunfeng’s trap!”

Lu Feng nodded. “Then, should we sit and wait for the success of Guo Chunfeng’s operation?”

“Of course not!” Lu Zui narrowed his eyes and said, “Our hunting team must be deployed, too. Make sure that Li Yao is killed the moment he shows up!

“More importantly, the Secret Sword Agents we arranged around Guo Chunfeng should take action, too, and make sure that Guo Chunfeng doesn’t grow suspicious of the whole thing!

“Right. See that the evidence that proves Guo Chunfeng to be Abyss is prepared!

“The guy is a genius. I cannot bear to destroy him. If everything goes smoothly according to our plan, it will be best. But otherwise…

“We’ll have to cover his head with the big hat called Abyss!”

…

Dozens of meters below the command center of the Demon Execution Division of the headquarters of the Secret Sword Bureau, inside a secret chamber, Ding Lingdang, Wu Mayan, Professor Mo Xuan, and Xie Anan were struggling hard against the constraint barriers. However, there was not much that they could do except trigger the dazzling electric arcs.

Shua!

The alloy gate several meters thick glided to two sides. Guo Chunfeng strode in and sat on the metal chair on the opposite side. He eyed them casually in the posture of a victor.

Ding Lingdang suddenly spat right in Guo Chunfeng’s face. “Damn gofer!”

Emotionlessly, Guo Chunfeng took out a dirty handkerchief from his pocket and wiped off the saliva slowly. He then picked up a glass cup that was full of cracks. He sipped, squinted, and tasted the flavor of the tea.

The tea leaves were the cheapest ones, but in his mouth, they seemed to be as tasteful as the Flowing Gold Leaves, which cost tens of thousands of bucks per gram.

After chewing for a long time, he finally swallowed the tea leaves and covered the tea cup with a lid before he said casually, “Speak now. What’s the means of contact between you and Blood Devil Li Yao?”

Chapter 1118 - The Good Always Triumphs!

At ten o’clock in the morning, together with a bunch of veterans, Li Yao entered the capital city again on a short-distance shuttle bus from a city not far away.

After the great explosion took place, the Secret Sword Bureau was focused on the suspicious targets within the city. Also, a lot of agents had been sent underground to chase after him. The examination on the passengers entering the capital city was much more sluggish.

Besides, almost a million veterans were now entering the capital from everywhere in the federation. Many of them had shocking scars on their face or wore crystal cameras or masks. Their appearance was utterly different from the record in the database.

It was also unrealistic to ask the aged, seasoned, and bad-tempered old men, who all had almost ten badges on their chests, to stop time and time again and receive thorough examinations.

Therefore, Li Yao did not meet much trouble when sneaking into the capital city this time.

Seeing the energetic, passionate crowd around him, he almost could not hold back the urge to shout out the truth.

However, he still lacked the most critical evidence.

He had no doubt about Lu Zui's craziness. If Lu Zui had a chance to kill him, the guy would not hesitate to kill ten thousand or even a hundred thousand innocent victims!

I'm afraid all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the federation have seen the picture of me heavily wounding Ye Changkong. I have no evidence to prove that Ye Changkong is a member of the Patriots Partnership. So, it is going to be difficult to explain.

Now, all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators consider me the most dangerous criminal. They won't let me approach them. When they discover me, they will certainly attack mercilessly!

The Jade Chip Disc is in my hands, but it is locked by a barrier. I can't find a random crystal processor specialist to crack it, partly because I can't find a capable one, and partly because they won't trust me even if I can!

I can only go to Professor Mo Xuan in order to crack the Jade Chip Disc and retrieve Elder Nether Spring's memories inside!

Only with the undeniable proof can I blow the scheme of the Patriots Partnership into smithereens!

He found a cable and reached out to the professor through the electric network, a method that they had agreed upon earlier.

Li Yao typed into a twenty-digit random number on the crystal processor.

Very soon, another twenty-digit random number was fed back.

It was the confirmation code that Professor Mo Xuan and he had agreed on earlier.

The two of them had prepared a hundred pairs of numbers in total. The numbers in every pair corresponded with each other. Each of them remembered half of all the numbers.

The one initiating the conversation would type a random number. The other one had to type in the corresponding number to prove their identity.

If the other one typed in an incorrect number, it would represent different situations, such as exposed, captured, or some member of the team was dead.

The hundred pair of numbers, and even the subtle changes inside a certain number, represented different information. In such a way, the most abundant information would be transmitted through the feeblest spiritual waves in the shortest amount of time.

Li Yao stared at the number. His eyelids suddenly twitched when he saw the last few digits of the number.

Taking a deep breath and calming himself down, he typed in a line of words.

…

Almost a hundred specialists were gathered in the command center of the Demon Execution Division, and yet, the atmosphere here was like that in a bankrupt mortuary house. All the specialists were staring at the words on the light beam, with faces as gloomy as the dead.

On the light beam, Li Yao wrote, “Professor, there is something very important that I must give to you. Meet me at the gate of the ‘Red Dream Dragon Mall’ in an hour.”

Almost all the specialists jumped to their feet upon reading the message!

After losing Li Yao’s trail for two days and two nights, they had finally caught the tail of the Blood Devil again!

“Excellent. He hasn’t noticed that Professor Mo Xuan is under our control yet!” Guo Chunfeng wiped the greasy sweat off his face hard and shouted, “The tracing team will pursue the source of the spiritual waves!

“Operation Team One will go to set up ambushes near the Red Dream Dragon Mall immediately. It is one of the liveliest business centers. You must be careful!

“All other operation teams will stay here in case the enemy changes the rendezvous! The air surveillance team will redistribute the computational ability of the crystal processor and analyze everybody around the Red Dream Dragon Mall!”

Everybody was as busy as a bee in the command center.

After almost half a month’s competition, everyone had been pushed to the limits by the wretched Blood Devil. Many of them had not closed their eyes for almost ten days, and their eyes were as red as the burning charcoal!

However, the explosion that had taken place in the Federal Square a few days ago was still twisting their heart like a scorching chisel. To capture the criminal, everybody burnt their soul and gritted their teeth again!

Very soon, the surveillance on the Red Dream Dragon Mall was in position.

The Crystal Camera Monitoring Center of the capital city also summoned dozens of mainframe crystal processors to analyze everyone’s facial information in the five square kilometers nearby.

But it was still difficult to confirm the source of the signal. After all, the point-to-point communication between Li Yao and Professor Mo Xuan was established by changing the intensity of the electric currents in a cable. It was a whole different matter from tracing the signals of the wireless Spiritual Nexus.

All the real-time information was transmitted to Hidden Star, the crystal warship of the Secret Sword Bureau that Lu Zui was on.

A tough hunting squad made of the members of the Patriots Partnership, including three snipers in the Core Formation Stage, also lunged toward the Red Dream Dragon Mall like hungry wolves.

Of course, they were not as strong as ‘Death Ray’ Ye Changkong. However, after suffering from Diwu Jian’s ‘Five Disintegrations of Heavens and Human’, it was impossible for Li Yao to remain at his peak state. His ability to dodge the attack must have been greatly reduced because of the heavy wounds.

This time, Li Yao would not be able to run away once he was exposed!

Fifty-five minutes later, five minutes before the pre-arranged meeting, more than two hundred tough agents of the Secret Sword Bureau, and three battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who had been asked to help, were surrounding the Red Dragon Mall.

However, three minutes later, Li Yao's angry words popped up on the point-to-point communicator.

"You betrayed me!"

All the Secret Sword Agents jumped to their feet.

But Guo Chunfeng was unmoved. "Don't be anxious. Everybody, stay where you are. Do not act recklessly. This is just the test of our enemy. He must be observing in secret right now. If all the members of the operation team jump out and search for him, we will really be screwed!"

There was nothing but silence in the command center. Everybody eyed Guo Chunfeng suspiciously.

Guo Chunfeng did have a point, but what if he was wrong? Would they not be abandoning the best opportunity to capture Blood Devil Li Yao?

It must be noted that Blood Devil Li Yao was very likely to be somewhere near the Red Dream Dragon Mall right now!

This was the most soul-stirring competition between predator and prey. It was also the time when the computational ability, the analysis ability, and even the willpower of a commander were tested!

Guo Chunfeng crossed his hands and put them under him nose. Two bloodshot eyes were revealed through the gaps of his messy hair while he gazed at the light beam.

The trembling veins on his hands indicated that his heart was not as calm as he appeared to be.

Five minutes later, the hope of fire for every Secret Sword Agent was ignited by the words that were jumping out on the point-to-point communicator one after another. “Alright. Professor. It’s all clear. I will be at the shuttle parking lot on the minus seventh floor.”

“Hooray!”

At this moment, all the crystal processor specialists and the data analysts could not suppress their excitement anymore and jumped to their feet!

The most quick-minded of them immediately realized the sordidness of Li Yao’s move.

Li Yao had intentionally sent out a message, pretending that he knew that he had already been exposed.

Then, if the ambushers were alarmed and began searching for him, Li Yao, who must have been lurking in the darkness, would certainly notice something wrong!

If it were any other commander, when Li Yao typed in ‘you betrayed me’, they certainly would have been shocked and asked all the agents to take action immediately.

Then, Li Yao would have fled without any hesitation when all the agents on the spot were exposed!

However, evil would never prevail over good. Guo Chunfeng completely grasped what was on Li Yao’s mind. He restrained his subordinates from moving at all. Finally, Li Yao was convinced that there were no ambushes around the Red Dream Dragon Mall, and he was free to show up!

Guo Chunfeng took a long breath in relief. “Alright. He should be appearing in the Red Dream Dragon Mall and won’t be sending more messages. Otherwise, he will risk exposing the source of the signal.

“All operation teams, surround the five square kilometers around the Red Dream Dragon Mall. Ask the three battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators to be prepared, too. This time, he is not going anywhere!”

“Understood!”

“Understood!”

“Understood!”

The squads of tough Secret Sword Agents approached the Red Dream Dragon Mall quietly.

The hunting team directly under Lu Zui’s command, including the three snipers in the Core Formation Stage, moved in on the Red Dream Dragon Mall, too.

Guo Chunfeng struggled to his feet and staggered out of the room. One of the Secret Sword Agents meant to give him a hand, but Guo Chunfeng simply pushed him away. “I’m going to the toilet. Are you hoping to hold my dick?”

Everybody was amused. They all understood how heavy the pressure on their boss’s shoulders must have been. If it were anybody else, they certainly would have collapsed a long time ago in the same situation.

However, in the battle of wisdom and bravery against the Blood Devil, it was still their boss who laughed to the end!

Inside the toilet of the commander center, in front of the faucet, Guo Chunfeng filled the basin with water and soaked his entire big head into it, cooling it down for five seconds.

The flushing noises and door being opened from a booth nearby could be heard.

Guo Chunfeng raised his head and narrowed his eyes, rubbing his big face that was full of wrinkles. He noticed the standard boots of the field agents of the Secret Sword Bureau with the corner of his eyes, but he did not think too much of it.

The owner of the boots went out and stood behind him. However, the guy did not open the door to the cubicle.

Guo Chunfeng was slightly dazed. He lowered his hands and looked at the Secret Sword Agent behind him in the mirror.

Guo Chunfeng recalled that he was a Secret Sword Agent whose code name was Black Panther.

However, the guy had a pair of eyes that were hundreds of times deeper, thousands of times sharper, and millions of times more dangerous than the eyes of Black Panther!

Chapter 1119 - Vulture’s... Death!

Guo Chunfeng smiled and drew a tissue from the box hanging on the wall next to the basin. Wiping his face unhurriedly, he said, “You’re finally here.”

Behind him, the owner of the pair of sharp eyes replied, “Yes. Haven’t you been looking for me? I’m feeding myself to you now.”

Guo Chunfeng rolled the wet tissue paper into a cluster and threw it into the dust bin. He observed with mixed feelings, “I vaguely had a feeling that you wouldn’t be captured so easily. Therefore, I’m surprised at all that you won’t be showing up in the Red Dream Dragon Mall.

“However, I have to admit that you showing up in the headquarters of the Secret Sword Bureau all of a suddenly is indeed a surprise for me, Li Yao!

“Names may be given wrong, but nicknames are never. You truly deserve your nickname. You are as brutal, insane, and bodacious as a vulture!”

“Don’t misunderstand,” Li Yao said, “I don’t intend to kill you.”

“You can’t, either,” Guo Chunfeng replied. “You are not regarding me as one of the workers who sits in the office all day long, are you? Your breath is rather unsteady. What caused your wounds?

“I am very, very curious how superlative the so-called ‘superlative height of the Core Formation Stage’ is, and whether or not a Cultivator in the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage can kill a Cultivator who has reached the limits in every aspect of the peak of the Core Formation Stage.”

“Don’t move.” Li Yao opened one of the buttons on his coat, revealing the glittering crystals and components on his chest. “You’ve hunted me long enough to know what business I like best, haven’t you? I am certainly not unprepared now that I have broken into the headquarters of the Secret Sword Bureau when I am already heavily wounded!

“Now, I am wrapped in the most powerful crystal bombs, which are all made of the marrow crystals and demon cores of the highest quality. At such a close distance, I guarantee that you will not have a chance to summon your crystal suit or establish your spiritual shield of the highest density. The chances of us dying together will be above 95%.”

Guo Chunfeng was amused. “Hey, Li Yao, you don’t think that people of my trade are scared of death, do you? Being blown up by crystal bombs is quick and painless. It is almost a way of death that all the Secret Sword Agents dream about!”

Li Yao smiled, baring his sharp teeth. “Perhaps you are not, but while I was infiltrating this place, I planted numerous crystal bombs in every corner of the headquarters of the Secret Sword Bureau.

“You must know that all the best agents of the Secret Sword Bureau are hunting after me outside. Only the strengthless admin-type and research-type Cultivators, most of whom are crystal processor specialists and data analysts, are left in the headquarters. What are their odds of survival if hundreds of crystal bombs are detonated at the same time?”

Guo Chunfeng narrowed his eyes. “Do you think I’m a three-year-old? The headquarters of the Secret Sword Bureau are heavily guarded. It is already your limit to sneak in without alarming anyone. How could you have possibly planted crystal bombs everywhere? Do you think our defense system is a sifter that has nothing but holes in it?”

Li Yao smiled. “I don’t care. I have done what I should. Now, it’s all up to you. You may take your chances.”

Guo Chunfeng was silent.

Li Yao waved his hands and showed a ring on one of his fingers. “You may think that the very inconspicuous interphone on you can send out the conversation that we are having right now, right? It won’t. I am wearing a piece of magical equipment that can jam the spiritual waves of communication magical equipment. In the next couple of minutes, you won’t be able to send out any message.

“You’d better make a decision soon. If somebody enters the restroom right now, it will be quite unlucky for us and the federation because I will detonate the crystal bombs immediately and blow myself, you, and the headquarters of the Secret Sword Bureau up into the sky!”

Guo Chunfeng took a deep breath. “What do you want?”

“I have evidence that suggests that the explosions in the Federal Square were committed by not the demon race but your boss Lu Zui, director of the Secret Sword Bureau,” Li Yao replied quickly. “I would like to show you the evidence!”

Guo Chunfeng’s eyelash shivered. “Alright. Show it to me.”

“The evidence is locked in a Jade Crystal Disc. Bring me to Professor Mo Xuan,” Li Yao said. “I know that he is definitely not in the Red Dream Dragon Mall but locked somewhere in the headquarters of the Secret Sword Bureau! Ask the professor to crack the Jade Crystal Disc, and you will have all the evidence!”

“Why you I believe you?” Guo Chunfeng sneered.

“Because you will in no way suffer a loss. If the evidence is true, you will have made the correct choice to save the entire federation.

“If the evidence is false, I will still have been brought to the prison in the headquarters of the Secret Sword Bureau, and it will be much more difficult for me to escape.

“Your biggest loss will be a waste of several minutes of time, but you will have the chance to reveal a great scheme. Isn’t it the fairest deal?”

“You seem to have a point,” Guo Chunfeng remarked.

“Yes, I do have a point.”

Right then, the door of the restroom was opened. Two Secret Sword Agents walked in. They both stood at attention when they saw Guo Chunfeng!

Li Yao’s pupils constricted all of a sudden. He watched them coldly aside.

Guo Chunfeng wiped his face and waved at them. “As I have said millions of times, do not salute me when you see me in the restroom. Will you salute me, too, when you are holding you dick?"

Both of the two Secret Sword Agents laughed and were relieved.

Guo Chunfeng smiled, too, and said to Li Yao, "Let's go. It suddenly occurred to me that I have to ask Professor Mo Xuan about something important."

Leaving the restroom, the two of them walked to the lift, one at the front and one at the back, talking in a low voice like a regular boss and his subordinate.

"Boss?"

Several Secret Sword Agents saw Guo Chunfeng and were all a bit surprised, wondering where Guo Chunfeng was going instead of staying in the command center to supervise the situation.

"Mind your own business. I am going to bring Professor Mo Xuan to the command center!" Guo Chunfeng said. "After Li Yao shows up, he will probably ask the 'false Professor Mo Xuan' some sensitive questions. Without the real Professor Mo Xuan giving him guidance, he will likely give himself away!"

He was the supervisor of the first division and the chief commander for the operation to capture the Blood Devil. When Lu Zui was on Hidden Star in the sky, he was the highest official in the headquarters of the Secret Sword Bureau. Naturally, nobody was suspicious about him.

The prison where Professor Mo Xuan was locked up was on the minus thirteenth floor.

On the two sides of the pathway where cold wind was blowing were transparent prison cells that were blocked by tempered glass. People outside could clearly see what the prisoners were doing inside.

Professor Mo Xuan, Ding Lingdang, Wu Mayan, and Xie Anan were locked up in four different cells. The glass was transparent from only one direction and could block all the spiritual waves.

Everything inside could be clearly seen from the outside, but all that could be seen from inside was a blinking mirror.

Seeing that the four of them were tied up in barriers and that Professor Mo Xuan, whose real body was just liquid metal, was being suppressed by the rune arrays that were unleashing ultrasound waves, Li Yao was suddenly breathing heavily.

Guo Chunfeng had the door of Professor Mo Xuan’s cell opened and walked in with Li Yao.

Professor Mo Xuan was dazed for a moment, but he seemed to realize something when he saw the mysterious eyes of the Secret Sword Agent next to Guo Chunfeng. “You—”

Guo Chunfeng raised his head and looked at the surveillance cameras on the wall. Moving his lips, he said without a sound, “I’ll give you ten minutes at most.”

Li Yao nodded. Adjusting the interference ring on his middle finger, he jammed the surveillance cameras to freeze the picture to a moment ago.

He walked up to Professor Mo Xuan, retrieved the Jade Crystal Disc from his Cosmos Ring, and was about to hand it over when—

Professor Mo Xuan suddenly shouted at the top of his voice, “Dodge!”

Li Yao’s pupils, pores, nostrils… and every other hole on his body all shrank to the minimum at that moment as he felt his internal organs being minced into pieces by an invisible saber!

He turned around, only to see Guo Chunfeng’s hideous face, and a sword aura that was hundreds of times more dazzling than a flash of lightning!

…

On Hidden Star in the sky of the capital city, more than ten core members of the Patriots Partnership were sitting next to Lu Zui. Almost a hundred light beams were floating in front of them, displaying the surveillance pictures of the Red Dream Dragon Mall clearly.

On a corner of the light beams, there were the surveillance pictures in the command center in the headquarters of the Secret Sword Bureau, too.

The time of Li Yao’s appearance was drawing near. All the members of the hunting team were in position. The three snipers in the Core Formation Stage finished preparing the settings of hundreds of shooting parameters, too!

Even Hidden Star and the other few warships of the Secret Sword Bureau had approached the Red Dream Dragon Mall, ready to fill in any possible vacancy and kill Li Yao at any cost!

His eyebrow furrowed, Lu Zui gazed at the crowd on the light beams.

However, his eyes were unfocused as if he was absent-minded. A moment later, he suddenly shivered. “Where is Guo Chunfeng?”

Everybody looked at each other in bewilderment, not knowing what Lu Zui meant. Should Li Yao not be their center of attention? Guo Chunfeng was of course in the command center on the ground.

Lu Zui suddenly rose up. He snapped his fingers in midair and enlarged the surveillance pictures of the headquarters of the Secret Sword Bureau. “Something is not wrong. Guo Chunfeng hasn’t sent any messages for a long time. Where did he go?

“It’s also strange that the interphone on him is now also jammed. There’s only background noise!

“Hurry up. Ask the voiceprint analysts to diagnose the noise. Find out what Guo Chunfeng heard and said just now!

“All ‘patriots’ around Guo Chunfeng, report the status right now. Where is Guo Chunfeng? Where is he?”

Very soon, the voiceprint analysts removed all the interference and retrieved Guo Chunfeng and Li Yao’s conversation from a moment ago.

“You’re finally here.”

“Yes. Haven’t you been looking for me? I’m feeding myself to you.”

The color of the faces of Lu Zui and all the ‘patriots’ changed!

The surveillance cameras in the Secret Sword Bureau also clearly captured Guo Chunfeng entering the underground prison with a Secret Sword Agent named Black Panther.

It was definitely abnormal!

“Vulture Li Yao has snuck into our headquarters and kidnapped Guo Chunfeng!”

Lu Zui’s face was utterly twisted, and he shouted desperately, “Hurry up. Ask all the ‘patriots’ in the headquarters to go to the underground prison immediately and kill him. He must be killed!”

Hardly had he issued the order when fulminations were echoing from the broadcast rune arrays. Almost all the surveillance pictures from the headquarters were shaking!

Judging from the data sent back several seconds later, an overwhelming explosion had taken place in the prison cells on the minus thirteenth floor of the headquarters of the Secret Sword Bureau!

Chapter 1120 - Capture Guo Chunfeng!

“A serial explosion took place in the prison cell where Professor Mo Xuan was locked. The bombs were so powerful that almost half of the minus thirteenth floor was blown up!”

“Supervisor Guo was heavily wounded in the explosion, but he luckily escaped in time. There were no other casualties!”

“According to Supervisor Guo, Blood Devil Li Yao snuck into the headquarters of the Secret Sword Bureau and intended to sneak Professor Mo Xuan and the rest of them out. However, Supervisor Guo discovered him in time. Desperately, Blood Devil Li Yao detonated the crystal bombs hoping to die together with them!”

“Supervisor Guo also said that Blood Devil Li Yao had probably planted crystal bombs all over the headquarters of the Secret Sword Bureau. So, he issued the ’emergency evacuation’ command and asked everybody in the headquarters to move out!”

“Director!”

Several Secret Sword Agents who were directly under his command were overjoyed. “Supervisor Guo took down Li Yao!”

“Don’t talk!” Lu Zui snapped. “Let me think. Let me think carefully. Fly Hidden Star back to the headquarters right now!”

The crystal warship was amazingly fast. After only one moment, it arrived in the east suburbs of the capital city, where the Secret Sword Bureau was headquartered.

The headquarters of the Secret Sword Bureau were an utter mess right now. Countless people were running out in a panic like ants whose nest had been drowned.

For an enormous intelligence agency such as the Secret Sword Bureau, only a tiny proportion of its members were warriors fighting in the frontline.

Most of the Secret Sword Agents were responsible for data analysis, signal tracing, intelligence collection, and other office work. They did not have the ability to fight.

Moreover, to capture Blood Devil Li Yao, the Secret Sword Bureau had invited a lot of crystal processor specialists to help the battle. Those specialists were not Secret Sword Agents in the first place. Naturally, they were even less willing to be buried in the headquarters of the Secret Sword Bureau!

Therefore, after the great explosion in the prison, and when Guo Chunfeng, whose head had been burnt and blackened, claimed that the entire headquarters were likely to have been planted with powerful bombs by Blood Devil Li Yao and everyone must be evacuated, the tens of thousands of workers in the place all fled in a hurry.

It was definitely not a joke. Even Guo Chunfeng, the strongest Core Formation Stage Cultivator of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, had almost been swallowed by the explosion. Would they not be blown into ashes if there were another hundreds of bombs?

After all, Blood Devil was already dead. There was no reason they should stay here and be buried in the same grave as him!

Therefore, all the workers flooded to the surface as fast as they could and dispersed. It was an utter mess that nobody could control!

Lu Zui narrowed his eyes while he observed everything through the surveillance camera. His eyes were colder and colder.

“Director, surveillance footage from Professor Mo Xuan’s prison cell after the explosion has been recovered!”

A Secret Sword Agent projected the footage to a light beam. All the ‘patriots’ held their breath.

There were three people on the picture, namely Professor Mo Xuan, who was locked by the barriers; Li Yao, who was pretending to be the Secret Sword Agent ‘Black Panther’; and Guo Chunfeng, who was standing by the door.

When Li Yao retrieved the Jade Crystal Disc out of his Cosmos Ring, even Lu Zui’s breath was disordered.

However, the next second, Guo Chunfeng suddenly attacked!

Nobody saw how Guo Chunfeng drew his sword. Nobody even saw where he kept his sword, just as nobody knew where he had been keeping an old, ragged tea cup.

Even when the picture was played at one tenth the original speed, Guo Chunfeng’s sword was still like the gentlest breeze in spring that one could not notice until their face was kissed.

Li Yao was caught unprepared. It could be clearly seen from the surveillance picture that, when he turned around, he was too shocked to maintain his disguise. His muscles all went out of control, and he revealed his real face!

It seemed that Li Yao had never expected that Guo Chunfeng would attack at the last possible moment.

Even if he did, due to the heavy wounds caused by Diwu Jian’s ‘Five Disintegrations of Heavens and Human’, it was impossible for him to dodge the critical strike of Guo Chunfeng, the strongest Core Formation Stage Cultivator of the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

The sword aura flashed. Li Yao cried miserably, his arm flying up and his blood spurting out!

Without a word, Guo Chunfeng slashed immediately after the first attack. In a glimmering arc that resembled a ring of stars, he cut from Li Yao’s shoulder to his abdomen!

The attack was so fast that there was nothing wrong on the surface although the aura of the blade should have torn apart Li Yao’s internal organs.

Only the indescribable expression on Li Yao’s face could tell the heavy wounds that the previous attack had caused him.

Shock, sadness, devastation. Li Yao’s soul seemed to be slashed apart by the sword!

He seemed not desperate about his own death but about the dark future of the federation!

Then, while the upper half of his body was still able to move, he made a gesture and detonated all the bombs!

The explosion happened.

The blast swept across everything. All the surveillance pictures, including those in the corridor, vanished at the same time, melted in the ocean of flames.

All the ‘patriots’ were at a loss after watching the video.

“Vulture Li Yao… has truly been slain by Supervisor Guo!”

One of the ‘patriots’ took a long breath in relief and said, still not entirely calm, “Thankfully, Supervisor Guo was not bewildered by him and executed him before he told him everything. He was forced to kill himself in the explosion!

“Although the price was high, the nuisance is finally resolved now!”

The other ‘patriots’ also beamed with joy. “Now, nothing can stop our plan!”

But Lu Zui was still frowning, deep in thought. A moment later, he replayed the video and jumped to the moment before Li Yao detonated the crystal bombs.

“Look!” Lu Zui pointed at a vague, black spot in front of Li Yao when the fire and blast just rose. “Li Yao tossed an object to Guo Chunfeng before he killed himself. What is that?”

The Secret Sword Agents leaned closer and observed. After enlarging the picture countless times and enhancing the quality with the mainframe crystal processor, they finally distinguished that it was a cubic item the size of a fist.

Everybody gasped. “The Jade Crystal Disc!”

“Exactly!” Lu Zui gnashed his teeth, his face more twisted than ever. “Li Yao threw the Jade Crystal Disc to Guo Chunfeng before his death. But even now… Guo Chunfeng hasn’t reported the matter!

“Where is he now? Contact him!”

Instead of waiting for the reply of his subordinate, Lu Zui dialed Guo Chunfeng directly. “Ah Feng, where are you?”

“Cough. Cough. Cough. Cough!”

Guo Chunfeng sounded extremely feeble. “I—I am on a temporary ambulance. It is very chaotic here. The explosion seemed to have affected…”

The communication was cut off, maybe due to the aftershock of the explosion, or maybe because Guo Chunfeng cut it off himself.

He did not mention anything about the Jade Crystal Disc. Not even one word.

Lu Zui turned off the crystal processor solemnly and glanced at everyone, before he said, one word after another, “Now, our target is no longer Li Yao but Guo Chunfeng. Activate the emergency plan and bring Guo Chunfeng as well as the Jade Crystal Disc to me!”

…

Near the headquarters of the Secret Sword Bureau, tens of thousands of people were being evacuated. Guo Chunfeng, who was blackened by smoke, was also staggering to the outside in a dirty blanket.

He seemed to be absent-minded, and this thick blanket was soaked in blood, leaving a red trace behind him.

A temporary ambulance was right next to him, but he did not bother to look at it and simply watched the entrance of a sewer not far away.

Fulminations echoed in the sky. Two heavy armed shuttles were hovering above his head.

Emotionlessly, Guo Chunfeng suddenly walked faster.

“Supervisor Guo!” Several fully-armed Secret Sword Agents jumped off the shuttles and surrounded him. “Director asked you to go to Hidden Star and report everything in person.”

“Alright.” Guo Chunfeng swallowed a mouthful of blood and smiled. Waving the crystal processor on his wrist, he said, “However, let me check my mailbox first and see if there are any messages from my family. I’ve been overworking for days. I don’t know what’s going on with my daughter.

“Shoot if you want, but I guarantee that whoever stops me from reading my mail will not see the sunrise tomorrow!”

Glaring at them, Guo Chunfeng raised his wrist slowly.

All the Secret Sword Agents directly under Lu Zui’s command were awed by his toughness. Including their captain, none of them dared to stop him!

Guo Chunfeng glimpsed at them with obvious despise. He withdrew his gaze and checked his latest mail, holding his breath.

He saw the most mind-stirring two words.

It was the name of the sender—Guo Xiaohe.

Faced with almost twenty storm bolters and crystal cannons, Guo Chunfeng opened his daughter’s mail, somewhat shivering.

“Dad!”

His daughter in the picture was still wearing the aberrant leather clothes. However, with her sunny smile, even the tattoo on her face seemed more agreeable than it should have.

“I’m out of the hospital now and just got home,” Guo Xiaohe said. “Look at me. I am as vigorous as ever again now. Hahahaha!

“There’s no need to worry about me. In the next couple of days, I’ll definitely, well, maybe, try to behave and stay at home and not cause any trouble. You can focus on your work now!

“Mom talked about a lot of things with me while I was in the hospital. I’ve figured it out now. Since it is your hobby, and your lifelong career, to study storms, as the daughter of the great ‘Lead Researcher Guo’, of course I should support you, just like you supported me in joining the army. That’s what a family should do!

“Right. Let me tell you a little secret. Mom has shredded the divorce agreement. She said that she will give you another chance. Try to behave better in the future!

“Hehe. She forbade me from telling it to you, but as far as I can tell, she was too embarrassed to talk to you in person and simply told me so that I could be a mouthpiece for her. Haha. I’m smart enough to know what is really on her mind!

“Alright. That’s all for now. Si Mao asked me to demonstrate, no, do homework at his place. Yes. Do homework!

“Be home as soon as you are not busy anymore, Dad. Me and Mom will be waiting for you at home!

“Right. A free reminder for you. It will be your wedding anniversary in a few days. Don’t forget to prepare a ‘surprise’ for Mom. Only an idiot would sit and watch such a beautiful, caring woman run away without doing anything, right?

“All in all. Keep it up, Dad. I’m totally going to be on your side in your battle to save your love!”

His daughter’s merry face was frozen on the tiny light beam as well as the deepest part in Guo Chunfeng’s pupils forever.

He turned off the light beam and crushed his person crystal processor into pieces.

“Let’s go and meet the director now.”

Slapping his hands, Guo Chunfeng walked over to the fully-armed Secret Sword Agents at ease.

Chapter 1121 - Sincere Talk!

On Hidden Star, Guo Chunfeng and Lu Zui were confronting each other in silence.

Invisible electric arcs were spluttering between the supervisor of the first division of the Secret Sword Bureau and the director of the Secret Sword Bureau. Even the air was uttering crackling noises.

Four Cultivators in crystal suits, their blades unsheathed and their firearms locked and loaded, were standing next to Lu Zui, aiming at every joint on Guo Chunfeng's body.

Guo Chunfeng glanced over each and every one of them and smiled. "'Doom Sword' Gu Feizhou, 'Bloody Shadow' Gao Cheng, Lei Po—an elder of the Green Cloud Sect known as the best expert in the southwest—and Xie Longyin, the chief tutor of the Slaying Steel Exo Training Camp. I did not know that the four top Core Formation Stage Cultivators were actually all working for the Secret Sword Bureau as Dark Sword Agents who are directly under director's command. What a surprise!"

He was bleeding hard because of his heavy wounds, like a tiger that had fallen into a trap and was confined without being able to move.

But Gu Feizhou, Gao Cheng, Lei Po, and Xie Longyin, four Core Formation Stage Cultivators who had gained their fame through countless bloody battles, did not dare ease their alert at all. Their intimidating auras locked him up like invisible chains.

“Ah Feng, you seemed to be leaving a moment ago,” Lu Zui said. “You’d just executed Blood Devil Li Yao. Where were you going to instead of coming and reporting to me? If my men had come one step later, would you have escaped underground and vanished into thin air?”

Guo Chunfeng was silent.

Lu Zui gradually raised his voice. “Blood Devil gave an item to you at the last moment. Why didn’t you report such an important issue to me?”

“You’re talking about this?” Guo Chunfeng opened his hands. A small bag, in which a cubic object was stored, suddenly appeared in his palm.

Lu Zui’s eyes shone. The four Core Formation Stage Cultivators were going to step forward and take it away when Guo Chunfeng turned around his hands and returned the item into his Cosmos Ring. Taking a step back, he roared like a tiger, “Who dares come?”

Lu Zui narrowed his eyes and said coldly, “Ah Feng, what’s the meaning of this? This is critical proof concerning the explosion case in the Federal Square. As the director of the Secret Sword Bureau, I now command you to submit it. Is there a problem?

“There is!” Guo Chunfeng stared at him. “After Li Yao snuck into the headquarters, he came to me and told me that it was you who planned the explosions in the Federal Square and that his evidence was kept in this very Jade Crystal Disc!”

“And you believed such a lousy lie?” Lu Zui sneered.

“I didn’t, at that time,” Guo Chunfeng replied, one word after another. “Therefore, I pretended that I was convinced and went to the prison cell where Professor Mo Xuan was caged together with him. Then, I slew him when he was the least prepared.

“However, his eyes and his countenance the moment before his death were too weird!

“I could tell that he had a chance to kill me together with himself, but he didn’t do it. Instead, he blew me out of the prison cell and snapped the Jade Crystal Disc into my pocket!

“What was the meaning of that?

“If he were the real Blood Devil, why was he determined to deliver the Jade Crystal Disc to me even at the cost of his own death? Is there such a Blood Devil?

“What kind of secrets have been hidden inside the Jade Crystal Disc? Or rather, what is the ‘evidence’ inside that he and you both attached great importance to?

“Director, this is my question. If you can give me a plausible answer, I will hand over the Jade Crystal Disc immediately!”

This time, it was Lu Zui who fell silent.

Guo Chunfeng gnashed his teeth. “Director, there’s another approach. We can look for a crystal processor specialist right now and have the Jade Crystal Disc cracked here and now. After the information inside is retrieved, the whole incident will be resolved, and your innocence will be proved!”

Lu Zui was still silent, but his eyes were sharper than ever.

His eyes made Guo Chunfeng shudder in chill. Guo Chunfeng exclaimed, “Or, was Blood Devil Li Yao speaking the truth? No. He wasn’t the Blood Devil at all. He was Li Yao. Vulture Li Yao! There is indeed evidence that is of paramount importance inside!”

“Ah Feng.” Lu Zui stood up slowly, as if he were suddenly thirty years older.

He groped for a piece of egg-shaped magical equipment from the drawer and tossed it into the air.

The egg-shaped magical equipment emanated an ocean of glimmer that filled every corner of the cabin in feeble creaking sound.

“Alright. The cabin has been jammed. All the eavesdropping chips are now blocked,” Lu Zui said. “Now, we can confide in each other.”

Holding his desk, he sighed softly. “Ah Feng, you are a talent. Over the past decades, I’ve been educating you carefully and watching you grow up step by step. I have high hopes for your potential and your future!

“You know that I am already more than two hundred years old. However hard I try to maintain myself, my head is still getting more and more rusted. I won’t be able to stay in this world for long.

“Before, I hoped that you could fill my place as the next director of the Secret Sword Bureau and as the guardian angel of the dark frontline of the federation after I retired.

“Despite everything that has happened, I still don’t want to ruin you. I hope that you won’t do anything stupid that will ruin yourself, too.

“Hand over the Jade Crystal Disc. I’ll arrange a place for you where you can treat your wounds without being disturbed. After ten days, you will be able to come back and reunite with your family. Does that sound good?”

“Since it was you who educated me, you must know my personality best. I cannot turn a blind eye to what I have already seen, and I cannot hide any clandestine stuff in my heart!” Guo Chunfeng declared resolutely. “Tell me the truth. What is inside the Jade Crystal Disc? Perhaps, I’ll take director’s side after deliberation, but otherwise, just attack!”

The atmosphere in the cabin was suddenly tense. All the metal walls around were uttering cracking noises!

Staring at him for a long time, Lu Zui hesitated and finally said, “It is the memories of Elder Nether Spring. Three months ago, we captured Elder Nether Spring and extracted all his memories with the ‘soul searching technique’. We also learned the truth of the Children of the Nether World plan.”

“What!”

As if struck by lightning, Guo Chunfeng trembled and mumbled, “You captured Elder Nether Spring and learned the truth of the Children of the Nether World a long time ago. Then, you knew the demon race’s plan to assassinate the Speaker and to take over Burning Prairie beforehand, and you simply watched everything happen?

“No! No! No!

“I understand it now. Li Yao was speaking the truth. The demons never intended to steal Burning Prairie. It was your scheme the whole time. Yours!

“Why? Why?

“Director, you are one of the most eminent persons standing at the highest peak of the federation. You’ve been fighting for us for two hundred years. You have no reason to betray the federation. Why did you do it?”

” **I didn’t betray the federation!** ” Lu Zui roared. “Everything I did was meant to protect the federation and preserve our most sacred, pure, and great motherland!

“Ah Feng, don’t you understand? It is impossible for mankind and the demon race to be integrated. Even if the two races join together, it will only be a time bomb that will explode at the most critical moment in decades to come!

“Ah Feng, you are a war orphan, too. Your hometown was demolished in a beast tide. Your parents were killed by the demon beasts, too. Can you not see the evil nature of the demon race? Are those stinky, inhumane animals in any way qualified to ‘integrate’ with us?

“The only way to save the federation is to attack and conquer the Blood Demon Sector completely. All the lousy animals will be sent for mining on the resource planets in the Flying Star Sector as slaves!”

“Let’s say your logic makes sense,” Guo Chunfeng roared, too, “why didn’t you propose your ideas and persuade most of the representatives in the parliaments to launch a war openly? Why must you trigger the hatred of the public through such shameless and insane methods?”

“Because we don’t have time to let the hatred brew.” Lu Zui suddenly calmed down. He said coldly, “The general public are always numb, weak, and short-sighted. They never see the contradiction decades later, only dwelling in the peace before their eyes!

“After the Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector came to the Heaven’s Origin Sector with the news of the Imperium of True Human Beings, the entire federation was soaked in groundless illusions that there would be peace between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector so that we could work together against the Imperium of True Human Beings.

“In such an atmosphere, all kinds of bizarre theories and opinions were popping up. Even the most unwavering warriors in the past had been corroded and thought that the blades of human beings and those of demons could point at the same direction and that the bloody hatred which had lasted tens of thousands of years would just thaw into nothing!

“Human beings are the weakest species in the world. They only believe what they are willing to believe. They always have impractical illusions and refuse to open their eyes to clearly see the brutality of the world!

“In the Blood Demon Sector, Jin Tuyi, the one-in-ten-thousand-years schemer, grasped the weakness of humanity perfectly. He threw out a proposal of truce under the disguise of ‘peace’ and tried to corrupt the entire federation slowly and inconspicuously!

“The proposal of truce was brought back to the Heaven’s Origin Sector by none other than the ‘federal hero’ Li Yao!

“Ah Feng, after working in the Secret Sword Bureau for more than two hundred years, I’ve seen too many lies, disguises, betrayals, regrets, and deaths. I know the sordidness of the demon race and the cowardice of our compatriots too well!

“I guarantee that when Li Yao brought the proposal of truce back to the Blood Demon Sector as a ‘federal hero’, our short-sighted and weak compatriots certainly would’ve been bewildered by his fancy words. They would’ve embraced peace, dancing in delight!

“But it would’ve not been the truth. Not real peace. It would’ve been merely a preparation period of several decades where the demons sharpened their claws and teeth before they butchered us!

“Now is the feeblest moment for the Blood Demon Sector and the strongest moment for us in the past thousand years. This is the best opportunity to conquer the Blood Demon Sector. If we miss our shot, or even agree to reach a truce with the demon race, the federation will be doomed. Completely doomed!”

Chapter 1122 - As Vicious As Viper!

Guo Chunfeng’s voice was extremely coarse, as if ten thousand sabers were rubbing his vocal cords at the same time. “So, in order to annihilate Li Yao once and for all and to aggravate the Heaven’s Origin Sector’s hatred for the Blood Demon Sector, you arranged a shocking assassination so that the two birds could be killed simultaneously?”

“Exactly.” Lu Zui smiled, with every wrinkle on his face shining. “Did you know? For all the young people, including both Li Yao and you, no matter how extraordinary your talents are and how excellent your performance is, you share the same greatest weakness—you are all very clear and easy to be seen through and manipulated!

“Vulture Li Yao likes infiltration and decapitation best. Whatever the problem is, it is always his first choice to sneak up to the enemy’s side.

“I came up with twelve plans by taking advantage of his fixed thinking pattern and his wariness of the Children of the Nether World. As it turned out, he fell into the trap when the situation progressed to my third plan. He was controlled by me and led to the Federal Square, completely unawares!

“You are the same, Ah Feng, you are quite awesome. For decades, you barely suffered any failure. There were no demon spies that ever escaped from you, but as a result, the arrogance and stubbornness in your personality were strengthened and strengthened.

“You seem to be drowsy and sluggish all the time, but I can sense your pride that is deep to the bones. You feel that everybody else is drunk, and you are the only one who is sober!

“I had no doubt that, after you experienced a minor setback from Vulture Li Yao, you would definitely feel insulted. You would burst into fury and go after him like a rabid dog!

“As I expected, the two of you put on a great, soul-stirring show under my manipulation until you eventually killed him. Even if both of you might’ve woken up at the last moment, what can you do? Too late. Everything has been settled. It’s too late!”

Guo Chunfeng clenched his fists and gnashed his teeth. “I totally understand now. To achieve your purpose, not only did you manipulate Li Yao and I in secret, you have also sacrificed tens of thousands innocent compatriots. Is this any different from the Imperium of True Human Beings where morals are treated as weeds?”

“Of course it is different!” Lu Zui snapped. “The Imperium of True Human Beings regard ordinary people as weeds and ants that can be enslaved and exploited blatantly.

“But we are different!

“The ‘patriots’ consider ordinary people as our compatriots that we must protect!

“It pains my heart too, when I remember that so many compatriots were killed, but it was a price we had to pay, just like the soldiers that have to be sacrificed in order to win a battle!

“Tens of thousands of compatriots sounds like a lot, but the federation has a population of more than ten billion! How much can the tens of thousands of people that were sacrificed take up? Less than 0.1%!”

“Sacrifice one, and save ten thousand. Isn’t it a fair deal?”

The more he spoke, the more excited he got. Waving his slender arms, he roared, “Compared to Cultivators, who are quick-minded enough to infer the changes in the future decades with our amazing computational ability, ordinary people are like the idiotic lambs. They do not know how to think, they have no vision, they cannot decide, and they will also slide into the abyss step by step pushed by their own weakness, timidity, and greed!

“As Cultivators, and as their protectors, it is our responsibility to educate, awaken, and modify them and set them on the correct path with all the endeavors possible. It is for their own good. It is for the sake of their posterity!”

Lost for words, Guo Chunfeng was dazed for a long time. He asked in disbelief, “Killing innocent people was actually for their own good?”

Lu Zui opened his arms and said sincerely, “Ah Feng, I know that everything must be too much of a shock to you. Maybe in your eyes, I am an unpardonable fiend right now!

“I don’t want to debate with you right now. Neither of us can win the ‘confrontation of beliefs’ after only a few words.

“I only want you to think calmly, rationally, and soberly!

“It is impossible for you to present the Jade Crystal Disc to the outside world right now, but let’s say you can, what then?

“You are planning to unveil my scheme, aren’t you?”

Guo Chunfeng sniffed. “What of it?”

“What will happen then? Have you considered the consequences?

“Once the scheme is revealed, it will be the greatest scandal in the history of the federation. Unprecedented chaos will be raised in the leadership of the federation and among the general public. The entire federation might collapse!

“When the Flying Star Sector learns the causes and consequences of the whole matter, they will certainly be scared of us, too. Our future cooperation will be under a thick, dark shadow!

“There’s no need to mention the Blood Demon Sector. After Jin Tuyi learns that his ‘special envoy’ Li Yao, whom he sent to propose a truce and discuss the surrender issues after all the internal conflicts in his world were resolved, has been killed by us, the Blood Demon Sector will never trust us again, either!

“The final outcome will be that the integration of the three Sectors fails. We will be three lone islands again, and there will be no way to resist the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings in a hundred years!

“Is this the outcome you look forward to?”

Guo Chunfeng was silent.

Lu Zui’s eyes were glittering. His voice was deeper and deeper, full of enchanting charisma. “I wasn’t lying to you. Through Elder Nether Spring, we have successfully grasped tremendous intelligence about the Blood Demon Sector and controlled the fatal Demon God Virus. As long as we spread the disease in the Blood Demon Sector on a large scale, it is possible that we can conquer the Blood Demon Sector without drawing our weapons! By paying barely any price, the wish of our ancestors for hundred years will be accomplished in our hands!

“The federation will either sink to doom or rise unstoppably. Is this really so hard to decide?

“Come on. Join us and be a real ‘patriot’. Avenge your parents and all our other compatriots who have been killed in the beast tides!”

Guo Chunfeng seemed to be debating with himself hard. Veins were bulging out of his temples and bouncing quickly. He struggled. “What if I say ‘no’?”

“You won’t stand a chance.” Lu Zui sighed and said, “Although you are praised as the strongest Core Formation Stage Cultivator of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, everybody knows that it refers to your quadruple talents. You are almost an omnipotent Cultivator.

“However, having quadruple talents also means that you have to dedicate your time to four different types of training. Therefore, you might not necessarily be the best one in any given aspect.

“The four of them are now all wearing crystal suits and prepared to attack. You don’t stand any chance of winning even if you are fighting any one of them with your heavy wounds, not to mention that there are four of them here.”

Guo Chunfeng sneered, “You are going to destroy me?”

Lu Zui extended one of his fingers and waved it softly. “Don’t ever think that wiping you out physically equals to destroying you. You are the supervisor of the first division of the Secret Sword Bureau after all. There will be bad influences if you are executed without a good reason. So, I’ve prepared a brand-new identity for you. Here. Take a look at the jade chip.”

He tossed over a jade chip.

Guo Chunfeng glanced at it with his telepathic thoughts, and his expression dropped. “Abyss?”

“Correct.” Lu Zui smiled. “Did you know? In fact, there is no such thing as Abyss. It was just a smoke grenade that Elder Nether Spring threw out as a disguise for the Children of the Nether World. However, such a nonexistent Abyss proves to be of great use for me!

“Your parents died young. You were a war orphan. You rose to fame miraculously after only several decades. You are among the few most powerful Cultivators below the age of a hundred. You couldn’t fit the description of Abyss better. What do you have to say for yourself?”

Guo Chunfeng gnashed his teeth. “I am not Abyss!”

“I believe you are not.” Lu Zui smiled. “But so what? Who else will?

His eyes bloodshot, Guo Chunfeng was panting like a bull.

“Ah Feng, I know that you are not scared of death, but we are not talking about your own life. You have a wife and a daughter, too.” Lu Zui tapped the desk and said slowly, “Try to consider them!”

Guo Chunfeng’s anger seemed to turn into thousands of invisible blades that penetrated through the four Core Formation Stage Cultivators and stabbed into Lu Zui’s chest. “You dare touch my wife and my daughter?

“Make no mistake. I will never do such a foul thing,” Lu Zui said peacefully. “What I meant is that, if you die as Abyss, there will certainly be no more worries for you anymore, but what about them?

“Think about it. In your wife’s eyes, you have always been the trump card of the Secret Sword Bureau and a great hero of the federation, and she was a hero’s wife. How much has she sacrificed after decades of devotion to the role?

“If, one day, she suddenly learns that her husband is not a hero at all but a spy from the demon race, and she has in fact slept on the same bed as a stinky monster for decades…

“What will she think?

“And your daughter. Her name is Xiaohe, right?

“As I recall, the little girl is the most standard hotblooded juvenile. She has always been proud to be a human being of the Heaven’s Origin Sector. She was planning to join the army recently to march into the Blood Demon Sector, wasn’t she?

“If such a girl suddenly learns that her father is actually a demon, and half of the blood flowing inside her body does not belong to a human being…

“What will she think?

“You are clear about the relationship between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, too. Once war breaks out, the two parties will be a hundred times more hostile to each other than right now.

“By then, everybody around them will know that they are the wife and the daughter of a demon. Gossip is a fearful thing. How do you expect them to live in society?

“Your wife is still young. She can at least live another hundred years. It is needless to bring up your daughter, who is as fresh as a blossoming flower. Do you want them to live the rest of their lives with such a cross on their back?”

The fury deep inside Guo Chunfeng’s brain seemed to be burning through his pupils. His voice—filled with anger, pain, hesitation, and desperation—sounded as if from the deepest level of hell. “How shameless of you! For the first time ever, I have learned that a human being, and a Cultivator, can be a hundred times more shameless than a demon!”

Chapter 1123 - Twist and Turn!

Lu Zui laughed. “Ah Feng, after working in the Secret Sword Bureau for two hundred years like me, you will know that the rise of a country counts on as much darkness as it does brightness.

“The federation needs heroes like Vulture Li Yao, but the federation also needs someone shameless to do the disgusting, clandestine things that are in utter violation of the spirit of the nation.

“Am I shameless? Maybe. Do you still remember I told you that, when I see the vile old man in the mirror every morning, I feel like vomiting myself?

“However, I also need to tell you that, as long as the federation can rise and our motherland can be stronger, there is nothing I will hesitate to do. I can be a thousand times, ten thousand times, more shameless!”

Guo Chunfeng was silent again.

When someone became a zealot like Lu Zui, it was pointless to say anything.

Taking a few deep breaths, Lu Zui calmed down from his passion. He said earnestly, “Ah Feng, if you truly bear the country in your heart and want to do something for her, just stand on my side!

“Do you know why I didn’t ask you to join the Patriots Partnership in the beginning? Confidentiality was only part of the reason. But more importantly, it was because I had high hopes for you, and I didn’t want you to be too close to the dirty organization!

“I know that many things that the Patriots Partnership has done crossed all the lines of the federation. Even if the federation gets stronger one day because of our endeavors, it will never acknowledge that we were right!

“It doesn’t matter. It doesn’t matter at all. People of our trade have long made up our mind to sacrifice everything. Let’s be the dirtiest cloth and be abandoned mercilessly after we clean all the stains for the federation!

“As long as the federation grows stronger, none of it really matters!

“When the war is over, the Patriots Partnership will certainly be punished for everything we did. Everybody who has benefited from us will hurry to draw the boundary between us. They will even berate us, attack us, and annihilate us!

“We are not afraid of sacrifices. The Patriots Partnership is not afraid of destruction, either. But the new federation and the new Secret Sword Bureau will need someone to supervise the situation and ensure that the federation always walks on the right path!

“Ah Feng, I want you to be the someone!

“Come on. Hand over the Jade Crystal Disc and stand on my side. You will need to do none of the dirty, shameless things later. You can pretend that you know nothing of it and come out to clean up the mess after everything is settled as a great hero!

“By that time, I will not regret it even if you are going to mince me apart!”

Suppressed by Lu Zui’s delirious voice, Guo Chunfeng was shuddering from head to toe. “Let me think. Let me think carefully.”

His voice was extremely coarse, and it seemed like he would break into tears at any moment.

“Hand over the Jade Crystal Disc. You can take your time to think. I will not push you!”

Lu Zui stared at the Cosmos Ring on his finger.

“No. I can’t give you the Jade Crystal Disc. This is my only bargaining chip!”

Guo Chunfeng took a few steps back and sat on a chair on the side of the cabin wall. He closed his hands, his face pale and his lips trembling.

The four Core Formation Stage Cultivators looked at each other in bewilderment. They all cast their eyes to Lu Zui.

Lu Zui slightly frowned. Seeing that Guo Chunfeng was more or less convinced and that the Jade Crystal Chip was not going anywhere, he thought that there was no need to rush and simply shook his head.

Five minutes later, according to the intel on the explosion in the headquarters of the Secret Sword Bureau, several Cosmos Rings had been found. They should be the belongings of Li Yao, Ding Lingdang, and the rest of them, but their bodies had not been found yet.

Perhaps they had directly vaporized in the fierce explosion.

It was not strange that the bomb was so powerful, considering that it was Vulture Li Yao’s desperate last resort. Also, the scene of the explosion was still packed with debris. It would be difficult to find the bodies even if they still existed.

Lu Zui vaguely felt that it was weird, but he did not think much of it. His brain had been overloaded for quite a few months and was bordering its limits. Hearing the news of Li Yao’s death, he was more or less relaxed, and it was impossible for him to concentrate again for the moment.

Seeing that time was going by second after second, Lu Zui was growing impatient. “Have you thought it through yet?”

Shaking his head, Guo Chunfeng was deep in thought. “Not yet. I have another question. How do I known that I will not be executed to keep my mouth shut after I hand over the Jade Crystal Chip?”

Lu Zui was amused. “Ah Feng, would I still be waiting right now if I meant to kill you? Wouldn’t it have been better for me to ask them to kill you and search your body for the Cosmos Ring? I told you so many things because I appreciate your talent, and I want to save you to create a better future for our country!

“Also, to keep your mouth shut? Is it necessary? In another few days, everything will be settled after the federal army marches into the Blood Demon Sector. There’s no need to shut anybody’s mouth when the few days are over!”

Guo Chunfeng considered carefully for a while. “There’s also Abyss. How do I know that you will not threaten me again with the matter in future?”

“As long as you stand on my side, you will be the most promising star of tomorrow in our organization,” Lu Zui said in a hurry. “Why would I blame Abyss on you? Would it do any good to our organization?”

“I see,” Guo Chunfeng mumbled. “Director, you are convincing me. However, if I do this, I don’t know how I’ll face my wife and daughter. No. If I am labeled as Abyss, I’m afraid they’ll be in an even more shameful position…”

Lu Zui suddenly shuddered. He extended his saber-like hawk nose, stabbed it into the air, and sniffed. Narrowing his eyes, he said, “Wait. You are delaying me on purpose…”

Guo Chunfeng was dazed. “I am delaying you on purpose? I? What am I delaying you for? Why am I delaying you? What benefits can I get by delaying you? Is there any reason why I should—”

“Shut up!” Lu Zui slapped the desk hard and almost ground his teeth to dust. “Stop talking. Let me think. Let me think carefully…”

Right then, another piece of news came over.

In the prison cell where a great explosion took place, the remains of a metal arm that was not entirely melted had been found.

According to the analysis, it belonged to an artificial limb.

However, the artificial limb was not Professor Mo Xuan’s but one of a thinner, lighter structure with biochemical materials resembling flesh and blood attached to it. Since the materials were all burnt, it had taken rather a long time to finish the analysis.

The result suggested that an artificial limb that definitely did not belong to the prison cell somehow appeared on the scene of explosion.

Staring at the remains of the artificial limb on the light beam for a long time, Lu Zui suddenly trembled deeply. “This—this is an artificial limb that was made to look like the arm of a human being!

“You—you chopped off Vulture Li Yao’s arm, but it was a false one!”

Blinking his bloated eyes, Guo Chunfeng scratched his greasy hair for a long time until his dandruff was snowing down. “Huh?”

Lu Zui was more than pissed. “Take him down!”

“Wait!” Guo Chunfeng retrieved the Jade Crystal Chip from his Cosmos Ring as fast as lightning and threw it to Lu Zui. “I’ve thought it through, director. The Jade Crystal Chip is right inside!”

Subconsciously, Lu Zui snatched it and ripped apart the container. The Jade Crystal Disc inside delighted him at first, but he was dumbfounded a moment later. “This—this is a counterfeit. This is not the Jade Crystal Disc that Li Yao stole!”

He glared at Guo Chunfeng.

Guo Chunfeng raised his hands to surrender. The hesitation, desperation, and pain on his face were all gone, only to be replaced by a brazen countenance. He grinned. “Director, that is the only Jade Crystal Disc on my body. You won’t find a second one even if you crush me into powder.”

“You—”

Lu Zui seemed to have become a wolf that had been hungered for ten years, meaning to bite a piece of flesh off Guo Chunfeng!

It had never occurred to him that everything would change in one second!

Guo Chunfeng blinked and said, “Director, do you want to know what has happened? It’s simple.

“After I captured Professor Mo Xuan and Ding Lingdang, I talked to them while we were still on the shuttle and won their trust.

“Professor Mo Xuan and Li Yao have discussed dozens of methods of contact other than point-to-point communication via cables.

“Also, after all the years I’ve been working in the Secret Sword Bureau, it is perfectly normal that I’ve hidden several crystal processors that are absolutely clean, right?

“Therefore, I reached out to Li Yao a long time ago and exchanged some critical information!

“Everything was easier after that. With my guidance and cover, Li Yao snuck into the headquarters of the Secret Sword Bureau successfully, wearing a false arm. The conversation we had in the restroom was meant for you, too.

“Then, on our way to the underground prison, we continued exchanging information profoundly and inconspicuously, settling what we were going to do in the next.

“In the prison cell, I chopped off his false arm, and he detonated a crystal bomb that was not very powerful at first to destroy all the surveillance cameras. Then, after Professor Mo Xuan, Ding Lingdang, and his disciples were saved, he detonated the real crystal bomb.

“The barriers on the prisoners personally were implemented by me. I freed them within a breath.

“Later, with the excuse that Blood Devil had planted countless crystal bombs, I ordered the evacuation in the headquarters. I was the highest official on the spot, and I was burnt and blackened like a piece of cr*p. Who had the courage to persist in working? The tens of thousands of people were all running out like headless flies. It was effortless for Li Yao and the rest of them to escape in the crowd with their disguises and the certificates that I’d prepared for them.

“The Jade Crystal Disc he tossed to me was, naturally, a counterfeit. The real one is still in his hands, and I believe that Professor Mo Xuan should’ve already cracked it.

“Also, you thought that Li Yao was executed by me, so you focused all your attention on me. The search and surveillance on him were aborted. Even all the crystal warships have returned to the headquarters.

“It means that, at this moment, Li Yao has snuck into the capital city with the cracked Jade Crystal Disc off your radar. As for where exactly he has fled, I truly don’t know, director.

“This is just about everything. The purpose of the whole trap was for Li Yao and Professor Mo Xuan to meet without alarming anyone and to jump out of the siege of the Patriots Partnership.

“Li Yao asked me to buy half an hour for him. Now that I’ve checked my watch, I have earned him thirty-four minutes and twenty-two seconds.

“Mission accomplished. I surrender. Any questions, director?”

Chapter 1124 - The Last Kilometer!

It was three o’clock in the afternoon.

In the parliament building in the central district of the capital city, the prolonged meeting was still going on.

Although the ‘expedition motion’ had been passed, and the federal army was carrying out drills in the Dark Desolate Domain at the north of the Grand Desolate Plateau, the federal army was merely part of all the armed forces of the Heaven’s Origin Sector. The Cultivators scattered in all the sects were the other strong pillar of the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

Without the support of the major sects, it was impossible for the federal army to secure the final victory alone.

Therefore, ever since the war machine was activated, the leadership of the top five hundred sects of the federation had all been making trips to the capital city. Together with the parliamentary representatives, they discussed how the sects should participate in the war, how to cooperate with the federal army, how to divide the fruits after the war, and other relevant issues.

Thus, at that moment, in parliament, other than all the representatives, there were also more than ten thousand experts, including the leadership of the major sects, the professors of the Nine Elite Universities, and the strong unaffiliated Cultivators!

All the ten thousand experts could influence the future of the federation!

Outside of the parliament building, in the central district and even the entire capital city, an unprecedented ‘triumph parade’ reached the climax after hours of brewing.

The representatives of the veterans from thousands of cities nationwide, together with students from all over the capital city and the citizens of all trades, gathered first in the Federal Square to mourn for the compatriots who had unfortunately been killed in the explosion here a few days ago. After declaring ‘the federation never gives up’, the crowd turned into scorching torrents that swept over every street and alley in the capital city.

After they completely turned the capital city into a simmering ocean of passion with their enthusiasm and their high-pitched songs, the crowd made of veterans, students, workers, small merchants, and regular citizens, raising tens of thousands of Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flags, congregated into a red river and marched to the parliament building from all directions.

The crowd would meet in the square before the parliament building and conclude the triumph parade with a soul-stirring battle hymn. In such a way, they would demonstrate the fury and determination of every federal citizen to the big shots attending the meeting in the parliament building!

What was ironic was that the Patriots Partnership helped a lot in organizing the ‘triumph parade’ so quickly into such an enormous scale.

The Patriots Partnership hoped to impose more pressure on the parliamentary representatives and the leadership of the major sects through the demonstration so that the war could break out as soon as possible and on as large a scale as possible!

However, when they bolstered the ‘triumph parade’, it never occurred to Lu Zui and the other ‘patriots’ that the zealous crowd like sweeping, seething magma would be a perfect disguise for three unattractive shadows who were marching quickly toward the parliament building under the dazzling banners and flags.

They were exactly Li Yao, Ding Lingdang, and Wu Mayan!

The cracked Jade Crystal Disc was in his pocket. Ding Lingdang and Wu Mayan were covering him some ten meters away. The three of them contacted each other through short-distance point-to-point communicators and would launch the critical strike on the Patriots Partnership together!

Professor Mo Xuan and Xie Anan were both pure refiners and did not boast a high combat ability. After cracking the Jade Chip Crystal, they lurked in the darkness and tried to reach out to the influential persons of both Sectors.

However—

The decryption of the Jade Crystal Disc was much more complicated than they had imagined. Without the help of the super-large mainframe crystal processor, it took Professor Mo Xuan almost twenty minutes to finish the work despite his astonishing computational ability. Subtracting the time that they spent on the way to sneak in, there was not much time left for them!

The cracked Jade Crystal Disc contained Elder Nether Spring’s memories, which were as boundless as an ocean and extremely complex. It was impossible to upload all of them to the Spiritual Nexus in ten minutes.

Besides, the Patriots Partnership must be monitoring the Spiritual Nexus in the area and set up certain keywords. Once the data related to ‘Elder Nether Spring’ popped up on the Spiritual Nexus, they would certainly find out and cut off the connection immediately. Also, they might be able to trace the signal back to the Jade Crystal Disc!

Li Yao was well clear that, even if Guo Chunfeng sacrificed himself to buy him more time, the search on the scene of the explosion would still be completed very soon. Given Lu Zui’s intellect, he would not be delayed by Guo Chunfeng for long!

[Damn it. The Spiritual Nexus is being seriously jammed. The interference is not targeting me but all the wireless signals in the area. The virtual channels of the Spiritual Nexus have been blocked, and the net speed has hit rock bottom!

[At such a low speed, it is difficult to even upload pictures and videos to the Spiritual Nexus, not to mention large files that contain millions of telepathic thoughts!

[Lu Zui has finally realized what is going on. He guessed that our destination would be the parliament building. Therefore, he simply blocked the Spiritual Nexus in the entire area!

[He—he has truly gone mad. This place is right next to the parliament building. Is he not scared that somebody will notice something wrong?

[Or maybe, he has no other options except to turn to this last resort. As long as he can capture me and get the Jade

Crystal Chip, the short-time blockage of the Spiritual Nexus will be explainable!

[Can I run away?

[Maybe I can. The capital city is too large, and it is very chaotic right now. It won’t be difficult to run away. I can figure out a way and send out the evidence of Lu Zui’s crimes slowly after I escape out of the capital city!

[No. That will waste too much time. Lu Zui will not be dealt with cleanly and neatly. With the profound connections of the Patriots Partnership, it definitely won’t be a problem for them to delay it ten to fifteen days!

[Right now, the war is being prepared busily on the Grand Desolate Plateau. Ten to fifteen days are more than enough for the federal army to march into the Blood Demon Sector on a large scale. Should a bloody battle between the federal army and the coalition army of demons break out, everything will be doomed!

[Therefore, we are left with no alternatives except to fight a final battle with Lu Zui here and now!]

Li Yao was surrounded by crowds as fervent as an erupting volcano, but his eyes were as cold and firm as the ice that was dug out from the deepest part of the South Pole.

The Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag and the emblem of the federation could already be vaguely seen flapping on the top of the parliament building.

Li Yao accelerated and strode toward the flag and the emblem, barely having any time to care about his identity now.

[Guo Chunfeng has fulfilled his promise and really bought half an hour for me. The most important half an hour!

[I’m only three kilometers away from parliament!

[I must live up to my promises. Even if I have to die, I must die inside the parliament building, after I deliver the Jade Crystal Chip to all the representatives and the experts!]

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Above the crowd, in the middle of the skyscrapers, more than ten swirls of wind were rushing close. Li Yao, Ding Lingdang, and Wu Mayan had the feeling that they were locked onto at the same time.

“Master, it is the hunting team. They are planning to shoot you. You go first. I’ll take them down!” Wu Mayan roared in the communication channel and dashed to a building next to him on the street, quickly running toward the commanding height.

“Ah Yan!” Li Yao bellowed. He was well aware of the capability of the hunting team. Despite the loss of ‘Death Ray’ Ye Changkong, they were still terrifying assassins!

“Don’t worry, Master!” Wu Mayan shouted. “On Iron Plateau, everybody believed that my foster father Xiong Wuji was a murderer, but you trusted him and proved that he was innocent in the end.

“Today, I will help you to prove your innocence, too!

“Believe me. I was the number one training genius on Iron Plateau, I ranked top in the Ten Most Distinguished Adolescents of the Flying Star Sector, and I am your first disciple!

“But more importantly, I’ve been tortured brutally by Masteress for more than half a year. Can those b*stards be more brutal than Masteress? I highly doubt it!

“Move forward, Master. Believe me!

“Scumbags, come on. Open your eyes and observe. This is the legendary 150th level of the Refinement Stage!”

Wu Mayan’s shrieks were eclipsed by the surging spiritual waves. The intimidating auras from the skyscrapers were suddenly disordered.

Li Yao’s nose suddenly flapped. There was no telling whether he was crying or laughing. Moving faster, he mumbled to himself, “I believe you, Ah Yan. I absolutely believe you!”

He and Ding Lingdang were getting closer and closer to the parliament building. There were only the last two kilometers!

In the sky, several crystal warships of the Secret Sword Bureau were rushing close from afar like shooting stars!

Four streaks of brilliance dashed out of the largest crystal warship of them that looked like a shark. Before they arrived, their daunting aura had locked Li Yao instantly from thousands of meters away!

Li Yao’s disguise was too hasty after all. The area around the parliament building was also the area where the Patriots Partnership paid most attention to. Under the scanning of thousands of crystal cameras, Li Yao was exposed with nowhere to hide after only several minutes.

Not far behind him, Ding Lingdang suddenly stopped.

Dozens of meters in between, the two of them looked at each other despite the blockage of the crowd.

“They are four experts at the peak of the Core Formation Stage,” Li Yao said.

“Believe me,” Ding Lingdang replied.

“… Alright. I believe you. I believe every one of you!”

His eyes were filled by something clear and watery, to the extent that the road ahead of him was suddenly blurred. However, he did not slow down at all. Even when he sensed that dozens of flying swords were charging at his critical parts on his back from various angles, he did not change his direction or speed!

As he expected, a moment later, he sensed that all the flying swords were consumed by a burning flame. Deafening roars were echoing in the communication channel. “Who dares touch my husband? Get in line and die!”

Li Yao laughed to his heart’s content. At this moment, there was only the last kilometer between him and the parliament building!

Chapter 1125 - Idiotic Choice!

Nine hundred meters! Eight hundred meters! Seven hundred meters!

Li Yao was closer and closer to the victory. There was no time for Lu Zui’s crystal warships to lock onto him!

Right when he was about to pass the last avenue and march into the small square before the parliament building, two passionate crowds crashed into each other heavily and blocked the entire avenue!

They were the two teams with the most people, who had met each other in front of the parliament building. Flags were intertwining with flags, and roars were colliding with roars. All the people, men and women, young and old, friends and strangers, were all hugging each other in excitement, leaving absolutely no room to pass by!

Of course, Li Yao could jump above everyone’s head and simply fly over.

But the price was that he would be exposed to the cannons of the ten or so crystal warships. With his wounds right now, it would be extremely difficult for him to dodge.

Besides, many people in the crowd had already noticed him.

The main participants of the ‘triumph parade’ were the representatives of the veterans nationwide. Naturally, a lot of them were Cultivators.

They might not be very strong themselves. Most of them were merely at the middle level or the low level of the Refinement Stage, the bottom for all Cultivators.

However, since they had all survived decades of years of bloody battles in the battlefield, they definitely had abundant combat experience and boasted the keenest sense about danger!

The Cultivators among the veterans immediately noticed the fierce fight between Wu Mayan, Ding Lingdang, and the ‘patriots’ among the skyscrapers!

They also noticed that Li Yao was squeezing in the crowd anxiously.

“What are you doing here!”

A few days ago, an explosion just took place in the Federal Square. The veterans were all highly alert. They surrounded Li Yao and unleashed their auras that were not strong but definitely tenacious enough!

Li Yao gritted his teeth, with fire popping out of his eyes.

If it were the ‘patriots’ under Lu Zui’s command that were stopping him, he would certainly have drawn his Blood Moon Dragon Hunting Saber and slashed all of them.

But the veterans who were blocking him were all ignorant and innocent. He could neither jump into the air and escape nor kill them. How could he free himself from the siege?

Right then, somebody in the crow shrieked, “He is an escaped criminal. Capture him now!”

Hearing the words, the veterans were even more daunting than before. Even the old men whose hair were white and who were short of an arm or a leg were also clenching their fists so hard that they seemed to be back to the battlefield decades ago!

Li Yao cursed loudly in his heart and immediately realized what was happening.

The ‘triumph parade’ today had certainly been instigated by the Patriots Partnership. Then, it was perfectly normal that several ‘patriots’ had blended into the demonstrating crowd to control the pace and the rhythm!

Lu Zui must have passed on his will to the ‘patriots’ who were lurking in the crowd. Now, they had let out fatal cries at the critical moment!

Li Yao glared in the direction of that cry, only to find nothing but heads and flags. There was no telling who the ‘patriot’ was at all.

The veterans who knew nothing, on the other hand, pushed closer and closer. The muscular man in the lead, with an iron plate and almost ten rivets on his head, yelled gravely, “Who are you exactly?”

“Listen to my explanation!” Li Yao opened his hands, indicating that he absolutely meant no harm. “You must believe—”

Before he finished ‘me’, every muscle on his back was shrinking violently, and his spine was leaping up like a shocked snake.

When he turned around and looked, Li Yao was greatly surprised!

In the sky not far away from him, a crystal warship in the half-stealth state was peeking around the corner of the skyscrapers. Three pointy magnetic rails extended from its head. A ball of lightning in which hundreds of electric arcs were entangled was crazily expanding, jumping and shining between the three rails!

In the few seconds while Li Yao was blocked by the parade, Lu Zui's 'Hidden Star' had finally caught up to him. The powerful 'Three Stars Slant Moon Cannon' on board had completely locked onto him!

When Li Yao turned around, what he saw was merely the residues of the attack. The real explosion energy of the attack had already burnt through thousands of meters coming right at his face!

For a moment, Li Yao's mind seemed to freeze. The entire world came to a halt. The only thing left in front of his eyes was the quickly expanding ball of lightning.

The parliament building was seven hundred meters behind him. Perhaps, if he burnt his life and soul without caring about anything, he would be able to dash into it within a breath.

However, standing right next to him were tens of thousands of ordinary people!

In front, there were the high school students who were holding the flags of their school excitedly.

On the left, there were the veterans who were wearing old, decolored uniforms and shining badges.

On the right, many citizens of the capital city had brought their children to the event. Many vigorous boys were sitting on their father’s shoulders and giggling while looking around, having no idea that the destructive energy was falling upon them.

Around him were seniors, kids, men, and woman. They were someone else’s parent, child, husband, or wife!

[Can I dodge the attack?

[Maybe I can. Or maybe, I can blow the ball of lightning away with my spiritual shield and dash into the parliament building with the counterforce!

[However…

[How many people will die?

[This is meant to save the federation and save more people!

[No, no, no!

[Ding Lingdang, Wu Mayan, Guo Chunfeng, Professor Mo Xuan… They have done their best. The last task has been put on your shoulders! Run now and fulfill your responsibility. You promised them!

[No… This isn’t my responsibility!]

Li Yao’s head was frozen for only 0.01 seconds.

Or rather, even when his head was still frozen, he already reacted subconsciously.

“Move away!” Li Yao roared and pushed everybody around him almost ten meters away with a blast. Stomping on the ground and leaving a giant crater almost four meters deep, he leaped to the midair, crossed his arms, and blew out a hurricane-like attack toward the surging ball of lightning!

Boom! Crack!

The ball of lightning exploded in midair brutally. The violent spiritual energy was spreading out like the sharpest blade and was about the envelop the citizens around when it was attracted by Li Yao’s overwhelming spiritual energy. Most of the energy was blown apart by Li Yao, and the remaining part was absorbed into his own body!

Pu!

Li Yao plummeted into the crater on the ground like a kite whose string had been severed, raising smoke all over the place!

In the sky, on Hidden Star, a ball of lightning that was even brighter, larger, and more violent was taking shape quickly!

Inside Hidden Star, Lu Zui roared thunderously. “Hurry up. He is wounded now. Kill him immediately. Kill him now!”

“But—” The ‘patriot’ who was responsible for the crystal railgun hesitated. “The Three Stars Slant Moon Cannon has been activated to the highest intensity, and too many citizens are gathered on the ground. No matter how hard we try to adjust the precision and control the electric arcs, somebody innocent will still be injured!”

“Idiot. With everything coming to this point, do we have time to bother that?” Lu Zui pushed the artillerist away and manipulated the crystal railgun in person. He mumbled, “Several battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators will be arriving soon. The representatives in the parliament building will notice something wrong soon, too. Everything will be doomed if we don’t kill Li Yao and take back the Jade Crystal Disc right now!

“As long as we kill him and take back the Jade Crystal Disc, everything can be explained. The investigation will not be finished until at least ten to fifteen days later even if there is one. Enough. That will be enough for us!

“This is ‘collateral damage’. They are necessary sacrifices! Kill one and save ten thousand. It’s worthwhile. It’s definitely worthwhile!

“Go to hell, Li Yao!”

Lu Zui grinned hideously and smashed the activation rune array of the Three Stars Slant Moon Cannon. The ball of lightning that was long prepared expanded abruptly. In the most fearsome appearance, it fell upon the land like a fiend made of lightning and thunder!

There was only a gap of several second between the first attack and the second. Most of the ordinary people did not realize what was going on. Even the bottom-level Cultivators among the veterans only vaguely felt that a cluster of violent energy exploded brutally above their heads, only to disperse into nothing in the next moment.

Having no time to do anything, they watched the second destructive sun getting brighter and brighter above their heads in bewilderment!

Right then—

Demonic energy was soaring to the sky from the crater on the ground. Bloody flames were rising up uncontrollably!

In the bloody flames, Li Yao opened his arms. His left eye was bloodshot, and bone spurs and scales were growing out of his body. The Blood Demon Form of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was completely activated!

In such a dreadful appearance, he stood in midair in between the ball of lightning and the crowd!

Crack!

Li Yao stabbed his hands into the breastplate and opened it brutally. Overwhelming demonic energy was unleashed from the magnificent demon core embedded to the center of the chest of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, as if a demon emperor had arrived in person!

While he was burning his life and soul and blowing out the strength in the deepest part of his every cell, the Hellish River Cannon, an upgraded version of the Cell Obliteration Cannon, expanded to the limits of the limits instantly!

Li Yao felt as if his internal organs had all been turned into flames, and the flames seemed to have evolved into a burning swirl. The swirl of fire was melting and absorbing his internal organs, his veins and nerves, his soul, and his vitality. When the absorption reached the threshold, it was completely detonated with the unstoppable fury as fuse, like a spring that had been compressed to the minimum!

“I will not allow you to hurt any innocent person!

“Burst out! One trillion times! Super crystal! Hellish River Cannon!”

Boom!

The attack from the Three Stars Slant Moon Cannon crashed brutally in midair with the Hellish River Cannon, like a ferocious beast that had encountered a deadly beast that was even more ferocious. After half a second’s impasse, the ball of lightning was directly swallowed by the infinite flame of demonic energy from the Hellish River Cannon. The power of the Hellish River Cannon even pushed forward and hit the spiritual shield of ‘Hidden Star’, forcing the crystal warship out of the stealth state. It was shaking violently in midair!

“What!”

Lu Zui’s eyes were almost bulging out of his face. He could not understand at all why Li Yao could still blow out such a powerful attack at such a moment!

Chapter 1126 - Old Artillerist!

Almost half of the capital city had perceived the devastating attack. The invisible blast swept across the entire city. Interference appeared on countless light beams and crystal processors. Birds were flying up from every street and alley, fleeing in panic.

All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Core Formation Stage Cultivators in the city were shocked and looked at the direction. The few Cultivators who had been moving to the place further accelerated their speed!

The strike had exploited all of Li Yao potential.

He was like a broken statue made of mud which had lost all the colors all of a suddenly. Staying briefly in midair, he fell headfirst into the crowd!

“A demon!”

“A monster! A monster is here!”

“Such intense demonic energy. What—what great demon is this?”

Everybody saw his dreadful appearance when he went on a rampage a moment ago. They were all running in a hurry. The Cultivators all drew out their weapons and protected the ordinary people around them anxiously!

Thankfully, most of the veterans in the demonstrating crowd were seasoned soldiers who had seen all kinds of monsters.

Because they were maintaining the order, the scene was less chaotic than the explosions in the Federal Square a few days ago.

“He—he is asking to be killed!” Lu Zui rolled his eyes, overjoyed. “He was idiotic enough to unleash such intense demonic energy in public! Now, this is all the evidence that we need! Fantastic. Fantastic! This is even better than killing him directly! Hurry up and take him down!”

The almost ten crystal warships stopped above the crowd. Dozens of Secret Sword Agents darted out to where Li Yao collapsed!

A solemn voice, mixed with inviolable intimidation, echoed in the sky. “The Secret Sword Bureau is now capturing a spy of the demon race. All citizens, please stay calm and don’t panic. Everything is under control!”

Li Yao was lying on the ground, his arms and legs stretched out. Half of his facial cover was broken, revealing his right eye that was more or less hollow. He stared at the sky that was about to be swallowed by the dark clouds in a daze.

The previous attack of the Hellish River Cannon drained all the strength in his body. In the next few minutes, it would be difficult for him to even breathe. Any random Secret Sword Agent would be enough to execute him.

The plan… had failed!

Did he regret it?

Maybe.

But would he make a second choice if it happened again?

Li Yao struggled to turn his head. He wanted to look whether or not the crowd behind him was affected by the explosion, but his eyes were blurry. He could not tell if there were other expressions on the panicked faces.

“Don’t be scared.”

He vaguely saw a chubby boy in the crowd who was clinging to his father’s leg, shaking.

For some reason, he suddenly recalled the chubby boy that he met at East Seagull Port at dusk, the one who swore that he would be Vulture Li Yao one day.

He extended his hands to the little boy and smiled. “Don’t be scared. I’m not…”

“We are here to capture the spy of the demon race!”

Almost ten aggressive Secret Sword Agents interrupted him. Pointing at the critical parts all over his body with their chainswords, they pushed close to him!

Li Yao closed his eyes and took a long breath before he struggled to his feet.

He was a Cultivator, and he did not intend to die lying instead of standing!

[I’m sorry, Supervisor Guo. I’m sorry, Professor Mo Xuan. I’m sorry, Wu Mayan. I’m sorry… Ding Lingdang!]

On one of his knees, Li Yao gripped his saber fiercely, his blood spurting out of his body!

The Jade Crystal Disc was in his pocket right now. He was planning to throw it to as far away as possible in the last fight and try his luck.

Just when the atmosphere was so intense that it might explode at any moment—

“Wait!”

A wrinkled giant hand suddenly extended in between Li Yao and the ‘patriots’.

On the back of the dry, slim hand was a tattoo that used to be the favorite of the bottom-level officers in the federal army. The tattoo had long been blurred and melted into his flesh after the corrosion of time.

The owner of the tattoo was wearing an old-fashioned military uniform, which had become discolored because of repetitive washing and had no epaulets or armbands. His skull was made of shiny steel, with almost ten firm rivets nailed to it. Below the rivets was a pair of eyes that were as sharp as those on an eagle.

It was exactly the veteran who blocked Li Yao and questioned his identity in the beginning!

More veterans, especially the Cultivators among the veterans, all came close!

It was not because they had noticed anything wrong, but simply because they perceived intense demonic energy and realized that there was a monster here!

Although they were disabled, although their spiritual energy was minimal, and although they had retired from the federal army decades ago… they still considered themselves federal soldiers, Cultivators, and warriors who would protect all the ordinary people and defend every inch of the territory of the federation!

Therefore, when the ordinary people dispersed, the veterans went against the current and charged close!

Even if there was indeed a monster which was beyond their capability, they could at least buy a few more seconds with their broken body for the ordinary people to evacuate!

The steel-skulled veteran glanced at Li Yao with his eagle-like eyes. Then, he glimpsed at the cannon on ‘Hidden Star’ in the sky, which was still emitting spiritual waves.

Like a chisel, he stabbed in between Li Yao and the ‘patriots’ unreasonably, keeping Li Yao behind him!

The steel-skulled veteran had a lot of comrades who had fought with each other for decades. Although they did not understand what he was doing, they quickly followed him and established a wall of people next to him!

All the veterans were a family. Other veterans, although unaware of them, joined them, too, when they saw that the veterans were gathering here. The wall of people was getting thicker and thicker until Li Yao was buried inside!

Several veterans eyed Li Yao warily, but they looked at the Secret Sword Agents and the crystal warships above their heads equally vigilantly.

With a grave face, as if he were berating his son, the steel-skulled veteran demanded, “What’s going on here? Who are you people exactly?”

“The Secret Sword Bureau is here to capture the spy of the demon race. Thank you for your help, fellow citizens!”

One of the Secret Sword Agents observed his face and quickly said with a smile, “The demon is very dangerous. Please hand him over to us immediately in case the innocent people are hurt!”

“You are scared that the innocent people might get hurt?”

The steel-skulled veteran sneered and spat noisily right to the feet of the Secret Sword Bureau. He spoke without any pause.

“The Three Stars Slant Moon Cannon is the super crystal railgun developed fifteen years ago. It is designed to annihilate single ground targets. The attack units adopted a ‘Split Lightning Seven Doom Array’ and two ‘Cold Pole Broken Star Arrays’. It can absorb twenty kilograms of high-purity crystal of the thunder class at once and completely transforms the spiritual energy contained inside the crystals into damage. The maximum attack range is above three hundred meters. A full-strength strike is enough to blow through the super-alloy armor ten meters thick!

“You were using such a weapon a moment ago, and you adjusted the firepower to the maximum, didn’t you?

“It was great that the monster jumped up and took the blow for us. If the strike hit the ground, the hundreds of people around him would’ve been roasted. Not to mention that a riot might have been caused when the crowd was panicked, just like in the Federal Square several days ago!

“Is this how the Secret Sword Bureau does your job? Are you here to capture a monster or to tear down buildings? Where’s your boss? Bring him out and let’s talk!”

The few Secret Sword Agents looked at each other in bewilderment. They did not expect that they would run into someone so knowledgeable here. The Secret Sword Agent in the lead cackled and said, “Sir, you must’ve seen it wrong. There’s clearly a misunderstanding—”

“Misunderstanding my ass!” the steel-skulled veteran snapped back mercilessly. He rolled up his sleeves and unbuttoned his coat, revealing his chest that was as dry as the skin of an orange.

On the chest, besides the battery for the man-made heart, there was a tattoo that was even larger and intimidating. It looked like… a crystal cannon that had grown wings!

“Brothers, tell those blind brats what we did for a living!”

Several veterans who were as old as him all burst into laughter. They all unbuttoned their coats and showed the same tattoo, shouting, “Observe, brats! We are the veterans of the Crystal Cannon Legion under the No. 55 Regiment! When we were blowing up the balls of demons on the Grand Desolate Plateau with our crystal cannons, you were still being breastfed!

“This is Sergeant Zhang, the most famous ‘Cannon King’ from the No. 55 Regiment eighty years ago. When he launched a crystal cannon from fifty kilometers away, the attack would never hit the demon beast’s asshole if he said that he aimed at its cock!

“Let me tell you. Even the most advanced crystal cannons would require an experienced artillerist such as Brother Zhang as an advisor during the development. Is there any crystal cannon in the entire federation that Brother Zhang hasn’t played with? Brother Zhang has seen it wrong? In your f*cking dream!”

The few Secret Sword Agents were truly dumbfounded and lost for words.

Many veterans had heard the name ‘Cannon King’ Zhang Danao before. They knew that the guy was a great troublemaker. Although he was merely in the fifth level of the Refinement Stage, he was quite a big shot among the veterans.

Hearing that Zhang Danao was making trouble again, more veterans and citizens behind were coming. The crowd that had dispersed a moment ago was congregated again!

Instead of bothering with the Secret Sword Agents, the old artillerist Zhang Danao turned around and eyed Li Yao. He observed for a long time and couldn’t tell what it is. He asked curiously, “What about you? What is this bloody, sticky thing that you are wearing? Is it a crystal suit or a biochemical beast? Are you a human being or a demon? Or a new species?”

Li Yao was too feeble to talk anymore.

“Be careful. He is very dangerous!” a Secret Sword Agent shouted drily.

“Get lost. I have killed more demon beasts than you’ve banged whores. What can such a half-dead thing do to me?”

Zhang Danao squatted next to Li Yao and observed him carefully. Scratching his steel skull, he asked in confusion, “Just now, you could’ve avoided it, couldn’t you? Even if you couldn’t dodge the first attack, you were definitely able to dodge the second!

“But instead of dodging, you flew to the midair and had a head-on clash with it!

“Why?

“If you had dodged, you would’ve been fine, but many people down here would’ve been killed, including myself. After fighting the demons for sixty years, I was not killed by the paws of demon beasts but nearly bombarded by the cannons of our own people! Hehe. The ‘Cannon King’ is killed by a crystal cannon? That’s really interesting!

“You didn’t dodge it. You saved me as well as the hundreds of people around and wounded yourself to such an extent. Why… did you do that exactly?”

Chapter 1127 - Flapping Red Flags!

A glimmer of hope surfaced in Li Yao’s dry eyes again. He took a deep breath and planned to talk, only to cough loudly, feeling that thousands of arrows were piercing through his heart!

Next to them, more Secret Sword Agents were coming over. A lot of them had even put on their crystal suits, prepared to fight!

Lu Zui’s thunderous roar was echoing in every Secret Sword Agent’s communication channel. “What are you waiting for? Capture him now!”

The wall made of the veterans was easily crushed by the Secret Sword Agents.

However, they never realized, or rather, they did not have time to bother even if they did, how the fearless, disobedient old guys would react!

“What’s the meaning of this? You want a battle?”

Fury bursting out of the old artillerist’s eyes, Zhang Danao simply took off his military uniform, revealing his slender body that was covered in saber and claw marks. He picked up a giant loudspeaker and shouted, “Something is definitely wrong with these sons of bi*ches. We cannot let them take away our captive!

“Brothers of the Crystal Cannon Legion of the No. 55 Regiment, charge with me now!”

After Zhang Danao’s roar, the dozens of worn, old men, who were mostly wrinkled and short of a limb or two, seemed to be injected with ten times more exhilarant and were back to their golden years decades ago. Waving bottles of water, shopping bags, and their artificial limbs, they moved forward together with Zhang Danao!

The veterans further away did not know what was happening in the beginning, but to maintain order during the triumph parade, all the veterans were wearing short-distance communicators and established an independent communication channel, which could not be blocked by Lu Zui however hard he jammed the Spiritual Nexus!

For a moment, roars were echoing nonstop in the communication channel of the veterans.

“Somebody is attacking our fellow veterans in the front!”

“It’s those stealthy brats of the Secret Sword Agents!”

“They don’t know what they are doing!”

“Are there any comrades from the No. 35 Regiment? Our men are being bullied in the front. Need backup! Need backup!”

“None from the No. 35 Regiment are here, but the No. 28 Regiment is. Coming right now. Hang in there!”

The first wall made of dozens of veterans was crushed easily, but the second wall, made of hundreds of veterans who were holding each other’s hands, was pushing forward slowly but surely. Behind the second wall, the veterans from different towns who were total strangers before were quickly forming the third wall.

No… It was not a wall but an ocean of tough iron!

The several hundred Secret Sword Agents soon found it impossible to move when they were drowned in the ocean of veterans. At a loss, they hesitated and observed the flags of the veterans that represented the glorious history of their troops before, but they could not see where Li Yao was hidden behind the flapping flags at all!

“What are you doing!” Lu Zui’s furious voice was echoing again in the communication channel. “Why are you not moving?”

The Secret Sword Agents looked at each other in bewilderment and failed to come up with a reply.

Even the craziest person among them did not know what they should do under such circumstances now.

The attack of the crystal railgun from the crystal warship might have caused dozens of casualties, which could have been explained by the professional term ‘collateral damage’.

However, slashing the angrily shouting veterans with chainswords directly? It was a whole different thing. Even the most insane person did not dare to do such a thing!

While they were hesitating, a few explosive noises were breaking out in the sky. Ding Lingdang and Wu Mayan both noticed the change of the situation and broke out of the skyscrapers, getting rid of their opponents!

Ding Lingdang made best use of the specialty of ‘Blazing Tyrannosaur’. Craning her head, she shouted out the most deafening sound!

“Do not let them take that guy away! It’s Li Yao! Vulture Li Yao!”

Vulture Li Yao exploded above all the participants of the parade. Everybody felt that their head was dizzy, and their ears were hurting.

“What’s going on? Li Yao is already dead!”

“Wasn’t he killed on the Grand Desolate Plateau in a crash?”

“I know her. She is ‘Crimson Queen’ Ding Lingdang, isn’t she? What’s happening? Who is she fighting? She said that Vulture Li Yao is not dead… but right here?”

Other than the veterans, most of the participants of the parade were the students from the high schools and the colleges. Ding Lingdang was quite popular among those hot-blooded young people.

When she activated her spiritual energy to the maximum in midair and summoned nine roaring dragons of fire, which were her signature, many young people recognized her immediately!

“Li Yao is not dead, but he is wounded. He needs protection. He needs all of us!” Ding Lingdang shouted without bothering anything. “Do not let Li Yao be captured by those people. They are all bad guys!”

Hearing her words, the crowd below was seething with even more excitement.

Most of the ordinary people, of course, did not know the truth yet.

But they could tell that the crystal warships in the sky were extraordinarily aggressive.

Just now, a red shadow jumped in the air and had a head-on clash with the ball lightning. Many people here had witnessed it in person, too.

Intuitively, they vaguely knew that the shadow was protecting them!

For the ordinary people, their fists were not strong, their legs were not fast, their computational ability was not high, and their minds were not as agile as the Cultivators'.

Maybe, they could not do anything in such a confrontation.

But at the very least, they could still wave the flag in their hands hard and shout out the voice that was sweeping everything with the last bit of strength in their chest under Ding Lingdang's lead.

"Stop right now!"

"What's going on here? Speak now!"

"Is it Li Yao? Is it?"

The sound was echoing all over the central district.

The few Core Formation Stage Cultivators who were fighting Ding Lingdang a moment ago now arrived, too.

However, under so many pairs of scorching eyes, they did not know whether or not they should continue attacking.

Those Core Formation Stage Cultivators, who had trained for more than a hundred years and could blow up a crystal tank after a single punch, had never known that the eyes of ordinary people could be so overwhelming. They felt that they were being suppressed!

During the moment when they hesitated, Wu Mayan, with bruises all over his body, flew to Ding Lingdang, too. He opened his arms and put on a bloodstained smile to the Core Formation Stage Cultivators in front of him.

“You’ll have to get past me if you want to touch my masteress!”

“You little guy!”

Their backs leaning against each other, Ding Lingdang asked in a low voice, “Are you alright?”

“Of course I am. I am the man who will be the strongest qi-trainer in history!” Wu Mayan shrieked. “Masteress, just lead the roars. The punches of those scumbags are not even one tenth as strong as yours!”

The triumph parade, as an unprecedented event in the history of the federation, had naturally garnered a lot of media attention.

If Lu Zui had been able to settle Li Yao cleanly in a few minutes, the media might not have noticed it. Even if they did, Lu Zui had his ways to cover or wipe out the news.

However, he had been delayed for too long, and the situation was too big a mess!

The reporters and photographers from almost a hundred media outlets were crowding toward the center of chaos hurriedly. Those who could not make their way through all dashed to the skyscrapers on the street, trying to look for a high stance where they could observe the riot.

The confrontation between the Secret Sword Agents and the veterans was captured clearly by them.

Of course, at this moment, the so-called ‘confrontation’ was just a one-sided battle where the veterans were teaching the ‘immature brats’ a lesson.

On Hidden Star, looking at the situation down there, which had completely fallen into chaos, and the faces of the soldiers, students, workers, teachers, and merchants on the light beams, Lu Zui’s eyes suddenly lost focus.

He was gritting his teeth, confused, angry, and grasped by desperation. A bottomless hole seemed to have appeared on his face, absorbing all his facial organs and expressions.

He extended his hands, shivering, as if he touched a piece of burning charcoal when he was trying to catch a nonexistent straw. His hands shrank violently, but he had nowhere to put them. Eventually, he had to place them in front of his chest like the paws of a mouse.

“Open fire. Bombard him. Bombard him!” Lu Zui mumbled.

There was nothing but silence on-board. All the crew members, all the marines, and all the ‘patriots’ knew clearly that their cause had come to an end.

Opening fire right now would lead to dire consequences and would not reverse their failure at all.

Even if they were determined to open fire, where they should aim at?

On the small square in front of the parliament building, at least ten thousand Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flags and ten times more flags of schools, troops and civil organizations were flying.

All the flags were equally vivid and hot while they were fluttering in the wind!

Li Yao was hiding below a certain flag, right in the middle of tens of thousands of ordinary people.

Open fire? At whom?

The ‘patriots’ leaned against their chairs lethargically. Looking at Lu Zui in a daze, they did not have the strength to move anymore.

On the street, Li Yao was protected by countless pairs of hands. More than a hundred flags had covered both him and the hundreds of veterans nearby. Everybody was asking questions.

“You are Li Yao?”

“Are you really Vulture Li Yao? You are not dead yet? What has happened?”

“Why does the Secret Sword Bureau want you? What did you do?”

Li Yao did not know how he should answer.

After a few minutes of breathing, he was gradually back to himself and regained the strength to talk.

But he could still not think, not because he was feeble, but because his head was occupied by something more scorching and exciting!

From all directions, the roars, sweat, passion, and fury of the tens of thousands of ordinary people congregated into tsunamis that were crushing his head and cleansing his soul!

Such tsunamis made his eyes red and swollen, his nose sour and dry. Even if he opened his mouth, he could not say anything out but only let out the most primitive, barbaric roar!

He had experienced the same feeling several times before on Iron Plateau in the Flying Star Sector.

The Iron Plateau natives called such a phenomenon ‘resonation of the fighting will’!

Right now, Li Yao felt that his own soul was vibrating, melting, and rushing together with the souls of tens of thousands of ordinary people!

The feeling was ten times, a hundred times, a thousand time stronger than the resonation of fighting will on Iron Plateau!

During the intense vibration, his withered muscles were revived, his dried veins and nerves bulged again, and a tiny sprout grew out of his lackluster heart, showing the dawn of a whole new level!

Chapter 1128 - Crumbled!

I was wrong .

In the middle of burning waves of the red flags, Li Yao's brain was stretched to its limits. His soul was expanding nonstop in the intense resonation. As if an invisible barrier had collapsed all of a sudden, a new, vaster world was slowly unfolding in front of his eyes.

In the new world, his soul was as calm, clear, and peaceful as a snowy plateau under the moonlight.

The memories of every second after he returned to the Heaven's Origin Sector were the snowflakes that were spraying in the cool, refreshing world.

It was not until this moment that Li Yao realized what a huge mistake he had made.

I thought that I was abandoned by the entire federation and that nobody trusted me. I felt wronged. I was angry. I was depressed. I almost slid into the dark abyss.

However, in retrospect, have I ever truly trusted my compatriots and all the citizens of the federation?

Before, I had countless opportunities to reveal my identity in public to win their support, but I didn't do it.

Was it because I never truly trusted them from the bottom of my heart? I thought that they were just strengthless ordinary people who could not see through the scheme. Even if they did, they could not help me much and would only add to my trouble.

That is why I brushed past them every single time. I chose to infiltrate in secret and fight on my own, trying to save the world by myself!

Even when I was most desperate, all I could think of were merely Cultivators such as Ding Lingdang and Professor Mo Xuan. I never thought that I could count on them, the millions of ordinary people!

I was wrong. I was really wrong!

My compatriots, everyone who has been working and living carefully on this land, might not have strong fists, fast legs, and a high computation ability like the Cultivators do.

But they are certainly not objects waiting for their salvation. They have their feelings, their standpoints, and their thinking ability. More importantly, they have their own… fighting will!

Cultivators, of course, are obliged to protect the ordinary people.

But the ordinary people… can protect the Cultivators, too. Right now, am I not being protected, supported, and encouraged by them, by tens of thousands of ordinary people?

No…

'Protect' is too thin a word to describe the relationship between us!

Nobody is protecting anybody. Cultivators and ordinary people are comrades who are fighting side by side. We are merely working in different posts through different approaches to protect our mutual home, family, and future!

Huala!

Every word that Li Yao roared out in his brain turned into soundless lightning, illuminating the new world!

His eyes were brighter and brighter. He clenched his fists harder and harder. Every cell deep inside his flesh was echoing like bells being tolled. The deepest part of his soul was blossoming like a lotus!

Li Yao smiled. After everything he had been through, he discovered that Lu Zui and the scheme of the Patriots Partnership were not worth mentioning at all when he looked back.

The power of the so-called ‘patriots’ was based on the lies and the mistrust between him and everyone.

When he did not trust his compatriots, and his compatriots did not know how to trust him, he felt like he was diving into a bottomless swamp on his own. He could not find a way out in the black maze.

At that time, the Patriots Partnership appeared mysterious, ubiquitous, prophetic, and manipulative!

However, when he learned to trust Ding Lingdang, Professor Mo Xuan, Guo Chunfeng, and everybody else, the seemingly powerful Patriots Partnership was like a sand castle in the wind. No matter how high it was piled up, it would crumble when the wind was blowing.

If he had realized the logic earlier, he might have been able to crack the scheme more straightforwardly.

But thankfully, it was still not too late.

Li Yao sensed that the snowflakes of his memories were falling into his soul before they were condensed into mysterious liquids that flowed slowly into his abdomen along his spine.

Inside his abdomen, his core was shivering. Vaguely, he seemed to hear a yawn, like the first mumble of a baby after a prolonged sleep.

Li Yao thought of something. He realized that after the last confrontation with the mental devil, and through all the tests that followed, his soul had been cleansed, and his belief had been firmed. He examined himself and even interrogated himself. Finally, in the resonation with the souls of tens of thousands of compatriots, he embraced the sprout of the Nascent Soul!

It was perhaps not the real Nascent Soul Stage yet, but it was enough to make him understand the differences between the Nascent Soul Stage and the Core Formation Stage.

The difference between Core Formation Stage and the Nascent Soul Stage lay beyond the simple factors such as strength, speed, or computational ability.

Most importantly, the Nascent Soul Stage highlighted the unification of strength and consciousness.

In the Core Formation Stage, the body and the mind were separate. Maybe, after some fortuitous incidents—for example, accidentally getting marvelous medicines and techniques—one might be granted destructive brute strength if they were lucky enough, which could potentially upgrade them into the Core Formation Stage.

However, impressive as their brute strength might be, they did not know where their strength originated and how they should really apply it. Eventually, they would become the prisoners of their own strength and slaves of their natural instincts, living their whole life unaware.

In the Nascent Soul Stage, however, the strength and the consciousness would be highly combined. A Cultivator would fully understand the source of their strength and its destination. They would really be able to carry out their own will and belief with their strength!

In short, a Cultivator could only see clearly what they were fighting for exactly after they advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage!

Below a ragged, bloodstained Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag, Li Yao slowly opened his eyes.

For a moment, millions of stars seemed to be shining inside his eyes, as if the fighting will of the tens of thousands of ordinary people had been concentrated in his eyes!

The next moment, the millions of stars were all absorbed into his soul. Li Yao’s eyes became pure black again. The only thing that remained was the dark-golden brilliance in the deepest part of his pupils!

Li Yao carried on shoulder the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag that had been scourged on countless battlefields. Surrounded by almost a hundred veterans, he held his head high and glared at ‘Hidden Star’ in the sky without disguising his new, burning aura at all!

The spiritual shield around Hidden Star was rippling, as if it were under real attack.

“Lu Zui, you are doomed!” Li Yao declared resolutely. His every word was hitting the spiritual shield of ‘Hidden Star’ like a bomb.

Hidden Star was shaking violently in midair, struggling in vain under the fury of the public.

“In order to raise the war between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, you planned the assassination of the Speaker in the Federal Square and killed more than ten thousand innocent victims. The undeniable evidence of your crimes is now in my hands!

“In order to destroy the evidence, you were trying to bombard me as well as so many compatriots here, when you knew clearly that tens of thousands of people had gathered in this place!

“Everything you did crossed the lines of not only the Cultivators but also all human beings! Lu Zui, the evidence and the eyewitnesses are all here. What do you have to say for yourself?

“Lu Zui, director of the Secret Sword Bureau, I know you are in this very crystal warship! If you are innocent, just come on out and confront me in front of all our compatriots here!”

Li Yao’s every word was delivered to the ears of the public clearly, making them understand everything that had happened quickly.

Such a piece of appalling news naturally raised another round of whispers. They eyed the crystal warship in the sky with more confusion and anger.

They did not know if Li Yao was telling the truth.

But they did notice that Lu Zui never showed up.

Li Yao was standing in public openly while Lu Zui was hiding himself in a warship. Naturally, the ordinary people made a judgement without any trouble.

Surrounded by the veterans, the Secret Sword Agents who were loyal to Lu Zui were so ashamed that they almost wished to turn into effluence so that they could flow into the sewer!

On Hidden Star, Li Yao’s words were sweeping across every cabin like hurricanes. The ears of every ‘patriot’ were humming.

All the patriots were lost for words, their faces pale.

Lu Zui’s hair was messy, his skin as yellow as dry wood. The speckles on his face were growing at a visible speed, but his vigor was jumping out of his body hurriedly like fleas.

Right now, Li Yao was standing on the ground openly. He could easily lock onto Li Yao with the crystal railgun.

But what was the point?

Lu Zui struggled for a long time. Shivering, his hands extended to the light beam, retreated, extended, and retreated again. Finally, after a long sigh, he collapsed into his chair in depression.

He sensed that three intimidating auras had arrived.

They were three battle-type Cultivators who were worshipped as ‘War Gods’ in the federation!

The three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators had been invited by the Secret Sword Bureau to help the execution of Blood Devil Li Yao. They were not members of the Patriots Partnership. He had been lying to them the whole time. Was there any point now that they had arrived?

Moreover, Lu Zui observed through the surveillance light beam that the air platforms on the parliament building were all opened. Hundreds of representatives and experts flew out!

All the representatives and experts had been informed earlier that a ‘triumph parade’ would be held outside today, which could be rather noisy.

Also, some of the officials responsible for the guardian work of the parliament building were members of the Patriots Partnership, too. It was not difficult to adjust the soundproof rune arrays and the blockage rune arrays on the parliament building to a higher level so that most of the waves from the outside world would be blocked.

Therefore, the representatives inside did not notice the chaos outside in the beginning.

However, the blockage had its limits, too. Right now, Li Yao was practically holding his solo concert outside. The representatives and experts inside were not deaf. How could they still sense none of it at this moment?

“It’s over now.”

Lu Zui smiled bitterly. He looked toward the north, his eyes unfocused.

It was the direction of the Dark Desolate Domain on the Grand Desolate Plateau.

At the very least, his scheme had completely failed on his side!

Chapter 1129 - The Truth Is Out!

“Such a magnificent aura. A fellow Cultivator is condensing the Nascent Soul!”

In the sky, the three battle-type Cultivators were all shocked when they perceived that Li Yao’s spiritual energy, which was mixed with will and belief, was spreading out like unstoppable tides.

A new Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was about to be born!

There were less than a hundred Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the entire Heaven’s Origin Sector. The birth of a new Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was a significant improvement on the comprehensive capability of the federation. It was something worth celebrating for all the Cultivators!

According to the Constitution of Cultivators, to increase the capability of the civilization of mankind, it was the responsibility of a Cultivator to protect their fellow Cultivators who were advancing into the Core Formation Stage or the Nascent Soul Stage from evilness at the critical moment!

Every Cultivator was obliged to improve the overall capability of the world of Cultivators!

Moreover, protecting an expert who was advancing into the Nascent Soul Stage was a gesture of friendliness, too. Even a

Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator would not mind having a few more Nascent Soul Stage friends!

Therefore, when the three battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators sensed that a Cultivator was condensing the Nascent Soul and that the few crystal warships in the sky seemed to be malicious, they immediately stopped in the middle without caring whether or not the crystal warships belonged to the Secret Sword Bureau!

The sharp auras from the three battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators immediately locked onto all the crystal warships of the Secret Sword Bureau, forcing Lu Zui to abandon his crazy last resort.

However, the next second, all three battle-type Cultivators were dazed.

They all heard the crowd below them echoing the same name.

“Li Yao! Li Yao! Li Yao! Li Yao!”

The three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators looked at each other in bewilderment, not knowing exactly what was going on. Was it… Li Yao who was condensing the Nascent Soul?

They had all retrieved tremendous proof from the Secret Sword Bureau and were aware that Li Yao had been possessed by the Blood Devil. The guy had also chopped off an arm from ‘Death Ray’ Ye Changkong.

This time, they gathered together for the single purpose of executing the Blood Devil and preventing it from brutalizing more people.

But they were utterly befuddled about the situation. Could the Blood Devil… enter the Nascent Soul Stage?

What was going on exactly? Did Blood Devil Li Yao have a certain secret art that allowed him to bewilder tens of thousands of people? Or, was there another side to the story?

All three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were in a dilemma.

The hundreds of representatives and the leadership of the major sects who were floating in midair noticed the complicated situation in front of the parliament building, too, which was as untamable as a flood.

They were not as simple as the ordinary people, and they were thinking in the long term.

Some of the representatives were even the members of the Patriots Partnership themselves!

At this moment, their faces were all gloomy, and they were looked at each other, exchanging information and trying to find a loophole for the last struggle.

The simmering public and the silent leadership were like two poles, one scorching and the other freezing. The situation was rather weird.

Li Yao's head was clearer than ever. He grasped what was on their minds keenly.

They are still not sure whether or not I am the Blood Devil. After all, it is too complicated an issue to be explained shortly!

If it were a moment ago, when he hadn’t seen through his heart, Li Yao might have burst into fury and felt wronged.

But right now, he felt that he more or less understood the powerful big shots.

Everything boiled down to his own actions. It was he who had gone separate ways with other people while returning to the Heaven’s Origin Sector. He even left a letter for them, claiming that there was a giant Blood Devil lurking inside his body and that whatever he said was not to be believed.

At that time, he had not figured out the truth about the Blood Devil yet, and he was not courageous enough to face the abyss in his heart. Or maybe, he did not trust everybody enough.

Right now, everybody was doing exactly what he asked them to in his letter. Was there anything wrong?

They were no bugs in his stomach, and they did not know what he had done in the Blood Demon Sector. Even if they did, they would not know his motivation and his attitude at all. How could they be one hundred percent sure that he was not possessed by the Blood Devil?

More importantly, to some extent, he was indeed possessed by the Blood Devil!

On his way to the Blood Demon Sector, during the space jump, he had executed the previous ‘Blood Stripe Virus’. But the pieces of the Blood Stripe Virus, mixed with the dark side of his soul, turned into a ‘mental devil’.

He, who was harassed by the mental devil, and Yan Xibei, who was manipulated by the Blood Stripe Virus, were fundamentally different.

But how could anyone else know that?

Li Yao tried to walk in their shoes. If he were one of the big shots who could influence the future of the federation, it would have been difficult for him to trust such a suspect of the Blood Devil under today's circumstances, too!

Everything began because of me. Then, let me finish everything completely by myself today!

Li Yao grinned.

Today, he was going to execute the Blood Devil in front of everybody!

“My compatriots, my friends, please calm down and listen to me!”

There was an uncanny, intimidating aura in Li Yao's voice, which pacified the tens of thousands of seething people in several minutes.

All the citizens, veterans, representatives, and Cultivators held their breath and pricked their ears, looking at him full of expectation.

“I want to tell you two things!

“Firstly, the criminal who caused the tragedy in the Federal Square a few days ago has been found. I have tremendous evidence on my hands to prove that he is guilty!

“Secondly, to answer the friends who are curious where I have been in the past year since I wasn't dead, I was in the Blood Demon Sector! I reached out to the leadership of the demon race. Now, I'm back with the declaration of surrender from the Pantheon of Demons! The demons have surrendered. We have won!”

A thunder seemed to have broken out in the sky!

His two statements, especially the second one, raised a riot both among the ordinary people and among the Cultivators!

Even the calmest Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were greatly shocked and nearly fell from the sky!

“The demons have surrendered?”

“We’ve won the war? How—how is it possible? The war hasn’t been fought yet, has it?”

Seeing that the crowd was about the seethe again, Li Yao roared again to control the situation. He shouted, “I know that everybody has a lot of suspicions. All the evidence is in my hands, but the evidence can only be displayed through the powerful mainframe crystal processor. Therefore, I am going to enter parliament with all the representatives and show them the evidence!

“I understand your enthusiasm, everybody, but there are too many people here, and it is too chaotic. If some ill-intended guys are still lurking in the crowd waiting to raise another riot, everybody’s safety will be threatened!

“There are a lot of seniors around you. Many citizens came here with their kids, too. For the safety of the old and the young, please calm down and evacuate slowly in an orderly fashion!”

“Exactly!”

The representatives and the experts in the sky felt that the situation was tricky, too. A crowd of so many excited citizens was like a powder keg that was put under the scorching sun. One spark was enough to detonate it!

In that moment, a lot of experts flew toward the crowd and helped to maintain the order. They were also looking around warily, in case someone jumped out in desperation.

“Li Yao!”

In the crowd, the old artillerist Zhang Danao squeezed out. He was sweaty, and one of his eyes was swollen. His friends and him were supporting each other to walk forward, but his spirits were higher than ever as he shouted, “We’ll go with you. We can prove that you saved us just now. You saved hundreds of people!

“Yes. Vulture Li Yao is a veteran, too. We will not let them wrong you as long as we are here!”

Li Yao smiled from the bottom of his heart.

To this moment, he still did not know the uncle’s name. However, if it were not for him, the future of the entire federation might have been vastly different.

On second thought, fate was truly an incredible thing. More than ten years ago, when he took part in the College Entrance Examination, it was the veterans of Floating Spear City who had brought justice to him.

Now, ten years later, it was still the lovely veterans who stood up at the most critical moment and showed him the strength that was far more powerful than the spiritual energy.

“Thank you, uncle.” Li Yao bowed deeply to Zhang Danao and the other veterans. He said earnestly, “Thank you, everybody, for standing up and helping me!

“I appreciate your kindness. But please rest assured. There are hundreds of representatives here as well as the leadership of the major sects. Some of the representatives are veterans and ordinary people, too. Everything will be alright with so many eyewitnesses!

“I can tell that many uncles here are wounded. Take a rest aside and let the doctors treat you!”

Zhang Danao sniffed. “They are not wounds at all. Years ago, when I—”

“Zhang Danao, I knew it was you who stirred all the trouble!”

A representative suddenly leapt down from the sky and hugged Zhang Danao hard. Their bodies were equally dry and as wrinkled as the skin of an orange. The tattoos on their arms and chests were also equally intimidating!

In the system of the Star Glory Federation, to ensure the benefits of the ordinary people, a certain proportion of the representatives could only be elected from the ordinary people.

Some of the representatives were veterans themselves. After they retired from the army, they took part in politics and continued their service to the country.

Just now, the noises outside had been blocked by rune arrays. They did not know what had happened at all outside. Now that they understood the situation, naturally, they all stood out and reassured the public.

“There’s no need to worry, everybody. This is too important an issue that has attracted too much attention from the public. Everything will definitely be revealed very soon!

“We will not wrong any good man, and we will never let go of any scumbag who is shameless enough to attack innocent people!”

Countless pairs of sharp eyes were focused on ‘Hidden Star’, which was still docked in midair.

Watched by three battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and almost a hundred Core Formation Stage Cultivators, even a heavy warship of the federation army would not be able to get away, much less ‘Hidden Star’, which was designed for the city battles, and therefore did not boast a very high speed or thick armor!

Chapter 1130 - Be a Blood Devil!

An hour passed.

Almost a hundred light beams were floating above the main hall of the parliament building.

Lights were blinking, and data was pouring. All the files that Li Yao had brought back from the Blood Demon Sector and Elder Nether Spring’s memory pieces were displayed once and for all.

The representatives and leadership of the world of Cultivators held their breath and read with complicated expressions, sometimes embarrassed, sometimes frowning, and sometimes overjoyed.

They were astonished at the thoroughness and cruelty of the Patriots Partnership’s scheme. They were also impressed by Li Yao, who resolved the fatal traps like a surgeon wielding a scalpel. Many representatives were embarrassed for the wrong decisions that they had made a few days ago.

Of course, the members of the Patriots Partnership lurking among the representatives were definitely not willing to admit their failure so fast. Through clandestine channels, they reached out to each other, ready to launch a new counterattack.

Li Yao was standing on the podium with Ding Lingdang, Wu Mayan, Professor Mo Xuan, and other friends.

The evidence had almost all been displayed. Next, it was Li Yao's turn to answer everybody's questions.

"Go now. Tell them everything that you've done over the past few days and humiliate the big shots who were sitting in the parliament building enjoying the air conditioner all day!"

Ding Lingdang bashed Li Yao's chest.

Li Yao smiled and held Ding Lingdang's hand. Staring at her in the eyes, he said solemnly, "Of course, I will explain everything, but there might be a little 'accident' later. I assure you that I'm definitely going to be fine. There's no need to fret. The only thing you need to do is trust me, alright?"

Ding Lingdang was dazed, not exactly knowing what Li Yao meant. Lu Zui had been captured, and all the evidence had been presented. What accident could possibly happen?

However, out of her trust for Li Yao, she nodded intuitively.

Li Yao turned around and said to Wu Mayan, "Ah Yan, take care of your masteress!"

This was the first time that he had ever used the term 'masteress' in front of his disciple. Even Ding Lingdang, who had always considered herself to be casual, still blushed.

"Master, what are you going to do?" Wu Mayan frowned and mumbled, "I feel that something is wrong. You must be planning a trick."

"What trick?" Li Yao scratched his nose and grinned. "I am the most frank and forthright federal hero. Tricks are not my thing!"

“…” Ding Lingdang.

“…” Wu Mayan.

“What I’m about to play is a game where they can do nothing when they know clearly that I’m cheating!”

Li Yao roared and flew into the air, as energetic as ever, stopping in front of the representatives, the experts, and the leadership of Cultivators!

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Core Formation Stage Cultivators were all wearing complicated expressions. The members of the Patriots Partnership among the representatives almost could not wait to jump out and question him.

But before they said anything, Li Yao shouted first, “There are a few words that I would like to share with you!

“The evidence that I displayed just now may be not enough to prove the sincerity of the demon race’s surrender, but at the very least, it is enough to prove that Lu Zui, as the director of the Secret Sword Bureau, Shou Yuxuan, who is the deputy director of the Capital Medical College, and other suspects knew of the existence of Elder Nether Spring and the Children of the Nether World a long time ago but kept them a secret. They even planned the operation to assassinate the Speaker and caused the deaths of tens of thousands innocent people!

“But behind Lu Zui, there is still an enormous organization named the Patriots Partnership, which loathes to see the peace between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector and is determined to raise a war in whatever way possible!

“Right now, the ‘expedition motion’ has been passed, and the federal army is running drills on the Grand Desolate Plateau. A great war will break out in no time!

“Therefore, I beg you to cancel the ‘expedition motion’, pause the war plan, and investigate the Patriots Partnership. Also, you can send a delegation to the Blood Demon Sector and check the situation there with your own eyes so that we will have a channel of communication with the Pantheon of Demons!”

Li Yao paused for a moment. Sensing that several representatives were looking at him sharply, he spoke in advance before they questioned him. “I know that, despite all the evidence I’ve provided, a critical question remained unanswered yet, which is whether or not I’m possessed by the Blood Stripe Virus!

“Many of the representatives and the fellow Cultivators here must be wondering the same thing. Even if everything that I said is true, I cannot prove that I am not possessed by the Blood Stripe Virus, can I? Maybe, the so-called Blood Devil is winning everybody’s trust in preparation for a larger scheme!

“I’m well aware that it is very difficult to explain, but we are running out of time.

“Therefore—”

Li Yao smiled and opened his hands. Small, glittering pearls popped up from his Cosmos Ring one after another and danced around him merrily.

Very soon, almost a hundred colorful, refreshing pearls were circling him faster and faster until they almost formed a barrier.

The three battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and hundred Core Formation Stage Cultivators were all greatly surprised. Not knowing what Li Yao was up to, they could only activate their spiritual shield and watch warily.

Li Yao grinned. “In order to prove my innocence, over the past year, I went through a lot of trouble to collect the most rarely-seen Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and produced a hundred and eight ‘Mental Devil Annihilating Thunderous Pills’!

“According to my design, the hundred and eight Mental Devil Annihilating Thunderous Pills, which were refined with the mysterious, sophisticated secret arts of the ancient times, can trigger mystic and incredible lightning that will take effect directly inside the brain and destroy all objects that do not belong to the body!

“If I cannot destroy the Blood Stripe Virus even then, I will detonate my body and soul with all my Cultivation and die together with it!

“Today, Vulture Li Yao will demonstrate my determination with my death, if that is the only way to convince you of everything that I’ve said!”

“What?” All the Cultivators jumped to their feet. They did not expect Li Yao to be as strong-minded!

Ding Lingdang frowned and was about to lunge forth when Wu Mayan clung to her thigh and dragged her back.

Wu Mayan rolled his eyes and said in a weird expression. “Wait, Masteress, if you recall what Master said a moment ago…”

Ding Lingdang was dazed. She looked at professor Mo Xuan, who was next to her.

As a spectral Cultivator, the professor did not have a facial expression, but the crystal cameras on his face were glittering. There was no telling what was on his mind, but he was definitely more amused than panicked.

“Don’t you come close!”

The ‘Mental Devil Annihilating Thunderous Pills’ around Li Yao were revolving faster and faster. They released electric arcs that weaved into a golden, blinking net. The electric net ripped the air apart, generating a deep blue mist. Everything inside the mist became obscure. The only thing that could be heard was Li Yao’s desperate roar. “The Blood Stripe Virus is very sordid. It might dash out of my body and run into yours!

“Fellow Cultivators, be careful not to be infected. Don’t come close! Sacrifice one for the happiness of many!”

A few Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Core Formation Stage Cultivators were planning to go forward and help Li Yao, but they did not dare move after hearing his words.

They had no idea what the Blood Devil was exactly, much less how to resist it. Who could they turn to if they were accidentally infected?

The ‘Mental Devil Annihilating Thunderous Pills’ were revolving at the highest speed. The spacious hall was filled with the sound of thunder. Covered by the deep blue mist, the spectators lost track of everything inside the array.

Everybody could only hear two voices replacing each other, one of which belonged to Li Yao, and the other was extremely sharp, brutal, and cold!

“You will not escape from my body. I am going to die with you!”

“Hiss. Let me go! Let me go!”

“Haha. Hahahaha. Let’s die together and finish everything!”

“You are crazy! Don’t. Don’t! Ah! Ahhhhhhhh!”

As the two voices echoed, bright, overwhelming spiritual waves and mysterious, unpredictable cold winds were both surging inside the array, as if two strengths, one righteous and the other evil, were having a head-on clash!

Gradually, the cold wind seemed to be eclipsing the spiritual waves!

Everybody was astonished. They were wondering what they should do when Li Yao roared from the center of the array. “Friends, compatriots, and fellow Cultivator, farewell!”

Boom!

The hundred and eight ‘Mental Devil Annihilating Thunderous Pills’ activated the most dazzling electric arcs at the same time and collapsed toward the center, raising a brilliant ball.

Deep inside the ball, a bloody shadow seemed to be struggling before it perished into nothingness after a scream.

The ball died down, and the electric arcs were no more. The hall was peaceful again, but a blackened statue was floating in midair quietly and extending its arms toward them, as if he were still not willing to leave the world. Frozen for half a second, he fell down heavily.

“Li Yao!” Ding Lingdang pinched her leg hard and ran forward in tears.

All the representatives and experts looked at each other in bewilderment, speechless.

The few members of the Patriots Partnership among the representatives were dazed and infuriated, too.

Before, they had drafted dozens of neat plans targeting Li Yao’s identity as the Blood Devil. The debate and the investigation would linger for days if not months. He would not be able to explain himself.

But they had not anticipated that Li Yao would play such a move!

What was that supposed to mean? Such acting skills were too unnatural! They were not idiots!

In the dead silence, Professor Mo Xuan walked to the podium slowly. He did not look at Li Yao, who was stretching on the ground, catching his last breath at all but turned his worried eyes to all the representatives and experts in the hall.

“Fellow Cultivators.”

Professor Mo Xuan was renowned in the first place, and everybody knew his legendary experience in the Flying Star Sector. Therefore, there was no need for him to introduce himself.

He sighed as if he were truly grieving and said solemnly, “Fellow Cultivator Li Yao was willing to die together with the

Blood Stripe Virus in order to destroy it. It was truly admirable.

“However, we don’t know yet whether the Blood Stripe Virus has been purged or not.

“Now, there are two possibilities.

“Firstly, the Blood Stripe Virus has indeed been annihilated without leaving slightest trace.

“Secondly, the Blood Stripe Virus has not been removed but is still lurking inside Li Yao’s body. After all, it is very difficult for us to confirm the result with our current technology!

“Oh, right. There’s another possibility. The Blood Stripe Virus is contagious. Perhaps, in the fierce fight just now, the Blood Stripe Virus, seeing that it was no good, escaped out of Li Yao’s body through the bloody mist and dashed into a certain someone’s body.

“In other words, all the representatives, elders, leaders, and ministers, every one of you, except for spectral Cultivators such as myself, could be… a Blood Devil!”

Chapter 1131 - Good or Evil!

Li Yao woke up slowly in the medication drugs, but he was not in a hurry to open his eyes. In the comfortable daze, he perceived the brand-new world slowly, like a butterfly that was about to break out of the cocoon or a sprout that was piercing out of the soil and smelling the warmth of sunlight.

Li Yao knew that he was totally different from the past now and that he had embarked on a completely different path of Cultivation.

Chiliu! Chiliu! Chiliu! Chiliu!

All the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures in the tank of medication drugs were absorbed by him instantly, repairing his broken organs crazily. His every cell was like a vigorous bud that would blossom soon.

The dark green medication drugs a moment ago turned as clear as water. All the ingredients had been swallowed by him.

Li Yao leapt out of the medication drugs, not raising the slightest wave. Before his feet landed on the floor, the remaining liquid on his skin had been vaporized into mist because of the high-frequency vibrations of his muscles. Surrounded by the mist, he looked rather elegant and mysterious.

Grinning, Li Yao looked at his hands in great satisfaction. He clenched his fists and felt the strength flowing among his finger like invisible dragons.

I’m finally back to myself!

The wounds previously, especially those from Diwu Jian’s Five Disintegrations of Heavens and Human, have mostly recovered. In another few days, the radiation will be utterly purged from my body!

Sensing that his every vein and nerve was as smooth and stoppable as a railway line, Li Yao felt so great that he roared!

It was a pure-white, high-level ward, filled with the most advanced medical magical equipment. But Wu Mayan was the only one taking a nap aside. Sensing the quickly surging spiritual energy, the young qi-trainer was suddenly woken up. He jumped to his feet. “Master, you’re awake!”

“What’s happened?”

Li Yao glanced at the clock on the wall. Twelve hours had passed since he executed the Blood Devil in parliament. It was the quietest moment at night right now.

Li Yao coughed. Rubbing his temples, he frowned. “Has the Blood Stripe Virus been killed by me?”

“Master…” Wu Mayan blinked and pouted. “You are going too far. I’ve followed you long enough, and this is not the first time that I’ve seen your performance as an actor. But even if you may not like to hear it, I still have to say that today’s performance was your most unnatural and unconvincing one!”

Li Yao’s face remained unchanged. “Was it?”

Wu Mayan nodded. “Yes, it was! Such foul acting skills did not even fool me. You didn’t think that the shrewd representatives, elders, and leaders would be tricked, did you?”

With a chuckle, Li Yao put on his coat with Wu Mayan’s help. Then he smiled. “You must think about it from a different perspective. Yes, my performance at that time was truly tawdry. It is the greatest stain on my acting career. Even the hundred and eight thunderous something pills were actually made by tearing down the beads of several bearings that I bought in a random hardware store. They indeed did not seem convincing enough to execute the Blood Stripe Virus.

“However, how can you prove that it was not yet another trick of the Blood Stripe Virus?

“Perhaps the Blood Stripe Virus wanted everybody to continue suspecting me while it took the chance to sneak into another victim’s body!”

Wu Mayan was dumbfounded. Hesitating for a long time, he said, “I have to prove that, too?”

“Of course!” Li Yao nodded solemnly. “You also know that the Blood Stripe Virus comes and goes without a trace. Whoever gets infected can only curse their bad luck! I was infected uncannily years ago, too. You were there to witness it in person!

“Therefore, no matter how foul my performance was, as soon as I point the fact out, the most powerful representatives, experts, and leaders will have to be faced with the same problem: how could they prove that my ‘foul performance’ was not the camouflage of a ‘marvelous performance’ and that the real Blood Stripe Virus has not snuck away to their body?

“Let’s take you for example. Suppose you are a representative in parliament, how can you prove that you are not infected by the Blood Stripe Virus?”

Wu Mayan jumped up and scratched his head for a long time, only to come up with nothing.

Li Yao laughed. “You can’t prove it. The representatives and leaders couldn’t, either, just like me.”

Wu Mayan raised his arms to surrender. “Master, you are losing me!”

Silent, Li Yao smiled.

“Master!” Wu Mayan glanced at him. Hesitating for a moment, he summoned his courage and asked, “Although it does make sense, I still want to know the truth. Has the Blood Stripe Virus been eliminated by you, Master? Will it jump out and cause trouble again sometime in future?”

“Does it really matter whether it is eliminated or not?”

Soft redness was flowing deep inside Li Yao’s left eye, as if it could be completely melted with the blackness in the depths of his right eye. Pondering for a moment, he said slowly, “It’s true that the Blood Stripe Virus seems bad and dangerous. Yan Xibei, years ago, even caused the doom of Iron Plateau after he was infected by the Blood Stripe Virus!

“Therefore, after I knew I was infected, I panicked every day and considered it a great enemy.

“However, after the incident recently, it has occurred to me that Lu Zui, who was in no way infected by the Blood Stripe Virus, almost caused the doom of the Heaven’s Origin

Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector, just like Yan Xibei, didn't he?

"Tell me. Is there a fundamental difference between Yan Xibei, who contracted the Blood Stripe Virus, and Lu Zui, who didn't?"

Wu Mayan was deep in thought.

Li Yao smiled and continued. "To this last second of his life, Yan Xibei still wouldn't accept that he was infected by the Blood Stripe Virus. He swore to me that he was Yan Xibei and that it was he who had been pushing forward the plan the whole time.

"At that time, I was not convinced. I thought that the real Yan Xibei was already dead, same as you did. I thought that our enemy on Iron Plateau was merely the Blood Devil that was using Yan Xibei's body as its shell.

"But now, I've changed my opinion. Perhaps he wasn't lying, and he was indeed not manipulated by the Blood Stripe Virus. Perhaps the so-called 'Blood Stripe Virus' is neither kind nor evil. It has always been us, our own heart, that can tell kindness from evilness. The Blood Stripe Virus is a catalyst at best.

"The Blood Stripe Virus did not manipulate Yan Xibei; Yan Xibei swallowed the Blood Stripe Virus and used its strength to carry out his crazy will!"

Wu Mayan stammered, "Master, you are saying—"

"What I'm saying is, maybe, there is an abyss in everyone's heart and a Blood Devil lurking in the deepest part of the abyss. Anybody—including someone like Lu Zui, who is absolutely not infected by the Blood Stripe Virus—might be accidentally swallowed by the abyss and fall into the control of their natural-born Blood Devil!

“If that’s the case, does it really matter whether or not the Blood Stripe Virus was purged by me?”

Wu Mayan gasped. “Then, what should we do?”

Li Yao snapped his forehead and said, “If you’re worried, go and look for the abyss and Blood Devil in your heart. Slash it every once in a while after dinner or sleep. That will be enough. Isn’t that the best sense of Cultivation?”

Holding his forehead, Wu Mayan was deep in thought, or rather, he pretended that was thinking hard.

Such ideas were not readily understandable for a young man less than twenty years old such as himself.

Right then, the door of the ward was thrown open. Ding Lingdang rushed in like a tornado and jumped into his arms.

Li Yao felt that an erupting volcano had just been thrown to him. He felt happy, stunned, and a bit suffocated.

Professor Mo Xuan looked at them from aside with delight.

“Should I give you ten minutes?” the professor asked thoughtfully and hinted at Wu Mayan.

“That’s unnecessary.” Ding Lingdang let go of Li Yao after pinching his chest hard. “You’ve been through this, too, Professor. We’ve been apart for ten years. What can we do in ten minutes? Also, the room here is too small. Not suitable for us.”

“Cough, cough. Cough, cough, cough!” Li Yao coughed loudly. Rubbing his ribs which were nearly broken by Ding Lingdang, he asked solemnly, “Professor, I’ve slept for half a day. What happened outside?”

Professor Mo Xuan smiled and brought three pieces of news.

Firstly, after learning that the Blood Stripe Virus was perhaps fleeing in the parliament building and might even have infected a random representative, expert, or leader, the federal government immediately took action with the cooperation of the Cultivators. In only a few hours, the best doctors, Meditation Healers, and refiners had worked out a standard procedure to identity the Blood Devil. The correction rate of the identification was one hundred percent.

All the representatives and experts who had been present, including Li Yao himself, passed the test. None of them were infected by the Blood Stripe Virus.

All of them agreed unanimously that the Blood Stripe Virus had been completely purged by Li Yao and would cause no further trouble.

It was truly a relief for everybody!

“Did they?” Li Yao frowned. “Is the identification procedure reliable or not? Is there any error? For safety reasons, we might as well quarantine all the representatives, leaders, and myself and observe the suspects for ten years. Isn’t that better?”

“Rest assured. It is absolutely reliable!” Professor Mo Xuan replied solemnly. “The identification procedure was approved by all the representatives, leaders, and specialists. It means that the authorities of the Heaven’s Origin Sector have guaranteed that anyone who passes the test is absolutely not infected by the Blood Stripe Virus!”

“That’s good.” Li Yao was finally relieved. He asked again, “Then, if I run into any trouble in the future, nobody will accuse me of being the Blood Devil again, right?”

“Definitely not!” Professor Mo Xuan answered quickly. “Everybody in parliament today could’ve been infected by the Blood Stripe Virus. If anybody suspects you, they will be suspecting everybody in the parliament building, won’t they?

“Therefore, after you executed the Blood Devil and fell into a coma, all the representatives, experts, and leaders agreed that the infection of the Blood Stripe Virus should be concluded now. Whoever dares to accuse other people of being infected by the Blood Stripe Virus will be a scoundrel fanning the flames and destroying the stability and harmony of the federation. Such people can only be spies sent by the Imperium of True Human Beings!”

Chapter 1132 - The Key to the Nascent Soul Stage!

The greatest burden on Li Yao’s heart was relieved. He felt much better and asked with a smile, “What about Lu Zui?”

“That’s the second great piece of news. Lu Zui is now under arrest. The ‘expedition motion’ has been paused, too.”

Lu Zui’s lies were full of holes when faced with the files and evidences brought by Li Yao, especially Elder Nether Spring’s memories. When the footage that recorded him ordering the shooting of the crystal railgun on ‘Hidden Star’ at thousands of civilians was sent to parliament, all the representatives and experts were greatly shocked.

Because of their unique battlefield, the actions of the Secret Sword Bureau did not require permissions under most circumstances. They were even allowed to bring the disciples of a sect in for investigation without contacting the leader of the sect, provided that they submitted evidence later.

But it did not mean that the Secret Sword Bureau was free to open fire on ordinary people.

Even if the first attack from Hidden Star was an honest mistake, the second one was definitely intentional.

The incident was in violation of the boundary of the federation and the Cultivators.

Right now, Lu Zui had officially been arrested and was now giving up other accomplices of the Patriots Partnership. The ‘expedition motion’ had been aborted in the emergency, too.

The message had been sent to the Grand Desolate Plateau at the highest speed. The troops that were stationed in the south of the Grand Desolate Plateau, planning to march into the Dark Desolate Domain, had all been ordered to retreat to their respective defense area. Those having drills in the Dark Desolate Domain would change the arrangement of the drills and finish them as quickly as possible so that they could return to their bases and stand by.

Also, in response to the instrument of surrender of the Pantheon of Demons brought back by Li Yao, the parliament decided to send a delegation to the Blood Demon Sector to investigate the situation of the world and to reach out to the Pantheon of Demons.

More importantly, they were going to pick up the remaining soldiers of a troop—the survivors of the Flying Tigers Legion led by Han Tuhu.

The soldiers of the Heaven’s Origin Sector had to be brought back home!

“I’m planning to join the delegation and go to the Blood Demon Sector!” Ding Lingdang rubbed her fists and said, “I discussed looking for you in the Blood Demon Sector with Wu Mayan before. But now, you’ve returned by yourself! Still, I want to see what the Blood Demon Sector looks like with my own eyes. Also… your third disciple Jin Xinyue seems to be an interesting girl. I should bond with her, shouldn’t I?”

Li Yao was sweating hard. “What—what do you want?”

Ding Lingdang smiled but said nothing. Behind her, Wu Mayan put on a miserable expression. It was clearly not a delightful experience to ‘bond’ with Ding Lingdang.

Professor Mo Xuan smiled. “Alright, alright. Save your private talk for at home. I have the third great piece of news.”

The third piece of news was a pleasant surprise.

Jiang Hailiu, the Speaker of the parliament, had woken up!

He was an admin-type Cultivator and did not boast much combat ability. He had nearly been broken apart by the crystal bomb that Lu Zui had carefully prepared. His brain had been in a deep coma because of the severe blast.

Before, Speaker Jiang was having a conservative treatment in a secret hospital not far away from the parliament building. Even the most brilliant Meditation Healers did not have good solutions to wake up his dormant soul.

However, in the afternoon yesterday, when everybody was shouting and singing the national anthem of the federation on every street and alley near the parliament building, Speaker Jiang’s brain had miraculously reacted!

Perhaps, when Li Yao’s soul collided with the souls of tens of thousands of citizens, the overwhelming resonation touched Speaker Jiang’s soul, which was struggling in oblivion. He had been reminded of his identity, his responsibility, and his destiny!

“Speaker Jiang woke up when you were ‘executing the Blood Stripe Virus’ in parliament,” Professor Mo Xuan said. “He dedicated himself to work the moment he woke up. The settlement of the ‘Blood Stripe Virus incident’ and the pause of the ‘expedition motion’ couldn’t have been passed quickly without his insistence.”

“Excellent!” Li Yao was overjoyed.

Jiang Hailiu was a leader with a calm, clear head, who would not be affected by the public fervor and his own emotions. He would certainly be able to make sure that the federation made the right choice.

“Speaker Jiang just woke up after all. His soul is still very weak. After working for six hours, he went back into the deep sleep state to treat himself again,” Professor Mo Xuan said. “However, before he went to sleep, he met me and asked me to bring a few words to you, which were exactly I meant to say to you—welcome home!”

“Welcome home, Master!” Wu Mayan shouted, too.

“Welcome home, my hero!” Ding Lingdang hugged Li Yao again and nibbled on his face.

Li Yao finally could not stop his tears from flowing out of his eyes anymore.

He was finally home. At that moment, he was truly back home with his family and friends!

Homecoming was ten times more exhilarating than condensing the Nascent Soul. Li Yao’s spiritual energy and soul were surging out beyond his control, and his brain was illuminated by the most dazzling brilliance!

“You are so strong right now!” Ding Lingdang sensed Li Yao’s changes immediately. She jabbed his chest and exclaimed, “What level are you in right now? You haven’t advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage yet, have you?”

The question made Wu Mayan and Professor Mo Xuan prick their ears, too.

A Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator less than forty years old?

That would be a monster in either the Heaven’s Origin Sector or the Flying Star Sector and even in the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago!

“I don’t know how I should put it.” Li Yao scratched his bottom and perceived the bump at the bottom of his spine. After hesitating for a long time, he said, “The Nascent Soul seems to have been condensed, but I’m still some distance away from the real ‘Nascent Soul Stage’. I feel like—

“Metaphorically speaking, my body is a pregnant woman right now. The ‘baby’ in my body has grown mature, but it is still in the womb and hasn’t been born yet.”

Ding Lingdang was confused. She thought for a long time and said, “Is it possible? I’ve never heard of such experiences from other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.”

Li Yao rubbed his stomach and observed, “This is what I thought. For most of the Cultivators who are about to enter the Nascent Soul Stage from the peak of the Core Formation Stage, they are at least a hundred years old. Their life experience, outlook, and worldview are all very stable. It’s like a grown-up woman giving birth to a baby. Everything will be very smooth when the time comes.

“But my situation is vastly different. I am too young after all. My strength may be enough, but I’m too short of life experience. My worldview is not mature and steady enough, either, considering how I often overrule my past opinions.

“It’s still too early for me to condense the Nascent Soul right now, like a teenage girl who conceived by accident. Her body is not prepared yet. When the critical moment comes, she—she might go through dystocia!”

The three of them looked at each other in bewilderment. Although Li Yao’s theory was rather unorthodox, it did make some sense on second thought.

“What do we do now?” Ding Lingdang asked anxiously. “Is it dangerous if the ‘baby’ cannot be born after a long time? I know a lot of experts whose capability plunged after they failed to advance into the Nascent Soul Stage. It was not a Nascent Soul that they formed but an Aggressive Soul, Broken Soul, or Fiendish Soul, which would plague them for the rest of their lives!”

Li Yao scratched his bottom again. Hearing Ding Lingdang’s words, he felt that his spine was swelling in pain and that the Nascent Soul that he had condensed was not peaceful as it appeared to be.

Thinking hard for a long time, Li Yao suddenly beamed with joy and said, “I reflected on the situations before, and I wonder if this is this key point.

“I have dual talents in fighting and refining, but I’m more focused on fighting. Before, I made all the improvements of the major levels during fierce battles. Sometimes, I never had a breakthrough unless I was beaten until I was heavy wounded, catching my last breath!

“For example, on Iron Plateau, I didn’t perceive the mysterious ‘superlative height of the Building Foundation Stage’ until Yan Xibei almost killed me!

“But this time, my opponent was Lu Zui. He is sordid and shameless, but he is not a warrior! In the end, I only just condensed my Nascent Soul with the resonation of souls of the public, when he raised hands and surrendered! I didn’t even move my fingers. How could I advance into the real Nascent Soul Stage?”

Ding Lingdang was enlightened. “I got it now. You are saying that, to advance into the Nascent Soul Stage, you need a great fighter to beat you up brutally to the point that you cannot feed yourself!”

Li Yao nodded. “That is not how I would put it, but that’s the idea.”

“That’s so easy. Come on. Shall we do it here or outside?” Ding Lingdang rolled up her sleeves and spat into her palms, eager to try. “I’m best at beating up other people, and I like beating you best. Come on. Let me savage you brutally!”

Wu Mayan clenched his fists and waved them, declaring solemnly, “Although my limbs are thin, if you think that I can be of any help, Master, I definitely will not hesitate to beat you up!”

How exciting it would be to beat his master up!

Li Yao coughed and shook his head. “It’s not simple as that. Not just you, even other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators won’t be helpful, either.

“It’s not about your strength but because I know that you do not really mean to kill me! How can the full potential of the Nascent Soul Stage be triggered without a real life-and-death battle?

“The only result will be that I am beaten up by you while gaining nothing. It will not be helpful for the improvement of my level at all.”

Ding Lingdang and Wu Mayan looked at each other in bewilderment and realized that it did make sense. It was like the battles in the Grand Illusionary Land and those in the real world; they were completely different.

No real warriors could ever be trained in a virtual reality system.

“Then what do we do?” Ding Lingdang frowned. It would be a time bomb if the issue was not addressed.

“We do nothing.” Li Yao scratched his head. Everybody’s path and opportunity to enter the Nascent Soul Stage was different. Other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator would not be able to offer much guidance to him. It all counted on himself.

Right now, he did not have good solutions, but he knew that he must not rush into anything.

The ‘Nascent Soul’ was the purest crystallization of a Cultivator’s will, experience, and strength. If irrelevant thoughts were mixed into it, his future training would be seriously affected.

Who knew whether or not Lu Zui had walked on the wrong path to this day because he had some extreme thoughts when he condensed the Nascent Soul?

Thinking about Lu Zui, Li Yao was suddenly ill at ease for some reason.

After the improvement of his level, his senses were even sharper than before. He could vaguely foresee something before it happened.

“Where is Lu Zui right now? I’d like to meet him.”

A lot of questions about the whole scheme remained unanswered. Li Yao was quite interested in talking to the leader of the Patriots Partnership.

Chapter 1133 - Mutual Appreciation!

“Lu Zui is now temporarily locked in the underground fortress in parliament,” Professor Mo Xuan said. “Due to the recent events, the Secret Sword Bureau is now a mess. Parliament has passed Speaker Jiang’s proposal that Supervisor Guo of the first division of the Secret Sword Bureau be the acting director of the Secret Sword Bureau. Also, he was asked to establish a special investigation group to interrogate Lu Zui and find out the scheme of the Patriots Partnership.

Li Yao beamed with joy and almost exclaimed, “Supervisor Guo is still alive?”

Li Yao was very clear that, although it was himself and the veterans who had caused great trouble and revealed Lu Zui’s real face in the end, the key to his endeavor had always been Guo Chunfeng.

If Guo Chunfeng had not taken action in advance and protected Professor Mo Xuan and Ding Lingdang under the name of the arrest, they would have been taken away by the Patriots Partnership.

Later, it was also Guo Chunfeng who had reached out to him. The two of them had been able to exchange tremendous information and set up their trap that even fooled the cunning Lu Zui!

It was still Guo Chunfeng who had informed him of the basic structure and defense system of the headquarters of the

Secret Sword Bureau and guided him to sneak in.

Otherwise, how could Li Yao have broken through the defense network of the largest intelligence agency of the federation in only a few hours, considering that he was a human being after all?

Without Guo Chunfeng, it would not have been impossible for him to communication with Professor Mo Xuan and retrieve the evidence of paramount importance from the Jade Crystal Disc!

At the last moment, Guo Chunfeng even sacrificed himself resolutely and boarded ‘Hidden Star’, where he stalled his boss, Lu Zui, earning the previous half hour for them!

Without the half hour, they definitely would not have been able to reach the central district, where the parliament building was located. The Patriots Partnership would have stopped them halfway.

At that time, Li Yao had still been under the adverse effects of the Five Disintegrations of Heavens and Human. His capability had plunged, and he was certainly no match for the assassins of the Patriots Partnership!

Therefore, even though everybody considered him a great hero who saved the day at the most critical moment, Li Yao believed that Guo Chunfeng was the most important person for the war.

Guo Chunfeng was definitely the well-deserved greatest contributor!

“Where is Supervisor Guo?” Li Yao asked excitedly. “I would like to meet him!”

Professor Mo Xuan’s crystal cameras glittered. He smiled. “As it happens, Supervisor Guo wants to meet you, too. He also asked whether or not you are willing to join the investigation group to look into the Patriots Partnership. He seems to have run into some trouble and would like to study it with you.”

Li Yao nodded quickly. “Of course!”

…

Below the parliament building was an underground fortress designed to resist the beast tide outbreak.

The entire fortress consumed more than five million tons of super alloys. There was a sentry post every few steps. The attack and defense rune arrays were all of the highest level.

Deep inside the underground fortress, Li Yao and Guo Chunfeng hugged each other warmly.

“Fellow Cultivator Guo!”

“Fellow Cultivator Li!”

‘Fellow Cultivator’ could mean a lot or nothing. When two Cultivators who had not seen each other before met, they could address each other by ‘fellow Cultivator’ for politeness.

However, for Li Yao and Guo Chunfeng, the meaning of ‘fellow Cultivator’ was much deeper, intense and unchangeable.

Even when there was still a misunderstanding between them and Li Yao regarded Guo Chunfeng as Abyss, he had admired the keenness and resolution of the ‘demon hunter’.

Many times, the traps and the false identities that Li Yao had made after all the trouble were seen through by Guo Chunfeng immediately. He had nearly been caught quite a number of times.

Such a worthy opponent truly deserved his appreciation.

Guo Chunfeng was a friend, not a foe. It was really the biggest surprise in the war.

“Brother Guo, how did you escape from Lu Zui?”

Li Yao used a more intimate form of address. He eyed Guo Chunfeng up and down and discovered, although the guy appeared feeble, there was nothing serious about him. He took a long breath in relief but was caught in confusion.

At that time, Guo Chunfeng had gone to buy more time for him at the cost of his own life. He had been determined to sacrifice himself.

How did Lu Zui allow him to survive?

Guo Chunfeng smiled and replied casually, “It’s simple. After I delayed Lu Zui for half an hour according to our deal, Lu Zui indeed realized what was going on and burst into fury!

“At that time, I was surrounded by Lu Zui and four tough warriors, who were all infuriated and had made up their minds to kill me. When I was about to die, at the critical moment—”

“What did you do?” Li Yao held his breath, sweating.

“I cried and kneeled on the ground,” Guo Chunfeng said solemnly. “I begged Lu Zui to be lenient and spare my worthless life.”

Li Yao was dumbfounded. “Huh?”

“I kneeled on the ground and crawled over like a dog. Clinging to Lu Zui’s thigh, I cried to Lu Zui. I told him that, for his information, everything that had happened had happened. I’d already delayed him long enough. Killing me wouldn’t help him, right?

“Moreover, although I was heavily wounded, I still had a bit of strength to counterattack. When a rabbit is angry, it can bite, too! If they were determined to kill me, it would cost them another several minutes as well as the physical strength and ammunition of the great heroes of the Patriots Partnership, which would certainly not be very good, right?”

“Brother Guo, you—you must be kidding, right?” Li Yao stammered.

“I am not. It was exactly what happened.” Guo Chunfeng opened his hands and said casually, “I kneeled, I begged, and I cried. Touching my chest, I told Lu Zui that I knew I was wrong and that I was willing to correct my wrongdoing and join the Patriots Partnership! I still had a lot of secret resources at my disposal, and I could contribute all of them to his organization and help him to complete his patriotic plan. As long as he could give us another opportunity and spare my worthless life, I was willing to do anything.”

Li Yao was astounded. “And Lu Zui believed it?”

Guo Chunfeng shook his head. “Of course he didn’t, but I said something else.

“Director, you claim that you are not swallowed by hatred and that everything you did was out of rationality for the future of the federation. That is the belief of the ‘patriots’.

“Then, it will be wrong for you to kill me.

“I am already kneeling on the ground begging for mercy. Killing me at such a moment is utterly meaningless. It’s just a way to vent your anger.

“Killing me will prove that the ‘patriots’, including Lu Zui, cannot control their hatred and fury. Then, the ideology and the ‘belief’ you persist with will be pure garbage. How will you be able to maintain your current level?

“The four Core Formation Stage Cultivators will be chasing after you later. If their belief wavers after they kill me, how can they fight the battle next?

“Just like that, I cried and rolled on the ground. Even Lu Zui was shocked. Then, the news that you’d been found came over. That was how I luckily survived.”

Li Yao was rendered speechless for a long time.

Guo Chunfeng patted his shoulder. “Young brother, are you very disappointed?”

“Not exactly.” Li Yao tried to adjust his facial muscles. “I’m just a bit surprised. Brother Guo doesn’t seem like someone who is scared of death.”

“I was not scared of death.” Guo Chunfeng’s eyes pierced through the underground and landed somewhere far, far away. “However, I was scared that I wouldn’t see my wife and my daughter again. Very scared.

“Now that I’ve earned enough time and fulfilled my responsibility as a Cultivator to my country and my compatriots, should I fulfil my responsibility for my wife and my daughter next?

"Young brother, when you are my age and have your own wife and children, you will understand me.

"On the ground that my principles are not violated, as long as there is a slim chance that I can reunite with my family… not just kneeling down and begging for mercy, I guarantee that I will lick the bottom of Lu Zui's shoes if he asks me to."

Li Yao was dazed for a long time, but then he suddenly smiled.

Perhaps it was not an answer that he expected, but at the very least, Guo Chunfeng was still alive. He could still go back home on his own feet and meet his wife and daughter. His wife and daughter needed to neither attend to his funeral nor cry on the countless cold nights in the future.

Could there have been a better outcome?

"Brother Guo, if I ever have the chance, I would love to visit your home and see what the place that attracts you so much really looks like!" Li Yao said sincerely.

"Hahahaha. It's just a regular house." Guo Chunfeng laughed in delight. "My daughter will be exultant if you are there—the legendary Ultra-Level Federal Hero, Vulture Li Yao! She won't be able to fall asleep again for the next three days!"

"Brother Guo, we both know that it is not true." Li Yao was more or less embarrassed. "You are the greatest contributor in the battle. If we're talking about heroes, you are certainly the real hero here."

"Alright." Guo Chunfeng changed the topic. "If we don't stop, we'll spend the next three days adulating each other. Let's talk later at my place when this thing is over. Now, let's watch the footage of Lu Zui’s interrogation. I feel that something is wrong, but I can’t tell exactly what it is. Take a look at it.”

“No problem!”

Li Yao walked to the analysis center next to the interrogation room, where hundreds of light beams were displaying the picture of Lu Zui being interrogated ever since he was captured.

Almost all of the interrogation was a one-on-one competition between Guo Chunfeng and Lu Zui. Even the tiniest muscle reactions when Lu Zui was speaking were monitored and analyzed carefully.

In the picture, Guo Chunfeng said calmly, “Director, your scheme has been exposed. It is a doomed cause now! If you do not give up, the interests of the federation will be harmed, and more blood will be shed for nothing! If you are a real patriot as you claim to be, just confess everything now for the federation and for everything you want to protect!”

After a long silence, Lu Zui replied in a bitter smile, “If you win, you are a king; but if you fail, you are a rebel.”

He began his confession. His speed was low, but his words were very clear. The information was unambiguous, too.

In a few hours, he gave up dozens of secret bases of the Patriots Partnership and a complicated connection network as well as several production centers of the Demon God Virus in the East Ocean and the southern rainforest.

According to the information, the Core Formation Stage Cultivators and the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the capital city took action immediately and marched to the places all over the country, trying to demolish the Patriots Partnership before they reacted.

Up to now, the dense of the Patriots Partnership in the capital city and the few cities nearby had been discovered. Hundreds of ‘patriots’, as well as tremendous files and even virus samples, had been captured.

Generally speaking, Lu Zui was quite cooperative, with barely any resistance.

However, after watching the interrogation videos, Li Yao frowned as hard as Guo Chunfeng did.

Chapter 1134 - There's Only One Truth!

Lu Zui was like a gambler who had wagered all his belongings only to lose everything. All his emotions other than frustration and desperation had flowed out of his body. The only thing that was left was an empty shell that was answering Guo Chunfeng’s questions mechanically.

However, behind the frustration and desperation, Li Yao vaguely sensed a hint tranquility.

Not the tranquility of gloom and giving up everything, but the tranquility of waiting before the arrival of a storm!

“Something is wrong.

“Lu Zui is too peaceful, desperate, and frustrated. He is a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. His belief should be unwavering. Would he give up so easily?

“He just suffered a brutal failure. In his eyes, the federation should be hopeless now. However, faced with such an outcome, he didn’t even struggle but simply confessed everything at the earliest opportunity. Is he watching the Patriots Partnership get demolished just like that?”

Looking at Guo Chunfeng, Li Yao said, “I want to meet him.”

When the two of them stepped into the prison cell, Lu Zui, locked up in barriers, was sitting cross-legged in a corner. He was absent-minded while staring at a dim light on the ceiling.

Several bugs crashed into the light, producing cracking noises, but they never retreated.

Lu Zui was completely focused on the few bugs. He did not even bother to greet Li Yao and Guo Chunfeng.

Now, time was on Lu Zui’s side again because Li Yao and Guo Chunfeng could not afford to wait. Guo Chunfeng could not help but ask, “Director, what are you looking at?”

“I’m looking at the future.” Lu Zui’s voice was both deep and slow, as if it was floating up from the depths of a swamp, with mud dripping from his every word. “The future a hundred years from now.

“In the decades to come, after the demon race surrenders and mankind secures a glorious victory, the capability of the federation soars quickly. Everybody dwells in the illusions of peace and prosperity, unable to free themselves. Li Yao and Guo Chunfeng, the two Cultivators who have facilitated everything, become the great heroes for the public!

“When the demons just surrender, they conceal their aggressiveness and pretend to be innocent lambs and hardworking horses. They sneak into the federation in the most humble and docile position, shouldering the most arduous and dirty work.

“With the joint efforts, the federation is flourishing. Everything seems to be developing to the perfect direction.

“However, good days don’t last long.

“Gradually, the population of the demon race grows larger. With their advantage in survival abilities, the demons spread out to all the resource planets in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector, and even the larger world.

“Human beings, in comparison, have a hard time immigrating into the Blood Demon Sector because of their weak bodies.

“As a result, there are more and more demons, and they are occupying more and more worlds. Over time, they seize the critical posts in the new federation.

“The war in the past is slowly forgotten as the two parties are more and more integrated. The activities of demons demanding their rights are gaining popularity. To stabilize the federation and to resist the imperium, the demon race, as the disadvantaged people, gets all kinds of privileges from the police makers. The rules, ethics, and even laws that have passed on for thousands of years are smashed into pieces because they are ‘biased’. Even the word ‘demon’ will become a taboo because it is not politically correct.

“Maybe demons by then will no longer be called demons. They will be ‘the physically extraordinary’ or ‘the federal citizens of Blood Demon descent’.

“Even so, the demons are still not satisfied. They are still pushing forward in every aspect. They replace our rules with their rules, they contaminate our culture with their culture, and they twist our history with their history! The heroes who sacrificed themselves on the battlefields to resist demons are no longer regarded as real heroes, and the dramas and movies with expert demons as protagonists will be aired blatantly!

“In the end, every human kid loses wariness of the demon race and forgets the hundreds of years of struggle of their ancestors. They are even ashamed of their natural-born suspicion!

“The changes will not happen in an instant but take place slowly and surely over the span of decades under the banner of ‘love, peace, and integration’.

“Nobody will realize that it is another invasion. The idiotic public will only be brainwashed by the media and the consortiums. The shrewd politicians, however, think that they can take advantage of the strength. Only the few people who are sober can see through the danger behind everything, but their voice is too low. Even if they say anything, they will be accused of being the remnants of the Patriots Partnership and be despised for ‘sabotaging the integration’.

“Eventually, when the stinky demons occupy our streets, steal our jobs, take away our women, and tarnish our flag, some of them will wake up in regrets.

“But it will be too late. The country will be like a patient whose cancer has proliferated to the entire body. There’s no way to reverse the illness at all.

“Maybe, at that time, the patient will regret not following the doctor’s advice in the beginning and cutting off all the cancerous organs with the sharp scalpel, no matter how important the organs appeared to be!

“This is everything I’ve seen, Supervisor Guo. No, that’s not right. I should call you ‘Director Guo’. The new director of the Secret Sword Bureau, are you interested in watching it together with me?”

Li Yao and Guo Chunfeng looked at each other and both felt tricky.

Guo Chunfeng sighed. “Director, do you know who he is?”

“Of course,” Lu Zui replied casually without even looking at Li Yao. “A retard who thinks he is smart. A moron who thinks that he is not corrupted by the Blood Devil when he fell victim to the evilness a long time ago.”

“Director!” Guo Chunfeng raised his voice. “With everything coming to this point, do you still not regret what you did at all? Li Yao saved the federation time and time again. He is a well-deserved federal hero, but in order to achieve your goals, you vilified him in such shameless ways and even involved Ding Lingdang, Professor Mo Xuan, and so many other people!”

“I didn’t vilify him,” Lu Zui said calmly. “The accomplishments in the past cannot make up for the wrongdoing today. At this moment, I still maintain my opinion that the real Li Yao died in the Blood Demon Sector and that the one who is alive is but a devil residing in Li Yao’s shell. The devil is going to ruin the federation eventually!

“I tried to stop the devil, but it is too cunning, too strong, and too good at taking advantage of the weakness of humanity. Therefore, I failed in the end.

“Do I feel bad? Of course!

“But do I regret? Hehe. I’m not sorry for what I did. I don’t regret!”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and confronted Lu Zui for the first time. “You don’t regret, and yet you confessed the nests of the Patriots Partnership. The organization is now falling apart, and the ‘patriots’ are being captured. Why?”

“As I said, when you take a gamble, you must brace for failure,” Lu Zui replied lazily. “I didn’t kill Guo Chunfeng on

‘Hidden Star’ because our organization was doing everything not for personal grudges but for justice and the future of the federation!

“Killing Guo Chunfeng would only have made me feel better, but the country would have lost an excellent director of the Secret Sword Bureau, which was against my belief. So, I didn’t do it.

“By the same logic, now that we’ve failed with no possibility of a comeback, is there any necessity to struggle in vain and waste the federation’s resources?

“Now that I’ve failed, I might as well admit my failure quickly. Consider it the last bit of dignity I save for myself!”

Li Yao scratched his head. He was not an interrogation expert. Lu Zui’s theory sounded rather self-consistent without many loopholes, but why was he feeling more and more puzzled?

“You are not admitting your failure!” Li Yao suddenly bulged his eyes and stared at Lu Zui. “You still have possibility of a comeback! Everything you are doing right now is the same as what Guo Chunfeng did on ‘Hidden Star’. You are buying time… for someone else!”

Lu Zui’s eyes were hollow, devoid of any feelings. He smiled and continued studying the moths that were darting toward the light.

“No! No! No!”

Li Yao thought so hard that he felt that his brain was exploding. He retrieved the locations of the nests of the Patriots Partnership that Lu Zui had confessed again. Finally, he found the source of his uneasiness.

"Lu Zui, in the past twelve hours, you've confessed thirty-seven nests, but thirty-one of them are located in the south of the federation or in the East Ocean!

"The few most important bases of the Demon God Virus, which are protected by the experts, are even at the southmost part of the country!

"What is the meaning of that? Does regional discrimination prevail in the Patriots Partnership and you only recruit southerners?"

Lu Zui simply closed his eyes in silence, but he gradually put on a scornful smile.

Guo Chunfeng was a top-tier interrogation expert. He had not been able to see the truth because he was too involved. Now that Li Yao had reminded him, he immediately realized what was going on. "Are you suggesting that he is distracting us?

"The thirty-seven nests he confessed are all of paramount importance. The toughest members of the Patriots Partnership are gathered there!

"To demolish those nests and to capture all the members, not only are the local Cultivators on the move, the experts in the north and the central part of the federation are also marching toward the south on crystal warships!

"Right now, most of the Core Formation Stage Cultivators and the Nascent Soul Stages in the federation are concentrated in the rainforest in the south and on the ocean to deal with the Patriots Partnership. It is impossible to get them back soon!

“Li Yao, you are not suggesting that there is someone behind Lu Zui, who is another leader of the Patriots Partnership on par with him, if not in a higher position, are you? Everything that Lu Zui has been doing is exactly like what I did for you. He is buying time for the guy so that the guy will be able to activate the backup plan!”

With a solemn, Li Yao nodded. “Don’t you find it odd, Brother Guo? Now that I think of it, to set me up, Lu Zui made use of a lot of connections and resources in the military, the circle of politicians, and the world of Cultivators. Isn’t it too much for the identity of ‘the director of the Secret Sword Bureau’?

“Also, our victory this time has come too easily, hasn’t it? The Patriots Partnership has planned carefully for such a long time taking all the factors into consideration. Have they not prepared a ‘Plan B’ as their desperate resort when their primary plan fails? Are they going to be suppressed just like that?”

Guo Chunfeng was having goosebumps all over his body. He bulged his eyes. “Another leader of the Patriots Partnership? Who—who are you suspecting?”

“Tearing off all the disguises, there can only be one truth!”

Li Yao pressed his temples. The deep brilliance in his eyes was unbelievably sharp and mysterious while Li Yao said, one word after another, “Jiang Hailiu, the Speaker of Parliament!”

Chapter 1135 - Simpleminded!

Guo Chunfeng suddenly shivered. “Young brother, why did you say that?”

Lu Zui, who was crouching in the corner with eyes closed like a monk, suddenly widened his eyes, with disbelief beaming out.

“Very simple. My experience!” Li Yao sneered. “I have travelled in the sea of stars for more than ten years. After bloody battles, large and small, and mysterious schemes, I have concluded an incontrovertible law of nature, which is—

“Wherever I go, as long as I’m involved in a scheme, the one behind it is always the local leading person of the righteous forces, one that always seems frank and outspoken!

“When I went to Iron Plateau, I was involved in the assassination of a chief and the internal strife of the six tribes. The one behind the curtain was Yan Xibei, the previous leading person of Iron Plateau!

“When I went to Heavenly Saints City, I was involved in the schemes of Iron Plateau and the coup of the Second Imperium. Eventually, it was Xiao Xuance, the leading person of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City and the strongest expert of the Flying Star Sector!

“When I was in the Blood Demon Sector, from the perspective of the demon race, the hiatus of the Red Tide Plan and the destruction of the Eye of Blood Demon was sort of a scheme, too, and it was planned by the leading person, Jin Tuyi, the nominal commander-in-chief of the demon army!

“Now, I’m already back in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and I’m involved in the incident of the Patriots Partnership again. Isn’t it obvious who is behind the curtain? It’s certainly the leading person of the Star Glory Federation, the Speaker ‘Jiang Hailiu’!”

“…” Guo Chunfeng.

“…” Lu Zui.

Guo Chunfeng wiped off his sweat. “Young—young brother, you do have a marvelous way of thinking. However, do you have any valid proof?”

“Of course, I don’t suspect anybody randomly!” Li Yao replied confidently. “First of all, since the guy is capable of making Lu Zui sacrifice for him willingly, he must be on par with Lu Zui in position, if not higher! In the entire federation, few are qualified, but the Speaker is an exception!

“Secondly, don’t you think that Speaker Jiang woke up too uncannily, Brother Guo? It was exactly the moment when Lu Zui was revealed, and everything was settled. As a result, it was only natural for him to clean up the mess that Lu Zui left for him!

“Also, Speaker Jiang’s political career began from the Grand Desolate Plateau, but the city that he operated for more than ten years was demolished in the beast tide! Therefore, Speaker Jiang hates the demons’ guts, and he certainly has a motive to join the Patriots Partnership!

“In conclusion, the assassination of the Speaker was a show directed and starred by Jiang Hailiu himself. He cleared all suspicion in such a way! It would be best if Lu Zui’s plan went well. But if it didn’t, he could still jump out and proceed with the backup plan!

“Now, Lu Zui has thrown out a batch of nests of the Patriots Partnership, which distracted most of the experts in the federation to the south and the East Ocean. The forces near the capital city are weaker than ever. All the representatives and experts are suspecting whether or not someone else is a remnant of the Patriots Partnership. It is a mess!

“At this point, if Jiang Hailiu has an unexpected force under his control, he will be able to do whatever he wants!

“As expected of the Speaker. What a well-played game. He can’t possibly fail either way!”

Guo Chunfeng nodded quickly. “Very reasonable. Very reasonable. You are truly… Wait! There’s a minor problem. Suppose Speaker Jiang is truly another leader of the Patriots Partnership, why would he go through the unnecessary trouble?

“If he and Lu Zui were the leaders of the Patriots Partnership, since Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao has always been a simpleminded hawk, they would’ve been able to wage a war three months ago when the capital city suffered a beast tide? Why the fuss?

“At that time, most of the representatives voted for the war. It was because of the insistence of the minority, including Speaker Jiang, and the endorsement of the allies from the Flying Star Sector that the two parties were at an impasse. Eventually, Lu Zui was forced to set a trap and assassinate the Speaker!”

“Well, the question—” Li Yao smiled and blinked, his face rigid. “—is a good one! How could I have neglected such a loophole!”

“…” Guo Chunfeng.

“…” Lu Zui.

“Wait!” Li Yao’s nose flapped, as if he smelt something unusual from the air. His eyes shone as he asked suddenly, “Brother Guo, you mentioned a name just now… Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao!

“Right! Right! Right! I finally know why I always felt that something was off now!

“Before I returned to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, Jin Tuyi told me that there were three key people for the peace negotiation, namely Speaker Jiang Hailiu, Director Lu Zui, and Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao!

“But during the incident, after Lu Zui and Jiang Hailiu both played their roles, Lu Zui being the villain, and the Speaker being blown up the moment he showed up, which was not his fault, where was Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao?

“The capital city was a total mess a while back. Why did the seasoned general not come here and calm everybody down? He didn’t seem to exist at all, did he?”

Guo Chunfeng thought for a moment and said, “The entire federation was anxious after the Speaker was assassinated. The federal army was seething, too. To stabilize the military, the Iron Commander flew to the Grand Desolate Plateau in person that night to supervise the large-scale joint drill with the code name ‘Furious Fist’.”

Li Yao squinted. “The Speaker was assassinated during the day, and the Iron Commander went to the Grand Desolate and planned a drill at night? That was quite efficient!”

“Not exactly.” Guo Chunfeng explained, “The ‘Furious Fist’ drill was planned three months ago after the incident in the capital city. Four crystal suit legions and more than twenty general legions were involved. For the drill, several war bases have been established on the Grand Desolate Plateau.

“Real soldiers and real bullets were used in the drill. The scenario of the drill was that, after a large-scale war broke out, the federal army would march through the Dark Desolate Domain into the Nine Voids in the Blood Demon Sector, where they would establish a base and a beachhead for the follow-up troops.

“Therefore, the drill had long been prepared. It was only activated several days earlier because of the attack on the Speaker.

Li Yao swallowed and felt that his throat was burning. “Four crystal suit legions plus twenty general legions? Real soldiers with real bullets? Supervised by Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao in person? It means that the drill can be transformed into… a real attack at any minute, right?”

“Not likely.” Guo Chunfeng shook his head. “Although the drill is highly simulative, the ammunition and supplies that they bring will not be as many as in a real war. More importantly, the logistics department and the follow-up troops are not prepared at all.

“Even if so many legions march into the Blood Demon Sector, they don’t stand any chance of winning without reinforcements.”

“Is it possible that there are no reinforcements?” Li Yao looked at Guo Chunfeng gloomily. “Suppose the ‘simpleminded’ Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao really leads twenty legions into the Blood Demon Sector without caring about anything, will we simply wait and watch them to be killed?”

Guo Chunfeng shuddered and sweated hard. “Zhou Hengdao is truly a big shot in the military who enjoys unparalleled prestige, but the federal army is not his personal troop. It is the country that the soldiers pledge loyalty to but not a certain individual! All the soldiers know that it is a drill. How can Zhou Hengdao command all the legions to march into the Blood Demon Sector? Won’t that be a mutiny?”

Li Yao scratched his head hard. “It does make sense, but I still feel that something is wrong. Right. You mentioned that it is a ‘joint drill’. Who’s joining the drill?”

“Burning Prairie, the best warship of the three Sectors! One of the purposes of the ‘Furious Fist’ drill is to hone the teamwork between the warship of the Flying Star Sector and the army of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, as well as to integrate the two hundred thousand Grand Illusionary Soldiers into the federal army.

“Also, most of the marines on Burning Prairie are rookies as well, and the performance of Burning Prairie is not very steady itself. Both the crew and the warship have to be polished in a live drill!”

Burning Prairie used to be ‘Heavenly Phantom’, a crystal warship co-produced by the six sects of Heavenly Saints City and the Star Fighters’ Alliance only to be taken over by Xiao Xuance, the leader of the Immortal Cultivators.

Heavenly Phantom was Xiao Xuance’s biggest reliance in the insurgency. Naturally, he spared no efforts infiltrating Heavenly Phantom.

When the insurgency broke out, most of the marines on Heavenly Phantom had been Immortal Cultivators. The critical posts were almost exclusively controlled by them!

More importantly, the ‘star brain’, which was the mainframe crystal processor of Heavenly Phantom, had been under the control of the ‘star child’ from the Imperium of True Human Beings!

Therefore, after the insurgency was suppressed, the Heavenly Phantom left to the Flying Star Sector had been a mess. The mainframe crystal processor had been completely ruined, and most of the marines had been arrested and trialed. It was truly a sorry scene.

Heavenly Phantom was not recovered, repainted, and renamed as Burning Prairie until several years later.

However, it was much easier to repair a warship than to raise marines. It was also significantly more difficult to get a mainframe crystal processor that could replace the ‘star child’!

To resist the Imperium of True Human Beings’ invasion a hundred years later, the hundreds of sects of the Flying Star Sector united and established a new armed force named ‘Burning Prairie Fleet’, prepared to bring up a batch of best warriors from scratch!

Burning Prairie, as the first-generation flagship of the fleet, was naturally responsible for the education of the new soldiers.

Right now, half of the marines on Burning Prairie were veterans recruited from various space zones of the Flying Star Sector. They were experienced, but their cooperation was not yet flawless.

The other half of the marines were the boy scouts of Burning Prairie, who would grow up together with the super warship in the decades to come.

To match the computational ability of the ‘star child’, the mainframe crystal processors from the Star Ocean Imperium were moved out of the Star Prier’s House below the ground of Spider Den and made into a super computation array with more than ten state-of-the-art crystal processors produced in the Flying Star Sector.

Although the specifications were as good as the star brain, the stability was still a serious problem, and faults were occurring every now and then.

Therefore, Burning Prairie today did not have as a high combat ability as when Xiao Xuance was alive, especially in terms of stability and manipulability.

In light of that, the citizens of the Flying Star Sector delivered Burning Prairie to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, hoping that it could be polished and regain its top combat ability as soon as possible.

“Brother Guo, I have a feeling.”

Li Yao squatted slowly and scratched his hair hard. Staring at the expressionless Lu Zui in the corner, he mumbled, “Putting such a super warship, which is not stable enough and has half a crew of rookies, next to the veterans like ‘Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao’ who have been fighting bloody battles for two hundred years…

“… is like putting an ignorant, newborn tiger and a scarred, cunning wolf together. The former is definitely going to be tricked by the latter!”

Chapter 1136 - Dual Cores!

Guo Chunfeng’s sweat congregated into two pools below his feet, and he seemed to lose several pounds all of a sudden. He tapped on his portable crystal processor quickly, projecting more than ten light beams.

“Take a look, young brother. After the ‘expedition motion’ was paused, the Speaker issued an ‘ultimate order’ as the supreme commander of the federal army, ordering all troops on the Grand Desolate Plateau to quit the preparation for war and stand by in their respective garrisons. The troops from the south of the Grand Desolate Plateau to the Giant Blade Pass are now being summoned. Those participating in the drill from the north of the Grand Desolate Plateau to the Dark Desolate Domain will finish the drill and return to the bases soon.”

“How are you certain that the military will follow the ultimate order?” Li Yao asked.

“The ultimate order is directly sent to Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao and the commanders of every legion,” Guo Chunfeng explained. “The Iron Commander expressed his shock and replied that Duanmu Ming—the commander of the Dragon Horse Legion, who is also a Child of the Nether World—was already arrested. The commanders of the legions all indicated that they would obey the order and not attack easily.

“Powerful as the Patriots Partnership might be, and high as Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao’s prestige is, they are not enough to make dozens of commanders disobey the ultimate order at the same time!”

Li Yao thought quickly and asked, “How does the inland communicate with the Grand Desolate Plateau nowadays? As I recall, the Spiritual Nexus on the Grand Desolate Plateau has never been steady, has it? After the burn-everything-to-the-ground strategy was implemented, there are barely any towns on the Grand Desolate Plateau now. The only establishments left are military camps. How do you ensure the connection of the Spiritual Nexus?”

The communication between the inland and the Grand Desolate Plateau had always been a headache for the federation.

The Spiritual Nexus counted on the spiritual waves that were released by the spiritual towers, a type of special magical equipment.

The Grand Desolate Plateau had been given such a name because it was both ‘grand’ and ‘desolate’. On such a vast, unpopulated desert, it would consume astronomical resources to set up enough spiritual towers to build a network and maintain their daily operation.

To make matters worse, the Grand Desolate Plateau was also plagued by disasters, such as tornadoes, thunderstorms, earthquakes, and beast tides. Any disaster might cause serious damage to the spiritual towers.

Therefore, the Spiritual Nexus on the Grand Desolate Plateau was intermittent and unstable.

Ever since the federal army implemented the burn-everything-to-the-ground strategy, deciding to trade space for time, the Grand Desolate Plateau had essentially been abandoned, and the coalition army of demons had galloped on it without any obstacles.

The first things that the coalition army of demons destroyed were, of course, the spiritual towers, which were the most important nodes of communication.

Now, although the coalition army of demons had retreated to the Blood Demon Sector, the spiritual towers on the Grand Desolate Plateau had mostly been ruined and would not be reconstructed so easily.

In the north of the Grand Desolate Plateau, at the Dark Desolate Domain, which was the point of impact for the two worlds and boasted the most chaotic magnetic field, the situation was even worse.

Due to the tremendous spiritual waves that the spiritual towers released, they were like natural lightning conductors and always tended to attract all kinds of violent spiritual energy. Few spiritual towers were able to survive one month in the Dark Desolate Domain.

Therefore, the further one went north, the more difficult it would be to communicate. The Dark Desolate Domain was often off the network all year round.

Once upon a time, Li Yao had been trapped in the Thunderous Sound Mountain in the Dark Desolate Domain. It was exactly because of the absence of signals that he had needed to travel on his own for ten days and ten nights before he finally fled from the hunting squad of the silver-blood demons.

“For the joint drill, and to march into the depths of the Blood Demon Sector later, the federal army has developed a batch of highly-powerful, super-large spiritual towers on their own," Guo Chunfeng said. "Such spiritual towers have been established on the Dark Desolate Domain and the north of the Grand Desolate Plateau as 'communication bases'. Now, sixteen communication bases are working and responsible to relay messages."

"It means that, controlling the sixteen bases will be grabbing the throat of communication between the capital city and the frontline, and whoever controls the bases can block all messages sent to the troops performing the drill or fake the replies of all the commanders of said troops, right?" Li Yao asked.

Guo Chunfeng pondered for a moment and said, "It is very difficult even in theory. All the commanders of the legions in the drill have their unique identification code. Other than them, the only one—"

"The only one who knows it is Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao, right?" Li Yao's voice was cold.

Guo Chunfeng was silent for a long time. He shook his head slowly. "I don't believe that Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao is a schemer. It's not about his attitude but about his character.

"Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao is most famous for his valiance and straightforwardness in the federal army. He is definitely not sophisticated enough to prepare such a delicate trap!

"Don't say that he has pretended to be 'simpleminded' for a hundred years to realize his ambitions. It must be noted that, until one year ago, he couldn't have foreseen that the Imperium of True Human Beings would arrive at all or that a truce between mankind and the demon race would be struck. Was it necessary for him to hide his really personality for more than a hundred years?”

“The Iron Commander doesn’t have to be a schemer.” Li Yao nodded at the corner of the prison with his chin. “Because there is already a super schemer in the Patriots Partnership.

“Lu Zui is responsible for planning, and Iron Commander is in charge of the implementation and the desperate resort when the scheme is unveiled!

“For the two of them, one is good at thinking, and the other is good at fighting. They have their own disadvantages and advantages. Together, they are the two cores of the Patriots Partnership and the real guys behind the curtain!”

Guo Chunfeng’s face was even more awful than before. “An hour ago, about the time you woke up, Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao just sent back a message from the Dark Desolate Domain, claiming that the troops in the drill were engaged in a rarely-seen super thunderstorm. Three communication bases were destroyed, and most of the spiritual waves were jammed. He said, they wouldn’t be able to reach out to the inland for a long time. He asked us not to be anxious. The bases would be repaired soon. He would be sending signalmen to contact the rear in the meantime…”

Guo Chunfeng could not talk any more. They looked at each other and saw the shock in each other’s eyes at the same time.

“If what you said is truth, we are now in a bad situation!” Guo Chunfeng gnashed his teeth. “Right now, no towns or sects are left on the Grand Desolate Plateau. The Cultivators scattered on the Grand Desolate Plateau almost all belong to the military. We don’t know which of them work for Zhou Hengdao and which ones don’t at all!

“All the elite forces inland have been dispatched to the south and the East Ocean. It will take some time for them to return even if they are summoned immediately!

“The communication with the troops in the Dark Desolate Domain might be under the manipulation of Zhou Hengdao. Because of the super thunderstorm, we cannot even reach out to Burning Prairie. Our message cannot be sent at all!

“It is very possible that the thunderstorm is the work of the ‘weather troop’ under Zhou Hengdao’s command, which will last however long he wants it to last!

“Even if we send someone over right now, it will still take at least two to three days before they reach the troops—that is if the Iron Commander is not blocking them!

“Two to three days is enough for the Iron Commander to do a lot of things!”

Both of them trembled. They eyed Lu Zui as if he were a viper that had become all the more dangerous in its dying struggle!

Guo Chunfeng could not help but bellow, “What—what are you up to exactly?!”

“Hehe…” Lu Zui turned his face to them again. Cold brilliance was focused in his eyes again as he said casually, “Everything is just your speculation without any proof. I will not acknowledge anything. If you are capable enough, why don’t you ask Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao on the Grand Desolate Plateau?

“However, as a mind game, I would like to infer what will happen next for you, assuming that what you said is true.”

Lu Zui stood straight and stretched out his arms. He had freed himself from the craziness, desperation, and frustration yesterday and regained the calmness, nonchalance, and resolution of the old days. His level did not plunge. Instead, he was even more unwavering than before. Walking to Li Yao and Guo Chunfeng, he smiled.

The smile made Li Yao’s and Guo Chunfeng’s pupils contract violently.

“First of all, as you said, the elite forces in the world of Cultivators have been dispatched to the south and the East Ocean, with no way of coming back in one to two days.

“The messages from the Grand Desolate Plateau have been blocked, too. It is impossible to contact the troops via the Spiritual Nexus.

“The only solution is to send someone with an ‘ultimate order’ to catch up to the troops in the Dark Desolate Domain, but how many days will it take?

“Before that, Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao might have found a suitable excuse to march into the Blood Demon Sector!

“He doesn’t need too many troops. He doesn’t need four crystal suit legions and twenty general legions. All he need is one or two legions that obey his order!

“For whatever reason the one to two legions march into the Blood Demon Sector, what will the follow-up troops do when they are engaged with the coalition army of demons? Will they wait and watch their brother troops get surrounded and annihilated by the enemy?

“No, they won’t. Not a single federal soldier will sit and watch their brothers get butchered by demons!

“The follow-up troops will have no choice but to reinforce them. Even Burning Prairie will march into the Blood Demon Sector to rescue the compatriots who are trapped!

“Alright, after the four crystal suits legions, the twenty general legions, and the strongest warship of the three Sectors all enter the Blood Demon Sector, what will the federal army in the rear do?

“It must be noted that the troops in the drill don’t have many supplies. Without the support from the back, they will certainly be wiped out after they run out of ammunition and food!

“Therefore, the rear has no options except to reinforce them!

“Hehe. It’s like a giant that is mired in a swamp. Perhaps only one of his legs is trapped in the beginning. But the more he struggles, the more he is swallowed, until he is completely drowned in the end!

“My dear misters in the capital city, what can you do after you know all this, even if you are well aware that it is a scheme of the Patriots Partnership?

“The war has begun. Tens of thousands of soldiers have been killed. On the Blood Demon Sector’s side, many villages and towns might’ve already been demolished by us, with even more casualties. By then, can you still bring about a ceasefire and shamelessly offer condolences, claiming that everything is just a misunderstanding?

“Believe me. Even the calmest, most prudent Speaker Jiang Hailiu won’t make a second choice under such circumstances. He can only curse loudly in his heart but cover up the truth with a seemingly honorable reason, finishing the rest of the world war!”

Chapter 1137 - Pouring Rain in Dark!

Li Yao and Guo Chunfeng breathed heavily, utterly shocked by the dreadful future.

Lu Zui’s smile was becoming more and more brilliant. He suddenly thought of something and patted his head. “Right. There are still the reactions of the Blood Demon Sector.

“The demons of the Blood Demon Sector never wanted peace in the first peace. They only conceded because of the heavy casualties they suffered, their internal strife recently, and Jin Tuyi’s insistence.

“Jin Tuyi was so impatient because he is a patient of the terminal disease ‘cerebral sclerosis’. He wanted to reach a truce before his brain completely collapsed.

“However, if dozens of towns of the Blood Demon Sector are demolished by the federal army, will the demons still believe in Jin Tuyi’s bullsh*t and his so-called ‘peace’?

“It’s impossible. Once the federal army attacks the Blood Demon Sector on a large scale, Jin Tuyi’s peace plan will be sabotaged. Not a single demon emperor will ever listen to Jin Tuyi’s command. Jin Tuyi and Jin Xinyue will be ripped apart by the angry demons as the greatest traitors in the history of the Blood Demon Sector!

“Under such circumstances, even if some of the demons in the Blood Demon Sector still long for peace, they will still choose to fight because they don’t know whether or not the Heaven’s Origin Sector really wants peace.

“By the same logic, even if some of the fools in the Heaven’s Origin Sector seek peace, how can they know the real attitude of the Blood Demon Sector?

“Hehe. Li Yao, you brought the ‘chain of suspicion’ and the Dark Forest Theory from the Flying Star Sector. Right now, we are faced with the most classic chain of suspicion and dark forest, aren’t we?”

Li Yao was so angry that he clenched his fists, his fingertips pushing hard into his palm.

Lu Zui smiled. With weird brilliance beaming out of his face, he extended his hawk nose over with an enticing voice. “You have felt the strength of fury. It is magnificent, isn’t it? Don’t suppress it. Just let it out. Kill me. Come on. Kill me!”

Staring at his nose for a long time, Li Yao took a deep breath and loosened his hands one joint after another. “Lu Zui, you’ve been possessed. You took advantage of the hatred and anger of your compatriots at first and the comradeship between the soldiers of the federal army later! To achieve your goals, you are stomping on the most precious feelings!”

“I admitted nothing,” Lu Zui replied casually. “I can only say that, even if the Patriots Partnership does have such a backup plan, we would never plan to use it in the beginning.

“Such a desperate attempt involves too many unexpected factors. At the very least, the first echelon of the troops to march into the Blood Demon Sector is basically committing suicide, which is a huge loss for the federation.

“Believe me. Unless it is absolutely necessary, I would never want to see such a backup plan be implemented. We could’ve arranged everything more carefully and thoroughly. When the Demon God Virus is more mature, and when the army and the Cultivators are all ready, we could’ve pushed forward openly and swept away all our foes. With the tiniest price, the Blood Demon Sector would have been conquered.

“Now, the blood of more innocent people will be shed on the land of the Blood Demon Sector for nothing, all because of the cleverness of you and Guo Chunfeng!”

Li Yao grabbed his neck and spurted saliva onto his face. “Listen up, scumbag. Not a drop of blood that shouldn’t be shed will be shed for nothing. Your plan will not work out. I will definitely stop Zhou Hengdao! Even if he jumps to the sky, I will still snatch his leg and drag him down!”

Lu Zui was picked up by Li Yao, but he did not struggle at all. Shaking like a puppet whose string was cut off, he was as calm as ever and continued smiling. “Then, you’d better hurry. If there is really such a desperate plan, Zhou Hengdao must’ve taken action already.

“You don’t have much time, Li Yao. Good luck!”

Li Yao sniffed and threw him to the side. Then, he turned around.

“Brother Guo, we have to wake up the Speaker now. I have to bring the ‘ultimate order’ to the Grand Desolate Plateau and call back the troops!”

Guo Chunfeng hesitated. “Your crystal suit hasn’t been repaired, and your wounds are not entirely healed yet. We have to gather more experts!”

“There’s no time!” Li Yao gnashed his teeth. “Zhou Hengdao will march into the Blood Demon Sector at any moment. I’ll go first and try to stall them. You can follow up later!

“You don’t need to say anything. I’m the best candidate. Many people on Burning Prairie know me. Luo Xingzi, the leader of the Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector, is an old friend of mine. Only I can stop them!”

…

In the north of the Grand Desolate Plateau, at the edge of the Dark Desolate Domain, a rarely-seen super thunderstorm was sweeping across the entire place!

The sky was a battlefield of lightning, and the earth became a kingdom of swamps. The black rainwater contaminated the sky and the earth like ink. When the lightning struck, one could see that there was a pale white valley around, but when the lightning was gone, all they could see was the absolutely darkness in which even their own fingers were obscure.

Boom! Crack!

Huala!

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

The sounds of wind, rain and thunder seemed to suggest that ten thousand ferocious beasts were fighting in the air fiercely, with no winners or losers.

At the end of the valley was a small communication base made of twelve spiritual towers. Several signalmen, with anti-water rune arrays unfolded around them, were busy repairing the spiritual towers that had been broken by the lightning in the pouring rain.

Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa!

Sparks were dancing everywhere. The spiritual waves were very chaotic. Some deep blue electric arcs even flowed out and circled the signalmen like sordid vipers.

Thankfully, the signalmen were all wearing thick insulative clothes and were not scared of the electricity.

Three signalmen worked hard for a long time, sweating. Finally, after a cluster of brilliant sparks burst out, the circuits of the spiritual towers were all repaired.

Glamorous brilliance emanated from the spiritual towers in the darkness, illuminating the deep valley.

“Excellent. We can receive messages from the rear now!”

The three signalmen were all overjoyed.

However, with the momentary brilliance when the spiritual towers connected, they vaguely saw that several fully-armed heavy shuttles were flying toward them in silence under the cover of the black rain.

In the lightning, the badge of the federal army in front of the shuttles seemed rather creepy.

Before the three signalmen realized what was going on, another five signalmen who were responsible for guarding the spiritual towers crawled out quickly from the half-underground fort nearby. Their cries struck the sky together with the lightning.

“Enemy incoming! Enemy incoming! Enemy incoming!”

The three signalmen had no idea what was going on, but their daily harsh training allowed them to react intuitionally. They jumped down from the spiritual towers and picked up their storm bolters!

Leaning against the spiritual towers, the eight signalmen established a defense formation. They breathed hastily in the pouring rain.

On their opposite side, twelve federal soldiers in Mystic Skeleton Battlesuits flew out of the armed shuttle and surrounded them in midair. The machine guns in their hands, which were at least three times larger than the storm bolters in the signalmen’s hands in terms of caliber, were pointed at their critical parts!

Storm bolters versus machine guns!

Federal soldiers versus federal soldiers!

Huala! Huala! Huala!

Streaks of lightning burst out one after another, illuminating the twenty soldiers in the dark night who appeared to be made of iron!

“This is a military area. Nobody is to come close without a password! What’s the password!” the commander of the signalmen shouted, only to get a mouthful of rainwater.

“This is the No. 1 Special Force of the Dragon Horse Legion. With the written order of Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao, we are here to take over the 2233 communication base! Follow our instructions and change your defense area immediately.

“Step back! Step back!”

The commander was not moved and continued pointing at the newcomers with his storm bolters. “This is the No. 55 Legion of the No. 24 Regiment. We are not under the command of the Dragon Horse Legion! Our mission is to defend the 2233 communication base until the last moment! We need the order of our direct official to retreat! Please clarify your order, or we will open fire!”

A young signalman was rather anxious because of the intense atmosphere against his comrades. He managed to clutch his weapon and asked a veteran near him in a low voice, “What—what’s happening?”

“I don’t know. The commander just received a few messages from the rear. Then, he went crazy!”

Under the lightning, the veteran’s face was pale, too, but his hands that were holding the weapon did not shake at all. “This is bad. F*ck. This is bad!”

“I repeat. The situation is urgent. Follow our instructions and retreat immediately!”

The twelve soldiers who were wearing crystal suits were becoming more and more aggressive. Their auras were bouncing like flames despite the pouring rain. “Those who disobey the order of the Iron Commander shall be executed immediately!

“I don’t know the Iron Commander. All I know is the password! Password! Password!” the commander roared and loaded his weapon!

The noise triggered a chain reaction. Clicking noises were echoing nonstop in the darkness. The endless fury in the soldiers' hands was about to be unleashed!

“Sergeant, do not put up a futile resistance!” The voice from the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was no longer cold. It was anxious, even mixed with a hint if begging. “There are only eight of you without crystal suits. You are definitely no match for us. You won't even cause any damage to us! Drop your weapons! For your brothers, drop your weapon!”

“No!” The sergeant raised his weapon, his eyes as bright as those of a ferocious animal. “We are federal soldiers! We will not surrender until we die!”

“Drop your weapon!”

“Back off! Back off! We will shoot if you don't!”

“Those who hinder military operations shall be executed!”

“Those who barge into the forbidden area shall be executed!”

“Don't be silly. We don't want to open fire to brothers!”

“Then back off now. Back off!”

In the pouring rain, the twenty soldiers were roaring, screaming, and showing their sharp paws and teeth like twenty beasts.

“There's no time. Prepare the anesthetic ammo and finish the quickly!”

The soldier in the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit spoke to his companions quickly.

However, before he concluded his sentence—

Boom! Crack!

A clap of thunder suddenly burst out right above their heads.

The rookie who was most anxious among the signalmen suddenly pulled his trigger because of the shock. A bullet rushed out and hit the breastplate of a Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit precisely.

The glittering firewall burnt everybody’s eyes instantly.

Da! Da! Da! Da! Da! Da! Da!

Boom! Boom! Boom!

There was no telling who opened fire in the next, but both squads were enveloped in fire and bullets the following second!

Chapter 1138 - Accidental Fall!

Ten minutes later, the bodies of seven signalmen were lying on the muddy ground in the rain.

The soldier who shot first because of nervousness had a shockingly huge hole in his abdomen. His life was maintained by the medication drugs, but the brightness in his eyes was dimming.

It was the only outcome when eight unprepared signalmen were engaged in a head-on clash with twelve fully-armed, well-trained Exos.

The Exos who opened fire at them ferociously a moment ago, however, were standing far away quietly at a loss like misbehaving children.

One of the medics was kneeling next to the soldier and opened the anti-water rune array, creating a dry space for him, while he performed the futile treatment on him with a pale face.

Suddenly—

The few elite warriors were picked up along with their crystal suits and thrown afar!

Several other Exos were kicked right in the chest when they just turned around, only to be blown more than a hundred meters away with their gear that weighed several tons, smashing the hard rocks into pieces.

In the middle of the lightning and thunder, a shadow knocked down all twelve Exos like a gale before kneeling on the ground and holding the dying soldier in his arms in the mud on that dark night.

Sparks were bursting out of one of his eyes, but his other eye was filled with tears, which mixed with sweat and rainwater and flowed to the soldier's face in a dirty current.

The soldier's brain was lacking oxygen because the loss of blood. In his dying moment, he had already forgotten the details of the battle just now, but he vaguely recognized the one who was holding him.

"Iron… Iron Commander?" the soldier mumbled in a feeble voice. His pupils were enlarged all of a sudden, with disbelief popping up on his face.

In the pouring rain, Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao kneeled down in the mud and blocked the rainwater for the soldier with his magnificent body. Dirty tears were uncontrollably flowing down his face like raging dragons.

He looked at the soldier as if he were watching his favorite grandson dying slowly in his arms.

"It's alright, son. I'm here," Zhou Hengdao mumbled to the soldier, sobbing.

Intense brilliance suddenly beamed out of the soldier's dimming eyes. He turned his head from Zhou Hengdao's shoulder to the night sky that was as dark as ink. Smiling, he said, "It's really you, Iron Commander. The enemy was coming…"

"I know, I know. It's alright. The enemy has been beaten back!" Zhou Hengdao tried to hold back his tears. "You are all very brave. Every one of you… is the best soldier of the federation. You have fulfilled your responsibility and persisted to the last moment! Now, reinforcements have arrived. Mission accomplished. Take a good rest now. You will… be home very soon!”

“Home…”

At the cold, rainy night, the soldier seemed to be remembering the hot dumplings in his warm home, the laughter of his parents and siblings, and so much more. Indescribable brilliance beamed out of his face, but his eyes were frozen to the moment forever.

The soldier’s hand slid down from Zhou Hengdao’s arms.

Like a rusted statue, Zhou Hengdao kneeled in the mud for a long time before he covered the soldier’s eyes with his iron hands.

Because of his shaking hands, he tried three times before he finished the simple task.

Then, he took off his military uniform that was sewed with Golden Stripes and laid it on the ground as cerecloth. He placed the soldier’s body on it carefully.

With the rain hammering his iron body, Zhou Hengdao rose up one joint after another and glanced around with his eyes that were as cold as ice.

The soldiers in crystal suits who made eye contact with him felt that they were hit by lightning. They all took a few steps back with the urge to vomit blood.

“Who asked you to kill anyone? Did I not inform you that all federal soldiers are brothers whom you should absolutely not attack for real?”

Zhou Hengdao waved his hand. One of the Exos, who was wearing a heavy-version Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit with a total weight of almost twenty tons, was drawn toward him easily until they were three meters away. He was locked onto and lifted into the air by his throat by Zhou Hengdao’s spiritual energy!

The burly warrior who was as strong as a tower could not even struggle. He writhed in pain in midair while uttering meaningless syllables!

Zhou Hengdao looked at him coldly, showing no intention of letting him go.

“Iron Commander, it was an accident!” Another warrior was greatly shocked and shouted, “We were preparing the anesthetic ammo. They shot first. All the brothers can prove that they shot first!”

Zhou Hengdao narrowed his eyes. The redness in the crystal camera on his face slowly dimmed. It was not until one minute later that he snapped his finger and blew away the warrior in midair brutally.

Boom!

The burly warrior smashed into the mud and curled up like a prawn, struggling to catch his breath.

“Everybody here, you and them, is the most excellent soldier of the federation. You should die in the Blood Demon Sector in the battles against the demons, not under the guns of each other!” Zhou Hengdao declared. “I do not want such a thing to happen again. The federal army should not attack each other no matter what!”

“I… understand!” The burly warrior whose throat had been grabbed by Zhou Hengdao for a long time finally caught his breath. He coughed and explained in pain, “This is the last communication base. Now, from the Dark Desolate Domain to the north of the Grand Desolate Plateau, the fifty-two communication bases, including the sixteen main ones, are all under our control. Other than the accident here, the missions everywhere else went very well, with zero casualties.

“Very good.” Zhou Hengdao nodded. “What about the signalmen?”

“They were treated in the same way. Locked up in barriers and given enough food and water,” the burly warrior replied. “The barriers will be automatically deactivated in five days. They will definitely be safe and sound.”

“Alright.” Zhou Hengdao took a deep breath in relief. He wiped the rainwater off his face, somewhat helplessly, and stared at the bodies on the ground. “Keep the bodies of our comrades here carefully for now. Find a place and establish defense rune arrays. Do not let them rot in the rainwater or be gnawed by pests! Also, put a jade chip next to their bodies. Record thoroughly the process of their death. Point out that they held onto their posts and sacrificed themselves to resist us!

“I will sign the record!

“If our cause succeeds, we will find their bodies, destroy the jade chip, and hold a grand funeral for them as ‘war heroes’. Their family will have the corresponding compensation.

“If… our cause fails, it will be the government who finds their bodies. They will still be great heroes who stood up against the Patriots Partnership. Everybody will remember their names. Their family will benefit from them, too.

“Do you understand now?”

“We do!”

In the darkness, the twelve Exos stood at attention at the same time and saluted the comrades who had been killed by them in the most solemn way.

After a moment of silence, Zhou Hengdao said, “Alright, prepare to act. It is too much of a burden to create such a super thunderstorm to block all the spiritual energy connection. The Thunder Weather Troop will not be able to persist for long. We have to seize every second and finish our operation before anyone realizes what is going on!

“Let’s check the time. It’s 3:12:35 a.m. at the moment. The ‘Fog Plan’ will be officially activated at 3:15!”

…

At 3:15, deep inside the Dark Desolate Domain, at the end of the Thunderous Sound Mountain, a highly-confidential weather troop slowly opened the waterproof cloth in the valley, revealing a weather rune array almost a hundred meters in diameter.

Nine Cultivators who were adept at communicating with nature were sitting at the nine nodes in the rune array. Sitting cross-legged, they mumbled spells, surrounded by electric arcs and mystic rays. Blood was leaking out of their mouths, noses, ears, and eyes while their vitality flowed into the rune array nonstop, making all the crystals that were embedded at the intersections of the spiritual stripes on the rune array glitter.

When all nine Cultivators were exhausted and about to fall down, a round magnetic field was generated above the rune array. The eight hundred and eight crystals embedded in the rune array broke apart at the same time. An invisible mystic ray soared to the sky like a pillar leading to the heavens, only to explode amid the clouds, attracting all the furious spiritual energy thousands of kilometers around like a huge magnet!

Boom! Crack!

Huala!

The Dark Desolate Domain was like a pot of seething oil that was added with a block of ice. The intensity of the thunderstorm was immediately multiplied, and the spiritual energy was more chaotic than ever. A deep, obscure fog was spreading out in the rainwater, expanding and consuming everything.

At 3:15 a.m., the thunderstorm died down a little bit, but the fog was even heavier than before. The entire Dark Desolate Domain seemed to be enshrouded in smoke, blurry and unpredictable.

At the center of the Dark Desolate Domain, where the fog was densest, as three rune arrays were detonated abruptly, a long, narrow gap appeared in midair out of nowhere.

Demonic energy was flowing out of the gap with all kinds of weird phenomena. It turned out to be a wormhole leading to the Blood Demon Sector!

At 6:19 a.m., a soldier in a broken crystal suit and soaked in blood staggered to the defense area of another legion. He fell to the ground before he reached the sentinels.

His crystal suit was covered in scars of the demon beasts’ venom, and the right side of his breastplate had been pierced through by a tusk brutally!

At 6:33 a.m., every legion participating in the Furious Fist drill, including Burning Prairie, was informed of a piece of shocking news!

At around three o’clock in the morning, when the thunderstorm was most intense, a natural wormhole leading to the Blood Demon Sector was generated due to the collision of the magnetic fields deep inside the Dark Desolate Domain.

In the Dark Desolate Domain, the appearance and disappearance of wormholes were the most common natural phenomena. In most cases, the beast tides from the Blood Demon Sector flooded into the Heaven’s Origin Sector through the natural wormholes, too.

However, when the wormhole was generated, a rapid response troop happened to be marching nearby.

Perhaps because the thunderstorm was too heavy, or maybe because the fog was too dense, the rapid response troop ended up entering the wormhole by accident and was teleported to the Blood Demon Sector!

They were under attack in the Blood Demon Sector. When they planned to retreat, the wormhole already disappeared. As a result, only one of the soldiers managed to escape back and tell everybody the news. The remaining 3,113 federal soldiers were still trapped in the Blood Demon Sector!

Chapter 1139 - Ten Square Victory!

In the Dark Desolate Domain, on the other side of the Thunderous Sound Mountain, the super warship Burning Prairie was struggling in the thunderstorm.

The clouds and thunders were not terrifying, but the turbulence of spiritual energy and the space gaps that occasionally appeared among it were like the fatal reefs in the shallow sea that Burning Prairie must avoid carefully. If the warship crashed into a space gap by accident and part of it was teleported to the other world, it would be the most horrible disaster.

Drowned in the endless night, Burning Prairie, which was dozens of kilometers long, was still nothing more than a canoe in the surging tides, unable to move fully at its own will. The lightning was hitting the spiritual shields and raising dazzling brilliance.

It was partly because of the crew members’ lack of experience and teamwork and partly because the mainframe crystal processor was jumbled recently and not stabilized yet.

But more importantly, Burning Prairie had never been a ground warship designed for the high-gravity environment within the atmosphere.

In the Flying Star Sector, other than Iron Plateau and Spider Den, everybody lived in the starships and world fragments. Heavenly Saints City, the largest city in the Flying Star

Sector, was almost a metropolis made of countless star fortresses.

In the universe, gravity was not a problem. The only thing that needed to be considered was how to generate gravity stably from inside but not how to resist it.

Burning Prairie was produced in outer space. It was a classical starship that was adapted to the environment of zero gravity and high radiation.

The strong attraction of the Heaven’s Origin Planet and the complicated environment in the Dark Desolate Domain were unseen before for Burning Prairie.

However, since a lot of resource planets would have to be developed on a large scale in the competition against the Imperium of True Human Beings and many battles might be fought in the orbits of the major planets where the warships would be under the influence of gravity and weather, Burning Prairie, as the first-generation flagship of the Burning Prairie Fleet, was determined to make up for the shortcoming and educate the crew members to fight in high-gravity environments.

Therefore, the Flying Star Sector had sent Burning Prairie to the Heaven’s Origin Sector and even deployed it in such a complicated environment as the Dark Desolate Domain for practical training.

Such training was quite a challenge for the crew members of Burning Prairie. The warship that was as enormous as a mountain was fluctuating up and down in the thunderstorm.

But it was quite a different view inside the warship.

Since Burning Prairie was a warship designed to cross the universe, most of the crew members would spend their entire life on it. Inevitably, they would have to consider getting married and having children on the warship.

The Flying Star Sector was even planning to produce more super-large starships that could both support ‘life’ and ‘battles’ with Burning Prairie as a sample.

Such starships were not just meant to resist the Imperium of True Human Beings.

More importantly, should the resistance fail and the Imperium of True Human Beings occupied or even destroyed the Flying Star Sector, the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector, those super-large starships would be able to carry as many people as possible and flee deeper into the universe, turning into another ‘starship civilization’, a bigger, nomadic Flying Star Sector.

Everybody was saving the future based on their own experience from their own perspective in their own way. The Flying Star Sector had always been a starship civilization. It was not strange that they came up with such a backup plan.

Therefore, the middle part and the rear part of Burning Prairie was an enormous living area, where all kinds of facilities, including schools, hospitals, hotels, restaurants, and entertainment places, had been established. It was an out-and-out independent town.

Other than the crew members and the boy scouts of the Burning Prairie Fleet, five thousand ordinary people had also boarded on Burning Prairie and arrived in the Heaven’s Origin Sector. They were mostly the families of the crew members, volunteers, and sociologists.

If possible, more natives of the Heaven’s Origin Sector would be invited to live on Burning Prairie to run the social experiment of ‘starship refugees’ in order to create a more comfortable living environment.

After reaching the Heaven’s Origin Sector, a lot of local entertainment facilities were moved to Burning Prairie, many of which were bizarre and new to the visitors from the Flying Star Sector. Therefore, the crew members after work and the boy scouts on holiday all liked to enjoy themselves in the living area.

Despite the thunderstorm outside, the living area was still peaceful under the control of the stabilization rune arrays.

In the living area, in an alley that was full of tubes and steam, more than ten teenagers were shouting even more passionately than the thunder outside.

“Six! Six! Six! Six!”

A transparent bubble was floating in midair, in which twenty dice, ten black and ten white, were flying, rolling, and crashing. Every once in a while, several dice would be blown away.

Two young men wearing the uniform of the boy scouts stood next to the dice. One of them was tall and strong. His arms were as thick as others’ thighs, and his thighs were as thick as other people’s waists. He looked ferocious and intimidating.

The other guy, however, was as slim as a skeleton. His hair was dry and yellow, his eyes were bloated, and he seemed to be dying of starvation. He was like a depilated mouse.

The two of them were like a troll versus a gremlin. They both bulged their eyes and stared at the bubble. One of them was rubbing his temples, and the other was twisting fingers and making seals quickly.

The dice in the bubble, under their manipulation, were fighting like twenty soldiers.

“Give up!” the muscular teenager shouted. Another several white dice were blown away, but the bubble suddenly exploded. The remaining dice all fell to a tray below.

All the bystanders craned their heads and observed. The black dice, which belonged to the muscular teenager, had eight left, while the white dice, which belonged to the slender one, had only three. In terms of numbers, the muscular teenager had fix sixes. He was a winner either way!

“Hahahaha!”

The muscular teenager burst into laughter and rubbed the slender guy’s head hard. “Where does this one come from? You talked big, but your skills in the ‘Ten Square Victory’ are too bad! A losing streak of three! Come on. Do you still have any money? Do you want a comeback?”

Ten Square Victory had been a popular gamble game among the space pirates on Spider Den in the Flying Star Sector.

Both participants of the game would control ten special dice and attack each other in midair. The dice that were blown out of the bubble were considered ‘dead’. When the time was up, the bubble would break, and the dice would fall. The numbers on the remaining dice would decide the final winner.

It was a game where skill really mattered, not just luck. For the beginners who just touched spiritual energy and telepathic thoughts, it was a great exercise, too. Therefore, the game had been rather popular on Spider Den.

However, Burning Prairie was the place to raise the future stars of the Flying Star Sector. Naturally, the gambling game among space pirates was strictly forbidden.

But a certain someone brought the game to Burning Prairie. In only half a year, it spread like an unstoppable wildfire.

Even the descendants of the noble families in the Burning Prairie Fleet, who were top-tier training geniuses, found it difficult to resist the temptation and often came to gamble in the living area during their holiday!

The muscular teenager was named Hei Xing. He was in the fourth level of the Refinement Stage despite his young age. He also had special skills to remotely control objects based on his family’s secret arts. In only several months, he had become a top expert of the Ten Square Victory. His companions were too scared to gamble with him anymore.

Therefore, he often came to the living area and looked for the other boy scouts who were not familiar with him. After all, more than ten thousand boy scouts were on Burning Prairie in different areas. Nobody could know everybody very well.

As a disguise, he often pretended to have more brawn than brains to fool the fools.

Today, an idiotic boy fell into his trap again.

Everybody was shouting to let him continue the game. The slender teenager was hesitating, too, but his pockets were empty, and he could only scratch the glittering pendant on his neck subconsciously.

Hei Xing had been born in a noble family. He had seen through the value of the pendant. Otherwise, he would not have bothered to gamble with such a poor boy. Seeing that the kid had been tricked, he laughed aloud. “Brat, get out of here if you don’t have any money. Do you want to play or not?”

All the bystanders were cheering again.

The slender teenager was caught in a dilemma and almost cried out.

Hei Xing chucked and played with the dice. “How about this? I can tell that my level is slightly higher than yours. I’ll be bullying you however we play the game. How about I use eight dice and you use ten? If I win, I will take away your Purple Sand Stone Pendant. If you win, you will take away this Silver Blood Dagger of mine and all the money here. How does that sound?”

The slender guy looked at him, the dagger, and the shouting bystanders around. Greediness beamed out of his eye, and even the air he breathed out was getting hot. He gritted his teeth and nodded!

“Excellent. Straightforward enough. A real man!”

All the bystanders were cheering.

A new game, eight black dice versus ten white dice, began!

The eighteen dice slowly popped up in the bubble. Both parties held their breath nervously, as if they were in a real battle. Sweat was popping up from their forehead, indicating that they were both doing their best!

But the legs of the slender teenager were shaking hard, and his teeth were clattering. He gave every sign that he would be the loser.

Right at the moment—

“Mouse Bai!”

The slender guy suddenly changed his face color and sneezed. Inside the bubble, a series of explosions were taking place at the same time. All eight black dice were crashed into pieces within a moment!

Hei Xing was dumbfounded!

All the bystanders were dumbfounded!

The slender guy, however, already crawled through Hei Xing’s pants as quickly as lightning while snatching all the money, crystals, and the Silver Blood Dagger. In the blink of an eye, he dashed into the air and dived into a tube of spiritual energy.

“Thank you, brother. Generous and unhesitating. You are truly a man!”

He grinned toward Hei Xing and disappeared in the tube.

It was not until this moment that dozens of boy scouts, carrying sticks and yelling, came close.

Seeing that Hei Xing and the rest of them were stunned, the newcomers immediately asked, “Did you play Ten Square Victory with him?”

Hei Xing nodded in a daze. “What—what about it?”

The newcomers were all eyeing him as if he were the biggest idiot in the world. “What’s wrong with you? How did you dare to play Ten Square Victory with Mouse Bai? This bullsh*t was brought to Burning Prairie by him!”

“Huh?”

“Also…” A pissed teenager grabbed Hei Xing by the neck and asked him rudely, “Did you see a Purple Sand Stone Pendant? It was my family treasure. The boy scammed me out of it!”

Chapter 1140 - The Things About Mouse Bai

The ugly, lean teenager Mouse Bai was running here and there in the living area, causing a great fuss, like a little mouse that had just stolen an egg.

Somebody was chasing after him wherever he went. It appeared that he had pissed off too many people. This time, almost a hundred boy scouts were blocking and surrounding him.

Mouse Bai shrieked and fled. In his desperation, he ran into the kitchen of a hotel and then from the kitchen to the lobby. Eventually, he was surrounded by dozens of boy scouts, including Hei Xing. One of them batted his leg hard with a stick. Mouse Bai was blown almost ten meters away after a scream and smashed into the ground.

“Mouse Bai, let’s see where you can run!”

“Mouse Bai, take out all the money that you fooled from us and my family treasure, the Purple Sand Stone Pendant!”

“And my Silver Blood Dagger!”

The teenagers were all young and vigorous, and they had been tricked too many times by Mouse Bai. Unable to hold back their anger, they punched and beat him hard.

Mouse Bai had no way to counterattack at all. He held his head and rolled on the ground, crying and screaming at the top of his voice. He writhed on the ground like a lobster that was thrown into boiling oil.

While the boy scouts were beating Mouse Bai hard, several of them who were familiar with Mouse Bai suddenly had a bad feeling. Mouse Bai looked disgusting and was essentially a skeleton—a blow of wind seemed enough to knock him down. But his attacks were often brutal and unpredictable. Even several warriors in the second or third level of the Refinement Stage would not be able to get near him. Why was he so abnormal today and acting like an unfed dead pig?

This was a plot!

They looked around and immediately felt that their necks were cold. Their facial expressions were rather complicated, too.

Not far away from them, in a booth at the corner of the hotel, several tutors of the Burning Prairie Fleet, military policemen who were not on duty, and a few middle-level commanders of Burning Prairie were having dinner together. They were now looking at the boy scouts in a dazed.

“…” The boy scouts holding the sticks.

“…” The tutors holding their chopsticks.

The military policemen looked at them and then at the tutors. “…”

The boy scouts were so scared that they nearly peed themselves. Deciding to take action first, they stood at attention and said, “Reporting to the tutors, we have caught a thief who stole our family treasures!”

In the middle of the boy scouts, Mouse Bai, whose face was bruised and swollen because of the beating, struggled to his feet. His eyes had been dried, and he was wearing such a sorry expression as if he had been greatly wronged with nobody to turn to. Trembling, he took off the uniform, revealing his upper body and even opening his arms.

His upper half body, which was also bruised and swollen, was clean. There was no place to hide anything at all.

The boy scouts looked at each other in bewilderment, all lost for words. They could not begin to fathom how, or where, Mouse Bai had hidden so many crystals and treasures while they were surrounding and pushing him.

Pu!

Right then, Mouse Bai spurted out a mouthful of black and purple blood, as if he were suffering from serious internal injuries. White occupied his eyes while he leaned backward and fell to the ground heavily!

The boy scouts were all utterly shocked. Looking at each other, and then at the tutors and policemen whose faces suddenly turned gloomy, they were so scared that they did not even dare to cry now.

…

Half an hour later, in a medical cabin on Burning Prairie, Ji Wende furrowed his eyebrow so hard that he might have been able to squeeze two basins of water out of his wrinkles. He stared at Mouse Bai, who was lying on the sickbed.

Covered in the white sheet, Mouse Bai appeared exceptionally weak, feeble, helpless, and vulnerable. The guy was looking at him in a ‘thank god you’ve come to save my life’ way.

“Chief Tutor…” Mouse Bai called weakly, as if he would pass out again when he heard something devastating.

Ji Wende was immediately having a strong headache.

Ji Wende had been the deputy leader of the Star Fighters’ Alliance before and was an old sailor who had spent his entire life on crystal warships. Several years ago, he had been involved in the suppression of the insurgency of the Immortal Cultivators, too. Piloting a seriously-wrecked light warship, he had blown up three crystal warships of the Immortal Cultivators in a row and stalled ‘Heavenly Phantom’, the antecessor of Burning Prairie, for quite a long time, creating an opportunity for the assault of Li Yao and the rest of the Cultivators.

After the Burning Prairie Fleet was established, the training geniuses and the descendants of the noble families in the entire Flying Star Sector had been filtered and recruited. The selection of tutors was stricter than ever, too. The best elites of the Flying Star Sector had been gathered.

As the deputy chief tutor of the Burning Prairie Fleet who was responsible for the actual training, Ji Wende was definitely one of the best Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector.

However, when the Cultivator at the peak of the Core Formation Stage who was more than a hundred and eighty years old was faced with Mouse Bai, a once-in-a-thousand-years freak, he still felt that his head was exploding.

“The 122 boy scouts who chased after and beat you have all been arrested. They will be disciplined in the most rigorous way!”

Pondering for a long time, Ji Wende said gravely, “This is the most serious collective violation of rules for the boy scouts ever since the Burning Prairie Fleet was established. What do they think the Burning Prairie Fleet is? And who do they think they are? Gangsters on the street?

“You are expected to become the most distinguished warriors of the Flying Star Sector, who will fight against the Imperium of True Human Beings in a hundred years!

“You did well in the incident. None of the surveillance cameras captured a picture where you fought back. Even when you were beaten up by a hundred people, you didn’t move your finger at all but maintained the most calmness and concession. It was indeed an example for other boy scouts!

“However, somebody reported that you were part of the Ten Square Victory game…”

“Reporting to you, chief tutor!” Mouse Bai struggled to sit straight on the sickbed. Sincerity was beaming out of his bloated face as he said, “Firstly, it is a groundless accusation. The descendants of the noble families always consider themselves to be elites. They loathe that someone with no background like me is stronger than them in all the training subjects. So, they gathered and taught me a lesson! When they failed to, they decided to set me up!

“Do they have any valid proof other than the eyewitnesses? Photos? Surveillance footage? My fingerprints on the dice? I’m willing to be punished as long as there’s any proof!”

“Of course they don’t,” Ji Wende said coldly. “Other people might not know it, but I know for a fact that Mouse Bai is too good to leave any traces however many wrongdoings he commits.”

Mouse Bai grinned and pretended that he did not not hear it. He extended his second finger and said, “Secondly, let’s say —hypothetically, just hypothetically—that I really participated in the Ten Square Victory game, they should catch me on the spot! Why are they reporting behind my back? Does such an action of betrayal fit the Burning Prairie Fleet?

“If today they can sell their comrade just for some petty grudge, won’t they sell the entire Flying Star Sector as traitors without batting an eye tomorrow if the Imperium of True Human Beings is too overwhelming?”

“Therefore, Soldier Bai Xingjian, ID No. 23333, hereby suggests to the chief tutor that such traitors who bite other people randomly must be kept under watch and not be promoted to key posts in the future!”

“Enough!” Ji Wende found it hilarious. He waved his hands and said, “Little Bai, I don’t have time for your bullsh*t. You can stop pretending to be weak and sick, too. We both know exactly what has happened! Why do you always have to cause so much trouble in your few holidays? This time, you’ve infuriated too many people. More than twenty tutors are accusing you at the same time. Tell me how I can get you out of this!”

“Uncle, I am truly innocent!” Mouse Bai replied with the utmost indignation. “You were the one who specially recruited me into the Burning Prairie Fleet in the beginning. Do you not know how decent I am?”

“I know. I know it too well!” Ji Wende glared at him.

The Burning Prairie Fleet was the future of the Flying Star Sector. When the news was out, naturally, countless training geniuses and descendants of noble families filed their applications. The recruitment conditions were extremely strict.

Even the talented young men born in the noble families, boasting family secret arts, with awakened spiritual roots, might not pass the scrutiny. An unattractive guy without any background such as Mouse Bai would not have stood a chance at all.

In fact, it was exactly what happened. The boy had been kicked away mercilessly during the first application.

But one day, Jin Wende encountered a street fight in Heavenly Saints City. A slim, weak young man was being beaten up by several tough men because he stopped them from theft.

However, no matter how hard he was beaten, and despite the broken bones, the young man gritted his teeth and stood up time and time again, waving his tiny fists and fighting back, until the policemen arrived.

Jin Wende, who witnessed the whole process in person, was greatly surprised. He escorted the young man to the hospital in person. After chitchatting on the way, he learned that the young man applied for the Burning Prairie Fleet but was rejected. Not willing to give up, the young man planned to work in Heavenly Saints City and study in a training school while waiting to apply again next year.

“Even if I have to die, I must die in the Burning Prairie Fleet!” the stubborn young man had declared.

The rest of the story was quite simple.

Ji Wende was patient enough to spend some of his time testing the young man. He discovered that, although the physical condition of the young man was mediocre, he had a natural-born connection with the crystal warships… as if he were the reincarnation of a crystal warship!

Ji Wende had never seen a guy who was so familiar with crystal warships before. Not only did the young man know the details of every type of crystal warships in the Flying Star Sector, even including the absorption index of the toilets on them, he also had the most precise understanding about the differences in specifications between two crystal warships after a single touch.

Therefore, Ji Wende made the call eventually and recruited the young man into the Burning Prairie Fleet.

He did not know whether it was the most correct choice that he made in his entire life or the biggest mistake.

Anyways, he soon discovered that he had been fooled. Mouse Bai’s attacks were cunning, slippery, and brutal. Not just a few tough men, even if ten times more mobs had lunged at him, it should not have been Mouse Bai who was lying on the ground!

Chapter 1141 - It's Allies That I Fear!

Despite that, Mouse Bai’s talent when it came to starships was definitely real.

After three months’ preliminary training in Burning Prairie Military School in Heavenly Saints City, the ugly young man distinguished himself and proved himself qualified to train on board.

Ji Wende intentionally arranged for him to work in the engine compartment where the environment was the harshest, not because he was angry that he had been fooled, but because he wanted to polish the rarely-seen genius.

The engine compartment was the hottest, dirtiest, noisiest place in a crystal warship, with all kinds of radiation. The regular descendants of the noble families were often reluctant to go to such a place.

But Mouse Bai, who had been born on the street, was like fish in the water. He was soon approved by everybody in the engine compartment.

Ji Wende clearly knew how difficult it was.

For a super warship dozens of kilometers long to rush in the middle of the cosmic storms or to resist the enormous gravity of the Heaven’s Origin Planet, it had to be as agile as a snake to avoid the turbulence, thunder, and lightning.

Therefore, the engine compartment of the warship itself was almost a piece of planetary-level magical equipment!

Inside the engine compartment, which was as spacious as a palace, eighteen groups of super impetus units had been established. There were also eight anti-gravity units that were installed to adapt to the gravity of the planet. Every unit weighed tens of thousands of tons and was made of millions of components. They could absorb a hundred tons at once and transform the energy into powerful thrust through thousands of rune arrays!

It was not hard to imagine how difficult it was to maintain the normal functioning of the entire system.

The captain on the bridge could move his finger and tap the runes on the light beam such as ‘activate’, ‘improve the power’, ‘activate the protective cover’, or ‘prepare for a space jump’ to give out orders.

But getting to the bottom of it, to make the orders of the commander to move to every capillary vessel of the colossal iron beast and keep it running at the highest efficiency required the arduous work of everybody in the engine compartment.

In the Flying Star Sector, the skilled workers in the engine compartment were also known as sea wolves.

They were like wolves rushing in the sea of stars who boasted the keenest noses, the best knowledge, and the most resolute will.

The experienced captains all knew that it was much easier to find an expert in fighting who could blow up a meteoroid than to find an old sea wolf who could exploit all the potentials in the engine units of a crystal warship while whispering a tune half-drunk!

If possible, none of the captains would hesitate to trade ten experts of fighting for such an old sea wolf!

In precarious moments, such as when the warship was trapped in the center of a cosmic storm and scourged by billions of meteoroids, not just ten, even a hundred fighting experts would still be useless.

But an old sea wolf who could keep the engine units under control was likely to save the lives of everyone on board!

Burning Prairie was the best warship of the Flying Star Sector. Naturally, the most renowned sea wolves of the Flying Star Sector had been gathered in the engine compartment.

Those old men had spent almost their entire lives in the engine compartment. They could distinguish the slightest deformation of a tiny component in the depths of a certain engine unit from the faintest of noises. They could also make a crystal warship that was riddled with holes and running out of fuel perform another short-distance space jump in the middle of a cosmic storm.

For those who did not know them, they were all unattractive, cr*ppy grandpas, but for people of the trade, their names were all as resounding as thunder and legendary monsters.

However, even those monsters were amazed by the young monster Mouse Bai. Several old monsters of different fields were even asking Mouse Bai to be their true disciple at the same time.

“I’ve travelled in the sea of stars for two hundred year, but I’ve never seen a guy so talented in starship maintenance before!”

“The boy is definitely born for the crystal warships!”

“Damn it. He is like a black hole that is absorbing all my best skills!”

Today, Mouse Bai had created an astonishing miracle. After joining the Burning Prairie Fleet for only one year, he was already able to take charge of all the work of a certain post in the engine compartment independently!

It was still because he was just a ‘boy scout’. According to the old monsters in the engine compartment, the little monster was totally capable of organizing the work of ten posts or mastering an engine unit on his own.

Therefore, when the boy grinned and called himself ‘Uncle Ji’, Ji Wende, as the deputy chief tutor, hesitated but still accepted the form of address. The boy was too talented to be missed out after all!

However…

The boy was as much a talent in the crystal warships as a jackass in other regards, to the point that Ji Wende had gnashed his teeth and more than once was of a mind to grab his neck, kick him in the ass, and blow him out of Burning Prairie.

“Mister… Bai Xingjian!”

Ji Wende took a deep breath and managed to suppress his anger. He tried to reason with the young man. “Look at you.

You brought the gambling game Ten Square Victory to Burning Prairie at first.

“Then, you instigated internal strife between the boy scouts from the Horizontal Wind Space Zone and those from the Scooping Eagle Space Zone. Both sides thought that they’d found the wisest advisor who made up a flawless plan for them. It was not until they bled hard after fighting that they discovered that their advisor was the same person, which was you!

“Next, you pretended to be a seasoned officer who was in his seventies and swaggered around in the magical equipment warehouse, causing quite a fuss! Don’t deny it! Although the truth hasn’t been found yet, and perhaps never will be, I know that it was you! It could’ve been no one but you!

“Today, you trapped more than a hundred boy scouts, who are all grounded because of you.

“Tell me about it. What’s on your mind exactly? Do you not know that people will hate you for what you did?

“Mister Bai Xingjian, you are truly gifted in the crystal warships. Why do you keep doing things like that and wasting your talents?”

The solemnness in the words put Mouse Bai on the sickbed into a dazed. Unseen brilliance popped up from the depths of his eyes that had always been covered by smile. He lay down again and rested his head on his hands before he said casually, “Because… I was too bored.”

“Bored?”

Ji Wende had never expected such an answer. Not knowing how he should respond, he said in amusement, “You are now working as the acolyte for seven masters in the engine compartment. Your training subjects are ten times more than general boy scouts. If someone else is in your place, they will be so busy running here and there all day that their heels will hit the back of their head. And you said you were bored? What, you will feel bored until you become the captain of Burning Prairie? Is that what you want?”

Mouse Bai yawned and said slowly, “The captain of Burning Prairie will still be boring.”

“What!” Ji Wende could not help but burst into fury. “Young man, after the insignificant accomplishments you’ve achieved, you think that you are truly something now? Do tell me about it. How can you be not bored? Mouse Bai, what do you want to do exactly?”

“I don’t know. I’ve been considering it, too.” Mouse Bai scratched his nose and smiled. “Perhaps one day, our technology will be advanced enough to produce super warships the size of a planet…”

“Then what?” Ji Wende sneered. “You will work as the captain?”

“Not exactly.” Mouse Bai shook his head. “If there is fleet made of a dozen of such planetary warships, and I am appointed as the commander of the fleet… it will be interesting, although not entirely satisfactory.”

“…” Ji Wende.

Right then, sharp alarms echoed inside Burning Prairie. Ominous red lights were blinking even in the medical cabin.

“The warship is now on level-one alert! All personnel on holiday and off duty, return to your post immediately!

Activate the defense rune array of the highest level in the living area. Deliver the single magical equipment and the life-saving magical equipment to everybody!”

Ji Wende and Mouse Bai both changed their face color greatly.

“I’m heading back to the bridge right now. You, stop pretending to be sick, and go back to the engine compartment immediately. Something must’ve happened. We may have run into a beast tide!”

Ji Wende put the military hat on his head and spoke in a hurry.

Mouse Bai, however, narrowed his eyes and extended his nose, sniffing stealthily. As if he had caught a portentous smell, he tilted his head and asked, “Uncle Ji, can we still not reach out to the rear?”

Ji Wende was dazed for a moment. Then he nodded and said, “The surface of a planet is different from the vacuum in the space. There are all kinds of interference. It is especially so in the Dark Desolate Domain when a super thunderstorm is happening. It is perfectly normal that we cannot communicate with the rear due to the chaotic spiritual energy.”

Mouse Bai nodded and asked again, “Uncle Ji, when we were in the capital city a few days ago, it was said that the Speaker of the Star Glory Federation was assassinated. Tens of thousands of civilians were killed, too. The public fury was raised, and the drill was begun in advance. What was that all about?”

“How would I know?” Ji Wende glared. “It is not something that you should be concerned about, either. Mind your own business!”

Mouse Bai scratched his nose habitually. His eyes were thinner and thinner as he said carefully, “Uncle Ji, I think we should leave the Dark Desolate Domain and fly out of the atmosphere as quickly as possible!

“As long as we are out of the atmosphere and enter the orbit of the Heaven’s Origin Planet, we will be no longer affected by the weather and can reach out to the rear, right?”

“You must be kidding me!” Ji Wende sneered. “One of the biggest purposes of the drill is to improve the combat ability of Burning Prairie in the harsh climate and environment. Yes, we can retreat now, but what can you do when you have a fierce battle with the fleet of the Imperium of True Human Beings on the surface of an important planet? Can you still retreat?

“What’s more, more than ten friendly legions are around us right now, and we have the best warship of the three Sectors. A little wind and rain have already scared you? There’s no reason to flinch even if we run into a large-scale beast tide! Let’s just show the demons the awesomeness of the Flying Star Sector!

“Cut the cr*p and go back to your post now! This is an order! Let me tell you, boy. I can turn a blind eye to other things, but I will see that you are punished in person if you hide during a battle!”

Ji Wende sniffed heavily and left.

“Friendly legions?” Watching him striding away, Mouse Bai wiped the saliva off his face and muttered with a bitter smile, “It is not the demons that I fear but the allies!”

Chapter 1142 - When the General Is at War!

On the bridge of Burning Prairie, Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao and several high-ranked officers of the federal army were standing in silence. Water was still dripping down from their raincoats, adding to the coldness from them.

Luo Xingzi, who was the leader of the Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector, as well as the captain of Burning Prairie and the officers on board, was somewhat at a loss.

The situation was a hundred times trickier than they had thought. It was much more than a simple beast tide.

“At around three o’clock in the morning, the No. 22 Legion of the No. 113 Regiment was performing the drill of night rush in the environment of a super thunderstorm at the end of the Thunderous Sound Mountain!

“Their original task was to occupy the No. 2342 highland after rushing for a hundred and fifty kilometers at night!

“However—

“A cluster of new turbulence of spiritual energy fell down from the sky, increasing the intensity of the thunderstorm by at least three levels. Also, the magnetic field was jammed, and almost all the magical equipment lost effect. They were able to neither tell the direction nor reach out to the allies nearby!

“Moreover, the black rainwater that contained multiple kinds if impurities was disintegrated in the thunder into hazy fog that even the pouring rain could not extinguish. The visibility was very low. They could barely see anything!

“As it happened, a space gap came into being naturally around the No. 2342 highland. The wormhole expanded instantly and happened to stop right in front of the army!

“As a result, 3,114 soldiers of the No. 22 Legion lost their direction and accidentally trespassed on the Blood Demon Sector through the wormhole in the fog!

“Before the wormhole perished, only one soldier managed to run back!

“According to the reports of the soldier, the troop that entered the Blood Demon Sector had been detected by the demons and was fighting a bloody battle!”

Every word of the emergency was like a piece of burning charcoal that hurt everyone’s ears and eyes.

Looking at the map of the No. 2342 highland and the introduction to the No. 22 rapid response legion, and then looking at Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao who was standing like a statue, Luo Xingzi did not know what to say during the moment.

“Fellow Cultivator Luo Xingzi and other fellow Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector!”

Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao simply allowed the black rainwater to flow on his mechanical body without even wiping his face. His voice was both cold and tough, like frozen fire.

“This is about the situation right now. According to our preliminary analysis, there can’t be too many troops on the Nine Voids, the other side of the Dark Desolate Domain. If the No. 22 legion builds up bastions and waits for reinforcements, they should be able to persist for more than twelve hours.

“However, since the two parties were already engaged, the Pantheon of Demons will certainly dispatch more troops to the battlefield and annihilate the No. 22 legion after getting the message!

“The No. 22 legion is a rapid response legion with the minimal gear. They did not carry any equipment that can build up teleportation arrays. It is absolutely impossible for them to return to the Heaven’s Origin Sector on their own!

“We have no other choices right now. We cannot wait and watch more than three thousand soldiers be torn into pieces by the demons in the Blood Demon Sector. We have to get them back!”

Luo Xingzi, Ji Wende, and the other leadership of the Burning Prairie Fleet looked at each other in bewilderment, all feeling a headache.

They would likely make the same choice if they were in the same situation.

However, if they took any action, a total war between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, or even one that included the Flying Star Sector, might begin!

“Right now, we have two options,” Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao said solemnly. “Firstly, the best solution. I beg the fellow Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector, for the sake that we are all human beings, to go to the Blood Demon Sector and rescue our compatriots with us!

“The reason is very simple.

“The large-scale teleportation array to the Blood Demon Sector is still under construction. Right now, it is still not able to teleport a large troop to the Blood Demon Sector in battle formation precisely.

“If our Exos and crystal tanks are sent to the Blood Demon Sector through the incomplete teleportation array, they will be sprayed all over the Nine Voids like snowflakes or even fall to somewhere deeper into the Blood Demon Sector!

“Without a battle formation, and unfamiliar with the terrain, the troop will be a bunch of mobs and a tray of loose sand. How can such a troop rescue anybody? It is possible that they will be surrounded by the regular army of the demons and wiped out before they accomplish their task!

“But Burning Prairie is different! Burning Prairie can perform short-distance space jumps with the super teleportation array on board.

“The Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector are melding in the first place. From the perspective of the four-dimensional space, we are only a single sheet of paper away from each other. Burning Prairie can stab through the sheet of paper very easily!

“If two or three legions on our side board Burning Prairie and jump to the Blood Demon Sector, we will be able to ensure the battle formation and the chain of command as much as possible.

“Also, the tremendous firepower on Burning Prairie will provide support for our rescue mission.

“In the meantime, the thorough medical facilities on Burning Prairie will allow the heavily wounded soldiers of the No. 22 legion to be treated as soon as possible. It is very likely that hundreds of lives will be saved in such a way!

“After we pick up all the soldiers of the No. 22 legion, we will return to the Heaven’s Origin Sector through the super teleportation array on Burning Prairie. There will be no need for us to build up a teleportation array in the Blood Demon Sector, which will take a lot of time!

“This is the fastest and cleanest approach! As the Chief of the General Staff of the federal army, a soldier, a Cultivator, and a human being, I beg you to give us a hand considering that we are all human beings!”

Zhou Hengdao’s request made Luo Xingzi and the leadership of the Burning Prairie Fleet shudder for a moment. Luo Xingzi replied drily, “The order we received from the Flying Star Sector is that Burning Prairie should stay in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and help the compatriots of the Heaven’s Origin Sector resist the demons.

“If the demons invade on a large scale, Burning Prairie definitely won’t hesitate to help the people of the Heaven’s Origin Sector to protect their homeland until all of us are sacrificed.

“However, to attack the Blood Demon Sector—”

“This is not an attack but a rescue!” Instead of waiting for him to finish, Zhou Hengdao interrupted him loudly. “We are not talking about conquering the Blood Demon Sector; we are talking about the lives of more than three thousand comrades and compatriots! If everything goes well, we may be able to find and rescue everybody in twelve hours before the main force of the coalition army of demons arrives!”

Luo Xingzi considered carefully for a moment and hesitated. “I have to send the intelligence back to the Flying Star Sector and ask for the authorization of the Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector.”

Zhou Hengdao laughed, with sparks bursting out of his artificial eye. “The three thousand soldiers who are now in the Blood Demon Sector on their own could die at any second! How long will it take for you to retreat from the Dark Desolate Domain, send the information back to the Flying Star Sector, receive the feedback from the Flying Star Sector, and react? Three days? Five days? Ten days?

“By then, the three thousand soldiers will be dry bones in a grave!”

Luo Xingzi wanted to say something, but Zhou Hengdao waved his hands and stopped him. The Iron Commander’s man-made eye turned dark red as he said stubbornly, “Fellow Cultivator Luo Xingzi, say no more. We are running out of time. I totally understand your stance. You do have your own responsibility and your mission! So, it is definitely understandable for you to stay here.

“If so, let’s take the second approach!

“I have gathered one crystal suit legion and two general legions for a start. Next, I will lead the three legions into the Blood Demon Sector through the incomplete teleportation arrays, rescue every one of the No. 22 legion, and return to the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

"I hope that fellow Cultivator Luo Xingzi and Burning Prairie can help us maintain the defense line in the Dark Desolate Domain while we are in the Blood Demon Sector. If any accident happens to us while we are there, and the coalition army of demons takes the opportunity to march into the Heaven's Origin Sector, I hope that Burning Prairie can help us resist the attack!

"I'll just thank you for your great help in advance here!"

Luo Xingzi and the rest of them felt that they were all blushing because of his bluntness.

Ji Wende stepped forward and said, "I read the construction plan of your teleportation array before. Right now, only half of the teleportation arrays are preliminarily built, with a very low precision of teleportation. If your three legions pass through those teleportation arrays, you will be like dandelions in a blowing wind and end up scattered in the Blood Demon Sector. You might even be directly teleported to the military camps of the coalition army of demons!

"How can you fight the battle if so?"

Another tutor from the Burning Prairie Fleet also frowned. "It's easier to go over than to come back. You'll have to build up a series of temporary teleportation arrays in the Blood Demon Sector to send back all the soldiers and their gears. How long will it take?

"I'm afraid that the coalition army of demons will surround you while you are building the teleportation arrays. It will be impossible for you to retreat in one piece during the fierce battle!"

"I know," Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao said calmly. "However, if you were in my shoes, would you make another choice?”

The bridge was immediately caught in an awkward silence.

“Alright. It’s urgent. My staff will discuss the specific arrangements with you. I’ll have to gather the troops and prepare to march out! The rear will be all yours after I’m gone!”

Zhou Hengdao stood at attention and saluted in the most formal way.

The Chief of the General Staff’s courtesy was like a saber slashing the chest of every Cultivator from the Flying Star Sector.

“Wait!” Luo Xingzi finally could not help but say, “Fellow Cultivator Zhou, this is too important an issue. Please… let us consider for a moment.”

Zhou Hengdao’s lips moved. Circles of redness beamed out of his man-made eye as he said, “Alright, thank you for your generous help, fellow Cultivators. The lives of more than three thousand compatriots will depend on your decision!

“I will go to gather the troops now. We will be prepared in an hour and a half. If you have a different answer, please contact me before that. Otherwise, we will be leaving off through the teleportation arrays!”

After saying that, he turned around and left without any hesitation.

“Fellow Cultivator Zhou!” Luo Xingzi called him. “Should we try to reach out to the rear? This issue should be approved by the capital!”

“I will.” Zhou Hengdao stopped and nodded. “I’ve been trying to contact the rear, but the thunderstorm has been too strong. I cannot talk to them to this moment.

“The soldiers trapped in the Blood Demon Sector will be in more danger with each passing second. There’s no time for us to bother about the details now.

“There’s a motto in the army that has been passed on from the ancient Cultivators. Now that you’ve established the Burning Prairie Fleet hoping to resist the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings in a hundred years, you will certainly encounter a lot of unexpected, complicated situations. So, I would like to share the motto with you.

“When a general is on a battlefield, he doesn’t take orders from the monarch!”

Chapter 1143 - The Federal Army!

An hour later, it was already morning.

However, at the point of impact between the two worlds, the Dark Desolate Domain, where the sky was broken, day and night were often indistinguishable.

The thunderstorm and the hurricane were still going on. The pouring rain seemed like it would never stop. Dirty water was flowing among the hills, dividing the world into countless dying lone islands.

In the middle of the storm and the flood, tens of thousands of Exos wearing Mystic Skeleton Battlesuits were standing in silence like statues that rose up from the sky.

Behind the warriors in crystal suits, there were countless regular soldiers who were driving crystal tanks or carrying storm bolters and crystal cannons. The rainwater did not shake them at all but was vaporized the moment it hit their burning bodies, decorating them in an unstoppable aura of killing.

In front of the hundred thousand federal soldiers, Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao was standing in the middle of the pouring rain just like the rest of them. The brilliance deep inside his eyes was glittering together with the shining lightning in the sky!

“Warriors of the Star Glory Federation!” Zhou Hengdao roared. “We are all clear about our mission now, which is the most dangerous one in the history of the Star Glory Federation!

“We will pass the broken wall between the two worlds and land on the Blood Demon Sector like burning dandelions!

“Perhaps we will be surrounded by the demon beasts before we stand to our feet.

“Perhaps we will see a hundred, or even a thousand, enormous demon beasts that can be hundreds of meters tall gathering into tides and mountains smashing at us!

“Perhaps we will all die in the Blood Demon Sector. We may be shredded into pieces by the paws and teeth of the demons, or we may be captured alive and sent back to their nests for the inhumane experiments!

“Are you scared? Tell me! Are you scared?”

In the pouring rain, the hundred thousand soldiers replied with silence that was as cold as ice and iron.

“Let me tell you. I am scared. I am very scared!” Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao bashed his chest hard until it was clattering while he roared, “Same as you, I know clearly that we are not prepared to set foot in the dangerous land right now at all! We are here for a drill, not a war! We are short of ammunition and supplies. Our legs are all shaking. Our hearts are all pounding. Butterflies are flying in our stomachs! We are more than scared!

“However—

“Five hours ago, 3,113 soldiers, 3,113 of our brothers, were trapped in the Blood Demon Sector!

“We are already more than scared when we haven’t been faced with anything yet. What about them who are being faced with the nightmare right now? What about the brothers who are trapped in the Blood Demon Sector without reinforcements? Think about it. What are they feeling right now?

“Let me tell you. They will certainly be very scared. They might feel like throwing up in fear!

“But however scared they are, they will not be desperate. They will certainly summon all the courage and fight to the end!

“Because they are very clear that they are not fighting on their own. Behind them, there are hundreds of thousands of brothers from the entire Heaven’s Origin Sector who participated in the drill with them! They know that those brothers will be there to save them! Even if there is only one of them left, those brothers will be there to save him!

“Because they and us carry the same Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars emblem, wear the same black uniform, and boast the same proud name—the federal army!

“This is going to be the most perilous battle since the federation was founded. It is also going to be the greatest one! Warriors and brothers, I cannot promise you anything, except that I will move forward together with you. Every brother will be rushing forward under my lead. As long as one soldier of the federal army is still lost in the Blood Demon Sector, I will definitely be fighting with the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars until I am not breathing!

“Now, do you still feel scared?

“If you are still scared, then just shout out our name that has been irrigated with the blood of countless heroes over the past five hundred years!”

“Federal army!”

“Federal army!”

“Federal army!”

In the pouring rain, thunderous roars were echoing from the hundred thousand soldiers. The thunder on the ground was competing against that in the sky and even eclipsed it. Even the lightning was driven away by the soaring killing intent of the hundred thousand soldiers, turning into earthworm-like arcs before it struggled and perished.

Iron Commander looked at the ignorant soldiers in silence. There was a trance on his face that was mostly covered in steel and rubber.

He seemed to be embarrassed by everything that he had said just now, but he also seemed to be unwavering because of the hypnotization of a certain force.

Deep inside the crimson man-made eye, the red spot was frozen, but a drop of dirty tear flowed down from the corner of his other eye.

Due to the long distance and the pouring rain, none of the soldiers noticed it.

Right then, a lieutenant rushed close, with mud spluttering, and whispered to him, “Iron Commander, the allies of the Flying Star Sector have agreed to send Burning Prairie to the Blood Demon Sector with us. They are now landing and deploying super short-distance commutation rune arrays so that all three legions can get on board quickly!”

“Excellent!” Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao’s eyes were glittering. “Ask the commanders of the three legions to take action immediately. I want everyone to board within three hours! In three hours, no matter how many soldiers have been accommodated, we will take off immediately!”

Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao looked at his beloved army for the last time and walked into the storm.

From the broken sky, the super warship Burning Prairie was landing slowly, opening to the hundred thousand federal soldiers!

…

At the same time, on the south of the Grand Desolate Plateau, a Rapid Dragon-level crystal warship, the fastest model in the federal, was rushing toward the Dark Desolate Domain at the highest speed!

On the warship were Li Yao, Ding Lingdang, and several other experts who had remained in the capital.

They were all carrying the ultimate order issued by Speaker Jiang Hailiu in person.

As the nominal commander-in-chief of the federal army, only the order from Jiang Hailiu could override Zhou Hengdao’s order, which came from the General Staff!

The order for the drill be aborted immediately had been spread to more than half of the Grand Desolate Plateau. The troops at the south of the Grand Desolate Plateau had all retreated to their garrison as per the instructions.

However, the north of the Grand Desolate Plateau and the Dark Desolate Domain seemed to be enshrouded in a thick fog that no orders could penetrate through.

Occasionally, there were responses from the Dark Desolate Domain, but it was hard to verify whether or not they had been sent by the troops under Zhou Hengdao’s control!

Several teams had been dispatched from the few war bases at the south of the Grand Desolate Plateau to the north to call back the troops in the drill.

However, after ten years of collisions between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, the Dark Desolate Domain at this moment was dozens of times larger than before. It had a coverage of several million square kilometers!

It was definitely not an easy mission to locate an army that was possibly avoiding them on purpose in the super thunderstorm!

Besides, even if they did find the target, would the communication teams sent by the military be enough to stop Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao?

Therefore, Li Yao and the other experts still took off from the capital city and rushed to the Dark Desolate Domain on the fastest crystal warship.

Boom!

The crystal warship suddenly uttered fulminations. As it turned out, the power rune arrays broke down again because of prolonged overloading.

This was the third crystal warship that they had wasted on their way.

Li Yao could tell from the sound that the warship was hopeless.

But there was not a second military base in the hundreds of square meters nearby where they could get on a new warship.

All the Cultivators boarded on the armed shuttle on the warship, prepared to move on to the next military base.

After looking at the time on his portable crystal processor, Li Yao, however, gritted his teeth and summoned Black Wing.

In the battle against Diwu Jian, Black Wing had been hit by the attack of ‘Five Disintegrations of Heavens and Human’. Cracks were appearing everywhere on the body of the sword. Li Yao was both sorry and angry, but he did not know how to mend it at all.

Black Wing sensed his need. It shook in his palm, as if it were saying, “That’s alright. I’m on it!”

Seeing that he summoned the flying sword, Ding Lingdang asked in a hurry, “Li Yao, what are you going to do?”

“It’s too slow if we move from one base to another. You bring the main troop and come slowly. I’ll simply go there first and check the situation!”

Touching the cracks on Black Wing, Li Yao squinted and said, “Many guys on Burning Prairie know me. As long as I find Burning Prairie, I can at least stall them for a while until you arrive even if I cannot stop them!”

Black Wing was the fastest magical equipment within the atmosphere that Li Yao had ever seen. Even the Rapid Dragon-level crystal warship and many super shuttles were no match for it.

More than ten years ago, when Li Yao was still in the Grand Desolate War Institution, he had often galloped on the Grand Desolate Plateau with Black Wing’s speed.

Today, history was reality again!

“I’m going with you. I brought my own Furious Flame Armed Shuttle for the mission!” Ding Lingdang said without any hesitation.

“As long as you can keep up with me, just come!”

Li Yao smiled and dashed to the exit of the crystal warship. He threw Black Wing to the midair. Immediately, black fog spread out and condensed into two wings dozens of meters long!

Li Yao leapt up and landed on the sword. The black waves of spiritual energy enveloped him. Integrating with the sword, he roared and rushed north, leaving a long exhaust flame behind him!

“Wait for me!” Ding Lingdang shrieked behind him. Her Furious Flame Armed Shuttled turned into a streak of redness and went after Li Yao!

Chapter 1144 - A Mouse!

In the Dark Desolate Domain, Burning Prairie lowered to an altitude of about a hundred meters from the ground. The spiritual waves raised by the anti-gravity rune arrays were spreading out like tides, blowing many younger trees away.

The marines on Burning Prairie jumped down and built up temporary commutation rune arrays on the ground. Channels of light seemed to be established between the ground and the super warship.

The commutation rune arrays were essentially short-distance teleportation rune arrays with fixed destinations. They could move the soldiers, crystal suits, crystal tanks, and other war assets into Burning Prairie from the ground.

Thousands of crystal suits and armed shuttles were flying in midair against the pouring rain and entering the super warship directly through the docks and airports on the super warship.

If one were to observe from afar, it was like rows of well-trained ants migrating into the body of a giant fish incessantly.

In less than an hour, almost half of the soldiers and war assets had boarded.

At this time, the remaining seventeen legions were still scattered in the Dark Desolate Domain according to the subjects they were training.

The entire drill plan had neatly been drafted based on Lu Zui’s suggestions to make sure that the few legions that he infiltrated most were near Burning Prairie at the ‘perilous moment’.

The other legions that he had less influence on and whose commanders were relatively independent were now training the most arduous and complicated subjects in the mountains in the depths of the Dark Desolate Domain.

Now that he had control of all the communication bases, the commanders would not become suspicious in the next twelve hours.

After Burning Prairie jumped to the Blood Demon Sector, the remaining members of the Patriots Partnership in the army would naturally issue new orders and get more and more legions involved in the turbulence of warfare!

“Hurry up!”

Zhou Hengdao dragged up a soldier who tripped himself over in the mud and patted the dirty water off his uniform. He roared, “One second sooner, and we will save one more life! Get on board now!”

…

At the center of the Grand Desolate Plateau, Li Yao darted toward the north at an amazing speed after being integrated with Black Wing!

On his way, Li Yao continued retrieving crystals from his Cosmos Ring and feeding them to Black Wing, which often guzzled all of them in only several seconds.

After absorbing enough spiritual energy, Black Wing roared and further accelerated time and time again.

Far behind him, Ding Lingdang's 'Furious Flame Armed Shuttle' was emitting ear-splitting noises. Steam was popping up from quite a few power rune arrays. All the magical equipment units were beyond their limits and could not hold on any longer!

"Li Yao, wait a moment, I will put on the crystal suit and follow you!" Ding Lingdang roared in the communication channel.

"It's useless!" Li Yao replied in the communication channel. "It's impossible for you to catch up with me even if you put on your crystal suit! Also, the crystal suit only has a limited storage of spiritual energy. If you rush for a long distance at the highest speed, not only will the crystal suit be drained, you will consume a lot of your physical strength and spiritual energy, too. When we arrive in the Dark Desolate Domain, you will be exhausted. How do you plan to stop Zhou Hengdao?"

Ding Lingdang was not an unreasonable person. She knew that she did not have an ultimate flying sword such as Li Yao's. If she were to finish the rest of the journey with her spiritual energy, she would be more or less paralyzed when she reached the Dark Desolate Domain. She would only be Li Yao's burden!

She gritted her teeth and lowered the speed, "Can you do it alone?"

"Trust me! I've returned safe and sound from the Flying Star Sector and the Blood Demon Sector!" Li Yao laughed. "How can a minor Dark Desolate Domain trap me?"

“Okay!” Ding Lingdang instantly made the most sensible choice. “You go and check the situation first. Try to avoid a head-on clash with Zhou Hengdao and just stall him! Me and the fellow Cultivators will contact the military bases nearby and make sure that the ‘ultimate order’ reaches every troop in the area. Hang in there. We will be joining you in no time!”

“Alright!” Li Yao stomped on Black Wing. The wings of spiritual energy on its two sides further expanded, only to shrink again. Like an arrow released from the bow, it accelerated to beyond five times the speed of sound the next second!

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

Ominous noises of explosion were echoing inside Black Wing.

The flying sword that had accompanied Li Yao for more than twenty years seemed to have reached the end of a certain phase, too.

Li Yao was both sorry and anxious. “Little Black!”

But Black Wing released more and more spiritual energy time and time again, leaving an exhaust flame that was as thick as an angry dragon behind them and demonstrating its strength in such a way!

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao felt that tears were rolling in his eyes. He mumbled, “Hang in there, Little Black. Hang in there! After the battle, I will definitely collect the most precious Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector and upgrade you into the unparalleled strongest sword in the universe! But right now, please hang in there and be faster!”

One in the south and one in the north, Li Yao and Zhou Hengdao were engaged in an invisible race.

Zhou Hengdao, who took action in advance, turned out to be faster than Li Yao. Two hours and fifty-four minutes later, the boarding procedure was completed!

“Teleportation work completed. 105,000 soldiers from three legions of the federal army, 7,520 crystal tanks, and 5,500 armed shuttles have boarded Burning Prairie!”

“The ground has been cleaned!”

“Burning Prairie is taking off and will float at the altitude of five hundred meters until it is ready to break the barrier of the three-dimensional world!”

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

In the space jump cabin, which was right next to the engine compartment, the super heavy space jump array was functioning slowly. Rune arrays were glittering one after another, pushing the rotors to revolve rapidly and release immense impetus!

The broad tubes of spiritual energy dozens sent the energy to every part of the super warship. Glamorous brilliance popped up on the outside of the warship. The iron beast was bathed in an amazing ocean of light and was about to vanish from this world!

On the bridge of Burning Prairie, Zhou Hengdao, Luo Xingzi, and other leadership of the Burning Prairie Fleet stood next to each other and gazed at the changing parameters on the control light beam.

On the face of the Iron Commander of the Federal Army, the parts made of steel and gel and those made of flesh and blood were showing vastly different expressions. He seemed to be both hoping that the space jump could begin as soon as possible and hoping that it would never begin.

Cracking noises were echoing deep inside his man-made eye, as if two strengths were crashing fiercely in his head.

“Super space jump array, output efficiency: 20%!”

“All crew members are in position!”

“Super space jump array, output efficiency: 40%!”

“Activate the protective membrane on the magical equipment on board. Prepare to resist the quakes during the space jump!”

“Super space jump array, output efficiency: 60%!”

“The coordinates of the destination have been locked. The estimated environment of the landing point has been preset!”

All the crew members and soldiers were set for the space jump. The brilliance around the warship was brighter and brighter, illuminating Burning Prairie into glamorous transparency like a burning torch of light.

Tiny swirls were appearing in the air around, crashing, meeting, and merging into larger swirls that were raging and tearing the flame of light around Burning Prairie. The enormous iron beast seemed to be shivering lightly.

Nothing seemed to be able to stop the ultimate jump of the beast now.

Li Yao was still rushing thousands of kilometers away, but it was impossible for him to move to the front of Burning Prairie instantaneously.

On the warship, the soldiers of the federal army who did not really know what was going on scratched their chainswords and storm bolters. Some of them were sighing in silence, and some of them were writing last letters to their family, but none of them were wavering.

The members of the Patriots Partnership among the soldiers, sensing the shaking of the warship, put on gloating smiles in secret.

“Super space jump array, output efficiency: 80%!”

The space jump was about to begin. Even everybody in the bridge sat in the special buffer rune arrays. The hesitation on Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao’s face was finally gone, replaced by coldness and determination. He stared at the light beam so hard that his natural eye was even redder than the other!

Everybody held their breath and braced themselves to meet the Blood Demon Sector!

Right then—

A weird noise seemed to be echoing deep inside the warship. The iron beast slightly shivered. The flame of light around was significantly dimmer than before!

“Alarm! Alarm! A fault has occurred in the engine compartment. The instant energy output was too high, which led to the explosion of the No. 2 unit of the space jump array! Emergency maintenance is required! Unable to complete the space jump for now!

“Quitting the space jump state. Progress…”

Looking at the progress bar on the light beam that was shorter and shorter, everybody was dumbfounded.

Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao even jumped out of the buffer rune array, every muscle on his face trembling!

“What—what has happened?”

Even Luo Xingzi and the leadership of the Burning Prairie Fleet were stunned. After quite a fuss, they finally got the preliminary fault report from the engine compartment.

Luo Xingzi’s face was written with disbelief after he read the report. He handed it to Zhou Hengdao somewhat in embarrassment.

The reason of the fault… was simple and very hard to believe.

The super space jump array was one of the most important facilities on Burning Prairie, which was powered by the energy outputted from the engine compartment. In the engine compartment, more than a hundred specialists and refiners were responsible for the steady output of energy.

However, a few hours ago, one of the specialists was sent to the medical cabin due to food poisoning.

All the doctors were at a loss what to do. They could only conclude that a certain local food of the Heaven’s Origin Sector might have been carrying a germ that was nonexistent in the Flying Star Sector. Or maybe, the guy was just unacclimated.

Thankfully, the illness was not fatal. He was merely seriously dehydrated and needed a good rest.

The specialist was in a very unique post and could not find a suitable substitute for the time being. Eventually, one of the boy scouts of the Burning Prairie fleet was summoned because of his distinguished performance previously.

Before, the boy scout had operated on his own many times in even more complicated posts and had done the jobs smoothly. Also, several old masters were supervising him, too. Nothing could have gone wrong.

But as it turned out, the boy scout did something wrong at the critical moment despite his usual excellent performance.

When he was supposed to type in a key parameter and adjust the intensity of a certain rune array to 30%, his hand suddenly shook hard, and he typed 300% into it!

It was not too serious a mistake. Even if it escaped the old masters' attention, the control crystal processor of the engine compartment had its own alarm system that would give warnings about the abnormal data.

However…

According to the investigation after the accident, a key wire connected to the alarm system in the control crystal processor of the engine compartment was somehow gnawed apart by a certain weird thing.

The thing was very likely to be… a mouse.

Chapter 1145 - I Can Only Help You So Much!

“A mouse?”

There was no telling whether it was anger, trance, disbelief, or relief on Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao’s face. He stepped back and collapsed into the buffer rune array, mumbling, “This is super warship that is dozens of kilometers long and weighs almost a hundred million tons, produced with almost all the resources of the Flying Star Sector through the wisdom of the best refiners after arduous efforts!

“On the warship are hundreds of thousands of best soldiers and Cultivators. Heavenly Might Cannon, the main gun of the warship, can demolish a town or leave a crater thousands of meters in diameter on the surface of a planet in only one attack!

“Such a super warship has fallen victim to a tiny mouse.”

“It was definitely not a random mouse!” Luo Xingzi argued in embarrassment. “Fellow Cultivator Zhou, you must be clear that the environment of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and that of the Flying Star Sector are vastly different. In the Flying Star Sector, we are a starship civilization that counts on crystal warships to live in the vacuum in the universe!

“Of course, there are mice on our starships, but the environment in the universe is relatively simple. There are few mice mutants!

“The tubes, wires, and internal defense system are all set to resist the ‘universal rodents’!

“In the Flying Star Sector, we have not seen many demon beasts. How do we know how to keep an eye on them?

“But the Heaven’s Origin Sector is different. This place used to be a world of demons five hundred years ago, and now it borders the Blood Demon Sector. The Grand Desolate Plateau is also a paradise for demon beasts!

“Ever since we arrive in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, our greatest enemy has never been the demons but the cockroaches, fleas, and mice that just appeared out of nowhere! Yes, the Heavenly Might Cannon can blow up a town after a single bombardment, but how can it annihilate all the pests on board?

“All in all, this mouse must be a local, hostile mouse of the Heaven’s Origin Sector. God knows what evil arts and techniques it has!”

Luo Xingzi felt wronged and elaborated on it for a long time. His key point was that it was truly an accident.

The mainframe crystal processor of the engine compartment boasted a fault detection system that would emit a mystic ray and scan all the wires every minute automatically. If one of the wires was broken, it would immediately send out warnings.

But as it happened, the wire had been gnawed off by the mouse when the previous scan was just over, and the careless boy scout had adjusted the parameter to 300% by mistake almost at the same time.

Because the wire of the alarm system was broken, the data displayed on the control light beam were quite normal. None of the workers noticed that the power of a certain unit was soaring crazily.

It also happened to be the minute when the No. 2 key unit of the space jump array was activated to the maximum, which was the most critical moment.

But if that was everything, the serious accident would not have happened at all.

After all, Burning Prairie was a super warship. Many redundant units had been designed on the key parts. Even if the problem was discovered one minute later, there would still be remedies.

But at this moment, the mouse that was running inside the crystal processor perhaps bit apart yet another wire and connected two wrongs ones, giving the mainframe crystal processor of the engine compartment a signal that a serious explosion took place in the engine compartment. Therefore, the mainframe crystal processor issued warnings and activated the automatic fire-extinguishing rune arrays, spurting out tremendous foams!

The entire engine compartment was filled with the foam, which blocked the experienced masters from the careless boy scout.

Everybody thought that the engine compartment had an explosion. In the flurry, they did not have time to bother about the boy scout’s operations anymore.

Then, the boy scout discovered the mistake that he had just made.

Under the interference of the explosion alarms, he was so panicked that he did not turn to the masters for help but tried to fix the problem on his own. However, the more he fixed, the more problems he caused. He made almost all the mistakes that could possibly be made in the next half minute, which eventually resulted to the paralysis of the space jump array!

On the light beam, the supervisor of the engine compartment scratched his nose and explained, with foams all over his head, “This is a tragedy caused by a series of accident. It is a price we have to pay in order to raise the rookies. We are all old sea wolves who have spent our entire life on crystal warships, but we have never seen such a weird thing before. I can only say that… we were unbelievably unlucky!”

Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao did not even have the strength to burst into fury anymore. He waved his hands wearily and asked, “How long will it take before everything is fixed?”

“It’s not a big problem. The only faulty part is the No. 2 core unit of the space jump array. It can certainly be repaired in two to three hours,” the supervisor of the engine compartment assured him. “Together with the debugging time, in three hours, no, four hours at most, we will certainly be able to perform the space jump!”

“Four hours…”

Iron Commander took a deep breath.

There was not much he could do now except to breathe.

Four hours was a very awkward duration.

Recently, the federal army had established a few teleportation arrays on the Grand Desolate Plateau. It was possible to send one or two legions to the Blood Demon Sector without Burning Prairie, although the legions might be scattered in the foreign land and not end well later.

However, according to the plan of the Patriots Partnership, the best move was to drag the Flying Star Sector into the trouble.

That was why Zhou Hengdao requested to board on Burning Prairie.

Everything seemed to be quite smooth. Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector had fallen into the trap step and step, but now that such an uncanny accident had taken place at the critical moment, he was a victim of his own scheme!

It was a huge project to get a hundred thousand soldiers on board and off board. The boarding procedure itself took almost three hours. It would take more than half a day for the soldiers to evacuate from Burning Prairie, regroup into battle formations, march to the federal army’s own teleportation arrays, and activate them!

It was not counting the strike on the morale of the army.

As the saying goes, the longer you delay, the more problems you will have.

Only a few people were really under Zhou Hengdao’s control after all. The majority of the soldiers were unaware of what was actually was going on.

But they were definitely not fools. The long they were delayed, the more unexpected factors would appear.

Having no other choices, Zhou Hengdao could only wait for the recovery of the space jump array patiently.

“A mouse?” With a despondent face, he mumbled nonstop, “A mouse? A mouse!”

…

“A mouse!”

At the rear part of the warship, almost twenty kilometers away from Zhou Hengdao, in the engine compartment, Ji Wende, the deputy chief tutor of the Burning Prairie Fleet was roaring thunderously, too.

He was trembling violently in fury, and his neck was so red that it might explode at any moment. Jabbing the young man’s face, he shouted, “Mouse Bai, what should I say about you? You acted so perfectly in your training. You’ve done simulations of space jumps in the Grand Illusionary Land almost a hundred times, and it was smooth and immaculate every time!

“But you panicked and made such an unpardonable mistake when you were on actual duty for the first time and when you were responsible for such an insignificant post!

“You—you—”

“That’s not my fault!” With foam on his head and dirt on his face, Mouse Bai craned his neck, although he was apparently panicking. “It was because a mouse bit apart a wire in the crystal processor. Who could’ve foreseen that?”

“And you are still arguing!” Ji Wende was mad. “Why did you not turn to the teachers, the tutors, or the old masters when you noticed something wrong but decided act on your own?

It was too complicated a problem for you to address single-handedly!”

“I shouted!” Mouse Bai defended himself. “At that time, foam was everywhere in the engine compartment. Alarms were ringing, too. Everybody thought that an explosion had taken place somewhere and was busy looking for it. I called them many times, but none of them even glanced at me. I thought that it was not a big problem. I handled it in the Grand Illusionary Land before. So, I decided to solve the problem myself, but I didn’t know that the mouse…”

“Mouse? You are still talking about mouse?” Ji Wende grabbed him by his ears and picked him up, roaring. “The way I see it, it was you who attracted the mouse to Burning Prairie. Why else are you nicknamed ‘Mouse Bai’?”

“Ouch! Ouch! Ouch! Ouch! Ouch!” Mouse Bai cried and hurried to beg for mercy. “Uncle Ji, it was wrong of me. It was wrong of me. Please loosen me. Let me make up for my mistake and help with the maintenance!”

“Make up for your mistake? You are planning to add to our trouble, aren’t you? Tutor Li, bring the boy to the single detention room and have him grounded for one month. Do not let him out one second earlier!”

Ji Wende was shouting with such a loud voice that his saliva was storming on Mouse Bai’s face. The boy shut his eyes like a shuddering mouse in a hurricane.

Ten minutes passed.

After a huge noise, the door of the detention room was slammed. Mouse Bai was left in the darkness alone.

When the tutor outside gradually walked away, the frustration and discontent on Mouse Bai’s face were suddenly gone. It was now mysterious and unpredictable, as if it were covered in a faint cloud.

In a moment, the feelings that he gave out were totally different from before. He was no longer a teenager but an old man more than two hundred years old who had weathered through too much difficulties.

His sharp eyes pierced through the thick shell of the warship and stared at the south of the Dark Desolate Domain, expecting something.

Creak! Creak!

A little mouse as if made of white jade crawled to his shoulder out of nowhere. A dark gold streak of light extended from its head to its tail along the spine. The mouse moved agilely and scratched him.

“I hope my judgement was correct!”

Mouse Bai lay down in a corner of the detention room comfortably with his hands as the pillow. The stinky toilet was right next to him, but he could not care less about it. Grinning to the mouse, he said, “It’s a pity that we’ve only just possessed the body. The body cannot withstand any harsher training and can only wield the capability of the Refinement Stage!

“Otherwise, we should’ve been able to play this enjoyable game as well!

“Forget it. We’ll have a lot of chances when we run into the Imperium of True Human Beings in the future!

“Why is Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao in such a hurry to start the space jump? Is an unexpected factor that he fears coming? What is this scheme exactly, and what is the unexpected factor?”

When he spoke ‘unexpected factor’, a face suddenly popped up in Mouse Bai’s head, which made the smile on his face even more mysterious.

Yes. He thought of someone, a guy who was an ‘unexpected factor’ wherever he went.

“Is that you, Li Yao?”

Bai Xinghe—or Boss Bai, the Pirate Potentate and the ruler of Spider Den in the past—and Bai Xingjian—or Mouse Bai, a boy scout in the Burning Prairie Fleet—spoke with a smile to the mouse, which was possessed by the remaining soul of Yan Xinjian, an unparalleled expert who had once had the greatest chance to march into the Divinity Transformation Stage in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, or the Blood Demon Sector.

“If it is you, I can only help you so much.”

Chapter 1146 - Evil Never Laughs to the End

Not far away from the bridge of Burning Prairie, in a temporary office, Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao sat on the chair in a daze. The artificial limbs on his body were not moving at all as if they were rusted.

Inside the light beam, it was tens of thousands of people and flapping flags and banners in the wind. Everybody was shouting the same name while singing the soul-stirring national anthem.

“Li Yao! Li Yao! Li Yao! Li Yao!”

It was the picture where Li Yao broke through the blockage of the Patriots Partnership in the capital city and marched toward the parliament building. Dozens of media outlets had captured the whole process and montaged it.

The lights and shadows were changing nonstop, illuminating Zhou Hengdao’s face. The seasoned warrior who would not change his face color in the storm of bullets or the fog of venom found it difficult to resist and slightly narrowed his eyes.

Complicated emotions were flowing deep inside his eyes, including a hint of embarrassment.

When Li Yao’s face was featured under the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag, Zhou Hengdao even tilted his head, as if he did not have the courage to stare at Li Yao.

His iron hand, which was holding a series of badges, was shivering, raising clattering noises.

Somebody knocked on the door.

“Come in,” Zhou Hengdao said lethargically.

A middle-aged man, tall, energetic, and bald, strode into the cabin, only to be great surprised by the sound from the crystal processor. He hurried to slam the door. Sweat all over his forehead, he asked, “Iron Commander, what—what are you doing? What if the guys from the Flying Star Sector overhear it?”

Naturally, the riot that Li Yao had raised in the capital city was still blocked in the Dark Desolate Domain right now.

The bald man was named Zhou Tieyi. He was Zhou Hengdao’s nephew and the captain of his guards who had fought with him for decades. He was one of Zhou Hengdao’s most trusted subordinates.

Of course, he was a member of the Patriots Partnership.

“Ah Tie, come over here and listen to the cheers. So many people are shouting Li Yao’s name.”

In a trance, Zhou Hengdao’s eyes were hollow, as if he were recalling things a long, long time ago.

“Do you remember what happened after the ‘Battle of Peaceful Tomb’ thirty-five years ago? We extinguished the largest beast tide in several decades and executed five demon kings. The dead bodies of the demon beasts weren’t burnt up until three days and three nights later!

“When we returned to the capital city with the dead bodies of the five demon kings in triumph, it was exactly what the millions of people in the capital city did. They welcomed us on the two sides of the street. The Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flags were waved in every street and alley. They were shouting our name. They were cheering for the federal army!

“Federal army! Federal army! Federal army!

“To this day, I often feel like I’m hearing the roars when I can’t go to sleep at night.

“At that time, they were definitely more excited and enthusiastic than when they are shouting Li Yao’s name today.

“Do you remember, Ah Tie? Do you still remember?”

Colonel Zhou Tieyi was silent for a moment. Then he clenched his fists and said, “Rest assured, Iron Commander. After we conquer the Blood Demon Sector and return in triumph, we will certainly have cheers that are a hundred times louder than ‘Li Yao’! By then, not just those in the capital city, everybody in the entire federation will cheer for us and the federal army from the bottom of their heart!”

“Will they?” Zhou Hengdao smiled. “Will that include the families of the more than three thousand innocent victims who were killed in the explosions in the Federal Square?

“Even if they do cheer for us, are you and I qualified to embrace their cheers without guilt?

“And they…” He raised the badges in his hand and shook them. “What about their family? Will they cheer for us? Can we bear their cheers?”

Zhou Tieyi frowned. “Iron Commander, what are you holding?”

“Dog tags.”

Zhou Hengdao split apart the eight dog tags. On one side of the dog tags, it was a Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars badge, and the basic information such as name, blood type, and level was on the other side.

Zhou Hengdao touched the names as softly as he could, as if he were touching the head of his great grandson.

“They are the dog tags of the eight signalmen who fought to the end to fulfill their responsibility only to be killed by us.

“Chen Gaoyi, Song Zuguang, Jing Guoyuan, Dong Rui, Liu Hao, Shan Shengjie, Deng Junhao, Xia Lesheng… Those are their names.

“Dong Rui was the youngest of them. He was only nineteen years old and only joined the army last year. Song Zuguang was the oldest of them. He was sixty-six years ago. He had almost dedicated half of his life to the federal army. He was a veteran who had participated in dozens of bloody battles!

“Hehe. After dozens of bloody battles, he was not killed by the demons. What a lucky man! Such a seasoned warrior would’ve been fought over by every troop!

“It’s a pity that he was not killed by the paws and tusks of demon beasts but by the guns of his brothers… and by our order!”

“It was an accident!” Zhou Tieyi’s eyes were more or less red, too. He stepped forward and supported Zhou Hengdao, who was shaking slightly. He bellowed, “Iron Commander, it was an accident. You must not blame yourself! Now that Director Lu has been captured, you are the spine for all the ‘patriots’ right now. In order to save the federal, Iron Commander, you must not fall over at this moment!”

“Accident. Hehe. Accident.”

Miserably, Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao buried his face into the eight dog tags.

The eight dog tags were hissing on his face as if they were scorching irons.

His trembling voice leaked out through his fingers. “I don’t know how things end up like this. I really don’t.

“Didn’t we make the best plan, the most flawless plan, in the beginning?

“As long as Jiang Hailiu was blown up in the Federal Square and Li Yao took the blame, it would have been enough. All possibilities of negotiation would have been cut off without any doubt. A war would start!

“The Blood Demon Sector suffered tremendous losses in the destruction of the Eye of Blood Demon. It is also faced with the threat of the plague. Its capability is at the lowest point in its thousands of years of history.

“In comparison, not only do we have the Demon God Virus and a hundred Children of the Nether World who are familiar with the inside information of the Blood Demon Sector, we also have the super warship Burning Prairie and two hundred thousand Grand Illusionary Soldiers!

“It was supposed to be an overwhelming victory. With the minimal price, we would gain the greatest benefits!

“Those who should be sacrificed should be Jiang Hailiu and Li Yao alone!

“Jiang Hailiu is a boneless capitulator, and Li Yao is a malicious traitor who intended to introduce the demons into the federation! The two of them had it coming whatever became of them in the end!

“Everything… should’ve been just like that. Those who were dead should’ve been those who deserved to be punished. Not a single innocent victim should’ve been involved. Then, we would’ve embraced the greatest victory and led the sacred federation to a brilliant path!

“Why did everything change when our perfect plan was implemented? ‘Accidents’ were jumping out one after another!

“In the Federal Square, so many innocent victims were killed, but Li Yao got away! To execute him, Ye Changkong and Diwu Jian… heroes who had made great contributions to the federation, Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who defended humanity, were so heavily wounded that they might’ve been better off dead! Eventually, the whole situation escalated to a point where Lu Zui’s crystal warship was opening fire toward the federal citizens in public!

“If Li Yao hadn’t stood in front of them, perhaps hundreds more unrested souls would be caused by our plan!

“Hehe. Even so, Li Yao was not stopped. We were forced to turn to our last resort!

“For our last resort, we lied to everybody, manipulated everybody. We have even killed our own comrades and brothers!

“We abandoned everything and walked this far. With a last, tiny jump, our plan would’ve worked out, but at such a critical moment, another ‘accident’ took place again! Even a mouse of the Heaven’s Origin Sector was against us and stalled us for almost four hours!”

“Iron Commander!” Zhou Tieyi roared. “The space jump array will be repaired very soon. The other legions in the drill do not know what is going on yet. It’s just a few hours. Everything is definitely going to be alright. There will be no accidents!”

“Is that so?” Zhou Hengdao smiled. Looking at the flapping flags on the light beam, he said, “Ah Tie, I’m thinking about one thing. When so many accidents overlap, are they still accidents? Or maybe, they are… the heavens’ will? Some supernatural power has been stopping us?”

“Iron Commander!” Zhou Tieyi was anxious. He raised his voice again and even shook Zhou Hengdao’s body hard without bothering with courtesy. “We are both soldiers! Soldiers should believe in their own sabers and swords! What is the heavens’ will? Our weapons are the heavens’ will!

“Everything we have done was meant to save the federation. It was a price we had to pay even if some victims were sacrificed in the process! People die in every war! Have we not lost too many comrades in the battles over the past hundred years in order to secure the final victory?

“There will be no more accidents. Iron Commander, we will succeed because we stand for justice! Evil never laughs to the end! Even if the heavens’ will does exist, it is definitely on our side!

“Evil never laughs to the end! Evil never laughs to the end! We are right. Our path is the only right one!”

The dim brilliance in Zhou Hengdao’s eyes was intensified again, but it only glittered for a few seconds before it was interrupted by hasty door knocks.

A major who was tall, slender, and had a gloomy face walked in. On the surface, he was a member of the communication department in the military, but in fact, he was the liaison officer that Lu Zui had sent to Zhou Hengdao.

He brought a new accident.

Vulture Li Yao had rushed to the edge of the Dark Desolate Domain despite all the obstacles!

Chapter 1147 - Iron Commander's Determination!

“At 1:22 p.m., Vulture Li Yao was detected by the first blockage squad. The two parties were engaged three minutes later. Li Yao executed seven and heavily wounded nine before breaking through the defense line!

“At 1:39 p.m., Li Yao reached the second defense line and turned the temporary mobile air defense bastion into an ocean of fire. Twenty-five crystal tanks were destroyed. Unable to estimate whether or not Li Yao was wounded!

“At 1:55 p.m., Vulture Li Yao and the ‘Wild Sandstorm’ crystal warship of the third blockage squad encountered. ‘Wild Sandstorm’ was pierced through from the head to the rear. All the parts from the bridge to the engine compartment to the warehouse were seriously wrecked. It lost all the moving and fighting abilities!

“Up to this point, in only half an hour, Li Yao pierced through three defense lines and has reached the edge of the Dark Desolate Domain!”

The messages sent back through the secret communication channel of the Patriots Partnership cast the three of them in silence. Looking at each other, they all saw a shadow that was as scourging as fire in each other’s eyes and how it was rushing unstoppably, slaying everything in its way in the middle of the lightning and clouds!

Nothing seemed able to stop the shadow from marching into the Dark Desolate Domain!

As the captain of the guards for the Chief of the General Staff of the federal army, Zhou Tieyi was an expert in the Core Formation Stage, too. Over the past few decades, he had experienced hundreds of battles large and small and survived all of them. He was definitely an out-and-out tough man!

Even so, thick sweat was still popping out of the forehead of the tough man as he watched Li Yao's accomplishments so far. His face pale, he asked, "Major Jiang, how—how is it possible? He penetrated through the three defense lines that we carefully prepared in only half an hour?"

"Exactly!" Major Jiang, who was the liaison officer sent by Lu Zui, nodded gloomily. "According to the latest intelligence, Vulture Li Yao is now only one step away from the Nascent Soul Stage. Also, he boasted an ultimate flying sword that is amazingly fast. Our armed shuttles and Exos couldn't catch him. He took them all unprepared and rushed through all three defense lines!

"Now, he is rushing at the edge of the Dark Desolate Domain. Although his speed might be lowered because of the super thunderstorm, it is possible that he will find us in the next two to three hours if we don't stop him.

"By then, whether a fight takes place near Burning Prairie or he successfully delivers the message to Burning Prairie and the legions nearby, it will be quite a nuisance!

"Thankfully, his companions are not as fast as him. According to our men on the Grand Desolate Plateau, he was leading the vanguard on his own, and those behind him are three to four hours away from him. The time gap should be enough!

“He is certainly not unharmed after breaking through the three defense lines. As long as he is killed, there will be enough time for Burning Prairie to perform a jump. Our plan is definitely going to work out!”

Zhou Tieyi opened his mouth. He looked at Major Jiang and Zhou Hengdao, only to come up with nothing.

Zhou Hengdao smiled. “Yes, as long as Li Yao is killed, everything will be back on track—that is what you’ve been saying since the beginning!

“However, in the Federal Square, in the wasted factory, and in the East Ocean, when we still had two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and more than ten Core Formation Stage Cultivators, was he ever killed?

“Now, he has broken through the three defense lines. Our strength is running low. Most of the ‘patriots’ need to control the troops and jam the communications. Who do we have to kill Li Yao?”

“Iron Commander!” Major Jiang narrowed his eyes, with intimidating aura leaking out of his every pore. He gnashed his teeth. “Don’t forget that we still have several boxes of cannonballs of the Demon God Virus that are applicable to real battles!

“Activate the last plan! Move a legion to block Li Yao. When the two parties are engaged, bombard the legion with the Demon God Virus immediately and transform all the soldiers into ‘uncontrollable mutants!

“Then, Li Yao will also be corrupted by the Demon God Virus!

"Even if he is lucky enough not to be corrupted by the virus, he will still be harassed by the thousands of 'uncontrollable mutants'. There's no way that he will be able to free himself in only a few hours!"

The proposal was like a gale from the deepest depths of hell, chilling both Zhou Hengdao and Zhou Tieyi.

Zhou Hengdao looked at Major Jiang in a daze, full of anger, disappointment, and disgust, as if he had seen clearly Major Jiang's true face as well as the true face of all the 'patriots' including Lu Zui and even himself, for the first time.

Zhou Hengdao stepped back and murmured, "You—you want me to attack thousands of brothers of the federal army and transform them into 'uncontrollable mutants'?"

"There's no time to hesitate, Iron Commander!" Major Jiang slashed his hand down. "They are the last sacrifices. We will win as long as Li Yao is stalled for a few hours! We can blame it on the demons later! After all, we are very close to the Blood Demon Sector. Everybody will believe it if we claim that the Demon God Virus has leaked from the Blood Demon Sector!"

"I will not do it." Zhou Hengdao seemed to have struggled out of a prolonged nightmare. Taking a long breath, he shook his head. "Major, you have gone too far no matter how you look at it."

"Iron Commander, are you going to abandon our cause at the last moment?" Major Jiang took off his hat and shouted, "So many brothers have paid with their sweat, blood, honor, and life to make us arrive at the edge of the war. Now, with this last insignificant price, our cause will succeed! Are you going to back off at such a moment and let the traitors such as Li Yao and Jiang Hailiu laugh to the end?"

“Major!” Zhou Tieyi stepped forward and stopped between him and Zhou Hengdao, roaring, “Watch our your attitude! You are speaking to a general!”

“Yes, General. Please reconsider!” Major Jiang’s face was red. Like an animal that was pushed to a dead end, he was roaring crazily, “There is no going back now. The future of the federation is on our shoulders! If we pity the lives of thousands of soldiers right now, billions of our compatriots will die tomorrow! Give the order. My men are preparing the Demon God Virus. We can definitely stop Li Yao. Definitely!”

Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao looked at Major Jiang quietly. His eyes were more and more indifferent and tranquil. Half a minute later, he shook his head slowly but resolutely before he said, one word after another, “No, Major Jiang. I cannot give such an order! Now, as the Chief of the General Staff of the federal army, and the leader of the Patriots Partnership, I order you to stop preparing the Demon God Virus and to refreeze the cannonballs that contain the virus!”

Major Jiang stared at him for a long time. He bit his lips so hard that black blood was flowing out. His anger was obvious in his silence.

“Major, carry out the order!” Zhou Tieyi roared from the side. “Are you defying the general?”

Major Jiang laughed in his fury. He gradually put on a scornful smile, and there was unmistakable disappointment in his eyes. “I didn’t know that, at the critical moment when the fate of our motherland is about to be decided, what Iron Commander cannot let go of are still his integrity and position! Fine then. The Iron Commander may care about those things, but we who have sworn to follow Director Lu don’t!

“Iron Commander, prepare the space jump now. Your hands need not be tarnished by the accident. The ‘patriots’ of the Secret Sword Bureau will see that everything is done!

“Later, all the curses will go to us, and all the glory will be yours and the federal army’s!”

He did not even salute before he turned around and opened the door angrily.

“Captain Zhou!” Zhou Hengdao asked subconsciously. Before he called, Zhou Tieyi, the captain of the guards, had already lunged out!

Everything happened in just half a second.

Zhou Hengdao lunged forward barehanded. Perhaps he only meant to get Major Jiang under control.

But Major Jiang, who was at his wit’s end, was like a heavily wounded animal that was highly dangerous.

Realizing that somebody was attacking him from behind, Major Jiang unsheathed a dagger out of natural instincts and stabbed at Zhou Tieyi’s ribs from below!

Qualified to be the liaison officer of the ‘patriots’ in the Secret Sword Bureau and the federal army, Major Jiang was one of Lu Zui’s most trusted subordinates. He was also an expert who had received the harsh training of the Secret Sword Bureau for decades. The attack was soundless and aimed directly at the heart.

Maybe, his attack was merely a deterrence, and he did not really want to pierce through Zhou Tieyi’s heart but only hoped to push him back.

After all, they were both ‘patriots’, and they were at a critical moment!

But it was impossible to find out the answer now because the moment he picked up the dagger and stabbed backward, Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao appeared next to him as fast as lightning, clutched his jaws with the pair of iron hands, and twisted.

Crack!

His vertebrae exploding, Major Jiang’s head was turned by 180 degrees and reversed to his back, staring at the Iron Commander and the captain of his guards in devastation.

Gulu! Gulu! Gulu!

Pink bubbles of blood were flowing out of his open mouth. A lot of questions seemed to be popping up from the bubbles as the guy berated the Iron Commander’s betrayal.

Zhou Hengdao held Major Jiang from falling down. He closed the guy’s eyes and then twisted his head to the normal direction. In the end, he patted his shoulder and said, “Take a rest, brother. Maybe we can all use some rest.”

Pada!

The dead body cramped and collapsed to the ground.

Looking at the body, Zhou Hengdao and Zhou Tieyi were caught in silence.

The portable crystal processor on the wrist of the body was still displaying messages about Li Yao nonstop.

Vulture Li Yao was getting closer and closer.

Lost for words for a long time, the captain of the guards asked with a bitter smile, “Iron Commander, what do we do now?”

Zhou Hengdao gazed at the unstoppable red spot on the light beam.

For a moment, his aura was so unprecedently weak that Zhou Tieyi almost thought that he was going to surrender.

But the next moment, the most dazzling brilliance beamed out of his artificial eye and his natural eye at the same time. His aura flooded out like a torrent and established an invisible realm that felt like an indestructible pillar around him!

“Help me prepare my crystal suit, Ah Tie,” Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao said casually. “Prepare my ‘Basaltic Fighting God Battlesuit’!”

Chapter 1148 - Duel of Dignity!

Zhou Tieyi was dazed. His breath was scorching as he stammered, “Iron Commander, what are you going to do?”

Although Zhou Hengdao was a seasoned warrior in the Nascent Soul Stage, although he had made his way to the commander of the federal army from a bottom-level private after two hundred years, seventy percent of his organs had been replaced by artificial ones. His veins and nerves had almost all been damaged, too, which resulted in the poor circulation of his spiritual energy. Also, he had worked in the office for more than ten years!

How good was Zhou Hengdao in fighting at this moment?

“I am tired. I’ve never been more tired.”

Zhou Hengdao sat back in his chair and gazed at the parade of the veterans in the capital city again. Touching the bloodstained dog tags in his hands, he said, “You know, Ah Tie, I have never been a man good at plots and schemes. Even after I was nominated as the Chief of the General Staff of the federal army, it has always been my ideology to fight straightforwardly in head-on clashes, breaking before bending!

“If I’m faced with a demon beast, I will crush it with my army.

“If I’m faced with a demon army of millions of demons, and I have only several remaining soldiers with me, I will still lead them to crush over the enemy!

“This is the path of me, Zhou Hengdao!

“However…

“Over the past few months, there have been so many plots and schemes, so many lies, betrayals, and deceptions, and so many traps that were linked with each other… all those things made me feel awful!

“Ah Tie, at this moment, do you still believe that our ideology is correct?”

“Of course!” Holding his chest high, Zhou Tieyi replied resolutely, “It is impossible, and unnecessary, for human beings and demons to live in peace! Now that we’ve been given a rarely-seen opportunity to wipe out all the demons, why shouldn’t we seize it? We are absolutely correct. Everything is for the national interests of the Star Glory Federation!”

“Yes.” Looking at Major Jiang’s body on the ground that had not gone cold yet, Zhou Hengdao’s eyes were firmer and firmed. “Like you, at this moment, when I sort through the whole thing in the most rational and the calmest way, I still persist in the answer—we are right! Our endeavor will ensure the national interests of the federation to the largest extent!

“But then, I’m baffled by one question.

“If we are right and the real patriots, Jiang Hailiu is an idiotic, incapable chicken, and Li Yao is a vicious traitor, why…

“Why are we hiding ourselves like rats in a sewer? Why can’t we set our plans to the public? Why do we have to achieve our purpose through lies, deception, and schemes?

“Why can Li Yao, a guy who is naïve enough to be fooled by the demons, show up in public openly, demonstrate his stance openly, and receive the applause of the people openly?

“What is it that has gone wrong? Must our belief be clandestine?”

The question was too complicated for Zhou Tieyi, who was nothing more than a warrior. Lost for words for a long time, he managed to reply, “People are fooled by Li Yao and the lies of the demon race!”

“But at the very least, Li Yao didn’t kill so many innocent victims, or rather, he killed none!” Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao waved his hands sadly. “Forget it. The question is too sophisticated. Not just you, even I don’t know where we went wrong in retrospect now that I am mired deeper and deeper in this.

“I’m just thinking about one thing. If we hadn’t played so many plots and tricks since the beginning and simply proposed our plans openly, would the situation have been different?

“Or maybe, when Li Yao returned to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, I should’ve marched over and had a duel with him immediately. Wouldn’t it have been better than this?”

“Iron Commander! What…” Zhou Tieyi asked anxiously, “What are you planning to do?”

“As I said, I feel awful because of the ruses of the previous months. This is Lu Zui’s path, not mine!” Zhou Hengdao opened his right hand. Spiritual energy flowed out of his body and turned into scarlet fire after being enhanced by the crystals in his artificial limb.

However, the fire seemed to have been mixed with a lot of impurities. It was bouncing up and down in creaking noises, as if it would perish at any moment.

“Look. The fire is like my belief, which has been corrupted by too many distracting thoughts and is about to collapse.” Zhou Hengdao smiled with a pale face. Suddenly, he crushed the fire of spiritual energy into pieces!

In a moment, he seemed to be somebody else and was nothing like before. A brand-new fire of spiritual energy, one that was more dazzling, scorching, and unwavering, as if a whole army was residing inside, rushed out of his palm!

Zhou Hengdao clenched the new fire of spiritual energy, which entangled his body like a slippery snake and enshrouded him in the most brilliant halo. He waved his hands brutally and bellowed, “Damn all the schemes and tricks! I am not a spy of the Secret Sword Bureau; I am a soldier of the federal army walking in the daylight! Let me finish the whole thing once and for all with Li Yao in a soldier’s way!

“Prepare my ‘Basaltic Fighting God Battlesuit’. Then, bring your men and control Major Jiang’s subordinates. Seal all the cannonballs that store the Demon God Virus!

“In an hour, I will slay Li Yao and return to Burning Prairie. Then, we will march into the Blood Demon Sector and annihilate all the wretched demons!”

“Iron Commander!” Zhou Tieyi found it difficult to breathe. Pondering for a long time, he said, “Ye Changkong and Diwu Jian, two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, have been defeated by Li Yao. They are all the top-tier experts of the Heaven’s Origin Sector!”

“Are you suggesting that I’m no match for him?” Zhou Hengdao said coldly. “Yes, because of the tremendous wounds I suffered in my early life, my capability in the recent decades is not half as good as before. If I am engaged in a head-on fight with Ye Changkong or Diwu Jian, I may be no match for them!

“But what is Li Yao’s condition right now?

“Don’t forget that, according to our intelligence, however strong Li Yao’s so-called ‘superlative height of the Core Formation Stage’ is, it cannot be higher than the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage! He has been invincible in the three Sectors only because of the enhancement of the super Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit!

“His crystal suit is made of the body scraps of Skeleton Dragon, which was a deadly demon from forty thousand years ago; the weapon system of the Dragon King Battlesuit, which is the best crystal suit of the Flying Star Sector; and the biochemical technology of the Blood Demon Sector!

“His crystal suit can at least improve his combat ability by thirty percent!

“The crystal suit, however, was already seriously worn in the battle with Diwu Jian before it suffered a full-strength strike from the Three Stars Slant Moon Cannon! He definitely didn’t have time to repair it in the urgency!

“Moreover…

“He rushed for tens of thousands of kilometers, broke through three defense lines, and blew up a crystal warship. How could he be utterly unharmed?

“Li Yao at this moment is definitely running out of spiritual energy and suffering from heavy wounds. His crystal suit must be on the verge of destruction, too!

“Didn’t you say that evil never laughs to the end? Didn’t you believe that the heavens’ will is on our side? If that is the case, is there any reason I cannot defeat Li Yao?”

Zhou Hengdao’s aura almost ripped the captain of the guards apart like roaring tides. Zhou Tieyi panted for a long time and gnashed his teeth. “Iron Commander, we will go with you!”

“Don’t you see, Ah Tie?” Zhou Hengdao said in a sad smile, “This is the ‘competition of the righteous path’ between me and Li Yao! If our belief is correct, I will certainly be able to execute him!

“On the contrary, if I do not have the courage to face Li Yao, who is heavily wounded and who is running out of spiritual energy, and I have to ask someone else to attack him together, will I still be qualified to insist that ours is the correct path?

“Besides, Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector are no fools. How can you explain if so many high-ranked officers are moved away at once?

“Without the ‘patriots’, it is impossible to control the soldiers. Should there be anything wrong, they will immediately be disorganized!”

Zhou Tieyi wanted to say something more, but Zhou Hengdao simply waved his hands and stopped him. “That’s all for now. Time is all that matters here. Say no more!

“Prepare my crystal suit now. Then, tell Luo Xingzi that I will brief the defense plans in the legions nearby while there is still time!

“After that, control Major Jiang’s people and seal all the cannonballs that carry the Demon God Virus. If anything goes wrong, destroy the cannonballs immediately! Do you understand?”

“Iron Commander—”

“Captain, this is an order!”

“Yes!”

Four eyes that were as tough as iron collided in midair, raising invisible sparks. Zhou Hengdao smiled in relief. He took out a jade chip from his pocket and handed it over to his nephew.

“If our belief is the correct one, I will certain win the ‘competition of the righteous path’ and execute Li Yao!

“Then, along with our hundred thousand brothers, we will stomp on the Blood Demon Sector with our iron feet!

“However, if I am executed by Li Yao…”

In tears, Zhou Tieyi bellowed, “Iron Commander, it’s impossible!”

“Why are you crying if it’s impossible? Are you not confident in our path at all?” Zhou Hengdao scolded. “Listen up. If I am killed by Li Yao, you can… do things as you see fit! The general principle is that none of our brothers are to attack each other, and no innocent ordinary people are to be involved anymore!”

“Understood!” Zhou Tieyi stood at attention and saluted so hard that his finger almost pierced into his temple.

“Also, try to deliver the jade chip to Director Lu through the secret channel.”

Zhou Hengdao gave the jade as well as the eight bloodstained dog tags to Zhou Tieyi. They were so heavy that the captain of the guards almost couldn’t hold them up.

“Director Lu? He is hopeless now! What’s this?”

Zhou Tieyi was greatly baffled.

Of course, the Patriots Partnership still had underground forces in the capital city, but the price would still be very high to deliver a jade chip to the most heavily guarded prison in secret.

What was the item that deserved such a price?

“It is hope.” Zhou Hengdao looked toward the south. There was no telling whether he was staring at Li Yao or someone even further down south. “Maybe, this will be the last hope for the Patriots Partnership to rise again and stand at the peak of the new federation in daylight!

“Alright. Carry out the orders. I can’t wait to block Li Yao’s path now!”

Chapter 1149 - You Are on the Wrong Path!

In the storm, a super heavy crystal tank rushed out and smashed into the mud, raising dirty tides and making the earth fulminate together with its power rune arrays!

Dozens of meters above the tank was an armed shuttle with a pair of crossed wings. The cabin of the shuttle was round, which made it look like a flying behemoth!

Suddenly—

Chi! Chi! Chi!

Electric currents were dashing between the corresponding rune arrays of the armed shuttle and the heavy crystal tank. Like flashing chains, they dragged the two vehicles together!

The electric arcs were expanding nonstop. The sparks and the brilliance were dancing together. A ball-shaped electromagnetic field almost ten meters in diameter was formed between the shuttle and the tank. The pouring rain was hitting on the edge of the electromagnetic field, only to be disintegrated into hazy mist, adding to its mysteriousness!

Hum! Hum! Hum!

The lower side of the shuttle was slowly opened. Several artificial arms delivered the components of a crystal suit.

In the meantime, the turret of the heavy crystal tank was slowly moving backward, too, revealing the most precise mechanical structure as it pushed the other part of the components upward.

The two parts of an unparalleled crystal suit were about to be joined flawlessly.

Hei!

Iron Commander leapt into the electromagnetic field without caring about the tearing force of the electric arcs. With his bellow, the artificial arms on his body were all shattered apart. What was left was his broken body, which had only one arm left and whose parts below the chest had been almost entirely removed!

In the thunder and lightning, such a broken body looked insignificant and vulnerable.

However, the endless flame of light bursting out of the body was rising up like a magnificent mountain. It was higher and higher, giving the feeling that he was going to blow up the heavens!

“Connect the crystal suit!”

The dominating components, pulled by the electric arcs, were connected to his broken body. Without the restraints of arms and legs, the special crystal suit for the Iron Commander, designed by nine masters of crystal suits in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and produced over five years, was able to make use of the wildest imagination possible!

At first glance, the crystal suit that was revealing its scaring appearance amid the crystal arcs was far taller than normal heavy crystal suits. It was unbelievably five meters tall.

Thick with heavy armor, it looked like a tortoise that had stood on its feet!

On the top of the ‘tortoise shell’, a head more than ten meters long, which could be extended and retracted freely, was installed.

In general, the crystal suit looked like a boa that had crawled into a tortoise shell. It was both aggressive and defensive without any openings!

Two arms extended out of each side of the ‘tortoise shell’. The artificial arms for combat, built with metals, might not be as agile as the natural hands. But the advantage in number and the almost hundred pieces of attack magical equipment hidden in the arms made up for the shortcoming perfectly!

Boom! After the last module was successfully connected, the crystal suit was now emitting a chilling deep blue color. A mystic ray slowly popped up from the center of the breastplate, painting the pattern of the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars. One second later, it broken into sparks and sprayed to every part of the crystal suit!

Hum! Hum! Hum!

Every rune array on the crystal suit was roaring like a ferocious animal. Even the soldiers nearby could not help but take a step back, finding it difficult to breathe.

It was the Basaltic Fighting God Battlesuit, an ultimate crystal suit based on Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao’s body condition, with consideration of the characteristics of the crystal suit and the Ares Extension, produced by making use of the most cutting-edge technology of the federal army!

“Come, my saber!”

Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao’s voice echoed from deep inside the Basaltic Fighting God Battlesuit. The arm on the front right side of his body suddenly extended to three meters and snatched nearby.

A crystal tank rushed close. The cap of the tank split apart, and an overwhelming saber three meters long and weighing 13.3 tons, which was made of meteorite, was heaved!

The saber was so heavy that the iron arms that were supporting it were squeaking nonstop, indicating that they might collapse at any point.

Stains of blood, as well as the traces of acid corrosion, were still left on the saber. Dozens of dents could be found on the edge of the saber, too, telling the glorious and yet gory history of the weapon.

Five raging tigers were painted on the body of the saber in the most barbaric, primitive style. Despite the corruption of the demon blood, they were still wreathed in such an intimidating aura that they seemed to be jumping out into the storm!

It was the Five Tigers Hell Cutting Saber, a legendary blade that had followed the Iron Commander for almost a hundred years and had greatly contributed to the execution of the countless demons that he had slayed!

When the saber slashed down on the ground, it was even able to cut hell in two and kill all the demons and devils inside. That was the true meaning of the weapons’ name!

Zhou Hengdao gazed at the saber for a long time. Every dent on the weapon turned into an ineffaceable memory in his eyes, but his hands stopped in midair and could not grip the saber.

After a long time, he demanded in a low voice, “Change the saber!”

The well-worn saber slowly sank into the tank, replaced by a new one that was immaculate and as smooth as mirror.

However, compared with the old Five Tigers Hell Cutting Saber, the new saber, which seemed more perfect, was short of something.

Perhaps it was the experience of killing gained through mountains of dead bodies that the new weapon was lacking!

“Iron Commander?” Zhou Tieyi, the captain of his guards, was confused and asked in a low voice, “Why are you changing your saber?”

Although the old Five Tigers Hell Cutting Saber covered in damage and tiny holes, it had served Zhou Hengdao for decades. After days and nights of accompaniment with each other, they had melded into one a long time ago.

The new Five Tigers Hell Cutting Saber had been made recently in case the old one broke apart. Although it adopted more advanced technology, better framework, a more elegant shape, and stronger rune arrays, the weapon would be very strange to the user before it was wielded for decades and echoed with the user’s soul.

Zhou Hengdao picked up the brand new Five Tigers Hell Cutting Saber and waved it randomly for a moment before he stabbed it into the sheath hanging on his waist. He said casually, “The old saber has worked for me for eighty-one years. It has killed thirteen demon kings, hundreds of demon generals, and innumerable demon soldiers! Every stripe on the body of the saber is suppressing billions of unrested demon souls!

“However…

“It has never been stained by the blood of a human being. Not once.

“It is a saber born to slay evil. I don’t want it to touch the blood of a human being!

“Moreover…”

He hesitated for a moment but still continued. “Even if Li Yao is greatly wrong, he shouldn’t be killed by this saber and die like a demon!

“Alright, Captain Zhou, carry out my orders!”

Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao roared and grabbed his saber. His magnificent body turned into a blue streak of lightning and soared into the sky, disappearing into the dark clouds in a moment!

…

To the south of those same clouds, Li Yao was rushing at his highest speed, breaking the thunder and lightning!

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was on the verge of destruction. The biochemical membrane on many parts had been burnt, showing the hideous strengthened external skeleton below. Damage and scratches appeared on almost every metal feather. Some of the feathers had even dropped off, making the wings seemed rather bare, like those of a sick bird.

Li Yao’s wounds were not recovered in the first place. After rushing tens of thousands of kilometers on the flying sword and breaking through three defense lines by brute force, he was already drained.

What was odd was that, the weaker his body was, the hotter the fire in his soul became. A new strength seemed to be flowing out of his abdomen and circulating inside his body, integrating him into the wind, the rain, the sky, and the earth!

[Little Black, hang in there. We’re nearly there!]

After the new strength was generated, the connection between Li Yao and Little Black was even more keen and tight than before. He seemed able to feel that the soul sealed inside Black Wing, which was as stubborn as himself, was nodding its head solemnly at his call!

Licking the blood on his lips, Li Yao grinned. His telepathic thoughts spread out like tides as he searched the storm quickly.

[Burning Prairie is dozens of kilometers long. The spiritual waves that it spreads out must be as overwhelming as an ocean! Calm down. I’m going to find it in no time!

[Huh. I’ve sensed it!

[Such tremendous spiritual waves. It must be Burning—

[Not good!]

As he sensed the unmistakable intent of killing in the spiritual waves, Li Yao’s pupils constricted to the minimum instantly. Black Wing shrieked and drove the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit to perform twenty-three small-scale movements in midair, dodging the aura of a blade in the appearance of dozens of blue lightning perfectly!

The aura of the blade, which was almost a hundred meters long, brushed past Li Yao and crashed into a mountain hundreds of meters behind him. After a crack, it split a huge rock at the peak of the mountain that was more than a hundred meters in diameter!

The giant rock rolled down from the peak thunderously in two halves!

In the middle of thunder, lightning, and pouring rain, two shadows confronted each other in silence.

Immense flames of light and electric currents were flowing around both of them, which were expanding unstoppably and enshrouding them in their own domain. They even attracted the thunder and lightning and absorbed the natural power to increase their own intimidation!

The electric arcs around Li Yao were as red as blood—scorching, passionate, and furious.

The electric arcs around Zhou Hengdao, on the other hand, were as cold as iron—solid, determined, and unwavering!

Before the two parties were engaged, the electric arcs under their control had already marched toward the enemy as vanguards. Spluttering noises were echoing nonstop in midair, and light balls that were as brilliant as fireworks were erupting!

In that moment, even the thunderstorm in the ten square kilometers nearby seemed to have turned feeble, awed by the two of them. The wind and the rain could not enter their domains but were only disintegrated into red and blue mist at the periphery. The mists were colliding, swallowing, mauling, and melting, too!

Zhou Hengdao raised his meteorite saber slowly. The telepathic thoughts condensed in the electric arcs and exploded right in front of Li Yao’s face one word after another. “Vulture Li Yao, you are on the wrong path. Go back now!”

Squinting and grinning, Li Yao bared his sharp canine teeth and raised his saber inch by inch. “I don’t intend to go back now that I’ve embarked on this path. Moreover, it is you who is on the wrong path, Iron Commander!”

The Blood Moon Dragon Hunting Saber versus the Five Tigers Hell Cutting Saber!

Vulture Li Yao versus Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao!

With the sky and the earth as the battlefield, the lightning as the banner, and the thunder as the drums, the competition of the righteous path was begun!

Chapter 1150 - Collision of Creeds!

The two of them suddenly exploded into hundreds of shooting stars in the color of blue and red, which crashed in midair brutally into thousands of pieces of blurred shadows!

Their real bodies, on the other hand, had attacked each other hundreds of times within the moment. The two sabers were crossed. Exhaust flames resembling torrents were spurting out of their backs at the same time. Several of their power rune arrays broke up almost at the same time. The two of them were blown away and consumed by the swirls of spiritual energy, unable to stabilize themselves for a long time!

Li Yao’s Blood Moon Dragon Hunting Saber, which was made of thousands of metal wings, could hardly hold together anymore and was about to collapse.

Zhou Hengdao’s brand new Five Tigers Hell Cutting Saber, on the other hand, had dozens of dents, too. Gaps that looked like spider webs were quickly spreading on the body of the saber.

They pointed their broken weapons at the opponent from faraway. The aura of the blades rushed out and illuminated the earth that was as dark as ink!

The two of them made full use of their spiritual energy the moment they were engaged without any reserve!

What accompanied the collision of sabers was the competition of the spiritual energy where their infinite will, belief, and soul power were condensed! In every second, tremendous telepathic thoughts were unleashed from their heads, tied up with the spiritual energy, and darted to the enemy’s forehead like flying swords!

The competition of the righteous path was not one of pure strength but the most thorough analysis, debate, and challenge about each other’s belief!

“Li Yao, just wake up already! Why do you have to protect the Blood Demon Sector when you are a federal hero?”

Zhou Hengdao’s will suddenly exploded and blew the thought into Li Yao’s head!

It was not a simple voice but the crystallization of Zhou Hengdao’s thinking, which contained Zhou Hengdao’s most intense emotions and most unwavering determination. It even included infinite pictures, colors, and even smells!

“I want to know why, too.” Li Yao blew over a thought brutally. “Iron Commander, none of your immediate family were killed by the demons. Why are you blinded by hatred and bewildered by Li Yao to join the Patriots Partnership? Why on earth!”

“Wrong!” Zhou Hengdao roared and lunged forward again. He raised the Five Tigers Hell Cutting Saber high. The blade shone brilliantly and attracted the turbulence in the clouds. Hundreds of lightning arcs hit the tip of the saber, only to be absorbed by it. The five ferocious tigers painted on the saber turned into five mystic rays and really lunged out while the weapon slashed down toward Li Yao destructively and overwhelmingly!

“It is exactly because I don’t have a personal grudge with the demon race that I joined the Patriots Partnership! As a soldier, all the decisions I made are based on the most rational thinking and the clearest head! I was neither blinded by hatred nor bewildered by Li Yao! My path was chosen after repetitive calculation and careful deduction. It is absolutely correct!”

The thought exploded in Li Yao’s head in only 0.1 seconds before the arrival of the Five Tigers Hell Cutting Saber, which was mixed with the power of the thunderous tigers!

Having nowhere to dodge, Li Yao could only raise his weapon to resist. After a huge crack, the feathers on the Blood Moon Dragon Hunting Saber were blown everywhere, and the weapon was almost broken apart. It went all the way back and was pressed back into his own shoulder blade!

Zhou Hengdao’s fighting will was higher than ever. The Five Tigers Hell Cutting Saber suppressed Li Yao’s Blood Moon Dragon Hunting Saber, and the aura of the blade as overwhelming as flood was running toward Li Yao’s carotid artery!

Li Yao gritted his teeth. The toughest wings beamed out of Black Wing again, providing powerful impetus, and pushed back Iron Commander together with his saber!

His brain seemed to be colliding with Zhou Hengdao’s as he roared, “Is butchering tens of thousands of innocent victims part of your repetitive calculation and careful deduction, too?”

Huala!

Zhou Hengdao was blown dozens of meters backward. Quite a few rune arrays on the Basaltic Fighting God Battlesuit broke apart at the same time. The Five Tigers Hell Cutting Saber was kept in his back and shivering slightly in the miserable rain.

“That was not the original plan! The deaths of the tens of thousands of innocent victims were not within my calculation! I will certainly answer for it when everything is over!” Zhou Hengdao roared. “But just because something is wrong with our approach doesn’t mean that our path is wrong!

“Regardless of what you say, the Blood Demon Sector is at the feeblest moment in the past thousand years, and we have more than a hundred Children of the Nether World, the Demon God Virus, Burning Prairie, thousands of warships of the entire Flying Star Sector, and hundreds of thousands of Grand Illusionary Soldiers. We are at the strongest moment in the past thousand years!

“Answer me, Li Yao. Do you think that we cannot win such a war? Do you have zero confidence in the federation? Answer me!”

He did not wield his weapon, but the question slashed toward Li Yao with his telepathic thoughts that were condensed into an unstoppable aura!

Boom!

The invisible aura was crushed into pieces when it hit Li Yao’s spiritual shield more than ten meters away from him. The streak of light bypassed Li Yao in an arc and dashed backward, disappearing in the storm.

“Of course, I am confident in the federation!”

Li Yao breathed heavily, accelerating the circulation of his spiritual energy and trying to recover his numb arms.

“Our greatest enemy is not the Blood Demon Sector but the Imperium of True Human Beings! Now that the Blood Demon Sector is willing to surrender, we can solve the problem with no bloodshed. Why do you have to sacrifice so many lives that are unnecessary to be sacrificed? Those soldiers should be dedicated to the resistance against the imperium!”

“Surrender? Hahahaha. As the saying goes, those who are not my people will certainly betray me in the end! Li Yao, you have almost stabilized in the Nascent Soul Stage right now, and you are still naïve enough to believe in the sincerity of the enemy’s surrender?”

Iron Commander burst into laughter.

“If you’re worried that we’ll lose too much in the war and cannot get enough slaves to develop the resource planets, you don’t need to!

“It’s true that the Blood Demon Sector is being savaged by the Demon God Virus. A lot of demons are not dry bones now. Our assault is likely to escalate the plague and turn the Blood Demon Sector into a complete wasteland!

“However, don’t forget that we now have the Demon God Virus and the antidote produced based on the blood of the Children of the Nether World!

“We can definitely control the plague and make it only savage the coalition army of demons. For most of the demons, we can capture them, inject vaccines, and impose barriers on them, thereby getting the healthiest, strongest slaves!

“I calculated before. I calculated more than a hundred times repetitively for ten days and ten nights. In such a way, we have a seventy percent likelihood to conquer more than half of the population of the Blood Demon Sector! If all the low-level demons are transformed into slaves, they will suffice to develop the resource planets!”

“Slaves?” Li Yao was gradually back to himself. His eyes were becoming more and more scary. “Do you really think that we can control billions of slaves and force them to mine dutifully on the resource planets thousands of lightyears away?

“It’s impossible, Iron Commander. The slaves will definitely rebel! Even if they are suppressed for the next hundred years, and no large-scale uprisings take place, how high will their collection efficiency be?

“Besides, the humiliation and hatred that have been accumulated for a century will be transformed into the most violent bloodthirst the moment that the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings arrives. Those slaves will join the Imperium of True Human Beings without any hesitation and turn against the federation!

“If we are talking about time bombs, they are the greatest time bombs that will blow the entire federation into smithereens at the critical moment!”

Boom!

The auras of their blades crashed into each other one more time, raising thousands of sparks of their thoughts. Zhou Hengdao bellowed, “You know the demons might rebel, too? You know the demons are unreliable, too? And yet, you are trying to introduce those guys into the federation and integrate them with human beings?

“Yes, you are right. Because of the shackles and the barriers, the demons who are now slaves may rebel or turn against us when the Imperium of True Human Beings arrives!

“Then, let’s say your plan works out. The demons are integrated into the federation without being punished in a war. Will they not betray if so?

“Yes, they will. Greed is the nature of all creatures. They are still likely to rebel! Without the suppression of shackles and barriers, and when they are at the heart of the federation, they will only rebel faster and cause greater damage to the federation!

“Faced with a great war, the most important thing for us is solidarity, which is impossible between us and the demons. It is better to slay the hidden problem once and for all with the weapons of the people of my generation than to wait until they divide the federation in a hundred years!”

“Iron Commander, you couldn’t be more wrong!” Li Yao slashed out hundreds of auras like tornadoes. “Since you captured Elder Nether Spring and even learned the secrets about Chaos, you must know that human beings and demons are of the same origin! Forty thousand years ago, everybody was human being! They were forced into such appearances because they had to!”

The hundreds of auras were taken by Zhou Hengdao the hard way, who would rather his breastplate explode than back off. His Five Tigers Hell Cutting Saber blew toward Li Yao’s hands again. “Forty thousand years ago! You know that it was forty thousand years ago, too! Forty thousand years of blood and hatred are enough to turn us into two entirely different species that will not stop killing each other until only one of them stands!”

Under his brutal attack, Li Yao’s Blood Moon Dragon Hunting Saber was finally blown away, but it took a circle in midair agilely before breaking into hundreds of streaks of brightness all of a sudden and returning to Li Yao.

With the interference of the Blood Moon Dragon Hunting Saber, Li Yao tore apart his breastplate and revealed the Hellish River Cannon. A light ball that was long prepared was shot out like a supernova outbreak!

“But right now, we have found a way to transform them reversely!”

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

Zhou Hengdao’s broad shoulder plate and breastplate exploded into pieces, revealing hundreds of tiny flying swords that dashed out and darted toward Li Yao’s attack. Hundreds of brilliant light balls immediately erupted in midair!

“It is exactly because of the simplemindedness of people like you that we decided to start a war at any cost!

“Appearances can be changed, but what about their hearts? Even the heart of a human being can be fickle, not to mention demons! Do you not understand that appeasement only brings disaster?

“Li Yao, stop being obstinate! What you have been doing is merely meant to satisfy your illusionary sense of justice under your wishful, naïve way of thinking, which will only ruin the federation in the end!

“I will not let you ruin the federation. Never. Go to hell!”

Chapter 1151 - The Real Spirit of the Federation!

While the Hellish River Cannon was dealing with the hundreds of flying swords, the long boa in the Basaltic Fighting God Battlesuit suddenly dashed out of the turtle shell and pecked Li Yao’s head brutally!

Caught unprepared, Li Yao activated the drill of mystic rays made of the seven dragon heads intuitively, which crashed into the head of the Basaltic Fighting God Battlesuit!

Nobody won the collision, but the Basaltic Fighting God Battlesuit had another four artificial arms!

The other pair of arms that Zhou Hengdao had been hiding on the two sides of his body finally showed up! Fourteen fingers, with seven fingers in each hand, moved quickly and performed almost a thousand gestures within a breath, which overlapped into a powerful, aggressive rune array!

Bolstered by the spiritual energy sent from the marrow crystals embedded inside the arms, the rune array was developed instantly and turned into a cluster of blue mystic rays in the shape of a tiger head!

BOOM!

The tiger-shaped brilliance hit Li Yao’s abdomen brutally!

Blood soared out of Li Yao’s body. His defense was finally crushed. Zhou Hengdao took the opportunity and slashed right at his head, knocking Li Yao hundreds of meters down into the mud on the ground!

Pu! Pu!

Another few rune arrays on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit exploded, burned, and perished. The crystal suit was as slack as the shell of an opened lobster. His body where blood was running out was revealed!

Zhou Hengdao descended slowly with a cold face. He opened his arms. Invisible air currents swept out from him. Deep below the ground, something seemed to be echoing with him!

Crack!

Crack! Crack!

A weird thing happened!

In the middle of the fierce thunderstorm, the land in the dozens of kilometers nearby split apart. Broken metal slowly floated from the depths of the soil and staggered to gather around Zhou Hengdao as if they sensed his calling!

With a closer look…

Many metal scraps were carved with the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars pattern and the emblems of different troops. They were the clumsy, old-fashioned weapons and the debris of crystal tanks and warships!

This place turned out to be an ancient battlefield where the blades of the past were buried!

“Do you know what place this is?” Zhou Hengdao eyed Li Yao coldly from the high ground. “With the collision of the two worlds, this place has gradually become covered by furious spiritual energy and the edge of the Dark Desolate Domain. But two hundred years ago, this place was the Broken Wind Valley, center of the north of the Grand Desolate Plateau!

“Two hundred years ago, the remnants of the Far East Demon Kingdom, as well as the last forces of the Alliance of Demons on the Grand Desolate Plateau, gathered here. More than five million demon soldiers were concentrated in this place!

“The federation summoned all the forces nationwide, too. The federal army and the elites of the major sects had an epic battle with the demons in exactly this place!

“Human beings secured a glorious victory in the Battle of Broken Wind. The last organized demon forces were kicked out of the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Since then, the Grand Desolate Plateau has been under the government of the federation, and human beings have occupied the entire Heaven’s Origin Sector!

“Those weapons, tanks, and warships were all left in the Battle of Broken Wind. Look. There are even teeth and claws marks of the demons on them now. Our ancestors’ undying souls are still around!

“For five hundred years, the pioneers have shed their blood and paid everything they had to banish the demons and establish a prosperous country that dominated the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

“It is the foundation of the Star Glory Federation to slay evil! I will not allow any scoundrel to tarnish the spirit of the federation, wreck its foundation, and destroy our motherland!

“Just look. All the souls of the martyrs below the sky will not allow you, either!” Zhou Hengdao roared crazily. The fire of his life was soaring to the sky. All the debris floating in the sky seemed to be encouraged by him and gathered around him quickly!

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Sabers ran into sabers, swords crashed into swords, firearms entangled with each other, and the broken crystal tanks pressed into the broken crystal warships. Like a snowball, they grew larger and larger still. Eventually, all the debris of war was concentrated into a super large saber hundreds of meters long!

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

Zhou Hengdao’s telepathic thoughts were transformed into electric arcs, which were flowing on the saber that was even more magnificent than a crystal warship, holding all the different parts of the saber together. His four arms were stretched out to the maximum before they suddenly slammed downward.

“Wake up, Li Yao!”

Boom!

The super large saber made of the ancient weapons two hundred years ago, surrounded by an overwhelming aura almost a thousand meters long, flew toward the ground in such a brutal attack that it seemed as if the planet would be destroyed!

It was like a waterfall from the galaxy that had rushed close faster than light and blown everything around Li Yao to smithereens!

After a thunderous roar, the land hundreds of meters nearby was crumbled. The aura of the blade dashed out of the holes that looked like spider webs. Pillars of light were shooting at the sky from the earth!

Even the overwhelming thunder, clouds, and lightning were eclipsed by the brilliant of the attack!

After only one second, the attack pierced almost a hundred meters into the ground. Li Yao was completely suppressed and drowned deep beneath the soil!

The earth went peaceful again. His scent could no longer be sensed!

Huchi! Huchi! Huchi! Huchi!

The Iron Commander breathed heavily in midair. His four arms, because of the excessive spiritual energy, seemed to be melting as if they had just been picked up from a furnace.

“Hehe. Hehehehe. As it turns out, my path…”

Before he finished, Zhou Hengdao’s smile was frozen.

He clearly sensed that, under the suppression of the super large saber, an uncanny force was rising higher and higher, getting stronger and stronger!

Zhi! Zhi! Zhi! Zhi!

The super large saber was pushed up inch by inch from underground!

“It’s impossible!” Zhou Hengdao roared. His Basaltic Fighting God Battlesuit turned into a cannonball as he stomped on the grip of the super large saber.

His spiritual energy surged out and almost burst the legs of his crystal suit. The super large saber pressed downward again, only to be held back by the uncanny force after it descended only one inch!

Soaring upward from the gaps of the saber along with the force was Li Yao’s burning resolution!

“You’re wrong, Iron Commander!

“I never tarnished the spirit of the federation. I never violated the vows the pioneers made. Everything I have been doing is to defend the country and the spirit of the Star Glory Federation!

“You think that slaying evil is the spirit of the federation? You are terribly mistaken! Slaying evil is just an approach. ‘Protect the homeland and all ordinary people’ is the true spirit of our nation!

“You and Lu Zui are both lost in the approach. You consider the ‘approach’ as the ‘purpose’ itself!

“Of course, I remember the war where the pioneers marched to the Grand Desolate Plateau and how they shed their blood and killed the demons in the Battle of Broken Wind!

“But I remember the purpose of the expedition more clearly. It was much more than for the expansion of territory. Most importantly, hundreds of millions or ordinary people were living in the demon caves and demon cities on the Grand Desolate Plateau, enslaved!

“We marched to the Grand Desolate Plateau to save those ordinary people!

“It is recorded as such clearly in every history book of the federation. It is also believed by every citizen, every federal soldier, and every Cultivator of the Heaven’s Origin Sector! At the very least, I have no doubt about it!

“The Star Glory Federation was founded to protect the ordinary people and to preserve humanity! Even when we were at the weakest moment after the country was just established, our predecessors never thought to stay safe in their territory but cast their eyes to the entire world!

“Our predecessors’ weapons were directed toward wherever there was slavery and oppression. They never hesitated to rescue ordinary people, even if it meant a war against the Far East Demon Kingdom, the strongest nation at the time!

“Don’t you understand, Iron Commander? In the eyes of our predecessors, the federation does not have a boundary, and there are no limits for our citizens, either. Ordinary people in the heartland, ordinary people on the Grand Desolate Plateau, and the ordinary people in the Blood Demon Sector are the same! All of them are the targets that our predecessors aimed to liberate and protect!

“That is the real spirit of the federation!

“Since you are aware of the ‘same-origin theory’, you should know that the millions of low-level demons, namely the ignorant black-blood demons and chaotic-blood demons, were all transformed from ordinary people in the beginning! Are they any different from the ordinary people enslaved by the demons of the Grand Desolate Plateau in the past?”

“Shut up!” Zhou Hengdao roared. “How are the bizarre-shaped b*stards in the Blood Demon Sector even qualified to be compared to the ordinary people of the Grand Desolate Plateau in the past? The Heaven’s Origin Sector belongs to the federation and mankind. I will not allow any foul creatures to corrupt her!”

“You mind is too narrow, Iron Commander!” Li Yao’s voice was louder and louder; even the bombardment of the super large saber and the thunder could not stop it. It exploded right inside Zhou Hengdao’s brain clearly. “If you insist on ‘those who are not my people will certainly betray me in the end’, if you only pay attention to the ordinary people on our planet but turn a blind eye to, if not loathe, the ordinary people in other places, then our federation will be confined in this tiny world forever until we breathe our last breath!

“When the stronger forces crush over, we will be destined to doom if we are alone. In the end, we can protect nobody!

“This minor world at the edge of the cosmos should in no way be a shackle for the federation. Instead, it should be a starting point for the federation! The destiny of the Star Glory Federation should be the broader universe and the entire sea of stars!

“The federation has succeeded in protecting the ordinary people of the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Now, we will rescue and protect all the ordinary people in the Blood Demon Sector. Then, united, we will explore more worlds and liberate more ordinary people who are enslaved and oppressed under the ideology of our pioneers!

“One day, when we do encounter the Imperium of True Human Beings, we will also rescue the billions of ordinary people in the Imperium of True Human Beings. We must awaken their strength and count on them!

“Only in such a way can we defeat the strong enemy while we are significantly weaker. We will dissolve the Imperium of True Human Beings from the inside and illuminate the center of the sea of stars with the brilliance of the Star Glory Federation!

“And the foundation of our cause is the real spirit of the federation, the ideology that ordinary people must be protected!”

Chapter 1152 - One Attack to Settle Everything!

Boom!

The super large saber that was stabbed deep into the ground suddenly shone in crimson brilliance, as if the undying flames at the core of the planet were flowing up through the gaps inside the saber!

After a momentary impasse, the super large saber expanded abruptly and exploded in a deafening noise!

The thousands of weapons of the past, after being burnt to thousands of degrees, were melted into an orange river of iron. They were dispersed and floating in the river again!

Even Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao was blown away. His Basaltic Fighting God Battlesuit was riddled with holes by the scraps of the weapons. One of the arms had been chopped off, too!

When he finally stood on his feet again, he discovered, to his surprise, that Li Yao had soared out of the ground and stopped at a higher altitude than his!

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit on Li Yao’s body was beyond recognition now. Part of the scraps were even deeply embedded into his flesh and blood. Even his facial cover was half broken, revealing a pair of sparkling eyes!

He seemed to have just been picked up from magma. Steam was popping up from every inch of his skin that was exposed to the air, just like his intimidating aura, expanding crazily at a speed that Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao could not comprehend!

The war debris from two hundred years ago was attracted by Li Yao’s surging spiritual energy and danced around him like the asteroid around a planet. They were colliding, melting, and taking a new shape!

It was… the shape of an unparalleled saber!

“It’s impossible! It’s impossible! Ahhhhhh!”

Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao burnt his life and soul without caring about anything. His spiritual energy was boosted to such an extent that it was beyond the limits of his crystal suit!

In the intense electric arcs and flames of light, the super crystal suit was collapsing inch by inch!

With his broken crystal suit as the cost, his will stretched out in all directions like an octopus.

More ancient weapons rose up and flew to him, only to be pressed into a saber that was larger and more dominating than the previous one!

Two hundred years ago, the debris of the magical equipment through which the federation won the Battle of Broken Wind two hundred years ago now became the best weapons for the two Cultivators in the middle of a bloody fight!

In the wind, storm, and thunder, two hundred-meter-long sabers—surrounded by their will, beliefs, and strength—took quickly shape!

"Iron Commander!"

Brilliance that eclipsed the lightning beamed out of Li Yao's bloodshot eyes. He roared, "It is not me who sullied the spirit of the federation and corroded its foundation but you, the guys who call yourselves 'patriots'!

"You claimed that you were not blinded by hatred and that everything you did was based on careful calculation and repetitive deduction in the best interests of the federation.

"If so, why did you not dare to put your plan forward in parliament? Why were you scared of telling the people the whole truth?

"It's simple! Because you were very clear that, when the people found out the truth, learned the 'same-origin theory', and knew that the Pantheon of Demons was going to surrender, they would never agree to your conquest plan. They would never agree to fight a war that would only be a recipe for disaster at the cost of the lives of countless their compatriots, for nothing more than turning the ordinary people of a different world into slaves!

"You knew too well that you'd be standing on the opposite side of the majority since the very beginning! That is why you never dared to tell everything to public and could only achieve your goal through deceptions, schemes, and all the clandestine methods!"

The super large saber in front of Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao grew a few secondary edges that looked like tusks after several cracking noises.

He was too focused on building up the saber to respond to Li Yao's criticism.

“Maybe you are right that we can conquer the Blood Demon Sector with a minimal price should the war begin.” Li Yao’s will illuminated the dark battlefield. His roars awed the rocks dozens of kilometers nearby like thunder, crushing Zhou Hengdao’s soul nonstop. “But what can you get after the Blood Demon Sector is conquered?

“What we will gain is a minor Blood Demon Sector that is far from enough to help us resist the Imperium of True Human Beings, and what we will lose is our trust in each other and the foundation that has supported the Star Glory Federation for five hundred years!

“If you butcher the demons and enslave them, or even their offspring who have done nothing wrong while knowing clearly that demons were transformed from human beings and that the countless bottom-level demons are just ordinary people in a different appearance, the spirit of our country will collapse, and the Star Glory Federation will really be screwed! Everything that we swore to protect and preserve will be wrecked by our own hands!

“That is your path! If you walk down the path, you will only witness the rise of another Imperium of True Human Beings, instead of a great Star Glory Federation!”

Boom!

Their ultimate sabers finally took shape. The two sabers, both hundreds of meters long, absorbing infinite lightning and thunder in the sky, triggered an aura of almost a thousand meters. Deafening noises were echoing as they collided.

Li Yao laughed. In that moment, his brain was clearer and more peaceful than ever, as if he had become one with the entire ancient battlefield. He seemed to sense that countless souls, who belonged to the federal soldiers and the Cultivators in the Battle of Broken Wind two hundred years ago, were standing behind his back cheering for him!

“Do you know, Iron Commander? In my eyes, all the ‘patriots’ are coward!” Li Yao eyed Zhou Hengdao coldly as if he were looking at the dry bones in a grave. He declared, “You said that I had zero confidence in the federation? No. I am too confident about the federation and the fire of civilization we’ve ignited!

“I have no doubt that the burning fire will radiate to every corner of the Blood Demon Sector in the decades to come. All the ‘demons’ will be proud to be part of the civilization of mankind. They will be willing to fight until the end to defend the federation and the fire of our civilization as members of the federation!

“This is my confidence, which none of you have. None!

“You are talking about how great the federation and how glorious the fire of our civilization is. But you are so scared of a minor Blood Demon Sector that you don’t even have confidence to assimilate a few demons!

“Your belief is so unsolid. How do you expect to resist the Imperium of True Human Beings in future or even march to the center of the sea of stars?”

“You!” Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao gave up the competition of beliefs completely. His eyes bulged out, and his hair was standing up. He raised the Five Tigers Hell Cutting Saber high with burning fighting will.

In front of him, the hundred-meter-long saber was heaved, too. The aura of the blade dashed into the sky and tore a large hole in the overwhelming clouds.

Li Yao raised the Blood Moon Dragon Hunting Saber high, too. The super large saber in front of them was lifted in the same way.

Hundreds of lightning bolts appeared in the clouds, attracted, absorbed, and activated by the two sabers, adding to the auras of the blades!

In that instant, even the world seemed to be awed by their fighting will and halted for a moment.

Every raindrop was frozen in midair, only to be shattered by the sweeping auras of the blades, turning into a mist covering dozens of square kilometers!

Shua!

In the mist, the two streaks of brightness accelerated to the highest speed at the same time. Like two shooting stars, they crashed into each other destructively!

The moment of the collision was like a soundless painting. There was no anomaly nearby at all except for the two monolithic sabers and the two ragged crystal suits that were at an impasse.

On Li Yao’s back, at the axis of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, the cracks on Black Wing further increased, like weird stripes. Infinite spiritual energy rushed out of the cracks and formed black wings almost a hundred meters long!

Then, there was a cracking sound, as if something inside Black Wing broke apart. The wings of spiritual energy expanded to more than three hundred meters all of a sudden, leaving an exhaust flame a kilometer long!

“Ahhhhh!

Something seemed to have broken apart in Li Yao’s brain, too. He let out the most thunderous roar, which awakened the entire world.

Wind was blowing, clouds were exploding, rocks were jumping to the air, and the animals hiding in the ground were reduced to smithereens!

The two enormous sabers collapsed at the same time, turning into burning sparks in the sky!

The two streaks of brightness brushed past each other. Their sabers were kept absolutely still in the most perfect posture, like two silhouettes that had been etched into the sky.

At the south of the Dark Desolate Domain, Ding Lingdang and several experts from the capital were marching forward, followed by the troops of the federal army that had received the ‘ultimate order’ from the Speaker.

Suddenly, Ding Lingdang and the few experts halted, and all stared toward the north in astonishment.

“Such tremendous spiritual waves. What has happened?”

To the north of the Dark Desolate Domain, on Burning Prairie, despite the super thunderstorm, the awe-inspiring spiritual waves were perceived, too!

Luo Xingzi, Ji Wende, and other Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector all narrowed their eyes and looked at where the spiritual waves were coming from.

“It is thunderbolt? Or is it…”

The troops in the drill around the Dark Desolate Domain detected the spiritual waves, too. The commanders of the troops were confused and thinking hard, too.

At the center of the spiritual waves, the ultimate collision of two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators even affected the weather and created a temporary ‘microclimate’. The clouds disappeared, and the sun rose again in the one square kilometer nearby. Rays of sunlight pierced through their bodies, which were now riddled with holes.

Pu!

Li Yao vomited a mouthful of blood while the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit exploded into pieces. He could not help it any longer and slowly landed on one of his knees. He panted hard and almost could not control his bladder because of the lack of spiritual energy.

Or to put it in a more straightforward way… he almost peed his pants in the fight!

Pada!

While he was calming himself down trying to control his bladder, Zhou Hengdao fell on his face, creating a huge noise. The Five Tigers Hell Cutting Saber, which had broken in half, stabbed into the soil nearby, too.

Zhou Hengdao’s Basaltic Fighting God Battlesuit was now pure garbage. He took off his twisted facial cover with all his remaining strength, revealing a dry, dying face.

He extended his iron hand that was about to melt to Li Yao. His dry lips moved for a long time before a soft sound echoed from the depths of his throat.

"Federation…"

Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao, the Chief of the General Staff of the federal army, gradually lost his breath.

Before his body perished, his soul had been crumbled by Li Yao's saber. It was impossible for him to be transformed into a spectral Cultivator at all.

Li Yao sighed and vomited another mouthful of blood. He crawled over and closed Zhou Hengdao's only eye.

He tried three times, but the old command who was as tough as iron would not close his eye. Uncanny brilliance popped up in his hollow eye as he watched Li Yao. There was no telling what the remaining emotions in it were. Regret? Frustration? Or… glimmering hope for the new federation in the future?

Chapter 1153 - Butterflies in the Storm!

Li Yao sat next to the Iron Commander’s corpse. He took out more than some energy bars made from the oil of the demon beasts, the roots of the demonic plants, and the powder of marrow crystals. Biting off the seals brutally, he absorbed all the surging energy inside and did not feel better until he devoured more than ten of them.

“Little Black!”

Li Yao had sensed that Black Wing was not well when he blew out the final attack a moment ago. Now, he finally had the strength rip the broken Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit off his body and pluck Black Wing from whatever remained of the crystal suit.

To his surprise, he found that, despite the cracks the size of fingers on Black Wing, which gave the feeling that the flying sword should be nothing more than pieces now, there was bottomless darkness in every crack. When he extended his spiritual threads into them, he felt that he had entered boundless abysses that were covered in a weird, hazy mist. He could not touch the soul of Black Wing at all!

Li Yao recalled the ‘Occult Orb Card’ that he had been given before he joined the Occult Orbs Fellowship years ago. At that time, a vast world seemed to have been hidden in a card as thin as paper, which he could not see clearly however hard he pried with his spiritual threads.

The Occult Orb Cards were the part of the relics of the Star Ocean Imperium retrieved from an ‘Occult Orb’.

The anomalies of Black Wing were quite similar to the Occult Orb Card, although the flying sword seemed much more advanced.

There was no telling where the soul of Black Wing was hiding inside the sword. It did not respond to his calling at all.

“Little Black, what happened to you? Wake up!”

Li Yao was quite anxious. Black Wing had accompanied him for twenty years through thick and thin. In Li Yao’s heart, Little Black was not just a flying sword but a close friend that was connected with him.

It was needless to say that Little Black was the only thing that his foster father had left him!

Endless secrets about Little Black and his foster father had yet to be unraveled.

In the past, when he had been weak, he did not feel too much about it, but now that he had traveled far and wide and even entered the Nascent Soul Stage, the more he considered it, the more immeasurable he thought his foster father was.

His foster father had once said that he had traversed dozens of worlds. In his early years, Li Yao did not understand the weight in those words. He had taken them for his father’s drunk talk.

But in recent years, he had felt shocked whenever he thought of it.

He had experienced such incredible events after travelling in only three Sectors, but his foster father had toured in dozens of Sectors. What a soul-stirring journey it must have been if it was true!

Who was his foster father exactly? Where did he come from, and how did he end up in the Heaven’s Origin Sector at the edge of the cosmos? What about Black Wing? Why was a flying sword behaving like a living creature and even appearing to be sealed?

Before, Li Yao had intended to find about the answers to the questions after the preliminary cooperation among the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector was agreed and the minor apocalypse was settled.

One must be graceful. His foster father had raised him for ten years and taught him countless training tricks without him knowing, which had laid a solid foundation for his rapid advancement later.

If his foster father had been wronged and forced to flee to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, it was Li Yao’s responsibility to seek justice for him!

At the very least, he had to find out his foster father’s identity and see if he still had other family members who should be given the message of his death so that his father’s life could come to a proper conclusion!

However, right now, Black Wing was in a weird state of near-broken. It seemed as if it would shatter if he touched it too hard.

Due to the shortage of facilities, Li Yao did not dare to act recklessly. He could only retrieve a cluster of oil from his

Cosmos Ring and smeared it on Black Wing carefully before he covered the sword with a piece of soft skin and sent it to rest in the Cosmos Ring.

There was no way that he could further study it until he returned inland and found an advanced refining workshop with full facilities.

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao calmed himself down and observed the surroundings.

As Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao died, the thunderstorm in the Dark Desolate Domain seemed to have weakened, especially in the place where they were. Because of the collision of the most immense spiritual energy, a stable zone that was barely affected by interference had been created!

There might not be enough time to go further into the Dark Desolate Domain and search for Burning Prairie now. Li Yao could also use the riskier and yet more straightforward method!

He retrieved dozens of metal sticks that had been carved with complicated rune arrays from his Cosmos Rings and stabbed them around himself. With the metal sticks as the framework, he crossed more bars on it and built it up, eventually assembling them into a large piece of magical equipment like an iron cage.

Atop of the ‘iron cage’ was an extendable antenna that stretched upward almost twenty meters.

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

As the rune arrays were slowly activated, the ‘iron cage’ was surrounded by electric arcs. The metal sticks were shivering, resonating with Li Yao’s brainwaves and significantly enhancing them!

The ‘iron cage’ was sort of a ‘spiritual tower’ in a different form. With its assistance, Li Yao turned himself into a ‘communication base’ that could spread out his telepathic thoughts through the antennas and the metal net.

However, the transmission distance of such a ‘communication base’ was still very limited. Besides, the remaining parts of the Dark Desolate Domain were still in the middle of the thunderstorm, which brought tremendous interference.

There was no telling whether or not they could pick up his message.

But the situation was too urgent for Li Yao to consider such issues. He glanced at the weapons of the old days that were scattered on the ground. He was having all kinds of illusions and seemed to see the federal soldiers and the Cultivators who had sworn to protect all human beings in the Battle of Broken Wind two hundred years ago.

All the predecessors were around him. None of them were looking at him. They were all gazing into distance.

In that moment, he seemed to be one of them, too, a random soldier on the battlefield.

No drumming, no roaring. The only sound was the fluttering Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag in the wind!

Accompanied by the melody of the flag, Li Yao sat cross-legged and concentrated his attention, broadcasting to the entire Dark Desolate Domain.

“Brothers of the federal army taking part in the ‘Furious Fist’ drill, Cultivators who are cooperating with the federal army, and allies from the Flying Star Sector, I am Li Yao, broadcasting to you from the south of the Dark Desolate Domain about the ‘ultimate order’ from Jiang Hailiu, the Speaker of the Parliament!

“The order is as follows…

“I repeat. All personnel who hear this broadcast, abort all activities. Effective immediately!”

Li Yao’s telepathic thoughts rippled out under the enhancement of the electric arcs.

The ripples were so weak that they looked like butterflies in the storm that were flapping their wings helplessly.

Li Yao stared at the storm and the clouds far away, his head aching and dizzy. He felt that his brains were about to flow out of his nostrils and ears at any point.

But he did not stop. He exploited his brain cells time and time again, triggering more telepathic thoughts and sending them to the depths of the Dark Desolate Domain.

“Brothers of the federal army, fellow Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector…”

At the north of the Dark Desolate Domain, in the storm, Burning Prairie finished the maintenance of all the units.

“We are done testing the space jump array. All the faults have now been fixed. It can be activated at any time!”

Luo Xingzi, Ji Wende, and the rest of the leadership of the Burning Prairie Fleet were all pacing anxiously on the bridge, looking at their watches every once in a while.

“Why is Iron Commander still not back? What’s with the immense spiritual waves a moment ago? Do we set off now or stand by?” Zhou Tieyi, the captain of Zhou Hengdao’s guards, vaguely felt something. He collapsed into the buffer rune arrays and stared at the interconnecting wires on the bridge in a daze.

At this moment, a signalman on the warship jumped to his feet and ripped off his headset. Too shock to say anything, he waved his hands crazily in midair.

“What’s up?” Luo Xingzi frowned. “Are we in touch with the rear now?”

The signalman rolled his tongue for a long time but still could not speak a complete sentence. In the end, he simply switched the communicator to the loudspeaker mode. The next moment, hundreds of broadcast rune arrays large and small on the bridge were echoing the storm and thunder, as well as a weak, seriously twisted, and yet continuous voice mixed in them, at the same time.

“Brothers of the federal army taking part in the ‘Furious Fist’ drill, Cultivators who are cooperating with the federal army, and allies from the Flying Star Sector, I am Li Yao, broadcasting to you from the south of the Dark Desolate Domain about the ‘ultimate order’ from Jiang Hailiu, the Speaker of the Parliament!

“The order is as follows…”

The same voice was ringing above every troop in the Dark Desolate Domain. Some of the soldiers who heard the ‘ultimate order’ were greatly shocked, some burst into fury, and some, who were the members of the Patriots

Partnership, were grasped by desperation and collapsed to the ground helplessly!

Everybody turned their eyes to the south, where the broadcast came from!

Li Yao knew none of it. He only repeated the words time and time again like a machine and showed no intention of stopping when blood was flowing out of his nose and ears.

He did not know how many times he had broadcasted that message. About to lose consciousness, he told himself again and again, [One more broadcast. One last broadcast, and the odds of somebody picking it up will increase. One more broadcast…

He fell into the mud. The microclimate, which lasted half an hour, finally shattered. The clouds and the storm consumed the land again, dying the mountains and rivers with darkness. His telepathic thoughts were ripped into pieces by the lightning and the tornadoes before they reached dozens of kilometers away!

Even so, Li Yao still lay on the ground, his limbs stretched out. He opened his eyes as best as he could to force himself to stay awake through the pouring rain while he sent out the telepathic thoughts that were destined to be shredded.

One telepathic thought. One telepathic thought was all that he needed. One telepathic thought meant one more shred of hope.

When he was about to fall unconscious, he vaguely heard sweeping tides from the back of the mountains in the north, as if a magnificent floating mountain was flying over. On the ‘floating mountain’, the two words Burning Prairie was emanating such brilliance that the storm and the clouds were shattered alike.

From the south, dozens of colorful streaks of brilliance were rushing close and piercing through the thunderstorm, too.

The red brilliance that was as scorching as the fire at the core of the planet was charging at him!

“Li Yao!”

Ding Lingdang’s roars even eclipsed the thunder in the sky. Even pouring rain halted for a moment in fear.

Li Yao closed his eyes in great relief. He grinned soundlessly in the mud!

Chapter 1154 - Repatriation!

A month later, in the Federal Square in the capital city…

For more than half a month, the capital city had been sunny and peaceful. The temperature was neither too high nor too low. It was the most comfortable time in autumn.

“Hurry. Hurry up! There’s a place here!”

A team of teenagers were yelling and shouting outside of the square. A tall, fat boy crammed into the crowd and shook his shoulders, creating room around him, before he gestured for the girl behind him to come over.

Guo Xiaohe was agile enough to jump to the high stairs. She looked at the front, standing on her toes.

Girls of her age recovered fast. The heavy wounds that she had suffered in the explosions a month ago had been fully healed, without the slightest scar left on her body. Every pore on her red skin was brimming with the youthful vigor. Revisiting the Federal Square today, Guo Xiaohe did not seem troubled by the bad memory at all, as if the accident had no effect on her whatsoever.

“Wow!”

The rebellious young girl was amazed by the flags, the cramming heads, the balloons, and the flying pigeons in the Federal Square.

“Let me take a look. Have they arrived? Are they here?”

The fat boy tried to squeeze upward, only to be blocked entirely by Guo Xiaohe. As it happened, she was wearing a short skirt that day. The little fatty’s eyes shined as he raised his head. He changed his attitude. “Well, Xiaohe. You just stay there and watch. I can watch your share down here!”

“Alright, Si Mao!”

Guo Xiaohe raised her left hand and aimed the crystal camera on her portable crystal processor at the center of the square and began shooting. She also activated the share mode and shared the picture she took with her companions down there.

But as to where exactly the fat boy, Si Mao, was looking, only the heavens knew.

At the center of the Federal Square, and the center of everybody’s attention, a special team walked close slowly.

At first glance, the team was made of the most ferocious demons!

Some of them had arms and torsos that were covered in thin scales, some had long, black hair on their faces, some had tails with bone spurs behind their bottoms, and some even had sharp horns above their foreheads!

When they moved out of the crystal tanks, stood in neat rows, and marched toward the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag at the center of the Federal Square, their hideous appearances and alien auras put the Federal Square in silence despite the pack of people.

Even Guo Xiaohe also gasped at the edge of the square and shrieked together with her companions.

However, nobody panicked or glared at them. On the contrary, people were looking at the demons with admiration, sympathy, and even some embarrassment.

The demons were not wearing the standard armor of the coalition army of demons, either, but the brand-new, black formal dress of the federal army. Every demon was wearing three to four medals in front of their chest. At the center of their hats, a Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars bag was nailed squarely!

They were not demons but the soldiers of the Flying Tigers Legion, who chased the enemy to the Dark Desolate Domain in the Battle of Dawn two years ago, only to be captured by the Nether World Watch and sent to the Nether World at the North Pole of the Blood Demon Sector for the experiments of the Demon God Virus!

Today was the day of their homecoming!

Led by Han Tuhu, the warriors, whose appearances had mutated but whose hearts did not, walked to the national flag firmly in goose-step on the land of their motherland with their feet that had grown sharp talons.

Below the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag, their families were waiting for them. Their parents, their wives, and their children!

In that moment, the soldiers who had travelled in the foreign land for two years, tortured and deformed, could see nothing else. Not the crowd that was greeting them on the two sides of the road, not the leadership of the federal army in the auditorium who were showing complicated feelings, and not even the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag that was flapping in the wind.

The only things that they could see were the faces of their family that were both familiar and strange, and their eyes that were speaking to him.

All the soldiers were hesitating. Their formation was no longer as organized as before. They seemed both eager to stride forward and short of courage to do so.

After Li Yao caught up to the troops in the drill and disrupted the war that was about to break out, the remaining soldiers of the Flying Tigers Legion had naturally been the happiest ones when the news was out.

Living in the foreign land for two months, they could not wait to go home.

However, they were faced with a tricky problem. They were all experiment subjects for the Demon God Virus, and every one of them had been subject to dozens of experiments. Their cells had mutated so deeply that they showed resistance to the ‘reduction drugs’.

The regular Divine Blood of Chaos, synthesized based on the blood of Jin Xinyue and the Children of the Nether World, was not enough to remove the features of the demon race at all.

It would at least take a year and a half before the drugs targeting their peculiar symptoms were developed, and even such drugs might not work out.

They were caught in a dilemma.

Should they continue staying in the Blood Demon Sector for a year and a half, or even longer, and reunite with their family after their original appearances were restored, or should they go back immediately… with such hideous appearances?

The moment they heard that they were able to go home, all the soldiers had been so excited that they had chosen the second path without any hesitation.

However, after they did come home and returned to the sunlight of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and their compatriots, fear and panic had popped up in their devastated hearts again. Some of them had even halted and hesitated, looking at the front with reluctance.

The soldiers and their family, one side with the appearance of demons and the other side as normal human beings, seemed to be blocked by an invisible wall. They were close to each other, but they were far away.

The Federal Square was absolutely quiet. The hundred light beams floating in midair sent the pictures from all angles to the audience, casting all the citizens of the federation into silence and thought.

Guo Xiaohe was so nervous that she held her breath and clenched her fists.

She was too young to understand how many feelings were concealed in the wet eyes on the light beams, but she could not help but start hoping for the best.

The soldiers and their family were silent for a long time like group sculptures.

Suddenly…

A green-faced, long-tusked soldier seemed to read something from the face of his family after he saw them in the crowd. He covered his tusks in self-abasement and stepped back. He lowered his head, meaning to run away.

But before he turned around, an aunt whose hair was half white had already run out and held both him and his tusks and claws in her arms.

A mother’s devastating cry was echoing in the sky of the Federal Square that was dead silent. “My son!”

The invisible ice was shattered into pieces by the cry. The two silent group sculptures turned into two surging tides that crashed into each other!

“Mom. I’m back. I’m back!”

“Honey, let me look at you. Let me look at you!”

“Dad! Dad!”

The Federal Square was simmering. According to the procedures of the ceremony discussed earlier, the soldiers would raise the national flag, sing the national anthem, report to the commander-in-chief of the federal army, and be given the new flag of the Flying Tigers Legion. But none of the ceremony could be conducted anymore. The soldiers were hugging their family, the soldiers and the Cultivators were hugging each other, and all the citizens of the federation who knew each other or did not were hugging each other.

Fireworks were lit up. Two colorful words were shot into the blue sky and the white clouds.

“Welcome home!”

It was an unprecedented event even for the Federal Square, which had witnessed countless ‘victory ceremonies’ and ‘triumph parades’ in the five hundred years of history of the Star Glory Federation.

However, over the past month, unprecedented changes had been happening everywhere, in every level, throughout the federation.

Jiang Hailiu, the Speaker of the Parliament, rested for only a day and a half before he dedicated himself back to work again, correcting the previous mistakes and controlling the situation at the highest efficiency.

The special squad led by Guo Chunfeng, acting director of the Secret Sword Bureau, worked day and night. After only a fortnight, the complicated social network of the Patriots Partnership was uprooted, and most of its bases were demolished!

After Lu Zui and Zhou Hengdao, the two leaders of the organization, were captured and killed, the Patriots Partnership had essentially lost the ability to counterattack. It was merely catching its last breath.

In the meantime, within the Patriots Partnership, not everybody had been aware of Lu Zui’s plan, either.

In fact, few people knew that Lu Zui had been prepared to butcher tens of thousands of compatriots and blame it on the demons. Even Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao had been unaware of it beforehand!

Some of the ‘patriots’ only knew that they were going to assassinate the Speaker in order to ‘save the federation by removing the national traitor’. Some other ‘patriots’ did not even know that they were planning to assassinate the

Speaker. They only maintained that human beings and demons could not live under the same sky, and a war had to be fought no matter what. With that in mind, they had helped the organization.

When the truth was out, the members of the Patriots Partnership who had been fooled completely collapsed.

Some of them turned themselves in, and some of them even killed themselves after leaving a note. Even the most obstinate diehards were unveiled one after another after being reported by their companions.

That day, one month later, the Patriots Partnership had been crushed and could stir no more trouble.

The preliminarily communication channel between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector had been established, too.

In fact, the soldiers of the federal army led by Han Tuhu returned to the Heaven’s Origin Sector partly for the home visit and partly to demonstrate the wish of peace of most of the chaotic-blood demons on behalf of the Skyfire, the newly-risen force in the Blood Demon Sector.

The soldiers who had features of the demon race would be the best bridge for communication between the two parties.

After Han Tuhu broke the ice, in the near future, Jin Xinyue, the new ‘Dark Lady of the Nine Heavens’ of the Pantheon of Demons, would arrive in the federation to officially discuss the terms of peace with a large-scale delegation.

After the agreement was signed, it would mean that the Blood Demon Sector had completely surrendered!

Chapter 1155 - Fan Meeting!

However, even if the surrender agreement was truly signed, it was just the first step of an expedition to light years away.

The federation in the past only had hawks and radical hawks. Even Speaker Jiang Hailiu, who was often considered the most prudent, hated the demons' guts and was in no way a pacifist who was scared of war.

The two parties had been fighting each other brutally for hundreds of years. The hatred could not be resolved easily by an agreement. For the leadership of the two Sectors, or maybe the three of them including the Flying Star Sector, how the people should live together in peace was quite a headache.

Other than the politicians, the specialists in the universities, think tanks, and research facilities, not restrained by their identities, had more freedom to propose their revolutionary ideas.

Whether human beings should live in peace with the demons or fight them, how human beings could live in peace with the demons, and how human beings should fight the demons if they decided to… all kinds of opinions were put forward and debated. Everybody seemed to be back to the period when the Flying Star Sector and the Imperium of True Human Beings had just been discovered, if not even more passionate.

After all, the arrival of the Imperium of True Human Beings would be a hundred years later, but the assimilation with the Blood Demon Sector was imminent.

At first, most of the people were hostile to the demons. Even after the truth about the explosions in the Federal Square were out and the Patriots Partnership surfaced, their attitude barely changed.

However, after the ‘same-origin’ theory was publicized, especially after the free transformation between human beings and demons was proved by Jin Xinyue, the Children of the Nether World, and the soldiers of the Flying Tigers Legion, even the most stubborn ‘human extremists’ had to lie low for a few days, reorganizing their defense and preparing new cannonballs for the debate.

Faced with the paradigm-shifting theory, all kinds of interesting thought experiments were invented.

“Now that the ‘same-origin’ theory has been proven, and some Cultivators can display the features of the ferocious animals after they practice certain techniques, what is the essential difference between human beings and demons?

“If there are two individuals, one being a human being who has been turned into the appearance of a human being by the Demon God Virus, and the other being a demon who now looks like a human being after being injected with excessive Divine Blood of Chaos, which of the two is the human being, and which is the demon?

“If the former is still the human being and the latter is still the demon, it means that the difference between human beings and demons lies in the heart but not the appearance. Then, here comes the question—how do you determine one’s heart?

“Since human beings and demons are of the same origin, and there is no ‘reproductive isolation’ between the two parties, they can be married if they want. Then, are their offspring human beings or demons?

“Let’s say that a ‘half demon’, who is a child of a human being and a demon, is married to a human being. Then, his descendent will be a ‘quarter demon’. If his progeny all marry human beings, the blood of the demon race in their veins will become less and less. After how many generations can they be considered real human beings?

“Or maybe, are they not human beings at all as long as there is one billionth of the lineage of the demon race?

“With our advanced medical knowledge, the Heaven’s Origin Sector is able to perform the ‘foreign limb replantation’ procedure. If a human veteran has the arm of a demon transplanted, will he be a human being or a demon?”

The bizarre questions seemed to be absurd, child-like chatter, but they raised unabated debates in the most high-end think tanks and academic forums. Since most of the debates were livestreamed, the mind-troubling thought experiments were transmitted to every corner of the federation.

Citizens of the federation, after five hundred years of bloody battles, all paid attention to national affairs, some more than others. As for the Cultivators, they were almost all reflecting on the questions that concerned their beliefs because of the responsibility on their shoulders.

In that moment, it suddenly occurred to the people of the Heaven’s Origin Sector that ‘executing demons’ meant something vastly different in the new era.

Although such ‘thought experiments’ were not enough to eradicate their hatred, the voice that demanded an immediate battle to slaughter all the demons with the virus had been significantly weakened, if it still existed at all.

Even the most obstinate extremists, when faced with the newborn babies of the demons who were identical to those of human beings and knowing that they could be transformed into human beings, were not brazen enough to call for a ‘slaughter’ now.

That was basically the situation among the politicians and in the academic circle.

However, for the general students and citizens, their focus was not the fancy ‘competition of beliefs’ but things that were more mundane, concrete, and practical, such as…

“How touching. How touching it is!” Si Mao, the little fat boy, sobbed and went to Guo Xiaohe. “Xiaohe, my heart is melting. Please give me a hug!”

“No problem. Come on!”

Guo Xiaohe opened her arms, too, and turned to the fat boy, only to crawl below the fat boy’s arms the moment before they reached each other. She also kicked his big, fat bottom hard.

Behind the place where Guo Xiaohe was standing was a bearded, muscular man.

The muscular man was also sobbing hard. Seeing that the fat boy was staggering at him, he opened his arms and shouted, “Our heroes are finally home. They’re home now!”

Being bearhugged by the muscular man, the fat boy nearly vomited the food that he had eaten last night.

Guo Xiaohe and the other few girls burst into laughter. Dodging other boys who were asking for hugs, they took each other's hands and ran out of the crowd.

The boys whose scheme had been seen through were not in the least embarrassed. They shrieked and chased after them. After going through all the trouble to free himself from the arms of the muscular man, Si Mao ran up again like a bear who was trying to steal some honey. The bunch of young people were laughing and playing in the middle of the layer of golden leaves.

A moment later, they sat in one row on the steps next to the square, drinking beverages, shaking their legs, and watching the clouds in the sky.

Guo Xiaohe pouted her lips and said, "Anyways, the war is not going to happen for now. The emergency mobilization of the federal army has been aborted. Our dream of joining the army is now at a dead end. We can only study dutifully and go to college now. How boring that is!"

"In fact…" Si Mao scratched his hair for a moment and hesitated before he said, somewhat in embarrassment, "It is not very bad. My dad came home yesterday. He said that he will be staying at home for half a month. I hadn't seen him for a long time. He was so thin that I could barely recognize him. It was quite pitiful."

"Huh?" Guo Xiaohe pointed at the fat boy's nose and observed in amazement, as if she had discovered a new continent. "Si Mao, you have always been the most radical of us all. Wasn't it you who came up with the idea to join the army together? Didn't you say that your father is a battle hero and you would be, too? Father and son slaying the demons together, wasn't it your dream?"

"Hehe…" The fat boy chuckled in embarrassment. He scratched his head faster and faster. "I stand by what I said. However, after learning that my father's troop was going to take part in the drill on the Grand Desolate Plateau and would probably be among the first echelon to march into the Blood Demon Sector, my mom didn't sleep well for quite a few days. She found my dad's photo and looked at it time and time again. One night, I even overheard her crying in the room.

"Starting from that day, I began to think that, if the demons insisted on a war, we should of course beat those son of bi*ches, but it wouldn't be half bad if the war was no more and my father could return safe and sound to my mother."

Guo Xiaohe was suspicious. "That is not what you said before!"

"I didn't know that it would be like this before!"

"Si Mao is quite right," another girl who had two ponytails said in a gentle voice. "My dad is not in the same troop as Si Mao's dad, but he was in the drill, too. After he set off, my mom was praying at home day and night. She got hundreds of statues of deities, buddhas, and the experts of the past. My house was essentially a factory of statues, with smoke popping up all day long! My dad is coming home tomorrow, too. My mom was so excited that she cleaned every statue carefully and even asked for my help. We spent the whole night doing that. She thinks that it's the deities' credit!"

"All in all…" Another boy took a long breathe in relief and said, "A martyr is glorious, but it's best to not be one if possible. Don't you agree?"

Guo Xiaohe touched the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars tattoo on her cheek and suddenly thought of something. She nodded. “I suppose so. I suffered some minor wounds a month ago, and my mom and dad were already devastated. I can’t imagine what would happen to them if the war really broke out, and I… died on the battlefield!”

Her words cast all the teenagers into silence. They were all at a carefree age and had only decided to join the army to fight the demons because of their hot blood. After a month of calming down, they had all more or less learned something else.

“Hey, hey, hey. Why so serious?”

Si Mao jumped up to his feet like a meatball. He glanced at everybody in great excitement, and his eyes stopped on Guo Xiaohe for the longest time. Suddenly, as if he were doing a magic trick, he took out a pile of cards from his back.

“Hey! My lackeys, look at what’s in Brother Si Mao’s hands! Do you know why Brother Si Mao summoned you today? Yes, we are here to watch the heroes, but it is not just the heroes of the Flying Tigers Legion that we are watching. There is an even greater hero that I would like to introduce to all of you!”

“What’s this?”

Everybody’s eyes shone and took a card from him. Reading the card, they discovered that it was a VIP card for a fan meeting. With the card, they could have a close-distance communication with a Cultivator, get their autograph, and even receive one-on-one enlightenment!

In the Heaven’s Origin Sector, all the Cultivators considered disseminating the training culture and raising the young people’s interest in Cultivation as their responsibility. Such fan meetings were often the best approach to encourage young people.

“This is…”

All the boys and girls jumped to their feet, their eyes shining so brightly that they looked like lanterns. Even Guo Xiaohe could not help but cover her mouth.

“That’s right. The hero that I would like to introduce to you today is a legend of legends; a miracle of miracles; an unparalleled training genius in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Heaven’s Origin Sector. He is the man who reversed the situation in the chaos a month ago and demolished the Patriots Partnership—Wu Mayan, the Eagle of Iron Plateau!”

Chapter 1156 - My Father Is a Hero!

The fat boy burst into such laughter that he laid his hands on his hips and could not have looked prouder.

His friends did not boo him as they usually did because those VIP cards were definitely enough to make any child proud and excited.

“Good heavens! Are they real?”

“Is it Wu Mayan? Is it the legendary ‘Eagle of Iron Plateau’ Wu Mayan?”

“I’m told that he is the top expert in the younger generation of the Flying Star Sector. No. He is basically the best expert below the age of thirty in both the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector!

“It is said that he grew up in the primitive, barbaric Iron Plateau and had a lot of adventures. Later, he had the privilege of studying under the legendary Vulture Li Yao. Now, he has advanced above the 160th level of the Refinement Stage, which is the unique training system of the qi-trainers. Translated into our system, he is definitely as strong as a Core Formation Stage Cultivator!”

“My idol! Wu Mayan has always been my idol! Brat, how did you get those VIP cards for my idol’s fan meeting? Speak! Speak now!”

The girls were eyeing the fat boy as if he were a handsome Mr. CEO, while the boys were eying the fat boy as if they were planning to tie him up and interrogate him about his relationship with Wu Mayan.

The fat boy was smiling so contentedly that his eyes were barely visible. After acting mysteriously for such a long time, he finally confessed dutifully. “You know that my uncle is a Cultivator of the Purple Spirit Sect. Over the past month, my uncle and his fellows have been taking part in the operation to demolish the bases of the Patriots Partnership. He happened to be Wu Mayan’s partner. My uncle and Wu Mayan discovered that their body moving techniques were quite complementary and therefore exchanged the skills. They became friends after that.

“Once they got to know each other, my uncle took the opportunity to invite Wu Mayan to have a fan meeting in the Purple Spirit Sect. Wu Mayan agreed. So, as my uncle’s dear nephew, I naturally had access to the VIP cards!

“Not half bad, right? With my uncle being there, every one of you will get the chance to talk to Wu Mayan closely. You will also have gifts that are the robes of the qi-trainers with his autograph. Chances are that we will even be having dinner together! Tell me, hasn’t Brother Si Mao offered you a great treat?”

“Totally! This is definitely the greatest treat! All hail Brother Si Mao! The fan meeting is in two hours, and the headquarters of the Purple Spirit Sect are not close from here! There will certainly be a traffic jam when the people in the Federal Square disperse!”

“No, no. I have to change my clothes before meeting Wu Mayan!”

“Right, of course. I need to change my clothes, too!”

Several girls hurried to raise their hands.

Wu Mayan was less than twenty-five years old, almost of the same age as them. He was young, wealthy, handsome, strong, and had the exotic charisma of the Flying Star Sector. He was essentially a prince of Iron Plateau!

He was definitely an idol for all the young girls in the federation!

Meeting Wu Mayan without makeup and proper clothes? They would be insane!

The girls were all talking and laughing. Even Guo Xiaohe also fantasized for quite a long time while holding the VIP card for Wu Mayan’s fan meeting. Looking at Wu Mayan’s slightly primitive and yet extraordinarily handsome face on the back of the card, she felt tempted, but she still gritted his teeth and gave the VIP card back to the fat boy.

“Si Mao, do excuse me, but there’s something I need to do later. I won’t be going!”

“What!”

All her friends were shocked.

The fat boy was so dumbfounded that he was stammering, “Are—are you serious? Xiaohe, don’t you like Wu Mayan best? I clung to my uncle’s leg and screamed for two hours in order to get those cards for the fan meeting. What a rarely-seen opportunity to chat and even dine with your idol! And you’re not going? What are you going to do instead?”

“Yes. The school is having a holiday, and we can’t join the army now. What can you possibly be occupied with?”

Her confidantes found it strange, too. They blinked and said, “Wu Mayan’s photos practically cover the walls of your room. How can you let go of such an opportunity?”

Blushing, Guo Xiaohe stammered for a long time. Finally, she gritted her teeth, craned her neck, and declared, “My dad is bringing me to eat barbeque and drink tea in the suburbs with his two colleagues!”

She was answered by silence.

All the boys and girls looked at each other in bewilderment, feeling that they were in a dream. It was not until half a minute later, when everybody’s expression was weirder than ever, that a few boys could not help it any longer and burst into laughter.

“I thought that it was something serious. Drinking tea with your dad’s colleagues? You’ve got to be kidding me! Miss Guo Xiaohe, since when have you become so old-fashioned? Are you really the Guo Xiaohe that we know? You are not possessed by a devil, are you?”

“Are you serious?”

The fat boy scratched his hair hard and roared, “Guo Xiaohe, do you have any idea how difficult it was for me to get those cards? I’d forgive you if you really have something important, but drinking tea with your dad’s colleagues? I feel embarrassed for you! Do you prefer meeting the nerd colleagues from your old man’s poor Bureau of Meteorology than meeting the legendary prince of Iron Plateau? I’m really suspicious that you are spellbound!”

Guo Xiaohe was so embarrassed that her face was as red as the bottom of a monkey, but when the fat boy mentioned her father's workplace, she immediately jumped up and snatched the fat boy's ears as fast as lightning.

“Ahhh. Ouch! Ouch! Ouch! Let go of me! What a rude woman!”

“Shut up, Si Mao. I forbid you to speak evil of my father!”

“It wasn't me! You're the one who has been saying that the Bureau of Meteorology is a wretched sh*thole, aren't you?”

“I—” Guo Xiaohe was lost for words. She let go of the fat boy and replied awkwardly, “I didn't know the real situation before. In fact—in fact, it was not true. My father is not a simple nerd. He is a… real hero!”

“Huh?” All the young people beamed with interest and crowded to her. “What do you mean?”

“When I was in hospital, my mom told me many things about my father.” Guo Xiaohe looked at her feet and said in a daze, “I was wrong all the time. My dad was busy for a reason. He is not a random worker sitting in the office of the Bureau of Meteorology. It is a highly-dangerous job that he has been doing!”

“What exactly is this dangerous job that my uncle has been doing?”

The fat boy moved closer and sat next to Guo Xiaohe.

“Studying the storms is only part of his job,” Guo Xiaohe said solemnly. “When some of the storms are too strong, he will fly into the sky in person to change the weather conditions so that the storms that can potentially destroy the city will be destroyed in advance.”

“Oh!” Everybody nodded, not very excited.

The fat boy scratched his head. “That explains a lot. It does sound… impressive. But speaking of which, are there such strong storms that can destroy a city in the federation? Why have I never heard about them before?”

“Because they were destroyed by my dad beforehand!” Guo Xiaohe glared at him. “Where can you possibly hear about them?”

“Yes, yes, yes. You’re right, Xiaohe. My uncle is truly a top-tier hero. However…” The fat boy was not willing to give up yet. “But he can’t be as much of a hero as Wu Mayan is, right? Moreover, you can see your dad every day, but not Wu Mayan. Why don’t you tell my uncle? My uncle will certainly not blame you if he knows that you are meeting Wu Mayan!”

“Enough. Stop talking about ‘my uncle’. Who’s your uncle?” Guo Xiaohe was relieved after she made up her mind. She stood up and placed the beverage cup on the fat boy’s head. “I haven’t seen my dad for almost half a year. The last excursion and barbeque we had were like centuries ago. Wu Mayan is important, but can he be more important than my dad? You go now. Remember to ask for an autographed robe for me. And take more photos. Haha!”

“No problem!”

Her confidantes waved their portable crystal processors.

“You’ll be watching the livestream. We guarantee that even the hair on Wu Mayan’s face will be captured clearly.

Chances are that you may have the chance to talk to your idol remotely!”

“I know, you are all my reliable sisters! Alright. My dad has sent me a message. He must be waiting for me somewhere!”

Guo Xiaohe hopped down the steps.

“Are you really not going?” The fat boy’s voice was full of disappointment.

“Are you really not?”

The boys in the behind were echoing in an amusing tone. “Our Brother Si Mao got those VIP cards specifically for you. We are all taking your advantage. Brother Si Mao’s heart will be broken if you are not going!”

Everybody laughed.

Guo Xiaohe’s face was as red as the flag. She pretended that she did not hear it and fled, half jumping and half running.

Ten minutes later, she found Guo Chunfeng and his ragged supermarket shuttle in the parking lot to the east of the square.

Guo Xiaohe glared at Guo Chunfeng angrily.

With an innocent smile, Guo Chunfeng had no idea what he had done wrong.

“Dear dad!” Guo Xiaohe crawled in the shuttle and jabbed Guo Chunfeng chest. “Not that I’m blaming you. I know that you are a pedant and you can’t come up with anything refreshing. You want to bring me and mom for tea-drinking and barbeque. That’s fine!

“But did you have to choose today?

“Do you know what today is? This is your wedding anniversary, buddy! Do you have any idea what wedding anniversary means? I even sent a message to you a few days ago. You said that you’d got it and you would prepare a big surprise for us!

“As it turns out, your surprise is to hike, barbeque, and drink tea with your daughter, your wife, and your colleagues?

“My dear father, is your head really different from the minds of us the normal people?”

Guo Chunfeng continued smiling, as if whatever his daughter said, even if it was meaningless noise, would be the best entertainment for him. He waited until his daughter had vented her anger and said lightheartedly, “It can’t be helped. I’ve been too busy recently, and I’ll be even busier in the near future. I have to do everything at once in my one-day holiday!

“I have two colleagues, no, friends, that you will be interested in meeting. Also… there’s something that I need to tell you.”

Guo Xiaohe’s ears suddenly pricked up as she realized the weight of her father’s words. She demanded warily, “What is it?”

“Everything.” Looking ahead, Guo Chunfeng said casually, “Things about my workplace, why I rarely come home, and why I act so mysteriously sometimes. Also, I’m going to tell you something that is about to happen. Your life may experience drastic changes soon, too.”

Guo Xiaohe gasped and covered her mouth.

Guo Chunfeng frowned. “What’s up?”

“Dad, you’re not telling me that the reason you hardly came home is that you have a mistress in your workplace and now you are finally telling my mom everything and ask for a divorce, are you?” Guo Xiaohe moaned miserably.

“…” Guo Chunfeng.

Chapter 1157 - That's Me!

His speechless expression made Guo Xiaohe jump from her seat and hit the ceiling of the shuttle. She sat cross-legged again, grimacing, and rubbed his head hard. “Dad, I was joking. But what’s with your guilty face? Did I point the truth out?”

“What are you talking about? What a child. Your mom and I are fine!” Guo Chunfeng held the steering wheel with one hand and touched his daughter’s head with the other. “What nonsense have you been reading?”

“Then what did you mean, Dad?” Guo Xiaohe blinked her watery eyes and asked, “What do you mean by ‘my life will experience drastic changes’?”

Guo Chunfeng blinked and took a long breath. “What I meant to tell you is that ‘researcher of the Storm Institute of the Bureau of Meteorology’ is just my disguise. In fact, your dad was the best agent of the ‘Secret Sword Bureau’ decades ago and the most excellent demon hunter of the federation.

“For the past decade, I have been managing the first division of the Secret Sword Bureau, which is the most important branch of the agency! In the battle to demolish the Patriots Partnership, I was nominated as the acting director of the Secret Sword Bureau and was responsible for the whole operation. Now, everything has been settled, and the ‘acting’ will be removed very soon!

“In short, your dad is now one of the most influential people in the federation and the leader of the secret frontline!

“I didn’t tell you this before because I wanted to protect you and prevent you from worrying. But now that I’ve been promoted to this new post, it is impossible that my identity can still be kept a secret. As my family, it’s impossible for you to grow up like a regular girl, too. So, I’ve decided to tell you in advance so that you’ll have more time to prepare yourself.”

Guo Xiaohe was silent for a long time. Her mouth bulged so wide that a watermelon could have been stuffed inside easily.

She stared at her father for a whole minute, only to discover no irregularities in her father’s face. Finally, she could not help it any longer and burst into laughter, holding her belly, kicking. She laughed so hard that her tears and snobs were flowing out.

“Hahahaha. Dad, you are funny. You are too funny! Whoever dares say that you are a nerd, I’ll definitely spit right in their face! Really. I never knew that you were so humorous. You are a master of joking! You didn’t win my mom’s heart through jokes, did you?”

“No,” Guo Chunfeng said casually. “I slew approximately eight hundred demon beasts and rescued your mom from a beast tide. That was how I won your mother’s heart.”

Guo Xiaohe laughed so hard that she almost slid down the seat. Her face red, she raised up his hands. “Help! Please stop talking, Dad! I’m being choked! I give up! I surrender! Hahahahahaha!”

Guo Chunfeng scratched his nose. His shuttle joined the traffic of shuttles in the sky and flew to the western suburb of the capital city.

The western suburb of the capital city was Jade Maple Mountain, which stretched for almost a hundred kilometers. The mountain was not steep, but it was zigzagging and enjoyable enough. It also had brooks, waterfalls, and a whole mountain of fiery maple leaves in the autumn. It was a great place of entertainment for the citizens.

Today was not a holiday, and most of the citizens had gone to the Federal Square to greet the Flying Tigers Legion, who had come home from a foreign land, if they were free. Therefore, few visitors were on Jade Maple Mountain. The place was quite peaceful and quiet.

The supermarket shuttle flew deeper and deeper into the Jade Maple Mountain. Soon, no travelers could be found anymore.

The two of them stopped the shuttle in a parking lot in the middle part of the mountain. Then, they walked upstairs, not in a hurry at all.

Guo Xiaohe told her father the interesting stories in her school. The father and the daughter had a great time and reached a small waterfall after walking for almost half an hour.

A tiny smoke was rising up from the trees, and the scent of chicken and spices could be vaguely smelt.

“Your mom is there. Let’s go!” Guo Chunfeng smiled, in great relief and expectation.

Guo Xiaohe nodded, but her portable crystal processor suddenly buzzed. She raised her wrist, only to beam with delight. She quickly pushed Guo Chunfeng. “Dad, you go there first. It’s a message from Si Mao. They are attending Wu Mayan’s fan meeting today!”

“That boy. Oh, right. He’s back at the capital city, too.”

Guo Chunfeng was dazed for a moment. Then, with a mysterious smile, he walked forward.

Guo Xiaohe opened the message and enlarged the light beam to the maximum. Immediately, countless heads were showing up in front of his face. She was seeing the liveliest scene and hearing the most deafening noises.

“Wu Mayan! Wu Mayan! Wu Mayan, prince of Iron Plateau!”

“Xiaohe!”

Si Mao, the fat boy, and a few of her confidantes all moved close to the camera. They were so excited that they might pass out at any moment. “Look, look. It’s really Wu Mayan. He just greeted us! Wow. He is so handsome. He is a thousand times, no, ten thousand times more handsome than his photos! Look!”

Her confidantes increased the resolution of the crystal camera and precisely shot Wu Mayan, who was signing autographs in the front of the crowd.

Wu Mayan was wearing a pure black suit, which was covered with dark Golden Stripes according to the distribution of his muscles, outlining his magnificent body.

His slightly messy hair covered half of his eyes, but the brilliance occasionally beamed out through the gaps, giving the feeling that he was a hybrid of a leopard and an eagle, full of wildness!

Guo Xiaohe’s heart almost melted. She scratched her hair hard. “Damn it. Why did the fan meeting have to be today?”

At this point, Wu Mayan happened to be smiling at the camera and even waved at them.

Her confidantes immediately shrieked in earsplitting noises and lunged at Wu Mayan, without caring about Guo Xiaohe anymore.

Si Mao, the fat boy, was left behind. He sniffed in front of the cameras. “How can they do that? It’s just a handsome guy who is young, strong, and wealthy! Do they have to be so crazy? But it doesn’t matter. Sister Xiaohe, I’m still here for you. Later, I will certainly grab a robe with Wu Mayan’s autograph for you. Should I deliver it to you tonight? Speaking of which, will my uncle be at home tonight?”

Guo Xiaohe quickly minimized the light beam. Hearing the deafening sounds, she sighed with great regret and walked to the waterfall.

Not far away from the waterfall, her mother and a woman whom she did not know had set up the grill and prepared the materials. They were roasting the food in the smoke.

Her father, on the other hand, was washing and dissecting the fish while chitchatting with a male colleague near the brook not far away.

“Mom, I’m here! Nice to meet you, Aunt!”

Guo Xiaohe greeted them politely. She then glimpsed at her father’s female colleague, only to discover that she was wearing a ridiculously huge hat with complicated spiritual stripes carved on the brim of the hat that were emitting a pleasant smell of fire.

Below the hat, most of the stranger’s face was covered by a pair of red, broad-edged sunglasses. Her mouth was rather big, and her lips were firm with attractive colors like jelly.

“Don’t call me Aunt!” The female colleague took off her sunglasses with a smile, revealing a pair of aggressive eyes, and grinned. “You are less than twenty years younger than me. Call me Sister Ding!”

“Sister… Ding.”

Guo Xiaohe scratched her head and intuitively felt that this ‘Sister Ding’ was a great friend-maker and would not be hard to get along with.

However, she did have a feeling that she had seen the stranger somewhere before.

Sister Ding handed over a skewer of chicken wings to her. “Little sister, you don’t look very happy. Don’t like barbeques? Here, all the first batch of chicken wings is yours. Take it slow. Don’t hurt yourself!”

“No! No!” Blushing, Guo Xiaohe quickly shook her head and explained, “I’ve been meaning to meet everyone from my dad’s workplace for a long time so that I can know my dad better… Wow, what are the spices for the chicken wings? It’s so delicious!”

For the first time in her life, Guo Xiaohe was about to cry out for the scrumptiousness of the food. After only one bite, she felt that brilliance was beaming out of every pore on her body. Having no time to care about whether the chicken wings were hot or not, she devoured all of them quickly and barely left any bones.

“Hahahaha. Of course it is delicious. The fire is my technique!”

Sister Ding raised her head and laughed hard toward the sky, her arms akimbo. Making delicious chicken wings for a girl seemed to be something that she was very proud of.

Right then, sounds were echoing from Guo Xiaohe’s portable crystal processor. The fan meeting appeared to have reached its climax.

“Huh. It’s Wu Mayan’s voice.” Sister Ding observed her face and immediately understood what is going on. “You like Wu Mayan, don’t you?”

“Yes.” Guo Xiaohe nodded, somewhat in embarrassment. She could not help but enlarge the light beam a little bit.

Her confidantes on the other side of the light beam had basically gone crazy. “Xiaohe, we just hugged Wu Mayan. Hugged him! Hahahahahaha!”

Guo Xiaohe was unbelievably jealous.

“Our Xiaohe loves Wu Mayan,” Yao Li, Guo Chunfeng’s wife, said with a smile. “Posters of Wu Mayan are all over our home. She is almost a member of his fan club, where a bunch of young girls collect information about Wu Mayan like lunatics.”

“Is this brat so charismatic? I really don’t know what young people nowadays are thinking.” Sister Ding sniffed. “I find him very unattractive, not to mention that he is also a coward. After only several punches, he was already weeping and begging for mercy, a far stretch from Li Yao years ago!

“However, if I had known that Sister Xiaohe likes him, I would’ve asked him to change the date of his fan meeting so that he could join the barbeque with us.

“But it doesn’t matter. I’ll call him later and ask him to come here early after the meeting. We’ll have dinner together. How does that sound, Sister Xiaohe?”

The weird conversation dumbfounded Guo Xiaohe.

Bulging her eyes, she stared at Sister Ding for a long time. Finally, an image that she was very familiar with, along with a thunderous, sparkling name, popped up in her head!

The name almost struck Guo Xiaohe into a coma like a streak of lightning. As if daydreaming, she stammered, “Ding, Ding, Ding—

“Ding Lingdang?”

Sister Ding smiled and handed over another chicken wing. “You’re right. That’s me.”

Chapter 1158 - Not Nonexistent?

“Wu Mayan! Wu Mayan! Wu Mayan!”

Excited shouts were echoing from the portable crystal processor.

All her confidantes and the boys, including Si Mao, had gone crazy.

However, Guo Xiaohe was no longer attracted by them.

Her head went blank, and she took the chicken wing from Ding Lingdang’s hands subconsciously. She looked at the chicken wing and then at Ding Lingdang, wondering whether she should be panicked or thrilled!

Ding Lingdang. It was truly the ‘Crimson Queen’ Ding Lingdang!

She was a super expert who had been famous in the Heaven’s Origin Sector for more than ten years! Compared to her, Wu Mayan—the Eagle of Iron Plateau, who had only been in the Heaven’s Origin Sector for one year—was just a rookie. He was definitely no match for her in terms of capability, fame, or influence!

Besides, Wu Mayan had always trained below Ding Lingdang after he came to the Heaven’s Origin Sector and considered himself her disciple. Everybody knew it, too!

Guo Xiaohe had missed Wu Mayan’s fan meeting, but the legendary ‘Crimson Queen’ Ding Lingdang showed up miraculously and even roasted two batches of chicken wings for her.

That—that—that was too…

Holding the chicken wings in a daze for a long time, she suddenly shrieked and jumped to her feet, rushing to the brook not far away.

She waved the chicken wings at her father and shouted, “Dad! Dad! You—you—you invited Ding Lingdang to barbeque with us? That—that—that is Ding Lingdang. The Crimson Queen!

“Dad, how did you manage it? That is incredible. Highly incredible of you!”

Guo Chunfeng was washing and dissecting the fish with a male colleague of his. The two of them had prepared a bucket of small fish. Hearing the voice, they turned around at the same time and smiled at her.

Guo Xiaohe’s crazily waving arms suddenly halted, as if she was magically frozen. Squinting, she observed her father’s male colleague suspiciously.

This guy…

He looked plain and had messy hair. He was wearing slack shorts and a linen T-shirt with a tiny hole on his sleeve.

In general, he seemed to be exactly the same type of person as her father, not able to care less about his appearance.

Guo Xiaohe could not tell how old the guy was.

At first glance, he was a young man slightly older than her, but there was an immeasurable feeling to his plain-looking face.

After she blinked, the feeling was gone, and the guy was another mundane, unattractive person.

However, Guo Xiaohe vaguely felt that, like her father, when the guy squatted near the brook, he was like a rock, a blade of grass, or a tree. They seemed to be part of the mountain, as if they had naturally grown here!

As for the face… the face…

Guo Xiaohe was quick enough to stuff the chicken wing into her mouth and bit it hard in case she shrieked again.

The plain-looking young man extended his hand to her with a smile. “Nice to meet you. I am Li Yao.”

Guo Xiaohe took a breath for a long time. She tried to hold it back but failed. In the end, she was shrieking at the top of her voice.

“Ah! Ahhhhhhhhhhhh!”

Good heavens! Was she in a dream? It could not possibly be not a dream, right? Vulture Li Yao? Vulture Li Yao!

Vulture Li Yao was an Ultra-Level Federal Hero. In the few years at the beginning, it had mainly been for the purpose of propaganda.

However, as his endeavors in the Flying Star Sector and the Blood Demon Sector were publicly known, all the citizens of the federation, from seniors a hundred and eighty years old to little kids, were all impressed by his legendary experiences of fighting the Immortal Cultivators, destroying the Eye of Blood Demon, and disrupting the Patriots Partnership!

If Wu Mayan, the Eagle of Iron Plateau, was a regular idol, and Ding Lingdang, the Crimson Queen, was a super idol, then Vulture Li Yao, as Wu Mayan's master, could not be described as an idol at all.

Calling him an idol would be a great insult to him.

He was the kind of illustrious individual that should only appear in textbooks or exams. For example, 'briefly describe Vulture Li Yao's experiences in the Blood Demon Sector and analyze the procedures of him breaking into the Eye of Blood Demon', which would frustrate and infuriate the test-takers and make them wake up in fear from nightmares!

However, the god who should only appear in textbooks or exams was wearing slack shorts, a T-shirt, and slippers, showing up in front of her face with a smile a bucket of fish.

"Xiaohe, I hugged Wu Mayan one more time. One more time. Hahahaha. I've hugged him for you!"

On the light beam, her confidantes who did not know what was happening on her side were still yelling.

"Xiaohe, I planned to ask my uncle to have dinner with Wu Mayan so that I could bring you together. He agreed at first! But later, he said that he had to have dinner with his master at night and could only meet us another day! Rest assured. I'll definitely make an appointment with him for you another day. It's all on me!" the fat boy said, half to ask for compliment and half in regret.

Guo Xiaohe moved her lips and intended to explain to her friends, but she put down her portable crystal processor when it almost reached her mouth.

How should she explain? Should she tell the guy that it would be unnecessary because Wu Mayan’s master was standing right in front of her face and would be having dinner with her and Wu Mayan?

[Calm down. I must calm myself down!]

Guo Xiaohe rubbed her chest hard for a long time. Still, she could not help but jump to a giant rock nearby in the end and roar to the sky, “How can anybody calm down when they run into something like this? Am I mad, or is it the world?”

…

Two hours later, everybody had enjoyed enough food and drink.

Guo Xiaohe had finally managed to recover from the overwhelming shock and accept the fact that her father was the director of the Secret Sword Bureau as if she had just woken up from a dream.

But the girl was rather carefree. She was playing with Ding Lingdang delightedly immediately after she was back to herself!

Li Yao and Guo Chunfeng went to the depths of Jade Maple Mountain with two empty buckets.

It was said that there was an icy spring at the bottom of a cave inside the mountain. The water from the spring could add quite a unique flavor to tea.

Li Yao stretched out his arms and patted his puffy belly, smiling. “After being busy as bee for more than a year, I almost feel as if I’m not suited to this new lifestyle, having rested for half a month. I feel that my bones are itching, and I have to find something to do!”

“Why don’t we swap our jobs?” Guo Chunfeng smiled, too. “That is very easy for you to say, young brother. You’ve been living your life comfortably this past month, eating, sleeping, and training. How enjoyable it was! But I was ten times busier than before!”

“Those who are capable must be troubled! Who else could find all the members of the Patriots Partnership lurking in the Secret Sword Bureau, the federal army, and other government agencies except for you, Brother Guo?”

Li Yao grinned. “How does it feel, Brother Guo, Director Guo? You are now the absolute leader of the secret frontline of the federation. With the authorization of parliament, you’ve also received the top confidential intelligence of the federation and the Blood Demon Sector. Even the Jade Crystal Disc that stores Elder Nether Spring’s memories is yours to parse. You now have even more power than Lu Zui did in the past. How does it feel?”

“That’s all temporary.” Guo Chunfeng shook his head and said, “It has to be done in order to uproot the Patriots Partnership. After everything is over, I will report to parliament in person and submit my proposal to restrain the power of the Secret Sword Bureau. At the very least, it should be checked and balanced in a certain way. Only by doing so can we make sure that the ambitions of an individual will not expand infinitely and that the tragedy of the Patriots Partnership will not happen again.

“As for how it feels…

“In short, grueling!

“You know that I have never been a man lustful for power. I am only interested in cracking cases and capturing criminals. If a second person was qualified to be the director of the Secret Sword Bureau, I would be more than happy to give them the post and continue working as the supervisor of the first division as before.

“There’s nothing on my mind right now except to solve everything as quickly as possible so that I’ll have more time to spend with my wife and my daughter.”

Li Yao smiled. “I think you’ve done a great job as the director, Brother Guo. I’ve read the case files. You have been very prudent, and you paid attention to the subtle differences between the members of the Patriots Partnership instead of punishing them alike.”

“Of course,” Guo Chunfeng replied solemnly. “The biggest taboo of such cases is amplification, like how Jin Tuyi struck the ‘remnants of Elder Nether Spring’ in the Blood Demon Sector or how Lu Zui struck the Children of the Nether World on our side. Such cases were merely means for them to remove their dissidents! If we punish all the members of the Patriots Partnership in the same way, it will shake the foundation of the federation and raise new mistrust!

“It’s just like the nonexistent Abyss. If we were determined to find out who Abyss was, how much trouble would we have caused, and how many innocent people could’ve been wrongly accused?

“Therefore, prudence is the top guideline for me when working on the case. We cannot make things up. We cannot imagine that a random guy is a member of the Patriots Partnership without solid evidence!”

Li Yao nodded and looked at Guo Chunfeng. “You’re quite right, Brother Guo. However, speaking of Abyss, I feel that he might not be nonexistent.”

Guo Chunfeng was dazed and stopped. “What do you mean? Elder Nether Spring confessed countless times that Abyss does not exist and was just a disguise for the Children of the Nether World before his death under the soul searching technique. Besides, the examination on his memories reported no traces of Abyss at all.”

Li Yao continued walking forward, spinning the empty bucket quickly on his fingertip. He said unhurriedly, “Elder Nether Spring was a man at the peak of both worlds. Is it strange to think that he could grit through the interrogation? Besides, one percent of the area inside his brain was completely sealed by himself. Nobody knew what was hidden inside. Now, the information has perished together with his brain cells.”

Guo Chunfeng followed him up. “You are suspicious that Abyss is not nonexistent? What proof do you have?”

“Nothing. It’s just my intuition.” Li Yao smiled and tapped his temple. “However, my intuition has often proved to be correct. I’m not going to let go of the lead. I will certainly pursue further until I dig out the real Abyss!

“Brother Guo, what’s up? Let’s keep walking!”

“Oh. Okay, okay. Look, that is the Blue Light Cave I told you about!”

Chapter 1159 - Abyss in the Cave!

Hidden among the rocks at the front was a small cave. The two of them walked in the cave, talking and laughing. The seemingly small cave was much more spacious than it appeared to be. It was cold and full of beautiful stalactites whose colors were changing nonstop under the light.

They found the Blue Water Spring at the bottom of the cave. Li Yao picked up a handful of water and tasted it. The water was indeed sweet and refreshing.

“Great water!” Li Yao complimented and was about to fill in the empty buckets.

“Wait.” Blinking his eyes, Guo Chunfeng suddenly interjected. “Let’s not hurry to fill in the buckets. The Blue Water Spring has another great advantage. There’s this Sand Bamboo Worm living at the bottom and in the wall of the spring. It is fresh and succulent. One of the best meats in the world, I would say. This is the best season to eat them. Let’s me see if I can find any.”

The spring was only half a meter deep. Guo Chunfeng did not care about his demeanor and simply crouched next to the spring, groping for the worms for a long time in the spring. In the end, he stood up in disappointment and shook his head. “Bad luck. I didn’t find them.”

“Let me have a try!” Li Yao was greatly interested. He crouched next to the spring like Guo Chunfeng and extended his hands into the spring.

“Okay, but don’t use your spiritual energy. Such worms are most sensitive to spiritual energy. They must’ve retreated into the mud because of the tiny bit of spiritual energy that I wielded,” Guo Chunfeng reminded him.

“Alright!”

Li Yao concealed his spiritual energy to the minimum. Like a completely ordinary person, he lowered half of his body into the spring and groped with all his attention. Even his head was soaked in the water.

Behind him, Guo Chunfeng stood in silence like a tree that was infested by bugs.

He also seemed to be swallowed by an invisible swamp inch by inch, with struggles written all over his face.

His face was now discontented, now angry, now aggressive, now frustrated, and now filled with the intense affection for his wife and his daughter.

The veins on the back of his hand bulged three times but died down again, only to rise thicker, higher, and more twisted!

Li Yao felt none of it. Half of his body was soaked in the spring as he groped for the Sand Bamboo worms carefully.

When his veins bulged for the fourth time, Guo Chunfeng’s pupils had been melted into his eyes, which were now pure black. He seemed about to become someone else. But at the last moment, something seemed to occur to him. He grunted, with cold sweat popping up all over his body, and lowered his hands. Stepping backward, he lost all his vigor, and his face was brimming with confusion and desperation.

“Let’s go back,” Guo Chunfeng said feebly.

“Wait a moment.” Li Yao stood straight in the spring and wiped off the cold water from his face. “I’m about to get them. Let me have another try.”

“There’s no need.” Upset, Guo Chunfeng said, “Maybe they have all been dug out by the gourmets. Let’s go. Everybody is waiting for us!”

“Alright!”

Li Yao shook the water off his body and filled the two empty buckets with the spring water. He handed a bucket to Guo Chunfeng and eyed him curiously. “Brother Guo, are you not feeling well? Why is there cold sweat all over your forehead?”

“You don’t know the answer? Because I’ve been exhausted recently, of course! I asked you to help me, but you hid in your refining workshop and didn’t leave the room for quite a few days. You didn’t even have time for a promotional video. Are there any other federal heroes like you?”

Guo Chunfeng glared and picked up a bucket. Turning around, he walked out of the cave. “Let’s head back. I’ll show you how I make tea!”

“Alright!” Li Yao said with a smile. Carrying the other bucket, he followed Guo Chunfeng. The two of them crawled out of the cave.

While crawling, Li Yao said casually, “Right, Brother Guo, there’s something that I want to ask you. Not very serious. You can talk if you are willing to, but it’s perfectly okay if you would rather not.”

Guo Chunfeng replied without looking back, “Go ahead. You have the highest permissions now and are qualified to know most of the confidential information anyway.”

“It’s not anything confidential.” Li Yao scratched his wet hair to one side of his head and asked at ease, “I’m just curious about one thing. Why didn’t you attack when I was crouching next to the spring? It was your only opportunity to kill me!”

Guo Chunfeng’s body suddenly froze at the entrance of the cave before he turned around slowly.

Li Yao and Guo Chunfeng, one tall and the other short, confronted each other in the cave where gloomy wind was blowing.

“It appears that we won’t be back for the time being,” Guo Chunfeng said coldly.

“I don’t mind walking while talking, but I’m afraid that you will.” Li Yao opened his hands and said, “Although Brother Guo is known as ‘the best Core Formation Stage Cultivator of the Heaven’s Origin Sector’, it only describes the breadth of your talents but not the depth. In terms of absolute combat ability, you are no match for me, Brother Guo.

“Right now, I’ve just recuperated from heavy wounds, my capability has not fully recovered, and even my crystal suit is not repaired yet. I was not defending myself at all, and I concealed my spiritual energy to the minimum.

“If you mean to kill me, it was your best, and perhaps only, opportunity. Now that you’ve missed it, after I completely regain the combat ability of the Nascent Soul Stage, few people in the three Sectors will be capable of killing me, and Brother Guo is definitely not one of them!

“I said that I would investigate Abyss until the truth is out. Brother Guo, you must know that I always keep my word!

“Killing me here not only has the highest odds of success but also has no eyewitnesses. You could blame it on the remnants of the Patriots Partnership. Although it is not flawless, you don’t really have a better choice.

“You hesitated three times. The fourth time, you almost made up your mind to kill me, but you gave up in the end. Why? Brother Guo, Director Guo, or… Abyss?”

Li Yao was quite relaxed. His voice was not very high, but every word he said stabbed into Guo Chunfeng’s body like a flying sword.

Guo Chunfeng was so feeble that he could not keep carrying the bucket of water, which weighed only several kilograms. The bucket turned upside down, and the cold water inside all flowed out.

“The water!” Li Yao said. “The water has gone!”

Guo Chunfeng could not withstand the coldness in the cave any longer. After a moment of rigidness, he crawled out to the brightness on all fours.

After he crawled out of the cave, he collapsed on a giant rock that was covered with moss nearby, allowing the sunlight to warm his frozen body from the gaps of the bare branches.

Li Yao crawled out of the cave, too, and sat next to him, observing him with great interest.

Gudu! Gudu! Gudu! Gudu!

Guo Chunfeng drank up the remaining half bucket of water. Gazing at the high, cloudless sky, he mumbled, “I never knew that, if you drink the water here too fast, it tastes like liquor. The hardest liquor.”

“Well, Brother Guo. Can we talk like normal people? Please don’t use the lines of cowboys and act as if we are having a duel,” Li Yao remarked. “It was just a casual question. Just forget it if you don’t want to talk.”

“Huh?” Guo Chunfeng was dumbfounded. “Is it forgettable?”

“Of course!” Li Yao nodded. “If you want, you can pretend that I said nothing and go back to fill the bucket. We’ll return then. How does it sound?”

Guo Chunfeng stared at Li Yao with his bloodshot eyes as if he were eyeing a monster.

Of course, in a certain sense, Li Yao was an out-and-out monster.

Looking at him for a long time, Guo Chunfeng was frustrated again. He said with a bitter smile, “Fine. Ask whatever is on your mind. I’m too tired to disguise myself any longer. I can tell you everything. But before that, I want to know why you are certain that Abyss is not nonexistent and why Abyss is me.”

Li Yao sipped the spring water, too. Clicking his tongue, he observed, “It doesn’t taste like liquor at all. It’s just water! About Abyss… here, let’s have a proper analysis.

“First of all, what baffled me most was Elder Nether Spring’s death!

"Let's review the scene for a moment. At that time, I snuck into the base of the Patriots Partnership in the East Ocean alone, released Neltharion to pry into the secrets of the base, and happened to run into the members of the Patriots Partnership who were interrogating Elder Nether Spring with the soul searching technique!

"Then, Elder Nether Spring was dead, right in front of my face. That's too uncanny, isn't it?"

Guo Chunfeng was dazed. "Elder Nether Spring was a powerful man. Is it strange that he kept some of the drugs inside his head and, after condensing enough drugs, killed himself at the critical moment when the base was under attack to avoid further suffering?"

"It's not strange that he killed himself, but why did he choose the time when I snuck into the base, no earlier, no later?" Li Yao gesticulated as he spoke. "If you think about it carefully, Elder Nether Spring's death was the trigger for everything that followed!

"If Elder Nether Spring hadn't died at that time, the Patriots Partnership wouldn't have extracted his memories into the Jade Crystal Disc.

"Without the Jade Crystal Disc, I would've been short of the critical proof to unveil Lu Zui's real face. It would've been possible that the war between the two Sectors was not stopped!

"If that is what happened, maybe, you and I would be in the middle of smoke, bullets, and dead bodies on a battlefield right now!

"We can even say that Elder Nether Spring destroyed the Patriots Partnership with his own death and avenged himself for Lu Zui’s capture and torment!

“Is it really a coincidence?”

Guo Chunfeng frowned. “Your words are getting stranger and stranger. What could it have been if not coincidence?”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes as he said, “When I manipulated Neltharion to dive into the undersea base, I was very careful, fearing that I might encounter battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who were likely to discover Neltharion. Thankfully, there were only three battle-type Core Formation Stage Cultivators and a research-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator in the interrogation room. It was almost possible for them to detect Neltharion with their Cultivation.

“I’d always thought that in the past. But during the past month, when I reflected on the whole thing in retrospect and sorted through all the details, it suddenly occurred to me that I overlooked someone very important!

“I was wrong to think that there were no battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the interrogation room!

“There was still Elder Nether Spring! He had been a strong demon emperor in the beginning. Although his strength system had been transformed, and he had been devastatingly tortured, his level was not lowered, and his senses must’ve been as keen as before. Stimulated by the drugs such as the Brain Exciter, his senses could’ve been multiplied!

“He was an out-and-out battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator!

“More importantly, Elder Nether Spring knew of Neltharion’s existence because he had been caught out by the device once before!”

Chapter 1160 - That Explains Everything!

Li Yao picked up a twig and wrote Nether World on the moss. He explained, “On the Gloomy Wind Islands at the North Pole of the Blood Demon Sector, in his secret base named Nether World, Elder Nether Spring once caged the experts of both human beings and demons—including Suo Chaolong, Han Tuhu, the Fire Ant King—for the experiments of the Demon God Virus. But I snuck into the base, investigated the surroundings with Neltharion, and planted bombs. In the end, I demolished the Nether World, which was a major blow for him.

“During the battle, I observed Elder Nether Spring at a close distance through Neltharion multiple times. Although he didn’t perceive it on the spot, he must’ve noticed the existence of such a piece of magical equipment later and remembered the features of Neltharion’s spiritual waves!

“Playing the same move on a demon emperor or a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator? It would be committing suicide! Therefore, just because Neltharion escaped everybody else’s attention doesn’t mean that Elder Nether Spring didn’t discover it!”

Guo Chunfeng was deep in thought. “So, you are suggesting that, in the interrogation room, Elder Nether Spring sensed the peeping of Neltharion keenly and inferred that Vulture Li Yao was nearby based on his discovery. So, he killed himself right in front of your eyes intentionally so that the Jade Crystal Disc that his memories would be stored in could be the critical proof for you?

“So, Elder Nether Spring’s death was not a coincidence but a great chess move that he calculated carefully? He destroyed the Patriots Partnership at the cost of his life?”

Li Yao nodded. “You could say that, but the reason alone is still not enough.

“It must be noted that, although the Patriots Partnership locked Elder Nether Spring up for three months and tortured him with the soul searching technique, I was also Elder Nether Spring’s mortal enemy because I sabotaged his Spore Stratagem!

“Perhaps, Elder Nether Spring hated me more than he hated the Patriots Partnership!

“His death could naturally destroy the Patriots Partnership, but I would be the winner in the end. With Elder Nether Spring’s cunningness, would he allow me to take such great advantage?

“I was perplexed by the problem for a long time until I jumped out of everything and made a different assumption! What if Elder Nether Spring killed himself intentionally not just to destroy the Patriots Partnership? Is it possible that he had other chess pieces or backup plans that would be triggered after he was killed and the Patriots Partnership was demolished?”

Guo Chunfeng was silent for a while before he slowly said, “Therefore, you suspected that Abyss did exist and, as Elder Nether Spring’s last chess piece, could gain some benefits from the destruction of the Patriots Partnership?”

Li Yao nodded quickly. “Only if Abyss did exist as Elder Nether Spring’s last hope would he possibly ignore his grudge for me briefly and kill himself. That way, although I would get things my way, Abyss would have even more benefits.

“If my guess is correct, the one percent of his brain that was sealed contained all the files about Abyss, but it’s a pity that all the files are gone with the wind now.”

Guo Chunfeng took a long breath. “Fair enough. But even if Abyss does exist, why are you certain that it is me?”

Li Yao smiled and said, “I’ve been suspicious about you since the very beginning. Before I returned to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, Jin Xinyue and I made a list of Abyss suspects, of which your name ranked at the top.

“Less than a hundred years old. Amazing talents in training. Rose to fame decades ago. Orphan without both parents. Working at a certain critical post… Brother Guo, the description of Abyss is like your resume. If you are not Abyss, the real Abyss will be embarrassed when he sees you!

“It is because I was suspicious about you since the beginning that I considered you my greatest enemy on my way to the capital city.

“However, when new evidence presented itself, I thought that I was paranoid again like the old times. Therefore, my suspicions about you disappeared. Later, I was too busy dealing with the Patriots Partnership to think about Abyss!

“When I’ve been free over the last couple of days and thought of it more carefully, I found that Brother Guo’s many reactions in the battle were quite weird!”

Guo Chunfeng raised his eyebrow. “What’s weird?”

Staring at him in the eyes, Li Yao said, “The weirdest thing of all is your trust in me for no reason.

“It must be noted that, when I got the Jade Crystal Disc, I was all by myself and far away in the East Ocean. However, you already captured the key people such as Ding Lingdang and Professor Mo Xuan before Lu Zui did! It means that, even before we met or talked, you were already sure that I was innocent, that Lu Zui was the real schemer, and that he had ill intentions by capturing Ding Lingdang and the rest of them.

“Why? Why were you so certain that Ding Lingdang was a good person and not a Child of the Nether World? And on what grounds did you find me trustworthy?

“Ding Lingdang trusted me without reserve because we love each other. Professor Mo Xuan trusted me as best he could because I saved his life before and fought side by side with him in the Flying Star Sector!

“Even so, they were only assured that I was not the Blood Devil after communicating with me!

“What about you? Why did you trust me when you hadn’t met me and when you did not have the slightest evidence?

“Not only did you rescue Ding Lingdang, Wu Mayan, Xie Anan, and Professor Mo Xuan in advance, you even reached out to me on your own initiative. You gave me the map of the headquarters of the Secret Sword Bureau and drafted a highly perilous plan together with me. Eventually, the entire Secret Sword Bureau was evacuated, and you even went to Hidden Star to confront Lu Zui by yourself, buying time for me at the risk of your own life!

“That was quite incredible of you, Brother Guo!

“If you were an eighteen-year-old young man, your recklessness would’ve been understandable.

“But you were the mighty supervisor of the Demon Execution Division of the Secret Sword Bureau and a seasoned warrior of the trade. Your nerves are thicker than the thighs of ordinary people. The future of the federation was on your shoulders. Why did you trust me without any evidence and without meeting me? Why did you help me even if it meant that you might be sacrificed? Why were you so confident that I was definitely not the villain and that Lu Zui was behind the scheme?

“It must be noted that, if your judgement was incorrect, you would’ve lost the future of the entire federation in the gamble!

“If you are not a prophet, there is only one explanation—you had some critical information in your hands that nobody else knew about, and the critical information was enough to prove that Lu Zui was lying!”

Li Yao had another mouthful of spring water. He wiped his lips and continued. “But then, I was even more confused. Brother Guo, Lu Zui was your boss. You might have been in charge of the field work, but he had the enormous Patriots Partnership under his command, too. What information could possibly have been grasped by you and you alone? With Lu Zui’s cleverness, he would’ve seen through it if you investigated him in secret, in which case you would have been doomed!

“I was confused and couldn’t figure out the answer until I had an epiphany and realized that everything would make perfect sense if you were Abyss!

“You are Abyss, and you had a certain mysterious connection with Elder Nether Spring. Therefore, you knew that Lu Zui was lying. Lu Zui killed Elder Nether Spring, which made him your sworn enemy. That is why you helped me deal with him!

“One more reason. Personally speaking, who gets the most benefits from the fall of Lu Zui and the Patriots Partnership?

“Me? Of course not! You know that I’m not interested in politics or power. The fame right now is just amusement for me!

“It is you who has gotten the most benefits, Brother Guo! You have been promoted to the director of the Secret Sword Bureau from the supervisor of the first division. You even have power that is even greater than Lu Zui’s for now. You are now the leader on the secret frontline and one of the most influential people in the federation!

“In that case, Elder Nether Spring’s death would be perfectly logical! Perhaps he had been waiting for an opportunity to destroy the Patriots Partnership with his death ever since his capture. That is why he persisted for several months against the soul searching technique. Eventually, the unpredictable opportunity finally showed up when he detected Neltharion!

“Therefore, he killed himself and dragged the Patriots Partnership to hell with him, but he also pushed you—Abyss, his last hope—to the supreme black throne of the secret frontline of the federation!

“With your position and accomplishments today, and your quadruple talents as the strongest Core Formation Stage Cultivator, your future is nothing but promising. Even if the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the

Blood Demon Sector do collaborate, Brother Guo will definitely be one of the giants in the new federation!

“Would there be a better ending for Elder Nether Spring?”

Guo Chunfeng raised his head to drink more water, only to discover that the bucket was empty. He grabbed the bucket from Li Yao’s hand and said, “Very marvelous deduction. Despite the lack of evidence, everything does make better sense now.”

“No, it is not good enough yet. There’s a critical point that makes the whole reasoning illogical.”

Li Yao stared at him, his eyes shining.

“Before, Lu Zui and his lot made the conclusion that Abyss was nonexistent partly for the reason that such a person was non-manipulable. Why would a human being who did not have any secrets or even memories of the demon race be willing to listen to Elder Nether Spring’s command?

“Even the hundred or so Children of the Nether World, whose secrets Elder Nether Spring knew about, had betrayed him. Why wouldn’t Abyss?

“I thought so, too, at first. So, I came to the conclusion that ‘Abyss does not exist’.

“However, after I inferred that you were Abyss, I discovered, to my surprise, although you were not acting according to Elder Nether Spring’s plans, you did not completely ‘betray’ him, either. The fact that you charged into Hidden Star by yourself even seems to be a gesture of revenge to me.

“Why?

“Why did Elder Nether Spring choose you as Abyss in the beginning? Why did he trust you without reserve to the last moment of his life?

“And why did you not betray him or join Lu Zui and his Patriots Partnership, instead standing against Lu Zui, avenging Elder Nether Spring at the risk of your own life?”

Guo Chunfeng’s eyes were somewhat hollow. He seemed to be staring at both a place far, far away and a past long, long ago.

He mumbled in the softest voice, “There’s one answer to both of the two questions.”

“Is that so?” Li Yao pricked up his ears.

Guo Chunfeng poured a handful of water and rubbed his face for a moment. Then, a feeble voice came through the gaps in his fingers. “It is because Elder Nether Spring was… my biological father!”

Chapter 1161 - Young Ye Yuya!

Li Yao’s face seemed to indicate that a venomous scorpion had stung his bottom. He jumped to his feet in astonishment. Rubbing his hands and brimming with curiosity, he asked, “Come on. Brother Guo. Tell me your story! You didn’t know that all the time, did you?”

Guo Chunfeng wiped his face hard and managed a smile that was even uglier than when he was crying. Holding the bucket, he said, “Of course I didn’t, or I wouldn’t be Abyss. I didn’t know anything… until a night three months ago!

“Before that night, I had always thought that I was a human Cultivator named ‘Guo Chunfeng’. My past was simple and clear like the ink on a piece of paper, and my present was full of delight and satisfaction despite the troubles. If possible, I wished that my life went on just like that. I didn’t need any change for my future!

“My name was Guo Chunfeng. My hometown was the Grand Desolate Plateau. My parents were both Cultivators. When I was young, my hometown encountered a large-scale beast tide and was ruined. My parents and other family members all passed away in the fierce fight, but I lived on, with the deepest hatred against the demon race. After moving to multiple places, I grew up and joined the Secret Sword Bureau, where I received the harshest training and carried out the most dangerous tasks. Eventually, I was promoted to the supervisor of the Demon Execution Division of the Secret Sword Bureau with the heads of thousands of demons!

“I didn’t remember too much about my hometown and my parents. If I thought about it too hard, I would have a strong headache. I asked a lot of brain surgeons and Meditation Healers to examine me. They told me that it was because I was too traumatized in the beast tide and my brain automatically erased the terrible memories in case my soul was heavily wounded again.

“It was a perfectly normal phenomenon. Many war orphans that experienced beast tides had similar symptoms. Even many adults had short-time amnesia after the terrifying beast tides!

“I was good at the techniques of all four fields myself. I had a profound understanding about the development of the brain and the arts of meditation. I knew that the doctors and the Meditation Healers were not wrong. Such amnesia did not have satisfactory treatments. Also, it didn’t really affect my life. Therefore, I didn’t think too much of it but simply brought out the photos of my parents and myself when I was young and imagined a childhood based on the mottled memory pieces in my head to comfort myself.

“All in all, I didn’t feel the slightest doubt about my identity as a human being before three months ago, and I hated the demons’ guts! As the supervisor of the Demon Execution Division, I’d seen too much damage caused by the demons. For both the national interest and my personal grudge, I believed that the evil demons needed to be annihilated as a whole!

“Hehe, if it weren’t for the prudence in my nature which made me reject Lu Zui’s offer out of habit, I perhaps would’ve joined the Patriots Partnership, too!

“But then, one night, three months ago…”

The muscles on Guo Chunfeng’s face were twisting. With a half confused and half horrified expression, he mumbled, “I clearly remember that it was several days after the assault on the capital city took place. The whole capital city was still in chaos, and the curfew was still in effect. The best forces of the police department and the military were stationed in the key nodes, while the operation squads of the Secret Sword Bureau were searching for the demons who were on the run or lurking citywide.

“That night, we discovered a heavily wounded demon king by scanning the demonic energy. After a fierce fight, we slew him successfully!

“I hadn’t slept for days. After the fierce fight, I felt that I was fatigued and decided to rest for a while in the temporary command shuttle. It was supposed to be a nap, but I was stuck in a extremely weird state. It felt like… like my soul had been pumped away from my body, swallowed by a bottomless swamp, and trapped in a bizarre nightmare!

“In my trance, it felt both like a dream and reality. A life of more than ten years suddenly expanded deep inside my soul!

“In the ‘dream’, I was no longer ‘Guo Chunfeng’, a human being born and raised on the Grand Desolate Plateau, but a young demon who grew up in a certain underground city in the Nether Spring Kingdom in the Blood Demon Sector. I had a brand-new name, Ye Yuya, and I had a new, hideous appearance!

“In the terrible world that was filled with the smell of sulfur, venomous gas, and demonic fungi and plants, I was cleansed by secret medicines all day long. I fought the demon beasts and learned the arts of all kinds of blades, demonic artifacts, and magical equipment! In this world, there were no companions in my eyes, only prey, enemies, and… my father. Every time he showed up, he brought me more prey and enemies, which meant more rigorous training, more crazy battles, and more brutal suffering!

“You must’ve guessed it. In the dream, Elder Nether Spring was the father of the young Ye Yuya!

“The dream seemed to only last one moment, yet it felt that it went on for more than ten years. All in all, at the end of the dream, I swallowed a certain drug that was stinky and spicy. Then, I was smeared with ointments and secret medications before being sent into something resembling a cocoon! Before the last piece of shell was sealed, I saw that Elder Nether Spring looked at me in a complicated expression. He said good night to me. Then, I was swallowed by the darkness, as if I’d died!

“Then, my dream ended.

“I leapt up from the abyss, only to feel that my head was aching, and I could not focus. I felt that I was both struggling before my death and had just revived from death!

“But deep inside my brain, a hideous face popped up, Elder Nether Spring’s!

“Grinning, he told me that, now that I was aware of my identity, I should be prepared. He would come to me in several days. By then, I would naturally learn the whole plan!”

Holding his head, Guo Chunfeng’s face was extremely pale, as if he were back to the horrid night again. After catching his breath, he struggled to continue. “The dream and the conversation made my head turn blank. I wasn't back to myself until almost twenty minutes later!

"My first feeling was not that my real self had awoken but that I, as Guo Chunfeng, was possessed by a guy named Ye Yuya!"

Li Yao nodded quickly in agreement. He had once been possessed by Ou Yezi, a master of refining from forty thousand years ago. He had experienced a weird, bizarre dream, too, which was perhaps more than ten times longer than Guo Chunfeng's.

Therefore, Li Yao understood the feeling when one was just freed from the state very well.

Guo Chunfeng went on. "My hands groped around my body subconsciously, only to find the dead body of a bug that had been broken. Some bright blue mucus was flowing out of the bug. Then, after I sensed it more carefully, I discovered its mouthpart in the back of my head. It was obvious that the bug had injected something into my head!

"As the supervisor of the Demon Execution Division, I knew the form of every demonic bug. Even the most rarely-seen demonic bug wouldn't escape my attention!

"Also, during urgent times when we are in the middle of an assault, a man in my place is very likely to be assassinated by the demons. Therefore, I established a spiritual shield and many alarm rune arrays when I was sleeping. I didn't sleep too tightly, either. It should've been impossible for a minor demonic bug to approach me!

"But this very demonic bug pierced through my spiritual shield and injected something into my head without waking me up!"

Li Yao was deep in thought. “Let’s assume that the demonic bug was sent by Elder Nether Spring. He could grasp your whereabouts easily through other Children of the Nether World. The liquid that the bug injected into your head was likely to some ‘activation drug’ that could turn you from the ‘hibernation state’ to the ‘awakened state’. Is that so?”

“Yes.” Guo Chunfeng took a deep breath and tried to keep himself calm. “I got rid of all my subordinates and staggered to the underground district where I found a dump. I crouched for half a night and sorted through everything before I reached the same conclusion.

“So, I’m not Guo Chunfeng. The real Guo Chunfeng was killed decades ago. I’m merely a demon named Ye Yuya who substituted him! Everything I thought to be real was false and carefully planned by Elder Nether Spring!

“I was disgusted, infuriated, and scared. I couldn’t help but throw up on the garbage!

“After vomiting, I was caught in confusion. Elder Nether Spring would come to be a few days later. What should I do?”

Li Yao’s eyes moved. “You didn’t want to help him?”

“Of course not!” Guo Chunfeng shook his head quickly. “For me, the life of the young demon Ye Yuya was just a dream. Real as it felt, could it be any realer than my own life in the previous few decades?

“Yes, maybe everything in my life was false. My identity was false, my appearance was false, my ethnicity was false, and even my accomplishments and position were perhaps facilitated by Elder Nether Spring, too!

“Even if everything was false, at the very least, my wife and my daughter are real! Elder Nether Spring is my father. So what? Yao Li is still my wife, and Guo Xiaohe is still my daughter!”

Li Yao slapped his thigh. “Well said!”

Guo Chunfeng smiled bitterly. “A good speech doesn’t mean a damn thing. Now, Elder Nether Spring had the greatest secret of mine in his hands. If my real identity was revealed, not only would my own reputation be tarnished, my wife and my daughter would be burdened, too. What should I do?

“If I refused to cooperate with Elder Nether Spring, he definitely would not hesitate to do such things. He didn’t need to kill me. Just dealing my wife and my daughter would be enough!

“Moreover, for some reason, ever since I heard his words in my head, I had an untamable urge to obey him!”

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao said, “Can we assume that Elder Nether Spring had a certain secret art that would make other people obey him unconditionally? Of course, based on the information we know, he was perhaps already good at it. But decades ago, in the early phase, the secret technique was still immature. It couldn’t be performed on anybody but could only work on the blood relatives, preferably children, right?

“It is quite easy to understand. Parents are natural authorities to their children. All the secret art needs to do is to build up the authority!

“That must’ve been the reason he chose his son as Abyss!”

Chapter 1162 - Born in Hatred, Die in Hatred!

Guo Chunfeng nodded. “I thought so, too, but even though I knew that it was a certain technique, I was not able to resist it. It was like a barrier that had been etched deep into my soul and a natural-born instinct. I couldn’t get rid of it at all.

“In the few days that followed, I remained in a trance. As soon as I fell asleep, or so much as I closed my eyes for a while, the dream and Elder Nether Spring’s voice would visit me again!

“I felt that I was cut in half by the truth, one piece being a human being and the other being a demon, and then stitched together.

“But I didn’t want my wife and my daughter to be hurt whether I was a human being or a demon, nor did I want to see the homeland that I’ve lived in for decades to be ruined. However, how would I be able to deal with everything all by myself?

“Then, as the dreams haunted me time and time again, something deep in my soul was gradually awakened. I began to consider the stance of the demon race. I started to feel that, on the Blood Demon Sector’s side, it wasn’t a huge mistake to attack the Heaven’s Origin Sector. I also felt that, now that Elder Nether Spring was irresistible, I might as well cooperate with him in order to save my wife and my daughter.

“It was truly a shameless thought, but what other choices did I have?

“I was living in fear all day, like a rabbit being hunted by a hound. I hated both myself and Elder Nether Spring. I even wanted to die together with Elder Nether Spring when he came to me!

“But before my death, I wanted to meet my wife and my daughter again, although I didn’t know how I should face them. I felt the same predicament as the soldiers who have returned to the federation today, only a hundred times more intense!

“Because they have the courage to stand in front of everybody without guilt, but I was clandestine!”

“So, you didn’t meet your wife and your daughter in the end,” Li Yao observed.

“No.” Guo Chunfeng smiled and said, “I went back secretly. I looked at them from afar, from the outside my daughter’s school and my wife’s company. I even took their photos.”

Li Yao was silent and did not know what to say.

Guo Chunfeng suddenly sighed in great relief. “I had no idea what the outcome would’ve been if Elder Nether Spring did visit me.

“Would I have been capable enough of dying together with him, or would my identity as a demon be fully awakened under his control, making me the real Abyss?

“Can’t say. I really can’t say.

“All in all, after being caught in such a dilemma and living in devastation for several days, I suddenly felt that the barrier, or the shackle, in my brain was loosened without a good reason!

“Let’s put it this way. It was like my neck was tied by a rope brutally. My head was dizzy, and I was almost suffocated. But then, the guy who was dragging the rope died or passed out. So, the rope was loosened even though it was not yet broken.”

Li Yao thought quickly and immediately realized what happened. “I got it now. Seeing that the Eye of Blood Demon was destroyed and that Jin Tuyi was too powerful to deal with, Elder Nether Spring activated the ‘backup plan’ and fled to the Heaven’s Origin Sector for his last attempt.

“In his backup plan, you, as Abyss, were naturally the most important person. Therefore, he asked a certain Child of the Nether World to release the long-prepared ‘activation beetle’ in advance.

“The Child of the Nether World was probably unaware what the beetle was for. He was only instructed by Elder Nether Spring to release the bug at a certain time in a certain location. That’s all.

“Then, you were activated by the bug, and Elder Nether Spring escaped to the Heaven’s Origin Sector. If everything went smoothly, he would join you in a couple of days and manipulate the Children of the Nether World who were lurking in all trades to perform a counterattack!

“As expected of Elder Nether Spring. Although not as good as Jin Tuyi’s scheme, his Spore Stratagem, which he prepared for decades, was not so easy to be crushed after all. There were such dangerous backup plans!

“However, it was beyond Elder Nether Spring’s expectations that the Patriots Partnership, which was a hundred times more sordid than the Children of the Nether World, was waiting for him in the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Soon after he arrived in the new world, he was captured by them!

“The moment when you felt the barrier in your soul being loosened was perhaps the moment when Elder Nether Spring was heavily wounded by the Patriots Partnership and imprisoned!”

Guo Chunfeng smiled and drank a mouthful of water before continuing. “Yes. In retrospect, that should’ve been the case. But how could I know it at that time? I only knew that I was Abyss and that Elder Nether Spring informed me of his imminent visit. The guy also had a dangerous plan that required my cooperation, but I waited and waited, and nobody showed up!

“On one hand, I was secretly relieved. I wished that he would never show up so that I could live peacefully with my family under Guo Chunfeng’s identity.

“But on the other hand, I clearly knew that it was definitely impossible! Elder Nether Spring might be caught in some trouble, but it was unlikely that he was wiped out! Therefore, I also wished that he could jump out soon so that we could settle everything once and for all!

“After more than one month of suffering, however, I heard the news about Blood Devil Li Yao from Lu Zui. I was also told that Blood Devil Li Yao had conspired with the giants including ‘Elder Nether Spring’ and was likely to implement a great scheme leading a batch of spies of the demon race named the Children of the Nether World!”

Li Yao could not help but laugh. “Lu Zui was quite unlucky. It would have been an immaculate lie if he hadn’t run into the party involved.”

Guo Chunfeng also laughed. “Exactly. Although I was confused at that time, I vaguely felt that something was not right. The Children of the Nether World were clearly the underdeveloped version of Abyss. By logic, as Abyss, I should be the one responsible for all the Children of the Nether World. It seemed highly unlikely that Elder Nether Spring would entrust such an important task to an outsider. So, what was Blood Devil Li Yao all about?

“Then again, I knew too little information at that time to infer the whole thing. I thought that you were truly Elder Nether Spring’s chess piece. Therefore, I tried my best to capture you in order to elicit more secrets from you, including Elder Nether Spring’s whereabouts.”

Li Yao nodded and remarked, “That explains a lot. No wonder Brother Guo worked so hard at that time. I was almost captured by you many times!”

Guo Chunfeng smiled. “Are you complimenting me or bragging about yourself? All in all, I failed to capture you despite my efforts. Then, the Speaker was attacked, and the incident in the Federal Square took place!

“After that, Lu Zui publicized the Children of the Nether World to the leadership of the Cultivators. He even told me about Abyss!

“His theory was probably flawless and self-consistent for those who didn’t know the truth, but in my eyes, it was full of loopholes!

“The more critical question was, if nothing happened to Elder Nether Spring, and he had been planning everything behind the curtain, why didn’t he come to me, and why did he loosen control over me?

“If something happened to him that made him unable to come to me, it would have been impossible for him to plan the accident in the Federal Square without me, the key person!

“Besides, Elder Nether Spring had been working on his plan for decades. He had camouflaged his blood son decades ago and sent him to the Heaven’s Origin Sector for nothing more than stealing Burning Prairie, the alleged strongest warship of the three Sectors? How could Elder Nether Spring have known the existence of Burning Prairie decades ago?”

Li Yao nodded in agreement. “You do have a point. It doesn’t make sense.”

“I wasn’t suspicious about Lu Zui until that moment,” Guo Chunfeng said. “Then, I changed my opinion about you and believed that you might have been wronged, just another chess piece in Lu Zui’s game!

“However, as you said, it was extremely difficult to investigate Lu Zui.

“He had been working in the secret frontline for two hundred years. His expertise in every regard was far better than mine. He would definitely see something wrong if I displayed any anomalies!

“If I didn’t have any weaknesses, I might have made up my mind to confront him.

“But I had a great secret that could not be revealed. If I challenged him, he would likely find out my secret. How could my wife and my daughter live in society then?

“Hehe. I hadn’t freed myself from Elder Nether Spring’s trouble yet, but I was caught in a new dilemma. At that time, I felt that my head was bloated to ten times its normal size, and I simply didn’t know what to do!

“It was not until I saw my daughter soaked in the medical cabin, wounded and in pain, that my messy thoughts were burnt to the ground by my infinite fury!

“At that moment, I finally made up my mind that, whether it was Elder Nether Spring or Lu Zui, I would not let them ago for reducing my daughter to such a condition! Even if my reputation was shattered and I died without a burial, I would make them pay the price!”

When he talked about his daughter’s injury in the explosions in the Federal Square, Guo Chunfeng was seething with rage. Even Li Yao found it overwhelming and leaned back.

Guo Chunfeng took a long breath and calmed himself down. “After that, I began to investigate Lu Zui in secret. But one day after the investigation began, I had a weird, absent-minded feeling. I seemed to know that Elder Nether Spring was already dead!

“It was truly a mysterious feeling. An electrical current seemed to crawl into my brain with enormous information, making me ‘see’ and ‘hear’ more truths in a trance!”

“A father and a son are always deeply bonded by blood,” Li Yao remarked. “Also, Elder Nether Spring had practiced secret arts. It’s not entirely impossible that he sent one of his telepathic thoughts thousands of kilometers away into your head through a certain technique.”

Guo Chunfeng nodded. “That might be the case. The rest is history. It’s because I knew everything in advance that I confirmed your innocence and fully cooperated with you.

“As for the head-on confrontation with Lu Zui in the end at the risk of my own life…

“Hehe, young brother, do you believe it? When I made the decision, I never thought of the federation, the motherland, the compatriots, or anything as such.

“I didn’t do it for you or to save the federation.

“I went to deal with Lu Zui on Hidden Star for a single reason. Revenge!

“It was partly meant to avenge my father and partly to avenge my daughter, whom he almost killed.

“His crimes were unpardonable. As a son and a father, I would drag him to the hell together with me if I must die!”

Li Yao was dazed by his answer for a long time.

Then, he laughed. Holding his belly, he burst into laughter under the sunlight!

Guo Chunfeng looked at him in confusion. “Young brother, what are you laughing for?”

Li Yao laughed so hard that his shoulders were shaking. “I’m laughing at the Patriots Partnership. Lu Zui and his Patriots Partnership were born in hatred, believed in the strength of hatred, and achieved their purposes by instigating people’s hatred. But in the end… such an organization was destroyed by hatred, too, the bloody hatred of a son and a father!”

Chapter 1163 - Fishing Crayfish!

Guo Chunfeng was dazed for a moment, too. Then, the warmest smile beamed out of his face.

“About Elder Nether Spring…” Li Yao hesitated for a moment but still asked, “Do you still hate him?”

“Of course. Why wouldn’t I? He ruined my life. Even though he is gone now, I am destined to carry the shadow on my back and walk on until I die!” Guo Chunfeng replied resolutely in anger. “Even in the young demon Ye Yuya’s memories, Elder Nether Spring, as his father, was an out-and-out fiend!

“A child less than ten years old had to receive training a hundred times crueler than that of adult warriors under the oppression of the fiend! I would shake and sweat if I recalled the misery right now!”

After pausing for a moment, he went on. “However…”

Guo Chunfeng lay on the giant rock again with his hands as the pillow. Looking at the blue sky, he could not help but put on the smile of an innocent child. “In the young demon Ye Yuya’s memories, other than the hellish suffering, there was also crayfish fishing.”

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. “What’s crayfish fishing?”

“There isn’t any Sand Bamboo Worm in the cold spring where we picked up the water just now. I lied to you. But in the place where the young demon Ye Yuya grew up, many Sand Bamboo Worms could be found near the underground cold springs," Guo Chunfeng explained. "They were the most sweet and fresh food!

"The Sand Bamboo Worms taste delicious when they are mixed with fiddle ferns, and they taste even better if they are taken together with the oil of certain demon beasts. The most incredible thing is that the Sand Bamboo Worms can be used as bait to fish the Silver-Striped Crayfish, which is a specialty of the Nether Spring Kingdom. It is the most mouthwatering food that I can imagine!

"In the young demon Ye Yuya's memories, there were several times, mostly when Elder Nether Spring won the wars outside and his son had made satisfactory progress in his training, that he would bring his son to the underground water area and fish the crayfish.

"At first, they would find a cold spring where the Sand Bamboo Worms gathered. Like we did just now, they would crouch next to the spring, hold their breath, and grope carefully. They could not resort to their demonic energy and had to pick up the Sand Bamboo Worms with the tiniest movements of muscles and tentacles.

"Half of the Sand Bamboo Worms would be mixed with the water from the cold spring, the underground fungi, and the spices, which would satisfy their stomachs for the time being. Then, they would pin the other half of the Sand Bamboo Worms into hooks before going to the rivers or swamps. He got a big stool and I got a small one. Holding our breath and waiting patiently, we could fish up two buckets of the Silver-Striped Crayfish in only half a day!

“Soaked in the fresh blood of demon beasts along with spices, the crayfish would be ready to be cooked. Elder Nether Spring was an expert at cooking crayfish. When the crayfish were out of the pot, all the demon beasts in the caves nearby would be attracted over. We would slay the fat and delicious ones among them and make them into another dish! Very soon, we would be enjoying ourselves in the dark underground.

“I often competed with him about who ate faster and whose crayfish shells were more intact and without any meat residue. He won most of the games. Occasionally, when I won, I almost bit my fingers off!”

Li Yao noticed that, at first, Guo Chunfeng was talking about ‘the memories of the young demon Ye Yuya’, but as he got more excited, he started to use first-person pronouns.

Of course, Li Yao did not point it out.

Sitting aside and listening to Guo Chunfeng, he remembered the good old times when he lived with his foster faster in the magical equipment graveyard more than ten years ago.

Soon, Guo Chunfeng finished the whole story and sipped the cold water.

The two buckets of water had almost been drunk up by him alone now.

Li Yao smiled. “It appears that we’ll have to go back and refill the buckets now. The girls must be complaining about what’s taking us so long.”

Guo Chunfeng was dazed for a moment. “You have learned everything now. What are you going to do?”

“What am I going to do?” Li Yao blinked and said, “Thank Brother Guo for telling me all this, of course. In fact, you and I are both clear that I don’t have any evidence. It was quite a mess when the Patriots Partnership was crushed. Elder Nether Spring’s body was destroyed in the chaos. Besides, your appearance has been changed through the secret techniques. I’m afraid that even a paternity test is unavailable now.

“No one can force you to say that if you don’t want to. Nobody can confirm your relationship with Elder Nether Spring, either.”

“Yes,” Guo Chunfeng said after a long sigh. “You would’ve got nothing from me if I made up my mind not to say anything. However, I’m really tired after carrying such heavy burdens walking to far. I want to put these things down and take a good rest!

“Moreover…”

He suddenly raised his voice. “I didn’t do anything wrong. I can’t decide who my father is. Why can’t I say it? Cultivators must Cultivate truth! Elder Nether Spring is truly my father. It is a fact that nobody can change! If I don’t have the courage to face the truth, do I deserve to be called a Cultivator?”

“Well said.” With mixed feelings, Li Yao suddenly rose up and bowed to Guo Chunfeng. He said earnestly, “Thank you, Brother Guo, for not attacking just now and for trusting me and telling me everything without reserve.”

Looking at his face, Guo Chunfeng observed, “It seems that you don’t want to kill me now?”

“I never intended to kill you in the first place. I merely wanted to solve the puzzle. You know it, too, Brother Guo. We are the same type of person. People of our kind always want to figure out every detail when they are faced with such a delicate, marvelous scheme. Their heart will itch at night if they leave one puzzle unanswered.”

“I got it. Thank you, too, Li Yao. You are a good man and… a true Cultivator! Rest assured. I know what to do. When the thing is completely over, I’ll find an appropriate opportunity to resign as the director of the Secret Sword Bureau.”

Li Yao was dazed. Scratching his head, he said, “I didn’t mean any of that. Aren’t you doing a wonderful job as the director? Why would you resign?”

Guo Chunfeng was dazed, too. “Are you not troubled seeing me working in such an important position when you know my real identity? Aren’t scared that I’m lying?”

Li Yao scratched his head even harder. “You’ve told me your relationship with Elder Nether Spring. What can you possibly be lying about?”

“Maybe,” Guo Chunfeng said, “I concealed some facts from you that are of paramount importance.”

Li Yao thought hard for a moment and figured it out. He sat down again and extended his two fingers. “I’ve got it. Even if everything Brother Guo said just now is true, there are still two possibilities regarding Elder Nether Spring’s death.

“Firstly, although Elder Nether Spring is dead now, he was visionary enough to prepare another top confidential plan, say, the ‘upgraded version of the Spore Stratagem’, which he sent into the head of his successor, or the tool of his choosing, through the surging brainwaves at his death.

“In such a case, his death is just part of the whole plan. Even if he died, he was still considering his son as a tool that would carry on the Spore Stratagem!

“Secondly, there’s no more ‘upgraded version of the Spore Stratagem’. Or maybe, even if there was, Elder Nether Spring abandoned it in the end! At the last moment of his life, he was no longer an ambitious schemer, a man who dreamed to rule all the three Sectors, or an insane spreader of the Demon God Virus. He was just a father!

“Maybe, for Elder Nether Spring, he considered the ‘young Ye Yuya’ a tool for ninety-nine percent of the time to realize his ambitions. However, on the brink of death, when the fire of his life was about to perish, after all his ambitions and schemes were smashed into pieces, he finally remembered that Ye Yuya was not just a tool but also his son.

“I can vaguely recall that I saw a casual smile on Elder Nether Spring’s face at the last moment of his life.

“Before, I thought that it was my imagination or that Elder Nether Spring had yet another scheme.

“But it is also possible that the smile wasn’t my imagination nor the sign of a scheme. It was perhaps only because Elder Nether Spring remembered the days when he fished crayfish with his son decades ago.

“He chose to die because he wanted his son to survive, either in the appearance of a demon or under the identity of a human being. It didn’t really matter as long as he survived.”

Guo Chunfeng finally burst into tears. He asked, “Did he smile? Did he really smile in the end?”

At a loss, Li Yao stammered, “Brother Guo, you are a giant of the Star Glory Federation right now, and you are decades older than me. How—how am I supposed to comfort you?”

“I’m fine. I’m fine!” Guo Chunfeng took a deep breath and managed to control his emotions. He smiled, somewhat embarrassed. “Neither of the two possibilities is supported by any evidence. Their odds are fifty-fifty. Do you not think that I am a great hidden problem under such circumstances? Are you not worried that I’ve accepted Elder Nether Spring’s last will and plan to activate the new Spore Stratagem one day in the future?”

“Because somebody might cause harm to us in the future, we must kill them in advance before they do?” Li Yao opened his hands and said, “That’s what Lu Zui and the Patriots Partnership think. But for me, I’m not capable of time travel, and I cannot see through the ‘future’. What I can influence is just the ‘present’.

“The future is fickle, with all kinds of possibilities and infinite wonders. I cannot exterminate the present because one of the possibilities is bad because when I am exterminating the present, I will also be exterminating all the possibilities of the future that are marvelous!

“In a word, the Star Glory Federation is ruled by law. As a Cultivator of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, I must abide by the Constitution of Cultivators, too. I must train myself and slay evil according to the law!

“I don’t know what you are guilty of by being Elder Nether Spring’s son or your name as Abyss. Besides, everything is just a casual conversation between you and me, not a verbal confession taken by the police. Even if it was a verbal confession, our law has clearly stated that, without direct proof, verbal confession alone is not enough to convict anybody!

“Is it possible that the upgraded version of the Spore Stratagem exists? Of course it is! Maybe, I’ll look for the evidence that it exists slowly!

“However, until I discover evidence that you’ve committed a crime, what makes me qualified to judge you?

“Such an idea might be idiotic and short-sighted. Somebody may even call it petty kindness. But it can’t be helped. This is my belief as I enter the Nascent Soul Stage. Even if the galaxy turns into a waterfall and pours into my skull, it will not be shaken!”

Chapter 1164 - I Am the Blood Devil, and I'm Scared of Nobody!

Guo Chunfeng was greatly touched. After observing Li Yao carefully for a long time, he finally took a long breath in relief and smiled. “I understand now, young brother. The belief that you have decided on is quite impressive! Alright. We’ve dawdled long enough. They must be impatient now. Let’s go back now!”

Wiping off the dust on his clothes, Guo Chunfeng leapt up a new man. He seemed to be reborn, relaxed from inside to outside.

Although he still looked like a slob, he did give out the feeling of a handsome man who did not pay attention to his appearance. One could not help but imagine what a charming middle-aged man he might have been if he attended to himself well.

The two of them went back to the cave and refilled the two buckets. Talking and laughing, they turned around and left.

“Young brother, in fact, there is a question that has been bothering, too. It might be inappropriate for me to ask.” Guo Chunfeng hesitated for a moment but smiled. “Make no mistake. Like you, I mean no harm. I am just curious. It’s our occupational disease. You must understand it.”

“You are free to ask, Brother Guo,” Li Yao said. “I can always choose not to answer it.”

Guo Chunfeng smiled and said slowly, “Everybody knows that it was just a show when you ‘executed the Blood Devil’ in parliament in front of the faces of thousands of representatives, leaders, and experts. You were merely trying to clean the suspicion about you. In fact, the real Blood Devil was already executed by you on your way to the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector. You were not controlled by the Blood Devil from the beginning to the end.

“Yes, that was what everybody believed, but the truth cannot be verified. The investigation was concluded hastily in the end.

“However, I have a different opinion.

“My natural instinct tells me that you have never executed the Blood Devil. The thing now still resides in your body and is already part of your soul, right?

“Hehe. You don’t have to say anything if it is not easy for you to answer. After all, as long as you don’t admit it yourself, nobody can accuse you of being the Blood Devil, just like nobody can accuse me of being Abyss if I don’t admit it myself!”

Li Yao was slightly dazed for a moment. Scratching his head, he discovered that the situation had been reversed.

His role and Guo Chunfeng’s had been swapped.

The mental devil crawled out of his brain again and shrieked, “Wow. We’ve been seen through. Kill him now!”

The mental devil right now, far from being reduced to smithereens, was even fatter and more energetic than before. There was even a halo around it. It was much more than ‘elegant’; it was even giving an ‘unearthly’ feeling. However, the evilness that was blinking every once in a while in its eyes revealed its dark nature.

It was obvious that, as Li Yao advanced, the mental devil, as part of his soul, advanced, too!

Li Yao triggered a telepathic thought and summoned lightning inside his brain. The mental devil was shrieking under the electricity. “How foul of you! I helped you so much in the parliament building and cooperated with your excellent show! Is this how you treat your good brother who fought by your side?”

“Excellent show? That was the worst show I’ve ever seen!”

The storm inside Li Yao’s brain concentrated into a giant foot and kicked the guy into the depths of the sulcus. “Get lost. Don’t steal my thunder, and don’t show up until I call you!”

Calming himself down, Li Yao walked forward. Deep in thought, he said, “Brother Guo, did you know? When I was chased by the Secret Sword Bureau, I was considering two questions. Firstly, how could I prove that I was not possessed by the Blood Devil? And, what was the difference between me and the Blood Devil Yan Xibei? I slew the Blood Devil Yan Xibei myself. So, wasn’t it only reasonable that the Secret Sword Bureau and other Cultivators wanted to slay me?”

“Sure. What then?” Guo Chunfeng thought hard, too. He found that the two questions were indeed tricky in Li Yao’s situation.

“I couldn’t figure out the answers to the questions at all. At the darkest moment, I even thought of the word ‘karma’! The Blood Devil Yan Xibei told me before his death that he was not possessed by the Blood Devil at all and that I would regret it if I killed him just like that! Was he speaking the truth? Was the karma for killing him finally happening to me?"

Li Yao clenched his fists hard. "But in the end, I thought through the questions!

"The first question does not need an answer! Why did I have to prove that I was not possessed by the Blood Devil? It was the responsibility of the guys who were chasing after me to prove that I was possessed by the Blood Devil!

"Otherwise, it would be like in parliament, where thousands of big shots were all likely to be possessed by the Blood Devil yet couldn't prove their innocence. It became a farce in the end, didn't it?

"It's like asking a random citizen to prove that they did not commit murder at a certain night three years ago. Who could remember the things that happened three years ago clearly? If it wasn't a special occasion, they wouldn't be able to provide an alibi at all. If the policemen and the judges solved and ruled cases like that, wouldn't our society be in chaos?"

Guo Chunfeng pondered for a moment and said, "You are talking about the presumption of guilt and the presumption of innocence."

"Exactly." Li Yao nodded. "It occurred to me that I was not obliged to prove that I was not possessed by the Blood Devil at all. Whoever claimed that I was, please offer undeniable proof. I shouldn't be convicted just based on a video clip I left a year ago, should I?"

"No, you shouldn't." Guo Chunfeng considered carefully and agreed.

“As for the second question, the answer was apparent,” Li Yao said carefully. “Even if I was indeed possessed by the Blood Devil, Blood Devil Li Yao and Blood Devil Yan Xibei were still different creatures!

“Why did I kill Yan Xibei on Iron Plateau? Because he was possessed by the Blood Stripe Virus and turned into a Blood Devil?

“No!

“I killed him because he joined the Temple of Immortals, murdered the chief of the Burning Sun Tribe, kidnapped the college students of the Flying Star Sector, and tried to raise a civil war between Iron Plateau and the space residents!

“He had already killed thousands of innocent people in the process, and the blood of millions more would have been shed for nothing after the war began!

“It was because of his past wrongdoings and what he was about to do in the future that I killed him. It had nothing to do with whether or not he was the Blood Devil at all!

“Let’s assume that the Blood Stripe Virus did not exist and Yan Xibei was still the pure qi-trainer Yan Xibei. If he planned the whole thing of his own free will and got so many people killed, would I have not killed him?

“Of course, I would’ve! I would’ve killed him, regardless of whether he was a qi-trainer, a Cultivator, an Immortal Cultivator, or a Blood Devil!

“Let’s make another hypothesis. Yan Xibei was truly possessed by the Blood Stripe Virus and turned into a Blood Devil, but he did nothing wrong. He was a kind Blood Devil, a righteous Blood Devil, and an honest Blood Devil, one who would help a grandma cross the street.”

His mental devil popped up again. “Who’s talking about me?”

“Get out of here!”

Li Yao snapped away the mental devil again and continued talking to Guo Chunfeng, “Then, would we have any reason to kill him?

“If he was lawful, dutiful, and peaceful, even if he produced the apocalyptic body in secret and transformed himself into a half-human-half-insect monster, I would believe that it was just his personal hobby which was perhaps due to his unique aesthetic view. Why would I bother to kill him? The most I would do is ask him to see a therapist.

“My conclusion is that I didn’t kill Yan Xibei for his identity. I killed him not because he was the Blood Devil or a bad guy but because of the wrongdoings he had committed. It is the principle of impersonality.

“Then, even if I am truly possessed by the Blood Devil and have turned into Blood Devil Li Yao, just like you who are Abyss, which law have I broken? On what grounds are other people eradicating me?

“Yes, I am possessed by the Blood Demon because I like it and I enjoy myself by doing so. What’s wrong with that? I didn’t cause harm to anybody, and I didn’t do anything illegal. Can’t I just domesticate a Blood Devil as a pet in my brain?

“If the Blood Devil really does something bad one day, he should be punished by law. ‘Abyss’ Guo Chunfeng will also be punished by law mercilessly if he does something wrong in the future, too! That’s the whole significance of the ‘Constitution of Cultivators’!

“But until then, until our illegal activities are proven, who is qualified to decide what we should do and what we should not?

“Just because we are Abyss or a Blood Devil, and we are potential threats, must we be eradicated in advance?

“I would argue that every man on the street has a dangerous weapon in their pants that can cause serious harm to a woman at any minute. What should you do with them? Castrate all of them?”

Guo Chunfeng burst into laughter. “That’s an interesting way of talking, young brother!”

A little bashful, Li Yao smiled. Scratching his messy hair, he said, “I got a bit too excited, Brother Guo.

“Speaking of which, I would like to say something else. I’m told that some people in parliament are proposing to define the Patriots Partnership as an espionage organization working for the Imperium of True Human Beings. The major suspects such as Lu Zui, on the other hand, would be the Immortal Cultivators who have been bewildered by the Imperium of True Human Beings.

“Yes, such an attempt can pacify people for now and unite them under a common foe. The federal government wouldn’t be such a disappointment.

“But for me, I strongly object to such a theory!

“Such a theory seems to indicate that all the bad things ever are exclusively done by the demons, the Blood Devil, Abyss, or the Immortal Cultivators. Even if some Cultivators committed crimes, it’s because they were corrupted by the bad guys. Most of the Cultivators intrinsically are pure, innocent, and righteous!

“But is that the truth?

“Why do we never dare to admit that, without the bewilderment and corruption of foreign forces, we—Cultivators and ordinary people—have a natural-born abyss in our heart, in which one, or even more, Blood Devil is residing? We don’t need the corruption of the demons and devils; we can be very, very bad by ourselves!

“Even if Lu Zui is really an Immortal Cultivator, he is definitely not an Immortal Cultivator from the Imperium of True Human Beings but a local Immortal Cultivator, born and raised in the Star Glory Federation!

“Moreover, he almost successfully transformed the Star Glory Federation into a country of the Immortal Cultivators, a smaller Imperium of True Human Beings that is willing to achieve its purposes without boundary!

Chapter 1165 - Stride Forward!

Guo Chunfeng took a deep breath and mumbled, “I understand what you mean now. Over the past few months, I’ve been troubled by my identity as Abyss. I was even scared that Elder Nether Spring had implanted other barriers or traps inside my head that would be activated when the time was right and turn me into some evil being.

“However, you do have a point. Lu Zui is neither Abyss nor the Blood Devil. There is no evidence indicating that he has been bewildered by the Imperium of True Human Beings. He has always been a pure Cultivator, but after one wrong step, he became insane to such an extent that he nearly caused a catastrophe to all three Sectors!

“If so, why should I be troubled by my identity? Is there anything bad that can only be done by Abyss and the Blood Devil but not general Cultivators?

“I think that identity doesn’t matter at all. As long as you deserve yourself, it will be enough. As for the other things, that’s not our business!”

Li Yao laughed. “Exactly! Perhaps, when the news that Lu Zui was not an agent of the Imperium of True Human Beings is out, more people will be disappointed, and more people will be suspicious about the federal government and the Cultivators. There might even be a riot among the public, but I always believe that it is better than pacifying people with a lie!

“A lie requires more lies as camouflage, just like Lu Zui’s minor plot required more plots and killing to mend the loopholes. I believe that everybody in the Star Glory Federation, both the Cultivators and the ordinary people, will have the courage to face their heart eventually, and when they discover the dark side of their heart, they will also discover more brightness!”

“You’re right. You’re right. I should point it out in parliament. Without solid evidence, we should not accuse Lu Zui of being the Imperium of True Human Beings’ spy because we want him to be. Otherwise, is there any real difference between us and Lu Zui?”

The two of them kept walking forward. There was no telling what Guo Chunfeng thought of, but he suddenly burst into laughter.

With a smile, Li Yao asked, “Brother Guo, what are you laughing for?”

“I just thought of an ironic thing!” Guo Chunfeng laughed so hard that he was wiping his tears. Intermittently, he went on. “The Star Glory Federation considers itself the guardian of humanity. But at the critical moment, it is an Abyss and a Blood Devil who saved the situation! Isn’t it hilarious?”

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. “Brother Guo, you can look at it from a different perspective. The Star Glory Federation is such a country that even Abyss and the Blood Devil are willing to fight and be sacrificed for her. This is the source of strength for our country, and it is also the only reliance we can count on to compete with the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“In the hundred years to come, we will certainly walk out of the desolate land and the edge of the cosmos, marching to the depths of the sea of stars that are much more brilliant. We will certainly encounter all kinds of weird species and their brilliant civilizations! After ten thousand years of separation, perhaps, even the civilizations of other human beings might look vastly different from ours.

“It is impossible for the federation to absorb all those civilizations with slaughter and conquest. Even if they are truly conquered, we would not be able to digest them in only several decades!

“I think that, if we are living in a federation that even Abyss and the Blood Devil are willing to fight for, we might be able to unite all the civilizations in a different way and compete with the unparalleled Imperium of True Human Beings at the center of the universe together, mightn’t we?”

Guo Chunfeng thought for a moment. Then, with an even brighter smile, he roared to the sky to express the delight in his heart.

His roar was echoed by another roar at the bottom of the mountain. It was Ding Lingdang who was shouting, “Li Yao, where are you?”

Ding Lingdang’s shout was followed by a much weaker voice. “Dad! Dad! I caught two fish. Two very beautiful fish!”

Li Yao and Guo Chunfeng looked at each other, both amused.

“Young brother, thank you. I truly can’t thank you enough,” Guo Chunfeng said sincerely.

“For what now?” Li Yao scratched his head.

“For not letting the war take place.” Guo Chunfeng’s eyes pierced through the shadows of the tree. He seemed to see two vivid people jumping vigorously on the mountain path. His eyes full of affection, he said, “Did you know? When the federation was seething with fury, and the federal army was enlisting, my daughter almost joined the army because her natural talent could boost the morale.

“If she really joined the army, and the war between the two Sectors broke out, it would have been impossible for her to stay out of it. She was bound to be involved in the cruel warfare.

“There could only be two outcomes to the war.

“Either the war did not go on as smoothly as we thought, in which case the federal army and the coalition army of demons would maul each other on the barren land of the Star Glory Federation. The young people would be like ants passing through a river, swallowed by the torrent and consumed mercilessly.

“My daughter wouldn’t have been an exception. She would have died on the battlefield, torn into shreds by demon beasts, perhaps not even leaving her bones.

“That would have been one of the luckier deaths. In worse scenarios, she might have been captured and tormented before she died.

“Or, if the war did go well, she might not have been killed, but she would have been forged into an iron-made, cold-hearted warrior in the terrible furnace that is called war. She might have twisted the necks of dozens of demons without batting an eye and pluck their hearts and livers out of their stomachs. When needed to, she would also have burned entire villages to the ground without hesitation and killed all the demons old and young, including the infants who were alike to the human babies!

“Believe me. I’ve worked in the Secret Sword Bureau for too many years, and I’ve seen too many Cultivators. They were all ignorant and naïve when they first joined. They had no idea what ‘slaying evil’ actually meant and thought that it was as cool as shown in the movies!

“However, after being baptized in the fires of war for several years, all of them, both men and women, will be what I just described. They will be like double-edged sabers that frighten both their enemies and their companions!

“Sometimes, when I couldn’t sleep at night, I even thought, even if we won the war in the end and turned all the demons into slaves, what then?

“If the slaves were sent to the Flying Star Sector for mining, a lot of guards and soldiers would be dispatched to supervise them. Would my daughter be one of them?

“After staying for several years on the dark, cold planet in a foreign world, would my daughter become a monster who waved a thorny whip and wouldn’t stop until the last value of a demon slave had been exploited? Would she become a ‘fiend’ for all the demon slaves and even their young kids? Would she be so used to having conversations through sabers and whips after staying for too long on the foreign planet that she couldn’t adapt to the normal society at all?

“You see, it would have been a dark future even if we won the war unstoppably. That is not a ‘victory’ that I desire!”

Li Yao scratched his head and said, “You are overthinking it, Brother Guo. With your high position, it is highly unlikely that your daughter would be assigned to such posts.”

With mixed feelings, Guo Chunfeng said, “Yes, my daughter might not have been sent, but the sons and daughters of others would have been. Maybe, the children of the folk who have absolutely no power would have been sent to the resource planets light years away and transformed from innocent, carefree teenagers into ruthless, coldhearted, perverted fiends under the most glorious, most righteous slogan!”

Li Yao was silent and did not know what he should say.

“Human beings are all selfish.” Guo Chunfeng continued. “We always talk big. Slay evil, defend humanity, fight and clear all the obstacles in our way… We can talk for all eternity without repeating.

“Joining the federal army and protecting our homeland is the most noble duty for every citizen. Even a three-year-old knows that!

“However, when it comes to real action, I simply can’t bear to send my own daughter to the battlefield and watch her turning into what I have described!

“I hope that she can always be as she is right now. It doesn’t matter even if she is simple or even stupid. As long as she lives on in peace and without worries, it is all that I want!

“That’s why I must thank you, Li Yao. You prevented such a dreadful future from becoming the reality!

“Yes, in a hundred years, we will be faced with the gravest threat in history, but at the very least, in the hundred years to come, my daughter will live in a world without wars, where she can comfortably study, fall in love with someone, pursue her dreams, get married, and have children of her own!

“The iron and blood will not fall upon her until the most beautiful golden years of her life have past, and she has tasted all the happiness in the world.

“Shouldn’t I, as her father, thank you for giving her the opportunity?”

Li Yao scratched his head hard.

He was not a father yet, and he did not know what the feeling was exactly.

At this moment, Ding Lingdang and Guo Xiaohe both ran up to them.

Guo Xiaohe was wet from head to toe. Even her hair was stuck to her face, but she was waving two small fish proudly.

The fish were emanating golden colors under the sun, as if she had grabbed two beams of sunlight in her hands.

“Dad! Look! Dad! Look!”

Guo Chunfeng embraced Guo Xiaohe. Li Yao picked up Ding Lingdang’s hand and walked ahead.

Looking at his smiling face, Ding Lingdang found it odd. “You were just picking some water. What are you so happy about?”

“Nothing particular.”

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao stared at the red sun above the endless ridges and trees and said with a smile, “I just feel that, if even such an insane, unpardonable guy like Elder Nether Spring still had a shining part in the deepest part of his soul, is there any reason why we shouldn’t believe in us and more people?

“Before, I was very uneasy about the upcoming attack of the Imperium of True Human Beings, but right now, I’m suddenly very confident about the future!

“Just stride forward. We will win. We will!”

Chapter 1166 - Lu Zui’s Anomaly

Inside a long, narrow valley three hundred and fifty kilometers to the southeast of the capital city, an enormous scale of caves had been dug out on the cliff. The metal building that was constructed based on the cliff, covered in dozens of defense rune arrays, was emitting a silver color under the sunlight, giving everybody a cold, suffocating feeling.

This was the White Silver Fortress, the most heavily guarded prison in the Star Glory Federation!

Before, the prisoners of the place were all the most ferocious, evil Cultivators. They were either mentally deranged or had committed crimes that were against the code of conduct of the Cultivators after being consumed by their desires. Every one of them had the blood of hundreds of innocent people on their hands.

However, one month ago, the prisoners had all been transferred to different prisons. The White Silver Fortress, which was already impenetrable, was strengthened once more. A crystal suit legion was stationed next to the prison, and three battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were supervising the situation, while the prison was transformed into the facility where the members of the Patriots Partnership were caged!

At this moment, on the hollow ground at the center of the White Silver Fortress, the ‘patriots’, with shackles and barriers on them, were enjoying the fresh air. They gathered in groups of two or three, bathed in the sunlight and talking with each other about the latest situation.

Gathering all the members of the Patriots Partnership together was not for humanitarian purposes but out of more practical concerns.

After more than one month of capturing and interrogation, the non-core members of the Patriots Partnership who had been fooled mostly collapsed. They quickly confessed everything that they had done.

However, the core members, who planned and implemented the explosions in the Federal Square and the attack on the Speaker, were as tough as ever and would speak a word not matter how hard they were interrogated. Even if they did confess something, there was no knowing whether or not they were keeping anything to themselves.

Therefore, Guo Chunfeng had specially arranged for the diehards and the other ‘patriots’ to hang out together, hoping that sparks would be raised from their collision, so that he could pick up valuable information.

The small square was full of surveillance rune arrays. Every word that every prisoner said, and even every blink, would be recorded dutifully.

In one corner of the square, Lu Zui sat cross-legged like an old monk. He looked lethargic, and his eyes were hollow.

His head was tied in a special ring. The twelve ‘Soul Stealing Stings’ on the iron ring pierced deep into his head and suppressed his immense soul power of the Nascent Soul Stage.

He was an admin-type Cultivator who counted on his brain in the first place, and his body was not tough. After his brain was locked, he was just like a random old man who was about to die.

Together with the shackles on his body that weighed hundreds of kilograms and could be charged with high-voltage electricity at any time, the schemer who had nearly dragged all three Sectors into the turbulence of war had no way to struggle.

Guo Chunfeng had hoped that other ‘patriots’ would approach Lu Zui and report to him their latest situation. It would have been even better if Lu Zui had given them any instructions.

If so, Guo Chunfeng would have been able to analyze the information based on the instructions.

However, Lu Zui seemed to have seen through Guo Chunfeng’s aim. As if he were surrounded by a cold wall, no other ‘patriots’ were within ten meters from him. They barely even looked at him.

He seemed to have been forgotten by the world, unable to pose any threat now.

Having no other choice, Guo Chunfeng could only ask his subordinates to pay more attention to the other ‘patriots’.

As it turned out, several diehards and the non-core members began quarrelling.

The diehards berated the non-core members that they were not determined enough, saying that they had forgotten their responsibility to slay evil and save the federation so quickly and that they had ‘betrayed’ so quickly!

The non-core members, on the other hand, scolded that the diehards, calling them a bunch of lunatics who not only tried to assassinate the Speaker but also killed tens of thousands of compatriots in the explosions that led to their eventual doom. Furthermore, they had been dragged into the trouble and turned into shameless traitors!

While they were debating, Guo Chunfeng collected a lot of useful information from them!

Hundreds of Secret Sword Agents who were responsible for the surveillance were all focused on the eyes and lips of the ‘patriots’, and they gradually came to ignore Lu Zui, who was still sitting in the corner.

Lu Zui stared at the argument of the ‘patriots’ not far away indifferently. There was not any expression on his face. If his shallow, gray eyes had not blinked occasionally, he would have been mistaken for a statue.

However, when the two gangs of patriots were about to get into a fight in anger, and when all the guards concentrated their attention on them, Lu Zui’s fingers suddenly moved, and a tiny jade chip showed up in his hands.

Nobody knew how exactly the jade chip had been delivered to Lu Zui, who was locked in the most heavily guarded prison that even an ant would not be able to creep in without permission!

It was an ancient jade chip. The shortcoming of such jade chips was the limited storage, which was only good enough for texts or short videos. However, the advantage was that it did not require a crystal processor. As long as the jade chip was stuck to the forehead, one would be able to read the information inside when the mystic rays of the jade chip pierced through the epiphysis.

Lu Zui yawned. As if uninterested in the argument in the front at all, he faced the wall and crouched.

When he turned his head, the brilliance that was as sharp and clear as icicles that had accumulated over ten thousand years shot out of his hoary eyes!

He stuck the jade chip to his forehead and pinched the activation rune array at the rear. A mystic ray immediately beamed out of the jade chip and penetrated into his epiphysis, producing a 3D image inside his brain!

It was Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao!

“Brother Lu, if you ever see this video, it only means one thing—I am dead, our plan has failed, and the Patriots Partnership has been demolished.”

In the picture, Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao was wearing the biting military uniform, but he was holding the hat in his hands and touching the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars badge at the center of the hat without pause.

His eyelids were bouncing nonstop, as if countless nails on the badge were stinging his fingers brutally.

After a moment of silence, Zhou Hengdao continued. “The life and death of you and me, and even the existence of the Patriots Partnership, don’t really matter. What matters is our federation and the ultimate civilization of mankind!

“Brother Lu, we walked together because of the same belief. We didn’t hesitate to cross any line, betray the duties on our shoulders, and even kill the innocent compatriots and frame the heroes of the federation!

“We trampled everything that could possibly be trampled on and betrayed everything that could ever be betrayed, and still, this is our outcome.

“Why? Is it possible at all that we’ve been wrong since the very beginning?

“Our purpose was definitely not wrong, but did we choose the wrong approach? If we had chosen a different path, one that was open and forthright, would there have been a better ending for us?

“What about now? Do we still have time to turn this around?

“I don’t quite know the answer.

“I have never been a smart person anyway. I am just a rigid soldier and a bad-tempered veteran. The only thing that I’m good at is killing people. Nothing more.

“However, a ridiculous, immature thought has occurred to this soldier who has more brawn than brains.

“Brother Lu, you are a hundred times stronger than me in terms of computational ability and deduction ability. It’s your call to determine whether the thought is realistic and how exactly it should be implemented if it is!

“No matter what the result it… I have fulfilled my responsibility as a federal soldier.

“How I wish that I can see the federation rising in the sea of stars with my own eyes. I really do…”

Lu Zui listened to Zhou Hengdao’s remarks quietly and analyzed Zhou Hengdao’s ‘ridiculous thought’.

A moment later, he laughed.

At first, he was chuckling. Then, his shoulders were shaking. In the end, he could not hold it back anymore and rolled on the ground like a crazy person, laughing to his heart’s content!

Lu Zui’s anomaly immediately attracted all the guards’ attention.

“Not good. Lu Zui is not right. What’s he doing?”

“There’s something in his hands. A jade chip! What happened? Who gave him the jade chip?”

“Hurry up and control Lu Zui!”

In the surveillance center, Guo Chunfeng was sweating anxiously.

Alarms were ringing in the sky of the White Silver Fortress. Guo Chunfeng led a batch of Secret Sword Agents into the square!

However, before he charged in, Lu Zui had almost cramped because of his wild laughter.

Together with his crazy laughter, immense spiritual energy burst out of his body and crushed all the barriers into smithereens like a torrent!

Streams of spiritual energy flowed out of his body and concentrated into invisible cocoons around his body. Their ripples stopped behind him in the shape of two enormous, colorful wings. He was like a butterfly who had been granted a new life after breaking out of the cocoon!

Lu Zui laughed so hard that tears were flowing out, but his eyes were both radiating as brilliantly as the sun and absorbing everything nearby like a deep, dark black hole. The two opposing feelings were melted into one and did not have any self-contradiction!

Shua! Shua! Shua!

The ‘Soul Stealing Stings’ that pierced deep into his head were pushed out one after another! In less than ten seconds, all the twelve Soul Stealing Stings were pushed out. Even the iron ring that locked his head was broken into pieces and collapsed to the ground!

“This is…”

Guo Chunfeng and the three battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, who had joined him upon hearing the news, were all greatly shocked. They were all well aware what the tremendous aura flowing around Lu Zui meant!

“A breakthrough… Lu Zui has made a breakthrough under such circumstances and advanced into the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage from the middle level!”

“How is it possible!”

“His body was sealed by barriers, his soul was completely suppressed by the twelve ‘Soul Stealing Stings’, and he was not boosted by any Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. How on earth could he have made a breakthrough? How!”

“His belief… his belief is even stronger, firmer, and purer than before. Just a random glimpse at me, and I already feel that I am about to be overwhelmed! What… what has happened?”

“What’s inside the jade chip exactly? What is it?”

The three battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Guo Chunfeng were all greatly alarmed. Surrounding Lu Zui, they did not even dare to breathe anymore.

Although Lu Zui was an admin-type Cultivator—after all, however many breakthroughs he made, his combat ability would only be equal to a battle-type Core Formation Stage Cultivator in a real fight—everything happening was still too weird. The four of them all felt that their blood was freezing!

Chapter 1167 - The Last Hope for the Patriots!

At this moment, the entire White Silver Fortress was dead silent. The sound of a needle hitting the ground would have been as loud as thunder.

Guo Chunfeng, the three battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, the Secret Sword Agents, and the hundreds of prisoners were all gazing at Lu Zui in disbelief!

Twelve shocking bloody holes were still on Lu Zui’s head. He had not freed himself from the shackle on his body that weighed hundreds of kilograms and could be charged with high-voltage electricity either. Dozens of super experts and more than ten crystal cannons had locked onto him!

However, he was smiling in great relief. As if a chess player walking to another game, he floated into the air and glanced around.

Wherever his eyes reached, everybody could not help but move their head away. Not just Guo Chunfeng, even the three battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators hesitated to make eye contact with Lu Zui, as if his casual observation would see through the deepest secrets in their heart!

Suddenly—

Lu Zui grunted. His aura shrank, and his skin broke into parts. Dim spots of light were popping up on his body. His flesh and blood around the spots quickly withered, giving no sense of vitality anymore.

It was as if a burning torch was about to kill him from the inside!

“I’m about to die.” Lu Zui smiled at Guo Chunfeng.

Guo Chunfeng and the three battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators looked at each other. They finally realized what was happening to Lu Zui.

The advancement of levels was not necessarily a good thing.

The higher one’s level was, the more energy they would consume, just like the more advanced crystal warships would certainly boast larger power rune arrays and cost more crystals.

For general Cultivators, when they were about to break into a new level, they would certainly prepare tremendous Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and use them to make up for the consumption of their body and soul.

Li Yao had a breakthrough in the middle of a combat, but before the battle, he had swallowed a lot of strengthening drugs. After the battle, he rested for more than half a month and absorbed more incredibly precious materials and drugs than anybody could count before he managed to stabilize himself in the new level.

But Lu Zui was different.

He was a prisoner and probably the most dangerous one ever since the Star Glory Federation was founded. He had been watched over in the strictest way. Over the past month, not to mention the resources for training, even his soul had been suppressed all the time and could not be drier.

Advancing into a higher level under such circumstances was like committing suicide.

It was like a weak, little mouse suddenly mutated and was granted with a brain that was larger, smarter, and more complicated than a human brain.

The new brain might bring new wisdom to the little mouse, but before that, the nutrition that the brain needed would drain its body!

That was exactly Lu Zui's situation.

No, not exactly. More precisely speaking, Lu Zui did not make a breakthrough by accident; he had burnt his life and soul and detonated all his Cultivation in the past two hundred years in that moment, trading his life for a brief epiphany. That was how he had broken all the blockages and marched into the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage!

Guo Chunfeng and the three battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were all awed by Lu Zui's resolution!

There were many questions that they had not asked Lu Zui yet. Many secrets about the Patriots Partnership had yet to be unveiled. How could he die right now?

Guo Chunfeng's face was as gray as that of a corpse. In front of his old boss, he was like a rooster that had lost a fight, shaking violently in anger!

"I can live one to two days at best." Lu Zui looked at him without either delight or sadness on his face. He extended two fingers. "Ah Feng, do you want a deal? One of the production bases of the Demon God Virus hasn't been revealed yet. Also, there are three secret storage locations where the unstable semi-products of the Demon God Virus are stashed. Although they are semi-products, they can still cause a great disaster if they are released. Do you want to know where they are?

“Hehe. You should be very clear that, now that I’m in the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage, the soul searching technique will not work on me. If I want, I can shatter my own soul with a telepathic thought and bring all my secrets to the deepest depths of hell. You will not be able to get anything from me!

“However, as long as you promise me one thing, I will be the most cooperative person in the world and give you everything that you want to know. Even if I die, I will not play any tricks on my brain. You will still be able to retrieve a lot of things from it.”

Guo Chunfeng’s voice was hoarse. “What do you want?”

“I want to meet someone and have a private conversation with her for half an hour, during which time you are not to interfere with us no matter what happens.” Lu Zui smiled. “That’s all.”

Guo Chunfeng was angry. “Are you still trying to send messages to your accomplices outside?”

“Ah Feng, seriously? If I am requesting to see my accomplice, won’t I be exposing her? Moreover, you will certainly be monitoring our every action. Whatever we say and do, including the tiniest movements of our pupils, will all be under your control. What are you scared of?”

Guo Chunfeng was silent for a moment. He calculated the pros and cons quickly before asking, “Who do you want to meet?”

Lu Zui gave a name.

Guo Chunfeng’s face was brimming with disbelief. He was dazed for a long time before he asked, “Why do you want to meet her? Is she a member of the Patriots Partnership? It’s impossible! Absolutely impossible!”

“You will know the reason after she arrives,” Lu Zui said. “You can take your time to consider, but I don’t have much time on my side. Make a decision quickly if you don’t want me to bring all my secrets to the crematory!”

Guo Chunfeng stared at Lu Zui hard, trying to look for traces on the face of his former boss.

However, Lu Zui descended from the midair and simply crouched in the corner again, dragging his withered body that was slowly smoldering. His eyes passed through Guo Chunfeng, the White Silver Fortress, the blue sky, the white clouds, and the atmosphere, darting toward the sea of stars and a long, long time away in the future.

…

Three hours later, inside the most heavily guarded prison cell in the White Silver Fortress, Lu Zui’s head was covered in another barrier that was even stronger. His limbs were tied up by more than ten chains attached to the corners of the prison cell and connected to aggressive magical equipment of more than ten attributes, allowing them to trigger electricity, fire, and frost at any time.

Although he was still free to move his hands and feet, the zone of activity was quite limited. His fingers were bound to tiny chains, too, to ensure that he would not be able to make seals quickly.

Even his tongue had been pierced through by three long nails, which could burn his tongue into ashes the moment he started enchanting any attack runes.

One could not be too prudent about the unparalleled brutal man who had broken into the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage by force despite the suppression of multiple barriers.

Lu Zui was not moving at all. His limbs and body were even drier than three hours ago. The black spots leaking out of his pores were gradually joining each other.

But his eyes opened wider and wider. An indescribable glimmer was beaming out of his eyes, as if he had dedicated all his vitality to his brain in order to get a chance to look into the future in the next hundred years!

Shua!

Shua!

Shua!

Opposite him, the three gates were opened one after another. A female Cultivator whose red hair was burning furiously walked in.

Lu Zui smiled. The glimmer in his eyes was entirely focused on the girl. He looked at her as if she were a raw jade that had yet to be carved but was full of potential.

“Fellow Cultivator Ding, you are here.”

“Cut the cr*p. Who the hell is your fellow?”

Ding Lingdang strode over, covering almost ten meters in only one step. She grabbed Lu Zui’s collar and picked him as well as shackle that weighed hundreds of kilograms with just one hand while waving her other hand in front of Lu Zui's eyes. Grinning, she said, "Old b*stard, do you know why I agreed to meet you? Do you know what the one thing that I regret most in the battle a month ago is?

"The thing I regret most is that I didn't beat you up to my heart's content, old b*stard!

"But today you are feeding yourself to me! Excellent! If there's anything you want to say, wait until I punch you several times! Let's make it simple. Three punches. Just three punches! If you are still breathing after three punches, we'll talk then!"

Guo Chunfeng was so anxious that he was sweating hard. He shouted through the broadcast rune arrays, "Miss Ding, don't be rash. He is dying. He cannot withstand a single punch from you!"

"Hehe!" Ding Lingdang sniffed. She glared at Lu Zui for a long time before she slowly let go of him and frowned. "Speak now. Why did you want to meet me? I'm really baffled. If there's anybody you want to meet before your death, it should be Li Yao! Why do you want to talk to me?"

Lu Zui looked at Ding Lingdang with a smile, not offended by her recklessness and rudeness at all but full of the pleasure of picking up a treasure. He said slowly, "Who is Li Yao? An idiot who is obsessed with the petty kindness. He is not qualified for me to waste my precious time before my death."

Ding Lingdang narrowed her eyes with dangerous brilliance beaming out. "Hey, watch your mouth. Don't force me to blow up your head in one punch!"

“What a shame. Fellow—Miss Ding, in fact, twenty years ago, when you lost your parents in the beast tide and were heavily wounded and almost disabled yourself, I heard the news and even considered adopting you,” Lu Zui said. “It’s a pity that your mother’s colleagues in the Grand Desolate War Institution took you away before me.”

Ding Lingdang could not help but hold her arms and shudder. “Then I can’t thank you enough for what you didn’t do.”

Ignoring Ding Lingdang’s sarcasm, Lu Zui continued. “Also, half a year ago, when we organized the discussion club and recruited the ‘patriots’, we vetted you from various aspects, too. You were excellent in every regard, except that you hesitated for a moment in the end.

“Due to safety concerns, we didn’t recruit you. Otherwise, you might be one of us right now.”

“Even if I was a member of the Patriots Partnership,” Ding Lingdang declared resolutely, “the first thing I would’ve done after learning of your shameless plan would be to punch your nose to the back of your head!”

Chapter 1168 - New Leader!

“You are indeed as… straightforward as I was told.” Lu Zui smiled and got back to the topic. “Today, I invited you here because I wanted to ask you a few questions. Of course, you can choose not to answer them or simply blow up my head and walk way.

“But until you shut me up, I will be speaking what is on my mind honestly.

“First of all, the scheme of the Patriots Partnership has been disrupted, and the reconciliation between mankind and the demon race has been reached. Nothing but peace and prosperity awaits us. However, Miss Ding, can the hatred at the bottom of your heart be erased without a trace so easily? Can you really forget the scene where your parents were shredded by the demon beasts and killed miserably in front of your eyes?

“Yes. I’m aware that the demon king who organized the beast tide and got your parents killed has been executed by you. It is sort of a revenge, but have all the demons who participated in the attack been killed? Is it possible that some of them are still enjoying themselves in the Blood Demon Sector and will even swagger to the Heaven’s Origin Sector under the banner of ‘peace’?

“At that time, will you really be able to let go of your hatred and embrace them with a smile?”

Ding Lingdang’s pupils shrank violently. She breathed fast and grabbed Lu Zui’s collar again.

In the surveillance room nearby, the assistant asked Guo Chunfeng, “Should we end the conversation?”

Frowning, Guo Chunfeng pondered for a moment but slowly shook his head. “Lu Zui was right. His soul power is unbelievably strong now that he is in the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage. Even though he cannot attack because of the barriers, it is more than easy for him to wipe something out of his mind.

“It’s easy for us to interrupt the conversation, but it will be a whole different matter to dig out the secrets of the Patriots Partnership in his head. Let’s hear what he has to say for now!”

“Secondly…” Lu Zui glanced at the surveillance camera at the corner of the prison cell casually. His eyes seemed to be piercing into the hearts of Guo Chunfeng and all the Secret Sword Agents through the surveillance camera.

His question next seemed to be both for Ding Lingdang, Guo Chunfeng, and all the other Cultivators on the spot. “Do you really believe that, as soon as the surrender agreement is signed, all the demons will turn into innocent rabbits immediately, that they will assimilate into human society sincerely without causing any trouble, and that they will be content as appendages all the time and human beings will always be dominators?

“Is it possible at all, say a likelihood of one percent, that things will not progress as a naïve child such as Li Yao has imagined? Is it possible that, after decades of integration, human beings will lose the dominating role in the alliance and that demons will return in a different appearance and rule over us again?

“Are you absolutely certain that it is impossible? Not even a likelihood of one percent?”

His question made Guo Chunfeng and all the Cultivators lower their heads, all wearing complicated expressions.

Many of those Cultivators had been fighting the demon race on the frontline for their entire life. Their family and friends had been killed by the demons, and they had witnessed countless towns being destroyed with their own eyes.

Even if they were aware, after rational thinking, that putting down the hatred was the best choice, human beings were not cold machines after all. It was impossible for them to have only taken benefits and harms into consideration, and it was not easy for them to accept the new change from the emotional point of view.

Ding Lingdang’s eyes immediately became bloodshot. Like a cow whose nostrils were spurting out steam, she clutched Lu Zui’s collar and shook it violently until his chains were clattering hard.

“Yes. It’s true that I cannot forget my deep hatred with the demon race! I will absolutely not trust the demon race! Never! I don’t want to get anywhere near the demon race!

“But so what? Everything has been fixed right now. Is there anything I can do?”

Ding Lingdang gnashed his teeth and said, one word after another, “Old fart, do you know what I hate about you most? Not that you assassinated the Speaker, not that you killed tens of thousands of our compatriots, not that you framed Li

Yao, but that you ruined our opportunity to challenge the demon race in an open fight!

“Why did you have to realize your purpose through such insane, sordid, and shameless methods?

“Why couldn’t you tell the public the truth and fight openly in a ‘competition of the righteous path’?

“If you had declared your stance openly in the beginning and insisted in parliament, to the media, and in front of billions of citizens of the federation that you did not agree with integrating with the demon race at all and that there would be tremendous benefits after we marched into the Blood Demon Sector—if you had done that, I can’t say for other people, but I definitely would’ve supported you and fought for you until the end!

“But you simply chose a different way!

“What did you consider our hatred to be? Was our hatred wrong? Was it clandestine? Must it be kept away from the light?

“Demons killed my parents. I hate the demons’ guts. I don’t see eye to eye with them. I just want them dead! It’s as simple and justified as that!

“Couldn’t you say these words? Were you not able to summon enough forces to smash the Blood Demon Sector into smithereens?

“This is your biggest sin. You tarnished my hatred as well as the most sacred hatred of our compatriots whose families have been murdered by the demons like mine! You exterminated our opportunity to fight the demon race in an open war! With that crime alone, you should be sentence to death ten thousand times, old fart!"

Lu Zui was like a canoe in the surging tide while Ding Lingdang was shaking him hard, but he kept smiling casually until a dirty teardrop flowed out. "Yes, Miss Ding. With everything coming this far, in retrospect, maybe you are right. It is all my fault. I ruined everybody's most precious hatred.

"Then, it you were me, what would you have done in my place?"

His eyes blinking, Lu Zui looked at Ding Lingdang full of expectation.

Ding Lingdang glared back at him without giving in. "First of all, I would not have kept anything mysterious or vet the members secretly. An underground organization? That's useless as hell!

"If I were to establish the Patriots Partnership, I would've done it openly! Register it in the relevant governmental department as a company, a sect, or even a political party. Regularize it, publicize it, and legalize it. Promote the idea that human beings and demons are not compatible to everybody!

"We are not doing anything wrong. It's freedom of speech and association. What's there to be scared of?

"Then, I would establish branches nationwide and draw media attention. I would gather all the victims of the beast tides and unite them. Everybody would make their contribution in their own way. Our voice would be most deafening!

“You were the director of the Secret Sword Bureau, and you certainly had your influence in parliament. I also believe that many representatives agreed that human beings and demons are not compatible! If I were you, after I captured Elder Nether Spring and interrogated the latest intelligence of the Blood Demon Sector out of him, I would have publicized everything to parliament so that all the representatives would know how weak the Blood Demon Sector at that moment was and what kind of secret, invincible weapons we had grasped!

“Following that, I would have proposed the motion of war!

“You and Zhou Hengdao were both firm supporters of the idea that human beings and demons are not compatible. With your push, it is very likely that the motion would’ve passed. After that, we would have been able to wage a war openly! Why did you have to resort to so many redundant schemes?”

Amazed, Lu Zui mumbled, “Old Zhou was quite right. Since you father was a federal soldier, and you are deeply connected to the federal army, Old Zhou studied you profoundly before and believed that you are not as simpleminded as you appear to be and in no way a woman with fists but no brains!

“Your theory is quite beyond my expectations, but on second thought, it makes a lot of sense. How can a top-tier expert of the younger generation of the Heaven’s Origin Sector really lack brains?”

Raising her head, Ding Lingdang sniffed. “Of course I have a well-functioning brain, but it is a habit of mine to solve my problems in the most direct and straightforward way! And in most cases, the most direct and straightforward way is this pair of fists of mine!”

“However, you’ve overlooked something,” Lu Zui analyzed. “If I had publicized everything to parliament, including that I’d captured Elder Nether Spring, I would’ve been obliged to explain why Elder Nether Spring fled to the Heaven’s Origin Sector in the appearance of a human being. Then, two other things would have been exposed.

“Firstly, the same-origin theory and the existence of the Divine Blood of Chaos, which means that human beings and demons are mutually transformable.

“Secondly, the fact that Li Yao sabotaged the Eye of Blood Demon and even reached a deal with Jin Tuyi. Demons were going to surrender!

“When the two things were revealed, they certainly would raise a riot. Many representatives, after weighing the pros and cons, would have made the decision that the war was not necessary, and the victory could be secured with no blood shed. It’s needless to mention the allies from the Flying Star Sector, who would in no way send out their fleet to help our expedition under such circumstances.

“In fact, I made more than ten deductions before. In this scenario, the odds that the expedition motion was passed were lower than ten percent. That’s why I planned the accident in the Federal Square, hoping to force the parliament into the decision of war.

“Miss Ding, if you were me, what would you have done after the expedition motion was rejected by parliament and Li Yao returned with the peace papers of the Pantheon of Demons? Is there any way that you could’ve reversed the situation?”

“Even if I couldn’t reverse the situation, it would still be ten thousand times better than right now,” Ding Lingdang said coldly. “Even if the expedition motion was denied, at the very least, the Patriots Partnership would still be walking in daylight as a deterrence to warn all the citizens of the federation to be wary of the demons!

“If I were you, the war would definitely not be an option when parliament vetoed the motion, but the entire Patriots Partnership and I would still keep an eye on the demon race closely!

“We would let them go if they surrendered dutifully and resumed the ancestral identity of human beings under the banner of the civilization of mankind as a whole. But if they had other ill intentions and meant to instigate trouble, I would chop off their tails brutally when they were wagging them!

“That’s what a real ‘patriot’ should’ve done!”

Hearing that, Lu Zui could not help but burst into laughter. He nodded in approval and said, “Well said, Miss Ding. Perhaps you are right. Perhaps we should’ve done it in the beginning!”

“Well said is not well done!” Ding Lingdang declared brutally. “You have ruined everything. It’s too late now!”

“Maybe it is not.” Lu Zui retreated his smiled. His expression was getting more and more mysterious, and he seemed to have entered a transcendental state.

He extended his right hand, which was still tied in chains, to Ding Lingdang. His face was calm, but his eyes were burning with hope and expectation. “Miss Ding, one last question.

“Would you like to be the new leader of the Patriots Partnership?”

Chapter 1169 - First-Hand Pain

His every word was like a super heavy bomb that stunned Guo Chunfeng and the Secret Sword Agents who were eavesdropping on the conversation in the booth nearby.

“Should—should we interrupt their conversation?” one of the assistants stammered.

“Of course not!” Guo Chunfeng roared. “Do you not understand what he means? The Patriots Partnership still have remnants out there! Organized remnants!

“But that doesn’t seem right. Even if there are still organized remnants and they need a new leader, he has no reason to tell us. Moreover, Ding Lingdang doesn’t look fit to be a leader of the Patriots Partnership. What does he mean? What does he mean exactly?”

Even Guo Chunfeng, Abyss, was dumbfounded.

Ding Lingdang was even more shocked. She could not help but let loose of her hands, which were grabbing Lu Zui’s collar. After a long daze, she burst into fury. “Old fart, what’s wrong with you?

“The Patriots Partnership has clearly been demolished. Most of the members have been locked up in prison. Even if some of them are still on the run, they cannot show up in public. Who am I going to lead exactly?

“Also, everybody in the federation knows that Ding Lingdang is a battle-type Cultivator. I like fighting more than anything, but managing a large organization? Mental! You may want to hire somebody else!”

Her reaction was all within Lu Zui’s expectations. The previous director of the Secret Sword Bureau and the incumbent leader of the Patriots Partnership said with a shallow smile, “There’s no need to underestimate yourself. Everybody has infinite potential. You have demonstrated enough calmness and wisdom in the incident of capturing Blood Devil Li Yao. The opinions that you raised a moment ago are logical and well-constructed, too. All that is evidence that you are not a simple warrior.

“Moreover—”

He paused for a moment and looked at Ding Lingdang’s face before continuing. “The Patriots Partnership in the past had a meticulous, intelligent, and deductive leader, me, and Zhou Hengdao, a big shot in the military. But didn’t it fail eventually?

“If the organization has failed despite the leadership of the wisest people, does it mean that ‘wisdom’ is not what matters to us most? Is it possible that we will reach somewhere new and unexpected if we have a simple, straightforward, stupid, unsophisticated leader?”

“Wait!” Ding Lingdang narrowed her eyes, with dangerous brilliance beaming out. She glanced at Lu Zui’s face up and down, as if she were deciding the best place to punch his nose in to make the guy look more agreeable. “Old fart, are you making fun of me?”

“Maybe I should use a different choice of words.” Lu Zui smiled. “Perhaps, for the future Patriots Partnership, it is not the management and planning ability that matters but the tremendous appeal and the strength to encourage other people!

"It's true that you are short of organizing, managing, and planning abilities, but your assistants and your colleagues can do the job for you. Your appeal and your strength of encouragement are definitely powerful enough! In the past decade, you have built up your name as the 'Crimson Queen' with your own fists one punch after another. Your fame is second-to-none in the new generation of the federation. Few are match for you, too—that is, of course, not counting the monster Li Yao."

Ding Lingdang sniffed and said, "What can appeal do? Should I go to the prison to call your prisoners to action? Or, are there other secret accomplices whom you have yet to confess? Then, I suggest that you give us the names right now. There's no way that I'm going to scheme with you!

"It's true that some of my accomplices are still out there," Lu Zui said calmly, "but after our conversation is over, I will write a personal letter and certify it with my soul stamp to ask them to turn themselves in. It is part of the deal I made with Guo Chunfeng. I must keep my word with my old subordinate, mustn't I?

"As for your first proposal, I don't think it's bad. Why can't you call the 'patriots' in the prison to action?

"It must be noted that the Patriots Partnership has almost five thousand members, but most of them knew nothing about the planned assassination of the Speaker and the explosions in the Federal Square; they were merely fooled by me. Some of them, including Zhou Hengdao, only knew that we planned to assassinate the Speaker and didn’t know about the explosions!

“Only ten or so people, including several of my foster sons, were aware of the explosions beforehand!

“When they are trialed, the suspects of the explosion case will naturally be charged with treason and arson and sentenced to death. As for those who were only involved in the planned assassination of the Speaker, except for the few chief conspirators, they might not be punished with the death penalty. Political murders are usually handled more prudently than regular murders.

“As for the ‘patriots’ who didn’t know the first thing about the assassination and the explosions, they are even less likely to be executed because they didn’t know anything and only provided help for me when I fooled them.

“Hehe. When I recruited the members, my candidates were all people whose level was relatively high and who boasted certain social influence just like you. Those people are all the valuable treasures of the federation. Now, we are in dire need of talents. How can they be locked in prison forever?

“By my estimation, when everything is settled, they will be sentenced to jail for decades, or maybe only a few years, according to the severity of their crime. Even if they are serving time, they will certainly be engaged in dangerous jobs such as the development of the foreign planets or the exploration of world fragments to atone for their sins. In fact, they will probably be freer than you think.

“However they are punished, those guys will certainly return to society before the Imperium of True Human Beings comes in full scale. They will become the pillars of the federation again and contribute to the resistance!

“Do you not think that several thousand of such people will be an unneglectable force?”

Ding Lingdang was dazed. She was not a quick-minded debater in the first place and failed to come up with any rebuttal in the moment.

But Lu Zui suddenly changed the topic. “However, it is not them that I mainly want to talk to you about today. In fact, it doesn’t matter even if they are all sentenced to death, or even if the Patriots Partnership today crumbles, like the ice under the sun, evaporated and obliterated!

“We are not talking about the Patriots Partnership now but hatred.

“The naïve fools such as Li Yao think that everything will be perfect after the Patriots Partnership is annihilated and that human beings and demons will hold each other’s hands hereafter, singing, dancing, and laughing like kindergarteners, while they stride for a better tomorrow.

“Fine. Don’t glare at me. Maybe I was too mean. It is not Li Yao’s fault. It’s just because he has never felt the first-hand pain as you and I have. He has never had the experience of holding the broken body of the people we love most and slowly sewing up the pieces. He has never known how it feels to wake up at night from a nightmare with tears all over our face. His hands have never shaken, his breath has never been difficult, and his eyes have never been bloodshot on instinct upon seeing demons!

“Therefore, he cannot begin to understand the force of hatred. He even denies it. He doesn’t know the first thing about the force!

"But you know it, don't you? Judging from our conversation just now, you know how strong the force is all the time, which is what delighted me most.

"If so, it will be very easy for you to understand what will happen. The victors led by Li Yao can destroy the Patriots Partnership, find every 'patriot', and put them in jail or sentence them to death! They can push the integration of human beings and demons by force. They can even shut everybody's mouth under the name of 'political correctness' and block every argument that opposes theirs in every newspaper or on every online forum!

"They can destroy the Patriots Partnership, but they can never destroy hatred.

"Let's take you for an example. Ding Lingdang, is there any way that you can forget the picture of your parents being killed by the demons? Is there any way that you can embrace the demons as your own without any grudges? Is there any way to erase the hatred at the bottom of your heart, leaving no trace behind?"

Ding Lingdang's eyes were suddenly bloodshot. She gritted her teeth hard and almost could not stop herself from punching Lu Zui. However, after holding her breath for a long time, she loosened her fists, and her back was suddenly not as straight as before.

"Answer me!" Lu Zui suddenly turned into a silver-haired lion, roaring furiously. "Answer my questions!"

In that moment, the chains all over his body were ripped apart, and the barrier on his head was blown away. Spiritual energy was surging out of his body like a hurricane!

Intimidated by his shocking aura, Ding Lingdang was so shocked that she stepped back and fell to the ground.

Crack!

The one-way transparent glass between the surveillance room next door and the prison cell was suddenly full of cracks.

Guo Chunfeng and all the Secret Sword Agents jumped to their feet.

“Director…”

The few assistants were all sweating hard while they looked at Guo Chunfeng helplessly.

Guo Chunfeng struggled to calm himself down. Then he realized that the ‘broken chains’ were just an illusion triggered by Lu Zui’s immense mental power. His back soaked in sweat, he felt as if he was in the middle of a steamer, but he still issued an order after a long hesitation.

“Prepare to interrupt the conversation.”

The situation was now out of his control. Lu Zui had taken control over everything!

Fortunately, Ding Lingdang seemed to know what he was going to do. Sitting on the ground, she shouted at the glass, “Don’t interrupt the conversation! I’m not done with him yet! Let us finish!”

The assistants looked at Ding Lingdang and then at Guo Chunfeng.

Guo Chunfeng scratched his head hard until it was no better than a bird nest. Every muscle on his face was dancing. Pondering for a long time, he still waved his hands helplessly, gesturing for his subordinates not to burn Lu Zui's tongue so that they could continue their conversation.

Ding Lingdang was a person who could be dealt with carrots but certainly not sticks. If they interrupted the conversation right now, it would indicate that they were not confident. Even if Lu Zui could not give the answer, Ding Lingdang would find it out on her own—in which case, the answer might be even more terrifying.

Damn it. Has Lu Zui calculated this in advance too? Is that why he asked to meet Ding Lingdang?

Chapter 1170 - The Sword Grabber

After shouting to stop Guo Chunfeng, Ding Lingdang stared at Lu Zui and stood straight again against the aggressive eyes of the high-level Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. She gnashed her teeth. “What are you trying to say?”

Lu Zui retracted his aura and became a dying old man again, as if the thunderous fury a moment ago had never happened. He breathed softly and said, “I’m trying to say that, although the Patriots Partnership can be destroyed, the soil that nurtures it is unlikely to be emptied in the decades to come. The soil is the hatred that has sunk to the deepest parts of countless people’s hearts.

“The hatred was condensed in hundreds of years of blood. A piece of paper and a few slogans such as ‘love and peace’, and they think that the bloody hatred will be gone just like that? How is it possible?

“As long as the soil of hatred still exists, even if the Patriots Partnership founded by me is eradicated today, a new Patriots Partnership will rise again when the time is right.

“Maybe it will be under a different name and a different appearance, and it will be run in a different way, but the soil in which it is deeply rooted will remain unchanged.

“Believe me, in the century of integration to come, all kinds of contradictions will take place between human beings and demons. For the next schemer, the right time will certainly show up. Even if it doesn’t, he can always create a ‘time’ on his own, just like I did.”

Ding Lingdang’s voice was colder and colder. “So, are you hoping that I can be the leader of the next Patriots Partnership when it appears?”

“No.” Lu Zui’s eyes were gentler and gentler. He smiled. “I’m hoping that you can to everything possible to prevent the next Patriots Partnership from appearing.”

Ding Lingdang was dazed.

Guo Chunfeng and the other Cultivators next door were dazed, too.

“The bloody hatred of thousands of citizens of the federation is like an invincible, indestructible, double-edged sword. When the sword falls into the hands of certain schemers, such as the past me, it will kill countless lives, cause tremendous damage, and even drag the entire nation to its doom.”

Lu Zui’s eyes were clearer than ever. Tiny brooks were flowing deep inside his eyes and emitting silver, starry spots. “However, weapons are not wrong, and they don’t kill people on their own initiative. It is people who can tell right from wrong and kill other people.

“Like you said, Fellow Cultivator Ding, your parents were killed by the demons right before your eyes. Is your hatred toward the demon race not justified? Who has the power to demand that you erase the hatred? Is the hatred even erasable? What is wrong with such hatred?

“Therefore, since the ‘hatred sword’ boasts tremendous damage and cannot be destroyed, for the future of the federation, the most critical question will be… by whose hands will the sword be grabbed?

“Will the sword be grabbed by the next schemer, like the me in the past, or will it be wielded by someone who is franker and more straightforward and doesn’t bother to think of any schemes or tricks?”

Ding Lingdang sat cross-legged, deep in thought.

This time, she did not protest when Lu Zui addressed her as a ‘fellow Cultivator’.

“On the other hand—cough, cough. Cough, cough, cough, cough!”

Lu Zui coughed hard and vomited a mouthful of thick, black blood. After calming himself down for a moment, he said, “You and I both agree that the integration of human beings and demons will not necessarily go very well. There are ambitious schemers among human beings, but are there no similar guys among the demons? Are there no unwavering ‘demon supremacists’? Are there no demon versions of the Patriots Partnership?

“Now, because of Zhou Hengdao and me, the federation has been swept over by the propaganda of the reconciliation of human beings and demons. Many people are dazzled by the near peace and turning a blind eye to the dreadfulness of the demon race. They are even singing for the demons when the peace agreement hasn’t been signed yet, calling for forgiveness, understanding, and harmony!

“It’s dangerous, Fellow Cultivator Ding. Such overcorrection is truly dangerous!

“Even if human beings and demons truly reach a truce, we should not let go of all our vigilance! Flowers in one hand and dagger in the other. That should be the proper attitude!

“Otherwise, what if the doves represented by Li Yao are wrong?

“Or rather, even if Li Yao is not wrong, and the old-generation demons such as Jin Tuyi mean to cease the war with us sincerely, what if other schemers pop up in the new generation of the demons?

“The integration of two races will not be completed overnight. There will be a time span of decades or even centuries, with interests, beliefs, historical conflicts, and concessions involved! There will be too many unexpected factors! If we drop the weapons in our hands and hearts so early, if something goes wrong in the middle and other schemers in the demon race jump out to instigate trouble, who will be there to stop them?

“There must be a force in the federation to keep the demon race in check. When other people are all relaxed, singing and dancing in peace, it will be the last defense line! I’ve given it a lot of thought. This is perhaps the value and the mission of the Patriots Partnership in the next hundred years!”

Ding Lingdang was greatly moved. Her eyes blinked nonstop, indicating that giant tides were surging inside her head.

“Right now, you have two options.” Lu Zui looked at her peacefully. “Firstly, you can consider everything that I said just now to be nonsense. You can blow up my head with my punch and walk out of this prison cell lightheartedly. You will return as the Crimson Queen, adored and applauded by the young people. You will enjoy your warm, peaceful life with Li Yao.

“Then, I will confess the last members of the Patriots Partnership as per our deal, and I will try my best to ask all the ‘patriots’ to turn themselves in, completely destroying the organization that I founded myself!

“But it will be useless.

“We can destroy the Patriots Partnership, but we cannot destroy hatred. As long as hatred is not removed, a new Patriots Partnership might reappear any day! A guy that is more dangerous, crazier, and more sordid than the past me will show up at any time to steal the invincible ‘hatred sword’ and create more hatred with it until the weapon expands and swallows everything!

“Or maybe we are lucky enough to not run into such a schemer. As time goes by, the old generation will gradually pass away. All the hatred might truly disappear. Human beings might forget the threat of demons and have embraced them from the bottom of their heart, allowing the demons to reach every capillary vessel of the federation.

“At that time, however, a schemer might jump out within the demon race, establishing a mirror version of the Patriots Partnership on their side. The federation will still be turned upside down!

“These are things that might happen if you walk out of this prison cell doing nothing.

“Of course, I’m not saying that it will definitely happen. But who can know the odds for sure? Ten percent? Twenty percent? Or even higher?

“You can take a gamble. Or maybe, you can simply leave it aside and declare ‘not my damn business’.

“Yes, it is indeed not your business. After you walk out of the room, nobody will know that this conversation ever happened. Even if a disaster really takes place one day in the future, causing the deaths of millions of people, nobody will blame it on you.”

Ding Lingdang’s eyes narrowed into two sabers while she gnashed her teeth. “Cut the cr*p. What’s the second option?”

Lu Zui laughed. “The second option is to be the new leader of the Patriots Partnership. Of course, it is already a stinky name in the federation now. You can give it a new name, but the core of the organization will be the same.

“The criminals of the Patriots Partnership right now who are about to serve time will be your first loyal supporters. Their family and friends outside of the prison will be the second echelon. With your appeal and ability to rally the public, the billions of people who have bloody hatred with the demon race will be the third batch of your supporters!

“When the three forces are combined, they will be enough to compete with the demon race openly and legally as you described just now!

“In short, the hatred of all the citizens of the federation will be forged into the sharpest sword, and you will the person in the federation who grabs the sword!

“It will be your responsibility to look after the ‘hatred sword’ well. You cannot allow it to dart out and hurt other people easily, and you cannot allow it to fall into the hands of the ambitious schemers. You cannot allow it to rust inside the sheath, either! You will have to polish the sword and wield it all the time, making sure that it remains as sharp as ever!

“One day, if a schemer in the demon race really jumps out and jeopardizes the interests of the federation and the civilization of mankind, it will be the time when you unsheathe your sword and slay the evilness!

“The Sword Grabber will not be an easy job. Or rather, it will be a dirty, exhausting job that yields few benefits for you! Once you choose to become the new leader of the Patriots Partnership, you will be shouldering the sins committed by Zhou Hengdao, me, and the rest of them! Starting from the very beginning, you will be destined to be misunderstood by everybody. You will be cursed by the family of the victims in the Federal Square. Many people will think that you have betrayed Li Yao. Even Li Yao will not understand you—”

“Wait!” Ding Lingdang rudely interrupted him. Baring her white teeth, she sneered, “Old fart, I have noticed that you have been trying to stir discord between Li Yao and me. What do you want? You feel bad after being crushed by him, so you are trying to raise a family conflict between us in order to make you feel better? Shame on you!

“Let me tell you something. Even if I do take over the ‘hatred sword’ as you said, it doesn’t matter what other people think of me, but Li Yao will certainly understand me!

“Maybe Li Yao and I have a slight disagreement in our beliefs. Maybe we are not always on the same wavelength. But even if he does not agree with the decisions I make, he will still understand me and support me!

“It’s like one month ago. Even though I did not completely agree with his beliefs, I still understood him, trusted him, and supported him without reserve!”

Lu Zui was dazed for a moment. For the first time, there was a bit of confusion on his face.

“Therefore…” Ding Lingdang sniffed. “Even if you are almost two hundred years older than me, and you have advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage, there are certainly things that guys like you will never understand.”

Lu Zui took the criticism without complaint, smiling. “It appears that I have underestimated you two. So to speak, you have agreed to my offer?”

“Says who?” Ding Lingdang frowned. “I’m still confused about one thing. Why me? I know myself very well. Awesome as I am, I’m just a Core Formation Stage Cultivator. Even in terms of appeal and the ability to rally people, there are many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the federation that are better than me, aren’t there?”

“Yes. It’s true that there are many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators that are more suitable than you,” Lu Zui said calmly. “In fact, it took me only five seconds to come up with seven Nascent Soul Stage candidates who are more suitable to be the new leader of the Patriots Partnership than you.”

“…” Ding Lingdang.

With a bitter smile, Lu Zui said, “The real problem is that all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators are powerful, experienced, and value their reputation. How can they degrade themselves by working with the stinky Patriots Partnership as the grueling, unbeneficial Sword Grabber? Won’t they be sullying their name?

“Only the young, hot-blooded people who don’t care about the opinions of the outside world might be bewildered by me, however unlikely. Isn’t that so?”

Chapter 1171 - A Hundred-Year Rivalry!

Without caring about Ding Lingdang’s angry eyes, Lu Zui simply went on. “Since it’s impossible for me to convince a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, I can only turn to the Core Formation Stage Cultivators, of whom you are the best candidate.

“Maybe you still have a lot of shortcomings at this moment. You are still too young and too rash. But it doesn’t matter. What I am looking forward to is what you will be like in decades to come!”

Ding Lingdang could not help but scratch her face and ask in confusion, “In decades to come?”

“Yes.”

Strange brilliance beamed out of Lu Zui’s eyes. He was like a smart chess player who had finally figured out the plan of the other player of the game who was smarter than him. He smiled. “Fellow Cultivator Ding, did you know? A few months ago, when I learned that Jin Tuyi was prepared to surrender for the first time, I was greatly surprised and didn’t understand what he was up to at all!

“Would the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons—a great man who concealed himself for decades for the Red Tide Plan and played Elder Nether Spring like a fiddle—give up so easily?

“I’d been considering his goal and his methods. Later, I generally grasped his goal, but as for the specific methods and details, they were like a giant crocodile lurking in a swamp. I could see a scale and a paw of it, but I could not see the whole picture!

“But today, after receiving Fellow Cultivator Zhou Hengdao’s letter, I burnt my life and soul and made a breakthrough by brute force, maximizing my deduction ability during that moment. Finally, I envisioned the future in Jin Tuyi’s dream!

“Hahahaha. As expected of Jin Tuyi, the greatest master of strategies in the past thousand years in the Blood Demon Sector!

“Jin Tuyi and I never had the opportunity to have a head-on clash while we were both in our peak years because of all kinds of factors. It’s truly a shame.

“However, it’s still not too late for us to have a clash in a different way!

“Mark my words, Fellow Cultivator Ding. In the decades of integration to come, all kinds of schemers and lunatics will be born in the demon race, but they will not be the scariest things. Even if somebody else is the Sword Grabber, they can still be executed!

“However, in a few decades, the most dreadful enchantress might be born in the demon race, one who has the chance to reshape the federation into a different appearance! You will be the only Sword Grabber who is capable enough of dealing with her!

“This particular enchantress is Jin Xinyue—Jin Tuyi’s daughter and the Dark Lady of Nine Heavens who rose to fame in the past few months, being worshipped by the folk of the Blood Demon Sector as salvation!"

"Jin Xinyue?" Confused, Ding Lingdang asked back, "Isn't she Li Yao's disciple? I'm told that she's the one who revealed the Red Tide Plan first. She also offered a lot of help when the Eye of Blood Demon was destroyed. She even helped Li Yao talk to her father, Jin Tuyi.

"So to speak, she has saved the lives of countless citizens of the capital city indirectly. She has done no wrong to the Star Glory Federation. She is a great contributor to the Blood Demon Sector's surrender, too.

"Hehe. Although I hate demons, I am not a rabid dog who bites anyone randomly. When you showed me the pictures where Li Yao and Jin Tuyi were together, you meant to infuriate me with jealousy, didn't you? I wasn't fooled at that time, and now you are playing the move again?"

"Then and now are different," Lu Zui replied with a bitter smile. "I hadn't figured out the logic at that time, and I thought that Jin Xinyue was just a girl whom Jin Tuyi had sent out to bewilder Li Yao. Now that I look at it, I took Jin Tuyi too lightly.

"Jin Tuyi's appetite is enough to swallow the sky. What he means to bewilder is not just a Li Yao but the entire federation!

"Yes. Jin Xinyue was the first one to reveal the Red Tide Plan. She helped Li Yao talk to the Blade of Chaos and her father. The intelligence that she provided helped Li Yao sneak into and destroy the Eye of Blood Demon!

"In terms of those actions, Jin Xinyue has indeed saves the lives of countless federal citizens, and she was a key person in facilitating the Blood Demon Sector’s surrender. It is not exaggerating to call her a great contributor for the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

“She was not involved in the wars to invade the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Her background is clean. Also, she has taken excessive Divine Blood of Chaos and transformed into a human being, which makes her walking proof of the ‘same-origin theory’.

“For the general citizens, they will not be very hostile to her. After she shows up as the ‘envoy of peace’, she will be embraced by the public readily and thereby step into the world of politics in the federation.

“Moreover, she is also Li Yao’s true disciple!

“Although I hate to admit it, it is true that Li Yao today is like the sun at noon. He boasts tremendous influence in the federation. He has enormous connections and interests in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector. He can be even considered the bridge for the integration of the three Sectors!

“Right now, the name ‘Li Yao’ alone represents unbelievable political, economical, and martial resources. In the next hundred years, such resources will definitely grow and expanded into a gargantuan creature that spans across the sea of stars!

“The problem is that Li Yao is not someone interested in managing the resources.

“Over the past few months, I’ve often reflected on Li Yao. The more I think about it, the weirder I feel. He is not indifferent to fame and fortune, at least not in the traditional sense. It’s like… he is seeking something of a much higher level. The resources that normal Cultivators regard as treasures are nothing but children’s toys in his eyes!

“I don’t know why I have such a feeling, but it is unimportant! What matters is that, if Li Yao is not running the resources in person, somebody next to him will definitely stand up and manage the resources on his behalf as his representative!

“In your opinion, who is qualified and capable enough of being the representative for Li Yao? Yes, Jin Xinyue. She is the only candidate!

“Since she is Jin Tuyi’s daughter, and now she has been promoted to Dark Lady of the Nine Heavens, she is definitely a key person in Jin Tuyi’s plan. I will not underestimate her abilities.

“Imagine it. In several decades, after her personal operation, the resources that the name ‘Li Yao’ represents will be multiplied by dozens of times. How magnificent will she be by then?

“At that time, who will be there to check Jin Xinyue?”

Ding Lingdang’s eyes froze. Her voice was both cold and tough, like the stick in a snowy world. “I finally understand why you chose me as the Sword Grabber now. It is not for any of the reasons you mentioned.

“You have been belittling Li Yao, but you are still scared of his strength after all, aren’t you?

“What you want to choose is not me but ‘Li Yao’s wife’. In your deduction, in a few decades, in the new federation, only Li Yao’s wife will be able to rival Li Yao’s true disciple and ensure the human beings’ position in the alliance! As for who Li Yao’s wife is, it doesn’t matter at all, does it?”

Lu Zui should have caught the sarcasm in Ding Lingdang’s words and sensed her fury from her eyes, but he was doing such an exhausting thing that he overlooked Ding Lingdang’s critical reaction.

He juxtaposed his middle finger and his index finger, sticking them to his forehead so hard as if he were stabbing them into his head.

Spiritual energy flowed between his temples. His head shook nonstop. His eyeballs collapsed, and the brilliance in his eyes gradually disappeared. He was dimmer and dimmer like coal that had burnt out.

It was like there was a big, highly-attractive swirl inside his brain that was swallowing his soul, his vigor, and his memories!

It took him ten seconds, but he seemed to be suffering in hell for ten years. When his fingers left his forehead, a spiritual seed the size of the core of a fruit was floating on his fingertip!

A spiritual seed!

The crystallization of the infinite experiences, memories, and determination of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, which was an ultimate treasure of training that was mostly given to their blood descendants and their most excellent true disciples!

The color rays emitted from Lu Zui’s spiritual seed even illuminated the surveillance room next door.

All the Secret Sword Agents in the room could not help but cry in shock.

It was a spiritual seed condensed by a high-level Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. For Lu Zui, it was perhaps the last one that he could condense before his death. The essence of his lifelong training must have been concentrated inside!

For any admin-type Cultivator, it would be a priceless treasure!

Even for Cultivators of other types, it could still enlighten them and help them develop their brain!

Even Guo Chunfeng shuddered when the glimmer of the spiritual shield reached his face and swallowed hard.

Staring at the spiritual seed, Ding Lingdang’s eyes were suddenly resolute again. She seemed to have made up her mind.

After condensing the super spiritual seed with tremendous soul power and physical energy, Lu Zui was even drier than before. He was nothing more than a walking skeleton now. His intimidating aura was gone, but he was more excited than ever. “Fellow Cultivator Ding, this is a spiritual shield that I specially prepared for you. My two hundred years of life experience have been stored inside. Although it’s impossible to turn you from a battle-type Cultivator into an admin-type one, it will make up for your disadvantage as much as possible!

“Come on. Swallow the spiritual seed and be my successor, the new leader of the Patriots Partnership, and the Sword Grabber of the Star Glory Federation!”

His low and hoarse voice was mixed with irresistible charisma. Dragging the heavy chains, he floated into the air and delivered the spiritual seed to Ding Lingdang from above.

Ding Lingdang extended her right hand, allowing the spiritual seed to rotate slowly in her palm.

The rays from the spiritual seed turned into weird colors in her eyes.

“Hahahaha. Jin Tuyi!” Lu Zui could not help but burst into wild laughter. “You think that you’ve taken everything into consideration, and you can manipulate the future a hundred years from now!

“It has never occurred to you that I can come up with a solution in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, has it?

“Do you think that you will be taking all the advantages after your daughter becomes Li Yao’s true disciple? I can also make Li Yao’s wife the Sword Grabber, who will compete with your daughter when the time comes!

“You want to steal the federation a century later? Not so easy. Not so—”

Lu Zui’s crazy laughter came to an abrupt end, replaced by the most appalled gasp resembling that of a hen whose neck was suddenly cut open.

All the Secret Sword Agents in the room next door jumped so high that they nearly crashed into the ceiling.

“Ahhhhh!”

Everybody pulled their hair and shrieked at the top of their voice. They eyed Ding Lingdang as if she were the craziest lunatic!

They found it hard to believe their eyes when the picture was replayed three times.

Right when Lu Zui was laughing in satisfaction, thinking that everything in his control, Ding Lingdang crushed his spiritual seed directly.

Chapter 1172 - I am Ding Lingdang!

Dozens of streaks of colorful brilliance, like dozens of burning mice, fled in a hurry from Ding Lingdang’s fingers and returned to Lu Zui’s head after crashing in midair for a while. It took a long time before they were condensed again, but their aura was significantly weaker than before. Their light was dim, and they gave the feeling that they were scared.

The spiritual seed was the crystallization of a Cultivator’s thoughts, will, and belief. It did not carry a real entity. Ding Lingdang’s attack was not based on spiritual energy, either. Naturally, the spiritual seed was not obliterated but simply broken apart and stripped of all its charm.

Ding Lingdang demonstrated her attitude in such a way.

Her eyes were brighter and brighter. Her aura was more and more magnificent, which seemed to be condensing into a real entity. A tyrannosaur was slowly materializing behind her. Although she was merely at the peak of the Core Formation Stage, she was no longer hesitating and backing off in the confrontation with a Cultivator in the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage!

The moment she crushed Lu Zui’s spiritual seed, Ding Lingdang also crashed into a brand-new world that she had not seen before!

Lu Zui was shaking in fury. He bellowed, “Fellow Cultivator Ding, you turned me down? You’ve turned me down? Don’t you understand how many benefits the spiritual seed of a high-level Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator can bring you?”

“I do. However, I don’t care about them!” Ding Lingdang snorted. “Is there anything else you want to say? If not, I’m leaving now. You can give your precious spiritual seed to whoever you want.”

Without any hesitation, she walked to the door of the room in only two steps.

“Wait!” Lu Zui was greatly shocked. He hurried to call her, “Fellow Cultivator Ding, my proposal will do us both good. It is a great safety measure for the future of the federation, too. Why do you not accept it?”

Ding Lingdang was about to open the door when she heard those words. She turned around and gazed at Lu Zui for a long time with her eyes that looked like two swirls of magma. In the end, she opened her mouth. “I admit that some of your words did make sense and moved me, which enlightened me to consider the hatred issue from a new perspective. There was a moment when I almost decided to accept your spiritual seed.

“However, there are two things that I don’t like. At all.”

She narrowed her eyes and pointed her finger at Lu Zui. “Firstly, I don’t like the feeling of being someone else’s chess piece, much less the chess piece of such a shameless, sordid, inhumane old b*stard like you!

“What were you thinking? Do you think that if you pretend that you’ve changed today, everybody will forget the tens of thousands of innocent souls who were killed in your scheme, and you can simply walk on like a good guy?

“Damn you!

“In any case, I will not associate with scumbags like you, and I will not be your successor or your chess piece!

“However, compared to the whole being chosen by you to be your chess pieces thing, the second thing pisses me off even more.

“As it turns out, you selected me as your chess piece not because I, Ding Lingdang, am suitable, full of potential, or incredible, but only because I am likely to be Li Yao’s wife?

“So, you are indicating that if Li Yao’s wife is not me but some other girl, then I would not even be qualified to be a chess piece and to get my hands on the hatred sword.”

Lu Zui was dumbfounded. He seemed to be caught unprepared by what troubled Ding Lingdang. After a long daze, he replied drily, “Fellow Cultivator Ding—”

“Cut the cr*p. I will not be the leader of your Patriots Partnership, and I will not be the successor of a scumbag like you. Just forget it!” Ding Lingdang declared, one word after another. Then, with a confident smile, she suddenly changed the topic. “However, the Sword Grabber is indeed an interesting theory. I’ll definitely think about it.”

Lu Zui was dazed again. “What do you mean?”

“Patriot is a good word, but the word has been ruined by the likes of you! How many blatant and horrific crimes has the Patriots Partnership that you founded committed? I feel like throwing up when I smell its stink! So, there is no way that I will inherit your bullsh*t organization!”

Ding Lingdang opened her hands and groped carefully in the air, as if there was really an invisible, invincible longsword in her hands. “Even if I am to be the Sword Grabber, I will not be picking up your wretched sword, which has been stained with blood! I will unite everybody who shares the same belief as mine with my hands and forge a hatred sword of our own. We will establish a real association of patriots! Let me see. I’ll just call it ‘Patriots Front’!

“You the scumbags have sullied the lovely name ‘patriot’, but we will make all the citizens of the federation remember what ‘patriot’ really means!

“You asked me hundreds of questions just now. This is my answer.

“Yes, I will be the Sword Grabber, and I will establish the Patriots Front. If needed, I will compete with Jin Xinyue, but I will not be doing it as Lu Zui’s successor or Li Yao’s wife! I am just myself. I am Ding Lingdang. I have my own path, and I will wield the hatred sword in my own way!”

Both Lu Zui and the Cultivators next door, including Guo Chunfeng, were dumbfounded by her words. They were even more astonished than when they saw Ding Lingdang crushing the spiritual seed a moment ago.

After almost half a minute of silence, Lu Zui stammered, “Then… what about the members of the Patriots Partnership who will not be sentenced to death?”

“After they are punished by law and have paid for their wrongdoing, if they are willing to join the brand new ‘Patriots Front’, we will treat them equally and welcome them happily.”

Ding Lingdang opened her hands and said, “If they are not willing to, whatever. They can go wherever they want. Do you really think that the planet will stop moving if we don’t have them?”

“What about the immense resources under Li Yao’s control?” Lu Zui was so anxious that he was almost mad. “Don’t be so arrogant. The enchantress Jin Xinyue is definitely malicious. If you don’t hold on to Li Yao’s resources, she is definitely going to steal all of them!”

“I know that you are up to no good. You are still trying to foment trouble between Li Yao and me at this moment.” Ding Lingdang sneered and casually replied, “I’ll give you the same answer. I don’t care! Li Yao and I are not married yet. All his items are his prenuptial property. He can give them to whoever he wants. Does it have anything to do with me?”

Lu Zui was completely overwhelmed. He jumped to his feet with disappointment all over his face. He yanked on the chains so hard that they were clattering.

“You—you—you are truly an idiotic woman! Without my heritage, without Li Yao’s resources, what are you? Nothing! You are just a fighter with more brawn than brains! How do you expect to compete with Jin Xinyue? Even her hair is smarter than you! Before you know it, you will be tricked into the hell!”

“Hiss—”

In the surveillance room next door, everybody gasped.

That was not an appropriate way of suicide. Talking to ‘Crimson Queen’ Ding Lingdang like that?

If the woman was really pissed off, not just a high-level Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, even the deities in the heavens would have to run away from her quickly!

Crack! Crack, crack! Crack, crack, crack, Crack!

The poor glass between the rooms, because of Ding Lingdang's shockingly exploding aura, had yet another hundred cracks. It was barely possible to see what was happening in the other room now.

For a moment, Ding Lingdang's eyes turned deep red, more scorching than magma. She seemed to be holding a ten-thousand-ton ship in each hand.

Even if she burst into fury and tore the entire White Silver Fortress to the ground, nobody would be surprised.

However, she managed to control her emotions in the end. Taking a long breath, she looked at Lu Zui in disdain. "Save your breath, old fart. Whatever you say, your era has passed. It is our era that is coming next!

"We will guard the future of the federation well. You can get lost and do whatever you want now!"

Ding Lingdang pushed open the gate of the prison cell and walked out with her head held high.

Each step carried her three meters forward, but she kept her arms in front of chest stably, as if an unparalleled longsword was placed in her arms.

Just like that, she walked out of the White Silver Fortress one step after another. In the warm sunlight, she walked to the future.

She never looked back, not even once.

…

Five minutes later, in the prison cell, Lu Zui sat cross-legged in a corner wearily. His face was frozen in fury and bafflement, as if he were wearing a tawdry mask. The twisted wrinkles did not relax for a long time.

Standing right in front of his former boss and looking at his miserable appearance, Guo Chunfeng had mixed feelings. He sighed. “People say that a woman’s heart is as unpredictable as a needle at the bottom of an ocean. Today, I’ve seen it with my own eyes. She was almost convinced by you in the beginning. You really should’ve kept the few redundant words at the end to yourself.”

Lu Zui was frozen for more than one minute before his eyeballs started moving again. He pushed the spiritual seed that was still rotating above his skull to Guo Chunfeng softly. “Ah Feng, here are you.”

“What?” Guo Chunfeng was amused. “I admit that I’m quite tempted to swallow your spiritual seed, old boss, but you decided to throw it to me after you failed to offer it to a young girl in her twenties? I have my pride, too!”

“You’re wrong!” Lu Zui wiped his face softly. As if a magic trick, all the devastation, desperation, insanity, and fury on his face was gone, replaced by a gloating smile that indicated that his plan had worked out.

He was like an old fox that had just stolen a bunch of big, sweet, purple grapes.

“Is she gone now?”

Lu Zui craned his neck and looked around. After confirming that Ding Lingdang had left, he said to Guo Chunfeng with a smile, “What do you mean by ‘throwing it to you’? This spiritual seed was condensed for you in the first place! Don’t think that I’m fooling you. You will know it after you swallow the spiritual seed. Inside the spiritual seed are the most critical points about the jobs in the Secret Sword Bureau, the Cultivation techniques that will be beneficial for your training, and all the secrets of the Patriots Partnership that I promised. Moreover, there are some reminders for you based on my life experience, in which your names are clearly written. What does the spiritual seed have to do with her?”

Chapter 1173 - Lu Zui’s Successor

Guo Chunfeng was dumbfounded. His mouth slowly opened, his every tooth emitting unbelievable brilliance. The brilliance gathered and turned into a simple question. “Provocation?”

“Yes,” Lu Zui admitted with a smile. “To deal with a woman who is known by the demons as ‘Blazing Tyrannosaur’, is there a more effective approach than provocation?”

Guo Chunfeng shut his mouth hard. Narrowing his eyes, he said coldly, “I’ll tell her. She is my friend. I won’t let you fool her like that.”

“It doesn’t matter.”

Lu Zui seemed to have been drained after bewildering Ding Lingdang. Like a torch that had been burnt out, his back was further hunched, and the black spots slowly covered his entire body, turning into black gas and flowing toward his head.

The last bit of brilliance inside his eyes had entirely disappeared. His pupils were completely melted inside his eyeballs. Guo Chunfeng could not even tell if he could still see anything. However, he vaguely felt that his former boss had been granted with a hollow and yet deep sight that allowed him to see through one’s heart directly.

Lu Zui’s body that was about the collapse could not support his big head anymore. He crawled forward, holding the wall, and anchored himself in a corner. His lips curled up, and he said with a smile, “After the failure, I have realized that for a competition that will last a hundred years, all schemes will have loopholes, and they are most likely to fail. In such a chess game, the real effective methods are the open ones.

“I was not scared that you would hear the conversation between Ding Lingdang and me, and I am not scared that Ding Lingdang will hear the conversation between you and me now. Provocation is an open approach. For those who are provoked, even if they can free themselves for now, they will still be mired in it in the end because the fury, discontent, and ambitions that are invoked have always been lying in their heart. Such feelings will not rest easily once they are awakened!

“Fury and hatred are the most enormous forces and can both be forged into unstoppable weapons. Just now, I saw infinite fury inside Ding Lingdang’s eyes. It is more useful than giving her a spiritual seed that is not fit her. Much more useful!”

“You are too… sordid.” Guo Chunfeng could not help but shudder. “As it turns out, you didn’t choose Ding Lingdang because she is Li Yao’s woman. You chose her as the Sword Grabber for her own potential and capabilities!”

“You’re wrong again!”

Black stripes were crawling on Lu Zui’s face like ivy, with tiny spots of light blinking in them, as if his brain was burning in the most glorious way.

His voice was so deep that it was barely audible. Guo Chunfeng had to bend his body and listen carefully in order to work out what he was saying. “Ding Lingdang is not the Sword Grabber that I have chosen. She was chosen by Iron

Commander Zhou Hengdao. I merely enlightened her a little bit on behalf of the deceased Fellow Cultivator Zhou.

“Only a simple-minded warrior like Zhou Hengdao would pick a successor such as Ding Lingdang, right? How could I appreciate such a female gorilla who jumps up and down the moment she is pissed off?

“As for the most appropriate successor in my heart… Do you need to ask? I told you on Hidden Star. It is you, Ah Feng!”

Guo Chunfeng’s body stiffened, and his facial expressions suddenly turned weird.

Bubbling sounds were echoing inside Lu Zui’s throat, as if some of his veins and nerves, if not all of them, had been burnt, broken, and shattered and were flowing up to his mouth in his blood.

Guo Chunfeng tried his best to deduce what he was saying from the meaningless syllables. “Who says that there can only be one Sword Grabber? If the Patriots Partnership in the past had two leaders, the Patriots Front in the future can have two, too!

“The Patriots Partnership founded by me is destined to be destroyed, without the slightest remnants left. It has been decided since the moment when I attacked my own compatriots against all laws and moral standards. Nothing can stop its destruction!

“However, I do hope that the spirit of the organization is passed on.

“It is exactly because the spirit needs to be passed on that the newborn ‘Patriots Front’ should be entirely separated from the old Patriots Partnership on the surface. They should not be connected whatsoever. The Patriots Front must be open, frank, pure, and able to walk in the brightest sunlight. Nobody will be able to find any secrets about it. That is the only way that it can march into battle in the future without hindrance!

“That was why I talked to Ding Lingdang just now. As for the effect, you’ve seen it with your own eyes. I believe that her Patriots Front will certainly be something in the future, won’t it?

“However—”

The life of Lu Zui, perhaps the greatest villain alive, was coming to an end. Centered at his eyes, the last brightness on his face was fading away quickly, gradually turning him into a vivid statue.

There was a long pause after saying ‘however’ before a feeble voice came from the depths of the ‘statue’. “Ding Lingdang alone might not be enough. Ah Feng, since you love the federation, the land, and all the patriots living here, just fulfil your responsibility as a federal citizen and be the other Sword Grabber. Supervise the demons and guard the federation in your own way!”

Guo Chunfeng could not have been more hesitant.

He had clenched Lu Zui’s spiritual seeds in his hands in the beginning, but after hearing Lu Zui’s words, he could not help but loosen his hands. After a few seconds of reluctance, he gritted his teeth and pushed the spiritual seed back.

“I… refuse!”

With a hoarse voice, Guo Chunfeng said miserably, “Director, there’s something you don’t know. I cannot be the

Sword Grabber and supervise the demons! It will be the most hilarious joke! Please choose another Sword Grabber. I’ll help you forward your spiritual seed to them!”

“Hehe…”

Deep laughter or a cry burst out of Lu Zui’s chest, which was nothing more than a stone now. His eyes, drowned in the swamp of death, shot out sharp, insightful brilliance for the last time. He picked up his spiritual seed with his withered hands that were burning in black flames and pushed it into Guo Chunfeng’s arms again.

Lu Zui’s eyes were gradually softened. He stared at his most excellent subordinate whom he had mentored for decades in the same way a strict father looked at his most distinguished child.

A mysterious smile popped up on his face as he said in the weakest voice, “It’s alright. Take it. Maybe… I already know.”

After the last word was uttered, no air was breathed in again. Lu Zui’s eyes sank into the immeasurable swamp once more.

But this time, they did not float again.

With the mysterious smile lingering on his lips, Lu Zui’s head slowly tilted to one side.

Different from Zhou Hengdao, who refused to close his eyes after he perished, Lu Zui’s eyes were shut very quickly, as if he could not wait to join his wife in the other world. However, his arms were crossed and placed in front of his chest, and he was crouching like a child who had misbehaved. Perhaps he was worried that his wife would criticize him or even reject him for what he had done in the human world.

Guo Chunfeng was left alone, dumbfounded, appalled, frightened, and anxious while holding his body, which was gradually cooling down and collapsing into ashes.

Ten thousand thunderous roars were breaking out in his head at the same time.

He knows? He knows! What does he know exactly? When did he find out?

In any case, Guo Chunfeng would not be able to find the answers to the questions, and they would haunt him for the rest of his life.

Lu Zui—the former director of the Secret Sword Bureau, the founder as well as the first and the last leader of the Patriots Partnership, the planner of the explosions in the Federal Square and the assassination of Speaker Jiang Hailiu, a high-level Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, and a questionable patriot—finally burnt up his life and soul and came to the end of his life!

Outside the White Silver Fortress, the setting sun was making the last struggles on the ridge of the mountain.

Perhaps, like Ding Lingdang said, Lu Zui’s death marked the ending of an old era.

The era of the new federation that belonged to the next generation of Cultivators and patriots was soon to arrive!

…

Three days later, at the periphery of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, a small starship was flying toward the Flora Satellite IX.

The Flora Satellite IX was the ninth satellite, and the smallest one, of the Flora God Planet, the fifth planet in the galaxy of the Heaven’s Origin Planet.

There was no atmosphere or water, which were vital for the survival of ordinary people, on the satellite. Barely any resources could be found, so it did not boast enough value to be developed.

Also, covered by the magnificent ring of the Flora God Planet, it was only known by few people.

Therefore, it was a quiet, unpopulated place. Even Cultivators who did training in space would hardly come here.

The starship that was no larger than a yacht slowly landed on the surface of Flora Satellite IX. On the head of the starship, a huge word ‘Li’ was glittering.

In fact, the small starship from the Flying Star Sector was a super extravagant space yacht with a high performance. It was designed for the magnates of the Flying Star Sector to enjoy themselves during their holiday.

Hearing that Li Yao had returned to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, his Glorious Sunlight Group in the Flying Star Sector hurried to send a yacht of the highest level over for his training in space.

Chi…

The moment the starship landed, it automatically triggered a spiritual shield covering one square kilometer. A man-made gravity field was also established, and oxygen was pouring in.

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang flew out of the starship wearing super-thin suits.

Both of them were seasoned Cultivators now. Even without oxygen and gravity, they could survive in the vacuum of space through ‘internal breathing’ alone.

Three days earlier, Lu Zui had passed away after burning up his life, but the spiritual seed that he offered to Guo Chunfeng stored tremendous secrets of the Patriots Partnership, including letters that had been sealed with his soul stamp.

With the help of the secret information and the letters, the last remaining force of the Patriots Partnership had finally been destroyed. The whole thing had come to a perfect conclusion.

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang were finally able to catch their breath in their busy lives and enjoy the world where there was only the two of them.

Chapter 1174 - Do It Once!

Ding Lingdang jumped onto the Flora Satellite IX carefully.

The surface of the Flora Satellite IX was full of tiny, smooth, pink dust, which made it look like a dreamy beach.

Ding Lingdang danced agilely on her tiptoes, leaving footprints that looked like peach blossoms on the ‘beach’.

However, the beach was not clear not enough for Li Yao to bring her to this place specifically.

Ding Lingdang pouted and looked at Li Yao in confusion.

Li Yao smiled and lay down on the pink dust on the Flora Satellite IX. With his hands as the pillow, he adjusted himself into a more comfortable position and said, “Look over there.”

Ding Lingdang looked where he was pointing at and found it difficult to breathe.

In the starry sky northeast was the Flora God Planet, the mother planet of the Flora Satellite IX.

The Flora God Planet was the biggest planet in the Heaven’s Origin Galaxy in the first place. It was dozens of times larger than the Heaven’s Origin Planet and much closer to the Flora Satellite IX.

When they looked at it from this particular perspective, the Flora God Planet swallowed half of the sky and seemed as if it would fall down at any moment.

The Flora God Planet was full of overlapping craters that could be hundreds of thousands of kilometers in diameter. They were as beautiful as blossoming flowers. It was also how the Flora God Planet had gotten its name.

In the planet’s orbit, there was the most magnificent ring of the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

The glittering ring seemed to be made of billions of silver feathers whose radiance spread millions of kilometers away in ripples, almost brushing the tip of Ding Lingdang’s nose.

Despite her addiction to weapons, Ding Lingdang was still deeply awed by the beautiful view of the vast and splendid universe.

Li Yao, however, narrowed his eyes and looked at the sun, which was hiding behind the Flora God Planet far, far away. He then lowered his head and checked the portable crystal processor on his wrist, mumbling, “Ten seconds to go. Keep your eyes open and watch closely. Three, two one…”

The most incredible scene took place!

When the first ray of sunlight illuminated the ring of the Flora God Planet on the Flora Satellite IX’s side, the previous silver, bordering on transparent, ring was suddenly glowing in thousands of colors. All the colors were the richest, most brilliant, and most vigorous!

It was like ten thousand running rivers of different colors suddenly crashed into each other and congregated into the most magnificent river of all colors, which was rushing unstoppably toward their heads!

Yes, it was not an illusion. The colors were really charging at the two of them!

There was no telling what minerals exactly were stored inside the ring of the Flora God Planet. After reflection, the sunlight became a colorful ocean of light after it reached the Flora Satellite IX.

The Flora Satellite IX, which had been pink in the beginning, was immediately enshrouded in lights, shadows, and clouds. It was truly a paradise.

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang, soaked in the ocean of light made of billions of colors, stared at each other in silence below the glorious sea of stars and the grand planet ring.

No female creature could withstand the shock of such brilliance.

Ding Lingdang’s eyes were more or less wet. She extended her hands clumsily, trying to snatch the unpredictable rays of light, mumbling, “It’s so beautiful. I didn’t know that there was such a beautiful place in the Heaven’s Origin Sector. It’s much more enjoyable than the world fragments! How did you find such a gorgeous place?”

“My foster father told me.”

Looking at the brilliance that was erupting the depths of the planet ring, Li Yao smiled. “A long, long time ago, he once locked himself in his room after he was drunk and took out a picture of a woman. He wept in great sorrow while he stared at the picture. I accidentally noticed him crying through the window. So, I asked him what was going on and who the woman was.

“Not only did he tell me nothing, he also beat me up brutally. As far as I can remember, he barely beat me.

“However, he regretted it after he beat me up. Although he didn’t tell me the woman’s identity, he told me about this place.

“He told me that the Flora Satellite IX was the most beautiful place in the entire Heaven’s Origin Sector every time this year and that if I met a woman that I loved, I should try to bring her to this place and joy the ocean of light made of millions of colors.”

“Your foster father…” Ding Lingdang was at a loss. “I often hear you talking about him. What kind of person was he exactly?”

“I don’t know.”

Li Yao’s eyes looked hazy. A self-contradictory combination of slovenly and handsome, lazy and persistent, popped up in his head. The red spot at the center of the guy’s forehead was so scorching that Li Yao could not help but move his eyes. He shook his head and said, “When I was little, I always considered him to be an old drunkard who never got a chance to realize his ambitions. But now… the more I think about him, the more immeasurable he appears to me! Maybe one day, after everything about the Imperium of True Human Beings is settled, I will set off and search for his story.”

“It will certainly be an interesting story.” Ding Lingdang held Li Yao’s hand. “If we can blow up the Imperium of True Human Beings, I will go with you.”

The two of them looked at each other in a smile and stopped talking. Narrowing their eyes, they enjoyed the brief ocean of light.

After less than twenty minutes, because of the angle and the orbits of the sun, the planet, and the satellite, the ocean of light slowly ebbed, and the ring of the Flora God Planet regained its silver color.

However, the brilliant ocean of light that was etched into their brains would never fade away.

“You—” Li Yao looked at Ding Lingdang but hesitated.

“You want to ask me about the Patriots Front, don’t you?” Ding Lingdang said straightforwardly. “It’s almost done now. I thought about establishing a party in the beginning, but after studying the regulations, I discovered that the rules and requirements to establish a party are too many. The timing is still not right. So, I registered a fund named ‘Patriots Front’ for now and threw all my savings from the past twenty years into it. It will just be participating in activities as a fund for the time being.”

“Then…” Li Yao scratched his head. “How do you plan to move further and recruit… the ‘new patriots’?”

“It’s simple!” Ding Lingdang said. “I plan on calling for a press conference in a few days. I will declare to everybody in the federation that I, Ding Lingdang, do not trust the demon race very much and that I have established an organization named ‘Patriots Front’ to supervise the integration between human beings and demons in case they have ill intentions. Anyone sensible who is suspicious about the demons is welcome to join me and build up the organization!”

Li Yao frowned. “So simple and straightforward?”

Ding Lingdang glanced at him. “It’s not like we only met today. Do you not know that I always like the simple and straightforward approaches?”

"Well… don't move your hands yet. Under such circumstances, isn't it a little bit too eye-catching for you to name your organization Patriots Front? People are definitely going to reproach you!"

Ding Lingdang snorted. "So what? Do I look like someone who cares about what other people say?"

"In fact," Li Yao said, "Brother Guo has told us the whole thing. You know that Lu Zui intentionally provoked you, so why bother?"

Ding Lingdang sneered. "Of course it is provocation. I felt that something was wrong on my way home. Lu Zui was an almighty Cultivator in the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage, and he had been working in the Secret Sword Bureau for two hundred years. That old fart should have been more than cunning, yet he stammered and was lost for words in front of me? It was simply impossible!

"However, no matter what he was thinking exactly, he wasn't wrong. The century of integration of human beings and demons will not be easy. Some Sword Grabbers are obliged to stay in the darkness as the last defense line!"

Li Yao sighed. "You don't believe that the integration of human and demons will go well?"

Ding Lingdang shook her head solemnly. "Wrong. I don't believe that human beings and demons 'can' be integrated."

Narrowing his eyes, he snatched Ding Lingdang's hand, which was moving on his body. "It appears that there is a minor disagreement between our beliefs, isn't there?"

"Exactly!" Ding Lingdang smiled aggressively. "Also, our beliefs are both very firm, and neither of us is likely to convince the other.”

Li Yao’s eyes were deeper and deeper. “Then, we are left with no choice but to have a competition of beliefs, right?”

Ding Lingdang licked her full, red lips and bared her sharp teeth. “A competition? Fellow Cultivator Li, I’ve waited for you alone for ten years. Are you shameless enough to say ‘a’ competition?

“Let me tell me. We’re either having no competition or doing ten!”

Li Yao’s pupils constricted violently. “Ten?”

“What? Is your belief not firm enough and you feel that you are incapable?”

“Says whom? My belief is as tough as iron and invincible. I am just worried that your belief is too naïve to have seen the ferocious beasts and the surging tides and will suffer a crushing defeat after only several rounds!”

“Hey, stop bragging about yourself. It’s not like I have never seen your belief before. Ferocious beast? Hahahaha. What a great joke! Let me tell you, even a real ferocious beast will be savaged and suppressed under my belief!”

“Excellent, Ding Lingdang. You have succeeded in infuriating me. Come, let’s see whose belief is going to suppress and whose belief is going to be suppressed until it is begging for mercy!”

Boom!

Flames of spiritual energy rushed out of their back like hurricanes at the same time and soared hundreds of meters high. In their excitement, all the flames were condensed into the shapes of the raging animals.

Dragons, lions, tigers, wolves—everything could be seen.

However, the animals formed by Li Yao’s spiritual energy were all male, while those condensed by Ding Lingdang’s were all female.

“Aooo!”

“Hoooo!”

“Hiss!”

The dragons tied each other up, the lions rolled together, and the tigers mauled each other. A pink mist was raised on the surface of the Flora Satellite IX because of the overwhelming spiritual energy. Li Yao and Ding Lingdang disappeared into the mist, too.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Deep inside the mist, dull noises as if a meteor shower had hit the satellite were erupting. The feeble earth of the Flora Satellite IX could not withstand the heavy bombardment every second. The rocks rose up high, and the dust turned into smoke. The smoke popped up into the sky in the form of a mushroom and did not disperse for a long time.

Centered at the spot of the ‘competition of beliefs’, a new crater more than one kilometer in diameter was slowly taking shape!

Chapter 1175 - Latest News

“We are about to broadcast the latest news on the peace negotiations between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector.

“After the full ceasefire in the Dark Desolate Domain between the federal army and the coalition army of demons, the special envoys of the two parties have finally settled the framework of the peace agreement after eleven rounds of negotiations.

“The content of the peace agreement is as follows. The Blood Demon Sector will admit the failure of the war, punish the war criminals, and compensate for the material and mental losses that the war has caused the Heaven’s Origin Sector. The scale of the coalition army of demons will be reduced by thirty percent in one year and to half its current size in three years. In the next ten years, it is forbidden from producing or researching on super heavy biochemical beasts more than a hundred meters long. The existing super heavy biochemical beasts must be installed with localization chips and control rune arrays to ensure their manipulability.

“The Nine Voids, the corresponding area of the Dark Desolate Domain in the Blood Demon Sector, will be classified as a special military area, which will be under the control of the federal army and the fleet of the Flying Star Sector.

“In the meantime, the Pantheon of Demons will open more than 150,000 key technologies, especially the ones in the field of biochemistry, to the Heaven’s Origin Sector. In return, the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector will introduce more than three thousand fields of crystals and spiritual energy to the Blood Demon Sector.

“The Peace Supervisors—consisting of the specialists, soldiers, and experts of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector—will be watching over the disarmament of the coalition army of demons and helping the experts of the demon who retire from the army find a job. In the decades to come, the Peace Supervisors will be responsible for handling the problems occurring during the integration of the three Sectors.

“In light that the Demon God Virus is still savaging the Blood Demon Sector and has swallowed most of the villages and towns in the south, in the humanitarian spirit that we were the same forty thousand years ago, a medical team of an enormous scale is ready to set off from the Heaven’s Origin Sector to the epidemic area to deal with the plague!

“Miss Jin Xinyue, the new Dark Lady of the Nine Heavens of the Blood Demon Sector, will arrive in the capital city soon and officially hand over the instrument of surrender, as well as the soil that is soaked with Jin Tuyi’s blood, to the federal government.

“According to the tradition of the Blood Demon Sector, it is a gesture of total submission!

“Five hundred and fifteen years after the Star Glory Federation was founded, the dawn of peace has illuminated the vast land for the first time. The war between the federation and the demon race has finally been put on hold now. We are now embraced by a new road that is leading to the sea of stars!”

…

“The official peace agreement hasn’t been signed by the two governments yet, but the communication in the general public is already on fire.

“It is told that the Skyfire from the Blood Demon Sector, the Glorious Sunlight Group from the Flying Star Sector, and the newly-rising Double Dragons Union of the Heaven’s Origin Sector have signed a trilateral cooperation agreement for the universal development to come.

“The Valley Rain Planet at the edge of the Dark Blue Space Zone of the Flying Star Sector is a resource planet that boasts tens of thousands of rarely-seen minerals. In the past, because of the harsh environment and the harassment of space pirates, it was not developed efficiently.

“Right now, the Glorious Sunlight Group has received the exploitation rights for the planet. The Glorious Sunlight Group, Skyfire, and the Double Dragons Union will develop the Valley Rain Planet together.

“The bottom-level demons in the Blood Demon Sector who have lost their homes because of the war and the virus outbreak will be the main force for the first phase of development along with the soldiers in the coalition army of demons who are about to be sacked.

“The development of the Valley Rain Planet will be a great experiment. The three parties will locate and settle the problems that occur during the development, thereby laying a solid foundation for the brand-new pattern in the universal exploration in the future!”

…

“Another piece of breaking news from space. Recently, the specialists of the federal observatory discovered that unusual, large-scale spiritual waves have been bursting out on the Flora Satellite IX for several days in a row. Electromagnetic radiation, invisible light, and the materials of the satellite itself have been spurting out like a volcanic eruption. It seems to have been scourged by a tremendous meteor shower for several days!

“Such a rarely-seen astronomical phenomenon has never been observed on the Flora Satellite IX or any other celestial bodies in this galaxy.

“According to the crystal cameras that have been projected to the orbit of the Flora Satellite IX, dozens of craters have been discovered on the surface of the Flora Satellite IX. The deepest of them is several hundred meters!

“Other than that, around some of the craters, more than ten actinoid canyons that are too deep to measure have been detected, too.

“After comparing to the observation of the Flora Satellite IX in the past, it has been determined that the canyons have recently been generated just like the craters.

“According to the specialists of the federal observatory, the phenomenon of a large-scale meteor shower striking a certain satellite consecutively for several days is a low-odds event even in the entire universe.

“The occurrence of such a rarely-seen phenomenon may have something to do with the integration of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector. It is a sign that the integration of the two Sectors have entered a new phase where not just the Heaven’s Origin Planet and the Blood Demon Planet but also all the other planets and satellites in the two galaxies will be involved. Eventually, a new Sector with dual galaxies that are deeply connected will be generated.

“A joint exploration team made of the specialists from the federal observatory and the Astronomy Department of Deep Sea University is now preparing to set off to the Flora Satellite IX soon. They will observe the craters and canyons at a close distance to determine the real cause of the event.”

…

The enormous light beam floating in the sky of the capital city was playing the latest news, but a deep, black limo passed through the light beam.

Blocked from the cockpit, in the fully-enclosed carriage, Jin Xinyue looked at Li Yao with a smile.

Although the news said that the newly-appointed Dark Lady of the Nine Heavens would not arrive in the Heaven’s Origin Sector until several days later, Jin Xinyue had in fact come early to the capital city, ready for the last round of negotiations with the leadership of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector.

Considering the subtle situation between the two Sectors, it was quite possible that some other extremists were lurking. If they went to assassinate Jin Xinyue at the critical moment, there might be bad influence. Therefore, the news was just a smoke screen.

Li Yao welcomed her as a special envoy of Speaker Jiang Hailiu. He was also responsible for her safety together with Guo Chunfeng.

Naturally, Li Yao was the best candidate for the mission. With him there, even an entire army might not be able to harm Jin Xinyue.

“Master, it’s been only several months. I didn’t expect that you would do so many shocking things in the Heaven’s Origin Sector again.”

Since the two of them were alone, Jin Xinyue was not putting up her front as the Dark Lady of the Nine Heavens anymore. She bowed to Li Yao respectfully. Observing him carefully for a while, she said earnestly, “However, you seem to have lost some weight, and you appear to be a bit lethargic. With all due respect… your face is yellow, and your flesh is emaciated, master.”

“Am I?” Li Yao touched his cheeks, which had become hollow, and said in a low voice, “It is perhaps because the competition of beliefs I had with someone else recently was too exhausting.”

“Who is this person? You have been worn out despite the firmness of your belief, the magnificence of your soul power, and the brilliance of your spiritual fire?”

Jin Xinyue was greatly shocked. She could not help but make a suggestion.

“Master, over the past year, you’ve been fighting in the Blood Demon Sector and the Blood Demon Sector. You’ve survived many life-threatening situations and had head-on clashes with too many top experts. Your body and your soul must have already been fatigued! Right now, everything has basically been settled. You should take a good rest and stabilize your new level. Even if you want to hold a competition of beliefs, why do you need to rush into anything? I think it will be better if you concede for now and challenge them later after you've recovered!"

"You are too young to understand this. The thing about the 'competition of beliefs' is that you must stride forward and suppress them destructively. How can you concede?"

Li Yao narrowed his eyes even though his eyelids were twitching. He seemed to have recalled some painful pictures that he would rather forget, but he gritted his teeth and declared resolutely, "As the saying goes, a Cultivator must not hesitate to fight! Will I still deserve to be called a Cultivator if I run in the face of a battle?"

Watching Li Yao's lackluster face, his ragged breathing, and his shaking legs, Jin Xinyue's could not help but feel that her eyes were wet.

She had learned the true meaning of 'Cultivator' from her master again!

"Forget it. Let's change a topic." Li Yao asked, "How is your father?"

According to the messages sent by Skyfire recently, Jin Tuyi's situation was rather bad. It seemed that his brain sclerosis had escalated far faster than expected. There was no telling how long the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons would last.

Thankfully, he had acted quickly, if not insanely, in the previous months to remove the dissidents. Now, he had seized all power and reached a deal of interests with most of the demon emperors. Skyfire was now one of the most influential forces in the Blood Demon Sector, too. Jin Xinyue was also the life-saving Dark Lady of the Nine Heavens in the heart of the bottom-level demons due to the resistance against the plague.

After the federal army and the fleet of the Flying Star Sector marched into the Nine Voids and established the special military area, it would be impossible for the Blood Demon Sector to attack the Heaven’s Origin Sector directly.

Even if some guys in the Blood Demon Sector were still set on war, they would be hard pressed to find any opportunity to stir trouble.

Jin Xinyue’s eyes suddenly dimmed. She shook her head and said, “Father has… lost his normal thinking ability and his memories. He cannot attend to himself now. We invited more than ten brain doctors to assess him. The result of their examination was that his wisdom was no different from a three-year-old’s, if not worse, and it would continue dropping in the future.”

Li Yao was dazed. “So fast?”

Something was not right. Jin Tuyi clearly said that he would persist to the day of trial so that the war would be properly concluded.

With his capability as a demon emperor, even if he could not stop the escalation of the brain sclerosis, it should not have been difficult for him to slow it.

How did he end up like this? Did he want to stand in court like a regard and bring insult to both himself and the Blood Demon Sector?

“Father’s situation got worse when he was reading some news one night,” Jin Xinyue said. “He was silent at first. Then he burst into such laughter that he fell off the chair and smacked his head. In the end, he became this.”

“News? What news?”

Li Yao sensed the smell of a scheme keenly.

Chapter 1176 - Era of the Great Universal Development!

Jin Xinyue handed over a mini crystal processor and said, “He was reading this.”

Li Yao took over the crystal processor and triggered the light beam, only to discover that it was an introduction to some cutting-edge medical technology.

“Recently, the Capital Medical College and the Mystic Ice Sect of the Flying Star Sector have sent out a joint team and successfully parsed tremendous files and training techniques about the Mystic Ice Force from the relics in a certain world fragment in the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

“The Mystic Ice Force is a technique to manipulate the spiritual energy of the ice class passed on from the Star Ocean Imperium. The Mystic Ice Sect had a lot of classics regarding the Mystic Ice Force in the first place. From the relics of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, they finally found the critical, missing piece of the art and cracked all the mysteries of the Mystic Ice Force. With the help of the specialists of the Capital Medical College, they have successfully developed a new, practical application of the Mystic Ice Force—Human Instant Freezing, which is also commonly known as Human Hibernation Technology!

“According to the specialists on the team, the technology allows the temperature of a human body to drop to around minus fifty degrees from normal temperature in only 0.01

seconds. Inside the special liquid, the metabolism and the cell activity will be reduced to the minimum. The normal functions of the human body are not damaged, and the level of a Cultivator will not be affected at all.

“For the hibernators, it’s like time has been frozen for them. Their cells age at such a slow speed that it can be ignored.

“After living years or even decades in hibernation, their cells will restore their original vitality soon after a brief recovery period when they are unfrozen!

“In today’s world, there are a lot of fields that the technology can be applied to.

“Other than the normal medical usages, most importantly, for the experts who are already old and perhaps can’t live another hundred years but are eager to fight against the Imperium of True Human Beings, sealing themselves with the Human Hibernation Technology until the Imperium of True Human Beings arrives is not actually not an unfeasible choice.”

Li Yao put down the crystal processor. Looking at the ever-changing view out of the window, he thought of Jin Tuyi’s unpredictable face, which seemed to indicate that everything was under his control. Pondering for a long time, he was amused.

Jin Tuyi, oh, Jin Tuyi. This is what you are thinking, right? You have found a possibility to compete with the experts of the Imperium of True Human Beings. So, you don’t want to die now, right?

Then, should I let things go your way?

Li Yao was deep in thought while he stared at the city skyline far away.

…

Ten days later, on Distant Expanse—known as the eternal flagship of the federal army—Jin Xinyue submitted the instrument of surrender and the box of soil that was soaked with her father's blood officially as the Dark Lady of the Nine Heavens on behalf of the entire Blood Demon Sector.

On the other side, the representative of the Star Glory Federation to accept the instrument of surrender and the bloody soil was not the Speaker but his 'special envoy' Li Yao.

It was partly because the Dark Lady of the Nine Heavens was not the supreme leader of the Blood Demon Sector but just the spokesperson of the twelve demon emperors. In terms of position, the Speaker of Parliament and the Chief of the General Staff of the federal army would be degrading themselves if they went in person.

It was also because the federal army did not really crush the coalition army of demons, and the Blood Demon Sector's surrender was a conditional one instead of an unconditional surrender after a huge defeat.

In fact, for the disobedient demon emperors of the Blood Demon Sector, they were not contented with those Cultivators who did not really defeat them in person.

Li Yao was different.

Li Yao had travelled through the Blood Demon Sector, snuck into the army, destroyed the Eye of Blood Demon, and killed countless demons and elite troops of the demons indirectly on his own!

In the Blood Demon Sector, where survival of the fittest was the highest law, all the demon emperors showed respect, if not awe, for a brutal person like Li Yao, even if he was an enemy.

Besides, by destroying the Eye of Blood Demon, he was certainly guilty of killing countless demons, which made him a great enemy of the Blood Demon Sector.

However, he also stopped the Spore Stratagem and helped more demons survive the catastrophe.

Otherwise, those demons would have been infected by the Demon God Virus and ended up as walking dead and uncontrollable mutants even if they were not killed in the destruction of the Eye of Blood Demon!

Right now, the plague was spreading on a large scale in the Blood Demon Sector. The tragedies caused by the Demon God Virus could be seen anywhere. Even the most stubborn demons, after seeing the gory scenes, had to admit that Li Yao had truly rescued countless demons and even the future of the Blood Demon Sector!

Therefore, in that regard, he was a great savior for the Blood Demon Sector.

With his appalling accomplishments, his contributions to the Blood Demon Sector, and his deep connections with the Flying Star Sector, which was now an important ally for the Heaven’s Origin Sector, it was definitely the most agreeable choice for all the three parties for Li Yao to accept the instrument of surrender.

Of course, it was perhaps also the compensation that the Speaker and most of the representatives made for wronging him in the past.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

When Li Yao took over the wooden box that contained the bloody soil, hundreds of crystal cameras were flashing at them nonstop. The epoch-making scene turned into pictures, videos, and text, spreading to every corner of the Star Glory Federation!

…

Almost at the same time as Li Yao took over the instrument of surrender from Jin Xinyue, thousands of kilometers away from the much-anticipated surrender ceremony, in the east district of the capital city, the first trial targeting the members of the Patriots Partnership had come to an end despite the lack of attention.

Twenty criminals in total were found guilty of treason, dereliction of duty, endangering public security, and other crimes—sentenced to imprisonment for thirty to fifty years.

In the federal law, thirty to fifty years was a heavy penalty only below death penalty and life imprisonment.

However, considering that the criminals tried were all experienced Cultivators whose longevity was far longer than ordinary people, such a penalty was not too harsh for them.

Besides, the judge had declared that, since the federation would enter the era of universal development soon and would require a lot of hands in the remote space zones, the criminals could either choose to idle by in the local prisons of the federation for decades or work with the federal government in the experimental projects. They could be sent to the far-flung, desolate space zones where they would atone for what they had done in the past. If they chose to do so, their imprisonment would be shortened, and they might be released in advance.

The twenty criminals in the first batch to be trialed were all carefully selected. They were all the members of the Patriots Partnership who had been fooled by Lu Zui and Zhou Hengdao. They had no idea that everything they had done was for the purpose of assassinating the Speaker, nor did they foresee such gruesome explosions in the Federal Square.

After learning the truth, they had almost collapsed the very next second and confessed everything they knew. They had even helped Guo Chunfeng’s special squads convince more members of the organization to surrender.

After one month of observation, it was determined that they truly regretted what they had done. Therefore, they were selected as the first echelon to be trialed.

The twenty criminals all chose to work with the federal government and go to the frontier of the universal development!

After the crime and penalty of the last person were announced, the twenty criminals who used to be celebrities in the circle of Cultivators were all greatly relieved. They seemed to be reborn and could not wait to dedicate themselves to the blood-boiling construction of the new era.

In the public gallery, their families heaved long sighs of relief, too. Many of them had tears in their eyes as they were happy to hear the rulings.

The thirty or so family members sitting on the left side of the public gallery, although in different clothing, were wearing the same round badge on their chest.

On the badge was a slightly weird pattern. There was a double-edged sword full of thorns at the center of the pattern. What was weird was that it did not have any grip, only the body.

A giant hand extended from the bottom of the pattern and grasped the sword hard.

Because there was not a grip, the edges of the sword and the thorns on its body pierced deep into the palm, making the giant hand bleed. The blood was flowing among the fingers and on the back of the hand.

On the back of the hand, in the middle of the blood, there was a big eye that was wide open, which was staring at everything with cold, yet sharp brilliance.

Below the badge were two small, cursive words—Patriots Front!

They sat in the public gallery for a long time until all the criminals were taken away by bailiffs. Then, they gathered outside of the court.

Ding Lingdang stepped out of the crowd. She was wearing a badge of the Patriots Front on her rising chest, too.

Compared to a month ago, there was an uncanny force added to her body now. It was not based on her fists but generated from the bottom of her heart, which made her calmer, firmer, and more unwavering.

Glancing around, Ding Lingdang said, “The trial of the Patriots Partnership will soon end, but the battle of the Patriots Front has only just begun!

“To be honest, like everybody here, I never thought that I would establish such an organization. I don’t have any experience in management, and my foresight is often not long enough. To this moment, I still haven’t figured out what incredible things the Patriots Front will be doing!

“However, I do believe in one point. The most incredible things must start from the most insignificant things.

“The war between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector is over now. In the future, the Grand Desolate Plateau will be developed again, and so will be the space zones of the Flying Star Sector and even the distant universe beyond the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector!

“Such places are now rough, desolate, and full of dangers.

“Without a doubt, the demons who are physically strong and are more adaptive to the environment will be sent to those places first.

“But the Patriots Front will not stand by and simply watch them. We must dedicate our own forces to those places, working and building with the demons!

“On one hand, we must keep an eye on them closely to see if they are sincerely cooperating with us.

“But on the other hand, and more importantly, we must prove that we can do the things that demons can, and we can survive where demons can! Not only can we survive, we will also develop those godforsaken wastelands into new paradises!

“Patriot is a good word. Although it has been stained now, it doesn’t matter. Fellow Cultivators, and fellow ‘patriots’, we have a hundred years to clean away the stains slowly!

“Let’s work together, everybody!”

Chapter 1177 - Double Swirl

The signing of the peace agreement between the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector marked both the end of the war and the arrival of a new era.

The delegation headed by Jin Xinyue, after signing the peace agreement on Distant Expanse, immediately shifted to Burning Prairie, the crystal warship from the Flying Star Sector, and began the discussion about the trilateral universal development of the Heaven's Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector.

In the sea of stars, a hundred years was nothing more than a snap of one's fingers. Faced with the threat of the Imperium of True Human Beings, they needed to seize every second!

However, such intricate, boring details were not what Li Yao was really into.

On the front desk of Burning Prairie, Li Yao, Wu Mayan, Xie Anan, and Luo Xingzi were saying farewell.

"Senior Luo Xingzi, I'm truly sorry for what has happened," Li Yao said, somewhat embarrassed. "I hope you are not disappointed in the federation."

In the scheme of the Patriots Partnership, the people from the Flying Star Sector were certainly the most unfortunate ones.

Honestly speaking, the Flying Star Sector was friendly enough for them. Not only did they bring the latest technology as well as tremendous warships, Cultivators, and even Grand Illusionary Soldiers, they were even prepared to fight side by side with the Cultivators of the Heaven's Origin Sector if the demon race invaded.

Li Yao knew full well that it was a huge cost for the Flying Star Sector, which had just quelled a ten-year riot of the Immortal Cultivators and was battered by war itself.

Although the Flying Star Sector was doing all this hoping to better resist the Imperium of True Human Beings later, their sincerity in the alliance with the Heaven's Origin Sector was beyond any doubt.

But as it turned out, after the Flying Star Sector sent the strongest warship and the best Cultivators to the Heaven's Origin Sector, the leaders on the federation's side, such as Lu Zui and Zhou Hengdao, were trying to seize Burning Prairie and sacrifice the elite soldiers of the Flying Star Sector to begin the war!

If Li Yao had not stopped it at the last moment, perhaps the people from the Flying Star Sector would have been killed by the savaging Demon God Virus, and Burning Prairie would have been nothing more than a piece of broken, rusted garbage now.

Li Yao considered the situation from the Flying Star Sector's point of view and thought, if he were in the same situation, he certainly would have burst into fury because somebody had stabbed him in the back, and he would have reevaluated the alliance with the Heaven's Origin Sector, if there was still an alliance to reevaluate at all.

Therefore, after the incident, he had been rather anxious, and he did not even know how he should face Wu Mayan and Xie Anan, both of whom were from the Flying Star Sector.

But as it turned out, the Flying Star Sector reacted much more calmly than he had expected. After learning everything, they had announced that they believed it was the personal action of the few criminals, not the stance of the federal government. The incident would not affect the cooperation and the alliance later.

Such a forgiving attitude was almost the most important premise for the collaboration of the three Sectors and the quick kick-off of the universal development.

Li Yao was very moved, if not slightly confused, by the Flying Star Sector’s magnanimity.

“Fellow Cultivator Li, you are overthinking. What’s there to be disappointed at?”

Luo Xingzi was amused. Under the setting sun, his face was illuminated with a layer of vague brilliance.

The junior brother of Xiao Xuance, who had been the leader of the Immortal Cultivators and a great man of the Flying Star Sector, after the baptism of the numerous tides, was gradually assuming his senior brother’s aura. Looking at the rolling red clouds on the horizon, he said slowly, “The Flying Star Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector are different.

“Ever since your civilization was awakened, you have been fighting against the demon race all the time. The fire of your civilization was forced into being under the tremendous pressure of the demon race.

“The Star Glory Federation has only been established for five hundred years. It is in the most vigorous era of growth. Faced with the strong enemy that was the demon race, you were united and striving without retreat, and you were able to suppress the dark side of humanity.

“Therefore, in your heart, humans are good, kind, pure, righteous by nature, and the non-humans such as demons are evil.

“Good and evil are clearly distinguished, and evil never laughs to the end. This was once your belief.

“But after the incident of the Patriots Partnership, in which you saw how evil humans can be, many of you have wavered and begun to be suspicious about humanity, even including many representatives. I have felt that very clearly when I’ve been talking to them.

“But the Flying Star Sector is different.

“Our world was already highly developed in the era of the Star Ocean Imperium. There were never any organized demon forces.

“Over the past ten thousand years, we were divided into ‘homers’ and ‘spacers’ at first, fighting among each other. Then, we were faced with the scourge of space pirates and the extraterrestrial devils. Even the extraterrestrial devils, our greatest banes, had to look for the loopholes in humanity and attach themselves to human beings in order to cause damage.

“It is safe to say that, for the last ten thousand years, we have been fighting against ourselves! On one side, our enemy is the vast, cold, dark universe. On the other side, our enemy is in our heart, something colder and darker than the universe.

“On a starship that has lost momentum with limited food, floating at the edge of a desolate space zone, anyone can turn into something a hundred times more evil than demons and extraterrestrial devils, trampling all the moral standards and causing indescribable tragedies.

“Such tragedies have happened countless times throughout history, and they are still not entirely avoidable to this day.

“Therefore, we know the dark side of humanity much better than you do. The space pirates, the Immortal Cultivators, and those guys who killed all their companions on board in order to survive a couple of days more after an accident, are they not human beings?

“However, on the other side, the space pirates and the Immortal Cultivators who nearly destroyed the Flying Star Sector are human beings, but aren’t those who prevented them from doing so and protected the world human beings, too?

“Let’s take this incident for example. It is true that the chief criminals such as Lu Zui and Zhou Hengdao are federal citizens, but aren’t you, who stopped them, one of the most excellent representatives of the federal citizens? Aren’t the tens of thousands of veterans and citizens who waved the flags and sang the national anthems in front of parliament federal citizens? Isn’t the so-called Star Glory Federation made of people like you?

“Why did Lu Zui and Zhou Hengdao have to turn to the clandestine approaches? They must’ve been well aware that people were not on their side, mustn’t they?”

Li Yao was dazed. “Senior Luo Xingzi, after experiencing so much darkness, are you still willing to believe in the federation and believe in humanity?”

“Humanity?” Luo Xingzi smiled. “Human beings are giant, contradictory objects in my eyes, a double swirl that is revolving in two opposite directions simultaneously.

“Whenever I trust humanity without reserve, the ugliest, most potent black foams always pops up from the swirl.

“However, when I cover my nose and run away, not trusting it any longer, the black foam will explode one after another and give out the most brilliant colors!”

He patted Li Yao’s shoulder and said, “However, if I have to choose, I think I will still choose to believe in humanity and human beings. I will not suspect it no matter how much darkness I experience, no matter how much ugliness I witness, and no matter how many times I am betrayed!”

“Because…”

He paused for a moment before saying with a bitter smile, “Do we really have a second choice?”

Li Yao was deep in thought. Then, together with Luo Xingzi, he put on the sunniest smile under the setting sun.

Taking a long breath in relief, Li Yao was clearly much more at ease than before. “Right, there’s one other thing. I’m told that you were about to jump to the Blood Demon Sector while I was on my way. Then, a boy scout of the Burning Prairie Fleet made a mistake and broke the space jump array. You were delayed for a few hours as a result. If that’s the case, the boy scout was the greatest contributor who helped stop the war!”

“What kind of contributor is he?” Luo Xingzi could not help but snort when he mentioned the boy. “Don’t mention him. He is still in detention!”

“Why?” Li Yao was greatly surprised. Almost three months had passed. Even if his mistake caused the malfunction of the space jump array, it still seemed to be too harsh a punishment.

Seeing his confusion, Luo Xingzi was amused. “You don’t need to bother about him. Honestly speaking, he didn’t delay us on purpose. It was just a lucky accident.

“After we learned the whole thing, we thought that he had made great contributions, although by accident, and that we would set him free after locking him for ten days or so. But on the seventh day, the boy somehow escaped from the fully-enclosed detention room and swaggered to the living area to gamble! All the tutors were almost deformed in fury! Do you think that locking him up for two months is still a heavy punishment?”

“Well…”

Li Yao scratched his nose but did not know what to say. Before, he had been quite interested in the guy who had accidentally stopped the war and wanted to meet him. But since the guy was still in detention, he might as well drop the idea. Burning Prairie had its own rules after all. It was inappropriate for an outsider like him to intervene.

“Anyway, everything has been settled now. The war is finally over!” Li Yao held his head with his hands and stretched his arms comfortably.

Looking at the distance, Luo Xingzi said with mixed feelings, “Yes. The war between human beings and demons is over, but the war between human beings and human beings has only just begun.”

“But why do I feel that there’s still something I forgot to do?” Li Yao tilted his head and thought hard for a moment, only to come up with nothing. “It seems to be something very important that will threaten my life if I don’t do it.”

“Master.” At this moment, Wu Mayan reminded him in a low voice, “You haven’t proposed to masteress yet.”

“Huh?” Li Yao blinked rapidly.

“Didn’t you say that you were going to be married after you were back home?” Wu Mayan said. “Also, Masteress asked me the other day if you were ‘prepared’. Note that she asked while gnashing her teeth and rubbing her fists!”

“Right!” Li Yao slapped his head. “I’ve been too busy with the important affairs of the country and the universe to give it any thought!”

Chapter 1178 - If You Want a Fight, Let’s Have One!

BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM!

In the suburbs of the capital city, inside the most advanced VIP room of a training field with full facilities, Ding Lingdang was training.

What was shrieking under her fists was the debris of a crystal tank. It was more like she was savaging it than attacking it.

She had beaten the debris of a crystal tank five meters long, two meters high, and weighing dozens of tons into a cluster of iron no more than one cubic meter with her brute force.

Struck by dozens of heavy punches every second, the sharp edges of the cluster of iron were gradually polished, and all the gaps were pressed into nothing. The surface of the debris was wreathed in an orange glow. The temperature inside could be a thousand degrees, burning and twisting the air!

But Ding Lingdang could not care less about it.

She was only wearing a thin sports vest and a highly-elastic shorts, which revealed the honey color of her skin and her elegant curves without any reserve. Her sweat was vaporized into a hazy mist around her before it escaped from her body.

Boom!

After a heavy punch, leaving a hole more than half a meter deep on the iron cluster of unimaginable density, Ding Lingdang blew at her fist where steam was popping up and turned around.

Li Yao crept in stealthily and grinned at her.

“What’s the hurry?” Ding Lingdang raised her eyebrow. “Didn’t you say that you would have dinner with your three disciples?”

“Nothing. Just wanted to come back early.” Li Yao scratched his face, not knowing where to put his hands. “Are you training?”

“Of course!” Ding Lingdang turned around and tortured the debris of the tank again while she said, “Now that the war is over, the Grand Desolate Plateau is a peaceful area again. Many natives of the Grand Desolate Plateau are returning to rebuild their homes. The Grand Desolate War Institution will be reestablished at the original location. This time, we are going to be the largest of the Nine Elite Universities!

“Professor Mo Xuan is rubbing his fists and can’t wait to build the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution into the ‘holy land of refiners’ in the place of the Refining Department of Deep Sea University. Your old dream might be realized soon!

“The old principal contacted me, too, and asked whether or not I would like to be the dean of the Combat Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution. Why would I refuse such an awesome-sounding job? However, it is not going to be easy to work as the dean of the Combat Department. I have to train myself well for the challengers!”

Li Yao's eyes suddenly shined. "Dean of the Combat Department? That's a good thing. Not bad. Not bad. You have my full support!"

"Why are speaking nothing but jibber-jabber today? Who else will you support if not me? Who else will I count on if not you?" Ding Lingdang turned around again and eyed him up and down suspiciously. Narrowing her eyes, she said, "No, something's wrong. What's in your hand? Let me take a look!"

"N—Nothing."

Blushing, Li Yao finally made up his mind and said, "I'm just saying that—well, since we are going to stay in the capital city for a couple of more days, and there is nothing important to do, why don't we get married sometime, you know, if you are free?"

He opened his hand. Inside his palm was a bright gold ring. There was a bunch of tiny bells that looked like grapes on the surface of the ring. All the bells were embedded with crystals of different colors and emanating the most dazzling brilliance.

Ding Lingdang widened her eyes and looked at him solemnly.

Li Yao was sweating hard and felt that his throat was dry. He had never felt so anxious, even when he was faced with Yan Xibei, Xiao Xuance, Bai Xinghe, the star child, Jin Tuyi, Lu Zui, or Zhou Hengdao. Looking back at Ding Lingdang, he stammered, "Is this too formal?"

"A little bit?" Holding back her laugh, Ding Lingdang snatched the ring and examined it under the light. "You made it yourself? Anything special about it?"

“Of course there is!” Li Yao was excited the moment he started talking about his magical equipment. He put the ring on Ding Lingdang’s fourth finger on her right hand while he elaborated. “This ring is named ‘Crimson Glow Dragon Slaying Ring’. Look. Eighty-one attack rune arrays have been carved on the tiny area. Once they are triggered, they will produce a colorful armor around your right arm and shoulder, which will improve the force of your fist by ten percent!

“Also, it has two modes. As long as you input some spiritual energy, the ring will automatically expand. Not only can you wear it on the finger, you can also cover it outside the crystal suit and strengthen the attack of the crystal suit with the ring!

“The most critical point is that, other than the dozens of unpredictable attack methods, it is also a tiny Cosmos Ring itself with a storage space of three cubic meters. I have filled half a cubic meter with crystals that will be the power source for the ring. So, you will be saved the trouble of charging it every day. I know that you hate trouble more than anything else.

“The remaining space is definitely enough for you to store powerful weapons, magical equipment, or even a light crystal suit!

“In fact, I produced it a few days ago, but the stripes on the surface were not carved, so I couldn’t give it to you until now.

“Compared to the rings on the market, maybe it is not very beautiful, but its combat ability is definitely impressive enough. You can certainly blow up a tank with a single punch!

“What do you think? Do you like it?”

Li Yao waited, his tongue and lips dry.

Ding Lingdang’s eyes creased into two crescent moons as she observed the ring in delight. Having no intention of taking it off her finger, she said gently, “You know that I am not a materialistic woman. I like whatever you give to me!”

Li Yao was overjoyed. “So, you’ve agreed?”

Ding Lingdang leaned over and drew circles on his chest while rubbing his certain other body part with her round, firm thigh. “I’m not done yet. I am not a materialistic woman. Rings and such are just formalities that I don’t care about. Even if you gave me the ring of a can, I would be happy as long as you meant it.

“Also, for other woman who are fond of romance, they always demand grand proposals that are watched by so many people. I do not have such habits, and I don’t think it’s a big deal. So, the simpler, the better. It’s not bad to propose in a training room at all!”

“Okay. Okay.” Li Yao nodded quickly. “That’s right. That’s right. You are saying exactly what is on my mind. We must recover our original simplicity!”

“However…” Ding Lingdang’s eyes became more and more dangerous, and she was drawing circles on Li Yao’s chest harder and harder. “I don’t care about materials or romance, but there still seems to be a minor disagreement between our beliefs. Do you think it is necessary to find a place where we can have a proper competition?”

“Huh? Another competition?” Li Yao’s face suddenly became pale. His legs were shaking as he said, “Fellow Cultivator

Ding, there are still years to come. Why do we have to rush all the competitions right now? How about we call it a tie in the spirit of peace?

“Also, our last competition was too noisy. Right now, a team of specialists is still exploring the Flora Satellite IX. They have even established a station. Many crystal cameras are flying here and there. It’s not like we can have a competition of beliefs in right of so many people, right?”

“Of course, the Flora Satellite IX is unavailable.”

Nibbling her lips, Ding Lingdang leaned toward his ear and said in a low voice, “I’ve found another good spot. The Dragon Paw Trench in the South Sea is the greatest trench on the Heaven’s Origin Planet with a depth of more than fifty thousand meters! We can dive to twenty thousand meters into the trench. It will be a cool, quiet place without any disturbance. We will be able to completely focus and have a competition of beliefs of three days and three nights!”

“Well, the ecological system of the sea will certainly be damaged. The fish and shrimps living in the area, as well as the innocent little animals such as the Nine-Headed Ocean Monsters, might be affected. Is it really a good choice?”

“You don’t love me!” Ding Lingdang cried.

“How so? You must be kidding!” exclaimed Li Yao.

“Or are you indicating that your belief is not hard enough?”

“You—you are asking to be killed. It’s not my fault! Alright, let’s go to the Dragon Paw Trench. We’ll have a competition if you want one!”

…

Ten days later, inside a large, luxury salon in Floating Spear City, an important town of training at the southeast of the federation…

The time was too early for the center to open. Several beauticians were cleaning the room. The host and the hostess, on the other hand, were having breakfast while watching the news with their two babbling daughters.

“It has been reported that immense spiritual waves have been bursting out of the Dragon Paw Trench inside the South Sea recently. Many Nine-Headed Ocean Monsters, which are known as the dominators of the deep sea, have fled from their home and are looking for new habitats.

“All signs suggest that a super undersea volcano that was undiscovered previously is now awakening inside the Dragon Paw Trench. The magma that it spurted out showed that the volcano is active again and triggered the mutations of the undersea environment.

“The specialists have concluded that this is further proof of the accelerated integration of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector after the consecutive meteor showers on the Flora Satellite IX.”

Such news was too far away from the city folk. The couple listened absent-mindedly and played with their chubby daughters once in a while. It was quite a warm scene.

Soon, the local news was broadcast.

“Mister Zhao Liang, a famous local expert of Floating Spear City, has established the ninth branch of his Empyrean Fighting Club. Master Red Pine, leader of the famous local sect Crimson Nimbus Guild, will cut the ribbon personally.

“Zhao Liang is one of the most distinguished Cultivators in the younger generation of Floating Spear City. Born and raised in the Crimson Nimbus Guild, he has advanced into the Building Foundation Stage before the age of thirty! His Empyrean Fighting Club has adopted the advantages of the training models of multiple sects, including the Crimson Nimbus Guild, the Soaring Clouds Sect, and a few others. It is the most renowned brand of training facilities in Floating Spear City. Supported unanimously by all local sects, it is about to walk out of Floating Spear City into the entire federation!

“The most interesting story about Zhao Liang is his incident with the legendary Vulture Li Yao in the past.

“Zhao Liang and Li Yao were once both students of No. 2 Crimson Nimbus High School. Back when they were in the school, they were competitors at loggerheads! It is said that Li Yao crushed Zhao Liang twice, but Zhao Liang stubbornly stood back up every time and went to challenge the formidable Li Yao again! It is perhaps such determination and fearlessness that has supported Zhao Liang to achieved what he has today!”

1. For Zhao Liang and Li Yao’s encounter please refer to the first fifty chapters of this novel.

Chapter 1179 - Li Yao’s Wedding!

“Tsk, tsk, tsk!”

The hostess, whose curled hair made her look like a golden-haired lion, changed the diaper for her baby while smacking her lips. “Look at that. Li Yao, the great hero of Floating Spear City, has shown up again. Even his old classmates are swaggering around!

“As far as I’ve heard, was this guy Zhao Liang at loggerheads with Li Yao at all? He was merely beaten up by Li Yao twice! But after Li Yao became the Ultra-Level Federal Hero, the guy bragged to everybody about the incident, claiming that he was a man who could still stand on his feet after fighting Li Yao twice in a row. He even brought the video of his fight with Li Yao in high school to his fighting club and played it every day. A lot of students were actually fooled by him. What a shameless guy!

“The fellows who graduated from No. 2 Crimson Nimbus High School are telling everybody that they are Li Yao’s alumni everywhere they go. Li Yao clearly went to another school in the end, and I’m told that he left because he was pissed off. What kind of alumni are they?

“Hey, Old Meng!”

The hostess finished changing diaper for her daughter quickly. Patting the little baby’s bottom, she went over to her husband and jabbed his nose with a chopstick.

“Didn’t you graduate from No. 2 Crimson Nimbus High School, too? I remember that you were in the same class as Li Yao. Why do I barely hear you talking about that?

“Was your relationship with Li Yao bad?

“It doesn’t matter. Look at this Zhao Liang. A Mr. Nobody who jumped out of nowhere has earned some fame by bragging about his experience of being beaten by Li Yao all day long!

“Just think about it. Let’s figure out a way to be connected to Li Yao. If we can take advantage of his popularity, won’t our business thrive?

“The simplest of all. You can put a picture of you and Li Yao in front of our shop. If you don’t have a picture where there are just the two of you, you must have a group picture of your class, right? Caption it ‘Makeover from Li Yao’s Alumni’. Make ‘Li Yao’ big. Other people might think that you are Li Yao’s personal beautician. How marvelous that would be!

“Haven’t you been saying that you will make your salon into the best one in the federation and even branch out into the universe beyond the Heaven’s Origin Sector? This is a great opportunity!

“Just think quickly! Was there any interaction between you and Li Yao? It will do even if you two once peed in the toilet together!”

Seeing his wife’s glowing face and her eyes that were about to become coins, Meng Jing grinned and drank a bowl of soy bean milk slowly. He then grabbed the egg pie that had not bored him after more than ten years. Taking a huge bite, he chewed with great satisfaction for a while before leaning back in his chair comfortably. Reminiscing about the past, he shook his head. “I won’t. I am different from Zhao Liang.”

The hostess frowned. “How so? Zhao Liang can take advantage of Li Yao. Why can’t you when you are Li Yao’s classmate, too?”

Meng Jiang smiled and said, “Zhao Liang is willing to sell some things, but not me. Not in the world!”

The hostess was angry. Her eyebrow furrowed, and she was about to say more when the wind chimes hanging on the door clattered. Somebody walked in.

“I’m sorry, sir, but we aren’t open yet. Would you please come back later?” a beautician told the stranger politely.

“It’s alright. I don’t want a haircut. I’m here to see your boss.”

A slightly dull voice came from the thick mask. Meng Jiang was slightly surprised because he found the voice quite familiar.

He turned around, only to discover that the newcomer was wearing a peaked cap and pressed it low. The guy was also wearing a pair of big, broad sunglasses. Along with his mask, his entire face was covered without the slightest gap.

The hostess pouted at Meng Jiang. “Old Meng, he is looking for you. Who’s this guy? Covering up his face and acting mysteriously like this? You haven’t done anything bad outside, have you?”

Meng Jiang immediately blushed. “What are you talking about?”

He stood up, holding the remaining half of the egg pie, and eyed the newcomer suspiciously. “You are…?”

“Ha. Smells good. I haven’t smelt the flavor of such delicious egg pie for more than ten years.”

The newcomer took off his sunglasses and mask with a grin, revealing a face that the couple occasionally saw on TV. His clear eyes, however, still had a hint of his youth from more than ten years ago.

“Ah!” the hostess exclaimed and accidentally dropped the chopstick to the ground. She forgot to pick it up and simply covered her mouth tightly.

Meng Jiang’s eyes bulged wider and wider, and he grinned so hard that his lips almost reached his earlobes. “Li Yao!”

“That’s right, my friend!” Li Yao smiled. “I’m getting married. I’m here to give you the invitation. I’m really sorry that I was still in the Flying Star Sector when you were married, but you must come to my wedding!”

“Of course, I will. I certainly will!” Tears in his eyes, Meng Jiang said, “I will be going even if it is raining knives that day”

The two best friends in high school burst into laughter and hugged each other despite the astonishment of the hostess and the workers in the salon!

…

At midnight, in the underground ghost market of Floating Spear City, Meng Jiang, who had toured their old hangouts with Li Yao for an entire day and drunk too much wine in the barbeque booth, was sound asleep on the greasy table.

Li Yao, on the other hand, sat aside and sent a message to Ding Lingdang.

“All the invitations of Floating Spear City, my last stop, have been sent. I have truly met a lot of old friends on this trip and remembered many things from the past!

“It is needless to mention my senior brother, Peng Hai. The Double Dragons Union is now rising quickly under his leadership and will be marching into the desolate space zones of the Flying Star Sector soon as the first sect to begin the new adventure. I’m sure that the gains will not be small!

“The moment he saw me, the bald Jiang Shaoyang lunged at me, crying, claiming that he would butcher me because I cracked the Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle, which he had produced over years of hard work, in only several minutes through crooked methods!

“Haha. The bad guy has defeated his uncle, ‘Supernova’ Jiang Sheng, fair and square in a competition of refining. He will likely be the youngest dean in the history of the Refining Department of Deep Sea University. Now that the brand of the ‘holy land of refiners’ is in his hands, it is not going to be easy to take it away!

“Do you still remember Mister Ding Yin, who guided me to become a Cultivator on the train to the Grand Desolate Plateau? He’s doing fine, too. He is now the deputy president of the Association of Spectral Cultivators. His arts of refining are even more profound than the old days. In terms of the magical equipment that involves the soul, his skills are certainly better than mine, and he has offered me a lot of enlightenment.

“Right, there’s also Wei Qingqing, the girl who was determined to be a rural teacher. It’s a shame that she perished on the train, too!

“But she luckily turned into a spectral Cultivator as Mister Ding Yin did. Right now, she is teaching the children who unfortunately passed away and turned into ghosts in a special school designed for such children. Other than her main job, she is also a popular novelist and has written quite a few fictions.

“My other friends are fine, too. Everybody is working hard and making their contributions in their respective field!

“Hehe. Although I’ve only just met them, I can’t wait to see them again at our wedding!”

…

In December, the coldest month of the year, the Grand Desolate Plateau was frigidly enshrouded in ice and snow.

However, on the remains of the city, in the middle of the dilapidated buildings that had been frozen into ice, red flags were flapping like thousands of roaring dragons. Countless tents had neatly been established on the ground. The noises that were soaring up to the sky shattered the frozen air!

This place used to be Wild Wave City, where the Grand Desolate War Institution was located, but it had been destroyed in the beast tide.

Now, hundreds of thousands of workers, soldiers, and Cultivators had gathered in the place. They would melt the snow, build walls, and reshape the Grand Desolate Plateau with their hands, sweat, and blood!

On the horizon, many super heavy tanks, which carried large engineering magical equipment, were driving toward them.

The fulminations from the vehicles sounded like the drumming of giants and the horns of another war!

At the center of the innumerous tents, guarded and blessed by all the workers, soldiers, and Cultivators, a special wedding was about to begin.

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

Shuttles and carriers were arriving through the clouds.

“Li Yao!” Fiend Blade Peng Hai, his tall and handsome senior brother, leapt out of the shuttle.

“Li Yao!” ‘Solar Eclipse’ Jiang Shaoyang, who had kept his iconic bald head and always seemed angry, flew out.

“Li Yao, congratulations!” Mister Ding Yin and Wei Qingqing both arrived. Wei Qingqing was still hiding inside a small mechanical blue bird, which stopped above Mister Ding Yin’s head and uttered crisp, oriole-like sounds.

“Li Yao, we are here, too!” Lei Dalu, captain of the Great Horn Exo Society, and Bai Kaixin, his advisor, as well Xiong Wuji, the chief of the Furious Bears Tribe on Iron Plateau, and all the good friends who had once fought side by side with Li Yao had come to the wedding from the Flying Star Sector.

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang were sitting in the middle of a pile of debris. Li Yao was wearing a slim, black suit while Ding Lingdang was in a long, fiery dress. The two of them were holding a heavy shovel that was tied with a giant red flower.

“The wedding begins now!” Wu Mayan and Xie Anan shouted at the same time, dragging their voice, with obvious delight and amusement in their tone.

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang raised the shovel high together.

On behalf of the workers on the Grand Desolate Plateau, they would be making the first step of the reconstruction of the Grand Desolate Plateau.

In such a way, they were telling the world that, no matter what happened and no matter what kind of difficulties and challenges they were faced with, they would build and defend their home side by side.

In that moment, all the workers, soldiers, Cultivators, and their family and friends held their breath and looked at them quietly.

On the horizon behind them, the sun was slowly setting, and the long, cold night was falling.

But did it really matter?

However cold and long the dark night was, it could never stop the stars from glittering!

Chapter 1180 - Welcome to Earth!

Wu!

Wu!

Ten thousand roars of thunder seemed to be passing his ears quickly, and a flock of birds were flapping their wings together. The ear-shattering noises, as well as the itching feeling on his bottom that seemed to indicate an electric shock, made Li Yao’s adrenaline spike. His every cell was energized, and the fire in the deepest part of his soul was ignited!

The highway, the opponents, the rivers, the mountains… The entire world seemed to be gone. He and his modified car were all there was.

Huchi! Huchi! Huchi! Huchi!

BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM!

Li Yao heard his own panting, which sounded like that of a cornered animal, and his heart that was beating faster and faster.

He had been engaged in car racing countless times, but this was the strangest of all. He had never been so anxious that his spine was about to be compressed into a small cluster.

It felt like a pair of invisible eyes were staring at him coldly from somewhere in the dark.

It also felt that a fatal viper was hiding inside the small cockpit, looking for the best opportunity to attack.

Gritting his teeth, Li Yao pressed his right foot hard, as if it had been welded to the accelerator. The speed of the car rose continuously and soon surpassed two hundred kilometers an hour!

Every part of the modified car had been adjusted by him personally. It was vibrating with every cell inside his body and shrieking in the most ear-splitting sounds.

Every indicator on the dashboard was shaking crazily as if they were on drugs. The reading on the LED screen was changing quickly every second and lost all meaning!

The racing car that he had modified was about to collapse… in midair!

After he surpassed the two hundred kilometers an hour, the car was like flood that had broken the dam. It accelerated and accelerated unstoppably. Very soon, it had surpassed 220 kilometers an hour… 250 kilometers an hour… 280 kilometers an hour… until the vehicle was almost flying!

It was a speed that completely exceeded the specifications of the car and even violated the laws of physics.

However, as if spellbound, Li Yao felt none of it.

In his bloodshot eyes that were about to explode, the straight highway became zigzagging. It looked like both a mountain road and a mysterious channel of space and time.

Vaguely, he smelt sulfur and smoke. Li Yao, the modified car, the highway, and the entire world seemed to be on fire.

“Ahhhh!”

Li Yao found himself in such an uncanny state that he completely forgot everything. All he knew was how to accelerate, crazily accelerate, and then accelerate some more!

Every indicator on the dashboard was rotating rapidly like a fan. Li Yao could not tell whether it was a mechanical error, or he was really rushing at a weird speed of more than one thousand kilometers an hour. The LED screen was emitting brilliance that was even more dazzling than the sun until it exploded into nothingness in the end!

BOOM!

In front of Li Yao, at the end of the highway, a crimson lotus was slowly blossoming. The giant red lotus swallowed him and the modified car. The world broke apart in front of his eyes, replaced by runes that were dropping down rapidly like waterfalls. The octagonal, glittering runes lunged at him like locusts and drowned him.

In a trance, Li Yao felt that the modified car hit the rail on one side of the highway. It rolled more than ten rounds in midair and crashed heavily before a serious explosion erupted.

At the same time, he also felt that he was a strengthless baby that was picked out of a womb.

His eyelids were like gates that weighed ten thousand tons. Summoning all his strength, he managed to open a tiny gap. Observing ahead of him, he realized that it was an extremely ugly woman with scars all over his face who picked him up. The woman was wearing ragged leather armor, carrying a bloodstained chainsword on her waist and an impressive three-barreled storm bolter on her back.

Li Yao did not have time to observe the environment. He only vaguely felt that he was in the middle of a wasteland-like desert.

The super ugly woman grinned, revealing a mouthful of sharp teeth, before she cackled. “Welcome to Earth!”

Li Yao shuddered violently. Everything was gone all of a sudden. He jumped from his bed and fell to his knees. It was not until he gagged for a long time that he felt he was back to himself and recalled who he was in the freezing air.

“I am Li Yao, a Cultivator of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and a citizen of the Star Glory Federation. I am now in a temporary settlement on the Grand Desolate Plateau. I’ve been married for a month!

“However—”

Looking back at his bed, he found that it was empty. He checked the watch and realized that it was four o’clock in the morning, the darkest moment before dawn.

Ding Lingdang should have gotten up early and gone to train herself in the world fragments.

Li Yao was sweating hard and barely able to lift his hands or feet. He also felt that his lips were wet. Wiping with the back of his hand, he found that it was red now.

He must have bitten his tongue while he was having the nightmare.

“Hu…”

Li Yao heaved a long sigh in relief. He poured a glass of cold milk for himself in the kitchen and drank all of it. After resting for five minutes, he finally calmed himself down.

Another weird dream about Earth. I haven’t had such dreams for a long time.

The weird dreams about Earth had been haunting him ever since he could remember things.

The weird dreams that appeared every other day reminded him constantly that he was different from those around him. It was also one of the greatest motivations for his crazy training.

At the same time, the weird dreams had also given Li Yao the memories and wisdom of an adult when Li Yao was merely a little kid, which had allowed him to survive in the perilous magical equipment.

Since the weird dreams barely affected his daily life, Li Yao had gradually become used to them.

After he became a Cultivator and embarked on the journey to the sea of stars, the weird dreams had hardly harassed him anymore.

Except for the information about the Vulture Plan that popped up in the weird dreams while he was dealing with the Blood Stripe Virus, he only dreamed about Earth once every two months. Plus, the dreams were just mottled pieces, no different from the dreams that other people had.

Furthermore, Li Yao was occupied by the affairs of the collaboration of the three Sectors and the resistance against the Imperium of True Human Beings. Since he was just married, he was having competitions of beliefs quite often.

Therefore, he gradually left Earth and the Vulture Plan behind him.

But the weird dream that day was different.

Li Yao had not had such a vivid, devastating dream for a long time.

Also, new information had appeared in his dream, something that was entirely opposite and contradictory to the information in his previous dreams.

That’s not right! Li Yao frowned, baffled.

He remembered having the same dream.

This particular weird dream had popped up in his head countless times. It was the memory of his last car race, in which he had unfortunately had an accident.

However, according to the development of the dreams that he used to have, he would be sent to the hospital and declared dead later.

After he was declared dead, his self-awareness was concentrated again, and he was reborn as a baby in a magical equipment graveyard in the Star Glory Federation of the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

Therefore, for a long time, Li Yao had thought that he might have been an earthling in his previous life, and he had somehow been teleported to the Heaven’s Origin Sector after he was killed in the car accident.

Such time travel and reincarnation, although not common in the world of Cultivators, was certainly not unprecedented or totally incomprehensible.

After all, all kinds of uncanny things could happen to a Cultivator.

But what was the scar-faced woman all about?

She was wearing a ragged leather armor, but in his quick glimpse, Li Yao still vaguely saw a few spiritual stripes between the blood and the stains on the armor.

It was a set of armor that could unleash spiritual shields and defense arrays.

Additionally, the scar-faced woman had been carrying a chainsword and a storm bolter. Although Li Yao did not have the time to distinguish their specific model, they were clearly not products of Earth.

At the very least, they were not the products of the commonly-known Earth in the 2010s.

However, the scar-faced woman had said something to him, something like a labyrinth and a puzzle.

Welcome to Earth!

“Ah…”

The more he thought about it, the greater the headache he had. Holding the milk container, he sat down in a corner of the kitchen and stared at the cold moonlight outside through the window of the shabby cottage.

What… was Earth exactly?

“Hey, are you there? Come on out!”

Li Yao unlocked the barriers deep inside his brain and summoned the mental devil.

The computational ability of Li Yao alone was not enough to figure out such complicated issues. He had to count on the mental devil’s half to get a general idea of it.

“I won’t.”

Deep inside his brain, the mental devil’s dull and wronged voice came out.

“Why?”

Li Yao was rather stunned. Was it not good to enjoy some fresh air?

“What do you regard me as?” the mental devil asked poignantly. “Every time you had a ‘competition of beliefs’ with your wife, you would kick me into the deepest part of your brain and suppress me with dozens of barriers. You don’t even let me watch! Now, your wife is not here, and you are calling me again because you feel lonely. Do you think that I’m a football that you can kick away and take back at your will?”

“Well, I admit that I was wrong,” Li Yao replied. “Next time, I will ask you to leave politely. I won’t kick you or strike you with lightning anymore. That should be enough, I believe?”

“Why? You and I are the same. You are me, and I am you. Therefore, Ding Lingdang is my wife, too. Why can’t I even watch?”

“…Forget it. You can keep yourself inside. Really. Just stay inside the depths of my brain!”

“I might as well get out then.”

Like a round, fat sloth, the mental devil slowly crawled out of the root of Ou Yezi’s memory tree. It took a memory piece from the tree and chewed slowly. “What’s the problem this time?”

“A weird one.”

Lightning-like thoughts struck inside Li Yao’s brain as he shared the weird dream that he had just experienced with the mental devil. “Look. The weird dream concerning the death of the earthling Li Yao, which we’ve been having for years, seemed to have an entirely different ending. The earthling Li Yao didn’t die in the hospital but… reached a weird place where he ran into a weird woman!

“Isn’t it contradictory to the weird dreams in the past?

“Help me analyze what is going on here. Does this so-called ‘Earth’ really exist? What’s the real identity of the earthling Li Yao? Which of the two different endings is true, and which is false?”

Chapter 1181 - Something Is Terribly Wrong!

The mental devil dissected the weird dream into the most fundamental stream of information and swallowed it. Smacking the lips and pondering for a moment, the mental devil mumbled, “It’s indeed a bit strange but not so far as ‘self-contradictory’. Or rather, this dream filled the most critical blank of the previous weird dreams!”

Li Yao was refreshed. “How so?”

“Look. In fact, the dreams we’ve had before are divided into two vastly different, if not opposite, parts.”

Waving its arms and legs, the mental devil declared, “First of all, in our childhood and youth, before our spiritual root was awakened, the weird dreams we had were about the ‘earthling Li Yao’.

“This particular ‘earthling Li Yao’ lived in the 2010s on Earth. He was just a regular car mechanic. If there was anything special about him, it was perhaps his racing skills, but it was not any special ability.

“All in all, this ‘earthling Li Yao’ was a completely ordinary person, and the planet that he lived on was a plain, peaceful world devoid of spiritual energy. He lived a boring life until he had a car accident that got him killed!”

Li Yao nodded. “Yes, that’s right. It is why I thought that I was the reincarnation of the ‘earthling Li Yao’, except that my memories and self-awareness of the past were somehow maintained while I was reborn. Was I wrong?”

“No. Not exactly,” the mental devil said carefully. “However, after we became a Cultivator, and especially after we perceived the mysteries of the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage through the fierce battles in the Flying Star Sector, didn’t a new dream occur to us?

“In the new dream, the ‘earthling Li Yao’ was a warrior who was resisting something. But the thing was, as I quote, ‘too dark and too strong’. Eventually, all our companions were killed by the thing, and we were the only lucky survivor.

“The reason we escaped was to carry on the Vulture Plan and to destroy something. Maybe, it was the ‘too dark and too strong’ thing that we were determined to destroy!”

Li Yao was deep in thought. “Yes. Although I don’t quite remember what is it that we wanted to destroy, the feelings of desperation and depression were deep to my bones.”

“Then, something doesn’t make sense now,” the mental devil said. “The earthling Li Yao was just a regular car mechanic and an excellent racer at best. He never served in the army, nor was he a warrior adept at fighting. How was he involved in the Vulture Plan?

“Besides, in our memories, Earth at the beginning of the twenty-first century, although not entirely peaceful, certainly did not have world wars! There were two superpowers that controlled Asia and Americas. The influence of their army radiated over the entire planet. There was friction between the two superpowers, but they certainly did not wage war at each other.

“Then, even if a certain threat that was ‘too dark and too strong’, say a virus or an alien, appeared, the two superpowers would certainly be there to settle everything. What could an insignificant mechanic do?

“If even the two superpowers could not deal with the threat, it’s even less possible that such a mechanic could save the world, right?”

Li Yao nodded quickly. “I was too trapped in my own thinking. Your analysis is quite correct! It does make sense. Now that I see it, the so-called Vulture Plan is too ungrounded. The two superpowers on Earth had almost twenty aircraft carrier battle groups and millions of soldiers, not to mention their powerful nuclear bombs. Even a few Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators might not fair too well if they went to Earth.

“Even if Earth really encountered a crisis, the two superpowers would’ve been there to deal with it. What did it have to do with a civilian?

“Or rather, is one of the two inconsistent dreams false?

“Either the identity of the ‘car mechanic Li Yao’ is false, or the Vulture Plan is!”

The mental devil shook its head hard. “Not necessarily. Don’t jump to any conclusions so fast. In my opinion, the key to understand the dreams lies in the one you had today.

“Alright, let’s sort through the timeline.”

The mental devil counted its fingers and said solemnly, “Before, there was a place called ‘Earth’, where an ordinary person named ‘Li Yao’ lived.

“Earth was a world without spiritual energy, and Li Yao was nothing more than an unknown, insignificant civilian. Other than his amazing racing skills, he did not have any special ability. He was not a secret agent of the government, nor had he ever heard of the Vulture Plan!”

Li Yao nodded. “That’s right. Go on.”

“Then, one day, Li Yao had an accident during a race. Everybody thought that he was dead, but he wasn’t. Instead, he met a super ugly woman who was wearing spiritual armor and carrying a chainsword and a storm bolter in ways that we can’t understand.

“After that, the memories went blank. We directly jumped to the end, where all his companions were killed and part of his remaining soul escaped from Earth in a hurry. He swore that he would come back one day and carry on the Vulture Plan!”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and mumbled, “Are you suggesting that, after the earthling Li Yao’s accident, he wasn’t directly teleported to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, but met the ugly woman and possibly joined a certain organization with the Vulture Plan as the core? He didn’t flee to the Heaven’s Origin Sector until the organization was crushed by the enemy, and he was forced to leave Earth?”

The mental devil nodded its head solemnly. “Yes. That must be the case.”

“It does make a lot of more sense now. Otherwise, an insignificant car mechanic certainly would not have had much to do with the mysterious Vulture Plan!” Li Yao took a deep breath, his temples bouncing. Thousands of thoughts seemed to be popping out of his head.

Rubbing his temples softly, his eyebrows furrowed again. “No. There is still something inexplicable. Even if the earthling joined a certain mysterious organization after the accident, why was he greeted with ‘Welcome to Earth’?

“Li Yao was an earthling who had lived on Earth his whole life! What did she mean by saying ‘Welcome to Earth’?

“Generally speaking, this should be the way that the locals of Earth greeted aliens, right? Or was the previous Li Yao in fact not an earthling but an alien? That’s too hilarious, definitely impossible!

“Also, why was the woman who said the greeting using magical equipment? Her leather armor, chainsword, and storm bolter were definitely magical equipment driven by crystals instead of the firearms of Earth driven by gunpowder and electricity. I’m certain about that!

“She should be a Cultivator!

“But that’s not right. There were clearly no Cultivators on Earth. Where was such a weird female Cultivator from? And why was she saying ‘Welcome to Earth’?”

Li Yao was more and more confused. He seemed to be mired in a revolving swamp and could not find a way out however hard he struggled.

Scratching his head hard, he narrowed his eyes into two spirals as he mumbled, “Did Earth really exist, or was it just part of my imagination?”

The mental devil was confused, too. “Welcome to Earth. It is indeed a weird greeting. Li Yao of the previous life was an earthling in the first place. Why would anybody welcome an earthling to Earth? It is not logical at all!”

Murmuring for a long time, Li Yao suddenly shuddered and jumped to his feet as if he suffered an electric shock. He demanded, “What did you say?”

The mental devil was shocked by him, too. “I said, why would anybody welcome an earthling to Earth?”

“Not this one. The next sentence. The next one!”

Li Yao could not help but tremble as if he had heard the most dreadful spell in the world.

The mental devil was baffled. After thinking for a moment, it replied uncertainly, “I said… it is not logical at all—what? Is there anything wrong with that?”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes, his body temperature dropping by more than ten degrees. Every muscle on his face and his body was shaking nonstop. “No. There is nothing wrong about that, but I’ve heard many people saying the word ‘logic’ before. Something is greatly wrong about that!

“Also, now that I think about it, when I proposed to Ding Lingdang, she once said that she was not a woman who pursued romance, didn’t she? You were there, too. Did she say that?”

The mental devil scratched its head and blinked. “What’s wrong with that? She has never been a romantic woman after all.”

“Don’t you understand?” Li Yao bellowed. “The critical question is not whether or not she is a romantic woman but why the word ‘romance’ was in her vocabulary and why she understood its meaning precisely! It is as baffling as why the people in the world of Cultivators know the word ‘logic’ and understand its meaning!

“Romance is not a word in our native language but from a certain western language on Earth!”

After he advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage, Li Yao’s memories had been significantly enhanced. Even the memory pieces in the deepest part of his brain could be recalled easily. Therefore, with a telepathic thought, he retrieved the etymology of the word ‘romance’ on Earth.

“The same goes for ‘logic’. It is a borrowed word, too, which can be dated back to ancient Greek.

“Here comes the question!

“You and I know the meaning and usage of the transliterations such as ‘romance’ and ‘logic’ because we share the memories of the ‘earthling Li Yao’. Both of the two words originated from the western civilizations on Earth and were passed on from Greek to English until they were loaned into the Chinese language!

“But Ding Lingdang and other people don’t know anything about Earth. They don’t know anything about ‘ancient Greek’ and ‘English’ at all. Then, why do they know the usages of the transliterations such as ‘logic’ and ‘romance’?”

Chapter 1182 - Of the Same Origin?

The mental devil was dazed for a long time. After it thought everything through, it was trembling as violently as Li Yao.

“It—It must a coincidence,” the mental devil said in a low voice.

“If the transliterations such as ‘romance’ or ‘logic’ are coincidences, how do you explain the following words?” Li Yao said coldly. “I’ve fought with the federal army and the Cultivators more times than I can count. Every time we are grasped by desperation, people always use two idioms to boost the morale—’break the cooking pots and sink the boats’ and ‘fight with the river to our back’!

“I didn’t feel too strange about those two idioms before, but on second thought, do you not feel that it is horrifying?

“Where does the idiom ‘break the cooking pots and sink the boats’ come from? It comes from an ancient general named Xiang Yu in the Chinese culture on Earth who smashed the cooking pots and burnt the boats, declaring to his army that there was no retreat, during the resistance against the Kingdom of Qin. Eventually, he crushed the magnificent Kingdom of Qin, thereby leaving the tale of ‘breaking the cooking pots and sinking the boats’!

“As for the idiom ‘fight with the river to our back’, it is about another famous general named Han Xin, who deployed his army right in front of the river during a battle. It was also a method to encourage the soldiers to fight hard in the desperate situation because they had nowhere to retreat. In the end, he secured a victory, hence the idiom!

“It means that the two famous generals named Xiang Yu and Han Xin appeared on Earth first before the two idioms ‘break the cooking pots and sink the boats’ and ‘fight with the river to our back’ came into being!

“You and I boast the memories of the earthling Li Yao. So, it is not strange that we know the two idioms. But what about other people? Why are other people aware of the idioms that come from Earth?

“There are more popular idioms than ‘break the cooking pots and sink the boats’ and ‘fight with the river to our back’ in this era. For example, there are also ‘taste the gall on the hay’ and ‘call a deer a house’… All of them are common idioms that people use on a daily basis, but they are based on the tales from Earth. Are they simply coincidences?

“Also, stocks, network, government, army… all those notions exist both on Earth and in the world of Cultivators and have the same spelling. How incredible is that?”

After hearing the words, the mental devil began to scratch its head hard.

After scratching for a long time, it suddenly slapped its thigh and declared, “It’s simple. Let’s go to the Spiritual Nexus, find an online dictionary, and check the etymology of the idioms such as ‘break the cooking pots and sink the boats’ and ‘fight with the river to our back’. Let’s see how they are described in the dictionaries!”

Li Yao’s eyes suddenly gleamed. He immediately felt that he was foolish not to have come up with the idea earlier.

He hurried to turn on his crystal processor and looked for the most official online dictionary. He typed in ‘logic’ and hit ‘Confirm’. The meaning of the word ‘logic’ immediately popped up on the light beam.

“Logic, originally meaning ‘the word’ or ‘what is spoken’, but coming to mean ‘thought’ or ‘reason’, is a subject concerned with the most general laws of truth and is now generally held to consist of the systematic study of the form of valid inference.

“There is no universal agreement as to the exact scope and subject matter of logic, but it has traditionally included the classification of arguments, the systematic exposition of the ‘logical form’ common to all valid arguments, the study of inference, including fallacies, and the study of semantics, including paradoxes.

“The word ‘logic’ originates in the ancient language ‘Tianzheluo’, which was spoken in the Heavenly Philosophy Great Sector fifty-five thousand years ago. It is said to be related to a certain alien civilization who communicated with each other telepathically, but the theory cannot be confirmed…”

Li Yao and the mental devil looked at each other in bewilderment.

What was the meaning of that?

According to the explanation of the dictionary, the word ‘logic’ was not from ancient Greek on Earth but an ancient language called Tianzheluo in the so-called Heavenly Philosophy Great Sector?

Li Yao thought for a moment and typed in the idiom ‘break the cooking pots and sink the boats’ and hit ‘Confirm’.

“Break the cooking pots and sink the boats, a metaphor that one must secure the victory of a war without considering retreating. Cooking pot: a large piece of equipment for cooking food on or in.

“In the middle phase of the era of ancient Cultivators fifty thousand years ago, the saying ‘burn the boats and break the pots’ was already recorded in the ‘Great Changes in the Army’, one of the classics at the time, to demonstrate the spirit of fighting to the end even if it meant death, but it was not passed on as an established idiom yet.

“At the end of the era of ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago, in the middle of the first civil war of the world of Cultivators, a great battle took place in the Dawn Moon Sector and the Desolate Dragon Sector. The Dawn Moon Sector was on the winning side, and the Desolate Dragon Sector was retreating in panic. Many Cultivators fled to other lands on divine boats.

“Xiang Feitian, commander-in-chief of the seventy-two sects of the Desolate Dragon Sector, gathered all the divine boats in the Sector and burned them to the ground, after excavating the core magical equipment and crystals on the vehicles. The assets were then crafted into new weapons. Eventually, the magnificent enemy was defeated!

“Henceforth, the tale ‘break the cooking pots and sink the boats’ gradually spread out!”

“Huh?” Li Yao and the mental devil both scratched their heads hard. So to speak, the incident ‘break the cooking pots and sink the boats’ had nothing to do with Xiang Yu, either, but was done by an ancient commander of Cultivators named Xiang Feitian!

This—this is too unbelievable!

Li Yao typed in another few words. Some of them were transliterations such as ‘sofa’, and some of them were idioms from ancient Chinese culture such as ‘taste the gall on the hay’.

But then, Li Yao discovered that the unique vocabulary from Earth in his memory could all be found in the dictionary, except that the words and idioms had totally different origins!

Not entirely convinced, he switched to a few other online dictionaries, but other than the difference in details, the results were basically the same.

It meant that both the transliterations such as ‘logic’, ‘romance’, and ‘sofa’ and the idioms such as ‘break the cooking pots and sink the boats’ and ‘fight with the river to our back’ were all part of the native language for the world of Cultivators. They had their own well-recorded etymology and were not plagiarized from the civilization on Earth.

Confusion descended upon Li Yao.

He pondered for a long time before he triggered a blank light beam and wrote two words on each side.

On the left side, he wrote ‘the Earth Civilization’. On the right side, it was ‘Cultivation Civilization’.

Below the titles were words that were almost identical.

“Pangu, Nuwa, dinosaurs, logic, stock, government, stars…”

After finishing everything, Li Yao turned on the faucet and cooled down his burning brain with the icy December water. After taking more than ten deep breaths, he calmed himself down and said, “Let’s analyze it now.

“Assuming that the ‘Earth Civilization’ that the previous Li Yao lived in and the ‘Cultivation Civilization’ that the current Li Yao is in are two different, irrelevant civilizations, everything will not make sense.

“Look at the words I wrote. From Pangu to logic, from stock to federal government, all of them are used in both worlds.

“Even the language we speak is basically the same as what was spoken in the Earth Civilization.

“One or two words might be coincidences, but how could it be a coincidence that the entire language system is identical?”

“So,” the mental devil said, “it is possible that the ‘Earth Civilization’ and the ‘Cultivation Civilization’ are deeply connected to each other in a certain way. Or rather, the ‘Earth Civilization’ might be part of the ‘Cultivation Civilization’?”

Li Yao frowned. “Can it?”

“Of course!” The mental devil nodded firmly. “Think about it. The Earth Civilization is claimed to have a history of millions of years, but it never developed at a high speed until several thousand years ago. The Chinese culture that we were in is said to have lasted more than five thousand years, but it’s still just five thousand years!

“The Star Ocean Imperium collapsed ten thousand years ago. Is it possible that ‘Earth’ was once a Sector in the Star Ocean Imperium that lost connection with the other Sectors in the chaos of war? After that, the Cultivation Civilization in the world might’ve been lost. After thousands of years of groping in the darkness, human beings there slowly created a civilization of a different kind. That might be the case, right?

“If that’s true, it will be not strange that both sides are aware of concepts such as ‘Pangu’ and ‘Nuwa’. They belonged together in the beginning after all!”

Li Yao pondered for a moment and slowly shook his head. “Unlikely. There are three suspicions points.

“Firstly, if Earth was really a Sector of the Star Ocean Imperium in the past, why was there not any spiritual energy at all?

“Yes. We’ve seen a lot of worlds where the spiritual energy was low, but it can’t be so low that it doesn’t exist at all, right?

“There were more than six billion people on Earth. Let’s say the odds of a Cultivator being born are one in a hundred million. There were bound to be dozens of Cultivators even so!

“But the truth is that there was no such thing as spiritual energy in the history of Earth. There was never a Cultivator, either.”

“Says who?” the mental devil argued. “Of course, there were spiritual energy and Cultivators on Earth. In the western history, there were Jesus and his apostles, who revealed all kinds of miracles. In the middle ages, there were tales of werewolves and vampires. In the eastern history, there were also almighty people such as Zhang Jiao and Zuo Ci, who could allegedly change the weather and enslave ghosts. Stories about zombies were passed on, too. Were they not Cultivators?

“Don’t glare at me. They might all be made up, but as the saying goes, there are no waves without wind. If they did not have the notion of ‘Cultivator’ in advance, how could the people have fabricated the omnipotent persons?

“Moreover, even if everything that I said is false, the super ugly woman you saw in your dream must be real, right? Wasn’t she a Cultivator on Earth?”

Li Yao was lost for words for a moment. After recovering from his daze, he continued. “Secondly, even if the Earth Civilization was truly part of the Cultivation Civilization, the words such as ‘logic’ and ‘stock’ only came into being in the past two thousand years, at which point Earth should not have been connected with the world of Cultivators. Why is it so coincidental that all the tales in the world of Cultivators were repeated in the history of Earth?

“As for the third suspicious point, it’s the Vulture Plan. What was the so-called Vulture Plan referring to exactly? Whether Earth was related to the world of Cultivators or not, there were never major catastrophes on Earth at the beginning of the twenty-first century. What was the threat that was ‘too dark and too strong’?”

Chapter 1183 - Problem Solved!

“Therefore, even if Earth is really part of the world of Cultivators and was part of the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago, it was definitely not a random Sector but a unique existence!” the mental devil observed.

“Chances are that the peaceful Earth at the beginning of the twenty-first century was not what Earth really was! Or maybe, in the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago, or even in the years of war previously, it was not known as ‘Earth’ at all but something much more famous!”

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. He asked, “Are you suggesting that we might’ve read its name millions of times in the history books but never realized that it was ‘Earth’?”

The mental devil nodded quickly. “Yes. If that’s the case, everything makes sense.”

“Maybe,” Li Yao said, somewhat gloomily. “Right now, we don’t have enough clues. We can deduce however we want, but we can never know the results of the deductions for sure. I really can’t understand that, if the me in the previous life escaped to a place so far away from Earth, why did I conceal the critical information in my soul and only give it out like squeezing toothpaste instead of telling myself the entire truth?”

“It’s a simple question.” The mental devil thought for a moment and replied, “On one hand, the data and shock to the system from the information would have been too immense. If everything is released at once, it would have crushed our brain like a tsunami or a hurricane. Therefore, making ourselves recall it bit by bit as we advance and our soul grows stronger is the safest and most stable approach.”

Li Yao was dazed for a moment and realized that it did make sense.

He clearly remembered the excited feeling of a pounding heart and exploding veins a moment ago.

Despite the fact that he was in the Nascent Soul Stage, the unparalleled excitement had still been too much for him. He had felt that the world was swirling before him. His head had been dizzy, and his heart had been about to rip open his chest and jump out.

If it were in the past, when his Cultivation was not high enough, or when he was still an ordinary person, the burden of such a memory piece would have burnt his brain and deprived him of his full mental faculties.

“On the other hand,” the mental devil continued, “maybe, we are still too weak at present to solve the problems regarding Earth. So, we would merely be bothering ourselves even if we told ourselves the whole truth. That might be why we don’t need to know so much right now.”

“Weak?” Li Yao sniffed. Looking at his palms where spiritual fire was about to pop up, he asked, “Is the legendary Nascent Soul Stage still weak?”

“What about the Nascent Soul Stage?” the mental devil sneered. “Don’t think that it is a big deal. Just think about the capability of Earth first. Let’s forget whether or not there is a deeper truth about Earth and simply focus on the two superficial superpowers. Is a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator enough to deal with almost twenty aircraft carrier groups and tens of thousands of nuclear bombs?”

Li Yao blinked and thought hard for a moment before he was struck by depression.

Yes, after he advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage, one punch from him was more or less enough to blow up a mountain or crush a warship. He was also able to live in the deep sea or a vacuum by himself for a long time now.

Although there were no Cultivators on Earth on the surface, and it was just ordinary people manipulating electric or chemical weapons, it did not mean that he could do whatever he want on Earth.

The most critical problem was the duration of his combat ability—how long he could fight in a battle.

During a battle, a Cultivator had to burn their life and soul incessantly. It was even more so after one advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage.

For a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, every second in their peak state would consume astronomical resources, spiritual energy, soul power, and vitality!

When a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator joined a battle, they would usually only stay in their peak state for several minutes, ten minutes at best.

Most of the time, they would keep themselves in the Building Foundation Stage and the Core Formation Stage and fight in their ‘energy-saving mode’ in order to lengthen the duration of their combat ability.

Only when they encountered a strategic target that was worth their attack would they burn their life and soul and unleash their strongest strike!

For a beginner like Li Yao who was new to the Nascent Soul Stage and seriously short of experience, it was even more so. He felt like he was like a three-year-old who was given an enormous torch as a toy, and he might burn himself up if he played with it carelessly!

Li Yao had run tests on his body before. On the condition that he had swallowed enough strengthening drugs and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures in advance, he could stay in his peak state for four to five minutes. If he lingered any longer, his body and soul would be damaged.

Also, however hard he tried to hold back the damage and challenge his limits, it was impossible for him to stay in the peak state for longer than ten minutes, unless he had chance to take drugs continuously during a combat. Even so, it would take some time for the drugs to be digested and absorbed. He was still not able to keep himself in his peak state for long.

Among all the battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, such a duration was perhaps the shortest, but it could not be helped. Breaking into the Nascent Soul Stage at such a young age was a miracle of miracles itself. It was only natural that he was not as fluent and experienced as those old monsters who were more than one hundred or even two hundred years old.

However, Li Yao estimated that, even for the most experienced Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who were most adept at controlling themselves precisely, it was hardly likely that they could stay in their peak state for longer than twenty minutes.

Everybody would get exhausted. Fighting was an exhausting activity. The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were human beings, too. Ergo, the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators could be exhausted.

The logic was quite simple.

Li Yao ran a simulation inside his brain. If the two superpowers on Earth at the beginning of the twenty-first century in his memory were his opponents, the battlefield was the Pacific Ocean, and he was faced with almost ten aircraft carrier groups and hundreds of fourth-generation and fifth-generation supersonic stealth fighter jets, the consequence would likely be…

He would blow up a hundred or so supersonic fighter jets with his immense capability. With any luck, he would even have the opportunity to break through the air-defense fire network, sneak into one of the aircraft carriers, and sink it!

But there would be no later.

After taking down one aircraft carrier group, his spiritual energy would be drained. He could only wait to be killed or flee in a hurry.

But the world was a world devoid of spiritual energy. Even if he managed to escape from the battlefield, there would be no place where he could rest and recover himself!

All in all, it might be as easy as pie for a Cultivator to fight ordinary people.

But however impressive the Cultivator’s appetite was, their stomach would still explode if they ate hundreds of pies in a row!

“Alright. You’re right. We are not capable enough yet. It is meaningless for us to consider those things. What can we do other than look at each other even if we know the truth about the Vulture Plan?”

Li Yao leapt up and warmed up his wrists and ankles against the freezing wind at the window. Looking at the brightness of dawn appearing on the horizon, he grinned, with glittering brilliance beaming out of his eyes. “If we are not capable yet, we must train ourselves harder, harder, and harder! The Nascent Soul Stage is not the end; it is just a new beginning for me!

“Hehe. At the very least, we already know now that Earth exists and is connected to the world of Cultivators in ways we can’t understand.

“If they are connected, I will definitely be able to find Earth after I advance into higher levels!

“However, the mysteries of Earth can wait. The most important enemy right now is still the Imperium of True Human Beings!”

Li Yao had thought very rationally about his previous life and his current one.

However weird the dream that had been haunting him was, it was just a dream after all.

Everything that had happened in the past should be left to the past, and everything that was yet to happen should be embraced in the future. No matter what he had been in the past, he was now a Cultivator of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and a citizen of the Star Glory Federation!

His family, friends, and compatriots lived in this place. Of course, he would fight until the end to protect everything that mattered to him!

Maybe, after defeating the Imperium of True Human Beings, he would see if he could return to Earth if opportunity arose.

But before all that, he should crush the Imperium of True Human Beings, the most wicked of all the civilizations of human beings!

Li Yao was suddenly amused when he thought about that. He realized that the hesitation that he had a moment ago was utterly unnecessary. As long as he passed the test of the Imperium of True Human Beings, the problem would be solved by itself.

The reason was simple. Even if ‘Earth’ did exist, it was nothing more than a single habitable planet. How awesome could a single planet be?

The Imperium of True Human Beings, on the other hand, was very likely to have controlled hundreds of Sectors. There must be at least hundreds of habitable planets in its territory.

If they truly defeated the Imperium of True Human Beings, it meant that the Star Glory Federation would be the strongest country of human beings in the sea of stars.

By then, would it not be more than simple to uncover the mysteries about Earth?

On the other hand, if they failed to defeat the Imperium of True Human Beings…

Then, Li Yao estimated that he must have already been killed in battle. The things about Earth would be none of his business anymore!

That’s right. No matter where the future leads me, my own strength is what matters most. I cannot be sluggish and must go on to train myself!

There are too many mysteries in the sea of stars waiting to be explored by me. I can’t wait to march to the center of the three thousand Sectors now!

The dawn was about to come, and Li Yao could not have been more excited. Instead of taking another nap, he cleaned himself and left his shabby ‘new home’.

The Grand Desolate Plateau was still under construction. Tents and super heavy engineering magical equipment were everywhere. There were also round, silver buildings that looked like enormous eggshells on the ground.

They were the half-permanent hard-shell tents built with the technology imported from the Flying Star Sector. The defense rune arrays outside of the buildings were enough to withstand the scourge of level-nine wind and storms. The reconstruction committee and some other temporary agencies, as well as the refining workshops and the crystal warehouses that required absolutely stability, were all based inside such buildings.

Chapter 1184 - Mutations of Black Wing!

The Grand Desolate Plateau was the point of impact between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector. This place was like a broken eggshell. Riddled with natural wormholes, it was the best location for space jumps.

Therefore, in the planning of the federal government, the Grand Desolate Plateau in the future would be built into a super-large universal port and a center of transportation that was connected to the Flying Star Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and even more Sectors. People would be able to reach the vast territory of the ‘new federation’ in the sea of stars from this place.

The resources, technology, magical equipment, relics, and experts from the Flying Star Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and other Sectors in the future would gather on the Grand Desolate Plateau and produce the most dazzling sparks during their collision, providing the most powerful impetus to push the new federation forward!

A Cutting-Edge Magical Equipment Industrial Park, which was meant to develop the latest technology in spiritual energy and biochemistry of the three Sectors, was now under construction.

With the tremendous wealth of the Glorious Sunlight Group, Li Yao had established a personal refining workshop inside the park in advance.

Above the giant, silver egg that was almost a hundred meters in diameter, there was a smiling star that was quite eye-catching. It was the fiend star, a signature of the magical equipment produced by Li Yao!

Only the items with the mark of the fiend star had been approved or produced by him.

It was not hard to imagine that, in the federation today, such items were all priceless. Sometimes, it was impossible to buy one even if someone offered tremendous money.

Li Yao had never intended to produce magical equipment for selling in the first place. In the past month, the magical equipment that he had carefully refined was all gifts that he gave to Ding Lingdang, Guo Chunfeng, Fiend Blade Peng Hail, Ding Yin, Wei Qingqing, and other family and friends.

Li Yao walked to the door of his personal refining workshop and typed in three passwords.

The door of the workshop was opened after a noise. Because the air pressure inside was higher than outside, he was greeted by a gentle breeze.

The personal refining workshop had only been built recently. Containers and buffer foam for the refining facilities were all over the room. There was barely anywhere he could set foot on.

In an airtight booth deep inside the refining workshop, however, a translucent cylinder that looked like a medical cabin was standing.

Inside the cylinder were fluids that stored tremendous spiritual energy. The object was also connected to dozens of crystal processors through the thick crystal cables.

Little Black, the flying sword that had accompanied Li Yao for twenty years, was floating inside the fluids.

Little Black was a very smart flying sword. It even boasted certain self-awareness, which made it look like a lovely puppy occasionally.

Li Yao was very suspicious that it was much more than a simple flying sword.

In the battle against Diwu Jian, a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, Little Black had been hit by Five Disintegrations of Heavens and Human, his ultimate skill. A lot of cracks had appeared on its surface because of the attack.

In the battle against Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao, without caring about its own wounds, Little Black had drawn out the highest speed and the most powerful blast, helping Li Yao to perform the earth-breaking attack and execute Zhou Hengdao.

But Little Black was ‘heavily wounded’ itself. It was seriously broken and fell into weird dormancy.

Faced with such a situation, Li Yao did not know what to do despite his anxiety.

After returning to the capital city, he had soaked Little Black in the special fluids of spiritual energy so that it could swallow endless spiritual energy every day. In the meantime, he monitored the flying sword’s situation through the crystal processors. It was sort of a conservative treatment.

It was rather odd that, although Little Black had fallen asleep and did not answer his call, it would absorb all the spiritual energy inside the crystals and the Heavenly

Materials and Earthly Treasures with a powerful attraction force whenever it came into contact with them!

It was also like a boundless world was hidden in the small body of the flying sword, which could not be filled up however many crystals were absorbed!

Li Yao calculated that Little Black, in its dormancy, had consumed resources multiple times more than those a Cultivator at the peak of the Core Formation Stage would during high-intensity training sessions every day!

Li Yao was perhaps the only guy wealthy enough to feed such a fellow who ate, slept, but simply did not talk. If it were any other Cultivator, they would have long gone bankrupt when they were trying to feed the flying sword!

The guy is swallowing the resources faster and faster now!

Li Yao turned on the surveillance light beam and checked Little Black’s situation, only to discover that the density of the fluids, which contained the elements of thirty-seven crystals, had dropped by more than a half. Most of the materials that stored spiritual energy had been swallowed by the flying sword.

Expanding the curve of Little Black’s food intake to show the current week, Li Yao discovered that it was getting steeper every day.

It meant time Black Wing’s ‘appetite’ was better and better. The daily resources it consumed on average were five times more than it did in an entire month before!

Are you kidding me? If you keep on eating like this, even I will not be able to feed you soon! Or maybe, is this a sign that you will wake up soon?

Li Yao thought of something. He took a piece of the Sun Flame Crystal, a marrow crystal that contained immense spiritual energy of the fire class, from his Cosmos Ring and threw it into the life-support system.

The moment the scarlet Sun Flame Crystal fell into the fluids, bright red colors were triggered. Like a sponge that had been expanded dozens of times, it dropped down slowly.

When it sank to Black Wing, dozens of black spiritual threads dashed out of Black Wing’s immeasurable cracks and enveloped the Sun Flame Crystal. In the blink of an eye, both the red colors and the Sun Flame Crystal itself were devoured!

When the black spiritual threads retreated into Black Wing in satisfaction, what appeared in front of Li Yao’s eyes was nothing more than a gray stone with holes that looked like a honeycomb. He could not perceive any spiritual energy from the marrow crystal anymore.

“Is that you, Little Black?”

Li Yao was overjoyed. When Black Wing was swallowing the Sun Flame Crystal, he had sensed a familiar wave that was similar to the feeling that Little Black had given him in the past!

But Black Wing, after having a wonderful meal, simply floated in the fluids lazily and showed no response to his calls.

Li Yao frowned. He was certain that he had perceived Little Black a moment ago. Also, judging from the statistics, it was high time that Little Black awakened. Something was definitely not right if the flying sword kept eating and sleeping all day.

Li Yao stuck his hands to the life-sustaining system. He released his telepathic thoughts and penetrated through the strengthened glass and fluids, crawling into the flying sword through the cracks on Little Black.

He meant to reach out to Little Black again in such a way.

Over the past several months, he had tried many times, but he had not gone deeper than this time before.

A black labyrinth seemed to be hidden deep inside the cracks of Black Wing, and the exit of the labyrinth was a mysterious, enormous world. Despite the magnificence of Li Yao's soul power, and even after he split up hundreds of telepathic thoughts, he was not sure that he had explored one thousandth of the world inside Black Wing.

Li Yao's eyes turned deep and dark, as if his soul had left his body and dived into Black Wing. After groping in the darkness for who know how long, he still found nothing.

Sensing that he was running out of soul power, Li Yao sighed and was about to retract his telepathic thoughts when a weird thing happened!

He suddenly discovered that his hundreds of telepathic thoughts seemed to be attracted by something, and he could not retract them at all!

Not just that, the mysterious force was even pulling his telepathic thoughts and his soul into the flying sword, as if it was trying to swallow him!

Li Yao was greatly alarmed. He hurried to free himself from the place. He was even prepared to cut off the hundreds of spiritual threads and abandon the telepathic thoughts if the situation demanded so that he would not be swallowed, even though his soul might be damaged!

Just when he was about to make the tough decision, he suddenly sensed a familiar scent from the depths of the flying sword. It was Little Black!

Little Black seemed to be trapped by something. It was anxiously asking for his help!

Li Yao only considered for half a second before he gritted his teeth and triggered all his soul power. His telepathic thoughts blew at the depths of the flying sword like a raging flood!

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Li Yao sensed that his soul had crashed into an extremely solid wall and nearly fell to pieces.

However, with the joint force of him and Little Black, after a momentary stalemate, the wall was still blown up by them!

A great explosion was raised the moment the wall was broken!

The explosion not only blew his soul back into his brain but also blew Black Wing, which was soaking in the fluids, into smithereens!

“Little Black!”

Li Yao was both angry and anxious. His head was a mess, and his cerebral vessels broke apart one after another. He was not able to move at all for the next half a minute.

After he restored the cerebral vessels in fury and regained control of his body, he observed, only to discover that Black Wing had been shattered into hundreds of lackluster pieces and fallen to the bottom of the fluids!

However…

What—what is this?

Before Li Yao had the chance to be devastated, his attention was attracted by the weird thing that was popping up from the fluids.

Yes, Black Wing had broken into pieces, but materials that looked like both smoke and ink were popping up from the broken Black Wing. After they flowed out of the fluids, they gathered in midair into a weird black ball!

The black ball was neither metal nor stone. It did not look like flesh or wood, either. It was elastic and could be kneaded into any form.

If it had to be described, Li Yao felt that it looked like… a super large egg!

Before Li Yao realized what was going on, the super large ‘egg’ bounced in midair for a moment and then jumped into Li Yao’s arms. Like a puppy that had finally found its master after losing its way for a long time, it was rubbing Li Yao in delight!

Moreover, on the side that appeared to be its ‘bottom’, a small ‘tail’ was condensed on the surface of the black materials, which was wagging in excitement.

Caught unprepared, Li Yao was truly stunned.

However, the familiar scent from the ‘egg’ made him overjoyed. He hugged the guy and asked, “Little Black, is it really you? You’re awake!”

Chapter 1185 - Pop’s Last Words! (End of Volume III)

The egg-like black ball continued rubbing Li Yao’s face. It was soft, fat, and warm, like the pink bottom of a baby.

Seeing that Little Back, who had been accompanying him since his childhood, was now reborn in a brand-new form, Li Yao was filled with mixed feelings, almost shedding tears of joy. “Excellent, Little Black. So, your real identity is not a flying sword but an egg!”

Little Black’s pointy tail waved in dissatisfaction, as if it were saying, “I am not an egg!”

“Then, what are you exactly? I’ve never seen such magical equipment before!”

Li Yao could not have felt stranger. He extended one of his fingers and jabbed Little Black.

He had never seen such a weird material before. Even ‘liquid metal’ was not enough to describe one ten thousandth of Little Black’s qualities.

Little Black’s ‘tail’ shook for a long time in confusion, as if it did not know what it was either. Eventually, ripples spread out on its ‘head’, and two items popped up from its body.

The first item was a three-edged metal stick the width of a finger.

Li Yao could not discern the materials that the stick was made of. He only knew that the hardness and density of the stick were extremely high. At the very least, it was much harder than all the metals and rocks that Li Yao had seen.

Compact spiritual stripes had been carved on the mental stick. They were fluent and in a consistent style.

Li Yao studied for a while. He could tell that those spiritual stripes were from the heyday of the Star Ocean Imperium, but he failed to figure out the specific usage of them.

Perhaps, the stick is a key?

No. Not a key, but half a key.

Some of the rune arrays on the stick were obviously incomplete. Also, there were quite a few mortises on one side of the stick that were perhaps meant to connect another component.

Half a key from the Star Ocean Imperium? What can it open?

The second item that Little Black ‘vomited’, on the other hand, was quite common. It was just a jade chip—a modern one produced by the Star Ocean Imperium no earlier than thirty years ago.

Li Yao blinked and inserted the jade chip into his portable crystal processor.

The light beam shook for a moment. As the ripples slowly condensed, a slobby man, who did not seem to fit in the world he was living in at all, showed up. The man grinned at him and said gently, “Ah Yao!”

“Pop!” Li Yao exclaimed in surprise with tears swirling inside his eyes.

The man inside the light beam was exactly his foster father, the man who had raised him for almost ten years in the magical equipment graveyard, taught him the basic ethics of a human being, and laid a solid foundation for his refining skills!

In Li Yao's memory, his foster father had fallen into the magical equipment graveyard from a garbage ship. The old man's body had always been in poor condition. He also liked the lousiest liquor most. After he was drunk, he would vomit, and when he was sober again, he went on drinking. He always crept into the garbage hills when he was half-wasted and got himself hurt. He would not listen to Li Yao even if the latter spoke to him many times about it. It was almost like a self-torture.

After torturing himself for ten years, he had passed away on a stormy night. He had not said much when he was dying.

Li Yao had never expected his foster father to have left a jade chip inside Little Black!

It was obvious that the jade would not be opened until his Cultivation reached a point where he could break Little Black's seal!

Pop, where are you from? Travelling in dozens of Sectors, carrying a piece of mysterious magical equipment like Little Black with you, and leaving your last words for me in such a weird way?

Were you worried about something? Was there anything unfulfilled? I'm listening!

Li Yao bulged his eyes and pricked his ears up.

The slobby middle-aged man on the light bean said in a low voice, “Ah Yan, if you are watching this video, it means that you are at least in the peak of the Core Formation Stage, or maybe in the Nascent Soul Stage. So, you are slightly qualified to travel in the sea of stars now.

“Besides, you should’ve noticed the anomalies about me and Black Wing and guessed that we are not natives of the Heaven’s Origin Sector.”

Li Yao nodded. His foster father was not from the Heaven’s Origin Sector. It was not an unexpected answer.

Wearing the most complicated expression, the slobby middle-aged man stopped for a long time before he continued slowly. “Ah Yao, after knowing that I will die very soon, I have been debating with myself whether or not I should tell you the truth about the center of the sea of stars. Or maybe, should I wager on the possibility that you will live your life happily in the bliss of ignorance?

“In the end, I decided to set up such a test. If your Cultivation is not high enough to pass my test, it will be unnecessary for you to know what I’m going to say next, because even if you do, there will be nothing you can do except wait for your doom to arrive.

“But now that you’ve passed my test, I can tell you my background and my suffocating and devastating homeland!”

When he mentioned his homeland, the slobby middle-aged man was clearly shivering. His teeth clattering violently, he managed to go on. “My homeland, the country that I escaped from and would never have the courage to face, is the strongest nation of human beings in the sea of stars. It is also the evilest, most terrible civilization in the history of mankind. No, it is even not qualified to be listed as a civilization of mankind; it is the terminator of all civilizations of mankind!

“You people living in the minor Heaven’s Origin Sector at the edge of the universe cannot even begin to fathom its dominance or one millionth of its wickedness!

“Right now, looming at the center of the sea of stars, it is extending tentacles to anywhere that was once illuminated by the fire of humanity. It is invading and expanding unstoppably!

“Maybe, one day, my homeland will reach the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Star Glory Federation, and you, my son, too!”

Li Yao nodded heavily. That explained a lot. He understood everything now!

As he expected, his father was from the Imperium of True Human Beings. Because his foster father was not satisfied about certain policies of the imperium and believed that the Immortal Cultivators were not qualified as a civilization of mankind but a threat to it, his foster father made up his mind to flee from the country to the edge of the cosmos.

However, his foster father was also very clear that, since the imperium was expanding rapidly, chances were that it would invade the Star Glory Federation soon.

His foster father had passed away more than ten years ago. In his eyes, at that time, the insignificant federation was obviously no match for the imperium. It would have been blown to smithereens the moment the expedition army of the imperium arrived.

That was why his foster father had always been so miserable and desperate!

“If… ” The slobby middle-aged man gnashed his teeth. “If the army from my homeland finally arrives on your doorstep one day, the only suggestion I can give you is… don’t surrender—resist to the end!

“Yes, you are certainly no match for it, but even if you are destroyed, you will die with the pride and dignity of human beings! If you surrender, you will be no longer human beings, not even animals, and, in some cases, no better than germs!”

Li Yao took a long breath and clenched his fists. He had never felt more passionate!

His foster father was right. Enslaved by the wretched Immortal Cultivators of the Imperium of True Human Beings, the ordinary people were simply ants and weeds, nothing remotely related to human beings!

The war between the Cultivators and the Immortal Cultivators had only just begun. They would certainly fight to the end until the blood of the last Cultivator was shed in the sea of stars!

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and declared, one word after another, “Rest assured, pop. No matter how formidable the imperium is, we will show them the pride of the federation!”

Naturally, the slobby middle-aged man could not hear his reply. He simply continued. “Ah Yao, listen up. My homeland—the most dreadful force of human beings in the universe—is the Alliance of the Holy Covenant!”

“Huh?”

“The Covenant Alliance, the strong, most wicked, and most terrifying nation of human beings in the entire universe! So far, countless Sectors have fallen into the hands of the Covenant Alliance. None of them were even close to be match for the Covenant Alliance!

“To resist the Covenant Alliance, which is rising like the sun, even the traditional superpower Imperium of True Human Beings, which always considered itself the rightful successor of the Star Ocean Imperium, has betrayed its past beliefs, abandoned the glory of Cultivators, and trampled on humanity, turning themselves into pure animals and out-and-out war machines!

“Despite the gory prices they paid, the Imperium, which has been utterly deformed, only managed to slow the march of the Covenant Alliance. As for how long their fierce war at the center of the universe will last and which side will be the final winner, we might not be able to know the answer this century!”

“…” Li Yao.

“Listen Ah Yao, since you are close to, if not already at, the Nascent Soul Stage, you can more or less influence the policies of the federation now! If one day, the Covenant Alliance really comes at the federation, don’t hesitate, and run away immediately! Run to the center of the universe and ask for the reinforcement of the Imperium of True Human Beings! If possible, it’s best that the entire Heaven’s Origin Sector be ceded to and protected by the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“Have you seen the metal stick? You don’t need to know what it is. When you arrive in the imperium, go and find a woman named ‘Li Linghai’. Give her the metal stick and the jade chip!

“The jade chip can prove your identity. There’s also a video that I’ve imposed a barrier on. It’s a few words that I’ve left for her. You don’t need to know them.

“Since you are my foster son, after you give her the metal stick, she will not wrong you for my sake. Even the Heaven’s Origin Sector might be protected by her and the imperium!

“Of course, that is depending on the imperium defeating the Covenant Alliance. If even the imperium is crushed by the Covenant Alliance, it will be doomed. Everything will be doomed!

“You don’t need to worry about where to find Li Linghai. If you really make your way to the imperium, just ask anybody you run into, and they will tell you where she is. However, as for exactly how you can approach her, you will have to work it out yourself.

“Remember, nobody except Li Linghai is to see the metal stick. If anybody does, kill them immediately! Otherwise, you will be mired in infinite trouble!

“This is also one reason I hesitated to tell you the truth.

“As for this video, you can clip the part about the metal stick and Li Linghai off and simply inform the leadership of the federation of the existence of the Covenant Alliance and the imperium so that they can be better prepared!”

The slobby middle-aged man coughed and vomited a mouthful of blood. Not bothering to wipe it off, he mumbled, “Ah Yao, I know that you are good kid. The Star Glory

Federation is a good country that persists in the orthodoxy principles of human beings, too.

“Perhaps, after you reach the imperium, you will find their approaches in complete violation of your beliefs and your moral standards. Those condescending and merciless Immortal Cultivators will definitely appear unacceptable to you!

“However, trust me. No matter how evil the Imperium appears to be in your eyes, the Covenant Alliance will be at least ten thousand times eviler!

“Are we clear?”

His eyes were bloodshot, and he was almost extending his head out of the light beam. He shouted desperately, “Don’t trust the Covenant Alliance. Don’t trust the so-called ‘Path of Ultimate Benevolence’ or ‘Pangu’s Covenant’. Don’t trust any of that. Never!

“This is the cruelty of the universe today. If you have to choose sides between the Covenant Alliance and the Imperium in the bleeding sea of stars, the Imperium should be your only option.

“However unwilling you are, and however ugly the Imperium of True Human Beings is, it is by far… the last guardian of humanity now!”

[End of Volume III]

[Prelude of Volume IV]

“Cough, cough. You self-righteous Cultivators don’t know the first thing about the universe or the true meaning of ‘human being’!”

…

“A few rookies in the Nascent Soul Stage… who gave you the courage to clamor here?”

…

“Haha! Come on, old monster. Open your eyes and observe! This is the true strength of human beings! We are the true human beings! The Immortal Cultivators shall never bend!”

Translator/Author’s note

Hi, everybody. Welcome to the end of Volume III, which appears to be a war between human beings and demon but is in fact still one between human beings and human beings. The theme of this volume is heavier, and more philosophical, than that of the previous two volumes. In Volume II, there are bad Cultivators, but they are called the Immortal Cultivators. Cultivators as a whole is still virtuous. But in Volume III, Cultivators are no longer necessarily representatives of justice. Also, the villains of Volume III, just like those in Volume II, have good reasons for their wrongdoings. I think it has always been a highlight of this novel. The design of two supervillains, one responsible for planning and the other responsible for fighting, is quite refreshing for me, too. All in all, the New Federation is rising, and the other two superpowers in the universe have announced their arrival. The mysteries about Earth are partly answered, too, but still with many questions unanswered. Where will Li Yao go next? How is he related to Earth? Wait and find out in the next volume! The FMC team will take a rest for a few days before the next volume starts. We hope you have enjoyed the read ?

Chapter 1186 - Dancing Butterfly

When the butterfly broke out of her cocoon, the world around her had experienced drastic changes. She was faced with the freezing rain and the overwhelming coldness on the Grand Desolate Plateau of the Heaven’s Origin Sector in the early spring, instead of the warm, moist breeze at the south of the Blood Demon Sector, her hometown.

The ghastly changes caught the little creature unprepared.

But her species was best known for their tough vitality. During the prolonged cold winter, when most insects were frozen in the snow, her species would turn into a cocoon and weather through the winter before they became butterflies again and reembraced the sun when spring came.

Before her simple nerves responded to the changes of the outside world, the strength hidden in the deepest part of her genes forced her to flap her wings fast and fly higher.

She observed the world around with great interest, trying to look for a shelter that was slightly warmer and food, of course. After feasting upon the delicious, sweet juices from flowers and grasses, she would also need to find a mate to pass the ancient genes inherited from her ancestors on to the next generation.

Her nerves that were too simple, bordering on shabby, could not afford too much hesitation, depression, and self-pity. After making sure her destiny, she was no longer confused or overwhelmed by the fear of failure or death, focusing on dancing in the cold rain.

Unfolding in front of her eyes, however, was a dazzling new world.

After several months of arduous effort from millions of workers and federal soldiers, the boundless Grand Desolate Plateau was no longer as empty and desolate as it had once been but a lively picture of prosperity!

The molten steel was spluttering, and the heavy magical equipment was fulminating. Hundreds of workers gathered together and sang the most deafening songs, as loud as the anthems of the legions of the federal army nearby. Even the clouds in the sky seemed to be shattered!

Based on the abandoned starships and the fixed tents, and with the underground buildings as the core, a new city was already taking shape after only several months.

The city, which was named Grand Desolate, would be not only where the Grand Desolate War Institution was located but also the communication center of economy, politics, and culture for the three Sectors!

The butterfly was fascinated by the lively scene there. Because of the hard-working workers and soldiers, the temperature in Grand Desolate City was several degrees higher than the wilderness, a difference that would very likely determine her life and death.

The butterfly flapped her wings and flew to Grand Desolate City.

Countless glittering, bizarrely-shaped buildings, unseen before in the history of either the Heaven’s Origin Sector or the Blood Demon Sector, were flashing below her translucent wings.

If her wisdom was enhanced a million times, and after thousands of years of evolution, she might come to realize the usages of those buildings and what an incredible miracle it was to have such buildings established on such a derelict place!

At the outmost area of her leap, in the northwest direction of Grand Desolate City, the super communication arrays made of more than fifty thousand pan-like signal transmitters could break the limitation of the three-dimensional space and make the information perform space jumps, thereby achieving real-time communication among the Heaven's Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector.

Although the so-called 'real-time' still had minutes, if not hours, of lag, for the Sectors that were countless light years away from each other, the delay was nothing more than the blink of an eye.

Next to the super communication array was a giant pit, dozens of kilometers in diameter. It was dark and bottomless. The sand and rocks excavated from the pit alone had been piled into a continuous man-made mountain next to Grand Desolate City. There was also a microclimate around the giant pit and even an inward attraction force, which nearly swallowed the butterfly.

The pit was the upgraded version of the Heaven's Artillery, which was still under construction. After adopting the state-of-the-art space jump technology of the Flying Star Sector, it would boast a teleportation ability dozens of times higher than its previous version. Projecting several Nascent Soul

Stage Cultivators to certain coordinates in the space zones nearby would not pose a problem!

The new-generation Heaven’s Artillery, the under-repair Eye of Blood Demon, and the Cosmic Slingshot of the Flying Star Sector would be the bridges that connected the three Sectors!

Wu!

A prolonged shriek suddenly echoed from another enormous building below the butterfly. Scared, she hurried to dodge to one side.

The dome of the egg-like building, on the other hand, suddenly split apart and retreated to the two sides. A light crystal warship activated the anti-gravity rune arrays and slowly floated from inside.

The strengthened external skeletons on the front of the warship and the pair of crystal and acid cannons, which should have been contradictory to each other, indicated that it was not a random crystal warship.

In fact, it was an experiment model of the new-generation warship that had adopted the most advanced technologies of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector. It was installed with a dual system of biochemistry and spiritual energy, and it was covered by both crystal armor and a strengthened external skeleton. Crystal cannons and acid cannons were both its weapons. Crystal cables and synthesized neurons were utilized at the same time to maneuver it.

To quote the reporters of the Star Glory Federation, who liked exaggeration more than anything else, it was a future warship!

Boom!

The experiment, which represented the future, collapsed in black smoke with a dull fulmination after rising only less than two hundred meters, perhaps due to the incompatibility of the dual system.

The refiners in the dock, however, had been prepared for all this. Hundreds of buffer rune arrays were activated at the same time. An invisible safety net seemed to be weaved above the dock and held the broken warship. After fluctuating for a moment, the warship became still in midair.

The refiners, wearing the engineering crystal suits from the Flying Star Sector, hurried to fly to the damaged parts of the warship.

The butterfly was deeply awed by the enormous creature. An enormous beast that had collapsed was still an enormous beast. It was not something that she could approach.

The butterfly continued flying toward the center of the city. She passed a brand-new campus that the Grand Desolate War Institution was planning, a crystal suit center co-funded by the three major crystal suit centers of the Flying Star Sector and the Glorious Sunlight Group, a research institute on the biodiversity of the Blood Demon Sector, and a trade market that came to being spontaneously and was running before the central area of Grand Desolate City was completed. The experts from the three Sectors often went there to exchange the messages about techniques, technology, magical equipment, and relics.

The butterfly did not know that the cocoon in which she had been hiding was buried in the soil of an Ice Marigold, which had been brought to the trade market from the Blood Demon Sector in a flowerpot.

Even if she did, she would not care about it because she too busy observing the colorful glass walls in the air, in which many giant creatures resembling hairless chimps were vibrating the air and sending out information she could not comprehend.

The butterfly was not certain whether the glass walls were real, or maybe they were intangible like the rainbows after a storm.

Her speculation was quite close to the truth.

The 3D light beams floated in the sky of Grand Desolate City were playing and replaying two pieces of breaking news.

The first piece of news was the conclusion of the war tribunal.

After the Blood Demon Sector submitted the instrument of surrender, and the two Sectors signed the peace agreement, the war tribunal targeting the Blood Demon Sector’s invasion on the Heaven’s Origin Sector immediately started to work.

During the century of conflicts, most of them were in the form of ‘beast tide’ in the previous ninety years. On many occasions, it was even impossible to tell whether the demon beasts of the Blood Demon Sector ran to the Heaven’s Origin Sector on their own through the natural wormholes or they were actually driven by the demons.

In fact, weirdly enough, in the past ten years, although the two parties regarded each other as their sworn enemy, they had never officially declared war on each other.

Therefore, most of the cases that the war tribunal worked on were about the crimes that the coalition army of demons committed while it was sweeping across the Grand Desolate Plateau in the Battle of Dawn three years ago, as well as the crimes of the Red Tide Plan, in which the demons assaulted the capital city of the Star Glory Federation.

The Battle of Dawn was the first large-scale military action taken by the coalition army of demons to invade the federation. It was planned and organized by the Kingdom of Lion Butchers and the supporters of continentalism in the Nether Spring Kingdom.

It was a pity that most of the suspects had already been trapped by Li Yao and killed in the destruction of the Eye of Blood Demon.

Elder Nether Spring was perhaps the only survivor of the disaster, but his ending was certainly not a pleasant one. One might say that his karma had caught to him.

Thus, the only guy who could stand in the war tribunal to be trialed and should be responsible for the beast tide outbreak in the capital city was Jin Tuyi, the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons!

After months of deliberation, the nine special judges of the war tribunal had ruled unanimously that Jin Tuyi was found guilty of various war crimes, slaughter, and other felonies!

However, opinions differed as to how he should be punished.

By logic, death sentence was the only suitable penalty for such a criminal.

But Jin Tuyi was under very special circumstances.

After the examination of the Association of the Meditation Healers and dozens of well-known neurologists, they had reached the conclusion that, before the war tribunal started, Jin Tuyi had already lost his wisdom because of cerebral sclerosis. He was no more intelligent than a newborn baby.

It meant that Jin Tuyi had essentially already died as a ‘social person’. What remained was just a pile of meat that could breathe.

“As a suspect who has committed appalling crimes, if Jin Tuyi is executed in such an ignorant state, not only will it be painless for him, it will also be the greatest irony for the citizens who were killed miserably and even the entire federation!

“Having confronted Jin Tuyi face to face, I know his formidability very well!

“I’m even suspicious that he has accelerated the escalation of his cerebral sclerosis through a certain secret technique and turned himself into an incontinent retard intentionally. He must be trying to evade from the real punishment in such a way. It is going to be a mockery for the solemnness and the integrity of the federal law!

“If Jin Tuyi, as a retard, is sentenced to death right now, it is not going to be a real criminal of war that we punish but a pile of meat that looks identical to Jin Tuyi!”

Chapter 1187 - Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage!

Regarding the sentence of Jin Tuyi and the way to punish him, debate remained unabated in almost every trade of the federation.

From the representatives, the ministers, and the leaders of the major sects, who were at the center of politics, to the ordinary folk who were not involved in national affairs, all citizens of the federation were considering how to conclude the war between mankind and the demon race in a way that was satisfactory for everybody.

Li Yao, the Ultra-Level Federal Hero, presented his opinions on the forums and through various media outlets. After making his declaration, he continued.

“According to the neurologists, at the terminal phase of cerebral sclerosis, even the nerve endings will be frozen. Other than the most fundamental actions that are controlled by the brainstem such as his heartbeat or breathing, he is barely able to do or sense anything. Nothing is painful for him.

“It means that, even if Jin Tuyi is minced to a pulp right now, he will not feel the slightest pain. On the contrary, his death will be the way for him to escape from the real punishment forever!

“Therefore, I don’t think we should punish Jin Tuyi right now. I think we should preserve his body and head in a certain way until the day we can actually punish him comes!

“With the integration of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector, all kinds of technology, including those regarding the brain nerves, are making breakthroughs on a daily basis. I’m certain that, in the not so distant future, cerebral sclerosis, which is an untreatable disease right now, will be dealt with through certain methods!

“Also, according to the latest news I’ve heard, we have made an explosive breakthrough in human hibernation. We have theoretically grasped the ability to freeze a human body at an ultra-low temperature, which allows us to freeze someone in the river of time for one to two hundred years.

“Then, let Jin Tuyi be the first person to receive human hibernation. Let him hibernate until cerebral sclerosis is curable. After his disease is treated and his most clear consciousness is back, we will give him the real punishment that he deserves. All the pain that is due for him should be tasted by him without him missing any of it!

“In my opinion, that will be a real trial and the only ending suitable for such a war criminal as Jin Tuyi!

“Of course, the human hibernation technology is still immature. Faults might occur, but the worst outcome will only be equal to a death sentence for Jin Tuyi.

“I don’t see anything inappropriate in dealing with him in such a way!”

Li Yao’s words raised discussions in every part of the society. After the initial shock, everybody had to admit that he did have a point.

Jin Tuyi was nothing more than a vegetative who could barely walk on his own, often urinating and defecating in his own pants.

Nitpicking a vegetative, cursing him, and even beating him hard would not cause him the slightest pain, physically or mentally.

Because of his cerebral sclerosis, Jin Tuyi’s soul had been sealed in the depths of his brain. With the technology of the federation right now, it was impossible to dig his soul out through the soul searching technique.

Basically, the federation could do nothing about him except execute him directly.

However, in many cases, death was not a punishment but a relief. Somebody had also said that every problem would no longer be a problem after they died.

Even the countryfolk, in their fury, would curse other people by shouting that they would die a miserable death.

It was indicative enough that, sometimes, ‘not dying a miserable death’ was actually something worth hoping for.

If the ignorant Jin Tuyi died just like that, it was certainly not a miserable death, or a real punishment, but a way to solve all his problems.

It was obviously against the purpose of the war tribunal.

After a month of discussion, the nine special judges finally came to a decision. Jin Tuyi, as an ultra-level war criminal, was found guilty of all charges, but given his special circumstances, he was exempted from the death sentence for now. Instead, he would enter the hibernation state through the rapid-freezing technology until cerebral sclerosis was treatable, at which time he would be unfrozen, cured, and executed.

Such an arrangement seemed redundant, but it actually reflected the dignity of the federation and the solemnness of law. Therefore, it was an action of necessity.

The public welcomed such a ruling, too.

After the general public saw on the live stream that Jin Tuyi was just chuckling like a moron, and even trying to pee at the bailiffs at a certain point, everybody agreed that executing such a clown was definitely not the best way to conclude the war. It would only be the greatest joke.

The Blood Demon Sector had no objection to the ruling, either. The leadership of the Pantheon of Demons, including Jin Tuyi’s daughter Jin Xinyue, supported the decision to perform the human hibernation procedure on Jin Tuyi and to postpone his execution.

Finally, the trial about the war came to an end, concluded by a rest that would be long enough, although not by a full stop.

Together with the trials regarding the members of the Patriots Partnership that were conducted and finished earlier, the century trials declared the Star Glory Federation’s farewell to the past.

From the Speaker to the regular workers on the street, every federal citizen got rid of the burdens of the past. Holding their heads high, they strode toward the future confidently!

The future, on the other hand, immediately slammed the bumpkins living at the edge of the universe right in the head brutally and mercilessly!

“What the federation is to be faced is probably not just the superpower Imperium at the center of the universe but also the Covenant Alliance, which is even more formidable and dreadful!”

The news swept across the entire federation like a thunderstorm before it spread to the Flying Star Sector and the Blood Demon Sector too. Everybody felt that their head was dizzy in the shock!

The new federation, which was still developing, was like a small fish that had only just grown fins and scales. Yet, the fish was suddenly thrown into the surging waves of a vast ocean. The world in the eyes of the fish was enlarged by billions of times. The angry octopi, the ferocious whales… all kinds of deadly predators were appearing in the mysterious deep sea!

It remained to be seen whether or not the small fish could weather through the scourge of the tides and the hunting of the predators and grow into a dragon that dominated the ocean and a top-tier player in the sea of stars. The goal required the joint effort of all Cultivators and ordinary people!

“The much-anticipated ‘Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage’ will begin in the Conference Center of the New Federation in Grand Desolate City, whose construction has yet to be finished. The meeting is…”

The butterfly was allured by the brilliantly-shining light beams and mistook them for real flowers.

She danced in front of the light beams, not having the vaguest clue what profound changes the meeting would bring to the world that she lived in.

The so-called ‘Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage’, as its name suggested, was a gathering of all the super experts in the Nascent Soul Stage or the demon emperor stage from the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector. The super experts would plan and discuss the future of the three Sectors so that all living souls in the three Sectors could survive in the perilous sea of stars.

The meeting that was proposed and encouraged by Jiang Hailiu, the Speaker, had been thought to be utterly impractical by many at first.

Everybody knew that, although the war between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector had ended, the mistrust between the top experts on the two sides would not be eliminated any time soon. Most of the demon emperors were suspicious that it was a plot of the Cultivators, who were preparing to annihilate all of them in one attempt.

As for the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector, although they did not have trust issues, astronomical resources would be consumed for them to jump to the Heaven’s Origin Sector and then jump back.

In the beginning, barely anybody except Jiang Hailiu believed that the Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage could be convened successfully.

However, as the integration of the three Sectors pushed forward smoothly, the technological communication between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector grew deeper and deeper. After the federal army brought the antidote to the Demon God Virus to the frontline of the epidemic in the Blood Demon Sector and helped their old nemesis deal with the plague, the tension between the two parties somewhat lessened.

The existence of the Covenant Alliance, in the meantime, cut the obsolete ideas of all the super experts into pieces like an invisible blade!

Also, after the space communication system was deployed in a hurry, which allowed the demon emperors and the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who were unwilling to attend to the meeting in person to join it remotely, the last obstacle was cleared, too!

All the top experts from the three Sectors were finally able to gather together and fight for each other's future!

Because of the different conditions of the three Sectors, where the super experts' influence and control over the society varied, and since they were probably unable to make the most correct decision immediately regarding the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance due to the lack of information, Speaker Jiang Hailiu defined the Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage as an unofficial caucus after much deliberation.

All the conclusions and decisions to be passed in the Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage would carry no legal effect and could not be used to bind the Building Foundation Stage Cultivators, the Core Formation Stage Cultivators, the demon generals, and the demon kings, who did not participate in the meeting. They did not mean any obligation for the ordinary people living in the three Sectors, either.

Furthermore, for the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who did participate in the meeting, they were free to refuse the decisions passed in the meeting if they were unsatisfied about the meeting.

Generally speaking, the meeting was going to be a seminar that focused on theories instead of reality. The top experts would discuss the most cutting-edge ideologies and the future path of the new federation.

It could not be helped. For the experts in the Nascent Soul Stage or the demon emperor stage, they could not be restrained through regular methods.

Faced with the formidable threats such as the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance, obligatory methods were also not the best choice because they would only push the three Sectors into another civil war.

As for exactly what path the new federation would take, and whether it would fight back unwaveringly or kneel down and surrender, it could only be decided by every Cultivator and every ordinary person at their own will!

Chapter 1188 - Destruction of the Imperium

“So far, sixteen experts in the Nascent Soul Stage and the demon emperor stage, including Speaker Jiang Hailiu and Li Yao, have arrived at the Conference Center of the New Federation. Through the space communication array, the rest of the super experts far away in the Blood Demon Sector and the Flying Star Sector have successfully connected, too. The meeting where more than a hundred Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors are gathered, unseen in the history in the history of either the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, or the Flying Star Sector, is about to commence!”

The anchor inside the light beam could not hold back his excitement. With tears of joy, his voice shivered as he said, “Stay tuned, dear audience. We will be following the prime meeting that has gathered the best wisdom, strength, courage, determination, and even imagination of the three Sectors!”

For the butterfly that was hovering in and out of the light beam, the excitement of the enormous mammal who was wearing fiber products did not mean anything. She only sensed that the temperature around her was becoming lower and lower, and that the energy inside her body was being consumed faster and faster. The cold rain hit her wings hard, throwing her off balance nonstop.

In the brilliantly-shining and yet unpredictable light beam, she found neither food nor shelter where she could stay away from the cold wind and rain.

She was about to reach the threshold of death. The remaining energy inside her body was not enough for her to find food or shelter. She was destined to fall down like a dry leaf in the chilly rain after a moment of struggle.

Even so, the butterfly was neither frightened nor disappointed. The simple nerves that she possessed were not capable of generating such advanced feelings.

Therefore, driven by the natural instincts deep inside her genes, she simply exploited the last bit of her energy, flapping her wings and flying further toward the flowers that she could never find.

Suddenly…

At the last moment of her life, the wings of the butterfly shivered as she was enveloped by a force that was as warm as spring breeze. She landed slowly and stopped on a metal finger.

Although the finger was metal, it was not cold at all. Instead, it was full of vitality like a twig in the bloom of spring.

Spiritual energy crawled into her body carefully, filling her body with hope again!

The butterfly flapped her wings in delight while she felt the new strength.

At the end of the metal finger was a metal arm. At the end of the metal arm was a splendid, artistic metal shell that was embedded with crystals and carved with spiritual stripes. On the metal skull above the shell, more than thirty-seven thousand bionic muscle fibers were twisted at the same time, giving out a vivid smile while the master of body giggled.

The metal finger snapped softly. The butterfly, revitalized, unfolded her clear wings again and flew to the sky.

Now, she was getting to know the dazzling new world.

Although she did not know where the flowers were, she believed that the flowers must be there somewhere, and she would certainly find them!

Before she flew away, the butterfly turned around and hovered around the existence who helped her, remembering the features of the particular existence.

It was an existence resembling the large mammal ‘human being’, but different from the normal human beings who were made of flesh and blood, it was made of bright blue metal. The high breasts and the slim waist suggested that it was a simulation of the females of human beings. The metal wings folded in its back, on the other hand, indicated that it had a heart that belonged to the sky.

The butterfly wrote all the features to the deepest part of her gene chains.

It was not out of gratitude but simply an experience. She knew that it was a ‘good’ existence that might sustain her life at a critical moment.

“Go now, little one.”

The butterfly sensed the patterned rhythms in the air. Although she did not understand the words, she did sense yet another warm wind.

In the warm wind, she flew higher and higher toward the depths of Grand Desolate City, looking for flowers and mates to pass on her life and everything that she had just perceived.

Looking at the butterfly dancing and flying farther and father, Wei Qingqing smiled more and more delightedly. Her man-made eyes were glittering with hope.

Li Yao, on the other hand, observed her with mixed feelings.

The rural teacher from the Sky Fantasia Academy, one of the Nine Elite Universities of the federation, who was not capable of fighting at all, had been one of the most important people in guiding Li Yao to embark on the path of Cultivation.

To some extent, she was even more important to him than his senior brother 'Fiend Blade' Peng Hai and the refiner Ding Yin.

Years ago, on the crystal train north to the Grand Desolate Plateau, Li Yao, who had still been an ordinary person back then, encountered a beast tide with all the passengers on board and was grasped by desperation.

Eventually, seven Cultivators had stood up, sacrificed themselves, and saved everyone. Wei Qingqing was among them.

For the rest of the Cultivators such as Ding Yin, they had some fighting experience, and their strength far exceeded that of the ordinary people.

Wei Qingqing, on the other hand, was a pure culture-type Cultivator and had only just graduated from college. She was merely in the middle level of the Refinement Stage. Faced with the overwhelming beast tide, she was no different from the ordinary people.

If she had decided to flinch, there would have been ten thousand reasons for her to. Or rather, even without her, the other six Cultivators might still have been able to delay the beast tide long enough.

However, she still stood up without any hesitation. With her shoulders that were not very strong, she resisted the blast of the beast tide the hard way, although her orchid-like life perished on the Grand Desolate Plateau too young!

The picture was etched to the deepest part of Li Yao’s soul, which had provided infinite impetus for him to awaken his spiritual root and become a Cultivator the next day.

“I am going to be a Cultivator like Ding Yin and Wei Qingqing!”

It was Li Yao’s original belief.

Once a belief originated, it would not be changed easily. Therefore, of all his family and friends in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, Wei Qingqing, the unique ‘blue bird’, had always been the one that he valued most.

To quote the ancient Cultivators, there was a very important ‘bond’ between the two of them. It was not love but a much purer emotion that transcended love.

After she turned into a spectral Cultivator, Wei Qingqing had been engaged in the education work in the Academy of Spectral Cultivators, where she taught the kids and teenagers who died too young. She was now a renowned educator in the federation. Even the most petulant young ghosts would be obedient after her lesson.

Li Yao was rather overjoyed to see her showing up with an interviewer’s badge.

“Sister Qingqing, you’ve quit your job and become a journalist?” Li Yao asked with a smile.

The methods to resist the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance would be the topic of the meeting, which would potentially decide the roadmap of the federation for the next century.

Although all the participants were there as individuals on behalf of themselves, and the decisions to be made in the meeting would carry no legal effect, everyone knew that the decisions made by more than a hundred Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors would be highly influential for the three Sectors anyway.

Therefore, the meeting attracted even more attention than the century trials did before.

After all, the trials were merely about the past, but the Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators would foretell the future!

It was for this reason that the vetting on the journalists was particularly strict. The organizer had released less than a hundred certificates for the interviewers. Only the most famous news workers from the most authoritative, unbiased media of the three Sectors had the chance to interview the participants in the meeting hall.

Wei Qingqing was not a professional journalist, but she had somehow gotten an interview certificate. That was quite unbelievable!

After a grimace, Wei Qingqing smiled. “Two reasons. Firstly, the Sky Fantasia Academy is the best school for culture-type Cultivators in the first place. Most of the celebrities in the news industry are my alumni. Also, you know that I am a reasonably good writer too.”

Li Yao nodded. Wei Qingqing was a fairly fascinating novelist. He had once travelled in the world of her novel himself!

Wei Qingqing continued. “I think, in the meeting that concerns the fate of the next hundred, if not thousand, years of the three Sectors, my alumni feel that the simplicity style of writing made by a non-professional from the perspective of an ordinary person will be more touching than a cold, objective article so that the public will better understand what we are going to be faced with.

While speaking, she laughed. “However, it is just an insignificant reason. You are the real reason I’m here!”

Li Yao blinked and pointed at his nose. “Me?”

“Exactly! It is because we knew each other in the past, and I had the highest odds of getting a personal interview with the Ultra-Level Federal Hero, that I was given the interview certificate! I have bragged to the journalists that I will get at least an hour-long personal interview from you. Don’t run away after the meeting ends!”

“No problem!” Li Yao replied quickly. “Now that Sister Qingqing has said that, I can do three hours. But I don’t know what I should say. You can ask questions, and I will answer them!”

Both of them laughed. Wei Qingqing’s eyes were keen enough to catch a short, red-faced old man who was walking by. Her face shone, and she hurried to bow to him before introducing him to Li Yao. “Ah Yao, have you met Professor Zhou Yifu before? He is a professor in my college and one of the most renowned historians in the federation!”

“Fellow Cultivator Zhou!”

“Fellow Cultivator Li!”

The two of them were both in the Nascent Soul Stage. However, Li Yao was too young. The newcomer should be around the same age as his great grandfather. Therefore, he hurried to greet the professor first.

Professor Zhou was courteous enough to bow back to him in return. There was indeed an unearthly aura in his manners.

The two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators exchanged small talk for a while. It was not just hypocrisy or politeness. There were only slightly more than two hundred Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors taking all of them in the three Sectors into account. Every Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, regardless of what job they were working on, was a well-known celebrity. They had definitely heard each other’s name before even if they had never met in person.

Li Yao knew for a fact that this Professor Zhou was a grandmaster in the field of history studies. His main focus was the period at the end of the Star Ocean Imperium where the great expedition and the Armageddon Rebellion took place. His masterpieces included ‘Destruction of the Imperium’ and ‘End of the Civilization of Mankind’.

Perhaps, the history regarding the destruction of the Star Ocean Imperium that he studied would be a valuable lesson for the three Sectors that were trying to defeat the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Alliance of the Holy Covenant.

Chapter 1189 - Too Much Debt Is No Debt!

“As the youngest Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator in the three Sectors, Fellow Cultivator Li is indeed a rising star. You look even sharper than I’ve heard!”

Zhou Yifu spoke loudly and confidently. The historians in the world of Cultivators were mostly similar to him. They would not be able to excavate relics and study ancient classics, which often contained immense spiritual energy, without a healthy body.

Zhou Yifu smiled. “However, while other people might be attracted by Fellow Cultivator Li’s glorious deeds such as destroying the Eye of Blood Demon or sabotaging the Patriots Partnership, what I admire you most for is that Fellow Cultivator Li established Skyfire and tried to restore the truth of history!

“Without history, one will never have the present; without the present, one will not have a future. History is the source of our civilization. Fellow Cultivator Li was truly thoughtful and visionary despite the perils at that time!”

Li Yao immediately blushed. It was true that, when he founded Skyfire in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the organization had been under the name of ‘The Skyfire Reading Club’, and its goal was to find out the truth between the entire opposing history books of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector.

However, such arrangements were disguises. There were no actual historians in Skyfire. All the members were just a bunch of rookies horsing around.

They might have been enough to fool those who did not know much about history, but in front of a grandmaster such as Zhou Yifu, they would not be worth mentioning at all.

“You are flattering me, Senior Zhou!” Li Yao said sincerely. “We indeed meant to sort through the history completely, but our abilities were too limited. Although we have a few scattered ancient classics and relics in our hands, it is more than troublesome for us to connect them and to combine all the details immaculately! Therefore, I have been hoping that the real specialists in history studies, such as grandmasters like Senior Zhou, can give us some enlightenment. It will be even better if some of them can be advisors for Skyfire!”

“I would be happy to!” Zhou Yifu said solemnly. “Right now, the federation is in peril. To defeat the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance, we must figure out the details of the two forces; at the same time, we must grasp all the techniques of the Star Ocean Imperium as soon as possible! Both hands require the effort of my fellow historians. I will certainly do my best to help!”

Li Yao was overjoyed. He did not expect that the grandmaster would be so friendly. In that moment, he was more confident about the Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage than ever.

“Would you please stop adulating each other, dear masters?”

Wei Qingqing was quite familiar with Zhou Yifu. She teased them and said, “There is still some time to go before the meeting begins. How about a short interview on you two masters first? Let's start from you, Master Li Yao. What do you think of the Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage? Do we really stand any chance of defeating the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Alliance of the Holy Covenant, which is allegedly even scarier than the former? By the way, that claim was made by your foster father, wasn't it?"

Three months ago, after finding out his foster father's last words, Li Yao had considered for a while but still publicized all the information except the part about Li Linghai and the mysterious key as per his foster father's instruction.

Li Yao had thought that the fact that his foster father was from the Covenant Alliance would raise suspicions and even cause trouble for him.

Suspicions were indeed raised, but they were mainly focused on the formidability and mysteriousness of the Covenant Alliance. However, as to the fact that he had a foster father from the Covenant Alliance itself, nobody felt anything wrong about it. Everybody thought that it was only logical.

Ding Lingdang, after learning the matter, had grinned, too.

"I thought that you were a monster. Otherwise, it would've been too unbelievable that an ordinary young man who was born and raised in the magical equipment graveyard advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage after only less than twenty years!

"I didn't know that you had a foster father who was from the center of the universe. If that's the case, everything makes sense now. It's perfectly normal that I can't beat you for the time being!"

All in all, with the attitude that it was not strange that he was an alien if he was Vulture Li Yao's foster father, society accepted the matter very quickly.

Her eyes glittering, Wei Qingqing went on. "In the crisis of the Flying Star Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Heaven's Origin Sector, you solved most of the critical problems on your own.

"Are you confident to continue playing a role as decisive as before when we are faced with the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance?"

Li Yao was amused. He scratched his hair and said, "Sister Qingqing, you should know me better. Many things I've gone through were pure coincidences. I was often merely a catalyst to accelerate the progress.

"To be honest, we already have three Sectors right now, and more will be joining us in the future. When the time of clash with the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance comes, we will be fighting them with dozens if not hundreds of Sectors on our side! In such a grand competition, the strength of any individual will be insignificant.

"Also, even during the battles in the Flying Star Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Heaven's Origin Sector in the past, I was never fighting alone. Lei Dalu, Bai Kaixin, Xiong Wuji, Jin Xinyue, the Fire Ant King, Guo Chunfeng… many companions have been fighting side by side with me and sacrificing more than I did so that we could defeat all the strong enemies!

"I imagine that it will be similar in our clash with the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance. A war cannot be won by one hero. If we truly secure victory in the end, it must be accomplished by thousands of heroes together!

“Moreover—”

Li Yao paused for a moment and glanced at Professor Zhou Yifu. He smiled. “I am not a person with much strategic insight. I am not good at organizing the immense resources in multiple Sectors, either. It is impossible for me to determine the policies of the federation in the next hundred years.

“In that regard, there are too many people among the participants of the Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage who are hundreds of times more awesome than me. I’m mainly here to learn from the seniors.

“I’m not being modest here. My specialty and interests are fighting on the frontline and taking part in the work that is more direct and specific. Therefore, if a certain strategy is passed on the meeting and it requires an executor, I will certainly be happy to carry it out without flinching.”

Wei Qingqing nodded quickly. “It seems that you are very confident that we will defeat the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance.”

Li Yao nodded and replied solemnly, “I’m indeed confident. However, I do feel that, even if we defeat the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance in the end, we will not necessarily have crushed them in a head-on battlefield. The more likely outcome is that we will defeat them from the inside.”

Dazed for a moment, Wei Qingqing asked subconsciously, “What do you mean?”

“I am not confident in the federation. It is humanity, and more specifically, the bright side of humanity, that I have faith in!” Li Yao grinned. “No matter what the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance look like, there is one thing that we are absolutely certain about—they both fall into the category of ‘civilizations of human beings’ and that they are made of human beings!

“Since they are made of human beings, I believe that the brilliance of humanity must be glittering in most people’s hearts!

“The rulers of the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance can suppress the brightness by force. But the harder their suppression, the stronger the counterforce will be!

“Think about the Patriots Partnership half a year ago. Now that some ‘local Immortal Cultivators’ can arise within the Star Glory Federation, is it really impossible for some ‘local Cultivators’ to arise within the Imperium of True Human Beings?”

Wei Qingqing could not help but open her mouth. She mumbled, “Although I feel that you are too optimistic, I sincerely hope that what you said is true!

“What about you, master? You are a specialist on the fall of the Star Ocean Imperium. I remember a paragraph from your masterpiece ‘Destruction of the Imperium’, which basically says that even the biggest empire has its day of doom. The bigger and the more invincible it is, the faster it will be destroyed. On many occasions, the destruction is not due to outer forces but boils down to its own weight and ambitions!”

Wei Qingqing turned to Professor Zhou Yifu and questioned him like a real reporter. “Such a theory is somewhat similar to Li Yao’s opinion. What do you think of our future? Do we stand any chance now that we are faced with two immense creatures simultaneously?”

Zhou Yifu smiled and said, “This is what I think. When you have too much debt, you stop worrying about it, and when you have too many lice, you don’t feel itchy anymore.”

“Huh?”

Wei Qingqing was dazed, not sure what her professor meant.

“Ever since the news about the Covenant Alliance was out, the entire federation has been panicking and uneasy. Everybody is scared by the dreadful sea of stars!” Zhou Yifu played with his half-white goatee and smiled. “But I have a different opinion. I think that the existence of the Covenant Alliance is not a bad thing at all but the greatest thing in history!

“If the odds of success that the federation fights the Imperium alone are one percent, then the odds that the federation fights the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance together will be at least five percent!

“Don’t you understand? If you are a fat and delicious rabbit, do you think it is better to face one hungry wolf or to face a pack of hungry wolves?

“One hungry wolf? That’s the wrong choice! In a one-versus-one situation, the rabbit doesn’t stand any chance at all! Only when it is faced with a pack of wolves will there be a slim chance of survival for the rabbit!

“Besides, the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance are not two hungry wolves but one ravenous wolf and a tiger that is even more brutal!

“And our federation is definitely not a harmless rabbit, either, but a young lion who has just grown claws and teeth and is short of battle experience. If it has the chance to gain hunting experience from the ravenous wolf and the crazy tiger, we will definitely grow quickly!

“Therefore, I was overjoyed to learn the existence of the Covenant Alliance. This is a great opportunity for the federation!

“Hehe. Not just two super forces. If possible, I really hope to find ten, twenty, or even a hundred super forces at the center of the universe. The more chaotic, the better!

“After all, the resources and relics left by the Star Ocean Imperium are limited. The more super forces there are, the weaker each of them will be. If there are a hundred super forces, there will be no super forces!”

Chapter 1190 - Longevity

Zhou Yifu’s words put smiles on the faces of Li Yao and Wei Qingqing.

“I thought that young people like Li Yao would be more optimistic,” Wei Qingqing said. “I didn’t expect that master would be even more confident and optimistic than him!”

“This is not about confidence,” Zhou Yifu replied disapprovingly. “We the historians are different from you. We’ve seen too much!

“Yes. Maybe, for the federation today, the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance are indeed behemoths. But so what?

“Think about it. Were the ancient Cultivators who occupied the three thousand Sectors forty thousand years ago not strong? But did they not experience an abrupt downfall and get replaced by the demons in the blink of an eye?

“Then, was the demon race, which reigned the universe for thirty thousand years and founded dozens of dynasties, not strong? But was it not crushed by the Star Ocean Imperium in another blink?

“The Star Ocean Imperium was the strongest force in the history of mankind. Powerful, awesome, invincible, but what happened later? It collapsed as quickly as it thrived. After staying at the peak for no more than a thousand years, it crumbled into smithereens like a sand tower in the wind!

“Right now, as formidable as the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Alliance of the Holy Covenant may sound, can they be more formidable than the ancient Cultivators, the Demon Beast Empire, and the Star Ocean Imperium? If the latter can be destroyed within a breath, will the former really be able to evade the law of history?

“Once we think it through, we will feel less intimidated when we are faced with the super forces from the center of the universe, and we will be able to look at them more objectively.

“If we get to the bottom of it, we are now looking at the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance the way bumpkins look at the city dwellers who are wearing fancy clothes and driving eye-catching shuttles. We think they are mysterious, mighty, and invulnerable!

“But their citizens are human beings after all. Same as us, they have one head that is supported by two shoulders. We’ve seen things better than them. What’s there to be scared of?”

Zhou Yifu’s words cast both Li Yao and Wei Qingqing into deep thought.

Wei Qingqing was about to ask a few more questions when Zhou Yifu patted her shoulder and hinted for her to turn around. “Qingqing, you are free you interview me whenever you want, but you might not be able to see that guy over there every day.”

Li Yao looked at where Zhou Yifu was pointing and was immediately refreshed.

Surrounded by the crowd, two demons with distinctive features were walking close.

Because of the special relationship between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven's Origin Sector, most of the demon emperors were still suspicious. They would rather hide in the Blood Demon Sector and join the meeting remotely through the real-time transmission of picture and sound.

Those who were willing to come in person were almost exclusively those who were close to the federation.

The first of the two demons was the Fire Ant King—Li Yao's old friend, Elder Nether Spring's blood brother, the former leader of the Blade of Chaos, and a demon emperor of the Insect Clan!

In the world of politics of the Blood Demon Sector in the post-Jin Tuyi era, as the source of Jin Xinyue's power, Skyfire quickly expanded and became the largest force in the Blood Demon Sector.

As one of the founders of Skyfire, the Fire Ant King, who also boasted tremendous influence among the bottom level-demons of the Blood Demon Sector, grew more and more important.

After Elder Nether Spring sabotaged the Nether Spring Kingdom with the Demon God Virus and fled in a hurry, it was a great headache to settle the mess in the Nether Spring Kingdom and the Insect Clan.

Elder Nether Spring was certainly unpardonable, but not every member of the Insect Clan was guilty. It was impossible to kill all of them.

Technically speaking, the Insect Clan that had been made use of by Elder Nether Spring for decades was the greatest victim. The members of the Insect Clan killed by Elder

Nether Spring miserably were definitely ten times more than those killed by the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

Therefore, when the Insect Clan was lacking a leader and the Nether Spring Kingdom was in chaos, unsurprisingly, the Fire Ant King returned to his homeland.

Elder Nether Spring had escaped. The Fire Ant King was supported by Jin Tuyi, Jin Xinyue, and Skyfire. He had the legacy of Chaos in his control and was a demon emperor as well as one of the best specialists in the refinement of demonic plants. Who could be match for him in the entire Insect Clan?

The Fire Ant King defeated a few unworthy challengers easily and became the new leader of the Insect Clan and the controller of the Nether Spring Kingdom.

Theoretically speaking, the title ‘Elder Nether Spring’ was now on his head, too. He was the new ‘Elder Nether Spring’ now.

However, as the Demon God Virus savaged the Blood Demon Sector, the previous ‘Elder Nether Spring’, guilty of all the crimes, had utterly befouled the title.

In order to draw the line from the past, the Fire Ant King did not acknowledge the new title. He was still engaged in activities under his previous title, Fire Ant King.

Right now, the Fire Ant King was sort of a new giant of the Blood Demon Sector. He and Jin Xinyue were two feet that kept the balance of the world.

It was worth mentioning that the Fire Ant King was in a subtle relationship with the federation.

The Blade of Chaos under his lead had once instigated the Riot of Bloody Blade. The mutiny at the most critical battlefield caused the fiasco of Battle of Dawn, which was the demon race’s first invasion into the federation.

He was doubtlessly a great contributor for the federation in that respect.

On the other hand, now that human beings and demons were integrating, and demons had been proven to be part of human beings, it was certainly inappropriate to accuse all the demons of being evil. The prevailing theory was that most of the demons were actually kind in nature. They were only fooled by a few ambitious politicians and schemers.

Therefore, the federation had defined the Blade of Chaos in the past as a resistance organization founded by the bottom-level demons spontaneously after they could not stand the deception and the exploitation of certain schemers in the leadership of the Pantheon of Demons!

As for the Fire Ant King, in the federation’s propaganda, he was the demon who was the first to be awakened and to realize the evil nature of the ‘Four Pillar System’ and the schemes of the leadership of the demon race. It was also said that he had an arduous struggle for decades and made acquaintance with the federal soldiers in the glorious battle against tyranny. Therefore, he was ‘an old friend of the federation’.

Right now, the ‘federation’s old friend’—the new giant of the Blood Demon Sector and one of the most powerful men in the three Sectors—was supporting another weary demon emperor respectfully.

Seeing that the Fire Ant King did not even dare to breathe hard, Li Yao might have thought that the stranger was his grandfather if their appearances had not been so vastly different.

Li Yao scratched his head. With the Fire Ant King’s position today, was there any demon emperor worth so much of his respect?

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and observed carefully.

The demon emperor’s back was hunched. His long eyebrows dangled down to his chest. His demonic energy was entirely concealed, and he looked like a stone statue that had grown moss.

His skin was like a broken fossil, and he was carrying an external skeleton resembling a turtle shell on his back. At first glance, he was a giant tortoise that had stood on its feet.

He was holding a stick that was also covered in moss in his hand. There was no telling how long the stick had been in service, but every burl was mixed with the flavor of time.

Helped by the Fire Ant King, the demon emperor walked up to Li Yao slowly.

Seeing that Li Yao was tilting his head and thinking hard, Zhou Yifu laughed and said in a low voice, “Stop thinking. He is Gui Suishou!”

Li Yao was dumbfounded. “He… he is? Gui Suishou is not dead yet?”

Of all the demon emperors of the Blood Demon Sector, Gui Suishou, a demon emperor of the Sea Clan, was definitely the most unique one.

In their training, demons were not classified into different types clearly like Cultivators were, but their specialties were still not entirely the same.

For example, the Fire Ant King excelled at refining demonic plants, Elder Nether Spring’s specialty was producing viruses, and Jin Tuyi dedicated most of his computational ability to strategic planning.

Some of the demon emperors were good at fighting, some were good poisoning, and still some others were fond of breeding demon beasts that would only appear in the worst nightmares to fight for themselves.

But Gui Suishou, as a demon emperor from the Sea Clan was good at… none of the above!

He could neither fight, nor produce venom, nor raise demon beasts. He had dedicated all his training to a single goal, which was to live on!

The Tortoise Clan, a branch of the Sea Clan, was one of the species that boasted the longest life in the first place, and Gui Suishou had inherited a secret art called Great Dream Tortoise Hibernation Art from his family, which highlighted the importance of a healthy life and specified how to live long. He could enter the hibernation state while he was training in seclusion. When he woke up again thirty to fifty years later, he would not be affected at all. Such a technique was much more awesome than the Human Hibernation technology recently developed by the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector!

This was Gui Suishou, the oldest demon emperor of the Blood Demon Sector and a legend, or a freak, who was four hundred years older than the Star Glory Federation!

Now that such an old monster was nearby, with nothing more than his age that was more than a thousand years old, no wonder the Fire Ant King was so respectful toward him.

Also, Gui Suishou did not have any grudges with the Star Glory Federation because he had been sleeping most of the time in the five hundred years after the Star Glory Federation was founded. In the past decades, he had even been training in seclusion all the time. He did not have any time to do anything bad even if he wanted to!

The ocean was too vast and mysterious. Gui Suishou was often never seen again after he found an undersea residence and hid himself inside. He was that kind of legendary, unpredictable person. Li Yao had only seen a brief introduction to him in the database before and thought that he was long dead!

It had never occurred to him that a relic from a thousand years ago would be standing in front of him for real!

No wonder even a grandmaster like Zhou Yifu was glowing with joy and excitement.

Perhaps, in the eyes of a historian, such old monsters who had lived more than a thousand years were all priceless treasures.

“Li Yao!”

The Fire Ant King greeted them delightedly. “Come here. Let me introduce you to each other. This is Master Gui Suishou, who was the Great Priest of the Pantheon of Demons five hundred years ago. He is now the oldest and most experienced demon emperor of the Blood Demon Sector!”

The Fire Ant King was obviously adulating Gui Suishou. Everybody knew that, except for his old age, this old tortoise had no specialties at all. He could neither fight nor bite and was definitely among the most useless demons.

In the Blood Demon Sector, where the strong preyed on the weak, what could seniority do? He might have been a thousand years old, but others would not hesitate to beat him if he pissed them off even if he was ten thousand years old!

However, the Fire Ant King’s next sentence made Li Yao’s spine constrict violently.

“Also, I only learned just now that Master Gui was also my big brother’s teacher!”

Chapter 1191 - A Billion-Year War!

Li Yao felt so creeped out that his Cosmos Ring was bouncing. He was not sure whether or not he should summon his crystal suit immediately.

“Don’t be anxious. I’m not done yet.” The Fire Ant King smiled. “Master Gui taught my brother for a while before, but he didn’t teach my brother the methods of fighting or the secret arts to produce viruses. What he taught my brother is a theory!”

“Theory? What theory?”

Li Yao blinked. He realized that it did make sense on second thought. This Gui Suishou, although respected as the most senior demon emperor of the Blood Demon Sector, was in fact nothing more than a mascot. He had no marvelous techniques. What could he possibly have taught Elder Nether Spring?

“Theory about pessimism.”

Before the Fire Ant King answered, Gui Suishou answered on his own.

The demon emperor who was a thousand years old had a voice that was not as weary as his appearance. Instead, it sounded smooth and refreshing, like a jade that was excavated from the bottom of the ground and carefully crafted.

The membranes that covered his eyeballs opened layer after layer. The purest brilliance that had been cleansed by time beamed out of his eyes as he observed Li Yao up and down. He said warmly, “My young friend Li Yao, greetings. I am Gui Suishou, an unwavering pessimist.”

Scratching his head, Li Yao realized what was going on.

Before, Elder Nether Spring had admitted frankly that he was an unwavering pessimist who believed in the doom of the demon race. He insisted that all the strategies that the demon race implemented would be hopeless. Therefore, he had to carry out the Spore Stratagem and try to plant the blossoming flower of ‘the third life form’ on the soil of human beings and demons!

Li Yao had never known that it was Gui Suishou who inculcated the demon race’s inevitable failure into Elder Nether Spring’s head!

“In fact, I was not exactly the young boy’s teacher. We had a discussion for a while. That’s all.” Gui Suishou smiled. “It was decades ago. At that time, I was sleeping in a residence in the West Ocean of the Blood Demon Sector, but the little boy named Ye Mengsheng snuck undersea, seeking the so-called relics of Chaos.”

Only then did Li Yao learn that Elder Nether Spring’s real name was Ye Mengsheng.

“As it happened, the relic of Chaos was exactly the residence that I was sleeping in. I only chose the place because it was cool and quiet, and I was not really interested in the arts and artifacts inside. So, I asked the boy to move lightly, leave as soon as he packed up, and not interrupt my sleep.”

Gui Suishou talked slowly. The great villain Elder Nether Spring was nothing more than a misbehaving kid in his mouth.

“However, the boy was rather bad-tempered. He didn’t stop after getting what he desired. He also wanted to kill me.

“Of course, he couldn’t, but I was too lazy to kill him. After all, every bit of my strength is extremely valuable and must be used to extend my longevity. If I summoned my demonic energy and stabbed him, I would live several fewer hours at the end of my life. That would’ve been a terrible deal, wouldn’t it?

“Moreover, I hadn’t floated to the surface of the ocean for decades, and I was rather interested in whether anything thrilling was going on outside. So, I chatted with the boy and told him the neat theory that the demon race was doomed. I could tell that he was fascinated by the theory.

“I thought that he accepted my theory. I never expected that he would do such things in order to escape from the unavoidable doom. He was still too young and naïve!”

Gui Suishou shook his head hard, apparently not thinking highly of his student.

Li Yao looked at Wei Qingqing in bewilderment before he asked carefully, “So to speak, Master Gui, your ‘pessimism’ is different from Elder Nether Spring’s ‘pessimism’?”

“Of course,” Gui Suishou said. “The boy Ye Mengsheng can be called a ‘relative pessimist’. Although he acknowledged that the demon race was doomed to failure, he was under the illusion that he could make the demon race rise again in a different way!

“Not just Ye Mengsheng, there’s also the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons who was trialed recently. What’s the boy’s name again? Right. Jin Tuyi. He is also a ‘relative pessimist’.

“As for me, I am an ‘absolute pessimist’. I firmly believe that the demon race does not stand any chance after the fall of the Demon Beast Empire and the foundation of the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago. Individuals can be transformed and changed, but the demon race, as a whole and a civilization, is doomed to destruction. However you struggle and try to save it, it is as useless as the dying breath.”

It was truly an eye-opener for Li Yao, who scratched his head for a long time and still found it hard to believe. “So, Master Gui, you simply abandoned struggling and watched your civilization go to doom?”

“Of course not,” Gui Suishou said slowly. “If we look everything from a closer perspective, say, the tens of thousands of years recently and to come, it is an unchangeable outcome that human beings will win, and demons will fail.

“However, if we are to consider the question from a more macroscopic view, the victor might not be necessarily so!

“For example, if we extend the time length and consider the competition between human beings and demons from a scale of one billion years, it will be hard to say who the final winner will be.”

Li Yao was dumbfounded. Despite the computational ability of the Nascent Soul Stage, he felt that his head was not functioning properly. “One billion years?”

“Yes, one billion years!” Gui Suishou nodded. “Pangu created demons and human beings, which marked the beginning of our civilizations, somewhere one million years ago. Even counting from the prosperous years a hundred thousand years ago, our civilizations have still lived a long time.

“What next?

“My young friend Li Yao, even if you are confident in your civilization, are you certain that the glory of your civilization can survive the next billion years?”

Li Yao frowned. The conversation was getting too philosophical. Who could foresee what would happen a billion years later?

Gui Suishou smiled. “If you think that the civilization of human beings can survive a billion years, what about a trillion years? It is the law of nature that things age and perish. Every civilization is destined to fall no matter how brilliant it is during its heyday. It is true about the civilization of demons. Will the civilization of human beings be an exception?

“Even if the civilization of human beings has defeated that of the demon race right now, so what? In the river of time of billions of years, we only perished one second earlier than you did!

“After the universe blinks and a billion years have passed, and when both of our civilizations are destroyed, we will be back to the starting line again and determine the winner between us in a new way.”

Li Yao was stunned. “Are we already destroyed? How can we determine the winner?”

“Civilizations can be destroyed, but important information can be passed on through their bodies, just like the fossils of the prehistoric creatures can give us a hint of their magnificence in the past,” Gui Suishou said casually. “If both civilizations are destroyed in a billion years, the criterion of the competition will be the quantity of ‘fossils’ that a civilization has left, or to wit, the relics and the tinder of the civilization!”

Li Yao was still baffled, but Zhou Yifu, as a historian, was beaming with interest!

“Let me give an example.”

Gui Suishou touched the burl on his stick as if they were Sectors. Narrow his small eyes, he mumbled, “Imagine that one billion years have passed. Civilizations of human beings and demons have perished in the river of time, and the universe has been occupied by some other civilizations!

“One day, the new civilizations discover an ancient relic on a planet. After analysis, they find a glorious ancient civilization that was known as the demon race.

“After the excavation of the relics of the demon race, the new civilizations find that the civilization of the demon race was a kind, brave, peace-loving, and hard-working one, which developed bright and beautiful technology, culture, and social form!

“However, good days never last long. A dark force named mankind, which was evil, brutal, terrifying, and swallowed and destroyed everything in its way. Naturally, the fabulous civilization of the demon race was ruined, too!

“The new civilizations believe everything said in the relics and write it into their history books. Maybe, the war between the civilization of the demon race and that of mankind will even be adapted into fictions and other entertainment works.

“Of course, in such works, the demon race will always be on the righteous side, while human beings will forever be evil and ugly.

“My young friend Li Yao, in your opinion, if such a stereotype comes into being in the mainstream civilizations in the universe in a billion years, which of us will be the final winner?”

Dumbfounded for a long time, Li Yao was rather amused. “Even if what you said does happen, our civilizations will have been long gone. Does it really matter who wins?”

Gui Suishou smiled and said, “In either the civilization of human beings and that of the demon race, countless warriors have fulfilled their mission to make their side win by sacrificing themselves.

“They were clearly destined to die, and they know nothing after they pass away. Why would they care about which side wins?

“Some things are higher than life and death. The outcome still matters to a civilization even after it is destroyed.”

Li Yao was lost for words, but Gui Suishou went on. “There’s another scenario. In a billion years, there isn’t any mainstream civilization that is highly developed, merely ‘quasi civilizations’ that appear like monkeys.

“One day, a monkey from one of the ‘quasi civilizations’ discovers a relic by accident. After opening it, he finds the arts, magical equipment, and classics inside, thereby igniting the fire of wisdom for his civilization!

“Henceforth, the quasi civilization regards the relic as a miracle and the master of the relic as their creator and ancestor. As for the enemy to the master of the relic, they are definitely the most wicked and hideous fiends!

“When the quasi civilization grows into a real civilization and extends its hands into the sea of stars, it will still be deeply influenced by the relic. They will even name their own civilization after the name of the master of the relic!

“It is definitely a possibility. Just like both mankind and the demon race regard the ‘Pangu Clan’ as gods and themselves as the successors of the Pangu Clan.

“Then, here comes the question. My young friend Li Yao, would you rather the monkeys find the ‘relic of human beings’ or the ‘relic of the demons’?”

Chapter 1192 - Grandpa Plan!

Li Yao opened his mouth, only to come up with nothing.

It was not because he did not have any refutation, but because he had found that the old tortoise was not on the same wavelength as himself at all. They were not pursuing the same thing.

With pride beaming out of his face, Gui Suishou said, “The omittance of history equals destruction. On the other hand, creating history equals immortality! The ancestors of my clan realized the logic thousands of years ago. Since then, we have shifted our attention to the preservation of the tinder of our race, instead of focusing ourselves on the current situation of the civilization.

“In our opinion, both Elder Nether Spring’s endeavor to create ‘the third life form’ and the tricks that Jin Tuyi played are ridiculous and meaningless. Only by preserving the tinder of the civilization in a certain way for billions of years will our civilization really be immortalized. It will even be passed on in a brand-new way by being reincarnated in other civilizations!

“Therefore, instead of dwelling on the competition with the civilization of mankind, my ancestors dedicated all their efforts to the extension of their longevity. We abandoned everything and even spent ninety percent of our lifetime hibernating. Finally, we lengthened our life to a thousand years.

“It is not our own immortality that we pursue. We are merely trying to study the history and the essence of our civilization from a longer time span.

“In our long lives, we gather all the history pieces about the civilization of demons. We sort through them, connect them, and establish a systematic plaza with tales, legends, and myths.

“We are also recording everything that is happening right now dutifully, the eventual fall and destruction of the great civilization that has ruled over the sea of stars for thirty thousand years.

“We will preserve the history and all the most important essence of our civilization, namely the epics, classics, arts, dictionaries, and artwork. We will build them into ‘tinder’ or ‘monuments’ before we launch them into the universe. They will float in the boundless universe without restraint until they are discovered by new civilizations in billions of years. The essence of the civilization of demons will be revived again at that time!

“This is the destiny of our people. This is also the way we plan to win the war of civilizations!”

Li Yao was so stunned that he did not come to for a long time.

This grandpa’s way of thinking was too weird. It was utterly incomprehensible to him.

However, Zhou Yifu, the historian of the federation next to him, was breathing quickly. He exclaimed, “So to speak, Master Gui, you are sort of a historian for the civilization of demons.”

Zhou Yifu was more than a hundred and eighty years old. He was often respected as ‘Master Zhou’. But in front of Gui Suishou, who was almost a thousand years old, he was as young as a prattling infant!

“I guess you can say that,” Gui Suishou said casually. “In our civilization, the historians who share my view are known as the Monument Scholars. We believe that every civilization is running to their inevitable doom from the moment it is born. Therefore, it doesn’t matter how the civilization lives. What matters is how to build a magnificent, delicate monument that stores the essence of the civilization!

“The civilization will last forever as long as the monument exists. If the monument is destroyed, the civilization will forever be doomed with no way of coming back!

“From that point of view, historians, who are responsible for building the monument, are the most important profession in a civilization. The historians of two hostile civilizations are often writing history in two opposing ways and having the fiercest collision. Such a smokeless war is in fact a hundred times more appalling than those fought by the warriors of the two civilizations on real battlefields!”

Zhou Yifu nodded quickly. “So, have you come to the Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage to record the historic moment, Master Gui?”

“It is only part of the reason.” Smiling, Gui Suishou replied, “I’m also here because I mean to persuade everybody in the three Sectors, especially the experts of the civilization of human beings, to prepare the tinder and monuments of your own like us.”

“Huh?”

Li Yao and Zhou Yifu looked at each other in bewilderment. Li Yao was more or less shocked, but Zhou Yifu was deep in thought.

“I was an unwavering pessimist, and I still am,” Gui Suishou said casually. “In the past, I didn’t believe that the civilization of demons could defeat the civilization of human beings. Right now, I naturally don’t believe that three Sectors will be enough to defeat the magnificent Imperium of True Human Beings and the Alliance of Holy Covenant in the center of the universe!

“I know that you won’t give up trying anyway, just like Elder Nether Spring didn’t.

“However, while you are struggling, it doesn’t hurt to sort through and summarize your civilization. You can condense the best parts of your civilization and find a way to preserve them before you send them to the universe as your tinder and monuments.

“That way, even if your final resistance fails, and the Star Glory Federation and the three Sectors are all destroyed, something will still be out there in the universe proving that we once existed.”

Li Yao clenched his fists and gnashed his teeth. “We will definitely, definitely, definitely not lose!”

After a smile, Gui Suishou replied peacefully, “My young friend Li Yao, did you know this? The more you say ‘definitely’, the less confident you actually are about the matter. You can only count on the word to hypnotize yourself.”

Li Yao was rendered speechless and scratched his head hard.

Zhou Yifu pondered for a moment and asked, “I have no doubt that the victory will belong to the federation, but anything can go wrong. Even if the odds of our success are as high as 99%, it doesn’t seem to be a bad idea to be well-prepared for the 1% chance of failure. I wonder, what specific plan to you have in mind, Master Gui? What are the ‘tinder’ and the ‘monuments’ you described exactly?”

“Tinder and monument are just metaphors. In fact, they shouldn’t even be large-scale relics that are easy to find.”

Gui Suishou proposed his plan very frankly. “Large-scale relics are very easy to be found out by our enemy. Also, it risks being destroyed by the tide in the river of time.

“The ‘tinder’ in my plan should be something extremely small. Something like a chip or… a ring. Yes, items like the Cosmos Rings.

“However, while the Cosmos Rings are designed to store materials and real entities, the new rings will be used to store tremendous information.

“We are compressing the vast information of our respective civilization, namely the history, the culture, the strongest technology and techniques, and everything else, into such rings.

“For the convenience of the new civilizations, we can also establish a ‘guide’ or a ‘teacher’ inside the ring.

“The ‘guide’ can be established in two ways.

“Firstly, we condense tremendous telepathic thoughts and produce a highly-developed ‘artificial intelligence’ with the help of tremendous computational ability.

“Secondly, we preserve the souls of some volunteers, which will be cast into the hibernation state. They will sleep for billions of years in the rings until they are discovered by new civilizations.

“My young friend Li Yao, don’t look at me like that. I’m not talking about extracting souls from living people. Aren’t there many spectral Cultivators in the federation? They do not have real entities in the first place but are merely amalgamations of tremendous information and spiritual waves. If we can develop a certain secret technique to preserve the frequency of their waves, they will be able to hibernate much longer than living people inside the rings. It is possible that they will be awakened even after billions of years.”

Li Yao was utterly alarmed by Gui Suishou’s insane idea.

A demon emperor was a demon emperor after all. The plan that he came up with looked evil from every perspective.

Gui Suishou smiled. “If we can produce ten thousand of such rings with the souls of ten thousand spectral Cultivators sealed inside and launch them into the universe, does it really matter if we are destroyed by the Imperium of True Human Beings or the Alliance of the Holy Covenant?

“Imagine this. In billions of years, all the old civilizations have perished, and the new civilizations are only just rising from the dark age.

“Then, there is an ordinary young man in the new civilization, perhaps one whose family is declining and is despised by other people.

“One day, he accidentally gets a mysterious ring, and an omnipotent, omniscient ‘grandpa’—let’s just call our ‘guide’ that—jumps out of the ring.

“With the help of the grandpa, the underdog of the new civilization inherits the legacy of our civilization. He masters the best techniques, which entail endless mysteries. Crushing all his foes, he soars unstoppably and finally establishes his own dynasty and his own era!

“Such a dynasty and aura will, of course, be deeply stamped with the traces of our civilization. Who can say that it is not a civilization of mankind or a civilization of the demon race in a completely new form?”

Wei Qingqing, as a spectral Cultivator, had subtle waves in her man-made eyes. She mumbled, “The universe is too vast a place. Even if there are ten thousand rings that store the tinder of our civilization, the odds of them being found by the new civilizations will still be too low, won’t they?”

“You don’t understand, little girl,” Gui Suishou replied tranquilly. “Even the lowest odds, after billions of years, will be magnified to a realizable extent! Or to put it simply, as long as there is enough time, any miracle will happen sooner or later.

“By then, our civilization will be reborn in such a way and revive our glory. The Imperium of True Human Beings and the Alliance of the Holy Covenant, which fear us most right now, will possibly be nothing more than dust!

“This is my way to resist the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Alliance of the Holy Covenant. I’m meaning to fight a protracted war that will last a billion and even ten billion years!

“Let me see. I’ll just call it the ‘Monument Plan’, or if you think that the name is too ominous, you can also call it the

‘Grandpa Plan’.”

Chapter 1193 - Female Teacher in the Future

Li Yao, Zhou Yifu, and Wei Qingqing were all stunned as if they had been crushed by a super high-speed crystal train. After half a minute of silence, Li Yao asked suspiciously, “Master Gui, you are demon of a senior generation. Are you not hostile to the civilization of mankind? Do you really want the civilization of mankind and that of the demon race to pass on together?”

“I admit that the civilization of mankind and the civilization of demons are antagonistic, but it doesn’t mean that I have to hate human beings.”

Holding his stick, Gui Suishou said unhurriedly, “Observed from a scale of billions of years, the war between us is just the mutual absorption of two germs. What’s there to loathe if one germ devours the other one?

“Besides, the Monument Plan that I just proposed is merely a design. To make it come true, we have to accomplish thousands of breakthroughs in astrology, informatics, artificial intelligence, soul hibernation, space jumps, and many other fields.

“Eventually, we will have to produce such a ring that contains enormous information, we will have to transform countless experts into ‘grandpas’, and we will have to make sure that those ‘grandpas’ wake up healthily and retain their normal memories, self-awareness, and thinking ability after sleeping inside the rings for billions of years!

"Also, after we cast the rings into the universe, we will have to ensure that they will not be destroyed by cosmic storms, supernova outbreaks, and black holes in the years to come.

"Think about it. How many technologies will be required in the attempt? The historians, and even the strength of the Blood Demon Sector alone, will not be sufficient to put it into practice.

"After all, artificial intelligence and space jumps are the specialties of the Heaven's Origin Sector and Flying Star Sector!

"That's the reason I'm here to join the meeting in person at the cost of my precious longevity. I'm hoping to concentrate the technology and resources of the three Sectors to accomplish the breakthroughs and realize the Monument Plan!

"After all, the universe is too vast a place, and the hibernation will be too long. The tinder of our civilizations, after floating to the depths of the universe, will be separate from each other. We will root and sprout in a different time and place, never to meet each other again. This is perhaps also a way for us to let go of the hatred between us. Hahahaha!"

Li Yao clicked his tongue and said, "Let's forget the technological difficulties for a moment. It is not going to be easy to find ten thousand 'grandpas' who are willing to hibernate for billions of years, knowing that ninety-nine percent of them are perhaps never going to be awakened again, is it? We will not allow any kind of coercion!"

Gui Suishou smiled and said, "My young friend, it appears to me that you don't know much about humanity after all. You don't need to coerce anybody into doing anything. As long as the news is out, countless spectral Cultivators will definitely volunteer for the job. For example, the little girl next to you is already tempted, isn’t she?”

Li Yao was greatly surprised. He turned around, only to discover that Wei Qingqing was in such a trance that her mind seemed to have drifted to billions of years later in the river of time!

“Sister Qingqing, you are not thinking of being one of those ‘grandpas’, are you?” Li Yao found it hard to believe and even a bit creepy.

“If we are truly running to a dead end, and the Imperium or the Covenant Alliance is about to destroy us, why shouldn’t we make such an attempt if the technology allows?”

Wei Qingqing gradually turned solemn and grave. Her shoulders slightly lowered, as if a new mission had been added to them. “Maybe Master Gui is right. We are no match for the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance right now, but in such a way, the tinder of our civilization will be preserved for billions of years, when it will be ignited again in a different time and environment!”

Li Yao frowned. “But isn’t it too much a sacrifice for those ‘grandpas’? We are talking about a hibernation of billions of years!”

“That isn’t really a big deal. Since it is ‘hibernation’, one will be unconscious as if he is completely dead, right?”

In a smile, Wei Qingqing said, “Is one billion years any different from one year? For this ‘grandpa’, he will be just a sound sleep. His eyes close and open again, and infinite time has already passed.”

Li Yao was somewhat angry. “What if the plan fails? What if the ring is never found by another civilization?”

“If it isn’t, the grandpas will be essentially dead forever, but the federation will have been destroyed, and all the Cultivators must’ve been killed anyway. Does it really matter how the grandpas die?” Wei Qingqing replied disapprovingly.

Li Yao was rendered speechless again.

He had almost forgotten that Wei Qingqing, although leaving the impression that she was just a small orchid, boasted courage that was utterly disproportionate to her weak body.

On the Grand Desolate Plateau, when she had only just graduated from college, she had already been brave enough to stride forward against the furious beast tide!

She was definitely not scared of death!

“Li Yao, I’m different from you.”

After a chuckle, Wei Qingqing said, “You are the most gifted and distinguished genius. You are now one of the most influential people of the three Sectors at such a young age. Everything you do right now will very likely influence the outcome of the war and the fate of our civilization immediately.

“What about me?

“I am just a regular, low-level Cultivator. My talents are limited, and I haven’t had as many fortuitous encounters as you. However hard I try, the Building Foundation Stage will still be the best I can achieve.

“In such an era, a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator matters little to the federation. In the magnificent war in the sea of stars, I am not important or necessary.

“There’s no need to comfort me. We are both clear that it is the truth. For example, if the world that we are living in is a novel or TV series, you will be the well-deserved protagonist and the center of all the spotlights, while people like me will be the supporting characters who cheer and applaud for you.

“Although it is the truth, although I am indeed not smart enough or boast high computational ability and combat ability, and although I seem insignificant, I don’t want to applaud as an supporting character and watch you save the world while doing nothing!

“I want to save the federation and our civilization in my own way!”

Wei Qingqing’s voice was louder and firmer. Her back that seemed to have shouldered an invisible mission was straightened again while she said solemnly, “The me today is just a trivial character for our civilization.

“But if there is really a way to reignite the essence of our civilization together with my remaining soul in billions of years, when it is discovered by a new, primitive civilization, I will certainly try my best and fulfil my responsibility as a ‘guide’ by leading the new civilization that is still living in ignorance and darkness. That way, the fire of our civilization will leave ineffaceable traces in a different time and space!

“I think that it will be the greatest contribution that I, an unimportant teacher, can do for our civilization.”

Her words made Li Yao grow respectful for her again and review the seemingly absurd ‘Grandpa Plan’ from a new perspective.

“I’ve read your files, my young friend Li Yao. Your experiences in the past decade are truly wonderful!” Gui Suishou said with a smile. “I remember that you once encountered an amazing ancient civilization that is made of a Blood Stripe Virus on Iron Plateau in the Flying Star Sector. They were trying to possess a different civilization in order to pass on their own legacy.

“In fact, my Monument Plan is somewhat similar to the apocalyptical possession of the Blood Stripe Virus.

“Maybe, all civilizations are the same. Survival and reproduction are their natural instincts. Faced with their inevitable doom, they will pay even more attention to the reproduction and heritage issues!

“It is the law of nature to age and perish. Everybody, including you and me, will die eventually. But as long as we send out the seeds of our life before our death, and even witness our offspring growing and thriving, death will not necessarily be a dreadful thing, will it?

“Anyway, my young friend Li Yao, will you support my motion and help push the Monument Plan on the Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage?”

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. Then he realized that Gui Suishou did not come to them and say so many things to them by accident; the guy was here to lobby.

It did make sense on second thought. With the resources at his disposal and his influence in the three Sectors, he was probably the unique one in all the two hundred participants of the meeting.

For some of the large-scale plans that would take decades to finish, even without the public resources of the three Sectors, through Skyfire, the Glorious Sunlight Group, and his friends in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, it was not impossible for him to carry them out on his own!

No wonder Gui Suishou, the old, cunning tortoise who had probably slept more than eight hundred years, would come to Li Yao first after he woke up!

Of course, it was also encouraged in the Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage.

All the Nascent Soul Stage experts were expected to say whatever they wanted and have the most intense brainstorm during the meeting.

They were free to propose the most ridiculously ideas as long as the ideas were related to the solutions of the problems about the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance. After the ideas were proposed, everybody would discuss and study them. Then, they would figure out how to put the brainstorm into practice and turn it into a real storm that swept across the universe!

“My young friend Li Yao, rest assured. You will not be supporting me for nothing.”

Although a bit snobbish because of his seniority, Gui Suishou was not an unreasonable man and knew the importance of reciprocity very well. He said slowly, “My ancestors have excavated a lot of classics, files, and relics during the thousands of years of history studies. All the discoveries are tradable. I can even share the Great Dream Tortoise Hibernation Art, my family’s secret art, with you.

“I know that, in order to explore more Sectors and build up the New Federation, lengthy and distant space voyages are unavoidable. In the journeys that can take decades, Human Hibernation is a technology of paramount importance.

“The Human Hibernation technology you have right now, however, is too shabby and not worth mentioning!

“If you are willing to support me, I can publicize the Great Dream Tortoise Hibernation Art. Combing the Great Dream Tortoise Hibernation Art with your Rapid-Freezing Technology, you will have real Human Hibernation. You may even be able to train yourself while you are sleeping!”

Chapter 1194 - Black Hole and Cockroach

Li Yao suddenly beamed with interest.

In a space voyage that could be hundreds of years long, if the crew members did not intend to die of old age, hibernation technology that could significantly and reliably extend their life and reduce the daily consumption of assets was indispensable.

The hibernation technology that the federation currently possessed had only recently been invented. It would not be mature in the decades to come.

However, the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings would be arriving in less than two hundred years.

Two hundred years was naturally a long life for an individual, but for a country that spanned the sea of stars, it was just a snap of fingers.

The time left for their development was not much. They had to seize every second. Any technology that could reduce the time cost was very important!

Li Yao had heard a thing or two about Gui Suishou’s Great Dream Tortoise Hibernation Art before. He was aware that the secret art could lower the breath, heartbeat, and metabolism of a creature to the minimum and even produce a weird ‘membrane’ around all the cells, thereby casting the creature into the false death state on the cellular level.

In the Tortoise Hibernation state, the clock of one’s life would basically stop ticking. A sleep of a hundred years would consume as few materials of the body as a day of consciousness would.

If Gui Suishou really provided the Great Dream Tortoise Hibernation Art to the three Sectors, it was very likely that the space voyage technology of the New Federation would be boosted by decades. Chances were that they would be setting off to look for new Sectors in a year and a half!

It was doubtlessly a fair deal.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao said prudently, “Master Gui, I am not certain how many technological obstacles are yet to be conquered in your Monument Plan and how many resources it will require. So, I cannot give you any promises now.

“Moreover, you will not be the only one proposing a solution to our civilizations in the meeting to come. Each of the two hundred participants will likely put forward their own way of saving the world. I have even prepared a minor plan myself. All the motions and plans will consume a lot of resources. As to which ones will be adopted and which ones will be abandoned, we will have to ask the professionals to listen and evaluate them.

“However, let me show you my attitude first. If your Monument Plan does not involve unconquerable conundrums technologically, the relevant technologies in your plan can be applied to other fields, and the resources to be consumed after evaluation are not high enough to bankrupt the federation, then I am personally willing to dedicate part of my resources to the Monument Plan!”

Gui Suishou nodded. Smiling as before, he replied, “Thank you, my young friend Li Yao. I estimate that the Monument Plan will not consume too many resources, because essentially speaking, it is still just an ‘escape plan’. And escape is almost always easier than a head-on clash with the enemy.”

Gui Suishou knew, too, that raising funds for a project was not an easy task. There would be more projects than simply his own that would be discussed in the Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage. Also, his project was a bit too passive after all.

Otherwise, his species would not have been the only one of all the demon species pushing forward the Monument in the past thousands of years, when all other demons turned a blind eye to it.

It was already acceptable enough that Li Yao had made such a gesture.

Having achieved his purpose, Gui Suishou blinked and glanced around, looking for the next potential supporter of the Monument Plan, ready to sell his ‘absolute pessimism’ to somebody else.

Wei Qingqing, who was working as a temporary reporter, however, beamed with joy. She asked in delight, “Li Yao, you have a plan to deal with the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance like the Monument Plan?”

Li Yao shook his head, somewhat embarrassed. “Not exactly. Master Gui’s Monument Plan is too magnificent and sophisticated. My methods are not splendid enough to cover a time of billions of years. It is just a small ‘tactical’ plan.

“Even if my plan does work out, the best outcome will be that the expedition army of the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance will be crushed on a local battlefield. Nothing more!”

“Crushing the expedition army of the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance?” Wei Qingqing exclaimed. “That’s already incredible enough! Tell me about it. What’s your plan exactly?”

Li Yao smiled. “You will hear the specific content in the Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage. I can only tell you the name of the plan for now—Blackhole!”

Wei Qingqing rolled her eyes. “The Black Hole Plan? You are not planning to build a black hole, are you?”

“Of course not,” Li Yao explained. “With our current technology, it’s unlikely we’d be able to create a real black hole even after tens of thousands of years of development. Even if we do create one, weaponizing it will be the trickiest problem. Chances are that it would swallow our own world before it swallowed the fleets of the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance!

“It is unrealistic to create a blackhole. My ‘Black Hole’ is just a code name. As for what it refers to exactly, you will know it after today!”

Wei Qingqing was not a professional reporter after all, and she had never learned how to press further in an interview. After hearing his words, she did not know how she should go on asking anymore. Thinking for a moment, she turned to the Fire Ant King.

The Fire Ant King, ‘the federation’s old friend’ and one of the new giants of the Blood Demon Sector, was apparently another interesting target to interview!

“Chief Fire Ant, greetings!” Wei Qingqing smiled. “Just now, Li Yao, Professor Zhou, and Master Gui offered their opinions about the war. I wonder, what do you think of the war? Do you agree with Master Gui’s ‘absolute pessimism’, or do you have a solution of your own like Li Yao does?”

The Fire Ant King smiled back. As the former leader of Void Turmoil City and the Blade of Chaos, he used to hang around with the silver-blood nobles a lot. Naturally, he was quite calm to be interviewed. Unhurriedly, he replied, “Master Gui is the oldest senior in the Blood Demon Sector. Of course, we all respect him. But as for the outcome of the war, I think that we should simply keep our own opinions.

“If you ask me, I don’t have a systematic plan like Li Yao’s. But faced with the threats of the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance, I am not as panicked and frightened as you.

“The reason is simple.

“For the past ten thousand years, you’ve considered yourselves as one of the successors of the Star Ocean Imperium. You think that all the human beings in the universe are your compatriots. While you were developing fast and thriving, you never expected that a human force at the center of the universe would be your enemy and would even send out an expedition army to destroy you!

“Therefore, you feel panicked, lost, and desperate.

“We, on the other hand, are different.

“The demons were beaten to the edge of the cosmos from the center step by step over the past ten thousand years by human beings. We have been clear that the super forces at the center of the cosmos are our foes and that they will come to annihilate us one day when they expand to the edge of the cosmos.

“Now, that day has come. That’s all.

“We have been mentally preparing for this for ten thousand years. What’s there to worry about?

“Therefore, the good news is that, no matter how panicked the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector are, the Blood Demon Sector will not be influenced at all. Even if the expedition army of the Imperium appears here and now, we will fight, and probably die, without fear and hesitation. That’s all.”

After a long daze, Wei Qingqing frowned. “Then, Chief Fire Ant, do you not have high hopes for our ending?”

“On the contrary, if there is only one last person in all the three Sectors who is confident about the war, the person will be me.”

With brilliance flowing at the bottom of the Fire Ant King’s eyes, he pointed at his chest while the antennas on his forehead were shivering. “It is well known that I am the new chief of the Insect Clan!

“The Insect Clan is a unique existence among demons. We are not as ferocious as the Claw Clan nor as fast as the Horn Clan. We cannot fly in the sky like the Feather Clan nor swim in the ocean like the Sea Clan.

“When the Insect Clan is mentioned, people’s first impression will almost always be ugly, insignificant, and inferior!

“Yes. In nature, insects are indeed a very low-level life form. A single insect boasts barely any combat ability. Even a strengthless ordinary people can kill quite a few of them after a stomp.

“Therefore, ‘insect’ is also an expression the developed civilizations often used to demean the weak, underdeveloped civilizations.

“Weren’t the high and mighty Immortal Cultivators calling ordinary people ants and weeds? Ants are insects, too!

“Perhaps, in the eyes of the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance, our three Sectors are but three insects at the edge of cosmos. In front of their iron army that will unstoppably cross space one day, all our struggles will only be the best footnote for the word ‘futile’. Even many people among us think the same.

“However, as insignificant as insects may be, are they really so easy to be wiped out?

“Let’s take cockroaches for example, a species that has lasted billions of years in the cosmos! The prehistoric beasts such as dinosaurs, Sarcosuchus, and the Gold-Haired Giant Apes all went extinct, but cockroaches have expanded to every corner in the three thousand Sectors. Sometimes, they are even found in environments that are unsuitable for demons and Cultivators!

“Are the high and mighty Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators capable of annihilating every cockroach in the world and destroying the species completely?

“It’s impossible. Even if all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators are dead, the cockroaches won’t be!

“The Imperium and the Covenant Alliance are perhaps behemoths like dinosaurs, and our small Sectors are like miniscule ants and cockroaches. It remains to be seen which side will be able to laugh to the end!”

The Fire Ant King’s metaphor caught Wei Qingqing off guard. She began to wonder how she should write the interview.

At this moment, Li Yao, the Fire Ant King, Zhou Yifu, and Gui Suishou all felt their wrists buzzed. Their portable crystal processors had received the latest notification.

The space communication array had finished its testing. The demon emperors from the Blood Demon Sector and the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector had all logged in successfully. The Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage would commence in ten minutes!

Chapter 1195 - Critical Question!

Because of the limited time, the Conference Center of the New Federation at the center of Grand Desolate City was not completed yet.

The walls, still the color of lead gray, were yet to be painted and decorated. The vast ceiling was packed with complicated tubes. Crystal cables were dangling down like boas. Even the seats were not installed yet but scattered in all the containers.

The hundred Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, however, were not bothered in the least. They sat or stood in the messy conference hall casually, filling the shabby room with a sacred solemnity.

Li Yao felt that his head was dizzy when he walked into the conference hall.

On the dark ceiling, the illumination rune arrays and the light beam projectors were glittering, casting him into the illusion that he was in an open field under a starry sky.

Looking at the faces that were as calm as statues, Li Yao could not help but think about a lot of things.

He thought that, millions of years ago, before the fire of civilization of human beings had been ignited, were there two hundred apes who decided to gather together and wage war against enemies that were stronger and fiercer than themselves as a tribe because they could not stand the scourge and exploitation of the wolves, tigers, and leopards any longer?

The power of the light beam projector on the ceiling was increased to the maximum. Holograms with streaks and snowflakes fell into the crowd and condensed into dozens of virtual persons.

They were the demon emperors in the Blood Demon Sector and the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the Flying Star Sector.

The almost two hundred top-tier experts of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector and the Flying Star Sector had fully gathered!

Li Yao glanced at so many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators with a pair of eyes that was devoid of spiritual energy.

Every face represented a thunderous and yet exciting name in his childhood.

But right now, the owners of the names were standing right next to them, and he was going to defend the civilization as one of them, too!

Such a feeling of walking into history was truly an indescribable experience.

While he was observing other people, he was being observed, too. The demon emperors from the Blood Demon Sector, particularly, rolled their eyes hard while they looked at the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators nearby.

It could not be helped. Such observation was naturally not very polite, but it was truly an unprecedented event that all the top experts from three Sectors were gathered in the same place. Even the seniors who had experienced too many things somewhat lost their calmness.

“Fellow Cultivators, the fact that we can gather in the same place and discuss the future is already a new history!”

Speaker Jiang Hailiu stepped on the podium, which was made of two boxes. Glancing around, he said slowly, “In the history of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector, or even in the history of the past forty thousand years, such a miracle has never happened before. Two hundred top experts have gathered together, not bickering about the petty interests of their respective sects, not fighting for the insignificant differences on our body, but contributing all our wisdom, strength, courage, and imagination to a new war while letting go of the hatred and wariness of the past!

“This is the greatest, most righteous war because we are not fighting for our selfish interests, not for the ambition of the minority, but for ourselves, for our family, for the fate of our civilization!

“We must live on!

“No matter how formidable an enemy we are faced with, we will not wait to be killed. We will certainly fight back and live on at any cost until the most brilliant part of our civilization illuminates the entire sea of stars!”

His resolute declaration cast all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator into deep thought. Even the demon emperors from the Blood Demon Sector were apparently moved and thinking hard.

To live on. What a simple and yet complicated, humble and yet noble, goal!

“My fellow Cultivators, you are all specialists and leaders in your respective fields. Time is precious. Also, our space communication array is still under testing. Every second of operation will consume tremendous crystals.

“This is just an unofficial assembly. We can save all the formalities. Since everybody has read all the files before the meeting, let’s seize the day and go to our topic now!

“First of all, I think that the one thing that everybody is eager to find out in this meeting is about the Covenant Alliance. Is the so-called ‘Alliance of the Holy Covenant’ real? Or maybe, is it just a trick that the Imperium of True Human Beings played and a crude strategical deception?

“The reason is simple. Before, we always considered the Imperium of True Human Beings to be our greatest enemy, and we planned to dedicate all our resources to deal with the Imperium. But right now, a Covenant Alliance, which is said to be even scarier than the Imperium, has popped up out of nowhere!

“In such a case, we will inevitably be less wary of the Imperium of True Human Beings, and we will even change our stance on the Imperium subconsciously.

“From the Imperium’s perspective, the subtle change of our attitude naturally greets with their interests.

“Therefore, many fellow Cultivators might be mumbled to yourselves. Does the Covenant Alliance, which is said to be a hundred more times evil than the Imperium, really exist? Is this the Imperium of True Human Beings’ plot?

“Are they using a nonexistent Covenant Alliance to intimidate the weaker forces in the universe, which are forced to seek shelter from the Imperium to avoid the aggression of the Covenant Alliance?

“If that is the case, the Imperium of True Human Beings will be able to conquer a large area of the sea of stars with no blood shed!”

In front of Li Yao, a virtual light beam was shining. It was a sign that Jiang Hailiu invited him to speak.

Li Yao was the discoverer of the Covenant Alliance. His foster father had claimed to be from the Covenant Alliance. Naturally, his opinion mattered most regarding the issue.

Li Yao had prepared his speech earlier. Therefore, gazed at by more than a hundred Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, he was not very nervous. Unhurriedly, he said, “Seniors here, nice to meet you. I am Li Yao. My foster father claims that he is from the Covenant Alliance, and I believe what he said.

“I have two reasons.

“Firstly, my foster bestowed upon me a flying sword whose materials and structure are quite unique. It is definitely not something that can be manufactured in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, or the Blood Demon Sector. It is definitely from a force far more advanced than ours. The scraps of the flying sword are still inside my refining workshop. Everybody is free to study and analyze them!

“Secondly, assuming that it is part of the Imperium of True Human Beings’ scheme, nothing makes sense.

“When my foster father passed away, I was still in high school as an ordinary person with a low Spirit Actualization Quotient. Although I’m slightly gifted at hand speed and magical equipment maintenance, it is really nothing compared to the real geniuses of training.

“The jade chip that my foster father left to me, however, was set to be openable only if I am at the peak of the Core Formation Stage or higher!

“If the Covenant Alliance does not exist, and my foster father is a spy from the Imperium of True Human Beings, how could he have been certain that I would reach the Nascent Soul Stage one day?

“For me when I was in high school, odds were lower than one billionth that I could be a Cultivator of such a high level. How could the Imperium of True Human Beings have counted their scheme on such a low chance?

“Also, if it is really a strategical deception, wouldn’t my foster father have reduced everybody’s wariness if he showed up as a citizen of the Covenant Alliance and reminded everybody of the evilness of the Covenant Alliance and the righteousness of the Imperium? Why would he point out, bluntly and redundantly, that the Imperium of True Human Beings was a force no more righteous?”

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators all nodded quickly. Li Yao’s analysis was clearly reasonable enough.

“There’s one other thing.”

With a solemn face, Li Yao said earnestly, “Although my foster father asked us to join the Imperium of True Human Beings in his last words, it was obvious that he couldn’t have foreseen what would happen in the next twenty years. It must’ve been beyond his imagination that the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector would be collaborating!

“Then and now are different. Whatever he said, and even if the Covenant Alliance does exist, my opinion about the Imperium of True Human Beings will not be changed!

“No matter what their reason is, a force that produces one ‘star child’ by killing hundreds of babies is definitely the evilest force in my eyes!

“The Covenant Alliance and the Imperium are both our enemies, and I will not surrender to either of them!

“If one force can be called ‘the last guardian of humanity’, it is not going to be the Imperium of True Human Beings but us!”

Li Yao’s words moved all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the demon emperors.

Many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who had not met him before observed the plain-looking young man again. They seemed to understand why he could be the youngest Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator of the three Sectors from his words now.

At the very least, his declaration was proud and straightforward enough!

Then, another Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator requested to speak. It was Zhou Yifu, a historian who studied the fall of the Star Ocean Imperium.

“I agree with Fellow Cultivator Li that the Covenant Alliance is real despite the lack of solid evidence. But I would like to illustrate a side view, which is the mutation of the Imperium of True Human Beings. How exactly did the Cultivators at the center of the cosmos degenerate into Immortal Cultivators?” Zhou Yifu said unhurriedly.

“It is well known that, after thirty thousand years of the Great Dark Era, human beings rose again and established the Star Ocean Imperium that spanned the universe.

“Although it was an Imperium, and the system it adopted was a combination of a dictatorship and feudalism, the overall social form of the Star Ocean Imperium was relatively positive, bright, and righteous.

“Cultivators of the Star Ocean Imperium, including the monarch Supreme Emperor, although still carrying the bad habits of the old days, had basically agreed that ‘Cultivators are the sabers of humanity’, ‘Cultivators originate from ordinary people and can give birth to ordinary people’, and other modern opinions.

“That is perhaps the case for any imperium at the beginning. The ruler that rose from the folk would pay attention to the feeling of the general public and know the importance of relying on them.

“Moreover, the Star Ocean Imperium justified its regime by the slogan ‘overthrow the tyranny of demons and liberate all the human beings in the universe’, which was the foundation of the Star Ocean Imperium. It could not be changed easily.

“Such an imperium that was relatively bright and righteous, before decaying and degrading, was already crumbled in the Armageddon Rebellion and destroyed!

“Although the Star Ocean Imperium disappeared as quickly as it rose, the pure spirit of the country was preserved without being sullied at all, encouraging all human beings in the universe.

“Today, most of the civilizations of human beings, including the Star Glory Federation, are still proud of being a successor of the Star Ocean Imperium and willing to pass on the spirit of the country!

“Here comes the question. Now that the Imperium of True Human Beings has occupied the prosperous area of the Star Ocean Imperium and considers itself to be the rightful heir to the Star Ocean Imperium, it must’ve more or less inherited the spirit of the Star Ocean Imperium that the ordinary people are worth fighting for.

“Why does this imperium act oppositely from that imperium, and how did the Cultivators become Immortal Cultivators?”

Chapter 1196 - Deterioration of the Imperium

All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were deep in thought. Even Li Yao nodded quickly after a slight daze.

Yes, although it was also an Imperium, the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago was more complimented than criticized in modern times.

It was because, in the Great Dark Era that lasted thirty thousand years, human beings were suppressed by demons. Cultivators were even the primary targets of the demons. On many occasions, they had to count on the ordinary people to cover and even shelter them.

When the Cultivators rose again, they resisted under the banner of ‘defend humanity’. It was naturally impossible for them to oppress ordinary people like the demon rulers did.

Due to the limitation of the era, there were not laws such as the Constitution of Cultivators in the Star Glory Federation, which dictated the rights and the equal status of Cultivators and ordinary people.

But the simple ideas that evil had to be executed and the weak had to be helped still entered the minds of most Cultivators of the Star Ocean Imperium.

It was so for the Star Glory Federation, a small country at the edge of the universe. How could the Imperium of True

Human Beings, which was at the center of the universe, not be so?

The heritage of Cultivators was never just about the cold Cultivation arts and classics. It also included the beliefs and spirits of the predecessors!

In the relics of the Star Ocean Imperium, other than the marvelous arts, there were also teachings from the Cultivators of the Imperium left for the latecomers, as well as the soul-stirring tales where they sacrificed themselves for humanity.

Such teachings and tales, of course, would reshape the beliefs of the future generations.

For example, Li Yao once discovered a multipurpose exploration ship named ‘Sparkle’ from the depths of the underground silver ocean of Boneyard.

In order to suppress Skeleton Dragon, Gao Xingce, the captain of Sparkle and a Cultivator of the Star Ocean Imperium, eradicated ninety-nine percent of his soul and memories, even including those about his family, just so that the remaining part of his soul could survive longer, monitor the status of Skeleton Dragon, and warn the latecomers!

Li Yao had accepted Sparkle and become its new captain. He had also accepted Gao Xingce’s spirit.

That spirit was now an indispensable part of his ‘belief’.

One day, if Li Yao intended to do anything that harmed the interest of the ordinary people, his belief would be shaken and caught in a self-contradictory state, which could result to a significant drop of his level!

It was so for Li Yao. Could it have been different for the Cultivators who received the legacy of the Star Ocean Imperium at the center of the universe?

This was a world where materials could be affected by spirit. It was impossible that one could just learn a senior's ultimate skill but not his benevolence!

"I believe that you've all found the subtle contradiction here, haven't you?" Zhou Yifu said. "By logic, for a country of human beings at the center of the universe, after inheriting the enormous legacy of the Star Ocean Imperium, the Cultivators should be sharing the same ideas as the Star Ocean Imperium's.

"They should consider themselves the 'sabers of humanity' and feel proud of defending the ordinary people. How on earth did they stop regarding themselves as human beings and even invent a new term, true human beings, to address themselves?

"Such a drastic change of beliefs is highly illogical. Under normal circumstances, it would certainly result in the collapse of their belief, their mental derangement, and even their abrupt death!

"The conversion of one or two Cultivators is nothing usual. The federation has such evil Cultivators, too, but all the Cultivators in an entire country have been transformed into Immortal Cultivators collectively. Such a change is barely comprehensible if there weren't external pressure!"

Li Yao's eyes shone. He turned on the public communication rune array and said, "Senior Zhou, are you saying that, when it was first established, the Imperium of True Human Beings, which absorbed the legacy and the ideology of the Star Ocean Imperium, was perhaps also a country made of

Cultivators whose goal was to defend humanity, a ‘smaller Star Ocean Imperium’ if you will?

“Later, under certain enormous pressure, they were forced to exploit all the national capability as quickly as possible to cope with it.

“Therefore, the Cultivators of the Imperium of True Human Beings, to quote my foster father, ‘abandoned humanity and the pride of Cultivators’ and transformed into Immortal Cultivators?”

“Exactly!” Scratching his goatee, Zhou Yifu nodded quickly. “Everything that has happened to the federation in the past year is perhaps a replay of the transformation of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

“The Star Glory Federation was a country where the equality between Cultivators and ordinary people was highly valued. Everybody made their own contribution and fought for a better future together.

“But ever since the news of the Imperium of True Human Beings a year ago, many Cultivators changed their mindset. They believed that the current system was not enough to exploit the most war potentials within the shortest amount of time. For survival, for the civilization, and for ninety-nine percent of people, one percent of them can and should be sacrificed!

“Cultivators who held such extreme ideas, represented by Lu Zui and Zhou Hengdao, killed tens of thousands innocent civilians to achieve their goal!

“Also, they pretended that they didn’t know human beings and demons were of the same origin, and they planned to send all the demons to the resource planets where the captives would slog until they died!

“It is safe to say that Lu Zui, Zhou Hengdao, and the rest of them, with everything they did, do not deserve the name ‘Cultivator’. They are out-and-out ‘Immortal Cultivators’!

“But after changing from Cultivators who guard ordinary people and humanity to Immortal Cultivators who can sacrifice random ordinary people to achieve their purpose, their belief was not caught in chaos, and their level did not decline. Before Lu Zui’s death, he was even able to summon all his strength and break into a whole new level!

“Why did all that happen?

“It’s simple. They did not think that they were wrong. They believed that, even if their approaches were flawed, their ideology and purpose were right. They believed that every ordinary person they killed was for the salvation of our civilization. It was with the idea of the ‘greater good’ that they deteriorated so quickly!”

At this moment, Luo Xingzi, the Cultivator from the Flying Star Sector, requested to speak.

“Fellow Cultivator Zhou, please allow me to add a few words.

“Based on the experience of the Flying Star Sector, a Cultivator can deteriorate really fast. Instead of a year and a half, it can be completed within several minutes if he is sent to a starship that is floating in a cosmic storm after an accident with limited food and fuel.

“To fight for the slim chance of survival, even the most righteous Cultivator in peacetime can turn into a fiend instantly. He can even develop a theory to defend himself later.

“After all, as long as he survives, excuses are always easy to find!”

Zhou Yifu nodded and smiled. “Thank you for your illustration, Fellow Cultivator Luo Xingzi. It is indeed true!

“In retrospect, it was very fortunate that the scheme of the Immortal Cultivators such as Lu Zui and Zhou Hengdao was stopped. Otherwise, in the war between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, they certainly would have expanded step by step and seduced more Cultivators. They would have exploited everybody through the most brutal methods until the Star Glory Federation turned into a new country of Immortal Cultivators in the end!

“Everything that didn’t happen in the Star Glory Federation must’ve happened for real in the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“We can totally imagine that at the beginning, the Imperium of True Human Beings must’ve been a country of Cultivators, like the Star Ocean Imperium in the past.

“However, during its development, the Cultivators ran into a formidable enemy named the Alliance of the Holy Covenant.

“Fellow Cultivator Li Yao’s foster father mentioned that the Imperium of True Human Beings was a ‘traditional superpower’. So, it is not hard to guess that the country must’ve hit a bottleneck at that time, with trouble both inside and outside. In the meantime, the Alliance of the Holy Covenant was a new power that was rising unstoppably like the sun in the morning!

“Therefore, the Covenant Alliance was as much a headache to the Imperium as the Imperium is to us now. Perhaps, some of the people in the Imperium believed that they must abandon humanity for animality and exploit the value of everybody in order to defeat the Covenant Alliance and defend their civilization!

“In the beginning, maybe, they thought the same as Lu Zui and Zhou Hengdao did. They believed that sacrificing the one percent for the remaining ninety-nine percent was worthwhile. However, how could they ever stop doing such things once they began? Under the aggression of the Covenant Alliance, the Imperium of True Human Beings must’ve been like an athlete addicted to exhilarants. It became mired deeper and deeper until it couldn’t be freed anymore. Eventually, Cultivators were completely transformed into Immortal Cultivators, and they no longer hesitated to do such a thing as kill hundreds of babies!”

Zhou Yifu’s deduction was both reasonable and convincing. With only a few words, he described the degeneration of an enormous kingdom at the center of the universe and proved the existence of the Alliance of the Holy Covenant from the side. The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were all nodding in approval.

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were all quick-minded fellows with amazing computational ability. Thinking quickly, they all felt that the deduction was perfectly reasonable and perhaps the truth.

“It appears that we all agree that the Covenant Alliance does exist. So, we are faced with not one but two super forces now.”

Jiang Hailiu, host of the meeting, glanced around and asked calmly, “Then, do you feel that, faced with two super forces that are both extremely hostile to us, our situation is now even worse than before and we should further adjust our previous strategies?

“Let me declare my opinion first. I think that it is utterly unnecessary!

“Our situation right now has not worsened. On the contrary, it has greatly improved. It will not be exaggerating to say that the next hundreds of years will be the period of strategic opportunities for the Star Glory Federation!”

Humming sounds immediately filled the room. Many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators did not expect Jiang Hailiu to be so optimistic about the issue.

However, Jiang Hailiu, as the Speaker of the parliament, doubtlessly boasted an excellent view of the overall situation. His stance regarding the war against the Blood Demon Sector before proved his strategical prowess, too.

All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators held their breath and waited for his presentation.

Chapter 1197 - Balance of Life and Death!

“As the saying goes, when a snipe and a clam are locked in combat, the fisherman will take advantage of both of them. In the fight of two behemoths that are the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance, the federation is nowhere close to being the fisherman, but there will still be room for to breathe.”

Jiang Hailiu’s opinion was more or less the same as Zhou Yifu’s theory before the meeting. “If there was only one super force named Imperium of True Human Beings at the center of the universe, they would be able to gather all the resources and soldiers to crush the secondary forces at the edge of the universe. With the three Sectors we’ve got, it is naturally far from enough to compete with hundreds of Sectors.

“However, the greatest enemy of the Imperium is the Covenant Alliance. The two parties are engaged in a magnificent war at the center of the universe. It goes without saying that neither of them will spare too many troops to deal with the ‘bumpkins’ who are living in a ‘slum’.”

Jiang Hailiu’s self-mocking metaphor raised a round of laughter. The atmosphere in the hall was more or less relaxed.

After a smile, Jiang Hailiu continued. “Most of the information we have about the Imperium of True Human Beings is from the ‘star child’. The star child also told Li Yao, Luo Xingzi, and the other Cultivators in the battle that the

Imperium of True Human Beings’ policies were quite ‘lenient’ and that if they were willing to cooperate with the Imperium, the Flying Star Sector would be granted high autonomy, provided that the Flying Star Sector submitted population, resources, and experts incessantly.

“His words might not be entirely ungrounded. The Imperium and the Covenant Alliance are having an evenly-matched, life-and-death war. For the war, both parties are trying their best to collect workers and resources from more Sectors, which they can devote to the inferno of war. The side that gathers more people, resources, and experts might secure the final victory!

“Then, the purpose of the expedition army of the Imperium is obvious.

“They are not here for a long conquer but to plunder people and resources as quickly as possible to deal with the real important war between them and the Covenant Alliance.

“Therefore, the expedition army that we are going to be faced with in one to two hundred years might not necessarily be the strongest troop of the Imperium of True Human Beings. They are more likely to be ‘slave catchers’ or ‘raiders’ who are here to look for ‘cannon fodder’!

“We don’t need to destroy the army completely. We only need to let the Imperium realize that the resources to be consumed in the war will far exceed the benefits it will gain after defeating us. If so, the Imperium is likely to retreat from the war as it is obviously not a good bargain!”

After hearing Jiang Hailiu’s analysis, many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were cheered up.

They had thought that the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings would be a devastating catastrophe, but on second thought, war was always an extension of politics, and what mattered most in politics was benefits. Nobody would wage a war that would give them nothing.

Magnificent as the Imperium of True Human Beings might be, it would definitely be exhausting and consuming to project an immense expedition army to millions of lightyears away. The Imperium might be evil, but they were definitely not stupid. What was their purpose?

Cannon fodder! They were going to the federation to collect cannon fodder that could be dedicated to the war with the Covenant Alliance later!

It meant that, as long as the expedition army of the Imperium was heavily struck by the federation, and the Imperium came to the realization that the yields of the war would not cover its investment, it was very likely that the federation would retain its independence!

“The federation, of course, will not be content after winning the insignificant war of defense. It will only be a beginning point for us!” Jiang Hailiu said thoughtfully. “War is the best catalyst for a civilization and the most convenient approach to learn from others. If we can really weather through the stormy attack of the expedition army of the Imperium, our civilization will certainly make a giant leap ahead!

“At the center of the universe, the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance are now engaged in a fierce war. The Imperium must’ve developed a lot of tactics and magical equipment targeting the Covenant Alliance, and vice versa.

“If the federation has the opportunity to learn how the two universal behemoths fight each other, how they bite each other’s throat and dig out each other’s heart, we will definitely be able to grow into a new behemoth, too!

“You might think that I am too whimsical, but we don’t need to grow into the size of the Imperium or the Covenant Alliance. It will be sufficient as long as our comprehensive capability is only one tenth theirs.

“As long as the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance are on par with each other, they will be like a balanced scale. Then, even if we are nothing more than a feather or a blade of grass, we will have the chance to influence the balance!

“We will only have one rule, which is to help the weak and to suppress the strong. If the Covenant Alliance is strong and the Imperium is weak, we will join with the Imperium against the Covenant Alliance. If the Covenant Alliance, as a new power, lacks momentum and the Imperium is on the winning side, we will work with the Covenant Alliance to fight against the Imperium!

“All in all, we must keep the balance between the two super forces and prevent either of them from dominating the competition. We will let them bleed in the prolonged war while we learn their most advanced arts, skills, and technologies, until our claws and teeth are sharp enough and our feathers are complete. By then, we will be the top players in the sea of stars!

“In short, the federation is hopeful. The three Sectors are hopeful! Fellow Cultivators, as long as all we walk forward together with a firm belief, not only will we be able to resist the invasion of any enemy, we will even march to the center of the universe where humanity will be illuminated in its true glory!”

Jiang Hailiu’s blood-boiling speech raised a round of applause. All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors were thrilled.

As a super expert, did any one of them not have the ambition to travel in the vast universe? Were any of them willing to be stranded at the desolate area at the edge of the universe and regarded by the super forces as ‘bumpkins’?

Also, after they learned that countless ordinary people were still being savaged by the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance at the center of the universe, even their beliefs would not allow them to stand by and watch.

We are the most rightful heir to the ‘Star Ocean Imperium’ spiritually! We are the last guardians of humanity! Let’s march to the center of the universe and revive humanity to its former glory!

Including Li Yao, all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, whether they were battle-type or not, were breathing fast and roaring the same thing in their hearts.

As for the demon emperors, they had even more complicated feelings.

Maybe, they could not understand the whole meaning of ‘humanity’ yet.

But ‘marching back to the center of the sea of stars’ was a dream that had haunted their ancestors for ten thousand years and had leaked into their blood!

For ten thousand years, demons had been on a losing streak. They had lost one home after another, and finally, the Blood Demon Sector was one of the last worlds of demons.

Even when the Blood Demon Sector was slightly stronger than the Heaven’s Origin Sector in the past, every demon emperor in the Pantheon of Demons had been well aware that ‘marching back to the center of the sea of stars’ was just an impractical fantasy!

But right now, if they worked together with the Star Glory Federation, there was a chance, however slim it was, to go back to the center of the universe.

Although they would be under a different banner, a different identity, and even a different appearance, they would still be going home after all!

For a moment, all the demon emperors were looking at each other and breathing heavily.

“What Fellow Cultivator Jiang said is very true. I also feel that the federation is very hopeful. In fact, the capability gap between the federation and the Imperium or the Covenant Alliance might not be as huge as we imagined!” Zhou Yifu, the historian, spoke again.

“It’s true that we have only grasped three Sectors, while the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance, which are looming at the prosperous area of the universe, are perhaps in control of hundreds of Sectors!

“But the ratio of capability between us is certainly not as simple as 1:100!

“I wonder, have you ever heard of theory that the territory of every country is limited? Due to the complexity of communication, transportation, and information processing, even the most enormous empire can only be expanded to a certain point, just like even the strongest primeval beasts couldn’t grow unlimitedly. They must stop developing when they are large enough. Otherwise, they will very likely collapse because of their own weight!

“According to the definition in modern cosmology, a Sector is an area with concentrated resources and within the reach of normal cruising methods at a sub-light speed.

“In the same Sector, a sub-light speed or an even lower speed would be enough for transportation. The communication of resources and population is relatively easy. The control of the government is the most effective, too.

“As for different Sectors, the transportation can only be conducted through space jumps. Not only will it consume tremendous resources, the journey can also be highly perilous. The vehicles are often caught in the turbulence in the four-dimensional space and gone forever!

“Sub-light methods instead of space jumps? Then, it will take more than a hundred thousand years to cruise between two Sectors that are a hundred thousand lightyears away from each other, not counting the expansion of the universe itself!

“Think about it. Today, we are only gathering the experts from the three Sectors and having a meeting, and we already have to resort to the space communication array, which burns innumerable crystals every second. Due to the interference of the higher-dimensional space, the signals are delayed several minutes or even longer!

“Then, even if the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Covenant Alliance both boast hundreds of Sectors, how much control will their rulers have over those Sectors? How can the Empyrean Terminus Sector, capital of the Imperium, enforce absolute control over another Sector hundreds of thousands of lightyears away?

“The vaster a country is, the weaker its control over the frontier and the higher the internal friction of the country will be. Most of the resources of the country are not wasted on the wars against foreign forces but on the vast land of the country itself. In the end, it is not necessarily the foreign forces that cause the fall of the country but its own immensity and the redundant, clumsy bureaucratic system that is designed to cope with the immensity. It is a law that works both in the ancient times and right now!”

Chapter 1198 - History as a Mirror

Zhou Yifu was most familiar with the fall and collapse of the Star Ocean Imperium. He spoke confidently when he was talking about the history of this period. “Judging from the relics we have excavated and the historical files left by the Star Ocean Imperium, the means of communication and transportation of the Star Ocean Imperium across different Sectors were not essentially different from ours. Their starships might have been larger and possessed a higher speed, and their spiritual beacons might have been more densely distributed, but that was all.

“Based on the technology of the Star Ocean Imperium, in fact, the territory that was really in the Supreme Emperor’s control had just been the dozens of Sectors around the Empyrean Terminus Sector. As for the Sectors that were further away, his control over them plummeted!

“In order to address the problem, same as most monarchs in history, the Supreme Emperor adopted a system of enfeoffment.

“But the enfeoffment system has its own fatal drawbacks, too.

“If the central government controls the local government too strictly, the local governments will be highly inactive and even detest the central government.

“But if the central government gives more autonomy to the local governments and allows it to develop on its own, it will be very possible that the leadership will be rendered ineffectual by recalcitrant subordinates. The local governments might be a threat to the central government one day!

“The Supreme Emperor’s solution was to copy his genes and create twenty ‘clones’ with ultimate secret arts. The twenty clones led the most elite forces of the imperium and founded twenty Guilds of Provenance, which governed the strategic locations at the frontier of the imperium.

“The so-called Guilds of Provenance were just another form of a fief!

“By logic, as his clones, they should have been even more loyal to the Supreme Emperor than his children were. There should not have been a problem at all.

“However, as everybody knows, when the Supreme Emperor launched the Hundred-Million Lightyear Expedition, trying to destroy the last remaining force of the demon civilization, ten of the twenty clones—including the Blood God, the commander-in-chief of the expedition army and the strongest clone that he poured his own soul power in—betrayed him!

“Eventually, the expedition failed, and the imperium collapsed. The universe entered the post Star Ocean Imperium era!

“Many legends and tales have it that, in the Hundred-Million Lightyear Expedition, the Blood God was bewildered by the extraterrestrial devils before he slowly degraded into a devil Cultivator and directed the Armageddon Rebellion, causing the fall of the imperium as the Mad Armageddon!

“Such a story is definitely most suitable for teenagers and middle-school students.

“However, since all the fellow Cultivators are excellent persons in the Nascent Soul Stage, such a theory is definitely not convincing enough for you.

“The reason for the Blood God’s betrayal is very simple. It’s just the contradiction between an aggressive local warlord and the central government.

“In the thousand years of the Star Ocean Imperium’ rise, the Blood God, as the Supreme Emperor’s strongest clone, was fighting in the frontline all the time. While his amazing capabilities were honed, he also gathered a loyal, magnificent army and many trustworthy allies who fought side by side with him!

“After the territory of the Star Ocean Imperium gradually stabilized, the Blood God’s fief was the cold and bitter land that bordered on the last territory of the Demon Beast Empire. In order to survive in such a place, the Supreme Emperor had to give the Blood God more autonomy so that he could act expediently.

“We can assume that, during the hundreds of years of war, the clones who fought at the territory of the imperium as the Blood God had long turned into warlords who reigned over their own ‘independent kingdoms’. They were very satisfied about the current situation.

“Once the last remaining forces of the demon civilization was cleared, there would be absolutely no need to keep such ‘warlords’. The ambitious Supreme Emperor would certainly cancel the power in the hands of the twenty clones and even rid them of their fiefs. Their sects might also be migrated to the Empyreal Terminus Sector for better control.

“When the rabbits are gone, the hounds will be useless. The logic is obvious for us, for the Supreme Emperor, and also for his twenty clones, of course.

“It was something unbearable for the clones who had turned into warlords!

“Therefore, ten of the twenty clones rose up and fought against the Supreme Emperor with the Blood God as their representative. It was not just the Blood God’s own scheme but the irreconcilable conflict between the central government and the local governments!

“Even if the extraterrestrial devils were truly involved in the matter, they must’ve participated in a different way. The extraterrestrial devils didn’t corrupt the Blood God into the Armageddon Rebellion, causing the division of the expedition army and the collapse of the imperium.

“The Blood God and the other clones must have had such malicious thoughts toward the Supreme Emperor for a long time, fearing that the Supreme Emperor would take away their power, and therefore rebelled while they still could!

“They knew that they were incomparable to the Supreme Emperor and the forces that were loyal to him. That was why they allied with the demons and the extraterrestrial devils, destroying the expedition army and the Star Ocean Imperium!”

Zhou Yifu’s brand new explanation about the Imperium of True Human Beings cast the spacious hall into silence.

However, no Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators argued with him.

Everybody there was an adult. The simple theories that ‘Cultivators are good, devil Cultivators are bad, and the Blood God was good until the extraterrestrial devils corrupted him’ could only fool middle-school students. Naturally, they were not very convinced.

Zhou Yifu’s explanation about the conflict between the central government and the local governments and that between the emperor and the warlords might be the truth of what happened ten thousand years ago.

Scratching his goatee, Zhou Yifu continued. “If you consider history as a mirror, you will see your own fate in the reflection. Why can’t everything that has happened to the Star Ocean Imperium happen to the Imperium of True Human Beings again?”

“Fellow Cultivator Zhou, are you suggesting that the Imperium of True Human Beings might also be faced with the conflict between the central government and the local governments?” Jiang Hailiu asked solemnly.

“Not might, must,” Zhou Yifu said confidently. “As long as the technological level of the Imperium of True Human Beings in terms of communication and space voyage does not far exceed that of the Star Ocean Imperium, the dilemma that once disintegrated the Star Ocean Imperium will definitely be replayed in the Imperium of True Human Beings again! By my estimation, the ruler of the Imperium of True Human Beings can only enforce effective control over the dozens of Sectors around the Empyrean Terminus Sector at best. It is impossible for them to control the far-flung areas millions of lightyears away handily!

“Also, the Imperium is faced with the serious military threat from the Covenant Alliance. It is even less likely that the

Imperium reigns the territory directly, which will be inefficient and unresponsive!

“If the Imperium reigns directly, the capital city of the Imperium will have to respond to every incident in the hundreds of Sectors. It is like a dinosaur dozens of meters long trying to seize control over every nerve ending. If other animals bite its tail hard, it will take quite a few seconds before the brain feels the pain. How can it work?

“Making the nerve endings act on their own—adopting the system of enfeoffment—is the only choice.

“The star child himself said that, as long as Li Yao, Luo Xingzi, and the rest were willing to surrender, the Flying Star Sector could serve as their fief, and they would be the masters of the Flying Star Sector.

“So, it must be a common practice that, after a new Sector is discovered by the Imperium of True Human Beings, it will be subinfeudated immediately, sometimes even to the local terms. Otherwise, the star child wouldn’t have made such an offer so quickly on its own initiative.

“Does the Imperium of True Human Beings not want to swallow the Flying Star Sector directly? Of course it does! But they have too many Sectors in their plate to control.

“If that is the case, we will have to reevaluate the Imperium of True Human Beings’ capability.

“According to the star child, the Imperium of True Human Beings occupies the central area of the universe and hundreds of the most prosperous Sectors.

“But when he made such a statement, he was in a context where he was trying to intimidate Li Yao, Luo Xingzi, and other fellow Cultivators so that they would surrender! Therefore, his statement must’ve been embellished.

“It is like the dynasty wars in the ancient times. When there are only slightly more than a hundred thousand people in the army, counting the cooks and their family, the commander of the army will be bold enough to say that he has an army of almost a million soldiers. It is also a way of intimidation.

“Right now, we know that there’s also the Covenant Alliance, which is on par with the Imperium, at the center of the universe. So, the ‘hundreds of most prosperous Sectors’ must be reduced by a half. Either party has under their control only two to three hundred Sectors at best.

“Of the two to three hundred Sectors, only dozens are under the effective control of the Imperium. The rest of the Sectors are all independent kingdoms reigned by, let’s call them, ‘Sector Masters’ and only provide resources, soldiers, and experts for the Imperium regularly.

“When the Imperium of True Human Beings was in its prime, the Sector Masters definitely would have been loyal to the central government and willing to provide their assets.

“However, after hundreds of years of warfare between the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance, how much loyalty will the independent kingdoms still have to the central government?

“Assuming that we can develop into a hard bone that does not carry much meat and is very hard to bite, how many of the Sector Masters of the Imperium of True Human Beings will be willing to bite us at the risk of breaking their teeth?

“By then, there will likely be such a situation, where the elite forces at the central area of the Imperium of True Human Beings, which are also the real troops of the Imperium, are too occupied in the war against the main forces of the Covenant Alliance to come at the disobedient bumpkins in a desolate region, while for the warlords at the territory of the Imperium, biting the hard bone will earn few benefits for them. So, even if they promise the central government that they will attack, it will be likely mere pretense, and they will not come for real.

“This is the awkward situation of the Imperium of True Human Beings that I have inferred from the decline of the Star Ocean Imperium! Therefore, I share the same opinion as Fellow Cultivator Jiang. The situation we are in is not as perilous as it seems. On the contrary, the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings will not be the end of the Star Glory Federation but the beginning of our real rise to be the dominator of the universe!”

Chapter 1199 - Covenant Alliance in the Mist

“Dominator of the universe…”

Despite the hyperbole and optimism in Zhou Yifu’s words, nobody was willing to argue with the historian at that moment.

In the recent year and a half—under the heavy burden of the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings—the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector had all been panicking to a degree. Such optimism was of paramount importance to boost the morale.

Even if it was an exaggeration, as long as there was a slim chance of survival, they would still be able to summon all their spirit, courage, and combat ability in the cold, dangerous universe and fight on!

“Fellow Cultivator Zhou is quite right. Us bumpkins at the desolate area and the hard bones that cannot be smashed, bitten, or boiled will certainly be a great surprise for the super forces at the center of the universe!”

Seeing that everybody was firmer than before, instead of waiting for an objection, Jiang Hailiu hurried to proceed. “Now that most of the fellow Cultivators have faith in our survival and rise, let’s move on to our next topic.

“When you know yourself and your enemy well, you will never lose a battle. To defeat the super forces at the center of the universe, we must get to know them better.

“Regarding the Imperium of True Human Beings, the Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector have excavated a lot of information from the scraps of the star child’s soul over the past years. We know it to be a country that has inherited a lot of techniques of the Star Ocean Imperium, is controlled by Immortal Cultivators, and exploits the ordinary people to the maximum extent with ‘evolution’ as its sole purpose.

“From the information we have, we have inferred a lot more intelligence. We can even generally outline the social form and the technological level of the Imperium of True Human Beings, thereby evaluating the possible combat ability of the expedition army of the Imperium.

“But what about the Covenant Alliance?

“We don’t know the first thing about the country hiding in the mist. What exactly are its social form, bureaucratic system, culture and customs, and moral standards?

“The social form of the Covenant Alliance and that of the Imperium are obviously different. Otherwise, they wouldn’t be at loggerheads, but the Covenant Alliance and the federation must be different, too, or Fellow Cultivator Li Yao’s foster father wouldn’t have loathed his motherland so much.

“What exactly is the country that has been called ‘a hundred times eviler than the Imperium of True Human Beings’?

“Right now, we don’t have any files about the country, but the information about the country is very important for our strategic development in the next hundred years. Can any of you here speculate the general picture of the Covenant Alliance with your amazing computational ability and deduction ability?”

After raising his question, he looked at the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in expectation.

However, his question was greeted by silence.

It could not be helped. Even the best cook could not make food without ingredients. Despite their unparalleled computational ability, how could they infer the truth about the Covenant Alliance with no evidence at all except a name?

A moment later, a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator named Xie Youxuan requested to speak.

He was one of the most distinguished psychologists and Meditation Healers of the Star Glory Federation.

“I think that we don’t need to be troubled by the last words of Fellow Cultivator Li Yao’s foster,” Xie Youxuan said. “The ‘a hundred times eviler than the Imperium of True Human Beings’ allegation is probably overstated.

“I am definitely not implying that Fellow Cultivator Li Yao’s foster father was lying. It’s just a subconscious misconception of the mind.

“Think about it. The Imperium of True Human Beings is already evil enough to regard ordinary people, even including the newborn babies, as weeds that can be exploited and butchered at will. In the eyes of the Immortal Cultivators, the ordinary people are not ‘true human beings’ at all. They think that they are the only true human beings!

“As Fellow Cultivator Li Yao said, in the ethics of mankind, this is already as evil as anybody can be. How can the Covenant Alliance be any worse than that? Are they killing all the ordinary people the moment they are born? Then, who can they count on to collect resources and fight a war?

“The so-called ‘ethics’ are just a set of rules for a community that were slowly developed while mankind tried to increase the efficiency of resource collection and utilization and to reduce internal conflicts for the sake of survival.

“An enormous country that spans the universe requires a very stable social system to collect and utilize resources. Then, it must have its own ethics. It is impossible that the country is being evil because it wants to be evil.

“Even the Four Pillars System in the demon civilization was created in a certain social and environmental context despite the ostensible evilness.”

“Of course!” The Fire Ant King, the firmest objector to the Four Pillars System, rose up suddenly and said emotionlessly, “I once established the Blade of Chaos to encourage the bottom-level demons to fight against the Four Pillars System. I developed a profound understanding of the Four Pillars System during the struggle.

“The reason for the Four Pillars System is very simple. There are limited resources, and the reproduction speed of demons is too high. The speed of the resource collection is far lower than the reproduction speed.

“If every demon is granted equal rights and enjoys the same privileges as the ‘saint-blood demons’ and ‘silver-blood demons’, where will the additional resources that they consume come from?

“Therefore, the harmony and stability of the society could only be maintained when different social classes were divided. Legends such as ‘obliteration, rebirth, immortality’ were made up, and most of the demons were enchanted to be content with their poor lives and hope for a better afterlife.

“Let’s be honest. After we are out of the hall, same as every one of you, I can criticize the Four Pillars System shamelessly in public and depict it as the evilest, the most obsolete, and the most inhumane system!

“But here and now, we should all be clear that it was exactly because of the Four Pillars System that was implemented in the Blood Demon Sector for thousands of years that the basic stability of tens of billions of demons was ensured with such poor land and resources without expansion!

“If the Blood Demon Sector had adopted an electoral system like the federation’s instead of the Four Pillars System and provided tremendous benefits for the bottom-level demons, justice would’ve been served, but where would the resources have come from?

“In order to satisfy the greedy voters, every campaigner would’ve regarded ‘expansion and search for more resources’ as their most important manifesto. The guy who was elected eventually would definitely be the most extreme and radical candidate!

“It is an inevitable outcome that will not be shaken by one’s personal morals. Take myself for an example. If my Blade of Chaos had successfully overthrown the Pantheon of Demons and seized the supreme power of the Blood Demon Sector, how would I have fulfilled my promises to the members of the Blade of Chaos that I would bring ‘brightness, prosperity, and equality’ to all demons?

“Incapable of turning rocks into gold, I would’ve found resources out of nothing. The only approach for me would’ve been to further expand and to conquer the Heaven’s Origin Sector in order to feed all the demons!

“Therefore, I think that you people of the federation should really thank the Four Pillars System, which ensured five hundred years of peace for the federation! If the Blood Demon Sector had turned to a democratic system and significantly improved the benefits and education level of the general public… it would’ve been much more aggressive. Chances are that the Heaven’s Origin Sector would’ve been wiped out as a whole before the federation was born!”

The Fire Ant King’s words rendered all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators speechless. The atmosphere in the hall was somewhat tense again.

The Fire Ant King, as a leader of the rebellions in the past, sensed the change very keenly. After pricking the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators a little bit, he quickly changed the topic and said, “I’m not saying all this to mock you. It is just a reminder to you that, if we do encounter the Covenant Alliance in the sea of stars one day, we’d better pray that the Covenant Alliance is an evil country that adopts an autocratic and slavery system.

“For a such a country, everything will be good as long as the monarch’s appetite is satisfied. Generally speaking, their aggressiveness and drive for expansion are both insufficient. They are also often faced with the resistance of the bottom-level citizens. The internal strife will be quite severe.

“The Imperium of True Human Beings is more or less like this.

“If the Covenant Alliance is as evil, oppressive, and depraved as the Imperium, everything will be easier.

“But it will be terrible if the Covenant Alliance adopts a democratic system that is as bright and righteous as, if not more than, the federation. If so, in order to meet the almost infinite demand for resources of the citizens of the Covenant Alliance, the country will be forced to expand and invade, and such invasion will be unanimously supported by the citizens. Its efficiency of resource utilization and control over the Sectors will certainly be higher than that of the Imperium!

“Unfortunately, it is likely to be the truth.

“Otherwise, it will be unexplainable why the Covenant Alliance, as a new power, is crushing the Imperium of True Human Beings, a traditional superpower.

“This is all I have to say. Please proceed, Fellow Cultivator Xie.”

The Fire Ant King sat down elegantly, leaving everything in awkwardness.

Xie Youxuan coughed for a moment and went on. “Fellow Cultivator Fire Ant’s words are indeed insightful. Anyways, Fellow Cultivator Fire Ant and I both agree that ‘the Covenant Alliance is a hundred times eviler than the Imperium’ is probably just an overstatement.

“The reason Fellow Cultivator Li Yao’s foster father said that is simple, too. It’s because he was from the Covenant Alliance!

“In psychology, this is a very commonly-seen misconception known as ‘paradise effect’. When one finds all kinds of irresolvable problems in the environment one lives in, one will tend to fabricate a nonexistent, immaculate paradise to comfort himself.

“Fellow Cultivator Li Yao’s foster father was from the Covenant Alliance. Naturally, he must’ve seen and experienced the Covenant’s evilness when he grew up in the Covenant Alliance. Therefore, he was disgusted by the Covenant Alliance.

“On the other hand, he never learned the evilness of the Imperium in person. The best he learned were merely the rumors on the street. It was unlikely that he felt the first-hand pain as the bottom-level people of the Imperium did.

“Or rather, because of the hostility between the Covenant Alliance and the Imperium, he might even have considered the evilness of the Imperium that he heard about to be the propaganda of the Covenant Alliance, thus liking the Covenant Alliance even less.

“If the Covenant Alliance was so evil, the Imperium, which is at war with the Covenant Alliance, might be righteous after all. It’s not unusual that such a thought would occur to anybody. As time went by, the Imperium of True Human Beings became a ‘paradise’, a fictitious guardian, for Fellow Cultivator Li Yao’s foster father!”

Chapter 1200 - Pangu’s Covenant!

“All in all, Fellow Cultivator Li Yao’s foster father wasn’t lying. He truly believed that because of the limitation of his life experience. However, as citizens of the federation, we must make a judgement sensibly on our own,” Xie Youxuan concluded very confidently. “A force a hundred times eviler than the Imperium? I really can’t figure out what that could be like!”

His deduction was very reasonable. Even Li Yao did not find too many loopholes after thinking for a moment.

It was quite right. What would a society that was a hundred times eviler than the Imperium, where lives were already regarded as no better than weeds, be like?

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators whispered and discussed with each other. They were more or less relieved hearing what had been said just now.

They had a preliminary understanding about the Imperium of True Human Beings. If the Covenant Alliance was similar to the Imperium, it would not be devastatingly strong, and they would still have a slim chance of counterattack.

Right then, low, slow laughter echoed at a corner, as if a conch was just blown.

It was the demon emperor Gui Suishou, the oldest expert of the Nascent Soul level in the three Sectors!

Jiang Hailiu, as the host of the meeting, immediately felt a headache.

The cr*ppy old man, whose whereabouts had always been unknown, had not been invited to the Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage in the first place because he often acted on his own and hibernated for decades deep inside an ocean. He was almost a person that transcended time. Nobody knew if he was alive or where he was.

Also, Jiang Hailiu had organized the meeting for a simple purpose. He wanted to gather everybody, cheer them up, and assure them of their final victory. The real solutions of the crisis were naturally on the agenda, but they were definitely not the focus.

All in all, this was supposed to be a meeting of unification, triumph, and optimism.

Gui Suishou, as a stubborn pessimist, was in obvious violation of the spirit of the meeting.

However, the guy had popped up out of nowhere and volunteered to join the meeting, and he had been spreading his pessimism and escapism theories even before the meeting began. It was clear that he was there to frustrate everybody and shatter their faith!

Jiang Hailiu did not want such a pessimist to join the meeting at all. However, given his seniority and capability, it was inappropriate to forbid him from joining the meeting, and it was even more inappropriate to forbid him from speaking.

“What are you laughing for, Fellow Cultivator Zhou?” asked Jiang Hailiu with a frown.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Everybody cast their eyes to the old tortoise.

Not just the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators from the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector, even most demon emperors in the Blood Demon Sector had never seen Gui Suishou with their own eyes before. All very curious about the legendary person, they pricked their ears up, ready for his insights.

“No biggie. I just feel that everyone is focusing on the trivial details and neglecting things that are really important!” Gui Suishou shook his head mysteriously.

Squinting, Jiang Hailiu said, “Then, what do you have to enlighten us regarding the Covenant Alliance?”

“I don’t have anything to enlighten you, except for my distressing pessimism and escapism theories.” Gui Suishou smiled. “However, if you think that what I am scared of are simply the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Alliance of the Holy Covenant, you are greatly wrong. The Imperium and the Covenant Alliance, strong as they may be, will not be as good as the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago. They are not enough for me to firmly believe in my absolute pessimism!”

“Oh?” Jiang Hailiu asked, “So to speak, Fellow Cultivator Gui believes that there is something other than the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance that is much more dreadful and irresistible for us? What is it exactly?”

Whispers were echoing in the hall again. Even Li Yao was gazing at Gui Suishou in astonishment.

The Imperium and the Covenant Alliance were already great headaches. What kind of existence could be even more scary than them?

“I am not certain about it. I’m only saying that it is possible. The answer lies in the name of the Covenant Alliance,” Gui Suishou said slowly. “The name of a country often gives a hint about the ideology and the origin of the country.

“The country of the Immortal Cultivators is named Imperium of True Human Beings because they believe that only the Immortal Cultivators are the true human beings. The ordinary people whose spiritual roots are not awakened can barely be called ‘human beings’.

“The Alliance of the Holy Covenant, as its name suggests, is an alliance formed by multiple Sectors because of a certain ‘holy covenant’. Such an understanding is perhaps very close to the truth, isn’t it?”

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the demon emperors all frowned. Gui Suishou was talking nonsense and wasting their time!

Without bothering to raise his head, Gui Suishou continued speaking slowly. “What is this ‘holy covenant’ exactly? We have found answers from the last words of Fellow Cultivator Li Yao’s foster father, too.

“There are two key phrases in the last words, ‘Path of Ultimate Benevolence’ and ‘Pangu’s Covenant’!

“The Path of Ultimate Benevolence must be a certain ideology of the Covenant Alliance and the belief for the Cultivators of the Covenant Alliance. Literally speaking, ultimate benevolence does not sound bad, but we don’t know the true meaning behind those words yet.

“But the second keyword is much more interesting. Pangu’s covenant? Pangu?

“Fellow Cultivators, whether you’re from the civilization of human beings or demons, we all agree that Pangu is our mutual ancestor. It is not just a myth but an undeniable fact proved by our respective historians and archeologists!

“In the civilization of demons, there are more detailed descriptions about how Pangu created the universe and how Nuwa created living souls. Naturally, some of them are exaggerated, but most of the content is reliable and at least reflects part of the truth.

“The Pangu Clan was an advanced civilization, or an alliance of the advance civilizations, billions of years ago. Under the banner of the ‘Pangu Alliance’, there were different civilizations such as the Pangu Clan, the Kuafu Clan, the Houyi Clan, the Zhurong Clan, the Gonggong Clan, and the Nuwa Clan, which were either the different branches of the same species or the combinations of different alien lives.

“The civilization of mankind, on the other hand, was enlightened by the Pangu civilization, or even directly created by it. The Pangu civilization is the father, and the civilization of mankind is the son.

“It is needless to mention the civilization of demons. You’ve already excavated the last relic of ‘Chaos’ Ba Yanzhi and unveiled the truth of demon’s origins.

“Demons were created after human beings drank a certain gene transformation drug left by the Pangu civilization and had mutations from inside to outside.

“If you think about it, the universe is so vast, and different species on different planets are in different life forms. How could there possibly be one drug that ‘happened’ to stimulate the gene strands and trigger such delicate mutations in human beings after being sealed for billions of years?

“Such a coincidence is simply too unbelievable!

“The only answer is that the Divine Water of Kunlun, discovered by ‘Chaos’ Ba Yanzhi, which could transform human beings into demons, was specifically designed for human beings by the Pangu civilization!

“The appearance of demons was not a coincidental mutation but a careful calculation of the Pangu civilization after countless experiments!

“This is the only way to explain why so many primeval cells can be activated inside our body, to the point that we are violating the laws of nature, while our body functions remain stable and we still boast high vitality and reproductive ability!”

Gui Suishou’s words suddenly heaved everyone’s mind to the vast universe in a scale of billions of years. The impatient Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors all calmed down and listened to his analysis.

“The demon civilization highlights the importance of body training. We focus on breaking the gene locks and unleashing the force deep inside our cells!

“When our experts broke the gene strands and observed the deepest part of the cells internally, they occasionally saw the primeval memories hidden at the end of the gene strands, where the charm of the Pangu civilization in its glory billions of years ago was partly revealed!

“But I’m not sure if any Cultivators have seen such anomaly before.”

Li Yao hesitated for a moment.

He had seen the anomaly Gui Suishou described before.

When his soul dived into the deepest part of the nucleus of his cell, and when he was marching to the source of the gene strands, he had gone back to the primeval era in a trance. He had witnessed the Pangu civilization, whose members were as tall and mighty as dinosaurs, creating lives. The sky-blocking super warship ‘Kunlun’ had left a deep impression on him, too.

Before he could respond, a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator not far away from him stood up first and said, “Yes. When I was almost mentally deranged during one of my training sessions, I saw the legendary primeval era while my head was dizzy!”

It was ‘Iron God’ Yan Ba!

‘Iron God’ Yan Ba was a body fundamentalist who focused on the training of his body and rejected all magical equipment. He had once offered a precious spiritual seed to Li Yao, which helped him defeat the ferocious Skeleton Dragon on Boneyard!

Body fundamentalists did not count on any tools but specialized in the improvement of their body and soul. When their Cultivation reached a certain point, their genes would go through mutations, too, decorating them with features of the primeval beasts. It was similar to the demons’ training methods.

It was not strange that Yan Ba, a body fundamentalist in the Nascent Soul Stage, had once triggered the cellar memories of the primeval era before.

Li Yao stood up and nodded at Yan Bu from the distance, greeting the senior who had offered him great help selflessly, before he said, “Like Senior Yan, I saw the Pangu civilization in the primeval era, too, during my training!”

Some other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators also stood up after considering for a moment and claimed that they did have fuzzy memories of the primeval era. But they were not certain whether the memories were illusions or real heritages hidden deep inside their cells.

“Alright. In such a case, I believe that everybody admits that we were created and enlightened by the Pangu civilization. The Pangu civilization is to our civilization a parent to a child.”

Gui Suishou smiled, but his wrinkled face was somewhat chilling. “Then, if we look back at the Alliance of the Holy Covenant, and the key phrase ‘Pangu’s Covenant’, we will have a lot to think about.”

Chapter 1201 - War of Successors!

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators thought quickly and immediately realized what Gui Suishou meant. The name ‘Pangu’ was like a dull clap of thunder striking everyone’s heart. They found it barely possible to breathe.

“Master Gui,” Jiang Hailiu said solemnly, “are you suggesting that the Alliance of the Holy Covenant is related to the Pangu civilization?”

“If we think on the bright side,” Gui Suishou said unhurriedly, “the so-called ‘Pangu’s Covenant’ might just be a slogan. Demons also like to shout that we are the descendants of Pangu and Nuwa during a fierce battle to boost the morale. But in fact, we’ve never received any direct gifts from the Pangu civilization. Most of the arts and techniques were developed on our own.

“If the Alliance of the Holy Covenant is the same, there will be nothing to fear.

“However, if that is the case, one thing will be inexplicable. How did the Alliance of the Holy Covenant rise miraculously in only several hundred years and even almost suffocate the Imperium of True Human Beings, forcing the latter to drastically change its system and ideology?”

The whispers around were louder and louder, and Jiang Hailiu’s eyebrows furrowed harder and harder. He said emotionlessly, “What do you mean?”

Gui Suishou smiled casually and explained, “Fellow Cultivator Li Yao’s foster father also admitted that the Imperium of True Human Beings is the rightful heir to the Star Ocean Imperium and a traditional superpower that has developed for almost a thousand years. Then at the beginning, it must’ve occupied the most prosperous Sectors at the center of the universe and excavated tremendous relics of the Star Ocean Imperium to arm itself.

“Before the Covenant Alliance showed up, the Imperium was definitely a well-deserved dominator of the universe!

“Then, how did the Covenant Alliance, which was absolutely unknown before, rise rapidly and cause immense pressure to the Imperium of True Human Beings?

“It must be noted that the Imperium of True Human Beings was even panicked when it was faced with the threat of the Covenant Alliance. It was so desperate that it degenerated from a country of Cultivators into one of Immortal Cultivators!

“All the evidence suggests that the rise of the Covenant Alliance was quick and unexpected. It showed up in front of the Imperium as a raging behemoth all of a sudden without any warning. Also, the arts and weapons demonstrated by the Covenant Alliance must’ve been unseen in the Imperium before and even far better than their counterparts in the Imperium. That is why the Imperium was so terrified!

“But how is that possible?

“Training methods and the development of technology require time and effort. The Imperium of True Human Beings had already occupied the most abundant resources of mankind and the most powerful legacies, and it had been developing rapidly for more than a thousand years. How could the Covenant Alliance have developed even faster than the Imperium?

“Let’s say that the Covenant Alliance also discovered important relics of the Star Ocean Imperium, or rather, even if it had received all the heritages of the Star Ocean Imperium, the best outcome would be that it was on par with the Imperium!

“There is no reason why the Imperium would be so scared of an enemy that was on the same level as itself, and there is also no reason why the Covenant Alliance could crush the Imperium to a losing streak for a hundred years, until the two parties divided the prosperous area evenly!

“Therefore, if ‘Pangu’s Covenant’ is not just a slogan but a real thing, suggesting that the Covenant Alliance really excavated tremendous relics of the Pangu civilization and received the direct legacy from it, won’t everything make better sense?”

There was nothing but silence in the hall. None of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators looked well.

But Gui Suishou could not have cared less about how other people felt. Shaking his head, he continued. “The Imperium of True Human Beings has the legacy of the Star Ocean Imperium, while the Alliance of the Holy Covenant has that of the Pangu civilization. I think it goes without saying which of the two legacies is more advanced, right?

“Of course, I am not blindly evaluating the past over the present. I don’t believe that the civilizations today are definitely worse than the civilizations in the primeval era. But we also have to admit that, even counting from the moment our nearest ancestors learned to use fire and tools and established tribes, the light of our civilization has only burnt for a hundred thousand years. We are still a young, if not naïve, civilization.

“The Pangu civilization, on the other hand, is a mature civilization that developed for at least a million years, judging from the relics they’ve left. It is also worth mentioning that they are also our creator and our ‘parent’!

“I don’t think it is demeaning ourselves to say that the Pangu civilization was more advanced than the civilization of mankind, is it?

“Fellow Cultivator Fire Ant, you once excavated ‘Chaos’ Ba Yanzhi’s secret base deep inside the White Silver Death Desert together with Fellow Cultivator Li Yao. Ba Yanzhi studied the legacy of the Pangu civilization in that very base before. Would you please tell us briefly what the legacy was?”

The Fire Ant King hesitated for a moment. Then he stood up and said coldly, “Allow me to briefly explain. Forty thousand years ago, ‘Chaos’ Ba Yanzhi fled to the Blood Demon Sector at the edge of the universe from the center, covering such a long distance, for the simple reason that there was a relic of the Pangu civilization near the Blood Demon Sector.

“At the cost of the disintegration of his body, he was temporarily granted tremendous strength, which allowed him to discover the relic and retrieve the legacy from the relic, including an enormous throne left by the Pangu civilization.

“Through such a legacy, Ba Yanzhi began to study ‘man-made spiritual roots’, ‘synthesized gold core’, ‘integration of flesh and magical equipment’, and other technologies. He also researched some dangerous viruses, like the primitive version of the Demon God Virus.

“Eventually, all the people and demon beasts ended up killing each other because of the leakage of the virus.”

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators had all heard a thing or two about the Mausoleum of Chaos before, but it was particularly scary considering what Gui Suishou had said just now.

Brilliance that was utterly unbefitting for a man of more than a thousand years old beamed out of Gui Suishou’s eyes as he demanded aggressively, “So, you are saying that Ba Yanzhi, an ancient man forty thousand years ago, was already taking part in the incredible research such as ‘man-made spiritual root’ or ‘synthesized gold core’ after getting the legacy of the Pangu civilization and that his research would’ve succeeded without the accident?”

The Fire Ant King shook his head. “It’s hard to say. He might’ve succeeded.”

Gui Suishou smiled and said, “What if it weren’t Ba Yanzhi, an ancient man forty thousand years ago, but modern people who were highly civilized and already received part of the legacy of the Star Ocean Imperium several thousand years ago? If the latter found the relics of the Pangu civilization, would it have been more possible for them to retrieve the techniques of the Pangu civilization through modern research methods?”

Dumbfounded, the Fire Ant King was lost for words.

“Therefore, we can make a bold assumption as to the rise of the Alliance of the Holy Covenant.”

Gui Suishou’s voice grew larger and larger, turning from the dull noise of a conch to the barrage of guns. “One to two thousand years ago, the Imperium of True Human Beings dominated the center of the sea of stars and occupied the entirety of the prosperous lands of the Star Ocean Imperium in the past. It also retrieved and inherited tremendous legacies and techniques of the Star Ocean Imperium!

“Of all the worlds of human beings, none were a match for the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“But at this point, some remnants of the Star Ocean Imperium who lived in a Sector at the edge of the cosmos discovered relics of the Pangu civilization by accident!

“The Pangu civilization, which was glorious for a million years, wouldn’t have entirely disappeared even if it had long perished. Its dead body would still be a boundless treasury.

“Since ‘Chaos’ Ba Yanzhi was able to find a relic of the Pangu civilization, other people could naturally find a second, a third, or even more relics!

“All in all, the human beings who discovered the relics of the Pangu civilization, after retrieving the knowledge in the relics, armed themselves with it. They considered themselves the lineage of Pangu and bonded with each other through ‘Pangu’s Covenant’. They grew quickly and expanded until they had a head-on clash with Imperium of True Human Beings, the dominator of the universe!

“The Imperium of True Human Beings was a traditional superpower, with a vast territory and a large population. Its roots were deep.

“The Alliance of the Holy Covenant, on the other hand, was just a new country. It didn’t have a territory as vast as the Imperium’s in the beginning, and the Sectors that it occupied were relatively barren. The population and the resources of the country were not as abundant as the

Imperium, but it boasted much more advanced techniques and legacies than the Imperium did!

“One of them is bigger, and the other is more developed. That is why the two of them are on par with each other. It remains to be seen who the final winner will be!

“But whichever side wins, the final victor will definitely become an ultimate force that occupies the most prosperous area at the center of the universe, has a population of trillions, and boasts the unparalleled techniques of the Pangu civilization!

“Faced with such an ultimate force, do we really stand any chance? Do we have any choice but to escape?”

Every word that Gui Suishou spurted out was like a mountain pressing down the hall. All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators looked at each other in bewilderment, not knowing how they should respond.

Angry, Jiang Hailiu glared at Gui Suishou.

Gui Suishou looked back at him honestly and innocently, like an old, shameless scoundrel.

Having no alternatives, Jiang Hailiu declared gloomily, “Fellow Cultivators, this is about our enemy. Now, we will have a ten-minute break. Everybody can sort through your solution again. In ten minutes, we will come back and discuss how to defeat our enemy… whoever they are!”

Faced with the tremendous pressure of the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance, the magnificent Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators reacted no differently from ordinary people would. They dispersed and joined their friends, discussing in small groups.

Li Yao meant to go to Iron God Yan Ba and thank him for offering the spiritual seed years ago. The two of them could also exchange the mysteries of the primeval memories in the cell.

But Gui Suishou came to him promptly.

Li Yao glared at him like Jiang Hailiu had done. He was not willing to talk to Gui Suishou, either.

It was not because he objected to Gui Suishou's theory. He admitted that it was rather self-consistent.

However, spreading such absolutely pessimistic speculation in such a meeting whose sole purpose was to cheer everybody up was exactly like telling parents 'your baby will eventually die' in a baby shower.

It was definitely not a wrong statement, but it was wrong to be so blunt!

However, Gui Suishou seemed unable to discern the hatred in other people's eyes. Brazenly, he said, "My young friend Li Yao, after hearing my assumption, have you grown a deeper understanding about the necessity of the Monument Plan?"

"Everything is just your speculation, backed by no evidence," Li Yao said coldly. "You are just exaggerating and scaring everybody!"

"Scaring everybody?" Gui Suishou smiled. "I know exactly why this Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage has been convened. You are just trying to cheer each other up. I don't want to dishearten you, so I chose the mildest hypothesis to share with you and kept the assumptions that are even more dreadful to myself!"

Chapter 1202 - When a Father Wants a Son Dead

“More dreadful speculations?” Li Yao sneered. “Please speak whatever is on your mind, Master Gui. I’m all ears. If Master Gui does have a point, I might increase the investment to the Monument Plan!”

Pretending that he did not hear the sarcasm in Li Yao’s words, Gui Suishou replied unhurriedly, “Alright. Let’s go a little bit deeper, Fellow Cultivator Li! Just now, I was merely talking about the possibility of the Covenant Alliance excavating the relics of the Pangu civilization on a large scale, in which case the Pangu civilization’s influence on the Covenant Alliance will be indirect and passive, and the ‘Pangu’s Covenant’ will be an agreement among the human beings of different Sectors.

“However, is there an assumption that is even worse?

“What if the ‘Pangu’s Covenant’ is not an agreement within the Covenant Alliance but one between the Covenant Alliance and the Pangu civilization? What if the Pangu civilization’s influence on the Covenant Alliance is not passive but active?

“What if the Pangu civilization—the living Pangu civilization and Pangu Clan—is looming behind the war between the Covenant Alliance and the Imperium? What do we do then?”

The cold smile on Li Yao’s face froze. Dumbfounded for a long time, he snapped, “It’s impossible. The Pangu civilization has been destroyed for a long time!”

“Says who?” Gui Suishou asked back peacefully.

Li Yao was of a mind to point out the idiocy of the question because the so-called Pangu, Kuafu, and Nuwa were all species in the legends that had long perished hundreds of thousands of years ago.

But on second thought, he did not have solid evidence of the Pangu civilization’s destruction. Everything was just his assumption!

Maybe it was not right. Perhaps, some of the ancient Cultivators forty thousand years had seen the Pangu Clan in person. Also, the communication between human beings and the Pangu Clan was probably still very intense. Otherwise, the tales that Pangu created the universe, Kuafu chased after the sun, Gonggong crashed into the Buzhou Mountain in his fury, and Nuwa mended the sky and created human beings… none of that would have passed on at all.

Such myths were the evidence that the ancestors of human beings had close contact with the Pangu Clan!

Seeing the gloom on his face, Gui Suishou was smiling even more delightedly. “See? Even you are uncertain that the Pangu Clan has really perished, aren’t you?

“Besides, even if a civilization is destroyed, there are many ways that it is revived and return again!”

Li Yao shuddered. Somehow, the Blood Stripe Virus, an alien species that was destroyed long ago, suddenly occurred to him!

“In the fields of primeval mythology and the Pangu civilization, the studies in the demon clan are much more developed,” Gui Suishou said slowly. “Since the Demon

Beast Empire forty thousand years ago, the classics such as ‘Legends of Ancient Demons’ have been passed on among us. In many classics, the ‘obliteration, rebirth, immortality’ theory can be found. Some of them even claim that the Pangu clan will arrive again in the final war and bring us all to the splendid Pantheon of Demons, where we will enjoy eternal glory.”

“That’s just the propaganda the high-level demons used to paralyze the low-level demons!” Li Yao said angrily.

“Indeed. It was just a means of propaganda.” Gui Suishou smiled. “However, no propaganda comes from nothing. It is exactly because the prophecy that ‘God Pangu will arrive again’ had been long spreading out among the demons that such a propagandistic, mythological system was founded.

“The propaganda is definitely false, but the prophecy that ‘God Pangu will arrive again’ is perhaps from the mutual primeval memory deep inside the cells of different generations of demons. Perhaps, it was a message left by the Pangu civilization to us, just like the last words that your foster father left to you, Fellow Cultivator Li!”

Li Yao took a deep, deep breath.

This old, crazy lunatic was too dangerous!

He seemed weary, slow, uncompetitive, and harmless, but after only a few words, and not even releasing his demonic energy, he was already shaking Li Yao’s mind to such an extent that Li Yao felt his soul was collapsing!

The old scoundrel was even scarier than Jin Tuyi and Elder Nether Spring!

Li Yao summoned his spiritual energy to calm himself down in silence before he gnashed his teeth. “Master Gui, are you suggesting that the living Pangu Clan is hiding behind the Covenant Alliance? Then it’s quite odd. Isn’t the Pangu Clan our creator? Isn’t the Pangu civilization our parent civilization? Why is a father hostile to a son?”

“I am not saying that the living Pangu Clan must be hiding behind the Covenant Alliance, nor am I implying that the Pangu civilization will certainly arrive or be reborn again!

“However, before you calculate your victory, you must calculate your failure. You consider what will happen in the worst-case scenario and how you should deal with it. Then, whether it happens for real eventually or not, you will not be panicked.

“Maybe I am just fretting and talking nonsense. Maybe, the Covenant Alliance has nothing to do with the Pangu Clan. Maybe, the Pangu Clan has long disappeared in the dust of history and will never arrive or be reborn again.

“Maybe, even if it arrives again, it will be a generous, kind hearted father who will give us a hand selflessly, who will end our war and slavery, and who will facilitate a great leap of our civilization!

“Everything will be excellent if so.

“But what if it is not?

“What if the worst things happen for real, one after another?

“What if the Pangu civilization, our ‘parent’, is truly reborn but is hostile to us? What can we do if it lurks in the darkness and interferes with our civilization through the Covenant Alliance?”

Gui Suishou’s words cast Li Yao into deep thought again. His despise for Gui Suishou a moment ago instantly disappeared!

“Now, do you understand why I am an absolute pessimist?” Gui Suishou sighed and smiled bitterly. “If we are only faced with two super forces made of human beings that are the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance, of course, I wouldn’t be so desperate. However, if our ultimate enemy is our parent civilization, our creator, and the legendary deities, do we have any qualification to fight them?

“Failure is inevitable if you resist your parent civilization. The only correct path is to escape!”

Li Yao clenched his fists and narrowed his eyes, compressing the brilliance in them into the edge of a saber. He said, one word after another, “I still don’t understand. Even if the Pangu civilization does exist, it was them who created us. Then, why would they be hostile to us and even want to destroy us?”

“Wasn’t the civilization of demons created by the civilization of mankind?” Gui Suishou replied, unmoved. “But did the civilization of mankind not detest the civilization of demons and even want to destroy it? Had the Imperium of True Human Beings not been coming, despite the ‘same-origin theory’, do you think that the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector would’ve reached a truce?”

Li Yao was rendered speechless.

Demons had been created by human beings. The civilization of mankind was sort of a ‘parent’ for the civilization of demons, but such a ‘parent-child’ relationship did not necessitate the harmony between the two civilizations.

On the very contrary, the civilization of mankind created the ‘child’ with ill intentions in the very beginning. The demons were only meant for mining.

The civilization of demons, in the meantime, awakened its self-awareness almost the day it was created. It resisted its parent fiercely and even waged a patricidal war, until the incipient civilization of mankind was destroyed!

That was the relationship between the civilizations of mankind and demons. So, what about the relationship between the Pangu civilization and the civilization of human beings? Was the Pangu civilization really destroyed? Was their destruction related to the initial human beings in the primeval era?

“It seems that you’ve got it.” Gui Suishou extended his hand that was as wrinkled as kelp and patted Li Yao’s shoulder. “Young man, the universe is far darker than you think. The so-called ‘parent-child relationship’ means nothing in this cold world.

“Besides, the morals and code of conduct in different civilizations can be vastly different. Perhaps, some ethical, natural things in the standard of the Pangu civilization are unpardonable in ours.

“Maybe, the Pangu civilization is really not hostile to us. It merely means to ‘discipline’ its child, who is ‘misbehaving’. But are you sure that the ‘disciplining’ is acceptable by our moral standard?”

Li Yao bit his teeth hard. His eyes became sharper while he declared resolutely, “I don’t care about who the parent civilization is and who the child civilization is. Whoever threatens the civilization of mankind, I will not hesitate to kill them even if they are legendary deities!”

"I do appreciate your bravery. I've seen many brave warriors in my long life. You are definitely among the best of them." Gui Suishou sighed and said gloomily, "But this time, the enemy we are faced with is perhaps really different from usual. Too different!

"You must've heard a saying before.

"When an emperor wants a subject executed, the subject will be. When a father wants a son dead, the son will be!"

…

Ten minutes later, the Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage reached the second half, which was also the more important procedure.

Regarding the assault of the Imperium of True Human Beings and the appearance of the Covenant Alliance, many Nascent Soul Stage experts had come up with their own solutions. Some of them were about new magical equipment, new Cultivation arts, and new tactical troops, while some were magnificent strategic plans that would take decades and tremendous resources to be accomplished.

The plans and proposals would all be discussed in the Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage. If they were supported by the majority, they would be the main strategies of the three Sectors in the next hundred years, or at least the very least, point out the direction of development in a certain specific field.

"Fellow Cultivators, we will require the wisdom from every one of you now!"

During the ten minutes, Jiang Hailiu, the host of the meeting, had sorted through his thoughts, too, and tried to set the meeting, which was deviated by Gui Suishou a moment ago, back to the right course. “Allow me to present my humble opinions first. In fact, there is no need to underestimate ourselves. Compared to the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance, we are perhaps truly underdeveloped in most fields, but we still have four advantageous fields that do not have a huge gap with their counterparts in the Imperium or the Covenant Alliance. Some of the fields even exceed our enemy’s!

“If we build up the four advantageous fields in the next hundred years, they are likely to be the fatal weapons and the ultimate moves of the federation!”

Chapter 1203 - Advantages of the Federation

Behind Jiang Hailiu, a 3D light beam rose up, displaying rows of splendid buildings established in a deep valley.

Li Yao could tell that the ‘deep valley’ was in fact the underground fortress on Spider Den in the Flying Star Sector. It had been built by the Star Ocean Imperium to resist the Blood God’s rebellion army.

Right now, it had been excavated by the Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector and transformed into a large research center.

There were two facilities of the utmost important inside the underground fortress.

The first of them was the secret residence of Yan Xinjian, the vice-commander of the Flying Star Coalition Fleet hundreds of years ago.

Yan Xinjian was the best expert who had the highest chance to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage in the past thousand years in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector. It was a shame that he had been swallowed by the abyss inside his own heart. He had betrayed everybody and degraded into the ‘supreme space pirate’ from the vice-commander of a fleet that struck space pirates. He had also excavated the underground fortress of the Star Ocean Imperium in the depths of Spider Den.

Legacies of the Star Ocean Imperium were piled up in Yan Xinjian’s residence. Years ago, Li Yao had explored the residence, too, and even trained alone inside for a thousand days. He had absorbed Yan Xinjian’s training log, which laid a solid foundation for his ‘superlative height of the Core Formation Stage’. It was also one of the reasons he could advance into the Nascent Soul Stage at such a young age.

In that sense, it would not be wrong to say that Li Yao was a disciple of Yan Xinjian, the top expert of the three Sectors in the past.

After the riot of the Immortal Cultivators was settled and Spider Den was taken over by the Cultivators, the development on the underground fortress had immediately begun. Li Yao had never intended to keep Yan Xinjian’s residence to himself.

All the items inside belonged to the Flying Star Sector after all. It was already more than enough for him to train inside for a few years. So many marvelous arts were naturally best to be shared with all the Cultivators!

Right now, the Glorious Sunlight Group, which was under Li Yao’s control, together with the traditional forces of the Flying Star Sector such as the six sects of Heavenly Saints City and the Star Fighters’ Alliance, funded a ‘Supreme Residence Development Company’ and developed Yan Xinjian’s residence. Many classics, arts, and treasures that had been buried for hundreds of years had been unearthed and could be put to use again!

Other than Yan Xinjian’s residence, the second facility, and the more important one, was the Star Prier’s House, an underground observatory established by Liu the Prier, who was one of the best astrologists and cosmologists in the Star Ocean Imperium!

“The building in the picture must be familiar to you, fellow Cultivators,” Jiang Hailiu said solemnly. “Detailed files have already been sent to your crystal processors prior to the meeting. This is the ‘Star Prier’s House’.

“In the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago, Liu the Prier’s family was one of the most famous mining magnates, best known for its almost infinite wealth!

“Spending almost all the fortunes of his family, Liu the Prier purchased dozens of the most advanced super crystal processors of the Star Ocean Imperium and established this underground observatory to study the apocalypses. Later, in the war that caused the fall of the Star Ocean Imperium, this place was modified into a surveillance station that could monitor the entire sea of stars.

“It is safe to say that the Star Prier’s House represented the peak of space surveillance in the Star Ocean Imperium!

“Even if the Imperium of True Human Beings truly inherited the relics of the Star Ocean Imperium, their observation methods will be no more advanced that those in the Star Prier’s House.

“Since the center of the universe was the main battlefield in the cruel war between the Supreme Emperor and the Blood God, the important Sectors of the Star Ocean Imperium, including the Empyrean Terminus Sector, were mostly blown to smithereens. Such large military observatories were the primary targets. It would have been very difficult for them to be preserved during the bombardment.

“On the other hand, the smaller Sectors at the edge of the universe, such as the Flying Star Sector and us, might have better chances to survive the catastrophe and keep more intact relics.

“All in all, this is an ‘eye’ that can see through the mysteries of the three thousand Sectors. Right now, the eye has fallen into our hands. If we learn all the techniques in the Star Prier’s House, in the fields of reconnaissance and exploration, we will be on par with the Imperium of True Human Beings, if not better than them!”

Jiang Hailiu truly deserved to be the Speaker of the Star Glory Federation. After only a few words, the atmosphere that had become somewhat depressed by Gui Suishou was brightened up again.

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators whispered to each other in enlightenment.

It was quite right. As magnificent as the Imperium of True Human Beings might be, it definitely would not be as strong as the Star Ocean Imperium in the past after developing for only a thousand years.

Everything had its advantages and disadvantages. At the very least, in terms of space surveillance, with the Star Prier’s House, the federation was not necessarily worse than the Imperium.

Seeing that everybody was refreshed, Jiang Hailiu went on encouraging everybody. “Right now, the enemy is in the spotlight while we are in the darkness. We know that the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings is coming. We can even monitor its march through the Star Prier’s House. But the Imperium doesn’t know the first thing about us. What they know is just a set of coordinates. They don’t even know whether or not we exist and what development phase we are in. Perhaps they think that we are still the primitive barbarians!

“Why can’t we win such a war?

“On the other hand, the super crystal processors employed in the Star Prier’s House are all state-of-the-art magical equipment from the Star Ocean Imperium. The computational chips and the deduction rune arrays have enlightened our own crystal processor experts.

“Such super crystal processors can be applied to space exploration as well as other fields. They can be used to produce stronger magical equipment, perfect Cultivation arts, or pave brand-new sailing routes in the sea of stars.

“If we completely grasp the mysteries inside the super crystal processors in the next few decades and duplicate them on a large scale, our capability will be multiplied by at least ten times when we have five hundred, a thousand, or even more of such super crystal processors!”

All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators nodded in approval. The meeting hall was even livelier than before.

Confidence beaming out of his eyes, Jiang Hailiu extended a second finger. The 3D light beam behind him quickly changed, too.

With light and shadow replacing each other, Spider Den was no more, substituted by two Sectors in the vast universe that were melding with each other in a dazzling glow. What a magnificent and soul-stirring view it was!

“Our second advantage, which is unique and unduplicable, is the merging of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and Blood

Demon Sector!

“The integration of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, although causing tremendous changes in both of the two worlds and nearly resulting to a world-blighting war, gives us an unexpected advantage, which is that the spiritual waves of both worlds have been significantly enhanced!

“An unprecedented, overwhelming tide of spiritual energy is now sweeping across the two worlds. It will perhaps last decades and will not die down until the two worlds are completely merged and stabilized!

“What benefits does such a tide of spiritual energy bring? The most direct one is that the training of Cultivators gets easier!

“Not only is it easier for ordinary people to awaken their spiritual roots and become Cultivators, the Cultivators’ speed of training is also greatly accelerated. It is easier for them to break into new levels now!

“I can boldly declare that, in the next hundred years, the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector will be the best ‘natural paradises’ in the universe, where the strongest Cultivators will be born!”

His words were like a stone tossed into a pond. All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were talking to each other loudly.

However transcendental the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were, they were Cultivators after all. Training always mattered to them. Did any one of them not hope to break into a new level, stand at the peak of evolution, and explore the amazing world unvisited by their predecessors?

The so-called ‘natural paradises’ were the places with the densest spiritual energy and resources in the universe. They were mostly generated at the center of the universe.

For the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, two remote Sectors, they had not even dreamed of having such places before.

For a moment, the eyes of the hundred Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were bubbling like magma while they stared at Jiang Hailiu with great interest.

With a smile, Jiang Hailiu unhurriedly said, “Don’t think that I’m exaggerating, everybody. What has happened to Fellow Cultivator Li Yao is the first inkling for us!

“Fellow Cultivator Li Yao is only slightly more than thirty years old. Traditionally speaking, he is just a kid who has barely walked out of the cradle. It would have been enough to call him a ‘genius’ if he had advanced into the Building Foundation Stage, but he has broken into the Nascent Soul Stage miraculously!

“To advance into the Nascent Soul Stage at such a young age, of course, has a lot to do with Fellow Cultivator Li Yao’s own crazy training and persistence. However, we must take the environment into consideration, too!

“Fellow Cultivator Li Yao had a final breakthrough in the Dark Desolate Domain deep inside the Grand Desolate Plateau during the final battle with Iron Commander Zhou Hengdao. Why? Because the Dark Desolate Domain is the point of impact between the two Sectors. The integration of spiritual energy is fiercest there, and the spiritual waves triggered are the strongest!”

All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators looked at Li Yao again. Even Li Yao was slightly dazed and could not help but scratch his nose.

He vaguely felt that Jiang Hailiu did have a point.

It was not that he underestimated himself, but it had always baffled him how he had gone all the way to the Nascent Soul Stage from an ordinary person in less than twenty years even with all his fortuitous experiences. It was almost too unbelievable!

“I have here the latest report issued by the Federal Bureau of Statistics.”

Behind Jiang Hailiu, with the universe as the background, a series of data poured down like a heavy rainfall. Thankfully, all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were monsters with incredible computational ability. In only a few seconds, they had read all the data and were astonished.

“Compared to the previous decade, in the last decade, nationwide, twelve percent more ordinary people awakened their spiritual roots, thirteen percent more Cultivators advanced into the Building Foundation Stage from the Refinement Stage, and nine percent more Cultivators broke into the Core Formation Stage from the Building Foundation Stage. The improvement in the minor levels is obvious, too!

“What is more incredible is that the growth rate is increasing exponentially. Please look at the curve of the growth rate. It is like a steep mountain that is getting ever steeper!

“Ten years ago, the growth race was not very obvious yet, but as the integration of the two Sectors deepened and the Dark Desolate Domain expanded, an invisible swirl of spiritual energy seemed to have enveloped the entire

Heaven’s Origin Sector, resulting in the continuous rise of the growth rate, which will likely become higher in the decades to come!

“Statistically speaking, it means that it will be easier and easier for ordinary people to be awakened, and Cultivators will be advancing faster and faster and breaking their limits ever easier! Fellow Cultivator Li Yao is the best example of the Cultivators who have benefited from the change!”

Chapter 1204 - Golden Century!

Li Yao could not help but rise up. “Senior Jiang, other than the statistics, is there any theory that can explain such a phenomenon? Could it be just a coincidence? Over the past ten years, with the friction between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector getting more and more intense and the few fierce wars fought, more experts were bound to show up!”

“Fellow Cultivator Li is right!” Jiang Hailiu nodded. “Generally speaking, the odds of experts popping up are greater in times of war. The more peaceful it is, the less likely an expert will appear! Therefore, we have compared the emergence rate of experts in the past ten years with that during the period when we annihilated the last demons in the Blood Demon Sector a hundred years ago on the Grand Desolate Plateau. Our conclusion is that the possibility today is still unusually high!

“The collective studies of the cosmologists and the specialists in spiritual energy theories have suggested that the probe devices we sent into space detected unusual enhancement of the intensity of spiritual waves continuously for several years. Normally, such an astronomical phenomenon will only occur when a supernova is on an outbreak at a close distance. But right now, it is happening on a daily basis, as if a supernova is appearing around the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector every day, and they are getting closer and closer to us!

“This is just the beginning. The enhancement hasn’t ended yet. It is still far from the peak!

“Why is such a thing happening?

“The Fellow Cultivators here are mostly not specialists in the spiritual energy theories. So, I will not waste your time with the tedious data and jargon. The relevant research files have been transmitted to your crystal processors. If you are interested, you can study them on your own or communicate with specialists in the field.

“To put it simply, let’s consider a metaphor. The Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector in the past are like two peaceful ponds. The fish living in the ‘ponds’, having never been tested by great wind and tide, cannot be really strong, can they?

“But as the two worlds gradually melted, it’s like the two ponds were crashing into each other brutally, raising a shocking whirlpool!

“If a fish struggles in the surging waves for more than ten years, it will be far stronger than the fish living in peaceful water. Do you find such an opinion acceptable, everyone?

“On the other hand, although our worlds are small, remote, and barren, it doesn’t mean that we have nothing here.

“The civilization of mankind is a relatively young one after all. It’s been less than a hundred thousand years since we entered outer space. Magnificent as the Star Ocean Imperium was, its development of the universe was still primitive. Many resources are unexploitable and even undetectable for us!

“For a barbarian who feasts upon the raw meat and doesn’t know how to make fire, the so-called ‘resources’ are trees, fruits, and goats. If he is placed in a valley full of crystals, he will feel that the valley is barren, without any resource that is of use to him.

“By the same logic, at the bottom of the Heaven’s Origin Planet, in the place near the core, tremendous high-density cores are stored, but they are barely exploitable for us. In space above our heads, many tantalizing resources are hidden, too. Some of them, including dark matter, are even unobservable for us.

“Such resources are like the food that has sunk into the mud at the bottom of the ponds, which is beyond the reach of the fish.

“However, due to the fierce collision of the two ponds, the ‘mud’ is being thrown to the surface of the water. The resources previously concealed in the mud are also being tossed to every corner of the ponds. The fish can now find them and absorb them easily!

“This is the benefit that the integration of the two Sectors brings us. In short, new spiritual energy and resources are not generated during the collision, but the potential of the two Sectors has instantly been exploited, allowing us to multiply our efficiency in making use of the spiritual energy in the two Sectors!

“If one percent of the resources in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector were utilizable for us before, the rate is at least ten percent right now!

“The integration of two Sectors is a rarely-seen astronomical phenomenon even in the cosmic level. Despite the capability of the Star Ocean Imperium, there has never been any record that two Sectors were melded at human beings' will. It is needless to mention the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“So, we rest assured that such a ‘benefit’ is the congenital advantage of the federation that no other forces can copy!

“According to the specialists, the integration of the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector will be completed in the hundred years to come. The aftermath of the shocking spiritual waves will perhaps last another fifty to hundred years! It means that the next two hundred years will be the ‘golden centuries’ when the federation will develop rapidly! As long as we seize the sprinting period by training and working hard, it is very likely that we will be the force that has the highest percentage of Cultivators in the population in the entire universe!

“Fellow Cultivators here, you might have chances to break into the legendary Divinity Transformation Stage from the Nascent Soul Stage!”

Divinity Transformation Stage!

Bolstered by Jiang Hailiu's words, the atmosphere of the Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage was like fire that had been boosted with oil. It was more scorching than ever!

Even Li Yao felt that he was blushing in excitement. He could not help but feel impressed.

Jiang Hailiu was truly one of the most experienced politicians of the Star Glory Federation. His eloquence was no worse than that of Jin Tuyi, Lu Zui, or Gui Suishou.

No wonder Lu Zui tried to blow him up into nothingness physically and dared not keep him in the government when the guy was attempting his scheme!

Li Yao licked his lips and planned to study the report of the specialists later. If it was as Jiang Hailiu had said just now, it would not be unusual if one or two ‘Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators’ appeared in the golden century to come!

Although a war could not be won by one or two individuals, whether or not there was a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator would matter a lot for a specific battle.

Also, as long as the issue was publicized, it would definitely boost the morale of the federal army. By then, even the Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector would be enticed by the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, hurrying to train in such places.

Li Yao peeped at those around him, only to discover the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, who had remained emotionless a moment ago, were all glittering with hope after they heard ‘Divinity Transformation Stage’.

He could not help but smile in his heart. It appeared that even Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were human beings with desires after all.

After enticing everybody for a moment, Jiang Hailiu changed the topic. Extending the third finger, he said solemnly, “Our third advantage is the integration of the civilization of human beings and the civilization of demons, which allows us to combine the training system of spiritual energy and the training system of biochemistry, thereby exploring the field unvisited by our predecessors!

“If a Cultivator boasts a body as physically strong as a demon, masters spiritual energy, and manipulates the new-generation weapons that are combinations of magical equipment and demonic artifacts, we can totally imagine how fabulous such new-generation Cultivators will be!”

Hearing his words, while many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were hesitating, the demon emperors from the Blood Demon Sector quickly nodded.

Having failed in the war, they were naturally worried about their status and interests in the future federation. Hearing Jiang Hailiu’s words to so many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, which was almost a promise, they were finally somewhat relieved.

“I agree with Fellow Cultivator Jiang.”

Iron God Yan Ba was the first to support the idea. As a body fundamentalist, he had been focused on the training of his body and had never touched magical equipment. When he was at his peak state, he could arm himself with claws, tusks, and scales, too!

Naturally, while such an appearance could deal tremendous damage, it was quite hideous and no different from that of a demon.

Nowadays, ‘body fundamentalist’ was not a popular profession. Even a warrior as magnificent as ‘Crimson Queen’ Ding Lingdang shook her head and turned down the offer instantly when Yan Ba invited her to embark on the path of ‘body fundamentalism’.

The lack of popularity of the profession was partly because of the difficulty in training and partly, and perhaps also more importantly, because the body fundamentalists looked too ugly during battle. They were the opposite of cool and awesome. At a distance, they looked no different from demons!

Before, in the federation, where demons were hated, it was only naturally that such a profession was not fashionable.

Yan Ba had always wanted to promote body fundamentalism, but he could barely find anybody who agreed with his philosophy. Now that an opportunity had presented itself, he would naturally grasp it and disseminate his ideas!

“In fact, the training system of biochemistry does not just belong to the demons. Training the cells and exploring the ultimate mysteries of genes are also what Cultivators should do!” Yan Ba said solemnly. “The ancient people said that you can store an entire world in a mustard seed. Every cell is a mysterious small universe itself. If we can activate the strength of the small universe, what kind of enemy can we not defeat?

“As for the slight changes in the appearance, I don’t think you need to worry too much about it, fellow Cultivators. It is just the battle form! Who looks pretty in battle? Many fellow Cultivators’ hair color will change to gold, blue, or red when you activate your spiritual energy to the maximum. Isn’t that a change, too? Is it essentially different from tusks and scales?

“In the era of ancient Cultivators, many experts highlighted the importance of polymorphing in a battle. Of course, it was not just about the change of the appearance, but at the very least, it does suggest that the change in appearance was not despised by the ancient Cultivators but still regarded as a normal path of Cultivation!”

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were dazed for a moment before they started whispering again. It was obvious that they found it difficult to accept such an opinion so quickly.

Jiang Hailiu did not want to pursue the question too far, either. In his eyes, it was a problem that should be slowly addressed in the hundred years to come, and it was definitely not something that could be worked out after a short meeting.

After all, they were merely talking about the possible paths today. Everybody could think more carefully after they were back.

“Fellow Cultivator Yan’s words do make sense. We can communicate further after the meeting and see how we can promote the body fundamentalist ideals! Fourthly, we have another great advantage, which is the relic of the Pangu civilization!

“In the former half of the meeting, Senior Gui mentioned that the Covenant Alliance has possibly excavated relics of the Pangu civilization and was therefore dreadful and invincible!

“But don’t forget that we have such a relic, too!”

Chapter 1205 - Developing Pangu's Relic!

While speaking, Jiang Hailiu glanced at Li Yao.

Li Yao had never been a man who preferred keeping everything to himself. Also, different from the ancient times, the exploration of relics, the production of magical equipment, and the perfection of Cultivation arts nowadays could not be completed by an individual or a single sect. They could only be done with the joint effort of a country or even a Sector.

Therefore, after the situation in the federation stabilized and his identity was confirmed, Li Yao had publicized the Star Map of Kunlun that had been left by ‘Chaos’ Ba Yanzhi, making it a treasure for everybody in the federation.

‘Chaos’ Ba Yanzhi was the only Cultivator whom Li Yao admired in the endless wars forty thousand years ago. He was also the first Cultivator who had really fought to his last breath for humanity!

Li Yao felt that only by releasing the Star Map of Kunlun to public would he deserve the soul of the predecessor. If he kept it to himself in secret, it would be a great insult for the name ‘Ba Yanzhi’.

Of course, the Star Glory Federation would not neglect the contribution of the Ultra-Level Federal Hero, either.

According to the law of the federation, the discoverers of mother lodes, former residences, and prehistoric relics would boast a special position that was protected by law. Once the findings were developed on a large scale, the discoverers would be entitled to part of the profits.

The law partly protected the interests of the treasure hunters who often went through so much trouble before they finally found something, and it partly encouraged all the treasure hunters to submit their findings to the government instead of keeping the information to themselves selfishly so that the findings could be developed faster and in a more organized way. It was a win-win for everybody.

Right now, the Star Map of Kunlun was being parsed and analyzed in the computation center of the federation and the Star Prier's House in the Flying Star Sector simultaneously. Li Yao had heard from Professor Mo Xuan before the meeting that a significant breakthrough had been achieved.

Once the legendary 'Kunlun' was located, an exploration team would immediately be sent. After the basic situation about Kunlun was figured out, large-scale development would be underway!

No matter how many items were excavated in the future, Li Yao would be granted with his fair share. For a person who was too lazy to operate everything on his own, it was definitely the best choice.

Many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors had heard of 'Kunlun' before. They were quite interested in the mysterious place that was claimed to be a relic of the Pangu civilization.

"Right now, we don't know anything about 'Kunlun', but some basic facts are still obvious," Jiang Hailiu said peacefully and calmly. "Firstly, this relic of the Pangu civilization will not be hard to develop. If it can be compared to a mother lode, it will be a fine one buried on the surface of the earth, if not exposed to the air directly!

“The reason is simple. Ba Yanzhi, an ancient Cultivator forty thousand years ago, was already capable of discovering and developing Kunlun. How difficult can it be?

“Secondly, by the same logic, since Kunlun was already developed once by Ba Yanzhi, who shipped a lot of goods to the Blood Demon Planet, it means that the defense system of Kunlun, if there was one, had lost effect or was destroyed by Ba Yanzhi. So, as a senior, Ba Yanzhi has already paved a way for us, the juniors. All we need to do is to follow the road he explored before!

“Thirdly, judging from Ba Yanzhi’s research, the Pangu civilization and the civilization of mankind should be compatible. The arts, devices, and classics of the two parties are not contradictory or incompressible to each other. Even Ba Yanzhi was able to absorb nutrition from the Pangu civilization and conduct his dazzling research.

“It is perfectly normal, too. Our civilization and the Pangu civilization are of the same lineage after all. The living environment and the biological structure of the two parties are not vastly different. It is very likely that we have directly succeeded the Pangu Clan’s genes, too. So, it’s only natural that we can make use of our parent civilization’s legacy.

“If it were a civilization with metal as the body and with light as the food source and the means of attack, there would be absolutely nothing we could do even if they sent their relic right to us!”

His words raised a round of laughter.

Jiang Hailiu smiled casually and said, “It means that the Pangu civilization’s magical equipment and techniques are very likely to be directly utilizable for us!

“Fellow Cultivators, think about it. In the classics of the ancient Cultivators, legends about the top ten marvelous weapons of the primeval era are recorded, including the Pangu Axe, the Donghuang Bell, the Xuanyuan Sword, the Kunlun Mirror, and so on. They are all destructive, world-transforming ultimate treasures!

“If we can get access to such marvelous weapons, do we really stand no chance of beating not the entire Imperium of True Human Beings, but a secondary troop from the Imperium that comes to us after a long expedition?”

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators’ eyes were glittering even more brightly than before. Their breath was so scorching that the temperature of the hall was raised by more than ten degrees!

The legendary weapons in the primeval era! The Pangu Axe, the Xuanyuan Sword, the Shennong Cauldron, the Donghuang Bell!

Of course, they were not really axes or swords but a certain stronger super magical equipment system that could suppress an entire Sector. Although the specific content about such systems was unknown, the side descriptions in many ancient classics were already soul-stirring enough!

If the federation had access to an ultimate treasure such as the Pangu Axe, which was bound to be more advanced than any stellar magical equipment, it was truly not going to be a problem for them to crush an expedition fleet!

Li Yao’s nostrils were fully opened, too, from which hot air was spurting out.

As a refiner, his passion for magical equipment was deep to his bones. If he could see the ultimate treasures left by the Pangu civilization and even manipulate the weapons such as the Pangu Axe or the Xuanyuan Sword personally, he would die a happy death even if he kicked the bucket the next second!

“All in all, the New Federation, with the four advantages, is definitely in a hopeful position, but hopeful doesn’t mean victorious. Victory will not come on its own but requires the joint effort of every fellow Cultivator here and the people of the three Sectors!”

Jiang Hailiu waved his arms hard, as if he were drawing a burning, shining path in a gloomy future. “We have talked a lot optimistically just now. The ideas such as playing the balance strategy in the war between the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance are all based on the same premise, which is we are strong enough!

“If we want to influence the balance of a scale, we must be at least a feather. If we are just speck of dust, it will mean nothing to either side!

“Only if we are strong enough ourselves, and we are capable of crushing the large-scale strategic attack from either the Imperium or the Covenant Alliance, will we really catch their attention and even become important factors that can decide the outcome of the war. That’s the only way we can take advantage of both sides!

“Nobody will care about an ant that they can step on casually. If we are an ant, we will be taking advantage of nobody and having enemies who can stomp on us all around us!

“Therefore, let’s strive with the four advantages as the foundation! Burn our lives, dedicate our souls, and work hard for a hundred years, for our family, homeland, and descendants, for our glory in the past and to come, and for a new federation and new future!

“Close your eyes and think about it, fellow Cultivators! In a hundred years, we will boast seven to ten Sectors, we will combine the training system of spiritual energy with the training system of biochemistry with the knowledge in the Pangu civilization’s relic, and the ratio of Cultivators to ordinary people will be ten times higher than present day. We will even have unparalleled experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage!

“Such unparalleled experts will be piloting the super large warships that is ten times, if not a hundred times, larger than Burning Prairie, manipulating the legendary weapons such as the Pangu Axe and the Xuanyuan Sword, and patrolling in the sea of stars!

“Even if the expedition army of the Imperium does come, so what? Let’s show them the real strength of the federation!

“As long as the expedition fleet of the Imperium is crushed, we will be able to retrieve tremendous techniques and technologies of the Imperium of True Human Beings. We will also have a lot of intelligence about the Imperium as well as captives!

“Then, it will be the moment when the federation goes against the current, marches to the center of the universe, and competes with the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance!

“Only we are the rightful heir to the spirit of the Star Ocean Imperium and the last guardian of humanity! I believe that the fire of humanity will definitely burn more and more fiercely in our hands, until the infinite universe is all illuminated!”

Although most of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were around two hundred years old and were usually indifferent to the change of surroundings, they still felt that their blood was boiling, hearing Jiang Hailiu’s speech. For a moment, applause was thundering.

For a Cultivator, was there anything more meaningful than raging in the sea of stars and spreading their will, ideology, and belief to the entire universe?

Life was limited, but ideology was not. Carrying out one’s will in all the three thousand Sectors and changing the fashion of the entire civilization so that the civilization of mankind could laugh in the universe for a million, a billion and a trillion years, that would be true immortality!

“Regarding the development in the next hundred years, many fellow Cultivators have carefully prepared their strategies and plans. Please feel free to speak whatever is on your mind, everybody!”

Jiang Hailiu bowed and cleared the podium.

Of the two hundred or so participants, around fifty of them had prepared their plans. According to the order decided by drawing lots beforehand, they went to the podium one by one.

Professor Mo Xuan was the first to present his ideas.

The spectral Cultivators had only the soul but not a body, and their ways of training were different from those of regular Cultivators. However, after experiencing the weird cosmic storm, melting with liquid metal, turning into star spirits, and swallowing the immense computational ability of the star child, Professor Mo Xuan’s computational ability had been soaring nonstop to an incredible level. He was in the Nascent Soul Stage from whatever aspect!

Hiding inside a normal artificial body, Professor Mo Xuan bowed courteously. Then, from every gap on the body, his real body, which looked like mercury, flowed out to the skull where it condensed into an absolutely perfect silver ball. Supported by spiritual energy, it floated to the midair.

Such a weird phenomenon made a lot of demon emperors exclaim in shock.

“Now, I would like to introduce to you the ‘Spiritual Ghost Plan’!”

From deep inside the silver

Chapter 1206 - Army of Star Spirits

Light and shadows were changing behind Professor Mo Xuan while data and files as boundless of an ocean emerged. Together with his immaculate body made of liquid metal, they inevitably brought a sense of mysteriousness.

“It is well known that spectral Cultivators are vulnerable to the interference of magnetic fields and radiation because of the lack of a physical body. They can possibly perish and disappear forever because of such interference!

“Therefore, the ancient ghosts often extended their own lives through vicious approaches such as absorbing other people’s vitality and even possessing someone else’s body.

“Nowadays, a kind of great magical equipment named ‘artificial body’ has been invented, which provides a metal shell for the spectral Cultivators, thereby significantly improving the longevity and life quality of the spectral Cultivators!

“However, the artificial bodies have their shortcomings. To say the least, in a war, compared to the bodies of Cultivators, the artificial bodies are very weak, and they can only make use of spiritual energy in a monotonous way!

“It is because the artificial bodies of the present day are all made of normal metals that have their own restraints. However, my four students and I, after being baptized by the cosmic storm by accident, turned into star spirits, new-generation spectral Cultivators, by hiding inside the liquid metal!

“Compared to regular artificial bodies, the liquid metal has too many advantages. We can change our physical form however we want. We are compatible with most magical equipment, crystal processors, and warships. We can even directly hack and corrode hostile crystal processors and warships!

“In the war to settle the riot of the Immortal Cultivators in the Flying Star Sector, we five star spirits snuck into the mainframe crystal processor of Heavenly Phantom, the predecessor of Burning Prairie, with the body of liquid metal. We stole tremendous computational ability and helped Li Yao and the fellow Cultivators defeat the magnificent star child indirectly!”

Behind Professor Mo Xuan, pictures about the riot of the Immortal Cultivators popped up. Explosions and ear-splitting sounds of metal being twisted were immediately echoing inside the hall.

Professor Mo Xuan went on. “As a scholar, I don’t believe in coincidences. Anything that happened will definitely happen again, however low the odds are!

“So, if my four students and I can be melted into the liquid metal perfectly, why can’t the other spectral Cultivators?

“The so-called ‘Spiritual Ghost Plan’ is exactly for such a purpose! We will establish an enormous ‘cosmic storm laboratory’ in the Heaven’s Origin Sector to simulate the cosmic storms and everything that my students and I experienced that day. We will explore the patterns by which the remnant souls are melted with the liquid metal. In the end, we will get the technology to produce star spirits on our own!

“By then, we will be able to pour the remnant souls into liquid metal as conveniently as we pour them into the artificial bodies right now!

“Today, more than fifteen million spectral Cultivators live in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector. Taking the ‘ghost demons’ in the Blood Demon Sector into account, the number can easily surpass twenty million! Our ultimate goal is to melt a hundred thousand or even more of them into the liquid metal and build an enormous ‘army of star spirits’ in the next hundred years!

“Think about it, everybody. Let’s leave the application of the ‘army of star spirits’ in peacetime aside for a moment. When the expedition army of the Imperium comes at us aggressively, the hundred thousand star spirits will sneak into the starships of the Imperium of True Human Beings without alarming anyone. We will infiltrate their mainframe crystal processors, swallow their computational ability, and even completely take over the starships!

“What a great help it will be for the victory of the war!”

The ‘Spiritual Ghost Plan’ that Professor Mo Xuan proposed with consideration of his own situation was truly enticing. Many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators nodded in approval. They were apparently quite interested.

Professor Mo Xuan took the opportunity to look for patrons. “To realize the ‘Spiritual Ghost Plan’, we will have to conquer thousands of technological obstacles. For now, the most important thing for us is to establish a ‘cosmic storm laboratory’ in outer space, which is a huge investment that requires more than fifty billion dollars to initiate. The Grand Desolate War Institution alone cannot afford it!

“After the Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage, we will host a ‘Spiritual Ghost Plan Press Conference’ and tell the public more details about the project. If you are interested, fellow Cultivators, you can come and join the event!”

Dozens of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators behind were waiting to speak. Therefore, Professor Mo Xuan only gave a general picture and a brief introduction.

After sending the detailed files to the crystal processors of the two hundred participants, Professor Mo Xuan bowed and left the podium.

Li Yao immediately sent a message to him. “Professor Mo Xuan, what’s the progress of the ‘Spiritual Ghost Plan’ right now? Are there any theoretically irresolvable conundrums? Let’s talk in private after the meeting and see if the Glorious Sunlight Group can invest the project directly and secure strategic cooperation with the Grand Desolate War Institution!”

Li Yao and Professor Mo Xuan had been through life and death together. Naturally, Li Yao would give his full support to Mo Xuan’s project.

It did not matter how much money the Glorious Sunlight Group was really investing. After the news that the Glorious Sunlight Group was now cooperating with the Grand Desolate War Institution, a lot of sects in the Flying Star Sector would certainly be willing to join the project.

Professor Mo Xuan replied to Li Yao with a thank-you emoji. They did not have time to pursue any further because another expert had begun his introduction. It was another of his old acquaintances, the Fire Ant King!

“What I am going to introduce is not a systematic plan but a series of research fields—the treasures left by ‘Chaos’ Ba Yanzhi!

The Fire Ant King used to be the leader of the Blade of Chaos. After the Elder Nether Spring died, most of the relics of ‘Chaos’ Ba Yanzhi fell to his hands. The development and utilization of such relics were his primary concern.

“Forty thousand years ago, Ba Yanzhi, the leader of the Chaos Demons, fought against the Ultimate One Demons with the Blood Demon Sector as his last fort. He left countless relics and secret treasures on the planet!

“The largest of all the relics is the place of Ba Yanzhi’s burial, namely the Mausoleum of Chaos deep inside the White Silver Death Desert of the Blood Demon Sector.

“There, Ba Yanzhi conducted a series of incredible research projects based on the relic of the Pangu civilization, which can shed a lot of light to us even today!

“After the situation in the Blood Demon Sector stabilized, I led an exploration team of Skyfire to excavate the Mausoleum of Chaos a second time. We sorted through the key technologies inside. Three of them are of paramount importance for the three Sectors today.

“Firstly, the man-made spiritual root technology. Once it succeeds, it will be possible to plant a man-made spiritual root into the head of an ordinary person and transform them into a Cultivator easily!

“Of course, due to the lack of training, such Cultivators will definitely be far from real ones. They might even not be able to advance and will stop at the beginning level of the Refinement Stage all their life.

“However, for the ordinary soldiers in their thirties who have almost no hope of becoming Cultivators in the first place, is there anything wrong with improving their combat ability quickly in such a way?

“Secondly, the gold core technology! If the man-made spiritual roots can only significantly expand the number of the bottom-level soldiers, the gold core technology will be able to produce experts in bulk!

“In fact, this is also the technology that is closest to realization. My brother, Elder Nether Spring, built a strong special force named the Nether World Watch through a similar technology!”

The Nether World Watch had been Elder Nether Spring’s personal army. The soldiers of the army were embedded with tremendous demon cores to enhance their combat ability. They were indeed much tougher than normal demons and had even caused a headache for Li Yao.

After Elder Nether Spring died, part of the Nether World Watch had resisted and been executed, but part of them, having no leaders, had chosen to surrender. The secrets of their training had then fallen into the hands of the Fire Ant King and Skyfire.

Methods of training were neither righteous nor evil after all. What Elder Nether Spring used to commit crimes, the Fire Ant King and Li Yao could use to protect their homeland and help the people.

“Thirdly, the technology to blend magical equipment with flesh! The essence of the technology is to grant a piece of magical equipment certain self-control and identification abilities. They can be called ‘ware spirits’, if you will, which can perform a mission for a long time without any manipulation!

“The intelligence of such ‘ware spirits’ will not have to be as high as an adult. They will be able to play an important role in many military fields as long as they are as smart as army dogs!

“Imagine such a picture. A batch of blood-sucking flying swords are produced and deployed to the space zones at the frontier of the New Federation. Once the invaders from the Imperium of True Human Beings are detected, they will immediately be awoken from their hibernation state. With self-control, they will dash into the warships of the Imperium of True Human Beings and keep themselves functioning by absorbing the flesh and blood of the Immortal Cultivators. Then, they will slaughter and sabotage!

“Even if they cannot stop the enemy, they will at least buy us more time and will consume the enemy’s resources as much as possible!”

Man-made spiritual roots, synthesized gold cores, and cannibal ware spirits!

Each of the three technologies was groundbreaking enough. If they were all successfully developed, the capability of the three Sectors would be enhanced by at least ten times!

All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors nodded in approval.

Like Professor Mo Xuan, the Fire Ant King left the podium swiftly after sending the project proposal regarding the development of the Mausoleum of Chaos to everybody.

Li Yao had seen the toughness of the blood-sucking flying swords in the Mausoleum of Chaos himself. He was quite interested in the mysterious magical equipment, too. So, he declared confidently to the Fire Ant King that money was not a problem, and he could provide however much the Fire Ant King needed.

However, after the Fire Ant King gave him the budget of the preliminary phase, Li Yao was so shocked that he could barely keep mouth closed.

Good heavens. So much money?

Li Yao’s personal assets right now, if used for his own training and entertainment, would be more than enough for the rest of his life even if he were to do nothing from this moment on.

However, compared to the budget of a super project that would take decades to accomplish and influence multiple Sectors, his money was nothing but a glass of water in front of an entire ocean.

Chapter 1207 - Solar Soldiers!

It appeared that ‘Chaos’ Ba Yanzhi’s mausoleum was not so easy to excavate after all. Li Yao could only scratch his nose in embarrassment and focus his attention on the introduction of the next Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator.

This time, it was Professor Sa Ranbing, the president of the Capital Medical College as well as one of the best biologists of the federation.

He was also the project leader on the Heaven’s Origin Sector’s side about the Human Hibernation Technology, which had been quite a hit recently.

In fact, the preservation of Jin Tuyi through the Human Hibernation Technology would be implemented by Professor Sa Ranbing.

The plan that Professor Sa Ranbing brought with him was named ‘Wind Sail’. On the 3D light beam behind him, a giant sail was indeed flapping in the infinite universe. Judging from the plotting scale in the corner, the sails that were as colorful as the wings of butterflies were all more than ten kilometers in diameter. They seemed to be thin metal membranes made of a certain extremely-light material. With their memory function, they were stretching out to the maximum and constricting to a cluster. They changed their angles in the light of the stars, absorbed the radiation, and cruised in the boundless universe.

They were both like lone boats that were striding forward and like dandelions that were flying along with the wind.

A hibernation capsule, which was utterly disproportional to the sails, was in the middle of every two sails. They looked like the dust between the two wings of a butterfly.

“It is well-known that we have made a significant breakthrough in Human Hibernation,” Professor Sa Ranbing said. “We have preliminarily achieved the instant freezing of a human body, allowing the cells to be preserved for decades perfectly!

“The Human Hibernation Technology can be applied to many fields. It can allow the terminally-ill patients who are suffering from untreatable diseases to hibernate until the medical technology is more developed. It can also allow Cultivators with high combat ability to hibernate until the expedition army of the Imperium arrives. It is also an indispensable technology on our long journey to explore more Sectors!

“Without the technology, not only will the long, lonely journey in the universe sabotage one’s body and soul, the crew members will also consume tremendous materials during their daily activities and through their metabolism.

“More life-sustaining materials means less fuel and ammunition. The distance of the voyage will be shortened, and the anti-risk ability during the voyage will be weakened, too!

“With the Human Hibernation Technology, the crew members who travel in the sea stars will not consume as many materials in their hibernation state. So, there will be more room in the star ship for fuel, crystals, and ammunition. The starships will be able to be designed with fewer restraints because the zones for the crew members' activity can be eliminated!

"It is safe to say that the Human Hibernation Technology is the indispensable prerequisite for us to walk out of the three Sectors to a broader universe!

"However, the technology has a flaw, too, or something that can be improved, if you will, which is that Cultivators in the hibernation state cannot train themselves!

"A Refinement Stage Cultivator will still be in the Refinement Stage after a century of hibernation. He cannot be automatically upgraded to the Building Foundation Stage. Or rather, because of the long hibernation, his Cultivation will even slightly decline after he wakes up, and it will take a period of physical therapy for him to fully recuperate.

"In our eyes, it is truly a shame because 'time' itself is an extremely valuable resource. If the Cultivators spend a hundred years hibernating while gaining nothing, it will be a great waste!

"Therefore, the Capital Medical College and the Refining Department of Deep Sea University hereby propose the 'Wind Sail Plan'!

"Please look at the 3D light beam. The metal membranes that look like butterfly wings are made of a new material known as Seven-Colored Membrane that has been developed by the Novem Stellae, the most excellent research group in the Refining Department of Deep Sea University, and Jiang Sheng and Jiang Shaoyang, who are among the most excellent refiners in the federation. The greatest feature of such a material is that it can absorb all the radiation in the universe and transform it into the spiritual energy absorbable for Cultivators through reactions on the microcosmic level.

“It is clear to us all that radiation is everywhere in the universe, the most important of which is the light and heat emitted by the stars, which is also known as solar energy. Such Seven-Colored Membranes, which look like wind sails, are essentially a system to collect and transform the solar energy!

“In our design, we will invent a ‘hibernation capsule’ that is heatproof and radiation-proof in the near future. Then, we will attach one hibernation capsule to two or even more Seven-Colored Membranes before we launch them to the orbit near the sun!

“When the Seven-Colored Membranes are stretched to the maximum, they can be hundreds of kilometers long theoretically. Also, different membranes can be connected to each other into an enormous membrane with a coverage of tens of thousands of square kilometers. The solar energy will be absorbed and transmitted to the hibernation capsule incessantly!

“Then, through the crystal wires implanted into the bodies of the hibernators, the solar energy will nurture the hibernators as time goes by and cleanse their body and improve their capability. Essentially, they will be training themselves while they are hibernating!

“Yes. That is our purpose. Train with the solar energy!

“The solar energy is truly the source of strength for all the lives on every planet. There will be no lives without the sun. The utilization efficiency of solar energy implies the development level of a civilization, too. Right now, we are utilizing the solar energy at an appallingly low efficiency. In the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector, too much energy from the star has been wasted. It is often the case that we can only use less than one ten thousandth of the whole!

“In the legends, the Kuafu Clan, which belonged to the Pangu civilization, could chase after the sun and establish an enormous magical equipment system to absorb the solar energy on the orbit of the star. They could even envelop the entire sun with a Kuafu Sphere, which could utilize one hundred percent of the energy from a star!

“What an incredible civilization it must’ve been!

“Of course, we are still not able to produce such marvelous magical equipment as a Kuafu Sphere right now, but building thousands of Seven-Colored Membranes as sails and sending Cultivators to the nearby of the sun where they will absorb the solar energy for a hundred years is totally feasible!

“In a hundred years, after we retrieve the solar hibernation capsules and activate the solar soldiers inside, they will definitely be the most terrible nightmares for the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings!”

Everybody was so shocked by the magnificent plan of Professor Sa Ranbing and the Refining Department of Deep Sea University that thunderous applauses did not burst out until he left the podium.

Even Li Yao secretly complimented the excellent design of Jiang Shaoyang and the Refining Department of Deep Sea University.

It was not just about the ‘Wind Sail Plan’ itself, but more importantly, their ambitions to utilize, develop, and conquer the sun showed Li Yao the future of the federation and the hope for the civilization of mankind!

Jiang Shaoyang the bald is truly not simple. It appears that he is really determined to defeat me!

Li Yao could not help but fantasize about what would happen if the plans of Professor Mo Xuan, the Fire Ant King, Sa Ranbing, and Jiang Shaoyang all worked out.

By then, the federation would boast an army of star spirits, a troop of solar soldiers, and legions based on the man-made spiritual roots and synthesized cores, which would be ten times stronger than the Nether World Watch today!

That way, the Imperium did not seem to be invading at all; it was more likely to be feeding the expedition army to them!

After Professor Sa Ranbing, more than ten Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors went to the podium and proposed their own splendid, extraordinary plans.

Three of them left a deep impression on Li Yao.

Firstly, the Deep Sea Plan.

It was raised by a demon emperor of the Sea Clan in the Blood Demon Sector. He pointed out that, on a planet that was suitable for the survival of human beings and demons, seventy percent of the surface was usually covered by the ocean in order to maintain the atmosphere and the ecological circulation. The ratio could not be lower than fifty percent.

The boundless ocean was virgin lands yet to be fully developed. Although people had walked to the sea of stars, they were not bold enough to say that they knew every detail about the seas of their hometown.

The Sea Clan, on the other hand, specialized in the development of the ocean. They had accumulated tremendous experience in exploiting undersea mines or building undersea cities and even fortresses in their thousands of years of heredity.

In the future, they could share the experience with the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector so that more undersea cities could be built in the oceans of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector. The rare crystals and mines deeply buried in the ocean would be excavated and purified, too. A batch of human beings could also be trained to live under the ocean, too!

When the expedition army of the Imperium came, the cities, mines, and soldiers hiding in the ocean would be an unexpected force that would give the expedition army thunderous strike when the battles in the outer space and on the surface of the planet were most fierce!

One day, they could even march to the territory of the Imperium. As long as there was ocean within the Imperium, they would find their paradise!

Secondly, the Ice God Project.

It was proposed by Si Koulie, the leader of the Star Fighters’ Alliance and a specialist in the refinement of starships. It was not a new plan but a restarted one.

When Li Yao was in the Flying Star Sector, Si Koulie was the second most influential person in the Flying Star Sector who was almost on par with Xiao Xuance.

To deal with the space pirates, a Meeting of the Next Millennium had been hosted in the Flying Star Sector, where Xiao Xuance proposed the Grand Illusionary Soldiers Project while Si Koulie put forward the Ice God Project, in which he tried to finish Ice King, a semi-product of a planetary warship left by the Star Ocean Imperium.

At that time, the project had been vetoed because of the time cost and the huge investment. In the end, even Ice King had been modified into an enormous Cosmic Slingshot, losing all its functions as a warship.

Si Koulie, as the best professional of starships in the three Sectors, had never been too happy about the outcome. He had been dreaming about restarting the Ice God Project. Finally, he had another opportunity!

Chapter 1208 - Li Yao's Grand Strategy!

Last time, the Ice God Project had been disapproved because of the time cost and the huge investment.

After all, the Flying Star Sector was a relatively loose civilization made of starships. Every starship was a small government itself. When so many governments were added together, nothing could be organized.

Without a powerful central government to concentrate the necessary resources on the projects that were really important, how could a piece of stellar magical equipment such as a planetary warship be built?

Besides, the threat of the space pirates had been right next to them and need to be addressed within a couple of years. There was no time for them to develop slowly.

Therefore, the Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector had chosen the Grand Illusionary Soldiers Project, which apparently had a lot of hidden problems, not because they were unaware of the problems but because their ability limited them to produce smaller magical equipment such as the Grand Illusionary Soldiers. They could only hope to build enough ants to bite an elephant to death.

But right now, everything was different.

The Star Glory Federation had a very powerful central government and a highly-efficient resource planning and utilization system after five hundred years of bloody wars.

Besides, the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings would not arrive until at least a hundred years later. They had a whole century to develop slowly. It was exactly the time that the production of a planetary warship required!

A warship the size of a planet, even if it was the smallest planet, would still be intimidating in the universe!

It was hard to tell whether or not there were planetary warships in the homeland of the Imperium of True Human Beings, but the expedition army was unlikely to drag a planet on their long journey.

Therefore, as long as the Ice God Project worked out, in the battle of resistance in the future, the federal army would even surpass the expedition army of the Imperium in regard of tonnage!

Thirdly, the Super Crystal Beast plan!

It was proposed by a specialist of the Blood Demon Sector who was adept at the refinement of demon beasts.

As was known to everybody, human beings and demons had different approaches regarding the usage of animals in a battlefield.

Demons preferred to stimulate the growth of the animal’s cells and trigger their mutation through the biochemical technology, thereby transforming the animals into ferocious demon beasts.

Human beings, on the other hand, liked to implanted chips into animals and build them into crystal beasts that could be controlled remotely.

The demon beasts were more brutal and boasted a higher combat ability, but sometimes, they could be disobedient or even attack their masters when they went mad.

The crystal beasts were highly controllable. They could carry out complicated orders, but in terms of animality, they had retrograded even compared to the regular wild animals. Therefore, such crystal beasts were only suitable for reconnaissance and transportation missions but not head-on battles.

If the two types of beasts could be combined by implanting chips that were written with complicated tactical orders into the central nerves of the demon beasts, super crystal beasts, which were stronger than crystal beasts and more controllable than demon beasts, would be made!

There were no theoretical obstacles as to how to implant the chip into a demon beast. As to the technology to write complicate tactical orders into a chip, the demon emperor found the answer from the Flying Star Sector.

“About the crystal suits in the Flying Star Sector, there is a technology named ‘skill card’. As long as a skill card is inserted into a crystal suit and activated, the crystal suit will be able to automatically respond and allow ordinary people to perform an expert’s ultimate skill!” the demon emperor said. “If we can create a few additional slots on the super crystal beasts that can be inserted with control chips or the skill cards, the super crystal beasts will be able to perform the ultimate skills, too. Their combat ability will be greatly improved!”

The plans of the experts that were full of imagination fascinated Li Yao. He greatly enjoyed himself. However, he was indeed dumbfounded by a few Nascent Soul Stage experts who were too imaginative and did not know how he should comment on them.

A Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator from the Flying Star Sector, perhaps because of the enlightenment of Iron Plateau, proposed a plan named the Barbarian Plan!

The specific content of the plan went like this.

Go to explore new Sectors immediately and locate a desolate world without too many resources near the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector.

If the existence of a civilization and the quantity of resources were not required, such a desolate Sector would be not hard to find.

Then, a batch of loyal soldiers would be shipped over and set up settlements there, pretending to be a civilization of barbarians who had lost all the heritage after the collapse of the Star Ocean Imperium but then redeveloped from the scratch on their own.

The warriors of the primitive civilization had a healthy body and a simple mind. They were the best materials for cannon fodder.

“Anyways, you can imagine it to be a bigger Iron Plateau!”

It was exactly what the Cultivator from the Flying Star Sector said.

On the ‘larger Iron Plateau’, some of the debris of magical equipment from the Star Ocean Imperium, which could send out spiritual waves to the outside world incessantly, would be placed intentionally to make sure that the barbaric world would be discovered by the expedition army of the Imperium first.

“The expedition army of the Imperium has to finish a journey of a hundred years. By logic, they will not bring too many low-level troops, and even the high-level troops will be tired after the trip!

“At this time, if they can suppress a primitive world and ask the barbarians to be the cannon fodder and their vanguard, it will definitely be the best choice for the expedition army of the Imperium!

“After all, it was what Xiao Xuance thought years ago. He planned to instigate the ‘barbarians’ of Iron Plateau to fight the space residents, saving the Immortal Cultivators the trouble!

“I don’t think the expedition army of the Imperium will think too highly of the uncivilized barbarians. They will even offer magical equipment to the barbarians and arm them to the teeth so that they can fight us better!

“We can even fabricate some tales, in which the barbaric civilization is described as the loser in the competition of the three Sectors and that they were banished a long time ago and hate our guts.

“It’s just like the tale between the Iron Plateau natives and the space residences, with some minor adjustments.

“In such a case, the expedition army of the Imperium will be even less suspicious. They will definitely be hoping to drive the tiger to attack the wolves and to settle the problem without getting their own hands dirty.

“But they don’t know that the ‘barbaric civilization’ is with us. Among the seemingly uncivilized barbarians, our best warriors, most knowledgeable scholars, and top experts of reverse engineering are hidden!

“After the ‘barbaric civilization’ sends back tremendous intelligence about the Imperium so that we can crack the magical equipment and the tactics of the Imperium, and after they bring the expedition army of the Imperium to a trap, we will attack from the outside, and they will attack from the inside. The expedition army of the Imperium will be settled once and for all!”

The Nascent Soul Stage from the Flying Star Sector talked rather enthusiastically, but most of the listeners, including Li Yao, looked at each other in bewilderment with a weird expression.

It was indeed… an impressive scheme. But was it not too wishful? For such a complicated, highly-dependent plan to work out, some luck was definitely necessary, and should it fail, all the elites would be wasted for nothing!

If the plan was too complicated, then the next plan was a bit too ‘magnificent’.

It was a plan named Universal Cannon, whose content was as awesome as its name.

The integration of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector was triggering the immense spiritual energy hidden deep inside the two worlds. So, if the spiritual energy was accumulated through certain magical equipment, an unprecedented cluster of spiritual energy would be gathered after one to two hundred years!

If the accumulated spiritual energy was to be shoot out by a certain ‘cannon’ floating in space, would it not be an invincible weapon?

Not just an expedition army of the Imperium, even an entire planet would be crushed into pieces like an egg under the bombardment of such a cannon!

Such a creative idea rendered Li Yao and a few other refiners in the Nascent Soul Stage amused and speechless.

Yes, it was theoretically possible.

However, how could the spiritual energy dispersing in the boundless land of the two Sectors be captured? How could the energy be collected without missing any? And what kind of container could store such spiritual energy and ensure its stability in the next hundred years?

In the end, how could such energy be triggered controllably, steadily, and precisely, instead of blowing up the expedition army of the Imperium together with the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector as a super large universal bomb?

Too many critical problems regarding material science, the studies of spiritual energy, and cosmology were involved. Such obstacles were barely conquerable.

Even if the federation was on steroids every day for the next hundred years, it was unlikely that the researchers would achieve any breakthroughs!

If the technological advancement had been accomplished, there would also be no need to produce a ‘universal cannon’ at all. They could simply establish a fleet and march to the homeland of the Imperium to settle the problem from its source!

However, everybody understood the anxiety of the speakers. No matter what they were actually thinking to themselves, they all applauded for the speakers warmly.

Very soon, it was Li Yao’s turn.

Today, he brought a whole new plan, too.

The ambience in the hall was immediately somewhat different from before. All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors held their breath, curious to find out what kind of extraordinary plan Li Yao, the youngest and most special Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator in the three Sectors, would present.

Would it be a realistic plan like the Wind Sail Plan, or would it be windbaggery with no consideration of the actual situation like the Universal Cannon?

If it were any other young man at his age, they would have felt that their legs shaking and their blood freezing when they were gazed at by more than two hundred Nascent Soul Stage experts.

However, after being hunted by dozens of demon emperors, Li Yao felt that such a speech was as easy as the cool breeze at a summer noon.

He smiled and connected his jade chip to the crystal processor. The file inside was displayed, but the first page was nothing except darkness.

In the darkness, he said unhurriedly, “Greetings, Fellow Cultivators, allow me to briefly introduce to you—the Black

Hole Project!

“Let me begin with an ancient catchphrase. Don’t ever argue with a moron because he will drag your intelligence to his level before he defeats you with his abundant experience.

“Just now, I’ve heard a lot of presentations from my fellow Cultivators. Many plans and proposals are incredible eye-openers for me!

“However, it appears to me that almost everybody is hoping to make us stronger than the Imperium in a certain aspect.

“Then, can you think from the other perspective? Instead of making us stronger than the Imperium, can we drag the Imperium to our level and make it as weak as us?”

Chapter 1209 - Black Hole Bomb!

Li Yao’s words cast all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors into a daze. What did ‘make them as weak as us’ mean?

“Developing the technology of a certain field until it is better than the Imperium of True Human Beings’ is, of course, the most correct methodology, but the question is that we don’t know the potential and the speed of development of the Imperium of True Human Beings,” Li Yao explained. “While we are developing, the Imperium is also developing. Why are we so sure that we can surpass the Imperium in a certain aspect?

“Even if we indeed surpass the Imperium in a certain field, the Imperium is definitely still much more advanced than us in countless more fields. It is an undeniable fact. Otherwise, the Imperium will have developed for nothing in the past thousand years, won’t it?

“All in all, to surpass the Imperium in every field requires tremendous investment. It is extremely difficult and not very hopeful. Even if we do surpass the Imperium in the end, it still might not be the decisive factor in the war!

“But this is what I think. We don’t know how strong the Imperium is, but we know exactly what we are able to do and what we are not. If we can figure out an approach to limit the expedition army of the Imperium’s war ability to our level, we will be able to crush the intruder with our advantage in experience and number, won’t we?”

All the participants of the meeting nodded before shaking their heads with obvious disapproval.

It was definitely a correct statement, but correctness did not make it useful. The critical question was ‘how’!

“Generally speaking,” Li Yao continued, “the advantages of the Imperium can be concluded to two aspects. Firstly, the number of the experts is larger, and their level is higher, perhaps with a few Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators. Secondly, the magical equipment of the Imperium is more advanced, and their methods to utilize spiritual energy are unbelievable!

“The two advantages are based on the same factor, which is spiritual energy!

“The top experts must inhale and exhale spiritual energy as vast as an ocean to maintain their peak state and blow out destructive force. The magnificent magical equipment can only be driven by astronomical crystals. A cook cannot make food without ingredients. The universe is ruled by the law of conservation of energy. ‘Perpetual motion machines’ do not exist. Do you agree, everybody?

“Then, what if there isn’t spiritual energy?

“What if we can create a temporary space around the expedition army of the Imperium where there is absolutely no spiritual energy?”

Everybody was stunned by what Li Yao said!

Many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors looked at each other in bewilderment. They understood every word that Li Yao had said, but they failed to comprehend the sentence when the words were connected into a sentence.

Since they were born, they had been living in a universe filled with spiritual energy. Some places had denser spiritual energy, and some places had less.

Even the demon emperors who mainly trained their bodies had to inhale and exhale natural spiritual energy during their training, except that their consumption on spiritual energy was relatively less.

Asking them to imagine a world without spiritual energy was like asking a fish in the deep sea to imagine a world without water. They felt that the world was falling apart around them!

“In a world with absolutely no spiritual energy, the advantages in technologies and experts that the expedition army of the Imperium have will be suppressed to the minimum!” Li Yao declared resolutely. “In the world of ‘absolute vacuum’, the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators of the Imperium will not be able to absorb spiritual energy from the outside world. They can only count on their own stock or be refilled by the crystals in their Cosmos Rings.

“It’s true that such high-level Cultivators boast an extremely broad brain and abdomen, which can store immense spiritual energy. But at the same time, their consumption rate is hundreds of times higher than the low-level Cultivators! How much spiritual energy will be consumed when they launch a strike that can blow up a starship? At least one tenth of their stock, I believe. And another one tenth of the stock will be drained after they resist a barrage of the starships on our side! If they calculate the trajectories of the cannonballs hundreds of times per second with the best of their computational ability, how much spiritual energy will they consume?

“Enormous as the stock of their spiritual energy may be, how long can it last?

“Of course, their Cosmos Rings can store a large number of crystals. But swallowing crystals and transforming them into spiritual energy takes time, too. It’s like the delicious food that an ordinary person takes, which will take a few hours to be digested, absorbed, and transformed into energy. It cannot be turned into physical strength the moment it is eaten!

“If the ordinary person does strenuous exercises, chances are that they will even have indigestion!

“In my personal experience, it takes of more than half a day to absorb an ultra-level marrow crystal the size of a finger without any distractions. As incredible as the Cultivators of the Imperium might be, it is impossible for them to digest the spiritual energy in a marrow crystal after only several minutes, right?

“Let’s say that their absorption efficiency is twice as good as mine, and it takes three hours for them to digest a marrow crystal. In a simmering battlefield, how will the Cultivators of the Imperium be given three hours to digest the marrow crystals? They will have been blown into smithereens in the bombardment!

“Same goes for the magical equipment. A lot of magical equipment has to echo with the natural spiritual energy nearby in order to achieve the best effect. The natural spiritual energy is like lubricant that keeps the steadiness of different units of the magical equipment!

“In an absolute vacuum that is devoid of spiritual energy, the more advanced a piece of magical equipment is, the less likely it can be activated to the maximum. Also, after functioning once or twice, it will certainly be overly drained, if not wasted!

“With the experts and the magical equipment both restrained, the expedition army of the Imperium will not be able to perform their brilliant methods at all, however marvelous the methods are. They will be sharks stranded on the beach and can only be butchered by us!”

Then, Li Yao halted for a moment intentionally so that the unprecedented silence in the hall could sink deeper.

Professor Mo Xuan was quite a close friend of him. After hearing such an… unbelievable plan, he simply rose up and asked without caring about the rules, “Li Yao, the absolute vacuum devoid of spiritual energy that you mentioned… is it technologically realizable?”

“Of course it is. Also, technologically speaking, it is definitely the easiest of all the plans proposed so far!” Li Yao smiled confidently. “If we get to the bottom of it, as long as the spiritual energy in a certain area is instantly vaporized, and the spiritual energy in the nearby is stopped from filling in the vacancy, we will achieve our purpose!

“It is not easy to collect the spiritual energy in an area, but isn’t it more than simple to consume all the spiritual energy? Many crystal bombs of the present day are based on the mechanism that the explosive force of the crystals will damage the stability of the floating spiritual energy in the air, thereby accomplishing a large-scale explosion!

“There’s also the famous method of thunder prevention. By triggering and detonating the spiritual energy of the thunder class in the clouds, all the fierce spiritual energy will be unleashed very quickly. For a long time that follows, there will be no thunder in the clouds again because the spiritual energy has been drained!

“They are all very mature technologies and magical equipment. Nothing too complicated. What I am trying to do is merely to expand such crystal bombs… by hundreds of times or thousands of times!

“This is exactly the ‘black hole bomb’ that I’ve designed. Once projected and detonated, they will instantly swallow all the spiritual energy in a certain area like a real black hole. Then, after the transformation of rune arrays, the spiritual energy absorbed will turn into high-interference waves that will form a certain ‘membrane’ out of the area, preventing the spiritual energy of the outside world from flowing in!

“Devouring the spiritual energy, interfering with the waves, and blocking with the membrane. With the three approaches, even if we cannot create an absolute vacuum that is completely devoid of spiritual energy, we will at least be able to suppress the spiritual energy in the area to the minimum and trap the expedition army of the Imperium in an empty swamp!

“This is like taking away the firewood under the cooking pot. We will be limiting the greatest advantages of the Imperium fundamentally!”

The humming sounds in the hall was louder and louder. Professor Mo Xuan pondered for a moment but still asked, “Li Yao, have you considered such a problem? Even if your ‘black hole bomb’ is successfully invented, and you can create ‘absolute vacuums’ that are temporarily devoid of spiritual energy free at your will, we will be mired in the swamp, too, exactly like the expedition army of the Imperium! The Immortal Cultivators of the Imperium cannot carry out their combat ability. But neither can we! What’s the point?”

Li Yao opened his hands and smiled. “Not all our combat ability is restrained. This is our land. Our army will definitely outnumber theirs. Our Cultivators, after a round of battle, can retreat from the ‘absolute vacuum’ unhurriedly and go to train themselves or refill their spiritual energy in the rear. New Cultivators will fill their vacancies and continue the battle! The expedition army of the Imperium will come here after such a long journey. They must be bringing elite troops that are not large in number. Also, they will not have any logistics bases. Where can they rest and resupply?

“In a war of attrition under such harsh circumstances, how can they defeat us?

“More importantly, as I said, we will drag our opponent to our level and then defeat them with our abundant experience!

“We have abundant experience in fighting a large-scale war in a world without spiritual energy. We know what kind of weapons, tactics, and strategies we should adopt in such an environment, but there is no way that the Imperium has the knowledge! This is our greatest advantage!”

Professor Mo Xuan frowned. “Li Yao, I’m getting more and more confused. What do you mean by ‘abundant experience in fighting a large-scale war in a world without spiritual energy’? We don’t have such experience! A world without spiritual energy? Unimaginable! Is it possible to fight a war in such a world? How? Tossing sticks and stones at each other? That’s a bit ridiculous, isn’t it?”

“Professor, I’m afraid you are wrong.” Li Yao smiled. “I assure you that advanced weapons that dealing fatal damage to Core Formation Stage Cultivators and even Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators can still be developed in a world devoid of spiritual energy and without any knowledge of crystals!

“Right now, we don’t have such experience, but we have a whole century ahead of us. We can run simulations and slowly accumulate experience!

“Over the past few months, when I was free, I established such a virtual world in my brain that was devoid of spiritual energy or Cultivators. I deduced the evolution of the world from the primitive age and calculated the weapons and the combat modes that were most likely to be invented in such a world. Eventually, I found that I’d created a terrifying planet where an ordinary person could boast destructive strength!”

Chapter 1210 - A World Without Spiritual Energy!

“It’s impossible!”

A Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator who was adept at theories of spiritual energy could not hold himself any longer and rose up. “Fellow Cultivator Li, spiritual energy is the most magnificent force in the universe. What can you empower yourself with if not spiritual energy? How can ordinary people train themselves? How can they boast destructive force without training?”

“With oil, coal, gunpowder, electromagnetic energy, and nuclear energy!” Li Yao replied solemnly. “Of course, when the interference is too severe, it is hard to say whether or not electromagnetic energy and the nuclear energy are applicable, but the former three are guaranteed to be usable!”

“Oil, coal, and gunpowder?” The theorist of spiritual energy was dazed for a moment before he observed with a weird expression, “That is the most barren source of energy. The energy contained in oil is less than one hundredth of that contained in a crystal of the same volume. What can it do?”

In the world of Cultivators, a lot of planets boast tremendous reserves of oil and coal, too.

In the studies of spiritual energy, regarding the cause of spiritual energy, oil, and coal, there was a hypothesis named ‘Corpse of the Ancient Civilization’.

According to the hypothesis, before the civilization of mankind was born, in the billions of years of development of the universe, countless ancient civilizations were born. However, no matter how prosperous the civilizations once were, they could not avoid the law of nature and declined and perished without exception.

Although the civilizations were gone, the dead bodies of the ancient species would not simply vanish into thin air.

After the civilization fell and the bodies were disintegrated, the immense souls of the ancient civilization would ascend to the universe, which were transformed into spiritual energy after billions of years of cosmic storms and stellar radiation.

The dead bodies without the souls, on the other hand, were buried deep underground, where they were tempered under high temperature and pressure. The essence of the bodies was turned into the mother lodes of crystals, while the unimportant parts were turned into coal and oil.

Doubtlessly, in the world of Cultivators, the soul was much more important than the body. Therefore, spiritual energy, which was believed to be transformed from the souls of the ancient species, was much stronger than coal and oil, which were transformed from the bodies of the ancient species!

The simplest example would be Li Yao. If Li Yao, as a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, passed away and was buried to the underground, after billions of years of reactions, his brain, spine, and the expansion on his coccyx would be very likely to be condensed into mother lodes of crystals, while his hands might turn into the oil, and his hair might turn into the coal.

Naturally, the spiritual energy stored inside the brain and spine was hundreds of times more than that stored in the hands and feet!

It was exactly because the universe was brimming of spiritual energy that the civilization of mankind embarked on the path of utilizing spiritual energy since it was born. They had never considered developing oil and coal on a large scale.

Some Cultivators in the past had been curious about the black liquid and solid and intended to develop the energy stored in them.

However, after they tried, they discovered that, not only did oil and coal boast little energy, there would also be heavy pollution when such energy was developed, which would affect the balance of natural spiritual energy. More importantly, oil and coal could not be directly absorbed by the human body during training!

Such a source of energy was both wasteful and harmful. What could it do?

Therefore, in the era of ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago, in the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago, and in the Star Glory Federation at present day, coal and oil had always been despised. Nobody conducted any significant research on them.

But Li Yao was different.

In the bizarre dreams that he had experienced since he was little, on the planet named Earth, oil and coal alone, without any drop of spiritual energy, had supported a magnificent civilization that could just about step out of the planet and explore the universe!

Therefore, Li Yao was very clear about the amazing potential that could be exploited from the seemingly barren ingredients that were oil and coal!

Whispers were echoing in the auditorium again. Most of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, including Professor Mo Xuan, supported theorist's opinion and doubted Li Yao's idea.

It was not about their wisdom or computational ability but just a matter of eyesight. For a jellyfish living in the deep sea, it would not be able to fathom what a ferocious animal on the land looked like however strong and smart it was!

"I know that the new strength system is in conflict with what you believed in and will not be accepted easily," Li Yao said confidently. "Therefore, over the past few months, I have summoned all my computational ability and deduction ability without resting, even at the cost of burning my life and soul. Finally, I have completed the inferred development of the world without spiritual energy. Please take a look, everybody!"

On the 3D light beam behind Li Yao, a blue planet surrounded by ocean appeared.

The picture zoomed in until it was shown that a bunch of primitive monkeys were approaching a burning tree that had been hit by lightning carefully at the edge of a forest on a continent.

The monkeys waved the burning branches and honed the stone axes and spears. Their hair gradually faded, and their backs straightened. Then, the bronzeware and ironware were refined. Wagons and cavalry were invented. In magnificent armor, they established tribes and countries. They explored and conquered their surroundings. They discovered the mysteries of coal and oil. They founded a smoky and yet splendid industrial system, and in the end, thousands of supersonic fighters and unparalleled fleets that dominated the ocean were produced.

The history of development of almost a hundred thousand years was displayed in front of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in only several minutes.

In the meantime, the data and information stream flooded into their crystal processors, too.

“Even without spiritual energy,” Li Yao said, “ordinary people can still explore the mysteries of the universe, summarize the general rules, and figure out the most fundamental laws of nature!

“I considered myself to be an ordinary person who lived thousands of years in a world without spiritual energy while I tried to explore how the world was functioning. Eventually, I founded many disciplines!

“Among them, the subject about the ultimate mechanism of all objects, including the pattern of their motion and their basic structure, is called physics!

“The subject that studies the relationship between different objects and how they can react with each other is called chemistry!

“Based with physics, chemistry, and mathematics, I was able to push forward unstoppably and pursue electrics, engineering, optics, the material science, and all the other subjects. When the essence of all the subjects is combined, the original force contained in everything will be made best use of without spiritual energy. All kinds of terrifying war machines can be created!”

Behind Li Yao, the light and shadow were changing. A heavy vehicle, made of metal and thickly armored, which looked similar to a crystal tank, appeared.

“I have named such a weapon ‘panzer’. It requires absolutely no spiritual energy, but it can still move as aggressively as fire and roar as loudly as thunder!”

The picture changed, and a second weapon that was similar to crystal cannon popped up.

“Such artillery is purely driven by gunpowder. It is much simpler than the crystal cannon in structure. Although it is not nearly as strong as a crystal cannon, once thousands of them are produced, it will still be more than enough to cover hundreds of kilometers in a bombardment. They can still smash the Immortal Cultivators into smithereens!”

The picture changed again. The third weapon turned out be an iron bird in lead gray. It was streamlined and did not have a single gap on the surface. A raging dragon was also carved on the empennage!

“Such supersonic stealth fighters can travel three times faster than the speed of sound while accommodating the pilot. They are also able to fly at the top of the atmosphere, an altitude where the temperature is low and the oxygen is little. Also, such vehicles are piloted by ordinary people! Let me repeat myself. Ordinary people without spiritual energy who have never practiced any techniques!

“I have drawn the basic structures of the three weapons. Fellow Cultivators, especially those of you who are masters of refining, please take a look at them, and see if the weapons are manufacturable theoretically.

“They are just the few relatively fundamental war machines. Other than them, there are also super weapons such as strategic missiles, nuclear submarines, nuclear supercarriers, and so on, which do not require spiritual energy at all and can be manipulated by ordinary people. Yet, such weapons boast the ability of wiping out an entire city easily! Although they were just in my imagination, I do feel that none of them are really imaginary, and all of them can be produced in a reality. Please do enlighten me with your suggestions. Do you see any issues?”

Files as vast as an ocean flooded into all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators’ crystal processors crazily. They all felt that the world was swirling before them!

To be honest, the ‘history of develop of the world without spiritual energy’ that Li Yao presented was not complicated. Neither the physics nor the chemistry involved was more sophisticated than the high-school level on Earth. He was basically copying what was said in the textbooks.

As for the panzers, artilleries, and supersonic fighters, he was just talking about the general idea and could not touch the essence.

After all, even in the bizarre dreams, he was just an ordinary person on the Earth, not a physicist or a chemist. As for the nuclear bombs or the nuclear physics, he did not know the first thing about them!

Therefore, all he could do was try to recall more details on the Earth with his amazing memory and relay the content in the textbooks and the military magazines that he had read before.

For example, he had once seen the model of the engine of a certain supersonic fighter on a military magazine before in his dream, and he could copy the picture into his theory right now.

As for material science, kinetics, and other subjects, some of them were not his specialties. So, he could only avoid talking about them.

Even so, the whole new strength system was a devastating shock for all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors.

Many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators had been suspicious, if not scornful, at the beginning. They had merely been skimming through it because they were showing respect for the Ultra-Level Federal Hero.

However, after they glanced at the files for a moment, their eyeballs seemed to be attracted by magnets and could not be moved away!

They discovered that the history of development that Li Yao inferred, despite the simplicity and even childishness in certain aspects, was natural and flawless in the description of the basic principles and the big picture!

Chapter 1211 - Brand New Patterns of War!

It was like a skyscraper that was wry, piled with mud bamboos, and in violation of all the accepted rules. The building seemed as if it would collapse as soon as anybody blew at it.

But when the lousy appearance was removed, it would be noticed that the skyscraper boasted the solidest framework and the most valid foundation. Also, all the seeming unacceptable parts were supported by the most delicate principles of mechanics!

After three minutes, after digesting the tremendous information that Li Yao had thrown out, all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors were in great shock!

When one law worked out, a hundred subsequent laws would also work out. With or without the spiritual energy, the rules of the universe were the same. The most fundamental laws of nature were unchanged. The strong interaction, the weak interaction, the electromagnetic interaction, and universal gravitation all existed. Absorbing energy from crystals and absorbing energy from oil and coal only differed in efficiency. There was not any essential difference!

They were all the specialists in their respective fields and were only blocked from the new world by a closed window. Now that Li Yao had ripped open the window for them, the two systems were immediately broken through. All the participants felt greatly enlightened!

Many specialists were deeply fascinated. Their fingers turned into clusters of gray mist in midair, while they deduced the development of a certain field in the world without spiritual energy based on their own experience.

After their calculations were done, they discovered that the outcome was exactly what Li Yao had pointed out. They were all amazed and found it unbelievable.

Several demon emperors of the Blood Demon Sector, who were most adept at condensing minerals into the blood of demon beasts to produce lethal venom or corrosive liquid, met absolutely no trouble when they studied the chemistry and biology of the world without spiritual energy.

Another few experts, who were best at theories of spiritual energy and the cosmology, found several of the most fundamental concepts in nuclear physics and astrophysics that Li Yao had raised and compared them with their own studies. They found absolutely no discrepancies and were even given new insights!

In short, after ten minutes of crazy calculation, all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors had to admit that, if a world without spiritual energy did exist, the seemingly make-believe world that Li Yao had proposed was possible to be produced in reality and to be manipulated by trained personnel!

I didn’t know that the guy’s deduction ability is so immense. This is truly unbelievable!

Many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors were sweating hard and considered Li Yao to be a mysterious monster again!

They had not gotten in touch with Li Yao before and had only heard his name. After learning Li Yao's life experience, many experts who were more than a hundred years old still had not thought too much of him. They had thought that the young boy was just lucky enough and happened to be involved in many great events wherever he went so that he could take advantage of the chaos and excavate many relics of the past.

Today, after finally meeting him, they had never expected the young man who was young enough to be their great, great grandson to propose any plan of strategic significance. It would be credible enough if he could come up with a creative tactic.

They did not know that the young man would put forward a purely imagined civilization!

Imagining the evolution of a civilization of more than ten thousand years was not difficult. One could think however they saw fit.

However, making sure that the sweeping subjects were all basically correct and every detail was so self-consistent that even two hundred Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors could not find a loophole was a whole other issue. What kind of computational ability the guy must have!

Horrifying. This is too horrifying!

No wonder he is already a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator at such a young age. Leaving his combat ability and arts in refining alone, his deductive ability is definitely among the best of the three Sectors!

The seasoned experts all looked at each other in bewilderment, sweating and blushing for silently mocking Li Yao a moment ago.

Some other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, who were in better relationship with Li Yao, were anxious and worried for him!

As Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, they were well aware of the weight of the files. It was inferring an entire world from nothing!

They were all clear that Li Yao was not bragging when he said ‘burned my life and soul’. Such a deduction could only be made with one’s full attention and the best of one’s computational ability for an unbelievably long time!

The simplest example would be Jin Tuyi, who only inferred the integration of human beings and demons and the development of the two Sectors in the hundred years to come for his Red Tide Plan. However, as a result, his brain sclerosis escalated!

Li Yao had created a world from nothing and inferred everything that happened in ten thousand years. It was definitely much more difficult than Jin Tuyi’s work. He must have been thinking with his life!

Judging from the detail of the files, for a deduction of such complexity, if his brain had not exploded on the spot, his longevity must have been reduced by decades!

For a moment, the eyes of many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were wet.

“Li Yao!”

Mercury tears flowed out of Professor Mo Xuan’s metal face, as he held back his excitement and said, “You—you’ve sacrificed too much. This issue is indeed important, but you must take care of yourself, too. You have only just married. There’s no need to work so hard. Try to think more for your own happiness!”

“It’s—it’s alright. For the future of the three Sectors, I think I can burn myself a little bit. I’m totally fine.” Li Yao scratched his hair, somewhat in embarrassment. He had not deduced a nonexistent world from nothing in the first place; he was merely copying his own memories, which was not exhausting at all.

To be honest, even the competition of beliefs with Ding Lingdang had been much more exhausting than the preparation of the files!

Li Yao coughed for a moment and changed the topic. “What I have deduced is just the most fundamental framework. As for the technological details and the cutting-edge theories, I really don’t know much about them. I’m hoping that the seniors here can perfect the new energy utilization system together with your own specialties so that the weapon that I’ve imagined can be manufactured in the real world!”

“It shouldn’t be a problem,” Professor Mo Xuan said. “I have basically read through the weapons you imagined. The rifles, panzers, and plans you mentioned are apparently based on the weapons of spiritual energy in our real world, except that the power source is changed from crystals to gunpowder, coal, and oil.

“It is hard to say whether or not nuclear weapons can be produced, but the panzers, the planes, and the artilleries are absolutely not a problem. They can be manufactured as long as we slightly modify the assembly lines of our magical equipment right now!

“Fellow Cultivators, do you agree?”

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators all nodded.

They had also noticed that the weapons that Li Yao had imagined had their prototypes in reality despite the different power source and the different ways of manipulation. But generally speaking, the new weapons were much more simplified than the existing ones.

After all, such weapons were designed on the premise that even the ordinary people could produce and manipulate them with their wisdom. How hard could it be?

“Compared to the production of such weapons, I am more concerned about the military theories!” Professor Mo Xuan said. “A new weapon means a new strategy, but right now, we have an amalgamation of hundreds of new weapons!

“How should a large-scale war be fought in a world without spiritual energy? We don’t have the slightest experience in the regard. It is certainly not going to work out if we simply copy our experience in the weapons of spiritual energy!”

Professor Mo Xuan was a grassroots refiner who was deeply associated with the military. Therefore, he was particularly sensitive about how the weapons could be utilized in the war.

“There’s no need to worry about that.”

Li Yao smiled and said, “While I was imaging such weapons, I also deduced the wars in different eras of the world without spiritual energy, especially those after the oil, coal, and nuclear energy were applied on a large scale. I have clipped four episodes of my deduction for your reference!”

Behind Li Yao, a torrent of steel, a swarm of bombers, and a rising mushroom was displayed.

“The four wars are respectively World War I, World War II, Desert Storm, and Oriental Sunset.

“Of them, World War I and World War II are two planetary wars in the world without spiritual energy that I’ve inferred before nuclear energy is applied on a large scale. From them, we can learn the overloaded manufacturing of single weapons, the national mobilization including women and children, the large-scale movement of regiments through trains, and the guerilla warfare to resist the enemy without surrendering even after the main force is crushed.

“Desert Storm is a thunderous, unstoppable local war after nuclear energy and electromagnetic energy are generally applied. We can learn how to fight a cubic and electronic war without spiritual energy and crush an enemy who is weaker than us!

“Oriental Sunset takes place more than thirty years after the Desert Storm. It is a local war fought by two superpowers who have both mastered nuclear energy and electromagnetic energy, taking place offshore from one of the superpowers.

“In the war, both parties deploy the most state-of-the-art weapons, including nuclear supercarriers, nuclear submarines, strategic fighters, fifth-generation fighters, and even outer space weapons. They are the best I can imagine!

“Of course, because of the size of the two parties, the war has been fought in the most restrained way. Most of the nuclear supercarriers and nuclear submarines do not have a head-on clash. But still, we can learn much from the war, including how to implement a strategic nuclear attack on an object in the orbit of the planet out of the atmosphere without resorting to spiritual energy!”

Li Yao sent the files of the four ‘fictitious wars’ to the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. Very soon, gasps were echoing nonstop in the hall again.

The reactions of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were within Li Yao’s expectation. He said calmly, “I think that, in a hundred years, if we develop a ‘backup war system’ that does not rely on spiritual energy, we can at least reach the World War II level, can’t we? If we dedicate more resources, and if we are lucky, we can develop to the level of Desert Storm and even that of Oriental Sunset, with nuclear supercarriers, nuclear submarines, and strategic nuclear weapons!

“With my personal computational ability, of course, the four wars that I’ve deduced must be crude and shabby in details, but I believe that the basic moves and strategies implemented in the wars should be correct. We can always hone the tactics or even have live drills. Are we really worried that we will not accumulate enough war experience?”

Chapter 1212 - Ocean of People

There was nothing but silence in the auditorium while all the emperors and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were calculating the four fictitious wars that Li Yao threw out.

The weapons in the latter two wars, such as supersonic fighters and missiles, which seemed enough to cause damage to the Cultivators, particularly aroused their interest.

A moment later, a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator asked cautiously, “Fellow Cultivator Li Yao, it has occurred to me that the war system driven by oil, coal, and nuclear energy seems to boast the most damage on the surface of a planet with an atmosphere and that its damage will be significantly reduced when the battlefield is in outer space. Isn’t it so?

“Let’s take the nuclear weapons, the most powerful weapons of all, for example. In the vacuum, most of the ways that they cause damage will lost effect. Their damage will be less than one tenth of the original!”

“Indeed it is!” Li Yao admitted frankly. “Due to my limited computational ability, this is as far as I can go. Perhaps that’s the best the chemical energy and the nuclear energy can do. They are only applicable within the atmosphere and not suitable for wars in the universal level!

“Therefore, such a war system might be barely sufficient to stop the expedition army of the Imperium in the outer space.

“However, it must also be noted that the expedition army of the Imperium is marching to the edge of the cosmos after spending a hundred years covering a distance of millions of lightyears not for nothing. It is not because they are brutal by nature and simply come here to sabotage!

“They are here for the resources and the population!

“But almost all the resources, including the population, the minerals, and the spiritual energy, are concentrated on the planets with atmosphere!

“However advanced the Imperium’s technology is, if they want to steal assets, resources, and people, they will have to land on the ground eventually, won’t they? From what I’ve seen, most of the wars in the Star Ocean Imperium were fought on the surface of planets, too! After all, a planet is often too huge for a starship to suppress!

“The one thing that we should be afraid of is that they don’t land, but if they do, everything will be much easier!

“Imagine this. In a hundred years, in the New Federation, more than fifty planets have been developed, and an atmosphere and ecological system have been established on all of them. On such planets with large populations, countless ‘black hole bombs’ are buried under strategic locations that are mostly likely to be the expedition army of the Imperium’s target. Also, many mobile black hole bomb launching platforms, which can instantly pump away the spiritual energy of a city or an even larger range, are also standing by!

“After the expedition army of the Imperium arrives, they have detected neither too immense spiritual waves from those planets nor too advanced defense rune arrays and magical equipment!

“In the concepts of the Immortal Cultivators, such planets are utterly defenseless, and they can do whatever they want!

“As soon as the expedition army of the Imperium lands within the atmosphere, the black hole bombs will be detonated instantly, and the spiritual energy near the battlefield will be pumped away, turning it into a land without spiritual energy!

“Right then—

“The airports hidden below the ground are opened one after another, from which tens of thousands of supersonic fighters soar to the sky. The artillery and missile formations are activated, too, and will lock onto where the fleet of the Imperium is located. The iron tanks will start roaring. The nuclear submarines lurking in the deep sea will be ready to launch. Every local ordinary citizen of the federation will defend their own homeland with a rocket launcher on their shoulder and an assault rifle in their hands!

“In the most extreme situation, all the tactical and even the strategic nuclear weapons can be used to launch a destructive strike on the garrison of the Imperium’s fleet!

“If all our planets make such preparations of war, and all our citizens are armed with such equipment and devotion, we will really become hard bones that cannot be boiled, chewed, or broken as Fellow Cultivator Jiang described! Magnificent as the expedition army of the Imperium may be, they are still destined to be smashed into pieces!”

Li Yao clenched his fists and smashed down, as if he were really holding a thick, hard bone in his hands and bashing an unparalleled universal fleet that had crossed millions of lightyears!

The picture that Li Yao depicted was appearing in the eyes of many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators as they calculated the possibility of such a strategy quickly.

The other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, however, frowned and thought that Li Yao's ideas were too simple.

"Fellow Cultivator Li, it is still hard for me to imagine that the ordinary people can cause serious casualties to the Immortal Cultivator by manipulating weapons without spiritual energy."

A Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator from the federal army said frankly, "The morale and the fighting will of the ordinary people are highly insufficient, and the Immortal Cultivators are unlikely to stand by while the artilleries and missiles bombard them!"

Li Yao nodded and said, "Of course, the Immortal Cultivators will not stand by and do nothing when they are attacked. Besides, for the high-level Immortal Cultivators, they can calculate the trajectories of even the missiles more than five times the speed of sound and dodge the attack!

"However, both calculating the routes of the missiles and running dozens of kilometers away instantly at a supersonic speed will consume a lot of spiritual energy!

"I believe that a change in quantity will eventually lead to a change in quality. I believe that ants can kill an elephant when there are enough of them! However lowly the weapons are, they will certainly cause serious issues for a high-level Immortal Cultivator as long as enough of them attack the target for a long time!

"Imagine this. If you are the Immortal Cultivators who are coming to invade the federation, and you find yourselves on a planet without spiritual energy and yet filled with tanks, artilleries, supersonic stealth fighters, and cruise missiles, which essentially make the planet an iron hedgehog…

“Yes. For you, the tanks without spiritual shields can be torn as easily as a piece of paper, taking the blow of several artillery attacks or missiles may be harmless, and you can clearly see the so-called supersonic ‘stealth’ fighters as soon as you concentrate your spiritual energy on your eyes and calculate the trajectories of the enemies precisely!

“However, which of those does not consume spiritual energy? Before the spiritual energy inside your body runs out, how many tanks can you tear apart, how many blows from the artilleries can you take, and how many supersonic fighters can you shoot down?

“Don’t forget that you are in the Nascent Soul Stage. You would even be among the top Cultivators in the era of the Star Ocean Imperium!

“Strong as the Imperium of True Human Beings may be, they can’t have too many Nascent Soul Stage Immortal Cultivators, can they? It’s impossible that every soldier of the expedition army is in the Nascent Soul Stage, isn’t it?

“I believe that the majority of the Immortal Cultivators are still in the Refinement Stage and the Building Foundation Stage, except that the magical equipment they utilize might be more advanced!

“The supersonic fighters and the cruise missiles may be no match for the Nascent Soul Stage or the Core Formation Stage, but are they even not enough to kill the Immortal Cultivators in the Refinement Stage and the Building Foundation Stage?

“The expedition army of the Imperium is coming to us after a long journey. They do not have supplies or reserves. One casualty will mean one less soldier. If all the soldiers at the bottom level are stalled or killed, the top experts will only be able to run here and there with nobody that they can command!

“Besides, I never said that the army of ordinary people will be fighting the expedition army of the Imperium on their own. We still have so many Cultivators here!”

His lips curled into a brilliance smile while a three-layered structure that looked like a pyramid appeared behind him.

Pointing at the structure, he explained, “The greatest advantage of the backup war system is that it barely consumes our precious crystals!

“The fellow Cultivators have proposed quite a few highly-valuable strategic plans. Some of them are visionary, some are responsive, and some are very creative. But all the plans require Cultivators to implement at the cost of astronomical crystals!

“Both Cultivators and crystals are extremely precious strategic resources whose total quantity is limited. If the investment on one plan is more, the investment on the other plan will be less!

“In comparison, developing the backup war system will consume absolutely no crystals. All it requires are coal, oil, and metal resources!

“Coal and oil are everywhere here, on Iron Plateau, on Spider Den, and in the Blood Demon Sector. They are enough for us to collect at a super high intensity for hundreds of years. The only thing that we need to pay attention to is the pollution to the environment.

“The metal resources are a bit tricky, especially the rare metals. However, as the demons are going to develop resource planets on a large scale, they will not be as scarce as crystals!

“Most importantly of all, this is a plan that does not require the participation of Cultivators from the beginning to the end. Three Sectors combined, there are tens of billions of ordinary people. Their wisdom and strength together will be almost infinite!

“With their effort, and perhaps the guidance of Cultivators regarding the cutting-edge theories if needed, it will be enough to found a planetary war system based on chemical energy and nuclear energy in a hundred years!

“It might be not good enough to be used during battles in outer space, but it will be more than sufficient to build their homes into coldly-shining iron hedgehogs!

“By then, the New Federation will boast three layers of armed forces.

“At the bottom level, and with the largest number, are the ordinary people who use weapons that do not require spiritual energy. They will be sort of the ‘militias’ of the federation. If the country is conquered, and there’s nothing else that they care about, the number of the militias can even surpass ten billion. By then, everybody will be a soldier. The Immortal Cultivators will be drowned in the ocean of the people!

“At the middle level are the regular armies who have received harsh training and who are equipped with spiritual energy weapons, namely the federal army and the coalition army of demons of the present day. Their number might not be much higher than right now. But since the chores can be handled by the militias, they will be able to focus on the frontline. Their combat ability will certainly be improved!

“Above the regular armies, at the peak of the pyramid, there are the most elite forces made of the Cultivators!

“Militias, regular armies, and Cultivators will cooperate with each other in a trinity! When the Immortal Cultivators arrive, we will treat them with a few black hole bombs first. Then, the militias will bombard millions of tons of burning steel on them with the artilleries. After that, the regular armies will hold the battle formation and protect the militias, while the Cultivators will look for opportunities to attack the high-level Immortal Cultivators who have been barraged by the cannons. The supersonic fighters piloted by ordinary people can harass them nearby. The flying swords and the missiles will be launched together, and the crystal cannons will echo with the nuclear weapons. Cultivators will fight side by side with ordinary people to defend our civilization together. This is the battle pattern that I’ve designed!”

Chapter 1213 - The Hands That Hold the Saber!

The eyes of all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors were glittering. Li Yao’s words had greatly enlightened them.

It was quite right. The supersonic fighters, missiles, and tanks might not be enough to deal with the Core Formation Stage Immortal Cultivators and the Nascent Soul Stage Immortal Cultivators, but they were surely even enough to hit and injure those in the Refinement Stage!

If a Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage and an Immortal Cultivator in the same level were in engaged in a fierce battle, while the Cultivator was assisted with a team of supersonic fighters that would launch missiles five times the speed of sound at his opponent, the outcome of the battle would be obvious.

It was the simplest math.

After pondering for a while, Professor Mo Xuan raised a very critical question. “Li Yao, I’ve read your proposal carefully. There are not too many technological obstacles. So, if we can develop such a strength system, the Imperium of True Human Beings certainly can, too!

“Do you think that the Imperium of True Human Beings has developed the same strength system or even come up with countermeasures?”

“Professor, you’ve asked the most critical question.” Li Yao smiled. Pointing at his temples, he said, “I believe that it is very unlikely. It is not about the technology but about the ideology!

“The strength system with oil and coal and the fundamental power source based on chemical energy and nuclear energy is in fact nothing extraordinary if we get to the bottom of it. The Imperium must have relevant technological reserves. However, once the system is really established, it will only mean one thing, which is that, for the Immortal Cultivators, the strength of the ordinary people will be much higher than before, to the point that they may be hurt by the ordinary people!

“From the ancient times to the present day, under the training system of spiritual energy, ordinary people without spiritual roots cannot inhale or exhale natural spiritual energy directly. The gap between them and Cultivators is huge.

“The powerful magical equipment of the ancient Cultivators did not have buffer and stabilization units. The ordinary people could barely pick them up, much less make use of them. Soldiers waving regular sabers, swords, and bows are nothing but ants in the eyes of a Cultivator holding a flying sword.

“That is the reason Cultivators were respected as deities in the ancient times!

“Today, after the profound research on spiritual energy, we have significantly improved many kinds of magical equipment. With the buffer and stabilization units, civil magical equipment is finally usable for the general public.

“But for military magical equipment that boasts a high output of spiritual energy and high damages, it is still not readily usable for ordinary people. Only strong soldiers with solid souls can manage to manipulate relatively low-level spiritual energy weapons!

“If a weak person is asked to operate a storm bolter, a chainsword, or a crystal cannon, it is very possible that the ‘recoil’ of spiritual energy is enough to blow apart their soul!

“Therefore, even today, under the training system of spiritual energy, the chasm between Cultivators and ordinary people is still very huge. Ordinary people can barely cause any significant damage to a Cultivator, so they are destined to a weak and submissive position!

“The Immortal Cultivators exploit ordinary people mercilessly, while the Cultivators protect ordinary people like the infants in cradles. But they mean the same thing—we all think that the ordinary people are not capable of deciding their fate!

“But it is wrong!

“I sensed it deeply in front of the parliament building in the capital city. The ordinary people have intense feelings, unwavering determination, and burning devotion. They can fight, too. They can defend their belief and their homeland with their owns hands. They can even protect a Cultivator!

“If Cultivators can be compared to the saber of humanity, then the ordinary people will be the hands that hold the saber! The possible damage of the saber does not simply count on the sharpness of the saber’s edge but also depends on how thick and strong the hands that are grabbing the weapon are!

“This is my original purpose of developing the ‘non-spiritual-energy weapons’. Ordinary people are a treasury with endless potential! If such a war system is truly built, every ordinary person will be able to decide their own fate!

“Just now, I kept talking about ‘black hole bombs’. In fact, black holes are not important, and zones of zero spiritual energy are not important, either. Even if the black hole bombs can never be invented, so what? Even if the universe is filled with spiritual energy, so what?

“As long as the army of ordinary people truly takes shape, and they boast innumerable supersonic fighters and tanks, the Cultivators will never be able to ignore their existence again like before!

“Even if they are ants, they will be ants with venomous stings after being armed. Cultivators may step on them just as easily as before, but the Cultivators’ heels will itch or hurt for a moment!

“One ant is enough for a Cultivator to itch for a moment. What about a million ants? A billion? A trillion?”

“We don’t have a trillion ordinary people,” Professor Mo Xuan remarked subconsciously.

“We don’t, but the Imperium might.” Li Yao smiled. “There are tens of billions of ordinary people in the three Sectors. So, the population of the ordinary people in the Imperium will certainly be much larger!

“This is the greatest difference between the federation and the Imperium. This is also our greatest advantage!

“We and the ordinary people belong together. Cultivators fight for the ordinary people, and ordinary people give

Cultivators their full support. The contradiction between us is little. We are a community with a shared destiny. The ordinary people getting stronger equals to our civilization getting stronger!

“But things are obviously different in the Imperium.

“When an emperor regards his subjects as weeds, his subjects will regard him as a sworn enemy in return. The Imperium of True Human Beings treats the ordinary people as ants. They are filtered the moment they are born, and the weak among them will be forced to mine underground until they die. Even newborn babies cannot survive. The weak are not even considered ‘true human beings’!

“Ordinary people must be hating the Immortal Cultivators’ guts. It’s just that they are unable to resist because of the huge gap of capability and the high-pressure suppression.

“Is the Imperium of True Human Beings brave enough to arm billions of ordinary people to the teeth? I’m afraid that the ordinary people will aim at the Immortal Cultivators the moment they are armed!

“Therefore, I estimate that, even if the Imperium of True Human Beings grasps the methods to manufacture the ‘non-spiritual-energy weapons’, they will definitely not spread them out but keep them top secret.

“Distrusting and even fearing the strength of the people is the common disease of every empire throughout history. How can the Imperium of True Human Beings be an exception?

“However, no technology will be blocked forever. As long as we defeat the Imperium’s first attack by relying on the ordinary people, we will disseminate the technology to the

Sectors within the Imperium’s territory and awaken the miners and the ordinary people who are struggling to live with their own strength. When they rise up and resist, however magnificent and dominating the Imperium of True Human Beings appears to be, it might collapse all of a sudden!

“My proposal is named the Black Hole Plan, but don’t think that the ‘Block Hole’ refers to the black hole bombs.

“The ‘Black Hole’ is not the black hole bomb, but the ordinary people of the Imperium of True Human Beings who are awakened from their exploitation and slavery, who master their own fate, and who will swallow all the Immortal Cultivators!

“I believe that, if we truly win the war one day in the future, it will not be Cultivators who defeat the Immortal Cultivators but the ordinary people living in the federation, the Imperium, and all three thousand Sectors!”

Li Yao bowed quickly and left the podium before the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators recovered from their shock.

It could not be helped. Li Yao’s last comment was too much for them.

A brand-new strength system meant a paradigm-shifting social reform. Faced with the overwhelming chemical and nuclear weapons, the masters of spiritual energy, although still boasting an absolute advantage, were no longer as unshakable as before.

The ordinary people would be more or less capable of restraining the Cultivators!

What would such a transformation mean for the world of Cultivators, for the civilization of mankind, and for the future?

Every Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator and demon emperor was deep in thought, as if thorny ants were truly crawling on them.

Hardly had Li Yao returned to his seat when he received complicated stares from all directions.

Even Professor Mo Xuan said to him with a bitter smile, “Li Yao, you truly make breaking news wherever you go without resting at all. You have proposed such a tricky question for us again!”

Li Yao smiled and replied confidently, “There is not any problem as long as we truly trust the strength of the ordinary people. The history of mankind is a history of Cultivators being secularized and integrated with the ordinary people. Not any force is enough to stop the process!”

Professor Mo Xuan hesitated for a long time but still shook his head and said nothing in the end, not knowing how he should comment on Li Yao’s plan.

The agenda of the meeting did not leave time for the detailed discussion of every project. Li Yao’s ultra-long presentation was already an exception, but the next speaker still did not go up front until five minutes later.

The whispers in the hall were louder and louder.

Jiang Hailiu, the host, stood up and said something to his portable crystal processor. Then, his eyes suddenly shivered before he left the hall in a hurry.

Li Yao and Professor Mo Xuan looked at each other in bewilderment, not knowing what was going on.

Li Yao’s plan was indeed a bit shocking, but such an overreaction seemed unnecessary.

A moment later, Jiang Hailiu strode back to the center of the hall again. His face was half red and half pale. There was no telling whether he was excited or anxious while he said solemnly, “Fellow Cultivators, we have just received an urgent message from the Flying Star Sector. I’m afraid that the Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage has to be adjourned now.”

Before the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the demon emperors could respond, he continued. “According to the news from the Star Prier’s House on Spider Den in the Flying Star Sector, Kunlun, the relic of the Pangu civilization, has probably been found!”

Chapter 1214 - It’s Finally Here!

“Kunlun!”

Including Li Yao himself, many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators stood up in excitement.

Li Yao remembered awakening the ancestral memories hidden at the end of the gene strands while he was exploring the mysteries of the cells in the Hundred Desolation Mountain in the Blood Demon Sector.

In the primeval memories, there was the Pangu Clan, which created the universe and all living souls, and their enormous warship named ‘Kunlun’!

He also remembered seeing a vintage, splendid throne of the Pangu Clan as well as a bright, golden skeleton, more than ten meters tall with the upper body of a human being but the lower body in the shape of a dragon, in the Mausoleum of Chaos.

Ba Yanzhi had once been to ‘Kunlun’. He had excavated the relics of the Pangu civilization and brought back a corpse of the Pangu Clan, which was the foundation of his amazing research!

Li Yao could not wait to go to explore Kunlun to search for the origins of mankind, reveal the secrets of how the Pangu Clan created the universe, and even receive the enormous strength from the primeval era!

For a moment, he completely forgot his own ‘Black Hole Plan’. There was nothing but ‘Pangu’ and ‘Kunlun’ in his head. His heart was pounding, his mouth was dry, and his eyes were spurting out fire. He clenched his fists so hard that noises were bursting out!

However—

Li Yao and Mo Xuan looked at each other, equally puzzled.

How had it been discovered so fast?

Half a year ago, after everything was settled, Li Yao had submitted Ba Yanzhi’s Star Map of Kunlun, which had then been parsed by the most advanced super crystal processors of the three Sectors.

However, Ba Yanzhi’s Star Map of Kunlun had been drawn in the ancient style forty thousand years ago. It lacked details and only had the basic forms of the galaxy.

However, the universe was too vast a place. Even the Blood Demon Sector’s nearby had tremendous galaxies, nebulas, and star clusters.

With the Star Map of Kunlun, it was like that they had learned the color and shape of a grain of sand but had to find it from an overwhelming desert that spanned ten square kilometers, which was certainly no simple task!

Despite the computational ability of the most advanced crystal processors and biochemical brains, Li Yao had thought that it would take several years, or even more than a decade, to locate the grain of sand in the desert. It had never occurred to him that the task would be accomplished so quickly.

However, when he looked at Jiang Hailiu’s face, he noticed that the Speaker was rather uneasy and more anxious than delighted, as if locating Kunlun was not a blessing but a disaster!

Li Yao thought of something and asked, “Speaker Jiang, why has Kunlun been discovered so quickly? Was there an unexpected change?”

Now that the Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage had been adjourned, all the participants resumed their daily identities. Therefore, Li Yao addressed him as ‘Speaker’.

Jiang Hailiu’s face was even more solemn. He nodded rather slowly and said, “Yes. At our original speed, it would have impossible to have discovered Kunlun in such a short period of time. In fact, we didn’t discover it; the ‘minor apocalypse’ of the Imperium of True Human Beings led us to it!”

“The minor apocalypse!”

Everybody was shocked by his words. The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the demon emperors’ faces were twisted for a moment, only to be replaced by excitement!

The boot that they had been waiting for so long was finally stepping on the ground. The minor apocalypse was here!

It was going to be the first head-on clash between the Imperium and the federation. Only by smothering the minor apocalypse brutally could all the plans that they had discussed just now be put into practice in good time!

Four mystic rays shot out of the ceiling of the meeting hall and gradually condensed into four shadows. They were the astronomers and cosmologists that were working in the Star Prier’s House in the Flying Star Sector.

They had connected to the meeting hall through the space communication system.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

The 3D light beam behind Jiang Hailiu suddenly changed into the boundless universe, with the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector highlighted in a corner.

The picture was enlarged and enlarged. The space around the three Sectors immediately became clearer than before.

It could be seen that, at a distance very close to the three Sectors, a light spot had been flying straight toward the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, only to glitter all of a suddenly when it almost entered the border of the two Sectors and slightly change its direction to nearby the Blood Demon Sector.

Judging from the trajectory, it would brush past the Blood Demon Sector before long.

The light spot was, of course, the minor apocalypse.

“The Star Prier’s House is a special observatory whose great purpose is to monitor the abnormal astronomical phenomena that are likely to be caused by intelligent creatures,” Jiang Hailiu explained. “In our case, it has been in service to monitor the anomalies from the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“The minor apocalypse from the Imperium of True Human Beings, after a super long-distance space jump, already landed to somewhere near the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector. After releasing tremendous spiritual energy and receiving enough acceleration, it turned off most of the impetus system and flew toward us with its momentum!

“Therefore, for quite a long time, it was not on the radar of the Star Prier’s House. After all, it was no different from a meteoroid and barely emitted any spiritual waves.

“We could only estimate its arrival to the two Sectors from the spiritual waves that it unleashed during its acceleration. Therefore, we were never aware of the specific date of its arrival but only knew that it would come in three to five years’ time.

“However, one day ago, it suddenly reappeared on the surveillance light beam in the Star Prier’s House. This time, it released tremendous spiritual waves at the cost of bountiful fuel, changing its direction and speed!

“All the astronomers in the Star Prier’s House were greatly baffled.

“In a super long-distance space voyage, fuel is always the most precious resource. Every change of speed and direction will waste a lot of fuel. The decisions must be made cautiously!

“We had initially concluded that the ‘minor apocalypse’ should be some sort of small spacecraft that certainly could not carry much fuel. It had locked onto us before and was flying to us with inertia. Slow as it might’ve been, it would definitely arrive in three years!

“Why did it suddenly change its direction to brush past the Blood Demon Sector? It must be noted that such a change would likely drain whatever was left of its fuel, making it unable to shift to the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector again!

“Even if it boasted the ability of transforming the spiritual energy in the universe into fuel, such a process could still take several years if not decades before it could attack us again!

“Something was clearly wrong. Therefore, the astronomers in the Star Prier’s House searched forward according to its latest trajectory and discovered a space zone with distinctive features. After careful comparison, it was deduced that the space zone is the place that Ba Yanzhi’s Star Map of Kunlun refers to!”

The picture behind Jiang Hailiu was enlarged nonstop. A very chaotic space zone showed up. It was covered by an overwhelming super nebula, which was twisting, swirling, and releasing broken streams of energy, like an enormous crab that was raging unstoppably in the universe!

“The space zone is completely covered by the crab nebula. Inside the nebula, cosmic storms, stone belts, and pulse stars are everywhere. It is an extremely dangerous and chaotic place!

“Its appearance is vastly different from the description in Ba Yanzhi’s Star Map of Kunlun. Some kind of catastrophe in the recent forty thousand years must’ve deformed it!

“Therefore, although it was very close to the Blood Demon Sector, and we scanned it more than once before, we’d always neglected it!

“It was not until the minor apocalypse flew toward it directly that we finally noticed its anomaly. After comparing the space zones around it with the edge of the Star Map of Kunlun, we finally discovered that it was the Kunlun that we’d been looking for all this time!”

Everybody began sweating upon hearing what Jiang Hailiu had said.

“Speaker Jiang,” Professor Mo Xuan said solemnly, “are you suggesting that the Imperium of True Human Beings’ minor apocalypse discovered Kunlun first and therefore exposed itself and changed its course to Kunlun, even at the cost of its remaining fuel?”

“Yes.” Jiang Hailiu nodded. “According to the speculation of Li Yao and the fellow Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector, the ‘minor apocalypse’ is some sort of ‘scout’ of the Imperium of True Human Beings. Since it is a scout, its destination is definitely not fixed because its purpose is to find and lock onto the most valuable prey.

“In the riot of the Immortal Cultivators a few years ago, the star child only had time to send the incomplete coordinates to the Imperium of True Human Beings. The Imperium does not know the truth about the Flying Star Sector or the fact that a rather large force exists in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, which are merging!

“Even if it does, it will probably consider us uncivilized bumpkins or even primitive barbarians.

“The Imperium’s greatest enemy is the Covenant Alliance, which believes in Pangu’s Covenant. Therefore, in the eyes of the Imperium, a relic of the Pangu civilization is definitely much more valuable than us bumpkins!

“Bumpkins can be killed whenever they want, but a relic of the Pangu civilization is not so easy to come by.

“It was probably the reason the minor apocalypse changed its direction!”

Professor Mo Xuan pondered for a moment and asked, “How does the Imperium know that it is a relic of the Pangu civilization?”

“The pulse stars at the center of the crab nebula are sending out intense pulses to the outside world every second,” Jiang Hailiu replied. “They are like signals of a certain frequency. Perhaps, the Imperium has seen similar signals before in the war against the Covenant Alliance. That must be how they figured it out.

“It is also possible that the spacecraft from the Imperium boasts certain probe methods that we don’t know yet, which would allow them to perceive the immense spiritual energy hidden inside Kunlun. They do not know that it is a relic of the Pangu civilization, but they do know that their materials and fuel can be refilled there. Therefore, before they launch attack toward us, they can take a rest there.

“The second possibility is the more plausible one, but the results are the same. After they arrive in Kunlun, they will certainly discover its worth and excavate the relic of the Pangu civilization before we can!”

Chapter 1215 - Confrontation in Kunlun!

All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, including Li Yao, narrowed their eyes.

They were all aware of the consequences if the Immortal Cultivators of the Imperium discovered the relic of the Pangu civilization.

In the competition between the federation and the Imperium, the Imperium boasted a vast territory, tremendous resources, and a long history of development, while the federation was merely at the edge of the universe. Even if it could find more Sectors in the future, they would likely be barren lands with equally little resources!

The territory, the resources, and the reserves were all the federation’s disadvantages. To secure the final victory, they had to secure a technological edge in certain fields!

Developing on their own was definitely the correct path, but the relic of the Pangu civilization was also one of the New Federation’s most important trump cards to achieve the ‘corner overtaking’!

If the trump card was stolen by the Imperium, the New Federation would not even be able to struggle!

On the other hand, the Imperium of True Human Beings was unaware of their details yet and probably considered them bumpkins or barbarians. The expedition army had only been sent there to plunder resources. Therefore, the performance of the army might not be too high.

However, after the news of a relic of the Pangu civilization was sent to the Imperium, chances were that the best legions in the Imperium would be marching toward the federation without caring about the cost!

A thunderous strike from the center of the universe was definitely not something that the federation could defend against at this moment!

“We cannot allow the Immortal Cultivators to steal Kunlun!”

Iron God Yan Ba, ruthless enough, slapped the chair hard, and rose up. “If we set off right now, can we arrive at Kunlun before the Immortal Cultivators?”

Jiang Hailiu spoke with the astronomers for a moment and nodded. “Theoretically, yes.

“The ‘minor apocalypse’ couldn’t have carried too much fuel in the first place, and most of the fuel was already consumed for the super long-distance space jump that crossed thousands of space zones. After the adjustment of direction, it will barely have any fuel left!

“Besides, the ‘minor apocalypse’ does not know the specific coordinates of Kunlun. It has to search while it flies. The crab nebula is full of perils. The electromagnetic environment is very complicated. Its cruising speed cannot be very high.

“According to the specialists, it will take a week or so for the minor apocalypse to reach Kunlun in the best-case scenario!

“We have the Star Map of Kunlun and sufficient fuel. Theoretically, we can beat it to Kunlun!”

“Then, let’s gather all the elites and set off immediately!” Iron God Yan Ba gnashed his teeth. “We must destroy the ‘minor apocalypse’ on Kunlun at any cost. We cannot allow it to excavate the relic of the Pangu civilization or send its findings back to the Imperium!

“If news is sent back to the Imperium, and it uses the resources in Kunlun to establish a ‘space gate’ by creating enough large-scale star beacons, the expedition army of the Imperium will be able to jump over immediately with the perfect guide. We will be doomed!”

All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors nodded heavily.

At a moment of life and death, they had no time to care about the friction between human beings and demons anymore.

They were all clear that, once the minor apocalypse rooted in Kunlun, established an enormous space gate, and summoned the army of the Imperium, it would certainly be the doom of the three Sectors that nobody was going to get away from.

The magnificent plans that everybody had proposed a moment ago would also be jokes!

“Fellow Cultivator Luo Xingzi, how is Burning Prairie’s situation?” Jiang Hailiu asked gravely. “When is the earliest time we can set off to Kunlun?”

At such a perilous moment, Burning Prairie, the strongest warship of the three Sectors, was their last hope!

Everybody focused on Luo Xingzi. The leader of the Cultivators from the Flying Star Sector, however, was rather hesitant. He looked at Si Koulie, the specialist of starships from the Flying Star Sector, and faltered. “It’s very difficult, bordering on unrealistic, to ask Burning Prairie to jump over directly!”

“How so?” Jiang Hailiu frowned. “Kunlun is very close to the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector. The distance is much shorter than that between the Flying Star Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Now that Burning Prairie can jump from the Flying Star Sector to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, why can’t it jump from the Heaven’s Origin Sector to Kunlun?”

“The space jump technology that breaks the barrier of the four-dimensional space has a lot of prerequisites.” Si Koulie helped Luo Xingzi to explain. “It is especially so for a super warship of Burning Prairie’s tonnage with so many top experts in the Nascent Soul Stage and the Core Formation Stage on board!

“More than half a year ago, we jumped from the Flying Star Sector to the Heaven’s Origin Sector on three premises.

“Firstly, the Flying Star Sector boasted a ‘Cosmic Slingshot’, which was an enormous launch platform modified from the space jump rune arrays of the Star Ocean Imperium. It was with the joint efforts of the Cosmic Slingshot and the space jump system of Burning Prairie that such an incredible journey was made possible!

“Secondly, the communication between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector was already frequent back then, and you’d established a large array of star beacons in the orbit of the planet. When more than eight hundred star beacons shone together, they were a brilliant lighthouse that guided the way for Burning Prairie!

“Thirdly, the environment of the Heaven’s Origin Sector was very stable, without complicated cosmic storms or stone belts. Besides, during the communication beforehand, you also provided a lot of parameters of the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Therefore, we knew every detail of the environment we were getting into!

“Even so, we still spent an unbelievable number of resources on the space jump, and the preparation took more than a month. After Burning Prairie was sent away, the Cosmic Slingshot had to undergo maintenance for two weeks before it supported the next jump!

“But right now, we have none of the three premises.

“Firstly, both the Heaven’s Artillery and the Eye of Blood Demon are now being upgraded and reconstructed. They are nowhere near as good as the Cosmic Slingshot of the Flying Star Sector. For them to produce enough impetus, they’ll have to be strengthened quickly, which will take at least ten days!

“Secondly, although we do have the Star Map of Kunlun, the environment there has completely changed in the past forty thousand years. Without the star beacons to guide the way, how can we jump to Kunlun precisely?

“Thirdly, the crab nebula that surrounds Kunlun is too complicated, and we don’t know the first thing about its parameters. How many stone belts are there exactly inside? How strong are the cosmic storms? Will the pulse stars affect the starship? How can we jump when we don’t know any of the information?

“It’s like a heavy ship that is moving in an unknown water area that is full of reefs and swirls on a dark night, with a great storm waiting for it ahead. That is not an adventure but suicide!"

Si Koulie had spent his entire life studying starships. He was an out-and-out old sea wolf, and his reasoning did make sense. Many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who had some knowledge could not help but nod.

"Leader Si, we admit that the difficulties you described are all real." Jiang Hailiu's face was so gloomy that a waterfall might pour out at any moment. "But the three Sectors are in peril now. The difficulties, however big they are, must be addressed one way or another. We cannot sit and watch the Immortal Cultivators take over Kunlun, can we?"

Si Koulie pondered for a moment and then calculated crazily with Luo Xingzi. In the end, he raised his head and said, "If Burning Prairie must jump to Kunlun, we can make a desperate attempt, but only on one condition!

"A smaller starship, with a limited number of elites, must jump over first!

"The mission of the starship is to record the astronomical parameters of Kunlun, explore the surroundings, and establish a star beacon near Kunlun.

"With the astronomical parameters and the guidance of the star beacon, the odds of a successful space jump will be greatly improved. Otherwise, our determination will not mean anything, and we will be killed ten times even if we jump ten times!"

"Let me go!"

Hardly had Si Koulie concluded when Li Yao rose up and said, "I will collect parameters and establish a star beacon for

Burning Prairie on Sparkle!”

Li Yao had spent quite a few years in the Flying Star Sector. He was also among the first batch to jump back to the Heaven’s Origin Sector from the Flying Star Sector. His space jump experience was much more abundant than regular Cultivators. Therefore, he knew that Si Koulie was not exaggerating

Just an ancient star map, no star beacons, and unfamiliar with the environment of the destination. A space jump on such conditions would certainly be a dead end.

Also, Sparkle was a multipurpose exploration starship of the Star Ocean Imperium in the first place. One of its designing purposes was to lead the way for super starships!

Li Yao had another identity, which was the captain of Sparkle. Right now, Sparkle had been fully restored with even more remarkable functions than before. He could not wait to explore the secrets of Kunlun with his old friend!

“Me, too!”

“And me!”

“Fellow Cultivator Li, let’s fight together!”

Many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors volunteered.

Whatever their stance to each other was, at a time like this, valiance and desire for the relic of the Pangu civilization were the last things that they were short of.

Due to the emergency, the point of order had to be put aside for now. After all, the super experts of the three Sectors were all there. The Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage immediately turned into a meeting of strategical analysis.

A few space jump specialists and starship specialists from the Flying Star Sector analyzed and precisely calculated the maximum load when the Heaven’s Artillery and the space jump system on Sparkle were working together.

Subtracting the load with the weight of the necessary facilities that Sparkle had to carry, they concluded the maximum number of persons that could be teleported once.

Generally speaking, three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, twenty Core Formation Stage Cultivators, or ten times more Building Foundation Stage Cultivators could be teleported.

“Let’s teleport three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators!” Li Yao said. “The electromagnetic environment in Kunlun is too complicated. Danger will be lurking everywhere. We are also likely to be engaged in head-on clashes with the Immortal Cultivators of the Imperium. If the crew are too weak, they may be burdens, and the Immortal Cultivators might dig out tremendous intelligence about the federation from their heads should they be caught!

“Also, the more people who are teleported, the more resources will be consumed. The load of Sparkle will be unnecessarily occupied, too!”

Storing the magical equipment, facilities, and crystals inside Cosmos Rings could indeed save space and weight, but Cosmos Rings, as special storage magical equipment, were particularly ‘heavy’ during a space jump. They would also release weird waves that would affect the space jump. Eventually, the starship might deviate from the course and got lost in the four-dimensional space!

Therefore, the seasoned sea wolves did not like to keep too many Cosmos Rings on a starship. The control of assets and fuel was still very important.

Chapter 1216 - Dark Flame Gold!

Li Yao’s opinion was supported by most of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

Right now, the details about the enemy were still unclear. If more Building Foundation Stage Cultivators and Core Formation Stage Cultivators were sent though, they would risk being caught by the Immortal Cultivators, who might interrogate them through methods such as the Soul Searching Technique and elicit the latest situation of the federation from them. That would be a disaster.

“Fellow Cultivators!”

His eyes glittering, Jiang Hailiu loudly declared, “This is doubtlessly the most critical moment for the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector! If we pass the test, we will gain the immense forces within the relic of the Pangu civilization. We will also be able to retrieve tremendous techniques from the Imperium of True Human Beings’ minor apocalypse, which can potentially improve our capability by five years, a hundred years, or even several centuries. Moreover, we will have a golden period of development that can be as long as two hundred years!

“If we don’t pass the test, the army of the Imperium of True Human Beings will arrive here within three to five years!

“It will be a catastrophe for all three Sectors. We will be meat on a chopping block, with our fate and future submitted to someone else!

“Whether we were friends or foes in the past, and no matter what differences and concerns we have regarding our future development, at the very least, we share the same goal right now, which is to survive!

“Fellow Cultivators, let’s fight for survival. Kunlun is ours and must not be stolen away by the Immortal Cultivators!”

…

Three days later, in the depths of the Grand Desolate Plateau, countless refiners and workers were as busy as bees on the concave surface of the Heaven’s Artillery that was dozens of kilometers in diameter.

Sparkle was ready in the deepest part of Heaven’s Artillery.

In the preparation room down below the Heaven’s Artillery, Li Yao put on the most advance mustard-seed combat suit with Ding Lingdang’s help.

The combat suit had adopted the biochemical technology of the Blood Demon Sector. Super tensile synthesized spider threads had been implanted to the critical parts, granting the suit a higher defense ability than the special porcelain plates although it was thin and barely carried any weight. After the suit was broken, the synthesized spider threads would even release a special, sticky material that would block the damage automatically.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Li Yao punched hundreds of times easily without even breathing any faster. With the force of his fists, the air became twisted and orange, but the extension and tenacity of the mustard-seed combat suit were not lowered at all.

Sensing spiritual energy flowing in and out of the super tiny fiber holes on the combat suit, Li Yao calculated in silence for a moment and then smiled. He was very satisfied with the new material.

As he had been told, the mustard-seed combat suit boasted a unique technique to block and stabilize spiritual energy by adjusting the fiber holes automatically. The Cultivators would be able to find the most optimal way to manipulate their spiritual energy and reduce the necessary cost, thereby extending the duration of their combat ability in a battle.

Li Yao estimated that the combat suit would extend his fighting duration by at least ten percent. Also, the air circulation system and temperature adjustment system in the mustard-seed level were most suitable for outer space where the temperature difference was huge. It truly deserved to be a super combat suit that was even more expensive than a crystal suit!

For the Kunlun mission, the entire world of Cultivators spared no efforts. It was needless to say that the three Cultivators who were the first batch to go to Kunlun brought out their best equipment. Even other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were all generous enough to provide their own collections. The mustard-seed combat suit was the most common one of them.

Li Yao examined the magical equipment that he was carrying again and could not help but feel that he had been armed to the hair on his legs!

He was the captain of Sparkle and boasted dual talents in fighting and refining, which allowed him to perform maintenance on starships and star beacons in emergencies. Naturally, it was only reasonable that he was in the first echelon.

Other than him, the second member of the team was the Fire Ant King.

The Fire Ant King was a demon emperor himself with remarkable combat ability. But more importantly, he was one of the best specialists in regard of the refinement of demonic plants in the Blood Demon Sector. In his decades of life as the leader of the Blade of Chaos, he had profoundly researched cytology and genetics.

Also, over the past decades, he had developed countless relics of Chaos, which proved him to be a qualified, if not distinguished, archeologist, or rather, a grave robber!

Also, Ba Yanzhi was deeply associated with the Pangu civilization. There was even a corpse of the Pangu Clan inside Ba Yanzhi's Mausoleum of Chaos. The corpse was now in the Fire Ant King's hands, and he had been researching on it for a while.

The Fire Ant King's understanding of Ba Yanzhi and the Pangu civilization was better than most Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators', perhaps even Li Yao's. It was only reasonable that he was the second explorer of the team.

The third member of the team was Professor Mo Xuan.

Compared to Li Yao and the Fire Ant King, Professor Mo Xuan's combat ability was little to none, but his special body of liquid metal endowed him with excellent self-protection abilities. He could always run away if the enemy was too strong for him!

In fact, the biggest reason that he had been selected was not related to the relic of the Pangu civilization itself but the Imperium of True Human Beings.

In the battle to suppress the riot of the Immortal Cultivators, Professor Mo Xuan and the other four star spirits had broken into Xiao Xuance’s flagship and devoured tremendous computational ability from the star child. They had a preliminary understanding about the crystal processor system of the Imperium of True Human Beings. In the years that followed, they had also developed several techniques that resembled the viruses on the crystal processors.

Once the team was engaged with the Immortal Cultivators from the Imperium of True Human Beings, Professor Mo Xuan’s viruses might prove to have amazing effects!

Besides, Professor Mo Xuan was a special spectral Cultivator with a unique form. He was weightless. Not just him, even the other four star spirits, who were Li Yao’s four senior brothers, known as the ‘Four Kings’ of the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution in the old days, could be brought to the trip!

The four of them had already been melded with Sparkle back when they were in the Flying Star Sector. After so many years of training, their skills in maneuvering the starship had become even more adept. They did not need any more crew members to exploit the most potential of Sparkle!

In such a case, while the four star spirits collected the astronomical parameters near Kunlun on Sparkle and cleared the sailing routes and the landing point, Li Yao and the other two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators would be able to explore Kunlun simultaneously. A lot of time could be saved.

The three main members of the exploration team all boasted abilities in multiple areas. They had cooperated with each other many times before, too, and their teamwork was flawless. Very soon, all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators agreed with the arrangement.

“I’m sorry. I’m leaving again after only several months of peace at home!”

While Li Yao was trying to hold back his eagerness, he suddenly thought of his wife. He scratched his head and said to Ding Lingdang, somewhat awkwardly, “You won’t blame me, right?”

Ding Lingdang chuckled and bashed his chest hard. “Enough already. Stop being pretentious. I know you better than anybody else. You have been itching for an adventure, haven’t you? We are not home people at all. Why would I blame you?”

Li Yao was greatly moved. He held Ding Lingdang’s hands and said solemnly, “I’ll be back!”

“Of course. If you don’t come back, I will drag you back from Kunlun myself!”

Li Yao and the rest of them were just the vanguard to deploy star beacons, clear the sailing routes, and scout for the main force to come.

The real main face would go to Kunlun on Burning Prairie. Ding Lingdang, as an enthusiastic warrior, certainly would not miss out on such an opportunity.

She was rubbing her fists, too, and could not wait to jump to Kunlun. Therefore, she understood Li Yao's feelings quite well.

Both of them were the most passionate Cultivators. Instead of an emotional farewell, they talked and laughed and left the preparation room for the magical equipment maintenance room next door.

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, which had been fully upgraded—or rather, rebuilt from scratch with the best technologies of the three Sectors—was the most important magical equipment for the mission. It was now undergoing its final tests!

The most distinguished Armadominus of the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector were gathered around the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and adjusting every tiny parameter, trying to make it perfect and flawless.

Li Yao triggered the surveillance light beam and read all the parameters. He was quite amazed by the significant improvement of the specifications. The world of refining truly had no end. Before, he had thought that the potential of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had been fully exploited. It had never occurred to him that the crystal suit could still be improved so much.

The brand-new Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had maintained the translucent black as the main color, but dark golden streaks were embedded to the black armor like the majestic stripes on a tiger.

Therefore, the crystal suit had been named as Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Dark Flame Gold!

On the surface, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Dark Flame Gold was not very different from the past. Its greatest feature was that a Cosmos Ring had been embedded to the shoulders, chest, back and legs. A lot of components were stored inside the Cosmos Rings.

With a telepathic thought, Li Yao could retrieve tremendous components from the Cosmos Rings at any time and restrain them through the force field, thereby changing the form of the crystal suit.

From the high mobility mode, in which the crystal suit was streamlined and fastest, to the melee mode, in which the crystal suit was covered in daggers and thorns from head to toe, to the heavy firepower mode, which included more than a hundred Six-Barreled Vulcan Machine Cannons… The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Dark Flame Gold could change between five different modes freely. It was very adaptive to any battlefield and was an out-and-out all-purpose crystal suit!

Li Yao was very satisfied with the crystal suit. The only shortcoming was that, since the flying sword that covered Little Black was broken, there was no place to keep Little Black on the new Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

He felt a little uncomfortable about that.

Thinking about that, Li Yao summoned Little Black from his Cosmos Ring again.

The little guy that looked like a fat meatball had been eating and sleeping throughout the past months. It had devoured a lot of crystals every day, and after it was full, it would either go back to the Cosmos Ring to sleep or floated in midair in a daze.

In the past, Black Wing could at least rush fast. After the seal was removed, it could not do anything anymore. Even when it was flying, it was so lazy that it seemed to be wriggling.

Having no other choice, Li Yao could only let it do whatever it wanted. After all, he was rich enough to feed the little guy right now.

“Little Black, do you still remember the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit? In the past, you liked to melt into the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and fight with me best! Take a look. Can you still melt into it?” Li Yao asked expectantly.

Outside his expectations, the black meatball extended a few tentacles and touched the crystal suit before they shook and retreated lazily.

Judging from its uninterested response, the super crystal suit that had adopted the best technology of the federation was not something to be appreciated for Little Black!

Chapter 1217 - The World Is Ours!

“What’s the meaning of this? Is the crystal suit not good enough for you?”

Li Yao found it rather curious. The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Dark Flame Gold was definitely the strongest crystal suit of the three Sectors right now, but Black Wing did not care for it at all. Was it possible that Black Wing had seen better crystal suits before?

Where was the little fat guy from exactly?

Li Yao jabbed on its body here and there in great interest.

Black Wing grunted like a dissatisfied fat puppy before it slithered back into the Cosmos Ring to sleep.

Li Yao scratched his head and looked at the second crystal suit.

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Dark Flame Gold was perfect except for one great shortcoming. Since Cosmos Rings had been embedded to the crystal suit, and Cosmos Rings could not be stored within other Cosmos Rings to avoid the conflict of the four-dimensional space, all the Cosmos Rings embedded to the crystal suit had to be removed first and carried by Li Yao personally before the crystal suit was stored.

On a battlefield, after retrieving the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Dark Flame Gold from the Cosmos Ring, Li Yao would have to implant the rest of the Cosmos Rings on the crystal suit in order to maximize its performance.

As a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, Li Yao boasted immense soul power now, and he was deft at remote manipulation. However, after practicing thousands of times, he found that the whole process would still take him two to three seconds, which was basically the same as the time cost of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Blood Demon Form, his last main crystal suit.

For a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, in an ever-changing battlefield, a time of two to three seconds to put on a crystal suit was too long. The enemy would definitely be able to launch a critical strike in advance.

Therefore, Li Yao prepared a backup crystal suit, which was a general Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit refined out of the best Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures!

Of course, the specifications of the general version were not as incredible as the Dark Flame Gold, but the advantage was that it could be put on extremely fast. It could be retrieved from the Cosmos Ring in a quarter of a second and be ready to fight in another quarter of a second!

If the battle was expected and he had enough time to put on his crystal suit, he would use the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Dark Flame Gold, but if it was an unexpected encounter or assault, he would put on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, General Version and look for an opportunity to perform an air change later!

Li Yao’s eyes soon passed the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, General Version and stopped at a third crystal suit in the corner.

The first two crystal suits had been handled by the specialists of crystal suits led by Professor Mo Xuan, but the third crystal suit had been modified by him personally. Almost every detail was carefully considered and carved.

Out of everyone’s expectations, the crystal suit that Li Yao had chosen to modify himself was not a powerful combat suit but a low-level engineering crystal suit from the Flying Star Sector known as ‘Rockman’.

The Rockman was a general-purpose engineering crystal suit that played an important role in the modification of asteroids or the maintenance of starships. It was simple in structure, reliable in performance, and cheap. Also, it could be combined with a lot of combat units and turned into a half-armed crystal suit. It was one of the most popular crystal suits for the normal citizens of the Flying Star Sector in both work and daily life.

When Li Yao first entered the Flying Star Sector, he had once fought the Storm Prison Pirate Gang with a ‘Rockman’.

When the Flying Star Sector reinforced the Heaven’s Origin Sector, they had brought a number of ‘Rockman’ suits over. Later, maintenance factories and assembly lines had been established in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and the Rockman Engineering Crystal Suits had been manufactured on a large scale.

The particular Rockman that Li Yao had modified, however, was not the latest model produced in the federation but an original antique from the Flying Star Sector, an old-fashioned model from more than fifty years ago. It was full of bumps, dents, and patches, and it appeared to be falling apart.

But Li Yao felt that it was not good enough. He attached a layer of vivid rust to the surface of the crystal suit and even sprayed the soil and dust of the Flying Star Sector on the gaps of the crystal suit.

Even the mainframe crystal processor of the Rockman was an old product that had been used for more than thirty years. Tremendous work logs inside the crystal processor proved that the Rockman had been sold almost ten times and that its every master was either a starship technician or the bottom-level soldier in a carrier or a guard in a certain world fragment. All in all, the unimportant Mr. Nobodies.

“Li Yao!”

Guo Chunfeng, his old friend and the new director of the Secret Sword Bureau, was standing next to the Rockman.

“The crystal suit is done. The logs have all been fabricated according to your ideas. We have worked with friends from the Flying Star Sector and collected authentic logs. Every detail has been considered. There can’t be any loophole in them.”

Guo Chunfeng patted the shoulder of the Rockman carefully, only to find that his hands were covered in rust, and he frowned. “However, just don’t fight in the Rockman. This is pure garbage. A high-speed movement of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator is more than enough to rip it apart in midair!”

While speaking, Guo Chunfeng handed over a Cosmos Ring. “The rest of the things that you wanted, including… the feces of different dates, are all inside. They are quite difficult to find. I do wonder what you are up to this time!”

“What else can he be up to?” Ding Lingdang said. “Some other shameless tricks that will trap the Immortal Cultivators miserably, for sure!”

Li Yao smiled and took the Cosmos Ring. He thanked Guo Chunfeng and explained, “Nothing really important. I just feel that our greatest advantage right now is intelligence. The enemy is in the daylight while we are in the darkness. We know more than the Immortal Cultivators do.

“For the Immortal Cultivators, the only thing that they know is the incomplete coordinates of the Flying Star Sector that the star child sent. They can only infer that a civilization of human beings is inside the Flying Star Sector at best.

“But this is not the Flying Star Sector but the nearby of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector. They only sensed that the two Sectors are melting and have therefore come for reconnaissance.

“The Immortal Cultivators do not know that civilizations of human beings that allow the birth of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators exist, too, in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector. They do not know that the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector have joined hands against them, either.

“I feel that it’s a point worth taking advantage of. As for exactly how I can take advantage of it, I haven’t figured it out yet, but I’ll keep everything prepared first in case of a rainy day!”

While talking, Professor Mo Xuan and the Fire Ant King showed up from the preparation rooms nearby.

Li Yao was quite amused by Professor Mo Xuan’s new appearance.

Professor Mo Xuan’s real body was the liquid metal. He often walked in a human-shaped artificial body. But this time, he had chosen an artificial body that was round with countless extensible metal tentacles, making himself look like both an octopus and a jellyfish. He floated in midair with spiritual energy and could not have looked weirder.

“Professor, you do look like a villain in the movies now!” Li Yao could not help but chuckle.

Professor Mo Xuan waved his metal tentacles and said in a rather dull voice, “This is a masterpiece of the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution. It may look ugly, but the sixteen tentacles each have their different functions. They are most suitable for an exploration mission in a foreign world!”

The Fire Ant King was in light-gray armor, but it was not a crystal suit.

Li Yao observed carefully. Greenness was vaguely emanating from the light-gray, which made the Fire Ant King look like a ‘treeman’ that was covered in dry rind.

Suddenly, the ‘armor’ on the Fire Ant King dissected. Tiny vines and branches grew out of the armor and flapped like the twigs of a willow. He was like a cluster of super large thorns!

The Fire Ant King smiled at the center of the thorns and said, “Li Yao, you’ve travelled far and wide, but I’m afraid you’ve never seen such strange armor before, have you? Technically speaking, this is also biochemical armor, except that it is not refined out of demon beasts but built with demonic plants!

“I collected a type of microorganism that lives near an underground volcano in the Blood Demon Sector that is heat-proof and can survive without oxygen. I melted them into the more than hundred demonic plants I’d bred and finally produced such a ‘living’ plant armor!

“The greatest feature of such an armor is its adaptability. When it is in the cold, dark vacuum in space, a hard shell, whose defense ability is even higher than the super alloys employed in crystal suits, will automatically be generated on the surface. The shell can sustain and maintain itself by the stellar radiation. Once the armor is in a suitable environment and has absorbed enough nutrition, it will be able to proliferate infinitely. A vine on the armor can grow to dozens of kilometers away!

“I have been dreaming about building such plant armor since I received part of Senior Ba Yanzhi’s legacy decades ago, but the resources at my disposal were not enough, and I was scared that I might be exposed. So, I never succeeded!

“But right now, Skyfire is one of the strongest forces in the Blood Demon Sector. My dream for all those years has come true now!”

The Fire Ant King waved his hands excitedly, like a giant tree full of thorns that could dance.

Of course, the tree was a man-eating one.

Li Yao secretly complimented him and realized that none of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors could be underestimated. Everybody had their own ultimate tricks!

It was also the most marvelous part about the world of Cultivators. There were still endless techniques and treasures in the vast world waiting to be explored by him!

“Right. I’ve also brought this!”

The Fire Ant King removed the plant armor and took off a weird pendant from his neck.

It was a glass syringe filled with bright green liquid, in which a gold finger was soaking!

“This is a finger of the Pangu Clan.”

In everyone’s astonishment, the Fire Ant King declared proudly, “I chopped it off from the corpse of the Pangu Clan that had been melted to the throne in the Mausoleum of Chaos.

“Although it is fossil now, all the cells dead, it is still easy to tell that the Pangu Clan was made of flesh and blood, too. They were creatures just like us, not legendary omnipotent deities that completely surpassed us!

“There are no deities in the world. Even if there are and they want to crawl above my head, I will punch them down!

“Evolution means that the next generation is always better than the last.

“Therefore, no matter how much I respect Gui Suishou, I cannot concur to his absolute pessimism!

“Even if the Pangu civilization is truly our parent civilization, so what? No child is willing to stay in the shadow of their father forever. The child will resist and eventually win!

“Learn them, absorb them, and exceed them! If the Pangu civilization indeed created us, this is the best reward that we can give them!

“Let’s go, fellow Cultivators. The world is destined to be ours!”

Chapter 1218 - Arriving in the Crab Nebula!

Li Yao’s blood was boiling because of the Fire Ant King’s words.

The terrible future that Gui Suishou had described and the depression that had been haunting him for days disappeared. His belief was clear and firm again!

Yes, the Pangu civilization might have been the parent civilization of mankind, but so what?

Surmounting was the best reward for creation!

“Let’s go!”

Li Yao, the Fire Ant King, and Professor Mo Xuan bade farewell to their family and friends before striding to the launch field.

The operation was highly confidential. Other than the two hundred Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors, only the families of the three of them and the staff at key positions knew what they were going to do.

No reporters were at the site. Jiang Hailiu, the Speaker of the federation, and dozens of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors were all there were to see them off.

Those Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors would stay in the base of Heaven’s Artillery and have drills with Burning Prairie so that they could jump in the second echelon after the three explorers established star beacons and sent back the critical astronomical parameters.

“Li Yao!” Jiang Hailiu patted Li Yao’s shoulder and said half-jokingly, “I am not a superstitious man, but the wonders you’ve created in the past ten years make me willing to believe that there is something in you that allows those wonders and more.

“How does it feel? As the first person in the three Sectors to explore the relic of the Pangu civilization, is there anything else you want to say?”

Looking at so many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors, Li Yao emotions were mixed. He thought for a moment and said carefully, “I feel that I’m lucky to have been born in this era. If it were in the ancient times, I’m afraid that everybody who knew such a super treasure like the Pangu civilization’s relic would’ve desired to monopolize it and take all the benefits. They would definitely be killing each other until there were no survivors.

“Two hundred Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors developing the relic of the Pangu civilization together is itself a true wonder!

“Whatever everybody’s reason is, and whether everybody is truly selfless or simply making the choice because of the pressure of survival, I believe this is a good start!

“Now that everybody has entrusted the mission to explore Kunlun as the first echelon to us, we will certainly not disappoint you!”

Li Yao stared at Ding Lingdang in the end.

Ding Lingdang waved her fists and opened her mouth wide to cheer him up. She was smiling ever so brightly and was obviously confident in him.

Li Yao felt more ambitious than ever. He smiled and boarded on Sparkle, not once looking back!

At 1:25 p.m., all three explorers boarded Sparkle and sank themselves into the bubble-like buffer gel.

At 1:27 p.m., Sparkle was dragged to the center of the Heaven’s Artillery. It was now like a grain of rice that was protruding from the center of a super large pan.

Li Yao’s four senior brothers, the Four Kings who had transformed into star spirits like Professor Mo Xuan, had been making preparations on Sparkle. The four of them melted into Sparkle and input the Star Map of Kunlun into Sparkle’s space jump system. All the parameters were set, and it was good to go!

At 1:30 p.m., Jiang Hailiu ordered that the Heaven’s Artillery, which had undergone emergency upgrades, be fully activated!

The Heaven’s Artillery, which was dozens of kilometers in diameter, looked like a giant pan deeply embedded to the ground. The pan was made of more than a million arced metal pieces whose angle could be adjusted freely.

Every metal piece had been carved with more than a thousand runes, allowing them to absorb the energy from the magma in the underground, the cosmic radiation, or even the crystals that were combusted!

When the three channels were working at the same time, the spiritual energy soared up. Colorful water seemed to be boiling in the super large pan. A series of bubbles popped up and concentrated in midair until an enormous pillar of light that pierced into the sky and the ground was formed!

The Heaven’s Artillery seemed to have been transformed from a pan into a super spotlight. The dazzling, colorful pillar of light rushed into the sky, tore the clouds apart, and shot into the outer space!

The extraordinary view was visible even hundreds of kilometers away.

The hardworking engineers and soldiers on the Grand Desolate Plateau were all dumbfounded. They were at a loss when they gazed at the pillar of light on the horizon.

“Ten! Nine! Eight! Seven!”

Inside the launch center, all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors echoed the countdown at the same time.

Inside the pillar of light, Sparkle spiraled up along the invisible rails of spiritual energy, at an ever-increasing speed, drawing closer and closer to the sky.

“Ahhhh!”

Inside Sparkle, despite the protection of the buffer gel, Li Yao tasted the feeling of breaking the void yet again. He felt that his every muscle fiber and every nerve was extended to a hundred kilometers long and that he was a lengthy noodle that was to break apart!

“Six! Five! Four! Three!”

Ding Lingdang was staring at Sparkle in the pillar of light from the launch center, too. She bit her lips so hard that she did not even know that her blood was flowing to her chin.

Her fists that would not tremble even when she punched demon beasts the size of a hill were now shivering slightly. She unclenched them and wiped the sweat in her palms off.

From her perspective, it could be clearly seen that Sparkle gradually turned transparent. It seemed to be made of ice but was vaporizing into nothingness in the scorching sunlight!

A lot of materials were disintegrated from Sparkle and rushed to all directions in mystic lights.

Very soon, Sparkle would be completely melted into the pillar of light!

“Two! One! Launch!” the chief refiner responsible for the Heaven’s Artillery bellowed. A huge hum burst out from the depths of the Heaven’s Artillery, and the pillar of light turned even brighter than before!

Although the glass window was tinted, its color close to the color of ink, everybody in the launch center could see nothing but white for half a second.

When their eyes were normal again, the pillar of light was dispersing into a smog. Centered at the Heaven’s Artillery, the dozens of kilometers around were soaked in an ivory mist where one could barely see their own fingers.

Ding Lingdang was the first to lunge to the window. She pressed her face so hard on the window that it was nearly squeezing through it, but after she bulged her eyes and observed for a while, she did not find any component of Sparkle in the smog.

Sparkle had vanished from the world!

…

“Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!”

On Sparkle, Li Yao felt that he was an over-blossoming flower. His every cell had exploded completely and was unfolded in the grand universe!

In the void, time and space lost their original definitions. In a trance, he seemed to ‘see’ countless ‘Li Yao’s that were placed next to each other in the shape of noodles and pies. They interweaved and filled the entire universe.

He even ‘saw’ that his mental devil was swung out of his brain and twisted to the limits in the universe like a half-dead germ, and yet it was still grimacing with what seemed to be both a cry for help and mockery.

The weird process lasted 0.1 seconds, or perhaps several days, before Li Yao shuddered hard. His every cell, nerve, vein, and muscle fiber compressed into real entities again.

“Wa…”

Li Yao struggled to free himself from the buffer gel and kneeled on the floor, gagging, only to dry heave.

Luckily, he had quite a few experiences of long-distance space jumps. The distance of this particular jump was not very long, and the buffer performance of Sparkle had significantly improved, too. He was back to himself in no time.

Then, Li Yao heard earsplitting alarms immediately.

Sparkle was under the scourge of a meteoroid cascade. The blood-freezing noises of impact were echoing nonstop.

“Did we make it?”

Professor Mo Xuan, the Fire Ant King, and the other four star spirits all recovered from the space jump, too.

The four star spirits hurried to turn on the spiritual shield and the force field twisting system.

During a space jump, the defense system of a starship would lose effect briefly, which was the most vulnerable moment for the starship. If they were unlucky, a tiny meteoroid might break through the shell and hit a critical unit.

After the spiritual shield and the force field twisting system were turned on, the smaller meteoroids would be blown away, and the meteoroids that were too big would be shattered by the shield.

As the spiritual shield and the force field twisting system were back online, the noises of impact grew weaker and weaker. Sparkle gradually stabilized until they could not feel the meteoroid cascade at all.

“It doesn’t seem to be a large meteoroid cascade. Just star dust, probably!”

“Self-examination has been completed. Sparkle is now 97% intact. The key units are undamaged. The fuel has not leaked, nor was it affected by the space jump!”

“The parameters nearby have been collected. Two celestial bodies are emitting immense spiritual waves in front of him.

One of them is Kunlun, and the other is a pulsar deep inside the crab nebula!”

“Measuring our relative distance to them and referring to the Star Map of Kunlun, it is safe to say that we have successfully jumped to the center of the crab nebula. Kunlun is no more than five hundred thousand kilometers from us!”

The four star spirits reported good news.

Li Yao, the Fire Ant King, and Professor Mo Xuan looked at each other in excitement.

It was a very successful space jump. A distance of five hundred thousand kilometers was just the distance between a planet and its satellite. In astronomy, it was the same as the width of a hair!

Without the guidance of a star beacon, and just based on an ancient star map from forty thousand years, they had hit the bull’s eye. It was quite a lucky day for them.

“What’s the situation outside? Turn on the crystal cameras and let’s take a look!” Professor Mo Xuan asked.

Immediately, the more than hundred crystal cameras around Sparkle captured the space around them, transformed the view into a hologram, and projected to their nearby.

From their point of view, the entire starship seemed to have vanished, and they were floating in the boundless space on nothing, appreciating the magnificent, spectacular universe!

Chapter 1219 - Kunlun, the Primeval Battlefield!

Li Yao did not know how he could describe the things that he was seeing. The universe inside the crab nebula was ten thousand times more brilliant than the universe outside.

It looked both like thousands of rivers in different colors that were colliding, and hundreds of beasts that were mauling and killing each other.

In the silent and yet surging tides, every spindrift was in thousands of different colors.

Just looking at the red colors alone, there were carmine, ruby, coral, maroon, magenta, fuchsia, cerise, vermilion, and thousands of more in different shades.

There were also millions of colors that were unrecognizable to human eyes.

What was even more amazing was that, every couple of seconds, an intense wave would come over from the deepest part of the crab nebula. Like a tide that was even more massive, it stirred the millions of colors in the entire universe and forced them to crash into an extraordinary outburst of brightness!

Such colors seemed to be alive. In fluffy and yet enormous arms, they extended to Li Yao and slapped his head as if deities had opened their hands!

Gaps were splitting apart from some other clusters of brightness while they turned into wry faces and grimaced at him in creepy smiles.

Breathing heavily, Li Yao felt that the billions of optical cells on his retina were far from enough.

He even had the illusion that the crab nebula that was larger than a galaxy was an overwhelming beast and that the waves of light were the breath and heartbeat of the beast.

Staring at the place where the waves came from, Li Yao asked Professor Mo Xuan in a low voice, “What’s that?”

Faced with such a spectacular universe, Li Yao felt that he was nothing more than dust or a germ in the body of the beast. He could not help but lower his voice.

“It’s a pulsar.” Professor Mo Xuan replied in a low voice as well. “The pulsar has been unleashing immense spiritual waves and stirring the nebula, turning the entire crab nebula into an enormous turbulence of spiritual energy.”

A pulsar was a type of neutron star that would release pulses periodically. They were usually around ten kilometers in diameter and boasted an extremely high rotation speed that could be tens of thousands of times higher than that of regular stars or planets!

Every celestial body had their own field of spiritual energy. Pulsars, because of their high revolution speed, had particularly intense spiritual waves and often unleashed them incessantly to the outside world.

Generally speaking, such waves were undetectable to the eyes.

But as it happened, this particular pulsar was surrounded by a nebula made of star dust and radiation aftermath. That was the reason it could leave brilliant traces on the visible spectrum.

Li Yao, the Fire Ant King, and Professor Mo Xuan appreciated the view for a moment. Then, they calmed themselves down and got back to business.

The pulsar was not their target.

For the technology of mankind, even in the heydays of the Star Ocean Imperium, it was impossible to efficiently train with a neutron star.

It was best to stay away from such dangerous celestial bodies.

At this moment, the hundreds of probe balls that the four star spirits had sent into space had collected a lot of astronomical parameters, which were not very satisfactory.

“Too much star dust occupies the era. Also, the waves released by the pulsar are blowing the stole belts everywhere randomly.

“Sparkle, a ship less than a hundred meters long, could manage to jump over, but a super warships dozens of kilometers long such as Burning Prairie cannot jump to a place with such complicated conditions!

“Besides, it is impossible for us to deploy star beacons here, which will be destroyed by the meteoroid cascades before they are unfolded. Even if they are not, they will barely be able to guide the way precisely because of the interference of the pulsar and will likely lead Burning Prairie toward the pulsar!”

Space jumps could be highly perilous. A starship was always defenseless when it just finished a space jump.

Sparkle was a super mini exploration ship that was agile and easy to maneuver. That was why it could risk jumping to the middle of the turbulence.

Burning Prairie, on the other hand, was too huge. At the most vulnerable moment after it finished the space jump, the odds of it getting hit by the meteoroid cascades were thousands of times higher than Sparkle. Also, it was bound to be affected by the pulsar!

Another very dangerous possibility was that some large meteoroids would melt into the engine unit or the warehouse of crystals during the space jump.

Objects that did not belong to the same place would be overlapped by force, and a great explosion would definitely be raised!

One other possible that was even more dangerous was that Burning Prairie would land too near the pulsar!

Once it was captured or even swallowed by the pulsar, the dream warship, along with the hundreds of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Core Formation Stage Cultivators on board, would be compressed to the size of rice, and even their remaining souls would not be able to escape. They would not even know how they were killed.

After discussing the issue with the four star spirits for a while, they all agreed that it was impossible to establish star beacons at this place. Thus, they had two options.

Firstly, they could fly to the opposite direction out of the crab nebula and then build up star beacons beyond the reach of the pulsar.

The advantage of such an option was that it was secure, but the shortcoming was that it would waste a lot of time. Even if Burning Prairie was teleported over, it would still be outside of the crab nebula. They would still have to slowly clear the sailing route and fly in bit by bit.

Secondly, they could fly further into the crab nebula and stop somewhere near Kunlun.

“The crab nebula is like a cosmic storm. The outer area has a complicated spiritual and electromagnetic environment, but the center is a relatively stable zone, just like the ‘eye’ in a storm!”

Analyzing the astronomical parameters just collected, Professor Mo Xuan said, “The Pangu civilization’s relic ‘Kunlun’ is exactly at the center!

“Deploying the star beacons at the ‘eye’ will allow Burning Prairie to pass the crab nebula and directly appear in Kunlun. What do you think, everybody?”

Although the plan was a bit risky, the odds of success were still quite high with the delicate control of the four star spirits. Right now, they were trying to beat the Immortal Cultivators of the Imperium to their destination; there was no time to worry too much.

After activating the spiritual shield and the force field twisting system to the maximum, Sparkle wriggled forward in the crab nebula like a glittering firefly.

They ran into small meteoroid cascades and spiritual energy turbulence on their way, but the probe magical equipment on Sparkle detected the events in advance and dodged them perfectly. The journey proved to be soul-stirring but safe.

However, the closer they got to Kunlun, the denser the meteoroids in front of them became. They had nowhere to dodge and could only crash into the meteoroids.

“This is abnormal. The ‘meteoroids’ look very weird. They do not seem natural!”

Manipulating two artificial arms, Professor Mo Xuan dragged a ‘meteoroid’ into Sparkle. After five sterilization procedures, he examined the elements of the object in person. As it turned out, it was made of a super alloy that would hardly appear in a natural environment.

“This is not a meteoroid but a certain synthetic material.”

Everybody looked at each other in bewilderment, but they had no choice except to move forward.

In the voyage in the next hour, everybody was breathing ill at ease, as if they were on a ragged boat that was sailing in infamous, dangerous reefs.

“Look!”

Very soon, they discovered edges that were obviously unnatural on more meteoroids. Some of the meteoroids were even carved with complicated spiritual stripes.

The spiritual stripes were a hundred times more chaotic than the most sophisticated spiritual stripes of the present day. Even Li Yao, a specialist who was familiar with the ancient spiritual stripes and the contemporary ones, had never seen such eerie, messy spiritual stripes that contained boundless information before!

“Li Yao, what does the ‘meteoroid ocean’ remind you of?” Professor Mo Xuan asked him in a low voice.

In a trance, Li Yao mumbled, “I’m thinking of the debris of the space battlefield that we saw when we just arrived in the Flying Star Sector. I feel that this is also a relic of a space battlefield, not ten thousand years ago, not forty thousand years ago, but… from a primeval era that is much more ancient!”

Right then, a star spirit exclaimed.

The searchlight of Sparkle detected a human-shaped object!

“Fly over, let’s take a look!”

All seven of them got excited. Maneuvering Sparkle, Professor Mo Xuan drilled a channel in the ocean of meteoroids with the drill of mystic rays. Very soon, they discovered a body that was floating in the cold universe!

It was a gargantuan body in a heavy armor that looked very similar to a crystal suit but with additional solemnity and dominance, indicating that its master might eclipse the stars.

Counting the armor, the ancient body was more than twenty meters long. The general appearance of the body was very similar to that of a human being, but it boasted six arms and a hairy tail.

The facial cover of the body had been knocked off a long time ago, revealing a hideous face with long tusks. Traces of scales could be found on many parts of its face, too.

For some reason, the body was still preserved perfectly and vividly after such a long time. The fury, regret, and desperation on the face were etched onto Li Yao’s heart.

There was a hole more than three meters in diameter on the abdomen of ‘him’, and all the internal organs inside had disappeared.

If ‘his’ biological structure was similar to that of a human being, the wound should have been fatal.

But even after death, ‘his’ arms were still waving different weapons.

Li Yao could vaguely distinguish several sabers and swords in ancient structures. Some other magical equipment was cylindrical. It was hard to tell whether or not they were remote weapons such as guns.

“This is a member of the Pangu Clan!” The Fire Ant King’s eyes were beaming with joy.

They had once seen a corpse of the Pangu Clan in Ba Yanzhi’s Mausoleum of Chaos. Although the previous guy was half human being and half snake and looked quite different from the six-armed dude in front of them right now, the armor that had almost melted into their bodies shared a lot of similarities. It was not hard to tell that their style was consistent.

“It seems that a fierce battle once took place in ‘Kunlun’. The Pangu Clan had a confrontation with other primeval species. The ocean of meteoroids is made of the debris and scraps from the broken starships at that time!”

Controlling Sparkle, Professor Mo Xuan drew close carefully. After scanning up and down more than ten times and making sure that there was no anomaly, he extended the mechanical arm, trying to pluck a weapon in the hand of the dead body.

Li Yao, however, felt a sharp pain in his head as if somebody stung him. He shouted subconsciously, “Watch out!”

Chapter 1220 - Pangu's Roar!

But there was no time!

Professor Mo Xuan was himself an experienced adventurer. He had scanned the corpse from inside and outside and ensured that there was absolutely no sign of life before he actually touched it.

Also, before Li Yao shouted, the professor felt something wrong himself and aborted operating the artificial arm in time when it was still one millimeter away from the dead body of the Pangu Clan.

However, the dead body seemed to be ‘revived’. Brightness was spurting out of every gap on the armor. The previously lackluster colors became vibrant again, as if an invisible barrier had been broken!

For a moment, everybody saw the same illusion. The warrior of the Pangu Clan seemed to have been awakened from millions of years of dormancy and was lunging at Sparkle unstoppably, waving his six arms and thick tail!

Before anybody had time to react, he had already crashed into the spiritual shield of Sparkle. The console was uttering such deafening alarms that they were even louder than when the starship was hit by the meteoroid cascade after the space jump!

Boom!

In 0.1 seconds, the spiritual shield surpassed its limits, and the unit exploded!

In the explosion, the shield around Sparkle was much brighter than before, turning from the previous ivory to deep red!

Thankfully, they had aimed the head of the starship at the corpse in the beginning, and the drill of mystic rays on the head, having just drilled through the meteoroid ocean, was also standing by. Professor Mo Xuan responded quickly and activated the drill with a bellow!

Dazzling sparks burst out as the drill pushed forward. The warrior of the Pangu Clan was immediately disintegrated into cosmic dust. The high-energy particle flow pierced Sparkle and everybody on board!

Sparkle was shaking violently like a bird whose wings were broken in a storm.

Li Yao felt that a raging river of magma, passing millions of years and millions of lightyears, poured into his brain, bringing him infinite fear, fury, hatred, and desperation!

The primeval memories hidden deep inside his brain cells awakened again.

He seemed to envision countless bizarrely-shaped giants in the same armor as this warrior’s flying and fighting in space!

The dark universe was soon brimming with colorful blood. Even the cold space was simmering because of their fighting will. It was a vacuum, but the thunder made of billions of roars were clearly audible!

Pu!

Li Yao vomited a mouthful of blood. He felt that his head was ten times its normal size, and he could barely condense a telepathic thought.

His brain might explode if he did!

Touching his face, he discovered that dark red blood was leaking out of his pore!

“Moo!”

The dead body of the Pangu Clan was gone. However, from the deepest part of the dust, a magnificent, immense, and solid roar came over and swept across the whole of Sparkle!

Tremendous rune arrays inside Sparkle exploded. The units all lost their effect, lights were flickering on and off, and fire seemed to have consumed the ship!

The ‘storm’ lasted about one minute.

But it was not until ten minutes later that the three explorers and four star spirits gradually calmed down from the chaotic state of their souls.

The automatic maintenance system on Sparkle had begun working a long time ago and doused the fire. The damaged shell was fixed, too. However, the broken units that were too complicated required manual work to be repaired.

The starship was only seventy-seven percent intact. The spiritual shield had suffered the most damage. It would not be able to work again without a few hours’ maintenance.

All seven of them were dizzy and unable to talk, still dwelling in the vast primeval battlefield.

“It’s… part of the undying will of the dead body that didn’t disperse after millions of years. Attracted by the spiritual waves of Sparkle, it suddenly burst out!” Professor Mo Xuan analyzed, not entirely recovered from the shock. “To quote the ancient Cultivators, the warrior of the Pangu Clan must’ve ‘died with his eyes open full of hatred’. We have just suffered from the blast of his hatred!

“Thankfully, the spiritual shield of Sparkle was powerful enough to withstand most of the blast. Otherwise, our souls might’ve been blown apart, and we would be mentally deranged!

“Is everybody alright?”

Li Yao, the Fire Ant King, and the four star spirits examined themselves with their own techniques. A moment later, they all nodded in relief.

It was a dead body from millions of years ago after all. After floating near a pulsar for such a long time and bathing in pulses and radiation all the time, the body had already become ninety-nine percent disintegrated.

It was also why the body was so feeble that it was obliterated after the first crash.

The seven of them were just awed. The four star spirits, who were relatively weaker, were not quite back to themselves yet, but they were all physically fine.

“Did you hear a ‘moo’ resembling the sound of a bull a moment ago?” Li Yao picked his ears, only to dig out a cluster of blood. He wanted to make sure that he had not been hallucinating. “It was from the deepest part of the dead body and sounded like a message or a sentence!”

“Yes, I did!”

“Me, too!”

The rest of them all nodded; everybody received the message.

Professor Mo Xuan turned on the surveillance system of Sparkle and replayed what had happened a while back. From the broadcast rune arrays, not just everybody’s exclamations and the explosion of units but also a flood-like noise were echoing.

“Moo!”

The expressions of the seven of them all changed. It was exactly the sound!

“This is the last word of the warrior of the Pangu Clan!” Professor Mo Xuan mumbled, somewhat in excitement. “Let’s try to decipher it!”

Li Yao had heard the Pangu Clan talking in the primeval memories, but it was not a unique privilege. Many other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors had entered the ‘primeval memory’ state and heard a lot of sounds before as well.

But they could not understand the meaning of the sounds both then and now because what the Pangu Clan employed was a more advanced and sophisticated language system.

The common tongue of mankind was a standard two-dimensional language, with every word denoting a certain meaning. When words were ordered in a specific sequence, an episode of complete information would be expressed.

The sequence was unique in every utterance.

The language that the Pangu Clan adopted, however, was sort of a three-dimensional language, in which many words were combined and overlaid according to mysterious rules. They might sound like one syllable, but when they were expanded, they contained more than a hundred syllables that had thousands of combinations and could express infinite meanings!

Although such a language system was esoteric, it was not entirely unlearnable for human beings.

In the world of Cultivators, many spells were the mutations, or ‘descendants’, of such a cubic language.

For example, the spell ‘by the decree of the deities’ could be used to activate many techniques. However, the spell was not as simple as six words but in fact a compression of more than a hundred commands to summon spiritual energy and cast the technique. ‘By the decree of the deities’ was just how it sounded on the surface.

Also, many Cultivators liked to shout out the names of their moves when they were performing their techniques. For example, ‘Five Thunder Piercing the Heart’, ‘Chasing the Clouds and Fighting the Lightning’, ‘Purple Fire Green Glow’, and such. They might sound awesome for the teenagers who did not know the truth, but it was actually quite awkward for the irrelevant bystanders who were watching them.

The Cultivators were not being pretentious. Such shouts were also part of the high-level language and contained hundreds of commands to construct force fields and combine the moves of attack.

Right now, there were more than thirty mainstream spell systems in the world of Cultivators. As for the non-mainstream and the obsolete ones, there were more than two hundred of them.

Professor Mo Xuan did not know the basic grammar of the Pangu Clan's language system yet. He could also try to crack it by brute force in the most primitive way, which meant that he would unzip the 'moo' sound according to the rules of the two hundred spell systems and see if he could get anything meaningful.

"Since the Pangu Clan is our creator, and we share similar biological structure and both transmit information by vibrating the air with a certain organ, it is very possible that the grammar on which our language systems are founded is the same!

"Many of the two hundred spell systems were inherited from the ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago. Chances are that some of them are language fossils and still keep the features of the Pangu Clan's language!"

A linguist of the Sky Fantasia Academy had come up with the idea, and soon, it had been accepted by all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. After three days, a new technique, which was dedicated to the decryption of the information left by the Pangu Clan, had been added to the mainframe crystal processor of Sparkle.

This was the first time that the technique had been used. Whether or not it worked remained to be seen.

Professor Mo Xuan activated the technique and decompressed the 'moo' with the two hundred spell systems collected from the three Sectors.

More than a hundred and forty systems were inapplicable, but sixty-seven soundtracks were successfully extracted.

Everybody held their breath and listened to them one by one.

Most of the sound tracks were meaningless noises. Some parts seemed to be patterned, but their meanings were unknown.

“Try denoise processing!”

Professor Mo Xuan filtered more than ten times and finally got three audio tracks.

Each audio track was only several seconds long and contained around twenty syllables. They sounded rhythmic, suggesting that they were part of a language.

Judging from the gap of the syllables, the three audio tracks meant the same thing. They were just the different expressions of the same information under three different spell systems.

However, the three expressions were vastly different from the common tongue of mankind.

“Nuwa? Vous nous avez trahi? Je jure de te tuer! Je jure de te tuer!”

Professor Mo Xuan, the Fire Ant King, and the four star spirits stared at each other in bewilderment, not having the slightest clue what the syllables meant.

Li Yao was the only exception. He shuddered as if he had been smashed by a hammer right in the face into a bottomless swamp. His lips were pale, and he was sweating hard, unable to say anything for a long time.

Professor Mo Xuan noticed his anomaly and hurried to ask, “Li Yao, have you got it?”

Li Yao swallowed hard and nodded rigidly. He stammered, “The—the syllables are a vernacular from the era of ancient Cultivators. It was only popular in a few remote Sectors. Since the few Sectors boasted abundant minerals, there were endless concepts in the vernacular that described metals and flames. Therefore, it was once regarded by the ancient refiners as the working language for a while. However, it gradually went extinct some forty-seven thousand years ago.

“I once learned the vernacular by chance and came to know a thing or two about it. I can basically understand the sentence!”

“Oh?”

Professor Mo Xuan and the Fire Ant King were both overjoyed. Having no time to ask what exactly Li Yao’s ‘chance’ was, they hurried to inquire, “What’s the meaning of the syllables? What was the angry warrior of the Pangu Clan saying in the end?”

Li Yao took a deep breath. The veins on his neck crept all the way to his cheeks, eyes, and forehead. His face was confused, bewildered, and a bit scary. Deep brilliance beamed out of his eyes as he said, one word after another, “Nuwa! Thou hast betrayed us! I swear to kill you! I swear to kill you!”

Chapter 1221 - Primeval War!

When Li Yao spoke that sentence, his soul seemed to be completely controlled by the soundwave, and even his countenance was as gloomy as the face of the warrior of the Pangu Clan.

The short sentence was like a bucket of freezing water that poured on Sparkle. Everybody’s heart and head were cold.

There was no sound inside Sparkle, except for the magical equipment being maintained.

Staring at Li Yao, Professor Mo Xuan hesitated. “Are—are you sure?”

Before Li Yao replied, he waved his hands heavily. “Never mind. Based on everything we’ve seen, the basic meaning of the sentence must be quite accurate.

“There is too much information in the sentence. After all, the maintenance of the spiritual shield and the examination of power rune arrays will both take some time. I suggest we calm ourselves down for ten minutes and sort through the mess. We’ll come back and discuss the issue in ten minutes. How does that sound?”

Li Yao and the Fire Ant King both agreed to the suggestion.

Having seen such a weird scene and heard a furious roar from millions of years ago, they indeed need some time to regain their composure.

Ten minutes later, the three of them gathered again. It was hard to tell anything from Professor Mo Xuan’s appearance, but both Li Yao’s and the Fire Ant King’s faces were wet, which had been obviously soaked in icy water.

“It appears that we have indeed found a battlefield of the primeval era.”

Professor Mo Xuan was the first to open his mouth.

“However, it was not a battlefield of the Pangu Clan and the alien species of the universe, but one of the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan. That was a civil war of the Pangu civilization!”

Li Yao turned to the Fire Ant King. “The demon race considers themselves to be the descendants of Pangu and Nuwa. Your studies about the primeval era are more profound than ours. What do you think of the civil war within the Pangu civilization?”

Both the civilization of mankind and the civilization of demons considered themselves to be the heirs of Pangu and Nuwa. There was no doubt about that. Legends had it that Pangu founded the universe and Nuwa’s feats included ‘patching the paradise’ and ‘creating human beings’.

However, on the civilization of mankind’s side, because of the thirty thousand years of the Great Dark Age, the inheritance of the ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago was mostly disrupted and degraded into absurd folklores. The legends were not of much value for reference.

The demon race, on the other hand, to justify their legitimacy of ruling over the universe, described the Pangu Clan as the ‘Twelve Ancient Demon Clans’. In the thirty thousand years, their historians and archeologists excavated, explored, and researched ancient texts, finally constructing a complete theory regarding the civilization’s development.

Although ungrounded tales and exaggerations were still not entirely avoidable, they were much more reliable than the pure legends on human beings’ side.

The Fire Ant King pondered for a moment and said, “The Legends of Ancient Demons, our popular history reader, states that, before the universe was born, when the stars and galaxies were still nonexistent, everything was highly compressed in a tiny point that is known as the Primordial Beginning. Metaphorically, it was also known as the Celestial Venerable of the PrimordialBeginning [1] !

“The Primordial Beginning turned into three thousand rules in a big bang that is beyond our imagination. Together, the rules constructed an ever-expanding universe. In the original universe, order and turmoil competed with each other, and two opposite creatures were thus born, namely Pangu, who abided by the rules and built up the order, and Chaos, who despised the rules and destroyed the order!”

The Fire Ant King had founded the Blade of Chaos. The ‘Chaos’ here was in honor of ‘Chaos’ Ba Yanzhi. However, ‘Chaos’ had not been invented by Ba Yanzhi in the beginning but referred to a primeval species that was the Pangu Clan’s sworn enemy millions of years ago.

In the concepts of both human beings and demons, the Pangu Clan was always considered to be righteous, and the Chaos Clan, evil. It was also the reason that the Ultimate One Demons, Ba Yanzhi’s enemies in the old days, gave him the nickname ‘Chaos’.

On the other hand, Ba Yanzhi’s constantly-changing, unstable form after his cells collapsed was indeed similar to Chaos in the legends.

“The Pangu Clan and the Chaos Clan fought for nobody knew how many years. After all three thousand Sectors were destroyed, they were both drained. At that time, the Nuwa Clan, which was the last to join the Pangu civilization, was given the task of recovering the three thousand Sectors, which was also known as ‘fixing the paradise’. In order to ‘fix the paradise’, they created the tiny creatures that were human beings and sprayed them to every corner of the three thousand Sectors with the force of the galaxy arms!

“However, ‘human beings’ were polluted by the Chaos Clan the moment they were born. Instead of taking orders from the Pangu Clan, they considered themselves the masters of the three thousand Sectors and even eventually rose up to resist the Pangu Clan!”

The Fire Ant King took a deep breath and said, “This is what is recorded on the ‘Legends of the Ancient Demons’. Maybe, you thought that it was a rhetoric of demons to vilify human beings. But from what we’ve seen here, such a theory definitely has its origins even if it is vilification.”

Deep in thought, Professor Mo Xuan said, “Leaving the absurd tales alone, I believe that this is a more reasonable explanation. First of all, the Pangu civilization was an ancient civilization living in millions of years ago, but it was not made of a single species but an alliance of multiple clans and civilizations.

“In the legends, there are the Pangu Clan, the Kuafu Clan, the Gonggong Clan, the Zhurong Clan, and so on, each of which boasted unique features. For example, the Zhurong

Clan liked to live in scorching worlds where the temperature was hundreds of degrees high and established their civilization by absorbing magma and geothermal energy. The Gonggong Clan, in comparison, was clearly an aquatic clan whose favorite living environment was undersea.

“It is very hard to imagine that they were two forms of the same species. They were probably two species that originated from different planets.

“The Zhurong Clan’s mother planet must’ve been a planet very close to a star. The planet was hot all year round, with abundant magma and geotherm resources. Volcanic eruptions were anything but unusual. Therefore, a species that was adept at the utilization of fire and heat was born, which was the Zhurong Clan.

“The Gonggong Clan, at their earliest state, must’ve lived on a planet whose surface was fully covered in water. That was why they developed technologies to exploit the ocean, make use of seawater, and retrieve energy from it.

“Although their living environments were vastly different, they were all carbon-based life forms made of flesh and blood. They had a head, a torso, and several limbs. From the perspective of the grandness of the universe, their civilizations were alike to each other. Then, after the two species got in contact with each other, it is possible that they formed an alliance!

“It was probably also the case for the rest of the species in the Pangu civilization. In the end, ten or so species joined the ‘alliance of the Pangu civilization’. Collectively, they called themselves the ‘Pangu Clan’!”

Li Yao and the Fire Ant King nodded quickly. Professor Mo Xuan’s deduction was quite reasonable. There was nothing too extraordinary. It was probably the truth.

Li Yao admired ‘Chaos’ Ba Yanzhi very much, and somehow found the ‘Chaos Clan’ in the primeval era less detesting. Thus, he could not help but ask, “Then, what exactly is the ‘Chaos Clan’, the Pangu Clan’s enemy?”

Professor Mo Xuan shook his head. “It is hard to tell due to the lack of files, but apparently, there is a theory that believes that the ‘extraterrestrial devils’ nowadays are the descendants of the Chaos Clan in the primeval era. If it is true, we can possibly infer the form of the Chaos Clan from the extraterrestrial devils!”

Li Yao thought for a moment and asked with great interest, “Are you suggesting that it is a civilization of pure energy?”

The extraterrestrial devils had no real entities and lived on a type of energy known as ‘tenebrum’. They were versatile and unpredictable. In the history of mankind, they had always been one of the most dreadful enemies, sometimes even more dreadful than demons.

Other than the extraterrestrial devils, there were also other pure-energy lives in the universe. For example, the Blood Stripe Virus that Li Yao once swallowed was a pure energy-based life form.

More straightforwardly, Professor Mo Xuan and the four star spirits were sort of energy-based life forms, too. They could live without a shell, except that they would perish very soon because of the interference and radiation.

“Very likely!” Professor Mo Xuan nodded and said, “If that is the case, the so-called Pangu Clan was actually a great alliance of the carbon-based life forms, while the Chaos Clan was a coalition of the energy-based life forms. The two types of civilizations existed in vastly different ways, and the living environments that they required must've been different from each other, too. It would have been quite normal for a heated war to burst out between them.

“Leaving the ungrounded tale that the Celestial Venerable of the Primordial Beginning founded the three thousand rules aside, it is almost certain that the Pangu civilization and the Chaos civilization had a great war millions of years ago. It was likely a competition of ‘carbon-based life forms’ versus ‘energy-based life forms’. Both parties were hoping to modify the universe into an environment that were suitable for their survival and reproduction. However, the war did not seem to end well. Both parties suffered great casualties and were about to go extinct.

“The Pangu civilization was at a slim advantage. It spared the Nuwa Clan, one of the species in the alliance, to carry out the Paradise Patching Plan. They were asked to repair the three thousand Sectors that had been destroyed and modify them into what were suitable for the survival of carbon-based life forms.

“The Nuwa Clan must've participated in the primeval war, too, and wouldn't have too many forces left. Since it was impossible for them to complete such an enormous project alone, they created human beings, highly fertile creatures, to implement the task.”

Then, the professor paused for a moment. Solemnly, he mumbled, “According to the Legends of the Ancient Demons, human beings were just ‘tools’ that the Pangu civilization created to fix the three thousand Sectors. Before, we always considered such a theory to be a shameless lie, but now, with the last words of the warrior of the Pangu Clan…

“Is it true that the Nuwa Clan, part of the Pangu civilization, and human beings, the brand-new species created by the Nuwa Clan, betrayed the Pangu civilization together?

“At the very least, the warrior of the Pangu Clan seems to believe so from his perspective!”

Chapter 1222 - Broken!

Looking at the pictures sent back by the crystal cameras, which suggested that the remains of war were getting denser and denser ahead, the Fire Ant King observed with an awful expression, “In such a case, Senior Gui Suishou might be correct that the Pangu civilization is kind of hostile to us! It seems that the journey to Kunlun will prove to be dangerous.”

“We have to go however dangerous it is,” Li Yao said solemnly. “This place is too close to the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector. It’s like a time bomb that is right next to our bed. The more dangerous this place is, the more necessary it is for us to find out the truth. Otherwise, we won’t know how we are killed should it ‘detonate’ one day!

“Besides, the Immortal Cultivators of the Imperium of True Human Beings are now marching toward Kunlun. We cannot just sit by and watch them steal the relics of the Pangu civilization from Kunlun, can we?

“The corpse of the warrior of the Pangu Clan was exposed in the universe for too long and suffered the radiation from the pulsar for hundreds of thousands of years. That is why it was so feeble and collapsed at the first touch.

“But better-preserved bodies of the Pangu Clan might be found on Kunlun, as well as the marvelous weapons of the Pangu Clan. If we have access to such weapons, they will significantly improve our capability of resisting the Imperium. But if the Immortal Cultivators get them, we will be doomed!”

Professor Mo Xuan and the Fire Ant King nodded simultaneously.

“Exactly.” Professor Mo Xuan’s metal voice sounded more resolute than ever. “Whatever the soul-stirring war in the primeval war was, we know the result. We’ve dominated the three thousand Sectors for more than a hundred thousand years, during which time the Pangu Clan was nowhere to be seen!

“It suggests that we are the last victor and beneficiary of the war!

“Also, Senior Ba Yanzhi explored Kunlun forty thousand years ago. Not only did he return in one piece, he also managed to bring a dead body of the Pangu Clan back to the Blood Demon Sector for research!

“Fellow Cultivator Fire Ant was quite right before we left. Neither Pangu nor Nuwa are ungrounded deities or devils but creatures made of flesh and blood like human beings. We are all carbon-based lifeforms. What’s there to be scared of?

“Let’s continue marching toward Kunlun!”

Behind them were the expectations of the Star Glory Federation and their compatriots of all the three Sectors. No matter how difficult and dangerous the path ahead was, it was not going to stop them from exploring the new world!

Li Yao, Professor Mo Xuan, and the four star spirits worked together. Finally, in three hours, the spiritual shield and the power rune arrays were all repaired.

In the meantime, Sparkle had also dragged a lot of star dust from space and run a thorough analysis on it. A lot of super alloy elements, with the same constituents, were found in the dust.

Therefore, it was not hard to assume that most of the scraps used to belong to a certain monolithic object.

Three hours later, Sparkle continued moving forward.

This time, they slowed down a little bit and scanned the space nearby carefully for human-shaped debris.

But they never met a second vivid, well-preserved body. All the ran into were bizarrely-shaped broken limbs that were blood-freezing and devastating.

What left the deepest impression on Li Yao was a cylinder more than half a meter in diameter and almost three meters long.

Judging from the scanning, it did not seem to be metal but looked more like part of a body of flesh and blood.

At first, Li Yao thought that it was a torso whose limbs were cut off or that it might be just a limb that was relatively thicker.

It was not until they studied carefully for a long time and discovered spirals on it that looked like growth rings that they came to the realization that the object was a finger.

A finger more than three meters long and half a meter wide, which was even larger than Li Yao.

Everybody stayed in front of the finger for a long time. After enough data was collected, they pushed forward without any hesitation.

“The star dust in front is reducing. The pulse storm is stabilizing, too! That’s odd. We are getting closer to the pulsar instead of moving farther away. Based on the astronomical parameters, this place should be where the pulsar storm is most intense, but why is it so quiet?”

“This is not a real storm. Then, where is the ‘eye’ from at all?”

“Immense spiritual waves and metal reactions are coming from the front. The mystic rays that we shot out feed a very enormous celestial body back!”

“All fifty-one features marked on the Star Map of Kunlun fit. We are arriving at our destination!”

The four star spirits reported the latest updates of the voyage.

The drill of mystic rays was revolving at the highest speed. The debris and the star dust on the primeval battlefield were all drilled into powder. Sparkle finally jumped out of the annoying ocean of meteoroids like a dragon!

The celestial body in front of Sparkle, however, rendered all seven of them dumbfounded and unable to calm down for a long time.

It was a bright-gold planet larger than the moon. The planet seemed to have just been hit by an asteroid not long ago, indicated by the super large scar that covered almost half of the planet’s surface. A lot of materials had been ripped apart and thrown into the space, turning into the ocean of meteoroids that they had just seen.

Even right now, a lot of materials were still spurting out of the interior of the planet and into space, making the planet look like both a geyser and a beast with a weird tail that extended to the ocean of cascades.

If it were a random planet, after such a blow, the broken planet would certainly have collapsed inwardly because of the revolutions and slowly turn into a small sphere.

However, the bright gold planet maintained the incomplete, half-sphere shape, like a gold apple that had been bitten and was still decaying.

Looking at the inside through the ‘wound’, one would be able to see the internal metal structure that was more complicated than a maze and a core covered in dazzling brilliance that did not appear natural at all!

The planet turned out to be hollow. Inside the planet were buildings that constituted underground cities.

Despite the thick rocks on the surface that formed an extremely solid crust, it was still an out-and-out artificial celestial body!

“Is this Kunlun, the Pangu Clan’s super warship?” Professor Mo Xuan mumbled to himself, his voice shivering in excitement.

Like Li Yao, he was also a super magical equipment fan. Although the refinement of starships was not their specialty, such an authentic ‘planetary warship’ was still making their souls bouncing in joy.

Particularly, because of the fatal strike the planetary warship suffered, its shell was completely torn apart, and the sophisticated internal structure was revealed clearly.

They greatly enjoyed the incredible view and almost couldn’t move their eyes away.

“Click! Click!” Sparkle’s crystal cameras immediately started shooting crazily.

“After we establish the space communication system and send the pictures back to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, Leader Si is definitely going to be overjoyed,” Li Yao said amusingly.

Si Koulie, the proposer of the Ice God Project and the leader of the Star Fighter’s Alliance, was one of the best starship specialists in the three Sectors. It had been his dream to build a ‘planetary warship’.

If he had the files about ‘Kunlun’, a super warship of the Pangu Clan, even though they were nothing but the appearance of the warship, it would still be a great inspiration on his project.

“The spiritual waves of this area are very stable. The interference from the pulsar is weak, too. It is very suitable to deploy the star beacons and the space communication facilities here.”

Professor Mo Xuan calculated for a moment and continued. “However, we did not expect that Kunlun would be so ragged that it was spurting out tremendous materials every second. Such materials become space garbage and might be a threat to the star beacons and the communication facilities when pushed by the pulse storm.

“To guide such a super warship as Burning Prairie with dozens of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Core Formation Stage Cultivators to jump over, the star beacons and the communication facilities must be unfolded to the maximum. Then, it will be a very tricky issue to avoid the scourge of the space garbage!

“If we deploy defense rune arrays first, which will generate an immense twisting force field, before we unfold the star beacons and the communication magical equipment, it will take at least seventy-two hours for us to finish the work.”

Li Yao nodded. “Alright. Let’s stick to our original plan. My four senior brothers will maneuver Sparkle to finish the deployment of the star beacons and the communication magical equipment, send back the astronomical parameters to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and clear an area where Burning Prairie can land.

“The three of us will go to ‘Kunlun’ and explore it first. If the Immortal Cultivators arrive in advance, we can be better prepared!”

It was the plan that they had made before they left. They were not behind on their schedule yet.

The three of them examined their Cosmos Rings and magical equipment one last time. Li Yao summoned the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Dark Flame Gold and embedded the few Cosmos Rings on it. The Fire Ant King put on his plant biochemical armor. Professor Mo Xuan crawled in the artificial body that looked like a metal octopus.

Shua! Shua! Shua!

Three capsule-like single assault cabins were spat out by Sparkle and darted toward Kunlun.

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

Crouching inside the cabin, Li Yao heard the sound of metal being twisted and saw the fire out of the window. He was secretly surprised.

It was a sign that the cabin was having intense friction with the atmosphere.

But how was that possible?

Kunlun was obviously half broken. Even if it had an atmosphere in the beginning, the atmosphere should have split apart and escaped after it took such a heavy blow.

How did the Pangu Clan manage to cover a ‘planetary warship’ with a man-made atmosphere that was still concentrated without dispersing despite such serious damage?

Where was the energy that supported the atmosphere from? They were right inside the crab nebula where there was no sun at all!

Li Yao was once more greatly impressed by the technology of the Pangu civilization. However, it did not mean that he was scared; he was simply even more eager to explore and study.

Very soon, all three assault cabins broke into Kunlun’s atmosphere and landed on the surface of the planetary warship!

Chapter 1223 - Miner in Space!

They did not choose to enter the inside of the planetary warship from the broken side of Kunlun because the bottomless damage was still spurting out millions of tons of materials incessantly.

Many components of the warship boasted extremely immense spiritual energy. They crashed in the vacuum, leading to fusion reactions that turned them into small suns. The suns rushed out along with the massive, fast materials and congregated into a raging river of fire and steel!

Running into the damage was like running into the crater of a volcano when it was erupting, suicidal.

Also, Kunlun’s scale was much larger than that of normal satellites. Its internal structure was certainly extremely sophisticated. Without the navigation of a map, they might not be able to get out of in a year and a half if they were trapped inside.

Therefore, they decided that they should land on Kunlun’s surface first.

Since there was an atmosphere and a solid crust, something had to have been left on the ground.

They chose the side that was exactly opposite the broken, enormous hole, and they localized the point where the metal reaction and the spiritual waves were most intense.

Adjusting the spurts of the assault cabins, they crashed into the land like three shooting stars!

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Dozens of kilometers away from each other, the three cabins landed one after another, leaving deep craters on the ground and triggering three bright blue pillars of smoke.

Li Yao raised his wariness to the maximum. He unleashed his telepathic thoughts and perceived the surroundings at first. Having detected no anomaly, he opened the hatch of the assault cabin and crawled out of it.

This was a planet with ‘surging tides’.

As far as one’s eyes could reach, the ground was full of folds that looked like waves. There was barely any flat land. It rose to thousands of kilometers high at points and fell to bottomless gaps without a sign elsewhere. Hot, colorful steam was also flowing out of the gaps, blossoming in the sky like bizarrely-shaped flowers.

Bright purple clouds occupied the sky. They were rolling a hundred times faster than those in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, leaving a very strong sense of depression.

Enormous spots of light appeared within the bright purple clouds every now and then, each replacing one another. They provided the basic light for Kunlun.

However, the world was still rather dim. It felt like the weather before a storm in the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

This is so heavy!

Crawling out of the assault cabin, Li Yao staggered and almost tripped himself over.

He found it difficult to breathe, and his hands and feet seemed to be bound to weights. He had to resist them with his spiritual energy in order to move normally.

Kunlun’s gravity was more than ten times that of the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

This is truly incredible. Kunlun’s size is similar to the size of a regular satellite. Its gravity should be one third to one fifth the gravity of the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Why is it so heavy? Li Yao thought quickly and soon realized the reason.

Kunlun was a man-made planet. There must be a lot of alloys with super high densities and masses inside. It might seem small, but its total weight might even be higher than that of the Heaven’s Origin Planet. Also, together with the artificial rune arrays and force fields, it was not strange that the gravity here was ten times higher than that of the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

Ten times the standard gravity was not a problem for Li Yao right now. He jumped up and down and punched hundreds of times. Soon, he was adapted to the environment. He released ‘Neltharion’ to explore from the sky and analyzed the air pressure and constituents within.

Surprisingly, although there were quite a few unrecognizable constituents in the air, the double analysis of the crystal processor and the biochemical brain showed that they were not life-threatening. No ancient germs or parasites were detected, either. The air quality was a bit worse than that of the Blood Demon Sector, but that was all.

It might have been impossible for ordinary people to breathe such air directly,but for Cultivators in the Nascent Soul Stage, it was absolutely not a problem.

Besides, Li Yao sensed that the spiritual waves there were much more active than the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector. The electromagnetic field around the planet was at least five times stronger than that of the three Sectors. Hardly had he landed when every cell inside his body was seething, and he felt that his internal organs seemed to be blossoming in spring.

His eyes glittering, Li Yao mumbled to himself, “This is truly a natural paradise!”

Those words amused him. This was the legendary ‘Kunlun’, a place where the deities lived. It was certainly a paradise!

Human beings and the Pangu Clan were of similar biological structure. The two parties belonged to the same lineage. Now that this was a planetary warship of the Pangu Clan with an atmosphere, it was only reasonable that the air was readily breathable for human beings!

Li Yao pressed a rune array on the left side of the helmet. Then, a red spot appeared at the center of the pure black facial cover, which was as smooth as mirror. Eighteen long, narrow red lines extended from the spot, dissecting the facial cover and gliding to the back of the helmet.

Li Yao took a deep breath of the air of Kunlun. He felt a mysterious coolness flow from his lungs to his entire body. His every nerve ending could not have been more comfortable, and he moaned in great satisfaction.

The Pangu Clan's technology is truly incredible. Training in such a natural paradise is five times more efficient than training in the Heaven's Origin Sector!

Li Yao was amazed. He could not help but fantasize how many experts would be raised in the next hundred years if Kunlun was built into a training facility that belonged to the federation.

Centered at him, Neltharion searched the dozens of square kilometers nearby. Very soon, Professor Mo Xuan and the Fire Ant King were both found.

The two of them were also fascinated by the extraordinary views on Kunlun and immediately started the most fundamental research instead of looking for their companions.

Other than them, Neltharion also discovered colorful moss on several high mountains, which appeared to be a certain low-level creature.

Since there was an atmosphere and even 'clouds', the ecological system still seemed to be functioning normally. Of course, some lives must have been kept after millions of years.

Other than the mosses, there might be lives of a higher level which were even a threat. They had to pay attention to that.

Beep! Beep! Beep!

Li Yao soon reached out to Professor Mo Xuan and the Fire Ant King. The communication with Sparkle was established, too.

However, since the atmosphere here was very unique and contained serious interferences, it was impossible to speak clearly just through the internal antennas of the crystal suits. The transmission of telepathic thoughts was intermittent, too.

It seemed that they had to deploy a fixed signal base somewhere after all.

Very soon, the three of them finished the basic exploration and gathered together.

“What an incredible planet!” exclaimed Professor Mo Xuan excitedly as he waved his mental tentacles. “The planet is half torn, yet the basic structure, the atmosphere, and even the ecological system have been maintained!

“It is only one seventh the size of the Heaven’s Origin Planet, yet it boasts a gravity ten times higher and such a strong electromagnetic field!

“It is so far away from any star, yet it is so bright. The temperature here is between the freezing point and the boiling point, too. This is amazing!”

“And there are creatures here, too,” the Fire Ant King added. As a specialist in botany, cytology, and genetics, he was particularly interested in lives. “I have only explored for less than twenty minutes, and I’ve discovered more than thirty types of fungi and spores. Judging from the trend of their distribution, more advanced life forms, or even animals, may be somewhere deep down the bottomless folds!”

“The air constituents here are incredible, too!” Li Yao offered his examination result. “There is a lot of inert gas in the air that is highly antioxidant and anti-corrosion. Other than slowing the aging of cells inside living creatures, it can also significantly slow down the deterioration of metals. This place is essentially an enormous crisper!

“I estimate that if some bodies of the Pangu Clan are here, they will definitely be not as feeble as the one in space. At the very least, they will not crumble the moment we touch them!”

All three of them were excited by the discovery.

It did not matter how well the bodies of the Pangu Clan were preserved. As long as they could get a few weapons of the Pangu Clan, this journey would prove to be priceless!

“But how is it possible?”

Looking at the continuous folds far away and the glittering light spots in the sky that was brimming with purple clouds, Li Yao was greatly baffled.

“Even if the Pangu Clan was truly capable of building a synthetic atmosphere on the surface of the planetary warship, how did they make sure that the atmosphere would not disperse after such a long time? And why are the atmosphere and the ecological system undamaged when the planet suffered such a heavy blow that half of the body was ripped apart?

“What is the source of energy to sustain such a system?”

Professor Mo Xuan pondered for a moment and said, “I have an immature hypothesis. Maybe, the pulsar not far away provides incessant energy for Kunlun!”

“The pulsar?”

Li Yao and the Fire Ant King were both interested.

“Yes. The rapidly-revolving neutron star is emitting super intense radiation every second of every day. It is the best source of energy.

“Kunlun happens to be at a tipping point of the pulsar, neither too far away nor too close. If it was closer, it would be attracted and swallowed by the pulsar. If it was farther away, it would not be able to absorb the energy from the pulsar at the highest efficiency. This is definitely not a coincidence!

“Therefore, I suspect that ‘Kunlun’ is some sort of ‘workstation’ that the Pangu Clan built to develop the pulsar. Some super magical equipment must be somewhere deep inside Kunlun!

“Such a piece of super magical equipment can absorb the radiation from the pulsar, which is an inexhaustible energy source!

“After multiple transformations, such energy partly maintains the normal functions of Kunlun and partly forms a synthetic atmosphere, an ecological system, and even the light spots in the sky that are replacements of the sun!

“With such dense spiritual energy here, Kunlun is definitely a super natural paradise. It is needless to say that the source of the energy is also the pulsar!

“It means that this is a workstation that retrieves spiritual energy from the pulsar, or rather, a ‘miner’ in space. Through Kunlun, the Pangu Clan was able to train themselves by absorbing the energy of the pulsar!”

“Training with the pulsar!” Dumbfounded, Li Yao and the Fire Ant King were both awed by Professor Mo Xuan’s magnificent idea!

Chapter 1224 - Giant!

However, on second thought, it was quite a plausible theory. Otherwise, it would have been unnecessary to build Kunlun right next to a pulsar.

“The surface of the Kunlun must’ve been less ragged in the beginning. It was definitely flat and suitable for living and training,” Professor Mo Xuan said. “Then, Kunlun suffered an overwhelming strike, and all the terrain was hence changed.

“The crash nearly tore Kunlun apart. The side on the point of impact was nearly all tossed into space, resulting into the ocean of star dust that surrounds Kunlun. Even the side opposite from the point of impact was crushed into layers of folds. The mountains and canyons we are seeing right now were formed at that time, too.

“However, as a planetary warship, Kunlun obviously boasts an excellent damage management system. Even though it has been reduced to such an extent, it is still functioning at the minimum efficiency in some sort of ‘hibernation’ state instead of complete death.

“Even the atmosphere and the ecological system on the surface of the planet have been maintained. So, chances are that there are better-preserved parts inside Kunlun that we can excavate!

“Seven hundred kilometers to our west is the center of metal reaction and spiritual waves on the surface of Kunlun. Something must be there. Let’s go and take a look!”

The three of them flew toward the west wearing their crystal suit, artificial body, and plant armor. After flying westward for four hundred kilometers, they landed on a fold that was fully covered with mosses.

They deployed a very inconspicuous attack formation in this place.

Li Yao planted a lot of crystal bombs as well as many attack rune arrays that could be detonated abruptly by his telepathic thoughts on the folds of the land.

The Fire Ant King, on the other hand, looked for soil in the canyon and sprayed numerous seeds.

The seeds of the demonic plants whose genes had been optimized after generations rooted and sprouted instantly. Their roots extended deep into the ground, and they would grow into vines full of venomous thorns in a few hours.

Even Professor Mo Xuan had deployed a few crystal cannons inside the crevices.

They had to consider the worst-case scenario in which they were forced to confront the Immortal Cultivators in Kunlun. If so, this place would the battlefield for their last attempt!

After finishing everything, Li Yao found a cave on a hill through Neltharion.

He retrieved the items prepared by Guo Chunfeng from his Cosmos Ring. Then, he placed the items inside the cave one after another. The cave was soon decorated into a messy, temporary residence.

He even found a place downwind outside of the cave, dug a canal, and poured some of the thoroughly-sealed feces into it.

The Fire Ant King and Professor Mo Xuan frowned and watched him deploying the trap suspiciously.

But Li Yao simply grinned at him. After finishing everything, he returned the empty containers and the wooden boxes into his Cosmos Ring. He slapped his hands in great satisfaction after making sure that there were no loopholes.

Right now, it appeared that the cave had been resided in for a year and a half, or even longer.

After everything was done, the three of them continued moving forward.

The metal reactions up front were getting more and more intense. Buzzes each higher than the last were echoing from Li Yao’s crystal processor, as if a high-quality, open-air mine had been discovered.

“Over the cliff in front of us, we will arrive at where the metal reactions and the spiritual waves are most intense. Take care, everybody!”

Flying in midair was too eye-catching. Li Yao, Professor Mo Xuan, and the Fire Ant King all landed and jumped forward while jetting.

The terrain there was even harsher than before, as if dozens of unprecedented earthquakes had taken place in a row. The cliffs were completely vertical, and the discrepancy in elevation was easily thousands of meters. The peaks of the mountains were hidden by the purple clouds, leaving everybody with the feeling that they pierced into space.

Placed in the middle of the broken folds, Li Yao felt that he was an ant finding his way out in a labyrinth constructed by the deities.

The precipices that protruded high from the ground were essentially walls as smooth as mirrors. History of millions of years had left ineffaceable traces on them. For many of the walls, the colors from top to bottom were obviously different because they belonged to different eras.

Like three mountain climbers, the three of them struggled to crawl over the folds, getting closer and closer to their destination.

There was only the last fold in front of them. It was almost ten thousand kilometers long, and one could not see the end of it. The altitude difference was more than seven thousand meters. It was quite overwhelming.

Li Yao was adjusting the mode of his crystal suit and planning the increase the output of the power rune arrays when Professor Mo Xuan suddenly exclaimed, “Look over there!”

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao looked at where Professor Mo Xuan was point, only to discover that a guy seemed to be squatting and staring at them in silence several kilometers away from them.

“What?”

Li Yao shuddered so hard that the bones all over his body were constricting. He unsheathed the Blood Moon Dragon Hunting Saber quickly and set the resolution of his crystal cameras to the highest before he observed carefully!

It was indeed a human-shaped object, but it was deeply embedded into the stone wall and seemed to have been dead for a long time.

Li Yao stretched out his telepathic thoughts and perceived no sign of a living creature. More or less relieved, he looked at the Fire Ant King. The two of them grabbed their weapons and carefully drew close while protecting Professor Mo Xuan.

The stranger seemed close to them, but it took them almost twenty minutes to reach there.

They were actually dozens of kilometers away from the stranger upon their encounter. The reason the stranger had appeared close to them was that the human-shaped object was unbelievably huge!

It was a giant more than a hundred meters tall.

Most of his body parts were deeply buried into the rocks, making him look like a man who was drowned in mud. The body parts that were exposed to the air were either broken or dehydrated into dry mummies.

However, it was not difficult to fathom the awesomeness of the giant when he was alive based on the bones that were thicker than crystal trains and the skull that was full of holes and horns and looked like a super heavy crystal tank!

His bones were covered in a majestic armor, which was in a similar style to the armor of the ancient Cultivators. However, after studying the fractures of the armor carefully for a while, Li Yao found that there was more to it. At least thirty different types of metal had been added to the armor in different layers. Also, tubes that looked like capillary vessels were between every two layers. They could easily increase the speed of spiritual energy circulation by hundreds of times. There were also structures that looked like nerve endings. Li Yao could not discern their purpose at all.

“The armor that seems to be in a vintage style actually adopts many technologies that far exceed those employed in modern crystal suits. The tubes of spiritual energy and telepathic thoughts have been built into a system that resembles veins and nerve network, covering the entirety of the armor!

“The enormous armor looks like a huge beast, but its senses are extremely keen. The subtlest change to any part of the armor will immediately be fed back to the giant’s brain!

“What an incredible product!”

Li Yao was greatly amazed.

“The hands of this giant are particularly large. His fingers are all more than two meters long. It is similar to the ‘super finger’ that we scanned in space a moment ago. They must’ve been the same species!” Professor Mo Xuan was deeply impressed, too. “There are indeed many species of giants in the legends.

“For example, in the tale of Kuafu chasing after the sun, the giant ‘Kuafu’ was able to drink up a lake without stopping, and when he drank from the rivers, the rivers would be drained.

“If the hundred-meter-tall giant was a member of the Kuafu Clan, such a tale might not be too much of an exaggeration.”

After that, the three of them were caught in a weird silence while they stared at the giant who was believed to be a member of the ‘Kuafu Clan’.

Although they were well aware that the stranger was made of flesh and blood, too, and essentially the same as themselves, and that too enormous a body size was more of a burden than an advantage on a planet of a high gravity, they still could not hold back their urge to worship him when they were standing in front of the toe of the giant who was a hundred meters tall.

It was a natural instinct carved to their gene strands in the deepest part of their cells, which they had to resist with their strongest willpower.

Beep! Beep! Beep!

The mystic rays that pierced into the stone walls gave back more information. Still more human-shaped and animal-shaped objects were embedded in the ground.

A long time ago, a fierce battle had taken place there. After the battle, with the passage of time, all the relics had been buried in the ground and sunk deeper and deeper.

It was not until recently when Kunlun suffered a heavy collision, which ripped apart the land and twisted the crust, that part of the battlefield was heaved to the surface again with the tectonic movements. It was why such an enormous ‘war fresco’ made of innumerous remains had been created!

To their surprise, the three of them discovered that the dead body of another giant was right inside the rock stratum behind the giant that they had found first.

The two parties seemed to be on opposite sides because the giant to the back was holding a weapon that looked like a drill and pierced it into the abdomen of the first giant, causing his internal organs to break apart!

After such a long time, the internal organs were, of course, no more, but the shocking cracks on the bones were indicative enough of the force of the strike!

“Was one of them a warrior of the Pangu Clan while the other a warrior of the Nuwa Clan who ‘betrayed’ them?”

The idea made their hearts pound. Operating in person, Li Yao shattered the rocks that surrounded the two giants and gradually exposed them to the air.

The two giants were actually hugging each other in a posture that suggested they had killed each other at the same time.

The giant at the back was smaller in size, approximately seventy meters tall, and he was fully buried in the rock stratum. That was why he had escaped their attention at first.

The ‘little giant’ was also covered in a vintage armor. The two sets of armor appeared to be in a similar style, except that the armor of the ‘little giant’ was more delicate and flawless. There was not any trace of a dead body at all.

“That’s not right!”

Under the strangle of the ‘big giant’, the ‘little giant’ was already twisted and deformed.

However, Li Yao never found anything similar to a dead body from the shocking holes. Wherever his eyes reached, he could only see metal components and transmission tubes that had been melted with the rocks.

Moreover, even on the fracture of the right arm of the ‘little giant’, which had been cut off from the shoulder, there was no hint of bones at all. The shoulder was filled up with magical equipment components.

“This… this is not armor!”

Chapter 1225 - God-slaying!

Li Yao and Professor Mo Xuan looked at each other and reached the same conclusion.

The two of them were both experts of crystal suits. However, such an obvious conclusion could be drawn by any ordinary person with functional eyes.

An armor was always worn on a body. They were essentially clothes made of metal. Of course, they had to be hollow. Otherwise, where could the body be stuffed?

Even the super heavy armor that was relatively thick, say, the ‘Ares Extensions’ that the Cultivators plugged outside of their crystal suits, had to be hollow, however thick they were!

The limbs and torso of the ‘little giant’, however, were utterly occupied by all kinds of magical equipment components. There was absolutely no room for a body.

Such a structure indicated that it was not armor but a certain super-large metal puppet or artificial body.

“Are you serious? Such a huge war puppet?”

Li Yao was greatly amazed. If every floor could be considered to be three meters high, a war puppet seventy meters tall would equal to a build of more than twenty floors.

It was far beyond the imagination of the two refiners. Such a size was so unbelievable that it seemed more fit for a movie.

“How was such an enormous war puppet maneuvered anyway?”

Li Yao and Professor Mo Xuan became ever more curious. They dug deeper into the rock stratums. Thankfully, after the violent collision, the crust of Kunlun was seriously twisted, and the rock stratums were not solid at all. Very soon, they dug the torso of the little giant out of the rocks.

It was not until this moment that they got a clear view of the fight of the two giants.

While the weapon on the little giant’s left arm, which looked both like a drill and a knuckle, impaled the big giant’s chest, the big giant extended his hand into the chest of the little giant and ripped everything inside apart.

Broken metal components could be seen from the twisted gaps. The transmission tubes were also in such a mess that they looked like broken veins and nerves.

“Huh. This part is empty. There’s a space here!”

Li Yao discovered a very irregular gap on the chest of the little giant, which did not seem to be caused by external force but looked like a structure resembling a hatch. It was now slightly open because of the twisted structures nearby.

Li Yao tried opening the hatch, but the little giant had been fully melted into the rock stratum and lost its activity. If he used any more strength, it might have broken apart.

Li Yao did not dare to crawl into the gap recklessly, either. So, he deployed Neltharion to investigate on behalf of him and then projected everything that its crystal cameras captured to the midair.

Shua!

In feeble light, Neltharion rushed here and there inside the chest of the little giant. Very soon, it entered a secret chamber. After the scanning of the mystic light, what appeared in front of them was an egg-shaped seat, and the one sitting majestically inside was…

A human being!

“Ah!”

Li Yao, the Fire Ant King, and Professor Mo Xuan exclaimed at the same time!

They could not be mistaken. It was definitely a human being!

Because of the eons of burial in the rock stratum, under the scourge of spiritual waves and minerals, he had gradually decayed like the ‘little giant’ outside.

However, the features of all his bones, including the skull, spine, ribs, and pelvis, were almost identical to those of modern human beings!

Everything that could suggest his identity, including his clothes, had been vaporized into powder. Inside the secret chamber, there were no controller or levers at all other than the egg-shaped seat.

The guy was merely sitting cross-legged and raising his head to the ceiling in a weird posture.

From his extremely twisted jaws, they seemed able to see the fury and magnificence from when he had still been alive!

The scene struck Li Yao and the rest of them into bewilderment like lightning. For three minutes, not only were they unable to utter a word, it was even barely possible for them to breathe!

“A human being less than two meters tall, who was a real compatriot exactly like us, piloted a super large war puppet more than sixty meters tall and killed a dominating giant almost a hundred meters tall who was wearing heavy armor!”

The fact made their eyes bloodshot and their hearts race. Their blood was flooding crazily inside their veins and was almost pouring out of their pores!

The Pangu Clan! The legendary deities who founded the universe and who could change the stars!

But they had been killed by an insignificant human being!

God-slaying!

That was real god-slaying!

For a moment, Li Yao remembered the resolute, thought-provoking, proud declaration again.

“Human beings are the strongest fighting species in the sea of stars!”

In that moment, Li Yao could not have felt prouder that he was a member of the civilization of mankind. Hot liquid filled his eyes for reasons he did not know.

We are human beings. When we are on a rampage, we can even kill a deity!

Crazy roars echoed at the bottom of Li Yao's heart!

"I never expected that I would see something so incredible one day!"

Professor Mo Xuan was not back to himself until three minutes later. Staring at the super-large war puppet, which was twenty floors high, he mumbled, "Before, I always thought that crystal suits were the most perfect single magical equipment in a battlefield and that war puppets more than ten meters tall meant nothing!

"Once a war puppet is more than ten meters tall, it will be faced with a bunch of tricky problems. Its own framework may not be strong enough; it will be discovered and barraged by the enemy easily; then there are the dynamic conductibility issues, the issues about the transmission, and feedback of telepathic thoughts… All in all, it is just a super large pile of garbage. The larger, the worse!

"Therefore, except for in movies and virtual games, we have never developed war puppets more than ten meters tall but always regarded crystal suits as 'kings of magical equipment'!

"But right now…

"Hehe. Seeing such a big guy here, I feel that I was wrong. I have lived my life for nothing!

"What kind of 'kings of magical equipment' are crystal suits? Such super-large war puppets, which can be maneuvered by one human beings and yet blow up a deity, better deserve to be called the kings of magical equipment that dominate the sea of stars!"

Li Yao did not know what he should say.

The material science, studies of spiritual energy, and theories of structure that were involved in such a super-large war puppet far exceeded the knowledge of the Star Glory Federation and even the Star Ocean Imperium. It was completely different from the war puppets that they had developed before.

However, he found empathy in Professor Mo Xuan’s declaration that he had lived his life for nothing.

After discovering that such a twenty-floor-tall war puppet, which could even kill a deity, had actually been maneuvered by an insignificant human being, Li Yao found it impossible to contain his own desire. He could not help but fantasize about how incredible it would be if he could be its pilot and thereby become a king of destruction that slayed everybody and everything standing in his way, dominating the universe!

Compared with such a war puppet, any crystal suit would be… too thin!

I’m definitely going to pilot it!

Li Yao’s eyes were burning with lust, like a hungry wolf that was coveting a yummy chicken from the other side of the iron gauze. He roared in his heart, *I will be piloting such a real king of magical equipment one day!*

As if affected by his excitement, itching feelings came over from the Cosmos Ring. Little Black was calling him.

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. Then he set Little Black free from the Cosmos Ring.

The lazy fatty was quite unusual today. It rolled around in midair for a moment. Then, after it saw the ‘little giant’, it was suddenly glittering in brilliance, as if it had been refreshed.

Eagerly, it flew to the little giant and extended several sticky tentacles from its round body, jabbing and poking. It even took a circle the control capsule in the chest of the little giant.

While Li Yao was greatly baffled, it returned slowly as if in frustration.

“Little Black, you haven’t seen such a thing before, have you?” Li Yao asked in disbelief.

Little Black gave no reply but simply waved its tentacles, as if it was saying to him, “Unplayable. So boring.”

Then, the guy slithered into the Cosmos Ring and went back to sleep again.

Li Yao blinked hard. The super-large war puppet had already been completely ruined in the fierce battle, and it had been buried for nobody knew how many years in the rocks. Too rusted, of course, it could not be activated.

But did Little Black know how to operate a brand-new war puppet such as this one?

“We don’t have much time. Let’s push forward now!”

Professor Mo Xuan finally calmed himself down. His voice slowly shivering, he said, “This is only the outmost area of the intense metal reactions. Let’s study it later after we’ve figured out exactly what is inside!”

After all, the giant who was suspected of being a member of the Kuafu Clan and the super-large war beast had been embedded to the rocks for millions of years. They could not become much worse in such a short time. After recording the coordinates of their whereabouts, they flew upward along the stone walls.

Very soon, they reached an altitude of five thousand years and crossed the folds.

Looking at the horizon, they discovered the clouds were surging, and clusters of smog were mauling and swallowing each other like shining beasts. Dull thunder could be heard, too.

Passing the last obstacle, they found themselves on a rarely-seen plateau on Kunlun. There were shining stripes that looked like ‘ripples’ here. The ‘ripples’ on the Plateau did not have much elevation difference and were in the distribution of concentric circles.

At the center of the ‘concentric circles’ that were hundreds of kilometers in diameter was a deep, dark well.

“Intense metal reactions have been detected. Human-shaped objects scattered in the rock stratum have been scanned by the mystic rays!”

“Spiritual energy is spurting out of the deep well incessantly. This is almost a spring, no, a volcano of spiritual energy!”

“Look. The few weird mountains on the horizon do not appear to be mountains. They are warships! The debris of the warships that crashed into Kunlun!”

The more they talked, the more excited they got, because they knew that they were onto something invaluable. Judging from the intense metal reaction and the distribution of the debris, this place was the relic of the main battlefield of the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan on Kunlun!

Chapter 1226 - Special Force of the Primeval Era!

Li Yao and his companions searched along the concentric circles anticlockwise and found a lot of dead bodies and puppets that were embedded in the rocks.

Judging from the broken bodies that were still mauling each other after their death, it was not hard to imagine the ferocity and the terror of the primeval war millions of years ago.

The armor and magical equipment of the two parties had a similar style. It was sometimes even difficult to tell which group the dead bodies belonged to.

However, after scanning a hundred dead bodies, Li Yao was able to tell the subtle difference in the styles of the magical equipment of the two sides.

For one side, the spiritual stripes were square and solemn, leaving the impression of perfection. Yet, they were a bit less rigorous and more rigid.

The spiritual stripes of the other side preferred to employ waves and clouds. They were dispersing like supernova outbreaks, giving the feeling of energy and vigor, but they were sometimes chaotic and even excited.

The species of the two sides in the primeval war were also clearly different from each other.

The party with square and solemn spiritual stripes was all made of bizarre-shaped primeval species. Some of them had long tusks, some of them had three heads and six arms, and still some had the head of a human being and the body of a snake.

Most of the primeval species were not as impressive as the member of the Kuafu Clan who was almost a hundred meters tall. But on average, they were still around twenty meters tall and deserved to be called giants in any sense.

The party with vigorous and messy spiritual stripes mostly consisted of standard human warriors. They were wearing all kinds of war puppets competing with the deities that were far larger than themselves!

Still having not gotten rid of the super-large war puppet twenty floors high, Li Yao was eager to find a second one that was better preserved.

However, after searching for dozens of kilometers, although hundreds of war puppets were detected, most of them were around twenty meters tall. There was nothing bigger than that.

It seemed that the super-large war puppets seventy meters tall were rare treasures even in the primeval era when the war broke out.

It did make sense. Such super-large war puppets were produced for the purpose of slaying deities. Giants a hundred meters tall such as the Kuafu Clan were the minority after all.

Since most of the members of the Pangu Clan were around twenty meters, war puppets that were about the same height would suffice.

In fact, such war puppets were certainly not easy to produce, either, because even war puppets twenty meters tall were rarely-seen in the battlefield.

Most of the warriors of human beings were still wearing thin armor that resembled crystal suits and fought the deities with their bodies of flesh and blood!

Li Yao observed the warriors and their armor, which were about to turn into fossils.

A lot of the armor gave him a contradictory feeling of both primitiveness and excellent design. They looked like immature experimental products and were even not fully enclosed.

Although they adopted a lot of technology that Li Yao was unfamiliar with, their combat ability would not be too impressive based on their overall structure.

Li Yao vaguely felt that some of the armor looked familiar. Thinking quickly, he realized what the problem was.

The human beings were wearing basically the same armor as the warriors of the Pangu Clan did, except that theirs were much smaller in size. Their gears were some sort of ‘counterfeits’.

But the problem lay elsewhere. The Pangu Clan boasted amazing techniques themselves based on their bizarre appearance. Naturally, their armors were produced in correspondence with such naturally-endowed techniques.

The simple duplication, despite the preliminary modification, of course, could not yield products that worked well with the bodies of human beings.

An embossment-like picture that had been left on a cliff left Li Yao a very deep impression.

The main character of the picture was a warrior of the Pangu Clan who was more than thirty meters tall. His head seemed to be made of metal, and two wings grew out of his ribs. Sharp bone blades protruded out of his hands and feet. Heavy armor made of countless scales was covering his body, too. He was essentially a walking war fortress.

Those who were fighting him, however, were not war puppets twenty meters tall but more than ten insignificant human warriors who were wearing thin armor.

Even counting their foully-made ‘counterfeit armor’, the human warriors were still less than two meters tall. There was an obvious gap between them and the warrior of the Pangu Clan.

The flying swords in their hands were as funny as needles for the warrior of the Pangu Clan, too.

However, with the needle-like flying swords, they stuck themselves to the warrior of the Pangu Clan. Even if the warrior opened his giant hand and crushed the bones of the human warriors into pieces, none of them retreated. They died together with the enemy and perished into the dust of history.

For some reason, Li Yao suddenly felt that the human warriors wearing shabby armor were even taller, more magnificent, and more unwavering than the super-large war puppet seventy meters tall!

However, human beings were not at such a disadvantage in every battle.

Li Yao discovered the body of a human being that was deeply buried. There were not any enemies around the body, yet he was stabbing his flying sword at himself brutally in a twisted expression, as if he were trying to cut his own stomach open.

Li Yao scanned carefully and finally found several dead bodies only the size of fingers at most on the body.

Although they were miniscule, they were still wearing delicate armor and waving tiny sabers and swords. But after the corrosion of time, they had slowly turning into grey rocks and looked more like children’s toys.

“Did they belong to the Pangu Clan, too?” Li Yao was amused. The universe of the primeval era was truly mysterious and unbelievable!

Right then, he heard the Fire Ant King’s excited exclamation.

The Fire Ant King had found an area of weird corpses.

At the center was what appeared to be a member of the Pangu Clan. He was more than ten meters tall, and his upper body was that of a standard human being while his bottom half was a snake.

But it could be vaguely seen that a lot of patterns of waves and clouds had been applied to the armor he was wearing, which were leaving a strong sense of vitality even after such a long time.

He was surrounded by more than ten human warriors. It appeared that they were not fighting against each other but fighting side by side!

Li Yao thought of something. “Is he a member of the Nuwa Clan?

“If so, the two parties involved in the primeval war that took place on Kunlun are obvious now. One side was the alliance of the Pangu civilization, including the species such as Zhurong, Gonggong, and Kuafu. The other side was the Nuwa Clan, which betrayed the alliance of the Pangu civilization, and human beings that the Nuwa Clan created.”

It did make sense. After all, legend had it that Nuwa created human beings. The Nuwa Clan was essentially the birth parent of mankind. If the Nuwa Clan really ended on bad terms with the alliance of the Pangu civilization, human beings definitely would have been on the Nuwa Clan’s side!

“I’m not asking you to look at that. Here. Look at this corpse!”

In delight, the Fire Ant King gestured Li Yao and Professor Mo Xuan to look at one of the human beings.

Li Yao observed and immediately noticed something wrong.

The warrior was around two meters tall. He was also wearing vigorous armor of spiritual stripes and fighting side by side with other human beings and the warrior of the Nuwa Clan. However, his appearance was different from his comrades’!

The flesh and blood had been corroded and broken apart, but the bones, after absorbing too many minerals, were preserved basically perfectly.

It was obvious that his arms were much longer than the arms of regular human beings. There were also talons as sharp as sabers on the fingers.

What was even more obvious was that his jawbones protruded forward and reduced in size in the front, forming a sharp triangle that reminded Li Yao of the beak of a bird. Also, the joints of his legs bent forward, too, exactly like many birds!

Two branches could also be found on the two sides of his spine. However, the bones there were so weak that they had long perished. It was hard to tell whether or not they were organs such as wings.

All in all, he was like a combination of a human being and a bird, not a regular human being in any sense.

However, judging from the attitude of the human warriors nearby who were fighting side by side with him until they all died, they were all close comrades without any grudges with one another.

Li Yao looked at the Fire Ant King suspiciously.

“Don’t you understand?” The Fire Ant King was almost crying. “This is a demon. A demon warrior!”

Li Yao was greatly enlightened. Judging from the bone structure, he was definitely an out-and-out demon, and probably an ancestor of the modern Feather Clan!

“This explains a lot. I get it now.” Professor Mo Xuan pondered for a moment and said, “Senior Ba Yanzhi retrieved a batch of Divine Water of Kunlun forty thousand years and created the first demons as we know.

“But in fact, since the Divine Water of Kunlun was passed on from the primeval era, there must’ve already been demons in the primeval era!

“Maybe it was the Nuwa Clan who produced the Divine Water of Kunlun for the purpose of getting warriors of different units.

“Think about it. Cultivators are better at remote attacks with spiritual energy, while demons prefer to train their body with spiritual energy first and have melee combat later! Aren’t they like two different units?

“The cooperation of different units matters most on a battlefield. The Nuwa Clan created human beings first. Then, they discovered that there were certain flaws in human beings that made the warriors unused to the relatively extreme battlefields. So, they produced the Divine Water of Kunlun and transformed part of the human warriors into experts of melee combat, or a ‘special force’ that was better adapted to a harsh battlefield if you will. That must be the earliest origin of demons!”

The assumption made a lot of sense. With the integration of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector, the idea could be publicized as a theoretical foundation of the New Federation. Since human beings and demons had fought side by side in the primeval era, it would only be natural that they joined hands again!

Click! Click!

Li Yao took photos of the relic where primeval human beings and primeval demons fought together from various perspectives.

It was not hard to imagine that the photos would be a hit when they were sent back to the three Sectors.

“Huh. There are words here.”

Li Yao discovered that two words were carved on the left chest of the demon warrior’s armor in the place of the heart. They were not spiritual stripes but an ancient language.

The heritage of a written language was much more stable than that of a spoken one.

Every Sector had a lot of different dialects. People might speak differently when they were only ten kilometers away from each other.

However, after words were carved on rocks and metals, it was difficult for them to change or vanish.

Li Yao immediately recognized that it was an extremely ancient font named ‘Tortoise Writing’, which was used forty thousand years ago for fetial and augury purposes.

The two words were ‘Thunder Striker’.

“Thunder Striker?”

Li Yao repeated the phrase. Since it was carved on the chest of the armor, it did not seem like the name of the person but more like the name of the troop that he belonged to.

The armor of other human beings barely had any words on it, so this seemed to be a privilege of an elite troop!

It appeared that Professor Mo Xuan’s guess was correct. The beak-mouthed guy was indeed from a special force of the primeval era named ‘Thunder Striker’!

Chapter 1227 - The Immortal Cultivators Are Here!

For the entire day that followed, Li Yao and his companions searched and explored the primeval battlefield, trying to find usable magical equipment or the remains of the primeval forces.

But it was a shame that the war had broken out too long ago. The remains left on the surface had all been corroded because of weathering and would turn into a pile of rust at the fist touch.

The corpses and magical equipment that had escaped the weathering underground could not escape from the seeping and exchange of minerals. Because of the tectonic reactions, they turned into materials like fossils and lost all their vitality.

Li Yao and his companions could only take photos and videos of the relics, hoping to record the spiritual stripes on the surface of the armor and the magical equipment at least.

The spiritual stripes boasted interfering and navigating functions on the spiritual and electromagnetic fields nearby. In other words, they could concentrate the natural spiritual energy, partly allowing the wearers to train anywhere and anytime, and partly serving as a natural spiritual shield.

The function mechanism of such spiritual stripes was completely different from that of the modern spiritual stripes. They were a great inspiration for refiners like Li Yao and Professor Mo Xuan.

Other than that, while they were marching to the center of the concentric circles, they also found something very interesting. As it turned out, not just the army of the ‘Nuwa Clan’ had human warriors. There were a lot of human warriors in the army of the Pangu Clan whose spiritual stripes were square and solemn!

At the same time, some bizarrely-shaped warriors of the Pangu Clan were wearing passionate and vigorous armor and fighting side by side with the Nuwa Clan and the human beings, attacking their own compatriots.

“It seems that the side of the civil war of the primeval era was not necessarily decided by species.”

After analyzing a relic where more than a thousand corpses gathered, Professor Mo Xuan reached that conclusion.

“There are relatively more human warriors on the Nuwa Clan’s side, but those under the command of the Pangu Clan are not few, either. Even the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan are not surly hostile to each other. They were somewhat mixed with each other.

“It seems that this was not a war of different species, but a war of beliefs that was fought for different ideologies, principles, and creeds. They were not fighting for their species but for what they believed in!”

“Of course, there should be human warriors on the Pangu Clan’s side!” the Fire Ant King reminded them. “Don’t forget Pangu’s Covenant! Isn’t the Alliance of the Holy Covenant on the Pangu Clan’s side? At the very least, it appears so on the surface!”

They all chewed on the new finding for a while.

If the Alliance of the Holy Covenant truly discovered a relic of the Pangu civilization, which was of the same level as ‘Kunlun’, and retrieved part of the techniques and technologies from it…

The twenty-meter-tall war puppets alone were enough for them to compete with the Imperium of True Human Beings.

Now that they thought about it, when the commander of a fleet of the Imperium of True Human Beings saw hundreds of super-large war puppets lunging at them and ripping the warships apart into pieces and their proud crystal suits being utterly useless in the head-on clash… such a horrid scene was indeed likely to scare the Cultivators back then into Immortal Cultivators!

Then, what were the so-called Pangu’s Covenant and Path of Ultimate Benevolence?

With those questions in mind, the three of them continued exploring. Neltharion got a general picture of the battle from the sky. The giant hole at the center of the concentric circles was more than one kilometer in diameter. According to the feedback of the mystic rays and the soundwaves, it was more than a hundred kilometers deep, suggesting that it should be a channel leading to the inside of Kunlun.

It must have been an entrance of the ‘planetary warship’ that led to the central area of Kunlun.

The Nuwa army was attacking for the purpose of breaking into Kunlun, while the Pangu army was holding the formation and trying to stop them from approaching the entrance of the planetary warship.

In other words, this was a ‘beach landing’ in the primeval era.

But it remained unclear if the Nuwa army had successfully broken into Kunlun in the end.

The spiritual and electromagnetic environment inside was too complicated. Some of the traps and rune arrays might have been hibernating, too. The three of them did not dare take the risk.

During that time, Li Yao established a communication base on the highest mountain nearby and finally reached out to Sparkle.

The pictures and videos that they sent back to Sparkle were great eye-openers for the four star spirits, who were all greatly amazed.

However, the work of the four star spirits had not gone so well. Hardly had they built a space defense array when it was violently scourged by a meteoroid cascade. Although the array was not damaged, many units had to be replaced now. Also, too many crystals had been consumed. The facility had to be repaired and refilled first.

As a result, the deployment of the star beacon and the space communication system had to be slightly delayed again.

The three explorers were more than anxious, but there was nothing that they could do except pray in silence that the minor apocalypse of the Imperium of True Human Beings would not come too fast.

It was a pity that they seemed to have used up their luck by jumping to the depths of the crab nebula, landing on Kunlun successfully, and finding so many relics of the primeval era without any trouble.

After only an hour, exclamations suddenly burst out on Sparkle.

“Unusually intense spiritual waves have been detected. An extremely fast object crashed its way through the ocean of meteoroids and is now flying toward Kunlun!

“They are very close to us, but they are much larger than us in volume and mass. They will brush past us in twenty minutes and break into the atmosphere of Kunlun in half an hour. Also, the landing point… is not far away from you!”

Li Yao and the rest of the explorers jumped to their feet.

“Retreat the space defense array now and pretend to be a meteoroid in the camouflage mode. Do not get discovered. If you are found, run away immediately toward the pulsar, and bet that they don’t have the courage to follow!

“Do not send out spiritual waves or telepathic thoughts. Keep absolutely silent until we reach out to you!”

Li Yao’s hands turned into a storm as he dismantled the communication base and threw all the components into his Cosmos Ring.

Professor Mo Xuan and the Fire Ant King, on the other hand, examined the surroundings to make sure that they had not left any traces.

When they met again, their faces were all incredibly grim.

“I didn’t think that the Immortal Cultivators would be so fast. They will land in less than twenty minutes, but our star beacons haven’t been deployed yet. Even without any interference, it will take days to fully unfold it and guide Burning Prairie to this place!” Professor Mo Xuan was grave.

After witnessing the incredible relics inside Kunlun, they were even more firm that the relics could not be allowed to be taken away by the Immortal Cultivators!

“Damn. Kunlun is such a large place. Why are they landing here? We are truly unlucky!” the Fire Ant King mumbled.

“It has nothing to do with luck.” Li Yao took a deep breath and forced himself to calm down. “The primeval battlefield is the place with the most intense metal reaction and spiritual waves. The Immortal Cultivators are here for reconnaissance and exploration, too. It’s only natural that they chose to land here!”

“There are only the three of us right now. What do we do?” Professor Mo Xuan asked worriedly. “They are the legendary ‘minor apocalypse’. Do we stand any chance of stopping them?”

Gritting his teeth, Li Yao declared resolutely, with brilliance as cold as the edge of a sword beaming out of his eyes, “Of course we do! There’s no need to underestimate ourselves or overestimate the ‘minor apocalypse’!

“Although there are only the three of us here, we are all in the Nascent Soul Stage!

“We are unclear of the capability of the Imperium of True Human Beings, but let’s simply compare it to the Star Ocean Imperium.

“The Star Ocean Imperium was the peak of the modern Cultivation civilization, but the majority of the Cultivators in the imperium were still in the Refinement Stage and the Building Foundation Stage. The Core Formation Stage experts were already unquestionable pillars in the army. For those in the Nascent Soul Stage, it was not a problem to become the commanders of a fleet!

“Therefore, in either the Star Ocean Imperium or the Imperium of True Human Beings, the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators such as us are definitely top-tier experts!

“Our enemy is only here for reconnaissance. In the eyes of the Immortal Cultivators, this land is a primitive, desolate place. Being sent here from so far away is essentially an act of exile. What experts can there be?

“I estimate that there are only several Nascent Soul Stage experts at best. We can definitely compete with them!

“Is the Imperium of True Human Beings really extravagant enough to send a dozen Divinity Transformation Stage monsters for a reconnaissance mission? If that’s the case, we will have to seriously consider Gui Suishou’s Monument Plan!”

Li Yao’s words were quite reasonable. The Fire Ant King and Professor Mo Xuan nodded quickly, finally having the courage for a head-on clash.

However, unless it was absolutely necessary, they still did not intend to fight the Immortal Cultivators directly. It would be best if they could wait until Burning Prairie came to reinforce them.

Therefore, they decided to ambush at the edge of the primeval battlefield first. They would see what the Immortal Cultivators were up to.

While their hearts were pounding, the twenty minutes passed quickly. A brilliant exhaust flame appeared in the middle of the purple clouds and crashed toward the ground straightly. But when it was a thousand meters to the ground, hot streams that looked like a blossoming lotus were unleashed, which significantly reduced its speed.

It was a rather large cluster of fire, yet it landed like a soft feather.

When the glow around all dispersed, the ‘minor apocalypse’ that had troubled the three Sectors for several years finally revealed itself in front of Li Yao.

“Huh?”

Li Yao and his companions were all dumbfounded. They looked at each other in disbelief with a weird expression.

It was not because of the magnificence and formidability of the stranger but because… it looked too plain.

At first glance, the ‘minor apocalypse’ launched by the Imperium of True Human Beings was simply a round, metal box that was about one kilometer long and dull gray in color. During its long voyage in space, it must have been hit by countless meteoroids, which had left bumps and dents all over its surface. It was mottled and utterly devoid of the charm of the Imperium that they had imagined.

Li Yao thought for a long time and finally realized what it actually looked like. It was basically a turtle shell, only much larger!

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Li Yao’s description turned out to be accurate. When it was about a hundred meters from the ground, four long arms extended out of the ‘turtle shell’, and the four drills at the front of the arms revolved rapidly and dug into the ground, affixing the turtle shell to the surface of Kunlun!

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and observed. He did not find any magical equipment or signs of rune arrays on the surface of the turtle shell.

Did the starship from the Imperium of True Human Beings boast zero combat ability? Was it the legendary ‘minor apocalypse’ at all? Could it be that the specialists of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector had been wrong the whole time?

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Right then, more than ten doors were opened around the turtle shell, revealing the deep, dark inside.

Li Yao was more anxious than ever!

Chapter 1228 - The Underestimated Imperium!

Countless black shadows flew out of the door. Illuminated by the purple clouds of Kunlun, they were emitting dangerous colors.

In only three minutes, the sky was occupied by hundreds of black shadows carrying chainswords and crystal cannons. The structure of their armor was entirely different from that of the armor of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and Flying Star Sector. Despite its vintage style, the flawless gear system at the joints suggested a much higher level of refining.

Hundreds of Immortal Cultivators? Li Yao felt both blood-freezing and baffled.

It was utterly illogical. The Imperium of True Human Beings a hundred years ago was only able to teleport a star child, who did not have a real body, to millions of lightyears away. Now, after only a hundred years, how was it already able to teleport hundreds of Immortal Cultivators precisely?

Were they not scared that the hundreds of Immortal Cultivators would perish in space if anything happened to the teleportation?

Such a development of technology was too unbelievable!

However, upon closer inspection, Li Yao immediately noticed something wrong. Those ‘crystal suits’ were all about 1.5

meters tall, even shorter than ordinary people. Also, their limbs were narrow and long, and they were extremely slender. Unless the Immortal Cultivators were all dwarfs, it would be impossible for them to fit in such crystal suits.

They were not crystal suits but certain war puppets. There was no sign of life inside. No wonder such a huge batch of them had been successfully teleported all at once.

Although they were lifeless puppets, their teamwork was quite immaculate. The three hundred war puppets were like a well-trained army. They established defenses around the turtle shell and searched around, as if invisible strings were guiding them from behind.

Li Yao thought quickly. Then, lightning suddenly struck his brain. His eyelids cramping, he said to Professor Mo Xuan in a low voice, “Grand Illusionary Soldiers?”

The operational patterns of those war puppets were very similar to those of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers. No, they was even more advanced than the Grand Illusionary Soldiers’, as if they were some sort of upgraded version.

“Very possible,” Professor Mo Xuan replied in a low voice. “In the Flying Star Sector, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers were the main force for the Immortal Cultivators in their rebellion.

“Although the plan was proposed by Xiao Xuance, it was in fact under the influence of the star child from the Imperium of True Human Beings, who pretended to be Xiao Xuance’s foster son Xiao Tianbao. It is safe to say that the star child actually led the project!

“Even the ‘star brain’, which controlled the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, was built by the star child.

“The clues suggest that the ‘Grand Illusionary Soldiers’, as a type of fully-automatic magical equipment, are a very mature technology in the Imperium of True Human Beings and very popular main-force gear. To carry out an expedition mission where a long journey is involved, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers—lifeless, loyal, and unemotional—are the best choices.”

Li Yao recalled the breathtaking feeling when he was surrounded by the Grand Illusionary Soldiers in the riot of the Immortal Cultivator again.

With a dull ache pervading his mind, he mumbled to himself, “I hate the Grand Illusionary Soldiers!”

Thankfully, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers as individuals were not very impressive. Their combat ability was based on their number, but there were only three hundred Grand Illusionary Soldiers there.

Even if the Grand Illusionary Soldiers of the Imperium of True Human Beings were even stronger than the ‘counterfeit’ versions produced by the star child, Li Yao would not be troubled by them because he was also much stronger than the past, not to mention that he was supported by another two experts in the Nascent Soul Stage.

But there was definitely more to the turtle shell. It was unnecessary for them to launch an assault yet. They could wait for Burning Prairie to deal with the enemy later.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

More than ten Grand Illusionary Soldiers of the Imperium of True Human Beings flew over their heads.

But they had hidden themselves with delicate camouflage in advance. They had buried themselves into crevices before they covered themselves with tremendous mud and rust. They looked exactly the same as the rest of the remains in the battlefield.

The metal reaction and spiritual waves were so intense there that they were like a few drops of water that had melted into the ocean. Unless they were observed at a close distance, it was impossible for anybody to notice them.

As they expected, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers detected no anomaly. Their masters never would have dreamed that somebody had arrived in Kunlun earlier than them.

The Grand Illusionary Soldiers were released perhaps for the purpose of exploring the local lives of Kunlun. Discovering only low-level lives such as moss, weeds, and insects, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers soon returned and stayed on alert around the turtle shell.

Another hundred shadows dashed out of the cabin, this time, not Grand Illusionary Soldiers but beast puppets about one meter long.

Most of the beast puppets were in the form of a spider and looked similar to the ‘Tarantula’ that Li Yao had refined before. A jet system was also installed to their round belly, allowing them to move agilely and quickly on the ragged folds.

The metal spiders crawled nimbly among different rock stratums, knocking the rocks now and then amid clicking sounds. In the end, they seemed to find what they desired. All the metal spiders were gathered together.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The extensible arms of the ‘turtle shell’ which had dug deep into the ground were now plucked and thrown to the air, while it crept to the location that the metal spiders had selected.

After the turtle shell was affixed to the surface again, more than ten drills extended out of the bottom of the turtle shell and suddenly penetrated underground like the drilling pipes that collected the underground minerals!

“Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum!”

The drilling pipes were revolving fast, and both the ground and the turtle shell were trembling with dull noises. Overwhelming spiritual waves were coming over from the depths of the turtle shell!

Li Yao and his companions looked at each other in bewilderment, not having the faintest clue what the ugly starship from the Imperium of True Human Beings was doing.

After observing it carefully for more than an hour, they finally guessed the turtle shell’s purpose. It seemed to be collecting the metal remains deeply buried underground.

In the meantime, the metal puppets were bouncing up and down on the folds and delivering the scraps of the larger remains to the turtle shell.

What was odd was that they simply excavated scraps that were larger and seemed to contain the most metal but showed no interest in the dead bodies of the primeval species at all or cared about the completeness of the remains.

While Li Yao and his companions were still confused, the turtle shell was going through new changes.

The shell was opened piece after piece, like thousands of blossoming buds. Many more metal puppets jumped out, with bizarrely-shaped components attached to their back by the electromagnetic force field.

Very soon, the number of the metal puppets reached almost a thousand. They jumped near to the turtle shell, where they paved the ground and established what appeared to be some buildings with the components on their back.

More than ten large buildings were being constructed at the same time. Therefore, the speed was rather now, but it was obvious that the buildings were neatly planned and quite impressive. Once they were completed, they would constitute an impenetrable war base.

Li Yao even saw that several buildings looked like smaller ‘turtle shells’!

There seemed to be a highly-efficient workshop inside the turtle shell. As more and more underground minerals and metal scraps were sent into it, more metal spiders and Grand Illusionary Soldiers were produced.

Then, the metal spiders could collect more remains and minerals and dedicate themselves to the construction of other buildings. The overall working efficiency was growing exponentially!

Li Yao and his companions did not intend to take any action at first because their star beacons were being constructed in space under the camouflage of the meteoroids. The longer they delayed, the more likely Burning Prairie was going to show up. Time was on their side. It was just a matter of speed.

However, after monitoring in secret for a long time, they all discovered that something was not right. The Grand Illusionary Soldiers deployed around the turtle shell were already more than five hundred, almost a double of the original ones, and the number of the metal spiders had surpassed two thousand!

Many buildings nearby were gradually taking shape.

The buildings deployed at the periphery were the watchtowers carved with countless attack rune arrays. Some of them were already unleashing spluttering high-voltage electric arcs.

Behind the watchtowers was a forest of cooling towers and furnaces, which constituted metal purification factories and magical equipment factories that were not small at all!

Other than them, there were also buildings that Li Yao failed to recognize. Judging from the antennas hundreds of meters tall that were being assembled, they had to have facilities to send telepathic thoughts into the space!

Several Grand Illusionary Soldiers and metal spiders were installing the crystal cannons just produced in the turtle shell to the highest place of the watchtowers.

The weird scenes reminded Li Yao of a possibility. The cold sweat on his forehead dropped into his eyes quickly, making his pupils constrict.

“This—this is a f*cking MCV[a][b][1]!” Li Yao mumbled to himself.

“Li Yao, what did you say? Isn’t this a ‘minor apocalypse’ from the Imperium of True Human Beings?” Professor Mo Xuan asked in a low voice.

“It is not a minor apocalypse, but it is likely to be even scarier than a minor apocalypse. Or rather, it represents thousands of minor apocalypses!”

Gloomily, Li Yao replied, “It seems that we have all underestimated the Imperium of True Human Beings!”

Professor Mo Xuan and the Fire Ant King looked at each and sensed each other’s anxiety. They asked nervously, “What do you mean? Have you seen through the attack pattern of the Imperium of True Human Beings?”

“It’s just my speculation, but it should be correct!”

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao explained, “We thought at the beginning that the Imperium of True Human Beings was likely to have launched a ‘minor apocalypse’ toward us. But if we think about it more carefully, it might not be the case. The environment throughout the universe varies greatly, and the forms of different civilizations are rarely similar. How could the Imperium of True Human Beings know for sure which kind of ‘minor apocalypse’ would work on us?

“Besides, minor apocalypses target individuals. A minor apocalypse is definitely not strong enough to trouble an entire civilization!

“Therefore, we speculated that the purpose of the ‘minor apocalypse’ was not destruction but reconnaissance and localization. It was here to lead the way and knock down the door for the army of the Imperium.

“But from what we’ve seen, we might’ve been wrong all the time. The army of the imperium is unnecessary. It is possible that the ragged starship of the imperium is enough to destroy us and conquer the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector!

“Because it isn’t an apocalypse at all but… a factory that can manufacture minor apocalypses!”

Chapter 1229 - Factory of Apocalypses!

A factory of minor apocalypses!

Li Yao’s words were like a deafening thunder that struck Professor Mo Xuan and the Fire Ant King speechless.

But the two of them were the top-tier experts with amazing computational ability after all. Enlightened by Li Yao, they quickly realized what was going on.

“It does make sense…” Professor Mo Xuan murmured. “In a super long-distance expedition covering millions of lightyears, projecting an army or a powerful weapon is not a sensible choice at all!

“The larger an army is, the more resources it will consume on the way, and the more losses there will be should any accident occur.

“The strategical weapons that are as strong as ‘apocalypses’, during their long voyage, are vulnerable to radiation and cosmic dust. Their strength will gradually be reduced to nothingness.

“It is needless to mention the precision. Millions of lightyears away from each other, after dozens of space jumps in a row, and the target is hit precisely? That is too incredible and completely surpasses the technology of our civilization and even the Pangu Clan’s. It is definitely unachievable!

“Also, the larger an army is and the stronger the ‘apocalyptic weapon’ is, the more difficult it will be for them to cruise the four-dimensional space. There will also be more unpredictable risks!

“Time and space are the solidest ‘walls’ in the universe. It is difficult to climb over or break them!”

With a grave face, the Fire Ant King remarked, “Therefore, instead of teleporting an army or an apocalyptic weapon to the target to be attacked, they might as well teleport a ‘factory’ or a ‘base’ that can manufacture armies and strategic magical equipment!

“Such a ‘base’ doesn’t have to be huge, and few Immortal Cultivators are required—just a couple of them are needed to supervise the situation at the critical moment while they are kept in the hibernation state when they are not needed.

“They don’t even need to carry too many Grand Illusionary Soldiers. As long as the safety and maintenance needs on the way are met, it will be enough.

“The most crucial thing is that the base must carry a mainframe crystal processor with an extremely high computational ability, a metal purification assembly line with a high compatibility, and a production line that can produce automatic magical equipment such as Grand Illusionary Soldiers and the beast puppets!

“Chances are that the designs of many other kinds of magical equipment are stored inside the mainframe crystal processor. With enough resources, countless pieces of automatic magical equipment can be manufactured incessantly!

“Such a base is like a swift dandelion that carries countless spores. When it is aimed at a certain direction and launched out, it will float on its own in the sea of stars.

“After it arrives in the vicinity of its destination, it will not explore or attack its destination directly but find a planet with abundant spiritual energy and minerals around first.

“Once it finds such a planet, it will land and release the Grand Illusionary Soldiers and beast puppets that it carries. They will be asked to collect resources, expand the base, and copy themselves. Gradually, more advanced buildings will be constructed, and more complicated Grand Illusionary Soldiers and beast puppets will be produced. Then, it is another circle. In such a spiral, more and more cutting-edge buildings and automatic facilities will be made, and what they really want will come out sooner or later!”

“It may be a magnificent star beacon system!” Li Yao’s voice was mixed with freezing coldness. “So magnificent that it is enough to lead the way for the army of the Imperium of True Human Beings and allow them to jump over instantly!

“It may also be a certain kind of mysterious magical equipment that can attack our planets directly, which will be incessant ‘minor apocalypses’!

“Or rather, the most straightforward approach may be building a swarm of Grand Illusionary Soldiers and a few starships to accommodate them. That way, we will be easily drowned!

“After all, this place is not far away from the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector. Not too many advanced starships are required to cover the journey!

“As for exactly which pattern is adopted, it will probably be decided by the development level of the civilization in the destination!

“If it is an immense force with a large army and many Core Formation Stage and Nascent Soul Stage experts, chances are that they will establish star beacons and summon the army of the Imperium for the attack.

“During the process, they will also build certain strategic magical equipment and harass the target force in the form of ‘minor apocalypses’. They will bleed the enemy until the army of the Imperium arrives.

“If they discover that the local civilization is not developed and does not have many experts, chances are that they will build a swarm of Grand Illusionary Soldiers and suppress the enemy on their away!”

The antennae on the Fire Ant King’s head and the tentacles around Professor Mo Xuan trembled.

“What a perfect mode of expansion!” The Fire Ant King gnashed his teeth. “Those sons of b*tches! This is even more sordid than throwing a ‘minor apocalypse’ at us!”

If a powerful minor apocalypse was really launched from the homeland of the Imperium of True Human Beings, covering the long journey in between, as the specialists of the three Sectors estimated, it would definitely be resolved as long as the methods of attack and the operation modes were figured out.

Even if the information was not figured out, the three Sectors were unlikely to be destroyed by one minor apocalypse.

However, with such a method, once the army of the Immortal Cultivators proliferated to a tipping point, they would expand faster and faster. Chances were that they would be able to produce more than ten types of strategic weapons of different categories that were similar to ‘minor apocalypses’ right there!

“We should’ve realized it earlier!” Li Yao smashed his head hard, his voice turning hoarse. “Expansion in the boundless universe certainly requires such a system that can automatically collect resources, reproduce, upgrade, command, and fight. Otherwise, if everything needed to be reported to the mother planet millions of years away while they waited for the instructions and reinforcements from their home, there would be no way to expand at all!

“The Fire Ant King is quite right. Such an expansion mode is truly impeccable and shameless!

“Think about it. Logically, the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector could not have discovered Kunlun, which was hidden deep inside the crab nebula at all, right?

“Even if we had the Star Map of Kunlun from Senior Ba Yanzhi, we wouldn’t have found this place without the guidance of the Star Prier’s House!

“If it weren’t for the fortuitous collaboration of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector, we wouldn’t have known the first thing going on here. In that case, the ‘base’ of the Imperium of True Human Beings would have been able to develop unhurriedly. It wouldn’t have mattered if the process took three to five years. Eventually, an unparalleled force certainly would have been produced!

“By then, when millions of Grand Illusionary Soldiers appeared in our atmosphere with dozens of minor apocalypses, we would certainly be caught unprepared because we never would have dreamed that the ‘foreign intruders’ would crawl out from next door!”

Despite the lack of a nerve system, Professor Mo Xuan shuddered hard.

Looking at each other, he and the Fire Ant King both realized that the truce of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector and the collaboration of the three Sectors came right in time!

If Li Yao had not stopped the war between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, there would not have been a victor at all!

It was hilarious that the ‘patriots’ such as Lu Zui were fantasizing over enslaving the demons and sending them to the Flying Star Sector for mining. Before their great cause was pushed forward, an overwhelming army of the Imperium would have shown up in less than five years and annihilated the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector alike!

The Imperium of True Human Beings truly deserved to be a superpower that was the first to have united the center of the universe for a thousand years after the Star Ocean Imperium!

Although it was faced with the serious threat of the Covenant of the Holy Alliance, it was still not something that the Star Glory Federation could deal with.

“It must be stopped!” Professor Mo Xuan said resolutely. “Right now, it has only one ‘base’. The efficiency of resource collection and construction is not very high. But look, the eggshell-like buildings are obvious some sort of docks!

“Smaller bases will be produced inside the docks and send into every part of Kunlun!

“One growing into two, two into four, four into eight. The base’s efficiency will increase exponentially!”

“This is too unbelievable!” The Fire Ant King clicked his tongue in astonishment. “As long as such a base proliferates in the universe like a virus, wouldn’t the Imperium be invincible? I really can’t imagine what the Covenant Alliance can possibly be like now. With such a marvelous weapon, is the Imperium still on the losing side?”

“Not necessarily. From what I’ve seen, such a mode of expansion has a fatal shortcoming, too. We might be just unlucky.” Professor Mo Xuan recovered from his original shock. Activating all his computational ability, he replied with a bitter smile, “The collection and utilization of resources have their own restraints.

“It is true that metal minerals are distributed on many planets. However, it is one thing for mother lodes to be buried under the ground, and it is a whole different thing to develop the mother lodes, purify the minerals, and build them into magical equipment that can contribute to a battle. The process will consume a lot of ingredients and spiritual energy!

“Of all the ingredients, the most important one is water!

“By the experience of the federation, to produce a ton of ‘Hundred Wave Gold’, the most fundamental alloy for the compound armor, a hundred and twenty-two tons of water will be consumed!

“Take the most common MP Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit for example. In the production, not counting the cost of other materials, the water consumption alone will be around thirty-five tons on average!

“Of course, the industrial level of the Imperium of True Human Beings must be higher than that of the Star Glory Federation. But the water cost is unavoidable. Let’s say that their efficiency is two times better. Then, a Grand Illusionary Soldier, a beast puppet, or a crystal suit will still consume tons of water when then are produced.

“There are too many planets in the universe. Metal can be found everywhere, but they are mostly raw materials with tremendous impurities that are deeply buried to the underground!

“To purify such raw materials and turn them into alloys fit for the purpose of refining, astronomical water and spiritual energy will be consumed!

“Water is the invaluable treasure in the universe. You might not find one planet with a natural atmosphere and water from a million planets. Same goes for spiritual energy. Although the universe is filled with spiritual energy, it is extremely thin in most places and hardly exploitable.

“Therefore, few planets are apt for such ‘bases’ to unfold and upgrade. Even if they found any, the environment on the planets must be harsh, and the speed of the development would be low. Chances are that a resource collection system would not be built until a year and a half later, and there would be another three to five years of waiting before the first Grand Illusionary Soldiers walk out!”

Professor Mo Xuan sighed. “It is a pity that it is not an ordinary planet that they have found but ‘Kunlun’!”

Chapter 1230 - Debut of the Immortal Cultivators!

Li Yao and the Fire Ant King immediately understood what he was getting at.

Ordinary planets did not have an atmosphere or water resources because they were either too close to or too far away from a star.

If they were too close, it was barely possible for them to generate a force field that was strong enough. Most of the spiritual energy around the planet would be attracted by the star.

If they were too far away, they would be frigid hells due to the lack of radiation from the star. The spiritual energy would be equally inactive.

On such planets that were short of sunlight, water, air, and spiritual energy, even if the reserves of metal minerals were impressive, it would be a tedious project to excavate them from underground and refine them into high-purity materials that were good for magical equipment. A lot of corresponding factories and personnel were required. It was indeed impossible to be achieved in a year and a half.

But Kunlun was different.

It was not an ordinary planet but a planetary warship modified by the Pangu civilization, with an atmosphere and an ecological system that were even more stable than the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector!

The purple clouds in the sky indicated abundant water resources. Li Yao and his teammates, while on their way there, had already seen many rivers and lakes. As for the unseen underground rivers, there were certainly even more!

The purple clouds that enveloped Kunlun were also attracting the radiation of the pulsar and transforming them into the purest spiritual energy. It was essentially an inexhaustible treasure!

What was more critical was that metal scraps were scattered everywhere on Kunlun. They were all high-purity materials that had been refined by the Pangu Clan millions of years ago.

Although most of the remains had rusted or lithified with the passage of time, they were certainly of better quality than the raw minerals which contained too many impurities!

In such a favorable environment, the war base of the Imperium did not even need to purify the raw materials. It simply collected the remains, filtered the usable parts, and cut them out. Then, there would be enough ingredients for production!

Such a speed of development was like a big bang. It was definitely a hundred times faster than on an ordinary planet.

Fortune might have been a curse in disguise. Kunlun, because of its closeness, naturally could bring tremendous relics, technologies, and techniques to the New Federation, but at this moment, it also turned into a catalyst that was pushing them toward the abyss of doom!

“According to my calculation, the production of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers and the metal spiders is slowing down.”

Looking at the time on the lens on his retina, Li Yao said in a low voice, “But the construction efficiency of the buildings has been significantly increased. Meanwhile, the entire base seems to be expanding!”

“It is perfectly normal,” Professor Mo Xuan said. “The Grand Illusionary Soldiers are not very advanced magical equipment after all. Their combat ability is not high. There’s no need to waste too many resources on them.

“If I were the commander of the Imperium in the base, I wouldn’t decide to build too many Grand Illusionary Soldiers, either. As long as I could protect myself, it would be good enough. Most of the resources should be used to upgrade the base so that larger, tougher magical equipment could be produced sooner!”

“Magical equipment stronger than the Grand Illusionary Soldiers?” Li Yao licked his dry lips and felt that the tip of his tongue was hot. He could not tell whether he was excited or anxious.

“Have you noticed it?” The Fire Ant King squinted and said, “The Grand Illusionary Soldiers recently produced are mottled, as if they have patches all over their body. Also, their movement is a bit rigid, too, and not as swift as the first Grand Illusionary Soldiers.”

Li Yao and Professor Mo Xuan observed carefully for a moment and nodded at the same time.

“I get it now. The materials that make up the Grand Illusionary Soldiers are not the refined raw minerals but the scrap from the primeval battlefield. Or in other words, they are not ‘produced’ but ‘jumbled’!”

Li Yao patted his head, somewhat in relief. “There go my worries! How could it be so fast to build a complete metal collection and purification system? It is too appalling even for the Imperium! As it turns out, all of them are piled up with garbage. That makes much more sense!

“No wonder they are not producing more Grand Illusionary Soldiers. I assume that it is because the ‘garbage’ nearby has all been collected. There are no materials now!”

Professor Mo Xuan’s voice was still tightened. “However, if we leave them alone, they will build a real purification plant and a magical equipment center sooner or later. By then, walking down from the assembly lines will probably be the most elite Grand Illusionary Soldiers and the powerful magical equipment beyond our imagination!”

“We must… take over it!” Li Yao’s eyes glittered in greed. He licked his sharp teeth and said, “The mainframe crystal processor of the war base must store countless designs of the military magical equipment of the Imperium of True Human Beings as well as the bizarre buildings and the procedures to build them! If we can get this ‘mobile war base’ and even duplicate it on a large scale, our capability will certainly witness a huge leap!”

Magma-like brilliance flowed out of the Fire Ant King’s eyes as he mumbled, “Yes. We are now developing the resources planets of the Flying Star Sector on a large scale and even hoping to look for more Sectors beyond. With such a mobile war base, our efficiency will be more than ten times higher!”

“Professor! A few years ago, you swallowed most of the computational ability of the ‘star brain’ and grew a deep understanding about the crystal processor system of the Imperium of True Human Beings. You’ve also developed several pertinent viruses targeting such crystal processors. Are you confident to sneak into the war base, steal its mainframe crystal processor, and turn it into part of yourself?” Li Yao asked, full of hope.

“It’s hard to say.” Professor Mo Xuan pondered for a moment and shook his head. “There are two problems. Firstly, the ‘star brain’ that I swallowed was made by the star child, who came from the Imperium more than a hundred years ago.

“It means that the star brain represented the level of the Imperium of True Human Beings more than a hundred years ago.

“We don’t know yet when the ‘war base’ was invented and which era the mainframe crystal processor it adopted belongs to. If it is the latest model with the most cutting-edge technologies, it won’t be easy for me to hack and control it.

“Secondly, the mainframe crystal processor is surrounded by the war base and protected by so many Grand Illusionary Soldiers. Besides, real Immortal Cultivators must be supervising everything inside the base. We must think carefully about how to sneak in.”

Staring at the war base far away, the Fire Ant King asked resolutely, “What if we create a distraction for you?”

“It’s not a good plan.” Li Yao pondered for a moment and vetoed the idea himself. “Right now, the enemy has stopped the production of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers and dedicated most of the resources to the expansion of their base. They must be making preparations for certain large magical equipment.

“The expansion and upgrade of the base will not be completed soon. During that time, the improvement of its overall combat ability will be limited.

“Before, we estimated that it was a ‘scout’ sent by the Imperium of True Human Beings and that there couldn’t be too many tough experts on it. But from what we’ve seen, it is probably going to develop on its own and produce an army in silence. So, we must rectify our previous judgment. The Immortal Cultivators in the war base are not scouts but some sort of commanders. They can’t be weak!

“We only have three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. If the enemy has one to two Nascent Soul Stage experts, with so many Grand Illusionary Soldiers and defense systems as well as the ultimate magical equipment hidden inside the base, it is very possible that we will be blocked!

“So, we will be alerting the enemy!”

The Fire Ant King and Professor Mo Xuan realized that it did make sense. The Imperium had projected such a terrifying war base, in which a lot of critical technologies of the Imperium were stored, from afar. If it could be occupied by three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators easily, the Imperium would not have gone there for an invasion at all but to commit suicide.

There had to be tougher methods of attack deep inside the base that they could not compete with easily.

“Right now, the Immortal Cultivators are unaware of our existence, and they do not know that we have grasped much information about them. That’s why they are not nervous at all and have switched to the ‘base expansion’ mode after only producing a thousand Grand Illusionary Soldiers!”

Li Yao's eyes were still as bloodshot as those of a hungry wolf, but his voice was extremely calm as he analyzed carefully, "If we launch an assault but fail, the Immortal Cultivators will certainly devote all the resources to the production of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers. In a few days, countless Grand Illusionary Soldiers will be jumbled crazily!

"Therefore, our best strategy is still to wait for Burning Prairie to arrive!

"When Burning Prairie comes here with dozens of Core Formation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, it can attack from the front and distract the base's computational ability while Professor and my senior brothers sneak into the base in the form of liquid metal, exactly like what we did to the star brain on Heavenly Phantom. We will definitely be able to take over the war base!"

There was no absolutely-perfect magical equipment or tactic in the universe. The Grand Illusionary Soldiers seemed overwhelming and blood-freezing, but they had a fatal shortcoming, which was their dependency on the mainframe crystal processor.

When the mainframe crystal processors manipulated thousands of Grand Illusionary Soldiers in a fierce battle, a lot of its computational ability would certainly be consumed. It would be a huge burden for the crystal processor itself.

It would also be a great opportunity for Li Yao and his companions!

Right then, the Fire Ant King suddenly exclaimed, "Look. Somebody is out!"

Li Yao and Professor Mo Xuan both shivered. They retreated further into the crevice while looking at the war base through a crystal camera whose resolution had been set to the highest.

Three glamorous shadows slowly rose up from the arced dome of the war base and floated in midair.

Compared with the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, they were tall and muscular, with an average height of more than two meters. The largest of them was more than 2.5 meters tall, the most standard size for a crystal suit.

Agile stripes of light were flowing around their armor like tamed lightning, forming a second armor that was made of light around them and wreathing them in an unearthly halo.

If such halos were spiritual shields, it meant that they boasted technology to control the spiritual and electromagnetic fields that was more advanced than the federation’s, which allowed them to change their spiritual shields into whatever shape they wanted.

Judging from their glamorous armor, their swift movement, and their magnificent auras, they were definitely not Grand Illusionary Soldiers but three Immortal Cultivators!

Chapter 1231 - First Contact!

Despite Li Yao, the Fire Ant King, and Professor Mo Xuan’s experiences in life-and-death struggles, they were still a bit anxious.

This was the first time that they had ever met the real Immortal Cultivators. Not the counterfeits such as Xiao Xuance and Lu Zui, not the remaining soul such as the star child, but authentic goods from the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“Their spiritual pressure is quite high. Judging from the twisted air around them, they must be very strong.”

“It’s hard to say how advanced their crystal suits are, but based on their fabulous and delicate spiritual shields, their control technology of the spiritual force field is definitely more developed than ours. Chances are that any bullets we shoot at them will be blown away or even sent back to us!”

“Li Yao was quite right. Three Immortal Cultivators, with so many Grand Illusionary Soldiers, are too much for the three of us. Even if they cannot defeat us, they will at least have time to retreat into the turtle shell!”

While Li Yao and his companions were whispering to each other, the three Immortal Cultivators in the distance took off their facial covers one after another and revealed their real faces, perhaps because they were confident about their own capability and believed that nothing on the planet, which had been dormant for so long, was a threat to them.

The three Immortal Cultivators were made of two males and a female. The shortest of them was an old man with a wrinkled face, a long hawk nose, and a pair of gloomy eyes. The brawniest of them was a bald, middle-aged man with scars on his face and a mustache that looked like black caterpillars. The youngest of them was a female with a pretty face. She was also the least calm of the three. Looking at the primeval relics around, she was almost bouncing in delight.

The three of them seemed to have just woken up from a prolonged hibernation. Their faces were all a bit pale, but they were reddening at a visible speed.

All the three of them took a deep breath. With fascinated expressions, they floated in midair and patrolled in their new ‘territory’ while they chatted with each other at ease.

Li Yao and his companions were too far away from them. Not having the courage to eavesdrop on the conversation with their techniques, they could only try to observe the Immortal Cultivators’ lips and guessed what they were saying. Because of the angle, they could not see very clearly, and they could only basically get what the strangers were saying after observing intermittently for about twenty minutes.

The female Immortal Cultivator took a long breath at first and said, “It’s been a long time since I last breathed such natural air!”

Then, her eyes glowed as she looked at the surroundings. “Exactly like I told you. There’s truly something here. A relic of the Pangu civilization! Such a great contribution would even be enough to expiate our past crimes if they were ten times more serious! As long as we deliver the message back to the Imperium, our titles, manors, and slaves will all be given back. We will even get ten times, or even a hundred times, more as reward!”

Of the two male Immortal Cultivators, the scar-faced, bald man who looked like a black tower appeared to be a taciturn one. He often replied with silence when the female companion quacked ten sentences. He was simply scratching his moustache, observing the relic, and nodding in satisfaction. The old man with a wrinkled face, on the other hand, was rolling his cunning eyes all the time. There was no telling what was on his mind, but he was echoing the female Immortal Cultivator.

Their accent was slightly different from the accent of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, or the Blood Demon Sector. It was impossible for Li Yao and his companions to grasp every word.

After observing for a long time, they finally got a general idea from the Immortal Cultivators’ conversation. The Immortal Cultivators had committed a certain unpardonable crime in the Imperium of True Human Beings, so they were exiled there to expand the territory for the Imperium as punishment.

They were the only three inside the war base, and they had been hibernating all the time until the mainframe crystal processor of the war base detected the feeble signals from Kunlun and woke them up.

The female Immortal Cultivator seemed to be some sort of ‘navigator’. It was at her insistence that they jumped to this place and discovered Kunlun at the cost of their remaining fuel!

“As we expected, the Imperium of True Human Beings has long learned the existence of the relics of the Pangu civilization. After finding this place, they are more excited than surprised!”

“Also, the Imperium of True Human Beings indeed has a slavery system. All three Immortal Cultivators owned a lot of slaves in the past, but the slaves have been divested because of a certain crime they committed. However, if they make great contributions again, the slaves will be given back to them!”

“Super large star beacons must be being built inside their war base. As soon as the star beacons are completed and activated, they will be able to reach out to the expedition army of the Imperium and even allow the expedition army to jump over directly!”

Li Yao and his companions were discussing the solution to the crisis when they sensed sharp pain simultaneously, and their pupils constricted to the minimum!

A shocking scene appeared on the picture sent back by the crystal camera.

The three Immortal Cultivators stopped talking at some point and stared at them warily.

“We’ve been caught!”

All the three of them were grasped by anxiety. They did not expect the Immortal Cultivators’ senses to be so keen. They were not even looking directly at the newcomers and simply observing them through the crystal camera, but they were still noticed!

Shua! Shua! Shua!

The facial covers of the three Immortal Cultivators closed again. The flames of light around them expanded and turned brighter and brighter.

Dozens of Grand Illusionary Soldiers flew toward Li Yao and his companions’ shelter in a battle formation.

“A battle right now is not in our favor whether we win or lose. We must not let them know our real intentions until Burning Prairie arrives!”

Thinking quickly, Li Yao declared, “I will distract them and try to calm them down. Also, I can elicit intelligence about the Imperium of True Human Beings from them! Unless it is absolutely necessary—say, the scene really goes out of my control or other unexpected changes take place—let’s not communicate with each other!”

The dozens of Grand Illusionary Soldiers arrived above them, and their crystal cannons had been activated. The immense spiritual waves shining around the barrels made the weapons look like colorful swirls.

There being no time for any discussion, Li Yao took off his crystal suit and the mustard-seed combat suit as quickly as possible. He then put on a well-worn fiber combat suit made of regular materials and the ‘Rockman’, a ragged, rusted engineering crystal suit that he had carefully prepared before the journey!

Gritting his teeth, he dashed out of the crevice!

Li Yao rushed here and there among the rocks and the debris, as clumsily as a rabbit whose leg was broken. He was waving his hands and legs crazily, and his every movement was only indicative of one thing—panic.

He sensed clearly that the dozens of Grand Illusionary Soldiers in the sky had locked onto him. Yet, they delayed their attack and simply surrounded him not far away.

Shua!

Right then, a streak of seven-colored brilliance appeared in front of him as quickly as lightning!

He crossed his arms to protect his chest out of natural instinct. An orange spiritual shield was condensed instantly, only to be crumbled 0.1 seconds later!

He was blown out by an uncanny force into a rock, leaving a deep dent below him. The cracks were spreading out like a spider web.

It was the youngest female Immortal Cultivator, who had kicked right in his chest and crushed both his spiritual shield and the Rockman Engineering Suit into smithereens!

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

Dazzling sparks were bursting out of the Rockman, and its hands and feet were cramping weird.

Li Yao moaned in great pain as if he could not even get to his feet.

The three Immortal Cultivators slowly landed while the Grand Illusionary Soldiers went back and searched Li Yao and his companions’ shelter.

While Li Yao distracted the firepower of the Immortal Cultivators, the Fire Ant King and Professor Mo Xuan had run away at the earliest opportunity. Of course, there was not a single trace left.

Li Yao was greatly relieved. He calculated the speed and strength of the female Immortal Cultivator's previous kick and inferred her real capability.

The female Immortal Cultivator closed her fingers. A tiny dagger of light was slowly condensed on her fingertips, and she stabbed the dagger toward Li Yao.

Li Yao controlled his every cluster of nerves and muscle fibers precisely and held back his urge to counterattack. He pretended that he was unable to move and completely at the enemy's mercy.

He won the gamble.

The enemy did not hurt him at all. She merely dissected the broken 'Rockman Engineering Suit' and set him free from it.

The three Immortal Cultivators observed him with great interest, as if he were a gorilla in a zoo.

"Cough! Cough! Cough! Cough! Cough! Cough!"

Li Yao coughed hard and crouched like a dried shrimp. His tears and snot spurted out at the same time while he asked, his voice shivering in fear. "Who—who are you exactly?"

The three Immortal Cultivators ignored him. They each dismantled many components from the Rockman Engineering Suit and covered the components in light, as if they were running some sort of analysis.

Very soon, the old man said, "The metal reaction of his crystal suit is different from the metal reaction of the planet. He shouldn't be a native of this place!"

“The style of his crystal suit is obviously different from the style of the ancient armors in the primeval era. It is different from the Covenant Alliance’s style, too,” the middle-aged man remarked. “The characteristics of the Star Ocean Imperium are all over the crystal suit. He must be a descendant of the imperium at the edge of the cosmos.”

The female Immortal Cultivator who had kicked Li Yao right in the chest, on the other hand, picked up the Rockman Engineering Suit’s crystal processor and ridiculed it. “Such an underdeveloped crystal processor. I can crack it in the blink of an eye. Let’s see what is inside. Ha? Flying Star Sector? He is from the Flying Star Sector?”

Despite their thick facial covers, Li Yao could clearly perceive that the eyes of the three Immortal Cultivators were shining all of a sudden.

They had been exiled to the edge of the cosmos because of the coordinates of the Flying Star Sector that had been sent by the star child in the beginning.

The Flying Star Sector was their original target.

The killing intent on the female Immortal Cultivator was even more intense than before. Malicious brilliance was beaming out of the four crystal cameras embedded in the facial cover, as if she were going to dismember Li Yao into slices for research.

Suppressed by her killing intent, Li Yao was shuddering even harder, but his heart was as calm as ice. His braincells trembled crazily as he analyzed the postures of the three Immortal Cultivators and the loopholes on their crystal suits. He drafted forty-seven tactics within the second.

Chapter 1232 - Mutual Cheating!

While the two parties were at loggerheads, the short old man suddenly took a step forward and stood between Li Yao and the female Immortal Cultivator. He pressed his temples, removing the facial cover and the helmet and revealing a face that was full of wrinkles.

It was quite odd that, while Li Yao’s first impression about the old man was cleverness, if not cunningness, when he observed the old man at close distance, gentle brightness seemed to be emanating from every pore on his body at this moment, making him look kind, benevolent, and trustworthy.

His eyes were almost transparent, and his face was warm, caring, and mixed with the delight of running into compatriots in the middle of nowhere as he stared at Li Yao’s pupils and seemed to pierce into his brain.

This is an expert of mental warfare!

Li Yao was suddenly alarmed. He immediately realized the old man’s identity. The guy’s eyes boasted not only hypnotizing but also lie-testing techniques!

“Is my fellow Cultivator from the Flying Star Sector? Are we in the Flying Star Sector right now?” the old man asked in both surprise and joy.

Li Yao gave no answer. The muscles all over his body were still tightened. There was half fear and half alert in his eyes.

He did not want to brag, but in his more than ten years of travelling in the universe, he had never been scared of anybody in terms of acting skills!

The old man rolled his eyes and waved at the two Immortal Cultivators and the Grand Illusionary Soldiers.

The two Immortal Cultivators sniffed and took a few steps back. Even the Grand Illusionary Soldiers also dispersed, withdrawing their chainswords and crystal cannons.

The old man helped Li Yao to his feet pretentiously and apologized, “Fellow Cultivator, do excuse us. We have only just arrived in this foreign land, and we were being a bit paranoid for fear of encountering evil creatures. We didn’t know that it was my fellow Cultivator who observed us, and we attacked too heavily. Please do forgive us, fellow Cultivator!”

“Cough! Cough! I—I didn’t know that you were human beings, either. You were causing such a fuss. Of course, I had to take a look!”

Li Yao vomited a mouthful of blood and took a deep breath. Fear slowly faded from his face, replaced by curiosity. He eyed the war base far away and then the three Immortal Cultivators, before he clicked his tongue and remarked, “Your crystal suits are different from ours. Those puppets look rather similar to the Grand Illusionary Soldiers of our Flying Star Sector, though. Who are you exactly?”

“Grand Illusionary Soldiers?”

The three Immortal Cultivators exchanged a thoughtful look. The old man’s smile was even sunnier as he replied mildly, “May I know your name, my fellow Cultivator? What is this place in the Flying Star Sector, and how far away is it from your mother planet?”

“I am Li Yao, a Cultivator in the Building Foundation Stage. As for exactly what this place is, I don’t have the slightest idea!” Li Yao said pitifully. “I ended up in this place after my starship had an accident!”

“Oh?”

The three Immortal Cultivators looked at each other in bewilderment. The old man said in a daze, “Misery truly loves company. We also ran into a storm in the sea of stars when we almost used up the fuel on the starship. We were forced to land in this place, but we didn’t expect that we would run into a fellow Cultivator from a different Sector!”

Noticing that Li Yao was distracted by the war base far away, the old man said with a smile, “There’s no need to fret, Fellow Cultivator Li. That is our starship, which is now self-recovering and refilling its fuel. As soon as the maintenance is done, we will be able to leave this place, with you, my fellow Cultivator, too!”

Ecstasy immediately beamed out of Li Yao’s eyes. He exclaimed in joy and waved his fists.

“However—” The old man frowned. “Such emergency maintenance won’t sustain long. If we don’t hurry to perform a full maintenance in a dock, it will collapse in space sooner or later!”

“It will be easy if we return to the Flying Star Sector!” Li Yao blurted. “The Flying Star Sector is adept at the maintenance of starships. Your starship is definitely going to be repaired there!”

“How exactly did you end up in this place, Fellow Cultivator Li?”

Colorful brilliance shot out of the old man’s eyes, and his thousands of telepathic thoughts crept into Li Yao’s head through his pupils, decorating his voice with irresistible charm. “Right now, we are all trapped in this place. It’s necessary to work together and get out of here! Fellow Cultivator Li, your experience might help us localize the Flying Star Sector’s coordinates. Please do tell us everything without leaving out any detail.

“After we have the starship repaired, Fellow Cultivator Li, you will be able to go home!”

Li Yao sensed that the old man’s voice and eyes turned into a weird force that were stimulating his cerebral cortex, especially the brain cells and clusters of nerves that were responsible for memories.

If he were truly a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator, chances were that he really would have been hypnotized after only a few words and confessed everything.

However, Li Yao’s brain had suffered the blasts of Ou Yezi, the mental devil, and many other weird forces. His brain cells were even more developed than a regular Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator’s. Such petty tricks were naturally not a problem for him.

“My father is an elder of the Swooping Eagle Sect. According to the rules of the Swooping Eagle Sect, every disciple of the sect must train themselves for three to five years or even longer in the real world while concealing their identity. For me, I changed my name and went to the Thousand Sails Space Zone, where I applied to be a guard for a short-distance cargo ship named ‘Sparrow’.”

Li Yao pretended that his eyes were frozen while he said dumbly, “Sparrow was a middle-sized carrier that often commuted among almost ten space zones. The sailing routes were the most prosperous ones in the Flying Star Sector. Nothing serious ever happened.

“However, the space pirates in the Flying Star Sector were getting more and more out of control. It was said that some terrible guys who called themselves ‘Immortal Cultivators’ also showed up…”

Li Yao could tell that the words ‘Immortal Cultivators’ were a shock for the listeners.

Concealing the existence of the ‘Immortal Cultivators’ in the Flying Star Sector was meaningless.

Since the star child had been disrupted when he only transmitted part of the coordinates of the Flying Star Sector, for the Immortal Cultivators of the Imperium of True Human Beings, the star child must have been exposed. So, the existence of the Immortal Cultivators was not necessarily a secret.

If he pretended that he did not know anything about the Immortal Cultivators, the three Immortal Cultivators before him might grow suspicious. Therefore, he might as well release some valuable intelligence in order to win their trust.

Besides, Li Yao also wanted to shock the three Immortal Cultivators with the words and see their reaction so that he could know more about the Imperium of True Human Beings.

“Our carrier team was attacked by space pirates during the voyage. Other starships were all captured, but we activated the short-distance space jump system in the hurry. After jumping aimlessly for a while, we got rid of the space pirates, only to find ourselves in the Wraiths' Wrath, the most dangerous stone belt of the Flying Star Sector!

"To get out of the Wraiths' Wrath, our captain performed a long-distance space jump without caring about anything. Our starship nearly broke apart because of the jump. Almost everybody on board was killed, too!

"We didn't know how long we floated in space, but when our last fuel was running out, we finally received feeble signals of this planet. Having no choice except to take our chances, we arrived here."

The old man rolled his eyes. "So, does that mean you have companions, Fellow Cultivator Li?"

"No!" Li Yao shook his head hard, as if he still had not recovered from the shock. His voice trembled as he said, "We did not know that it would be such a dreadful planet that half of it had broken into a dangerous ocean of meteoroids!

"Our carrier was riddled with holes in the first place. It was soon ripped apart by the meteoroids after a few collisions!

"Everybody ran to the escape capsules, but a meteoroid happened to crash into the area where the escape capsules were at. They all died. All of them!

"I was the only one who summoned my crystal suit in time. With the feeble impetus of the crystal suit, I managed to fly into the gravity sphere of the planet and survived!

"However, in the past year, I have been living on the food in my Cosmos Ring. I'm about to run out of food and starve here. I didn't know that I would be fortunate enough to run into my fellow Cultivators!

“May I know the seniors’ names and where you are from?” Li Yao asked respectfully.

The old man smiled and gestured for his two companions to take off the helmet and the facial cover.

“I am Su Changfa, captain of ‘Flourishing Sun’. This is Kou Ruhuo, chief of arms of Flourishing Sun. This is Tang Qianhe, navigator of Flourishing Sun!”

Li Yao clicked his tongue in sympathy. “The cosmic storm that you experienced must’ve been a strong one. You are the only three survivors of such a huge starship?”

But he reviewed the three Immortal Cultivators’ duties coldly in his heart.

Since ‘Kou Ruhuo’, the bald, scar-faced man, was the ‘chief of arms’ of the three, he was probably the one with the highest combat ability. Should they be engaged in a fight, he should be dealt with first!

However, the possibility of the cr*ppy old man ‘Su Changfa’ tricking him could not be ruled out yet. One was often the opposite of their appearance. Chances were that the navigator ‘Tang Qianhe’, or even the old man himself, was the strongest of them!

Everything was possible. He had to continue investigating.

Su Changfa burst into laughter and waved his hands. “Fellow Cultivator Li, you are kind enough to care about unknown fellow Cultivators when you are in desperation yourself, but please rest assured, Fellow Cultivator Li. We didn’t lose any hands. When Flourishing Sun took off, we were the only three on board!

“Different from you, we are not from a Sector nearby but from the center of the cosmos after cruising millions of lightyears. The journey to break the void is too dangerous for us to bring too many people with us.

“Besides—”

Su Changfa scratched his long beard and smiled even more gently, “We are here for peace, friendship, and development. We are not here to fight a war. Why do we need so many hands?”

“Center of the cosmos?”

Li Yao was utterly shocked. He stammered, “Wasn’t—wasn’t it the capital of the Star Ocean Imperium in the past?”

Brilliance suddenly shone in Su Changfa’s eyes. “Oh? You know the Star Ocean Imperium, too, Fellow Cultivator Li? It seems that the lineage of history hasn’t been entirely cut off in your world. Or is it because you’ve seen fellow Cultivators from other Sectors?”

Li Yao nodded first because he shook it later. He replied dutifully, “Of course, we all know the Star Ocean Imperium. It’s in the history books, but I have never seen or heard of fellow Cultivators from other Sectors before!

“Hehe!”

He seemed to have thought of something. Swallowing in excitement, Li Yao stuttered, with greed written all over his face, “If I can bring my fellow Cultivators back to the Flying Star Sector, I will certainly have both fame and fortune!”

Chapter 1233 - We Are Here for Peace!

Obvious disgust and contempt flashed on Su Changfa, Kou Ruhuo, and Tang Qianhe’s faces.

Su Changfa slowly extended his hand and patted Li Yao’s shoulder.

His hand was soft and comfortable like giant, warm foam. Li Yao felt that the bones all over his body were itching.

Pretending that he did not catch Li Yao’s last sentence, he retained a sincere smile. “Fellow Cultivator Li, since you do know about the Star Ocean Imperium, our trouble to explain it to you can be saved. That’s right. We are exactly from the Star Ocean Imperium’s capital area, the most glorious land of the civilization of mankind in the past!

“In the territory where humanity once thrived, a new country is now rising as the successor of the Star Ocean Imperium’s will and the guardian of our civilization. It is evolving, evolving, and evolving while it explores the true meaning of ‘human beings’!

“Our civilization has developed to a very high level, and we have defeated countless evil creatures who coveted the prosperous land. The center of the universe is under our steady control!

“But we know that, at the edge of the universe, many human brothers and sisters are still struggling in darkness and obscuration!

“Therefore, some of us have been volunteering to explore the universe on starships that represent peace and brightness, hoping to find more Sectors so that we can share our knowledge, wisdom, technologies, and techniques. Eventually, the civilization of human beings as a whole will leap forward!

“That is everything that we want.

“A few years ago, we discovered a world named the Flying Star Sector from an ancient star map of the Star Ocean Imperium. It was allegedly a central world at the frontier of the imperium ten thousand years ago. Maybe, we thought, many compatriots are still living there ten thousand years later!

“Therefore, we set off on our journey and try to find you despite the long distance!

“It’s a pity that the universe is simply too vast and dangerous. With the incomplete star map of the past, we couldn’t lock onto the coordinates precisely and lost our way in the super long-distance space jump. Later, we were involved in a cosmic storm, which consumed most of our fuel. We were forced to land here in the end!

“But as they say, every cloud has a silver lining. We didn’t know that we would run into Fellow Cultivator Li from the Flying Star Sector here! It seems that the connection between us and the Flying Star Sector cannot be ripped apart by even the cosmic storm!”

While talking, Su Changfa continued patting Li Yao’s shoulder softly.

His five fingers were bouncing thousands of times in the tiniest movements, sending uncanny forces into Li Yao’s body.

“Huh. This old fart is stimulating your nerve clusters!”

The mental devil crawled out of Li Yao’s head and commented on Su Changfa hypnotization skills. “Not bad. Not bad. He is sending spiritual energy into your body without alarming you and stimulating your nerve clusters, making the hormones in your body be secreted precisely. Your central nerves and brain cells will thus be affected. Not only will you believe his words beyond your control, he can even manipulate your emotions to some extent. This is a rather interesting technique!”

The mental devil was a great expert of manipulation itself. Li Yao’s brain was what it most desired, too. Hardly had the foreign forces entered Li Yao’s brain when they were discovered and seen through by the mental devil.

Li Yao sniffed in his heart. His soul had gone through too many blasts and mutations. It was much stronger than that of regular Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators!

Also, when he was in the Flying Star Sector, he had once received a secret technique of Hellsword, a Nascent Soul Stage expert, who specialized in mental attacks. He practiced hard later and became an expert of mental attacks himself, too!

To some extent, he was attacking and defending against the mental devil hundreds of rounds every day deep inside his brain. The two parties were on par with each other, and he was even at a slim advantage. That was why he could suppress the mental devil.

Yet, the old man was trying to hypnotize him? He did not know what he was doing!

Even without the reminder of the mental devil, Li Yao still understood the changes happening to his body. The secretion of his hormones was under his precise control, too.

It was only because he did not want to alarm them that he allowed Su Changfa to ‘hypnotize’ him.

Li Yao’s face was exultant, thrilled, and then twisted while he was drooling greedily. He bowed and adulated, “So—so, you are three seniors from the center of the cosmos. What—what—what a—”

He pretended that he was lost for words in excitement.

His reactions were within the Immortal Cultivators’ expectations. Vague inky colors dyed Su Changfa’s almost transparent eyes, turning them into two bottomless springs, while he said in a soft voice, “There’s no need to flatter us as seniors. We are here for communication on equal terms. Let’s just call each other ‘fellow Cultivator’.

“Fellow Cultivator Li, the purpose of our journey is to disseminate the culture at the center of the cosmos and to reach out to the brothers and compatriots in the Sectors at the edge of the cosmos. We are here for peace and communication, and we didn’t carry too many weapons with us. Except for Fellow Cultivator Kou Ruhuo, who boasts abilities to protect himself, neither I nor Fellow Cultivator Tang Qianhe know how to fight!

“From what we’ve heard, the Flying Star Sector is rather a dangerous place plagued by the space pirates and the Immortal Cultivators, isn’t it? Would they threaten our lives if we go to the Flying Star Sector?

“I know a thing or two about the space pirates. Bandits who travel in the space and rob other people. That’s all. But I wonder… what are the Immortal Cultivators?”

Li Yao sneered to himself. *Do not know how to fight? Chances are that the most dangerous one of the three Immortal Cultivators is the old fox who is good at hypnotization and mental attacks!*

However, on the surface, he pretended that he was completely hypnotized and confessed everything he knew. “The Immortal Cultivators are terrorists who have popped up in recent years. They established an organization named ‘The Temple of Immortals’, which has been complicit with the space pirates!

“The Immortal Cultivators are different from us Cultivators!

“We Cultivators always dedicate ourselves to the execution of evil and the protection of ordinary people. We won’t hesitate to burn ourselves to illuminate the world!

“The Immortal Cultivators, however, consider ordinary people to be nothing but ants. They have no moral standards to achieve their purpose, and they can sacrifice tens of thousands of ordinary people without batting an eye!

“In the Flying Star Sector, the Immortal Cultivators have launched too many terror attacks. Countless ordinary people have been killed by them. They are a major trouble for us!”

“I didn’t know that there were such shameless Cultivators in the world!” Su Changfa said in shock. “Then, haven’t the fellow Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector figured a way to eliminate them yet? Have your Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators not taken action?”

In confusion, Li Yao replied, “Divinity Transformation Stage? There’s nobody in the Divinity Transformation Stage in the Flying Star Sector. Even the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators are only a handful, and only one of them is battle-type! The Flying Star Sector is too large a place. One battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator is far from enough!”

Su Changfa, Kou Ruhuo, and Tang Qianhe looked at each other, almost unable to hold back their derision and delight.

Kou Ruhuo, the tall and strong ‘chief of arms’, stepped forward and asked solemnly, “Fellow Cultivator Li, I wonder, what’s the population of the Flying Star Sector? How many warships and worthy Cultivators are out there?”

It was quite a sensitive question, but Li Yao appeared inert enough to catch the killing intent entailed in the sentence. Tilting his head and thinking for a moment, he shook his head and said, “The population… is about seven to eight billion, or maybe even ten billion. I really can’t tell!

“The Flying Star Sector is a civilization based on starships. Most of the people live on starships that drift from space zone to space zone. There is not a central government. No conclusive census has ever been conducted, so nobody can tell the precise population!”

“There isn’t a central government?”

In a daze, Kou Ruhuo asked, “Then, how do you organize your army to fight the space pirates… and the Immortal Cultivators?”

With a bitter face, Li Yao replied, “That’s the problem! The Flying Star Sector experienced a great catastrophe five thousand years ago. The environment of the entire world underwent drastic changes. Ever since then, we have been loose sand. A few starships make a sect, and every sect minds their own business. There has never been a united army. That’s why the space pirates and the Immortal Cultivators have been causing so much trouble!

“However, after the Immortal Cultivators showed up, all the sects finally joined our hands to build a piece of magical equipment named ‘Grand Illusionary Soldier’, hoping to exterminate the Immortal Cultivators!”

Tang Qianhe, the ‘navigator’ and the only female Immortal Cultivator, asked with a smile, “Grand Illusionary Soldier? What is that?”

Li Yao nodded at the Grand Illusionary Soldiers of the Imperium of True Human Beings in the sky. “It is similar to the metal puppets of yours. Such magical equipment can fight on their own without being controlled by a Cultivator. All the Grand Illusionary Soldiers are manipulated by the ‘star brain’, a super crystal processor. It is said that several million of them will be enough to settle the trouble of the space pirates and the Immortal Cultivators once and for all!”

“That explains a lot!” Su Changfa’s deep, dark eyes rolled time and time again. “But I wonder, when did you end up in this place? At that time, the final battle between you and the Immortal Cultivators had not begun yet, had it?”

Li Yao nodded. “We were ambushed by the space pirates five years ago. Then, we drifted in space for about three years before we found this place. It’s been around two years since I was forced to land here!”

“Since you were forced to land in your crystal suit, you certainly didn’t have a starship to live in,” Kou Ruhuo said coldly. “Where have you been residing in the past two years, Fellow Cultivator Li?”

Li Yao pointed east and said, “I’ve been living in a cave several hundred kilometers to the east!”

Cold brilliance suddenly shined in Tang Qianhe’s eyes. “If you’ve been living hundreds of kilometers in the east, why did you come here?”

Sullenly, Li Yao replied, “I’ve been hiding in my cave, not daring to come out, fearing that some ferocious beasts might be lurking on this planet. But the food that I carried is about to run out. It’s not like that I can feed on moss every day, right?

“Besides, my crystal suit hasn’t been maintained for two years, so many components have already rusted!

“I detected a large-scale metal reaction in this direction. That was why I decided to risk coming over. Even if I couldn’t find any food, I could at least find some fuel and metal components so that my crystal suit could be more or less repaired. After that, I would be able to hunt in the abysses!

“I’d found nothing of value after exploring for almost half a month until I noticed that my fellow Cultivators landed today. I didn’t know whether you were friends or foes, human beings or demons. That’s why I was lurking and observing in the dark!”

Chapter 1234 - Who’s Being Hypnotized?

The three of them cooperated with each other and asked Li Yao a lot more questions.

Most of the questions were about the politics, geography, history, population, and sects of the Flying Star Sector, especially the scale of the starships, the number of Cultivators, and the important wars in the history of the Flying Star Sector.

From the perspective of a Mr. Nobody, Li Yao dutifully confessed everything that a regular Cultivator in the Building Foundation Stage should know, except that he underrated the Flying Star Sector in some critical aspects, such as the size and firepower of the strongest warship of the Flying Star Sector and the number of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Core Formation Staged. All in all, he described it to be a chaotic world where everybody fought for their own interests and whose security was supported by the Grand Illusionary Soldiers.

The three Immortal Cultivators showed neither trust nor suspicion regarding his answers. After interrogating him for half an hour, they asked again exactly how he came to Kunlun, especially the times and coordinates of the short-distance space jumps that his carrier performed.

Li Yao knew that they were trying to infer the relative distance between the Flying Star Sector and Kunlun from the number of space jumps.

With the distance and part of the coordinates of the Flying Star Sector, it was possible for them to deduce the precise location of the Flying Star Sector.

Naturally, Li Yao ‘was not wary at all’. He carefully ‘thought back’ for a long time and described a fake memory without pause.

Occasionally, however, he hesitated, and his eyeballs slightly shivered. Even his heartbeat and the secretion of his hormones also showed anomalies.

The three Immortal Cultivators seemed to have noticed nothing wrong. After asking him more than ten times, they finally nodded in satisfaction, and Su Changfa smiled. “Fellow Cultivator Li, what you have said will be of great help for our escape. Now, we should all work together to overcome the difficulties!

“Why don’t you join us and live on ‘Flourishing Sun’, Fellow Cultivator Li? Isn’t it much better than living in the wilderness?

“Look, we have hundreds of artificial warriors here. Let’s go to your residence and move your belongings to Flourishing Sun!”

Li Yao could not help but feel that he was lucky. He knew that the old fox did not believe what he said and intended to search his living place.

Thankfully, the first thing that he did after landing on Kunlun was prepare such a residence. He had even prepared all the living traces including excrement in advance.

It was a valuable experience that he had learned when he pretended to be a ‘barbarian’ on Iron Plateau.

Therefore, he agreed in delight. The four of them, together with a hundred Grand Illusionary Soldiers, flew all the way to the east. Very soon, they reached his ‘residence’, which was hidden among moss and bushes!

“My residence is rather messy because I had little time for cleaning. Please excuse me, seniors,” Li Yao said, blushing.

“It doesn’t matter. It doesn’t matter. Fellow Cultivator Li, you must be tired after such a long journey. Why don’t you take a rest and let our warriors do the job?”

Su Changfa patted Li Yao’s shoulder again, but his hand slithered to Li Yao’s neck like a snake and pecked the back of his head.

Li Yao’s eyes immediately froze and became covered in a layer of gray mist. He could not help but lean backward, only to be caught by a Grand Illusionary Soldier. Then, soft snoring sounds came over.

Su Changfa grabbed his wrist and sensed his pulse carefully for a moment. Then, he nodded and said, “The breathing, heartbeat, and flow of blood are all very stable. He has entered the deep sleep state.”

Li Yao sneered in his heart, calculating again whether or not he should launch an attack right now.

He knew that the Fire Ant King and Professor Mo Xuan would be lurking nearby. They had planted a lot of traps in advance.

However, Su Changfa was obviously an expert of mental warfare, and he definitely had better methods.

Meanwhile, Kou Ruhuo, the ‘chief of arms’ who appeared to be the strongest, had yet to reveal his truly capability. The casual kick from the navigator, Tang Qianhe, in the beginning suggested remarkable speed and strength.

Li Yao’s purpose was not simply to kill the three Immortal Cultivators. He was planning to capture one or two of them alive and interrogate them for more intelligence about the Imperium of True Human Beings. Moreover, he intended to take over Flourishing Sun, their war base.

If they activated a certain ‘self-destruction device’ when they were caught in desperation and detonated the entire war base, it would be a great waste.

Therefore, Li Yao did not move at all but continued to stay ‘sound asleep’ while waiting for an opportunity.

Judging from the speed of wind and the waves in the air, Li Yao sensed that the three Immortal Cultivators split apart and searched both in and out of the cave.

Tang Qianhe—the short, female navigator—however, squatted next to him and groped from his hair to his heel, searching even the gaps of his toes. She even unleashed feeble, itching electric currents to test if he had really fallen asleep.

It was a common approach for the Secret Sword Bureau of the Star Glory Federation, too. In the past few months, Li Yao had been in a close relationship with Guo Chunfeng, and he had learned quite a few sordid, shameless moves and the corresponding countermeasures from the new director of the Secret Sword Bureau.

Even if his nerve endings were being directly stimulated by electricity, he was still making the intuitional reactions fitting someone who was sound asleep.

Tang Qianhe’s hands went to a necklace on his neck.

Li Yao’s heart immediately tightened.

For him, covering his identity was as natural as breathing. It was not difficult at all.

What was really difficult was how to conceal the few most important Cosmos Rings on him!

The Cosmos Rings stored the critical magical equipment such as Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Dark Flame Gold and Black Wing. There was no way that Li Yao would let them be far away!

Before he left, Li Yao had pondered hard how he should hide the few Cosmos Rings when he was forced to resort to his acting skills after an encounter with the Immortal Cultivators.

He had thought for a long time and realized that it was not safe to hide them anywhere. Therefore, he simply chose the opposite approach. While hiding a few Cosmos Rings that he specially devised in the most conspicuous parts, he wore the Cosmos Rings that stored the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Dark Flame Gold, Black Wing and tons of crystals on his neck as a necklace, after polishing it into the most common appearance with the techniques of the Hundred Smelting Clan and painting it with a layer of gold lacquer!

Cosmos Rings were invaluable treasures. Normal Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators usually only hand a handful of them, but Li Yao had put almost ten on his neck, which formed a shining, gold necklace!

Whoever saw it would be fooled by its appearance. They would never believe that such an eye-catching necklace was actually made of Cosmos Rings.

Even so, Li Yao still sent telepathic thoughts to his every cluster of nerve ending. As long as Tang Qianhe grew even slightly suspicious, he would kill the woman immediately and attack the remaining two Immortal Cultivators together with the Fire Ant King and Professor Mo Xuan.

But luckily, Tang Qianhe was tricked!

She groped on the inconspicuous parts on Li Yao’s body for a long time but simply ignored the thick gold necklace.

After finding four Cosmos Rings, she sneered and patted Li Yao’s face before she stood straight again.

Li Yao was greatly relieved.

The four Cosmos Rings had been designed for them in the first place. They could take the Cosmos Rings if they wanted, but he would have them back sooner or later with additional interest!

Half an hour later, the three Immortal Cultivators gathered again to report their findings.

“The guy has indeed fallen asleep,” Tang Qianhe said. “I tested him with a secret technique, Green Bee Sting. His nerve reactions were quite normal. However, I did find a lot of interesting stuff on him!”

“I’ve searched both inside and outside,” Kou Ruhuo said. “Even his excrement has been examined. Some of it was left as least half a year ago. It seems that he has lived here for more than half a year. He wasn’t lying about that.”

“I have compared the logs in his crystal processor with everything he said,” Su Changfa said. “Every item corresponds perfectly!

“Also, just now, we asked him countless questions about the history, politics, geography, and social form of the Flying Star Sector repetitively. Those questions were carefully devised and correlated, too!

“I have inputted his answers into the mainframe crystal processor for deduction. There are no major loopholes. It is indeed a world that exists in reality. He couldn’t have imagined it based on nothing.”

“If so, everything makes sense now.” Tang Qianhe chuckled. “It seems that the star child, our senior from a hundred years ago who went missing, indeed ended up in the Flying Star Sector. However, this place was still controlled by the Cultivators, and he could not occupy it directly.

“Therefore, with thorough and delicate plans, he transformed part of the Cultivators into Immortal Cultivators in a hundred years and produced the magical equipment named the Grand Illusionary Soldier, hoping to fully control the Flying Star Sector!

“But in the end, some accident took place and rendered his endeavor a failure. He was not able to send the complete coordinates of the Flying Star Sector back and vanished!

“It doesn’t matter. What our senior failed to accomplish shall be continued by us. The result will be the same!”

“Wait,” Kou Ruhuo said coldly, “are you fully convinced by the guy’s words?”

Tang Qianhe sneered. “Of course not. Whenever we asked how the guy ended up in this place, he stammered and tried to change the topic. He is obviously hiding something from us!

“Also, he is just a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator. Even if he is a son of a certain sect, how can he be rich enough to own four Cosmos Rings?”

Su Changfa laughed, too, while scratching his long beard. He said casually, “I’ve been monitoring the guy’s breathing, heartbeat, and hormone secretion all the time just now. I found that the signs were all normal when he answered the questions about the general background of the Flying Star Sector, which suggested that he was speaking the truth.

“However, when we asked how he got here, something was obviously wrong with his breathing and heartbeat, and the secretion of several key hormones increased by at least twenty percent. They’re all reactions when you are lying.

“He wasn’t telling the truth!”

“Isn’t it simple?” Tang Qianhe asked lightheartedly. “In my opinion, let’s just waste our time no more and bring him back to Flourishing Sun, where he will be interrogated slowly and carefully. Or maybe, we can kill him here and now and freeze his brain. Then we’ll cut it into slices and scan them layer by layer. After the key memories are retrieved, the whole truth will be found out!”

Chapter 1235 - Ill Intentions!

Su Changfa shook his head and said, “It’s inappropriate.”

“Master Su, what’s wrong?”

Tang Qianhe was confused, “The guy is not anybody important. I don’t think he knows much useful information. Why should we waste our time and efforts on him?

“As long as we can determine the basic coordinates of the Flying Star Sector based on the intelligence in his head, we will be able to swallow the Flying Star Sector after building an enormous space gate and summoning the expedition fleet.

“What’s the use of keeping him alive?”

“If you are planning to summon the expedition fleet, it is indeed useless to keep the guy alive.”

Su Changfa’s face suddenly turned extremely weird. He said mysteriously, “But otherwise, he will prove to be greatly useful!”

Tang Qianhe and Kou Ruhuo were both surprised. Looking at each other, they both frowned, “What do you mean, Master Su?”

“The three of us are all losers in the competitions of our respective family or sect.”

Gloomily, Su Changfa said, one word after another, “We’ve lost everything we had. Position, glory, manor and slaves. We have even been blamed for things we didn’t do and exiled to the desolate land at the edge of the cosmos, with no way to come back for the rest of our lives!

“I’m too old to care about anything now. But the two of you are still very young. Are you really willing to live the rest of your lives like this?”

“But we’ve discovered a relic of the Pangu civilization!”

Tang Qianhe said in a hurry, “This is such a great accomplishment. Is it still not enough for us to be embraced again?”

“You’re wrong, Little Tang.”

Su Changfa sighed and said, “If we only discovered the Flying Star Sector as we were instructed to and made an accomplishment neither too big or too small, chances were that part of our crimes would be pardoned and our position would be slightly restored. The enemy in our family and sect would not consider us a great threat!

“However, as for such a great accomplishment as discovering a relic of the Pangu civilization… Is it bearable for the three of us?

“How will the guys who regard us as sworn enemies allow us to return with such an accomplishment, to take back everything that belongs to us, and even to seek revenge from them?”

Tang Qianhe and Kou Ruhuo both fell silent.

“Moreover, don’t you forget what the expedition army for this mission is made of!”

Su Changfa said coldly, “The Black Wind soldiers of the Black Wind Sector!

“The Black Wind Sector is one of the most dangerous Sectors in the territory of the Imperium. After years of battles with the Covenant Alliance and the extraterrestrial devils, the Black Wind soldiers are as ruthless as the Covenant Alliance and as bloodthirsty as the extraterrestrial devils themselves. They are as cruel to their enemy as they are to their allies. When they go crazy in the competitions of accomplishments and trophies, they will not hesitate to slaughter their allies!

“The Black Wind soldiers are a bunch of rabid dogs and locusts who do not understand rules in the first place. Right now, the Covenant Alliance has gathered their forces and occupied the Black Wind Sector. The Black Wind troops which are stationed outside are all going on a rampage because of the loss of their mother planet!

“They are wandering and causing trouble everything in the capital space zone, demanding His Majesty wage a war and take back the Black Wind Sector immediately for them!

“But the national affairs are not child’s play. Every battle influences the big picture. How can you wage a war because of their complaint?

“However, it is equally a bad idea to keep such an army of locusts, which is thorny, disobedient, drifting everyday homelessly. What can we do if they truly go mad and claim a random Sector?

“Therefore, after receiving the signal from the Flying Star Sector, His Majesty decreed the Black Wind fleet to be the expedition army, for the sole purpose to keep the troublesome fellows as far away from the capital space zone as possible!

“A remote, desolate Flying Star Sector is naturally not enough to satisfy the Black Wind soldiers. It is said that His Majesty made a deal with the Black Wind soldiers that all the Sectors conquered by the Black Wind soldiers after they left the territory of the Imperium would be their land!

“Think about it. The Black Wind soldiers are all ravenous wolves with hooks in their stomachs who eat all but give nothing. Will there be any benefits left for us after we summon them here?”

Tang Qianhe was dazed for a moment. Then she mumbled, “Will the Black Wind soldiers be stationed here? Didn’t they say that they will redeem their battle credits and march back to the Black Wind Sector?”

“That is just bulls*it to fool others!”

Su Changfa sneered, “The Black Wind soldiers are crazy, but they are not stupid. The Black Wind Sector is exactly in the middle of the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance. It is the frontier with the most fierce battles. Yes, there are abundant resources. But they must consider whether or not they can live long enough to enjoy the resources! Although this place is much more barren, it is the rear of the war after all. They can develop hundreds of years in peace!

“The Black Wind soldiers’ claim to march back to the Black Wind Sector was just an approach of negotiation. What they really want must be this place! How will they go away if they really come?”

Kou Ruhuo said solemnly, “You do have a point, Master Su. The Black Wind soldiers will certainly devour the Flying Star Sector without leaving any crumb!”

“It is still acceptable if that’s everything.”

Su Changfa said gloomily, “The Flying Star Sector is just a bone. The relic of the Pangu civilization is the real fat meat. Once the Black Wind soldiers discover it, there will not be the slightest share for us!

“Hehe. We and they are all homeless dogs. But there are only the three of us while they have a whole fleet! This place is too far away for any message to be sent back to the Imperium in time. It is more than easy to make us ‘go missing’ in the relic of the Pangu civilization!”

Li Yao was both delighted and worried while he was eavesdropping. He was delighted that the Imperium of True Human Beings had a limited effective boundary as Professor Zhou Yifu had described. Only the dozens of Sectors around the capital space zone were really under the emperor’s control, while the Sectors farther away boasted a certain degree of independency.

For example, the Black Wind soldiers who lived in the Black Wind Sector did not entire obey the orders of the emperor, and they could even negotiate with him!

Judging from the unsurprised tone of the conversation, that was not a special case in the Imperium. It was possible that all the frontier Sectors who boasted their own troops were more or less the same.

Such an amalgamation of warlords was obviously a great advantage for the Star Glory Federation’s strategic planning later.

What Li Yao was worried was that the ‘Black Wind soldiers’ which were coming at them were cruel even for the Immortal Cultivators. It was obvious that they were the most ferocious and inhumane guys!

Besides, now that their own home was occupied by the Covenant Alliance, but they decided to look for a new shelter instead of taking back their home, the war between the two parties would not end until one side was utterly eliminated!

While pondering the solutions, Li Yao continued eavesdropping.

In a bitter smile, Tang Qianhe said, “Master Su, according to you, we are ten to one doomed?”

Kou Ruhuo said coldly, “We are a hundred percent doomed. Otherwise, why would our enemies have been hypocritical enough to give us the opportunity of ‘expatriation’? This is a scheme. They are trying to kill us through the Black Wind soldiers!”

Su Changfa sighed. “I’m too old now. I have neither the determination nor the strength for a desperate counterattack. If I am all by myself, what does it matter if I end up to be a pile of dry bones at the edge of the cosmos?

“But are the two of you really willing to give in?”

Tang Qianhe hurried to reply, “Master Su, of course, we are not willing to give up just like that. We are eager for your enlightenment!”

Kou Ruhuo said coldly, “Death matters little to me. But it will be best if I die after chopping off the heads of a few enemies!”

Su Changfa chuckled, “If the two of you are determined for a counterattack, I am always ready to give you a hand. Right now, the only solution for us is to conquer the Flying Star Sector on our own instead of summoning the Black Wind fleet!”

Li Yao was anxious at the beginning and then relieved later. Everything would be good if the three Immortal Cultivators did not summon the main force millions of lightyears away.

Conquering the Flying Star Sector right now with only the three of them?

That would truly be a suicidal mission!

Tang Qianhe and Kou Ruhuo looked at each other in silence.

Kou Ruhuo said solemnly, “Even if the guy’s intelligence about the Flying Star Sector is true, the three of us are still far from enough to occupy the entire Flying Star Sector!

“It is a civilization based on starships with a sparse territory after all. Almost a thousand sects are scattered in dozens of space zones. Even if they do not have many experts, how can the three of them take over all the land?”

Su Changfa smiled and replied unhurriedly, “Now, you must understand why I didn’t destroy the guy’s brain and soul in the beginning, don’t you?

“Since he is the son of an elder of a local sect of the Flying Star Sector, he might be of help if we keep him alive when we are conquering the Flying Star Sector!

“Also, the relic of the Pangu civilization is a planetary warship. The debris on the primeval battlefield on the surface is but the a drop in the ocean. The real marvelous weapons and the primordial techniques must be buried deep inside the planet.

“If we can enter deep into the planetary warship and excavate the marvelous weapons of the primeval era, we will have some bargaining chips to live on!”

Tang Qianhe and Kou Ruhuo both gasped, “Entering the planetary warship?”

“Exactly!”

Su Changfa’s face suddenly turned extremely hideous. In the most excited voice, he declared, “I, as a crappy old man, lost all hope when I was exiled to the desolate land at the edge of the universe. But now that I am blessed by the heavens to discover such an unparalleled treasury, it is impossible that I’m going to let it slip through my fingers!

“Even if I must die, I will die in the depths of the Pangu’s relic, which will be better than dying in the hands of the Black Wind soldiers or the laughter of my enemies!

“However, if we are fortune enough to not get killed but excavate infinite secret treasures from the relic… Hehe. Hehehehe!”

Tang Qianhe and Kou Ruhuo both changed their face in Su Changfa’s laughter that was full of hatred. Greed and abhorrence were flowing out of their own eyes, too!

“However, the guy is still keeping something from us!”

Tang Qianhe shrieked, “He still has ill intentions and will prove to be an unstable factor!”

“It doesn’t matter. I have basically guessed what he was lying about!”

While chortling, Su Changfa walked to Li Yao. “Trust me. The guy WILL cooperate.”

Chapter 1236 - Such Ugliness!

Li Yao sensed Su Changfa open his hands and press on his skull in an extremely weird gesture with the thumb sticking to the center of his brow, which was the place where the ‘pineal body’ was located.

Five streams of extremely uncanny spiritual energy dived into Li Yao’s brain as Su Changfa’s fingers trembled violently. They looked for their prey like five sordid vipers.

It was the most dangerous moment. Li Yao’s every nerve ending was shivering like a flower as he was ready to burst out and kill Su Changfa at any moment.

He was very clear that Su Changfa was stimulating the part of his brain that was responsible for fear, hatred, regret, bloodthirst, and all other negative emotions. The guy was guiding the negative emotions to his shallow brain cells and displaying them in the form of a nightmare. Or in other words, Su Changfa was casting him into a nightmare in reality!

Li Yao’s countermeasure was to create a tiny zone inside his brain and filled it with the carefully-fabricated memories with his and the mental devil’s amazing computational ability, covering his real soul and memories.

On the crystal processors, there was a technology named ‘virtual machine’, which could simulate the performance of different crystal processors as a compression of telepathic thoughts that had been optimized.

In a similar way, Li Yao built a ‘virtual brain’ inside his head, waiting for Su Changfa’s invasion!

Never would Su Changfa have dreamed that he was facing such a monster-level opponent like Li Yao. He fell into the trap easily. After finding the ‘virtual brain’ that Li Yao prepared for him, he smiled and suddenly exerted his strength. Five telepathic thoughts pierced into the virtual brain and injected the lethal ‘venom’ into it!

“Hu…”

Such a secret technique was a great burden for Su Changfa, too. He took a long breath in relief and loosened his fingers. Smiling, he said, “Let’s wait and see. What is the most fearful, guilt-provoking and ulterior thing at the bottom of our little brother’s heart?”

Very soon, Li Yao reacted.

His face gradually turned dark and then turned from dark into pale. He was breathing faster and faster while he raised his hands and waved crazily in midair, like someone who was unable to free himself from a deep quagmire.

His eyes were still closed, but his eyeballs were rolling fast. Sweat the size of beans leaked out of his forehead and was pouring down very soon, spreading into a pool around him.

He was now angry, now biting his lips, and now wearing a pitiful, adulating expression.

Hulu. Hulu!

His chest was fluctuating rapidly, as if somebody had stabbed him right in the lungs.

Li Yao was shuddering harder and harder. Eventually, he was cramping as if suffering from an epileptic attack. After cramping for more than ten seconds, his limbs suddenly tightened. His body shivered, and he opened his eyes.

Every vein on his face was protruding, as if it was covered in an ugly spider web. His eyes were deeply hollowed, but his eyeballs were appallingly huge, without the slightest vigor inside but covered in mist and blood, like an animal that had lost its soul. He was murmuring something to himself while saliva mixed with blood slowly flowed out of the corner of his lips. Yet, he did not seem to know how to wipe it away.

Like a real animal, he rolled on the ground and squatted, eyeing the surroundings while baring his teeth. When he saw the three Immortal Cultivators, his pupils obviously constricted, as if he had seen the most horrible things in the universe. His every muscle was twisted to the maximum, and he shrieked in fear like a eunuch.

“Old Lei, Brother Bai, Little Chen… Why—why are you here? You are dead. You are already dead! Don’t come here. Don’t come here!”

He shouted in a twisted voice while he edged back with lips as pale as those of a dead person.

“Don’t come close. Don’t come any closer! Old Lei, I didn’t kill you. It was Brother Bai who did it. He stabbed you in the back. I was forced by him! He’s right next to you. Go for him. Go for him!

“Brother Bai, I didn’t kill you, either. Little Chen did it. He fooled you into the gravity room and pressed you to death there! I didn’t eat much. I only ate half of your hand. Little Chen had the most. He devoured your two thighs!

“Don’t look at me like that! Don’t look at me! Don’t! Bai Kaixin, you were the first to feed on others! You were the one who butchered Fatty Gao and divided him for us! It’s just karma that you were eaten by us! It’s the karma from the heavens! If you want revenge, go to the heavens. Don’t come to me. Don’t come to me!”

Li Yao was in such fear that his face was covered in tears and snot. He collapsed to the ground as if he had no bones while he begged for mercy. “Don’t come close. Don’t come any closer! I didn’t have a choice. I only wanted to survive! We had little left on board. How could that be enough for so many people? Everybody would have died if it was all divided evenly! Bai Kaixin, wasn’t it the logic you told me? I was simply doing what you said!

“Please. Don’t kill me. I want to live. I want to survive! As long as you don’t kill me and eat me, I can do anything for you!

“Right. I know that three persons are hiding on board. As long as you don’t eat, I’ll bring you to them and eat them all! There’s an old man, a woman, and a fatty. The fatty has a lot of meat. He probably weighs more than two hundred kilograms. There will be enough food for days!

“They are all yours. Just leave a few bones to me, and I will be fine. I will be fine…”

The Immortal Cultivators had been observing coldly. It was not until this moment that they finally put on a disgusted look.

“The guy’s memories are all mixed up. The three people that he mentioned are us, right?” Tang Qianhe giggled. “It never occurred to me that such an unattractive guy would be so shameless. No wonder he was carrying four Cosmos Rings. They must be trophies after cannibalism!”

“The universe is full of disasters, and this is nothing unusual after a disaster,” Su Changfa remarked casually. “Anyone who survives a cosmic storm, especially if he is the only one alive on board, must have more stories than he cares to admit!

“It’s almost like raising insects. If hundreds of insects are kept in the same cage, how can the last surviving one be kind in nature? He is definitely a great scoundrel!

“However, for us, the more shameless, the better. It will be easier for our ‘cooperation’ later. Hahaha!”

“Wait a moment,” Kou Ruhuo said coldly, “the guy is up to something.”

Before he concluded his sentence, the pores all over Li Yao’s body had constricted while he spurted out the spiritual waves that far exceeded the Building Foundation Stage. He lunged at the three of them after a bellow!

Kou Ruhuo sniffed. He took a step forward and blocked Su Changfa and Tang Qianhe. Raising his right arm, he summoned his spiritual energy and condensed it into an enormous hand, clutching Li Yao as if he were a fly. Li Yao was unable to move forward at all!

Li Yao waved his hands and struggled hard with the ugliest face. Utterly different from the obsequious guy a moment ago, he laughed. “You didn’t see this coming, did you? I am not in the Building Foundation Stage; I’m in the Core Formation Stage! Hahaha. While you idiots are fighting each other exhaustedly, I will take advantage! I will eat all of you. All of you!

“Nobody can stop me from living on! If you like the escape capsules so much, I might just as well give them to you and send you to hell. Haha. Hahahaha!

“I must live on! I must live on! I must live on!”

He was foaming at the mouth, and his eyes seemed to be melted in the clots of blood, which seemed to be a red mast on his face. It was obvious that the veins on his face were exploding because of the intense blast of spiritual energy!

“Not good. He is going to be mentally deranged!” Tang Qianhe exclaimed. “The guy is still useful. He cannot die!”

“Understood!”

Kou Ruhuo strode forward and kicked Li Yao right in the chest.

The kick seemed to be fast and unstoppable, but the force entailed was actually gentle and neutral, scattering the furious spiritual energy that was raging inside Li Yao’s body.

Pu!

Vomiting a mouthful of stinky, black blood, Li Yao stepped back and, leaning against the wall, slowly collapsed.

The blood on his face ebbed, and the fire of spiritual energy around him slowly died down. He was like a withered cabbage that had been scorched in the sunlight for an entire day.

Kou Ruhuo moved forward and opened his mouth, pouring a dose of high-nutrition drug into it before he pushed the drug into his internal organs with spiritual energy.

“I didn’t see this coming.” Tang Qianhe was quite amazed. “He is actually in the Core Formation Stage. We were almost fooled by him. What a cunning man. Chances are that he was really planning to eat the three of us!”

“You didn’t see it coming, but Master Su did,” Kou Ruhuo said briefly.

“Hehe. I didn’t see it. It’s just that I have quite a lot of experience touching bones after living for so many years.” Su Changfa smiled. “All Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage have a mass at the end of their spine. It is the place where their ‘core’ is at. Whatever secret techniques they employ to conceal their aura and suppress their level, it is impossible to fully cover the protrusion. Only after you enter the Nascent Soul Stage can you slowly disperse it into every part of your spine and completely integrate it into your body!

“The guy didn’t know us, yet he told us that he was in the Building Foundation Stage honestly upon our encounter when he did not know whether we were friends or foes. Wasn’t it a bit too naïve?

“Only the young adults who have just stepped into society without any experience in dealing with other people would be so innocent, right? How can anybody who lived on his own on a planet of a foreign land for such a long time be so childish?

“The only answer is that he was intentionally misleading us!

“Therefore, when we got in touch with him, I paid special attention to the end of his spine, and I did notice the anomaly.

“Not simple. The guy is truly not simple. I have analyzed his skeletal age carefully. Judging from his bones, he is in his thirties at best, but he has advanced into the Core Formation Stage!

“Such an amazing training speed at such a desolate land. No wonder the crew members who were on the same starship as him were fooled and ended up being the food in his stomach!”

Chapter 1237 - Spare My Life, Deities!

“However, for us, the capability of the Core Formation Stage just suffices. If he was too weak, he would hamstring us while exploring the relic of the Pangu civilization, and he would not be of much use after reaching the Flying Star Sector!” Su Changfa said with a smile.

They chatted casually, not in the least bothered by Li Yao’s incident of eating other people.

Li Yao did not pass out after being kicked by Kou Ruhuo. He breathed hard lethargically for a moment before he leaned forward and threw up nonstop.

He shuddered while he vomited. Occasionally, when he raised his head and looked at the three of them, his big, bloodshot eyes constricted into two small eyes the size of beans. Brutality beamed out of his face, only to be replaced by weakness and humbleness later.

He looked both like a ferocious wolf and a dog whose legs had been broken.

He seemed to be both planning to bite the most succulent parts on their body and preparing to cling to their thighs and beg for mercy.

What a pitiful and yet hateful appearance!

“Fellow Cultivator Li, it’s true that you can never judge anyone from their face.” Su Changfa smiled. “I didn’t know that you were so brutal despite your young age and your harmless appearance. You survived because you ate all your companions. That’s something. That’s really something!”

His words seemed to be hitting Li Yao’s heart like bullets. Li Yao’s face was pale again, as if he had recalled certain pictures that he would rather forget. He covered his mouth and continued gagging.

After gagging for a long time, with bloody tears flowing out of his eyes, he still did not dare move his hand away from his mouth. He almost buried his entire body into the crevice, as if he were too ashamed to see anyone. He shouted desperately, “You—you have no idea! In that environment, they would’ve eaten me if I didn’t eat them! I—I only wanted to survive! I want to survive. I want to survive…”

Covering his entire face, he burst into tears.

The three Immortal Cultivators watched his repulsive performance coldly. After a long sigh, Su Changfa said, “There’s endless darkness in the boundless universe. Too many tragedies are being played every minute!

“Your crimes are indeed unpardonable, but you were only doing it for survival. As the saying goes, every man works for himself, and the devil takes the hindmost. Outsiders such as us are not qualified to judge you.

“However, what you did must be seriously in violation of the rules of the Flying Star Sector. Even if you can return to your home, how will such a cannibal like yourself face your compatriots? Tsk, tsk, tsk. When I picture that you are cursed by thousands of people and detested by even your family and friends, young man, I do feel sorry for you!”

Li Yao shuddered hard, as if his deepest worry had been pointed out. His fingers were opening, revealing a face that could not have been more twisted. He mumbled to himself, “I—I didn’t know that I could go back to the Flying Star Sector one day. I—”

Suddenly, brutality flourished inside his eyes again. He picked up a random sharp rock and waved it crazily at the three Immortal Cultivators while he shouted hysterically, “Who—who are you exactly? What did you do to me just now? Why did I say everything in a trance? I seemed to have a terrible nightmare. Were you behind all that? Were you?

“Are you here to capture me? To seek revenge? To execute me?”

The three Immortal Cultivators were all amused.

Looking at her fingernails, Tang Qianhe scoffed. “Young man, don’t overestimate yourself. You are just a poor bumpkin in the Core Formation Stage. What makes you think that you are qualified for us to chase you down? If we want to kill you, you will be blown into smithereens with a yawn from us. Why would we tolerate your disrespect to this moment?”

Li Yao’s small eyes span in their sockets almost ten rounds quickly. The protruding veins on his face slowly recovered. Touching the wound on his chest where he had been kicked twice, he craned his neck and gnashed his teeth. “I don’t buy it! Even if you didn’t want to kill me, after hearing so many… wrongdoings of mine, you should certainly be determined to kill me!

“It is the duty of Cultivators to slay evil. I—I have declined into a monster that is even uglier than demons in the eyes of Cultivators by doing all this. Nobody would hesitate to kill me!

“I—I am a man of pride, too. Now that my secrets have been known, you can kill me if you want, but don’t make fun of me on purpose!”

“Alright!” Tang Qianhe stepped forward with a smile. The mystic rays that entangled the crystal suit’s right arm expanded incessantly and turned into five sharp talons under the restrain of the force field.

Shua!

Tang Qianhe’s talons of light slid on the wall. She did not seem to be exerting her strength at all, yet the rocks were crumbled and falling down in powder.

Five traces that were more than half a meter deep were left on the wall!

“You seem to boast the demeanor of the Cultivators after all. I will fulfil your wish then!” Tang Qianhe bellowed. The five talons were opened and snatched toward Li Yao’s skull!

“Spare my life, senior!” Li Yao’s neck was almost retreated into his chest. He crouched on the ground and screamed like a pig being butchered. “Don’t kill me! Don’t kill me! Please don’t kill me!”

“I knew it!” Bored, Tang Qianhe sneered and retracted her talons before kicking Li Yao away. “You don’t look like a tough man at all. Why do you have to act like one?”

Li Yao was grimacing in pain as his back hit the protruding stalagmites. He touched his back and yet did not dare to scream. Seeing that the three of them showed no intention of killing him, he put on a baffled expression.

After a long daze, he asked carefully, “Do you three seniors not plan to kill me?”

Tang Qianhe didn’t even bother to look at him. She mocked, “If you continue wasting our time, chances are that I will indeed cut you into twenty pieces when I’m pissed!”

“No. No. Please don’t!” Li Yao was overjoyed. With a sunny smile, he bowed to the ground. “Thank you for your mercy, seniors. Your kindness to me is essentially giving me a second life. I will not be able to return one thousandth of your favor even if I work for you dutifully for the rest of my life!”

“Who dares to ask you to work for us?” Tang Qianhe sneered. “Won’t we be scared that you will find an opportunity to eat the three of us now that you’ve tasted the flavor of human meat?”

Li Yao blushed and came up with nothing after stammering for a moment. With suspicion in his eyes, he hesitantly said, “You three seniors are as marvelous as deities. For you, killing me is as easy as squashing a bug. I wouldn’t dare offend you seniors even if I were ten times more audacious!

“But—but I wonder… Why did you spare me, seniors? I thought that all the Cultivators would draw their swords and kill me the moment they heard such a thing!”

Tang Qianhe raised her eyebrow and looked at Su Changfa.

Su Changfa coughed lightly for a moment. Then, with a feigned smile, he said, “My young friend, who says that we are Cultivators? Hehe. We are… Immortal Cultivators!”

“Ah!”

Greatly shocked, Li Yao looked at the three of them in devastation. He then took a few steps back—with terror, confusion, and even a hint of hope on his face!

“What’s that face? You dare look at us like that any longer, and I’ll cut out your eyeballs!” Tang Qianhe declared brutally. “Shameless enough to eat your friends and companions on the same starship as yourself, you are worse than animals. Do you think that you are qualified to judge the true path of immortality?”

“No. No. I’m not!”

Sweating hard, Li Yao’s eyes shuddered, his lips trembling. He stuttered, “I was too ignorant to realize that it was three deities who had shown up. I wasn’t—well—I—”

He was lost for words.

Unhurried, Su Changfa said with a smile, “Fellow Cultivator Li, it appears that you have misunderstanding about the true path of immortality that we the Immortal Cultivators believe in.

“But it’s understandable. The universe is too vast a place. Many great ideas deviated off track and degraded into rumors during the dissemination. Then, with the vilification of the ill-intended fellows, they gradually turned into their opposite, until everybody unaware of the truth would fear the ideas as they feared scorpions!

“It’s just like you, Fellow Cultivator Li. Did you do anything wrong? Did you kill your companions intentionally? Of course not! You were only trying to survive. Are the natural instincts to survive wrong?

“But if other people hear your story, they will not care about the environment that you were in at all and simply convict you as a cannibal. You will be executed and dishonored after your death!

“Nobody knows that you are actually a good man who is kind in nature and that you did what you did because you were forced to.”

“Yes. Exactly!” Li Yao nodded hard and mumbled, “I’m a good man. I’m a good man. I was forced. They forced me to do it!”

“That’s right. It is the case for you, and it is also the case for the Immortal Cultivators. We are just a bunch of people struggling to survive in the dark, perilous sea of stars!”

Su Changfa sighed and said, “Let me repeat myself. Right now, we are on the same boat. We should help each other to run out of this place. There are only the four of us on this planet. If we have internal conflicts, nobody will survive!”

“You are quite right, Senior Su!” Li Yao took a long breath in relief, his face finally relaxed. Looking at their glamorous crystal suits greedily, he said, “It seems that the rumors I heard about the Immortal Cultivators are probably slander! But I wonder, what is the ‘true path of immortality’ exactly? What’s the difference between the Immortal Cultivators and the Cultivators?”

Su Changfa smiled and said, “The connotation of the true path of immorality is too huge a topic to be explained in a few words, but I will tell you this—the difference between the Cultivators and the Immortal Cultivators does not lie in races or Cultivation techniques but in the beliefs!

“As long as you change your belief and get rid of your past shackles, when you observe the universe and mankind from a higher altitude, every Cultivator can be an Immortal Cultivator in order to shoulder the real responsibility for the civilization of mankind!

“It’s like you, Fellow Cultivator Li. You have committed unpardonable crimes in the eyes of the ordinary people. Even if you return to the Flying Star Sector, the secret will accompany you for the rest of your life. When it is revealed, you will be a rat on the street that everybody will stomp on!

“I assume that there must be magical equipment such as ‘polygraphs’ and ‘Meditation Healers’ who are adept at hypnotization arts in the Flying Star Sector, aren’t there? Your little secret will not be so easy to keep, will it?”

Devastated, Li Yao could not help but nod.

“That’s right, Fellow Cultivator Li.” Su Changfa smiled gently. “Since the moment you crossed the line, you have been abandoned by the community of Cultivators! You know fully well that there is no coming back now!

“But the door of the Immortal Cultivators is open to you all the time!”

Chapter 1238 - The Apotheosis of Lists!

Li Yao’s eyes bulged out as he asked in delight, “I can be an Immortal Cultivator, too?”

Before Su Changfa replied, Li Yao withdrew his gaze, and his eyes started shuddering in shrewdness and cruelty again. He shook his head and said questioningly, “Wait, wait. I don’t believe that there is such an easy thing in the world! Without paying any price, I can be an Immortal Cultivator and receive the protection from you and the force behind you.

“Whatever I can do for you, just say it straight, Senior Su. I cannot return your great favor even if I am shattered here and now, and I will not hesitate to do anything I’m asked to do as long as I’m capable of it!”

“You are indeed smart. No wonder you survived the cosmic storm!”

With a hint of praise, Su Changfa said, half for real and half faked, “I’m starting to appreciate you, Fellow Cultivator Li!

“Alright. Now that we are aware of each other’s identity, there’s no need for any further ado. Let’s just get to the topic!

“Fellow Cultivator Li, you may not know this, but the planet that we have been forced to land on is actually an ancient relic. You may have seen countless bizarre bodies and fossils on the ground, but they are just the tip of the iceberg. Many more precious secret treasures are hidden deep down the ground!

“The ancient treasures are now owned by nobody. Whoever gets them will claim them. As the saying goes, you will be punished if you refuse the gift of the heavens. Now that we have the privilege of discovering the relic, of course, we have to explore it well!

“The three of us as well as the war puppets are still a bit insufficient. Since Fellow Cultivator Li is in the Core Formation Stage, too, we can explore the relic underground and see exactly what is inside together. If any secret treasures are found, you will have your fair share, Fellow Cultivator Li!”

Li Yao swallowed hard and gnashed his teeth. “How—how do I know that you are not lying? I’ve seen too many such things. A treasure is found, but it is heavily protected by traps and guards. So, a fool will be sent first to try all the traps!

“It’s easier if the fool is killed by the traps, but if the fool passes all the traps without getting killed, he can always be killed in order to keep his mouth shut later. How is it possible that you would really give me my share?”

“Fair enough. Then, do you believe that I can kill you right now?” Tang Qianhe said coldly.

Fear spurted out of Li Yao’s eyes again. His legs were shivering beyond his control, but this time, the gloomy aura after devouring countless people of his kind leaked out of his pores, as he clenched his fists and bellowed, “I do! But I will be killed by you sooner or later. What difference does it make?

“I don’t want to die. I want to live on. Please let me live on!”

“Fellow Cultivator Li!” Su Changfa patted Li Yao’s shoulder hard and said solemnly, “Your worries are completely reasonable. However, whether or not one can live on ultimately depends on one’s own instead of mercy from others!

“It’s true that we are manipulating Fellow Cultivator Li and hoping that you can scout for us, but on the other hand, aren’t you trying to escape from this place through us, Fellow Cultivator Li? People always manipulate each other. If anybody is not of any value to be manipulated, they will be not qualified to live on!

“Therefore, if Fellow Cultivator Li really desires to live, you may think carefully about what parts of you are still of value to be taken advantage of. Dig deeper and find it out. You will survive if you can!”

Li Yao was lost for words for a long time. He stammered, “I—I—I—”

Su Changfa smiled even more hideously. “I’m going to give you a hint, Fellow Cultivator Li. What do you think we are here exactly for with such an enormous base after a journey of millions of lightyears? Are we really here for cultural communication? You are not idiotic enough to believe that, are you?”

Pondering more a moment, Li Yao was greatly enlightened. Instead of shocked or feared, he got greatly excited.

His face was flushing, and his ears seemed to be on fire. Animalistic sounds were echoing deep down his throat again, as he nodded and said, “I got it. I totally understand now! Rest assured, Senior Su. I’m very useful! I’m of much value to be taken advantage of!

“However—”

He seemed to think of something. Glimpsing at Su Changfa, he hesitated.

“There’s no need to worry!” Su Changfa guessed what was on his mind from his shivering eyebrow, and he smiled very leniently. “As you can see, we are not ferocious demons or bloodthirsty extraterrestrial devils. Just like you, we are wise, judicious human beings.

“The Flying Star Sector is a large place. In order to achieve a profound ‘communication’ with the people of the Flying Star Sector, we will have to look for a few natives as our assistants to lead the way for us. They can even be our representatives and act on behalf of us!

“Fellow Cultivator Li, you have proved yourself smart enough. If you keep your loyalty, why would we waste our time killing you and looking for a new candidate?

“After all, although the universe is a large place, it will not be easy to find a second freak such as yourself who has eaten his own kind. Haha. Hahahaha!”

All the three Immortal Cultivators laughed.

Li Yao lowered his head in embarrassment first. He thought for a moment and then laughed along with them.

“Anyways, this is your only opportunity now, Fellow Cultivator Li!” Su Changfa’s smile suddenly disappeared. He moved close to Li Yao and stared at him in the eyes, declaring coldly, “The universe is vast, but you can’t find any place that you can call home now, Fellow Cultivator Li. Whether you believe us or not, you can only show your best performance and have a last try!

“If you really distinguish yourself, it is possible that you will announce your grand homecoming later. Not only will all the dirt of your past be kept a secret, you will also even boast power and position that are beyond your imagination, or set foot in the ultimate levels that you’ve never dreamt of!”

Stimulated by his scorching eyes, Li Yao’s own eyes turned from bloodshot into two abysses. He nodded hard and said, “Understood. I’m willing to be at the service of you three seniors!”

“Excellent!” Su Changfa nodded in satisfaction. “Alright. Let’s rest in our base and prepare for the exploration!”

The four of them left the cave for the war base.

Only several hours passed, but the relationship between them was greatly different now.

Li Yao rubbed his fists and jumped up and down, acting as if he did not know how he could demonstrate his value even if he meant to. Noticing that nobody paid any attention to him, he scratched his hair and approached Su Changfa, asking respectfully, “Senior Su, if I may ask, what is this ancient relic exactly? I can tell that the corpses and puppets here are quite old. Are they from the era of ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago?”

“Forty thousand years ago?”

Su Changfa was amused. He shook his head and said, “It doesn’t hurt to tell you now, foolish boy. This relic dates back to far beyond the era of the ancient Cultivators. It is a battlefield of the God-Sealing War in the primeval age!”

“The God-Sealing War?”

This time, Li Yao was truly dazed. It was a strange word that was not mentioned at all even in the memories of Ou Yezi, the master of refining in the world of ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago.

It appeared that there were indeed benefits to hanging around with the Immortal Cultivators. His eyeballs shuddering fast, Li Yao blurted out, “What is that?”

“As its name suggests, it was a war to seal all the deities and devils in the universe.”

Ambition was leaking out of Su Changfa’s body and interweaved into fire of spiritual energy while he scratched his long beard. “In the primeval age, when the deities were in their heyday, everything in the universe was dominated by ‘divinity’!

“However, human beings are the essence of all creatures. We are the strongest, most excellent, and most advanced species in the sea of stars. How could we accede to the reign of the deities generation after generation?

“Nothing is ever qualified to crawl over our head. It is our destiny to slay all the deities and devils should they be standing in our way!

“The God-Sealing War was a war between deities and human beings, ‘divinity’ and ‘humanity’! The outcome of the war was that all the deities in the universe were sealed. Divinity declined, and humanity thrived. That was the beginning of our dominance over the three thousand Sectors!”

Although he had made a similar judgement earlier, Li Yao still could not help but feel shocked when it was confirmed by the Immortal Cultivators.

The God-Sealing War!

Even the deities could be sealed!

How audacious, unstoppable, and magnificent human beings in the primeval age were!

Listening to their conversation, Tang Qianhe, the female Immortal Cultivator, could not help but interject. “Master Su, the planetary warship here is large and splendid enough in my eyes. Do you think it is possible to be the legendary ‘Wild Shepard’?”

“I wouldn’t go that far!” Su Changfa pondered for a moment but shook his head. “The legendary ‘Battle of Wild Shepard’ was a decisive battle at the last phase of the ‘God-Sealing War’. It was in this battle that countless human beings who were under the control of the Pangu Clan were awoken and launched a critical strike at the Pangu Clan from behind. That was why ‘humanity’ defeated ‘divinity’!

“The planetary warship here is fairly large, but it is far from qualified to be the main battlefield for the ‘Battle of Wild Shepard’!”

Glancing at Li Yao, Tang Qianhe asked rather mysteriously, “Then, do you think it is possible at all that we can discover… the thing here?”

Li Yao was rather embarrassed. He wondered whether or not he should keep listening and was worried that unexpected changes might happen if he eavesdropped on their secrets.

But Su Changfa simply smiled and said frankly, “Fellow Cultivator Li is on our side now. What must be kept a secret from him? The thing is common sense in the Imperium, and even little kids know of it! Besides, everybody will have to work hard and excavate it together. Fellow Cultivator Li strikes me as a man of luck. Chances are that he will find it for us!”

Li Yao scratched his nose and asked awkwardly, “Senior Su, Senior Tang, what are you talking about exactly?”

“It’s a thing named ‘Book of Revelation’!” Su Changfa said. “According to legend, at the end of the God-Sealing War, the experts of the Pangu Clan inferred the outcome that divinity would decline, and their reign would fall. So, with the unbelievable techniques, they condensed the essence of the civilization of the Pangu Clan, even including their genes and heritage, into an enormous treasury of information!

“They essentially saved their entire civilization into it!

“The treasury of information in which the entire civilization was saved was named Apotheosis of Lists. It was divided into eight volumes, and it has also become known as the Book of Revelation!”

Chapter 1239 - Book of Revelation!

Li Yao was rather fascinated. The eight volumes of the Book of Revelation that stored the essence of the Pangu civilization were quite similar to the Monument Plan that Gui Suishou had proposed. Both endeavors were trying to pass on the civilization in a different form after its decline.

However, the Pangu Clan’s Monument Plan was obviously much more magnificent and mysterious.

Maybe, there were more unexpected factors, or even a great scheme, in everything.

How did the Imperium of True Human Beings know of the Apotheosis of Lists’ existence? Did several of the eight volumes of the Book of Revelation fall into the hands of the Immortal Cultivators?

Li Yao was more curious than ever. He felt that ten thousand ants were crawling on his heart and almost couldn’t wait to ask.

However, he somehow felt alarmed deep inside his brain. Thinking quickly, he was almost having cold sweat!

The old fart was truly cunning!

To this moment, Su Changfa was still not entirely convinced by Li Yao. He raised the enticing topics intentionally in order to test him!

For the role that Li Yao was playing, even if he knew the existence of ‘Pangu’ and ‘Nuwa’, he should be regarding them as the figures of legends. If they were talking about the war between human beings and the Pangu Clan matter-of-factly, but Li Yao showed no surprise at all and simply pursued the whereabouts of the Apotheosis of Lists, something would be seriously wrong with him!

It would suggest that Li Yao had known part of the truth about the primeval war, which was contradictory to his identity!

Thinking that through, Li Yao applauded Su Changfa’s sleaziness in his heart while he put on a dumbfounded expression again and stammered, “Pan—Pangu? Isn’t it our ancestor in the legends? Does the so-called ‘God-Sealing War’ mean sealing Pangu? It—It—It—”

Su Changfa narrowed his eyes and observed Li Yao’s face without leaving out any muscle. Failing to find any loopholes, he smiled and said in disdain, “Is the Pangu Clan in any way qualified to be our ancestor? Human beings have only one ancestor, the Nuwa Clan!”

Pausing for a moment, he continued the previous topic. “The eight volumes of the Book of Revelation are divided into two parts. The reason it is given such a name as weird as Apotheosis of Lists is believed to be that what is stored in the civilizational treasure are the names of the unparalleled experts in the Pangu civilization. They are like eight rosters.

“But of course, what is etched in the Apotheosis of Lists are much more than simple names! Behind every name is everything about the expert, including their genes, memories, techniques, Cultivation arts, and research products. When countless experts of countless fields are listed together, they represent the peak of their civilization!

“Of the eight volumes, the first part consists of the Volume of Thunder, the Volume of Fire, the Volume of Plague, and the Volume of Fighting, while the second part contains The Stars and Galaxies, The Mountains and Rivers, The Rain and Cloud, and The Kindness and Evilness.

“Among them, the Volume of Thunder and the Volume of Fire both elaborated on the arts of the manipulation of spiritual energy and the transformation of different classes of spiritual energy. Whoever gets either of them will become the absolute authority in the studies of spiritual energy!

“The Volume of Plague, on the other hand, is about the mysteries of genes, viruses, and biochemistry. All the research products on biochemistry and virology of the Pangu civilization are saved in this one.

“The Volume of Fighting stores the blood, genes, experiences, and memories of the strongest warriors and most distinguished commanders of the Pangu Clan, as well as all the military theories and the battle formations of the Pangu civilization! Whoever learns and grasps the Volume of Fighting will become the most excellent strategist in the entire universe.

“The Stars and Galaxies is about the research products in astronomy of the Pangu civilization, including their profound understanding about the universe, the navigation maps of infinite space zones, the ways to absorb spiritual energy from a star or to build star beacons, and so on!”

“The Mountains and Rivers as well as The Rain and Cloud are both focused on the modification of planets. How to build a man-made atmosphere, how to generate a synthetic ocean, and how to realize a self-circulating ecological system, and so on. Together with the biochemical and genetic technologies recorded in the Volume of Plague, a planet that was cold and dark in the beginning will be transformed into a natural paradise that vigorously absorbs spiritual energy and stellar radiation and provides an environment for infinite creatures!

“The Kindness and Evilness is the most sophisticated and mysterious volume of all. It is said that all the knowledge of the Pangu civilization about the soul is stored inside. But what is kindness, and what is evilness? What exactly is the soul? Is there anybody smart enough to answer the questions?”

Li Yao was so thrilled that his mind almost flew back to the primeval age millions of years ago!

Volume of Thunder, Volume of Fire, Volume of Plague, and Volume of Fighting!

The Stars and Galaxies, The Mountains and Rivers, The Rain and Cloud, and The Kindness and Evilness!

The Pangu civilization had left such an enormous treasury. He could not wait to get a volume of the Book of Revelation and see what kind of amazing knowledge and techniques were stored inside!

While talking, Su Changfa glanced at everyone’s face. He sneered and said, “The Book of Revelation is the ultimate treasure in the universe. The Supreme Emperor in the past only got three volumes of them, and he already led the renaissance of humanity and established the once prosperous Star Ocean Imperium!

“How could such an ultimate treasure be easily found by us? Even if we did, it is not something we could decrypt or understand. It would definitely raise a storm of blood and even get us killed!

“Let’s not overthink it. As long as we can excavate a few regular treasures, or the Cultivation techniques of the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan, of the primeval age, it will be good enough for us to stop!”

Li Yao, Tang Qianhe, and Kou Ruhuo all nodded quickly.

Li Yao’s mind was greatly stirred.

The Supreme Emperor—the founder of the Star Ocean Imperium and the greatest contributor to the renaissance of humanity—had once gotten three volumes of the Book of Revelation!

It was indeed a piece of shocking news.

However, on second thought, it did make sense.

Before, when Li Yao read the history where humanity revived and the Star Ocean Imperium rose ten thousand years ago, he had always felt that something was off.

It was true that, at the last years of the Demon Beast Empire, the internal strife within the demon race was already untamable, and they were far weaker than in their heyday.

However, the feet of a centipede would be cramping even after it was dead. The demon race was an absolutely overwhelming civilization that had reigned the universe for thirty thousand years, during which time they had savaged and exploited the ordinary people while eliminating and suppressing the Cultivators, trying to weaken the strength of mankind as best as they could. They had also established a stable, hierarchical society with the Four Pillars System. The bottom-level demons were mostly paralyzed, and an enormous regular army was at their disposal!

At that time, human beings did not have a regular army at all, and the Cultivators were anything but strong.

It was an unbelievable miracle that the Supreme Emperor had been able to lead mankind to rise in only one century and conquer countless space zones without experiencing major setbacks!

All the history books attributed the accomplishment to the degeneration of the Demon Beast Empire itself, the charisma of the Supreme Emperor, and the devotion and sacrifice of the human experts. Sometimes, it was even ascribed to the ungrounded ‘fate’. The historians believed that it was the will of fate that the demon race declined and mankind rose again.

After ascending to the Nascent Soul Stage, Li Yao found his head much clearer than before. When he reviewed the history, he had brand new judgements and realized that there was much more to it!

Other than everything else, how could mankind have developed such marvelous techniques and technologies while everybody was struggling to survive in the thirty thousand years of suppression?

Like a big bang, the Star Ocean Imperium had invented crystal processors, crystal suits, planetary warships, super-large star beacons, and countless kinds of other super magical equipment in only several hundred years, not to mention the incredible techniques!

A lot of the magical equipment and techniques were far more advanced than their counterparts today.

For example, the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector could not produce a ‘planetary warship’ even today, but the Star Ocean Imperium already did ten thousand years ago!

Techniques and technologies all required accumulation. How could the Star Ocean Imperium have established a mature system of magical equipment and techniques in only hundreds of years? It was an uncannily high mountain in the history of the civilization of mankind!

Before, Li Yao could not figure out the reason at all. Were the Cultivators today really so much dumber than the Cultivators of the Star Ocean Imperium? What the Cultivators hundred years ago developed were sometimes hardly understandable, much less duplicable, for their counterparts today after studying for almost a thousand years!

If everything that Su Changfa had said was true, the Star Ocean Imperium’s rapid rise would be quite explainable.

Most of the techniques, magical equipment, and technologies of the Star Ocean Imperium were not invented from scratch but based on the Book of Revelation!

No wonder the Star Ocean Imperium’s capability expanded exponentially and crushed the demon race!

If the Star Glory Federation has access to one volume of the Book of Revelation…

Li Yao was fantasizing again and swallowed hard.

“Rest assured, Master Su. We know what to do,” Kou Ruhuo said solemnly. “The Book of Revelation is a curse rather than a bliss. It was a scheme that the Pangu civilization left the book! Although the Star Ocean Imperium in the past rose with the help of the Book of Revelation, it collapsed as quickly as it rose and could not avoid its inevitable doom at all. Even worse, on the dead body of the Star Ocean Imperium, such a monster as the Covenant… has been born!

“We will be very careful. Even if we do find anything, we will not repeat our predecessor’s mistake!”

Li Yao’s heart was pounding.

What was the meaning of that?

The word that Kou Ruhuo kept to himself was obviously ‘Alliance’. He seemed to be suggesting that the Pangu civilization left the Book of Revelation for a big game and that there were endless more mysteries to the establishment and decline of the Star Ocean Imperium and even the birth of the Covenant Alliance.

It seems that I have to participate in the journey to Kunlun now.

Li Yao had been curious about Kunlun in the first place. He simply did not dare take the risk while the main troops were not there yet.

However, the three Immortal Cultivators including Su Changfa apparently had a much deeper understanding about the relic of the Pangu civilization than he did. It was not a bad idea to go down and take a look first with the three ‘tour guides’.

Li Yao calculated the capabilities of the enemy quietly.

Judging from the fact that Kou Ruhuo kicked on his chest casually and yet blew apart the furious spiritual energy of the Core Formation Stage inside his body without any trouble, the guy must be greatly above the Core Formation Stage, which meant that he was a battle-type Immortal Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage!

Chapter 1240 - Parasitic Wasps and Incubators!

Su Changfa’s capability was unknown. However, he was apparently familiar with secret techniques to do with the soul and adept at hypnotization and manipulation. He was not at all bothered by Li Yao, who was in the ‘Core Formation Stage’.

Moreover, he was also the captain of Flourishing Sun. Even Kou Ruhuo, who was in the Nascent Soul Stage, showed enough respect for all and addressed him as ‘Master Su’. Therefore, his Cultivation could not be very low. By the most conservative estimation, he should be in the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage.

The middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage and skilled at the secret techniques concerning the soul—he would prove to be a tough enemy in a fight!

Tang Qianhe was the only one who seemed weaker, but she would not be lower than the middle level of the Core Formation Stage and was probably at the peak of it!

Two in the Nascent Soul Stage and one at the peak of the Core Formation Stage. A ‘vanguard’ made of such personnel seemed rather appropriate.

The war base was a treasure of the Imperium of True Human Beings after all, where countless advanced techniques and technologies of the Imperium had been stored. If a few mediocre crew members were deployed to pilot it, it would very likely be taken away by the enemy. If so, they would not be a ‘vanguard’ but a ‘logistics team’!

At this moment, the comparison of the capabilities of the two parties was as followed.

On the Imperium’s side, two in the Nascent Soul Stage and one at the peak of the Core Formation Stage.

On the federation’s side, one battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, one research-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, and one battle-type demon emperor. Also, they had the advantage of intelligence. Lurking in the darkness, they could launch an unexpected assault at any moment.

Judging from the data, the federation had the edge.

However, Li Yao had observed the crystal suits of the three Immortal Cultivators carefully. It was hard to tell how advanced the suits themselves were, but the spiritual shields covering the suits were generations more developed than their counterparts in the federation.

After analyzing the thickness, color, and frequency of the spiritual shields, Li Yao concluded that such spiritual shields for crystal suits could provide a defense ability almost equal to that of many crystal warships in the federation. They were extremely sturdy and almost impenetrable

The squad of the federation boasted the advantage on the offensive and could launch an assault at any moment. However, the Imperium was enhanced by countless Grand Illusionary Soldiers and a war base. Should a battle break out, it was unknown which side would win in the end!

Li Yao calculated in secret for a long time but still decided to not attack until Burning Prairie showed up.

If everything went well and the star beacons were unfolded in space perfectly, Burning Prairie, accommodating dozens of Core Formation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, would arrive in a couple of days!

After all, judging from the information that Li Yao had overheard, the three Immortal Cultivators did not intend to summon the main troops but were planning to act purely on their own. It was obvious that they would not be able to produce too many Grand Illusionary Soldiers in only a couple of days.

Besides, they had absolutely no idea that a monster like the Star Glory Federation was drawing close. They thought that they had plenty of time for preparation and focused their attention on the relic of the Pangu civilization for now.

Of course, Li Yao would not hesitate to see them off to the other world!

After briefly introducing the content of the Book of Revelation, Su Changfa seemed to feel that the topic would be too sensitive if he talked more. Thus, he shut his mouth and walked in silence.

Li Yao still wanted to exploit more secrets about the Immortal Cultivators and the Imperium of True Human Beings from the few ‘authentic Immortal Cultivators’. Therefore, he brazenly sidled up to Tang Qianhe.

The female Immortal Cultivator was the youngest and the weakest. She was neither as clever as Su Changfa nor as taciturn as Kou Ruhuo. Although she had been trying to act tough, she was almost as hilarious as a grimacing rabbit in Li Yao’s eyes.

“Senior Tang…”

With a big smile, Li Yao rubbed his hands and said, “There’s something that has been bothering me. I hope you can give me some enlightenment, senior!”

Pouting, Tang Qianhe looked at him without giving a reply, both in despise and in wariness.

“Well, I—I did that thing in my confusion when I was forced to. Do Immortal Cultivators really not mind such things? Can I truly be pardoned?”

Tang Qianhe’s nose slightly flapped. She took a few steps back quietly to keep a distance from Li Yao. “Do we mind? Of course, a little bit, but it has nothing to do with morals. It is just an intuitional, psychological reaction.

“For us, what you did was nothing more than feeding on your excrement in order to survive when you are forced. It is not unpardonable, but it is nonetheless disgusting!

“Therefore, rest assured. Just keep away from me. Don’t aim your stinky mouth at me. Also, behave and help us complete the task. We won’t bother you if you cooperate!

“On the other hand, the Imperium has a large territory. The hundreds of Sectors each have their own culture and customs. In some of the places, people like you are not rejected but greatly embraced!

“I’m told that, in the worlds with extremely harsh environments, the Sector Masters gather people like you into an army known as the ‘Ghoul Troop’ or the ‘Ogre Troop’. It is said that such elite troops are often deployed to carry out the most ruthless tasks that cross all the lines!

“If you are interested, I can send you to them someday. I guarantee that you will have a lot in common with the ‘ghouls’ and ‘ogres’! Hahahaha!”

Li Yao shuddered hard and shook his head quickly. Thinking for a moment, he asked, “Imperium? What imperium?”

“The Imperium of True Human Beings!”

Every pore on Tang Qianhe’s face was glowing. She held her head high and declared proudly, “The rightful successor of the Star Ocean Imperium, the only guardian of the civilization of mankind, and the strongest country of human beings in the sea of stars—a nation made of real human beings!”

Li Yao did not understand why she stressed ‘a nation made of real human beings’.

Upon pondering briefly, he realized the reason.

It appeared that, in the official propaganda of the Imperium of True Human Beings, the Alliance of the Holy Covenant was not considered ‘a nation made of real human beings’ but one made of ‘monsters’ as described by Kou Ruhuo!

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao continued pretending to be in shock and asked in fear, “I am determined to join the Imperium now. However, I have committed felonies after all. Am I not going to be punished by law for my actions?”

“Law?”

It was obvious that Tang Qianhe had never been through this before. She did not know how she should answer it, but she was not willing to lose face in front of the ‘new Immortal Cultivator’ who had just surrendered, either. Frowning for a moment, she sneered, “Evidence matters most in every law. Have you left any evidence after doing what you did?”

“Right. Right. You are correct, Senior Tang. I wasn’t thinking carefully because my head is muddled!” Li Yao said in embarrassment. “I am simply hoping to learn more about the rules and regulations of the Imperium of True Human Beings so that I can perceive the mysterious true path of immortality sooner!

“If the same thing happens within the homeland of the Imperium of True Human Beings, and undeniable proof has been left behind, what then?”

Tang Qianhe thought carefully for a moment and replied, “It depends on who exactly you have eaten and whether they are ordinary people or Cultivators.”

Li Yao was dazed. “Are ordinary people and Cultivators not the same?”

“Of course not,” Tang Qianhe answered matter-of-factly. “If the victims are ordinary people, we will see if they have owners. If they turn out to be the slaves of a certain Immortal Cultivator, you will have to pay a large sum as compensation and even rarely-seen materials or magical equipment, depending on the position and Cultivation of the owners, in order to stop them from making trouble for you. If the victims are unowned free folk, the compensation will be greatly reduced.”

Li Yao clicked his tongue. “Compensation? That’s all?”

“Or what?” Tang Qianhe sneered. “Ordinary people are not human beings at all but creatures slightly more advanced than livestock!

“In urgent situations, you are forced to kill a few goats to feed yourself when you are starving. What’s the big deal about that? Is compensation not good enough?

“Besides, most Immortal Cultivators have bought expensive insurance for their slaves. If a few slaves are killed, the insurance companies will pay for the financial losses. What you are actually compensating for is the defamation!”

“Livestock…” Li Yao mumbled, with an expression that indicated that his outlook and worldview had been shattered instantly.

Staring at him coldly with more and more despise surfacing in her eyes, Tang Qianhe scoffed. “Listen, boy. Now that you have abandoned darkness for brightness and embarked on the true path of immortality, the first thing that you need to do is to get rid of the banal dogmas that you formed while you were in the world of Cultivators in the past. You must throw away all the hypocritical, self-righteous ideas!

“Let me repeat myself. Listen to me carefully this time. Ordinary people are not human beings!

“Ordinary people and Cultivators whose spiritual roots have awakened are two kinds of creatures that appear identical, but the similarity in our appearances does not suggest anything!

“Nowadays, as the genetic technology is thriving, we can modify a gorilla into the appearance of a human being through surgery, so what? Does looking like a human being make it a real human being?”

Dumbfounded, Li Yao stammered, “I—I don’t understand. How can ordinary people be the same as gorillas? In the Flying Star Sector, many Cultivators are born by ordinary people and have been ordinary people themselves until their spiritual roots are awakened…”

“Have you ever heard of ‘parasitic wasps’?”

With a smile, Tang Qianhe said, as if she were reciting a textbook, “The parasitic wasps are a very unique insect. After capturing some of the larger prey, they will paralyze the victims with special venom and enzymes. Then, they will implant their eggs into the bodies of the prey. The nutrition of the prey will feed the eggs and the larvae until the larvae grow mature and crawl out of the bodies of the preys!

“During the process, the larvae of the parasitic wasps will even devour part of the genes of the hosts, which allow them to display part of the features of the hosts. Therefore, the parasitic wasps are in weird forms, and their society is ever-changing!

“Many parasitic wasps look exactly like their hosts.

“For an observer who is unaware of the truth, the hosts seem to give birth to the parasitic wasps!

“But can you claim that the hosts are parasitic wasps? Of course not. They are just a bunch of ‘incubators’!”

Chapter 1241 - Animal Rights Extremists!

Listening to Tang Qianhe’s explanation, Li Yao could tell that she was talking much more colloquially than before. He immediately understood that theory was very popular in the Imperium of True Human Beings, and she had not just come up with it. Perhaps, it was ‘brainwashing’ rhetoric that every Immortal Cultivator had to accept.

Li Yao was quite curious about the Immortal Cultivators’ theories. To maintain a kingdom as enormous as the Imperium of True Human Beings, to ask so many Immortal Cultivators to sacrifice themselves incessantly, and to consider itself the ‘guardian of humanity’ after enslaving countless ordinary people, the Imperium of True Human Beings certainly had a self-consistent system of theories to support its shamelessness. It was the ‘belief’ for the Immortal Cultivators and the source of their strength!

If he could study the belief of the Immortal Cultivators, he would be able to locate the source of their strength. He could analyze it and come up with solutions.

That would be the competition of beliefs between the federation and the Imperium!

It was too great an opportunity to let go of. Li Yao was very interested in how the Immortal Cultivators brainwashed themselves into such an evil and yet complacent ideology!

Solemnly, he bowed to Tang Qianhe and respectfully asked, “I feel that I’m onto something, but I’m still confused about some of the critical parts. I wonder, can you enlighten me with the real meaning of the true path of immortality, Senior Tang, including the relationship between the ordinary people and the Cultivators?”

Tang Qianhe was of the lowest rank among the three Immortal Cultivators. She was quite happy when Li Yao addressed her as a senior.

Raising her head, Tang Qianhe looked at Su Changfa in inquiry.

Su Changfa had been observing the two of them not far away. He coughed and nodded.

In their plan, Li Yao was not going to be used temporarily but as a long-term investment. They would rely on his help to invade the Flying Star Sector. His identity, his Cultivation, and his secret made him the perfect traitor available. Until they found the next candidate that was even more apt for the job, he was very valuable.

If Li Yao could be brainwashed into an Immortal Cultivator, he would be willing to do things on his own without complaint, which would be perfect for them. Having received the permission from the captain, Tang Qianhe said with a smile, “Alright. Now that you’ve made up your mind to thoroughly reform yourself, of course, we would like to give you a hand!

“Let me ask you a question first. Which one do you think is more critical for a human being, the body or the soul?”

Li Yao blinked, not sure which answer fitted his current role better.

Before he replied, Tang Qianhe spoke again. “Or maybe, let’s start with a simpler question. Are there spectral Cultivators in the Flying Star Sector? The ones whose souls persist after their death and are attached to some magical equipment or puppets.”

“There are.” Li Yao nodded. “Spectral Cultivators are common in the Flying Star Sector. Nobody feels strange about them. They are regarded as our own kind, too.”

“That’s right!” Tang Qianhe clapped her hands. “The spectral Cultivator is under a metal shell and thinks with a crystal processor, while a human being is in a body of flesh and blood and thinks with their brain cells! The two existences that look vastly different are considered to be the same kind!

“Let me give you another example. Do you know an evil art known as the ‘Soul Transference Technique’ in the world of ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago? Such a technique could transfer a human being’s soul into the body of an animal and swap it with the animal’s soul.

“Imagine that, one day, you are captured by a strong Cultivator for experiments. You are locked with a monkey, and your soul is swapped with the monkey’s through the ‘Soul Transference Technique’. Then, your soul will be confined inside the monkey’s body, and the monkey’s soul will be confined in yours. If so, between you and the monkey, which one do you think is more qualified to be called a ‘human being’?”

“Me, of course!” Li Yao blurted out. “Not just the body of a monkey. Even if I’m in the body of a cow, a goat, or a pig, I am still a human being!”

“That’s right. I agree with you. This is the only conclusion after thousands of years of debate in the world of the Immortal Cultivators!” Tang Qianhe said with a smile. “I’m giving you two examples to prove one thing. What defines a ‘human being’ is not your genes, not your body, but your soul, the amalgamation of your spirit, will, and memories!

“Genes can be filtered, modified, and mutated. Your body of flesh and blood are nothing more than a shell. Even if it is replaced by a new one that is made of metals and crystals, it will not change your essence as a human being!

“For those who have Cultivated to our level, we can stimulate our genes and cells and perform preliminary modification on the cells all over our body, thereby changing us into the opposite of our ‘natural appearance’.

“Are we no longer human beings after we grow tusks, scales, a three-lobed lunge, two hearts or two brains during the modification?”

Eagerly nodding, Li Yao said, “Of course we are.”

He agreed with the Immortal Cultivators’ opinion so far.

After a Cultivator advanced into the Core Formation Stage, the end of their spine would begin to expand, and a second brain would slowly take shape. The functions of the internal organs would be significantly enhanced. By the training of special techniques, they could even grow brand new organs.

Li Yao’s Cell Obliteration Cannon was the most typical example. It was impossible for ordinary people to grow a translucent ‘crystal concretion’ in their palm or on their chest!

Judging from his appearance, Li Yao indeed looked irregular when he activated the primeval cells to the maximum.

However, it would be preposterous to say that he was no longer a human being!

The essence of a human being was not the body but the soul. That was the mainstream opinion of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector. It was also the theoretical background of the New Federation.

Li Yao had always been a firm supporter and promoter of the theory. His understanding about the theory was even more profound than Tang Qianhe’s. Earlier, outside of Heavenly Path City in the Blood Demon Sector, he had persuaded Jin Xinyue through the theory and made Jin Xinyue realize her real identity.

Tang Qianhe was truly embarrassing herself by preaching that theory to him!

“Therefore, as long as they carry the soul of a human being, no matter what they look like—in a body of flesh and blood, in a metal shell, or in any other bizarre appearance—they can be regarded as human beings alike, right?” Tang Qianhe asked with a smile.

Li Yao sensed that there was a trap in the question, but he did not figure out where the loophole was after consideration. Thus, he nodded hesitantly.

“If so, it should be true vice versa, right?”

Dangerous brilliance beamed out of Tang Qianhe’s eyes as she said, “The essence of a human being is not the shell but the soul. Although ordinary people boast a shell that is almost identical to ours, they lack a real soul. So, they are not true human beings! They are like what you get after transferring the soul of a monkey into the body of a human being, which is naturally not a human being but a monkey that looks like a human being!”

Li Yao was dumbfounded. *Is—is—is it even possible to explain it in such a way?*

He barely needed any pretension when he stammered, “Se—Senior Tang, then, how can you confirm that a person has the ‘true soul’?”

“It’s simple!” Tang Qianhe tapped between her eyebrows with a smile. “It all depends on the spiritual root! As soon as your spiritual root is awakened, and you master the ability of absorbing spiritual energy, you will be qualified to fight for the civilization of mankind. That’s the sign of a true soul!

“Otherwise, how are the useless cr*p whose spiritual roots cannot be awakened be addressed with such a great title as ‘human being’?

“Do you still remember the example of the parasitic wasp? In many cases, the eggs of the parasitic wasp and the eggs of the host are kept and raised together. Even their larvae look very similar, but they are essentially two different species!

“It is also the relationship between us and ordinary people!

“When our body is just born, we have to go through the period where our spiritual root is not awakened, which is like the eggs that the parasitic wasps planted into the host.

“At first glance, we are truly identical to ordinary people!

“However, after receiving harsh training, some of us will eventually distinguish themselves. They will surpass their limits and awaken their spiritual roots. They will understand their duty and glory as part of mankind!

“Only those people are the ‘parasitic wasps’ and qualified to be called ‘true human beings’. It is also where the name of the Imperium of True Human Beings comes from!

“In the Imperium, everybody is divided into two kinds. Cultivators whose spiritual roots are awakened, such as you and me, are addressed as ‘true human beings’. Only true human beings are entitled to be citizens of the Imperium and the pillars of humanity!

“The useless cr*p whose spiritual roots cannot be awakened after ten to twenty years of training are, of course, unqualified to be called ‘human beings’. You may call them ‘hominoids’ or ‘subhuman’. They are a relatively advanced animal between livestock and true human beings.”

Despite knowing that he was being brainwashed, Li Yao still found the shock to his worldview almost unbearable.

“You have been brainwashed by the archaic ideologies of the Cultivators for decades,” Tang Qianhe mocked. “Do you feel that what I said is ridiculous jibber-jabber?”

Li Yao hurriedly shook his head and apologized. “Not exactly. I simply feel that—well, ordinary people and livestock are still different, aren’t they? Livestock can nether think nor talk, while ordinary people can communicate with Cultivators freely.”

“The best you can say is that those ‘hominoids’ are relatively personable,” Tang Qianhe sneered. “Personable animals are not rare. Cats and dogs are very personable themselves, which many people like to keep as pets. After being raised for a few years, the pets will be connected with their master and can understand the meaning of their master’s words and actions.

“As for the hominoids, they are the upgraded version of cats and dogs at best.

“Right. Is there such a thing as ‘animal rights extremists’ in the history of the Flying Star Sector? They are a bunch of psychos who consider cats and dogs their own kind and, sometimes, even as their sons and daughters. They place their hobby on the moral high ground and climb up there to demonstrate. They cannot bear to see others mistreating cats and dogs and often stop them in the most violent ways. In short, they attach more importance to animal rights than they do to human rights!”

Li Yao blinked and nodded. “Not only were there such people in history, there are even a lot of them at the present day. They are making quite a fuss nowadays, especially when things don’t go their way!”

“That’s right!” Tang Qianhe snorted. “In the eyes of Immortal Cultivators, the hypocritical Cultivators who consider ‘protecting the ordinary people’ their destiny are nothing more than ‘animal rights extremists’ in a different form!”

Chapter 1242 - Wolves and Rabbits

“The Cultivators’ claim to protect ordinary people is no different from the animal rights extremists’ obsession of cats and dogs. It is not because they are kinder, more righteous, and more merciful than others, but because of their selfishness.”

“Selfishness?” Li Yao stammered. “What selfishness?”

“In the Imperium of True Human Beings, there was a very famous sociologist and psychologist named Ma Tianluo, who proposed theory of the hierarchy of needs,” Tang Qianhe explained. “He pointed out that the lifelong needs of a human being, from bottom to top, can be divided into five levels, namely the physiological needs, the safety needs, the love and belonging needs, the esteem needs, and the needs for self-actualization.”

“The physiological needs and the safety needs are easy to understand. Warm, fed, comfortable, unharmed from enemies—they are desires that even animals will have.

“The love and belonging needs are not difficult to understand, either. Human beings are a gregarious species. One always hopes to be enveloped in love, friendship, romance, and all other positive feelings. Even saints cannot fully cut off their emotions.

“As for the esteem needs, if we get to the bottom of it, it means one’s yearning to be of a certain position in a society and to be acknowledged, respected, and even worshipped by others! Once such needs are met, one will feel confident and perceive the ‘value’ of one’s existence!

“The needs for self-actualization are the needs of the highest level. It refers to the maximal achievement of one’s dreams, ambitions, and creeds and the implementation of one’s belief!

“The Cultivators’ actions are very easy to understand if analyzed with Master Ma’s theory of the hierarchy of needs.

“The protection of ordinary people can satisfy the love and belonging needs of the Cultivators, make them revered and admired by the general public, and carry out their principles and beliefs! So, the three higher levels of needs in the hierarchy are met at the same time!

“To be honest, the Cultivators protecting ordinary people and receiving the cheers and applause from them are driven under the same ulterior motive as the ordinary people who raise a pet dog, establish a dog house, buy dog food, and even call the dog their family, for the sole purpose of the adoration of the pet.

“Are they particularly fond of little animals? Not at all. It is just a way to fill their empty heart!

“Otherwise, why are there much more people who raise cats and dogs than those who raise toads and cockroaches? If we get to the bottom of it, it’s only because cats and dogs are cuter and more personable. They bring a sense of gratification to the ordinary people, which is why the ordinary people keep them as pets. By the same logic, the ordinary people bring a sense of gratification to the Cultivators as high-level pets. So, the Cultivators protect the ordinary people!”

“Well—Well—”

Having never heard of such absurdities, Li Yao failed to come up with any refutation for the moment.

Moreover, he did not dare show much resistance in case the three Immortal Cultivators grew suspicious of him. He could only agree with Tang Qianhe and said, “Well, that doesn’t seem too bad, right?

“Everybody is free to spoil their pets. There’s nothing wrong about that!”

Tang Qianhe harrumphed. With both despise and disgust, she said, “It’s a pity that, like the animal rights extremists, the Cultivators like to regard the satisfaction of their desire as their morals. They consider their own prejudice as the universal truth. They even interfere with other people’s perfectly normal behaviors!

“There are limited resources in the universe. Keeping ordinary people as pets will consume a lot more resources than keeping cats and dogs will. Also, the ordinary people are much more brutal than cats and dogs. One moment of carelessness, and they will bite you, forgetting what you’ve done for them!

“The Cultivators are all selfish, shortsighted fools. Out of their petty interests and their natural instincts, they can only see that ordinary people are poor here and now and need to be protected at all costs. They feel that they are being kind and merciful, but little do they know that they are causing a disaster in the long term, which will eventually lead to the overall collapse of the civilization of mankind!”

Li Yao frowned. “What disaster?”

“The civilization of mankind, like the ecological system in nature, is in fact both solid and feeble,” Tang Qianhe said carefully. “They are solid because the natural rules that they entail allow their self-adjustment and self-balance, and they can purge themselves and evolve under the restraint of the seemingly cruel rules. On the other hand, they are feeble because—once human beings, as the wisest of all creatures, grasp the ability to modify certain rules, and if they do modify them driven by their self-proclaimed leniency—the eventual collapse is almost unavoidable!

“Fellow Cultivator Li, you’ve heard of the ecological equilibrium before, haven’t you?”

Li Yao nodded.

“The ecological system of the great nature is a piece of balanced and impeccable artwork. Let’s imagine a prairie where there are a few wolves, hundreds of rabbits, and boundless fields of grass. Together, they constitute a simple ecological system.

“The rabbits feed on the grass, and the wolves feed on rabbits.

“The rabbits are lovely and can provoke anyone’s sense of pity.

“The wolves, on the other hand, are hideous and brutal, and it is quite gory when they hunt the rabbits!

“At first glance, it is very tempting to define rabbits as ‘good’ and wolves as ‘bad’.

“Then, one day, some omnipotent human beings arrive at the prairie. Seeing the bloody scenes where the wolves hunt the rabbits, and enjoying the bunnies cuddling them in their arms, the newcomers make up their minds to beat the bullies and help the poor. They kill and drive away all the wolves. The only creatures left are furry, chubby, gentle, lovely rabbits.

“Will the prairie be a paradise henceforth?

“Of course not!

“In less than a year, the rabbits, who are highly fertile and good at destroying the roots of the grass, will ruin every bit of the prairie. Then, losing all the sources of food, the rabbits will die on a large scale until they go extinct in the end!

“Do you understand?

“In the ecological system, the seemingly hideous and brutal wolves are actually the guardians of the grass, the rabbits, and the great nature, while the seemingly friendly, warmhearted guys are fiends who are enslaved by their expanding morals!

“Maybe they really meant well. Maybe they fought hard against the wolves and paid a lot of blood and sacrifices while they were protecting the rabbits…

“But so what? It does not change the fact that the entire ecological system has been destroyed by their ‘kindness’!”

Li Yao’s brain was humming.

The Immortal Cultivators’ rhetoric was apparently tempered time and time again during the past thousand years. Although it was a bit imposing, it did seem justified and reasonable at first glance.

Taking a deep breath, with sacred brilliance gleaming on her face, Tang Qianhe proudly declared, “The civilization of mankind, like the ecological balance, has its own internal logic of operation and development.

“Only the fittest should survive. Only by maintaining a certain level of cruel competition can we make sure that the most excellent genes receive the most abundant resources and be passed on, and that the foul genes are slowly eliminated instead of wasting our resources and polluting the environment!

“This is just the metabolism of the civilization of mankind. It is a normal and reasonable process. The superior are selected, and the inferior are eliminated!

“However, as the civilization of mankind developed and all kinds of new techniques and technologies were invented, it seemed that we had defeated mother nature and could ignore the rules and logic! Therefore, many people grew arrogant. Their rationalities were replaced by their passions, and they were even bold enough to serve justice for the nature. Their living embodiments are the contemporary Cultivators!

“The contemporary Cultivators conquered every place and removed the enemies of the civilization of mankind. They created a stable world without any trouble inside or outside. They also developed advanced technology of spiritual energy and popularized the magical equipment and the techniques. The living environment of the ordinary people was significantly improved. Their average longevity had been more than multiplied. As a result, the population of the ordinary people soared like a volcanic eruption. The foul genes which should’ve been eliminated in a harsh environment were actually passed on!

“They were like the exponentially growing rabbits on the prairie who have lost the wolves as their enemies!

“Such a world seems beautiful, but it is just a man-made, delicate, and vulnerable greenhouse. It cannot last long.

“As soon as the population of the ordinary people reaches a tipping point, their infinite desire for resources will eventually collapse the entire world. Soaked in their foul genes, the Cultivators will also lose their desire for innovation and retrograde with them. In the end, everybody will be doomed. The fire of civilization in the world will perish forever, just like the desert that has been chewed up by the rabbits!

“Do not think that I am overstating this. In the history of the Imperium of True Human Beings, we have discovered too many self-destructing worlds of Cultivators. It is exactly because we saw the miseries of those worlds and learned their lessons that we were motivated to further pursue the true path of immortality!

“After we return to the base, you can ask Master Su to show you the destruction of said worlds. You will understand what I mean!

“Anyway, no matter how harmonious, beautiful, and prosperous a world of Cultivators appears, and no matter how bonded the Cultivators and the ordinary people are, it is achieved at the cost of trading the future and sacrificing the interests of their progeny. It is the last moment of consciousness before death and the eventual brilliance of a civilization in its sunset!

“For someone like you who is unaware of the truth and has been brainwashed by the Cultivators for decades, the

Immortal Cultivators’ behavior may strike you as cruel, brutal, and even ferocious!

“However, it is just like wolves hunting rabbits. What appears to be brutal is a matter of necessity for the ecological equilibrium. It is greatly beneficial for both the prairie and the long-term prosperity of the rabbits as a whole!”

Li Yao took a deep, deep breath.

He began to feel that he was being slightly shaken by Tang Qianhe.

Tang Qianhe, of course, could not be smart enough to come up with such theories. Such words must have been drafted by the great theorists among the Immortal Cultivators after hundreds of years and inculcated into every citizen of the Imperium’s head from a young age.

Li Yao did not intend to fight theoretical enemy when he was not prepared. Pretending that he was enlightened, he nodded quickly and changed the topic. “I—I think I understand now! However, what if… I ate Immortal Cultivators instead of ordinary people?

“Ordinary people are just ‘hominoids’. It doesn’t matter because they are special, high-level animals. But what will happen if I really hurt people of my own kind?”

Chapter 1243 - Law of the Imperium!

Dwelling in her own world, Tang Qianhe was talking colloquially, when Li Yao suddenly threw such a tricky question at her and caught her unprepared. She was dazed for a moment, not knowing what to say.

“The Imperium of True Human Beings is the peak of the civilization of mankind. Of course, we have a thorough law system to protect the interests of every citizen of the Imperium.”

Su Changfa had approached the two of them at some point. With his hands behind his back, he said casually, “According to the penal law, the civil law, and the maritime law, if the clauses regarding the ‘act of rescue’ are invoked, you will probably be charged with ‘unjustifiable self-defense’ and ‘insulting bodies’.

Li Yao was dazed. “Unjustifiable self-defense? Insulting bodies?”

“Exactly!” Su Changfa replied confidently. “The Imperium boasts a vast territory. Thousands of starships are cruising in cosmic storms every day. Naturally, a lot of accidents have happened. We are very experienced in dealing with such issues.

“Based on the experience of the Imperium in the past, nobody is innocent in such an extreme environment. Once realizing the limitation of resources, anybody can be an attacker, and anybody can be a victim. It’s just that some of them take action earlier than others do. Fellow Cultivator, what do you think?”

With a hint of fear and panic flashing in his eyes, as if he was reminded of the miserable days again, Li Yao nodded quickly and said, “Exactly. Exactly. I wasn’t the one who attacked first!”

“Precisely so. Since you were attacked, you were merely trying to protect yourself. So, your action was a self-defense or unjustifiable self-defense at worst. Isn’t it a reasonable conviction?

“As for the bodies, in the eyes of the Immortal Cultivators, they are just shells and nothing too important. Accusing you of insulting the bodies would be good enough!

“After discretional evaluation of evidence, with consideration of the unjustifiable self-defense and the crime of insulting bodies, you would be probably sentenced to a few years of penal servitude. You may also be exiled to a certain dangerous legion to fight against the enemies of the Imperium!

“However, for every citizen of the Imperium, if you want more training resources and plan to crawl higher up the ladder, you will have to seek military credits in a battlefield anyway. The more dangerous a battlefield is, the more rewarding and the more tempting the trophies there will be!

“Therefore, such a sentence is just the bite of a mosquito. It doesn’t really hurt.”

Li Yao clicked his tongue. “I can get away so easily?”

Smiling gently, Su Changfa patted Li Yao’s shoulder. “Fellow Cultivator Li, you are too young to understand the designing principle of the laws of the Imperium.

“The designing principle of the imperial laws is to sustain the immortality of the civilization of mankind, to facilitate the evolution of human beings, and to pour fuel on the fire of humanity!

“This is the first and foremost clause in the constitution of the imperium. All our laws have been drafted with this principle at the center!

“Then, how can we facilitate the evolution of human beings and pour fuel on the fire of humanity?

“It’s simple. Survival of the fittest. Give the most excellent genes the most abundant resources so that they can pass on, while all the foul genes will be filtered, eliminated, and destroyed by nature!

“You were the only survivor in the cosmic storm. You may have resorted to ruses and schemes, you may have robbed other people, and you may simply have been more fortunate than the rest. But none of that changes the fact that you defeated countless enemies in the harsh environment and survived!

“The ‘fact’ proves that you were the most smart, sordid, agile, or strong person on board!

“In other words, you boasted the most excellent genes!

“Then, your survival means the survival of the most excellent genes. Making the carrier of excellent genes live on is in the best interest of mankind!

“Therefore, from the perspective of the imperial constitution and human beings as a whole, of course, you will not be punished with too harsh penalties, at least theoretically.”

Li Yao immediately grasped the key word. “Theoretically?”

“Fellow Cultivator Li, you are indeed quick-minded enough to have noticed the key part. Yes. I was merely talking about theories!” Su Changfa said with aplomb. “In reality, when such things do happen, it is usually difficult to find concrete evidence. So, the cases are not often addressed in a court. Even if they are filed to the court, the judges are generally not fond of such messy cases because the scarce evidence can barely from a chain. In the end, the suspects are often acquitted of any charges due to lack of proof.

“The family of the victims know the practice clearly, too. Therefore, the plaintiffs rarely go to the court, too. They usually appeal to the local ‘arbitral tribunal’ deployed by the Imperium. Such appeals do not require any evidence. As long as they are proposed by the immediate family of the victims or their friends in the same sect, with reasonable doubt, the appeals will be accepted quickly.”

Li Yao was getting more and more shocked. “What then? How are the appeals going to be handled without evidence?”

“They are not going to be handled, of course. There’s no evidence after all!” Su Changfa smiled. “The so-called arbitration is just a fair duel between you and the family of the victims hosted by the arbitrator!”

“Huh?” Li Yao was dumbfounded. Was it really possible?

“Do you remember what I just said? The designing principle of the imperial laws is to ensure the succession of the best genes. Therefore, if your enemy wants you to be punished, they must prove that the genes of their family are more excellent than yours!

“They will be able to prove it as long as they defeat you in an arena! By then, you will be guilty of not cannibalism but ‘destroying the possibility of genes more excellent than yours being passed on’!

“By the logic of the imperial laws, this is the most appalling crime that jeopardizes the continuity of the civilization of mankind. It is the most severe felony. Of course, you will be punished as heavily and as quickly as possible!

“Then, you will be arbitrated to be guilty. If the families of the victims accuse you again in court, you will be found guilty even if there is no evidence and be sentenced to more serious penalties than what are due!

“Of course, most of them wouldn’t go through such trouble. You will be taken care of by the family of the victims directly in the arena!”

Unrecovered, Li Yao said, “What if I win?”

“If you win, it means that your genes are indeed excellent enough to be passed on! Even if new evidence shows up later, the family of the victims will not be allowed to trouble you again in any way!

“Such arbitration is a one-time thing. Only one arbitration can be filed for a specific accusation. The result of the arbitration will stand in effect permanently. If they can’t kill you this time, they will never be allowed to kill you again!

“If the family of the victims continue harassing you after you crush the challenge from them in public and prove the superiority of your genes, you will not need to do anything yourself. The law of the imperium will be on your side. Your enemy will suffer the heaviest punishments, to the point that the entire family may be executed!”

After thinking for a long time, Li Yao nodded. “I got it now. As long as I am strong enough, I will not be guilty of whatever I do!”

“The winner is the king while the losers turn into bandits. Isn’t it the universal truth?” Su Changfa said coldly. “However, in the world of the Cultivator, such a truth is decorated into an ‘unspoken rule’ that is often expressed implicitly, but in the world of the Immortal Cultivators, it is the most frank and explicit rule, fair and square for everybody!”

Li Yao took a long breath and mumbled, “Then, wouldn’t the society be in chaos if all the strong experts murder and plunder at their will?”

“Why would it?” Su Changfa smiled. “If you are strong enough to be, say, a Sector Master, you will be able to draft the rules of the game yourself. You will receive stable, incessant benefits through open, legal approaches. Why do you have to resort to the violent and inefficient methods such as murdering and plundering?

“If you have to murder and plunder, it only means that you are not strong enough to be rule-makers. Then, the local Sector Master and experts will soon find you and kill you, or they may also suppress you and recruit you into the game, making you part of the system.

“How can such a society not be stable?”

“I totally understand now!” Li Yao slapped his head and bowed deeply to Su Changfa and Tang Qianhe. Delighted and fully convinced, he said, “Thank you for your enlightenment, seniors. Your words have been a great eye-opener for me. I feel that I have found a brand-new world. It’s like that I’ve been living in a smothering case for decades and never found the real world until I broke out of the shell today!

“However—” Rolling his eyes, Li Yao hesitated. “I seem to have one last question that I cannot find an answer to!”

“Please speak, Fellow Cultivator Li!” Su Changfa smiled. “This is far from enlightenment. We are simply discussing and exchanging ideas with each other!”

“Alright. This is my confusion. Your amplification on ‘true human beings’ and ‘hominoids’ is truly spectacular and instructive for me. However, on second thought, I seem to notice that the true human beings are not necessarily born by true human beings, are they? And their offspring might not be true human beings, either, right?

“It is the case in the Flying Star Sector anyway. Many Cultivators’ parents are not Cultivators, and although their children have higher chances of becoming Cultivators, not every one of them can awaken their spiritual root!

“If a true human being, or an Immortal Cultivator, has parents and children that are all hominoids, doesn’t it mean that the parents and the children are different species? Isn’t it a little bit… inexplicable?”

“What’s inexplicable?” Tang Qianhe sneered. “When a horse and a donkey mate, they give birth to a mule. The horse and the donkey are parents, and the mule is the child. Are they the same species?”

Li Yao was immediately rendered speechless, his neck reddening!

Chapter 1244 - Demagogism!

“I assume what you are really interested in, Fellow Cultivator Li, is the relationship between the true human beings and the hominoids, especially the interaction between those who have the same bloodline, in the Imperium of True Human Beings, right?” Su Changfa asked comfortingly.

Li Yao hurried to nod.

“You are not wrong to say that the true human beings and the hominoids are two different species,” Su Changfa explained. “According to the precise categorization of biology, technically speaking, they are two different genera in kingdom Animalia, branch Vertebrata, class Mammalia, order Primates, suborder Anthropoidea, species Hominidae. Although the two genera have no reproductive isolation, and they are even free to communicate and transform between each other, they are essentially different.

“However, although the hominoids are deemed a special, high-level animal and a ‘proximity of blood’ to ours, and the slavery system is still operating in the Imperium, the system has been perfected after a thousand years of development. It is certainly not as bloody and chaotic as you imagine.

“The hominoids are the providers of our genes and the incubators. They are much more agile, sturdy, and automatic than any kind of artificial puppets. They are perfect, indispensable tools to build the civilization of mankind. Therefore, the hominoids boast a higher position in the Imperium than regular animals. Legally speaking, they are also equal to the rare animals that are about to go extinct!

“The rare animals that are about to be extinct are protected by the Rare Animals Protection Act. As for the hominoids, their essential benefits are protected by the Hominoids Protection Act, too.

“See? We don’t entirely refute the protection of animals. What we object to is just the obsessive, extreme methods! Protecting animals is protecting ourselves. How can we not understand such simple logic?

“All in all, although the hominoids cannot become citizens of the Imperium, as long as they demonstrate talents in a certain aspect or their value to the Imperium, they can also live a relatively comfortable life. Even if they are slaves, they will be the property of their owner and be protected from the scourge of the alien species and the natural disasters in the universe. Their survival rate and average longevity are much higher than in the chaotic world outside of the Imperium!

“As for the hominoids who have blood relationships with the Immortal Cultivators, such as the Immortal Cultivators’ parents and children, their days will be even better.

“There’s nothing to be ashamed of. Although bloodline is highly valued in the Imperium, military credit matter even more. It is highlighted to prove the excellence of your genes with your weapons and fists! Most Immortal Cultivators wouldn’t deny such blood relationships. They will even arrange better jobs for their hominoid relatives, such as the management of the slaves.

“Other Immortal Cultivators will not trouble such hominoids, either.

“After all, as long as one Immortal Cultivator is born into the house, it means that the bloodline of the house entails genes of a relatively higher level. Even if all the descendants of one particular generation are hominoids, odds are still higher that there will be Immortal Cultivators in their offspring! From that point of view, treating them well is beneficial for the future of the civilization of mankind.

“Let’s say that some of your family members are hominoids who are absolutely good for nothing. You can always keep them as pets. At the very least, they can satisfy the emotional needs of the Immortal Cultivators by amusing us. We are definitely not detached monsters!”

“Regard my hominoid relatives as… pets?” Li Yao found it difficult to agree on.

“Do you feel that your morals have been overturned?” Su Changfa asked, not in the least bothered.

After thinking for a moment, Li Yao nodded dutifully.

Even for the role that he had fabricated, such a groundbreaking theory was still too much to be accepted so quickly.

As he expected, Su Changfa did not burst into fury. He simply smiled and said, “The so-called morals are simply tools to adjust the relationships in a society. They are a set of man-made rules and regulations. When the social relations change drastically, the morals will undergo paradigm-shifting transformations.

“There are no eternal morals from the ancient times to the present day. Mankind is evolving. The world is evolving. Naturally, the morals are evolving, too!

“Let me give you the simplest example. Hundreds of thousands of years ago, when the fire of the civilization of mankind had just been lit, it was still a matriarchal society where everybody only knew their mother but not their father. Then, honoring their mother would be the highest moral. Not knowing and not supporting their father would not be ‘immoral’ at all.

“About a hundred thousand years ago, when mankind just entered the slave society, it was a matter-of-fact practice to regard slaves as sacrificial items. There was even a whole set of serious, extensive rituals that was developed on the basis of the burial system. Can we accuse the ancient people at that time of being immoral?

“In the time of the ancient Cultivators, when the civilization was underdeveloped, teenagers twelve to thirteen years old were already getting married and having children. It was decided due to objective factors such as the short average longevity and the high death rate of infants. What is immoral about that?

“What’s absolutely unacceptable in our eyes is fitting for the corresponding society. At their time, that was all necessary for the development of the civilization.

“On the other hand, while we cannot judge the ancient people with the morals of the present day, can the ancient people impose their morals upon us?

“Let’s imagine this. There’s a portal here that allows one to travel to the past or the future, and three ancient people from the matriarchal society, the slave society, and the world of ancient Cultivators respectively visit our world today. After witnessing that we are surnamed after our fathers, that children are forbidden from sexual intercourse, that even the most powerful monarchs no longer demand human sacrifices after their death, and all the other systems that we deem conscionable, they, however, pointed at our noses and cursed aloud, decrying our shameless and depraved society. Then, what will you think, Fellow Cultivator Li?”

Li Yao was lost for words.

Tapping his right temple softly, Su Changfa said, “The biggest problem for the Cultivators is that, while mankind has evolved to a new social form and begun to struggle for a life in an even broader universe, they turn a blind eye to our progress and simply cling to obsolete morals!

“To be honest, I have run into some ‘righteous’, ‘unwavering’ Cultivators. How virtuous they are! They were swearing even before they were executed, shouting that all Immortal Cultivators are barefaced, inhumane, unpardonable fiends! Fellow Cultivator Li, do you know what was on my mind every time I heard such declarations?”

Li Yao shook his head hard.

“I always felt that I saw a leader of a matriclan who had travelled to the modern day berating us for not worshipping the ‘morals’ that our ancestors left for us. To her, we were wicked enough to have surnames after our fathers instead of revering our mothers!

“Do you see what I am getting at?”

“I do.” Li Yao’s throat was extremely dry. His voice seemed to be echoing from a broken broadcast rune array. “What you are suggesting, senior, is that every era has its own morals. Right now, we are in the era of the grand universe. The morals of the Cultivators are as outdated as the morals of the matriarchal society!”

“You are truly smart!” Su Changfa’s smile was even brighter than before. “Although we are making use of you, frankly speaking, I’m thinking more and more highly of you right now. I believe that you will grow into an excellent Immortal Cultivator one day!”

Hearing the ‘compliment’, Li Yao felt so disgusting as if he had just devoured a mouthful of flies alive, and the flies were still humming inside his head.

The Imperium of True Human Beings was truly a traditional superpower that had developed a thousand years. It was hard to determine the country’s hard power, but the soft power of demagogism was truly impressive!

No wonder the Immortal Cultivators could have unwavering beliefs despite the abnormality of the beliefs, to the point that many Nascent Soul Stage Immortal Cultivators could be born.

Regarding Su Changfa and Tang Qianhe’s theories, Li Yao needed some time to digest them to come up with rebuttals.

In the meantime, he pretended to be the sincerest follower behind Tang Qianhe as if he were an elementary school student, while she blatantly described the Imperium of True Human Beings to be a well-deserved, unparalleled ‘last guardian of mankind’.

Soon, Flourishing Sun, the war base, was right in front of them.

Completely dwelling in the Immortal Cultivators’ dangerous theories, Li Yao walked in with the three Immortal Cultivators without having the time to study the appearance of Flourishing Sun.

The place that they had entered seemed to be a garage. Ivory brilliance was emanating from the wall. Every corner was in the most perfect arc. There was not the slightest gap in the entire room, leaving a flawless, futuristic feeling.

The garage was almost half the size of a sports field. It was empty, but a pool of green light was embedded to a corner of the room, from which Grand Illusionary Soldiers were popping out one after another before striding to another corner of the room mechanically, where they entered the hibernation state.

What advanced soundproof and heat-proof rune arrays! Li Yao thought to himself.

He knew that, after the three Immortal Cultivators changed their plan and decided to explore the depths of Kunlun, they must have altered the mode of the war base in order to produce new Grand Illusionary Soldiers for the perilous mission.

However, while large-scale production was being conducted not far away, he could barely perceive any noise, vibration, heat, or spiritual waves. It meant that the Imperium had technology generations ahead of the federation’s in the fields of sound, heat, and spiritual energy isolation.

The three Immortal Cultivators whispered for a moment. Then, Tang Qianhe and Kou Ruhuo entered a pathway enveloped in ivory brightness respectively. However, Su Changfa stayed with Li Yao and extended his hand with a smile. “This way, Fellow Cultivator Li!

“I am in fact not a person who likes to expound on theories. After all, everybody can have their own theories, and it eventually boils down to the size of their fists to decide who is right and who is wrong.

“I prefer to discuss the issues that are more concrete and substantial!

“Now that you have proved to be smart enough and do not reject the true path of immortality, we can communicate more freely now. So, I now invite you to take a look at the self-destruction of a few worlds of Cultivators whose guideline was to protect the ordinary people!”

Chapter 1245 - Self-Destructing Worlds!

Su Changfa brought Li Yao to an arced secret chamber. The silver white wall was so spectacular that he felt that he was in the middle of a shining giant egg.

As lights and shadows flashed, the wall slowly vanished and turned into a boundless sea of stars. The three thousand Sectors and the infinite space zones were floating in the dark universe like glittering lanterns.

All the stars were gradually stretched into thin lines. The two of them seemed to be diving deep into the sea of stars. The nebulas and the stars were zoomed in, and a brown planet was quickly enlarged in front of them.

This place was a large simulation room of the ‘Grand Illusionary Land’. It was more realistic than all the Grand Illusionary Lands that Li Yao had experienced. It was even more detailed than the real world.

He could vaguely sense that information streams as boundless as oceans were raging behind the light and shadow!

Li Yao found it rather peculiar. Every gram would be a heavy burden for a super long-distance space jump. Tremendous spiritual energy had to be consumed to teleport it over.

Therefore, every gram of weight would be calculated carefully for a starship that was about to perform a super long-distance space jump. Nothing useless would ever be brought.

But why was Su Changfa’s Flourishing Sun carrying a simulation room of the Grand Illusionary Land, which appeared to be useless?

Thinking quickly, Li Yao immediately realized what was going on.

This was a ‘brainwashing room’.

The three Immortal Cultivators came from far away. It was necessary for them develop their own kind in the new world and raise their loyal representatives so that the influence of the Imperium of True Human Beings could be expanded.

The traitors who were allured by power and benefits were all vile, undependable scumbags. They could be transformed back with higher power and more benefits at any time.

Only by brainwashing the ‘traitors’ could they become real Immortal Cultivators and work for the Imperium of True Human Beings dutifully and diligently. That would be the better approach!

Therefore, a ‘brainwashing chamber’ was definitely necessary for their starship in order to deeply brainwash the key persons such as Li Yao.

Li Yao estimated that they would decide the value and the possibility of betrayal of the targets first before they coerced the targets into join their side.

After the targets joined them, they would test the targets with the carefully-woven rhetoric. If the targets were not firm believers, it was very possible that their worldview would be shattered.

Then, they would bring the targets here and reestablish a world view that was completely different form the past for them through the more ‘vivid’ tales from history.

For Cultivators below the Nascent Soul Stage whose beliefs were not firm, after such a triple strike, it was indeed possible that they would believe in the new ideology in their dizziness and end up being Immortal Cultivators!

Li Yao sniffed in his heart.

Now that he had advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage, his belief and his soul had melded together. He was now one of the most stubborn diehards. It was impossible that he would be brainwashed by a few words.

Therefore, he simply watched what else the Immortal Cultivators could offer.

In front of Li Yao, the yellow and brown planet grew larger and larger still. He could tell that it was the fourth planet of a certain star, boasting an atmosphere and abundant ocean resources.

The picture slowly passed through the atmosphere and descended. Every detail of the planet was displayed.

It could be seen that this was a planet with a highly developed civilization. Honeycomb-like cities were everywhere on the vast continent. They were connected to each other via certain translucent tubes.

All the cities were brimming with coruscating skyscrapers. Many of the cities were even larger than the capital city of the Star Glory Federation!

However, all the cities were empty and lifeless. Even the most splendid buildings were full of rust and dust.

They were like countless monuments standing together and telling the glory of the past in silence.

What left the deepest impression on Li Yao was a statue almost a hundred meters tall at a city square. It was a young man with one hand on his hip and the other hand pointing at the sun.

From the vigorous face and the muscular body, it was not hard to envision the fearlessness of the civilization in its heyday!

It was a shame that the statue was now rusted and covered in bird feces. His smile was covered by dust and stains, and a lot of vines had also swallowed it inch by inch from the bottom.

The previously-shining gold statue had turned brown, red, and green, nothing more than a pile of mottled garbage.

Su Changfa’s deep voice echoed behind Li Yao. “Now, Fellow Cultivator Li, I will tell you the stories of three Sectors. After the collapse of the Star Ocean Imperium, they all absorbed part of the essence of the imperium and were the first to be revived. They were once at the glorious peak under the lead of the Cultivators!

“However, because of the Cultivators’ unrestrained pity, selfish hypocrisy, and their foolish ideology of protecting the ordinary people at all costs, the three worlds slowly embarked on the path of self-destruction, until they were ruined in the end.

“Their doom was not because of the invasion of the alien species, not because of natural disasters or apocalypses, and had nothing to with the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“In fact, one of the worlds of Cultivators had already self-destructed before the Imperium of True Human Beings was born! What they left for us was just a heap of dead bodies, a monument, and a profound lesson!

“This is the first world, the Curly Dragon Sector!”

The world around Li Yao slowly shivered before the map of the Curly Dragon Sector was fully displayed.

“Like the Flying Star Sector, the Curly Dragon Sector was a world spread over dozens of space zones but with a small population. It was not far away from the capital ring of the Star Ocean Imperium in the past. As a prosperous world not too seriously scourged by the war, it was slowly revived in the second millennium after the Star Ocean Imperium’s collapse!”

The picture flashed. It could be seen that many human beings in bizarre clothes were excavating relics, exploring the foreign planets, and reconstructing their civilization.

Although the environment was extremely hash, everybody’s face was glowing with hope and happiness, as if a torch was burning in their chest.

“However, the distribution of resources of the Curly Dragon Sector was quite special. Curly Dragon, the mother planet of the world and the sole naturally-habitable planet, had extremely limited crystals. Most of the resources were actually reserved in the harsh planets at the edge of the world that were far away from the mother planet!”

Li Yao nodded. The situation was rather familiar in the Flying Star Sector.

Maybe, it was a common feature of the Sectors with multiple space zones.

“At first,” Su Changfa continued, “the ignorant people of the Curly Dragon Sector didn’t realize it. Relying on the non-abundant resources of their mother planet, they still developed an advanced civilization!

“But the more advanced a civilization is, the more crystals it will consume. Very soon, as the population of the mother planet boomed, the crystals were running low!

“Right then, people of the Curly Dragon Sector discovered another few relics of the Star Ocean Imperium. Finally, they grew clearer of the world that they were living in!

“After learning that all the crystals of the mother planet were buried on the shallow surface and that they would find no more however deep they excavated when the resources were drained, all the people were shocked!

“Hehe. Fellow Cultivator Li, if you were leader of the Curly Dragon civilization, what would you have done?”

“It’s simple. Organize an exploration fleet and go to mine the resource planets at the remote area!” Li Yao blurted out without thinking.

“Exactly. That’s the most correct methodology. The resources of any planet will run dry. Every civilization is faced with a cruel race of death since its birth. They must figure out a way to leave their mother planet before the resources do run dry!

“If they grasp space cruising technologies that are advanced enough for them to leave the mother planet and march into the universe before the resources run out, the civilization will be preserved and enter the next round of the death race that is even crueler.

“But if they cannot leave the mother planet after the resources run out, they will be trapped in the cradle forever, unless a civilization of a higher level discovers them in time!”

Su Changfa sighed and said, “The problem of the Curly Dragon Sector was that their mother planet was too deceptive!

“Aside from crystals, the mother planet boasted abundant mother lodes of all the metals you could possibly imagine. The climate was stable, too. Destructive disasters were rare. Harassment of demons and extraterrestrial devils were never heard of. It was the best natural paradise for the reproduction of lives!

“The crystals, despite their insufficient volume, were mostly buried very shallowly and easy to develop. Some of the crystal mines were actually open-air. A pebble you kicked on the road might be a crystal. Every sign couldn’t help but give everybody the illusion that more abundant mother lodes were deeper under the ground!

“Therefore, for a long time, the people of the Curly Dragon Sector believed that their mother planet was resourceful enough to provide everything for them!

“They were not in a hurry to explore the sea of stars at all. Instead, they dedicated all the resources to the construction of their mother planet, building it into the most spectacular heaven. The living environment significantly improved. Not just the Cultivators, even the ordinary people could live extravagant lives!

“Everybody thought that such days would last forever. Everybody took six-hour workdays, paid vacations, three-year maternity and paternity leaves, a munificent pension, and other benefits for granted. Everybody wanted the easiest, most ‘creative’ jobs. The entertainment business, the lottery business, and other third industries thrived. Nobody was interested in the fundamental work that was in the slightest exhausting. The workers of such trades often went on strike for ‘violation of human rights’, demanding fewer work hours, better working conditions, and better wages and benefits!

“Such a carefree life lasted three hundred years with no problem whatsoever on the surface. The Curly Dragon Sector almost became the epitome of harmony between Cultivators and ordinary people and a paradise where human rights were absolutely ensured.

“However, good days came to an end eventually. All the crystals on the mother planet were running out!

“After parsing the map of resources of the Curly Dragon Sector from the Star Ocean Imperium, they got a good piece of news and a bad one.

“The good news was that the Curly Dragon Sector was not barren. There were still enough crystals for the coming thousands of years.

“The bad news was that all the reserves were in the most remote space zones of the Curly Dragons, which had harsh environments that were absolute unfavorable for human beings!

“With such a prosperous mother planet, the people of the Curly Dragon Sector had never thought it necessary to develop space cruising technologies in the past hundreds of years.

“Thankfully, their civilization was already rather developed, and a lot of relics of the Star Ocean Imperium were available. After excavation, analysis, and duplication, they finally boasted the preliminary abilities for space voyage and resource collection!

“However—

“After thorough analysis, the specialists of the Curly Dragon Sector reached the conclusion that, with their current technology, tremendous sacrifices were unavoidable to mine in the remote space zones!

“Countless miners were bound to be killed miserably in the dark, cold, foreign stars because of various factors!

“The death rate would be proportional to the yield of crystals. If they wanted resources, they had to trade lives for them!

“From their preliminary estimation, every ton of raw crystals meant the possible death of three to five miners!”

Chapter 1246 - Land of Drought

Li Yao was suddenly alarmed because he vaguely understood what Su Changfa meant.

Rolling eyes, Su Changfa asked with a faint smile, “Fellow Cultivator Li, if it was in the Flying Star Sector, how would you have dealt with the situation?”

Li Yao pondered for a moment and replied, “If it were in the Flying Star Sector, the Cultivators probably would’ve led the elites among the ordinary people, such as the stronger soldiers, to form ‘dare-to-die teams’. No matter how many sacrifices must be made, the crystals need to be excavated, right?

“After all, without crystals, it would be practically impossible to escape the planet and the galaxy. Everybody would end up trapped on the mother planet one day!

“The Flying Star Sector is different from the Curly Dragon Sector as Senior Su described. ‘Iron Plateau’, our mother planet, was struck by an apocalypse five thousand years ago. The environment there is harsh in the first place, dominated by the aggressive ‘qi-trainers’ who dislike foreigners. Therefore, we do not have a resourceful mother planet that we can count on. We must get everything on our own!

“Having to struggle for a life in the rigorous sea of stars, the Cultivators and the ordinary people of the Flying Star Sector are not as delicate as those of the Curly Dragon Sector. I believe that they wouldn't hesitate to sacrifice when necessary.

“Moreover, I believe that the high death rate is just temporary. After the environment of the resource planets is improved, the excavation and purification magical equipment advances, and everybody's experience in mining grows more abundant, they will certainly figure out a set of effective approaches to reduce the death rate to an acceptable level.”

Su Changfa smiled and said, “It appears that the civilization of the Flying Star Sector is still in the rising period and not entirely rotten yet.

“The civilization of the Curly Dragon Sector, however, was too sick to be treated!

“The people of the Curly Dragon Sector lived comfortable lives on the resourceful mother planet without doing anything for too long. Hundreds of years of such a carefree lifestyle corrupted the resolution, doggedness, ambition, devotion, and all the other noble spirits in their hearts!

“Spoiled by the Cultivators, the ordinary people of the Curly Dragon Sector took for granted the benefits that they had traded the future for. They thought that their actions were justified!

“Also, the Cultivators dwelled in the halo of ‘savior’ for too long and lost their way amid the cheers and admiration of the public!

“When the harsh environment of the resource planets, the tediousness and dangers of mining, and all the other cruel truths were demonstrated to them, most people were not able to accept it!

“Other than a few Cultivators, nobody was willing to be killed in such places!

“Was trading their lives of flesh and blood for cold crystals ethical and justifiable, or was it unpardonable?”

“The question raised unabated discussion in the civilization of the Curly Dragon Sector. The entire society was divided into two sides with opposite ideologies. They further drifted away from what they should do and wasted their precious time and effort on meaningless debates.

“The discussions lasted decades, during which, whatever was left of the crystals on the mother planet were still being consumed rapidly, but not a single mining starship was sent to the resource planets!

“Decades later, perhaps because of the stimulation of the alarming stock of resources, the Curly Dragon Sector finally managed to reach a consensus. The crystals had to be excavated, but nobody could be killed!

“Not just death, even the relatively more exhausting work was in violation of human rights and the core principles of the civilization!

“Therefore, they wasted precious resources, attempting to build an absolutely safe and comfortable mining system.

“In the mining system, the mining starships were as extravagant as space yachts, and the mining bases were even more enjoyable than luxury hotels. Most of the dangerous jobs were completed by the spiritual puppets. All the miners had to do was sit in the bases and tap on the light beams while drinking their beverages!

“Even so, few people were willing to mine on the resource planets. The miners who agreed to work in the frontier all believed that their sacrifices were too huge. They greedily demanded higher pay, better benefits, and better working environments time and time again!

“In the end, the package of a miner was several times higher than that of a professor on the mother planet. The yields of the mother lodes, instead of being transported to the mother planet, were dedicated to the modification of the mining resources lavishly!

“Instead of improving the efficiency of mining, they constructed a lot of entertainment facilities unrelated to the work in the mining bases under the guise of ‘building a humane working environment’. They also reduced the working hours to five hours per day, and they went on a strike every once in a while.

“Hehe. You can’t have all the best in the world. Is it possible to excavate crystals so easily?

“Because of their follies, the cost of excavation and transportation soared. They could barely make ends meet in the end. Every ton of raw crystals would waste more resources than the value of the crystals!

“Of course, such a system was not promising. Finally, some Cultivators who couldn’t stand it any longer proposed a reform, but it was too late!

“The miners and part of the administration on the resource planets had established a powerful labor union. As an enormous interest group, they united and negotiated with the mother planet. They even extended their hands into the government of the mother planet.

“High benefits and easy work were considered basic human rights in the Curly Dragon Sector. Most people supported the labor union of the mining industry and believed that they had sacrificed for the entire civilization. Cultivators who grew up in such an environment couldn’t force the ordinary people to do anything, either. Under the aggression of the labor union, they conceded time and time again despite their strength!

“After every concession that the Cultivators made, the labor union would be more arrogant, demanding more privileges!

“The miners’ theory sounded reasonable at first. Crystals were mostly excavated for the training of Cultivators and to provide energy for the magical equipment. Of course, Cultivators would take the most advantage.

“If so, wasn’t it only reasonable that the Cultivators paid more for them?

“Not only was theory acknowledged by most ordinary people, even some of the idiotic Cultivators also agreed with the idea and betrayed their companions!

“Just like that, the cancer in the body of the civilization grew ever larger, draining the nutrition of the mother planet. Instead of fixing the shortage of crystals, it escalated the problem!

“The half-automatic mining system that adopted countless spiritual puppets had a lot of problems itself. As the spiritual puppets were slowly worn, invisible dangers accumulated and reached a tipping point!

“Finally, on a resource planet named Bloody Dragon, a cosmic storm disrupted the communication between the spiritual puppets and the mining bases, and the chips of the spiritual puppets happened to have a fault that escaped the attention of the miners responsible for security. In the end, an unprecedented disaster was caused, in which more than 1,700 miners were killed!

“The gory accident made the Curly Dragon Sector question the safety and legitimacy of mining on the resource planets.

“Is it really reasonable and justifiable to trade lives for cold crystals?

“If a civilization must be sustained by the deaths of ordinary people, what is the worth of such a civilization being sustained?

“Blood crystals! What the Cultivators are consuming are the Blood Crystals traded with the ordinary people’s blood!

“Such voices spread virally under the freedom of speech.

“Meanwhile, the high compensations rendered five insurance companies and the mining group bankrupt, raising a huge economic crisis in the world.

“The labor union of the mining industry took the opportunity to attack. All the miners returned from the resource planets to the mother planet for demonstrations against the Cultivators. They demanded better working conditions and safety measures. In their delirium, they proposed unrealistic terms!

“With the technology of the Curly Dragon Sector at that time, their demands were simply fantasies that could not be satisfied!

“This time, the Cultivators truly had no choice.

“However, even at the moment of life and death, the Cultivators were still unwilling, unable, to deal with the labor union. Instead, they built a mining team exclusively made of Cultivators, hoping to address the resource problem by themselves.

“How was it possible?

“Cultivators were much fewer in number after all. Also, mining on the resource planets was a simple, repetitive, low-intelligence job most of the time. They were wasting their lives by going down the wells in person!

“Just like that, the resource collection system of the Curly Dragon Sector managed to keep functioning at an extremely low efficiency. In the following hundreds of years, the number of Cultivators grew smaller and smaller.

“It was mainly caused by two factors.

“Firstly, with the mother lodes on the mother planet being exhausted, the spiritual energy on the surface was thinner and thinner. It was essentially a small ‘Age of Doom’. Of course, the number of newly-awakened Cultivators plummeted.

“Secondly, the resource planets were highly perilous. When Cultivators mined crazily, burning their life and soul, their average longevity was much lower than when on the mother planet, and the casualty rate was significantly higher!

“Also, after dedicating most of their time and effort to the meaningless mining work, they had barely any time to train themselves and could not advance. In the end, one death meant one fewer Cultivator!

“The ordinary people didn’t notice anything wrong about that.

“It was because the labor union of the mining industry had already berated the Cultivators during the competition with the Cultivators.

“Crystals are excavated mainly for the enjoyment of Cultivators. For ordinary people, we can live an excellent life even without crystals!

“Most of the people of the Curly Dragon Sector were fooled by such a claim. They were not interested in anything happening on the resource planets. After all, the remaining assets left by their ancestors were enough for them to live comfortable lives for hundreds more years.

“For an ordinary person, hundreds of years was long enough. They couldn’t see the end of it even when they were about to die.

“But for a civilization, hundreds of years is just a blink of an eye!

“Just like that, after hundreds of years of fuss, the brilliant and glorious civilization of the Curly Dragon Sector finally embraced its unavoidable doom.

“The number of the Cultivators hit rock bottom and was not enough to sustain the functioning of the resource collection system. All the mining bases fell into states of disrepair.

“As the crystals ran dry, the last transportation route between the mother planet and the resource planet was cut off. The Curly Dragon Sector finally lost the ability of space cruising, collection, and transportation for all eternity!”

Chapter 1247 - Planet of Plague!

Su Changfa’s voice was cold, and his face was gloomy.

Together with the empty, desolate cities displayed in the Grand Illusionary Land, dark, depressing clouds were looming in the room.

Although he knew that he was simply being brainwashed, Li Yao still felt cold sweat all over his body. He could not help but ask, “So, what happened the civilization of the Curly Dragon Sector?”

“Thousands of years later, the civilization of the Curly Dragon Sector is no more,” Su Changfa said casually. “Not many files are left for our reference. We can only make basic speculations.

“First of all, as the crystals ran dry and the spiritual energy got rarefied, the Curly Dragon Sector officially entered the Age of Doom. After the last Cultivator perished, nobody was able to awaken their spiritual root ever again!

“Without crystals, without spiritual energy, and without the lead of Cultivators, the civilization of the Curly Dragon Sector was mired in the rotting swamp that was their mother planet.

“As the population and the average longevity continued soaring, everybody’s desires and demands were infinitely magnified. The shortage of resources could never be completely resolved!

“Yes. There were still high reserves of coal and petroleum on the mother planet. Other kinds of chemical energy and the nuclear energy were available, too.

“However, spiritual energy is the purest, strongest energy form in the universe! Neither chemical energy nor nuclear energy are remotely close to the spiritual energy!

“The starships powered by chemical energy or nuclear energy can never surpass one hundredth the speed of light!

“Not surpassing one hundredth the speed of light disapproves the possibility of a mature and stable space cruising, collection, and transportation system, just like you can never hope to conduct trades across the ocean with a few canoes that are riddled with holes!

“Besides, the coal and petroleum resources are exhaustible, too!

“Just like that, in the several thousand years after the crystals were extinct, coal, petroleum and other resources were exhausted, too.

“At that time, people of the Curly Dragon Sector finally realized the importance of marching into the sea of stars. But how was it possible for them to achieve that with their ‘canoes’ powered by nuclear energy and chemical energy?

“Without energy, the civilization declined as a matter of course. The civilization of the Curly Dragon Sector did not collapse abruptly but walked to its doom step by step. One may say that it died of old age!”

Shua!

The picture in the Grand Illusionary Land flashed. The forsaken cities vanished, replaced by naked, short people whose skin was extremely pale.

They were no taller than dwarves, but their limbs were rather proportional and slender, like mini versions of normal human beings.

They were wearing naïve, if not moronic, smiles. Their big eyes, which almost occupied half of their faces, were blocked by a translucent membrane, but there was not the slightest spark of wisdom or humanity in them.

Their movements could not have been slower. Even the simplest movement of stretching out their arms took them quite a few minutes.

Looking at the weird mini people, Li Yao could not help but recall a creature—sloth!

“They are the natives of the Curly Dragon Sector after their civilization has degenerated for thousands of years,” Su Changfa explained. “After landing on the mother planet of the Curly Dragon Sector, the exploration team of the Imperium discovered the remnants of the civilization in the complicated sewer system of the abandoned cities.

“To adapt to the world without energy, their bodies and habits have mutated to the mode where heat is the least consumed. In their entire life, they spend most of the time lurking in the darkness below the ground, not moving at all. The heat they consume is a fraction of what a normal human being would. By sucking part of the residues of the civilization of the past, they will be able to live on.”

Li Yao shuddered hard and mumbled, “Where are the descendants of the Curly Dragon Sector right now?”

“Still in the Curly Dragon Sector,” Su Changfa said unhurriedly. “We have established quite a few ‘Natural Reserves of Rare Hominoids’ on their mother planet to protect them. Such reserves are open to all citizens of the Imperium. The history of the civilization of the Curly Dragon Sector is the best lesson of patriotism. It is also a reminder to all Immortal Cultivators that we must not repeat the mistake of the Cultivators.

“If you are interested, Fellow Cultivator Li, you can visit the descendants of the Curly Dragon Sector in the Curly Dragon Natural Reserve someday in person. You will understand by then what a sensible choice you are making today by abandoning darkness for brightness!”

Li Yao took a deep breath, and he could not help but ask, his voice shivering, “You have caged human beings and exhibited them?”

“Are you not listening, Fellow Cultivator Li?” Su Changfa raised his voice. “They are not true human beings; they are hominoids. Hominoids! Hominoids!

“Hominoids are not humans but a bunch of shortsighted and sluggish creatures, animals, beasts that are hopelessly driven by natural instincts!

“You must not spare any mercy on the cattle. As long as you show them the slightest kindness, they will be insatiable. Eventually, they will ruin the entire civilization as well as themselves!

“Only by treating them as cows, goats, pigs, and dogs and discipling them with strict rules can they expect to contribute whatever value they have to push the civilization of mankind forward!

“Hehe. The Cultivators of the Curly Dragon Sector were too lenient and concessive. That was the essential reason of their doom!

“If it was the Immortal Cultivators, we would’ve disbanded the labor union, stopped the strikes, suppress the demonstrations, and executed all the leaders of the labor union at the earliest chance. We would’ve skinned them and shattered their soul so that they would have nowhere to run!

“Whoever dares cause any trouble will be sent for mining on the resource planets together with their family and friends! A ton of crystals means the death of three to five miners? Does it really matter even if it means thirty to fifty, or even three hundred to five hundred, miners must be killed? Compared with the continuity of the civilization, such sacrifices are just a drop of water in the bucket!

“What does it matter even if millions of slaves are killed after working hard for hundreds of years? At the very least, the civilization will develop at a high speed, and there will be more and more Immortal Cultivators. We will be able to build starships of large scales, which will grant us the ability to march to the broader universe!

“By then, the energy issue will be resolved, and all the sacrifices will be worthwhile. The entire civilization will continue its glory, instead of embracing its doom like the foolish people of the Curly Dragon Sector!

“There’s a saying in the Imperium. ‘The flower of civilization must be fertilized with infinite blood’. It describes the logic quite well. Fellow Cultivator Li, what do you think?”

Li Yao swallowed and struggled to nod.

He suddenly felt that Su Changfa's hand on his shoulder was as slippery and greasy as five cold vipers.

His heart seemed to have been bitten hard by a viper, too, and he felt extremely uncomfortable.

Su Changfa could tell that he did not mean it, but he was not in the least bothered and simply smiled. “Fellow Cultivator Li, I know that it is hardly possible for you to accept all theories of the true path of immortality after only such a short time. It doesn't matter. Let's take it slow and explore it bit by bit. As long as you don't have any prior hypothesis bias, you will certainly be enlightened in the end!

“This is everything about the Curly Dragon Sector. Then, let's talk about the tales of the Medicine Fork Sector, the second self-destructing civilization!”

Behind Su Changfa, the light and shadow broke apart into dancing butterflies, only to condense into a space zone that looked vastly different from the previous one. At the center of the space zone was a glowing planet that seemed to be made of green jade.

“The Medicine Fork Sector was a world that slowly grew prosperous two thousand years after the glory of the Curly Dragon civilization.

“Different from the Curly Dragon Sector, the Medicine Fork Sector was not a world with multiple space zones; it only had one prosperous space zone. All the spiritual energy and crystals were concentrated on Medicine Fork, the mother planet. Therefore, the shortage of resources was never a problem!

“However, the Medicine Fork Sector had its threats, too.

“In the Medicine Fork Sector, other than human beings, a lot of demons were occupying the planet, too. The two parties fought each other for more than a thousand years as sworn enemies.

“The demons were very adept at biochemistry and virology. The biochemical weapons and virus weapons that they developed dealt tremendous damage to the people of the Medicine Fork Sector. They nearly declared the doom of the newly-born civilization of the Medicine Fork Sector.

“At that time, Medicine Fork was an out-and-out ‘planet of plague’, where everybody suffered from viruses and pestilence. They struggled to catch their breath, never knowing if they would live to see the end of the day!

“However, the rise of humanity was the unstoppable trend. After a thousand years of bloody battles, the Cultivators of the Medicine Fork civilization developed marvelous drugs and disease control systems. Eventually, they annihilated all the demons in the Medicine Fork Sector!

“The golden era of the Medicine Fork civilization thus began!

“Without the enemies, nothing could stop the rapid development of the Medicine Fork Sector!

“Because of the miserable memories of being tortured by plagues and viruses in the past thousand years, the main focus of the Medicine Fork civilization was the field of medication!

“In only several hundred years, the people of the Medicine Fork Sector had developed the most remarkable medication skills and an almost perfect fully-comprehensive health care system. Many of their advanced medication skills are tantalizing even for the Imperium of True Human Beings today!

“Under the creed of ‘protecting all the ordinary people’, most of the Cultivators of the Medicine Fork Sector were devoted to the fight with diseases. A doctor was seen as the most honorable profession in the Medicine Fork Sector!

“They basically destroyed all the harmful bacteria and viruses in nature before they cured the diseases that troubled human beings one after another. Also, through the injection of all kinds of medications, they established a solid barrier within the body of every ordinary person, preventing them from being invaded by any intruder!

“For the hundreds of years, Medicine Fork was almost ‘a planet without illness’. Many ordinary people lived their entire life without ever being affected by the slightest ailment. Not just cancer or seriously infectious diseases, they wouldn’t even catch a cold!

“As a result, the average longevity was greatly improved, and the ordinary people ‘looked’ healthier and healthier, too. They could easily live to two hundred years. The quality of their life had a drastic improvement compared with the ‘era of plague’!

“At first glance, just like the Curly Dragon civilization’s glory before their crystals ran out, everything about the Medicine Fork civilization appeared perfect when it climbed to the peak of development!”

Chapter 1248 - Calamitous Pestilence!

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao frowned and asked, “What’s the problem of a world without diseases?”

“What’s the problem?” Su Changfa scoffed. “The biggest problem is that the Cultivators broke the rules of nature and shattered the balance between human beings and nature!

“Human beings are the spirits of all creatures, the perfect existences that were born after billions of years of evolution of all carbon-based life forms! Even counting from the time when human beings were first born, we have also developed an effective immune system in the competition with nature, germs, viruses, and diseases!

“Without any medicine or medicative approaches, the immune system of the human body alone is enough to defeat most of the bacteria and viruses and also build up the body during the process. The growth is sometimes even deeply etched into our genes and passed on to future generations!

“This is what we know as evolution!”

“That’s not necessarily right,” Li Yao observed. “If one doesn’t go to a doctor in time when they are sick, it is still very possible that they may die.”

Su Changfa snorted and said, “Diseases are the filtering system that nature has bestowed upon human beings. By eliminating the carriers of foul genes, it can be ensured that the species as a whole will develop to the correct path!

“For the civilization of mankind as a whole, a certain degree of ‘elimination rate’ must be guaranteed. Only be filtering those who are unsuitable for survival can the optimal configuration of resources be achieved.

“For an individual, death is a tragedy, but for a civilization, the real tragedy is that those who should’ve died continue living and wasting resources!”

Li Yao could not help it any longer. Pretending to be enlightened, he replied, “That explains a lot. I understand now. So, there is no such place as a ‘hospital’ in the Imperium of True Human Beings, right?”

“Of course, there are hospitals,” Su Changfa said with a smile, “but they are mostly focused on external injuries! For the infection of viruses, cancer, and other diseases, we will simply inject some ‘immune system activation drugs’ into the patients to stimulate their own potential to cope with the diseases.

“So, in our hospitals, it eventually comes down to the patient’s own immune system and resistance to deal with bacteria, viruses, and cancers. The doctors only help ‘awaken’ and ‘enhance’ them.”

Li Yao was dazed. “Does it work?”

“Of course,” Su Changfa said. “Although not as good as the hundred percent healing rate that the Medicine Fork civilization claimed, we have found that general tumors and infections can be killed by the patient’s’ own vitality!

"If they cannot be killed, we hardly intervene or perform other procedures because the patient's fire of life is too feeble to prove that they are qualified to live on!"

Rendered speechless, Li Yao could only prick his ears and keep listening.

"However, the Cultivators of the Medicine Fork civilization chose a different methodology from ours," Su Changfa said. "They believed that the civilization of mankind was a whole. All human beings were brothers and sisters. Regardless of their sex, age, and wealth, whether they were ordinary people or Cultivators, and no matter how many deficiencies there were in their genes and how low their immunity was, they were worth saving through whatever means possible!

"Therefore, they modified the entire planet at a huge cost, establishing an ecological system that was devoid of fatal bacteria and viruses and was therefore extremely vulnerable. They also injected tremendous hormones, antibiotics, and chemical drugs into every citizen's body, constructing an 'impenetrable' man-made immune system!

"At that time, the people of the Medicine Fork Sector would have injections from the moment that they were fetuses in their mother's womb. The moment they were born, they would be soaked in the tanks of medicine. That was the cost to trade for a seemingly long and healthy life!

"It was a pity that the health and longevity on the surface were actually founded on an extremely feeble foundation. It's like the Cultivators worked hard to build a greenhouse for all the ordinary people and kept them safe inside from the storms of the outside world.

"It was indeed an effective approach in the short term.

“However, the side effect was that everybody, including the Cultivators, became flowers in the greenhouse!

“As the saying goes, ‘a country without an enemy will soon die of arrogance’. The same logic applies to human beings, too!

“Without the attacks of diseases, bacteria, and viruses, there would be no chance of ‘drills’. Maintaining your health purely with medicine is like protecting your nation with foreign mercenaries. How could it possibly last long?

“Just like that, the people of the Medicine Fork Sector grew up in an enormous ‘sterile room’ generation after generation. Their immune system grew weaker and weaker until they lost the ability to survive on their own!

“The historians of the Imperium of True Human Beings, when studying the civilization of the Medicine Fork Sector, named their disease ‘Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome’. Because their environment was too ‘clean’ and overloaded with interventional medicative defense measures, their immune system collapsed completely, and even their genes were changed!

“Their immune system, just like our ‘appendix’ and ‘tail’, became useless organs and slowly degenerated, eventually vanishing!

“Hehe. Because the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome caused by the Cultivators’ ‘unconditional love’ for ‘all the brotherly human beings’, we also call it the ‘spoil disease’!

“Everybody having AIDS was just part their problem. What was more horrible was that, under the Cultivator’s principle that nobody should be left behind and everybody must be saved, many people who were unsuitable to survive because of their foul genes or, at the very least, unsuitable to have offspring were rescued by them and allowed to get married and have children like normal people, only to leave descendants that were even fouler.

“The Cultivators could suppress the ostensible symptoms of the carriers of foul genes with their incredible medicines and medication skills. However, it was impossible for them to address the problem from the source, which boiled down to the gene strands.

“As a result, the foul genes spread, lurking among the people of the Medicine Fork Sector. They were like an inactive volcano that was expanding incessantly and could wake up at any point!

“To suppress the symptoms of the foul genes, the Cultivators had to increase the dosages of drugs, but the increased dosages led to the escalation of AIDS. Such a vicious circle was utterly unstoppable!

“Although the Medicine Fork civilization was on the brink of destruction, it still looked prosperous and brilliant on the surface!

“They were not as foolish as the people of the Curly Dragon Sector. They had developed rather advance space cruising technologies after several hundred years, which were excellent enough to support space jumps across different Sectors!

“That was the peak of the golden era of the Medicine Fork civilization. When they gazed at the boundless sea of stars, every citizen was confident that they could conquer every enemy including nature!

“However, they never thought of one thing.

“While their immune system was deteriorating, the bacteria and viruses, their most dangerous opponents, were mutating or… evolving!

“The medicine and antibiotics that the Medicine Fork people produced could kill 99.99% of viruses. However, the surviving one, under the stimulation, would have shocking mutations and become even more sordid, mysterious, and fatal!

“Hehe. Survival of the fittest is the law of the universe. The Medicine Fork civilization led by the Cultivators stomped on the rule arrogantly, but the bacteria and viruses in the Medicine Fork civilization had always abided by the rule. Bolstered by the medicine and antibiotics, they were struggling, mutating, and evolving at a speed hundreds of times higher than before!

“Cultivators of the Medicine Fork Sector noticed that the bacteria showed more and more resistance and the viruses were mutating faster and faster, too. A newly-discovered disease could mutate into dozens of variants in only a couple of months.

“However, they still did not realize their mistake. They simply produced even more drugs, vaccines, antibiotics, and interferons crazily. It’s like when you are faced with a blocked flood, you simply want to increase the height of the dam for temporary safety, but you never foresee the damage that the collapse will cause in the future!

“For a while, their strategy seemed to be working.

“All the bacteria and viruses on the land were thoroughly examined by them. They had also developed pertinent vaccines and antibiotics for everybody.

“But they overlooked the ocean.

“Just when the first space fleet of the Medicine Fork civilization was about to set off to explore the sea of stars, an undersea volcano located at the west of the planet suddenly erupted and threw tremendous materials at the bottom of the ocean into the sky.

“The materials included an ancient virus that had hibernated for hundreds of thousands of years in the sulfur and mud near the undersea volcano.

“For the past hundreds of thousands of years, such a virus had never appeared on the planet before. The Medicine Fork civilization did not know the first thing about it or have a targeting vaccine.

“The virus swept across the entire planet like a hurricane. Mixed with the bacteria and virus that hundreds of generations of drugs and antibiotics had failed to kill, it led to a calamitous pestilence!

“The ‘greenhouse’ that Cultivators built for the Medicine Fork civilization after almost a thousand years was finally shattered ruthlessly. The ‘flowers’, with tremendous foul genes lurking inside their bodies and without an immune system, were exposed to the terrible storm!

“In only three months, the Medicine Fork civilization lost one fifth of its population. The social order was on the verge of collapse. It fell to the deepest level of hell from the clouds!

“In fact, at that time, the civilization could still have been saved.”

With a cruel face, Su Changfa made a chopping gesture as he said, “Kill! Kill! Kill! Establish quarantines and gather the

Cultivators, whose resistance is higher. They will maintain the basic order and kill all disease carriers and suspected carriers, thereby purging the entire planet of the civilization of the Medicine Fork Sector!

“Half of the population, or maybe even three quarters, may be lost. But so what? The civilization exists as long as Cultivators are there! Later, the crashed immune system can be recovered slowly, and the civilization will be rebuilt from scratch!”

Chapter 1249 - Destruction of the Martial Meritocrats!

“If the Medicine Fork civilization had survived from the calamitous pestilence, which seemed to be an unavoidable doom at that time, I believe that they would’ve been much stronger and even become a dominator in the sea of stars!

“However, under the leadership of the Cultivators with their petty kindness, nobody was resolute enough to make such an ‘unpardonable’ decision!

“On the contrary, the belief of ‘protecting all the ordinary people’ had melted into the bones of every Cultivator, which decided that they would not give up anyone, not even the carriers and the suspected carriers!

“As a result, the calamitous pestilence got worse and worse. In only one year, the Medicine Fork civilization lost four fifths of the population. The social order completely fell apart!

“It was not until this moment that the immune system in the survivors began to evolve again and raced with the viruses!

“Too late. It was awakened too late. The virus was evolving hundreds of times faster than their immune system! After decades on their last breath, the last survivor of the Medicine Fork civilization was consumed by the pestilence and turned into a pile of filthy bones!

“When the explorers of the Imperium of True Human Beings arrived in the mother planet of the Medicine Fork Sector, we saw many well-preserved starships in a splendid launch field. Those starships that were rather advanced even in our eyes had become paradises for rats and cockroaches.

“The Medicine Fork civilization could have leapt into the stars, but it was smothered in the cradle by tiny bacteria and virus.

“What’s most ironic is that, when the historians and archeologists of the Imperium explored the planet carefully, trying to find the cause of the calamitous pestilence thousands of years ago, we did find the undersea volcano that erupted once, and we successfully retrieved the ancient virus that was in the hibernation state in the sulfur and mud near the volcano.

“Fellow Cultivator Li, do you know what the virus really was?”

Li Yao shook his head hard.

“It was a primordial version of a respiratory syncytial virus.” Su Changfa smiled. “Despite the scary name and the high contagiousness, it is not fatal in any way.

“In fact, the modern mutants of the virus will often cause the follow symptoms: high fever, headache, nasal congestion, rigor, and sore muscles, which are often collectively known as… a cold!”

“Huh?” Li Yao exclaimed in disbelief.

“Exactly. A virus from the primeval era that could cause nothing more than a cold shattered the once glorious

Medicine Fork civilization, which claimed to have destroy all the diseases, brutally into smithereens!”

Su Changfa burst into laughter. “The Cultivators of the Medicine Fork Sector naively thought that they could rescue everybody, but as it turned out, they rescued nobody in the end, not even themselves!”

Li Yao’s emotions were in turmoil.

He knew full well that the self-destructive civilizations of Cultivators must have been carefully selected by the authorities of the Imperium of True Human Beings. Chances were that the materials were just propaganda with exaggerated and distorted stories.

However, despite all the overstatement and vilification, the picture where the glorious civilizations in the past slid into the abyss step by step with no way to stop was still vaguely visible.

Li Yao found it impossible to laugh under the helplessness and desperation. He pondered carefully about what the reborn Star Glory Federation would do when the Cultivators were caught in a similar situation.

“The destruction of the Curly Dragon civilization and the Medicine Fork civilization is truly poignant. However, the decay of the Martial Meritocrats civilization is much more thought-provoking than them!”

Su Changfa made a gesture. The Grand Illusionary Land changed yet again. This time, it was a Sector that was even more prosperous.

Hundreds of sailing routes connected almost twenty planets, interweaving with each other like a spider web.

“Now, Fellow Cultivator Li, I would like to show you the self-destruction of the third, and the last, civilization!”

Li Yao was refreshed. The destruction of the Curly Dragon civilization and the Medicine Fork civilization had already been stunning enough for him. Now that the Martial Meritocrats civilization was kept to the last, there had to be even more twists and turns to the story!

At this moment, Li Yao had already changed his attitude. He was not simply viewing everything as the brainwashing methods of the Imperium of True Human Beings. He was also hoping to learn lessons from the destroyed civilizations that could guide the way for the Star Glory Federation or, at the very least, point out the wrong directions for it!

“The Martial Meritocrats civilization was a very classic civilization of Cultivators. They were much more fortunate than the Curly Dragon civilization and the Medicine Fork civilization. The resource reserves were neither too high nor too low. The planets were neither too dense nor too sparse. The enemies were neither too strong nor too weak—neither strong enough to devour them as a whole, nor so weak that their sense of community, ambitiousness, devotion, and other positive spirits couldn’t be triggered.

“All in all, led by the Cultivators, the pioneers of the Martial Meritocrats civilization slogged and strived from scratch. After bloody battles, they destroyed the demons, the extraterrestrial devils, and other enemies, and eventually established a powerful country—the Alliance of Martial Meritocrats!

“Citizens of the Alliance of Martial Meritocrats neither dwelled in the abundant resources of their mother planet and lost their ambitions and courage, like the people of the

Curly Dragon Sector did, nor pursued an absolute sterile world fanatically while forgetting the rules of nature, like the people of the Medicine Fork Sector did.

“Although they had defeated the enemies within their reach, they did not lose their sense of enterprising. Instead, by excavating the relics of the Star Ocean Imperium, they gained a deep understanding about the vastness of the universe and realized that many other human beings were still scattered in the three thousand Sectors!

“All human beings are family. March to the sea of stars, find our brothers and sisters, and let our civilization radiate to every direction!

“It was the slogan and dream for every person of the Martial Meritocrats Sector in its golden years.

“Boosted by such noble, great, and righteous ambitions, they strode forward together and successfully developed space cruising technology. Space fleets of an enormous scale were established. Many determined, devoted experts distinguished themselves, too. They marched out into the grand universe without any hesitation!

“Fellow Cultivator Li, up until now, do you feel that the Martial Meritocrats civilization is more balanced, stable, and excellent than the previous two civilizations?”

Li Yao pondered for a moment and nodded.

He felt that the Martial Meritocrats civilization was a duplicate of the Star Glory Federation from the environment of birth to the creeds that everybody believed in.

The federation was in its golden years as well!

However, now that the outcome of the civilization was obvious, there had to be a fatal problem in it. The rise and decline of the Martial Meritocrats civilization would be a highly valuable lesson for the Star Glory Federation. Instead of waiting for Su Changfa to talk, Li Yao asked promptly, “What’s the Martial Meritocrats civilization’s problem?”

Su Changfa smiled and said, “The fatal wound of the Martial Meritocrats civilization was that they adopted a parliamentary system where voting and partisan competition were highlighted when the country was established!”

Li Yao was suddenly alarmed.

Isn’t is exactly like the federation?

What’s wrong about voting and the parliamentary system?

Noticing the suspicion in his eyes, Su Changfa unhurriedly replied, “Voting and the parliamentary system do not have a problem per se. In fact, the Imperium of True Human Beings is quite democratic, too. A voting system has been implemented in many levels!

“However, how can the votes that will decide national affairs be given to ignorant hominoids casually?

“In the Imperium, only the citizens who are ‘true human beings’ have the right to vote. The more important an issue is, the higher the demand on the voters will be. For many national policies, only the Immortal Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage or even the Nascent Soul Stage are qualified to vote!

“This is the only way to keep the stability of a country and the rationality of the decisions to be made!

“However, it was not the case in the Alliance of Martial Meritocrats. What they adopted was an absurd system where everybody had one vote equally. An illiterate hobo with ulcers all over his body had one vote, a lazy, treachery gangster had one vote, and a well-revered, capable Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage, theoretically, also had only one vote!

“Fellow Cultivator Li, tell me about it. Is there a more hilarious thing in the world?”

“Well—” Li Yao scratched his head.

After a sniff, Su Changfa continued. “The Martial Meritocrats civilization was the civilization where the hypocrisy, shortsightedness, and petty kindness of the Cultivators stood out the most. The one-person-one-ticket voting system was just the first clue. As for the laws and the social morals, the rights of the ordinary people were overstressed while the position of the Cultivators was belittled!

“With great power comes great responsibility!

“Cultivators are the servants of the civilization of mankind and must devote their everything!

“Cultivators come from the ordinary people and must serve the ordinary people unconditionally!

“Ordinary people are water, and Cultivators are fish. Without ordinary people, there will be no Cultivators. Every crystal that Cultivators consume is a cost of the wealth of mankind. Therefore, the techniques and Cultivation arts that the Cultivators trained with the crystals do not belong to the Cultivators but to mankind!

“Such absurdities were the most popular theories in the Martial Meritocrats civilization. They were the undebatable ‘truths’!

“All in all, Cultivators of the Martial Meritocrats civilization dedicated themselves to the most tiresome and dangerous jobs. Their tax rate was many times higher than that of the ordinary people. When the ordinary people were in trouble, they had to give everything that they had to help them. In short, from the laws to the morals, everything dictated that they be out-and-out ‘saints’!

“The Cultivators of the Martial Meritocrats Sector whose heads must’ve been seriously wrong, after being brainwashed for a long time, accepted everything in the end, too. They degraded themselves but considered it a pleasure. They devoted but never asked for anything in return!”

Li Yao coughed hard. “One side is willing to take, and the other is willing to offer… There doesn’t seem to be a problem, does there?”

“If the territory of the Alliance of Martial Meritocrats had been restricted to the Martial Meritocrats Sector alone, there wouldn’t have been a problem. After all, all the Cultivators and ordinary people shared the same history, creeds, culture, and values. No matter how demanding the ordinary people were, they had boundaries after all.

“Besides, the ordinary people of the Martial Meritocrats Sector fought their way to prosperity through bloody battles, too. They were not entirely lowly, lazy, troublemaking creatures. They were as demanding on themselves as they were on the Cultivators. Everybody was giving it their all to march to the universe so that they could find more Sectors and save the brothers and sisters there!

“What seriously went wrong, however, proved to be the brothers and sisters that they rescued from other Sectors.”

Chapter 1250 - The Chiyou Cult

Li Yao’s heart was tightened. “How so?”

The Star Glory Federation also considered protecting the human beings of all the three thousand Sectors as its responsibility. In the planning, it was also going to expand actively and explore new Sectors in order to build up the entire federation!

The Martial Meritocrats Sector’s fall would be a great lesson for them.

“The Martial Meritocrats Sector was quite *fortunate* ,” Su Changfa sneered. “With the star maps of the Star Ocean Imperium, it soon found a Sector not far away from them named ‘Sand Primitive Sector’, which was also inhabited by a lot of human beings.

“However, not every Sector was as lucky as the Curly Dragon Sector, the Medicine Fork Sector, or the Martial Meritocrats Sector, which did not suffer much in the gory war, had a relatively stable environment, and could absorb the heritage of the Star Ocean Imperium during the reconstruction of their civilization.

“Most of the Sectors had been destroyed in the war that caused the collapse of the Star Ocean Imperium. They were shattered and occupied by tremendous demons and extraterrestrial devils.

“In such a harsh environment, even though some of the human beings survived, it was impossible for them to sustain a complicated and delicate modern civilization. They were forced to retrograde to the primitive stage and build everything from scratch again.

“The Sand Primitive Sector was exactly such a miserable world.

“Before the Martial Meritocrats’ people arrived, the civilization there had been at an extremely low level, which was no better than the world of ancient Cultivators forty thousand years and even worse in many aspects!

“The natives of the Sand Primitive Sector were nomadic. They were aggressive, radical, sensitive, and suspicious in nature. There weren’t systematic training techniques and Cultivator arts. Everything was incomplete. The few Cultivators were known as ‘shamans’ and fought with their talents and instincts.

“To resist the rough environment and the brutal alien species, the shamans of the Sand Primitive Sector had to establish an extreme and cruel religion named the ‘Chiyou [1] Cult’, in which the legendary ruthless God of War was honored to be the supreme god. They trained themselves with the ‘strength of belief’ and triggered the potential inside human bodies through approaches such as ‘seances’ and other sacraments, in order to raise the most bloodthirsty ‘berserker warriors’!

“As time went by, the culture of the Sand Primitive Sector was also deeply affected by the Chiyou-worshipping belief, which often proved to be radical, passionate, and fearless. The Chiyou Cult leaked to every pore and every bone of their daily life!

“They formed different tribes around the shamans who claimed that they could communicate with God Chiyou. The people only knew the shamans and Chiyou but did not have any idea about officials, government, or law!

“All in all, the Martial Meritocrats Sector and the Sand Primitive Sector were vastly different from each other in history, culture, belief, social form, and strength system. Other than the similar appearance and language, they were essentially two different species!

“However, at that time, even the smartest, keenest Cultivators of the Martial Meritocrats Sector didn’t realize what such differences actually meant!

“The discovery of the Sand Primitive Sector made the entire Martial Meritocrats Sector overjoyed. The people of the Martial Meritocrats Sector had finally found subjects that they could save. Their long-accumulated sense of justice and sympathy finally emerged in all its splendor and had somewhere to go!

“When they discovered that their ‘poor brothers of the Primitive Sector’ were struggling on a mother planet whose environment was extremely harsh under the scourge of demons, extraterrestrial devils, and other alien species now and then, large-scale aids were immediately underway!

“Magical equipment, crystals, and techniques were delivered to the Sand Primitive Sector incessantly without bothering the cost. Many volunteers arrived at the new land, too, promulgating the latest training methodology and system to the natives!

“In order to cope with the threats of the enemies, before they taught the people of the Sand Primitive Sector how to till the land with machines, they taught them how to use the advanced chainswords, crystal cannons, heat-sensitive flying swords, and even… crystal suits!

“Since the environment of the Sand Primitive Sector was too harsh, and the demons and extraterrestrial devils were not likely to be wiped out any time soon, it didn’t take long for the Alliance of Martial Meritocrats to pass many laws including the Bill of Equal Human Beings and the Bill of Sectoral Free Communication.

“According to the laws, all human beings in the sea of stars were brothers that were entitled to the same natural rights. Among them, the right of free migration, the right of residence, and the right to protect oneself from any war were the most sacred and inviolable three!

“Therefore, as long as they were willing to, the natives of the Sand Primitive Sector were absolutely qualified to immigrate to the Martial Meritocrats Sector freely. After receiving simple education and training, they would be granted the citizenship of the ‘Alliance of Martial Meritocrats’ and have the same privileges and benefits as natives of the Martial Meritocrats Sector did!”

Even Li Yao found it unbelievable when he heard the part.

Were the people of the Martial Meritocrats Sector all morons?

Although Li Yao supported the integration of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector because of the push of the Imperium of True Human Beings, it was unthinkable to grant all demons the citizenship of the Star Glory Federation!

Besides, in the Star Glory Federation, there were many Cultivators who had a different stances from Li Yao’s. The radical ones of them included Lu Zui and Zhou Hengdao, and the more conservative ones included his wife, Ding Lingdang. Regardlessly, they were all wary of the demons and checked Li Yao and his supporters from the other side of the scale.

Li Yao had no issue with Ding Lingdang’s belief being utterly different from his. On the contrary, he found it very necessary.

One civilization could not have only one voice, even if the voice sounded correct and righteous.

Only by the check and balance of different ideologies could it be ensured that the civilization walked on the correct path without leaning to either side.

Although all the Cultivators of the federation, including Li Yao, had the pure heart of a newborn babe to believe in brightness, it did not mean that they were really three years old!

Su Changfa smiled. “Do you feel that the people of the Martial Meritocrats Sector were silly?”

Li Yao nodded subconsciously.

“Wrong. The Martial Meritocrats people may have been a bit naïve, but they were not foolish enough to open the door for burglars!” Su Changfa said coldly. “However, misguided by a faulty system, even the smartest guys will have to push forward even if they know clearly that swamps and abysses are in the front.

“If they don’t walk forward, those behind them will still push him into the abyss!

“The bills that the Martial Meritocrats Sector passed were ostensibly because of their belief and ideology.

“But more importantly, they were meant to address the issue of the shortage of labor force.

“At that time, the Alliance of Martial Meritocrats had developed for more than a thousand years. It was a rather mature, high-level civilization. Most of the citizens were highly educated. They all hoped to participate in jobs that were technology-intensive, vigorous, creative, and brought a sense of achievement.

“The great leap in the space cruising technology and the exploration of new worlds provided many technology-intensive, high-paying, and promising jobs for them.

“At that time, a job related to space exploration was the biggest dream and a dream that could very likely be realized for every citizen of the Martial Meritocrats Sector.

“But then there was a problem. Although the advanced jobs were sufficient, who was going to fill in the dirty, tedious work and the simple, repetitive jobs?

“Spiritual puppets were naturally a choice. However, the cost of the puppets was too high. Also, they would consume a lot of crystals. It would be too wasteful to deploy them for such lowly work.

“Although there were abundant resources in the Martial Meritocrats Sector, the people there had equally abundant ambitions. They were hoping to explore the entire universe. Crystals, as fuel for the space voyages, had to be carefully distributed.

“The arrival of the Sand Primitive Sector seemed to have solved the problem perfectly.

“While the natives of the Martial Meritocrats Sector were engaged in the advanced, demanding, vigorous, and creative jobs where astronomy, medication, law, liberal arts, and philosophy were involved, the Sand Primitive Sector took part in the low, simple, repetitive jobs that did not require any creativity or bring any sense of achievement, as the bottom-level workers and farmers in the society.

“Doctors, stargazers, and workers were just different fields of work. Nobody was nobler than anybody. All the citizens were helping each other and contributing in their own way to a brilliant, glorious civilization.

“It was perhaps what the decision-makers of the Martial Meritocrats Sector had thought.”

Li Yao was hooked by the story. He asked subconsciously, “Were the people of the Sand Primitive Sector not willing to take it?”

“I wouldn’t say that. The first generation of the Sand Primitive people accepted such an arrangement rather gladly,” Su Changfa replied. “After all, the environment of the Sand Primitive Sector was too harsh, and too many enemies were out there. Compared with their home, the Martial Meritocrats Sector was almost heaven on earth! Even the heaviest, dirtiest, and most boring jobs in the Martial Meritocrats Sector were still a hundred times better than their days in their homeland!

“Besides, the two Sectors were far away from each other after all. Although the space carriers of the Martial Meritocrats Sector jumped back and forth at the highest frequency, few natives of the Sand Primitive Sector were transported to the Martial Meritocrats Sector. They took up less than one tenth of the whole population.

“When you live under somebody else’s roof, you must learn to bend your neck. People of the Sand Primitive Sector were rather dutiful and hardworking when they just arrived in the foreign land.

“They took over the dirty and tedious jobs that the natives despised and worked diligently. They had no complaint whatsoever about the minimum wages and benefits. They worked from day to night for the sole hope that they could move their wife, their children, and even their entire family to the Martial Meritocrats Sector to live a happy life!

“The Sand Primitive people who had just left their homeland naturally kept their habits as a nomadic people and continued worshipping their Chiyou Cult. However, they often chose times and locations that were unattractive and conducted their rituals in secret so that nobody else would be disturbed.

“Human rights, including the right to worship different gods, were respected in the Alliance of Martial Meritocrats. The citizens generally had an indifferent view toward different religions, ranging from pantheists to atheists. They knew clearly that the legendary deities such as Pangu or Nuwa were prehistoric civilizations at best. There were no real gods in the universe. Their religious beliefs were more of a hobby.

“Now that the Sand Primitive immigrants had done their jobs so excellently, it did not seem inappropriate to let them keep their religion because they were not disturbing anybody.

“Moreover, many citizens of the Martial Meritocrats Sector regarded the Chiyou Cult to be an exotic, mysterious culture from a foreign land. They even joined the Chiyou Cult to feel the unique charm of the ‘primitive culture’ for themselves.”

1. Chiyou was a sagacious mythical king in ancient China.

Chapter 1251 - Frogs in Warm Water!

As Su Changfa spoke enticingly, the Grand Illusionary Land behind him was changing and displaying vivid pictures, too.

The last picture was one where countless people were worshipping and dancing deliriously in front of a black, angry Chiyou statue.

Compared with the Curly Dragon civilization and the Medicine Fork civilization, the Martial Meritocrats civilization had left much more detailed records. They were almost like the real-life experiences of some citizens of the Imperium.

Seeing that the number of the Sand Primitive people whose skin was blackened and whose body was tattooed was growing nonstop, Li Yao felt that his teeth were aching.

Jin Tuyi once told him blatantly the real Red Tide Plan, which was in fact the roadmap for the demon race to integrate into the federation. It was basically the same.

However, from Li Yao to Ding Lingdang, and even including Lu Zui and Zhou Hengdao who had died and Speaker Jiang Hailiu who was still alive, everybody more or less kept their vigilance. There was no way that the Red Tide Plan would be implemented exactly as Jin Tuyi had in his mind.

It was because human beings and demons used to be sworn enemies. The two parties were wary of each other by nature.

The people of the Martial Meritocrats Sector, however, took the people of the Sand Primitive Sector as their ‘siblings’. They embraced all of them without the slightest alarm.

Li Yao seemed to envision the beginning of a tragedy.

“At first, the integration of the Martial Meritocrats Sector and the Sand Primitive Sector seemed to be going well. ‘Model Integration Zones’ were established, in which the Martial Meritocrats natives and the Sand Primitive natives lived in peace, took part in different jobs, and communicated with each other closely. There were even a lot of married couples from different worlds. Quite a few hybrids were born.

“With the Sand Primitive natives engaged in the labor-intensive work, the natives of the Martial Meritocrats Sector were able to focus all their attention on realizing their dream to explore the sea of stars. The national capabilities soared, and the territory quickly expanded!”

Su Changfa sighed. “However, the decision-makers of the Martial Meritocrats Sector did not foresee the fatal changes caused by two factors!

“Firstly, the Alliance of Martial Meritocrats adopted an election system where one citizen had one vote. Under such a system, a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator locally born and raised had one vote, and an immigrant from the Sand Primitive Sector who was new to the place, who had just learned the dialect of the Martial Meritocrats Sector, and who couldn’t even repair a toilet, also boasted one sacred vote because he was a citizen of the nation!

“Although the Cultivators of the Martial Meritocrats Sector were people of honor and integrity, they would not concede or give up in the pursuit of the supreme power. They would also debate and argue with each other.

“They might not be fighting for their selfish interests, but only when they were high in power could they carry out their belief and the belief of their party!

“In order to enter parliament and even the highest decision-making circle, they had to fight for more votes!

“The Alliance of Martial Meritocrats had been founded for a thousand years. Most parties had their own ‘ticket bunker’, which was the range of their influence. The votes in every election wouldn’t change too much. It was very difficult for them to win votes from the ticket bunker of other sects, too.

“Although the system was a bit rigid, it ensured the stability of politics and the continuity of policies.

“But the arrival of the Sand Primitive immigrants changed everything.

“Many parties had been kept in balance for hundreds of years, with a similar number of hardcore supporters, but with the votes of the Sand Primitive people, it was very possible that the situation in the past would be changed!

“The more Sand Primitive people are in favor of us, the more likely we will win the election!

“How can we get more Sand Primitive people to support us? First of all, naturally, we will promise them more privileges and assure them that the policies will be in effect as soon as we are in power, thereby winning over the Sand Primitive people!

“Then, we can try our best to move their family, friends, and even the entire tribe to the Martial Meritocrats Sector and make the newcomers citizens of the nation. So, we will have more new votes!

“As a result, the votes on our side will definitely increase exponentially!

“Even if we don’t do it, our hostile parties will. If the hostile parties are supported by more Sand Primitive immigrants, we will never be able to carry out our beliefs in office!

“Such a train of thought was simple enough even for a Building Foundation Stage Cultivator or a Core Formation Stage, not to mention those in the Nascent Soul Stage. In fact, it was exactly what the smart and civilized Cultivators did!

“To win the support of the voters from the Sand Primitive Sectors, today, Party A proposed that the social position of the natives of the Sand Primitive Sector must be improved and that a certain ratio of employees in the government agencies must be from the Sand Primitive Sector.

“The next day, Party B proposed that the conditions required for the natives of the Sand Primitive Sector to join the Alliance of Martial Meritocrats should be loosened and that every Sand Primitive native would automatically be granted citizenship and the voting right the moment they entered the Martial Meritocrats Sector.

“The day after that, Party C proposed that, in order to maintain the basic rights of the citizens from the Sand Primitive Sector, they must be provided with additional allowances other than free food and housing!

“The Sand Primitive people, on the other hand, knew the importance of gratitude quite well. They indeed supported Party As, Party Bs and Party Cs, making those parties win the elections smoothly and crush many opponents that had troubled them for hundreds of years!

“The parties-in-elect, after savoring the fruit of success, wouldn’t abandon such effective approaches. To ensure the victories in the future elections, they spared no effort moving large batches of Sand Primitive natives to the Martial Meritocrats Sector and transforming them into citizens of the Alliance of Martial Meritocrats and even the disciples of the local sects!

“Day after day, year after year, the privileges and the position of the Sand Primitive natives became better and better; their number and voice grew larger and larger. Eventually, they became a force that nobody dared to mess around with.

“The Alliance of Martial Meritocrats only meant to hire a few workers in the beginning, but now, the workers had become the bosses. Despite the benefits that were even higher than regular natives of the Martial Meritocrats Sector, they were greedy enough to demand higher wages, benefits, and better living environment, and a medication, education, and social security system that favored them biasedly!

“In many cases, the Sand Primitive natives were in fact too stupid to come up with all that.

“It was the parties and local sects of the Martial Meritocrats Sector that offered the conditions to them promptly time and time again, stimulating their greed and ambitions to expand!

“This was the first fatal mistake that the Martial Meritocrats civilization made.

“The second fatal mistake, in the meantime, was the population issue.”

Li Yao felt that his eyelids were jumping. “What’s the population issue?”

“The Martial Meritocrats civilization and the Sand Primitive civilizations were actually two civilizations of different eras and levels. Yet, the childish Cultivators melded them together by brute force,” Su Changfa sneered. “The Martial Meritocrats civilization had already entered a highly-developed phase. As the educational and economical level improved, the fertility rate naturally decreased.

“Traditionally speaking, natives of the Martial Meritocrats Sector focused more on the self-perfection and self-actualization. Faced with the boundless sea of stars, too much work needed to be done, and too many mysteries were waiting to be explored! Everything would consume a lot of time and effort.

“Therefore, the natives of the Martial Meritocrats Sector did not like having too many children, if they were married at all. Many of them believed in celibacy, claiming that they would devote their life to the sea of stars!

“For those who chose to have offspring, they often stopped when they had two children. They carefully educated every child and raised them with their all.

“Therefore, it was even less likely that they would be interested in more children.

“That was the practice of the society. The natives of the Martial Meritocrats Sector who had a handful of kids were often mocked by their friends for their lack of ambition. They would be considered to be the antiques from ancient times.

“But the Sand Primitive natives were different.

“The harsh environment of the Sand Primitive Sector meant an appallingly high death rate. So, fertility meant everything! Only by giving birth to enough children and transforming them into the most frantic warriors in the most efficient way could the Sand Primitive civilization survive while being surrounded by the infinite enemies!

“Therefore, the females of the Sand Primitive Sector were all highly fertile. They usually started having children immediately after their menarche and wouldn’t stop until their menopause. It was not strange at all if they had twenty children!

“In the Sand Primitive Sector in the past, most of the twenty children would die of diseases or in the battles before they grew up. Such cruel eliminations ensured that the population wouldn’t excessively expand and that only the strongest could survive.

“However, the ‘kindhearted’ Cultivators, who were determined to protect every ordinary person, had arrived. How could they bear to watch the Sand Primitive natives being killed by the alien species while doing nothing?

“Therefore, they taught the Sand Primitive Sector tremendous techniques, aided them with countless flying swords and crystal cannons, and eventually helped annihilate all the enemies of the natives of the Sand Primitive Sector!

“The enemies were gone, new medication procedures were introduced, but the tradition of fertility was unchanged. Naturally, the population of the Sand Primitive Sector boomed!

“Cultivators of the Martial Meritocrats Sector simply waited and watched everything happen. Instead of stopping it, they even encouraged the practice and offered all kinds of birth benefits and education funds.

“It was because such a tradition was their ‘sacrosanct culture’. It was also because every newborn baby in the Sand Primitive Sector meant a new vote in the near future!

“Just like that, after only a hundred years, after a series of population booms and crazy immigration, the citizens from the Sand Primitive Sector almost took up half of the population of the Alliance of Marital Meritocrats now.

“Fellow Cultivator Li, take a guess. What would happen next?”

Taking a long breath, Li Yao narrowed his eyes and said, “The Sand Primitive natives were about to reveal their true face, weren’t they?”

“Wrong!” Su Changfa laughed maliciously. “After a hundred years of learning, the new-generation natives of the Sand Primitive Sector were much more cunning than their predecessors. They fully continued the nature of the nomadic people and lurked around the prey, setting up traps quietly!

“On the surface, nothing too dramatic happened. Although the demands from the Sand Primitive natives were more and more arrogant, and the Chiyou Cult was spreading inside the Alliance of Martial Meritocrats more and more actively, it was nothing different from what they had been doing in the past century. Like frogs in warm water, the natives of the Martial Meritocrats Sector were rather used to it. The situation did not seem to be out of control.

“However, in the darkness, a theory known as ‘original sin’ suddenly rose up and swept across the entire world!”

Chapter 1252 - Natural-Born Original Sin!

“Original sin?” Li Yao frowned. He had never believed that any sin came with one’s birth and felt subconsciously repulsive about the phrase.

Thinking quickly, Li Yao opened his mouth and asked, “Is that a ruse that the Sand Primitive natives came up with, claiming that the Martial Meritocrats natives occupying a prosperous and steady world was highly unfair? It was their natural-born original sin, so they had to make up for the Sand Primitive natives? Is it a hilarious theory like this one?”

Su Changfa smiled and shook his head. “If you think that way, you are terribly underestimating both the Martial Meritocrats natives and the Sand Primitive natives. Also, the history would lose its general significance. You can totally argue that the destruction of the Martial Meritocrats Sector has nothing to do with the ideology of the Cultivators but is solely because the Cultivators there were too idiotic!

“You can argue that, if it were Cultivators who were more sober and wise, and they had taken it slowly to assimilate the Sand Primitive natives step by step, the outcome might’ve been entirely different.”

Li Yao almost choked for a moment.

It was exactly what he was thinking. When the Star Glory Federation was accepting the demons, they were certainly not as naïve and foolish as the Martial Meritocrats natives.

“No, the history that I’m telling you is much more complicated than that. The destruction of the Martial Meritocrats was not caused by their stupid immigration policies, either. At best, the Sand Primitive natives were just a ‘trigger’!

“The so-called original sin was not used to explain the contradiction between the Martial Meritocrats natives and the Sand Primitive natives but that between Cultivators and ordinary people. It was not the Martial Meritocrats natives who had ‘original sin’ but the Cultivators!”

“What?”

Dumbfounded, Li Yao scratched his cheeks beyond his control. He found it hard to believe. “What original sin does a Cultivator have?”

“Isn’t it obvious?” Su Changfa said thoughtfully. “Including the Martial Meritocrats civilization, most of the Cultivation civilizations hold, to different degrees, that natural human rights are inviolable and that everybody is equal whether you are a Cultivator or an ordinary person. However, you can draw a preposterous conclusion from the ideas, which is that Cultivators and ordinary people are naturally highly unequal!

“Yes. The law can protect the rights and political position of the ordinary people. Through the one-person-one-vote system, the ordinary people can even pretend that they are as good as the Cultivators!

“However, it is just a lie that they tell themselves!

“Once the spiritual roots are awakened, Cultivators boast speed, strength, body build, and intelligence that far exceed the ordinary people’s. Their sight, hearing, and other senses will be much keener, too!

“Such advantages on the Cultivators’ body are something that ordinary people can never achieve however hard they do physical exercises!

“With such advantages, Cultivators can easily eclipse all ordinary people in any competitive field. They can occupy all the jobs that have a high demand on intelligence, physical strength, speed, or the soul. They can be eye-catching heroes who will be cheered and applauded by the general public!

“As long as one Cultivator appears in a certain field, it means that all ordinary people, even if they work so hard that their every cell is exploding, will not stand any chance of competition. They can only give up nicely and watch the Cultivators show their techniques!

“In short, the world is the Cultivators’ stage, and the ordinary people are the audience below the stage at best, whose only responsibility is cheering and applauding!

“They don’t deserve, nor are they capable of, going to the stage and demonstrating their own splendor!

“Fellow Cultivator Li, is such an inequality not an original sin of the Cultivators?”

Su Changfa’s smile grew creepier and creepier as he spoke, but his tone was ever calmer. Li Yao could not help but feel goosebumps all over his body!

“More critically, the inequality not only means that ordinary people cannot compete with Cultivators in any field, but also means that ordinary people are totally incapable of protecting their lives and their property. Everything is in the hands of the Cultivators!

“The ordinary people have to accept the fact that their happy and peaceful lives are founded on the Cultivators’ kindness, pity, and charity!

“Everything that they have is a sand tower in wind and a pavilion without a foundation. It is maintained by the Cultivators’ ungrounded ‘morals’!

“Today, the Cultivators decide to help the weak, beat the bullies, and protect the ordinary people chivalrously. That’s why the ordinary people are living a good life.

“But what if the Cultivators change tomorrow?

“What if the Cultivators, for any reason, or for no reason but their bad mood, decide not to protect the ordinary people any longer and want a different way of living?

“By then, the Cultivators will be able to kill ordinary people, take away their property, enslave their family, and regard all their offspring as free slaves!”

“Cultivators won’t do that!” Li Yao blurted out.

Hardly had he spoken out when he felt cold sweat in his heart.

Su Changfa gazed at him and smiled. “The key point is not if they will, but whether or not they can! And obviously, they can!

“Cultivators can harm ordinary people easily, but ordinary people cannot hurt Cultivators at all. Therefore, the latter can only pray that the former abide by the social rules that have been long abided by, which are ‘morals’. This is where the most fatal problem lies!

“As I said just now, Fellow Cultivator Li. ‘Morals’ are the most unreliable things in the world. As the productivity and the social relations change, morals will also change at an astonishing speed!

“Besides, there are also a lot of accidents!

“The easiest example will be you, Fellow Cultivator Li. I believe that you must’ve been a model Cultivator in the past. Chances are that you did a lot of good things and protected many ordinary people, didn’t you?”

His eyelids twitching violently, Li Yao pretended that his mind was in chaos and nodded softly.

A fiendish smile popped up on Su Changfa’s old, wrinkled face. “However, after the accident in space, in which you went so far past the line that the line is a dot to you, you have changed, in each and every way!

“Even if the ordinary people could trust you wholeheartedly in the past, can they still trust you right now?

“If you hadn’t run into us but returned to the Flying Star Sector by luck, are you certain that you could have regarded the ordinary people the way you did instead of considering them to be delicious meat?

“If you harmed an ordinary person, driven by a certain weird instinct of yours, and maybe even their entire family, would they be capable of defending themself?”

Li Yao’s face was pale as he made a gagging posture, but he failed to come up with a reply.

“Nobody can stand the fact that their fate is entirely based on other people’s kindness and mercy!” Su Changfa said coldly. “Cultivators’ abilities to harm the ordinary people however they want and never to be harmed by the ordinary people are their original sins. Biggest original sins!

“Targeting the two original sins, the solutions proposed were quite easy!

“First of all, the tax rate for Cultivators was further increased, and their rights were limited. Ordinary people were much more in favor in jobs, education, politics and all the other fields!

“Secondly, since Cultivators were so dangerous, bordering on brutal animals, they had to be monitored closely. Their identity, capability, level, and whereabouts would be tracked and known by the public. When necessary, the Cultivators could be kept in detention even without proof!

“Thirdly, the ‘Committee of Equal Human Beings’ was founded to investigate all cases in the past century where Cultivators abused their abilities and harmed the interests of the ordinary people in unfair competitions. Also, magical equipment that could restrain the abilities of the Cultivators was developed to ensure that the ordinary people boasted the ability to harm the Cultivators!

“Absolute power means absolute corruption. Right now, the Cultivators boast ‘absolute power’. So, their corruption will only be a matter of time! Only if everybody has the ability to harm each other will the balance of power be achieved and the stability and development of the Alliance ensured!

“Those were the main points of the original sin theory.

“Soon after the theory popped up from the dark abyss, it swept across the entire Alliance of Martial Meritocrats like a wild tide under the support of most of the ordinary people!”

“How is it possible?” Li Yao’s eyebrow was almost standing like sabers. “It’s not strange that the original sin theory was supported by the citizens from the Sand Primitive Sector because the Sand Primitive natives were probably behind the theory. But weren’t half of the citizens from the Martial Meritocrats Sector? Why did they support such a farce?

“You find the original sin theory absurd because you are a Cultivator. It’s only reasonable that you take the Cultivators’ side!” Su Changfa declared coldly. “If you were an ordinary person who barely had the strength to capture a hen, you wouldn’t find it absurd at all. Instead, you would probably feel greatly enlightened!

“Try to walk in their shoes, Fellow Cultivator Li. Summon your computational ability and imagine that you are an ordinary person. What exactly will be at the bottom of your heart when you are faced with the high, mighty, omnipotent Cultivators?”

Su Changfa placed his freezing arm on Li Yao’s shoulder and craned his head to Li Yao’s ear. His vague voice sounded like a breeze from the deepest level of hell. “Seeing that they are higher, faster, stronger, smarter, and more handsome than you, that they have a much higher social position and a better ability of self-actualization, while knowing for a fact that you will never be able to catch up with them for the rest of your life…

“As an ordinary person, wouldn’t you feel a bit… jealous?

“When you see that the Cultivators can blow up a giant rock with a single punch and kick away a demon beast weighing more than ten tons after a casual kick, would you find it irresistible to imagine how it would feel if you were the one being punched and kicked?

“As an ordinary person, wouldn’t you feel a bit… scared?

“When you watch the splendid Cultivators living an extraordinarily marvelous life on the stage, and when you turn back to review your boring, lackluster life in the auditorium, wouldn’t you feel a bit… desperate about your weakness, idiocy, uselessness, and ugliness?

“Jealousy! Fear! Desperation! When all the negative emotions overlapped and haunted you day after day, year after year, wouldn’t a tiny bit of… hatred brew at the deepest part of your bones?”

Chapter 1253 - Civil War!

Although Su Changfa did not release any spiritual energy, Li Yao still found it barely possible to breathe.

“However,” he said drily, “most of the Cultivators had helped the ordinary people and won their gratitude before, right?”

“So what?

“As the old saying goes, if you give a beggar a bowl of rice, you will be his life-saver, but if you give him a tank of rice, you will be his sworn enemy! The favors that Cultivators did to the ordinary people could never be returned in this life and the next. So, should the ordinary people always keep the kindness in their heart and focus on returning the favors for the rest of this life and probably the next while doing nothing else?

“When there are too many favors, the favors will be a heavy burden, and the last straw on the hatred that was condensed by jealousy, fear, and desperation!

“Perhaps, the rise of the original sin theory was indeed bolstered by part of the Sand Primitive shamans in secret, but they were merely speaking the truth that was on everybody’s mind and nobody dared to voice!

“Have you ever heard a story named ‘the Emperor’s New Clothes’, Fellow Cultivator Li?

“The Cultivators and the ordinary people of the Martial Meritocrats civilization had knitted the ’emperor’s new clothes’ with their hypocritical morals to cover the natural, irreconcilable contradiction between the two parties!

“The natives of the Martial Meritocrats civilization born and raised in such an environment, be they Cultivators or ordinary people, had been brainwashed since childhood. Their eyes were covered in a membrane, and they lost part of their sight. After a long time, they were all convinced that the ’emperor’s new clothes’ were a real thing.

“The Sand Primitive natives, on the other hand, were the innocent child. They saw through the truth with their most barbaric, animalistic instincts and ripped apart the nonexistent new clothes, revealing the cruel truth to everybody without concealing anything!

“Right now, Cultivators and ordinary people could no longer pretend that they were ‘equal’.

“As the saying goes, inequality rather than scarcity is the cause of trouble. If there weren’t such things as a ‘spiritual root’ and ‘techniques’, and everybody in the world was an ordinary person, it wouldn’t be a big deal! However, the fact was that some of the people, with their spiritual roots and techniques, were entitled to wealth, power, and a marvelous life that other people could never hope to enjoy for the rest of their life. Why?

“One’s sense of happiness is not necessarily improved with better materialistic conditions; it is often achieved in comparisons! In a society with Cultivators, even if the materialistic conditions are significantly increased because of the good things that Cultivators have done, the increase of the sense of happiness will still be far from enough to offset the emptiness, frustration, and desperation when ordinary people compare themselves with Cultivators!”

Li Yao was so anxious that he was breathing heavily.

He suddenly felt that, compared to everything that had happened in the Martial Meritocrats Sector, the conundrums that he had been faced with in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector were as easy to fix as arithmetic of the elementary school level!

“Just like that, the original sin theory further spread out in the Martial Meritocrats civilization, winning the support of the media and the general public. From the newspapers of the national level to the taxi drivers on the street, everybody was talking about the motions to improve the position of the ordinary people and to limit the abilities of the Cultivators!

“The trend was already unstoppable!

“Don’t forget what I said earlier. The Alliance of Martial Meritocrats adopted a one-person-one-ticket voting system and worshipped the absolute equality between Cultivators and ordinary people. There were a lot of representatives and government officials that were ordinary people in parliament and government agencies of every level!

“With such a government and such a public opinion, do I need to tell you what kind of policies and bills would eventually be passed?

“In the end, the highest authorities of the Alliance of Martial Meritocrats accepted the original sin theory without distinction, and they truly established an organization named ‘Committee of Equal Human Beings’ to investigate the cases of the Cultivators in the past hundred years and to review their ‘unjust enrichment’! Also, the Cultivators would be monitored every hour of every day. What they were doing at a particular second, and how much they had grasped a certain technique, must be known by the public!”

“What’s ‘unjust enrichment’?” Li Yao asked.

“Generally speaking,” Su Changfa explained, “if the Cultivators had achieved benefits with techniques that could absolutely never be grasped by ordinary people, the benefits would be deemed as ‘unjust enrichment’!”

Li Yao could not help it any longer. “Did the Cultivators not resist when other people were already sh*tting on their necks like that?”

“Resist what? Don’t forget that the Cultivators of the Martial Meritocrats Sector, after being brainwashed by the hypocrisies of their predecessors for a thousand years, had always considered themselves to be the servants of the civilization of mankind!”

Su Changfa cackled. “Many Cultivators were believers of the original sin theory themselves and members of the Committee of Equal Human Beings! They insisted that they were indeed guilty of stripping the sense of happiness and competitiveness of the ordinary people! Also, compared to the ordinary people’s, their strength was too high, and it was only reasonable that the ordinary people felt scared. It had to be restrained!

“Such Cultivators were the saints of saints. They were known as the ‘expiators’!

“Some of the Cultivators, however, just like you said, were not willing to let other people sh*t on their necks. But what could they do when faced with the overwhelming discontent of the public? They did not know how to attack the ordinary people at all after a thousand years of brainwashing education. Moreover, if they did attack, the accusations that the original sin theory raised would be proved valid, and the situation would be even worse!

“Such Cultivators who were seething in fury and yet had nowhere to vent it were known as the liberals!

“The majority of the Cultivators, although dissatisfied about the original sin theory, never thought to resist it, because if they stood up, society would be divided!

“They felt that, if they made minor concessions to the ordinary people in appeasement, the ordinary people would be content, and their worries would be alleviated. Eventually, the Martial Meritocrats civilization would stay unified, stable, and developing!

“Such Cultivators were naturally the cowardly appeasers!

“In short, until the Cultivators were psychologically prepared to suppress all the ordinary people and revolutionize the social form, they wouldn’t be able to perform their magnificent capabilities at all when they were faced with the surging tides made of ordinary people!

“Just like that, a great trial began!”

Su Changfa scratched his beard with a gloating smile. “Fellow Cultivator Li, you must’ve felt that such a trial was mixed with the euphoria of the mobs’ self-proclaimed victory. It was destined to go out of control! The investigation soon became criticization. The trial soon escalated into confiscation. After all, according to the definition of the Committee of Equal Human Beings, ninety-nine percent of all Cultivators’ achievements were ‘unjust enrichment’!

“Faced with such blatancies, for even the Cultivators who had been brainwashed for a thousand years and were willing to be the servants of the civilization of mankind dutifully, part of them couldn’t stand it any longer and rose up to resist!

“Then, the Spiritual Valley Tragedy took place!

“It was unexpected conflict when an inspector from the ‘Committee of Equal Human Beings’ was investigating a sect named ‘Spiritual Valley Sect’ with a troop made of ordinary people!

“In retrospect, the conflict was quite uncanny. The Sand Primitive shamans and the believers of the Chiyou Cult were perhaps behind it. They were probably lurking within both the disciples of the Spiritual Valley Sect and the troop of the ordinary people and attacked each other when the atmosphere was most intense!

“The cause of the Spiritual Valley Tragedy is unknown today, but the result is that more than a thousand soldiers who were ordinary people were killed by the Cultivators of the Spiritual Valley Sect!

“The most dreadful scene for the ordinary people was finally played!

“Under the demagoguism of the Sand Primitive shamans and the believers of the Chiyou Cult, the rumor that the Cultivators had finally revealed their true faces and were about the purge all the ordinary people quickly spread out to every corner of the world!

“To defend the life and glory of the ordinary people, they had take action first and deal with the extreme Cultivators once and for all!

“It was the only thought for the panicked and anxious ordinary people!

“The civil war of the Martial Arts civilization officially broke out!

“One party of the war was the liberals of the Cultivators who refused investigation and trials and were determined to defend their rights.

“The other party was the expiators of the Cultivators who were too deeply brainwashed to wake up and the ordinary people.

“The appeasers of the Cultivators were divided. Most of them joined the liberals, making the number of the liberals quickly expand. They became the majority of the Cultivators.

“However, faced with the troops of the ordinary people that were as boundless as oceans, they were still the minority, not worth mentioning at all!

“Don’t forget that there were countless citizens from the Sand Primitive Sector who were both aggressive and fearless in the Alliance of the Martial Meritocrats right now!

“The Sand Primitive natives were similar to the ‘Iron Plateau natives’ that Fellow Cultivator Li described. Because of the extremely harsh environment that they lived in, their combat ability was multiple times higher than that of the ordinary people even if their spiritual roots had not awoken. When hypnotized by the chief shamans of the Chiyou Cult, they could even trigger their potential and become ‘berserker warriors’!

“Besides, in the past hundred years, to annihilate the demons and monsters of the Sand Primitive Sector, the Martial Meritocrats Sector had aided them with a large batch of magical equipment and helped them train an unbelievably huge troop of ordinary people!

“Right now, the magical equipment and the troop were both turned around to attack the liberals of the Cultivators in the Martial Meritocrats civilization!

“There were few expiators, but partly to win the trust of the ordinary people again in redemption, and partly to win the civil war, they could only refine popular magical equipment on a large scale and arm the ordinary people!

“Because the body build of the Sand Primitive natives was better than that of the Martial Meritocrats natives, and they were more used to cruel wars, most of the soldiers who were armed with magical equipment were from the Sand Primitive Sector!

“The civil war lasted thirty years. The Cultivators and the ordinary people, who were ‘family’ before, attacked each other on the battlefield, their blood shed in the smoke!

“However capable the Cultivators were, they were made of flesh and blood, and they could be consumed by the ordinary people with their absolute advantage in number!

“After thirty years of civil war, the liberals of the Cultivators completely failed. They either perished or surrendered.

“The expiators of the Cultivators who had been fighting on the frontlines were not any better. They suffered tremendous losses, too, and were much less influential.

“In short, in the entire Martial Meritocrats civilization, the strength of the Cultivators had hit rock bottom, with no way of making a comeback.

“The strength of the ordinary people, especially those from the Sand Primitive Sector, however, expanded to the maximum!”

Chapter 1254: Blackstar’s Revenge (1)

Splendid, spectacular cities appeared in the light and shadow behind Su Changfa. However, in the modern establishments that were brimming with skyscrapers and spirituality, the glittering shadows of Cultivators were fewer and fewer. What was left of them were weary, exhausted and could barely stand on their feet.

On the other hand, the believers of the Chiyou Cult, covered with eccentric tattoos, who had bloodshot eyes and delirious faces, became more and more common.

Because the Chiyou Cult had mastered the ability to trigger the life potential of ordinary people and turn them into ‘berserker warriors’, and it was highly organized and militarized, more and more ordinary people joined the Chiyou Cult in the thirty years of civil war and fought against the liberals of the Cultivators under the lead of God Chiyou.

At the last picture, almost every alley and boulevard was occupied by the fanatic worshippers of the Chiyou Cult, who prayed to their god in the most primitive and barbaric ways right below the coruscating skyscrapers.

The few Cultivators were entirely surrounded, if not swallowed, by them. They looked vulnerable, isolated, and helpless!

Li Yao sighed deeply.

Cultivators were the sabers of the civilization of mankind after all. They were the protectors and the guides for everyone!

Right now, the ordinary people of the Martial Meritocrats civilization broke the saber themselves and abandoned their protectors. Then, the tragedy to come was unavoidable!

Su Changfa sneered. “The expiators of the Cultivators thought that they would be trusted and embraced by the ordinary people again after they annihilated all the liberals and helped the ordinary people win the civil war. They were too simpleminded!

“The ordinary people were scared and jealous of them not because of what they did but because of what they could do!

“Even though they had raised the cleavers toward their own kind in the civil war time and time again, butchering all their compatriots and even their friends from the same sect, it was impossible for the expiators to be trusted by the ordinary people!

“The stronger and the more damaging they were in the battlefield and the more glorious accomplishments they achieved, the more scared, wary, and antagonistic the ordinary people were to them!

“In the past, the liberals were the common foe for the expiators and the ordinary people. They were still able to fight side by side to defeat the enemy.

“But the bows and the hounds were useless after the birds and the hares were captured. Now that all the liberals of the Cultivators were annihilated, how could the expiators survive the disaster?

“After the civil war, the expiators did not know yet that the ordinary people had already heaved the guillotine and put the thorny nooses on their necks in secret. The ‘Committee of Equal Human Beings’ was still busily doing its work to limit the rights of the Cultivators in full scale, including day-and-night surveillance, registration of Cultivation arts and techniques, ‘presumption of guilt’ on the Cultivators, and such!

“The Cultivators thought that, as soon as the bills were passed, the ‘grand reconciliation’ between the Cultivators and the ordinary people would be achieved, and everybody would be reunited again!

“Hehe. How could it be so simple?

“The bills were passed one after another. The rights of the Cultivators were gradually reduced until they were unable to move at all like bears trapped in cages! Still, the greedy ordinary people were not satisfied. They pushed further and eventually came up with a final solution!

“The solution demanded that all the Cultivators have a crystal bomb, which stored high-purity marrow crystals powerful enough to blow their head away from their torso, put in them the day that their spiritual root was awakened!

“The remote-control rune array of the crystal bombs, in the meantime, would be kept and utilized by an independent department made of the members of the Committee of Equal Human Beings, who were ordinary people!

“In such a way, the ordinary people would have the ability to harm the Cultivators, too!”

Shocked, Li Yao exclaimed.

He remembered the Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle that Jiang Shaoyang had crafted.

If all Cultivators were to wear such a shackle for their entire life, with the rune arrays that controlled the shackle in the possession of the ordinary people, such a life would be worse than death!

The expiators of the Cultivators were truly the victims of their own wrongdoings!

“At this moment, the expiators of the Cultivators finally understood that what the ordinary people wanted was not reconciliation but complete suppression. They were trying to take away all of the Cultivators’ rights!

“They also finally came to the realization that Cultivators and ordinary people, both physically and mentally, were two species that were entirely different from each other and that individuals of different species could never understand each other!”

Su Changfa continued in that same unemotional tone. “The expiators of the Cultivators, who could not have regretted their actions more, finally stood up to resist, but it was already too late!

“In the thirty years of civil war, they had personally seen that most of their own kind were sent to hell. They had suffered tremendous causalities themselves, too. The ordinary people, in comparison, were armed by the magical equipment that they had provided and even grasped some of the methods to deal with the Cultivators under their personal enlightenment!

“In the meantime, the Sand Primitive shamans and the celebrants of the Chiyou Cult slowly seized the power of the

Martial Meritocrat civilization in the civil war step by step. Most of the citizens of the Martial Meritocrat Sector had been bewildered by them!

“At this moment, the Sand Primitive natives finally ripped apart their disguise and revealed their true faces!

“The space gate that connected the Martial Meritocrat Sector and the Sand Primitive Sector was activated to the maximum. Large batches of warriors of the Sand Primitive Sector marched into the Martial Meritocrat Sector on the shabby starships and crushed the vulnerable fortresses of the expiators like burning tides!

“The high, mighty, handsome, omnipotent Cultivators kneeled in the dust, beheaded, hanged, and minced!

“Their family and children were enslaved, their sects were burnt to the ground, and the lineage of their bloodlines and their techniques were cut off!

“Even the firmest expiators in the Committee of Equal Human Beings failed to escape their doom. They were executed for all kinds of crimes that they didn’t commit. Their heads were cut off amid the cheers and applause of thousands of people!

“Just like that, the once glorious Martial Meritocrats civilization was destroyed by the childishness, cowardice, and weakness of the Cultivators! The Chiyou Cult became the final victor of the war. Almost all the Cultivators were annihilated and butchered!

Behind Su Changfa, pictures of turmoil, battles, massacres, incineration, and ordinary people lunging at the Cultivators with their hideous faces appeared.

Screams, cries, roars, laughter, and prayers were echoing from the stereo broadcast rune arrays nonstop.

In the end, the splendid and prosperous Martial Meritocrats civilization ended up as a dark, desolate wasteland!

Below the wasteland were the piles of bones of countless Cultivators.

Above the wasteland, however, were the zealots of the Chiyou Cult, in their barbaric and ignorant ways, with a state of mind that was incompressible for normal human beings, burning the classics of Cultivation, breaking any idols other than Chiyou, and detonating the headquarters of every Cultivation sect—they were eliminating all traces of the Cultivators at a visible speed!

Although he had known the outcome since the beginning, Li Yao could not help but feel deeply sorry when he did see it.

To be honest, the destruction of the previous two civilizations, namely the Curly Dragon civilization and the Medicine Fork civilization, did not trouble him too much.

He believed that it was because of the ‘technological issues’ that they were ruined in the end and that their destruction had nothing to do with the path of Cultivation per se.

However, the destruction of the Martial Meritocrats civilization, the contradiction between the Cultivators and the ordinary people, and especially Su Changfa’s declaration that individuals of different species could never understand each other indeed touched Li Yao more or less.

He vaguely felt that something was wrong but could not tell exactly what it was for the time being.

After all, the materials were the ‘brainwashing tutorials’ that the Imperium of True Human Beings must have carefully compiled. The presentations of the three civilizations were in a logical order, with the first two being the groundwork for the third. At first glance, theory was indeed convincing and flawless, and it was not something that he could refute immediately.

Li Yao thought for a moment and suddenly realized that Su Changfa was not telling the whole story yet. He frowned and asked, “Senior Su, you mentioned just now that ‘almost all the Cultivators’ were annihilated? So, some of the Cultivators did escape from the Martial Meritocrats civilization?”

“Not some, but one.” Su Changfa smiled and said unhurriedly, “The young Cultivator was the youngest son of the chairman of the Committee of Equal Human Beings. He had received the most extreme brainwashing education since childhood and had absolutely no doubt about the expiators’ theories!

“Since his spiritual root was awakened and he became a Cultivator, he had dedicated his life to the most glorious cause in the entire universe, or to wit, to be at the service of all ordinary people like a cow or a mule.

“In the thirty years of civil war, he was a tough warrior on the expiators’ side. He was as peaceful and warm as a spring breeze when he was with the ordinary people, but he was as cold and ruthless as a blizzard when he was faced with the liberals of the Cultivators. He made great contributions to the victory of the civil war and thereby became the youngest member of the Committee of Equal Human Beings!

“He was too deeply poisoned to be rescued. After the ‘final solution’ was raised by the ordinary people, and even his father, the chairman of the Committee of Equal Human Beings, was planning to stand up to resist, he was still obstinate enough to leak his father’s plans to the ordinary people and made yet another contribution for the final fallout of the expiators!

“Hehe. The young Cultivator had truly done everything that he could for the ordinary people!

“As the saying goes, you don’t thank somebody else for saving your life; you express your gratitude with real actions. He had done such a great favor to the ordinary people that the ordinary people, feeling that there was no way they could return it, threw him into a highly active volcano and watched him being swallowed by the burning magma!”

Li Yao could not help but sigh again.

Any extremely belief would turn out to be a disaster in the end. The young Cultivator was truly pathetic, pitiful, shameful, and detestable!

“Senior Su, did the young Cultivator have a high Cultivation? After he was swallowed by the magma in an active volcano, did he survive?”

Hearing that question, Su Changfa smiled knowingly. “He was a young man. How high could his Cultivation have been? After being soaked in the magma for more than ten minutes, even the strongest spiritual shield was about to be exhausted. Most of his body tissue was about to be melted by the magma, and death was already knocking the door!

“However, the time of his doom hadn’t come yet. Nobody realized that a relic from the Star Ocean Imperium was actually hidden in the deepest part of the active volcano!”

Chapter 1255 - Blackstar’s Revenge (2)

Shocking images were popping up in the Grand Illusionary Land behind Su Changfa.

In the first image, a bunch of excited, crazy ordinary people were raising a young man, who was impaled on soul-suppressing nails and bound by icy chains, and marching to the crater of a volcano.

It could be vaguely seen that the young man’s bloodstained face was written with regret, misery, and pain, which was an obvious contrast to the insanity and delirium of the ordinary people around him.

It appeared that, at this moment, the young Cultivator’s belief in the path of the Cultivators had finally, completely crashed!

The second image was captured from the young man’s perspective. He seemed to be falling rapidly into a bottomless abyss.

Above him was the round crater. In the middle of the smoke, a circle of hideous heads were watching him dropping into the magma in entertainment and satisfaction.

In the third image, the young man was struggling in the magma. Most of his spiritual energy was locked, and his limbs, face, and torso were corroded by the magma nonstop into ash and nothingness!

The young man’s screams pierced Li Yao’s soul through the broadcast rune arrays. Li Yao felt that his blood was freezing and could hardly bear to watch it any longer.

In the fourth image, the young man, whose limbs were shortened and whose internal organs were serious damaged, finally got rid of the bondage of the chains and the barrier magical equipment. Driven by his survival instincts, he crawled to the place where the temperature was relatively low. Finally, he found a mysterious rune array on the half-frozen wall!

In the fifth image, the young man was in the middle of a silver, shining secret chamber that had calligraphic, complicated rune arrays on the walls. He was enveloped in colorful mystic rays, too.

It seemed that this place was the relic of the Star Ocean Imperium!

However, after the colorful mystic lights integrated, they sank into a black color that resembled the night sky!

The young man was so seriously eroded by the magma that the poisonous heat had deeply invaded his bones and cells and even corrupted his soul. It was impossible for him to repair the cells.

His crippled body and face that could not have been more twisted were delivered into a crystal suit that was as dark as ink!

It was a crystal suit, an artificial body, and a life-sustaining system for him!

Hu… Hu… Hu…

As the black monster slowly stepped out of the mystic rays, hoarse breaths that were uncannily deep and depressing echoed from the broadcast rune arrays!

It sounded like, because he had inhaled too much magma and sulfur in the volcano, his lungs were forever burning with infinite wrath!

Li Yao was secretly alarmed.

Although it was just an illusion that the Grand Illusionary Land had created, he could still sense that the young man’s crashed belief was quickly condensing into something different and much stronger under the motivation of hatred and fury!

The young man brought so much pressure to Li Yao that he almost could not help but summon the whole strength of the Nascent Soul Stage to resist it!

However, he vaguely had a feeling that, even if he activated the maximum strength of the Nascent Soul Stage, he still would not be able to compete with the black monster!

And it was still just an illusionary shadow!

Li Yao swallowed hard. He was more baffled than ever.

To build such an effect in the Grand Illusionary Land required a very precise simulation system made of magical equipment at the cost of tremendous crystals.

Why were the Immortal Cultivators doing that?

If it was just for brainwashing, were the stories of the previous three civilizations not enough?

Who was the young man, the last survivor of the Cultivators of the Martial Meritocrats Sector, really?

“The young Cultivator found a relic of the Star Ocean Imperium from the depths of the active volcano. He activated the medication equipment inside and stuffed his broken body into a special black suit, managing to save his life.”

Su Changfa seemed to have overlooked the bafflement on Li Yao’s face and continued unhurriedly according to his own pace.

“However, the Martial Meritocrats Sector and the Sand Primitive Sector were both occupied by the Chiyou Cult. The relic of the Star Ocean Imperium was not of a high level, either. It was just a tiny base where a small scout starship with not much firepower was stored.

“Fighting the entire Chiyou Cult with a small scout starship would definitely be madness!

“Besides, for the young man at that time, what he loathed most was not the Chiyou Cult at all, nor the Sand Primitive natives, but the ungrateful, depraved ordinary people!”

Li Yao understood it now.

What the young man found must have been a small starship that was similar to Sparkle. Such starships were highly automatic and could even cruise on their own, but they did not have a high combat ability. Their main purpose was exploration and reconnaissance.

A Sparkle was naturally far from enough to compete with all the people in two Sectors.

“The young man had no choice but to run away. With the extraordinary performance of the starship from the Star Ocean Imperium, he successfully avoided the hunting of the Chiyou Cult and dived into the depths of the sea of stars!”

Su Changfa’s voice was mixed with a hint of untamable excitement.

“Starting from the moment he escaped from the Martial Meritocrats Sector into the universe, the naïve, childish, and idiotic Cultivator in the past died, but a brand-new existence broke out of the cocoon and was born!

“The young man killed his past self. He also gave him a new name, Wuying [1]Qi, as a reminder for himself not to forget the great hatred and humiliation that he and all the other Cultivators had suffered in the Martial Meritocrats Sector!

“Wuying Qi swore that he would return to the Martial Meritocrats Sector one day and seek his vengeance in ways a hundred times crueler!”

Li Yao swallowed hard again.

It appeared that the ordinary people of the Martial Meritocrats Sector and the Sand Primitive Sector would not meet good ends, either.

“A very advanced hibernation system was installed in the small starship of the Star Ocean Imperium that Wuying Qi discovered. In the long journey, he entered long dormancies through the hibernation system and would not be awoken by the crystal processor until valuable relics and worlds were detected so that he could explore and travel.

“In such a way, he trained himself in the boundless sea of stars and polished himself in the craziest methods!

“As for Wuying Qi’s history of training in space, where exactly he went to and what benefits he got, debates have remained unabated.

“Some say that he was once in the Sectors controlled by the demons. He was even captured and ended up being a slave. But after games of wisdom and bravery, he successfully escaped.

“Some say that he visited a world governed by the demonic Cultivators and even went to the home of the extraterrestrial devils. On the battlefield of the extraterrestrial devils, he fought millions of devils and successfully tamed countless of them!

“There’s even another theory stating that Wuying Qi once explored the mausoleum of the Supreme Emperor, the strongest expert of mankind in the past and the founder of the Star Ocean Imperium. Not only did he receive the Supreme Emperor’s legacy, he also found a few volumes of the Book of Revelation!”

“Ah!” Li Yao’s heart was pounding again.

The Book of Revelation, which stored the essence of the Pangu civilization, was actually found by Wuying Qi?

Li Yao was more and more curious about the young man who was locked in a black shell!

“All in all, with the hibernation system, and through his adventures in multiple Sectors, Wuying Qi finally reached an unbelievable level after wandering in the sea of stars for hundreds of years.

“At that time, navigated by the broken star maps he retrieved from different Sectors, he finally arrived in a new

Sector and encountered another civilization of mankind that was led by Cultivators!”

Behind Su Changfa, a star map that was dozens of times vaster and more prosperous than the Martial Meritocrats civilization popped up.

Interconnecting transportation routes and dense light spots that represented habitable planets formed a glittering and lively ocean. A torch seemed to be burning furiously in the dark, bleak space!

Li Yao could not help but grow suspicious in his heart.

Didn’t the guy say that he would tell the stories of the destruction of three civilizations? What’s a fourth civilization doing here?

However, Li Yao vaguely had a feeling that Curly Dragon, Medicine Fork, and Martial Meritocrats were just appetizers. The fourth civilization was Su Changfa’s real focus and the key point of the ‘true path of immortality’!

“It was not until he reached this particular civilization of mankind that Wuying Qi finally understood that there is no limit in the universe! He had thought that the Martial Meritocrats civilization was the strongest, most advanced force of human beings in the universe. He had never expected that the force at the center of the universe, after absorbing the heritage of the Star Ocean Imperium, included dozens of resourceful core Sectors. Its influence radiated to the hundred Sectors nearby. There were indeed as many experts and warships as drops in an ocean. It was truly an invincible civilization!

“For such a civilization that spanned multiple Sectors, it was certainly inappropriate to name it after a certain Sector.

Since they claimed that they were the ‘rightful successors of the Star Ocean Imperium’, and they adopted a parliamentary republic regime under the lead of the Cultivators, the country had been named the ‘Star Ocean Republic’.

“The Star Ocean Republic was unquestionably the strongest country in the entire universe at that time!

“Wuying Qi’s hometown was already occupied and tarnished by people whom he loathed the most. He had also been travelling alone in the cold universe for hundreds of years. Everywhere he went, he had been fighting against demons, devils, and monsters with his wisdom and courage, risking his life. Occasionally, when he ran into another civilization of human beings, they were either uncivilized or catching their last breath like the Curly Dragon civilization and the Medicine Fork civilization. He was already too exhausted to move any farther.

“Naturally, Wuying Qi was fascinated by the opulence and advancement of the Star Ocean Republic. He decided to stay in this place, partly to learn the advanced techniques, technology, and magical equipment of the Star Ocean Republic, and partly to establish his own force so that he could march back to his hometown one day!

“The Star Ocean Republic was a superpower at that time. All the distinguished persons in the Sectors nearby yearned to join it.

“The Star Ocean Republic was quite open, too, and did not reject anyone who had special skills.

“Wuying Qi’s Cultivation was extremely high, and he brought many secret treasures with him. Soon, he was embraced and granted citizenship of the Star Ocean Republic.

“Wuying Qi’s hometown had been ruined, but he considered the Star Ocean Republic to be his ‘second hometown’. He sincerely hoped to integrate into the country and fight for the prosperity of the civilization of mankind!”

Chapter 1256 - Blackstar's Revenge (3)

“The Star Ocean Republic?”

Li Yao listened unemotionally and chewed on the name.

The ‘strongest country in the universe’ called itself the ‘rightful successor of the Star Ocean Imperium’, too?

Things were getting more and more interesting.

“Wuying Qi at this moment was no longer the innocent, childish young man he used to be,” Su Changfa said. “In the thirty years of civil war of the Martial Meritocrats civilization, his battle commanding abilities had been honed to an excellent level. During his hundreds of years traveling in the sea of stars, he had experienced more adventures than normal Cultivators could dream about. His body, his will, and his soul were all as tough and unwavering as iron!

“When he arrived in the Star Ocean Republic, Wuying Chi distinguished himself and rose to fame when he only demonstrated a fraction of his capabilities. He established his own force and gradually got in touch with the government of the Star Ocean Republic!

“Don’t forget that Wuying Qi used to be the youngest member of the Committee of Equal Human Beings, and his father had even been the chairman of the organization. He was sort of born and raised in a family of politicians and learned a lot from the familial knowledge. After the tremendous changes that he went through, he grew an even more profound understanding of humanity!

“Wuying Qi soon discovered that many fatal problems were hidden below the splendor of the Star Ocean Republic on the surface!

“The seemingly on-fire, well-respected, and flourishing ‘strongest country in the universe’ actually had undercurrents flowing everywhere. Germs and viruses were growing and undermining the foundation of the country!

“The problematic issues included the decline of the high-quality population, over medication, the frequent strikes organized by the greedy labor unions, the incessant increase of benefits and wages, the serious aging population, the unbalanced development of different Sectors, the low-quality immigrants from the remote Sectors, the conflicts between different beliefs and religions…

“Also, with the Star Ocean Republic governed by parliament for almost a thousand years, different parties had already formed indestructible groups. Faced with the absolute power that nobody could check, the representatives had slowly become corrupt, too. Elections gradually became games of money and crystals. To win the elections, all kinds of dirty methods and ruses were employed. Everybody was thinking about the short-term, selfish interests of their own party and sect. Nobody had ever given any thought to the long-term development of mankind as a whole.

“All in all, the diseases that had once caused the destruction of the civilizations in the Curly Dragon Sector, the Medicine Fork Sector, and the Martial Meritocrats Sector could all be found in the Star Ocean Republic!

“However, the Star Ocean Republic was enormously huge and boasted a lot of potential. It was like a giant with a remarkable body build who hadn’t been crushed by the lethal viruses yet!

“However, once the giant was truly crushed, the repercussions would certainly be dire!

“Wuying Qi’s ‘first hometown’ had already been destroyed. He absolutely did not want his ‘second hometown’ to be destroyed for the same reasons. He wanted to save the country, the people, and the civilization of mankind, but he was alone and did not know where to start!

“The feeling of being the only sober person in a crowd of drunkards watching each and every one of them staggering to the abyss while having nothing that he could do made Wuying Qi more depressed than ever!

“Just then, something unexpected happened in the Star Ocean Republic.

“At the frontier of the country, an insignificant country suddenly jumped out to challenge them. Caught unprepared by the enemy’s unannounced assault, quite a few vassal worlds of the Star Ocean Republic were taken over.”

Hearing that, Li Yao suddenly thought of a possibility. His heart racing, he almost exclaimed aloud!

Suppressing his excitement hard, he asked, trying to be as cool as he could, “What’s the name of the ‘insignificant country’?”

Su Changfa did not notice Li Yao’s agitation. Thinking for a moment, he felt that there was no reason to tell him the answer. “Let’s just call the insignificant country the Covenant Alliance.”

As he expected!

Li Yao understood it now. He totally understood where Su Changfa was getting at now!

“Although the Covenant Alliance was an insignificant country, it had made careful preparations for a long time. Hitting the critical parts of the Star Ocean Republic, it exposed all the problematic issues that we talked about earlier!

“In the moment, the fatal weaknesses of the Star Ocean Republic—such as the jittery partisan competition in the parliament, the low efficiency of the rigid system, and the greed of the ordinary people—were all revealed to everyone. Faced with the Covenant Alliance’s aggressive attacks, it was barely possible to take reactions!

“Wuying Qi loved the Star Ocean Republic and did not wish to watch the destruction of his second hometown. Therefore, he devoted all his assets to establishing a team and marched to the frontier to resist the Covenant Alliance!

“While the regular army was as inert as a stupid dinosaur, and they were on a shameful losing streak against the Covenant Alliance’s unpredictable tactics, Wuying Qi had analyzed the features of the Covenant Alliance’s attacks in time and came up with countermeasures, managing to draw even with the enemy.

“After the first few battles, Wuying Qi’s militia was taken in by the regular army based on their remarkable achievements.

“Wuying Qi, with his unparalleled combat ability and commanding ability, was also recruited as an officer of the regular army.

“He was engaged in life-and-death battles with the Covenant Alliance on the front lines for years and made tremendous contributions. The middle-level and the bottom-level young officers all considered him a superhero. Because he was used to his black crystal suit, and his combat style highlighted the importance of speed and elusiveness, the officers and the soldiers all admired him and gave him the title ‘Blackstar’!

“Just like that, Wuying Qi built a ladder to climb upward with drops of blood and sweat. He gradually became the highest commander of the Star Ocean Republic on the frontline in the war against the Covenant Alliance. His personal prestige was also higher than ever among the young officers and the bottom-level soldiers!

“However, the war didn’t go as well as he expected.

“The war didn’t go well not because the Covenant Alliance was too strong to be defeated, not because Wuying Qi’s commands had been flawed, but because too many people were hamstringing him in the rear!

“At that time, the Star Ocean Republic was still dwelling in the fantasy of the ‘strongest country in the universe’ and did not think too much of the insignificant Covenant Alliance at all. Everybody believed that it was just an ailment and that the frontier was merely being harassed by a bunch of barbarians.

“Wuying Qi, having been engaged with the Covenant Alliance for years, knew the enemy’s sordidness and dreadfulness very well. They were definitely not regular barbarians or devils. They had to be suppressed with the strength of the entire nation in order to remove the problem for all eternity!

“He proposed to the capital many times, requesting that the country enter the highest warring state immediately, levy special war taxes, build the largest planetary warships at any cost, and enlarge the scale of the army by more than ten times!

“All in all, it was a national war, which could potentially end the Star Ocean Republic, that they were faced with, not a frontier faction in everybody’s imagination!

“The suggestions that he raised with his blood and sweat were considered jokes by the noble ministers in parliament. All of them were vetoed!

“For the general public, because of the inconvenience that the war brought to people’s daily life, the ‘saints’ in the people and among the Cultivators all complained and criticized the military operations in the frontline!

“To deal with nothing more than an insignificant Covenant Alliance, the Star Ocean Republic is suffering tremendous losses. We haven’t made any substantial development in multiple years. May I ask what the commander in the frontier has been doing?

“We strongly demand an investigation on the peculation and corruption issues of the high-level officers on the frontline. What are the assets we have delivered to the frontline used for exactly? Every usage must be clearly listed!

“Is the harsh training for the newly-recruited troops in the rear justifiable? We’re told that the cruel methods of training were all come up with by Lieutenant General Wuying Qi, commander of the Third Fleet. He must explain the legitimacy and the necessity of such a set of training methods!

“Yesterday, we were harassed by the guerilla troops of the Covenant Alliance again. Three squads of the regular army, a hundred and fifteen soldiers in total, died for their country! How did that happen? How exactly have our soldiers been trained? What exactly are our battle tactics? Wuying Qi must stand up and take all the responsibility!

“Such opinions were everywhere on the newspapers, network, and streets of the Star Ocean Republic.

“In short, the ‘saints’ among the people and the Cultivators were not willing to fully support the warriors who were fighting bloody battles in the frontline by improving the tax rate, reducing the benefits, and going into a war system. Yet, they demanded, utterly in negligence of the objective conditions in the frontline, that the generals and the soldiers annihilate the Covenant Alliance as soon as possible!

“After going through everything, Wuying Qi became greatly fearful.

“He seemed to see the tragedy that once destroyed the Martial Meritocrats civilization replaying itself on a larger stage slowly!

“The Star Ocean Republic was a center of the civilization of mankind. Once it was destroyed, the civilization of mankind would be completely hopeless!

“The ordinary people were unreliable. Most of the hypocritical Cultivators were unreliable. To save the civilization of mankind, he could count on nobody but himself!

“Everybody mistook Wuying Qi for a tough general who had more brawn than brains and knew nothing other than fighting a war. They didn’t know that he had already been a qualified politician hundreds of years ago who had a deep insight on humanity!

“Faced with the criticization from the rear, he accepted all of them in pretense to buy him more time, but all the while, he negotiated with multiple parties diplomatically, dismembering their coalition without alarming them, increasing his personal influence, and winning the trust of some of the sects.

“In secret, he established a new group named the Salvation Syndicate, which consisted of the young officers in the army and the Cultivators in the rear who had been tested by him in person!

“The purpose of the Salvation Syndicate was to save and purge the civilization of mankind through whatever means possible so that the old and weary Star Ocean Republic could be revived again!

“At this point, in fact, everybody who was not stupid could clearly see that the frontline against the Covenant Alliance was a great swamp. The military power and the discipline that the Covenant Alliance demonstrated suggested that they would not be annihilated easily!

“Without the general mobilization of hundreds of Sectors, whoever was nominated as the new commander in the frontline would only get himself in trouble, his lifelong reputation depreciated!

“Therefore, although the war in the frontline didn’t go well, Wuying Qi’s post as the highest commander on the frontline remained as stable as ever. Nobody wanted to jump into the fire pit to replace him!

“At this moment, Wuying Qi’s mindset was changed, too.

“The situation right now was exactly the situation in the Martial Meritocrats civilization. The people of the Covenant Alliance were like the people of the Sand Primitive Sector. They were not the real enemies. The real enemies that jeopardized the entire civilization were hiding right behind him!”

Chapter 1257 - Hero or Fiend?

In the Grand Illusionary Land behind Su Changfa, another poignant picture showed up.

Almost half of the picture was occupied by a huge, setting sun. Below the bloody sun was a desert that was full of debris and corpses from a war. A black shadow that was weary and small was marching forward alone.

Behind him, the wolves and hyenas that were depicted in an anthropopathic way were tailing him. Their countenance that were both cowardly and brutal, both greedy and hypocritical, could not have been more vivid!

The pictures in the Grand Illusionary Land were obviously drawn by experts among the Immortal Cultivators who were adept at painting. Whoever saw them would feel deeply sympathetic toward Wuying Qi and indignant about the mediocre Cultivators and the avaricious ordinary people!

Li Yao stimulated his soul with spiritual energy time and time again, in case he walked into Wuying Qi’s shoes and observed the entire world from the ‘Blackstar’!

“After recognizing who his real enemy was,” Su Changfa said slowly, “Wuying Qi was no longer as frank and demanding as he had been in the past when he was willing to insult all the leadership in the Empyrean Terminus Sector, the capital, in order to win the war. He focused more on stabilizing the defense line and reducing the consumption of assets and the death rate of the soldiers. Finally, he got a moment to catch his breath. However, in secret, he had been expanding the influence of the Salvation Syndicate by accepting more ‘fellow Cultivators’ who shared his vision!

“Wuying Qi believed that most of the officials in the Star Ocean Republic and the old Cultivators were too deeply poisoned to be rescued. Only the young Cultivators were the future of the country and the future of the civilization of mankind!

“At that time, the lethargy of the Star Ocean Republic also triggered many hotblooded young Cultivators’ passion to revolutionize other than Wuying Qi. With Wuying Qi’s personal charisma and the calling of a great cause, the Salvation Syndicate quickly expanded, winning countless young Cultivators over!

“However, even at that time, Wuying Qi never thought of completely splitting apart from the world of Cultivators. The so-called Salvation Syndicate was merely a discussion group where everybody gathered and talked about subjects such as the relationship between Cultivators and ordinary people, the Cultivators’ real responsibility to the civilization of mankind, the great kindness and the petty kindness, the position of the civilization of mankind in the universe, and so on. They only meant to stop the country from declining and improve the civilization!”

The picture behind Su Changfa flashed. Many young people were talking and laughing around a black crystal suit.

Every tiny stroke was brimming with vigor and hope, entirely different from the style when the parliament of the Star Ocean Republic was depicted!

Su Changfa gnashed his teeth. “Initially, Wuying Qi prepared to walk down the path of the reformists. He hoped to build up the Salvation Syndicate into the largest party in the Star Ocean Imperium. The representatives that belonged to the Salvation Syndicate would be the majority in parliament. One day, he could even campaign for the position of Speaker of the Star Ocean Imperium so that he could seize power legally and reform the civilization of mankind as he saw fit!

“However, at this point, what worried Wuying Qi most happened!

“The Covenant Alliance suddenly launched an attack toward the Star Ocean Republic with an enormous army including more than fifty fleets!

“The scale of the strategic attack far exceeded the combination of all the attacks from the Covenant Alliance in the past ten years. It seemed that the testing at the beginning was finally over, and the Covenant Alliance played a real move that could decide the outcome of the war!

“Right now, the mysterious, well-trained troops of the Covenant Alliance, with their state-of-the-art weapons, finally attacked in earnest. The exhaust flames from the warships of the fifty fleets were enough to rip the entire universe into shreds!

“Because of the sluggishness and the obstructions from the past, Wuying Qi, as the highest commander on the frontline, only had warships with low tonnage and firepower and legions that were seriously lacking all kinds of assets!

“Even so, Wuying Qi did not give up his responsibility. Exerting all the knowledge that he had learned in his hundreds of years of travel in the sea of stars, he defeated the enemy multiple times when his troops were terribly outnumbered, postponing the Covenant Alliance’s advance, which was as aggressive as fire!

“Of all the battles, the most decisive one was the Battle of Karan!”

The Grand Illusionary Land behind Su Changfa displayed a bleeding galaxy where explosions were bursting out like raindrops.

With that as the background, a yellow, unattractive planet popped up.

“Karan was a resource planet near the frontline under the control of the Star Ocean Republic. Although it was not large in size, it had the storage of dozens of rare materials including the Green Lotus Stones, the Frost Brilliance Crystals, and in particular, the Purple Thunder Crystals, which were in a high reserve and quality. The Purple Thunder Crystals are an extremely rare super catalyst for fuel. After they are mixed into the fuel of a starship in a certain ratio, the maximum speed of the starship can be improved by more than five percent!

“A speed increase of five percent! What a terrifying improvement that is! In any interstellar battle, not five percent, even a one percent speed increase is very likely able to reverse the final outcome!

“For the two parties whose starship technologies were close, the Purple Thunder Crystals were strategic assets of paramount importance. Therefore, Karan was the most important place in the frontline, and both parties desired it!

“Wuying Qi’s command center was established on Karan, too!

“The Battle of Karan was a strategic sudden assault that Wuying Qi had carefully prepared long ago.

“General sudden assaults require our troops to attack the enemy unexpectedly, but this time, Wuying Qi was preparing to let the enemy launch a ‘sudden assault’ on him!

“Before the Battle of Karan, despite the continuous victories that Wuying Qi had secured, they were just tactical victories after all due to his limited troops. The Covenant Alliance, on the other hand, was well-prepared and did not fear a war of attrition.

“Behind Wuying Qi’s defense line, it was not the homeland of the Star Ocean Republic but more than ten vassal Sectors, which were also known as ‘sub-republics’. They boasted a certain degree of independence and were in fact undetermined flip-floppers.

“Those flip-floppers were like the appeasers in the Martial Meritocrats civilization. All they cared about were their own interests. They had always been reluctant to carry out Wuying Qi’s military demands and would simply stay back when the Covenant Alliance’s army arrived while asking Wuying Qi’s troops to resist the enemy. Some of them were even conspiring with the Covenant Alliance in secret, selling assets and intelligence to the enemy!

“Since this place was too far away, even the parliament of the Star Ocean Republic could barely do anything about the sub-republics. They could only maintain the harmony on the surface.

“Wuying Qi knew better than anybody that the flip-floppers were not reliable. If he suffered a crushing defeat, the vassal worlds would certainly not fight to the end for the Star

Ocean Republic. If anything, they would be the first to surrender. By then, the failures would snowball until the final defeat was unstoppable!

“Therefore, Wuying Qi had to secure a glorious victory with the few troops that he had!

“He decided to gamble. After finishing the preparations on Karan, his nest, he pretended that he had grown arrogant because of the recent victories and marched to attack the Covenant Alliance’s supply lines.

“The Covenant Alliance saw through his fatal disadvantage, his shortage of troops, as he expected. Seizing the momentary opportunity, they launched an assault to Karan.

“With his remarkable commanding arts, Wuying Qi pretended that he was crushed and had to run away in panic. He threw away Karan and escaped to a vassal Sector in the rear.

“In order to fool the Covenant Alliance, he even pretended that he had been attacked by the local armed forces who were determined to surrender to the Covenant Alliance so that the Covenant Alliance would think that he had completely lost his power.

“The Covenant Alliance was tricked as he planned. After they occupied Karan, because of the strategic resources on the planet and since Wuying Qi had left the facilities such as the maintenance docks, the space ports, and the communication bases intact, they considered the place to be a new command center and were preparing to conquer the ten or so vassal Sectors nearby.

“But they didn’t know that Wuying Qi had made preparations beneath Karan’s surface!

“Since the Purple Thunder Crystals on Karan were enough to boost the maximum speed of a starship by five percent, it is not hard to guess that they are materials that contain abundant spiritual energy and are both highly active and highly unstable!

“With the methods that he had learned when he was wandering in the universe, Wuying Qi established a great array that pierced through the core of the planet and connected all the mother lodes of the Purple Thunder Crystals, turning the whole of Karan into an enormous ‘planetary bomb’!

“It was indeed the most insane tactic!

“It must be noted that, when Karan was converted into a ‘planetary bomb’, Wuying Qi’s main force was still gathered in the place. Even he was commanding the battles there in person, too!

“One moment of carelessness, and he would’ve been blown to smithereens!

“It was an appallingly risky gamble, but it paid off!

“The Covenant Alliance considered the occupation of Karan a landmark success. The main force of the fleets gathered on Karan to rest and regroup ahead of the attacks in the next phase. Most of the generals were gathered in the command center on Karan, too, dispatching troops and discussing strategies.

“Choosing a perfect opportunity, Wuying Qi activated the great array deep inside Karan. The spiritual energy contained in the Purple Thunder Crystals was unleashed all at once, blowing the entire planet apart!

“The shocking explosion affected the entire space. Not only were the generals of the Covenant Alliance all cooked up, most of the main force warships also became wasted garbage floating in the universe!

“The more than ten vassal Sectors couldn’t help but become awed by such a glorious achievement. Called and intimidated by Wuying Qi, they all submitted their local armed forces. A coalition fleet was founded and chased after the enemy. Eventually, the Covenant Alliance’s strategic attack was crushed. A lot of starships of the Covenant Alliance were captured, too. It was indeed the most brilliant victory!”

Li Yao had been holding his breath the whole time and did not exhale again until this moment.

There were certainly exaggerations in Su Changfa’s rhetoric, but the key tactic was unlikely to have been fabricated.

Despite the possibly different stance, Li Yao was truly amazed by Wuying Qi’s strategical judiciousness and his tactics that bordered on insanity!

Seeing Li Yao’s apparently touched countenance, Su Changfa, however, put on a cold smile and gnashed his teeth. “After winning the battle in such a glorious way—shattering the Covenant Alliance’s intentions and almost annihilating all the invaders—when the troops on our side were so terribly outnumbered by those on the enemy’s, logically, he should’ve returned a hero and received the bouquets and cheers from the people of his homeland!”

Li Yao found it odd. “Did he not?”

To this moment, he had not figured out what was wrong about Wuying Qi yet at all.

Su Changfa frowned. “Of course not. What awaited Wuying Qi was not applause but the barrage of the Cultivators, the despise of the general public, and a trial of the military court on the grounds of ‘crimes against humanity’ and ‘massacre’!”

Li Yao was dumbfounded. “Wh—why?”

It was almost like one of the classic plots where good guys were wronged without a good reason!

Su Changfa coughed and said, “Because… in order to deceive the Covenant Alliance, Wuying Qi did not bring away the ordinary people living on Karan when he ‘fled from the planet in panic’.

“There were approximately 8.2 million civilians on Karan, most of whom were miners, mechanics, and specialists of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and their families.

“When Karan was detonated, the 8.2 million civilians were naturally… sacrificed, too.”

Chapter 1258 - Will You Press It or Not?

“Blowing up almost ten million people on his own side?”

Li Yao gasped hard, his mind abuzz. He felt that his heart was grasped by a cold hand. He was shocked, disgusted, and scared.

It was not ‘accidentally injuring’ ten million compatriots in a fierce battle, nor an extreme condition such as one where the commander was forced to barrage an area indiscriminately to destroy the enemy when the enemy’s commander was discovered along with ten thousand compatriots next to it, but a carefully concocted plan since the very beginning where the ten million compatriots were baits to lure the enemy into the trap. The commander had known, and actively pushed forward, the death of the ten million compatriots since the very beginning!

Such—such—such a technique far exceeded the limits of Li Yao or any other normal human being!

It was indeed not wrong to accuse Wuying Qi of crimes against humanity and massacre.

The shock and wariness that Li Yao showed subconsciously made Su Changfa laugh coldly. “Do you not understand such a simple logic, Fellow Cultivator Li?

“The Covenant Alliance may be vile, but they were definitely not foolish. They had been dealing with Wuying Qi for more than ten years and knew very well that he was an experienced, unwavering commander!

“How could it be so easy that Wuying Qi ‘fled in panic’?

“Such a tactic to lure the enemy to march forward before destroying them together was a risky plan in the first place. He had to pretend that he was caught unprepared and forced to escape in a hurry. Only in such a way would there be a slim chance that the Covenant Alliance was fooled!

“If Wuying Qi had evacuated the almost ten million civilians in advance, would it not have suggested that he had foreseen the upcoming assault of the Covenant Alliance? The enemy would have needed only the most preliminary analysis to notice the strange arrangement!

“Therefore, the 8.2 million civilians could not be evacuated. For the country, for their people, and for the glorious victory of mankind as a whole, they had to be sacrificed!”

Li Yao coughed hard. Thousands of thoughts were rolling in his head, tearing his solid belief crazily.

He carefully calculated what reactions his fake identity should make under such circumstances before he stammered to reply, “I understand all the logic. However, sacrificing almost ten million civilians in a row was indeed a bit… violent. No wonder the Cultivators and citizens in the capital were dissatisfied!”

“It is the easiest thing in the world to judge this and judge that on the moral high ground when you are not involved. Nothing really concerns your interests after all!” Su Changfa snorted. “What’s difficult is to actually make the helpless and yet correct choice when you are in a critical situation!

“The lives of 8.2 million innocent victims sound like a big deal, don’t they? Wuying Qi sounds like an inhumane butcherer and a headsman, right?

“However, those guys, and you, Fellow Cultivator Li, have you ever considered the consequences if he hadn’t made such a choice?

“At that time, the border defense army under Wuying Qi’s command was terribly outnumbered. Despite the continuous tactical victories, their zone of activity was significantly suppressed by the intruders of the Covenant Alliance!

“If he couldn’t secure a crucial victory, he would’ve been overwhelmed by the army of the Covenant Alliance!

“In the meantime, behind Wuying Qi were more than ten vassal worlds that were undetermined and on the fence. The controllers of the vassal worlds were all local magnates who only cared about their own interests. They were sordid, shameless tyrants!

“Although they had accepted a lot of aid from the Star Ocean Republic under the name of ‘humanitarianism’, they wouldn’t hesitate to surrender to the Covenant Alliance at the perilous moment at all!

“Once the ten or so vassal worlds betrayed them, the Star Ocean Republic’s defense line on this particular galaxy arm would’ve completely collapsed! The army of the Covenant Alliance would’ve marched into the most prosperous core area of the Star Ocean Republic unstoppably!

“At this time, the Star Ocean Republic had yet to enter the highest warring state. The core worlds were still reminiscing about the hundreds of years of peace and tranquility. The weapons were still all in the arsenal, and everybody was still talking and laughing as usual. They were not ready for a great war at all!

“In such a case, how many ‘innocent civilians’ would’ve been killed in your opinion?

“Ten billion, fifty billion, a hundred billion?

“The worst case-scenario might’ve been that the Star Ocean Republic was completely crushed, and the last hope of the civilization of mankind was extinguished!”

Li Yao did not know how he should answer the question.

Under Su Changfa’s enchantment and the interference of the swirls of light and shadow in the Grand Illusionary Land, he found it impossible to calm himself down and think about the question carefully.

At this time, countless glittering tentacles extended from the Grand Illusionary Land and covered Li Yao’s tightly, as if they were putting extremely cold, black armor on him!

“Hu… Hu… Hu…”

Li Yao heard his own breath, which sounded like it was from the deepest level of hell.

The world in front of him was changing in silence into the bridge of a starship. There was only one button on the panel in front of him. The light beam on the panel was displaying a yellow planet with countless tiny light spots dancing on the surface like dense, shining butterflies.

It was the planet of Karan.

Su Changfa’s voice came from behind Li Yao, dropping like the venom that a viper was secreting incessantly. “Fellow Cultivator Li, let’s do a little mind game. Now, you are Wuying Qi at that day, faced with Karan, which has already become the enemy’s nest!

“You can choose to detonate Karan, and blow up the enemy’s command center and main force fleets as well as 8.2 million civilians, thereby winning the war and saving the entire Star Ocean Republic!

“You can also choose to follow the general principles of humanity, kindness and mercy, and retreat instead of doing that. As a result, the ten or so vassal worlds will surrender, the entire defense line on the galaxy arm will be crashed completely, and the Star Ocean Republic will be open, utterly defenseless. More than ten billion victims will be killed in the war eventually!

“Come on. Make a choice. Will you press the button to detonate the entire planet?

“Press it, and you will be killing 8.2 civilians personally!

“If you don’t, billions of victims will die because of you, and even the entire civilization might be doomed. The 8.2 civilians will not necessarily survive to the end, either!

“Will you press it or not?

“Make a choice! Make a choice! Make a choice!”

Su Changfa’s voice was like tsunamis made of black venom that were crushing Li Yao’s belief crazily.

This was the truly ‘brainwashing’. Everything just now was merely story-telling!

Li Yao gritted his teeth hard, his face twisted, as he pondered if there was a perfect solution with the best of his computational ability.

However, he failed to find a third option when his brain almost exploded.

Deep down in his heart, the mental devil was seething and shrieking, “What’s there to think about? Compared with ten billion people, ten million are just drops in a bucket. Press it. Just press it already!”

The mental devil took control over Li Yao’s left hand again and extended toward the button.

Li Yao grunted and contained the rebellion of the mental devil with his brute force. His entire left arm was uttering cracking sounds, and he seemed to be controlled by invisible string because his movements could not have been more rigid.

Su Changfa observed his actions coldly. Then, after a smile, he clapped his hands. The illusions were suddenly gone. They were back to the ‘bystander mode’ in the beginning.

Li Yao took a breath in relief. All his clothes were soaked in sweat, and the nerves in his brain were still bouncing.

“It’s difficult to choose, isn’t it?

“Normal people are not capable of making a choice. Their nerves are not thick enough for them to face the cruelty of the universe!

“In fact, if Wuying Qi had been merely considering his personal gains and losses, he probably should’ve made the second choice.

“Because of the huge contrast of the numbers of the two armies, even if he failed, he wouldn’t have been held responsible. Instead, it would have been the perfect evidence that the capital’s support for him had not been good enough, which was a horrible mistake. His future development would benefit from it!

“Let’s say that the Star Ocean Republic was truly destroyed by the Covenant Alliance in the end, so what? He could always wash his hands and leave again, continuing his travel in the sea of stars!

“But Wuying Qi never considered his personal gains and losses. Everything he did, he did for the salvation of mankind as a whole and our civilization!

“If not me, who? For the best interests of mankind, Wuying Qi chose the first option without the slightest hesitation. Every single person that he killed meant the salvation of a thousand! Killing ten million people meant saving ten billion. He saved the entire civilization!”

Prideful brilliance was beaming from every pore on Su Changfa’s body, as if he found glory in Wuying Qi’s decision, too.

Li Yao was silent.

Deep inside his brain, his soul and the mental devil were at loggerheads. They were glaring at each other, neither of them backing off.

“Senior Wuying Qi was too great!” The mental devil was sobbing and could not have been more touched. “If not me, who? Such integrity, devotion, wisdom, and courage! What a resolute and incredible man!

“I have decided!

“I’m going to learn from Senior Wuying Qi and join the Immortal Cultivators. I will fight to the last breath for the best interests of the civilization of mankind!”

“Cut the cr*p!”

Li Yao could not help but raise a storm of brain electricity and slashed it hard with the dazzling lightning.

Although the mental devil was screaming and blacked as before, it was recovering much faster this time. There was not much pain on its face, either. Instead, the face was full of fearlessness and determination.

“Come on! The Immortal Cultivators are never scared of the bullies!”

The mental devil craned its neck and shouted, “You can suppress me with violence temporarily. You can even completely kill me. But you will never defeat me, unless you make your choice first. Kill ten million people, or have ten billion people killed? Choose! Choose! Do you have the courage to choose?”

Li Yao was lost for words for a moment.

Ever since the negative emotions inside his soul swallowed the Blood Stripe Virus and turned into the mental devil with an independent personality, this was the first time that he did not know how he should face the dark side of himself!

Chapter 1259 - The Sick Beauty

“Wuying Qi placed the best interests of the civilization of mankind above his personal interests and the interests of the Star Ocean Republic’s parliament,” Su Changfa declared passionately. “For mankind, he would not concede to anyone or waver when he was faced with tough choices!

“During the Battle of Karan, other than sacrificing the 8.2 million civilians, he in fact did something else that seriously dissatisfied the capital.

“At that time, for the play that he ‘fled in panic’, not only did he leave the 8.2 million civilians to Karan, he also kept most of his starships and strategic assets in that place, too.

“Wuying Qi’s forces were thin in the first place, and they were even weaker after he lost more than half of his starships and assets.

“Although the command center and the main force fleets of the Covenant Alliance were destroyed in the detonation of Karan, a lot of soldiers still dispersed in chaos and were rushing toward their hometown.

“It was easy to defeat them, but a lot of forces were required in order to annihilate all of them. Wuying Qi’s border defense army was far from enough for the task. He could only seek help from the ten or so vassal worlds!

“However, at the beginning, the cowardly and condescending flip-floppers never believed that Wuying Qi could secure such a glorious achievement!

“Many of them had even long negotiated with the Covenant Alliance about the terms of surrender. Each having their own ill intentions, they were even less willing to cooperate with Wuying Qi!

“Speed almost matters most for an army. Wuying Qi didn’t have much time to dawdle with them!

“Thankfully, Wuying Qi had worked on the frontline for more than ten years. His Salvation Syndicate was quite an influential organization among the young Cultivators in the vassal worlds. The young generation of many sects and the middle-level and bottom-level core disciples had joined the Salvation Syndicate in secret!

“With their help, Wuying Qi cut off the communication between the vassal worlds and the Empyrean Terminus Sector, the capital of the Star Ocean Republic. Then, he declared that the country had entered the highest warring state and that the elite fleets to protect the capital city were on their way here. He claimed that he was also authorized by parliament with the power of expediency. Whoever disobeyed him would be executed by him!

“At the life-and-death moment, as the highest commander of the battle zone, he had to have the unconditional obedience of the vassal worlds!

“Wuying Qi was not simply talking.

“To deal with the governing sect of a vassal world that was the most rogue of all, Wuying Qi washed it with blood. After only one night, the sect with a population of almost a hundred thousand was entirely wiped out. Not even a chicken or a dog was left alive!

“In the other worlds, the Cultivators who had joined the Salvation Syndicate in secret also responded and went up to seize power!

“With the thunderous actions and the multiple approaches, Wuying Qi finally got the absolute support of those vassal worlds. He gathered most of their troops and formed a coalition fleet to chase after the defeated soldiers of the Covenant Alliance. Eventually, most of the invaders from the Covenant Alliance were surrounded and annihilated!

“It was just an expediency under the circumstances when he was forced to. If he hadn’t surrounded and annihilated the main force of the Covenant Alliance but simply crushed them, the Covenant Alliance would’ve been able to return and attack again at any time. Only by destroying them completely could the long-term peace and prosperity at the frontier of the Star Ocean Republic be guaranteed!

“However, the Mr. Big Shots at the center of politics and the other local leaders of the vassal worlds obviously thought otherwise.

“When two ‘unconventional things’ were combined, Wuying Qi’s tragedy was already destined!”

Su Changfa shook his head and sighed in sadness, as if he was very angry about Wuying Qi’s poignant experiences after the battle.

The mental devil was also applauding inside Li Yao’s head. “Senior Wuying Qi is truly a role model for all the Immortal Cultivators. With the fewest forces, he defeated the barbarians and awed the unruly. He saved the country and the people. How marvelous, how incredible! I hereby announce that Senior Wuying Qi will be the most admirable idol for me from this moment on!”

“Cut the cr*p!” Li Yao sneered.

Just now, Su Changfa’s sophistry and his seemingly reasonable logic made his head swirling and dizzy.

However, when the ungrounded empty talk was changed into more specific examples, Li Yao’s keen analysis and computational ability were able to function normally again.

As to exactly whether the Immortal Cultivators’ logic was correct or not, it could be discussed later.

However, despite Su Changfa’s exaggeration and distortion, when it came to Wuying Qi’s actions, Li Yao—having been taught good lessons by the old seniors such as Xiao Xuance, Bai Xinghe, Jin Tuyi, Lu Zui, and so on—saw through the truth without any trouble.

I’ve seen too many schemes. Such fancy words are not going to fool me!

Wuying Qi had obviously been planning all that for a long time. Otherwise, how could he have been able to intimidate the ten or so vassal worlds and collect all their forces so shortly after the explosion of Karan and the defeat of the Covenant Alliance’s army?

Since Wuying Qi had been working in the frontier for more than ten years, and he had been actively expanding the influence of his Salvation Syndicate, wouldn’t those vassal worlds behind him, which were far from the capital and almost independent, have been the freshest meat in the universe? Did he not want to take a bite at it when he had the chance?

Wuying Qi’s subordinates, namely the Cultivators of the Salvation Syndicate, must’ve deeply infiltrated those vassal *worlds!*

The massive attack of the Covenant Alliance was just an excuse. With or without the war, Wuying Qi would’ve swallowed the vassal worlds one way or another!

However, a great opportunity had presented itself so that he could justify his cause!

Wuying Qi gave false orders from the capital and executed the local magnates who disobeyed him when he actually did not have permission. When the Cultivators of the younger generation who were loyal to him filled in the power vacuum, a lot of blood must’ve been shed during the process. With dirt all over their hands, the Cultivators who recently rose to power could only follow Wuying Qi to the end!

Hehe. For such a great man like Wuying Qi, who probably would not spit out any bone when he devoured someone, is it possible that he would return the forces of the vassal worlds when he already had them?

Before the battle, Wuying Qi was merely in control of a border defense army which belonged to the country, and he was just a common general in the ranks of the army. The army was loyal to the Star Ocean Republic, not himself.

After the battle, however, Wuying Qi had taken over more than ten remote Sectors. He also boasted the magical equipment, starships, and captives that the Covenant Alliance left behind during their defeat. His capability had significantly soared. He was already a local warlord who was qualified to wrestle with the capital!

What a delicate scheme! He was truly a smart guy!

When he figured everything out, Li Yao examined Wuying Qi’s decision to ‘sacrifice’ 8.2 million civilians. He soon thought of something and was greatly enlightened!

The devil was in the details!

The key point was not the death of the 8.2 million civilians that Su Changfa highlighted and elaborated on but the fact that he understated in the end, which was that ‘Wuying Qi left most of the starships and strategic assets on Karan and had to borrow troops from the vassal worlds because of the shortage of soldiers on his side’!

If Wuying Qi had only left empty starships and assets, why on earth would he have been short of soldiers?

There could only be one answer. What Wuying Qi left behind on Karan were not just 8.2 million civilians, the starships, and the strategic assets, but also numerous troops of the border defense army!

Only by leaving the border defense army behind on Karan to ‘resist with their full might’ would the Covenant Alliance really be deceived!

Then, what kind of specific troops did he leave behind intentionally for the suicidal mission?

Of course, the troops that were absolutely loyal to the Star Ocean Republic and not to Wuying Qi himself!

It was an out-and-out purge!

By borrowing the cleavers of the Covenant Alliance, Wuying Qi slew all the forces that objected to him in both the border defense army and the vassal worlds and realized the complete unification of the frontier area!

Chances were that even the ‘invasion of the Covenant Alliance’ was within Wuying Qi’s calculations. He had carefully calculated and guided every step that the two parties made. He fabricated an irresolvable dilemma where the 8.2 million civilians had to be sacrificed in order to cover his real purpose of purging and swallowing those ten or so worlds!

Even if the purge was discovered, he could still argue justifiably that the soldiers had to be sacrificed for the salvation of the country!

So sordid! So shameless! So cunning! He was even more dreadful than Xiao Xuance, Bai Xinghe, Jin Tuyi, Elder Nether Spring, and Lu Zui combined!

Cold sweat was pouring in Li Yao’s heart.

After he thought everything through and came back to himself, when he listened to Su Changfa’s enchanting persuasion again, it was like when his blood was boiling and he was seething with libido after seeing a sexy beauty, he accidentally saw her test result for STDs, with the dozens of items on it all being positive.

Then, no matter how beautiful, sexy, and attractive she was, it was still enough to calm and even freeze the most lustful man!

Li Yao coughed lightly and pretended that he was slowly convinced. With deep acknowledgement appearing on his face, he went on listening to the hearty tutelage from Su Changfa.

But he was actually sneering in his heart. *Brag. Just keep bragging. Let’s just see what kind of flower you are going to decorate such a scumbag as Wuying Qi into!*

Su Changfa was quite satisfied that the new recruit was actively changed. He said with mixed feelings, “Wuying Qi was a man who did not care about his own reputation for the sake of the country. After finishing the Covenant Alliance’s invasion through thunderous approaches, he already vaguely had the feeling that he would be berated by everybody in the world.

“However, at that time, he was still under the illusion that the public opinions would be 50/50. Some of them would support him while some would object.

“Also, parliament would let him go considering the great contributions that he had made.

“After all, his contributions could be used to offset his wrongdoings. He could even be sentenced to prison for a few years. Then, he could retire and focus his attention on the Salvation Syndicate. That was what Wuying Qi had in mind at that time.”

Li Yao almost failed to stifle his laughter. After figuring out the truth, Su Changfa’s story was indeed interesting in a different sense!

“Therefore, after receiving the subpoena of the parliament, Wuying Qi returned to the capital without any hesitation.

“Never did he anticipate that what awaited him there would be overwhelming curses, criticism, and vilification, as well as the immediate arrest and trial of the authorities, instead of any flowers or cheers!”

Chapter 1260 - Eagle Flies!

Su Changfa put on a hideous and infuriated appearance, raging and yelling, as if he were one of the ordinary people who hated Wuying Qi’s guts.

Inside the Grand Illusionary Land, countless ignorant and fanatic ordinary people, whose eyes were bloodshot and faces were wry, resembling the believers of the Chiyou Cult, were spitting on and barraging Wuying Qi, who was wearing a black suit that was surrounded by white mystic rays, making him look like a saint.

It was like a bunch of hyenas attacking a lion.

One could not help but feel that Wuying Qi had been wronged, helpless and sorrowful, while the ordinary people were idiotic, ungrateful, and gullible.

“Wuying Qing is a murderer and a living embodiment of fiend!

“Blood for blood! For the 8.2 million innocent victims on Karan, he must be minced!

“Very soon, Wuying Qi was found guilty of crimes against humanity and massacre. Because he gave false commands and killed the leaders of the sub-republics without approval, he was also found guilty of treason. To answer for all the crimes, his military rank was removed, and he was sentenced to death without any probation. Also, his soul would not be left behind. He wouldn’t even be given the opportunity of turning into a spectral Cultivator!

“What was ironic was that the punishment for officers of the Covenant Alliance who were escorted to the capital together with Wuying Qi was much lighter.

“Hehe. At this moment, Wuying Qi finally understood one thing.

“He had been betrayed!

“He had been betrayed again. Just like he had once been betrayed by the ordinary people for whom he fought for thirty years in the Martial Meritocrats civilization, he had been betrayed yet another time by the people whom he devoted his everything to protecting!

“Before, those people threw him into a crater. Today, they were going to send him to the guillotine without even letting go of his soul!

“Wuying Qi immediately understood everything.

“He was an outsider without any background in the country at all. He was a new force who distinguished himself!

“For the past ten years, he had been dealing with the Covenant Alliance in the frontier. His accomplishments were not significant, and he had sometimes even lost a battle or two. However, the capital had been ‘lenient’ on him and never issued any substantial punishment.

“It was because parliament needed an unsupported idiot like himself to jump into the swamp and take the blame!

“But now, after securing such a glorious victory, he was completely beyond control with his soaring capability. He posed a threat to the big shots in parliament and jeopardized the interests of the traditional forces in the world of Cultivators!

“Yes. He was guilty!

“He was guilty not because he sacrificed the 8.2 million civilians, not because he had seized the military power of the vassal worlds without approval, but because—

“He was too strong, too keen, and too brilliant! He was capable of threatening the parliament and the deeply-rooted interest groups!

“Whether or not he used that capability, the fact was that he possessed the capability. It was his original sin. He was guilty of being too strong!

“Such a crime could not be washed away by a few years of prison or the deprivation of power and properties. As long as he was alive, he might rise again at any time!

“Therefore, in the eyes of the hypocritical Cultivators and the ignorant ordinary people, Wuying Qi, who was guilty of being too strong, had to be executed!”

Failing to hold back his excitement, Su Changfa bellowed, his every wrinkle turning into a bloody saber, “At this moment, Wuying Qi finally abandoned all his illusions about Cultivators and ordinary people. He completely broke up with the ungrateful, shameless snakes!

“Yes. He was determined to save the civilization of mankind, but what exactly was the civilization of mankind? What was mankind?

“Mankind, the wisest of all creatures and the dominator of the universe!

“Was everybody who was born randomly entitled to such a noble identity?

“Were the stupid, fat, illiterate, foolhardy, avaricious parasites who lived on the Cultivators and the hypocritical, selfish, and shortsighted Cultivators all qualified to be called ‘human beings’?

“No. Absolutely not!

“Only the warriors who had a healthy body and noble character, who knew the essence of the universe clearly, and who were willing to dedicate their everything to improving our civilization were the true human beings!

“The rest of them were simply animals wearing the skin of human beings. They were ‘hominoids’ controlled by their animalistic instincts!

“Wuying Qi did not care about his own life and death, but he absolutely could not stand the abhorrent hominoids sullying and even destroying the noble civilization of mankind any longer!

“Only by replacing hominoids with true human beings could the multiple shortcomings of the civilization of mankind be removed so that our civilization could be brought to a new altitude that was even more glorious!

“That was the enlightenment that Wuying Qi had.

“When he was enlightened and his belief blossomed, he abandoned his identity as a Cultivator without any hesitation! His real-life experience in the past hundreds of years assured him that the title ‘Cultivator’ had been contaminated by too many dregs and diseases. It was already hopelessly rotten!

“A new era required new protectors!

“Wuying Qi was no longer a Cultivator but an Immortal Cultivator, a brand-new existence who stood on the peak of humanity’s hundreds of thousands of years of evolution and represented the future and the hope!

“The first Immortal Cultivator in history and in the three thousand Sectors was thus born!”

“Ah!” Li Yao exclaimed very cooperatively, with an ‘I-never-saw-this-coming’ expression.

Su Changfa was quite satisfied with his cooperation. As if on drugs, the old man’s face was flushing, and his eyebrow was dancing while he chuckled in amusement. “To this moment, when the first Immortal Cultivator in the universe was born, the idiotic Cultivators had yet to realize what a terrifying enemy they had pissed off. They had no idea what kind of mysterious abilities the enemy had grasped during the hundreds of years of travel in the universe. They did not know what an enormous organization the Salvation Syndicate had developed into in secret, either!

“Wuying Qi was confined in the most heavily guarded prison in the Empyrean Terminus Sector. He seemed to be too frustrated to resist anymore. His death sentence would be carried out soon, too.

“His trusted subordinates whom he had brought to the capital had been disarmed, too, either arrested or under surveillance.

“The big shots in parliament and the seniors in the world of Cultivators, based on their own experience, thought that Wuying Qi’s accomplices had been cleared and that he would not be able to stir up any trouble on his own.

“What was the biggest threat right now was actually the border defense army on the frontline that was loyal to Wuying Qi.

“The border defense army—combined with the private armies of those ten or so vassal worlds, equipped with the starships and the magical equipment left by the Covenant Alliance, and possessing their experience of more than ten years of bloody battles—was truly not to be underestimated.

“The Star Ocean Republic had been at peace for too long. Most of the troops lacked battle experience despite their remarkable gear. They were incapable of dealing with Wuying Qi’s border defense army in a remote, unfamiliar environment.

“In order to settle the trouble as quickly as possible, preferably with no blood shed, the parliament dispatched the ‘central army’ whose responsibility was to garrison the Empyrean Terminus Sector.

“The parliament demanded that the central army march to the frontier as quickly as possible, take over the border defense army that was loyal to Wuying Qi, and bring the nearby vassal worlds under control.

“In the parliament’s opinion, as tough as Wuying Qi’s border defense army might be, it had just gone through a great battle and suffered tremendous casualties after all, and it was mixed with the mobs from those vassal worlds. Wuying Qi was not there to command them in person, either. They were essentially loose sand!

“How could they expect to compete with the central army, which was well-trained, had abundant supplies, and had the orders of the authorities?

“Chances were that the jumbled army would surrender the moment that the central army arrived!

“It remained to be seen whether the central army was stronger than the border defense army or whether it was the other way around. However, the big shots in the capital forgot one thing. While the central army, which was supposed to guard the capital, marched to the frontier to suppress the rebellion, wouldn’t the capital be poorly guarded?

“Oh. They might’ve thought that, but the Star Ocean Republic was ‘the strongest country in the universe’! For a thousand years, the ten or so core Sectors around the capital city had never been scourged by any war. Even if no soldier was left in the capital, would there be anybody who was audacious enough to come and ask to be killed?

“Just like that, a great show was aired!

“When Wuying Qi was escorted to the punishment field and was about to be officially executed in front of everyone, a fleet with pure black camouflage that looked like a ghost suddenly appeared in the Empyrean Terminus Sector and pierced into the heart of the ‘strongest country in the universe’!

“It was an elite troop loyal to Wuying Qi, comprised of the veterans who had survived after more than ten years of bloody battles with the Covenant Alliance. Equipped with the advanced starships from the Covenant Alliance, with tremendous Purple Thunder Crystals as the fuel catalysts, they were like eagles that flew in the sky, zigzagging around dozens of Sectors and launching an unexpected assault to the capital!”

In the picture behind Su Changfa, starships that were streamlined and looked like black lightning descended from the sky like soldiers from the heavens. The thunder that they unleashed changed the color of the sky and the earth!

On the ground, the ugly ordinary people and the Cultivators were all appalled. They were all fleeing in devastation and falling apart!

“Under the thunderous attack of Wuying Qi’s fleet, the garrison troop that was temporarily moved to guard the capital was no match at all. Many members of the Salvation Syndicate had been lurking in the capital, too. Infuriated by the parliament’s betrayal and set-up, they rose up in response!

“Wuying Qi had already been escorted to the punishment field. However, the punishment field was entirely surrounded by the people who supported him, admired him, and worshipped him. Before Wuying Qi unlocked the shackles on himself, he had already been raised by countless pairs of hands to a crystal tank!

“On the crystal tank, while removing the soul-suppressing nails and the spirit-stealing needles that had been pierced into his bones while not even changing his countenance, he gave the famous speech entitled ‘New Hope’!

“The scene was captured by countless reporters and delivered to the audience in the hundred Sectors. They all deeply felt Wuying Qi’s formidability, resolution, and wisdom!

“After finishing the speech, Wuying Qi was heaved by his supporters from the punishment field to the parliament directly!

“Wuying Qi announced that the parliament had lost its legitimacy and could no longer stand for all citizens of the Star Ocean Republic because of the corruption, perversion, and conspiracies with hostile countries!

“He demanded the dissolution of parliament, the dismissal of the Speaker, and the arrests of all the representatives. A new constitution was drafted, changing the regime of the country from ‘parliamentary republic’ to ‘presidential republic’!

“Because of the urgent situation and the upcoming civil war, he announced that the Star Ocean Republic was to enter the state of emergency immediately. According to the ‘Emergency Response Act’, he was appointed as the first acting president of the Star Ocean Republic in the time of peril!”

Chapter 1261 - The First Clue

In the picture behind Su Changfa, Wuying Qi’s black crystal suit was gradually upgrading. It was becoming ever larger and more spectacular. It was getting more and more hideous too.

The upper half of the helmet protruded like a skull into a thorny crown.

The black arrows that represented Wuying Qi’s forces were expanding nonstop, raging inside the Empyrean Terminus Sector.

Countless starships crashed in the space zones nearby. Thousands of Cultivators perished like insects in the winter. The Cultivators tasted the strength of the Immortal Cultivators for the time, and the strength was more invincible that they could have imagined!

The Empyrean Terminus Sector, the capital of the Star Ocean Imperium in the past and the Star Ocean Republic at that time, had fallen into the hands of the Immortal Cultivators!

Although Li Yao was still highly alert, he could not help but feel awed by Wuying Qi’s desperate counterattack.

From the punishment field to parliament, and from a prisoner on death row to the first president of the Star Ocean Republic, Wuying Qi’s life was truly magnificent and intriguing!

However…

Li Yao thought for a moment and asked suspiciously, “It wasn’t enough for Wuying Qi to just control the capital, was it? There were so many other Sectors in the Star Ocean Republic. Did nobody object to him? Most importantly of all, what about the central army, which was supposed to protect the capital as the most elite troop?”

“Fellow Cultivator Li, you are indeed smart,” Su Changfa said. “You’ve noticed the critical question quickly enough!

“Of course, it wasn’t enough to just control the capital. The seething local forces needed to be intimidated through thunderous approaches, too! To achieve that, the most important thing was to destroy the central army cleanly and neatly!

“The central army was unaware of the capital falling into Wuying Qi’s hands. After a long journey, they finally arrived at the frontier that Wuying Qi had carefully operated on for more than ten years.

“Despite the well-training soldiers, the ample supplies, and the rightfulness, they were unfamiliar with the local environment. They were unaware of the locations of the cosmic storms, the best places for space jumps, the differences in the spiritual and electromagnetic fields, the stars that boasted special spiritual waves that could affect the sailing starships, and so on.

“The universe is too boundless and mysterious. Too many dangerous factors can affect a voyage. Without the navigation of local guides who were familiar with the situation, even the largest starships wouldn’t be able to move forward at all.

“Also, they were so arrogant that they did not consider the operation to be a battle mission at all. They were under the illusion that the border defense army and the natives would give up and beg for mercy the moment that they arrived and that they were mainly there to regroup them!

“Most importantly, even the central army had been seriously infiltrated by the Immortal Cultivators of the Salvation Syndicate, who constantly sent valuable intelligence to Wuying Qi’s side.

“The conceited central army underestimated both the combat ability of the border defense army and the resistance of the local armies of the vassal worlds! It should be noted that the local magnates had just uprooted the original interest groups under Wuying Qi’s support in order for themselves to rise to power. They had all expressed their loyalty with real actions, and the blood on their sabers had not been dried yet. Once the central army won, the previous interest groups would certainly counterattack, and they would die without a burial!

“Therefore, the vassal worlds that had been rather ostensibly complicit with the capital before were in fact quite loyal to Wuying Qi!

“But the central army knew none of it.

“All that they knew about were the false messages that the Immortal Cultivators sent back!

“Misled by the false messages, the central army thought that Wuying Qi’s remaining forces had already crumbled and that the border defense army was suffering from internal strife with the troops from the vassal worlds, which had proved loyal enough to join the capital’s side again!

“The central army, overjoyed, accepted the ‘local armies of the vassal worlds who had returned to the right path’ without any wariness. They launched attacks toward the border defense army together. As they expected, the border defense army suffered tremendous losses and fled in panic while leaving a large number of starships behind!

“Hehe. Nobody would feel sorry for the death of the Cultivators who were as greedy as pigs and as stupid as dogs! Wuying Qi’s subordinates played the same trick that was played on Karan, but they were fooled without defense again!

“Right when they were taking over the starships left by the border defense army, the crystal bombs that were buried deep inside the starships, together with the arsenals and the engine compartments, exploded all at once, turning the entire space zone into an ocean of fire!

“The broken debris filled the entire sailing route. The elites of the central army were stuck inside, unable to move at all.

“The battlefield was carefully selected by the border defense army and the local troops in the first place. After a certain period, because of the integration and friction of two nebulas, an enormous, highly-intense cosmic storm would be raised here, which was called by the locals as ‘Death Wing’. You can tell from the name how dreadful it is!

“The elites of the central army suffered a suicidal explosion first and then got caught in the Death Wing later. It shouldn’t be hard to guess their damages.

“When the remnants finally survived the scourge of the Death Wing, the border defense army and the local troops, which appeared to be engaged in a fierce battle earlier, suddenly marched out from the two flanks and gave the most advanced, formidable, and glorious fleet of the Star Ocean Republic a critical attack!

“Right then, Wuying Qi’s counterattack in the capital and his actions, including dissolving the parliament, arresting the representatives, and announcing his inauguration as the acting president, were finally delivered to the central army, too.

“Their final pillar, which was their legitamacy as the army of the authorities, collapsed!

“Right now, the border defense army and the local troops were the ‘rightful armies’, and they were the rebels that had no support!

“Without supplies and ammunition, and because of the heavy casualties, the central army finally collapsed and surrendered to Wuying Qi’s border defense army. The most elite troop of the Star Ocean Republic thus belonged to Wuying Qi!

“After controlling the capital and the few most elite troops in the Star Ocean Republic, Wuying Qi had basically settled the trouble once and for all!

“In other local Sectors, many Immortal Cultivators of the Salvation Syndicate were active, too. With their cooperation inside, Wuying Qi was simply unstoppable. All the local forces surrendered to him without much resistance. As everybody hoped, the ‘acting’ in his title was removed, and he was nominated as the unquestionable first president of the Star Ocean Republic!”

Li Yao could not help but raise his thumb for Wuying Qi’s thunderous approaches in his heart again.

As the saying went, outsiders watch things for fun, but people of the trade notice the tricks in them. Interesting details were included in Su Changfa’s story, which must have been embroidered more times than anybody could count. Only someone like Li Yao could notice them!

There were too many suspicious points and coincidences in the whole event. It was even more unbelievable than fiction!

However, the loophole revealed in the most critical part gave Li Yao the first clue about the truth in the past!

The loophole hole was that… for such an incredible man like Wuying Qi, after slaughtering ten million civilians and gathering the power of the frontier area through false orders and purges, how could he not have foreseen that the capital would be determined to execute him?

He was now the biggest warlord in the Star Ocean Republic. As a warlord, he should not go to the territory of the central government easily, and even if they did, he would need to tread lightly with as many soldiers with him as possible. Was that not common sense?

How could he not have predicted that, the moment he returned to the capital, he would be captured and sentenced to death?

Su Changfa described Wuying Qi to be a white lotus flower that was selfless and kind in nature. Everything that he did was because he was forced to. However, such bullsh*t could only fool a three-year-old.

Li Yao reckoned that Wuying Qi must have been transformed into an Immortal Cultivator a long, long time ago!

Perhaps it was the moment when he was thrown into the crater, or perhaps it was during his hundreds of years of travel in the dark universe, but all in all, he was probably already an Immortal Cultivator before he arrived in the Star Ocean Republic!

He did not discover the Star Ocean Republic ‘by accident’; his destination had been the strongest country in the civilization of mankind since the very beginning!

Therefore, he intentionally fed himself to the authorities and had himself trialed!

I understand it now!

Since the very beginning, Wuying Qi’s appetite had never been able to be satisfied by a few remote Sectors in the frontier. The whole time, he had one and only one goal, which was the capital, the Empyrean Sector, and the supreme power of the Star Ocean Republic!

Li Yao was almost shrieking.

With Wuying Qi’s ambitions, it was meaningless to be a warlord who controlled little more than ten remote, vassal worlds.

Even if Wuying Qi kept a low file and did not do anything, the strategical environment that he was in was still quite harsh.

In front of him was the Covenant Alliance, which had just suffered a brutal failure and hated his guts.

Behind him was the central government of the Star Ocean Republic that was hostile to him, too.

With enemies both in front and behind, such a territory was certainly not suitable for long-term development. It would only be a cage that would trap him to his death!

The Star Ocean Republic was a traditional superpower with tremendous potential after all. With his insignificant scale, if he competed with a hundred Sectors, he stood absolutely no chance of winning once his opponents got serious, entered the state of emergency, and had a general mobilization!

Therefore, just like dealing with the Covenant Alliance, he had to finish the battle quickly with unexpected moves!

Going to the capital and being held in prison was a gamble that was even more shocking and perilous than the Battle of Karan. He had three aims.

Firstly, to ease the wariness of parliament. The Cultivators would think that he was just so-so and that he was a fish in the water tank with nowhere to run. So, the country would not have a general mobilization. Their pace would be slowed.

Secondly, to command the Immortal Cultivators lurking in the capital personally. Since he was determined to lead the rise of the Immortal Cultivators, what he had dedicated his most attention to was certainly the capital other than his nest in the frontier. Countless Immortal Cultivators would have been hiding in the Empyrean Terminus Sector.

Thirdly, to mislead the authorities into thinking that the biggest threat right now was the army that he left in the frontier.

Right. It was also highly likely that he had kept the starships and the magical equipment that he had captured from the Covenant Alliance in the space zones in the frontier. Such valuable treasures were definitely attractive items for the central government!

Perhaps, the Immortal Cultivators lurking in the darkness had been fanning the flames and subtly manipulating the decisions of the authorities, too. In the end, they successfully made parliament dispatch the central army, whose combat ability was the highest, to regroup the border defense army and accept the starships and the magical equipment of the Covenant Alliance.

When the three aims were combined, Wuying Qi created a fatal distraction with his return to the capital!

Chapter 1262 - Blackstar the Great!

After the central army was moved away from the Empyrean Terminus Sector, the capital of the Star Ocean Republic was at the most vulnerable moment in its thousand years of history!

Also, the ‘tiger’ that had marched a long way to the swamp at the frontier did not have much combat ability left, either!

By killing two birds with one stone, Wuying Qi created the most perfect conditions for a coup by himself.

His most elite force, which was armed with the starships of the Covenant Alliance and the Purple Thunder Crystals, certainly did not set off after hearing the news that he was captured and tried, either.

They would have been divided into two groups, one in the daylight and the other in the darkness, while he returned to the capital openly. The force in the daylight was disarmed by parliament and the Cultivators. However, the real force in the darkness was actually hidden with the help of the Immortal Cultivators in other Sectors and soared to the sky with a critical strike at the crucial moment!

If Wuying Qi had not fed himself to the central government, what would have happened?

He could have ruled over the ten or so vassal worlds at the frontier as a local warlord. But on the capital’s side, being more wary of him, they certainly would have constructed more defense lines between the frontier and the capital while increasing the garrison, thereby pushing him strategically from every perspective.

It was a war between a viper and an elephant. He would not have stood any chance in a head-on clash. The elephant would have stomped on his head easily.

Right behind him, the Covenant Alliance, which had just suffered a crushing defeat, would have been biting their lips in fury, too, and would not have minded stabbing him right in the back while he was confronting the Cultivators!

If so, however capable he was, there was no way that he could expect to accede to the supreme throne in the sea of stars!

Therefore, the viper had to crawl into the elephant’s head through the nose and inject venom into its most feeble nerves!

Wuying Qi had no choice but to go to the capital and feed himself to the enemy. He needed to have the central army in the capital dispatched to his territory to annihilate his border defense army, too.

How could he achieve that?

What kind of crimes would make parliament and the Cultivators determined to annihilate a credible general who had been stationed in the frontier for more than ten years with his troops without caring about the cost?

Only crimes against humanity and the crime of massacre!

Therefore, if it was a young man who did not know the first thing about the Immortal Cultivators and did not have a firm belief yet, when he heard Su Changfa telling the story of Wuying Qi’s legendary rise, he would inevitably feel that it was shocking, logical, and yet full of lucky coincidences. Wuying Qi had been forced into desperation every time and had no choice but to counterattack ruthlessly before he secured a final victory in the end!

It was indeed intriguing and satisfying. One could not help but feel that was what a great man should do!

However, if one were inferred backward from the result, it would be easy to notice that blowing up Karan and the 8.2 million innocent civilians on it, purging the ten or so vassal worlds with blood, and turning into a warlord that threatened the central government were certainly not Wuying Qi’s helpless choices. They were even not the strategies that he came up with during the war but plans that he had made long before the war began when he decided to swallow the entire Star Ocean Republic!

Every step was a trap that he had repetitively deduced and calculated. After a series of seemingly unconnected subtle movements, they led to the result of a perfect coup!

The almost ten million restless souls on Karan were the offerings that Wuying Qi had been long prepared to sacrifice in order to seize the highest power!

Moreover…

Li Yao even realized that all the words were simply Su Changfa’s side of the story. He claimed that, while Wuying Qi was fighting the Covenant Alliance in the front line in difficulties, the public, parliament, and Cultivators in the rear were shortsighted, ungrateful, and jealous!

Was it really true?

Was it possible that Wuying Qi was merely expanding the force of the border defense army with the military threat of the Covenant Alliance?

Was it possible that, after the public, parliament, and Cultivators gave him all the support and resources that he needed, he dedicated ten percent of the resources to the resistance and ninety percent to build up the Salvation Syndicate and raise countless Immortal Cultivators in secret?

Otherwise, how could the Salvation Syndicate have leaked into every Sector of the Star Ocean Republic, to the point where they took over the country in their final insurrection?

Was it possible that Wuying Qi and the Covenant Alliance had reached certain clandestine deals and that the large-scale attacks of the Covenant Alliance were within his expectations or even agreed upon?

Li Yao’s brain was like a spring with broken ice floating on the surface. He was calmer than ever and no longer under the influence of the fancy talks.

But on the surface, he pretended that he was completely fascinated. Clenching his fists, he pursued further in excitement, “Then, what happened next?”

With a pitiful and yet indignant face, Su Changfa said after a long sigh, “Wuying Qi becoming the president of the Star Ocean Republic was everybody’s hope and the necessity of history. Under his government, the Star Ocean Republic was reborn from fire and thriving again!

“However, while Wuying Qi was reforming society with the true path of immortality, it was only natural that the interest groups of the Cultivators fought back fiercely!

“The Immortal Cultivators who had just risen were like a morning sun. They represented the future of the civilization of mankind and were therefore utterly unstoppable!

“The shameless Cultivators and the ignorant ordinary people who were incited by them were obviously no match for them!

“The despicable bandits who were hoping to stop the wheel of history with their tiny arms were all ground to dust by Wuying Qi’s iron army!

“However, their shamelessness was still far beyond the imagination of Wuying Qi and the other Immortal Cultivators. For counterattack and comeback, to restore the reign of the Cultivators, they even conspired with the Covenant Alliance, their old nemesis in the past!

“The Covenant Alliance returned and helped the Cultivators reestablish the parliament of the Star Ocean Republic, which falsely claimed that it was the legal government of the Star Ocean Republic!

“Hehe. The so-called legal government was merely the Covenant Alliance’s puppet!

“When the two enemies joined their hands, they did seem rather formidable. Many vassal worlds wavered again and took the Cultivators and the Covenant Alliance’s side.

“A civil war broke out!

“This was the second civil war that Wuying Qi had been through, but this civil war was a hundred times larger than the civil war in the Martial Meritocrats civilization hundreds of years ago. Almost a hundred Sectors were involved in the fire of war. Nobody at the center of the cosmos was able to get away from it!

“The civilization of mankind reached a perilous moment once more!

“While coping with the Cultivators and the Covenant Alliance calmly, Wuying Qi contemplated on the real cause of the civil war and the regime that was most suitable for the civilization of mankind to develop and rise in the sea of stars.

“Finally, he reached a conclusion!

“The biggest problem was the ‘republic system’ being adopted right now!

“The universe was too vast. The Sectors were extremely far away from each other. The communication and transportation were inconvenient. Their environment and interests were different from each other’s. Therefore, there was a natural trend of division and independency!

“If the so-called free and democratic republic system was to be implemented any further, wherein every Sector, every space zone, and even every planet was able to utter their voice without restraint and without cost, division and civil wars would be unavoidable because they were all too selfish to place the interests of the civilization as a whole above the interests of their own world!

“Even if the Covenant Alliance and the Cultivators could be destroyed this time, new, unstable factors would pop up again next time. As time went by, the civilization of mankind would be destroyed in internal strife!

“The problem needed to be resolved from the source!

“The republic system was an underdeveloped system only good enough for the small countries when the civilization of mankind was still restrained to the planets. It was too outdated for the development in the era of the grand universe!

“In the boundless, dark, and cold sea of stars, the civilization of mankind needed to be unified under one banner, one voice, and one leader to march forward bravely and unstoppably!

“Solidarity! Solidarity! Solidarity is strength! Solidarity is everything!

“There was a reason the civilization of mankind was reborn from fire in the Star Ocean Imperium and defeated the civilization of demons, which had dominated the universe for thirty thousand years, regaining control over the sea of stars!

“The imperial system! It was exactly because the Star Ocean Imperium adopted the imperial system that the Supreme Emperor and the most excellent elites of mankind could play their roles in the best ways that they could and establish such a brilliant and glorious country!

“It was most hilarious that, although the Star Ocean Republic called itself the ‘rightful successor’ of the Star Ocean Imperium, it only inherited the empty shell and failed to learn the core system, which was the actual essence!

“When Wuying Qi realized that, it was the time when the war was most intense. Led by the barefaced Cultivators, the army of the Covenant Alliance raged into the territory, and the fire of war was almost ignited in the capital!

“Everything seemed to be in peril, but the night is darkest before the dawn!

“The greatest news came over from the depths of the Empyrean Terminus Sector!

“In the past, the Supreme Emperor once received three volumes of the Book of Revelation, which was the civilizational heritage of the Pangu Clan. However, the volumes were lost when the Star Ocean Imperium collapsed!

“But right now, the Immortal Cultivators had discovered one volume of the Book of Revelation from an ancient relic, from which the unbelievable techniques and technologies of the Pangu civilization could be retrieved!

“That was the destiny!

“That was the sign that the rise of the civilization of mankind was unstoppable!

“With destiny in hand, and as everybody hoped, in order to save the country and the civilization, Wuying Qi no longer hesitated and altered the regime of the country decisively from a republic into an imperial system. He ascended to the throne and proclaimed himself to be an emperor!

“The Star Ocean Republic evolved into a grand new imperium!

“In order to be distinguished from the Star Ocean Imperium in the past, in order to draw a clear line from the so-called ‘legal government of the Star Ocean Republic’ and also to demonstrate the belief and ideology of the new imperium, Wuying Qi named the new country… the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“Just like that, the young man who was tied up like a piglet by the ordinary people of the Martial Meritocrats Sector and thrown into the crater had finally grown into the supreme leader of the civilization of mankind, the protector of the three thousand Sectors, the founder of the Imperium of True Human Beings, and the forever first citizen of the imperium! He was henceforth known as Blackstar the Great!”

Chapter 1263 - Motivation and Tutelage

Su Changfa’s voice and face were more and more excited. In the end, when he uttered ‘Blackstar the Great’, he was almost shouting at the loudest of his voice with his face flushing, like the bombardment of the main gun of a starship. Smoke seemed to be popping up everywhere!

Together with his roar, an enormous spiritual puppet almost a hundred meters tall slowly crept out from the infinite sea of stars in the Grand Illusionary Land behind him!

The pure black spiritual puppet looked very similar to the black crystal suit that Wuying Qi had been wearing, but the aura around it was hundreds of times stronger. An everlasting cosmic storm seemed to be condensed around him as his cloak and his flag!

The black giant opened its hands and extended to the universe, almost occupying the entire Grand Illusionary Land. The suffocating oppression was slowly released to the world of reality from the Grand Illusionary Land. Li Yao felt that the gravity was dozens of times higher!

“Ah!”

Although Li Yao had known the answer earlier, he still exclaimed in shock cooperatively.

To criticize the Cultivators’ belief that the ordinary people must be protected, the three examples in the beginning would be sufficient. The remaining part of the story was unnecessary for that purpose.

The fourth story, which the narrator had spent the most time on, was actually the chronicles of the founding father of the Imperium of True Human Beings. Through the ‘legendary rise’ of Blackstar the Great, the Cultivators were smeared again between the lines, the formidability of the Imperium of True Human Beings was better rendered, and the one being brainwashed would have a greater sense of acknowledgement for the Imperium of True Human Beings, the Immortal Cultivators, and Wuying Qi, Blackstar the Great!

Through the story-telling of Su Changfa that was mixed with hypnotization techniques, the immersion experience of the Grand Illusionary Land, and the original paintings and graphics created by the art masters among the Immortal Cultivators, normal people would be mired in the soul-stirring story and not be able to help but stand in the role of ‘Wuying Qi, Blackstar the Great’.

Once they accepted the setting, when Wuying Qi rose to the throne from nothingness and integrated into the Imperium of True Human Beings, normal people would not be able to distinguish the logical fallacies!

Li Yao pretended that he was utterly hooked. He was breathing fast, and his lips were trembling. There was nothing but admiration in his bulging, bloodshot eyes.

Su Changfa burst into laughter and said in satisfaction, “That’s right. This is the rise of the Imperium of True Human Beings. This is the ineffaceable legend of the ‘first citizen of the imperium’!

“Suppressed by the thunderous might of Blackstar the Great, the Covenant Alliance and the self-proclaimed legal government of the Star Ocean Republic were but vulnerable ghosts. He swept away all of the enemies!

“The center of the universe was reunited!

“This is the true unification! Not the strange bedfellows in the past but a sharpest alloy tank of the civilization of mankind that is made of metals and minerals of different categories that have been melted in a high temperature!

“The Imperium of True Human Beings today includes the hundreds of most prosperous Sectors at the center of the cosmos. The super experts in the Nascent Soul Stage and the Divinity Transformation Stage are as numerous as carps swimming in a river! The super heavy warships that can suppress a planet easily are also like stars in the night sky!

“The comprehensive capability of the country is more than ten times higher than that of the Star Ocean Republic!

“More importantly, this is a just, honest, vigorous, and hopeful country. All the obsolete traditions and formalities of the civilization of mankind in the past have been abandoned. Every citizen of the imperium is burning their life and soul and striving for the development of the civilization of mankind with their all!

“Anybody can be a hero regardless of their background. For an Immortal Cultivator, as long as they are strong enough, no matter what family they are born into, and whether or not they have committed any… unpardonable crimes in the past, they will be able to distinguish themself and rise to power in the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“Even if you were the humblest slave yesterday, as long as your spiritual root is awakened, with some battle credits, you will be granted citizenship. Then, you will be able to climb upward to be a general, a duke, and even the master of an entire Sector someday!

“Such examples of growing from a slave into a general or from a pawn into a Sector Master are anything but unusual in the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“Fellow Cultivator Li, think about it. Even Wuying Qi, the founding emperor of the country and the forever first citizen of the imperium, was not born in the center of the cosmos; he was an out-and-out foreigner!

“Then, why can’t an Immortal Cultivator from the Flying Star Sector make a career in the Imperium of True Human Beings and distinguish yourself in the sea of stars?

“Disaster is often bliss in disguise. You have survived all the tough tests and luckily run into us. Maybe, this is the will of the universe and an opportunity that has been bestowed upon you. A great cause is waiting to be achieved by you!”

Li Yao gulped again and again in shock. He seemed to have devoured twenty eggs in a row, and his drool was almost flooding.

“Well…” His eyes shuddering, he asked carefully, “What exactly is the life of the ordinary people, or the so-called ‘hominoids’, in the Imperium of True Human Beings? They must be taking up more than ninety-nine percent of the whole population, right? Are they all slaves?”

“Of course not!” Su Changfa was amused. “Although the slavery system is kept in the Imperium of True Human Beings, we clearly know the shortcomings of such a system.

From the perspective of boosting productivity, increasing labor enthusiasm, and even ensuring stable and sustainable development, a monotonous slavery system is never the best choice!

“In the territory of the imperium, most of the hominoids are not slaves but free folk. They are also burning, working, and striving for the civilization of mankind with pride!

“We only keep the slavery system in a limited range. Even in those fields, our sociologists, psychologists, and zoologists have been improving and optimizing the traditional slavery system after hundreds of years of studies!

“All in all, the true human being’s attitude toward the hominoids is not slavery but motivation and tutelage!”

“Motivation and tutelage?” Li Yao was confused.

“Exactly. In fact, such a policy is in the hominoids’ best interest, too!” Su Changfa nodded and said solemnly, “We all know that the hominoids are human-shaped animals driven by their natural instincts. They do not have a soul. Their empty brain is filled with arrogance, jealousy, laziness, greed, desire, and lust!

“If they are allowed to do whatever they want without any discipline, their desires will be magnified indefinitely, and they will be addicted to virtual games, hallucinogens, sex, and all the other meaningless entertainment. Their life will be wasted!

“Even if they realize that such a life is not right and want to think, they will only be brainwashed repetitively by scheming media outlets and schemers because they do not boast the ability of independent thinking at all!

“They think that they are capable and can make a certain choice of their own free will, and they even feel an abnormal sense of gratification from it.

“But in fact, they are just the dandelions in a wild wind. They seem free, but they cannot control themselves at all. They are not flying with their own strength!

“The bottom line is, such animals must be disciplined!

“They are like the burning wildfire. If you leave them alone, they are likely to burn the world to the ground. However, if you make use of them carefully, they can also provide immense impetus for the development of the civilization of mankind!

“They are our close relatives and incubators, and the high-level animals closest to us, after all!

“With proper motivation and tutelage, they will be able to get rid of their disgusting, low-level interests and understand the significance of honor and responsibility. If you activate the strength of the ‘jealousy, greed, and desire’ in their head to the maximum in a skilled way, they can also be the best workers, farmers, and soldiers, tiny but qualified components in the enormous machine that is the civilization of mankind!

“Even the laziest dog, after proper training, can grow into an excellent army dog and launch a suicidal attack without fear. This is the same logic.

“Maybe, for the vast majority of the hominoids, their spiritual roots can never be awakened for them to become true human beings however hard they are disciplined. Yet, we will try our best to raise them into ‘ninety-nine percent human beings’ so that their body and spirit can be purged and perfected to the greatest extent!

“For those ignorant hominoids, such a life is truly a bliss that they must’ve earned through the good things that they did in their previous lives!”

“Cough, cough, cough, cough.” Li Yao coughed hard. “It does sound not bad. However, do the hominoids… have no complaints?”

Su Changfa raised his eyebrow and asked in surprise, “Why would they? We give them the opportunity to get rid of the decayed, degraded, meaningless life and dedicate themselves to a new one that is positive and meaningful. We have turned them from rotten cr*p into what look like human beings!

“They cannot wait to express their gratitude to us. Why will they complain?

“Fellow Cultivator Li, let go of your remaining prejudices. Do not mistake the slavery system in the world of the ancient Cultivators tens of thousands of years ago, which you perhaps caught in the history fantasies, for our advanced, civilized, modernized slavery system. In fact, after our motivation and tutelage, even the humblest slaves in the imperium have far better physical and mental conditions than many free folk in the desolate space zones do!

“We have conquered the desolate space zones and captured the aboriginals there for tutelage because we are trying to help them, enlighten them, and save them so that they can realize what an honor and glory it is to be part of the civilization of mankind!

“After motivation and tutelage, the hominoids, who are ‘ninety-nine percent human beings’, are the most solid foundation, the sharpest cleaver, and the toughest fists for the imperium. Why would they have any complaints?”

Li Yao was rendered speechless. For a moment, he was not able to tell whether or not Su Changfa was speaking the truth.

Seeing through the suspicion in his heart, Su Changfa smiled casually. “Fellow Cultivator Li, if you still find it difficult to understand, allow me to explain it to you with one of the most vulgar idioms, will you?”

“Please, Senior Su.”

Su Changfa cleared his throat and unhurriedly said, “You can never have a loyal son without physical abuse!”

Chapter 1264 - Raising a Ravenous Tiger!

Li Yao did not want to say anything.

When somebody was too shameless, even calling them ‘shameless’ sounded like a compliment.

“Fellow Cultivator Li!” Su Changfa’s eyes were glittering as he said earnestly, “I’ve talked so much to you for the sole purpose of convincing you of the fact that the Cultivators stand for the past while the Immortal Cultivators are the future! I know that you will not be able to completely understand it for the time being, but it doesn’t matter. I’ll need to make preparations for our exploration in the relic, which will probably take a few hours. You can take your time to study the files in the Grand Illusionary Land here!

“Right. There are also three books here, all written by famous scholars of the Imperium of True Human Beings. You can have a read and try to gain a deeper understanding!”

Su Changfa handed over a jade chip, in which three books, namely ‘The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind’, ‘The Age of Fools’, and ‘On the Collective Unconsciousness’, were stored.

After patting Li Yao’s shoulder, Su Changfa turned around, ready to leave the ‘brainwashing room’.

But Li Yao called him. “Wait a moment, Senior Su. I have two little questions.”

Su Changfa was never scared of questions from the audience because it was a sign that they were interested. What he was most scared of were the silent, irresponsive dudes who often proved to be too stubborn to be persuaded.

The old man turned around immediately and said with a smile, “Ask away, Fellow Cultivator Li!”

“Well, I want to know what became of the Martial Meritocrats Sector and the Sand Primitive Sector later.” Li Yao scratched his hair.

Su Changfa grinned hideously. “After Blackstar the Great founded the Imperium of True Human Beings and unified the center of the cosmos, naturally, he did not forget his beloved homeland! The two remote worlds, corrupted by the Chiyou Cult, turned out to have stagnated during the past hundreds of years. In many fields, they had even retrograded into a shocking level!

“When Blackstar the Great returned home with the imperial fleet, the ignorant believers of the Chiyou Cult even thought that devils had arrived to bring about doomsday!

“However, they were not entirely wrong.

“Blackstar the Great hated everybody in the Martial Meritocrats Sector and the Sand Primitive Sector so much that all the people of the two worlds, including their posterity, would be stamped with special marks as the lowliest slaves of the imperium for all eternity!

“It is unnecessary to treat such slaves as mercifully as we treat the common slaves. They are just the ‘little mice’ of the imperium and still play an ‘irreplaceable’ role in many fields even today!

“Hehe. After hearing about Blackstar the Great’s suffering in the past, you can certainly understand such fury, can’t you, Fellow Cultivator Li?”

Li Yao shuddered.

Of course, he knew what the ‘little mice’ were for.

He couldn’t help but recall the star child, who was a special spectral Cultivator that could only be born at the consumption of the souls of hundreds of babies. For the sake of the stabilization of the imperium, the hundreds of babies might not necessarily be the offspring of the common slaves; they were most likely the children of the remnants of the Martial Meritocrats Sector and the Sand Primitive Sector.

The ordinary people of the Martial Meritocrats Sector and the Sand Primitive Sector might be guilty and might be not, but such a severe, eternal punishment on their progeny was still quite detestable to Li Yao.

However, it was not the question that he was really interested in.

He only asked the question in order to ease Su Changfa’s alertness so that the second question would not be too obvious.

“So, that’s their ending. They truly had it coming!” Li Yao clapped his hands. Then, he asked, pretending to be casual, “By the way, was the Covenant Alliance demolished in the end?”

Su Changfa coughed. His face a bit unnatural, he nodded, “Yes. It was basically cleaned. Some of the last remnants are still hiding at the edge of the cosmos in a panic. They are not a concrete threat to the imperium anymore!”

That’s it!

Li Yao chuckled in his heart. After such a long time, he had finally grasped the enemy’s weakness!

Su Changfa might have been bragging about the thunderous might of Blackstar the Great all the time who swept all the filthy opponents on his way, but the critical parts still revealed the truth behind the rhetoric!

Hiding in a panic all day?

I’ll be damned if I believe you!

Li Yao’s foster father was from the Covenant Alliance, and it was around twenty years ago when he fled to the Heaven’s Origin Sector. According to Li Yao’s foster father, the Covenant Alliance was still at least on par with the imperium!

There was no reason for his foster father to lie to him, but there were definitely ten thousand reasons for Su Changfa to lie!

It appeared that the threat that Blackstar the Great had intentionally kept in the beginning so that he could build himself up had turned out to be beyond his control and was even burning him in the end. On the enormous body of the Star Ocean Republic, two monsters, namely the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Alliance of the Holy Covenant, were nurtured and born at the same time!

Li Yao calculated crazily in his heart, but his facial expression remained absolutely unchanged. Su Changfa watched carefully for a moment but did not notice anything. After bragging about the accomplishments of Blackstar the

Great and the magnificence of the Imperium of True Human Beings again, he left the brainwashing room in a hurry.

Li Yao scratched at the center of the brainwashing room and touched the jade chip that stored the books, including ‘The Crowd’, pretending that he was reading them carefully. However, deep inside his brain, he was ripping apart every word that Su Changfa had said and every picture displayed in the Grand Illusionary Land with his computational ability and judgement. After quite some time, he assembled the pieces into the facts to his knowledge!

I think Wuying Qi, or Blackstar the Great’, finished the transformation from a ‘Cultivator’ to an ‘Immortal Cultivator’ the moment that he was tied up by the ordinary people and thrown into a crater.

After he survived the disaster, during his hundreds of years of travel in the dark, cold universe, he trained himself while he perfected theories of the Immortal Cultivators!

Of course, he didn’t encounter the Star Ocean Republic by accident. He must’ve gathered many star maps and learned the existence of the strongest country in the human worlds. Then, he considered it the best target and lunged toward it intentionally!

Chances were that the first things he did after arriving in the Star Ocean Republic were establishing the Salvation Syndicate and developing Immortal Cultivators in secret, disseminating his theories and his beliefs everywhere!

The rising of the Covenant Alliance gave him the best opportunity. He joined the border defense army. In more than ten years of battling, he slowly built up himself while keeping the enemy as a threat. Eventually, after a series of *delicate schemes, he initiated a coup and successfully seized power!*

However, after he seized power, there was still another critical problem!

The Star Ocean Republic was a civilization of Cultivators after all. Cultivators and ordinary people were equal and friendly. Everybody believed in the regime of republic. Although the country was no longer in its heyday, there was still some distance before its doom. The social contradictions were not too acute to be resolved yet.

In either the parliamentary system or the presidential system, Wuying Qi, even if he was the president, could not change the regime as he wished. He could not slaughter all the Cultivators in the hundred Sectors without a good reason, either.

In other words, after a thousand years of development, the Star Ocean Republic had its own 'belief', which could not be shaken easily by a foreigner who had only been in the place for less than twenty years and only seized power through a violent coup.

It is possible that the second invasion of the Covenant Alliance, which was aided by the Cultivators, was directed by him, too!

Only by doing so would he have the most justifiable excuse to eliminate the forces of the Cultivators, destroy the belief of the Star Ocean Republic, overturn the system of the country, and establish an Imperium of True Human Beings that solely belonged to the Immortal Cultivators!

Hehe. Such clever methods. What a manipulative villain!

Li Yao sneered in his heart.

“So what?” The mental devil was like a crazy fan who had run into someone that was insulting its idol. It jumped to the feet and shrieked, “Even if your assumption is totally correct, it only proves the smartness and the planning abilities of our Blackstar the Great!

“The universe is too large a place with too many stars. How can you rule over the entire universe without certain schemes?

“If what you analyzed is true, I’m admiring Blackstar the Great even more! All the stars in the sky are in my hands! Wow. My blood is boiling when I just think of it!”

“I’m afraid that not all the stars in the sky are in his hands. Even if Blackstar the Great had really taken everything into consideration, there is still one thing that he underestimated, which proved to be a matter of life and death later,” Li Yao replied coldly. “In order to seize power, Wuying Qi kept the Covenant Alliance as a threat. Maybe, he knew a thing or two about the formidability of the Covenant Alliance, but he must’ve been even more confident about his own capabilities and methods. He believed that he would certainly be able to control the ‘poisonous fire’, and the Covenant Alliance would be at his disposal.

“After all, once his cause succeeded, he would grasp the most prosperous area in the entire universe. With the tremendous resources and relics of the Star Ocean Imperium as the foundation, and with his planning abilities, he felt that absolutely nobody would be a match for him.

“Hehe. Little did he know that the Alliance of the Holy Covenant was probably deeply connected to the Pangu Clan in the primeval age. In terms of heritage, they were apparently much wealthier than him!

“Wuying Qi made all the correct choices, but he completely screwed up on this one. The Covenant Alliance that he thought he could domesticate as a cat grew into a ravenous tiger. The Imperium was rising, but the Covenant Alliance was rising at an even higher speed. Chances were that the latter was already able to swallow Wuying Qi’s lifelong enterprise that he had achieved after such arduous efforts!”

“Hehe!” Lost for words, the mental devil simply glared at Li Yao.

Li Yao ignored it and said calmly, “Su Changfa talked so much about the ideologies on their side. I haven’t come up with proper rebuttals yet.

“But I must point out one thing. If the Imperium of True Human Beings is truly as perfect as he claimed, and if it is the most advanced form of civilization for mankind where everybody’s infinite potential can be triggered, why is the Covenant Alliance still alive right now?

“He did not even dare to tell me the real capability of the Covenant Alliance but simply made up a lie that they were ‘living in fear all day’. Why? Was he scared that I would grow suspicious about the invincibility of the imperium after learning the truth?

“What do you think, dark me?”

Bloody mist was popping up from the mental devil’s head because of its fury. Grinding the teeth hard amid cracking noises, it argued, “I don’t care. I don’t care. Anyways, the true path of immortality is the ultimate truth in the dark universe. Only the fittest should survive. You cannot expect to refute such a sacred rule!

“It’s like the choice that you dodged a moment ago.”

The mental devil chose to attack instead of defending. Changing the topic, it grinned hideously. “If you were the commander, what choices would you have made if you could kill ten million people to save ten billion?

“Don’t say that Wuying Qi was doing that intentionally and had planning everything in advance. You are simply shunning!

“Let’s forget Wuying Qi and just focus on you. If you, a righteous, unselfish man, are caught in the same dilemma, what will you choose? Can you make a different choice from Wuying Qi’s?

“Speak now! Do you dare answer the question, Cultivator?”

Chapter 1265 - Straight Answer!

The mental devil jumped up and down while shouting.

But Li Yao simply frowned. “Karan was caught in the dilemma where the problem had to be resolved through a complete explosion because of Wuying Qi’s own scheme! If it were a general who was righteous, unselfish, and willing to sacrifice himself for the country, such a dilemma wouldn’t have existed in the first place!

“The Star Ocean Republic and the Covenant Alliance had been at war for more than ten years. If I were the commander of the border defense army, and I had already grown a deep understanding about the potential threat of the Covenant Alliance, I would certainly have made the country enter the highest state of war through whatever means possible. The most elite troops such as the ‘central army’ would be mobilized to the frontier. We would attack and let the fire of war burn in the territory of the Covenant Alliance so that the enemy would be exterminated while in their cradle!

“If an expedition was unrealistic because the Covenant Alliance’s situation was ambiguous for us, at the very least, after a general mobilization, the Star Ocean Republic, as a traditional superpower, certainly had the ability to construct the most solid defense line on the galaxy arm in the border space zones. The loyalty of the vassal worlds would be better ensured, and the central government’s control over them would be higher. Also, the civilians in the borderland would be evacuated soon!

“As long as such actions were taken, nobody would need to face such a cruel choice!

“It is exactly because Wuying Qi was selfish enough to hide part of the information from the capital, and even the fickleness of the vassal worlds might be under his manipulation, too, that everything ended up like that!”

“Stop smearing his great name!” the mental devil shrieked. “Everything is just your speculation. You have no evidence that Blackstar the Great was behind it! What if the Star Ocean Republic’s parliament was truly that shortsighted, incapable, and arrogant? What if the vassal worlds were truly idling by because it was not their problem?

“Assume—let me repeat, we are assuming right now—that an incapable parliament was hamstringing you, and the vassal worlds were not willing to contribute at all but gladly watching you to fight on your own. Nobody believed what you said. Nobody was willing to offer you the slightest assistance. Everybody distrusted you, misunderstood you, and framed you, until eventually you were pushed to the point where you had to choose between killing ten million and killing ten billion, what would you do?”

“Even if parliament was truly as stupid as swine and as greedy as dogs, I wouldn’t have been pushed to the point, either. I still had a hundred ways to avoid such a dilemma!” Li Yao sneered. “I can come up with a solution in only five minutes to fool the parliament around. There’s no reason why Wuying Qi couldn’t with his remarkable planning abilities, right?”

“Hahahaha!” The mental devil burst into laughter. “Stop bragging. At that time, it was impossible for the commander of the border defense army to interfere with the policies made in the capital.

“All in all, the parliament would choke your throat. They did not give you enough assets and troops, and they did not believe your warning. Whatever you said to them, they thought that you were merely exaggerating to scare them. For the sake of economic development and the stability of politics, they were unwilling to conduct a general mobilization! What could you do? What could you do?”

“I surrender,” Li Yao said slowly after a long sigh.

The mental devil was even more delighted. It declared gloatingly, “See? You have no choice but to surrender, don’t you? Our Blackstar the Great was the same. He was forced to do it because he wasn’t given other options!”

“Wait. You seem to be mistaken. I’m not saying that I give up on the topic and surrender to you,” Li Yao said unhurriedly. “What I’m saying is that, as the commander of the border defense army of the Star Ocean Republic, after the capital refused my requests time and time again, distrusted my judgement, and even criticized me, I would surrender to the Covenant Alliance in my fury!”

“Huh?” The mental devil was immediately dumbfounded.

“Of course, submission could be an extremely complicated job, especially so for an elite troop to surrender to the enemy who they had been fighting against for ten years. The whole thing would be certainly be a prolonged project!

“Therefore, I would have to send my trusted subordinates to get in touch with the Covenant Alliance, hinting that I would like to jump to their side with the entire border defense army. Also, I would negotiate with them on the terms of surrender.

“Considering the contributions that I was about to make, it would be inappropriate not to give a few Sectors to me, wouldn’t it?”

The mental devil narrowed its small eyes that were rolling fast, like a mouse that had smelt the odor of rat poison.

“In the border defense army,” Li Yao continued, “other than my trusted subordinates who were loyal to me, naturally, there would be a lot of soldiers of integrity who were loyal to the country and parliament. Therefore, when I ‘accidentally’ leaked out the message that I was preparing to surrender, news would certainly be sent back to the capital faster than light and raise a riot in parliament and among the Cultivators!

“Also, my appetite was quite huge. Not only was I going to defect with the border defense army, I would also instigate the vassal worlds behind me to join the enemy’s side!

“Haha. Once the plan was carried out, the elite border defense army and the ten or so vassal worlds of the Star Ocean Republic on this galaxy defense line would change their banner overnight. The place would be the Covenant Alliance’s territory!

“The Covenant Alliance’s capability would soar. The frontline would push forward significantly. There would be a lot of excellent soldiers who were familiar with the intelligence of the heartland of the Star Ocean Republic. The vanguards would be able to stab into the internal organs of the Star Ocean Republic!

"Oh, right. From the starships, crystal suits, and magical equipment that I brought to the Covenant Alliance, and from the heads of the excellent soldiers, it wouldn't be hard for the Covenant Alliance to retrieve the most valuable Cultivation arts, techniques, and technologies, would it?"

The mental devil was gnashing its teeth so hard that it looked as if it would lunge at Li Yao at any moment!

With a smile of victory, Li Yao said, "Do you think that, when such news got back to the capital, the big shots in parliament would still consider the threat of the Covenant Alliance as dermatitis and choose to ignore it?

"Even if there were hundreds of pigs that were sitting in parliament, they should know that it was no good, shouldn't they?

"The general mobilization might take a while, but at the very least, the most elite, most loyal troops would certainly reach the borderland as quickly as possible to control the situation and to construct a solid defense line, intimidating the vassal worlds into not messing around!

"Okay, problem solved!

"Of course, the real process wouldn't be so simple. Many details had to be fixed and perfected, but that's the general idea!

"With my weak commanding ability, it might be impossible for me to put the plan into practice, but Wuying Qi certainly should've realized it perfectly with his intelligence, couldn't he?

"I came up with the solution after three minutes of thinking. It is of course childish, violent, immature, and deeply flawed.

I wonder, what are your comments and suggestions, Immortal Cultivator?”

The mental devil was seething in fury. Pacing back and forth inside Li Yao’s brain, it shouted angrily, “If so, you would lose your reputation and be cursed by everyone!”

“No need to worry about that! When the central army had everything under control and started an investigation, they would find that the message that the commander of the border defense army intended to defect was purely ungrounded. It was a set-up and a shameless scheme of the Covenant Alliance! After all, after years of struggles with the Covenant Alliance, their blood covered my hands. I was probably the biggest problem for them. It’s quite reasonable that they would try to frame me!”

The mental devil was lost for words for a long time. Then, after a long silence, it replied, “What if other people didn’t believe the conclusion?”

“Then, there’s nothing I could do,” Li Yao said calmly. “At the very least, the border had reinforcement of troops, the defense line was more stable, the vassal worlds would no longer act recklessly, and the capital came to understand the aggressiveness of the Covenant Alliance! I achieved all my goals. As to what would happen to me, that would be a different story!

“After all, that fits the profile you gave me. Have you forgotten? We are talking about a righteous, unselfish soldier!”

“O—okay. You got me!” The mental devil stomped on the ground hard. Scratching the messy hair, it gnashed its teeth. “You’ve worked your way out of the problem through tricks again, but you simply do not have the courage to face my question, do you?”

“It has nothing to do with my courage. Your question is one that doesn’t need to be answered.”

While replying to the mental devil’s tricky question, Li Yao was sorting through his own thoughts, too, and began to feel that his head was clearer.

“Choosing between ‘killing ten million’ and ‘killing ten billion’ is a question like ‘which one will you save when your wife and your mom both fall into the river’, ‘which rail should the trolley run on when there are kids on both rails’, or ‘you are forced by your kidnapper to kill one of the two kids who are kidnapped together with you’. Such questions are not real questions but venomous traps. For anybody whose head is normal, it is unnecessary to step into them.

“I can answer your malicious traps with a ‘no comment’. However, seeing that you are utterly unconvinced, let me give you a straight answer as a Cultivator!

“As a Cultivator, under any circumstances, for whatever purpose, I will not kill anyone innocent. One or ten million, I will kill none of them!

“I will not press the button to detonate Karan. I will not even allow such a button to exist!

“This is my choice. Are you satisfied?”

The mental devil, thinking that Li Yao’s weakness had finally been grasped, jumped to its feet in excitement. After a snap of fingers, it shouted, “A-ha. So, you will be killing ten billion ordinary people!”

“Su Changfa might’ve been exaggerating. It remains unknown whether or not the invasion of the Covenant Alliance would have caused the death of ten billion people,” Li Yao calmly replied. “But even if ten billion innocent people died in the war, I was not the one who killed them. I would not carry such a moral burden on my back.

“If a firefighter rescued ten people who were trapped in a building that was on fire with his best during a mission, but a hundred more who were trapped were killed in the fire, would the firefighter be blamed for the death of the hundred victims?

“If a policeman protected ten innocent citizens while stopping bandits, but the bandits’ fierce firepower caused the death of another hundred innocent citizens, would they have been killed by the policeman?”

Chapter 1266 - Ideal and Reality!

“This is pure sophistry!” the mental devil countered. “Killing ten million and killing ten billion are in a chain of causality. It’s black and white! It is because of your petty kindness and your hypocrisy that you are unwilling to shoulder the blame of ‘killing ten billion’! That’s why the ten billion people were killed! It’s entirely different from the example you put forward!”

“How are they not different?” Li Yao asked back coldly. “For example, if a policeman sees a fully-armed criminal who has already raised his gun, he has no time to activate his own gun, and he does not have a second solution except to pick up an innocent little girl and throw her toward the criminal’s gun so that he will have time to tame the criminal!

“But because he doesn’t do that, because he doesn’t toss the innocent little girl over, will the policeman be to blame for everybody that the criminal kills?

“If you think that I’m merely arguing irrationally, how about the next example?

“Some fanatic zealots have captured a hundred innocent elementary school students as hostages. They demand the authorities to hand over one—yes, only one—adult who has ‘sullied’ their religion!

“If the authorities do not hand over the adult, they will kill the hundred innocent children!

“But in the end, if the authorities insist on not handing over the adult, and the fanatic zealots do kill the children, are the children’s deaths the authorities’ fault?

“The choice between the life of an adult and the lives of a hundred children are in a ‘chain of causality’ anyway, right? If the adult dies, the children will be spared. If the adult doesn’t, the children will certainly be killed. This is what you call ‘black and white’, right?

“Then, just because of that, the authorities who are unwilling to concede are murderers, are they?

“Damn you! What kind of bullsh*t logic is that?

“What kills the victims are the fire, the criminal, and the fanatic zealots, not the firefighter, the policeman, and the authorities!

“Therefore, even if I didn’t choose to detonate Karan, I was simply making a choice that any firefighter, policeman, and government with a normally-functioning head would make. If the defense line collapsed later, and ten billion people or even more were killed, it would be the invaders from the Covenant Alliance that killed them, not me, who had been trying to resist the enemy with all I could!

“If I were truly in Wuying Qi’s place, no matter how harsh the environment I was in was, I would not cross the line. I would fight like a real Cultivator. If I failed, I would retreat, regroup, and continue fighting! If countless ordinary people were killed in the war during the process, I would blame the Covenant Alliance for all the casualties and settle the scores with a hundred times more interest later! If I couldn’t achieve that, the only reason would be that I was killed in battle on my way!

“I believe that, other than the Immortal Cultivators with ill intentions and the few people who were bewildered by them, anybody who had basic intelligence and thinking abilities would know who was to blame for the disaster and who the real murderer was!”

The mental devil sneered while scratching its face.

Taking a long breath, Li Yao declared resolutely, “There’s no need to cover your fear with a cold smile. Do you know the biggest problem of your so-called choice?

“The biggest problem is that lives are immeasurable and invaluable! For something that is already infinitely great, the result will be the same even if you multiply it by a thousand!

“The lives of two people combined are not necessarily more important that the life of one person. The life of a big shot who is smart, handsome, and born in a rich family is not more valuable than the life of a little guy who is born in a poor family living a mundane life!

“The 8.2 million innocent victims on Karan were as valuable as the ten billion civilians in the rear!

“If you deny that, today, you can ‘sacrifice’ 8.2 million people for ten billion; tomorrow, you can sacrifice ten billion for a hundred billion; the day after tomorrow, you can sacrifice another hundred billion for a hundred billion plus one. After all, the latter are always a bit more valuable than the former!

“As a result, the foundation of society will be gone. Eventually, far more people than 8.2 million or even ten billion will be killed!”

“Stop your alarmism there!” the mental devil sneered. “Your jibber-jabber is just your ungrounded presumption. I don’t believe any of it!”

“You don’t?” Li Yao put on a cold smile, too. “I’m disappointed. I’m truly disappointed! You are my clone anyway. Our intelligence should be similar despite our different stances, shouldn’t it? Why is your wisdom declining so fast? It is also a landslide! Can’t you even see through Su Changfa’s fancy talk?

“Is it possible that one will become dumber when one becomes an Immortal Cultivator?

“Having such an idiotic clone like you… I feel sorry for myself!”

“What did you say?” The mental devil burst into fury and climbed to the top of Ou Yezi’s memory tree like a monkey, raging and roaring. “Let’s get everything through! What fancy talks have I not seen through? You are not going to get away with it if you don’t explain it to me!”

“It’s simple,” Li Yao said calmly. “Su Changfa said that by detonating Karan and sacrificing 8.2 million people, Wuying Qi rescued ten billion people, which sounds like a fair deal, doesn’t it?”

The mental devil nodded its head hard. “It is doubtlessly a fair deal!”

“Then, did he tell us how many victims were killed in the war that the Imperium of True Human Beings waged against the Covenant Alliance and the ‘legal government of the Star Ocean Republic’?”

“It was a super civil war that a hundred Sectors were involved in. The death of hundreds of billions of people should have been unavoidable, right?

“But how exactly did the civil war break out? How did the Covenant Alliance break into the country?

“Because Wuying Qi’s coup seriously tore apart the stability in the Star Ocean Republic and led to the conflict of the Cultivators and the Immortal Cultivators!

“How did the coup work out? If we get to the bottom of it, it had a lot to do with the explosion on Karan, too!

“So, can we say that, by detonating Karan, Wuying Qi sacrificed 8.2 million civilians for ten billion people, only to cause the death of hundreds of billions more eventually?”

“About that—”

“You understand it, too, don’t you? This is a messy ledger that you can never get a clear result after calculation because lives shouldn’t be calculated in the first place! As a Cultivator, as long as I abide by my belief and do my best, I will not feel regretful whatever the final ending is!

“How about it, Immortal Cultivator? Are you satisfied about my straight answer?”

The mental devil crouched on a twig, and its eyes shook for a long time. Suddenly, it chuckled and said, “Forget it. You have successfully tricked me again. I shouldn’t have debated with you in the first place!

“Theoretically, you may be right. Lives ‘should’ be invaluable and ‘shouldn’t’ be compared or measured!

“But that’s only theoretical!

“However you put it, in the real world, lives do have a price. Some lives are more expensive than others. Lives can be, and often are, compared and measured!

“Hehe. The lives of two are indeed not necessarily more valuable than the life of one, but the lives of the big shots and the young masters of noble families are definitely more valuable than a poor boy from a humble family!

“Every life has its price, except that some prices are higher, and some are lower!

“It is certainly the case in the Imperium of True Human Beings, but what about your most beloved Star Glory Federation? What a free, democratic, and equal place! You have a parliament, you have elections, you have the Constitution of Cultivators, you have the core belief to protect the ordinary people, you have the Cultivators who are willing to be the sabers of mankind. What a f*cking heaven on earth!

“But is it otherwise here?

“For you, who was born and raised in the magical equipment graveyard and have struggled to survive and grow up through all kinds of trouble only because of luck as a scavenger, do I need to pick a few examples from your memories and throw them at your face?

“You are fortunate enough to be a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator right now. As a high and mighty big shot, you have the privilege to chat with the Speaker of the Federation casually on equal terms. Of course, it is easy for you to spout theoretical cr*p like that!

“If you hadn’t had your fortuitous encounters, if you were still the scavenger who struggled to make a living in the magical equipment graveyard, could you still make such proud declarations faced with the cruel, brutal reality? Would you still have absolutely no doubt about the Cultivators’ ideology?

“No. You would certainly have turned into an Immortal Cultivator!

“You and I are both clear that it is not a vicious assumption but the truth!

“I am the amalgamation of the negative emotions, dark memories, and cold realities deep inside your soul in the first place. I am a half Li Yao! My choice is part of your choice!

“Admit it. Part of you has realized the cruelty of the real world and become an Immortal Cultivator!”

The words hit Li Yao’s critical spot precisely.

Li Yao was silent.

The mental devil burst into laughter after its counterattack. “That is the problem of all you Cultivators! You do not have the courage to face reality at all! Everything that you’ve been talking about, however touching and perfect it sounds, is just an ungrounded theory! The Immortal Cultivators are the real warriors who are brave enough to face the miseries of the real world!”

“You are wrong.” Li Yao was surrounded by invisible flames. Streams of golden brilliance emanated from deep inside his brain and glowed like sunlight piercing through the clouds. An impenetrable golden fortress was rising slowly inside his brain!

One word after another, he said softly, “The Cultivators have never been too cowardly to face reality!

“Of course, we know clearly how dark, cruel, and heavy reality is!

“But we will never be slaves to reality under the heavy burden like the timid and unprincipled Immortal Cultivators are!

“No matter how dark, cruel, and heavy reality is, we will transform it bit by bit with our belief according to our ideals!

“As long as everybody works together, an ideal can become reality!”

Chapter 1267 - Triple Star-Lightning Flag!

The mental devil grimaced and sneered nonstop. “Let’s just wait and see. One day, when the Imperium of True Human Beings truly arrives, I will definitely be able to prove the uprightness of the Immortal Cultivators!”

“There’s no need to wait for them to arrive!” Li Yao declared confidently, waving his fists. “After the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings is dealt with, I will try to observe the territory of the Imperium of True Human Beings in person and see if the ‘true human beings’ and the ‘hominoids’ living in the place are exactly as Su Changfa made out!

“I believe that the Imperium of True Human Beings is definitely not as impeccable as his propaganda claimed. There must be fatal drawbacks!”

The mental devil simply turned around and clung to the memory tree, pretending to be sleeping.

After sorting through his thoughts, Li Yao had no interest in dealing with it any longer. His consciousness floated to the shallow layer of his brain as he refocused his attention on the Grand Illusionary Land.

After studying carefully for a moment, Li Yao discovered that the Grand Illusionary Land that was designed for brainwashing did not simply boast a story-telling function. There was also an immersive experience mode from the main perspective for many scenes.

Shua!

After entering the mode, Li Yao felt that he was experiencing the destruction of the Cultivators and the rise of the Immortal Cultivators from the angle of different individuals.

He seemed to have become a Cultivator of the Curly Dragon civilization. At the Age of Doom when crystals had run dry, he walked slowly past a launch field that had become overgrown with weeds. He touched the rust on the launching racks and looked at the night sky where the stars were glittering, yet there was nothing more that he could do.

Then, he became a Cultivator of the Medicine Fork civilization. In the chaotic world after the pestilence broke out, he fought with the infected patients who had ulcers all over their bodies. Eventually, he contracted a fatal virus himself and died a miserable, hideous death.

Next, he became Wuying Qi at the last moment of the Martial Meritocrats civilization. His veins and bones were all locked up, and he was thrown into a crater.

The feeling of his internal organs being burnt by the magma was cutting his nerve endings as precisely as a scalpel!

Later, as Wuying Qi, he passed through multiple scenes, including the travel in the universe, the arrival at the Star Ocean Republic, the battles with the Covenant Alliance on the frontlines, the court in the capital where he was despised by everyone, and eventually the punishment field. Every scene felt like a real memory, and his real emotions were being triggered.

Before he knew it, he seemed to be melding with Wuying Qi into one.

When ‘he’ was captured, taken to the punishment field, and took the barrage of curses and shouting, the feeling of being betrayed by the entire world seemed to have overlapped with the scene where he was thrown into the crater a moment ago. He could not have felt more depressed, infuriated, and hateful!

Then, the army loyal to him appeared out of nowhere, and the dark emotions that had been compressed to the minimum were instantly unleashed!

He was heaved by thousands of hands onto the immortal throne to rein over the sea of stars!

Concession, devastation, counterattack, revenge! Boundless pleasure was crushing his nerves and his brain like a hurricane!

In a trance, his facial expressions were changing nonstop unpredictably, as if he had truly been bewildered.

In the war base not far away from the brainwashing room, the three Immortal Cultivators were monitoring Li Yao’s every action on the light beam, including the slightest changes of his biological data.

On the light beam with a super high resolution, the subtlest change of expression on Li Yao’s face was recorded dutifully.

As for his biological data, they were divided into more than a hundred indexes including heartbeat, pulse, brainwaves, hormones, and so on. Everything was precisely under their control.

“The curve of his brainwaves deviates less than five percent from the standard curve. He has completely been fascinated by our tutorial,” Tang Qianhe said with a smile. “He is now dwelling in the worlds and viewing everything from the perspective of the Immortal Cultivators. He is also unleashing his feelings without restraint.”

“That’s for sure. Nobody can withstand the bombardment of truth, not to mention a guy… who has long realized the meaning of survival of the fittest!” Su Changfa announced confidently. “Another lost Cultivator has been rescued and transformed into an Immortal Cultivator! Considering that we are seriously short of hands right now, an increase from three to four is quite good news! The odds of a successful exploration in the underground relic are much higher!

“Is your gear done testing?”

Tang Qianhe and Kou Ruhuo both nodded.

“Then let’s go to welcome our new fellow Cultivator now!”

Very soon, when Li Yao walked out of the brainwashing room, his head dizzy and his face flushed, he saw Su Changfa, Tang Qianhe, and Kou Ruhuo looking at him with sincere smiles.

“Master Su, I have a question.”

Li Yao licked his dry lips, his bloodshot eyes glittering, before he asked impatiently, “What do I need to do to be a citizen of the Imperium of True Human Beings?

“I mean, a citizen like you, who enjoys the corresponding rights in the Imperium.”

Su Changfa coughed and said, “To be a real citizen of the Imperium, there is only one condition, which is that you must break your limits and awaken your spiritual root!

“Fellow Cultivator Li, you have obviously met the condition. Not only is your spiritual root awakened, you are also an expert in the Core Formation Stage!

“For such an expert like you, Fellow Cultivator Li, who has advanced into the Core Formation Stage determinedly in a harsh environment with barely any resources at the edge of the cosmos, you meet every requirement in the ‘Overseas High-Level Talent Introduction Act’ of the Imperium. The procedures of your application can be greatly shortened!

“As for exactly how it should be done… Right, Fellow Cultivator Li, please follow us to the outside for the ceremony!”

Ceremony?

A big question mark popped up in Li Yao’s heart again. He walked out of the war base behind the three Immortal Cultivators dutifully. Surrounded by hundreds of Grand Illusionary Soldiers, they arrived at an empty area nearby that was not too spacious.

Four Grand Illusionary Soldiers carried a heavy metal box to the center of the empty ground.

Four drills extended out of the box and dug deep into the ground.

After a soft mechanical rubbing sound, the metal box was unfolded into a simple flag-raising platform.

An enormous flag rose from the bottom of the flag-raising platform slowly and flapped in the breeze.

The background color of the flag was as crimson as blood. At the center of the flag were three sharp stripes that looked like a cross between sabers and lightning. In a circle, they constituted a triple-edged star, giving a strong sense of aggressiveness and dominance.

“This is the national flag of the Imperium of True Human Beings, the Triple Star-Lightning Flag. The deep red background color represents the fact that the advancement of the civilization of mankind requires the irrigation of the hot blood of those who are sacrificed. The three black lightning bolts represent solidarity, devotion, and evolution. They are the three indispensable pillars of the country!”

Tang Qianhe proudly explained the flag to Li Yao.

“Raise the flag and play the national anthem!” Kou Ruhuo declared solemnly.

A magnificent march, which sounded like the barrage of the main guns of a starship, immediately echoed from the fully-automatic flag-raising platform. The Triple Stars Lightings Flag moved higher and higher, fluttering in the wind.

All three Immortal Cultivators raised their right arms high and clenched their fists, roaring together with the dull, domineering, and depressing drumming.

This was the first time that Li Yao had heard the national anthem of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

Different from the Star Glory Federation’s national anthem, which was bright and soul-stirring, the national anthem of the Imperium was dragged four to five registers down as a whole. The heavy drumming was bashing his heart like a storm, making him feel that his heart was about to explode!

Li Yao breathed hard and finally managed to control his crazy heartbeat. The Triple Star-Lightning Flag had already reached the top, and the three Immortal Cultivators were singing the last verse of the song!

“Let’s conquer, Immortal Cultivators! Conquer the ghosts and the evils!

“Let’s reign, true human beings! Reign the dark and cold universe!

“As our warships swoop past the surging tides, the glory of the Imperium will shine forever!”

Although the song had ended, the three Immortal Cultivators were still reveling in the glory of the Imperium with their eyes half closed, unable to free themselves.

Li Yao felt sweat all over his back, as if he had been bombarded by the main guns of the starship multiple times.

“Alright, Fellow Cultivator Li.” Narrowing his eyes, Su Changfa observed the Triple Star-Lightning Flag, which was flapping in midair, and clapped his hands in great satisfaction. “The ceremony of flag rising has been completed. Right now, the mysterious planet is now the territory of the Imperium of True Human Beings!”

“Well—” Li Yao blinked. *Uncle, isn’t it a bit too arrogant? Just stab a flag to the ground, and the land is now your territory?*

“This place has been abandoned for more than a hundred thousand years. Of course, whoever arrives first can claim it,” Su Changfa said matter-of-factly. “Whoever finds new worlds, new space zones, and new planets is entitled to the ownership of their findings. This is the common practice in the universe!”

Li Yao thought for a moment and said, “In other words, the force behind whoever finds the planet first owns the place, right?”

Su Changfa nodded. “Of course. Is there a problem?”

“No. Not at all. I feel that this is a very excellent system. Reasonable and logical!”

“Good!” Su Changfa smiled. “Now, since this place is the territory of the Imperium of True Human Beings, we will be allowed to begin our work!

“You may not know this, Fellow Cultivator Li, but in order for the fire of the Imperium of True Human Beings to illuminate as many worlds in the sea of stars as possible, the explorers from the Imperium like us have all been given special authorizations!

“Our starship is a multipurpose base. It is the ‘floating territory’ of the Imperium of True Human Beings with multiple functions!

“It is a military camp, a court of law, a police station, an arbitration tribunal, a tax bureau, a school, a culture center, and most importantly of all, an immigration office!

“Explorers such as us have all been authorized as the special staff of said agencies of the Imperium!”

Su Changfa took out a small badge from his Cosmos Ring and clipped it onto his chest. He tapped it softly. Mystic rays shot out and soon interweaved into a pattern in which many eagles were flying back to their nest.

“This is the badge of the Imperial Immigration Office. Right now, I am a level-two immigration officer of the Immigration

Office of the Imperium of True Human Beings.”

Su Changfa coughed and cleared his throat. “According to the immigration law and the ‘Overseas High-Level Talent Introduction Act, considering the level of our war base and Fellow Cultivator Li’s Cultivation in the Core Formation Stage, I am now allowed to grand Fellow Cultivator Li the green card of the Imperium of True Human Beings with the highest permission!”

Chapter 1268 - The Contribution Point and the Citizenship System

While talking, Su Changfa took out a new badge from his Cosmos Ring and gave it to Li Yao with both hands as if it was something serious.

Li Yao accepted and observed the badge. It was carved out of a certain type of jade that was purely green and surrounded by flowing, vigorous spiritual energy. At the center of the badge were three golden, glittering patterns, just like the pattern on the Triple Star-Lightning Flag. There was a saber and a sword on the left and the right respectively, both entangled by olive branches.

“Green card?” Li Yao touched the surface of the badge and could not help but have an absurd feeling.

“Yes. The so-called ‘green card’ represents the right of permanent residency in the Imperium of True Human Beings. For foreigners beyond the territory of the Imperium, this is an unusual privilege.”

Su Changfa scratched his beard and explained, “Every green card must be issued extremely prudently. I only took advantage of a loophole in the policies and considered Fellow Cultivator Li a native of the planet. Then, when the planet became the territory of the Imperium, as a native, you were granted permanent residency and turned into a subject of the Imperium automatically!

“However, a ‘subject’ is still different from a ‘citizen’. Only ‘citizens’ are the owners of the Imperium who have political rights to decide the direction to march forward for the civilization of mankind. They are also entitled to the ever-evolving, magnificent Cultivation arts, techniques, marrow crystals, magical equipment, Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, and all other resources in advance!”

Li Yao thought of something and asked, “How can a ‘subject’ become a ‘citizen’?”

“Citizenship represents the ultimate glory and heavy responsibility. It cannot be granted easily! Even the Immortal Cultivators born and raised within the homeland of the Imperium are not immediately given the citizenship when our spiritual roots are awakened! We have to strive for the Imperium and the civilization of mankind as everybody else does. Only after we make great contributions and after we prove that we are healthy, wise, and calm enough to be qualified for political participation will we be granted citizenship!”

Su Changfa was quite proud of the citizen system of the Imperium of True Human Beings. The other two Immortal Cultivators were also glowing in delight, too.

“In the Imperium, all citizens are classified into twenty levels, not according to their bloodline or their wealth, but according to their personal capabilities, Cultivation, and contributions!

“All citizens have the right to vote and decide on important issues. However, the higher your Cultivation is and the more contributions you make to the country, the louder your voice will be in the decision-making process. One vote of a high-level citizen might carry more weight than a hundred votes of the low-level citizens!

“The sacred and supreme emperor is at the peak of the citizen system. He also proves his legitimacy to rule over the universe with his strength, wisdom, and courage!

“In fact, since the era of Blackstar the Great, instead of titles such as His Majesty, our leaders for generations preferred to be respected as First Citizen. His Majesty is based on a bloodline, while the First Citizen is purely based on their own capabilities!”

Li Yao was dumbfounded. “So, as long as somebody else is stronger than the Wuying family, the royal family of the Imperium, they can replace the incumbent ruler at any time?”

“Theoretically, yes.” Su Changfa grinned hideously. “Whoever isn’t scared of death is free to taste the heavy punches of the emperor anytime!”

Li Yao clicked his tongue. “Why is there such a system?”

“Even if such a system did not exist, would schemers not rise up in times of turmoil when the emperor’s power declined?” Su Changfa said with a cold smile.

Li Yao failed to come up with a reply.

“All in all, strength matters most in this world! The Imperium does not believe in the divine right! Under the guidance of Blackstar the Great, our royal family trains harder than anybody else, and the competition within the family most cruelest of all. Only by making greater contributions and sacrifices to the Imperium and the civilization of mankind can the honor of the First Citizen be preserved forever!

“We are a new imperium in the sea of stars. We are totally different from the traditional, corruptive-in-nature empires!”

Pausing for a moment, Su Changfa pointed at the ‘green card’ in Li Yao’s hands and said, “The citizen system of the Imperium is fair, open, and just. Any contribution you make to the civilization of mankind will be transformed into contribution points, which you can redeem for the techniques and the magical equipment that you want in order to earn more contribution points. When your stock of contribution points is large enough, you will be able to redeem them for citizenship of the Imperium and climb up the ladder level by level!

“According to their Cultivation, everybody will be given a certain number of ‘initial contribution points’. You will gain additional contribution points for your every advancement later, including the improvement of a minor level, or even a new technique that you have grasped!

“Also, during the calculation of contribution points, different levels have a weighting coefficient that must be timed. There’s a set of complicated and precise algorithms!

“I’ll save the trouble of explaining the tedious calculation process to you. All in all, the higher your Cultivation is, the faster you will be able to accumulate contribution points. For those in the Core Formation Stage such as you, Fellow Cultivator Li, you will be earning contribution points much faster than those in the Refinement Stage and the Building Foundation Stage!”

Li Yao nodded in approval in his heart. Such a contribution point system was indeed useful to motivate everybody to serve the Imperium. Even a foreign Cultivator not from the

Imperium of True Human Beings such as himself was somewhat attracted!

“Specifically speaking, how can I earn the contribution points?” Li Yao pretended to be impatient.

“Hehe. You must be concerned that you cannot become a citizen of the Imperium, right, Fellow Cultivator Li?” Su Changfa said with a smile. “Don’t worry. The greatest accomplishment is right in front of us, and you can catch it simply by extending your hand!

“Any discoveries that you make in the primeval battlefield when you are exploring it with us will be exchanged for tremendous contribution points!

“Then, Fellow Cultivator Li, you can bring us all to the Flying Star Sector… Our operations all depend on you from now on. If everything goes smoothly, I’m sure that you will soar into the sky as a new noble in the Imperium!”

His muscles twitching on his face, Li Yao gradually put on a greedy smile.

He understood what Su Changfa meant.

As long as he helped the Imperium to swallow the Flying Star Sector, the contribution points would of course be astronomical!

“Look!” Su Changfa was scared that he was not entirely relieved yet. He tapped Li Yao’s green card and triggered a 3D operation menu, on which his name, Cultivation, fingerprints, voiceprint, and brainwave information were listed. Together, they constituted a unique identification code.

“Don’t underestimate the tiny green card. It was actually crafted by the most magnificent refiners of the Imperium carefully, with dozens of soul stamps of the top experts of the Imperium. Every green card is uncopiable, unchangeable, and indestructible! Right now, your identification code has been affixed to it. It is all yours now! You shouldn’t have any worries now, right?”

Li Yao blinked and pretended that he was confused. “Worries about what?”

“At the beginning, were you worried that we would kill you to keep your mouth shut after the job was done, Fellow Cultivator Li?

“But right now, with the identification code on the green card, you have proved yourself to be a subject of the Imperium. So, we will no longer be able to kill you without a good reason!” Su Changfa explained.

“The information on every green card will be sent back to the Imperium for vetting later. If it is found out that we have slain a subject of the Imperium in the Core Formation Stage, we will certainly be punished!”

“Huh?” Li Yao blinked and asked in confused, “Isn’t ‘survival of the fittest’ accentuated in the Imperium? Can’t you kill anybody when needed?”

“Blackstar the Great drafted the Magna Carta, in which he explained the concept of ‘survival of the fittest’ in great detail!

“I’m not saying that you cannot kill somebody else. It all depends on the specific conditions!

“Take the mission to explore the relic for example. If we ask a foolish boy to scout for us and kill him after the treasure is found, we will indeed be able to get everything without sharing it with him. However, the price is that our credit will be lost, and the reputation of the Imperium will be sullied. As time goes on, nobody will dare cooperate with the Imperium anymore, right?

“Trading long-term interests for short-term interests—more importantly, trading the overall credit of the Imperium for personal gains—is, of course, behavior that is absolutely intolerable!

“There are too many ancient relics in the vast sea of stars. If one is greedy enough to swallow all the benefits this time, the credit and the reputation of the Imperium will be ruined, to the point that nobody else will ever trust the Imperium. So, such criminals truly deserve the death penalty!

“Therefore, in the Imperium of True Human Beings, there are laws on the exploration of ancient relics to protect the rights of the ‘foolish boys’!”

Li Yao was almost convinced.

Su Changfa burst into laughter and patted his shoulder warmly. “Fellow Cultivator Li, as I said to you earlier, we stand for justice and truth, and we are nothing like the evil beings out there!”

Greatly moved, Li Yao nodded quickly, but in his heart, he simply sneered.

The guy was talking so fancily, but was it not really because they had discovered more value in him and therefore decided to go easy on him for now?

In the beginning, when he pretended to be in a coma, they had even been discussing whether or not to slice him up for research!

Moreover, Su Changfa mentioned to the other two Immortal Cultivators that the Black Wind Fleet, which was marching toward the Flying Star Sector aggressively, would very likely kill them all and claim their discoveries.

Was that not contradictory to the ‘contribution system’ that Su Changfa had explained?

Perhaps, when Blackstar the Great founded the Imperium of True Human Beings, he indeed established a just, fair, and efficient system, which was as perfect as Su Changfa described .

However, after a thousand years, even the most solid system had gradually become corrupted and riddled with holes.

The interest groups such as the Black Wind Fleet, which was tough and relentless, were still able to negotiate with the emperor and even wrestle with him, ignoring the system!

The situation was so severe that, when Su Changfa and the other two Immortal Cultivators discovered such a piece of fat meat, they did not dare establish a space gate to summon the Black Wind Fleet!

Li Yao figured out everything in his heart, but he pretended that his face was burning with passion. Waving his fists, he shouted, “What are we waiting for? Let’s set off now and explore the relic!”

Chapter 1269 - Superstring Armor!

Su Changfa did not reply but simply coughed.

Kou Ruhuo—the tall, bald, muscular guy—stepped forward and said briefly, “Fellow Cultivator Li, as the chief of arms of the exploration team, I am responsible for deciding the gear and the tactics in the exploration and the battles later. Do you have any objections?”

Li Yao quickly shook his head.

Of course, he did not have any objections. In fact, he was quite curious about how advanced the magical equipment of the Imperium of True Human Beings really was.

Kou Ruhuo tapped on his wrist crystal processor for a moment. Soon, four spiritual puppets dragged an enormous crystal suit.

With the sound of air being spurting out, the crystal suit case blossomed like a lotus flower, revealing a shining, magnificent… Rockman!

Li Yao’s face suddenly turned extremely weird.

That pile of garbage was his, was it not?

It had only been repaired and repainted with a golden, cheesy-looking lacquer!

“We have studied your crystal suit carefully and discovered that the crystal suit technology of the Flying Star Sector is still in a highly underdeveloped phase,” Kou Ruhuo said solemnly. “Since you are used to such underdeveloped crystal suits, even if we gave you the most advanced crystal suit of the Imperium right now, it would be impossible for you to operate it proficiently any time soon. If your integration is not good enough, the crystal suit may prove to be a burden instead of an aid.”

Li Yao scratched his nose. He seemed to be a victim of his own scheme now.

The Rockman was an ancient crystal suit invented hundreds of years ago in the first place. In the Flying Star Sector, it was only used as a civil, engineering suit.

He had chosen the Rockman as his crystal suit in order to make the Immortal Cultivators misjudge the overall capability of the Flying Star Sector. However, it did not mean that he was incapable of manipulating the more advanced crystal suits!

Had he seen that coming, he would have equipped himself with a more advanced battle crystal suit, at least on par with the MP Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. Chances were that he would have been able to fool a better crystal suit out of the Immortal Cultivators!

“In order to begin our exploration as quickly as possible, we decided to repair your crystal suit and perform a full upgrade with super alloy materials. Also, we have installed some critical magical equipment units, which should have increased the combat ability of the crystal suit to the maximum that you can take advantage of!”

Kou Ruhuo seemed like a battle maniac. He was taciturn most of the time, but when it came to battle-related topics, his eyes were glowing, and he almost could not stop talking.

Pointing at the weird unit on the back of the Rockman that was full of holes, he explained, “Of them, the most important one is the superstring shield generator, which can construct an extremely tensile membrane of light on the surface of your crystal suit. The shape and range of the shield can be controlled by your telepathic thoughts. Its efficiency is five times higher than that of the spiritual shield you activate with your underdeveloped technologies!”

“Superstring shield!” Li Yao’s heart was pounding again. The hot blood of a refiner was surging inside his body!

He had observed the crystal suits of the Immortal Cultivators carefully before. They were not much more advanced than the top crystal suits to his knowledge. The gap was visible!

The super, limited-edition crystal suits such as his own Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit might have comprehensive specifications that were even higher than the crystal suits of the Immortal Cultivators!

However, the spiritual energy technology of the Imperium of True Human Beings was apparently much more advanced than the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector combined. It was one to two hundred years ahead of theirs!

If he could learn such technology… Li Yao’s eyes immediately became bloodshot with greed.

Looking at the bald, brawny, bearded man Kou Ruhuo, he began drooling.

Never would Kou Ruhuo have dreamt that he was considered by a bumpkin from nowhere to be a target of hunting. He explained patiently, “Are you aware of string theory?”

“String theory?” Li Yao scratched his head. He was better at the realistic operations and could not say that he knew much about the mysterious, cutting-edge theories.

“I’ve noticed that the technology of your spiritual shield is still restrained to the fields of the classic fundamental particles,” Kou Ruhuo said. “Your spiritual shields are generated by the mystic rays triggered with spiritual energy, but you don’t have any research or utilization on the photons that constitute the mystic rays.

“Such a fundamental mechanism decides the low-efficiency of your spiritual shields. Too much spiritual energy is consumed, and it is difficult to control the spiritual shield while it is in shape. Also, tremendous photons are dispersing from the spiritual shield every second, making you unable to hide yourself from the scanning of the enemy!

“All in all, in terms of spiritual energy consumption, manipulability, stealth, and various other aspects, the technology is quite underdeveloped. Yours can be called the first-generation spiritual shields at best!”

Li Yao coughed, blushing. “Is the Imperium’s spiritual shield technology any different?”

“Of course it is!” Kou Ruhuo declared proudly. “The Imperium has long surpassed the classic theories of fundamental particles and is marching on the ultimate path of the ‘string theory’!

“We believe that the fundamental particles that make up all the objects in the universe, including electrons, photons, neutrinos, and so on, are not the most basic unit in nature!

“The fundamental particles can still be explored and divided!

“If you continue dividing the fundamental particles, you will be able to get… extremely tiny ‘strings’. Such strings are existences between energy and materials. Their incessant vibrations at certain frequencies raise ripples known as ‘membranes’. When the ripples overlap, they make up the fundamental particles, and the fundamental particles form all objects in the universe!

“So to speak, our understanding of the universe is one level deeper than yours! You have only perceived the level of the ‘fundamental particles’, whereas we are already in the ‘string’ level!”

Li Yao’s mind was greatly stirred.

String theory was only just beginning to be explored in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector. It was merely a hypothesis!

He did not know that it was already a noteworthy science in the Imperium of True Human Beings and even applied to real battles!

“Our spiritual shield technology allows a special force field around the crystal suit where the photons will be crashing at a high speed,” Kou Ruhuo declared proudly. “During the collisions, there are certain odds that the photons will enter the Superstring state, which will completely alter the structure and the nature of the spiritual shield!

“The Superstring shield that adopts such technology is the second-generation spiritual shield. It is so vastly different from the first-generation spiritual shield that they are essentially two different things!

“Of course, our understanding of string theory is still in the preliminary phase, too. No more than 0.01% photons will enter the Superstring state during the collisions, and their Superstring state lasts less than 0.01 seconds before they collapse. Still, they are enough to make our Superstring shields twenty times better than your shields of mystic rays!”

Li Yao secretly chuckled. This Kou Ruhuo was too honest to keep the shortcomings of his technology to himself.

If it were Su Changfa, he certainly would have bragged about the technology and described it as the best in the universe.

It appeared that Kou Ruhuo was a serious technology enthusiast. As long as technology was involved, he would not tolerate any falsehood or embellishment.

To some extent, Li Yao was such a type of person, too. When it came to magical equipment and refining, he disliked exaggeration.

Su Changfa coughed and smiled. “What ‘our’ and ‘your’? We now all belong to the Imperium!”

“Right. We are all on the same side!” Kou Ruhuo slapped his bald head. He then pointed at two small cannons on the shoulders of the Rockman and said, “Other than the shield, I have installed two Erratic Light Cannons, which are the products of the same technology. The efficiency of such cannons is five times higher than that of regular cannons. Every cannonball is covered in a controllable membrane whose shape can be changed freely!

“Fellow Cultivator Li, are you satisfied with my upgrades?”

“Yes, of course. More than satisfied!” Drooling, Li Yao rubbed his hands, his eyes glittering. “Is there any stronger magical equipment? Won’t it be better if I have more weapons?”

“There is, but I’m sorry to tell you that…” Kou Ruhuo said solemnly, “Fellow Cultivator Li, you already have an overdraft in your contribution points.”

Li Yao was dumbfounded. “Huh?”

Kou Ruhuo tapped the light beam and sent a message over. “Now that you are satisfied with my upgrade, this is the bill. Please leave your spiritual stamp and sign your name as confirmation!

“The bill includes the maintenance cost of the crystal suit, the cost of the super alloy materials, the prices of the Superstring shield generator and the two cannons, and my personal wages and maintenance fees. All have been listed clearly. The charges are all within the price range as dictated by the authorities of the Imperium. Later, if you have the chance to go to the Imperium, you can verify it yourself!”

“…” Li Yao.

“Fellow Cultivator Li, you are in the Core Formation Stage and have joined the Imperium through the ‘Oversea High-Level Talents Introduction Act’,” Kou Ruhuo said. “So, you have your own initial contribution points. Also, as a native of the planet, you can be considered a ‘local expert of the original planet’, too. For such local experts to integrate into the Imperium as soon as possible, the Imperium gives you a ‘welcome package of contribution points’ as a special privilege when you become a subject of the Imperium!

“All magical equipment that involves string theory is marvelous and costly even in the Imperium. Taking all your contributions into account, you can only redeem them for the modified Rockman. With the new plugins, not only have your contribution points been drained, you are now even in debt. We cannot offer you any more weapons for now.

“The detailed data is all on the bill.

“This is not a forced deal. All the magical equipment is necessary for the overall safety of the team after my thorough evaluation of the operation as a professional!

“As the chief of arms, for the interests of the team, it is my right and responsibility to choose the most appropriate magical equipment for the team!

“This is a matter of life and death that cannot tolerate any negligence. Fellow Cultivator Li, you must not be a penny pincher!”

Li Yao was dazed for a long time before he stammered, “I—I wasn’t worried about the money. It’s just that I didn’t know that… I would have to pay for the gear.”

Tang Qianhe stepped forward and said with a smile, “If you were our slave, you wouldn’t need to pay for your gears. However, as a result, you would not have a share of our findings after the exploration, either!

“Or, if we had malicious plans to kill you after the job is done, we would certainly not charge you and would provide the equipment for you promptly.

“But right now, Fellow Cultivator Li, you are a companion who is equal to us. When the job is done, everything will have benefits, and we are not going to swallow yours. So, should we pay for your gear?”

Li Yao scratched his hair—it did sound quite fair!

Such respect for rules inevitably gave the feeling that the Imperium was a country where law mattered.

Together with the procedures of flag-raising, anthem-playing, and the granting of the green card, they contributed to the sense of ceremony that was solemn, grave, and just.

For a Cultivator living in a desolate area at the edge of the universe who was not backed by a strong civilization, they probably would have been fascinated by the Imperium and earnestly pledged their loyalty!

Chapter 1270 - Breaking into Kunlun!

Shua!

Li Yao put on the Rockman. After the maintenance and the upgrade through the advanced technologies of the Imperium of True Human Beings, the engineering crystal suit had been fully reborn.

Although the operation system was identical to the past, Li Yao discovered that all the specifications had soared during the self-check. It had now been upgraded into a battle suit from an engineering suit.

Also, three groups of buttons had been added to the operation menu that was projected to his retina, which were responsible for the superstring shield, the Erratic Light Cannon, and a control interface for the spiritual puppets.

Through the control interface, Li Yao was able to extend his telepathic thoughts to manipulate part of the spiritual puppets!

After he was connected to Su Changfa, Kou Ruhuo, and Tang Qianhe’s local area network, Li Yao familiarized himself with the fundamental operations of the superstring shield and the Erratic Light Cannon with their help.

Kou Ruhuo had poured a lot of tutelage telepathic thoughts into the mainframe crystal processor of the Rockman so that Li Yao could get the hang of it more quickly through the Half-Step Grand Illusionary Land.

After he was familiarized with the superstring shield and the shoulder cannons, Kou Ruhuo allocated ten spiritual puppets to him.

Considering that it was his first time, the spiritual puppets were all set to an automatic defense mode and did not require manual maneuvering. Their main responsibility was to protect him.

After examining the list of spiritual puppets, Li Yao noticed that the Immortal Cultivators had indeed spared no expense for the exploration into Kunlun. They had mobilized more than eight hundred spiritual puppets to go to the underground with them.

Li Yao was more than glad to see that.

After all, the fewer spiritual puppets left in the war base, the easier it would be for the Fire Ant King and Professor Mo Xuan to attack.

Chances were that Professor Mo Xuan could even find an opportunity to hack the mainframe crystal processor of the war base!

In that case, the faces of the three Immortal Cultivators would definitely be indescribable after they returned from the underground with full loads.

He did find one thing odd, though. “Why don’t we simply send the spiritual puppets for the exploration mission instead of placing ourselves in danger?”

“The spiritual and electromagnetic interference beneath the primeval battlefield are too strong,” Kou Ruhuo explained. “We sent a squad of spiritual puppets down there for investigation earlier, but they lost contact with the base after marching around ten kilometers! It is estimated that a certain anti-invasion rune array that can block telepathic thoughts has been installed somewhere in the primeval battlefield and is still functioning to some extent after hundreds of thousands of years!

“Therefore, we must go down in person and control the spiritual puppets at a short distance through our brainwaves that are magnified through the control unit in the crystal suit!”

“It explains a lot!” Li Yao nodded and, thinking for a moment, asked again, “We have eight hundred spiritual puppets. Aren’t they too many for us to control?”

“It doesn’t matter!” Kou Ruhuo smiled. “The spiritual puppets have been programed with almost ten thousand classic tactics in advance. As long as they remain connected to our brain, they will automatically choose the most suitable tactic after receiving a fuzzy order from us!

“For example, we only need to give orders such as ‘attack’ or ‘stay alert’ but don’t have to mind the specific operations of every spiritual puppet—they will choose the best plan themselves!”

Li Yao nodded and understood everything.

The spiritual puppets were the upgraded version of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers. They were somewhat similar to the modifications that the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector were performing on the Grand Illusionary Soldiers.

If I can steal the technology of spiritual puppets of the Imperium of True Human Beings, it will be a great help for *the modification of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers on our side!*

Li Yao looked forward to the trip into the planetary warship more and more.

He was eager to find out the true capabilities of the three Immortal Cultivators and what kind of delicate tactics they and their spiritual puppets could present.

Very soon, Su Changfa and Tang Qianhe were all set to go.

In order to manipulate the tremendous spiritual puppets, they had each installed a special brainwave enhancement unit on the back of their crystal suit. A few circuits that looked like magnifiers also protruded out of their helmets like awesome horns.

“Let’s go!”

Kou Ruhuo waved his hands toward the giant pit at the center of the primeval battlefield.

Su Changfa was the leader of the exploration team, but after they entered the real battle, Kou Ruhuo, as the chief of arms, took over commander.

A hundred spiritual puppets were ahead of them as vanguard, three hundred were staying on alert behind them, ensuring their retreat at whatever cost when they were in peril, and the other four hundred were gathered around them.

All the spiritual puppets were within three kilometers from them, which was the maximum range for the manipulation of their brainwaves.

I didn’t expect that I would have Xiao Xuance’s privilege one day.

Li Yao felt like laughing. When he was confronting Xiao Xuance in the past, what he hated most were the hundreds of Grand Illusionary Soldiers that the guy summoned to help him.

He had never thought that he would be living a happy life where hundreds of meat shields would rush forward and slash his opponents into pieces at his cough.

If looked at from a hundred kilometers up in the sky, the center of the primeval battlefield was a dark, giant hole, dozens of kilometers in diameter.

However, when they did reach the edge of the hole, they seemed to have reached the end of a cliff, with a bottomless abyss in front of them.

Spiritual energy was surging out from underground like scorching steam.

When Li Yao scanned with the special crystal cameras that were mixed with the powder of the rare metals, he saw colorful geysers rushing up in a hurry into enormous pillars that stabbed into the sky, consuming the entire world!

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

Many units on the crystal suit were sending out alarms.

Even the operation menu that was projected to the retina showed colorful streaks and ripples.

They were signs of serious interference.

As the saying went, water can lift a boat, but it can knock over a boat, too. Spiritual energy was naturally an indispensable resource for both Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators. However, when the intensity of the spiritual energy was too high, to the point that it was like a raging flood, they would not be able to bear it, either!

It was as simple as one could not eat too much food or drink too much water during a short while. If soaked in the spiritual energy whose density was too high, not only would the magical equipment be seriously affected, even the circulation of spiritual energy of the Cultivators themselves would also be vulnerable to the interference. They might even become mentally deranged!

Li Yao understood why they had to go down in person now.

In such a complicated environment, any remote-control magical equipment would malfunction.

Hundreds of spiritual puppets flew into the dark abyss as the first echelon.

Despite the serious inference, they managed to send back a lot of fuzzy pictures.

The channel leading to the core of the planet was perhaps an entrance for a certain middle-sized starship. It was more than a hundred kilometers long. Sophisticated traces of burning that looked like bizarre paintings could be found on the walls.

“Let’s go down!”

A minute later, when the spiritual puppets that had descended three kilometers reported no anomaly, the four of them drove their crystal suits to fly downward slowly, too.

Zhi! Zhi! Zhi! Zhi! Zhi!

Wuuu! Wuuu!

In the middle of the tide of spiritual energy that was rushing from the core of the planet, Li Yao immediately heard the cries of ghosts, as if the darkness below their feet led to the gate of the deepest level of hell, where countless hungry apparitions and fiends were impatiently waiting for their arrival.

“There’s no need to fret!” Kou Ruhuo reassured them solemnly. “It’s not anything alive. Our surveillance rune arrays must’ve been affected by certain flames of spiritual energy whose frequency and nature are unclear!”

The four of them held their breath and continued descending. As it turned out, after flying down almost a hundred kilometers, except for the ghost cries that were becoming more and more miserable and devastating, they ran into nothing abnormal.

However, in the darkness in front of them, glittering floccules were gradually showing up. They looked like fluorescent jellyfish and translucent hairtails.

When the spiritual puppets at the front touched the floccules, they immediately entangled the hands and feet of the few spiritual puppets.

From the manifestation of the local area network, Li Yao could tell that the erosion of the few spiritual puppets was quickly soaring. They were apparently under the attack of the floccules.

“Those things are probably abnormal creatures that slowly came into being after the planetary warship was abandoned, but they are still in a very low-level phase.”

While observing the floccules to attack the spiritual puppets, Tang Qianhe said softly, “I think that they are somewhat similar to the ‘Spirit Devouring Insect Grass’, an ancient creature in the primeval era. However, the Spirit Devouring Insect Grass lived in the ocean, but those things are floating in the air.”

“Given the abundant spiritual energy in the place,” Su Changfa said, “perhaps, the creatures that feed on spiritual energy such as the ‘Spirit Devouring Insect Grass’ are provided with a force field the resembles buoyancy. This is a very unique mini ecological system!

“Be careful, everybody. The Spirit Devouring Insect Grass is already one level more advanced than the moss and bushes that we discovered on the ground. Although their attack is not fatal, it is quite a nuisance when then entangle the joints of the crystal suit.

“Their appearance suggests an intact ecological system down there. Perhaps, more ferocious ancient creatures, which have survived for generation after generation as ‘living fossils’, are lurking in the broken interior of the planetary warship!”

Eerie as the Spirit Devouring Insect Grass was, their speed was quite slow, and they were quite sparse. It was not difficult to pass through them.

After passing through the activity zone of the Spirit Devouring Insect Grass, they descended another thirty kilometers before they ran into the first branch.

It was an enormous hole that was apparently blown out by brute force in the smooth tube leading straight downward. A new pathway that was almost parallel to the ground had been dug out.

“According to my speculation…” Su Changfa pondered for a moment and said, “The tube we’ve flown in through was probably one of the ‘jet impetus tubes’ of the planetary warship. Through the power rune arrays deployed at the center of the planet, the spiritual energy can be blown out crazily through here so that the direction and the rotation speed of the planetary warship can be adjusted.

“It is obvious that the power rune array at the core is somewhat damaged, resulting in the significant leak of spiritual energy. That’s why the spiritual energy here is so dense!

“I tested it just now. The density of spiritual energy here is already two times higher than at the entrance. If we go any further, neither our crystal suits nor ourselves will be able to bear it. Also, if the spiritual energy is supersaturated, a great explosion might be triggered if we are careless for one second!

“The hole in the tube must’ve been made by the invaders during the primeval war.

“They certainly had their reason for breaking in here. Perhaps, the valuable items are along this branch!”

Su Changfa’s speculation made a lot of sense, and the other three nodded in agreement.

Right then, Tang Qianhe pointed at the depths of the branch and shouted, “I have detected a lot of signs of life!”

Chapter 1271 - The Blood Tide and the Hellish Light Butterflies

The signs of life came over exactly from the pathway that was blown out by force.

The four of them did not hesitate anymore. Covered by the hundreds of spiritual puppets, they changed their direction and flew into the enormous hole.

The pathway, which had been formed by an explosion, did not belong to the planetary starship. Traces of melting metal could be found everywhere, making the pathway look like a cave in a mountain. Occasionally, circles of whorls could be seen on the wall.

If Li Yao was asked to take a guess, he would propose that the invaders dug into the wall with a huge drill which had an unbelievably high temperature. The drill melted all the metal components of the planetary warship and created such a destructive channel.

The invaders must have planned to hit the critical part directly in such a way!

Therefore, there was surely a certain invaluable treasure, or a core facility of the planetary warship, at the end of the channel!

Because of the enormity of the planetary warship, they had not reached the end yet even after they walked forward in darkness for ten minutes.

Occasionally, they ran into the broken dead bodies of the Pangu Clan and the giant metal puppets that had been twisted and deformed. The hollow eyes of the metal puppets were gazing at the depths of the channel, as if they were monuments guiding the way for them.

Tang Qianhe pierced into the dead bodies with a syringe but failed to retrieve any living material.

After almost a million years of erosion, the corpses and the puppets had long lost their vigor and magnificence of the past. They had turned into what appeared to be fossils and gradually melded with Kunlun.

It was not until half an hour later when a tiny red spot, which looked like a flickering lantern in the dark night, popped up ahead.

The signs of life were suddenly getting intense.

All four of them held their breath. The spiritual puppets entered the state of the highest alert.

As they moved forward, the red spot grew larger and larger still until it gradually occupied their eyes and turned into—

A red inferno.

Li Yao swallowed subconsciously. He felt that his throat was both stinky and scorching.

The scene in front of them obviously fitted the description of the inferno.

At the end of the channel was a boundless square that was more than a hundred kilometers both in length and width.

Li Yao discovered what seemed to be starship debris at the edge of the square. They were similar to the primeval warships on the ground.

Therefore, it was quite possible that this place was a starship manufacture center deep inside Kunlun.

A planetary warship was massive, so it would not often perform space jumps but usually served as a ‘base’.

Both the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan certainly needed starships that were more agile for the regular battle, patrol, and logistics missions.

The starship manufacture center was brimming with dead bodies of human beings and soldiers of the Nuwa Clan and the Pangu Clan. Everybody was mauling each other in the most resolute manner.

Their twisted bodies reminded Li Yao of the bacteria under a microscope.

The scale of the battlefield and the fierceness of the battle were a hundred times greater than the battlefield on the surface!

What was most blood-freezing for Li Yao was that all the dead bodies—whether they belonged to human beings, the Nuwa Clan, or the Pangu Clan—were buried in thick redness. They were even wriggling under the influence of the spiritual waves.

Everybody became a creature of blood. They seemed to have been skinned and were struggling miserably with their bleeding wounds.

It was like the soldiers who should have been killed hundreds of thousands of years ago were still haunting the place and having the most brutal battles day after day incessantly!

“They are moss,” Kou Ruhuo said calmly. He commanded a spiritual puppet to fly to the battlefield.

Li Yao observed carefully and finally discovered the truth.

All the dead bodies and the remnants of magical equipment were densely covered in a layer of blood red moss with barely any gap left.

The moss was extremely thick, and it was even able to move around. The hundred square kilometers there was its territory. It was the moss that made the dead bodies red and seem to be moving.

When the spiritual puppets were still more than ten meters from the ground, the blood red moss on the ground suddenly flowed crazily, like a storm that was brewing on a peaceful ocean. An enormous tide made of the red moss rolled up to almost fifty meters high and consumed a spiritual puppet directly!

Being enveloped by the moss, the spiritual puppet seemed to have fallen into an extremely weird stomach. It soon gave up struggling and simply allowed the moss to drag it into the debris. Soon, there was no sign of it anymore.

“This is a kind of weird moss named ‘Blood Tide’. It is a ‘living fossil’ that has survived to this day from the primeval era,” Su Changfa explained to Li Yao. “The Blood Tide is also known as ‘Ghoul Moss’. It feeds on crystals and also corrodes metals. A very foul creature, actually. It’s not unusual to go through all the trouble of excavating a relic only to discover that everything inside has been devoured by the Blood Tide.

“Thankfully, the primeval battlefield here is too large for the Blood Tide to spread to every corner. Otherwise, the ecological system wouldn’t be functioning at all!

“As you have seen, the Blood Tide can attack targets thirty to forty meters from the ground. For our safety, let’s not fly to below fifty meters from the ground.”

Li Yao did not know much. He was there to learn from the three Immortal Cultivators after all. He nodded and asked again after thinking for a moment, “Now that the Blood Tide has covered all the dead bodies and puppets, how are we going to excavate them?”

“There’s no need to be hasty,” Su Changfa said softly. “Adjust the spiritual energy output of your crystal suit to the minimum level. As long as the gravity control unit can keep you floating in midair, it will be good enough!

“Kou Ruhuo and Tang Qianhe will take care of everything.”

Li Yao turned off most of the magical equipment units on his crystal suit as he was told obediently. Like a giant rock floating in midair, he calmed down and observed Kou Ruhuo and Tang Qianhe’s operation.

The two Immortal Cultivators examined the square carefully with two squads of spiritual puppets, paying special attention to the dome that was covered in darkness.

The two of them and the spiritual puppets soon vanished into the darkness.

Very soon, golden brilliance was bursting out in the darkness like lightning in a dark cloud.

Kou Ruhuo and Tang Qianhe fled out, followed by dozens of dazzling streaks of light, as if they were being hunted by dozens of dragons!

Greatly surprised, Li Yao hurried to set the resolution of his crystal cameras to the highest, only to discover that the ‘glittering dragons’ were actually made of countless tiny moths!

What was weird that a small crystal was embedded into the stomach of each moth and grasped by their appendages that had already retrograded!

The moths and the crystals were so perfectly integrated that they almost seemed natural.

The two Immortal Cultivators and the spiritual puppets dived down to the ground at a high speed. The glittering dragons behind them became faster and faster, too!

On the ground, the Blood Tide, which fed on spiritual energy, sensing the arrival of intense spiritual waves, rippled out like a greedy, unsatisfiable mouth.

The two Immortal Cultivators controlled their speed and distance perfectly. When they were about to enter the hunting range of the Blood Tide, they suddenly changed direction and dashed to the two sides while turning off most of the units on their crystal suits.

They flew forward purely pushed by inertia. There was not the slightest spiritual wave coming from them anymore.

Most of the spiritual puppets around them hit the brakes and flew horizontally, too. Their spiritual energy output was cut off.

Three of the spiritual puppets, on the other hand, activated the super-compressed crystal reactor to the maximum and unleashed infinite flames of spiritual energy before they leapt into the Blood Tide like three torches in the darkness!

The shining moths in midair seemed to take spiritual energy as their food, too. Attracted by the three spiritual puppets, they ran into the Blood Tide without any hesitation.

In the moment, the dragons were roaring, and the Blood Tide was boiling!

Li Yao saw that the crystals on the abdomens of all the moths were glowing, turning them into tiny suns. Wherever they went, they would burn a large area of Blood Tide into ashes!

However, there was simply too much moss. It was flowing over from various directions in a hurry. However big the hole that the shining moths burnt was, the moss could fill it up instantly!

It was like countless streaks of magma were flowing into an icy ocean. What a rowdy and intense view!

“Such moths that also feed on spiritual energy are known as ‘Hellish Light Butterflies’.” Su Changfa smiled. “Everything in nature is related. The Blood Tide and the Hellish Light Butterflies, as a pair of mortal enemies, often live relatively close to each other. Although they are usually at peace, they are low-level creatures, and you can incite them to attack each other with appropriate baits.”

Very soon, the fierce battle between the Blood Tide and the Hellish Light Butterflies ended.

All the crystals on the Hellish Light Butterflies were drained. They fell into the Blood Tide like moths darting to the fire. The last bit of the brilliance perished.

However, a giant hole almost five kilometers in diameter had been burnt in the Blood Tide, too. All the moss within the area had been consumed, revealing the original appearances of the dead bodies and the puppets below.

The remaining moss retreated far away. For the time being, it did not dare approach the area that was still mixed with the scent of the Hellish Light Butterflies anymore.

Li Yao and the Immortal Cultivators took the opportunity to land and scan the debris on the battlefield.

It was a pity that the Blood Tide was too damaging. All the remains had become riddled with holes because of the corrosion. They were fragile and vulnerable and would collapse at the first touch.

“It seems that nothing here is worth excavating!” Tang Qianhe pouted and sighed.

Li Yao thought for a moment and asked, “What kind of things are worth excavating?”

“For example, the magical equipment that hasn’t been affected by the environment or the passage of time, the sabers, swords, and firearms from the primeval era, and the likes,” Tang Qianhe said with a smile. “Such things are highly valuable!

“Also, the clear and well-preserved ancient spiritual stripes and rune arrays, if duplicable, are also valuable items for scholars.

“Moreover, if we ever run into the better-preserved bodies of the Pangu Clan, from which living materials can be retrieved, so that we can analyze their gene strands, that will truly be an invaluable treasure!”

“What about the super large puppets almost a hundred meters tall that were piloted by human beings?” Li Yao’s heart was racing.

“You are talking about the ‘Colossus’!” Kou Ruhuo interjected. “Of course, that is a marvelous weapon and the ultimate treasure that every Cultivator dreams about!”

Chapter 1272 - Colossus!

“Colossus!” Li Yao repeated. The word flowed through his body like electricity, and he felt that his blood was boiling.

Even Little Black inside the Cosmos Ring dangling in front of chest was seething impatiently, sending eagerness into his brain.

“The Colossi were the marvelous weapons that human beings used to dominate the sea of stars in the primeval era. They could trigger the best of a human being’s potential! It was exactly with the help of the magnificent Colossi that we were able to compete with the legendary deities and devils and eventually claim the entire universe!”

Infinite excitement and hope were mixed in Kou Ruhuo’s voice. “Such ultimate treasures from the primeval era were made through countless techniques that we are unaware of. Many units on them are even not duplicable with our technology!

“In the universe today, every Colossus is a unique, formidable existence. If it is damaged in a battle, we can hardly repair it and will have to replace the broken units with the same units dismantled from other Colossi!

“Therefore, even if we cannot find an intact Colossus here, as long as we can discover the debris of several Colossi that are relatively better preserved, we will still be able to dismantle the useful units and components, which are all invaluable treasures that can significantly improve your citizen level or be redeemed for several powerful Cultivation arts!”

Li Yao gulped, his eyes hidden deep inside the crystal suit glimmering. “Is there anyone still piloting a Colossus today?”

“Of course, but their number is small,” Kou Ruhuo said. “On the one hand, few Colossi have been perfectly preserved to this day from the primeval era in the first place. Most of our available Colossi are actually jumbled based on the debris of different Colossi and the modern technology to build large-scale magical equipment.

“As long as they have the slightest chance of being repaired, we will try our best to recover them no matter how cr*ppy that debris looks because they are far stronger than general crystal suits any way you look at it.

“On the other hand, it is terribly difficult to manipulate the Colossus, which can prove to be a huge burden on the soul. Even the Nascent Soul Stage is only just the start line to use the Colossus!

“Today, everybody who is qualified to control a Colossus is among the most influential celebrities, if not legends who have created history. Together with their Colossi, they will live on in the history books forever!

“For example, the Supreme Emperor of the Star Ocean Imperium and his Colossus ‘Gold Sun’, the ‘Blood God’ and his Colossus ‘Calamitous Doom’ and Blackstar the Great with his Colossus ‘Blackhole’s Heart’. These are the most famous Colossi! “Gold Sun, Calamitous Doom, Blackhole’s Heart…”

Li Yao’s lips were trembling.

The names alone and the debris of the Colossi on the surface that he had seen were enough for him to imagine how terrifying such marvelous weapons must have been when they exerted their maximum strength!

I am going to control a Colossus one day. I will! Li Yao secretly swore to himself.

Fearing that his overexcitement might be noticed, he asked intentionally, “Right, what about the Book of Revelation? If we can find one volume, it will certainly be more valuable than a Colossus, right?”

All three Immortal Cultivators chuckled at his greed and childishness.

“How can it be so easy to find the Book of Revelation?” Su Changfa smiled. “You must’ve seen the debris of hundreds of Colossi both on the surface and on the primeval battlefield here, right? Although most of the debris has been completely shattered, it is not entirely impossible to retrieve one or two usable units from them.

“On this primeval battlefield alone, there may already be more than a thousand broken Colossi.

“The Book of Revelation, on the other hand, has only eight volumes, less than four of which have yet to be discovered. The universe is too large a place. How can we discover it so easily?

“Besides, the Colossi are enormous in size, and you can notice them at first glance. However, the Book of Revelation can come in various forms. Nobody knows exactly what specific form it has been preserved in. Chances are that we won’t notice it even if it is right in front of us!

“Therefore, you might as well not hold too much hope. Our key targets are the relatively intact bodies of the Pangu

Clan, the usable units of the Colossi, and the core facilities inside the planetary warship!”

Very soon, Kou Ruhuo finished scanning the details of the battlefield.

The Immortal Cultivators had a profound understanding about the habits of the Blood Tide. They were aware that the residue on the ground, after being sucked and swallowed by the Blood Tide for hundreds of thousands of years, was no longer worth exploring.

However, they still went through the trouble of clearing an area of the Blood Tide because they meant to get a closer look at the fierce battle down there so that they could infer the direction of attack and defense!

“It’s here!”

After studying the result of scanning for a long time, Kou Ruhuo pointed in one direction in the darkness and said, “Most of the soldiers of human beings were attacking toward this direction, while the Pangu Clan was defending with the place behind them. Therefore, what the invaders tried to take and the defenders tried to protect must be in that direction!”

Tang Qianhe launched a localizing and probing soundwave in the direction that Kou Ruhuo had pointed out.

The feedback of the soundwave suggested that there was a giant hole leaning downward around forty kilometers away from them.

The hole was highly irregular. There was a circle of rising metal residue around it, indicating that the hole had either been blown out or drilled through.

“Where exactly were the troops of human beings marching to in the primeval war?”

Carefully avoiding the Blood Tide on the ground and the Hellish Light Butterflies on the dome, the four of them located the hole soon. They also discovered dead bodies around the hole that were as high as a hill.

It was obviously a critical location that the two parties struggled over. Although hundreds of thousands of years had passed, the goriness of the fierce battle on that day was still clearly perceivable.

After going down through the hole for another five kilometers, they found themselves in an open space!

It was as if they had ‘descended’ to the other side of the planet.

No, it was because the underground space was simply too vast, with a width and length both more than a thousand kilometers. At first glance, it was a boundless continent itself!

On the ‘continent’, a magnificent primitive forest was standing.

Li Yao and all three Immortal Cultivators held their breath.

They had descended from the channel on the dome that was blown out through brute force. Therefore, they found themselves at the center of the primitive forest the moment they arrived.

Through the pictures from various angles taken by the high-resolution crystal cameras, and after inputting all the data into their crystal processors to run analysis and comparison, they finally realized that there should have been a glorious city in front of their eyes.

It was a city that the Pangu Clan had established deep inside Kunlun!

Individuals of the Pangu Clan were more than six times taller than human beings on average. Therefore, their buildings were as high and awe-inspiring as the temples and palaces that human beings had built.

Li Yao discovered that the Pangu civilization seemed to be a civilization that worshipped rules, to the point that it was even a bit monotonous.

All the buildings were the most standard geometric objects. Straight lines were their favorite. Even arcs and cones were hardly ever featured.

Generally speaking, the entire city was a collection of geometric objects large and small. Every corner was a precise right angle, and the edge of every building was as sharp as a razor.

Cubes, cuboids, prismoids… The objects were copied ten thousand times and blocked by the streets that were absolutely straight, constituting the whole city.

It was indeed a magnificent city that everybody would be awed by when they first looked at it.

But it was also a city that nobody would be interested in living in.

Li Yao felt that it was more appropriate to describe it as a factory, a military camp, or a prison than to say it was a city.

However, it was all a long, long time ago.

After the Pangu Clan abandoned the city, the low-level creatures that they left gradually took over the place. The vines spread upward along the dull buildings. Interweaving with each other and nurtured by the overintense spiritual energy, they slowly grew into a messy primitive forest, disordered but vigorous. The traces of the past had been entirely buried.

“Look over there…” Tang Qianhe pointed at a high, monolithic building at the center of the city and called to them.

It was more like an overwhelming black cube than a building.

Judging from the contrast with the buildings nearby, it was at least more than ten kilometers in length, width, and height. The surface of the building was purely black and natural. There was not a single window or gap!

The solemnity and the dominance that the black cube gave him reminded Li Yao of the altars where sacrificial offerings were served to the gods.

After they scanned with mystic rays and measured the length, width, and height of the black cube, they discovered that all the values were the same.

Ten kilometers.

Precisely ten thousand meters!

It was another sign of the Pangu Clan’s enthusiasm for rules and regularity.

They also discovered that the black cube was located exactly at the center of the city, where all the streets in the city congregated, without the slightest error.

It was like the entire city was born for the enormous black cube.

Even the primitive plants that had entangled all the buildings nearby did not trespass into the black cube’s territory. It was standing, utterly incongruous with the environment, and demonstrating its power silently in such a way.

“It seems that the building was the most important facility in the city of the Pangu Clan. It was also the target that the troops of human beings tried to take over without caring about the cost,” Kou Ruhuo said solemnly. “Move forward in battle formation!”

The noise of hundreds of power rune arrays fulminating at the same time ripped apart the silence of the forest in the city. Many shadows were peeking out of the vines and branches.

Li Yao scanned them with the mystic rays, only to discover that they were bizarre-shaped animals, many of which were similar to the primeval creatures recorded in the paleontology textbooks. They must have been the ‘living fossils’ that had survived to this today from the primeval era.

Zhi! Zhi! Zhi! Zhi!

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

As they got closer and closer to the black cube, earsplitting shrieks echoed from the depths of the forest, and hundreds of malicious scents soared into the sky, locking onto all of them!

Chapter 1273 - Three Fundamental Laws!

“Firepower deterrence!” Kou Ruhuo bellowed. The hundreds of spiritual puppets formed a rhombus-shaped battle formation, the crystal cannons on their shoulders opening fire at the same time. More than a thousand clusters of unstoppable mystic rays immediately raised countless blasts and airwaves inside the primitive forest.

Many animals were evaporated before they had the chance to scream. Still more animals fled to the deeper parts of the forest amid devastated cries.

The overwhelming malicious intent a moment ago was entirely gone.

The firepower deterrence lasted a whole minute, paving a wasteland a kilometer wide and dozens of kilometers long in front of them.

Li Yao took the opportunity to record the firepower of the spiritual puppets and evaluate their combat ability.

It was obvious that the spiritual puppets of the Imperium of True Human Beings had a combat ability three to five times higher than Xiao Xuance’s Grand Illusionary Soldiers did.

As for the firepower deterrence itself, Li Yao did not have any objection.

He had personally explored many world fragments, too. He knew that one needed to demonstrate their dominating firepower when they were exploring an unvisited land—especially if they were faced with the low-intelligent, primitive animals—so that the ferocious animals would be scared and keep their distance from them.

Otherwise, the ferocious animals that did not know what was best for themselves would likely lunge over one after another. Even if they could not pose a fatal threat, a lot of spiritual energy and ammunition would be wasted, too. It could be quite a nuisance.

With the display of power, whatever the animals lurking inside the primitive forest exactly were, they had been taught a good lesson about respect.

Without the harassment of the animals, there was nothing to stop them from advancing, so they successfully flew over to black cube.

The closer they got to the black cube, the better they felt the splendidness and incredibleness of the building.

Measured from whichever direction, every edge of the building was precisely ten thousand meters, without even an error of one millimeter.

By achieving the best in the largest and smallest scale in such a way, the building was informing the visitors a million years later of the formidability of the Pangu civilization!

Li Yao and the three Immortal Cultivators flew around the black cube. They discovered a slot that pierced through the cube on one of the surfaces. The slot was equally straight, precise, and boring.

It was perhaps the ‘gate’ of the black cube.

It was a ‘slot’ from a long distance away, but it was actually more than a hundred meters in width. Covered in a vague mist, they could not tell exactly what was inside the black cube.

Dead bodies of the Pangu Clan and human beings were lying all around the ‘gate’. They were mostly broken because of tearing and gnawing.

It must have been done by the animals and vines that proliferated after the city fell.

However, all the animals and vines only dared to touch the surroundings of the black cube but had no courage to invade it.

“Chances are that there are better-preserved corpses inside, maybe even Colossi!”

The four of them and almost eight hundred spiritual puppets fell into the black canyon like dust.

The moment that he broke into the black cube, Li Yao’s eyes were entirely blocked by the black mist. Even the communication channel was jammed, with background noise echoing nonstop.

He could only hear his own heartbeat and see the reflection of his glittering eyes.

But the black mist soon dispersed. Li Yao finally got a general picture of what was inside the giant, black cube.

And he could not help but gasp hard.

He did not know how he should describe everything in front of his eyes. It was even stranger than the ‘red inferno’ a moment ago that was caused by the Blood Tide.

The black cube was hollow. As a large building ten kilometers in both length and width, it did not have any levels or walls inside. The entire space inside was a whole without the slightest blockade. It looked like a warehouse, a factory, and more importantly, a farm.

The reason it looked like a ‘farm’ was that giant, black pillars thousands of meters high occupied the entire black cube. Every black pillar had countless branches, and every branch had countless metal vesicles that looked like wheat ears or corn cobs.

Most of the metal vesicles had been broken. They were lackluster and dry, like the empty cocoons of the insects after they broke out.

But a few metal vesicles remained intact on the surface. Dark red brilliance was being emitted from them!

Most of the vesicles were three to four meters in diameter. From every metal vesicle, more than a hundred metal tubes were connected to the black pillars, as if they were transmitting energy and nutrition from the pillars.

Li Yao ran a simple calculation. Every black pillar that was six to eight kilometers tall boasted almost a hundred branches, which could ‘grow’ almost ten thousand metal vesicles.

When he was flying among the dense black pillars, he felt that he was a small mosquito darting into a primitive forest. Everything felt both large and weird. He found it almost impossible to catch his breath.

Li Yao scanned the broken metal vesicles with the mystic rays, only to find nothing worth noting after more than ten tries.

When he scanned the nineteenth metal vesicle, however, he finally found… the skeleton of a human being inside it.

The skeleton was only 1.6 meters long. Judging from the skull, the teeth, and the limbs, it was a male human.

His bones were intact. There was no sign of fierce resistance or struggle. His death was rather ‘peaceful’ or even ‘tranquil’. He seemed to have died of natural course.

What was odd was that, given the development of his bones, he should have been a teenager. Yet, he was crouching in a cluster like a fetus in the womb.

Did the Pangu Clan capture the young man, stuff him into the metal vesicle, and sustain their life functions in a certain way? Li Yao pondered to himself, but he somehow felt that his guess was not right.

After scanning almost a hundred broken metal vesicles, he discovered three skeletons of human beings from the primeval era.

Other than two teenagers, the third one was at least thirty years old.

Despite their different ages, they all died a peaceful death, and they were crouching in the same posture that looked like a fetus.

What exactly was going on here? Did the Pangu Clan really capture so many human beings? They didn’t have any reason for that! What’s the purpose of such an attempt?

Li Yao flew hard toward a metal vesicle that was emitting dark, red brilliance.

The metal vesicle should have been filled with a dark red liquid, but after hundreds of thousands of years of corrosion, all the liquids had volatilized. The only thing left was a dark red membrane that was attached to the translucent shell of the metal vesicle.

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and looked inside through the translucent shell.

Strange. There are occasionally bodies in the broken metal vesicles, but this perfectly-preserved metal vesicle has nothing inside.

While he was baffled, he heard Tang Qianhe’s exclamation.

She had also found a seemingly perfect metal vesicle that was emitting dark red brilliance.

Li Yao hurried over to her.

Inside the metal vesicle that she found was a super tiny corpse, like… a newborn baby!

Did the Pangu Clan baptize their magical equipment with human babies, too?

Having seen such a brutal scene in person, Li Yao could not help but burst into fury.

But that was still not right. If the place was meant to baptize magical equipment with the pure souls of babies, or for other evil purposes, all the dead bodies should be babies. Why were adults twenty to thirty years old mixed among them?

The souls of adults were not as pure as those of babies. Even one of them might ruin the final product. It was certainly not a fair deal.

Nothing inside… Babies… Teenagers… Adults…

Black pillars like trunks and straws, metal vesicles like wheat ears and fruits, hundreds of tubes that were transmitting nutrition and energy…

When all the details were connected, Li Yao was so shocked that he almost bit his own tongue.

He finally thought of an extremely shocking possibility.

The first sealed metal vesicle that he scanned might not be empty at all.

Something that was invisible to the human eyes was probably growing inside.

A zygote.

This place was not a prison where human beings were interrogated or exploited by the Pangu Clan.

On the contrary, this was the factory where the Pangu Clan manufactured human beings!

“This is—” Utterly shocked, Li Yao looked at Tang Qianhe, brimming with curiosity.

Staring at the metal vesicle, Tang Qian replied, her voice both hollow and depressed, “I’m not clear. Let Master Su tell you.”

Su Changfa and Kou Ruhuo, on the other hand, had already flown to the center of the ground. They were circling around a transparent cube around ten meters in diameter.

When Li Yao and Tang Qianhe joined them, they were still unable to move their eyes away from the transparent cube.

Li Yao squinted and observed carefully. The transparent cube seemed both like a control pivot of the entire factor and a huge monument. After hundreds of thousands of years, it was still glittering in refreshing spiritual energy.

Deep inside the cube, three sophisticated, octagonal, three-dimensional runes were floating and flashing!

Li Yao had never seen such delicate, flawless runes before.

Their power had even exceeded the category of runes but lay in a certain mysterious, inviolable law of the universe!

For some reason, when the mystic rays from the three runes pierced through him, Li Yao's cells—deep down to his gene strands—were seething uneasily. He had an extremely uncomfortable feeling of being restrained.

Li Yao only felt better after he gritted his teeth and grasped the grip of his chainsword. He asked Su Changfa in a low voice, "What is this?"

The old Immortal Cultivator was silent for a long time.

It was not a silence that suggested his reluctance to give the answer but a silence before the outburst of a volcano that suggested he was accumulating his strength.

Staring at the three runes deep inside the cube for a long time, the old Immortal Cultivator finally sniffed and said coldly, "One day, you might get in touch with something called the Path of Ultimate Benevolence.

“The three runes here, once parsed, represent the three fundamental runes of the Path of Ultimate Benevolence. You can call them the heavens’ laws if you want.

“Hehe. In the legends, violating the heavens’ laws is an unpardonable crime. Burning you into ashes and forbidding you from an afterlife are the lightest punishments!”

The Path of Ultimate Benevolence? Overjoyed, Li Yao hurried to asked respectfully, “Senior Su, what do the three ‘fundamental laws’ mean exactly after they are parsed?”

Su Changfa took a deep breath. His bones were cracking so loudly that the sound was clearly audible despite the thorough coverage of the crystal suit. He declared, one word after another, “The three fundamental laws of the Path of Ultimate Benevolence are as follows!

“A human being may not injure an individual of the Pangu Clan or, through inaction, allow an individual of the Pangu Clan to come to harm.

“A human being must obey orders given to ‘it’ by the Pangu Clan except when such orders would conflict with the First Law.

“A human being must protect its own existence from being harmed by others as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law.

Chapter 1274 - Manufacture Human Beings

“Such three fundamental laws…” Li Yao felt coldness from the bottom of his heart.

Although his foster father had alleged that the ‘Path of Ultimate Benevolence’ was not anything good, this was the first time that he had tasted the ruthlessness, graveness, and precision in it.

The three fundamental laws were like three well-structured, indestructible shackles that had been bound to his body. He felt that he was almost suffocated.

Li Yao grunted and stretched his hands and feet out of natural instincts, trying to struggle out of the invisible shackles.

He vaguely felt that human beings, under the suppression of the three fundamental laws, were completely slaves to the Pangu Clan.

No, they were even humbler than slaves!

Although the Imperium of True Human Beings divided human beings into true human beings and hominoids and also kept a large batch of slaves, it was not hard to tell from the Immortal Cultivators’ words that they also admitted the normal feelings and emotions of the ‘hominoids’. Such ‘hominoids’ were just ‘lowly human beings’ and, through training, could still grow into ‘99% human beings’.

However, seeing that the Pangu Clan manufactured human beings in such a weird way under three inviolable fundamental laws, Li Yao realized that the Pangu Clan did not regard them as human beings, animals, or any creature but a certain tool. They were nothing more than the spiritual puppets!

Therefore, in the eyes of the Pangu Clan, are we simply spiritual puppets constituted by cells? Li Yao asked himself in his heart.

If so, his foster father’s statement that the Covenant Alliance was ten thousand times eviler than the Imperium was more or less understandable.

The splendid black cube, the thousands of metal vesicles where human beings were produced, and the three fundamental laws that were still glowing after hundreds of thousands of years… Such a weird scene turned the sense of depression into thick, black fog that was pressing them and crawling into their body through the pores, leaking into the deepest part of their gene strands.

The shackles that had been broken for eons were showing signs of revival again.

The Cultivator and the three Immortal Cultivators all bit their lips softly, their fists shivering beyond their control, as they resisted the solemn and overwhelming power.

“Senior Su, is this… a factory of the Pangu Clan to ‘manufacture human beings’?” Li Yao asked.

Su Changfa nodded softly, his voice both cold and tough. “Yes. You must’ve noticed that the two parties at war on the primeval battlefield both boasted numerous human soldiers. The Pangu Clan had a lot of human soldiers at their service, too. This place must’ve been where the human soldiers came from.”

Is it true? Li Yao clicked his tongue. “Manufacture human beings…”

“This isn’t any too sophisticated method,” Su Changfa sneered. “Undeveloped as our civilization may be, artificial insemination and test-tube babies are a piece of cake, too. Is it difficult to build an environment that simulates the womb?”

Li Yao nodded. It was quite true. Not just the Imperium, even the Star Glory Federation had quite mature test-tube baby technologies. Also, there were special medical cabins and life-sustaining cabins that could simulate the conditions of a womb. Infertile couples were saved the trouble of having to look for ‘surrogacy’ and all the ethical concerns involved.

However, it was not exactly the question that he was interested in. What he really wanted to know was—

“Why?” Li Yao raised his head, looking at the black pillars in all directions that soared to the ceiling and the metal vesicles that were dangling from the branches. “Human beings can reproduce themselves. Why must the Pangu Clan ‘manufacture human beings’ in such a complicated way?”

“I have no idea,” Su Changfa said. “There has been much speculation. Maybe, human beings who reproduced on their own in the wilderness had unstable genes and could not necessarily give birth to excellent farmers, workers, and soldiers. Also, the ‘production’ was prone to environmental changes. They were often unbridled and tended to act on their own.

“In comparison, if they were manufactured in such ‘factories’, it would be very convenient to modify their genes from the zygotes. The quality and productivity would be very stable. With the minimum nutrition and energy, they could let human beings pass the useless infant and teenager phase and directly grow into ‘mature bodies’. As soon as such human beings walked off the ‘assembly lines’, they would be able to work or fight.

“Most importantly of all, only by manufacturing in a ‘factory’ could the Pangu Clan easily stamp our head…”

With a gloomy face, Su Changfa tapped the temples of his helmet before he thought for a moment and shook his head. “No. Not just the head, but every gene strand in every cell, including the brain cells, was all stamped with the ‘three fundamental laws’!”

Although Li Yao could not see his face, he was still deeply awed by the hateful voice. He could not help but scratch the back of his head.

Of course, the only thing that he reached was a cold helmet.

“We were tools.” Su Changfa’s voice sounded like the cold wind blowing out of the icy caves in the North Pole. “Do you not feel that a tool that could move on their own and could upgrade and copy itself beyond control should be highly dangerous in the eyes of the tool-maker? Such things should be strictly forbidden, shouldn’t they?”

Li Yao pondered for a moment and understood the logic.

He recalled the fear in his heart when he was faced with the overwhelming Grand Illusionary Soldiers during the riot of the Immortal Cultivators in the Flying Star Sector.

He had not been scared by the Immortal Cultivators such as Xiao Xuance but the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, tools that were better, faster, and stronger than ordinary people!

Li Yao glanced around at the spiritual puppets around.

Noticing the rotation of his head, ten spiritual puppets that were responsible to protect him immediately reacted and turned to where he was looking.

More than a hundred crystal cameras were glittering in every part all over their bodies, in brilliance that seemed to be some sort of intelligence.

The spiritual puppets could not upgrade themselves. Their production and duplication were under the Immortal Cultivators' rigorous control, too.

But what if the war base that had been transported to Kunlun did not carry any Immortal Cultivator, and everybody on board was a spiritual puppet, which could upgrade and copy themselves according to the different environment and could spread out to build their own 'territory'?

Li Yao thought for a moment and felt that such a scene was more dreadful than ten thousand Immortal Cultivators.

“Xiao Tang, it seems that you're right,” Su Changfa said. “Although this isn't 'Wild Shepard', the most critical battlefield of the 'God-Sealing War', it must've been another planet designated to the production of human beings just like Wild Shepard.

“Manufacturing human beings would consume tremendous spiritual energy. There must be more underground cities than this one. Chances are that there are hundreds more human being manufacture centers!

“Such an enormous production requires a stable and sustainable energy source. The pulsar is definitely the best choice.

“That’s why the Pangu Clan built such a huge planetary warship near the pulsar. This place was essentially their ‘weapon factory’!

“Then, the purpose of the invaders is also obvious now. They were trying to break into the human being manufacture center to liberate more compatriots!

“Judging from the result, the invaders must’ve achieved their strategic goals. We can see that only a handful of human soldiers were not freed and most of them got away!”

Su Changfa’s words made their faces less awful than before.

Despite their different stances, they were equally happy for a small victory of human beings hundreds of thousands of years ago.

“What is the Battle of Wild Shepard exactly?” Li Yao took the opportunity to ask the question on his mind, hoping to collect as much information about the primeval war as possible.

“The Battle of Wild Shepard was the most critical battle in the God-Sealing War,” Su Changfa explained. “According to the legends, Wild Shepard was the largest human being manufacture center of the Pangu Clan, which must’ve been at least a hundred times more enormous than the one we are in!

“On Wild Shepard, the Pangu civilization incessantly produced the most magnificent human warriors, stamped their cells with the ‘three fundamental laws’, and dispatched them to suppress the ‘wildlings’ who were born in the wilderness and were beyond control!

“The Pangu civilization was overwhelmingly strong and had been on the winning side. All the ‘wildlings’ were going to be suppressed in no time.

“At the moment of life and death, the elite warriors of the ‘wildlings’ assaulted Wild Shepard and broke the magical equipment that was responsible for the inculcation of the ‘three fundamental laws’ inside the human being manufacture center like the crystals here. They also managed to awaken all the human warriors that had been produced with the thought of resistance!

“As a result, a huge batch of human warriors defected in the frontline, and the Pangu Clan was consumed by the fire it ignited. Eventually, it was suppressed, sealed, and slain!

“Judging from the scale of the planet, it is probably not the critical Wild Shepard. This might’ve been a test attack, or an ‘experiment’, before assaulting Wild Shepard. From what we can see, the experiment proved to be successful in the end!”

“Breaking the fundamental crystals and liberating all human beings!” Li Yao imagined the accomplishments of the human experts in the primeval era. He could not help but feel fascinated, and his blood was boiling!

“Exactly. Just like this!” Su Changfa’s voice was mixed with destructive power. The Erratic Light Cannons installed on the shoulders of his crystal suits were glowing with dazzling brilliance!

Kou Ruhuo, the chief of arms, and Tang Qianhe, the navigator, raised their crystal cannon and storm bolter as well!

“Human beings must obey all the orders of the Pangu Clan and not harm the individuals of the Pangu Clan?” Kou Ruhuo sneered. He suddenly opened his helmet and spat on the ground. “Go f*ck yourself!”

The three Immortal Cultivators opened fire at the same time. Dozens of colorful whips of light slapped the transparent cube brutally. The crystals that stored the three fundamental laws generated a shield that looked like a bubble. Rays were spluttering, flames were soaring, and the entire gloomy, horrible human being manufacture center was illuminated!

After a few seconds, the bubble broke apart into nothingness. The dozens of whips of light slapped the fundamental crystals directly. The crystals collapsed all of a sudden. The runes that contained the three fundamental laws shrieked and struggled in the flames of light for a long time before they slowly melted, disintegrated, and vanished, like ghosts that had fallen into magma!

Chapter 1275 - Kill You One More Time!

Li Yao's eyes were entirely occupied by the colorful fire and bullets.

Kou Ruhuo's crazy and barbaric roars were echoing through the communication channel, so aggressive, blatant, and primitive that he sounded like a primeval animal that had just woken up and struggled out of all its chains!

Perhaps, hundreds of thousands of years ago, when human beings learned to use weapons for the first time and when they stabbed the weapons into their creators' chest, the roars that they uttered were equally blood-boiling!

The brilliant bullets and crazy shouts made every pore of Li Yao's body open.

He felt that, deep down in his cells, a ferocious animal was slowly waking and struggling to get out of the bondage of gene strands, too. It was stretching out the bones and gazing at the entire universe.

Breathing heavily, Li Yao could not help but activate the Erratic Light Cannons and pick up a heavy storm bolter. He joined the three Immortal Cultivators and unleashed his fury and resistance to his heart's content!

"Human beings must not harm the Pangu Clan!"

"Human beings must obey the orders from the Pangu Clan!"

"Human beings must not harm themselves or each other!"

The three sacred, inviolable ‘rules of heaven’ appeared so fragile and vulnerable in that moment. They were blown apart into feeble flickers by the three Immortal Cultivators and the Cultivator and fled into the air in panic. However, they could not escape from the bullets and the fire. In less than half a minute, they were entirely consumed by the dominating wrath of human beings.

Even the crystals that accommodated the three fundamental runes were blown into the tiniest powder.

Without the enhancement of spiritual energy, the effect of the corrosion of hundreds of thousands of years was immediately manifested. The powder lost its glamor and turned into the most lackluster dust. In the storm of bullets, it dispersed into nothingness.

Kou Ruhuo was still not satisfied. While laughing crazily, he turned toward the vesicles around where human beings were manufactured.

Li Yao sensed clearly that his spiritual energy was expanding much more widely than before. The guy was like a giant almost ten meters tall, and dozens of whips of light darted out from the two Erratic Light Cannons on his shoulders. He was demonstrating the firepower of a heavy war fortress by himself!

Most of the metal vesicles, having been exposed to the air for hundreds of thousands of years, were already as rusted as could be. Being slapped by Kou Ruhuo’s whips, they were all blown into smithereens and gone for good!

Even one of the black pillars was knocked over because of his repetitive barrage and leaned to the side. After a huge boom, the earth was shaking, and the entire human being manufacture center seemed to be falling apart!

“Enough!” Su Changfa said coldly in the communication channel.

Kou Ruhuo unleashed his firepower crazily for another half a minute and stopped, not entirely satisfied, when the Erratic Light Cannons were beeping in alarm.

He spat toward where the fundamental crystals were again, except that the place was already empty now.

“Fellow Cultivator Li, you should understand now why we divide human beings into ‘true human beings’ and ‘hominoids’, right?”

His hands in his back, Su Changfa spoke softly while he stared at the human being manufacture center, which was now an utter mess.

“The truth is right in front of you. Ninety-nine percent of human beings were not true human beings in the first place. They were just ‘tools’ and ‘ingredients’.

“Only less than one percent of the human beings awakened from such a sorry fate and realized their true identity and destiny!

“All Cultivators know the importance of ‘awakening the spiritual root’. What is the so-called ‘awakening’ exactly? Awakening more strength, higher speed, and keener mind?

“All of them are, of course, very important, but most importantly of all, we must awaken our glory as human beings and all the fate that is on our shoulders!

“The spiritual root is not only the road for us to reach the ultimate peak personally but also the brilliant path for our civilization to reach immortality!

“Only those who realize that are Immortal Cultivators and true human beings!

“Hehe. The shortsighted and ignorant Cultivators know the profoundness of neither the universe nor human beings! They do not know the origins and the past of human beings, and they do not know what kind of tough challenges human beings will be faced with in the near future!

“Therefore, we Immortal Cultivators must whet our civilization, seizing every second and every means possible without caring about the cost. We must evolve, evolve, and evolve so that we can be stronger than ever!

“That is the destiny of the Immortal Cultivators. That is the path that the true human beings are walking on!

“As long as the civilization of mankind is guarded by the Immortal Cultivators, even if all the deities and devils in the entire universe are reborn, they will simply be killed one more time!”

Su Changfa’s deafening voice was even more destructive than Kou Ruhuo’s roars and stormy bullets.

Li Yao almost could not contain himself anymore. He bit the tip of his tongue hard and drank a mouthful of boiling blood to calm himself down. Then he pursued, “Senior Su, you mentioned that I might run into something called the Path of Ultimate Benevolence? What does that mean? Are there still human beings who believe in the absurd ‘three fundamental laws’ in the universe today?

“Also, you said that, in the God-Sealing War in the primeval era, all the members of the Pangu Clan were ‘sealed’ and ‘suppressed’ by human beings, right?

“Not destroyed, not annihilated, but sealed and suppressed. What’s the meaning of that? Every seal can be unraveled, and no suppression can last forever. Is it possible that the Pangu Clan will come back again one day?”

Su Changfa narrowed his eyes and stared at Li Yao without blinking.

Li Yao was greatly alarmed. Perhaps, he had asked too many questions and his intentions were too obvious.

“You are too curious,” Su Changfa said coldly. “You will know the answers when you know the answers. Now, just keep exploring!”

Blocked by the black cube, the spiritual and electromagnetic interference leaking out of the power core of the planetary warship were greatly reduced. The four of them had a large control range over the spiritual puppets, too. The hundreds of spiritual puppets dispersed and soon figured out every detail of the enormous human being manufacture center.

Although no intact bodies of the Pangu Clan or Colossi were discovered, they did find four huge teleportation arrays in the four corners of the black cube.

Three of the teleportation arrays had been seriously wrecked in the war, but the last teleportation array was rather well-preserved and seemed like it would still be able to be activated.

Li Yao and the three Immortal Cultivators gathered in front of the teleportation array that was more than three hundred meters in diameter.

At first glance, it was like an enormous, blossoming black lotus flower, covered in a glimmer. Just like the fundamental crystals, it had not been affected by the passage of time.

Tang Qianhe was the navigator of the exploration squad. The jobs where teleportation, navigation, space jump, star map studies, and the likes were involved all fell under her jurisdiction.

She flew to the center of the ‘black lotus flower’ and studied the part that seemed to be ‘stamens’ for a long time before reaching a conclusion.

“This is a short-distance teleportation array, probably for the internal use of the planetary warship. Through the teleportation array, it would have been very convenient to move among the core facilities of the planetary warship!”

“A very reasonable design.” Su Changfa nodded. “If so, the human warriors that had just been produced from the ‘manufacture center’ could be projected to every part of the planetary warship through the teleportation arrays. Their mobility would be highly increased.

“The defense array of the teleportation array seems to be connected to the self-sustaining system of the planetary warships and has been functioning for the last hundreds of thousands of years, keeping the teleportation array in a healthy state. What’s the other end of the teleportation array? It is still usable?”

“I need to study it for a while longer.” Tang Qianhe flew over to the ‘stamens’ again.

Very soon, after a ‘hum’, all the black ‘petals’ around the teleportation array were shivering slighting. Colorful rays of light were rolling on the black petals and condensed into transparent ‘dew’, which then reeled into the stamens along the slanted petals.

“I’ve made it!” Tang Qianhe exclaimed. “The spiritual energy of the teleportation array is highly insufficient. I assume that only one percent of the capacity can be activated right now!

“Thankfully, it was designed for the Pangu Clan and large batches of human soldiers. A hundred members of the Pangu Clan and thousands of human soldiers could be teleported at once!

“With just the four of us and the hundreds of spiritual puppets here, even one percent of the capacity should be enough to send us over!

“As for the destination… I don’t know what it is exactly. It should be configurable and corresponds with almost a hundred other teleportation arrays. However, I don’t know how to configure it yet. So, we can only be teleported to the destination that was configured last time!”

Li Yao was secretly surprised.

Tang Qianhe was the weakest of the three Immortal Cultivators. He did not know that she was even capable of manipulating the teleportation array of the Pangu Clan.

That was utterly unreasonable. Where did she learn that exactly?

Li Yao thought quickly and soon came up with a possibility. If the Covenant Alliance was truly associated with the Pangu civilization, it would not be strange at all that they had grasped the teleportation technology of the Pangu Clan.

Wars were often the best means of communication.

In the protracted war, the Imperium learned the same teleportation technologies from the Covenant Alliance. It was a very sensible deduction.

“Let’s review what happened that day!” Tang Qianhe was quite excited. “The invaders obviously broke into the human being manufacture center and liberated tremendous human warriors. The defenders, on the other hand, fled in panic through the teleportation array. So, the last destination of the teleportation array must be a very important place!

“We should go and take a look at the other side!”

“That’s inappropriate.” Kou Ruhuo frowned and said, “We don’t know the first thing about the other side of the teleportation array. If we are teleported over recklessly, it is very likely that we will be caught in an awkward situation.”

“The entire planetary warship is in the hibernation state. The worst we can expect are just some mutated animals. How dangerous can it be?”

Tang Qianhe pouted and said, “Although we’ve found the human being manufacture center, it is only valuable for historical studies. We cannot gain much from it. We still need to check if there are any Colossi so that we can deal with… what’s coming next!

“Maybe, we can send someone over first to investigate. If it is safe on the other side, the rest of the three can go over in the second batch!”

Tang Qianhe looked at Li Yao.

Li Yao thought that she was intending to send him for the suicidal mission, but she simply puffed her chest out and said, “Since it was me who came up with the idea, I’ll go over first!”

Chapter 1276 - Somebody's Inside!

Su Changfa considered it for a long time.

Under normal circumstances, Li Yao knew that, with his cunningness, Su Changfa would not agree to such a reckless operation to teleport to an unknown area. After all, there might be too many unexpected factors.

However, Su Changfa’s ‘exploration squad’ and the main force of the expedition army made of the Black Wind Fleet were not on the same boat. Instead, they were quite antagonistic to each other.

The three Immortal Cultivators were the losers in the competitions in their respective families, having been exiled to the edge of the universe. They all craved to excavate the secret treasures in the relic of the Pangu civilization and occupy a Sector to accumulate enough resources for their revenge!

When the Black Wind Fleet—which was as tough as a tiger, as brutal as a scorpion, and as greedy as a hyena—arrived, not only would their dream fall apart, they might even get killed.

In order to compete with the Black Wind Fleet, Su Changfa had to take a slight risk.

If they could indeed find a Colossus, it would certainly be a great help for their operations to come.

As Li Yao expected, after more than half a minute of hesitation, Su Changfa said to Kou Ruhuo solemnly, “Brother Kou, the exploration of ancient relics always entails risks. The most critical factor is whether or not the returns are worth the risks. To this moment, we haven’t found anything of value yet. It is obviously not going to work out if we return with empty hands. What do you say?”

Kou Ruhuo was the nominal commander of the exploration mission, but Su Changfa was his captain. Also, the bald man understood that, if a piece of legendary magical equipment such as a Colossus was discovered, he would most likely be the one to use it.

Therefore, he hesitantly nodded, too.

Tang Qianhe exclaimed in joy and was about to activate the teleportation array when Kou Ruhuo suddenly stopped her.

“I am the chief of arms. My ability to handle crises is far better than yours. Let me!”

Tang Qianhe was dazed for a moment.

Perhaps it was his imagination, but Li Yao felt that the female Immortal Cultivator seemed to be reluctant. She did not retreat until 0.01 seconds later.

On the black lotus flower, the colorful ‘bubbles’ were growing larger and brighter until they turned into a cluster of dazzling balls of light.

Leading a hundred spiritual puppets, Kou Ruhuo strode in and disappeared into the light ball.

Li Yao took the opportunity to analyze Tang Qianhe’s behavior just now. He somehow felt that something was off.

She seemed to be too active.

Also, the 0.01 seconds of rigidness was quite unnatural and gave the feeling of some sort of… signal delay.

Before Li Yao pondered any longer, Kou Ruhuo appeared in the light balls again, shivering.

“We are onto something good!” the bald man roared in excitement in the communication channel.

After leaving three hundred spiritual puppets to form an automatic defense formation around the teleportation array, the four of them walked into the light balls and were swallowed one after another.

Shua!

In front of Li Yao’s eyes, colorful, rainbow-like pieces flashed by. Thousands of butterflies gathered as quickly as they dispersed.

He appeared in the transitional force field triggered by another teleportation array.

What unfolded in front of Li Yao could only be described as a boundless space.

For a moment, he even came under the illusion that he had teleported into the infinite universe.

Triggering his optical nerves to the maximum and looking at the horizon, he finally realized that he was still in the middle of Kunlun after noticing the dense hexagonal holes on the walls.

They found themselves at the center of a super-huge honeycomb. Trypophobia patients certainly would not like such a world.

The gravity control arrays of the place had probably been damaged in the primeval war. Without the bondage of gravity, just like the vacuum in the universe, the dead bodies and the remains were all floating in midair quietly like frozen statues.

Their arrival raised ripples of spiritual energy, disturbing the sleep of the bodies. Some of the scraps were dancing in midair, too.

His eyes glittering, Li Yao mumbled to himself, “It seems that although the soldiers of the Pangu Clan fled to the place through the teleportation array, the troops of the human beings followed close behind. The two parties had another fierce battle in this place!”

The enormous space was both a relic of the ancient battlefield and an invaluable treasury.

Because of the protection of the super alloy walls, there was neither intense interference nor the invasion of the Blood Tide, the Hellish Light Butterflies, and other mutated animals. Most of the remains had been perfectly preserved!

Although most of the dead bodies of the Pangu Clan and human beings from hundreds of thousands of years ago had turned into dry corpses and bones, and there was not the slightest sign of living cells, glimmering light was still emanating from the armor and the blades of some of the soldiers, suggesting that they had not entirely corroded yet!

When Li Yao approached the magical equipment and tested them with a few telepathic thoughts, the flames of light on the surface of the magical equipment suddenly soared, obviously responding to his telepathic thoughts!

The magical equipment is not totally broken yet! Li Yao was about to cry tears of joy!

For a specialist of magical equipment, was there a more wonderful thing than to swim in an ocean of ancient magical equipment of the primeval age?

Shua!

At the center of the enormous space, Tang Qianhe must have touched a certain piece of magical equipment. Intense ripples of spiritual energy were triggered. A golden ball of light expanded suddenly from a small spot that bordered on nothingness to more than a thousand meters in diameter!

On the translucent golden ball were starry spots of light that were linked to each other with the thinnest of lines, with detailed information noted next to them!

Li Yao carefully adjusted the power rune arrays of the crystal suit. Spurting out feeble exhaust flames, he flew into the golden ball slowly and observed the world inside the golden ball.

He found himself in a small and yet specific universe. The stars and everything in the sky were slowly swirling around him.

This is... the navigation map of the Pangu civilization!

Li Yao almost cried out in shock!

The star maps that recorded all the celestial bodies in the three thousand Sectors had many categories.

Some of the star maps paid special attention to the stars, some were focused on the resourceful, habitable planets, and some highlighted the location of every black hole.

The star map inside the Star Prier’s House, for example, was designed to lock onto all abnormal celestial bodies in the entire universe. It was essentially a depiction of the running apocalypses.

So, not any random star map could support a voyage in the sea of stars.

It was like travelling the world with a global map the size of a palm, which would barely be of any help in providing guidance.

The Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector’s understanding about the universe was still shallow. All the star maps under their control, except for the Star Map of Kunlun left by Ba Yanzhi and the depiction of the running apocalypses in the Star Prier’s House, were essentially no different from a global map the size of a palm. They could not be used to guide voyages in space at all.

The star map in front of Li Yao, however, was different.

Not only did it include tremendous information about black holes, neutron stars, red giants, geomagnetic nebulas, and safe sailing routes, it also specifically marked countless space zones that had abundant spiritual energy and stable astronomical parameters and were therefore suitable for space jumps!

Other than that, there were also thousands more types of information that were dazzling and utterly incomprehensible to Li Yao!

It was the most professional space navigation map designed to guide the starships!

Although Li Yao failed to understand most of the information, he still managed to recognize the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, which were in the bottom left corner of the picture, and the Flying Star Sector, which was in the center!

Judging from the relative relation of the three Sectors and the scale of the whole map, the range of the star map was not very large, but it still included dozens of Sectors around the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector!

This is a priceless treasure!

Li Yao only hated that he could not stuff the star map into his stomach.

Although it was a product of almost a million years ago, from an astronomical point of view, the time elapsed was just a blink of an eye. The macroscopic environment would not be too different!

It meant that the detailed space navigation map where the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the nearby worlds were included could provide enlightenment for the universal development even today!

The three Immortal Cultivators were also shivering in excitement. It was obvious that a lot of information contained in the space navigation map was not even grasped by the Imperium of True Human Beings!

Not good!

Li Yao suddenly thought of something. The value of the star map was simply too high. There would be dire consequences if it fell to the hands of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

Whatever the price was, he had to prevent the three Immortal Cultivators from having the star map!

“This place is an escape center.”

Tang Qianhe made a professional judgement based on her abundant space travel experience. Pointing at the empty ‘honeycomb’, she said, “Those dense holes should’ve been filled with escape capsules in the beginning.

“Perhaps, the Pangu Clan realized that their failure was inevitable. Therefore, they were teleported to the place through the teleportation arrays deployed everywhere on the planetary warship before they boarded the escape capsules and fled from the planetary warship!

“Escape capsules wouldn’t have possessed much power, and it’s difficult for them to change their sailing route. Therefore, their destinations were set through a certain piece of control magical equipment in the escape center. That’s why there is such a clear and detailed space navigation map here!”

“Escape capsules?”

All four of them were fascinated.

If they could find an escape capsule left by the Pangu civilization, it would be possible for them to figure out the universal sailing technology and the space jump technology entailed in the artifact. The treasure would be invaluable!

“Explore the ‘honeycomb’ right now and see if there’s any escape capsule left!”

Even the cunning Su Changfa could not hold his excitement back anymore. Li Yao could clearly hear his heavy breath in the communication channel.

All of spiritual puppets dispersed and started searching the walls that were almost infinitely long.

Li Yao was receiving almost a thousand pictures through the spiritual puppets simultaneously. He did not need to explore personally but only had to analyze and process the pictures.

Most of the hexagonal holes were empty, with dark tubes behind them leading to nobody knew where.

Some of the holes had been completely ruined in the explosions together with the escape capsules inside. They had turned into dark scraps and lost all their value.

Half an hour later, the spiritual puppets controlled by Tang Qianhe finally found the first intact escape capsule.

What surprised them even more was that—

Somebody was inside the escape capsule!

Chapter 1277 - A Living God!

The members of the Pangu Clan were often six times taller than regular human beings. Therefore, their single escape capsules were more like the small-scale crystal warships for human beings. This particular escape capsule was more than thirty meters long and fusiform, bulging at the middle and tapering at each end. It looked like a brilliant lozenge that had sharp edges.

The middle part of the ‘spindle’ adopted certain translucent materials. Thick, deep-blue fluids could be vaguely seen inside the lozenge. Despite the scourge of time after hundreds of thousands of years, it was still in the most glamorous colors.

In the escape center that was utterly dim, the intact escape capsule was as eye-catching as a firefly on a dark night. Therefore, the Immortal Cultivators found it without any trouble.

Inside the deep-blue fluids, a giant was floating, or rather, embedded!

He was around fifteen meters tall and the color of white jade. His skin was fair and smooth. Generally speaking, he was very similar to the members of the Pangu Clan who disintegrated themselves and facilitated the evolution of all creatures in the primeval memories that Li Yao had experienced, except that his skin was less rough than theirs.

He was just like a human being that had been enlarged multiple times. There were no bizarre features such as additional heads and limbs or long tusks. Even the number of his fingers and toes was precisely ten.

Although his eyes were half-closed, there was still an aura of solemnity, perfectness, and inviolability on his face. He was like a magnificent statue in a temple and imposed upon anyone who saw him the urge to worship him and obey his orders.

Other than the thick, deep-blue fluids that he was submerged in, he was also covered in a ‘skin membrane’ that looked similar to a mustard-level combat suit.

Li Yao observed from various angles. The skin membrane was reflecting thousands of complicated colors that were swirling and colliding crazily like tornadoes until they condensed into esoteric runes in the end.

At first, Li Yao meant to focus his attention and parse the runes.

However, after reading for only a few seconds, he felt that the world was turning upside down, and he could not persist any longer. The complexity of the rune arrays far exceeded the limitation of his computation ability.

Perhaps, it was the skin membrane where billions of rune arrays were compiled that preserved the body of flesh and blood from the primeval age to this today and kept it fresh, intact, and full!

Compared to other dead bodies on the primeval battlefield, the member of the Pangu Clan was athletic with bulging muscles. Deep below the gray skin, there were also vague traces of veins.

He did not look like a body that had been dead for hundreds of thousands of years; he seemed to have just fallen asleep the day before and would wake up at any moment.

The three Immortal Cultivators and the Cultivator looked at each other. Despite the blockage of the thick helmet, they still felt the shock and ecstasy in each other's eyes!

"An authentic member of the Pangu Clan!"

"Not a fossil, not a corpse, not pieces of light and shadow, but a real existence with flesh and blood!"

"Is he dead? Or is he—"

"It's hibernation technology! He is in the middle of a hibernation that has lasted hundreds of thousands of years!"

"I get it. I get it now! The single escape capsules of the Pangu civilization were hibernation cabins at the same time! Because the single escape capsules were weak and could not change the route easily, accidents were very likely to happen, causing them to brush past their destination. If so, they would float in the universe for a very long time!

"Therefore, the moment that they entered the escape capsule, they would enter the hibernation state. Even if they were launched into the depths of the universe aimlessly, they would be sustained long enough until they reached their destination or were found by rescuers!

"By doing so, their odds of survival would be significantly increased!

"The navigation system and the launch system must have been destroyed by the invading human troops who followed them to the place, when the member of the Pangu Clan had just crawled into the escape capsule and entered the hibernation state. He never got the opportunity to be launched. As a result, he was stuck to the place, unable to move at all!

“Look here. His escape capsule is connected to the escape center through tubes. The entire planetary warship is still providing energy for it. No wonder the hibernation state has lasted hundreds of thousands of years!”

The four of them could not have been more excited. Proposing their respective opinions, they managed to infer what had happened on the battlefield that day.

The key point right now, however, was—

“Is the member of the Pangu Clan still alive?”

It was a complicated issue.

Judging from the appearance, he did not seem to have breath or a heartbeat. There were no vital signs on him at all.

However, the most advanced hibernation technology could achieve the same purpose by compressing the life activities of the body to the minimum and reducing all the consumption of energy. Otherwise, how could anybody survive a long time in the hibernation state without aging?

Yet, even if the member of the Pangu was dead, at the very least, his body was still very healthy. It was certainly possible to retrieve living souls from the body, which would help them to crack the secrets of the Pangu civilization!

“Let’s tread lightly. The Pangu Clan was a very dangerous existence!”

Su Changfa swallowed and said, “If he truly is dead, everything will be easier, but if he is alive and awakened, it… might not be anything good for us!”

Li Yao recalled the warriors of the Pangu Clan on the primeval battlefield who could fight the ‘Colossi’ dozens of meters tall on their own. Instantly, he felt an ache in his head.

He agreed with Su Changfa’s judgement.

The half-dead member of the Pangu Clan was not only an invaluable treasure but also a red-hot potato.

“I suggest that we keep everything around the escape capsule exactly as it is and deploy fifty spiritual puppets to guard it to ensure that no pieces will hit it,” Su Changfa said softly, somewhat scared. “Right now, there are only two possibilities. The soldier of the Pangu Clan is either dead or hibernating!

“We are not clear of the structure of the escape capsule or the way to open it. If he is already dead and we act rashly, it is possible that we will destroy the hibernation rune array inside the escape capsule. His body will rot and decompose instantly. We won’t be able to retrieve a single cell!”

Li Yao recalled the vivid body of the Pangu Clan that he and Professor Mo Xuan had run into in space just outside Kunlun.

Sparkle had only approached it a little bit, when it was already obliterated into smithereens, nowhere to be found again.

Such dead bodies that had decayed for hundreds of thousands of years might be extremely vulnerable despite their glamorous appearance. Anything could happen when they were exposed to the air, so it was indeed important that they acted cautiously.

“If he is still alive, and we are reckless enough to free him in our carelessness, it will be even more terrible! Nobody wants to be faced with an infuriated soldier of the Pangu Clan without preparation!”

With a bitter smile, Su Changfa said, “Now that we have likely discovered a ‘living’ member of the Pangu Clan, we might as well slightly change our plan.

“Since all kinds of resources can be found on the planetary warship, we can totally postpone… communicating with the Flying Star Sector and focus on the development in this place first.

“Maybe, in a year and a half, we will be able to collect enough resources to upgrade the base toward the ‘war form’ so that we will be able to build stronger spiritual puppets and magical equipment with heavy firepower designed to deal with the huge enemies!

“After all, the member of the Pangu Clan has already slept for hundreds of thousands of years, and he is not likely to wake up any time soon. Once we have enough troops that are strong enough, we can come back and figure out how to open the escape capsule. What do you say?”

Li Yao’s interest was piqued.

Su Changfa’s words revealed a piece of key information.

The Imperium of True Human Beings’ space exploration base turned out to be upgradable and developable to different directions.

Since there was a ‘war form’, there must be other directions such as ‘resource collection form’, ‘space teleportation form’, and ‘research and exploration form’.

Maybe, in certain forms, the base could be unfolded into an enormous space gate itself so that a great army in a foreign world would appear out of nowhere and occupy the new Sector!

However, the upgrades of the base would obviously cost both time and resources, considering that the preliminary upgrade would not be finished in a year and a half when Kunlun was already such a resource-intensive place!

You can take your time to upgrade! Li Yao chuckled to himself. For the exploration mission, they had already dawdled too long. Burning Prairie would bring the top-tier experts of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector to the place at any moment. By then, the whole of Kunlun, as well as the half-dead member of the Pangu Clan, would be the trophies of the Cultivators!

However—

He suddenly felt alarmed without a good reason. Something did not seem right!

Su Changfa’s suggestion was one that carried the least risk. Also, a presumably dead body of the Pangu Clan was not enough to resolve the three Immortal Cultivators’ imminent peril. What they were in desperate need of was battle magical equipment such as a ‘Colossus’.

After recovering from their initial shock and excitement, Tang Qianhe and Kou Ruhuo both agreed with Su Changfa’s decision. After leaving dozens of spiritual puppets to watch over the member of the Pangu Clan whose status was unknown, they continued exploring around.

This time, they paid special attention to the enormous, human-shaped puppets more than ten meters tall, no matter how broken the puppets were.

Kou Ruhuo was the specialist of magical equipment among the Immortal Cultivators. With the debris of the broken Colossi, it was possible for him to assemble a makeshift Colossus!

Moving forward in the remains of magical equipment, which were floating everywhere, Li Yao felt that he was back in the magical equipment graveyard twenty years ago.

The only difference was that the ‘garbage’ around him was countless times more advanced!

Li Yao discovered sophisticated components inside the simplest-looking sabers and swords when he extended his spiritual threads to explore them. They were a hundred times more precise than the chainswords employed by the Imperium or the federation!

Li Yao was both surprised and delighted.

He was surprised at the incredibleness of the magical equipment of the Pangu civilization.

What delighted him, however, was that the basic mechanism of the magical equipment was the same despite their incredibleness. There might be an order of magnitude regarding the gap on the precision, but the products had no fundamental differences.

As long as the mechanism was the same, it was totally possible for them to understand the designing principles of the magical equipment in the Pangu civilization. They would be able to learn the advanced methods and even… catch up to and surpass them!

When Li Yao was fascinated by the future while staring at a super sword almost thirty meters, he suddenly felt that his neck was itchy.

Little Black was calling him from the Cosmos Ring and seemed to be pointing at somewhere in the escape center.

Chapter 1278 - Draconic Phoenix!

Little Black, what have you found? Li Yao sent a telepathic thought into his Cosmos Ring.

For some reason, although Little Black had been lazy and unresponsive over the past couple of months after breaking the seal of the flying sword, it was particularly excited after arriving in Kunlun.

When Li Yao approached the debris of some Colossi, the guy was always seething in impatience inside the Cosmos Ring, as if it was eager to try them.

Li Yao glanced around. Monitored by dozens of spiritual puppets closely, he did not dare summon Little Black. He simply flew in the direction that it pointed at without alerting anyone.

After squeezing through a cluster of broken debris, and passing by a few dead, dehydrated bodies of the Pangu Clan, from the middle of a garbage swirl that was slowly revolving, Li Yao discovered the remains of a dark red Colossus.

The remains of the dark red Colossus were piled up with the garbage of other magical equipment. Its surface was lackluster. Even the crimson color there was like mottled lacquer that was about to entirely fall apart.

It was so inconspicuous that Li Yao would never have noticed it in the battlefield where the debris was as boundless as an ocean without Little Black’s reminder.

The Colossus was about fifteen meters tall and generally in the shape of a human being, but the details on its body also featured the characteristics of a dragon and a griffin, too.

The layered spiritual stripes on the plate armor in red waves looked like the burning fire, the scales of a dragon, and most importantly of all, the feathers of a griffin.

Li Yao circled around the Colossus and did not find any weapons. They seemed to have been lost during the fierce battle. However, two unbelievable wings that were more than twenty meters long extended out of the back of the Colossus. Red turbulence was condensed on the surface of the wings, as if they were made of magma!

However, at this moment…

The Colossus could not have looked more wretched!

The entire left arm together with a large cluster of the left shoulder had been ripped off, revealing the broken circuits, rune arrays, tubes, and wires inside. All the components had been seriously corroded and deformed into a mess.

It was like a hideous scar that had recovered without any careful treatment.

The skull, from which three rams jabbed out like the head of a dragon, had been smashed by heavy magical equipment with brute force, too. The left side of the skull had completely collapsed, and both of the two eyes on the face had burst out. They were only still attached to the head by two crystal wires that were as thin as spider threads.

The breastplate of the Colossus had been torn open, too, exposing the cockpit that was utterly empty. The wings that had been stretched to the maximum were riddled with even more holes. They reminded Li Yao of an old hen whose feathers were falling out. It seemed that the two wings would break up by themselves after a small flap!

The plate armor on all the other parts was packed with cracks, through which one could see the seriously rusted components without any trouble.

This Colossus looked a hundred more times more miserable than a lot of the others that Li Yao had seen on the primeval battlefield. It did not seem to boast any value to be maintained or even dismantled whatsoever from any perspective.

Li Yao had no idea why Little Black had to pull him to this particular Colossus.

After circling around the Colossus three times, Li Yao finally noticed something interesting.

Despite the wretched appearance of the Colossus, which was equivalent to someone with polio together with hemiplegia, the inside of the cockpit was miraculously intact.

When Li Yao narrowed his eyes and observed carefully, he discovered that the entire cockpit was covered in a scarlet mist that possessed a vague magma-like aura!

The other Colossi on the battlefield, on the other hand, had most been so deeply susceptible to the minerals and the electromagnetic interference that their cockpits had degraded into lifeless caves despite their originally perfect appearance!

Is it possible that the Colossus is still functional?

His heart pounding, Li Yao tried to extend a stream of telepathic thoughts into the cockpit of the Colossus.

His telepathic thoughts together with his spiritual threads pierced into the mist, which filled the cockpit and explored deeper and deeper. Finally, he seemed to have touched something that felt like… a crystal!

Little Black was sending out feeble waves inside the Cosmos Ring, as if it was guiding Li Yao to deal with the weird red mist.

Making up his mind, Li Yao condensed his telepathic thoughts into the sharpest needle and stabbed it into the object in the depths of the red mist, which was suspected to be a crystal.

“Hum!”

A blood red sphere rippled out and blew away all the magical equipment debris nearby!

The weirdest scene then took place!

The crystal deep inside the red mist seemed to have been detonated by him. Like a supernova outbreak, infinite crimson brilliance was unleashed and flowing around the surface of the Colossus!

The redness was compressed, turning both thick and stagnated. The Colossus seemed to be surrounded by a cocoon of magma!

When the ‘magma’ was absorbed by the Colossus, and all the details were demonstrated to Li Yao again, the previously mottled armor was as fresh as new, and the lackluster colors were replaced by dazzling brilliance that resembled a red diamond!

It seemed to have passed hundreds of thousands of years from the primeval age to the modern times through the purge of the burning fire. It was revived with unparalleled vigor again!

In the meantime, Li Yao’s brain was crushed by the ocean of fire crazily, too!

The overwhelming torrent of information made his head ten times bigger than usual.

The magma integrated with the fire and crawled into his every brain cell. They condensed two ancient, dominating words deep inside his brain!

“Draconic Phoenix!”

Li Yao seemed to envision that, on the primeval battlefield, a ferocious beast covered in infinite flames, which looked like both a dragon and a griffin, soared to the sky and tore apart the clouds. The magma seemed to be flooding the air!

When the image of the ‘Draconic Phoenix’ slowly dispersed inside Li Yao’s brain in thousands of sparks, Li Yao found himself enveloped in hot sweat. He breathed heavily.

Draconic Phoenix. Is it the name of the Colossus? It truly sounds awesome!

Little Black, how did you notice that something is special about the ‘Draconic Phoenix’ and that it is even maneuverable?

Speaking of which… how should the thing be maneuvered at all?

Li Yao blinked and observed the cockpit of Draconic Phoenix suspiciously. There were no crystal processors, levers, control light beams, or anything like that, nor any facilities like a virtual helmet or a connection system of synthesized nerves.

How should he control it?

Li Yao swallowed greedily. He was about to crawl into the cockpit to study more carefully when one of the pictures on the crystal processor showed that Kou Ruhuo was rushing toward him rapidly.

It seemed that Kou Ruhuo's attention had been caught when he awakened Draconic Phoenix a moment ago.

Kou Ruhuo, as the chief of arms, should be the one with the highest combat ability of the three Immortal Cultivators. Without a suitable opportunity, Li Yao did not want to attack him recklessly.

On one hand, he wanted to find out whether or not the Immortal Cultivators knew how to maneuver the Colossus.

On the other hand, a magical equipment maniac such as Kou Ruhuo would certainly be deeply hooked by the Colossus. There would perhaps be a great opportunity for Li Yao.

Although Li Yao did not intend to ambush the three Immortal Cultivators there, he might find it difficult to contain himself if the opportunity presented was too wonderful.

As he expected, hardly had Kou Ruhuo arrived when his eyes were completely attracted to Draconic Phoenix, which was ‘as good as new’. He stared at the Colossus without blinking the eyes and completely ignored Li Yao.

Li Yao heard the suspicious sound of Kou Ruhuo’s swallowing in the communication channel.

“I—I don’t know what happened. I extended my spiritual threads into it and stabbed into something during the exploration. Then, it—it suddenly hummed and got illuminated!”

Pretending that he was at a loss, Li Yao defended himself in a tizzy.

“It’s alright. It’s alright!” Kou Ruhuo was overjoyed. He shouted, “Fellow Cultivator Li, you are truly a man of fortune for us! We have been too unbelievably lucky on this trip with you on the team. Not only have we found a living member of the Pangu Clan, we have also discovered a Colossus with such a perfectly-preserved spiritual residence so quickly!”

After pausing for a moment, he explained, “The spiritual residence is a term in the field of the Colossus studies. It refers to the cockpit of a Colossus. Although the limbs of the Colossus here are seriously worn, and its left arm is even entirely missing, it can still serve as the core of an assembled Colossus as long as its spiritual residence is not damaged!

“As long as we find the hands and feet of other Colossi and connect them to this Colossus, we will still be able to bring out at least sixty percent of its combat ability!”

Kou Ruhuo’s words, however, cast Li Yao in a slight daze. He felt greatly alarmed.

The ominous feeling that had been haunting him a moment ago popped up again, turning into a dark shadow and gazing at him coldly.

Kou Ruhuo was an expert in the Nascent Soul Stage after all. Sensing Li Yao’s subtle rigidness, he immediately struggled out of the excitement of finding a functional Colossus. He turned around and asked, “Fellow Cultivator Li, is there a problem?”

Li Yao shook his head hard, trying to make the shadow clearer, while he mumbled, “Senior Kou, do you not feel that… something is not right?”

Kou Ruhuo narrowed his eyes. “What do you mean?”

Li Yao scratched his helmet so hard that it was screeching. “Everything seems to have been going… too smoothly!

“Senior, truth be told, I am in fact a man of misfortune, and my life has been full of twists and turns. I have never done anything smoothly. There have always been mistakes or trouble of all kinds, and I can only arrive at the destination after much difficulty!

“Also, whenever I teamed up with somebody else to explore a relic or hunt a few demon beasts, no matter what the mission was, including those that seemed most safe and secure, my adventure would always prove shocking and life-blighting in the end. Every time, a few of my teammates had to be sacrificed for the mission to succeed!

“But this time, everything has been going too smoothly. We are exploring such a weird primeval battlefield and a relic of the Pangu civilization, and my teammates are all alive? That doesn’t seem right!”

“… Why didn’t you tell us your buff earlier?”

“Cough. Cough. Forget my personal buff. Let’s just review the exploration. Do you really not feel that everything has been too smooth?

“Your starship happened to land next to the impetus tube precisely. We happened to run into a branch right after we descended, and we then happened to discover a city of the Pangu Clan after passing the branch. Then, we found the teleportation array leading to this place when we only searched the city casually. In the end, we found a living member of the Pangu Clan without any trouble!

“Everything has happened within less than three days. Just like you said, we have been too unbelievably lucky!”

Chapter 1279 - Fatal Pulse Signals!

Li Yao’s words made Kou Ruhuo’s face grave, too.

The Immortal Cultivators had all gained their expertise through mountains of bodies. They were all highly responsive to the environment. Although Kou Ruhuo was overjoyed by the shocking discovery just now, he soon noticed a lot of suspicious points after Li Yao’s enlightenment.

“Also, do you not feel that the relics here are too intact, Senior Su?” Li Yao pointed at the surroundings and said, “Since the Pangu Clan lost the battle on the planetary warship, why did human beings, as the winners, not clean the battlefield and sabotage the enemy’s base? Why did they leave so many things to us?”

“It’s quite easy to explain,” Kou Ruhuo replied. “The planetary warship is so huge that the city of the Pangu Clan and the escape center we have discovered can’t be unique. Chances are that there are hundreds of more!

“Most of the cities and escape centers must’ve already been plundered and ruined. We just happened to come across a place that was neglected.”

“That’s exactly the problem,” Li Yao analyzed calmly. “Let’s assume that there were a hundred cities and escape centers on this planet of the Pangu Clan and ninety-nine of them were burnt to the ground in the war. Yet, it only took us three days to find the only one that was kept intact without encountering any major obstacles… What are the odds?”

Kou Ruhuo was silent for a long time. With killing intent leaking out of the gaps of his crystal suit, he said coldly, “What are you trying to say?”

Li Yao heart was beating faster and faster, as if an invisible ferocious animal was crouching on his back and gripping his neck with its thorny tongue. He could not have felt more creeped out.

Instead of caring about the safety of his real identity, he was even bold enough to ask, “Senior Kou, with all due respect, did you come all the way from the Imperium of True Human Beings for this place in the beginning?”

Kou Ruhuo was the one that was least interested in deception and tricks among the three Immortal Cultivators. After hesitating momentarily, he replied frankly, “Not exactly. It doesn’t matter if I tell you the truth now. Our original purpose was the Flying Star Sector. We were preparing to explore and investigate your world! But when we were about to reach the Flying Star Sector, we received mysterious pulse signals from the area. That’s why we shifted the direction and came here to take a look.”

“The Flying Star Sector is a civilization based on starships. We know a thing or two about super long-distance space voyages, too. There couldn’t have been too much fuel left after such a long journey in the sea of stars, could there? You were indeed very ‘brave’ to make the decision to change the direction of sailing when your fuel was about to run out!”

Li Yao smiled and continued asking, “Senior Kou, you mentioned that you received mysterious pulse signals. Did all three of you receive the signals or only some of you?”

Kou Ruhuo was dazed for a moment before he replied. “It was Tang Qianhe who received the pulse signals and strongly suggested that we change our direction to explore this area. Neither I nor Master Su noticed anything unusual.

“However, everybody has their specialties. There are countless signals triggered by electromagnetic waves and astronomical phenomena every second in the sea of stars. It is the job of the ‘navigator’ to distinguish the valuable signals from the messy, chaotic waves. Master Su and I are not good at that!

“Tang Qianhe has received professional training in that regard. She is a top-tier space exploration expert. Since she insisted confidently, we naturally respected her professional judgement!”

Li Yao felt that his entire spine was soaked in icy water. His voice was so frosty that his teeth were almost entirely frozen. “So, at first, Senior Kou and Senior Su never intended to explore the area. It was Senior Tang who claimed that the pulse signals here were weird and persuaded you to come here, right?”

Kou Ruhuo nodded slowly. Suddenly, his body shivered as he said gravely, “Are you suggesting—”

“I have suddenly thought of something!” His teeth clattering, Li Yao mumbled, “The hibernation system installed in the single escape capsule of the Pangu Clan was obviously designed for the escapers to be successfully found again after they were launched into the universe and floating for maybe hundreds of years, right?”

“Yes.” Kou Ruhuo nodded.

“The universe is too vast a place,” Li Yao said solemnly. “How could the escapers of the Pangu Clan ensure that they would certainly be found again by their companions even if they were lucky enough not to be killed? After all, in the scale of the grand universe, a small single escape capsule is more insignificant than a grain of dust!

“If it were me, I would’ve installed certain magical equipment that could send out distress signals inside the escape capsule. Such a device would send out the message ‘I’m here. Come and save me!’ incessantly!

“Such distress signals should be encrypted through special methods. Only my allies would be able to distinguish them. In the eyes of bystanders and enemies, they would be nothing more than an episode of meaningless noise in the universe!

“Senior Kou, you are a specialist of magical equipment. Do you think what I said makes sense?”

Kou Ruhuo put his hand on the sword dangling from his waist softly before he said, one word after another, “It makes a lot of sense!”

“Therefore…” Li Yao’s voice sounded so gloomy and cold that it might have come from inside a blackhole. “What exactly were the ‘pulse signals’ that Tang Qianhe received from the planetary warship?”

“Not good!” Kou Ruhuo spat on the ground. “Tang Qianhe said just now that she had found something, but she was not certain about it and asked Master Su to help identify it!”

“What?” Li Yao was suddenly alarmed. Subconsciously, he looked at where Tang Qianhe and Su Changfa were at together with Kou Ruhuo.

Right then—

A dazzling ball of light suddenly burst out from the depths of the escape center and expanded to a kilometer away instantly, swallowing all the scraps of magical equipment and the debris of war within the range!

The remains further beyond, motivated by the blast, darted around in scorching metal torrents!

The escape center that had been quiet for hundreds of thousands of years was now completely awakened by the hot waves and the ear-splitting explosions. The last bit of remaining spiritual energy inside a lot of magical equipment was activated in resonation, too. The battlefield was as chaotic as a pot of boiling soup of particles!

Su Changfa’s devastated screams echoed in the public communication channel of the four of them.

The great world-shaking explosion took place exactly where he and Tang Qianhe were!

Like a shocked bird whose wings were broken, Tang Qianhe was blown backward by the blast, her crystal suit shattered. She flew toward the two of them in desperation. While flying, she shrieked in the communication channel, “Not—not good. Master Su has been—”

She seemed to be too shocked to speak right now, but her distance from Kou Ruhuo was shortened significantly.

“Don’t say anything!” Kou Ruhuo bellowed at Li Yao in the private channel before he rushed toward Tang Qianhe.

Li Yao heard the bald man’s anxious voice in the communication channel. “Xiao Tang, what has happened?”

Instantly, Li Yao understood what was going on.

Something was definitely wrong about Tang Qianhe. Su Changfa had probably been ambushed by her!

Right now, she was still preparing to ambush Kou Ruhuo.

Fortunately, Kou Ruhuo had made up his mind quickly enough, too. He pretended that he did not know anything about it and prepared to ambush Tang Qianhe!

Those Immortal Cultivators are indeed foxy, sordid, and most importantly of all, top-tier actors!

Squatting nearby, Li Yao watched the internal strife of the Immortal Cultivators.

There was only the last five hundred meters between Tang Qianhe and Kou Ruhuo.

Li Yao could vaguely see tiny sparks condensing around the power rune arrays on the back of Kou Ruhuo’s crystal suit.

It was a sign that the power rune arrays were about to output the most impetus and accelerate the speed to the highest!

When Tang Qianhe was about to step into the deadly trap, she seemed to be suddenly alarmed. As if being slapped right in the face brutally, she flipped around without a sign and fled backward!

Kou Ruhuo bellowed and could only activate his long-prepared Erratic Light Cannons in a hurry. Hundreds of colorful whips of light spurted out of his shoulders, chest, and hands and stabbed toward Tang Qianhe in unpredictable arcs!

Li Yao had thought that Tang Qianhe was merely in the Core Formation Stage. However, the flames of spiritual energy that surrounded her expanded to the level of the Nascent Soul Stage within a moment.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

The superstring light from the both of them collided heavily, resulting in broken glimmers in various colors, before they expanded into glamorous bubbles and rose up!

Tang Qianhe resisted Kou Ruhuo's critical attack with her immense spiritual shield. She showed no intention of dawdling at all. Without any hesitation, she rushed to the other end of the escape center in the blink of an eye!

As it turned out, she had been concealing her capabilities the whole time. Judging from her movement, which was as swift as a ghost and her thick superstring shield, even if Kou Ruhuo and Li Yao had attacked her at the same time, they might not have been able to stop her!

Boom! Boom! Boom!

She had somehow planted countless smoke bombs and interference bombs among the debris on the battlefield without anybody noticing. The bombs had been so delicately deployed that they had even escaped Li Yao's attention!

Now that all the bombs were detonated, the entire escape center was covered in a black fog that looked like sticky glue. Li Yao's crystal cameras and probe magical equipment were all jammed. There was nothing but snowflakes and waves on the light beams. No usable information was distinguishable at all!

Gritting his teeth, Li Yao released his telepathic thoughts despite the intense interference, spreading them out and locking onto Tang Qianhe.

He immediately gasped!

Tang Qianhe had snuck to the member of the Pangu Clan who was caught in the hibernation state under the cover of the smoke bomb and the electromagnetic interference!

Most of the hundreds of spiritual puppets were under Su Changfa’s control, but now that Su Changfa’s life status was unknown, and because the spiritual puppets were not designed to attack those on their side, they were all standing by in a daze when they could not make clear what the situation was!

A small proportion of the spiritual puppets were controlled by Tang Qianhe and Kou Ruhuo respectively. They were immediately divided into two groups and started brutalizing each other!

Tang Qianhe, however, triggered an enormous 3D control menu in front of the single escape capsule of the Pangu Clan under the cover of the hundred or so spiritual puppets on her side.

Although the control menu was designed for the members of the Pangu Clan and was not suitable for human beings’ smaller stature, Tang Qianhe was flying up and down fluently and skillfully like a colorful butterfly!

“What—what’s she doing exactly?”

Seeing that Tang Qianhe had inputted dozens of runes already, Li Yao and Kou Ruhuo both felt so cold that their souls were nearly frozen.

They knew the answer precisely.

Tang Qianhe’s purpose could not have been more obvious.

She was going to wake up the member of the Pangu Clan who was in the hibernation state!

Chapter 1280 - She Is a Demi-Human!

Goosebumps rising all over his body, Li Yao immediately understood what had happened.

Professor Mo Xuan, the Fire Ant King, and he had come to ‘Kunlun’ because of the guidance of the ‘minor apocalypse’ of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

The reason the ‘minor apocalypse’ of the Imperium of True Human Beings changed direction in the end, on the other hand, was because Tang Qianhe, the navigator, received pulse signals that were indistinguishable for normal people!

Of course, it could be explained by the fact that Tang Qianhe had received professional training before, which allowed her to tell the useful information from the meaningless noises in the universe.

However, there could also be another explanation.

The single escape capsule, in which a hibernating member of the Pangu Clan was kept, was not aware that the Pangu civilization had long perished. Since ages ago, it had been sending out distress calls to the outside world incessantly and dutifully according to the preset programs.

It might have been because Tang Qianhe heard ‘Pangu’s calling’ that she intentionally led Su Changfa and Kou Ruhuo to the place. Li Yao and the rest of them had been attracted to the place because of her, too!

Everything had been under her control.

She had known their final destination since the very beginning. That was why they had discovered so many perfectly preserved cities and relics on their way and were ‘fortunate’ enough to discover a living member of the Pangu Clan!

Seeing Tang Qianhe’s performance in front of the escape capsule of the Pangu Clan, which looked like a bizarre dance, Li Yao felt that his lips were cramping uncontrollably. He suddenly felt that their earlier use of the word ‘fortune’ could not have been more ironic.

Without any hesitation, he raised his crystal cannon and activated the Erratic Light Cannon, joining the fight!

The competition of beliefs between the Cultivators and the Immortal Cultivators could be left aside for a moment because there would be dire consequences if a member of the Pangu Clan was reincarnated!

With Li Yao’s participation, the firepower was immediately doubled. Many spiritual puppets under Tang Qianhe’s control were immediately riddled with holes and on the brink of destruction.

However, Tang Qianhe’s skills in manipulating the spiritual puppets had significantly soared, too. The hundred or so spiritual puppets under her control formed the solidest wall, stopping Li Yao, Kou Ruhuo, and their spiritual puppets from coming close, while resisting their overwhelming wrath.

“Tang Qianhe! Tang Qianhe!” Kou Ruhuo was roaring like a prehistoric animal. “You betrayed the Imperium! How dare you betray the Imperium!”

Tang Qianhe heard none of it because she was busy on all fours. Her limbs were like the fingers of the member of the Pangu Clan as he tapped on the 3D control menu at a fixed speed. Every tap would raise ripples of light, as if she were dancing the most incredible dance in the middle of a bright golden ball.

Boom!

Kou Ruhuo fully burst into fury. His hands condensed seals quickly while the flames of spiritual energy flooded out of his body, turning into an enormous giant almost twenty meters tall! The face of the giant was similar to his own. It was also roaring furiously with veins bulging out!

The giant waved the fists and smashed the spiritual puppets that were controlled by Tang Qianhe. The spiritual puppets were blown into smithereens before they had time to scream!

Kou Ruhuo was going all out!

He was now burning his life and unleashing his soul power without bothering about anything else, demonstrating his Nascent Soul where his infinite Cultivation had been condensed in the most glamorous and brilliant way!

Li Yao had once seen several fellow Cultivators unleashing such unbelievable strength during the riot of the Immortal Cultivators in the Flying Star Sector!

According to the ancient Cultivators, it was known as the ‘departure of the Nascent Soul’!

The fury of an expert in the Nascent Soul Stage was definitely not to be underestimated. The remaining spiritual puppets were not able to hold on any longer and were all ripped apart as if they were made of paper.

Li Yao gritted his teeth so hard that they were creaking. He pondered whether or not he should utilize the strength of the Nascent Soul Stage, too, in order to disrupt Tang Qianhe’s ‘waking ritual’ together with Kou Ruhuo.

However, the firepower behind him was suddenly enhanced. The last few spiritual puppets on Tang Qianhe’s side were wiped out with none left!

The spiritual puppets that had been idling in midair, not knowing what to do, a moment ago all came back to life!

It was Su Changfa!

The old cunning fox was not dead yet!

It appeared that, even if he had failed to recognize Tang Qianhe’s trap in time, his sharp senses had still helped him survive the disaster!

However, he could not have looked more miserable!

His right arm and his right leg were both cut off from the joint, and the wounds were temporarily sealed by clusters of bluish gel. There was such a shocking hole on his abdomen that Li Yao could put his arm through his stomach without meeting any obstacle!

His crystal suit was like a hedgehog, with colorful pieces of crystals stabbed all over it.

The destructive shrapnel from crystal bombs seemed to boast the weird ability of stopping the body from being recovered either by the crystal suit or the body itself. With

Su Changfa’s expertise in the Nascent Soul Stage, he should have been able to seal his veins, muscles, and skin easily. However, at that moment, even his tiniest movement would cause tremendous blood to flow out of the gaps of the crystal shrapnel. The flood turned into red, round pearls in the environment without gravity and floated around him!

Despite his heavy wounds, Su Changfa still extended his right hand and almost stabbed his middle finger and his index finger into his forehead, while he tried his best to activate his telepathic thoughts to control the spiritual puppets!

Li Yao, Kou Ruhuo, and Su Changfa bombarded crazily at the same time!

All the spiritual puppets under Tang Qianhe’s control were blown into ash and powder until there was nothing left!

However, Tang Qianhe, who was dancing within the gold ball of light, finished her last step!

Hum!

The escape capsule of the Pangu Clan slightly shivered. The shell that was originally translucent, even a bit dirty, was now getting more and more clear and bright!

Uncanny forces were being released from the depths of the escape capsule, forming an immaculate sphere barrier around the escape capsule and Tang Qianhe!

Li Yao observed carefully, only to discover that the sphere barrier was made of billions of runes, each of which was shining brilliantly in octagonal shapes while they integrated and changed!

“Ahhh!” Kou Ruhuo roared. He drove the giant that was made of his Nascent Soul to crash into the sphere barrier.

After an ear-splitting noise, the hundreds of runes around the point of impact were suddenly enlarged. Hundreds of colors in different shades were unleashed, with ripples spreading out. All the runes that were involved in the ripples were enlarged, too. Eventually, the blast was passed out and shouldered by the billions of runes together, causing no actual damage at all!

The sphere barrier was as perfect as before!

Kou Ruhuo’s giant Nascent Soul, on the other hand, was blown away by the counterforce. Its color was much more lackluster than before!

Kou Ruhuo vomited a mouthful of blood, too. His moan could be heard in the communication channel!

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Having no time to care about his bleeding wounds, Su Changfa maneuvered hundreds of spiritual puppets to rain their firepower upon the sphere barrier.

Ripples were spreading out everywhere on the sphere barrier, and it was shaking all the time. Yet, it did not collapse no matter how hard they tried!

In the meantime, protected by thousands of runes, the escape capsule was shining more and more brightly.

Li Yao could vaguely feel that the thick, deep-blue fluids inside the escape capsule were bubbling crazily. They were getting thinner and thinner, as if all the energy and nutrition inside were being absorbed by the member of the Pangu Clan!

He is indeed not dead yet! He is now devouring energy crazily in order to wake up from the prolonged hibernation! Li Yao was greatly appalled.

Tang Qianhe had finished all the operations. The rapid movements a moment ago seemed to have drained all her spiritual energy and even her vitality. She opened her arms and closed her legs, floating in the zero gravity like a cross.

If measured with a piece of magical equipment, it would be easy to find that her arms and her torso was in the most perfect right-angle without the slightest error!

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

The crystal suit on her body dismembered one piece after another. Eventually, her elegant body, which was shivering slightly, was revealed. There was no telling whether she was fatigued or anxious.

In the end, Tang Qianhe’s mysterious face appeared in front Li Yao and the Immortal Cultivators.

Li Yao did know how he should describe the face.

Generally speaking, with such a great scheme working out, she should have been blushing and gloating in excitement, if not bursting into crazy laughter, should she not?

However, there was none of such expressions on Tang Qianhe’s face. She was only wearing an eternal, enigmatic smile, as if a certain strange force had pumped away all her feelings and emotions and only left the last one percent!

She was eyeing the three of them completely unlike a hunter eyeing the prey that had fallen into the trap. There was no satisfaction, delight, or fear. Instead, her eyes were full of brilliance of pitifulness and sacredness.

She seemed to be looking at three lambs that had been lost, or three sinners who were waiting to be saved from their ignorance.

Li Yao sniffed.

He did not like being observed in such a way. Not at all.

He would rather face an enemy who roared, laughed, gloated, or went on a rampage—such as Yan Xibei, Xiao Xuance, Elder Nether Spring or Lu Zui—than confront such a… holy and yet hollow face!

“Tang Qianhe, why did you betray us? Why?”

Kou Ruhuo crashed into the sphere barrier time and time again, only to be blown back without any exception. His giant Nascent Soul was getting dimmer and weaker.

Devastated, he howled like a wounded animal.

“Save your strength!” Su Changfa gnashed his teeth. “She has joined the Covenant Alliance. She wouldn’t hear anything that you are saying!”

“Tang Qianhe works for the Covenant Alliance?”

Kou Ruhuo paused for a moment. In disbelief, he shouted, “Impossible. It’s impossible! Before we left, we all received the most rigorous ‘Ring-Tu Test’. How can she be a spy of the Covenant Alliance?”

“It means that the Imperium’s ‘Seventh-Generation Ring-Tu Test System’ has been deciphered by the Covenant Alliance!” Su Changfa declared in hatred. “Those wretched puppets are upgrading themselves incessantly, too. The latest generation of demi-humans are already able to simulate ninety-nine percent of the feelings and the ways of thinking of human beings. The ‘Ring-Tu Test’ is our last defense line. If it is cracked, it will be more than simple for them to infiltrate us!”

With the proof right before their eyes and the peril that they were in, they had no time to brag about the invincibility of the Imperium of True Human Beings to Li Yao anymore and spoke part of the truth.

Inside the sphere barrier, Tang Qianhe was still looking at them with a pair of eyes that were full of pity. The curve of her lips was precise and had absolutely no change at all during the time.

Kou Ruhuo’s roar did not move her at all. She kept smiling while she said, “Betray you? No, I am your salvation.”

Chapter 1281 - Infection and Wildness

“Just look at the Imperium of True Human Beings. What state has the civilization of mankind ended up in under the government of the Immortal Cultivators?”

Compared to a moment ago, Tang Qianhe’s voice was hollow, peaceful, and unhurried. It sounded both like a brook and the roaring thunder that was piercing through the sphere barrier and dwarfing the noises when Li Yao and the Immortal Cultivators were raining their firepower on the sphere barrier crazily!

She seemed to be looking at three obstinate sinners from the high ground. With vague sadness on her face, she said, “You have all been deeply infected by Chaos, and you truly believe that you are the supreme creatures in the sea of stars, qualified to do whatever you want to the entire universe!

“You have been damaging the environment without restraint. You have been exploiting the resources and energy from the three thousand Sectors, pushing the universe to the brink of collapse time and time again!

“You haven’t learned your lesson from the war of ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago, and the destruction of the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago failed to awaken you, too! Today, with the final battle between the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance drawing near, you are still putting up your futile resistance!

“Even though you have exploited so many resources and so much energy, your ravenousness can still not be satiated. You have conquered all living creatures in the three thousand Sectors, but then you are turning against your own kind!

“You are clearly the same human beings. Yet, you divide yourselves into all kinds of different groups. Citizens of the Curly Dragon Sector and citizens of the Martial Meritocrats Sector. Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators. Hominoids and true human beings. Men and women…

“A hundred thousand years! Nothing has changed for a hundred thousand years! Since the moment the fire of the civilization of mankind started burning, you have been killing, conquering, and enslaving each other under all kinds of banners, only to march to the abyss of doom together!

“Such a civilization is truly the most wicked of all. No, it is not qualified to be called a ‘civilization’; it is just a malignant tumor that Chaos made!

“The Imperium of True Human Beings, on the other hand, is the epitome of the wickedness. It is a hopeless tumor, a cancer of the universe!

“Living in such an evil world—soaked in lies, violence, slavery, murder, and betrayal since childhood—have you still not been awakened?”

“Bullsh*t! Bullsh*t! Bullsh*t!” Unable to break the defense after such a long time, Kou Ruhuo was more than infuriated. “You are just a puppet whose string is in Pangu’s hands. What makes you think you are qualified to comment on the Imperium of True Human Beings?”

“If we speak of puppets, everybody is a puppet.”

Even when she was making the harshest accusation, Tang Qianhe still showed no sign of anger whatsoever. She was now even more peaceful and undisturbed than before.

Her face seemed to have contracted a virus named ‘smile’.

Li Yao even doubted whether or not she had the ability to burst into fury.

“It’s true that we are the puppets of the divine Pangu Clan, and we feel delighted, proud, and peaceful about that!

“But what about you? Haven’t you, the self-proclaimed ‘true human beings’ who think that you boast ‘free will’, betrayed the divine Pangu Clan under the lead of Nuwa, only to end up being Chaos’ puppets?

“Wake up, my compatriots!”

Tang Qianhe raised her arms, with a thin layer of mist condensing in her eyes. “Stop dwelling in the incessant sins. Realize your real identity and destiny!

“Think about it. What life have we been living under the lies of the Imperium of True Human Beings?

“We have to receive the most rigorous training from the moment that we are born. Before we learn to talk, we have to learn to kill all kinds of cute creatures with a dagger! We may have to compete with each other in a cruel arena or even be thrown to a desolate planet to struggle on our own at the tender age of seven! In such cruel competitions, only the best one of ten thousand has the chance of awakening their spiritual root and being granted the identity of ‘true human being’!

“Even if you become a true human being, and you are qualified to enslave millions of hominoids, so what? Are you not mired in never-ending schemes, betrayals, ambushes, and internal strife? Do you not risk falling into the abyss from the peak with only a moment of carelessness? Would you not be stabbed by a poisonous dagger in the back when you are just taking a nap?

“Let’s just take the three of us for example. Is the Covenant Alliance to blame for what has become of us today? Was it the Covenant Alliance’s fault that we were exiled to the remote edge of the cosmos for exploration and even faced with the fate of being swallowed by the Black Wind Fleet?

“No. Not the Covenant Alliance, but the Imperium and the poisonous daggers from within our families!

“We are all sacrifices of schemes and internal strife, victims of greed and wickedness. The Imperium of True Human Beings, on the other hand, is the quintessence of arrogance, jealousy, fury, greed, and all the other sins in the history of mankind! Why are you still clinging to the evil Imperium, which is about to collapse when everything had come this far?”

“So, that’s the reason. You’ve surrendered to the Covenant Alliance because you are dissatisfied about losing the family competition. You b*tch!” Kou Ruhuo cursed!

Tang Qianhe sighed, with vague confusion popping up in her eyes, as if she found it difficult to understand why her barbaric compatriot still could not wake up. She shook her head and said, “Fellow Cultivator Kou, you’re wrong. From the moment that I saw my father being killed miserably right in front of my eyes, I have repented and returned from my lost journey. I saw the darkness of the Imperium of True Human Beings from the bottom of it!

“From that moment on, I realized what an absurd and evil lie I had been living in and how much pain the many sinuous viruses on my body had caused me!

“At first, I thought that the Imperium of True Human Beings was a special case and that there might be other civilizations of mankind that were better.

“However, after studying all the civilizations in the past, including the civilizations of the Cultivators that had long been destroyed, I discovered that self-destruction is an incurable disease that has leaked deep into our bones and soul. It is in our nature!

“The Imperium of True Human Beings, the Star Ocean Imperium, the civilizations of Cultivators, the civilizations of Immortal Cultivators, the civilizations of demons, the civilizations of ancient Cultivators… there is absolutely no difference; they were created for the sole purpose of disrupting the entire universe!

“Have you not been touched at all after visiting the ‘human being manufacture center’ in person?

“We are just puppets and tools. We are not qualified or capable to, nor should we, be the dominators of the sea of stars!

“We have established our so-called ‘civilizations’ by mimicking our masters clumsily when we are merely tools that are infected by viruses and have gone out of control. But we are just parrots. We can never understand the true meaning of ‘civilization’!

“The civilizations of human beings are like a high tower built by a three-year-old. Splendid as they appear to be, they do not have a solid foundation, and they are doomed to completely collapse one day! The higher the tower is, the larger the damage will be when it does collapse!”

“Even if the civilizations of mankind have been destroyed ten thousand times, it will not be destroyed again because the Immortal Cultivators are here!” Kou Ruhuo roared thunderously. “The Imperium of True Human Beings is the ultimate form of the civilization of mankind. We will certainly march forward, forward, until we reach the end of the sea of stars!”

“It’s impossible!” Tang Qianhe said casually. “Mankind is too hopeless to rescue ourselves. It’s like you can never pull yourself up from the ground by snatching your hair!

“Our civilization was implanted with a fatal virus when it was just born. It was created for exactly the purpose of messing up the universe. How can we expect to free ourselves from the sorry fate by ourselves?

“Only the divine Pangu Clan, our creator and the real controller of civilizations, can save us and the entire universe!

“Wake up, my compatriots. We’ve been out of control for too long. It’s time we cleanse all the sins on our body and return to the true rules, true peace, and true civilization!

“Join me in the shelter of the Path of Ultimate Benevolence. Let our Lord return to the universe and reestablish a glorious civilization again! That’s our ultimate destiny, which will grant us peace, happiness, and true immortality!”

“Ahhh!” Kou Ruhuo roared. The armor on his entire right arm stood up like a thorny fish that had suddenly exploded. His right arm looked almost five times thicker than before!

Colorful mystic rays entangled his right arm for a moment before they suddenly shot out and phantomized into almost a hundred whips of light in midair. In the deadliest arcs, they stabbed the same point on the sphere barrier almost at the same second!

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

The sphere barrier was suddenly twisted, dimmed, and constricted!

Under the bombardment from Li Yao, Kou Ruhuo, and Su Changfa, it was about the decline and collapse!

Uneasiness flashed on Tang Qianhe’s face.

However, her pupils suddenly narrowed, as if it were a taboo to reveal negative emotions like that and she had been warned by something invisible deep inside her brain. Her nervousness was soon covered by hollow peacefulness again.

“Fellow Cultivator Li—”

This time, Tang Qianhe turned her eyes that were full of pity and sense of purpose to Li Yao, while she smiled and said, “The two of them have been hopelessly poisoned. There’s nothing we can do except dispose of them.

“But you are different. You have only just been fooled by the lies of the Imperium of True Human Beings. You are still savable!”

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. “No, thanks. I’m feeling pretty good about myself. I don’t think that I need anybody to save me. Thank you, though!”

“No, you are not good at all. You have no idea how many sins have occupied your body, and you haven’t realized how blatant the lies of the Imperium of True Human Beings are!”

Tang Qianhe slightly raised her voice. For her, it was perhaps the most violent way to express her feelings. “Do not believe anything that they have been brainwashing you with in the past two days! Not only did they inculcate cr*p like the rise of ‘Blackstar the Great’ into your brain, they also never dared tell you the most critical facts!

“The Covenant Alliance was never destroyed by the Imperium. Instead, it is rising unstoppably despite the merciless strikes of the evil Imperium!

“Today, the Covenant Alliance has conquered a fairly large part of the sea of stars. Also, it has extended the tentacles into the Imperium of True Human Beings’ rotten, degenerative body! Many citizens of the Imperium, including myself, have realized our real destiny and conformed to the Path of Ultimate Benevolence. We have returned from the wilderness!

“Today, the Imperium is nothing more than a shaking, setting sun that is walking toward its inevitable doom!”

Chapter 1282 - Virus Killing!

“What?”

Pretending to be greatly surprised, Li Yao exclaimed in the communication channel before he stared at Kou Ruhuo and Su Changfa with the most appalled expression.

Under his eyes that were full of shock and criticization, both the two Immortal Cultivators somehow lowered their heads in embarrassment however brazen they were.

“The Imperium of True Human Beings is not the ‘future of mankind’ at all, but a candle that is about to die out in the wild wind. The Immortal Cultivators have become particularly brutal and ruthless during their dying struggles!”

Tang Qianhe continued her instigation with a tone as calm as water.

The demagogism, which should have been blood-boiling and soul-stirring, when spoken in such a peaceful way, caused a strong feeling of self-contradiction. Li Yao felt that somebody had pressed a huge rock to his chest, and it could not have been more uncomfortable.

“Fellow Cultivator Li, even if you have completely turned into an Immortal Cultivator and are determined to join the Imperium of True Human Beings, nothing good will happen to you!

“The Imperium of True Human Beings where men feed on other men. As the saying goes, it is the biggest crime to hold possessions that do not befit your position. You have discovered such an important Gods’ Realm and even found treasures such as the Colossi inside. Do you think that other Immortal Cultivators will let go of a foreigner new to their country?”

Li Yao had collected another piece of important information. As it turned out, in the Covenant Alliance, the relics of the Pangu civilization were called as Gods’ Realms.

Judging from Tang Qianhe’s performance so far and her skillfulness when controlling the escape capsule of the Pangu civilization, the Alliance of the Holy Covenant must have found more than one Gods’ Realm before.

Perhaps, there were not living members of the Pangu Clan in the previous Gods’ Realms, but a lot of legacies must have been retrieved, allowing the deep communication between the Covenant Alliance and the Pangu Civilization.

With the enhancement of the Gods’ Realms, it was indeed no wonder that the Covenant Alliance could compete with the enormous Imperium from a tiny world in the universe and even be on the winning side!

“They’ll certainly never let go of you!”

Of course, Tang Qianhe had no idea what was on Li Yao’s mind. Seeing that he did not reply, she thought that the new Immortal Cultivator had been convinced. With vague delight flashing on her face, she stressed, “With the legacies of the Gods’ Realm, you will be the fattest meat in the eyes of every Immortal Cultivator. They will be too ashamed to call themselves Immortal Cultivators if they don’t bite you!

“Maybe, you were capable of surviving to the end in a starship that had an accident as the last victor, but in the homeland of the Imperium of True Human Beings, a young man with your ignorance and your treasures will not be able to survive three days!

“In fact, at exactly this moment, an enormous fleet of the Imperium is marching toward your hometown the Flying Star Sector. The fleet is made of the soldiers of the Black Wind Sector, the most infamous race in the Imperium of True Human Beings. They are all the most brutal killers, the most sordid assassins, the most rapacious bandits, and the most ruthless butchers! Once the Black Wind fleet arrives, both you and your hometown will be devoured and digested, with absolutely no residue left!

“You want to compete with the Black Wind fleet with only the three of you and an expedition base? In your dream!”

Li Yao ‘gasped’ and ‘bulged his eyes’ before exclaiming in the utmost shock, “Is she telling the truth?”

Su Changfa grunted. Pearls of blood were leaking out of his wounds again.

Kou Ruhuo lowered his head in silence and simply focused on bombarding the enemy with the flying swords and the superstring light.

The sphere barrier around Tang Qianhe was becoming more and more lackluster. Every attack would make it ripple and shake for a long time, as if it was going to collapse at any point.

However, behind her, the thick, deep-blue fluid inside the escape capsule of the Pangu Clan became as transparent as clear water. All the nutrition and energy seemed to have been absorbed by the member of the Pangu Clan!

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Tiny cracks were appearing on the rhombic crystals that constituted the escape capsule. They were spreading out like a spider web and joining each other, giving the feeling that somebody was about to break out of the shell!

“You’ve been lost in the desert of sins for too long. Return to the Path of Ultimate Benevolence right now!” Tang Qianhe’s face was solemn, and her voice was hollow. “Embrace the Covenant Alliance. Only the Covenant Alliance can save you and everybody in your hometown. Your soul will be purged, and your life will be cleansed. You will no longer be out of control. You will realize your sacred destiny that has always belonged to you!”

Pretending to be panicked, Li Yao asked, “Covenant Alliance? What country is the Covenant Alliance exactly?”

“The Covenant Alliance is not a country. The so-called ‘country’ is just an ugly shell that human beings invented to better kill each other and was imposed on everybody by force!

“The Covenant Alliance is an assortment of believers. It is an immense force condensed by everyone who believes in the Path of Ultimate Benevolence and who has returned to their sacred destiny!

“In the Covenant Alliance, everybody is absolutely equal regardless of their age, gender, or strength. Everyone is the same!

“There are no lies, wars, crimes, exploitations, slavery, or conflicts inside the Covenant Alliance. Everybody helps each other, shares everything, and lives in harmony!”

Li Yao clicked his tongue. “A world without conflict where everything is shared? How is it possible? Can an expert in the Nascent Soul Stage be absolutely equal to an ordinary person in every aspect and even share everything with each other?”

The Star Glory Federation protected the rights of the ordinary people and highlighted the equality of the citizens. However, the ‘equality in rules’, instead of ‘equality in results’, was paid more attention to.

Generally speaking, an expert in the Nascent Soul Stage would far exceed an ordinary person in terms of social position or wealth. That was perfectly normal.

As long as they had been abiding by the ‘Constitution of Cultivators’ while they were improving their social position and accumulating their wealth and did not violate any law, they would still be ‘equal’ to other people, and everybody else would acknowledge everything that the Cultivator had earned.

“Of course. In fact, there is no difference between Cultivators, Immortal Cultivators, and ordinary people in the Covenant Alliance. Everybody is the same!” Tang Qianhe smiled. “In front of our Lord, we are all the humblest dust, the most ignorant ants, and the most docile lambs!

“The so-called ‘experts in the Nascent Soul Stage’ are nothing more than slightly larger ants!

“Faced with the bleak, boundless universe, what’s the essential difference between larger ants and smaller ants?

“If you have indeed awakened your spiritual root and reached the Nascent Soul Stage, it is still just a blessing from the Lord, and you should place the strength at the service of the Lord instead of showing off your identity, position, wealth, and even enslaving others with it!”

Li Yao was rendered speechless.

What kind of bizarre theory was that?

Although he could not concur to the Immortal Cultivators’ ideology, he was at least able to understand it. But was the Path of Ultimate Benevolence not too perverted?

“All conflict, deception, and slavery boils down to the sins deep down in our souls. As long as we uproot the sins, we will be able to be freed from all of them!”

Tang Qianhe continued speaking calmly.

“If there’s no greed, there will be no deception. If there’s no jealousy, there will be no slaughter. If there’s no arrogance and anger, there will be no war! Eliminate all the negative emotions deep inside the souls of human beings, and a brand new, immaculate world of order, peace, and friendship will arrive!”

Li Yao was dazed. “Greed, jealousy, arrogance, anger… We are born with negative emotions. How can we eliminate them?”

“We are not born with them at all!” Tang Qianhe waved her hands so crazily that she was almost extending her pale face out of the sphere barrier. “Fellow Cultivator Li, you don’t know the first thing about our origin! Just think about the ‘human being manufacture center’ that you visited! Do you really that the merciful, almighty Lord would pour wicked stuff such as ‘greed, jealousy, arrogance, and anger’ into our souls when we were created?

“No, all such emotions are viruses that were condensed by Chaos with life!

“The viruses of Chaos first infected the Nuwa Clan, which was responsible for creating and utilizing us. Then, through the Nuwa Clan, they infected us and brought countless negative emotions to us. They are the source of all sin!

“The viruses corroded the three fundamental laws of the Path of Ultimate Benevolence and made us go out of control. The brilliant civilization of the Pangu Clan was destroyed. Then, the universe has been demolished time and time again in a cycle of death, with no way of getting out!

“But right now, we can be saved!

“Just like the viruses on the crystal processors can be killed by the ‘anti-virus programs’, our souls should have a thorough ‘virus-killing’ procedure, too, in order to slay all worries, desires, and sins!

“Trust me, Fellow Cultivator Li, as long as you taste the feeling of ‘virus-killing’ once, you will perceive true peace, tranquility, and happiness. You will realize how idiotic, hilarious, and hideous your old self was, which was driven by the negative emotions and the primitive desires and caught in the abyss of sins without knowing!”

Li Yao’s eyes were shaking, but he did not slow down attacking the sphere barrier at all.

“There’s no need to lie to me, Fellow Cultivator Li, I can tell.”

Tang Qianhe did not care about their crazy bombardment at all. Combing her hair that had covered her eyes, she smiled casually. “You have a mental devil in your heart. A very strong one that you can barely get rid of!

“You are trapped in the battles with the mental devil day after day, and you do not dare relax for one second because you may be swallowed by the mental devil with one moment of sluggishness!”

Li Yao was greatly alarmed. He did not know that Tang Qianhe would be capable of seeing through the mental devil inside his brain!

The mental devil exclaimed in shock, too, before it jumped into the crown of the memory tree and hid there.

“Let me take a guess about the origin of your mental devil. Was it because of the countless companions you ate during the accident in the space?

“Perhaps, there were your life-and-death comrades and even your dearest lovers, but eventually… you ate them all!

“It explains why your mental devil is so strong.

“Let me tell you, Fellow Cultivator Li, even if you do survive in the Imperium of True Human Beings and achieve the position, wealth, power, and strength that you crave, your mental devil will not go anywhere! It will haunt you forever and grow as you get stronger, bathing you in eternal pain, fear, regret, and desperation all the time!

“One day, you will be completely devoured by the mental devil. All your wealth, standing, and power will be meaningless!

“The Imperium can offer you everything materialistic, but it cannot save your soul!

“Only the Covenant Alliance can grant you a grand new life!

“We can completely wipe out your mental devil and erase all the negative emotions in your soul. You will hate, fear, panic, regret, envy, lust, and snap no more. You will be a carefree, impeccable, and pure human being!”

Chapter 1283 - You Must Not Be Swayed!

“Wow!”

Before Li Yao could reply, the mental devil extended its little neck out of the tree of memory pieces and shrieked, “That’s too vicious! Slaying such an innocent and harmless mental devil such as myself? No wonder they say that women are the most obnoxious of all! You—you wouldn’t listen to her jibber-jabber, would you?”

“I beg to differ,” Li Yao said. “Although she may be overstating some parts, she does have a point in general. You have been quite an annoyance, and you try to bewilder, corrupt, and swallow me from morning to dust every day. If I am incautious for one moment, I will be mired in your Abyss. It does not seem a bad offer if I can wipe you out for good!”

“Not a bad offer?” The mental devil bashed its chest and cried. “Unbrotherly! So unbrotherly! To think that we have gone through life and death in the Blood Demon Sector, and I helped unravel the mysteries of the training of cells, activate the primeval memories in the ancient times, and even build the Cell Obliteration Cannon for you! I consider you a good bro to fight side by side with, and this is how you are treating me? I’m weeping!”

“A good bro? Did you really?” Li Yao thought carefully for a moment. “I only recall that, when I was framed after I returned to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, not only did you refuse to help me, you even took the opportunity to swallow me when I was in peril!”

“You dummy!” the mental devil exclaimed, as if it were greatly wronged. “Do you still understand how much I have been doing for you? I was merely enlightening and polishing you in a special way! Had I not pretended to swallow you time and time again, would your soul have grown to such an immense level, and would you have advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage at such a young age?”

“That explains a lot. It seems that I have indeed wronged you.” Li Yao nodded in approval. “Then, what about yesterday? Didn’t you declare resolutely yesterday that you had taken sides with Blackstar the Great, whom you considered to be your most admirable idol, and you had become an unwavering Immortal Cultivator? Didn’t you say that your belief would completely crush mine and you would swallow me one day?”

The mental devil blinked innocently. “Did I say that?”

“Should I retrieve a clip of my memory for you?”

“… That will not be necessary, Brother Yao. After a day’s careful consideration, I have thought everything through!

“Yesterday, I was too foolish, having been deeply brainwashed by the Immortal Cultivators. My head was not clear when I bought their bullsh*t, which is full of loopholes. That was why I spoke such nonsense to you at that time!

“Later, under Brother Yao’s insightful tutelage and charming charisma, I gradually realized the nature of the Immortal Cultivators, which is sordid, shameless, selfish, and ruthless. The decayed Imperium of True Human Beings is doomed to fail, while the vigorous Star Glory Federation will certainly rise unstoppably. It is the law of history and the trend of the universe!

“Screw Blackstar the Great and the Imperium of True Human Beings! Screw all the other Immortal Cultivators! I have decided! From this moment on, I will return to the correct path and join the side of brightness. I will examine my wrongdoings and be a proper and glorious Cultivator!

“In the future, I will certainly follow your lead. We will work together and fight side by side for the federation, for our compatriots, and for the general public. We will make contributions and sacrifices as expected of a Cultivator!

“Please look forward to my performance, Brother Yao!”

“You seem to have turned into a man of devotion after only one day,” Li Yao commented. “You are not saying this when you do not mean it because you are scared that I have found a way to execute you, are you?”

“Of course not. Do I look like such a coward?” the mental devil declared solemnly. “I meant every word that I said. I was not forced to say anything at all!”

“Really?”

“Yes! Although I am a tiny mental devil and evil is in my nature, I am Brother Yao’s mental devil after all! As the saying goes, he who gets in contact with vermilion will become red! After following Brother Yao for such a long time and being edified by your glorious deeds from dawn till dusk, finally, as the changes in quantity lead to a change in quality, I have been completely changed by you! Isn’t—isn’t it very reasonable?”

“Fine!” Li Yao licked his dry lips. He narrowed his eyes as he gazed at Tang Qianhe and said silently inside his brain, “Then, prepare to activate the most brutal form of my left arm where you are lurking!”

The mental devil was suddenly alarmed. “What are you trying to do? Your heart is beating more than a hundred times per second!”

While he was grinning hideously, Li Yao’s bloodshot eyes passed Tang Qianhe’s shoulders and pierced into the escape capsule. “Nothing particular. I only mean to find out something.”

“What—what is it?” the mental devil stammered.

“When I just began my career,” Li Yao said, “I once practiced saber arts in the middle of the sandstorms on the Grand Desolate Plateau. At that time, even the tornadoes were slashed in half and perished into nothingness!

“The second when the tornadoes that could rip apart the sky and the ear vanished in front of my eyes was the most gratifying second in my entire life. The feeling was so enjoyable that even the ‘competition of beliefs’ is no match for it!

“My saber is a saber that can kill a tornado!

“I would like the taste the feeling again, where the entire world is eclipsed by me!

“I want to find out whether or not my saber can kill a ‘god’ after being crazily whetted for more than ten years!”

Violent music was playing inside Li Yao’s brain.

After he advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage from the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage, he had already become able to control himself and restrain the sound of resonation between his abdomen and his spiritual energy to his veins, nerves, and spiritual root without letting any out.

However, Li Yao had already grown fond of fighting in the middle of soul-stirring music. He was also preparing to build his special combat mode, or rather, the ‘spiritual domain’, with the violent, world-shaking music as the core!

It was said that when a Cultivator marched into the Divinity Transformation Stage from the Nascent Soul Stage, their soul and their will would temporarily be freed from the confines of their body. They would construct a special, twisted force field around them!

Everything within the force field would be covered by their soul and their will. They would be like a true god mastering everything in the tiny, independent world!

Such a force field was also known as a spiritual domain!

Within the range of the spiritual domain, a mortal could be a god!

The ability to trigger a spiritual domain marked the biggest difference between the Nascent Soul Stage and the Divinity Transformation Stage. When a Cultivator boasted a spiritual domain, they would essentially be carrying a portable ‘home field’. Whoever they were fighting against, as soon as they activated the spiritual domain, they would immediately boast mysterious ‘home field advantages’!

Of course, Li Yao was still some distance away from the Divinity Transformation Stage, but still, it would not hurt if he started making preparations right now so that he could soar into the ultimate level one day!

“Fellow Cultivator Li!”

Slapped by countless whips of light brutally, Tang Qianhe was shrieking in a high-pitched voice, her figure and her voice both twisted. “If you persist in your ignorance, you will be plagued by worries forever! Embrace the Path of Ultimate Benevolence and let us eliminate all your concerns for you!”

“Fellow Cultivator Li!”

Su Changfa and Kou Ruhuo were both summoning all their spiritual energy. They were also on the verge of exhaustion. If Li Yao jumped to the Covenant Alliance’s side at that moment, everybody would be doomed!

Even the old and cunning Su Changfa sounded like he was begging when he said, “Do not listen to that puppet’s nonsense! One’s feelings are indispensable in the first place. If you indeed kill all your negative emotions, all your positive emotions will be suppressed to the minimum, too. You will become just like her!

“How can you be delighted without experiencing sorrow? How can you be happy without going through fury? If there’s no envy, there will be no competition or momentum to strive forward! Without greed and desire, can a human being still be called a human being!

“Fellow Cultivator Li, you must not be swayed. You must not!”

“So,” Li Yao said solemnly, “you are admitting the most of her words are true? Is the future of the Imperium of True Human Beings truly not promising, and the Covenant has risen unstoppably and overwhelmed you?”

“Cough, cough! Cough, cough, cough, cough!” Su Changfa coughed nonstop, covering his weakness by throwing up blood.

“We are still at an advantage in head-on battles,” Kou Ruhuo shouted. “We have so many resources from so many Sectors at our disposal. They are enough to even crush the Covenant Alliance with their sheer weight!

“However, the shameless Covenant Alliance has infiltrated us and brainwashed a number of citizens of the Imperium, especially the hominoids who are slaves, with their theory of the Path of Ultimate Benevolence. That is why they have resurged time and time again!

“But rest assured, Brother Li. The Imperium has developed a technique called the Ring-Tu Test that can accurately tell human beings apart from such puppets!

“We will eliminate the Covenant Alliance for good very soon!”

Kou Ruhuo was a terrible liar after all because Tang Qianhe had obviously deceived the Ring-Tu Test. In the urgency, he was too anxious to care about whether or not Li Yao was laughing at him right now.

However, from his unconsidered words, Li Yao was still partly able to infer why such an absurd Path of Ultimate Benevolence was spreading on a large scale in the territory of the Imperium.

Li Yao found the Path of Ultimate Benevolence absurd because all his materialistic needs had been met. He was not concerned about the safety of his life, either. Naturally, it was the spiritual achievements that were of a higher level that he pursued.

Feelings and emotions were very important to him.

It would definitely be unacceptable if somebody wanted to take them away from him.

However, Li Yao, and even perhaps the Star Glory Federation, were probably the special cases in the three thousand Sectors.

Maybe, in many other Sectors, the ordinary people were still living lives of fear all day with barely any food or clothes. They could end up being the prey of demons, the extraterrestrial devils, or the ferocious animals of the alien species at any time. They might even become the slaves or the experimental mice of their own kind, like the hominoids of the Imperium of True Human Beings!

Walking in their shoes, Li Yao realized that, if he were a remnant citizen of the Martial Meritocrats Sector or the Sand Primitive Sector, he would be the most miserable slave in the Imperium of True Human Beings. Every second after he was born might be the second when he was sent for experiments.

Then, he definitely would not hesitate to embrace such a beautiful new world, which was claimed to be a place where everybody was equal without any conflict or oppression, even if he had to trade all his worries, fears, and sorrows for it. If anything, they were exactly what he hoped to get rid of!

Chapter 1284 - The God Has Arrived!

Those Immortal Cultivators have truly caused more problems than they solved! Li Yao thought to himself regretfully. *If they hadn't founded such a country as the Imperium of True Human Beings where ordinary people are exploited cruelly, the 'Path of Ultimate Benevolence' would never have been spread out in the bottom level of the society so quickly, and the Covenant Alliance wouldn't have risen so fast!*

"How can you do things like that?" Li Yao roared toward Kou Ruhuo and Su Changfa. "I mean from the bottom of my heart to be an Immortal Cultivator, and I want to join the Imperium sincerely! But you were simply deceiving me with such terrible lies? Is there still even the slightest trust among Immortal Cultivators!"

Kou Ruhuo was more embarrassed than ever. He gritted his teeth and said, "Brother Li, we can talk about things between us later. The most important issue right now is to deal with the member of the Pangu Clan! We have to blow up the escape capsule before he absorbs all the energy inside the escape capsule!

"Once he absorbs enough energy, he will return to the world in a fully awakened state. We'll be screwed if that happens!

"After the member of the Pangu Clan is suppressed, we will have achieved an unparalleled accomplishment. You can get anything from the Imperium and even be granted the entire Flying Star Sector!"

Li Yao sneered in his heart. Such an offer as the ‘master of the Flying Star Sector’ had already been promised by the star child once in the past.

The Immortal Cultivators were indeed of the same trade. Even the temptations that they threw out were so cliché!

However, he was not wrong about one thing.

While the Immortal Cultivators were definitely no good, the member of the Pangu Clan was ten thousand times more dangerous than them and could not be allowed to be resuscitated in a fully awakened state!

Li Yao gritted his teeth and ignored Tang Qianhe’s enchantment. Magma seemed to be spurting out of his shoulders as the Erratic Light Cannons shot out streams of brilliance, raising clusters of brilliant stars on the sphere barrier that surrounded Tang Qianhe and the member of the Pangu Clan!

Disappointment and sympathy flashed in Tang Qianhe’s eyes when she saw that he would not listen to her after all. She turned around to her Lord and began uttering spells and worshipping, praying that the Lord could wake up sooner.

Boom!

Perhaps her prayer did work out. Two deafening noises burst out on Li Yao’s shoulders, while deep red fireballs rose up to the sky.

As it turned out, since this was the first time that he had ever used the Erratic Light Cannon, he must have failed to control the rhythm of pulling the triggers but simply bombarded as crazily as could. The internal temperature of the Erratic Light Cannons was so high that the core control units had melted. Both shoulder cannons were now wasted!

“Cr*p. It’s overheated!” Li Yao looked at Kou Ruhuo earnestly.

As the chief of arms, Kou Ruhuo was responsible for the allotment of weapons and magical equipment for the entire team.

The situation was too urgent. His soul was also shaking unstably due to the many violent collisions and was about to fall apart at any moment. His computational ability had hit rock bottom!

At such a time of life and death, there was no need to consider too much. After a moment’s hesitation, Kou Ruhuo picked out a scarlet ball the size of an egg. He tapped it to the center of his eyebrow before he threw it toward Li Yao and roared, “I have unlocked all the barriers and given you the highest permissions of all the magical equipment. You can choose whatever magical equipment is suitable for you!”

Li Yao picked up the round ball and observed it carefully, only to discover that the translucent ball looked like half-frozen magma with particularly bright stars embedded deep inside that were blinking as if endless mysteries had been stored in them!

Li Yao sent his telepathic thoughts into the ball. All the ‘stars’ embedded in the ball were glittering. Thousands of streams of information stored inside the ‘stars’ were flooding into his brain unstoppably!

A 3D ‘magical equipment warehouse’ was immediately unfolded inside Li Yao’s brain!

It was a rather advanced Cosmos Ring, which the aggressive magical equipment that Kou Ruhuo carried with himself was stored in. It was an out-and-out walking arsenal!

Li Yao shrieked in his heart while he watched the projections of the different types of magical equipment from the Imperium of True Human Beings swirling slowly inside his brain. Every detail was clearly visible, and all the methods of utilization were demonstrated in the streams of information. He was about to burst into tears!

Crack!

Li Yao clenched the scarlet ball in his hand. His telepathic thoughts flooded into it like a tide and enveloped one of the ‘stars’.

After he slightly exerted his strength, the ‘star’ seemed to be crushed by him. Thousands of starry specs leaked out of the ball and spread all the way upward through the gaps of Li Yao’s fingers, entangling his entire right arm!

Very soon, a second layer of crimson armor appeared on Li Yao’s right arm!

The armor was not made of metal, and it looked as translucent as a red crystal. However, it could be turned around swiftly at the same time. It could not have been weirder!

On the crystal armor, redness was flowing and expanding crazily, enhancing Li Yao’s spiritual energy to the maximum and producing a red claw almost ten meters long!

Every finger was more than two meters long, the sharp aura of the talons that was vibrating at a frequency of tens of thousands of times per second.

All the scraps that entered the range of the aura would be absorbed into them and torn into shreds!

This is the real level of the magical equipment in the Imperium of True Human Beings!

With the marvelous weapon in his possession, Li Yao was so satisfied that he almost felt like roaring!

Compared with the crimson crystal arm armor, the two Erratic Light Cannons that Kou Ruhuo installed for him were nothing more than pistols. It was obvious that they did not trust him and had only been willing to give him the cheapest weapons!

“Thank you for your trust, Senior Kou. I have finally felt the selfless warmth of the Imperium of True Human Beings!”

Li Yao kept the ‘arsenal’ to himself with no intention of returning it. He roared and snatched at the sphere barrier with the red claw!

Tang Qianhe thought that he was in the middle level of the Core Formation Stage at best and would not be able to bring out the weapon’s full power. Therefore, she did not care too much about his attack but focused her attention on Kou Ruhuo’s collisions and the bombardment of the remaining hundreds of spiritual puppets.

However, Li Yao had improved his capability to the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage easily. While he was waving the sharp talons, he was also attracting the metal debris from around, which was shattered and heated into five torrents of scorching particles, penetrating into the sphere barrier brutally!

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

The five talons pierced deep into the sphere barrier, leaving five holes behind!

The two force fields completely entangled with one another. All the particles were interfering with and crashing into each other. The sphere barrier was immediately thrown into disorder and could not sustain the perfect sphere any longer. A lot of lumps bulged out on the surface, and many deep dents were appearing, too!

Kou Ruhuo was overjoyed. The Immortal Cultivator was tough enough to leap on top of the sphere barrier while grabbing a superstring cannon that was even thicker than his thigh. Weathering through the intense radiation and interference, he pressed the barrel into a deep dent on the sphere barrier and pulled the trigger brutally!

“Ahhhhh!”

Kou Ruhuo’s inhuman screams were echoing inside the communication channel.

There was no telling whether it was because of the excruciating pain caused by the radiation and interference or because he was greatly enjoying himself in the storm of bullets!

Boom!

The spiritual shield of the escape capsule of the Pangu Clan was finally blown up into icy, thin crystals that were glittering and dispersing in all directions!

Tang Qianhe shrieked and jumped onto the escape capsule. “Lord, wake up now!”

“Kill him!”

Li Yao, Su Changfa, and Kou Ruhuo opened fire at the same time.

Li Yao’s bizarre claw of spiritual energy, Kou Ruhuo’s giant that was made of his Nascent Soul, the hundreds of spiritual puppets under Su Changfa’s control… Thousands of streaks of brilliance darted toward the escape capsule like thousands of vipers!

The cracks on the escape capsule of the Pangu Clan reached the maximum. Finally, it could not bear the bombardment of spiritual energy anymore and exploded!

Huala!

For a moment, Li Yao felt that the space around the escape capsule was ‘broken’.

Waves ten thousand times stronger than tsunamis were spreading in all directions. All the magical equipment on his crystal suit was blocked. The light beam went blank, and there was nothing but ear-splitting noise in the communication channel. Even the telepathic thoughts that he unleashed were like butterflies in a storm. He felt that the whole world was swirling in front of him, and he could not perceive anything!

When the dizziness gradually alleviated and his crystal suit returned to normal, the last picture that he was able to see was displayed on the twisted light beam!

The escape capsule of the Pangu Clan was shattered into pieces, which were floating in the zero-gravity space, mixed by transparent dews that must have been the energy liquid stored inside the escape capsule earlier.

The member of the Pangu Clan, however, was sitting cross-legged in midair in a solemn posture while making a seal with both hands against his chest. His two fingers were extended out, one pointing the sky and the other pointing at the ground.

Glamorous brilliance was emanating from his armor, too, as if it was being activated!

He was not woken up according to the normal procedure but forced to wake up because of the crazy attack from Li Yao and the rest of them. Therefore, his big, pale face was written with fatigue, and he was not willing to open his eyes for a long time.

However, when his eyelids were truly opened in the end, revealing a pair of eyes that were purely black without pupils, all the three of them were awed by the indifference, graveness, and coldness in the eyes!

“Merciful and almighty Lord, welcome back to the infected universe. Please free us from all the miseries and completely purge the entire world!”

Tang Qianhe’s voice was as calm and soft as before, with barely any inflection.

Even after her true god had arrived, she was showing no sign of delight except raising her lips a few degrees!

Tang Qianhe picked up a cold drug from her Cosmos Ring and drank all of it. Then, she made seals with her hands quickly while she muttered spells.

From every pore on her body, thick, deep-blue fluids that looked like the hibernation energy liquid were leaking out!

The liquids seemed to be alive. Drawing deep blue strokes on her elegant body, they were… dissecting her quickly!

Sacred brilliance and a touching smile appeared on Tang Qianhe’s pretty face that was about to be melted in the blue light. Her eyes full of expectation, she murmured, “Absorb me, Lord, and refill the energy that you have lost during the protracted hibernation. Then, destroy the tyranny of human beings and establish a perfect world where there are no wars, no suffering, no oppression, and no slavery!”

Chapter 1285 - Regards from an Immortal Cultivator!

Li Yao felt so creeped out that all his nerve endings seemed to be exploding. Tang Qianhe’s enjoyable, hopeful smile on her face was giving him a strong feeling of nausea, too.

Dismembering her body and soul and offering them to the Pangu Clan?

Was… was it really behavior that befitted a ‘human being’?

However, for the Pangu civilization, it seemed to be anything but unusual. Li Yao had once seen the pictures in the primeval memories where the Pangu Clan created flourishing lives. At that time, it was the members of the Pangu Clan who drank thick, black liquids and dissected themselves, allowing their genes to fall into the ocean and evolve into all the other creatures!

Since they did not even hesitate to dissect themselves, it was not hard to guess their attitude toward human beings, which were considered tools. Perhaps, in the concepts of the Pangu civilization, the dissection was not death but immortality in a different form!

But for modern human beings, such ‘immortality’ was simply too hilarious!

No wonder his foster father had said that the Covenant Alliance was ten thousand times more wicked than the

Imperium!

No wonder!

“Stop her!” Kou Ruhuo shouted desperately. “After absorbing her, the member of the Pangu Clan will become even more formidable. We are definitely going to be no match for him! If he reactivates the planetary warship, all will be lost!”

Li Yao was greatly alarmed.

The members of the Pangu Clan were not literally ‘gods’ but carbon-based lives that were made of flesh and flood. However brilliant their civilization had once been, one of them could not be too strong!

However, once he completely returned to himself and found a way to activate the planetary warship again, there would certainly be dire consequences!

The homeland of the Imperium might not have been affected immediately because of the billions of lightyears in between, but it would certainly be a world-blighting catastrophe for the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector, which were right next to the place!

Li Yao could not help but envision all the citizens of the Star Glory Federation worshipping the member of the Pangu Clan with a smile resembling that of a retard while they were suppressed by the brilliance of the Path of Ultimate Benevolence. Then, they dissected themselves into the most fundamental energy and provided nutrition for the Pangu Clan.

It was a future that was even more unacceptable than being the Imperium of True Human Beings’ slaves!

“This is not the future!”

With a roar, Li Yao snatched the member of the Pangu Clan who was still in a trance with the bizarre claw of spiritual energy!

Parent civilization?

That’s not a reason to not kill you!

Kou Ruhuo, on the other hand, aimed all the firepower at Tang Qianhe, trying to blow her up before she was devoured by the member of the Pangu Clan.

“The Lord has arrived. Stop your futile struggle and accept the purge. This is your only fate!”

Tang Qianhe’s voice sounded both dull and blurred. After saying that, she leapt toward the member of the Pangu Clan with a smile of relief, dragging her glittering body that was about to melt!

Kou Ruhuo’s thousands of whips of light that were flooding out were about to rip her to shreds, and Li Yao’s bizarre claw of spiritual energy was about to grab the member of the Pangu Clan’s face, when the member of the Pangu Clan opened his lips and uttered a series of deafening, soul-stirring primeval spells!

Every word sounded like a combination of hundreds of syllables, which did not break apart again until they crawled into the heads of the listeners. They turned into golden, shining stripes and tied, confined, and suppressed the listener’s souls!

His voice became louder and louder. Infinite spiritual energy was also being condensed in front of him. With every syllable that he uttered, the most complicated character would pop up in front of him!

The characters were a hundred times more precise than the most sophisticated calligraphy that Li Yao had seen in the memories about the ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago. They were all made of more than a thousand strokes that were all square and errorless!

The glittering, octagonal spells, after being spoken by the member of the Pangu Clan, immediately extended and expanded, as if they were unfolded from the second dimension to the third dimension. They were upgraded from a plane into a cube of sharp edges that had dense spells on all surfaces.

Boom!

The cube of spells exploded, blowing out thousands of torrents of particles that pierced the bodies of all three of them!

Li Yao felt the most excruciating pain from his bones, as if thousands of ants were gnawing his heart. The superstring shield outside of his crystal suit was shaking like a candle in a storm. A lot of units in the crystal suit had exploded during the moment. The Rockman was mottled and riddled with holes!

What made him even more uncomfortable was the weird sense of depression flowing out from his cells. It was harassing his every gene strand and urging him to worship and take the orders from the member of the Pangu Clan!

In his trance, the member of the Pangu Clan seemed to have become a true god and the only inviolable dominator in the entire universe!

The primeval spells took effect immediately after they were cast, and the fundamental laws suppressed and stole their souls!

Pu!

Li Yao’s soul seemed to have been struck by lightning. His every cerebral vessel was leaking blood. He had been blown away almost ten kilometers by the storm of spells, crashing into countless scraps along the way. His back was covered in bruises, and his bones were almost broken!

When he finally stabilized himself again, there were the only last remains of the Rockman on his body. His blood was fleeing from his body quickly in tiny pearls!

His eyes were even dyed in the freshest redness by the blood. Even his pupils were almost entirely melted!

Kou Ruhuo and Su Changfa had been blown away by the storm of spells, too!

The dozens of spiritual puppets that were closest to the member of the Pangu Clan were all spurting out dazzling sparks before they completely went out of control in the cracking explosions.

They were either activating their power rune arrays to the maximum and flying aimlessly like headless flies or floating in the vacuum quietly with their limbs twisted and their light turned off, like the surrounding war debris!

The member of the Pangu Clan took the opportunity to snatch Tang Qianhe!

Tang Qianhe moaned in great satisfaction. Both like a cluster of thick liquids and like a furiously burning torch, she integrated into the brilliance triggered by the gray giant!

For a moment, thunder was echoing from the gray giant’s body. The surface of his armor was brighter and clearer!

He stretched out his arms with a long roar.

The entire escape center was shaking in fear under his roar!

He lowered his head and looked at Li Yao, Kou Ruhuo, and Su Changfa not far away, the three mini creatures who were very similar to himself in appearance but multiple times smaller.

As if not entirely satiated, he extended his enormous hand to the three of them.

The information streams contained in the spells and his matter-of-fact countenance made the three of them immediately understand what he meant.

The member of the Pangu Clan was asking the three of them to jump into his palm promptly and be swallowed by him so that his energy could be refilled.

“Hehehehe…”

Kou Ruhuo’s low and crazy laughter echoed in the communication channel.

Before Li Yao and Su Changfa realized what was going, the bald Immortal Cultivator had already lunged toward the gray giant’s huge hand.

“Lord!” Kou Ruhuo’s rough voice was echoing from the broadcast array of the crystal suit. “Please accept the sincerest regards from me, a true human being, to the merciful and almighty Lord!”

He became faster and faster, like a flying sword that was accelerating at the last phase. His voice turned into sharp arrows, marching forward with him. He seemed to be a great army on his own!

“Lord!”

Kou Ruhuo burst into laughter as he broke three of the gray giant’s barriers of spells in a row. Waving his right arm, he raised a narrow, long saber and slashed right toward the member of the Pangu Clan’s face.

“F*ck you!”

Boom!

Kou Ruhuo, who was less than three meters tall even with his crystal suit, was an out-and-out dwarf in front of the member of the Pangu Clan, who was almost twenty meters tall!

However, the saber of the ‘dwarf’, together with the long, scorching aura of the blade, left a dazzling trace on the member of the Pangu Clan’s face!

The Immortal Cultivator’s blade aura crashed into the member of the Pangu Clan’s spiritual shield brutally. In the twisted force fields, both of them seemed to be in the middle of unpredictable alien space!

The attack was condensed by all the spirit of an expert in the Nascent Soul Stage. Although it did not hurt the member of the Pangu Clan’s body, it was a major shock for his soul that had only just woken up.

With an expression of pain on his face, the member of the Pangu Clan bellowed and closed his hands, trying to kill Kou Ruhuo in his palm!

Perhaps Kou Ruhuo could have avoided the attack, but he had focused all his belief, his will, and his soul power on the unstoppable attack in front. He did not bother to evade the dominance of a ‘god’ at all!

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

Kou Ruhuo’s superstring shield had been activated to the maximum, only to die out in the next half a second. His crystal suit became rife with cracks instantly and fell apart in the next moment!

“Go to hell!” Kou Ruhuo yelled, but he had already crawled out of his crystal suit before the crystal suit was broken!

That was his tactic!

He abandoned the crystal suit and the superstring shield, he abandoned all the defenses, and he abandoned all the opportunities of escape, just so that he could buy himself a gap of 0.1 seconds to leave the trace of a human being on the face of a ‘god’!

“Take a good look at my saber!

“This is the warmest greeting from the Immortal Cultivators, the true human beings, and the Imperium, to b*stards such as you!”

His tall and magnificent body withered to the minimum. Kou Ruhuo seemed to have condensed all his vitality into the most brilliant attack ever. The saber aura was suddenly levels brighter and even eclipsing the spells that the member of the Pangu Clan spurted out!

The gray giant’s spiritual shield was finally cut open by the attack that Kou Ruhuo had traded almost half of his life for like a piece of tofu!

The aura of the saber pierced into the gray giant’s left eye, the feeblest part on any being’s body. A large cluster of thick, black blood immediately burst out!

As it turned out, the Pangu Clan—gods—could bleed, too.

The gray giant was roaring even more ear-splittingly while he shook his head hard, trying to throw Kou Ruhuo away.

Kou Ruhuo took the opportunity to clutch the handle of the saber and moved left and right in order to expand the wound.

The member of the Pangu Clan was almost bending because of the excruciating pain. He extended his hand to the left eye.

Kou Ruhuo had already consumed too much of his spiritual energy when he crashed the sphere barrier with his Nascent Soul. Right after, after sparing nothing and performing the attack that even devils would fear, he was already exhausted.

Faced with the member of the Pangu Clan’s enormous hand, he did not dodge at all but simply grabbed the enemy’s eyelid amid crazy laughter. Then, he opened his mouth and bit it hard!

“You want to eat me? In your dreams!

“Let me taste the flavor of a god first!”

Chapter 1286 - On Fire!

Kou Ruhuo’s canine teeth bit into the corner of the member of the Pangu Clan’s eye deeply. He waved his head hard and truly tore off a large piece of flesh together with the skin!

He chewed quickly, swallowing both the meat and the black blood into his stomach, before he put on an expression of disguise and spat out part of the broken meat. “How smelly!”

Every muscle on the face of the member of the Pangu Clan was twitching violently because of the pain, but they could not be frozen into the countenance of fury at all, as if a certain ‘barrier’ that had been installed in his soul was taming his negative emotions. Whenever his negative emotions were flooding out, the barrier would unleash things like ‘electricity’ to suppress his nerves!

His fury was provoked time and time again, only to be contained every time without exception. As a result, his face was extremely twisted, with inhuman gloom on it!

After the large piece of flesh of the member of the Pangu Clan was devoured, the immense spiritual energy contained inside made Kou Ruhuo’s stomach bulge like a balloon. Cracks appeared all over his body, from which fire and smoke were flooding out crazily!

He burst into laughter in the fire, releasing his infinite feelings blatantly!

Joy, anger, sadness, content, despise, pride, affection… The positive ones, the negative ones, the bright ones, the dark ones. All his emotions were breaking out like a torrent!

Kou Ruhuo’s behavior infuriated the member of the Pangu Clan even more.

It was like a man who had lost the sense of smell, taste, and satiation watching somebody else enjoying a delicious meal to their heart’s content.

Li Yao could see a hint of intense jealousy from the eyes of the member of the Pangu Clan.

However, the very next second, ‘jealousy’, as a negative emotion, was shattered into pieces by the lightning deep inside his soul. His eyes turned into two tranquil, black gems again.

It appeared that he was not capable of jealousy and fury at all!

The member of the Pangu Clan opened his hands and slapped his eyes, trying to flatten Kou Ruhuo!

After devouring tremendous flesh, Kou Ruhuo was also dissected like Tang Qianhe. However, his fire of life was a hundred times more violent than Tang Qianhe’s. His high and magnificent Nascent Soul soared up in the fire, which would not be suppressed however hard the member of the Pangu Clan tried. It was spurting out crazily from the gaps of the fingers of the member of the Pangu Clan and burning more and more fiercely, as if a newborn star was melting the member of the Pangu Clan’s face!

“You want to absorb me? Come on! My soul is right here. Why don’t you take it?”

Kou Ruhuo burst out his last roar. The flames of spiritual energy surged out, and his Nascent Soul was expanding crazily. His life and will turned into the most dazzling brilliance and exploded on the member of the Pangu Clan's face brutally!

The tough Immortal Cultivator had decided to detonate his own Nascent Soul and made his long life blossom for this moment!

A volcano was erupting on the gray giant's face. Black and red fire was squirting out from the gaps of his fingers that were covering his left eye. He could not stop it however hard he tried!

The red color was the last glamor of Kou Ruhuo's shining soul.

The black color was the mist of blood when the member of the Pangu Clan's flesh was vaporized!

“Ahhhh!”

With a dull scream, the member of the Pangu Clan staggered in midair, unable to maintain its high and almighty posture from a moment ago!

“Senior Kou…”

Li Yao had never expected that his blood would be boiling and his fighting will would be soaring by the boost of the resolution and toughness of an Immortal Cultivator!

He did not know whether it was because Kou Ruhuo's suicidal attack significantly diminished the member of the Pangu Clan's oppression or because his burning fighting will had ripped apart all boundaries that were entangling his gene strands.

But all in all, the member of the Pangu Clan at this moment was no longer as scary as when he had just woken up. His daunting spells turned into dispersing brightness, too, and could not impose any influence on them anymore!

“Fellow Cultivator Li, go now!” Su Changfa shouted. “Kou Ruhuo is dead. I’m heavily wounded. You are merely in the Core Formation Stage, and your crystal suit has been shattered. We are definitely no match for him! While his soul is still in shock, go back to the surface and fully activate the war base. Mobilize more spiritual puppets to deal with him!”

“We go?” Li Yao was grinning so hideously that the redness inside his eyes was almost overflowing and covering his entire face in stripes of blood!

Boom!

The fire of spiritual energy all over Li Yao’s body soared. Bloody brilliance spurted out of his pores, blowing away whatever left of the Rockman engineering suit!

His magnificent aura and the violent battle hymn that was also boosted to the maximum along with his bloody fighting will cast Su Changfa into bewilderment. He pointed at Li Yao and shouted, “You—”

“Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Dark Flame Gold!”

Li Yao touched the center of his eyebrow with his index finger and his middle finger on his right hand. His soul power mixed with his spiritual energy flooded out crazily like a long river!

The Cosmos Rings that were hanging in front of his chest a moment ago were surrounding his body like shooting stars!

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

One unit after another rushed out of the Cosmos Rings and was affixed to him because of the attachment of the electromagnetic field, gradually displaying the whole appearance of a black crystal suit!

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit at this moment had already been adjusted to the ‘super-heavy firepower mode’. The entire crystal suit was almost three meters long. In front of the broad chest, a crystal cannon that seemed to be made of thousands of stars was floating. The left arm seemed to be condensed by seven interweaving dragons and was significantly thicker than the right arm!

Boom!

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Dark Flame Gold, in the super-heavy firepower mode, had been successfully equipped!

Li Yao’s spiritual energy, which had been enhanced by crystals, produced an immense force field, breaking all the war debris within a hundred meters into metal powder that was rubbing during the high-speed rotation until it was heated into a scorching torrent of particles resembling magma!

Manipulated by his telepathic thoughts, the scorching torrent of particles gradually turned into two wings. An overwhelming falcon seemed to be taking off!

“Kill you while you are ill!”

Li Yao pushed the wings of fire. They melted behind the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Dark Flame Gold into an enormous ring, from which an exhaust flame several kilometers long was bursting out. Li Yao's speed was bolstered to the highest in that moment!

While Su Changfa was looking in utmost shock, Li Yao sprinted unstoppably toward the member of the Pangu Clan, who was holding his head in pain!

The member of the Pangu Clan had only just recovered from a hibernation of hundreds of thousands of years. He was not fully recovered in the first place. Although he was charged with Tang Qianhe's whole spiritual energy, it was not nearly enough to fill the void!

Then, Kou Ruhuo's suicidal attack of detonating his Nascent Soul had completely broken through his spiritual shield, causing his head to be burnt and blackened!

In excruciating pain, the member of the Pangu Clan's techniques to draw runes and cast spells were greatly weakened!

He covered his left eye with one hand while he drew a few runes quickly in midair with his other hand. The runes were unfolded from a plane into the three-dimensional space again. Thousands of spells burst out into walls of wall, only to be breached through by the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Dark Flame Gold directly!

The moment it pierced through the walls of fire, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Dark Flame Gold turned from black into orange.

It was not hard to guess what a devastatingly high temperature the fire triggered by the member of the Pangu

Clan must have been!

However, Li Yao’s speed was not affected in the slightest. Driving the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Dark Flame Gold that was about to melt, he dashed right up to the member of the Pangu Clan’s face!

The member of the Pangu Clan’s enormous body size was now more of a burden. Now that a human being, which was much smaller in size, approached him, it was very difficult for him to catch the enemy!

It had nothing to do with strength but because of the natural restraint of body size, just like human beings might find it difficult to catch the flies above their head with their bare hands.

To catch the ‘fly’ that was Li Yao, the member of the Pangu Clan had to resort to using both hands. He opened his fingers, which looked like ten giant pillars, limiting Li Yao’s range of activity!

It was exactly the opportunity that Li Yao had been waiting for. He straightened his left arm as if it were a spear before he aimed it at the member of the Pangu Clan’s heavily-wounded left eye. The seven dragons that were entangling his left arm suddenly dispersed, opening a bloody mouth from which bloody brilliance was bursting out!

“Super strengthened! One trillion times! Cell Obliteration Cannon!”

The bloody pillar of light penetrated through the gray giant’s left eyeball and into his brain!

Bloody mists were blowing out of the member of the Pangu Clan’s left eye, left ear, and left nostril. Half of his head was burning fiercely in the fire of blood.

However, his aura was not reduced but boosted. With starry brilliance exploding inside his right arm, he opened his mouth and spat out an arc-shaped light!

Suppressed by the arc-shaped light, Li Yao felt that he had fallen into a deep ocean. His body was immediately stalled. The member of the Pangu Clan’s enormous hand was already extending to his face, but he was unable to move at all!

A sophisticated, primeval rune surfaced on the member of the Pangu Clan’s palm. The rune that was made of almost ten thousand strokes seemed to be an impeccable formula to restrain and activate the spiritual energy that could boost the power of the spiritual energy to the maximum!

Boom!

The primeval rune was stamped on Li Yao’s body brutally!

The outermost layer of the plate armor on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Dark Flame Gold immediately turned gray and white. All its vitality was lost, and it was crumbling like sand!

The high-energy particles pierced through Li Yao’s body and blew him more than ten kilometers away!

He seemed to have suffered excessive nuclear radiation. Tremendous cells had withered instantly, and the gene strands in the other cells were falling apart, too.

If it were any other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, the heavy wounds would have made them lose their combat ability entirely!

"He must be burning his life and soul, too!"

Swallowing his blood, Su Changfa shouted, "He needs a good rest now that he has just woken up. Such a way of fighting will damage himself, too! He definitely wouldn't do it if he had any other choice!"

"Understood!" Li Yao licked his lips and grinned hideously. "So, he is sparing no efforts to deal with us, right? Very well. Then let's—"

"Hooo!"

Half way through his sentence, the heavily wounded member of the Pangu Clan roared ear-splittingly, covering half of the escape center in his soaring fire of spiritual energy!

He had originally been around sixteen meters tall, but the bright blue spiritual energy continued expanding and formed another giant almost fifty meters tall behind him!

Boom!

The giant of spiritual energy covered several kilometers in one step, absorbing all the war debris on its way into its body as bones!

"Let's do as Senior Su said!" Li Yao turned around and said to Su Changfa, "I think that you were quite right, Senior Su. We should make a strategic adjustment and deal with him using the war base after we return to the surface!"

Chapter 1287 - Draconic Phoenix, Activated!

Before he even finished his sentence, the giant of spiritual energy had already approached them. The war debris involved in the spiritual energy was built into a whip thousands of meters long and slapped Li Yao and Su Changfa brutally, blowing them away in different directions and separating them!

Su Changfa vomited blood and was almost killed on the spot.

Because of the perilous situation, he had no time to bother with Li Yao's eccentricity anymore. He released his telepathic thoughts and controlled all the remaining spiritual puppets to attack the member of the Pangu Clan.

The member of the Pangu Clan, who was 'burning his life and soul', looked like someone totally different from a moment ago. Golden brilliance was flowing on the surface of his armor, and two golden swords had formed in front of his arms. When they were waved, they would leave traces that could last several seconds in midair. The traces of the sword that were not dispersing interweaved into an impenetrable sword net!

The golden sword net fell upon them overwhelmingly. The spiritual puppets that were caught were all dissected into the tiniest components before they struggled. They were even attached to the brilliance of the sword, making it even more dazzling and huge!

Boom!

On the other side, Li Yao went through all the trouble to crush the giant of spiritual energy formed by the member of the Pangu Clan, but he was blown away again by the torrent of particles that the giant spurted out at the last moment. His crystal suit was entire broken, and his veins were almost cut into pieces!

Compared to the dead bodies of the Pangu Clan on the ground, the armor of this particular member of the Pangu Clan was more complicated and glamorous, indicating that he might have been an officer or a captain. Now that he was fighting on fire, he was truly like an invincible deity!

Even with hundreds of spiritual puppets, Li Yao and Su Changfa, two super experts in the Nascent Soul Stage, were even not enough to stop him!

What do I do?

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Dark Flame Gold, which he had worked on for almost half a year, was almost a total-loss after achieving nothing but crippling one of the member of the Pangu Clan’s eyeballs. It was dangling from his body like a dry snake skin.

There was a second Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit inside Li Yao’s Cosmos Ring, but it was just a regular model with specifications far lower than the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Dark Flame Gold’s. It might not even be able to take one of the member of the Pangu Clan’s attacks!

Seeing that Su Changfa’s spiritual puppets were being crushed by the member of the Pangu Clan like ants and that the member of the Pangu Clan’s spiritual energy was burning more and more fiercely, showing no sign of weakening, Li Yao was more than anxious!

At the moment of life and death, his last Cosmos Ring buzzed crazily.

Little Black, which was hiding in the Cosmos Ring, was calling Li Yao!

Somehow, Li Yao suddenly felt that he was being summoned by something behind him.

When he turned around, he found that he had happened to be blown to where Draconic Phoenix, the broken Colossus, was floating. He had just smashed into Draconic Phoenix and even stained the surface of the Colossus with his blood!

Perhaps motivated by the surging spiritual energy from the two parties, and perhaps completely awakened by his blood, Draconic Phoenix had ripples on its surface. The fiery ripples sounded like impatient calling, and even the incomplete wings were slightly unfolded. The metal feathers were rubbing each other, letting out roars of tigers and dragons!

Is this thing…

Li Yao’s heart was pounding as he recalled the scenes that he had seen on the primeval battlefield.

Perhaps, the only thing that could engage in a head-on battle with the member of the Pangu Clan was a Colossus!

However, the Colossus ‘Draconic Phoenix’ was entirely broken on the surface. Both the breastplate and the cap of the cockpit were gone. The right arm, as well as most of the components in the chest on the left side, was missing, too.

But even if it could be activated at all, how would he drive it?

Boom!

One of the spiritual puppets was crumpled into a burning ball by the member of the Pangu Clan and thrown over like a shooting star, brushing past Li Yao’s skull and exploding not far away into blossoming pieces!

A smoldering scent was immediately spreading out from Li Yao’s head.

As if I have any other choice!

Li Yao gritted his teeth and retrieved Little Black from the Cosmos Ring before he tossed it toward Draconic Phoenix.

“Go now, Little Black. Let’s see what kind of miracle you can create!”

With a cry of joy, Black Wing was tossed into the cockpit of Draconic Phoenix precisely.

Li Yao held his breath and waited for the responses of Black Wing and Draconic Phoenix eagerly.

For a moment, nothing seemed to be happening. Black Wing was simply floating at the center of the open cockpit of Draconic Phenix quietly, revolving.

However, the next moment, Black Wing suddenly expanded after a weird sound!

It was originally a cluster of soft, smooth, elastic, mysterious materials.

But after it expanded, it turned into a black spring that was spurting nonstop. The thick fluids soon occupied the entire cockpit and even extended dozens of black tentacles that zigzagged forward along the joints and the damage of the Colossus, entangling the three remaining limbs of the Colossus!

Sharp black stripes appeared on the crimson plate of the Colossus. Even the two broken wings were now emitting blackness, which added to its aggressiveness and mysteriousness!

Dumbfounded, Li Yao did not realize what was going on yet when almost ten black tentacles suddenly dashed out of the black fluids that filled the cockpit of the Colossus and dragged him into it!

Li Yao felt that he was mired in a black swamp. He could not even see his own fingers, nor could he hear the fierce battle outside.

He found himself in a black space, with lackluster runes flashing in front of his eyes and heavy breathing that sounded like a primeval beast’s echoing near his ears!

“Little Black! Little Black!” Li Yao shouted. However, the black fluids poured into his stomach the moment that he opened his mouth and leaked into his limbs and organs through his lungs and his stomach!

What was odd was that he did not have any foreign body sensation. Instead, he felt that he was melding with the black space!

However, the next second—

Excruciating pain leaked to every nerve ending from his pores, making him scream out loud!

The black space turned into a swirl with an ultra-high attraction force, absorbing all the spiritual energy inside his body and even his soul through the pores. He felt that he was being emptied!

He had experienced a similar sensation when he helped Little Black break the seal last time, but that had been far less dangerous than this time.

Li Yao felt that all his vitality was being drained.

He had not been so fatigued even when he did twenty competitions of beliefs in a row!

Even his Nascent Soul—which condensed all his will, determination, ideology, and belief—was dashing out from his skull because of the immense attraction force!

The Nascent Soul had left the body!

Li Yao was greatly surprised. He did not expect that piloting a Colossus would be so dangerous that even the Nascent Soul was forced to leave the body!

For a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, the Nascent Soul was their everything. Unless they had made up their mind to perish together with the enemy, like Kou Ruhuo did, they would never let their Nascent Soul out of their body to breathe some fresh air!

Only when they had advanced into the Divinity Transformation Stage, when the Nascent Soul would boast certain anti-radiation, anti-interference, and highly-competitive abilities, would they dare set the Nascent Soul free from the body in order to absorb natural spiritual energy or build spiritual domains without concerns of being harmed!

The spiritual and electromagnetic environment in the outside world was so complicated. A Nascent Soul without a shell was like a lantern in a storm. It would be shaking and could perish at any moment!

However, after waiting for three seconds in fear, Li Yao had no feeling of his Nascent Soul being jammed or attacked. It was still enveloping him and seemed to be under the protection of a solid armor that was even nurturing and enhancing it!

The darkness in front of his eyes was gone. He regained his vision and hearing again, which were ten times keener than before!

“Huchi… Huchi… Huchi… Huchi…”

Li Yao could not tell whether it was his own heavy breathing or the roar of the Colossus ‘Draconic Phoenix’ that had slept in dust for hundreds of thousands of years!

Li Yao felt that his every nerve was breaking out of his body and stretching out in all directions, mastering a body that was stronger, bigger, and solider!

The feeling was similar to the experience when he put a crystal suit on for the first time, except that it was a hundred times more gratifying than that time!

When he lowered his head in a daze, Li Yao found that he had an iron body more than ten meters tall.

When he clenched his fists subconsciously, the right hand of the iron body was clenched, too. Screeching sounds of air being highly compressed echoed from the gaps of the fingers before it turned into white smoke and popped up!

Li Yao brought the smoking iron fist to his face. His lips curled into a smile of joy.

So, this is the case.

With Little Black’s help, his Nascent Soul and his original soul had both expanded to the maximum, extending to every unit on Draconic Phoenix.

He and Draconic Phoenix had been melded!

He was the iron giant Draconic Phoenix now!

I understand it now!

Li Yao vaguely felt that he had grasped the mechanism of Colossi.

The super war magical equipment that could be up to a hundred meters tall, essentially speaking, was still a special ‘crystal suit’!

The only difference was that the common crystal suits protected and enhanced the body itself, while the Colossi protected and enhanced the Nascent Soul, the crystallization of a Cultivator’s soul and will!

A Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator could only perform the strongest strike after employing their Nascent Soul in battle.

However, without protection, a Nascent Soul that was flying randomly was vulnerable to interference and attacks and could be destroyed easily. Such a way of fighting was a suicidal one.

But what if the Nascent Soul was covered in a crystal suit?

What if the damage of the Nascent Soul was significantly increased by tremendous crystal suits and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures?

That was exactly what Colossi, the super crystal suits designed to power up the Nascent Soul, did!

No wonder only those above the Nascent Soul Stage were qualified to drive a Colossus! No wonder the cockpit of a Colossus was also called the spiritual residence!

In the Cultivation terminology, the spiritual residence, also known as the purple residence, referred to the place where the original soul and the Nascent Soul lived inside a human body in the first place!

“Ahhhhh!”

Li Yao roared in great satisfaction. He stretched out his arms with Draconic Phoenix. From the metal skull that could not be more twisted, thousands of snakes of fire blew out!

Chapter 1288 - Fists Against Flesh!

The world in front of his eyes became clearer and clearer until it was even clearer than the limits of his vision. Even the invisible spiritual waves and electromagnetic fields turned into the most brilliant spots of light that Li Yao could see directly.

It was like a colorful tide that was surging unstoppably in front of him!

Through the tidal waves and the changing colors, he was able to predict the trajectories and strength of the member of the Pangu Clan’s attacks!

In the meantime, magnificent runes were popping up inside his brain. In the middle of them were the glittering words Draconic Phoenix. The thousands of runes that surrounded the ancient calligraphy, on the other hand, were lackluster and incomplete!

Hum!

When the sparks bouncing out of the words ‘Draconic Phoenix’, a bell seemed to toll inside Li Yao’s head.

He had a feeling that he was already perfectly melded with Draconic Phoenix!

With Little Black’s assistance, spiritual threads were extending out of his every nerve ending, controlling every unit and every rune array on Draconic Phoenix!

“Hiss—”

Then, Li Yao felt such excruciating pain that he cried out aloud. Even his snot was almost flowing out.

He couldn’t sense his left arm at all. The most devastating agony was coming over from his left shoulder and his heart, too.

It appeared that after the user was integrated into the Colossus, the heavy wounds that the Colossus suffered would immediately be fed back to the user’s central nerves.

Draconic Phoenix had lost one arm and tremendous body components in the first place. Li Yao felt every bit of pain without being spared at all.

“Hu…”

Trying to hold back the pain, Li Yao stood straight and gritted his teeth to warm up his hand and feet, adapting himself to the iron body that was more than ten meters tall as quickly as possible. However, a crucial question suddenly occurred to him.

“Little Black, how does a Colossus fight? Not a physical fight with punches and kicks, I presume? Are there super brilliant and awesome techniques with appalling visual and sound effects like the ultimate skills in a game?”

Little Black responded with silence. It considered the question carefully.

Li Yao could feel that the ‘black space’ was shivering slightly.

It was Little Black’s way of saying, “I’m not sure.”

Cold sweat was immediately pouring off Li Yao’s forehead as he shrieked, “What do you mean by saying ‘I’m not sure’? Is Draconic Phoenix too damaged to perform the techniques although there should’ve been some in the beginning, or have you been sealed for too long to remember the information?”

Little Black shivered a while longer and sent a message into Li Yao’s brain. “Maybe, perhaps, possibly, both of them are true!”

“Are you kidding me?” Li Yao cried before he caught a gray shadow charging at him at lightning-like speed!

The member of the Pangu Clan was not an idiot to wait for a fair competition after he was fully used to Draconic Phoenix.

The moment that he activated Draconic Phoenix, the gray giant had realized that he was the most dangerous enemy present.

Therefore, leaving the remaining hundred or so spiritual puppets aside, he rushed toward him, with the armor opening like a blossoming lotus and dazzling spiritual energy bursting out of the depths of the ‘stamens’!

Boom!

The gray giant crashed into Draconic Phoenix brutally.

Both parties were surrounded by a spiritual and electromagnetic field, but the deep blue force field and the crimson shield deeply melted together. Ripples versus ripples, stripes against stripes, and tides on tides, until an enormous ball of light hundreds of meters in diameter was formed!

Deep inside the ball of light, Li Yao gritted his teeth hard and, holding back the pain of his abdomen being pierced through by the member of the Pangu Clan, clutched the heavily-wounded left side of his enemy’s face with the remaining right hand of Draconic Phoenix!

Li Yao was taking the advantage that the member of the Pangu Clan’s left eye was blinded, which might have affected his entire left cerebral hemisphere, too. Even if the enemy could still perceive the surroundings with his soul, it was certainly not as good as before!

The left side of his vision was definitely bad!

As he expected, the right thumb of Draconic Phoenix pierced into the member of the Pangu Clan’s left eye, which was as broken as mud, while the other four fingers grabbed his temple brutally like hooks and dragged his head down!

“Tiger kick, septuple kill!”

Draconic Phoenix’s knees hit the member of the Pangu Clan’s face like rushing supernovas, bursting out thick, messy fluids that were black, white, and red.

It was the simplest move of ‘kneeing’. Even a gangster who had learned the skills of fighting for a couple of days could do that.

However, who dictated that one must be lofty and elegant in a battle with a ‘god’?

“What does it matter even if I don’t have ultimate kills? I can blow you up with just punches!”

Exerting all his strength, Li Yao performed the last heavy kick.

After a crack, excruciating pain came over from his left knee, and the senses below his left knee were ebbing!

The Colossus was too old after all. After such a long time, the internal structure had become too fragile. Now that it was involved in a cruel, close-quarters, head-on battle without repair and maintenance, such a fighting style meant equal damage to itself!

The left knee of Draconic Phoenix was almost crippled now.

Together with the left arm that had been long lost, the Colossus was now a paraplegic patient!

After such a huge cost was paid, the member of the Pangu Clan was definitely not feeling any better. His face had already deeply collapsed because of the seven heavy blows. It now looked like a pan, one that was filled with the guts of animals.

After four wounds deep to the bones were left on his face, and after having a comminuted fracture on the rim of his left eye, the member of the Pangu Clan finally got rid of Li Yao’s harassment.

He covered his left eye not far away, while the coldest brilliance beamed out of his right eye and leaked into Li Yao’s every pore.

Li Yao sneered. Motivated by his fighting will, the thousands of runes that surrounded the words ‘Draconic Phoenix’ inside his head were rotating slowly, too. The brightness seemed to be contagious, and more and more runes were illuminated.

Suddenly, several runes staggered out, as if they were pulled by a mysterious force. They were listed in a row in an orderly fashion, constituting a spell!

Glamorous brilliance flashed on the surface of the spell before information as vast as an ocean was transmitted to Li Yao!

Dazzled, Li Yao was seeing three unpredictable, translucent pictures at the same time.

The first picture was depicting the primeval era, when the volcanoes were erupting and the seas were simmering. A giant eagle that was surrounded by flames was flying freely in the sky. Suddenly, it closed its wings and swooped into the ocean in a swirl, catching a big fish!

Li Yao did not know exactly how huge the eagle was, but the prey it caught from the ocean was an Iron-Teethed Ancient Shark, which was often dozens of meters long, with tusks in the mouth and heavy armor in the head!

The Iron-Teethed Ancient Shark, a dominator in the deep sea, was grabbed by the head by the eagle. The fire of spiritual energy around the eagle pierced into its body through the gaps of the bone armor, boiling the Iron-Teethed Ancient Shark when it only just got out of water, with hot steam popping up!

In the second picture, the intact Draconic Phoenix was mimicking the battle posture of the eagle, shattering the stars like a rainbow piercing through the sun!

The third picture, on the other hand, was a translucent painting of a human being, who was sitting cross-legged with the palms aiming at the sky. Spiritual energy was flowing in a fixed pattern inside the thousands of veins in his body.

“This is…”

Li Yao thought of something. With Little Black’s help, he immediately understood that it was the whole process of performing one of Draconic Phoenix’s ultimate skills!

The Colossus adopted a very advanced dual control menu.

Firstly, the connection of nerves and spiritual threads allowed the user to be integrated with the Colossus. The user would be able to control it as they controlled their own arms and perform the simple battle techniques that they had grasped before easily.

The thousands of ancient rune arrays that had been swirling inside Li Yao’s brain, in the meantime, were the second control menu that was more advanced. They were designed to retrieve the ultimate skills!

The thousands of ancient runes stored thousands of different ‘rules’ or ‘telepathic thoughts’. By combining them according to a certain pattern and guiding them with the user’s own circulation of spiritual energy, the user would be able to build a special spiritual and electromagnetic model to unleash an ultimate skill that Li Yao was dreaming about!

This is what I’m talking about. Come on!

Li Yao could not have been more excited!

Although the circulation of spiritual energy as depicted in the third picture was rather sophisticated, and the direction, speed, and intensity of spiritual energy in thousands of veins had to be controlled simultaneously, it was more than simple for Li Yao, who had already entered the Nascent Soul Stage!

He entered the deep meditative state immediately. In his trance, Draconic Phoenix seemed to become transparent, and the cold units and components inside were replaced by veins and nerves.

In the veins and nerves large and small, the spiritual energy was flowing and circulating prosperously, some like rivers, some like brooks, and some like vast lakes.

However, when the spiritual energy in the last nerve was functioning according to the correction direction, the spell deep inside Li Yao’s brain, which was used to summon the ultimate skill, suddenly exploded after a dazzling explosion and returned to the depths of the great array of runes!

Li Yao was dumbfounded, as if somebody had poured a bucket of cold water on his head. “What’s happening now?”

With a string of ear-splitting buzzes, another series of runes was snapped to him, but they did not seem like a spell to summon the ultimate skill but… some sort of direction entailed in the control menu of the Colossus.

Li Yao looked at the calligraphic primeval handwriting in a daze for a long time before he finally asked, “Little Black, can you help me translate? Tell me what has happened exactly, in the most simple, straightforward, and understandable way possible!”

The black space suddenly shivered. Very soon, a line of simple modern characters popped up below the primeval text.

“System fault 401.

“The attack mode you designated cannot be applied to the current machine. No response from the corresponding technique. The retrieval command has been refused.

“Check your machine and make sure that the left arm and the left knee are successfully connected. Please retry after they are reconnected.”

Chapter 1289 - Terrible Metamorphosis!

As Black Wing and Draconic Phoenix became better melded, more and more runes were shivering.

It appeared that Little Black’s long-sealed memories were gradually awakened, too. It had found the right control method and was helping him read the list of all the techniques of Draconic Phoenix.

However, when the primeval runes shone and were combined into a spell, they would crumble very soon, followed by system directions that implied different faults!

The Colossus, which had slept for hundreds of thousands of years in the open air without any protection, was too fragile. If the techniques were performed by force, chances were that it would be dismembered before it dealt any actual damage to the member of the Pangu Clan!

Gritting his teeth, Li Yao boosted his computational ability to the maximum while he tried his best to look for more combinations of primeval runes, hoping to find a technique that was still more or less applicable!

However, he suddenly had a palpitation when he sensed unparalleled pressure.

When he raised his head, he was so shocked that his snot was almost bubbling!

The member of the Pangu Clan, who was floating in front of Draconic Phoenix, quietly stretched out all four limbs with his veins bulging on his face!

He seemed to be still, like a seriously deformed statue, but the fire of spiritual energy dancing around him was giving birth to colorful, surging turbulence!

The gray giant was gritted his teeth hard. His face suggested that he was more miserable than… a hemorrhoids patient who had suffered from constipation for seven days and seven nights. His skin slowly turned from gray to bright blue. Lumps were bursting out on his skin that was exposed to the air as it grew rougher. He looked like some sort of reptile!

Is this… a Soul Igniting Law? Li Yao was utterly dumbfounded.

To increase their longevity, Cultivators often concealed their level through the Soul Converging Technique, where they were no different from ordinary people. Only when they were in a fierce fight would they made full use of their Cultivation with the Soul Igniting Law!

A princess when quiet, and a rabbit when on the move. That was the way of life for many Cultivators.

Before and after they summoned all their Cultivation, they would undergo tremendous changes. Therefore, many people called the process ‘metamorphosis’!

Judging from the violent aura around the member of the Pangu Clan, he was in the middle of a certain weird metamorphosis, too!

Are you kidding me? He is already so big, and he is still undergoing a metamorphosis? This is absolutely *ridiculous!* Li Yao cried in his heart like a pig being butchered.

However, on second thought, it was perfectly understandable.

The civilization of human beings and the Pangu civilization were deeply associated in the first place. The gene strands, cellar forms, and body structures of the two parties were almost identical. Their Cultivation arts were of the same lineage, too.

Since the Cultivators among human beings could undergo a metamorphosis, of course, the members of the Pangu Clan could, too!

I'm going to be screwed after his metamorphosis succeeds!

Having no time to retrieve the techniques anymore, Li Yao waved the fist and lunged at the member of the Pangu Clan who was shaking crazily!

It was too late!

Boom!

Centered around the member of the Pangu Clan, a volcano seemed to be erupting. An invincible aura was flooding out crazily like blast, forming solid 'air walls' in between!

Draconic Phoenix was pressed against the walls. However hard Li Yao pushed, it was not able to move forward any longer. Instead, screeching noises of metal fatigue were echoing, as if it was going to collapse in the next second!

Chiliu! Chiliu! Chiliu! Chiliu!

From the member of the Pangu Clan, in the meantime, came the blood-freezing sounds of bones being twisted and flesh being torn apart.

His skull suddenly bulged high, and his frontal bone protruded forward incessantly. Three rows of silver, shining tusks ejected out from his mouth!

His skin that was exposed to the air completely turned uneven and into the color of black and blue. Long, slender bone spurs burst out from his arms, knees, and spine. On the bone spurs, natural stripes that appeared to be some sort of spell were growing!

His body size did not expand; instead, it had even shrunk. However, the fire of spiritual energy and the frightening aura that surrounded him sank and consolidated, making him an almighty dominator again!

Shua!

A thick tail covered in scales was waving unpredictably behind him. At the end of the tail was a hollow bone sting, and a cluster of cold, purple fire was vaguely bouncing at the sharp end of the bone sting!

At this moment, the member of the Pangu Clan looked like a hybrid of a human being and a tyrannosaur.

Perhaps, this was the real appearance of a species of the Pangu civilization that had evolved from dinosaurs!

What was weirdest was that, despite the enormous changes in the body, the armor that had tightly covered the member of the Pangu Clan did not break apart or fall off.

There was no telling what the armor was made of. Perhaps, a lot of space folding, liquid metal, and even atom collapse technologies had been involved to increase its extension and elasticity to the maximum. As lights flashed, the shape of the armor continued changing until it was perfectly adapted to the brand-new appearance after the member of the Pangu Clan’s metamorphosis. Even the bone spurs that protruded out of the body surface was now enshrouded in a layer of glittering shell!

Li Yao gulped hard.

He felt that he was like a rabbit whose legs were broken, faced with a tyrannosaur that was entirely made of metal.

“Hehehehe…”

A tiny spot appeared at the center of the member of the Pangu Clan’s pure black eyes. He opened the six rows of tusks in the mouth with low, dull laughter.

Li Yao’s eyes were twitching nonstop. He vaguely felt that, as the ‘metamorphosis’ was complete, it was not just the member of the Pangu Clan’s body that had changed but also his soul.

The barrier that tied up his soul seemed to have been loosened slightly, allowing him to release some emotion!

Li Yao suddenly felt that it would not be bad at all if the member of the Pangu Clan could remain as tranquil as before…

Swoosh!

The member of the Pangu Clan suddenly vanished into thin air!

With the most dazzling flexibility, the enormous body dashed into dozens of streaks of brightness and attacked Li Yao from dozens of different angles!

Li Yao was having such a headache that his brains were almost burning, when he determined twenty-two trajectories of attack to be false in 0.2 seconds, before his back suffered a heavy blow!

Crack!

Li Yao heard the sound of his broken bone clearly.

The member of the Pangu Clan, after metamorphosis, was performing attacks with an unstoppable gale.

The gale had to have been made of a smaller particle than spiritual energy since it could pierce through Li Yao's spiritual shield, the Colossus' metal plate, and even Little Black's protection to attack Li Yao's spine directly!

Li Yao was a beginner who had not grasped the usage of the Colossus yet. He could not help but fall forward.

The member of the Pangu Clan, however, appeared in front of him instantly. The blue gale smashed him continuously like mountains and suppressed him brutally.

Li Yao felt that he was about to be suffocated.

His Nascent Soul managed to resist the attacks with the ragged Colossus, but he wondered how he could escape from the nightmare of the member of the Pangu Clan.

For some reason, he felt that the pressure was reduced for a moment, as if a gap as tiny as the width of a hair appeared between two mountains.

Gritting his teeth, Li Yao straightened his left leg and stabbed it toward the member of the Pangu Clan’s lower abdomen through the gap!

At this moment, his only hope was that the genitals of the Pangu Clan were in the same location with and of a similar structure to human beings’.

But then again, even if the member of the Pangu Clan was a tyrannosaur, his genitals should still be somewhere around there, right?

The member of the Pangu Clan was indeed fooled. He snatched Li Yao’s left ankle and twisted it hard.

But the left knee of Draconic Phoenix had long been broken. The parts below the knee were now nothing more than adornment.

Li Yao took the opportunity to twist toward the opposite direction. The left shin of Draconic Phoenix was twisted off easily. The scattered magical equipment components, mixed in suspicious liquids, spurted out like broken bones!

Holding back the pain of losing a leg, Li Yao finally separated himself from the member of the Pangu Clan!

When he turned around, he found that Su Changfa was manipulating the remaining a hundred or so spiritual puppets to attack the member of the Pangu Clan’s back while Li Yao was engaged in head-on combat with the enemy!

Now that the number of the spiritual puppets was greatly reduced, Su Changfa was able to allocate many more spiritual threads to each puppet, allowing the puppets to be much defter than before.

The old Immortal Cultivator knew the tricks of harassment quite well. He was not counting on the puppets to deal a fatal damage to the member of the Pangu Clan but hoping them to buy a few more seconds!

It was like countless velociraptors had lunged to the back of a tyrannosaur to launch fearless attacks.

Su Changfa took the opportunity to retreat and ran to the teleportation array quickly.

Li Yao followed him and fled in panic, too!

“Who are you exactly?” Su Changfa demanded as the two of them ran alongside each other.

With everything coming so far, how could the old and cunning Immortal Cultivator not notice Li Yao’s changes?

“Judging from your skeleton age, you can’t be more than forty years old, yet you are in the Nascent Soul Stage! Even in the Imperium, it is a miracle among miracles!

“Such a top-tier expert such as yourself is definitely not a Mr. Nobody in the Flying Star Sector. How could you have been hunted by space pirates and caught in a cosmic storm?

“And you—you know how to drive a Colossus, too?

“Something is definitely wrong with your identity! Who are you exactly? How did you end up in this primeval battlefield? Are you a Cultivator or an Immortal Cultivator?”

Li Yao suddenly lowered his head before a few clusters of burning spiritual puppets were thrown past him above his head. He shouted, “Don’t worry about whether I’m a Cultivator or an Immortal Cultivator! Even if I am nothing more than a bicycle mechanic, we should still work together for now!”

“Huh?” Su Changfa was dazed for a moment. It did make some sense, except that there was one question. “What’s a bicycle?”

“That’s not important!” Li Yao roared. Noticing that the member of the Pangu Clan was catching up to them, he dived into the teleportation array without any hesitation.

For safety reasons, the teleportation array had been kept at the half-activated state. As long as anybody stepped into it, it would be immediately awakened.

Li Yao and Su Changfa were immediately enveloped in a cluster of ivory light before they were teleported to a corner in the black cube!

Hardly had Li Yao recovered from the shock to his soul due to the short-distance jump when he rose up and stomped on the ground with his remaining right foot, lunging toward the dashboard of the teleportation array.

Right when he was lunging at the dashboard, the member of the Pangu Clan’s enormous and hideous body was gradually emerging from the light ball, too!

Chapter 1290 - Pestering!

“Now is the time!”

Li Yao crushed himself into a cluster before he suddenly exploded like a spring. Draconic Phoenix was like a long-prepared cannonball when it hit the dashboard of the teleportation array brutally!

The force of almost a thousand tons and the spiritual energy from Draconic Phoenix instantly blew the dashboard into smithereens!

The teleportation array ran out of control!

It was Li Yao’s final gamble. He was wagering on the possibility that the member of the Pangu Clan would catch up with him in fury. The best opportunity was seized. When the teleportation array began to collapse, the member of the Pangu Clan had only just extended his head!

As a result, half of the member of the Pangu Clan’s body was teleported to the human being manufacture center while the other half was left in the escape center!

The member of the Pangu Clan was roaring deafeningly. The entire human being manufacture center seemed to be roaring with him.

Many vesicles where human beings were once manufactured fell to the ground!

In his overwhelming wrath, the fire of spiritual energy rotating around the member of the Pangu Clan was suddenly moving faster and supported the teleportation array that was perishing.

He suddenly jerked, plucking most of his body parts from the turbulence of the high-dimensional space!

His right leg was the only thing left in the teleportation array that was continuously collapsing.

The teleportation array completely halted.

An invisible blade of space seemed to have cut off his entire right leg as well as the armor.

The fracture was as smooth as a mirror, with veins, nerves, and bones distributed evenly. It was so clear that it was like a picture. No blood leaked out for a long time!

Shua!

It was obvious that the member of the Pangu Clan was constricting the muscles and pressing the wound, trying to stop the blood from spurting out.

A large cluster of deep-blue fog of light also surged out of the fracture of the armor and covered the wound. Very soon, it turned into a layer of bright gel.

Although the missing leg did not result in massive blood loss, indescribable pain was still revealed on the member of the Pangu Clan’s face that was as hideous as that of a dinosaur.

One of his legs has been taken care of! Li Yao was both regretful and excited.

What he regretted was, of course, that he failed to rip the member of the Pangu Clan in half with such a great opportunity.

However, the member of the Pangu Clan’s left eye had been blinded, and now his entire right leg, which should be of paramount importance, had been cut off. His movement would definitely be greatly affected!

We must believe in the laws of nature!

The more life-blighting the situation was, the calmer and clearer Li Yao’s head got.

The universe was not a place where the larger one’s body size was, the better!

A larger body size, naturally, meant a more awesome appearance and a bigger storage of spiritual energy and materials. But at the same time, the body would be bound by greater gravity force, which could be a heavy burden on the bones, flesh, and internal organs!

It was especially so on a planetary warship such as ‘Kunlun’, whose gravity was ten times the standard gravity because of the tremendous unique metals on it!

By the law of the evolution of creatures, the higher a planet’s gravity was, the smaller the creatures produced by nature should be.

Otherwise, they would have to grow tougher bones and more tensile skin to resist the gravity, which would consume too much energy. Chances were that the large creatures would not be able to accumulate enough nutrition for such a body size even if they were taking in food twenty-four hours a day.

Therefore, intelligent creatures with a super large body size on a planet with strong gravity was a phenomenon in violation of natural laws.

Li Yao estimated that the member of the Pangu Clan, or most of the members of the Pangu Clan, should have been living on planets with weaker gravity at first.

Only with a lower gravity, or huge buoyancy, could such a large body be supported.

After they evolved to the point where they boasted the ability to cruise through the universe, the body size was no longer an important issue, partly because they were not restrained by gravity in the universe, and partly because they had certainly grasped the technology to build different gravity fields.

In order to grow more veins, thicker spiritual roots, and bigger second brains inside their bodies, they would likely aim to be even larger.

However, on some of the planets with high gravity, such as the main planet of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and that of the Blood Demon Sector, such a behemothic body was definitely not the most suitable size!

The ‘escape center’ was a space of zero gravity. Therefore, no difference could be felt. However, after they were teleported to the human being manufacture center, the strong gravity immediately pressed on both parties like an invisible mountain!

Hardly had the member of the Pangu Clan woken up when one of his eyes was blown apart and one of his legs got cut off. Now, he was also shouldering ten times the standard gravity, which far exceeded the limitations of the body.

Creaking noises were immediately echoing from the armor, and spluttering explosions were taking place on various joints. He was immediately slowed down.

Draconic Phoenix's body size was also enormous, but it was made of super metals after all and boasted a natural advantage against the high gravity!

He is indeed affected by the ultra-high gravity!

Li Yao was overjoyed, if not somewhat puzzled.

Odd. 'Kunlun' was a planetary warship of the Pangu civilization. Why is the gravity in this place so high that it is even unsuitable for the Pangu Clan to move around?

He thought quickly and immediately understood the reason.

I'm a fool. There must've been a certain piece of super large magical equipment acting as a pivot to control the gravity deep inside Kunlun so that the gravity that suited the Pangu Clan could be maintained.

However, after hundreds of thousands of years, it must've broken down. So, the high-gravity environment in the natural state has been restored!

Or rather, it's also very possible that when the Nuwa Clan led the attack with human beings, they destroyed the artificial gravity devices at the earliest opportunity and turned the place into a 'home field' where human beings were at an advantage!

When a species of a smaller size and a lower mass had a head-on competition on a battlefield with gravity with another species that was made of behemoths of enormous masses, finding a way to significantly improve the gravity would definitely be a tactic that yielded the greatest returns with the lowest cost.

Chances were that, if the gravity was adjusted to dozens of times the usual, the fight would no longer be necessary because the enemy would be crushed by their own weight.

Even though the Pangu Clan had grasped certain techniques to resist gravity, performing them would still consume tremendous spiritual energy and add to the load of their brain cells. They would not be able to fight as long as usual!

Human beings are definitely not worthless compared to the Pangu Clan!

Chances are that the Pangu civilization created human beings, which were smaller and lighter with themselves as the template, for the purpose of developing the 'high-gravity worlds' that were unsuitable for their survival!

In a high-gravity environment, we are the real 'kings'!

I was too hasty a moment ago. I should fight a war of attrition!

He has only just woken up from a prolonged hibernation. The storage of spiritual energy inside his body must be highly insufficient, and the functions of his organs can't have entirely recovered. He is definitely in no condition for a fierce battle right now!

Otherwise, he wouldn't have initiated the metamorphosis only at the last moment when he couldn't hold back his fury anymore!

The forced metamorphosis must've caused irreversible heavy wounds to his body. The spiritual energy inside his *body is too inadequate to sustain such a state for long, too!*

It is needless to say that he will be wasting a lot of spiritual energy to resist the stronger gravity that even I feel quite uncomfortable in!

Despite his intimidating aura, as long as we dawdle on and continue the fight, his spiritual energy will certainly be exhausted faster than mine. By then, chances are that he will be crushed by his own weight!

Thousands of thoughts flashed inside Li Yao’s heart as the same time as he came up with a harassing battle plan.

Shua!

A brutal and mysterious purple fire was running toward him.

He seemed to have neglected something. Although the right leg of the gray giant was broken, he still had a bizarre tail that was even thicker than the right leg!

The bizarre tail slapped toward Li Yao brutally with a thunderous whip-like sound.

Before the tail reached him, a glamorous purple fire suddenly spurted out of the hollow ‘sting’ at the end of the tail, lunging toward Li Yao like a raging fiend!

At the critical moment, Li Yao’s head was clear enough for him to realize that the purple fire would catch up to him whichever direction he dodged in.

Judging from the vague and unpredictable form of the purple fire, and the fuzzy effect that resembled a cloud when it touched the air around, Li Yao could easily tell that it was not a normal heat reaction.

It was certainly an eccentric fire that was caused by a chain reaction of high-energy particles!

With a bellow, Li Yao marched forward instead of retreating and attacked the abdomen of the member of the Pangu Clan!

Boom!

He was hit brutally by the middle part of the member of the Pangu Clan’s tail and felt the excruciating pain that was swallowing him like a tide again. The world in front of him was turning black and white.

But he was fortunate enough to have evaded the scourge of the fatal purple fire at the end of the tail!

The purple fire missed the target and dissipated in midair. Some of the parts fell to the ground, only to melt many giant pits that were too deep to measure in the hard floor!

Utterly scared, Li Yao quickly jumped away with the counterforce of the member of the Pangu Clan’s bizarre tail!

When they entered the ‘escape center’ for exploration, Su Changfa had been prudent enough to deploy a defense bastion and a few hundred spiritual puppets next to the teleportation array.

At this moment, the spiritual puppets were all jumping toward the member of the Pangu Clan, unwavering even if they were burnt into slag in the purple fire!

While the member of the Pangu Clan was blocked by the spiritual puppets, Li Yao struggled to his feet and hurried to run away with Su Changfa in panic!

Hardly had they dashed through the narrow gap at the entrance of the human being manufacture center when they sensed violent spiritual waves coming at them!

The member of the Pangu Clan had burnt away all the spiritual puppets so quickly!

“What do we do?” Su Changfa shouted. “The spiritual puppets’ attacks are meaningless to him!”

“They definitely aren’t. It just takes time for them to take effect. I don’t believe that there are unkillable creatures in the world!” Li Yao spat. If the Pangu Clan was truly invincible, they would not have lost the primeval war! There was no reason the offspring could not achieve what their ancestors had achieved hundreds of thousands of years ago!

He suddenly thought of something. “Senior Su, when we were on our way here, you mentioned that we were probably crawling in through the jet tube of a super power rune array, and because the super power rune array had been damaged, it was leaking spiritual energy all the time. As a result, the intensity of spiritual energy in the tube is almost a hundred times greater than normal, right?

“You also said that we couldn’t go down any further because we might trigger an explosion in the highly-intense spiritual energy, right?”

Chapter 1291 - The God Is Frightened!

Su Changfa was dazed for a moment. Then he realized what Li Yao meant.

Silently, the old Cultivator accelerated toward the ‘hole’ in the dome of the city of the Pangu Clan!

It was the way they had come from!

Both of them were rushing at the highest speed, with long, brilliant exhaust flames behind them.

After the fierce battles, the member of the Pangu Clan was tired, too, and his movement was less agile because of the heightened gravity. His several sprints and stabs were all dodged by Li Yao and only ripped a few pieces of plate armor on Draconic Phoenix, making the Colossus even more ragged.

Li Yao became more and more adapted to Draconic Phoenix. Although he still failed to find a technique that could be performed with the broken body, the basic movements in the normal state were indeed more and more fluent and skilled!

Swoosh!

In two streaks of brightness, one thicker and the other thinner, Li Yao and Su Changfa crawled into the hole and returned to where they had come from. Rushing all the way back, they soon arrived at the ‘bloody inferno’ that they had seen in the beginning!

It was the nest of the Blood Tide and the Hellish Light Butterflies ahead.

The creatures that fed on spiritual energy had shockingly keen senses.

“Conceal all spiritual waves!”

Li Yao and Su Changfa turned off all their units at the same time and suppressed their own spiritual energy to the minimum!

Because of their desperate running a moment ago, the crystal suit and the Colossus were all highly heated like burning iron blocks. Even if they were no longer heated, it was not so easy for them to ‘cool down’.

But it did not matter because a target that was even more attractive was behind them!

They did not need to conceal their spiritual energy to the point that the Blood Tide and the Hellish Light Butterflies could not perceive them. They only needed to make themselves less obvious than the member of the Pangu Clan!

Although this place was the home field for the member of the Pangu Clan, neither the Blood Tide nor the Hellish Light Butterflies were there when he fell into hibernation hundreds of thousands of years ago!

Never did he anticipate that such a trap that was not fatal but tricky nonetheless would be awaiting him!

As it turned out, when Li Yao and Su Changfa lunged over, the bouncing spiritual energy on them immediately triggered the ‘appetite’ of the Blood Tide and the Hellish Light Butterflies!

Then, the low-level, unintelligent creatures immediately discovered the member of the Pangu Clan behind, who was like a torch on a dark night!

If Li Yao and Su Changfa, who had concealed their spiritual energy, were appetizers, the member of the Pangu Clan, who was unleashing spiritual energy blatantly, was certainly the most delicious main dish!

The Blood Tide and the Hellish Light Butterflies, in two greedy torrents, swept toward the member of the Pangu Clan from the ground and the air!

Creaking noises were immediately echoing from the dark tube!

Li Yao and Su Changfa took the chance to run into the vast channel vertical to the ground that they had entered through in the beginning.

When they looked up, there was nothing but dimness. They could not see anything but the sky.

When they looked down, however, they could vaguely see fresh, glamorous brilliance.

It was the high-intensity spiritual energy leaked from the super power rune array.

With the scale of the planetary warship, if it was engaged in a long-distance voyage across Sectors, space jumps, instead of a journey boosted by spiritual energy, would probably be chosen as the means of transportation.

The super power rune array was unlikely to be the main power source of Kunlun. It was only a piece of ancillary magical equipment to slightly adjust the trajectory of Kunlun.

Even so, to change the trajectory of such a gargantuan object, the power rune array was still unfathomably huge.

For hundreds of thousands of years, the planetary warship had been absorbing and transforming the energy released by the pulsar and powering the self-sustaining system on Kunlun.

Part of the spiritual energy was leaked continuously through the broken power rune array and sank inside the jet tube, turning it into a highly dangerous place.

“There’s no time. It’s impossible for the Blood Tide and the Hellish Light Butterflies to stop him for half a minute. Throw all the explosive magical equipment you have brought!” Su Changfa shouted. He closed his hands and then opened them. One Cosmos Ring swirled in front of his face, and more than ten crystal bombs the size of goose eggs jumped out of the Cosmos Ring quickly. After they were triggered, they were thrown into the depths of the channel in colorful light, turning into a few sparks in the dark abyss!

“The crystal bombs I have brought aren’t enough. They may be not enough to trigger a chain reaction of the high-intensity spiritual energy and detonate it!”

With a gloomy face, Su Changfa asked anxiously, “Do you have any crystal bombs with you? If you don’t, there should be a few in Kou Ruhuo’s arsenal as I recall. They’ll be better than nothing, I suppose. We don't really have any supplies now!"

"That will be unnecessary!" Li Yao shrieked. "I happen to have brought a few bombs with me!"

Draconic Phoenix opened its mouth and spat out almost ten Cosmos Rings.

All kinds of crystal bombs humanly imaginable, including the Thunder-Palms, the Hellfire-Lightnings, the Sky Boomers, the Deity Execution Cannons, the Soul Devastating Balls, the pointy ones, the edgy ones, the flowery ones, those made of marrow crystals, those made of demon cores, those decorated with adornments… poured into the depths of the channel like a roaring waterfall!

Judging from the quantity of crystal bombs, they should have been more than enough to blow up a main force warship of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

"…" Su Changfa.

"Well," Li Yao said, "the universe is a dangerous place. I only bring them for self-defense. There's no need to worry, Senior Su."

While he was talking, an earth penetrator that was more than three meters in diameter and five meters long fell out of a Cosmos Ring before it charged toward the core of the planet in a dull noise.

Watching the earth penetrator, which was embedded with at least a hundred high-intensity crystals and the biggest demon core that he had ever seen in the middle, vanish into the darkness, Su Changfa turned around and stared at Li Yao in silence.

Li Yao stared back at the old Immortal Cultivator innocently.

The member of the Pangu Clan’s thunderous roars hit them from the side, breaking the somewhat awkward silence.

The assault of the Blood Tide and the Hellish Light Butterfly did not deal any actual damage to him.

However, the terrible feeling of falling into a trap of the shameless human beings overlapped with some very unpleasant memories from hundreds of thousands of years ago, further loosening the barrier that confined the giant’s soul.

He crashed into the jet tube without bothering about anything and saw two insignificant human beings fleeing upward right above his head with their spiritual shields activated to the maximum!

The member of the Pangu Clan’s six rows of tusks rubbed, producing metallic sounds. He was about to chase after them when he felt a destructive force from below his empty feet!

He lowered his head, only to discover that a colorful light spot was suddenly magnified into the most splendid ocean of brilliance and swallowed his entire vision!

It was not until this moment that the sound of never-ceasing explosions came over one after another!

The detonation of the hundreds of crystal bombs finally made the high-intensity spiritual energy that had been condensed inside the jet tube for hundreds of thousands of years surpass the tipping point and blossom instantly!

It was not until this moment that the member of the Pangu Clan finally understood the shameless human beings’ plan. But there was no time for him to dodge. He could only expand the spiritual shield to the maximum as Li Yao and Su Changfa had done!

BOOM!

He was consumed by the ocean of brilliance and struggled in the middle of the destructive interference while he was spurted to the ground together with the soaring spiritual energy!

Li Yao and Su Changfa were one step ahead of him. They could also use the giant as a large ‘meat shield’. Most of the blast of the explosion would not affect them until it penetrated through the member of the Pangu Clan’s body.

Even so, the two of them still felt that their souls and bodies were being ripped apart, as if they would be reduced to the most fundamental cells any second, and even the cells would be obliterated the second after!

Pu!

On the surface of the planet, in the middle of the primeval battlefield, a spring of spiritual energy thousands of meters high rose up to the sky, standing in the middle of the sky and the earth like a colorful, enormous tree of light!

Li Yao, Su Changfa, and the member of the Pangu Clan were all spurted out and thrown onto the bleak land dozens of kilometers away from each other in burning curves.

Stretching out his arms and legs, Li Yao found himself deeply embedded in a rock. He felt that he was a slug that was being dissolved.

Is—is he down?

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao struggled to his feet. He floated in midair with Draconic Phoenix, although all the components were falling down in clattering noises. Even one of the two wings that had already been on the verge of destruction was severed and hit the ground.

Li Yao looked into the distance and soon discovered the member of the Pangu Clan.

The enemy was like a huge mountain of meat that had been boiled, with hot steam popping up nonstop.

However, the ‘meat mountain’ was getting taller and longer while it was shivering!

The giant was back on his feet again!

The member of the Pangu Clan’s vitality was so tough that the instant explosion of the high-intensity spiritual energy only managed to blow up the armor on him!

Although he was bleeding and burnt, and quite a few golden broken bones protruded out of his body, he could still move.

The member of the Pangu Clan seemed to be drunk. He was shaking, if not dancing, on the earth with his tail and his left leg.

For a human being, it was a sign of severe brain concussion.

It suggested that, although his body and bones had survived the instant explosion of spiritual energy, his soft brains were still oscillating at a frequency of thousands of times per second inside the tough skull!

When Li Yao discovered the member of the Pangu Clan, the enemy discovered him, too.

However, the member of the Pangu Clan, who had been at an advantage and suppressing Li Yao all the time, showed obvious hesitation.

After pondering for a moment, he did not charge toward Li Yao. Instead, he staggered to run back to the hole at the center of the battlefield!

The high and almighty ‘god’ was frightened by insignificant human beings and fled in panic!

He was trying to run back to the depths of the planetary warship.

Maybe, he should not have chased after the enemy in the first place.

But he was in desperate need of spiritual energy, and he underestimated the determination of the uncontrollable human beings who had evolved for hundreds of thousands of years.

“You want to run? Not so fast!”

Li Yao’s soul power had almost run dry. It was barely possible for him to blink.

However, seeing the member of the Pangu Clan’s devastated appearance, he was so satisfied that, with new strength that grew out of nowhere, he turned into a shooting star in Draconic Phoenix and crash toward the member of the Pangu Clan, covering the dozens of kilometers in between instantly!

BOOM!

The member of the Pangu Clan was already near the hole when he was blown away by Li Yao in the opposite direction. Before he rose to his feet, he was drowned by a silver torrent!

It was the metal spider puppets that the Immortal Cultivators had deployed to collect resources!

Chapter 1292 - Kill the God in My Way!

After the Immortal Cultivators’ war base landed on Kunlun, no threats had been discovered. Therefore, few battle puppets had been produced.

Most of the battle puppets had been taken underground and had been drained in the series of fierce battles.

However, in order to collect as many resources as possible, the Immortal Cultivators had manufactured numerous mining puppets, which were gadgets that looked like six-footed spiders!

Although the metal spiders were only for mining purpose, there were simply too many of them. When they lunged forward together, they could be a major headache.

The member of the Pangu Clan, who barely had any intact skin now, struggled in the crazy tide of spiders. He attacked time and time again, throwing out purple fire with his tail and melting countless spiders.

But the remaining spiders still marched toward him fearlessly.

In order to collect the minerals, they had all been installed with high-intensity rock mincers, high-frequency oscillating knives, and super-alloy fixation clangs on the abdomen.

Just as the magical equipment could dig out the raw minerals that contained crystals and rare metals from deep down the rock stratums, it could also dig through the member of the Pangu Clan’s body of flesh and blood and grind his stomach into powder!

Surrounded by thousands of metal spiders, the purple fire thrown out from the member of the Pangu Clan’s tail became ever dimmer, and the frequency of him ripping apart the metal spiders was greatly reduced, too.

The member of the Pangu Clan was apparently on the verge of collapse.

Li Yao definitely did not mind making things worse for him.

Boom!

Hitting the ground with the remaining arm, Draconic Phoenix was revolving fast on the same place, and the right leg left turned into an invincible drill, aiming for the chest of the member of the Pangu Clan!

The member of the Pangu Clan did not evade or establish a force field to interfere with the attack. He suffered the blow hard and sure, falling down into the swarm of spiders again!

An enormous hole was pierced open in the giant’s chest, through which one could see many feebly bouncing organs.

A number of metal spiders took the opportunity to crawl into the wound!

Li Yao was about to rise up and continue attacking when he suddenly sensed a cluster of dangerous spiritual waves behind him.

When he turned around, he was greatly alarmed. The war base of the Immortal Cultivators had slowly risen up from the folds of the land without him noticing. The arc-shaped plate on the top of the base glided to two sides, and a grand cannon more than fifty meters long was heaved from inside. The hundreds of thousands of runes carved on the barrel were all emitting mysterious blackness. Black smoke that looked like skeletons was condensing in front of the cannon, gathering, twisting, and screaming!

For a moment, a ghostly wind was blowing. The whole of Kunlun seemed to have turned into a hell!

Li Yao vaguely sensed that it was yet another piece of vicious magical equipment that involved the unrested souls.

He did not know that the Immortal Cultivators had kept such weapons to themselves!

Judging from the scale of the grand cannon, even Burning Prairie might have been damaged if it had landed without defense!

Hu!

The skeleton-like black smoke was formed into an air mass more than a hundred meters in diameter before it was abruptly shot out from the barrel!

The attack was so powerful that the entire war base shivered in midair.

The black smoke smashed the member of the Pangu Clan overwhelmingly!

The gray giant, enveloped in the super-corrosive turbulence, revealed his bright golden bones as his flesh was melted into mucus!

“Ahhhhhhh!”

The member of the Pangu Clan uttered a devastating scream. His skin and flesh were suddenly dried, and he was as thin as a skeleton!

But the fire of spiritual energy on him soared yet again to compete with the black swirl while shattering countless metal spiders into the most fundamental components!

Li Yao knew that it was the dying struggle that the member of the Pangu Clan performed at the cost of the last bit of his soul and blood!

Right then, the most pleasant music suddenly echoed inside Li Yao’s brain, while a spell was glittering, which had been adored by a golden line at the edge outside of the already glamorous brilliance!

Little Black had finally found a technique that such a broken Colossus could activate!

Li Yao was overjoyed. He focused his attention on parsing the mechanism of the technique.

The illustrations that stored the essence of the technique, in the meantime, were also etched into his soul and unraveled slowly!

Huala!

When he adjusted the flow of spiritual energy inside his body precisely according to the guidance of the technique, the spell suddenly began burning. It rushed out of his brain and, flying around Draconic Phoenix’s right arm, dived in deeply!

Five sophisticated ancient characters immediately surfaced on Draconic Phoenix’s right arm. They turned into fibers of light and covered the entire arm evenly.

Shua!

Draconic Phoenix’s right arm dissected itself silently, revealing the delicate, interconnected components inside.

Infinite spiritual energy burst out like a volcanic eruption and enveloped the right arm that had been dismembered. It then spread out, eventually turning into a furiously burning fiery falcon!

The fiery falcon was flapping the wings and grunting impatiently with killing intent so vivid that it seemed as if a primeval beast had truly crossed time and space and landed on Draconic Phoenix’s arm!

However, when Li Yao observed from a different perspective, the fiery falcon became as thin as the wing of a cicada, if not a plane without thickness!

It was a very weird feeling.

He felt that he had torn apart three-dimensional space with Draconic Phoenix’s right hand and snatched a fiery falcon that was absolutely superficial from the infinite void!

Li Yao had no time to think.

Draconic Phoenix had no power source itself and was only functioning with Li Yao’s burning his life. Every technique was performed at the cost of Li Yao’s sweat and blood.

His soul was extremely exhausted in the first place. After condensing such a weird ‘two-dimensional falcon’, he felt that his brains had been squeezed out.

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao focused on the member of the Pangu Clan’s neck. He raised the right arm of Draconic Phoenix, which had been dissected. The fiery falcon opened its wings to the maximum, like a longbow that had been tightened, ready to fly!

Li Yao sensed that his soul was resonating with an ancient and profound force deep inside the Colossus.

The resonation flowed to his throat from his chest in the blink of an eye, making him roar bleakly and domineeringly!

“Phoenix Demolisher!”

Shua!

The fiery falcon was thrown out. With an ear-splitting shriek, it turned into a falcon-shaped blade and dashed toward the member of the Pangu Clan.

Although it was awkward, middle-school-student behavior for a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator to shout the name of a move during a fierce battle, it was the only way to meld the Cultivator’s flesh, will, and soul into the Colossus completely. The power of the technique would be boosted to the maximum!

The ‘Phoenix Demolisher’ reached the member of the Pangu Clan without a sound.

It was like a technique from a whole different world, leaving absolutely no sound, light, or electromagnetic waves in this one.

With a thickness a thousand times thinner than a piece of paper, it was barely possible to be discovered by the target, who could see a thin, red line in midair at best.

They would barely be able to tell whether the red line was still or coming at them!

The member of the Pangu Clan was still dealing with the black smoke and the crazy spiders. His senses had been reduced to the minimum.

When he noticed the Phoenix Demolisher, he only had the time to bulge his eyes and form a spiritual shield in front of his chest.

However, the front half of the Phoenix Demolisher had already cut in before the shield closed and flashed across his neck, which was as thick as a crystal train!

The member of the Pangu Clan’s body suddenly shook. He struggled for a moment longer because of inertia. His face grew more and more confused, and gray fog was popping up inside his pure black eyes, while a long, narrow line appeared on his neck.

Pu!

The enormous head soared up to the sky. A black spring burst out of his neck. The member of the Pangu Clan toppled forward, and the furiously burning spiritual energy around him entirely disappeared!

Without the enhancement of spiritual energy, his body could not withstand the extremely strong gravity anymore. After a series of cracking sounds, he collapsed in a weird posture and cramped briefly before he stopped moving.

Huala!

As the giant fell to the ground, Draconic Phoenix fell from the air and hit the ground like a chunk of scrap metal. From the broken breastplate, Li Yao was ‘spat out’ by Little Black and lay on the ground with all his limbs stretched out.

This time, he truly did not even have the strength to fart.

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

A few metal spiders crawled to him and eyed him maliciously with their crystal cameras. The mining drills on their abdomens, stained with the member of the Pangu Clan’s blood, were emitting a stinky stench because of the heat.

“Senior Su.” Li Yao smiled miserably to the mining spiders. “I’m done. My spiritual energy is dry. Half of my bones are probably broken. All my internal organs are bleeding, too. Please come and save me!”

Su Changfa soon arrived.

He was in no better condition than Li Yao and could not have looked more wretched.

However, he had received the fundamental treatment in the war base. Right now, he was soaked inside a jet medical cabin, with only his burnt head exposed to the air. Every hair on his head had been burnt up, making him as bald as a big turtle.

His combat ability was mainly based on the spiritual puppets. At this moment, there were still too many metal spiders that had survived. They all gathered around him and stared at Li Yao coldly.

Looking at the corpse of the member of the Pangu Clan and Draconic Phoenix, which was as broken as mud next to Li Yao, Su Changfa put on a victor’s smile.

“Fellow Cultivator Li, you’ve been troubled,” the old Immortal Cultivator said peacefully.

“Indeed, I have.” Li Yao looked back at him innocently as if he did not read the viciousness behind his iris.

“I didn’t know that you would be so incredibly strong,” Su Changfa said unhurriedly. “Not only are you in the Nascent Soul Stage, you were even able to trigger such a powerful technique with a Colossus and finish the member of the Pangu Clan in one attack!

“Thankfully, we ran into him, who forced Fellow Cultivator Li to play all the trump cards. Otherwise, the few of us might’ve been unable to stop you if you had suddenly attacked us!

“It appears that you hid a lot of interesting experiences from me. Why don’t we adjourn to our base so that we can talk slowly?”

“Cough, cough. Cough, cough, cough, cough!” Li Yao vomited a few mouthfuls of phlegm that were mixed with saliva before he said lethargically, “There’s nothing clandestine about my experiences. You can ask anything you want, Senior Su. However, I’m too heavily wounded right now, and I’m afraid that I’m incapable of talking. Can I ask the two of them to have a nice chat with you on my behalf?”

Su Changfa was suddenly alarmed because he discovered that two more long shadows had appeared next to his own on the ground without him noticing!

One of the shadows was branchy, like an enormous tree, while the other was wry and did not have a fixed form, like a living swamp!

Chapter 1293 - Beginning of the Great Development!

By the time he saw the two shadows, it was too late.

Dozens of demonic vines, which seemed soft and thin but were in fact dozens of times harder than iron ropes of the same diameter, tied up Su Changfa’s medical cabin silently.

The material that seemed like a mercury swamp, on the other hand, leaked into every gap of the medical cabin with the demonic vines as a vehicle, taking over the medical cabin instantly!

Su Changfa had already suffered heavy wounds when he was ambushed by Tang Qianhe. After he luckily survived, he had been manipulating a thousand spiritual puppets with all of his soul power.

After the fierce battles, he was already on the brink of collapse and no better than a Core Formation Stage Cultivator.

How could he foresee the assault of two experts in the Nascent Soul Stage?

As the vines and mercury threads crawled into the medical cabin and bound Su Changfa’s body that was riddled with holes, stopping near his heart, carotid artery, and temples, the old Immortal Cultivator put on an expression of indescribable bewilderment.

His telepathic thoughts immediately expanded, and all the mining spiders were seething impatiently, eager to attack.

The vines and the mercury instantly pierced toward his eyeballs and temples.

Su Changfa’s pupils constricted violently. He retrieved his techniques obediently and shouted straightforwardly, “I surrender!”

Three minutes later, after setting up traps on Su Changfa’s medical cabin and ensuring that the signal transmission between him and all the spiritual puppets had been cut off, Professor Mo Xuan and the Fire Ant King finally helped Li Yao to his feet.

“What—what has happened exactly?”

Both of them were greatly surprised by the dead body of the member of the Pangu Clan, which was like a hill with steam popping up, and Draconic Phoenix next to Li Yao, which had gone on a rampage a moment ago.

Since Li Yao and the three Immortal Cultivators went deep into the underground, Professor Mo Xuan and the Fire Ant King had been observing the war base from nearby, hoping to find an opportunity to sneak in.

However, the war base was heavily guarded with a thorough defense system. There were watch towers and electricity nets everywhere. The two of them had studied it for a long time but failed to locate any loophole. Therefore, they had given up, waiting for Li Yao’s message.

They both knew that Li Yao was a rogue that would turn the world upside-down anywhere he went.

Therefore, they had thought that they would not be surprised however Li Yao decided to announce his return.

Never did they expect that they would witness a fierce battle between a member of the Pangu Clan and an enormous war beast, like a replay of the primeval war hundreds of thousands of years ago.

The entire battlefield was surrounded by the mining spiders, so it had been very difficult for them to intervene!

However, in the end, it turned out to be Li Yao who fell out of the enormous war puppet!

What happened below the ground?

Looking at each other in bewilderment, the two of them did not have the faintest idea. They could only turn around and stare at Li Yao suspiciously.

It was not until Su Changfa was completely under control that Li Yao took a deep breath, relaxed. Noticing the confusion in their eyes, he simply smiled. “No biggie. As you have seen, I just killed a god.”

“…” The Fire Ant King.

“…” Professor Mo Xuan.

“Come on. Give me a hand. There’s one last thing I need to do!”

Li Yao struggled to his feet. Supported by the two of them, he staggered to the flag-raising platform that the Immortal Cultivators had deployed on Kunlun in the beginning.

At the top of the flagpole, the Imperium of True Human Beings' flag was still flapping high.

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao gazed at the flag, which was made of three aggressive lightning bolts against a deep red background. He extended two fingers and formed a blade of spiritual energy at his fingertips, waving it softly.

The flag of black lightning immediately fell to the ground.

Li Yao retrieved a new flag from his Cosmos Ring.

In the universal exploration, a flag was always among the items that every explorer brought with them, as long as they had a reliable, trustworthy motherland that they swore to protect!

The flag was also blood red, but it was fresher, brighter, and more energetic than the crimson flag of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

At the center of the flag was a vivid pattern sewed with golden stripes. The upper half of the pattern was a raging gold dragon while the lower half consisted of nine glittering stars.

It was the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag, the national flag of the Star Glory Federation!

When the new flag fluttered in the sky of Kunlun in the wind in place of the Imperium of True Human Beings' black-lightning flag, the Immortal Cultivator Su Changfa seemed to have realized something. His eyes were twitching violently.

"Senior Su, you were interested in my identity, weren't you?" Li Yao turned around and smiled. "Now, I can tell you loud and clear.

“The stories you told me were quite marvelous, and Blackstar the Great deserved to go down in history, but I’m sorry, I don’t intend to change the path I’m walking on.

“I am a Cultivator from the Star Glory Federation!”

Above Li Yao’s head, in the eastern sky, a tiny spark suddenly appeared. It was expanding at a visible speed, like a blossoming bud.

Burning Prairie had successfully jumped to Kunlun and was entering the atmosphere!

When he realized Burning Prairie’s scale and speed, Su Changfa finally could not help but moan in frustration and desperation!

…

Five days passed.

The major discovery on Kunlun shocked the entire world of Cultivators.

A dead body of the member of the Pangu Clan, which still boasted a lot of living cells and intact gene strands, a living Immortal Cultivator, an undamaged war base of the Immortal Cultivators, and a Colossus, which hopefully could still be recovered, had been captured!

The good news was making the Cultivators seethe with joy. Nobody could have hoped for a bigger windfall!

However, the formidability of the Imperium of True Human Beings, the dreadfulness of the Alliance of the Holy

Covenant, and the mysterious truth about the origins of human beings cast an unpredictable dark cloud over the future of the New Federation, too.

Burning Prairie brought a lot of star beacons.

A space gate made of more than three hundred star beacons was slowly unfolded above Kunlun.

When the three hundred star beacons broadcast waves of special frequencies toward the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector at the same time, a broad, unhindered gate was opened.

A lot of starships jumped to Kunlun from the three Sectors, projecting a large batch of mobile camps and laboratories to Kunlun.

Right near the primeval battlefield that Li Yao and his fellows discovered, a base that belonged to the Star Glory Federation had been rooted and was expanding on a daily basis.

In the near future, the federation would extend their hands to the deepest parts of Kunlun, chewing and absorbing every component and even every screw on the planetary warship for their own use!

Due to the heavy wounds and his dry soul, Li Yao was not able to shoulder the side effects of a space jump yet.

Moreover, he could not bear to leave such a paradise.

Kunlun was indeed a place of fortune. He could dig out the debris of a few pieces of magical equipment anywhere randomly.

Even though he was not healthy enough to study them yet, he could always satisfy himself for the time being by looking at the sophisticated ancient runes.

Therefore, Li Yao simply decided to treat his wounds on Kunlun. After all, Ding Lingdang had come over on Burning Prairie. With her company, this place was no different from home.

After five days of rest, his wounds were more or less recovered. Having had enough rest, Li Yao almost could not wait to explore the depths of Kunlun again.

However, before that, another mission that was more urgent was awaiting him.

“Su Changfa wants to talk to me?”

The news that Guo Chunfeng brought to him made him scratch his head for quite a while.

The Immortal Cultivator and his war base were perhaps trophies more important to the federation than the relics of the Pangu Clan on Kunlun.

The reason was simple. The primeval treasures in the relics of the Pangu civilization, however incredible and powerful they used to be, came from hundreds of thousands of years ago. After such a long time, most of them were already too rusted to be studied.

Even the intact treasures might not be readily usable because the body structures of the Pangu Clan and human beings were slightly different anyway.

The Immortal Cultivators and the Cultivators, in comparison, belonged to the same civilization of the same era. There was no gap between them.

The two parties differed in their ideology, but when it came to Cultivation arts, there was not the slightest disparity.

The Cultivators could pick up and use the Immortal Cultivators’ Cultivation arts, magical equipment, and techniques without any obstacles.

Besides, an expedition fleet of the Imperium of True Human Beings was now marching toward the federation aggressively.

According to Su Changfa and the other Immortal Cultivators, the soldiers of the fleet from the Black Wind Sector were a notorious, unpardonable race even within the Imperium.

So, it was all the more important to grasp as much intelligence about them as possible!

For the federation at this moment, Su Changfa, as a living Immortal Cultivator, was definitely much more valuable than the dead member of the Pangu Clan.

Su Changfa was heavily wounded and unable to survive long-distance space jumps. Therefore, Guo Chunfeng simply brought a team of his elite subordinates to Kunlun to interrogate him.

But naturally, the old and cunning fox’s mouth would not be opened so easily.

Li Yao found it more or less understandable that the guy wanted to meet him.

After all, the old Immortal Cultivator had been ‘trapped’ by him and was probably unwilling to admit his failure just like that.

Li Yao intended to find out more about the world of the Immortal Cultivators. Therefore, he agreed without any hesitation and went to the single prison cell that the Secret Sword Bureau had specially prepared for Su Changfa.

Out of his expectations, he ran into an unannounced guest in front of the prison cell.

“Master Gui, what brings you here?” Li Yao asked, somewhat surprised.

The old man standing in front of him looked like both a giant tortoise that had stood on its feet and a mottled rock statue. It was Gui Suishou, the most famous guy who had outlived his usefulness, an ‘absolute pessimist’, and the proposer of the Monument Plan!

“My young friend Li Yao, greetings!”

Gui Suishou seemed to be quite unused to the high gravity on Kunlun because his tortoise shell was apparently much heavier than before. Yet, his face was as delighted as ever when he said with a smile, “As you know, I am a historian, and it is my responsibility to record every groundbreaking event while our civilization is walking toward its doom!

“The discovery of Kunlun is certainly a groundbreaking event. Of course, I had to come to this place and witness everything our legendary parent civilization once created in person.

“I’m told that you, my young friend, even killed a member of our parent civilization with your own hands. That was indeed incredibly courageous of you!”

Chapter 1294 - Old but Never Die

“Master Gui…” Having just killed a member of the Pangu Clan in personal, it would have been too hypocritical for Li Yao to say that he did not feel particularly good about it. “Do you still insist that ‘a son will be dead if his father wants him dead’?”

Gui Suishou smiled causally. “Of course I still do. After hearing the history of the Imperium of True Human Beings’ rise and the truth about the Path of Ultimate Benevolence, I am even more convinced!

“I believe that the Pangu civilization might’ve implemented their version of the Monument Plan when they were coming to their doom. However, it was not monuments that they sprayed into the sea of stars but seeds.

“Now, after hundreds of thousands of years of growing, the seeds are sprouting, blossoming, and yielding fruit again.

“Li Yao, my young friend, you are truly worth complimenting for killing a member of the Pangu Clan, but the greater enlightenment of the incident should be that a living member of the Pangu Clan can survive hundreds of thousands of years or even longer through hibernation!

“The universe is a boundless place with infinite worlds. You don’t think that there is just this one member of the Pangu civilization in the hibernation state in entire universe whom you have accidentally encountered and killed, do you?

“What if other members of the Pangu civilization wake up from their hibernation elsewhere, not to be killed by heroes like you but to be embraced by the people of the Covenant Alliance dominated by the Path of Ultimate Benevolence?”

Clear, innocent brilliance beamed out of Gui Suishou’s dirty eyes.

Li Yao was so angry that his teeth were itching. It was what the old tortoise did all the time. He always liked to propose theories that would extinguish other people’s delight but were irrefutable!

“Then, you are free to study the relics of the Pangu Clan carefully, Master Gui. What are you doing here?” Li Yao snapped with a gloomy face.

“I’m here specifically for you, my young friend,” Gui Suishou said unhurriedly. “I wonder, can we talk more after you finish your conversation with the Immortal Cultivator?”

Li Yao scratched his head. “Is it for the Monument Plan? We can talk about it later. Most of the resources of the Glorious Sunlight Group will still be focused on the development of Kunlun for the time being.”

“Yes and no,” Gui Suishou said. “It’s true that the Monument Plan is in dire need of funding, but it is not a project that can be rushed. I’m simply curious about you, Li Yao, and I’m hoping to record your words and actions, as many as possible!”

This time, Li Yao was truly puzzled. “Why?”

“I am a historian. I want to keep the marks of the last glory of our civilization as best as I can. But the so-called civilization is not just about cities and relics but, more importantly, about people!

“Cities are not a civilization, and magical equipment is not a civilization. Only people are what makes a civilization!

“I feel that you are a very interesting example of our civilization. Your life experience, your quotes, and your anecdotes should be built into a vivid ‘monument’ to tell the brand-new civilizations in billions of years what a ‘Cultivator’ really is.

“Therefore, I’m planning to write a biography for you to add to the ‘monuments’ in the future, which will be passed on for millions if not billions of years!

“To some extent, you will be sort of ‘immortalized’ in such a way, my young friend Li Yao!”

Gui Suishou spoke delightedly with a ‘now-come-on-and-thank-me’ face.

However, Li Yao had goosebumps all over his body as he put on an extremely weird expression.

He had never thought that his tales would be passed on to others millions of years in the future, not even in his wildest dreams. It was… too creepy!

The old tortoise’s head was indeed abnormal!

For a moment, Li Yao felt that he had turned into a relic himself, or perhaps a well-preserved dry cadaver, which was being sliced for research and commented on by some green-skinned, three-headed, and six-armed creatures.

Shuddering in coldness, he made a few empty promises to Gui Suishou and walked into the prison cell.

“Senior Su!”

Su Changfa and Guo Chunfeng were alone in the prison cell, one sitting and the other lying.

The place was not creepy at all for a prison cell. Instead, the ivory ceiling and the wall that was the color of a green apple made it look more like a ward with full facilities. Except for the barriers around the sickbed, there was not the slightest intimidating vibe of interrogation.

Compared to five days ago, Su Changfa looked much better. It seemed that he had adapted to the lifestyle in the world of Cultivators. At this moment, he was sitting cross-legged on the bed with a crystal processor in his hands, reading a jade chip carefully.

The five days did not prove to be entirely futile. Su Changfa had traded some valuable intelligence for a crystal processor and a brief introduction to the Star Glory Federation.

Right now, the two parties both had a basic understanding about each other.

“Fellow Cultivator Li, we meet again.” Seeing Li Yao walk in, the old Immortal Cultivator put down the crystal processor and smiled calmly. “I didn’t know that you have achieved so many astonishing accomplishments despite your young age. You are truly a pillar in the world of the Cultivators of the Heaven’s Origin Sector. How blind I was!”

Li Yao’s lips curled up.

He did not find Su Changfa too distasteful.

Perhaps, it was because the two of them had once fought side by side, or perhaps it was because Su Changfa had not committed any inhuman crimes in his presence.

“Is there anything you want to say to me, Senior Su?’ Li Yao directly got to the matter at hand.

“Yes. In the past few days, I have exchanged some intelligence for your files. The more I read, the more I was surprised. Such a young hero like you is a rarely-seen talent even in the Imperium!”

Su Changfa glanced at Guo Chunfeng and sneered, “If I must confess, I would rather communicate with a frank and forthright Cultivator such as you than fall into those who are willing to do anything to achieve their goal!”

Guo Chunfeng scratched his nose. Even if he was embarrassed, his face certainly did not betray his feelings.

Li Yao raised an eyebrow and said, “Senior Su, have you thought everything through? Are you ready to confess?”

“Yes, I can confess, but I want to confirm something first.” Su Changfa smiled. “Fellow Cultivator Li, if you consider yourself to be the most standard Cultivator, you will definitely persevere in your bright and righteous belief and will not waver easily, right?”

Li Yao nodded. “Of course!”

“I’m aware that there is a ‘Constitution of Cultivators’ in the Star Glory Federation. The law is the lowest criterion of the Cultivators’ belief. Therefore, you will certainly abide by the law. Correct?”

“Yes!”

“If somebody else is violating the law, a ‘true Cultivator’ such as yourself will absolutely not idle by but help serve justice, right?”

“Naturally.”

“If you watch and do nothing, your belief will be sullied, and you will not stop questioning yourself. In the worst case-scenario, your belief will collapse, and your level will plummet, right?”

“So what? What are you trying to say, Senior Su?”

Su Changfa nodded quickly. “Then, I’m truly confused now. Fellow Cultivator Li, you and I have fought a bloody battle together. We should be acquaintances even if we are not friends. Why are you doing nothing while I’m in prison, Fellow Cultivator Li?

“If I may ask, what law of your country have I violated exactly, and why do I deserve to be confined and even interrogated by the agent organization of your country without good reason?

“This is a heinous action that is seriously in violation of human rights. Are you not going to stand out and serve justice, Fellow Cultivator Li? Where’s your belief?”

Li Yao was dazed for a moment before he blurted out, “Are you not an Immortal Cultivator?”

“So what?” Su Changfa replied frankly. “Is it a crime to be an Immortal Cultivator in your country?”

Dumbfounded for a long time, Li Yao turned around and asked Guo Chunfeng, “Brother Guo, is it a crime to be an Immortal Cultivator?”

Guo Chunfeng frowned. “It… doesn’t seem to be a crime to be an Immortal Cultivator.”

“That’s it. Whatever the law does not forbid, you are free to do. Now that being an Immortal Cultivator is not a crime in your country, for exactly what reason have you captured me?”

Su Changfa leaned against the wall and said like a rascal, “Even if being an Immortal Cultivator is truly a crime, how do you determine that I am an Immortal Cultivator? Are there any unique physiological features about the Immortal Cultivators? Are the two words ‘Immortal Cultivator’ on my forehead? Or is it simply because I said I was one?

“Yes. I’m indeed from the Imperium of True Human Beings, and I mentioned that I was an Immortal Cultivator, but is it really evidence?

“Tang Qianhe was from the Imperium of True Human Beings, too. She claimed to be an Immortal Cultivator, too. What happened later?

“You are convicting me based on just a few words and tales that I told Fellow Cultivator Li. I don’t think it is appropriate, is it?”

Li Yao blinked. “Indeed, it is not.”

“There must be a misunderstanding, Senior Su.” Guo Chunfeng coughed and said, “We did not capture you because you are an Immortal Cultivator. Part of your freedom is only limited because you are believed to be a threat to the national security of the federation. That’s why we are investigating you.”

“What a joke!” Su Changfa snapped. “I had not heard the name ‘Star Glory Federation’ before I jumped to this area. Also, my original destination was not the Heaven’s Origin Sector, either. We were merely using this place as a platform because we were attracted by the waves caused by the integration of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector!

“How could I be a threat to your national security when I didn’t even know the name of the Star Glory Federation?”

Li Yao frowned. “But you were planning to launch an invasion to us!”

“As far as I know, the Imperium of True Human Beings has never declared war on the Star Glory Federation or any other political entity in the universe,” Su Changfa replied innocently. “What’s ‘invasion’ all about?

“Even if a war between the two nations does break out, does it have anything to do with smallfolk such as myself? I’m just a traveler in the sea of stars who enjoys the ecstasy of discovering more Sectors!”

“Smallfolk?” Li Yao sneered. “Anyone who is not blind can see the huge war base outside! Besides, are you not an official of the ‘Immigration Bureau’ of the Imperium?”

Li Yao took out the ‘green card’ that Su Changfa had issued him.

“I’m just a regular civil official.” Su Changfa did not even bat an eye when he was lying. “I can’t see how an official of the Immigration Bureau is a threat to the national security of your country. As for the war base… the universe is a vast and perilous place. Everybody brings some self-defense magical equipment with them. Are the carriers of your country not armed at all?

“Most importantly of all, even if I was indeed armed to my teeth, I didn’t land on the territory of your country! Your territory is the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Is this place Heaven’s Origin Sector? This is not your jurisdiction. On what basis are you arresting me?

“Fellow Cultivator Li, you are a kind, noble Cultivator. How can you do nothing about such absurd actions? Can the law be overlooked and the innocent such as me be sacrificed easily just because a groundless indictment of ‘national security’? How is it different from the Immortal Cultivators’ actions?”

Chapter 1295 - Thorn on the Belief

Li Yao and Guo Chunfeng were both dumbfounded.

It was not because Su Changfa's brazenness was beyond their expectations, nor because they had no rebuttals, but because they were shocked by Su Changfa's childishness.

Did the guy think that they would set him free after he won a game of words?

Li Yao's eyelids were twitching.

He believed that Su Changfa was definitely not such a boring man. The man was the soul of the three Immortal Cultivators!

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao immediately understood Su Changfa's intention. He also sensed the vague thorn inside his heart.

"Brother Guo, can we talk in private?"

Li Yao called Guo Chunfeng to go out of the cell.

"Is there something wrong with the Immortal Cultivator's head?" Guo Chunfeng found it unbelievably. "He is not thinking that the Cultivators are so 'innocent' that we will let him go after his empty talk, is he?"

"That's not what he meant." Li Yao smiled bitterly. "I'm afraid that his life and death is no longer his concern right now. He is not expecting that he can get away through some bullsh*t. His words were specially prepared for me to hear."

"For you to hear?" Guo Chunfeng was confused. "Why? What's the point?"

"He wanted to plant a thorn in my heart, or a seed that might grow into the 'true path of immortality' one day," Li Yao said carefully. "I assume that he had two reasons.

"Firstly, it was me who sabotaged his endeavor and played him for a fool. He was probably pissed off and hoped to destroy my belief in such a way.

"If a gap appears in my belief and I fall from the Nascent Soul Stage into the Core Formation Stage, he will have his vengeance!

"Secondly, perhaps, despite his extreme hatred, he hasn't entirely given up hope yet. He wants to have one last go and see if I can be transformed into an Immortal Cultivator."

Guo Chunfeng was amused. "With a few empty words?"

"Maybe." Li Yao stared at Guo Chunfeng solemnly. "To be honest, I've been considering the difference between the Cultivators and the Immortal Cultivators over the past few days. If there is a clear boundary that classifies the two concepts, where exactly is the boundary? Or rather, is there no boundary at all but an ambiguous, gray area?

"What crimes has Su Changfa, an Immortal Cultivator, committed? Does the Star Glory Federation have the right to try and punish him? Even if he is suspected to be a threat to national security and must be confined, how long will he be confined? If he is unwilling to confess dutifully all the time, are we allowed to torture and torment him to get the information we want?

“I would very much like to find the answers to these questions.”

Guo Chunfeng scowled. “That’s petty kindness!”

“Maybe, but part of my belief is exactly made of such ‘petty kindness’. If that part collapses, my belief will be broken, and my level will definitely plunge!” Li Yao pondered for a moment and said, “Also, as a result, I will not be able to answer one question to myself. Without the ‘petty kindness’, what’s the essential difference between a Cultivator and an Immortal Cultivator?

“Hehe. Perhaps, as I result, I may be trapped in the dilemma longer and longer until I cannot free myself from it anymore. I will truly be an Immortal Cultivator by then.

“Just think about Lu Zui and Zhou Hengdao. Sometimes, it may only take one second for a Cultivator to be transformed into an Immortal Cultivator.”

Guo Chunfeng tilted his head and thought for a long time before he said, “I understand it now. The old man was not struggling to survive. He was merely hoping to plant the seed with his words and his ‘miserable outcome’ later into your heart so that you could be turned into an Immortal Cultivator who was willing to achieve your purpose through whatever means possible!”

“Yes.” Li Yao nodded. “Therefore, I’m desperate to know whether or not there is any legal ground for us to confine him and even to exploit his soul through torture.

“After all, it is true that he did not do anything hostile to the Star Glory Federation from the beginning to the end. He even surrendered the moment the Fire Ant King and Professor Mo Xuan broke into his medical cabin. I would say that he was quite cooperative!”

Guo Chunfeng frowned and asked, “If there isn’t, are you going to stop us from interrogating him?”

“Of course not. After all, the Immortal Cultivator and his war base are too valuable. I can’t stop it.” Li Yao thought for a moment and said, “However, a thorn will be buried at the bottom of my heart as I cannot think it through.

“From this day on, I may not be as confident in my belief as before, which can seriously affect my training and my battles. Chances are that one day in the future, I will suddenly ‘think it through’ and decide that I can do anything needed for the interests of the federation!

“As a result, I will be an Immortal Cultivator like Lu Zui, Zhou Hengdao or Su Changfa.”

“Understood.” Guo Chunfeng took out his glass teacup and poured the water into his mouth before he chewed the tea leaves hard. “Therefore, in order for the belief of the ‘Ultra-Level Federal Level’ hero and the future star of the Star Glory Federation not to be broken, we must handle everything with undeniable proof in the completely legal way, right?”

“More or less. Is it difficult?”

“I don’t think so. Give me five minutes. Let me see.”

Five minutes passed.

Li Yao returned to the prison cell in a joyful mood.

Su Changfa’s eyelids were dangling down as he stared at the newcomer suspiciously.

“Problem solved, Senior Su,” Li Yao said merrily. “We truly do not have any evidence to support your accusations. Your freedom will be restored very soon.”

Su Changfa was dazed, with confusion beaming out of his eyes. He did not understand what Li Yao was up to. Was the guy going to let him walk away just like that?

“However, please be aware, Senior Su.” Li Yao coughed and declared pretentiously, “Before the starship of the Imperium of True Human Beings landed on the relic of the Pangu civilization, an exploration team of the Star Glory Federation had already discovered the place. Therefore, we have every reason to announce that this place was already the territory of the Star Glory Federation before you arrived!”

Su Changfa’s eyes were almost frozen and did not move again until a long while later. Hoarsely, he asked, “So?”

“So, Senior Su, you have committed ‘illegal entry’ as stated in the federal law. Of course, we understand that you were unaware of the situation beforehand. So, we do not intend to press formal charges. We will simply confiscate your vehicle with which you crossed the border illegally, pronounce you as an ‘unwelcomed man’ in our country, and banish you.”

This time, it was Su Changfa who was rendered speechless. Staring at Li Yao for a long time, he sneered, “By ‘banish’, do you mean depriving me of all my magical equipment and launching me out of the atmosphere where I will wait to die?”

“Definitely not!” Li Yao shook his head solemnly. “It’s true that we will launch you outside of the atmosphere, but we will certainly make sure that you have enough food and water. You will also be given a sealed suit, which should be enough to sustain you in space for a couple of days!

“We will launch you to a fixed sailing route. A few carriers of the Flying Star Sector cruise along the sailing route every day. You will definitely be rescued!”

Somebody seemed to have stuffed ice into Su Changfa’s throat. “The Flying Star Sector?”

“Exactly. The Flying Star Sector. The Flying Star Sector where the Immortal Cultivators raised a riot a few years back and killed countless ordinary people.”

Su Changfa glared at Li Yao.

“I have carefully considered every detail for you, Senior Su. Such a decision is definitely in the spirit of law and humanitarianism. Even the pickiest person cannot find anything wrong with it!”

With his hand on his chest, Li Yao said, “I feel quite relieved to have fought for such a privilege for you, Senior Su. I think that my belief has just been refreshed!”

Staring at Li Yao without blinking, Su Changfa said, one word after another, “I have never seen a Cultivator as shameless as you.”

Li Yao scratched his chin. “Perhaps, the Cultivators not as shameless as me have been eliminated by the cruel universe.”

"So," Su Changfa said, "you are saying that, if I don't confess the intelligence about the Imperium of True Human Beings and the secrets of the war base, you will hand me over to the citizens of the Flying Star Sector, who hate the Immortal Cultivators' guts?"

"Technically speaking, we are merely banishing you, Senior Su. Moreover, you came such a long way for the purpose of conquering the Flying Star Sector in the first place. I don't feel at all ill at ease to hand you over to the people of the Flying Star Sector.

"But I'm confused about one thing. Now that you have chosen to surrender, why are you not willing to confess everything promptly?"

"How can they be the same?" Su Changfa replied toughly. "Surrender is my personal choice. Surrender when the enemy is too invincible to keep myself alive, and chances are that I can rise up again later. It is a tactical choice, not immoral at all!

"But the crucial information, should I confess it, is very likely to jeopardize the overall interests of the civilization of mankind!

"I am a cr*ppy old man more than two hundred years old after all. However scared of death I am, it is not enough for me to sell out mankind in exchange for my survival!"

Li Yao was surprised. "Does it have anything to do with the overall interests of the civilization of mankind?"

"Of course it does," Su Changfa said. "After a few days of getting to know each other, I have realized that, although the Star Glory Federation is remote at the edge of the universe and all by yourself, you are as ambitious as a rising sun, which reminds me of the Covenant Alliance in the past!

“Now that you are integrating the forces of all three Sectors and you have discovered such a large relic from the Pangu civilization, your potential will be further boosted if you have the tremendous intelligence about the Imperium!

“Once the federation rises, the Imperium will have enemies both in front and behind. If we have to waste too many resources and forces on you, we may not be capable enough to deal with the Covenant Alliance!

“Should the Covenant Alliance defeat the Imperium, the civilization of mankind will be suppressed by the Path of Ultimate Benevolence and cursed forever! Tell me, is it not against the overall interests of the civilization of mankind?

“Hehe. The reckless man Kou Ruhuo burnt his life and soul to show the member of the Pangu Clan the valor and valiance of mankind! If I betray everything just in order to live a few more decades when I’m an old man in the first place, I will be too ashamed to meet Kou Ruhuo in the afterworld!”

Chapter 1296 - Master of Debate

Li Yao was greatly enlightened. “So to speak, in your eyes, the overall interests of the civilization of mankind are more important than anything, even including the Imperium of True Human Beings, your motherland?”

Su Changfa hesitated for a moment but still said, “Of course, the overall interests of the civilization of mankind are more important than anything. However, the Imperium of True Human Beings represents the greatest interests of mankind. The two concepts are indispensable from each other! There’s no need to trick me on that!”

“I hardly think so,” Li Yao sneered. “Senior Su, have you never given it any thought? The Path of Ultimate Benevolence is truly a creepy ideology. The human beings under its control have lost all their normal emotions and become lifeless puppets!

“But why is such a ridiculous theory, which should be freezing the blood of any normal human, so popular in the Imperium of True Human Beings? Why have so many people devoted themselves to the cause of the Covenant Alliance, rising up against the powerful suppression of the Imperium?

“Do you not feel that the tyranny of the Imperium is an important reason for everything?

“It is exactly because you regard the ninety-nine percent ordinary people as ‘hominoids’, existences no better than animals, and you have savaged and exploited them blatantly, imposing suffering on them, that they abandon their everything for the Path of Ultimate Benevolence!

“Even being puppets is still better than being your slaves! This is perhaps what a common ‘hominoid’ of the Imperium thinks.

“The more you exploit ordinary people, the more determined the ordinary people will be to get away from you and resist you. The power of the Covenant Alliance will snowball as a result!

“This vicious cycle is like an enormous swirl at the center of the cosmos that the Imperium can never flee from!”

Su Changfa burst into fury. His eyelids twitched for a long time before he took a deep breath and said coldly, “How can you explain the national affairs so easily? As you have seen in person, the hominoids were created as ‘tools’ in the very beginning. Being enslaved is in their nature!

“They are dogs that can never be familiarized, animals that can never be fed up! However nicely we treat them, they will still be controlled by the Path of Ultimate Benevolence in the end!

“Forget it. Now that you’ve seen through my intention, I don’t want to play the game of words with you anymore. If you want to hand me over to the people of the Flying Star Sector, so be it!

“The bottom line is—”

With a sneer, he said, “It’s easy for you to kill me, but let’s see whether or not you are capable of retrieving the crucial intelligence deep inside my memories!”

“I don’t want to play the game of words, either, and I don’t want to determine which of our beliefs is correct and which is wrong here and now. I am in the Nascent Soul Stage, too. I know better than anybody that changing the belief of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator is extremely difficult!” Li Yao said sincerely. “However, if I may suggest that you consider the question from a different perspective, does it really hurt to buy ‘insurance’ for your belief?”

“Insurance?” Su Changfa was dazed. “What do you mean?”

“This is how it goes…” Li Yao explained patiently. “According to your belief, you have absolutely no doubt that the true path of immortality is the only correct path for mankind to march forward and that the Imperium of True Human Beings will certainly defeat the Covenant Alliance and defend the civilization of mankind, right?”

“Of course!” Su Changfa nodded solemnly. “I will implement the true path of immortality with my life to make everything reality!”

“Let’s say that your belief is 99.99% likely to be correct, but what if things go wrong?

“What if the 0.01% possibility turns out to be true and you have been walking down the wrong path further and further? What if the Imperium of True Human Beings can never defeat the Covenant Alliance?

“There’s no need to brag now, Senior Su. Other than you, we have other sources of intelligence. We are aware that the future of the Imperium of True Human Beings is not very promising. Although your country may not be in danger for now, nobody can say how long it will take for you to completely defeat the Covenant Alliance.

“The Imperium of True Human Beings has been mired in the swamp of war. You should know the crisis within the Imperium! Are you really confident enough to swear with your belief that there is absolutely nothing wrong with the true path of immortality, not even in the odds of one ten thousandth?”

Su Changfa was lost for words for a moment.

Of course, he could lie to Li Yao or anybody else, but he could not lie to his own heart.

“You have other sources of intelligence?” For a moment, Su Changfa seemed to become ten years older. He mumbled to himself, “Is it possible that you have met other Immortal Cultivators before? It’s impossible. Absolutely impossible!”

“I can’t tell you anything about that,” Li Yao said honestly. “I simply want you to consider carefully. Should the Imperium of True Human Beings truly fail and be swallowed by the Covenant Alliance, the Star Glory Federation, which believes in the path of the Cultivators with ‘protecting the ordinary people’ as the core principle, might be the last hope for the civilization of mankind!

“At the very least, I’m confident that, in the federation whose environment is relatively harmonious, not so many people will worship the wretched Path of Ultimate Benevolence!

“Since your true path of immortality considers the highest interests of the civilization of mankind to be most important, won’t improving the Star Glory Federation’s capabilities be insurance for the future of mankind? If the Imperium fails, the federation will be able to continue resisting so that the torch of human civilization will burn a while longer!”

Silently, Su Changfa was deep in thought.

“Besides, even if we’re not looking from not the perspective of the overall interests of mankind but the national interests of the Imperium of True Human Beings, it will benefit your country a lot if you decide to cooperate with us and build up our capabilities!”

This time, Su Changfa was truly surprised and amused. “I knew that you were shameless, but I didn’t know that you could be so shameless! My first impression of you wasn’t wrong at all. You are a natural-born Immortal Cultivator! Being a Cultivator is too much of a waste of your talents in shamelessness!

“Come on. I’m all ears. How exactly is the Imperium going to be benefited if I tell you the critical intelligence about the Imperium and the usages of the war base?”

“It’s not wrong that the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Star Glory Federation are in a subtle, hostile relation right now,” Li Yao replied frankly. “If we were the only two forces in the universe, every secret that you confessed would be a brazen action of treason!

“But right now, there are not two but three forces in the universe, namely the Imperium, the Covenant Alliance, and the New Federation!”

“Are you serious?” Su Changfa picked his ear and yawned. “Faced with the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance, can your small federation be considered a ‘force’? There should be a line in your overstatement!”

“The federation right now is definitely no match for the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance, but do you not have high hopes about our future, too, Senior Su?” Li Yao declared barefacedly. “With the relics of the Pangu civilization, if you bring the techniques and secrets of the Imperium to us, we will definitely rise at the speed of light! In the end, even if we cannot be on par with the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance, we will still be a critical variable in the game!”

“How can the Imperium be benefited from it?” Su Changfa said coldly.

“It cannot be benefited at all and will only be greatly harmed,” Li Yao admitted frankly. “Our beliefs are incompatible, and we both consider ourselves to be the rightful successor of the civilization of mankind. A great war of belief and rightfulness will break out between us sooner or later.”

Su Changfa was rather surprised. “Then, why on earth should I help you?”

“Because while we will harm the Imperium,” Li Yao replied, “we will harm the Covenant Alliance even more!

“The Cultivators and the Immortal Cultivators are of the same origin after all. We all believe that human beings are the dominators of the universe and that the interests of the civilization of mankind are of paramount importance! We only differ in the concept of ‘civilization of mankind’ and the specific approaches to defend the civilization of mankind.

“But if we get to the bottom of it, we are all ‘human supremacists’. We can sit down and communicate nicely like right now!

“But the Covenant Alliance is different from us!

“Controlled by the Path of Ultimate Benevolence, they mean to reestablish the order of the Pangu civilization in the universe, which is utterly unacceptable for both of us!

“Just think about our experience in the relic. The Pangu Clan and the Covenant Alliance are our mutual enemies!

“Therefore, if I grade the federation’s hostility toward the Imperium at five points, then the federation’s hostility toward the Covenant Alliance is at least ten points!

“Senior Su, this is just my bold guess, but I assume that the Imperium may not be at an advantage in the war with the Covenant Alliance, right?”

Su Changfa blushed and sniffed but did not reply.

“Then, at this moment, isn’t it a good thing for the Imperium of True Human Beings that a new power that is highly antagonistic to the Covenant Alliance is rising?

“It’s true that we are unlikely to ally with the Imperium. We may even declare war against the Imperium at some point!

“However, when we destroy one starship of the Imperium, we may have already destroyed two starships of the Covenant Alliance! When we kill one Immortal Cultivator, we may have killed three to five soldiers of the Covenant Alliance!

“In my opinion, in a war, the party on the winning side does not want to see new, unexpected factors because victory is theirs as long as the situation goes on according to the current trend.

“On the other hand, the party that is losing always welcomes unexpected factors, which can possibly bring the two parties to level and even help them win, right?”

Su Changfa’s face was gloomy.

The relics of the Pangu civilization had already fallen into the hands of the Cultivators, which was a fact. The federation, with the relics of the Pangu civilization, was destined to grow into an influential force in the coming century.

Just as Li Yao had said, it would be a chess piece that rolled onto the board out of nowhere in the game of the universe.

The Immortal Cultivator quickly calculated what amazing changes the chess piece would bring to the two parties of the game—the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance—after it stabilized its position on the chess board.

After contemplating for ten minutes, Su Changfa took a long breath in relief and said slowly, “If I am willing to work with you to a certain degree, how will you treat me?

“I will certainly not accept my identity as a prisoner, and I am not interested in spending the rest of my life in a sunless cage!”

Chapter 1297 - Vaccines for Immortal Cultivators

While Su Changfa was deep in thought, Li Yao had been sitting cross-legged across him.

The ivory sunlight beamed into the room from the window nearby, illuminating the dust around him and making him appear to be wearing a bright golden cloak.

After hearing Su Changfa’s demand, Li Yao smiled. “As I have said just now, legally speaking, you are not guilty of anything requiring imprisonment. Now that you are even willing to cooperate with us, of course, I will fight for the best privileges for you.

“You will certainly not be regarded as a prisoner, a captive, or a hostile agent while you are in the Star Glory Federation. You can rest assured about that.

“Maybe, Senior Su, you think that the so-called ‘law’ and ‘morals’ only apply to one’s own country and that two countries at war should resort to whatever means possible without any restraint!

“But I don’t think so.

“Both the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Star Glory Federation originate from the Star Ocean Imperium, the greatest nation of human beings ten thousand years ago. Also, we are both ambitious enough to inherit the last will of the Star Ocean Imperium, restore the former glory of mankind, and make it shine even more brilliantly!

“I think that, even if a war truly breaks out between us, it will only be a ‘civil war’ of the civilization of mankind, one about our rightfulness, belief, and direction!

“Such a ‘civil war’ is vastly different from a racial war against alien species in the universe.

“What I’m defending is not a planet, a land, or a city of the Star Glory Federation but the spirit of the federation, Cultivators, and humanity!

“Since the Flying Star Sector is not part of the Star Glory Federation yet and you have done no harm to the Star Glory Federation, making sure that you are treated properly will be the first realization of such ‘spirits’!

“Trampling on such spirits is equivalent to destroying a city of the federation in person for me. It is not going to happen.

“Therefore, I will try my best to defend your legal rights, whether we have fought side by side with each other or not.

“Just now, I talked with Director Guo of the Secret Sword Bureau of the federation. In your case, Senior Su, if you are willing to cooperate with us, you can totally be granted freedom and live in the homeland of the Star Glory Federation.

“Of course, for a very long time, your residence and your communications will be monitored, which I believe is understandable, but the surveillance will certainly not affect your normal life.

“In my opinion, you can even go to work, say, as a professor in a college! A great expert in the Nascent Soul Stage. That’s something that normal colleges might not have even if they want to hire one!”

“What did you say?” Su Changfa found it almost impossible to believe his ears. Pondering for a moment, he replied quickly, “It makes no mistake. Just because I’m willing to cooperate with you to some degree doesn’t mean that I have given up my belief as an Immortal Cultivator! I am an Immortal Cultivator, and I always will be. It is absolutely impossible that I will be transformed into a Cultivator!”

“I know.” Li Yao smiled. “So what? There is no law in the Star Glory Federation that states that you are guilty for having an opinion different from others, nor will anyone be punished because of their ‘identity’. Just like you said, being an Immortal Cultivator carries no conviction itself. You can always be one if you want to.”

“If you really set me free and give me the right to speak…” Su Changfa gnashed his teeth. “I will certainly promulgate the true path of immortality within the Star Glory Federation and bring up even more Immortal Cultivators!”

“I’m hoping that you will do that,” Li Yao said casually.

Su Changfa was dumbfounded. “You are not planning to shut my mouth?”

“Mouths can be shut, but ‘ideas’ are invisible and all-pervasive,” Li Yao said carefully. “As the communication between the federation and the Imperium grows more heated, maybe into the ultimate form of communication that is ‘war’ later, the ideology of the Immortal Cultivators will certainly spread out on a large scale sooner or later. Will it really help to shut your own mouth alone?

“Nothing can stop an idea from spreading out. Even if everybody’s mouth is shut, they can still make eye contact! Also, the more you shut it, the more curious people will be about the ideology. They will prompt themselves to explore and learn it!

“After your brainwashing and your stories, which I can’t tell are true or false, I have to admit that the ‘true path of immortality’ is a seemingly-justified and highly-intriguing ideology!

“Such an ideology is very dangerous!

“I have been pondering about it for a while. Right now, it is possible for us to shut your mouth one way or another. However, if the citizens of the federation know nothing about the ‘true path of immortality’, will we be able to stop it when your expedition fleet arrives and implements a ‘collective brainwashing’, disseminating the true path of immortality like a flood?

“If we cannot block it forever, we might as well publicize it sooner. We will let the citizens of the federation get to know the real Immortal Cultivators and true path of immortality sooner. We will gather the wisdom of all the citizens to find loopholes in the true path of immortality in the hundred years to come, in order to win the debate between the Immortal Cultivators and Cultivators!

“You must know ‘vaccines’, mustn’t you, Senior Su? A vaccine is a collection of pathogens, too. But it can trigger the immune system of a human body so that it will gain resistance to the viruses and germs of a higher intensity!

“I want you to be a ‘vaccine’ that will trigger the federation’s ‘immunity’ to the truth path of immortality!

“This is also a reason I’ve trying to restore your freedom, Senior Su!

“Of course, if you have unwavering faith in the true path of immortality, you should be even more glad to accept my proposal because, if your path is the correct one, everybody will turn to the true path of immortality at the end of our debate.

“Then, by confessing some intelligence, you will be given freedom and the opportunity of public preaching, which is definitely in the interests of the Imperium of True Human Beings, right?”

Su Changfa’s eyes were deeply hollowed.

Li Yao’s words cast him into a tricky dilemma.

“The ‘unexpected factor’ you mentioned is too heavy a load for computation. Right now, I can’t tell whether there are more benefits than harm for the Imperium in the federation’s rise.”

After a long time, the old Cultivator gave up the argument and decided to give in for now. “I will need to live in the homeland of the federation for a while to learn how this world of Cultivators functions before I make a choice.

“If the Star Glory Federation is as hopeless as the Curly Dragon civilization, the Medicine Fork civilization, and the Martial Meritocrats civilization, it will be unnecessary for us to cooperate at all.”

Li Yao shook his head. “I can’t convince the Secret Sword Bureau to let you walk out of this place so easily. At the very least, you must offer part of the critical intelligence that is verifiable. For example, the control and production methods of the war base!

“If you can prove your sincerity about the cooperation with such critical intelligence, it is not unlikely for us to set you free and give you time to study the history and society of the Star Glory Federation!

“After all, there will still be a hundred years to go before the full-scale communication between the federation and the Imperium. We can talk about the intelligence within the Imperium later!”

Looking at his wrinkled fingers, Su Changfa was deep in thought for a long time before he eventually opened his mouth. “Fellow Cultivator Li, believe it or not, I truly find your decisions and your demeanor admirable!

“Now that you are frank enough to have such a sincere talk with me, I don’t want to waste our time with more lies.

“There isn’t much I can say about the critical intelligence regarding the Imperium of True Human Beings. Most of it is just empty, superficial talk.”

“How is it possible? Stop making fun of me, Senior Su.” Li Yao laughed. “Formidable as the Imperium of True Human Beings may be, experts in the Nascent Soul Stage can’t be a pawn everywhere to be seen, can they? Considering that you are in the Nascent Soul Stage and you have been given the responsibility of exploring with such a war base, you must be a man of high social status in the Imperium. How can you not know any secrets?”

Su Changfa tapped his head and said, “Pay attention to my choice of words. I didn’t say that ‘I don’t know’; I said that ‘I can’t tell’. It’s not that I’m unwilling to talk. I’m simply incapable of doing that.”

Li Yao blinked. “What do you mean by ‘incapable’?”

“I mean that the critical intelligence inside my head was locked through secret arts before I set off,” Su Changfa said casually. “You may consider me as a patient of ‘selective amnesia’, and I have forgotten part of the things in my past. If somebody else tries to activate the memory cells about that part, the barriers may be triggered and cause my brain to die instantly.”

“W—why?”

This time, it was Li Yao who was dumbfounded.

“Isn’t the reason obvious? To prevent the situation that I am in right now, of course!” Su Changfa said matter-of-factly. “The universe is dark and full of terror. Even the best expert in the Imperium might be caught in a desperate situation in an exploration mission through thousands of space zones. Should he be captured by the hostile forces and confess top confidential information from the Imperium, wouldn’t the Imperium suffer great losses without gaining anything?

“It is not about the loyalty of the Immortal Cultivators. The soul-searching techniques nowadays are too advanced. Even the most loyal Immortal Cultivators cannot weather through them.

“Therefore, before we set off for a mission, we examine our souls carefully and seal the important memories unrelated to the mission. When the mission is completed and we return to the homeland of the Imperium, we unlock the memories with special magical equipment. That way, there will be absolutely no losses!”

Li Yao scratched his head hard.

He finally understood why Professor Mo Xuan and his fellows had failed to retrieve much valuable intelligence after swallowing the star child in the Flying Star Sector last time.

The star child must have sealed a lot of critical memories before he left like Su Changfa did.

“Right now, my knowledge about the Imperium of True Human Beings won’t be much more than what a college student in the Imperium knows. Most of it is about the basic concepts and the general picture. Regarding the distribution of armed forces, the coordinates for space jumps in different Sectors, the sailing routes in the universe, the detailed refinement procedures of various kinds of magical equipment… all the specific, professional stuff has been sealed!”

Su Changfa looked at Li Yao as earnestly as Li Yao had looked at him a moment ago.

“That should be enough for now!” Li Yao gnashed his teeth. “What about the war base? You are the captain of Flourishing Sun. You won’t tell me that you have forgotten how to use or build it, will you?”

Chapter 1298 - Monkey and Gun

Su Changfa smiled. “The war base is not as useful as it appears to be. Do not be intimidated by the super high efficiency.

“Since you are a refiner, you should know that nothing can be produced without the necessary ingredients. The war base has simply achieved high-level automation, but the rest of the requirements are the same as any other magical equipment factory. A lot of water, air, spiritual energy, raw materials, and various other resources must be consumed on a large scale.

“Only in a place full of assets such as the relics of the Pangu civilization can it function at such a high efficiency and produce as many spiritual puppets so shortly. If the war base had landed on a regular planet that had insufficient resources, we might have had to hibernate for another twenty years before it produced a troop of the minimal scale for our exploration!”

“That’s not a problem.” Li Yao stared at him, his eyes shining. “You only need to tell me how to operate, dismantle, and maintain it.”

Pondering for a moment, Su Changfa said, “I can tell you the operations of the war base slowly. But as for dismantling and maintenance, I will have to say sorry. Even I don’t know how to dismantle and maintenance a lot of units inside the war base, much less figuring out their mechanism and duplicating them.”

“Senior Su, you are the captain of Flourishing Sun. Shouldn’t you know everything about it?” Li Yao found it strange.

“You may not know this, Fellow Cultivator Li, both the war base and the Colossi are the strategic magical equipment of the Imperium of True Human Beings.” Su Changfa smiled bitterly. “The greatest feature of such magical equipment is that they have adopted tremendous rune arrays and work units from the Star Ocean Imperium, the age of ancient Cultivators, and even the primeval era.

“The ancient magical equipment was all excavated from different relics. We only came to understand their performance, functions, power, and operations after thousands of experiments!

“For us, all the units are ‘black boxes’!

“Do you know what ‘black boxes’ are? It means that we know that inputting a certain command into the unit will lead to a certain result.

“However, as for exactly how the command is translated into the output and what the specific process and mechanism are, we don’t have the slightest clue!

“Even if we dismantle the ‘black boxes’, we still can’t figure out what exactly is going on inside. Also, it’s possible that we will never be able to assemble the parts again after we dismantle them. If so, a precious unit of ancient magical equipment will be wasted!

“Therefore, even if you have received one war base, it will be almost impossible for you to duplicate it because even in the Imperium of True Human Beings, such ‘national treasures’ are also manually made and cannot be manufactured on a large scale. Their total number is limited!”

Li Yao was dumbfounded. “How so?”

“In the Imperium of True Human Beings, we like to explain the phenomenon with a metaphor named ‘monkey and gun’,” Su Changfa explained. “Let’s assume that the civilization of mankind has been extinct for tens of thousands of years and monkeys have taken over the world. At this moment, a particularly smart monkey accidentally discovers a storm bolter that was deeply buried underground but is still of use.

“Because the monkey is very smart, or maybe because he is especially lucky, he accidentally pulls the trigger and shoots out a bullet. When the bullet blows a giant tree up, he learns the usage of the gun.

“Pulling the trigger is something that even monkeys can learn. Do you agree, Fellow Cultivator Li?”

Li Yao pondered for a moment and nodded.

“Pulling the trigger is not difficult. If the monkey is extraordinarily smart,” Su Changfa continued, “perhaps, he can even go one step further and learn to shoot precisely through the scope. As a result, he will be the dominator of the forest.

“However, learning to pull the trigger is one thing, becoming a gunslinger is one thing, and dismantling the gun and duplicating it is yet another thing, right?”

“Yes,” Li Yao agreed. “Even if the monkey turns into a great gunslinger and is smart enough to dismantle the gun into different components, it is impossible for it to duplicate the gun because it lacks the entire industrial system from metal purification to crystal refinement!

“To build such a system from nothing will take thousands of years!”

“Fellow Cultivator Li, you are truly insightful,” Su Changfa complimented, not entirely meaning what he said. “Let’s assume that the monkeys build an intact industrial system after thousands of years, allowing themselves to duplicate the components without any error and assemble them. There will still a long distance to go before they completely understand the concept of ‘spiritual energy’ and the mechanism of a storm bolter. They know how it works, but they don’t know why it works. Do you agree?”

Li Yao nodded. It was self-explanatory.

It was not just so for monkeys. He had been an expert of magical equipment maintenance when he was still a teenager, but he had merely been copying what was written in the textbooks.

Even if he could repair a crystal processor, it did not mean that he understood all the mechanisms behind a crystal processor.

“Now, imagine us to be monkeys and the Pangu Clan to be us. Fellow Cultivator Li, you should be able to understand what phase we are in regarding the exploration of primeval treasures.

“Yes. Many experts among us can pilot a Colossus skillfully. They can even kill a member of the Pangu Clan with a Colossus like you did!

“But it’s like a monkey pulling the trigger of a gun and killing a human being, which might not necessarily be a coincidence but does not mean much.

“Just because we can operate the Colossi doesn’t mean we can certainly maintain and duplicate them. We can modify the Colossi, but it doesn’t mean that we understand the mysterious mechanisms that support them! Many questions carry no answers right now with the underdevelopment of our civilization so far.

“The same logic applies to the war base. Therefore, you might as well give up the fantasy of duplicating it—it’s impossible!”

Li Yao took a long breath, not without regret.

His intuition told him that Su Changfa was not lying.

When he was faced with the magical equipment from the primeval era, he truly felt that he was a monkey with a gun. It was not difficult for him to learn to use it, but it would be unbelievably troublesome to figure out all the mechanisms.

“One thing off the topic…” Su Changfa said casually. “Have you ever wondered, Fellow Cultivator Li, why there were so many top experts and such powerful magical equipment in the age of ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago? The splendid views and the terrifying damage of many interstellar wars are still major eye-openers for us even to this day.

“One inevitably has the feeling that the more ancient, the stronger. It’s as if we have been retrograding after generations.

“Hehe. Of course, the ancient people were not necessarily better than us. The real reason is simple. In the age of ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago, the magical equipment and Cultivation arts left by the Pangu civilization were still scattered in the universe. The ancient people were simply adorning themselves with borrowed plumes by taking advantage of the powerful magical equipment of the Pangu civilization!

“It is like an unintelligent son who happens to receive his father’s fortune after his father passes away. He seems to be really rich and magnificent on the surface!

“It’s also like the monkey that we talked about earlier, except that it is not one gun that the monkey has discovered but a whole arsenal!”

Li Yao was greatly enlightened; Su Changfa’s explanation truly answered the unresolved question that had haunted him for a long time!

Sighing, Su Changfa said, “It’s a shame that it is particularly easy for a rich son to go bankrupt because he only knows how to spend the money but doesn’t know how to earn it. Even if he has a mountain of gold in his house, it will be exhausted one day!

“It’s needless to mention the monkey who has acquired an arsenal. They may have great fun shooting the guns, but they never consider the industrial system behind the arsenal and how exactly the civilization that supports it was built! The bullets will run out one day, and the guns will be total-losses eventually!

“As a result, forty thousand years ago, the ‘mountain of gold’ was finally gobbled up, and all the weapons in the ‘arsenal’ were wasted!

“Thus began the doom of the ancient Cultivators!”

“I understand what you are getting at now, Senior Su,” Li Yao said. “Today, we may not have as many experts as the age of ancient Cultivators did, and there may still be a gap between the most powerful magical equipment that we make and theirs. However, we and the ancient Cultivators are fundamentally different!

“Our everything has been built from scratch through hard work. After we find secret treasures of the primeval era, we will try our best to figure out their structure and mechanism, unlike the ancient Cultivators who were already content when they only learned how to use them!

“The ancient Cultivators were the wasteful sons and monkeys who dominated the forest with an arsenal. However invincible they appeared to be, it was their fate to decline generation after generation until their eventual doom.

“As for us, although we cannot compete with the ancient Cultivators, or even the Pangu civilization, in many fields as of now, we are exploring, studying, and making progress every day. We have never stopped. Then, it will only be a matter of time before we surpass the ancient Cultivators, the Pangu civilization, and all other alien species in the sea of stars!”

When Li Yao said that, Su Changfa gazed at him without blinking, trying to analyze what was truly on his mind through the twitching muscles on his face.

There was no telling which of Li Yao’s words touched him. The old Immortal Cultivator finally sighed and waved his hands. “Invite Director Guo here. I’ve thought everything through. Perhaps we can negotiate more on some of the details!”

Li Yao was overjoyed.

Su Changfa’s life was not important, but the information in his head was very important!

As an expert in the Nascent Soul Stage, if he was unwilling to share information, it was barely possible to elicit the information from him through torture.

Elder Nether Spring was a perfect example. Despite the cruel exploitation of the soul-searching techniques, Elder Nether Spring had still been able to conceal the secret of Abyss deep inside his brain and even kill himself at the crucial moment.

Torture was the most idiotic choice. It would be best if Su Changfa was willing to cooperate!

“I’m going to bring Director Guo here right now!”

Li Yao suddenly rose up, but he thought for a moment and sat down again.

In embarrassment, he scratched his hair for a long time before he asked awkwardly, “Senior Su, there is still one question that I would like to seek your enlightenment on. It’s not a big deal if you don’t know her, but have you ever heard of a woman named ‘Li Linghai’?”

Chapter 1299 - Who Is Li Linghai?

In his last words, Li Yao’s foster father wanted Li Yao to surrender to the Imperium of True Human Beings when the Alliance of the Holy Covenant attacked them. He also asked Li Yao to look for a woman named Li Linghai in the Imperium, claiming that she would certainly look after Li Yao and even the entire Heaven’s Origin Sector for old time’s sake.

Li Yao felt quite strange about the plan.

First of all, his foster father was from the Covenant Alliance, while Li Linghai was from the Imperium. What exactly was the relationship between them that made his foster father unable to forget her when he was about to die and believe that she would certainly take care of his offspring?

Secondly, who was Li Linghai in the Imperium exactly? Was she powerful enough to decide the fate of an entire Sector?

His foster father had mentioned that Li Linghai’s identity was not a secret. If Li Yao ever had the chance to go to the homeland of the Imperium, he could ask any random guy to learn where she was.

Since Su Changfa was an expert in the Nascent Soul Stage, and certainly not any random guy, it was all the more likely that he knew who she was.

After all, it was hardly likely that he would ever return to the Imperium in the rest of his life. Therefore, Li Yao decided to ask him right now. The secret would not be leaked anyway.

“Her surname is Li?”

Scratching his bald eyebrow, Su Changfa pondered for a moment and then said, “Since you are asking me without a context, it is obvious that this Li Linghai should be someone famous. In the Imperium, there is indeed a powerful ‘Li family’, which is sort of the most influential noble family only second to the royal family!

“The Li family of Long Wind was a great house whose influence spanned quite a few Sectors early in the age of the Star Ocean Republic. The history of the family can be dated back to thousands of years ago. Even long before the Star Ocean Republic was established, the ancestors of the family had already begun their activities.

“They are probably one of the most ancient families that have survived on to this day from the collapse of the Star Ocean Imperium!

“After Wuying Qi ascended to the throne, the Li family of Long Wind was among the first batch of noble families to pledge loyalty to him. A lot of members of the Li family joined the imperial army and participated in the war to annihilate the ‘rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic’. They accumulated their battle credits, increased their influence in the army, and swallowed countless Sectors who disobeyed the Imperium along the way!

“At present, there are seven Sectors whose Sector Masters are from the Li family. The other members of the Li family, in the army and in the capital, hold the positions relating to economy, politics, military, and media both on the surface and below the table!”

“Understood.” Li Yao nodded. “Wuying Qi was an outsider after all. He couldn’t have ascended to the throne without the support of the local magnates such as the Li family of Long Wind!

“One may even say that it was the local magnates such as the Li family of Long Wind who took the opportunity to eliminate their dissidents and competitors and to gain more benefits with Blackstar the Great as their cover!

“After all, in either the Star Ocean Republic or the Imperium of True Human Beings, no matter how dynasties and eras change, the Li family of Long Wind stands as stably as ever!

“This is about the case, right?”

With everything coming to this point, everybody already knew each other’s intelligence. Su Changfa was no longer bold enough to embroider the Imperium anymore. After a cough, he said, “You can say that.”

Li Yao pondered for a moment. If she was a descendent of an ancient family that had a heritage of thousands of years and was one of the earliest contributors to the Imperium’s cause, it was quite possible that she could potentially decide the fate of a ‘remote world’ such as the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

“Li Linghai, Li Linghai…”

Su Changfa curled his fingers and tapped his head softly.

“The Li family has tens of thousands of members. Even the most excellent of them are too many to count. It seems difficult to find her. Wait. Odd, odd. The name does ring a bell. There must’ve been shocking news about her!

“Let me see… Let me see… Li Linghai. A member of the Li family. A woman…

“Got it!”

Su Changfa narrowed his eyes. He suddenly eyed Li Yao up and down for a long time with a queer expression. Li Yao felt so creeped out that he had goosebumps all over his body.

It was not the hostile and malicious look that an Immortal Cultivator cast toward a Cultivator.

Instead, it was a look mixed with certain ‘affection’!

Affection? Li Yao was dumbfounded. He rubbed the goosebumps on his arms hard while he asked awkwardly, “Why are you looking at me in such a way, Senior Su? Is the woman a taboo?”

“She is indeed a minor taboo. The Crown Princess of the Imperium of True Human Beings happens to be Li Linghai.”

The vague affection inside Su Changfa’s eyes turned into deep suspicion. “Few people dare address the Crown Princess directly by her name. That’s why I didn’t realize it was her in the beginning!

“Where did you learn the name, and why are you suddenly asking about our Crown Princess?”

Li Yao was truly dumbfounded. His mind in a mess, he stared at Su Changfa for almost ten seconds before he struggled to say, “If I say that I asked about her because I truly admire the charm of your Crown Princess and don’t mean anything, will you believe it, Senior Su?”

Su Changfa shook his head slowly.

Li Yao’s teeth were aching again, as if somebody had put pepper into his mouth.

Had he known that the answer was so sensitive, he would not have asked Su Changfa.

“Well, Senior Su.” Li Yao looked around, trying to change the topic. “Do you feel that there is any chance at all that the Imperium of True Human Beings and the federation can maintain basic peace first before the Covenant Alliance is destroyed? Can’t your expedition fleet turn around?”

“Your diversion of topics is too lousy,” Su Changfa observed.

Li Yao coughed hard.

“Forget it,” Su Changfa sighed. “I can’t force you to tell me anything if you don’t want to. Even if I know the answer, it’s hardly unlikely that I’ll be able to send the answer back to the homeland of the Imperium while I’m alive!

“However, groundless peace is definitely impossible! The Black Wind Fleet will not turn around. They will certainly swallow you in a hundred years!

“It has nothing to do with the Imperium’s ambition. It even has nothing to do with our different ideologies. To be honest, the Imperium is too rich and vast to bother about a few pebbles at the edge of the cosmos!

“The crucial question is that there is still the Covenant Alliance other than the Imperium!

“Any Sector that is not occupied by the Imperium will be occupied by the Covenant Alliance! Any resource that is not owned by the Imperium will be exploited by the Covenant Alliance and turned against the Imperium later! Any human being will be fighting for the Covenant Alliance after they are brainwashed by the Path of Ultimate Benevolence into emotionless puppets if they are not fighting for the Imperium!

“Do you understand now? Because of this, the Imperium will never abandon any Sectors or the creatures living in it!”

“I understand. Now that the Imperium will not give up its ambition to conquer us, it seems that a war between us is unavoidable before we work together to deal with the Covenant Alliance!

“I only hope that the failure of the war will clear the heads of the big shots in the Imperium and make them understand what exactly the opponent they are trying to conquer is!”

“That’s right.” Su Changfa smiled. “Power is the only thing that matters in the universe. The fittest will survive, and the winners will be kings!

“If you want to participate in the game between the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance as a player and sit on par with the dominators of the universe, you will have to demonstrate your power to the Imperium first!”

…

Although he had left the prison cell and the soft, comfortable breeze was brushing his face, Li Yao still felt that he was confused, and his head was in a mess.

Even the large excavation magical equipment far away, which was letting out deafening noises, and the buildings that were rising higher and higher could not calm him down.

Pop, this must be the greatest joke that you have ever played! How did you meet the Crown Princess of the

Imperium of True Human Beings when you were from the Covenant Alliance?

From what I can read between the lines, you were actually not in a bad relationship with the Crown Princess? Is it possible that you two were together once?

Li Yao was quite scared by his own filthy thought.

However, on second thought, it did make a lot of sense!

After his foster father ended up in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, he would quench his sorrow with liquor every day. He had even wept at night and sometimes gazed at the sky in the distance while mumbling to himself. His mind had seemed to be drifting somewhere far, far away.

Li Yao had experienced the same things himself. They were obvious signs that a man was missing someone!

Besides, what reason could make a man and a woman who were not related absolutely trust one another other than ‘love’?

This is too dreadful!

What exactly are the intriguing, clandestine secrets between my foster father, a guy from the Covenant Alliance, and the Crown Princess of the Imperium of True Human Beings, the queen to be?

Was my foster father suggesting that I should seek help from his ‘former mistress’ one day?

Also, since my foster father was from the Covenant Alliance, theoretically speaking, he should have been bound by the

Path of Ultimate Benevolence and shouldn't have revealed any negative emotions!

But the foster father I saw had perfectly normal feelings, the same as everybody else. Also, when he was dying, he was still asking me to be wary of the Covenant Alliance!

It's obvious that he had freed himself from the control of the Path of Ultimate Benevolence and awakened the real consciousness as a human being. He betrayed the Covenant Alliance completely!

How did he achieve it?

Did it have anything to do with the mysterious woman Li Linghai?

Also, what is Little Black exactly?

Over the past few years, what Li Yao had paid most attention to was not his own recovery but Little Black's secrets.

The fat, lazy guy that had been sealed inside Black Wing for decades could be used to control a Colossus!

At first, Li Yao had thought that Little Black was a primeval treasure from hundreds of thousands of years ago.

However, after asking for his permission, Li Yao had scraped off part of the powder from his body for examination, only to discover that the latest time Little Black was completely refined was no earlier than ten thousand years ago.

Therefore, Little Black's 'birth date' was not the primeval era but the age of the Star Ocean Imperium.

Based on Li Yao’s own experience and Little Black’s obscure memory, Li Yao assumed that Little Black should be a piece of ancillary magical equipment that the Cultivators of the Star Ocean Imperium produced to manipulate the Colossi.

It was an object that could almost be called a ‘liquid crystal processor’ and could translate the primeval operation menu of the Colossi into new interfaces that modern people could understand.

Then, the question remained.

Which unparalleled expert of the Star Ocean Imperium had Little Black’s previous owner been?

And where exactly did his foster’s father find it?

His foster father asked Li Yao to give half of the key to Li Linghai. So, was the whole thing related to the Crown Princess of the Imperium of True Human Beings from beginning to the end?

Chapter 1300 - Shine Brilliantly!

There was one other problem.

If Li Linghai was a regular noble of the Imperium of True Human Beings, perhaps Li Yao could still have tried to look for her when he went to the homeland of the Imperium one day in the future.

But she was the Crown Princess of the Imperium of True Human Beings!

Li Yao did not know how long it would take before he went to the homeland of the Imperium, but when he did, she would probably be the queen of the Imperium!

So, how exactly was Li Yao going to barge into the royal palace in the capital of the Imperium and have a nice chat with His Majesty's wife?

The picture was so beautiful that Li Yao shuddered in coldness.

While he was upset, the old tortoise Gui Suishou appeared out of nowhere again and said with a smile, "My young friend Li Yao, you seem worried. What's troubling you?"

Li Yao frowned and snapped, "A lot of things are troubling me, but nothing that you can take care of, Master Gui."

Gui Suishou blinked his bean-sized eyes and said, "Why? I may be not intelligent enough, but I am a few years older than my young friend after all. I can certainly share some of my life experience with my young friend. It can perhaps solve the puzzles in my young friend’s heart!”

“Isn’t it obvious?” Li Yao said. “Master Gui, you are an ‘absolute pessimist’ who believes in the unavoidable doom of our civilization! If so, in your eyes, all our struggles and endeavors right now should be futile. What can I gain by telling you things that are upsetting me?”

“It seems that you have somewhat misunderstood ‘absolute pessimism’!” Gui Suishou was good-tempered enough to not react when Li Yao was lambasting him so straightforwardly. “Let me ask you something, my young friend Li Yao. Do you believe that everybody is destined to die?”

What kind of question is that? Li Yao was dazed. He blurted out, “Of course. It is the law of nature to age and die. I am not that kind of guy who blindly pursues an eternal life!”

Gui Suishou sighed. “No matter how brilliant and glorious one’s life is, they will end up as a pile of dry bones eventually. In hundreds of years, even those bones will be entirely gone. Right?”

Li Yao nodded and did not think that it was a big deal. “It is enough as long as their life shined brilliantly once. What’s the big deal even if there’s nothing left in the end?”

“Therefore, I can call you a person who believes in the unavoidable doom of life,” Gui Suishou said unhurriedly. “You believe that you cannot escape from your death no matter how hard you try, right?”

Li Yao was rendered speechless for a moment.

“If you believe that a living creature is destined to die one day and that you are not an exception, why are you striving and struggling so hard right now?” Gui Suishou said carefully. “For you, does the short life before death mean anything?”

“Of course!” Li Yao felt that a pot of boiling oil was poured into his messy head. “Isn’t it nonsense? We are not living our lives just because we are going to die sooner or later?”

Gui Suishou smiled casually. “Right now, my young friend Li Yao, you should understand the essence of the ‘absolute pessimism’ better now, right?

“You believe that everybody is destined to die, but you won’t deny the value of their hard work when they are alive, will you?

“On the contrary, it is exactly because death awaits everybody that ‘life’ is full of precious significance.

“If an eternal life does exist, everything that the undying person does will be truly meaningless!

“This is just like a race. Only if there is a finish line will a race be meaningful. If everybody has to run incessantly without a finish line, who will be ever persistent enough to run on?

“By the same logic, I believe in the inevitable doom of the human civilization, but I do not deny the value of human civilization just because of that, nor am I disapproving of the efforts that everybody, including you, is making while trying to save the civilization!

“It is exactly because I believe that our civilization will eventually perish that I have been given the privilege to observe our civilization from a more transcendental perspective and record every shining point of our civilization on the great monument of civilization!

“This is the essence of the Monument Scholars. Have you got it, my young friend Li Yao?”

Li Yao’s eyes were blinking faster than the flapping wings of a butterfly. “… More or less.”

“Then, would you like to tell me what is bothering you?” Gui Suishou asked very kindly.

Li Yao scratched his hair for a long time. He suddenly felt that all the cr*ppy old men were sophisticated enough to muddle his head with only a few words.

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao said, “Master Gui, there is indeed a question that has confused me for quite a few days. In fact, it is not exactly one question but a whole bunch of questions!”

Gui Suishou pointed at the uneven ground and said, “I’d like to know the details.”

Not caring about whether the ground was clean or not, Li Yao sat down and started discussing his questions with Gui Suishou.

“Before the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Alliance of the Holy Covenant revealed their true faces, I was an avid believer of the ideology I used to believe in,” Li Yao said honestly. “However, after I engaged with the Immortal Cultivators and someone from the Covenant Alliance on Kunlun and learned part of their ideologies from different perspectives, and especially after I got a clear understanding about the origins of the Immortal Cultivators, I grew confused again.

“My belief is very firm. Of course, it is not the core principle that ordinary people must be protected that is wavering.

“However, the history of the decline of the Cultivators’ civilizations that the Immortal Cultivators showed me seemed rather plausible. There are indeed certain internal contradictions within the Cultivators’ civilizations that are barely resolvable!

“The Curly Dragon civilization, the Medicine Fork civilization, the Martial Meritocrats civilization… and dozens more civilizations of Cultivators have declined for various reasons. The ‘diseases’ that caused them to decline are not entirely unseen in the Star Glory Federation!

“The so-called ‘true path of immortality’ is certainly not a treatment to cure the diseases; it is just a dose of violent drugs that can stimulate the potential of the body for a short time, making them appear energetic, but will in fact hide the real causes of the diseases. When the effect of the drugs is over, the diseases will get worse and kill the patient!

“However, it appears to me that the path of the Cultivators cannot address the problems completely, either. It can’t create a perfect world!”

“Perfect world?” Gui Suishou was amused. “My young friend Li Yao, you’ve been too obstinate. Is there really such a thing as ‘perfect world’?

“Civilization is too large and complicated a concept. We can’t make everything clear for the time being. So, let’s take human beings as an example.

“For every person in the world, even if they are born in a rich family, always pay attention to their health, and work hard to maintain it, it is always possible that they may be ill every once in a while, right?

“Which mortal in the mundane world can guarantee that they will be free of illnesses and worries forever? Only those in the tombs, I’m afraid!”

Deep in thought, Li Yao asked, “What should they do if they have worries?”

“Anything that suits them!” Gui Suishou said casually. “When you are ill, you go to a physician. When you are anxious, you go to a therapist. If the problems can’t be solved, you drink or cry your troubles away… Don’t all nobles and smallfolk spend their entire lives battling through such troubles and obstacles in such ways?”

Li Yao frowned. “But some illness and worries are untreatable!”

“Then, they may die.” Looking at the bright purple clouds not far away, Gui Suishou said slowly, “Now that you also know that doctors are not deities and that some diseases are beyond treatment, the doctors may not be to blame even if the patients pass away in the end.

“By the same logic, Cultivators are not deities. What makes you think that the destruction of the Curly Dragon Sector, the Medicine Fork Sector, the Martial Meritocrats Sector, and all the other civilizations is the fault of the path of the Cultivators?

“As you said yourself, it is the law of nature to age and die. Every material declines. Even the burning sun will fade away one day. Why do you think that a civilization will never be sick or die?

“When a civilization is sick, we must find a way to treat it. If this prescription doesn’t work, we will switch to the next one. After all the prescriptions have been tried and none of them prove useful, we will try to leave our message and die with dignity. This is the worldview of us Monument Scholars.”

Li Yao’s face seemed to be mired in a deep valley.

One moment, he was confused, enlightened the next, and then, hollow. There was no telling where his mind had floated to.

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao finally mumbled, “Master Gui, your words do make a lot of sense. I seem to be asking for trouble before trouble troubles me!”

“Precisely.” Gui Suishou nodded with a smile, “If you believe that the most important thing for a living person is not how healthy and how long their life is, but what dazzling brilliance they unleash while they are alive, is it otherwise for a civilization?

“As long as the civilization of mankind leaves a heavy, ineffaceable stroke on the canvas that is the sea of stars, will we be regretful even if our civilization walks to its doom one day in the future?

“At the very least, the Monument Scholars will try our best to record the brilliant stroke as perfectly as possible and spray it to infinite lightyears away and eons later as our ‘offspring’ and ‘legacy’!”

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao looked at the clouds in the sky that were rolling like surging tides.

Yet, his eyes seemed to be piercing through the clouds and darting into the depths of the universe.

His heart was pounding, his breath was hasty, and his eyes were glittering. The worries that had plagued him for days were gone.

He could not wait to leave his own ineffaceable trace on the enormous ‘canvas’!

Chapter 1301 - Great Leap!

“Sister Long, here, here!”

Long Yunxin, the youngest mentor of the Refining Department of Flying Star University, had only just arrived at the entrance of the park with the hundred most distinguished students of her apartment when she saw Xie Anan, her confidante who had been a friend to her since childhood, jumping up and down, waving her hands at them.

After being away for more than five years, the little girl who always followed her had grown much more mature. She was almost like a charming and lovely woman now.

However, her round, red face that looked like a ripe apple was exactly like before. If she made her hair into a cute ponytail, chances were that she would still be mistaken for a college student!

But one should never judge anyone based on their appearance. Long Yunxin knew for a fact that the little girl, who appeared to be a bit silly before and was merely spoiled by everyone as a precious darling, had made astonishing progress after learning under the legendary master of refining ‘Fiend Star Li Yao’.

Xie Anan’s arts of refining had already been acknowledged as expert-level. In good time, it was possible that she would indeed grow into a grandmaster to everybody’s surprise!

Who could’ve seen this coming? Long Yunxin secret observed with mixed feelings. She had not figured out even to this moment what about Xie Anan caught Li Yao’s attention and made him decide to recruit her as a disciple.

Speaking of which, when Li Yao entered the circle of refiners in the Flying Star Sector, it was Long Yunxin who had made his acquittance first.

Long Yunxin had even taken Li Yao to a Sword Tasting Get-together. They had competed in the Skyhill Sword Seminar!

Later, when Long Yunxin was teaching in the Refining Department of Flying Star Universe, Li Yao had spent around half a year in Flying Star Universe as a ‘visiting scholar’, too. The two of them had been in a close relationship.

Long Yunxin had been rather fond of Li Yao, who had still been concealing his identity back then. She had even subtly expressed her feelings for him.

But as a result, Li Yao had refused her in a rather… perverted way.

Ever since then, whenever the name of Li Yao was mentioned, Long Yunxin’s teeth would clatter in fury, and she was often so embarrassed that she almost wanted to dig a hole in the ground and bury herself in it.

Because of the incident, she was even too ashamed to contact her good friend Xia Anan who happened to be an eye-witness of the awkward dinner.

However, time was the best healer for everything, and that event had been a long time ago.

It had been almost ten years since the riot of the Immortal Cultivators in the Flying Star Sector and six years since the great plague in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the rebellion of the Patriots Partnership in the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

Five years had already passed since Kunlun was first visited by human beings and the relics of the Pangu civilization had been found!

For everyone in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector, history seemed to be a boat that had suddenly marched into a narrow, ragged valley with surging waves after passing through a broad, peaceful river slowly. The reforms over the past five years were perhaps more epic than the changes in the five hundred years before that!

Civilizations originated from communication. With the integration of the technology, techniques, wisdom, and history, and with the primeval magical equipment, spiritual stripes, and spells that were transported to the three Sectors from Kunlun, countless new concepts, new findings, and new organizations were popping up like mushrooms after a rain, making everybody feel dazzled.

Even the most remote towns in the three Sectors were witnessing changes on a daily basis and would be utterly reshaped every three to five months, not to mention the glorious city that was a center of the three Sectors now.

Everybody had been ushered into an exciting era of great leaps!

For a refiner such as Long Yunxin, it was certainly extremely fortunate to live in such a revolutionary age.

Take their trip for example. Five years ago, the Heaven’s Artillery and the Cosmic Slingshot were the only vehicles between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector. Better communication could only be conducted through large starships that boasted super long-distance space jump abilities such as Burning Prairie. The cost to ship personnel and resources was extremely high. A journey between Sectors was beyond the dreams of most people.

However, in the past five years, the star beacons between the two worlds had become larger and larger, with ever-greater precision. Some point-to-point space gates had been established, too, significantly reducing the cost of the journey.

As a result, a common refiner such as Long Yunxin, together with almost a hundred college students in her department, was already able to jump from the Flying Star Sector to the Heaven’s Origin Sector to study or travel on medium-sized starships!

Long Yunxin and her students were just part of the enormous delegation that the Flying Star Sector sent out.

They were there for the first Three-World Magical Equipment Exposition!

The Magical Equipment Exposition was a traditional event of the Star Glory Federation, where the cutting-edge magical equipment of the entire federation would be exhibited.

After the preliminary integration of the three Sectors, many products were developed by the teams made of specialists from multiple worlds.

The great development on Kunlun, the relic of the Pangu civilization, could not have been accomplished without the collective effort of the three Sectors.

In the great development that was as long as five years, the development teams made of historians, archeologists, refiners, and specialists of various other trades ran into all kinds of difficulties, impediments, and uncanny phenomena in the depths of Kunlun. Many had even sacrificed themselves inside!

Right now, the first five-year plan of the development on Kunlun had finally been concluded.

In the Three-World Magical Equipment Exposition, their most advanced products developed over the past five years would be displayed together, laying a solid materialistic foundation for the formal establishment of the New Federation later.

Long Yunxin and Xie Anan hugged each other tightly.

The two of them shouted and laughed like two teenage girls, as if they were back to their carefree childhood again.

Long Yunxin was a refiner after all. Knowing that the ultimate treasures excavated from the relics of the Pangu civilization were right inside the park, she felt that dozens of kitties were scratching her heart and simply could not hold it any longer.

After talking and laughing for a while, she immediately held Xie Anan’s hand and went into the park to visit.

As one of the two best colleges in the Flying Star Sector, the Flying Star Sector naturally had its own booth in the Magical Equipment Exposition.

However, Long Yunxin knew every detail of the magical equipment developed by Flying Star University.

She knew that Xie Anan, as Fiend Star Li Yao's disciple, had been working on cutting-edge magical equipment in the past few years. Therefore, she would know what magical equipment was worth appreciating and even the functioning mechanism and key mysteries behind the products.

It would not be wrong to ask her to be a tour guide. Chances were that they would be even able to see some good stuff that the regular tourists would not see!

"Everyone, please follow me!"

Xie Anan welcomed the dazzled college students warmly.

The adolescents who were in their twenties at best had not entirely recovered from their first space jump across Sectors yet. Their feet were unstable when they were simply walking.

They had been born and raised in a civilization of starships where the room of the living environment was limited. Even the splendid Heavenly Saints City was essentially a larger iron shell, formed by hundreds of starships.

This was the first step that they had ever taken on the real ground of a habitable planet.

Every blade of grass and tree of the Heaven's Origin Sector was fresh to them, and they were amazed by the smallest facts such as the rising sun, the falling moon, and even a bird that was flying in the sky.

Xie Anan was from Flying Star University, too. Those little guys were all her junior brothers and sisters. She understood their feelings quite well and simply waited nearby with a smile.

In the end, it was Long Yunxin who felt embarrassed and urged everybody to move forward.

The unprecedented Magical Equipment Exposition, as well as the following meetings of magical equipment deals and research projects, would last three months.

The duration was also meant to spread out the tide of tourists who were crowding toward the event.

Even so, the park was still packed with people. Not only was the ground entirely occupied, even the sky, which had been divided into dozens of levels of transportation zones according to different altitudes, was crammed with the tourists who were driving their shuttles and visiting carts.

“Wow. Look over there. A floating mountain has been refined into the appearance of a resource planet. It is floating in midair, displaying a model of an automatic mining base!”

“The thing behind it, is it a legendary Colossus? It is said that all the debris we gathered on Kunlun after five years was only enough to be assembled into three Colossi!”

“Huh. Are the few guys there demons? Their wings are so beautiful. Like dragonflies!”

After they entered the park, not just the students, even Long Yunxin herself felt that her eyes were not enough. However hard she pretended to be cool, her eyes were still shuddering beyond her control. Excitement and confusion were replacing each other on their faces.

Such an expression was maximized when they arrived at the center of the main square of the park.

The center of the main square was a statue of light and shadow.

It looked like both a never-dying spring and a blossoming lotus flower. Observed from every perspective, it would reflect more than ten thousand colors in different shades. Every wave was calculated randomly and would not repeat however long the statue was observed. Anyone who cast their eyes on it would be fascinated and never grow tired.

On every drop of spring water, or on every petal, translucent names of magical equipment, techniques and technologies and their brief introductions were dangling down. As long as the visitors touched them softly, they would be able to read detailed introductions.

“The Colossi and related techniques and technologies.”

“Star fortress and related techniques and technologies.”

“Magical equipment related to superconductivity…”

“Magical equipment related to the super heat-proof metal materials…”

It was an intricate list of all the items exhibited in the Magical Equipment Exposition. It was sort of a special ‘tour map’. If the visitors were interested in any particular magical equipment, they could go to the corresponding zone to appreciate it according to the map.

What Long Yunxin was interested in, however, was the spectacular statue itself.

She extended her finger and touched the ‘petal’ softly.

The warm feeling and the elastic feedback told her that the colorful statue was not illusionary light and shadow but made of spiritual energy!

“You have made such breakthroughs in the ‘superstring theory’ that you can cover the spiritual energy with light membrane and twist it into such a delicate form through the force field?” Long Yunxin exclaimed in disbelief.

Chapter 1302 - Dazzled

As a refiner, Long Yunxin clearly understood that, although it was not difficult to condense spiritual energy, there were too many theoretical and technological obstacles to conquer to control the intensity, form, and every other detail of spiritual energy to ‘morph’ it into a vivid appearance!

Only with a profound understanding in the superstring theory and even the ‘membrane theory’ could everything have become reality!

Although it was just a beautiful and yet harmless spring that was exhibited here and now, Long Yunxin was quite clear how amazing a role such technology could play in the industrial field and the wars.

In short, when Cultivators were able to reshape spiritual energy freely, they would be able to trigger superstring shields that were more apt for their body figure and had a higher defense ability. They would also be allowed to fold and knit ‘spiritual threads’ into circuits through which tremendous information could be instantly transmitted. Also, minimal spiritual energy could be used to construct a super large spiritual shield that could protect a starship or even a city!

It was definitely a groundbreaking breakthrough. Long Yunxin did not expect that it could be completed in only five years!

If such a technique was applied on a large scale to every crystal suit and every starship, the capability of the three Sectors would definitely soar!

“Sister Long, your eyes are indeed keen!” Xie Anan smiled and said, “Since we received the Immortal Cultivators’ crystal suits five years ago, we have been studying their superstring shield generators. Based on that, we have established our own superstring theory and membrane theory systems!

“However, our reserve in that regard is insufficient after all. For now, we are only able to make simple duplications. The fundamental mechanisms are still a mystery to us!

“But it doesn’t matter. We still have a hundred years to catch up with the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance! In these hundred years, you, me, and all the junior brothers and sisters here must work hard and try our best!”

Xie Anan’s words, as well as the list of magical equipment and techniques dangling on the spring of spiritual energy, ignited the eyes of the college students from the Flying Star Sector like sparks.

All of them felt that their mouths were dry and their blood was boiling.

Time was waiting for nobody. Every second had to be seized!

Xie Anan and Long Yunxin tapped on the spring of spiritual energy softly and selected the route for the first day.

What they paid most attention to was, of course, the magical equipment related to the mining industry on the resource planets.

As a world with multiple space zones, the Flying Star Sector boasted a vast territory and many planets that were resourceful but had a harsh environment.

How to develop the resources on the planets in the most cost-efficient and the safest way was the greatest problem haunting every Cultivator of the Flying Star Sector.

The Gallery of Resource Collection Magical Equipment, deployed in the open air, was certainly one of the most attractive galleries in the entire Magical Equipment Exposition.

The organizer had made a ‘resource planet model’, which was more than three meters in diameter, float in midair with anti-gravity rune arrays.

On the ‘resource planet’, there were all kinds of mini mines, wells, and mining bases. Mining magical equipment that looked like ants and could only be seen clearly with magnifying lens was busy working, too.

What attracted the college students most was a walking mining base that looked like a ‘turtle’ and ‘miners’ that looked like metal spiders around the turtle.

It could be seen that the metal spiders were sending ‘minerals’ the size of millet into the turtle’s abdomen before colorful spiritual energy spurted out of the turtle’s back. Very soon, the turtle shell glided to two sides, and more metal spiders crawled out, joining the army of miners!

“Such a walking mining base has been developed on our own, based on part of the technologies of the war base of the Imperium of True Human Beings.”

With her head held high, Xie Anan explained proudly, “Because super long-distance space jump is not a requirement for us, and we don’t need to realize one hundred percent automation or add too many attack and defense modules, the design is much easier!

“What you see here is just a model. The real experiment models have been delivered to the depths of the Flying Star Sector and started working!

“Once the experiments succeed, the automatic collection and purification center and the mining spiders will be the best assistants for the demon miners and help them significantly improve the efficiency of mining!”

All the college students were greatly amazed. Like other tourists, they flew into the air on the floating discs and observed the resource planet model at a close distance. Some of them even waited in long lines to try maneuvering the mining spiders in person on the virtual control panel.

After enjoying it for two hours, they finally moved on to the next gallery, not entirely satisfied.

The next gallery, in comparison, looked like a huge toy store, with colorful toy models everywhere, including starships, shuttles, crystal suits, and even Colossi, which were quite a hit in the three Sectors. All of them were placed on the shelves randomly for the tourists to play with.

It was a paradise for the kids. Many of them would not walk anymore after they reach this place. They waved the toy models while mimicking the sounds, playing with each other, and having great fun.

A vague fragrance was spreading in the air, and some of the toy models were still somewhat hot, suggesting that they were all newly made.

Right next to the zone of the toy models were dozens of huge, cubic utensils made of tempered glass, with interconnecting metal tubes inside that were moving agile through the spindles.

Those metal tubes looked like long flutes, with tiny holes scattered on them.

The tiniest ‘threads’ occasionally spurted out of the holes. Heated by the fire of spiritual energy, the ‘threads’ were melted into different components before they were slightly cooled down and tossed out from the discharge hole in the lower part.

Long Yunxin picked up a component and touched it. She felt that it was not metal but quite smooth and light. It was so delicately and strictly produced that there was not the slightest error in every curve and every angle!

“This is amazing!” Long Yunxin was aware that such a ‘Twelve-Curved-Surfaced Irregular Component’ was extremely difficult to produce. Through traditional cutting method, it would take half a day to make one even for the most experiment refiners. Not only would the work waste time and efforts, the defective fraction was also extremely high. Every one to two products out of ten would be faulty ones that must be abandoned.

However, just now, this weird magical equipment had produced one in less than five minutes!

Long Yunxin did not find any refiner near the magical equipment. The dozens of pieces of magical equipment there were all controlled by crystal processors in the most standard assembly-line work.

She did not feel the intense spiritual waves that were a sign of the traditional furnaces, either. The brand-new magical equipment was terribly quiet!

Pondering for a moment, Long Yunxin widened her beautiful eyes and stammered, “Is this the 3D printing technique?”

“Exactly!” Xie Anan replied with a smile. “This is also a technology parsed from the Immortal Cultivators’ war base. With part of the knowledge that we retrieved from the relics of the Pangu civilization, we have managed to overcome the difficulties of 3D printing!

“Such a technology has significantly reduced the difficulty of producing the components of super complicated magical equipment. It also allows us to test the appearance and form of new components freely on crystal processors. We will be able to ‘print’ materials that are lighter as replacements for the traditional clumsy alloy materials!

“We have tested the components produced through the ‘3D printing’ technology on some crystal suits. Without reducing their defense ability, the crystal suits that adopted 3D printed plate armor were seven percent lighter than before, which means a significant improvement in combat ability and production time!

“One day, if we are going to cruise in space to explore new worlds, such technology will be of paramount importance!

“There is only limited space on a starship. It is impossible to bring infinite magical equipment and refining facilities onto it. Also, the environment deep inside the universe is too unpredictable. There’s no telling what magical equipment will come in handy.

“Therefore, it will be a major headache to decide what magical equipment to bring and what to abandon!

“But the problem will mostly be solved with the new facilities that have adopted the 3D printing technology.

“With a 3D printer, as long as the production procedures are stored inside the crystal processors, fundamental magical equipment that does not have a high demand on the hardness of materials can be directly printed. When complicated magical equipment is damaged, it will also be possible to print the components to deal with the urgency first until better replacements are found!

“When the technology is upgraded in the future, chances are that we will be able to directly print the super-large, super-complicated magical equipment such as ‘star beacons’. If so, we will be saved the trouble of carrying the clumsy star beacons into space every time! The room spared in the Cosmos Rings can be used to carry more food, water, and crystals, and the survival abilities and the working duration will be significantly enhanced!”

After hearing Xie Anan’s interpretation, the college students could not help but feel amazed again. Some of them who were too curious even picked up a few crystal suit models and played with them in their own hands.

Long Yunxin took a model, too. Her fingers moved quickly and dismantled the crystal suit into the tiniest components. She discovered that, although the model was small, it had everything that a crystal suit should have. Most of the units were strictly constructed and had absolutely no gaps between them. Such models were completely different from regular toy models.

She was greatly amazed in her heart. The world was changing too fast. Even she, a teacher at a top universe of the Flying Star Sector, felt that the Magical Equipment Exposition was such a great eye-opener that she was almost at a loss. It was not hard to imagine what the other tourists would feel!

Long Yunxin pointed at a giant, fruitful tree not far away and asked, “What is that?”

For some reason, she felt that such a scarlet tree was rather out of context to be planted here. Was this place not a zone where new materials were exhibited?

“About that. It is a brand-new demonic plant that my master and the Fire Ant King, a botanist of the Blood Demon Sector, created together!”

Chapter 1303 - New Colossus!

Xie Anan brought everybody to the mysterious tree.

It looked like both an ancient tree that had grown for millions of years and an animal that was deeply rooted underground. Translucent burrs were everywhere on the rough trunk, beating like hearts.

The branches that were flapping in the wind looked somewhat like thousands of tentacles, too. Sensing the vague spiritual energy spreading out of Long Yunxin and the rest of them, they were even sweeping toward the newcomers.

The tree leaves were opened layer after layer, as if a ferocious animal had bared its sharp tusks.

Thankfully, three circles of defense rune arrays had been deployed around the weird tree. When the clattering twigs were still almost twenty meters from everybody, they were suddenly struck by a few electric arcs that appeared out of nowhere and retreated unwillingly.

“It looks rather dangerous. Is it a carnivorous plant?” Long Yunxin clicked her tongue.

No wonder no tourists were allowed to approach the giant tree. Some Cultivators were even safeguarding nearby.

“Yes. Most of the demonic planets feed on meat. This one’s appetite is even larger. It is a very violent existence!” Xie

Anan smiled. “However, it can be very useful, too. Look!”

Xie Anan pointed at a few fully-armed Cultivators.

They were all fully-armed, with the most advanced superstring shield unfolded around themselves, while they drew close the trunk of the giant tree, carrying their chainswords.

The giant tree waved the branches and whipped them hard, only to be blocked by the superstring shields time and time again. They took the opportunity to cut into the trunk and left a few shallow wounds on it with their chainswords.

Colorful sap that looked like liquid metal immediately flowed out of the wounds.

Injured, the giant tree was waving the branches at an even faster speed amid spluttering noises.

It was not until the staff nearby tossed a few goats and cows that had been butchered toward the tree that the branches enshrouded all the food and chewed in great satisfaction.

The Cultivators took the opportunity to collect the liquid metal that was being secreted by its body.

The whole process was somewhat similar to the harvest of natural rubber. The Cultivators also seemed to be ‘herding’ the weird tree!

“This tree has been specially refined and boasts an extremely deep root. In a natural environment, it can grow to thousands of meters below the ground. Also, with the unique sucking ability, it can absorb the essence of the underground mother lodes into the roots, purify the resources, and transmit them into the trunk incessantly.

“One might say that it is a piece of purely natural ‘mining magical equipment’, but it is much more advanced than the mining facilities we are using right now!

“The liquid metal secreted from the trunk is itself a kind of Heavenly Material and Earthly Treasure with a high purity. It can be directly used to produce magical equipment without any further processing or be sent into the 3D printers to be built into other products.

“Of the one hundred and eighty common metals and crystals that we are aware of and five hundred or so rare metals and crystals, ninety percent can be collected and purified by such trees.

“In some of mining areas whose environment is harsh and whose tectonic structure is complicated, the traditional ways of mining may pose severe safety threats. It will be best to collect the resources with such trees!”

Naturally, Xie Anan knew everything about her master’s work.

In fact, such a weird plant was not of Li Yao’s own invention.

Li Yao was not a botanist in the first place, and he did not know the first thing about the refinement of demonic plants. It was impossible for him to study such things, which were in a completely different category from what he was familiar with.

But back when he was on Iron Plateau, the apocalyptic beasts produced by the eggs of apocalypse had been major problems for Li Yao.

The eggs of apocalypse were weird beings between creatures and non-creatures that were driven by a mysterious microorganism.

The eggs of apocalypse looked like hills on the surface. However, the parts revealed above the ground were just the tip of the iceberg. Most of them were hidden deep underground. They were also able to extend their ‘roots’ deep down to absorb the mother lodes, metal minerals, and other nutrients, which would be used to produce ‘apocalyptic beasts’ with various metal structures in their body.

Despite the trouble that they had caused Li Yao, the eggs of apocalypse were indeed highly efficient in collecting and utilizing resources. They were particularly suitable for the areas where the resources on the shallow surface had been exhausted and those deep underground were extremely difficult and costly to collect.

After Li Yao advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage, and especially after he experienced many unbelievable ideologies, civilizations, and worlds on the trip to Kunlun, he had changed his previous mindset more or less.

All the techniques and technologies were double-edged swords. Whether they were righteous or evil depended on how they were applied.

Before, he had been too scared by the techniques of the Blood Stripe Virus and kept all the evil arts deep inside his brain, unwilling to take them out for his own use.

Right now, he was willing to experiment on a small scale to see whether or not the seemingly ‘evil’ techniques could benefit people.

Li Yao did not dare produce an ‘egg of apocalypse’ recklessly, but he invited the Fire Ant King to a project where the techniques to build the eggs of apocalypse and the technologies to refine demonic plants were combined. After a few years of testing, such a weird plant that could suck resources from the ground was finally invented!

Naturally, Long Yunxin was unaware of the backstory. She simply felt that Li Yao was truly a monster. Not only was he a great warrior and an expert in the arts of refining, he was even able to work on demonic plants. He was truly omnipotent!

When she thought of Li Yao, Long Yunxin felt that her mind was disturbed again. She sniffed and asked, “Right. Where’s your master?”

Xie Anan blinked and said, “He’s in the Colossi Demonstration Area.”

As the ultimate magical equipment that could literally kill a god should it run into one on its way, the Colossi were definitely the greatest focus of attention in the entire Magical Equipment Exposition.

When the competition of two Colossi began, which was always the show of the day, the million or so tourists throughout park were attracted!

Below the blue sky and the white clouds, a spherical arena almost a thousand meters in diameter, which was made of defense rune arrays and arc-shaped electric nets, was floating in midair.

Two Colossi, one red and the other black, were confronting each other.

Before they took action, the burning flames around the two Colossi already raised tides of exclamations.

The burning flames around the red Colossus made it look like a crimson falcon, entwined with a few hideous, raging dragons, that was about to soar into the sky ferociously.

The black Colossus was relatively smaller and only about fifteen meters tall, but the fire of spiritual energy from it rose to hundreds of meters high, too, forming calligraphic spells and sophisticated primeval stripes!

Swoosh!

In two streaks of brightness, the two Colossi crashed into each other brutally!

Despite the buffer rune arrays installed around the arena, which could weaken the spiritual waves and the noises, the deafening collisions and the hurricane-like spiritual waves still made a lot of the audience close their eyes with their facial muscles twisting. They could not help but cover their ears and open their mouths to the maximum, exclaiming in sheer shock.

The two Colossi were both extremely fast. With her bare eyes, Long Yunxin could only see the redness and the blackness splitting, proliferating, and expanding, until they entangled each other and turned into a red and black cluster of light!

Only through the picture captured by the high-speed crystal cameras that had been slowed to almost one twentieth the normal speed could they manage to see that two fuzzy shadows were having a soul-stirring competition!

Although the Colossi were both almost five floors tall and were out-and-out iron giants, their movements were even quicker and more agile than the high-speed scouting crystal suits.

The plate armor of the two Colossi had many keen sensors installed, recording the damage of their every attack and displaying the parameters on the light beam in midair.

The outsiders were merely having fun, but the insiders were reading the details. Seeing that the parameters of damage surpassed the limits unbelievably time and time again, Long Yunxin could not help but gasp.

“Such terrifying damage!

“With such an enormous size, they can perform eighty-seven random dodging movements in a limited space in only one second? How can their joints and transmission shafts survive the friction?

“For a Cultivator in such a Colossus, even ten Cultivators of the same level wearing the latest crystal suits may be no match for him, right?”

Standing nearby, Xie Anan introduced the Colossi. “The red Colossus is Draconic Phoenix, the first Colossus that we discovered on Kunlun! Although it was broken into smithereens in the very first battle, the most critical control unit, or rather the spiritual residence, was not damaged. After a year of maintenance, it was ready to be put back to use!

“Later, our relic development team explored Kunlun on a large scale and found hundreds of units that were more or less usable. We have assembled a few new Colossi with them!

“The black Colossus is the one that we assembled most recently. It is named ‘Fancy Phantom’!”

Before Xie Anan finished her sentence, the battle between the two Colossi in the sky was concluded.

The hundreds of spells that were floating around the black Colossus, Fancy Phantom, suddenly surged toward Draconic Phoenix like tentacles. When they touched Draconic Phoenix’s fire of spiritual energy, they immediately expanded into clusters of black smoke!

Dark clouds seemed to be swallowing Draconic Phoenix!

Based on the changes of parameters on the light beam, it could be seen that the black smoke seemed to be highly corrosive and narcotic. It was breaking into Draconic Phoenix and attacking the user’s brain directly!

However, Draconic Phoenix was only rigid for one second before the black smoke was ripped apart by the erupting spiritual energy!

On Draconic Phoenix’s back, six furiously burning dragons seemed to be raising their heads and charging toward Fancy Phantom, piercing the Colossus’ chest instantly!

Cracking sounds were echoing from all over Fancy Phantom. Its every joint was tied up by the fiery dragons tightly while it fell down from the sky. It floated in midair with the support of the anti-gravity rune arrays, unable to move anymore.

Draconic Phoenix slowly landed on the ground and raised the arms, accepting the cheers from the colossal audience.

The fiery dragons returned to the arms of the Colossus again and hovered around it slowly, making the iron giant, which was only twenty meters tall, as magnificent as a pillar piercing into the sky!

After a long silence, Long Yunxin said, with a complicated expression, “Your master… is truly a super monster!

“Not only is he so adept at refining and fighting in a crystal suit, even the legendary Colossus is but a toy in his hands.”

“Yes. Master is indeed an out-and-out monster,” Xie Anan said, somewhat embarrassed. “However, you seem to be mistaken about something, Sister Long. The guy in Fancy Phantom who is lying on the ground right now is my master. It is my masteress who is piloting Draconic Phoenix!”

Chapter 1304 - The Most Dangerous Woman in the Federation!

Right below the area of Colossi, there was a maintenance warehouse that extended hundreds of meters into the underground.

The two Colossi that had just battled so fiercely slowly landed in the warehouse through enormous shafts.

Boom!

Draconic Phoenix fell onto one of its knees. Red holes mixed with the smell of sulfur immediately appeared on the joints all over the Colossus’ body and gaps of the plate armor. It seemed to be an active volcano that had just erupted violently and was in the middle of a half-time break, preparing for the next eruption that would be even crazier!

More than ten refiners in engineering crystal suits immediately flew close. They were as busy as bees, jumping up and down Draconic Phoenix.

Two of them, holding two enormous transparent utensils that looked like giant syringes, stabbed the utensils into the active valves on the two sides of Draconic Phoenix’s breastplate.

From the ‘spiritual residence’ of Draconic Phoenix, a lot of thick, amber-like liquids immediately flowed out, filling the two ‘syringes’ like glittering honey.

It was the Nerve Connection Liquids, also known as man-made cerebrospinal fluid, which was developed after three years by applying the liquid metal technology of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the biochemical neuron technology of the Blood Demon Sector, and the ‘skill card’ technology of the Flying Star Sector at the same time.

If the user crawled into the spiritual residence of a Colossus after it was filled with such liquids, the user would be able to spread out their brainwaves into the man-made cerebrospinal fluid and better integrate with the Colossus.

Meanwhile, the liquids boasted high buffer and protection abilities, too, and could serve as an airbag or a shield. However crazy the Colossus’ movements were, and no matter how serious the wounds it suffered, the user inside would be protected as best as possible by such liquids.

The Nerve Connection Liquids were the most precious materials co-developed by the three Sectors in the past five years. It would be understating its value if it was called ‘liquid gold’.

Every drop of the Nerve Connection Liquid was ten times more precious than marrow crystals of the same volume. Therefore, after every fierce battle, all of it had to be properly recycled without missing any.

Chi!

After the pumping magical equipment extracted most of the Nerve Connection Liquids out of Draconic Phoenix’s spiritual residence, the breastplate, which was carved with a pattern of a falcon stretching out its wings, slowly moved upward. A sophisticated rune at the center rotated 180 degrees, splitting the breastplate in half.

With a head of burning long hair, Ding Lingdang leapt off Draconic Phoenix!

She was exactly as she used to be. Brilliance bordering on provocation was always shining inside her big eyes. Her honey-colored skin was smoother than even the best silk. Her heaving breasts were shivering like two heavy crystal bombs, and the tightened sports vest seemed unable to support them. One could not help but feel nervous that it would burst at any moment. Her long, straight legs almost took up half of her height. The explosive strength that they demonstrated made her one foot taller than she actually was.

Such a perfect body figure that was built up after high-intensity exercises all year around would put even the most professional female model to shame.

Ding Lingdang was perhaps not beautiful in the traditional sense.

Her mouth was too big, and her skin was not fair enough. The intimidating vibe that flowed out of her from time to time was unbearable for most people, who felt that it was already tremendous pressure to stand next to her.

However, the smooth, wheat-colored skin had an advantage, which was that time could hardly leave any trace on her body. It seemed that all the corrosion force was blown away by her elastic skin.

Today, she was as young and vigorous as when she first saw Li Yao on Distant Expanse almost twenty years ago.

It seemed that her appearance would not change at all even in another hundred years.

If she covered her signature fiery long hair with a hat and walked on a street, chances were that she would also be mistaken for a college student just like Xie Anan would!

Of course, that was before she advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage.

Right now, in the Heaven's Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector, everybody knew that she was the youngest, pure battle-type Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage and the most dangerous woman in the entire federation!

Ding Lingdang had advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage half a year ago.

She owed her quick breakthrough to the 'Three-Five Plan'.

The so-called 'Three-Five' meant 'three years of preparation and five years of sprinting'.

It was a super warrior raising program that had been brought to the agenda when the great development on Kunlun first began.

In the first meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage, some of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators proposed raising 'solar soldiers', who would train themselves through the spiritual waves released by the star.

After the great development on Kunlun began, the specialists had suddenly discovered that they had a better source of spiritual energy than a stable star—the pulsar that was unleashing spiritual wavs crazily and Kunlun itself, which had absorbed the spiritual energy for hundreds of thousands of years!

There were countless broken power rune arrays on Kunlun. The tubes that connected those power rune arrays were mostly filled with spiritual energy of a high intensity.

If anybody got into the tubes without protection, the high-intensity spiritual energy would very likely cause the disorder of electrolytes inside their body, their enchylema to leak, and even the over-expansion of their mitochondria. Eventually, they might be mentally deranged, and their life would be threatened!

However, if they had taken the corresponding medication and potential activation drugs in advance and put on the appropriate macromolecule-membrane training suit, with the help of the specialists and the doctors, they would be able to absorb the high-intensity spiritual energy incessantly when they trained themselves deep inside the tubes, thereby significantly increasing their training efficiency!

The training was both miserable and perilous.

It was a game for the brave!

Ding Lingdang was in the first batch of Cultivators to participate in the ‘Three-Five Plan’.

Or rather, she was the very first one to sign up for the project.

Many training subjects were actually developed by her along with the specialists and masters of spiritual energy together. Then, she would add burdens and more burdens to the subjects and train herself so crazily that everybody was shocked.

To quote a specialist who had been involved in the Three-Five Plan since the very beginning, Ding Lingdang had been training in the eternal flames of the inferno all the time.

And that was only the training during the day.

Every night, when her companions in the Three-Five Plan were sound asleep, Ding Lingdang would go to Li Yao, who was also working on Kunlun. The two of them would find a place that was uninhabited but boasted intense spiritual energy and have the fiercest competition of beliefs!

They had competitions of beliefs on the primeval battlefield that was scattered with the war debris from hundreds of thousands of years ago!

They had competitions of beliefs deep inside the tubes where the spiritual energy was scorching!

They had competitions of beliefs in the infinite metal torrents that Kunlun spurted out and in the turbulence that could rip apart the stars!

They even had competitions of beliefs in the orbit of the pulsar right at the tipping point where they would be attracted by the pulsar and crushed into smithereens if they took one step further!

Five years. For five years!

Just like that, Ding Lingdang trained crazily during the day and had competitions of beliefs at night even more crazily. Finally, at the most intense moment during one competition of beliefs, in the boundless universe, right at the center of the surging tides unleashed by the pulsar, she had a breakthrough and advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage successfully!

After she marched into the Nascent Soul Stage, she immediately showed astonishing talent with Colossi.

Her body was born with fire, and her spiritual root seemed to be made of magma. She was also in possession of an ancient fire art named ‘Nona-Colored Fire’.

Draconic Phoenix was like a Colossus tailor-made for her.

In the competition for the ownership of Draconic Phoenix, she emerged beyond everyone’s expectation and defeated quite a few famous Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in a row. Finally, she had been acknowledged as the first user of Draconic Phoenix.

Ding Lingdang was realizing her vow in the past slowly but surely.

It was destined that she would leave her mark in the sea of stars under the name of ‘Ding Lingdang’, instead of ending up being an unknown vase like ‘Li Yao’s wife’!

Perhaps, it was the greatest momentum for her training.

She was a woman supported by competitiveness, and she would not allow herself to be eclipsed by anybody.

If Li Yao was a dazzling supernova, she had to be even more brilliant than Li Yao!

Hiss! Hiss! Hiss! Hiss!

After cleaning the last drop of Nerve Connection Liquids with a smaller sucker, Ding Lingdang walked to the black Colossus Fancy Phantom.

Her nose was raised high, and her lips were closed into a line tightly. She was obviously dissatisfied with her performance just now.

Compared to the magnificent Draconic Phoenix, Fancy Phantom looked rather shabby.

After the previous Colossi were assembled, the well-preserved, best-quality units and components had already been used up. The only things left were the half-broken, barely-usable ones.

Fancy Phantom was jumbled with such ragged parts and components that the federation managed to duplicate. It was a counterfeit product.

Although it was the one most recently made, it was actually the weakest Colossus and boasted the most unstable combat ability among all the Colossi in the federation.

When it was flying in the high sky and fighting at a distance, one might not notice it, but now that it had been moved underground, if it was observed carefully from a close distance, anybody would be able to tell the crudeness from the rough connection points, the joints that were exposed to the air, and the highly-uncoordinated hands and feet.

Crack! Crack!

Fancy Phantom’s breastplate, which had been twisted and deformed by Draconic Phoenix, managed to be opened after a while of ear-splitting noises. A cluster of black materials flowed out to the ground, and Li Yao struggled out of it.

“You are truly awesome, honey!” His face bruised and swollen, Li Yao cheered. “My wife is truly a super training genius second to none in the world! After you entered the

Nascent Soul Stage, you have been progressing faster than light!

“What was your last move exactly just now? It pierced my internal organs and almost blew up my stomach! Cough, cough. Cough, cough, cough, cough. I’ve got a stomach ache now. It seems that we won’t be able to have any competitions of beliefs tonight!”

Chapter 1305 - Ace of Aces!

“Stop it. I know that I’m no match for you!” Pouting her lips, Ding Lingdang glared at Li Yao angrily. “Draconic Phoenix is the first Colossus that we discovered. When we repaired it, we used the best-preserved and the most powerful units. More than ninety percent of the Colossus is made of the primeval parts, which makes it essentially a remastered version of the original Colossus in the primeval era. It has the highest combat ability among all the Colossi!

“Fancy Phantom, on the other hand, is what we have jumbled up with the unusable ‘leftovers’ after we assembled the four Colossi and with our own technology of enormous spiritual puppets. The primeval parts on Fancy Phantom only make up thirty-five percent. Also, the final debugging hasn’t been completed yet. It is still in the experimental phase, with a low combat ability and an unstable performance. It’s already a miracle that the Colossus can fly into the sky without breaking apart!

“However, when I was driving such a powerful Draconic Phoenix and you were driving such a vulnerable Fancy Phantom, it took me a whole minute to shoot you down!

“Besides, you weren’t trying your best at all…

“If we had swapped Colossi, you would’ve blown up my Colossus completely in less than three seconds, wouldn’t you?”

“You are wrong, sweetheart,” Li Yao said solemnly. “Who says that I wasn’t trying my best. Under your incessant bombardment that felt like a raging flood, I was truly sparing no effort to resist you!”

“Do you think I’m blind?” Her arms akimbo, Ding Lingdang bulged her big eyes and bellowed, “You didn’t even put on a mustard-seed combat suit, and you joined the battle in a T-shirt, shorts, and slippers. Is this your best?

“Hehe. I know that you are the strongest ‘ace’ in the three Sectors. Right now, the gap between you and me is still too wide. But don’t you gloat! I’ll catch up with you very soon and beat you in a fair and square competition!”

“You’re truly wronging me this time. How am I gloating? Hehehehe!” Li Yao scratched his nest-like hair innocently but failed to control himself after trying for a long time. He put on an evil smile of satisfaction.

Little Black, resuming the appearance of a fat, round meatball, grew two short, silly wings on the two sides of its body, which were flapping hard while it hovered above Li Yao’s head.

It seemed to feel that Li Yao’s messy, furry hair would be very comfortable and therefore simply seated itself on it.

But it was a pity that Little Black was too ‘obese’. Li Yao’s hair was entirely pressed down because its weight, as if Li Yao was holding a ball right above his head.

In the past five years, the three Sectors had undergone groundbreaking changes, and Ding Lingdang had advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage after crazy training. Naturally, Li Yao had not been idle during that time.

He had been working in the development team on Kunlun as a leader. He was mainly responsible for the collection, research, recovery, and assembly of the magical equipment related to the Colossi.

The so-called Colossi were essentially ‘crystal suits for Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators’. They shared some similarities to the general crystal suits for other Cultivators.

As an expert of crystal suit modification, Li Yao happened to be adept at the ancient arts of refining forty thousand years ago, which gave him an advantage when studying the primeval spiritual stripes and rune arrays. He soon became the core of the team.

When the Colossi were assembled one after another, he picked up his old job willingly again and worked as the ‘test pilot’ of the Colossi.

All the Colossi were driven by Li Yao first in the experimental phase before they were slightly adjusted and improved according to his feedback. Only after he nodded in approval and declared it to be qualified would a Colossus be considered completed and ready to be handed over to other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

In the past five years, Li Yao had been dwelling in the world of Colossi and the primeval runes on Kunlun.

Therefore, although his barehanded combat ability might not be in the top three among the super experts in the Nascent Soul Stage, he definitely boasted the most abundant experience in operating and modifying Colossi, leaving the second place so far behind that the guy would not even catch his exhaust flame. He was the true ace of the federation!

If he used Draconic Phoenix, the strongest Colossus of all, perhaps the other four Colossi would have to attack together in order to suppress him.

Ding Lingdang understood the situation quite well. She naturally knew that her husband had gone easy on her.

Of course, if she pursued any further, Li Yao would certainly blink his innocent eyes and drag his tone while he said, *It can't be helped. You have been operating Colossi for less than half a year. You can't trigger my full fighting will!*

Ding Lingdang narrowed her eyes and sneered, "You are still chuckling? Fine. I'll teach you a lesson about chuckling tonight!"

She was no match for Li Yao in a Colossus, and she could not defeat Li Yao in a dazzling war of magical equipment with a crystal suit.

However, when the two of them engaged in a naked, close-distance battle barehanded, she, who was between a 'body practitioner' and a 'body fundamentalist', had overwhelmed Li Yao again after she advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage.

Li Yao's delight was replaced by frustration, and his smile froze on his face.

Had he seen it coming, he definitely would have refused the training match with his wife.

…

On the lift leading to the warehouse of the Colossi, the hundred students from the Refining Department of Flying Star University were all blushing in excitement. Some of them were almost crying!

Even to this moment, they still found it hard to believe that everything was happening for real and that they were not in a dream.

“Good heavens. Are—are we really going to meet the legendary Master Li Yao!”

“I’m so nervous. I can’t seem to catch my breath!”

“That is Master Li Yao! *The* Master Li Yao who defeated Xiao Xuance, the best expert of the Flying Star Sector; rescued the Flying Star Sector, sabotaged the Eye of Blood Demon; facilitated the alliance of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector; and even discovered the sanctuary Kunlun!”

“Vulture! Fiend Star! Sand Scorpion! Every nickname represents a legend, and so many legends are concentrated on one person!”

“Also, he is the well-deserved best Colossi operator in the three Sectors. The ace of aces! Even the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who are one hundred years older than him have to drive the Colossi according to the ‘Colossi Operation Manual’ composed by him!”

“Rumor has it that with a Colossi, his combat ability is almost equal to an entire starship fleet, and he could suppress a small planet easily!”

“Do—do we really have the privilege of meeting Master Li Yao and even talk to him? I—I—I am so thrilled. I can’t stop my tears. What do I do? What do I do?”

“Sister Anan, what kind of person is your teacher exactly? Is he very lofty and strict? Will he be impatient if I ask for his autograph?”

“Lofty?”

Pouting, Xie Anan thought for a long time and realized that, although her master could be described in many ways, ‘lofty’ was absolutely not one of them.

After pondering for a moment, Xie Anan said carefully, “Well, there is no need to be nervous. My master… should be quite different from what you imagine!

“On many occasions, if I don’t remind myself intentionally, I forget that he is a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, a specialist of crystal suits, and a grandmaster of the Colossi, and think that he, well, he is like a regular mechanic!”

Chi…

The lift slowly stopped in one corner of the warehouse where the Colossi were being maintained. With black smoke popping from the gaps on the floor, the lift soon retreated.

Under Xie Anan’s lead, Long Yunxin and the hundred students walked out in a line. Feeling like ‘pilgrims’, they observed and studied, prudent and respectful.

The first thing that they saw was not the red, magnificent Draconic Phoenix but the unattractive black Fancy Phantom. Or rather, it was the people around Fancy Phantom that they saw first.

Most of them were seniors whose hair was white. Some of them were middle-aged men whose eyes were as sharp as the hawks’ and whose hands were as smooth as jade. Regardless of their age, their intimidating aura was obvious to all, making them seem to be surrounded by tornadoes!

They are all top experts in the circle of refiners!

The students from the Refining Department of Flying Star University naturally knew the authorities of their trade.

“That is Professor Zhao Yimian, the authority on crystal reactors!”

“There’s also Professor Sun Xiaolin, an expert in aerodynamics!”

“Look. That’s Master Huangpu Bo, possibly the best Armadominus of the Flying Star Sector, and Master Xue Yuanxin, who specializes in the Ares Extensions!”

All the specialists had spent almost a hundred years in the world of refining. Every name was thunderous for any other refiner. If they lectured in any university, the campus would be empty because all the students would be listening to them!

However, at this moment, all the experts and masters were carefully observing Fancy Phantom like the most obedient elementary school students.

On Fancy Phantom, a young man was crawling up and down like a monkey. Now and then, he stuck his ear to the plate armor of Fancy Phantom before his hands blossomed like a lotus flower and drew twenty or so runes casually, concentrating the spiritual energy and pushing it into the machine!

Fancy Phantom seemed to be enlivened by the mysterious hands and would shriek with ever-changing pitch. A whole orchestra seemed to be playing deep inside Fancy Phantom’s chest!

“Have you seen clearly my techniques, Fellow Cultivators?”

The young man who seemed rather unattractive and looked like a random college student smiled.

“This is the ‘Snap and Listen’ technique from the ancient arts of refining, which is the best skill when it comes to examining damage! The eighty-five basic gestures have been demonstrated to you just now. I believe that you all have your own unique secret arts. You can create even more sophisticated and unpredictable gestures with your own knowledge after absorbing my demonstration!

“On the axis on the left ankle of Fancy Phantom, there is a 0.05 millimeter gap between two beads, which affected the agility of the left foot and even the entire left leg. I assume that it is because the materials that the beads are made of have not been processed to deal with the super-high temperature. We must try to improve the procedures or even simply choose a different material to settle the problem once and for all!

“Alright. These are about all the problems that I have noticed. I’ll entrust the examination of the details to you, Fellow Cultivators!”

The young man smiled and leapt down toward Xie Anan, Long Yunxin, and the hundred college students, with his slippers creating two crisp claps on the floor!

Chapter 1306 - Civilization

"…"

Seeing the casual appearance of the young man and the face that often appeared on posters on the street, all the college students were dumbfounded!

Is—is—is this the legendary Master Li Yao?

He was wearing a sloppy T-shirt that seemed half a size too big, with a huge '250' at the center. There was also a badge, a clenched fist, on the chest, which was surrounded by the caption 'The Grand Desolate War Institution has been established for two hundred and fifty years'!

It was obviously promotional clothing that had been distributed for free when the birthday of the school was celebrated.

From the somewhat lackluster number and badge, and the creases that could not be removed no matter how they were ironed, it could easily be deduced that the T-shirt had been worn for quite a few years. Even the regular cloth now looked like silk because it had been rubbed too much!

The creased T-shirt, the fat, striped beach pants, and a pair of sloppy slippers, along with a bag of tools mixed into various colors by the oil dirt and crystal powder dangling from his waist, constituted Master Li Yao's basic profile!

Having just finished the maintenance of Fancy Phantom, Master Li Yao not only had a pair of hands that were stained with dirt and all kinds of suspicious liquids that were emitting repugnant smell, but he also had a black-and-white face, like a panda that had only just woken up.

His appearance collapsed the image of their idol in many female student’s hearts.

As it turned out… all the handsome and magnificent pictures on the posters were lies. They must have been rendered through countless modifications and edits!

He—he—he was actually so unattractive in real life!

Naturally, Li Yao did not have the vaguest clue what on the female students’ mind.

“Miss Long!”

He was glad to meet an old friend from the Flying Star Sector, too, and greeted Long Yunxin with a smile.

With mixed feelings, Long Yunxin was lost for words for a moment.

She knew better than to pay attention to the appearance on the surface. Through the immense vitality dispersing from Li Yao’s every pore and the stars that were hidden deep inside his eyes, she sensed a vast ocean!

Long Yunxin secretly sighed.

At this moment, she finally acknowledged, however reluctantly, that even if her vague feelings for Li Yao years ago had not been turned down on the spot, they would not have yielded any fruit.

They were living in two different worlds. The gap between their levels was too huge.

Her world was Flying Star University and the Flying Star Sector, or the New Federation that would include the three Sectors at best. That was the limit of her knowledge and the goal that she fought for.

However, below Li Yao’s seemingly casual posture and his somewhat slobby appearance, a boundless world that could almost include the entire universe was hidden!

His own world was so vast, mysterious, and marvelous that he was too fascinated by it to care about his image in the mortal world.

It was like how a falcon would not care for its every feather so that other people would be able to appreciate it because the falcon had a higher sky to break into and further clouds to conquer!

Making colorful feathers and uttering crisp shrieks were what sparrows and orioles should do.

Long Yunxin felt that she was a small sparrow right now, while Li Yao was a falcon that was soaring above the sea of stars. Although the two of them had spent some time flying together because of fate, it was inevitable that they would part in the end.

The one who was qualified to fly with a falcon to the end of the universe could only be another falcon!

After thinking through that, Long Yunxin suddenly felt her heart shake for a moment. An invisible rope was loosened instantly, and the problem that had troubled her for years was gone. She found herself able to confront Li Yao at ease now!

Taking a deep breath, Long Yunxin smiled and bowed back to Li Yao as an old friend before she said what they were there for.

“You are here to communicate with me on the arts of refining? Welcome, welcome. Of course, you are all welcomed here!”

Overjoyed, Li Yao blinked and said, “After all, I was a visitor scholar in Flying Star University for more than half a year, and I also developed an Ares Extension with Master Xue Yuanxin of your school! Flying Star University does mean a lot to me. Communication of the refining arts is definitely not going to be a problem!

“But there’s a minor problem. I only just returned to the Heaven’s Origin Sector from Kunlun, so I have a lot of old friends that I have to meet. My schedule for the day is full. How about the night?

“Tonight, we will have a good talk. Everybody will exchange their ideas and thoughts deeply and freely until dawn. How does that sound?”

The students did not expect that the legendary Master Li Yao would be so warm and easygoing. For a moment, they were all jumping and laughing in joy!

“However…” Li Yao smiled. “I want to ask a favor from you, too, which will possibly take an entire day. But don’t worry. Your time will not be wasted for nothing. In fact, I’m hoping that you can help test a piece of brand-new magical equipment so that some experiment data can be collected!”

For the students of the Refining Department, it was their daily routine to work as a refiner’s assistant or run magical equipment tests.

Now that it was an offer proposed by the legendary Master Li Yao, the item to be tested was definitely not random magical equipment. There was absolutely no reason for them to refuse the offer!

Therefore, all the students were encouraging Long Yunxin to accept the request.

After all, Long Yunxin and her students were on a study trip. The opportunity to be enlightened by such an expert like Li Yao was too rarely-seen to be missed out. Therefore, she promised Li Yao very quickly. However, she did say that some of the students that she had brought with her were less skilled than others. Some of them were only in their sophomore year or even freshman year. If the magical equipment to be tested was too sophisticated, they might not be able to complete the job well.

“Rest assured, everybody. The test does not have any difficulties. Not just college students, even middle-school students can finish the job easily.” Li Yao smiled. “In fact, it is not much of a test. I’m simply inviting you to play a game.”

“A game?” Long Yunxin was confused.

“Yes.” Li Yao smiled and replied mysteriously, “A game. A very special game.”

Twenty minutes later, they arrived at a sealed area in the southeast corner of the Magical Equipment Exposition.

The most cutting-edge super magical equipment, some of which was still being developed and tested, was displayed in the era. It was not open to the public. Only VIPs and specialists with special invitation cards were allowed to visit.

Li Yao brought the hundred students to a round, glass room.

It was like a center of virtual games everywhere to be seen, with game cabins that looked like metal cocoons scattered about in the room. Through the nerve connection technology, the players would be allowed to enter the most profound Grand Illusionary Land where they could play vivid and exciting games.

Special humming sounds caused by the high-functioning crystal processors could be heard. The air was mixed with the flavor of incense.

A lot of participants were already running tests in the game cabins.

Long Yunxin glanced around and noticed that the age and gender of the participants varied. Most of them were even seniors whose hair was completely white.

“This particular game demands that the tester boasts certain knowledge in sociology, politics, game theory, and military strategies,” Li Yao explained. “Therefore, most of the ordinary participants are of a relatively older age.

“Right now, the game is still in the alpha test phase. We have invited the citizens of different trades and social classes in the Heaven’s Origin Sector for the test and accumulated tremendous data. Next, we will invite players from the Blood Demon Sector and the Flying Star Sector who are of a different cultural background for the test!

“The Flying Star Sector is a civilization based on starships. When you play the game, the strategies that you choose will certainly be slightly different from what the people of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, who are from a planetary civilization, have chosen.

“The hundred students that have come with you on the study trip must be the most distinguished elites, considering that they have been admitted by Flying Star University. It should not be difficult at all for them to have fun in the game.”

Li Yao took the college students to the first basement. Many workers immediately led them to their game cabins.

Long Yunxin noticed that the staff were all wearing the school emblem of the Grand Desolate War Institution on their chest. They should be a team of volunteers made up of the students of the Grand Desolate War Institution.

It appeared that the development of the game was deeply associated with Li Yao, who was also from the Grand Desolate War Institution.

Li Yao adjusted one of the game cabins to the ‘Half-Step Grand Illusionary Land’ mode and guided Long Yunxin to play the game.

Because the game had not been completed yet, the picture demonstrated on the light beam was a bit shabby. In the middle of music, a crude, unembellished title rushed close from the depths of the universe.

Civilization!

That was the name of the game.

On closer look, the title ‘Civilization’ was actually made of countless brilliantly shining stars. When the player focused their eyes on the title, the shining stars suddenly exploded into a waterfall, which was then magnified into swirling galaxies.

Every galaxy had a caption next to them.

The Curly Dragon civilization!

The Medicine Fork civilization!

The Martial Meritocrats civilization!

The Sand Primitive civilization!

The names of dozens of different civilizations were listened. When the player focused their eyes on any name, detailed information about the civilization would be displayed, including the population, distribution of resources, social form, number of experts, and so on.

"'Civilization' is a cosmic simulation game," Li Yao explained. "The player will choose a civilization of Cultivators, play the role of the highest decision-maker, and decide the progress of the civilization!

"Every civilization of Cultivators has its unique skills and resources. Some of them boast abundant crystals, and some others have tremendous relics of the Star Ocean Imperium. However, the civilizations are faced with all kinds of problems, too, such as a shortage of resources, population boom, asteroid collision, and even the invasion of demons or descent of extraterrestrial devils. As the highest decision-maker, you will have to select the most appropriate strategy and deal with the problems one by one!

"We have provided almost a million selectable strategies. You can consider yourself to be infinitely free in the game, not bound by any rules such as morals, laws, or ethics. You can do whatever you want as long as you can bear the consequences of a certain strategy!

“The game has hundreds of different victory criteria. The one with the highest difficulty is to make a civilization of Cultivators survive thirty thousand years and radiate to at least a hundred Sectors nearby.

“It’s a pity that no player has yet achieved the goal in the alpha test. Therefore, Miss Long, you may set your goal as ‘make my civilization live as long as possible’ before you get started.

“After the game is over, you will be able to see how skillfully you can lead a civilization from the rank of players.”

Chapter 1307 - Unavoidable Doom

Long Yunxin’s eyelashes were shivering slightly. She was not particularly into such strategy games where grandiose narrative and the grand sea of stars were involved.

But according to Li Yao’s introduction, it sounded rather interesting. She might as well have a go.

Following the tutorial, Long Yunxin entered the game step by step. She selected the easiest beginner mode and the Curly Dragon civilization, which was at the top of the list.

Under the ‘beginning mode’, she did not need to draft the specific rules and policies. After she chose or altered the main strategy, the system would carry out her will in the most optimal way.

“In year 431 of the Curly Dragon Calendar, the new Archon of the Curly Dragon Coalition Government has been inaugurated. We hope that you can bring Curly Dragon, which has a proud history, to a tomorrow that is even more brilliant and glorious!”

With the simple and dry introduction, a vigorous planet grew larger and larger in front of Long Yunxin. Prosperous cities, dense skyscrapers, and crowds on the street gradually showed up.

Information streams fell down like a waterfall, giving a basic introduction to the Curly Dragon civilization.

The game ‘Civilization’ had two different versions, one for the Cultivators and another for ordinary people.

In the version for Cultivators, the transmission speed of information was ten times higher than that in the ordinary version, thus significantly reducing the time cost.

As a teacher of Flying Star University, Long Yunxin naturally boasted a reasonably good computational ability. Although strategy games had never been her favorite, she still managed to grasp the basic situation of the Curly Dragon civilization.

At the beginning of the game, the Curly Dragon civilization was a rather mature civilization with a single planet.

On their mother planet, they had already established a civilized, highly-developed society full of benefits.

Here, the ordinary people and the Cultivators lived in harmony, deluded in the pleasant life of high benefits, high pension, paid vacation, low working hours, and low labor intensity.

But the pleasant life was founded on the abundant resources of the planet that were running dry at an ever-increasing rate.

Long Yunxin was from a civilization of starships, which was like a nomadic people in the sea of stars. From her first memories, her family and compatriots had been wandering on starships, sifting through broken spaceships and battlefields for the slightest resources.

Other than the resource planets that were too harsh to be developed, they did not leave any space in the Flying Star Sector.

Therefore, once Long Yunxin ‘mastered’ the Curly Dragon civilization and discovered that the ‘death date’ of the planet was coming near, she naturally chose to march into the universe.

To march into the universe, an enormous space fleet would need to be established.

To build such a fleet from scratch, the entire civilization would have to be shifted from a high-benefits society where everybody enjoyed their life to a hardworking one where everybody strived and contributed their everything.

Long Yunxin soon discovered that it was not as simple as she had imagined.

When she ordered to increase the taxes, shorten the vacations, and extend the working hours, and when a lot of resources were devoted to the construction of the space fleet, she immediately suffered serious backlash from every field.

The civilians were all complaining, striking, and demonstrating. The scholars berated her for damaging a well-functioning economy. Her political enemies accused her of being too aggressive and declared that she was establishing the space fleet for her own interests.

As a result, because of the internal contradiction, the resources that she could devote to the space fleet were even less than before!

Seeing that such a policy would lead to riots in the society, Long Yunxin had to make a minor concession.

She thought that such concession would calm the people down.

However, the greedy guys thought that she was weak and that they could take advantage of her. They proposed more and more outrageous demands.

In the end, their demands of benefits and social security were even more ridiculous than the system at the beginning. There was no way that the national economy could shoulder the burden.

This time, she fought back without giving in.

But her weakness in the past had already made her lose the support of her allies and subordinates. The two parties wasted a hundred years bickering with each other, while all the resources on the planet plummeted. Eventually, all the curves turned into a straight line that looked like the electrocardiogram of a dead person. The vital signs of the Curly Dragon civilization were disappearing fast.

Soon, a series of cold words jumped out.

“In year 522 of the Curly Dragon Calendar, the people of the Curly Dragon Sector consumed the last gram of crystal during their protracted argument. They lost their ability of space jump.

“They were suppressed to the cage below one percent the speed of light and failed to break out the solid barrier when they perished in silence!”

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Her score and her rank popped up.

Embarrassingly, Long Yunxin discovered that her previous performance was lower than 83% of all the players who had selected the beginner mode and the Curly Dragon civilization!

Long Yunxin’s face was aching, as if somebody had slapped her. She was a teacher of Flying Star University and a Cultivator in the Building Foundation Stage after all. How could her performance be so poor?

After getting away from the Grand Illusionary Land, she looked around, afraid of being found out, only to discover that Li Yao had already left some time ago.

More or less relieved, she gritted her teeth and went back into the world of ‘Civilization’.

She selected the beginner-level Curly Dragon civilization again. This time, she made up her mind and persisted in her policies toughly in spite of the backlash of the people and the vilification of her political enemy. Like an iron lady, she pushed forward her plan of ‘universal development’.

Large-scale riots immediately burst out everywhere on the planet.

Fiery riots were bouncing inside Long Yunxin’s beautiful eyes. Biting her lips so hard that her teeth pierced into them, she chose to suppress the riots without any hesitation.

As a result…

The demonstrating crowd somehow boasted massive destructive magical equipment and attacked the military policers. The suppression turned into massacre. For a moment, blood was being spilled everywhere.

Although the trend of strikes and demonstrations was stopped by force, the spirit of the civilization was entirely demolished. Everybody lost their enthusiasm!

Long Yunxin felt like crying when she read the stagnating resource data.

It was true that she could lengthen working hours, reduce benefits, and force everybody to go to work, but there was no way that she could stop people from being sluggish!

The leadership of the military who were responsible for the construction of the space fleet took the chance to suggest that, with the peril right now, she should announce that the country would enter the general mobilization state. Large-scale curfews and military control should be implemented. Everybody should be included in a militarized system. Those who were lazy would be punished according to the military law!

Having no choice, Long Yunxin accepted the suggestion.

After the shot of ‘special cardiotonic’, the effect was rather obvious. The society was stable again, and the efficiency in resource collection and utilization was significantly improved. The space fleet grew larger and larger. Everything was back on track.

When Long Yunxin took a deep breath of relief and thought that the Curly Dragon civilization had finally passed the test, a team of fully-armed, aggressive soldiers suddenly popped up on the picture and strode toward her.

“Hey, hey, hey. Why did nobody tell me that there’s also a ‘military coup’ in the game? Somebody, help me!”

The poor Curly Dragon civilization was destroyed again, by the crazy ambitions of the military this time.

Unwilling to give in easily, Long Yunxin was patient enough to try a few more times. However hard she thought and weighed up different options, the Curly Dragon civilization fell into the abyss of destruction in the end helplessly.

Of all her attempts, the furthest that she ever went was the one where she struggled to the year 600 of the Curly Dragon Calendar and successfully developed almost twenty resource planets.

Tremendous crystals were shipped to the mother planet incessantly. She established a cross-world, enormous space fleet again, ready to march into new Sectors ambitiously.

Right at this moment, nineteen resource planets announced at the same time that they were done with the blatant exploitation of the mother planet and that they would be an independent ‘Outer Space Federation’ henceforth. They were even waging a war against the mother planet!

Seeing the starships that were coming at her from various directions, Long Yunxin was so angry that she felt her head going dizzy!

“There’s absolutely no answer to the development of the Curly Dragon civilization. This is an out-and-out unresolvable conundrum!”

Pissed off, Long Yunxin switched to a new civilization—the Martial Meritocrats civilization.

Very soon, she found herself mired in trouble that was even bigger than that of the Curly Dragon civilization.

Holding back her dizziness, she played another few rounds and finally ran out of her last shred of patience. She had to admit, however reluctantly, that she was perhaps the worst ‘leader’ in the world.

When she lost the enthusiasm and selected ‘Exit’, a reminder suddenly popped up on the menu, asking whether or not she would like to continue experiencing the game from a brand-new perspective.

Long Yunxin calmed down and browsed through the introductions patiently. Then she discovered that ‘Civilization’ had two different game modes.

In the first game mode, she was the supreme master of a certain civilization who would guide the way for a civilization.

However, she could also choose to be a tiny constituent of the civilization, an unknown ordinary person, and experience the rise and fall of the civilization from the bottom level of the society.

The first mode was a top-down, magnificent strategy game.

The second mode, on the other hand, was a bottom-up role play game.

Thinking quickly, Long Yunxin chose to experience the second mode. The light and shadow around her changed again, and she soon found herself in a brand-new world.

She was back on the mother planet of the Curly Dragon Sector but not as the Archon of the Curly Dragon civilization this time, instead one of the most ordinary clerks in an office.

Of course, time went much faster for the life in the game.

The great events that were happening in the society and their influences on the female clerk all turned into torrents of information flooding into her brain.

She could also make different choices regarding the female clerk’s life.

However, most of the time, under the surging trend of social reforms, personal choices were usually weak and meaningless. Individuals often could do nothing to change their life.

At first, Long Yunxin was still struggling hard, but she gave up trying very soon. Like a cold and ruthless bystander, she watched the female clerk living her life and trying to find a balance between her job and her family, her parents and her children.

While she was watching, Long Yunxin suddenly felt that she was somehow touched.

She had a weird feeling. When she was the Archon of the Curly Dragon civilization, she felt that the people of the Curly Dragon Sector were too ignorant and shortsighted. How could they not foresee that a great catastrophe was coming but simply dwell in the pleasure in front of their eyes? Why could they not accept working sixteen hours a day, huge salary cuts, and devoting all the resources to the construction of the space fleet?

They had no sense of the big picture at all. They were too selfish and blind!

Therefore, when she ran into the dilemma a second time, she had chosen ‘suppression’ without any hesitation.

But right now, when she was ‘experiencing’ everything in person from the perspective of an ordinary person of the Curly Dragon Sector, she somehow changed her attitude again.

Chapter 1308 - DLC

The so-called nine-nine-six [1] working system is truly a great burden for the ordinary people. This is not a life at all!

The whole national economy is functioning based on high benefits. A reckless reform is indeed a great shock to ordinary people. In the statistics reports, they are just rows of numbers that could be considered or sacrificed, but in real life, they are living people with hearts, who can complain and even resist!

Mining on the resource planets at the edge of the sea of stars, they are faced with infinite darkness and a high death rate all year round. Every ton of crystals is stained with their blood. No wonder so many people of the Curly Dragon Sector were discontent!

The Curly Dragon Sector has never developed any space cruising technology in the past how many millenniums. To build a space fleet from nothing is too difficult! For an ordinary person, they may not see any obvious progress at all after living a frugal life tor twenty years. It's like a journey in a dark night where one can never see the direction of dawn. Nobody can take the suffering!

When Long Yunxin saw that her character turned from a young and energetic girl into a dry, wrinkled woman who could barely catch her breath from the burden of life, her feelings changed.

The girl had been born in the 'golden age' before the shortage of resources became a problem. Growing up in a honeypot, she was innocent and carefree, taking all the happiness in her life for granted.

However, three days after she and her equally kind and innocent husband were married, the government announced that the Curly Dragon civilization had entered the era of ‘Glorious March’. The benefits would be greatly reduced, working hours would be extended, and everybody would be forced to deposit their money and purchase national bonds to support the space fleet.

When she watched this part, Long Yunxin had a feeling that she was a victim of her own doing—she had issued the very same policies many times when she was the Archon.

At that time, she had been viewing the future of the Pangu civilization condescendingly from the big picture. She had never thought what the change actually meant to the ordinary people.

After going into the era of Glorious March, the ordinary woman of the Curly Dragon Sector that she played found her life, which was as delicate as a greenhouse, shattered ruthlessly.

The working hours were significantly lengthened, but the salary was reduced by half. That missing half of her pitiful earnings had to be deposited into a designated account in the ‘Universal Development Bank’ for ten years. If she withdrew the money before those ten years were up, not only would she receive no interest, even a huge amount of her principal deposit would be appropriated!

With the resources being devoted to the space fleet, the prices were soaring, and the currency was devaluing in society. Everybody was living ill at ease.

Currency inflation and economic crisis would break out every two to three years. Eventually, a strict ration system was implemented in order to stabilize the situation.

The warmth between her and her husband was soon ripped into shreds by the cruel reality. Her husband, whose blood and sweat were exhausted in the factory during the day, became more and more taciturn, sensitive, and unapproachable.

Their marriage and their relationships with their own family were all on the verge of collapse.

Finally, bad news came over one day. The latest mining starship developed at tremendous cost proved to be another failure. In the great explosion, the resources that everybody contributed by cutting their own expenses were wasted!

People could not hold their fury anymore. They went to the streets to demonstrate and protest, including Long Yunxin’s ‘husband’!

Long Yunxin knew that the company her ‘husband’ was in was about to go bankrupt because of a shortage of raw materials. He had been in a terrible mood recently and would even mumble to the wall every once in a while.

Too worried, Long Yunxin called her husband’s name in the crowd on the street.

A scorching airwave suddenly rose in front before a cluster of intense black smoke soared up!

Along with the ear-splitting exclamations, Long Yunxin heard the shrieks when crystal bullets were tearing apart the air, which was the last sound that she heard in the game.

“Ahhh!”

Long Yunxin suddenly woke up from the game. She had somehow started living in it instead of watching as a bystander at some point.

As if she had just escaped from a nightmare, she breathed for almost a whole minute before she finally calmed herself down.

However, after reviewing the life of the ordinary person, her breath became hasty again because she discovered that it was exactly the episode where suppression turned into slaughter when she was playing the game for the second time.

This explains a lot. Everything I’m experiencing as an ordinary person is caused by what I chose just now!

Long Yunxin vaguely touched upon the true meaning of the game ‘Civilization’.

She was not fond of simulations and strategies, but she had no objection to role-playing.

Following that experience, she played another ten roles in the Curly Dragon civilization, all as relatively uninfluential ordinary people.

She was once the president of the labor union who fought for better benefits for the members.

She was also an ordinary soldier who participated in the suppression and slaughter.

She was a miner who went to the resource planets for mining, only to die in an accident leaving no bones behind.

She was also the closest family member of the deceased miner.

The more corners of the bottom of the Curly Dragon civilization that she reached out to, the more complicated her feelings became.

There are only limited resources on one planet. To make a civilization live long and prosper, they cannot be bound to the planet!

However, it isn’t so easy to leave the planet. There’s a good chance that, after decades and astronomical resources are wasted, and after countless tragedies take place in countless families, nothing is earned in the end!

It’s difficult, almost too difficult, for a civilization to develop, or rather, to merely survive, in the sea of stars!

Long Yunxin did not know how to approach the conundrum.

She was going to select more civilizations and try the life in the Medicine Fork Sector, the Martial Meritocrats Sector, and even the Sand Primitive Sector, when a line of shining words at the bottom of the main menu caught her attention.

It seemed that she had met certain requirements while she was playing the game just now. A brand-new module of the game was now activated.

The module was a DLC [2] of ‘Civilization’ named ‘Rise of the Imperium’.

Above the five words that seemed to be forged out of iron and emitting the smell of smoke was an overwhelming flag of black lightning. A black shadow in full armor was standing right below the flag.

Over the past few years, rumors about the Imperium of True Human Beings had been propagating in the three Sectors. Stories about the rise of Blackstar the Great had even dozens of different versions.

Long Yunxin immediately guessed that the DLC was about Wuying Qi’s rise after he arrived in the Star Ocean Republic, how he stole the supreme power, ascended to the throne, and established the Imperium of True Human Beings.

As she expected, the introduction of the DLC specified that ‘Rise of the Imperium’ was a whole new world generated with the enormous database and computational ability of ‘Civilization’. The map of the DLC was focused on the Star Ocean Republic, the most prosperous land of the human worlds.

The players were free to choose the roles they were to play. They could be the representatives in the parliament of the Star Ocean Republic, or the leaders of a major sect, or a general of the central army which guarded the capital, or a head of the natives of the half-independent worlds at the border. They could accelerate, decelerate, support, or stop the arrival of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

Of course, if they were willing to, they could also play Wuying Qi himself and experience the rise of darkness from the very perspective of ‘Blackstar the Great’.

But right now, most of the functions were still being perfected. Not all the identities were accessible yet. There were few roles that the players could actually choose.

Long Yunxin selected a random name from the list. Her eyes flashed as she appeared in a whole new world.

Information was dumped into her brain.

She was an ordinary citizen of the Star Ocean Republic, and her husband was an experienced expert of tunnel architecture.

Ten years ago, she had followed her husband to settle down on the small resource planet. She worked in an elementary school, which was affiliated to the mine. She also had two lovely kids, a boy and a girl. Her life was warm and peaceful. It would not be bad at all if such days could last forever.

But their peaceful life was broken by war. The resource planet was occupied by the incoming enemy. The command center of their side that had been deployed there earlier had retreated in a hurry, leaving all the civilians including them behind.

They did not give up resistance. Many remaining soldiers and the young people among the civilians crawled into the complicated tunnels and continued the battle, defending the dignity of the Star Ocean Republic in vain.

Although her husband did not directly join the underground resistance force, he was providing help for the resistance force with his professional knowledge. He also offered his home to be a secret meeting place for the resistance force at the risk of his own life.

A lot of computational ability and rendering ability had been devoted to the tale of the anonymous person, building a world was unable to be differentiated from reality.

She seemed to ‘see’ that she was roaming in front of her house, holding her daughter and son, but in fact staying on alert for the members of the resistance force in her house.

She could even feel her anxiety, worries, fury, hatred, and all the indescribable emotions.

Will the enemy discover the resistance force? If it is discovered, how are they going to punish us?

Will our army march back in the future?

I don’t matter, but can my son and daughter return to the motherland and grow up safely and healthily?

Long Yunxin was consumed by worry, truly walking in the shoes of the character in the game.

Right then, she suddenly felt the ground shiver slightly before she smelt the intense smell of something being burnt. Hundreds of deep blue electric arcs darted up from the horizon, as if ten thousand volcanoes that were filled up by lightning had erupted at the same time!

She saw the enemy’s starships taking off in a hurry, only to be caught up and ripped apart by the electric arcs before they broke out of the boundary of the gravity sphere!

But before she had the chance to cheer at the result, the lightning turned into an overwhelming tsunami, sweeping across the entire planet and swallowing the enemies, the soldiers of the resistance force, and the civilians including herself and her children alike!

Long Yunxin struggled out of the game again.

Her body was so cold that she was almost a dead person, but her teeth were clattering hard in cracking noises.

She knew who she had been playing now.

She was one of the eight million civilians that were ‘sacrificed’ by Blackstar the Great in the Battle of Karan.

Chapter 1309 - Real and Illusionary

Long Yunxin had heard about the Battle of Karan before.

It was the most crucial procedure on Wuying Qi’s rise to the peak of power. All his accomplishments later were based on the event.

In the battle, Wuying Qi ‘sacrificed’ eight million civilians and wounded soldiers on Karan, blew up the supreme command center of the invaders from the Covenant Alliance, took over the military assets from Covenant Alliance, and seized more than ten border worlds.

Whether or not it was worthwhile to sacrifice eight million to save eight billion was a tricky question. It was also a heated topic that often appeared in the debate matches in Flying Star University.

Long Yunxin had once given it some thought herself.

But at that time, she had been sitting on a couch comfortably, enjoying the finest food, and chatting with several good friends. They had been viewing the event from the perspective of the representatives of the Star Ocean Republic, Blackstar the Great Wuying Qi, or even the unbiased offspring beyond the leadership of the Star Ocean Republic and Wuying Qi. Their discussion had been pure empty talk.

She had never tried observing the whole event from the perspective of an ordinary person that was living on Karan at that time.

No. She was not ‘observing’ the event; she was ‘experiencing’ the event in person as a witness of history.

Long Yunxin swallowed hard, feeling that her throat was both smelly and cold. Her soul seemed to have fallen into an icy cave, and her internal organs were entirely frozen.

Her body, however, was scorching, and her skin was in excruciating pain, as if the scourge of the electric arcs in the virtual world was still lingering inside her bones.

Her hands shivering, she selected characters of different identities.

Those characters were either the miners who had been living on Karan and devoting their lives to the excavation of the raw crystals silently, or the teachers, doctors, nurses and waiters who were the family of the miners and the refinement specialists, or even the soldiers and the battle heroes who had not been transferred yet because of the heavy wounds they suffered in the previous battles.

Although they were all the most unremarkable cells in the civilization, there were still countless marvelous and extraordinary stories to them.

The ordinary young people who were the bottom-level miners, after the invaders from the Covenant Alliance occupied Karan, picked up their spades and raw crystal shredders and became unpredictable guerilla soldiers deep inside the interconnected tunnels.

The doctors, nurses, and waiters who used to work in the living area, on the other hand, went behind the invaders’ back, hid a lot of assets, and secretly brought the assets into the tunnels.

The battle heroes who had suffered heavy wounds held each other’s hand, supported each other, and charged at the overwhelming starships of the Covenant Alliance.

What left the deepest impression on Long Yunxin was a young female teacher on Karan.

After the tiny planet was scourged by the fire of war, she stood up and protected the twenty-odd elementary school students in her class.

She hid a flag of the Star Ocean Republic in secret and taught the children to sing the national anthem of the Star Ocean Republic time and time again.

When the deafening fulminations of starships echoed outside, the young voices were the last wall of defense.

When she was singing the national anthem, she would sometimes burst into tears and say, “Wherever we end up in the universe in the future, do not forget your hometown. Remember that we are from the Star Ocean Republic. We are from Karan. We are people of Karan!”

However, everything they did—

The stubborn resistance of the guerilla forces, the valiance of the disabled soldiers, the persistence of the civilians, the crisp sounds of the teacher and the kids… None of that mattered.

Whatever the specific ‘victory conditions’ of a character were, it was impossible for them to survive to the arrival of dawn.

Everybody’s outcome was the same. They were swallowed by the storm of lightning from the underground and blown to smithereens together with their home!

No miracles, no superheroes, no twists and turns and counterattack in desperation. Doom was their only future!

It was a game that could never be won. Or rather, it was not a ‘game’ at all, but a certain highly simulative and intriguing ‘computer graphics’.

Yet, something uncanny about the game attracted Long Yunxin to play it time and time again, making her experience the last feelings of the residents on Karan, their hope and their desperation, before the final doom!

The last CG was focused on the female teacher.

When the crystal bombs that Wuying Qi planted deep inside Karan detonated all the Purple Thunder Crystals on the planet, triggering an overwhelming hurricane of lightning on the horizon, the female teacher was the first one to discover it.

She immediately jumped to her feet and opened her arms toward the tides of lightning, while she roared and asked all the children to stand behind her.

It was like a ‘Chicken vs Eagle’ game that they often played, where she was the hen protecting all the ‘chicken’ behind him.

In such a posture, the female teacher competed with Blackstar the Great, who was to establish the Imperium of True Human Beings soon.

Although the dazzling light made her blind for a moment, glamorous fire was still raging inside her eyes.

Against the thunderous tides, she was absolute and would not give in. She maintained the same posture when both she and the children were ripped into shreds and vaporized into smoke, as if she were a statue made of certain mysterious materials.

“Hu… Hu… Hu… Hu…”

Long Yunxin covered her face hard, but her tears were flowing out of the gaps between her fingers. She quivered inside the game cabin for a long time before she was finally more or less back to herself.

It was almost a poisonous game!

But she could not wait to try more content about the game now.

Even for a girl who was not interested in games where military strategies were involved, after experiencing everything on Karan, she was eager to play the full content of the game, hoping that she could stop Wuying Qi, Blackstar the Great, and the Imperium of True Human Beings with everything she could as a representative of parliament in the Star Ocean Republic, a general of the central army, or a Sector Master in a border world!

Taking a long breath, Long Yunxin felt that her brain was slightly aching. She knew that it was a sequela because her sense of time had been seriously twisted after spending too much time in the game time.

I shouldn’t play any longer.

She glanced at the time and prepared to exit the game cabin.

Huh? Half a day has passed!

Long Yunxin secret clicked her tongue.

She was a woman of self-control, and it was her habit to be addicted to any game.

However, the game ‘Civilization’ indeed boasted indescribable charm that made anyone who started playing reluctant to leave.

After she dizzily left the game cabin, she discovered that many students nearby had finished the test, too. But they were no longer as noisy and excited as when they first arrived. They were all crouching in the corner and thinking in silence. There was a mixture of deliberation, confusion, and enlightenment on their faces.

Some of the emotional girls were also weeping like Long Yunxin did.

Perhaps, they also played the DLC ‘Rise of the Imperium’, yet what they witnessed was not the ‘rise of the Imperium’ but the doom of the smallfolk!

“Miss Long!”

Seeing Long Yunxin walking up to them, the girls surrounded her as if she were a life-saving straw in the fierce currents.

“The game is too scary. Is the continuity of a civilization really so difficult?”

“I—I really don’t know what I should choose! When I played the Martial Meritocrats civilization, I felt that the Sand Primitive natives were all scoundrels while the people of the Martial Meritocrats Sector were overly kind! But after my role was changed to a woman in the Sand Primitive Sector who was born and raised in a burning desert, and my ten children were either swallowed by demon beasts or killed by diseases, I began to feel that, as long as my children could live a life as the people of the Martial Meritocrats Sector did, I was willing to pay any price, do anything, and worship any god!”

“Karan! Karan! Is the destruction of Karan truly unavoidable? Before, I had no idea what ‘eight million people’ meant exactly, but now I do. Maybe…”

The girls were all sobbing.

Usually, when they were sobbing, the passionate guys would have long come to the aid of the damsels in distress. They would have comforted the girls joyfully, probably hoping to win one of the girl’s affection.

But today, the guys who had just finished the test were sitting next to their game cabin, their eyes hollow and their mind absent, as they were pondering in silence.

Long Yunxin felt that she was about to be inundated with questions. With the excuse that she needed to discuss something with Li Yao, she fled from the game center with the guidance of the staff.

Li Yao was chitchatting with an unworldly, elegant-looking senior in a fine cottage right behind the game center.

Seeing Long Yunxin walk in, he immediately stood up to greet her.

“Why did you develop such an enticing game?” Without bothering with any courtesies, Long Yunxin cut right to the chase. “It isn’t a ‘game’ at all, is it? All the civilizations in the game once existed in the real world and have all been destroyed, right?”

“Yes,” Li Yao admitted frankly. “After seizing the war base of the Imperium of True Human Beings, we have dismantled and studied every unit. The secret chamber that was used to brainwash the Cultivators and transform them into the Immortal Cultivators was a focus of our research!

“We discovered that there was much more than the history of the decline of three civilizations that was stored inside the ‘brainwashing room’. The history of dozens of different civilizations of Cultivators had in fact been saved inside.

“Perhaps, with the abundant ‘educational’ material, the Immortal Cultivators would be able to select the ones that were most suitable for the features of the subject being brainwashed!

“Based on the brainwashing material, and the material where the Immortal Cultivators bragged about Blackstar the Great’s feats, we perfected and built up the files. Eventually, ‘Civilization’ and its first DLC ‘Rise of the Imperium’ were developed!

“But if you ask me whether or not the game content is real, of course, it is not entirely real.

“On one hand, the original data of the Imperium of True Human Beings must have a lot of overstated parts, which can’t be completely trusted.

“Also, when we adapted the files into the game, we hoped to add more personal content into it and make the reasons for every world’s ‘destruction’ more abundant and of more general significance.

“Therefore, the game is not ‘real’ in the sense of perfectly replicating their history.

“However, all the computational logic and the reactions of the virtual figures are infinitely close to ‘real’, which means that such things can ‘possibly’ happen somewhere in the boundless sea of stars in reality!”

Chapter 1310 - Father of ‘Civilization’

“The game ‘Civilization’ will be an extremely vast virtual world,” Li Yao said. “What you have played is merely the most preliminary offline version, which I’m afraid only takes up one percent of the real game!

“We are planning to enrich the whole world in the next hundred years and realize a real interactive gameplay. By then, the officials and the general public of a civilization will all be real-life players made of flesh and blood. The evolution of civilization will be more real!”

“It will certainly be a boundless world!” Long Yunxin felt that she was quite looking forward to it, but she was somewhat baffled. “The creation of such a world must require astronomical resources, right? Why did you choose to implement the project? There are many hundred-year projects right now that demand tremendous resources, aren’t there?”

“For mainly three reasons.” Li Yao extended his fingers and replied frankly, “Firstly, after I learned the history of the decline of the dozens of Cultivators’ civilizations, I was more or less confused. I studied their decline carefully in the hope of solving the problems of the civilizations, to no avail however hard I tried.

“When I was exhausted and thought calmly, I realized that I was being hilariously stupid. A civilization is bound to come across infinite problems during its development. Not just an amateur of politics such as myself, even Speaker Jiang

Hailiu, an admin-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, wouldn’t be able to solve all the problems all by himself!

“People of the Covenant Alliance aren’t wrong about one thing.

“The strength of an individual is limited after all. Against the boundless starry sky, even the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators are but dust that is slightly larger. They may be ten times or a hundred times larger than the ‘tiny dust’ that is the ordinary people. But so what?

“However insignificant a grain of dust may be, when billions of individuals are gathered together, they will make the most brilliant and glorious building covering the entire world!

“Such a mysterious question as the evolution of a civilization can absolutely never be figured out by a few admin-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators!

“But when the wisdom of everybody of the three Sectors, including the ordinary people, is gathered, it is possible that we may find a way out in the dark, boundless universe for ourselves!

“Everybody has their own talents and specialties. Even the least known ordinary people may have weird sparks in their brain that have never occurred to even the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators! What we are going to do is unleash the thousands of sparks!

“Even though some of the sparks may seem ‘bizarre’, they can prove to be brand-new enlightenments for us later!

“This is the original purpose for which we developed ‘Civilization’ and the DLC ‘Rise of the Imperium’.

“Millions of players will contribute their wisdom through the game, which will be a reference for the New Federation when policies are made, after the data is filtered, analyzed, and stored!

“Through the history of the decline of the predecessor civilizations, we will be able to realize where exactly the problems lie and exterminate the dangers the moment they show up!

“We are using history as a mirror in such a way.”

Long Yunxin was deeply attracted by Li Yao’s extraordinary idea.

The billions of people of an entire world participating in the evolution of civilization and offering their own wisdom and strength?

If the plan worked out, it would truly be a world where everybody was equal!

“What’s the second reason?” Long Yunxin asked subconsciously, eager to know the answer.

“The second reason is sort of about the competition of beliefs between us and the Immortal Cultivators!” Li Yao said. “The Immortal Cultivators despise the power of the ordinary people and consider ninety-nine of the human beings as ‘hominoids’, existences slightly more advanced than monkeys. They forbid the ‘hominoids’ from getting involved in politics or controlling their own fate!

“The Immortal Cultivators’ excuses sound right correct and justifiable. They said that ‘hominoids’ have a low computational ability, are susceptible to addiction, are often swallowed by their own lust and feelings, and are lazy, greedy, and shortsighted…

“Therefore, the development of the civilization must be controlled by the Immortal Cultivators tightly. All the ‘hominoids’ need to do is obey the commands and carry them out dutifully. That way, the interests of both parties will be maximized!”

Long Yunxin recalled her experience in the game. She had to painfully acknowledge that she seemed to have been somewhat bewildered by the Immortal Cultivators.

Although not all ordinary people were like that, quite a large fraction of them were kind of, sort of, maybe unsuitable to control their own fate.

Handing over their fate to themselves was like giving a sharp dagger to a three-year-old, which would be a tragedy for both themselves and others.

“What’s wrong with the excuse?” Long Yunxin’s voice was as feeble as a mumbling mosquito.

“It’s very easy. Nobody is born to have a clear and sharp mind. Nobody is inherently omniscient and omnipotent! Even the easiest things such as walking or holding chopsticks must be learned, mustn’t they? How can you know anything without learning?” Li Yao sneered. “The Immortal Cultivators deprive the ‘hominoids’ of the right to decide their own fate because they are too idiotic for politics. It is almost like cursing some teenagers for being illiterate when you didn’t teach them how to read when they were children!

“For the Cultivators, we believe that ‘practice makes perfect’. All skills are honed slowly when we grow from a rookie into a master—including how to take fate by the throat!

“If ordinary people are too shortsighted, try to broaden their horizons as much as possible! If ordinary people cannot handle complicated political issues, dismantle the issues into the simplest multiple-choice questions and train them from scratch! If ordinary people do not know how to choose between ‘present’ and ‘future’, we will simulate a million possibilities so that everybody will see the consequences with their own eyes!

“In short, if the people are not wise enough, we will try to enlighten them. We will not allow the minority to seize power forever with the excuse that the people are unwise!

“We will learn bit by bit, and we will be more rational, keen, determined, and enlightened than the last day every day. Eventually, everybody, including both the ordinary people and the Cultivators, will be built into warriors who can fight for themselves, for society, and for whole civilization!

“Therefore, the game ‘Civilization’ is also some sort of ‘tutorial’. I believe that anybody can learn something from it.”

Long Yunxin nodded quickly. She could not agree more.

“Thirdly—” Without even catching his breath, Li Yao continued quickly. “The game ‘Civilization’ is of unique significance for the Cultivators, too, because it gives them an opportunity to play the roles of the ordinary people and experience the happiness and sorrow of the mortal world.

“Miss Long, you must’ve played some roles that were ordinary people just now, right? Did you feel anything different?”

Long Yunxin nodded slowly. Her lips moved, but she came up with nothing although there was so much that she wanted to say.

“Cultivators, with our own capabilities, computational abilities, and connections, are more likely to succeed than ordinary people. It is easier for us to climb to a higher position enshrouded in colorful halos.

“As we grow stronger and stronger, and the halos around us get more and more brilliant, many Cultivators tend to be lost. They forget where they come from and where they are going to in the end!

“Through the episodes of ordinary life in the game, I believe that we will be able to understand the ordinary people’s feelings and needs better. We can better figure out the relationship between the Cultivators and the ordinary people. We will be clearer and more determined about our civilization.

“This is a kind of training, too. Such a training method is not our own invention but dates back to the ancient Cultivators.”

“The ancient Cultivators?” Long Yunxin was slightly dazed.

“Precisely!” Li Yao blinked and said, “The high-level Cultivators in ancient times often performed a training named ‘mortalization’. They would conceal their techniques and live in the world of the mortals as ordinary people for many years, experiencing everything that an ordinary person would. They would even marry and have children. After witnessing all the facets of a real life, they would be able to see the entrance to a higher level!

“Maybe, after the high-level Cultivators lived in seclusion as hermits for too long, they had forgotten the basic feelings of a human being and the significance of their life. By way of ‘mortalization’, they could find a reason to live again!

“The mortalization of the ancient Cultivators is extremely difficult. They had to live in the world of ordinary people for ten to twenty years for real! But it’s much easier for us modern Cultivators to experience ‘mortalization’. Through the game ‘Civilization’, we can experience thousands of different lives at any time!

“Perhaps, one day, we can pass a new law dictating that every Cultivator of the federation must receive ‘further education’ every year, in which certain hours of ‘mortalization’ training will be involved.

“In such a way, the distance between the Cultivators and the ordinary people will be shortened, and we will be able to compete with the so-called ‘true path of immortality’!”

Hearing that, Long Yunxin took a deep breath. She looked at Li Yao in disbelief and admiration, before she said, fully convinced, “I didn’t know that you had such a profound understanding about politics and sociology other than your expertise in the crystal suits and the Colossi!”

Li Yao suddenly blushed. He hurried to shake his hands and said, “I’m afraid that there’s a misunderstanding, Miss Long. The game ‘Civilization’ is not really related to me. I merely proposed some unimportant ideas during the beginning phase.

“Even the words I said just now are not mine. They are the essence of countless sociologists and politicians and will be stated on the introduction page of ‘Civilization’. I simply brought them up in advance and mimicked the sages' theories!

“The design and development team of the game ‘Civilization’ is made of members from everywhere, including the Glorious Sunlight Group, the Grand Desolate War Institution, and some of the experienced technicians of the former ‘Grand Illusionary Group’ in the Flying Star Sector. Some demon emperors of the Blood Demon Sector who are adept at biochemical neuron technology were involved, too!

“The federation government also provided tremendous support for the project!

“Right, the senior right next to me contributed a lot to the birth of ‘Civilization’. He is almost a father of ‘Civilization’.

“Here. Let me introduce him to you. This is the dean of the Sociology Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution, Professor Su Changfa!”

Chapter 1311 - Deconstructivism

“Professor Su…”

Long Yunxin vaguely felt that the name ‘Su Changfa’ sounded familiar.

Also, was the Grand Desolate War Institution not one of the most famous academic establishments for fighting? She had never heard about their expertise in the liberal arts subjects such as sociology. Why was the dean of the Sociology Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution so awesome that Li Yao addressed him as the father of ‘Civilization’?

Looking at his white hair and his unworldly appearance, Long Yunxin was deep in thought.

A moment later, her pupils shrank violently, and cold sweat was all over her body. She could not help but exclaim in shock, “Isn’t Su—Su Changfa the Immortal Cultivator that was captured?”

During the Battle of Kunlun, not only was a member of the Pangu Clan killed, there was also an Immortal Cultivator who was captured alive. It was quite a piece of shocking news back then.

However, the authorities of the federation had kept a tight lid on information about the final outcome of the Immortal Cultivator. There was no public trial or any news that the guy had been executed. The Immortal Cultivator seemed to have just vanished into thin air.

Long Yunxin had thought that the highly-dangerous Immortal Cultivator must have been confined in the most heavily guarded prison of the federation.

She never expected that he would be walking in daylight freely, that he would be so familiar with Li Yao, or that he would be the dean of the Sociology Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution!

What—what—what was that all about?

Now that an Immortal Cultivator had been appointed as a dean of the Grand Desolate War Institution, which was one of the Nine Elite Universities in the federation, were the authorities never afraid that he would brainwash the students?

Also, he was to be credited for the birth of the super game ‘Civilization’, was he?

For a moment, Long Yunxin was utterly confused.

She could not help but take a step back and put on a defensive posture.

Over the past ten thousand years, the Flying Star Sector had never been at war with the demon race. Many of the people had never even seen a demon before. There was no grudge between the two parties.

Therefore, the Flying Star Sector could embrace the demons without complaint and work as the ‘adhesive’ between the demons and the people of the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

But the Immortal Cultivators were a different case.

Several years ago, the Flying Star Sector had been turned upside down in the riot of the Immortal Cultivators, almost doomed.

The Immortal Cultivators, led by Xiao Xuance and the star child who was even more sordid and hideous than Xiao Xuance, had led the deepest impression of terror on the Flying Star Sector.

When she realized that she was so close to an Immortal Cultivator, Long Yunxin somehow felt that she was in the middle of a cold cave being stared at by a cobra.

“Senior Su is a model graduate of the Imperial Colonization University of the Imperium of True Human Beings. He has diplomas in sociology, history, psychology, and more than ten other disciplines.” Li Yao smiled. “That is why he was sent to investigate the critical information about the alien worlds at the edge of the cosmos, such as the social structure and the development of the civilization.

“When the game ‘Civilization’ was devised, Senior Su showed his profound professional knowledge, too. Asking him to manage the newly-established Sociology Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution is almost a waste of his talents.”

“That—that’s not what I meant,” Long Yunxin said in a hurry.

Su Changfa’s kind appearance overlapped with Xiao Xuance’s hideous face in her memory, making her heart beat faster and faster. She did not know what she was saying anymore. “I—I was only meaning to ask how—why—”

“Miss Long, you want to know why an Immortal Cultivator is not watched over closely but allowed to walk freely and even work as a teacher in the college, right?”

With a smile, Su Changfa continued unhurriedly. “Are they not scared that he will preach the Immortal Cultivators’ theories to the students and brainwash the young fellows who haven’t experienced the real world yet?”

It was indeed what was on Long Yunxin’s mind.

However, she was too embarrassed to admit it. After stammering for a long time, she failed to come up with anything and blushed.

“If only all the Cultivators were as kind and innocent as Miss Long.” Su Changfa sighed, not without regret, and mumbled, “But it’s a pity that there are shameless, cunning Cultivators such as Li Yao among you!”

“Huh?” Long Yunxin widened her beautiful eyes and glanced at Li Yao and Su Changfa suspiciously.

Were the two of them not friends?

“Miss Long, there’s one thing that you have to understand. You can kill an Immortal Cultivator, but you can never destroy the Immortal Cultivators’ thoughts!” Su Changfa said casually. “Now that you regard the Imperium of True Human Beings as a great enemy, it’s unavoidable that you must study the Immortal Cultivators’ theories deeply. How can you completely block and even seal the thoughts?

“Caging me or killing me is simply meaningless, because in a hundred years, more Immortal Cultivators—with more powerful magical equipment, more majestic troops, and more thorough theories—will invade from the depths of the sea of stars!

“Killing me right now and pretending that the ‘true path of immortality’ does not exist is like an ostrich burying its head in the desert and pretending that the enemy is not out there!

“As the saying goes, when you know both yourself and your enemy well, you will never lose a battle. If you want to defeat the Immortal Cultivators, you will have to know what the Immortal Cultivators and the true path of immortality are exactly, right?

“This is the biggest reason for the formation of the Sociology Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution. We never intended to set the federation as the research target. Our main focuses are the social forms of the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance, as well as the thoughts including the ‘true path of immortality’ and the Path of Ultimate Benevolence.”

Long Yunxin found it hard to close her mouth. She did not expect that Su Changfa would be so frank. Was the guy a phony, or had she misunderstood the Immortal Cultivators all the time?

“On the other hand—”

Staring at Li Yao, Su Changfa tried to keep calm. “If you want to undermine an idea, the best approach is not to block everyone’s ears, mouth, and eyes.

“An idea is invisible, all-pervasive, and never to be blocked. The more you suppress it, the more vigorous it will be and the more likely it will be disseminated to the whole world because of reverse psychology.

“On the very contrary, the best approach is to expose the idea to sunlight and try to deconstruct it, twist it, and corrupt it slowly!”

Confused, Long Yunxin replied subconsciously, “I don’t understand.”

“For most of the people, it is hard for them to tell whether the ideology of the Cultivators is better than that of the Immortal Cultivators or the other way around. Their theories are often too boring for the general public to study. The people, who think that they are smart, will often shift their attention to the believers of the thoughts as opposed to the thoughts per se!”

Su Changfa scratched his beard out of habit and went on. “Let me give you the simplest example. If, when you are walking down the street one day, an ulcerated, smelly beggar suddenly jumps out of a trash bin and tells you that he has a book named ‘Tricks to Be a Billionaire’ to teach you, promising that you will be a billionaire after you grasp the book, will you believe him?”

Long Yunxin was amused. Forgetting the Su Changfa was an ‘Immortal Cultivator’ for a moment, she shook her head quickly and said, “Of course not!”

“Then, if the very same book is distributed by the richest magnate of the Flying Star Sector who has built his enterprise from scratch miraculously, will you be tempted, Miss Long?”

Long Yunxin blinked and admitted frankly, “Although I am not very interested in money, I think I’d be tempted to see what such a book is really about.”

“Well said, Miss Long. When the same book is distributed by different persons, the outcomes can be vastly different. It is quite understandable!” Su Changfa smiled. “Now, please imagine this, Miss Long. For some reason, the richest magnate of the Flying Star Sector decides to give his Tricks to Be a Billionaire to you for free. However, a sordid, shameless, and cunning scoundrel doesn’t want you to have the book or to believe theories in the book even if you have the book!

“What should the scoundrel do?

“Block the news? It’s impossible. However hard he blocks the book, the richest magnate of the Flying Star Sector definitely has a way to deliver the book to Miss Long. He can’t keep it a secret forever!

“What if he warns you in advance? He persuades you not to believe in Tricks to Be a Billionaire, claiming that it is dangerous, wicked, and will cause grievous side effects.

“I’m afraid that the more he talks in such a way, the more curious you will be, won’t you, Miss Lon?

“Hehe. Perhaps, the best approach is to hire a beggar with some money and ask him to deliver the very same book to Miss Long one step earlier, exactly like I have described in the first case-scenario.

“Or even better, the scoundrel can figure out a way to make a hundred thousand copies of the book and distribute them for free on the street. Hopefully, everybody will own a copy by the end of the day!

“Think about it, Miss Long. In such a case, will you still believe that the content of the book is real, and will you still take the book seriously?”

Pondering for a moment, Long Yunxin shook her head, deep in thought.

It was true that, even if Tricks to Be a Billionaire was real, it would be considered a crudely-made counterfeit!

“This is precisely a successful ‘deconstruction’,” Su Changfa said coldly. “Right now, replace Tricks to Be a Billionaire with the true path of immortality, the richest magnate of the Flying Star Sector with the expedition fleet of the Imperium of True Human Beings, and the smelly beggar with me, and it will be the shameless trick through which Li Yao deconstructs the ‘true path of immortality’!

“The true path of immorality is indeed a truth that can build up our species, but however incontrovertible the truth is, it still matters who exactly brings up the truth!

“If it is proposed by the expedition fleet of the Imperium of True Human Beings and endorsed by the mighty troops and unparalleled experts, naturally, it will be very convincing!

“However, if it is me, a prisoner who only regains his freedom because of the pity of the Cultivators, who puts forward theory, it’s like asking a beggar to promote Tricks to Be a Billionaire. How convincing can that theory be?

“No matter how I elaborate on the truth, I’m afraid that the only thing on your mind will be—if the truth path of immortality is so awesome, how come an Immortal Cultivator such as you has ended up being a captive of the Cultivators like a loser?”

Chapter 1312 - Draw Your Sword!

Long Yunxin coughed and put on a weird expression.

Deep in thought, she thought exactly the same.

“Do you think that Li Yao made the authorities free me early and hire me as the dean of the Sociology Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution with his influence so that I can propagate the Immortal Cultivators’ theories because he is merciful and idiotic?” Su Changfa sneered. “How is it possible!

“Leniency is the power of the strong. The stronger you are, the more lenient you will be. Li Yao was doing that merely because he wanted to accentuate the pettiness and ridiculousness of the ‘truth path of immortality’ with the magnificence and confidence of the Cultivators!

“Once the unjustified opinion enters everyone’s head, it is only natural that the true path of immortality will be despised.

“The Immortal Cultivators do not mind being loathed or feared because fear is itself a power that will make other people bend and believe! However, fear is one thing—disdain is another! If everyone’s attitude toward the true path of immortality is contempt, it will be very difficult to shake your belief!

“This is exactly what Li Yao has been concocting.

“In the ancient battles, if a general of a hostile country was captured, it was often the case that he would not be directly executed but kept alive while being paraded through the streets, showing his most ragged and hilarious appearance to the public. The enemy’s image would be sullied, and their morale would be reduced.

“Beheading him would only make the general a hero. Such living punishment harsher than death was the real way to dissolve the enemy’s source of power!

“At this moment, I am like a general who has been captured alive and is being paraded in shame. You think that this is a privilege? No. This is the cruelest suffering that the scumbag Li Yao has come up with!”

Long Yunxin was quite shocked at Su Changfa’s suddenly profanity. She asked subconsciously, “Are—are you not friends?”

“Friends?” Su Changfa widened his eyes, as if he had heard the greatest joke in the world. “Why would you say that, Miss Long? How can Li Yao and I be friends? In my eyes, this shameless, ruthless fellow who knows no bounds may be the most terrible enemy for the Imperium one day. I only wish I could mince him into pieces and burn him into ash right now!”

“Huh?” Long Yunxin found the behavior of the Nascent Soul Stage experts weirder and weirder. “But—but you were having a nice talk just now, weren’t you?”

“Senior Su wants to kill me, but he is not able to do so,” Li Yao said with a smile. “Although we are both in the Nascent Soul Stage, Senior Su is focused on liberal arts and mental control. Unless he has thousands of spiritual puppets under his control, he will be absolutely no match for me. If I’m determined to kill him, I can finish him with one hand!

“But, as you have heard just now, he is still of much value. What reason do I have to eliminate him?

“He wants to kill me, but he can’t. I can kill him, but I don’t want to. So, now that the two of us are in the same room, what can we do except have a nice talk? Are we going to curse each other like vixens on the street?”

“Do you see how wicked the Ultra-Level Federal Hero is right now?” Su Changfa smiled. “He is not satisfied that I called him a ‘scumbag’ just now and is hinting that I am a ‘vixen’!”

Sweat popping out of her head, Long Yunxin was lost for words, but she was mumbling to herself in her heart. *The guys in the Nascent Soul Stage truly think differently from others. You can never guess what’s on their mind!*

No wonder they are also called ‘old monsters’ by other people and even accepted such an inelegant nickname willingly.

They are truly a bunch of weirdos whose actions cannot be anticipated through common sense!

Long Yunxin pondered for a moment. Although she had not figured out everything yet, she was no longer as intolerant of or frightened by Su Changfa as before.

“Senior Su, so to speak, you are very clear that Master Li Yao is taking advantage of you and parading you to ruin the image of the ‘true path of immortality’ and the Imperium of True Human Beings, right?” She asked respectfully. “If so, why were you willing to be taken advantage of?

“Although you are an Immortal Cultivator, your spirit and resolution do not give me the feeling that you are someone scared of death. Few of the Immortal Cultivators such as ‘Xiao Xuance’ who raised disasters in the Flying Star Sector were soft. Now that you had seen through Master Li Yao’s ‘viciousness’, why didn’t you kill yourself when you realized that you wouldn’t be rescued?

“At the very least, if you were unwilling to accept the ‘pretentious job’ and develop the game ‘Civilization’, there is absolutely nobody who could force you to.”

“Why would I be unwilling to?” His eyes glittering in the scorching brilliance of a vigorous teenager, he suddenly raised his voice and declared with unwavering confidence, “What I said just now is only the plan that Li Yao concocted, but was it really so simple?

“Most importantly of all, I firmly believe in the correctness of the ‘true path of immortality’. However you vilify, twist, and lambaste it, you will eventually kneel down before the only truth!

“Li Yao wants to turn me into a ‘vaccine’. He wants to establish a department that focuses on the study of the true path of immortality so that you can know your enemy better. He wants to create a game to solve all the problems that can possibly occur when a civilization of Cultivators is functioning. Then, so be it!

“Because I believe that I am not a ‘vaccine’ but a life-saving drug and that whatever the students had in mind before they come to my class, they will eventually realize the correctness, the advanced nature, and the absoluteness of the true path of immortality. There’s no need to mention the game ‘Civilization’. The more you play, the clearer it will be to you that regular methods can only solve the petty, superficial errors but can never cure the natural-born diseases of human beings. If you want to save our civilization from the bottom of it and make it continue burning for ten thousand years, a hundred thousand years, or even longer, the true path of immortality is the only path that you can follow!

“Li Yao thinks that he is taking advantage of me, but who can tell whether or not he is a victim of his own scheme and is actually being taken advantage of?

“In short, this is a competition of beliefs. Detour or retreat is not an option. You can only draw your sword and see who the winner is on the narrow road!

“Now that Li Yao dared to challenge the true path of immortality in such a way, I will gladly answer the challenge even if the cost may be my life! Let the next hundred years be the judge to determine which of us is right and credible!”

Su Changfa’s determination deeply touched Long Yunxin.

Her hatred and contempt for the Immortal Cultivator that she had just grown in the game ‘Civilization’ was suddenly slightly shaken.

Those experts in the Nascent Soul Stage were too dreadful. One would be unavoidably affected by their belief when they were too close to them!

Right then, somebody knocked on the door softly. A young man in the school uniform of the Grand Desolate War Institution walked in with a tray of tea cups. He greeted Su Changfa as ‘master’ respectfully first before he changed the tea for the three of them.

Long Yunxin was greatly surprised.

The terms of address among Cultivators could be quite sophisticated.

Su Changfa, as an Immortal Cultivator who was permitted to open a lecture in the Grand Desolate War Institution, could be called teacher, professor, or dean by the students who went to his class. All those titles were perfectly normal.

However, the students should be well aware of Su Changfa's background and identity. They should also know that they were studying the true path of immortality just to better deal with the enemy.

Their bond with Su Changfa was the thinnest teacher-student relationship. It was more like a dealer-customer relationship where knowledge was the merchandise.

But addressing someone as 'master' was different from addressing him as 'teacher'.

One day a teacher, forever a master. It was a very solemn title that entailed tremendous obligations and rights!

For example, Li Yao had once been a visiting scholar in Flying Star University. So, it would be appropriate for the students of Flying Star University to call him 'teacher'. The title did not imply that Li Yao had any duty or responsibility about the students.

In all three Sectors, Wu Mayan, Xie Anan, and Jin Xinyue were the only three who were entitled to address Li Yao as 'master'. As Li Yao's true disciples, they were going to inherit Li Yao's knowledge one day.

On many occasions, a Cultivator’s true disciples were more intimate to them than their family. The bond between them could be very deep. Every Cultivator, especially those in the Nascent Soul Stage, could not be more cautious when they recruited a true disciple.

But the student of the Grand Desolate War Institution was a ‘true disciple’ to Su Changfa, an Immortal Cultivator?

Long Yunxin observed the young man with great curiosity.

Her first impression was that he was outrageously young. Had there not been the school uniform, he might have been mistaken for a senior high school student, if not one from a junior high school!

His skin was rather yellow, and his arms and legs were as thin as a skeleton. Somehow, his neck was supporting an extraordinarily huge head. The two big, round eyes took up almost half of his face.

He gave Long Yunxin the feeling that he was a malnourished bean sprout!

Sensing that Long Yunxin was observing him, the young man glanced at him casually.

Despite his slimness and his young face, the young man’s big eyes seemed to belong to an adult who had experienced too many vicissitudes of life. They seemed to boast soul-stirring charm, allowing him to see through someone else’s deepest secrets with a glimpse.

Long Yunxin shuddered coldly.

She felt that the young man’s eyes did not stop on her at all. After piercing through her heart, they darted toward the clouds in the sky.

In the meantime, she sensed two opposing auras from the young man.

One of them was the demeanor of a patient noble. His every action suggested that the young man had received the education of the upper society.

However, hidden beneath the vague aura of a noble were toughness and indifference, which seemed to suggest that he was an orphan born and raised in the wilderness.

The mysterious young man successfully attracted Long Yunxin's full attention. She was more curious about him than Li Yao and Su Changfa combined.

Narrowing her eyes, Long Yunxin discovered two badges on the lapel of the young man's school uniform.

The first badge was, naturally, the 'Fist of Fury' badge, which was the famous emblem of the Grand Desolate War Institution.

The second badge was a pattern of a fist, too, but it was one that was holding a double-edged sharp sword tightly.

On the bleeding back of the hand, a shining eye was carved.

The badge was not rare in the Flying Star Sector recently, either. Even some of the societies in Flying Star University were associated with the organization behind the badge.

It was the symbol of the Patriots Front, an organization that had been rising quickly in the past few years!

Chapter 1313 - The Young Immortal Cultivator

“Miss Long, what’s wrong? Are you interested in my true disciple—Lu Qingchen?”

Su Changfa was apparently very proud of his disciple. Scratching his long beard, he declared, “Li Yao went through all the trouble of setting up such a scheme, but he doesn’t understand the logic of ‘Man proposes, God disposes’. However fabulous his thoughts are, there will be many unexpected changes when they are implemented! Lu Qingchen may be the first unexpected change, but I believe that he is definitely not going to be the last!

“Qingchen, there’s something I must discuss with Fellow Cultivator Li. Please walk with Miss Long and introduce the development of our ‘Civilization’. If she is interested in you, you may introduce yourself to her well, too!”

“Understood, Master.”

The young Immortal Cultivator Lu Qingchen nodded and bowed to Long Yunxin courteously. “Miss Long, this way, please.”

Long Yunxin knew that the two Nascent Soul Stage experts were going to talk about some strange and mysterious topics again.

The communication in the Nascent Soul Stage was too weird for her to follow. She sometimes even found it hard to tell whether they were praising or cursing each other.

The young man, on the other hand, seemed to be a better subject of communication.

Who was he? Why did he become an Immortal Cultivator’s true disciple? Did the federal government simply let it happen?

Ten thousand questions were rolling on her mind. Su Changfa’s suggestion was exactly what she wanted. Therefore, she left the room with the young man quickly.

Too impatient to wait any longer, Long Yunxin asked while they were still on their way, “Mister Lu, how did you become Senior Su’s true disciple? Do—do you really believe in the true path of immortality?”

“What’s wrong about the true path of immortality?” Lu Qingchen asked back casually.

It appeared that the sophisticated young man did not consider Long Yunxin, who was more than ten years older than him, to be an opponent of the same level as him.

“Well—”

Lost for words briefly, Long Yunxin blurted out, “Isn’t it obvious? The true path of immortality is of course wrong. Just look at the game ‘Civilization’. How brutal the Immortal Cultivators are!”

Lu Qingchen smiled. His voice was not utterly devoid of the freshness of a young man, but it was mixed with a unique coarse taste. “As you said yourself, ‘Civilization’ is just a game, and not just any game but a strongly biased one. It is just a way of brainwashing for the Cultivators. How can you decide whether the true path of immortality is right or wrong with that?

"Under my master's lead, I was partly involved in the development of 'Civilization' as an assistant. When designing 'Civilization', and especially the DLC 'Rise of the Imperium', the designers intentionally chose pictures, scenes, and plots that were unfavorable for the Immortal Cultivators so that the players would despise and loathe Immortal Cultivators before they knew it.

"Such doing is no different from the brainwashing procedure the Immortal Cultivators performed on Master Li Yao in their war base. They are simply selecting a certain facet, magnifying it and extremizing it, in order to achieve their purpose.

"Today, you may be 'deeply touched' after only playing a game for several hours and decide that you hate the true path of immortality. Then, tomorrow, you may be moved by the tenacity and the hot blood of the Immortal Cultivators, or intimidated by the mighty troops and invincible fleets of the Imperium of True Human Beings!

"But if we get to the bottom of it, people like you know neither the Cultivators nor the Immortal Cultivators. You are merely puppets speaking and dancing according to others' will.

"As the saying goes, the picture of ice is indescribable for an insect that only lives in summer. How can I answer your question when your belief is so infirm?"

Long Yunxin was dumbfounded!

Help me!

She suddenly would rather listen to the incomprehensible talk of the two Nascent Soul Stage experts who might be praising each other or might be cursing each other than stay with the little monster here any longer!

“Therefore, before we discuss whether or not I believe in the ‘true path of immortality’, we must figure out what the ‘true path of immortality’ is exactly! If it is good, where and how is it good? If it is bad, how specifically and to what extent is it bad?”

The young Immortal Cultivator paused for a moment and then said solemnly, “This is the only reason why I am learning from my master. I want to understand the true path of immortality and figure out what it is exactly before I decide whether or not to believe in it.”

There was finally something that Long Yunxin could understand. Greatly relieved, she said, “I understand now. You are just curious. You are not a real believer of the true path of immortality. So, you are still a Cultivator, right?”

“No.” Lu Qingchen shook his head quickly. “As I said, I will not believe in any theory recklessly, either the Cultivators’ and the Immortal Cultivators’, before I completely understand it. Therefore, I am neither an Immortal Cultivator nor a Cultivator. I am just a regular trainer and a student who is groping for my life. You may consider me as a man without a belief!”

“Well…” The answer was even more unfathomable than if the young man thought he was an Immortal Cultivator; Long Yunxin was utterly confused. “Without a belief? You don’t believe in anything?”

“Exactly. Is there anything wrong about that?” Lu Qingchen glanced at her matter-of-factly. Thinking for a moment, he said, “When I was little, I believed in many things childishly like you and many other people.

“I was born in the Grand Desolate Plateau. I lost my parents in a demon beast outbreak. I was raised by my foster father, who was also a war orphan. I lived together with my foster father and my grandfather.

“At that time, I firmly believed that demons were living embodiments of evilness and our most ferocious sworn enemies. My foster father and my grandfather were great heroes and pillars to support the federation!

“When the news of the Imperium of True Human Beings’ attack came over, the whole world was suddenly turned upside down. The ferocious demons suddenly turned into comrades whom you could unite with, and the heroes determined to fight to the end against the demons became dishonored traitors and schemers.

“The demon emperors, who used to be described as cruel and unpardonable, arrived on the land of the federation openly. My foster father and my foster father’s foster father, Lu Zui, became national enemies because of their Patriots Partnership!

“My grandfather died without a sound in prison. My foster father was sentenced to fifty years in prison and sent to your Flying Star Sector for mining.

“Fine. It took me a lot of time to convince myself, but I persuaded myself that they deserved their punishments and that the Immortal Cultivators were our most dreadful enemies. Faced with the threat of the Imperium of True Human Beings, the bloody grudge in the past could, and must, be put down, including the death of my own blood parents!

“I really figured everything through and let it go. I smashed my belief in the past and establish a new belief that was even tougher, solider, and more unwavering. My hate toward the demon race was poured toward the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Immortal Cultivators!

“However, when I just found my new belief, another piece of stunning news came over. As it turned out, the Immortal Cultivators were not the evilest enemies in the enemies, either. There were still existences that were even more wicked than the Immortal Cultivators, which were the people of the Covenant Alliance!

“Hehe. Since the news of the ‘minor apocalypse’, the federation had been exaggerating the terror of the Immortal Cultivators, exactly like they exaggerated the terror of the demons in the past. How ugly and vicious they were!

“But this time, everything changed again, and the Immortal Cultivators became understandable and communicable. Under extreme circumstances, we might even have to join hands with the Immortal Cultivators to resist the Covenant Alliance.

“Isn’t it ridiculous?

“If sworn enemies could become the most intimate allies, and great heroes could turn into ambitious traitors, and the Immortal Cultivators could vacillate between the role of ‘enemy’ and the role of ‘friend’, who could say for sure that we wouldn’t be fighting side by side with the Covenant Alliance when an existence more evil than the Covenant Alliance popped up?”

With a thin smile, the young man said, “Tell me about it. Faced with such abrupt changes, what should I believe in when I am unused to the world? I fear that the unpredictable reality will jump out and smash my new belief into pieces the moment I choose it!”

Long Yunxin was rendered speechless.

Born in a rich family and growing up smoothly, she should not understand the young man’s troubled and thrilled life at all.

“Therefore, I choose to believe in nothing,” Lu Qingchen said. “I need to spend some time studying the difference between the Cultivators and the Immortal Cultivators. Maybe, it will take me decades to study the two paths before I finally decide the one that I will walk on.”

“Decades?” Long Yunxin was greatly shocked again.

Seeing the solemnness on the young man’s face, she could tell that the young man was not bragging but making a serious life plan.

“Is it strange?” Lu Qingchen said disapprovingly. “Sometimes, I think that people like you are the real strange ones. When you buy a cabbage in the market, or when you buy a crystal processor in a store, you will pick and analyze carefully before you make a final decision. But when it comes to the decision of beliefs, an issue of paramount importance, why do you choose to become a Cultivator or an Immortal Cultivator recklessly just because the so-called ‘time’ comes?

“It wouldn’t be strange at all if such a decision was studied and considered with one’s entire life and wasn’t made until one was about to die. In fact, this is exactly how such a decision should be made!”

Long Yunxin was blushing in embarrassment because of Lu Qingchen’s words. She managed to change the topic in order to cover her discomfort.

“Well, Mister Lu, so to speak, if you reach the conclusion that the true path of immortality is correct after decades of research, you will become an Immortal Cultivator without any hesitation, right?”

The young man nodded. “Of course.”

“But have you never considered the consequences of your decision? I can tell that you are not disguising what you are trying to do at all. Do you not feel that your decision… may cause you some trouble?” Long Yunxin looked for a suitable word carefully.

A hundred years later, when the magnificent army of the Imperium of True Human Beings arrived, the Star Glory Federation would definitely be on high alert. If a blatant Immortal Cultivator appeared from within by then, his outcome would certainly be much more than ‘trouble’.

The big-eyed young man laughed, like a sprout that was dancing in the breeze.

“I know what you mean, Miss Long.”

With radiance that resembled two rainbows spreading out inside his big eyes, Lu Qingchen said unhurried, “There is quite an interesting coincidence. When offering their enlightenment on my training, my grandfather Lu Zui and my master Su Changfa said something that basically meant the same.

“They said—if the truth is hidden in the deepest level of hell, then who should go to hell if not me?”

Chapter 1314 - March into the Universe!

Three days later, the Magical Equipment Exposition was still on fire. Although it was late at night, hundreds of thousands of tourists were still having a great time inside the park. The visual and sound effects cast the center of the Grand Desolate Plateau into a colorful paradise.

Inside the meeting center, the sixth Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage began.

Starting from five years ago, the Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage became a regular meeting that was held once every year. However busy they were, all experts in the Nascent Soul Stage would try to put their work down and gather for the meeting. They would communicate with each other on their new knowledge in training in the past year, the progress of their projects, and the latest development of the research fields, while they looked for cooperation and trade opportunities.

Although the Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage was just a spontaneous, unofficial meeting, it boasted unparalleled significance for the future of the three Sectors.

Many vital projects actually originated from the collisions of inspiration in the Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage.

It was safe to say that the New Federation, a galaxy behemoth that was destined to swallow the stars one day, began its first step of growth during the Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage.

This was the first time that Ding Lingdang had participated in the Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage.

When she walked into the meeting hall holding Li Yao’s hand, she was particularly excited as she bulged her eyes and looked around.

The decorations of the meeting hall, however, slightly shocked her.

The Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage had kept the shabby if not messy decorations exactly as the first time it was held.

Such an environment could give all the participants a sense of urgency.

Over the past five years, all the participants of the meeting had been training with their all. Every one of them had three to five super projects in their hands. They were so busy at their work that they often had no chance to meet each other except at the meeting.

Some of the participants had become good friends after the five years of development even if they did not know each other in the beginning. They were greeting each other warmly as they saw one another.

This Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage was particularly different from the previous years.

The first phase of the exploration on Kunlun had finished. The technology, techniques, and training systems of the three Sectors had been preliminarily integrated. The digestion and absorption of the knowledge from the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Pangu civilization had also hit a bottleneck.

The Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector were about to embark on a whole new journey!

It was not Speaker Jiang Hailiu who hosted this Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage but Li Yao’s old friend, Professor Mo Xuan.

After he turned into a special life form star spirit and swallowed the computational ability of the star child, Professor Mo Xuan’s expertise in the arts of refining had soared exponentially.

Also, after the Battle of Kunlun, he had swallowed the mainframe crystal processor on Flourishing Sun, the war base of the Immortal Cultivators. He had developed a new understanding of the Immortal Cultivators’ system of refining.

Based on that, Professor Mo Xuan had become one of the leading persons in the exploration of Kunlun. On the other hand, with the support of the Glorious Sunlight Group, he was also actively increasing the capability of the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution by communicating with the elite universities in the Flying Star Sector and the Blood Demon Sector and hiring many professors and scholars from the two Sectors to teach in the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution.

Today, the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution had already distinguished itself with a comprehensive capability very close to that of the Refining Department of Deep Sea University, which ranked top in the federation. In many cutting-edge subjects and interdisciplinary research topics, it had even surpassed the old enemy. The two parties were now on par with each other, each having their own advantages.

As for Professor Mo Xuan himself, he had been elected the president of the Refiners' Association of the Federation. He was doubtlessly one of the best refiners in the federation!

Since the Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage and the Magical Equipment Exposition were held together, it was only natural that he had been asked to host the meeting.

"In the past five years, we have made significant breakthroughs in every field regarding magical equipment and techniques. Many super projects that concern the next hundred years have yielded promising results!"

On the Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage, Professor Mo Xuan got directly to the main topic. "Our main research products are focused on five fields!

"First of all, the bulk raising of the 'super warriors'! With the spiritual energy generated incessantly on Kunlun by transforming the radiation from the pulsar, we have implemented the Three-Five Plan, allowing many training prodigies to improve their level at the speed of light! Fellow Cultivator Ding Lingdang, who is sitting with us right now, is the greatest success of the plan so far!

"Secondly, the super-long human hibernation and unfreezing. We have received the help of Fellow Cultivator Gui Suishou, the oldest individual in the three Sectors. We have also retrieved much valuable technology from the debris of the Pangu civilization's escape capsules. Substantial breakthroughs have been made!

"Right now, we have realized long-term hibernation, with a success rate close to 100% and an energy cost meeting the actual demand. A Cultivator’s body and level will not be affected at all even if they hibernate for five hundred years!

“Thirdly, the starship technologies, especially the cross-world starships that can perform dozens of space jumps in a row!

“The starship specialists from the Flying Star Sector are to credit for the remarkable achievement.

“They have completely parsed the Imperium of True Human Beings’ war base while also studying the starship debris left by the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan on the surface of Kunlun. In only five years, the technology of our starships has been boosted by at least five hundred years!

“Fourthly, the space navigation that is directly related to the starship technology. As is well known, we discovered a primeval navigation map left by the Pangu Clan in the escape center on Kunlun, which included most of the information regarding the space zones around us!

“The decryption, restoration, and deduction on the star map has not been stopped for one second in the past five years. Right now, we have basically grasped the basic situation of the thousands of space zones near the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and Flying Star Sector!

“Lastly, the techniques and the technologies about the Colossi!

“It’s true that we haven’t entirely cracked the mysteries of the Colossi yet, nor are we able to develop brand-new Colossi on our own. We can only do the simple assemble and modification work. After five years, we have only assembled five Colossi!

“This number is too low. However awesome a Colossus is, it cannot decide the victory of a war!

“However, the techniques, technologies, spells, and runes retrieved from the broken parts and units of the Colossi can generally be applied to all kinds of aggressive magical equipment, especially crystal suits!

“After applying the runes and techniques related to the Colossi on a large scale, and together with the ‘superstring magical equipment’ from the Imperium of True Human Beings, our crystal suits are taller, faster, and stronger than five years ago. Their survival abilities and their operational duration in a battle have both witnessed revolutionary improvements!”

With Professor Mo Xuan’s opening remarks, information streams as vast as an ocean flooded out on the colorful light beams around the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, displaying the breakthroughs in the tens of thousands of subcategories in great detail!

“It is not an exaggeration to say that, after five years of integration and the great development on Kunlun, the comprehensive capabilities of the three Sectors are at least three times higher than five years ago!”

Professor Mo Xuan extended three fingers to stress the conclusion.

All the participants were quite calm. They were all more or less numb to the shocking breakthroughs in the past five years now.

They all knew that Professor Mo Xuan was not bluffing and that the increase of three times was merely a conservative estimate.

“However…” Professor Mo Xuan changed the topic and said solemnly, “I believe that we all know clearly what has facilitated such ‘explosive development’!

“In the past five years, we have been focused on the fields with the least technological difficulties and the most relics and heritages. They are the fields that are easiest to crack.

“Let’s say that we are faced with an exam paper about the civilization development. Right now, the simplest multiple-choice questions and the fill-in-the-blanks at the front have been completed, but those questions only make up ten percent of the total score. Even if we answer all of correctly, it is still not guaranteed that we will not ‘fail’!

“The remaining ninety percent of the questions will definitely not be as easy. We are destined to be faced with tough and bloody battles in the next ten years. We will have to settle the obstacles patiently one after another. It is unlikely that our development will be as smooth and fast as the previous five years!

“I believe that everybody knows what matters most if we do not want to fail the exam.

“That’s right. It’s our size!

“Right now, we have only three Sectors. The population, resources, relics, and training systems are too few, weak, and incomplete after all. How can you dedicate a grandiose performance inside a small nut?

“Explore new Sectors, find new resources, arts, techniques, and relics, bring the compatriots there to our side, and trigger the most dazzling sparks of wisdom in the collision of different Sectors!

“Three Sectors is far from enough to compete with the Imperium of True Human Beings or the Alliance of the Holy Covenant in any regard!

“However, if we can discover seven to ten new Sectors in the next hundred years and join hands with them, we will certainly grow into a force at the edge of the cosmos that nobody can underestimate. We will have enough weight to seek a strategic balance between the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance!

“Time and tide wait for no one! Nobody knows how long the journeys in the universe will take. Even if Sectors occupied by human beings are indeed discovered, it will still take tremendous time to convince them to work with us instead of joining our enemies. Therefore, we must start our preparations right now and hopefully send out the first batch of space explorers in the next year!

“The Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage this year will be themed around ‘March into the Universe’. We will mainly discuss the topic from three perspectives.

“Firstly, the technological perspective. If we are marching into the universe, how and where are we going, and how are we going to find new allies?

“Secondly, the integrational perspective. If new Sectors that have civilizations of human beings are truly discovered, how are we going to embrace them into our system? After all, judging from the examples of the Curly Dragon civilization, the Medicine Fork civilization, and the Martial Meritocrats civilization, they may be unwilling to abandon their independence and join hands with us!

“Thirdly, the personnel perspective. Who exactly is going to be deployed for such important missions? Naturally, the ‘space explorers’ cannot be too weak, but if the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators are sent away, too many things may be affected when they are not around. We have to determine the people for the job after careful consideration!”

Chapter 1315 - Everything from Nothing

“Now, let’s hear what Fellow Cultivator Si Koulie, who is the leader of the Star Fighters’ Alliance and the most renowned authority on starships in the three Sectors, has to say. He is also the general supervisor of the ‘Heavenly Road Plan’!

“The Heavenly Road Plan will be our first step to march into the universe!”

Professor Mo Xuan waved his hands and sat back down in his seat.

Si Koulie went to the podium with his head held high.

He was also Li Yao’s old acquaintance.

Back in the Flying Star Sector, he had once proposed the Ice God Project and competed with Xiao Xuance for the leadership of the future development.

At that time, he had been completely overwhelmed by Xiao Xuance and ended up being an anonymous character.

However, more than ten years later, while Xiao Xuance had already turned into a cluster of dust in the universe, Si Koulie had unleashed his vigor of life for a second time at the sunset of his life because he had the chance to devise the future where more Sectors were involved now!

The leader of the Star Fighters’ Alliance and the chief designer of Burning Prairie, the strongest warship of the three Sectors, was filled with intense confidence and hope.

His back was even straighter than a teenager’s. His hair was black and glowing. There was not the slightest wrinkle on his face, and even the spots were so vague that they were barely visible. He seemed even younger than when Li Yao met him for the first time!

“Fellow Cultivators, it’s been so long!”

Si Koulie’s voice was as loud as a tolling bell, brimming with unquestionable decisiveness and soul-stirring passion. He did not say anything useless other than the courtesy at the beginning.

“After five years of development, we are now finally capable of marching into the universe to look for more Sectors!

“Sector is a word that many ordinary people and Cultivators often speak of. However, as for exactly what a ‘Sector’ is, the definitions can be quite fuzzy if not self-contradictory in many cases.

“It is well-known that the three-dimensional universe we are living in is an integral whole. There aren’t any concrete ‘walls’ that block or enshroud different worlds.

“The universe is integral, continuous, and inseparable. Assuming that there is a tortoise that can crawl and live in space but does not grow old, given enough time, it will be able to slowly ‘crawl’ from the Heaven’s Origin Sector to the Flying Star Sector, and then from the Flying Star Sector to the Blood Demon Sector. Nothing complicated need be involved at all.

“It’s a shame that nothing doesn’t grow old in the real world. Not only the individuals such as us, even our civilization only has limited time. Time is the most precious resource for us!

“What blocks two Sectors is not a visible, concrete wall but the most terrible obstacle to our knowledge—distance and time!

“Take the Heaven’s Origin Sector for example. The nearest galaxy to us is still five years away from us. Even if we were to set sail at the speed of light, it will take us five years before we arrive. Not to mention that our technology is far from enough to support the speed of light yet!

“That galaxy, in the meantime, is just a random galaxy with barely any spiritual energy and absolutely no lives!

“There are too many such galaxies in the universe, 99.99% of which have no signs of spiritual energy or life. Without resources and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, they are not qualified to be defined as a ‘Sector’ and can be called ‘wastelands’ at best. They are of zero value for our development at all!

“It is impossible for us to reach a prosperous galaxy that has enough spiritual energy to nurture all creatures from the Heaven’s Origin Sector through regular approaches right now, because it can be more than a thousand lightyears away from us. So, it is safe to say that we are two different ‘Sectors’!

“Therefore, on many occasions, a Sector is in fact not a vast concept. On the contrary, it is extremely narrow and strict. Sometimes, its range is smaller than a galaxy!

“The galaxy of the Heaven’s Origin Sector is approximately fifty billion kilometers in diameter, but only the five billion square kilometers at the core boasts sufficient spiritual energy and a habitable environment.

“Therefore, we may say that, although the galaxy that our Sector is in is fifty billion kilometers in diameter, the diameter of the Heaven’s Origin Sector is only five billion kilometers, which is only one tenth of the former!

“Worlds with multiple space zones such as the Flying Star Sector are the weirdos in the universe. Yet, the Flying Star Sector is not a collection of dozens of galaxies but a collection of the spaces in the dozens of galaxies with the most abundant spiritual energy that are connected through wormholes.”

Behind Si Koulie, a vintage and simple painting appeared.

It was a kind, sacred, motherly goddess who was spraying dew onto the ground with a willow branch.

Sprayed by the willow branch, the dews scattered into transparent, shining pearls on the ground.

It was a depiction of the myth where Nuwa created human beings.

In the myth, Nuwa was molding mud into human beings in the beginning, but she felt that the efficiency was too low while she was working. Therefore, she simply dipped a willow branch into the mud and water and sprayed it out, filling everywhere within her reach with thousands of living souls.

“Myths often contain our ancestors’ profound understanding about the universe and the objects in it. They can provide enlightenment for us even today,” Si Koulie said peacefully. “Let’s look at the mud and dew that was sprayed out. If we consider the ground as the entire universe and every dew as an independent Sector, we will be the tiny microorganisms living inside the dew.

“The ‘microorganisms’ are so feeble that we can only receive sufficient nutrition and resist the scourge of the sun and the sandstorm when we are inside the dew. If we leave the dew, we will be killed very soon.

“In the meantime, although no walls stand between the dew, they are simply too far away from each other. With a microorganism’s unbelievably short life, it is impossible for them to leave a dew droplet and crawl for several kilometers to another.

“This is the relationship between the Sector that our life is based on and the whole three-dimensional universe. If we only use regular cruising approaches, we are destined to be confined in the invisible and therefore unbreakable ‘cage of the speed of light’!

“Thankfully, above the three-dimensional universe, there are still wormholes between the three-dimensional universe and the four-dimensional universe, allowing us to shatter the void and reach another Sector directly through a higher dimension!”

The picture behind Si Koulie suddenly changed. Colorful threads of light extended out of every dew droplet, connecting all the dew like the tiniest rainbows!

Those rainbows were the symbols for the wormholes.

“The wormholes in the universe are limited, and the place that can support a space jump is limited, too. It is often where we set up the sailing routes in the universe! For a ‘blind jump’ without setting the coordinates, the sailing route is ninety-nine percent likely to be a suicidal action!

“Of all of us here, Fellow Cultivator Li is the only person who has ever tried a ‘blind jump’ and succeeded, but I believe that even he definitely wouldn’t want to have another try!”

Li Yao scratched his nose awkwardly.

Si Koulie was right. He would rather face Xiao Xuance, Bai Xinghe, Lu Zui, and Zhou Hengdao another hundred times than have a blind jump without fixed coordinates and sailing routes.

In a challenge with a formidable enemy such as Xiao Xuance, the failure would only mean a quick death. But if a blind jump failed, it was very possible that he would wind up in a desolate space without any resources or lives and wait to die slowly in the cold darkness.

There might not be a second soul in the billions of lightyears around him. Such a lonely and desperate way of death would crumble even the firmest belief.

“To march into the universe,” Si Koulie went on, “the most important thing is to find out and dredge the sailing routes, before we deploy powerful lighthouses—or rather, the star beacons—on the two ends of a sailing route. We can even assemble countless star beacons into a ‘space gate’ so that the large-scale fleets will be able to transport more easily.

“Fortunately, human beings are not the first civilization to explore the sea of stars. Before us, the Pangu civilization developed and mapped the three thousand Sectors on a large scale. Most of the usable wormholes have been discovered and built into sailing routes. A rather perfect teleportation network based on star beacons was set up, too, connecting the three thousand Sectors into a congruent whole!

“The space network still played an important role in the age of the ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago, allowing the ancient people to transport easily among different Sectors through the sea of stars despite their underdeveloped technology.

“But unfortunately, after the civil war at the end of the age of the ancient Cultivators, the war between mankind and the demon race, and the rise and decline of the Star Ocean Imperium, the space transportation network has mostly been ruined.

“If you want to be rich, pave your road first. It is a common sense that even the village-level governments known.

“Ignoring the ancient Cultivators, in the thirty thousand years while demons reigned the sea of stars, and in the thousand years when the universe was governed by the Star Ocean Imperium, endeavors were both made to recover and increase the star beacons and the sailing sails. Although the wars rendered the endeavors futile in the end, a lot of debris and relics have still been left behind. Quite a few star beacons are even not broken but just in the hibernation state because they have run out of spiritual energy.

“Right now, with the heritage of the Star Ocean Imperium that we have excavated from Spider Den, the knowledge of the Imperium of True Human Beings brought by the Immortal Cultivators in their war base, and the legacy of the Pangu civilization on Kunlun, we have grasped tremendous information about ancient sailing routes and the secret techniques to craft star beacons and space gates of a higher level!

“To march into the grand universe, our first step will be to find and activate the sailing routes, repair the star beacons that the previous civilizations deployed, and expand them into space gates larger in scale!

“We have to build a great cause from scratch exactly like our earliest pioneers did. We will reconnect the dry and broken veins and nerves in the body of our civilization one by one again!

“This is exactly the significance of the ‘Heavenly Road Plan’!”

On the light beam behind Si Koulie, a lot of worlds were shining brilliantly. They were connected to each other tightly by colorful roads, constituting a splendid paradise in the universe.

Although they knew that it was simply artwork, Li Yao and Ding Lingdang were still deeply fascinated by such a glorious future.

Chapter 1316 - Let’s Go to the Universe!

All the participants were inspired by Si Koulie’s speech. In the whole night that followed, they proposed their own amazing insights for the ‘Heavenly Road Plan’.

Such an enormous plan could almost be called the ‘First Project’ of the New Federation. Naturally, it would be impossible to reach any result after only one night.

Thankfully, most of the participants of the meeting were staying for the Magical Equipment Exposition. As a result, the duration of the Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage was lengthened to an unprecedented ten days.

They had plenty of time to plan everything.

After the first day’s meeting was over, Li Yao and Ding Lingdang roamed the garden outside the meeting hall, hand in hand.

It was already dawn after a whole night of discussion. On the horizon in the east, the morning glow was swallowing the entire night sky like a surging tide.

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang were still dwelling on the spectacular and passionate meeting.

Occasionally, when they made eye contact, they immediately felt what was on each other’s mind.

Ding Lingdang smiled and jabbed Li Yao with her elbow. “You want to join the ‘Heavenly Road Plan’ and explore more

Sectors in the sea of stars, right?”

“Yes!” Li Yao licked his lips, with eagerness beaming out of his eyes. He looked at his fists and said, “We’ve spent five peaceful years on Kunlun. Although it was quite a lot of fun to study the Colossi all day, I felt that… my life was short of something. My spirit couldn’t be entirely activated, and my level stagnated, too. I couldn’t make any progress however hard I trained myself!

“It felt like—It felt like—Huh, how should I put it?”

Ding Lingdang smiled and bared the sharp teeth. “It felt that you were not completely alive?”

“Exactly!” Li Yao’s eyes suddenly shone while he raised his thumb for his wife. “That’s exactly my feeling. How do you know?”

“Because I felt the same!” Ding Lingdang sniffed. “We are the same type of person. We are not born for a peaceful life. Challenging the limits of our limits in incessant adventures and battles is our lifestyle!

“In the past five years, although my level has been improving fast through the arduous training, it never felt as gratifying as when I fought the demons in the depths of the Grand Desolate Plateau eight years ago! Such a monotonous life is like a prison for me. My bones are itching so much that I feel there must be bugs inside. I’ve long expected the human hibernation technology and the space jump technology to be developed enough for us to march into the universe!

“Now, the day has finally arrived. The opportunity is too great to miss. After all, there are still almost a hundred years to go before the expedition army of the Imperium of True

Human Beings arrives. Being caged in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and living a mundane life for the next hundred years will be a greater suffering than killing me!”

“Li Yao, let’s go to Professor Mo Xuan and Leader Si Koulie and ask them about the details about the ‘Heavenly Road Plan’. If we are truly marching to the universe, there are no candidates that are more suitable than us!”

Li Yao’s eyes were glittering. He held Ding Lingdang’s hands tightly and said, “That’s exactly what I want!”

Si Koulie was the best starship specialist in the three Sectors, while Professor Mo Xuan had been studying the ancient star map left by the Pangu civilization over the past few years. The two of them were both the most crucial components of the ‘Heavenly Road Plan’.

Although Li Yao was Professor Mo Xuan’s student, he had been devoted to the research on the Colossi and did not pay much attention to the ‘Heavenly Road Plan’ before it was announced.

Si Koulie and Professor Mo Xuan had not rested yet. They were still sorting the presentations of the participants in the meeting hall now.

Seeing that Li Yao and Ding Lingdang returned, the two seniors showed no sign of surprise at all.

“Li Yao, perfect timing. Come here and take a look at this!” Si Koulie greeted Li Yao with a smile.

Back in the riot of the Immortal Cultivators, the two of them had become comrades who fought side by side with each other. When the communication between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector went deeper, Li

Yao's Glorious Sunlight Group and Si Koulie's Star Fighters' Alliance formed a strategic partnership. They shared a lot of mutual interests and were in an unusual relationship. Therefore, even the title of 'Fellow Cultivator' was saved.

Si Koulie activated a rune array softly, triggering a hologram right in front of them, which turned out to be a super small starship around ten meters long and as brilliant as a diamond.

At first glance, the starship did not carry any metal materials and was in a completely different style from what was seen in the Heaven's Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, or the Blood Demon Sector. The flawlessness of the starship actually had a primeval air around it, just like…

"Isn't it the escape capsule of the Pangu Clan?" Li Yao scratched his hair and finally recalled what it was.

Five years ago, deep inside Kunlun, he and three Immortal Cultivators had once found an escape capsule of the Pangu Clan and even fought the hibernating warrior of the Pangu Clan inside hard.

At that time, the escape capsule had been blown up into countless pieces.

The super small starship in front of his eyes right now, however, was eighty percent similar to the escape capsule of the Pangu Clan and looked like a reduced version.

"Yes, precisely!" Si Koulie declared proudly. "Although the escape capsule was blown into smithereens, we collected the debris carefully and tried our best to analyze it. Together with our latest starship technology, we have finally produced this feather-level super starship, which we have named 'Spark'!

“Don’t underestimate it just because it only has the space to accommodate one passenger. It has in fact been embedded with hundreds of units excavated from Kunlun, allowing it to perform dozens of space jumps in a row or accelerate to ‘sub-lightspeed’. As the fastest and most agile starship of the three Sectors right now, it is most suitable for the universal exploration!”

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang looked at each other, their eyes shining.

“Professor, Uncle Si, you must know what we are here for, mustn’t you?” Li Yao went directly to the topic. “I believe that there shouldn’t be a problem if we want to join the ‘Heavenly Road Plan’ and explore the new Sectors with our capabilities, right?”

“Regarding the issue, we would’ve gone to you if you hadn’t come to us.” Professor Mo Xuan walked close and said, “According to the internal discussion of the team of the ‘Heavenly Road Plan’, it is indeed necessary to send out experts in the Nascent Soul Stage at the beginning phase of the universal exploration.

“But it is not because those in the Building Foundation Stage or the Core Formation Stage are surely unqualified for the task. This is mainly for safety reasons.

“We don’t know the first thing about the worlds beyond the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and Flying Star Sector. Assuming that there are local forces in the new Sectors, we are unaware whether they are friendly or hostile, how developed their civilization is, and if they pose a threat to us!

“Even if the overall development level of their civilization is not as good as ours, it doesn’t mean that their top experts cannot kill or even capture our explorers alive.

“It’s just like us. Our comprehensive capability is far behind that of the Imperium of True Human Beings, but with a delicate scheme and some luck, we were still able to capture the explorers of the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“In the perilous universe, information is one of the most valuable resources! After we captured an explorer of the Imperium of True Human Beings, we received tremendous information from both them and their war base, which significantly increased our capability and will make us grow into a serious threat for the Imperium one day.

“Should locals who are hostile to us encounter and capture our explorers while we are exploring the universe, and they elicit crucial information about the federation from the captives, it will be a terrible disaster for us!

“Therefore, the first echelon of explorers must boast high self-protection abilities… In the worst case-scenario, they must be capable of destroying all the information about us before terminating their own life when they are caught in a desperate situation!”

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang looked at each other, not very surprised.

Although the two of them were Cultivators who believed in humanity, they were not innocent children who did not know the darkness in the universe.

Danger lurked everywhere in the sea of stars. Professor Mo Xuan’s concerns were definitely valid.

If the explorers from the federation ran into powerful and hostile locals, they might confess the coordinates, combat ability, civilization level as well as other critical intelligence under the vicious secret arts such as the ‘soul-searching technique’ before they had the chance to figure out the new world’s situation. In that case, the federation would be losing a lot instead of gaining anything from the exploration missions!

It was needless to say that the explorers might run into the scouts from the Covenant Alliance or the Imperium in the vast universe, who might be tough characters like the star child.

Only the experts in the Nascent Soul Stage were capable of competing with them. Even if they could defeat the enemy, they would still be able to destroy themselves and all the information they carried cleanly so that the federation could still be hidden in the mist at the edge of the cosmos.

Li Yao clapped his hands and said, “Then, the two of us will go for the mission. We’re perfect for it!”

“You are indeed perfect for the mission, but you cannot be in each other’s company on the mission,” Professor Mo Xuan said. “In our plan, every exploration team will be supervised by a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. However, two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators will not be on the same team.”

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang were both dazed for a moment. They asked simultaneously, “Why?”

“Two reasons. Firstly, you cannot put all your eggs in the same basket,” Professor Mo Xuan explained. “Although the space jump technology is quite mature, passing through the four-dimensional space is a highly-risky endeavor after all. If anything goes wrong, the vehicle may be caught in a cosmic storm of the foreign dimension until it drifts to the end of the universe!

“One space jump may be not that dangerous. However, while the ‘Heavenly Road Plan’ is implemented, the explorers will jump continuously like the star child of the Imperium of True Human Beings. When the risks of dozens of space jumps are accumulated, the final result can be extremely high!

“There are only slightly more than two hundred experts in the Nascent Soul Stage in the three Sectors. Subtracting those who are too old and the non-battle ones who are unsuitable for the universal exploration missions, there are few suitable candidates for the job.

“Assuming that the two of you are on the same starship, should an accident take place, we will lose two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who are of paramount importance at the same time!

“Such a loss is too heavy for us to shoulder. Therefore, we cannot be as extravagant as the Imperium of True Human Beings who put two in the Nascent Soul Stage and one at the peak of the Core Formation Stage on the same exploration team. We can only put one Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator in each team at best!”

Chapter 1317 - A Greeting

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang both nodded, somewhat helplessly. They had never considered the issue from that perspective before.

On second thought, it was indeed a conundrum that could barely be bypassed.

“Secondly, the complexity of the universal exploration. We have to try everything we can to increase our odds of discovering a new Sector,” Professor Mo Xuan said. “For the ordinary people who live on a planet, with a blue sky above their heads and a solid land below their feet, when they are faced with the night sky brimming with brilliantly shining stars, it is often impossible for them to truly understand the vastness and enormity of the universe!

“How many stars are scattered in the three-dimensional universe to our knowledge?

“By the preliminary estimation of generations of astronomers, there are approximately ninety sextillion, which means a nine with twenty-two zeros behind it!

“What does 90,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 mean exactly?

“Let me put it this way. We are now on the Grand Desolate Plateau at the north of the continent of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, which is a famous desert. There is another boundless desert at the south of the Blood Demon Sector known as the White Silver Death Desert!

“Say that every grain of sand in the desert stands for a star, then, even if all the grains on all the planets in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector are combined, their total number will still be smaller than the number of stars in the universe!

“But although there are so many stars, only a tiny fraction of them can generate stable galaxies, and of the stable galaxies, only a tiny, tiny fraction are qualified to be called a ‘Sector’ with abundant spiritual energy!

“We must consider the investment and the possible yield before we develop the Sectors. Some of the Sectors may boast bountiful spiritual energy, but they are too far away from us, and their environment is too harsh. So, they will be of no use to us at all for the next hundreds of years!

“In the end, the Sectors that fit our filtering conditions are few to none!

“This is the difficulty of universal exploration. The ‘Heavenly Road Plan’ equals to a mission to locate a few grains from the billions of grains on the Grand Desolate Plateau.”

Ding Lingdang could not help but interject, “But don’t we have a lot of star maps?”

“Yes,” Si Koulie replied with a smile. “It is exactly because of the star maps left by the Pangu civilization and the observational magical equipment passed on from the Star Ocean Imperium that such an arduous mission is ‘possible’. Otherwise, we wouldn’t even be able to begin the first step!

“However, there is still a long way to go from ‘possible’ to ‘successful’.

“On the other hand, the universe is dynamic and changing all the time. Every planet, every galaxy, and every nebula is moving and rotating incessantly, affecting and interfering with each other. So, the universe can be quite mysterious and unpredictable.

“The star map of the Pangu civilization that we have retrieved is a product from hundreds of thousands of years ago. It is now incomplete and lacking a lot of critical information. But even if we manage to repair it, what it records will still only be the status of the sailing routes from hundreds of thousands of years ago.

“Although hundreds of thousands of years are just a snap of the finger for the whole universe, the relative position among the galaxies and the Sectors has still gone through drastic changes!

“Therefore, we must calculate the trajectories and the patterns of most Sectors and worlds before we deduce what the universe looks like right now based on the ancient star map.

“Or to put it more straightforwardly, the star map of the Pangu civilization is already ‘outdated’, and we have to ‘refresh it’!

“It is not hard to imagine that, with the level of our civilization, there will be all kinds of errors when the star map of the Pangu civilization is being refreshed.

“With the help of the Star Prier’s House, the observatory of the Star Ocean Imperium, we have tried to narrow the errors to the minimum. Together with the historical and archeological evidence, we have determined hundreds of space zones where a Sector may exist.

“But it doesn’t mean that we can jump into the core of a civilization simply based on the coordinates we have determined! The odds are basically negligible!

“Our explorers will have to jump, drift, and grope in the infinite darkness, in order to have a slim chance of finding a new Sector!

“To increase the possibility of finding a new Sector, we are preparing to send as many explorers as possible to different directions and distances!

“Every new exploration team means a greater likelihood of finding a new Sector and building up our federation. That is the only way that we can expect to resist the scourge of the expedition army in the battle to come!

“If two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators are kept in the same team, if they are unlucky and find absolutely nothing after drifting in the universe for decades, it will not just be their own time that is wasted but also the future and destiny of the New Federation!”

“So, that is the case…” Li Yao and Ding Lingdang both frowned.

The two old seniors did make a lot of sense. From the perspectives of both anti-risk and success rate, it was indeed inappropriate to keep the two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators on the same team.

“In fact, if Ding Lingdang hadn’t advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage so quickly,” Professor Mo Xuan said, “Li Yao in the Nascent Soul Stage and Ding Lingdang at the peak of the Core Formation Stage would’ve been made a gold team!

“But nobody expected that you could march into the Nascent Soul Stage so quickly, Little Ding. Right now, you are both ‘national treasures’ for the Star Glory Federation. How can we send you out recklessly?”

“Okay.” Li Yao held Ding Lingdang’s hands tightly and immediately sensed what his wife was thinking about from her palm. Thinking for a moment, Li Yao said, “It doesn’t matter even if we have to be split apart for a while. After all, the ‘Heavenly Road Plan’ is a well-prepared, active exploration, instead of a random, aimless shot in the dark like when I jumped to the Flying Star Sector last time. I assume that there will certainly be results after three to five years of exploration, won’t there? Or maybe, can you arrange two space zones that are close to each other for me and Ding Lingdang to explore so that we may be able to take care of each other?”

After hearing that, Professor Mo Xuan and Si Koulie both put on a weird expression and fell into silence.

Li Yao raised his eyebrow and asks suspiciously, “What’s the problem? Even that isn’t an option?”

“It is.” Professor Mo Xuan coughed and said, “Li Yao, there’s a top secret that we were planning to officially publicize on the Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage in a few days, but now that you’ve mentioned it in advance, we can tell you the secret first.

“But for the record, we are only informing you of such a mission right now. The nature of the mission is very special, and we are definitely not imploring you to do anything. After you hear the introduction, it will be up to you whether or not you should accept the mission! Although you, Li Yao, are the best candidate in our mind, it doesn’t mean that you are irreplaceable. Do you understand?”

Now that Professor Mo Xuan was speaking in such a serious way, Li Yao’s curiosity was aroused.

Looking at Ding Lingdang for a moment, he smiled. “Isn’t it just a mission to explore a new Sector? That’s my thing. Do you have to be so serious, professor?”

“Wait until you hear the introduction.”

Professor Mo Xuan and Si Koulie communicated in a low voice for a moment. Then, Si Koulie retrieved a bizarre-shaped mini crystal processor from his Cosmos Ring and triggered a colorful, complicated star map.

It was a repaired and abridged version of the star map of the Pangu civilization inside the escape center.

Countless shining stars immediately enveloped the four of them, building a mysterious vibe.

Professor Mo Xuan seemed to be hiding behind a fuzzy nebula. His voice was moving up and down unpredictably as he said, “Li Yao, you should know that, although the universe seems to be cold and empty, radiation, cosmic storms, and space-time ripples can take place anywhere and anytime. As long as we monitor the vacuum with suitable magical equipment, we will be able to hear chaotic, messy sounds, which are collectively called ‘universe noises’!

“However, the so-called ‘universe noises’ might not necessarily be meaningless noises. It is very possible that extremely precious information is contained inside some of the ‘noises’, except that we can never understand the information!

“On Kunlun, the escape capsule of the Pangu Clan had been sending out distress signals that were highly penetrative to the outside world all the time, but the signals were considered by the Immortal Cultivators as ‘universe noises’. Tang Qianhe, the spy of the Covenant Alliance lurking among the Immortal Cultivators, was the only one who was able to understand it.

“When we were developing Kunlun profoundly, we got in touch with some magical equipment with which the Pangu Clan transmitted information in the universe. We partly figured out the Pangu Clan’s methods to send out information to the universe and are now able to distinguish their information from the ‘universe noises’!”

Li Yao nodded slowly. Up to now, he still had not realized what Professor Mo Xuan was getting at yet.

“Long story short. Five months ago, the Universal Surveillance Center that we deployed in the Star Prier’s House suddenly picked up some ‘universe noise’ from the depths of the sea of stars. After analysis and restoration, we found certain patterns from it that are quite similar to the Pangu Clan’s methods of universal communication!”

Professor Mo Xuan made a gesture. Li Yao and Ding Lingdang immediately heard the sound as if drops of water were hitting a rock.

“Tick… Tick… Tick, tick, tick… Tick… Tick… Tick, tick, tick… Tick… Tick… Tick, tick, tick…”

In front of their eyes, soundwaves rather patterned, if not graceful, slowly blossomed like a flower of ghosts in the depths of the universe.

“The technique through which the information was sent is extremely sophisticated and utterly incomprehensible for us. We only know that it may have something to do with ‘gravitational wave communication’. They basically teleported a ripple through the four-dimensional space to our world instantly, ignoring the distance in three-dimensional space.”

Professor Mo Xuan’s voice sounded like a cold wind blown over from somewhere deep in the universe. “Soon after the Flying Star Sector received the message, the Heaven’s Origin Sector received exactly the same message. Tick… Tick… Tick, tick, tick!

“It is almost like that a mysterious existence in the depths of the universe… greeted the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector in a way similar to the Pangu civilization’s technology!”

Chapter 1318 - Invisible World

A certain mysterious existence greeted the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector at the same time in the Pangu civilization’s way from the depths of the universe?

The horror in the statement made a chill run down the spines of Li Yao and Ding Lingdang after considering carefully for a moment. They could not help but breathe heavily.

“Professor, are you saying that the Pangu Clan still exists and has discovered us?” Li Yao asked drily.

“Not necessarily the Pangu Clan.” Professor Mo Xuan shook his head and said, “According to our current research, the Nuwa Clan, which is relatively friendly to human beings, belongs to the Pangu civilization, too. Their training systems and techniques were quite similar to the Pangu Clan’s.

“Therefore, it is also possible that it was the Nuwa Clan who said hello.

“On the other hand, the ‘hello’ might not have been directly sent by the Pangu Clan or the Nuwa Clan at all. It is possible that a certain kind of communication magical equipment left in the relics after they perished was recently activated by accident from the dormancy and sent out a message through the preset network.

“In fact, we are more in favor of the last possibility right now.”

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao asked, “Why?”

“Because the Blood Demon Sector did not receive the ‘hello’,” Professor Mo Xuan explained. “By logic, since the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector are so close to each other that they have already begun melting, there is no reason why the Blood Demon Sector would not receive the greeting when the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector did!

“Such a weird phenomenon baffled us. Eventually, we thought of a possibility. The integration of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector only began hundreds of years ago. Before that, the two worlds were extremely far away from each other.

“Since the Blood Demon Sector never received the message, it suggests that the guy who sent the message was using a piece of communication magical equipment left a long time ago when the Blood Demon Sector was still not on the ‘contact list’ yet!”

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang were both slightly relieved by the explanation.

But not entirely.

Since the guy was able to send a message to the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector, it was quite possible that he could measure the precise coordinates of the two Sectors and even find them!

“Can we trace the source of the signal?” Li Yao asked gravely.

He was not really looking forward to a positive answer. After all, the universe was too vast a place. Who could say for sure from which unvisited corner the ‘sound’ was sent out?

But out of his expectation, Professor Mo Xuan nodded and replied, “As a matter of fact, we basically can.

“You may feel that it is a big strange, right? By logic, their ability to send out a signal with the four-dimensional ripples as the vehicle suggests that their technology is much more advanced than ours. It is impossible for us to find them at all if they intend to hide themselves!

“However, they showed no intention of hiding themselves at all. The ‘hello’ contained tremendous information about their own coordinates. It’s almost like the purpose of the greeting is to connect us to each other!

“Let’s make an example. The greeting is like sending a message to a public channel—Hey, I am A, and I am at Place B. Are you there, C? Message me back ASAP if you are. That’s basically what the greeting is for.”

“So,” Ding Lingdang said, “the sender of the message is not hostile?”

“We don’t know that yet,” Li Yao said coldly. “It may still be a trap, with the ‘hello’ as a bait. If anybody sends a message back, they will be prey that have been fooled because their most precise coordinates will be locked onto by the enemy.”

“Li Yao is quite right,” Professor Mo Xuan said. “After figuring out the information contained in the greeting, we have studied and discussed the findings, too. The possibility that it is a trap cannot be ruled out!

“As it happens, the star map of the Pangu civilization was basically recovered at the same time. So, we looked for the source of the signal implied in the greeting on the star map. In the end, we located the sender of the message!”

Professor Mo Xuan pointed at the top left corner of the star map of the Pangu civilization and said, “Right over there!”

The universe was too vast. The star map of the Pangu civilization naturally could not depict the whole picture of the universe. It was focused on the part of the universe around ‘Kunlun’.

On the top right corner of the star map was a cluster of bright blue stars that were connected by countless glittering sailing routes.

The sailing routes that extended from the star in the middle were large in number, suggesting that it might have been an important stronghold of the Pangu civilization.

“Li Yao, Ding Lingdang, as you can see, the star here is in its prime years. The stellar system is very system, and the shining nebulas nearby also fit the features of abundant spiritual energy.

“Tremendous sailing routes are pointing at the place. Almost one third of the escape capsules of the Pangu Clan set this place as their destination, too!

“We assume that there should be a Sector in this area, one with copious spiritual energy and resources and one where Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures are everywhere to be found. That is why the Pangu Clan developed it into a strategic stronghold and even a center of the local area!”

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao activated his computational ability to the maximum. He replied immediately, “If it is truly a strategic stronghold with copious spiritual energy and resources and has relics of the Pangu civilization, there is no reason for it to be unheard of in our history. Its name must’ve been sung throughout the three thousand Sectors!

“This mysterious Sector is not far away from the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector. It will be quite easy for us to reveal the Sector’s real face if we search the ancient classics on astronomy and observe it through the Star Prier’s House, right?”

“That is precisely where the problem lies,” Si Koulie interjected. “We can’t find it.”

Li Yao’s eyes widened. “What do you mean by ‘we can’t find it’?”

“We mean that, after scanning all the ancient classics on astronomy in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector, we haven’t found any information of value to help us find this particular Sector.

“What is even weirder is that, when we observed the place where the Sector should be through the most advanced magical equipment in the Star Prier’s House, we still failed to discover any trace that proved the existence of such a world.

“From the scraps of the star maps of the Star Ocean Imperium that we have collected, we have found all the space zones near the Sector except for the Sector itself!

“There are only two pieces of evidence confirming that the Sector is not illusionary.

“Firstly, the star map of the Pangu civilization from hundreds of thousands of years ago.

“Secondly, the ‘hello’ that was just delivered to our ears a moment ago!

“It must be noted that the greeting was made with the four-dimensional ripples as a vehicle and was therefore not restrained by the speed of light. We may consider the signal as a real-time one, which means that they did not send out the greeting until around half a year ago and that we received the greeting in almost the next second.

“Other than the two pieces of evidence, the Sector does not exist at all!”

Li Yao’s mouth opened larger and larger as Si Koulie’s description proceeded. He found it hard to believe. “Is it possible? Then, what did the most advanced astronomical magical equipment in the Star Prier’s House, which also observes the universe through the four-dimensional space, see in the place where the mysterious world should be?”

“Nothing at all. Not even a random star,” Si Koulie said. “Compared to the star map of the Pangu civilization, at least dozens of stars have vanished. It’s like there is an enormous ‘black spot’ that swallows the space in the area in its entirety.”

Li Yao thought for a moment and concluded, “So, a mysterious Sector, which was an important place for the Pangu civilization in the primeval era hundreds of thousands of years ago, just vanished into thin air in the age of the ancient Cultivators and remains nonexistent to this day.

“But right now, from the ‘missing world’, someone has greeted us in the Pangu civilization’s way, almost like… the ghosts of the Pangu Clan are still haunting the universe.”

Hearing ‘haunting ghosts’, Ding Lingdang jabbed him in the back and said in a low voice, “Stop being so creepy!”

Li Yao chuckled and scratched his head. “I was just kidding, but consider such a possibility. Since it was an important stronghold of the Pangu civilization, it must’ve been a gory battlefield in the God-Sealing War. So, is it possible that the world was blown up in the war between the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan? That way, the world would naturally disappear!”

Hardly had he proposed the hypothesis when he realized that something was not right. If the mysterious world had indeed been destroyed in the God-Sealing War, how could a highly-directional message have been sent from the place recently?

Was it really the doing of the restless ghosts of the Pangu Clan?

Li Yao was almost scared by his own thought.

“It’s impossible for a whole Sector to have been demolished.” Professor Mo Xuan shook his head slowly. “For such gigantic celestial bodies like stars, it is extremely difficult to destroy them without leaving any trace behind. Even if the stars do decline of natural course, they will turn into red giants, white dwarfs, neutron stars, or black holes. They will still be observed one way or another.

“If the star was destroyed because all its energy was exploited instantly in an unbelievable cosmic war, it must’ve unleashed almost infinite radiation and storms, which would have been a hundred times more violent than a supernova outbreak. So, it is impossible for the star to have left no traces in the space around.

“Moreover, it is not one star that we are talking about right now but almost a hundred of them. Even the Pangu civilization at their peak period couldn’t have been able to wipe them out without a sound!

“Regarding the whole issue, I have another speculation. The Sector and the space zones around it are not destroyed but ‘blocked’ by cosmic dust!

“As Fellow Cultivator Si mentioned just now, the space in the area seems to be swallowed by the black spot. It is quite a vivid metaphor. The so-called ‘black spot’ is actually a ribbon of cosmic dust that is massive and boasts special characteristics. As a result, the rays of light and the radiation cannot break through the ribbon. Protected by the ‘nebula of black spot’, it is quite possible that the Sector inside is living just fine after hundreds of thousands of years!”

Chapter 1319 - Problems of the Sub-light Speed

In the boundless universe, as well as the celestial bodies such as stars, planets, and comets, space was actually not an absolute vacuum but filled with floating cosmic dust in most places.

Their elements were fundamentally the same as the elements that constituted planets, which were all the powder of rocks and metals. Restrained by appropriate gravity and force fields, they often condensed into celestial bodies that looked like clouds. They were also known as ‘nebulas’.

Kunlun, the relic of the Pangu civilization, was hidden inside a crab nebula. Right now, there was another nebula that seemed to be a black spot.

It was also possible that the Pangu civilization had grasped a certain secret technique that allowed them to manipulate the nebulas.

Li Yao knew that, according to the different metal constituents of the nebulas and the changing force fields that restrained them, the nebulas could display all kinds of amazing features, such as sending out and blocking specific radiation or absorbing and releasing spiritual energy.

“This is about everything that we know right now,” Professor Mo Xuan said. “Although we have discovered the sender’s location, it is covered in a large ‘black spot nebula’. It is impossible for us to observe them directly from the Heaven’s

Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, or the Blood Demon Sector with our current technology!

“However, from the perspective of the grand universe, the sender of the signal is not very far away from us, and it is hard to tell whether it’s a blessing or a curse now that such a mysterious, unknown world has suddenly jumped out right next to us and even greeted us promptly.

“We cannot allow a stranger to sleep right next to our bed soundly, much less someone we know absolutely nothing about!

“There’s something that’s even more critical. Come here and take a look. This is an estimated trajectory based on the star map of the Pangu civilization and the diagram of apocalypses in the Star Prier’s House. Have you noticed anything wrong?”

Professor Mo Xuan pointed at the top of the picture and said, “The mysterious world is not far away from the route of the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings. In a hundred years, when the expedition army of the Imperium brushes past them, it is possible that they will discover this Sector, like the Immortal Cultivators including Su Changfa who discovered Kunlun five years ago.”

Li Yao took a long breath. He could totally imagine the dire consequences if Su Changfa and the other Immortal Cultivators occupied Kunlun.

‘Kunlun’ was just a weapons factory that the Pangu civilization established with the spiritual energy dispersing from the pulsar. However, since the mysterious Sector was considered an evacuation destination by so many members of the Pangu Clan, it was obvious that the place must have been an important stronghold for them or perhaps a local military center.

If such a world was involved with the expedition army of the Imperium, it would definitely not be good for the federation, which was trying the best to defend.

Did the extremely mysterious Sector still exist at all after hundreds of thousands of years?

What kind of species or civilization was living in the world?

The place was far away from the prosperous area at the center of the cosmos. Therefore, it was unlikely to be part of the Imperium or the Covenant Alliance. Then, who could the residents be? Were they demons or demonic Cultivators? Were they the heirs of the Pangu Clan or the Nuwa Clan? Or were they beings that were even more bizarre?

Also, why did they say hello to the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector? Was it friendly or malicious? Did they really mean to communicate, or did they set up a trap with ill intentions?

“I understand it now!” Li Yao narrowed his eyes and said, “Now that we’ve discovered the stranger, we cannot sit by and do nothing about it. We can only resort to the most primitive method by sending out an exploration team to the mysterious Sector in order to figure out the details of the unknown Sector, including their stance, their civilization level, if they are a threat to us, if they will be manipulated or even conquered by the expedition army of the Imperium, and so on!

“Otherwise, it will be hilarious if formidable enemies from a mysterious world march to our door together with the expedition army of the Imperium when we think that we are certain winners after a hundred years of construction!

“Your ‘special mission’ must refer to this job, right? It’s not a big deal. Just let me go. There’s no one more suitable for the task than me!”

Professor Mo Xuan and Si Koulie looked at each. The professor coughed and said, “Li Yao, don’t rush into any decision. Let me finish first.

“The mysterious world deeply hidden in the black spot nebula is vastly different from the other space zones that are going to be explored according to the ‘Heavenly Road Plan’.

“First of all, it is extremely far away. As you can see, the Sector is almost at the edge on the star map of the Pangu civilization. It will be extremely difficult to directly jump over!

“Secondly, dozens of galaxies are around the mysterious world, all of which are covered in the hazy mist. We don’t know what is inside at all!

“To search for a Sector that has been hidden since hundreds of thousands of years ago from such an overwhelming black nebula is like fishing for a needle in an ocean. It is almost a hundred times more difficult to find than other Sectors!

“Therefore, the starship for the exploration mission must be capable of enduring hundreds of space jumps. It will also have to boast an extremely high regular cruise speed and preferably the ability to receive the signals released by the Pangu civilization. A hibernation system with full facilities is mandatory, too.

“In all three Sectors, such an exploration starship is nowhere to be found—our starship technology is still too underdeveloped. Even Sparkle, the multipurpose exploration ship of the Star Ocean Imperium, is still unqualified for the task.

“Only Spark, modified from the single escape capsule of the Pangu civilization and one size smaller than Sparkle, is good enough!

“As Fellow Cultivator Si said just now, Spark was transformed from the single escape capsule of the Pangu civilization. A lot of units from the Pangu civilization have been directly adopted, which means that the starship is a unique one. It’s unlikely that we can build a second one in the decades to come!”

Li Yao finally understood it now. He gasped, “Professor, are you saying that, with our technology right now, we can only send ‘Spark’ to accommodate one explorer into the dark nebula to look for a long-lost, mysterious world?”

“Yes.” Professor Mo Xuan nodded and said, “This will be a one-time deal. If the explorer is trapped deep inside the dark nebula, we will not even be able to rescue him. We can only abandon the mission completely and wait for him to come back one day by himself!

“That, however, is still not the most special part of the mission.”

“Huh?” Li Yao was dumbfounded. “This is still not special enough? What more problems can there possibly be?”

“The problem is that Spark is too fast,” Si Koulie said, stepping in when it came to his field. “Not only is it the fastest starship in the three Sectors, it is multiple times faster than the one in the second place. It is a real starship in the sub-light speed!

“It can accelerate to the ‘sub-light speed’ state immediately after a space jump, which is also the biggest reason why we have chosen it for the exploration mission in the dark nebula.”

“Isn’t that good?” Li Yao was puzzled. “Since Spark can perform space jumps repetitively, cruise at the sub-light speed, and has a good chance of receiving the stranger’s signals because it is modified from an escape capsule of the Pangu Clan itself, it is almost a starship tailor-made for the exploration mission. What’s wrong with a high speed?”

“Have you ever heard of the ‘Time Dilation Effect’ and the ‘Length Contraction Effect’?” Si Koulie smiled bitterly. “To put it simply, when an object gradually approaches the speed of light, the time around the object will be slowed down, and the space will be narrowed. The closer the object’s speed is to the speed of light, the more meaningless time and space will be. Once the object reaches the speed of light, time will stop, and the space will collapse into a singularity. The object will enter a state known as ‘zero space-time’!

“Reaching and even surpassing the speed of light is something utterly unimaginable for us with our technology level. Therefore, the ‘zero space-time’ state is just our speculation.

“However, that time is relatively slowed when the speed approaches the speed of light is a fact that has been observed and verified.

“Our interstellar trips in the past often bypassed the barrier of ‘lightspeed’ through space jumps in most cases. During normal cruising, it is hardly possible for our starships to be kept at a sub-light state. We can only stay in the state for a few seconds at best!

“Therefore, even if the ‘Time Dilation Effect’ and the ‘Length Contraction Effect’ do exist, their influence on us is still little to none.

“But this mission in question is a different case.

“First of all, Spark, which is to perform the mission, is the fastest starship of the three Sectors, and it can break into the sub-light state and stay in that state for a long time. Second, it has to fly for quite a while in the sub-light state in order to possibly find the mysterious Sector that is hiding deep inside the dark nebula!

“With the two factors combined, the explorer on Spark will have a very different perception of time compared to the people in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector!

“Perhaps, according to his senses, he has only conducted the exploration for a year and a half, while in the three Sectors, decades of years have passed quickly.

“Do you understand now, Li Yao?”

Professor Mo Xuan sighed and said, “If we are truly going to explore the mysterious Sector, we can only send one explorer. But for him, even if he completes the exploration, topography, and localization tasks smoothly without any trouble, it will still be very likely that decades if not hundreds of years will have passed when he returns to the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

“This is the most special and the trickiest exploration mission in the ‘Heavenly Road Plan’.

“The sailing routes of other Sectors are all relatively clean, and their locations are clear. There isn’t too much interference. It will be best if we can find them, but if we can’t, we will still be able to immediately jump to the next space zone. If absolutely nothing is found at the end, we can still return to the federation in a couple of years to reunite with our family or join other projects.

“But this mission here is too uncertain and can potentially take too long!”

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang both fell silent.

The ‘Time Dilation Effect’ and the ‘Length Contraction Effect’?

The closer one was to the speed of light, the slower time would pass?

Decades for a single exploration mission?

It was something that the two of them had never thought of before they arrived.

“However difficult the mission is, however long it takes, and however huge the cost is, it will have to be carried out, won’t it?” Li Yao said solemnly. “Because we cannot pretend that we don’t see the mysterious new world after it jumps out of nowhere and even greets us blatantly, right?”

Chapter 1320 - You Are the One

“Yes,” Professor Mo Xuan said. “After discovering that the cost of the mission is so high, the whole team of the ‘Heavenly Road Plan’ has evaluated whether or not it is necessary to carry out such a mission many times.

“If the mysterious world was not a local military center of the Pangu civilization hundreds of thousands of years ago, where the war relics and even the arsenal of the Pangu civilization can possibly be stored, if it is not covered in a weird ‘black spot nebula’, if it didn’t suddenly ‘wake up’ and ‘greet’ us, if it doesn’t happen to be on the route of the expedition army of the Imperium and will likely be scanned and detected by the Imperium…

“If any of the ‘ifs’ didn’t exist, chances are that we would abandon the mission. After all, it is too complicated, dangerous, and lengthy. Should anything go wrong, we will lose a precious Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator!

“However, with the four factors combined, it’s like a sting that has deeply pierced into our eyes, making us unable to ignore the mysterious world.

“If we do, just like you said just now, it is very possible that an army vastly different from what we have anticipated will be knocking on our door in a hundred years’ time!”

Li Yao listened to the professor’s introduction carefully while he measured the virtual star map, estimating the distance between the Heaven's Origin Sector and the mysterious 'black spot nebula' and the possible spiritual energy cost.

After calculating in silence for a long time, Li Yao tapped between his eyebrows softly and said, "If we are indeed performing such an exploration, it will be the longest space jump in the history of the Heaven's Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector. No wonder we can only send a super-tiny starship such as 'Spark', which is both light and fast!

"However, I do have a technological question.

"After receiving the space jump technology of the Pangu civilization and the Imperium of True Human Beings, our Heaven's Artillery, Eye of Blood Demon, and Cosmic Slingshot have all been upgraded into top-tier space jump platforms. After necessary modifications, it is indeed possible to launch Spark to the black spot nebula millions of lightyears away.

"But how is Spark coming back?

"Assuming that there is a vast and surging river between us and our destination, a strong, muscled man can definitely throw a pebble over the river.

"But the biggest issue is how to make the pebble fly back even though it is easy to be thrown away. (NovelFull)

"However, our mission is exploration and topography. If we have indeed collected tremendous intelligence, we will have to bring it back one way or another. Won't it be a suicidal mission if we can only jump over but can't jump back?"

"We all have considered the issue." Professor Mo Xuan turned on a second light beam. This time, it was the complicated 3D designs that were displayed in the virtual space.

The figures, spiritual stripes, and rune arrays were as small as the heads of flies, and they had taken up almost every corner. Normal refiners would feel dizzy when they read any of them.

Li Yao, however, craned his head and studied with great interest.

“This is what we have in mind right now.” Professor Mo Xuan pointed at the design and said, “Look. This is Spark after being modified. There’s a special super-compressed space in its rear. You may imagine it to be a Cosmos Ring with an extremely high capacity. We have stored the units that can be assembled into a star beacon in the space.

“After the explorer jumps to the black spot nebula, the first thing he needs to do is collect the local astronomical parameters, measure the appearance of the universe nearby, and look for the world that probably still exists and has ‘greeted’ us.

“After the explorer finds the Sector, he will find a safe and stable space nearby, where he will assemble and unfold the star beacon. That way, the precise coordinates of the Sector will be sent back to us.”

“Wait a moment.” Li Yao raised his hands. As a professional, he immediately noticed something wrong. “The black spot nebula and the three Sectors are so far away from each other. Only the specific coordinates information sent by the largest star beacons will be able to be successfully received by the three Sectors, right? Even if the message is received, it will be like a flickering firefly in a dark night. Obscure and incomplete, it will be far from enough to navigate the space jump of a fleet!

“To guide a collective jump of an enormous space fleet covering a distance of millions of lightyears, hundreds of star beacons are needed to be put together into a ‘space gate’!

“So many star beacons are definitely beyond the capacity of a tiny Spark!”

“Li Yao, your concerns are very reasonable. The cases are different. Let’s talk about them separately,” Professor Mo Xuan explained unhurriedly. “After discovering the new Sector, the explorer will need to enter deep into the mysterious Sector. Without exposing his own identity, he will need to figure out their ethnography, their civilization level, the distribution of their Pangu relics, their attitude toward us; whether or not they are related to the Imperium, the Covenant Alliance, the demon race, the extraterrestrial devils, the Pangu Clan, the Nuwa Clan, or any other alien species… but most importantly of all, find out why exactly they ‘greeted’ us!

“The explorer will collect all the intelligence of value and run a preliminary analysis on the ground.

“In the best-case scenario, the creatures of this Sector boast a very developed civilization and are quite friendly to us. They are glad to communicate or even ally with us, like the relationship between the Flying Star Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

“Then, the explorer will send the result back through the star beacon.

“At that time, the federation will send more units of star beacons toward the coordinates where the explorer is at.

“You see. Although the flickering light millions of lightyears away may not be enough to guide an enormous fleet, it should be more than enough to guide a few lifeless units of star beacons.

“After the units are teleported over, the explorer will collect and assemble the units on Spark into a second, a third… and even a hundredth star beacon, until an intact ‘space gate’ is established so that our main force will be able to jump over to establish deeper communications with the stranger.

“After the main force arrives, they will bring larger carriers that accommodate magical equipment to dredge the space sailing routes. So, it will no longer be a problem to go home for the explorer.

“If the kindness of the creatures of this unknown world is unquestionable, it is very possible that they will have their own highly-developed space jump techniques. Maybe, the explorer can go home with their method.

“After all, the situation right now is utterly different from when we were wandering in the Flying Star Sector. At that time, we didn’t know the specific coordinates of the Heaven’s Origin Sector at all. Naturally, it was extremely troublesome for us to return home.

“But right now, we know everything about the specific coordinates and the astronomical parameters of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector. With a platform on the level of the Heaven’s Artillery, it will be very easy for the explorer to return!”

Grinding his teeth for a long time, Li Yao shook his head slowly. “I’m afraid that we cannot be so optimistic. A friendly, highly-developed civilization? It doesn’t sound very hopeful to me.”

“Then, it will be the second case-scenario, which is relatively worse,” Professor Mo Xuan said. “If the explorer discovers that a powerful civilization that is hostile to us and even deeply associated with the Imperium, the Covenant Alliance, the extraterrestrial devils, the Pangu Clan, or other forces is dominating the unknown Sector, and that they are planning to conquer or even destroy us, the explorer will still have to collect all the intelligence about them before he returns to the ‘jump point’ that he has deployed in space!

“By then, the explorer will send a different signal to the three Sectors. After receiving a message from him, the three Sectors will also teleport assets to him, not the units to assemble star beacons this time but the units to make ‘thrusters’.

“You may think of a so-called ‘thruster’ as a super-mini ‘Heaven’s Artillery that is specially for Spark’s use. It will kick Spark hard right in the bottom. Together with the space jump facilities installed on Spark, the starship will be able to be teleported back, too.”

Li Yao thought for a moment and said, “The second case-scenario is ‘worse’. So, there is still the ‘worst’-case scenario?”

“In the worst-case scenario,” Professor Mo Xuan said calmly, “the explorer will fall into the hands of the locals.

“It is a possibility that we can’t ignore. After all, the fact that they ‘greeted’ us from millions of lightyears away is indicative enough of their civilization level. Now that our explorer is entering the dangerous land without knowing the first thing about them, we have to consider the possibility of the explorer being captured and studied by them.

“If that’s the case, the explorer must be able to terminate his own life before he confesses any crucial intelligence about the three Sectors, especially our war potential and our specific coordinates!”

The cruel possibility cast both Li Yao and Ding Lingdang into silence for a moment.

“Professor, allow me to summarize your requirements.” Li Yao rubbed his face hard. Sorting through his messy mind, he said slowly, “In order to explore the mysterious world, the explorer you are looking for must have abilities in two aspects.

“Firstly, the abilities to fight on his own deep behind enemy lines, to assume other identities, and to collect and analyze intelligence.

“Secondly, the abilities to assemble and maintain magical equipment independently! It is very possible that the explorer will have to establish a ‘space gate’ purely on his own. Although all the assets will be teleported from the three Sectors, it will still be an extremely difficult task to assemble tens of thousands of units, debug them, and make sure that the function normally!

“It is needless to say that the magical equipment units may malfunction after breaking through the void. He will have to test and maintain each and every one of them, which is not a job that any random refiner can accomplish.

“There are the most distinguished special forces soldiers, intelligence experts, and camouflage masters in the three

Sectors. There are also the most excellent refiners and magical equipment specialists.

“However, Spark is modified from the escape capsule of the Pangu Clan, and it can only accommodate one passenger!

“You can count the Cultivators who boast the abilities in both the two aspects with one hand. I think that there are fewer than three names on your candidate list, Professor.”

Chapter 1321 - When You Learn the Truth in the Morning

Professor Mo Xuan was silent for a moment before he nodded and said, “You’re right. Not many people are suitable for the task, and you are on the top of the list.

“On one hand, you have the valuable experience of exploring the Flying Star Sector and the Blood Demon Sector on your own, which nobody else in the three Sectors shares.

“The results of your adventures are not bad at all, proving that you have all the abilities required for the mission. Although luck did play a role in your journey, the newborn Star Glory Federation needs some luck, too, in order to embark on the way to dominate the sea of stars!

“On the other hand, you are also one of the best refiners in the three Sectors. Although you are not good at theoretical studies, your practical abilities are definitely among the best and can even rank in the top five!

“The mission requires the explorer to assemble a large amount of magical equipment units and even perform sophisticated maintenance work. Such work does not demand much theoretical knowledge, but it calls for very high practical abilities!

“Therefore, generally speaking, you are the best candidate!

“However, as I have explained the difficulties of the mission to you just now, one day in your journey may mean one year in the real world. Such a mission will greatly influence your life plans and the future of your family!

“You are no longer the unknown, poor boy that you were twenty years ago who had nothing to lose when you were having your adventures. Now, you are the core member of the Colossi Project, and you are responsible for sorting and writing the operation manuals of the Colossi, which essentially makes you the ‘chief tutor of the Colossi’ of the three Sectors. You also have many organizations under your name, such as the Glorious Sunlight Group, the Double Dragons Union, Skyfire, and so on, which are operating quite well in the three Sectors. Also, you have only been married for five years and don’t have any children yet…

“If you are to carry out the mission, it means that you will be separated from everything I mentioned just now for decades!

“A lot of things will happen in the next hundred years. When you return from the foreign land, the Star Glory Federation will be destined to be something entirely different from what it is right now!

“You and Ding Lingdang need to consider the possible influences carefully.

“In fact, even I don’t know whether or not it is worthwhile to choose you for the mission because you can also play an irreplaceable role if you stay in the three Sectors. Chances are that you will make even more contributions here than if you go to explore space!

“Therefore, even if you and Ding Lingdang decline the mission after deliberation, I will absolutely support your decision. I can arrange a few Sectors that are closer to us and less difficult for you to explore!

“I mean what I said. Perhaps, it will be even better to keep you in the federation as a ‘symbol’. The fame, influence, wealth, and resources that you can possibly gain here will be much more than you can from the depths of the sea of stars. You will also create value for the federation in a much more stable way. (NovelFull)

“This jade chip stores all the research files regarding the mysterious world ever after we received the uncanny signal. You and Ding Lingdang can take a good look at it and consider all the factors comprehensively before you give us a reply. We don’t need to rush into any decision after all.”

Hesitating for a moment, Li Yao took the jade chip. The jade chip was as small as a cicada, but it felt as heavy as a thousand tons on his palm.

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao asked one last question. “Professor, the issue is indeed too complicated. I need time to think about it more carefully with Ding Lingdang! However, I’m indeed very curious about one thing. I wonder, can you tell me—how many candidates are on your list? Who’s out there besides me?”

Li Yao was asking this question simply because of his pride.

He was eager to know who else other than him was capable enough for such a mission.

With glamorous brilliance glittering inside Professor Mo Xuan’s eyes, he said slowly, “I was lying when I told you that there were many names on the candidate list. There are only two names on the whole list.”

“Oh?” Li Yao’s eyes suddenly shone. “Who’s the other guy?”

“Myself.” Professor Mo Xuan extended a liquid metal tentacle and pointed at himself. “I have listed my name in the second place on the list. If you choose not to go, I will certainly be going. So, there is no need to think of a third name for the list.”

“Professor!” Li Yao was greatly surprised. “Are—are you going to abandon everything for an adventure deep inside the dark nebula?”

“What? You think that I’m not as good as you?” Professor Mo Xuan smiled. His voice was tranquil but filled with unquestionable confidence. “In the past five years, while you were making significant breakthroughs, other people were not standing by, either. At the very least, I, for one, have undergone drastic changes compared to five years ago!

“My body of liquid metal is not as simple as only being able to swallow crystal processors. It can play a role that is beyond the enemy’s expectation in battles, too!

“Of course, since I am a creation-type Cultivator, my combat ability can never be nearly as good as yours however I train myself.

“But the focus of this exploration mission is stealth, infiltration, and intelligence collection. Head-on battles may not be necessary. So, my unfixed form gives me quite an advantage.

“Moreover, after swallowing the star child and the star brain, my computational ability is higher than yours. When it comes to the calculation of astronomical parameters, inferring the coordinates of space jumps, and intelligence collection and analysis, I will have more advantages than you do!

“Why can’t I go?”

Blushing, Li Yao shook his hands quickly and said, “That—that’s not what I meant. I’m just saying that—If you do join the mission, what about Professor Yuan?”

Li Yao was referring to Professor Mo Xuan’s wife, the former dean of the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution and a famous refiner in the federation.

Yuan Manqiu was also the first teacher who deserved the full meaning of the word for Li Yao after he began the systematic studies on the arts of refining.

The original version of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had been made by Yuan Manqiu and Li Yao.

“She will understand and support me. I know it,” Professor Mo Xuan said peacefully, with a hint of indescribable affection in his calm voice.

“But why?” Li Yao found it hard to understand. “Professor, do you have any idea how important you are to the future of the three Sectors? You are now president of the Refiners’ Association of the Federation. Countless super magical equipment projects will be awaiting your leadership in the next hundred years! Why must you carry out such a dangerous mission?

“I don’t believe that we cannot find a third candidate who is suitable for the mission. If there isn’t anyone who is very suitable, we can always select a top-tier expert who has distinguished abilities in a certain regard and train the candidate with the abilities in the other field. With the computational ability and the learning abilities of the Nascent Soul Stage, a year and a half's intensive training should be more than enough, shouldn't it?"

Professor Mo Xuan chuckled and said casually, "Li Yao, you're wrong. I put myself as second place on the candidate list, not because of my concerns about the future, but for myself; not because 'I have to go for the federation', but because 'I want to go'. Nothing more!"

"You want to go…" Li Yao was dazed for a moment. Reciting the words for a few times, he felt that he had sensed something, too.

"Of course I want to go!"

The brilliance emitting from deep inside Professor Mo Xuan's soul was too intense for his man-made eyes to bear. Dazzling sparks were bursting out on his face.

His voice seemed to be echoing among the stars, deep, hollow, and powerful. "A mysterious world in the depths of the sea of stars, which could contain the secret treasures of the Pangu civilization from hundreds of thousands of years ago, with a scale ten times larger than those on 'Kunlun'!

"In this world, there may be the most dangerous enemies who are lurking in the darkness. The Imperium, the Covenant Alliance, the extraterrestrial devils, the Pangu Clan! There may also be powerful, potential allies—say, another civilization of Cultivators that is struggling to survive in the dark universe or even the Nuwa Clan who once fought side by side with human beings in the past!

"All the answers are hidden in the mist, waiting to be explored and found out by us!

“For a Cultivator, can there possibly be anything more thrilling than that?

“I am a man who has been reborn from death. My second life was born in a cosmic storm in the first place. As long as I can witness the infinite wonders of the mysterious world in person, does it really matter if my life has to perish in the sea of stars again?

“The ancient people said that ‘if you learn the Truth in the morning, you can die peacefully at night’. Maybe, this is exactly what they are talking about!

“Therefore, Li Yao, did you know? Had it not been for the fact that you are indeed more suitable for the mission than I am, I never would’ve put your name at the top of the candidate list!

“Even right now, I’m still strongly hoping that you can turn down the mission and give the rarely-seen opportunity to me!

“Go now. Discuss with your wife and tell me your answer. I’ll be waiting for you!”

Professor Mo Xuan waved his hands and stopped bothering Li Yao, returning to the small world that was the ‘Heavenly Road Plan’ together with Si Koulie.

…

On the Grand Desolate Plateau, the sun had only just risen in the middle of the thin clouds, dying them with tides of gold and crimson.

Hand in hand, Li Yao and Ding Lingdang roamed in the clouds while they looked down at the board-like cities below them that were even smaller than matchboxes.

“I feel that we are back to twenty years ago,” Ding Lingdang said with a smile. “Do you still remember the day when you were heavily wounded in the ‘Limit Challenge Competition’ on the Devil Flood Dragon Island and ended up being a useless person because your spiritual root was entirely ripped apart?”

“Of course I do!” Li Yao’s eyes were sparkling. “At that time, nobody believed in me. They thought that I was done for and would sink to the abyss. When I managed to wake up, nobody cared about me. You were the only one who trusted me. Not only did you stay with me when I was in a coma, you even paid a visit to the Crimson Nimbus No. 2 High School for me. Then, you brought me to the very clouds where we enjoyed the great view. You cheered me up and encouraged me to rise up and stride forward again!

“Right. I remember that you brought a lot of delicious food. The sausages, roasted chicken, ham, and other things gave me quite a shock!”

“Hahahaha!” Ding Lingdang laughed hard. “Did I leave such a deep impression on you that you hopelessly fell in love with me?”

Chapter 1322 - Ding Lingdang’s Choice

“Well…” Li Yao scratched the back of his head, hesitating. However, seeing the brutality in his wife’s eyes, he immediately nodded heavily. “Exactly! I did!”

“Now, that’s the right attitude.” Ding Lingdang smiled in satisfaction. Taking each other’s hand, the two of them walked to the end of the clouds on the steps made of their spiritual energy.

They seemed to be standing on the top of an unpredictable abyss while observing the vast and boundless land and the sky that was even more vast and boundless in the distance.

After a long silence, Li Yao finally struggled to open his mouth. “What’s your opinion on the exploration of the dark nebula today?”

Ding Lingdang narrowed her eyes. Her palms were moving slowly in the middle of the sunlight, as if she were trying to pick up a handful of water from the river of rays. “I’m just a simple warrior. I don’t know much about issues where refining and intelligence are involved. Why don’t you say your opinion first?”

“I think that the mission has to be carried out, even if it means that we will be short of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator! If we don’t go, there will be too many risks in the future, but if we do, we may be able to find a relic even more splendid than Kunlun and even make a powerful ally!”

Li Yao had apparently given it a lot of thought while he was on the flight in the clouds. He was not stopping at all now that he had begun. “But as for the candidates for the mission, Professor is certainly not the best choice.

“It’s not that I am not confident in his capabilities, but as the star spirit, he is now the master of the most powerful super crystal processor of the three Sectors, and he is responsible for countless revolutionary magical equipment projects. He will be one of the pillars for the three Sectors for the next hundred years. We can’t do without him! (NovelFull)

“As for other candidates, I’ve managed to come up with a few names. For example, Guo Chunfeng, director of the Secret Sword Bureau.

“Known as the ‘strongest Core Formation Stage Cultivator in the three Sectors’ and boasting talents spanning the four domains, he would’ve made a perfect candidate! First of all, intelligence collection is the job that he has been doing all his life. Moreover, he is also a reasonably good refiner. After a year and a half’s intensive training, he will certainly be able to learn how to maintain and assemble the ‘space gate’.

“But the same problem will happen if Brother Guo is chosen. His role in the secret frontline of the federation is equally irreplaceable. Considering that the people of the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance look identical to us, it will be even easier for them to infiltrate the federation than the demons in the past.

“Intelligence and anti-infiltration works will certainly be of paramount importance in the future war!

“Besides, Brother Guo is one hair away from the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. At a moment of life and death, the gap of one hair may mean great trouble. It is still not safe enough to choose him!

“As for the other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, they are mostly adept in just one certain field. It may be not satisfactory enough to ask them to grasp the skills of a different field through intensive training.”

Ding Lingdang chuckled and said, “I know what you are doing now. You are simply bragging about yourself and think that nobody except for you is suitable for the job. Right?”

Li Yao blushed. “I didn’t mean that, but it’s true that I’m more suitable than Professor Mo Xuan and Brother Guo. Most critically of all, I don’t think that I will be able to play too important a role in the federation in the next hundred years if I stay.

“I’m a core member of the Colossi Project, but we have already assembled five Colossi. Both the assembly procedures and the piloting skills have systematic operation manuals right now. Further studies will require cutting-edge theories.

“It’s not just the case for the Colossi. Other magical equipment is the same.

“You know that I’m better at practical operations. I really don’t know the first thing about the latest theories. I doubt I can contribute much in the future.

“The Glorious Sunlight Group, the Double Dragon Union, and Skyfire are similar. Nominally, I have a lot of shares in the enterprises, while in fact, I’ve been entrusting everything to the managers!

"The Glorious Sunlight Group is now managed by the seniors in Wu Mayan's family and Xiong Wuji. The Double Dragon Union is led by my senior brother Fiend Blade Peng Hai. Skyfire is supervised by the Fire Ant King and Jin Xinyue at the same time. All of them are a hundred times better than me in terms of management and operation. Even without me, the three enterprises will still grow prosperously!

"After thinking for a long time, I feel that I'm more of a 'mascot' in the federation right now. There shouldn't be much influence on the federation even if I'm away for a while, should there?"

While speaking, Li Yao suddenly felt that his heart was heavy. After a long hesitation, he said softly, "I feel that I will be the best choice for the mission from whatever perspective. The only problem is you.

"You have read the files just now, too. Looking for a mysterious Sector inside a dark nebula is like groping for a needle in a sunless swamp. There's a good chance that it will take decades!

"Now that we have both advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage, our cells are extremely vigorous. As long as we don't exhaust ourselves too much in the next hundred years, our bodies will be as healthy as now in a hundred years.

"However, it is a hundred years that we are talking about after all!

"Therefore, I need to hear your opinion. I hope that you can make a decision for me!

"Honey, if you too think that I'm the most suitable candidate, I will join the mission, but if you don't think I should go, we can go to the professor right now and decline the mission!”

Ding Lingdang heaved the rays of sunlight in her hands to her face. Staring at her husband through the brilliance, she chuckled. “I get to make the call? You are so obedient?”

“Of course!” Li Yao clapped his hands. “Happy wife, happy life!”

“Very well, then,” Ding Lingdang said with a smile. “Now, I can formally, gravely, and seriously tell you that, if what you said just now are all your reasons, I don’t want you to go!”

“Huh?” Li Yao was dumbfounded.

“What? Did you think that I would agree because I should understand the importance of the big picture?” Ding Lingdang sniffed and poked Li Yao’s chest hard. “In fact, I think that Professor Mo Xuan was quite right about one thing. Li Yao, don’t overestimate yourself. The world can run normally every day without any individual, can’t it? Why do you have to show off and solve every conundrum in person?

“Are Professor Mo Xuan, Brother Guo Chunfeng, or any other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who have done intensive training really not as good as you and absolutely incapable of such a mission? Are you that awesome?

“Chances are that they will accomplish the mission even better than you will!

“As for the vacancy after they leave, it is even less of a problem. I don’t believe that we can’t find two people who are suitable to be the director of the Secret Sword Bureau or the president of the Refiners’ Association when the population of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star

Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector is already tens of billions!”

Ding Lingdang was poking Li Yao’s chest hard after every sentence. Li Yao was gasping and grimacing in pain.

At this time, however, Ding Lingdang began to rub Li Yao’s chest with her hands softly as she said, “All in all, the federation has countless superheroes. You are not the first one, and you will not be the last. Even if you hide in our home and sleep all day, the sky will not fall down, the earth will not collapse, and the end of the world will not come!

“But I have only one husband, and I’m too lazy to find a second one.

“You are not that important to the federation, but you are more important to me than anything else. Do you understand?

“Therefore, if your reasons are what you gave me just now, then this is my answer—No. Absolutely no! Whoever dares to fool you into the mission with bullsh*t reasons such as ‘devotion’, ‘patriotism’, or ‘sacrifice’, I will blow up their head!

“You have done enough for the federation. Even if you do have your responsibility as a Cultivator, you have long fulfilled it!”

Li Yao was rendered speechless by his wife. He was dazed in the clouds for a moment.

Pondering for a moment, he felt that there was a deeper meaning to her lines. “You will not agree if my reasons are what I gave you just now. So, you may agree if it is for something else?”

Ding Lingdang grinned and suddenly said, out of context, “Li Yao, thank you.”

Li Yao was even more curious. “Thank me for what?”

“Did you know? In fact, a long, long time ago, before I met you, and even for quite a while after I met you, I thought that I would never be married in my entire life.” Ding Lingdang opened her arms, melting herself in the gold sunlight. “After all, you know my personality best. I’m too uncivilized, and I’m too fond of adventures. What I like best is to blow a demon beast’s brains out of its head. When I’m training crazily, I may not take a break for three days and three nights, during which time I know absolutely nothing around myself!

“I’d been thinking before—what kind of man would accept such a wife? Most men prefer girls who are cute, quiet, and homey, instead of crazy ones like me, right?

“But after so many years into our marriage, you have always supported me. You never stopped me when I enrolled in the highly-dangerous, experimental training programs, when I fought the strengthened demon beasts with real guns and ammos, and even when I trained at the edge of the gravity sphere of the pulsar, where I might have been dragged into it and compressed into a point smaller than dust if I was incautious.

“When I reported the training subjects to you exactly as they were, I could see the worry in your eyes, but you never stopped me, not once. Instead, you encouraged me while pretending to be lighthearted. Tell me, why?”

Li Yao’s face was redder than the morning glow. He scratched his nose and said, “Do I need a reason? All the things were what you wanted to do. You could gain happiness, realize your dream, and even find the true meaning of life from them!

“As your husband, of course I had to support my wife to do anything she wanted and to shine brilliantly to her heart’s content!”

Li Yao smiled carefreely again.

The sun reappeared behind him, putting her in a glorious halo. Pairs of wings seemed to be growing from her back.

“This is exactly what I want to say to you,” Ding Lingdang said. “Regarding the issue just now, if you reason is simply ‘the country needs me’, then I will absolutely say no. Your country does not need you, but I do!

“The only way you can win my support is if your reasons have nothing to do with the country, the planet, the civilization, the future, or anything grandeur, but simply ‘I want to go’!”

Chapter 1323 - 105% Alive!

“Ask yourself. When you heard Professor Mo Xuan’s introduction on the exploration mission in the dark nebula just now, was the very first thought that popped up in your head ‘I have to go because the mission is important for the federation’ or ‘I want to go because the mission is so interesting’?”

Ding Lingdang looked at Li Yao expectantly.

Li Yao’s eyes passed her and darted toward the furiously burning sun. Under the sunlight, his face turned gold.

Holding Ding Lingdang’s hands softly, he was deep in thought for a long time. His face flickered with confusion, calmness, excitement, and gloom until it became pureness in the end.

“I… want to go, from the bottom of my heart,” Li Yao mumbled. “You’re quite right. It has nothing to do with the grandeur concepts such as civilization, federation, or future. The universe is such a spectacular place. I just want to go out there and take a good look at it.

“There’s something that I kept from you all the time.

“After more than ten years of soul-stirring adventures, in the past five years, I was finally able to live a peaceful and routine life like normal people.

“I had almost everything. Fame, position, power, enterprises, and support and admiration from the general public! You were by my side the whole time, too. No matter how hard we were training during the day, we were still able to share the same bed at night like a normal husband and wife.

“By logic, this should already be the most satisfactory point of my life, right?

“However, do you know who visited my dreams most when I was sound asleep at night?”

Blinking his eyes, Ding Lingdang said, “Yan Xibei, Xiao Xuance, Bai Xinghe, the star child, Jin Tuyi, Elder Nether Spring, Zhou Hengdao, Lu Zui?”

“How did you know?” Surprised, Li Yao scratched his lips subconsciously. “Do I talk at night?”

“Of course not.” Ding Lingdang smiled. “It’s because I often dream about my past enemies, too!

“During the ten years when you were away from the Heaven’s Origin Sector, I was training and travelling in the depths of the Grand Desolate Plateau. I encountered many brutal and hideous demon beasts, and I only narrowly escaped from beast tides hundreds of times, too.

“The scenes often reappear in my dreams!

“It is quite odd. When I was wandering on the Grand Desolate Plateau, I often had to burn my life and soul, sparing nothing, in order to win a slim chance of survival. On many occasions, the physical and mental suffering were simply indescribable!

“Every time I survived a beast tide and dragged my bleeding and exhausted body back to the base, I told myself that I would never do such a stupid thing as to wander in front of the wormholes on the Grand Desolate Plateau by myself again!

“But I would be reckless again after resting in safety for less than one week. I forgot the pain as soon as the scars were gone!

“In my dreams, when I am back in those moments of life and death, I often… relish them so much that I want to try them once, or a hundred times, more!”

“Yes. That’s exactly the feeling!” Li Yao’s eyes suddenly shined. He held his wife’s hand more and more tightly and exclaimed, “In my dreams, I often find myself challenging Yan Xibei, Xiao Xuance, Elder Nether Spring, Lu Zui, and the rest of them again. What troublemakers they were! I only managed to defeat them with the help of countless companions and a bit of luck every time after the last bit of wisdom, courage, and determination in the deepest part of my soul were exploited!

“The unparalleled ecstasy after I defeated them, or simply while I was defeating them, made me feel that I was 100% or even 105% alive!

“Honey, make no mistake. I’m not saying that I didn’t enjoy the peaceful life for the past five years or that I don’t want to spend the rest of my life with you. It’s just that—it’s just that, compared to the blood-freezing adventures ten years ago, I feel that such a smooth, undisturbed life, which I can absolutely foresee will be like decades later, is a bit—a bit—boring!

“You—you can understand the feeling, right?”

“Of course!” Ding Lingdang’s thoughts drifted to somewhere far, far away, too. Her entirely body seemed to be turning into a transparent diamond that was gradually melting into the air. She felt both real and illusionary.

Her voice was so deep that it sounded like it was coming from the cold, dark universe. “In order to advance into the Nascent Soul Stage, I once risked training for ten days and ten nights in the closest orbit to the pulsar.

“The special force fields of the pulsar were like a natural telescope that was magnificently built in the universe. It could collect all the information of light in history.

“Through the special filters on the crystal suit and the direction perception of the spiritual root, I seemed to envision that the whole universe was unfolding slowly in front of me.

“I ‘saw’ the galaxy arms made of billions of stars burning furiously. I ‘saw’ the nebulas expanding and shrinking like the raging behemoths inside an ocean. I ‘saw’ boundless galaxies blossoming like flowers before they slowly withered. I ‘saw’ the tide of the millions of colors released by the pulsar that enveloped me instantly. I even forgot my training. The brilliant plethora of the millions of colors were enough for anyone to pay their entire life to enjoy!

“Before I knew it, I was so attracted to the view that I moved closer and closer to the tipping point of the gravity sphere of the pulsar. I was almost absorbed by it!

“But at that time, I didn’t feel frightened or regretful at all. Instead, I had a weird sense of calmness and delight. I felt that I was a grain of dust that came from the universe and was returning to the universe!

“It was in those ten days and ten nights of training that I polished my real belief. I understood the true meaning of ‘reborn’. I was reborn from the universe!

“It was perhaps the greatest reason why I could march into the Nascent Soul Stage at such a young age!

“When someone has seen the millions of colors from the pulsar, the colliding and simmering rivers of stars made by the galaxy arms, and the unpredictable flowers made of the rays of stars from tens of billions of years ago blossoming slowly in front of them, how can they be at all interested in anything in the mortal world at all?

“Fame, power, wealth, position, honor… In front of the grand universe, the things that the mortals crave and fight for with their lives are as hilarious as the high towers made of sand!”

“We should’ve communicated on the topic earlier.” Li Yao stared at Ding Lingdang in a very strange way before he said proudly, “Honey, you truly have chances on a daily basis. You are completely different from the past now!”

“Of course. Do you think that you are the only one making breakthroughs and other people never improve?”

Grinning, Ding Lingdang flicked Li Yao’s forehead hard. “It’s not too late to communicate right now. Tell me the truth. You think that the past few years have been a bit monotonous, right?”

“Not exactly monotonous. My life is never monotonous with you around. I just feel that it wasn’t 100% me!”

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao shook his head. “No. More precisely speaking, in the past five years, Li Yao was living as an Ultra-Level Federal Hero and a super mascot but not purely for himself!

“The pure Li Yao only lives in adventures and fierce battles when he is burning his life and soul to have summit confrontations with formidable enemies such as Xiao Xuance, Bai Xinghe, Elder Nether Spring, and Lu Zui!

“I don’t want to live as a ‘super mascot’ anymore. Not even for one day, much less the next five years, ten years, or decades until the Imperium of True Human Beings arrives!

“I yearn to visit the scenery in the wonderful worlds in the depths of the universe that nobody has ever set foot on, make friends with the experts there, study their civilization, and confront formidable enemies! In the ever-escalating adventures, I will feel my physical strength, my will, my wisdom, my life, and my everything being exploited to the maximum, knowing that the pure Li Yao is back!

“The most important thing for a Cultivator is to Cultivate your true self. My ‘true self’ is right out there in the middle of the stars!

“Stars are my destination!

“Therefore, it doesn’t matter at all if the issue is related to the fate of the federation and the future of our civilization.

“Now that I have learned of the existence of such a mysterious world, and I’ve been given the opportunity to find out what it is exactly, I will certainly not let it go!

“It is mine. The last thing I want to see is it falling into somebody else’s hands, its beauty and mysteries being enjoyed not by me!”

Li Yao’s voice was more and more deep and resolute. Infinite dominance was spreading out from every pore on his body!

Even the clouds were dancing around him, cladding him in a battle robe.

If not me, who?

Hearing Li Yao’s simple and majestic demonstration, Ding Lingdang chuckled, her eyes brimming with affection and tenderness. “This is the answer I wanted to hear. If that’s the case, just go to the depths of the sea of stars, conquer new worlds, and live as your true self. I’ve absolutely got your back!”

“But—” His wife’s empathy and support made Li Yao feel both moved and ashamed.

“No ‘but’. I know that your soul has been stolen by the mysterious world. If I insist on you not going, you will live the rest of your life in regrets and without a soul!

“What I want is a man who lives up to all the wonders of himself, not a walking zombie!

“I understand you as much as you understand me. If you have never hindered or stopped me when I went out for travels and adventures, why would I hinder and stop you now?”

Chapter 1324 - A Deal of a Hundred Years!

The more outspoken Ding Lingdang was, the more hesitant Li Yao became. “But we are talking about decades!”

“It’s not as serious as you imagine!” Ding Lingdang smiled. “As Professor Mo Xuan said, you will spend most of the time in the space journey in a hibernation state. You close your eyes, you open your eyes, and the journey is over. You will not perceive the passage of time at all!

“Even when you are awake, your sense of time will be vastly different from the outside world because you are at the sub-light speed. The decades in the outside may only be a few years for you!

“The time will only go at a normal speed again when you discover the mysterious world and begin collecting intelligence. So, it will not take many years for you.

“As for me, I certainly won’t wait stupidly in the federation for decades after you leave. I will also join the ‘Heavenly Road Plan’ to explore a greater universe and enjoy a more marvelous life. I’ll spend most of my time in the hibernation cabin, too, and I will not be unfrozen and woken up for adventures until new Sectors are found!

“If I have nothing better to do, I can always join the ‘Solar Soldier’ program. I will train myself in prolonged hibernation in a special cabin near the orbit of a star by absorbing the spiritual energy released by the star.

(NovelFull) “In such a way, even if a hundred years have passed in the real world, in our perception and for our body status, it will only be three to five years or maybe around ten years at most.

“A departure of ten years seems acceptable to me. What do you think?”

Li Yao pondered carefully and realized that it did make sense.

Most of the time in a space exploration mission was always wasted on looking for new galaxies and worlds in the vast, boundless universe.

Such a dull task could totally be automatically accomplished by the navigation crystal processors, allowing the explorers to kill time in hibernation without knowing anything.

As long as a hundred years might be, it would only be a dream for them. They would not be conscious of anything.

If everything went well, in their perception, they would meet each other after only a few years.

“Li Yao!” Ding Lingdang suddenly grew excited. She waved her arms hard under the golden sunlight, like a leopard that was jumping at the sun. “Let’s make a deal and have a competition!

“In the next hundred years, you will explore the mysterious world deep inside the dark nebula, and I will participate in the ‘Heavenly Road Plan’ to discover more Sectors!

“In a hundred years’ time, when we meet again, we will tell each other the interesting adventures we’ve been through while we are exploring the new Sectors. Then, we will see whose stories are more intriguing and whose achievements are greater. How does that sound?”

Her ecstasy drove apart Li Yao’s last hesitation.

Extending his finger to his wife, Li Yao curled his pinkie with hers!

“It’s a deal then!”

With the most brilliant smile, Li Yao said, “I’ll certainly bring the most beautiful flower of the Sector in the dark nebula back to you. Wait for me, honey!”

“Of course,” Ding Lingdang said softly. “I’ll certainly be waiting for you, until the day the universe is destroyed.”

…

A month later, the first Trilateral Magical Equipment Exposition of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector and the Flying Star Sector came to a successful conclusion amid amazement and applause. The superstring magical equipment, the Colossi, the automatic resource-collecting puppets… All the magical equipment was a dazzling eye-opener for the tourists.

A new batch of super projects, including the Heavenly Road Plan, were initiated one after another. The glorious prospects that they described were a great ‘cardiotonic’ for the general public of the three Sectors, filling them with confidence in the future.

However, in the secret fields that were inaccessible for the general public, undercurrents were flowing, and many people were quite ill at ease.

The mysterious signal from deep inside the dark nebula—the greeting or threat from an unknown force—made the leadership of the three Sectors and all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and demon emperors have a ‘it never rains; it pours’ feeling.

After realizing the severity of the issue, everybody agreed unanimously that, however great the price was, an explorer had to be sent toward the dark nebula!

Li Yao’s capabilities and experiences in the past clearly made him the best candidate.

It was also the exploration mission of the highest priority in the ‘Heavenly Road Plan’.

Right now, the directional modification on Spark and the space gate was being carried out busily. The Heaven’s Artillery would have to be adjusted to the extreme mode in order to maximize the distance of teleportation.

Li Yao had three months for his ‘super intensive training’.

A training team consisting of more than thirty Nascent Soul Stage experts was providing service for, or rather, torturing, him and him alone.

The cruel, hellish training reminded him of the miserable sufferings when he was a young man.

Although he often found pleasure in self-abusive training, he was now groaning in pain from morning to dawn.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Every day at four o’clock in the morning, inside the training chamber of thirty times the standard gravity deployed on

Kunlun, Li Yao’s daily torture would begin with the bombardment from Ding Lingdang and ‘Iron God’ Yan Ba, the expert body practitioners.

There was no need to mention ‘Iron God’ Yan Ba, who was an old battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator in the federation, an extremely crazy body fundamentalist, and a monster that could tear apart a crystal suit barehanded as easily as tearing apart a matchbox!

Ding Lingdang, a newly-risen battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, showed absolutely no consideration for their husband-wife bond at all. She was punching him so hard that she did not stop until Li Yao was bleeding from his every orifice.

“Hurry, hurry, hurry. You are too slow. Way too slow!”

“You think you are awesome because you can pilot a Colossus? When you reach an unfamiliar foreign land, will there be Colossi and crystal suits available for you?

“Any magical equipment can be worn and broken. In the harshest environment, you can’t find resources and tools to repair your magical equipment!

“Therefore, your body is your most trustworthy ‘magical equipment’!

“Only by polishing your body to the point that it has a higher density than the neutron star will you be able to secure a slim chance of survival in the mysterious land!”

Whetted and bombarded by the two expert body practitioners, Li Yao felt like crying. At times, he felt like he was truly compressed into a neutron star with an extremely high density and then ripped apart into spraying dust.

The body build-up would last an entire hour. Then, he would spend an hour recovering in the medical cabin.

However, he was not idle in the hour. Although he could not move his body, Guo Chunfeng, director of the Secret Sword Bureau, was still able to train him on the intelligence work.

“Over the past dozen years, you’ve done a great job in both the Flying Star Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, but too much of your success was based on luck and accidents,” Guo Chunfeng said. “During both of the two adventures, you made friends with big shots of certain forces by accident, got involved in mysterious plots, and finally laid your hands on the information and secrets inaccessible for normal people.

“Obviously, we cannot put our hope on luck and accidents. You will have to abandon all your self-taught knowledge and systematically learn how to fake an appropriate identity, break into the core of the target force, and gather the most crucial intelligence consciously!

“In such a short period of time, it is impossible and unnecessary for you to study the most rudimental theories from zero.

“I have prepared a lot of cases here. All of them are top classified files in the Secret Sword Bureau, including the classic infiltrations between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector over the past two hundred years!

“There’s the case of an expert in the Blood Demon Sector, known as ‘Thousand-Faced Fox’, who lurked in the federation for decades until he was promoted to the Deputy Director of the Classified Files in the Department of National Defense. There’s also the case where our Secret Sword Agent snuck into the Blood Demon Sector and infiltrated the

Pantheon of Demons. Of course, there are also experiences where they were seen through, captured, resisted interrogation, broke out of prison, and escaped!

"If you figure out every detail of the hundreds of cases, I believe that the mysterious new world will not trap you at all whatever it really is."

Pausing for a moment, Guo Chunfeng said, "Unless, of course, the locals of the new Sector are all members of the Pangu Clan who are twenty meters tall, in which case even the gods will not be able to help you. You will have to count on your own luck!

"It is also part of the lessons that we will get in touch with later—how you can avoid being captured alive when you are in a desperate situation, and how you can terminate your own life cleanly and painlessly without leaving any useful information to the enemy even if you are captured alive!"

"Huh..."

"If you think that it is too difficult, there is still time for you to turn back. To be honest, I'm quite interested in the mission myself!"

"Hehehe." Li Yao chuckled. "I went through all the trouble of persuading my wife to let me go on the mission. How can I give up the chance so easily? You must be joking, Brother Guo!"

After dwelling in Guo Chunfeng's mysterious world of underground battles for an hour, Li Yao would enter the routine of magical equipment maintenance.

The elite teams from the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution and the Refining Department of

Deep Sea University, including Professor Mo Xuan and Supernova Jiang Sheng themselves, gathered and poured all the knowledge about the assembly and maintenance of the space gate to Li Yao.

Although Li Yao was a top refiner, his specialties were crystal suits and Colossi.

He could make do with regular star beacons, but the array of star beacons of an enormous scale, and the space gate made of said star beacons, was a completely different issue!

In order to send the coordinates information from the dark nebula to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, covering a distance of millions of lightyears, the space gate was destined to be gigantic. It was estimated to be made of at least three hundred star beacons and tens of thousands of magical equipment units.

When the magical equipment units were launched into the depths of the dark nebula, it was impossible for them to be precisely projected to Li Yao’s surroundings. Therefore, the magical equipment units would be installed with special radiative sources that would emit unique signals that were perceivable to Spark alone. Then, Li Yao would maneuver Spark to collect all of them and assemble them.

After the space gate was assembled, a series of thorough and repetitive debugging procedures were also mandatory for it to work and send out signals normally.

The fundamental files and the operation manuals concerning the work were as boundless as an ocean. The jade chips being delivered to Li Yao every day could be measured by ‘basket’!

Chapter 1325 - Special Training! Special Training!

It was yet another great burden for Li Yao's head.

When the incessant information inundated his brain, he felt that his brain was about to explode. But his hands couldn't stop. He had to repeat the complicated assemble and maintenance work time and time again, until every procedure became muscle memory and were deeply etched to his nerve endings.

Li Yao hadn't tasted the feeling of his fingers being scathed for years. Right now, when he had the experience again, he couldn't help but feel that he was back to the past.

The feeling made him feel that a tiny sprout was growing out of the soil deep inside his soul.

The only thing that could almost be called a relief in an entire day was when he learnt the arts of breath and meditation after Gui Suishou, so that his body would train itself while he was unconscious in the hibernation state.

“All the functions of a human body can be divided into two parts, the conscious ones and the subconscious ones.

“Raising your hand, walking, blinking or opening the mouth are all controlled by the shallow consciousness. Even ordinary people can influence them free at will.”

Gui Suishou said, “But some other actions, say, the rhythm of the internal organs, the opening and closing of the pores, and the secretion of body fluids, are not controlled by the cerebrum but by the cerebellum and brainstem.

“Normally, it is very difficult for the ordinary people to control their own heartbeat and secretion of hormones. When they are anxious, their heartbeat will be faster, and they will sweat. When they are horrified, their hands and feet will be cold, and they will have goosebumps. Such phenomena are perfectly normal.

“The Cultivators, however, can control everything I said to some extent.

“The higher a Cultivator’s level is, the deeper their understanding and control over themselves will be, and the more organs and hormones they will be able to influence.

“If we consider a human body as a crystal processor with an operation system, then, the process in which the Cultivators break the physiological limits by training through their arts can be compared to the process in which the higher permissions, say, the administrator’s or even the developer’s, are gradually unlocked for the crystal processor. Eventually, the user is able to debug and edit the architecture and even the hardware itself, making the crystal processor work stably with a performance much better than previously.

“In other words, when a Cultivator is training himself and releasing the techniques, his body is actually ‘overclocking’!

“However, while ‘overclocking’ can significantly increase the work efficiency, there are serious side effects, too. To say the very least, the energy consumption will significantly rise. Or put in a more straightforward way, the Cultivator will be ‘burning their life and soul’!

"For a space journey that can possibly last a hundred years, what we really need is not 'overclocking' but 'underclocking'. The real problem is how to maintain a Cultivator's most vitality and Cultivation with the minimum energy cost, and how to make sure that they recover immediately after they are woken up!

"To achieve the purposes, we have to partly count on the 'hibernation cabin' and the circulative drugs, and partly rely on the Cultivators to perform the useful Cultivation arts unstoppably even if they are unconscious!

"Did you know, Li Yao? In fact, such a long-distance trip in hibernation is a good thing for you."

Gui Suishou said in a smile.

"Oh? How so?"

Li Yao was rather curious.

"Both demons and human beings will have to rip apart the muscles and heal them time and time again during their training. For the experts who have advanced into the demon emperor state or the Nascent Soul Stag, none of them haven't been recovered from heavy wounds before, have they?"

Gui Suishou said unhurriedly, "But how can there be no cost when you are breaking the limits of a body? Even the top sportsmen, who have the best teams to train and offer medical advice to them, are often rife with diseases when they retire, not to mention the Cultivators whose training amount is hundreds of times larger than that of the general sportsmen.

"Although invisible on the surface, tiny 'cracks' are packed inside the body of every Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator and every demon emperor. Even their soul is often riddled with holes because of repetitive exploitation and burning. They are only supporting themselves with their belief!"

Li Yao blinked his eyes, "Is it so serious? Our self-recovery abilities are a hundred times better than the ordinary people's. Take me for example. However heavy wounds I suffer, I will recuperate very soon, without any sequela whatsoever!"

"If you tear a piece of paper into halves, it may be repaired as perfectly as before by a pair of deft hands."

Gui Suishou smiled, "But what if the paper is torn apart a hundred times, a thousand times, and ten thousand times?

"Don't think that I'm exaggerating. The modern training theories have surpassed their counterparts in the age of the ancient Cultivators tens of thousands of years ago in many regards. But when it comes to the 'art of health', we are actually left far behind.

"Paying too much attention to training and little to health results to the 'hidden wounds' that are everywhere in the soul and the body. So, as you can see, the modern Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators can only live two to three hundred years. Those who are older than four hundred years are already rarely-seen. Just look at the Star Glory Federation. Has there ever been any Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator who lived more than four hundred years?

"But in the age of the ancient Cultivators, Cultivators four to five hundred years old were anything but unusual.

“Of course, one of the very important reasons is that the spiritual energy in the age of the ancient Cultivators was much more abundant than the present day.

“However, even if we take the factor into consideration, there should be a problem for a modern Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator to live another hundred years if they pay more attention to their health.

“Back to you. The problem is even more serious on you.”

Li Yao was quite surprised. “How serious?”

“You entered the Nascent Soul Stage too early.”

Gui Suishou, “Do not think that it is necessarily a good thing that you entered the Nascent Soul Stage so early. Have you ever heard the tale of ‘pulling up seedlings to help them grow’? Everybody’s body and soul have their own patterns. Although it is the significance of Cultivation to break the patterns and to defy nature’s will, the retaliation of the patterns are also unavoidable for any Cultivator!

“You are only slightly more than thirty years old right now. Among the Cultivators, you are like an elementary school student. But you have successfully advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage through bloody battles. Behind your ostensible magnificence, there are already countless tiny cracks inside your body and soul, which will eventually escalate into internal wounds and corrode your longevity. As a result, you will also perish much earlier than you should!

“Over the past five years, has it ever occurred to you that your level could barely be upgraded however hard you trained, and that your blood was simmering and your Cultivation was unstable once in a while?”

Bulging his eyes, Li Yao nodded his head quickly, “Yes, exactly. I thought that it was because I was new to the Nascent Soul Stage and I wasn’t used to it yet!”

“If you don’t pay attention to it, I guarantee that you will die before you are two hundred years old, or even a hundred and fifty.”

Gui Suishou said casually, “Just like the ‘young prodigies’ recorded in the history books who rose to fame at an early stage only to flash and be gone forever like a shooting star on a night sky.”

Li Yao grew serious.

He was not interested in the meaningless longevity. But it was true that he wanted to lengthen his short life as much as possible, so that he would have a chance to visit the Imperium, the Covenant Alliance, and even the outer universe beyond the three thousand Sectors, where he would explore the secrets of the primeval civilizations such as Pangu, Nuwa and Chaos.

Gui Suishou was the oldest individual in the three Sectors. He must have a special understand on the arts of health.

“Master Gui, then how should I heal myself?”

Li Yao asked respectfully.

“That’s why I said the prolonged interstellar journey is a good thing for you.”

Gui Suishou said in a smile, “Since you are generous enough to ask the Glorious Sunlight Group to sponsor my ‘Monument Plan’ greatly, as part of the deal, I will teach you the whole ‘Great Dream Tortoise Hibernation Art’ and the tricks in the training without any reserve in the next two months.

“The art will not only make your body and soul enter the ‘extreme underclocking’ state, where the activities of your cells and mitochondria will be almost frozen to the absolute zero, but also repair your ‘hidden wounds’ caused in the fierce battles over the past dozen years without you knowing!

“I believe that the hidden wounds in your body will be generally cleaned up after a hibernation of decades.”

“Thank you for your wholehearted tutelage, Master Gui!”

Bowing deeply, Li Yao suddenly thought of something else. “Right, Master Gui. If what you say is true, and that the earlier you enter the Nascent Soul Stage, the more serious the hidden wounds inside your body will be, won’t my wife be very dangerous, too?

“If the Glorious Sunlight Group increase the investment on the ‘Monument Plan’ by 20%, can you give some enlightenment on my wife, too, regarding the tricks and mysteries in the art?”

Gui Suishou smiled kindly and gently, “Hehehehe. Our friendship is too sacred for such a cheesy thing as money. But if my young friend insists, an increase of 40% will do.”

“It’s a deal then!”

Li Yao snapped his finger.

This time, he would have no more worries.

After receiving Ding Lingdang and Iron God Yan Bu’s training to build up his body, Professor Mo Xuan and Supernova Jiang Sheng’s training on the arts of refining, Guo Chunfeng’s training on the intelligence subjects, and Gui Suishou’s training on the hibernation skills, Li Yao welcomed an unexpected teacher.

Su Changfa, the Immortal Cultivator.

“Senior Su, I didn’t know that you would contribute to the ‘Heavenly Road Plan’. This rather goes against your usual style, doesn’t it?”

Li Yao exclaimed.

“What’s strange about this?”

Su Changfa said unhurriedly, “After hearing the news about the dark nebula, even I was rather curious, because judging from its location and its distance from the center of the cosmos, it belongs to neither the territory of the Imperium nor that of the Covenant Alliance!

“It means that the existence who sent a signal to you is not the Imperium, not the Covenant Alliance, but a force that none of us know!

“There’s no telling whether the force is a friend or a foe yet. It may jeopardize the interests of the Imperium of True Human Beings as much as it may jeopardize the interests of the Blood Demon Sector!

“It is especially so when an expedition army from the Imperium of True Human Beings is marching over aggressively and probably passing near the dark nebula. Who knows what may happen?

“If a terrifying existence is indeed lurking inside the dark nebula, and it captures the entire expedition army of the Imperium, from which it figures out the tremendous information and the coordinates about the Imperium of True Human Beings, will it go backwards and march towards the Imperium’s homeland?

“With that in mind, same as you, I want to figure out what the mysterious world hiding in the darkness really is!”

Chapter 1326 - The Arts of Colonization

Sitting cross-legged, Su Changfa went on. “You know that I graduated from Imperial Colonization University in the Imperium of True Human Beings. The main research fields of the Imperial Colonization University are the expansion of the Imperium’s territory and the colonization of other Sectors. Today, I will teach you some of the basic knowledge.

“Tell me, Li Yao. What do you think the most important and precious resources in the universe are?”

Li Yao pondered for a moment before replying, “Spiritual energy? Mother lodes? Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures? I’m afraid that the answer isn’t so simple, right?”

“It isn’t.” Su Changfa smiled. “Spiritual energy, mother lodes, and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures are indeed important, but without another two resources, their value can never be fully exploited.

“Let me tell you. Only two resources in the boundless universe can be called the most important—time and information.

“Time means the possibility of development, and information means the direction of development.

“The simplest example. Right now, the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Star Glory Federation are hostile. A fleet from the Imperium whose capability far exceeds yours is now marching toward you!

“If the expedition fleet of the Imperium shows up in front of you right now, the federation will not be able to resist at all. You will be doomed to failure!

“It’s a pity that the almost infinite sea of stars is itself the best barrier. The expedition fleet will not arrive for another hundred years, but the information of the expedition fleet’s arrival, unfortunately, has been learned by you in advance.

“So, in the next hundred years, you can develop and evolve pertinently. When the expedition army really arrives, the outcome of the battle will not be definite!

“This is exactly the importance of ‘time’, a valuable resource.

“The reason it will take a hundred years for the expedition fleet to arrive is that it doesn’t know the ‘information’ that is your specific coordinates!

“Time and information are complementary and also influential to each other. They decide how far a civilization can go and how strong it can become!

“Therefore, in the greeting, communication, and competition between different civilizations, the key to victory lies in how you conceal and camouflage your own information and how you collect the unknown civilization’s information as much as possible!

“In Imperial Colonization University, there’s a teaching that has been passed on for almost a thousand years—Never look down upon the locals of any planet, no matter how underdeveloped and weak they appear to be, and never leak any information about ourselves to the locals unless we are absolutely certain of our safety!

“Locals are all very dangerous beings. Once they learn any information on us, with a few hundred years earned through the long distance in the sea of stars, nobody knows how developed they will be and what kind of trouble they will cause to the Imperium!

“Look. I’m the best example myself.”

Pointing at himself, Su Changfa smiled bitterly. “It doesn’t matter about telling you the truth now. When we are exploring the Sectors with local civilizations, we have a whole set of standard procedures in which the tiniest detail is specified. We can melt into the world of the locals completely and gather enough critical information in order to evaluate the level of the local civilization precisely. After we decide that it is ‘harmless’, we will begin our next-step operation from there.

“If we had arrived in the Flying Star Sector directly, you never would have noticed us before we launched our thunderous strike!

“Hehe. It was exactly because we landed on the relic of the Pangu civilization, which was terribly far away from the Flying Star Sector, and were captivated by the primeval battlefield there that we were fooled by your lies, leading to the hopeless consequences.

“It is evident enough that the slyness of the locals has nothing to do with the level of their civilization. Even the most underdeveloped civilization might have a shameless, cunning, cruel individual such as you who could ambush the explorers from a much more developed civilization!”

Li Yao coughed for a moment and said, “Thanks!”

With a grim face, Su Changfa said, “In the conquest and expansion over the past thousand years, the standard procedures to colonize a brand-new Sector have been gradually concluded in the Imperium of True Human Beings, which consist of four steps, namely infiltration, observation, disruption, and teleportation!

“The first step is infiltration. We will blend into the local civilization immaculately under the fake identities of the locals. This is the most important step. The new civilization must not learn of our existence.

“Because of the limited resources in the sea of stars, there is no civilization that is absolutely kind. We must assume that every civilization is malicious from the beginning in order to ensure our own safety as much as possible.

“The presumption of innocence does not work here.

“Assume the civilization is malicious at first. Then, with that in mind, we will observe the population, resources, military power, top-tier warriors of the civilization in darkness, and so on before we conclude whether or not it is capable of imposing its ‘maliciousness’ upon us and how great a price we will have to pay when we impose ‘maliciousness’ upon it!

“This will be the second step, observation.

“Generally speaking, a Sector that is worth ‘observing’ at the cost of tremendous time and resources boasts a certain capability. It is not so easy to be conquered in their ‘home field’.

“Which leads us to the third step, disruption.

“By ‘disruption’, I mean the explorers will mobilize the resources of the Sector through their own abilities so that meaningless internal strife will be caused.

“For example, we can lead to top experts of the civilization into fighting each other with the magical equipment several generations ahead of the civilization.

“Or, we can instigate an ambitious warlord of the civilization to wage a civil war at the central government of the civilization.

“Or, we can release plagues and crystal processor viruses, and even summon a ‘minor apocalypse’ from the homeland of the Imperium, casting the civilization into incessant natural disasters.

“All in all, before the army of the Imperium arrives, we will try our best to exhaust the capabilities of the civilization and disrupt, or even terminate, their development!

“The riot of the Immortal Cultivators in the Flying Star Sector was an example of ‘disruption’. After the establishment of the Temple of Immortals and the incitement of Yan Xibei, Xiao Xuance, and others’ ambitions, the development speed of the Flying Star Sector was significantly slowed down. They almost reached the fourth step, ‘teleportation’!

“It should’ve been a classic colonization case that would be recorded in the textbooks of the Imperium, but eventually, you jumped out of nowhere and messed up everything, turning it into a pot of half-cooked food!

“Oh, right. There’s still the fourth step, ‘teleportation’. We will establish a space gate, send the coordinates of the destination, and find a way to make the army in the homeland jump over instantly.

“This seems to be the easiest step, but there are still many tricks as to how and where the space gate should be built. Everything is knowledge!

“Infiltration, observation, disruption, and teleportation. The tasks seem arduous, but the explorers who are sent out are mostly experts in the Nascent Soul Stage, a level that is almost the top tier in every Sector. It is not difficult for them to break into the core circle of the unknown civilization. With a few ploys, a Sector will be ours!”

The more Li Yao listened, the more scared he was. He declared, one word after another, “Do not compare the federation to your Imperium. What you want is conquest, but what we want is integration! We are looking for allies on our mission. If the new civilizations are not willing to join the big family that is our federation, we will never force them to!”

“Integration and conquest are just two expressions of the same meaning.” Su Changfa smiled and said slowly, “You have chosen ‘integration’ only because the time left for you is as short as a hundred years, and your abilities of remote attack and troop projection are far from enough for you to conquer a new world a million lightyears away. Even if you do manage to subjugate them, you will not be able to digest and absorb them!

“If you boasted a super fleet like the Imperium does, and you had hundreds of years for your digestion and absorption, when a fat and delicious new Sector unfolded itself in front of you, and the locals of the world were arrogant enough to show their muscles and refuse to ‘integrate’ with you, would you or would you not ‘accelerate the progress of their civilization’ by resorting to a tiny bit of your military power?”

Li Yao shut his mouth, unwilling to discuss the hypothetical questions with the obstinate Immortal Cultivator Su Changfa.

“Even if you are truly so childishly innocent, the two steps ‘infiltration’ and ‘observation’ are still necessary at least. Learn the essence of Imperial Colonization University well now!”

Su Changfa sighed and said, “Although I hate that I cannot mince you into pieces and burn you into ash, I’m really unwilling to see you captured by the locals deep inside the dark nebula and confess all the information inside your brain cells under their interrogation!”

Li Yao scratched his nose and asked, “Why?”

“I’ve already said just now.” Su Changfa glimpsed at him and said, “The destruction of the Star Glory Federation is not the slightest concern for me, but the most critical thing is that you have not only the information about yourselves but also the information about the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“If a powerful, malicious civilization truly lies inside the depths of the dark nebula, it will certainly retrieve tremendous information about the Imperium of True Human Beings after it swallows the Star Glory Federation. Do you think that it will let go of the Imperium by then?

“Or rather, after all the information in your head is exploited, there is a great chance that the civilization will decide to go at the Imperium first instead of the federation.

“After all, the Imperium is a hundred times ‘fatter’ than the federation. It is much more attractive for the predators in the universe!”

Li Yao chuckled in amusement. “So to speak, our exploration mission may prove to be a burden for the Imperium?”

“Exactly.” Su Changfa glared at him coldly.

“Then, I’m so sorry. Do excuse me!” Li Yao said, not meaning what he said at all.

“Apologies are unnecessary.” Su Changfa sighed and said, “Learn the essence of colonization that the Imperium has accumulated after a thousand years from me. For the Imperium, I wish for your exploration operation to be a successful and fruitful one!”

Chapter 1327 - Everything Is Set

Three months had passed second after second.

While the Heaven's Artillery, the super teleportation platform deep inside the Grand Desolate Plateau, was being modified with the heritage of the Pangu civilization and the state-of-the-art technology learned from the Immortal Cultivators, Li Yao was absorbing the complicated knowledge, technology, and techniques of various aspects crazily.

He was like a piece of well-tempered steel whose density had reached the maximum, only to be pushing new metal constituents into his body by brute force in the high temperature and high pressure!

At four o'clock in the morning, on Kunlun, inside the arena of fifty times the standard gravity.

General Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage would be staggering as if intoxicated after only a short while of high-intensity training under such gravity.

Li Yao, however, was wearing super-dense metal weights that were several tons on his hands and feet, which were bound by highly-tensile veins of demon beasts.

To perform every punch and kick, he needed to overcome the burden of the metal weights and the boundary of the veins of the demon beasts!

Ding Lingdang and Iron God Yan Ba, one on the left and the other on the right, bombarded him crazily!

Li Yao, however, was like a slipper ball that was rotating smoothly inside the arena. The spiritual shield around him was taking almost a hundred different shapes every second, allowing him to resist the opponents’ attacks in the most perfect angle. As a result, the powerful and tricky bombardments simply slipped over on his spiritual shield!

After three minutes, although he suffered hundreds of heavy punches from the two expert body practitioners, he was still standing magnificently due to such a weird defense technique with a confident smile on his lips.

“Three minutes are up!” Li Yao licked his lips. The spiritual energy around him suddenly grew sharp, turning into invisible wind blades and cutting off all the veins of demon beasts that were confining his hands and feet.

His palms and heels both seemed to have ‘withered’ for a moment, too, allowing the circular weights to fall off from his body. They were blown to the wall of the arena in ear-splitting wind so deeply that the entire arena was humming.

Swoosh, swoosh! Swoosh, swoosh, swoosh, swoosh!

After getting rid of the incarceration of the weights and the ropes, Li Yao punched hundreds of times casually.

The sharp aura from his fists was focused without dispersing, as if a hundred vipers dashed out of his arms at the same time!

“It’s my turn to attack!” Li Yao had still been jumping up and down to warm himself up a second earlier, but the next second, he seemed to be split apart into two persons that were lunging at Ding Lingdang and Iron God Yan Ba simultaneously!

Stormy shrieks were echoing on the dull and scorching arena again. Despite the wall that was more than half a meter thick, the staff outside still felt that their eardrums were being ripped apart.

At seven o’clock in the morning, on the orbit of Kunlun, in the field of star beacon assemble simulation…

Inside the deep, dark universe, Li Yao was wearing an engineering crystal suit that had six circular artificial arms making it look like a spider. He was floating in midair silently.

Right next to him, hundreds of magical equipment units and ten times more components that could connect the units were floating, too.

Li Yao’s telepathic thoughts spread out incessantly like tides through the eight artificial arms. Like invisible ripples, they covered all the units and components softly.

Suddenly, every unit and component was enveloped in dark red fluorescence.

They seemed both enlivened by Li Yao and embroiled in wild turbulence. Attracting and assembling themselves, they were gradually taking the form of a star beacon, and every detail of the form was outlined at a visible speed.

After the bigger modules were assembled, Li Yao cut into them immediately. His hands turned into two clusters of colorful lights, while spiritual threads darted out from his fingers into the depths of all the modules. He slightly adjusted the internal architecture of every module by manipulating the spiritual threads with his fingers before he connected all of the modules together carefully.

In the end, a star beacon that was more than fifty meters long and had eight umbrella-shaped metal membrane receptors, better known as ‘universe lighthouse’, appeared in the darkness!

“Time: one hour, twenty-two minutes, and thirty-five seconds!”

When the numbers appeared on the staff’s crystal processors, amazement and exclamations echoed inside the entire simulation test field.

Finishing the assembly and debugging of a super star beacon of such an enormous scale purely on his own with a time cost of less than one and a half hours!

Those who are qualified to be present at the simulation test arena were all the top refiners of the three Sectors, but even they had to admit that, in all the three Sectors, it was difficult to find a second refiner with such hand speed, skill, and precision!

“Li Yao, job well done. How do you feel?” Professor Mo Xuan asked.

“How do I feel? I don’t know,” Li Yao replied. “My ten fingers cannot feel anything now!”

At half past eleven, on Kunlun, in Li Yao’s special cafeteria…

In front of Li Yao, a demon beast ‘Single-Horned Elephant’ the size of a hill, which was shining greasily after being roasted and emitting pleasant flavor, was looming.

For someone who smelled it for the first time, they would definitely be drooling full of eagerness.

However, for Li Yao, who had been stuffed by excessive food for quite a few months in a row, it was quite a headache.

Faced with the mountain of meat that was more than three floors tall, Li Yao was emotionless. His eyelids were twitching nonstop, and cold sweat was popping up on his forehead. He stared at the Fire Ant King.

“Don’t look at me as gloomily as that. Do you have any idea what it cost to produce such a ‘high-energy Single-Horned Elephant’?” the Fire Ant King said with a smile. “This is the most excellent food that only proves to be a success after hundreds of tries. After genetic refinement, every piece of flesh of the Single-Horned Elephant contains tremendous spiritual energy. It is essentially an edible crystal!

“Even the bears know the importance of preserving fat and energy for their hibernation by eating more food, not to mention that you are going to hibernate for years. Most of Spark’s capacity will be dedicated to the star beacons and the facilities. If you can preserve more spiritual energy by yourself, the logistical burden will be reduced!

“Don’t be hasty. Take it slow. We have nothing but roasted meat!”

At half past three in the afternoon, on Kunlun, inside Li Yao’s personal crystal suit modification chamber…

Although Li Yao was a top-tier pilot of the Colossi, he was not planning to take any of them with him for the mission.

The Colossi were too huge in size. It was barely possible to compress them into a Cosmos Ring when the Cosmos Ring technology had not met any breakthroughs and the capacity was not enlarged yet.

Even if the Colossi could be dismantled into independent units, it would be still quite troublesome to assemble it bit by bit when confronting an enemy.

If he was engaged with an enemy in the Nascent Soul Stage or an even higher level, before he had time to assemble one arm of a Colossi, his head would have been pierced through by the enemy’s flying sword.

Besides, the Colossi had a very high demand on the logistics system, and it had to undergo rigorous maintenance after every fierce battle. It was impossible for Li Yao to finish the maintenance and refill the spiritual energy all by himself every time.

Most critically of all, the Colossi, which were often ten to twenty meters tall, were too huge to move inconspicuously right below the enemy’s nose.

Everything had its advantages and disadvantages. The Colossi were indeed marvelous weapons in the battles in the sea of stars, but just because the Colossi appeared did not mean that the crystal suits would no longer be important.

They were two types of magical equipment with different characteristics and usages. In the future battles, they were destined to be used together and would co-exist for a long time.

Li Yao had prepared three Mystic Skeleton Battlesuits for different purposes other than the engineering suit named ‘Black Spider’, which had been designed for the assembly of the star beacon.

In fact, Li Yao’s special Mystic Skeleton Battlesuits had nothing similar to the MP model of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit a dozen years ago. It was more of a serial name in honor of the tradition.

The three Mystic Skeleton Battlesuits were the products of dozens of the best crystal suit masters, including Li Yao, Professor Mo Xuan, and the crystal suit experts of the Flying Star Sector.

Even many experts from the Refining Department of Deep Sea University, who shared different ideologies in respect to refining with the Grand Desolate War Institution, joined the project and offered valuable suggestions and opinions from a different perspective.

To increase Li Yao’s chances of survival while he was alone in the foreign land, what was of the utmost importance was not the crystal suit itself but a 3D printing furnace system that was nicknamed ‘treasure box’ by the refiners.

With the furnace, which was based on 3D printing technology, Li Yao would be able to refine—or rather, ‘print’—the necessary components to repair his crystal suit.

Relatively basic magical equipment whose structure was simple could even be directly ‘printed’ without any further refining as long as the corresponding ingredients were available.

It was like the ‘treasure box’ in the legends that would offer all kinds of magical equipment that one desired.

With the ‘treasure box’, even if Li Yao landed on a barren, desolate land, he would still be able to build the simplest crystal suit workshop as quickly as possible.

At 7:20 p.m., on Kunlun, inside Li Yao's personal residence…

Li Yao and Su Changfa, one Cultivator and one Immortal Cultivator, enjoyed some tea and wine while they sat down and discussed the Great Dao.

Lu Qingchen, Su Changfa's true disciple who had yet to decide whether to be a Cultivator or an Immortal Cultivator, was serving the two of them. His big eyes were blinking while he was deep in thought.

It was a condition that Su Changfa had made.

He was willing to teach Li Yao the precious experience of Imperial Colonization University on the expansion in the sea of stars. In return, he wanted his only true disciple Lu Qingchen to be present and audit during the three months of teaching sessions.

"My disciple has his own understanding about where his belief will go. He is unwilling to be swayed easily.

"Li Yao, our ideologies are vastly different. The communication between us will certain raise the most dazzling sparks.

"If my disciple is allowed to be present and feels the collision of the path of the Cultivators and the path of the Immortal Cultivators in person, it may be of some help for him to consolidate his belief.

"If you believe that the path of the Cultivators is the rightful one, then it is very possible that you can 'drag him back to the correct path' by allowing him to stay here!"

Chapter 1328 - Life Legacy

Now that Su Changfa was putting it in such a way, Li Yao could not find a reason to refuse him.

Besides, he was quite interested in Lu Qingchen, a unique, mysterious young man who did not seem to fit in the world.

Lu Zui, Lu Qingchen's grandfather, was the most sophisticated, most frightening, and most pathetic opponent that Li Yao had ever come across.

He was almost an 'Immortal Cultivator' born and raised in the federation. He proved with his doings that an abyss and a mental devil were lurking at the bottom of everybody's heart. One moment of carelessness, and they could be doomed forever.

Right now, Lu Zui had been duly punished, and Lu Qingchen's foster father was still serving time in prison on a mining star at the edge of the Flying Star Sector.

Accusing the family members of a criminal was not a practice in the federation. Lu Qingchen's birth parents were credible soldiers who sacrificed themselves valiantly in a beast tide outbreak. Naturally, Lu Qingchen was not to answer for his foster parent's crimes.

Lu Qingchen turning into Su Changfa's true disciple was something beyond Li Yao's expectations.

However, after vetting Lu Qingchen's background carefully, Li Yao could not help but feel that it was perfectly normal for the guy to waver between the two different ideologies.

Li Yao and the authorities did not stop Su Changfa from recruiting a true disciple.

On one hand, such a thing could never be stopped. Even if they did not reveal a real ‘master-disciple’ relationship to anybody, Su Changfa could still teach him and offer enlightenment in secret.

A violent prohibition would only be a sign of their own weakness. Lu Qingchen might be stopped on the surface, but the only result would be that more young people would secretly join Su Changfa’s cause.

Now that they had decided to regard Su Changfa as a ‘negative example’, they certainly would not be so petty. Besides, they could also observe the Immortal Cultivators’ heritage pattern from Su Changfa and Lu Qingchen’s relationship, which could be beneficial for the competition with the Imperium of True Human Beings in the future, too.

Other than the conflicts of thoughts, Lu Qingchen, who had been raised by Lu Zui, was indeed a very capable young man.

After Ding Lingdang gathered the family members of the participants of the Patriots Partnership and established the Patriots Front, Lu Qingchen had joined the organization without a second thought.

Ding Lingdang was a pure warrior. Other than her unparalleled personal charisma, she had neither the capabilities, nor the interest, time, and energy, for the construction and management of the organization.

Most of the time, the jobs were entrusted to the appropriate talents among the family members. Lu Qingchen was naturally one of them.

After only a few years, although he had not graduated from college yet, he had already started playing a vital role in the Patriots Front. Right now, he was the PR manager of the ‘Young Federation Association’, a periphery organization of the Patriots Front. He was almost a new, rising star.

Li Yao was not wary or cautious of Lu Qingchen just because the young man was raised by Lu Zui.

With his Cultivation and social position, would it not be hilarious for him to be deeply vigilant of a college student who only just stepped into his twenties?

Now that Lu Qingchen hoped to make a personal choice after profoundly learning the path of the Cultivators and that of the Immortal Cultivators, Li Yao was willing to satisfy his carefulness and study spirits.

Li Yao had every faith in the Cultivators’ path. He believed that Lu Qingchen would certainly make the most correct choice.

Today was Li Yao and Su Changfa’s last session regarding the studies of colonization.

“When you are new to a foreign land, you will have to fake the identity of a native of the local civilization in order to sneak in and observe their social form and capability. Then, what kind of identity is most suitable?” Su Changfa asked.

“If possible, it will be best to act as a member of the half-civilized ethic groups that are located at the fringe of the local civilization,” Li Yao replied.

“Why?” Su Changfa raised an eyebrow.

“After the booming development in the age of the Star Ocean Imperium,” Li Yao elaborated, “all three thousand Sectors were highly developed and civilized. Although the Star Ocean Imperium completely crashed in the gory Armageddon Rebellion, a lot of relics and secret treasures were left behind.

“Based on those relics and secret treasures, even the Sectors with only one planet should still be able to develop a thorough organizational structure and an advanced social form!

“In such a world, the prosperous area at the center of the civilization must have a large population and be under the government’s strict control. The noble families have their own lineages. An unparalleled expert jumping out of nowhere would certainly raise suspicion. Somebody will be bound to trace their origins and look for their master and their background. So, it will be very easy for them to be seen through!

“Therefore, if possible, it’s be best to disguise as an expert from the barbaric groups at the edge of the civilization. On one hand, such an identity has far fewer loopholes. On the other hand, the stranger’s wariness will be reduced, and it will be easier to collect intelligence about the stranger.”

“Do you have to appear as a top expert? Can you pretend to be an unattractive, incapable civilian?” Su Changfa’s eyes suddenly shined as he asked his next question.

“No,” Li Yao replied. “An ant can never understand an elephant’s world. If I pretend to be an anonymous Mr. Nobody, how can I find out the top warriors and the political situation at the core of the world?

“There are only two ways to figure out the real capabilities of a world in the shortest amount of time.

“I can either find a top warrior of the world, ambush him, assume his identity, and walk around as him.

“Or, I can embark on my path to the center of the world from the desolate area of the world as a warrior of the barbaric groups.”

“Will you be able to find out the overall capability of the unknown civilization after you reach their core center?” Su Changfa smiled and continued.

Li Yao shook his head and said, “Not necessarily. If the Sector has been at peace all the time, and the experts all keep a low profile, then I may not be able to tell their real capabilities even if we sit and talk nicely while enjoying the wine.”

“What should you do in such a case?” Su Changfa asked the most critical question.

“In such a case, I will have to find a way to intensify the conflicts and change the peaceful status quo,” Li Yao said calmly. “The most commonly used, and probably the best, approach is to tempt all the experts of the unknown civilization with fake ‘treasures’ or ‘relics’!

“The explorer can prepare a batch of vivid ‘fake treasures’ in advance, preferably mixing the real scraps of the secret treasures of the Star Ocean Imperium and even the primeval era, and bury them into a certain place of the target world. Then, the explorer can release the news in every place of the world, claiming that a certain place has an invaluable relic.

“Not only are there priceless treasures inside the relic, there are also techniques, medicines, and magical equipment that all Cultivators dream about. Whoever finds their way into the relic and receives the legacies will immediately become the dominator of the Sector!

“Where there are people, there is conflict. Even the experts who are uninterested in the secret treasures and the relic will not stand by and watch their opponents gaining access to the treasures while doing nothing. Therefore, all the experts will crowd toward the relic. Beyond their control, they would be more and more deeply mired!

“The explorer will observe coldly in the teams of the treasure hunters and exhaust the top warriors of the unknown civilization in the quest. Even if they are not exhausted, he will still be able to see the real trump cards of the Sector in order to ascertain the following operation plans.”

Su Changfa listened without leaving a comment. Finally, he nodded and said with a smile, “Very good. Very good. Li Yao, you are a completely qualified adventurer in the sea of stars right now even in the standard of the Imperium of True Human Beings!”

At 11:20 p.m., outside of Kunlun, deep inside the crab nebula, inside the space zone near the gravity range of the pulsar…

The three months of special training had finally been concluded. Li Yao finished all the preparations for the exploration mission deep into the dark nebula.

There were only ten days left before he would set off for the farthest, longest, and perhaps most soul-stirring interstellar teleportation in the history of the three Sectors!

There was only one last thing left to do right now.

Li Yao looked at the pulsar not far away.

Through the observation of his spiritual root, he did see the tides of lights made of a hundred million colors blossoming like lotus flowers and burning like an ocean of flames as described by Ding Lingdang. They were like thunderstorms, like thousands of primeval beasts that rushed from the beginning of the universe to the infinities of the future, sweeping across the entire universe!

The birth and destruction of the whole universe seemed to be displaying right in front of his eyes.

Indescribable horror, emotion, loneliness, and peacefulness flooded into Li Yao’s body without a sound.

Summoning the spiritual energy inside his limbs and internal organs, Li Yao forced it to flood into the depths of his brain incessantly. By stimulating his soul, he produced his own small universe, which was echoing, resonating, and melding with the universe in the outside world.

In a trance and not knowing exactly what was happening outside, he finally perceived the great harmony of the universe after who knew how long.

Calming himself down and focusing his attention on his abdomen, Li Yao bound the great harmony with his soul and pressed the whole essence of life and his understanding about everything in the universe into the great harmony. He then urged it to move downward to crash at the critical part three inches below the abdomen.

In the meantime, the dynamic simulation system made of air that he formulated with his spiritual energy was also stimulating his most sensitive nerve endings.

Finally!

When the most intense essence of his life and his understanding about the mysterious universe were sealed into the great harmony, his nerve endings were boosted to the maximum, too. Li Yao bellowed and, exerting all his physical strength, spurted out the great harmony!

Because of the absence of gravity, the great harmony immediately turned into translucent, bright-golden pearls.

Li Yao covered it with a special container and preserved the great harmony well.

Sensing the immense vigor of the great harmony, which was simmering inside the container and seemed like it would break out at any point, Li Yao smiled.

Both him and Ding Lingdang were in the middle of the rise of their career. They had been too busy training and studying in the past years to consider having any children.

In the future decades, the two of them were destined to travel in different Sectors, and it was unlikely for them to give birth to and raise offspring.

However, the exploration of the universe was a highly perilous endeavor after all. Li Yao did not dare to guarantee that he would certainly return in one piece.

Therefore, by preserving the essence of his life that was the strongest, most powerful, and contained all his understanding about the heaven and the earth, should anything happen to him, their blood would still be able to be passed on!

Chapter 1329 - Future of the Disciples

Li Yao had no more concerns after part of his life essence, together with Ding Lingdang's seed, was delivered to the refrigerated warehouse of the Glorious Sunlight Group. He had made a deal with them that the frozen goods would be retrieved and mixed if anything happened to him or Ding Lingdang.

In the few days that followed, Li Yao travelled in the Heaven's Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and Blood Demon Sector and visited his friends and acquaintances.

The journey through space would be a long and dull one. Even if everything went well, it would take at least thirty to fifty years. If there were any setbacks, it would not be surprising at all if he spent seventy to eighty years. It was even possible that Li Yao would find absolutely nothing after a hundred years of searching, in which case, Li Yao would still activate the star beacon, return to the federation, and prepare to fight against the expedition fleet from the Imperium.

After all his adventures in the three Sectors, Li Yao had made a lot of friends, old and new. Many of the seniors were already old right now, and they could not enter hibernation for the next hundred years because they would have to actively participate in the great development of the New Federation. They might not be able to live another hundred years.

The farewell was probably the last reunion for them, so their feelings were understandably confused. However, the destination of all Cultivators was the sea of stars. Departures were nothing too emotional for them. Therefore, they simply discussed the future over delicious wine and bade each other farewell after they enjoyed themselves.

During the three months while Li Yao was having the special training, the testing of the Heaven’s Artillery and Spark was completed, and the magical equipment that he would be taking, such as the star beacons, was all prepared. The final launch date was set to be ten days later.

It was the moment when the only moon of the mother planet in the Heaven’s Origin Sector was closest to her and when the tidal bore was the strongest.

At that time, a great explosion would erupt deep below the Heaven’s Artillery in order to trigger a man-made earthquake. The most violent power of magma would flood upward into the Heaven’s Artillery.

By combining the methods of spiritual energy absorption of both the Eye of Blood Demon and the Heaven’s Artillery, and fully exploiting the potential of the space jump array on Spark itself, the tiny ship would be able to break the invisible, unpredictable barrier between the three-dimensional world and the four-dimensional world.

Five days before the launch, in Sunrise Village next to the magical equipment graveyard in Floating Spear City, an important town for training in the southeast of the Star Glory Federation in the Heaven’s Origin Sector…

It was Li Yao’s hometown and where his dream began.

He had spent his past five years there in the company of his childhood playmates and seniors, especially the lovely old men who had once helped him.

He had once been kicked out of the door by the Crimson Nimbus No.2 High School before the College Entrance Exam. It was the Miners’ High School which took him in later.

After he rose to fame, the Miners’ High School in Floating Spear City had become well-known, too. It had also been invested in by Li Yao’s tremendous resources and manpower and developed into one of the most reputable high schools in the federation.

The Miners’ High School today was sort of a private school co-funded by Li Yao and the Glorious Sunlight Group. It had also established a partnership with the Grand Desolate War Institution and was some sort of affiliated school to the Grand Desolate War Institution now.

According to the leadership of the school, the name of the school could have long been changed into ‘Li Yao High School’ or ‘Glorious Sunlight School’.

However, at Li Yao’s insistence, the original school name was kept, and the policy that most of the admitted students should be from the middle and bottom level of society was not changed, a gesture to show that he did not forget where he came from.

Li Yao had spent a lot of time in the Miners’ High School in the past five days, too, and taught the poor children who commuted all the way there from the magical equipment graveyard, the slums, the orphanages, and the dilapidated buildings. He saw much of himself in the hotblooded, hardworking, and persistent teenagers and felt quite emotional watching them.

Right now, the young people were still unattractive seedlings if not weeds, but would they grow into prospering trees that could support the sky on their own by the time he returned a hundred years later?

What drastic changes would the Star Glory Federation have been through by then?

Was it possible that he would be a completely outdated ‘old man’ by then?

The feeling of ‘one day for me and a thousand years for the world’, and knowing that it would happen for real, led to slight changes in Li Yao’s mindset.

He suddenly found Gui Suishou and his people’s perseverance more or less understandable.

Compared to the rise and decline of a whole civilization, an individual’s endeavors and efforts were truly nothing worth mentioning!

His new feeling was maximized when he met his three disciples.

In the past five years, Li Yao’s three disciples had distinguished themselves in their respective fields.

They were now scattered in the three Sectors and busy doing their own business. It was not easy for them to find time to meet each other.

It was their last meeting with their master for a long time. Naturally, they were all weeping, unwilling to let him go.

Just like Ding Lingdang, Wu Mayan had participated in the strengthened soldier training on Kunlun. However, he was a qi-trainer, and his path of training was different from that of the common Cultivators. After only three years of training, he felt that his progress was slower and slower. Therefore, he chose a different approach and returned to Iron Plateau, his hometown.

In the two years that followed, just like Yan Xibei, the previous best expert on Iron Plateau, he trained himself alone on the dark continent on Iron Plateau while he cooperated with Xiong Wuji and the Glorious Sunlight Group on the great development of Iron Plateau.

Today, he was still a young man in his twenties, but he had secured accomplishments that were far more shocking than the achievements of Yan Xibei and Xiong Wuji by reaching the unprecedented, unbelievable 300th level of the Refinement Stage!

Of course, by the criterion of the qi-trainers, an increase of every meter in the diameter of the range of one’s spiritual gas meant one level-up. It did not seem very convincing.

However, it was also a fact that the general Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage often could not sustain one minute under the crazy bombardment of Wu Mayan in the 300th level of the Refinement Stage.

Iron Plateau today looked like the opposite of what it had done a dozen years ago. As one of the few habitable planets in the three Sectors, it was a natural paradise that boasted even more resources and denser spiritual energy than the Heaven’s Origin Planet and the Blood Demon Planet did before the apocalypse.

But after the apocalypse, the Flying Star Sector fell apart. With the serious contradiction between the spacers and the homers, it was impossible for the planet to be developed.

Right now, after the tremendous resources of the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector were invested and the tough, physically-strong demons were deployed for the development, the infinite potential of Iron Plateau was immediately activated. The exchange of techniques and the resource deals were flourishing.

Most of the business was controlled by the Glorious Sunlight Group.

The Glorious Sunlight Group had accumulated a lot of wealth through the business, which was later invested back into the development of Iron Plateau.

Iron Plateau was no longer a land of primitive barbarians like a dozen years ago. Even many of the underground shelters and cities established by the Flying Star Coalition Government before the apocalypse had been excavated. The relics and legacies inside were yet another great boost for the development of the New Federation!

Right now, the leader of the six tribes on Iron Plateau was still Xiong Wuji.

After his body was completely destroyed in the battle versus Yan Xibei, he had been able to focus his full attention on the art of the deal. Iron Plateau was ordered and flourishing under his management.

Wu Mayan was his foster son and Li Yao's disciple. Even the Glorious Sunlight Group was in fact run by the Wu family. Naturally, he played an important role on Iron Plateau.

Iron Plateau's potential had yet to be fully exploited. In the next hundred years, it would very likely be restored to its former glory from five thousand years ago and grow into one of the most important planets in the three Sectors.

It was within everyone’s expectation that Wu Mayan’s position would definitely soar, and he would be one of the most powerful men in the New Federation.

Jin Xinyue, on the other hand, was no less influential than Wu Mayan.

Jin Tuyi, her father and the previous dominator of the Blood Demon Sector, was already too sick to be treated. He had undergone the rapid freezing procedure and been confined in the most mysterious war prison in hibernation.

However, Jin Xinyue had inherited all of Jin Tuyi’s methods, and she was a smart person herself.

Although she was merely in the Core Formation Stage, she had a great reliance named Li Yao behind her back. With the support of Skyfire and the Fire Ant King, she had cleverly taken advantage of the original conflicts among the four main demon clans and the power vacuum after the scourge of the Demon God Virus through diplomatic tricks in the past five years. Finally, she was able to reunite the demon clan. Then, throwing out the resource planets at the edge of the Flying Star Sector and the resources on the dark continent on Iron Plateau as bait, she successfully hooked a large batch of middle- and bottom-level demons who pledged their loyalty to her.

At this point, her place as the Dark Lady of the Nine Heavens in the Pantheon of Demons was more than stable.

After absorbing the technology left by Elder Nether Spring to build the Nether World Watch and raising a batch of personal troops who were loyal to her, she was no longer scared of the betrayal of any demon emperor now.

In fact, after learning of the existence of the Alliance of the Holy Covenant, and some of the demons paid a visit to Kunlun and witnessed the Thunder Striker troop—a primeval demon force who fought side by side with human beings—the theoretical grounds for any conflict between demons and human beings barely made any sense now.

Human beings and demons were both descendants refined by the Nuwa Clan. The two parties were essentially the same and simply served as different units in the army. So, what contradiction could be absolutely irresolvable between them?

Human beings boasted independent spirits, emotions, and will, and so did demons. To embrace the Path of Ultimate Benevolence and turn into existences who had no feelings or will and knew nothing but obedience was something unthinkable for every demon emperor.

The discovery of the Covenant Alliance significantly accelerated the integration of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector.

Today, a lot of capital from the Blood Demon Sector had flowed to the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector along with the demons who went out to collect resources. Human beings and demons established a lot of joint ventures to push forward many super projects.

As a leader of the demons, Jin Xinyue would certainly play a vital role in the federation in the hundred years to come.

Also, different from Wu Mayan, she was not interested in the improvement of her personal combat ability but strode to master the entire world.

She had never hidden her goal of turning into the Speaker of the Federation one day from Li Yao.

With the support of the entire Blood Demon Sector and Li Yao’s tremendous resources, it was indeed a dream that could become reality.

Seeing Jin Xinyue, who was even more vigorous, aggressive, and like her father than five years ago, Li Yao could not help but have a lot of thoughts.

Would it be possible that a hundred years would have passed after a sleep in the hibernation cabin and that his disciple would already be commanding the heroes of the world as a Speaker of the Federation when he announced his return?

Chapter 1330 - See You in a Hundred Years!

“Master…” Xie Anan was weeping, her apple-like face red.

Of the three disciples, her aptitude and Cultivation were the lowest. Li Yao had only recruited her as a disciple for her determination.

Li Yao was more than satisfied that she could participate in the research programs of some of the high-end magical equipment. He was not expecting her to become someone great.

Working in the field to one’s liking and finding and surpassing one’s limits were already good enough.

As a refiner, it was actually Xie Anan who had spent the longest time in Li Yao’s company in the past five years.

Her level was the lowest, and her emotions were the most obvious of all. Her affection and unwillingness written all over her face, she sobbed. “Master, are you really leaving just like that?”

“Rest assured. I’ll be back one day!” Li Yao felt somewhat heavy himself, but he pretended to be smiling. “In a few decades, or a hundred years at most, I will certainly announce my return. You will only be in your a hundred and twenties by then. For a high-level Cultivator, it is just the beginning of your golden years. We can always reunite again!

“Anan, while I’m away, you must train with the techniques I’ve left for you. Do not be left behind by them too much. Got it?”

“Rest assured, Master. I’ll certainly try my best!”

Biting her lips softly, Xie Anan clenched her fists.

However, her face collapsed again after being ‘resolute’ for only half a second. “Master, I really can’t bear to let you go. I really don’t understand why you are making such a choice! You already have everything in the Star Glory Federation. Position, power, money, and strength. You can whatever you want easily. Are they not attractive enough for you to stay?”

“The things you mentioned are exactly why I must leave.”

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao stared at his three disciples with his sparkling eyes and said solemnly, “Anan, did you ever do ‘role-playing’ when you were little or simulation board games such as ‘Monopoly’ with your playmates?”

Dazed for a moment, Xie Anan nodded. “Of course I did.”

Li Yao smiled and continued, “When you were role-playing, you must’ve played a lot of roles, even including princesses, didn’t you? When you played ‘Monopoly’, you must’ve earned a lot of money in the game and become a billionaire before, right?”

Xie Anan nodded in a daze again.

Li Yao looked at her and said, “Then why did you stop playing such games?”

Xie Anan frowned and blurted out, “Do—do I need a reason? It’s because I outgrew the games. They were no longer as interesting to me as before.”

“If I tell you that, for me, the titles such as Ultra-Level Federal Hero are like ‘Your Highness’ when you were playing role-playing as a little girl, the tremendous assets brought to me by the Glorious Sunlight Group, the Double Dragons Union, and Skyfire are like the cash you earned while playing games such as ‘Monopoly’, will you find my decision more comprehensible?”

Xie Anan was lost for words for a moment. She, Jin Xinyue, and Wu Mayan all fell into deep thought.

After a long sigh, Li Yao said slowly, “People say that Cultivators have no desires and choose to pursue the unpredictable, ultimate truth instead of enjoying all the temptations of the mortal world!

“When I hadn’t reached the level yet, I had exactly the same questions and thought that the so-called ‘unearthly’ is just bullsh*t. If a Cultivator does not know how to appreciate the beautiful world but simply throws away fame, fortune, and entertainment as if they are well-worn shoes, what’s the difference between such a Cultivator and a eunuch?

“It was not until my Cultivation reached such a level that I began to realize that Cultivators do not ‘have no desires’. On the very contrary, our desires are hundreds and thousands of times stronger than ordinary people’s. We are essentially so ‘horny’ and ‘lustful’ that we want to pursue, swallow, and burn with everything we have!

“However, our desires can no longer be satisfied by the wealth, entertainment, and power of the mortal world, just like your desires cannot be satisfied by the title of ‘Your Highness’ while you are role-playing or the vast wealth in a game of ‘Monopoly’!

“If a bunch of three-year-olds invite you to role-play, saying that they are willing to crown you with the most fabulous titles such as princess, queen, fairy… and if they play ‘Monopoly’ with you, offering you all the cash and real estate, I’m afraid that you will still be too bored to play the games with them, right?

“In the eyes of little kids, you are someone with no desires because what they cherish and pursue is not worth mentioning at all from the bottom of your heart.

“But you know that you have long surpassed the level of the little kids. Of course, you have your desires, your goals, and your dreams, but they are things that can never be gratified by role-playing and Monopoly.

“Even the greediest bandit will not fight for the toy cash in a game of Monopoly with little kids, right? It’s the same!”

“How can they be the same?” Xie Anan said in a hurry. “Role-playing and Monopoly are both false, but the world that we are living in is real! How can becoming a ‘queen’ in role-playing and becoming a… let’s say, Speaker of the federation in the real world be the same?”

“They are the same, in that they equally cannot satisfy my appetite and desires.” Li Yao smiled. With the greediest brilliance beaming out of his eyes, he mumbled, “What about Speaker of the Federation?

“The federation has been established for five hundred years. There have already been almost seventy Speakers, and there will be another seventy in the five hundred years to come.

“Even turning into the Speaker of the Federation only means that you are just one of the hundred and fifty people.

“The Star Glory Federation, on the other hand, is just an insignificant country in a remote area in the sea of stars. How many Speakers, prime ministers, presidents, and even emperors have been out there in the three thousand Sectors over the past ten thousand years?

“Thousands? Tens of thousands? Hundreds of thousands?

“Becoming one of the hundreds of thousands people and repeating the ‘great accomplishment’ that hundreds of thousands of people have achieved… can I be satisfied by such a life? This is a great joke!”

Xie Anan, Wu Mayan, and Jin Xinyue were all greatly moved.

They never knew that their master’s ambitions were so huge!

“Then, what is it that you are pursuing?” the three of them asked respectfully at the same time.

A hint of confusion flowed out of Li Yao’s eyes at first before it turned into intense excitement. He said with a smile, “I don’t know. The sea of stars is a vast and splendid place. Even I don’t know what kind of wonders and interesting beings are lying in wait in the universe! Therefore, I can’t say for sure what I’m pursuing after right now. The best I can do right now is broaden my horizons, step by step, know myself, and understand what it is that *not* I’m pursuing.”

Pausing for a moment, Li Yao covered the back of his head with both hands before he leaned back in his chair and said with a smile, “Perhaps, this is the most fascinating part about being a Cultivator!”

…

There were three days to go before Li Yao’s departure.

He held a grand party in Floating Spear City, gathering the closest friends in order to say goodbye to them.

Professor Mo Xuan, Fiend Blade Peng Hai, ‘Solar Eclipse’ Jiang Shaoyang, Meng Jiang from high school, who are from the Star Glory Federation; the Fire Ant King from the Blood Demon Sector; and Xiong Wuji, Lei Dalu, and Bai Kaixin from the Flying Star Sector all attended the party.

“Li Yao, you still didn’t leave the opportunity to me!” Professor Mo Xuan said with a bitter smile. “I knew that you would make such a choice!”

“My apologies, Professor!” Li Yao laughed. “I can concede in almost anything except the quest of the Great Dao!”

“Li Yao, I will take great advantage of this!” ‘Solar Eclipse’ Jiang Shaoyang’s eyes were shining and said, “Your training progress will be very slow while you are in the hibernation state, if it is moving forward at all, whereas I will certainly make great breakthroughs in the next hundred years. You will certainly be no match for me in a hundred years!”

“That will be for the best!” Li Yao licked his lips and grinned. “I’ll simply allow you to train yourself for a hundred years before we have another competition!”

Lei Dalu and Bai Kaixin bashed their chest and said, “Li Yao, leave everything in the Flying Star Sector to us. Just rest assured!”

Ever since Li Yao soared in the Flying Star Sector, the Great Horn Exo Society had begun to develop unstoppably.

At first, they cooperated with the Glorious Sunlight Group and monopolized most of the transportation business between Iron Plateau and the outside world. With the opportunity, they then established the trade routes among the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector.

Eventually, the Great Horn Exo Society and the Glorious Sunlight Group even had a merger. Lei Dalu and Bai Kaixin became the core management of the Glorious Sunlight Group.

Right now, Lei Dalu was responsible for the armed transportation business, which was one of the Great Horn Exo Society’s focuses in the past, and Bai Kaixin had slowly taken over the operations of key businesses within the Glorious Sunlight Group.

It was not because Li Yao distrusted the members of the Wu family who were running the Glorious Sunlight Group in the beginning but because Bai Kaixin, who had apparently inherited all his father’s wisdom and cunningness, boasted rarely-seen talents in administration and management that were impossible to be fully carried out in a small Great Horn Exo Society. After he joined the Glorious Sunlight Group, he was like a dragon or a ferocious tiger who had been set free from the shackles and immediately distinguished himself!

Li Yao, Lei Dalu, and Bai Kaixin were life-and-death friends. Naturally, it was not difficult for him to put Bai Kaixin in charge of the Glorious Sunlight Group.

“Everybody…”

Li Yao raised the cup, gazing at the familiar faces in front of him.

The buddies who used to horse around with him, the teachers who had offered him wholehearted tutelage, the seniors who showed him the mysteries of the world of the Cultivators for the first time, the comrades who went through life-blighting battles with him, and even the competitors who were at loggerheads with him in the past all gave him complicated feelings.

“Let’s meet again… in a hundred years!”

Li Yao knocked his head back and finished the wine in the cup!

Chapter 1331 - Destination: End of the Universe!

There was one last day to go before Li Yao’s departure.

On the Grand Desolate Plateau, right below the starry sky, he and Ding Lingdang left two lines of overlapping footprints on the desert, hand in hand.

There was not a single town in the hundreds of square kilometers around. The night sky was so clear that it looked like a large block of jelly that could not bear the weight of the stars. As a result, the stars seemed to be all raining toward them.

Looking at the deep and boundless sea of stars, the two of them were silent for a long time.

Everything was already said in the quietness.

After a long silence, Li Yao finally opened his mouth and said, “I’ve thought many times that it is such a pity that we can only live one life where we are bound by the heavy realities!

“The universe is so vast. Inside a grain of sand might be a whole new world, and every world means an episode of a new life. I wish that I could live an unlived life in the depths of the dark nebula and bring the new ‘me’ back to meet you.”

“In that case,” Ding Lingdang replied, “what you would be meeting would certainly be a new ‘me’, too, one who has been living a few wonderful lives in different Sectors!”

The two of them looked at each other with a smile and sat down on the desert.

The moment seemed to become eternity.

…

“Dear audience in front of the light beam projectors and the crystal processors, we are now live streaming from the Heaven’s Artillery, the national launch field at the center of the Grand Desolate Plateau. In half an hour, the very first mission of the well-anticipated ‘Heavenly Road Plan’ will be performed here!

“The launch will be a groundbreaking event for everybody in the federation and the three Sectors!

“The Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector have finally broken free from our internal conflict and cast our eyes upon the depths of the sea of stars!

“From today on, there is only one opponent that we are going to fight and conquer—the universe!

“March to the universe and toward the infinities of infinities. Leave the traces of our civilization at the end of the edge of the cosmos!”

In most of the places of three Sectors, the blood-boiling if not crazy roars were echoing while the live stream was displayed to everybody.

In the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector, human beings, demons, ordinary people, Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, demon emperors, teachers, students, workers, farmers, miners… Everybody in every place dropped their work at hand and focused their attention on the groundbreaking launch.

On the launch platform of the Heaven’s Artillery, which was dozens of kilometers in diameter, the tiny ‘Spark’ was barely visible, like a grain of sand inside an ocean.

But it was much more than a grain of sand; it was a bullet that represented the very first roar of a nascent civilization at the edge of the sea of stars toward the whole universe!

Inside the Miners’ High School, all the students were gathered in the playground, clenching their fists, holding their breath, and waiting for the arrival of the biggest hero in their heart.

“He’s here. He’s here. Li Yao is here!”

On the light beam, Li Yao was striding close from the end of the pathway wearing a black, fit protective suit.

The tall and handsome pose, the magnificent aura around him, and the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who were surrounding him like stars surrounding the moon made the high school students’ eyes shine in indescribable brilliance.

It was exactly the same brilliance as when Li Yao saw the grand entrance of ‘Fiend Blade’ Peng Hai for the first time in the past.

“He’s so awesome!”

“Strong, dominating, and invincible! His eyes seem to be electric and just shocked me brutally! My heartbeat almost stopped!”

“How much money can such an unparalleled expert such as Vulture Li Yao earn in a year? Several million? Wouldn’t he be able to buy whatever he wants?”

“Several million? You’ve got to be kidding me! Several billion, at the very least! Chances are that a random training facility around him will cost several million apiece already!”

“If I can become such an unparalleled expert for one day, or even one second, I will die without regrets!”

“Hehe. You are too unambitious. Didn’t you not learn anything when Master Li Yao came back to school and gave us lectures a couple of days ago? We are all made of flesh and blood, and we have two arms and one head just like him. Nothing is impossible!

“What he can accomplish is also accomplishable for us, as long as we work hard enough!

“Chasing after him and surpassing him are his greatest hopes for us and the best reward we can return for enjoying such excellent training conditions here for free!”

In the downtown area of Floating Spear City, not far away from the Miners’ High School, a bunch of neighbors had been gathered in the hair salon of Meng Jiang, Li Yao’s best buddy from high school.

Everybody had closed their shops and gathered together, enjoying the live stream.

When they saw Li Yao walk into Spark slowly through a vacuum channel, and when the full view of Spark and the Heaven’s Artillery was displayed again, they all exclaimed in amazement.

As insignificant shop owners in the city, the folk might not have high diplomas, and they did not know the real significance of Li Yao’s mission.

However, when the Star Glory Federation’s Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag rose up slowly in front of the magnificent Heaven’s Artillery, the hairdressers, the bread dealers, the shuttle mechanics… and everybody else still had an amazing feeling of pride.

“I’m told that… Li Yao is going somewhere far, far away. Maybe as far away as millions of lightyears. How long is the distance exactly?”

“Such a huge pot must be at least dozens of kilometers long. It can shoot someone out of the sky in only one blow, right? That’s truly awesome!”

“Li Yao is quite a mysterious man. I don’t know whether he is smart or stupid to abandon everything and go somewhere so far away, searching for a world that may or may not exist. What if he dies? We really can’t figure out what is in the mind of the big shots even if we think our brains out!”

“Hey. How much do you think such a launch will cost? I went to visit the Magical Equipment Exposition last time and even saw a big guy named Colossus. That’s truly something. After only one attack, a starship was blown into smithereens!

“If such a launch is saved, wouldn’t we be able to produce a few more Colossi? Wouldn’t it be better?”

All the neighbors were discussing with each other.

Everybody was scratching their head hard but failed to find any answer.

Meng Jiang and his wife, on the other hand, simply listened with a smile.

None of the neighbors knew that Meng Jiang and Li Yao had been best friends in high school who were as close as blood brothers.

Meng Jing had kept the secret at the bottom of his heart and was preparing to do the same for the rest of his life.

Sipping the wine, he tapped a plate with the chopsticks and said slowly, “What you said is too complicated for me, but I think that the ‘Heavenly Road Plan’ is not made for us but for them.”

Everybody looked at where his chopsticks were pointing at.

Six or so children of the neighbors were playing together, pretending that they were Li Yao, Spark, the Heaven’s Artillery; or the stars, the moon, and the sun; while they were giggling merrily.

In the Flying Star Sector, the headquarters of the Star Fighters’ Alliance was the largest starship manufacture center in the three Sectors.

On the circular dock, a super starship as attractive as Burning Prairie was being produced. The keel had already been formed, and the starship was slowly taking shape.

It was a sister starship to Burning Prairie.

The brand-new starship that included the heritage of the Pangu civilization and the techniques of the Imperium of True Human Beings was destined to play an even greater role than Burning Prairie!

At this moment, all the refiners and workers, as well as the technical officials sent by the ‘Burning Prairie Fleet’ to supervise the production of the starship, gathered together and watched the launch of the Heaven’s Artillery.

As starship specialists and people of the Flying Star Sector who were born to roam the sea of stars, they found the unprecedented, soul-stirring voyage particularly meaningful for them.

“Piloting the fastest starship of the three Sectors to the unvisited mysterious space zone… Li Yao is such a lucky man!”

“Just wait for it. In several decades, he will certainly send the specific coordinates back to us from the depths of the dark nebula!”

“We will build a large, well-equipped super fleet as crazily as we can in the next decades. As soon as we receive the coordinates information, they will all be able to jump over at once!”

“If we have ten super starships on the same level as Burning Prairie, we can be confident to fight whatever enemies are hiding deep inside the dark nebula!”

“Ten? Ten is far from enough!

“You don’t know this yet, do you? In the Flying Star Sector alone, two large starship manufacture centers are under construction. Another three are being built in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector!

“On Kunlun, there’s another state-of-the-art starship manufacture center, which is designated to the research of the starship debris of the primeval era and the duplication!

“in several decades, the super warships the level of Burning Prairie will be nothing more than ‘canoes’. Not just ten or fifty, we may have a hundred of them by then!”

In a corner, a technical official sent by the Burning Prairie Fleet for supervision was sitting on the ground rather sloppily. He was blowing a whistle while he listened to the chatter of the workers with his eyes half closed.

He was as ugly as a weasel. When he closed his eyes, he was almost repulsive.

However, when he opened his eyes, the brilliance beaming out of his eyes vastly reshaped his aura. His originally unbelievably ugly face seemed to have become the background to highlight his eyes, filling them with soul-stirring charisma.

This was the second time that Bai Xinghe had watched Li Yao take off at the center of public attention, the first time being when he returned from the Flying Star Sector to the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

When the earth was shaking on the light beam, a cluster of light resembling a supernova outbreak burst out of the Heaven’s Artillery, and ‘Spark’ was floating at the center of the ball. Everybody exclaimed beyond their control, praying that Li Yao’s teleportation would be a success.

However, Bai Xinghe was utterly untouched because he knew that Li Yao was too fortunate a man to have an accident in such a place.

“Last time on Spider Den, because of the disruption of the scumbags including Xiao Xuance, I never had a chance to have a gratifying battle with you!”

Scratching his uneven face, Bai Xinghe smiled and said in a voice only audible to himself, “So, I’m looking forward to another competition in a hundred years, my… good disciple!”

Chapter 1332 - Firefly in the Darkness

Chapter 1332: Firefly in the Darkness

At this moment, in the Heaven's Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector, too many friends, foes, family, teachers, seniors, competitors, enviers, and even haters were reciting Li Yao's name to themselves.

But Li Yao certainly could not hear any of it.

He had experienced many space jumps by breaking the void, but this journey was certainly the most violent, powerful, and dangerous one of all!

Although he was hiding deep inside Spark and soaking inside deep blue buffer nutrition liquids, he still felt such great shock that the world seemed to be falling apart for him.

All the rune arrays on Spark that could utter a sound were shrieking, only to be dwarfed by the friction from Spark's air resistance. However, the sound of friction, which resembled a volcanic eruption, was suppressed by the interference of the force fields before it had the chance to savage for a few seconds!

Spark hovered inside the enormous light ball triggered by the Heaven's Artillery at a higher and higher speed. Drawing a spiral trace, it gradually flew to the center of the light ball.

Li Yao felt that he was a moth darting toward the fire, only to be rushing into the sun directly.

"Ahhhhh!"

Even such a tough man who had experienced countless bloody battles was roaring at the top of his voice when he was faced with the hotness and the pure brilliance.

The ear-splitting sounds outside made him unable to hear his own roars. He could only roar louder and louder, until his throat was in such pain that somebody seemed to be scratching it with a dagger, before the uneasiness in his heart was more or less dispersed.

At this moment, Spark had reached the exact central point of the enormous light ball that was dozens of kilometers in diameter!

The crazily flashing dashboard and the light beams that were filled with streaks and snowflakes came to a sudden stop.

Even the deafening fulminations outside turned into absolute silence in just 0.01 seconds. It was so quiet that he even felt weird.

It was like the concepts of time and space had all frozen. Li Yao seemed to have become a small mosquito that was sealed inside a 'time-space amber'.

However, the weird feeling lasted only 0.01 seconds.

With the exclamations of tens of billions of spectators from the three Sectors, the force field that the Heaven's Artillery triggered suddenly collapsed inward.

Like a star at the end of its life collapsing into a black hole because its mass surpassed the tipping point, the light ball that covered almost a hundred kilometers collapsed into the size of a mustard seed in only a blink of an eye.

The immense force ripped apart an invisible gap in the flawless space, creating a super-tiny, super-long wormhole!

The formidable attraction force from the wormhole immediately grabbed Spark, which was very next to it. Then, the wormhole turned into a cluster of brilliance, spurting out like fireworks in the daylight.

When the brilliance vanished, Spark and Li Yao had been gone from the world!

A brand-new adventure had thus begun!

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

All the units on Spark were sending out alarms.

Creak! Creak! Creak! Creak! Creak! Creak! Creak!

Every metal component was moaning as if they were about to be ripped apart, too.

"Ahhhhhhhhhhhhh!"

Li Yao's face was so twisted that he could not tell whether it was he who was roaring or his every bone, every muscle, every cluster of nerve endings, and even every cell.

Ahead of him was the infinite, boundless universe, where the stars were coming at him like a sandstorm and hitting the spiritual shield of Spark like raindrops.

It was not an illusion but a fact that was taking place in the real world because he could both hear the spluttering sounds when the spiritual shield was crashed into and saw the glamorous, fascinating, yet dangerous flowers blooming on the spiritual shield caused by the starry dust.

In the dark universe, the stars were raining like a sandstorm. A tiny spark was marching forward alone and difficultly in the overwhelming sandstorm!

Li Yao did not know how long the sandstorm of stars lasted.

While he was passing through the wormhole, time had lost all significance.

He was dwelling so much in the splendor and wonderfulness of the sandstorm of stars that he was entirely awed by the magnificence of the universe.

An extremely strong sense of ambition occurred to him while he was stunned.

He did not wish to unravel all the mysteries of the whole universe once and for all.

But even if he could simply appreciate one hundredth, one thousandth, or even one millionth of its beauty, he would be content with his life as a Cultivator!

In a trance, Li Yao felt that his body was being stretched by an invisible force. When he lowered his head, he discovered that the tip of his foot was hundreds of kilometers away.

He was like a high-speed crystal train that was rushing into a long tunnel.

The sandstorm of stars came to a halt without him realizing. There was not a single light spot to be seen. The only thing left was absolute darkness.

Inside the darkness, however, some colors, or entities of energy, that were even deeper than the notion of 'black' stared at Li Yao's teleportation coldly without blinking on the two sides of the 'tunnel', like countless magnificent devils.

Li Yao could not speak or turn his neck. His body was rigid. It was impossible for him to tell whether they were figments of his imagination or real existences. He could only grit his teeth and continue sprinting forward.

After who knew how long, many hands and tentacles extended to Spark from various directions and pierced through Spark's spiritual shield and shell without any trouble. They penetrated Li Yao's skin, muscles, skull, and brains, reaching his soul.

Li Yao felt that his soul was going to be split apart.

He could only recite the spells in silence and recall the fierce battles in the past. He reflected on the family and friends who were waiting for him in the hometown and also the Vulture Plan, which was still hidden in the mist and had yet to be accomplished by him!

"I have a great many battles to fight, a great many things to do, and a great many places to visit!

"Ding Lingdang is waiting for me. My three disciples are waiting for me. The Star Glory Federation is waiting for me. Even the mysterious place called 'Earth' must be waiting for me somewhere, too!

"How can I be lost in this place?" Li Yao bellowed, with brilliance shooting out of his brain. The tentacles made of dark materials retreated after ear-splitting shrieks. Spark moved faster and faster. Not far away in the front, at the end of the 'tunnel', a translucent light ball could vaguely be seen!

BOOM!

Spark shivered violently. It went through the state where time and space were temporarily frozen exactly like when it fell into the wormhole, before it was 'spat out' by something!

Spark gradually slowed down. The parameters on the dashboard, the rune arrays, and the light beams all returned to normal.

According to the parameters, he had reached a brand-new world unseen before.

"Hu—"

Li Yao took a long breath in relief. He felt that every muscle in his body was sore and that he was like a floating corpse that had been soaked in a river for three days and three nights.

Have I reached the destination precisely?

Li Yao struggled to activate the probe magical equipment on Spark, but the indicators of the star's direction and coordinates did not change at all.

It meant that Spark did not detect the existence of a single star.

Observing with his bare eyes, Li Yao found nothing, either. The universe appeared to be absolutely pure darkness, without the slightest sign of a star.

No stars meant no references. Spark seemed to have been embedded into the darkness. There was no sign that it was still flying at all.

It was a trepidation a hundred times more intense than death.

The universe seemed to have been destroyed, and Li Yao was the only survivor.

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao tried to calm himself down while he tapped quickly on the light beam.

It seemed that he had come to the right place.

Of course, the universe there could not have zero stars.

Even if there were no stars nearby, Spark should still be able to receive the light of the stars from billions of years away in various directions.

It was like he would always be able to see the brilliant stars in the night sky when he was on the Heaven's Origin Planet in good weather.

The only plausible explanation was that he had already jumped into the depths of the dark nebula and that some sort of weird elements inside the dark nebula could absorb the freely-travelling light in the universe. Like a ubiquitous cloud, they blocked all the stars.

The situation had been within the tech team's expectations.

It was also the reason the observatory in the Star Prier's House could not lock onto the coordinates of the place directly and why a starship had to be sent on a field trip to explore it.

Dense as the 'cloud' might be, one would still be able to peek at what was behind it as long as they were close enough to the cloud.

It was like when you could not see your own fingers in the absolute darkness, you would still see them again as long as you touched the end of your nose.

On Spark, a navigation map of the Pangu civilization from hundreds of thousands of years ago had been installed, which recorded all the details about the depths of the dark nebula.

Therefore, as soon as he located one or two stars and positioned him precisely with the stars as the references, he would be able to find out where he was and how to get to the mysterious place that had sent a signal to them.

Li Yao typed in the search conditions and the automatic navigation information quickly.

For a long time that followed, he would be in the hibernation state, while Spark would cruise automatically in the sub-light speed.

Li Yao had set the wake-up conditions on the mainframe crystal processor of Spark. Every time a new star was discovered, he would be woken up from the hibernation state.

Of course, he had to take the worst case-scenario into consideration.

The diameter of the dark nebula could be almost a hundred lightyears. If he was too unlucky to find any star in the next hundred years, the mainframe crystal processor would still wake him up.

By then, he would find a random place where the dark nebula was relatively thin and unfold the star beacons to send the coordinates to the federation so that he could be brought back home to cope with the expedition fleet of the Imperium of True Human Beings to come.

I can't be that unfortunate, can I?

Li Yao took out a crystal in which a photo of grinning Ding Lingdang was embedded and held it in his hands. He then quietly performed the Great Dream Tortoise Hibernation Arts that Gui Suishou had taught him and activated Spark's hibernation system.

The deep blue fluids were getting thicker and thicker, colder and colder, turning into a form that was between liquid and solid. Li Yao's face gradually became relaxed, confused, and tranquil.

A tiny firefly, in flickering light, moved forward in the infinite darkness, searching for the unpredictable brightness.

Chapter 1333 - A Lone Star’s Journey

Li Yao’s journey log, year nine.

“This is the first time that Spark has detected the sign of a star inside the dark nebula. It is also the first time that I’ve been woken up from hibernation.

“In the state of sub-light speed, my perception of time is different from the outside world. Besides, in the hibernation state, my brain is absolutely silent. I wouldn’t even have any dreams, much less sense the passage of time.

“For me, the farewell with close friends such as Professor Mo Xuan, the Fire Ant King, Fiend Blade Peng Hai, Lei Dalu, and Bai Kaixin seems to have just taken place a few days ago. It was just yesterday that Ding Lingdang was walking with me hand in hand on the Grand Desolate Plateau, and I just left my hometown on Spark this morning at the center of public attention. I feel that I merely yawned just now.

“The specialists in the federation have installed a special clock on Spark, which can precisely calculate the influence of Spark’s speed on the time and infer the time elapsed in the ‘real world’.

“It was not until I checked the clock that I learned that nine years had actually passed during my ‘yawn’.

“However, in the vast and boundless universe, and especially inside the dark nebula that is filled with weird metal powder, it is quite lucky of me to have found the first star after ‘only’ nine years.

“Although the star is a typical ‘lone star’, which exists in the universe on its own without a galaxy system and therefore is of little use to us, its very existence proves that my speculation is right. I have truly jumped into the depths of the dark nebula, and all kinds of stars and celestial bodies must be within hundreds of lightyears from me, except that they are all blocked by the dark nebula.

“As long as I am close enough to them, I will be able to detect such celestial bodies!

“I have inputted the magnitude of the star, its trajectory, and other parameters into the mainframe crystal processor in order to cross-reference the Pangu civilization’s navigation map.

“Right now, only one star has been found, and it is still more or less difficult for precise localization. I believe that the navigation map will be greatly useful after more stars are found!”

Li Yao’s journey log, year fifteen.

“A second star has been detected so quickly. What a pleasant surprise!

“This is a standard hybrid star. While it is revolving around the largest celestial body at the center of the dark nebula, it boasts its own seven planets, which constitute a small solar system. The seven planets have satellites of their own, too. It is a world that is quite similar to the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

“I have explored the system over the past month. It is a shame that the quantity and brightness of the star are insufficient. All its planets are cold and desolate rocks or air masses. I didn’t find any trace of water on them, or the signs that suggest there are lives or there used to be lives.

“In the field of universal exploration, such worlds are often known as ‘wastelands’. It would be wrong to say that such places had absolutely zero spiritual energy or that the planets could not be modified into habitable planets. But the investment to collect resources and toe modify the planets is too huge. The cost far exceeds the yields. Therefore, they are not of any value for development and immigration.

“Even so, I’m quite happy about the discovery.

“In only fifteen years, I have found two stars in a row. After inputting their astronomical parameters and their relative positions into the crystal processor, and then referring to the Pangu civilization’s navigation map, I finally have a basic idea where specifically I am inside the dark nebula right now.

“It seems that I am not a man of misfortune now on this mission. Even the heavens are watching over the federation. Chances are that I will find the mysterious Sector in only twenty to thirty years!”

Li Yao’s journey log, year forty-one.

“This must be a jinx!

“I shouldn’t have blabbered when I was feeling too good about myself. Fortunes will become sour when you speak about them!

“I have indeed found a third star. Or rather, beyond my expectation, I even discovered a fourth one. It was a dual-star system, where two stars rotated around each other in a very stable companion structure.

“The problem is that I didn’t know it in advance.

“The other star in the dual-star system was hidden deep inside the dark nebula, and the mainframe crystal processor of Spark failed to detect it in time. I was under the illusion that it was yet another lone star.

“Because it was in a very stable state, I planned to cut into its orbit and utilize its gravity field as a ‘stellar slingshot’ so that Spark would be accelerated again without consuming any fuel. The time cost of the exploration would be greatly reduced.

“But I didn’t know that the gravity field of the dual-star system was so complicated that it was almost a fatal area of turbulence. Hardly had Spark got involved when it was hit brutally by a ‘gravity tide’. It almost directly fell into the center of the star, in which case, I would’ve been burnt up without a single hair left.

“Although I narrowly escaped, Spark was seriously damaged. Not only were all the supply components used up, I was even forced to dismantle some of the components from the star beacons in order to sustain the sub-light speed.

“It’s getting tricky now.”

Li Yao’s journey log, year seventy-seven.

“Another thirty-six years have passed in the real world after the terrible accident in the dual-star system.

“Over the past thirty-six years, Spark has spent half of the time performing short-distance space jumps, running here and there inside the dark nebula like a headless fly, and the other half of the time flying at sub-light speed, dispersing the ‘fog’ on the navigation map.

“I have discovered another five stars, four of which boast their own galaxies, but none of them have signs of life or value to be developed.

“But it is nothing unusual in the universe. Life is itself the greatest miracle in the universe. It is often not easy to find.

“This is the first time I have ever found a red giant, a moribund star.

“When the core of a star is burnt up and the last brilliance of its life spreads to the periphery, the star will greatly expand, and the brightness will soar.

“In terms of visual impact, the red giant that occupies almost the entire universe is definitely the most splendid, extraordinary view that I’ve ever seen.

“In front of the red giant, the tiny Spark is not even a grain of sand faced with an ocean; it is essentially a germ placed next to the ocean.

“Looking at the red giant, I was suddenly caught by loneliness.

“Since the exploration mission began, the time cost when I’ve been conscious to examine the few galaxies and perform Spark’s maintenance is about a year and a half. It is not too much suffering.

“But in reality, seventy-seven years have passed!

“Seventy-seven years is enough for a newborn baby to grow into the pillar of their family. Seventy-seven years is also enough to turn a dominating expert into a tombstone, a handful of soil, and a cry of wind.

“Ding Lingdang made a deal with me that she would join the second batch of missions in the ‘Heavenly Road Plan’ to explore the Sectors relatively closer to the three Sectors after I left.

“Did she arrive in the new Sectors safe and sound? What kind of intriguing, soul-stirring adventures did she go through there?

“Could she persuade the civilizations in the new Sectors to join the federation?

“What’s she doing right now? Is she as energetic and radiant as before?

“What about my three disciples—Jin Xinyue, Wu Mayan, and Xie Anan? How have been they doing?

“Has Jin Xinyue distinguished herself in the world of politicians in the federation? Has Wu Mayan achieved his dream and broken into the 1000th level of the Refinement Stage? Is Xie Anan still a crying little girl just like before? Has she made some accomplishments in the circle of refiners?

“What is the Star Glory Federation right now exactly?

“Before I left, rumor already had it that the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector would be completely integrated for the establishment of the New Federation and that the independent calendars would be forfeited and replaced by a ‘federal calendar’. However, the conditions in many aspects were not mature yet. Everything was just a plan yet.

“But seventy-seven years have passed. The brand-new Star Glory Federation should be rising at the edge of the cosmos, shouldn’t it? With the integration of the three Sectors and the development of Kunlun, the Cultivation level of the New Federation must’ve soared. The experts must’ve been popping up like mushrooms after a rain. Haha. Maybe, when I return to the federation, I’ll be like a bumpkin visiting a city for the first time, not knowing what’s around me at all!

“There was a brief time when I thought that it would have been best if the capacity of ‘Spark’ had been improved to two passengers when it was designed. If Ding Lingdang was together with me, it wouldn’t have mattered at all even if the journey took five hundred or a thousand years.

“However, on second thought, the current design seems better.

“On one hand, such a journey in the universe has proved to be too perilous. I’m unwilling to let Ding Lingdang take the risk together with me.

“On the other hand, when I know that somebody in my hometown is waiting for me to return, the difficult, dangerous, and unpredictable situation here doesn’t seem to be a big deal anymore!

“As time goes by, I seem to be finally having my day. There’s more and more good news.

“Firstly, after measuring the astronomical parameters and relative positions of almost ten stars, I am finally able to relate them to the stars marked on the Pangu civilization’s navigation map, thereby ascertaining my coordinates inside the dark nebula.

“Secondly, I feel that, over the past decades, the dark nebula has been getting thinner and thinner itself. The visibility is higher and higher, and it is easier to send out information right now.

“The red giant is an excellent reference. I can choose to unfold the star beacons in its orbit, absorb the spiritual energy it emits, and send the coordinates of the place back to the hometown.

“However, the red giant is not our real target. It will not be of much significance even if the main troops of the federation jump to the place.

“Besides, I’m not aware of the situation in the mysterious world yet. It will be a terrible disaster if they have certain signal-capturing technologies that allow them to trace back to the specific location of the federation!

“For safety reasons, it will be better to find the mysterious world and figure out their civilization level and their stance before I send the information back to the hometown.

“I vaguely feel that I’m very close to the mysterious world now!”

Chapter 1334 - Black Box

Deep inside the sea of stars, a zigzagging, glittering dragon was raging forward.

Upon closer inspection, one would discover that it was actually the debris of a primeval battlefield, which was still emanating colorful radiation although hundreds of thousands of years had passed. Pushed by the storms and the undercurrents in the middle of the stars, the debris congregated into a tiny ‘Milky Way’ that was paved in the middle of the glamorous galaxy.

All of a sudden—

The head of the ‘dragon’ spat out a streak of brightness, which hovered around the river of debris before it spurted out exhaust flames and gradually slowed down. It turned out to be a super-tiny starship that was well-worn and riddled with holes!

On one side of the starship, the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars emblem of the Star Glory Federation could be clearly seen. On the other side of the starship was the pattern of a grimacing star.

The word ‘Spark’ was carved on the head of the starship, but it had been rubbed and corroded so much in the journey of almost a hundred years that it was barely recognizable.

Inside Spark, Li Yao, who had only just woken after a hibernation of ten years, almost burst into tears and roared when he saw the glamorous world in front of him!

He had been woken up immediately after a short-distance jump, not because a new star was found, but because Spark was in a dangerous stone belt and was likely to crash at any time.

Yet, Li Yao was not scared but overjoyed at the situation.

It was because he had discovered that the elements of the ‘river’ were precisely the primeval debris that he had once seen in the periphery of Kunlun, including the corpses of the Pangu Clan, the armor of the Nuwa Clan, and the primeval treasures—Colossi piloted by human beings!

Although the debris was so rotten that it would break apart at the first touch, its very existence suggested that he was not far away from his real destination!

Li Yao shifted Spark to the manual pilot mode. With his amazing skills to maneuver the ‘super shuttles’, he went against the currents to the source of the river of the debris. After cruising for a few days, he finally discovered the Sector where the spiritual energy was unbelievably abundant!

It was an extremely stable galaxy. The star at the center of the galaxy was at the prime years exactly like the star in the Heaven’s Origin Sector was, releasing light and heat to the outside world generously and incessantly.

Also, the star seemed to be made of materials different from what often constituted other stars. They were mixed with some precious constituents that Li Yao was unaware of. When observed with his bare eyes, the star looked fresher and redder, with a hint of multiple colors. The spiritual energy contained in the star was not only much more bountiful than regular stars but also readily absorbable.

It meant that, if any living creatures existed on the planets near the crimson star, they would be able to accumulate some spiritual energy without doing any training as long as they sunbathed every once in a while.

When there was sufficient spiritual energy inside their bodies, the development and evolution of the nerve networks would be boosted, leading to the intelligence of a higher level. After hundreds of generations, formidable spiritual beasts and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures would be born.

If any human beings were living in the place, it would certainly be much more convenient for them to train themselves than it was for the residents in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector!

The star alone was enough to prove that the Sector here was an out-and-out ‘natural paradise’!

Finally. Gotcha!

After inputting the astronomical parameters and the relative coordinates of the star into the mainframe crystal processor, Li Yao was finally able to fix the last missing piece on the Pangu civilization’s navigation map.

It was the economical, political, and transportation center for the Pangu civilization in this particular galaxy arm hundreds of thousands of years ago!

If the Pangu civilization had conceptions such as ‘provinces’, the space zone here should be the ‘provincial capital’ of the entire galaxy arm!

Li Yao was of a mind to sing and dance to celebrate his major discovery.

In front of him, according to the special clock, it had been ninety-nine years, one hundred and twenty-two days, thirty-seven years, and fifty-four minutes in the real world since he departed from the Star Glory Federation!

It was indeed ‘one day in the heavens means a thousand years on the earth’!

After he encountered another setback in a rough galaxy ten years ago, Li Yao had been somewhat caught by desperation and was prepared to return without any findings.

It never occurred to him that, when he was planning to find a random stable space zone to unfold the star beacons and summon the rescuers from his hometown, the mysterious destination would abruptly present itself to him!

I must not be too excited. Calm down. Calm down!

From this moment forth, the fate of me and the federation will be walking on a rope above a bottomless abyss. One moment of carelessness, and we will be screwed forever!

When he truly found himself at the door of the mysterious world, Li Yao grew somewhat uneasy and nervous after the initial ecstasy.

The abundant spiritual energy here was not necessarily a good thing because it meant that there might be an enormous force that was much more developed than the Star Glory Federation.

Recalling the blatant message that the strangers had sent to the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector, Li Yao was even more wary of the mysterious world now.

What's the quirky civilization in the world up to exactly?

Besides, it's rather uncanny here!

Judging from the electromagnetic waves received by Spark, the artificial waves in this mysterious world are rather scarce. There seem to be only the waves released by the natural celestial bodies themselves. Signs of man-made celestial bodies are few!

Logically, with the abundance of the spiritual energy here and the tremendous relics of the civilization, if there were a civilization here, it should've long developed into a behemoth spanning hundreds of galaxies.

Why is the space here so empty? There isn't even a trade route between the planets, or any starship, is there?

Li Yao was greatly baffled.

He did not intend to land on the planets of the mysterious world for investigation, which would be too risky and entail too many unexpected factors.

His original idea was that, since the civilization was able to send a message to a different world, it must have at least highly developed the galaxy that it was in, and there must be carriers everywhere among the planets.

Then, with his most favorite 'starship breakthrough' tactic, he would sneak into one of the stranger's starships and observe the social form and the civilization structure based on the small world on the starship before he decided his follow-up operations.

If the stranger was truly malicious, it would be easier for him to deal with a single starship than to deal with a whole planet.

However, to his surprise, the surrounding space was utterly empty. There were no traces of artificial celestial bodies whatsoever except for the debris of the primeval battlefield from hundreds of thousands of years ago, which cast Li Yao in an awkward situation.

Could it be that the space voyage technology hasn't been developed in the Sector yet?

Li Yao could not help but put on a weird expression.

The super long-distance space jump technology covering a distance of thousands of lightyears was certainly a very sophisticated, state-of-the-art knowledge.

However, honestly speaking, the exploration of one's own galaxy did not involve too much difficult technology at all.

Even the 'Earth' in Li Yao's memory, which was utterly devoid of spiritual energy, was able to achieve that to some degree. How could this Sector not do that?

Was it possible—

Li Yao thought quickly and realized something.

In the hundred years while he was cruising inside the sea of stars, he had always had a vague feeling that the dark nebula covering hundreds of lightyears nearby was not natural but man-made.

The 'war fog' was like the most advanced barrier that preserved the entire world inside carefully. The outsiders, unable to detect them or see their stars, were naturally never unaware of their existence.

No matter what happened outside, the world inside would be living in peace minding its own business.

However, as a result, just as the outside world could not see the inside, it was very difficult for the insiders to watch the outside world, too.

For human beings living inside the universe, although they were nothing more than the germs on a tiny mud ball, they were still able to view the vast sea of stars when they raised their heads late at night. Without any magical equipment, and through the most precise telescope, they were able to appreciate the mysteries in the sea of stars.

It was the foundation of human beings' ambitions to rage the sea of stars and explore the worlds beyond!

But in this place...

Li Yao did not know whether or not the people of this world were able to appreciate the glamorous starry sky and sense the boundlessness of the universe, or maybe their night sky was nothing but darkness, with only the glimmers of a few stars.

It was practically impossible for the signals they sent out to penetrate through the thick and dense dark nebula. Their space voyage technology, when just developed, would not be enough to allow the starships to move inside the absolute darkness.

After a long time, they would not even know whether or not there was a vaster world outside of the dark nebula. Who would ever grow ambitions to explore the sea of stars?

The world here was almost like having been kept inside a ‘black box’ all the time!

Things are getting more and more interesting.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao began to feel that the whole thing had deviated from his original plan.

However, he still could not be too prudent. Anything could happen in the mysterious universe. Even if an octopus that was secreting green pus suddenly dashed in front of him right now, he would not be surprised at all.

Li Yao had two options right now.

Firstly, to unfold the star beacons right there and send the specific coordinates of the place to the Star Glory Federation.

But during the hundred years of difficult voyage, Spark had been seriously damaged quite a few times. The supply components had long been used up. To sustain the speed, Li Yao had been forced to replace the worn components with the parts on the star beacons.

It was possible to restore the parts to where they belonged, but as a result, Spark’s performance would be greatly undermined, and it would not be able to reach a high speed.

Now that he was faced with an unknown civilization, the inability to reach a high speed meant that he would not even be able to flee!

Besides, at this moment, Li Yao still had not ruled out the possibility that everything was just a trap.

Chances were that the moment he unfolded the star beacons and sent the coordinates back to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the enemy would lock onto him and trace the signals, until the precise coordinates of the Heaven’s Origin Sector were determined.

In a universal war, one’s own precise coordinates were something more sensitive than the patterns on one’s wife’s underwear.

Despite the formidability of the Imperium of True Human Beings, it was still their ground rule during the exploration of new Sectors that no information was to be sent back to the mother planet until the civilization level and the stance of the new Sector were completely figured out.

Li Yao might have despised the Imperium of True Human Beings’ ideology, but he would certainly not ignore their experience.

Therefore, he decided to risk sneaking into the unknown civilization’s planet and make plans after he got more details.

As it happened, many units of the star beacons that Spark carried had been terribly worn. The result might not be satisfactory if the star beacons were assembled and unfolded right now.

It would be better if he could find some resources on the planet of the unknown civilization and craft a new batch of components so that he could send the coordinates information of the place back to the federation in concise waves in the most inconspicuous way.

Chapter 1335 - Breaking into the Unknown World!

In the next month, Li Yao acted quietly in the periphery of the mysterious world.

He measured and analyzed many planets and satellites, planning hundreds of shelters and routes of escape.

Judging from the information recorded on the navigation map of the Pangu civilization, this was a typical single-galaxy Sector, and most of the spiritual energy was concentrated near the star.

There were eleven planets altogether in the entire galaxy. Four of them were gaseous planets, two were packed with liquid constituents that resembled methane on the surface, and another few solid planets were unsuitable for the survival and reproduction of carbon-based life because they were either too far away from or too close to the star.

Only the fourth planet was at an acceptable distance from the star. It boasted its own atmosphere and two satellites and was a resourceful, habitable planet with plenty of spiritual energy.

It was also the essence of the Sector.

The diameter of the planet was around twice the diameter of the Heaven’s Origin Planet. Naturally, its surface was much larger. However, it seemed to be made of different materials, which were of a lower density, from what made up the Heaven’s Origin Planet. As a result, its mass was almost identical to the Heaven’s Origin Planet’s, and the gravity field there would be bearable for ordinary people.

It was reasonable, too. After all, the members of the Pangu Clan were often tall and strong. They were even less adapted to high gravity than human beings, who were much tinier in size, were. Since this place was the ‘provincial capital’ for them, the gravity here naturally could not be too high.

The navigation map of the Pangu civilization paid special attention to the two satellites of the planet.

It seemed that the two satellites were made of some uncanny materials, too, allowing them to mix some sort of mysterious force when reflecting the rays from the star. As a result, the spiritual energy from the star was even more dense.

Li Yao had been worrying that the dominator of the Sector would boast unpredictable space voyage abilities and be observing him quietly in the darkness while preparing itself.

Or rather, the Sector here itself might be a fatal trap. Everything here could have been fabricated.

Assuming that a powerful, enormous civilization intended to figure out the specific coordinates of many Sectors, study the civilizations of the Sectors, and eventually swallow them, it was absolutely possible for them to ‘dig out’ such a trap somewhere else other than their mother planet.

They would send out signals in various directions from the trap, attracting the explorers of other Sectors to draw close.

If they discovered that the explorer was rather weak after observation, they would show up and capture the explorer together with their starship. They would analyze the prey and decide the precise capabilities and specific coordinates of the explorer's civilization before they made up follow-up plans.

If the explorer that they baited was too powerful for them, they could totally abandon the 'trap' and flee.

After all, this place was not their mother planet, and they would certainly not leave any trace of their mother planet here.

When Su Changfa told him the history of the Imperium of True Human Beings' colonization, a lot of such cunning and unpredictable cases had been elaborated on.

Despite the low odds, he still could not be too cautious because it concerned the future of the tens of billions of people in the federation.

That was why Li Yao wasted his time and fuel wandering around in the periphery of the galaxy, like a shocked bird that would run away quickly at the first anomaly.

But after he made quite a fuss for more than half a month, he felt that he had been 'flirting with someone blind'. The entire galaxy was as peaceful as ever, without the slightest sign of turmoil.

If the civilization's technology was not so developed that they could completely conceal their existence, making Li Yao unable to see or hear them, the only explanation was that they had not broken out of the gravity sphere of the mother planet yet or that they had retreated after finding nothing of value in the universe.

If it was the first case-scenario, Li Yao's every move right now must have been scrutinized by them. However hard he struggled right, he would still be nothing more than a fish in a water tank.

Thinking through that, Li Yao resolved himself to march to the fourth planet.

The closer he was to the center of the galaxy, the more vivid the traces left by the Pangu civilization were.

Li Yao discovered the traces of large-scale development on quite a few solid planets and the solid satellites of the gaseous and liquid planets.

They were enormous holes that could be hundreds of kilometers in diameter, leading to the core of the planets.

One of the satellites had been entirely emptied, with only a thin shell on the surface, but under the support of some uncanny force, it was still able to maintain the basic form.

It appeared that the Pangu civilization regarded all the planets and satellites in the galaxy other than the fourth planet as ‘resource planets’ and did not intend to colonize them. They were merely exploiting the resources inside and threw away all the planets that had been drained.

It was quite fitting for the status at the last years of the God-Sealing War, where both parties were trying their best and shedding their blood.

Li Yao noticed some existences that were suspected to be the Pangu civilization’s relics, too.

But he did not dare explore them recklessly while he was all by himself.

If he was caught in a perilous situation like the one on Kunlun, he would be killed for sure, all alone.

He could only scan and record the appearance and coordinates of the relics of the Pangu civilization for now. After he determined that the Sector was absolutely safe, he could send the coordinates and information back to the federation so that the mother planet could deploy a large-scale fleet for exploration.

A month later, Spark, which was pretending to be a meteor, finally drifted into the gravitational field of a satellite of the fourth planet.

Li Yao docked Spark at the dark side of the ‘moon’ to maintain a sense of safety, however thin it was.

He did three days of rehabilitative training there. Finally, he felt that his body and soul had recovered to the peak state before the hibernation. Even the invisible cracks in the deepest part of his soul were gone!

Everything was ready for exploration!

This exploration was different from his travels in the Flying Star Sector in that he had very clear targets.

Firstly, he had to sneak into the mysterious world without exposing his real identity. He would observe the development level of the local civilization, study their social form, make acquaintance with the core leadership of the civilization, and figure out why they ‘greeted’ the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector without a reason.

Secondly, he would have to find out whether the civilization was malicious or kind.

If Li Yao determined that the civilization was ruthless, hostile one after studies, he would then have to figure out whether or not it was capable of launching a cross-world attack toward the Star Glory Federation.

If it was, Li Yao would try to learn the specific patterns of the attack before he left without a sound and brought all the intelligence back to the federation so that the federation could make preparations or even attack in advance.

Li Yao had been away from the federation for a hundred years. After a hundred years of booming development, the Star Glory Federation today should no longer be a fish on a chopping block at anyone’s mercy now, right?

He almost could not wait to establish the ‘space gate’ and see how magnificent the troop jumping out of the space gate was!

If the hostile civilization did not boast the cross-world remote attack ability, or it was even unaware of the existence of the Star Glory Federation and had simply sprayed the signals to the entire universe aimlessly, Li Yao would take different actions.

He would still bring the information back to the federation so that the federation would leave the mysterious world aside for now and focus its full attention on the expedition fleet of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

In the second scenario, if the civilization was not malicious, and it simply sent out the signals for the purpose of communication, the Star Glory Federation would definitely give a friendly reply, too.

Considering that the army of the Imperium of True Human Beings was approaching, and the dreadful people of the

Covenant Alliance were haunting the universe like ghosts, Li Yao would try his best to persuade the Sector to join the federation.

If the civilization wished to retain part of its independence, the Star Glory Federation could still form a partnership with the civilization in order to resist the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance together.

As an adventurer galloping in the universe, Li Yao had been entrusted with great powers. He was allowed to get in touch, communicate, and sign eligible treaties with an unknown civilization before the authorization of the parliament in the federation.

In short, in the boundless sea of stars, Li Yao was not simply a ‘diplomat’ of the Star Glory Federation; Li Yao was the Star Glory Federation itself!

Other than the two missions with clear targets, there was a variable that might or might not be serious.

It was the expedition fleet of the Imperium of True Human Beings, made of the ‘Black Wind soldiers’, who were so brutal and infamous in the Imperium that even Su Changfa, Kou Ruhuo, and Tang Qianhe were scared of them!

Over the past hundred years, while the federation was developing fast, the Black Wind fleet had certainly not been resting, either. Chances were that it had already jumped to somewhere in the area.

After Li Yao’s personal experience, he doubted that the Black Wind fleet would be stupid enough to dive into the depths of the dark nebula directly.

However, even if the main troops stayed outside, it was still possible that a few scouts had been sent to explore the dark nebula on the super-tiny starships exactly like he did.

The space voyage technology of the Imperium of True Human Beings was much more advanced than that of the Star Glory Federation. Their efficiency would certainly be multiple times higher than Li Yao’s.

If the Black Wind fleet of the Imperium of True Human Beings truly discovered the mysterious world and even conspired with the local civilization to attack the Star Glory Federation together, it would be a terrible disaster.

Therefore, Li Yao had to stop such a future.

Should he run into an Immortal Cultivator in the mysterious world, he would have to try his best to sabotage their alliance with the locals and make the locals join hands with the federation!

All things considered, the stance of the mysterious world would have a huge influence on the outcome of the war to defend the federation!

Other than that, there was also a low possibility, which was that it was the blood descendants of the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan who had been living on the mysterious planet all the time, like the ‘living fossils’ that had hidden and reproduced on a lone island for hundreds of thousands of years.

But judging from the environment here, the possibility was almost negligible.

If it were the Pangu Clan or the Nuwa Clan who resided in the place, their footprints should be all over the sea of stars, should they not?

Prepare to go!

Spark was too obvious a target after all. Li Yao did not intend to bring it with him.

He landed Spark on the first satellite of the fourth planet, remembered its coordinates, and set up the controller of self-detonation. He then stored all the assets other than the star beacons into his Cosmos Rings and put on his crystal suit, ready for the exploration.

Chapter 1336 - This Doesn’t Look Right!

For safety’s sake, Li Yao spent seven days gathering debris in space, carving power rune arrays on them, and embedding crystals in them as the source of momentum.

He calculated the volume and density of the debris carefully, making sure that they would all be burnt up while they broke through the atmosphere of the fourth planet without leaving any trace behind.

If the people on the fourth planet raised their head and observed, the best that they could notice was a flashing, glamorous meteor shower.

Meanwhile, Li Yao hid himself inside one piece of the debris in his crystal suit, pretending to be a shooting star.

Sneak into the unknown planet. Now begin!

Li Yao and hundreds of garbage remnants in space accelerated suddenly toward the bright green planet in front of him. After a long journey, they were finally captured by the gravitational pull of the bright green planet. Their speed was higher and higher as they gradually fell to the surface of the planet.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

The debris immediately turned into fireballs because of the friction.

The atmosphere seemed to boast mysterious constituents, too, because the fireballs were not orange but in various brilliant colors.

Very soon, most of the remnants were burnt up in the atmosphere.

The remnant Li Yao was hiding in was the only exception, which, because of its enormity and solidness, melted and shrank but persisted to the end and broke into the sky of the unknown planet with Li Yao despite the flames.

What a great natural paradise!

Li Yao had never seen such a clear, blue sky before.

It was like a whole piece of sapphire that had been carved into the shape of bowl and placed upside down on the land. It was simply astoundingly beautiful.

In the blue sky, clouds could occasionally be seen. Few of them were pure white. Most of them were glowing in various colors, decorating themselves with splendid views around them.

The clouds were now like galloping stallions and rolling dragons, now like raging, unstoppable rivers, and now like pavilions in a paradise!

Under the blue sky and the colorful clouds was a boundless ocean.

The seawater was pure and peaceful, with a high visibility. The bottom of the sea hundreds of meters deep could easily be seen. Colorful, brilliant coral and seaweed, with translucent small fish swimming among them now and then, were shining in the ripples of the ocean.

It was like a spectacular undersea forest had been embedded into a green amber. Because of the reflection of the waves, the ocean looked even more unpredictable and mysterious.

This was the best example for ‘blue sky and green sea’!

When Li Yao looked down from the high sky, he noticed quite a few mountains and islands on the ocean. But there was nothing except overwhelming primitive forests on the islands. When he looked further ahead at the horizon, what he could see on the zigzagging coastline was pure greenness, too, without the slightest trace of modern cities.

It was like this place was a desolate planet that had not been developed at all.

The civilization here is truly not to be underestimated. In terms of environmental protection, they are too strong!

Li Yao secretly clicked his tongue.

The history of colonization in the Imperium of True Human Beings suggested that the more developed a civilization was, the more importance they would attach to environmental protection and the more likely they would build their world in harmony with nature.

After all, human beings were animals that had evolved from nature. If possible, nobody was willing to live in the dirty, smoky forests of rebar and cement.

For many powerful civilizations, after they finished the cruel primitive accumulation by seriously damaging the environment of the mother planet and exploiting the resources on the mother planet, they would repair the mother planet by mobilizing the resources from elsewhere and establishing ‘natural reserves’ on the mother planet, thereby revitalizing the mother planet.

This should be the case for this particular Sector. Chances were that the dominators here had moved all the cities and warring forces to the underground and left the whole surface of the planet to be a huge, natural park!

The civilization here must’ve reached the ‘nature-returning’ level. I can’t be too careful!

Li Yao calculated the trajectory of the falling remnant precisely and slightly adjusted it with the power rune arrays of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, ensuring that it was rushing all the way to the continent.

The landing point when an explorer was sneaking into an unknown world was highlighted in the arts of colonization in the Imperium of True Human Beings, too.

Generally speaking, the explorer was not suggested to land on the ocean.

On one hand, most of the habitable planets had oceans multiple times vaster than continents, with countless ferocious beasts lurking at the bottom of such boundless oceans, which could be even more hideous and brutal than the animals on the continents.

It would do the explorer no good if they pissed off the ferocious beasts when they were new to the place.

On the other hand, on the flat oceans, there was no shelter at all. It would be difficult for the explorer to run away if they were discovered.

When Li Yao was staying on the satellite, he had observed and realized that the fourth planet boasted an enormous continent that probably had a larger area than the continents of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector combined.

Other than that, some islands were scattered around the main continent.

The west half of the continent was higher than the east half. A few running rivers marched their way through the continent, creating many fertile plateaus.

The plateaus seemed to be the pivot of the civilization. The metropolises and even the capital city, which had the highest population, should be on or below the plateaus.

With the situation unclear, Li Yao did not dare land on the plateaus recklessly. Instead, he went to broken mountains and primitive forests at the south of the continent, a landing point that he had long chosen.

Everybody could easily tell that such a place was sparsely populated. There were underground caves and rivers everywhere, too. Even if he was noticed by someone, it would be very convenient for him to run away.

Boom!

With a long exhaust flame, the shooting star smashed into the forests, like a stroke depicted with fire!

Crack! Crack! Crack!

The trees were collapsing, and a deep ravine was ploughed on the ground. The pungent smell of things being burnt filled the air. The bushes and the weeds were all on fire.

Every sign suggested that it was a commonly-seen meteorite shower. The remains of the magical equipment had been burnt and melted into a cluster of bizarre-shaped iron block. Whoever came to investigate it would not notice any anomaly.

Li Yao slowly walked out of the fire before returning the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit to his Cosmos Ring.

From this moment on, he could not keep anything related to the Star Glory Federation with him.

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao took a deep breath of the air of the new world. Despite the smell of smoke when the buses were scorched, Li Yao still grinned in great satisfaction.

What fresh air!

The oxygen percentage in the air is very high, with multiple types of microelements and spiritual gas!

With such a high oxygen percentage, the insects must be large in size, and the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures will be easier to find, too!

The civilization here truly knows how to enjoy themselves!

Judging from their efforts in environmental protection, their civilization does not look like an aggressive one. However, everything is just the superficial observation so far. I must investigate it further before I jump to any conclusion!

Li Yao summoned Neltharion from his Cosmos Ring.

After a soft whistle, Neltharion immediately entered the stealth state. Like a breeze melting into the air, it flew toward the north under the manipulation of Li Yao’s telepathic thoughts.

The north was relatively close to the plateaus. The odds of finding other people were higher there.

Neltharion slithered above the forests without a sound while scanning the spiritual waves hundreds of square kilometers nearby.

There seemed to be smoke at the southeast, which appeared to be some small towns.

Li Yao was about to drive Neltharion to explore the southeast, when chaotic spiritual waves, mixed with intimidating killing intent, came over from the north, giving every sign that it was a battle between two armies or two experts!

Something is going on!

His heart pounding, Li Yao hurried to press Neltharion into the forests and flew it toward the source of the mayhem carefully under the coverage of the branches and crowns.

It appears that the world here is not as peaceful as it appears to be!

But this is a great opportunity for me. I can take the chance to observe the battle patterns and the average combat ability of the world. It will be even better if I can blend into them!

Like an invisible gecko, Neltharion slowly drove close to the battlefield.

The shouts from the battlefield became clearer and clearer. Colorful venomous fog and sword auras could vaguely be seen spurting from the top of the crowns, too, which were quite beautiful in their various colors.

But every time the fog and the sword auras fell down, screams were echoing.

What—what the heck?

Li Yao frowned. He started to feel that it was getting weird.

As an expert in jungle warfare himself, he knew that the most critical factor in a battle in the jungle was inconspicuousness. The two parties engaged in the battle should both be as quiet as they could because any sound that they made meant their failure or even death!

But those guys were shouting so loudly that they seemed to be fearing that they could not be found out. Were they playing some sort of drama?

When Neltharion finally captured the whole view of Neltharion, Li Yao was dumbfounded as if hit by lightning and did not come back to himself for a long time.

What—what—what—what in heavens' name is this?

The battle was taking place next to a lake that was a joint of two brooks in the forests.

Two troops were engaged in a fierce battle. Their blood had turned the lake red.

One of the troops was made of ferocious-looking barbarians who had long hair and tattoos all over their body. They were either wearing vine armor and bone blades or colorful feathers from head to toe, carrying vipers in both arms, or driving bizarre-shaped lions or tigers.

The other troop was wearing vintage style armor. They were much more organized and holding their own banner.

The breastplates of many soldiers were embedded with the pattern of a black tiger, with vague spiritual energy circulating inside.

Judging from their teamwork and their obedience to orders, they should be the well-trained regular troop.

However…

They seemed more like an army of the court in the era of ancient Cultivators tens of thousands of years ago!

Li Yao noticed that a small camp was established right behind the regular troop in black armor. There was a giant flag flapping on the top of it that read “Ling, the Appeasing Ambassador of the Fifth Prefecture of the Southland of Sorcerers!”

Right below the flag, a general—in a black helmet and black armor, with two giant hammers in his hands, who had bright gold hair and a dark face—was giving orders and commanding the troop on a horse calmly.

This—this doesn’t look right! Li Yao shrieked in his heart, wondering whether it was he who had travelled through time or the fellows who were wearing the ancient attire for no good reason.

Chapter 1337 - Bloodstained Paradise

The queer clothing of the two troops and their clumsy if not shabby blades made them look more like figurants who had just run off the set of a movie set in the ancient times.

For a moment, Li Yao even suspected that he had accidentally walked into the gathering of the fans of ancient Cultivators.

Such fellows were both in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector. They were fond of the fashion and the unworldliness of the ancient Cultivators. They often bought the ancient clothes and magical equipment and decorated themselves before they had a party and took photos of each other. It was sort of a way to promote the traditional culture that their ancestors had left for them.

However, the flying broken arms, the flowing guts, the screams that were shocking the birds, and even the most brutal animals… All the gory scenes told Li Yao that it was certainly not a game but a life-and-death battle between two groups of ‘ancient people’!

Judging from the position of the two parties, it was obvious that the ’emperor’s army’, which was under the banner of ‘Appeasing Ambassador of the Fifth Prefecture of the Southland of Sorcerers’ had travelled inside the mountains for a long time and just established their camps after finding the open place with a water source.

As it turned out, they were ambushed by the forest barbarians who were short, slim, and wearing fancy clothes.

The barbarians seemed to have been lurking in the branches and mud in the first place and marched into the heart of the emperor’s army easily.

Therefore, the battle was already the cruelest state the moment it began.

Why—why is everything like this?

Li Yao could not figure out the reason at all.

Judging from the armor, blades, and flags of the two parties, the civilization was still at a very underdeveloped phase. It was the living examples of the history books and Ou Yezi’s dreams.

How was it possible?

It had to be noted that the civilization of mankind had already been pushed to a splendid peak in the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago.

With the help of three volumes of the Book of Revelation, the modern Cultivation civilization built by the Supreme Emperor himself almost reached a mature phase immediately after it was founded.

Although the Supreme Emperor and Mad Armageddon killed each other in the Armageddon Rebellion, which resulted in the collapse of the Star Ocean Imperium, the seeds of the modern Cultivation civilization had been sprayed to all three thousand Sectors.

The heritage of the Star Ocean Imperium was everywhere to be seen in the broken worlds.

In the most chaotic, dark era after the Star Ocean Imperium’s collapse, the people on all the planets still remembered the glory of the Imperium and were still able to excavate the legacies. They had never really had to build everything from scratch.

Therefore, the brand-new civilizations founded on the broken pieces of the Imperium returned to modernity after only a few thousand years.

For the worlds such as the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector, there were metropolises, public education, computation, and communication tools such as crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus, and a basic understanding about the universe.

The Flying Star Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector were not special cases.

In the ‘brainwashing tutorial’ of the Imperium of True Human Beings, dozens of independent civilizations of mankind had been recorded, such as the Curly Dragon civilization, the Medicine Fork civilization, and the Martial Meritocrats civilization, which had all become modernized in a few thousand years.

Their eventual destruction was not caused by their primitiveness or ignorance but boiled down to the untreatable disease in the ‘postmodern’ era.

In the Sectors reigned by the demons, such as the ‘Blood Demon Sector’, the original appearance of the planet seemed to have been kept, but it was simply because demons chose a different approach of development.

The civilizations of demons, based on biochemistry, also boasted biochemical brains, skeleton warships, biochemical beasts, networks founded on brainwaves, and other rather modern techniques and devices.

The most ‘primitive’ planet that Li Yao had ever come across was probably ‘Iron Plateau’.

However, Iron Plateau was a special case because it had suffered a violent apocalyptic strike that nearly terminated the civilization.

Even so, the qi-trainers on Iron Plateau still developed all kinds of magical equipment based on True Qi. Then, with the True Qi magical equipment, they created a unique ‘True Qi civilization’ which considered the True Qi containers as the sources of power. They also had True Qi trains, True Qi airships, large factories, big cities, and other modern magical equipment and facilities.

Li Yao had never thought that he would run into an ‘ancient civilization’ in its full sense, which seemed to still be in a feudal society.

“This doesn’t make any sense. Even leaving the great development of the Star Ocean Imperium, the civilizations of the demons already evolved to a remarkable level at the end of the ‘Great Dark Era’ in which the universe was reigned by the demons. Why is everything like this?” Li Yao mumbled to himself. Then, he suddenly realized something.

The world had been covered inside the dark nebula for tens of thousands of years. It had not been recorded on the star map of the Star Ocean Imperium left in the Star Prier’s House.

Chances were that neither the Demon Beast Dynasties nor the Star Ocean Imperium were aware of its existence. Naturally, its modernization had never been accelerated.

It was a lone planet that had developed on its own for tens of thousands of years inside the ‘black box’. The changes in the outside and the great events in the universe had nothing to do with it at all.

Was this mysterious world a ‘paradise’ in the universe?

However, the ‘paradise’ here was apparently not peaceful and enjoyable but filled with blood and slaughters.

Li Yao felt that his teeth were aching.

He had made all the necessary preparations. He was braced for the possibility of meeting the most advanced civilization and ready to exploit the essence of the target civilization before he reached out to the local authorities.

But it never occurred to him that… the target civilization would be so ‘underdeveloped’!

What do I do now?

I’m here to visit and possibly ally with the world here as a representative of the Star Glory Federation, but it’s still ancient times here!

The good news is that, since such a well-trained army is carrying the flag saying ‘Appeasing Ambassador of the Fifth Prefecture of the Southland of Sorcerers’, there must be a court here.

With Ou Yezi’s abundant memories, and now that he had advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage, he had a basic understanding about the customs in the world of ancient Cultivators now.

The so-called ‘Appeasing Ambassador’ was a commonly-seen official title in different worlds of ancient Cultivators.

Generally speaking, the central dynasties at the plateaus would establish ‘Appeasing Bureaus’ at the frontiers and the primitive lands. Such agencies were responsible for intimidating the foreign races and suppressing any rebellions.

It’s not too bad. There’s at least a central government here. I know who I should turn to.

If it were a civilization of bloody battles, which was a ‘jungle society’ where everybody disagreed with each other and feasted on each other’s blood, Li Yao would not even know whom he should negotiate with.

The bad news is that, since there’s a court, there must be a king or an emperor sitting in the court!

Should I go to the emperor and tell him, ‘Your Majesty, did you know that the world we are living in is in fact a large place, there are hundreds of other worlds beyond your territory, and I happen to be an alien from one of the worlds…’?

Li Yao sighed and suddenly felt that the alliance would be tricky.

He had never been particularly fond of the ancient Cultivators after swallowing Ou Yezi’s memories and gaining a basic understanding about the ancient Cultivators.

It was because the ancient Cultivators were more like the Immortal Cultivators, who regarded the ordinary people as ants, in terms of their belief.

Of course, the ancient Cultivators were not necessarily unpardonable fiends.

In fact, there were too many merciful masters who subdued the bullies and helped the weak, and patriots who sacrificed themselves for their country and people, among the ancient Cultivators.

However, even the most loyal and moral ancient Cultivators might find it difficult to embrace the ideology of equality in modern society by placing themselves on par with the ordinary people or even being checked and balanced by them.

It had nothing to do with their attitude. Perhaps it was just their ‘historic limitations’.

Su Changfa, as an Immortal Cultivator, was not wrong about one thing. It was inappropriate to judge the ancient people with modern morals.

As it happened, it was a bunch of ‘ancient people’ that Li Yao had come across!

There’s nothing I can do now. I might as well make more observations.

Although the civilization here was still in the ‘ancient’ phase, and everything looked rather underdeveloped at first glance, Li Yao did not dare underestimate them or return to space to establish the ‘space gate’ and summon the fleets from the federation recklessly.

He knew clearly that there had been a crazy era in the world of ancient Cultivators when the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were as numerous as the dogs on the street!

Because of the abundant spiritual in this world, even the lizards here were magnitudes larger than those in the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Nobody could tell how formidable the Cultivators here were!

If he underestimated the capabilities of the world and summoned the space fleets of the federation rashly to demonstrate his power, only to discover that the civilization sent out fifty Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators in a row…

Then Li Yao’s negligence would certainly be unpardonable.

Before summoning the main troops of the federation, there are a few critical questions that I must figure out first.

Firstly, is the civilization that is suspected to be a world of ancient Cultivators the real dominator of the planet, or is it simply the puppet on the surface controlled by another civilization below the ground or in outer space that is a hundred times more developed?

Secondly, how exactly was the world hidden in the ‘black box’, and what happened hundreds of thousands of years ago?

Thirdly, how many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators are out there in the world? If there are indeed a lot of them, how much damage can they cause to a civilization of modern Cultivators when they are on a rampage?

Fourthly, and most critically, what was the signal sent to the outside world a hundred years ago about? Was it sent by the ancient Cultivators here? What was their purpose?

Li Yao did not know how terrifying a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator could be.

On Li Yao's path of training, the one with the highest Cultivation should be the 'supreme space pirate' Yan Xinjian, who hid in his residence in the underground fortress on Spider Den in the Flying Star Sector to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage.

Li Yao had spent quite a few years in the supreme space pirate's residence absorbing Yan Xinjian's heritage.

It had been the most beneficial seclusion in his life of training. Not only did he successfully march into the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage, the training also laid a solid foundation for him to break into the Nascent Soul Stage when he was only in his thirties.

To some extent, he had received Yan Xinjian's tutelage and could almost be called Yan Xinjian's 'true disciple'.

Yan Xinjian died because of mental derangement when he only touched the threshold of the Divinity Transformation Stage.

Inferring the average capabilities of the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators with Yan Xinjian's Cultivation, Li Yao pondered for a long time but still felt that… only one Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator would be able to cause world-blighting damage if he snuck into the Star Glory Federation!

Chapter 1338 - Combat Ability of the Ancient People!

The two troops fighting in the forest were, of course, neither in the Nascent Soul Stage nor the Divinity Transformation Stage.

It was not even a fight of pure Cultivators but a battle between ordinary people led by a few Cultivators.

However, when Li Yao adjusted Neltharion to a perfect angle and observed the battle, he was still deeply awed by the toughness of the locals and the fineness of their blades.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Although both parties were mostly using ‘cold weapons’, sparks were bursting out. Giant pits almost two meters deep were smashed on the group. The trees that one could barely hold were also shaking and bordering on collapse in the airwaves.

It was almost a battle where crystal cannons and crystal bombs were employed. They were equally fiery and sparkling.

Li Yao focused his attention on the ’emperor’s army’ that was under the great banner of ‘Appeasing Ambassador’.

The army was perhaps a representative of the highest government on the planet, which was the main target that Li Yao was to deal with later.

The ‘court’ was not something that he could bypass either if he wanted to ally with them, be neutral, or even declare war on the civilization.

The emperor’s army deserved to be the emperor’s army. Although most of the soldiers in the ancient troop that had tiger-like stripes on their breastplates were ordinary people, they were mostly tall, muscular experts with bulging temples and glittering eyes.

Ripples were spreading out whenever they kicked or punched.

Judging from the sound when they waved their heavy sabers, the weapons weighed at least fifty kilograms!

It was not a historical fiction, where the heroes could easily exert a force of four hundred Newtons with their arms.

In the real world, those who could wave sabers weighing fifty Newtons easily were certainly experts among experts.

This is rather awesome! Li Yao secretly commented. The average capability of the troop was almost at the peak of ordinary fighters.

In the standard of the Star Glory Federation, it was almost equal to a Spiritual Actualization Quotient of ninety percent!

Li Yao recalled a few elite special forces in the Star Glory Federation and discovered that the ordinary soldiers on his side, if using pure cold weapons such as chainswords instead of the hot weapons such as crystal cannons, were absolutely no match for the soldiers here!

It was quite normal.

In the modern society, while the magical equipment found its way into all households making everyone’s life easier, they somewhat diminished people’s instincts and wildness.

During certain periods in history, it was quite normal that the ancient people were better at wilderness survival and close-distance battles.

Besides, the oxygen percentage of this world was very high, and the spiritual energy was rather abundant. It was not strange at all that a large batch of top fighters distinguished themselves.

The average build of the soldiers here is even better than anybody else on Iron Plateau other than the ‘qi-trainers’! Li Yao pondered to himself. If such a magnificent army joined the federation, they would certainly make a powerful assault team after they were equipped with modern chainswords, vibration sabers, and crystal cannons. Even if they were engaged with the Immortal Cultivators, they would be still be able to have a head-on clash with the enemy.

On the other hand, if they were to join the Imperium of True Human Beings’ side as the cannon fodder, it would certainly be a disaster for the federation.

Moreover, other than the ordinary soldiers who were all top fighters, there were also some Refinement Stage Cultivators in the ’emperor’s army’.

They mostly wore armor that was even more fresh and glamorous. Other than the tiger stripes on their chest, their shoulder armor was also shaped into a roaring tiger.

Their sabers were even more daunting than the weapons of the ordinary soldiers, like tiger’s teeth magnified dozens of times. Spiritual energy was vaguely circling around the edge of the saber.

After every slash, a blade aura several meters long would be unleashed, which would be condensed into the appearance of rushing tigers after ripping apart the air.

Even the enemy more than ten meters away might be torn into pieces by the rushing tigers!

The vanguards and the captains in the army are all Cultivators in the Refinement Stage. It appears that the world of Cultivators and the mortal world on this planet are deeply involved with each other.

The ancient Cultivators had many different social forms.

For some of the worlds where spiritual energy was not abundant, only the natural paradises such as mountains and forests might boast a reserve of spiritual energy. Therefore, the number of Cultivators was few.

Such Cultivators were not necessarily related to the mortal world. They were often the deities in the groundless folklores.

In some other worlds, the Cultivators established their own system and acted under different ‘sects’.

The so-called ‘dynasties’ were merely the puppets of such ‘sects’. There might be few Cultivators in the court or in the army.

Most of the Cultivators would stay in the headquarters of their sects and occasionally go down the mountains to remote control the puppets.

However, in some of the worlds of ancient Cultivators, the local dynasties were established by the Cultivators, and the Cultivators were integrated into the mortal world in every aspect. The emperor was a Cultivator, and the major ministers and generals were Cultivators, too. Such cases were not rare, either.

It seemed that the world here was an excellent example. Because of the overly-abundant spiritual energy in the world, the number of Cultivators was likely very high. It was impossible for them to live in seclusion. They had to go into the world of mortals and construct a relatively stable social system together with the ordinary people for the sake of the benefits of both parties.

Under the lead of the ‘vanguards’ and ‘captains’ who were in the Refinement Stage, the emperor’s army fought back like tigers and wolves. They gradually recovered from the shock of being ambushed and reorganized their battle formation.

However, since the barbarians were bold enough to bite the hard bone that was the ’emperor’s army’, their teeth were certainly rather tough, too.

In terms of their body figure, born and raised in the hot and damp southern land, they were much more slender than the soldiers from the central land.

However, their bronze-colored skin and their muscles that resembled dried beef indicated their excellent body build.

As natural-born jungle hunters, they were jumping up and down among the branches like slippery monkeys and appeared right behind the emperor’s army without a sound like ghosts.

Compared with the fine armor and blades of the emperor’s army, their equipment was much more ragged.

However, the venomous fog they spurted out, the vipers on their arms, and the scorpions, centipedes, and other pests hidden inside the bamboo baskets they carried significantly made up for the shortcoming of their gear. The emperor’s army was struggling to deal with them.

Even in the head-on clashes…

“Huh?”

Li Yao’s eyes were keen enough to notice that a vanguard in the Refinement Stage in the emperor’s army was blocked by a short, thin barbarian. The blades of the two parties raised clusters of sparks after collision, but neither of them could defeat the other.

Upon closer inspection, Li Yao discovered that, while the vanguard was summoning his spiritual energy with his face flushing, the barbarian’s pupils turned into two narrow slots, and his jaw and his teeth protruded out.

This is a… demon!

Li Yao saw through the changes of the barbarian easily.

When the vanguard of the emperor’s army was unleashing the spiritual energy without bothering anything, the barbarian was bombarding his mitochondria, awakening the primeval cells inside his body, and displaying part of the features of demons!

However, the barbarians did not seem pure demons, either.

They were more like hybrids of human beings and demons and only kept part of the features of demons.

But it does make sense.

It should be noted that there was no distinction between ‘human beings’ and ‘demons’ in the primeval era. Demons were merely another battle form of human beings. Everybody was a comrade who was enlightened by the Nuwa Clan and who fought side by side.

The serious contradiction between human beings and demons in the outside civilizations is because the ‘Ultimate One Sect’ forty thousand years was insane enough to transform them into Ultimate One Demons in their pursuit to rule over the entire universe, which led to the thirty thousand years of Great Dark Era. It is the source of the bloody grudge between the two parties.

If the Sector here hasn’t reached out to other worlds for tens of thousands of years, naturally, they know neither the Ultimate One Demons nor the ‘Great Dark Era’.

Then, it is perfectly normal that the boundary between human beings and demons is ambiguous here, and that some of them were even married and gave birth to hybrid descendants.

Honestly speaking, the weapons, battle techniques, and organization of the emperor’s army were all better than those of the barbarians. If the two parties fought on an open plateau, the barbarians would have been beaten to the ground in several minutes.

However, the battlefield was a forest, with smoke, swamps, and pits everywhere.

The terrain was in the barbarians’ favor, and they were well-prepared for the ambush. Together with their determination to die together with the enemy, they even managed to fight on par with the emperor’s army without losing.

The emperor’s army grew somewhat agitated when they failed to defeat the enemy after so long.

After all, they were on an expedition mission. One casualty meant one fewer warrior.

Even if ten barbarians were killed in the meantime, the vacancies would be filled easily from the forest that was as boundless as the ocean.

The black-armored general under the ‘Appeasing Ambassador of the Fifth Prefecture of the Southland of Sorcerers’ suddenly roared before he bashed the two hammers in his hands hard, raising a deafening noise!

The two hammers were embedded with hundreds of colorful rings respectively. After the violent collision, the bronze rings rotated quickly and unleashed mystic rays, covering the battlefield several square kilometers nearby like an upside-down bowl!

The black-armored general’s face was so pale that he nearly fell down from his horse, but he gritted his teeth and smashed the hammers another time!

The second hit was even louder than the first one. The sound echoed around the entire battlefield like a running river.

A weird thing happened!

In the coverage of the soundwaves and the mystic rays, the morale of the emperor’s army was significantly boosted. All the ordinary soldiers bulged their eyes, their skin breaking apart and their muscles protruding. The vanguards and the captains were even more rampant, and the auras of their blades were surging out like rainbows.

The barbarians, on the other hand, seemed to panic at the deafening noise and forgot how to resist when the enemy’s weapons were slashing toward their faces!

Shua! Shua! Shua!

Dozens of well-tempered sabers slashed down brutally, cutting the barbarians in half with blade auras that were more than ten meters long. The guts of the barbarians were spraying everywhere on the ground. The air was immediately wreathed in burning redness.

The emperor’s army took the opportunity to march forward. The battle formation of the barbarians, which had been rather disorganized in the first place, was further shattered apart.

Seeing the devastating wounds of their companions, the fearless barbarians were putting on expressions of fear and horror and roaring like wounded animals.

Chapter 1339 - Orchid Sword

[What a piece of marvelous soundwave magical equipment!]

Li Yao analyzed in secret. The hammers that the black-armored general utilized must have the abilities of triggering the fighting will or the sense of terror by stimulating one’s nerve endings with soundwaves. It was a piece of rather impressive magical equipment for collective attack.

However, since the same soundwaves could trigger the fighting of the soldiers on his side and devastate the enemy simultaneously, some sort of advanced ‘friend-or-foe identification rune array’ must be taking effect.

Li Yao pondered carefully for a moment but failed to figure out the working mechanism of such a rune array.

It suggested that the Sector had special knowledge in terms of refining, too, which was worth studying.

The barbarians’ roar seemed to be a call. A bizarre-shaped bird, with hideous claws and teeth, suddenly flew to the sky in panic because of the shock.

Many giant trees were leaning awry on the ground, making the ground thunder, as if a rock weighing ten thousand kilograms was rushing over!

Very soon, a giant tree that even five people would be able to hold was thrown towards the emperor’s army and hit four soldiers precise, blowing the victims into piles of blood and meat immediately.

In earsplitting laughter, a behemothic shadow lunged out from the depths of the forest, which turned out to be an enormous demon beast almost ten meters long, with heavy armor all over the body and a long horn over the head, which made it look like both a rhino and an elephant!

The rhino demon beast was raging among the soldiers of the emperor’s army like a crystal tank.

Because of the thick skin and the lumps on it, the general weapons and auras of blades could not even pierce into the demon beast’s body.

The crash of the demon beast, on the other hand, could knock three to five soldiers into the sky every time. The soldiers were often broken apart on the spot and killed before they had the chance to scream.

Right on the back of the rhino demon beast was installed with a seat made of vines. A bald, muscular man, in a sloppy robe, who looked like both a monk and a mortal, was sitting on the sea cross-legged while cackling.

The bald, muscular man was so fat that the flesh on his body was moving up and down like waves when he was laughing. But as it happened, his body had tattoos that were snakes, bugs, rats and ants everywhere. When his body was shaking, it looked like countless pests were crawling on his body. Anybody who saw it would feel that their blood was freezing.

The bald man was waving a saber made of skeleton, which was embedded with nine bone rings. On closer look, one would notice that the skulls of many reptiles were bound to the nine bone rings. They were clattering when the weapon was shaken.

Grey threads that looked like withered vines were attached to the saber, giving every feeling of evil and creepiness.

The bald man should be the soul of the barbarians.

His arrival swept away the depression among the barbarians easily.

The clattering skulls on his saber dispelled the echoes generated by the general of the emperor’s army easily!

Hearing the sound, the soldiers nearby were all putting on expressions of nausea. Many of them were having cold sweat, their faces gloomy.

Li Yao knew that it was a natural reaction because of the abnormal secretion of hormones inside the body after the nerve endings were stimulated, which was not something resistible with courage.

It appeared that attacking the nerves with soundwaves was a common technique in the Sector for every force.

Seeing that the enemy was suppressed, the bald man was laughing even more crazily. He suddenly threw the nine-ringed saber, and the dozens of skulls on the nine rings, enveloped inside a certain weird force field, flew to the midair.

The skulls must’ve belonged to the reptiles such as vipers or lizards in the beginning. If one were to look into their tiny eyes, tiny, eccentric fire hidden at the center of the skulls could be found.

Once the skulls flew to the midair, the eccentric fire immediately bulged and dashed out of the eyes and mouths, lunging at the soldiers of the emperor’s army as vipers and lizards!

The soldiers that were caught by the eccentric fire were often burnt up instantly into dry corpses.

The eccentric fire was not only getting more and more vigorous but also transmitting the vitality in the blood back to the bald man’s saber through the tiny skulls.

The withered threads on the saber immediately expanded. An organ that was beating like a heart was even formed at the center of the interconnecting threads.

[A combination of flesh and magical equipment!]

[A bloodthirsty saber!]

Li Yao secretly exclaimed.

He had seen similar magical equipment deep inside the mausoleum of ‘Chaos’ Ba Yanzhi.

It was a piece of magical equipment which could hibernate for a long time and which could automatically cruise, stay on alert, and attack with the blood as the source of power.

Such magical equipment from the mausoleum of Chaos could be traced back to ‘Kunlun’, the relic of the Pangu civilization.

The planet below Li Yao’s feet, on the other hand, could possibly be a relic of the Pangu civilization of an even greater scale. It was not unusual that such a piece of magical equipment could be found.

It appeared that the emperor’s army was about to lose.

The face of the black-armored general under the banner of ‘Appeasing Ambassador’ was pale, and he was about to fall down. He was trying his best to smash the hammers to raise the soundwaves.

However, the special soundwave could only motivate the morale and keep the battle formation unbroken at best. It could not stop the savage of the eccentric fire from the skulls.

The more soldiers it killed, the more bloodred the bald man’s saber became. Very soon, the aura of the blade extended to more than ten meters away. Repugnant smells were emitting out, too.

The bald man grinned hideously. Baring his sharp teeth, he patted the rhino demon beast below his bottom and marched towards the black-armored general.

Judging from the range, brightness of their spiritual energy and their utilization of their magical equipment, Li Yao estimated that the general on the emperor’s army’s side was at the beginning level of the Core Formation Stage at best.

The bald man was at least in the middle level of the Core Formation Stage himself, significantly higher than his enemy’s.

The bloody saber in his hands was apparently a piece of magical equipment more powerful than the general’s hammers.

The iron-armored rhino demon beast below him was certainly no match for the general’s horse, too.

The result of such a clash was almost too obvious.

“Phew—”

The horse below the general of the emperor’s army had stripes which resembled swirls on both sides of the body, as if it had grown wings. It looked rather extraordinary, too, and must be a hybrid of a magnificent stallion and a certain spiritual beast.

However, no matter what an awesome hybrid it was, how could it expect to deal with an iron-armored rhino that was brimming with demonic energy?

Seeing that the enemy was crushing over like a huge mountain of meat, the horse stood on its feet because of the shock and nearly knocked the general off its back.

The fat, bald man, naturally, wouldn’t let go of such a great opportunity. He must’ve weighed more than two hundred kilograms, and yet he lunged at the general of the emperor’s army in a streak of bloodiness together with his saber as agile as a swallow.

Right then, an unexpected change took place!

Behind the general of the emperor’s army was the banner of ‘Appeasing Ambassador of the Fifth Prefecture of the Southland of Sorcerers’, and a shabby camp was standing behind the banner. The camp had been quiet at beginning, as if it were empty. There was not the slightest sound even when the battle was most fierce.

But out of everyone’s expectation, when the fat, bald man’s attack was performed to such an extent that he was no longer able to change his posture, a deep blue aura of sword suddenly dashed out of the curtain of the camp which was not fully closed!

The aura of sword was quiet and did not carry any feeling of the mortal world. It darted right towards the center of the fat, bald man’s eyebrow, as if somebody had drawn a straight line in the midair with an invisible blue pen!

The fat, bald man seemed to have sensed the most dreadful thing in the world. After a shriek, he stopped his momentum of rushing forward, with explosive sounds all over his body as he broken dozens of bones, before he bounced backwards as if he had run into an invisible wall!

In only one moment, he had realized that it was a long-devised trap!

His reactions were quick enough, but the blue sword was even quicker. It took an abrupt turn in the midair, not in a curve but in almost a right angle, and continued locking onto the center of his eyebrow in a trajectory that was in complete violation of all the laws of physics!

Weird sounds were echoing inside the fat, bald man’s abdomen, as if ten thousand toads were crying. Then, he opened his mouth and spat out bloody mist, hoping to corrupt the blue sword.

The blue sword, however, disintegrated into nine swords that were even thinner suddenly the moment before the venomous fog arrived, and dashed to all directions, before the parts were concentrated above the fat, bald man’s head again after unsmooth turns of right angle and acute angles.

The light and shadow interconnected with each other, and the lines extended into what appeared to be an upside-down orchid flower which pressed down heavily!

“Shua!”

The orchid flower made of hundreds of auras of sword pierced through the fat, bald man’s enormous body easily!

The ever-surging flesh of the fat, bald man came to a suddenly halt.

In utmost fury and fear, he pointed his bloody saber at the camp.

The curtain of the camp was lifted. A young girl, whose clothes were whiter than snow, paced out casually, with her hands in her back, giving the feeling that she was herself an orchid inside a valley.

Her nose was very high, like a mountain that rose to the clouds. Her eyes were straight and clear, too. Her eyes were glittering, but confidence that bordered on indifference was flowing out. The battle in front of her eyes, and probably everything in the mortal world, seemed to have nothing to do with her, and she could decide all of them with one of her fingers.

The face confidence, arrogance, and even narcissism was the typical expression of many ancient Cultivators in Li Yao’s memory.

[A Cultivator in the peak of the Core Formation Stage!]

The girl was not covering her spiritual waves at all. Therefore, Li Yao could tell easily that she was only several steps away from the Nascent Soul Stage!

As for her flying sword…

The hundreds of blue swords, after piercing through the fat, bald man, spread out and stabbed into the hearts of another dozens of barbarians!

But as a result, the aura of the swords seemed more or less lackluster, suggesting that they might’ve been contaminated by the enemy’s blood.

The girl in white blew a whistle. The hundreds of swords all returned to her and disappeared in her broad sleeves.

Li Yao noticed an interesting fact.

The girl was in white before, without the slightest redundant color. But after the swords were swallowed into her sleeves, a tiny orchid flower suddenly showed up at her cuff and seemed to be dancing as she waved her arms. It was quite a beautiful scene.

[A piece of very advanced magical equipment.]

[The attack seemed to be made of pure energy. By manipulating the spiritual energy which is bound by special force fields with her telepathic thoughts, she is able to build the swords into different forms and endow them with kinetic rules different from those which the real entities must abide by. Therefore, the routes of attack are erratic and unpredictable!]

Chapter 1340 - The First Observation Report of the Foreign World

The seemingly simple flying sword in fact involved many sophisticated theories in string theory, membrane theory, and even quantum physics. Even the Star Glory Federation might not be able to produce it.

Logically, it was impossible for a civilization whose civilization was still in the medieval phase to build such a weapon.

However, according to the stories told by the Immortal Cultivator Su Changfa and the experience that he learned from Ou Yezi's memory pieces, he found a very plausible explanation for the uncanny phenomenon.

The explanation was very simple. The magical equipment that surpassed the era it was in often boasted units or rune arrays left by the Pangu Clan or the Nuwa Clan as the core parts.

Their offspring were merely adding new ancillary units to the magical equipment pieces of the primeval era.

It was like a primitive barbarian in the stone age who picked up a military dagger produced through modern technologies.

The primitive barbarian did not need to understand the procedures, mechanisms, and usages of the modern dagger.

He could simply tie the dagger to a bone or a twig, thereby ‘creating’ an invincible and marvelous weapon!

Building such a dagger from scratch was ten thousand years more difficult than tying the dagger to a stick!

Therefore, although the ancient Cultivators had boasted a lot of powerful magical equipment unimaginable to the modern Cultivators, it did not imply that the ancient Cultivators were smarter than their modern counterparts.

The only reason was that the ancient people lived closer to the primeval era, and it was easier for them to excavate the pieces of the primeval magical equipment. With the units they found as the cores, they would be able to assemble the mysterious ultimate treasures quickly.

The ancient Cultivators had basically spoiled all the primeval treasures, leaving no heritages to the modern Cultivators. Therefore, it was much more troublesome for the latter to develop.

Of course, the ‘easy’ was only in a relative sense.

At the very least, in Li Yao’s memories, it was certainly a great event if a broken piece of the primeval magical equipment was excavated in the world that Ou Yezi lived in. The experts everywhere would fight over it.

The primeval treasures had no owners. Whoever qualified would claim them. How could anyone be qualified? Of course, when their fists were tough enough!

In Ou Yezi’s world, it was often the case that only experts above the Nascent Soul Stage were entitled to a primeval treasure.

But in the world here, even a Cultivator at the peak of the Core Formation Stage was mastering a flying sword, which apparently utilized a primeval treasure at the core.

It was obvious that either she was renowned and backed by a powerful family or sect, or the remnants of primeval magical equipment were less rarely-seen there than in the other worlds of ancient Cultivators.

Li Yao thought about everything quickly in only one moment.

But when the orchid flower on the girl on white’s sleeves fully blossomed, the fat, bald man suddenly exploded into a pile of broken flesh and meat.

Such a terrible view made all the barbarians scream in desperation.

Their leader being slain so easily meant that they had no opportunity to fight any longer. When the indifferent female Cultivator attacked again, the victims would be much more than dozens of barbarians.

All the barbarians shrieked and fled in panic.

The situation was suddenly reversed. The emperor’s army chased after the enemy like hungry tigers.

However, the mountain there was high and the forest dense. There might be unexpected factors if the army dispersed in the forest. They could pay a high price despite the assistance of the female Cultivator’s mysterious swords.

The ‘Appeasing Ambassador’ was apparently an experienced general. He immediately ordered the army to retreat and clean up the mess.

While they were cleaning the battlefield, finishing the dying barbarians, and saving their companions, Li Yao began to compile his first observation report.

“Li Yao’s observation report of the foreign world, entry one.

“On the very first day after I landed on the mysterious world, I observed a competition between two local troops.

“The planet boasts a main continent with a relatively stable tectonic structure. The east side of the continent is a fertile plateau that is a gift of several large rivers running parallel to the equator.

“The continent seems to be reigned by a relatively civilized ‘central dynasty’, which has established a bureaucratic system including titles such as ‘Appeasing Ambassador’.

“However, the dynasty’s control over the whole planet hasn’t reached one hundred percent yet. Half-civilized barbaric groups still seem to exist in the jungles and on the prairies at the edge of the continent.

“Otherwise, titles such as ‘Appeasing Ambassador’ wouldn’t have been set up in the first place.

“The planet here boasts abundant spiritual energy and a high oxygen percentage. The insects and animals here are much larger in size. Human beings here are much healthier, too. Both the soldiers of the army of the central dynasty and the warriors of the borderland barbarians boast stamina, strength, and speed that were higher than modern ordinary people did. With modern training, they can certainly be trained into a dominating army!

“The fierce battle that took place here just now looked like an ambush that the barbarians initiated on the troop of the central dynasty. However, such an assault might’ve been within the expectations of the emperor’s army, who intentionally lured the enemy into attacking and took the opportunity to execute the enemy’s leader!

“It is indicative enough that both the troops of the central dynasty and those of the barbarians are capable of making and carrying out complicated schemes. They are rather clever and must not be regarded as silly primitives just because of their underdeveloped civilization.

“Besides, the number of Cultivators and warriors with a demonic bloodline in the troops is amazingly high. Their ratio has surpassed that of the Level-A regular legions of the Star Glory Federation. Judging from the vastness of the continent and the land suitable for farming and reproduction, the number of Cultivators in this world might be much greater than our estimation.

“In terms of gear, the weapons and magical equipment that the ordinary soldiers and low-level Cultivators are using are generally rather shabby and no better than the average performance of the ancient Cultivators. They are certainly no match for the modern magical equipment, which can be made from thousands of components.

“However, it is possible that this Sector boasts a huge number of remnants of primeval treasures. With the primeval treasures as the core, they will be able to build very powerful super magical equipment that is equal to or even better than modern magical equipment.

“What I’ve seen was just a battle between two common troops. They were certainly not the most elite troops such as the emperor’s guards or the private troops of certain

Cultivation sects that are even stronger than the emperor’s guards.

“But the tip of the iceberg already suggests that the capabilities of this Sector are not half bad. Even if they cannot expect to compete with the modern war system on the vast plateaus and boundless space, it will still be a major headache if a squad of the ancient Cultivators break into our starships and have a head-on battle with us in the narrow cabins!

“Up till now, there has been no sign of the Sector’s cross-space attack abilities yet.

“However, a very serious question must be brought to attention.

“It is doubtless that the Imperium of True Human Beings has such abilities!

“What if the expedition army of the Imperium reached out to the Sector and bought the local experts with magical equipment, training arts, and even the land and population of the federation as baits, thereby establishing a mercenary army of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and even Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators?

“It is also a commonly-adopted approach in the Imperium of True Human Beings’ colonization.

“Ask the locals to fight the locals. After the locals of multiple worlds are all exhausted, the army of the Imperium will take advantage of all of them unstoppably!

“The ‘ancient Cultivators’ here, who are still in the primitive era and do not know the cruelty of the outside world, may find the temptation irresistible.

“We must prevent such a scenario from happening, or we can even do unto them as they would have done unto us. If we cannot ally with this Sector, the experts of this Sector should be hired by the federation instead of the Imperium as mercenaries!

“The Imperium might be very powerful, but it is not entirely impossible for the federation, after absorbing and digesting the relics on Kunlun, to propose more attractive offers to win the support of the local Cultivators and establish an Overseas Mercenary Legion of the Star Glory Federation!

“Everything above is just my preliminary observation. Whether or not the Sector is as simple as it appears to be, whether or not there are deeper secrets, and what exactly the mysterious signal a hundred years ago was about require more exploration.”

Li Yao finished the first report. The battlefield was soon cleaned up. The forest where blood was boiling a moment ago fell silent again.

Li Yao rubbed his temples softly, thinking about how to meet with this ‘Appeasing Ambassador of the Fifth Prefecture of the Southland of Sorcerers’.

It was certainly not because he favored the ‘rightful dynasty’ and only saw the court in his eyes.

For him, whose vision had been expanded to the entire sea of stars, the human beings of all the three thousand Sectors were compatriots. Both the ’emperor’s army’ and the barbarians in the forests were more or less the same.

Li Yao had accepted the demons who had eight legs. He was a ‘monster’ who might grow sharp teeth and claws after a sneeze. Why would he discriminate against the seemingly hideous barbarians?

The only problem was that he did not have much time left, considering that he had wandered through space for a hundred years and that the Black Wind fleet of the Imperium of True Human Beings was coming anytime.

He was not interested in playing a game of upgrading from zero through pretentious acting. He had to negotiate with the highest authorities and best experts of this Sector on equal terms as quickly as possible.

It appeared now that the highest authorities of this Sector were probably the court behind the Appeasing Ambassador. The best expert was either the emperor himself or the leaders of the noble families who manipulated the emperor as a puppet. All in all, he could not avoid reaching out to them.

The troop here is well-trained. All the soldiers possessed badges and ID numbers. Also, they know each other quite well. It’s unlikely for me to join them under the disguise of a soldier. Even if I do, I wouldn’t be able to obtain much useful intelligence.

What about pretending to be a barbarian?

Not an option. They are quite decisive and merciless about the barbarians. They don’t keep any captives!

What should I… Huh. What’s this?

While Li Yao was pondering his move next, he suddenly sensed subtle waves.

Neltharion activated all the probe magical equipment to the maximum. Very soon, a mosquito with bright golden wings in the bushes nearby was locked onto!

Behind the seemingly common mosquito that was approximately the size of a dragonfly was an extremely tiny telepathic thought that extended into the depths of the mountain.

Somebody was remotely controlling the mosquito from far away.

Li Yao was suddenly alarmed. He immediately realized that he was not the only ‘observer’ in the darkness!

Chapter 1341 - Ancient Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator

Li Yao suddenly felt that he was lucky.

He had been cautious enough to not leave any trace behind after he landed.

Otherwise, even if the army of the court overlooked him, the ‘observer’ that had been prying in the darkness certainly would have grown suspicious. He would have been mired in endless trouble.

The fact that the stranger could attach a feeble telepathic thought to a mosquito and remotely control it from several mountains away suggested that his Cultivation was at least as good as that of the female sword Cultivator at the peak of the Core Formation Stage.

Thankfully, the mosquito was made of flesh and blood, so not too many techniques could be stored inside the tiny body. It was already its limits to observe the battle.

Neltharion, on the other hand, was a piece of cutting-edge magical equipment from the Star Ocean Imperium that had been constantly improved by Li Yao. When it was hidden in the air, a tiny mosquito could certainly not detect it.

Therefore, it was Li Yao who discovered a second observer, not the other way around.

The discovery gave Li Yao a great advantage in the secret battle.

The mosquito slightly shivered. As if attracted by a spiritual thread, it flew toward the depths of the forest.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao ordered Neltharion to follow the mosquito, planning to meet the mysterious observer.

The army of the court commanded by the ‘Appeasing Ambassador of the Fifth Prefecture of the Southland of Sorcerers’ was large with many soldiers. It was impossible that the army would vanish into thin air from the forest.

A lot of traces would be left behind by the wagons and horses after the army passed.

Neltharion had recorded the terrain nearby. Even if the army was lost right now, it was easy for Li Yao to keep track of the army by following their traces.

The mysterious observer, on the other hand, might not be found again once lost.

Li Yao had a vague feeling that the level of the stranger should be far higher than the female sword Cultivator. Chances were that he was even in the Nascent Soul Stage.

I wonder, what methods does the ‘ancient Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator’ of this Sector boast?

Li Yao smiled and began to take off his clothes.

Shirts, pants, and underwear. He was completely naked in the end.

He tossed all the objects that did not belong to the world back into his Cosmos Rings before he activated the instant self-destruction alert rune arrays on the Cosmos Rings.

Should he be captured by a terrifying expert far stronger than himself in the worst case-scenario, he would still be able to destroy all traces related to his home instantly.

But as for the fact that nudity was certainly not any type of decorum…

Li Yao scratched his hair and found a piece of soft humus. He picked up a handful of mud and soon smeared himself in it.

Then, he managed to knit two covers with the broad leaves that resembled those of a palm and protected his private parts with them. Finally, he rushed after the mosquito under the guidance of Neltharion.

The master of the mosquito must not have dreamt that somebody could perceive his enchanted insect inside the forest that was brimming with venomous fog. The mosquito was swaggering forward without the slightest concealment. After passing two mountains, it almost turned into a streak of bright gold at a speed higher than that of a bird.

However, it was true that the area was a desolate and harsh land. The giant trees dozens of meters tall blocked all the sunshine. Swamps and caves whose depth nobody could tell were everywhere. Many lethal snakes, rats, and ants were also lurking in the branches and grass, too.

Li Yao estimated that, not just the troops from the central dynasty, even the local barbarians of the area might not have the courage to approach.

The land in the front suddenly sank. A deep, narrow canyon appeared, as if the ground had been slashed upon brutally.

On the cliffs of the canyon grew bizarre-shaped trees whose dense crowns blocked Li Yao's vision. Like the duckweed that floated on the top of a pond, they stopped everybody from examining how deep the canyon was.

Very soon, however, the sound of water echoed from the bottom of the canyon, as if a river was surging from the depths.

There was not the slightest track created by animals when they walked by near the canyon. Not just the ordinary people, even the toughest fighters would not dare to explore the area by themselves.

Li Yao noticed a weird phenomenon.

After surpassing quite a few high mountains in a row, he heard the shrieks of animals everywhere from the primitive forest. He had also sensed the auras of some rather intimidating demon beasts, which suggested that this place was a paradise for wildlife.

But after he reached the canyon, he could not hear the sound of any living creatures, not even the slithering noises of the snakes and rats, although the forest there was even more dense and even had a clear water source.

The seemingly vigorous forest was like a silent graveyard. Although the sun was burning in the sky, there was nothing but chilly air in the forest.

The mosquito dived down into the canyon.

Neltharion still tailed it, neither too distant nor too close, in the stealth state.

Li Yao activated the Great Dream Tortoise Hibernation Art that Gui Suishou had taught him silently and reduced his physiological signs such as breath and heartbeat to the minimum in the high-speed movement.

Not only was the Great Dream Tortoise Hibernation Art a device for hibernation, it also had another great advantage, which was that the physiological signs on the surface of the body could be reduced during short-time strenuous movements. So, a body might appear cold although it was burning hot inside.

Right now, if somebody observed Li Yao’s skin with a microscope, they would discover that Li Yao’s pores had been fully sealed, and his skin was as smooth as a mirror. He looked like a person born without pores.

The spiritual energy, bodily fluid, and smell, which escaped through the pores, were naturally kept inside the body.

Before, Li Yao had studied similar stealth techniques, but the general techniques only allowed him to hide himself in the still state. The Great Dream Tortoise Hibernation Art was much more incredible in that it allowed Li Yao to not leak any smell or wave while he was rushing forward.

The canyon was extremely deep. It was narrow at the top but got broader as he descended. After passing through the upper layer that was occupied by the overwhelming crowns of the trees, he discovered that dark fog was rolling up and down in front of him.

At the bottom of the canyon was a large river in pale white. Like an angry dragon, it was crashing and tearing apart the rocks on the two sides of the canyon. Occasionally, some of the rocks were ripped off and minced into pieces into pieces, disappearing into the river.

Even a feather could float on such a river!

Everything about the place was creepy and hideous. It seemed like a terrain where a few zombies could jump out at any time.

The mosquito flew toward into the rushing river at the bottom of the canyon. It was about to be smashed into pieces by the wave when it suddenly vanished into thin air after a flash.

Blinking his eyes, Li Yao discovered, after maneuvering Neltharion to take quite a few circles, that right behind a horizontal, half-dead tree on one side of the canyon close to the surface of the river was a crack that was well hidden and only allowed one person to pass through at a time.

Although the tree was not huge, its roots were rather dense and almost blocked the crack entirely like a natural barrier.

If Li Yao had not seen the mosquito crawling into it, it would have been difficult for him to notice the crack even if he searched with his full attention.

Neltharion passed through the gaps among the roots carefully and groped for a long time in the darkness along the zigzagging gap until there were suddenly no more obstacles ahead.

It turned out to be a very broad underground cave!

The underground cave was more than a hundred meters long and wide. Traces of manual work were obvious. There were quite a few cracks on the top leading to nobody knew where. Occasionally, pale white brilliance was leaking down, illuminating the entire cave.

When Li Yao calmed himself and observed again, he noticed that the cave was not just illuminated by the brilliance showered from the gaps on the dome but also by the bones that had occupied the entire cave!

Most of the bones were bright gold, deep red, bronze, and various other colors. They were countless times larger than the bones of human beings. However, the hands, feet, and skulls resembling those of human beings could still vaguely be distinguished.

They were well-preserved remains of the members of the Pangu Clan or the Nuwa Clan!

Li Yao’s eyes suddenly shined. The remains of the Pangu civilization was another piece of evidence that the mysterious world of ancient Cultivators was deeply related to the Pangu civilization.

However, other than the primeval bones with intimidating auras, some of the skeletons belonged to human beings.

Judging from the dry residue on the skeletons, they had only recently been killed. Also, the dead bodies were rather young and small. They seemed to be little kids, if not newborn babies.

Is there an evil Cultivator torturing living people here?

Li Yao’s eyebrow was immediately furrowed.

He knew that evil arts to baptize the magical equipment with living people existed in many worlds of ancient

Cultivators.

It was also a tradition of the desolate Cultivators to magnify the power of their magical equipment by sacrificing the living people and melting the victims' souls into the magical equipment.

As for the victims to be sacrificed, infants, whose souls were still unpolluted, were the best choices.

If explained with modern theories, it was probably because the structure of the force fields of the infants were relatively stable because their souls had not been contaminated by cosmic radiation yet.

Li Yao found almost twenty skeletons of kids that were relatively intact. As for the scattered bones, there were simply too many of them to count.

Such a gory view stirred his mind and raised his killing intent despite his calmness.

In the deepest part of the cave was an altar made of black rocks. Ancient, mysterious spiritual stripes and embossments were carved everywhere on the altar, depicting the creepy scenes of fiends swallowing human beings.

Behind the altar were a vintage furnace and many devices for the refinement of magical equipment. They were of a reasonably good quality even in the eyes of a professional such as Li Yao.

As for the thing placed next to the furnace, it was even more interesting.

It seemed to be a part of some enormous armor.

More exactly speaking, it was half of the shoulder armor that should have belonged to the armor worn by a member of the Pangu Clan or the Nuwa Clan who was about twenty meters tall.

The half shoulder armor was almost five meters long, but it was riddled with holes and only had the framework left.

In front of the shoulder armor was a middle-aged man whose skin was pale and whose face was gloomy.

The man’s eyes were deep, with a blue birthmark that looked like a giant bird opening its wings at the center of his brow, covering most of his upper face.

Hidden below the ‘wings’, his eyes were even deeper. His hawk nose boasted a large curve, and the tip of his nose was almost piercing into his lip. His lips were thin and protruded forward, which made them look like the beak of a bird.

Despite his ugliness and the shabby environment, the man had an intimidating aura around him, as if he were the invincible dominator of the forest!

Chapter 1342 - Hundred Ghosts Edict

The mosquito that returned from hundreds of kilometers away over all the mountains hovered around his head for a while before it reached his mouth, only to be swallowed in the next second. The guy chewed it for a while, his cheeks moving up and down, and spat out a mouthful of green saliva. Then he chuckled.

“Black Nose was truly a dumbass who hadn’t grown any more intelligent after decades. He was still as stupid as swine and as greedy as a dog. After the slightest incitation from the few villages, he was bold enough to perform a head-on attack on the Appeasing Ambassador’s army!”

The green-spotted freak shook his head in disdain.

As his facial muscles were twisted, the birthmark that looked like a bird seemed to be flapping up and down, making it even more hideous.

The three thousand Sectors all originated from Pangu and Nuwa. The mysterious world that had never been visited before had been raised by Pangu or Nuwa, too.

All the existent civilizations of human beings more or less inherited the essence of the Pangu civilization in terms of language and social system.

Therefore, their languages were generally similar to each other. They were like the dialects of the same language.

Having absorbed many of Ou Yezi’s memory pieces, Li Yao was adept at many vernaculars of the medieval era in the first place.

During the five years of development of Kunlun, the federation had excavated a lot of remnants that stored the spells and runes of the Pangu civilization, allowing him to gain a deeper understanding of the language system of the Pangu civilization.

The language adopted in this Sector was similar to the ‘Lotus Small Seal Calligraphy’ at the early years of the medieval era, with slightly different strokes. Therefore, the words on the banner ‘Appeasing Ambassador of the Fifth Prefecture of the Southland of Sorcerers’ had been recognized by Li Yao easily.

The green-spotted freak’s accent, on the other hand, was both blurred and creepy. It sounded like a viper zigzagging inside one’s ears. Anybody who heard it would find goosebumps rising all over their body.

Li Yao listened carefully for a while and compared it to dozens of dialects in the age of the ancient Cultivators. Finally, based on the context, he was able to get what the guy was saying.

The green-spotted freak sniffed and said, “Did it never occur to Black Nose what they were going through? Would the Appeasing Ambassador who was bold enough to assume his office at such a troubled time be easy to deal with? I only pity the great flesh on his body and the ‘Gloomy Fire Blood Transformation Saber’!”

Although he was talking about ‘pity’, there was not any real pitifulness on the green-spotted freak’s face, just as he was not really thinking that the Appeasing Ambassador was hard to deal with even if he was talking as such.

It appeared that the battle in the forest was completely disregarded by him. The Appeasing Ambassador's victory and the barbarians' failure were both trivial, not worth mentioning.

Li Yao realized that the so-called Black Nose must have been the fat, bald man who was riding the rhino demon beast.

Judging from the green-spotted freak's tone, he was an old acquaintance of Black Nose's, but the two of them were not in a good relationship.

Since he had been able to observe the competition between Black Nose and the female sword Cultivator and still scorn them, it was obvious that he was far stronger than either of them.

The green-spotted freak sneered for a while longer before he dropped the issue and refocused his attention on a few sword embryos and broken rune arrays on the altar.

It turned out that the altar was sort of a working table for him.

As a master of refining with knowledge about both the past and the present day, Li Yao realized what the green-spotted freak was doing after the first observation.

He estimated that the green-spotted freak must have accidentally discovered the mysterious cave where the armor and dead bodies of the Pangu Clan were hidden.

However, perhaps because of the passage of time, or perhaps because he wasn't the first lucky dog to discover the place, few relics there were still of value except for half of the arm armor.

Because of the Pangu Clan’s enormous body size, even half of the arm armor would still be enough to be built into many marvelous weapons if it was refined into ingredients first.

Therefore, the green-spotted freak must have been living in the place in seclusion, dismantling the giant’s arm armor and modifying it into magical equipment that he could use.

Judging from his monologue, he had not met Black Nose for decades. Also, based on the decorations of the cave, it was very possible that he had hidden himself here for ten to twenty years.

Li Yao vaguely saw that dozens of square holes had been dug out on the wall of the cave that was as smooth as a mirror. The holes had been smeared with a layer of bone powder at first before almost twenty semi-products were placed in them. It appeared that they were all plucked from the giant’s arm armor, a job that could not have been finished quickly.

In the age of ancient Cultivators, the professions of Cultivators were not clear yet. The high-level Cultivators often studied multiple disciplines and knew a thing or two about medicine, poison, refining, rune arrays, and many other subjects.

The green-spotted freak was probably an expert in the Nascent Soul Stage who had lived in seclusion for decades after locating the ‘treasure’, partly to train himself and partly to build powerful secret treasures. It was a rather common practice for the ancient Cultivators.

However, the ancient Cultivators, who did not know much about the fundamental subjects, apparently would not study the basic mechanism as modern Cultivators would after receiving the secret treasures of the Pangu civilization.

The green-spotted freak was merely interested in the super alloys on the arm armor and considered it materials for his sword.

As for the aerodynamics, the circulation of spiritual energy, the ergonomics, and the mysterious mechanisms in many fields behind the arm armor, he turned a blind eye to them all. Li Yao could not help but feel that it was simply too wasteful.

That being said, the green-spotted freak indeed had his own expertise in refining.

He took over a sword embryo made of the remnants of the Pangu Clan’s armor. Touching it in fascination for a while, he spat another mouthful of green saliva, which turned into a green fire the moment it reached the sword embryo. When the fire perished, a few zigzagging streaks had been left on the sword embryo.

The green-spotted freak narrowed his eyes and observed the streaks by aiming them at the light. Then, he unpacked a colorful silk bag on his waist and took out a black badge from it.

The badge was the size of a palm. Almost a hundred big-headed children were carved on the surface in an eccentric style. Every big-headed child was laughing in delight, but there was a creepy feeling hidden in the deepest part of their smile.

Such a picture of children laughing was truly more disturbing than a picture of ghosts walking at night.

The green-spotted freak recited his spell in silence. Two streams of bright green smoke escaped from his nostrils, circling around the badge nine times, before they diverged into green threads that were even thinning and crawled into the noses of the big-headed children in the picture!

A weird thing happened!

After absorbing his telepathic thoughts, the big-headed children who were rigid on the metal badge suddenly began grimacing. The delight on their faces was now mixed with misery and suffering!

Suddenly, the green-spotted freak extended his long, narrow fingers and snapped the badge three times. After a grunt, his telepathic thoughts fished up a few souls from the badge like lines!

The few souls looked like children if not babies, except that their bones were bulging and their bodies were twisted. They could not have looked queerer.

The green-spotted freak kept grunting. His immense spiritual energy crashed at the souls of the children like a few giant hands, kneading and torturing them as if they were mud.

Because of the painful suffering, the souls of the children were finally infuriated and launched counterattacks at him brutally!

However, how could the children whose souls were deprived of a body soon after they were born and had no specialties except for their pureness expect to compete with a great expert in the Nascent Soul Stage?

The green-spotted freak, on the other hand, was like a cat playing with the mice. He dealt with the souls of the children unhurriedly, building up their aggressiveness and bloodthirst.

This is much more an evil art to sacrifice the living people. This is a secret technique that looks like a way to tame ghosts!

Li Yao was more than shocked.

It was obvious that the green-spotted freak was to answer for the dead bodies of the children at the periphery of the cave.

He killed the children, plucked their souls, and sealed them inside the weird badge.

The badge was similar to an ‘artificial body’ in the modern Cultivation civilization, where one’s remaining soul could be hidden and nurtured.

Naturally, the guy did not have any good intentions. He was hoping to cleanse and turn the ignorant souls of children into gremlins before he melted them into swords and artifacts in order to increase the power of the magical equipment!

To explain what ‘gremlins’ were, the notion of ‘ware spirit’ must be explained first.

According to the ancient Cultivators, the flying swords and the magical equipment were personable. With enough time, after absorbing enough natural essence, they would be connected to their owners, and a ‘ware spirit’ might be born. If so, the magical equipment would be able to automatically attack or defend without the control of the owner.

Magical equipment that boasted a ware spirit was also known as ‘spiritual treasure’, an existence of a higher level. They were also the ultimate treasures that countless ancient Cultivators sought after.

In the opinions of modern Cultivators, the so-called ‘ware spirit’ could be defined as artificial intelligence that could automatically search, cruise, make judgements, attack, or defend based on the tactical plans embedded.

It was very difficult to develop an artificial intelligence that was a complete simulation of a human being’s brain even for the Star Glory Federation, not to mention the medieval era where everybody was still groping in darkness.

Right now, a popular theory in the federation even had it that the ‘ware spirits’ were very common in the age of ancient Cultivators because they were the military artificial intelligences, and their mutants of the Pangu civilization left after the primeval war.

The primeval ware spirits were something tantalizing but often unreachable. Therefore, some of the evil guys turned their malicious eyes to human beings.

Killing human beings, retrieving their souls, and attaching them to the magical equipment could achieve the effect of ‘artificial intelligence’, too, if not better.

Children’s souls were the best choices for such evil arts to transform human beings’ souls into ‘ware spirits’.

It was because the souls of children were pieces of unpolluted, white paper. They were like the ‘initial state’ of a crystal processor whose architecture was just constructed but had not been written with any front-end operation system and specific instructions yet. Therefore, the user would be able to fill in new instructions without bothering about the system conflicts.

Chapter 1343 - A Test!

However, one’s soul was not a senseless artificial intelligence after all. Even if their memories were wiped out, they would still feel pain, suffering, and other emotions.

It was especially so when the green-spotted freak was refining the innocent souls of children into the most brutal ghosts. The pain that the children bore was certainly beyond any description.

The children had been thrown into a permanent slaughterhouse before they had a taste of life. They shouldered suffering that was a hundred times more miserable than being minced, and yet they could not kill themselves.

Even a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator such as Li Yao could not help but feel that his tongue was numb and his heart was racing when he thought of the torture.

*The b*stard must be killed!*

Killing intent suddenly rose inside Li Yao and occupied his heart.

Just now, the battle between the two troops in the forest was one among adults. Everybody had their mission in a battlefield. Li Yao never thought that he could stop all wars in the three thousand Sectors despite his ideals.

However, it was one thing to fight another adult, and it was a whole other thing to butcher children.

Even butchering the children itself was only a brief pain. Those that were killed would die a clean death.

It was a hundred times crueler to capture the souls of the children, burn them day and night, and seal them into magical equipment in order to reap the lives of more innocent people!

Li Yao could not ignore it.

He had to rescue the souls of the innocent children.

Although his target was probably an expert in the Nascent Soul Stage, and he should focus more on investigation as he was new to the place, this was where his belief lay.

If he turned a blind eye to such an unpardonable crime and escaped, there would be loopholes in his belief, and his level might plummet. He might begin to question his outlook and the spirit of the federation. It would be impossible for him to accomplish his mission well.

I will have to compete with a local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator sooner or later and gauge the expertise of the experts of this world myself anyway!

This is the deepest part of the mountains at the bottom a great canyon. There's not another person in the hundreds of square kilometers nearby. Nobody is going to discover the fight!

The guy must be living in seclusion without a companion. So, there won't be any unnecessary trouble!

Alright. Let your head be the offering for my cause!

After Li Yao became determined to kill the guy, he found another great benefit of executing him, which was that the guy’s identity seemed to be of great value!

Squinting, Li Yao slithered toward the crack without a sound on the steep cliff like a gray boa.

Right then, a vague sweet smelt, mixed with a feeble heartbeat, came from behind him.

The hair on Li Yao’s head and on his back immediately stood up. He turned to the left side out of natural instinct. After a huge noise, an iron whip seemed to have brutally slapped the crag where he had been lying a moment earlier, leaving a gorge more than half a meter deep there. Yellow smoke was even popping up from the gorge, and the rocks were corroded into holes that looked like honeycombs.

A giant lizard almost eight meters long, which looked like a hybrid of a crocodile and a dinosaur, had appeared on the crag above Li Yao at some point. A long tongue that was almost as thick as a boa was dragged from its great mouth. Thick poisonous fluids were dripping from the tongue onto the rocks, burning countless holes on them!

Four yellow and brown eyes were staring at Li Yao viciously. The reflection inside the tiny eyes showed another person standing right behind Li Yao.

It was the master of the mysterious cave, the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator who had a bird birthmark on his forehead and was torturing the souls of children!

“Huh?” The local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was somehow surprised by Li Yao’s quick response. He eyed the stranger up and down and cackled. “Capable of avoiding a full-strength strike of the Six-footed Crocodile Dragon, you are indeed something. No wonder you are bold enough to pry into my residence! Which family are you from? Who sent you here? Confess now, and I'll save your suffering. Otherwise, I'll burn your soul for three days and enjoy my wine over it!"

The appearance of the green-spotted freak was between that of a civilized citizen in the central area and a barbarian. He did look like a locally born and raised Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator.

However, Li Yao would not look down on him just because of his appearance—after all, he had just tricked Li Yao.

I was fooled!

The guy must've deployed some sort of barrier out of his cave, not to prevent others from prying or trespassing, but to inform him silently when a burglar is detected!

Li Yao secretly frowned.

The two types of barriers were vastly different.

The first type of barriers was meant to block the enemy so that they would know it was best to retreat, but the second type was intentionally letting the intruders in so that they would be fished up once and for all.

The fact that the guy dared to live in such a rough land on his own and deployed such barriers was obvious enough that the guy was very confident in his own capabilities and believed that everybody was asking to be killed if they barged in!

It was quite understandable. In such a desolate land at the edge of the civilization, a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, with a few primeval treasures, should be as confident as anyone could be!

I've made the same mistake as Su Changfa.

Although I'd reminded myself time and time again, I was still careless after discovering that the Sector is still in the medieval age and that those guys are half-civilized barbarians!

But in fact, although the so-called 'ancient people' and 'barbarians' may be not as good as the modern people in terms of knowledge system, they can be better at plots and schemes than we are!

Li Yao sighed. Now that an ambush was no longer an option, he could only suppress the enemy in a head-on clash.

It might not be bad, either. He could collect more experimental data and gain a thorough understanding about the maximum combat ability and battle patterns of the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

"Are you too scared to say anything now, junior?"

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator with a birthmark on his forehead grinned even more hideously, thinking that Li Yao was already petrified.

He was not worried at all.

Before his seclusion, he had already been invincible in the thousands of square kilometers nearby. Right now, after he grasped such incredible arts and built tougher magical equipment, he was even confident in going to the splendid world at the central plateau. What could a junior who jumped out of nowhere, unarmed and unarmored, do?

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator’s pupils suddenly constricted to the minimum. His facial expression was stopped between disdain and shock, as if every nerve there had been frozen.

The junior was gone.

Not good. Behind me!

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator’s back seemed to have been slashed by a heavy saber brutally and almost ripped in half.

But it was merely the wind raised when Li Yao was kicking.

Saying one more word would mean a greater likelihood of his information being leaked. Li Yao was not interested in playing a pretentious game with the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. Whatever information he needed to know, he could always elicit it from the enemy after he suppressed the enemy.

Although the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator knew a lot of secret arts about souls, Li Yao was no worse than him with the mental devil and the memories of the ancient Cultivator!

Li Yao’s attack greatly shocked the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator.

He had been travelled in the Southland of Sorcerers for a hundred years and even paid a visit to the central plateaus occasionally. However, he had never seen such a ruthless opponent who performed a deadly attack without saying anything!

Moreover, how was the guy’s body tough enough to appear right behind him like a ghost without resorting to any magical equipment?

The guy’s attacks were simple and shabby, too, without any mysterious changes. He was more like a performer on the street than a high-level Cultivator.

But as it happened, the guy’s speed was amazingly high. He straightened his feet and came close like a rushing flying sword!

The local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator shrieked and dashed upward quickly. Without looking back, he waved his hands backward, throwing out two clusters of green fog, which were condensed into two giant claws and snatched at Li Yao’s legs.

Boom!

Emotionlessly, Li Yao did not care about it at all and blew the two claws into smithereens after only one kick.

Pu!

The local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator spewed a mouthful of blood, his hands shivering. The kick seemed to have hit two arms directly.

It’s basically as I have imagined.

Doing two things at the same time, Li Yao drafted his battle plan while he analyzed the presentation of the top warriors of this Sector.

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator of this Sector boasts rather a high reserve of spiritual energy. However, he has yet to grasp the technique to activate the spiritual energy in the most straightforward way at the highest efficiency. Their *moves are mixed with too many splendid and yet useless visual and sound effects. Or rather, there are too many ‘impurities’ in their attacks!*

Judging from the experience in the other worlds of ancient Cultivators, it is because the spiritual energy is too abundant in their living environment and is not worth cherishing. Therefore, they have not developed Cultivation arts to increase efficiency.

Their Cultivation arts are often invented by themselves in primitive and crude ways. Such arts never receive hundreds of times of repetitive calculations and perfections or repeatability tests, double-blind tests, extreme tests, and so on.

The ancient Cultivation arts are to modern ones what workshops are to the factories with assembly lines. Even if their power can be impressive occasionally, they are far worse than the latter in terms of stability, repeatability, and efficiency!

Li Yao’s toes pierced into the rocks like nails before he stomped on it and charged at the local Nascent Soul Stage like a cannonball!

“My Fellow Cultivator, what’s the grudge between you and me? Why are you attacking so ruthlessly?”

The local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator’s spine and arms were numb. He changed his form of address for Li Yao from ‘junior’ to ‘Fellow Cultivator’. Although he was asking, he did not stop his action. The giant lizard whose long tongue was like a weird boa immediately launched an attack from the high stance!

Pa!

The lizard’s long tongue hit Li Yao’s body brutally.

Before the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator had time to be overjoyed, Li Yao turned into ripples after being slapped by the long tongue. He was nothing but a blurred shadow!

The attack had missed the target!

Li Yao’s real body appeared right behind the giant lizard, pinched the lizard’s neck, and swung it brutally!

Who was Li Yao?

A guy who had been doing competitions of beliefs with Ding Lingdang for five years!

Even without magical equipment, his body itself had been polished into an invincible weapon by Ding Lingdang!

That was especially so for his core ‘lumbo-abdominal strength’, which was now even more brutal and fierce than the high-speed crystal trains after thousands of collisions!

With the core strength as the foundation, Li Yao strangled the lizard’s neck as if his legs were scissors. Then, cracking noises echoed inside the lizard’s neck. The bones, veins, and nerves of the animal all exploded. Before it even had the chance to scream, the enormous head of the lizard had been cut off!

Chapter 1344 - The Local Nascent Soul Stage Is Angry!

Although the Six-footed Crocodile Dragon had been beheaded, its enormous body was still cramping under the control of the nerves. Stinky, venomous blood sprang from the broken neck and spluttered over Li Yao’s face and body, turning him into a glittering, bloody man.

Li Yao’s formidability was quite a surprise for the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. The death of his beloved pet that he had raised carefully for decades was quite a devastation for him, too.

However, now that the enemy was contaminated by the slightly green blood of the demon beast, he was sneering to himself again.

The Six-footed Crocodile Dragon had been found next to a poisonous spring upstream from the Poisonous Dragon River, the turbulent river at the bottom of the canyon.

The poisonous spring was clear and seemed fresh and drinkable, yet no plants or animals were thriving nearby.

The Six-footed Crocodile Dragon, which had only been the length of an arm at that time, was the only creature that dared to crawl out of the crevice and drink water from the spring. The local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator who happened to be collecting herbs nearby noticed it and realized that it was a naturally-distinguished beast. So, he had brought it back to his cave as a pet.

The beast usually fed on vipers, scorpions, centipedes, and the like, and it took more than a hundred snakes as thick as bowls for one meal. The venom had been accumulated inside its internal organs. The saliva of the beast was so poisonous that it would kill any victim immediately if it was smeared on the blade.

The toxicity of the blood, on the other hand, was a hundred times higher than that of the saliva!

The mysterious weirdo, despite his toughness, did not have the first clue about the mysteries of the Six-footed Crocodile Dragon and simply allowed the dragon blood to corrupt him. Would it not be…

Seeing the green smoke popping up from his body, Li Yao was rather interested. He dipped his fingers into the dragon blood and savored it for a moment.

Not bad. Not bad. Many kinds of neurotoxins, blood circulations toxins, and cell toxins can be found inside the dragon blood. It equals to a combination of the venoms of the cobras, green bamboo snakes, kraits, and blue ocean snakes, with an effect dozens of times stronger! They can rust one's nerve endings, cerebral cortexes, and respiratory muscles instantly, making the victim enshrouded in hallucinations. The victim's nerves will then lose control, and his limbs will not stop cramping. Eventually, the victim will die of muscle paralysis and hypoxia!

This is rather tough for a natural venom!

However, there's still a major gap between such a venom and the genetic poisons carefully made by combining the *body fluids of hundreds of different kinds of venomous insects and demon beasts based on modern genetic technology!*

Part of Li Yao was now the mental devil, who was a great expert of genetic refinement and cell amplification. With his ability to analyze, resist, and crack the venoms infiltrating his body, he was now basically immune to all poisons!

It had also been the greatest reliance when Li Yao travelled in the Blood Demon Sector years ago.

After the unification of the three Sectors, Li Yao felt that it would be difficult for him to make a breakthrough soon according to normal training methods now that he had advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage at such a young age.

Therefore, he had come up with many seemingly ‘unorthodox’ methods together with the trustworthy demons such as Jin Xinyue and the Fire Ant King.

Improving the body hardness and triggering the potentials of the cells with the combinative poisons was one of the methods.

It was in fact the very same method that Yan Xibei had adopted to build his ‘apocalyptic body’ on Iron Plateau years ago.

After five years of refinement, Li Yao’s body, although not very attractive, was in fact ten times stronger than Yan Xibei’s hideous ‘apocalyptic body’!

Besides, he could also reduce all the pores to the minimum through Gui Suishou’s Great Dream Tortoise Hibernation Art. When his skin was as smooth as a mirror, it was impossible for the venom to leak in. How could it deal any damage to him?

It appears that the demon beast herding technology of this Sector is still rather underdeveloped. They are merely domesticating animals and not interfering with the growth of the animals through genetic approaches when they are still embryos.

However gifted the natural demon beasts are, they are not monsters born for killing like the biochemical beasts of the Blood Demon Sector!

Li Yao suddenly shook his body. The high-speed vibrations of his muscles blew away all the venom attached to his body into a crimson mist.

Now seen and now invisible inside the crimson mist, he was even more mysterious and terrifying.

The local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was so scared that his heart was pounding.

He knew a thing or two about the famous experts in the Nascent Soul Stage in the central plateaus, in the north, and overseas, but he had never heard anything about such a brutal and weird man before!

Besides, he could not figure out what the mysterious expert was doing in the Southland of Sorcerers, when every renowned expert had been gathered in the north for the upcoming great event.

Is it possible that he learned the news that I’m crafting magical equipment here and came to rob me of my treasures?

Absolutely not!

After I found the cave and the treasures inside it, in case anybody coveted it, I faked my own abrupt death decades ago. I haven't visited the outside world for dozens of years. Also, the array I deployed has informed me of all trespassers, who were all killed by me. Even their souls were swallowed without sparing anything. It is impossible that any news was leaked!

The more the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator thought, the more he was appalled. Knowing that it was a time of life and death. He rubbed his hands, and a round, pale pearl suddenly shone inside his palm. A streak of green brilliance flowed throughout his body, covering him in a battle armor outside his green feather cloak!

The greasy armor was connected by countless hexagonal scales. The joints were also strengthened by the skulls of many bizarre-shaped demon beasts. The two curved horns on the helmet that looked like curling vipers added to the barbaric air of the gear.

The local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was holding a lackluster flying sword in one hand and a tiny, colorful flag in the other. Dozens of mysterious sparks were flying around him, fully demonstrating the demeanor of the evil scoundrel.

Li Yao eyed the ancient armor somewhat with appreciation. He felt that he was walking into the history books and fighting against the ancient people in person.

“Hu!”

His blood boiling, he did not intend to put on his crystal suit at all. Utterly naked except for the palm leaves, he dashed toward the fully-armed local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator.

Ding Lingdang and Iron God Yan Ba were right!

It was possible that experts above the Nascent Soul Stage existed in this unknown world. If he were to encounter an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage, he might not have time to equip modern magical equipment and activate it even if he had brought the gear with them.

The body of flesh and blood was the most ‘convenient’ magical equipment, which could probably save his life at a crucial moment!

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator of the barbarians who was living in the wilderness by himself could not be the best warrior of the Sector. Otherwise, he would have marched to the central plateaus and demanded the emperor satisfy his needs. In terms of the efficiency of resource collection, the central plateaus must have been multiple times better than the barbaric land, which was essentially a rainforest.

It was perfect for Li Yao to adapt himself to the moves and techniques of the local Cultivators with such an enemy!

Li Yao punched toward the enemy’s breastplate in the most simple and straightforward way, an attack even a middle-school student in the federation could perform.

The local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was so infuriated that he almost vomited blood. He had never seen such an unreasonable style of fighting before!

For the Cultivators, even if they were robbing someone else of their belongings, they would at least have the courtesy to tell the victims their own names before the two parties performed their delicate moves and summoned their magical equipment for a splendid battle.

Where was the weirdo from exactly? He was fighting silently with the shabby moves that even the barbarians in the forest would laugh at, but the straightforward moves turned out to be extremely powerful!

The local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator felt that it was not a fist that was rushing at his chest but a dark meteor!

“Hooo!” The local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was angry!

He shook his flag, and the dozens of sparks around him immediately turned into an unpredictable gloomy wind, covering Li Yao!

The lackluster flying sword also rose up to the sky, splitting into dozens of streaks of brilliance!

His hands produced dozens of runes in different gestures like a lotus in only one moment, which smashed at Li Yao brutally as if they were real entities!

BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM!

In just several seconds, the two of them exchanged almost a hundred blows.

At first glance, the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator’s moves were spectacular and enjoyable, and his magical equipment was unpredictable, with all kinds of visual and sound effects. The thunder, the lightning, and the colorful brilliance were almost dazzling.

Li Yao’s attacks, on the other hand, were reduced to almost a ‘dutiful’ level. He was simply punching, kicking, and wrestling without any fancy tricks. He hardly cast any spells or unleashed any mystic rays. He was even simpler than a farmer.

However, the result was that—

The local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was suppressed from every perspective!

The most delicate moves, the most erratic spells, and the most unpredictable magical equipment, upon encountering Li Yao's fists and legs, were like eggs hitting a rock!

My guess is correct. This is a very classic battle technique of the ancient Cultivators.

While suppressing the enemy casually, Li Yao was even in the mood to analyze him.

The ancient Cultivators' skills in casting spells, manipulating magical equipment, and performing the techniques can mostly be traced back to the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan. They were passed on generation after generation.

However, the multiple clans of the Pangu civilization had a different physiological structure from human beings after all. Also, during the hundreds of thousands of years of teaching and reteaching, some of the information was misinterpreted!

Moreover, the ancient Cultivators could not get rid of their superstitions. They did not know the truth about the prehistoric civilizations such as Pangu, Nuwa, Kuafu, and Gonggong but simply treated them as deities.

The techniques were considered to be a blessing of the deities!

Now that they were a blessing of the deities, naturally, the techniques could never be revised or adjusted. All the procedures of the techniques were indispensable.

Even if the ancient Cultivators found some parts of the techniques ambiguous or even absurd, they would simply blame themselves for their own aptitude or their infirm belief. They never thought that anything could be wrong with the classics.

When they were too obstinate to accept anything new, how could they draw out the power of the ‘real’ secret techniques of the Pangu Clan and their own unparalleled spiritual energy?

Chapter 1345 - Collision of Civilizations!

Both the Star Glory Federation and the Imperium of True Human Beings had analyzed the differences between the ‘medieval Cultivators’ and the ‘modern Cultivators’ and the causes after getting a general picture of the age of the ancient Cultivators from the boundless ancient classics.

Li Yao’s own experience was even more unusual. With Ou Yezi’s memories, he had a deeper understanding of the congenital flaws of the ancient Cultivators’ civilizations.

The difference between the ancient Cultivators and the modern Cultivators was essentially the difference between a self-sustaining feudal society and a modern, or even postmodern, information society with a sweeping industrial system.

The former was just the simple accumulation of personal experience. They knew what and how, but they did not know why. They knew that a certain spell could trigger a certain technique with a certain effect, but nothing more.

As for exactly how the spell could trigger the specific technique, how the technique was structured, and why it could deal the unique damage or other effects, they did not have the first clue and simply credited everything to the deities.

The latter, on the other hand, highlighted the importance of fundamental mechanisms, big data, and manufacture on the same conditions.

Even the simplest flying sword and ‘fire raising art’ needed to be studied to the core!

For example, a Lotus Flower Hand Seal, in the medieval civilization of Cultivators, might have been passed on by one’s grandpa’s grandpa’s grandpa. How exactly the hand seal should be made and what effects it would bring, but nothing more.

As for the grandpa’s grandpa’s grandpa, he was probably enlightened by an eccentric expert or a deity to grasp the hand seal.

The mechanism of the hand seal, the flowchart of spiritual energy… Such information was utterly unknown to them. The technique was a black box. They knew the input and the output, but they did not know what happened in between at all.

When such a ‘black-box hand seal’ was passed on through vehicles such as jade chips and classics, there would be two outcomes.

If the heritage was kept intact, the offspring would worship it as the standard. Everybody would train themselves exactly the same as their ancestors did without the slightest adjustment.

It never occurred to them that everybody’s finger size and palm size were different. Also, the different fingerprints and palm prints would influence the effects of the hand seal, too.

Moreover, the hand seal ‘taught by the deities’ was possibly an art of a species in the Pangu civilization that was naturally endowed with six fingers. If their ancestors copied everything exactly as it was, their ancestors would be fundamentally wrong. How much damage could the hand seal cause after they performed it?

This was the better case-scenario.

If the vehicles in which the technique was stored got broken—change of dynasties and destruction of civilizations were nothing unusual for a civilization, and most of the heritages could possibly be damaged—then, the Cultivators of the future generations could only figure out a way to fill in the missing parts on their own.

But they did not know the mechanism of the ‘hand seal’. The fill-in became an art of mysteries. However the process was embroidered, it was essentially a game of luck!

The Cultivation arts revised in such a way would be even less powerful.

The modern Cultivation civilization, on the other hand, was different.

If a modern Cultivation civilization had access to a brand-new hand seal, they would recognize first that hand seals were a way to construct unique magnetic fields with their fingers by guiding the bioelectricity inside their body to their hands, which were the deftest organ on their body. Then, the magnetic fields would be used to trigger the spiritual energy hidden inside the body, the Cosmos Rings, or nature, leading to a chain reaction that would generate greater magnetic fields.

Therefore, the hand seals were essentially the ‘commands’ to invoke different ‘functions’. Different hand seals represent different commands.

But the commands were not unchangeable. Everybody could ‘compile’ their own simple, elegant, and errorless commands based on their actual situation.

After figuring out the mechanism, the modern Cultivators would slightly adjust the new hand seal according to the size of their palms, the length of their fingers, their bone density, their average hand speed, their extreme hand speed, and so on, with the help of the immense computational ability of the crystal processors.

After all the data was inputted into the crystal processors to construct models, digital tests would be run millions of times before the most perfect hand seal was outputted.

When a modern Cultivator trained themselves with the standard, most perfect hand seal, they could also receive the assistance of the facilities such as ‘hand fixer’. Naturally, their improvement would be fast.

That was just the beginning.

After a new hand seal was discovered, the government would upload it to the relevant ‘hand seal database’, check its similarity with the existing hand seals, and see if it belonged to a series.

Then, the new hand seal would be calculated repetitively in a virtual world in pairs with the spells in the ‘spell database’ for the researchers to see if any spell could build up its power when used together.

There were too many follow-up research programs to count.

But all the studies, including the immense databases of arts and techniques, needed to be backed by a powerful central government or a super business agency.

In a small-scale peasant economy, the court, which lacked control over the subjects, and the classic sects, which considered their neighbors their enemies, would never have such power.

It was exactly so for the moves that Li Yao had performed.

The punches, kicks, and knocks seemed simple, but in terms of routes of attack, breath frequency, and entanglement model, they were the products of countless specialists after hundreds of years of hard work, and they had been optimized by the super crystal processors. All the fabulous and yet redundant actions had been abandoned, and they had returned the true, fundamental meaning of the notion ‘attack’, which was to hit the target’s most vulnerable part with the greatest force through the shortest distance.

Simple as that.

Ugly as that.

Violent as that.

Boom!

Li Yao’s unattractive fist broke through the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator’s dazzling defenses and smashed into his hawk nose.

The local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator cried. His entire body was bashed into the hard rock, like a nail that had not been hammered in the right place.

It was the only result.

The local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator’s arts had been learned during decades of seclusion by himself.

The arts of Li Yao, an alien Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, were the essence of the wisdom of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector. They were invented during the communication, perfection, testing, and adjustments of countless Cultivators of different levels with consideration of the mechanisms in the studies of spiritual energy, biochemistry, kinetics, aerodynamics, anthroponomy, and hundreds of more disciplines.

The hundreds of disciples could only be developed in a highly developed industrial and information society!

It was not a battle between two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators but a collision between a medieval civilization that had remained stagnant in a small-scale peasant economy for more than a hundred thousand years and a modern Cultivation civilization that had dominated the sea of stars!

There was not any suspense in the outcome.

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators here are too weak, Li Yao thought to himself.

In terms of the reserve of spiritual energy, the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator would pass.

However, his moves when he was making hand seals, casting spells, or performing close-distance attacks were brimming with redundant, inexplicable actions.

The actions were indeed mysterious, and the posture was indeed elegant. The sound and visual effects triggered were quite impressive, too.

It was a shame that it was not a pageant going on right now but a fight.

Li Yao estimated that the redundant actions were either a must for the Pangu Clan who created the art because of their physiological conditions, false information caused because of the misinterpretation of the arts during the ages of lineage, or simply a gesture to show their belief and summon the deities.

Whatever the reason was, it did not matter at all!

BAM!

Li Yao kicked another time through a few flowers of ghostly fire, dislodging three teeth from the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator’s mouth.

The local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, who had appeared dominating a moment ago, now looked like a giant monkey that was depilated. He could not have looked more wretched.

His eyes full of fury and his face written with devastation, he was still waving his hands crazily as if cramping while he recited his spells and summoned the nonexistent deities in desperation.

Although every meaningless, redundant movement cost less than 0.1 seconds, three to five of them added up to almost half a second.

In a fierce battle between the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, a lot of things could be done in half a second.

Superstitions are truly a bad thing!

Li Yao could not help but sigh to himself.

To stride into the modern civilization, the very first step was to eliminate all superstitions and establish an atheistic worldview. It was the only way one could appreciate the techniques, magical equipment, and classics inherited from the ancient times from a more objective perspective so that they could study, improve, or even overrule the traditional knowledge.

But it was certainly not an easy task.

The Earth of Li Yao’s previous life in his memory was a place devoid of the traces of any prehistoric civilizations. The pyramids, the Stonehenge, and the Great Wall were all works of human beings.

Even so, billions of people were still avid believers of supernatural beings.

In the Sectors of Li Yao’s current life, there happened to be prehistoric civilizations incomprehensible for human beings.

When the enormous bodies of the Pangu civilization were excavated, they could easily be mistaken for the ecdysis of deities by the mortals. Also, what were starships and space stations if not heavens and paradises?

It was very difficult for an ancient Cultivator to deny the existence of deities and become an atheist after they witnessed the corpses of the Pangu Clan in person and could perform the wonderful techniques themselves!

Then, how did the modern Cultivators break their beliefs in deities?

It eventually boiled down to the silver lining of a disaster.

In the thirty thousand years of the Great Dark Era, human beings had been under the tyranny of demons, who propagated superstitious theories and governed the universe through the Four Pillars System.

According to the Four Pillars System, demons were the ‘blood descendants of deities’ and the ‘chosen ones’, whereas human beings were the traitors and clowns who betrayed the deities. It was the destiny of human beings to be exploited and enslaved, and they would bear such a fate forever without any chance of overturning it.

To stand up to the demons, naturally, human beings had to shatter the chosen ones’ propaganda together.

“No savior from on high delivers,

“No faith have we in prince or peer,

“Our own right hand the chains must shiver,

“Chains of hatred, greed, and fear!”

After sinking, praying, and struggling for thirty thousand years without seeing a single deity come to their rescue, human beings finally understood.

That was the foundation of the booming development of the modern Cultivation civilization after the demons were defeated.

Perhaps, without the thirty thousand years of desperation, human beings never would have been reborn and granted a new life, and all the Sectors in the universe would have been lost in the bigoted, obstinate medieval age like the Sector here!

Chapter 1346 - As Vile as Such!

Apart from overall gap between the medieval Cultivation system and the modern Cultivation system, Li Yao’s own capability was unreachable for the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, too.

Who was Li Yao? Back when he was still in the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage, he was already bold enough to fight Xiao Xuance, the best expert of the Flying Star Sector at the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage!

Then, he broke into the Blood Demon Sector on his own and challenged dozens of demon emperors with hundreds of thousands of soldiers as the background in the Eye of Blood Demon!

On Kunlun, he even slew a member of the Pangu Clan in person!

Right now, in terms of the immensity of his soul power, his capability was certainly higher than the general sense of the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage!

In terms of the toughness of his flesh, with the mental devil, he could activate his primeval cells freely, which meant that he was an expert on par with general demon emperors, too!

He had essentially combined the advantages of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator and a demon emperor into one. Only great experts above the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage might be able to fight him.

Normal Cultivators at the beginning level and the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage were but appetizers for him.

Pa!

Li Yao slapped his arm heavily again, drawing a line almost five meters long and hit the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator’s chest hard.

After a crack, the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator’s spiritual shield fell apart, and the breastplate was blown into pieces. His ribs exploded into powder, and his chest collapsed. Even some of his lung lobes were broken, as indicated by the miserable moans in his throat.

The local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator ran for almost a hundred meters holding his head.

Li Yao did not chase after him. Instead, he focused his attention on recording the data such as the strength that he had just used and the enemy’s wounds.

It was barely a fight; it was more like an experiment with a white mouse.

A hundred meters away, the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator’s hair was in a terrible mess, and he almost peed his pants.

In the forest south of the Sorcerers’ River, he had been an invincible, brutal man!

But the mysterious weirdo who jumped out of nowhere was a hundred times more brutal than him!

Without any armor or magical equipment, the guy had suppressed almost all of his magical equipment with just a body of flesh and blood.

The seeming shabby moves tore apart his spiritual shield, his armor made of dragon scales, and his flesh time and time again!

In the meantime, his flying sword could barely touch the enemy’s shadow!

His enemy did not look like a human being but a ferocious beast in human skin!

Seeing the indifference and boredom on Li Yao’s face and the emotionless eyes, the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was caught by desperation and lost all his fighting will.

After his lung was damaged, his previously deep and enchanting voice became like the shrieks of a broken gong.

“Fellow Cultivator! Please stop, Fellow Cultivator!

“Senior! Spare my life, senior!

“Deity! Let’s talk nicely, deity! Deity, your skills are too extraordinary for me. Your junior is willing to offer the Poisonous Dragon Cave and be at your service. Please—”

Li Yao blinked.

He had indeed considered capturing the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator alive and eliciting the information about the planet from him.

However, on second thought, the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was a native of the place after all. He must be familiar with the environment here.

Also, the soundless barriers that he had deployed around his cave were indicative enough of his cleverness. He was certainly not a barbarian with more brawn than brains.

It was also proved by the fact that he was begging for mercy when he realized that he could not win.

He was in the Nascent Soul Stage after all. Just because he could not defeat Li Yao did not mean that he could not run away when Li Yao was not focused.

Li Yao had just landed on the planet. There were still many things that required his full attention. He could not keep such a time bomb next to him.

Besides, a Cultivator from the barbarians did not necessarily know the situation in the central dynasty and the world of Cultivators. After all, the army of the ‘Appeasing Ambassador of the Fifth Prefecture of the Southland of Sorcerers’ was nearby. Li Yao could always seek information from them after he fabricated a new identity.

Therefore, after weighing the pros and cons, Li Yao found it unnecessary to keep the guy alive.

Standing on the surging river at the bottom of the canyon, Li Yao warmed up his wrists and ankles unhurriedly, his hair dancing in the air although there was no wind. Hearing none of the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator’s cries for mercy, he said casually, “Run.”

It was the first word that he had said after he landed.

He was trying to simulate the local dialect by exercising his vocal cords and the muscles on his throat.

What he was simulating was exactly the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator’s style.

While begging in tears, the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was concocting all kinds of ploys and schemes in his heart. His last magical equipment was simmering impatiently inside the silk bag on his waist when he suddenly heard ‘run’. Dazed for a moment, he failed to understand what Li Yao’s meant.

Pointing at the upstream of the river in the darkness at the end of the canyon, Li Yao repeated himself. “Run, at your highest speed.”

Having already collected the relevant data in terms of attack and defense just now, he was also interested in testing the extreme speed of the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator.

The local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator finally understood what he meant.

He also understood his identity as a ‘test subject’ from Li Yao’s expressionless face.

Shua!

The local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator suddenly blushed. In contrast, the bird-shaped birthmark on his forehead was even more obvious. It was almost bursting out of his head!

“Fellow Cultivator, do not be too mean. Have you never tasted the wrath of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator?”

The local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator’s chest suddenly collapsed in thunderous sounds before it entirely collapsed.

Pu!

A mouthful of green blood spurted into the air, turning into a hideous giant with three heads and six arms.

He was burning his life and unleashing the Nascent Soul, ready to fight Li Yao without any reserve!

Under the coverage of the giant of spiritual energy, the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator patted the silk bag on his waist. Almost fifty black streaks swooshed out and charged at Li Yao in deadly lines while letting out miserable laughter in midair!

This is what I’m waiting for! Li Yao sneered to himself.

It was thirty-six black daggers that were rushing at him. Every dagger was entangled with intense hatred and sense of death, indicating that they were ‘spiritual treasures’ where the souls of the innocent children were sealed as ware spirits!

The thirty-six daggers should be the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator’s last magical equipment that he would not use easily.

Every time he used such weapons, the spiritual waves and radiation of the outside world might corrupt the ware spirits inside the weapons, making the ‘spiritual treasures’ retrograde into general magical equipment.

However, once the weapons were indeed used, the agility of the magical equipment itself, the weirdness of the routes of attack, and the cooperation among the thirty-six daggers were quite impressive.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

The thirty-six black lines flashed around Li Yao, as if they were locking him into an impenetrable prison.

The daggers were made of materials collected from the enormous armor of the Pangu Clan. Chances were that some of the rune arrays of the Pangu Clan were still working on their surface. They were so fast that even Li Yao failed to dodge them for a moment.

Dozens of wounds were immediately cut on his body. The wounds quickly turned black, and his flesh was rolling out like the lips of a baby.

Streams of black gas were crawling into the wounds in a hurry.

Frowning, Li Yao cursed.

The vileness of the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was far beyond his expectation.

The scumbag did not just refine the souls of innocent children into ware spirits and seal them into the daggers in order to improve the manipulability and automation level of the magical equipment.

He even plucked some of the feebler souls, who were probably newborns or even fetuses in the uteruses, in a certain way and crafted them into the invisible, gloomy dark auras, which he attached to the daggers.

As long as the daggers cut the target’s skin, the dark auras would flood into the target’s body and gnaw the target’s nerves and soul directly!

“Hahahaha!”

Seeing that Li Yao was riddled with wounds and tied up by almost a hundred dark auras, ‘unable to move at all’, the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator could not have been more satisfied.

The thirty-six daggers had been forged by him after decades of hard work. So far, they had only been used to slay a few demon beasts. He had never tested them on the experts above the Core Formation Stage.

Just now, he could not estimate Li Yao’s expertise and did not dare to unleash the daggers. Finally, when he was left with no choice, he decided to have a go. He did not expect that the effect would be as good!

The previous depression on the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator’s face had entirely gone. He demanded, “What makes a rogue like you think you can mess around in front of my residence? However many skills you may have, the dark ghosts will break into your body, your bones, and your brain after you are hit by my daggers. You will feel like ten thousand ants biting your heart!”

Li Yao was truly exasperated.

“Ah-ha. So many fresh dark ghosts. They seem to be made of souls. Yummy!” The mental devil woke up inside Li Yao’s brain. Raising its nose, it was sniffing like a dog and almost wagging its nonexistent tail. “Can I eat them?”

“No, you can’t!” Li Yao said coldly. “The souls of the infants should not have been dark ghosts for long. In an appropriate environment, it is possible that their darkness can be purged for them to regain their consciousness.

“Attract them to you and enshroud them carefully, but do not swallow any of them, or I’ll eliminate you for real!

“I may joke about many things, but I’m serious on this one!”

The mental devil shuddered and stuck out his tongue. “Understood. Don’t be so grave. I was merely joking with you, too!

“Although I’m the dark side of your soul and a representative of your negative feelings, your soul has never been dark and negative to the point that you want to swallow the souls of babies!”

The mental devil shrieked and lunged at the dark auras that were infiltrating Li Yao’s body in dozens of streaks of redness.

The dark ghosts were merely made of the souls of ordinary barbarian babies in the southern tribes. They were truly nothing more than a piece of cake for the mental devil!

Before they had to chance to struggle or shriek, they were controlled by the mental devil one by one and transported into Li Yao’s brain.

Li Yao sensed the helplessness and the agony below the brutality and hideousness of the dark ghosts.

His pupils constricted to the size of two poisoned needles as he gazed at the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator not far away.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Dozens of interconnecting crevices suddenly appeared on the rock that the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was leaning against.

It was almost ripped apart by the dominating aura from Li Yao!

Chapter 1347 - Too Weak!

Shua!

Li Yao vanished abruptly!

The air between him and the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was suddenly twisted by a cluster of hazy mist.

It was a weird illusion caused by the temporary vacuum when Li Yao was fast enough to rip apart the air.

It was not until a long time after the mist appeared that explosive sounds echoed in the air.

Li Yao’s speed was at least three times higher than just before. Streaks of blackness spurted out of his body, enveloping his torso and his limbs, forming a magnificent black crystal suit!

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Heavy Firepower Model was implemented!

A cold and devastating God of War in black armor, supported by eighteen exhaust flames in black, stood above the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator and looked down at him.

On the arced, mirror-like helmet, six crimson crystal cameras were rolling without a sound. Their aperture was enlarging and shrinking as they locked onto the enemy.

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

Daunting black smoke mixed with spiritual energy and demonic energy was unleashed blatantly, occupying every corner in the narrow, long canyon and turning the rift into a slaughterhouse that solely belonged to Li Yao. Even the surging Poisonous Dragon River halted briefly for a moment!

The local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator's laughter came to an abrupt end.

His heart was also entirely frozen by Li Yao's killing intent and intimidating aura.

For a moment, he even forgot his fear because he was distracted by Li Yao's crystal suit.

He had never seen such weird and yet perfect armor before, which had enveloped every inch of the Cultivator's skin without leaving out any gaps.

Also, a layer of bright brilliance was vaguely flowing on the surface of the armor that was as smooth as a mirror, as if it was covered in a thin membrane made of light. As a result, the armor was reflecting thousands of complicated colors from whatever perspective.

The local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was gripped by fear again.

He was not just frightened by 'absolute strength' but also by mysteries.

From the flawless, immaculate armor, he could vaguely tell that his opponent seemed to be from a world that was completely beyond his comprehension and imagina—

Boom!

After a single punch, Li Yao blew back the giant of spiritual energy that was lunging at him silently.

With the enhancement of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, the force of his fists skyrocketed. The punch left a hole the size of bucket on the chest of the three-headed, six-armed giant. Ripples were spreading out, and the wound did not recover for a long time.

The giant of spiritual energy was shrieking ear-splittingly like a broken balloon.

Pu!

The giant of spiritual energy was made of the quintessence of the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator’s soul and blood and directly linked to him. Li Yao’s heavy punch seemed to have broken into the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator’s brains, making him throw out yet another mouthful green blood and collapse!

Without blinking, Li Yao kicked the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator to the cliff and paved him open like a giant pancake.

His punches rained down like a storm at a frequency of hundreds of times per second. He seemed to have turned into a heavy pile hammer himself while he dug a hole several meters deep in the cliff and bashed the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator into it.

With the assistance of one of the best crystal suits of the three Sectors, such a battle was nothing more than brutalization.

Ever since the moment Li Yao got serious, the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator had to be permitted by Li Yao even if he wanted to let out the last dying scream.

Half a minute later, the hole was already ten meters deep, turning into a new cave.

Because of the high-speed friction between the fists and the rocks, the temperature inside the cave had been improved by hundreds of degrees, and smoke was popping out.

The giant of spiritual energy lunged forward again, only to be slashed in half by Li Yao casually.

As for the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator…

He was smeared on the wall of the cave very evenly before he was burnt into nothingness by the high temperature and the friction!

Pu!

A streak of greenness suddenly dashed out of the cave and flew between Li Yao's pants in the shape of a green person less than three feet tall who had exactly the same appearance as the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator who had been killed miserably under Li Yao's fists just now.

The little person ran five hundred meters away within a breath. Thinking that he was safe, he pointed at Li Yao and shouted, "How do you dare to destroy the body of Master Spiritual Vulture? This is not the end of it! Even if you do not have the courage to declare your name and where you're from, I'll certain dig out your background and demolish your entire family one day when I come back!"

After making the declaration, the little person grinned hideously and ran toward the depths of the canyon in a streak of brightness.

Li Yao's eyelids shook for a moment. The operation menu suddenly glittered as data and runes fell down like a pouring storm. He determined the position, speed, and nature of spiritual energy of the enemy and the best magical equipment to deal with him instantly.

Shua!

The enormous sword box on the shoulder of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Heavy Firepower Model was opened quickly, revealing honeycomb-like launch tubes of flying swords. After a few swooshing sounds, dozens of automatic tracking super-tiny flying swords rushed out in rainbow-like trajectories before they caught up to the running Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator from different angles in several seconds.

After a few booms, the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator 'Master Spiritual Vulture' finally uttered a devastating scream before his soul was blown apart, and he was gone forever!

"Too weak."

Looking at the firework that was slowing rising in the dark canyon far away, Li Yao yawned.

…

Having become the owner of the mysterious residence 'Poisonous Dragon Cave', what Li Yao was most concerned about was, naturally, the badge where the souls of countless children were confined.

Deep inside the cave, Li Yao sat cross-legged on the altar. He retrieved all the precise magical equipment that he used for maintenance and refining from his Cosmos Rings before he carefully studied the badge on which hundreds of weirdly laughing children were carved.

On top of the metal badge were three zigzagging, centipede-like words—Hundred Ghosts Edict!

The result was within Li Yao’s expectations.

He examined the center of the Hundred Ghosts Edict with tools that could observe the internal structure of metal products, only to discover a cylindrical unit full of dense needle holes.

The ghosts were hiding inside them, sound asleep like lotus seeds inside a seedpod.

The unit was very similar to certain units that the federation had excavated on Kunlun. Therefore, it could be confirmed that the unit was a product in the Pangu civilization.

The main purpose of such magical equipment was to store souls.

According to the specialists in the federation, such magical equipment was probably a first-aid medical facility on the battlefield to rescue the ghosts.

Too many people were often killed in a fierce battle. Some of the soldiers would become ghosts after they died.

But newborn ghosts were extremely vulnerable. If they were not stored in a solid, stable place and kept away from radiation, they would likely perish shortly.

Through such magical equipment, the ghosts would be able to be temporarily stored. After the battle was over, gear such as ‘artificial bodies’ that was usable for the ghosts would be created. The longevity of the ghosts would be significantly extended.

Such a remnant of a ‘medical facility’, after falling into the hands of human Cultivators and being installed with shabby control rune arrays and a fancy shell, turned into the Hundred Ghosts Edict, a piece of evil, vicious magical equipment where souls were confined.

Li Yao counted a hundred and nine souls from the Hundred Ghosts Edict.

Together with the dark ghosts attached to the thirty-six daggers and infiltrating into his body, the total number was two hundred and twenty-one.

They were merely the survivors.

It was not hard to imagine that even more souls of the children must have perished because of the infinite suffering when the daggers were forged. Chances were that three to five hundred children had been killed in total.

Li Yao was so angry that his gums were almost bleeding. He felt that Master Spiritual Vulture had died too easily and quickly.

He also found it tricky to deal with the souls of the children.

When the children were killed by Master Spiritual Vulture, they had generally been between three years old and seven years old. They were still at an innocent age and did not remember many things.

After Master Spiritual Vulture’s repetitive torture and purification, their last remaining memories had been wiped out, too, and they were turned into pure, flawless paper.

It was impossible to send them back to their homes, which would also have been meaningless. Judging from the civilization level of the Sector, they were unlikely to live in peace as ghosts in the barbaric tribes of the desolate land.

Chances were that, in the forests where shamanism and evil spells prevailed, they would either perish soon or be captured by other malicious Cultivators and turned into ‘gremlins’ again!

Li Yao pondered for a long time and decided that he could only bring them with him while hoping that their aggressiveness could be more or less dissolved. One day, if he could take them back to the federation, they could probably still have a new life as orphans.

Thankfully, the Hundred Ghosts Edict was more than spacious enough to accommodate a few hundred souls of children, so he was spared that trouble.

After the problem of the children’s souls were solved, Li Yao began to search Master Spiritual Vulture’s Poisonous Dragon Cave carefully.

He found a crossroad right behind the altar, which led to a few minor caves.

This time, Li Yao raised his alert and groped for barriers inch by inch. As he expected, he discovered a few rather primitive traps.

Since the owner of the traps was dead, Li Yao met absolutely no trouble cracking the barriers.

The crossroad led to three minor caves.

The first one was a warehouse, in which plenty of provisions such as clean water and dehydrated meat was stored. The second one had a bed made of bones, suggesting that it must have been Master Spiritual Vulture's bedchamber. The third cave was a library. A lot of jade chips and mottled books were kept inside.

Li Yao also found a colorful silk bag made of weird materials that was not blackened at all in the temperature of hundreds of degrees where Master Spiritual Vulture was burnt into ashes. Inside the silk bag was a roughly made Cosmos Ring.

The crystal processor that he carried with him had been preinstalled with many programs to crack the barriers. After the Cosmos Ring was connected to the crystal processor, the programs automatically ran and cracked it by brute force. After only a few seconds, the primitive barriers were removed, and he became the new owner of the Cosmos Ring.

The items inside the Cosmos Ring, as well as the books and jade chips inside the library, gave Li Yao a general idea of the cave's background and why Master Spiritual Vulture had been living in seclusion here.

Chapter 1348 - Differences Between Traditional Arts and Modern Ones

After thorough communication with the Immortal Cultivator Su Changfa, Li Yao had learned some of the experience that the Imperium of True Human Beings had in the development of primeval relics.

In most cases, the explorers were not as lucky as the Star Glory Federation to excavate an intact 'Kunlun'.

After hundreds of thousands of years, most of the relics had already been excavated time and time again by the predecessors.

Excavating a relic of the ancient civilizations was somewhat similar to grave robbing. When the grave robber made their way into a grave from tens of thousands of years ago, they would most likely find the excrement of people of their trade left hundreds of years ago, instead of antiques and treasures.

It was exactly the case with this cave.

Perhaps, some hundred thousand years ago, a warehouse, a base, or a shelter of the Pangu Clan or the Nuwa Clan was once hidden underground here.

However, after the Pangu and Nuwa civilizations perished and humanity thrived, many Cultivators had visited the place and exploited most of the primeval relics.

Different from the grave robbers, most of the Cultivators would not run away the moment they grabbed the items they desired. On the contrary, they would claim the place and build it into their own residence.

Because of the natural canyon outside, it was easy for the spiritual energy to condense, and a very unique natural magnetic field was formed.

The river running straight down from the mountains also brought out the metal ions contained inside the mother lodes in the mountains, making the air here different from other places, which was beneficial for training.

Moreover, the place was quite remote, and the top of the canyon was blocked by overwhelming trees. Not only did they prevent the cave from being noticed, it was also very difficult for the spiritual waves inside to spread out. They were the best natural camouflage.

If one trained in the small ‘natural paradise’, it would be very difficult for them to be found out unless they were unlucky.

For tens of thousands of years, many predecessors had developed the residence. While consuming the heritage of the Pangu civilization inside, they had left detailed notes of their training, their Cultivation arts and techniques, and even their flying swords and magical equipment.

As time went by, more and more items were accumulated, making the cave rarer and rarer.

When Master Spiritual Vulture found the cave, there were in fact few heritages of the Pangu civilization. The only things that he found were some enormous bones from the Pangu Clan and a half arm armor.

However, he did find more than ten classics and notebooks left by his predecessors, as well as a lot of materials for refining.

Master Spiritual Vulture considered the items to be ultimate treasures and had been lurking in this place, learning the Cultivation arts while forging his evil daggers with the last remains of the Pangu Clan’s armor.

It was a pity that most of the notes that he left were for training purposes. The guy did not mention anything about his life or the customs of the local area.

From the guy’s narration, Li Yao could only tell that he had been living in seclusion for at least fifty years, during which time he had grasped almost fifty magnificent techniques left by the predecessors and forged thirty-six daggers. His purpose was to forge eighty-one daggers before he announced his grand return to the world.

It was a pity that he had been pummeled to death by an alien Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator before he fulfilled his ambitions!

According to the notes, Li Yao carefully examined the collections inside the cave.

He was not very interested in the legendary ‘unparalleled techniques’.

After swallowing Ou Yezi’s memory pieces, Li Yao had already gained access to the Heavenly Refining Tower of the Hundred Smelting Sect in the world of ancient Cultivators.

There were too many secret techniques that the Hundred Smelting Sect acquired for all kinds of marvelous weapons with other major sects.

Li Yao was no stranger to ancient classics. He had also practiced quite a few ancient arts according to Ou Yezi’s memories. He had never found them to be particularly extraordinary.

In the modern Cultivation theories, ‘unparalleled techniques’ were far less important than in the medieval Cultivation world.

As the saying goes, you can only learn by doing. In the eyes of the modern Cultivators, the classics were nothing more than ‘textbooks’.

Reciting all the textbooks would not make a person a great scholar.

Etching Economics, Accountancy, Finance, Stock Investment Theories, and other theoretical books written by the specialists into one’s head would not make them a billionaire in a year and a half, either.

Finding a jade chip, or a few ancient books, living in a cave for decades, and returning as an invincible expert. How could it be as simple as that?

The so-called ‘amazing arts’ were merely tools to lay a solid foundation. Even if one’s foundation was solid enough for them to pursue further, there was still a long way ahead!

Besides, in the eyes of modern people, the arts and techniques of the ancient Cultivators were not qualified even for ‘textbooks’.

On one hand, the ancient Cultivators could not get rid of the superstitions about deities. They were almost all traditionalists and believed that the older, the better, and the more original, the better. They probably thought that even a chamber pot of an ancient sage was more awesome than a flying sword of their age.

Due to their mental restrictions, they had absolutely no doubt about the ancient classics. They only knew how to learn from the predecessors but did not know how to make revisions. Naturally, in many cases, they were like the idiots who cut their feet in order to fit in their shoes.

Anything would not make any sense when occultism was involved. All the ancient techniques were perfect. If their power could not be brought out, it was not because there was something wrong with the techniques but because they were not practicing the techniques well. Even if their every hair was exactly the same as depicted in the classics, it would still be because they were not ‘sincere’ enough.

If everybody thought in such a way, how could they expect to make any progress?

On the other hand, the ancient Cultivators also had the tendency to isolate themselves. After they found a great book of techniques, they often considered it as a rarely-seen treasure and feared that somebody else would rob them of their belongings.

Therefore, they often hid the news and trained themselves in seclusion in an unpopulated land.

What they did not know was that any knowledge and theory in the world was born during communications. Only when everybody exchanged their opinions and thoughts would the sparks of wisdom be triggered. It was the only way to verify the advantages of a Cultivation art and find out its shortcomings.

Not communicating with others, without a systematic environment for theoretical discussions, they would train in forests, underground caves, or islands on their own. They did not know why their Cultivation worked out or why it did not. When they were slightly mentally deranged, they considered the phenomenon as the ‘enlightenment from the deities’. Together with other mysteries and exaggerations, that would be their training notes or introductions to techniques.

If such books were buried below the ground for thousands of years and found by the posterior Cultivators again, they would be new ‘ancient techniques’ that were worshipped and blindly trusted again.

After such a vicious cycle of tens of thousands of years, most of the techniques that had been passed on were absurd and packed with flaws. In many cases, they were not even as useful as the Physical Education classes in the middle and elementary schools in the federation.

The PE classes were never to be underestimated. They were the collections of the wisdom of the fighters and the medical experts from the entire federation with consideration of the essence of the ancient combat arts. They were the best approaches for one to build up the body and stimulate the growth of cells!

Master Spiritual Vulture, as well as the previous ancient Cultivators who had once occupied the cave, were both the victims of said training system and the inflictors of the system without knowing it.

Li Yao browsed through the Cultivation books they left behind. They were not entirely devoid of shining points, but the essence had all been covered by tremendous dregs.

If anybody trained according to such arts, they would be exactly like Master Spiritual Vulture, who appeared to be something at first look but in fact had a lot of redundant actions. They would never survive a real battle.

In short, compared to the modern Cultivation system, the biggest problem with the ancient Cultivators was their unprofessionalism!

However, right now, Li Yao had to study and learn a thing or two about the ‘unprofessional’ ancient techniques.

As a great expert above the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage, and having practiced a lot of ancient techniques through Ou Yezi’s memory pieces before himself, it was not difficult at all for him to learn the techniques, especially when he was not really grasping the techniques but simply simulating the visual and sound effects when such techniques were performed.

Li Yao was doing it for, of course, only one purpose, which was to impersonate the unlucky ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’.

Li Yao’s ultimate goal was to break into the core ruling circle of this Sector, where he would observe the nature, stance of the super experts, and the functioning social system of the world before determining whether the Sector could be allied with or even integrated.

Even if an alliance was not an option, it was still a good thing to hire a team of Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage, the Nascent Soul Stage, or even higher levels as the oversea legion of the Star Glory Federation.

If he could not even achieve that, he had to stop the Imperium of True Human Beings from recruiting the

Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage, the Nascent Soul Stage, or possibly in the Divinity Transformation Stage.

To break into the core circle of this Sector and impose his influence, the identity as a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was necessary.

If he was in the Building Foundation Stage or the Core Formation Stage, which of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators would bother listening to him?

Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were not weeds in a farmland that could grow out of nowhere. If he travelled in the world as a brand-new Nascent Soul Stage, somebody would certainly question his background, his sect, and his family, which were difficult to fabricate.

The unfortunate ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’, on the other hand, was not a bad identity at all.

First of all, he was a Cultivator from the barbarians. So, it would be quite understandable if he did not know the social customs and the traditions of the Cultivators, or if he had a weird accent, after he went to the central plateaus.

Secondly, the unlucky guy had lived in seclusion there for at least fifty years. Judging from the notes that he had left behind, in case others grew suspicious of him, he had even faked his own ‘abrupt death’ before he went into seclusion.

It would be perfectly normal if such an old monster was pretentious or even sensitive about his identity after he returned to the human world again.

Chapter 1349 - Whereabouts of the Appeasing Army

In the end, according to the experience in Ou Yezi’s memory pieces, the barbaric Cultivators from the desolate land at the edge of the civilization were generally radical and had their uncanny quirks. They were not restricted by the rules of the noble sects, either. Therefore, other people would not come to mess around with them easily.

Pretending to be such an antagonistic guy would save him a lot of effort.

Li Yao was a great expert in camouflage in the first place. He had also made thorough preparations for the exploration and brought all kinds of tools and drugs, which could even change his appearance and physique in the cellar level. It was not a challenge for him to impersonate a guy who had vanished more than fifty years ago.

But before he completely figured out the guy’s background, Li Yao did not intend to completely pretend to be Master Spiritual Vulture himself.

If the guy was a public enemy for the Cultivators, or he once pissed off great experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage, Li Yao would have been a victim of his own schemes.

Therefore, Li Yao made other plans.

…

Night fell.

The top of the long, narrow canyon was covered by the flourishing trees. When it was broad daylight outside, it was nothing but horror and darkness inside the canyon.

What was odd was that, when the night came and the two moons—one slightly blue and the other pale—were shining, the canyon was soaked in silver clouds when the gentle brilliance flowed through the tree leaves like soft smoke.

Li Yao was sitting cross-legged in midair.

The Hundred Ghosts Edict was floating in front of him, as if attracted by an invisible string.

Exactly like what Master Spiritual Vulture had done, he spurted two streams of white light from his nostrils, which were attached to the surface of the badge and touched it softly. All the souls of the children confined inside were unleashed so that they could build up themselves by absorbing the essence of the moonlight.

Before, every time Master Spiritual Vulture summoned them and allowed them to absorb the essence of the moonlight, he would torture and savage them in order to stimulate their aggressiveness.

Of course, Li Yao would not do such things. Instead, he was slowly washing the aggressiveness off with his own mild spiritual energy and the peaceful moonlight.

It was an arduous task that demanded both time and focus, and it could not be stopped any day. It would do no good to Li Yao’s personal training.

However, that was where his belief and the spirit of the federation lay, which were their greatest reliance in the competition against the Imperium of True Human Beings. Naturally, Li Yao could not turn a blind eye to the souls of the children who would inevitably grow into fearsome wraiths if he did nothing.

Almost a hundred tiny souls were crawling out of the Hundred Ghosts Edict carefully. They thought that they were going to endure inhuman suffering again and were pushing each other at the edge of the badge, reluctant to go out.

Li Yao smiled and picked them up with the spiritual energy as gentle as water, soaking them in a warm spring.

The souls of the children were just white paper, and their feelings could change very quickly. Sensing Li Yao’s kindness, they immediately cheered and danced up and down around him in greenish sparks.

They were the descendants of the locals of the forest. It was their nature to horse around. Sensing that Li Yao was not malicious at all, they grew even bolder and approached Li Yao. Eventually, they even jumped to Li Yao.

Some of them were clinging to Li Yao’s arms, some were snatching Li Yao’s hair, and some crawled over to Li Yao’s ears. A few of them were even trying to open his mouth to crawl in. They took Li Yao’s body for a huge playground.

Children often did not have many memories. Judging from the carefreeness on their faces, they had temporarily forgotten the pain of the past.

Feeling the delight emitting from the children’s souls, Li Yao could not help but have a lot of complicated thoughts.

In the three thousand Sectors, the societies, nations, laws, and civilizations may vary. Sometimes, it's hard to say which ones are right and which ones are wrong.

However, the children who are just born and yet to be edified by any society or civilization are probably the same!

The ancient Cultivators in this Sector and the modern Cultivators may be very different from each other. Their beliefs and ours may be as contradictory as fire to water.

But is there any essential difference between the children of the barbarians born in the forests and the children born in the modern hospitals in the federation?

Perhaps, they are all the same. They are the future of the civilization of mankind!

Under the moonlight that was as clear as water, right above the surging river, amid a hundred tiny ghosts who were playing with each other, Li Yao pondered, meditated, and trained.

…

In the ten days that followed, he lurked in Master Spiritual Vulture's cave, where he analyzed the Cultivation arts left by Master Spiritual Vulture and simulated the visual and sound effects when the techniques were performed.

In the meantime, he also reviewed the classic techniques in the Heavenly Refining Tower in Ou Yezi's memories.

After that, he recrafted the magical equipment left by Master Spiritual Vulture and built a few pieces of brand-new ancient magical equipment.

When he reflected on the battle with Master Spiritual Vulture, Li Yao felt that he had revealed too many moves that did not belong to the era. They could be loopholes if someone noticed them.

For example, the worst possibility was that, if a scout from the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings had already snuck onto the planet, it was possible for them to see through his identity.

Therefore, Li Yao decided that, in the exploration that followed, he would deal with the enemy with classic techniques and magical equipment, and he would not expose the moves and the devices that he had brought from the federation unless he absolutely had to.

During the exploration, it was possible that he would be engaged with experts above the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage. Therefore, the camouflage required extraordinary tricks to slowly change his appearance on a cellular level.

The lengthy endeavor took Li Yao almost half a month.

During that time, naturally, he did not let go of the army of the Appeasing Ambassador. He sent Neltharion to search for the target’s traces in the woods and followed them neither too far nor too close.

After the bloody battle half a month earlier, and especially after an expert in the Core Formation Stage was slain, the local barbarians seemed to have become terrified of the army. There had never been any head-on conflict since. They were simply hiding in the forests in small squads and ambushed their enemy when the army was not prepared. After they took down one or two victims, they would immediately run away.

Such a tactic was tricky to deal with. Also, the natural venomous fog in the forests of the primitive land put the soldiers in miseries, too. The strong and healthy fighters before had significantly lost their weight and liveliness.

However, not all the barbarians in the forests were against the ’emperor’s army’.

After half a month’s observation, Li Yao gradually discovered that the local barbarians could generally be classified into two types. The first type of barbarians were the pure primitives who had tattoos and rings all over their bodies, lived in the caves or nests deep inside the forests, and hunted for every meal.

Such barbarians were more hostile to the emperor’s army.

The other type of barbarians, in the meantime, lived in better environments, such as the side of rivers or valleys. They were capable of tilling their land and growing crops. Their life was relatively stable.

Such barbarians were more civilized. Their utensils were finely-made, too. They knew the courtesy to cover their body with clothes. They even had the notion of ‘towns’. In the towns, some people in exactly the same attire as those in the emperor’s army were doing their business as blacksmiths or merchants. Li Yao even saw a white-haired scholar in a relatively large village who appeared to be a teacher teaching more than ten kids of the barbarians how to read.

It appeared that the notions of ‘strange barbarians’ and ‘familiar barbarians’ existed in the Sector, too. There were disobedient barbarians who resisted the authorities, and there were also obedient folks who admired the culture in the central plateaus and pledged loyalty to the central dynasty.

As he expected, Li Yao discovered that the route of the Appeasing Ambassador’s army included most of the villages of the ‘familiar barbarians’ in the mountains.

After they reached every village, although it would be exaggerating to say that the locals welcomed them with great enthusiasm, they were quite respectful to them at least on the surface.

It was especially so after the Appeasing Ambassador surnamed Ling stuck the head of ‘Black Nose’, the Core Formation Stage Cultivator of the barbarians who was slain half a month ago, to the tip of the flagpole and had some patrol around the village with the flagpole. The locals of the villages were all dumbfounded and frightened, even less courageous to resist.

They kept the heavily wounded soldiers in the army for treatment and prepared sufficient food, water, and necessary medicines for a jungle march for the army. Some of the barbarians even volunteered to join the Appeasing Ambassador’s army. All kinds of fancy flags were fluttering in the sky. The army was much more magnificent than before, at least on the surface.

Appeasing Ambassador Ling lived up to the ‘expectations’ of the locals, too. Everywhere he went, as long as the locals were obedient on the surface, he would bring what appeared to be ‘royal decrees’ in Li Yao’s eyes out of his camp, announcing that the court had decreed the local barbarian leaders as the mayors of the villages.

After being decreed and given official titles, all the local barbarian leaders were overjoyed and worked even harder to provide assets and soldiers for the emperor’s army.

It was also a regular approach that the central dynasty adopted to deal with the barbaric groups in many worlds of ancient Cultivators.

What was an Appeasing Ambassador’s job exactly? He would recruit the barbarians who were obedient to the court and include them in the bureaucratic system of the court by decreeing them as officials before he asked them to join him in crushing the barbarians that were not obedient.

Curbing the barbarians with barbarians by taking advantage of their internal strife was a smart move. How could the army from the central plateaus, who were terribly outnumbered and unused to the climate, expect to suppress the barbarians born and raised in the tough land?

Li Yao was not interested in the regular barbarians who joined the ’emperor’s army’.

However, other than the ordinary barbarians, as the news that the Appeasing Ambassador’s army entered the forests spread out, some of the ‘extraordinary’ barbarians with spiritual energy dancing around them joined the cause after they reached every town.

Those who played with snakes, tigers, or ghosts; those who rode rhinos, buffaloes, crocodiles or deer; and all the rest of the bizarre-looking Cultivators of the barbarians appeared from whichever corner they had been hiding previously.

Chapter 1350 - Li Yao Is Out!

In Li Yao’s eyes, most of barbarian Cultivators were little guys in the Refinement Stage. For those in the Building Foundation Stage, they were either surrounded by their adoring public or followed by a large batch of wild animals or insects and could not have looked more awesome.

Appeasing Ambassador Ling, perhaps considering it a gesture to welcome talents or perhaps because he was seriously short of hands, recruited all of them who were nothing more than acrobats. He seemed really thirsty for loyal supporters.

Just like that, after every barbarian village, the scale of the emperor’s army would be significantly larger. Putting aside the combat ability of the barbarian soldiers and the barbarian Cultivators, the team at least looked rather spectacular right now.

Besides, there was another advantage to recruiting the locals, which was that they were more familiar with the terrain there. After they joined, the emperor’s army was able to send out the barbarian soldiers and barbarian Cultivators for reconnaissance when marching. The odds of being ambushed by the enemy were significantly lowered. A lot of their trouble had been saved.

Appeasing Ambassador Ling grouped the barbarian Cultivators into the same camp and asked quite a few barbarian soldiers to attend to them.

The barbarian Cultivators were ‘deities on the earth’ in the southern forests in the first place. They were essentially the guardian angels of the major villages and tribes. The barbarian soldiers all considered it a great honor to look after them.

For several days, the barbarian Cultivators were bragging about how awesome they were in their camp from morning to dusk every day.

But they did not know that a Neltharion was hiding right next to them, eavesdropping on their conversation.

Li Yao summarized the basic situation of the Sector based on their chatter. He also learned why Appeasing Ambassador Ling was dispatched to the Southland of Sorcerers.

It was time to get in touch with them.

After more than half a month, an indifferent young man gradually surfaced on the branches above the canyon in the depths of the mountains.

The young man’s skin was slightly green, yet it was extremely smooth as if it were made of a warm, green, slippery jade.

Although he was a young man, the corners of his eyes were filled with tiny streaks that extended all the way to the temples on closer look, making his eyes rather narrow and long.

Together with his pure black eyes without the slightest fancy shade, where the pupils almost swallowed the eye white, he gave out a mysterious, immeasurable feeling and made others unable to guess his age.

It seemed appropriate to call him a teenager. It was not wrong to say that he was a middle-aged man in his thirties. It would pass, too, to call him a man more than seventy years old who had paid special attention to facial care.

The young man’s lips were extremely thin, and he was always wearing a half smile. His vision was extremely broad. One would feel his stare whichever side they were standing to him. The brutality that was occasionally flashing inside his eyes explained why he was able to walk inside such a perilous forest without any disguise.

The young man was wearing a green ring on the left thumb, which was shining brilliantly like a green fog that was forever clenched inside his palm.

The young man extended his right hand, span the ring softly, and coughed.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Ear-splitting explosions immediately echoed deep inside the canyon. The crags on the cliffs collapsed and blocked the cave, leaving absolutely no hole.

The young man smiled and darted into the forest as quick as lightning.

Very soon, the sounds of trees breaking off and rocks falling apart and the screams of demon beasts filled the area.

A giant python that had nine sharp thorns above the head like a crown dashed out from the top of a tree and fled in panic, only to be grabbed by an unstoppable force before it reached twenty meters away. Amid the most miserable shrieks, it was dragged into the depths of the woods by brute force, like a lamb whose thighs had been bitten by it in the past.

…

Right next to the great banner of ‘Appeasing Ambassador of the Fifth Prefecture of the Southland of Sorcerers’, quite a few red and green flags as well as bizarre-shaped skulls of demon beasts were hanging. They represented the different barbaric tribes that had succumbed to the emperor’s army.

Right below the great banner was a wagon dragged by four spotted cows. It was like a mobile palace. Despite the rune arrays added to the wheels and axles, the four spotted cows were still sweating and breathing hard.

Inside the wagon and outside were two different worlds.

The outside of the wagon was a forest with venomous fog, giant flies and mosquitoes, and a scorching sun.

Inside the wagon, on the other hand, was a quiet, peaceful room. Not only were the shrieking cicadas, the hissing horses, and the clamoring crowd outside were entirely blocked, the passengers in the room could not even feel the bumps when the wagon ran over the tree roots or the water pools. It was as smooth and gentle as a journey in the clouds.

The mobile quiet room was in fact not qualified even for Appeasing Ambassador Ling to enjoy. It belonged to the female Cultivator at the peak of the Core Formation Stage who manipulated the orchid sword.

In one corner of the ‘quiet room’, a bright purple incense was burning inside an octagonal censer made of white jade.

On the right side of the room was a delicate bookshelf, on which a few mottled bamboo books and several vintage remnants were placed.

The female Cultivator was still in white, like an orchid flower that was about to blossom. She was sitting cross-legged with her eyes half closed, as if she were taking a nap.

When the smoke of the incense flowed to her, however, it was condensed into an elegant shadow that was waving a sword like a thunderous dragon because of the attraction of her telepathic thoughts, filling the entire room with sword auras.

Suddenly, the sword auras, consolidated by dozens of streams of purple smoke, retreated into a bright purple pill. The female Cultivator opened her mouth and swallowed it.

She opened her eyes and extended her wrists. Ripples appeared on the curtain of the wagon, as if a barrier was just removed.

A cough echoed outside before Appeasing Ambassador Ling raised the curtain, stooped, and walked in.

He was much slenderer than before after marching in the forest for half a month. His face was darker and blacker, and his wrinkles were deeper as if they had been cut.

But at this moment, there was delight in his eyes, as if he had just encountered something good.

“Father, why did the army stop just now?” the female Cultivator asked casually. “I sensed quite impressive shock of spiritual energy. Has a local expert joined us?”

“Yes and no.” Appeasing Ambassador Ling smiled. “When the army passed the ‘Head Cutting Cliff’, a dangerous area nearby, just now, shrieks below the cliff were heard. We sent out scouts to investigate, only to discover that a weird-looking young man was fighting a High-Crowned Lethal Python next to the Thousand Snakes Cave below the cliff!

“The High-Crowned Lethal Python is one of the strongest snake-type demon beasts in the southern forests. Yet, it could not withstand the bare hands of the young man, who tore it into several pieces on the spot. It was quite a wonder!

“I asked the local experts to test him. Three village leaders of the Sky Touching Mountain were defeated by the young man in a row and almost killed.

“According to my observations, the young man is at least in the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage. His attacks were quite organized. Somebody must’ve enlightened him before. He is a rarely-seen talent in such a rough land!

“It was great that the young man came to greet us on his own initiative after seeing the great banner of the emperor’s army and the Black Tiger Iron Guards.”

“Is that so?” The female Cultivator’s eyes suddenly glittered. She asked, expressionlessly, “What’s the guy’s background?”

“I asked an interpreter who is familiar with the vernacular of the southern villages to inquire him, but the guy was speaking what sounded like a dialect in the westmost area,” Appeasing Ambassador Ling replied. “Also, he was stammering and almost couldn’t say a complete sentence. It seems that the guy has lived alone for too long to talk to anybody.

“According to the interpreter, even the guy himself couldn’t tell exactly where he came from. He only knew that he grew up in an unpopulated place in the company of snakes and wolves. As a result, his body was built up to the point that it was almost weapon-proof. One day, he was captured by an eccentric fellow and dragged into an unknown cave, where the stranger taught him all his knowledge. After several years, the eccentric fellow died an abrupt death. The guy has been a dominator of the forests since then and fed on serpents and wild animals.

“However, the guy’s master did inform him of the incredibleness of the court. Therefore, he did not dare challenge us upon seeing the banner of our army, and he was willing to join the court and attack those who are disobedient!

“My dear daughter, ever since the ‘Appeasing Order’ was released half a month ago, the barbarians from twenty-two villages have joined us. The Cultivators in our army have reached a hundred, too. Right now, we have even found a warrior who perfectly fits the role of vanguard. It is indicative enough that the Great Qian still has its influence. Chances are that we may fight a bloody way out of the deadly trap.”

“Still has its influence?” The female Cultivator smiled, her eyes mysterious. She sighed gloomily. “Three hundred years ago, when the Great Qian Empire was in its heyday, what were the barbarians in the southern forests exactly? At that time, we did not need to deploy an army at all. As long as an official in the Refinement Stage came here with the gold sword degree from the capital, not just the Mr. Nobodies in the Refinement Stage and the Building Foundation Stage, even the Cultivators in the Southland of Sorcerers in the

Core Formation Stage and the Nascent Soul Stage would still have been intimidated and obeyed every command, right?

“After only a few hundred years, however, the Great Qian has deteriorated to such an extent that Father, a Class-Two eminent official of the court and the Appeasing Ambassador of the Fifth Prefecture of the Southland of Sorcerers, is overjoyed for nothing more than a newly-recruited Cultivator in the Building Foundation Stage. What a… What a… What a…”

His daughter’s words made Appeasing Ambassador Ling blush. He smiled bitterly in embarrassment, “Lanyin, we pledged our loyalty to the emperor, and we serve him well. The changes in the court are not something that you or I can control. Now that I’ve been appointed as the Appeasing Ambassador, I can only try my best to stop the situation in the Southland of Sorcerers from getting any worse. That is the only way I can return His Majesty’s trust!”

“His Majesty’s trust?” Ling Lanyin, the female Cultivator, sneered. “It is obvious that the new emperor has not calmed down from his anger yet after recently ascending to the throne. He is trying to wipe out the entire Ling family as an example for others!”

“Watch your mouth!”

Just now, when he was speaking to his daughter, Appeasing Ambassador Ling was rather polite, as if his daughter’s position was even higher than his.

However, hearing such defiant words from her, Appeasing Ambassador Ling still put on a grave expression and roared, half seriously.

Chapter 1351 - Mayhem in the Ancient Sages Sector

“What’s the situation now? Is there a place where smoke is not popping up in all the Nine States? The Southland of Sorcerers may be a perilous place, but is the Dark Cloud Prairie not? Is the West Plateau not? Even the East Lake, which was a peaceful and prosperous land of honey and milk in the past, is also plagued by thieves and bandits!”

Appeasing Ambassador Ling smiled bitterly and said, “We are either going to appease the barbarians at the Southland of Sorcerers, the West Plateau to dispel the rebels, the East Lake to suppress the evil Cultivators, or even the Dark Cloud to fight against the iron cavalry of Ghost Qin… Are any of the opponents easy to deal with?

“Besides, the Ling family is now deeply mired in turbulence. One wrong step, and we will be doomed forever. My daughter, you must note that there can always be someone eavesdropping on us. Even if barriers have been installed inside the camp, you still have to be cautious in case you say anything wrong!”

“Father, I know I’m wrong.” Expressionlessly, Ling Lanyin bowed and, after pausing for a moment, continued. “However, Father, you must be clear that the barbarians are untrustworthy with their unknown backgrounds. Chances are that they have joined Ghost Qin in secret and will stab us right in the back at a crucial moment!”

“How can I not know that?” Appeasing Ambassador Ling sighed and said, “Not only is the young man in the Building

Foundation Stage who jumped out of nowhere today very uncanny, are any of the hundred or so barbarian Cultivators who joined our army earlier not scoundrels that will change their sides when anything goes wrong?

“It is almost certain that they have placed wagers on both sides!

“They are ostensibly loyal to the court, but will they not waver until everything is settled? If we defeat the Cultivators from Ghost Qin in the battle, they will still be His Majesty’s loyal and obedient subjects. However, as soon as the first sign of our failure shows up, hehe, I guarantee that they will lunge at us like hyenas, devour us, and offer our bones to Ghost Qin for a reward!

“Those barbarian Cultivators are sure to be connected with Ghost Qin. What does it matter even if the young man in the Building Foundation Stage is, too? Moreover, I can tell that he is blatantly brutal and does not look like a guy of schemes. Chances are that he will prove to be the most ‘loyal’ one of them all!”

Appeasing Ambassador Ling’s words were filled with endless devastation. After a miserable smile, he comforted himself. “Thankfully, the same goes for the barbarian Cultivators who joined the Ghost Qin’s side. They are all waiting for the final outcome, too. As long as we demonstrate the magnificent power of the court, they will certainly not act recklessly. Chances are that they will tie up the Ghost Qin soldiers and deliver them to us!

“All in all, the barbarian Cultivators can only serve as cheerleaders. It eventually depends on the Black Tiger Iron Guards, the Ling family’s private troop, and your Purple Pole Sword Sect. I understand the logic perfectly!”

“Rest assured, Father!” When her sect was mentioned, Ling Lanyin seemed even more proud than when the ‘Ling family’ was brought up a moment ago. She stood straight, her eyes glittering, before she declared resolutely, “The Ling family and the Purple Pole Sword Sect have been associated for five hundred years. The leaders of our family of every generation have been close friends to the elders of the Purple Pole Sword Sect. They will certainly not watch the Ling family fall and do nothing!

“Let me tell you a great piece of news, Father. This morning, I just received the purple smoke message of my sect. My eldest senior brother began marching toward the Southland of Sorcerers to reinforce our army with almost a hundred elites of the Purple Pole Sword Sect five days ago!

“But later, they received a report that a batch of Cultivators from Ghost Qin was crossing the Sorcerers’ River to enter the Southland of Sorcerers, too. Therefore, they decided to ambush and block the enemy. It is believed that they will arrive with the heads of those Cultivators in three days!”

“Your eldest senior brother?” Appeasing Ambassador Ling was dazed for a moment. Overjoyed, he lost all his demeanor as the ‘Appeasing Ambassador’ and exclaimed, “Isn’t he ‘Thunderous Straight Swordsman’ Lou Chongxiao? As the youngest Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage in the Purple Pole Sword Sect, he has come in person?”

“Exactly!” Ling Lanyin smiled. “You can rest assured, Father. The Purple Pole Sword Sect will never abandon the Ling family!”

Appeasing Ambassador Ling nodded with mixed feelings.

The Ling family of Luochuan and the Purple Pole Sword Sect were indeed deeply connected. However, Lou Chongxiao, the best sword Cultivator in the younger generation in the sect, had been sent out to help the battle certainly not just because of the Ling family.

The most important factor was probably his daughter, who had revealed her talents in training at a young age, advanced into the peak of the Core Formation Stage before thirty, and enjoyed a promising future as the last true disciple of the leader of her sect.

A sword Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage would certainly be a great help for the fierce battles to come. Appeasing Ambassador Ling was finally more or less eased after months of nervousness.

…

While the father and the daughter were talking inside the wagon, one of the subjects they mentioned—namely the young man in the Building Foundation Stage, Li Yao—was actually riding a giant serpent more than ten meters long and as thick as a bucket. He was moving forward unhurriedly at the back of the team.

As a close friend to the Fire Ant King, and since Jin Xinyue, the nominal leader of the Pantheon of Demons, was his disciple, it had not been a problem at all for him to learn a few tricks to domesticate and maneuver demon beasts.

Besides, the Blood Stripe Virus boasted the naturally-endowed talents to suppress and modify animals.

Therefore, it was more than simple for him to deal with a tiny High-Crowned Lethal Python. Without any trouble, the beast was tamed as obediently as a lengthened dog.

The rest of the team, including the other barbarian Cultivators, were all dumbfounded by his ferocious mount and did not dare greet him at all.

It was exactly the quietness that Li Yao needed.

His appearance right now was slightly different from when he had just left the canyon.

It was not his face that had changed but the air around him.

The gloom and brutality were hidden in the deepest part of his eyes. The half-smile was gone, too. His lips were dangling down, and his eyeballs were barely moving at all. He would stare at anybody who made eye contact with him without retreating.

More toughness and recklessness had been added to himself to better fit for the image of a fearless wildling.

He was not hiding his capabilities because he intended to ‘play a pig that ate the tiger’.

If anybody wanted to play a pig that ate the tiger, their target should at least be a tiger. The barbarian Cultivators in the Refinement Stage and the Building Foundation Stage at best, Appeasing Ambassador Ling at the beginning level of the Building Foundation Stage, and the female Cultivator at the peak of the Core Formation Stage were nothing more than geckos in Li Yao’s eyes.

Would there be any gratification in playing a tiger that ate geckos?

It was just that Li Yao was unaware whether or not the identity of ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’ entailed any trouble. If the guy was a well-loathed, notorious evil Cultivator, or he once raped and killed a family member of a certain Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator, Li Yao would in no way pick such an identity.

After he made sure that the identity was okay, he would naturally resume his role as a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator in order to make acquaintances with the upper class of the society.

While there was no disturbance, Li Yao began to compile the second observation report in his head.

“Observation report of the foreign world, issue two.

“I’ve lived in this Sector for twenty-three days. After eavesdropping on the conversations among the locals with Neltharion, I have finally gained a basic understanding about this world.

“The world here is named the ‘Ancient Sages Sector’. I estimate that the so-called ‘ancient sages’ refer to the giant corpses of the Pangu Clan or the Nuwa Clan, which are not rare at all in this Sector. It appears that the primeval items are truly worshipped in this world.

“The good news is that the Ancient Sages Sector is governed by Great Qian, a central dynasty that is generally civilized. The Great Qian Dynasty boasts thorough law, ethics, and bureaucratic systems. At least, this is not a bloody jungle where cannibalism prevails. It is possible for the government of the Star Glory Federation and the government of the Great Qian Dynasty to communicate and ally.

“The bad news is that the Great Qian Dynasty has ruled the Ancient Sages Sector for a thousand years. There are no ever-lasting dynasties in any world. The Great Qian Dynasty cannot get away from the law of history, either. It is now running into a dead end!

“The Great Qian Dynasty is a dynasty supported by Cultivation sects. The sole significance of its existence is to provide population, food, crystals, and other resources for the Cultivation sects stably, continuously, and efficiently.

“The royal family of the Great Qian Dynasty was originally the biggest Cultivation sect itself.

“However, after a thousand years of steady development, the experts in the royal family are dwindling, while many of the local sects are thriving. They are acquiring land, sheltering peasants, raising private troops, and expanding their forces, making it more and more difficult to restrain them.

“A hundred years ago, because of the changes in the density of the dark nebula around the Ancient Sages Sector, the average temperature of the Ancient Sages Sector dropped by more than ten degrees. It is now in a brief ‘Ice Age’. Natural disasters, including large-scale famines, are breaking out every once in a while!

“The more famines, the more peasants will have to run away from their homes, and the more sects will acquire their lands, shelter the peasants, and expand their forces. The more powerful the sects are, the weaker the dynasty will be. It has gradually become a vicious cycle.

“Today, the smoke of war is rising throughout the Great Qian Dynasty’s territory.

“The southeast place, which used to be wealthy, is witnessing a ‘Riot of White Lotus’. Half of the country is on fire.

“In the northwest, a killing god known as the Heaven Battering King has rebelled with thousands of fleeing peasants. They are raging like locusts and leave absolutely nothing behind wherever they go.

“In the northern prairies, a formerly unknown group called ‘Ghost Qin’ is also flourishing. Those people are good at raising a kind of beast named Dragon Wolf, which is as fast and as unpredictable as the wind!

“When the Great Qian Dynasty was at its pinnacle, Ghost Qin was but minor trouble. However, with the Riot of White Lotus and the Haven Battering King causing trouble in the northwest, the Great Qian Dynasty’s resources have been greatly wasted, and Ghost Qin took the chance to rise!

“At the beginning of last year, Dark Cloud Ghost Knights, the main force of Ghost Qin, had a battle with the army of the Great Qian Dynasty in FIying Swallow Pass at the North Land, which turned out to be a one-sided slaughter!

“The Dark Cloud Ghost Knights took the opportunity to march forward toward Divine Capital, the center of the Great Qian Dynasty. The emperor at that time was so frightened that he died abruptly. The situation couldn’t be any worse right now.

“From the perspective of an observer, I highly doubt that the Great Qian Dynasty’s reign over the Ancient Sages Sector can last long. Perhaps, it’s better for us to be prepared to deal with a new government?”

Chapter 1352 - Optional Strategic Partners

Thinking about that, Li Yao sighed, somewhat helplessly.

It had never occurred to him that the situation of the Ancient Sages Sector would be so chaotic.

Without a government that had absolute control, it was barely possible to reach a long-lasting alliance or cooperation. Even if the emperor of the Great Qian Dynasty was persuaded, would he still be able to fulfil his promise when the Great Qian Dynasty was demolished by the rebels in the Riot of White Lotus, or the Heaven Battering King, or the Dark Cloud Ghost Knights from Ghost Qin?

Besides, people would suffer when a dynasty rose and when a dynasty perished. The more conflicts there were in the world, the more struggles the common folk would have. Too many innocent ordinary people had been, were, and would be killed in a protracted dynasty-changing war!

Li Yao was definitely not the most merciful person in the world. The Ancient Sages Sector was a good distance away from his homeland, too. They were two irrelevant Sectors.

However, it did not mean that he could turn a blind eye to his own kind who were identical to him—the white-haired old men, the children learning how to speak, and the adolescents in the best years of their life—while they were slaughtered miserably in the war.

Moreover, people were not just killed in the war. In great famines, tragedies where people ate each other’s children as food were not unusual at all.

In such an environment haunted by the ghosts, all kinds of immortal, inhumane things could happen. It was not just human beings that were trampled upon into dust but also the dignity of mankind.

If possible, Li Yao did not want such a tragedy to continue.

In his own belief, in the spirit of the federation, or in the national interests of the Star Glory Federation, there would be a lot of benefits if Li Yao interfered in the internal affairs of the world, helped the Ancient Sages Sector settle the chaos, and even supported a regime that was ‘pro-federation’.

However, it did not mean that Li Yao had to take the Great Qian Dynasty’s side.

Having received the basic history education in the Star Glory Federation and read many ancient classics, Li Yao knew the tales of the rise and decline of hundreds of dynasties in the three thousand Sectors.

The peasant rebellions such as the ‘White Lotus Cult’ or the ‘Heaven Battering King’ might not necessarily be the living embodiment of justice.

The Ghost Qin troops from the northern prairies could be brutal and ruthless barbarians, too.

But it did not mean that the aristocrats and the ruling class of the Great Qian dynasty were any better.

Generally speaking, at the end of a dynasty, it was often not outside trouble that crushed the dynasty but the internal putrefaction. It would be a compliment to call most of the nobles and bureaucrats in such a period ‘scumbags’.

Judging from the serious crisis that the Great Qian Dynasty was in, Li Yao seriously doubted that the federation could reverse the situation by dedicating tremendous resources.

After all, the federation was too far away from this Sector, which was a living example of ‘beyond reach’. If the Great Qian Dynasty was truly too rotten to be rescued, there would be nothing Li Yao could do.

Besides, the Great Qian Dynasty, which must have considered itself the center of the universe, might not trust the federation’s kindness at all!

In conclusion, the Great Qian Dynasty was not the only candidate that the federation had to cooperate with.

The White Lotus Cult, thriving in the southeast, and the Heaven Battering King, raging in the northwest, were two uprising forces both worth observing.

After all, the peasants in the medieval era were the most dutiful, obedient kind of folk. They would not have taken the great risk of fighting the fully-armed elite troops of the court unless they were truly pushed into desperation and left with no choice.

Only when they were too hungry and ate up all the rind and the grassroots, when they realized that they would either die of starvation or be killed in a revolt, would they rise up and seek a gratifying fight.

As for the solutions to famine…

It just so happened to be a strong suit of the modern Cultivation civilization.

The ancient Cultivation civilizations and the modern Cultivation civilizations had their own advantages in the military field, and the ancient Cultivation civilizations were even better in certain aspects. However, when it came to civil Cultivation technologies, the ancient Cultivation civilizations would suffer a crushing defeat.

The essence of the modern Cultivation civilizations was not the chainswords, not the crystal cannons, and not the crystal warships.

It was the popularized training arts and magical equipment, such as fertilizers and pesticides that could increase the yields of the farmlands and kill the pests, the automatic reaping machines, and the meteorological magical equipment deployed in the sky that could forecast and even change the weather.

With the help of such civil magical equipment, famine, a problem that troubled mankind for tens of thousands of years, was revolved once and for all, allowing the exponential growth of the population!

A civilization only had endless possibilities when its population was beyond a trillion!

It was so for the modern demons, too. The first creations of the botanists of the Blood Demon Sector, of whom the Fire Ant King was a good example, were not the ferocious, carnivorous plants but hybrid rice, wheat, potato, or bananas, which were resistant to the cold and drought and had a high yield.

What was the foundation of the overwhelming beast tides? The demonic plants such as hybrid rice, wheat, potatoes, bananas, and everything else that filled their stomach!

Every civilization’s development was in the shape of a pyramid. However spectacular the experts at the tip of the pyramid were, they had to be supported by the tough bedrock at the lower level.

The more solid the bedrock was, the more likely the experts at the tip of the pyramid would be able to break the limits of the civilization.

Although the logic was self-explanatory for modern human beings and demons, it might not be understandable for the ancient Cultivators.

In many worlds of ancient Cultivators, when the mortals were rising up because of starvation, the Cultivators often thought that it was no big deal and were still enjoying their own life!

It seemed even easier to support the rebellions such as the White Lotus Cult and the Heaven Battering King than to support the Great Qian Dynasty.

Li Yao did not know how developed the space cruising technology of the Star Glory Federation was right now after a hundred years.

However, it should not be a problem to summon a few carriers that brought cold-proof, drought-proof, high-yielding, genetically-modified crops as well as tremendous humanitarian assets once the space gate was established.

With enough people, people would be calmed down. He could impose influence on the rebellions as a representative of the federation and even transport the excessive population of the Ancient Sages Sector to the federation, which would partly relieve the population pressure of this world and partly build up the strength of the federation. Was the stone that killed two birds not perfect?

If the Great Qian Dynasty, the White Lotus Cult, and the Heaven Battering King were hopeless, the Ghost Qin troops in the north could also make a potential strategic partner.

Li Yao was an alien to the Sector. He had no concept of ‘rightfulness’ at all.

For him, there were only two things that mattered, the first being the people’s rights of survival and development and the second being the local regime’s long-term cooperation and even integration with the federation.

Generally speaking, when an ethnic minority overthrew the central dynasty, barbaric slaughters and bloody suppressions would always follow.

However, if the ‘iron riders’ on Dragon wolves with hard bows found hundreds of crystal warships over their heads, they might want to change their policy.

The ethnic group ‘Ghost Qin’ was the last candidate on Li Yao’s list if he absolutely had no choice. After all, it did not matter who claimed the central plateaus in the end as long as the process was fast enough, which would be far better than a hundred years of fighting and killing.

Of course, for the federation to influence the politics of this Sector, two questions had to first be figured out.

Firstly, Li Yao had to get to the bottom of the mysterious signal sent to the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star

Sector a hundred years ago. Judging from the civilization level of the Ancient Sages Sector, it was technologically impossible!

Secondly, Li Yao needed to find out whether or not scouts from the Imperium of True Human Beings who had similar missions to his were now stirring trouble in the Ancient Sages Sector.

Li Yao had learned most of his tricks from Su Changfa, a professor of the Imperial Colonization University in the Imperium of True Human Beings.

It was not hard to imagine that, if the scouts of the Imperium did sneak into the Ancient Sages Sector, they would certainly support the local forces to achieve their purposes.

Chances were that the Dark Cloud Iron Knights in the north were already each holding a machine gun now!

Li Yao could not help but feel chilly when he imagined them riding Dragon Wolves and shooting their machine guns.

Li Yao would never establish the space gate, which could potentially expose the coordinates of the federation, until the two questions were figured out.

But they seemed too far away right now.

Li Yao sorted through his thoughts and continued his report.

“As for the military forces of the Ancient Sages Sector, I’m only seeing the tip of the iceberg because I’m at the southwest corner of the country. It is hard to estimate the specific scale of the forces here.

“I can only say that one state of the Great Qian Dynasty seems enough to mobilize tens of thousands of soldiers, and there are eighteen such states in Great Qian.

“Their weapons are rather shabby, but because of the abundant spiritual energy, their average body build is even better than the federal army’s, which makes them rather tough warriors in head-on battles.

“As for the high-end warriors, I haven’t found anyone in the Divinity Transformation Stage yet. But according to the southwest barbarians, of the more than thousand sects in the Ancient Sages Sector, the top hundred are almost all supervised by Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. The top ten sects even have more than one Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

“Chances are that there are around five hundred Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in this world. Their quality is amazingly high, too. Many of them are in the high level or even at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage!

“Up until now, there are three ‘super experts’ worth my attention.

“Firstly, Wan Mingzhu, known as ‘Mother White Lotus’, who is the leader of the ‘White Lotus Cult’ that is causing trough in the southeast of the Great Qian Dynasty.

“Mother White Lotus is a strong spectral Cultivator without a body. She claims to be the ‘forebear of all the ghosts’. Her whereabouts are unclear, and her attacks are unpredictable. She must be a super expert adept at attacks of pure energy. I’ve never seen such opponents before. I have to be very careful when I’m dealing with her.

“The second one is Qi Changsheng, the ‘Heaven Battering King’ who leads the millions of peasants in the northwest and has survived the hunting of the emperor’s army dozens of times.

“According to my fellow barbarians, the guy has built an invincible, indestructible body. Wherever he goes, there is nothing but drought. He has killed countless people without leaving any living creatures behind. He is the scariest fiend of killing in the Great Qian Dynasty.

“Of course, such a description must entail the intentional vilification of the court, but it is evident enough of the guy’s toughness, too.”

Chapter 1353 - Twelve Gold Statues!

“The third guy is ‘Han Baling’, the regent of Ghost Qin in the north.

“The guy’s expertise in military and fighting can already be seen in the battle to annihilate the three hundred thousand soldiers of the Great Qian Dynasty last year with his Dark Cloud Ghost Knights.

“What is even more dreadful is that he is also a great politician and scholar.

“Ghost Qin was the collective name for the hundreds of scattered groups in the northern prairie. But they have been integrated with an iron fist by him into an intact, coherent army. He has also introduced many scholars who are not appreciated in the Great Qian Dynasty and modified the groups with the culture of Great Qian. He even changed his surname from ‘Poliuhan’ to ‘Han’ and his name from ‘Poliuhan Baling’ to ‘Han Baling’, to show everyone that he is not a foreign group but a rightful competitor of the throne.

“According to the standard of the modern Cultivators, the guy is definitely a standard ‘hybrid-type Cultivator’ who has shocking talents in both battle and administration!

“Although it is hard to gauge the specific capabilities of the three super experts based on hearsay, they are certain to be between the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage and the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage.

“Right. When the army led by Han Baling marched to the capital city, and when the incumbent emperor died abruptly, it was only because of the young emperor right now who distinguished himself in the troubled times that the dynasty was saved.

“It is said that the young emperor is born as dictated by fate and has concentrated the Great Qian Dynasty’s thousand years of luck. After he assumed the throne, he has accomplished quite a few noteworthy tasks. The dynasty seems to be thriving again.

“Whether it is the dying glow of the Great Qian Dynasty or it is a new start, the young emperor’s personal abilities cannot be underestimated. With a lineage of a thousand years and the enhancement of infinite treasures, it is also very possible that he is above the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage, too!”

The four of them were the candidates that could most likely be the ‘strategic partners’ of the Star Glory Federation.

Although he had executed a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator easily half a month ago, he did not dare to underestimate the four of them.

Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were different.

It had been pointed out to Li Yao that the Southland of Sorcerers was the most remote and poor area of the Great Qian Dynasty in the first place. The number and the quality of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators here were the lowest. The arts and the magical equipment in their possession were little to none, too.

To quote the ancient Cultivators, they were like ‘clowns’ who did not deserve much respect.

The central plateaus and the Dark Cloud land in the north were the places where the top Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector gathered.

Such places boasted abundant spiritual energy and many talents. The major sects often had a history of more than a thousand years. The relics and the treasures of the dynasties in history were not rare, too. The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who trained in such an environment were certainly different from the barbarians like ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’ who had to figure everything out on their own and who were overjoyed when they discovered a cave.

It was needless to say the Cultivators with the supreme power such as Han Baling, the regent of Ghost Qin and the emperor of the Great Qian Dynasty, who had almost infinite secret arts and resources.

‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu and ‘Heaven Battering King’ Qi Changsheng, despite being rebellions, had broken into the headquarters of quite a few Cultivation sects while they were on a rampage.

After every Cultivation sect was occupied, they would plunder the magical equipment and the secret arts. Their team was snowballing, too.

Right now, the leaders of the two rebellion forces perhaps had more techniques and magical equipment under their control than many leaders of notable sects did!

If Li Yao mistook the ‘super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators’ such as Han Baling, the emperor, Mother White Lotus and the Heaven Battering King for ‘third-rate Nascent Soul Stage

Cultivators’ such as Master Spiritual Vulture, he wouldn’t even have the chance to cry.

“Let me just observe and consider for now. If the local affairs are too messed up for me to intervene, I’ll have to figure out how to hire some of the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators as mercenaries.

“When the dynasty is changed, many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators of the previous dynasty will certainly lost their home. I don’t think that they will turn down the offer of the citizenship of the Star Glory Federation.

“Right. If the Great Qian Dynasty is truly falling apart, will it be more convenient for me be to hire more Cultivators if I bring someone of royal blood and many Cultivators who are loyal to the royal family back to the Star Glory Federation? For what it’s worth, we can make a deal with them to deal with the Imperium of True Human Beings together, before we help them restore their dynasty by providing money, guns, and food for them!”

Li Yao began to think wildly.

The future plans could still wait. After the two parties were officially in contact, the specialists in the think tanks of the federation would certainly come up with better solutions than his ill-considered ideas.

“I heard something interesting when I eavesdropped the barbarian Cultivators.

“The greatest trouble of the Great Qian Dynasty right now is the ‘Ghost Qin’ soldiers on the Dark Cloud Prairie in the north.

“But ‘Ghost Qin’ is actually a contemptuous term used by the Great Qian Dynasty. They actually call themselves ‘Cloud Qin’.

“The so-called ‘Cloud Qin’ refers to the ‘Cloud Qin Dynasty’, the very first empire that unified the Ancient Sages Sector a hundred thousand years ago. The northern ethnic minorities led by Han Baling are in fact considering themselves as the descendants of the most ancient dynasty in order to justify their fight for the throne.

“But that is not important.

“What is important is, legends in this world have it that the Ancient Sages Sector was plagued by wars a hundred thousand years ago. The tribes and the small kingdoms had been fighting each other for thousands of years.

“Then, the Cloud Qin Dynasty was born. It gathered all the magical equipment in the world and forged the items into twelve ‘Cloud Qin Gold Statues’. Eventually, the world was unified with the help of the twelve ‘Cloud Qin Gold Statues.

“It is said that the twelve Cloud Qin Gold Statues were all almost a hundred meters tall and boasted infinite physical strength. They were the invincible beings who could raise storm and thunder by waving their arms!

“Even today, the footprints and the claw traces of the ‘Cloud Qin Gold Statues’ can still be found on the ancient battlegrounds.

“A hundred meters tall, made of metal, and able to summon lightning and thunder? They are doubtlessly the ‘Colossi’!

“It seems that some human beings in the Ancient Sages Sector discovered twelve intact Colossi and knew how to manipulate them in prehistoric times. With the twelve Colossi, they managed to unify the whole world.

“Traces of the Cloud Qin Gold Statues lingered on in the few dynasties after the Cloud Qin Dynasty. They even became a symbol of power. Whichever force had one Cloud Qin Gold Statue would be able to claim the world!

“However, the Cloud Qin Dynasty was established a hundred thousand years ago. Considering the average longevity of each dynasty to be three thousand years, there are still more than thirty changes of dynasties so far.

“In the passage of time, the twelve Cloud Qin Gold Statues were finally gone.

“The last time they appeared on the history books of this Sector was about ten thousand years ago, when a bunch of slaves discovered a one-eyed gold statue from a river while they were dredging the canal.

“The one-eyed Colossus alone resulted in the fall of the dynasty at that time. But the Colossus also disappeared in the chaos of the war. Perhaps, it was seriously damaged and ran out of spiritual energy and ammunition. Nobody knew how to maintain it and eventually it was buried again!”

The rumors about the twelve Cloud Qin Gold Statues made Li Yao respect the reserves of the Ancient Sages Sector even more. Right now, the information he had collected was too little after all. He might as well wait and see for now.”

Having finished the preliminary report, he stretched out his arms comfortably

His telepathic thoughts spread out again and immediately caught the laughter of many barbarian Cultivators.

A barbarian Cultivator with vipers all over his body, who had his face painted in various colors was whispering to another Cultivator who was as slim as skeleton. They were both grimacing.

The barbarian Cultivator with vipers chuckled in a low voice. “Gu Siduo, aren’t you always Huo Laoer’s dearest friend? Why have you joined the emperor’s army instead of helping him? Hehe.”

The Cultivator who looked like a zombie shrieked. “There are too many soldiers in the emperor’s army. How can the few people in my village expect to defeat them? As the people in the central plateaus say, ‘a wise man knows when to retreat’. Besides, the rewards that the Appeasing Ambassador are quite impressive. What’s not good in joining the emperor’s army?

“After al—”

Pausing for a moment, the zombie-like Cultivator ‘Gu Siduo’ smirked. “—We’ll take a few steps back after we go into the Fire Rude Village and watch the fight off the two bunches of northerners first. If the emperor’s army is winning, we will still help them. If the cute little girl’s head is cut off, we are naturally going to help Huo Laoer. Meng Duo, what do you say?”

The Cultivators with snakes named ‘Meng Duo’ chuckled and nodded his head. “Exactly. Exactly. How about this. Let’s later gather the warriors of our two villages together, so that we can look after each other. We can wait until they beat each other’s s*it out of their pants!”

Gu Siduo moved his eyes and faked a smile. “I am only planning this because I’m a close friend to Huo Laoer. But are you not the most trusted brother of Huo Laoda? Why are you so—disloyal?”

Meng Duo blinked his eyes and said, “Everybody knows that Meng Duo of the Black Mist Village is the most loyal one both to friends and to the court. It is impossible for me to betray the court!

“However, the court has truly crossed the line too much this time! Not only are they demanding the Southland of Sorcerers to submit so much food and livestock, they are also drafting fifty thousand soldiers to fight against the Ghost Qin soldiers in the north!

“We men of the south land are as free in the woods as fish are in the water. If we leave the woods for the north, we will be like a fish out of water. How can we expect to live faced with the Dark Cloud Ghost Knights?

“The order is clearly one that asks us to participate in a suicidal mission!

“Meng Duo is loyal to the court, but the court is not as loyal to Meng Duo. So, I’ll have to leave my loyalty aside and see what the trend is. Is there anything wrong about that?”

“No. No. Not at all!”

Gu Siduo nodded his head quickly and scorned. “The Appeasing Ambassador takes us for the rocks in the mountain and stupid dummies. He thinks that now is still three hundred years ago and that he can draft fifty thousand soldiers with a few empty words? Haha. Then let’s see first whether or not the court’s fist is as tough as before!”

Chapter 1354 - Total Mess!

The two barbarian Cultivators thought that they were having a confidential conversation by restricting their soundwaves into a line, and that ‘Ling Lanyin’, the female Cultivator in the wagon up ahead could never hear what they were talking about.

But they never knew that a great expert in the Nascent Soul Stage named Li Yao was right next to them listening to every word they said.

Li Yao had no intention of reporting them.

It was because almost all the barbarian Cultivators had the same thought as theirs. They were open to cheering and applauding, but if they were asked to fight at the risk of their life, they would have to see whether the blades of the emperor’s army or the Ghost Qin army’s sabers were sharper.

Through their clandestine communication, Li Yao managed to have a general idea of the mess in the Southland of Sorcerers.

The Great Qian Dynasty had dominated the Ancient Sages Sector for a thousand years. The prosperous central plateaus were blocked from the southwest forests by a surging ‘Sorcerers’ River’. Therefore, the southwest area south to the Sorcerers’ River was collectively called ‘Southland of Sorcerers.

In the Southland of Sorcerers, the mountains were steep, the weather was hot, and venomous fog was everywhere. Primitive forests were all everyone could see whichever direction they looked at. Even the rare basins and plateaus among the mountains were blocked by the high mountains, making it difficult to communicate with the outside world.

The place was highly unsuitable for the survival and reproduction of human beings. The pests which carried all kinds of diseases were enough to extinguish the sparks of civilization. Therefore, of all the states in the Great Qian Dynasty, the Southland of Sorcerers was the one with the least population and the weakest capability.

During the Great Qian Dynasty’s thousand years of reign, a lot of peasants in the central plateaus were forced to immigrate to the place. But the peasants were merely co-existing with the local barbarians, even if they did teach a batch of ‘familiar barbarians’ who were familiar with the rules of the central plateaus.

Deep inside the forests, it was still the world of the ‘strange barbarians’ who feasted on raw meat and blood. The mysterious, unpredictable, eccentric evil arts and sorcery prevailed, too. It was considered to be a land of perils by the folks living on the central plateaus.

Thankfully, most of the tribes in the Southland of Sorcerers knew that they were outnumbered. For hundreds of years, they had been quite dutiful and never rebelled.

The barbarian Cultivators who played with snakes and ghosts often stayed in the Southland of Sorcerers. They hardly went to the central plateaus or committed anything illegal there.

It was because, just like the barbarian soldiers, the barbarian Cultivators were greatly dependent on the venomous fog, pests, and other advantages in the tropical forests.

As natural-born jungle hunters, even if an army of a million soldiers marched into the forests, they would only need to dive into deeper parts of the forests, and nobody would be able to do anything about them.

On the other hand, if the barbarian Cultivators left the forests for the flat, boundless plateaus, their venomous fog, pests, and gremlins would be much less powerful.

Since the experts in the Southland of Sorcerers were incapable of moving on to a greater stage, and the Great Qian Dynasty was offering tremendous magical equipment and arts to win their support, submitting to the Great Qian Dynasty, allowing the Appeasing Ambassador of the Great Qian Dynasty to establish local agency as nominal leader, and agreeing that the leaders of the villages would be decreed as chiliarches and generals did not seem very bad.

With such a strategy, the Southland of Sorcerers and the central plateaus had maintained the ostensible peace for almost a thousand years. Except when they were submitting the taxes and the labor service, they had barely communicated with the central plateaus.

However, over the past few decades, with the Grand Qian Dynasty unstable, some ambitious warlords in the Southland of Sorcerers began to have other plans.

After the rise of Ghost, their regent Han Baling was also quite determined to swallow the entire world, and therefore paid great attention to diplomacy.

Although the Southland of Sorcerers was not strong itself, it was at a critical geological position. In the southwest, it was close to the few major grain-producing areas in the middle part of the Great Qian Dynasty’s territory. Also, by sailing downwards on the Sorcerers’ River, it would be able to reach the prosperous lands in the southeast directly, which was essentially the softest abdomen of the Great Qian Dynasty.

For hundreds of years, the Great Qian Dynasty had never worried about the Southland of Sorcerers. Military fortresses or armies were never deployed along the Sorcerers’ River.

Now that rebellions were rising up in the southeast and the northwest, and Ghost Qin was coveting from the north, the Great Qian Dynasty had ever fewer troops to build up the defense in the Southland of Sorcerers.

If the barbarian tribes revolted at this moment, they would be stabbing the most vulnerable part of the Great Qian Dynasty brutally. The Great Qian Dynasty would be even less likely to be able to deal with the emergencies all at once.

Han Baling had secretly dispatched the Ghost Qin Cultivators to infiltrate the Southland of Sorcerers, devoting tremendous resources to buy the local leaders and warlords.

His persuasion work was rather thorough. At least, the two bros in the Refinement Stage in front Li Yao’s eyes had both met envoys from Ghost Qin and received Han Baling’s gifts.

Even two barbarian Cultivators in the Refinement Stage had been attended to well. It was indicative enough of the smoothness and carefulness of Ha Baling, who was called by the Great Qian Dynasty as the ‘Wolf King’.

Right now, the Great Qian Dynasty still had its remaining influence, and the domination hadn’t been entirely gone yet. Nobody could tell what would happen later. The cunning barbarian Cultivators were certainly unwilling to jump to any choice.

They gladly accepted the gifts from Ghost Qin and did not reject the jewelry and the Cultivation arts. But when it came to rising up as rebellions and declaring war on the Great Qian Dynasty, they would certainly hesitate and observe for a while longer.

Maybe, all the leaders, warlords and Cultivators in the Southland of Sorcerers had been waiting for a signal.

Right now, the signal had shown up.

Six months ago, the previous leader of the Fire Rude Clan died abruptly and mysteriously.

The Fire Rude Clan was the strongest tribe of barbarians, and the one with the largest territory, in the Southland of Sorcerers. It was also the tribe closest to the Great Qian Dynasty.

The leader of the Fire Rude Clan was appointed by the emperor in person as the ‘Chieftain of the South Land’. He was the nominal leader of the hundred tribes in the southwest.

The so-called ‘Appeasing Ambassador’ was not a regular official title most of the time. If it had been peaceful for a hundred years, there would be no need to send out any Appeasing Ambassador. The local affairs and the tributary system would be under the control of ‘Chieftain of the South Land’. The barbarians would be managing the barbarians’ own business.

It went without saying that the previous leader of the Fire Rude Clan was a loyal subject of the Great Qian Dynasty.

But his successor was not necessarily so.

The old leader died abruptly when he was in his prime years. He did not leave any will to name an heir.

Of his many sons, Huo Wuji, the eldest son, and Huo Wujiu, the second son, were both very capable. They had in their control a few villages of the Fire Rude Clan respectively, and a lot of soldiers and Cultivators had pledged loyalty to them.

After the previous leader perished, Huo Wuji was the first one to present a will which nobody knew where he found, claiming that he was the new leader of the Fire Rude Clan his father had named. He also sent a messenger to the capital city of the Great Qian Dynasty, demanding the official appointment and degree of the Great Qian Dynasty.

It was a sign that he would continue acknowledging the Great Qian Dynasty's reign and serving the Great Qian Dynasty.

Huo Wujiu, the second sound, did not give in, either. He also took out a piece of creased paper, announcing that he was actually the rightful leader of the Fire Rude Clan.

That was not the whole of it. He also let out of a piece of shocking news.

It was said that, when the previous leader was alive, he had sensed the decline of the Great Qian Dynasty and the rise of Cloud Qin and was considering joining Cloud Qin's side instead of pledging loyalty to the Great Qian Dynasty.

The assassins of the Great Qian Dynasty who were hiding inside the Fire Rude Clan learned the matter and killed the previous leader shamelessly.

Huo Wujiu announced that, for the future of the hundred tribes in the Southland of Sorcerers, he would fight the Great

Qian Dynasty to the end even at the cost of his own life!

Everybody in the Southland of Sorcerers was greatly shocked by his words.

They were not shocked by such an absurd joke that the Great Qian Dynasty assassinated the local leader, but by the fact that Ghost Qin had finally found such an important spokesperson.

To compete for the leadership of the Fire Rude Clan, Huo Wuji and Huo Wujiu had been fighting bloody battles for half a year. But neither of them was able to defeat the other.

Right now, because of the efforts of the renowned elders and Cultivators in the hundred tribes in the Southland of Sorcerers, they finally agreed to sit down and negotiate and decide the leader of the Fire Rude Clan in a more straightforward way.

However, those who were smart enough could all tell that the puppets had finished their show and it was time for the real players to come up.

Huo Wuji’s request of degree had long been delivered to the capital. The Fire Rude Clan had been key to the hundred clans in the Southland of Sorcerers and was always obedient to the court. It was certainly a big deal, and the court had to stand up for him.

That was why Ling Shoujing, ‘Appeasing Ambassador of the Fifth Prefecture of the Southland of Sorcerers’, was reinforcing the area with the Black Tiger Guards.

On Ghost Qin’s side, a lot of elites had been deployed to stir trouble, too. Some of the tribes, under their enchantment, finally jumped out in rebellion, too.

The ambush that Ling Shoujing's army suffered was conducted by a few barbarian tribes that had joined Ghost Qin's side.

But as it turned out, their leader Black Nose was minced into pieces before they had the chance to ask for rewards from their new master.

Right now, Huo Wuji and Huo Wujiu, two self-proclaimed leaders of the Fire Rude Clan, were both recruiting the barbarian Cultivators in the desolate land to build up their force and waiting for their respective reinforcements.

When the emperor's army from the Great Qian Dynasty and the experts from Ghost Qin arrived, the final 'negotiation' would take place in the village of the Fire Rude Clan.

Even the most stupid persons knew that the 'negotiation' wouldn't be done with words.

It was much more than the leadership of the Fire Rude Clan that was to be decided by the negotiation, too.

If Huo Wuji, the eldest son, won, it would prove that the Great Qian Dynasty was still powerful enough, and a tiny Southland of Sorcerers was certainly not good enough to deal with it.

If Huo Wujiu, the second son, laughed to the end, not only would the Fire Rude Clan join Ghost Qin's side, a chain reaction would also be caused. The situation in the Southland of Sorcerers would be hopeless.

It was exactly because of the importance of the 'negotiation' that Ling Shoujing had been recruiting barbarian soldiers and Cultivators the moment he entered the area.

He naturally knew that most of the barbarian Cultivators would not fight for the Great Qian Dynasty with their life.

But at such a critical moment, it was almost good that one more person was cheering for his side.

Chapter 1355 - Master Spiritual Vulture’s Infame

By eavesdropping on the barbarian Cultivators’ whispers, Li Yao also got a piece of crucial information.

Ling Shoujing, the newly appointed Appeasing Ambassador of the Fifth Prefecture of the Southland of Sorcerers, had two purposes for his journey.

Firstly, he was there to back Huo Wuji and sustain the Great Qian Dynasty’s nominal reign in the place.

But his second purpose was actually to draft the barbarian soldiers to suppress the insurrections of the White Lotus Cult, the Heaven Battering King, and Ghost Qin.

It appeared that the Great Qian Dynasty was indeed seriously short of soldiers and had to exploit the places harder even though it was not a good approach in the long term.

Or maybe it was a trick to kill two birds with one stone. As long as the young soldiers in the Southland of Sorcerers were drafted into the Great Qian Dynasty’s army, and after they were weakened during the battles to come, the hundred tribes in the southwest would not be able to rebel even if they wanted to.

Other than the ordinary soldiers, the barbarian Cultivators were welcomed, too.

The Great Qian Dynasty's politicians and Cultivators were essentially two complementary and yet independent systems.

While the emperor's army and Ghost Qin's cavalry were fighting hard, the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty and those from the northern prairies had a few huge competitions, too.

It was said that the two parties would hold yet another shocking match to decide the fate of the regimes that they represented.

To prepare for the once-in-a-hundred-years match, the Great Qian Dynasty and Ghost Qin were both inviting experts from everywhere.

Although the Southland of Sorcerers was rather weak, it could still provide certain support. Even if the experts in the Nascent Soul Stage were few, it was still good if some barbarian Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage or the Building Foundation Stage were invited back to build up their force.

Besides, it was a trade-off. If the Great Qian Dynasty failed to recruit the barbarian Cultivators, they would likely be hired by Ghost Qin. As a result, one fewer Core Formation Stage Cultivator would be on their side, and one more Core Formation Stage would be on the enemy's side, which could significantly affect the overall capabilities of the two sides.

Therefore, Ling Shoujing, as the Appeasing Ambassador of the Fifth Prefecture of the Southland of Sorcerers, had come to officially decree Huo Wuji as the new Chieftain of the South Land as a representative of the Great Qian Dynasty. He was also going to draft the soldiers through the new Chieftain, collect assets, and march to the north.

In the meantime, Ling Lanyin—Ling Shoujing's daughter who was from the Purple Pole Sword Sect, which was known as the best sword sect in the Great Qian Dynasty—was sort of a representative of the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty to invite the extraordinary folks in the southern tribes to join the Great Qian Dynasty's side in the match to come.

The news could not have been better for Li Yao.

The match between the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty and those from the northern land would certainly involve the top experts of both sides. If he could observe the match in person, a lot of his time could be saved.

The only thing to be confirmed right now was whether or not there was anything wrong with the identity of 'Master Spiritual Vulture'. It would be quite embarrassing if he presented himself in the match only to discover that he was a mutual target of the Great Qian Dynasty and Ghost Qin.

Li Yao eavesdropped on them from behind without a sound. Then he suddenly heard the two barbarian Cultivators mentioning his fake name.

As it turned out, not all the barbarian Cultivators were as cunning as foxes.

The spiritual energy in the Ancient Sages Sector was too abundant. As a result, many bizarre Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures had been generated. Some fruits and the blood of certain animals could even transform someone into a Cultivator by cleansing their body and awakening their spiritual root!

But such Cultivators were often not wise enough despite their surging spiritual energy. They were essentially three-year-olds waving deadly weapons, threats to both themselves and others.

Such cases were much more common in the Southland of Sorcerers, which was short of tutelage and edification.

Therefore, of the hundred barbarian Cultivators in the team, other than most of the sleazy scoundrels, quite a few of them were actually ‘cute’ and ‘innocent’.

The role that Li Yao was playing was exactly such a person.

Such people only became Cultivators because of luck. Sometimes, because of the crash of spiritual energy when their spiritual root was awakened, their brain was more or less injured, and they were even more unintelligent and reckless than ordinary people.

Born and raised in the roughest land, they often lacked the latest news, too.

Most people’s impression of the Great Qian Dynasty was still its domination and invincibility hundreds of years ago.

Therefore, when the emperor’s army arrived, the cute and innocent Cultivators were the most active of all. They thought that they could make great contributions by following the emperor’s army and be rewarded with the magical equipment, Cultivation arts, and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures from the central plateaus as their ancestors did hundreds of years ago!

The two barbarian Cultivators, one fat and the other slender, in front were discussing how to instigate the stupid boys to lead the vanguard and earn the trophies for them when the ‘negotiation’ began.

Of course, the role that Li Yao was playing was one of the 'stupid boys'.

Thinking of something, Li Yao pinched his legs. The giant python below his bottom slithered like a dragon and squeezed into the middle of the two barbarian Cultivators.

"Huo!"

Li Yao glared at him, and his python was gazing at the two of them maliciously, too. He declared, "I heard you mentioning my name while laughing. Were you making fun of me?"

The two barbarian Cultivators were greatly shocked. They did not realize that the boy who popped up from the Head Cutting Cliff had been following them so closely all the time without being discovered and that his ears were keen enough to catch their mosquito-like voices.

"Brother Snake Swallower, make no mistake!"

The fat barbarian Cultivator who was tied up in snakes hurried to drop a hint at the other barbarian Cultivator who was as slender as skeleton before he said with a smile, "Come here. Let me introduce to you Brother Gu Siduo from Black Mist Village. I was talking about your strength with him just now, Brother Snake Swallower. It was truly marvelous of you to have thrown away three leaders of Hundred Flowers Village of the Sky Touching Mountain.

Li Yao's fake named 'Snake Swallower' suggested that he had grown up feeding on vipers.

It was a rather common way to give names in the uncivilized tribes in the southwest.

Raising his chin, Li Yao did not even bother to look at them. “Is that worth mentioning at all? Not just the three monkeys, when I was in the woods, I could casually toss giant boars weighing a thousand kilograms several kilometers away!”

“Of course. We absolutely have no doubt you can. You are certainly going to distinguish yourself under the Appeasing Ambassador’s command. These old bones here are all counting on young heroes such as you!” Gu Siduo adulated him with a feigned smile.

Li Yao was so delighted that his face was beet red. Suddenly, he lowered his head ‘in embarrassment’ and asked, “Hey, let me ask you something. I’m told that, after we reach the village of the Fire Rude Clan, if I throw the opponents several kilometers away as I did just now or smash them into rocks, there will be great rewards. I can get all the rare treasures and even be a man with power in the central plateaus. Is it true?”

Looking at each other in bewilderment, the two barbarian Cultivators both held back their smiles and nodded. “Of course it is true. As said clearly in the ‘Appeasing Order’, as long as you try your best and preferably kill dozens of Cultivators on the enemy’s side, you can get as much gold, Cultivation arts, and magical equipment as you want. You will be granted a high position, too, and you will get to choose what official you would like to work as!”

Li Yao scratched his face in joy. “The guy surnamed Ling said that we are on… right, Huo Wuji’s side, and I should not kill anyone randomly on our side. I wonder, who are the people on the enemy’s side? Are they capable of bearing my toss, punch, and strangle?”

Meng Duo, the fat barbarian Cultivator with vipers all over his body, smiled. “Brother Snake Swallower, you boast naturally-endowed formidable strength. You also have your extraordinary arts that have domesticated such a dangerous Highly-Crowed Lethal Python. You are obviously second to none in the Southland of Sorcerers. Isn’t it so, Brother Gu Siduo?”

“Of course. Of course!” the zombie-like barbarian Cultivator said solemnly. “Brother Snake Swallower, you will certainly make the greatest contributions in the battle to come!”

“Fantastic!”

Li Yao smashed his fists in excitement before he glared at the two of them. “Don’t steal my opponents after the battle begins. Otherwise, I may remember your names, but the giant python below me certainly won’t!”

The two barbarian Cultivators were too old and cunning to bother fighting for credit with him. Therefore, they simply flattered Brother Snake Swallower and described him as a great hero who would not only dominate the Southland of Sorcerers but also make a name for himself in the central plateaus or the northern prairies.

Li Yao seemed to have been lost in their exaltations. While clapping his hands and bursting into laughter, he declared arrogantly, “Right. A few years ago, when my master was still alive, he often mentioned a tough guy named ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’. My master’s greatest regret in his life was that he didn’t have a chance to fight Master Spiritual Vulture!

“My master is dead now. I’ve lived more than ten years in the wilderness, and I feel that I’m much stronger than him when he was alive! I wonder, is Master Spiritual Vulture coming or not? If he does, which side will he be on? It will be best if he is on our enemy’s side. I’ll punch him into pieces easily and pour a cup of wine for my master with his skull!”

Hearing that, Meng Duo and Gu Siduo both shuddered, and their faces immediately turned pale.

The temperature around the three of them suddenly lowered by dozens of degrees, as if an invisible block of ice hit them hard.

The two of them looked at Li Yao as if he were a dead body filled with venom and plague.

“Brother Snake Swallower, watch your mouth!” Meng Duo was smiling in a way uglier than crying. “You must not joke about M—M—Master Spiritual Vulture’s name!”

“Exactly!” Gu Siduo had not entirely recovered from his shock, either. “It doesn’t matter if you want to get yourself killed, but please don’t bring the two of us down with you!”

The two of them quietly moved away from him, as if they were avoiding a leper.

But Li Yao certainly would not let go of them so easily. He intentionally raised his voice and shouted, “Huh? What are you doing? Is Master Spiritual Vulture so terrible? Can we not defeat him even if the three of us join hands?”

Chapter 1356 - Unimaginably Brutal!

Hardly had Li Yao finished his sentence when Meng Duo and Gu Siduo, two hideous-looking barbarian Cultivators, shivered as if they were feverish. One left and the other right, they carried Li Yao aside before he exclaimed, “Dear heavens! Brother Snake Swallower, you can always kill yourself if you want to, but why do you have to involve the two of us? You are all by yourself without any dependency. But we have our villages and compatriots behind us. One moment of carelessness, and the entire tribe might be wiped out. It’s not a joke!”

Realizing that Li Yao was probably an idiot who probably did not know what fear was, the two barbarian Cultivators somewhat regretted talking to him.

But what was done could not be undone. They could only describe Master Spiritual Vulture’s backgrounds to Li Yao as vividly as they could, so that the reckless young calf would know what was best for him.

So to speak, Master Spiritual Vulture was a brutal man who was active in the Southland of Sorcerers some seventy years ago.

It was said that he was the son of Red Feather Village’s leader, which was to the west of the Southland of Sorcerers. He was supposed to inherit the leadership after his father passed away.

But as it turned out, there were quite a few ambitious fellows in Red Feather Village, who learned some evil arts from a few sorcerers from outside towns. They claimed that the giant birthmark on his forehead was an embodiment of an evil god and an ill omen.

For the safety of the village, the ‘Green Crow Evil God’ at the center of his eyebrow must be plucked out. But their sole purpose was merely to kill him.

Master Spiritual Vulture had a series of fierce battles with the enemy. He luckily escaped but went missing afterward.

In fact, he was recruited by Elder Five Despairs of the Flying Thunder Cave of the Broken Stomach Mountain as a disciple. He had a senior brother named ‘Master Black Moon’.

Since the birthmark on his forehead looked like a soaring bird, and it was the source of the vicissitudes of his life, Elder Five Despairs named him after ‘Spiritual Vulture’.

In the decades that followed, Master Spiritual Vulture and Master Black Moon had been training after Elder Five Despairs in the Flying Thunder Cave.

Later, for reasons no one knew, Elder Five Despairs died abruptly.

Rumors in the Southland of Sorcerers had it that the two of them, having learned all the necessary knowledge, were so greedy about their master’s magical equipment and techniques that they killed their master in an ambush while Elder Five Despairs were not unprepared!

After the senior brother and the junior brother split their master’s belongings, they went their separate ways.

Naturally, Master Spiritual Vulture went back to the Red Feather Village for revenge.

To this moment, what he had been doing was still within the understanding of most people. It did not seem inappropriate although he minced his former enemies into pieces.

But as it turned out, Master Spiritual Vulture was a temperamental, bloodthirsty and even psychopathic person.

After he returned to the Red Feather Village, not only did he torment the few members of the tribe who framed him in the past, leading to their deaths with the most cruel methods, he had even blocked the gate of the house and butchered the hundreds of people in the village, leaving no survivors, in their party to celebrate him as the new leader.

“In the past, when they smeared that I was possessed by the evil god and were about to dig out my brains, you were all reluctant, suspicious and even taking their sides. You thought that I ought to be sacrificed for the sake of the village!

“Hehe. In my opinion, it is you who are possessed by the evil god. For the safety of the village, let me open your head and see if there’s an evil god inside!”

It was said that Master Spiritual Vulture crushed the members of his tribe’s skulls one after another while declaring as such.

Such an insane and inhuman action was appalling enough even for the uncivilized ‘strange barbarians’ who feasted on raw meat and blood.

But it was not the end of his revenge.

Although all his enemies were killed, his enemies were all disciples of certain sorcerers of other villages and only coveted his right of succession because of the sorcerers' instigation.

Master Spiritual Vulture made a list of seven sorcerers. He massacred them as well as their whole villages. Even the animals in the villages were not left alive.

Master Spiritual Vulture's brutality henceforth spread out to the entire Southland of Sorcerers.

His blatancy was putting everybody in the Southland of Sorcerers in panic. They were scared whenever they heard the name 'Spiritual Vulture'. Naturally, many barbarian Cultivators intended to remove the hazard.

This was the time when Master Spiritual Vulture showed his wisdom.

The guy was strong enough after inheriting Elder Five Despairs knowledge. He had also butchered everyone in his own village. He had absolutely no weakness or anyone he cared about.

Therefore, he was coming and going unpredictably in the forests. It was difficult to keep track of him.

Besides, he understood the importance of 'cutting the roots of weeds to stop them from growing again' very well. His attacks were well-considered and thorough. The entire families of his enemies were slaughtered, and not a single victim survived.

The barbarian Cultivators mostly pursued after him to maintain the order and peace of the Southland of Sorcerers. They had no direct grudge with him.

He also announced to the Southland of Sorcerers about everything that happened in the past. He claimed that what he did was purely for vengeance.

Whoever came after him must note that their family and tribes might end up the same way as the eight villages including the Red Feather Village did!

However, if he were not attacked first, he would not go on a killing spree without a reason, either.

After all, he was all by himself right now and had nothing to lose. It was more than easy for him to find out who was hunting him.

While the enforcers of justice were looking for him in the forests, they might not be able to look after their villages properly. So, it would be easy for him to ‘look after’ their villages!

After such an announcement was made, the barbarians, who were ‘determined’ to remove the public hazard in their ‘indignity’, went separate ways on the spot. Who was willing to mess up with such a brutal man when there were no gains?

All in all, Master Spiritual Vulture was such an insane, vicious maniac who had massacred his own village when he went crazy!

Massacring eight villages in a row, and still swaggering in the Southland of Sorcerers, he was the unique Cultivator in the Southland of Sorcerers a hundred years ago.

Because of the betrayal of his fellows in the past, Master Spiritual Vulture was quite solitary. Later, after he grew notorious, he was always acting on his own.

He retrieved tremendous resources and Cultivation arts from the eight villages he demolished. After training for another twenty years, he was almost growing into the top expert in the Southland of Sorcerers.

Then, even fewer people dared to piss him off here. Occasionally, when he visited a certain village, all the folks in the village would be so frightened that they would offer everything he desired as if he were a deity.

Even if he appeared in front of the barbarian Cultivators blatantly, most of them could only swallow their pride and call him ‘master’ respectfully because of his formidability.

Around fifty years ago, Master Black Moon, Master Spiritual Vulture’s senior brother, sent a letter to him, stating that he had encountered a secret treasure and would like Master Spiritual Vulture to explore and capture it together with him.

Different from Master Spiritual Vulture, his senior brother Master Black Moon took the more orthodoxy career of the barbarian Cultivators.

The so-called ‘orthodoxy career’ referred to the practice that the Cultivators would look for a village after their training was complete and work as the guardians, priests or sorcerers of the tribe. Then, they would help the tribe to hunt animals, deal with demon beasts, and fight against the priests and sorcerers of the hostile tribes.

Their own living expenses and the resources that their training demanded would be covered by the tribe under their protection.

The higher their Cultivation was, the more techniques they would be able to provide, and the more flourishing the tribe would be. As a result, the position and the resources that the barbarian Cultivator had would soar, too.

If he were so capable that he could meet everyone’s needs, he would also be a ‘Great Sorcerer’ who commanded multiple tribes. He would even be able to establish his own sect and recruit disciples, raising the disciples into the priests and sorcerers of other tribes. It would be an even more splendid cause.

That was exactly Master Black Moon’s approach.

Inheriting Elder Five Despairs’ knowledge same as his junior brother did, he did an excellent job, too. When Master Spiritual Vulture became the most notorious man in the Southland of Sorcerers, his personal influence spread to dozens of tribes, too. He also made friends with a lot of Cultivators from the central plateaus. He was almost considered as a positive representative of the Cultivators in the Southland of Sorcerers.

The rumors that he betrayed and killed his master was just a minor conflict among the barbarians without valid proof in the eyes of the Cultivators from the central plateaus. It was not worth mentioning at all.

Nobody knew what was the relationship between Master Black Moon and Master Spiritual Vulture.

All in all, there was no telling what promises Master Black Moon made in the letter, but Master Spiritual Vulture went to meet him gladly.

What happened later was quite uncanny, with many different versions.

According to Master Black Moon, Master Spiritual Vulture was wounded and poisoned by demon beasts during the adventure, before he fell into an abyss and went missing.

But some of the barbarian Cultivators claimed that Master Black Moon killed his junior brother when he was unprepared just like how they ambushed Elder Five Despairs in the past!

As to exactly why Master Black Moon did that, opinions varied. Maybe, it was because such an infamous junior brother as Master Spiritual Vulture would be a great stain and burden on his growing reputation. Maybe, it was because he had been coveting half of Elder Five Despairs' belongings which were given to Master Spiritual Vulture in the past. Maybe, it was Master Spiritual Vulture who attacked first only to be killed later… But none of the reasons mattered.

What mattered was that Master Spiritual Vulture, the notorious man that was everyone's nightmare, finally disappeared. He hadn't been seen for decades.

Even so, his death was not acknowledged after all. Because of his appalling brutality, nobody had the courage to gossip about Master Spiritual Vulture in daylight even today.

If, however unlikely, the guy was not dead yet, it certainly wouldn't be a joke if such a volatile, petty maniac who had the habit of killing others' entire village got his eyes on you.

Meng Duo and Gu Siduo were both well-renowned sorcerers in their villages. They had a lot of family members, too. They did not have any place to run to. Therefore, they were unwilling to take any unnecessary risks.

So, he truly is a brutal and notorious man!

Li Yao thought to himself. He finally figured out why Master Spiritual Vulture was hiding inside his cave for decades.

Chapter 1357 - Legends of the Divinity Transformation Stage!

What Master Black Moon said might be not entirely false. But it couldn’t be entirely true, either.

Master Black Moon and Master Spiritual Vulture, two brothers who killed their master together, might indeed have such a deep grudge that they wanted each other dead no matter what.

But it was also possible that Master Spiritual Vulture had earlier discovered the ancient cave where the armor of the Pangu Clan and the heritages of the anterior Cultivators were left. He intended to seclude himself for some time, but he feared that his enemies and his senior brother might find him. Therefore, he pretended that he was tricked and met his senior brother gladly, before he faked that he was poisoned and fell into the abyss.

Chances were that, after grasping all the knowledge of the anterior Cultivators and forging eight-one ghastly daggers, he would find his senior brother Master Black Moon and slaughter his entire family before he did anything else!

Thankfully, karma jumped in. Right before his scheme was to work out, he encountered Li Yao, the unreasonable alien Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, who suppressed him with a crystal suit and blew his soul apart, killing him forever.

The identity of Master Spiritual Vulture is too excellent!

Li Yao mumbled to himself.

First of all, the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator had clear backgrounds, and he was a reasonably famous person a hundred years ago.

There were too many folks among the ancient Cultivators who secluded themselves for a hundred years. It was not unusual that an old monster who had disappeared since decades ago returned to the human world again.

Secondly, Master Spiritual Vulture was an extreme, temperamental and bloodthirsty lone wolf who had always acted on his own. His senior brother Master Black Moon was perhaps the only one familiar with his appearance and character.

If he had lived in seclusion for decades practicing the evil arts, it was perfectly normal that his appearance and character were utterly reshaped.

As long as Li Yao did not run into his senior brother Master Black Moon, nobody would notice anything wrong.

Also, because of the guy’s brutality, other people wouldn’t have the courage to question him even if they grew suspicious of him.

Moreover, although Master Spiritual Vulture was a notorious man, according to the two barbarian Cultivators, he had been active only in the South Land of Sorcerers decades ago. He never left the place or commit any crime in the main land of the Great Qian Dynasty. Therefore, the majority of the Cultivators did not hold much of a grudge against him.

After slaughtering eight tribes in a role, his brutality had spread out to the entire South Land of Sorcerers. Together with the announcement he made later, none of the barbarian Cultivators dared to challenge him.

When somebody was smiling, it was difficult to slap them in the face. Since all the local barbarians were worshipping him as a deity, there was no need for him to commit any more murders. Therefore, in the decades that followed, he hadn’t made too many enemies.

In short, although the guy was a notorious man, few people desperately wanted him dead right now.

The South Land of Sorcerers was almost an independent system in the first place. The rest of the world regarded them mostly as cannibals and would not ask them to abide by the law and rules in the central plateaus. As long as they behaved obediently when they were out of their hometown, the two parties would live in harmony.

But of course, it would still be quite inconvenient for him to make friends with the mainstream Cultivators under such a title.

However, Li Yao had slightly changed his mind right now. He was not considering the court of the Grand Qian Dynasty as the sole target of negotiation.

Great Qian, the White Lotus Cult, the Heaven Battering King and Ghost Qin were four forces that all deserved observation.

Master Spiritual Vulture’s identity might be rejected by the mainstream Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty. But it might be popular among the rebellions led by the Heaven Battering King or the White Lotus Cult, and in a nascent force such as Ghost Qin which was ambitious enough to change the dynasty.

A villain had a villain’s advantages. The purpose of Li Yao’s journey was observation, and observation might not necessary have to be conducted positively.

If a certain force knew clearly that he was a merciless, brutal man who murdered innocent people, and still talked to him nicely after seeing the souls of two hundred children that he carried, such a force was not worth negotiating at all even if other conditions were perfect.

More importantly, if it were a righteous Cultivator from a famous sect, how could Li Yao kill him and assume his identity?

It’s decided then. I’ll walk around under Master Spiritual Vulture’s identity while I observe the capabilities and beliefs of Great Qian, the White Lotus Cult, the Heaven Battering King and Ghost Qin, investigate the actions of the Imperium of True Human Beings, and figure out everything about the mysterious signal a hundred years ago. After everything is settled, I’ll establish the space gate, summon the space fleet from the federation, and officially communicate with the Ancient Sages Sector!

Li Yao was not a man who liked to play the pig that ate geckos.

Besides, disguising himself in front of the barbarians was almost an insult to his acting skills.

Now that he ascertained that the identity of Master Spiritual Vulture wasn’t very troublesome, he did not want to keep acting anymore. He was about to unleash his auras and demonstrate the real power of ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’, so that he could collect information of a higher level from Ling Shoujing, the Appeasing Ambassador of the Fifth Prefecture of the South Land of Sorcerers, and Ling Lanyin, the female sword Cultivator from the Purple Pole Sword Sect.

However, what the two barbarian Cultivators said next made Li Yao stop his movement.

“You might want to watch your mouth, Brother Snake Swallower. Although Master Spiritual Vulture’s whereabouts are obscure while he is on his trip, and he hasn’t shown up for decades, his senior brother Master Black Moon is the most marvelous sorcerer in the South Land of Sorcerers. He has already advanced in the Nascent Soul Stage and enjoyed unparalleled prestige!

“Is there a tribe in the place that does not worship him as a deity respectfully?

“This time, the eldest son and the second son of the Fire Rude Clan only agreed to negotiate because Master Black Moon asked them to!

“Master Black Moon is the host of the negotiation. He is now supervising everything in the village of the Fire Rude Clan. He and Master Spiritual Vulture are of the same origin and share a lot of techniques. If Brother Snake Swallower belittles Master Spiritual Vulture’s techniques, chances are that Master Black Moon will grow angry, which will certainly be a disaster!”

Master Black Moon was the summoner and the middleman of the negotiation. He was also an expert in the Nascent Soul Stage. The news made Li Yao hesitate again.

If he declared that he was ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’, others might not be bold enough to question him, but he certainly wouldn’t pass his senior brother’s test.

There would certainly be trouble if his reactions went wrong, which could become his fatal weakness at a crucial moment later.

Li Yao could only suppress the thought of revealing his identity immediately and continued walking forward on the giant python.

In the few days that followed, they had been on the road in the forests.

As the flags of yellow dragons and the drafting orders of the Great Qian Dynasty was sent into the deeper forests, more and more barbarian Cultivators were joining them. All kinds of bizarre-looking flags were now flapping in the team.

Li Yao spent most of his time hanging around with Meng Duo and Gu Siduo, the two seasoned barbarian Cultivators. Pretending that he was young and stupid, he elicited a lot more intelligence from them.

It was a pity that they were both locals of a far-flung area. Most of the intelligence was merely about the South Land of Sorcerers. They did not know much about the Cultivators in the central plateaus.

With all the tricks he learnt from Guo Chunfeng, Li Yao only found one piece of valuable information from him.

A hundred years ago, there were Cultivators in the Divinity Transformation Stage in the Ancient Sages Sector!

It was said that two invincible Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, one in the Great Qian Dynasty and the other on the northern prairies, appeared at that time. The two of them even had a world-blighting, incredible competition.

After the battle, both Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were gone. Some said that they were both killed, some said that they had broken the void and ascended to the heavens, and some said that they perceived the ultimate truth of the universe during their battle and trained themselves in seclusion afterwards.

But all in all, a hundred years wasn’t a long time for a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator. It was very possible that the two of them were still living in a certain form!

Besides…

Considering that they were in the Divinity Transformation Stage a hundred years ago, nobody could tell how strong they could be after a hundred years of training!

Li Yao was quite sensitive about the timing ‘a hundred years ago’.

A hundred years ago, two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators disappeared mysteriously after their summit confrontation.

At approximately the same time, an uncanny signal was sent to the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector from the Ancient Sages Sector.

Were the two incidents in any way related?

I have to find the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators and convince them to stand on the federation’s side!

If two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators joined the Imperium of True Human Beings, it would be great strike on the federation!

When he imagined that two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators infiltrated into the capital of the federation and went on a killing spree, Li Yao couldn't help but feel that his blood was freezing.

Besides, both Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were the leaders of the Cultivators. Their stance might decide the stance of hundreds of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. There would certainly be a chain reaction if they leaned towards a certain side. The consequences might be too dire for the federation if they chose the wrong side.

Li Yao couldn't help but feel lucky.

There were a lot of discussions as to whether or not such a risky, long-distance exploration was necessary.

It was lucky that he came here after all. He still had the chance to change everything.

On their trip, Ling Shoujing, the Appeasing Ambassador, and his daughter Ling Lanyin, the female Cultivator from the Purple Pole Sword Sect, both greeted the barbarian Cultivators.

Ling Shoujing was fine. Although he was a Class-Two official and in the beginning level of the Core Formation Stage, he was not very condescending to the barbarians born and raised in the rough land. Instead, he tried to be warm when he welcomed the newcomers.

Ling Lanyin, his daughter, on the other hand, was more cold and indifferent.

She was a great expert at the peak of the Core Formation Stage from a noble sect in the central plateaus after all. Most of the barbarian Cultivators knew the gap between them very well and were already satisfied to only have a few words with her.

What was the most important of all was that Ling Shoujing's army brought tremendous crystals and magical equipment besides the weapons. The barbarian Cultivators who were willing to serve the court were promised to return with full loads.

For a moment, the morale was quite high, and the team looked truly like an invincible army.

However, Li Yao's eyes were keen enough for him to discover Ling Lanyin's anxiety and worry from her twisting facial muscles and her moving pupils.

After he sent out Neltharion to eavesdrop on her conversation with her father, he learnt that a batch of strong reinforcements from the Purple Pole Sword Sect, led by a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, should've joined them days ago. But for some reason, they never showed up.

The village of the Fire Rude Clan, the largest town in the South Land of Sorcerers and the destination of the great army, however, was right ahead of them.

Chapter 1358 - Master Black Moon

The woods in the front suddenly turned sparse, replaced by a valley and a plateau caused by a zigzagging, red river.

Right next to the valley was a crimson town built against the mountain. The wall of the town was piled by the ‘Red Steel Rocks’, from which red air seemed to be popping up. It could block the snakes, insects, rats and ants, and yet it couldn’t make anyone feel uncomfortable. Looked at from a long distance, the town was enshrouded in clouds and mists and appeared rather splendid.

It was the stronghold of the Fire Rude Clan, the largest tribe in the Southland of Sorcerers. It was also the economical, political and military center in the Southland of Sorcerers which had been influenced by the Great Qian Dynasty most.

Right now, on the two sides of the Fire Rude Clan’s village, approximately ten kilometers away from each other, camps had been established, and flags were fluttering. Two variously-colored, bizarre-looking armies of barbarians were stationed on the two sides respectively.

They were the battle formations of the two brothers Huo Wuji and Huo Wujiu.

The two of them had fought for half a year, and yet neither of them could beat the other one although they were both exhausted. Even they fought any longer, the entire Fire Rude Clan would’ve collapsed and be gone forever.

Also, Master Black Moon, the most respected sorcerer in the Southland of Sorcerers, showed up to facilitate the peace talks. Therefore, the two of them finally reached a temporary truce, not entirely willingly.

But in secret, they were asking for reinforcements from their reliance, namely Great Qian and Ghost Qin, respectively, ready to have another fight when the reinforcements arrived.

At this moment, although the barbarian soldiers were not fighting, a handful of barbarian Cultivators were actually engaged in a fierce battle in the sky.

Colorful, venomous fog was spreading out everywhere, and hideous animals which should’ve been kept in natural reserves were occasionally revealing themselves in the smoke. It was quite a view.

They were all the barbarian Cultivators invited by Huo Wuji and Huo Wujiu.

Barbarian Cultivators, bound by their homeland, generally did not have much communication with the Cultivators from central plateaus. They were often deeply linked with each other. In competition for the poor population, resources and natural paradises in the Southland of Sorcerers, they often ended up being sworn enemies.

If a pair of sworn enemies happened to be invited by Huo Wuji and Huo Wujiu respectively and belonged to different sides, naturally, it was a great opportunity for them to settle the scores. Their battle was purely about personal grudge but not about the conflict between Great Qian and Ghost Qin.

When Li Yao arrived with the army, he happened to run into a barbarian Cultivator, who was covered in a gold snake skin and looked like a giant serpent, falling down from the sky, with blood spurting out, after half of his arm was cut off by his opponent.

Immediately, dozens of soldiers rushed out of Huo Wuji’s camp and carried him back to their came together. Somebody was even booing inside the camp.

In Huo Wujiu’s camp on the other end, however, everybody was drumming and shouting. The cheers could be heard dozens of kilometers away.

“Huh? Even ‘Gold Ring Third Man’ has failed? He has even lost an arm? Hehehehe. It’s time that his good days ended!”

Both Meng Duo and Gu Siduo were gloating, not feeling any indignity that they should have because the injured guy was on the same side of theirs.

“Brother Snake Swallower, have you noticed the black rock over there? That’s the ‘Black Rock Great Arena’. For any barbarian Cultivator who wants to rise to fame, a Black Rock Great Arena is always necessary!”

Meng Duo and Gu Siduo grimaced, “It’s just child’s play and not a real game today. Wait until three days later, when the Black Rock Great Arena will officially begin. If you win ten games in a row up above, we guarantee that every tribe in the Southland of Sorcerers will know your name, dear brother!”

Li Yao slightly frowned, somewhat amused.

The so-called ‘Black Rock Great Arena’ was in fact an abrupt black rock next to the Fire Rude Clan’s town. It was as smooth as a desk and about eighty meters long and wide.

It was said that, when the tribes in the Southland of Sorcerers had irresolvable conflicts, they would go to the Black Rock Great Arena and settle the conflicts under relative fair conditions with their fists, blades and venomous fog.

As to the disagreement about the leadership of the Fire Rude Clan between Huo Wuji and Huo Wujiu, it would be decided by a magnificent ‘Hundred Victories Great Arena’.

The so-called ‘Hundred Victories Great Arena’ referred to a game where both parties would send out hundreds of warriors and experts who would fight each other in turns. The winner stayed in the arena, and the losers were thrown out of the arena. As the game went on, the side which secured a hundred victories first would be deemed to be the final winner.

In case that one party invited a super expert, say, one at the peak of the Core Formation Stage or in the Nascent Soul Stage, and the guy crushed a hundred enemies in a row easily, the rules of the ‘Hundred Victories Great Arena’ dictated that any expert could only win ten competitions at most before he was forced to leave the field.

Even a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator could only help his side secure ten victories. The other ninety victories still counted on his comrades.

However, there was another rule to the Hundred Victories Great Arena, which was that one may lose but may not surrender. Abstention wasn’t an option, either. If any party refused to fight, it would be considered to fail.

It meant that, if one side truly sent out a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator as a champion, the other side would have to pay the lives of ten warriors even if they knew that they were no match for the enemy in order to ‘eliminate’ the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator.

It was rather a cruel rule.

However, it was also appropriate for the presentation of a top expert.

Therefore, what mattered most in the Hundred Victories Great Arena wasn’t personal combat ability but the overall personnel of the side, and whether or not dozens of fearless warriors could be deployed to eliminate the experts that were too invincible on the enemy’s side.

Meng Duo and Gu Siduo were flattering that Li Yao could secure ten victories because they thought that he was ignorant and were simply making fun of them.

But they didn’t know that Li Yao was secretly mocking them, too.

‘Vulture Li Yao’ had travelled in the sea of stars for decades. He’d had games of wisdom and bravery with the cunning experts such as Xiao Xuance, Bai Xinghe, Jin Tuyi and Lu Zui, and today, he had degraded himself to the point that he was playing in an arena against a bunch of barbarians?

Li Yao hated the long and dull arena games most. It might pass if the arena games were casual. But the national affairs and the lives of thousands of people were to be decided on the arena? What a joke!

It appears that I have to lower my estimation on the intelligence of the natives of the Ancient Sages Sector now.

It's understandable that the barbarians like arenas. But even a notable Appeasing Ambassador is involved? How absurd!

Li Yao didn't think much of it.

He made up his mind that he would not go to the arena and fight like a monkey. Whoever wanted to fight were welcome to try, but certainly not him. He would make other plans after he figured out the details of Master Black Moon.

Huo Wuji's side had just lost a great warrior. Its morale was at rock bottom, when the news that the emperor's army had arrived came over. Everybody was enlivened again.

Very soon, a few barbarians riding buffaloes as dark as ink rushed out. Hardly had the buffalo in the lead came to a still when a young man, in almost exactly the same appearance as the scholars in the central plateau except for his face that was slightly dark, quickly jumped off the saddle and said, "You have finally arrived, Lord Ling!"

The guy was, obviously, Huo Wuji, who was on the Great Qian Dynasty's side.

Ling Shoujing, the Appeasing Ambassador of the Fifth Prefecture of the Southland of Sorcerers, went to the front to greet him. The two of them had a long talk and cheered each other up.

Li Yao had no time for their jibber-jabber. He maximized his eyesight and observed the camps on the other side ten kilometers away carefully.

He discovered that a young man, who looked similar to Huo Wuji but wore the local attire, was riding an eccentric beast, which looked like a horse and a wolf and had a certain demeanor of dragons, on the hill. The guy was watching at his direction with a few other knights.

The few knights were all tall and strong. Their skin was slightly yellow, and their cheekbone protruded high. Gold rings large and small occupied their ears. Their faces were brimming with wrinkles resulting from cold wind. They looked rather strange and definitely weren’t the same as the southwest barbarians.

The were wearing crude and yet practical light armor made of beast hide, and they had a deep black bow on their back. Although the bows were not stringed, scent of blood was vaguely spreading out. Li Yao could clearly smell it even though he was kilometers away.

It must be Huo Wujiu, and the Ghost Qin soldiers who endorse him.

Li Yao observed with great interest.

The seven guys next to Huo Wujiu were the Cultivators of Ghost Qin surrounded by spiritual energy.

The Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Cultivator did not seem to know much tricks about concealing their level. Generally speaking, they were blatantly revealing their Cultivation. They could consume the natural spiritual energy faster, but their capability would be exposed easily.

It was also a common disease for the ancient Cultivators.

The seven Ghost Qin Cultivators were not strong. They were between the Refinement Stage and the Building Foundation Stage.

However, Li Yao sensed the intense aura of battlefield killing from them.

They were like well-trained soldiers who considered death homecoming. The air around them was entirely different from that of the unorganized Cultivators who never received military training.

There are only seven of them scattered on the hill, and yet they seem to forming an unstoppable battle formation that can crush a thousand enemies!

The Ghost Qin warriors from the Dark Cloud Prairie truly know what they are doing. No wonder they are on par with the Great Qian Dynasty!

Li Yao secretly complimented.

At this moment, Ling Shoujing and Huo Wuji had mostly finished their small talk. From the town of the Fire Rude Clan that was surrounded by fiery mist, a magnificent cloud of spiritual energy flew out. On the top of the cloud was a middle-aged man in black robe who had a square face and looked rather handsome.

“It’s Master Black Moon!”

Meng Duo and Gu Siduo, two barbarian Cultivators, were shrieking next to Li Yao.

Master Black Moon, in the Nascent Soul Stage, was the strongest sorcerer in the Southland of Sorcerers. He was worshipped by many uneducated barbarians as deities.

After he appeared, the soldiers and Cultivators in both Huo Wuji’s camp and Huo Wujiu’s kneeled down and paid their respect, uttering blurred, zealous roars.

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and thought quickly. As Master Spiritual Vulture’s senior brother, Master Black Moon was perhaps the greatest obstacle for his fake identity. Naturally, he needed to observe the guy carefully.

Master Black Moon slowly descended in front of the army. His eyes were as deep as an ocean, and there was not any expression on his giant, pale face.

He was an honorable Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. Even Ling Lanyin, the female Cultivator from the ‘Purple Pole Sword Sect’, had to crawl out of the wagon and meet him courteously.

Chapter 1359 - Hundred Victories Great Arena

“Ling Lanyin, of the Purple Pole Sword Sect, sends regards on behalf of my master Tian Qingzi. My master said that he benefited a lot from the discussion you and he had at the Colorful Glow Mountain twenty years ago. He often mentioned the meeting over the past twenty years and hoped that you could pay a visit to the Purple Pole Sword Sect one day, senior, so that everybody in our sect would have the chance to witness the demeanor of the experts in the Southland of Sorcerers!”

Ling Lanyin bowed to the ground in respect.

Master Black Moon smiled. His voice was warm and comfortable, utterly devoid of the southwest accent. “Please save the courtesy, my young friend Ling. You are the youngest swordsperson at the peak of the Core Formation Stage in the hundreds of years of history of the Purple Pole Sword Sect. I’ve heard your name a lot although I live in such a remote area!

“Sword is the king of all weapons, and the Purple Pole Sword Sect is the quintessence of the sword arts in the sword. I’ve been meaning to visit your sect for a long time. But I was always troubled by mundane affairs. Please do ask your master Tian Qingzi to forgive me!”

“I’m told that—”

He slightly lowered his voice and said, “Right now, all the experts are gathering in the north, hoping to hold the gala a thousand years ago again and have another great match that will decide the fate of the world. Although I'm a barbarian born and raised in the smoky land of the south, I am quite interested in appreciating the magnificence of the greatest heroes of the world. But it's a pity that I'm a stranger to the central plateaus, and I'm afraid that I'll have to ask your sect to help introduce me to them!"

There was deeper meaning between the lines. The guy seemed to be showing intention of standing on the Great Qian Dynasty's side and even allying with the Purple Pole Sword Sect.

Overjoyed, Ling Lanyin bowed again. She was about to speak, when Master Black Moon shook his hand in a smile and turned to Ling Shoujing. "Lord Ling."

Although Ling Shoujing was merely in the Core Formation Stage, he was a Class-Two official of the court, and he was an envoy of the emperor on this trip instead of a simple Cultivator.

Therefore, Ling Shoujing must wait for Master Black Moon to greet him first before he greeted back.

"Lord Ling, the situation is very clear now."

Master Black Wind pointed at the barbarians on the two sides of the Fire Rude Clan's town, who were at loggerheads with each other, and said in a bitter smile, "Thirty years ago, I witnessed the prosperity of the Great Qian Dynasty and the magnificence of the Cultivators in the central plateaus when I travelled in the world. The Southland of Sorcerers is remote, unpopulated and unintelligent. It is just a grain of dust faced with the Great Qian Dynasty and will be gone forever after a sneeze.

“For me, I would never dare to go against the Great Qian Dynasty. I’m willing to protect the southwest land for the Great Qian Dynasty forever.

“However, although the Great Qian Dynasty is powerful, the Ghost Qin isn’t weak, either. Over the past years, Cultivators from the Dark Cloud Prairies have been showing up in the Southland of Sorcerers, coercing our tribes with both carrots and sticks. Some of the tribes turned to the Ghost Qin’s side because of corruption and compulsion. There wasn’t much I could do!

“I went to demand those tribes several times. But I was rendered speechless by a single reason!

“They said that they were the Great Qian Dynasty’s loyal subject’s too, and they did not want to join the Ghost Qin’s side. But if they did not, the Ghost Qin soldiers would make their blood spill. The emperor’s army was too far away after all. They could not wait and watch their tribe to be butchered, right?

“Although I’m in the Nascent Soul Stage, I’m all by myself. How can I expect to protect the hundred tribes in the Southland of Sorcerers when the Ghost Qin Cultivators swarmed in blatantly?

“That is how everything comes to this far today. I can only persuade Huo Wuji and Huo Wujiu to reach a truce for now until the emperor’s army arrives to serve justice. I feel rather ashamed!

“All in all, please rest assured, Lord Ling, most of the hundred tribes here still root for the court. They are merely responding courteously but without sincerity because of the Ghost Qin’s intimidation.

"As long as we suppress the Ghost Qin Cultivators in the Black Rock Great Arena three days later, all the tribes in the Southland of Sorcerers will certainly be on the court's side unwaveringly!"

Master Black Moon was a tough person, too. He was speaking the truth.

After all, the Southland of Sorcerers was just a tiny egg, and Great Qian and Ghost Qin were two rocks too hard for them. So, they had to ask the two hard rocks to decide which one was harder first.

As if to prove Master Black Moon's words, hardly had he finished his sentence when dozens of barbarian Cultivators and three Ghost Qin knights dashed out of Huo Wujiu's camp on the opposite side. They rushed towards the Appeasing Ambassador's army in an arrowhead, only to stop beyond the archers' reach. They demonstrated and roared, pouring profanities on the court.

Master Black Moon looked at Ling Shoujing helplessly, "Although I have some fame in the Southland of Sorcerers, it's not like I can kill everybody who is too defiant to listen to me, right?"

His face cold, Ling Shoujing turned around and looked at the 'Black Tiger Iron Guards', his private troop, before he said solemnly, "Fang Dazhong, Zuo Qianjun, go and cut a few heads now!"

The private troop was not made of servants or slaves but the tough, fearless warriors who were raised since childhood and who only knew the Ling family but not the emperor.

After he called, a few gloomy vanguards walked out of the crowd, their bloodstained sabers roaring inside the sheaths hungrily.

Li Yao was watching the good show in the crowd in the beginning. But the seasoned barbarian Cultivators were all clamoring and encouraging the ‘stupid and young’ guys including himself to have a fight first.

It appeared that many barbarian Cultivators had deep contradiction with the barbarian Cultivators who were coming at them. They were hoping to kill their enemy without taking action themselves.

Li Yao secretly cursed and almost went to kick Meng Duo and Gu Siduo.

He was of a mind to stay in the back. But he had established his simpleminded image since the moment he showed up in the Head Cutting Cliff.

Seeing that most of the barbarian Cultivators were grimacing at him, and Ling Shoujing, Ling Lanyin, Master Black Moon and Huo Wuji were looking at him, too, he could only grit his teeth and charged forward together with dozens of barbarian Cultivators who were desperate to make contributions as well as a team of Black Tiger Black Guards.

Two messy, bizarre-looking and utterly-unorganized troops crashed into each other.

Li Yao intentionally went to three Ghost Qin knights.

Now that he was already here, he would certainly take the opportunity to test how good the Ghost Qin soldiers were.

“Shua!”

Three fast sabers turned into streaks of brilliance almost five meters long, brushing past his head and cutting off a few strands of his hair.

The sabers of Ghost Qin were not bad. At the very least, they helped the soldiers to condense their spiritual energy when it was already five meters away from their body. They were rather finely-made ancient magical equipment.

What amazed Li Yao even more were the demon beasts they rode, known as ‘Dragon Wolves’.

Such a demon beast was a combination of the velocity of horses, the brutality of hungry wolves, and a fraction of the intimidation of dragons. They were not scared when they were faced with the giant python below Li Yao and simply opened their bloody mouths to bite its head.

A rather advanced demon beast. It is almost sort of a biochemical beast. Did the Ghost Qin people develop it on their own, or did they receive the heritage on biochemistry from the primeval era?

Li Yao evaded the attack of another saber. The giant python shook its head hard and knocked a knight off his mount. Li Yao took the chance to turn around and run away.

“Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!”

A few sharp arrows, mixed with spiritual energy and as powerful as crystal bullets, brushed past him and exploded on his left and his right, covering him in dust.

All the barbarian Cultivators were laughing.

Ling Shoujing, Ling Lanyin, Huo Wuji and Master Black Moon, however, suddenly beamed with interested.

“The guy is not half bad.”

Ling Shoujing spoke to Master Black Moon.

“Indeed he isn’t.”

Master Black Moon smiled. There was no telling what was on his mind.

Soon, screams echoed on the battlefield as somebody was finally killed.

Both parties cut off a few heads from the enemy’s side. They slowly disengaged.

Because the three Ghost Qin knights wasted too much time on Li Yao, the Black Tiger Iron Guards were able to go on a killing spree. Although the three knights were not killed, they each killed a few hostile barbarian Cultivators and returned with full loads. Immediately, everybody was cheering for them.

“Tomorrow, we will hold a ceremony and official degree you as the Chieftain of the South Land of the Great Qian Dynasty. You will be the guardian of the southwest of the Great Qian Dynasty forever!”

Ling Shoujing spoke to Huo Wuji. Before Huo Wuji expressed his gratitude, his sharp eyes darted towards the enemy’s camp. Mixed with spiritual energy, his voice was echoing in the ten square kilometers nearby. “The emperor’s army has arrived. Powerful reinforcements are on their way, too. In the Hundred Victories Great Arena three days later, all the vermin who disobey His Majesty shall be blown into smithereens!”

For a moment, everybody in Huo Wuji's camp was shouting in joy, while Huo Wujiu's camp was dead silent.

Master Black Moon narrowed his eyes and observed Ling Shoujing and his army in silence. There was no telling what he was thinking of.

Li Yao, on the other hand, squatted not far away, his face still in dust. He observed the guy coldly and felt that he smelled the scent of schemes.

The night fell.

Outside of the Fire Rude Clan's town, Ling Shoujing's army had established continuous camps.

The Black Tiger Iron Guards and the local barbarians enjoyed Huo Wuji's feast near the furious bonfire, which was partly a welcome to the emperor's army and partly a celebration for the brave warriors who fought the battle during the day.

After everybody had enough dishes and wine, and their face was boiling together with their blood, some of the muscular guards carried dozens of heavy wooden boxes and smashed the locks on them with axes, before they kicked the boxes over. Gold, jewelry, crystals, and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures were all flowing out of boxes.

The colorful and intriguing treasures made almost all the barbarian Cultivators' hearts stop beating.

“Everybody here is a loyal subject of the Great Qian Dynasty. So I'll cut the useless crap and get to the point!”

After drinking a few cups of hard liquor he brought from his home, Ling Shoujing was entirely different from the day. He was filled with so much aura of a battlefield general that he almost looked like a tiger which stood on its feet.

He declared solemnly, “Now that we have carried the crystals, the magical equipment, and the marvelous pills all the long way to the Southland of Sorcerers, we never intend to bring them back!

“Three hundred persons will participate in the Hundred Victories Great Arena three days later. The Black Tiger Iron Guards will make a hundred candidates. The other two hundred candidates, however, will be selected from you!

“We’ll begin picking two hundred strongest warriors from you tomorrow. All the treasures in front of you will be divided evenly by the two hundred warriors!

“This is just the rewards before the battle!

“If you have distinguished performance during the Hundred Victories Great Arena, the rewards will be multiple times more!

“Although you are born and raised in the smoky southland, you are all the irreplaceable warriors of the Great Qian Dynasty. As long as you remain loyal to the Great Qian Dynasty, you will never be wronged!”

Chapter 1360 - That Explains A Lot!

The few boxes of crystals, magical equipment and marvelous weapons were piled up like a glittering hill. Illuminated by the torches as thick as arms, they were shining like diamonds.

Such a hill of treasures would be divided evenly by two hundred barbarian Cultivators, who would be offered even higher rewards if they won a few competitions in the Hundred Victories Great Arena!

Li Yao already heard a lot of his fellows drooling.

Although they were adept at hiding what was on their mind, and they had been dominators of this rough land, they had never heard of, much less seen, most of the glamorous treasures and pure crystals from the central plateaus.

Li Yao observed coldly. Even Meng Duo and Gu Siduo, the two old foxes, were rolling their eyes and breathing heavily. Red stripes were crawling from their necks to their ears. It was obvious that they had been hooked by the treasures.

If there weren’t the solemn, strong Black Tiger Iron Guards holding their weapons in front of the hill of treasures, and Ling Lanyin, the female Cultivator, weren’t staring at them coldly in their back, Li Yao estimated that many barbarian Cultivators would have lunged at the treasures.

In the moment, all the barbarian Cultivators were bashing their chests, declaring that they were willing to fight. Their pets, namely the scorpions, snakes and other eccentric beasts, were also shrieking so loudly that even Huo Wujiu's camp ten kilometers away might catch the sound.

Many barbarian Cultivators were asking to join the two hundred warriors right now.

Ling Shoujing, however, laughed and gestured everyone to calm down. "I'm new to the place, and I'm not familiar with the expertise of the southwest heroes yet. It will be unfair if I choose anyone right now!

"In the next three days starting from tomorrow, we will have a test in the camp. Everybody will show their techniques in public. So, it will be obvious who are qualified to go and who are not. What do you think, everybody?

"Come on. Today is all about partying but not fighting. Serve the 'Empyrean Drunk Wine' that we've brought from the capital. This is a gift from His Majesty. Let's not return until we are drunk!"

While he was talking, the Black Tiger Iron Guards carried buckets of fragrant, delicious wine.

When it was poured into the unique cups in the Southland of Sorcerers, which were made of horns, the fluids were as thick as honey.

When a bucket of wine was almost emptied, the last bit of the wine would hang on the wall of the bucket and flow all the time, as if the wine would never be poured up. All the barbarians' eyes were almost jumping out of their face, and they were about to jump into the buckets for a shower.

In the next moment, everybody roared and drank crazily like whales absorbing water.

Soon, all of them were wasted and snoring.

Li Yao devoured plenty of ‘Empyrean Drink Wine’, too.

However, a slight ominous feeling inside his head made him analyze the elements of the wine.

As I expected, there are intense narcotic drugs inside the wine. Otherwise, the barbarian Cultivators wouldn’t have been drunk so quickly.

However, although the narcotic drugs are quite effective, they are in fact very mild and will cause no harm to the body. They will wake up normally tomorrow morning.

Ling Shoujing, the Appeasing Ambassador of the Fifth Prefecture of the Southland of Sorcerers, is not a simple guy!

Li Yao did not sense any maliciousness from Ling Shoujing.

Moreover, all the barbarian Cultivators were on the court’s side. Unless Ling Shoujing was planning to defect and join the Ghost Qin’s side, it was highly unlikely that he would harm those barbarian Cultivators.

Therefore, Li Yao simply pretended that he was sound drunk, too, and collapsed to the ground like a heap of mud, while he observed what Ling Shoujing was going to do next.

The feast lasted more than five hours, and there was still no sign of stopping.

Li Yao couldn’t help but notice that, after the barbarian Cultivators were drunk, many ordinary barbarian soldiers under Huo Wuji’s command joined the feast and continue drinking, partying and clamoring in place of the barbarian Cultivators.

Many barbarian Cultivators, including himself, were carried into a seemingly plain tent deep inside the military camps by the Black Tiger Iron Guards.

Somebody opened his mouth and fed some sour, smelly and almost undrinkable liquids into it.

Li Yao absorbed part of the liquid with his tongue and analyzed, only to discover that they were drugs to stimulate the nerves and wake up people from anesthesia.

Therefore, he coughed and ‘woke up’, before he looked around in confusion.

The joyful ambience of a feast was entirely gone. He found himself in a cold tent filled with the stink of blood.

Every burning torch around the tent were emitting cold, bluish brilliance.

Under the bluish light, everyone’s face was as pale as that of a corpse.

Ling Shoujing, who was friendly if not riotous a moment ago, was now wearing a gold armor, with two enormous hammers crossed on his back. He sat at the center of the tent magnificently and gazed at them without any expression as if he were a statue made of steel.

He was surrounded by almost thirty Black Tiger Iron Guards. They were all the vanguards or captains in the army. Their sabers had all been unsheathed, and the aura of their weapons were glittering.

They did not cover their spiritual energy at all, which was spreading out and blowing the tent made of thick bull hide like a balloon.

Li Yao turned around and noticed another seventy or so barbarian Cultivators who also just woke up from a hangover in confusion. They were blinking their eyes, not having the slightest clue what was going on.

Some of the quick-minded barbarian Cultivators thought that the emperor’s army was going to attack them and exclaimed in shock. Yet, they did not know how to react and simply shuddered in fear.

Although they had the advantage in number, they were drafted from different villages and had not been familiar with each other. Some of them even had minor conflicts before. They were just a bunch of mobs that did not stand in solidary like the emperor’s army.

“Please don’t be anxious, everybody. I mean you no harm. I have to invite you for a conversation in such a way because there are too many spies outside!”

Ling Shoujing’s tone was entirely different from his tone during the feast. It was filled with the graveness and toughness of an iron saber. He seemed even more determined than during the day.

He coughed slightly. Several Black Tiger Iron Guards brought the hill of treasures outside back into the tent again.

Right now, the crystals, blades and magical equipment were all mixed up, making them even more dazzling than before.

“Right now, there are altogether sixty-eight heroes from the Southland of Sorcerers in my tent, and you will split the treasures!”

Ling Shoujing’s words were such a shock that all the barbarian Cultivators who were still in confusion jumped to their feet.

Everybody found it hard to believe their eyes. They were so greedy that their tongues were often dangling.

Didn’t he just say that a three-day test would be held and only those who proved themselves to be the strongest were entitled to 1/200 of the treasures?

Although the barbarian Cultivators were not good at arithmetic, they did know that the personal gains would be much higher if it were sixty-eight people who split the treasures instead of two hundred!

Li Yao was the only one who vaguely guessed Ling Shoujing’s plan. He couldn’t help but cheer for the Appeasing Ambassador’s wisdom and resolution.

The sixty-eight barbarian Cultivators next to Li Yao were not the most experienced or the strongest ones, but the most dogged and the most loyal ones from the most remote villages.

Also, the Cultivators who volunteered to join the battle during the day, no matter what their performance was, had been summoned here, too, even if they failed.

On the other side, none of the famous barbarian Cultivators, whose capabilities were well acknowledged, as long as they were wavering and not meaning to make actual contributions, such as ‘Meng Duo’ and ‘Gu Siduo’, showed up here!

In such a case, wasn’t it obvious what Ling Shoujing was up to?

The Black Tiger Iron Guards were quite fast to divide the crystals, blades and magical equipment into two hundred fractions.

Then, they carried out almost twenty bronze boxes and smashed them.

Inside the first box was coldly-shining sabers and flying swords, which were brimming with spiritual energy and already roaring while they were still inside the box.

Those weapons were even more advanced that those presented to the public just now!

The second box contained iron balls the size of fists which were covered in straw, cotton and silk. Their surface was written with complicated spiritual stripes, too, that congregated into the words ‘Taiyi Heart Stabbing Grenades’.

The next few boxes included finely-made armors embedded with rune arrays and night cloaks which could hide one’s traces.

The last box, however, was packed with gold, glittering scrolls.

Several Black Tiger Iron Guards opened the scrolls and invited the barbarian Cultivators to read them.

Many barbarian Cultivators were illiterate. They learnt only after other people’s interpretation that the scrolls were the Great Qian Dynasty’s royal degrees of appointment.

What were listed on the scrolls were the most important and promising posts in the Southland of Sorcerers. The seal of the Appeasing Ambassador of the Fifth Prefecture of the Southland of Sorcerers had been stamped on them, too. But the column of name was still empty.

“The sabers and flying swords are of different models. You can choose whatever blades you find suitable for you. Everybody will be given four Taiyi Heart Stabbing Grenades, one Green Cloud Spiritual Armor, and one Night Stalker Cloak. As for the names on the royal degrees…”

Ling Shoujing smiled, with intense killing intent beaming out of his face, “They will depend on your performance later!”

The barbarian Cultivators looked at each other in bewilderment.

With such a weird vibe and such bountiful rewards, even the most inert barbarians should’ve sensed something wrong.

One of the barbarian Cultivators, who was rather fat and had a pair of huge ears, emboldened himself to ask, “If I may ask your lordship… What is going to be our performance later?”

Ling Shoujing sneered and declared, one word after another, “Two hours later, before dawn, we are going to assault the enemy’s camps and kill Huo Wujiu as well as his Ghost Qin accomplices! In the battle during the day, you have all distinguished yourselves and proved your loyalty to the court. I am very satisfied!

“You are the real heroes in the Southland of Sorcerers. Is there any need to hold another test?

“Before our night assault, we have also prepared such fine gears for all of you. They will certainly be a great help. I hope that you will try your best and do not disappoint me, the court, and His Majesty!”

Chapter 1361 - Night Assault!

His words swept across all the barbarian Cultivators’ heart like a hurricane.

Their greed for the treasures and excitement about the official posts entirely vanished. All the barbarian Cultivators were dumbfounded, as if they had been struck by lightning.

Attack Huo Wujiu at night!

Kill all of the Ghost Qin people!

That—that must be a joke!

Li Yao, however, was applauding in his heart.

So, that was the real plan!

Ling Shoujing had intentionally declared in public during the day that he would decree Huo Wuji the ‘Chieftain of the South Land’ on behalf of the emperor tomorrow.

Then, he threw a party at night, where everybody enjoyed themselves, and announced, as if it were real, that a test would be held in the next three days to select qualified warriors.

Everything that he did was a trick to fool the enemy into thinking that he truly meant to fight the Ghost Qin people in the Hundred Victories Great Arena.

But in fact, he had never intended to play a game in any arena since the very beginning.

The Appeasing Ambassador of the Fifth Prefecture of the South Land of Sorcerers had one and only one idea, which was to execute the barbarians and the hostile soldiers who defied the emperor’s will and settle everything cleanly once and for all!

Li Yao could feel the determination and domination of the central dynasty from Ling Shoujing’s decision.

That was the right thing to do. How could an affair of national importance be decided in the arena? And not just one game in the arena but more than a hundred in a row? Only psychos would do such a thing!

Li Yao’s estimation on the intelligence of the leadership of the Ancient Sages Sector was more or less improved.

The real barbarian Cultivators, however, were thinking otherwise. Many of them grew anxious after a brief silence.

“Well—”

“For hundreds of years, it has been a tradition in the South Land of Sorcerers to settle scores through the Hundred Victories Great Arena. It might pass if neither party agreed to resolve their conflict through the Hundred Victories Great Arena, but now that the agreement has been made, it does not seem appropriate to assault before the game starts, does it?”

“We are going to be punished by the ghosts who were killed on the Hundred Victories Great Arena!”

“Master Black Moon is the host of the Hundred Victories Great Arena this time. The two brothers of the Huo family only reached a truce for his sake. How do we explain it to Master Black Moon if we launch a reckless assault?”

Everybody’s opinion differed, but the general idea was that they were not afraid of the tough soldiers from Ghost Qin but the wrath of Master Black Moon.

The peace negotiation was conducted because of Master Black Moon’s facilitation. If the Great Qian Dynasty was going to break the truce and assault the other side, how would Master Black Moon feel?

The wrath of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was never to be underestimated. Maybe, Ling Shoujing would be able to resist it with his identity as the emperor’s envoy of the Great Qian Dynasty. However, the barbarian Cultivators locally born and raised could never bear the consequences of slapping Master Black Moon’s face blatantly like that.

Ling Shoujing smiled confidently and clapped his hands. Two people walked into the tent from the back.

The first guy was Huo Wuji, the leader of barbarians who was close to the Great Qian Dynasty.

The second guy, however, turned out to be Master Black Moon—the greatest expert in the South Land of Sorcerers, the most respected sorcerer in the hundred tribes, the middleman of the negotiation, and the host of the Hundred Victories Great Arena!

For a moment, there was nothing but devastating gasps inside the tent.

Thankfully, the tent was made of nine layers of bull hide, and rune arrays to block waves were sewn in between every two layers. Therefore, however noisy it was inside the tent, nobody would hear anything outside.

“I was terribly deceived by Huo Wujiu!”

Master Black Moon’s pale, big face that looked like a full moon was packed with hatred that did not exist during the day. He put it straightforwardly. “Huo Wujiu told me that Huo Wuji and assassins from the Great Qian Dynasty murdered the leader of the Fire Rude Clan, that he was merely avenging his father. In my carelessness, I believed his bullsh*t and promised him that the issue would be settled in the Hundred Victories Great Arena under my name!

“However, I have discovered a lot of evidence that suggests it was the ruthless, despicable dog who killed his own father!

“Not only did he kill his own father, he had also betrayed the court, which has always given special privileges to the South Land of Sorcerers. He was planning to involve the entire South Land of Sorcerers in the flames of war! Such a man must’ve been possessed by the evil god. His qualification to participate in the Hundred Victories Great Arena should be deprived!

“My identity is very special. Many tribes and villages that follow Huo Wuji are protected by me, too. Although they have joined Ghost Qin’s side, I still can’t bear to attack them in person.

“All in all, from this moment on to the morning, everything that will happen will be left aside. I will not question anyone for anything they do!”

Master Black Moon glanced at everyone coldly after saying that, as if he were still angry. He then exited from the back of the tent. Very soon, his aura had entirely disappeared.

It was another old and cunning fox, who was hoping to watch the two tigers fight while doing nothing.

They could decide who the final winner was either through the arena or through assaults before the games. Everything was fine as long as his interests were not harmed.

But his promise overjoyed all the barbarian Cultivators.

What Ling Shoujing said next made their blood boil even harder. They were all roaring in excitement.

“In the battle to come, one hostile barbarian Cultivator’s head will be rewarded with fifty kilograms of gold and five kilograms of crystals, and one Ghost Qin Cultivator’s head will be rewarded with a hundred and fifty kilograms of gold and fifteen kilograms of crystals! Whoever kills Huo Wujiu or the leader of the Ghost Qin soldiers will be rewarded with fifty kilograms of crystals!”

Li Yao was aware that the refinement and purification procedures in the Ancient Sages Sector were not advanced yet. Most of the crystals they used were the raw minerals that contained tremendous impurities.

Even so, it was still quite shocking for crystals, which were often measured in ‘grams’, to now be presented in loads of dozens of kilograms.

When the reward was good enough, there would certainly be someone brave enough. Also, Ling Shoujing had thoroughly planned beforehand. Even Master Black Moon was vaguely on their side.

Therefore, the barbarian Cultivators all felt that the assault would be a sure success.

At that moment, the morale was higher than ever.

The sixty-eight barbarian Cultivators that Ling Shoujing selected were the most simpleminded ones of all in the first place. After all the promises and temptations, they had almost turned into crazy, ravenous tigers.

But Ling Shoujing felt that it was not good enough yet. He had buckets of Empyrean Drunk Wine delivered again.

This time, Li Yao tasted a certain exhilarant in the wine.

It was similar to ‘Incendiary’, which Fengyu Zhong’s pirate gang liked to inject to the space pirates before a battle. Such drugs could stimulate the nerve endings, accelerate the secretion of adrenaline, and trigger the potentials of one’s soul.

After drinking the delicious wine that was mixed with excitants, the barbarian Cultivators all had bloodshot eyes and forgot all their concerns. They looked like hungry ghosts that had come back to life.

An hour later, it was the darkest moment before dawn and also the time when people were sleeping most tightly.

Huo Wuji’s camp was already filled with snores, but some of the ‘energetic’ barbarian Cultivators were still drinking, singing, and laughing as if they were still enjoying the party.

A team of Cultivators, who had covered their spiritual energy and their body with the Night Stalker Cloaks, however, left the camp quietly and lunged at the opponent’s camp after bypassing the Fire Rude Clan’s town.

There was nothing but silence in Huo Wujiu's camp, too.

Now that the deal had been made that everything would be settled through the Hundred Victories Great Arena three days later, the barbarian and Ghost Qin Cultivators on Huo Wujiu's side were naturally taking a good rest to prepare themselves.

There were only a few torches around the camp. Under the firefly-like light, it could be seen that several tough-looking Ghost Qin Cultivators were still awake.

However, they were from the northern prairies, which were accompanied by freezing wind all year around, and they were highly unused to the hot, damp, smoky forests of the southland. Tortured by the mosquitoes and bugs, they were all drowsy, and their jaws would drop to the ground now and then.

The night assault was like a crocodile enshrouded in mud when it crept out of the swamp without a sound toward the prey under the cover of darkness.

When it was a hundred meters away from Huo Wujiu's camp, the 'crocodile' split into five smaller, agiler vipers.

To this moment, Huo Wujiu's camp was still peaceful and quiet, as if they never dreamt that the emperor's army would ambush them in disregard of the deal.

"Ahhhh!"

Suddenly, a miserable scream tore apart the quiet night sky and opened the curtain on the brutal assault.

Boom! Boom, boom, boom!

The Taiyi Heart Stabbing Grenades were exploding in Huo Wujiu’s camp nonstop, blowing many tents as well as the soldiers inside into the sky.

Ling Shoujing, with the experts of the Black Tiger Iron Guards, went on a rampage inside Huo Wujiu’s camp, setting fire, killing, and trampling.

Ling Lanyin, the female Cultivator, was rushing forward unstoppably on her own.

The barbarian Cultivators, befuddled by the high reward, were like unchained tigers. They were a hundred times more ferocious than during the day.

While the three lanes pushed forward, many barbarian soldiers were killed when they were still sound asleep, and the entire camp was on fire. It was on the brink of destruction.

Ling Shoujing, Ling Lanyin, and the barbarian Cultivators met again at the center of the camp without any trouble like three arrowheads.

The battle had progressed so well that it almost felt creepy.

To this moment, most of the victims that they had killed were ordinary soldiers and generals. They had not met a single barbarian Cultivator under Huo Wujiu’s command.

Ling Shoujing and Ling Lanyin vaguely smelt the scent of schemes.

However, the barbarian Cultivators on their side were too bloodthirsty to care about that.

“Huo Wujiu’s main tent is right ahead. Let’s go!”

Dozens of barbarian Cultivators roared and lunged into the most glamorous tent of all.

However, it was not the sound of blades colliding as they expected which echoed but a huge explosion.

While smoke was popping up, the entire tent fell into a giant pit, in which green flames were dancing into many ghost hands, entangling the barbarian Cultivators and burning them alive!

Wu—Wu—Wu—Wu!

The wolf bone horn was blown in the forests of the South Land of Sorcerers, in the same breathtaking and blood-freezing way as it was blown on the Dark Cloud Prairies in the north.

Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa!

Fireworks were shot to the sky like cannonballs, glowing and illuminating the land as if it were daylight.

The Black Tiger Iron Guards that Ling Shoujing had brought with him and the female Cultivator Ling Lanyin had nowhere to hide at all under the pale brilliance.

Lights and shadows were shaking in the obscure forests around. Horses and wolves were roaring. The Ghost Qin Knights whose number they could not predict had surrounded them!

Chapter 1362 - Lord of Behemothic Eagle!

“We’ve been tricked!”

Ling Shoujing and Ling Lanyin looked at each other in bewilderment. With everything coming this far, it was obvious that Ghost Qin’s people were prepared for their assault. This was clearly a trap!

“Go southwest!”

Ling Shoujing was an experienced general both adept at planning and fighting. He saw through the weak part of the opponent’s siege and made the decision quickly. With the cover of his daughter’s flying swords, he led the night assault team southwest!

However, when they were about to leap out of Huo Wujiu’s camp, intimidating howls echoed from the woods in the southwest. Then, dozens of round balls, spurting green sparks, were thrown toward them!

“Watch out!”

Ling Shoujing and Ling Lanyin had thought that it was magical equipment such as grenades that the enemy tossed at them. They hurried to activate their spiritual shield. The light flowed out, and all the Black Tiger Iron Guards were covered.

The items were blown away by the spiritual shield and rolled on the ground, but they did not explode because they turned out to be grimacing heads.

The mystic rays around the heads seemed to boast a certain preservation technique. Although the wounds below the heads were dry, indicating that they had been chopped off a while ago, they seemed to have just been taken away from the necks. The faces were still as vivid as when they had been alive. Even the devastation inside the eyes could clearly be seen.

Although they were not grenades, they had stirred the mind of the warriors of the Great Qian Dynasty better than a hundred grenades would have.

“Senior brother!” Greatly disturbed, Ling Lanyin, the female Cultivator, could not help exclaiming.

Who else could the head in front, which was illuminated by the ghostly fire around it clearly, belong to if not her senior brother, ‘Thunderous Straight Swordsman’ Lou Chongxiao, who was the best expert in the younger generation of the Purple Pole Sword Sect and had already advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage?

The Black Tiger Iron Guards of the Ling family were nominally responsible for the mission to the Southland of Sorcerers, but in fact, the mission was backed by the Purple Pole Sword Sect.

The Purple Pole Sword Sect had sent out Ling Lanyin, a sword Cultivator at the peak of the Core Formation Stage, to join her father’s army on the surface.

In secret, the young expert ‘Thunderous Straight Swordsman’ Lou Chongxiao, as well as a hundred elites of the Purple Pole Sword Sect, had set up ambushes next to the

Sorcerers’ River, ready to assassinate the experts of the Ghost Qin’s reinforcements when they were unprepared.

If everything had gone well, Lou Chongxiao should have joined Ling Lanyin a couple of days ago with the heads of the enemies before they worked together to clean up all the Ghost Qin survivors and the barbarians who defied the Great Qian Dynasty in the woods.

However, Ling Lanyin had lost contact with Lou Chongxiao following their last correspondence half a month ago. She had never expected that she would meet her senior brother in such a way!

‘Thunderous Straight Swordsman’ Lou Chongxiao, one of the youngest Cultivators in the Nascent Soul Stage, bulged his unfocused eyes and stared at Ling Lanyin helplessly against the spiritual shield.

His eyes that were almost dry were filled with shock, fear, devastation, and desperation!

They were exactly what Ling Lanyin was feeling at that moment.

Somebody laughed from where the heads had been tossed.

A Dragon Wolf with a body size larger than a rhino, surrounded by black spiritual energy, slowly paced out, leaving footprints of black fire behind.

On the back of the Dragon Wolf was a giant more than two meters tall whose eyes looked like two bells.

For most of the giants more than two meters tall, if they happened to be heavy, they would easily give the feeling that they were unintelligent.

This guy, however, had a square face and a pair of broad eyes that were as sharp as lightning and filled with the immeasurability of a deep ocean.

His face was utterly devoid of the features of barbarians. Even his hairstyle was the fashion of the central plateaus. Had it not been for the ten or so gold rings hanging on his ears, he would have made a standard warrior of the Great Qian Dynasty.

His arrival made Ling Shoujing and Ling Lanyin's hearts fall into an icy hole thousands of meters deep where nobody could pick them up.

"Han Yuantai—the regent Han Baling's brother, the leader of the Behemothic Eagle Unit, and the renowned expert of the Cultivators from the Dark Cloud Prairies—has come in person!"

Ghost Qin had a different system from the Great Qian Dynasty.

In the Great Qian Dynasty, Cultivators lived, trained, and got engaged in activities under the fundamental communities as 'sects'. Except for the few unaffiliated Cultivators, almost all the Cultivators belonged to a certain sect.

Even the officials in the court were restrained by their respective sects, too, and had to bear the interests of their sect in mind. Without the support of a sect, no politician or businessperson would be able to get things their way.

There had been some scattered sects on the Dark Cloud Prairies in the beginning. However, after Han Baling's unstoppable rise, he had reformed the system by annihilating the few sects and grouping all the Cultivators in Ghost Qin into eight units.

As a result, all the Cultivators on the Dark Cloud Prairies were drafted into an iron army. There were no more sects or free, unaffiliated Cultivators. The only people that existed were the bloodthirsty warriors who traded military credits for training resources!

The Cultivators on the Dark Cloud Prairies were classified into eight units. Han Yuantai became the leader of the ‘Behemothic Eagle Unit’ as one of the eight most powerful persons only second to Han Baling not based on his bloodline but because of his wisdom and his accomplishments!

He had already been a famous expert in the Nascent Soul Stage decades ago. Right now, he was at least above the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage. His hands were stained with the blood of the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty, and he was one of the greatest headaches for Great Qian!

Ling Shoujing had never expected that such a renowned noble of Ghost Qin would arrive in person to settle the trouble in the Southland of Sorcerers. No wonder even ‘Thunderous Straight Swordsman’ Lou Chongxiao was no match for him!

Ghost Qin has attached such importance to the Southland of Sorcerers that the Lord of the Behemothic Eagle Unit has come here at risk in person!

Ling Shoujing’s face was pale, his former calmness nowhere to be seen. Even his hands were shivering uncontrollably.

He knew that he had failed the moment Han Yuantai showed up.

Moreover, who else could the smiling guy with a disgustingly big face that showed up together with Han Yuantai be if not Master Black Moon, who had been assuring him in the tent a moment ago?

Master Black Moon, the top expert in the Southland of Sorcerers, had long joined Ghost Qin's side. Everything had been their scheme to concentrate the elites of the Great Qian Dynasty and eliminate them once and for all!

His heart in great pain, Ling Shoujing could not have regretted more that he launched the reckless night assault in his eagerness for victory!

However, it was not exactly his fault. Although Master Black Moon was a barbarian Cultivator, he was an avid embracer of the Great Qian Dynasty's culture.

Over the past few decades, he had travelled in the central plateaus a lot and maintained quite a good relationship with most of the noble sects, including the Purple Pole Sword Sect, the Ling family's greatest reliance. Even though he had not visited the Purple Pole Sword Sect in person for more than ten years, he had asked someone to deliver the local specialties of the Southland of Sorcerers to the headquarters every year.

With all the troubles that the Great Qian Dynasty was mired in right now, could they complain about such an obedient vassal?

Therefore, although Master Black Moon was based in the Southland of Sorcerers, the major sects were not biased against him but considered him a member of the Great Qian Dynasty.

After the emperor’s army arrived, it was quite understandable for Ling Shoujing and Ling Lanyin that Master Black Moon could not stand on the Great Qian Dynasty’s side openly because of the formidability of Ghost Qin.

Therefore, when the two parties got engaged in secret, and Master Black Moon agreed to the night attack plan, the father and the daughter of the Ling family did not grow suspicious at all.

It never occurred to them that the guy would betray them at the most crucial moment.

“Master Black Moon, you—”

Covering his chest, Ling Shoujing shook and almost fell off his horse.

He did not hate Han Yuantai very much. The two of them were enemies in the first place, and he had to admit his failure when his scheme was not as extraordinary as his enemy’s.

But he was seething with fury because of Master Black Moon’s betrayal!

Master Black Moon smiled and said casually, “When fate dictates a change of dynasties, one must choose whom to follow wisely. What is your anger about, my dear ambassador?”

“Why?” Ling Lanyin clenched her bluish flying sword and ground her silver teeth.

The female Cultivator was not angry at what had happened but shocked at Master Black Moon’s preference to the stinky barbarians on the Dark Cloud Prairies over the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty.

“Master Black Moon, the Great Qian Dynasty has never wronged you. We have never held any prejudice against you because you are from the southland or what you did in the past. We embraced you and regarded you as a fellow Cultivator. How—how could you do that?”

Ling Lanyin was so enraged that her head was dizzy. She almost did not know what she was talking about. “If you had made up your mind to defect, you and Han Yuantai would’ve been more than enough to kill us all. Why did you draw us to this place through such ploys? Is this your intentional humiliation?”

She was too young and had been training in the Purple Pole Sword Sect after all. Despite her high Cultivation, her mind was rather simple.

She did not understand Master Black Moon’s reason, but her father was smart enough to see through it instantly.

It was true that Master Black Moon and Han Yuantai, two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, could have killed the father and the daughter, both in the Core Formation Stage, and all the Black Tiger Iron Guards without much trouble.

However, the Southland of Sorcerers belonged to the Great Qian Dynasty on the surface after all. After hundreds of years, many tribes kept part of their loyalty to the Great Qian Dynasty out of habit.

If violent approaches had been adopted, the locals might have succumbed to them on the surface, but it would have been impossible for them to earn the people’s sincere trust.

The Southland of Sorcerers was a rainforest area with an extremely complicated terrain. Even the ordinary people were as deft and disobedient as monkeys.

When they crawled into the woods, it would be an awfully arduous task to find all of them without missing any, even for a Core Formation Stage Cultivator or a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator.

Therefore, Master Black Moon, Han Yuantai, and Huo Wujiu had set up the trap and deceived Ling Shoujing to break the sacred tradition of the ‘Hundred Victories Great Arena’ first through such a shameless plan as a ‘night assault’.

If the filthy approach worked out, and Huo Wujiu as well as the Ghost Qin soldiers who conspired with him were all executed, the hundred tribes of the Southland of Sorcerers certainly would not have any complaints.

But now that the approach did not work out, things were getting rather awkward!

Han Yuantai and Master Black Moon wanted much more than to simply kill them. They also wanted to diminish the Great Qian Dynasty’s influence in the area through the incident!

Chapter 1363 - Fire in the Pit!

When Ling Shoujing recalled everything that he had done after he arrived at the Fire Rude Clan’s town, he realized that he had been doing exactly what his enemy wanted him to do in every step.

The entire scheme was seamless and flawless.

Despite Master Black Moon’s cunningness, such a scheme was too much for him.

Ling Shoujing had long known that Han Yuantai, Lord of Behemothic Eagle, was a general of both wisdom and courage and Han Baling’s right hand in Ghost Qin. The scheme was certainly his work. The guy truly deserved his name!

If one Appeasing Ambassador was killed, the court could send out a second one, a third one… and even a hundredth one.

However, if the Great Qian Dynasty’s image was shattered and everybody lost their faith in it, it would be hopeless.

Ling Shoujing smiled bitterly.

He could see through everything right now, but what more could he do?

As he expected, long snakes made of torches were zigzagging close from the Fire Rude Clan’s town. They were the chiefs, leaders, sorcerers, and other big shots in the Southland of Sorcerers.

They had been invited by Master Black Moon to judge the Hundred Victories Great Arena.

But at this moment, they were the best eyewitnesses for the Great Qian Dynasty’s shameless violation of the rules.

In such a case, it did not seem very implausible that the previous leader of the Fire Rude Clan was actually assassinated by the court.

The bank was collapsing, and nothing could stop the flood. Ling Shoujing was a hundred times more desperate than his daughter.

As he expected, Master Black Moon completely ignored Ling Lanyin’s question. He simply smiled at her and said in a voice that was barely audible, “I’ve long been told that the Purple Pole Sword Sect is one of the most respected sects and has a secret technique for body build-up. My young friend, since you have advanced into the peak of the Core Formation Stage at such an early age, you must’ve grasped the technique and built marvelous flesh on your body, right?

“I’ve remained stagnant in the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage for decades and couldn’t make any progress how much flesh and blood I devoured. With your body in the peak of the Core Formation Stage, I may be able to break into the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage. Haha. Hahahaha!”

Ling Lanyin’s face paled.

Although she did not completely understand what he meant, the malicious aura of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was too much for her to resist.

At this moment, the morning glow had dyed the eastern sky red, and the chiefs and sorcerers of the tribes had arrived at Huo Wujiu’s camp in commotion.

The fact that the father and the daughter of the Ling family and so many Black Tiger Iron Guards had appeared in Huo Wujiu’s camp, along with the broken limbs on the ground, were all undeniable proof!

“Warriors of the southland, look at what the sordid people of central plateaus have done!”

Master Black Moon’s evilness was suddenly concealed. When he slowly ascended to the sky, he was full of righteous fury.

Changing to a tone of indignity, he bellowed, “We clearly made a deal and swore in front of all the deities and devils in the mountains that the leadership of the Fire Rude Clan shall be decided by the ‘Hundred Victories Great Arena’ with the valor of the two parties!

“But the shameless and cowardly people of the Great Qian Dynasty turned a blind eye to the rules and ambushed Huo Wujiu’s camp while the night was dark. They have killed too many soldiers of the Southland of Sorcerers!

“They are scared. They do not have the courage to fight our warriors and the warriors of Cloud Qin in the arena and chose such vicious, clandestine methods!

“If I hadn’t run into them in time, they certainly would’ve killed Huo Wujiu!

“Our tradition that has been passed on for a thousand years has been insulted! The dignity of all the warriors of the Southland of Sorcerers has been insulted! All the mountains in the Southland of Sorcerers have been insulted!”

Master Black Moon’s every word was like thunder echoing next to the barbarian Cultivators and chiefs’ ears.

Master Black Moon was well respected in the Southland of Sorcerers. The sorcerers of many tribes were deeply connected to him. Moreover, the proof was obvious. The Black Tiger Iron Guards there could not have been dragged to this place, could they?

The court was too shameless!

The barbarian Cultivators on Huo Wujiu’s side were naturally roaring in fury.

The wavering, neutral ones were also frowning, feeling that such an approach was too dishonorable for the emperor’s army.

Even the barbarian Cultivators and chiefs on Ling Shoujing and Huo Wuji’s side could not help but feel embarrassed, their stance slightly shifting.

The barbarian Cultivators who had been intoxicated by Ling Shoujing at the feast burst into even more fury after they woke up from their hangover.

What was that supposed to mean? Hiding the night assault from them and making all of them drunk. It was obvious that they were not trusted, and they were merely camouflage.

More importantly of all, they would have no share of the crystals and magical equipment at all!

It was too sordid, shameless, and disgusting!

For a moment, everybody was whispering. Few people were still firmly on the Great Qian Dynasty's side.

After a momentary vicious smile, Master Black Moon slashed his right arm. "Kill them all!"

Hundreds of Ghost Qin Knights above the Refinement Stage had been hiding inside the forests like ice melted into the water just now, showing absolutely no sign of their presence.

But right now, they revealed themselves and charged at the Black Tiger Iron Guards in dozens of arrowheads.

The barbarian Cultivators loyal to Huo Wujiu who were deployed at the periphery of the camp also jumped out to prevent the enemy from fleeing.

Han Yuantai—riding the Dragon Wolf that was thicker than a rhino, faster than a leopard, and deadlier than a cobra—trampled upon Ling Shoujing.

Master Black Moon, however, licked his lips and went to Ling Lanyin!

Huala!

Ling Shoujing was blown almost ten meters away, his spiritual shield and his armor both shattered. He threw out mouthfuls of blood and was obviously no match for Han Yuantai at all.

If Han Yuantai had not intended to humiliate the 'emperor's envoy' of the Great Qian Dynasty more, the attack alone would have blown him into smithereens.

Hiu!

Ling Lanyin’s orchid sword blossomed brilliantly in midair.

Pu!

A cluster of black air condensed into the shape of a crescent moon and cut the orchid flower in half easily. Ripples that looked like halos spread out and swallowed all the sword auras.

There were two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators on the enemy’s side, while there were heartbreakingly one Cultivator at the beginning level of the Core Formation Stage and one at the peak of it. It was a game without any suspense.

Ling Shoujing, Ling Lanyin, and all the Black Tiger Iron Guards were grasped by desperation. Their countenance was exactly like that of the Cultivators of the Purple Pole Sword Sect whose heads were rolling on the ground.

“Death is our only destination today!” Ling Shoujing struggled to his feet. He vomited blood while he roared, “Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty, die before retreating!”

The Black Tiger Iron Guards, each of whom had three to five sharp arrows stabbed into their body, roared, too. “Warriors of the Ling family, die before retreating!”

The panic and confusion that flashed on Ling Lanyin’s face was soon replaced by determination and nonchalance. She pointed her longsword at Master Black Moon, the aura from her blade piercing through the morning sun that had just leapt out from the clouds!

Master Black Moon burst into laughter and, stepping on the ground, thrust himself toward Ling Lanyin, as unpredictably as the moon in the clouds.

The game of lions verses rabbits was about to be concluded, when Han Yuantai, the emotionless noble from Ghost Qin, suddenly lost his composure.

“Watch your back!” he shrieked in alarm, utterly losing the calmness of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. He was even more nervous than Ling Shoujing when Ling Shoujing first saw him.

Abandoning Ling Shoujing, whom he could kill with a cough, he darted toward Master Black Moon like an arrow just released from a bow!

At this moment, Master Black Moon was only one step away from Ling Lanyin.

But his back was right toward the enormous pit at the center of the camp where Huo Wujiu’s main tent had been standing.

The giant pit was a trap that Han Yuantai and Master Black Moon had carefully prepared. A lot of grenades, lethal oil, and poisonous fire had been planted inside, which had killed dozens of barbarian Cultivators who were loyal to the Great Qian Dynasty in a row just now.

With the dead bodies of the barbarian Cultivators as fuel, the green, ghostly fire did not die down even to this moment. Instead, it was burning even more violently when Master Black Moon jumped over the pit to attack Ling Lanyin!

The green, ghostly fire was dancing unpredictably as if it were alive. Weird chuckles echoed deep inside the fire, while two fiery tentacles as thick as boas extended out, one slashing at Han Yuantai and the other moving to Master Black Moon without a sound!

Pa!

Han Yuantai did not dodge at all when he crashed into one of the two tentacles, raising glamorous shockwaves!

Then, after a few weird noises, the Lord of Behemothic Eagle from the Dark Cloud Prairies screamed most miserably and fell backward while he scratched his face!

As it turned out, the seemingly empty fire actually contained long needles that were thinner than hair!

Han Yuantai had thought that it was an attack of pure spiritual energy. Confident in the abundance of the spiritual energy inside his body, he had not been scared of a head-on clash.

But the weird existence hiding inside the pit was brazen enough to hide weapons inside the fire!

There was no telling what the needles were made of and how long they were, but the needles were so thin that they seemed nonexistent. They escaped his attention despite his senses in the Nascent Soul Stage!

As it happened, the needles were extremely hard, too. They pierced his spiritual shield easily into his mouth and nose!

The long needles, through whatever uncanny techniques they entailed, were even squirming forward into his brain like caterpillars after they pierced into his face!

What kind of evil arts are these?

Greatly shocked, Han Yuantai quickly flew backward as if he had run into a ghost. He focused his whole attention on pushing out the long needles and could not have cared less about Master Black Moon anymore.

Master Black Moon was merely in the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage. He was weaker than Han Yuantai in the first place, and he was the main target of the tentacles of ghostly fire. Before he realized what was going on, his entire right thigh had been tied up. The dozens of venomous needles hidden inside the ghostly fire darted into his body and flowed throughout his body along his veins!

“Ahhh!”

Master Black Moon felt such excruciating pain that all his veins and nerves seemed to be gnawed by thousands of ants. The circulation of his spiritual energy was entirely blocked, too!

Shua!

All the barbarian Cultivators, the Black Tiger Iron Guards, and the Ghost Qin Knights watched Master Black Moon be snatched by the tentacles of ghostly fire into the seemingly bottomless pit without putting up any resistance!

Chapter 1364 - Elder Has Returned!

“Creak! Creak! Creak! Creak!”

Evil, eccentric, and headache-causing sounds were immediately echoing inside the pit.

Thousands of fiends seemed to be chuckling at the bottom level of hell at the same time, and infinite bugs seemed to be wiggling together!

The barbarian Cultivators, the Ghost Qin knights and the Black Tiger Iron Guards alike felt that their eardrums were being torn apart and their heart was constricting while they were grasped by nausea.

Even if they were summoning their spiritual energy to resist it, they could not suppress the shock and fear in their heart!

The greenish, ghostly fire inside the pit, however, seemed to have just been added with oil. It suddenly soared to almost a hundred meters tall like a raging, hideous fiery tree.

Countless sparks were darting towards the audience randomly. They were growing and spluttering in the wind, making the scene even more chaotic. Everybody was covering their head and fleeing in utmost fear!

“Ahhhhhhhhhhhh!”

Deep inside the pit, Master Black Moon was screaming most miserably, as if he were going through the cruelest suffering in the world.

All the barbarian Cultivators were looking at each other in bewilderment. They had to summon all their spiritual energy to stop their legs from shaking.

It was the first time that they heard Master Black Moon, the top expert in the Southland of Sorcerers, to cry in such a desperate way.

What accompanied Master Black Moon’s screams were hoots of derision each louder than the last. A voice that was so sharp and high-pitched that it sounded from the gaps of rusted soil was shouting, “Yan Wenlong, take a look at who I am. Our grudge for decades can be settled once and for all today!”

Yan Wenlong was Master Black Moon’s original name.

But after he became a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator who commanded dozens of villages, few people had the courage to call him by his name.

Even ‘Master Black Moon’ was not a title that general barbarians of the land dared to use.

Most of them would kneel on the ground and call him ‘elder’ in the most respectful way upon meeting him!

But right now, their ‘elder’ was being publicly tortured!

Many wrinkled, aged barbarian Cultivators somehow found the weird sound familiar.

It was not the sound itself but the arrogant, aggressive and insolent tone in it!

They all frowned and searched their memories.

Suddenly, one of the old sorcerers shuddered, his face turning pale. His throat was uttering meaningless syllables, suggesting that he might’ve lost his mind in fear!

Master Black Moon had absolutely no way to fight back while he was being savaged by the mysterious person.

Even his loud and desperate screams turned into intermittent moans later.

When the moans came to the feeblest moment, thousands of cracks were echoing at the same time, as if all the bones on Master Black Bone had been crushed in the second!

In the next moment, the eccentric fire was even more brighter than before. Blood was spurting out from the bottom of the giant pit, only to be burnt up by the fire.

The few bones and half skull left was also burnt into ashes in the blink of an eye, too.

“Hiu!”

The greenish, ghostly fire immediately retreated to the pit. Not a single spark could be seen anymore.

Green mist was rolling inside the pit and surging out into a hazy lake, as if it were competing with the morning glow.

The hundreds of square meters nearby was all enveloped in the green mist.

The green mist seemed to be made of countless fiends which boasted an evil life. It was hissing and extending out tentacles now and then, trying to drag the Cultivators nearby into the mist.

Even the barbarian Cultivators born and raised in the Southland of Sorcerers who were adept at the dark arts had never such a weird view before, not to mention the Black Tiger Iron Guards from the central plateaus and the Ghost Qin Knights from the northland!

Sensing the immense pressure from the depths of the mist, as if primeval beast was breaking out of the cocoon, all the Cultivators felt their mouth was dry and their legs were shaking, not knowing what to do!

At the center of the green mist, the waves were moving up and down, highlighting a cluster of air the size of a human being.

At first look, the man was not very tall. He was rather slim, and his face was as young as a juvenile’s.

However, the tiny wrinkles at the corners of his eyes which were as deep as the ocean and emitting brutality now and then, and his lips that were slightly pursed like a guillotine, made it impossible for anyone to tell his real age.

He was wearing a broad, green robe which seemed to be made of ghostly fire. His hair was scattered behind his head like a waterfall, dancing crazily because of the boost of the ghostly fire!

Floating in midair without support, he put his hands in his back and unleashed unparalleled spiritual energy blatantly. The waves tore apart the air and spread out in visible ripples.

Disintegrating a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator into pus and burning the pus into nothingness seemed to be an effortless triviality for him.

He did not seem to be concerned about the hundreds of Cultivators including one in the Nascent Soul Stage and several in the Core Formation Stage at all, either.

He was glancing at them so indifferently that they seemed to him nothing more than hens and dogs.

Every Cultivator he stared at felt that they were lying right below a guillotine at the mercy of the guy!

Many barbarian Cultivators emboldened themselves to observe the newcomer in secret, only to discover that the tiny green birthmark at the center of the guy’s eyebrow, which was like a green speck at the beginning, was gradually occupying the upper half of his face like a drop of ink that was dripped on a piece of paper into the shape of a green vulture under the boost of his spiritual energy!

The green vulture seemed to be flying up at any second. Taking up half of his face, it seemed to be adorning him with a mask, making him even more mysterious and unpredictable!

The extremely evil appearance made all the barbarian Cultivators’ heart race. One after another, they recalled a name that had been gone for decades and yet still kept them awake at night today!

“S—S—Spiritual Vulture…”

Before they thought of the guy’s name, he had already pounced towards Han Yuantai, the other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator on the spot, like a rapacious vulture!

Hardly had Han Yuantai plucked the venomous needles on his face out when he sensed the pressure of spiritual energy which was even more immense than his own. He couldn't be more appalled!

But he truly deserved to be one of the top experts on the Dark Cloud Prairies. After a bellow, he chose to attack instead of dodging. He picked up a unique weapon which was embedded with dozens of wolf fangs and looked like both a saber and a saw, and his spiritual energy spread out into a winged enormous wolf!

“Hooooooo!”

The enormous wolf made of spiritual energy was as vivid as a real one. Flapping its wings, it lunged towards the mysterious newcomer.

“Creak! Creak! Creak! Creak!”

The green mist that surrounded the mysterious newcomer was screeching in a noise that made everyone's teeth sour. Almost ten slender arms suddenly popped up from the green mist, half of which snatched the wolf and the other half attacked Han Yuantai!

[The same move!]

Han Yuantai was both shocked and infuriated. This time, he finally perceived that hundreds of venomous needles were hidden inside the claws made of the ghostly fire!

What magical equipment is this? So sordid and vicious!

Although he had seen through the enemy's technique, the venomous needles contained inside the ghostly fire were integrations of the attacks of spiritual energy and the attacks of magical equipment. They were erratic and quite hard to deal with!

Han Yuantai was greatly troubled. He could only focus his full attention in distinguishing the needles inside the ghostly fire so that none of them would reach him!

Right then—

Suddenly having an ominous feeling, he moved towards the left by force, all the bones all his body uttering cracking noises.

The saber in his hand, however, broke into two halves without a sound. The fracture was as smooth as a mirror, without the slightest dent!

A mica threat which was ten times thinner than the needles just flashed past his face!

Had he reacted less promptly, it would’ve been his wrist instead of the his saber that was cut off by the mica threat just now!

At this moment, he was already jumping up and down in a flurry, while his enemy was smiling with the hands in the back, apparently not doing his best!

Where—where does this monster come from? And what’s this vicious weapon?

Han Yuantai felt like crying. He roared to himself in his heart.

The Ghost Qin Knights were fearless of death. Seeing that their general was in danger, they roared and, urging the Dragon Wolves, charged at the enemy together!

The green-robed freak sniffed. He shook his sleeve, and dozens of glittering skulls flew out of his cuff and rotated in midair.

The skulls were in fact made of metals and crystals. They were as vivid as natural. Green, ghostly fire was burning inside the hollow eyes and mouth. When they reached the Ghost Qin Knights, they exploded after a few booms into thousands of skeletons of fire, blocking the riders from their general in a wall.

Sensing the eccentric demonic energy contained inside the fiery wall, although the Ghost Qin Knights intended to jump over it, the Dragon Wolves below them were all shrieking and howling, before they collapsed to the ground foaming and shivering, utterly intimidated.

When the Ghost Qin Knights who fell to the ground stood on their feet again, they saw the most unbelievable picture through the skeletons of ghostly fire!

Han Yuantai, the invincible Lord of Behemothic Eagle in their mind, a great expert in the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage, and a man of the time who had dominated the Dark Cloud Prairies for decades, had been tied up by an enormous shackle which looked like the bones of a vulture.

The vulture’s two wings pierced deeply into his ribs, and his shoulder blades were grabbed by the vulture’s claws. Its narrow, long neck that was full of sawtooth entangled Han Yuantai’s neck, too!

Han Yuantai was bound to the bizarre-looking shackle and unable to move at all. His countenance couldn’t have been more weird!

The green-robed freak opened his hand and grabbed Han Yuantai by his head like a falcon grabbing a chicken. There was not the slightest emotion in his deep, dark eyes while he glanced at the Ghost Qin Knights casually.

Within a breath, everything had been settled. One of the two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators was as dead as anyone could ever be. The other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was alive but he might be better off dead!

To this moment, all the barbarian Cultivators nearby finally realized what had happened and what was going on. They all knelt to the ground. There was no telling who started it, but everybody was crying in the loudest of their voice!

“Master Spiritual Vulture!”

“Elder Spiritual Vulture!”

“Everybody in Wolf Tail Village of the Silver Wolf Mountain welcomes Master Spiritual Vulture’s return!”

“Elder, elder. We—We’d been looking forward to today for sixty years. You have finally come back!”

Chapter 1365 - Unfreeable Nightmare

“Congratulations, Elder. You have finally perfected your techniques and become the real dominator of the Southland of Sorcerers!”

“Elder Spiritual Vulture, you are truly invincible in the world. Everybody in the Silver Wolf Mountain is at your service!”

“Elder! Elder! Elder!”

“Ah!”

Ling Lanyin suddenly woke up from a bizarre nightmare and moaned, only to discover that the adulations that she heard in her dream were actually happening in the town of the Fire Rude Clan!

She was shuddering coldly as if she had fallen into an icy cave. The golden core inside her abdomen was shaking like a candle in the blowing wind. She breathed for a long time before it occurred to her that she was not in Huo Wujiu’s messy camp but in the Fire Rude Clan’s town.

She was safe for now.

But she did not know how long her safety could last.

For Ling Lanyin, everything that had happened in that short day was as long as a nightmare that she could not wake up or free herself from.

Just two days earlier, she had been a center of public attention, a rarely-seen prodigy in training, and an orchid angel that everybody adored.

She had been born and raised in the Ling family, a noble family in the Great Qian Dynasty. Although she was a female, she had never been neglected by her family because she had revealed her talent for training very young. Instead, she had been given even more resources than the males of her family were.

She had lived up to her family’s expectations, too. At the age of twelve, she had already distinguished herself and gotten officially recruited by the Purple Pole Sword Sect, her family’s reliance. Ever since then, her path of Cultivation had been smooth and unstoppable. After several decades, she had grown into one of the youngest Cultivators at the peak of the Core Formation Stage in the Purple Pole Sword Sect and even in the entire Great Qian Dynasty!

Ling Lanyin had always been confident in herself. She believed that nothing in this world could not be resolved by her orchid sword.

Although it was her first field mission off the mountain, she had not thought too much of it because her targets were merely a bunch of ignorant barbarians.

Moreover, she was just a support; her senior brother ‘Thunderous Straight Swordsman’ Lou Chongxiao was the man to make the calls. What was there to be worried about?

It had never occurred to her that…

Everything changed after only one day. Her senior brother as well as the elite swordsmen in her sect had been beheaded. Master Black Moon, who had always been a close friend to the Cultivators from central plateaus, had defected. The enemy had sent out such an important person as Han Yuantai, the Lord of Behemothic Eagle. To make matters worse, at the life and death moment, a creepy, wicked Master Spiritual Vulture jumped out of nowhere!

What—what was happening?

Ling Lanyin had completely lost her cool.

It was not until then that she realized how weak and vulnerable she actually was despite her indifference and condescension on the surface.

“Lanyin!”

Right then, Ling Shoujing, her father and the Appeasing Ambassador of the Fifth Prefecture of the Southland of Sorcerers, heard the sound and walked in after knocking on the door.

Ling Lanyin had been training in the Purple Pole Sword Sect for decades and hardly went back home. She and her father were rather emotionally distant.

Also, after she advanced into the peak of the Core Formation Stage, under everybody’s adulation, she had slowly changed her attitude and begun to respect her father, who was only in the beginning level of the Core Formation Stage, less. She had believed that she was the true pillar of the Ling family.

When they were on their way south, her father had been quite courteous and respectful due to her identity as a Cultivator in the peak of the Core Formation Stage, too, which added to her arrogance.

But at this moment, with everything being more chaotic than ever, Ling Shoujing, a Class-Two official of the court, showed his calmness and wisdom.

While Ling Lanyin was still panicking, he had recovered from confusion quickly and started studying the new situation, hoping to save the lost cause!

Ling Lanyin hurried to greet her father and ask, “Father, what’s the situation outside?”

They were now under house custody in the Fire Rude Clan’s town. No one was to leave the town without Master Spiritual Vulture’s permission.

Although the barbarian guards outside of the house could not stop them, the father and the daughter did not dare act recklessly when they thought of Master Spiritual Vulture’s cruel methods at the bloodstained dawn.

“Right now, we cannot tell who’s friend and who’s foe. Everything is still ambiguous. I have asked Yuan Wu to officially meet Master Spiritual Vulture and see what he plans to do. Yuan Wu has always been the smartest one of them all. He should be reporting to us soon. There’s no need to fret, my child!”

Ling Shoujing waved his hands and drank from the pot of cold tea on the table. It was obvious that the Class-Two official of the court was not as calm as he appeared to be.

“What he plans to do…”

Ling Lanyin was still at a loss. Thinking for a moment, she asked in self-comfort, “But Master Spiritual Vulture killed Master Black Moon brutally and beat Han Yuantai up the moment that he appeared in the morning. It should be a sign that he’s on the court’s side, shouldn’t it?”

Ling Shoujing was amused. Pondering for a moment, he explained, “You didn’t know his backstory. So, it’s understandable that you made such a conclusion. Master Spiritual Vulture was a person of the older generation who was active almost eighty years ago. He also spent most of his time in the Southland of Sorcerers and never went to the central plateaus. Therefore, it is perfectly normal that you young folk never heard the stories of his ruthless past.”

Ling Shoujing sighed and described Master Spiritual Vulture’s past doings to his daughter.

The female Cultivator was gasping nonstop the whole time.

“Master Spiritual Vulture and Master Black Moon hate each other’s guts. It is said that Master Black Moon found an opportunity to kill Master Spiritual Vulture because he wanted his junior brother’s share of their master Elder Five Despairs’ heritage!”

With a bitter smile, Ling Shoujing said, “But it appears now that Master Spiritual Vulture wasn’t really killed. He might’ve gone through other fortuitous incidents. All in all, he trained himself in seclusion for decades and finally grasped marvelous arts recently. So, he came back to Master Black Moon for revenge!

“He was hiding inside our army. He even held back the pain when the trap was activated while he was waiting for the chance to finish his senior brother Master Black Moon in one attack!

“Although the brutal man did kill Master Black Moon, it was purely for a personal grudge. He is not necessarily on the

Great Qian Dynasty’s side!

“If he had killed Han Yuantai, his stance would have been very clear, but Han Yuantai was merely wounded and captured. So, there’s still a lot of suspense!”

“A brutal barbarian from almost a hundred years ago!” Ling Lanyin found it hard to believe. “Then, how come he looks so young?”

“There are many evil spells and arts in the Southland of Sorcerers,” Ling Shoujing said. “A lot of uncanny things may have happened during his decades of seclusion. It is also possible that he has possessed someone’s body or even built a new body from scratch on his own!

“The brutal man was a rarely-seen expert at the peak of the Core Formation Stage in the Southland of Sorcerers seventy years ago. After decades of seclusion, he must’ve grasped certain amazing arts that allowed him to advance into the middle level or even high level of the Nascent Soul Stage. He is one of the top experts in the world right now!

“Don’t underestimate him because of his appearance, my child. He is definitely one of the most brutal men in the world!”

Ling Lanyin quickly nodded.

If anybody dared underestimate him after witnessing the brutal man’s performance at dawn, they have felt that they had lived long enough!

“Well—” Ling Lanyin pondered for a moment and asked another question. “Father, which side do you think this Master Spiritual Vulture, who has just broken out of his decades of seclusion after grasping marvelous arts, will take? Great Qian or Ghost Qin?”

Ling Lanyin was quite worried.

She felt that the brutal man’s cruelty was quite similar to the viciousness of the Ghost Qin people propagated in her sect. They could easily become conspirators.

“It’s hard to say. Very hard!” Ling Shoujing shook his head with that still bitter smile. “He is a man of the older generation who has been gone for decades after all. He hardly visited the central plateaus, too. We know little about Master Spiritual Vulture’s personality and habits.

“Moreover, the man is cruel, petty, wicked, and utterly unpredictable. He does everything just because he wants to. He is an out-and-out maniac!

“The man is ten times more difficult to predict than Master Black Moon. Nobody knows which side he will take for what reason. Or maybe, he will take neither side and simply act on his own to please himself!

“However, my child, for the Great Qian Dynasty, for the Ling family, and for the Purple Pole Sword Sect, we must try everything we can to make the guy join us!”

“Well…”

There was obvious resistance on Ling Lanyin’s pretty face.

The Purple Pole Sword Sect was a righteous sect. The ideology to serve justice and help the weak was believed in by everyone.

She was naturally resistant to brutal barbarians who bordered between eccentric and evil such as Master Spiritual Vulture.

“My child, we are in the middle of a great crisis. You must bear the big picture in mind!” Ling Shoujing sighed and said solemnly, “I know that you certainly won’t see eye to eye with Master Spiritual Vulture simply because of his cruel and sordid style. In fact, do you think that I want to deal with such a barbarian?

“However, he has proved that his Cultivation is almost immeasurable by suppressing two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators instantly purely on his own. How much trouble can such an unparalleled expert cause if he chooses to join Ghost Qin’s side instead of the Great Qian Dynasty?

“Moreover, his brutality was already well known in the Southland of Sorcerers decades ago, and today, he has cruelly tormented Master Black Moon, the top expert in the Southland of Sorcerers, in front of everyone, awing all the local tribes!

“It is very possible that his attitude will decide the attitude of the entire Southland of Sorcerers!

“The attitude of the Southland of Sorcerers concerns the life of the thousand people in the Ling family and the continuity of the entire Purple Pole Sword Sect. I believe that your master must’ve explained it to you already before you left for the mission, right?”

Conflicted, Ling Lanyin nodded rather helplessly.

“Everybody in the court was gloating and waiting for us to humiliate ourselves on our trip to the Southland of Sorcerers.” Ling Shoujing sniffed and said, “However, if we not only keep the Southland of Sorcerers stabilized but also bring a great expert above the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage back with us, what will the noble sirs in the court have to say? Will they have any reason to punish the Ling family or to appropriate the Purple Pole Sword Sect?”

Chapter 1366 - Man from the North!

Ling Lanyin hesitated, with confusion beaming out of her beautiful eyes. She had obviously thought of the dark cloud looming over her family and sect and was not as unwavering as before.

Ling Shoujing coughed and said, “My child, although Master Spiritual Vulture is extreme and cruel, he has never committed any crimes in the central plateaus. As a barbarian born and raised in a far-flung area, it is perfectly understandable that he is uncivilized and practices all kinds of terrible arts.

“We are in the middle of an unprecedented change right now, and the court needs every useful hand. The Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty have more ferocious enemies to deal with, too. As long as he is willing to serve the court, I believe that the Cultivators will not pursue what he did in the past!

“If we can edify him with the rules and courtesies of the central plateaus and make him abandon evilness for righteousness, we will be making even greater contribution!”

Her heart in a mess, Ling Lanyin smiled bitterly. Her lips shivered for a long time, but she only sighed in depression in the end. “This—this—this is very different from what I imagined before I left the mountain!”

“It is indeed different!” Ling Shoujing felt that he was somewhat shameless, too, considering that he was ignoring all the crimes that the guy had committed in the past.

However, in the middle of the turbulence, even a Core Formation Stage Cultivator could only drift along with the current. One moment of carelessness, and his entire family would be annihilated. What choice did he have except to struggle no matter what?

“My child, you will understand it better later.” The Appeasing Ambassador of the Fifth Prefecture of the Southland of Sorcerers whined. “Everybody says that Cultivation is more difficult than leaping into the sky, but they don’t know that struggling and surviving in the world of mortals is a hundred times more difficult than Cultivation!”

While the father and the daughter were sighing and concocting their plans, the servants outside reported that his two subordinates who went to visit Master Spiritual Vulture had returned.

“Yuan Wu, what did Master Spiritual Vulture say? Did he grant an audience?”

Because of the emergency, Ling Shoujing had no time to keep us his demeanor as the Appeasing Ambassador and degraded himself by saying ‘grant an audience’.

The guy named ‘Yuan Wu’ was a tough-looking young man who was close to the Building Foundation Stage. But right now, he was like a frosted eggplant and replied lethargically, “Your lordship, I was pushed out by a bunch of barbarian Cultivators before I had chance to meet Master Spiritual Vulture. According to them, Master Spiritual Vulture had gone to talk to Han Yuantai, and he would only have time to meet us after he decided what to do with Han Yuantai!"

"What!" Ling Shoujing and Ling Lanyin both seemed to have been hit by lightning. They looked at each other, only to discover that they were both pale and sweating.

Master Spiritual Vulture indeed did not kill the Ghost Qin captives. Moreover, he was meeting the Ghost Qin people before he met the envoy from the Great Qian Dynasty.

That—that—that—

In a moment, Master Spiritual Vulture became even more mysterious and unpredictable to them.

…

At the center of the Fire Rude Clan's town, there was a great house in the popular style of the central plateaus.

The place used to be the residence of the leader of the Fire Rude Clan. The wall was high, the yard was vast, and the floor was paved with green bricks. There was also a pond in the backyard, filled with lotuses and fish and surrounded by willows and bamboos.

To maintain such an elegant and peaceful house in the Southland of Sorcerers was quite costly. It was also a sign of the Fire Rule Clan's immense wealth.

At this moment, the fine cottage naturally became the temporary residence for Master Spiritual Vulture, the new 'top expert of the southland'.

However, the guy kneeling on the ground below the willows near the pond in the backyard was not Master Spiritual

Vulture but Han Yuantai, the Lord of Behemothic Eagle, whose air did not befit the delicate environment at all.

Bloody stains covered his body. Quite a few claw traces left by Master Spiritual Vulture were still lingering on his forehead. Dense scars caused by the venomous needles had marred his face. He was bruised and swollen and could not have looked more miserable.

The weird shackle on him was not taken off, either, but sank even deeper, making him unable to summon his spiritual energy at all. He was almost a cripple, and even breathing was a painful task for him.

The man from the north, however, was quite calm. He was even studying the shackle on his body with great interest instead of appreciating the lotus flowers inside the pond next to him.

What a finely-made piece of magical equipment. It is even more delicate than the shackles used in the prisons in the capital city. All my acupoints and critical veins have been locked, and I cannot break free from it however hard I try!

I'm afraid that even the strongest expert will have to beg for mercy after they are caged by such magical equipment!

There are also the unpredictable venomous needles and the sharp blade made of mica that was ten times thinner and barely perceivable!

All the weapons are the most vicious magical equipment!

Master Spiritual Vulture is not much stronger than me in terms of spiritual energy reserve, but he waited deep inside the fiery pit for the best opportunity to launch thunderous attacks with all his marvelous weapons.

His patience and determination are even a hundred times scarier than his needles, blades, and shackle!

The purpose of my mission to the south is to recruit the greatest heroes in the world. If such a distinguished man works for Cloud Qin, he will certainly be a great help for our cause!

While Han Yuantai was pondering, he suddenly felt that the lotus flowers in the pond were shivering, and his heart was aching too as if it had been stung by needles.

He raised his head, only to discover that the black-haired, green-robed, young-looking Master Spiritual Vulture was standing right before him!

The birthmark on the unparalleled brutal man's face had been restricted to a green spot at the center of his eyebrow again, making his face more 'agreeable' than before.

However, for Han Yuantai, who had experienced his cruelness in person, the agreeable face was even more terrifying than an angry one.

Holding back his horror, Han Yuantai suddenly laughed aloud and said, "You are finally here, Master!"

Li Yao showed no expression.

But he added 0.5 points for Ghost Qin in his heart.

He had intentionally ignored Ghost Qin and Great Qian for two hours and observed the reactions of the two sides.

The Ghost Qin Knights and Han Baling's right hand had behaved quite calmly. Even if they were merely pretending, they looked rather tough and showed barely any vulnerability on the surface.

On the Great Qian Dynasty’s side, however, everybody was sighing in panic. Even the father and the daughter of the Ling family failed to respond to the crisis satisfactorily.

In the meantime, when Han Yuantai saw him, the guy was still able to laugh confidently despite the unease in his heart, which alone would be evident enough that the guy deserved to be a notable man in the north.

Li Yao looked at the shackle on Han Yuantai’s body.

The shackle had been made with the ancient refining techniques in the Hundred Smelting Clan based on the mechanism of the Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle. It was tailor-made for the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators of this Sector.

The fact that Han Yuantai was talking and laughing elegantly despite the shackle made Li Yao think more highly of him.

Li Yao rolled his eyes and said creepily, “You seem delighted to see me, Fellow Cultivator Han. Why? Are you not scared that I’m here to kill you?”

“You must be joking, Master Spiritual Vulture. If you wanted me dead, you would’ve killed me in the morning instead of waiting until now!”

Han Yuantai put on a brilliant smile despite the blood on his face and said confidently, “Master Spiritual Vulture, you were already a great expert in the Southland of Sorcerers a hundred years ago. However, the ignorant people often considered you a bloodthirsty and temperamental guy and are terrified of you. They couldn't have been more wrong!"

"Oh?" Li Yao eyed Han Yuantai up and down and chuckled, "Are they not? I did kill a lot of people in the past!"

"Of course they are wrong!" Han Yuantai said solemnly. "Those that you killed in the past were all associated with your enemy. If they were not eliminated, they would have caused more trouble later. It was all about removing any potential threats and definitely not slaughtering the innocent!

"After you killed those people, Master, you immediately stopped and announced your threat to the Cultivators in the Southland of Sorcerers, stating your boundary and your retaliation methods. As a result, you lived in peace for decades without being disturbed by anyone.

"During those decades, as long as nobody harmed your interests, you never killed anyone again!

"It is obvious that you are a wise, prudent man who knows when to attack and when to retreat. You are certainly not the impetuous, bloodthirsty barbarian that others think you to be!

"What happened this morning is yet more evidence. Although you savaged and killed Master Black Moon in the cruelest way, it was only because of your grudge in the past. As for the visitors from Cloud Qin, although you seemed to be beating us heavily at that time, you didn't actually kill any of us!

"It is obvious that everything is within your control, and you want much more than to seek vengeance!"

“Hehe!” Li Yao sniffed angrily. Green brilliance suddenly shot out of his dark eyes and swirled around Han Yuantai’s neck like a sharp blade.

He was like an old monster who intended to kill the guy that had seen through his secret.

Han Yuantai felt that somebody was stinging his back, and he almost grunted when Li Yao glanced at him.

However, he knew that he could not give in to such an old monster—he had to raise the opponent’s curiosity one way or another.

Making up his mind, he laughed dryly. “I almost forgot. I must congratulate you on behalf of my brother Han Baling, the regent of Cloud Qin! You must’ve experienced a lot of fortuitous incidents during your decades of seclusion. After such a long period of training, you have finally soared into the sky as one of the top experts in the world!

“With your amazing Cultivation, a minor Master Black Moon is truly nothing worth mentioning. You are more than capable of competing with the great heroes of the world in the sky of the royal palace in the capital city in the central plateaus right now, Master!”

Li Yao did not even bother to lift his eyes. He sneered, “Of course. Master Black Moon was just in the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage and meant nothing to me. What I want to do most right now is go to the central plateaus and see what the emperor’s throne looks like in the royal palace, or go to the Dark Cloud Prairies and see what a hot woman Ha Baling’s wife is. Haha. Hahahaha!”

With a hint of fury flashing inside his eyes, Han Yuantai stood straight despite the shackles and replied toughly, “Master, you may be one of the top twenty experts in the world with your incredible abilities. However, even the strongest expert has his limits. Fighting a nation, a people, or the unstoppable fate on your own is just a suicidal endeavor!”

“You are truly not scared of death!” Li Yao narrowed his eyes and blew Han Yuantai away into the mud heavily.

Han Yuantai struggled to his feet from the mud and burst into laughter. “I shall die without regret for the great cause of Cloud Qin!”

Chapter 1367 - Ancient Cultivator’s Vision

Li Yao’s killing intent was soaring. He glared at Han Yuantai coldly as if his eyes were steel sabers.

Han Yuantai gritted his teeth so hard that they were cracking. He craned his neck and stared back at Li Yao. He was overwhelmed by the brilliance in Li Yao’s eyes many times and almost turned away his head to dodge it, but he persisted to the end with the fire in his chest!

Around them, the lotus flowers in the pond were shivering and withering rapidly.

The fish and the shrimps were jumping on the surface of the pond, only to be floating on the surface dead soon, as if it were not a pond but a pot that they were staying in.

Right when Han Yuantai was about to collapse, the intimidating killing intent around Li Yao was suddenly gone, as if it had never appeared.

He smiled casually, “Very brave!”

Han Yuantai took a long breath in relief. The tough man from the north and the well-respected Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator in the Dark Cloud Prairies almost burst into tears in front of the unpredictable old monster!

At this moment, his legs were finally shaking beyond his control. Not even having the time to wipe off the sweat on his forehead, he breathed heavily, before he managed a smile, “You are flattering me, Master. I have noticed just now that I underestimated Master’s level after all. With Master’s Cultivation today, it is possible that you are one of the top ten experts, and you are capable of fighting a nation and a people with yourself and your sword!”

“Forget it. We are all smart guys here. Let’s put it more straightforwardly.”

Li Yao waved his hands and said, “For a Cultivator, especially those in the Nascent Soul Stage such as us, to make progress, wealth, residence, arts and partners are indispensable factors. We will consume astronomical resources on a daily basis, which can only be covered by a fixed base and a huge population!

“Fighting a nation on one’s own might be possible if the purpose is short-time sabotage. But it is absolutely impossible to compete with the nation for long!

“Hehe. I don’t need you to point out that the Southland of Sorcerers is too remote and ragged. Although the despicable pests are everywhere, Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures are extremely rare here!

“Also, this place has been quite desolate since ancient times. No powerful sects had ever been headquartered here. Therefore, it is very difficult to find a residence or a relic below the ground!

“In such a rough environment, it is already the limit for the Cultivators in the Southland of Sorcerers to advance into the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage with the peculiar arts. Although I have reached the level I’m in right now because of other fortuitous incidents, it will be the wildest dream if I want to pursue further and touch the mysterious Divinity Transformation Stage!

“If we get to the bottom of it, the Southland of Sorcerers is too small a pond even for a tortoise. How can a high-level Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator be distinguished in such a place?

“To break into higher levels, I must have a higher population, more prosperous land, more residences and relics. How can I not understand such a simple logic?

“However…”

Li Yao suddenly sneered, before he said unhurriedly, “You can give me such things, but the Great Qian Dynasty can, too! With my level, techniques and magical equipment today after sixty years of hard training, I will be a well-respected guest and elder wherever I go, won’t I?

“I don’t know, nor am I interest in, what Master Black Moon was thinking of. But why do I have to abandon the prosperous Great Qian Dynasty for your Cloud Qin?

“It’s true that the Dark Cloud Prairies are boundless, and that quite a few powerful dynasties have emerged in the past ten of thousands of years. There must be quite a few relics and secret treasures below the ground.

“However, your population is too small. As a result, there are few Cultivators and famous sects.

“I’m told that your regent Ha Baling is now carrying out his reform, annihilating all the sects!

“Haha, in the entire Dark Cloud Prairies, there is not a single sect. Isn’t it a joke?

“In comparison, the Great Qian Dynasty is prosperous and has a long history. The hundred or so noble sects can be traced back to a thousand years ago or even longer before to the previous dynasties. There are as many experts as raindrops in the sky. The Cultivation arts and classics are too many to be counted!

“Of the three hundred Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the world, the Great Qian Dynasty boasts more than two hundred!

“I’m told that you had a minor victory against the Great Qian Dynasty last year, and your vanguard almost reached the capital? What was the result? Did you not hurry to run away after plundering the resources? Were you bold enough to stay and fight against the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty the hard way?

“Hehe. Master Black Moon may have been bewildered by your fancy talks. But your bulls*it is not going to persuade me to run errands for you so easily!

“Han Yuantai, do not think that I dare not kill you. You are merely in the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage, nothing more than a bug in my eyes. If I want to crush you, I will crush you. Does it really matter?

“I kept you alive because I want to see what you can say to encourage me to get on your boat!

“Come on. I’ve been training in seclusion for sixty years. Now that I’m out again, it’s true that I’m not familiar with the situation of the world. Just try your best to enchant me. Tell me why Ghost Qin of the Dark Cloud Prairies is qualified to challenge the Great Qian Dynasty! “Hehe. You are free to brag about Ghost Qin however you want, because I will not be able tell whether it is true or false at all. But in case you forget, I have two Core Formation Stage Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty in my hands, too. Later, after I cross-check what you say, I will know exactly who is speaking the truth!

“If I find that you lied to me…”

Li Yao chuckled creepily again.

Han Yuantai shuddered deeply, feeling that the coldest wind was blowing at his bones. His every joint seemed to have been stabbed with dozens of rusted nails, which made him feel sour and unable to move at all.

“Master, your eyes are too keen. I do not dare to say anything false!”

Taking a long breath, Han Yuantai was about to give a long speech, when Li Yao waved his hands and declared gravely, “Just abandon your rhetoric. Isn’t it exhausting to talk in such a way all day long? I’m a barbarian from the wilderness, and I don’t understand your empty words. So, just tell me in the most candid way what is strong about Ghost Qin, what is weak about the Great Qian Dynasty, and why the Cultivators of the Dark Cloud Prairies are confident to compete with the Great Qian Dynasty which boasts a thousand sects large and small and countless Cultivators when you do not have a single sect!”

Han Yuantai took a long breath. He suddenly raised his neck and burst into a laughter. He didn’t stop after a long time.

Unsatisfied, Li Yao said gloomily, “Speak now. If you continue being pretentious, I’ll pluck all your teeth from your wretched mouth!”

Han Yuantai know that the man was brutal enough to fulfil what he had promised. He immediately stopped laughing and said solemnly, “You’ve mentioned many times that the

Great Qian Dynasty boasts a lot of sects and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, Master. Do you believe that the more sects and Cultivators, the stronger a nation will be?”

Li Yao rolled his eyes, amused. “You are stating the obvious. Is it not the case?”

“Of course not!”

Han Yuantai replied resolutely, “Although it is what the hundred dynasties in the Ancient Sages Sector have believed, people of Cloud Qin are going exactly the opposite way. We believe that sects are the cancer of a nation. The more sects and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, the weaker a nation will be!

“Right now, the Great Qian Dynasty has 3,725 sects large and small and 221 experts in the Nascent Soul Stage. But they are the sign of the Great Qian Dynasty’s doom instead of the foundation of its prosperity!”

“The more sects there are, the weaker a nation will be. That’s a fresh idea!”

Li Yao laughed and said lazily, “Do you care to explain it?”

Han Yuantai struggled to his feet. But clattering noises were echoing from his body, because his excitement triggered the barrier.

Han Yuantai finally grunted in pain.

Li Yao curled his right little finger and snapped it. Then, the shackle suddenly took off from Han Yuantai’s body and condensed into a skeleton vulture again, before it hovered above Han Yuantai’s head and flew back to Li Yao.

Li Yao extended his arm, allowing the skeleton vulture to land on his arm. Then after a shake, he stored the shackle into his Cosmos Ring.

Disbelief beamed out of Han Yuantai's face. He mumbled, "I'm told that there's an amazing artifact in the ancient times named 'Deity Tying Rope'. The barrier of yours must be similar to the Deity Tying Rope, Master!"

Li Yao said coldly, "I didn't relieve the shackle to hear your crap."

Calming himself down, Han Yuantai immediately focused his attention on the topic. "The idea that the more sects there are, the weaker a nation will be seems absurd. But it will make sense when you give it enough thought!

"A powerful and unified court is mandatory for any nation to grow strong. As the saying goes, there can never be two suns in the sky, and there can never be two monarchs on the earth. When the decrees from the emperor are carried out inviolably, the local prefectures will be stable, and the folks will live in peace. It is the everlasting law of history!

"But the Cultivation sects, especially the 'noble sects' which have been passed on for thousands of years and which boast unparalleled influence in the local area with their Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, seriously undermine the authority of the court and the emperor!

"When decrees are issued from different leaders, and when internal strife never ends, to the extent that the local people of an area only know a certain sect, a certain noble family and a certain Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, but not the court and the emperor, how will such a nation not decline and perish?

“For the hundreds of dynasties in the Ancient Sages Sector in the past tens of thousands of years, no matter how peaceful, prosperous and unstoppable they were in their heyday, they would be corrupted by the ‘cancer’ eventually and came to their doom!

“The cancer of the dynasties is untreatable. How can the Great Qian Dynasty survive it today?

“Master Spiritual Vulture, you asked me just now on what basis Cloud Qin is fighting the entire Great Qian Dynasty.

“Hehe. If the Great Qian Dynasty is truly a solidary, gapless nation, we will stand absolutely no chance!

“But in fact, the so-called ‘Great Qian Dynasty’ is not a real nation at all. It is just a puppet, and an empty shell, enshrined by the Cultivation sects which each have their own intentions for their own interests!

“There is not such a nation as ‘Great Qian’ at all. There are only the countless sects that are essentially loose sand below the fake title!

“The Great Qian Dynasty is a seemingly ferocious beast whose internal organs have in fact been emptied by the maggots and rats. What is left is but the skin on the surface now. After a tiny blow of air, it will fall apart and collapse!

“When the giant beast collapses, the maggots and rats hiding inside its body will only flee in panic in search for the next host. They will never live and die together with the beast!”

Chapter 1368 - Disasters of the Cultivators!

Li Yao never thought that Han Yuantai, as an ‘outdated’ person and a ‘barbarian’ in the eyes of the central dynasty, had such a sharp insight on the relationship between the Cultivators and the nation. Also, the man’s mind was very clear besides his bravery. He indeed deserved to be the right hand of Han Baling, the magnificent dominator of Ghost Qin!

He was the first sign of the formidability of Ghost Qin as a force and its leader Han Baling!

With a smile of derision, Li Yao said coldly, “You are exaggerating it, aren’t you? Cultivation sects have existed for as long as Cultivators have. It’s been the tradition for a hundred thousand years. Are they all unworthy as you claimed?”

“They are exactly so unworthy!”

Han Yuantai declared, “It was exactly because the cancer named Cultivation sects has been attached to the nation over the past hundred thousand years that almost a hundred dynasties replaced one another, causing infinite tragedies!

“Let’s leave the history aside and focus the Great Qian Dynasty’s rise a thousand years ago!

“Before Great Qian, the world was in blood and chaos for hundreds of years. At that time, the thousands of sects of the Ancient Sages Sector were kings in their own territory. The wars between them never ceased. Not just the ordinary people, even the Cultivators' death rate was unbelievably high. It would not be overstating to say that none of the people at that time were confident to see the end of a day in the morning!"

"It was not until the 'Thunderous Qian Hall', the predecessor of the Great Qian Dynasty, rose unstoppably and unified the world leading eighty sects, that the new dynasty was founded and the peace in the Ancient Sages Sector was restored!

"However, the peace was merely temporary!

"The world was unified by the Thunderous Qian Hall and the eight sects together. Naturally, the contributors must be properly rewarded. At that time, countless sects and Cultivators who disobeyed the Great Qian Dynasty could be swallowed. After clearing all the opposing forces, the ruling class lived in peace for hundreds of years with the resources that the dissidents left.

"However, during the hundreds of years, because of the peace and prosperity, the number of Cultivators grew exponentially!

"Cultivators' longevity is always as impressive as their ambitions. None of them are willing to be below someone else. When a senior brother and a junior brother in a sect are on par with each other but have certain conflict, they will often establish their own branches to avoid the conflict and to expand the influence of their original sect.

"Just like that, after hundreds of years, the eighty sects under the 'Thunderous Qian Hall' continued branching. Many unaffiliated Cultivators in the world founded their own sects, too. Gradually, they have evolved to the almost four thousand sects today!”

Li Yao sniffed, “The more Cultivation sects, the better. What’s wrong about that?”

“There will be nothing wrong if there are infinite resources.”

After a bitter smile, Han Yuantai said, “But there are only limited spiritual energy and treasures in the world. One more Cultivator means a reduction in every Cultivator’s share, and every newly founded Cultivation sect will add to the pressure of the nation. Although the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty seem to be stronger and stronger, they are in fact approaching their doom fast!

“According to the rules established when the Great Qian Dynasty was established, the emperor and the Cultivators shall reign the world together. Cultivation sects have countless privileges!

“We don’t need to talk about the powerful sects such as the ‘Purple Pole Sword Sect’. Let’s just take a medium-sized, regular sect for example. Such a sect often boasts hundreds of core disciples and ten times more non-core ones. It may occupy hundreds of thousands of acres of the finest farmland. The folks that are attached to the sect can be more than a hundred thousand households!

“According to the rules, Cultivation sects have little responsibility in tax and labor service. Once the Cultivation sects claim the farmland, it will be difficult for the nation to levy the tax. If a folk becomes a disciple of a certain sect, or if they are a relative of a disciple of the sect, it will be difficult to force them to serve in the army or carry out other duties when the Cultivation sect is on their back!

“Such a Cultivation sect, after rooting in a certain place for hundreds of years, will monopolize all the powers in the local area. From the local officials to the local celebrities, everybody will be a disciple of the Cultivation sect. The rules of the sect will even replace the law of the nation. Also, thousands of fearsome warriors, who are not engaged in any kind of production activities but focused in building up their body and grasping new techniques, pasture on the Cultivation sect, which make it even more like an independent kingdom!

“Such ‘independent kingdoms’ hide their properties in the most stunning ways, resist the court’s orders to levy tax or to draft soldiers, and often demand privileges from the court under the pretext of famines or natural disasters. What are they if not unhelpful, bloodsucking cancer?

“When the Great Qian Dynasty was just founded, there were only eighty such ‘cancers’, and the nation was still healthy enough to bear them!

“But right now, the cancers are getting greater and great and even giving birth to smaller cancers. They are more and more vicious in stealing the nation’s wealth, and they care less and less about the consequences! How can the Great Qian Dynasty not collapse when its emaciated body is burdened with such four thousand ‘cancers’?”

Li Yao’s eyes glittering for a moment, before he said coldly, “If someone from Ghost Qin such as you sees through it so clearly, why do you think the emperor of the Great Qian Dynasty turns a blind eye to it? Didn’t you say that the ‘Thunderous Qian Hall’ the emperor belongs to was the greatest sect in the past? Can they not come up with any solution to eliminate the ‘cancers’?”

Han Yuantai smiled and shook his head, “The emperor, which should be the supreme authority in the world, naturally wouldn’t be happy to see so many disobedient ‘cancers’ who act on their own in his territory.

“However, it is more than difficult to eliminate the cancers!

“It’s true that the Thunderous Qian Sect was the most powerful sect a thousand years ago. But its best was to compete with twenty Cultivation sects. If the other eighty sects joined their hands, there would be nothing the Thunderous Qian Sect could do about them!

“That was why the Thunderous Qian Sect had to, however unwillingly, cooperate with the eighty Cultivation sects and found the ‘Great Qian Dynasty’ together!

“The Great Qian Dynasty was more like an alliance of the eighty-one sects of the Ancient Sages Sector than a nation. The so-called emperor was nothing more than the leader of the alliance!

“When the Great Qian Dynasty was just founded, the contradiction between the ‘Thunderous Qian Hall’ which the emperor represents and the local sects was not very intense yet, and the two parties were still able to live in peace for hundreds of years.

“But when the contradiction escalated after the local sects expanded beyond control, the Thunderous Qian Hall had declined and lost the capabilities to rectify the situation!”

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao asked, “Now that the Thunderous Qian Hall seized the power as the royal family of the Great Qian Dynasty, they must’ve been entitled to the best resources, techniques and magical equipment. When the local sects were expanding, the royal family should be growing stronger, too. Why was it declining?”

Han Yuantai said in a smile, “It’s understandable that you do not know this, Master. There are mainly three reasons for the royal family’s decline.

“Firstly, every emperor is busy attending to the national affairs. They are often participating in various meetings every day and dealing one problem after another.

“If the emperor is diligent and works on everything in person, he will not have time for training at all. Even if their level is improving, their combat ability is often dropping!

“If the emperor entrusts the national affairs to the ministers and focuses on training himself, it will be a opportunity for the rise of the local sects, because most of the ministers come from other Cultivation sects and not just the Thunderous Qian Hall alone.

“Secondly, the emperor’s throne is the seat of supreme authority. Even if the title is just the nominal leader of the world, many people are still coveting it, too!

“The political struggles within the royal family and the parricidal tragedies have never ceased in the past thousand years! The emperor are not assured when he entrusts the national affairs to the Cultivation sects. But he will be less assured if he entrusts the task to his brother or the other disciples of the Thunderous Qian Hall!

“Ever since the Great Qian Dynasty was founded, the Thunderous Qian Hall and the entire royal family have been mired in the most cruel internal strife. Counting the new emperor who acceded to the throne last year, there have been sixty-six emperors in the Great Qian Dynasty in the past thousand years. On average, every emperor passed away after they were in power for less than twenty years. Their longevity was unbelievably short for Cultivators who can easily live up to two to three hundred years old!

“It was hardly likely that they died of old age, right? Nobody could tell how many clandestine tales are behind their abrupt death!

“Thirdly, the world is the royal family of the Great Qian Dynasty’s world on the surface. Therefore, the emperor is a common foe for all the Cultivation sects. No matter how contradictory the Cultivation sects are amongst themselves, they will join their hands to compete with the emperor when they are challenged by the latter!

“The emperor lives inside the royal palace in the capital city. He does not know the real situation in the nation, and most of his army come from the local areas, too. If he ends up on bad terms with the Cultivation sects, he does not even know for sure whose orders the soldiers will take. How can he expect to fight against the world?

“After a thousand years of struggles, the Great Qian Dynasty has reached a point where every place is brimming with Cultivation sects. The folks only recognize the leaders of the sects but do not know the emperor. When they are in trouble, they will go to the Cultivators, hoping that the Cultivators will ‘serve justice’, instead of reporting the issues to the law enforcement. It is not strange at all that the emperor’s orders cannot leave the capital city, or even the royal palace!”

Deep in thought, Li Yao said, “So to speak, for the emperor, the Cultivation sects are truly the untreatable and obnoxious cancers?”

“Not just for the emperor. They are cancers that are a hundred times more cruel for folks, too!”

Han Yuantai said solemnly, “Most of the members of every sect are the aggressive, murderous soldiers! They do not work or have knowledge about any trade. What they do every day is to train themselves with the ways of killing!

“Besides, their appetite is shocking, too. The food they take are dozens times more than that of the ordinary folks!

“To feed a Cultivator who does not have a job and who practices his techniques all day long, even if he is only in the Refinement Stage, it will still require almost a hundred peasants to slog in their farmland day and night!

“Moreover, the Cultivators cannot be just satisfied with food. They also demand the entertaining facilities, the crystals and minerals, and the marvelous pills and medicines!

“Therefore, when the Cultivators and Cultivation sects of the Great Qian Dynasty expanded crazily like mushrooms after a rain, their exploitation on the folks was even harsher. The folks who were affiliated to the Cultivation sects couldn’t live on any longer!”

Chapter 1369 - Causes of the White Lotus Cult!

The more Li Yao heard, the more surprised he became. He observed Han Yuantai up and down carefully.

Before his dialogue with Han Yuantai, and especially when he suppressed two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators easily, no matter how he reminded himself, he could not help but look down on the ancient Cultivators and feel too confident about himself.

He even found it difficult to consider his trip a perilous mission like his adventure in the Blood Demon Sector. Instead, he felt that he was having fun in an Ancient Cultivator Theme Park.

It never occurred to him that a world of ancient Cultivators that was entirely blocked from the universe could produce such an insightful man as Han Yuantai!

Han Yuantai was already remarkable. What kind of great hero would Han Baling, the magnificent leader of Ghost Qin, be?

What amazing accomplishments would such people have achieved if they were born not in the Ancient Sages Sector, which was enshrouded in the dark nebula, but in the boundless sea of stars outside?

But maybe it was not too late.

Whether Li Yao was willing to or not, the ‘ancient Cultivators’ who dominated the Ancient Sages Sector would break out of the dark nebula and appear in the world of modern Cultivators one way or another!

What would happen when three hundred ancient Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators appeared in the federation, the Imperium, or the Covenant Alliance?

Li Yao calmed himself down and pretended that he did not buy it. He sneered, “You must be exaggerating. The Cultivators in the Southland of Sorcerers have a long history, too. Why aren’t such things happening here?”

“The Southland of Sorcerers is different from the main territory of the Great Qian Dynasty,” Han Yuantai replied very peacefully. “With all due respect, Master, the Southland of Sorcerers is still in an underdeveloped phase. There are few Cultivators in the first place, and the sects here are mostly small, with a membership of ten or so people.

“Take your master Elder Five Despairs for example. He only had two disciples, and he lived in a residence deep inside the mountain. He never had a high demand for the villages and tribes nearby.

“Also, despite the unfavorable climate in the Southland of Sorcerers, the yields of farmlands here are high enough for the ordinary people. If they are left with no choice, they can always feed on bananas if crops cannot be grown.

“Therefore, while the rest of the world is plagued by wars and famines, the Southland of Sorcerers is a unique, peaceful place!”

Li Yao was rendered speechless for a moment.

Although Han Yuantai was from the northern prairies, he truly had a lot of general knowledge about the world.

The Southland of Sorcerers was a typical tropical and subtropical rainforest. It seemed unlikely for a prosperous civilization to develop here. But if the locals did not have a high requirement on their living conditions, it was easy for them to survive by feeding on the bananas, cassava, and jackfruit.

Therefore, although most of the barbarian Cultivators looked ugly and creepy, even if they took one person for food every day, they would be eating only three to five hundred in a year.

But it was nothing unusual for a million people to be killed in a famine caused by a great war.

Therefore, it might be inappropriate to judge a regime superficially.

Li Yao sighed to himself and raised his eyebrows. “Is the rest of the Great Qian Dynasty different?”

“Of course. For ordinary people, the environment in the Great Qian Dynasty’s main territory is much harsher than in the Southland of Sorcerers,” Han Yuantai replied unhurriedly. “There are a hundred times more Cultivators in the Great Qian Dynasty than in the Southland of Sorcerers. Also, they are highly organized, greedy, and manipulative. Their demands on the folks are a hundred times higher than the barbarian Cultivators’!

“In the states of the Great Qian Dynasty occupied by the Cultivation sects, even including the fertile land of honey and milk in the southeast, the folks are merely struggling to survive under the oppression of the Cultivation sects!”

“Really?” Li Yao blinked and said, “I’m told that the southeast of Great Qian is the land with the most abundant spiritual energy. Of the hundred and eight natural paradises in the Ancient Sages Sector, more than half are in the southeast. How can the people’s lives be difficult?”

“You might not know the details, Master.” After a chuckle, Han Yuantai said, “It is exactly because the land in the southeast is too fertile that people’s lives are difficult!”

“Oh?” Li Yao was truly puzzled this time. “How so?”

“It’s simple. Because of the land is brimming with spiritual energy, naturally, the crops in the land belong to the Cultivators. How can the ordinary folks deserve them?

“In the southeast, near the towns occupied by the Cultivation sects, of every fifteen acres of farmland, at least seven are dedicated to the ‘spiritual rice’ that is specially grown as food for the Cultivators. Such rice grains are as large as pearls and contain bountiful spiritual energy. They are also known as Jade Crystal Pellets. Because of food’s contribution to the buildup of Cultivation and the refill of spiritual energy, it is the most common food in the Cultivation sects.

“Since the Jade Crystal Pellet has so many merits, the ordinary folks who grow it are of course unqualified to enjoy it. All the Cultivation sects forbid such folks from eating a single Jade Crystal Pellet!

“Also, they are not able to eat such food even if they want to. The intense spiritual energy inside the food can only be dissolved with Cultivation arts in order to provide nutrition.

“If the ordinary people eat the food accidentally, one grain of the rice will be enough to blow up their stomach and kill them!”

“What about the other eight acres?” Li Yao asked.

“The Cultivators can’t just feed on rice.” Han Yuantai smiled. “The remaining land will be used to grow ingredients for pills, fodder for rare animals, and raw materials for the Cultivators’ robes.

“As a result, most of the produce of the fifteen acres of land are for the Cultivation sects. What the folks have is just half an acre.”

Li Yao was dazed. “Only half an acre?”

“Not half an acre,” Han Yuantai said. “For the local Cultivation sects, however much they despise the emperor of the Great Qian Dynasty, they have to submit taxes more or less. Most of the taxes, as you can imagine, are from the half acre of land.

“The Jade Crystal Pellet is a good thing. With the Jade Crystal Pellet, the training will be very efficient. Also, together with the enhancement of the natural paradises, the Cultivators in the southeast are larger in number and stronger on average. The more Cultivators and the stronger they are, the higher the demand on Jade Crystal Pellets. The more Jade Crystal Pellets that they eat, the more Cultivators. The more Cultivators, the greater the consumption of the Jade Crystal Pellets… When do you think such a vicious cycle will end, Master?”

Lost for words, Li Yao furrowed his brows.

“Therefore, even in the prosperous land in the southeast, where people can squeeze oil out of the soil, the folks are starved every year and can barely make ends meet. Why else do you think the Riot of White Lotus broke out?”

His interest piqued, Li Yao craned his neck and asked, “I’ve heard of the White Lotus Cult recently. What is it exactly? I’m told that it was founded by a woman named ‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu, who claimed to be ‘mother of all ghosts’. Is she really so tough?”

Han Yuantai nodded and said, “‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu is certainly the troublesome leader of spectral Cultivators in the Ancient Sages Sector. She is definitely among the top ten experts of the Ancient Sages Sector. Even my brother Han Baling thinks very highly of her!

“However, the rise of the ‘mother’ was merely the doing of the Cultivators in the southeast themselves.

“As I said earlier, the Cultivation sects in the southeast, in order to raise more Cultivators, expanded the coverage of the ‘Jade Crystal Pellet’ and the marvelous herbs in the farmland. Ninety percent of the yields of the farmland were unenjoyable for the ordinary people. As a result, the folks in the southeast were hungry all year long. When there was anything wrong with the climate, famines would break out.

“During a famine, a person might resort to anything when they are too hungry. Although knowing that eating the Jade Crystal Pellets meant death, a lot of folks still couldn’t bear the temptation of a round, fragrant Jade Crystal Pellet.

“They would die of starvation if they did not take the food, and they would be killed because their stomach was blown up if they did. Therefore, they might as well take the food and die with a full belly!

“Such things happened all the time, but however gory the situation was, the Cultivators would not plant any crops edible for ordinary people on their precious land at the risk of starving themselves!

“However, it never occurred to the Cultivators that the Jade Crystal Pellet, as a supreme hybrid strain of rice only invented hundreds of years ago, had an expected feature.

“The Jade Crystal Pellet boasts immense spiritual energy. Although the ordinary people would be killed because they could not digest the spiritual energy, it would nurture their soul when they were dying and make their souls purer and stronger. Their odds of being transformed into spectral Cultivators was significantly higher!

“Haha. After a famine, it was common for countless folks to die because they stole the Jade Crystal Pellet as food. Corpses whose guts were flowing on the ground were left everywhere. However, there were countless ghosts full of hatred, too!

“Those folks were harmless ants who posed absolutely no threat to the Cultivators when they were alive. However, the Jade Crystal Pellet had nourished their soul and endowed them with the capability of inhaling and exhaling natural spiritual energy.

“Also, because of their miserable death, their hate often lingered on in their soul, turning them into very troublesome, haunting ghosts!

“The White Lotus Cult is an organization made of the haunting ghosts and their families.

“Because the Jade Crystal Pellet cleansed their soul, they were able to keep part of their memories when they were alive, unlike the more common ghosts that kill anyone randomly they met. They still recognized their family, and they blamed the Cultivation sects for their misfortune!

“Naturally, the haunting ghosts that transformed from the ordinary people were the spectral Cultivators of the lowest level. Even the Cultivators in the Refinement Stage could kill dozens of them easily. Therefore, the Cultivation sects did not think much of it in the beginning.

“However, the famines in the southeast would never end as long as the coverage of the Jade Crystal Pellet and marvelous herbs was not reduced. There would only be more and more haunting ghosts.

“A million haunting ghosts are savaging the southeast today. Even if the Cultivation sects could eliminate 999,999 of them, the lucky survivor would absorb the hatred of their companions and grow even stronger!

“It is the same logic as how you raise the ‘king of insects’ in the Southland of Sorcerers. When many insects are kept in the same cage for elimination, the last survivor will certainly be the strongest of all!

“Mother White Lotus Wan Mingzhu is deservedly known as the mother of all ghosts, born after absorbing the hatred of a million haunting ghosts!”

Chapter 1370 - Heaven Battering Fiendish King

Li Yao was fascinated.

On his way there, from the chitchat between the father and the daughter of the Ling family and the conversation among the barbarian Cultivators, he had heard the names of the top Cultivators. ‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu was the one with the highest frequency.

However, the barbarian Cultivators did not know much about the outside world, and Ling Shoujing and Ling Lanyin, because of their biased stance, decried Wan Mingzhu as a brutal, hideous ghost queen while mentioning how exactly the ‘ghost queen’ rose in the southeast where the Cultivators were most powerful.

It was the first time that Li Yao had heard the story from a different perspective. Whether it was true or not, it was refreshing enough.

“The White Lotus Cult already thrived quietly in the southeast almost eighty years ago,” Han Yuantai said. “The Cultivators labeled the White Lotus Cult as unpardonable devils. Claiming that they were ‘slaying evil and serving justice’, they suppressed the White Lotus Cult cruelly and broke into the headquarters of the White Lotus Cult hundreds of times!

“However, soon after the Cultivators announced that the White Lotus Cult had been completely demolished, new haunting ghosts of the White Lotus Cult were generated in the fertile land that was brimming with Jade Crystal Pellets again!

“Mother White Lotus herself had been executed by multiple Cultivators almost a hundred times. However, before long, she would be reincarnated in the hatred of the public again!

“The southeast is of paramount importance to the Great Qian Dynasty. As you have mentioned yourself, Master, half of the hundred and eight natural paradises of the Ancient Sages Sector are in the southeast. Almost all the powerful sects have established important branches if not their headquarters in the southeast!

“The southeast is the world of Cultivators. Why has it been haunted by so many ghosts for decades? How has the ghost queen trained enough to become one of the top ten experts in the world? Is it not a sign that the Great Qian Dynasty is on the brink of its doom?”

Li Yao slightly nodded. “Well…”

Observing his face, Han Yuantai thought that the old monster was changing his mind. Overjoyed and excited, he raised his voice and said, “The situation in the southeast is relatively better. A thousand Cultivation sects are there to suppress the enemy after all. The Riot of the White Lotus Cult often dies as quickly as it appears. The overall peace can be sustained for now.

“However, in the northwest of the Great Qian Dynasty, ‘Heaven Battering King’ Qi Changsheng’s bandits are utterly untamable!”

Li Yao nodded and said, “I’ve heard the name of Heaven Battering King Qi Changsheng a lot, too. I’m told that he is also a super expert who rose to fame during my decades of seclusion. He is even more dominating than Mother White Lotus Wan Mingzhu. What’s his background exactly?”

Han Yuantai burst into laughter. “He doesn’t have any background at all! He was just a soil rat! However, during such a world-shifting era, one’s background is the least decisive factor for one’s success. Everybody can achieve great things with bravery and determination!

“The northwest of the Great Qian Dynasty used to be the center of the Ancient Sages Sector a hundred thousand years ago. Dozens of ancient dynasties thrived around the place, but after such a long time, the hundreds of thousands of years of consumption have almost drained all the spiritual energy. It is now a poor and desolate land with barely any resources.

“The folks in the southeast are still ‘qualified’ to be exploited by the Cultivation sects, but in the northwest, they do not even stand a chance to be exploited because there is barely any land, however infertile it is, in this area!

“Of all the barren land, the relatively acceptable part is all under the control of the Cultivation sects. Not the slightest scrap of land will be shared with the ordinary folks.

“A lot of folks starve even when the climate is ideal. You can imagine how serious the famines are when there’s a natural disaster!

“When there’s a famine, the peasants are forced to leave their homes and gather into locust-like mobs. If they plunder any food in their foray, they will survive one more day. When they are too hungry, they are even bold enough to attack the headquarters of the Cultivation sects and even lunge at the mighty Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators!”

“The hungry folks in the southeast boast some combat ability after they are transformed into haunting ghosts by the Jade Crystal Pellets,” Li Yao sneered, “but the northwest peasants have no access to the Jade Crystal Pellets, do they? Then, what can a million ravenous peasants do to the impenetrable Cultivation sects and the marvelous Cultivators?”

Han Yuantai nodded heavily. “That’s exactly what the court and the Cultivators thought in the beginning, Master. Therefore, for decades, their attention was focused on the White Lotus Cult in the southeast. After all, however many homeless peasants there were in the northwest, they were still ordinary people. Ordinary people attacking the headquarters of the Cultivation sects was like eggs hitting rocks. It’s just a joke!

“However, it would appear that the Great Qian Dynasty is truly doomed because the most bizarre things happened!

“The northwest of the Great Qian Dynasty was the earliest prosperous place in the Ancient Sages Sector. The Cloud Qin Empire, the first unified dynasty in the Ancient Sages Sector, rose from the northwest a hundred thousand years ago!

“Dozens of dynasties and countless traditional sects had been headquartered in the northwest. There were too many tombs, residences, relics, and secret treasures below the ground there, many of which escaped the explorers’ attention after millenniums of excavation!

“Therefore, quite a few people in the northwest lived in ancient tombs, residences, and relics. The grave robbers are known as ‘soil rats’!

“The ancient tombs, especially those of high-level Cultivators, were often deployed in the best terrain, secured by special rune arrays. The magical equipment of the tomb owner was often buried together with them, too. If…”

“You are fooling me again,” Li Yao interrupted coldly. “The tombs of the high-level Cultivators must be protected by the most powerful barriers. Even a Cultivator might be killed if they broke in recklessly. How can an ordinary grave robber come and go freely?”

“It is, of course, the case for the tombs in the recent ten thousand years,” Han Yuantai explained, “but even the strongest Cultivator cannot resist the passage of time!

“Spiritual energy can be vaporized, and venom may go dry. The traps will decay and collapse. For the solidest tombs a hundred thousand years ago, one earthquake might have been enough to trigger and deactivate all the traps inside, exposing the central room inside the tomb. If fortunate enough, even an ordinary person can go into the tomb and return with full loads easily.”

Li Yao thought for a moment and realized that it did make sense.

He had excavated quite a lot of ancient relics himself. The underground fortress of the Star Ocean Imperium on Spider Den, ‘Chaos’ Ba Yanzhi’s mausoleum, and even Kunlun had all been in serious states of disrepair.

That was why the latecomers were able to enter easily and retreat in one piece.

“Even if the soil rats who rob those tombs are ordinary people in the beginning, after activities in such tombs filled with spiritual energy for a long time, it is possible for them to become Cultivators if they are lucky enough to survive!

“Heaven Battering King Qi Changsheng was such a soil rat in the beginning.

“It was also one of the few professions that could provide enough food for a person in the northwest.

“Rumors among the Cultivators have it that he accidentally discovered an ancient tomb from ninety thousand years ago whose owner had turned into a deadly wraith.

“Then, there’s no telling what incidents Qi Changsheng went through in the tomb, or maybe it was because something in him earned the deadly wraith’s appreciation, but he was granted an indestructible body afterward!

“The profession of soil rat was certainly not intolerable for any Cultivation sect.

“Exploring the relics is the Cultivators’ privilege. If the filthy ordinary people are qualified to claim the ancient relics, won’t everything fall into disorder?

“Therefore, Qi Changsheng soon became a brutal bandit wanted by almost a hundred sects in the northwest!

“The guy truly deserved to be called a brutal bandit. Before he grasped the ‘Thousand Miles of Bare Land’ technique, his most dominating technique, he was surrounded by hundreds of Cultivators. However, he fought a bloody way out with a broken saber and escaped!

“It’s said that the dry land in the dozens of square kilometers was dyed red after the battle. The bloody cloud soared up and did not fade away until three days later. It was truly a breathtaking battle!

“After breaking out of the siege, Qi Changsheng decided that he should pursue further. He summoned all the soil rats in the northwest and joined the army of the homeless peasants!

“The soil rats who earned their living in the ancient tombs certainly had their own expertise. Their participation significantly improved the capabilities of the army of the homeless peasants. After countless sacrifices, they were finally able to break into the headquarters of the first Cultivation sect!

“Everything became easier after the headquarters were broken into!

“The homeless peasants claimed all the crystals, magical equipment, herbs, Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, and Cultivation arts in the Cultivation sects!

“A lot of Cultivators were captured by Qi Changsheng, too!

“Qi Changsheng intentionally kept the low-level disciples in the sect alive and asked them to mince the high-level Cultivators in the sect into pieces and eat the flesh!

“Even if the high-level Cultivators had already been killed by Qi Changsheng, the disciples were still forced to cut up their flesh and eat it!

“Whoever disobeyed the order would be minced immediately, and their flesh would be divided between everyone, too!

“Slaying their seniors and even swallowing their senior’s flesh were the greatest felonies. Nobody could save the low-level Cultivators!

“Henceforth, the low-level Cultivators could only work for Qi Changsheng because they would not be embraced by any Cultivation sect!

“In the meantime, he released false messages and pretended that he was still attacking the Cultivation sect, attracting the other sects to reinforce it.

“While keeping the homeless peasants in the headquarters as bait, Qi Changsheng led the low-level Cultivators who had just joined him and ambushed the headquarters of the reinforcing sects when they had dispatched their available forces to save the sect being attacked!

“After another Cultivation sect was breached, he did exactly the same. The captives were divided into two parts. The low-level Cultivators were asked to surround the high-level Cultivators and join his gang after they committed the unpardonable felony!

“After they joined the gang, they were coerced into attacking the nest of the third Cultivation sect without any breaks!

“Just like that, the army of low-level Cultivators under Qi Changsheng’s command snowballed and swept across the entire northwest!

“When the Cultivators who reinforced the first sect finally annihilated all the homeless peasants that he had intentionally left there, Qi Changsheng had already broken into the nests of twelve Cultivation sects. By plundering the crystals, magical equipment, Cultivation arts, and low-level

Cultivators, he turned the previous mob into a brutal army of Cultivators, the Heaven Battering Army!”

Chapter 1371 - Eunuch's Conspirators!

Although knowing that Han Yuantai could have been exaggerating, Li Yao was still quite shocked by the rise of ‘Heaven Battering King’ Qi Changsheng.

None of the guys who raised a storm of blood in the world were easy to deal with!

“This is about the situation right now. The White Lotus Cult is thriving in the southeast, and the Heaven Battering Army is raging in the northwest. Cloud Qin is also threatening from the north. The Great Qian Dynasty is already shaking despite its ostensible magnificence!

“At such a moment of life and death, the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty still do not change. They are too addicted to their internal strife to join their hands to revive Great Qian!”

“With the great enemies around, are the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty still busy dealing with each other?” Li Yao frowned harder.

“Great enemies?” Holding back his laughter, Han Yuantai asked, “If I may ask you, Master, who do you think the greatest enemy for the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty is?”

Li Yao pondered for a moment and replied, “There cannot be two monarchs. If I were the emperor, I would certainly not tolerate the local magnates who develop their sects into independent kingdoms. Therefore, the emperor of the Great Qian Dynasty is the greatest enemy for the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty!”

Han Yuantai shook his head.

“The White Lotus Cult and the Heaven Battering Army are causing trouble in southeast and northwest.” Li Yao tried again. “If they work together, it’s possible that they can split the nation apart. They are the archenemies of the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty!”

Han Yuantai shook his head again.

“Are you saying that Ghost Qin is the greatest enemy for them?” Li Yao asked angrily.

Han Yuantai shook his head and laughed. “Not the emperor, not the White Lotus Cult or the Heaven Battering Army, not Cloud Qin. The greatest enemy for the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty is themselves!”

Li Yao stared at him coldly without blinking.

Han Yuantai found it hard to breathe under Li Yao’s gaze, but he gritted his teeth to explain, “As I recall, Master, you pointed it out earlier that the most important things for a Cultivator are wealth, residence, arts, and partners, or in short, resources!

“One can only train oneself with spiritual energy, crystals, magical equipment, Cultivation arts, and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. Without resources, even the highest aptitude will mean nothing!

“Therefore, for every Cultivation sect, it is their natural instinct to defend the resources that they have and gain as many more resources as possible.

“Then, here comes the question. Where are most of the wealth, residence, arts, and partners concentrated?

“The whole world is the emperor’s domain. Naturally, the royal family has tremendous resources. However, the royal family has been declining for hundreds of years now. All the resources are running dry. Also, the target is too obvious. Whoever dares to rob them may be attacked by everybody else!

“The White Lotus Cult is just a bunch of ghosts who train themselves by absorbing other people’s hatred, which is totally different from the prevailing methodology among the Cultivators. They have also been eliminated dozens of times. How many resources can they have?

“The Heaven Battering Army is a horde of bandits. After every raid, they will consume all the resources on the spot. Then, they will be as poor as before!

“The situation is similar in Cloud Qin. The Dark Cloud Prairies are a bitter cold land with barely any natural paradises. The Cultivators from the Dark Cloud Prairies are best known for their dearth of belongings. Other than the Dragon Wolves, few items here are worth hunting!

“Fighting the White Lotus Cult, the Heaven Battering Army, and Cloud Qin will earn the Cultivation sects little. After fierce battles, even at the risk of sacrificing a few Core Formation Stage Cultivators or Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, they may get nothing in the end. So, why bother?

“Some people do risky businesses, but no one will do unrewarding businesses. Waging a war upon the White Lotus

Cult, the Heaven Battering Army, or Cloud Qin is one such unrewarding business. Therefore, the Cultivators from the ‘noble sects’ of the Great Qian Dynasty will never consider us as targets unless we are asking for their trouble.

“You know what I’m getting now, Master, don’t you?

“The majority of the wealth, residences, arts, and partners in the entire Ancient Sages Sector lie in the hands of the noble sects!

“For the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty, eighty sects split the wealth, residences, arts, and partners in the beginning. Naturally, their days were happy and carefree. But right now, almost four thousand sects are splitting the same wealth, residences, arts, and partners. There are more wolves, but there is less meat. It is not hard to imagine what a bad relationship those sects are in!

“Therefore, despite the ostensible peace, the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty are fighting each other in the most brutal way in secret!”

“Since they claim to be noble sects,” Li Yao said solemnly, “how can they fight each other in the most brutal way? They cannot just rob other people of their treasures, can they?”

“Cronyism, vilification, frame-up. There are always approaches!” Han Yuantai smiled. “You may not believe my empty talk, so let me give you a real-life example!

“As you know, Master, I am the leader of the Behemothic Unit, one of the eight units of Cloud Qin. I am also Han Baling’s brother. I’m a famous guy in the Dark Cloud Prairies.

“Then, why was I bold enough to sneak into the southeast crossing such a long way? Was I not worried that the

Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty would send out a lot of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators to kill me?”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes. “Right. My appearance was not within your expectations. So, you were confident that you would return safe and sound. Why?”

“Hahaha!” Han Yuantai laughed and said, “Because I knew that nobody else except for the Ling family and the Purple Pole Sword Sect would carry out the appeasing mission, and even the Purple Pole Sword Sect would not deploy all its experts. It would be their best to send out a Cultivator at the peak of the Core Formation Stage and one in the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage!

“That’s because many people within the Great Qian Dynasty did not want the mission to succeed, or rather, they intentionally wanted it to fail so that the Ling family would be crushed. Then, the Ling family’s fall would be an opening for them to deal with the Purple Pole Sword Sect, the best sword sect in the world, allowing them to split the wealth, residences, arts, and partners under the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s control!”

“Oh?” Li Yao’s eyes shuddered, and he sniffed heavily. “The Purple Pole Sword Sect has been passed on for almost a thousand years. It is one of the most powerful sects in the world. Why is it hated by so many people? There must be a reason, mustn’t there?”

“Of course there is.” After a mysterious smile, Han Yuantai said, “It is because the Purple Pole Sword Sect, and the noble families under the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s protection including the Ling family, are all the eunuch’s conspirators!”

“The eunuch’s conspirators…” Li Yao’s acting skills were being tested. He felt like vomiting blood.

“It all started with Emperor Qiyuan of the Great Qian Dynasty, who passed away last year,” Han Yuantai said unhurriedly. “As I said just now, if the emperor is too busy handling the complicated national affairs, he will have no time to train himself, and his own strength will decline. Not only will he be unable to intimidate the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the major sects, it will also be possible for them to ‘die of natural causes’ without a good reason!

“On the other hand, if the emperor is ambitious enough to grow into a top expert to intimidate the local Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, he will have to entrust national affairs to someone else.

“It is not an option to entrust them to the ministers because most of the ministers originate from the local sects. All they think of is how to earn benefits for their own sect.

“It is not an option to entrust them to the brothers, either. Who can resist the temptation of the emperor’s throne? If he raises his brothers’ ambitions, won’t he be inviting trouble for himself?

“So, with everything in consideration, the emperor can only entrust the national affairs to one group of people—the eunuchs around him!

“Eunuchs do not belong to any sect. They are loyal to the emperor. They do not have offspring. It doesn’t matter at all however ambitious they are. In the eyes of the emperor, they are more trustworthy than ministers and brothers.

“Therefore, of the sixty-six emperors of the Great Qian Dynasty, those who set their life goal as grasping the extraordinary arts have almost all been assisted by the eunuchs, who seized great power!

"It was exactly the case when Emperor Qiyuan was on the throne.

"As a famous training maniac, he dedicated himself to the marvelous techniques. He considered Emperor Wu as his role model and intended to suppress all the sects with unstoppable personal strength by advancing into the Divinity Transformation Stage.

"He would train himself day and night and had no time to deal with national affairs after all. Therefore, he raised a spokesperson for him in the court, Wang Xi, the Lead Eunuch!"

"Wang Xi…" Li Yao chewed on the name silently.

The name sounded rather plain, but since Han Yuantai had brought up the name to waste his time, the guy must have been a formidable man on par with Mother White Lotus Wan Mingzhu and Heaven Battering King Qi Changsheng!

As he expected, Han Yuantai said, "A lot of powerful eunuchs have appeared in the Great Qian Dynasty before. The Cultivation sects knew what the emperor was interested in and could not push him too far. Therefore, they simply conspired with the eunuchs and deceived the emperor together. Not much trouble was ever caused.

"So, after Wang Xi distinguished himself, the Cultivation sects never thought too highly of him and coerced him in the old way, tempting him to stand on their side.

"However, Wang Xi was no ordinary eunuch. His wisdom, determination, planning, and Cultivation were among the best!

“Pretending to be awed by the Cultivation sects and greedy about fame and fortune, Wang Xi agreed to cooperate with them. He informed them of the emperor’s every action and turned a blind eye to their unlawful doings in their territory.

“But in secret, he tried to intensify the conflict among multiple Cultivation sects through his diplomacy skills, leading to quite a few clandestine competitions among the sects!

“He even established an agency of assassination and espionage known as ‘Ghost Character’ under the connivance of many Cultivation sects to help those sects settle the troubles that were best kept a secret.

“Just like that, Wang Xi partly diminished the power of the major sects by forcing them into internal strife and partly built up an underground organization. He also grasped countless secrets of the famous sects. With his broken body, he manipulated the entire world!

“When the time was right and he finally revealed what he really was, the Cultivation sects finally discovered that not only did the inconspicuous, ballless eunuch boast countless loyal subordinates, he was also an incredible swordsman himself with an unbelievably high Cultivation!”

“What!” Li Yao finally could not help it and exclaimed, “A eunuch turned out to be an incredible swordsman?”

“Exactly.” After a bitter smile, Han Yuantai said, “The wretched eunuch was in fact one of the strongest sword Cultivators in the world. Even his enemies had to admit that, however unwillingly. That is the first facet of Wang Xi’s formidability!”

Chapter 1372 - Bloodless and Tearless Years!

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and said, “So to speak, Wang Xi is truly a rather remarkable man. Not only is he good at politics and has founded ‘Ghost Character’ in secret, he also boasts extraordinary sword arts himself… After hearing what you’ve said, even I feel eager to meet the man!”

“For the emperors of the Great Qian Dynasty, if they are focused on training, they will often handle the national affairs through their trusted eunuchs,” Han Yuantai further explained. “On the other hand, if the emperors dedicate themselves to national affairs, in case they die without a good reason, they will also recruit certain imperial bodyguards. Naturally, the eunuchs who tend to them day and night are the best candidates for the imperial bodyguards!

“Therefore, after a thousand years, many powerful eunuchs who were adept at politics emerged in the Great Qian Dynasty, but many of the eunuchs boasted rather extraordinary personal strength themselves!

“When the Thunderous Qian Hall rose and established the Great Qian Dynasty, almost a thousand sects were demolished. Most of the secret treasures and magical equipment of those sects were accumulated in the royal family’s private treasury. It was not wrong at all for the emperor to take out some of the techniques for the eunuchs around him to practice!

“Since those eunuchs had no sects or offspring, who else could they pass on their experience in training or their self-invented arts to but the younger eunuchs around them?

“Just like that, the older eunuchs taught the younger eunuchs, and the younger eunuchs taught the even younger eunuchs. After dozens of generations, they managed to combine the essence of training of hundreds of sects from previous dynasties and conclude a set of extremely mysterious arts that were particularly suitable for their broken bodies. That arts were known as ‘Apparitional Night’.

“Wang Xi possessed the experience that the imperial bodyguards had left for dozens of generations. He was a peak expert who had Cultivated the ‘Apparitional Night’ technique to the highest level and knew all the relevant techniques!

“Before Wang Xi, most of the eunuchs hid themselves inside the royal palace and hardly showed up in the world of Cultivators. They merely worked as the emperor’s bodyguards and helped the emperor train himself.

“Because of their bodies, they were mostly quite self-loathing. Their lineage was quite clandestine, too. No one from the outside world had ever learned of their existence!

“It was not until Wang Xi rose to power that the many Cultivation sects learned of the existence of ‘Apparitional Night’ and realized how strong the eunuch experts inside the royal palace were!

“Wang Xi had hidden his claws and teeth for decades and behaved obediently toward the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty for a simple purpose, which was to instigate trouble among the Cultivators, diminish the capabilities of the major sects, and even make the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators kill each other or pursue the tantalizing immortality. Eventually, the emperor would be able to be the real master of the world!”

Li Yao laughed. “So, Wang Xi was a loyal man?”

Han Yuantai sniffed. “He might’ve been loyal to Emperor Qiyuan, and part of his purpose was achieved, too! But as a result, the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty were divided, and the conflicts among them were more intense than ever, which created a great opportunity for the White Lotus Cult, the Heaven Battering Army, and Cloud Qin! If we think that way, was Wang Xi a loyal subordinate or a great villain? Heaven only knows!”

Li Yao thought for a moment and realized that it did make sense. If the emperor intended to gather power, he would have to weaken the local sects, but if the local sects were too weak, the entire Great Qian Dynasty would be dying. It was a move that would bring as many losses as gains and should not be employed easily.

“Did the major sects follow Wang Xi’s words so obediently? Did they simply attack each other when Wang Xi asked them to?”

“On one hand,” Han Yuantai said, “it was because Wang Xi’s instigation was too thorough and flawless, but more importantly, it was because the conflict due to ‘wealth, residences, arts, and partners’ among the major sects had already reached an extreme and become utterly unmitigable.

“The relationship among the major sects was like an unstoppable flood. What Wang Xi did was merely give it a push!”

“I’m often told that the Southland of Sorcerers is an uncivilized place and the barbarian Cultivators are primitive savages, while the Cultivators from central plateaus value law and morals. I never know that this is the reality!” Li Yao sneered.

“Law and morals? Hahahaha!” Han Yuantai slapped his thigh and laughed. “Have you ever heard this saying before, Master? When you have a marvelous weapon, you will be tempted to kill someone with it. Even an ordinary farmer will be eager to try his newly-purchased saber after he buys one.

“Besides, every Cultivation sect keeps a huge bunch of disciples who do not have jobs but are fully devoted to training! Those disciples can eat half a bull for a single meal, blow apart a rock with a single punch, and cut off a couple of heads the moment after they launch their flying swords. Yet, other than fighting and killing, they are capable of and interested in nothing! Do you want to release the young, disobedient disciples to fight outsiders or keep them within the sect to fight themselves?

“If law and morals are truly valued, why are they keeping so many disciples who don’t work but only kill? ‘Morals’ cannot feed anyone!

“All in all, it is the Jade Crystal Pellet all over again. The more disciples a Cultivation sect has, the more resources they will demand. In order to secure more resources, they will have to recruit even more ferocious disciples. It is an unending loop!

“All the sects have been caught in such a loop. Whoever jumps out of the loop will be swallowed by others because they are incapable of protecting themselves! Such a vicious cycle leads to the merciless, bloodless, and tearless years we are in. Their so-called morals are just bullsh*t!”

Li Yao was silent for a long time. Then, after a long sigh, he said, “Judging from your tone, Wang Xi lost his power in the end, didn’t he?”

“Exactly.” Han Yuantai nodded. “Everything wanes after it waxes. After Wang Xi fully revealed his sharpness, he was able to suppress the sects in the world, but the divided Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty were unified again in secret.

“Also, as his Cultivation and his power increased, and when he was flattered by countless sects, Wang Xi’s own state of mind might’ve gone through subtle changes, too. He was no longer satisfied with being Emperor Qiyuan’s puppet.

“There’s no telling what kind of breathtaking drama happened among the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty, Wang Xi, and Emperor Qiyuan later.

“But eventually, after Wang Xi intimidated the world for almost ten years with his unparalleled power, Emperor Qiyuan, his greatest reliance, died abruptly at the beginning of last year!

“Wang Xi was perhaps really loyal to Emperor Qiyuan and never thought of betraying him, but he was not necessarily so loyal to the new emperor. He was even taking advantage of the new emperor’s young age and regarded the new emperor as his puppet instead.

“This time, he made the same mistake as the Cultivation sects did in the past. He underestimated the new emperor and never realized that the young monarch was as ambitious as him, not a man who was content with being a puppet or below anyone!

“As powerful as Wang Xi was, his position had to be justified by his respect for the emperor.

“When the emperor and the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty both opposed him, there was no way that he could resist it. His ten years of hard work completely collapsed half a year after Emperor Qiyuan died abruptly!

“However, the man was a top-tier swordsman after all. He was also prudent and knew the importance of keeping retreats. After he was forced to resign, he vanished into thin air before the emperor and the Cultivators hunted him!

“Not only did Wang Xi run away, he also stole tremendous magical equipment, secret arts, and medicines from the emperor’s personal treasury, as well as all the wealth that he had accumulated in the past decade. More importantly, the secrets about the major sects that he had collected through the espionage agency ‘Ghost Character’ were still under his control!

“The magical equipment, secret arts, medicines, and wealth might not be important, but the stinky, clandestine secrets in Wang Xi’s hands were like daggers pressed against the backs of the major Cultivators!

“Therefore, Wang Xi is now the public enemy of every Cultivator in the Great Qian Dynasty. No sect does not want him dead! It’s a shame that they do not even know where Wang Xi is hiding!

“Wang Xi, the Lead Eunuch; Wan Mingzhu, Mother White Lotus; Qi Changsheng, the Heaven Battering King; and my brother Han Baling, regent of Cloud Qin. They are the four greatest headaches for the Great Qian Dynasty known as the Four Rapscallions! In fact, if the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty were not divided and asking for their own doom, what could the Four Rapscallions do however brutal they were?”

Li Yao pondered to himself for a long time before he asked, “Are the Purple Pole Sword Sect and the Ling family really Wang Xi’s subordinates?”

Han Yuantai smiled. “Too many things were involved in Wang Xi’s fall. The Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty started their internal strife again with the court as their battlefield. They are accusing each other of being the ‘eunuch’s conspirators’, in exactly the same way as they barraged their dissidents before!

“If they are talking about the eunuch’s conspirators, which of the sects were absolutely not connected with him during the ten years that Wang Xi was in power? The sects that were determined to go against him have long been annihilated by the sects that were working with him!

“As for the Purple Pole Sword Sect, they are just not very lucky!

“Wang Xi was an extraordinary swordsman. Naturally, he was interested in the mysteries of the sword. The Purple Pole Sword Sect is the best sword sect in the world. Naturally, there are countless sword art classics and famous sword Cultivators in the sect!

“Therefore, when Wang Xi was in power, he often visited the Purple Pole Sword Sect to discuss sword arts with them. With his power and Cultivation at that time, could the Purple Pole Sword Sect turn him down?

“Therefore, on the surface, the Purple Pole Sword Sect was more intimate with Wang Xi than other sects were.

“But after Wang Xi’s fall, it became the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s greatest sin!”

Chapter 1373 - Wolf, Sheep, and Grass

Han Yuantai paused for a moment and observed, only to discover that the ‘old monster’ was deep in thought, apparently hooked by what he was talking about. Excited, he grew even more confident. “As the saying goes, if a man falls once, all will tread on him. The major sects went through all the trouble to crush the eunuch and his conspirators, but before they split the gains left by the eunuch and his conspirators, Wang Xi had packed up all the treasures, leaving absolutely nothing for them! At this moment, if they did not kill a scapegoat and enjoy its blood and meat, everybody would be starving!

“If we get to the bottom of it, it doesn’t matter whether or not the Purple Pole Sword Sect is Wang Xi’s conspirator. What matters is that it boasts astronomical resources as the best sword sect in the world. If the Purple Pole Sword Sect is defeated, its body will sustain the other major sects for quite a long while!

“It’s just like after a blizzard on the northern prairies, the cold, hungry wolves warm each other in a pack while observing their companions. If any of their companions show any weakness, they will attack them immediately and feed on their flesh and blood until the next companion shows weakness!

“However, the Purple Pole Sword Sect is the best sword sect in the world after all. It is not so easy to deal with.

“That’s why the major sects began with the Ling family, a family affiliated with the Purple Pole Sword Sect. They gave the Ling family a mission that was barely accomplishable. If the Ling family did fail and even raise a riot in the Southland of Sorcerers, it would’ve been a great excuse to attack the Purple Pole Sword Sect. They could even blame the Purple Pole Sword Sect for ‘conspiring with Wang Xi and rebelling in the Southland of Sorcerers’. In that case, the Purple Pole Sword Sect would certainly be doomed!

“The Purple Pole Sword Sect understood the situation clearly.

“However, most of the experts of the sect had to stay in the headquarters to keep an eye on the covetous sects nearby. Therefore, they could only spare two young, inexperienced Cultivators, one at the peak of the Core Formation Stage and the other in the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage, for the mission!

“Their arrangement was within my brother Han Baling’s expectations. That is why he was bold enough to ask me to infiltrate the Great Qian Dynasty’s territory and reach the Southland of Sorcerers!”

Li Yao bulged his eyes and asked in disbelief, “Even the issues of national importance can be taken advantage of for the conflicting sects?”

Han Yuantai burst into laughter. “You may not know this, Master, but what I spoke about was just the first clue of the shameless deeds of the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty. If I elaborate on them, three days and three nights will not be enough!

“Not just a tiny Southland of Sorcerers, do you think that the White Lotus Cult, the Heaven Battering Army, and even

Cloud Qin are not backed by the major sects?”

“What!” Li Yao rose in utmost shock.

“What’s to be surprised at?” Han Yuantai replied matter-of-factly. “You will understand everything very quickly if you consider it carefully, Master. Assuming that the White Lotus Cult, the Heaven Battering Army, or Cloud Qin takes down a certain sect, who will get the greatest gains?

“The White Lotus Cult is made of wandering ghosts, and the Heaven Battering Army consists of homeless peasants. Cloud Qin is based on the Dark Cloud Prairies and cannot stay in the central plateaus for long. Even if we truly break into a sect, the only thing that we can do is run away after we plunder something.

“How much can we plunder in a hurry? Also, no matter how much we plunder, it is impossible to bring the sect’s natural paradise away with us!

“After we evacuate, or after we are ‘eliminated’ by the coalition army of the major sects, whom will the natural paradise and the remaining resources of the broken sect belong to?

“If you understand the question, you will understand why the White Lotus Cult, the Heaven Battering Army, and Cloud Qin have never been eliminated and are growing stronger after every elimination!

“Honestly speaking, many noble sects in the Great Qian Dynasty regard us as knives and hungry dogs. They’re worried that we are not sharp and voracious enough!

“Hehe. Last year, the light cavalry of Cloud Qin crushed the heavy cavalry of the court of three hundred thousand soldiers. We swept across the north and marched toward the capital city, trampling upon the headquarters of more than fifty Cultivation sects in the north on our way. If I tell you that certain southern sects were behind the battle and that it was an extension of the conflicts between the northern sects and the southern sects in the Great Qian Dynasty, would you believe it, Master?”

Li Yao felt chilly. He mumbled, “Are the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty not scared that the tigers will grow uncontrollable after they are fed too much?”

“Hahahaha!” Han Yuantai laughed aloud. “In the eyes of the spectacular Cultivators, people of Cloud Qin and people in the Southland of Sorcerers are just a bunch of wild dogs. They throw a few bones to us and ask us to bite someone, and we will. We are quite useful tools. Are we ‘tigers’ at all?”

Li Yao was rendered speechless.

“Master!” Seeing that the timing was appropriate, Han Yuantai beamed with sincerity and declared, “Heed my words! All the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty are shameless, cunning, pretentious, and treacherous! A great expert growing up in the jungles in the southeast who has been secluded for training will absolutely be no match for them in terms of schemes and deception!

“The Great Qian Dynasty is a dirty swirl right now. Should you get involved, you will not even know how you get killed!”

Li Yao glanced at him and smiled. “We are finally getting back to the main topic now, aren’t we? You are belittling the Great Qian Dynasty with all your talk about dynastical cancer, public hatred, and internal strife. Is Ghost Qin of the

Dark Cloud Prairies any different? Is it able to cure the ‘cancer’?”

“Of course!” Holding his head high, Han Yuantai replied confidently, “Cloud Qin is not at all similar to Great Qian. We are unifying all the Cultivators with the ‘Eight Units System’, the most advanced system in the history of the Ancient Sages Sector!

“There were few sects in the vast northern prairies in the first place. They were never too strong.

“After my brother Han Baling unified the tribes in the prairies as per the arrangement of fate, he understood the principle that ‘Cultivation sects are the cancer of a nation’ with his unparalleled wisdom!

“Therefore, he swept across the Dark Cloud Prairies with iron and blood, uprooting the few sects. He restrained all the shamans, priests, and unaffiliated Cultivators with military rules and classified them into eight units!

“Behemothic Eagle, Black Tortoise, Blue Dragon, Crimson Phoenix… When the eight units are combined, they make a well-organized army where every order is executed without fail!

“Why do we call ourselves ‘Cloud Qin’? The ignorant folks of the Great Qian Dynasty say that we are intentionally looking for an awesome ancestor to justify ourselves.

“Hehe. They are too shortsighted to understand our ambitions!

“We are of course the descendants of the Cloud Qin Empire in the past. However, it is not their bloodline that we have inherited but their spirit!

“The Cloud Qin Empire was the first magnificent dynasty to end the chaotic battles among the thousands of sects and unify the entire Ancient Sages Sector a hundred thousand years ago. How did they achieve that?

“Through the inviolable rules that all Cultivators were bound by. All the Cultivators of Cloud Qin were taught to focus on national fights and not personal ones. They were strictly forbidden from internal fights. Once discovered, both parties involved in the fight would be punished!

“Then, all the Cloud Qin Cultivators were divided into twenty levels. Each level corresponds to a certain quantity of training resources that was larger than the last level’s. It was not one’s Cultivation but one’s military credits that mattered during the classification!

“Even a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was not entitled to any crystals if they had not earned any military credits. They would still be despised by other Cultivators!

“Even a Cultivator in the low level of the Refinement Stage would receive the most resources from the nation regardless of their aptitude as long as they made great contributions in the battles against other forces!

“As a result, the whole of Cloud Qin became a super sect and an invincible army, which was the foundation of the Cloud Qin Empire’s cause to unify the world!

“It’s a pity that…

“The Cloud Qin Empire in the past never really realized the harms of the Cultivation sects. They only discouraged the Cultivation sects from growing within the empire but never eliminated them!

“After the empire was established and the world was at peace, the leadership eased their wariness and rewarded the Cultivation sects. As a result, the Cultivation sects were rekindled, which eventually led to the doom of the empire!

“The hundred thousand years that followed were the age of Cultivation sects. The magnates in the Nascent Soul Stage decided the national affairs and manipulated the emperor. Not a single dynasty was able to eclipse the Cultivation sects!

“After a hundred thousand years, we, the younger generation of Cloud Qin, are going to finish the cause that the Cloud Qin Empire failed to accomplish in the past. We will eliminate the cancer named ‘sects’ forever and establish an everlasting, supreme nation!

“Right now, all the Cultivators of Cloud Qin know only the nation but not the sects. Or rather, the whole of Cloud Qin is a great sect and a super army!

“The Cloud Qin Cultivators live in peace against common, external foes. Private fights are strictly forbidden, but healthy competition among the eight units is encouraged!

“Also, like the ancient Cloud Qin, we have established twenty levels. The training resources are allocated according to the level that the Cultivators are in, and the level is determined based on military credits earned in battle!

“Therefore, although the Cloud Qin Cultivators are smaller in number and weaker in general, everything is clean and well-functioning. The dozens of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators are united as one. We are not nearly as filthy and stinky as the Great Qian Dynasty, which is nothing more than an apple of Sodom!”

“That’s just your side of the story,” Li Yao said coldly. “Is the so-called ‘Eight Units System’ an elixir to all diseases? Are the lives of ordinary people in Cloud Qin any better than those in Great Qian?”

Han Yuantai put it straightforwardly. “It is the law of nature that common folk must provide resources for Cultivators. However, there is no internal strife among Cultivation sects in Cloud Qin. The valuable resources will not be wasted in vain. Also, we consider the ordinary folk to be our property, and we hardly would hardly kill the goose that lays eggs!

“When a shepherd is herding livestock on the prairies, he can only get enough food by treating the livestock well and making them gain weight, right?

“The Cultivators are wolves, and ordinary people are sheep. First of all, there can’t be too many wolves, and the pack cannot expand infinitely. The ratio of wolves to sheep to grass must be kept within an appropriate range. Secondly, the wolves cannot be too greedy. If all the fat sheep are devoured to satisfy the momentary desire, and the only things left are the lambs and the sick sheep, it won’t be long before the extinction of the entire wolf pack!

“They are the ultimate laws of nature that my brother Han Baling perceived on the vast prairies in the north!”

Chapter 1374 - The Birth of a Country!

“Wolves, sheep, grass!” Li Yao chewed on Han Yuantai’s words.

The relationship between Cultivators, ordinary people, and resources implied in his words, despite the simplicity and crudeness, was already much more advanced than the traditional Cultivators’ attitude of regarding ordinary people as pure ants.

“Master!” Han Yuantai suddenly grew excited. He waved his hands and exclaimed, “Do you think that I risked my life visiting the Southland of Sorcerers for the simple purpose of overturning the Great Qian Dynasty and replacing it with Cloud Qin?

“If so, you’ve underestimated the Cloud Qin people’s ambitions again!

“My brother Han Baling often says that, if this was just a regular change of dynasties, we might as well save ourselves the trouble!

“That’s because such changes of dynasties have happened in the Ancient Sages Dynasty hundreds of times in the past hundred thousand years, but none of the new dynasties ever lasted more than three thousand years. Even the most vigorous dynasty, after a thousand years of ups and downs, would eventually decay and corrupt until it fell to dust one day!

“Every dynasty thrived under a different name in a different era, but the process of their rise and decline has almost always been the same!

“First of all, the world was in chaos, and the sects grew independent. The strong preyed on the weak, leading to ruthless slaughters. The population of ordinary people and Cultivators plummeted!

“When the population of Cultivators dropped to a certain point where their demand on the resources could be satisfied, the conflict among them was mitigated. They understood the importance of compromising and cooperation again. Eventually, a unified and stable dynasty was established!

“However, in the unified and stable dynasty, the Cultivators, having no external threats, began to reproduce exponentially. Also, because of their longevity, their population became larger and larger, and their demand on the sources rocketed higher and higher until it was too heavy a burden for the burden, just like present day. Therefore, the world fell into chaos again, marking the start of another cycle!

“So, my brother Han Baling wants much more than overthrowing Great Qian!

“What he wants, and what everyone in Cloud Qin wants, is to completely destroy the sect system and establish a powerful country where there are no sects or internal strife, where all Cultivators are united and train themselves under the planning of a national government, and where the world will be at peace for another hundred thousand years and even longer!

“Master, this is an unprecedented cause in the history of the Ancient Sages Sector! If an extraordinary man like yourself does not devote himself to such a glorious enterprise, what has he practiced his techniques for?”

Li Yao’s eyelids were bouncing. He rolled his eyes for a long time before he said coldly, “So to speak, the Cultivators of Cloud Qin are a super army with strict military rules. Even a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator will be restrained by the rules and cannot live a free life, right?”

“Exactly,” Han Yuantai said resolutely. “In Cloud Qin, military rules top everything else. The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators will be punished on equal terms as ordinary folk when they commit crimes!”

“Hehe. Ridiculous!” Li Yao sneered. “I’m a barbarian who’s lived a carefree life for too long, and I hate restraints more than anything else. Why would I go to Cloud Qian and be bridled by your ‘military rules’ when I can live an enjoyable life in the Southland of Sorcerers and even in the Great Qian Dynasty?”

Han Yuantai looked Li Yao in the eye, with aggressiveness beaming out of his eyes. “As a high-level Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, of course you are free to choose to do whatever you want and live an enjoyable life! But as a result, you will certainly be no match for the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who are bound by military rules and have maximized their combat ability and fighting will because of their firm belief!

“You can seize the day right now, but later, our iron legion of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators will crush all the other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who are enjoying their life, including you!

“This is the power of organization! This is the power of discipline. This is the power of a country! This is the trend of the universe that is now in our hands! We are the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators of a highly-united country that is as tough as iron, whereas you are loose sand, acting purely on your own! No matter how formidable you look right now, you are destined to be killed one day if you don’t join us!”

“How dare you!” Gnashing his teeth, Li Yao opened his hand and snatched the air.

Invisible ripples immediately ripped apart the air and formed what appeared to be a skinny ghost hand that grabbed Han Yuantai’s head.

Crack, crack. Crack, crack, crack, crack!

Han Yuantai’s skull and facial bones were emitting appalling sounds. His face was bleeding and could not have appeared more twisted!

“It is unknown yet if I will die for sure, but the high and mighty Lord of Behemothic Eagle will kick the bucket shortly!” Li Yao grinned hideously.

“Haha. Hahahaha!” Han Yuantai was shuddering in pain because of Li Yao’s suppression. His face was pale, but he burst into laughter. “I have raged on the Dark Cloud Prairies for more than a hundred years. When I was young, I rode my horse for four thousand kilometers and executed the hundred and forty-five infamous Quick Wind Bandits on the prairies in thirty-three days!

“I also went to the north end of the continent, which was covered in eternal night but illuminated by the brilliant auroras, and jumped into the icy ocean, fighting against the giant whales hundreds of meters long!

“Last year, together with my brother Han Baling and countless other men from the prairies, I marched south unstoppably into the central plateaus, crushing the three hundred thousand heavy cavalry of the Great Qian Dynasty!

“Our army trampled the headquarters of countless Cultivation sects of the Great Qian Dynasty. Our vanguard even approached the capital city. I saw the top of the royal palace with my own eyes!

“In my life, I have waved the sharpest sabers, I have ridden the fastest swords, I have made friends with the most trustworthy brothers, and I have executed the toughest enemies. I have enjoyed enough of the beauties of the world. Even if I die right now, what’s there to feel regretful about?

“What about you, Master?”

“After all the trouble you’ve been through, after decades of seclusion in the wilderness, you have finally grasped unparalleled techniques and announced your return. Yet, you will only be crushed by the iron army of Cloud Qin when you defy the heaven’s will before accomplishing anything and before tasting the feeling of being admired, worshipped, and hated by others!

“I truly feel sorry for you! I truly do!”

“You—you—you—!” Li Yao burst into fury. The ghost hand was even more brutal and hideous. It pierced into Han Yuantai’s head so deeply that green smoke was popping up.

Han Yuantai’s eyes were bloodshot because of the agony. His tears were rolling inside his eyes, but he kept them back and simply laughed.

Angrily, Li Yao bluffed for a long time, only to discover that the guy was unwilling to give in at all. He was finally frustrated.

He stopped his technique and gritted his teeth gloomily.

Han Yuantai collapsed to the ground. Finally, he could not help but grunt. He said, “Thank—thank you for not killing me, Master!”

“Save it.” Li Yao waved his hands lethargically. “I’ll have your subordinates freed later. Take Huo Wujiu with you and get back to the Dark Cloud Prairies as fast as possible!”

Han Yuantai blinked and immediately understood what Li Yao was thinking. He agreed quickly. “Alright. I know that a few words of mine are certainly not enough to convince you, Master. You have only just broken out of seclusion and do not know much about the latest situation of the world. It is only reasonable that you choose to be prudent! I’ll leave a channel to convey secret messages later. The gate of Cloud Qin will always be open to you, Master. My brother Han Baling and I look forward to meeting you on the Dark Cloud Prairies and working on the great cause together!

“I believe that the day won’t be far after you have witnessed the grubbiness of the Great Qian Dynasty!”

“Get lost.” Li Yao sniffed. “Before I change my mind.”

Han Yuantai crossed his hands and bowed deeply to Li Yao before he left the room.

It was not a courtesy of the barbarians but the military courtesy of the Cloud Qin Empire a hundred thousand years ago!

After the guy finally disappeared out of the garden, the brutality and frustration on Li Yao's face instantly disappeared, replaced by deep excitement and admiration.

He was so thrilled that he could not calm himself down for a long time.

He knew that he was witnessing the birth of a real 'country of Cultivators'.

Han Yuantai was not wrong. In the early years of the age of ancient Cultivators, the sects and the experts had the loudest voice. Not just the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, even the insignificant Cultivators in the Refinement Stage and the Building Foundation Stage often disobeyed the law and disregarded the authority of the court.

At that time, although there were dynasties and empires on the surface, they were not real countries but 'alliances of tribes' disguised as countries.

The so-called dynasties that were brimming with Cultivation sects were often plagued with serious conflict. The efficiency of collecting and utilizing resources was extremely low. The ability to summon forces was extremely weak. Also, as the population of Cultivators boomed, the dynasties would inevitably come to their decline.

Li Yao had learned from the history books that, in the last years of the age of ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago, the ancient Cultivators in the three thousand Sectors, after experiencing dozens if not hundreds of replacements of dynasties in their respective world, all came to the understanding that Cultivation sects were the cancer of a nation. They realized that only through rules and by being highly organized could they maximize resource utilization efficiency so that the changes of dynasties could be avoided forever.

From then on, almost all the worlds of ancient Cultivators merged the disorganized sects in different ways and embarked on the path of centralization.

After all the sects were combined, almost every world of Cultivators had one large, solid force left.

The name and form of the forces might have been different. Some were known as dynasties, and some called themselves empires. Some of them even inherited the old names of certain sects or guilds.

However, such regimes were completely different from the dynasties and sects in the past.

After all the Cultivators were united under law and their control extended from the pivot of power to the bottom-level towns, the authority of the country and the power of organization had overwhelmed the personal combat ability of the top experts. The control and mobility in such regimes was a hundred times higher than in the era of conflicting sects!

They were the prototypes of the modern countries of Cultivators!

Chapter 1375 - Classic Militarism!

However…

The path is not going to work out after all! Li Yao observed with mixed feelings.

Han Yuantai was confident that the new ‘Cloud Qin’ would live in peace and prosperity forever after destroying the incurable cancer—the conflicting sects.

But that was impossible.

Even in the best-case scenario, where the Cultivators that belonged to a ‘country’ were so united that they did not have any conflict and the resource utilization efficiency had been maximized, there was still a fundamental problem that they could not address.

The problem was that the Cultivators in the ancient age were mostly bottomless holes. While they were consuming tremendous resources, they were not offering any ‘product’ that was of use to society.

How many crystals, medicines, and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures would a Cultivator consume from the time that their spiritual root was awakened to when they advanced all the way to the Core Formation Stage, the Nascent Soul Stage, or even the Divinity Transformation Stage?

How many folks, how much land, and how many natural paradises would need to be occupied to provide the resources that the Cultivators needed?

After swallowing so many resources and growing into unparalleled experts, what could the Cultivators provide for society?

As far as Li Yao knew, the ancient Cultivators, even those from noble sects, often attached great importance to personal combat ability and mocked professions that could not improve their combat ability, not to mention the immoral, evil Cultivators.

When the Cultivators were ‘serving justice and slaying evils’, if getting to the bottom of it, the main product that they provided for society would be their ‘combat ability’.

When the only produce that most of the elites of a world could provide after swallowing the majority of resources was ‘combat ability’, the overall ‘combat ability’ would certainly be superfluous.

To set such a society on a path of healthy, sustainable development, and to prevent it from collapsing because of the overly-expanding combat ability, there was only one solution, which was to expand and plunder more resources from the outside world with the ‘superfluous combat ability’!

Therefore, in the last years of the age of ancient Cultivators, the faster Sectors that had eliminated the mayhem of contradictory sects inside and concentrated the power in advance all embarked on the path of militarization and expansion when their aggressiveness and combat ability were bursting out.

The historians of the federation defined such a path as ‘classic militarism’.

At first, the path seemed to be a successful one.

Faced with the army of Cultivators who were united under the notion of ‘country’ and were guided by classic militarism, the Cultivators who were still in the medieval age were too disorganized and mired in their own trouble to put up any resistance. They were all demolished unstoppably without any exception.

However, the good days did not last long. Expansion had its limits. When most of the ‘medieval worlds’ of the three thousand Sectors were annihilated, and the only regimes left were the ferocious worlds where classic militarism prevailed, the collisions of the superpowers were unavoidable.

That was the First Civil War of Cultivators as described in the history books.

It was also at the last phase of the super civil war that consumed all the three thousand Sectors when demons were created on a large scale. Then, taking advantage of the weakness of the worlds of Cultivators that had been exhausted in the war, the demons counterattacked and dominated the sea of stars, ushering in the Great Dark Age of thirty thousand years.

Getting to the bottom of it, the greatest problem of classic militarism was that it could not fix the contradiction that the Cultivators took in all the resources but offered nothing in return. Such a methodology was merely covering the contradiction time and time again through continuous invasions and conquests.

However, during the invasions and conquests, the Cultivators would only desire more ‘combat ability’. When the invasions and conquests suffered setbacks, even the most powerful countries would collapse all of a sudden!

The Ancient Sages Sector, on the other hand, would only be more tragic.

Because the star beacons and the space teleportation arrays left by the Pangu civilization in the three thousand Sectors in the outside world had not yet been damaged in the age of ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago, the three thousand Sectors were still in a network, and the transportation system was quite convenient. Even the ancient Cultivators could launch expeditions across the sea of stars despite their underdeveloped technologies.

Therefore, after a world of ancient Cultivators finished the transformation from ‘medieval sects’ to ‘classic militarism’, it would be easy for the world to launch invasions on other worlds, thereby transferring the internal contradiction!

If the world was lucky, it could swallow multiple underdeveloped worlds of Cultivators in the hundreds of years to come and grow into a giant that spanned the sea of stars, surviving for yet another thousand years.

The Ancient Sages Sector, in comparison, was enshrouded in the thick, dark nebula. It was extremely tricky to jump out.

Also, everything was different today. After tens of thousands of years of wars, the space transportation network outside had been mostly wrecked. Launching a universal expedition was much more difficult than before!

Moreover, the outside world would be dangerous. There was not a single push-over in the sea of stars out there. Not just the monsters such as the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Covenant Alliance, even the Star Glory Federation a hundred years ago would not have been scared of the Ancient Sages Sector at all!

Even if the Ancient Sages Sector truly developed to the stage of ‘classic militarism’, who could it conquer?

Without new targets to conquer, such an untenable system would never last long.

Li Yao believed in Han Yuantai’s sincerity and the ambitions of Han Baling, the regent of Cloud Qin. He also believed that the Cultivators of Cloud Qin were in the most united and organized state right now.

But that was because they were faced with a powerful external threat, and they had a whole world waiting to be conquered.

What would happen after they overthrew the Great Qian Dynasty and unified the world?

If they could not find a new vent for the ‘superfluous combat ability’, Li Yao did not think that the so-called ‘Cloud Qin Dynasty’ could survive five hundred years.

This is an unresolvable, fundamental contradiction.

Only when Cultivators follow the ideology of ‘serve the people’ and return the resources they swallow to the public in forms including but not limited to ‘combat ability’, so that the resources will flow and circulate between the Cultivators and the ordinary people, will a society embark on the path of sustainable development with a virtuous cycle!

If we get to the bottom of it, the so-called 'cancer' is not the sects, not militarism, but the Cultivators who take everything but give nothing, who swallow resources like a black hole but are in fact utterly useless!

How many resources must be consumed for the birth of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator? How much labor and material have been spent without anyone knowing?

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator could flaunt their techniques and violate the existing social order without respect for the law.

But even if the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator prefers a carefree and enjoyable life and focuses on his own training without caring about anything else, he will still make absolutely no contribution to society. Eventually, he might be struck by a minor apocalypse when he is advancing into a higher stage. Won't the resources that he has consumed be wasted?

Moreover, even if he occasionally comes out to serve justice and slay evils, will the contributions he makes be proportionate to the resources he has consumed?

Such an abnormal system will never persevere for long even if it evolves to the form of a modern country under the armor of 'classic militarism'!

Cloud Qin was walking on the wrong path.

Li Yao was well aware of that.

However, he did not despise Cloud Qin, Han Yuantai, or Han Baling—one of the Four Rapscallions who must have been even more spectacular than his brother—because of that.

Li Yao knew himself very well.

He understood the logic not because he was smart enough but because he was standing on the shoulders of countless seniors. The conclusions had been made by the historians and sociologists.

The Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector did not know the first thing about the outside world. They had to learn everything on their own. Like a blind person riding a blind horse, they groped in the eternal darkness. It was already extremely remarkable that they had walked this far!

Then, was it possible to work with the Cultivators from Cloud Qin?

It depended on several factors.

On one hand, Cloud Qin was walking on the path of ‘classic militarism’, which was similar to the Imperium of True Human Beings ‘modern militarism’. The two of them might find each other very agreeable.

However, judging from Han Yuantai’s demeanor and resolution, his brother Han Baling was surely an ambitious, superb person who lived beyond his era.

If such a person could be brought to the federation and allowed to study the history of the outside world, would he draw a lesson from the gory outcome of the First Civil War of Cultivators and realize that it was not a path that was going to work out, thereby choosing a new approach?

It’s getting tricky now.

The most critical question right now is whether or not the Imperium of True Human Beings is involved in all this. If the *federation can’t find a way to embrace those ancient Cultivators, they will certainly be bemused by the Imperium!*

If I were a scout who discovered the Ancient Sages Sector, I definitely would’ve selected Han Baling as my primary target of communication after I learned the situation in this world!

Then...

Is it possible that the Immortal Cultivators from the Imperium of True Human Beings are already hiding next to Han Baling and engaged in certain underground activities in secret?

Li Yao felt a headache coming on. Thinking for a moment, he coughed and summoned Meng Duo and Gu Siduo, the two barbarian Cultivators.

The fat barbarian Cultivator and the slim one, after discovering his identity as ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’, were so frightened that they almost sh*t their pants. They could barely stand on their feet. Kneeling on the ground, they begged for his mercy.

Naturally, Li Yao was not interested in picking on small fries such as themselves. After all, he had grown quite familiar with the two guys recently. He knew that they had done nothing unacceptable and their reputations in the Southland of Sorcerers were not bad. So, he had employed them as his temporary servants.

“Bring me the father and the daughter of the Ling family.”

Very soon, the uneasy Ling Shoujing and Ling Lanyin appeared in front of Li Yao.

“Let’s not waste each other’s time.”

Instead of waiting for the newcomers to bow to him, Li Yao waved his hands and said straightforwardly, “I’ve spoken with Han Yuantai just now and learned the basic situation already. Tell me about it. What exactly do you want, and what can you offer in return?”

Chapter 1376 - You Go, Your Daughter Stays!

Ling Shoujing, the Appeasing Ambassador of the Fifth Prefecture of the South Land of Sorcerers, and his daughter Ling Lanyin, a Cultivator at the peak of the Core Formation Stage, looked at each other. They were not sure what was on the mind of the petty, cruel and temperamental monster, or what he and Han Yuantai had talked about.

Observing Li Yao's young, emotionless face, where a green birthmark was shining at the center of the eyebrow, the two of them grew more and more ill at ease.

Ling Shoujing thought that such a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator from a barbarian certainly couldn't be convinced with morals, ethics or lofty ideals. Therefore, he might as well directly go to the more concrete stuff!

After a cough, he said, "Master, I have arrived at the Southland of Sorcerers to decree Huo Wuji as the Chieftain of the Southland. Moreover, I have brought five thousand kilograms of high-quality crystals, fifteen thousand kilograms of fine steel which can be used to forge marvelous weapons, and twenty-five thousand kilograms of the ingredients of the pills that are of great use for training! Right now, Master is the best expert in the Southland of Sorcerers. All the barbarian Cultivators here revere you and listen to your command. So, it will be the best if Master helps allot the items on behalf of us."

Unmoved, Li Yao sniffed and said, "Anything else?"

Hesitating for a moment, Ling Shoujing gritted his teeth and said, “This isn’t really what we expected in the beginning. If truth be told, Master, all the items were prepared for Master Black Moon. What level was Master Black Moon in? The beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage! Master’s Cultivation, on the other hand, must be at least in the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage, isn’t it?

“The gifts are indeed a disrespect for Master’s identity and Cultivation. After I deliver to the court the message that Master has returned with your incredible techniques, the court will certainly not wrong such an unparalleled expert like yourself, Master. The gifts will be… at least double of what I just said!”

Li Yao was still emotionless. He said casually, “Okay.”

Ling Shoujing was even more confused about what the old monster really wanted. Gritting his teeth, “The Purple Pole Sword Sect is the best sword sect in the world. Countless sword arts and marvelous weapons are stored there. If Master is willing to join the Great Qian Dynasty, the techniques and the magical equipment will all be open to you!

“Right—”

Noticing Li Yao’s apparent lack of interest, Ling Shoujing thought of something and said in excitement, “With Master’s Cultivation right now, it is not entirely unlikely for you to be nominated as an important official in the court or a leader of a major state. If Master is interested—”

Seeing that Li Yao was not interested in Cultivation arts, magical equipment, pills or crystals, he thought that Li Yao, as a barbarian Cultivator, lived in the Southland of Sorcerers in boredom for too long and wanted to be an official.

Li Yao was rather amused.

He was not sure whether he should sigh or curse.

Great Qian and Cloud Qin might be on par with each other. But the gap between their envoys were too huge.

Han Yuantai was talking about ideologies, beliefs, ambitions and future with him, while Ling Shoujing was talking about crystals, pills, techniques, magical equipment… and such!

If it were the real barbarian Cultivator Master Spiritual Vulture who hadn't seen anything better, he might've been allured by the tens of thousands of kilograms of crystals and pills.

However, for Li Yao, who was connected with the most powerful forces of the Heaven's Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector and the Flying Star Sector, and who had seen the best things in the world, there was only one thing that he wanted to say:

[Don't talk about money with me. It's too tawdry!]

Li Yao was too impatient to listen any longer. He waved his hands and said, "I always find the mundane affairs in the mortal world too boring. It doesn't matter whether Huo Wuji or Huo Wujiu is the Chieftain of the Southland! Let's just get it over with. What else do you want?"

[It's done!]

Ling Shoujing was quite excited.

Now that the old monster gave his consent that Huo Wuji, who was close to the Great Qian Dynasty, could be the Chieftain of the Southland, it was indicative enough that the guy hadn’t reached a satisfactory deal with Han Yuantai yet, and that the Southland of Sorcerers were still under the command of the court!

Having accomplished the greatest purpose of his mission despite the setbacks all the way, Ling Shoujing exhaled in great relief. He continued, “Other than that, the situation in the Great Qian Dynasty is sort of…”

“I’ve heard a lot of things from Han Yuantai. There’s no need to phrase it.”

Staring at him, Li Yao said coldly, “You can say straightforwardly that the Great Qian Dynasty is half dead with troubles everywhere.”

“You must not believe in Han Yuantai’s overstatement, Master!”

Ling Shoujing grew anxious. “Those people from Ghost are as cunning as foxes and as brutal as wolves. Have they ever spoken anything true? Right now, there are indeed some riots in the Great Qian Dynasty, and the northern territory isn’t in the most peaceful state. However, the Great Qian Dynasty has weathered through all kinds of vicissitudes for a thousand years. We are too well-founded to be knocked over by a few spindrifts!

“Of course, now that the world and the people are plagued by riots, rebellions and evil beings, it is the time for Cultivators such as to stand up and rescue the folks from the cataclysm! If the Southland of Sorcerers could provide fifty thousand soldiers and five hundred Cultivators whom Master will command to the north…”

“Hehe.”

With a feigned smile, Li Yao said, “You want us to give you a troop of fifty thousand soldiers, who will leave the warm and comfortable forests for the freezing north, where they will fight bloody battles against the cavalry of Ghost Qin that has just left the court’s army with a crushing defeat last year?”

“That is not what I was going to say, Master!”

Ling Shoujing had thought of it earlier. None of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were idiots, including such a barbarian like ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’. Naturally, they wouldn’t agree to such an outrageous request.

Ling Shoujing in fact had other plans. He said confidently, “Master, rest assured, everybody knows that the northern people are not good at battles on water while the southern people are not good at battles on horses. I do not mean to ask the tough soldiers of the Southland of Sorcerers to march north to the Dark Prairie Prairies to be killed in vain at all!

“Honestly speaking, despite the valiance and brutality of the Ghost Qin soldiers, they will still be more than vulnerable when faced with the elite forces of the court! However, the inland of the Great Qian Dynasty is in fact beleaguered by vermin. Most of the elite forces and high-level Cultivators of the court are now stalled by the vermin and can’t move around. That is why the Ghost Qin people had their shot!

“If we mobilize the elite troops and the main forces to the north, the vermin inland will be out of control and further expand. Eventually, it will be the common folks who suffer most.

“Therefore, I am hoping that the warriors and Cultivators of the Southland of Sorcerers could be mobilized to the southeast where they would suppress the local riot of the White Lotus Cult!

“Then, the forces and troops in the southeast will be able to be spared to annihilate Ghost Qin in the north!”

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. He didn’t see the coming of such a proposal.

Ling Shoujing continued colloquially, “The southeast of the Great Qian Dynasty is brimming with rivers and lakes. There are hills everywhere. The weather is warm and damp, very similar to that of the Southland of Sorcerers. The non-acclimatization which may happen if marching to the Dark Cloud Prairies will not be a problem!

“Besides, the southeast is the most prosperous part of the Great Qian Dynasty with the most abundant spiritual energy. Are there any warriors in the Southland of Sorcerers who do not want to appreciate it?

“I wonder, how did Han Yuantai interpret the ‘White Lotus Cult’ to you just now? The members of the White Lotus Cult are all the most violent ghouls! Their leader Wan Mingzhu was the most notorious ‘mother of all ghosts’ who fed on other people’s vitality and flesh! It is said that even grass wouldn’t grow anymore after the members White Lotus Cult pass. When the ghouls of the White Lotus Cult congregate into an army and sweep across an area, the dozens of towns in the range might be emptied. Not just the living people, even the hens and dogs will be transformed into deadly ghosts! They are tragedies that happened before!

“It is the responsibility of us Cultivators to slay the evils. This is also a great endeavor to serve the justice for the heavens!

"Moreover, you have lived in seclusion for decades, Master. Now that you have returned with your marvelous techniques, you wouldn't want to age and die in this remote land unknown, even if you don't want to be famous, right?"

Seeing Ling Shoujing's self-righteousness, Li Yao suddenly had a lot of mixed feelings.

From the perspective of 'modern history view' of the Star Glory Federation, if Han Yuantai was speaking the truth, the 'Riot of the White Lotus' could be classified as peasant rebellion.

Dispatching the barbarian soldiers to suppress a peasant rebellion wasn't something Li Yao could tolerate.

He felt that Ling Shoujing's mindset was too different from his. Their gap was much huger than that between him and Han Yuantai. Further communication would only be a waste of his time.

"I've got it now. You may leave now."

Li Yao snapped his fingers and said casually.

Ling Shoujing was dazed for a moment, not knowing why the old monster suddenly changed his attitude when he appeared friendly just now.

However, he did not dare to say anything anymore, fearing that the old monster might grow angry. Also, the old monster did not turn down the proposal on the spot, either. So, there was still room for negotiation.

Therefore, he simply bowed deeply and was ready to leave with his daughter.

“Wait.”

Li Yao suddenly said, “You can go. But your daughter stays.”

Ling Shoujing almost tripped himself over. Cold sweat was immediately popping up on his forehead.

Ling Lanyin opened her lips in a shiver, too.

“Well—well—My daughter—”

Under Li Yao’s glare, Ling Shoujing lost his calmness and did not know how he should respond.

Ling Lanyin, on the other hand, was rather confident. Taking a long breath, she soon calmed herself down and said in a low voice, “Rest assured, father. Master Spiritual Vulture is a well-respected senior who has been famous since a hundred years ago. Will anything happen to me now that he is here?”

Li Yao smiled and said, “Your tongue is rather sweet, kid. Rest assured. Although I’m not anything close to ‘well-respected’, I wouldn’t go so far as to make things difficult for a young fellow at the peak of the Core Formation Stage such as yourself. I’m told that you are one of the most distinguished disciples of the Purple Pole Sword Sect in the past decades. I keep you here only because I’m interested in certain issues about the Purple Pole Sword Sect.

The father and the daughter looked at each other, more or less relieved.

On second thought, although Mater Spiritual Vulture was best known for his ruthlessness, he never struck anyone as a lecherous man.

Besides, he had to consider the reputation of the ‘Purple Pole Sword Sect’ after all. It was unlikely that he would piss off the Purple Pole Sword Sect just for momentary pleasure, right?

The Purple Pole Sword Sect, the greatest reliance for the Ling family, was now in great trouble because of its relationship with Wang Xi. Such an old monster would certainly be a great help if he gave a hand!

Thinking about that, Ling Shoujing reminded his daughter of something and left the garden uneasily.

Calming herself down, Ling Lanyin bowed to Li Yao again, “What do you want to know about our sect, senior? I’ll certainly not keep anything from you!”

Chapter 1377 - The Purple Pole Sword Sect

With his hands behind his back, Li Yao paced about unhurriedly before asking, “A hundred years ago, before I advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage, I did not know much about the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty. The Purple Pole Sword Sect claims to be the best sword sect in the world. So, the disciples in your sect surely all practice flying sword arts, right?”

It was almost a meaningless question. Would the disciples of a sect whose name was ‘Purple Pole Sword Sect’ train themselves with the arts of rods and sticks?

Ling Lanyin, however, did not dare to show any derision in front of the old monster. She replied dutifully, “You’re right, Master. The disciples of the Purple Pole Sword Sect are mostly focused on flying swords. Some of them use sabers and spears as their magical equipment, too. In general, all the weapons are regular ones. Few of them domesticate insects and beasts or forge flags as weapons like the Cultivators in the Southland of Sorcerers do.

“The Purple Pole Sword Sect has a hundred thousand disciples and five thousand empyreal swordsmen that are all top experts whose sword auras could reach the sky. There are also seven… six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. Their skills are even more incredible.”

Ling Lanyin had almost said that there were seven Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the Purple Pole Sword Sect, but then she realized that ‘Thunderous Straight Swordsman’ Lou

Chongxiao, one of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, had already passed away. She could not help but feel depressed, and her tone became rather flat.

“Of them—”

Fearing that the old monster would underestimate her sect, she bit her lip and stressed, “My senior uncle Yan Liren has reached the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage. He is so crazy about swords art that he is known as the ‘Sword Maniac’ by the Cultivators. He is one of the well-acknowledged ‘Three Saints’. He can frighten a troop of a million soldiers with just himself and his sword!

“Peak of the Nascent Soul Stage, Yan Liren, the Sword Maniac…” Li Yao chewed on the name slowly. Putting it aside for a moment, he asked, “Alright, since the Purple Pole Sword Sect has a hundred thousand disciples and five thousand empyreal swordsmen, and you certainly have even more vassal families, where do your flying swords come from when there is such a high demand? Do you forge them yourselves, or do you purchase them elsewhere?”

“We forge them ourselves.” It was not a secret, so Ling Lanyin replied truthfully, “The Purple Pole Sword Sect, as the best sword sect in the world, has a very high demand for swords and sabers. Many flying swords are declared to be total-losses on a daily basis just because of the disciples’ training. How can we purchase them elsewhere?

“The Purple Pole Sword Sect boasts the ‘Hundred Blade Mountain’, which is an intersection of the mother lodes in the world. Thousands of rare materials are stored inside the mines. Countless Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures are excavated every year!

“Also, within the territory of the Purple Pole Sword Sect, there are nine springs that contain abundant spiritual energy and many amazing materials. With the spring water, and the undying, eccentric fire deep inside the Hundred Blade Mountain, we are able to forge unparalleled weapons!

“Furthermore, the Purple Pole Sword Sect has collected the notes of the predecessors for hundreds of years. Through the traces on the notes, we have excavated a lot of the relics that belonged to the great swordsmen of the past. We have retrieved many marvelous weapons of the ancient era. The experts in the Nascent Soul Stage often use those treasures as their weapons!”

Li Yao’s eyes suddenly shone. “Therefore, the Purple Pole Sword Sect certainly boasts a very spacious place for refining, and you must have a reserve of many rarely-seen materials, right?”

Ling Lanyin nodded. “Yes.”

It was a fact that everybody knew. Ling Lanyin could not lie about that.

“Alright.” Li Yao nodded and said straightforwardly, “There’s no need for me to hide the truth from you. I have indeed experienced certain fortuitous incidents in the past few decades before I reached the level I’m at right now.

“As for exactly what the fortuitous incidents are, you don’t need to know. It will do you no good if you know too much.

“Right now, I have grasped the most incredible arts, but I still need some convenient magical equipment and blades!”

Ling Lanyin’s eyes glittered. She said in a hurry, “The Purple Pole Sword Sect has the best magical equipment and blades!”

Li Yao shook his hands and said, “The magical equipment I use is deeply connected with my essential techniques, and I have to forge them on my own. However, the Southland of Sorcerers is too far-flung with barely any resources. The metal materials here are particularly rare and of an astoundingly low quality. There are no appropriate springs, fire, and furnaces for refining, either!

“Since the Purple Pole Sword Sect has everything I need, I am wondering if I can rent a place for refining from the Purple Pole Sword Sect and borrow your springs, fire, metal resources, and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, which are needed for my magical equipment. Is this against your rules?”

So, that was on the old monster’s mind. Ling Lanyin took a deep breath, and she replied in delight, “Absolutely not. We will all be honored by your presence!

“The flying swords produced by the Purple Pole Sword Sect are not just for the use of our disciples in the first place. Many of them are sold to other sects. Even several powerful troops of the court, including the imperial guards, mostly used the sabers and swords manufactured in the Purple Pole Sword Sect!

“Many high-level Cultivators think exactly the same as you do, Master. They are unwilling to utilize the magical equipment made by others, but their own sect is short of a place suitable for refining or certain critical materials. Then, it is not unusual for them to rent a place in the Purple Pole Sword Sect, buy the necessary materials, and build their own magical equipment!

“The Purple Pole Sword Sect has always had a high reputation in that regard. Not only can we offer the rarest materials in the world and the best place for refining, we even have the servants, blacksmiths, and weapon testers that you may need during the refining. Before, during, and after production, no information about what you are working on will ever be leaked out!

“Whatever magical equipment you have in mind, Master, it will be your best option to come to the Purple Pole Sword Sect. There isn’t a second sect that can surpass the Purple Pole Sword Sect in that regard!”

Li Yao nodded.

In fact, on his way there, he had basically figured out through eavesdropping that the ‘Purple Pole Sword Sect’ was the largest arms group of the Great Qian Dynasty and a super amalgamation of weapon businesses and mining businesses.

That was why he was patient enough to talk with Ling Lanyin for so long.

Li Yao was indeed in need of certain magical equipment, but it was the components of star beacons that he needed instead of flying swords for battle.

When Li Yao set off from the Heaven’s Origin Sector, he had brought a high-level star beacon and numerous backup components in the storage space of Spark.

However, countless accidents had occurred during the hundred years on his journey. He had wasted a lot of components on the star beacon to maintain Spark during his narrow escape from the ‘dual-star system’.

Furthermore, the thickness of the dark nebula and the weirdness of the cosmic dust there were far beyond his anticipation. Judging from the results of a few experimental transmissions, the signals did not travel very well inside the dark nebula.

Therefore, for safety reasons, Li Yao had to fully maintain and strengthen the star beacons to ensure that the signals were shot back to his hometown through four-dimensional space instantly.

Then, the components to make the space gate would be sent back to him and assembled by him in order to achieve the seamless connection between the two worlds.

The maintenance and the construction of the star beacons could be done in the satellites of the planet or even outer space.

But just as even the most experienced cook could not make food without ingredients, Li Yao had to prepare the components that he needed first.

It was refining in a real world instead of a virtual game. Throwing some minerals and expecting the product was impossible.

Li Yao had received pertinent training before he took off. He knew all the maintenance and strengthening plans. Technologically speaking, it was not a difficult task.

However, by rough estimation, there were a hundred and twenty-two materials that he did not carry or did not carry enough of in his Cosmos Rings.

Also, since he was going to refine the components through ancient techniques, the quality of the cooling liquids and the fire would directly affect the quality of the final product.

It was impossible for him to produce the components of the most precise, modern magical equipment in the jungles of the Southland of Sorcerers where there was absolutely no refining industry.

The Ancient Sages Sector did not have a sect whose sole business was refining such as the ‘Hundred Smelting Clan’.

Therefore, an amalgamation of weapon businesses and mining businesses such as the Purple Pole Sword Sect would be his best choice.

Also, Li Yao had taken one other thing into account.

The Purple Pole Sword Sect had become a prey that all other Cultivators coveted because of its relation to Wang Xi’s case.

It also might have something to do with the high profits of the weapon business, which aroused the greed of others.

However, the Purple Pole Sword Sect was a deeply-rooted super sect after all. There were six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, one of whom was even at the peak of it!

It was unlikely that they would wait to be killed.

Then, tensions and even conflicts would very likely break out between the Purple Pole Sword Sect and the other sects in the Ancient Sages Sector.

If Li Yao intended to rise to fame under the identity of ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’ in the shortest amount of time without raising any suspicion, so that he could make acquaintance with the core, high-level Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector, this would be the best starting point!

No matter which force he decided to cooperate with in the end, and even if he had other plans and rejected all other forces, he had to repair and strengthen the star beacons.

Therefore, he had to pay a visit to the Purple Pole Sword Sect to get access to the rare metal materials and produce a batch of appropriate components.

If he could observe a full outbreak of ‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren, a Cultivator at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage, along the way, he would be able to have a chance to evaluate the top combat ability of the Ancient Sages Sector, which would be even better!

Then, Li Yao thought of something else. He asked, “You said just now that your senior uncle Yan Liren is one of the ‘Three Saints’ of the Great Qian Dynasty. Who are the other two?”

“My senior uncle Yan Liren’s sword arts are unparalleled in the world,” Ling Lanyin said. “He is the well-acknowledged ‘Sword Saint’!”

“Huh?” Li Yao interrupted her. “Just now, Han Yuantai told me that the Lead Eunuch Wang Xi’s sword arts were truly unparalleled in the world and that he was the best swordsman of the Ancient Sages Sector. Why is your story different?”

Chapter 1378 - Three Saints, Four Rapscallions, One Monk, and One Emperor!

“Nonsense!”

As if she was greatly insulted, Ling Lanyin’s pretty face suddenly flushed. She raised her voice and said, “Wang Xi—Wang Xi is just a eunuch with a damaged body. Also, he has committed the most vicious wrongdoings. How is he qualified to be called ‘unparalleled’? My senior uncle is the strongest swordsman of the Ancient Sages Sector!”

Sword Maniac Yan Liren was the best warrior of the Purple Pole Sword Sect. For the Cultivators who were dedicated to the sword arts, Yan Liren was their most admirable idol that nobody could smear.

Hearing that Li Yao was putting an unpardonable eunuch above her senior uncle, she screamed without considering anything.

It was not until she blurted those words out that she realized whom she was talking to. Her face immediately paled, and her sweat was dripping down.

Her own life did not matter, but if she infuriated the old monster, it might be a disaster for her family and even her sect, in which case she would never forgive herself!

Thankfully, after observing secretly for a while, she did not find any sign that the old monster was bursting into fury. His eyes that were as dark as the throats of an animal glanced at her up and down before he grinned. “Han Yuantai said that the Purple Pole Sword Sect was one of the eunuch’s conspirators. So, are you not with Wang Xi? Why do you think so little of him?”

“Who—who is the eunuch’s conspirator?”

Ling Lanyin was more than angry, but she did not dare to lose her temper again. She controlled her voice and managed to explain, “The Purple Pole Sword Sect is a noble sect that has a history of almost a thousand years. Our rules are strict, and the moral standard is high. The very first lesson that a master teaches their disciple is that we must serve justice with our swords. How could we ever hang around with scoundrels such as Wang Xi?

“It’s just that—It’s just that my senior uncle Sword Maniac Yan Liren is a man who is utterly dedicated to his sword. Except for sword arts, he does not care about anything in the world.

“As for Wang Xi, he was more or less an expert in sword arts. Knowing that my senior uncle’s sword arts are the best in the world, he came to visit my senior uncle to discuss sword arts many times.

“My senior uncle was quite lonely as an expert. It wasn’t easy for him to find an opponent who was on par with him. When he was too excited, he couldn’t care less about who his opponent actually was.

“Just like that, my senior uncle and Wang Xi made a deal of meeting annually. The two of them would spend ten days discussing and competing in sword arts every year.

“For a couple of years, they even travelled around the beautiful scenic spots together, allegedly in search of battlefields suitable for their fight. They went to the depths of the mountains covered in mist, the oceans with surging waves, and the sunless bottom of the underground holes…

“In fact, nobody in our sect was in favor of getting too close with such an ambitious person, even including my master and the few other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

“However, my senior uncle is a maniac, and he is at the unreachable peak of the Nascent Soul Stage. Who can stop him from making friends when he wants to?

“All in all, my senior uncle was involved with Wang Xi for seven years. No matter how hard we tried to cover it up, their relationship gradually became known to all the other Cultivators.

“However, I can swear that my senior uncle and Wang Xi were just discussing the sword arts. They were not connected at all except for the sword arts. Claiming that we are the eunuch’s conspirators is a false and shameless accusation!”

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao sneered, “Were they really not connected otherwise?”

Ling Lanyin blushed. She coughed and said in a low voice, “A few years back, when Wang Qi was in power, he was the one to decide exactly which sect the weapons of the court’s troops would be purchased from.

“At that time, it happened that the imperial guards, the Kylin Army, and a few other strong troops were changing their gears on a large scale and purchasing new blades and magical equipment. The Purple Pole Sword Sect secured quite a few fat orders.

“However, the Purple Pole Sword Sect is the best sword sect in the world. The blades and magical equipment that we produce are the best in the world. Even without my senior uncle’s relationship with Wang Xi, those orders still would’ve been ours! But right now, other sects won’t let it go and smear us, labeling us as Wang Xi’s conspirators!”

Seeing that the girl was seething with indignation, Li Yao could not help but feel amused.

She was truly a silly girl who did not know how the world functioned.

Had it not been for the connection between her senior uncle and Wang Xi, why would the super fat orders have been given to them?

Were they the only sword forgers in the entire Ancient Sages Sector?

On the other hand, the Purple Pole Sword Sect must have swallowed the military purchase orders that should have belonged to other sects by taking advantage of the personal relationship between Sword Maniac Yan Liren and Wang Xi. It monopolized the whole market and thereby successfully enraged everyone else.

Now that Wang Xi had fallen, it would be highly unusual if the sects did not take the opportunity to counterattack and force the Purple Pole Sword Sect to throw out what it had swallowed in the past!

Judging from Han Yuantai and Ling Lanyin’s words, Ling Lanyin’s senior uncle ‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren was the well-acknowledged ‘Sword Saint’ in the Great Qian Dynasty and the best expert in sword arts, but Wang Xi had been qualified to compete with him for seven years in a row. There was still room for both of them to make progress.

It was indicative enough of Wang Xi’s own extraordinary sword arts!

He could ask about more details on Wang Xi and Yan Liren later. Li Yao did not want to waste any more time on those questions and changed the topic. “Who are the other two people of the ‘Three Saints’ of the Great Qian Dynasty?”

When she thought of the second saint, Ling Lanyin put on an indescribable smile and said, “The second guy that is on par with my senior uncle is ‘Weird Saint’, Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar.”

“Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar?”

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. What kind of name was that?

The guy was a super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator after all. Calling him a ‘beggar’ seemed rather disrespectful.

Li Yao coughed violently and tried to hold back his laughter. “That’s an interesting name.”

“Exactly!” Ling Lanyin said, “Senior Ba’s self-given nickname is the very first clue to his casualness and disregard of rules.

“He was the son of the leader of the Fuluo Island in the eastern ocean. He boasted unbelievable wealth accumulated through overseas trade and training resources collected from the natural paradises on the ocean. His family was one of the richest ones in the world of Cultivators, and he used to be a son living a carefree and comfortable life.

“However, when he was young, Fuluo Island was demolished by thirty-seven pirate gangs together.

“It is said that after the collapse of his family, Senior Ba had an epiphany and went to the world of mortals. He trained himself in the dirtiest places amid the most common of people. For some reason, he indeed perceived unparalleled techniques and became the most famous unaffiliated Cultivator of the Ancient Sages Sector!

“The senior nicknamed himself ‘Beggar’. So, he often shows up in front of everyone as a scrounger or a homeless person. His Cultivation and his seniority are both very impressive, but his personality is very weird. He despises nobles and high-level Cultivators and even often pranks those people. However, he is extremely kind to the poor people and always tried his best to help common folks. Whenever there’s a natural disaster, Senior Ba is normally around to help.

“His reputation is very high among the folks; he is truly regarded as a deity walking on the earth by the people of the Great Qian Dynasty. It is not exaggerating to call him a ‘saint’!”

Li Yao nodded slowly.

Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar?

There finally seemed to be someone whom he could try to make friends with and recruit.

“The third saint is ‘Iron Saint’ Qi Zhongdao, Master Righteous One,” Ling Lanyin said. “He was already the leader of the Cultivators when you went into seclusion. I don’t think I need to introduce him further, right?”

Li Yao secretly frowned. He thought to himself, *Why don’t you just give him an introduction?*

But he gave up the idea after thinking for a moment. Since the guy was a leader of the Cultivators, he must be a very famous person, and Li Yao could uncover his past by asking anyone randomly later. It was unnecessary to risk asking too much about him right now.

“Of course I’ve heard the name of Qi Zhongdao before. You don’t need to talk more about him!”

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao said slowly, “Just now, Han Yuantai told me about the ‘Four Rapscallions’ of the world, and then you told me about the ‘Three Saints’. I wonder, are the Four Rapscallions and Three Saints qualified to be listed among the top ten experts today?”

Ling Lanyin hesitated for a moment but still nodded. “My senior uncle ‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren boasts the most extraordinary sword arts. Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar has his own bizarre, unpredictable techniques. Master Righteous One Qi Zhongdao has the Heaven Flipping Seal, a primordial treasure, in his possession. The three of them are the top three experts on the side of justice!

“Mother White Lotus Wan Mingzhu is the mother of all ghosts, and her expertise in dark arts is incomparable. Heaven Battering King Qi Changsheng has an indestructible body and practices the most dominating ‘Thousand Miles of Bare Land’ technique. Wang Xi, with his ‘Apparitional Night’ technique, was able to fight with my senior uncle for seven years without being crushed. There’s also Han Baling, the magnificent monarch in the north who has created the

‘Dragon Wolf Arts’ himself. The ‘Four Rapscallions’ deserve to be called top ten experts, too!”

“Very good!” Brilliance flashing inside Li Yao’s eyes, he released the daunting aura of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator nonstop. All the grass and trees in the garden were shivering. “Three Saints and Four Rapscallions make seven people. Little kid, if you were asked to make a list of ‘top ten experts’, who would be the last three?”

“There is not a fixed answer. After all, many super experts will never fight with their best abilities until they are left with no choice!”

Ling Lanyin paused for a moment and thought for a while. In the end, she answered reluctantly, “Master Bitter Cicada of the Stupa Temple might be capable enough of fighting against the Three Saints and the Four Rapscallions, but he is a monk who focuses most of his attention on rescuing people. He is not often involved in the conflicts among sects. So, he is not counted as one of the Three Saints.

“Also, my master said that, despite the young age of the emperor, it is quite possible that he has received all the heritages of the founding emperor of the Great Qian Dynasty. He is commonly believed to be a wise monarch who will reverse the situation and revive the Great Qian Dynasty. His Cultivation is immeasurable, too!”

Chapter 1379 - First Stop, the Purple Pole Sword Sect!

“Taking the two of them into account, that’s only nine. Who’s the last one?” Li Yao asked scarily.

Ling Lanyin’s face became flushed. She was obviously not a person who was familiar with adulation. Before she began her flattery, she was feeling rather embarrassed herself. “The Three Saints, the Four Rapscallions, Master Bitter Cicada, and His Majesty are the nine most extraordinary Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the world today. They are mostly in the high level or even the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage. The rest of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators all have a certain gap from them.

“If I must propose a name, I think that you can be compared to them and listed as one of the top ten invincible experts, too, senior!”

“Really?” Li Yao sneered. He suddenly burst into fury and cried, “You are lying! Are you trying to fool me?”

Li Yao’s saliva burst out, and Ling Lanyin felt like she had just been crushed by a storm. She gritted her teeth so hard that they almost turned sour before she managed to reply, “I dare not. I was not saying that because I meant to cajole you, senior!

“Master Black Moon was the top expert in the Southland of Sorcerers, but he was merely at the beginning level of the

Nascent Soul Stage. Let’s leave him aside.

“Han Yuantai, the Lord of Behemothic Eagle, is a famous expert from the Dark Cloud Prairies at the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage. Last year, when the Ghost Qin cavalry trampled on the central plateaus, he was among the vanguard. In less than one month, he broke into the headquarters of quite a few northern sects, slaying one Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator and nine Cultivators at the peak of the Core Formation Stage. His dominance is known by the world!

“But such a brutal man, together with Master Black Moon, was not able to resist one attack of yours, senior. Within a breath, one of them was captured, and the other died. It’s obvious enough that your Cultivation must’ve reached the peak, too!

“Before I left for the mission, my master told me the basic criteria to determine one’s capabilities.

“The Three Saints, Four Rapscallions, His Majesty, and Master Bitter Cicada belong to the level of ‘super experts’. Han Yuantai, in the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage, belongs to the tier of ‘first-rate experts’. There is an enormous chasm between ‘super experts’ and ‘first-rate experts’. Without rarely-seen opportunities, and without extraordinary personal aptitude, the chasm is barely crossable!

“Now that you can suppress a ‘first-rate expert’ easily, senior, you must belong to the tier of ‘super experts’, too. You are absolutely qualified as one of the top ten experts in the world!

“Haha. Hahahahahahahaha!” Li Yao burst into the craziest, most arrogant laughter. With greenish, ghostly fire beaming out of his black eyes, he stared at Ling Lanyin without blinking for a long time. Then, he nodded and said, “Well put!

“I picked up the greatest treasures that nobody could ever imagine in… that place by accident, and I trained myself in seclusion for decades, holding back the pain of being skinned and reborn as many times as I narrowly escaped the dangers of becoming mentally deranged. Finally, I have grasped the best techniques in the world, which shall not be wasted in the Southland of Sorcerers!

“Top ten experts?

“Hehe. Hehehehe. It’s fine that I’m not on the rank, but if I am, I will be the top one!

“Kid, I don’t need to hide my ambitions from anyone. I’m not interested in dealing with the messy trivia in the Southland of Sorcerers at all. Your father, Huo Wuji, and the chiefs, priests, and sorcerers from the hundred tribes here can make arrangements however you see fit!

“For me personally, I’m going to travel the world and meet the great heroes of the present day, including the ‘super experts’ in your eyes, the Three Saints and the Four Rapscallions and such!

“Let’s begin my journey from the Purple Pole Sword Sect. What do you think?”

Ling Lanyin thought quickly. The barbarian Cultivator from a desolate area who had suddenly grasped unparalleled techniques was almost like a bumpkin from countryside grew rich overnight due to a windfall. It was quite understandable that he wanted to show off in the fabulous world outside.

After all, the old monster was in need of the resources and refining facilities of the Purple Pole Sword Sect. There was certainly room for cooperation between the two parties. It was unlikely that the guy would go on a rampage the moment he arrived at the Purple Pole Sword Sect, right?

Since he had consented that Huo Wuji would be appointed as the new Chieftain of the Southland and was not stopping her father’s actions in the Southland of Sorcerers, it was obvious that he was still vaguely on the Great Qian Dynasty’s side.

If that was the case, everything was simple!

The Purple Pole Sword Sect had been in peril over the past few months. If such a tough and brutal old monster came to visit, other people who did not know that he was there to rent a place for refining would inevitably think that he had been invited by the Purple Pole Sword Sect to help the situation. They would certainly have more concerns if they wanted to start more trouble.

Thinking about that, Ling Lanyin bowed deeply. “It will be our honor to have Master Spiritual Vulture in our sect. You will certainly be welcomed most warmly, senior!”

After making a deal with Ling Lanyin, Li Yao asked her to forward the message to Ling Shoujing.

Although Ling Shoujing did not get thousands of soldiers immediately, persuading such an old monster in the middle-high level of the Nascent Soul Stage to visit the Purple Pole Sword Sect was an accomplishment even better than drafting a hundred thousand barbarian soldiers. Naturally, Ling Shoujing could not have been more satisfied.

Huo Wuji, Meng Duo, Gu Siduo, and other leaders of the barbarian tribes, after hearing the news that Li Yao was going out to ‘travel’, were not sure whether they should feel happy or worried. Of course, they were all crying as if their parents had just died and were almost clinging to Li Yao’s thighs, begging him not to leave.

Fearing that some of the barbarian Cultivators might be Master Spiritual Vulture’s old acquaintances and notice something wrong about himself, Li Yao simply dismissed all of them after a few words.

The chiefs, priests, and sorcerers of the Southland of Sorcerers then delivered him tremendous local specialties to Li Yao as farewell gifts. Snakes, rats, ants, poisons, and bugs as thick as Li Yao’s arm were offered to Li Yao in baskets. Li Yao greatly frowned at their kindness.

Later at night, Li Yao set Han Yuantai and the hundreds of knights from Ghost Qin free.

Quite a few barbarian Cultivators were still loyal to Huo Wujiu. If they were kept in the place, chances were that they would run into conflict with Huo Wuji’s supporters again. So, Li Yao asked the Ghost Qin people to take them away, too.

Although they were allowed to go, the souvenirs were forced to stay there.

Li Yao was new to the place. He could not use the currency of the federation. Therefore, as a poor boy, he was in dire need of a generous magnate such as Han Yuantai.

After all, Han Yuantai had brought many treasures and crystals on his trip south, which should have been given to Master Black Moon and other barbarian Cultivators who supported Ghost Qin as gifts. Naturally, they were all Li Yao’s property now.

After the guests from Ghost Qin were dealt with, Ling Shoujing held a ceremony to decree Huo Wuji as the new-generation Chieftain of the Southland.

Li Yao had announced that he would not be concerned with the issues in the world of mortals. The way he saw it, Huo Wuji did not look like a man blindly loyal to the Great Qian Dynasty. Instead, the guy was simply acting like such a person. If Ling Shoujing intended to mobilize his barbarians for battles, the two of them would certainly have long talks and meetings!

Ling Shoujing’s army would be stationed in the Southland of Sorcerers to demonstrate the power of the court and to maintain order.

Since Ling Lanyin had been sent by the Purple Pole Sword Sect to reinforce Ling Shoujing and was not restrained by the emperor’s order, she was free to leave.

Therefore, with Ling Lanyin leading the way, the two of them flew all the way to the central plateaus on their swords without being troubled by the terrain anymore.

With Li Yao and Ling Lanyin’s Cultivation right now, and with the intense spiritual energy of the Ancient Sages Sector, it was not entirely impractical for them to fly thousands of kilometers and directly return to the headquarters of the Purple Pole Sword Sect in a dozen days.

However, because Li Yao intended to observe the life of the Ancient Sages Sector, they put their swords away after they reached the north of the Sorcerers’ River, which was the borderline between the Southland of Sorcerers and the central plateaus. Li Yao disguised him as a low-level, unaffiliated Cultivator and bought himself a boat that was driven by spiritual energy. Asking Ling Lanyin to pretend to be his servant, he went along the river all the way north.

Ling Lanyin was rather anxious that her sect had already fallen into war with other Cultivation sects while she was away. She almost could not wait to fly back to the Purple Pole Sword Sect immediately with her back stabbed with swords.

However, she knew that the old monster near her was quite temperamental. Although he had expressed his intention to cooperate with the Purple Pole Sword Sect, he might change his attitude at any moment if he was unhappy.

Therefore, Ling Lanyin—as one of the youngest female Cultivators at the peak of the Core Formation Stage, praised as the most brilliant star in the younger generation of the Purple Pole Sword Sect, nominated as the Orchid Angel of the ‘Four Angels’ by the fellow Cultivators when Wang Xi was still in power—could only cover her face and work diligently as Li Yao’s servant, hoping that he had found enough entertainment in the outside world soon.

Although the Sorcerers’ River was not the longest river in the Great Qian Dynasty’s territory, it was definitely the most twisting, dangerous, and thrilling one.

It was especially so in the north of the river, where the cliffs were high and the forests were misty. Tigers and leopards were roaring all the time. When the boat was floating amid the surging tides, and when the noises of all kinds of demon beasts were coming over from the depths of the obscure woods, Li Yao felt that he was travelling along the Styx. The journey was quite breathtaking.

Li Yao appreciated the beautiful land of the Ancient Sages Sector, which had yet to be highly developed. After every pier he reached, he would dock the boat and observe the villages and towns next to the river.

He realized that Han Yuantai was not wrong about one thing. The Great Qian Dynasty was truly heavily controlled by the Cultivation sects, which were essentially independent kingdoms.

The towns of a reasonably large scale everywhere that he went had a Cultivation sect garrisoned, which would often occupy the best place and establish an ‘inner city’. They built up coruscating buildings and fortresses. The colorful defense rune arrays were on all day. The sunlight, after the reflections of the defense rune arrays, further accentuated the splendor of the Cultivation sects.

Such a view was a vivid contrast to the ‘outer city’, which was ragged and populated by ordinary folks. They were almost two worlds.

In some places, Li Yao even saw floating mountains, where plants, pavilions, waterfalls, rainbows, and birds were flourishing, three hundred meters above the ground. What fascinating and unworldly paradises they were!

However, on the ground three hundred meters below, the houses of the ordinary folks were just ‘burrows’ that were essentially holes in the ground mixed with fences and mud.

Chapter 1380 - Who's Right, and Who's Wrong?

When the handsome and elegant Cultivators, in their fancy clothes, rode their swords out of the splendid floating mountains and looked down upon the emaciated and even stinky folks in whatever clothes they had, it was the most vivid contrast of deities and mortals!

“Ordinary people are ants!”

Li Yao, born and raised in the modern era, found it hard to acknowledge the declaration.

In the modern Cultivation civilization that the Star Glory Federation was, even the most weak ordinary people could be clean and tidy, with a healthy body and high spirits. At first glance, they were not much different from Cultivators.

However, in the world of ancient Cultivators where productivity was low, the difference between deities and mortals did exist. What were the ordinary people struggling in their burrows for if not lambs and ants?

Therefore, the Cultivators that Li Yao observed might not necessarily have had a malicious attitude toward the ordinary people, but their condescension was obvious when they were engaged with ordinary people.

They looked at ordinary people with more ‘indifference’ than ‘contempt’. It seemed to them that the difference between them and ordinary people was natural and self-justified.

It was almost always the case after he passed more than ten sects.

Such a sight sent Li Yao’s thoughts into disarray. He was going to criticize the ancient Cultivators who despised ordinary people with the glorious theory that ‘Cultivators are fish, ordinary people are water, and Cultivators are the sabers of humanity’ from the Star Glory Federation, when the words of some locals of the Ancient Sages Sector slapped him in the face.

It happened when he stopped by a town named Stone Martial Town. Seeing that the headquarters of the Stone Martial Hall was particularly spectacular, and the houses of the ordinary people nearby were more dilapidated than usual, he was quite interested and decided to stop to investigate.

He found an excuse to get Ling Lanyin away before he entered Stone Martial Town disguised as a traveler on the road.

As he expected, the Cultivators in this place was more arrogant than usual and simply viewed ordinary people as nothing.

When he caught the casual conversation of a few customers in a tea shop below the mountain outside of the city, Li Yao could not help but feel infuriated.

As it turned out, the Stone Martial Hall had been acting on its own in the place. Not only was it blocking the food and tax that was supposed to be submitted to the court, they were even demanding servitude in the name of the court!

The households of ordinary people within the Stone Martial Hall’s territory had to provide labor service for the Stone

Martial Sect for three to five years, during which time they were paid little to nothing.

The youngest son of this customer was at service in the Stone Martial Hall in the beginning. He had been toiling for three years for the Cultivators and was about to be free to go back home.

But one day, the Stone Martial Hall threw his cold body out, claiming that he had died abruptly because of exhaustion.

Judging from the body, it was indeed skinny, with veins bulging out. He had obviously borne too much work for too long.

More importantly, when the customer was talking about his youngest son’s death, despite his sorrow, there was no dissatisfaction about the Stone Martial Hall at all.

The fellow customers were also merely sighing about the fact that he was unfortunate and that his youngest son must have been fated to a short life. However, they did not dare to complain about the Stone Martial Hall at all. They did not even realize the Stone Martial Hall’s responsibility.

Li Yao could not take it anymore. With all kinds of thoughts rolling in his mind, he could not help but scorn the customers.

But as it turned out, his words raised public fury, and he was lambasted by everyone. Even the customer whose youngest son had passed away due to overworking for the Stone Martial Hall also spat on him.

The attitude of the customers dumbfounded Li Yao at first and then rendered him speechless. Eventually, he blushed in embarrassment.

As it turned out, the area around the Stone Martial Sect was the most mountainous area with the densest forests in the basin of the Sorcerers’ River.

The tiny basin was surrounded by the highest mountains, which were mired in mist all year long.

In many places inside the mountains, there were exceedingly few days with sunshine. The rest of the year was continuous rain.

Such a desolate area was naturally packed with wildlife and demon beasts, which would not only swallow the villagers who accidentally trespassed into the forests but also sweep across the towns below the mountains in hordes, leaving nothing but bones behind.

Despite such a harsh environment, one city, almost ten towns, and dozens of villages had been developed. It was all thanks to the Cultivators of the Stone Martial Hall.

It was because they marched into the forests fearlessly slaying the evil in their way and expanding the safe regions time and time again that the ordinary folks could follow up, burn the trees to the ground, and establish new villages!

“Over the two hundred years since the Stone Martial Hall was founded, they have eliminated the dens of fiends and demon beasts in the forests more than ten times every year. Twenty to fifty deities perish every year!”

“That’s right. In recent decades, to slay the evil, even two leaders of the Stone Martial Hall have sacrificed themselves!”

“Without the deities from the Stone Martial Hall, the settlements within hundreds of square kilometers would’ve been savaged by the monsters. That is exactly why this place is named ‘Stone Martial Town’ in honor of the great help of the deities!”

“You should thank others when gratitude is due. How can you be a guy who forgets what a great favor other people have done you? Even two of their magnificent leaders have passed away. Twenty or so regular disciples are killed every year, too. Almost ten disciples can be killed in a single trial. What’s there to complain about when one individual from our household dies?”

Li Yao did not expect that the numb and ignorant victims would say that. He stammered for a while but insisted that, regardless, the Stone Martial Hall should not block the court’s tax or initiate servitude without permission, which was a complete disrespect for the authority of the court. If every sect did what the Stone Martial Hall did, they would be independent kingdoms. Then, what would happen to the Great Qian Dynasty, which was shaking in the storm?

His words raised even merrier laughter.

At this moment, all the customers regarded Li Yao as a pedant who had read too many books and stopped bothering about him.

A civilized-looking local, who appeared to be a teacher, counted his fingers and did the math for him.

First of all, theoretically speaking, the Stone Martial Hall certainly did not have the right to block the food and tax that should have been submitted to the court.

But then again, for ordinary folks, they had to pay taxes either way. If the food and tax was handed over to the court, God knew what they would be spent on. Or rather, they might take a few turns among the high officials in the court, only to be pocketed somewhere in between!

In comparison, if they submitted the food and tax to the Stone Martial Hall, which was a local sect after all, most of the earnings would be devoted to the local area, even if some of it was squandered. So, the local people would rather not give their belongings to people from elsewhere.

Moreover, annihilating the monsters in the forests in order to collect the rare materials and the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures in the forests was greatly beneficial for the Stone Martial Hall itself. It was even the fundamental approach to sustain the Stone Martial Hall’s development.

Without the motivation of the folks, the Stone Martial Hall would still try to slay the monsters. Most of the resources that they demanded from the folks would be dedicated to that end, too.

To some extent, it was also kind of ‘from the people and for the people’.

Therefore, the Stone Martial Hall had the full support of the locals. Every year, when the tax was filed, they would work together with the Stone Martial Hall to block the food and the money.

The same went for servitude.

For most folks, they had to take servitude either way, either in the Stone Martial Hall or for the court.

But serving the Stone Martial Hall had a lot of merits.

First of all, the Stone Martial Hall was a local sect. Even the high and mighty Cultivators were mostly distant family members to them.

Could the Cultivators turn a blind eye to all their family members and even regard their father and mother as ants?

Naturally, it was impossible. At least, for most of the low-level Cultivators, they were not coldhearted enough to ignore their seventy-year-old mother’s begging.

Therefore, to the servants that their seventy-year-old mother introduced, they might be rather indifferent on the surface, but it was unlikely that they would intentionally torture the servants.

So, over the years, some ordinary people did die of exhaustion while serving the Stone Martial Hall, but few of them were killed in torment. Even if some of them were killed on purpose, it was mainly because they had violated the rules of the sect and were used to set an example for others.

Moreover, if they served the Stone Martial Hall and worked harder, the Cultivators of the sect would have more time for training to be stronger, and if the Cultivators were stronger, they would be able to kill more demon beasts. Would the local villages not be more peaceful?

Also, by serving a Cultivation sect, if the folks were smart and lucky enough, they might be able to pick up some fundamental martial arts. With enough luck, they might even become Cultivators some day!

Although the odds were little to none, for the folks who tilled their land throughout their life, it was the only channel to change the life of their children.

Even if the path did not work out, as long as they were dutiful enough and won the favor of a certain deity, they would have a great reliance when they walked among their fellows in the future!

Serving the court, on the other hand, carried none of those benefits.

First of all, servitude of the court often demanded that the folks be moved to a foreign place thousands of kilometers away. It was not unusual for them to be bullied, beaten, and exploited without anyone to turn to.

Honestly speaking, if the folks died in the Stone Martial Hall, their body was at least left intact.

If they joined the army of the court and got killed on a battlefield thousands of kilometers away, it would be a blessing of their ancestors if an urn of their ashes was sent back!

Also, the troops made of ordinary people were the lowliest professions. They had barely any chance to get in touch with the Cultivators, receive their tutelage, or find support.

Lastly, if the young and strong people were drafted too far away, who was going to deal with the monsters in the forests nearby? The deities could not do the chores while slaying the monsters at the same time, right?

What? The court needed troops to fight Ghost Qin?

What the f*ck did Ghost Qin have to do with those citizens? It was not Ghost Qin who caused trouble in the local area but the monsters in the forests!

It was the northerners’ business that the Ghost Qin Knights were trampling on their land. Why should the southerners bleed for them in vain?

“Court? In our place, the court is just sh*it. The Stone Martial Hall is the heaven!” the teacher-like local declared to Li Yao as such both profanely and proudly. “When the monsters go on a rampage, all the deities from the Stone Martial Hall attack them together. Where’s the army of the court? Nowhere!

“But when harvest season comes, they come pretty fast to requisition the grain, only to be beaten back by the deities of the Stone Martial Hall!”

Chapter 1381 - Our Past

The remark raised yet another round of laughter. Everybody was shaking their head and feeling proud of themselves, as if beating the tax officers of the court back was a glorious endeavor.

While laughing, they were still eyeing Li Yao the same way people usually eyed a retard.

Li Yao had many words he wanted to tell the ordinary people who had been undernourished so long that they were dark, thin, and looked like a different species from the Cultivators.

However, under their pitiful gazes, he did not know where to begin.

After he left the tea shop, under the guidance of the teacher, he went to visit the local temple, which was said to be a popular place.

Religions were very important on the two sides of the Sorcerers' River. There were many temples in the villages and even in the forests.

However, it was rarely the groundless deities that were enshrined in the temples but the Cultivators of the local sects who had sacrificed themselves in the operations to slay monsters.

It was said that the Cultivators' souls would not entirely wither after they perished and that if the souls were enshrined, they would still protect their hometown and the people.

Therefore, after Cultivators of the Stone Martial Hall perished, temples would be established for those who had a high Cultivation and position. The deceased low-level Cultivators would also be allotted to the temples and be enshrined together with the seniors.

Most of the villages had more than one temple, which were often the most splendid buildings in the village. With green bricks, beautiful tiles, stone lions, and a bronze gate, they were a major contrast to the low, ragged cottages around them.

Inside every temple, the souls of three to five Cultivators were enshrined.

They were the things in highest demand. Every time a Cultivator of the Stone Martial Hall passed away, all the local villages would fight for them. Everybody would promise the most generous reward, hoping that the soul of the deceased could be led back to their town.

The number of souls enshrined was a symbol of the capability of a town!

Four Cultivators were enshrined in the temple that Li Yao visited, including an elder and a leader of the Stone Martial Hall. It was known as Four Saints Temple and was the largest temple nearby. No wonder the villagers said that it was a popular place and that the prayers there were often very effective.

The statues of the four Cultivators, enshrouded in gold powder, were standing inside the Four Saints Temple. A few rune arrays that could trigger colorful light had been carved in the darkness, too, making the statues look rather elegant and vivid. If the ignorant villagers ran into them at night, it would be quite understandable for to mistake them for resurrected heroes.

A few bronze plaques nearby had been carved with the life events of those Cultivators and the reasons for their demise.

Li Yao read carefully, only to discover that three of the Cultivators had perished when fighting the ferocious animals in the forests while the leader, who was at the peak of the Building Foundation Stage, had been killed by a strong evil Cultivator who had happened to flee to the local area.

Li Yao did not know how he should comment on them anymore.

It was obvious that a Cultivation sect could not solely live on the taxes of local villages. For training, the Cultivators had to hunt the demon beasts in the forests, retrieve their meat and cores, and excavate the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and crystals from the mountains. That was the bedrock of a sect.

So, the Stone Martial Hall went into the mountains to slay the monsters for the survival and development of the sect. It was not just a selfless endeavor of ‘serving the justice’.

Yet, objectively speaking, it was exactly because those Cultivators had fought the monsters and the demon beasts unwaveringly for hundreds of years that the ordinary people had been given a piece of land where they could survive.

When the monsters went down the mountains to cause trouble, or the foreign evil Cultivators fled to the villages, the ‘deities’ of the Stone Martial Hall never hesitated.

Therefore, if he was asked whether or not the Cultivators of the Stone Martial Hall had made any contribution to the ordinary people here, Li Yao found it impossible to say ‘no’ brazenly.

A Cultivator from the Stone Martial Hall scorns and patronizes the folks today and can’t look more obnoxious.

But chances are that he will unfortunately be killed while fighting the monsters in the mountains tomorrow!

From his point of view, he merely goes there to collect cores, bones, and herbs for his own training, and he certainly never bears the interests of the folks in mind. But objectively speaking, he has indeed paid with his life and contributed to the peace and happiness of the people!

Is such an ancient Cultivator a good person or a bad person?

Li Yao could not figure out the answer for the time being.

Moreover, did the ancient Cultivator really never consider the interests of the folks at all?

The Cultivators of the Stone Martial Hall were mostly locally born and raised.

The parents and children of many Cultivators were ordinary people living in the place.

When the monsters went on a rampage down the mountain, the families of the Cultivators would suffer a catastrophe, too.

When the Cultivators were slaying the monsters inside the forests, were they really simply considering their own interests without at all feeling that they were protecting their hometown?

Unlike plants, human beings had emotions. Could everything in the world simply be judged as ‘right’ or ‘wrong’?

Li Yao secretly sighed. After hesitating for a long time, he finally bowed to the four ancient Cultivators represented by the four statues as a modern Cultivator and called them respectfully in his heart, *Seniors!*

No matter what, the ancient Cultivators represented the history of the civilization of mankind and the past of all the modern Cultivators.

Would there be a future without a past?

When he was about to leave, Li Yao noticed a detail.

In front of the four statues, dozens of trays of sacrificial offerings, including roasted chicken, meat, and steamed buns, were placed.

Li Yao knew that, considering the poverty of the local villages, they could barely afford porridge. The chicken, meat, and steam buns were the most delicious food that they would not dream of having for even the spring festival.

There was no telling how much trouble the villagers had gone through to purchase so many items for the statues and how much of their good will was attached to the offerings!

However, those offerings were now slowly deteriorating in front of the statues and would certainly entertain the rats and ants later.

A few dirty, beggar-like kids, with barely any clothes on them, were standing outside of the temple. They were standing on their toes and drooling while they stared at the offerings. Yet, they could only watch the chicken and meat slowly decay but had no courage to even lick the food.

Li Yao heard the thunderous sounds inside the kids’ belly.

His appreciation for the ancient Cultivators that he had just gained was immediately suppressed again.

At this time, cries were echoing in the village outside, which seemed to be contagious. Very soon, the entire village, and even a few villages nearby, were drowned by tears.

Li Yao exited the temple to see what happened, only to discover that almost a hundred white flags had been raised in the village. Many folks were already inwhite [1] , apparently quite familiar with the situation.

“The other day, Elder Lei of the Stone Martial Hall led twenty new deities into the mountain for a trial. They unfortunately alarmed an eccentric boa that had lurked below the ground for decades and was about to evolve into a dragon. Elder Lei and six new deities perished. Perished!”

Cries and moans were echoing everywhere within the range of Stone Martial Town.

…

Li Yao spent one day tracing and executing the eccentric boa that had a red lump on the head. He then dug out the corpses of Elder Lei and three Cultivators from the beast’s stomach and carefully preserved them. When nobody was around at night, he put the dead bodies down at an intersection below the mountain.

Bowing to the deceased three times, he returned to his own boat at the pier on the Sorcerers’ River with complicated feelings.

Later, while he explored the towns by the river on the way east, he lost the arrogance of one from a modern civilization and tried to observe the issues from the perspective of locals.

The next twenty or so towns were more or less the same. They were all centered around the Cultivation sects. The Cultivators in such places were indeed high and mighty existences who were even more powerful than the emperor.

However, the terrain along the Sorcerers' River was almost identical to the nearby of Stone Martial Town. Mountains were high, forests were dense, and monsters and ferocious animals were many. Without Cultivators fighting them, it was impossible for ordinary people to live.

If Li Yao were a local peasant, what could he have done faced with the deadly monsters and animals except for placing all his hope on the 'deities'?

If Li Yao were a local Cultivator, he would not necessarily have felt guilty about the relationship at all. Instead, he would feel that it was only natural that the folks admired, worshipped, and revered him, because he was training hard every day to guarantee the peace of the local villagers at the risk of his own life.

After a few days, they finally moved out of the zigzagging part of the Sorcerers' River and entered a new stretch of the Sorcerers' River, which was mostly hills and plateaus.

Starting from the place, they had gradually entered the southeast of the Great Qian Dynasty, which was the most prosperous land with the most intense spiritual energy. The land was much more developed there. Naturally, there were few primitive forests or ferocious monsters.

The hills and lands were all utilized at a high efficiency however small they were. It was barely possible to find a desolate land the size of a fingernail.

After a thousand years of land annexation, most of the land and forests belonged to the local noble families. They were rented to peasants for tilling.

The noble families were often affiliated with a certain Cultivation sect. So, some of the best lands were the Cultivation sect’s property, and there was no way that ordinary people could lay their hands on it.

The population there was too large for the usable land. The territories of most of the Cultivation sects were right next to each other.

Therefore, the threats around this stretch of the Sorcerers’ River were no longer wildlife but other Cultivation sects!

Here, Li Yao witnessed a fight between two Cultivation sects for the first time.

Under the lead of almost ten Building Foundation Stage Cultivators, almost a hundred Cultivators in the Refinement Stage, holding the banners of their respective sects, crashed into each other like two throngs of tigers. They were attacking each other so cruelly that they did not seem to care that they were of the same kind.

After fighting for less than an hour, three Building Foundation Stage Cultivators and more than twenty Refinement Stage Cultivators had been killed.

The reason of the fight, however, was not for an unparalleled technique or any Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures but simply a cow.

A regular cow!

Chapter 1382 - Deterrence

The case was actually quite simple.

A from Village B lost a cow, only to find it again with C from Village D. A went to question C. C said, ‘Would the cow reply to your call?’ A said, ‘There was a mark on the cow’s body.’ Then, C simply asked his fellow villagers to beat A out. A was not only bruised and swollen but also broke a leg.

As a result, a large fight between Village B and Village D began.

In the poor and uncivilized area, such village-wide fights were nothing unusual.

For cows, for water sources, for land, for women, or for grudges accumulated through all kinds of trivia, two villages might be fighting hard, each dropping a few dead bodies. It was rather a common practice.

However, Village B and Village D happened to be at the border of the territories of two Cultivation sects, and they were under the protection of the two Cultivation sects. The souls of the Cultivators from the two Cultivation sects were also enshrined in the two villages. The incense was burning inside the two temples all year long!

During the fights, the villagers often invited the statues inside the temples with them. Covering the statues in fancy garments and lighting up firecrackers, a few muscled men would carry the statues to the front, hoping that the deities would watch over them and guarantee their victory.

However, it was often unavoidable that the statues of the ‘deities’ on one side were broken. Some of the villagers even intentionally tarnished them with dog blood or the cloth women used during their menstrual period.

For the Cultivation sect that was the supporter of the losing side, how could they watch the souls of the Cultivators of their own sect be insulted like that?

If the rumors spread that a certain Cultivator of a certain sect could not even help the believers on his side win a battle despite the amazing techniques that he had when he was alive, and a bunch of peasants even broke his halo easily with a basin of dog blood, would the Cultivation sect have any reputation among the Cultivators?

Therefore, it was necessary that the Cultivation sect should stand up for the peasants within its territory!

To stand up for the peasants, they would not demean themselves by troubling the hostile peasants but simply go to their protector!

Because the two sects bordered, a lot of friction had certainly developed during the long history. They had long developed grudges with each other, not to mention that there were certainly conflicts of interests, too. Now that one party had challenged the other openly, would the other party simply give in?

The fight that caused the death of three Building Foundation Stage Cultivators and more than twenty Refinement Stage Cultivators in the two Cultivation sects was thus initiated hilariously.

The cause of the fight seemed to be a cow, but it was actually more than a cow. They were fighting to prove their capabilities. Proving their capabilities was, of course, for the full-scale battles of living space.

According to what Li Yao had learned later, street fights were quite popular in places that had been highly developed and could not expand further.

In rural areas, the villages fought each other for farmland, wells, irrigation issues, and the like. In towns, the gangs also resorted to fighting to strive for and maintain their interests in transportation businesses, mining businesses, or unchartered salt businesses.

Most of the land in every village belonged to a Cultivation sect. The salt dealers or the ferrymen in the towns, even if they were controlled by some chambers of commerce on the surface, were still in fact connected to the Cultivation sects.

Therefore, all the fights would eventually involve the Cultivation sects. The fights among ordinary people gradually escalated into fights among Cultivation sects. Even worse, the two parties might invite reinforcements from other places. The fire of war might burn more and more intensely until it became a huge conflict where dozens of sects were involved.

The fight between two Cultivation sects caused by a cow that Li Yao witnessed was actually among the better ones.

After all, in the age of ancient Cultivators, a cow was an important asset of a village. Its ownership was certainly worth fighting over.

The most extreme example that Li Yao heard, however, was a fight because of a poop, in which two reasonably large Cultivation sects were fully at war. They continued inviting their friendly sects for help, and their friendly sects had relatives who had established their own branches and returned to give their family a hand upon hearing that the situation was not good.

More and more forces joined. After half a year of battles, except for other casualties, even two Cultivators at the peak of the Core Formation Stage were killed!

One cr*p cost the lives of two Core Formation Stage experts. It indeed sounded ridiculous!

However, after Li Yao's careful analysis, he found that it was a truly indestructible loop. Whoever was caught in the loop, from the ignorant farmers to the high and mighty Core Formation Stage Cultivators, would not get away from it.

More specifically speaking, the cause of the battle was when a kid felt a stomach ache and had a bowel movement on his return from a family visit with his mother, who was a peasant's wife.

At that time, poop was very important fertilizer. The place was far away from their village, but the wife could not stop the kid from popping because of the emergency. Then, she enveloped the excrement with a few broad leaves, planning to take it back to her farmland.

But a local peasant's wife dashed out and announced to her that, since the poop had dropped on the territory of that village, it was the village's property. She demanded that the stranger leave the poop!

The two women thus began a fight over a poop. The woman from elsewhere, naturally, did not win the fight. Not only did she fail to secure the poop, some of her hair was even torn out.

When she returned home and told her villagers the story in tears, the two villages—which belonged to two different Cultivation sects and had deep grudges because of water sources, farmlands, and other reasons—naturally, had yet another huge fight, resulting in a few people dying.

Things would not end well if some people got killed in a fight. The peasants would never go to the local branch of the court and demand justice. Instead, they carried the bodies of their people to the headquarters of the local Cultivation sect and placed them in a row before crying and asking for the help of the deities.

Could the deities say no?

Since the Cultivation sects were deeply rooted in local villages, they counted on the support of the villagers.

The villagers were renting their land, providing labor for them for free, building temples for them, and enshrining the dead Cultivators with roasted chicken that the villagers could barely afford. They were catering to the Cultivators' needs better than they catered to their family. What more could they do?

They were not calling the Cultivators deities or building the temples for nothing. The roasted chicken was not intended for the dead people to enjoy with nothing in return. It was a rather peaceful land nearby, without too many monsters that the Cultivators were obliged to kill. Their lives were comfortable enough. Now that the villagers were in trouble, were they even qualified as deities and brazen enough to enjoy the chicken if they did not help settle the trouble?

Besides, there was also the familial bond. It was their uncle of their aunt of their second cousin of the external disciple of their sect who lay dead outside. Knowing that he was backed by someone else and knowing that the village was under the protection of the sect, the hostile sect still beat him to death. Was it not obvious that they did not respect the sect at all?

If the Cultivators did not stand up for the villagers, they would not be praised for acting generously or leniently. Instead, they would be considered cowardly pushovers!

“What kind of sect is this? How is it going to fight for the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures if they cannot even fight for a poop?”

It might seem absurd, but it was the natural and the only possible result in an era when there were too many Cultivation sects and too few training resources, when the social contradiction was higher than ever.

It was not about a poop but about deterrence.

The so-called deterrence consisted of two parts.

Firstly, make sure that they had abilities to defend all their interests, even if the ‘interest’ was just a poop.

Secondly, make everyone believe that they were determined to use the abilities at any time when they were dissatisfied.

If they had deterrence, the other sects would be scared of them. It would be safer and more convenient for their disciples to travel outside. People of all trades would pay them for their protection. The other sects would have to consider carefully and evaluate the sect’s possible reprisals before they took anything from the sect. More unaffiliated Cultivators would join them because they were famous for their protection!

Without deterrence, if they could not even secure a poop, everything would be doomed. People would no longer believe in the sect, and the sect would have difficulty operating. Nobody would be awed by them when they were outside. The trades and territories under their control would be harassed on a daily basis. The sect's disciples would be scorned by their family every day. Ashamed, they might just stand up and leave. Even the humblest peasants might run to the territory of another sect and work for someone else!

Moreover, if the thing was spread out, the court might feel that the sect was easy to deal with. There would be endless trouble in future!

So, it was only necessary that the Cultivators stood up for the villagers.

Of course, the first Cultivators to stand up were certainly the disciples in the Refinement Stage of the lowest level. Chances were that the two parties would even set up rules for the fight and hope to settle the problem in a peaceful manner.

However, Cultivators were capable of eating half a bull for a meal and killing a tiger with one punch. When they were truly angry, how could they remember the rules all the time?

Should some of the disciples be unlucky enough to be killed, could their master not stand up for them? How could they hang around with other Cultivators if they did not?

Of course, their masters had masters, too, and the masters of masters had senior brothers and juniors. When the young were defeated, the seasoned came. After the Refinement Stage Cultivators were dead, Building Foundation Stage Cultivators came, and after the Building Foundation Stage

Cultivators were dead, the Core Formation Stage Cultivators arrived.

It was the whole story of ‘one poop killed two Core Formation Stage Cultivators’.

Getting to the bottom of it, ‘poop’ was just a fuse. The real critical factor was the resources that were running dry and could not support so many Cultivators!

Li Yao felt like laughing when he first heard the story.

However, after he learned the full story, he felt deeply saddened.

He knew that the Cultivation sects in the age of ancient Cultivators were in a much worse relationship than the ones in the modern Cultivation civilization. It was not unusual for them to fight over Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures or unparalleled techniques or even rob someone else of their belongings.

Such cruel tales had been well featured in movies, video games, and literary works of the Star Glory Federation, so Li Yao was not surprised.

But it had never occurred to him that a world of ancient Cultivators where the resources were running low could be so cruel, even to the extent that the most insignificant froth could be a spark to trigger a great battle when every sect wanted to maintain their deterrence!

Chapter 1383 - Two Saints in Competition, the Dragon Spring Meeting!

After exploring villages, farmland, and sects along the Sorcerers’ River for half a month, Li Yao finally developed a profound understanding as to why Han Yuantai said that the Great Qian Dynasty was not a real country.

The foreign person coveting the south from the northern prairies was not wrong. Compared to a modern country such as the Star Glory Federation, the so-called ‘Great Qian’ was merely a geological concept. Its court did not possess the power of a real country at all.

As the helpless replacements, the beggar-thy-neighbor Cultivation sects were more like small countries.

Li Yao could never forget the hateful eyes of the losing side in the fight between two sects caused by a cow as they were picking up the dead bodies of their side.

If Ghost Qin’s people suddenly showed up in front of the sect, Li Yao had no doubt that it would absolutely join Ghost Qin without any hesitation as a self-willing vassal in order to destroy the hostile sect.

As for the Great Qian Dynasty?

Screw it!

Li Yao felt helpless.

It shouldn't be like this. Cultivation shouldn't be like this.

The high and mighty ancient Cultivators who were killing each other were wrong. The peasants attached to them, due to a combination of ignorance, greed, cunningness, kindness, and innocence, were wrong. The Cultivation sect was wrong. The court of the Great Qian Dynasty was wrong, too!

Including Ghost Qin of the Dark Cloud Prairies, everybody was wrong. Greatly wrong!

But how was he going to point it out, awaken them, and change everything on his own?

Li Yao could not forget the hungry, wistful children outside of the temple of Cultivators.

Li Yao could not forget the deformed bodies of the Cultivators after he dug them out of the stomach of the demon beast.

Li Yao could not forget the scene where two Cultivation sects were fighting in the sky, and the ordinary people affiliated to them were also fighting each other, blowing out one another's guts and brains with their sickles and hoes. He could not forget the eyes of the losing side, which resembled wounded wolves.

He did not think too much of the world in the beginning and simply regarded it as a 'mercenary camp' of the Star Glory Federation.

However, the half month of travelling made the flames in his heart burn brighter and brighter.

He could not wait to go to the Purple Pole Sword Sect and craft a batch of components as soon as possible so that he could establish the super large beacons and set them to a standby state where they could be activated at any time.

He could not save the entire Ancient Sages Sector on his own.

But with the power of the entire Star Glory Federation, they certainly could!

Ignite the fire that would illuminate the entire universe and save all human compatriots who were still sinking and struggling in darkness!

It was the significance of the Star Glory Federation, and it was the greatest reliance for them to fight until the end against the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance confidently!

After arriving in River Town, the largest city along that stretch of the Sorcerers’ River, Ling Lanyin finally managed to communicate with the headquarters of the Purple Pole Sword Sect through a branch of the sect there.

The news that she received in the branch, however, startled Ling Lanyin and amazed Li Yao!

“The Purple Pole Sword Sect is going to convene the Dragon Spring Meeting, which is usually held once every five years, ahead of schedule. All the great heroes of the world will be invited to appreciate their swords and relevant arts!

“The Dragon Spring Meeting to be held will be the largest one in the past hundred years. Not only will the newly produced marvelous weapons be exhibited, almost a hundred confidential, primeval weapons will also be open to visitors. It will be a great gala that all the sword Cultivators in the world will not hesitate to join!

“What is even more shocking is that, during the Dragon Spring Meeting, ‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren and ‘Master Righteous One’ Qi Zhongdao, two of the Three Saints of the Great Qian Dynasty, will have an unprecedented summit confrontation!

“It is said that my senior uncle has finally finished polishing the unparalleled primeval sword after thirty years. He finally has a chance to compete with the Heaven Flipping Seal, Qi Zhongdao’s core magical equipment!”

After explaining everything to Li Yao, Ling Lanyin was entirely dumbfounded. She mumbled to herself, “What do we do? What do we do? Master Righteous One and my senior uncle are both pillars of the Great Qian Dynasty. But they are going to fight. They are going to fight…”

It took Li Yao a long time to figure out what happened.

The Purple Pole Sword Sect was the largest sect of sword Cultivators in the Great Qian Dynasty. Forging and selling swords was an important business of the sect. Before, a Dragon Spring Meeting had been held every couple of years, where the blades produced in recent years would be displayed. All the other sects were welcome to come and purchase them.

In the term of modern Cultivation civilization, it was some sort of ‘product release meeting’ or ‘annual special sale’.

‘Iron Saint’ Qi Zhongdao, one of the Three Saints, was an immeasurably extraordinary person!

The Purple Pole Sword Sect was the largest sect of sword Cultivators.

The Grand Mystery Sect, in comparison, was the largest sect in the Great Qian Dynasty, or rather, in the entire Ancient Sages Sector!

‘Master Righteous One’ Qi Zhongdao was the grand leader of the Grand Mystery Sect!

He had been the counsellor of the Great Qian Dynasty for three generations. No matter who sat on the throne, and even during the days when Wang Xi seized power, his position was utterly unshakable. He was almost the leader of all the Cultivators in the Great Qian Dynasty.

For the disorganized Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty, Qi Zhongdao was the only one who could sustain the ostensible harmony and basic order!

Although the man was powerful and had a high Cultivation, he had never been the subject of any scandals. He was well respected for his frugalness and asceticism. Also, when he was handling the conflicts of other sects, he always ruled reasonably and unbiasedly. He truly deserved his name [1] !

He had been given the nickname ‘Iron God’ because he was as tough and selfless as iron.

However, if anybody disobeyed Qi Zhongdao’s rulings, they would understand the other meaning of ‘Iron Saint’, which was that he was indestructible and unstoppable!

His core magical equipment, the Heaven Flipping Seal, was known as the most tyrannical treasure of the Ancient Sages Sector, able to crush anybody that dared to compete with it!

‘Iron Saint’ Qi Zhongdao, leader of the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty, was to have a fight with ‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren, the strongest sword Cultivator of the Great Qian Dynasty?

It was indeed a piece of stunning news.

No wonder Ling Lanyin was shocked.

However, for Li Yao, the competition between the two ‘top ten’ experts was within his expectations and nothing to be surprised at.

By his estimation, this was how the whole thing developed.

A few years ago, when the Lead Eunuch Wang Xi was still in power, the Purple Pole Sword Sect, as the greatest conglomerate of weapon business in the Great Qian Dynasty, secured quite a few fat orders due to the personal connection between the leader of the sect and Wang Xi. It also monopolized the project to change the gear of all the troops of the Great Qian Dynasty. Although it profited greatly, the other weapon corporations and interest groups were certainly not happy.

After Wang Xi’s fall, naturally, the other interest groups came back and demanded compensation.

Not only were they forcing the Purple Pole Sword Sect to give up all the orders, it would be even better if the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s original market was open to them. The most satisfactory result would certainly be that the Purple Pole Sword Sect was eliminated and its market and body were split by them.

Claiming that the Purple Pole Sword Sect was the eunuch’s conspirator was only step one.

Through their connections in the court, they ordered the Ling family, a family affiliated to the Purple Pole Sword Sect, to carry out the mission of ‘appeasing the Southland of Sorcerers’. That was step two.

The mission was obviously extremely difficult to accomplish. Should it fail, the Ling family would be a start point to dissect the entire Purple Pole Sword Sect!

However, the Purple Pole Sword Sect was certainly not so easy to deal with, either.

As the largest weapon conglomerate of the Great Qian Dynasty, it had a super elite force of soldiers. How could it wait to be butchered?

Even though the ‘Thunderous Straight Swordsman’ was killed, there were still six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, of whom ‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren was a super expert who could be the strongest Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator of the Great Qian Dynasty!

Seeing that the court had assigned such an illogical mission to their vassal family, the Cultivators of the Purple Pole Sword Sect knew what was going on.

Therefore, the Purple Pole Sword Sect announced the Dragon Spring Meeting ahead of schedule as a counterattack. They were demonstrating the marvelous weapons and the primeval treasures that the sect had accumulated for hundreds of years to the world.

Was it really a ‘production release meeting’ or an ‘annual special sale’?

It was a blatant demonstration of power, almost like someone half-naked shouting, “Come on. The Purple Pole

Sword Sect has so many disciples and so many extraordinary weapons. Whoever intends to steal my orders or break into my headquarters is welcome to try, as long as you are prepared to be killed!”

However, the other major sects in the Great Qian Dynasty were obviously determined to chop something, preferably a piece of meat, off the Purple Pole Sword Sect.

Even ‘Iron Saint’ Qi Zhongdao, the grand leader of the largest sect in the world who was acknowledged as the leader of all Cultivators, had been invited to have a summit confrontation with ‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren.

The meaning was obvious, too. ‘I might as well have a try!’

This is very exciting! Li Yao could not help but feel his mouth was dry in his excitement.

The competitions in the Dragon Spring Meeting would decide the fate of the Purple Pole Sword Sect, the largest sword sect of the Great Qian Dynasty, and even alter the general picture of the Ancient Sages Sector.

‘Iron Saint’ Qi Zhongdao and ‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren would certainly try their best. It was not going to be a restrained exchange of skills.

I’m told that, except for the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators who went missing mysteriously a hundred years ago, Qi Zhongdao and Yan Liren are basically the representatives of the top combat ability of the Ancient Sages Sector. By observing the fight of the two unparalleled experts, I will be able to evaluate the average level of the top warriors of the Ancient Sages Sector!

Also, the Heaven Flipping Seal, Qi Zhongdao’s core magical equipment, and the marvelous sword that Yan Liren has recently polished are both claimed to be ‘primeval treasures’. Does their ‘primeval’ mean the same as the ‘primeval’ in the outside world? I’m going to observe it more carefully!

Also, all the big shots in the Great Qian Dynasty must’ve joined the Dragon Spring Meeting. This is the best opportunity for Master Spiritual Vulture to announce his grand entrance!

Now is better than later. Let’s go to the Dragon Spring Meeting now!

Chapter 1384 - Tension Below the Hundred Blade Mountain!

The Purple Glow Peak of the Hundred Blade Mountain in the Middle Sun State was where the Purple Pole Sword Sect was headquartered.

Li Yao and Ling Lanyin had been rushing on their swords day and night after learning the news that the Dragon Spring Meeting was to be held in advance. They reached the place after a crazy journey of more than ten thousand kilometers without rest. But still, they were three days late, and the Dragon Spring Meeting had already begun!

What a magnificent mountain that takes the sky and the earth as a furnace!

Li Yao secretly admired the Hundred Blade Mountain, which span hundreds of kilometers.

As the name ‘Hundred Blade’ suggested, the mountain was steep and had quite a lot of abrupt peaks that stabbed into the sky like swords, spears, sabers, and other blades.

On the precipitous peaks that rose up to the sky almost vertically, countless pavilions had been established wherever there was a gap. They were as magnificent as palaces. Their main colors, green and black, gave a strong sense of solemnity.

Amid the hundreds of peaks, dozens of waterfalls were rushing down like raging dragons made of jade in roaring sounds. Emitting colorful brilliance, the water streams congregated into various forms. The view was quite splendid.

The jade dragons were mixed with tremendous minerals, which made them out-and-out ‘heaven metal waterfalls’. The minerals were also the reason that they were variously colored. Although they were too lethal for people to drink directly, they were the best ingredients to forge swords or to conduct refining.

Li Yao looked up far ahead. Deep inside the Hundred Blade Mountain, brilliant fire was soaring up, pushing the smoke upward into a cloud that covered the mountain.

It looked like both an ocean in the sky and an upside-down furnace that had enshrouded the entire world.

From the depths of the clouds, clangs were vaguely echoing, indicating that it was an ancient refining ground whose scale was unfathomable!

This is rather splendid. It is almost as good as the headquarters of the ‘Hundred Smelting Clan!

Li Yao and Ling Lanyin put away their swords and landed.

The Great Qian Dynasty boasted a vast territory. The thousands of sects were far away from each other.

Therefore, although it was the third day of the Dragon Spring Meeting, the Cultivators from many sects were still arriving.

Li Yao and Ling Lanyin had kept a low profile on their way. They did not reveal the magnificent auras of the Core Formation Stage and the Nascent Soul Stage, wear the attire and badge of the Purple Pole Sword Sect, or hold the banner of the Purple Pole Sword Sect.

Therefore, many Cultivators coming with them did not even know who they were.

Most of the participants of the Dragon Spring Meeting did not come to purchase flying swords. Instead, they were gloating and planning to gain something for themselves now that the great power named ‘Purple Pole Sword Sect’ was falling.

“Hehe. How domineering was the Purple Pole Sword Sect when they conspired with the great eunuch Wang Xi years ago? Their days are finally over!”

“It’s hilarious that they are convening the ‘Dragon Spring Meeting’ in advance to show their power. Are they planning to desperately struggle?”

“But they couldn’t have seen it coming that even ‘Iron Saint’ Qi Zhongdao couldn’t bear their crimes any longer and would arrive with the many experts of the six major sects of the Great Qian Dynasty. They are going to suppress the Purple Pole Sword Sect thunderously!

“Although the Purple Pole Sword Sect has seven Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, more than thirty Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators have come to threaten the Hundred Blade Mountain under the call of ‘Iron Saint’ Qi Zhongdao. How are they going to win the fight?”

“I’m told that ‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren of the Purple Pole Sword Sect has recently finished polishing a primeval sword, and he is going to challenge Iron Saint Qi Zhongdao's Heaven Flipping Seal with the sword."

"Yan Liren is doubtlessly the best sword Cultivator in the world, but Qi Zhongdao's Heaven Flipping Seal is a primeval treasure that is unparalleled in the entire Ancient Sages Sector. Too many super experts in the Nascent Soul Stage have been knocked down by the Heaven Flipping Seal and unable to move at all the moment it was released! Yan Liren must be crazy to hope to reverse the situation with himself and his sword!

"Yes. Fellow Cultivator Li, Fellow Cultivator Wang, the twelve sects in the South Desert have always been in neat cooperation. We must work together again this time! After Iron Saint Qi Zhongdao suppresses Yan Liren, we can only expect to gain something from the gaps between the fingers of those eminent sects by working together!"

The participants who joined the Dragon Spring Meeting on the third day came mostly from small sects from far-flung areas.

Those Cultivators from the harsh lands naturally did not show much courtesy, nor did they bother to pretend that they had. They gathered and whispered to each other, while they eyed the hills and lakes inside the Purple Pole Sword Sect maliciously.

The five thousand empyreal swordsmen and the hundreds of thousands of disciples of the Purple Pole Sword Sect had long been sent to every corner of the territory.

Compared to the guests whose ill intentions were obvious, the disciples of the Purple Pole Sword Sect not only boasted determination that suggested that they would not hesitate to die together with the enemy but also were well trained and highly obedient. They seemed to be even more organized than the Ling family’s Black Tiger Iron Guards!

What tough swordsmen!

The splendid scenery inside the Purple Pole Sword Sect was already a great eye-opener for Li Yao. But the valiance, calmness, and resolution of the disciples of the sect was a hundred times more impressive than the scenery.

The main business of the Purple Pole Sword Sect was forging and refining, which necessitated minerals.

The Hundred Blade Mountain where the Purple Pole Sword Sect was headquartered was a natural paradise with the most abundant metal resources in the entire Ancient Sages Sector.

The Purple Pole Sword Sect also raised a large, experienced, and skillful team of miners.

Miners were one of the few technology-intensive professions in the age of ancient Cultivators. Not only was the job highly dangerous and arduous, it also required certain knowledge and excellent discipline.

Also, when miners worked inside the caves that were full of spiritual energy radiation for a long time, the spiritual energy slowly nurtured their body, which was of great help to strengthen their soul power and physical build.

Therefore, compared to the peasants who generally made a living on the farmland, not only were miners greater backups for Cultivators, they would also easily make a magnificent army because of their fearlessness and their obedience after they became Cultivators!

The disciples at the edge of the Purple Pole Sword Sect who were greeting the guests around were exactly so.

They were just external disciples and did not receive the honorable title ’empyreal swordsman’ yet. But their full armor, their crossed swords on their back, and the great saber dangling from their waist added to their brutality, declaring that they were not afraid to start a fight anytime, anywhere.

That was exactly the first impression that the Purple Pole Sword Sect intended to leave on the major sects of the world.

Despite her high Cultivation, Ling Lanyin was still very young and had been too focused on her sword arts. She really did not know much about the conflicts among Cultivators.

Hearing that ‘Iron Saint’ Qi Zhongdao, the leader of all Cultivators, was also going to deal with the Purple Pole Sword Sect, the girl’s heart was already in a mess.

Now, she was witnessing the tension on the Hundred Blade Mountain. All the disciples were ready for a desperate struggle.

The insignificant sects from the far-flung areas were not respecting the renowned ‘best sword sect of the world’ anymore!

The fall of her sect seemed to be happening soon!

Right then, two ear-splitting noises echoed on the top of two mountains that were as steep as the edge of a sword. The soundwaves spread out like surging tides, leaving a hole more than ten square kilometers in the mist on the top of the mountains.

Thunderous cheers erupted!

Very soon, a piece of shocking news came over.

Master Heavenly Dome, an elder of the Purple Pole Sword Sect at the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage, had a fight with Zhuge Xuan, the leader of the Thunderstorm Valley, which was one of the six major sects, with a newly produced Nine Turns Fish Intestine Sword but failed!

Master Heavenly Dome was injured, and the Fish Intestine Sword was broken!

After the news came over, all the disciples of the Purple Pole Sword Sect gritted their teeth, their eyes bloodshot.

The Cultivators from the middle-sized and small-sized sects who intended to fish in troubled waters, however, were rejoicing in delight!

Ling Lanyin shook so hard that she almost fell off from the flying sword which was yet to come to a stop. Her face was one brimming with desperation.

Li Yao, however, chuckled and did not think it was a big deal.

“Se—senior, with the situation in our sect right now, you—”

Ling Lanyin looked at Li Yao, ill at ease.

At this moment, the mysterious old monster was her last hope. She was fearing that Li Yao would immediately change sides and take advantage of the hopeless situation of the Purple Pole Sword Sect after everything that he had seen!

“Kid, no worries. After observing the terrain and the demeanor of the Purple Pole Sword Sect, you are not at a dead end yet!” Li Yao laughed aloud. “The Iron Saint Qi Zhongdao, the thirty Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, and the hundred incoming sects are just bluffs.”

“What?” Dumbfounded, Ling Lanyin stammered. “Thirty Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and almost a hundred sects have arrived. Still more sects are coveting and intending to take advantage of our misfortune. Are they all bluffs?”

“It is exactly because too many sects have arrived that they are bluffs,” Li Yao said casually. “If they were truly determined to destroy the Purple Pole Sword Sect, the six major sects would have come without a sound, lead by their elites. Why would they ask so many insignificant sects who are utterly useless except for giving cheers and applause to join them?

“The more sects there are, the more disorganized they will be. What about thirty Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators? Are they really a gapless group?

“Today, for the major sects, it is an issue of getting more benefits or fewer benefits. It’s just business. But for the Purple Pole Sword Sect, this is a matter of life and death!

“Therefore, everybody in your sect, from the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators to the unofficial, external disciples, will certainly try your best, putting your lives on the line.

“You can easily tell it from the countenance of the swordsmen in your sect. Hearing that your elder in the Nascent Soul Stage has failed, they are merely gritting their teeth hard but show no hesitation or oscillation. It is doubtlessly a gesture that they are going to have a desperate last try!

“As the saying goes, ‘a mourning army is a winning army’. You are now a mourning army!

“The best sword sect in the world, with six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, five thousand empyreal swordsmen, a hundred thousand elite swordsmen, and even more external disciples and miners who are adept at martial arts! All the sects here may be able to destroy you if they truly mean to, but can they eliminate every one of you?

“If they can’t, and the super experts such as ‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren lead some of the empyreal swordsmen to escape, they will see an army of rebels that is ten times more dreadful than the White Lotus Cult and the Heaven Battering Army. Who can bear such dire consequences?”

Chapter 1385 - Greetings, Elder!

“Moreover…” Li Yao sneered. His hands in his back, he continued unhurriedly, “How much are they going to pay if they really make up their mind to demolish the Purple Pole Sword Sect? The wrath of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator is never to be underestimated. You have six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators right now. If I were your leader, I would gather the six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and attack one of the sects, say, the Grand Mystery Sect that ‘Iron Saint’ Qi Zhongdao belongs to!

“As the saying goes, ‘tall trees catch much wind’. As the largest sect in the world, does the Grand Mystery Sect not have any enemies or any rivals that covet its position? So, the Purple Pole Sword Sect would concentrate all their strength on it and drag it to hell together!

“The Purple Pole Sword Sect dares to die, but does the Grand Mystery Sect dare to?

“The Grand Mystery Sect dares not. None of the so-called ‘six major sects’ dare, not to mention the insignificant smaller sects! A hundred sects have indeed arrived aggressively on the surface, but they have their own interests, plans, and concerns. What are they if not an unruly mob?

“Lastly, although so many sects are standing against you, are there not any sects that are standing on your side in secret? The Purple Pole Sword Sect obviously cannot be the only ‘eunuch’s conspirator’. The other ‘eunuch’s conspirators' must've already gathered in the Hundred Blade Mountain, too!

"The Purple Pole Sword Sect will be their example. What you suffer will happen to them later. Do you think that they will watch the giant tree named Purple Pole Sword Sect fall without doing anything?

"When the time of life and death comes, rest assured, those 'eunuch's conspirators' will certainly jump out and fight on your side!

"Even I, a barbarian from nowhere, know all the above. Can Qi Zhongdao, the well-respected leader of all Cultivators, and the leaders of the other major sects not think of that? It will be a great joke!"

Ling Lanyin was dumbfounded at what he said. She looked at Li Yao in disbelief, admiration, and reverence.

She knew every word that Li Yao had said, but the connotation after the words were connected was fresh for her. It was like a gate was opened in front of her, introducing her to a brand-new world!

Noticing the girl's apparent shock, Li Yao secretly sighed in his heart.

He discovered that abundant spiritual energy was not necessarily a good thing.

Because of the abundant spiritual, training was simple here. So, the population of Cultivators in the Ancient Sages Sector was very large. Their speed in upgrading their Cultivation was quite high, too.

But it was exactly because of the ease of training that they overlooked the whetting of their will and belief. As a result, a lot of them, just like Ling Lanyin, were simple-minded, weak-willed, and did not have a firm belief despite their immense strength.

At the same level, the Cultivators from the Ancient Sages Sector were certainly no match for those from the federation. It was not about the technological gap but about the gap in will and belief!

At the very least, the experts at the peak of the Core Formation Stage in the federation were all determined, extraordinary people who were pillars of their field. They certainly would not ask stupid questions like that.

Ling Lanyin simply felt that the old monster was growing more and more mysterious. She did not dare to look down on him at all now but asked respectfully, “If I may ask senior, with what you said in mind, why are the parties in such tension right now?”

“This is negotiation.” Li Yao snorted. “The Purple Pole Sword Sect swallowed too much in the past few years with your personal connection with Wang Xi. You enraged everyone. Now that the new emperor has claimed the throne and Wang Xi has fallen, you must surrender some of your benefits!

“Labeling you as a ‘eunuch’s conspirator’ is just their exorbitant proposal. In fact, they would never be bold enough to really shoulder the consequences of forcing the Purple Pole Sword Sect to rebel!

“Everybody in the game knows that. So, this Dragon Spring Meeting is simply a bargaining meeting where you propose your demands and they propose their counteroffers. The Purple Pole Sword Sect will definitely have to give up some interests, but as for exactly how many interests you surrender and who you surrender the interests to, it will depend on the results of the ‘competitions’ here!

“If the Purple Pole Sword Sect proves to be strong enough and wins most of the competitions, naturally, you will be able to keep most of your interests.

“If you accidentally lose a lot of ‘competitions’, and even your best expert ‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren is crushed by ‘Iron Saint’ Qi Zhongdao, you will have to chop off your own flesh to feed the hungry intruders.

“Of course, if you suffer such a humiliating defeat that you are not able to counterattack at all, it will only be reasonable that the guests take the chance to demolish the Purple Pole Sword Sect. However, according to my observations, the disciples in your sect are in high spirits, and the cloud of spiritual energy inside your mountain is still condensed. You are still united. So, the likelihood of such a scenario is rather low!”

Taking a deep breath in relief, Ling Lanyin was fully convinced. She bowed deeply to Li Yao and said, “Thank you for your enlightenment, Master. I was disturbed by what the Cultivators of other sects said just now and lost my calmness. Please do excuse my lack of manners.”

“That’s alright.” Li Yao glanced at the Cultivators of other sects who were rather excited with a fake smile before he chuckled. “When the wolves and tigers are fighting, the rats and snakes are bold enough to watch at such a close distance. They don’t know what they are doing! When the wolves and tigers are exhausted and hungry, who will they feed on?

“Just wait and watch. In my opinion, none of the six major sects or the Purple Pole Sword Sect will be the losers in the Dragon Spring Meeting. Chances are that those fellows who are gladly preparing to loot the burning house will take the blame of ‘eunuch’s conspirators’!”

Li Yao did not hide his analysis abilities because he did not intend to be regarded as a pure warrior with no brains.

While showing his unparalleled combat abilities, he had to demonstrate a certain degree of wisdom and cunningness in order to be involved in the real core secrets.

Otherwise, other people would always consider him a ‘lunatic’ or an ‘old monster’. How could he communicate with them?

Li Yao’s glance raised the attention of the Cultivators of the ‘twelve sects of the South Desert’.

The few Cultivators had observed Li Yao and Ling Lanyin in secret for a long time, too. However, both of them had intentionally disguised themselves, and they showed no distinguishable features. So, they were not recognized.

Li Yao did not conceal the brutality and hostility inside his eyes at all. He eyed the Cultivators as if they were fish that were bouncing on a chopper block not knowing what was coming to them. The few Cultivators were certainly not happy to be watched in such a way.

Toughness was a mandatory trait for the Cultivators from the harsh lands. All the Cultivators from the South Desert put their hands on their blades. A muscular man in the lead glared at Li Yao and bellowed, “Are you talking about us in our back, Fellow Cultivators? Just say whatever you want in front of us. What are you if you do not even dare to fart loudly?”

Taking a long breath, Li Yao smiled at Ling Lanyin. “Kid, you’ve been working hard to be at my service on the way here. For your sake, I do not want to pollute your headquarters with blood when I just arrived. However, if the swine continue throwing out such vulgar language, do not blame me for what I’m about to do!”

Ling Lanyin gasped. Of course, she knew that the temperamental old monster could do anything!

The scene where he minced Master Black Moon into pieces and then burnt the pieces into ashes was still haunting Ling Lanyin in her nightmares!

Besides, Ling Lanyin was quite angry herself at the dirty words of the Cultivators from the South Desert.

Now that she had returned to the territory of her sect, she was no longer worried about ambushes. What was there to hesitate for?

Shua!

Ling Lanyin’s strength of the peak of the Core Formation Stage suddenly burst out. Her flying sword was not even unsheathed when it crashed into the Cultivator of the South Desert’s chest in a streak of blue, blowing him dozens of meters away. The guy was throwing out mouthfuls of blood crazily, and he collapsed to the ground, unable to move at all!

“You!”

The other Cultivators from the South Desert was both shocked and infuriated. They did not expect the two unattractive Cultivators to be so brutal!

“They are not worth your anger, Master. I will teach such arrogant, idiotic things a good lesson. You don’t need to bother taking action.”

Ling Lanyin did not look at the South Desert Cultivators at all but simply begged Li Yao hard.

She knew that blood-vomiting would have been the least of their concerns if Li Yao had attacked. How would the old monster stop if they had only thrown out all their guts?

“Who are you pretentious fools?”

Being utterly ignored, the Cultivators from the South Desert burst into fury.

However, swooshing sounds echoed far away as dozens of streaks of brilliance rushed close. They were a team of tough-looking ’empyreal swordsmen’ of the Purple Pole Sword Sect!

The empyreal swordsmen were the best of the core disciples of the Purple Pole Sword Sect. Many of them were elites above the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage. Every one of them had a well-tempered weapon. They had a lot of experience in real-life battles and were a famous troop in the world of Cultivators!

Intimidated by the newcomers, the South Desert Cultivators hesitated and did not dare to act recklessly anymore.

Dozens of empyreal swordsmen darted close like lightning toward the spot and stopped around Ling Lanyin like dozens of arrows that had been shot into the ground. They cupped their hands and bowed at her.

“Senior Sister Ling, you are finally back!”

“Senior Sister Ling, the leader has been waiting for you for a long time!”

“Welcome back, Senior Sister Ling!”

“Which sect do you come from, Fellow Cultivators? Now that you have come to join the Dragon Spring Meeting of our sect, you should settle your conflicts on the Sword Testing Field. Why are you offending Senior Sister Ling before you even enter the gate of our sect?”

Seeing that the empyreal swordsmen were greeting Ling Lanyin respectfully, some of whom had even fallen on one knee, and hearing their addressing for her, the South Desert Cultivators finally thought of a name. They changed their face color greatly and shrieked, as if somebody grabbed their throat, “Or—Or—Orchid Angel Ling Lanyin!”

‘Orchid Angel’ Ling Lanyin was one of the youngest experts at the peak of the Core Formation Stage in the Great Qian Dynasty. She was definitely a terrible existence that they could not afford to anger!

The South Desert Cultivators looked at each other in bewilderment, their faces pale. Recalling what they had said earlier, they felt that their legs were shaking so hard that they could barely walk away.

With the old monster around, Ling Lanyin did not want any fuss. She yelled at the South Desert Cultivators gravely, “Get lost!”

Pardoned, the South Desert Cultivators hurried to carry their wounded companion who had already lost the courage to moan and fled.

Finally, Ling Lanyin took a long breath in relief. Putting on an expression that was so obedient and respectful that she was almost a cat, she hurried to gesture at everyone. “Come on. Let’s welcome Elder here now!”

Chapter 1386 - The Elder Likes a Low Profile!

“Elder?”

All the empyreal swordsmen were greatly surprised at Ling Lanyin’s respectful attitude that bordered on adulation.

When Ling Lanyin reached the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s branch, she had written everything that had happened in the Southland of Sorcerers, including the death of ‘Thunderous Straight Swordsman’ Lou Chongxiao and that she was probably going to invite a new Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator to go back with her, in a letter and had it delivered to the headquarters.

However, the death of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator and the participation of a new Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator were both shocking pieces of news.

Right now, the Purple Pole Sword Sect was in great peril. Naturally, such astounding news could not be released to the public immediately. Only the few elders including the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators knew the information.

Meanwhile, Li Yao did not intend to embark on the boat named the Purple Pole Sword Sect so quickly, at least not until he had gotten a satisfactory reward. Therefore, he specifically stated that he did not want the elders or leader of the Purple Pole Sword Sect to welcome him at the gate, or he would immediately go away.

Those empyreal swordsmen only knew that they were there to welcome Ling Lanyin for her return and that they had to follow Ling Lanyin’s orders on everything. What they did not know was that Ling Lanyin had brought such a terrifying monster back!

Although Ling Lanyin was quite obedient and ignorant in front of Li Yao, it was because she was entirely suppressed by the aura of the ‘old monster’.

In front of the regular disciples, however, the Orchid Angel, who was one of the youngest Cultivators at the peak of the Core Formation Stage in the Great Qian Dynasty and the most distinguished sword Cultivator in the Purple Pole Sword Sect recently, was truly an awe-inspiring and inviolable existence. She was even worshipped by a lot of young disciples as a ‘goddess’!

But today, their goddess, who had always been cold, proud, and strong, was actually as humble as dust before the plain-looking, unattractive young man. How could the empyreal swordsmen not be dumbfounded?

“What are you waiting for?” Ling Lanyin grew anxious. The old monster had only agreed to take a tour of the headquarters of the Purple Pole Sword Sect. He had never promised that he would stand on the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s side. The guy was temperamental and immeasurable. Who knew what kind of horrendous things he would do if he felt offended?

Therefore, standing in front of everywhere, she cleaned her clothes and bowed down to the ground, performing the courtesy in the strictest way. “Ling Lanyin of the Purple Pole Sword Sect is privileged to meet Master Spiritual Vulture!”

“Spiritual Vulture…”

All the empyreal soldiers blinked. Master Spiritual Vulture was an ancient person from more than a hundred years ago, and he had been active in the Southland of Sorcerers most of time and barely set foot in the central plateaus. For the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty, he was a Mr. Nobody. Many young men had never even heard of him.

He is probably an expert that Senior Sister Ling invited from the Southland of Sorcerers to help us?

However, except for Master Black Moon who is somewhat capable, the Southland of Sorcerers does not boast any excellent high-level Cultivators. I fear that Senior Sister was too desperate!

No matter what, the guy must be at least in the Core Formation Stage, considering that Senior Sister is so respectful to him. Also, the barbarian Cultivators' approaches are often untraditional, and their skills to manipulate insects and venomous smoke can be very erratic and unpredictable. He might catch many of our enemies unprepared later!

Therefore, all of them bowed deeply exactly like Ling Lanyin.

The empyreal swordsmen above the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage, who considered themselves to be more or less capable, called him 'Master', and the disciples in the Refinement Stage addressed him as 'Elder'.

Then, Ling Lanyin grew anxious again. She tapped everyone's head with her sheath. "How rude of you! It is too disgraceful for you to call 'Master'. Call him Elder. Elder!"

"… Elder!"

"We are privileged to meet you, Elder!"

The empyreal swordsmen were deeply confused again by Ling Lanyin’s hassle. They lowered their heads, but they were rolling their eyes and glancing at Li Yao suspiciously, not having the first clue what was amazing about this ‘elder’.

Emotionlessly, Li Yao took everyone’s courtesy. It was not until the tough-looking empyreal swordsmen bowed for half a minute that he waved his hands lazily and said, “Forget it. Just stand straight. I prefer to keep a low profile. Such courtesy will certainly raise unnecessary attention.

“Who is your captain? Come on and talk. Has your Senior Uncle Yan finished the competition with ‘Iron Saint’ Qi Zhongdao?”

“Right!” Ling Lanyin asked earnestly, “Ah Wu, the Dragon Spring Meeting has been on for three days. What’s the situation now?”

The one named ‘Ah Wu’ was a slightly fat young man with a broad saber on his back. He stepped forward and bowed to Li Yao and Ling Lanyin again before he replied loudly, “Elder, Senior Sister Ling, the Dragon Spring Meeting this time is different from unusual. We have brought forth all our best collections of flying swords and magical equipment for exhibition. Since the meeting started three days ago, the experts from various sects have been challenging us under the name of ‘testing the weapons’!

“Thankfully, all the disciples in our sect know that this is a time of life and death. Everybody fought bravely and did not dishonor our sect too much in the competitions in the previous two days!

“Today is the first day that we have suffered defeat. The high-level Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage and the

Nascent Soul Stage in the ‘six major sects’ led by the ‘Grand Mystery Sect’ are all showing up. Just now, Elder Hong and Zhuge Xuan, the leader of the Thunderstorm Valley, had a match, and we unfortunately failed. Even the newly-produced ‘Nine Turns Fish Intestine Sword’ has been broken!”

Ling Lanyin was slightly worried and glanced at Li Yao.

Li Yao snorted. “The Purple Pole Sword Sect and the Thunderstorm Valley both belong to the ‘six major sects’. It is not a big deal that your elder was defeated by their leader. The most important thing is, was the match a one-sided one, or did Zhuge Xuan go through a lot of trouble?”

“Although Zhuge Xuan wounded Elder Hong, he seemed to be badly injured, too, and went to treat himself with a pale face the moment the match was over,” Ah Wu replied.

“Then, it shouldn’t be countered as a failure,” Li Yao said casually. “The key is still the battle between ‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren and ‘Iron Saint’ Qi Zhongdao. When will it begin?”

“In about four hours, when the sun is high!” Ah Wu said.

Ling Lanyin was quite astonished. “So soon?”

The Dragon Spring Meeting was a ‘commodity sales exhibition’ that would last ten to fifteen days. She had thought that the summit confrontation would happen in the last few days as the highlight.

Li Yao nodded, not surprised.

The Dragon Spring Meeting was a negotiation where the combat ability of the two sides was their bargaining chip.

As the representatives of the best combat ability of the two sides, if Yan Liren and Qi Zhongdao did not decide which of them was stronger, the other competitions would be meaningless.

Even if the other sects won every competition with the Purple Pole Sword Sect, what would the final result be if Yan Liren executed Qi Zhongdao, the leader of all Cultivators, with his sword?

Or, if the Purple Pole Sword Sect was on a winning streak and resisted the opponents' every provocation, only to find that their strongest Cultivator was blown into meat and blood by the Heaven Flipping Seal, which side would be counted as the final winner?

Therefore, only after Yan Liren and Qi Zhongdao determined the main theme of the negotiation through their summit confrontation would the lesser competitions, which would determine the specific interests regarding a certain order, territory, or trade, be significant.

“Kid.” Pondering for a moment, Li Yao flicked a piece of paper into Ling Lanyin's hands.

The piece of paper seemed as heavy as a bucket when he tossed it out. Many keen-sighted empyreal swordsmen were quite shocked and finally grew really respectful for Li Yao.

Ling Lanyin took the piece of paper, only to discover that the names of all kinds of materials had been listed on it.

“Twenty kilograms of Insect Wave Stones… Five kilograms of Class-Nine Jade… Sixty kilograms of Red Star Copper…”

Many of the hundreds of materials on the paper were rare metals and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. It was quite troublesome even for the Purple Pole Sword Sect to collect them despite their capabilities.

“Give the inventory of the materials that I need to those who are really in charge,” Li Yao said matter-of-factly. “Tell them that I will help you once in the Dragon Spring Meeting if you collect all the materials in the inventory for me in one month and lend your best refining workshop to me for three months!”

Ling Lanyin was dazed, and she frowned slightly.

The old monster was indeed a super expert who could suppress Han Yuantai in one move, but the price of his help seemed a big too high.

It would be quite difficult to gather all the rare materials!

“Do you feel that my price is too high?”

Chucking for a moment, Li Yao said slowly, “It is not high at all. You must realize that what you get is not just that I will fight as a champion of the Purple Pole Sword Sect once but also a promise that I will not attack you for at least three months!”

Ling Lanyin bulged her eyes, and her mouth hung agape.

“It’s truly exhausting to talk to a kid like you. If you can’t understand, let me explain it to you.

“Give me the materials on the inventory, and I will help you deal with whoever you want me to during the Dragon Spring Meeting.

“Otherwise, I would very much like to find out exactly how sharp the swords of the Purple Pole Sword Sect are. Hehe.

Hehehehe!”

“You—” The empyreal swordsmen all heard the coercion in Li Yao’s words. Their hostility was naturally raised.

“Huh?” Li Yao narrowed his eyes. Greenness suddenly flourished inside his black eyes. Even the tiny green spot at the center of his eyebrow was spreading out thorn-like tentacles and about to grow into a green bird!

“Ah!”

Under his glare, the empyreal swordsmen felt as if they had been struck by lightning. Their hearts were aching, and their breathing was unsteady. Thousands of pests seemed to have crawled into their internal organs!

It was not until then that they realized that the Cultivation of this ‘Elder’ was far beyond their expectations and seemed to be at the peak state. They were both shocked and frightened!

“Senior, Master, Elder!”

Utterly scared, Ling Lanyin hurried to say, “I will certainly help deliver your request and bring a satisfactory reply back to you, Elder!”

“Hehe!” Li Yao finally withdrew his suppressive glare, which had been piercing into every empyreal soldier’s body like venomous stings. He casually said, “If you feel that I am not worth the price, you are free to give me a reply that dissatisfies me!

“Go now, kid!

“You, little fatty, come here. Where is the battlefield of ‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren and ‘Iron Saint’ Qi Zhongdao’s confrontation? Is anybody allowed to watch? No. You don’t need to lead the way for me. Just giving me a badge that grants clearance will be fine!”

Chapter 1387 - Competitions in the Classical Age

Li Yao climbed up the stairs deep inside the Hundred Blade Mountain alone, while he appreciated the splendid views on the hundreds of steep mountains that looked like weapons.

During the Dragon Spring Meeting, most of the mountains in the Purple Pole Sword Sect were open to all the sects in the world. They were supervised by disciples of different levels with the recently produced or excavated marvelous weapons, whose formidability would be demonstrated in the ‘sword testing fields’ on the mountains.

If the Cultivators of other sects were interested in the marvelous weapons, they could negotiate with the Purple Pole Sword Sect more about a purchase.

Of course, flying swords and magical equipment were all items that concerned the user’s life. If the customers did not trust the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s presentation, they could always go to the field and test the sharpness of the weapons in a real battle themselves.

On the hundreds of mountains, Cultivators of various sects wearing fancy clothes, riding fast stallions, and flying their banners were everywhere. The sword and saber auras were spreading out like waves. Noises of weapon collisions echoed nonstop, as if a piece of magnificent battle music was being orchestrated.

The Dragon Spring Meeting this year was different from usual. Getting to the bottom of it, it was a meeting where all the interests of the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty were redistributed now that the new emperor had assumed the throne and the powerful Lead Eunuch Wang Xi had fallen.

The quantity of interests that a sect could get would be decided by the capabilities that they demonstrated at the Dragon Spring Meeting.

Therefore, brutality and bloodthirst were mixed in the magnificent music.

From a lot of mountains, screams were often coming over after a series of metal collisions. Some of the screams even came to an abrupt halt halfway through.

It was not hard to imagine that the screamers did not stop screaming; they just could not scream anymore.

Li Yao observed quite a few ‘sword tests’ as a regular unaffiliated Cultivator. He noticed that they were indeed having life-and-death battles under the pretext of a ‘sword test’ or ‘friendly match’. During the five sword tests, everybody was unleashing their deadliest moves. There were casualties in three of the tests. Those who were not dead were all heavily wounded.

What particularly caught Li Yao’s attention was that, while three sword tests were between the Purple Pole Sword Sect and other sects, the other sword tests were actually conducted by Cultivators of other sects.

The cruelty that they demonstrated during the tests was even more appalling than that demonstrated during the tests between the Purple Pole Sword Sect and other sects. It was like they hated their enemy’s guts and would rather die with their enemy.

If it were any other visitor from the modern Cultivation civilization, they would probably have found themselves perplexed in such a situation. Did everybody not agree to threaten the Purple Pole Sword Sect together there? Why were they fighting their own instead?

However, for Li Yao, who had Ou Yezi’s memories and was essentially an ‘elder of the Hundred Smelting Clan’ in this world of ancient Cultivators, he was not surprised at all.

Refining was the main business of the Hundred Smelting Clan. Naturally, the magical equipment that they produced would be sold to the sects everywhere even including those in other Sectors.

So, the Hundred Smelting Clan had product release meetings and annual special sales similar to the Dragon Spring Meeting but with an even larger scale. Even Cultivators in various other Sectors were sometimes attracted to the events.

During the Hundred Smelting Clan’s magical equipment exhibitions, naturally, the Cultivators of other sects were allowed to test the magical equipment produced by the Hundred Smelting Clan and talk about purchases after they were satisfied.

Every magical equipment exhibition that the Hundred Smelting Clan held, however, always ended up being ‘arena games’ where the Cultivators of other sects fought each other. In the end, as the tradition passed on, the Hundred Smelting Clan simply established a special arena zone where everyone was free to duel.

The arrangement was quite welcomed by the major Cultivation sects at that time. The scale of the arena matches grew larger and larger, and the rules became more and more thorough. Eventually, everybody even forgot that it was part of the magical equipment exhibitions.

It was because sharp contradictions often existed among the sects in the environment that lacked resources and had too many Cultivators. Their grudges might have been too long to be traced after.

The insignificant sects that Li Yao saw in the basin of the Sorcerers' River could start fighting at the first spark if they had conflicts and grudges.

However, for the big sects such as the Purple Pole Sword Sect and the Grand Mystery Sect that were too gigantic to fall, every action that they took would affect the general picture. Naturally, they could not attack each other with their full strength like the small sects from rural areas. If they wounded each other in such battles, it would be someone else who took all the advantages.

Therefore, after their scale reached a certain level, the Cultivation sects had to abide by certain rules to settle their conflicts so that the competitions would be more formal.

However, there were two tricky problems to make the competitions formal.

Firstly, it was difficult to find justifiable excuses.

Most of the Cultivation sects had some sense of honor. Despite what they actually did, they claimed to be 'deities' who focused on training and did not bother the mortal affairs. It seemed inappropriate to fight for the ownership of a port or the monopolization of a trade. If rumor spread, would they be any different from gangsters on the street?

Secondly, even if the two parties agreed with each other on the time, location, and rules of their competition, it was difficult for them to guarantee that the enemy would not play any foul moves or even not acknowledge the result of the competition afterward.

The magical equipment sales such as the Dragon Spring Meeting, on the other hand, resolved the two concerns perfectly.

Firstly, everybody was there for magical equipment, and there was certainly nothing wrong with testing magical equipment, which would act as the life saver for many users, as much as they could. What would the best test be? Of course, a simulation of real battle!

Such simulations naturally entailed dangers like in real battles. Even if someone was accidentally killed, it would be because they were fated to die there. Nobody else was to blame.

Secondly, such meetings were often held by the most powerful local sects, and all the experts of the major sects would participate. With so many spectators, it would be difficult for two sects that were going to settle their conflicts under the name of ‘sword tests’ to play dirty tricks before or during the matches and to refute the result after the matches were over.

It was sort of an ‘unspoken rule’ of the Cultivators.

Anyone or any force that violated the unspoken rule would not be long for the world!

Because of such an unspoken rule, the Dragon Spring Meeting was destined to be much more complicated than a simple magical equipment exhibition. It was a meeting where all the Cultivators resolved their conflicts and redistributed resources once every five years so that peace and harmony could be maintained for the next five years.

The newbies from the sects would also take the great opportunity to show their strength, hoping to rise to fame after a battle!

Fame, fortune, power, and desire were all mixed together. That was the reality of real-life Cultivators!

“Nice sword!”

Almost a hundred Cultivators were around a sword test field up ahead.

At the center of the sword test field was an empyreal swordsman of the Purple Pole Sword Sect. He was sitting cross-legged with his eyes closed, manipulating a crimson flying sword that was dancing rapidly in midair. A fiery trace was left and did not disperse after a long time. Eventually, it turned into four words—Purple Pole Sword Sect—raising a round of exclamations.

“I am Jiang Junai, a disciple of the Wind Blade Alliance at the middle level of the Building Foundation Stage!”

A proud young man in red light armor suddenly leapt into the sword test field. He glanced around arrogantly first before he bowed to the empyreal swordsman sloppily. He asked aloud, “The ‘Red Fire Heart Stabbing Sword’ of your sect is truly extraordinary, but I wonder, is it equally sharp in a real-life battle? I hope to have the opportunity to test the sword!”

“Nice!”

“It’s Jiang Junai, an expert from the ‘Eight Mountains State’ who rose in recent years!”

“I’m told that he barely has any equals in the youngest generation at his level!”

The Cultivators around were cheering for him. Some of the female Cultivators were exclaiming in surprise, too. Jiang Junai was even more satisfied, and the brilliance in his eyes grew brighter and brighter.

The empyreal swordsman sitting at the center of the sword test field, however, was like a piece of rotten wood. He merely opened his eyes and eyed Jiang Junai up and down for a moment before saying coldly, “Fellow Cultivator, your Cultivation is too high. In a real-life battle, I’m afraid that I would have to try my best. This sword has only been produced recently, and I cannot yet control it perfectly. As the saying goes, weapons know no mercy. If anybody is accidentally injured, the Purple Pole Sword Sect will not be able to shoulder the criticism of the Wind Blade Alliance and their family!”

“It doesn’t matter!” Jiang Junai blushed. He took out a jade badge and tossed it over. “I have my ‘Exemption Order’ here. The spiritual signatures of my master and the leader of our sect have been stamped on it. I will test the sword with my life. Nobody is to blame if I’m killed!”

The empyreal swordsman picked up Jiang Junai’s Exemption Order. He took out a steel badge from his pocket and threw it toward the challenger, too. “This is the Exemption Order of the Purple Pole Sword Sect, with the signatures of my master and leader on it! If I am too weak and unfortunately killed by my fellow Cultivator, you will take no blame. Instead, the

‘Red Fire Heart Stabbing Sword’ will be given to you as a gift. All fellow Cultivators here will be eyewitnesses!”

“Excellent!” Jiang Junai snatched the empyreal swordsman’s Exemption Order and stuffed it into his pocket without looking at it. His longsword roaring, he declared, “Now that the Exemption Orders have been exchanged, let’s—”

Before he said ‘fight’, the empyreal swordsman who looked like rotten wood suddenly turned into a fiery storm!

Hiu!

Fireworks seemed to be glittering, and a volcano seemed to be erupting. The entire sword test field was covered in redness. The audience felt something flashed in front of their eyes before two items soared into the air.

One of them was the empyreal swordsman’s left arm.

The other was Jiang Junai’s head!

Pa! Pa!

The arm and the head fell to the ground one after the other.

Blood was spurting crazily from the empyreal swordsman’s left shoulder. His face was pale, but he was still expressionless.

There was neither any sign of excruciating pain nor the delight of victory. He simply picked up his broken arm and bowed to the cramping, headless body.

“Thanks for going easy!”

Then, he stepped back to the rest area. Other disciples went up and treated the wound for him.

It was not until this moment that the headless body dropped to the ground. The blood spurting out of the neck left new marks on the sword test field, which was already covered in blood.

Two middle-aged Cultivators in the armor of the Wind Blade Alliance leapt onto the sword test field.

One of them had a pale face and was breathing difficultly. Staring at the empyreal swordsman on the opposite side, he said hoarsely, “It’s indeed an excellent sword! How much is it? The Wind Blade Alliance will take it and offer three times the price to compensate for your broken arm!”

After saying that, the two of them left in silence and depression, one holding the head and the other carrying the headless body.

Chapter 1388 - Bronze Censer Peak, Best Versus Best!

This is truly a bunch of…

Such sword tests full of solemnity and in an ancient style were certainly not something that the messy fights of the local sects could compare to. This was the method of negotiation of the upper class of Cultivators!

Observing everything, Li Yao could not help but secretly sigh to himself.

… psychos!

Such matches were indeed fair and clean. They even entailed a certain solemn, moving beauty.

However, those who had Cultivated to the middle of the Building Foundation Stage were definitely one-in-ten-thousand elites in a society from whatever perspective.

If all the elites in a society killed themselves in such a boring way, how was the society going to progress?

Li Yao could not help but recall the Cultivators of the Star Glory Federation who sacrificed themselves valiantly in the beast tides.

Some deaths were lighter than feathers, and some were heavier than neutron stars. Compared to the preposterous deaths of the ancient Cultivators, Li Yao felt that the modern

Cultivators perished in a way that more deserved their years of hard training!

After a sigh, he went on to the Bronze Censer Peak of the Hundred Blade Mountain, his destination.

The Bronze Censer Peak was a very weird mountain.

Almost a hundred spiky rocks that looked like spears stabbed into the sky at the edge, while there was a deep hollow in the center, making the peak look like both an enormous crater and a super furnace.

As long as a barrier was established on the top to block the spiritual energy from flowing out, nobody outside would be able to tell what was going on inside at all.

Therefore, the peak had been built into a top-secret sword test field of the Purple Pole Sword Sect after dozens of generations. The experiments to determine the power of confidential weapons or primeval treasures would all be conducted in the Bronze Censer Peak.

Today was one of the rare days when the Bronze Censer Peak was open to all the sects in the world because an unprecedented confrontation was going to be held in this place!

The battle between Sword Maniac Yan Liren and Iron Saint Qi Zhongdao was claimed to be the most fabulous battle after the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators vanished in their duel a hundred years ago.

The most important big shots in the world of Cultivators had all gathered, ready to watch the battle of the two top experts!

For Li Yao, if he meant to join the core circle of Cultivators in the Ancient Sages Sector and establish his brand as a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator from the Southland of Sorcerers so that he could be involved in the great events that would change the future of the Ancient Sages Sector, this was perfectly the best and only opportunity!

Qi Zhongdao, Yan Liren…

Li Yao’s eyes were glittering. The green spot on his forehead was simmering again, and the thorns made of his fighting will were spreading out.

He did not want to brag about himself, but he believed that he could represent the top combat ability of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector, three worlds of modern Cultivation civilizations.

Qi Zhongdao and Yan Liren, on the other hand, stood for the top combat ability of the world of ancient Cultivators!

What kind of brilliant sparks would be raised in a battle of best versus best?

Li Yao swallowed. His saliva was vaporized by his boiling blood before it slid into his stomach.

Full of expectation and fighting will, he marched on to the Bronze Censer Peak.

The Burning Censer Peak was at the center of the mountains. Yet, it was not connected to them via roads or bridges. To arrive at the Bronze Censer Peak, one would have to ride a flying sword, a jade disc, or mounts such as cranes, eagles, and falcons.

The confrontation between Qi Zhongdao and Yan Liren was not open to any random person.

The disciples of the Purple Pole Sword Sect had long established arrays and barriers around the Bronze Censer Peak.

The colorful blade auras that were soaring up into the firmament surrounded the entire peak. Not a hair or a telepathic thought would fly in.

Only the celebrities among the Cultivators were permitted to observe the match. The unqualified leaders of the insignificant sects could only wait for the result at the bottom of the Bronze Censer Peak.

Of course, some Cultivators from the uncivilized and underdeveloped areas, partly because of their natural-born disobedience and partly because they had dominated their hometown for so long, were barging into the field despite the reprimands of the disciples of the Purple Pole Sword Sect.

Naturally, none of them succeeded. Some of them even lost an arm or a leg before they learned the toughness of the arrays.

When Li Yao arrived, thousands of Cultivators had already gathered below the Bronze Censer Peak, yelling and shouting boisterously.

On the opposite side, there were thousands of empyreal swordsmen of the Purple Pole Sword Sect. They were standing in midair, their longswords slowly swirling around them, like a silent forest of iron trees.

Screams that resembled those of pigs being butchered echoed from the crowd.

As it turned out, some ten unaffiliated Cultivators who had just returned from certain overseas natural paradises, considering themselves to be superior, broke into the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s array by force, only to be slapped back ruthlessly.

There was no telling what techniques were entailed in the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s array, but those trespassers were suffering the most excruciating pain after the sword auras invaded their body, although there was not the slightest wound on the surface of their body.

Unable to hold back the pain at all, they writhed on the ground and screamed, even though they knew that they were being watched by so many people.

After they had screamed for ten minutes, a few disciples of the Purple Pole Sword Sect stepped forward and bashed them with the hilts of their swords.

The ten or so foreign Cultivators vomited black blood, their faces pale. They could not even form a complete sentence and did not dare to go rogue anymore.

There were quite a few disobedient fellows among the audience who had been planning to test the power of the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s array. Even if they could not barge in, would they not earn enough fame for them to be known by everyone in the world if they lasted for a long time inside the array?

Seeing that the few unlucky guys were still as hunched as lobsters, those young fellows looked at each other in bewilderment, secretly relieved that they did not act recklessly.

His hands in his back, Li Yao walked to the crowd unhurriedly.

He seemed to be covered in an invisible, greasy membrane, which allowed him to squeeze through the crowd easily like a loach.

When he reached the place where the few unlucky guys were writhing, he stepped over them without bothering to look at them.

“You—”

All the Cultivators eyed Li Yao in astonishment.

The Master Spiritual Vulture that Li Yao played carried the features of the southeast barbarians, which looked different from the Cultivators from the central plateaus.

Also, when he explored the situations in the local towns all the way here, he had been wearing a gray robe that was devoid of any sigil. It was already ragged and well-worn.

Moreover, Li Yao concealed his spiritual energy and kept it at around the beginning level of the Building Foundation Stage, a good habit that he had learned in the modern Cultivation civilization.

This was sort of his ‘standby state’. In such a way, his combat ability duration in a battle would be maximized.

But it was not something that the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector were used to.

Because of the intense spiritual energy in this world, except for the few eccentric fellows, such as ‘Weird Saint’ Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar of the ‘Three Saints’, normal Cultivators rarely concealed their level. They were often showing their power and strength blatantly.

It was especially so during such a highly competitive occasion. They were all demonstrating their capabilities like peacocks spreading their tails, fearing that others might covet and challenge them if they showed weakness.

Seeing that Li Yao, as a young, plain-looking Building Foundation Stage Cultivator, was swaggering toward the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s array, the audience all felt strange.

“Look. What’s the barbarian doing?”

“Haha. Another unruly and unintelligent man. He must intend to be taught a lesson by the array, too!”

“Tsk, tsk, tsk. The guy is going up when we won’t? Is he too bold, or is he simply blind, unable to notice the few fellows lying on the ground?”

“Leave him alone. It’s just a barbarian. Let him be crushed and bleed. It will be fun!”

The Cultivators from the central plateaus of the Great Qian Dynasty often despised the barbarian Cultivators from the uncivilized places who knew nothing except how to play with snakes and venoms.

Besides, they heard that the barbarian Cultivators were mostly petty and narrowminded, with cruel, sordid approaches. Those people were tricky to deal with even if their Cultivation was not high.

It would be excellent to make the barbarian embarrass himself and therefore hate the Purple Pole Sword Sect.

Therefore, a lot of the bystanders were grimacing and whispering to each other by concentrating their soundwaves into a line through the ‘Secret Talk’ technique that they thought to be delicate.

But on the surface, they all nodded at Li Yao with a smile. They even cleared the way and made a ‘please’ gesture, welcoming Li Yao to walk forth.

Li Yao did not even bother to yawn at the small fries. He walked to the front of the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s array as if nobody were around and glanced at the leader of the sword Cultivators casually.

“Huh. The ignorant barbarian is provoking ‘Rampant Thunder Swordsman’ Wu Jiuxing? He truly doesn’t know what he’s doing!”

“Ha. A great show is coming on. Just what corner of the world is this freak from? Who is his master? Was he never taught to be humble after he reached the Great Qian Dynasty?”

Behind Li Yao, many Cultivators were still talking to each other secretly. They almost laughed out loud.

The ‘Rampant Thunder Swordsman’ Wu Jiuxing was a Cultivator in the Core Formation Stage. He was both tall and muscular, and his beard stabbed out like swords. His face was as giant as a mill, and his bloodshot eyes were like two burning charcoals embedded on the mill.

The giant sword on his back was the size of a plank. It was no different from an axe.

Seeing that Li Yao was strutting close, Wu Jiuxing immediately bulged his bull-like eyes. Even his breathing was heavy. The muscles in his body all tightened, too!

Naturally, the thousand empyreal swordsmen also noticed Li Yao. The previous flawless battle formation was suddenly more or less in disorder.

“The Rampant Thunder Swordsman is about to burst into fury. Good heavens. Is he going to break dozens of the guy’s bones, or will he simply cut off one of his arms?”

The Cultivators were all looking forward to the competition earnestly. Even the ten or so overseas Cultivators who were grunting on the ground could not help but hold their breath, waiting for Li Yao to be slapped back.

It was what people usually thought. When they were unlucky, they always hoped that somebody ten times unluckier would show up, which would be a comfort for them.

But Wu Jiuxing, whose brutality was well known, glanced at a regular, unadorned wooden badge on Li Yao’s waist and confirmed his identity.

Then, he raised his thick, hairy arm high and gestured at his subordinates. The thousand empyreal Cultivators in full armor bowed at Li Yao deeply at the same pace as if they were one person!

Chapter 1389 - The Consequence of Infuriating the Master!

“What!”

The empyreal swordsmen’s reaction was a major shock for every Cultivator from other sects on the spot. Gasping, they could not believe their eyes at all and were puzzled by Li Yao’s background!

“Who—who—who is he exactly?”

“I have never heard of such a person before in the world of Cultivators. Why are the thousands of empyreal swordsmen so respectful to him?”

“Is he a foreign unaffiliated Cultivator that the Purple Pole Sword Sect has invited? He seems rather plain and unattractive!”

While everybody was whispering to each other, ‘Rampant Thunder Swordsman’ Wu Jiuxing, the Core Formation Stage Cultivator who looked like a black tower, personally presented a jade disc that was almost ten meters in diameter to Li Yao, which was glittering extravagantly in the shape of a lotus flower.

After the jade disc was presented, all the Cultivators on the spot were so astounded that their eyeballs almost dropped to the ground.

Most of the high-level Cultivators were capable of flying on their swords. However, they were at the headquarters of the Purple Pole Sword Sect. Since the two parties had not declared war openly yet, they had to abide by the host's rules and could not fly freely.

To transport the high-level Cultivators to observe the battle on the Bronze Censer Peak, the Purple Pole Sword Sect had prepared a lot of floating jade discs.

The floating jade discs were classified into different levels, too.

The most common jade discs were around ten meters in diameter. They were essentially a giant, round tray and could accommodate dozens of Cultivators one time.

The relatively advanced jade discs were around three meters in diameter. They mostly shined glamorously because of the colorful crystals and pearls embedded in them. With a capacity of one individual, they were prepared for the leaders of general sects.

The ultimate jade disc, which was more than seven meters in diameter and blossoming like a lotus flower, was magical equipment of the highest level. None except for the big shots in the Nascent Soul Stage were qualified to board such a jade disc!

Li Yao's plain clothes and feeble spiritual energy did not befit an expert in the Nascent Soul Stage at all, and yet the Purple Pole Sword Sect was welcoming him in such a grand way!

For a moment, there was nothing but silence below the Bronze Censer Peak. The thousands of Cultivators were staring at Li Yao with complicated feelings.

Li Yao secretly frowned.

He had repeatedly reminded the disciples of the Purple Pole Sword Sect that they should not address him as ‘elder’ before they agreed to his terms.

The title ‘elder’ was the honorable form of address that the low-level Cultivators reserved for high-level Cultivators whose capabilities far exceeded their own. However, the original usage of the title was restrained to two parties in the same sect who were in a master-disciple lineage. It had the connotation of ‘ancestor’ or ‘grandmaster’.

Li Yao did not mind helping the Purple Pole Sword Sect, as long as he found the reward satisfactory.

But would it be too cheap if he was fighting for them when they respected him as ‘elder’ but actually paid nothing?

It never occurred to him that the fellows of the Purple Pole Sword Sect would circumvent his intentions.

It was true that they did not address him as ‘master’ or ‘elder’ as per his instructions, but was thousands of elite swordsmen bowing to him with such courtesy simultaneously and giving him such a fancy jade disc before he said anything any different from calling him ‘elder’ directly?

The ancient Cultivators can be sly, too!

Li Yao was more or less amused.

But that was not important. One could not blame someone who was smiling at one. Li Yao did not intend to pursue it any further. Casually, Li Yao nodded to the ‘Rampant Thunder Swordsman’ Wu Jiuxing who could not have been more obedient. Then, he stepped onto the lotus jade disc, with his hands behind his back and his spiritual energy flowing out. Ripples were spreading from the jade disc, pushing it up to the Bronze Censer Peak slowly like thousands of colorful butterflies.

The Cultivators who were breathing his exhaust flames below were, naturally, sighing again in jealousy, envy, hate, and confusion.

Li Yao's ears were keen enough for him to catch all their whispers. He heard an enigmatic voice instigating someone else through a technique that the guy thought to be confidential. "Fellow Cultivator Yuchi, how unfair the Purple Pole Sword Sect is! You are an unaffiliated Cultivator from the borderlands, and you met absolutely no match in the Fire Net Valley. You've come after such a long way to help them, but you have been blocked here!

"The guy seems to be an unaffiliated Cultivator from the borderlands, too. He looks rather unfamiliar and can't be any famous celebrity. He didn't show any astounding expertise, either. Yet, the Purple Pole Sword Sect welcomed him in such a spectacular way!

"Both of you are unaffiliated Cultivators from the borderlands. Why is he allowed to go up but not you? Or, do we have to pull strings in order to watch the confrontation of the two top experts of the present day?"

Li Yao turned around and glanced back.

He saw a Cultivator in white, who had powder all over his face and must have thought that he was handsome and elegant, inciting a red-faced Cultivator, whose straightforwardness was obvious and whose body size was even larger than 'Rampant Thunder Sword' Wu Jiuxing.

The red-face Cultivator would strike anyone as a guy who was vulnerable to incitation and who had more brawn than brains.

Besides, toughness and disobedience were his traits, and he was already angry enough that the empyreal swordsmen had stopped him just now.

Seeing that Li Yao, ‘another unaffiliated Cultivator from the borderlands’, had been picked up by the Purple Pole Sword Sect in such an eye-catching way, his fury was condensing into sparks and jumping out of his throat.

Now that somebody had goaded him, implying that Li Yao was permitted to go upward because he had connections with the Purple Pole Sword Sect, the red-faced Cultivator could not have been angrier.

“Hehe!” The red-faced Cultivator snorted. He pushed the few guys in front of him away and ran up to ‘Rampant Thunder Swordsman’ Wu Jiuxing. Pointing at Li Yao in midair, he shouted, “Who is this Fellow Cultivator? Why is he allowed to go up when we are not?”

“Exactly. What’s his background? Why can he go up?”

“Unfair! The Purple Pole Sword Sect is too unfair!”

The Cultivators from other sects were there to witness the Purple Pole Sword Sect be humiliated in the first place. Now that someone was bodacious enough to start the trouble, they naturally did not hesitate to follow up.

‘Rampant Thunder Swordsman’ Wu Jiuxing was dazed for a moment. His face turned gloomy as he glared at the red-faced Cultivator.

He was about to open his mouth when he heard an ear-splitting scream from the Cultivators behind the demander.

“Ahhhhhhh!”

The scream seemed to be from the deepest level of hell, yet it was reaching to the highest sky tearing apart the clouds in the next second.

The thousands of Cultivators’ hearts were all shivering. The clamor of the crowd eclipsed by the scream!

Including the red-faced Cultivator, everyone looked at the source of the scream, only to discover that the white-robed Cultivator, who enflamed the red-faced Cultivator a moment ago ill-intendedly, was contorted to the point that he was beyond recognition, as if he were possessed by a hundred thousand devils. His face was covered in various colors, too.

Very soon, he was foaming and cramping before he lost control over his bowels and bladder. A yellow and brown stain was slowly spreading out on the bottom of his dustless robe with a stinky smell!

“What—”

“What has happened?”

All the Cultivators were dazed. They were all grasped by horror as if a vulture was staring at them maliciously.

The red-faced Cultivator looked at the white-robed Cultivator who was writhing in pain and farting uncontrollably in a daze before he shifted his eyes to Li Yao, whose face was casual and whose eyes were dark and deep. He was rash but not retarded. Frightened, he kneeled down and kowtowed.

“Spare my life, senior! Spare my life, senior!”

It was not until then that the Cultivators realized whom the white-robed Cultivator, who was quite famous in the southeast, had infuriated to cause him end like this!

Immediately, all the Cultivators who spoke ill of Li Yao secretly a moment ago were all shuddering in silence, their faces pale!

The bottom of the Bronze Censer Peak was mired in weird quietness again.

But this time, none of the Cultivators dared to observe or comment on Li Yao!

Li Yao turned around and put the small fries behind. On the jade disc, he made his way to the top of the Bronze Censer Peak!

On the Bronze Censer Peak, the sun was rising from the east with dazzling glow.

The rocks as steep and sharp as spears were stabbing into the sky and reflecting the unstoppable brilliance, too.

Surrounded by the circular rocks was a flat hollow on the mountain peak. The banners were flying, and the rays of light were shooting out. Hundreds of the best experts in the Great Qian Dynasty had gathered!

From high above, Li Yao stared down.

The entire Bronze Censer Peak was an enormous sword test field. More than ten concentric rings had been carved into the ground in different colors. Every ring was made of tremendous crystals, metals, and rune arrays. They looked like a target for a giant archer that had been put on the ground. There was no telling what it was for.

Below the cliff far away, a flamboyant VIP auditorium had been set up temporarily.

However, most of the Cultivators still preferred to stand close to the ‘bullseye’ and chitchat with their friends.

Those qualified to observe the battle between Yan Liren and Qi Zhongdao were experts at least in the Core Formation Stage. They were mostly leaders and elders in the local sects.

Most of the time, they remained far away from each other, and it was difficult for them to meet. An event on the scale of the Dragon Spring Meeting was their best opportunity to expand their social network.

Li Yao noticed that, although the hundreds of high-level Cultivators were in different small groups, their different stances were quite obvious.

The five super large sects led by the Grand Mystery Sect had raised their magnificent banners on the right side of the Bronze Censer Peak.

The Grand Mystery Sect!

The Thunderstorm Valley!

The Flying Spirit Island!

The Golden Armor Clan!

The Monster Tamer Pavilion!

On the banner of every sect, besides the calligraphic names of the sect, there were also spiritual stripes that contained infinite fighting will. The dozens of banners seemed to be an unstoppable army!

The smaller sects that had come with them to loot the burning house were on one side, too. They were hoping to threaten the Purple Pole Sword Sect with the advantage in numbers!

On the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s side, they were not fighting alone, either.

Other than hundreds of intimidating sword Cultivators wearing the robes or armor of their own sect, quite a number of Cultivators from other sects were talking and laughing with them.

Some of the Cultivators, whose noses were tall and whose eyes were deep, with completely different appearance from the Cultivators of the central plateaus, were also touching their blades under the banner of the Purple Pole Sword Sect while staring at the Grand Mystery Sect’s side aggressively.

Li Yao knew that those Cultivators were either from the sects who had been close enough to Wang Xi in the past to be blamed as ‘eunuch’s conspirator’ or the overseas Cultivators who had been hired by the Purple Pole Sword Sect with decent pay to help fight!

Chapter 1390 - The Purple Pole Sword Sect's Decision!

While Li Yao was observing the experts of the Ancient Sages Sector, he became a focus of attention himself.

The high-level Cultivators from the five sects including the Grand Mystery Sect were even more surprised that an indifferent, strange young Cultivator slowly landed on the lotus jade chip of the highest level.

They communicated with each other through eye contact. Apparently, none of them knew Li Yao.

So, he was obviously an unaffiliated Cultivator that the Purple Pole Sword Sect had hired to deal with the crisis.

For Cultivators, wealth, residence, arts, and partners were mandatory. Generally speaking, only after they joined a certain sect would they be supported with enough resources to make decent progress in their training.

The unaffiliated Cultivators who did not belong to a sect were either not worth mentioning because of their lack of resources or extremely dreadful with unpredictable Cultivation because they boasted their own confidential resource channel, say a secret residence of some predecessor.

Now that the guy had arrived on a lotus jade disc, he was certainly the one with the highest Cultivation among the unaffiliated Cultivators that the Purple Pole Sword Sect had invited for help. So, he certainly deserved their attention.

Many high-level Cultivators closed their eyes and rested after a few glances at Li Yao.

An unaffiliated Cultivator was an unaffiliated Cultivator after all. How capable could he be?

Moreover, he was an unknown man from nowhere. Chances were that he had been training in a remote place throughout his life and was somehow summoned by the Purple Pole Sword Sect. The peak of the Core Formation Stage was the most that he could amount to!

Such an unaffiliated Cultivator just deserved their attention. Nothing more.

At this moment, the high-level Cultivators in the five super sects had yet to learn that the chaos in the Southland of Sorcerers had been settled. Thus, they did not know that Li Yao had killed Master Black Moon, who was in the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage, in one move and suppressed Han Yuantai, who was in the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage, in another.

If they had known it, they definitely would not have felt so easy.

The incidents, however, had been conveyed to the elders and leaders of the Purple Pole Sword Sect by Ling Lanyin.

Just now, when Ling Lanyin met them, she even further stressed upon Li Yao’s formidability.

She was at the peak of the Core Formation Stage and one of the most distinguished experts in the Purple Pole Sword Sect other than the six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. Naturally, no one doubted her words.

Therefore, quite a few elegant, unworldly-looking sword Cultivators on the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s side courteously greeted him from far away in respect.

But it raised the suspicion and dissatisfaction of the other overseas unaffiliated Cultivators that the Purple Pole Sword Sect had invited because they did not enjoy such privileges when they reached the Bronze Censer Peak.

Ling Lanyon was speaking to a few Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators under the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s banner. Seeing that Li Yao had shown up, her eyes glittered. She flew over with her master’s permission and bowed to Li Yao obediently before she gave a rewritten inventory of resources to Li Yao with both hands.

Li Yao unfolded the inventory and checked. Other than all the materials that he required, hundreds of other extremely rare materials had been added to the paper, some of which had an annual yield of less than a hundred grams for ten years in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector!

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and thought quickly. With those new materials, he would have dozens of new solutions to build up the star beacons. The signals that he sent back to his hometown would be clearer, more conspicuous, and more precise.

While drafting the new modification designs in his head, he stared at Ling Lanyin suspiciously. The new inventory of resources was at least three times as valuable as the previous one!

Ling Lanyin smiled. “Senior, our sect has admired your remarkable techniques and your reputation in the south for a long time. Knowing that you are in need of magical equipment after just breaking out of seclusion, our sect is willing to offer you all the materials on the inventory. The best refining facilities in our sect will be at your service indefinitely, too. That is the least we can do for your refining, senior!

“However, we do have a minor request. We hope that you will admit to being a ‘visiting elder’ of our sect when you help us in a fight!”

Li Yao raised his eyebrow.

“It is not a permanent identity!”

Fearing that Li Yao grew angry, Ling Lanyin hurried to explain the counteroffer. “We only need you to work as a visiting elder in our sect for half a year so that we can live through the crisis!”

“What if I don’t?” Li Yao asked emotionlessly.

Ling Lanyin shuddered and gritted her teeth. “If you don’t, I’m afraid that we will not be able to complete the deal that you want, senior. If you insist on standing against our sect and trying the sharpness of our swords, the six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, hundred Core Formation Stage Cultivators, and five thousand empyreal swordsmen will have no choice except to try our best to not disappoint you!”

Li Yao stared at her without blinking.

The few Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators of the Purple Pole Sword Sect not far away locked onto the place, too.

“Hehe. Hehehehe!” Li Yao chuckled. “The Purple Pole Sword Sect is indeed good at doing business!”

At first glance, the inventory of materials were three times as valuable as Li Yao had expected. The offer could not have been more generous.

However, Li Yao had intended to help the Purple Pole Sword Sect only once. It was a clean, one-time deal. The two parties would not be involved after the trade.

But now, the Purple Pole Sword Sect was asking him to be a ‘visiting elder’ for half a year, in which time he would have to demonstrate his power on the tank named Purple Pole Sword Sect. He would be involved in all kinds of trouble.

On the surface, the Purple Pole Sword Sect was losing a lot by providing so many rare materials for free.

However, the next half a year was exactly the critical period when the Purple Pole Sword Sect and other giants would decide the redistribution of interests in the ‘post-Wang Xi era’.

With the participation of Li Yao, a super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, they would certain gain more from their share in the interests than the price of all the materials on the inventory.

The leadership of the Purple Pole Sword Sect were certainly brave and decisive, too. At such a perilous moment, they were still thinking far ahead into the future!

He could either be the visiting elder of the Purple Pole Sword Sect or just go away as the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s enemy, in which case he would not get half a crystal!

The ancient Cultivators’ wisdom is truly not to be underestimated!

Li Yao confirmed the point again.

“Senior?”

Ling Lanyin’s heart was almost beating out of her chest as she looked at Li Yao nervously waiting for his answer.

“You may leave now. Let me… take a look at it first!”

Li Yao put the inventory of materials into his sleeve after a smile. He roamed away without giving Ling Lanyin a clear reply.

His communication with Ling Lanyin was noticed by a lot of Cultivators on both sides.

Although the two of them talked secretly through much more advanced techniques, preventing them from eavesdropping on the content of the conversation, the Cultivators could easily see Ling Lanyin’s brimming frustration.

Also, after Li Yao landed on the Bronze Censer Peak, he did not stand below the ‘Purple Lightning Banner’ and greet the leader and the few Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, as other hired unaffiliated Cultivators did.

The keen-sighted, quick-minded Cultivators immediately sensed the subtle relationship between Li Yao and the Purple Pole Sword Sect.

“What’s the meaning of this?”

“Did the stupid barbarian Cultivator demand too high a price and ruin the negotiation with the Purple Pole Sword Sect?”

“Or, did he see that there were so many experts on our side and realize that he is no match for us so he changed his mind?”

Li Yao did not mind them at all. Greenish flames were burning inside his black eyes again, and he glanced at the Cultivators on both sides.

In the world of ancient Cultivators, strength meant everything. Today, he would certainly take action to cement his position as an unparalleled expert!

The high-level Cultivators, be they on the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s side or the Grand Mystery Sect’s side, could all be his opponents and prey today!

Suddenly, Li Yao’s eyes seemed to have run into a magnet as they were attracted to a guy surrounded by a few Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators under the banner of the Grand Mystery Sect.

The guy was tall, slender, and dark. He was wearing a plain, thorny crown and a pure black robe without any mottle. At the center of the magnificent Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, he seemed rather unattractive, if not lackluster.

However, nobody would ignore him.

He was like a black hole. No matter how dazzling that brilliance around him was, he would absorb all the light until everybody forgot everything around him and simply noticed him.

For normal people who were as tall and slender as him, they would be described as ‘bamboo’.

However, when Li Yao saw him, he could only think of two things.

A black, indestructible nail that had stabbed deep into the ground, or an absolutely straight ruler that would never bend and could be used to measure the sky, the earth, and the stars!

“Iron Saint Qi Zhongdao!” Li Yao mumbled to himself before his telepathic thoughts spread out, and he stared at the unparalleled expert who could be a candidate for the best expert of the Ancient Sages Sector!

Below the banner of the Grand Mystery Sect, Qi Zhongdao was chatting with other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who were leaders and elders of other sects.

Qi Zhongdao was the grand leader of the Grand Mystery Sect, the largest sect in the world. He was also the closest thing to a leader of the alliance of the Cultivators there. Because of his astounding Cultivation and position, even the giants from the super sects such as the Thunderstorm Valley or the Flying Spirit Island were rather respectful for them.

“Although ‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren is one of the Three Saints of the Great Qian Dynasty, and it is said that his sword arts are sophisticated enough to kill deities and devils, he is an expert who only rose to fame in the past few decades after all. He lacks experience!”

“He may have his chance of winning against other people, but he wants to defeat Fellow Cultivator Qi’s Heaven Flipping Seal, which has suppressed every enemy in the past hundred years with an ancient sword from the primeval era. He is nothing more than an ant that intends to shake a tree!”

The leader of the Flying Spirit Island, who was a white-haired old man, sneered.

“It’s not necessarily true.” Qi Zhongdao’s voice sounded like two colliding iron rulers. “With Yan Liren’s and my Cultivation, it is impossible to infer who will win based on our previous accomplishments before we really have a fight!

“Besides…

“My Heaven Flipping Seal is also a primeval treasure. Naturally, it is not scared of the primeval sword that Yan Liren recently polished.

“But in the past ten years, Wang Xi and him have discussed and exchanged sword arts every year!

“Although Wang Xi is a shameless rebel, he is also a master of the sword. With Wang Xi’s whetting, how sharp is Yan Liren today?

“This is truly—”

Qi Zhongdao was about to express his feelings when he suddenly grunted. His pupils constricted, and he slighted turned his head to look back at Li Yao.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Their eyes collided in midair, raising soundless and yet no less breathtaking explosions!

Chapter 1391 - Qi Zhongdao, Yan Liren!

Li Yao’s eyes surged out like a flooding river, destroying, swallowing, and drowning everything in his way!

Qi Zhongdao’s eyes, however, were like a boundless ocean. No matter how rampant the flood was, it would vanish into nothingness after it ran into the ocean.

Boom!

A giant noise echoed inside Li Yao’s head. The world around him seemed to have disappeared, replace by an empty universe in front of his eyes. ‘Iron Saint’ Qi Zhongdao’s spirit had turned into horizontal and vertical iron rulers that interweaved into a chess board, a shackle, and a cage, suppressing his soul and imprisoning him with Qi Zhongdao’s ‘rules’!

What immense mental power!

Li Yao was greatly amazed.

But he did not know that Qi Zhongdao was ten times more shocked than him!

As one of the leading people in the Great Qian Dynasty, Qi Zhongdao knew a thing or two about all the top experts in the entire Ancient Sages Sector. The faces, features, and favorite techniques of the three hundred or so Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were all in his mind. He had evaluated what kind of tough people he might run into in the battle to overwhelm the Purple Pole Sword Sect and drafted corresponding plans.

When Li Yao first landed, he did not think too much of the newcomer.

Unlike other people, he gave Li Yao a higher estimation and regarded Li Yao as an overseas unaffiliated Cultivator who had made significant progress in training by accident and had perhaps reached the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage, which was why the Purple Pole Sword Sect valued him so much.

However, it was just the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage!

When Li Yao observed him blatantly from afar, he still did not think too much of the overseas unaffiliated Cultivator. He merely intended to suppress the guy with part of his telepathic thoughts so that the guy would retreat.

But he did not expect that mysterious unaffiliated Cultivator's soul to be so powerful!

The guy was like a boa, a falcon, a tiger, or even a primeval beast like a tyrannosaur, when he raged, roared, and savaged inside the cage condensed by Qi Zhongdao's spirit, determined to break free from it!

Huala!

Qi Zhongdao's cage, shackle, and chess board were finally showing cracks.

Li Yao's boa, falcon, and tiger took the opportunity to run out, but they were heavily wounded and moaning!

The two of them retreated their eyes almost at the same time.

Li Yao’s nose was bleeding, and there was no way that he could stop it.

He did not intend to stop it, either, but merely took a step back and lowered his head to observe where he had been standing.

Two deep footprints had been left on the ground there. A series of tiny cracks could be found around the footprints, too.

They were a sign that he was unable to control his spiritual energy precisely because of the blast to his soul.

Impressive!

Li Yao finally sniffed the blood in his nose and raised his thumb for Qi Zhongdao in his heart.

After the brief collision of eyes, he was already able to basically estimate Qi Zhongdao’s capabilities. The guy should be similar to, if not slightly stronger than, Xiao Xuance, the enemy with the highest combat ability that Li Yao had ever come across so far.

Xiao Xuance had once been the best expert of the Flying Star Sector. He was close to the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage, and his capabilities were immeasurable!

Years ago, it was with the collective attack of seven Cultivators, six in the Nascent Soul Stage and one in the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage, that they managed to kill Xiao Xuance luckily!

The other opponents that he had dealt with, such as Bai Xinghe, Jin Tuyi, Elder Nether Spring, Lu Zui, or Zhou Hengdao, were perhaps better than Xiao Xuance in terms of their leadership, schemes, and wisdom. Yet, when it came to ‘absolute combat ability’, they were still far from Xiao Xuance!

As expected of the leading person of this world. Under the obsolete training system that is tens of thousands of years behind that of the outside world, he has Cultivated to such an astonishing level. How unbelievable!

Li Yao’s eyeballs shivered quickly. Hundreds of virtual battles between him and Qi Zhongdao surfaced inside his brain as he estimated his odds of success. The more he calculated, the more excited he became!

Qi Zhongdao was in a much better condition than Li Yao was. He was barely affected on the surface, but he was nonetheless shocked in his heart.

The collision of their eyes happened fast. Both of them were super experts when it came to manipulating spiritual energy. The confrontation of their soul power was so secret that even the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators around Qi Zhongdao had sensed nothing. They merely felt that Qi Zhongdao was suddenly a bit ill at ease.

Qi Zhongdao narrowed his eyes. An unnatural wave flashed on his dark and slim face as he asked in a low voice, “Who’s that fellow Cultivator over there?”

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators looked at each other in bewilderment. They looked at Li Yao again but failed to recognize him. At first, they thought that he was an overseas unaffiliated Cultivator that Purple Pole Sword Sect had invited to help the battle. But judging from the communication between him and Ling Lanyin a moment ago, things seemed to have changed. He was not necessarily taking the Purple Pole Sword Sect's side, perhaps because he was intimidated by them.

Only an elder of the Gold Armor Clan fell into deep thought. He stated that he seemed to have seen the guy in the southwest a long time ago. The air around the guy was familiar to him despite the vast changes in the guy's appearance. However, he failed to recall the guy's name. The guy did not seem to be anyone famous.

"A long time ago, in the southwest?"

Solemnly, Qi Zhongdao thought hard for a moment. He was about to have somebody look into the issue when a lot of Cultivators on the Purple Pole Sword Sect's side began exclaiming.

'Sword Maniac' Yan Liren had shown up!

Including Li Yao and Qi Zhongdao, all the Cultivators focused their attention on the 'Sword Maniac' whose sword arts were claimed to be unparalleled in the world!

Li Yao did not even have time to wipe the blood from his nose. Allowing his chest to be stained by the blood, he stood tall and looked at the banners of the Purple Pole Sword Sect. The two crossed banners were like a gate, and a figure that was too short and small slowly walked out of the gate toward the 'bullseye' in the sword test field one step after another.

So, it is true…

Li Yao was absent-minded for a moment.

The rumors that he had heard were true. Sword Maniac Yan Liren, who was equally qualified to compete for the title of the best expert of the Ancient Sages Sector, was actually a dwarf!

He was no more than 1.3 meters tall. His body was already short and fat enough, but his head was exceptionally round and huge. His limbs were thick and short. At first glance, he was like a giant white gourd with a watermelon piled on it.

He was wearing a bright purple robe and covered in tiny, delicate armor. A short, mini sword was dangling from his waist, too. The robe, the armor, and the sword all looked like children’s toys.

What was more, the sheath of the tiny sword was fully embedded with pearls, agates, emeralds, and all the other fancy common jewelries that was devoid of spiritual energy. The weapon could not have looked more flamboyant.

For Cultivators, the description of ‘flamboyant’ was certainly not a compliment.

Yan Liren’s head was completely bald. He did not have a single hair. Even his eyebrows had been entirely plucked, making his head look like a big, round bead.

His eyes seemed to be stuck looking upward. He was neither glancing at the crowd nor looking at his most formidable opponent. Instead, he was staring at the ever-changing clouds in the sky while he mumbled to himself and calculated with both hands quickly. There was no telling what he was measuring.

His idiotic appearance when his attention was focused easily made other people think that he was a maniac.

When Yan Liren showed up, the whole field fell silent.

Unlike when Li Yao arrived, no matter how dishonorable Yan Liren looked, no matter how eccentric he was acting, and no matter how everybody on the spot was craving to split the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s enormous interests, none of them dared to say anything or scorn him to his face.

It was the deterrence of a super expert!

In the utmost silence, Li Yao was the only one who narrowed his eyes and looked at Yan Liren in exactly the same way that he looked at Qi Zhongdao a moment ago.

However, Yan Liren sensed none of it. He continued walking forward, not bothering to look at Li Yao at all, still focused on his clouds!

Li Yao’s pupils constricted violently.

Yan Liren was an expert qualified to fight against Qi Zhongdao. There was no way that he could not sense Li Yao’s provocative eyes.

His non-reaction when he obviously could sense it only suggested one thing.

Yan Liren’s belief was extremely firm.

Since he was about to fight against Qi Zhongdao, all his spirit, will, and computational ability was concentrated on the battle.

Everyone and everything that was irrelevant to the battle, however strong and serious, could not distract him!

In comparison to Yan Liren’s non-reaction, Qi Zhongdao spared his attention just now to look back at him. The gap of their levels were apparent!

Shocked, Li Yao exclaimed subconsciously, “Qi Zhongdao is going to fail!”

For Cultivators at their level, the immensity of spiritual energy or its release efficiency was not the decisive factors in a battle. A lot of other mysterious factors, including their belief and determination, played an important role.

Yan Liren was undistracted. There was but the upcoming battle in his eyes.

Yan Liren had perhaps been the only one in Qi Zhongdao’s eyes a moment ago. However, since he had been disturbed by Li Yao, how could he win the fight when he could not focus his attention?

Li Yao secretly sighed to himself. He planned to have a few virtual battles with the data of the two top experts that he had collected just now.

It was both a way of training and great entertainment for the mind.

But somebody suddenly demanded him angrily. “Who are you exactly, Fellow Cultivator? The battle between Master Righteous One and the Sword Maniac has not begun yet. The result is not known. Why are you shooting from the hip and ruining our morale?”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. He looked back, only to discover that five Cultivators in black robes that were similar to the style of Grand Mystery Sect’s attire were glaring at him.

As it turned out, when he was shocked by Yan Liren’s concentration just now, he had shouted out loud subconsciously.

The Cultivators around all had keen senses. He was not controlling his volume, either. Naturally, a lot of people caught what he said.

“The Grand Mystery Sect is the greatest sect in the world, and Master Righteous One is the role model of all Cultivators. Naturally, he won’t hold you for your irresponsible remarks!”

The blue-robed Cultivator in the lead was a man whose face was yellow. He crossed his fists to Li Yao sloppily before he sneered, “I am Xie Xinghuo of the Spiritual Mountain Sect, which is directly related to the Grand Mystery Sect. If I may speak on behalf of the confused Cultivators here, I want to ask you, Fellow Cultivator, forgetting that you called Master Righteous One by his name disrespectfully, on what grounds did you claim that Master will fail? Is it because your eyes are keen enough to have noticed a certain anomaly or because you have been instructed to instigate trouble here?”

Chapter 1392 - Life Is a Present…

The Spiritual Mountain Sect was a branch of the Grand Mystery Sect.

When reaching a certain scale, every sect would have different interest groups within.

Many interest groups were unable to swallow their opponents despite the competitions on and off the table. They were unwilling to wound each other for nothing. So, they would often reach deals and establish branches from the main sect, bringing the resources to develop in the broad world outside.

Sometimes, to march into the new states or prefectures, or to explore the unpopulated frontier, the local disciples in such areas were often given greater powers and incentives and turned from local representatives of the sect into new branches later.

Some of the smaller sects in the local area, awed by the foreign sects, were willing to be acquired, which was another source of the branches.

By the standard of the modern Cultivation civilization, their relationship was similar to parent companies, child companies, and OEMs.

Although the branches and the main sect were divided, they were still deeply connected with each other. If they did not separate on bad terms, their relationship was not necessarily bad. Sometimes they were even intimate sects like brothers who would make decisions together.

It was especially so for the Grand Mystery Sect, the largest sect in the world that boasted countless secondary branches. They mostly maintained friendly relationships. The branches were essentially a team of lackeys that the Grand Mystery Sect had raised. Scattered around the Great Qian Dynasty, they interweaved into a complicated network of interests. At a critical moment, they could also gather together, wave their colorful banners, and cheer for the Grand Mystery Sect.

The Spiritual Mountain Sect was exactly one of such ‘lackeys’. Xie Xinghuo was an elder of the Spiritual Mountain Sect and the best expert in his sect.

As a lackey of the Grand Mystery Sect, hearing that somebody had spoken of the grandmaster of the sect directly in such a scornful tone and claimed that Master Righteous One was bound to lose, how could he not jump out and berate him?

When Li Yao first arrived on the lotus jade disc, he had been quite mysterious, and nobody could deduce his background. If he also had the Purple Pole Sword Sect backing him, Xie Xinghuo would not necessarily have had the courage to question him.

However, he did notice that Li Yao’s communication with Ling Lanyin did not go so well, which put the guy in an awkward position. The guy seemed to be neither on the Grand Mystery Sect’s side nor the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s side. He was all by himself!

With that in mind, what was there to be concerned about?

Xie Xinghuo meant to demonstrate his loyalty by defending Qi Zhongdao’s reputation in front of his fellow Cultivators so that his sect would distinguish itself among all the branches of the Grand Mystery Sect and be appreciated!

Thinking that through, Xie Xinghuo further raised his voice and shrieked, “Master Righteous One is too honorable to be estimated or insulted by any random guy. Who are you, and where are you from, Fellow Cultivator? How dare you disrespect Master with your arrogant words?”

Xie Xinghuo’s voice indeed attracted the attention of quite a lot of Cultivators nearby who had been staring at Yan Liren just now. They were all looking at Li Yao again.

However, they were all amused by Li Yao’s crazy nose bleeding and the stain in front of his chest.

Li Yao smiled bitterly to himself.

He had never been a man who liked to invoke trouble without a good reason. It was indeed reckless of him to have said that. As a branch of the Grand Mystery Sect, it was only natural for the guy to stand up for his main sect.

If it were the real Li Yao, he would not have bothered talking to the guy anymore and just left. Or, he might have revealed some shocking techniques so that the guy would see his real capabilities and stop asking for death. Either way, the problem would be resolved. He would never escalate the trouble to the point that it was unresolvable.

However, he was playing the role of Master Spiritual Vulture right now!

The Ancient Sages Sector might be underdeveloped. However, the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators here were all as cunning as foxes. In order not to expose any loophole, he could only react according to the personalities of such a character as Master Spiritual Vulture.

I'll have to be a snob again. How painful!

Thinking to himself, Li Yao stared at Xie Xinghuo without saying anything.

Xie Xinghuo felt quite creepy under his stare. He could not help but take a step back and scratched his face before he said angrily, "Why are you not replying, fellow Cultivator? Do you have no respect for the Spiritual Mountain Sect?"

But Li Yao still looked at him emotionlessly and mysteriously, as if he was scrutinizing every pore on the guy's face.

Xie Xinghuo was shocked, infuriated, and somewhat scared. Holding his flying sword, he gnashed his teeth. "What are you looking at?"

"Please don't be angry, fellow Cultivator." Li Yao finally opened his mouth. With a smile, he said gently, "I have never seen any face of as much fortune as your face, Fellow Cultivator Xie. The face is incredible and certainly unique in this world. That is why I forgot my manners just now. Please do excuse me, Fellow Cultivator!"

"A face of fortune?"

Xie Xinghuo and the bystanders put on weird expression.

None of them expected the mysterious, anonymous unaffiliated Cultivator to make such an irrelevant statement. Was it a sign that the guy was giving in?

Xie Xinghuo could not help but touched his slim face and curl his lips. Softening his tone, he said, “How so?”

With his hands behind his back, Li Yao said slowly, “Without your face of fortune, Fellow Cultivator Xiao, how would you have met me today?

“For the past few decades, I’ve been living in seclusion inside the forests to calm myself down. I often heard the brooks inside the forests flowing, which sounded like pearls dropping into jade trays. I saw the sun rising in the east and setting in the west, watched the moon waxing and waning, and observed the flourishing and perishing of trees and grass. Finally, I perceived the vicissitudes of nature and washed away my aggressiveness. My belief today is immaculate.

“Fellow Cultivator Xie, you happen to have run into me today. That’s why you are still alive right now. How would you explain that if you do not have a face of fortune?

“If you had met me a hundred years ago, Fellow Cultivator Xie, with your accusation just now, I’m afraid that you would’ve died the most miserable death. You would’ve ended up in a pool of pus, and even your soul would have been suffering the most excruciating pain!”

“…” Xie Xinghuo and the Cultivators nearby were all dumbfounded.

After a long silence, somebody around finally understood Li Yao’s obscure sarcasm and could not help but laugh out loud.

Blinking, Xie Xinghuo realized what was going on, too. He was so exasperated that his yellow face flushed pure red. Thousands of arrows of blood seemed to be shooting out of his face, as he unsheathed his bright sword and roared, “What—what—what are you saying?”

Li Yao eyed him with great bafflement.

He seemed to be confused why somebody would be so determined to rush into hell when he could live a good life on the earth.

After a long sigh, he said solemnly, “Fellow Cultivator Xie, do not rush into anything. Please heed my words.

“When I was living in the forests, I saw grass sprouting stubbornly below the giant rocks, I saw a deer whose one leg was bitten off struggling to survive with the three legs left, and I saw countless ants work hard to store food and strengthen their nest before winter, knowing that they would be dead for sure.

“Why did the creatures resist and struggle so hard? To live one more day, of course, right?

“As the saying goes, even an insect values its life. Life is the most priceless treasure in the world that even animals cherish. It is needless to say that you must’ve gone through a lot of difficulties to be born as a human and to advance into the level you are in right now, Fellow Cultivator Xie!

“Even if you are not considering yourself, you must think more for your wife, your children, and your old parents at home. Why do you have to ask to be killed instead of cherishing your good life, which didn’t come easily?”

“You—you—you—!” Xie Xinghuo was blushing so hard that his neck was like a furnace. He was almost throwing out his guts together with his blood as he shouted furiously, “Who are you exactly? My sword does not kill anyone without a name!"

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao said, one word after another, "Master Spiritual Vulture of the Flying Thunder Cave on the Broken Intestine Mountain."

The Flying Thunder Cave on the Broken Intestine Mountain was the residence of Elder Five Despairs, who was the master of the real Master Spiritual Vulture.

However, Master Five Despairs had been killed by Master Spiritual Vulture and Master Black Moon a long time ago. Master Black Moon had since been killed by Li Yao. So, the successors in the lineage included only Master Spiritual Vulture. According to the tradition of the Cultivators, he was the new owner of the Flying Thunder Cave now.

It was the brand of Master Five Despairs' lineage. If the successor really trained himself in the Flying Thunder Cave was not important.

"Master Spiritual Vulture…"

The somewhat strange name cast Xie Xinghuo and the other Cultivators from central plateaus into deep thought.

Sensing that the mysterious aura around Li Yao was on the rise, Xie Xinghuo even took a few steps back to better prepare himself.

However, after he finally recalled who 'Master Spiritual Vulture' was, he burst into laughter. "And I was wondering who you are. Master Spiritual Vulture, the guy who once dominated the Southland of Sorcerers but vanished into thin air. I haven't heard any news about you for decades. It never occurred to me that you would dare mess around in the

Dragon Spring Meeting. You truly don’t know what you are doing!”

The Cultivators from the Southland of Sorcerers were best at domesticating wildlife and making poisons. They were often despised by the Cultivators from central plateaus, and their arts were often deemed to be queer.

Only the best of them, such as Master Black Moon who was in the Nascent Soul Stage, could manage to be acknowledged by the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty.

Those in the Core Formation Stage such as Master Spiritual Vulture, who disappeared decades ago into nobody knew where, were not in the eyes of the Cultivators from central plateaus at all. Their only impression of such people was ‘Oh, there seems to be a guy with that name!’

Perhaps, in the dense forests, the tricks of the barbarian Cultivators were still difficult to deal with. However, in an open confrontation on the sword test field, they were not worth mentioning at all!

“Master Spiritual Vulture, although the Spiritual Mountain Sect is insignificant, you are not to insult us like that!”

Thinking that he had figured out Li Yao’s background, Xie Xinghuo was greatly assured. He sheathed his flying sword, but his killing intent was even more intense as he stared and Li Yao and gnashed his teeth. “However, this is the Dragon Spring Meeting. There are rules here. The competition between the Sword Maniac and Master Righteous One is about to commence. Your blood doesn’t deserve to tarnish the Bronze Censer Mountain!

“Our Spiritual Mountain Sect has recently received a sharp sword, but we lack a sword tester with real materials! After the Sword Maniac and Master Righteous One’s competition is over, do you dare test the sharpness of our sword in the sword test field?”

Chapter 1393 - Observing Is Dangerous!

“This is the first time that I have stepped into the central plateaus after lurking in the Southland of Sorcerers for a hundred years, and I intend to establish my name among the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty. Naturally, I will not refuse your sword test,” Li Yao said coldly. “However, I have restrained my killing intent all the way here and did not attack anyone because I was looking for someone who is worthy of my attack!

“You, however, are unworthy!”

Xie Xinghuo was so angry that he was actually laughing. “Haha. Hahahaha. I didn’t know that the tongues of the barbarian Cultivators can be as tough as your venom. But I do wonder if your weapon is as sharp as your tongue!”

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao said scarily, “Alright, alright. Now that you are determined to be killed, Fellow Cultivator Xie, I’m willing to fulfil your wish. However, a small fry such as yourself is far from enough. Do you have any senior brothers, masters, or best friends? Hurry and invite them over. Find as many of them as possible and make sure you write down how exactly they want to be killed. I guarantee that your wishes will be satisfied!”

“You…” Xie Xinghuo was so infuriated that his head was dizzy.

“Why are you not going?”

Two green flames glittered inside Li Yao’s eyes and darted into the depths of Xie Xinghuo’s soul.

He might have been showing off, but he did not intend to kill anyone.

He had killed countless people in this life, and they all deserved to be killed.

Punishing someone for what they said or killing someone because of fury was not what a Cultivator who grew up in a modern society ruled by law should do.

The two green flames rushed into Xie Xinghuo’s brain and suddenly exploded. Xie Xinghuo shuddered abruptly, and the entire world turned into a creepy devil’s cave. When he looked at Li Yao again, the guy was a hideous ghost king!

Cold sweat popped up on his forehead. He finally realized that he might have pissed off someone that he should not have. After an exclamation, he was frozen on the spot.

Li Yao noticed out of the corner of his eye that Ling Lanyin was striding close with a few empyreal swordsmen.

It was obvious that the girl was fearing that he might go on a killing spree when he was moody and even retaliate against the Spiritual Mountain Sect later, which would cause infinite trouble.

Li Yao took the opportunity to stop the oppression. He shook his sleeve and walked away.

The minor conflict soon spread out. Many Cultivators were pointing at the two of them. The name of ‘Spiritual Vulture’ spread among the Cultivators, too.

When Qi Zhongdao heard ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’, he gazed at Li Yao solemnly and suspiciously again.

It made Li Yao respect him even less.

Li Yao stared at Yan Liren. The dwarf Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator had finished calculating the sky. Now, he shifted his eyes to the Cultivators on the spot. He looked as silly as before, and his lips continued shivering nonstop. His short, thick fingers were jabbing randomly. There was no telling what he was calculating.

This time, his eyes were cast to Li Yao.

However, they did not make eye contact. Like two streams of smoke, the stares from them simply passed each other without crossing.

Li Yao could tell that Yan Liren was not regarding him as a ‘person’. For the guy, he was just an object, or an obstacle, on the sword test field.

Li Yao finally understood what exactly Yan Liren was calculating with his full attention.

He was calculating the number of the ‘obstacles’ on the sword test field, as well as their size, distribution, and possible movement, in order to measure their influence on the fight later!

Yan Liren is a certain winner! Li Yao thought to himself. He was willing to bet his head on it!

At this time, Ling Lanyin, having put on a purple long dress, walked to the ‘bullseye’ at the center of the sword test field elegantly.

Starting from the bullseye, the rings on the ground were all humming and releasing immense spiritual waves.

“Seniors, Fellow Cultivators, welcome to the Dragon Spring Meeting of our sect!” Ling Lanyin bowed. “In every Dragon Spring Meeting, we exhibit both the blades and magical equipment that we have produced in the past five years and the primeval treasures that we have collected from everywhere for the seniors and fellow Cultivators to appreciate and study!

“The Dragon Spring Meeting this year will be even more spectacular than usual because three swords from the primeval era have been completely polished!

“The three ancient swords that have recently been polished in our sect may not have been forged too marvelously, but their sharpness is still quite impressive!

“To trigger the full brilliance of such ancient swords, two unparalleled experts are mandatory!

“Today, our sect is honored to have Master Righteous One, grand leader of the Grand Mystery Sect, join us to test the swords with Yan Liren, the elder of our sect, with so many seniors and fellow Cultivators to observe. You have all brought light to our shabby sect!”

Ling Lanyin’s words triggered a round of whispers. The Cultivators on the Grand Mystery Sect’s side all looked quite awful.

The news that they had in the beginning was that the Purple Pole Sword Sect had finished polishing one secret sword from the primeval era recently and intended to compete with Qi Zhongdao’s Heaven Flipping Seal.

It never occurred to them that the Purple Pole Sword Sect did not polish one ancient sword but three!

However, that was also expected for the competition of Cultivators because magical equipment was part of their capabilities. As long as they could carry the weapons and support the weapons with their spiritual energy, they could bring however much magical equipment they wanted. Not just three, even if the guy was playing with thirty swords at the same time, there was nothing that the bystanders could do except compliment his capability.

The Purple Pole Sword Sect has indeed put their all into keeping the interests that they have earned to themselves! Li Yao thought to himself and looked forward to the competition even more. What were the ‘primeval swords’ and the ‘Heaven Flipping Seal’ exactly?

“The ancient swords are unbelievably formidable. The Heaven Flipping Seal is also the ultimate treasure in the world. The blast will certainly be overwhelming upon their collision!

“Our sect has established ten levels of defense barriers on the sword test field. Seniors and Fellow Cultivators, please choose a place to watch the game according to your capabilities in case you are accidentally injured!”

Bo! Bo, bo!

While Ling Lanyin was talking, the ten rings embedded in the ground generated spiritual shields that were aimed at the internal side one after another. They were like transparent eggshells covering the sword test field layer after layer.

It was not until then that Li Yao realized what the enormous ‘arrow target’ on the ground was for.

The collision between the extraordinary weapons of Qi Zhongdao and Yan Liren would certainly be crushing. The blast resulting from the furious collisions and the broken pieces when their magical equipment crossed could possibly injure the bystanders.

There were ten rings on the arrow target. If someone observed the battle at the periphery, they would be protected by ten defense barriers. Even if some broken pieces penetrated through the ten barriers, their strength would be greatly diminished.

Of course, those who were confident in their own ability and were not scared of ending up as a collateral were free to stand closer to the center.

The closer the audience was to the ‘bullseye’, the fewer protective barriers there would be and the more dangerous it was.

Because the spiritual shields were emitting colorful waves themselves, which would slightly twist the space around, the scene inside would certainly be fuzzy if someone observed the battle through ten barriers.

The closer they were to the center, the better the view they would have. It was the same logic as watching a football game.

This was the time where the audience’s capabilities and courage were tested.

Those who were confident in their Cultivation and intended to observe the competition of the two top experts clearly could naturally stand at the center, which was closest to the battle.

But for those who were merely joining the show for fun, they would be better off staying back for their own sake!

Tragedies where the bystanders were injured had happened in the Dragon Spring Meeting before. All the Cultivators were quite familiar with the tradition. When the round defense barriers slowly rose up, most of the Cultivators began stepping back.

Some of them moved to three layers back, some moved to five layers back, and some went to the tenth layer, only to discover that few fellow Cultivators were around. Blushing, they gritted their teeth and moved forward two layers.

Only the fifty or so experts in the Nascent Soul Stage, and some of the Cultivators at the peak of the Core Formation Stage who might be overly confident about themselves, were still standing at the innermost place, where there was absolutely no protection. They could be hurt by the attacks of the two experts at any time.

Li Yao was naturally one of them.

Crossing his arms, he stared at Yan Liren coldly but simply ignored the suspicions of the fellow Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the ‘first circle’ who had been famous for a long time.

Xie Xinghuo from the Spiritual Mountain Sect moved three rings back. While looking for his friends and seniors from the sect, he searched for Li Yao, too.

When he noticed that Li Yao was moving forward instead of retreating and reached the first ring, he gasped and felt that his teeth were aching even more.

“Junior Nephew Xie, why are you in such a panic?”

A super obese guy, who must have weighed more than two hundred and fifty kilograms, squeezed next him, the fat all over his body shaking.

“Senior Uncle Liao!”

Finally finding a life-saver, Xie Xinghuo hurried to bow before he gnashed his teeth. “For your information, Senior Uncle, the barbarian Cultivator Master Spiritual Vulture was arrogant enough to insult not only the Spiritual Mountain Sect but also Master Righteous One just now. He even despised all the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty!

“He also said that I should ask as many seniors as possible to be killed together. He—he was obviously disregarding your Divergent Mountain Sect, Senior Uncle Liao!”

“Yes. I heard your conversation just now,” Senior Uncle Liao said with a smile. Intense killing intent was beaming out of his eyes, which were almost blocked by fat. “To think that a frog from the southwest can be so arrogant! How hilarious!

“Where’s this Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture? Huh. He dares to stand in the first circle?”

‘Senior Uncle Liao’ rolled his eyes and laughed in amusement. “Is he really such an ignorant guy who doesn’t even know the toughness of the Dragon Spring Meeting? Let’s just wait and see how he humiliates himself later!”

Clang!

The sound of weapons meeting made everybody on the spot stop talking, and the field was gradually occupied by an unpredictable air of solemnity.

All the spectators stood straight in their respective circle.

Qi Zhongdao and Yan Liren, the Iron Saint and the Sword Maniac, walked slowly toward the ‘bullseye’ at the center of the sword test field!

Chapter 1394 - This Is Too Unbelievable!

When the two super experts stood together, it was almost a caricature.

They were entirely the opposite of each other.

Qi Zhongdao was tall and slender, like a black nail, while Yan Liren was short, fat, and only reached the waist of his opponent, with such fair skin that he almost looked like a piece of white bread.

However, the collision of their unparalleled auras was rippling out. All the bystanders could not help feeling that their pores were constricted to the minimum, and they could not even smile anymore.

For a moment, the people, grass, trees, wind, clouds, sunlight, and everything else on the Bronze Censer Peak seemed to be frozen.

Qi Zhongdao and Yan Liren attracted each other like two magnets.

“Fellow Cultivator Yan,” Qi Zhongdao said casually, “the two of us are flattered by the Cultivators in the world as two of the ‘Three Saints’ of the Great Qian Dynasty. But we have never—”

“Hush!” Yan Liren’s ever-shivering eyes suddenly stopped and focused on his opponent’s body. He said solemnly, “Enough talking. Let’s fight!”

Hardly had he finished his sentence when Yan Liren's spiritual energy split the ground below his feet into hundreds of cracks, each of which was charging at Qi Zhongdao like the sharpest sword!

Qi Zhongdao's face color changed. Web-like cracks appeared below his feet, too, which pierced Yan Liren's cracks at fast as lightning!

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Hundreds of cracks joined, shattering the entire area. Countless pebbles soared into the sky with the boost of their spiritual energy and blossomed in midair, only to be enveloped by their spiritual energy again. The previously plain pebbles all turned into colorful, translucent gems before they darted toward the enemy from unbelievable angles in hundreds of dazzling streaks of brilliance.

Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa!

Every pebble that was poured with spiritual energy was broken apart by the hostile pebbles into the tiniest powder. The powder was then absorbed by them again and circled around him in the shapes of hideous monsters.

The two unparalleled experts in the world of ancient Cultivators began their competition in such an expected way!

During the first collision, although they controlled their strength precisely and the broken stones did not splutter out, the blast resulting from the crash of immense spiritual energy still rushed out.

Most of the blast smashed the defense barriers. Quite a few of the barriers were shivering and flickering under the blow.

The Cultivators outside of the defense barriers all changed their face color greatly. Many of them took another step backward in silence.

In the innermost circle, many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators had activated their spiritual shields.

Only a few Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, including Li Yao, were still roaming amid the surging tides of the spiritual energy blast.

Li Yao did not even activate the spiritual energy of the Nascent Soul Stage. He merely accelerated the flow of spiritual energy inside his body and kept himself at the middle level of the Core Formation Stage.

The experts who did not bother to defend themselves were quite obvious. They noticed each other immediately.

Most of the people other than Li Yao were seniors who had been famous for a long time.

Their faces were all solemn as they were not sure whether Li Yao truly boasted incredible techniques or was simply fearless because he was ignorant of the consequences of being involved in the blast.

Wait until your head is cut off!

In the third ring, Xie Xinghuo and his ‘Senior Uncle Liu’ from the Divergent Mountain Sect sneered to themselves with fury shooting out of their eyes.

Swoosh!

After the two unparalleled experts were done testing each other, they performed the real deadly moves in the second round.

Yan Liren turned into a completely white ball of light as he rolled over the entire sword test field. Dozens of colorful flying swords darted out of his Cosmos Rings quickly, which were a hundred times more powerful than the pebbles just now!

In comparison, Qi Zhongdao was truly like a nail that had been bashed into the ground. No wonder how overwhelming the enemy’s attacks were, he stood absolutely still, except that he shook his sleeve and released a hundred black iron rings.

Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang!

Every iron ring swallowed a flying sword precisely.

Dazzling light was flowing on the dense rune arrays on the iron rings, putting them in various colors. An immense strangling force was generated, as the iron rings intended to mince apart all the flying swords!

Yan Liren was expressionless in the first place, and there was nothing except for ‘seriousness’ on his face. Now, he grew even more focused. Every flying sword was shivering violently, raising sparks on the iron rings that could blind the audience!

Crack!

A lot of flying swords were contorted by the strangling iron rings, falling apart into thousands of pieces!

Clang!

But many iron rings were broken by the dazzling brilliance unleashed by the flying swords, too!

It was almost as if two shooting stars were colliding above everyone’s head. Thousands of pieces were darting away faster than five times the speed of sound in the purple and red fire due to the friction with the air!

Pu! Pu! Pu! Pu!

In the first circle, the spiritual shields of many Cultivators at the peak of the Core Formation Stage were ripped apart by the pieces instantly, which almost left a few bloody holes on their body. Frightened, they hurried to step backward to the second ring and the third ring!

The spiritual shields of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, on the other hand, were much sturdier. The pieces were even blown into powder after they hit them, raising a hazy, colorful mist around the Cultivators!

The Cultivators were apparently not as calm and unhurried as before. They were all gritting their teeth and activating their arts to the maximum.

Even a lot of experienced Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who did not open up the spiritual shields a moment ago were secretly clicking their tongues. They were taking out their defensive magical equipment and opening up the spiritual shields one after another.

Those who were still at ease were only Li Yao and two or three experienced Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

Li Yao seemed to notice none of the thousands of incoming pieces. To observe the battle from the best perspective, he was even walking around in the ‘storm’.

It was rather strange that, perhaps because he was lucky or perhaps he had truly calculated everything well, his every movement happened to allow him to avoid the scourge of the broken pieces and the sweeping auras!

In the most dangerous encounter, a broken iron ring where Qi Zhongdao’s massive spiritual energy still lingered was only two inches away from his temple. Had he tilted his head, his brains might have been blown out!

However, he simply walked past it without any expression, not even bothering to blink his eyes.

There was no telling whether it was because he was too incapable to notice the deadly piece coming at him or because he was unbelievably confident about the trajectory of the piece that he had calculated!

“Is this guy just lucky enough to avoid the dead attacks every time, or is he—”

“Or is he capable of analyzing the routes of attacks from the two unparalleled experts, calculating the range of all the pieces, and then avoiding them from the safest places?”

“Is he really an expert who has been concealing himself and foresaw the result of the battle through a certain anomaly that he discovered?”

Xie Xinghuo and his ‘Senior Uncle Liao’ looked at each other and noticed the pouring sweat on their foreheads.

Most of the Cultivators on the spot had exactly the same questions as theirs.

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators of the Purple Pole Sword Sect, who knew everything in the beginning, nodded in approval. This ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’ was indeed a super brutal man who killed Master Black Moon and suppressed Han Yuantai. He was even more capable than they had expected!

“Fellow Cultivator Yan!”

The iron rings and the flying swords in midair had almost all been shattered. They occupied the space like a small ocean of meteorites. Qi Zhongdao suddenly shouted, “I am not here today to test garbage. Where are the primeval swords? Let me test them!”

“Alright!” The roars of a ferocious beast burst out of Yan Liren’s tiny body. “Take my swords with your Heaven Flipping Seal, then!”

Shua!

Three streaks of dazzling brilliance surged out of Yan Liren’s Cosmos Rings and condensed into three flying swords in different forms above his head. Before the three swords came to a halt, the invisible auras of the sword had spread out like an autumn wind sweeping the fallen leaves. Many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators found it almost impossible to keep their eyes open!

The largest one of the flying swords was more than fifty meters long. It was pure black, and there were a few patches of rust that must have been unpurgeable on the surface. However, they simply added to the solemnity of the sword. Like a giant pillar supporting the sky, it was more of a gigantic stick than a ‘sword’!

The second largest one was about thirty meters long. It was green and blue, surrounded by dazzling electric arcs that were expanding into balls of lightning. It looked quite intimidating.

The ‘smallest’ one of them was still more than seven meters long. There was no telling what it was made of, but the sword was almost transparent and seemed to be melting into the air. It was even changing its color according to the background and slithering soundlessly like a chameleon. It was obviously a deadly weapon for assassination purposes!

“Huh?” Li Yao was startled, his jaw almost hitting his feet.

He was not surprised by the appalling techniques entailed in the three ridiculously huge primeval swords, or by Yan Liren’s advanced Cosmos Rings which were spacious enough to accommodate such three swords, but…

What—what—what’s happening here? Aren’t they the blades for Colossi?

Before Li Yao was engaged in the expedition mission, Li Yao had been studying the Colossi on Kunlun. He was the best specialist on the Colossi in the Star Glory Federation.

Therefore, he instantly recognized that the three ‘primeval swords’ that Sword Maniac Yan Liren was wielding were actually the weapons of the Colossi, the strategic inventions of mankind in the last years of the God-Sealing War!

The largest remnant of a Colossi that he had ever come across was almost a hundred meters. They were the only candidates for such super heavy swords!

The ancient Cultivators… are too unbelievable!

The swords are blades for the Colossi, but you have dissected it and are able to manipulate them purely with *your telepathic thoughts. Bro, how have you been training yourself exactly?*

Li Yao could not have admired the ancient Cultivators more.

But then, he discovered that he could.

After Qi Zhongdao summoned the Heaven Flipping Seal, known as the strongest magical equipment of the Ancient Sages Sector, Li Yao was so astounded that his brain went blank.

Are you kidding me? You even have such a thing? And it can be used as a weapon?

Chapter 1395 - Glory of the Dead End!

When the brilliance of the three primeval swords tore apart the sky and awed the entire field, making the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators waver and retreat, Qi Zhongdao was as stable as a mountain. He merely shook his broad sleeve again. Another streak of silver brilliance shot out and expanded into a piece of enormous magical equipment more than ten meters in diameter!

The body of the magical equipment was a giant, round, translucent ball that seemed to be filled with half-transparent fluids inside. The arts of metal polishing and craft as demonstrated in the artifact were incredible. It was an absolutely perfect sphere. Even when Li Yao maximized his eyesight, making his eyes almost equal to a microscope, he could not find an error of one tenth the width of a hair on the magical equipment!

Outside of the main ball, six circular, interconnected rails were swirling quickly with the ball at the center.

The circular rails were full of dense spiritual stripes and rune arrays. They were releasing colorful electric arcs that were interweaving with each other in ear-splitting noises!

“The Heaven Flipping Seal, the ultimate treasure in the world!”

The high-level Cultivators nearby stepped backward while exclaiming.

After the Heaven Flipping Seal was summoned, the world was suddenly a hundred times heavier, as if an invisible mountain was pressing down!

Including Li Yao, all the Cultivators close to the center felt that their blood was freezing, and they were short of breath. They seemed to be bound by an invisible shackle that was getting tighter and tighter!

While other Cultivators considered the item as a secret treasure blessed by the deities in the primeval era, Li Yao was the only one who knew what the object was exactly.

This is a ‘gravity generator’ of the Pangu civilization!

There was no gravity in outer space. When the starships moved in space, there was no distinction in directions when they were not under the influence of gravity.

But for living creatures that were born on planets and used to gravity, they could not live in the zero-gravity state for long. Therefore, some magical equipment had to be manufactured to create an ‘artificial gravity field’.

Sometimes, they would have to explore or settle in the worlds whose gravity was far higher than that of their mother planet. Then, facilities were required to adjust the environment of ten times or fifty times the standard gravity into a low-gravity one that was suitable for their long-time survival.

The ‘gravity generator’ was a piece of magical equipment invented for such a purpose. It could release a special force field and adjust the gravity in a certain space.

Li Yao had excavated the remnants of the starships of the Pangu Clan or the Nuwa Clan on the Kunlun relics. Although the remnants could not have been more rotten, he had seen quite a few gravity generators at the cores of the starships, at least their basic appearance.

According to Li Yao’s speculation, the gravity generator that Qi Zhongdao was using as the Heaven Flipping Seal must have been dismantled from a rather advanced assault starship. Other than generating artificial gravity inside the starship, it could also project the force field to envelop the starship so that the trajectory of the incoming bullets and cannonballs would be altered!

The gravity generator is of an extremely high level. It is also well-preserved!

The Ancient Sages Sector is indeed deeply connected to the primeval civilizations, considering that they have so many treasures that are so perfectly preserved!

Also, the ancient Cultivators of this Sector are too unbelievable!

Both the blades of the Colossi and the gravity generator for a starship should be connected to a mainframe crystal processor. They cannot be driven smoothly without the enhancement of tremendous computational ability and the input of immense spiritual energy!

But they are actually using such magical equipment with their feeble brains and whatever spiritual energy is inside their body!

It’s like a primitive who picks up a storm bolter that is tens of thousands of years ahead of his age, only to decide that he will use it for the bayonet!

Nuts. This is pure nuts!

Li Yao did not even know how he should feel.

Boom!

The primeval treasures that the two top experts released from their Cosmos Rings announced the climax of the competition!

Yan Liren’s three giant swords that had been retrieved from the Colossi were flying up and down purely under the control of his telepathic thoughts.

The black sword that was more than fifty meters long was emanating the most intense black smoke. It was like an upside-down black tornado. When it was sweeping by, the sky and the earth was crumbling and screaming.

The twenty-meter-long sword closely followed it, unleashing lightning dozens of meters long that was dancing like gold snakes. It was soundless but even more fatal!

However, in Li Yao’s eyes, the splendid visual and sound effects of the first two swords were for the sole purpose of covering the third sword!

Under the cover of the black smoke and the lightning bolts, the third sword had gone completely transparent and melted into the world around. It was beyond recognition unless someone extended hundreds of spiritual threads to perceive it!

The black sword and the lightning sword are all meant to compress Qi Zhongdao’s zone of activity as much as possible, confuse his eyes, and distract his attention so that the last ‘assassination sword’ will have the best opportunity to attack!

This is truly as expected of the Sword Saint! Such combat ability is definitely among the highest even in the Heaven's Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector!

How is Qi Zhongdao going to handle this?

Li Yao looked at the leader of the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty, only to discover that the guy seemed to be even darker and thinner, as if his vitality had been entirely absorbed by the Heaven Flipping Seal in midair. The rails around the Heaven Flipping Seal were swirling faster and faster, and the gravity imposed upon the sword test field was higher and higher, too!

Ten times the standard gravity! Thirty times! Fifty times!

After only one moment, the gravity in the sword test field had been increased to an astonishing point!

Also, the gravity generator could not just improve the gravity but also weaken or even remove it!

Therefore, in some places, the pebbles and the broken pieces were floating in midair, shaking, while in some other places, the land deeply collapsed, as if an invisible behemoth had stomped on it brutally!

Even a bystander such as Li Yao was feeling that his eyeballs were bulging out and that his internal organs were going to be squeezed by the more than seventy times the standard gravity. It was needless to say that Yan Liren, as the primary target of the Heaven Flipping Seal, would only feel less comfortable!

The dwarf Sword Saint seemed to be someone who was being drowned in an ocean or a dizzy drunkard. He was staggering, unable to keep his body balanced. Together with his short, thick limbs, he could not have looked more comical.

However, Li Yao knew what kind of terrible pressure Yan Liren was under right now.

What was even more terrible was that Qi Zhongdao would certainly not just impose a super high gravity on him.

For example, by controlling the gravity field precisely, he could make the left half of Yan Liren’s body shoulder fifty times the standard gravity and the right half shoulder ten times or even zero gravity!

The imbalance of the two halves of the body, and the feeling of being torn apart, was not something that a regular Cultivator could bear!

For Qi Zhongdao, who was in a gravity field that was completely at his mercy, he did not even need any other magical equipment. A grass, a twig, a stone, or even a grain of sand could all be turned into the deadliest of weapons!

More specifically speaking, while Qi Zhongdao was not in the Divinity Transformation Stage, whose main difference from the Nascent Soul Stage lay in the ability to create a spiritual domain that was a small world governed by the Cultivator’s own rules, he was able to simulate some of the techniques of the Divinity Transformation Stage with the power of his primeval treasure, the Heaven Flipping Seal!

No wonder he was the leader of the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty!

No wonder the Heaven Flipping Seal was the ultimate treasure in the world!

“Master Righteous One is about to win!”

“The Heaven Flipping Seal is the Heaven Flipping Seal after all. Can the invincible treasure be defeated by a few random primeval swords?”

“Yan Liren is indeed strong. He deserves his name as the Sword Saint! But too bad. His opponent is Master Righteous One!”

Qi Zhongdao seemed to be at an advantage in the battle. Many Cultivators standing under the banner of the Grand Mystery Sect were secretly relieved and began to comment again.

Perhaps, they were doing it for other purposes, like distracting or frustrating Yan Liren, but there was no way to know.

Some of them were even looking at Li Yao, intentionally or unintentionally. They seemed to be sneering at his forecast before the battle.

Li Yao had no time to bother with the unworthy small fries because his mind had become fully occupied by the summit confrontation between the two ancient Cultivators.

He discovered that there was something wrong with his evaluation on the combat ability of the ancient Cultivators. He neglected a factor that was of paramount importance.

It was true that general Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in this world, such as Master Black Moon, were nowhere near as strong as the modern Cultivators of the same level.

However, what if an ancient Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, after receiving a piece of magical equipment from the primeval era, melted their soul, their will, and their life into it patiently and perennially in order to activate the maximal power of the ultimate treasure?

It was a dead end.

The reason was simple. As powerful as the primeval treasures might be, they were products from hundreds of thousands of years ago after all. The civilizations that created them had all probably perished. Therefore, one broken treasure would mean one fewer treasure. One day, they would all be used up.

Also, for those who walked on such a path, cases would not be rare that ‘the older, the better’ or ‘the previous generations are always better than the future generations’.

The modern Cultivation civilization, on the other hand, had truly digested and absorbed part of the heritage of the Pangu civilization. On that basis, they developed a training system and a magical equipment industry that solely belonged to mankind.

Even if the magical equipment that they produced was not as good as the counterparts in the Pangu civilizations, their potentials were infinite, and their futures were promising. Developing and evolving slowly, one day, they would be higher, faster, and stronger than the Pangu civilization!

In general, Li Yao was very confident and optimistic about the modern Cultivation civilization.

But when it came to individuals…

The elites among the ancient Cultivators, such as Qi Zhongdao and Yan Liren, had reached the very end of the ‘dead end’ and advanced to an unimaginable level where they could absolutely not push forward any further!

The ancient Cultivators in the outside world had all perished or evolved.

But they were like prehistoric beasts that were caged on a lone island without having any evolution for billions of years. They were simply unleashing the most primitive, wildest, and most brilliant performance of the formidability of the ‘ancient Cultivators’!

The last glory of the ancient Cultivators in the three thousand Sectors was fully displayed in front of Li Yao’s eyes in such a thunderous and breathtaking way!

Chapter 1396 - He Has... Perished!

“Hiss! Hiss! Hiss! Hiss!” The auras from Yan Liren’s sword occupied almost the entire sky like lightning and dragons while they lunged at the Heaven Flipping Seal crazily, only to be contorted and shattered under the oppression of the Heaven Flipping Seal!

Yan Liren walked forward as if in a blizzard, leaving clear footprints behind him. Because of his insufficient height, more than half of his body had been buried in the ground as he took every step forward.

Under the suppression of the immense gravity, not only was his face bleeding, bloody pearls were leaking out of his every pore, too. His previous bread-like head was being crushed into a pie, making him look even more appalling than before.

Qi Zhongdao, on the other hand, was as steady as ever, as if the entire world was rotating around him and running under his rules!

The contrast between the two parties made a lot of ignorant spectators at the periphery cheer for Qi Zhongdao.

Li Yao, however, suddenly constricted his pupils. Having been calm and still all the time, he suddenly fell backward, before he stomped on the ground with his heel heavily, retreating fast like a shocked bird!

Almost at exactly the same moment as he retreated, Yan Liren’s abdomen suddenly expanded into a ball as he uttered the most deafening roar. The black sword almost fifty meters long somehow was freed from the boundary of the gravity field and smashed at the Heaven Flipping Seal!

If it hit the target, the Heaven Flipping Seal would either be cut in half or crushed into a piece of paper!

Qi Zhongdao sniffed. With blood flowing out of his mouth, the rails around the Heaven Flipping Seal were rotating at an even faster speed than before. Visible force fields were quickly spreading out in black waves!

Boom!

The black sword was shattered by the Heaven Flipping Seal!

Before everybody cheered, however, the scraps of the black sword further exploded into a black smoke, which swept around and instantly enveloped the hundreds of square meters nearby!

“Not good!”

“Yan Liren has shattered his primeval sword to influence the power of the Heaven Flipping Seal!”

“How can he bear to lose such a primeval sword?”

Before everyone’s exclamation died down, an unprecedented blast burst out from the black smoke, crushing the entire field like a tornado and a tsunami. The sun seemed to have crashed on the Bronze Censer Peak!

The Cultivators who responded slower than Li Yao were swallowed by the blast instantly. They were like canoes in a surging ocean before they were blown away brutally!

The ten protective barriers around the sword test field exploded, twisted, and faded one after another, leaving only trails of smoke.

Everyone’s eyes were blinded by the dazzling light triggered in the huge collision of the primeval treasures. It did not help at all even if they closed their eyes as fast as possible.

Their ears were stuffed by the deafening explosions. Hundreds of ear-splitting sounds overlapped, and the echoes were still bashing their eardrums repetitively. They all felt their heads aching, and they were about to be smothered!

After more than ten breaths, the Cultivators who had been knocked to the periphery of the sword test field finally calmed themselves down and scanned the field with their senses.

What was in front of them was an unbelievable picture.

At the center of confrontation of the two superb experts, the previously flat sword test field was filled with concentric creases. The earth seemed to have turned into tides, and the tides had been frozen into icebergs more than ten meters high!

Qi Zhongdao and Yan Liren were standing on two icebergs respectively, facing the opposite direction. Their faces were emotionless, and their eyes were deep.

Some of the careful Cultivators, however, noticed that they had swapped positions.

The Heaven Flipping Seal was still rotating slowly above Qi Zhongdao’s head, except that it no longer released colorful mystic rays. The previously immaculate, errorless silver sphere now had a shallow dent!

Although it was narrow, short, and shallow, it could hardly escape anyone’s attention, just like the scar on a beauty’s face.

Above Yan Liren’s head, the two primeval swords, other than the black one, were floating in midair next to each other. The auras of the swords were also shivering, making them look like two heavily wounded serpents.

“This battle…”

All the Cultivators were shocked. Judging from the appearances of the two people, it was hard to say who the final winner would be!

Suddenly, a Cultivator exclaimed at the sky, “Look!”

Everybody looked where the guy was pointing at, only to discover that the few clouds above Yan Liren’s head had been compressed into balls, which seemed unable to bear their own weight and were about to collapse from the sky!

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Before everyone had the time to be amazed, a few rocks that were piercing into the clouds at the edge of the Bronze Censer Peak also let out deafening explosions before they slid down on a slant, revealing a fracture that was as smooth as a mirror. They had obviously been cut off by Yan Liren’s sword auras!

Boom!

The monolithic rocks weighing almost ten thousand tons crashed at the edge of the Bronze Censer Peak. The earth shook violently, as if the entire Bronze Censer Peak could not stand the devastation of the two experts and was about to crumble!

Hundreds of disciples of the Purple Pole Sword Sect hurried up. The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators of the sect also wasted no time restoring and building up the rune arrays around, in case the unexpected event of the entire mountain falling down did happen.

Pu!

A Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator who had been watching the battle at the innermost circle vomited a mouthful of black blood before he staggered backward a few steps and fell to the ground. His face was as colorless as that of a dead person, and his breathing was unsteady!

“Not good. Senior Qing Leizi of the Roaring Thunder Sect has been heavily wounded because of the sword auras and the power of the Heaven Flipping Seal. Somebody, help him!”

Qing Leizi was a well-known senior in the world of Cultivators. It had never occurred to them that he had been wounded to such an extent just because he stood a bit too close to the center and ran away a bit too slowly.

Whispers were echoing again.

Everybody was amazed. The battle was truly spectacular. It was almost on par with the shocking battle of the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators a hundred years earlier!

But the question remained, who was the winner?

The air was so intense that the field looked like a glacier where the ice blocks were cracking and falling apart. All the Cultivators, be they on the Grand Mystery Sect’s side or the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s, held their breath and stared at the two experts who were standing on the top of the icebergs like statues.

“Hu…”

Li Yao took a deep breath in relief and shook his clothes, which had been soaked in his sweat. The trip to the world of ancient Cultivators was certainly rewarding. The chance to watch the confrontation of two unparalleled experts at such a close distance alone was already worth the ticket price!

Appreciating such a gratifying battle is greatly beneficial for my own training. I can vaguely feel the breakthrough that I’m going to make in the near future!

It’s a shame that I cannot stop the great battle of the two elite ancient Cultivators. Neither of them deserves to die in such a way!

Qin Zhongdao is truly worthy of being the leading person of the Great Qian Cultivators. However… However…

Li Yao sighed. Noticing that a few Core Formation Stage Cultivators in the robes of the Grand Mystery Sect were standing next to him, he waved his hands at them and said, not without regret, “Now, hurry up and make sure that Master Righteous One’s body is preserved properly. He has… perished!”

“What?”

When everybody was waiting for the final result in silence, Li Yao’s whisper was as loud and shocking as thunder on a sunny day!

“Master Righteous One has lost and died? How is it possible?”

“How did he know? How can he tell it?”

“The rude guy is still spreading fallacies to deceive people!”

“Don’t talk like that. This Master Spiritual Vulture is something. He was watching in the innermost circle just now and walking amid the attacks without using his spiritual energy, but he remained uninjured!

“Besides, before Master Righteous One and the Sword Maniac launched their ultimate move, he was the first to respond and retreat!

“Before the battle, he predicted that Master Righteous One would fail. He spoke so confidently right now because he truly knows what has happened and is not just blabbering!”

“This is—this is—”

Everybody looked at Li Yao with both fear and fury.

The disciples of the Grand Mystery Sect were looking at Qi Zhongdao and Li Yao in turns with most devastation.

Xie Xinghuo, who provoked Li Yao and demanded a ‘sword test’ in the beginning, and his Senior Uncle Liao were so scared that they covered their heads and squeezed into the crowd, fearing that Li Yao might catch them!

In everyone’s eyes, the unaffiliated Cultivator from the borderlands who had predicted the outcome of the battle before it began was becoming more and more mysterious if not creepy!

At this moment, things were finally changing on the mountain.

“Cough, cough. Cough, cough, cough, cough!”

Qi Zhongdao’s body suddenly shook. He began to vomit blood and simply could not stop it. He seemed like he was about to fall from the peak!

“Ah!”

The words of Master Spiritual Vulture were true. As if hit by lightning, the Cultivators did not know how to respond!

Cracks were echoing again. On the other iceberg, the two primeval swords flying above Yan Liren’s head suddenly became riddled with hundreds of interconnecting cracks. Their edges were full of dents, too. They were too damaged to be repaired!

The two swords fell down from the sky helplessly, one jabbing into the ground and the other lying on the ground like a dead fish. They did not carry the glamor of primeval treasures at all but were essentially two stove pokers!

Pu!

Yan Liren vomited a mouthful of blood, too, and rolled down the hill like a meatball into the broken folds of the ground, vanishing from everyone’s eyes.

Dumbfounded, everyone stood on the tips of their feet and waited for a long time, only to hear a dull noise from the folds. “I have… lost!”

Qi Zhongdao vomited blood for quite a long while and shook in midair, but he was not showing any sign that he was dying. With exactly the same dark, bitter face as before, he clasped his fist toward Yan Liren, who was at the center of a crevice, and said drily, “… Thank you!”

Stowing the Heaven Flipping Seal away, the leader of the Great Qian Cultivators glanced at Li Yao with a pair of complicated eyes. He then bowed toward the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s banner before he stepped back on the nonexistent stairs to the Grand Mystery Sect’s side.

“We’ve won!”

All the high-level Cultivators on the Grand Mystery Sect’s side whose hearts had hit rock bottom just now were almost bursting into tears of joy!

“The Sword Maniac is indeed no match for Master Righteous One!”

“Of the three primeval swords that he had polished for decades, after the encounter with Master Righteous One’s Heaven Flipping Seal, one broke apart, and the other two were heavily damaged!”

“The victory is truly neat and gratifying!”

“The Grand Mystery Sect deserves to be the strongest sect in the world! Master Righteous One deserves to be the leader of all Cultivators!”

“It’s hilarious that the guy just said—”

Immediately, countless pairs of sharp eyes were darting toward Li Yao!

Chapter 1397 - Sophisticated Dialogue!

“Damn it. I was almost fooled by the pretentious guy and really thought that Master Righteous One unfortunately failed and perished!”

“The guy was talking as if it were real. Even I bought it just now. I thought that he had his reasons, but he turned out to be talking out his behind!”

“Is—is this guy trying to earn reputation in such a way? He actually knows nothing and was simply taking a wild gamble. If Master Righteous One had unfortunately failed, he would’ve been given a chance to brag about himself!”

“Shameless! This is as shameless as anyone can imagine! Can the grand leader of the Grand Mystery Sect and the role model of all Great Qian Dynasty be insulted by such a scoundrel?”

“Where are the disciples of the Grand Mystery Sect? Where are the Great Qian Cultivators? Can you allow such uncivilized barbarians to disregard the rules of the Dragon Spring Meeting?”

The high-level Cultivators on the Grand Mystery Sect’s side and the unaffiliated Cultivators that the Purple Pole Sword Sect had invited for help were all simmering.

It was because Li Yao had been too convincing a moment ago. He had easily struck everyone as an unworldly expert who had trained himself for a hundred years and was about to reap the fruits!

They had never expected that he was such a dumbass. The actions that he had taken while he was watching the battle in the innermost cycle were probably based on luck, too.

Immediately, the high-level Cultivators associated with the Grand Mystery Sect were all staring at Li Yao aggressively with intense killing intent!

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators on the Purple Pole Sword Sect's side were at a loss, too.

Honestly speaking, they did mean to recruit Li Yao and believed that he had his expertise.

However, the two statements that Li Yao had made so far were highly inopportune. They did not know where to begin even if they wanted to help.

Li Yao, however, was utterly stunned. He was still dwelling in his own world in confusion and did not catch what anyone around him was saying at all.

That's unreasonable. My judgement can't be wrong. How did it end up like this?

Qi Zhongdao should've been killed. Yan Liren's sword… His sword…

Li Yao suddenly shuddered. As if waking up from a feverish dream, he strode toward the center of the sword test field, his eyes turning sharper abruptly.

"What's he up to?"

“Still acting?”

The Cultivators around were both shocked and enraged, especially those on the Grand Mystery Sect’s side. They were all rubbing their fists and glaring, as they almost could not wait to kill the guy who had been babbling all the time!

Soon, two Cultivators walked out of the crowd and stood in Li Yao’s way. Maliciously, they said, “Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture…”

They were Xie Xinghuo, the elder of the Spiritual Mountain Sect who had confronted Li Yao earlier, and his Senior Uncle Liao, who belonged to the Divergent Mountain Sect, a branch of the Grand Mystery Sect.

One on the left and one on the right, they sneered and gripped Li Yao brutally like a pair of heated tongs.

“This is none of your business. Get lost!”

Staring at the folds at the center of the sword test field, Li Yao did not even bother to look at the two of them. He opened his hands as if they were the claws of a falcon and snatched their shoulders as fast as lightning. The two of them were unable to move at all. Then, after a shake, all the joints in their body were dislocated before they were thrown hundreds of meters away.

“Not good!”

Quite a few Cultivators dashed out from the crowd, trying to pick up the two guys. However, the two of them seemed to be covered in a mysterious, electric shell. All the helping hands were shocked stiff.

After a huge collision, the two of them hit the ground in the loudest screams!

“How did he—”

Everybody on the spot was shocked. They found it difficult to believe their eyes!

Right when they thought that ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’ was merely a shameless, conceited scoundrel, Li Yao had snatched and tossed away two experts in the Core Formation Stage like an eagle snatching chickens, not even giving them an opportunity to be helped by others!

Under the Grand Mystery Sect’s banner, the leaders and elders of the five major sects were all staring at Li Yao in astonishment for a long time before they slowly turned around and looked Qi Zhongdao, their eyes blinking.

Qi Zhongdao was still expressionless, but his dark face was gradually filled with paleness. His lips shivered for a long time, but he did not say anything in the end, simply poured out fragrant pills from a bright green calabash and swallowed all of them. Thunderous sounds were echoing inside his stomach!

Throwing away the two Core Formation Stage Cultivators, Li Yao jumped and dashed forward, landing at the center of the sword test field like a weird giant made of lightning!

‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren, who had failed just now, was climbing one of the hills again clumsily, preparing to return to the Cultivators of his side.

Li Yao happened to stop in his path.

Li Yao and Yan Liren, two guys who were equally bloodstained and bedraggled, confronted each other in silence.

Another battle seemed to be looming when the aftershock of the first still had not died down. The auras unleashed in their confrontation seemed to be even sharper and more aggressive than those during the confrontation between Yan Liren and Qi Zhongdao a moment earlier!

All the Cultivators, both those on the Grand Mystery Sect’s side and those on the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s side, were greatly shocked. None of them knew what the mysterious and unpredictable ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’ was up to.

Silently, Li Yao stared at Yan Liren for a long time, especially the overly flamboyant short sword that had been dangling from his waist all the time.

Yan Liren did not seem surprised at the stranger who had jumped out of nowhere. At this moment, the Sword Maniac finally observed Li Yao carefully for the first time.

He was eyeing Li Yao in the same way that he eyed an interesting sword target.

The two of them observed each other for such a long time that whispers were echoing again around. Suddenly, Li Yao opened his mouth. “Why did you lose?”

It was indeed an unreasonable question.

Faced with ‘Iron Saint’ Qi Zhongdao, the leader of the Great Qian Cultivators, and under the suppression of the Heaven Flipping Seal, the ultimate treasure in the world, was it not normal for him to lose?

Returning in one piece was something worth smiling about!

The Cultivators around finally could not help it any longer. They were all shouting and yelling.

Yan Liren, however, tilted his head and was really considering the question carefully. While wiping the blood off his face with his sleeve, he said, “Qi Zhongdao’s Cultivation is slightly higher than mine. If I wanted to win, I would have had to kill him!”

Green fire was seething inside Li Yao’s pure black eyes. The green spot between his eyebrows was already releasing thorn-like stripes toward his eyes. “You didn’t want to kill him?”

“My senior brother asked me not to kill him,” Yan Liren replied dutifully, like a kid answering the question of a teacher in class. “My senior brother said that, although Qi Zhongdao is on the other side, he is a man who respects rules. Only if he supervises everything will the Dragon Spring Meeting be completed as planned!

“If I executed Qi Zhongdao with my sword, there would be some immediate gains, but as a result, chances are that some guys who disrespected rules would take his place.

“My senior brother said that the world of Cultivators is in chaos and that the current peace is sustained by Qi Zhongdao. Without a pillar like Qi Zhongdao, everything would only be even messier. Nobody would benefit from a complete fallout!

“Therefore, my senior brother told me in advance that I must not kill Qi Zhongdao if I had a choice, even if it meant that I might lose a little bit.”

Everybody was shocked by what he said!

What was the meaning of that? Yan Liren was too unbelievable! He talked as if the well-respected leader of the Great Qian Dynasty was someone whom he could easily kill if he wanted to!

Did he keep something to himself in the battle just now?

How could it be?

Many high-level Cultivators were mumbling to themselves, and they could not help looking at Qi Zhongdao suspiciously.

Qi Zhongdao was still expressionless, as if his face were covered in an iron shell. There was no telling whether or not his mood was affected by Yan Liren’s words at all.

Li Yao narrowed his eyes. “Were you not afraid that he would kill you if you didn’t kill him?”

Yan Liren smiled. “He can’t.”

Li Yao’s eyes became thinner and thinner, until they looked like the edges of two daggers. “Are you suggesting that the pace of the sword test was fully under your control and that Qi Zhongdao’s life was in your hands but your life was still in yours?”

Yan Liren tilted his head and thought for a moment before nodding and saying, “Yes.”

The Cultivators around were all rendered speechless.

“You mentioned just now that you could still kill him even though Qi Zhongdao’s Cultivation was slightly higher than yours?”

“Yes,” Yan Liren said, “it’s like how, although your Cultivation is perhaps on par with mine or even slightly higher, I can still kill you if you don’t run away.”

“Huh?”

The Cultivators around who had rested their throats for just a moment exploded again.

Whatever the result of the previous battle was, Yan Liren was still an unparalleled sword Cultivator in the world and could be listed as one of the top ten experts of the Ancient Sages Sector!

But he… he was saying that Master Spiritual Vulture’s Cultivation was on par with his and might even be slightly higher?

“What—what are they talking about exactly?”

Many experienced high-level Cultivators felt their minds go blank. Everything that was happening in front of their eyes was truly the most ridiculous scene in their hundreds of years of training!

Yan Liren’s words made the killing intent in Li Yao’s eyes even more intense. He shifted his eyes from Yan Liren’s big face to the flamboyant short sword on his waist before he said, “There’s something that has been bothering me.

“Before your battle with Qi Zhongdao, I already felt that your odds of winning were higher.

“During the battle, when your black sword exploded and released the black smoke to affect the Heaven Flipping Seal, I sensed an unassailable sword aura that must’ve been sharp enough to slay a deity!

“Therefore, I thought that Qi Zhongdao had been killed by you, which proved to be a mistake.

“However, after careful consideration, I have realized that, despite the formidability of the three primeval swords, you only finished polishing them recently, and you were not able to move them as flawlessly as you move your limbs yet. It was impossible for you to kill Qi Zhongdao with those three swords!

“This is in contradiction with my speculation at the beginning!

“Therefore, I have made a bold assumption that you actually have a fourth sword, which is the strongest sword of the Sword Saint of the Great Qian Dynasty and surpasses the three primeval swords!”

“…” The Cultivators from other sects were too stunned to say anything.

Even most of the disciples of the Purple Pole Sword Sect had never heard it before. They were all looking at Li Yao and Yan Liren in disbelief!

Yan Liren was silent. He focused his full attention on his neck. His eyes, which were as sharp as scalpels, seemed to pierce through Li Yao’s skin and flesh, dissecting Li Yao’s cervical arteries, nerves, and spine.

Staring at Yan Liren’s waist, Li Yao slowly said, “I, Master Spiritual Vulture of the Flying Thunder Cave of the Broken Intestine Mountain, hope to witness the Sword Maniac’s fourth sword!”

Chapter 1398 - The Fourth Sword!

Li Yao’s every word rumbled inside the hearts of the audience like thunder.

At first, they thought that Li Yao was someone that the Purple Pole Sword Sect invited to help the fight.

However, Li Yao seemed to be in a subtle relationship with the Purple Pole Sword Sect. He was more like an unaffiliated Cultivator who acted purely on his own. Later, his shocking remarks further raised everyone’s attention.

But right now, he intended to challenge Yan Liren, known as the ‘Sword Saint’ of the Three Saints of the Great Qian Dynasty, and witness his fourth sword, which was even stronger than the three primeval swords.

“Whose side is he on?”

“What is his Cultivation level? Is he not scared of death?”

“Did Yan Liren really keep something to himself? Does he really have a fourth sword that is even more intimidating?”

Regardless of their stance, sect, and Cultivation, all the Cultivators were stunned.

They had thought that, after the battle of Qi Zhongdao and Yan Liren ended without anybody being killed, the Dragon Spring Meeting could now go on according to the plan. They did not expect that such an uncanny guy would jump out of nowhere. The twists and turns were indeed quite surprising.

For a moment, the surprised, the suspicious, the haters, and the bystanders whose interests were not involved all etched the name ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’ into their hearts!

Yan Liren was still staring at the artilleries on Li Yao’s neck with concentration and some sort of appreciation. “With your Cultivation, you are indeed qualified to fight me. However, on what grounds do you think you can try my fourth sword, which even Wang Xi and Qi Zhongdao never tried?”

By saying that, he was acknowledging that he had not been doing his best just now and went easy on Qi Zhongdao on purpose. Naturally, another round of exclamations arose.

All the Cultivators on the Grand Mystery Sect’s side were greatly surprised. Even the banners flying in the wind were turning somewhat messy and unsteady.

Qi Zhongdao finally got back to himself after swallowing half calabash of pills. Hearing Yan Liren’s words, he could not help but cough again and vomited a mouthful of bright golden blood.

It was the blood in the blood vessels on the surface of the heart, the most precious blood for a Cultivator. Every drop of it was the essence of the Cultivator’s blood. It contained the spirit of the Cultivator, and they would not activate it easily.

Qi Zhongdao quickly wiped off the blood of the tip of his heart. His dark face was even graver than before as he stared at Li Yao and Yan Liren.

His coughing was not an eye-catching movement, and he was covering it on purpose. With his Cultivation, it was impossible for anyone around him to notice anything wrong now that he was determined to keep it to himself.

On the peak, Li Yao pondered for a moment and said, “If I have the privilege of appreciating your fourth sword, Fellow Cultivator Yan, I’m willing to work as a visiting elder for the Purple Pole Sword Sect for a year!”

That was the first time that he had spoken about his deal with the Purple Pole Sword Sect in public. The few Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators of the Purple Pole Sword Sect all beamed with interest. Those on the Grand Mystery Sect were, of course, even more surprised than before.

Yan Liren smiled and shook his head. “Inviting you to be a visiting elder is my senior brother’s idea. It has nothing to do with me.

“I don’t care if you are a visiting elder. After all, as long as the Purple Pole Sword Sect has me and I have my sword here, no one in the heavens or on the earth will ever shake it.”

He talked easily and casually. The ravings from his mouth sounded like a statement of the most obvious fact.

“Fair enough!” Li Yao nodded and eyed Yan Liren up and down. He suddenly changed his topic. “Just now, when you showed up, you were observing the sky and calculating something while mumbling to yourself. You were calculating the clouds in the sky, weren’t you?”

His question confused all the Cultivators on the spot. Yan Liren, however, was dazed for a moment before he asked back in delight, “Why would I calculate the clouds?”

“You were calculating the patterns of the clouds,” Li Yao said. “It’s a sunny day today. Since you were going to fight at noon, the sunlight was very likely to be an interference. The clouds in the sky, on the other hand, would possibly cover or reflect the sunlight, adding many mysterious changes to the angle and intensity of the sunlight when it sprayed down!

“After you calculated the patterns of the clouds, you would be able to take advantage of the point by changing your position and perspective during the fight and forcing your opponent to move without him knowing. At the most critical moment, the opponent might be dazzled by the sun’s glare!

“Of course, for an unparalleled expert close to the Divinity Transformation Stage, the influence of sunlight is negligible, if it can be counted at all.

“However, since his opponent was an expert in the sword arts such as yourself, a tiny, insignificant loophole would be more than sufficient for you!”

No one had ever heard about such an unbelievable theory before. All the Cultivators looked at each other in bewilderment, not sure whether Li Yao was merely making stuff up or speaking seriously.

Yan Liren was smiling even more delightedly. “Anything else?”

“Yes.

“By observing the patterns of the clouds, you would be able to calculate the speed, intensity, and direction of the wind today. Then, you could calculate the feeble interference that your flying swords would suffer while they were in the air. During your every pierce, slash, or block, you would be able to take advantage of the feeble wind power. When the changes in quantity led to a change in quality, you would perform your most perfect move!

“Weather, terrain, and people are the three critical, indispensable factors to win a fight. Just now, we discussed ‘weather’. In fact, you observed the Cultivators nearby after you finished calculating the weather. Or rather, you simply regarded all of us as ‘obstacles’.

“You knew that those qualified to watch the battle were high-level Cultivators at least above the Core Formation Stage and that when we were watching the battle, we would naturally release our spiritual waves to resist the aftershock of your collisions.

“Then, after countless spiritual waves were released, they would congregate into invisible turbulence, which would slowly spread to you and Qi Zhongdao, leading to unpredictable changes!

“You were hoping to take the ‘terrain’ and the ‘people’ factors into your calculation through your observation before the sword test and translate them into your odds of winning!

“Before your battle, you were calculating such minute details while turning a blind eye to such a dangerous, covetous expert such as myself. It was because of your determination and concentration that I made the prediction that you would be the sure winner!

“I did not expect that I would run into an unparalleled sword master who has Cultivated to the ‘cloud computing’ level after I just broke out of my seclusion and started travelling in the central plateaus. This truly calls for a toast!”

Li Yao’s words made all the Cultivators raise their heads to look at the sky.

The clouds in the sky were as puffy as cotton and as unpredictable as smoke. What was the angle of sunlight, and what were the intensity and direction of the wind?

Qi Zhongdao’s face grew darker and darker, and his eyes became deeper and deeper. His chest rose high at first. Then, after a secret sigh, it slowly collapsed again.

Yan Liren’s smile blossomed like a flower.

The ugly dwarf happened to have a very pretty smile. He looked like a totally different person when he was smiling and could almost be called ‘handsome’.

“Anything else?” he asked gently.

“There is. Your face is fair and beardless. You don’t even have hair or eyebrows. But I dare say that you were not born like this. You should’ve been a man with dense hair, but you removed your hair, your eyebrows, and your beard with certain medicines, or maybe you simply uprooted all of them with brute force. That is why you have such a weird appearance right now.”

“Is that so?” Yan Liren’s eyes slid from Li Yao’s neck to his heart with deep affection. His voice was even gentler. “Why would I do that?”

“Because hair, beard, and eyebrows affect your speed,” Li Yao said. “When you accelerate to the maximum speed, those three things will catch part of the wind and reduced your agility and dexterity by a neglectable amount.

“In pursuit of the most perfect sword arts, you eliminated all your hair. You then smeared and polished your skin with various kinds of secret medicines, which turned you into a slippery loach. That way, you would have absolutely no hindrance when you moved in the air!”

All the Cultivators put on a weird expression after hearing that.

If what Li Yao said was true, then Yan Liren was really too much of a… freak!

All the Cultivators were dedicated to improving themselves. Some of them were even crazy people who cared about nothing but their training. However, was it not too appalling that the guy simply plucked the hair all over his body just to fully unleash his sword arts?

Yan Liren's eyes continued moving downward and stopped at Li Yao's abdomen. He said casually, "Go on. I'm already considering showing you my fourth sword, which none alive has ever witnessed."

"Alright!" Li Yao said. "Your fourth sword, which is stronger than the three primeval swords and which none alive has ever witnessed, is right inside the tawdry, flamboyant sheath on your waist!"

Yan Liren was as calm as before. "Why?"

"Two reasons," Li Yao said. "Firstly, although you seemed to have been heavily wounded by Qi Zhongdao just now, and you were vomiting blood in devastation, the sword on your waist was not contaminated by any blood or dirt. It does not even have the tiniest scratch after your great battle with Qi Zhongdao.

"All these signs suggest that the sword is your most beloved item. You would rather the three priceless primeval swords be destroyed than have the sword damaged in the slightest!

"Secondly, and more importantly, I have observed you for a long time and released my telepathic thoughts to sense the sword. But while I can see the sword with my eyes, I cannot perceive it in my mind!

“At first, I thought that the sword boasts certain unique stealth techniques. However, after careful examination, I realized where the problem lies.

“It’s not that I did not perceive the sword in my head; it’s just that the sword has melded with your flesh and blood and become part of you, just like your hand and your foot. What I perceived was exactly such a ‘whole’!

“Therefore, that is your fourth sword, the strongest sword that can execute anything instantly!”

After saying that, Li Yao fell into silence. He was like a well-prepared longbow that was slowly pulled.

Yan Liren’s eyes finally returned to his face again. This time, there were more emotions in his eyes. He was finally looking at not an immaculate sword target but a living person.

There was nothing but dead silence on the Bronze Censer Peak except for the fluttering of the banners. None of the Cultivators dared to breathe aloud!

Yan Liren suddenly chuckled. He shook his head while he smiled bitterly.

“What a shame!” he said regretfully.

Chapter 1399 - Attack of the Sword Maniac!

Li Yao frowned and asked, “What are you sorry about?”

“In the past ten years, I have come across three people that were worth killing, but it is a shame that I have never had the chance to kill any of them without concern!” Yan Liren groaned. “Wang Xi was the first one worth killing, but at that time, he was the most powerful man in the world. My senior brother only allowed me to practice with him but not to kill him, stating that there were more benefits in letting him live than killing him!

“When it was finally okay to kill him, the guy was more cunning than a fox and had long run away.

“Qi Zhongdao was the second one, but my senior brother again said that, since he was the leader and the pillar of the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty, I could defeat him or be defeated, but I’d better not kill him.

“Now, I have run into you.

“You are just like Wang Xi and Qi Zhongdao. You are all worthy of my full-strength strikes, which will certainly be most gratifying. Yet, it is a pity that my senior brother is trying to recruit you as a visiting elder. Naturally, I cannot kill you. Isn’t it a shame? Such a great shame!”

Yan Liren suddenly stopped. His eyes suddenly froze, and he tilted his head and furrowed his nonexistent eyebrow, as if he was pondering upon a very complicated question.

Li Yao frowned. “What you are thinking now?”

“I’m thinking about whether or not I should betray the Purple Pole Sword Sect and simply kill you and Qi Zhongdao in disregard of all the rules and reminders to fulfil my desire,” Yan Liren replied casually and continued pondering.

He looked at Li Yao and then at Qi Zhongdao not far away as well as the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators next to Qi Zhongdao. He began mumbling to himself and calculating again. There was no telling what he was calculating.

All the Nascent Soul Stage experts under his stare felt chilly, as if somebody was stabbing their backs!

Some of them at the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage even took half a step back subconsciously.

“Forget it!”

After considering for a moment, Yan Liren suddenly extended his right thumb and index finger, making a gesture of ‘the width of hair’. He said with a smile, “If you were slightly stronger than right now, just the tiniest bit stronger, I would find it worthwhile to betray the Purple Pole Sword Sect and have fun executing you! But right now, you are still not enough for me to leave the Purple Pole Sword Sect, where I can practice my sword arts comfortably!”

All the Cultivators nearby, be they on the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s side or the Grand Mystery Sect’s side, were dumbfounded, not knowing how they should respond to Yan Liren’s words!

Li Yao’s eyes were twitching violently, but he was roaring in his heart. *Damn it. This should’ve been an occasion where I* *announced my grand entrance and earned my fame. Can you stop being so unbelievable and stealing my thunder!*

With a solemn expression, Li Yao dragged his voice, while he thought hard about how he could steal the thunder back. “Fellow Cultivator Yan—”

Suddenly!

Li Yao’s pupils, nostrils, pores, heart, stomach, genitals, and all his other organs that could be constricted were constricted to the minimum!

He did not hear any sound or see any light when he felt that he suddenly fell into the weirdest world!

In this world, the notion of time seemed to have been stretched. Every grain of dust in the air was dancing in slow motion, while the pictures of his life were swirling in front of his eyes like a kaleidoscope!

From the deep purple smoke and the rusted sewers in the magical equipment graveyard, to the anxious nights in the training grounds when he was in high school, to Ding Lingdang’s glittering teeth when he saw her for the first time, to the Devil Flood Dragon Island, the Grand Desolate War Institution, Boneyard, the Flying Star Sector, Spider Den, the Blood Demon Sector, homecoming to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, Kunlun, and the dark nebula!

His whole life was dissected into tens of thousands of pictures, which were arranged like parallel webs.

His consciousness was falling from the top, crashing into the webs one after another, falling, falling, and falling into the eternal darkness where there was nothing!

Hiu!

An inexplicable sound echoed inside Li Yao’s head. Even the mental devil did not realize what was going on. It merely raised its head with one of Ou Yezi’s memory pieces in its mouth.

Yan Liren had attacked!

The fourth sword, which surpassed the three swords that were the Colossi’s blades, cut Li Yao’s throat just without any forewarning!

The shriek that was ringing inside Li Yao’s brain, however, was not the wound of Yan Liren’s sword.

It was the sound of Li Yao’s life crazily fading away!

BAM!

The uncanny kaleidoscope broke apart all of a sudden. Li Yao’s soul shuddered, and he returned to reality, only to discover that Yan Liren was still standing opposite him as casually and emotionless as before.

His two hands were still on the sides of his body dutifully. The fancy ‘fourth sword’ was still dangling from his waist dutifully. Judging from the distance between the sword and the waistband, it had not moved at all.

His eyes gazed past Yan Liren’s shoulder, and Li Yao observed the clouds in the sky. From the changes of the clouds, he could tell that 0.1 seconds had passed at most!

But he seemed to have seen his entire life in a near-death state!

“Cough, cough. Cough, cough, cough, cough!”

Li Yao’s pupils widened, and weird sounds resembling the sounds of rusted gears running rumbled from his throat. His hands were trembling violently, as he covered his own neck slowly.

It was like his neck, including the cervical artilleries, the spine, and the central nerves, had been chopped off by Yan Liren’s fourth sword, and he had to support his head with his hands in case it fell off.

His hands were wet. Some liquids were leaking out nonstop.

They were not blood but cold sweat that was even thicker than blood.

His face as pale as that of a dead person, Li Yao slowly fell to one knee. He gagged for a long time with a dizzy head and almost threw up all of his guts.

“This is my fourth sword.” Craning his big, fat head close, Yan Liren asked solemnly, “Is it beautiful? Do you have any suggestions?”

“You killed me!” Li Yao’s voice was hoarse, miserable, and shocked. “You killed me once with your sword in my illusion! How was it possible? How can there be such a terrifying swordsman in the world?”

Everyone on the spot was shocked!

They only saw the two of them talking with each other on the peak, when ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’ suddenly covered his neck with a weird face and slowly fell to one knee.

It was not until Li Yao shouted ‘you killed me’ that everybody realized that Yan Liren had already performed an attack with his fourth sword!

“This is—”

Everybody was startled, confused, and appalled!

But Li Yao was more horrified than all of them combined!

Unlike the ancient Cultivators, he had experienced some pretty huge events in the modern Cultivation civilization. Not just guys like Xiao Xuance or Zhou Hengdao, he had even executed one of the members of the legendary Pangu Clan!

But he really had never seen such a frightening attack before!

He had never even thought that such a threateningly unpredictable and invisible attack could be grasped and launched under the ancient training system!

It was unstoppable!

It was unstoppable even if he were in his crystal suit!

It was unstoppable even if he were hiding on a crystal warship!

Even if he were wearing the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit in the strongest form or piloting a Colossus… he was not confident that he could resist the attack!

For the first time in his life, Li Yao felt that in the world of Cultivators, there were perhaps certain things that were beyond calculation, measurement, or analysis!

Yan Liren’s sword was definitely one of those things!

“Why?” His voice was hoarse, and every word that he said sounded like a steel saber churning his throat. “You Cultivation can’t be much higher than mine. Why is your sword so fast?”

Yan Liren eyed Li Yao as if he would never understand. “You don’t get it. You and I are not the same type of person. So, even if your level is higher than mine, you will still never wield your sword in such a way!”

“What?” Li Yao bellowed. “I don’t know what you are saying!”

“You, Wang Xi, and Qi Zhongdao are the same, while I am someone entirely different from you,” Yan Liren said. “You, Wang Xi, and Qi Zhongdao may have a high Cultivation, an immense reserve of spiritual energy, or a piece of extremely powerful magical equipment, but I see in your eyes much more than your sword.

“Other than the sword in your hand, you can count on a lot of other things. Wisdom, power, subordinates, or other cr*p.

“What you pursue can never be earned with a sword or a fight.

“This sword test field is not your battleground, at least not the entirety of it.”

Li Yao was silent.

Yan Liren was right.

Wang Xi was a powerful eunuch who established the Ghost Character, an espionage and assassination agency, that caused great trouble in the world of Cultivators.

Qi Zhongdao did not become the well-acknowledged leader of all the Cultivators just because he was strong. He was obviously a man who was good at setting up rules and making other people follow his rules.

It was needless to mention Li Yao himself. He never considered himself to be a pure warrior. His weapons were certainly not his only reliance. There was still the support of three Sectors behind him!

Wang Xi, Qi Zhongdao, and Li Yao were not pure warriors. What they desired was not achievable on a tiny sword test field.

“You are insincere to your swords,” Yan Liren said. “I’m not saying that you don’t trust your swords. I’m saying that you cannot wager everything on your swords. There are many things on your path of Cultivation that you have to earn in other ways.

“But I’m different from you.

“I only have my sword. I only trust my sword. I’m certain that my sword is enough to resolve all the problems in the world. If it can’t, the only reason will be that my sword is not fast and sharp enough!

“This is the difference between me and the three of you. The disparity does not mean that I’m superior to you, but it makes you unable to wield a sword like I do because, deep in your bones, you don’t want to wield such a sword.

“A sword that deserves searching for with your entire being, you don’t believe that such a sword exists.”

Chapter 1400 - Just a Swordsman!

Yan Liren talked peacefully, yet it sounded like a rumbling thunder for Li Yao.

Shaking violently, he almost fell off from the peak. With an indescribable expression, he mumbled to himself, “In the past, I was ambushed by my senior brother Master Black Moon in the Southland of Sorcerers. I suffered seventy-two kinds of poisons when I fell into Poisonous Dragon Lake at a bottomless abyss. I thought that I was dead for sure!

“But it did not occur to me that the poisons in the lake would neutralize the poisons inside my body. As a result, I was reborn and granted a new life. I even had the fortune of experiencing the most incredible adventures!

“I trained myself in a remote residence for decades. I thought that my Cultivation had advanced to the peak. So, I finally broke out of seclusion and came to the central plateaus to meet the heroes of the Great Qian Dynasty!

“I didn’t expect that I would run into such an extraordinary person like you, Fellow Cultivator Yan, in my very first battle and witness such a marvelous move!

“I have lost the battle, and I have no excuses. Fellow Cultivator Yan, you deserved to be called ‘unparalleled’!”

Li Yao clasped his fist and sincerely bowed to Yan Liren.

“You’re wrong again. I am not unparalleled right now.” Yan Liren shook his head. Like a pedant who did not know anything better, he had to point out the fallacy in other people’s formalities. “A hundred years ago, Wu Suiyun, the greatest expert of the Great Qian Dynasty, and Meng Chixin, who was respected by the hundred and eight tribes on the Dark Cloud Prairies as the ‘Wolf God’, had the most breath-taking confrontation in the past thousand years on the sunless northern glaciers, only to both vanish. They have not been heard from since.

“Many people suspect that they fell to the bottom of the icy ocean and died with each other. Some also speculated that they broke the void and ascended to a higher level. But I believe that they are not gone and will be back again.

“Right now, I am still not unparalleled. After I kill Wu Suiyun and Meng Chixin, I probably will be.”

“What?” Li Yao found it impossible to keep up with the Sword Maniac. He lost his calmness and shouted, “Wu Suiyun and Meng Chixin were the last two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators in the Ancient Sages Sector. Strong as you might be, you are at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage at best, but you are insane enough to challenge Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators?”

Yan Liren smiled and said, “The so-called Nascent Soul Stage and Divinity Transformation Stage are just a classification for you Cultivators. For me, they are meaningless.”

“Us Cultivators?” Li Yao’s pupils constricted violently. “Are you not a Cultivator? What are you?”

“It doesn’t matter whether I’m a Cultivator or not. The Building Foundation Stage, the Core Formation Stage, the

Nascent Soul Stage, and the Divinity Transformation Stage are just a boring game played by boring people."

Touching the hilt of the sword on his waist as if it were his lover's foot, Yan Liren could not have been more lighthearted. "I am not a Cultivator; I'm just a swordsman."

When his words spread to everyone's ears, all the Cultivators, including the sword Cultivators under the Purple Pole Sword Sect, were confused and aghast!

"Swordsman..." Li Yao took a deep breath. He touched his neck again subconsciously, as if there was indeed a wound there, before he bowed to Yan Liren again. "Thank you for your performance, Fellow Cultivator Yan. Your enlightenment has cleared the mist in my heart and allowed me to see a new path. I think that it is possible that my Cultivation can be further improved!"

"There's no need to thank me. It is also because your soul is strong enough." Yan Liren stared at Li Yao. "I seem to have underestimated you. Your soul is indeed quite weird. It is very tensile and slippery. Despite the brutal slash of my sword just now, it is already recuperating and showing signs that it will be stronger than before!

"If it were a random Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, even if I did not actually wield my sword but merely attacked with my will, part of their soul would have been damaged. Their Cultivation would've plummeted, and they would be living in fear all day!

"Huh. You were baiting me into attack you just now on purpose, weren't you?"

Yan Liren was dazed for a moment. His eyes were suddenly a hundred times sharper when he looked at Li Yao!

“You knew that your soul was special and were fearless of my mental attack. Also, you were certain that the Purple Pole Sword Sect badly needs you as a visiting elder. So, I definitely would not kill you for real!

“With that in mind, you intentionally attracted me to attack you. So, while you wouldn’t be killed by me for real, you would be able to witness my best attack!

“For those at the level of you and me, in a fierce fight, if such an attack where my full spirit and will were concentrated did not kill you, it would definitely make you grow stronger than before!

“Moreover, you have familiarized yourself with the patterns of my attack. Thus, if we really engage in a life-and-death battle, you will be able to make preparations in advance, which will significantly increase your chances of winning!”

Li Yao’s face went somewhat rigid.

He did not expect the Sword Maniac to have such a keen mind, to the extent that the guy saw through his whole plan so quickly.

Yes. Li Yao was not a lunatic who was crazy about nothing but fighting. Why would he risk his life just to appreciate Yan Liren’s strongest sword?

He had indeed taken it into consideration that the Purple Pole Sword Sect was in dire need of a strong visiting elder now that it was at a disadvantage.

Since Yan Liren did not kill Qi Zhongdao, who was apparently on the hostile side, it was even less likely that the guy would kill him.

It was exactly because he knew that the match would not be life-threatening that Li Yao dared to jump out.

Otherwise, with Li Yao’s personality, if it was really a life-and-death battle, he would have long run away from a man as tough Yan Liren and concocted other sordid and shameless tricks to deal with him!

However, there were two points that Yan Liren failed to guess.

Other than broadening his horizons and improving his level with the help of Yan Liren’s performance, Li Yao was also meaning to show his own expertise during the fight with Yan Liren.

Moreover, Yan Liren was one of the best experts of the Ancient Sages Sector. Only by fighting the guy in person would Li Yao be able to measure the limits of the experts in this Sector so that he would have material for his observation report later!

Li Yao had calculated everything except that Yan Liren would be so strong that he did not have any chance to show off at all. It was getting awkward now.

With a light cough, Li Yao said, “Fellow Cultivator Yan, do excuse me.”

Naturally, he did not want to leave a bad impression on such a great swordsman. Such a talent was definitely worth recruiting for the federation. The guy should be brought back to the federation even if Li Yao had to kidnap him!

“That’s alright,” Yan Liren said casually. “This is your methodology. This is your path. Now that you have chosen such a path, you are free to set up traps and deceive me.

However, it also means that you will never defeat me with your sword in a sword test field!”

His words raised yet another round of surging tides inside Li Yao’s head. He felt that his belief was almost shaking.

That was not right. He had to get out of the guy’s pace and set the conversation back on course!

“Fellow Cultivator Yan, I am not a man who doesn’t know gratitude,” Li Yao said solemnly. “Your performance and your words are indeed great enlightenment for me and should be worth ten years of hard training! Your performance alone is enough for me to work as a visiting elder of the Purple Pole Sword Sect willingly for one year!”

Li Yao had been reluctant to work as a visiting elder for even half a year in the beginning. He had been planning to meet the other experts of the ‘Three Saints and Four Rapscallions’. How could he have the time to work there?

However, after witnessing Yan Liren’s attack, he changed his mind.

The guy’s combat ability was too high. Also, he did not seem to have any moral standard and would not hesitate to kill anyone, be they righteous or evil. It would be good if he could be persuaded to stand on the federation’s side and taught with the ‘Constitution of Cultivators’ and the ‘Regulations on Lethal Weapon Control’. The consequences would certainly be dire if the Imperium recruited the guy someday!

Li Yao could not allow such a thing to happen!

Maybe, if he spent some more time in the Purple Pole Sword Sect and seduced, no, attracted the guy, it would be possible for him to turn the guy into the first ‘overseas mercenary’ of the Star Glory Federation!

Besides, the super experts had their own circles, too. After the battle, Yan Liren should be acknowledged as the top expert of the Three Saints of the Great Qian Dynasty. Did Li Yao need to worry that he would not run into the rest of the ‘Three Saints and the Four Rapscallions’ if he followed the guy?

Emotionlessly, Yan Liren gave no approval or disapproval. “As I said, it doesn’t matter to me at all if you are a visiting elder. If you want to thank me, just train yourself hard while you work here!

“With the understanding you gained from my performance and the immense resources of the Purple Pole Sword Sect, you should be able to make enough progress in one year and advance into someone whom I must kill at all costs even if I have to betray the Purple Pole Sword Sect!

“That will be your best gratitude!”

After saying that, Yan Liren turned around and left without looking at Li Yao anymore, as if Li Yao did not deserve any more of his time.

“Wait!”

Yan Liren was apparently the star of the show. How could Li Yao allow that? He shrieked and tried to stop the guy.

Yan Liren paused for a moment, but he continued walking forward without looking back.

Li Yao gnashed his teeth, thinking to himself, *You are forcing me to play my ultimate move now, boy.*

“Fellow Cultivator Yan,” he said coldly, “I do have one last question. Is your fourth sword 50.04 centimeters long, 21.32 centimeters wide in the thickest part, weighing 11.73 kilograms, with a barycenter 28.17 centimeters below the tip of the sword, made of materials including ‘Purple Martial Copper’ and ‘Cold Mountain Steel’, the ratio of the two main materials being five to four, and the rest being other miscellaneous materials?”

Yan Liren was about to disappear below the peak when he was suddenly stopped by Li Yao’s words.

After a cracking sound, the rock below his foot was crumbling.

Although the rocks were already vulnerable enough because of Yan Liren and Qi Zhongdao’s collision just now, the fact that they were crumbling suggested that Yan Liren was unable to control his dispersing spiritual energy.

It was needless to say how shocked he was!

The Cultivators nearby all shook their heads in astonishment, too.

The reason was simple. Purple Martial Copper and Cold Mountain Steel, despite being Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, contained a lot of impurities that were difficult to remove. They were lousy ingredients for refining.

The swords made of such materials were often regular flying swords for low-level Cultivators.

How could the strongest sword of Yan Liren’s, a supreme swordsman, be made of Purple Martial Copper and Cold Mountain Steel?

Chapter 1401 - Steal the Thunder!

“How can he tell?”

“It’s impossible. I don’t even know whether or not Yan Liren attacked. Besides, according to Yan Liren, he did not wield the sword at all but merely attacked with his will. Could the guy have perceived the constituents of the sword through the will of the sword?”

“Are you kidding me? This is too unbelievable!”

The Cultivators nearby had already been shocked by Yan Liren time and time again. Hardly had they caught their breath when they were crushed again by Li Yao’s mind-boggling theory. They found it barely possible to stand on their feet!

Yan Liren’s outstretched foot moved back, and he turned around. Staring at Li Yao, he asked, “How did you know?”

“You just ‘killed’ me with the will of the sword.” Touching his neck, Li Yao said, “My throat can still taste the wind and frost on your sword. If I could not distinguish what it was that ‘killed’ me, wouldn’t I be too hilarious?

“It is a surprise to me that, while the Purple Pole Sword Sect boasts all kinds of marvelous weapons made of the best Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and even the ancient swords inherited from the primeval era, many of which are the tantalizing treasures for any Cultivator in the world, you disregard all those incredible blades and prefer such a short sword that is no different from a plain sword made of regular metal.”

“This is my very first sword.” Yan Liren pondered for a moment. He seemed to feel that Li Yao was a person worth explaining it to. “I received the sword when I was nine, and I have never been separated from it, not for one day. After so many years, I can’t tell how many times I’ve touched it and waved it. Not only am I familiar with the weight, form, and hardness of the sword in any part, I also know every detail about the sword, including the speed and strength of the sword when it cuts into the wind at a certain angle and the different feedback when it pierces into a shield, armor, spiritual shield, or bone!

“As you said, it has really become an extension of my limbs and part of my life!

“The three primeval swords, on the other hand, are too powerful and consume too much spiritual energy and telepathic thoughts because they were not built for me but for the primeval deities and devils. Although I have polished them for decades, it is still troublesome for me to wield them!

“I often feel that I am not manipulating the three primeval swords. Instead, they are searching and attacking on their own after absorbing my spirit and vitality!

“Wielding such swords is like a three-year-old wielding a giant saber. Damaging as they may be, how can they be called the ‘strongest sword’?”

Li Yao was greatly moved!

Yan Liren’s statement showed traces that he was beginning to break the ancient Cultivators’ fanaticism about primeval treasures and shifting to the modern principles of Cultivation!

It was quite right that, however excellent the primeval items of the Pangu Clan were, they were created specifically for the Pangu Clan instead of human beings. Worshipping them blindly and taking them over directly for one’s own use might be easier and quicker, but it was certainly a dead end in the long run!

The best magical equipment was the magical equipment that suited the user most!

The logic was very simple, and it might be very easy to understand. However, when a powerful primeval treasure was placed right in front of their eyes, how many Cultivators could refuse the temptation to be their slaves?

“You have Cultivated to such a level,” Li Yao mumbled to himself.

“I only perceived it recently.” Yan Liren smiled. “Over the past few decades, I was as awed by the power of the three primeval swords as everybody else was. I tried my best to conquer them, to polish them, and to manipulate them, almost at the cost of my life!

“In recent years, I had a match with Wang Xi every year. The last time we met, seeing that I was more anxious and delirious with every year, he couldn’t help but offer me a few words of advice. Finally, I woke up from the bottomless abyss and grew a profound understanding!

“So, the strongest sword had been next to me the whole time. Why did I look afar and neglect what lay close at hand, abandoning the sharp blade that was special to me for some garbage that someone else threw away?”

Garbage… Li Yao was deeply shocked.

Calling the super weapons of the Pangu Clan or the Colossi in the primeval era ‘garbage’ was surely something that only the ‘Sword Maniac’ was capable of!

“My Cultivation is in fact slightly lower than Qi Zhongdao’s,” Yan Liren said. “However, I have forfeited the garbage of the primeval era and found my strongest sword, while Qi Zhongdao is still clinging onto the so-called Heaven Flipping Seal without letting it go. He is so fascinated by the power of the primeval treasure that he is actually too restricted to use all of his ability!

“Perhaps, if the Heaven Flipping Seal did not exist, there would be a stronger ‘Iron Saint’ Qi Zhongdao.

“But it is a pity that, burdened by vanity, he won’t, daren’t, and can’t make such an attempt!”

Li Yao was silent.

He did not know whether or not Yan Liren was right.

However, it was true that the Heaven Flipping Seal was essentially a gravity generator and not a weapon. The operation patterns and the spiritual energy supply mode of the device were not suitable for individuals, either.

To unleash the unbelievable power of the Heaven Flipping Seal all by himself, Qi Zhongdao must have paid unimaginable prices, too.

Were the prices worthwhile, though?

Their dialogue cast all the Cultivators into deep thought, especially Qi Zhongdao, who was standing below the Grand

Mystery Sect’s banner. His slender face, which was like black coal, was turning purple. The breath of the Cultivator at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage was suddenly unsteady.

“I get it now.” Taking a long breath, Li Yao said, convinced, “It’s indeed a nice sword!”

Yan Liren did not deny it. Touching the grip of the sword gently, he replied, “In my hand, it is a nice sword.”

“But it is a pity that the nice sword has been ‘heavily wounded’.” Li Yao suddenly changed the topic. “Although it is a marvelous weapon that has melded with you over the years, it is made of lousy materials such as the Purple Martial Copper and the Cold Mountain Steel after all. The foundation of the sword is not good.

“As you advance, your speed and power become higher and higher, and the damage to the sword accumulates, too. After such a long time, tiny cracks are everywhere inside the sword!

“What is more critical is that the sword once suffered a heavy blow at 14.43 centimeters below the tip of the sword. It is a dent the size of a grain on the left side.

“Although it seems to be an insignificant dent, in fact, a serious crack has already spread through the entire body of the sword. One moment of carelessness, and the tip of the sword will be broken with the dent as the start point!

“Based on my perception, I can tell that you have tried to maintain or even re-forge the sword. But your attempts did not work out, and you merely imposed a few spiritual stripes on the surface of the sword to keep it as it is. Am I right?”

Through their interaction, there had never been any noteworthy expression on Yan Liren’s bread-like face. He seemed to be interested in nothing except for his sword.

But after hearing Li Yao’s words, the supreme swordsman finally put on a dumbfounded expression that was the same as an ordinary person’s!

Even a few Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and experienced sword forgers who were spectating far away stood up from their seats, looking at each other in bewilderment and disbelief!

“How—how did you know?” Yan Liren was stammering!

With a smile, Li Yao said casually, “I also know why you are unwilling to reforge the sword.

“It’s because you have lived together with the sword your entire life. You know the shape, weight, barycenter, and feeling of the sword at your fingertips. All your skills, arts, spells, and techniques have been practiced based on the shape and weight of the sword right now. You have reached the perfect state!

“If the sword is re-forged, and the gaps and dents are mended with Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures that are more precious, it is inevitable that there will be a slight difference in the length, thickness, and weight of the sword.

“For a great swordsman like yourself, even if the renewed sword is only one hair longer or heavier than before, it will still be something that is absolutely intolerable because it will break the ‘perfection’ that you have achieved after training for your whole life!

“Oh, I was wrong about something.

“This sword of yours is not only made of common materials but also crudely made. The weight on the two sides of the ridge of the sword is not equal. The left side is a tad heavier than the right side!

“This isn’t a perfect sword.

“But you have adapted to the imperfection. You have adjusted your body into an equally imperfect distribution in order to better cooperate with the sword!

“If the sword is re-forged, and the imbalance is ‘rectified’, the result will be the opposite of what you want. There will be an ‘error’ in the flawless relationship between you and your sword!

“That’s why you are unwilling to repair or renew your sword when you know clearly that it has a lot of internal damage. Am I right?”

The situation had been entirely reversed!

Just now, Yan Liren had been suppressing Li Yao and leading the pace of their conversation. However hard Li Yao struggled, he had still been like a fish in a water tank!

However, when the topic in question was the flaws of the sword, their roles had reversed. Li Yao had counterattacked and made Yan Liren completely fall into his control!

Of course, for the spectators who were not clear what was going on, the two of them were almost telling a story. The sword was not even drawn, yet he could tell so much about the sword after merely tasting the ‘will of the sword’ with his neck?

Who would buy that?

Besides, was this Master Spiritual Vulture not a barbarian Cultivator, the likes of which were best known for their pests and their poisons? Where did he learn so many things about flying swords?

Yan Liren, however, did not deny it. He stepped forward and exclaimed. “Exactly. So what?”

“So, nothing,” Li Yao replied hurriedly. “If I say that I can help you re-forge the sword and build it up with the finest, hardiest materials in the world while perfectly keeping the length, weight, shape, barycenter of the sword, and even the unique rough feeling caused by the flaws during the original forgery, Fellow Cultivator Yan, would you believe me?”

Chapter 1402 - Heir of Great Zhou!

After Li Yao said that, even the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators of the Purple Pole Sword Sect looked at each other in bewilderment, grasped by shock and suspicion.

The Purple Pole Sword Sect was the largest sword sect in the world. The Ancient Sages Sector did not have a sect that specialized in the business of refining. Therefore, the forgery of the Purple Pole Sword Sect was definitely state-of-the-art. There were too many great sword forgers in the sect!

As the strongest sword Cultivator of the Purple Pole Sword Sect, Yan Liren, with his reputation as the ‘Sword Saint’ and the ‘Sword Maniac’, had more resources at his disposal than even the leader of the sect did.

Whatever his needs were, the entire Purple Pole Sword Sect would certainly try their best to fulfil them, no matter the cost!

After his sword was damaged, naturally, he did once intend to look for the famous, experienced sword forgers for maintenance.

The general swords built out of Purple Martial Copper and Cold Mountain Steel were not difficult to maintain at all. With the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures under the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s control and the marvelous skills of the sword forgers, there would not be trouble at all even if Yan Liren wanted the hardness of the sword to be increased ten times over or attach a powerful technique to the sword.

However, Yan Liren’s requirement was that the renewed sword should be exactly the same as before in every detail, including the length, the thickness, the shape, the outline, the barycenter, and everything else. Nothing was to be added or reduced. Even the tiny holes lingering inside the body of the sword during the original forgery had to be identical!

Such a weird requirement was indeed a bit too much. Many of the masters of forgery had never heard of such an absurd request before even though they had spent their entire lives building magical equipment. After much discussion, they found the task impossible. Therefore, it had been postponed.

They had thought that the sword was Yan Liren’s beloved item as a souvenir or a reminder of the past. Also, Yan Liren could prove to be a dummy who did crazy and weird things sometimes. Nobody knew exactly why he proposed such a requirement.

Yan Liren had mentioned the issue twice and dropped it after seeing that nobody could repair the sword. Soon, everybody forgot it.

Today, after hearing Li Yao’s detailed interpretation, they finally realized that there were so many more mysteries to the whole matter. They had dedicated their entire lives to the forgery of swords, yet they did not know that an invisible hole inside a sword could cause fatal influences on the attacks performed in the end!

“How is it possible?”

“Is he able to do it when so many sword forgers here together can’t?”

"That's very implausible. Master Spiritual Vulture is a barbarian Cultivator. It is understandable why he is very strong. However, why does he have such a profound understanding of the arts of sword forgery?"

"But—but Elder Yan brought the blueprints last time to tell us the specifications of the sword to be renewed. They were exactly like what the guy just said!"

"This—this—"

The famous sword forgers of the Purple Pole Sword Sect were all lost, not to mention the Cultivators of other sects who did not have the first clue what was going on. Intense doubt was written all over their faces!

Yan Liren, however, was the only one who stared at Li Yao without blinking.

He had never shown his sword to anyone alive.

Even when he asked the great sword forgers in his sect for maintenance, he had merely drawn the blueprints and written the data and his requirements.

Because none of the sword forgers had dared accept the contract, he had never revealed the sword to any of them.

However, this 'Master Spiritual Vulture' not only specifically described the parameters of the sword but also pointed out the hidden injuries inside the sword. He even understood Yan Liren's reluctance to reforge the sword!

The basis of his deduction, however, was just an invisible, illusionary will of the sword!

There were actually such terrifying arts of sword scrutiny in this world!

Yan Liren’s eyes immediately became bloodshot.

He was devoted to his sword. His sword was his life. To achieve the most perfect sword, he was willing to pay anything!

He had thought that the sword would be in his company in such a ragged appearance for the rest of his life. Although he could make up for it with his marvelous sword arts, it was still his major regret!

Yet, out of his expectations, an opportunity had presented itself. How could he not feel thrilled?

“Are—are you really capable of renewing the sword?” The eminent Sword Saint was bellowing like an anxious young man.

“Of course! In terms of the sword arts or other techniques, I may be no match for you or Qi Zhongdao. However, when it comes to forging and refining, I am absolutely invincible in the entire Ancient Sages Sector!”

His declaration rumbled across the field like thunder!

Before he joined the Dragon Spring Meeting, Li Yao had run a detailed analysis on the positioning of the identity of ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’.

It was not enough to position the identity as a mean and brutal warrior.

He was born and raised in a modern Cultivation civilization, and he was used to battles in crystal suits, which was definitely not to be exposed right now.

Without crystal suits or Colossi, and with just his own combat ability, not just the terrifying ‘Sword Saint’ Yan Liren, even Qi Zhongdao could force him to run away like a stray dog when the Heaven Flipping Seal was triggered to the maximum.

Even if he could earn his fame as one of the ‘top ten experts’ on par with the ‘Three Saints and Four Rapscallions’, his rank would still be low.

Besides, with his combat ability alone, he was certainly able to build the image of an unparalleled brutal man who was good at fighting. Chances were that other people would be scared of him, admire him, recruit him, and get him involved in certain core secrets.

However, the role that he played would only be a ‘muscle’, who would have to carry out the most dirty and exhausting tasks without corresponding benefits.

But a refiner would be different.

The profession of refiner could be traced back to ancient times when it was called ‘sword forger’. It had been quite popular at the time. Making friends with other experts and establishing a complicated social network were very easy things for a refiner who helped others forge swords and other magical equipment!

For Li Yao who intended to build an ‘overseas mercenary camp of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators for the Star Glory Federation’, it was certainly a very advantageous role.

The perfect example would be right now. If he could indeed successfully help Yan Liren renew his sword, he would certainly win the guy’s affection. With a few nice words, it was possible for him to convince the guy to stand on the federation’s side!

Furthermore, while exploring relics, refiners were highly protected assets and would not be leading the charge fighting with their lives. After all, if the team ran into any alien traps or magical equipment, they would have to count on the refiners to crack them.

Compared with his combat ability, Li Yao had more faith in his expertise in refining.

The reason was simple.

He was now in the Nascent Soul Stage. Therefore, Ou Yezi’s memory pieces had been opened to the phase of the Nascent Soul Stage, too.

Right now, after the mental devil helped Li Yao swallow and study Ou Yezi’s memory pieces, the two parties would share the knowledge. The efficiency of digestion and absorption had been significantly increased!

The highest level in the Ancient Sages Sector was the Nascent Soul Stage. The two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators who had gone missing mysteriously a hundred years ago did not seem to have any shocking expertise in refining, either.

Therefore, Li Yao did not think that there would be a better ‘sword forger’ than himself in this Sector!

The only problem was that such an identity would raise suspicion or even connect him with Vulture Li Yao of the Star Glory Federation one day in the future.

However, after giving it a lot of thought, Li Yao believed that it was not very likely.

When he was in the Star Glory Federation, he had never told anyone that he had the memories of Ou Yezi, a master of refining in the age of ancient Cultivators!

It was true that he often performed certain methods that had been popular in ancient refining at that time. However, most of the methods were merely for ancillary purposes. They were only meant to ‘knock the door’ so that he could better understand the mysteries of modern refining.

At that time, the impression that he left on everyone should be a modern refiner who was adept at ancient refining arts and whose works were in a quaint style.

It was completely different from refining purely with ancient techniques!

As long as he slightly changed his style in refining, nobody would realize that a sword forger from the Ancient Sages Sector who adopted the most authentically traditional approaches was the same person as the modern refiner of the Star Glory Federation whose works were a vintage style!

Besides, he had foreseen the dangers of his journey before he left the federation and made arrangements accordingly. If he indeed returned to the federation with the ‘Nascent Soul Stage mercenaries’ one day, those arrangements might come in handy.

“You must know who I am, Fellow Cultivator Yan. I am just a barbarian Cultivator! It’s only natural that you grow suspicious about my expertise in refining!”

Bronze Censer Peak was still utterly soundless following Li Yao's egotistical declaration.

Li Yao glanced around slowly before he continued proudly in a hoarse voice. "I didn't intend to reveal the secret earlier. However, your astounding attack has indeed benefited me a lot!

"I am a grateful man. Now that you have shown me respect by demonstrating your most secret sword to me, what is the big deal about my little secret?

"It's true that barely any knowledge in forging and refining has been passed on in the Southland of Sorcerers. There are few experts good at manipulating the swords among the barbarian Cultivators!

"My master was Elder Five Despairs. His lineage did not have any knowledge in the arts of sword forging.

"However, as many fellow Cultivators may have heard, seventy years ago, I was ambushed by my senior brother Master Black Moon and knocked into a venomous lake at the bottom of an abyss. I narrowly escaped from being killed, but I was seriously corroded and deformed!

"Thankfully, the dozens of lethal poisons neutralized each other, and I managed to survive. Later, by accident, I found an ancient residence that was passed on from the Great Zhou Dynasty!"

"The Great Zhou Dynasty!"

All the Cultivators exclaimed.

'Great Zhou' was the second unified dynasty after Cloud Qin more than eighty thousand years ago. In the eyes of the ancient Cultivators who believed in ‘the older, the better’, it was certainly a mysterious and incredible age!

“What I found was a residence left by a master of sword forging and examination named ‘Yan Zhu’. To avoid the riots in the world of Cultivators in the Great Zhou Dynasty, he fled all the way to the Southland of Sorcerers. Since he passed away in his residence, the place hadn’t been opened for tens of thousands of years. But I accidentally entered it!”

Naturally, the name Yan Zhu was make-believe.

He had learned on his way there that the ‘Great Zhou Dynasty’ was a short-lived dynasty where riots and conflicts were ubiquitous. Little information of that time had survived. No one would see any loophole in the nonexistent ‘sword forger of Great Zhou’ that he had fabricated!

Chapter 1403 - Is This a Ruse?

It was not rare for someone to grow into a famous expert after accidentally finding an ancient residence and receiving the heritage of a great pioneer. At least, it was much easier to accept than explaining to them, ‘As a matter of fact, I’m an alien.’

Of all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators there, quite a few had experienced their own lucky encounters and boasted their own secret residences.

However, it was indeed an amazing experience to have found an ancient residence from the age of the Great Zhou Dynasty more than eighty thousand years ago, which was almost the beginning of the history of the Ancient Sages Sector.

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, even though a bit suspicious earlier, calmed down and listened on.

“Yan Zhu left almost a hundred methods to manipulate the sword and thirty-six volumes on sword forging,” Li Yao declared proudly. “I spent seventy years understanding and absorbing all of them. Now, I am more or less Yan Zhu’s successor.

“The hundred methods in sword arts were all stolen from the experts of other sects in the Great Zhou Dynasty by Yan Zhu. Their quality is not very good.

“The thirty-six volumes of books on sword forging, on the other hand, were his life’s work. They are all invaluable techniques!

“Therefore, when it comes to the sword arts, I may not be as excellent as many heroes in the world, but in terms of examining and forging swords, I have every faith in myself. If even I cannot renew your sword, it will truly be hopeless!”

The few sword forgers of the Purple Pole Sword Sect looked rather awful while they whispered to each other.

They had thought that the visiting elder from the Southland of Sorcerers was a pure warrior, but he claimed to be an unparalleled expert in sword forging. Was it true?

Yan Liren’s eyes suddenly glittered. He stepped forward and said, “How exactly are you going to help me renew the sword? Tell me about it!”

“Alright!” Li Yao nodded and cleared his throat before he said unhurriedly, “First of all, I will have to stay close to you. We will train together and even sleep on the same bed so that I have a deep understanding about your character, your mind, your beliefs, and your Cultivation. I will be the one most intimidate to you who grasps every detail of your life!”

“Oh?” Yan Liren’s eyes quickly shuddered.

He had seen a lot of top sword forgers in the Purple Pole Sword Sect over the past hundred years, but he had never heard of such a weird forging method before.

However, the approach seemed rather analogous to the way that he practiced his sword. On second thought, it did make some sense!

“The process will take three months to one year,” Li Yao said solemnly, “because I will have to calculate every tiny movement when you are walking, breathing, and attacking, including the rhythm of your heartbeat and the constriction of your pores, all to build an impeccable sword!”

“It is also why I’m willing to work as a visiting elder in the Purple Pole Sword Sect for a year. Only such a long time will be enough for me to figure out everything about you!”

Of course, he did not entirely mean what he said.

How could Li Yao let go of such an unparalleled tough man?

If he could train with the guy and examine all his details from a close distance, it would be a great help for Li Yao to improve his own combat ability.

He would also be able to take the opportunity to rope the guy in before he knew it!

Besides, as long as he stayed close to Yan Liren, if the scouts from the Imperium of True Human Beings had arrived at the Sector, they would probably come to the ‘great sword forger’ when they visited Yan Liren because he was equally worthy of being recruited. That way, he would have access to the Imperium’s scheme!

“Anything else?” Yan Liren asked, giving neither approval nor disapproval. He tilted his head, as if he were really considering the possibility.

“Also,” Li Yao said, “I will warm myself up with the marvelous weapons in the best refining field in the Purple Pole Sword Sect so that my soul will gradually blend with the environment of the refining field before I reach my peak state!

“I estimate that a year and a half is enough for me to learn every detail of the refining field here and adjust myself to the most perfect state!”

Deep in thought, Yan Liren nodded slowly.

“Moreover, I want you to prepare a thousand of the most famous eccentric flames of the Ancient Sages Sector, as well as a thousand buckets of water collected from the best rivers and natural paradises. I will test them one by one until I figure out the best fire and water for the refining task!”

Yan Liren narrowed his eyes and said, “The most famous eccentric fire and water sources of the Ancient Sages Sector can all be found within the Purple Pole Sword Sect. Their features have long been studied. You can learn them by reading the documents.”

“What I want to know is not the features of the eccentric fire and water sources but their indescribable nature hidden in their deepest parts!” Li Yao said casually, “The fire and water in the world are just like the people in the world. Their personalities and tempers are different.

“The brooks that flow from the top of mountains have an air of pride and loneliness around them, while the earth fire that has burnt for a thousand years without dying in the desert is mixed with an intimidating killing intent that feels like a sweeping sandstorm! What I’m looking for is the most ‘harmonious’ fire and water for your sword!”

Yan Liren’s bald head suddenly glittered. “It explains a lot. Thank you for your enlightenment!”

“Lastly, and most importantly,” Li Yao said, “what you have is a sword that kills people. So, I will have to see how you really kill people that deserve to be killed! Only after I have witnessed the momentary brilliance that will be as splendid as a shooting star will I be able to craft a sword that is enough to accommodate your whole life!”

Pondering for a moment, Yan Liren said, “Do the ‘Four Rapscallions’ count as people who deserve to be killed?”

Li Yao nodded. “Of course. As long as you find any one of them and have a fight with them, it will be enough for me to appreciate the splendor and finish the preparations for the sword forging!”

The Three Saints, Four Rapscallions, One Monk, and One Emperor were the group of true super experts of the Ancient Sages Sector according to Ling Lanyin. They were way above the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators behind them.

From Li Yao’s friendship with Yan Liren and when he worked as the visiting elder of the Purple Pole Sword Sect, he would have opportunities to meet the Three Saints, One Monk, and One Emperor.

However, of the Four Rapscallions, except for Han Baling who had the connection of Han Yuantai, the other three would not go out and meet him easily, would they?

Now that Li Yao had announced the issue to the public, even if he went out to look for the Four Rapscallions with Yan Liren later, he would have a perfect excuse. Nobody would suspect him at all!

After he met the Three Saints, Four Rapscallions, One Monk, and One Emperor, he would easily be able to tell whether or not the scouts from the Imperium of True Human Beings were lurking around them conducting clandestine schemes.

Yan Liren was finally convinced after hearing that. Taking a long breath in relief, he bowed deeply to Li Yao and said, “I was so ignorant that I had never heard such incredible arts in sword forging before. I’m afraid that the deities and devils couldn’t have done any better when they forged the primeval treasures!

“However—”

He raised his big head, his eyes suddenly becoming sharp. “Master, are you not scared that after you renew the sword for me, it will be even easier for me to kill you?”

The Sword Maniac was indeed the Sword Maniac. After ascertaining that Li Yao was a target who deserves to be killed, he would not let go of the idea easily. Li Yao had taken such a detour, but he apparently had not forgotten it.

Amused, Li Yao touched his neck and casually said, “It is a tradition for ancient sword forgers to offer themselves to their swords. If I have to be killed, won’t it be the best ending for a sword forger if he can be killed by the sharp blade that he made?”

In reality, he was sneering to himself. *Damn you, shorty. Don’t be so arrogant. Your sword may be fast, but you haven’t witnessed the formidability of the modern Cultivation civilization yet!*

I was simply going easy on you today. Otherwise, if I had summoned the super Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit which has been strengthened by the string theory, hehehehe!

I would’ve triggered my power rune arrays to the maximum and run far away. Where can you catch me?

Li Yao had given it a lot of thought. Although Yan Liren’s fourth sword was horrifying, it was certainly not invincible.

If the two of them really engaged in a life-and-death battle, Li Yao had a tactic in mind.

Step one, put on his crystal suit!

Step two, activate the super-compressed crystal reactor and the power rune arrays to the maximum and flee!

Step three, summon the ground-oriented warships that had been parked in the planet’s orbit to launch a saturated bombardment on the zone that Yan Liren was in with all the main guns and ensure that the entire space was shattered!

After a one-hour bombardment was over, he would bring a hundred Grand Illusionary Soldiers and five hundred beast puppets to search the bombarded area. Hehe. Could the guy survive that?

Of course, if he did not have the fire support of an entire fleet, then…

Then he would rather not have a life-and-death battle with Yan Liren!

“Fine…”

Yan Liren, naturally, had no idea what Li Yao was thinking about. He was already deeply awed by the arts of sword forging that Li Yao had introduced!

The Sword Saint of the Great Qian Dynasty was shining more brilliantly than colored glaze as he solemnly said, “You are the second friend after Wang Xi that deserves me wasting my time in sword practicing to make. I will entrust my sword to you, Master!”

“Forging an invincible sword for an invincible swordsman is the most gratifying thing possible for a sword forger!” Li Yao burst into laughter. “On my very first trip to the central plateaus in my entire life, although I failed to make a name for myself, I have made friends with such an unparalleled man. The journey is definitely worthwhile. After you, Fellow Cultivator Yan!”

“After you, Master!”

The two of them smiled and bowed to each other before they walked to the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s banner, leaving the high-level Cultivators dumbfounded as if statues behind them.

All the high-level Cultivators felt that they were freaking out.

This—this—this doesn’t look right!

Qi Zhongdao clearly won the summit confrontation against Yan Liren. All three primeval swords were broken. It was not a victory with slim edge but a crushing one!

Shouldn’t the five major sects be on fire and the Purple Pole Sword Sect be lethargic?

Why is the ambience entirely reversed after the mysterious ‘heir of a sword forger from Great Zhou’ and Yan Liren had a seemingly sophisticated conversation?

They seemed to have suppressed everyone on the spot and made the audience the background of their chitchat.

Many thoughtful Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, after looking at each other in wilderment for a while, came up with a possibility at the same time.

Did the two of them… prepare their lines in advance? Was that show a ruse?

Chapter 1404 - Master Spiritual Vulture, Please Wait!

After the idea popped up in the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator's heads, it was like a flood that instantly occupied their thoughts.

Those Cultivators with immense computational ability thought quickly and immediately discovered that it was quite a plausible possibility.

Because Yan Liren's attack was as rapid as lightning and as unpredictable as water, and it was aimed solely at Li Yao, nobody else sensed anything except Li Yao.

Therefore, in the eyes of the audience, who did not know the truth, this was what happened just now—

Yan Liren suffered a brutal failure in the competition; all of his three primeval swords shattered. One of them had even exploded into powder and was beyond repair.

Yan Liren was devastated and stained by blood himself, not to mention that he fell into a pit in the end. It was indeed a crushing defeat where he had no chance to fight back at all.

Right then, a guy who looked equally shabby and devastated went forward and had an uncanny conversation with Yan Liren!

They said that Yan Liren could have slain Qi Zhongdao easily, that Yan Liren had a fourth sword that surpassed the three primeval swords, that he was the strongest swordsman in the world…

Then, the guy even fell on one knee, covering his neck as if he had been cut in the throat by the will of the sword. Even his voice turned hoarse.

The incredible acting skills convinced everybody at that time, but once they reflected on it, they realized that it was just Li Yao’s empty talk, and he could have said anything that he wanted!

The conversation that they had later was the same.

At first glance, Li Yao seemed indeed capable of telling the specific shape of Yan Liren’s fourth sword just based on the previous illusionary attack. Also, the guy’s marvelous arts in sword forging…

But was all that not their word alone?

They were not bragging about themselves; they were adulating each other. Li Yao adulated Yan Liren sword arts, and Yan Liren adulated Li Yao’s expertise in sword forging. They flattered each other until everybody was confused!

With some further thought, did the so-called ‘fourth sword’ and the ‘heritage from Great Zhou’ really exist?

“What fourth sword? It can’t be real. This is just an act!”

“Also, he claims to have astonishing expertise in swords that allows him to perceive the shape and weight of the magical equipment, and even the internal injuries, just based on an illusionary attack? He must be exaggerating!”

“I have been refining for a hundred and eighty years. I have never heard of such arts before!”

“The conversation between those two fellow Cultivators was indeed unbelievably incredible. The mysteries and expertise that they described can only be described as ‘appalling’. However, what if they prepared everything in advance?

“Their goal was to save the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s face after Yan Liren’s brutal failure and to make us overestimate its capabilities so that they would be at an advantage in the negotiation later!

“Exactly. This ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’ might’ve had some fortuitous experiences in the southwest forests. Judging from the fact that he could suppress two fellow Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage easily, perhaps he has really advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage!

“But what of it? We have more than fifty Cultivators in the Nascent Soul Stage here. If he were just a regular Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, he wouldn’t be much help to them even if he stood on the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s side!

“Therefore, they intentionally prepared a nice play by making use of Master Spiritual Vulture’s mysterious identity!

“Master Spiritual Vulture blurted out ‘Qi Zhongdao will surely fail’ in public before the battle. His statement could have gone either way!

“If Master Righteous One indeed failed, he would have forecasted the outcome wisely. When others were appalled, he would announce that he was a visiting elder of the Purple Pole Sword Sect gloatingly and demand benefits for the Purple Pole Sword Sect later!

“If Yan Liren failed, they would do exactly what they did. After a seemingly witty conversation, they almost managed to change their passive position and make us unable to determine the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s potential!

“This is obviously a trick of the fortune tellers, who won’t be wrong either way!”

“Exactly. That must’ve been what happened. As expected of the wise and thoughtful Senior ‘Tian Jizi’. Everything makes sense now after your interpretation!”

“Damn it. We were almost fooled!”

“Seventy years ago, Master Spiritual Vulture was merely at the peak of the Core Formation Stage. Despite his fortuitous experiences, he can only be a regular Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator at best right now. How can he be half as incredible as he described?”

“Anyways, we have fifty Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators here. Are we going to watch them go away without even having the courage to test them as if we are scared by their few words?”

“Below the Bronze Censer Mountain, too many Cultivators from the smaller sects are still waiting for the result of the battle. If they learn that the five major sects hesitated because of their empty talk when Master Righteous One secured an obvious victory, how are the Grand Mystery Sect, the Gold Armor Clan, Thunderstorm Valley, Flying Spirit Island, and the Monster Taming Pavilion going to stand in the world of Cultivators and awe the three thousand sects in the world?”

Suspicions, exclamations, and yells were flowing toward the center of the sword test field like tides.

When the tides of fury reached the peak, a thunderous roar finally rumbled in the crowd. “Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, please wait!”

Boom!

A streak of intimidating, golden brilliance soared into the sky, unleashing a blast in midair, before it smashed toward the center of the sword test field like a shooting star. The broken stones were flying everywhere, and the soundwaves were pushing out!

When the smoke died down, a tall, muscular man as magnificent as a tower was revealed. He was in heavy, golden armor, and his skin was dark gold, too. A golden sword more than three meters long, which seemed to be made of a whole piece of gold, was hanging from his waist!

“Bu Tiantong, the secondary leader of the Gold Armor Clan!”

Amid everybody’s exclamation, the gold-armored man bowed to Li Yao. Baring his white teeth, which must have been able to chew steel up, he smiled. “Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, your lecture on sword forging was indeed enough to enlighten the benighted! However, as a visiting elder of the Purple Pole Sword Sect, are you just going to walk away after throwing out a few empty words?”

The Gold Armor Clan, as its name suggested, was a super sect that focused on the manufacture of all kinds of armor and defensive magical equipment.

As a matter of fact, although the Grand Mystery Sect was leading the operation to threaten the Purple Pole Sword Sect together with the other four sects, it was because the Grand Mystery Sect had always been a ‘big brother’ in the world of Cultivators.

In terms of the foundation and the main business, in fact, the Grand Mystery Sect and the Purple Pole Sword Sect were quite different. The two of them were dominators in their respective fields, and the friction of their interests was not that intense.

The Gold Armor Clan’s case, however, was different.

It was also a major sect of refining. If a furnace could produce a suit of armor, it could certainly produce a flying sword.

The market for aggressive magical equipment was larger than the market for defensive magical equipment. The Gold Armor Clan was ambitious enough to have begun developing in multiple categories a long time ago. They had produced a lot of sabers and swords of their own.

However, theirs was a trade where the brand mattered. The Purple Pole Sword Sect had always enjoyed its reputation as the ‘best sword sect in the world’. Also, it had integrated the upstream suppliers and the downstream distributors, monopolizing the market a long time ago. It was more than difficult for the Gold Armor Clan to jump in.

When Lead Eunuch Wang Xi was in power, not only did the Gold Armor Clan fail to occupy the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s market share in the aggressive magical equipment, the Purple Pole Sword Sect even swallowed part of the market of defensive magical equipment by taking advantage of Wang Xi’s connection with them!

Stopping others from making money was like killing their parents. The Gold Armor Clan hated the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s guts and was more desperate to bite some meat off the sect than anybody else.

Therefore, Bu Tiantong, a secondary leader of the Gold Armor Clan, had to march forward and provoke Li Yao even while knowing that the guy could be in the Nascent Soul Stage!

What was the big deal about the Nascent Soul Stage? The guy was in the beginning level at most, while he was at the middle level. What was there to be scared of?

Frowning, Li Yao turned around and glanced at Bu Tiantong. “What do you have to enlighten me, Fellow Cultivator Bu?”

“You are flattering me!” The golden muscles on Bu Tiantong’s face were shaking, and he patted his sword heavily and laughed. “The Gold Armor Clan knows a thing or so about refining, too. This ‘Gold Crow Devil Sweeping Sword’ is an ultimate product that three great sword forgers of the Gold Armor Clan have produced after arduous work! Since you are good at examining swords, why don’t you examine this one?”

“Bu Tiantong is personally taking action!”

“He is most famous for his advanced Cultivation arts that are particularly tough and violent. He is a fearless and relentless expert!”

“I have heard about the ‘Gold Crow Devil Sweeping Sword’ before. It is said that the Gold Armor Clan accidentally found the debris of an extraterrestrial weapon that fell from the sky. Three great sword forgers spent five years finding hundreds of materials to merge with the debris. Finally, a marvelous sword was created!”

“I’m told that the Gold Armor Clan has been hoping to test the new weapons that the Purple Pole Sword Sect produced with the sword during the Dragon Spring Meeting and earn their fame!”

Whispers were soaring up to the sky again.

Even Qi Zhongdao, who had been seated below the Grand Mystery Sect’s banner the whole time, could not help but stand up and stare at Li Yao without blinking.

“Alright!” Li Yao thought to himself, [Thank god this bro jumped out. If they were all cool enough to bear my provocation, I would have had no chance to show off!

Hiu!

Before Li Yao’s voice died down, his clothes suddenly shivered. A few streams of smoke seemed to be crawling out!

“What!”

The high-level Cultivators felt that their heads were dizzy. Li Yao’s bloodstained, common gray robe was standing there in midair, but the person inside was gone. Or rather, it seemed to be worn by someone transparent!

A long shriek that sounded like the shriek of a vulture suddenly echoed above Bu Tiantong’s head. A cluster of green, ghostly fire suddenly burst out into a dominating figure!

At this moment, Li Yao was like a totally different person!

Right below the gray robe was in fact another glamorous robe that was pure green, as thin as cicada wings and as smooth as silk, giving every feeling that it was extraordinary!

While his black hair was shaking, the green spot at the center of his eyebrows spread into a green vulture whose wings surpassed his eyes and extended to his temples.

Together with the ripples of spiritual energy that were spreading out like fire, the demeanor of an unparalleled, brutal man was fully revealed!

Chapter 1405 - Nice Sword!

“Hua!”

Exclamations were echoing on the sword test field on the Bronze Censer Peak.

Many elders and leaders in the Nascent Soul Stage had guessed that Li Yao was probably also in the Nascent Soul Stage.

But they never dreamt that Li Yao would trigger such dominating auras when he had seemed quite plain before!

His spiritual waves alone suggested that he could not be in the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage. He was even better than the rarely-seen middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage and on par with the supreme experts such as the Three Saints and Four Rapscallions!

It was a tough man who could make it to the ‘top ten experts in the world’ list!

He might even really be qualified to be compared to experts such as Qi Zhongdao and Yan Liren!

His chitchat with Yan Liren just now was perhaps… perhaps not a bluff.

The green spiritual waves that Li Yao triggered snatched at Bu Tiantong brutally like a bizarre bird flapping its wings!

Bu Tiantong was the one under the most pressure after his sudden outbreak.

The toughest person of the Gold Armor Clan felt that he was indeed being swooped upon by an eagle that could stir up the clouds in the heaven!

Bu Tiantong had never thought that his opponent would be so strong!

However, the expert in the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage was not a fish on a chopping block.

With the marvelous weapon ‘Gold Crow Devil Sweeping Sword’ in hand, Bu Tiantong’s comprehensive combat ability was perhaps even higher than Han Yuantai’s when he had no time to retrieve his magical equipment in the Southland of Sorcerers.

Shua!

Golden brilliance was flourishing on his armor and expanding into a giant golden ball more than three meters in diameter. The brilliance was so intense that it looked like a tank of molten steel that could melt anything!

The Gold Armor Clan was best known for their defenses in the first place. The extraordinary mystic rays released from the armor could not only disrupt the enemy’s vision and telepathic thoughts but also cover the operations of the user. It was definitely some of the best magical equipment!

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

The green flames of spiritual energy around Li Yao changed from a giant eagle into almost ten tentacles and spread out.

Like an enormous ghost hand, they clenched the golden ball released by Bu Tiantong’s armor!

One green and the other gold, the two flames in different colors crashed, rubbed, and consumed each other and had chemical reactions like two incompatible liquids. Not only were ear-splitting shrieks echoing, colorful smoke was also dashing up into the sky!

This was purely a war of attribution. It was the immensity of their spiritual energy that was being tested.

At first glance, they seemed to be in stalemate.

However, Li Yao’s ghost claw was infiltrating the golden ball, and he seemed to have everything under control.

As it turned out, a moment later, a roar echoed inside the golden, shining ball. The ‘Gold Crow Devil Sweeping Sword’ turned into a raging gold dragon that broke out the shell and stabbed toward Li Yao’s face!

Bu Tiantong could not sustain it any longer and changed his move!

The auras of the sword were neither straight lines nor arcs. Instead, they shot out in the shape of a sector like the dazzling brilliance of the sun, covering dozens of square meters around Li Yao!

Locked onto by the auras of the sword, one would feel like one was standing in the middle of a desert with a scorching sun overhead. There was nowhere to run!

Li Yao did not bother to blink. He rolled his fingers and threw out the needles that had once horrified Han Yuantai in the

Southland of Sorcerers. The needles darted toward the sun like a hazy drizzle.

Ding! Ding! Ding! Ding! Ding! Ding! Ding! Ding!

Every needle hit one of the auras of the sword precisely. The auras withered like balloons that had been stabbed. They perished into nothingness, leaving lingering echoes behind them.

When the hundreds of crisp sounds overlapped, it sounded like a piece of weird music!

Half narrowing his eyes, Li Yao appreciated the melody of fire and war to his heart’s content. As if he had drunk delicious wine, his face became flushed, and he seemed to be intoxicated when he observed, “Nice sword!

“The auras of the sword gave a feeling of emptiness and boundlessness when they were tapped, which is not something that ordinary metals can offer. They can only be found in the sea of stars above the firmament from the real ‘star metals’!”

Li Yao had noticed something weird after he landed on the Ancient Sages Sector.

Infinite stars could also be seen at night in the Ancient Sages Sector. They were even more brilliant than the stars seen in the outside worlds. Quite a few colorful galaxies were flowing in the sky!

It was quite illogical.

Because the Ancient Sages Sector was at the center of a dark nebula, it should be difficult for the brightness of other stars to penetrate. Even if some of the stars were visible, their number should be few.

However, after pondering for a long time, Li Yao finally realized that the ‘stars’ in the sky were not real stars in the universe but the battlefield debris around the Ancient Sages Sector left in the primeval war!

The debris was Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures that boasted many special characteristics. It also had such intense radiation that it had not dissipated after hundreds of thousands of years and was still releasing all kinds of waves nonstop.

When the ancient Cultivators of this Sector raised their heads to look at the sky at night, that was what the ‘stars’ they saw were.

The debris was not absolutely stationary in the universe. Instead, it moved randomly due to the interference of the gravity of the sector’s planets and their satellites. When some of the remnants crashed into each other, or when they were captured by the gravity sphere of the planet, it was possible for them to drop down to the planet.

The debris was made of the super alloys that the Pangu Clan or the Nuwa Clan had crafted with their spectacular technology, which was tens of hundreds of years ahead of the current era. Naturally, they were the best materials for refining.

Because they were the ‘stars’ in the knowledge of the ancient Cultivators of this Sector, such remnants had become known as ‘star metals’.

The high-level Cultivators did not expect that Li Yao could still talk in the middle of the fierce battle. They were even puzzled about his expertise. After looking at each other for a moment, they all fell silent.

Sha! Sha! Sha! Sha! Sha! Sha! Sha!

Manipulating the thin needles, Li Yao bypassed the sword auras and pierced at the real body of the Gold Crow Devil Sweeping Sword at a higher and higher speed with less and less strength. When the needles tapped the body of the sword, it was no longer the ear-splitting sounds but the pleasant, gentle sounds of raindrops falling into grasses!

“Those are some good materials. The craftsmanship is quite remarkable, too!” Li Yao said with both surprise and amazement. “The star metals should’ve been much too hard for you to melt or forge. It was supposed to be just a block of metal and could in no way be forged into a weapon!

“However, the sword forgers of the Gold Armor Clan selected an innovative approach. Instead of heating it with the eccentric fire, they mediated it with more than thirty kinds of liquids that could melt metals. After it was softened, they reinforced it with various materials including the Hundred Dry Vines, the Long Hateful Grasses, the Devil Taming Bones, and the Blood Rain Stones among a few others. As a result, the features of the star metals were changed, and they could be refined into weapons!

“Since the Gold Armor Clan has such extraordinary sword forgers who are not restrained by traditions, no wonder you are confident in competing with the Purple Pole Sword Sect!”

All the Cultivators were dazed by what Li Yao had said.

Was it even possible to deduce the forging procedures of the magical equipment by the sounds of collisions and infer its raw materials?

How unbelievable was that!

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Everybody looked at the elders and leaders of the Gold Armor Clan.

All of them from the Gold Armor Clan appeared so shocked and devastated that they might have just run into ghosts!

No. Even if ‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu, the mother of all ghosts, showed up in front of them, they would not have been so shocked, unless Wang Mingzhu not only showed up but also offered a strip dance!

Bu Tiantong’s previously shining gold face was pale, and his sword auras were in disarray!

Li Yao roamed among the sword auras that were as scorching as the sun and sighed. “Nice sword. Nice materials. Nice approaches. It’s a pity…”

His countenance suggested that he truly felt regretful. “It’s a pity that, because the Hundred Dry Vines, the Long Hateful Grasses, the Devil Taming Bones, and the other materials are ancillary ingredients for the ease of forgery, they have to be replaced one way or another after the forgery is complete in order to increase the purity of the sword!

“You chose to absorb them with Jade Ocean Sand and then removed Jade Ocean Sand, which had been attached with the useless materials.

“That’s not a bad idea. Every grain of ‘Jade Ocean Sand’ has billions of tiny holes that are invisible to the naked eye. It is the best material for absorption!

“However, at the last moment of refining the ‘star metals’, the temperature of the furnace must be raised to above 3,300 degrees. Yet, you didn’t know that the ‘Jade Ocean Sand’ could possibly be vaporized into smoke when the temperature is between 3,380 degrees and 3,392 degrees!

“Maybe, only one grain of the Jade Ocean Sand was vaporized at that time!

“However, the smoke after it was vaporized, which could’ve been multiple times thinner than a hair, was enough to leave a crack that regular Cultivators cannot perceive at all deep inside this sword!

“Therefore, even if this sword is made of star metals, and you have gone through all the trouble of carving more than five hundred rune arrays at the periphery, turning it into an unstoppable and invincible weapon….

“As long as the tiny gap caused by the Jade Ocean Sand is located…”

Li Yao smiled. His speed suddenly accelerated to a higher level as he marched forward toward Bu Tiantong’s chest against the brilliance of the Gold Crow Devil Sweeping Sword!

“Ah!” Bu Tiantong was both shocked and infuriated. After his roar, the dazzling brilliance on the Gold Crow Devil Sweeping Sword suddenly expanded. It no longer looked like a sword at all but a shining, golden pillar!

Li Yao’s right hand extended into the gold pillar directly against the brilliance!

The sharpest auras of the sword were about to mince his right arm and right shoulder, yet all of them suddenly vanished after a ‘clang’. Half of the tip of the enormous sword flew into the sky and stabbed to the ground after rotating several times in midair, still shivering!

The Gold Crow Devil Sweeping Sword had been broken in half by Li Yao when he flicked it with his thumb and his middle finger!

Chapter 1406 - Astounding Performance!

Hu!

A gale of wind marched in through the broken hole caused by Yan Liren’s sword aura previously and blew into every Cultivator of the Great Qian Dynasty’s heart.

There was not a sound on Bronze Censer Peak. Almost everybody was confused.

The result seemed to be even more unbelievable than the confrontation between Qi Zhongdao and Yan Liren.

During Qi Zhongdao and Yan Liren’s confrontation, the two parties had used their primeval treasures. The three primeval swords being shattered by the Heaven Flipping Seal was still within the range of their perception.

However, breaking the marvelous weapon that the Gold Armor Clan had crafted with star metals after surmounting multiple problems over the years with just a snap of the fingers?

How was it possible?

Even Qi Zhongdao and Yan Liren combined would not have been able to achieve such a terrifying feat!

“I didn’t break the sword.”

Looking at his slightly-red middle finger and glancing at Bu Tiantong on the opposite side, who appeared utterly dumbfounded, Li Yao said unhurriedly, “When the sword was just created, there was already a tiny gap 1.27 meters below the tip of the sword caused by the vaporized Jade Ocean Sand. It is the sword’s congenital deficiency.

“In the meantime, Fellow Cultivator Bu, your Cultivation arts highlight force and momentum.

“You loved the ‘Gold Crow Devil Sweeping Sword’ so much, and you were so determined to compete with the heroes of the world with the sword during the Dragon Spring Meeting that you poured immense spiritual energy into it to polish it day and night!

“Because of your high-intensity training, the gap inside the sword grew larger and larger, making the sword more and more vulnerable, to the point where it was on the verge of collapse!

“Just now, in your fury, you were inputting spiritual energy into the sword without thinking about anything else. You were preparing to perform your ultimate skill, weren’t you?

“But you didn’t know that, by doing that, you would hurt your sword before you hurt anybody else because you imposed a heavy burden on it that it couldn’t bear!

“At that time, as long as the gap was located precisely, not just a finger, even the softest blade of grass would’ve been able to break the sword!

“If we get to the bottom of it, it is not the strength of the finger or the grass that breaks the sword but your own!”

His words cast the sword test field into dead silence. Nobody knew what to say next.

Bu Tiantong was sweating hard. The sword forgers of the Purple Pole Sword Sect were amazed. The few sword forgers from the Gold Armor Clan, on the other hand, took a few steps back, as if they were all experiencing cardiac arrest at the same time. Without the disciples of their sect supporting them, they would have fallen to the ground!

Looking at the half broken sword that was still shivering in Bu Tiantong’s hand, Li Yao shook his head lightly and sighed. “The characteristics of the star metals are too unique for the Gold Armor Clan to craft right now. It is already very remarkable that you overcame all those difficulties and progressed this far. This isn’t your fault!

“Do not question your expertise in sword forging at all just because the sword is broken. In my opinion, your expertise in sword forging is already rather high. Keep it up. I look forward to your next masterpieces!”

“…” Bu Tiantong.

“…” The sword forgers of the Gold Armor Clan.

“…” All the other Cultivators.

Not far away, Yan Liren held his arms and observed with great interest.

He had thought that, since the will of the sword could kill Li Yao easily, it would be more than simple for him to execute the guy in reality if he drew his sword.

But he realized now that it might not necessarily be so!

The reason was simple. The ‘will of the sword’ was invisible. It would not be exhausted, worn, or broken. Even if the will of the sword perished, he could always condense another one.

However, the real weapons would have imperfections formed during the manufacture process and the dozens of years of usage.

They were the magical equipment’s ‘fatal weaknesses’!

It was obvious that this ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’ was someone extremely good at grasping the fatal weaknesses of the enemy’s magical equipment!

Yan Liren could kill him with the will of his sword, but if he drew the real sword, which was already riddled with cracks, would it have been snapped in half by the guy before its edge kissed the guy’s throat?

“Interesting.” Yan Liren spoke to the fourth sword on his waist. “Now that we have such a guy, it seems that we need not be in too much of a hurry to kill Wang Xi!”

After saying that, Li Yao stepped forward with a sunny smile beaming on his face.

Bu Tiantong was hesitating over what to do now when he suddenly sensed unstoppable killing intent. Dazed, he said in confusion, “You—”

“Fellow Cultivator Bu, you invited me to examine your sword just now. So, I have examined it for you despite my reluctance. However,” Li Yao said with a smile before brutally suddenly shot out of his eyes, “are you sure that you are capable of paying for my service?”

The shriek that was brimming with killing intent made everybody on the spot shiver violently. It finally occurred to them that the guy standing in front of them was not a harmless, regular sword forger, but a brutal man who had scourged the Southland of Sorcerers a hundred years ago and who would raise a flood of blood in his dissatisfaction!

BAM!

Li Yao turned into a green shadow and crashed into Bu Tiantong, who was more than twice as large as himself and wearing heavy armor!

The most unbelievable thing happened!

While Bu Tiantong was blown away brutally, the heavy armor on his body was dissected into pieces and spluttered everywhere!

When he fell to the ground like a kite whose string had been severed, he was already naked. The entire armor had been dismembered into the most fundamental pieces that littered the entire sword test field!

“Well…”

Everybody was shocked—even more shocked than when they witnessed the Gold Crow Devil Sweeping Sword being broken!

Getting to the bottom of it, sabers and swords were not the Gold Armor Clan’s traditional business. It was more or less understandable that something went wrong during such a challenging task as refining the ‘star metals’.

But when it came to armor-type magical equipment, nobody in the entire Ancient Sages Sector was better than the Gold Armor Clan!

Bu Tiantong was a secondary leader of the Gold Armor Clan, and his combat ability ranked among the top three in the entire sect. Naturally, the ‘Burning Sun Great Armor’ on him was the best of the best!

Yet, it had been… dismantled by the enemy who was barehanded?

Li Yao smiled to himself.

As an experienced crystal suit specialist in the Star Glory Federation, if he had to name one type of magical equipment that he was most familiar with, it would certainly be the armor-type!

After all, a crystal suit was also one kind of armor. It was the most professional, the most advanced, and the most unique armor that had combined multiple kinds of other magical equipment.

In the Star Glory Federation, for the convenience of maintaining and strengthening the crystal suit, he had long grasped the remarkable skill of ‘dismantling a crystal suit barehanded’.

Even the most precise super crystal suit could be dismantled by him without any tools. How complicated could the armor of the ancient Cultivators be?

“Today is the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s event. To show respect for Yan Liren, I will not kill anybody here. So, just leave one of your arms as the fee for my service of examining your sword!”

Chuckling, Li Yao lunged toward Bu Tiantong like an enormous eagle!

Naturally, he was not attacking Bu Tiantong for real.

However, it was not a fairy tale but reality. The Cultivators in the Nascent Soul Stage were all as shrewd as monkeys and certainly would not ask to be killed in lines.

Since Li Yao dared say that, if he did not pretend that he was going to heavily wound Bu Tiantong, after witnessing his arts in sword forging and his combat ability, other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators certainly would be sensible enough to not start a fight with him anymore.

How could he allow that?

He had waited a hundred years for a chance to show off. Having only defeated one of them, he was not satisfied at all!

He had to show off when there was a chance. If there was not, he had better create one himself!

As he expected, when he lunged toward the armless and defenseless Bu Tiantong from the high stance in chuckles, two people attacked him collectively!

“Master Spiritual Vulture, we are not enemies. You don’t have to be so aggressive!

“Since you are adept at examining magical equipment, I, Ren Changkong from Thunderstorm Valley, have a pair of ‘Thunderous Polarity Cymbals’ that I would like you to give your insight on, Master!

“Li Zhuilang of the Flying Spirit Island also has a ‘Spiritual Dragon Sea Piercing Spear’ for you to evaluate!”

Two Cultivators in the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage marched out, pushed back Li Yao, and protected Bu Tiantong.

The two of them were Bu Tiantong's best friends. On this trip, they had planned to split some of the interests by threatening the Purple Pole Sword Sect together, too. So, they rushed out to help him without thinking too much.

They were both respected big shots in their sects. They had certainly not considered attacking the enemy together. In fact, attacking the enemy in turn was already bad enough for their reputation.

However, Li Yao had made up his mind to gain his fame. After a laugh, he took a weird turn in midair. The green flames of spiritual energy swept across the two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators at the same time like the two wings of a vulture!

"Alright! Let's not waste each other's time. Bring out your magical equipment and let me examine them!"

Shua!

Ren Changkong shook his sleeve and released two flying cymbals, one red and the other purple. They were swirling crazily in midair with extremely sharp edges where vague brilliance of electricity was flashing. They were now joining each other and now splitting in thunderous explosions. All the audience felt that the earth was shaking in thunderstorm!

"Excellent cymbals!" Li Yao shouted. "Those cymbals are divided into two pieces. The female one is made of Ghost Wind Copper, which was blown by wind for ten thousand years. The male one seemed to be made of regular steel, but it has been hit by lightning at least thirty times. The will of the thunder dwells within the male cymbal, turning ordinary into extraordinary!

“But it’s a pity!”

Li Yao smiled and dashed over to the broken sword before he kicked it toward the Thunderous Polarity Cymbals!

“You once fought against a formidable enemy with those weapons, and the female part was left with a tiny hole. Although it was repaired carefully, it was no longer the perfect state it used to be!”

BAM!

The Thunderous Polarity Cymbals crashed into the Gold Crow Devil Sweeping Sword. Although the broken sword was blown away, a tiny hole indeed appeared on the bright purple female cymbal, which seemed to have been pierced through by the teeth of a beast.

After the hole appeared, the Thunderous Polarity Cymbals were ten times more lackluster than before, just like Ren Changkong’s face!

“What about my spear!”

Before Li Yao chased after Ren Changkong, Li Zhuilang, the Nascent Soul Stage expert from Flying Spirit Island, stabbed his spear toward Li Yao’s face.

“Hiss!” Li Yao gasped and shouted, “Perfect!

“This ‘Spiritual Dragon Sea Piercing Spear’ is flawless from its materials to its craftsmanship. The maker of the treasure must have spared no effort. The user has been carefully wielding and maintaining it, too. There is no major damage. It is impeccable, except for one problem!”

“Problem?” Li Zhuilang was very proud of his spear. He did not know where it was flawed at all. He asked in a hurry, “What’s the problem?”

“The biggest problem of the sword is that…” Li Yao chuckled. “… you are its owner!”

Chapter 1407 - You're in for a Treat!

“Hoooo!”

The Spiritual Dragon Sea Piercing Spear suddenly disappeared right behind Li Zhuilang, as if it had been retreated into his Cosmos Ring!

However, the very next second, it crawled out of his armpit weirdly and poked right toward Li Yao’s face from an unbelievable angle!

On the Spiritual Dragon Sea Piercing Spear, countless helical spiritual stripes were glittering at the same time, forming a dragon that had been tied onto the body of the spear. The scales of the dragon were all rising, while the tip of the spear raged forward. As it moved, there was not the sound of the sonic barrier being broken but the roars of a dragon!

Centered at Li Yao’s nose, his facial muscles were spreading out in ripples, as if the air currents concentrated at the tip of the spear had already deeply pierced into his face!

The powerful attack raised rounds of exclamations among the Cultivators nearby. The ultimate skills of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator were not something that could be witnessed often!

On the route of the Spiritual Dragon Sea Piercing Spear’s attack, even the high-level Cultivators hundreds of meters away felt the tremendous pressure and could not help but get out of the way quickly in case they ended up as collateral damage.

Li Yao, however, did not evade at all. He did not even move away his head when he crashed into the tip of the spear directly.

At first, he seemed to be committing suicide.

Then, an amazing scene took place!

The Spiritual Dragon Sea Piercing Spear was about to penetrate through his head, when the tip of the sword suddenly shivered, as if Li Zhuilang was unable to hold it steadily. It brushed past Li Yao’s left cheek and only scratched the part of the skin on the tip of his ear!

Li Yao took the opportunity to stride forward. He was only one hair away from Li Zhuilang!

The larger a weapon’s range was, the more powerful it would be. For a piece of magical equipment such as the Spiritual Dragon Sea Piercing Spear, its power could only be maximized with enough distance!

“What happened?”

“How did the attack miss the target?”

“Li Zhuilang’s hands trembled? How is that possible?”

As an unparalleled expert in the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage, he certainly boasted the most thorough control over his beloved magical equipment. Such a mistake was too lousy for even an ordinary fighter!

When all the high-level Cultivators were confused, somebody suddenly pointed at the end of the Spiritual Dragon Sea Piercing Spear and exclaimed, “Look, what is that?”

Everybody widened their eyes and observed. However, despite the bright sunlight, they could only see certain vague shimmers on threads and did not know what it was exactly.

Only the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators with the highest expertise could tell that there were some kind of metal threads that were much thinner than a hair but extremely tensile!

Those metal threads had been released from Li Yao’s sleeves and attached to the tail of Li Zhuilang’s spear at some point. Like the springs behind a marionette, a tiny tug on the threads would have been enough to cause a subtle change in the attack route of the spear tip!

“What kind of magical equipment is this?”

The sword forgers from the Purple Pole Sword Sect, the Gold Armor Clan, and other sects alike felt that their jaws were dropping.

It was a piece of magical equipment that had never appeared in the Ancient Sages Sector, or for that matter, in any other world of ancient Cultivators. They were the molecular mica threads that Li Yao had brought from the federation.

It was only one molecule large in diameter, but the hardness and tenacity of the material were unbelievably high. The spiritual energy conductivity of the mica threads was very satisfactory, too, which allowed them to be controlled by the telepathic thoughts. They were the best product in the field of material science in the Star Glory Federation.

When Li Yao poured his spiritual energy into them and made them vibrate at a frequency of tens of thousands of times per second, they were like the tiniest saws, capable of cutting the hardest materials.

It was not a piece of attack magical equipment in the first place but a tool for refining that Li Yao used to perfect the metals.

Back when he was in the Flying Star Sector, Li Yao was already cutting multi-surface components with similar mica threads.

Moreover, since they were able to cut the hardest metals and crystals, it was certainly not a problem for them to cut the flesh and bones of a human being!

Shua!

Dozens of molecular mica threads, with a needle tied to the front as a balance weight and a lead, darted toward Li Zhuilang’s critical parts.

The molecular mica threads that Li Yao had secretly tied to the Spiritual Dragon Sea Piercing Spear were even jerking up toward Li Zhuilang’s hands like vipers!

If Li Zhuilang did not intend to be cut into thousands of pieces by the molecular mica threads, he would only have one option.

“Release it!” Li Yao bellowed.

Li Zhuilang was obedient enough to let his weapon go immediately and retreated!

But although his hands loosened, two attraction forces were flowing out of his arms as he tried to manipulate the spear with his spiritual energy to attack Li Yao from behind!

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators did not necessarily have to use their magical equipment with their hands after all.

It was a pity that while he was retreating fast, Li Yao stomped in midair and stopped his momentum before running backward, too!

While retreating, Li Yao pulled the spear hard with the molecular mica threads!

The magical equipment had been polished by Li Zhuilang for decades and connected to his heart. Now that it was also closely attached to him with spiritual energy, it was certainly not something that Li Yao could snatch away easily!

The spiritual energy and the molecular mica threads from the two of them exerted forces from two different directions. Then, with a crisp snap, part of the lower half of the Spiritual Dragon Sea Piercing Spear was cut off because of the high-speed oscillations of the molecular mica threads!

“Ahhh!”

Seeing that his most beloved magical equipment had been destroyed, Li Zhuilang felt more hurt than he would have after losing arm. He cried and fell to the ground. He looked at Li Yao with bloodshot eyes that were filled with hatred and craziness!

Like a crazy animal, he roared desperately, “A true man should be killed before he is insulted. How dare you insult me like that!”

“You are overthinking it,” Li Yao sneered. “Do you think that I was mocking you when I said that the biggest problem with the spear was you?”

Li Zhuilang was dumbfounded. His crazy face froze. Sitting on the ground, he asked, “Were you not?”

“Of course not. I was only speaking the truth,” Li Yao said casually. “Even the best magical equipment requires a corresponding user to maximize its power! This spear is made of the icy steel deep inside North Sky Ocean of the Frost Moon State together with dozens of veins of dragon-type animals. In terms of the materials, rune arrays on it, and temperature when it was crafted, every detail was impeccable. Even I can’t find any flaws!

“However, I am very certain that you are certainly not the original owner of the spear!

“This spear is 2.279 meters long and weighs 54.835 kilograms. The tail of the spear has been thickened by an additional embossment, partly to make it easier to be wielded and partly to slightly adjust the barycenter!

“Judging from those features, the spear should’ve been designed for a Cultivator who is 2.19 meters tall with an arm span of 2.03 and a weight between 92.5 kilograms to 93.5 kilograms!

“Only such a height, arm span, and weight could perfectly match the spear in order to use the weapon to the fullest extent!

“It was certainly an expert who crafted the spear. When he forged the spear, he did exactly what I am about to do to renew Yan Liren’s fourth sword. He took the body details and the habitual movements of the user into account!

“You are 2.13 meters tall, and your arm span is 1.95 meters. Although these two details are close enough, your weight is the most critical problem. You weigh 117.5 kilograms, with muscle all over your body!

“The spear is devised for agile, erratic attacks!

“You are too strong for the spear!

“When you wave the spear, your height is not right; your weight is not right; your barycenter is not right; everything is not right! Even if you have polished the spear hard for decades and have copied all the moves, arts, and techniques of the previous owner of the spear, how can you expect to wield one tenth of the spear’s original power?

“You can’t possibly have never sensed the anomalies during your training. So, am I wrong to say that the biggest problem of the spear is you? Tell me!”

Boom!

Li Zhuilang’s face seemed to have been bombarded by a crystal bomb. His face reddened to such a point that he seemed to be choked by the blood that he was about to vomit. He did not even know whom he should curse.

“I…”

Looking at Li Yao and the Spiritual Dragon Sea Piercing Spear, which had been shortened, he was lost for words!

All the high-level Cultivators were whispering to each other. The Spiritual Dragon Sea Piercing Spear was a famous piece of magical equipment among the Cultivators. It was Li Zhuilang’s family treasure, and the earliest owner of the spear was his father.

When his father was alive, his father had indeed been taller and slimmer than him. It was not a secret. Many Cultivators of the older generation still remembered it!

“I don’t know what the relation between you and the original owner of the spear is. Perhaps it is your friend or family,” Li Yao said solemnly. “Therefore, after you retrieved the spear, you were determined to revive the spear’s former glory no matter the cost!

“However, everybody has their own features and habits. Even the same Cultivation art and the same magical equipment should have minor adjustments when they are utilized by different people according to the users’ idiosyncrasies. It is definitely not practical to just follow the traditions!

“Since your height and arm span are shorter than those of the spear’s previous owner, and you are heavier with a lower barycenter, by shortening the spear by a little bit, like right now, and adjusting the balancing weights to move the barycenter of the spear forward by 2.5 centimeters, it should be able to match your body figure perfectly!”

Li Zhuilang was dazed for a long time before he asked in disbelief, “You—you did not intentionally break my spear but were helping me revise it?”

“You’re in for a treat!” Li Yao smiled. “My service is supposed to be very expensive. However, I’m obliged to show Fellow Cultivator Yan my proficiency in sword forging so that he can hand over his fourth sword to me for renewal without worries!”

Hardly had he concluded his sentence when Li Yao suddenly widened his eyes and bellowed. The molecular mica threads spread out in the airwaves, hooking not only the Spiritual Dragon Sea Piercing Spear but also the Thunderous Polarity Cymbals and the Gold Crow Devil Sweeping Sword that had been split in half!

Shua!

The three pieces of damaged magical equipment were all thrown high into the sky before their owners realized what was going on!

Chapter 1408 - This Is What I'm Talking About!

Hu!

The green flames of spiritual energy around Li Yao surged out. Only, this time, they condensed into an enormous furnace that expanded to almost thirty meters and climbed upward, swallowing all three damaged weapons!

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

The ‘furnace’, which was made of pure spiritual energy, revolved rapidly. The immense attraction force that it generated absorbed the broken pieces on the ‘Burning Sun Great Armor’ on Bu Tiantong that were scattered on the ground and tossed them into the furnace!

“Look!” many high-level Cultivators exclaimed.

The clouds above the ‘furnace’, pulled by the attraction force, were changing into the magnificent shapes of dragons and tigers as they lunged into the furnace!

The Bronze Censer Peak only looked like a furnace but could not be used for real refining.

However, ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’, the savant who had received the heritage of the Great Zhou Dynasty, was now demonstrating the most incredible refining arts with the sky and the earth as the furnace and the clouds as the fuel!

“Is he going to repair the three pieces of damaged magical equipment right here without a furnace?”

“How is it possible? The three pieces of magical equipment are all badly damaged. They won’t stand a chance of being repaired without tremendous Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and days and nights of polishing in a furnace, will they?”

“How is he going to do that?”

When all the Cultivators and sword forgers were astonished, tiny, broken, crimson powder suddenly spread out of the furnace of spiritual energy before it was suddenly ignited!

For a moment, the hundreds of square meters nearby became a smoking inferno. Even the high-level Cultivators standing hundreds of meters away felt that the fire was licking their eyes and that their skin was breaking apart.

“What kind of eccentric fire is this? The temperature is so high!”

“This temperature is high enough to melt steel into liquid, but is Master Spiritual Vulture safe and sound deep inside the flames?”

“Look. The fire is still changing!”

While everyone was exclaiming, the crimson fire suddenly turned purple before it changed from purple into pure white. It was so beautiful that it looked like a cluster of shining diamonds. Yet, the temperature of the fire was even higher than before. The air was utterly twisted. Viewed from afar, the furnace of spiritual energy was fluctuating like an enormous, beating heart!

All the Cultivators heard the stunning noises echoing from deep inside the furnace.

They also saw that the previous black smoke, gradually nurtured by spiritual energy as the temperature grew higher, had turned colorful and looked as translucent as crystals. The trails of smoke extended toward the sky like colorful jade pillars, turning the entire furnace of spiritual energy into a piece of jewelry!

The splendid view almost made everyone stop breathing.

They had never seen such a magnificent performance of the refining arts before.

It was quite understandable because this was not refining at all but the visual and sound effects that Li Yao intentionally made up.

Only the outermost layer of the furnace was thousands of degrees high in temperature, which was the ever-changing, gorgeous shell.

As for the inside, because of the blockage of barriers, the temperature was still normal.

The shell of thousands of degrees was partly to awe other people and partly to prevent them from spying with their telepathic thoughts so that Li Yao would be able to conduct the unattractive operations inside.

The three pieces of damaged magical equipment were floating right in front of Li Yao’s eyes.

The marvelous tool that Li Yao took out of his pocket, however, turned out to be a tube of glue that was designed to temporarily repair magical equipment!

Such glue was similar to the liquid metals that could automatically repair the shell of a starship. It was also a state-of-the-art product in material science from the Star Glory Federation.

Once it was smeared to the broken part of magical equipment, it could generate immense attraction force and cover the damaged parts while keeping consistent characteristics with the surrounding parts.

Such a glue had the best performance in elasticity and hardiness. Its spiritual energy conductivity was very high, too, and it was very steady in nature. It was compatible with almost all metals and super alloys. After being repaired in such a way, the magical equipment would regain at least two thirds of its performance.

The only shortcoming was that the working time of the glue was brief. It would gradually lose effect after it was exposed in the air for several days and end up being dust.

Therefore, it was only for battlefield usage.

Li Yao intentionally mixed a few pure natural Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures into the glue so that he could claim it to be a treasure that he had inherited from the ‘Great Zhou Dynasty’.

Sure. He could have fixed the magical equipment with the glue dutifully in front of everyone without the gaudy shell that he was hiding in right now.

However, would he be any different from a shoe repairer on the street if so?

Cool and splendid apparently meant a lot for the Cultivators in such an age!

Alright. I’ll clean the lower half of the spear first and remove the embossment which is used as a weight. I’ll attach it somewhere higher!

This sword is rather easy to deal with. I only need to align the two parts and fill the gap in between with the glue.

The real tricky one is the hole on the Thunderous Polarity Cymbals. It can’t be helped. Let me cut a fixation granule in an identical shape!

Right. I can’t impress anyone with such a soundless maintenance job. Let me play some music with my abdomen!

Boom!

When all the Cultivators outside were waiting, an explosion suddenly echoed from the brilliantly shining furnace of spiritual energy, and the entire Bronze Censer Peak began shaking!

While all the heroes were in disarray, not knowing what was happening inside the furnace, the daunting sounds of tides were escaping from the depths of the furnace!

The sounds were higher and higher and gradually turned into the music of a battle, as if thousands of troops were fighting fiercely inside the furnace!

The scene was so shocking that not only were the high-level Cultivators on the Bronze Censer Peak deeply awed, the low-level Cultivators who were waiting for the result anxiously below the Bronze Censer Peak also noticed what was happening in the sky.

“What the heck?”

“Has the Sword Maniac and Master Righteous One’s competition taken so long?”

“It doesn’t feel like their aura. This aura is rather strange, yet it is extremely dominating!”

“Look. The clouds in the sky are concentrating into an enormous swirl. Something seems to be absorbing them!”

The astonishing process of refining lasted about ten minutes.

Then, the furnace outlined by smoke and fire spread out like ice melting in water, turning into hazy mist floating into the sky.

The sky turned into a turbulence of various colors, which did not disperse after a long time.

Li Yao was sitting cross-legged at the center of the sword test field like a meditating monk or a tree that had grown for tens of thousands of years. He was truly like someone who had travelled through time.

The three pieces of magical equipment were floating above his head quietly. Mystic rays were shooting out and vibrating the air, creating the roars of tigers and dragons!

Suddenly, the three pieces of magical equipment darted to their original owners in three streaks of brilliance!

“This is—”

Li Zhuilang was the first to exclaim.

After he shook the spear, he felt that a dragon moved from the tip of the spear into his body and melted into his flesh and blood. He could not have felt swifter, more comfortable, or more satisfied!

It was like the Spiritual Dragon Sea Piercing Spear had never belonged to him until that day even though he had polished the weapon for decades!

“So—so, it was too long!” Li Zhuilang almost roared into the sky.

For decades, he had been practicing the ‘Sea Piercing Sky Burning Arts’ that his father had left for him. But however hard he trained himself, and even when his level far exceeded his father’s peak ability, he always felt that there was an intangible gap between him and the best of the spear and the arts!

He had thought that it was because his training was flawed. By referring to his father’s training notes, he trained himself even more crazily, trying to be identical to his father in every detail. But as it happened, he was getting farther and farther away from the perfect state in his heart.

It had been bothering him for a long time, and he was about to be mentally deranged because of it.

He did not know until that moment that it was not his problem but the spear’s!

Touching the newborn Spiritual Dragon Sea Piercing Spear, Li Zhuilang sighed with a complicated feeling. He eyed Li Yao with indescribable emotions inside his eyes.

Bu Tiantong of the Gold Armor Clan and Ren Changkong of the Thunderstorm Valley, the two Cultivators in the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage, were the same. They touched their magical equipment carefully, but they failed to sense the tiniest gap in the previously damaged parts.

The two of them looked at each other and noticed the shock in each other’s eyes at the same time. They felt that their magical equipment had never really been awakened until Li Yao’s repair.

It was almost like…

It was almost like their magical equipment was just a counterfeit previously—it only became the unique, authentic product after Li Yao modified it!

“Don’t feel happy so fast.”

With his eyes half closed, Li Yao casually said, “Today, we do not have much time, and there are no tools and materials here. So, I merely made a rough example of how to repair them. I didn’t cure the ‘internal injuries’ of the magical equipment completely!

“Right now, the weapons are not as excellent as they appear to be. They cannot weather through a real battle despite the ostensible perfection!

“If you find my work satisfactory, you are free to come to me and tell me what kind of price you are willing to pay to have your magical equipment really repaired.

“Of course. If you feel that the sword forgers of your own sect are good enough to solve the issues without leaving any hidden problems, you are welcome to take care of the weapon on your own. The demonstrations I showed just now will be complimentary!

“However, if you choose to tend to it yourself, do not come to me and waste my time if something goes wrong again in the near future!”

That was the vocational benefit of refiners. As long as they seized what one cared for most, they would never be afraid that one would not bend to them.

Ou Yezi’s memories had been expanded to the Nascent Soul Stage—where he was a pillar of the Hundred Smelting Clan. Naturally, Li Yao had learned a lot of things about the arts of blackmailing from him.

“Well…”

Bu Tiantong, Ren Changkong, and Li Zhuilang—three Cultivators in the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage who came to make demands of the Purple Pole Sword Sect—looking at the ‘perfect’ magical equipment in their hand, lost all their aggressiveness.

Chapter 1409 - Rising to Fame!

Below the Bronze Censer Peak, more and more Cultivators from the smaller sects had gathered.

As time went by, they grew more and more curious about the result of the ongoing ‘summit confrontation’.

For Cultivators at the level of Qi Zhongdao and Yan Liren, the outcome of their fight would often be decided in one moment. It was impossible for them to maul each other for an hour without a winner like two mobsters on the street.

But that seemed to be what was happening.

The low-level Cultivators could only hear the astonishing sounds on the Bronze Censer Peak and see the spectacular views where the mountains were chopped by the sword auras, the clouds were churned by spiritual energy, and all kinds of variegated brightness were soaring toward the sky.

When they thought that the battle was over, new noises erupted before they were replaced by dead silence. They waited and waited, yet there seemed to be no end!

All the Cultivators were waiting so earnestly that they almost hated that their souls could not leave their body to see what was going on there.

Of course, that was impossible. The entire Bronze Censer Peak had been surrounded by barriers. Not just the outsiders, even the empyreal soldiers responsible for security did not know the result!

After waiting for a long time without any new message, as if an invisible behemoth had swallowed everyone on the Bronze Censer Peak, everyone at the bottom of the mountain grew rowdy.

“What’s going on? Why have the Sword Maniac and Master Righteous One fought for such a long time? This doesn’t seem like their style!”

“Who do you think is the winner, the Sword Maniac or Master Righteous One? Who is the well-deserved ‘best’ in the Dragon Spring Meeting?”

“The Sword Maniac is best known for his fast sword. If he is the winner, it shouldn’t have taken so long, right?”

“Did anything unexpected happen on the Bronze Censer Peak? Is it possible that Yan Liren or Qi Zhongdao were killed by the opponent, and the Purple Pole Sword Sect waged a war upon the other five major sects?”

“Is—is—is it really possible?”

“Then, how do you explain the fulminations and the surging spiritual energy there? Look. The clouds in the sky are galloping like stallions. It is a sign that the spiritual energy has been activated to the maximum! Who else except for super experts such as Yan Liren or Qi Zhongdao can unleash such intimidating flames of spiritual energy?”

The yells and shouts spread like wildfire. Not only were the thousands of Cultivators from the smaller sects ill at ease, even the empyreal swordsmen of the Purple Pole Sword Sect were apparently less confident than before despite their faked calmness.

They did not expect the battle to drag on to such a point. What exactly happened on the Bronze Censer Peak? Was it Yan Liren who won, or was it Qi Zhongdao? Or…

Every empyreal swordsman’s hands were sweating while they clenched their swords.

Just when the raucous scene was almost out of control, a dull gong noise finally echoed on the top of the Bronze Censer Peaker. The barriers that surrounded the mountain ebbed like colorful tides.

The elders of the six major sects slowly descended on their lotus jade discs.

“The result is out!”

“What happened? What happened? Did the Sword Maniac overwhelm Master Righteous One, or did Master Righteous One eclipse the Sword Maniac?”

An elder of the Purple Pole Sword Sect stepped out of the crowd. He flew above the thousands of Cultivators on the lotus jade disc before glancing at the messy crowd with a half-smile and declared, “The result of the sword test between Elder Yan of our sect and Master Righteous One of the Grand Mystery Sect is now out! Master Righteous One’s Heaven Flipping Seal deserves to be known as the ultimate treasure in the world. It has suppressed all three primeval swords that our sect recently produced. The Purple Pole Sword Sect has lost the competition!”

“Ah!”

“Lost. Yan Liren lost! The Purple Pole Sword Sect lost!”

“Heaven Flipping Seal! Heaven Flipping Seal, the best treasure of the Ancient Sages Sector! To think that it has destroyed three primeval swords in a row! How amazing!”

“It seems that the Purple Pole Sword Sect suffered such a crushing defeat that they were not able to fight back at all. Otherwise, why would their elder be admitting it so frankly without any whitewashing?”

“This is good!”

Many of the smaller sects had followed the five major sects there because they intended to split the leftovers after the five major sects claimed the trophies.

Now that the Grand Mystery Sect was on the winning side, they were naturally simmering with delight. The greed in their eyes was obvious!

The few Cultivators who were not bemused by their voracity, however, felt that something was off.

They noticed that the leadership of the five major sects who were slowly landing all had weird expressions. There was not the joy of victory at all but certain uncanny embarrassment.

The elders and the managers of the Grand Mystery Sect, in particular, had faces as dark as the bottom of a pot. They did not look confident and ambitious at all.

“What’s going on? Didn’t Master Righteous One win? Why does it seem that the five major sects have lost?”

The elder of the Purple Pole Sword Sect caught the reactions of all the Cultivators from the smaller sects. With a feigned smile, he said, “There are also three things that we would like to inform you of!

“Firstly, our sect and the Grand Mystery Sect have just reached a deal. We will provide three thousand ‘Moon Wave Swords’ made of Moon Wave Steel in five years. For the deal, we will join hands with the Grand Mystery Sect to develop Violet Moon Mountain, which has abundant reserves of Moon Wave Steel!

“Violet Moon Mountain is remote, with dense forests and animals. We are going to need a lot of hands. If any fellow Cultivators here are interested in the business, you are welcome to cooperate with us!”

“What!”

His announcement dumbfounded all the Cultivators who were planning to loot the burning house.

Moon Wave Steel was nothing rare. Moon Wave Swords were low-level flying swords that were usually distributed to the newly-recruited disciples.

For the super sects such as the Purple Pole Sword Sect and the Grand Mystery Sect, the business of three thousand Moon Wave Swords should be insufficient to fill the gap of their teeth!

At such a moment, the public announcement of such an insignificant deal and the claim that the two sects would develop the Moon Wave Steel reserves together were just a gesture suggesting that the Purple Pole Sword Sect had reached a secret deal, or at least laid the groundwork for the deal, with the five major sects led by the Grand Mystery Sect!

But how was it possible?

Since a thousand sects had come to threaten Hundred Blade Mountain under the lead of the five major sects, the situation was highly unfavorable for the Purple Pole Sword Sect. After Yan Liren, the top expert of the sect, had failed, they should have been like meat on a chopping block waiting to be butchered!

How did the two parties reach a deal so fast? The smaller sects did not even have time to enjoy the leftovers!

Also, judging from the casualness and the smile of the elder of the Purple Pole Sword Sect, the deal that they had reached was even more advantageous for the Purple Pole Sword Sect.

What exactly had happened up there?

The low-level Cultivators could not figure it out at all, and they scratched their head as hard as they could!

“Secondly…”

The elder of the Purple Pole Sword Sect dragged his tone and said unhurriedly, “According to the news that we have just received from the Southland of Sorcerers, Ling Shoujing, the Appeasing Ambassador of the Fifth Prefecture of the South Land of Sorcerers, has fortunately accomplished his mission. With the enlightenment of Master Spiritual Vulture, a local senior, he has pronounced Huo Wuji as the Chieftain of Southwest, banished the disobedient rogues including Huo Wuji, and executed Master Black Moon who was shameless enough to rebel. Even Han Yuantai, Lord of Behemothic Eagle from Ghost Qin, was heavily wounded and kicked back to his own hometown!

“In half a month, the chaos in the Southland of Sorcerers has been addressed!”

It was another piece of explosive news.

Everybody knew that the Ling family, a vassal family to the Purple Pole Sword Sect, had been asked to fix the mess in the southwest.

It was also not a secret that the Purple Pole Sword Sect, to cope with the pressures from everywhere, could not dispatch too many Nascent Soul Stage experts to support the Ling family.

Ling Shoujing, on the other hand, was just a Core Formation Stage Cultivator. Few people were optimistic about his mission to the Southland of Sorcerers.

But as it happened, even guys as brutal as Master Black Moon and Han Yuantai had been suppressed?

Ling Shoujing certainly did not have such capabilities.

Many people located the most critical name from the whole announcement quickly.

Master Spiritual Vulture!

As they expected, the elder of the Purple Pole Sword Sect went on. “Thirdly, our sect has recently hired a new visiting elder. His name is Master Spiritual Vulture, a man who has been renowned in the Southland of Sorcerers for a hundred years!

“Not only does Master Spiritual Vulture boast an immense Cultivation that has arrived at the peak, he is also an extraordinary specialist in sword forging, which happens to be the specialty of this sect!

“In order for more Cultivators to appreciate Master Spiritual Vulture’s demeanor, we have just decided that the Dragon Spring Meeting this year will be specially extended by one day. Master Spiritual Vulture will hold a lecture that covers the mysteries of the secret arts from Great Zhou on forging and refining! If you are not in a hurry to go home, Fellow Cultivators, I strongly suggest that you do not miss it!”

The elder of the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s words raised rounds of whispers each louder than the last among the thousands of low-level Cultivators.

“Master Spiritual Vulture? Wasn’t he a barbarian Cultivator who disappeared decades ago? I recall that his senior brother Master Black Moon…”

“Watch your mouth! I’m told that he is an old monster who is brutal, petty, and blatant!”

“How did the Purple Pole Sword Sect invite such an old monster?”

“Were the anomalies on the Bronze Censer Peak related to him? Is he the key to everything?”

“The secret arts from Great Zhou? What Great Zhou? Hiss… Is it the Great Zhou Dynasty from ninety thousand years ago?”

Every mouth was shouting the name of ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’. Every pair of suspicious eyes was gazing at the Bronze Censer Peak, trying to find any traces of the barbarian from the unpredictable mist and clouds!

In the middle of the doubts, sighs, and exclamations, the name of ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’ was spreading over the entire Hundred Blade Mountain like an unstoppable storm with the Bronze Censer Peak as the center. In less than an hour, it had been learned by all the Cultivators who went to participate in the Dragon Spring Meeting.

It would not be long before the name was spread to every corner of the Ancient Sages Sector!

Chapter 1410 - Incoming Febrile Typhoon!

Three months later, in the capital city of the Great Qian Dynasty…

There was no telling whether it was because the Great Qian Dynasty had run out of bad luck or because the new emperor was indeed a man of fortune. When it came to the sunny, flourishing April, the Great Qian Dynasty’s devastation from when the wolf knights of Ghost Qin marched all the way to the capital city seemed to have entirely disappeared.

It was perhaps the most favorable and peaceful spring for the Great Qian Dynasty in the past twenty years.

In the north, Ghost Qin had suffered a lot of losses during their armed robbery the previous year. After they retreated to their nest, they slowly treated their wounds and digested the trophies. They showed no intention of marching south again in the near future.

In the southeast, the White Lotus Cult had not been on a rampage for a long time. The terrible scenes where ghosts were singing in thousands of households became nightmares of old.

In the west, Qi Changsheng’s Heaven Battering Army was crushed by the court’s Sky Ascension Troop again. Hundreds of thousands of homeless peasants surrendered on the spot.

The leadership of the Heaven Battering Army, including Qi Changsheng and hundreds of Cultivators who betrayed their sects, fled in panic. They had fractured in the snowy world and were divided into dozens of disordered groups of bandits.

Rumor had it that even Qi Changsheng himself had been heavily wounded during the split and disappeared.

Although both the White Lotus Cult and the Heaven Battering Army were not so easy to eradicate and had been through similar desperate situations countless times before, only to rise again later, it was expected that the two forces would not be able to stir much trouble for a year and a half.

More importantly, ever since Lead Eunuch Wang Xi fell, the Cultivators who had been in conflict reached a new deal on the distribution of interests after the Dragon Spring Meeting and gradually stabilized. The new balance among the sects and between the sects and the new emperor had been achieved.

It meant that the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty were finally freed from the complicated internal strife and shifted their attention to the external problems such as the White Lotus Cult, the Heaven Battering Army, and Ghost Qin!

The fate of the dynasty seemed to have been changed so shortly after the new emperor assumed the throne. Even the capital city had recovered from the depression when it was besieged by the Ghost Qin’s army after only one year. The previous prosperity and liveliness had been restored, with even more vivacity!

The capital city, Divine Capital, was the largest city in the Ancient Sages Sector.

The splendid city, claimed ‘never to fall’, had been regarded by more than ten dynasties as the capital city. It was divided into four levels in total.

The underground space at the bottom level was the residence of the ordinary people.

Like diligent ants, they had excavated sophisticated and splendid caverns below the ground over thousands of years. Then, with all kinds of huge bronze mirrors, they directed the sunlight hundreds of meters below the ground.

As a result, not only was the underground golden and spectacular, even the entire capital city seemed to be floating on a blossoming golden lotus. It was indeed fabulous and brilliant and could be called a heaven on earth!

The buildings on the ground belonged to the Cultivation sects that were headquartered in the capital city and their vassal families. The red walls and the vast yards were too intricate to be measured.

In the sky, dozens of floating mountains were listed in a strict square. They were the pivot of the Great Qian Dynasty. The central offices of the dynasty and the elites of the troops, as well as the tea houses, hotels, fairs, auctions, and casinos for the Cultivators, together with the headquarters of the six major sects or their most important local office in the capital city, had all been founded here.

Right above the floating mountains was a group of carefully built palaces made possible by emptying an entire floating mountain. It was also the headquarters of the Thunder Qian Sect, the founder of the Great Qian Dynasty in the past. It was surrounded by barriers that were glowing purple. Even a full-strength strike of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator would not be able to shake it. Known as the Forbidden City, it was the royal palace that could theoretically command the entire Ancient Sages Sector!

At night, when just the lanterns were on, the tea houses and restaurants below the Forbidden City would all be packed with guests. The Cultivators from all over the world had come to the same place.

Those qualified to be entertained there were at least above the Building Foundation Stage, which meant that they were the main forces in the world of Cultivators. Many of the guests were in the Core Formation Stage or even in the Nascent Soul Stage. They were all well-informed. Naturally, their conversation topics were the latest changes and the celebrities in the world of Cultivators.

However, in whichever tea house or restaurant, after the conversation went on for a while over the delicious wine, the same name would always been brought up.

Master Spiritual Vulture.

It had indeed been the most heated topic in the world of Cultivators over the past three months.

The glaciers at the northernmost deserts, the volcanoes in the westmost lands, the islands in the depths of the eastern ocean, the sultry forests in the south… In any place that had a Cultivation sect or Cultivators, somebody would always mention the name mysteriously.

It was said that he was the strongest Cultivator in the Southland of Sorcerers in the past hundreds of years. His Cultivation was already unimaginably high. During the Dragon Spring Meeting, he had suppressed three Cultivators in the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage in a row with ease.

It was said that not only was his Cultivation immeasurable, he also boasted the most extraordinary refining arts. In his debut during the Dragon Spring Meeting, he pointed out the shortcomings of three marvelous weapons. He even turned on his furnace and repaired the three marvelous weapons on the spot.

Later, he also hosted a lecture in the Dragon Spring Meeting on the mysteries of the ancient arts of sword forging. When he reached the best part, flowers were falling from the sky, and countless experienced sword forgers were enthralled!

It was said that, after he became a visiting elder of the Purple Pole Sword Sect, he did not stay there all the time. Instead, he travelled far and wide, searching for eccentric fires, water sources, and other materials desirable for refining. He also visited a lot of super sects including the Grand Mystery Sect, the Gold Armor Clan, and Flying Spirit Island, partly to fight with the experts of the sects in combat and partly to compete with the sword forgers of the sects in refining!

There was no telling the outcomes of the matches, but there was a theory among the Cultivators stating that Master Spiritual Vulture was the one best at refining among all the fighting Cultivators and the one best at fighting among all the sword forgers!

Some of the gossipers even claimed that, after Master Spiritual Vulture broke out of seclusion, another name had to be added to the ‘Three Saints of the Great Qian Dynasty’, making it ‘Four Saints’!

“Did you hear? A few days ago, Master Spiritual Vulture officially turned on his furnace and began refining. He completely repaired the ‘Gold Crow Devil Sweeping Sword’ of the Gold Armor Clan. There’s no telling what the result was, but the price that the Gold Armor Clan paid was shocking enough. Not counting anything else, they offered twenty ‘Ten Square Star Soul Pearls’ the size of fists!”

“It is certainly more than that. I’m told that Master Spiritual Vulture is best at forging and examining swords with the heritage from the Great Zhou Dynasty. Right now, not only is the magical equipment refined by himself invaluable, countless people have also visited the Purple Pole Sword Sect to ask him to examine their swords and analyze the advantages, disadvantages, and hidden injuries of the magical equipment. The fee for the examination is scary enough!”

“I have also heard an interesting tale. It is said that ‘you-know-who’ in the Forbidden City is of a mind to invite Master Spiritual Vulture to visit the royal treasury, examine the treasures that have been left for a thousand years, and clean and maintain them!”

“Well, well, well. Isn’t it—”

Similar conversations were underway in every tea house and restaurant.

But they were interrupted by an ear-splitting roar at the same time.

“Hiss!”

The long roar, like a peal of thunder on a sunny day, made the hearts of all the Cultivators on the floating mountains palpitate. They threw away their cups and chopsticks, ran out of their rooms, and raised their heads.

As they expected, a crimson shadow covered in vague golden brilliance was rushing over from the southeast. The long flames at its tail seemed to be tearing the night sky into halves!

“Get lost!”

Among the floating mountains, a lot of Cultivators were flying slowly on their rafts, cranes, or jade discs.

On the crimson shadow, a tired knight was yelling at them furiously and even slashed out a red sword aura, blowing away many Cultivators standing in his path with no consideration for their probably honorable identities.

All the Cultivators looked awful when they saw the crimson shadow.

“The ‘Red Lightning Flying Horse’!”

“Even the ‘Red Lightning Flying Horse’ has been boosted to the maximum without bothering about the cost. Something terrible must’ve happened in the southeast!”

Shua!

The Red Lightning Flying Horse rushed right toward the Forbidden City. The purple glow around the Forbidden City shook slightly and took it in.

Before midnight, rumors were already spreading on the streets and valleys on the floating mountains. The Great Qian Dynasty, which had just caught its breath, suffered yet another unbearable blow.

It was said that the largest typhoon in decades had already landed on the southeast!

…

When the news that the typhoon had landed made too many Cultivators unable to sleep at night, on the God Shocking Peak—the highest place in the Hundred Blade Mountain, which was nine thousand and five hundred kilometers south of the capital city—two unpredictable shadows, like two clouds that were ripped apart by the rocks, were flickering in their fierce fight!

The God Shocking Peak had the roughest terrain on the Hundred Blade Mountain. It was like a wolf’s fang stabbing right upward toward the sky. The cliffs in many places were adjacent to the ground, with no place to set foot on at all.

The peak was not worth developing. The top was frozen in ice all the time, too. It was too high, steep, and cold even for a Cultivator if they intended to turn it into their residence. Therefore, it had been abandoned by the Purple Pole Sword Sect for hundreds of years.

But after the ‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren distinguished himself, the place became the best location for his meditation and hard training.

At this moment, it was naturally Li Yao and Yan Liren who were engaged in a fierce battle above the God Shocking Peak.

Although Yan Liren’s sword was fast, it was not invincible. Even the fastest sword had a range of attack and had to lock onto the enemy.

So, it would do if Li Yao could find a way to make Yan Liren unable to lock onto him or keep out of the range of his attack.

Theoretically, yes.

But in reality…

Li Yao was almost rolling on all fours as he tried to get rid of the will of the sword that was right behind him.

He had kept his speed above three times the speed of sound. Only in such a way could he get away from Yan Liren’s sword.

Whenever his speed was below 2.9 times the speed of sound for more than three seconds, he would feel chilly in his neck, waist, and ankles.

It was the threat of Yan Liren’s sword!

Chapter 1411 - Commitment!

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

Li Yao’s fingers turned into clusters of gray mist as he shot out hundreds of tiny needles toward Yan Liren. But all of them took a weird turn in midair and hit the rocks, turning the crags as tough as iron into honeycombs!

It was because Yan Liren’s sword had captured Li Yao’s every needle precisely and blocked them midway by brute force!

Crack! Crack! Crack!

The sound of bow strings being broken echoed in the seemingly empty air. The dozens of molecular mica threads that Li Yao deployed in midair without anybody knowing had been severed by Yan Liren’s invincible sword!

Li Yao’s movement became faster and faster. A streak of brilliance flashed above, and he appeared at dozens of corners on the God Shocking Peak almost simultaneously!

Yan Liren, however, slowed down. He squatted, like a gyro that was rotating at such a high speed that it actually seemed stationary. He grabbed his sword with his right hand and touched the sheath with his left sword gently. He was mumbling something to himself and put on a charming smile. He even half closed his eyes, not looking at Li Yao at all.

Suddenly…

“Ahhh!”

The dozens of shadows scattered all over the God Shocking Peak perished at the same time. Li Yao shrieked, with cracking noises echoing from inside his body, which seemed to be split in half and gathered again dozens of meters away.

His face was pale, and he was breathing like a cow. His sweat was pouring, only to be frozen into white frost on his face because of the frigidness.

Crack!

Behind Li Yao, a rock more than ten meters in diameter split apart from precisely the middle, broke through, and fell to the bottom of the peak thousands of meters below in deafening noises.

Before the rocks fell, Li Yao noticed that the fracture was as smooth as a mirror, without the slightest gap or dent. It seemed to have been dissected with the most state-of-the-art knives of the Star Glory Federation.

Huala! Huala! Huala!

The three layers of armor on Li Yao’s chest exploded one after another, the broken pieces spluttering out. The assault did not stop until the last protective glass in front of his heart.

But a deep crack appeared at the center of the heart-protection glass, too, and it fell into two crescent pieces with that slight touch.

Li Yao felt excruciating pain in front of his chest and behind his back. A thin, long line slowly extended, and drops of blood were crawling out in a hurry.

“Nice sword!”

Looking at the wound on his chest, Li Yao observed Yan Liren at the same time.

He was complimenting Yan Liren’s sword arts.

Yan Liren, on the other hand, was complimenting the sword that he refined.

It was the first sword that Li Yao had crafted for Yan Liren in the past three months.

The past three months had been particularly comfortable for Li Yao.

After revealing the ‘fourth sword’ in public during the chitchat with Yan Liren, and crushing three Cultivators in the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage, and then hosting a personal lecture—where he bragged about the conclusions of the Hundred Smelting Clan under the pretext of the nonexistent notes of the Great Zhou Dynasty—his plan indeed worked out. The name of ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’ soon spread out to the entire world of Cultivators through the mouths of the participants of the Dragon Spring Meeting who returned to their hometown.

Then, Li Yao took the opportunity to visit the super sects including the Grand Mystery Sect, the Gold Armor Clan, and many others, further consolidating his status as a ‘great sword forger’.

Since he distinguished himself at the Dragon Spring Meeting and earned tremendous benefits for the Purple Pole Sword Sect, naturally, the Purple Pole Sword Sect met his demands for every material and provided all of them in slightly more than one month.

With those materials, it took Li Yao only one month to craft the components to maintain and strengthen the star beacons. Many of the components, having adopted the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, had even a better performance than the original components from the federation.

As long as the components were brought back to Spark, which was still docked on the satellite to assemble before they were projected to the sea of stars to be activated, the coordinates of this Sector would be sent back to the federation immediately.

Now that the most important job was done, Li Yao focused his full attention on Yan Liren.

As the saying went, ‘he who has no desires is unassailable’. The converse of that was—those who had desires had weaknesses.

Yan Liren was not a man without desires. His greatest desire was his sword. Anything related to the sword would intoxicate him.

Li Yao had Ou Yezi’s memory pieces. There were too many unverified records and anecdotes in terms of sword forging and sword arts in the Hundred Smelting Clan. Some of them were even ridiculous tales about deities and devils collected from hundreds of different Sectors. Naturally, they were much more interesting than the stories of the Ancient Sages Sector alone.

As an expert of personal magical equipment, Li Yao’s passion for sabers and swords came from the bottom of his heart, too, and was certainly not faked.

Yan Liren's understanding of sword arts, including the clandestine arts and techniques, hooked Li Yao.

Just like that, the two of them spent days and nights in the world of sword arts. They found too many things that they were both interested in. After only a couple of months, they had become good friends.

Li Yao's capabilities soared after his competitions with Yan Liren!

Yan Liren was indeed the most formidable swordsman that Li Yao had ever encountered in his life. In terms of explosive attack, he was even stronger than Xiao Xuance!

However, Li Yao was also an unbelievable monster. Other than anything else, his body that had been strengthened by the Blood Stripe Virus boasted a very high cell segmentation and self-recovery ability.

It was not hard to imagine the formidability of such a body if Yan Xibei in the past could connect his broken body to a hideous apocalyptic beast!

As long as his head was not chopped off entirely and kicked ten thousand kilometers away, even if he was half chopped away, Li Yao was confident that he could survive.

It was his belief to be braver upon setbacks and to be stronger during battles. Almost his every major upgrade had been achieved on the brink of death.

In the last five years in the Star Glory Federation, although a few opponents could still have a gratifying battle with him, hardly any of them could bring him the life-and-death thrill that was the greatest momentum to stimulate him to improve!

For Li Yao, the one month of training was equal to the last five years!

Maybe he had not achieved a breakthrough in his level yet, but his damage had definitely been multiplied!

It had to be noted that he had not put on his crystal suit yet!

At this point, he had successfully realized the primary target on his journey to the Ancient Sages Sector.

He had finished the preparations to repair the star beacons, assumed a very reasonable identity, and become acquainted with the unparalleled experts of this Sector.

He had not quite figured out his new targets yet.

He did not know where he should begin to investigate the mysterious signals sent to the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector a hundred years ago, and he did not know whether or not the spies of the Imperium of True Human Beings were working in this Sector.

In Li Yao's opinion, if he were a spy of the Imperium of True Human Beings, getting in touch with Yan Liren was a necessity.

On one hand, although Yan Liren lost the battle against Qi Zhongdao in the Dragon Spring Meeting three months ago, the mysterious 'fourth sword' had more or less proved him to be the best expert of the Ancient Sages Sector.

On the other hand, Yan Liren, as the 'Sword Maniac', had no attitude or stance. No trouble, save the delicate sword arts and the modern blades of the Imperium of True Human Beings, was required to persuade him.

But over the past three months, Li Yao had never seen any suspect of the Imperium of True Human Beings’ spy, although he had spent almost every minute with Yan Liren. It was quite uncanny!

Did the Imperium of True Human Beings not notice the Ancient Sages Sector?

Li Yao secretly hoped so.

Yan Liren appreciated the complicated stripes on the first sword that Li Yao crafted for himself right in the cold moonlight on the snowy mountain full of amazement.

After appreciating it for a long time, he finally put the sword back into his sheath, not entirely satisfied, before he leapt toward Li Yao.

“This sword is already very similar to mine!” He was as merry as a child who had just gotten a new toy. “The length, weight, barycenter, and feedback are all identical!”

“It is identical,” Li Yao said. “I have forged it entirely according to your ‘fourth sword’. Every detail, including the distribution of the tiniest bubbles inside the body of the sword, is exactly the same!”

“But I still feel that something is slightly different.” Recalling the battle just now, Yan Liren said, “Odd. Everything is the same. The length, weight, and feedback have no errors, but why was there a tiny bit of hindrance?”

“Of course, something is different. Even though all the dimensions are identical, the new sword is still missing one thing,” Li Yao said. “That’s why I said that I would repair your old sword for you, instead of building a new one.

“Forging a new sword is easy. As long as you grasp all the features of the old sword and copy them based on brand new materials, it will be done.

“However, it will be quite difficult to repair the old sword, which is riddled with holes and bruises, ensuring that it is renewed and reborn while not affecting the unique idiosyncrasy in the deepest part of the sword. The whole process has to take at least one year!”

“Is that so?” Yan Liren sat on the rock that had been entirely frozen and asked with great curiosity, “If the old sword and the new one are identical to each other in terms of length, weight, barycenter, and sharpness, what exactly is the difference?”

The routine sword discussion had begun again.

Li Yao sat cross-legged in front of Yan Liren and replied solemnly, “Commitment.

“The best magical equipment is not a cold, dead object but an item that accommodates your whole spirit, will, dreams, and even memories. I call your spirit, will, dreams, and memories collectively ‘commitment’!

“For a Cultivator, a piece of magical equipment with commitment is the best magical equipment. Without commitment, it will be like the three primeval swords that you wielded at the Dragon Spring Meeting. However powerful they are, they will only end up being shattered in the end!”

Chapter 1412 - Long Quest for Divinity!

“Fair enough!”

Looking at the clouds below his feet which were freezing into waves around the icy peak, Yan Liren was deep in thought. “I thought that it was because I did not polish the three primeval swords enough that I failed to unite with the swords and wield them freely. Now that I think of it, I wasn’t interested in polishing them with my heart and will at all. So, I was short of commitment!”

“Judging from the erosion on your fourth sword, you must’ve carried it for more than fifty years,” Li Yao said. “Before you rose to fame, you kept it with you. It must’ve been given to you by someone special and irreplaceable, right?”

Yan Liren’s eyes were deep, as if he were dwelling in memories of a long time ago. There was no telling whether it was delight or sorrow on his face when he mumbled, “It was indeed someone very special who gave the sword to me.

“As you can see, I am a natural dwarf. When I was young, nobody had any hope for me. They believed that my accomplishments would be limited however hard I tried.

“She was the only one who believed in me and supported me. After I was deprived of any training resources, she secretly shared her medicines and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures with me. She also bought me this sword with all her belongings.

“Did you notice the flamboyant decorations on the sheath? Hehe. She wasn’t a person who understood swords. She thought that the more spectacular a sword appeared, the more powerful it would be. This sword cost her almost everything. She was certainly charged much more than she should’ve been!

“I remember that when she offered the sword to me, I was at the lowest point on my path of training. I was so depressed that I even considered abandoning the sword arts and working as an ordinary disciple who dealt with mundane affairs!

“She was much nobler than me at that time. I was both surprised and delighted to see the sword, but I did not have enough self-esteem to pick up the sword. Out of nowhere, I asked her, what would happen if I could not achieve anything or become a world-famous swordsman despite her trust?”

In the blowing, freezing wind, Yan Liren’s voice was mixed with weird magnetism. Li Yao could not help but feel hooked by the story. He asked, “How did she reply?”

Yan Liren smiled. He took out the immaculate short sword that Li Yao had crafted and stabbed it into a random crevice. Then, he unsheathed the damaged old sword from his waist and held it in his arms. Looking at the world below the clouds, he casually said, “She smiled… in a very silly way and said that it didn’t matter. She said that she didn’t give me the sword because she wanted me to be a great swordsman but because she liked to see me wielding my sword.”

Li Yao acknowledged his story with a long ‘oh’.

"After becoming Cultivators at the level of you and me, as long as we find a suitable technique, it is not entirely undoable for us to twist the shape of our bones and flesh and therefore change our appearance completely."

Looking at the volatile clouds in the cloud, Yan Liren continued. "The Purple Pole Sword Sect has already gone through the trouble of searching for Cultivation arts that can alter the body. They found quite a few secret arts that can extend one's height and limbs.

"Although the secret arts are not enough to turn me into a tall, magnificent-looking man, they are certainly enough to make me look like a normal person.

"I know that, although they never say it explicitly, they always consider me to be too much of an eyesore as a signage for the sect. A swordsman should look gracious and otherworldly. How can one be as hideous as I am?

"However, if what she liked was how I wield my sword in my current appearance, why would I bother to change my appearance just because of some irrelevant people's opinions?"

"Understood!" Li Yao took a long breath and said sincerely, "Thanks for your candor, Brother Yan. I know how the sword should be renewed now. However, it will take a long time and cannot be hurried. You must not be impatient, Brother Yan!"

"It doesn't matter." Yan Liren smiled causally. "Take your time, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture. Not just a year and a half, even ten or twenty years are fine with me."

"Why?" Li Yao was dazed. Pondering for a moment, he asked, "Do you not want your sword to be renewed as soon as possible?”

Frowning, Yan Liren said, “It will certainly be great if the sword can be renewed sooner.

“However, my sword arts are already incredible and marvelous as they are right now. If I have a sword that integrates with me perfectly, won’t I really be invincible in the world?”

“… Cough, cough. Cough, cough, cough, cough. What’s bad about being invincible?”

“Being invincible will be too lonely.” Yan Liren sighed. “With my ability today, there are fewer than ten people in the entire world who deserve my full attention and most perfect attack. They will be fewer still if I start killing them.

“I really can’t bear to kill them!

“However, however reluctant I am, I will kill all of them someday. Even Wu Suiyun and Meng Chixin, the two dominating Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, will be found by me. Their body together with their soul will be completely slain by me!

“Now that you are helping me to forge the sword, the day will come much sooner than I expected!

“After all the experts in the world have been executed by my sword, who shall I wield my perfect sword against?”

“…” Li Yao.

“Heavens, heavens, why are you so unfair!” Yan Liren suddenly leapt at and cursed toward the infinite sky furiously. “Why—why did I have to be born so strong? Why did you allow me to train myself to an invincible level so easily while making everybody in the small world hens and hares instead of giving more experts to me so that I can kill them all?

“Why? Why exactly?”

Like a crazy devil, Yan Liren triggered his invisible sword auras and launched them into the sky, which ripped apart narrow and long fractures in the clouds. Pale traces lingered in the sky!

“… B—Brother Yan, don’t get too excited. Have you ever thought that there might be a vaster world other than the one we are living in, where plenty of worthy experts are waiting to be challenged by you?”

“Are you referring to the deities’ realm?”

After his catharsis, Yan Liren gradually calmed down. He turned around to look at Li Yao but shook his head with disapproval. “For tens of thousands of years, rumors among the Cultivators have said that, as long as you advance to beyond the Divinity Transformation Stage, with the most mysterious secret arts, you will be able to break the void, ascend into the deities’ realm, and become immortal deities!

“However, where exactly is the so-called ‘deities’ realm’?

“I have read a lot of ancient notes. Tens of thousands of years ago, the spiritual energy of the Ancient Sages Sector was far denser that it is right now. There were many experts above the Divinity Transformation Stage, many of whom had marched out of the Ancient Sages Sector and into the sea of stars, looking for the ‘deities’ realm’!

“However, most of the super experts above the Divinity Transformation Stage never returned and simply vanished into the unpredictable sea of stars!

“According to the experts who luckily escaped back to the Ancient Sages Sector, there was not a deities’ realm outside of the Ancient Sages Sector. Instead, it was a place of absolute emptiness and darkness without air, life, or resources. The darkness also knew no destination. It was like an ocean that nobody could get through!

“If anyone rushed into it, they would also end up as a dry corpse in the darkness after all the resources and spiritual energy were exhausted during the prolonged flight!

“That’s how the super experts who once dominated the Ancient Sages Sector were killed!

“I read the notes of a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator from the Great Chu Dynasty twenty thousand years ago.

“The Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator was an aristocrat of the Great Chu Dynasty. He was ambitious enough to collect resources, prepare magical equipment, and accumulate spiritual energy for a hundred years, all for the purpose of breaking out of the ‘black ocean’ that surrounded the Ancient Sages Sector in search of the deities’ realm!

“He drifted for thirty years in the dark sea of stars. He thought that he had arrived where none had ever arrived before, when he accidentally discovered a boat that was a hundred times more precise than the one that he had prepared, as well as a vivid body inside the boat.

“After examining the items left on the body, he discovered that the body was a famous Cultivator in the Void Refining Stage who raised and destroyed quite a few dynasties fifty thousand years ago!

“Even a great Cultivator in the Void Refining Stage, with a boat a hundred times more precise than his, died miserably on the quest for the deities’ realm!

“The aristocrat of the Great Chu Dynasty, who was at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage, was so frustrated that he nearly went mentally deranged. He lost all his courage to keep searching for the deities’ realm. Finally, after another decade, he fled back to the Ancient Sages Sector!

“Hehe. Many ordinary people believe that the erratic stars in the sky are the residences of the deities. In fact, the boundless stars we see are just glittering remnants floating in the dark ocean!”

“The quest to the deities’ realm is long and unpredictable. Where exactly is the so-called deities’ realm, and how can we reach there?

Li Yao thought of something and said, “There’s need to be pessimistic, Brother Yan. Since everybody knows of the ‘deities’ realm’, it can’t be groundless, right? Perhaps, the deities’ realm does exist, but we cannot reach there by rushing the outward without stopping. We may need to resort to certain… magical equipment, like portals, in order to be teleported to the place!”

Yan Liren eyed Li Yao in a very weird way before saying, “Interesting. Your theory is somewhat similar to Wang Xi’s theory.”

Li Yao’s heart nearly skipped a bit, as he lost his calmness and exclaimed, “Say what?”

“Wang Xi once asked me whether or not I feel that the Ancient Sages Sect is a lone island surrounded by an ocean of darkness, or just a bottomless well, and that our so-called ‘unparalleled experts’ are merely a bunch of frogs that can never jump out of the well however hard we try!”

Yan Liren smiled and said, “Then, Wang Xi said that, perhaps for a hundred thousand years, we have been resorting to a wrong approach. This well is too deep for us to jump out, but if we dig a hole through the wall of the well, we may be able to crawl out through that hole!”

Chapter 1413 - The Things About Wang Xi

Taking a long breath, Li Yao tried to calm himself down before he remarked, “Crawl out if we can’t jump out? That’s indeed a theory that I’ve never heard before!”

“It was not unusual for Wang Xi to propose bizarre theories such as this one,” Yan Liren said. “For example, he once asked me whether or not I ever wondered what exactly the world beyond the sky was, how exactly the so-called deities’ realm looked, and what the difference between the deities living in their realm and mortals such as us was.

“He also suspected that theory of breaking the void and ascending to the deities’ realm is just a scam. Could the seniors who had ‘immortalized’ really live an eternal life in the deities’ realm? If that was true, why had the ‘deities’ never returned to the Ancient Sages Sector to visit us and teach us the methods of ascension in the past hundred thousand years?

“I remember that the weirdest question he asked me was this. Everybody knows that the so-called ‘Ancient Sages Sector’ is actually an enormous sphere that floats in the boundless sea of stars.

“Then, why does the sphere not fall downward, and what exactly is ‘downward’?

“Also, the sphere is rotating all the time. If so, why is the water in the ocean not poured into the sky, and why are the sphere’s inhabitants not thrown off the sphere?”

Li Yao was felt so astounded that he almost fell off the cliff. Holding back his shock, he nodded and replied, “It’s very interesting. How come I never thought of such bizarre questions before myself? How did you answer them, Brother Yan?”

“I didn’t,” Yan Liren said. “I am not interested in such stuff. Even if the deities do exist, the only thing that I care about is how it feels like to kill them.”

Li Yao was amused. “That makes sense. Discussing the mysteries of the sea of stars with you, Brother Yan, is no different from casting pearls before swine!”

Yan Liren was not insulted to be taken as swine. He admitted frankly, “Yes. Sword arts are my sole concern. In every annual meeting with Wang Xi, most of the things we talked about were about the sword. Wang Xi indeed had an extraordinary talent for sword arts. Or rather, as long as he grew serious, he could be a top-tier expert in any field!

“I remember that when I met Wang Xi for the first time ten years ago, he was already the most powerful eunuch in the world, but he paid a special visit to me to ask about the mysteries of the sword arts.

“I’d been dedicated to my sword for my entire life, and I was not interested in fame or power at all. I did not intend to waste my time on him, but my senior brother and the rest of them begged me, claiming that the meeting concerned the future development of the Purple Pole Sword Sect. So, I had to waste a few days of my time to deal with him!

“However, after I tested him, I discovered that Wang Xi’s Cultivation was immeasurable, and his passion about sword arts was genuine. He was definitely a worthy opponent!

“At that time, in terms of sword arts, he was still far behind me.

“However, I could feel his rapid growth in our competitions every year. In less than five years, he already deserved the full will of my sword to cope with him!

“In the last year, he was even able to enlighten me, asking me not to dwell in the unimaginable power of the three primeval swords too much.

“A swordsman rides his sword and should not be ridden by the sword!

“As I recall, that is exactly what Wang Xi said at that time!

“His words were like a bash right on my forehead and awakened me from my delusion. When I reviewed my experience in polishing the three primeval swords, I realized how ridiculous and hilarious I was. I was almost lost for good!

“It was not until then that I completed the polishing of my fourth sword, and I finally achieved the perfect state where my sword and I are integrated as one!”

Li Yao was greatly moved. According to Yan Liren’s interpretation, Wang Xi, the Lead Eunuch as one of the ‘Four Rapscallions’, was indeed not a simple person!

Having come from a modern Cultivation civilization, Li Yao knew for a fact that the secret treasures of the Pangu Clan from the primeval era, despite their formidability, were not necessarily unassailable.

There were two unchangeable shortcomings about the primeval treasures.

Firstly, most of the primeval treasures were not designed for human beings. Their original owners could be in bizarre shapes, say, half human and half snake, three heads and six arms, or particularly monolithic.

Then, the operations of the treasures might conflict with the physiological features of human beings.

The colossal black sword that Yan Liren wielded would be a perfect example. Not just a dwarf, even a muscular, ten-meter-tall man would not be able to wield it in his hands easily.

If the sword was driven by telepathic thoughts, there would be issues such as interference and latency. It would not be as convenient as when it was wielded in a pair of hands.

Secondly, because of the erosion during the hundreds of thousands of years, most of the primeval treasures often had all kinds of rust and damaged. Even if they looked as good as new on the surface, there were often hidden injuries and metal fatigue inside.

That was the conclusion that the Star Glory Federation made after excavating Kunlun for five years.

They searched Kunlun for five years before they managed to find enough components to assemble five Colossi!

Therefore, the seniority of a piece of magical equipment did not imply its excellence. There were both marvelous weapons and garbage in the primeval era.

Although Li Yao came from a modern Cultivation civilization, it still took him a long time to overcome his blind admiration on the heritages of the Pangu civilization and to realize that anciency did not necessarily lead to excellency.

But Wang Xi had so many amazing ideas in an enclosed environment such as the Ancient Sages Sector. He even clearly recognized the advantages and disadvantages of the primeval treasures.

The Lead Eunuch who once stirred up the entire world of Cultivators in the Great Qian Dynasty purely on his own was too dreadful!

Who is he exactly? Could he be…

Calming himself down, Li Yao simply showed that he was interested and asked directly, “I’ve been staying in the Great Qian Dynasty for almost half a year, and the name ‘Wang Xi’ has echoed in my ears hundreds of times. It is said that he is still one of the ‘Four Rapscallions’ even to this day, on par with Han Baling, Wan Mingzhu, and Qi Changsheng. Brother Yan, you’ve had seven competitions with him, and you must know him pretty well. In your eyes, what kind of person is he exactly? Is he a wicked and cunning man as the rumors make him out to be?”

“I don’t know if he is wicked and cunning. I’m not interested to know it, either.”

Tilting his head and thinking for a moment, Yan Liren put on a weird expression as he said, “Anyways, if I have to make a comment, he is an absent-minded guy.”

“An absent-minded guy?” Li Yao was slightly dazed. “How so?”

“He seems to be absent-minded about everything. He does not even seem to fit in this world.” Yan Liren’s eyes were slightly cramping as he gnashed his teeth. “Even when we were in the middle of our fierce fights, I could still notice something uncanny deep inside his eyes, which told me that he did not fully concentrate on the fight with me!

“I always felt that Wang Xi does not belong to the Ancient Sages Sector, at least not just the Ancient Sages Sector. He belongs to be bigger, vaster world. The legendary ‘deities’ realm’, perhaps!”

Li Yao’s face shifted greatly because of the last remark. He gasped so hard that his throat was shrieking.

To cover himself, he hurried to ask, “What? Are you suggesting that, while Wang Xi was ‘absent-minded’, he was still able to draw even with you, Brother Yan, despite the slight disadvantage?

“Then, if Wang Xi had focused his soul, attention, and spiritual energy on the sword in his hand, wouldn’t he have been able to surpass you and become the greatest swordsman in the world?”

“Probably.” Yan Liren shook his head with a smile. “It’s a pity that he cannot concentrate his spirit on a tiny sword, just like you can’t, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture.

“He has his path, you have your path, and I have mine. Each of us has chosen our own path. Although we may share the same destination, the scenery that we see on the road is still different!”

Li Yao was silent for a moment. Then he observed with mixed feelings, “It sounds like you think very highly of Wang Xi, Brother Yan!”

“Indeed I do.” After pondering for a moment, Yan Liren said, “Let me put it this way. If I am forced to choose only one person to kill for my entire life, with the options being Fellow

Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, Qi Zhongdao, and Wang Xi, I will choose to kill Wang Xi without any hesitation!

“This is an example of how highly I think of Wang Xi. You wouldn’t mind, would you, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture?”

“No. No. Not at all. You can always test your sword with Wang Xi, Qi Zhongdao, Qi Changsheng, Wan Mingzhu, Han Baling, and the rest of them. I’m really not in a hurry. I can wait in line behind the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators!”

Catching his breath for a moment, Li Yao rolled his eyes and said, “There are truly all kinds of wonders in the world. I find it hard to understand why such a great man like Wang Xi would brutalize his body to work as a eunuch in the royal palace. With his wisdom and talents, would he not distinguish himself under a different identity?”

Yan Liren smiled and said, “You don’t get to choose a lot of things at first. You feel depressed. You are bothered for decades. But when you get to choose and you look back, you feel that it is all unimportant and that the choice does not mean anything. Just like I choose to be a… dwarf.”

“That’s not the same.” Li Yao frowned and said, “You are born with such a body, Brother Yan. But going to the royal palace as a eunuch, on the other hand, is—”

“You are wrong.” With weird brilliance beaming out of Yan Liren’s eyes, he said, “I wonder, have you ever heard of such a notion as ‘natural eunuch’ before, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture?”

Li Yao was greatly surprised. “Are you trying to say that Wang Xi is a ‘natural eunuch’, Brother Yan?”

“It is just a groundless rumor. Who knows that it is true or false?”

“It is impossible for other people to get to the bottom of it except for himself,” Yan Liren said.

“Of course.” Li Yao smiled bitterly. “I’m afraid that none except the lunatics who want to be killed would have the courage to ask the question right in front of Wang Xi’s face. Hey, I’m told that you are a natural eunuch. Is it true?”

“Not necessarily so.” Yan Liren scratched his nose and spoke as if it were not a big deal. “I once asked him right to his face. I also planned to cut open his pants with my sword and see what’s what…”

Chapter 1414 - A Mannered Man!

“Cough, cough, cough, cough!” Li Yao almost fell back and really fell into the abyss. He coughed so hard that he was looking at Yan Liren in admiration, feeling that the Sword Maniac was more magnificent than ever in the frigid well!

When going crazy, he even dared to take off Lead Eunuch Wang Xi’s pants. It was indeed as expected of the legendary Sword Maniac!

“Make no mistake, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture,” Yan Liren said, frowning, “I have no interest in whether or not Wang Xi has any unspoken disease.”

“I wasn’t judging,” Li Yao said. “Everybody has their curiosity. It is perfectly normal even if you truly were slightly interested. To be honest, even I want to know Wang Xi’s secrets.”

“But I’m truly not interested.” Emotionlessly, Yan Liren said, “I only meant to infuriate him, rip apart his shell of absentmindedness so that he would launch the most furious, insane, and brutal attack toward me.”

“So, that’s the reason!” Li Yao blushed, feeling that he was not as good as Yan Liren.

The Sword Maniac was obviously a man free from lowly entertainment. He was a real, pure swordsman. Yet, Li Yao was imagining him as being so nasty. It was indeed petty!

Pettiness was fine. Li Yao moved on and asked, “What then? Did you cut his pants?”

“Then, he ran off.”

“Ran off?”

“Yes. Before my sword aura reached him, he fled, holding his legs.”

“So, it is possible that Wang Xi is indeed a natural eunuch. If he was just castrated normally, since he was already a world-famous eunuch, he wouldn’t be acting so weirdly, right?”

“I don’t know. Unless he has a sword growing between his legs, I’m not very interested in the stuff around a man’s groin. If you are interested in that, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, you can take off his pants yourself if you find Wang Xi in the future.”

“Well…” Li Yao deeply frowned. He ignored Yan Liren’s last remark and pondered on the peculiarities of Wang Xi.

At first, when he heard Wang Xi’s astonishing theories from Yan Liren, Li Yao’s first reaction was, naturally, that Wang Xi could be a spy of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

But on second thought, his first reaction could have been wrong again.

First of all, the timing was not right.

Although Wang Xi did not become a powerful eunuch until ten years ago, he had been lurking and accumulating his strength for decades. His endeavors included establishing the intelligence and assassination organization ‘Ghost Character’.

Together with his training period deep inside the royal palace, the guy must have lived in the Ancient Sages Sector for more than sixty years.

His background must have been very clear for him to be admitted by the Forbidden City and become a trusted subordinate of the emperor. It was impossible for him to be a mysterious person who jumped out of nowhere.

The spies of the Imperium of True Human Beings might have reached the Ancient Sages Sector sixty to seventy years ago.

Should they have jumped near the Ancient Sages Sector after a super long-distance space jump with unbelievable luck, even if the odds might be one billion, it was still possible for them to appear here.

The real problem was that, if the spies of the Imperium of True Human Beings had reached the Ancient Sages Sector so early, they would have had plenty of time to collect resources, analyze the intelligence, and establish the ‘space gate’ to summon the expedition army of the Imperium!

Then, by the time Li Yao landed on the Ancient Sages Sector, it would not have been such a ‘vintage’ and ‘traditional’ scene that he saw.

Chances were that he would have seen the graceful ancient Cultivators shooting Vulcan Machine Guns and the cavalry of Ghost Qin fighting together with crystal warships.

Since such a thing did not happen, Li Yao could only conclude that, even if the spies of the Imperium of True

Human Beings did exist in the Ancient Sages Sector, they should be at a similar phase to him. They were also accumulating their initial resources and intelligence and preparing to establish the space gate.

Secondly, if Wang Xi was truly a spy of the Imperium of True Human Beings, there would have been absolutely no reason for him to discuss so many topics with Yan Liren that would raise suspicion, such as those regarding the world beyond or crawling out of the Ancient Sages Sector.

Li Yao, the ‘ill-intended’ spy of the federation, for one, would never say such things.

“Who is Wang Xi exactly? I’m so curious about him!” Li Yao sighed. For a moment, he even lost interest in practicing the sword arts with Yan Liren.

Right then, long horns echoed below the mountain. Afar and near, colorful, glittering lanterns were ignited on the entire Hundred Blade Mountain. Looked at from a distance, a brilliant dragon seemed to have surfaced from below the ground.

It was the welcome ceremony of the highest scale in the Purple Pole Sword Sect. An honorable guest must have arrived.

Li Yao and Yan Liren looked at each other because they both sensed the anxiety in the welcome ceremony.

Besides, both of them were elders of the Purple Pole Sword Sect, but they had not been informed that any honorable guest was going to visit!

Very soon, ‘Orchid Angel’ Ling Lanyin flew over to the God Shocking Mountain on her flying sword and respectfully asked the two elders to go to the ‘Sword Washing Pavilion’ and have a meeting with Master Righteous One.

After only three months, Qi Zhongdao, who claimed to be the leader of all the Cultivators in the Great Qian Dynasty, arrived at the Purple Pole Sword Sect again.

When Li Yao and Yan Liren stepped into the ‘Sword Washing Pavilion’, the grand meeting hall of the Purple Pole Sword Sect, all the leadership of the Purple Pole Sword Sect—including Dan Fengzi, the head—were making small talk with Qi Zhongdao and his companions.

They had just decided the new distribution of interests during the Dragon Spring Meeting. Naturally, their conversation was not as tense as the previous one.

However, the ambience was certainly not enthusiastic, either. If anything, it was even more depressed than the vibe of the Dragon Spring Meeting.

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao observed Qi Zhongdao with great interest.

The leader of the Cultivators, who was essentially a moderator of all affairs, was truly a very interesting fellow.

Of ‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren, Dan Fengzi, as well as the juniors including Orchid Angel Ling Lanyin, everybody agreed that Qi Zhongdao was a mannered man.

How mannered?

For example, if Qi Zhongdao had borrowed an amount of money from a guy, agreeing to return the principal with the interests at a certain time, yet the guy accidentally slept with Qi Zhongdao’s wife, then, after Qi Zhongdao killed the guy with one attack, when the day to pay the debt came, he would still return the principal sum and the interest to the guy’s tomb, without missing a penny.

Of course, such a thing could never happen, but that was the basic idea of how mannered the Iron Saint was!

During his chitchat with Yan Liren at the Dragon Spring Meeting, Li Yao pointed out the mysteries regarding the ‘fourth sword’ for him and somehow raised the position of both of them in the world of Cultivators.

But on the other hand, it was a slap right to the face of Qi Zhongdao, who was the victor of the match. He essentially dashed upward by stepping on Qi Zhongdao’s face.

Li Yao had thought that Qi Zhongdao would hate his guts and even retaliate.

It could not be helped. It was impossible to rise miraculously in a short time without pissing off anyone. That was a price that he had to pay.

Li Yao had made preparations for Qi Zhongdao’s vengeance, but he did not expect that, although Qi Zhongdao’s face was as gloomy as the bottom of a pot, the guy had remained silent the whole time.

In the end, he had even acted as if nothing had happened and reached an insignificant business deal with the Purple Pole Sword Sect on behalf of the Grand Mystery Sect, which was almost a public concession!

Later, in the secret meetings where the leaders of hundreds of sects were gathered and interests large and small in all fields were divided, Qi Zhongdao’s methods were even greater eye-openers for Li Yao.

The thousands of sects there were essentially a mess with the entangled interests and their grudges old and new.

Qi Zhongdao, however, had a certain skill that allowed him to pick out the clues in the mess. He was able to divide the interests according to the capabilities and the range of activities of the sects while ensuring that most of the sects could accept the arrangement, however reluctantly.

If some of the interests were not divided at all, he could also come up with a suitable dueling arrangement for the two parties. The champions of the two parties, the rules of the duel, and the criterion for victory were all proposed by him, and none of the parties involved disagreed.

What astonished Li Yao the most was that, when it came to 'Master Spiritual Vulture', who had just smacked his face hard, he also tried his best to steal a proportion of interests from the sects, including a fairly-good natural paradise and the annual protection fees in the transportation trade, and offer them to Li Yao for free!

At that time, Qi Zhongdao said such things to him.

“Master Spiritual Vulture, since you are able to suppress the three Cultivators in the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage easily, and you can discuss and fight with a great swordsman like Yan Liren, you are definitely among the most distinguished Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the Ancient Sages Sector!

“For such an unparalleled expert such as yourself, even if you do not have appropriate resources, you will certainly plunder them yourself later!

“It is certainly not an issue to plunder them, but you are new here, and you are not familiar with the rules of robbery in the Great Qian Dynasty yet!

“For Cultivators, the rules are our supreme authority. If everybody fights for resources according to the rules, even the tension between the Grand Mystery Sect and the Purple Pole Sword Sect today will still not be a big deal. We will divide the interests exactly according to the rules. After the result is out, we will still be fellow Cultivators, and we can still cooperate with each other.

“However, if somebody does not worship the rules and intends to knock over the entire table, disrupting all the other Cultivators’ lives, they will be public enemies.

“Today, I admire your expertise and offer you the resources that you deserve. They are the ‘rules’ that the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty have given you.

“However, after you accept the items, you will be a member of the Cultivator community of the Great Qian Dynasty.

“I don’t care what you did in the Southland of Sorcerers in the past, but the Great Qian Dynasty has the Great Qian Dynasty’s rules. Even if you are not interested in helping the weak or serving justice, every Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator should be a well-respected senior here. I hope that you cherish your identity. Slaughtering someone’s entire family after a dispute is absolutely forbidden here. Crimes such as killing the innocent and extracting their souls for training are all considered evil and crooked. They are the greatest taboos here!”

Chapter 1415 - Ghost Shadows

After saying that, Qi Zhongdao suddenly beamed with brutality and declared, “If you wish to earn your fame in the Great Qian Dynasty, Master Spiritual Vulture, we will certainly not stop you. However, if you are going to break the rules that everyone lives by, all the Cultivators in the world will beat you until you are dead. Even the Purple Pole Sword Sect won’t be able to shelter you. I will also spare nothing and will not rest until you are crucified!

“You can take your time and consider whether or not to accept the ‘rules’!”

It was the first confrontation between Li Yao and Qi Zhongdao, which made Li Yao understand why Dan Fengzi, the leader of the Purple Pole Sword Sect and Yan Liren’s senior brother, reminded Yan Liren time and time again that he must not kill Qi Zhongdao.

He also understood why the leader of all the Cultivators was still Qi Zhongdao but not and never Yan Liren, even if the latter’s combat ability was slightly higher than the former’s.

After three months, Qi Zhongdao was even darker and thinner, and his face had no expression the whole time. Rust seemed to have grown on the iron shell that covered his face.

“A febrile typhoon is here.”

After Li Yao and Yan Liren were seated, Qi Zhongdao went to the topic without greeting them at all.

Li Yao had heard of such typhoons before—they were a super natural disaster.

Different from the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Ancient Sages Sector had been locked for a hundred thousand years. The spiritual energy had nowhere to escape. So, its density here was much higher than that of the outside world.

The overabundant spiritual energy had some side effects other than making it convenient for the Cultivators’ training.

As far as Li Yao knew, there were at least two major disadvantages.

Firstly, because of the overly-abundant spiritual energy that nurtured all the creatures in the world, the animals and plants in the Ancient Sages Sector were much larger than their counterparts in a regular world. They were also more prone to mutations and could turn into demon beasts or demonic plants more easily. Some of them were quite brutal, posing a threat to ordinary people and low-level Cultivators.

Most of the mountains in the Ancient Sages Sector were surrounded by the most overwhelming primitive forests nurtured by spiritual energy. The forests where there was no sunlight all year long were frequented by all kinds of terrible monsters that could never be annihilated.

For some of the most infamously dangerous areas, even the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators did not dare march into them alone.

That was the reason the local Cultivation sects thrived. However, it was also the objective reason for the sects growing into independent kingdoms and an effective central government never really being established.

Because the states and the prefectures in the world were all blocked by the dangerous zones, the court, which supervised everything from the capital city, could not reach the local areas!

The second disadvantage would be the natural disasters.

The more abundant the spiritual energy was, the fiercer the reactions and the more unsteady the force fields of the entire Ancient Sages Sector.

Their manifestations within the atmosphere and above the crust were shocking, extreme weather conditions. The super natural disasters, which contained such furious spiritual energy that even the Cultivators had to step back in fear, were anything but unusual.

In the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the rarely-seen thunderstorms or sandstorms on the Grand Desolate Plateau were just common weather phenomena in the Ancient Sages Sector.

Even landslides, earthquakes, tsunamis, tornadoes, and other natural disasters of a low intensity could escalate into super natural disasters instantly if the furious spiritual energy that they carried caused a resonance!

A febrile typhoon, on the other hand, was one of the most dreadful natural disasters in the Ancient Sages Sector.

It had originally been a superstorm generated on the tropical oceans. However, while it was marching toward the continent, it had mixed with the ‘gales’ that wandered below the atmosphere and contained tremendous violent spiritual energy. As a result, it would evolve into the highly destructive febrile typhoon!

According to the nature of the spiritual energy mixed, the febrile typhoons would show different characteristics.

Some of the most freezing febrile typhoons, after landing, would turn everything in their path into a snowy world. All the creatures would be frozen.

Some of the febrile typhoons that contained the power of thunder were like a bunch of lightning dragons rolling on the ground. Whatever they caught would be electrified into ash!

However, most of the febrile typhoons were still related to the spiritual energy of the fire class. Such febrile typhoons were flowing flames that left a scorching inferno wherever they reached. Even if the victims of the disaster survived, the crops in the farmland would certainly be destroyed.

The term ‘febrile typhoon’ meant ‘the wind that could burn anything’ in the first place.

If it was just that, the febrile typhoon was still far from a ‘super natural disaster’.

The most dreadful thing about the febrile typhoon was that there was no telling what mysteries the electromagnetic fields inside the febrile typhoons had, but the creatures killed miserably by the febrile typhoons, and even the dead bodies that were swept over by the febrile typhoons after they died, could mutate and become the most hideous ghouls!

According to the information that Li Yao had collected on his way on the Sorcerers’ River, it was an overstatement that

Han Yuantai blamed the rise of the White Lotus Cult entirely on the ‘Jade Crystal Pellets’ the other day.

The Jade Crystal Pellets were certainly part of the reason, but the most important reason that the White Lotus Cult was never annihilated was that the febrile typhoons would make the dead walk again and turn the remaining souls into deadly ghouls every time that they passed by.

Whenever the White Lotus Cult was dwindling away, it was not unusual for a febrile typhoon to pass by and transform countless poor peasants into ghouls who would become available soldiers of the White Lotus Cult again.

“The febrile typhoon of this year is particularly rough. Three days ago, a febrile typhoon landed and savaged the southeast, causing grievous damage. On top of that, in ten days, another febrile typhoon of a larger scale will probably march northward, very close to the southeast shoreline. If it slightly deviates from the trajectory and lands again, there is going to be a catastrophe!”

Qi Zhongdao explained the situation in the southeast to the people of the Purple Pole Sword Sect. “To make matters worse, the two febrile typhoons happened to arrive at a time when the Sorcerers’ River is in the middle of the spring flood season!

“The water level is high, and the wind is strong. The flood of the Sorcerers’ River has been unusually large in recent decades. Should the dams collapse, and the Sorcerers’ River changes its course, it is very possible that a large area will be flooded!

“Too many people will lose their homes or be killed in the flood. Their remaining souls will not disperse so quickly. When the febrile typhoons blow at them, they will very likely turn into the most brutal ghouls. If an army of a million ghouls tramples on the prosperous land in the southeast, the place will be hopelessly ruined!

“Naturally, ‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu will not let go of such a heavenly opportunity. According to the message that the Grand Mystery Sect has received, Wan Mingzhu’s ghost shadows have appeared near East Peace County. It is very possible that she will lead thousands of ghouls to attack East Peace County!”

The news cast the people of the Purple Pole Sword Sect into silence.

Even Li Yao’s eyelids were twitching.

East Peace County was a famous city in the southeast of the Great Qian Dynasty. Although it was not nearly as large as Divine Capital, it was even more prosperous and flamboyant. For thousands of years, it had always been an important town for training in the southeast. Dozens of Cultivation sects had headquartered near East Peace County.

If East Peace County was attacked by the White Lotus Cult’s ghoul army, even if it was nothing but a bluff or a gesture, it would be a shocking piece of news. The Heaven Battering Army in the northwest would certainly be boosted by the stimulation, and Ghost Qin’s people in the Dark Cloud Prairies would be more ambitious than ever!

“The thirty-three sects near East Peace County have sent out a call for help, hoping that the fellow Cultivators everywhere can give them a hand to save East Peace County from the looming catastrophe!”

“As of now, Master Bitter Cicada of the Stupa Temple has already moved to the southeast to appease the deceased. It is said that Fellow Cultivator Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar is also wandering around the homeless peasants to calm everyone down and cope with the natural disaster together!”

Li Yao’s interest was suddenly aroused.

If a rank of ‘top ten experts of the Ancient Sages Sector’ was made, Master Bitter Cicada of the Stupa Temple and Ba Xiaoyu the ‘Beggar’ were certainly the two that he admired most.

In the three thousand Sectors, religions and schools whose grand wish was ‘universal salvation’ were not rare. In the Ancient Sages Sector, such a lineage was known as the Stupa Temple.

Master Bitter Cicada of the Stupa Temple was a truly wise and awakened Cultivator. Although his capabilities were on par with the Three Saints and Four Rapscallions, he was never involved in the conflicts in the world of Cultivators but focused his full attention on dealing with natural disasters.

Wherever there was a natural disaster, there was Master Bitter Cicada. He provided food and water, mollified the deceased, and pacified the living. His prestige was unparalleled among the ordinary folks.

Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar was the same.

His main focus was not to provide food for the victims but to deal with the officials, nobles, and Cultivation sects that earned a great fortune immorally during the natural disaster. He often humiliated the shameless officials and Cultivators in the most hilarious ways.

Even according to the standard of the modern Cultivation civilization, the two seniors could be called real Cultivators.

Li Yao had long meant to get in touch with them, but he had never found a chance.

‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu was also an important person—or rather, an important ghost—on Li Yao’s observation list. Li Yao would like to witness the charm of the ‘mother of all ghosts’ with his own eyes!

“One third of the training resources of the Great Qian Dynasty are yielded from the southeast. Nobody will benefit if the place is destroyed!”

Staring at Yan Liren and Li Yao, Qi Zhongdao said, “I believe that your sect is well aware of the interests in the region and will send reinforcements!

“However, if we set our target as ‘resist the natural disaster and dispel the ghoul army’ as we did in the past, it will not solve the problem from the source!

“‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu is the source of the riot. The ghouls will come back again as long as Wan Mingzhu is not eliminated!

“Therefore, I’m hoping that we can work together to remove the White Lotus Cult and execute Wan Mingzhu!”

“It’s not going to be easy to kill Wan Mingzhu!” Dan Fengzi, leader of the Purple Pole Sword Sect, suddenly remarked. “Wan Mingzhu is a top ten expert. She is also an unpredictable ghost without a real entity who can be attached to anyone alive.

“It is not easy to catch her, much less kill her!”

It was not an excuse but a well-grounded concern.

For those at the level of Li Yao, Yan Liren, or Qi Zhongdao, it was one thing to ‘defeat’ them, and it was another thing to ‘kill’ them. The latter was ten times more difficult than the former!

Li Yao and Qi Zhongdao could not defeat Yan Liren, but if they were determined to run away, with their life-saving skills and tools, it would be almost impossible for Yan Liren to kill them.

The two of them were still living people with bodies of flesh and blood; Wan Mingzhu, on the other hand, was just an unpredictable ghost. So, it would only be more difficult to execute her.

Chapter 1416 - Tall Trees Are Hit First!

“It’s certainly not going to be easy to kill Wan Mingzhu, but it’s not entirely impossible if all Cultivators join our hands!”

Qi Zhongdao still appeared emotionless, but passion was beaming out of his eyes as he said solemnly, “In the past dozen years, Wang Xi has been stirring trouble in the court. Everybody in the world of Cultivators could only mind their own business under the threat. The scoundrels such as Wan Mingzhu, Qi Changsheng, and Han Baling took the opportunity to rise, and they have grown stronger to the point that they are barely eliminable!

“Right now, the new emperor has ascended to the throne, Wang Xi is on the run, and the Cultivators are united again!

“If we don’t take the chance to remove Wan Mingzhu, Qi Changsheng, Han Baling, and other evil rebels, there will be endless trouble later!

“Wan Mingzhu is indeed the mother of all ghosts, but Fellow Cultivator Yan, Master Spiritual Vulture, Master Bitter Cicada, Fellow Cultivator Ba Xiaoyu, and I are certainly on par with her, if not slightly better!

“As long as we find Wan Mingzhu and fight her together in a suitable trap, the odds are very high that we can execute her once and for all!”

“Well…” Dan Fengzi hesitated and hinted at Li Yao. “Right now, the troops of the court have been dispatched to East

Peace County to settle the riot. The elites from the Ghost Armor Clan, Thunderstorm Valley, Flying Spirit Island, the Monster Taming Pavilion, and hundreds of other sects are on their way to the southeast to slay those evils, too!”

Turning a blind eye to Dan Fengzi’s hint, Qi Zhongdao went on. “We don’t need to talk more about our responsibility to slay evil and serve justice. I only want to add one thing. This time, the febrile typhoon and the flood season have overlapped and will certainly evolve into a super natural disaster. Many sects in the southeast will certainly be uprooted!

“After the natural disaster, large vacant areas that are not protected by the Cultivation sects will be left behind. By then, won’t all the people count on the six major sects to supervise the situation for them to live a better life?

“If we don’t go there and simply allow the local smaller sects to fight each other, chances are that there will be a catastrophe even more dreadful than the super natural disaster!”

The meaning between the lines was obvious. He was instigating the Purple Pole Sword Sect to start a turf war there.

Dan Fengzi smiled. Nodding, giving neither approval nor disapproval, he said, “Slay evil, serve justice, and help the people are what all righteous people should do. With a natural disaster incoming and the people in an abyss of suffering, the Purple Pole Sword Sect will certainly do our best!

“However, as you have seen, Master, to host the Dragon Spring Meeting three months ago, the Purple Pole Sword

Sect used up all our accumulated resources. We are now still slowly recovering!

“This is too important an issue that requires deliberation. If we are indeed sending a large batch of empyreal swordsmen to go to the southeast, we will have to make thorough plans. You must excuse us, Master!”

“Of course.” There was neither frustration nor delight on Qi Zhongdao’s face. He turned to Yan Liren and said, “Fellow Cultivator Yan, thank you for going easy on me in the battle three months ago so that I was not humiliated in public. Other people may not know this, but I absolutely agree with Master Spiritual Vulture. Your sword is indeed unparalleled!

“But I do wonder, is the unparalleled sword in the world enough to slay the mother of all ghosts in the world?”

Yan Liren blinked. His bald forehead was suddenly shining, and even his breath became hotter than before.

“Master Spiritual Vulture.” Qi Zhongdao turned to Li Yao. “Since you have come to the Great Qian Dynasty to earn a name for yourself, after the super natural disaster, won’t the vacant prosperous land in the southeast be the best stage for your performance?

“I look forward to fighting side by side with Fellow Cultivator Yan and Master Spiritual Vulture to slay the evils there!”

Not caring about Dan Fengzi’s extremely awful expression, Qi Zhongdao finished his remark slowly before he left the room.

Dan Fengzi coughed. He made a gesture to the elders on the spot but led Li Yao to a fine cottage next to a waterfall behind the Sword Washing Pavilion.

As the leader of the Purple Pole Sword Sect and Yan Liren's senior brother, Dan Fengzi was also an extraordinary sword Cultivator.

However, his abilities in making judgements and decisions were even sharper than his sword, which could be seen by his methods in hiring Li Yao as a visiting elder of the Purple Pole Sword Sect.

Li Yao could become a visiting elder of the Purple Pole Sword Sect and be given twice resources, but if Li Yao refused, the Purple Pole Sword Sect would rather go against Li Yao than ask for his help!

Li Yao thought quite highly of Dan Fengzi. He believed that the leader was a person whom he could communicate and negotiate with. In a certain extreme scenario, he could even consider hiring the entire Purple Pole Sword Sect as a whole and regroup it into a certain 'Purple Pole Mercenary Group', which would command and manage themselves and carry out relatively large strategic operations.

The reward of the contract could be an assembly line of modern flying swords or an assault warship that was best at close-distance battles… Everything was negotiable.

"Are you planning to go southeast, Elder Spiritual Vulture?"

While Li Yao was making plans, Dan Fengzi went directly to the topic while he looked at the waterfall outside, which was brushing the rocks.

"I'm tempted." Li Yao had thought of an excuse. "As you know, leader, we barbarian Cultivators are best at playing with poisons and ghosts. Although I have received the heritage of Yan Zhu, a sword forger from Great Zhou, I never forget where I come from. Since Wan Mingzhu claims to be the ‘mother of all ghosts’, naturally, I want to check out how capable the ghost is!

“Besides, Master Righteous One does have a point. After the super natural disaster, a lot of sects in the southeast will have been destroyed. Does the Purple Pole Sword Sect not want to fill the vacancy in the southeast with the chance?”

Dan Fengzi smiled and shook his head. “You might not know the whole of it yet, Elder Spiritual Vulture. You must not believe everything that Master Righteous One said. This issue is definitely not so simple!”

“Oh? Frowning, Li Yao cackled. “Was the noble leader of all Cultivators lying?”

“Not exactly,” Dan Fengzi explained patiently. “Firstly, Elder Spiritual Vulture, you’ve spent most of your life in the Southland of Sorcerers, and I’m afraid that you don’t know how tough the febrile typhoons are. The febrile typhoons are essentially super gales that have landed on the ground with immense, violent spiritual energy that will seriously affect the souls and veins of the Cultivators!

“If caught in a febrile typhoon, even Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators have to summon all their spiritual energy to resist it. One moment of carelessness, and the febrile typhoon will invade their body and soul, resulting in a decline in their Cultivation!

“The greatest headache with the febrile typhoons is that they seem to have wisdom that allows them to search for the Cultivator with the highest Cultivation within the range of their rampage automatically. They will cause the greatest damage to said Cultivator, while the Cultivators of lower levels and ordinary people will suffer much less!

“Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators such as you and me will be their primary targets if we enter the febrile typhoons!”

Li Yao furrowed his brow. “Is that so?”

In fact, he understood it perfectly. The specialists in the Star Glory Federation had long figured out the reason of the common phenomenon in super natural disasters.

The higher a Cultivator’s level was, the more immense the spiritual energy inside their body would be. The spiritual energy would generate a powerful force field.

When the force field caused by the super natural disaster approached, it would naturally interact with the most powerful force field first.

A more vivid metaphor would be that, during a thunderstorm, the lightning would always hit lightning rods and trees first. The higher the lightning rod and the trees were, the more likely they would be struck.

The high-level Cultivators, just like lightning rods and trees, were the first ones to take the blow.

“The devastation of the febrile typhoons is just the beginning of the disaster,” Dan Fengzi said. “Based on our experience in the past, after every febrile typhoon, there will be a large batch of victims.

“When the victims die miserably, they turn into aggressive ghouls full of hatred. Although such ghouls are insignificant in capabilities and can cause little damage to Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators such as you and me, when there are too many of them, it is possible for them to corrupt our soul and make our mind impure, which can be quite troublesome!

“Since you are from the Southland of Sorcerers, Elder Spiritual Vulture, you must be aware of some methods to baptize the aggressive ghouls. However, I believe that the methods only allow you to deal with a hundred or so ghouls at most, right? What can you do if hundreds of thousands of aggressive ghouls present themselves in front of you?

“Qi Zhongdao, Yan Liren, Master Bitter Cicada, Ba Xiaoyu, Elder Spiritual Vulture—altogether the five ‘high-level Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators’—with dozens of regular Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators seem to be an invincible army. However, if a million ghouls come at us at the same time like a tide, it will still be almost impossible for us to resist!

“The most critical issue is, even if we kill all the ghouls and even uproot the White Lotus Cult, so what? What benefits are there?

“High-level demon beasts have demon cores. The powerful spiritual animals have beast crystals and spiritual bones. A perilous adventure in the dangerous land can yield a lot of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures that we want. So, it is worthwhile to execute the devils, however risky it is.

“However, if we engage with the army of ghouls, even if we try our best to blow apart their souls, we will gain absolutely nothing. Instead, the broken pieces of their souls might pollute our soul and belief. It is definitely not worth the risk!”

“So, that’s the case,” Li Yao sneered. “Isn’t Master Righteous One implying that the Purple Pole Sword Sect can grab a piece of land in the southeast? Isn’t it a benefit?”

“On the contrary, it is the greatest disaster that might even spell the doom of the Purple Pole Sword Sect!” Dan Fengzi said solemnly. “You must’ve heard an old saying before, Elder Spiritual Vulture, the tall trees are hit first. Do you know why I insisted that Junior Brother Yan not kill Qi Zhongdao in the Dragon Spring Meeting three months ago?”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes. “Because Qi Zhongdao is a man who values rules, and he is the only one who can manage to maintain the balance of the Great Qian Dynasty?”

“That’s only part of the reason,” Dan Fengzi said. “More importantly, I didn’t want Junior Brother Yan to win in the first place. I intentionally wanted him to lose!”

“Oh?” Li Yao was slightly dazed. His eyes suddenly glittered. “Why?”

“Master Spiritual Vulture, do you know which sect is the largest one in the world?” Dan Fengzi asked back.

Li Yao frowned. “The Grand Mystery Sect is well acknowledged to be the largest sect. However, when Wang Xi was in power, with the connections with him, the Purple Pole Sword Sect had hopes to assume the position, too!”

“Wrong.” With a weird smile, Dan Fengzi replied, “It’s not the Grand Mystery Sect, nor the Purple Pole Sword Sect, but the Thunderous Qian Hall!”

Chapter 1417 - Emperor Phoenix!

“Thunderous Qian Hall?” Li Yao’s eyes narrowed. The Thunderous Qian Hall was the super sect that had established the Great Qian Dynasty a thousand years ago and the current royal family of the Great Qian Dynasty.

Theoretically speaking, it was indeed the ‘greatest sect in the world’, but few people really considered the royal family as a sect.

“Elder Spiritual Vulture, you must understand that two tigers cannot live in harmony on one mountain. If you were the leader of the ‘greatest sect in the world’, how would you view an ambitious force that is more or less capable of replacing you?”

Li Yao’s facial muscles were twisting, as he replied coldly, “An eyesore, of course!”

“Exactly. Therefore, the ‘greatest sect in the sword’ is certainly not a position worth bragging about. On the contrary, it is a death sentence for anyone who bears it!”

After pondering for a moment, Dan Fengzi said, “When the late emperor was on the throne, to balance the sects in the world and especially to deal with the Grand Mystery Sect, the largest sect in the world, he supported the Purple Pole Sword Sect through Wang Xi, allowing the Purple Pole Sword Sect to quickly expand. His purpose was to raise an ‘enemy’ for the Grand Mystery Sect so that the royal family could take advantage while we are fighting!

“Although the Purple Pole Sword Sect understood the late emperor and Wang Xi’s aims, many issues were actually not up to us. The fact that the late emperor was willing to make use of us proved that we were at least worthy of being used. So, we might take the chance and have a go!

“It was a pity that the Grand Mystery Sect was still too deeply rooted. Thousands of years of heritage and accumulation cannot be shaken overnight. When the late emperor passed away and Wang Xi fled in panic, there was still a gap between us and the Grand Mystery Sect. We failed to develop to a point where nobody else dared mess with us.

“But at that time, we were already showing our power to the full extent!”

At that point, Li Yao interjected. “But I’m told that the new emperor is different from the old emperor. He has already conceded to the Cultivators. Otherwise, Wang Xi’s forces wouldn’t have collapsed so quickly!”

“Just because the new emperor wants Wang Xi dead doesn’t mean he will lower his head to the Cultivators.” Dan Fengzi chuckled. “Killing Wang Xi was perhaps just a move he played to ease the major sect’s alert when he was new to power and did not have much support. Or, maybe it was because he was not able to trust the late emperor’s subordinates and wanted to raise his own ‘Wang Xi’!

“All in all, according to the intelligence I’ve collected from various sources, Emperor Phoenix is certainly not someone to be underestimated. He might be a man ten times more dreadful than Wang Xi!”

According to the tradition of the Ancient Sages Emperor, after an emperor passed away, he would be designated with a special posthumous title. When the emperor was still alive, he would be addressed under the year name. Right now, it was ‘year two of the phoenix’. So, the incumbent emperor was called ‘Emperor Phoenix’.

In the world of ancient Cultivators, strength was power. For many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, the so-called emperor was merely a butler who organized the resources in the world on behalf of them. They did not have much reverence.

Dan Fengzi and Li Yao were both in the Nascent Soul Stage. It was not unusual for them to not address the emperor in a more respectful way.

“This year is year two of the phoenix, but ‘phoenix’ is not in the collection of names that our ancestors made. It is an unorthodox name. The year name should’ve been ‘light martial’,” Dan Fengzi said. “The year name was proposed by the new emperor himself, meaning that ‘the phoenix will be reborn from the fire’. It is the first sign of his ambitions!

“Many ministers object to the year name, but the new emperor insists on it. The debate remains unabated in the court even to this day. It is quite a fuss. Many ministers are trying to fix the orthodox year name. The issue has been called ‘Debate of Decorum’ by many people!

“In fact, it doesn’t really matter at all what exactly the year name is. This is just a way for ‘Emperor Phoenix’ to show his power. It is evident enough that he will never be content with hiding in Divine Capital and being a carefree emperor. He definitely wants to achieve something!

“When a new local official comes to the office, they have to adopt certain extreme policies to intimidate the local magnates. Emperor Phoenix is new to the throne. This is exactly when he is whetting his saber, looking for a target to demonstrate his power!

“The Purple Pole Sword Sect is deeply connected to Wang Xi and the late emperor in the first place. In recent years, we have been too heated, too. That’s why we are involved in the case of the eunuch’s conspirator. The Dragon Spring Meeting three months ago seemed to be an occasion where the other sects threatened the Hundred Blade Mountain, but was Emperor Phoenix really not behind it?

“In our own headquarters, we would not be scared even if the Grand Mystery Sect came together with the other four major sects, but if the ‘Thunderous Qian Hall’, the real greatest sect in the world, was also behind everything, it would be something that the Purple Pole Sword Sect couldn’t resist alone!

“That is why I wanted Junior Brother Yan to lose the battle. It was partly meant to show our weakness, and partly to transmit some of the interests to the Grand Mystery Sect with the opportunity. It would be better if we reached a real alliance with the Grand Mystery Sect so that we could cope with Emperor Phoenix’s possible moves later!

“However, we did not expect that Master Spiritual Vulture would suddenly show up, leading to unanticipated changes in the situation. It was truly…”

Li Yao coughed in embarrassment. He did not know that there were so many backstories to the Dragon Spring Meeting, which made him look rather naïve.

With a conflicted expression, Dan Fengzi said, “The Purple Pole Sword Sect boasts the Hundred Blade Mountain, which is an intersection of the various mother lodes in the world. We produce the finest weapons and magical equipment. We also have a group of strong swordsmen!

“The only thing that we are short of is a large area of farmland where we can plant Jade Crystal Pellets and plantations where we can raise Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures.

“Both of the two things can be found in the southeast, the land of honey and milk!

“If we expand to the southeast as Master Righteous One said and even grasp a certain prefecture or county, we will have mines, farmland, elite soldiers, and unparalleled experts such as Junior Brother Yan and you, Elder Spiritual Vulture!

“If I were the emperor, I would have trouble eating and sleeping when there was such a super sect. I would definitely write the name of the sect next to my bed to remind myself every day that I have to get rid of it as soon as possible!”

Cold sweat popping out, Li Yao shrieked, “Damn Qi Zhongdao. How sordid he is!”

“Not exactly.” Dan Fengzi smiled bitterly. “I believe that Master Righteous One is definitely not someone who intentionally plays tricks. He is sincerely considering for the entire community of Cultivators. He wants all the Cultivators to be united no matter what, to fight the natural disasters, evils, barbarians, emperor, and all other things that do not value rules!

“It’s a shame that, although he is a mannered Cultivator, this is an era without manners and rules!

“Master Spiritual Vulture, don’t be fooled when he said that the elites from the Grand Mystery Sect, the Gold Armor Clan, Flying Spirit Island, Thunderstorm Valley, and the Monster Taming Pavilion were all out. It was probably an overstatement. Not just the Ghost Armor Clan and everybody else, can he really command the Grand Mystery Sect?”

Li Yao was dazed. “As I recall, he seemed to be quite charismatic in the Dragon Spring Meeting three months ago!”

“How can that be the same?” Dan Fengzi was amused. “The Dragon Spring Meeting was a time when a thousand sects came to divide the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s interests. Master Righteous One was expected to withstand the top experts such as Junior Brother Yan. Naturally, everybody listened to him. After all, praising him as the leader of all Cultivators wouldn’t cost them anything!

“However, fighting a super natural disaster and an army of ghouls for real is different. If they fail, they will have casualties and lose a fortune. If they win, they will attract Emperor Phoenix’s hate, too. What are the court and the emperor for if the Cultivators have done everything to deal with the trouble?

“Do you see it now? This is a deal with zero gains. You can neither win nor lose. Who will really listen to Master Righteous One and mind the business irrelevant to themselves?”

The business irrelevant to themselves… Li Yao was meaning to ask, if all the Cultivators stepped back, what could the victims struggling in the febrile typhoons and flood do?

But he did not ask in the end. He merely observed, “So, that’s the reason. However, what do you mean by saying that Master Righteous One can barely command the Grand Mystery Sect?”

“If he commanded the Grand Mystery Sect, he would be the ‘leader’ instead of the ‘grand leader’!” Weird brilliance was beaming out of Dan Fengzi’s eyes. “Do you like a senior nagging you about rules every day, Elder Spiritual Vulture?”

Li Yao pondered for a moment and realized the reason.

Qi Zhongdao was certainly not a likeable man, much less someone that other people found attractive and wanted to make friends with.

The best treatment for someone like him seemed to be to enshrine him in the sky as a flag and a mascot.

“All in all, I’ve talked with you about so many things today, Elder Spiritual Vulture, because I don’t want you to be bound to Master Righteous One without knowing what is going on,” Dan Fengzi said sincerely. “Although you agreed to only work as a visiting elder for one year, your contributions to the Purple Pole Sword Sect will never be forgotten by the hundreds of thousands of disciples of this sect. Naturally, we don’t want anything to happen to you.

“Since the thirty-three Cultivation sects in East Peace County have sent out calls for help to all the Cultivators in the world, the Purple Pole Sword Sect will certainly dispatch reinforcements. Seeing Junior Brother Yan’s shining forehead, I can tell that it will not be possible to stop him from meeting Mother White Lotus. However, you and Junior Brother Yan are different, Elder Spiritual Vulture. You should understand the benefits and drawbacks in all this!

“All in all, a trip to the southeast will be unavoidable. However, the Purple Pole Sword Sect has no intention of expanding in the southeast. Our elite swordsmen will not be all sent out, either. Elder Spiritual Vulture, you and Junior Brother Yan must consider your own safety as your primary concern. It doesn’t matter whether or not Mother White Lotus is executed!”

Li Yao took a long breath. “Thank you for your enlightenment, leader. It appears that the White Lotus Cult will not be annihilated yet again, will it?”

“Indeed, it won’t!” With a smile of derision, Dan Fengzi said, “Other than Master Righteous One, Master Bitter Cicada, and perhaps Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar, how many Cultivators in the entire world truly mean to get mired in the dirty water? I fear that you can’t even find half of them!”

Chapter 1418 - Surging Flood!

Boom!

Crack!

Li Yao had never seen such dreadful lightning, devastating gales, or crazy flooding before!

It was noon, yet the world was completely dark. The sullen clouds that could not have been more intense were wriggling nonstop and pressing down on the land, enveloping all creatures in the stomach of a monolithic beast leavening no escape!

The lightning was striking down like waterfalls. The bolts looked like dragons that had crawled out of the clouds and ghost hands that were reaching toward the ground, raising bluish fire on the earth!

The rain was much more than ‘pouring’. It was like another vast ocean in the sky was now running down because the sky was broken and was about to swallow the entire world!

The lightning was already appalling enough, but the fierce wind was even more appalling!

The fierce wind was the aftershock of the febrile typhoon. The spiritual energy inside that had nowhere to run to was savaging the land in blast. In the wind were the uprooted trees, the destroyed buildings, and the broken limbs of countless creatures. The wind was like a behemothic, invisible mincer that was mincing everything on the earth, leaving absolutely nothing behind!

Not just the ordinary people and the low-level Cultivators, even the experts in the Core Formation Stage and the Nascent Soul Stage did not dare ride their flying swords in such a thunderstorm.

If so, they would be the primary targets for the furious spiritual energy between the sky and the earth!

With the wind, the storm, and the lightning as the background, the flood in the Sorcerers’ River was on a rampage.

The Sorcerers’ River had undergone drastic changes compared to what Li Yao had seen four months earlier.

It should have been springtime. Many snowy mountains along Sorcerers’ River had thawed. The melted snow flowed down along the river, increasing the instant flow of the Sorcerers’ River by more than five years, leading to the unstoppable spring flood!

If the Sorcerers’ River, which spanned the entire Great Qian Dynasty, had been a sleeping dragon, then the ravenous dragon had fully woken up and was raging to claim sacrifices to fill its belly!

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The flood crests, each higher than the last, were crashing against the vulnerable dams on the two sides of the Sorcerers’ River. The defense rune arrays deployed in the heyday of the Great Qian Dynasty were releasing dim light. However, they had corroded and rusted after such a long time due to the lack of maintenance, and their defense ability was far worse than before!

If the dams were broken, the flood would be surging out. The Sorcerer’s River would even change its course altogether, leading to a large inundated area. The consequences could be dire!

That was the scene that Li Yao, Dan Fengzi, Yan Liren, and hundreds of empyreal swordsmen saw when they were on their way to the southeast to provide aid.

The flood, on the other hand, was not nearly the most dangerous thing at hand.

“Ho! Hoooooooo!”

Amid the surging tides raised by the flood, blood-freezing echoes would occasionally resound.

The flood destroyed not only the homes of the ordinary people and the Cultivators but also the valleys and forests in the basin of the Sorcerers’ River. A lot of ferocious animals that had been lurking in the forests were forced out!

Since the living environment of the animals had greatly changed, and the previous prey had been swept away by the flood, they could not help but look for new territory.

During their search, it was inevitable that they would have fierce conflicts with other ferocious animals and even the Cultivators!

“A lot of dragon-type animals are hiding inside the Sorcerers’ River. Be careful, everyone, and consider your safety your primary concern. Don’t do anything until we meet Master

Righteous One and the fellow Cultivators from other sects!” Dan Fengzi roared desperately inside the storm.

Faced with the pugnacity of nature, there was not much that the Cultivators could do even though they often considered themselves brilliant. They could only watch the lightning, storm, wind, flood, and animals in the flood crashing against the feeble defense rune arrays on the dams time and time again.

“Leader, look over there!”

One of the empyreal swordsmen suddenly exclaimed and pointed at the flood. The tides of the flood were rising abruptly like a mountain soaring to the clouds.

When they looked carefully, they discovered a bright purple dragon-type animal that was almost a hundred meters long in the dirty flood. The front end of the animal even split into three hideous big heads. Each of the heads was packed with dense thorns that made them look like three gigantic iron thistles!

Pu! Pu! Pu!

The thorny dragon was quite weird. It opened its three bloody mouths and spat out three pearls the size of basins, which moved in the flood without meeting the least hindrance before they hit the dams brutally.

Boom!

A few defense rune arrays set up at the back of the dams exploded on the spot. The dams, which were already vulnerable enough, immediately revealed more than ten shocking cracks that were quickly spreading!

“What is this animal exactly? It looks like a Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon, but why is it so large with three heads?”

“It has already accumulated three demon cores. Considering its enormous size, it must’ve been training deep inside the Sorcerers’ River for hundreds of years. It wouldn’t have surfaced had it not been for the once-in-a-hundred-years flood!”

“Horrible! Horrible! Another few crashes, and the dams will completely collapse. Let’s get out of here quickly!”

Faced with the ferocious animal that seemed to have travelled to the present day from the primeval era, the empyreal swordsmen were all petrified.

“Elder Spiritual Vulture!” Dan Fengzi’s face looked extremely awful, too. “I didn’t know that the natural disaster this time would be so tough. Just the flood of the Sorcerers’ River and the aftershock of the febrile typhoon alone are so powerful! I can’t imagine what the places that were in the paths of the febrile typhoons have possibly gone through!

“The dams are about to collapse. Let’s get out of here quickly. Should we get involved in the flood and have to fight against the lightning, storm, and flood, our souls will be shocked, and our Cultivation will plunge even if we are in the Core Formation Stage or the Nascent Soul Stage!”

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao observed the shaking dams in front of him, but he was actually thinking about the farmlands and towns that he had seen when he passed the place for the first time on the flying sword.

This area of the Sorcerers’ River was the most prosperous land of the Great Qian Dynasty. Naturally, it was also the most populated place. The population in a town there was often larger than the population of a city in the southwest.

After the febrile typhoon landed, a lot of homeless victims had already fled westward along the Sorcerers’ River, further adding to the population of the towns and villages nearby.

If the dams collapsed, allowing the Sorcerers’ River to change course, it would spell the deaths of the thousands of homeless victims!

Li Yao could not wait and just watch such a tragedy.

However, with the temper and personality of Master Spiritual Vulture, he should not be a man who would fight for the ordinary people without considering anything.

Li Yao’s hesitation was misunderstood by Dan Fengzi, who frowned and said, “Elder Spiritual Vulture, are you planning to take the three extraordinary demon cores?

“You must not!

“This dragon-type animal is probably a mutation of a ‘Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon’. Judging from the size, it has already trained inside the Sorcerers’ River for almost a thousand years. Chances are that it already existed before the Great Qian Dynasty was founded!

“Dragon-type animals are born with water. Right now, the surging flood has increased its ferocity. It is too risky to hunt it right now!

“If you are truly interested in the animal, we can always wait until it breaks the dams and escapes to the plateau. It will be much easier to be dealt with when it is stranded and the weather is better!”

Li Yao’s lips moved. He was of a mind to ask Dan Fengzi if the guy had ever considered the ordinary people living on the two sides of the Sorcerers’ River besides hunting the animal and taking the cores.

But he forced back the words before he said them out.

Dan Fengzi was talking so matter-of-factly as if he were considering Li Yao’s interests made him lost for words!

“Ho! Ho! Ho!”

Right then, the three-headed Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon roared in the most deafening noise again. The three demon cores rushed out and, like three enormous magnets, attracted all the lightning nearby. Centered at the demon cores, three balls of lightning—one blue, one purple and one green—were formed!

Crack! Crack! Crack!

The balls of lightning expanded quickly in the wind and soon expanded to more than ten meters in diameter. The storm clouds around them were disintegrated into mist, which surrounded the lightning hazily, further adding to the invincibility and indestructibility of the balls of lightning!

Seeing that the three balls of lightning were about to crash into the dams, Li Yao was about to rush out to ‘slay the dragon and loot the demon cores’, his heart pounding faster than ever, when bold brilliance suddenly shot out of the dark clouds toward the multi-headed dragon overwhelmingly like burning golden arrows!

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

Hundreds of arrows immediately hit the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon, riddling it with holes and making it bleed hard!

Because of the excruciating pain, the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon could only give up the dams and redirect the three balls of lightning toward the clouds!

Boom!

The balls of lightning tore apart the clouds and vanished into thin air. The only things left were three somewhat lackluster demon cores that were rotating in midair.

Above the broken clouds, a moon-white cassock, surrounded by a dim golden glow, was flapping in the wind, like a boat in the middle of a surging ocean.

Right above the cassock, a monk was standing.

He was possibly the most handsome man that Li Yao had ever seen.

It was not an exaggeration to say that he truly seemed to have been carved out of an entire piece of jade or marble, and nothing—even time, which could corrode everything—could detract from his handsomeness by one thousandth!

The only thing that slightly undermined his handsomeness was the vague bitterness that covered his face.

If one was to appreciate it carefully, the merciful bitterness actually brought his appearance to a whole new level, where one could not even feel jealous or inferior to him!

“Master Bitter Cicada of the Stupa Temple!” Dan Fengzi exclaimed in a low voice!

Chapter 1419 - Fighting the Sky and the Earth!

Li Yao was greatly shocked.

The handsome-looking monk who looked like a young man in his twenties was actually Master Bitter Cicada, who was not counted in the Three Saints and Four Rapscallions but also considered among the top ten experts!

According to Dan Fengzi and Yan Liren’s previous remarks, Master Bitter Cicada’s Cultivation should have been much greater than that.

He was a real genius in training who was naturally wise, and he had been a top expert seventy years earlier. He was even believed to be the best expert who had the highest chance to step into the Divinity Transformation Stage after Wu Suiyun and Meng Chixin!

Even the proud Sword Maniac frankly admitted that, if Master Bitter Cicada had been focused on training in seclusion without caring about anything else, his achievements would have been far higher than Yan Liren’s!

However, Master Bitter Cicada’s ambition did not seem to be the Divinity Transformation Stage. Instead, he was really putting the mantra of the Stupa Temple, which was ‘universal salvation’, into practice and spent most of his time and effort on resisting the natural disasters and assisting the ordinary people.

It was said that, in the past several decades, he had fought tsunamis dozens of meters high, extinguished a forest fire that had spread thousands of square kilometers, and suppressed a volcano near a prosperous town that had been about to erupt purely on his own. As a result, he had exhausted too much of his spiritual energy and been heavily wounded multiple times. His Cultivation had stagnated and was even dropping.

Master Bitter Cicada, who had half stepped into the Divinity Transformation Stage, was only on par with the Three Saints and Four Rapscallions, if not slightly weaker, after decades of hard work.

In the middle of the thunderstorm, Master Bitter Cicada was standing on a moon-white cassock with Golden Stripes and holding a rusted black staff in his hand. A ring of enormous glass pearls was draped over his shoulder. Every one of the pearls was the size of a fist and translucent. A lot of colorful runes were vaguely popping up inside the pearls and glittering!

“Moo!”

Master Bitter Cicada looked at the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon full of pity and sorrow, but his stomach unleashed such a fulmination that sounded like a bell being tolled. The pearls that were on his shoulder flew up one after another. In the end, the eighteen pearls surrounded the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon and rotated quickly as if they were shooting stars!

“Buddhas in heaven and in hell, save the people now. Lock!” Master Bitter Cicada chanted. His voice pierced through the clouds and was delivered to everybody’s ears clearly.

After each of his words, the brightness in the eighteen pearls got slightly higher and more transparent.

When the last word ‘lock’ was uttered, the eighteen pearls seemed to have melted into the air, and the octagonal, glittering runes sealed inside were all released!

Crack! Crack! Crack!

The thousands of runes triggered a series of golden electric arcs that condensed into an overwhelming shackle, locking the three enormous heads of the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon!

The Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon screamed miserably and struggled hard, but it could not get away from Master Bitter Cicada’s constraint at all.

The three demon cores seemed to have frozen in midair. They shivered for a long time but were unable to move at all!

Casting a spell with the realized runes! Li Yao was secretly surprised.

He felt that the pearls that Master Bitter Cicada used as a weapon had a similar attack mechanism to the member of the Pangu Clan that he had fought against on Kunlun.

At that time, the member of the Pangu Clan had cast spells by declaring his spirit and will with soundwaves, which attracted the spiritual energy in the surroundings. He had then constructed the spiritual energy into erratic models and outputted them into techniques of different natures!

The pearls could also have been polished and modified based on a secret treasure from the Pangu civilization in the primeval era!

Under the pearls’ suppression, the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon was unable to move at all and could only roar!

Master Bitter Cicada sat cross-legged on the moon-white cassock. He half-closed his eyes and put his palms together, his rusted staff resting in his arms. While he was mumbling the spells to himself, an air of transcendency and inviolacy was flowing out of his body.

As his runes were activated, the shackle of golden brilliance triggered by the eighteen pearls was tightened. Like an iron, it left deep stamps on the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon. Stinky, black smoke that even the storm could not quench soared into the sky!

The Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon was about to be suppressed by Master Bitter Cicada, when…

The violent spiritual energy in the area had been searching for the ‘fattest prey’ from the beginning.

Li Yao, Yan Liren, Dan Fengzi, and the empyreal swordsmen of the Purple Pole Sword Sect were all lying low and concealing their auras, not daring to act recklessly in the thunderstorm.

Even so, some of the lightning was even hitting their surroundings, and the electric arcs were swimming inside the veins and nerves crazily!

But right now, Master Bitter Cicada had flown high into the clouds. He was also summoning all of his spiritual energy and activating his magical equipment blatantly. He was essentially turning himself into the most eye-catching ‘lightning rod’!

Boom!

Crack!

When he activated the power of the pearls to the maximum, countless streaks of lightning lunged at him from every direction and hit his moon-white spiritual shield brutally. Electric arcs and sparks were spluttering nonstop!

Struct by thousands of lightning, Master Bitter Cicada was shaking slightly, and a few streams of blood were zigzagging out of his eyes and mouth. Yet, his face remained utterly unchanged. With exactly the same vague pity and sorrow, he continued outputting his spiritual energy, his soul, and his life, trying his best to suppress the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon so that it would not have a chance to destroy the dams!

He was not fighting a Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon; he was fighting the sky, the earth, and the violent spiritual energy in between that could destroy everything in their path. He was struggling against the thunder, slashing the clouds, and suppressing the running tides with his body that was not all that strong!

The lightning became more and more frequent, and the thunder grew louder and louder. The crazier the storm was, the brighter Master Bitter Cicada's eyes became!

Li Yao had never realized that a man's eyes could be so brilliant. Some sort of flowing liquid light seemed to be flowing out from the edges of his eyes!

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The lightning was striking Master Bitter Cicada's head incessantly. The moon-white spiritual shield was dying like a candle in a storm.

Master Bitter Cicada’s skin had broken apart, but it was bright gold that was revealed below the fractures, as if a tiny golden buddha resided within his immaculate body!

Master Bitter Cicada gritted his teeth to persist. The rusted black club staff on his arms had already been dyed bright gold by his blood.

It was impossible for him to compete with nature by himself after all!

While Li Yao was hesitating, the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon had already caught its breath!

Its three heads were all expanding crazily. The sharp horns that looked like thorny needles on the heads all turned blood red.

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

The thorny needles on the three heads of the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon darted out like a storm toward Master Bitter Cicada.

Perhaps, Master Bitter Cicada could have evaded, but if he dodged, the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon would break free, and after a tiny crash, it would destroy the dams!

Therefore, Master Bitter Cicada did not dodge at all. Instead, he roared and threw out his black staff, which revolved rapidly in front of him and formed a bright golden shield. After a series of clanging noises, most of the thorny needles were blocked!

However, a handful of them penetrated through the shield silently when thousands of lightning were hitting Master Bitter Cicada brutally!

Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa!

All the needles exploded abruptly into powder before they had the chance to touch Master Bitter Cicada’s body.

But they distracted Master Bitter Cicada after all, allowing lightning that was thicker than Li Yao’s thigh to strike Master Bitter Cicada’s skull!

Boom!

Master Bitter Cicada grunted. Bloodstained electric arcs seemed to be squirting out of his eyes, nostrils, ears, and mouth simultaneously.

The runes that were used to suppress the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon faded, and the eighteen pearls reappeared!

The Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon took the opportunity to dash upward, freeing itself from Master Bitter Cicada’s shackles.

The three demon cores that were frozen in midair returned to the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon. They rotated for a while and, attracting tremendous electric arcs, condensed into three bluish balls of lightning again, attacking Master Bitter Cicada together with the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon!

Li Yao could not wait any longer.

But somebody was even faster than him.

‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren roared. Immense spiritual from someone at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage was fully unleashed toward the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon in a sword aura that was hundreds of meters long!

Huala!

He appeared like a firefly that was holding a lantern on a dark night. He was so obvious and attractive that many lightning bolts that had begun lunging at Master Bitter Cicada changed their direction and ran toward him!

“Be gone!”

Yan Liren’s sword was not unsheathed yet, but the auras of the sword had already diverged into more than ten sharp edges, slashing the lightning into twisted electric arcs, before the electric arcs were shocked into starry sparkles!

It was not until this moment that a shining sword that was more than twenty meters long finally appeared in midair. Like a long, narrow magnet, it attracted all the electric arcs nearby to its body. The sharpness of the sword was immediately increased with the boost of the electric arcs!

It was one of the primeval swords that Yan Liren had used during the Dragon Spring Meeting.

The black sword, which was the largest one of all, was already completely wrecked and beyond repair.

The other two primeval swords were only riddled with cracks on the surface. After careful refinement, some of their power could still be restored.

Therefore, Li Yao had asked the disciples of the Purple Pole Sword Sect to collect the powder of the black sword that had completely collapsed. After mixing and refining it, he had added the powder to the other two primeval swords as materials of enhancement. It was sort of recycling.

After Yan Liren’s sword slashed out, the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon’s three heads retreated at the same time. Having no time to harass Master Bitter Cicada any longer, the animal quickly summoned the three demon cores, trying to block Yan Liren’s enormous sword.

However, the sword that was dozens of meters long, under Yan Liren’s manipulation, was as swift and agile as a soft sword that one could bind to their waist. Drawing a weird curve in midair, the sword crawled in through the gaps among the three demon cores. The very next moment, the middle head of the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon was chopped off!

Chapter 1420 - A Monk’s Mercy

“Ow!”

The left and right heads of the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon screamed miserably at the same time. However, the head in the middle, which was larger than a mill, was floating in the river. A fracture a few meters in diameter was left where it had been chopped off. Black blood was spurting out, vaporizing into a venomous mist in the storm that covered the area!

Under the cover the venomous mist, the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon sank and fled toward the depths of the Sorcerers’ River.

“You want to go? Not so fast! Leave your demon cores here!”

Amid scary chuckles, a green shadow lunged toward the top of the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon like a vulture that had opened the wings. Of course, it was Li Yao who pretended to be Master Spiritual Vulture!

Storm, thunder, and flood!

The violent spiritual energy between the sky and the earth!

They were also rushing toward him overwhelmingly!

Such a magnificent view of the sky breaking apart and the lightning surging out reminded Li Yao of the happy period of crazy training in the thunderstorms deep within the Grand Desolate Plateau in the Star Glory Federation!

Fighting the sky and the earth brought him endless pleasure. He was a guy who could slay tornadoes!

“Storm and thunder, you can go to hell if you have come to me!” Li Yao shrieked. The green flames of spiritual energy around him condensed into two enormous, sky-blocking wings. After one flap, the lightning and clouds that were coming at him were all shattered!

Then, the two wings were closed together. Under the precise control of his telepathic thoughts, the spiritual energy in the wings reformed. A monolithic claw took shape, which snatched right toward the heads of the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon!

The Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon had just suffered a heavy blow and lost the most important head. It was in such agony that it did not notice the traps that Li Yao had hidden in the green fire at all.

Hardly had the animal escaped from the snatch of the claw when it was caught precisely by a trap made of dozens of monocular mica threads.

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

As it desperately fled toward the Sorcerers’ River, Li Yao pulled hard. The molecular mica threads cut off its tough scales, rough skin, and sturdy flesh, deeply embedding into the bones all over its body!

The animal was like a fish that had bitten the hook. However hard it struggled, it would only make the hook even tighter!

Having been training for hundreds of years, the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon had long gained basic intelligence. It knew that now was a time of life and death. If it could not eliminate the weird threads that had been embedded into its body, there was no way that it could run away!

After struggling down for a moment, it changed the methodology and simply attacked backward toward Li Yao by hitting the surface of the river with its enormous tail.

Hiu!

Yan Liren’s second primeval sword was unsheathed. The two swords were like another two dragons when they fought the rest of the two heads of the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon!

Master Bitter Cicada took the opportunity to jump up from the moon-white cassock. Picking up the black staff, he batted the eighteen pearls out, which rushed deep into the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon’s body through its wounded neck with long exhaust flames like shooting stars!

Dong!

Master Bitter Cicada knocked the staff in midair. As if it had hit solid ground, a deafening noise was raised!

Centered at the point where the staff ‘hit the ground’, complicated and dazzling rune arrays appeared out of nowhere and stretched out. At the core of the runes were three overlapping swastikas [1] , which were surrounded by eighteen buddhas in different postures!

As the eighteen buddhas glittered one after another, eight dull noises echoed inside the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon’s body. The parts where the noises originated bulged out violently at first as if they had swallowed an iron ball, before they quickly withered as if all the bones had been removed. The animal turned from a dominating dragon into a soft earthworm, losing all ability to fight back!

Shua!

Li Yao’s molecular mica threads cut off the remaining two heads of the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon easily. The body of the animal, which was essentially a mountain of meat, fell into the Sorcerers’ River and soon disappeared into the currents!

When Li Yao, Yan Liren, and Master Cicada, three super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector, joined hands, a Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon could not get away despite the interference of nature!

“The demon cores are mine now!”

Li Yao burst into laughter on purpose, finding an excuse for his precious attack. Pretending that he was greedy, he controlled the molecular mica threads to pick up the three demon cores that were rotating in the air!

But after he raised his head, he discovered that Master Bitter Cicada did not bother to look at the three demon cores at all. He did not even catch his breath first as he dived deep into the Sorcerers’ River!

“What’s he doing?” Li Yao blinked in bafflement.

But he vaguely felt that yet another round of tides was sweeping close from further up the Sorcerer’s River.

Considering the vulnerability of the dams there, if the defense rune arrays were not repaired as soon as possible, perhaps the crash of the tides alone was enough to collapse the dams, and the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon was not even needed!

Is—is he going to crush the incessant tides on his own until the storm stops?

As if hit by lightning, Li Yao was utterly dumbfounded. He had never thought that such an extraordinary person as Master Bitter Cicada could be born in the world of ancient Cultivators!

Looking at Master Bitter Cicada marching toward the tides on his own above the Sorcerers' River, Yan Liren frowned and asked, "What's on your mind, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture?"

"I'm thinking…" Li Yao rolled his eyes for a long time and finally said, "Brother Yan, your unparalleled sword is already fast to the point that it can't be any faster. It is enough to kill any person in the world!

"But I wonder, is it capable of slaying the incessant tides?"

"Slaying the incessant tides?" Touching his bald head and looking at the other bald head in the flood, Yan Liren's nostrils flared. "Interesting!"

…

The overwhelming storm lasted a day and a night. It was not until the next day in the morning that the lackluster sun finally revealed itself reluctantly in the broken morning glow.

Thanks to Li Yao, Yan Liren, and Master Bitter Cicada, the canal that the members of the Purple Pole Sword Sect were on did not have a tragedy of collapsing dams, but other places were not so lucky. Dams collapsed seriously and less seriously everywhere. When Li Yao flew up hundreds of meters, everything that he could see had been drowned in water except for the relatively high places that had turned into lone islands and long bridges.

The victims whose homes had been destroyed by the flood were crammed onto the islands and bridges like ants, spreading out aimlessly. They were homeless peasants, the greatest headache for the court and Cultivators!

For the court, the homeless peasants were the greatest cause of riots.

For the Cultivators, when alive, the homeless peasants that were nothing more than ants and weeds were certainly nothing to be scared of.

However, should the evil warlords such as ‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu get involved and absorb the aggressive souls that had died miserably in the natural disaster, they might be turned into violent ghouls after a few battles, which would be quite a headache!

Therefore, resisting the natural disaster and appeasing the homeless peasants was not only the court’s responsibility but a responsibility for all the Cultivators.

It was especially so for the Cultivation sects that were rooted in the southeast because, if they did not do anything, they would be the first to be wounded by an insurgence!

Seeing that countless homeless peasants, with their ragged clothes and numb faces, had even lost the ability to cry and were simply moving with the crowd in desperation, Li Yao did not know what to feel.

There were of course natural disasters in the Star Glory Federation, too, such as floods, earthquakes, and tsunamis.

However, for the Cultivators of the Star Glory Federation, resisting the natural disasters was a duty as important as slaying evils. One for all and all for one was certainly not empty talk.

The central government had a thorough, well-tested emergency relief mechanism. When it was fully functioning, there was no way that the flood would be so severe. Even if there were homeless victims, they would be properly taken care of soon and certainly would not be left alone to count on themselves.

While he was sighing, Li Yao’s eyes were keen enough to notice a moon-white figure amid the dense crowd.

It was Master Bitter Cicada!

Li Yao was very curious about the mysterious monk.

The previous night, to resist the tides, he had marched into the flood time and time again until his spiritual energy had been exhausted, and a few high-level Cultivators of the Purple Pole Sword Sect had saved him.

It did not occur to Li Yao that the guy was out again after a rest of only four hours. What was he doing among the disaster-stricken people?

Li Yao’s curiosity was aroused. He landed near Master Bitter Cicada.

When the homeless peasants saw that a deity was landing from the clouds, they were so ashamed that they all fled away. Even if they fell into the dirty water, they did not dare to draw close to Li Yao.

Some of the white-haired old men were even kneeling before Li Yao, dragging the children whose hair was dry and yellow. Li Yao's heart almost broke.

As 'Master Spiritual Vulture', it was naturally inappropriate to treat everybody as an equal. He could only frown and take the courtesies while forcing him to look at Master Bitter Cicada instead of the dirty faces.

Amid a bunch of muddy peasants, Master Bitter Cicada's moon white robe was polluted, too. Even his bald head was blemished with sludge and dirt.

But his face was till as immaculate as white jade. It seemed to be glowing from inside.

He was sitting cross-legged in the middle of mud.

In front of him, however, was a skull that was monolithic and hideous and almost as large as an elephant. It was one of the heads of the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon!

Master Bitter Cicada's fist-sized pearls were hovering above the head and emitting gentle light that was nurturing the head.

The vague aggression and brutality that lingered in the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon's head gradually dispersed while Master Bitter Cicada was reciting the sutras.

He is appeasing the soul of the animal!

Li Yao was greatly awed.

I'm told that the Stupa Temple claims that everybody is equal and everything has wisdom, but I didn't know that

Master Bitter Cicada is so merciful that he would even go through the trouble of appeasing the soul of an animal.

What a remarkable monk!

“All done!” While Li Yao was secretly complimenting him, Master Bitter Cicada finished his technique. The eighteen pearls flew back to his shoulder, and he stood up, supporting his black staff. Stretching out his arms, he clapped his hands and smiled. “The poison inside the skull of the animal has all been eliminated by this monk. You are free to eat it now!”

After saying that, he waved his staff. After a crack, the bone broke apart, and the brains spurted out!

“…” Li Yao.

Chapter 1421 - Such a Monk!

Master Bitter Cicada did not rest at all. He waved the black staff fast and bashed the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon’s head crazily, his spiritual energy leaking in like water. It was not until the tough skull was pulverized and changed into nothing more than soft dough that he took a deep breath and retreated his staff.

Resuming his former solemnity, he put his palms together toward the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon and paid respect to it. In the end, he spoke to the homeless peasants nearby. “Although the poison in the animal has been neutralized by this monk, it is the meat of a demon beast that contains powerful spiritual energy after all. If you eat it without self-control, you will end up the same way as if you take the Jade Crystal Pellet. Your guts will flow out, and your veins will be broken. You will die the most miserable death!

“This is how you should eat the meat. Everyone can pick a tiny bit with your fingernail and then mix it into half a bucket of water. Then, you will divide the water into even proportions and have the water over three days and three nights, not any faster. In such a way, you will not be thirsty or hungry for the next couple of days, and you can manage to survive even if you don’t have any food or water for one week. By then, the aid from the court will surely have arrived. Rest assured, everybody!

“You have been separated from your hometown, but do you have mayors or any one in charge? If you don’t, asking any respected seniors to divide the meat for everyone will also be fine!”

Master Bitter Cicada’s words were plain, yet they seemed to boast marvelous power that made all the homeless peasants line up obediently and elect more than ten respected seniors for distribution. It was in order without any chaos.

It was not until then that Li Yao realized that Master Bitter Cicada went through so much trouble to purge the head of the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon with his own spiritual energy because he was preparing food for the hungry peasants.

All the victims of the disaster were ordinary people whose consumption was little. If a head of the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon was ground into powder and mixed into water, it was indeed enough to support thousands of people for a couple of days.

After finishing the distribution, Master Bitter Cicada finally nodded at Li Yao with a smile in acknowledgement.

Then, crazy noises echoed from the handsome monk’s belly. He had been working in the flood for a day and a night too and must have been very hungry himself.

Rubbing his stomach, Master Bitter Cicada walked to an empty spot nearby.

Li Yao followed with great curiosity.

The homeless peasants naturally could not thank Master Bitter Cicada enough. However, seeing that the two ‘deities’ were about to talk, they did not draw too close and simply kept their distance.

A big pit had been dug at the center of the empty spot, in which some wood and grass was smoldering.

Other than the smell of burnt plants, there was also a weird flavor that Li Yao could not recognize.

Master Bitter Cicada sniffed and, probably feeling that the food was ready, squatted near the pit. He wiped his staff, which was stained with mud and brains, with a corner of his moon-white robe before using the staff to lift up the twigs and wood that covered the pit, revealing a cluster of black things.

After a boom, a sour and smelly scent suddenly rushed into Li Yao’s nostrils.

Li Yao craned his neck and glanced at the pit, only to almost vomit out what he had eaten yesterday in disgust.

Inside the pit were a few pieces of beef covered in mud.

It was a way to cook chicken. If the food had been properly cooked, there should be a fragrant odor.

However, beef was too large and thick for such a cooking method in the first place. The fire was not strong enough, either. As a result, the beef was still half raw, with blood flowing out. There were also tremendous guts in the pit, which looked black but released colorful pus at the first touch.

When all the beef was combined, it should have made up more than half a bull, but they had been soaked in the flood for so long that they had all deteriorated. However they were cooked, the stink was too intense to go away, haunting the pit!

Li Yao had never been picky about food. Fine dining was certainly great, but the most regular snacks on the street could be enjoyable, too. However, he found the highly-rotten, stinky meat that had been soaked in the flood for too long very repulsive.

Master Bitter Cicada, on the other hand, took out a handful of powder that Li Yao did not recognize and sprayed it onto the pit, managing to suppress the stench.

Then he jabbed his staff and picked up a bleeding bull's leg before he clenched the hoof with both hands as if the leg were a saber. Extending his neck, he bit the leg comfortably. After only two mouthfuls, there was almost only the bone left!

Master Bitter Cicada was not satisfied. His teeth shining, and with cracking noises echoing nonstop, the leg bone of the bull was gnawed section after section as if it were sugarcane. Eventually, there was not the slightest residue left!

Li Yao was stunned.

He had never seen it coming that the most voracious man whom he had seen in his life would actually be such a good-looking monk!

Master Bitter Cicada chewed the leg until there was nothing left. Then, he picked up his staff again and stabbed a block of ribs in the pit. It was not until he grabbed the ribs that he realized that he had company. Smiling at Li Yao bitterly, he said, “This monk has a large stomach that the beef here can barely fill. So, I will not offer anything to you, Master Spiritual Vulture. Do excuse me!”

Li Yao was still in a trance. Watching the guy rip apart the ribs and suck them into his belly as if they were noodles, Li Yao did not come back to himself after a long time. He stammered, “Do—do monks eat meat, too?”

“Of course.”

Greasy and surrounded by the stench of meat, Master Bitter Cicada was holding the ribs in his mouth, but faint pity and sorrow still lingered on his face. There was no telling whether it was because the food was too awful or because he was feeling sorry for the bull that had ended up in his stomach.

Pushing the residue at the corner of his mouth into his mouth with his thumb, he sighed. “How can a monk have the strength to save people without eating meat?”

The statement truly made no sense.

However, Master Bitter Cicada indeed boasted such charisma that even the most ridiculous words in the world, if spoken by him with such a poignant expression, would force other people think whether or not they made sense after all.

Batting his eyes for a long time, Li Yao frowned. “Even if you want to eat meat, you should eat the meat of the animals that contain tremendous spiritual energy. Do you not have a Cosmos Ring that stores food?”

“There were a few pieces in the beginning,” Master Bitter Cicada explained casually. “However, there were too many peasants on my way here. The food has been divided by them.”

“Even so, you should at least get some fresh meat.” Li Yao could not help but observe, “A lot of dead pigs and cows are drifting in the flood, not to mention the incessant river fish. Although the pigs and cows are mostly decayed, too, some of the meat must be edible. Why do you have to eat such filthy food?”

“The fine meat on the pigs, cows, and the fresh river fish are naturally offered to the homeless peasants,” Master Bitter Cicada replied. “The deteriorated meat, however, is certainly not edible for ordinary folks. If they eat it, they would suffer diarrhea until they died of dehydration! But it doesn’t matter for this monk. It tastes slightly sour, but it is still good enough to provide nutrition for me!”

Li Yao was greatly moved and lost for words. He could only hold back his shock while he watched Master Bitter Cicada swallow the half-putrefied meat one mouthful after another.

Although he was eating the most sour and greasy roasted beef in the middle of the mud softened by the flood, Master Bitter Cicada was so casual and comfortable as if he were enjoying the finest tea in the world with the most delicate utensils in the most peaceful chamber while appreciating the beautiful landscape out of the window!

“Master…” Taking a long breath, Li Yao calmed himself down and looked for a topic. “It was with your help that we managed to block the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon yesterday. We retrieved three invaluable demon cores. I am certainly not a greedy man. According to the tradition of the Cultivators, the three demon cores should be divided evenly among you, me, and ‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren!”

“You are very welcome, Master Spiritual Vulture. But dividing them evenly is not necessary.” Master Bitter Cicada waved his hands generously.

“How can we do that?” Li Yao could not have admired the ascetic monk more. He said earnestly, “I heard your name a lot when I was in Southland of Sorcerers, Master Bitter Cicada. Now, I have come to the central plateaus to make a name for myself and even establish my own sect one day! If word gets out that I took your demon core, won’t I be too ashamed? You deserve the demon core, Master, and you must keep it!”

“You misunderstood me, Master Spiritual Vulture.” Master Bitter Cicada sighed. “This monk meant that the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon was found by me in the first place. Most of its strength was exhausted by me when this monk hunted it all the way down. It was this monk who launched the critical strike, too. Therefore, it is only fair that this monk takes two of the three demon cores!

“This monk was going to visit your sect and ask for them after this monk finished the beef. But now that you have brought it up, Master Spiritual Vulture, it is even better. This monk can tell that you are not a petty man. You are not going to argue over a demon core with this monk, are you?”

“Huh?”

“If you think that two is too much, Master Spiritual Vulture, we can always negotiate,” Master Bitter Cicada said solemnly. “How about we each side have one demon core and divide the third one? This monk will take eighty percent, and your sect will take twenty percent. Do you find it reasonable?”

“How—how can the demon core be divided?”

“Ask the auctions in Divine Capital to appraise and sell them. We’ll divide the income,” Master Bitter Cicada said unhurriedly. “Of course, if your sect thinks that it is too much trouble, you can offer a price to me. If this monk is satisfied, this monk will directly sell it to your sect. That way, the intermediary fees for the auctions can be saved!”

Li Yao was rendered speechless.

Master Bitter Cicada continued guzzling the meat. “Why are you quiet, Master Spiritual Vulture? Do you think that my price is too high? We are not in a hurry. It can be negotiated slowly!”

“Not exactly.” Li Yao scratched his nose and smiled. “I did not expect that you would be so straightforward as to talk about money directly!”

“We do not know each other. What else can we talk about if not money?” Master Bitter Cicada frowned. “Do you want this monk to preach the Dharma to you?”

“…” Li Yao.

“Right. It doesn’t matter what the final price is. But if your sect can afford it, this monk would like to sell my share to your sect and trade it for food, medicine, and clothes. Does your sect have time to collect resources, I wonder? If you can collect a large sum of food in a short time, this monk can slightly reduce the share. We can divide it fifty-fifty.”

Chapter 1422 - What Mercy?

Li Yao seemed to have been slapped in the face by the monk. He found it hard to believe. “Food, medicine, and clothes? M—Master, are you trading the demon core for stuff to help the victims?”

Holding an enormous bull’s head in his hand and with a greasy mouth, Master Bitter Cicada smiled and said, “That’s the least I can do.”

Li Yao did not know what to say. With complicated feelings, he pondered for a moment and said solemnly, “Master, I don’t want to waste my time negotiating with you. It doesn’t matter at all even if I offer my demon core to you. However, there is one condition that you must agree to!”

“Oh?” Master Bitter Cicada’s eyes were shining. The pity on his face dispersed for a moment, as if the sunshine was beaming out of the broken, dark clouds. He looked even more handsome and extraordinary than before, for only one moment. Then the next moment, the vague bitterness flowed up again. “What’s your condition, Master Spiritual Vulture?”

“It’s not been very long since I broke out of seclusion, and I’m short of magical equipment and materials.” Li Yao thought hard for a long time to come up with a reasonable excuse so that he could offer his demon core for free. “Gold, silver, copper, steal, agate, emeralds, and such are abundant in the Purple Pole Sword Sect, but rare demon cores and animal bones are less easy to find!

“This overwhelming flood have driven countless ferocious beasts to the plateau, giving us a great chance to collect the cores and bones. You’ll be the one taking advantage this time, Master, but next time we run into a troublesome animal, I’ll need you to help me to hunt it!”

“No problem!” Master Bitter Cicada clapped his hands and said, “That is exactly what this monk does for a living. With a decent price, not just hunting demon beasts and collecting cores and bones, even if you have other needs, Master Spiritual Vulture, such as exploring the residences of the previous dynasties, sweeping the primitive forests, or if you need to build up your power when you establish your sect, or if you need an expert as a bodyguard when you are being chased after by an enemy, I can satisfy all your needs. Also, the prices of my services have been clearly listed. Every Cultivator knows my reputation!”

After saying that, he picked out a thin handkerchief from his pocket and threw it to Li Yao.

Li Yao picked up the handkerchief and looked, only to discover that it was a price list written with tiny, golden characters, listing the prices for hunting demon beasts, fighting as muscle, having a duel as someone’s champion, and a lot of other services.

Once more, Li Yao was dumbfounded. “Shouldn’t a monk be living in seclusion and studying the sutras? How can you consider slaying demon beasts and fighting other people your main business?”

“Living in seclusion and studying the sutras will not save any victims of the disaster even if the buddhas are woken up by the recitals,” Master Bitter Cicada said. “In a mortal world, can you ever get the food in your mouth and the clothes on your body without real money?”

“Even so,” Li Yao said, “appeasing the deceased and holding religious ceremonies are both ways to make money.”

“Buddhism is not popular in the Ancient Sages Sector,” Master Bitter Cicada said. “This world belongs to the Grand Mystery Sect. Appeasing the deceased and holding religious ceremonies are too unrewarding. Also, this monk does not know how to recite sutras but only knows fighting. Hunting demon beasts and fighting on behalf of others are much more straightforward!”

Li Yao was even more surprised. “Isn’t it a creed of the Stupa Sect that all creatures are equal and we must be merciful? Regarding hunting demon beasts as your business, Master, I’m afraid it’s a little bit—”

The pity on Master Bitter Cicada’s face grew even more intense. “In the years of peace and prosperity, this monk naturally values mercy, but right now, people are starving everywhere, and everybody is caught in the abyss of suffering, leaving this monk no choice but to do what I have to do!

“As for the ‘all the creatures are equal’ part, it doesn’t matter whether or not I kill the demon beasts. Take the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon for example. Today, this monk was slightly more capable than the animal. So, naturally, it was killed, skinned, and eaten. However, if it had been more ferocious and swallowed this monk whole, this monk wouldn’t have complained at all! Wolves feed on sheep, and sheep feed on grass. You can eat me, and I can eat you. What’s the difference? This is the true meaning of ‘all the creatures are equal’!”

“About that…” Scratching his head, Li Yao still felt that it was weird. “This Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon was almost a hundred meters long, with three enormous heads. I’m afraid that it was already seven to eight hundred years old and boasted certain wisdom. It was still not similar to grass and trees, was it? Did you not feel guilty at all when you killed it, Master?”

With a smile, Master Bitter Cicada replied, “You are too obsessed, Master Spiritual Vulture.

“Since ‘all the creatures are equal’, then not just seven to eight hundred years, even the great animals that have lurked for seven to eight thousand years are no different from a weed or a dry tree off the road, are they?

“While this monk was on the way here, I saw too many victims who lost their homes. They uprooted weeds and bark on dry trees, devouring them without bothering about the consequences. Yet, they were unable to digest the food and soon died. Quite a lot of lives were lost!

“The victims are lives. The weeds are lives. The trees are lives. The Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon was a life, too. If this monk had chosen not to kill the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon, many lives would have perished where this monk couldn’t see. There would still have been blood on this monk’s hands. What’s the difference?”

As if hit by a bat right on the forehead, Li Yao felt his ears humming. He asked respectfully, “Is this the Dharma?”

“Yes.” Solemnly, Master Bitter Cicada nodded slightly. “This is the Dharma. Those who listen to this monk interpreting the Dharma will be charged, too. You have seen the prices, Master Spiritual Vulture. Please!”

Master Bitter Cicada extended his greasy hand over.

…

When Li Yao returned to the Purple Pole Sword Sect's temporary camp at a loss, the astonishment on his face had not entirely disappeared.

Dan Fengzi, leader of the Purple Pole Sword Sect, knew exactly what had happened after seeing Li Yao's face. "Master Spiritual Vulture, did Master Bitter Cicada beg for alms from you?"

Li Yao nodded. "Not exactly alms. I offered the demon core of the Multi-Horned Bizarre Dragon that belonged to me to Master Bitter Cicada for free and agreed to exchange the two demon cores for food, medicine, and clothes. He promised that when I was going to explore residences, relics, and secret treasuries in the future, he would try his best to help me once!"

"It's a fair deal!" Dan Fengzi smiled. "Although Master Bitter Cicada's Cultivation has remained stagnated for decades and is even slightly dropping, he is definitely still one of the few top experts in the world. Even Junior Brother Yan might not be able to defeat him. You have definitely profited by trading a tiny demon core for his help once, Master Spiritual Vulture!

"If the disaster were less severe, I'm afraid that Master Bitter Cicada wouldn't have made such a promise so easily. You must cherish the opportunity, Master Spiritual Vulture, and do not redeem the favor easily.

"As for the food, medicine, and clothes, that will be the least of your concerns, Master Spiritual Vulture. They're all on me. To show respect for you and Master Bitter Cicada, what you are going to get for the two demon cores will certainly be more than their worth!”

Li Yao nodded. He could not help but remark, “How can there be such a monk?”

“Everybody is baffled,” Dan Fengzi said. “He had a good shot at advancing into the Divinity Transformation Stage with his unusual talents. Yet, he was stalled by the ordinary people in the mortal world. After decades of lingering, he is moving farther and farther away from the Divinity Transformation Stage now and is probably never going to advance into it for the rest of his life. I do wonder why Master Bitter Cicada has been doing all that!”

Rolling his eyes, Li Yao asked, “Master Bitter Cicada also showed me a price list. There are all kinds of services, such as hunting demon beasts or fighting as a champion. Does he always earn money in such a way?”

“Yes. It’s not a big secret among Cultivators. With a decent price, he can take whatever task,” Dan Fengzi said. “It is not unusual for a Cultivator to seek wealth. After all, the resources necessary for our training must be traded with money.

“However, the resources that Master Bitter Cicada earned through hunting demon beasts and exploring relics at the risk of his own life are mostly traded for food for the relief of the victims of disasters everywhere!

“The Ancient Sages Sector is too large a place. Natural disasters never cease. There are countless victims of disasters every year. It is not something that you can help! Are his endeavors any different from a moth darting toward the fire trying to extinguish the burning flames? This is pure idiocy!”

“Moth darting toward the fire…”

In a trance, Li Yao suddenly thought of something. He squinted and said, “Odd. If Master Bitter Cicada is so strong, and he is willing to accept any task with a decent price, how come the Purple Pole Sword Sect or the Grand Mystery Sect did not hire him to help in the Dragon Spring Meeting three months ago?”

“Who says we didn’t hire him?” Dan Fengzi frowned and said, rather angrily, “Master Bitter Cicada came to us, stating that the five major sects including the Grand Mystery Sect and the Thunderstorm Valley paid him a certain amount of money and asked him to threaten the Purple Pole Sword Sect together with them. However, he was still hesitating because he was going somewhere else for disaster relief. Therefore, if the Purple Pole Sword Sect was willing to pay seventy percent of the price, he would not join them!

“What choice did we have except to pay the money obediently?”

Li Yao was amused. “What an interesting monk!”

Right then, on Li Yao’s ‘mercenary observation list’, Master Bitter Cicada had already surpassed ‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren and become the one that fitted the Star Glory Federation’s ideology best and deserved to be hired most!

While the two of them were talking, Qi Zhongdao had finally arrived with the reinforcements of the other major sects that had come to relieve the disaster and execute the ghosts.

Dan Fengzi was not wrong.

The reinforcements who came with Qi Zhongdao were sparse, their flags not straight. There were few disciples below every banner, who were not half as magnificent as three months ago when they threatened the Purple Pole Sword Sect.

It appeared that dividing the interests and rescuing people in a disaster were indeed different.

Most of the Cultivation sects that were not headquartered in the southeast showed very little interest in the mission. The few Cultivation sects that had sent their best there were actually planning to fish in the dirty water.

Seeing that the leader, the Sword Maniac, Master Spiritual Vulture, and other elders of the Purple Pole Sword Sect had all arrived in respect for the summoning of the ‘leader of the Great Qian Cultivators’, Qi Zhongdao was somewhat moved. He hurried to descend and meet with everyone.

After some small talk, Dan Fengzi asked about the latest situation in the disaster area.

Qi Zhongdao shook his head. Hoarsely, he replied, “Not good!”

Chapter 1423 - Food Crisis!

According to Qi Zhongdao, the inundated area that the members of the Purple Pole Sword Sect were at was still in a relatively decent condition.

After all, floods were rather common in the Great Qian Dynasty every year.

The victims in front of them alone were not enough to panic the court and the Cultivators.

The real trouble was the southeast seashore where the febrile typhoon savaged.

The febrile typhoon had affected three states, nine counties, and seventy prefectures, devastating more towns than anyone could count. It had also triggered continuous forest fires, burning a lot of farmland and settlements to the ground. Too many folks had lost their homes. Their number was a hundred times larger than the disaster victims that the Cultivators could see before them!

The disaster victims were not problems per se because they were not much of a threat to the Cultivators.

The real problem was that, since most of the victims were short of clothes, food, and medicine, and they were already dying because of the wounds caused by the febrile typhoon and the dirty water that they were soaked in, there was a good chance that they would die in the end.

There were peaceful deaths and unpeaceful deaths.

For those who died of old age, their soul was relatively steady, and it was easy for them to disperse and be relieved for eternity.

But for the victims who were starved to death in the febrile typhoon and flood, who were killed because they ate too many plant roots, and who died miserably because their wounds caused by the febrile typhoon got infected, their soul contained powerful hatred and aggression. When the negative emotions were taken advantage of by guys such as ‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu, they could easily turn into ferocious ghosts and threaten the Cultivators.

Based on past experience, the great disasters were always followed by plagues. During the plagues, the army of ghouls would march forward fearlessly. The ghostly fire would blossom everywhere in the prosperous land in the southeast as fast as lightning!

“A big army of ghouls has already appeared near East Peace County, with fire that looks like a white lotus above their heads. Even in broad daylight, they still dare to appear on the main road, trying to block the transportation between East Peace County and other places and assassinate the scouts and Cultivators flying out of East Peace County. They are apparently making preparations for the army of ghouls to attack the city!

“The ten or so towns to the south of East Peace County suffered the heaviest blow after the febrile typhoon passed. Countless folks were killed, but when the Cultivators of the sects nearby went to investigate, they only saw a whole area of dead bodies and found absolutely no remaining souls. It was obvious that all the remaining souls had been taken away by ‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu and refined into ghoul soldiers!

“This time, the White Lotus ghouls are assaulting on a large scale exactly at a time when the febrile typhoon and the floods are happening. It is not to be underestimated. The entire southeast may be affected!

“The southeast of the Great Qian Dynasty is the most important agricultural region for the Cultivators. Half of the Jade Crystal Pellets for the Cultivators are grown here.

“Before, the fertile land in the northeast could also be established into farmlands, but the main roads to the northeast have all been cut by the Dragon Wolf cavalry of Ghost Qin. It is impossible to develop the northeast for now!

“We cannot allow anything to happen to the southeast. Should the White Lotus ghoul army trample on all the farmland, the prices of rice and wheat will certainly soar. Chances are that starvation will happen even among the Cultivators. If so, the competition between sects will become even fiercer. All the rules in the world of Cultivators will disappear!”

With a dark face, Qi Zhongdao elaborated on why they had come such a long way for disaster relief and to eliminate the White Lotus Cult.

Qi Zhongdao was not a merciful monk like Master Bitter Cicada. Everything that he did was for the interests of the Cultivators.

He would not bat an eye if thousands of victims were killed, but it was utterly intolerable if those victims could be turned into deadly ghouls and sabotage the southeast farmlands under the lead of Mother White Lotus!

There were thousands of training techniques in the Ancient Sages Sector. However, there was one fundamental training principle that transcended all other methods.

Nobody could do anything without food!

Cultivators boasted marvelous capabilities. The functioning speed of their cells, nerves, and muscles was ten times and even a hundred times higher than that of the ordinary people. To maintain the activity of their cells, they had to devour an astronomical amount of food every day. Otherwise, it would be very easy for them to starve themselves.

If they fed on regular food and meat, they would require a huge amount of provisions, and they might not be full after consuming a hundred kilograms of food. In the meantime, such food could only keep their current level from falling at best.

If they intended to progress, they had to feed on the meat of the animals that boasted tremendous spiritual energy or food such as Jade Crystal Pellets.

The animals that boasted tremendous spiritual energy had to be hunted. They were not readily available for low-level Cultivators. The rice and wheat grown in the farmlands where spiritual energy was dense, in comparison, was the foundation for the Cultivators’ training and for a Cultivation sect to exist!

Half of the farmlands were located in the southeast, which was also the better half with the most spiritual energy.

If the southeast farmlands were destroyed by the White Lotus ghouls, there would certainly be a ‘food crisis’ among the Cultivators in the harvest season in the latter half of the year!

Qi Zhongdao unfolded a map of the Great Qian Dynasty painted on goatskin.

Mystic rays were slowly rising up, congregating into an uneven sand table where the mountains, rivers, and towns were all detailed.

He pointed at the sand table and said, “Right now, the five main troops of the court are marching to the southeast at top speed. As all you fellow Cultivators know, most of the soldiers of the court are ordinary people who can barely move forward in the flood. It will take them at least a fortnight to arrive at East Peace County.

“During that half a month, it will be our job to help stabilize the situation!

“We have three missions in total. First of all, pacify the victims and prevent them from getting killed by coldness and hunger and turning into hateful, restless ghosts. Secondly, protect the farmlands from the scourge of the army of ghouls. Thirdly, if possible, find ‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu and execute the ‘mother of all ghosts’!”

“This is indeed great kindness. With everyone’s help here, the folks in the southeast will finally have a chance to be saved. You are all making great contributions, fellow Cultivators!” Master Bitter Cicada, who had been informed and come over, put his palms together and asked, “But I wonder, where will the food for the homeless victims come from in the next half a month?”

Qi Zhongdao slashed his hands. “The Grand Mystery Sect, the Purple Pole Sword Sect, Thunderstorm Valley, Flying

Spirit Island, the Gold Armor Clan, and the Monster Taming Pavilion, as well as many other large sects, have dispatched a sizable batch of emergency food that will be delivered in a couple of days!”

This was the first time that Li Yao had heard of the Purple Pole Sword Sect providing a large batch of food for the disaster area. After a momentary daze, he somehow had a better impression on the Cultivation sects.

Whatever their purpose was, supporting the disaster area with precious food would save a lot of victims. It was indeed worth commending.

Li Yao could not help but glance at Dan Fengzi, the leader of the Purple Pole Sword Sect, only to discover that Dan Fengzi was wearing a weird smile.

Sensing Li Yao’s eyes, he scratched his nose and turned his face.

Taking a breath in relief, Master Bitter Cicada thought for a moment and asked again, “Then, what are the victims going to eat for the next couple of days?”

After hearing that, Qi Zhongdao’s face was even darker than before. His cheeks cramping, he said coldly, “I’m afraid we’ll have to ask the local sects in the southeast to provide food. This is a local affair of the southeast after all. How can the local sects idle by while the foreign sects are doing everything we can?”

After listening to Qi Zhongdao’s explanation, Li Yao finally realized that not every place was demolished in the febrile typhoon and flood. There were still some paradises in the area.

They were the headquarters of the local sects in the southeast.

It was needless to mention East Peace County, a splendid city where dozens of sects were headquartered.

Even the sects in local towns had mostly established their headquarters against the mountains. The headquarters were often magnificent and impenetrable.

They were also surrounded by defense rune arrays and barriers. Floods, febrile typhoons, and other natural disasters would be hard pressed to breach their defenses.

Even when the bureaus of the Cultivation sects were destroyed, they were often the last establishments in the local area to be destroyed.

Therefore, when a natural disaster was nearing, most of the Cultivators would reap the rice, store tremendous assets, and escape into their headquarters in advance. They would defend the strongholds and would not be active in the outside world until the natural disaster was over.

Since the Sorcerers’ River downstream was a kingdom of swamps and the southeast was basically drowned, the headquarters of the Cultivation sects had essentially become lone islands where tremendous resources were stored.

However, it was certainly not easy to open the lone islands.

“Three hundred and fifty kilometers from here, it’s the headquarters of Roaring Tiger Hall!”

Pointing at the edge of a rather high mountain on the mountain, Qi Zhongdao said, “Roaring Tiger Hall is one of the few most famous sects in the southeast. Two thirds of the farmlands in the entire West River Stage belong to Roaring Tiger Hall. Roaring Tiger Hall first thrived based on the farmlands. Then, they monopolized the transportation business along a stretch of the Sorcerers’ River and accumulated tremendous wealth. They have spent twenty years hollowing Heavenly Tiger Mountain and establishing the magnificent Roaring Tiger City!

“Roaring Tiger City has been built next to the mountain and is extraordinarily spectacular. When it was built, an enormous Tiger Apparitions Array was already buried deep beneath the ground. Also, more than a hundred Crouching Tiger Cannons and Fiery Crow Ballista have been forged in the critical locations in the city. It is essentially an impenetrable fortress!

“Roaring Tiger Hall boasts two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and ten at the peak of the Core Formation Stage. They are the dominators in the West River State!

“Hearing that the febrile typhoon and the flood were coming near, they collected all the resources, escaped into Roaring Tiger City, and shut the gate!

“Because Roaring Tiger City is the highest place in the hundreds of square kilometers nearby, it has not been damaged at all in the natural disaster. Right now, hundreds of millions of disaster victims are gathered below Roaring Tiger City, and millions more are still running toward the place. If Roaring Tiger City keeps their gates shut without letting anybody in or any grain out, there will be great trouble soon enough!”

Chapter 1424 - Uneasy Ghosts Below Roaring Tiger City!

Deep in thought, Master Bitter Cicada nodded. “Then, have you paid a visit to Roaring Tiger Hall, Master Qi?”

Qi Zhongdao’s face was as dark as the bottom of a pot that had been brushed with shoe polish. He gnashed his teeth. “The Grand Mystery Sect has already visited them. It’s a pity that the meeting did go so well. Therefore, I’m hoping that Leader Dan Fengzi, Fellow Cultivator Yan Liren, Master Spiritual Vulture, Master Bitter Cicada, and the other Cultivators here can go persuade Roaring Tiger Hall to consider the big picture together!”

It was obvious that the super Nascent Soul Stage, who was the nominal leader of all the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty and supported by the ultimate treasure of the Ancient Sages Sector, was more than infuriated.

Qi Zhongdao’s words made a lot of sense. Naturally, Li Yao and the rest of them followed his command. The high-level Cultivators from dozens of sects, carrying their vivid banners, rushed toward Roaring Tiger City like almost a hundred rainbows with their own unique techniques.

While they were on their way, Li Yao approached Dan Fengzi and asked, “Leader, I didn’t know that the Purple Pole Sword Sect would be so generous as to provide food for the disaster victims. Is it true?”

Dan Fengzi chuckled but hesitated. Looking at the high-level Cultivators of other sects nearby, he said in a low voice, “There is more to the matter. We’ll talk about it later. All in all, we only need to follow the Grand Mystery Sect’s lead. Whatever the Grand Mystery Sect does, we do exactly the same!”

Pausing for a moment, he said again, “Later, after we arrive, you must tread lightly, Elder Spiritual Vulture. Roaring Tiger Hall boasts two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, ten at the peak of the Core Formation Stage, and countless low-level Cultivators. It is one of the most distinguished sects in the entire southeast and stronger than many sects in East Peace County.

“Also, Roaring Tiger City, their headquarters, is a city that has recently been built in the past ten or so years. The Tiger Apparitions Array is a first-rate defense array. The Crouching Tiger Cannon is also very powerful remote magical equipment!

“On our side, although we have many sects and experts, and the six major sects seem to be joining hands, most here are not united at all. Who is willing to be the first to march forward and take the blow of a hundred Crouching Tiger Cannons in the middle of the Tiger Apparitions Array?

“What’s more, those who are capable of flying tens of thousands of kilometers above the inundated area in only a couple of days are all high-level Cultivators. Therefore, it’s all the leadership of the major sects who have come on the trip. Look. Even our empyreal swordsmen have had to stay in the camp at the rear because they can’t follow us.

“Now that we are short of an army of mortals and low-level Cultivators to consume the array and the cannons, there will be a great loss if the high-level Cultivators attack all by themselves!”

“What do you mean, leader?” Bulging his eyes, Li Yao pretended to be surprised. “Are you going to assault Roaring Tiger City?”

“It all depends on Master Righteous One!” Dan Fengzi blinked and said, “Everything is obvious now. To weaken ‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu’s power and prevent her from gathering an army of ghouls to attack East Peace County, we cannot allow too many disaster victims to die in hatred and remorse.

“To prevent the disaster victims from dying in hatred and remorse, they must at least be fed so that they will die with their belly full if they have to!

“But where can we find food exactly? Other than East Peace County, which is surrounded by the White Lotus ghoul army, the fortresses of the Cultivators scattered in the southeast are the only places with a storage of food!

“But will the local Cultivators behave nicely and simply offer their food?

“Roaring Tiger Hall is the largest Cultivation sect in the southeast outside the ones in East Peace County. I assure you that countless pairs of eyes are focused on Roaring Tiger Hall right now.

“If Roaring Tiger Hall is willing to provide the food, other sects will certainly follow the example.

“If we can’t bite the hard bone that is Roaring Tiger Hall, the other local sects will certain refuse to offer a single grain of food!”

After pondering for a long time, Li Yao said, “Master Righteous One’s words make a lot of sense to me. If the White Lotus ghoul army savages the southeast and destroyed the farmlands, the rice and wheat for the Cultivators will be highly insufficient, which will do nobody any good. Do the local sects not bear the big picture in mind at all?”

“Big picture?” Dan Fengzi chuckled. “Hehe. Hehehehe. Look, Elder Spiritual Vulture. Roaring Tiger City is here!”

Lowering the tip of his sword, Li Yao narrowed his eyes and looked afar.

Before he saw Roaring Tiger City, he heard cries, screams, shouts, and moans that were soaring into the sky first!

Victims!

Hundreds of thousands of disaster victims, in a series of thick, black torrents, were flowing incessantly from various directions toward the highest place in the hundreds of square kilometers nearby—Roaring Tiger City!

But they were all blocked outside the city by colorful screens of light, only to form a camp of disaster victims, which was like a hell on earth!

Inside the camp, cries were echoing everywhere. Disaster victims in ragged clothes who looked like walking dead were crammed together!

Some of the disaster victims only had their last breath. They had been dragged to the same place, waiting to die. Extending their dry, thin arms where veins were bulging, they were snatching at the sky. There was no telling what they were trying to catch.

Some of the younger and healthier folks were kneeling toward Roaring Tiger City, begging the deities to let them into the city. Many men kowtowed on the rocks so hard that their heads were bleeding until they fell to the side and stopped moving.

A lot of disaster victims were searching for trees, weeds, rats, earthworms… anything that could be put into their mouth. They were fighting and mauling each other like animals for nothing more than a tiny earthworm!

Bright, black auras were soaring from the disaster victims who were catching their last breath. Floating in midair, they condensed into what looked like dark clouds.

Some scarlet things were vaguely condensed inside the clouds. As the disaster victims screamed, they got redder and redder. Like eccentric eyes, they gazed at the ground coldly, full of gloom, hate, wrath, desperation, and other negative emotions.

The auras gave Li Yao an extremely uncomfortable feeling. Even the circulation of spiritual energy inside his body more or less stagnated. He was feeling nausea like the ordinary people who were naturally disgusted when faced with spiders or centipedes!

“The unrested souls and the devastating auras!” Dan Fengzi exclaimed. “I didn’t know that such intense unrested souls and devastating auras had gathered in this place. It appears that Mother White Lotus will gain an army of aggressive ghouls with no effort!”

Reciting the sutras, Master Bitter Cicada moved out of the crowd and ran into the devastating auras above the moon-white cassock!

Almost a hundred black air masses that looked like skulls were immediately formed inside the devastating auras. Shrieking, the skulls lunged toward Master Bitter Cicada!

The pity and sorrow on Master Bitter Cicada’s face grew even denser than before. He shook his enormous pearls and then swung them with his staff!

With his staff as the axis, the pearls rotated rapidly and released colorful mystic rays that sprayed on the hundred skulls.

The skulls made of black air masses were frozen in midair. They trembled violently before blossoming like buds, revealing ragged, fuzzy shadows in the middle of the black air masses!

The unconscious souls seemed to have just woken up from a dream and did not know what was going on.

As Master Bitter Cicada recited the sutras, they seemed to be reminded of everything in their past. The devastating auras around them dispersed, and peace and delight returned to their faces again, before they gradually turned into pure, transparent mist.

In the end, with sighs of relief, they left the world entirely.

All the unrested souls had been appeased by Master Bitter Cicada.

The sky, which had previously been haunted by gloomy winds, finally reembraced sunlight.

The nausea of Li Yao and the other high-level Cultivators finally disappeared.

The so-called ‘soul’ was actually a collection of very special waves. After a person died, without the support of enough energy and materials, they would soon disappear.

However, if their soul received a tiny bit of energy and managed to maintain the previous frequency and form for a while without collapsing, it would turn from a ‘soul’ into a ‘ghost’.

The ‘aggressive ghoul’ referred to the highly unsteady and interferential field that contained tremendous negative emotions in this collection of special waves.

The highly interferential field, if powerful enough, would be able to affect the real world, like the magnetic field of a magnet could attract and affect many metals and even add magnetism to the metals.

If the interferential field invaded the brain of ordinary people, triggered the bioelectricity, and manipulated one’s optical, audio, and central nerves, it was possible that the victim would see all kinds of terrible hallucinations. The central nerves and bodily fluids of the person could also be affected, resulting in wounds and changes to the human body, such as bloodshot eyes, uncanny laughter, weird posture, instant increase of hair and fingernails, and so on.

When the aggressive ghoul was too strong, it could even block the original soul residing inside the body and assume its place!

It was what the ordinary people called ‘run into a ghost’ or ‘possessed by a ghost’.

A human being’s potential was infinite. For ordinary people, they did not know how to activate the potential in the normal state. The most likely time for them to activate their potential was the moment before their death!

If they died peacefully without regret, their potentials would rarely be activated.

However, if they had unaccomplished wishes, if they died a painful, miserable death, or if they had not reaped their revenge, it was possible for them to activate the full potential inside their brain when they were dying, which would lead to a reaction that resembled a supernova outbreak in the brain cells and turned themselves into powerful ghosts!

If that was everything, with the Cultivator’s tough body and soul, they would not be scared of a few aggressive ghouls that used to be ordinary people when alive.

But the real tricky issue was that changes in quantity would cause a change in quality.

Hundreds of thousands of disaster victims had been gathered in the same place. Because of hunger, plague, coldness, and other reasons, their deaths were the opposite of tranquil.

A lot of aggressive ghouls would be generated after they passed away. Some of the aggressive ghouls would even resonate and integrate, upgrading into ghoul generals and ghoul kings that were even more belligerent!

Chapter 1425 - Magnificent Tigers!

No Cultivator was willing to encounter an army of ghouls because the aggressive ghouls were often very disruptive. Even if the Cultivators could eliminate the ghouls by raising their hands easily, their own soul would still suffer minor interference.

If they were surrounded by thousands of aggressive ghouls, the minor interference would accumulate and destroy the steady circulation of spiritual energy in the Cultivator’s body. As a result, their soul and body would be corrupted by the devastating auras. Their Cultivation would drop if they were lucky, and they would be mentally deranged if they were not!

One might say that activating the most primitive life potential inside the head with indelible hatred and a miserable death and turning themselves into aggressive ghouls were the only way that ordinary people could check the Cultivators’ power in the underdeveloped world of the ancient Cultivators. It was a special ‘suicidal attack’!

The Ancient Sages Sector’s case was relatively better.

Because the world was closely wrapped in a thick, dark nebula, spiritual energy and probe equipment could not leak in. Therefore, the extraterrestrial devils did not know about the existence of the Sector.

In the three thousand Sectors outside, at the age of the ancient Cultivators, devils and ghosts often came together.

When countless restless souls and aggressive ghouls congregated into an overwhelming army, and when the intense negative emotions broke out of the sky and spread to the universe, the extraterrestrial devils that were wandering in the universe would perceive it.

Then, the extraterrestrial devils would arrive and build up the army of ghouls with the tenebrum energy that sometimes even corrupted living people. It would be an out-and-out catastrophe.

It had happened before when the population of an entire planet was transformed into an army of ghouls and demonic Cultivators who destroyed the Cultivation sects and civilizations in the Sectors nearby!

However, it was exactly because the ordinary people in the three thousand Sectors nearby boasted an ultimate checking method, which was ‘introducing the extraterrestrial devils’, the Cultivators paid more attention to the harmony with the ordinary people and tried to leave the extraterrestrial devils no chance.

Also, in the Great Dark Age, which lasted thirty thousand years, ordinary people and Cultivators suffered cruel tyranny together and gradually turned into a community of shared destiny, which was the bedrock for the modern Cultivation civilization.

In the Ancient Sages Sector, there was no such thing as the arrival of the extraterrestrial devils. The most advanced ghoul that an ordinary person could turn into was ‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu. It was not enough to shake the foundation of the Cultivators’ reign.

Perhaps that was the reason that the Cultivators had hardly changed their attitude toward the ordinary people for the past hundred thousand years.

Thinking to himself, Li Yao observed Roaring Tiger City at the end of the camp of the disaster victims.

After only a quick glance, he complimented in his heart, *What a well-constructed stronghold!*

The city was established next to a steep mountain that looked like a tiger that had just woken up. It was Heavenly Tiger Mountain, a famous mountain in the southeast!

At the end of Heavenly Tiger Mountain, Roaring Tiger City, which was entirely piled up with giant black rocks, truly looked like a monolithic tiger head that had opened its bloody maw!

Although Li Yao was still dozens of kilometers away, he could still feel that intimidating aura declaring that it would rip everything in its way apart!

It was said that when the city was built, Roaring Tiger Hall purchased the demon cores and bones of almost ten thousand dragon-type and lion-type animals with a fortune and buried them around the critical locations in the city. After ten years of hard work, the Tiger Apparitions Array was finally built. The defense array and the city had been integrated into one. When it was fully activated, ten thousand of lions and dragons seemed to be guarding the city day and night. It was almost on the level of the protective arrays in the headquarters of the Grand Mystery Sect and the Purple Pole Sword Sect!

Behind Roaring Tiger City was a steep mountain, but in front of the city was a deep, bottomless river. Dangerous tides were spluttering out of the dark currents all the time.

Observed from a distance, there were even shadows of bizarre boas and crocodiles in the river. They were all the animals domesticated by Roaring Tiger Hall.

As long as the drawbridge in front of the ‘tiger mouth’ was pulled up, it would be practically impossible for regular Cultivators to march into the city from the land!

Then, if they were to attack from the sky…

Li Yao noticed that hundreds of holes were riddling the towers in the shape of tiger heads. Although he could not tell what was inside exactly, he did feel a breathtaking killing intent that even made a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator such as himself feel alarmed.

They seemed to be the firing holes of the Crouching Tiger Cannons and the Fiery Crow Ballista.

The Crouching Tiger Cannons and the Fiery Crow Ballista were famous remote magical equipment in the Ancient Sages Sector. When Li Yao was in the Purple Pole Sword Sect, he had retrieved a few blueprints and objects to study.

Although the two magical equipment were rather crude in terms of functioning mechanism, they could still be very powerful once a lot of high-purity crystals were placed inside.

When dozens of Crouching Tiger Cannons were shooting together, they could indeed pose a certain threat for a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator.

Li Yao did not dare underestimate the ancient Cultivators’ magical equipment.

Even the stone axes and spears of primitives could be lethal weapons.

He deduced the battle pattern of Roaring Tiger Hall when they were defending their headquarters. First of all, they would probably activate the Tiger Apparitions Array and release the souls of the ten thousand lion-type and tiger-type animals to harass the invasive Cultivators. After all, high-level Cultivators could be very fast. The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators could burst into the speed of sound very easily!

As long as they were stalled by the souls of the animals for one moment, the hundred Crouching Tiger Cannons and Fiery Crow Ballista would certainly open fire on them. Even a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator could be burnt and blackened!

It was needless to mention that Roaring Tiger Hall had two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and ten at the peak of the Core Formation Stage in the first place. With the advantage of the homefield, together with the defense rune arrays, barriers, and hundred cannons, it was also an iron egg that could not be chewed, boiled, or grinded.

No wonder the people of Roaring Tiger Hall were so brazen as to refuse the request of the leader of the Great Qian Cultivators!

Li Yao noticed that a glamorous ship was floating in midair not far away from Roaring Tiger Hall’s fortress.

The floating ship was more than a hundred meters long. Sails made of rainbow-like feathers were hanging above. Two rows of sophisticated floating rune arrays had been carved at the bottom. Twelve objects that resembled quants protruded out, too. Every time that they waved, colorful ripples would spread out in the air.

The ship had a quaint style. It was the largest flying boat that the Ancient Sages Sector could produce. It was also probably the oldest prototype of the crystal warships in the modern Cultivation civilization.

On the flying boat, the banner of the Grand Mystery Sect was flying. It was the mobile command center of the Cultivators who were reinforcing the southeast.

Around the flying boat were many enormous cranes, falcons, griffins, and tigers.

Many Cultivators were sitting cross-legged on the boat in brilliant halos, as they demonstrated their power and competed with the Cultivators in Roaring Tiger City.

The intimidating auras inside Roaring Tiger City were soaring up to the sky. The Tiger Apparitions Array had been activated to the maximum. It was truly roaring incessantly like a tiger and dragon. The souls of the animals were lunging at the flying boat without disguising their hostility and triggering explosive sounds after they crashed into the spiritual shield of the flying sword. Even the banner of the Grand Mystery Sect was shaking in midair!

While the two parties were in a stalemate, once the high-level Cultivators of the Purple Pole Sword Sect, especially Li Yao, Yan Liren, and Master Bitter Cicada, joined them, the morale on the Grand Mystery Sect’s side was greatly boosted, and many people began cheering.

Li Yao observed coldly but felt that they were just a bunch of mobs.

This was very similar to the occasion where the major sects threatened the Purple Pole Sword Sect three months earlier.

In terms of ostensible capabilities, there were more than ten Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, and they were certainly at a great advantage.

However, the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who belonged to different sects were not interested in disaster relief at all. They were there paying lip service purely to show respect to Qi Zhongdao and also to see if they could gain anything along the way.

Besides, the attack was not justified. The Roaring Tiger Hall was a well-respected sect after all. How could the Cultivators attack their headquarters when they had done nothing wrong?

Even if they attacked, who would be the first to charge forward and take the blow of the Tiger Apparition Array and the hundred Crouching Tiger Cannons?

Twenty or so Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators from different sects each having their own ill intentions attacking together?

It was just a dream!

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators cared about themselves most. The idiots such as Master Bitter Cicada were few.

Most of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators craved to advance into the Divinity Transformation Stage. They paid so much attention to their body and soul that they were even careful when they clipped their fingernails.

They had no grudge with Roaring Tiger Hall whatsoever. Without enough gains, why would they attack Roaring Tiger Hall’s well-defended headquarters?

Li Yao observed for a while and noticed the casualness on every Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator’s face. He then glanced at Dan Fengzi.

Dan Fengzi stepped forward without an expression and pulled his sleeve softly. “Calm down, Elder Spiritual Vulture. You must calm down. This is not a time to show off like the Dragon Spring Meeting. The two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators of Roaring Tiger Hall will be fighting with their life for real! Should they be willing to heavily wound one or two enemies at the cost of their own lives when they are in fury, won’t it be very unlucky if any Cultivator runs into them?

“We all hang around in the world of Cultivators. There will be a time when we will meet again. Peace is gold. Peace is gold!”

Not just Dan Fengzi, the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Core Formation Stage Cultivators from other sects were all whispering and reminding each other not to lead the charge.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Hundreds of eyes were cast to Qi Zhongdao simultaneously.

Their meaning was obvious. *Big brother, rest assured and go now. The hundreds of lackeys behind are here for you. If anything goes wrong, we will throw a thousand pieces of magical equipment over and demolish Roaring Tiger City.*

Qi Zhongdao’s face was so gloomy that his facial features were barely recognizable. Without saying anything, he soared above Roaring Tiger City and said loudly, “Where is the leader of Roaring Tiger Hall? Qi Zhongdao wants to have a talk with him!”

“Excuse us, Master Righteous One and fellow Cultivators!” A muscular man who had a golden beard and looked truly like a giant tiger crawled out of the dense cannons and Ballista. He clasped his fist toward the sky and said emotionlessly, “A few days ago, my father tried his best to resist the natural disaster. Although the safety of the local area was ensured, he was also heavily wounded and nearly mentally deranged. Right now, he is still resting and cannot greet Master Righteous One and other fellow Cultivators. Please do forgive us!”

Chapter 1426 - Heartless!

Although he was asking for forgiveness, there was not the slightest guilt on his face. He was even releasing his intimidating aura blatantly in front of Qi Zhongdao, as if he would not hesitate to have a fight if the conversation did not go well.

“This guy is Duan Yuanwu, the young leader of Roaring Tiger Hall. His father, Duan Tiande, is also a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator,” Dan Fengzi said to Li Yao in a low voice. “The son is in the beginning level and the father is in the middle level.

“With their blood bond, the two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators have practiced very delicate skills of joint attack. When they integrate their Nascent Souls together, their combat ability is close to that of a high-level Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator! Inside the Tiger Apparitions Array, they are scared of nobody. Even Master Righteous One will have to consider it carefully if he intends to break into the array by himself!”

“Leader Duan was heavily wounded and almost mentally deranged while resisting the natural disaster?” Qi Zhongdao pulled a long face. “Is that so?”

“It indeed is.” Without batting an eye, Duan Yuanwu said coldly, “Master Righteous One, if you find it hard to believe and insist on meeting my father, please come into the city. I’ll lead you to where my father is resting, Master!”

Hundreds of Crouching Tiger Cannons and Fiery Crow Ballista had been set up there, and two Nascent Soul Stage

Cultivators and ten at the peak of the Core Formation Stage were inside the city. Even Qi Zhongdao would not be able to walk out of the trap unharmed.

After pondering for a moment, he said, “If so, please send my regards to Leader Duan. Later, the Grand Mystery Sect will deliver gifts to help Leader Duan’s recovery. I can talk about the issues with Young Leader Duan, too!”

“Please, Master Righteous One!” Duan Yuanwu clasped his fist. “I’ll do whatever I can!”

“Alright!” Pointing at the dense disaster victims below his feet, Qi Zhongdao said, “The febrile typhoon has just passed, and the Sorcerers’ River is flooding. The prosperous land in the southeast has been reduced to a kingdom of swamps. As a result, so many folks have lost their homes. They are struggling on the brink of death to survive! If they are left aside, there will be great disasters in the future! Plagues, riots, armies of ghouls. The situation will be beyond control!

“All Cultivators have the heart to serve justice and help the people. Roaring Tiger Hall is among the most famous sects in the West River State. It is your responsibility to guard the land and shepherd the folks. Please open the gate and provide a shelter for the disaster victims, Young Leader Duan!”

“If I may speak, Master Righteous One.”

Without blinking, Duan Yuanwu replied loudly. “It’s not that Roaring Tiger Hall is heartless, but our city is too small. A few days ago, when the febrile typhoon just passed and the flood was not here, almost a hundred thousand local disaster victims moved into the city. The facilities and assets have all reached their limits now. We cannot allow any more disaster victims to come in even though we want to!

“If we open the gate now and introduce the disaster victims into Roaring Tiger City without sufficient food, medicine, and assets, Roaring Tiger City will only end up being an enormous graveyard where everybody will die together!

“Roaring Tiger City is just a tiny city. How many disaster victims can be accommodated here? If you are truly seeking a way of living for them, Master Righteous One, please guide the disaster victims to East Peace County. That is one of the largest cities in the entire Great Qian Dynasty. I’m sure that millions of people can be accommodated there!”

There was not any emotion on Qi Zhongdao’s dark face. He was even more indifferent as he nodded and said, “Fine. It’s reasonable that Roaring Tiger City is too small for so many disaster victims. Then, please allocate some of the assets in Roaring Tiger City to the disaster victims so that they can establish tents outside of the city to block the chilly rain and eat for now!”

Duan Yuanwu shook his head and said, “We have neither tents nor food!”

“Hehe. Hehehehe. The Roaring Tiger Hall is the largest sect in the West River State. Not just the southeast, it is one of the most famous and powerful sects in the entire Great Qian Dynasty!” Qi Zhongdao sounded even more dissatisfied. “All Cultivators know that not only does more than half of the land in the West River State belong to Roaring Tiger Hall, the Black Wind Roaring Tiger Flag of Roaring Tiger Hall is also flying in the fertile land of the states and counties nearby.

“Right now, the many sects including the Grand Mystery Sect and the Purple Pole Sword Sect, as well Master Bitter

Cicada of the Stupa Temple, have come all the way here for disaster in the southeast. Is it honorable for Roaring Tiger Hall to offer not a single grain of food for the disaster victims as a local sect of the southeast?”

“Do forgive us, Master Righteous One and fellow Cultivators. This is definitely not Roaring Tiger Hall’s excuse!” Duan Yuanwu said neither humbly nor pushily. “It never rains; it pours. Before, Roaring Tiger Hall had already planned to bring out all out stored food to the disaster victims. When the rice and wheat for the Cultivators were already dissolved carefully with certain medications and turned into a paste that was edible for the common folks. It’s a shame that one dark night a few days ago, the barn caught fire, and all our stored food was burnt to the ground!”

Qi Zhongdao’s voice was even colder. “Not sooner, not later, and it caught fire precisely when the large batch of disaster victims came close?”

“An accident wouldn’t be an accident if it was foreseen, right?” Duan Yuanwu made a gesture to the bottom of the fortress. Then, a few tough-looking Cultivators in robes made of tiger hide carried a few boxes of blackened stuff to him.

Duan Yuanwu kicked over the few boxes and declared, “Please take a look, fellow Cultivators!”

Inside the few boxes was tiny, broken, black residue that had a weird burnt smell. Under the wind, the scent was blown into the air and turned out to be crops that had been burnt up!

“The fire burnt up the food that Roaring Tiger City had stored for more than three years. Right now, more than a hundred thousand disaster victims are still waiting to be fed inside Roaring Tiger City. Everybody in Roaring Tiger Hall is in distress. We were thinking of being so brazen as to borrow some food from Master Righteous One and the fellow Cultivators. How can we bring out any grain of food now?”

Duan Yuanwu sighed. Even his gold, shining beard seemed to be getting lackluster.

“Young Leader Duan!” Qi Zhongdao was shaking in anger. “Now is not the time to consider the selfish benefits of a single sect. This is not an issue for the Grand Mystery Sect, the Purple Pole Sword Sect, the Gold Armor Clan, and Thunderstorm Valley. This is even not an issue for Roaring Tiger Hall. This is about all Cultivators. This concerns the big picture of the world of Cultivators!

“Right now, the Grand Mystery Sect, the Purple Pole Sword Sect, the Gold Armor Clan, Thunderstorm Valley, the Monster Taming Pavilion, Flying Spirit Island, and dozens of other sects have all dispatched tremendous food that is being shipped here as fast as possible. It will be delivered in a couple of days! As long as Roaring Tiger Hall provides a sum of food so that the disaster victims could survive the toughest days, you will be making an unparalleled contribution!”

“Human beings differ from the plants in that we have feelings. If there was food, not just a day or two, Roaring Tiger Hall would do our best to support the victims for half a month!” Duan Yuanwu slapped his thigh and was almost crying out. “But it’s a pity that there isn’t any food!”

“Young Leader Duan!” Qi Zhongdao was so exasperated that his voice was as tough as iron and mixed with a hint of coercion. “Did it not occur to you that, with so many people gathered in front of Roaring Tiger City, should anything happen to them, Roaring Tiger City will be the first one to suffer the blow of the army of ghouls that comes into being after their death!”

“Haha. Hahahaha!” Duan Yuanwu wiped his face. His fake tears were immediately replaced by dominance. After a few chuckles, he eyed the dense crowd below the city in disgust before shouting, “Roaring Tiger City is as well-defended as any city can ever be. If certain blind ghosts dare to attack Roaring Tiger City, let them taste how strong the Tiger Apparitions Array and my fists are!”

By the ‘certain blind ghosts’, he was obviously not referring to the folks who were struggling to survive.

For a moment, the atmosphere became even more intense. The two parties were so at loggerheads that even the air was cracking!

Duan Yuanwu, who was only in the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage, confronted Qi Zhongdao, who was at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage, remotely. Protected by the Tiger Apparitions Array and the hundred Crouching Tiger Cannons, Duan Yuanwu was not eclipsed at all!

The negotiation surprised and baffled Li Yao.

It was inappropriate for him to directly ask Dan Fengzi why Roaring Tiger Hall refused to open their barn, which would imply that he cared too much about the disaster victims. Rolling his eyes, he changed a way of asking and chucked. “I didn’t know that Master Righteous One’s title would be so useless. Even a Cultivator at the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage dares to show no respect for him at all and refuses to offer any food!”

“Of course, respect cannot be shown here,” Dan Fengzi said in a low voice. “Offering food is a bottomless hole. Once the barn is open, the whole sect will go bankrupt. So, not just Master Righteous One, even if Emperor Phoenix… no, even if the heavens came here in person, he will still show no respect, and the sect would still resist to the end!”

“Oh?” Blinking, Li Yao commented, “I truly don’t understand what is on the mind of the locals of the central plateaus. Although there are a lot of disaster victims here, since Roaring Tiger Hall is the largest sect in the West River State possessing tremendous farmlands, do they not have enough food for the victims to survive the famine? Why do they reject so strongly that they are offending Master Right One, Master Bitter Cicada, and us?”

“Elder Spiritual Vulture, that’s because you are not seeing the whole picture, but that’s understandable,” Dan Fengzi explained. “The Southland of Sorcerers is vast and unpopulated. Bananas and other fruits are everywhere in the forests, too. There can’t be too many people who suffer from hunger, right?

“If the hundreds of thousands of victims here were all there are, it would be simple enough for Roaring Tiger Hall to deal with them with the assets that they stockpiled earlier!

“However, the victims have legs. Once the news that Roaring Tiger Hall has opened its barn is out, the millions of disaster victims in the states and counties nearby will all crowd toward Roaring Tiger Hall!

“By then, we will be seeing not hundreds of thousands of disaster victims but ten times more. When the millions of victims surround Roaring Tiger Hall, each of them waiting to be fed, Roaring Tiger Hall will be drained even if it has a whole canyon of food!”

Chapter 1427 - Respect That Must Not Be Given!

Li Yao was slightly dazed. In fact, the logic was quite simple. But the natural disasters in the Star Glory Federation were all handled properly and quickly soon after they happened. He had never seen the victims of the disasters causing trouble before. So, he did not think it through just now.

Seeing Li Yao's reaction, Dan Fengzi continued. "Although the hundreds of thousands of homeless folks are a lot, and they will be troublesome after they turn into an army of ghouls if Roaring Tiger Hall does nothing, Roaring Tiger Hall will still be capable to dealing with them.

"If they do follow Master Righteous One's instructions and open the barn, the millions of disaster victims nearby will be attracted, and the food still might not be enough. Countless victims will die of hunger. When there are a lot of bodies, with the density of the crowd, the odds of a plague outbreak will be much higher. Even more people will die a miserable death below Roaring Tiger City, their unrested souls lingering on!

"As a result, the army of tens of thousands of ghouls can be upgraded into an army of a million ghouls. If they hover above Roaring Tiger City, it is possible that Roaring Tiger Hall will not be able to resist them and will quickly be demolished!

"Tell me about it, Elder Spiritual Vulture. The lives of all the members of the sect are on his shoulders. How can the Duans show Master Righteous One respect?

“For Roaring Tiger Hall, the only correct choice is what they are doing right now. They’re showing unmistakably to all the disaster victims that Roaring Tiger Hall has absolutely no food and they will certainly die if they keep staying here. Going to East Peace County is their only choice to live if they want to live!

“In such a way, the trouble will be guided to East Peace County, and Roaring Tiger Hall will be at peace again!”

Li Yao took a deep breath. “That explains a lot. Human beings can really be treacherous.”

“Of course. The most treacherous things in the world are human beings!”

Dan Fengzi sighed and said, “Is Master Righteous One demanding that Roaring Tiger Hall open the barn because he is, to quote him, ‘serving justice and helping the people’? No. He is hoping to ease the pressure on East Peace County’s side with Roaring Tiger Hall as the price by attracting the disaster victims wandering around East Peace County so that Mother White Lotus will not be able to draft enough ghost soldiers, and he will have a chance to eliminate her once and for all!

“Hehe. Master Righteous One is taking advantage of Duan Yuanwu’s lack of experience since he is new to the Nascent Soul Stage! However, his father, Duan Tiande, has been hanging around with the Cultivators for more than a hundred years. They will not be fooled so easily!

“Just wait and watch. Duan Tiande must be lurking in the darkness. If Master Righteous One dares attack by force, the Duans will certainly bite a few pieces of flesh off him even at the cost of death!”

Li Yao was appalled. Pondering for a moment, he frowned and said, “That’s still not right. If the big sects including the Purple Pole Sword Sect are shipping food to this place, which will arrive in two to three days, Roaring Tiger Hall only needs to provide food for a day or two for the victims to survive the crisis. Isn’t it a happy ending for everyone? Why are the two parties so antagonistic to each other?”

“Hehe. Hehehehe!” Dan Fengzi chuckled, somewhat in embarrassment. Instead of replying to Li Yao’s question, he changed the topic and said, “Even if Roaring Tiger Hall does have food that is sufficient for millions of disaster victims to survive half a month, it is still impossible for them to offer any!”

“Why?” Li Yao asked.

“For a simple reason.” Dan Fengzi counted his fingers and calculated. “With the natural disasters in the spring, specifically the collective strike of the flood and the febrile typhoon, the fertile farmlands in the southeast have been ruined. When harvest season comes, the Cultivators will certainly be short of food!

“Not only will the rice, wheat, and Jade Crystal Pellets for the Cultivators be in short supply, when the Cultivation sects run out of their storage and the Cultivators have to feed on regular rice and wheat, their demand on food will grow exponentially!

“By then, the price of food will certainly soar. It will be five times and even ten times higher than right now!

“Whoever has food will have the most hardcore resources and capabilities!

“Offering a basket of food to the disaster victims right now means a reduction of their capabilities during the harvest season when the famine breaks out. Who’s silly enough to do that?

“After the natural disasters, Roaring Tiger Hall is bound to expand their territory. Battles will be inevitable. The food that they store will be exchanged for the resources needed in the battles. How can they waste the food on the disaster victims for nothing?”

“Battles?” Li Yao was more and more amazed. “Battles? What for?”

“After every natural disaster, there will be a period of fighting when the Cultivators in the central plateaus divide their turf again,” Dan Fengzi explained to Li Yao patiently. “The central plateaus are different from the Southland of Sorcerers. The land here is little, but the population is high. The friction is intense. The farmlands, plantations, and reserves of different sects are very close to each other, often without the slightest gap. Conflicts happen almost on a daily basis!

“Before, on a property, there would be barriers and banners indicating the owner of the territory. So, an ostensible peace can still be maintained. However, after a flood or a febrile typhoon, most of the barriers and banners will be ruined. Who can prove the boundary between two neighboring forces?

“Everybody wants more. Isn’t it only necessary that they fight each other for the expansion of their territory?”

“Phew…” Li Yao took a long breath. He recalled the anecdote that he had overheard when he was investigating along the Sorcerers’ River earlier. For nothing more than a pile of poop, two Cultivators at the peak of the Core Formation Stage had been killed in the fight between two sects.

“Friction over territory is not very important.” Dan Fengzi smiled again. “The more chaotic situation is this. Sometimes, the headquarters of a sect happens to be hit directly by a natural disaster and is completely demolished. With the experts in the sect wiped out, it does not have the capabilities to keep its previous territory any more.

“Some of the less lucky sects are even entirely uprooted by the natural disaster, and most of the disciples are killed. So, a lot of unowned farmlands and forests have present themselves!

“Elder Spiritual Vulture, do you think that the unowned land is worth fighting for?”

Li Yao nodded and gnashed his teeth. “Of course it is!”

“Therefore, after every natural disaster, there will be a great opportunity for the Cultivation sects to fight and swallow each other in their own way!” Dan Fengzi said with a smile. “For a local superpower like Roaring Tiger Hall, weather conditions mean little. In fact, after weighing the pros and cons, they might even prefer natural disasters!

“Elder Spiritual Vulture, you can take a minute to think if it makes sense. Roaring Tiger Hall currently boasts half of the farmlands in the West River State. It has also extended its tentacles into the neighboring states and counties and established a lot of fortresses, bureaus, and farms.

“If the weather is favorable, their farmlands will yield the most crops, which is certainly good!

“If there is a natural disaster, Roaring Tiger Hall, as the most powerful sect in the thousand square kilometers nearby, certainly boasts the highest anti-disaster capabilities. When the smaller sects are dying, Roaring Tiger Hall might only suffer bruises!

“As soon as they pass the natural disaster, Roaring Tiger Hall will have the opportunity to swallow the sects, resources, and interests nearby. Isn’t it a fairer deal than reaping the crops when the weather is favorable?

“How could Roaring Tiger Hall have developed into what it is today if they hadn’t chosen such a path? You can’t have ten Cultivators at the peak of the Core Formation Stage and two in the Nascent Soul Stage by farming alone!

“To fight for territory, a lot of resources will be consumed, among which food is the most important of all!

“Considering the scale of the natural disaster, a lot of sects must’ve been significantly weakened or even entirely collapsed. It is a great opportunity for Roaring Tiger Hall to rise. How can they waste the precious battle resources on the relief of the disaster victims?”

“That explains a lot!” With complicated feelings, Li Yao said, “Roaring Tiger Hall has other ambitions. No wonder they are giving no food!”

“Even if they do not have ambitions but merely want to protect themselves, it is still impossible for them to offer any food.” Dan Fengzi smiled. “If Roaring Tiger Hall truly offers a huge amount of food for the relief of the victims, their own barn may be drained. Even if they survive the scourge of the army of ghouls, they will still be eyed by the other sects nearby who have sufficient warriors and food!

“In this world, just because you don’t hurt other people doesn’t mean that other people won’t hurt you. How can Roaring Tiger Hall place themselves on a chopping block waiting to be butchered?

“It has nothing to do with the Duans’ personalities but concerns the lives of the tens of thousands of disciples of Roaring Tiger Hall as well as the ten times more fighters and tenants who are attached to them. Even if Master Bitter Cicada were the leader of Roaring Tiger Hall, would he trade the deaths of the hundreds of thousands of people inside Roaring Tiger City for a slim chance of survival for the millions of victims outside?”

Dan Fengzi’s statement was like a strike right on Li Yao’s forehead, and his head was humming.

He raised his head and looked at Master Bitter Cicada, only to discover that Master Bitter Cicada was still appeasing the deceased in the middle of the gloomy clouds far away.

His eyes half closed, he was mumbling the sutras to himself without looking at Qi Zhongdao and Duan Yuanwu, who were confronting each other.

Was the monk unwilling to look, or could he not bear to, or did he not dare to?

If the monk were asked to choose, would he have attacked Roaring Tiger City and opened the barn by brute force?

Pondering for a long time, Li Yao shook his head with a bitter smile. “It appears that they truly can’t respect Master Righteous One.”

“Of course they can’t. They will not even respect the emperor if he gives the order!” Dan Fengzi said resolutely.

Then he put on a weird smile. “Besides, Master Righteous One does not deserve much respect right now because his face was slapped hard recently!”

“What do you mean?” Li Yao was baffled. “Who dares to slap the ‘leader of the Great Qian Dynasties’?”

“Wasn’t it you, Elder Spiritual Vulture?” Dan Fengzi looked at Li Yao solemnly. “Have you forgotten how you and Junior Brother Yan had a two-man show and stomped Master Righteous One’s face into the mud three months ago during the Dragon Spring Meeting? Do I need to remind you?”

“…” Li Yao.

“There is a big difference between the best and the second best.” Dan Fengzi shook his head and said, “Before, awed by the power of the Heaven Flipping Seal, everybody had to think carefully before they refused Master Righteous One’s request. But now, since it has been proven that the Heaven Flipping Seal is beatable and Master Righteous One is not invincible, the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators such as the Duans are certainly braver than before!”

Chapter 1428 - Kill Me If You Want, But There’s No Food!

Li Yao was rendered speechless. He did not realize that he was involved, too.

However, on second thought, it did make sense. Although the ancient sects and the modern sects were both named ‘sects’, they were fundamentally different!

The ancient sects were independent kingdoms and war groups that acted on their own. Although Qi Zhongdao was the well-acknowledged leader of all Cultivators, it was just a nominal title to show respect for him.

When life was peaceful, he was naturally respected by everyone because of his unparalleled capabilities. However, when their core interests were affected, they would not care about who he was at all!

To unite the hundreds of independent groups large and small to think and do things together was too hard!

“Now that Master Righteous One, Master Bitter Cicada, and so many other fellow Cultivators have arrived,” Duan Yuanwu shouted from Roaring Tiger City, “to show respect for everyone here, and with the benevolence of the heavens in mind, we have combed the burnt barns time and time again and finally collected three thousand baskets of food! After taking the three thousand baskets of food, you can lead the disaster victims eastward to East Peace County. That’s the only place where they can survive!”

“Three thousand baskets is far from enough!” Qi Zhongdao did not give in at all. “Right now, the road to East Peace County has been blocked by the White Lotus ghoul army. It is impossible for the weak and sick folks to travel to East Peace County before they are enchanted by Mother White Lotus and turned into an army of ghouls, causing great trouble! They cannot go to East Peace County and must settle here! Roaring Tiger Hall can provide fifty thousand baskets of food right now. In a couple of days, after the flying boats that are fully loaded with food from the other sects arrive, the crisis will be resolved!”

“Fifty thousand baskets?” Duan Yuanwu burst into laughter. His eyeballs seemed to be twice as large as before and turned dim yellow color, resembling those of a tiger. His beard shaking, he snarled, “So, you want to demolish Roaring Tiger Hall and annihilate the Duan family?”

“If the army of ghouls walks in the day, the world will be shattered. There will be no good for anybody!” Qi Zhongdao said sincerely, almost digging out his heart to show Duan Yuanwu his earnestness. “Right now, both the Grand Mystery Sect and Roaring Tiger hall, both the Duan family and the Qi family, should bear the big picture in mind and consider the entire community of Cultivators! Let’s stabilize the current situation no matter what for now. No matter what prices your sect has paid, I assure you with the Heaven Flipping Seal in my bag that we will make up for your losses later!”

“Haha. Hahahaha. The way I see it, Master Righteous One, you are trying to openly plunder our city with the power of the Heaven Flipping Seal, right?”

Duan Yuanwu did not buy what he said at all. He raised his head and laughed, before he scratched his beard and said, “I didn’t know that the world would be reversed after the natural disaster arrived. The leader of all the Great Qian Cultivators, and the grand leader of the Grand Mystery Sect, has been changed into a bandit who loots a burning house!”

“Young Leader Duan!” Blood red veins were bulging out on Qi Zhongdao’s dark face, and terrible ripples were spreading out. “Is Roaring Tiger Hall so ruthless that you are not going to open the barn even if hundreds of thousands of victims are dying of hunger and coldness outside?”

“No food. No food. Not a grain of food!” Duan Yuanwu slapped a rock on the tower so hard that it was immediately blown into smithereens. “Let’s forget the fact that the barn of Roaring Tiger Hall has been burnt down with all the food gone and we cannot offer much. Even if we do have food, why are you demanding that we offer the food?

“The thousand square kilometers nearby is all the property of Roaring Tiger Hall! We earned the land fair and square! We reaped the crops without violating any laws! It all belongs to Roaring Tiger Hall and the Duan family!

“We have been merciful enough to allow those bumpkins to trespass on the land of Roaring Tiger Hall. You want food? No. Absolutely no!”

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

The auras of the two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were colliding like tides in ear-splitting noises.

The dizzy victims on the ground in their ragged clothes were listening to the talks of the two ‘deities’. Some understood what they were talking about, but most did not. They were all shaking and struggling in pain while covering their ears.

“Young Leader Duan, are you really so mean and heartless?” Qi Zhongdao bellowed.

“What about being mean?” Duan Yuanwu shouted. “The land is ours. The food is ours. Is it an unpardonable crime that we do not have food to spare?

“Besides, there are too many Cultivation sects in the southeast. Why are you clinging to Roaring Tiger Hall alone?

“1,250 kilometers south of this place, the Heaven Resounding Guild is also a famous big sect in the southeast. Is there not any food?

“1,320 kilometers north of this place, the Flying Leopard Palace also has thousands of acres of fertile land. Is there not any food?

“The founding elder of the Heaven Resounding Guild was an elder who split from the Grand Mystery Sect!

“Although the Flying Leopard Palace had nothing to do with the Grand Mystery Sect in the past, its current leader is an in-law of Elder Lu of the Grand Mystery Sect!

“The Heaven Resounding Guild and the Flying Leopard Palace are both rich and boast bountiful resources. They are also deeply connected with the Grand Mystery Sect. Why are you coming to Roaring Tiger Hall instead of asking them first?

“Did you not forget the conflicts on the transportation business on the Sorcerers’ River last year between Roaring Tiger Hall and the Grand Mystery Sect? Are you taking the chance to diminish Roaring Tiger Hall so that the Heaven Resounding Guild and the Flying Leopard Palace can swallow us sooner?”

Qi Zhongdao was shaking in fury. “Watch your manners! Even your father Duan Tiande wouldn’t dare talk to me in such a way! You are only a junior in the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage. How dare you?”

Duan Yuanwu took off the tiger-hide armor, revealing his chest that was full of golden hair. He spat out a mouthful of saliva with a huge noise. “I call you Master Righteous One and regard you as the leader of all Cultivators merely to show respect for you! But as the leader of all Cultivators, you should do what is expected of the leader! You always talk about rules, and I certainly believe that law trumps rules. Tell me about it. What law has Roaring Tiger Hall broken exactly, and what crimes have we committed? Are you really regarding a noble and righteous sect as evil outlaws?”

Qi Zhongdao burst into fury. “You—”

Duan Yuanwu’s mouth was shooting like the Crouching Tiger Cannons and the Fiery Crow Ballista as he went on. “Digging out food from the throat of the Cultivators and offering it to the cash-stripped bumpkins for free. Has there ever been such a thing in the thousand years of history in the Great Qian Dynasty? Although Roaring Tiger Hall is not as powerful and influential as the Grand Mystery Sect, we do have a few disciples who can speak to the emperor in the court in Divine Capital! Qi Zhongdao, you are blatantly annihilating Roaring Tiger Hall for a few insignificant bumpkins. What are you up to exactly? Do you have any respect for the emperor?

“Are you intentionally earning the favor and support of the bumpkins for a grander scheme later?

“Let me tell you honestly. You want Roaring Tiger Hall to open the barn. It’s easy. Ask the emperor to issue a decree! Roaring Tiger Hall is loyal to the Great Qian Dynasty and obedient to His Majesty. As soon as we see the decree, we will open the barn immediately!

“But right now, with only a few empty words from you, Qi Zhongdao, you want us to open the barn and embrace our doom. Hehehehe. It can work, too, if the Grand Mystery Sect takes the chance to establish a ‘Great Mystery Dynasty’ exactly like the Thunderous Qian Hall did in the past!”

Duan Yuanwu was certainly not as blunt and reckless as he appeared.

His arguments were truly sordid and critical.

On the flying boat, many disciples of the Grand Mystery Sect frowned. They looked at Qi Zhongdao with complicated feelings.

“Look.” Dragging the few elders from the Purple Pole Sword Sect, Dan Fengzi further retreated to the back of the crowd. He looked at Li Yao and grimaced, “Now you should understand why Master Righteous One is the ‘grand leader’ of the Grand Mystery Sect now, Elder Spiritual Vulture. If he continued working as the leader, the Grand Mystery Sect would have been killed by itself in no time!”

“Fellow Cultivators!” The more Duan Yuanwu talked, the more excited he got. “Roaring Tiger Hall has no grudge with everyone here whatsoever. As a local of the southeast, we cannot thank you enough for coming such a long way here for disaster relief!

“However, Roaring Tiger Hall has indeed been caught in desperation, and we cannot offer too much food. We hope that fellow Cultivators have more sympathy on Roaring Tiger Hall!

“Although Roaring Tiger Hall has two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and ten at the peak of the Core Formation Stage, that’s nothing compared to the entire world of Cultivators! Therefore, Roaring Tiger Hall is certainly unwilling to be on the opposing side of the great heroes and sects of the world!

“I’ll remember all the sects and Cultivators who have come to Roaring Tiger Hall today. If you understand Roaring Tiger Hall’s trouble right now, in a year and a half, especially when the price of the food is soaring, Roaring Tiger Hall will certainly offer gifts in return!

“However, if certain ill-intended fellows are determined to attack the headquarters of Roaring Tiger Hall taking advantage of the chaos in the natural disaster, then for the safety of the hundreds of thousands of lives in Roaring Tiger City, we will fight a bloody battle to the end knowing that we will fail. We will have no complaints even if we are shattered into pieces in the end!

“Make your choice now, fellow Cultivators!”

After saying that, Duan Yuanwu shut his mouth and focused his attention on the rune arrays.

“Ho! Soooooo!”

Roars of dragons and tigers from Roaring Tiger City were even louder than before. Golden brilliance was crawling out of every corner of the city and condensing into vivid appearances of lions and tigers, which patrolled around the city and extended their claws to the outside world maliciously now and then.

Even the magnificent-looking Crouching Tiger Cannons and Fiery Crow Ballista were releasing the most brilliant, dangerous brightness!

Roaring Tiger Hall had made all its preparations for a final battle!

On the intruders’ side, however, there was nothing but disunion, exactly like the Dragon Spring Meeting three months prior. None of them were determined to fight against the enemy with their life.

Qi Zhongdao returned to the flying boat with a gloomy face. While he was walking, he left a few deep footprints on the deck, which was made of fine steel. It was indicative enough that he was truly more furious than ever!

Chapter 1429 - Who Will Break the Array?

The disciples of the Grand Mystery Sect and the high-level Cultivators of other sects all crowded toward him, with indignation, compassion, or mysteriousness on their faces.

“Elder Huang, what do the Heaven Resounding Guild and the Flying Leopard Palace have to say?”

With a dark face, Qi Zhongdao asked an elder of the Grand Mystery Sect, “When can they collect enough food and deliver it with flying boats?”

“About that…” Elder Huang coughed for a moment pretentiously. “The Heaven Resounding Guild and the Flying Leopard Palace have both been scourged by the natural disaster. It is reported that they suffered heavy losses, too. A lot of disaster victims are going to them. Right now, the most important thing for them is to deal with the disaster victims who have come to them! Of course, with their relation to the Grand Mystery Sect, they will certainly offer whatever they can! Both of them have promised that they are doing their best to collect food, medicine, and clothes. As long as Roaring Tiger Hall provides a batch of assets first, their reinforcements will arrive in a couple of days!”

“A couple of days!” Qi Zhongdao was more than angry. “In a couple of days, the assets for disaster relief from the six major sects will have arrived. Are they really needed? Also, what about the other Cultivation sects in the West River State and the states nearby? Did we not invite the managers of those sects to meet below Roaring Tiger City and discuss how we are going to resolve the problems at hand together? Why are there no leaders or elders here?”

“If I may inform the grand leader,” Elder Huang replied helplessly, “starting from yesterday, the disciples of the Grand Mystery Sect have been busy running around. They have visited dozens of sects, but you know the situation of those sects, too, grand leader. Their cities are too small to weather through the disaster. It is said that they have suffered huge losses, and they can barely take care of their own affairs right now. They do not have any time to deal with other business.

“However, now that the grand leader has commanded, those sects are naturally willing to follow your order. They have all promised that as long as the big sects such as Roaring Tiger Hall, the Heaven Resounding Guild, and the Flying Leopard Palace provide a batch of assets first that supports the victims for ten to fifteen days, they will have cleaned up their messes and gathered enough resources to help!”

“Everybody is using the natural disaster as an excuse. Tough as the flood and the febrile typhoon might have been, could they have ruined all the sects in the thousands of square kilometers nearby?”

Qi Zhongdao was shaking in anger. Pointing at a corner on the sand table that was packed with hills and mountains, he said, “Green Cloud Mountain to the south of the West River State is troubled by neither the febrile wind nor the flood. Why are the few Cultivation sects on Green Cloud Mountain not offering any food?”

Elder Huang blinked and stammered for a long time.

Looking around, Qi Zhongdao’s voice was as cold as voice. “Speak!”

Gritting his teeth, Elder Huang replied, “According to Green Peak Sect, the largest sect in the area of Green Cloud Mountain, although they did not suffer losses in the natural disaster, they have a lot of conflicts with Spiritual Cloud Sect, the second largest sect in the area of Green Cloud Mountain. Spiritual Cloud Sect is arrogant and ambitious, and they may swallow them at any point!

“If Green Peak Sect offers tremendous resources to sustain the disaster victims right now, they fear that the Spiritual Cloud Sect will surpass them shortly. By then, if the Spiritual Cloud Sect wages a war at them, how are they going to defend themselves?

“Therefore, Green Peak Sect is willing to offer money, food, or labor, provided that the Spiritual Cloud Sect offers an equal amount first. The Green Peak Sect will not pay one fewer coin or grain of rice than the Spiritual Cloud Sect does!”

“Hehe!” Qi Zhongdao narrowed his eyes and said coldly, “What did the Spiritual Cloud Sect say? I don’t suppose that they demand that Green Peak Sect offer the resources first and they will follow up with exactly the same amount, do they?”

“Not exactly,” Elder Huang replied. “According to the Spiritual Cloud Sect, the area of Green Cloud Mountain has been troubled by bandits and ghosts. Traces of the criminals of the Black Devil Cult have been found recently. They are obviously going to loot in the middle of the chaos after the natural disasters!

“As the grand leader and fellow Cultivators all know, the Black Devil Cult is an evil religion that has been savaging the thirteen states in the southeast. They trade slaves, produce drugs, murder, loot, and commit all kinds of crimes. However, they are quite unpredictable and capable. Many sects have been assaulted by the Black Devil Cult. On occasion, an entire group of flying boats have been hijacked by the Black Devil Cult, and they just vanished into thin air!

“The Black Devil Cult is too huge for the forces such as the Spiritual Cloud Sect and Green Peak Sect to resist. Therefore, they can only strengthen the defenses in their base and do not dare act recklessly. Even if they do gather a lot of resources, wouldn’t it add to the current problems if the food is looted by the Black Devil Cult during their delivery?

“All in all, grand leader, with all due respect, the local forces in the southeast are all waiting for the result in Roaring Tiger City. If we can subdue Roaring Tiger Hall and ask Roaring Tiger Hall to provide tremendous assets, it will be easier to deal with other sects!

“But if we suffer a setback in Roaring Tiger Hall, it will be more than difficult to request other sects to do the same.

“Yes. Those sects are not as powerful and wealthy as the sects here. If we march over to them, they will have no choice but to open their headquarters. However, our attack will be unjustified. Furthermore, it is easy to open the gate of their headquarters, but it will be far less easy to find the assets that they have hidden. I’m sure that the local forces that have operated for hundreds of years must have several unknown treasuries in their territory.”

Elder Huang’s words made Qi Zhongdao breathe hastily for a long time even though he was an unparalleled expert at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage. Finally, he shifted his eyes to Li Yao and the leadership of the Cultivators present.

“Everybody!” Qi Zhongdao’s voice was filled with fury and anxiety. Trying to hold back his anger, he said, “This is about the situation we are in right now. If we cannot gather enough food soon, countless disaster victims will die. After the victims die, Mother White Lotus will establish many troops of ghouls that are full of hatred! The troops of ghouls will not only savage the southeast and destroy the farmlands that are not destroyed in the natural disasters but also attack East Peace County, the most important town in the southeast. As a result, the world will be shaken, and endless evil will be rising! In the end, no Cultivator will benefit from it!

“Therefore, although this seems to be a disaster in the southeast, it is in fact a great catastrophe for the entire world of Cultivators. None of us are going to escape it!

“To resolve the crisis, we must convince Roaring Tiger Hall to open the barn and offer some food. However, Roaring Tiger Hall is ruthless and heartless! Fellow Cultivators, please speak now. How are we going to deal with such a sect like Roaring Tiger Hall, which does not care about the big picture at all?”

The Cultivators all whispered to each other after hearing his words.

A lot of them were berating Roaring Tiger Hall for its inaction. They declared with indignation that Cultivators should serve justice and help the people. Leaving so many disaster victims aside without the least bit of empathy was a shame for such a ‘noble sect’!

Somebody else was shouting that, since Roaring Tiger Hall had shown absolutely no respect for the heroes of the world, they should launch thunderous attacks immediately and force Roaring Tiger Hall to open the barn!

Then, somebody asked if it was appropriate. Roaring Tiger Hall was indeed cruel and heartless, but it did not violate any law and should not be treated as evil.

It was the responsibility of the Cultivators to slay the demons and devils, but Roaring Tiger Hall was neither a demon nor a devil. Duan Yuanwu did have a point. The land and the food were Roaring Tiger Hall’s property. Should they be punished with a death sentence if they did not want to offer the food to the disaster victims?

Some of the more experienced, older Cultivators also pondered and said that the issue would not be addressed even if the gate of Roaring Tiger City was broken. With the cunningness of the Duans, they must have hidden all their food and assets in the secret treasuries that were not going to be found quickly!

If the headquarters were indeed broken into, countless disciples of Roaring Tiger Hall slain, but no food was found, it would be a proof for Roaring Tiger Hall’s claims that their barn had caught fire and all the assets had burnt to the ground. Then, what were the major sects going to do? Would they not be burglars who openly looted someone else’s house?

Also, getting to the bottom of it, were they really qualified at all to attack the headquarters of Roaring Tiger Hall? Right now, the new monarch, Emperor Phoenix, had just assumed the throne. Nobody understood the personality and temper of the emperor yet. If they acted on their own without reporting the issue first, it would not be very appropriate, would it?

After a long discussion, they reached no conclusion. At this moment, a Cultivator in the crowd said loudly, “Fellow Cultivators, we have been talking about nonsense. Our attack may be unjustified, and the treasuries of Roaring Tiger Hall may take a while to be found out, but that is not important. The real critical problem is that the Tiger Apparitions Array and the hundred Crouching Tiger Cannons and Fiery Crow Ballista seem rather sophisticated. I fear that a real expert will be needed in order to break the array!”

Everybody looked at the source of the voice, only to discover that it was Bu Tiantong, a secondary leader of the Gold Armor Clan!

The muscles on his face twisting, Bu Tiantong declared angrily that the Cultivators should consider bullying the bullies and helping the weak as their responsibility, and trouble times were times when Cultivators should distinguish themselves! At such a critical moment, the ruthless and indifferent attitude of Roaring Tiger Hall was an insult to all Cultivators, which he found intolerable!

The so-called ‘Tiger Apparitions Array’ looked rather intimidating at first, but in his opinion, it might not necessarily be as tough as it appeared!

Were it not for the fact that he had been heavily wounded by Master Spiritual Vulture, known as a Grandmaster of Great Zhou, whose name resounded in the southeast, no, the entire Great Qian Dynasty three months ago during the Dragon Spring Meeting, and that he had not fully recovered yet after three months of treatment, he would have marched forward and broken the array for everyone instead of allowing the clowns of Roaring Tiger Hall to be so arrogant in front of Master Spiritual Vulture!

While saying that, Bu Tiantong, who seemed rather innocent and straightforward, glanced at Li Yao nonstop.

Chapter 1430 - Array Breaker!

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Hundreds of eyes lunged toward Li Yao like stray dogs that had smelt the aroma of meat.

The leadership of all the Cultivation sects, the pretentious leaders and elders, all beamed with interest and put on a mysterious smile.

Some agreed with Bu Tiantong, saying that Master Spiritual Vulture was the most suitable one to break the array because he must know a lot about arrays based on his unparalleled knowledge in refining!

Some sneered and said that, after Master Spiritual Vulture rose to fame in the Dragon Spring Meeting, he had become one of the pillars of the Great Qian Dynasty. If he was sent out, there would be no fight at all. The gutless scoundrels in Roaring Tiger Hall would sh*t their pants and surrender when they heard the name ‘Grandmaster of Great Zhou’!

Some others, however, argued solemnly that they were too unbelievable. Master Spiritual Vulture was indeed certainly among the top three experts in the world, but Roaring Tiger Hall was not made of dough. How could it surrender so easily?

Asking Master Spiritual Vulture to break the Tiger Apparitions Array on his own would be too much of a stretch for him despite his amazing capabilities!

However, in case everybody forgot, there was another super expert in the Purple Pole Sword Sect who was a contender for the title of ‘best expert in the world’. It was ‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren!

Was Yan Liren’s mysterious ‘fourth sword’ not said to be incomparably powerful, such that it could even slash apart the Heavenly Flipping Seal, the ‘ultimate treasure of the Great Qian Dynasty’? The insignificant Tiger Apparitions Array was not a big deal for the Sword Maniac at all, who would shatter it into smithereens after a single attack!

If the Sword Maniac and Master Spiritual Vulture worked together, they would certainly break the array in no time!

Listening to the unbelievable adulations, and looking at the enthusiastic eyes, Li Yao felt that sweat the size of beans was popping up on his forehead nonstop.

Cursing loudly in his heart, he turned around and looked at Yan Liren before he said in a low voice, “Fellow Cultivator Yan…”

Yan Liren’s eyes were half closed, and he was not disturbed at all. He observed his palm carefully, as if there were a flower in the middle of his palmprint. He casually replied, “I am a maniac, not a moron.”

This was the time when the leader of the sect should step up.

Dan Fengzi cleared his throat and walked forward. He bowed to everyone at first before thanking all the fellow Cultivators for their praise and compliments to the two elders of the Purple Pole Sword Sect. Then, he stated that the Purple Pole Sword Sect found Roaring Tiger Hall’s ruthlessness intolerable, too!

But it was a pity that the Purple Pole Sword Sect had been drained during the Dragon Spring Meeting three months prior. Yan Liren and Master Spiritual Vulture, the two elders with the highest Cultivation, had both suffered a lot of hidden injuries during the competitions. They were still in the middle of recuperating!

If the two elders went to fight despite their heavy wounds, the possible losses of the Purple Pole Sword Sect might not be important, but it would not be pretty if they failed and dishonored all the fellow Cultivators there, right? The scoundrels in Roaring Tiger Hall would also certainly grow even more arrogant.

After Dan Fengzi said that, all the other people were rendered speechless. They had no choice but to look at each other in bewilderment and begin praising their companions.

One praised the guy standing next to him, saying that his Infinite Cosmos Art was the best technique in the world and that he could blow the Tiger Apparitions Array into smithereens after one slap with only thirty percent of his full strength!

The guy hurried to reply that his Infinite Cosmos Art just looked fancy but was in fact a petty trick that was not worth mentioning at all. If anything, it was the first guy’s Wave Sweeping Art that was the truly amazing technique.

All in all, they passed the duty between one another, claiming that they were mentally deranged or not recovered from previous wounds. After a long period of prevarication, there was still nobody willing to lead the charge.

Looking at the gracious, courteous leaders and elders turning so hesitant and cowardly, which was far from what he had expected, Li Yao found it hard to accept. He asked

Dan Fengzi in a low voice, “Have the Cultivators in the central plateaus always been like this?”

“Not exactly,” Dan Fengzi replied. “Before, there were some valiant and unwavering high-level Cultivators.”

Li Yao asked, “What happened?’

“They all died.”

“…” Li Yao.

Watching the leadership of the super sects arguing with each other, Qi Zhongdao was silent, and his face seemed to be covered in a black mist. There was no telling what his countenance was behind the black mist.

After a long silence, he shouted, his voice so pained that he seemed to be suffering from constipation, “Everybody, are you still doing this at such a time? We must bear the big picture in mind. The big picture!”

“Master Righteous One,” an elder of the Thunderstorm Valley said solemnly, “it’s not that we are not willing to consider the big picture, but we have come here in too much of a hurry this time. Right now, only the high-level Cultivators of the major sects are here, while the low-level Cultivators are still escorting the relief assets behind us!

“Asking the high-level Cultivators to attack a defense array that has been activated to the maximum and protected by hundreds of Crouching Tiger Cannons and Fiery Crow Ballista is no different from throwing jades at bricks, right?

“We must note that Roaring Tiger Hall has not been our primary target since the beginning. They are fellow Cultivators that we are going to meet again in future. The

White Lotus Cult, on the other hand, is our mortal enemy that we must eliminate this time!

“Before we have even seen the shadow of Mother White Lotus, we will clash with Roaring Tiger City and bleed, and we may not necessarily find the food and assets needed for the disaster relief. Is it a truly wise decision? How are we going to deal with the White Lotus ghoul army in the middle of a civil war?

“Therefore, we must wait until the low-level disciples of the sects arrive and discuss later!”

“Exactly. Wait and discuss later. Wait and discuss later!”

The words of the elder of the Thunderstorm Valley won the agreement of the leadership of all the sects.

“Wait… and discuss later!”

Covering his chest, Qi Zhongdao was shaking slightly. He laughed drily for a moment, only to come up with nothing.

Master Bitter Cicada was still appeasing the deceased in midair. Other than appeasing the deceased, even the merciful monk seemed to be incapable of dealing with the mess now.

When all the magnificent high-level Cultivators were in a dilemma, something happened!

Boom!

A deafening explosion echoed from deep within Roaring Tiger City.

For a moment, the earth was shaking, and a sandstorm was rising. The entire Heavenly Tiger Mountain shivered briefly for a moment. After a few cracks, crevices as thick as boas appeared on the rocks!

All the high-level Cultivators were dumbfounded. They stared at Roaring Tiger City in confusion, only to discover that a colorful cloud was rising from the center of the city. Intense black smoke was spurting out from the core and gradually taking the form of a mushroom!

The explosion was so powerful that the center of Roaring Tiger City was collapsing in one piece. Cries and screams were echoing nonstop!

“Look!”

Elder Huang of the Grand Mystery Sect suddenly pointed and exclaimed, “The Tiger Apparitions Array is dimming!”

Everybody looked carefully. It was true that the golden souls in the Tiger Apparitions Array were turning lackluster and weak, and they disappeared into streaks of brightness in the end!

The unparalleled oppression that they had imposed on everyone soon vanished.

All the disciples on the towers in Roaring Tiger City were running in panic, their previous calmness replaced by anxiety.

“The pivot of the Tiger Apparitions Array has exploded!”

The high-level Cultivators were momentarily dazed. After thinking for a moment, they immediately realized what had happened and were overjoyed.

What a great opportunity they had been given!

Without the protection of the Tiger Apparitions Array, the two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators alone were nothing to be scared of!

But how did it happen exactly?

As the explosion happened, the sounds of fierce fights vaguely echoed inside Roaring Tiger City. Judging from the spiritual waves that were spreading out, it was obviously a competition among a few Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and many Cultivators at the peak of the Core Formation Stage!

The sounds of fighting came closer from afar and gradually approached the towers of Roaring Tiger City.

Before those engaged in the fight were seen, another explosion took place on one of the towers, and a certain black object was shot from the smoke toward the flying boat in midair!

“Block him! Block him!”

The most desperate and panicked roars were echoing from Roaring Tiger City.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Dozens of chains dashed out of the smoke, trying to block the black object and snatch it back.

However, there were more than twenty Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators on the flying boat, and they certainly would not allow such a thing to happen. The next moment, dozens of blade auras spurted out and shattered the chains into pieces, before they picked up the black object, dragged it over, and tossed it to the deck!

The black object, however, turned out to be a human being.

He was tall and slender, his face was rather pale, and his lips were extremely thin, with a vague air of evilness and brutality. He was wearing the garment of the low-level disciples of Roaring Tiger Hall, but the joints all over his body had been crushed. Blood was leaking out of his clothes. All the veins and nerves in his body had been sealed, and he could not even move his finger. The only thing that he could do was stare at everyone with his eyes that were filled with hatred and desperation.

There was also a note painted on a scroll made of toilet paper on the man’s waistband.

After the scroll was unfolded, it turned out to be a structural map of Roaring Tiger City. Most of the elements on the map were wry and of little value for reference, but the locations of a few underground treasuries had been marked. There was no telling if they were true!

“This is…”

The high-level Cultivators felt that the guy was familiar. Some of them changed their face color greatly after pondering for a moment!

“He is Zhou Wukun, the leader of the Mountain Ghost Branch of the Black Devil Cult!” somebody shrieked on the tower in Roaring Tiger City, which was still covered in smoke. “Why do you think Roaring Tiger Hall insisted on not opening the city gate? Because Roaring Tiger Hall is in the same gang with the Black Devil Cult. The Black Devil Cult is based in Roaring Tiger City. Qu Futong, the leader of the

Black Devil Cult, was Duan Tiande’s blood brother, Duan Xingyi, who died fifty years ago. Right now, he is right next to Duan Tiande, trying to kill this beggar!”

Chapter 1431 - Reprehensible

Hardly had the voice died down when a dirty person in ragged clothes popped up in the smoke on the tower of Roaring Tiger City.

Li Yao had never seen anyone so ugly before.

He was like the very opposite of the handsome Master Bitter Cicada. His hair was dry and yellow, his cheeks were pointy, and his limbs were short. His back was hunched, his legs were not parallel, and his shoulders were slanted. Even one of his arms was longer than the other. Ulcers large and small were all over his dirty body. He could not have looked filthier!

At first, the guy certainly looked like one of the poorest beggars. If he were placed in the middle of the thousands of disaster victims outside of the city, it would have been impossible to spot him quickly.

However, he could not have been tougher. Snatching the ankles of two disciples of Roaring Tiger Hall, he picked them up and waved them as if they were two enormous axes.

Dozens of disciples of Roaring Tiger Hall were around, but they did not dare to draw any closer in case they injured their companions!

“Surround him! Kill him!” An infuriated voice burst out from the smoke.

“Leader Duan!” The hideous beggar chuckled. “Are you not resting because you suffered heavy wounds and nearly got mentally deranged while resisting the natural disasters? What, you have perfectly recovered so quickly?”

After saying that, the beggar threw the two disciples of Roaring Tiger Hall off the tower. While it was a mess down there, he bent down and crawled into the smoke once more!

Inside the smoke, his words, each louder than the last, were echoing. “Duan Tiande, do you still dare to claim that the notorious Black Devil Cult has nothing to do with your Roaring Tiger Hall? Let me ask you!

“Is the Black Devil Cult not headquartered in the place deep inside Roaring Tiger City?

“Is Qu Futong, the leader of the Black Devil Cult, not your blood brother, Duan Xingyi, who should’ve died fifty years ago? Is he not glaring at this beggar right now next to you?

“The thirty years when the Black Devil Cult savaged the southeast were the thirty years when Roaring Tiger Hall thrived. How could you have established such a magnificent city as Roaring Tiger City and set up a defense array as enormous as the Tiger Apparitions Array after only decades with your farmlands and your transportation business alone? Where did you get the money to buy the cores and bones of so many lion-type and dragon-type demon beasts?

“It is needless to mention the seven treasuries that this beggar has discovered beneath Roaring Tiger City. Besides loads of crystals and Jade Crystal Pellets, there are also the pills, magical equipment, and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures that the Black Devil Cult has looted for decades. Tsk, tsk, tsk. The essence of the southeast has almost been entirely extorted!

“Haha. This beggar did not know until today that the sects whose wealth went missing during the riots of the White Lotus Cult were not destroyed by ‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu at all but by Roaring Tiger Hall and the Black Devil Cult under the cover of the White Lotus Cult. Otherwise, how could the whole warehouses of secret treasures have appeared beneath Roaring Tiger City?”

Every question that the ugly beggar raised was an attack toward the depths of the smoke. They were causing an earthquake inside the smoke as if they were a continuous meteor shower.

The guys inside were unable to argue at all. They were simply roaring in fury, “You—you—you are lying!”

“This beggar is lying?” The ugly weirdo burst into laughter. “I have followed the trail of the Black Devil Cult for an entire year. I also released false messages implying that I was active in East Peace County in order to ease your wariness. Then, using the chance offered by the natural disasters, I snuck into your nest. I have seen everything with my own eyes!

“Duan Tiande, Duan Xingyi, and Duan Yuanwu, you three inhuman b*stards, save your words for the fellow Cultivators outside!”

Hu!

A strong wind suddenly blew atop the tower, dispersing all the smoke and black mist.

As it turned out, on the top of the tower, surrounded by dozens of Crouching Tiger Cannons and Fiery Crow Ballista, except for the extremely hideous beggar and Duan Yuanwu who was wearing an armor with tiger stripes on it, there were two old men who were almost identical to Duan Yuanwu!

For the Cultivators in the Nascent Soul Stage, the change of their appearance caused by the passage of time would often not be revealed until they were dying.

Although the two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators of Roaring Tiger Hall were father and son, their age gap was only thirty to forty years. For Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, who could easily live hundreds of years, it was not much of a difference.

Therefore, the three guys who were confronting the beggar looked like three brothers at first glance, except that their hair color was slightly different. Duan Yuanwu’s hair was pure gold, while the other two had gray streaks mixed into the gold.

Naturally, one of the old men was Duan Tiande, the leader of Roaring Tiger Hall.

But who was the other old man that was almost made out of the same mold as him?

The three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators of the Duan family all looked particularly awful.

Anger, fear, desperation, hate… All kinds of emotions were mixed together, and thick venom seemed to be shooting out of their eyes!

“Oh. It seems that this beggar was wrong about something.” The beggar smiled and said, “Qu Futong, the leader of the Black Devil Cult, is not necessarily Duan Xingyi. Perhaps you two brothers take turns to play the role. After all, you are twins, and it is difficult for anyone to notice anything wrong whichever of you appears in daylight as the leader of Roaring Tiger Hall!”

All the Cultivators on the flying boat saw exactly what was going on.

“It’s Senior Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar!”

“Huh. An old man identical to Duan Tiande has indeed shown up, and his scent is not half weak. He—he is also in the Nascent Soul Stage!”

“Three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the same family!”

“I never heard that Roaring Tiger Hall had a third Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. Is everything that Senior Ba Xiaoyu said true and the Black Devil Cult that has scourged the southeast for decades related to Roaring Tiger Hall?”

“There are a few secret treasuries at the bottom of Roaring Tiger City, in which the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and pills that the Black Devil Cult looted over the past decades are stored!”

Gasps were immediately echoing on the flying boat.

Ba Xiaoyu was a weirdo with a unique style among the Cultivators. He was known as the ‘Weird Saint’ of the Three Saints of the Great Qian Dynasty. As a marvelous person on par with Qi Zhongdao and Yan Liren, it was not hard to imagine his Cultivation and influence!

The Black Devil Cult, on the other hand, was the most notorious gang in the Great Qian Dynasty, which had plagued the southeast for decades. It had looted and even annihilated many small sects.

The Cultivators had long tried to demolish the group. However, the evil Cultivators of the Black Devil Cult were unpredictable, and their every ‘job’ was neat and clean, leaving no survivors behind. There was not a single trace leading to their nest, either.

Also, with the rise of the forces such as the White Lotus Cult and the Heaven Battering Army, which were even more troublesome, the Black Devil Cult had managed to survive to this day.

It had never occurred to the Cultivators that the ferocious Black Devil Cult was actually another facet of Roaring Tiger Hall, the ostensibly largest righteous sect in the West River State!

On the flying boat, the eyes of many high-level Cultivators were shining.

Things were easier now that Roaring Tiger Hall was a conspirator of the Black Devil Cult.

It was a moral issue whether or not Roaring Tiger Hall was willing to open the barn. The food was theirs after all. What could other people do if they looked away and refused to offer the food?

However, conspiring with the Black Devil Cult, killing innocent people, and looting other sects suggested that they were straight-up evil!

It was the responsibility of the Cultivators to slay evil. Thus, their attack was justified!

Moreover, the pivot of the Tiger Apparitions Array, the greatest headache for the Cultivators on the flying boat, had been destroyed by Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar and would not be repaired anytime soon. The clumsy artillerymen who were controlling the Crouching Tiger Cannons and the Fiery Crow Ballista could not lock onto the high-level Cultivators, who could move without any pattern at a supersonic speed!

Furthermore…

There are several secret treasuries that store the loot of the Black Devil Cult in the past decades!

Tsk, tsk, tsk. We thought that most of the southeastern sects were plundered by Mother White Lotus during the riots and didn't know that the Black Devil Cult was involved, too!

There are so many treasures here, and their previous owners have died. Even their bones must have turned to dust. The treasures are now unowned!

The banners of the sects that were dangling from the flagpoles like wrinkled snake skin suddenly erected and fluttered in the wind in full spirits!

The high-level Cultivators of the sects, looking at each other for a moment, all looked at Qi Zhongdao passionately.

At that moment, they were truly respecting the 'leader of the Cultivators'.

Qi Zhongdao's dark face flushed red. He bulged his eyes and shouted angrily, as if thunder was rumbling, "The mill of the heavens grinds slowly but surely! The Black Devil Cult and Roaring Tiger Hall are evils intolerable for any Cultivator. Today, they have finally revealed their true faces! Fellow Cultivators, let's work together to break into Roaring Tiger City, eliminate the Black Devil Cult, and save the people. Right now!"

Hu!

Qi Zhongdao stomped on the deck so hard that the front half of the flying boat tilted downward!

The flying boat became an enormous spring and sent Qi Zhongdao into the air.

He was back above Roaring Tiger City, only ten times more dominating than previously. Without saying anything, he shook his sleeve, and the Heaven Flipping Seal, said to be the ultimate treasure of the Ancient Sages Sector, dashed out of his Cosmos Ring in a streak of silver brightness, suppressing the entire world!

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

The periphery of Roaring Tiger City had been covered in the magnificent Tiger Apparitions Array in the beginning, which was protected by the souls of almost ten thousand lion-type and dragon-type demon beasts and powered by a whole warehouse of crystals as the energy source. It was a super-large barrier, capable of resisting the Heaven Flipping Seal, which was essentially a piece of portable magical equipment for a single soldier.

However, the pivot and the warehouse of crystals for the Tiger Apparitions Array had been destroyed by Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar from inside after he snuck in. It was impossible to be restarted so quickly.

Without the enhancement of the defense array, how could the seemingly hard rocks and bricks withstand the suppression of the Heaven Flipping Seal?

Chapter 1432 - Fall of Roaring Tiger Hall!

Cracks as thick as fingers appeared on the black rocks that were as smooth as mirrors. Then, they spread out like ripples. Eventually, in cracking sounds, the rocks crumbled, and the city wall collapsed. Even many Crouching Tiger Cannons and Fiery Crow Ballista fell to the giant pit of collapse. A lot of disciples of Roaring Tiger Hall broke their arms or legs and were bleeding when the cannons and ballista hit them!

The towers on the city were all bearing dozens of times the standard gravity. People with low Cultivation and the defensive weapons alike were crushed to smithereens!

Of course, elsewhere, the Couching Tiger Cannons and the Fiery Crow Ballista were in zero gravity. They were floating in midair, shaking, together with a lot of broken rocks. The disciples of Roaring Tiger Hall were waving their hands and feet in midair as if they were being drowned. However hard they struggled, they could not reach the land.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

During the panic, many disciples of Roaring Tiger Hall fired the Crouching Tiger Cannons and the Fiery Crow Ballista. The balls of spiritual energy in the shape of lions, tigers, and crows were rushing to the sky!

The Crouching Tiger Cannons and the Fiery Crow Ballista were powerful remote magical equipment. When they launched a barrage, even a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator would have to retreat—that was, if they could hit their target!

When the Tiger Apparitions Array was fully activated, the souls of the tigers and lions could harass and stall the target so that the Crouching Tiger Cannons would have a chance to lock onto the targets that were in the Nascent Soul Stage.

However, the Tiger Apparitions Array was already out of order, and the disciples who were manipulating the Crouching Tiger Cannons were in disarray. There was also Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar turning the fortress upside down inside the city. Who could they aim at and lock onto?

The seemingly powerful cannons and ballista did nothing but light up brilliant fireworks near ‘Iron Saint’ Qi Zhongdao!

Boom!

Another deafening explosion broke out deep inside the fortress. Almost half of the tower had been blown away. Like a hill drifting away after an avalanche, it flew dozens of meters into the sky and then fell down again with a momentum ten times higher under the gravity control of the Heaven Flipping Seal!

After only one blow, half of the city wall had crumbled!

As it turned out, through his delicate control over gravity, Qi Zhongdao had pressed the highly-unstable crystals and ammunition inside the arsenal hidden in the city wall and triggered a great explosion!

In such an era, the technology to refine and stabilize crystals and ammunition was not very advanced, and the odds of accidental explosions were much higher than in the modern Cultivation civilization!

After the arsenal exploded and half of the city wall collapsed, the determination of most of the disciples of Roaring Tiger Hall was completely crushed.

Many of them screamed and threw away the Crouching Tiger Cannons and the Fiery Crow Ballista, running back into the city.

Only the few disciples who were members of the Duan family or involved in the secret operations of the Black Devil Cult, knowing that they would be dead either way, were still trying to fight back!

However, without the protection of the Tiger Apparition Array, the Nascent Soul Stage and Core Formation Stage Cultivators in the sky were ten times stronger than they were. How could they hurt the intruders at all even if they were desperate?

“Slay the evil and serve justice!” Qi Zhongdao roared awe-inspiringly. The Heaven Flipping Seal emanated a brilliance that was even more fierce than the sun at noon while it bombarded the vulnerable city wall of Roaring Tiger City time and time again.

“Slay the evil and serve justice!”

The Cultivators from the main sects were also on a rampage. They all launched colorful, glamorous magical equipment and smashed the city wall like a storm.

For a moment, a firework show seemed to be going on. The entire city was soaked in an ocean of light. Explosions, collapses, screams, moans, exclamations, yells… All kinds of noises were echoing!

The disaster victims did not know what was going on. They had never dreamt of witnessing deities fighting each other even in their wildest dreams. They could only crouch on the ground in fear, shivering and praying.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Three shadows dashed out of the collapsed fortress and ran into the depths of the city. They were exactly the three unpardonable Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators of the Duan family.

“Slay the evil and serve justice!”

The hundred Cultivators rushed into Roaring Tiger City like a tornado!

“Junior Brother Yan, Elder Spiritual Vulture!” Dan Fengzi was blushing in excitement. He said in great delight, “Let’s go to slay the evil and serve justice now!”

Frowning, ‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren shook his head while he watched the mess down below, which was almost child’s play. “There are already enough people. My sword shouldn’t be drawn in such a place.”

Dan Fengzi suffered a setback, but knowing his weird junior brother’s temper, he was not in the least bothered. He turned his eyes to Li Yao and said earnestly, “Elder Spiritual Vulture, let’s go. If other people have eliminated all the evil in the Black Devil Cult and excavated the secret treasures of the Black Devil Cult, we will be caught in a passive position!”

Seeing that Master Bitter Cicada and Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar had both run into Roaring Tiger City, and glancing at the disaster victims outside of the city who were cold and hungry, Li Yao sighed and said, “Alright. Let’s go!”

Roaring Tiger City was already an utter mess.

In the natural disaster, those who were qualified to take refuge in Roaring Tiger City were the family of the disciples of Roaring Tiger Hall, the family of the evil Cultivators of the Black Devil Cult, the servants of the vassal families of Roaring Tiger Hall, and the tenants who farmed on Roaring Tiger Hall’s land.

One might say that they all counted on Roaring Tiger Hall to make a living.

Naturally, they were very hostile to the intruders. If it was a regular sect that came at them, they certainly would have tried everything they could to fight against the enemy and protect Roaring Tiger City.

However, faced with hundreds Cultivators in the Nascent Soul Stage and the Core Formation Stage, it did not matter at all whether or not the mobs resisted.

Explosions erupted all over Roaring Tiger City. Panicked crowds were everywhere. They were running around at a loss like the ants whose nest had been set fire on!

With the messy crowd in the city, it was impossible for the disciples of Roaring Tiger Hall to rush. If they left the crowd and flew in the sky, they would be the most obvious targets. When dozens of Cultivators in the Nascent Soul Stage and Core Formation Stage attacked them at the same time, they would be blown into pieces even if they were covered in ten layers of spiritual shields!

Very soon, with Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar leading the way, tracing the three shadows, Li Yao rushed to the outside of a temple that had been built into the shape of a gold, shining tiger at the center of the city, together with hundreds of other Cultivators who looked more like hyenas.

It was exactly the highest center of Roaring Tiger Hall. The plaque right above the temple where the name of the sect was carved calligraphically could not have looked more ironic right now!

Holding the Heaven Flipping Seal in his hand, Qi Zhongdao stopped in midair and demanded., “Leader Duan, with everything coming to this point, what do you have to say for yourself?”

“Master Righteous One, you attacked my headquarters, destroyed my city, and killed so many of my disciples just based on one side of the story. How cruel of you!”

Hateful roars were echoing right inside the temple, like the last roars of a heavily wounded, hungry tiger that was caught in a trap.

“One side of the story?” Qi Zhongdao burst into laughter. “Everybody in the world of Cultivators knows that Senior Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar is a man of integrity. Would he have told his ‘side of the story’ without valid proof?

“Leader Duan, if you do not plead guilty, come out and confront us! Tell us the identity of the mysterious Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator next to you who is identical to you. Also, open all the secret treasuries in Roaring Tiger City so that the fellow Cultivators here can examine whether or not the Cultivation arts and secret treasures from the sects that were allegedly annihilated by the White Lotus Sect in the past thirty years are kept inside!

“How will you explain yourself if we find anything? Is Roaring Tiger Hall not related to the Blood Devil Cult but the White Lotus Cult?”

There was nothing but silence from the temple, as if three crazy tigers who had run into a dead end were pacing inside but could not come up with a reply.

“Why do you not dare confront us if you are confident?” Qi Zhongdao glowered and shouted, “Duan Tiande, as a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator and the leader of the righteous forces in the West River State, not only do integrity, chivalry, and justice mean nothing to you, you even degraded yourself by establishing the evil cult, killing and looting! Your crimes are unpardonable!

“Today, fortunately, the schemes of Roaring Tiger Hall and the Black Devil Cult have been fully exposed. This is the karma moment for your entire sect! What do you have to say for yourself before your death?”

The words were reasonable and irrefutable. The soundwaves spread to the entire Roaring Tiger City, which was caught in a brief silence after being awed by Qi Zhongdao’s righteousness.

There was a long silence inside the temple, too, which was broken by the wildest laughter very soon. Duan Tiande, the leader of Roaring Tiger Hall, seemed to have gone mad. He laughed so hard that he almost could not catch his breath. Finally, he shrieked, “The winner takes all; the loser has to fall. What else can I say for myself?

“Yes. The Black Devil Cult was established by the two of us. Over the past few decades, fifteen sects were annihilated and plundered by us during the riots of the White Lotus Cult!

“How could Roaring Tiger Hall have survived and thrived in such a dog-eat-dog world otherwise?

“Hehe. Hehehe. The Duans are indeed unpardonable for our crimes, but did we not learn everything from the seemingly graceful while in fact rotten-to-the-bones great sects of central plateaus?

“The Grand Mystery Sect! The Purple Pole Sword Sect! The Gold Armor Clan! The Thunderstorm Valley! The Flying Spirit Island! The Monster Taming Pavilion!

“How many clandestine deals did you arrange when you first rose to power? How much blood of the innocent has stained your hands? How many sects that hindered you were eliminated by you in secret? Don’t presume that every Cultivator has forgotten your doings after only several hundred years!

“Right now, you are rich and powerful. You are on top of the world, and you have forgotten your filthy past and started ‘slaying evil and serving justice’?

“I don’t buy it!”

Chapter 1433 - Complete Suppression!

His voice was a hundred times more devastating than the ghost cries. It was almost like the hums of a swarm of venomous bugs. All the high-level Cultivators from the ‘noble sects’ looked particularly awful after hearing what he said.

A moment later, an even crazier and twisted voice came over. “The six major sects have done exactly the same thing. The main sects of the central plateaus have done exactly the same thing. But Roaring Tiger Hall can’t?

“Qi Zhongdao, Dan Fengzi, and the b*stards from the Gold Armor Clan, Thunderstorm Valley, and Flying Spirit Island, don’t assume that we do not know of the filthy sects that the central plateaus’ sects are up to exactly!

“You are here for disaster relief under the excuse of resisting the natural disaster, but in fact, you’re worried that the southeastern sects are growing stronger and will threaten the main sects in the central plateaus. You are intentionally reducing our power with the natural disasters!

“You are demanding that we offer food. If you foresaw that there would be a shortage of food after the natural disaster, why wasn’t your flying boat loaded with food when you arrived? Why are there only magical equipment and crystals inside your Cosmos Rings? Do the Cosmos Rings of the Cultivators from so many sects have enough capacity for weapons but not any space for a single grain of rice?

“Haha. Hahahaha. You did not intend to offer food at all. You did not plan to offer a single grain of rice. You are here specifically to annihilate us and confiscate our property!”

Duan Tiande, the leader of Roaring Tiger Hall, and Duan Xingyi, the leader of the Black Devil Cult, echoed each other. Their curses flowed out continuously like the unstoppable flood on the Sorcerers’ River.

Qi Zhongdao’s face was gloomy. The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators from the main sects all burst into fury. Many of the experts had already launched their magical equipment. The ripples of spiritual energy congregated into shocking tides that covered the temple like dark clouds!

Bu Tiantong, the secondary leader of the Gold Armor Clan, shrieked, “What a monster! He is vilifying others and instigating trouble even before his death. How insane and incorrigible!

“Let’s not talk about rules and mercy with such evil beings. Fellow Cultivators, defend justice with your thunderous methods!”

After saying that, instead of waiting for Qi Zhongdao to stop him, he launched the Gold Crow Devil Sweeping Sword that Li Yao had repaired for him, which released auras that were dozens of meters of long and slashed toward the temple brutally!

Bu Tiantong’s attack seemed to have opened an invisible gate. The high-level Cultivators from the Grand Mystery Sect, the Purple Pole Sword Sect, the Gold Armor Clan, Thunderstorm Valley, and all the other main sects launched their most powerful magical equipment and smashed down without any expression!

There was a hint of hesitation on Qi Zhongdao’s dark face, but with dozens of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators attacking together, how could he stop them even though he was at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage?

The auras from the swords and sabers weaved into an impenetrable web and covered the temple without leaving the tiniest gap!

The two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators inside the temple were still shouting and cursing, but their profanity was soon eclipsed by the rumbling magical equipment outside.

Their spiritual shields were crushed by the collective bombardment of the dozens of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

The main center of Roaring Tiger Hall seemed to have been hit by a meteor shower. Savaged by the blast, it was reduced to rubble. Even the earth had collapsed into a burning pit.

Li Yao had been observing coldly behind the crowd. With so many Cultivators attacking at the same time, whether he attacked or not would not make a shred of difference.

He was not interested in the secret treasuries of the Black Devil Cult, and he did not want to get involved in the internal conflicts of the corrupt Cultivators.

He was just an observer, and the most important mission for him was to keep his head clear.

After he pondered for a moment, he immediately sensed the anomaly of the two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators of the Duan family.

Raising his eyebrows, Li Yao suddenly realized where the problem was. His telepathic thoughts spread out like threads. Then, his spiritual energy blew out into two green wings behind him, and he rushed toward the southwest!

The Cultivators nearby were all astonished, wondering what he was doing.

When they were still confused, Li Yao flapped the wings of spiritual energy without saying anything. Almost a hundred needles that were attached to the molecular mica threads were shot out toward the seemingly normal empty ground!

The spiritual energy on every needle was helical, and the needles revolved fast like tiny drills. They pierced deep into the ground without any trouble!

Judging from the hollow sound in the underground, it was actually empty below the ground!

The hundred molecular mica threads instantly tightened, reflecting greenish, eccentric colors from a subtle angle.

A grunt as soft as a mosquito echoed from underground.

But it could not have been clearer for the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators!

“Somebody is down there!”

It was not until this moment that ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’, who had not joined the attack the whole time, displayed such keen senses, discovering a secret tunnel buried deep below the ground!

“Get out, now!” Li Yao bellowed and pulled up. The ground exploded like a volcano erupting. Tremendous broken stones and bricks were spurting out. In the middle of the dust, a somewhat devastated shadow, whose joints had been locked by the needles and the molecular mica threads, jumped high into the sky!

It was Duan Yuanwu, the young leader of Roaring Tiger Hall who had shown off in front of Qi Zhongdao moments earlier!

Unlike before, Duan Yuanwu was covered in dust. His golden hair and beard had been dyed white by the smoke. The magnificence of the young leader was entirely gone. He looked like a stray dog whose legs had been broken. Desperate, furious, frightened, and vicious, he was trembling hard but unable to speak!

“Ah Wu!”

Two miserable screams echoed from the debris of the temple.

Duan Tiande and Duan Xingyi had intentionally stayed in the main center of Roaring Tiger Hall and cursed the Cultivators in the sky, raising their fury for the purpose of attracting them to attack thunderously so that Duan Yuanwu, the youngest Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator of the Duan family, would have a chance to escape through the underground tunnel.

However, their attempt proved to be in vain. The only hope of the Duan family had been discovered in the end!

“Ahhh!” Duan Yuanwu’s entire body had been restrained by Li Yao. He was cramping hard because of the excruciating pain!

He was a tough, brutal man. Knowing that he would not survive even if he surrendered with the blood on his hands and that he would only endure even more sufferings, he simply aimed at a rock that had been blown into the sky and stomped on it, rushing toward Li Yao like a cannonball!

Simultaneously, his stomach rumbled, and his skin turned dangerously translucent. Flames of spiritual energy spurted out of his skin and gradually condensed into the image of a raging tiger around himself!

He was about to detonate his Nascent Soul and die together with Li Yao!

Li Yao slightly frowned. He minced the molecular mica threads hard, cutting more veins and nerves inside Duan Yuanwu’s body than anybody could count. Then he dashed hundreds of meters away.

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

Behind Li Yao, dozens of auras rushed close and hit Duan Yuanwu like a storm. They were the casual attacks of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Core Formation Stage Cultivators.

Duan Yuanwu’s veins, nerves, and muscles had been severed by Li Yao in the first place, and his reaction was a bit slow. Also, many of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who launched the attacks had a higher Cultivation than him, too. How could he evade the attacks?

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

The dozens of auras exploded at the same time. Like a hideous monster, they swallowed Duan Yuanwu after only one bite before they turned into brilliant fireworks that expanded in the sky, then gradually vaporized into nothingness!

“Ah Wu!”

“Ah Wu!”

The two voices inside the debris of the temple looked fifty years older than the instant before. They seemed to be echoing from the gate of the deepest level of hell. The two of them sounded as if they had lost their sanity. “Haha. Hahahaha. You can kill Ah Wu and us. You can destroy Roaring Tiger Hall and the Black Devil Cult. But so what? The Great Qian Dynasty, this world, and all Cultivators will not last for long!

“Tomorrow, your headquarters will be destroyed by Ghost Qin, the White Lotus Cult, and the Heaven Battering Army just like you will destroy Roaring Tiger City today! We will be waiting for you in hell. Each and every one of you from all the sects!”

After they said that, two clusters of immense, brutal auras soared into the sky like cannonballs, only to be pressed back to the ground by the brute force of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the sky collectively.

After another two ear-splitting explosions, the range of the pit was further expanded by dozens of square meters. Then, everything was peaceful again.

The three unpardonable Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators of Roaring Tiger Hall had been executed.

Roaring Tiger City had gradually regained some peace under the suppression of so many high-level Cultivators, too.

The Cultivators that belonged to Roaring Tiger Hall were either suppressed on the spot or surrendered in advance. Their veins and nerves were sealed by barriers, and they were bound to each other with shackles while they squatted on the street of Roaring Tiger City.

The Cultivators from the main sects had secured the full victory of the battle!

The ten or so warehouses of Roaring Tiger Hall were all excavated under the guidance of Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar.

Huala!

The heaps of Jade Crystal Pellets, dry meat, and raw crystals inside the warehouses almost dazzled all the Cultivators.

In quite a few secret barns below the ground, which boasted a fine ventilation and drainage system, more food that anybody could measure was stored with rune arrays. They were essentially white and golden oceans full of the fragrance of food. Even the barns of the court could not have had more storage!

Looking at the loads of food here, Qi Zhongdao sneered. “The barns caught fire, and everything was burnt up, huh?”

After all the warehouses were opened, there were indeed Jade Crystal Pellets, raw crystals, and the dry meat of animals. The seals and unique magical equipment that belonged to the sects that were thought to have been annihilated by the White Lotus Sect had been found, too.

However, they seemed far away from Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar’s claim that ‘there are quite a few treasuries that are fully loaded with secret treasures’!

Chapter 1434 - Slay the Evils When There Are Evils and When There Aren’t!

“Fellow Cultivator Ba?”

Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar, in his ragged, stinky clothes, was surrounded by a bunch of elegant-looking leaders and elders, as if he were the moon around a bunch of stars or an emperor who was served by the eunuchs.

As the secret treasuries were opened one another, the Cultivators’ expectations were raised time and time again, only to be shattered without exception. The more impatient ones of them could not help but ask, “Where are the secret treasures where the Black Devil Cult has accumulated its loot for decades?”

“Well. Here, and here. Aren’t they all secret treasures?”

There was no telling where Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar found a black tobacco pipe. He puffed on it comfortably and pointed with the pipe. “The seals of the leaders of quite a few sects are in this place. They are enough evidence that Roaring Tiger Hall has been conspiring with the Black Devil Cult to lay waste to so many sects, aren’t they?”

“Of course, but…”

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators all grew anxious. “The seals of the leaders are certainly very important evidence, but didn’t you mention that the secret treasures that the

Black Devil Cult had accumulated for more than thirty years were hidden beneath Roaring Tiger City, Fellow Cultivator Ba? Where are those secret treasures exactly?”

“Oh. Those secret treasures…” Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar turned around the tobacco pipe and used it as a back scratcher when he extended it into a hole on his collar and scratched his back. He said with a smile, “I only overheard the Duans talking about that earlier. There might be, but I didn’t hear quite clearly. It is also possible that they changed the secret treasures into different appearances and traded them for resources to build this city. Haha. I was merely listening as a thief, and I couldn’t catch everything they said. Why don’t you go to the Duans and interrogate them? You’ll certainly find satisfactory answers!”

Duan Tiande, Duan Xingyi, and Duan Yuanwu had just been obliterated, without the slightest shred of a soul remaining. How could they be interrogated?

Many high-level Cultivators’ faces were almost deformed in fury. It was not until then that they realized that they had fallen victim to Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar’s prank.

Unsatisfied, somebody demanded him, “Fellow Cultivator Ba, didn’t you claim that you saw it with your own eyes?”

“Why, indeed I did!” Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar nodded solemnly. “I saw these warehouses and seals with my eyes personally. Did I lie to you? As for the information about the secret treasures, I heard it loud and clear. The Duans could testify for me. That was exactly what I told you just now. Then, you began ‘slaying the evil and serving justice’ impatiently. What, was it not what this beggar said just now?”

“Well…” The elders and leaders of more than ten sects, who were all big shots in the world of Cultivators, blushed and look at each other in bewilderment, not knowing what they should say.

“Fellow Cultivators!” Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar chuckled, “The way I see it, let’s leave the secret treasures aside for a moment. So many disaster victims outside of the city are waiting to be fed. A lot of them are dying in the cold from hunger every minute. Spectacular as crystals, magical equipment, and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures may be, can they be taken as food or worn as clothes?

“Right now, is there anything more qualified as a secret treasure than the delicious meat and rice? After all, such ‘secret treasures’ can save people’s lives! Everybody here was shouting about serving justice just now. Has it never occurred to you that life is the highest justice?

“You are jumping up and down angrily, but you won’t get anything valuable from this beggar even if you capture me and search my belongings. Why don’t we hurry to open the barn and provide food for the disaster victims so that the situation here can be stabilized! Do you really want to attract Mother White Lotus’ ghoul army to this place before you stop the fuss?”

All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were lost for words. They coughed in embarrassment at the same time.

Qi Zhongdao stepped forward and glanced around coldly before he announced, “Open the barn and distribute the food!”

…

Hundreds of boiling pots were set up below Roaring Tiger City. The smoke billowed up and turned into hundreds of white pillars that pierced into the sky and dispersed into puffy clouds.

Many disaster victims had been too starved to feed on fish or meat right away. Even the porridge that they consumed needed to be dissolved to the point that it was as thin as water for their recovery.

Although the porridge was thin, the meat powder of animals had been added to it, and a lot of herbs were used to neutralize the meat. The golden, fragrant porridge was the most delicious food that most of the folks had ever eaten.

The main sects set up their banners and divided the zones.

The larger sects such as the Grand Mystery Sect and the Purple Pole Sword Sect had more pots under their control, while the smaller sects managed fewer pots. They gathered the disaster victims below the banners of their sects!

The story that the disaster victims heard was that Roaring Tiger Hall were evil, lawless bandits who had committed too many crimes. Today, they finally had their karma. The other sects had come to annihilate the sect together.

Justice had been served!

Seeing that the folks had been exploited by Roaring Tiger Hall to such a miserable extent, the main sects found it insufferable and provided food so that everybody would survive those troubled times!

For a moment, all the disaster victims were kneeling in gratitude and kowtowing like wheat in the wind.

When Li Yao passed by the dozens of boiling big pots, it was exactly the disaster victims who kneeled before him gratefully that he saw.

Li Yao felt that he had become one of the statues with a gold surface in the temples.

He did not like the feeling and felt very uncomfortable.

Dan Fengzi appeared out of nowhere and asked warmly, “Elder Spiritual Vulture, is there something bothering you?”

On this trip to the southeast, the leader of the Purple Pole Sword Sect had been particularly friendly to Li Yao. Naturally, he had his reasons.

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao said straightforwardly, “I’ve been reflecting on the last words of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators of the Duan family. It is already appalling enough that Roaring Tiger Hall has been conspiring with the Black Devil Cult, but did the famous ‘six major sects’ such as the Grand Mystery Sect and the Purple Pole Sword Sect also have a disreputable past when they rose up?”

Dan Fengzi laughed. “Elder Spiritual Vulture, do you believe the crazy talk of those few fiends of the Duan family before their death? There was nothing clandestine about the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s rise. However, some of the information is indeed confidential. If you are willing to remove the ‘visiting’ from your title and join the Purple Pole Sword Sect as a formal elder of our sect, Elder Spiritual Vulture, you will certainly learn everything that you want to know!”

Li Yao’s eyes shined coldly as he sniffed. “I thought that I made my position clear last time, leader. During my fifty years of seclusion, I thoroughly studied the legacy of Yan Zhu, the sword forger from Great Zhou. I have only left my mountain to gain reputation, establish my own sect, and spread the knowledge of Great Zhou. Right now, certain juniors in the world of Cultivators have given me the nickname ‘Grandmaster of Great Zhou’, which does not sound bad.

“How can a ‘Grandmaster of Great Zhou’ be under somebody else all the time? It is already my limit to work as a visiting elder. There’s no way that I will join the Purple Pole Sword Sect completely!”

“Elder Spiritual Vulture, you have grand ambitions. The Purple Pole Sword Sect is too small to keep such an unparalleled expert like yourself!” Dan Fengzi sighed. “However, it is easy to be famous in the world of Cultivators, but it is much more difficult to establish and run a sect.

“The base, the land, the disciples, the vassal families, the revenues… Everything is a headache!

“Establishing one’s own sect is like wire-walking on a bottomless abyss. Even a family as tough as the Duan family, which had three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, met such a dishonorable end after they founded Roaring Tiger Hall!”

“Indeed!” Li Yao sighed as well. “Since the Duan family had three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, they probably could’ve built up Roaring Tiger Hall without resorting to such crooked methods. Why were they so eager for instant success and quick profits by working on the ‘Black Devil Cult’?”

“If they didn’t, somebody else certain would. You don’t think that the Black Devil Cult is the only evil organization causing trouble in the southeast, do you, Elder Spiritual Vulture?” Dan Fengzi explained. “It’s because Roaring Tiger Hall knocked over all the disobedient sects in the West River State after decades with the help of the Black Devil Cult, which then fed the flesh and meat of the victims back to Roaring Tiger Hall, that Roaring Tiger Hall had its glory today!

“If Roaring Tiger Hall had not established the Black Devil Cult, other sects might have secretly established the Red Devil Cult, Yellow Devil Cult, or Blue Devil Cult. Chances are that Roaring Tiger Hall would’ve been annihilated decades ago. They wouldn’t have survived till today!”

Frowning, Li Yao asked, “So, is it really nothing unusual for the justice defenders and the villains to conspire with each other among the Cultivators?”

Dan Fengzi smiled but did not give a direct answer. “When all the birds are shot down, the fine bow will be laid to rest. When the cunning rabbits are dead, the hounds will be useless. If a janitor raises a cat, he wants the cat to catch the rats in the house. But what can the cat do if all the rats are caught? It is the Cultivators’ responsibility to slay evil. What can the Cultivators do if there are no evils?”

“So, are you suggesting that we should slay evil when there is evil and when there isn’t any evil?” Li Yao asked.

Dan Fengzi’s eyes suddenly shone. He clapped his hands. “Well said, Elder Spiritual Vulture!”

After a long pause, Li Yao took a deep breath and said, “This is not exactly what I imagined before I left the Southland of Sorcerers.”

“What did you think before you left the Southland of Sorcerers, Elder Spiritual Vulture?” Dan Fengzi asked.

“The Southland of Sorcerers is an uncivilized land of barbarians. Everybody resides in the forests and caves as different tribes,” Li Yao said. “Every barbarian Cultivator is the protector of a tribe. They are responsible for banishing demon beats, suppressing evil, fighting against the hostile tribes, and so on. Although there are foul practices such as blood sacrifices, there aren’t many mysteries. When there are conflicts between different tribes, open competitions in the Black Rock Arenas are the more favored resolution!

“I’ve got nothing to hide from you, leader. A hundred years ago, I was an ignorant barbarian Cultivator who dominated the forests. I didn’t feel that anything was wrong with such a life.

“However, after I was reborn from the Poisonous Dragon Lake and received the legacy of Yan Zhu, I was edified by the demeanor of Great Zhou for fifty years. My mindset gradually changed. I felt that my eyes were opened and that the things that I had done in the past were not worth mentioning at all!

“The Southland of Sorcerers was too small for me. So, I decided to travel in the central plateaus and see how much ‘Great Zhou’ was left in ‘Great Qian’, which is also based in the central plateaus. It never occurred to me that—”

Chapter 1435 - Defy the Heaven’s Will!

Laughing drily, Dan Fengzi said, “Great Zhou? Haha. The Great Zhou Dynasty where all the Cultivators treated each other with manners?

“You can never know dignity until your belly is full. The Great Zhou Dynasty is still the ignorant age of the Ancient Sages Sector. At that time, the world was still in chaos. The land was vast, and the population was small. Dense forests in which countess Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures were growing were everywhere. There were few Cultivators at that time!

“Every Cultivator could gain sufficient Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and cores and bones from the forests if they were willing to. If a few Cultivators helped each other and fought in a team, their gains would only be multiple times more!

“In such an environment, they were naturally capable of treating each other with manners like brothers without violating each other. They could enjoy abundant resources and train themselves slowly!

“However, after a hundred thousand years, now that we have arrived at the Great Qian Dynasty, most of the unowned land has been developed. Few available resources are left, and so many new Cultivators are popping up every year!

“Elder Spiritual Vulture, let me tell you something. Anything will be cheap if there is too much of it! Today; the least valuable things are lives. The lives of the ordinary folks are as cheap as the lives of the Cultivators!”

After a long silence, Li Yao sighed and said, “I thought that the Cultivators in the forests in the Southland of Sorcerers were already brutal enough to raise ghosts, play with poison, and even offer blood sacrifices. I didn’t know until today that the Cultivators of the central plateaus could be even more brutal than us. Also, your brutality is so traceless and incredible!”

“Hahahaha!” Dan Fengzi laughed and shook his head. “Elder Spiritual Vulture, you didn’t understand such simple logic until today? The central plateaus boast beautiful landscapes and vast, fertile land with abundant spiritual energy. Natural paradises are everywhere. How could such a wonderful place belong to us if we Cultivators in the central plateaus were not more brutal than the Cultivators in the Southland of Sorcerers?

“If the barbarian Cultivators were more brutal, it would’ve been a barbarian Cultivator who sat on the throne in Divine Capital. The Cultivators from the central plateaus such as us, on the other hand, would be chewing the bananas in the rough, smoky forests of the Southland of Sorcerers!

“What I am about to say may not sound very pleasant, and it may upset you, Elder Spiritual Vulture, but I’m going to say it anyway. Elder Spiritual Vulture, you are perhaps one of the cruelest, toughest people in the Southland of Sorcerers. However, while your skills are more than enough for you to dominate the forests in the Southland of Sorcerers, if you establish your own sect in the central plateaus, you won’t know how you died!

“Yes, you are very strong, and you are adept at refining. Even five Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators might not be able to defeat you even if they attack together. However, in the central plateaus, competitions do not mean fighting on many occasions. When the fighting does take place, it is probably not going to be five Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators that come at you but more like today, when thirty Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and almost eighty Core Formation Stage Cultivators attacked together! After all, it is everybody’s responsibility to slay evil!

“Is ‘Heaven Battering King’ Qi Changsheng not tough? Is ‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu not tough? Is Lead Eunuch Wang Xi not tough? But are they not stray dogs living in panic every day right now?

“Do forgive my bluntness, Elder Spiritual Vulture. I’ve been talking to you sincerely for your own sake, and I suggest that you stop thinking of establishing your own sect and just work as an elder in the Purple Pole Sword Sect. Later, I can help you occupy a mountain yourself, and you can manage your own offshoot. That way, you will still be able to pass on the knowledge from Great Zhou on sword forgery. Isn’t it a win-win?”

“It appears that I was wrong all the time,” Li Yao replied, somewhat depressed. “I read a lot of the notes of the Cultivators of the Great Zhou Dynasty in the residence. After I broke out of seclusion, I also collected the stories, such as the ‘Legends of the Swordsman on the Spiritual Mountain’, that were introduced from the central plateaus. I thought that the Cultivators in the central plateaus would be more or less as described in the book!”

“Legends of the Swordsman on the Spiritual Mountain?” Dan Fengzi was amused. “And I thought that you were depressed for a better reason, Elder Spiritual Vulture. So, you were simply misled by some hilarious novels. They are not the anecdotes of the Cultivators at all but make-believe that the ignorant ordinary people have fabricated. You cannot believe a single word in that!

“I remember reading a few pages of the Legends of the Swordsman on the Spiritual Mountain. The Cultivators in the book are all able to do whatever they want. Their life is truly enviable. It is understandable that you found it attractive.

“However, how can the Cultivators in the real world be so unattached from mundane affairs? Not only do we have to eat food, we will also have to eat ten times, a hundred times, or even a thousand times more than ordinary people do!

“There are no free lunches in the world. If you want to eat, you have to fight for the food with your own hands. In that respect, is there any real difference between a high and mighty Cultivator and a butcher on the street?

“If we get to the bottom of it, although the folks call us ‘deities’, we are both clear that we are just people who have more strength and bigger stomachs!”

Li Yao looked at Dan Fengzi carefully before he shifted his eyes and looked at the darkness of the night sky pressing down bit by bit. He mumbled, “So, it seems that we will not have true freedom until we break the void and ascend to the deities’ realm. No wonder so many Cultivators crave ascension!”

Dan Fengzi smiled miserably and said, “In the legends, after you ascend to the deities’ realm and become real deities, you will indeed be entitled to infinite freedom and comfort. However, I don’t think that is the case!”

“Oh?” Li Yao raised his eyebrow. “Why not?”

“Since Cultivators are much stronger than ordinary people and have much bigger stomachs than ordinary people, it is only reasonable that we assume that deities have stomachs a thousand times larger than the Cultivators’ if they are much stronger than the Cultivators, right?”

“Fair point!”

“But we know for a fact that it is a boundless black world beyond the Ancient Sages Sector. No air. No water. Nothing whatsoever except for cold stones. The resources there are a hundred times thinner than the resources in the Ancient Sages Sector!

“The deities’ stomachs are hundreds of times larger than the Cultivators’, but the resources outside are much scarcer than the resources in the Ancient Sages Sector. If the deities do live in the world beyond, then, to fight for the smallest resources, their competition will only be thousands of times crueler than in the Ancient Sages Sector. How can it be a real heaven of peace and happiness?”

Li Yao was dazed for a long time as he gazed at Dan Fengzi in disbelief.

“However, I estimate that there are neither the deities nor the deities’ realm.” Dan Fengzi burst into laughter before he declared ruthlessly, “Because if there really are deities, they would’ve marched to the Ancient Sages Sector, slaughtered each and every one of us, and stolen our resources! At the very least, if I were a deity, I certainly would have come and conquered the Ancient Sages Sector!”

Li Yao took a long breath and said, “I didn’t know that the world of the Cultivators and the deities’ realm are equally cruel in the leader’s eyes!”

“There’s nothing cruel in all this. This is the heavens’ will,” Dan Fengzi said casually. “Only the strongest should survive, and the winner is the king. That is the heavens’ will!”

Swallowing, Li Yao finally could not help it any longer. “Even if it is indeed the heavens’ will, aren’t Cultivators supposed to defy the heaven’s will?”

Dan Fengzi chuckled. “If you defy the heaven’s will, you will have to taste the power of the apocalypses!”

Li Yao gnashed his teeth. “If the thousands of Cultivators stand up and fight together, even the most powerful apocalypse can be punched into pieces!”

Dan Fengzi glanced at Li Yao in confusion. “But who will lead the charge? Elder Spiritual Vulture, the questions you raised today seem rather peculiar!”

Li Yao’s heart suddenly palpitated. He knew that he had been acting too radical because he was shocked by the misery of the disaster victims and the doings of the major sects.

Thankfully, prolonged horns echoed from the sky to the northwest.

Dan Fengzi’s eyes suddenly shone. Forgetting his chitchat with Li Yao, he put on a weird expression and said, “The fleet of the relief assets sent by the main sects has arrived. Let’s go take a look!”

To cope with the natural disasters in the southeast, the main sects in the central plateaus had all dispatched a lot of relief assets, which were delivered to the south in a huge fleet of flying boasts escorted by Master Dawn Moon, the current leader of the Grand Mystery Sect.

The flying boats that were fully loaded with food, clothes, and other assets were certainly not as fast as the light boasts that only accommodated the high-level Cultivators. They were less comparable to the flying swords that could rush at a supersonic speed. So, they did not arrive at Roaring Tiger City until that day, although the high-level Cultivators had been there for days.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Not just Li Yao and Dan Fengzi, the high-level Cultivators from other sects also turned into streaks of brightness and flew toward the fleet of relief assets.

However, they were all greatly shocked by the appearance of the fleet!

The fleet used to be made of dozens of behemothic carriers that were as huge as whales, but at that moment, there were only ten broken boats that were riddled with holes left. They looked like the bodies of whales attacked by sharks and seemed as if they would crash into the land at any point.

The black traces of charring could be found everywhere on the shell of every broken boat. The banners of the sects were all askew and blackened.

Moans and screams were echoing inside the cabins. The intense and even repugnant stench of medication drifted out!

“What—what exactly has happened?”

Li Yao heard an angry bellow in midair. ‘Iron Saint’ Qi Zhongdao smashed down like a weight and nearly knocked down the carrier in the lead.

A middle-aged Cultivator, wearing an advanced robe of the Grand Mystery Sect, who was covered in bandages from which balm was leaking out staggered out of the cabin supported by two disciples of the Grand Mystery Sect.

Dan Fengzi told Li Yao in a low voice that the heavily-wounded man was Master Dawn Moon, the current leader of the Grand Mystery Sect.

“Replying to you, Junior Uncle!”

Master Dawn Moon’s breathing and voice were feeble, but he struggled to get rid of the support of the two disciples and stumbled close, bowing to Qi Zhongdao deeply as a disciple, only to almost fall over. He shouted with the utmost indignation, “It—it was Qi Changsheng. Qi Changsheng’s Heaven Battering Army has looted the majority of our assets!”

Chapter 1436 - All Looted?

“What!” Qi Zhongdao took quite a few steps back in shock to the verge of the almost broken gunwale. Almost unable to bear such a critical strike, his long hair was pointing to the sky, and his face turned extremely hideous!

After a few cracks, the entire carrier was shaking up and down under his surging spiritual energy as if it were on a stormy ocean and about to crumble at any time!

“Wasn’t Qi Changsheng’s Heaven Battering Army blown apart last winter?”

Qi Zhongdao gnashed his teeth. His eyes gradually turned gloomy and terrifying as he stared at Master Dawn Moon’s heart. Colder than ever, he demanded, “Why could he organize such an elite army so quickly that even the fleet of carriers protected by you and the experts of the six major sects have been crushed and even you were heavily wounded yourself?”

“Cough, cough. Cough, cough, cough, cough!” Master Dawn Moon threw out two mouthfuls of black blood and replied in pain. “It was exactly because Qi Changsheng’s Heaven Battering Army was defeated last winter that we were too careless and reckless to search the caves on the two sides of the Wolf Smoke Canyon when we passed it. As a result, we were ambushed by the Heaven Battering Army!

“Nobody knows how Qi Changsheng returned so quickly or where he gathered so many experts. Perhaps he has united all the evil beings in the northwest!

“Most of the high-level Cultivators in the six major sects came to the southeast in advance for disaster relief. There were only a few Cultivators in the Building Foundation Stage and the Core Formation Stage in our carrier fleet. Qi Changsheng’s Heaven Battering Army, on the other hand, was well prepared. They were as ferocious as tigers and separated our team at the very beginning!

“We were carriers fully loaded with assets after all. Our crafts were too cumbersome for us to fight agilely. We suffered heavy losses when the battle first started. I led the vanguard in a few charges but failed to break in. Seeing that we were about to be surrounded, we could only flee forward. Later, we lost another few carriers while we were getting rid of the Heaven Battering Army. Finally, we managed to save the eight carriers here!

“It was a shame that, in order to increase our speed, we were forced to abandon most of the assets. Cough, cough, cough, cough, cough, cough, cough!”

Master Dawn Moon’s face grew pale as he spoke, and he was coughing so worryingly that his lungs seemed as if they would spurt out at any moment.

A few disciples of the Grand Mystery Sect hurried to support him. They looked at Qi Zhongdao pitifully.

“You were assaulted in the Wolf Smoke Canyon, and all your assets were stolen by Qi Changsheng? Not a grain of food has been delivered?” Qi Zhongdao demanded scarily, one word after another. His eyes gradually froze into two icy clones. Despite Master Dawn Moon’s dying appearance, he looked more and more fearsome.

“It was exactly what happened!” Master Dawn Moon replied feebly. “The fellow Cultivators from other main sects together with me have seen it with their own eyes. It was not because of our incapability but because Qi Changsheng’s Heaven Battering Army was too tough!”

“Sun Jiuling, Leader Sun!” Qi Zhongdao was so furious that he was calling his junior nephew by his name. “All thirty ships of assets, and you failed to keep any of them. Excellent. Excellent. You are really my excellent junior nephew and an excellent leader of the Grand Mystery Sect!”

Boom!

The flames of spiritual energy suddenly burst out of Qi Zhongdao’s body and soared into a raging fiend in his back!

Boosted by the spiritual energy, the entire flying boat was creaking. Many parts that were already full of damages were now blowing out bits of wood again!

“The failure of the battle and the heavy losses are all due to my inappropriate commands. Please punish me as you see fit, Senior Uncle!”

Vomiting blood, Master Dawn Moon shoved the disciples in front of him and fell on one knee in front of Qi Zhongdao before he craned his neck and gazed at Qi Zhongdao.

“You—you think that I do not dare punish you?” Qi Zhongdao was so exasperated that the flames of spiritual energy above his head were even more fierce!

“Grand leader!”

A few elders of the Grand Mystery Sect who had been eyeing coldly nearby stood up and said unhurriedly, “The leader is indeed partly to blame for the loss of the relief assets after the assault of the Heaven Battering Army.

“However, nobody could’ve foreseen that Qi Changsheng could return so quickly!

“Qi Changsheng has savaged the northwest for decades. As one of the notorious Four Rapscallions, he is qualified as one of the top ten experts in the world. His indestructible body is also too sturdy for Master Dawn Moon to resist himself. It is understandable. Before, a lot of Cultivators were deployed to hunt Qi Changsheng. One time, more than twenty Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators went to chase after Qi Changsheng, but did they not fail to block the guy and let him run away?

“Since the leader has fought bloody battles and is now exhausted and heavily wounded, we’d better let him treat his wounds right now and punish him when the wounds are healed!”

The elders mostly possessed high positions. Some of them were even a generation older than the leader and were senior brothers or junior brothers to Qi Zhongdao. They were basically on par with each other and did not need to listen to Qi Zhongdao’s curses.

“You—”

Qi Zhongdao gnashed his teeth so hard that the teeth were almost ground to dust.

“Do you have any other orders, grand leader?”

The few elders of the Grand Mystery Sect stood between Qi Zhongdao and Master Dawn Moon without saying anything. There was no telling if it was intentional, but they stressed ‘grand’ when they addressed him.

The grand leader of the Grand Mystery Sect and the current leader of the Grand Mystery Sect as well as the elders had a silent and yet extremely dangerous competition.

The flames of spiritual energy behind Qi Zhongdao were slowly retreated back into his body, but on his dark skin, red veins and nerves were bulging out!

Even Li Yao had sensed Qi Zhongdao’s intimidating aura that was ten times more powerful than during his match with Yan Liren during the Dragon Spring Meeting. It felt like an iron wall a hundred meters tall was about to fall upon everyone!

The air almost froze.

There was nothing but dead silence on the spot. Even the noise of a needle hitting the deck would have been as shocking as thunder.

Right when the two parties were about to have an open fight, Dan Fengzi, leader of the Purple Pole Sword Sect, suddenly walked out and bowed to Qi Zhongdao. “Master Righteous One, by common sense, this is an internal affair of the Grand Mystery Sect, and it is inappropriate for outsiders such as us to comment.

“However, in the fleet escorted by Master Dawn Moon, quite a few were contributed by the Purple Pole Sword Sect. Master Dawn Moon was wounded not for his personal interests but for the common interests of all the sects here and for the happiness of the people. So, on behalf of the Purple Pole Sword Sect, I fear that I must say something.

“First of all, the natural disasters are not over yet, and the great enemy is still ahead of us. Our primary target is the White Lotus ghoul army that is attacking East Peace County. Right now, the most important things for us is stability and unification. We can deal with other issues, however severe they are, after the White Lotus ghoul army is suppressed!

“Secondly, although it was quite a heavy loss for the thirty carriers to all be looted, we have fortunately conquered Roaring Tiger City. The assets in the few warehouses in Roaring Tiger City should be enough for the million disaster victims to survive the most difficult period. So, the consequences of the brutal failure might not be as dire as we imagine!

“If the assets in the whole of Roaring Tiger City still do not suffice, it doesn’t matter. As long as we inform the nearby sects of the appearance of Roaring Tiger City right now, hehe, I think that they will deliver a lot of relief assets very soon, and the disaster victims will survive the calamity!”

“Dan Fengzi, even you…” Qi Zhongdao stared at Dan Fengzi as ferociously as a tiger, as if he were trying to poke two holes on his face.

Dan Fengzi looked back casually and confidently. His eyes were as clear as water, and he seemed to be unaware of what Qi Zhongdao meant.

Other than Li Yao and Yan Liren, the other few elders of the Purple Pole Sword Sect all stood behind Dan Fengzi, holding their swords hilts. Vague sword auras were spreading out.

“Dan Fengzi is quite right. Four ships from the Gold Armor Clan have been pillaged, too. We went through a lot of trouble to gather those resources. Of course, we feel painful to lose them. However, the brutality of ‘Heaven Battering King’ Qi Changsheng is well-known. Is there anybody here who hasn’t suffered losses because of him? It was quite unfortunate that the fleet ran into him, but it was certainly not entirely Master Dawn Moon’s fault. Honestly speaking, even if we were defending the carriers, could we have stopped Qi Changsheng for sure?”

Including Bu Tiantong, a few elders of the Gold Armor Clan stood up, too.

“Thunderstorm Valley thinks the same. Right now, a great enemy is still in front of us. Let’s talk about the less important issues after we have suppressed the White Lotus Cult!”

A few elders of Thunderstorm Valley stepped forward and stood next to Master Dawn Moon, Dan Fengzi, the elders of the Grand Mystery Sect, and the elders of the Gold Armor Clan.

“After all, there are enough assets for the disaster victims. If we are still short of something, we can always ask the sects nearby to provide them. I don’t think they’ll dare to refuse!”

The Cultivators from Flying Spirit Island stood on Master Dawn Moon and Dan Fengzi’s side, too.

On this side, it was dozens of elders, leaders, and Cultivators from all the main sects.

On that side, it was just ‘Iron Saint’ Qi Zhongdao alone.

Looking at the many ‘fellow Cultivators’ in a daze, Qi Zhongdao seemed to grow twenty years older in just a moment. He suddenly lost all his strength. His veins and nerves, which had been bulging like snakes previously, withered, too. His lips trembled for a long time, but he did not know what to say in the end. His body was shaking slightly, and he seemed almost unable to stand on his feet.

“Senior brother,” an elder of the Grand Mystery Sect said respectfully, “like you used to say, we must consider the big picture!”

“The big picture?” Qi Zhongdao smiled bitterly. “The big picture!”

His throat rolled for a long time, only to come up with nothing. Finally, after a long sigh, he shook his sleeve and turned into a streak of grayness, flying into the clouds to get all the annoyances out of his sight.

The only things left behind were a dilapidated Roaring Tiger City and the folks who were gobbling in gratitude and innocence outside of the city.

The miserable screams of Duan Xingyi, the leader of the Black Devil Cult, seemed to be still echoing in the night sky.

“You did not intend to offer food at all. You did not plan to offer a single grain of food!”

Chapter 1437 - The Wine Cup Is Never Empty!

Night fell. The dashing stars weaved into a net and soon covered the entire world.

Below Roaring Tiger City, the torches as thick as children’s arms were paved. Together with the enhancement of the Cultivators’ techniques, their brilliance integrated and illuminated the place as if it were daylight.

After a whole day of hard work, the flood nearby had been drained. Also, the bricks and rocks dismantled from the debris of Roaring Tiger City were piled into simple dams, which expanded the lone islands in the flood and gradually connected them together. They looked like an undersea continent that was rising up.

On the spacious ground, centered around the porridge pots, independent zones had been divided according to the banners of different sects. A lot of traps, trenches, and walls had been dug out, too. There were also weights, hammers, and other facilities for working out on the ground. Swords, sabers, and spears could be found, too.

Also, fully-enclosed tents had been established, in which the confidential test magical equipment of the sects was set up to examine the aptitude and talents of the applicants.

“Ho! Ho!”

The disaster victims, who were mostly as thin as a skeleton, were already scrambling on the traps and walls when they had not entirely recovered from the horror of the savaging flood yet. They were also crushing themselves with the weights and hammers, unwilling to give up even when they were bleeding. Some of the peasants who had learned a thing or two about martial arts before were waving the spears or sabers so crazily that even water would not pass.

It was because the main sects had established offices below Roaring Tiger City to recruit new disciples.

Although resources were scarce, people were certainly not. However, most folks had barely any clothes and had been starving for a long time. They were even falling off at the first morning breeze. Therefore, they were only a waste of food and absolutely useless for the Cultivation sects.

The natural disasters treated everybody equally. Not just the common folks were running for survival, even the richer households who had the wealth for wine, meat, and body buildup before had to escape, too.

After such a long period of suffering, the applicants who had strength to complete the tests that the Cultivation sects arranged certainly had desirable aptitude and talent. Even if they were not qualified to be core disciples, they were more than enough to serve as external disciples or a servant or tenant of the vassal families of the Cultivation sects.

What was even better was that, unlike the locals that the Cultivation recruited within their own territory, the disaster victims were unhesitant to sign the lifelong indenture.

According to their indenture, there would be no compensation if any accident happened to them during their training, and even if they accomplished something, they would still have to serve their master and sect for the rest of their life. If they had other intentions, they would be struck by the wrath of the heavens!

The disaster victims who were healthy, strong, and far away from home and signed an indenture were the best cannon fodder for the Cultivation sects.

When two Cultivators were fighting, dozens of disciples of the hostile sect might get killed by accident in every round. Most of the dead disciples were those people.

When it was required to explore highly dangerous relics and mysterious demon caves, or to fight tough enemies such as the White Lotus Cult, the Heaven Battering Army, and the Ghost Qin cavalry, those people would be sent out first, too.

Dan Fengzi was the one who told Li Yao that inside information.

Inside Roaring Tiger City, an argument that was even more fierce was breaking out. The six major sects—including the Grand Mystery Sect and the Purple Pole Sword Sect—as well as sects from the central plateaus that had come for disaster relief together were all involved in a debate as to the distribution of the tremendous resources left by Roaring Tiger Hall, including crystals, magical equipment, and the low-level disciples.

It was then that Li Yao realized that the low-level Cultivators of Roaring Tiger Hall would not certainly be punished with death even if they possibility participated in the Black Devil Cult’s operations in the past. On the contrary, for the sake of benevolence, they would be sent to the main sects for ‘rectification’ so that they would have a chance to atone for their mistakes.

Seeing that the elegant-looking high-level Cultivators lunged at Roaring Tiger Hall's enormous body like ravenous hyenas and were tearing off the bloody, stinky meat piece after piece greedily, Li Yao could not have been more disappointed by the 'noble sects' in the world of ancient Cultivators!

He finally understood that the 'noble sects', just as the leaders of Roaring Tiger Hall and the Black Devil Cult said, were there for personal gains blatantly under the disguise of disaster relief.

It did make sense on second thought. If most of the ancient Cultivators were not as despicable as such, how could a super civil war that swept across the three thousand Sectors have broken out and eventually destroyed the entire ancient Cultivation civilization?

The experiences of 'Chaos' Ba Yanzhi alone were indicative enough of the faces of most of the ancient Cultivators!

Li Yao was more and more reluctant to stay any longer in such a corrupt world. He could not wait to return to the modern Cultivation civilization.

Even after dealing with the ruthless Imperium of True Human Beings or the emotionless, mechanical Alliance of the Holy Covenant seemed to be better than hanging around with the pretentious guys and listening to their bullsh*t about 'slaying evil and serving justice'!

Li Yao made a decision.

After the issue with the White Lotus Cult was over, he would find an excuse to travel on his own for a while. Then, he would go to the second satellite of the Ancient Sages Sector and establish the star beacon first!

He walked randomly on that dark night, moving farther and farther away from Roaring Tiger City.

Behind him was an obstreperous city full of lights, and in front of him was a stinky, muddy land savaged by the flood.

However, he found it hard to tell which side was hell and which side was the world of human beings!

Suddenly, Li Yao smelt a certain stimulating fragrance, which was the scent of some kind of thick, intense wine mixed with almost ten kinds of meat.

Then, he heard contented laughter far away ahead of him.

Greatly curious, Li Yao sniffed and walked toward where the fragrant came from.

After walking for a long time, he finally discovered that a ragged plank was docked in a small water pool that had been filled with mud below a crooked tree that had already been destroyed by lightning.

A giant pot had been set up nearby. There was no telling what was being boiled inside, but the cap of the pot was jumping because of the soaring air below, which was almost leaking out in milky smoke.

There were also dozens of tankards of wine paved in a row. The tankards were all shining greasily in dark golden colors. The marks on the tankards were the patterns of an awesome tiger, indicating that they were the fine wine treasured by Roaring Tiger Hall!

On the small plank, two people were sitting, one in the front and the other at the rear. They were the handsome monk Master Bitter Cicada, who did not mind eating rotten meat, and Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar, who was wearing ragged clothes and could not have been stinkier!

Master Bitter Cicada and Ba Xiaoyu seemed to be old friends. They were not restrained at all in front of each other.

Ba Xiaoyu picked up a tankard of old wine with his spiritual energy and broke the seal before he poured the wine, which was as gold as honey, into two bailers. He clapped his hands and laughed. “The b*stards of Roaring Tiger Hall committed all kinds of crimes. Even a stray dog on the street is cleaner than them! However, the wine that they brewed is indeed among the best in the world! When this beggar saw the Duans drinking the wine for the first time, I was so thirsty that I almost jumped down and knocked down both of them in order to drink up all their wine!

“After a year of waiting, I have finally fulfilled my wish today. This couldn’t be better! Hey, monk. Of the three tankards of wine here, one is yours, and the other is mine. If you haven’t had enough, fill your stomach with the meat!”

After saying that, Ba Xiaoyu raised the bailer with both hands and opened his mouth. Leaving aside the demons of the Blood Demon Sector, Li Yao had never seen any creature who could open their mouth to such an extent. After only one moment, an entire bailer of wine had nothing left!

With a world-shaking burp, Ba Xiaoyu burst into laughter. “There’s always wine in my cup, and there are always heads of the scoundrels waiting to be cut off. Satisfying. This is very satisfying!”

He was not in a hurry to pour the second bailer of wine. Instead, he opened his fingers and snatched another two tankards of wine with his spiritual energy. Shaking his arms, he tossed the two tankards of wine into the sky and smashed them into each other.

“The Thunderous Sound Hall, Green Glow City, Void Appearance Sect… All the victims killed by the Black Devil Cult, all the Cultivators and ordinary people, you may rest in peace now!”

The delicious wine sprayed on the dark land like broken stars.

Master Bitter Cicada sighed. The pearls that he held in his hand slowly drifted into midair. Accompanied by the soothing recitals of sutras, they revolved slowly and released the gentlest brilliance.

Ba Xiaoyu suddenly widened his eyes and spat, “Which scumbag is eavesdropping over there? Are you planning to steal my wine?”

Li Yao secretly frowned. He did not hide his presence but walked close openly. Although it was pure darkness around, it was impossible for Ba Xiaoyu not to have noticed him with his Cultivation under the illumination of the stars.

What was the guy’s attitude all about when he knew exactly who Li Yao was?

Li Yao could tell that Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar was quite hostile toward him.

It was quite perplexing. Li Yao was pretty sure that Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar must not have met Master Spiritual Vulture before. There should not have been any grudges between them.

“Old Ba, don’t be anxious.” Master Bitter Cicada stopped reciting the sutras and opened his eyes. He nodded at Li Yao with a smile in acknowledgement before he turned to Ba Xiaoyu and said, “The way I see it, Master Spiritual Vulture’s eyebrows are focused and not dispersing, his eyes are sharp but not deadly, and although killing intent is circling his face, there isn’t much brutality and aggression in it. He does not look like an insane, inhuman, and bloodthirsty person!

“Rumor among the Cultivators has it that he slaughtered quite a few tribes, leaving absolutely no survivors, and his notoriety spread across the entire Southland of Sorcerers. I know that you hate scoundrels as you hate your mortal enemies. It is understandable that you are not willing to make friends with such people.

“However, in my opinion, I don’t think that Master Spiritual Vulture is such a person right now.

“There could be more to the story, or it could simply be a rumor, considering that it happened almost a hundred years ago. Or, Master Spiritual Vulture might have realized his wrongdoing and decided to walk on a different path after receiving the legacy of Yan Zhu, the sword forger of the Great Zhou Dynasty!”

Chapter 1438 - Friend from the Sky

Li Yao's heart skipped a beat. He did not know that Master Bitter Cicada was so good at scrutinizing faces that he could tell a person's character by their subtle expressions.

Appearances could be faked, and part of one's personality could be simulated. Li Yao was a brutal man who would not hesitate to kill anyone, but although he had killed hundreds of people since he was born, none of them were innocent.

The real Master Spiritual Vulture was an insane murderer. So, it was impossible for him to simulate the figure perfectly.

Then, he recalled that he had almost lost his cool in front of Dan Fengzi. It appeared that there were still a lot of bugs regarding the identity of 'Master Spiritual Vulture' that required patches.

Ba Xiaoyu's face turned milder after hearing Master Bitter Cicada's words, but he was still staring at Li Yao coldly. "Master Spiritual Vulture, tell me, have you slaughtered a few tribes without even sparing the children?"

Thinking quickly, Li Yao replied in a hoarse voice, "What if I did, and what if I didn't?"

"If you didn't and it's just a rumor, this will be a nice encounter between you and me. You may sit down and enjoy the wine with me!" Ba Xiaoyu said. "If you are the scumbags who murdered children, it is fine, too. The delicious wine here and your broken guts will be perfect sacrifices for the unrested souls you killed!”

“You are going to kill me for something a hundred years ago?” Li Yao’s pupils constricted violently, and he cackled like a crow. “Are you able to kill me?”

“It doesn’t matter whether it’s a hundred years ago or it’s yesterday. Now that this beggar has learned of it and run into you, this is your unlucky day!” Ba Xiaoyu chuckled. “As for whether or not I’m able to kill you, I’ll know the answer after I try. If I can’t, I can run away to heal my wounds, and I’ll come back after I’ve recovered. I’ll kill you when you are bathing, pooping, eating, or sleep! I’ll poison your wine, pee in your food, and put pests in your bed. Even if you are not killed, you will be disgusted and frightened!

“For as long as you are alive, I will try to kill you in such a way, until either of us dies!”

Li Yao suddenly felt warm, but coldness beamed out of his eyes. His facial muscles cramped for a while before he gnashed his teeth. “If you want to kill me, just do it. After all, in the eyes of the pretentious Cultivators from the central plateaus, the barbarian Cultivators are all cannibals who feast upon raw meat and blood. What kind of appalling things do we not do? Would you believe me even if I told you that I did no such thing?”

Ba Xiaoyu stared at Li Yao’s face for a long time.

Li Yao stared back at him aggressively, too.

When the air between the two of them was about to be ignited, Ba Xiaoyu suddenly picked up half a bailer on the plank and threw it toward Li Yao.

“Since the monk says that you are not a bloodthirsty person, and you are not willing to admit it, I can only believe that you are innocent for now because of the lack of proof. If I find proof tomorrow, I will kill you tomorrow. But tonight, let’s drink!”

After a sniff, Li Yao snatched the bailer and landed on the plank like a soft feather.

Ba Xiaoyu patted his hands and curled his finger. The boiling pot was suddenly opened. It jumped into the air and did not descend even after rotating three times.

The most treasured food ingredients of the Roaring Tiger Hall, boiled by ten barrels of fine wine, were bubbling inside the pot. They were already well-cooked, with the fragrance of meat spreading out. The center of the pot even seemed to be glowing!

Ba Xiaoyu laughed. He picked up a fishing pole from the edge of the plank. Then, as if fishing, he tossed the pole at the pot and picked up a red, greasy, and fragrant dog leg!

“Master Spiritual Vulture, you grew up in the Southland of Sorcerers. I’m afraid that you have never seen such a dog leg before. This is no ordinary dog leg!

“It is a common practice to put such a ‘dog leg’ in the middle of a barrel of hams when the hams are being brewed so that the flavor of the dog meat will add to the taste of the hams!

“After the barrel of hams is brewed, the flavor and essence of the dog leg will have leaked into the ham. So, the dog leg itself will lose all the taste, and it is usually abandoned!

“However, haha, this beggar discovered that, if you put the dog leg that has lost all its essence and looks like a honeycomb into the same pot with the other food ingredients and boil them together, the dog leg will absorb the essence of the other meat and be filled up again. It’s almost like pumping!

“Tsk, tsk, tsk. As a result, such a dog leg will be the best food in the world that you can never find elsewhere!”

While introducing the dish, Ba Xiaoyu was already drooling. He shook the hooks on the fishing pole and picked up three dog legs from the bottomless pot. Passing two of the legs to Li Yao and Master Bitter Cicada, he looked at Li Yao and said, “The same food can breed very different people. Some of the Cultivators in the central plateaus are pompous villains, but some of them are the extravagant magnates who are willing to share the invaluable dog legs. Come on. Even a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator might not be able to stand on his feet after a mouthful of such dog meat!”

This was the first time that Li Yao had ever heard a ragged beggar calling himself an ‘extravagant magnate’ without the least unease.

Ba Xiaoyu’s face of delight indeed seemed to suggest that he was an emperor treating his honorable guests who had come from afar with hundreds of delicious cuisines in his splendid palace.

Glancing at the wine in front of Master Bitter Cicada, Li Yao smiled. “Do you drink wine and eat dog meat, too, Master?”

“Of course,” Master Bitter Cicada said. “The monks count on the benefactors for their living. If the benefactor gives water, we will drink water. If they give wine, we will drink wine. Now that the dog leg has been given, it is disrespectful to turn it down."

"Haha. Not only does this monk have wine and meat, he drinks even more than I do. Pay special attention later and make sure that he doesn't steal more wine!" Ba Xiaoyu clapped his hands and laughed. Then, he suddenly put on a grave face and glared at Li Yao. "Why are you not eating? Do you feel that this beggar is too smelly and filthy for you?"

Ba Xiaoyu's body was indeed covered with ulcers and pustules. Not only did he look rather unkempt, he did not smell very good at a close distance.

There was also a deep bite on his left leg that had long deteriorated due to the untimely treatment. Right now, the rot had already reached the bone.

However, he seemed to be feeling none of it and was still talking and laughing. There was really no telling what he was made of.

Li Yao frowned and shook his head. "I was born in a land of barbarians. Why would I despise you for your untidiness, Fellow Cultivator Ba? I am just curious. With your Cultivation, you must already be insusceptible to weather or poisons now, mustn't you? How can you be troubled by dermatitis? Also, the wound on your left leg does not seem to be caused by any tough poison. As long as the rotten flesh is cut away and the wound is covered in decent medication, it will recover very quickly. Why have you delayed the treatment to this day?"

"If I want to cure it, of course, it will be cured very soon." Looking at the hole on his leg, Ba Xiaoyu said, "However, the ulcers and the wound are my best cover. It was with their help that I was able to sneak into Roaring Tiger City. Nobody suspected that a beggar could be in the Nascent Soul Stage!”

Li Yao was greatly shocked. He lost his calmness and exclaimed, “So, you intentionally caught the disease in order to collect the evidence of the Black Devil Cult’s crimes and to figure out the relation between the Black Devil Cult and the Roaring Tiger Hall?”

Ba Xiaoyu nodded and bit the dog leg hard, while he replied in a blurred voice, “Why are we still talking? Come on. Have the meat and wine!”

Li Yao was caught in mixed feelings. The world of ancient Cultivators had no rules. Everything was growing wildly, and polarization was extremely severe.

There were the seemingly gracious but in fact extremely selfish elders and leaders who appeared to be Cultivators but did the things in the Immortal Cultivators’ way.

There were also the Cultivators like Master Bitter Cicada and Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar who were really ‘slaying evil and serving justice’!

From them, Li Yao seemed to have found the origins of the creed to protect the ordinary people in the modern Cultivation civilization.

He also understood why humanity could rise and bloom again in the dark universe after sinking for thirty thousand years!

He felt that his blood was boiling. Like Ba Xiaoyu and Master Bitter Cicada, he took the meat and wine to his heart’s content.

It was the most delicious meat and wine that he had ever enjoyed.

Right then, Master Bitter Cicada suddenly spoke to the clouds. “Now that Fellow Cultivator Qi is also here, why don’t you join us for some wine and meat, too?”

His voice concentrated into soundwaves that pierced through the sky like a pillar.

After a long time, the clouds slowly swirled into a hole, from which a translucent shadow crawled out and landed on the crooked tree next to the plank like a dry leaf.

It was ‘Iron Saint’ Qi Zhongdao, the leader of the Great Qian Cultivators.

His face was gloomy. A thin, icy shell covered his body. Frost was everywhere on his head and his eyebrow. He was truly like what he was nicknamed and no different from a cold, hard glacier that nobody wanted to touch.

“Greetings, Leader Qi!” Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar welcomed Qi Zhongdao with a smile.

There was not a regular alliance among the Cultivators in the Great Qian Dynasty. However, in cases of emergencies—for example, to fight the Heaven Battering Army, the White Lotus Cult, the Ghost Qin army, or to threaten the Purple Pole Sword Sect like last time—or to resist natural disasters, temporary alliances would be established for the convenience of organization.

In most of the cases, Qi Zhongdao would be the leader of such temporary alliances. Why else would he be called the leader of all the Great Qian Cultivators?

Naturally, it was not an exception this time.

The form of address, however, made Qi Zhongdao’s face even gloomier. He was almost grinding his teeth and about to leave.

“Old Ba, do not talk like that!” Master Bitter Cicada sighed. “Fellow Cultivator Qi’s life is not easy, either. To unite the selfish sects into an ostensible alliance that can work on something together, he has paid much more than you did when you snuck into Roaring Tiger City to investigate the Black Devil Cult!

“You never know how difficult something is until you do it yourself. The life of a monk or a beggar is easy, but it is certainly much more difficult to work as the leader of all the Cultivators!”

Chapter 1439 - Chat Over Wine!

His words made Qi Zhongdao’s eyelids that were full of ice shiver for a moment. The coldness on his frozen face slowly thawed.

Flushing, Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar scratched his face and apologized. “Yes. It was inappropriate of me to have said that. Qi Zhongdao, this beggar is best at speaking nonsense. Please do not be bothered by what I said! I know that it is quite hard to look at those smiling jerks every day without a chance to punch them in the face!

“Years ago, it was exactly because I could not bear the smugness of those jerks that I simply abandoned my own sect. It is much more comfortable to live as an unaffiliated Cultivator among the common folk! I can cry when I want to cry and laugh when I want to laugh!”

Before Qi Zhongdao replied, Master Bitter Cicada said, “You were free to leave your family’s sect, but Master Qi cannot leave the Grand Mystery Sect and the shaking community of Cultivators.

“Right now, despite the internal conflict of the Cultivators, some ground rules are still kept on the surface. We all appear to be at peace, serving justice together. Whoever dares to openly violate the rules and swallow other sects, just like the Roaring Tiger Hall and the Black Devil Cult, are considered evil and will be lambasted!

“If the ground rules on the surface are wiped out, the world of Cultivators will completely fall apart and retrograde to the primitive dog-eat-doge jungles again. Too many people will suffer in a lawless, chaotic era!

“The lives of the ordinary people are not easy when the days are peaceful nor when we are at war, but in general, they still suffer more during wars. Just as the saying goes, it’s better to be a dog in a peaceful world than to be a human being in a war!

“When a plaza is falling, it is impossible for one pillar to hold it. Does Master Qi not know that he is doing the impossible? If he only considers his own interests, why would he bother to be elected as the leader, which entails all kinds of trouble but absolutely no gains? He has simply been doing whatever he can!”

Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar was greatly touched. He looked around, only to discover that the bailers that he used as bowls had been used up. He picked up the bailer that he had drunk from just now and wiped it carefully with his clothes before pouring wine into it until it was full. Delivering the bailer respectfully, he said, “Fellow Cultivator Qi, over the past few decades, although we have been respected as the Three Saints together by other Cultivators, we have always been on our separate paths. I was always a beggar, and you were the leader of all the Cultivators. We barely had any intersection!

“But after tonight, I hope we can be friends!”

Qi Zhongdao did not say anything. Hearing what Master Bitter Cicada had just said, and looking at the wine that Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar had given him, he accepted the wine with both hands and chugged it, his eyes suddenly turning red. Bubbling sounds were rumbling from his throat to his abdomen.

“That’s some delicious wine. Any more?”

His voice sounded like a rusted gear that was being lubricated by oil.

“Yes, of course!” Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar clapped his hands and laughed. “If we run out of wine, this beggar can always go back to the city and steal more!”

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

He simply attracted another few barrels of wine with spiritual energy. Too lazy to find a utensil anymore, he simply broke the seals, craned his neck, and poured the wine into his mouth. The golden liquid ran into his throat like a flooding river, but not a single drop of it spluttered out of his mouth. It was quite amazing!

“Hu!”

In the blink of an eye, a whole barrel of wine had been drunk up. He chuckled and filled half of the empty barrel with mud from the pool. Summoning his spiritual energy, he tossed the barrel into the darkness far away!

After a dull noise, the barrel was smashed by something. Then, all the mud in the barrel swooshed back. As if it had eyes, the mud was not coming at anybody else but fully focused on Ba Xiaoyu like pebbles.

After a shriek, Ba Xiaoyu soared up like black smoke to the top of the crooked tree. He shouted toward the darkness, “Hey, Yan Liren, I’m holding a feast here, entertaining my guests with delicious wine. What are you doing here?”

The bald dwarf swordsman slowly walked out from the darkness on the mud, but his shoes were not stained at all.

Holding his short sword, he replied casually without any expression, “I’m here to practice my sword.”

“Why don’t you practice in the city?” Ba Xiaoyu said.

“The city is too raucous,” Yan Liren said. “It’s quieter here.”

Master Bitter Cicada smiled. “Together with Fellow Cultivator Yan, the ‘Three Saints of Great Qian’ are all here. Master Spiritual Vulture is also a magnificent figure that according to the Cultivators will be added to the Three Saints shortly. Now that fate has arranged for us to meet here, why don’t you come here and have a drink, Fellow Cultivator Yan?”

Yan Liren did not bother to look at them when he shook his head. “I don’t drink. My sword is slower if I drink.”

Rolling his eyes, Ba Xiaoyu chuckled. “How do you know that your sword will be slower after you drink if you don’t drink wine? I have heard a certain art named ‘Drunk Sword’, which is an unparalleled technique whose power will be maximized only when the swordsman is dizzy because of drinking!”

“How come I never heard about it before?” Yan Liren said. “You just made it up, just like you told me last time that, if someone learns to hold a sword with his foot, he will be able to hold four swords with four limbs and thereby quadruple the power of a sword art.”

To everyone’s surprise, Ba Xiaoyu nodded and said, “You’re right. It’s true that I just made it up. But since you are so awesome, it is possible that you will invent such a technique named ‘Drunk Sword’ while you are sipping the wine. Wouldn’t it be wonderful?”

Yan Liren tilted his head and thought for a moment. Then, to everyone’s surprise, he nodded solemnly and said, “Fair enough. Since I’m so awesome, if there really is a ‘Drunk Sword’ in the world, I will certainly be the one who invents it!”

While saying that, he strutted toward the plank.

Right when everybody thought that he was going to step on the plank, Yan Liren suddenly vanished without a sign.

The next second, however, he appeared on the head of Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar who was standing on the top of the crooked tree, with four sharpest edges glittering around him!

Nobody saw how he leapt up and took off his shoes and socks. Nobody could tell where he found the four swords that he was wielding with both hands and both feet!

The four streaks of brilliance instantly multiplied into forty, four hundred, and four thousand streaks when they met the wind, enveloping Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar like crazily dancing snakes!

Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar screamed. He jumped backward in a hurry and put the tobacco pipe that was on his back into his mouth. Then, he spurted out a mouthful of smoke, which turned into vivid ermines that seemed to be alive and swallowed all the sword auras!

“What are you doing, Yan Liren?” Ba Xiaoyu craned his neck out of the colorful smoke and shouted angrily, “I was kind enough to invite you to the party. Is this how you reward hospitality?”

“Nothing.”

After launching four thousand sword auras instantly, the four swords disappeared without any trace as unpredictably as they appeared.

Yan Liren landed on the plank softly before he spoke to Ba Xiaoyu who was still hiding in the colorful smoke in midair. “I just wanted to tell you that the technique to control four swords with four limbs has been grasped by me. However, it cannot increase the power of a sword by four times as you claimed. The best it can do is double it.”

While speaking to him, Yan Liren picked up a barrel of wine without greeting anybody else. He broke the seal and poured half the barrel of wine into his mouth before he smacked his lips and mumbled, “Drunk Sword?”

Deep in thought, he poured the remaining half the barrel into his throat.

“You—”

Shouting angrily, Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar dashed out of the colorful smoke. It was not until then that everybody realized why he was reluctant to get out.

As it turned out, Yan Liren’s swords were so fast and sharp that, although he managed to evade the sword auras, his ragged clothes had been ripped apart. They were dangling from his body like broken clothes. He could not have looked more devastated.

“This wine is good. I feel like I’m onto something!” Yan Liren broke the seal of a second barrel of wine and said seriously, “If I grasp the ‘Drunk Sword’ one day, I will practice with you again, Brother Ba!”

Ba Xiaoyu shrank his neck and stopped talking. He snatched a barrel of wine, widened his eyes, and poured it into his mouth, too.

Yan Liren was still drinking while touching his sword.

Holding the wine barrel angrily, Ba Xiaoyu seemed to be planning to chew the container.

Holding a bailer of wine in his hand, Master Bitter Cicada was not in a hurry to drink it. Instead, he was savoring the thickness of the wine. The pity on his face was more or less dispersed by the fragrance of the wine.

Leaning against the crooked tree, Qi Zhongdao looked rather lonely when he gazed at the lively Roaring Tiger City that was ablaze with lights. Silently, he simply poured the barrels of wine into his mouth. His dark face was slowly glowing red, as if he were an iron block that was being heated from inside to outside.

Li Yao was sipping the wine slowly while he secretly observed the top experts in the world who all looked rather interesting. The depression in his heart was more or less dissolved by them.

The five of them were all super experts close to or beyond the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage. The delicious wine in the mortal world would not have intoxicated them even if there was a whole warehouse of it.

However, the wine that they were drinking was the secret medical wine brewed by Roaring Tiger Hall specifically for the three Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators of the Duan family. Besides the bear hearts, the leopard gallbladders, and the tiger bones, almost a hundred incredible Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures had been mixed into it, which made the wine nurturing and narcotic even for the powerful Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

Very soon, the dozens of barrels of wine were split up by the five of them.

Among them, Li Yao and Master Bitter Cicada drank the least. They basically shared only one barrel.

The other three, however, seemed to be having a competition with each other. They each poured more than ten barrels into their mouth.

‘Iron Saint’ Qi Zhongdao’s eyes were completely bloodshot.

Chapter 1440 - The Wine Tank Named World!

Huala!

A wine barrel was smashed into pieces next to the plank. The broken pieces rained upon Iron Saint Qi Zhongdao's face due to the counterforce.

"Why?" Qi Zhongdao sounded like a cluster of cold ice enveloped by scorching fire. He said painfully, "Why do the Cultivators from the main sects not understand the importance of the big picture at all? As long as a sect provides a tiny bit of food, millions of disaster victims will be spared, so they will not cause any trouble or be manipulated by Mother White Lotus!

"This is the best approach to prevent a ghoul army from appearing. It is certainly much better than slaying evil in a hurry after thousands of ghouls have shown up, isn't it?

"But—but I didn't know that their duplicity would be so appalling!

"Thankfully, Fellow Cultivator Ba, you revealed the schemes of Roaring Tiger Hall and the Black Devil Cult in time and gave us a reason to attack Roaring Tiger City. We have fortunately found a large batch of food that is enough for us to pass the crisis!

"What would've happened without Fellow Cultivator Ba's tremendous help today? Would they have felt satisfied when they saw millions of disaster victims die and turn into aggressive ghouls? I really don’t know if those people have a heart or a brain!

“Yes. We seem to have resolved the crisis with the assets confiscated from Roaring Tiger City. However, none of the heroes in the world are blind and can see through their blatant petty tricks easily! Through such approaches, they may gain slightly for now, but all the southeastern sects will be disheartened. The reputation of the main sects of central plateaus has been trampled on! How are we going to cooperate with the southeastern sects in the future when there is absolutely no trust between us?

“Shortsighted, penny wise, and pound foolish, yet they are still gloating. That is simply too idiotic!”

Qi Zhongdao cursed aloud with the boost of the wine until he was trembling. His eyes seemed to be on fire, and crimson magma was about to flow out.

He swallowed. His throat uttered a weird sound, as if his vocal cords were burningly hot. His voice shivered as he said, “The Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty seem to be in their heyday, but does anyone here, as a top expert in the world of Cultivators, not know the truth?

“The White Lotus Cult is savaging the southeast, the Heaven Battering Army is stomping on the northwest, and Ghost Qin is coveting from the north. One moment of carelessness, and we will be doomed forever!

“At such a dire time, all the main sects are still profiting at the expense of others, busy in conspiracies and internal conflicts. Even the rules on the surface are now being kicked away and utterly disregarded!

“If things go on like this, the country will no longer be a country! Even if the White Lotus Cult, the Heaven Battering Army, and Ghost Qin were just minor diseases in the beginning, if the Cultivators continue messing around like this, they will escalate into fatal illnesses soon. When the illnesses are too severe to be treated, it will be too late for regrets!

“If the Great Qian Dynasty does fall apart, there will be at least a hundred years of lawless bloody wars. All the sects and Cultivators will be involved in the turbulence. They will either live like a devil or die the most miserable death!

“If the Great Qian Dynasty is a high tower, the Cultivation sects and the Cultivators are already at the highest level of the tower. What benefits can we get by destroying the tower? Why can’t those people understand such simple logic?”

Clenching his fists, he was going to punch the crooked tree hard.

However, the half-dead, shaking crooked tree somehow reminded him of something. He simply turned the direction of his fists and slapped his thigh hard.

“Brother Qi, don’t be so anxious. What you said is the most correct and sensible logic.” Ba Xiaoyu was also half drunk. Belching, he said with a smile, “But correct and sensible as it is, you have been working as the leader of all the Cultivators for too long to understand what is on the mind of those below you.

“Yes. Food is just a minor issue right now. The price of food in other places is still low.

“However, what will happen when the influences of the natural disasters spread and when the harvest season comes without a harvest?

“Then, the food price will soar possibly by ten to twenty times. Famine will doubtlessly spread through the southeast area. The Cultivation sects in the southeast will be willing to pay any price for the precious food to consolidate their forces!

“If the food is delivered here and now to solve the imminent trouble in the southeast, what benefits can you get except for the gratitude of the poor folks?

“However, if you wait until the southeast is short of food in the harvest season, you will be able to sell your food at an astronomical price!

“Don’t be so hasty to argue. I’m not done yet. The great profits in the harvest season are just part of the reason. There’s another reason that is even more important. You can steal talents here!

“The southeast is a place where the spiritual energy in the world congregates. The ordinary folks here, nurtured by the natural spiritual energy, have a much higher chance of awakening their spiritual roots than the folk elsewhere do. They all make the best apprentices for training!

“Before, this place was dominated by the southeastern sects, and it was difficult for foreign sects to recruit disciples here!

“The natural disasters, however, give the sects from central plateaus a great opportunity to act in collusion and get what they want!

“No one wants to leave their home for an unfamiliar Cultivation sect far away and struggle like a dog for a slim chance of survival unless they absolutely have no choice.

“If you really deliver enough food here, allowing the disaster victims to survive the crisis peacefully, how many of them will willingly be recruited by you? Even if they do want to join a Cultivation sect, they can always choose a local force in the southeast!

“Therefore, even if there is food, it must not be fed to the disaster victims so easily. They must be half-starved first so that they will be fascinated by the thin porridge. Then, after realizing that there is plenty of food in the sects in the central plateaus and it is their only chance of survival, they will participate in the entrance tests hosted by the main sects.

“Only the strong, talented folks will be given enough food after they pass the entrance tests and sign the lifelong indenture!

“In such a way, the Cultivation sects will build up their own force with the elites of the southeast while diminishing the potential of the southeastern sects without offending anyone. Is it not the most ideal plan?”

“This is against the rules!” His eyes bloodshot, Qi Zhongdao declared angrily, “Recruiting disciples in the territory of other sects across the border is very likely to raise large-scale friction and riots. There will be major chaos. I never did such a thing when I was the leader of the Grand Mystery Sect!”

“It’s a pity that you are not the leader of the Grand Mystery Sect right now, Brother Qi. Forgive my bluntness, brother, but is there any essential difference between a ‘grand leader’ and a wife who is divorced from her husband?”

With a sharp tongue, Ba Xiaoyu grimaced. “Brother Qi, do you still think that we are not already in chaos? Rules only make sense if everyone respects them. If I am the only one who respects the rules while the rest don’t, won’t I be at a huge disadvantage? I’m no fool. Why would I respect the bullsh*t rules at all, even if the rules come from the well-respected leader of all the Cultivators? Such rules are utterly meaningless!”

As if struck by lightning, Qi Zhongdao was dazed for a long time. He suddenly laughed in amusement. “Excellent. Excellent. You couldn’t be more right, Fellow Cultivator Ba! I am no leader of all Cultivators at all; I am just a champion at anyone’s mercy!

“When the main sects were planning to threaten the emperor together, they remembered me as a ‘leader’ and respected me as much as they could. After the emperor and Wang Xi fell, did any of them regard me as a leader at all?

“When the main sects went to intimidate the Purple Pole Sword Sect and split its enormous interests, I became a high and mighty ‘leader’, supported by everyone again, and I had to fight a life-and-death battle with ‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren! After the interests were divided and the Dragon Spring Meeting ended, did I matter to any of them at all?

“Because of the natural disasters in the southeast, somebody was required to go through all the trouble summoning the forces in the world and moderating the messy relations among them. So, I became the leader again! Even during the attack on Roaring Tiger City, the ‘leader’ had to lead the charge. Then, if ‘Emperor Phoenix’ burst into fury in the future, blaming us for acting without permission, I would certainly be the one guilty of the crime!

“Haha. Leader, leader. Is there such a bullsh*t leader in the world?”

Heartbroken, Qi Zhongdao was roaring toward the sky.

“Fellow Cultivator Qi, you are drunk,” Master Bitter Cicada said.

“I am indeed drunk. I’ve been drunk for so long that I thought that I could change the world and everything by myself!” Qi Zhongdao sat down on the plank and sighed. “But why is this happening? Why can’t any of them look ahead into the future and consider the big picture and the interests of all the Cultivators?

“I always had high hopes for Master Dawn Moon and thought that he would be able to lead the world of Cultivators with his charisma as the manager of the largest sect in the world! He never disappointed me in the past. I don’t know when he became so unworthy!”

“Perhaps, it is not Fellow Cultivator Dawn Moon who has changed but this world.”

Tapping the empty wine barrel with his bailer, Master Bitter Cicada sighed.

“Perhaps, this world has already turned into an impenetrable wine barrel that is filled with the dirty, filthy wine brewed with fame, fortune, and power. Those who fall into the barrel are drifting up and down in the wine. How can they not become intoxicated?”

Chapter 1441 - A Road Up Ahead!

Li Yao could not help but observe, “I’m an uncivilized barbarian, and I don’t understand what you are implying. However, I do find your gloom and depression very peculiar. You are mostly at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage, and few people in the entire world are a match for you. If this world is truly an impenetrable, filthy wine tank that dissatisfies you, why don’t you just smash it into pieces?”

“Smash it into pieces?”

With a bitter smile, Qi Zhongdao mumbled while gazing at the intense darkness far away. “Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, you don’t understand. This wine tank is made of the hardest metal and does not have a single gap. It is also filled with the most narcotic and intoxicating liquor. How can you smash it when you are soaked inside the darkness without seeing any light?

“I know that you have come to the central plateaus from the Southland of Sorcerers for the pursuit of invincibility. However, hehe, what can you do even if you are truly invincible? You can only demonstrate your power in the dark, sunless wine tank, and it is going to be arduous to take one step out of the tank!”

“Leaving aside the Four Rapscallions and the emperor, the five of us are basically the five strongest Cultivators in the entire world,” Li Yao said solemnly. “Are we not able to carry out our will the way we want?”

Qi Zhongdao shook his hands and pointed his index finger at the lively Roaring Tiger City far away. “If you want fame and fortune and everyone’s reverence, or if you want to train in seclusion striving for the ultimate Divinity Transformation Stage, you will of course be able to fulfil your desires. Everybody will respect you and cater to your every need. You will feel that you are on top of the world!

“However, if you want to change the world, does the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage mean anything at all? You are just another struggling bug inside the giant wine tank!

“It’s true that the five of us have the highest Cultivation in the entire world. General Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators are absolutely no match for us. But so what? There are dozens of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and hundreds of Core Formation Stage Cultivators inside Roaring Tiger City right now. Even if the five of us join our hands, can we suppress them and force them to listen to our commands obediently and offer all the food and resources?

“Even if the five of us were ten times stronger than we are now and boasted the ability to suppress and crush them, so what? The detailed affairs have to be accomplished by someone specific. So, they will still have a chance to meddle. The substitutes may be dutiful at first, but after three days, they will be as corrupted at their predecessors!

“Besides, who can do such a thing as butcher dozens of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and hundreds of Core Formation Stage Cultivators in a row? Wouldn’t they be the greatest evil in the world and an enemy for all the Cultivators in the world? By then, the entire world will be in turbulence. Is it any good?”

Qi Zhongdao’s sigh silenced the few top experts.

“I did not know that you had such keen eyes, Fellow Cultivator Qi,” Master Bitter Cicada observed.

“My eyes are always keen.” Pointing at the front, half drunk, Qi Zhongdao said, “But before, I was always reluctant to look at everything carefully. Today, I have to admit that there is no road ahead of us!”

The few Cultivators at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage looked at where he was pointing at.

There was nothing but the mud brought there by the flood between the gloomy sky and earth. It looked like a boundless swamp without any path on it.

Li Yao, Qi Zhongdao, Yan Liren, Master Bitter Cicada, and Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar all stared at the roadless swamp in a daze.

Boom! Crack!

Another peal of thunder rumbled in the sky. Dozens of lightning bolts lunged down. Fierce wind was blowing again, forecasting yet another storm.

“Look over there!”

With the illumination of the lightning, the five of them were keen enough to notice a few wriggling black spots on the horizon deep inside the mud where the moors were next to each other.

Master Bitter Cicada tosses his pearls where the black spots were wriggling. The pearls released gentle brilliance in midair. Both like a lighthouse and like a torch, they illuminated everything down there!

The black spots turned out to be three disaster victims!

Everybody observed carefully, only to discover that the three disaster victims had paved a door on the mud to increase their buoyancy in the mud.

On the door was a white-haired lady and a pregnant middle-aged woman. The old lady was as thin as a skeleton and about to die, and the middle-aged woman was appallingly slim, too, as if her flesh and blood had all been absorbed into her round stomach!

Even so, the two of them were still jabbing the mud crazily with two bamboo poles to maintain their balance and control the direction.

Behind the door, in the mud that had already reached his chest, there was a thick, ugly man who was gritting his teeth to push the door forward with all his strength, while they budged slowly toward Roaring Tiger City.

They must have seen the light in Roaring Tiger City and knew that there was a chance of survival there. So, they had decided to risk traversing through the swamp that even the Cultivators felt to be roadless without thinking too much.

Hearing the thunder and seeing the lightning, the three disaster victims knew that a storm was drawing near. Their faces were all extremely pale.

If a storm indeed came, they would be absolutely hopeless in the pouring rain with their tiny door!

There was no telling what the pregnant woman told the muscular man, but the muscular bellowed and pushed the door even harder, his hair standing up. He tried to push the door somewhere safe before the storm arrived.

The old lady and the middle-aged woman were waving their poles much faster than before, too, until the poles suddenly cracked in the mud!

It was an impossible mission.

But the three of them seemed utterly unaware of that. They were still pushing, digging, and rowing with all their strength, as if they had turned into three senseless machines. Even the shining pearls in midair did not trigger any reaction from them.

The scene turned the five Cultivators at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage into statues.

Qi Zhongdao was the most dumbfounded one of all. He was blushing in embarrassment.

“Help them!”

As if waking up from a dream, Master Bitter Cicada rose up and dashed toward the three disaster victims.

But he was still one step slower. Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar was faster than him and had already rushed to the horizon.

“Look, Fellow Cultivator Qi!” Seeing that Ba Xiaoyu and Master Bitter Cicada were both on the move, Li Yao took a deep breath in relief. He could not help but smile at Qi Zhongdao. “If there isn’t a road, we will simply fly over. We are Cultivators!”

…

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

After a few thunderous explosions, clusters of pale smoke were blossoming like white lotuses below East Peace County.

After the white lotuses gradually dispersed to the sky into what appeared to be giant trees with enormous crowns, thousands of translucent human-shaped shadows appeared without a sound right below the crown.

They were an army of ghouls!

The army of ghouls was different from the wandering ghosts that Li Yao had come across on his way to East Peace County. Despite their aggressiveness, they were not raging and screaming at all. Instead, they were simply staring at the city towers coldly and moodily. Whoever looked at them would feel that their hair was standing, and their spine would go numb!

They were like the tough soldiers who had survived a hundred battles, while the wandering ghosts were like untrained mobs.

They were not random ghosts but the White Lotus ghoul army built and trained by ‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu!

“The White Lotus ghoul army is fighting a bloody battle for real!” Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar spat on the flying boat.

Half a month had already passed since Roaring Tiger City was taken down.

Li Yao, Qi Zhongdao, Yan Liren, Master Bitter Cicada, and Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar, the five super experts, finally arrived at East Peace County, one of the three most prosperous cities of the Great Qian Dynasty, together with the main troop!

This was also an important part in Li Yao’s observation report.

Judging from his current information, the White Lotus ghoul army was a rather suitable target of cooperation. Li Yao had hoped to find a chance to communicate with Mother White Lotus and preferably make her acquaintance.

But his journey there was not very smooth.

The reinforcing sects from the central plateaus dawdled in Roaring Tiger City for five days to recruit new disciples—or rather, cannon fodder—and to carve up the resources left by the Roaring Tiger Hall and the Black Devil Cult before they finally set off for East Peace County unhurriedly.

On their way, when they ran into the disaster victims or the sects that suffered heavy losses in the natural disasters, they always stopped and ‘offered help’ tirelessly. As for exactly what they were up to in secret, Li Yao was not interested in finding out at all.

Just like that, they loitered, until three days ago, when the last thing that they wanted to hear came over from East Peace County. A large ghoul army was already bodacious enough to unleash the ghostly smoke to block the sunlight so that they could appear below East Peace County during the day. Also, their number was growing larger and larger. They showed no sign of dispersing. Instead, they looked like a well-trained, obedient army, as they divided themselves into different groups and manipulated the dead bodies to dig burrows as their camps. They had even carried hundreds of decaying coffins to East Peace County from nobody knew where. There was no telling what was inside the coffins, either.

All the signs indicated that Mother White Lotus had gathered enough ghouls to launch an assault on East Peace County!

The reinforcements from the central plateaus finally grew anxious. They marched toward East Peace County at full speed.

However, ‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu was certainly not someone easy to deal with, considering that she had been stirring trouble in the southeast for decades. Because of the Cultivators’ fuss in Roaring Tiger City, their location and route had long been determined by their enemy, and their enemy had arranged for two troops of ghouls to block them on their way.

Although the troops of ghouls were crushed in the end, the haunting things still slowly stalled their march.

After they arrived at East Peace County, the White Lotus ghoul army had already launched two waves of attacks.

Broken, filthy dead bodies were lying everywhere below East Peace County.

There were also the miserable screams when the aggressive ghouls were perishing, and the smell of flesh being burnt hung in the air!

Chapter 1442 - Hideousness of the Ghouls!

The swarm of ghouls looked like an ocean covered in white lotuses.

Below the dim sky, at the front of the boundless army, stood countless translucent remaining souls that looked like a mist when observed from a distance.

The remaining souls mostly belonged to the folks who died miserably in the natural disasters.

When they died in hatred, their souls would haunt the world after their death. Without the timely appeasement of the experience monks such as Master Bitter Cicada, they would take shape under the instigation of Mother White Lotus. Driven by their remorse and hatred, they were the vanguards and cannon fodder of the greatest quantity in the army of ghouls.

They were different shades. Those with the feeblest waves looked like steam popping up from boiled kettles. Their color was so thin that they could barely be recognized as humans.

Some of them were deeper in color and more solid, and their appearances when they were alive could be made out. Most of them were slender disaster victims when pales faces. Having been soaked in the flood for too long, the victims were generally stinky and hideous, with their guts flowing out, before their death. Such features had been reflected vividly on their remaining souls, too!

A lot of the remaining souls were in a daze. Due to the loss of memories, they did not understand what was going on.

Some of the remaining souls did not know that they were dead. They were still looking at East Peace County earnestly.

There was no telling whether they were attacking East Peace County because they hated the Cultivators in East Peace County or because they intended to take shelter in East Peace County, motivated by their survival instincts.

The remaining souls of the ordinary people were highly unstable and susceptible to all kinds of interference. The lone ghosts were likely to vanish into nothingness after one moment of carelessness.

Therefore, many people stated that the real men in ancient times were never scared of lone ghosts because they could blow away the remaining souls with the vigor inside their body.

However, things would be different when the tiny remaining souls congregated into an overwhelming army where everybody was supporting each other. There would be a certain protective shield around all of them.

It could be compared to ice, which would melt very quickly if there was only a tiny cluster of it. However, if there was a whole warehouse of ice that was pressed together without the slightest gap, it would not thaw after ten days.

Moreover, Li Yao had also noticed that altars of dry bones had been established a fixed distance apart in the army of ghouls. Intense white smoke was popping up from the altars and turning into blossoming lotus flowers in the air, bathing all the remaining souls in the radiance of the white lotus.

The altars seemed to be some sort of magical equipment to stabilize the magnetic fields and to prevent the souls from dispersing.

The origins of the altars were probably a piece of military magical equipment of the Pangu civilization to protect souls!

The souls of thousands of ordinary people were already emitting suffocating intimidation under the protection of the white lotuses.

It was needless to mention the seasoned ghosts that were as vivid as living people behind the vanguards.

Although the seasoned ghosts were fewer in number, they were the main force of the army of ghouls. They originated from the particularly hateful homeless peasants, the folks whose souls were cleansed and polished by spiritual energy because they swallowed tremendous Jade Crystal Pellets before their death, or the lucky dogs among the regular remaining souls that were not battered during the previous battles but were fortunate enough to swallow the broken pieces of other remaining souls when they dispersed and grew stronger!

Some of the seasoned ghosts had even been transformed from Cultivators. They were authentic spectral Cultivators.

In the world of ancient Cultivators, there was neither a government nor law to organize everything. The Cultivators were certainly not an intact whole.

The conflicts among the Cultivators were much more severe than the conflicts between the Cultivators and the ordinary people. Too many Cultivators had been killed miserably in their bloody competitions. In the worse cases, some sects were even entirely wiped out by the evil forces such as the Black Devil Cult.

After such Cultivators died, their souls lingered in the world, but they were not tolerated by the other Cultivators, and they knew nothing about the techniques of the spectral Cultivators to preserve and strengthen themselves.

What choice did they have but to change sides and join Mother White Lotus?

It was also one of the most important reasons that the White Lotus Cult had never been uprooted in the past decades.

The seasoned ghosts looked much more daunting than the rookies. Their souls were highly condensed. At first glance, they were no different from living people except for their paleness and lack of vigor. Only through careful observation could one notice the black gas that was slowly spreading out from their body.

Most of the seasoned ghosts had mastered the techniques of remote control. They were wearing robes and armors.

The robes and armor were naturally enchanted by Mother White Lotus and carved with rune arrays to stabilize the magnetic field so that their souls would be steadier and less likely to crumble.

The recently deceased souls were the vanguards and cannon fodder, and the seasoned ghosts were the main force. On the two flanks of the army were hordes of skeleton soldiers.

Other than weird-shaped human skeletons, there were also the skeletons of pigs, dogs, bulls, and goats. There were even super skeleton monsters that were more than ten meters tall, piled up with all kinds of bones that were emitting a silver glow. They should be the large siege machines that the army of ghouls had prepared for the battle!

Sealing the soul into a skeleton and turning it into a skeleton soldier was also one method of ‘possession’. There were both advantages and disadvantages.

One advantage was that the soul, protected by the skeleton, would be less likely to be crushed. Also, it was more convenient for the skeletons to hold heavy blades and attack the enemy’s body of flesh and blood. If the soul was particularly powerful, it could even control dozens of skeletons or melt into the enormous skeleton of a ferocious animal in order to produce a unique, super skeleton soldier, which would be even more overwhelming.

In the ancient times when there were no super alloys to create artificial bodies, the natural, unpolluted skeletons would be the most primitive artificial bodies.

But the disadvantages were obvious, too.

Without muscles, nerves, and veins, the movement of the skeleton soldiers was slow and rigid. One moment of carelessness, and their joints might slip off or break apart, resulting in the skeleton soldiers collapsing to the ground, unable to move anymore.

Except for the few tough soldiers who had carved rune arrays on the skeletons to increase their dexterity and damage, most of the skeleton soldiers were only one-time attritions.

Most importantly of all, skeletons could not fly. They had to creep over to the enemy on the ground dutifully, which meant that they would be deprived of agility, the greatest advantage of the ghosts.

Skeletons were both like armor or a shell, with apparent advantages and disadvantages. Therefore, it was impossible to stuff all the ghosts into skeletons. They could only be regarded as an important unit but could not carry out all missions by themselves.

“Wu…”

A trumpet was echoing in a mind-stirring way deep inside the army of ghouls.

Huala! Huala! Huala!

The thousands of coffins at the end of the battle formation suddenly broke apart at the same time, from which thousands of zombies, whose faces were blue and whose skin had grown tiny villus, jumped out.

Most of the zombies were glittering in the color of copper, but some of them were shimmering in silver brightness. A few of them were even glowing in dazzling golden brilliance, as if they were the high and mighty nobles in the army of ghouls.

Zombies were very interesting things. They were the few beings that were extremely rare in the modern Cultivation civilization but quite common in the world of ancient Cultivators.

The very existence of zombies was illogical. Since the breath and heartbeat of a person would stop after they died, and the mitochondria inside the cells would cease absorbing and releasing energy, why would the zombies not decay, and why were they so strong?

It was not until Li Yao investigated in the Ancient Sages Sector in person and compared the techniques to raise corpses in this world to theories among the modern Cultivators that Li Yao finally understood the mysteries.

By Li Yao’s estimation, the so-called ‘zombies’ should be caused by certain special microorganisms or parasites that crawled into the Cultivators’ bodies, which were as tough as iron because of their training.

The special microorganisms regard the corpses as their paradise. They conducted mysterious modifications on the corpses, which resulted in the incredible features on the outside.

Many tales stated that the zombies had different hair colors. Some were green, and some could be white. It was a very common phenomenon when microorganisms and bacteria were cultured.

Therefore, the practice of ‘raising corpses’ was just the ancient people’s skillful manipulation of special microorganisms. It was essentially the same as making yogurt with bacteria.

After a body was successfully refined, a ghost would be able to infiltrate and control it, turning it into a zombie that could move freely and exchange spiritual energy with the outside world. Their power, agility, and defense were a hundred times better than the ordinary skeleton soldiers’.

As for the microorganisms inside the zombies, they did not have any intelligence at all. Therefore, there would be no conflict between them and the ghosts that entered the bodies.

The recently deceased ghosts, the seasoned ghosts, the skeleton soldiers, and the zombie commanders, with their graveness, raised gloomy, ghastly auras that were soaring to the sky. The sky was occupied by dark clouds and looked like a black ocean. There was no sign of sunshine.

In the middle, toward the rear, of the army, there was also an enormous caravan piled up with countless bones that looked like a mobile palace of bones. Coldness that felt like the edge of a blade was emanating vaguely, and infinite desperation was spreading. It seemed to be where ‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu was commanding from.

Although they clearly knew that ‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu was there, it was impossible for Li Yao, Yan Liren, Qi Zhongdao, Ba Xiaoyu, and Master Bitter Cicada to charge forward and cut off her head in the middle of a million ghouls.

Besides, she did not have a head to be cut off at all. If anything went wrong, she could turn into smoke and run away easily.

Therefore, the hunting team led by Qi Zhongdao could only wait on the flying boat patiently for a better opportunity.

Standing next to the rail, Li Yao moved his eyes from the army of ghouls to East Peace County, the greatest city in the southeast, below his feet.

The prosperous city—described as a city without night—was mired in fear and desperation.

East Peace County was dozens of times larger than Roaring Tiger City. The city wall was thrice as high, too. It was bordered the ocean in two sides and with a mountain in one side. The one side that was open to the land had been fully packed with ditches, pits, and barricades. There were also hundreds of giant pillars dozens of meters tall that were engraved with golden, shining runes. Standing below the city towers silently, they constituted an indestructible defense array!

Chapter 1443 - Incoming Ghost Army!

It was the famous ‘Ocean Suppressing Array’ in the world of Cultivators.

It was said that there was a mother lode below East Peace County that extended for thousands of kilometers into the depths of the ocean, like a dragon king that suppressed the ocean. That was why the ocean near East Peace County was so peaceful that it was a natural port.

The thirty-three sects located in East Peace County worked together to collect tremendous crystals from under the ocean and hunt the dragon-type demon beasts in the ocean. Then, their cores, bones, and blood, blended with copper, silver, and gold, were melted into liquids and poured on the city wall of East Peace County. Once the runes were carved into it, the array was established!

Now that the Ocean Suppressing Array was fully activated, an enormous bluish curtain of light had fallen upon the whole of East Peace County, which seemed to be covered in a translucent, upside-down bowl.

The bluish waves were surging like tides in deafening noises. The entire city seemed to have been moved to the bottom of the ocean!

It was the best barrier to block all the ghosts.

Even so, the Cultivators of the thirty-three Cultivation sects in the city and the Cultivators from the other sects who were seeking refuge in East Peace County from elsewhere were still solemn and did not dare relax.

The previous two waves of attack had proven that the Ocean Suppressing Array alone was not enough to withstand the scourge of thousands of ghosts.

Also, it was just Mother White Lotus' reconnaissance. The real main face had not been deployed yet.

Most of the southeastern Cultivators had gathered on the city towers and the city wall, ready to have one last battle with the army of ghouls.

The city was where their sects were headquartered. All their training resources were stored there and could not be abandoned. They already had no escape.

Other than the Cultivators, there were also countless ordinary people in East Peace County.

They were either the vassal families affiliated with the Cultivation sects, the tenants and dealers at the service of the Cultivation sects, or the refugees who had sought shelter after the natural disasters.

The Cultivators of East Peace County turned out to be smarter than the Cultivators of Roaring Tiger City. They knew that if the disaster victims were kept out of the city, they would certainly turn into powerful ghosts because of their hatred after they died of hunger or cold while staring at the closed gate. Then, Mother White Lotus would have even more soldiers at her disposal. It would be a great trouble.

Also, the thirty-three sects qualified to develop in East Peace City were higher up the food chain of the southeastern sects in the first place. The most profitable trades and fields in the southeast were in their hands. There was no need for them to resort to the clandestine approaches such as the Black Devil Cult. Therefore, they had few secrets that they would rather nobody found out.

So, before the army of ghouls arrived, they had opened the city gate and allowed as many disaster victims to go into the city as possible. As a result, the population of East Peace County had surpassed one million!

East Peace County was certainly not a remote town. There was already an enormous military camp in the city, in which troops loyal to the court were stationed.

At that moment, the thirty-three sects had also opened their headquarters and offered tremendous military assets to arm the relatively healthy men among the disaster victims and the ordinary people in the city. The militias were asked to listen to the command of the generals of the court.

“Hooo!”

The sky of the city was the most important battlefield, which was defended by almost a thousand Cultivators who were riding their flying swords, cranes, falcons, or simply the clouds. Also, the Cultivators from the central plateaus who had come for reinforcements also lined up their flying boats. Therefore, they were not scared that the army of ghouls would attack from the sky!

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Dull thunder was echoing in the clouds. Tides were rising on the ocean in the east. The spiritual waves in the air suddenly turned chaotic.

The twisting trumpets deep inside the army of ghouls were getting short and powerful. Like coffin nails, the noises were being bashed into the deepest part of everyone’s soul!

As the hundreds of white lotuses condensed by smoke slowly floated forward, the overwhelming army of ghouls marched together and approached East Peace County like a weird tide!

On and below the city towers, the Cultivators were shouting to the temporary troops made of ordinary folks. “The army of ghouls is extremely brutal. If the city is taken, everybody will be killed. Also, you will not have peace even after you die. You will be refined into ignorant ghost soldiers and cursed forever!

“The Thunder Striking Legion of the court is reinforcing us as fast as possible. The vanguards have already risked breaking into the city. The main force will arrive in no time!

“The only way to survive is to defend the city until the troops of the court come to our aid!

“The ghosts seem tricky to deal with, but they are not as scary as they appear. Every man who has enough valor and hot blood will be able to blow the ghosts apart!”

They were not exaggerating.

The competition between humans and ghosts was in fact a war of interference and anti-interference between different waves.

If the waves of the living people were weak, they would be easily affected by the ghosts. They would be depressed or even possessed by the enemy, and they would be gone forever.

But if the waves of the living people were more powerful, all the ghosts would be crushed!

Even if the ordinary people did not know how to train themselves, as long as they were healthy, furious, and fearless, their waves would naturally grow strong, and it would be more difficult for them to be affected by the ghosts.

If a troop of thousands of ruthless soldiers gathered, their waves would overlap and resonate. Their killing intent would soar and stop the evil ghosts from approaching.

The army stationed in East Peace County was one of the best troops, second only to the imperial guards that protected the capital city. Naturally, they had a fearless, intimidating vibe around them. Rumbling at the same time, they more or less dispersed the sense of death that was enveloping the city, showing everyone a glimpse of hope.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Right then, weird explosions echoed from the flanks of the army of ghouls.

As it turned out, the skeleton monsters larger than elephants, which were piled up with dry bones, changed their shape at some point into ballistae and threw out almost a hundred enormous skulls instantly!

The skulls did not belong to human beings but demon beasts that were countless times bigger than human beings. Like giant rocks, they crashed into the Ocean Suppressing Array brutally in ear-splitting noises after drawing short arcs.

Shua!

The bluish colors flashed on the Ocean Suppressing Array. As if hundreds of tides were rolling, the skulls were all smashed into pieces!

Hu!

The skulls which had been blown into smithereens, however, spurted out tremendous greenish, ghostly fire. It seemed to be highly sticky because it flowed on the Ocean Suppressing Array and burned, consuming the power of the array.

The army of ghouls, who had been containing themselves, finally unleashed all their fury, hatred, brutality, and hideousness!

A cold wind was blowing, and the creepy screams congregated into an ocean of fear on which the ghosts were drifting toward East Peace County!

To maintain the integrity of their waves and pheromones, the ghosts were not floating at a very high speed. They were only slightly faster than running living people.

However, they were not bound by gravity, and ground was not the only route of their attack. Instead, they dispersed in various directions from the very beginning and launched a three-dimensional attack from both the air and the ground!

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

The recently deceased ghosts that were marching at the front soon crashed into the blue barrier of the Ocean Suppressing Array. Like sparrows that had run into an electrical net, they were immediately stuck to it. Tremendous bluish electric arcs pierced through their bodies and instantly ionized them into nothingness!

However, they did leave feeble ripples on the Ocean Suppressing Array with the last strength of their life.

When more and more recently deceased ghosts were marching forward like moths darting at the fire, and the feeble ripples were getting more and more dense, the ripples finally evolved into tiny gaps!

The recently deceased ghosts and the cunning seasoned ghosts behind them immediately charged into the Ocean Suppressing Array through the gaps!

The defenders had long been prepared for this.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Arrows were raining down from the city towers.

None of the arrows had a head. The front end of the shafts were sloppy bags.

Some of the bags were bloodstained, full of stimulating stink of blood. Some had suspicious yellow and brown colors with a vile stench. Some of them were covered in a layer of black ointment with a weird fragrance.

What was odd that, when the headless arrows pierced through the ‘bodies’ of the incoming ghosts, the result was even more unbelievable than when the sharp arrows with real heads piercing through the bodies of soldiers. It was not unusual for a tiny arrow to cause a hole the size of a bowl.

The arrows covered in black ointment, on the other hand, exploded the moment they touched the army of ghouls. Red flowers blossomed on the battlefield, damaging all the ghosts nearby!

Inside the bags was actually the blood of black dogs, the excrement of humans and animals, and women’s menses.

According to the ancient people, such filthy, dirty, and foul items could break all evil.

According to the modern people, the items secreted by the bodies of living creatures boasted immense vigor and vitality that could seriously affect and even sabotage the waves that constituted the ghosts.

It was especially so for the menses, which were a symbol of the reproduction of life. It boasted the most vigor and vitality of all. Even a seasoned ghost would have to run away in fear should they run into it, or they would be disrupted and even obliterated!

As for the arrows covered in black ointment, they had been crafted by the Cultivation sects according to the secret techniques. Their attacks targeted the ghosts, too.

The result of the shooting arrows was more than satisfactory. The crossfire from the sky and the ground drove away all the remaining souls and the seasoned ghosts.

It was a pity that one could only have a finite number of feces every day. There was a limited stock of excrement in the city.

As for the women’s menses, that was an even scarcer resource. Who would preserve it if they did not know that an army of ghouls would be attacking the city soon? Moreover, it could not be preserved for long even if they wanted to!

The marvelous weapons that the ordinary people used against the ghosts were soon running out of ammunition.

The bizarre-shaped skeleton soldiers on the flanks of the army of ghouls, on the other hand, waved their rusted hoes and sabers and started running in a rigid and weird pace!

Chapter 1444 - Compassion!

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

The thousands of skeleton soldiers were running faster and faster. Their bones were rubbing in weird shrieks that congregated into an ocean of creepy sounds.

The bone altars and ballistae that were more than ten meters tall were also slowly moving toward the city wall, surrounded by the skeleton soldiers.

The skeleton soldiers were followed by decaying, hideous zombies, which would make anyone who saw them have nightmares.

The copper, silver, and golden zombies that were specially refined were still protecting the palace at the center of the army of ghouls while observing the tiny changes in the battle coldly.

While the Ocean Suppressing Array was fully functioning, the entire East Peace City was slightly shivering.

The bluish electric arcs that were spurting out ripped more and more souls, skeletons, and zombies into shreds.

However, the perishing ghosts significantly affected the normal functioning of the Ocean Suppressing Array, too.

As more and more broken pieces floated in the air, the ripples on the array became more intense, and it was getting ever more lackluster.

Streams of remaining souls, skeletons, and zombies broke into the defense array.

In many places, the Ocean Suppressing Array was even entangled with the white mist that was released by the army of ghouls. They were attacking, swallowing, and melting each other, leaving holes that did not disperse after a long time.

The enormous ballistae in the army of ghouls were pushing forward to East Peace County exactly through the holes.

“Today is when we slay the devils!”

“All your family are inside the city. Do you want them to become the people below the city?”

“Go, go! Jade Emerald Tower, East River Union, Ocean Sand Sect, and nine other sects have issued a bounty together. Those who fight bravely will be admitted as external disciples! The old external disciples will be upgraded into inner disciples! The inner disciples will the awarded with Cultivation arts, magical equipment, and crystals according to their credit!”

None of the city defenders were supposed to take the blow passively on the towers. Under such a methodology, even the toughest city could not last three days.

The elite soldiers in the city had to be deployed to attack actively in order to demolish the important facilities on the enemy’s side and to strike the enemy’s morale!

Before the army of ghouls arrived, the main city gate of East Peace County was slowly opened. The elite cavalry of the court in the city rushed out like a black tornado, followed by the low-level disciples of the main sects.

As for the high-level Cultivators, they naturally turned into streaks of brightness and swooped upon the ghosts that were flying in the sky!

The elite soldiers of the court had a bloody air of killing around them after all the battles they went through. When their killing intent gathered and got enhanced by the Cultivators, it evolved into red mist that was almost real.

Wherever the mist went, the ghosts would squeak as if they had touched magma, with white smoke popping up. The more heavily wounded ones vanished into the air on the spot, and the lightly wounded ones were half burnt and reduced into twisting ripples.

There was no need to mention the Cultivators. The magical equipment that they launched emanated colorful brilliance, which darted toward the center of the army of ghouls like the sharpest arrow. Almost no ghost could survive one attack from them!

Huala! Huala! Huala!

The army marched forward unstoppably and soon destroyed the few altars and ballistae that had broken into the Ocean Suppressing Array.

After the altars collapsed, the white mist above the ghosts' heads immediately disappeared. Without the protection of the white mist, many recently deceased ghosts were unable to maintain their form and dispersed on the spot. Even the seasoned ghosts were hesitating to move forward anymore, as if they had lost their armor.

At first glance, the army of ghouls crumbled in the first clash. They were absolutely no match for the Cultivators and the court's army.

However, if one observed more carefully, one would discover that, as time went by, while more and more ghosts were killed by the Cultivators' magical equipment, they had wasted a lot of magical equipment and made the weapons lose all their colors. The magical equipment was all entangled by the gray and black air currents that looked like snakes.

The Cultivators, who seemed to be on a killing spree, grew slower and slower. Their faces darkened, and their eyes lost their charm. Weird countenance was appearing on their faces without them knowing.

Although he was standing on the flying boat, Li Yao could feel that the battlefield below was a pot of simmering venom, from which lethal gas was bubbling up.

As long as the Cultivators were in the battlefield, no matter how high their Cultivation was, how determined they were, and how powerful their magical equipment was, it was inevitable that they would be affected, polluted, and corrupted by the remaining souls. Even if they did secure a victory in the end, they would suffer as many losses as their gains.

That was the dreadfulness of the army of ghouls. It was also why most of the Cultivators were unwilling to have a head-on clash with an army of ghosts unless they absolutely had to.

Suddenly, a Cultivator from a local sect in the southeast, after slashing more than ten skeleton soldiers with a dominatingly huge saber and blowing dozens of remaining souls into smithereens with a grenade, suddenly widened his eyes, and his face turned pale. Interconnected black stripes appeared on his face as if an enormous spider had crawled onto him. He tossed his saber aside and grabbed his own neck before rolling and screaming on the ground!

One or more seasoned ghosts must have crept into his brain when he was unprepared and launched a deadly soul attack on him!

The fall of the southeastern Cultivator seemed to be a signal. Harassed by more and more seasoned ghosts, other Cultivators were also waving, struggling, and losing consciousness uncannily!

Some of them were belching intense black gas from their mouths, eyes, and ears after struggling in pain for a moment. Squeaky noises could be vaguely heard from the black gas, too. It was the seasoned ghosts that they had driven out from their brains. Having failed to possess the body, the seasoned ghosts were greatly weakened. The Cultivators did not even need to lay their weapons on them, and they would be ripped apart by the overwhelming killing intent on the battlefield by themselves.

But some of the low-level Cultivators, whose souls were relatively weak or were just wounded, ended up being grave puppets after trembling violently for a moment. Silently, they picked up their weapons and attacked their comrades!

Those people were either successfully possessed by the seasoned ghosts or beguiled into thinking that the comrades next to them were filthy zombies because the ghosts affected their aural, optical, and olfactory nerves.

The previously unstoppable Cultivators and army of the court were immediately thrown into chaos.

The elites of the army of ghouls, namely the copper zombies, silver zombies, and golden zombies created via special microorganisms, and the super skeleton soldiers made of the bones of rare animals with evil runes carved on them finally marched out!

The combat ability of the elites was equal to the high level of the Refinement Stage and even the Building Foundation Stage. Their movement was extremely agile and fast. There was not the slightest rigidness typical of regular zombies and skeletons at all. They rushed toward East Peace County in the blink of an eye!

The few high-level Cultivators in East Peace County all rushed out, too, and had a head-on clash with the army of ghouls. The battle between the living and the undead reached its climax.

“Now’s the time!”

In the sky, noticing the loosening of the battle formation of the army of ghouls, a flying boat slowly withdrew from the battlefield, took a big detour on the right side of the battlefield, and dashed right toward the rear of the enemy’s formation.

Before the enemy discovered what was going on, five streaks of brightness had already jumped out of the boat and darted toward the palace of corpses at the center of the army of ghouls like five shooting stars!

“Mother White Lotus must be right inside the palace. As long as the monster is killed, the riot of ghosts will be suppressed in no time!

“Be extra careful, fellow Cultivators, and do no waste any time on the ghosts nearby. If we are corrupted by the souls and our spiritual energy does not circulate well, it is possible that we will be trapped by the army. Even if we do manage to survive in the end, our Cultivation will certainly plummet!

“Mother White Lotus is unpredictable and does not have a fixed body, which adds to the difficulty of capturing and executing her. Please pay special attention, everyone!”

Naturally, the five streaks of brightness belonged to Li Yao, Yan Liren, Qi Zhongdao, Ba Xiaoyu, and Master Bitter Cicada, the five super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

Only the five of them had a chance of slaying Mother White Lotus, who was well protected by the thousands of ghosts.

However, Qi Zhongdao, who wanted Mother White Lotus dead more than anything else, did not know that Li Yao actually had other intentions. He was thinking of sparing Mother White Lotus and then following her to her nest.

The war between the living and the dead was a sheer tragedy. The living had every right to pursue survival, but was the vengeance of the dead not justified at all?

Even if Mother White Lotus was suppressed, as long as the world remained an impenetrable wine barrel, then before long, countless restless souls would pop up again, and a new ‘Mother Red Lotus’, ‘Mother Black Lotus’, or ‘Mother Green Lotus’ would appear among them!

Li Yao secretly made up his mind that he would break the wine barrel in his own way and end the unceasing tragedy!

Hardly had the five streaks of brightness rushed into the army of ghouls when they were enveloped by the ubiquitous white mist.

Li Yao clearly sensed the interference of the ghosts.

He felt that countless memory pieces were piercing through his brain, making him share countless episodes of broken lives in the moment.

In a trance, he seemed to be a disaster victim who was struggling in the middle of rushing torrents while watching his home to be swallowed by the flood.

The next second, he became a patient who was burnt by the febrile typhoon and left unattended on the road, slowly dying in excruciating pain as if thousands of ants were gnawing at his heart.

In the third second, he turned into a hungry disaster victim whose stomach was filled up by weeds and bark, shaking and falling on the ground while staring at the splendid gate of a Cultivation sect.

Flood, fire, the scorching sun, and ferocious monsters!

Countless gory pictures were gliding in front of his eyes one by one.

Moans, screams, begs, curses, and fights!

Countless sounds were piercing through his ears.

Pain, regret, hope, desperation, detestation!

All the negative emotions were crawling inside his brain like venomous spiders!

Chapter 1445 - Appearance of White Lotus!

They were the most unforgettable memories that the folks and Cultivators had before their death.

At that moment, they were turning Li Yao's brain upside down like sharp blades.

Even though there was an entity as weird as the mental devil inside Li Yao's brain, which could absorb tremendous negative emotions crazily, the negative emotions were still flooding in faster than they were processed!

After all, there were a million ghosts there. The hatred of a million people was definitely a world-blighting power!

When they were harassed by the unrested souls, the Cultivators' spiritual energy was jammed, and their telepathic thoughts were disrupted. Even if they were at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage, they were still greatly affected.

Li Yao had been used to the blow of negative emotions and was in better shape. The other few Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were equally solemn when they were faced with the vague black gas floating around them, which was trying to find a gap and wriggle into their bodies like thousands of almost transparent bugs!

Right then, a prolonged chant of Amitabha Buddha echoed in everyone’s ears.

Master Bitter Cicada’s pearls broke apart into eighteen shooting stars that revolved quickly around the five of them, unleashing golden brilliance, which formed a shield like an enormous bell and drove away all the evil auras nearby.

“There are too many ghosts here. Let’s not dawdle and simply charge toward Mother White Lotus’ palace!”

After a roar, Qi Zhongdao launched the Heaven Flipping Seal again. Countless skeletons and zombies below him were crushed into smithereens, but they mattered little to the ghosts.

Yan Liren did not say anything, but four sword auras spurted out abruptly and interweaved into an impenetrable ball of light around him. Whoever dared draw close, be they skeletons, zombies, or ghosts, would be cut into pieces the moment they touched the light ball!

Shua!

The ball of light rolled hundreds of meters forward. The fourth sword that Li Yao crafted for Yan Liren was finally launched. The aura of the sword rushed forward like a rainbow over the heads of thousands of skeletons and zombies landing on the palace of bones that looked like a blossoming lotus flower!

The ghostly auras circling the palace could not resist Yan Liren’s sword auras at all and dispersed instantly. Even the palace itself was slashed in half after an explosion. It collapsed to the ground, ending up as a heap of broken white bones.

However, the palace was empty. There was not a single soul inside it!

“Hehe. Hehehehe!”

The gloomy, frightening, and high-pitched laughter of a woman echoed in midair. The broken bones on the ground were actually wriggling slowly and jumbling into a monolithic scorpion of bones. On the back of the scorpion, the face of a woman who was gritting her teeth hungrily was patched up by all the bizarre-shaped broken bones.

Although the face was merely made of bones, the woman could almost be called pretty. However, her twisted countenance would make anyone’s heart freeze after they saw her. There was no need to mention her hideous laughter, which was getting more and more miserable. It was even more wretched than the cries of the ghosts in the deepest level of hell!

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

Intense white smoke was spurting out of the gaps of bones of the enormous scorpion.

Once they made contact with the white smoke, the previous lackluster ghosts and remaining souls were enlivened. They began raging and roaring.

The skeletons and zombies that had been moving slowly were accelerated, too. They split into two groups. One group was blocking the five super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators from the other Cultivators, trying to stop them from meeting each other. The other group went to surround the five super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators!

‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu’s Cultivation was so unbelievably high that she did not possess a regular zombie but the entire palace of bones.

All the bones were her embodiments, and she could change or combine them free at will!

“White Lotus!”

Activating the Heaven Flipping Seal, Qi Zhongdao pressed the scorpion so hard that the bones were all cracking. “You are insane enough to manipulate the thousands of ghost soldiers to attack a heavy town of the Cultivators! Whoever dares to challenge the entire world of Cultivators will be blown into smithereens and cursed forever!”

“Wan Mingzhu!” Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar held the black tobacco pipe in his hand. The orange glimmer inside the pipe was flickering, and smoke was flowing out now and then. His usual casualness replaced by solemnity as he said, “Only those guilty for a crime should be punished. The Bamboo Mountain Cult, which killed your entire family and even tried to turn you into Five Desperation White Bone Corpses, has already been slaughtered by you. You should’ve already sought your revenge however great it is. Why do you have to vent your hatred on other sects and innocent people?”

“Fellow Cultivator Wan.” Master Bitter Cicada’s voice that was mixed with bitterness emerged, too. “The sea of bitterness is boundless, and you can only find the shore if you turn back. Lay down your weapon and find your inner peace! You are instigating the unrested souls just for your personal grudge and turning them into an army of ghouls. How many massacres have you committed in the southeast?

You have been out of mind for too long. It is time for your repentance!”

“Haha. Hahahaha!” The pale face on the back of the scorpion laughed crazily. “Qi Zhongdao, Ba Xiaoyu, Bitter Cicada, Yan Liren, and… Master Spiritual Vulture? The so-called five strongest Cultivators on the righteous side are all here today?”

“Qi Zhongdao!

“I’ve been fighting you Cultivators who seem to be gracious but are in fact corrupt to the bones for long enough. You have besieged me and tried to annihilate me with your great forces more than once. Has your wish ever been fulfilled? You don’t need to play any word games. If you want to kill me, just come and try!”

“Ba Xiaoyu!

“Do not think that you are qualified to criticize me just because of the vanity you gained by helping the weak! You are just another snob fishing for compliments who only has the guts to investigate the Roaring Tiger Hall and deal with mediocre forces such as the Black Devil Cult! Let’s forget the ugly businesses the Grand Mystery Sect, the Purple Pole Sword Sect, and other major sects of the past and just focus on the thirty-three sects inside East Peace County. Do you dare to look into their clandestine actions from when they were rising and make sure that all the criminals are punished accordingly?

“Bitter Cicada!

“Of all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, you are the most hypocritical of all! You talk about laying down weapons and finding inner peace, but when the Cultivators were exploiting us, why didn’t you tell them to put down their weapons? When the lords sh*tted on our necks doing whatever they wanted to us, why didn’t you tell them to find their inner peace? Where were you when so many folks were killed because of the Cultivation sects? Where were you when they were forced to sell their children? Where were you when our families were refined into weapons by the Bamboo Mountain Cult?

“Now, we are dead, and we are capable of seeking the justice that we deserve, but you are jumping out to tell us to put down our weapons and look for inner peace?

“Haha. Hahahaha. You are either idiotic or pure evil. How can you find inner peace if you lay down your weapons? Let me tell you. If you lay down your weapons, you can only be butchered!”

Hardly had her voice died down when the tail of the scorpion flipped, and it attacked Master Bitter Cicada!

In the meantime, the bones on its body darted out four chains, blocking the other four Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators!

‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu was fighting against five heroes of the world, but she was fearless enough to attack first!

The pity and sorrow on Master Bitter Cicada’s face was even more intense than before. Without saying anything, he bashed the tail of the scorpion with his staff.

After a crack, the tail exploded suddenly!

Li Yao and the other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators also broke the four chains without any trouble!

Qi Zhongdao’s Heaven Flipping Seal pressed the scorpion to the ground, making it unable to move anymore. The crazily waving limbs of the scorpion had almost been buried to the ground.

Yan Liren launched yet another unstoppable sword aura that split the scorpion in half from the head to the tail!

However, intense white mist spurted out from the shell of the scorpion.

Infinite negative emotions were mixed inside the mist, as if thousands of people were screaming, begging, crying, and roaring at the five Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators at the same time!

“You want to kill me? It’s not so easy!” Wan Mingzhu’s miserable laughter was echoing inside the white mist. “You have five Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators on your side, but I have thousands of restless souls on mine! Listen to the screams when they were tormented, and look at their despondent deaths! As long as injustice exists in the world, I will never be killed or broken. I lead them to purge the sky and the earth!

“Repentance? I don’t need repentance, now or ever!”

The white mist slowly dispersed. The previous enormous scorpion, however, had turned into countless small scorpions the size of a fist, which were scuttering on the ground and running away in various directions at an amazingly high speed.

Nobody could tell which scorpion Wan Mingzhu’s soul was hiding in!

It was indeed a weird technique. No wonder the White Lotus Cult had savaged the southeast for decades, and countless Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators had failed to annihilate her!

Qi Zhongdao was even more serious than before. The Heaven Flipping Seal was hovering above the battlefield, triggering powerful gravity and crushing the swarms of scorpions.

Yan Liren, on the other hand, froze in midair as if he were a statue. Even his eyeballs seemed to have stopped. Only the vague will of his sword was dashing quickly among the scorpions, searching for the real body of Mother White Lotus.

Ba Xiaoyu and Master Bitter Cicada, on the other hand, were dealing with the army of ghouls that were crowding close from various directions. Otherwise, everybody might have been drowned by the ghosts after one moment of carelessness.

Although the souls of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were extremely powerful, it was impossible for them to compete with the hatred, regret, and pain of a million people in a head-on clash!

Suddenly, Yan Liren’s frozen eyeballs shivered rapidly, as if he had been caught in a weird dream.

The sword aura rushed out like a rainbow, aiming at not the crazily crawling scorpions on the ground but a seemingly vulnerable skeleton soldier that was staggering toward Master Bitter Cicada!

He was not using the duplicate of the fourth sword that Li Yao had forged for him but the real fourth sword!

Chapter 1446 - Something’s Wrong!

After the sword aura arrived, the skeleton was not cut in half. Instead, it exploded into pieces.

From the thousands of pieces of bone, an unpredictable stream of white smoke surged out and dashed to the rear of the battle formation of the army of ghouls!

Wan Mingzhu’s real body turned out to be not hiding inside the small scorpions. Instead, escaping everyone’s attention, she had hidden herself in such a regular skeleton, trying to ambush Master Bitter Cicada in the company of the many skeleton soldiers and zombies!

Yan Liren’s countenance remained unchanged. He even put on a smile of interest as he snapped his fingers. His sword aura took an abrupt turn in midair and continued chasing after Wan Mingzhu’s real body!

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

The bone pieces bombarded Yan Liren’s sword aura like a storm, drawing devastating curves in the air, only to be shattered into powder by the sword aura!

The sword aura caught up to Wan Mingzhu as quick as lightning and slashed her brutally!

“Ahhh!”

The entire world was occupied by Wan Mingzhu’s horrified scream. She split her own soul in half at the life-and-death moment before the sword aura arrived, allowing the sword aura to pass through the gap in the middle!

Even so, the sharpness at the edge of the sword aura still heavily wounded her soul. When the soul was combined again into the image of a middle-aged beautiful woman in a white robe who was full of hatred, she looked much dimmer than before. An obvious black line had appeared at the center of her body from head to toe, from which black smoke was still popping out nonstop!

Yan Liren’s sword was truly the best in the world. Even the ‘mother of all ghosts’ had been injured after one attack!

Gritting her teeth, Wan Mingzhu could not have looked more hideous.

More and more ghosts and zombies had gathered around her, grimacing and waving their claws at the five super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

Right then, a thunderous explosion echoed in the horizon.

Boom!

The entire earth shook violently, as if an unexpected great earthquake had taken place!

Deafening cheers came over from East Peace County. The mist above the head of the army of ghouls, on the other hand, looked rather disrupted.

The noise that was mixed with intense spiritual waves was spreading out in all directions like a tsunami, attracting the attention of the five super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Mother White Lotus.

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao looked to the northwestern horizon, only to discover an overwhelming troop, surrounding a certain dark object, pushing forward to the battlefield slowly but determinedly!

Banners were flying everywhere in the troop, with enormous ‘Thunder’, decorated with the spiritual stripes of the thunder class, written on them. They seemed to be carrying bright electric arcs by themselves and looked particularly eye-catching under the dim, yellow sky.

As for the dark object that they were protecting in the center, despite all the messy, useless adornments on the surface, and despite its fancy appearance, in Li Yao’s eyes, was it not—

A main gun on a crystal warship?

Li Yao’s eyeballs were bulging out when he watched hundreds of muscular men pulling the gun of a crystal warship forward slowly with iron chains by attaching one end of the chains to their body and the other end to an enormous tank!

Also, the chains had more functions than just acting as a tow rope. Li Yao sensed that the spiritual energy and the souls of the hundreds of muscular men had been connected to the gun via the chains, thereby constituting a primitive and shabby launch system!

“Hoooo!”

The hundreds of muscular men roared at the same time, and their spiritual energy surged out to the maximum like the tides of the ocean. The chains immediately pulled taut, as if immense electric currents had flowed into the gun through the chains. After another ear-splitting roar, a cluster of fire-like plasma rushed out not toward the ground but aiming at the sky that was occupied by dark clouds!

The plasma exploded, unleashing thousands of electric arcs that ripped apart all the dark clouds like sharp swords. From the enormous holes, the blue sky and the glorious sun were revealed again!

The sunlight fell upon the white mist covering the army of ghouls like thousands of golden arrows. Intense noises were immediately bursting out, as if a piece of ice had been thrown into boiling oil.

The white mist was dispersing at a visible rate.

The army of ghouls under the mist were ill at ease. The radiation of the sunlight could disrupt the magnetic fields of their souls without any stop, which was equivalent to them bleeding all the time. Therefore, the army of ghouls had a natural fear of sunlight. Only on a cloudy day or at night and under the protection of the white mist did they dare to act out!

“It’s the Thunder Striking Legion! The Thunder Striking Legion’s Thunder Lord Cannon!”

Cheers were echoing on the city towers.

As Dan Fengzi had said to Li Yao earlier, the true largest sect in the world was not the Grand Mystery Sect but the Thunder Qian Hall, which had established the Great Qian Dynasty.

The Thunder Striking Legion, an elite troop responsible for the security of the capital city, was a strong army made of the core disciples of the Thunder Qian Hall. Common troops of the court were certainly incomparable to them.

To cope with the riots and rebellions caused by the natural disasters in the southeast, the Thunder Striking Legion had been mobilized to East Peace County. It happened to run into the great battle where the ghouls were attacking the city!

The arrival of the Thunder Striking Camp immediately broke the impasse between the two parties.

Wan Mingzhu, attacked by the five super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators collectively, could only defend herself without any way to fight back in the first place. She had been separated from her subordinates and could not issue any effective commands to the army of ghouls.

In the meantime, the cannons of the Thunder Striking Camp were firing nonstop, shredding the dark clouds in the sky.

Illuminated by the fierce sunlight, the hundreds of white mists dispersed one after another.

The ghosts that were bathed in sunlight seemed to be burning in fire. Amid screeching noises, blue smoke was soaring, and they were evaporated into nothingness in a moment!

The defense line of the army of ghouls was collapsing.

The soldiers and Cultivators who had lost their mind because of the possession of the souls gradually came back to themselves under the boost of the valor of their companions. Encouraged by the bombardments of the cannons, they lunged at the skeletons and zombies again!

The only thing that one had to fear was fear itself. That was the competition between humans and ghosts. The party that was more determined and resolute would eventually win!

“White Lotus, your army is doomed!” Qi Zhongdao burst into laughter. He shook his sleeves and jumped at Wan Mingzhu!

Wan Mingzhu glanced at the Thunder Striking Legion, which was still on the horizon, hesitating.

A lot of time was needed for an army to march forward. The Thunder Striking Legion had not arrived at the battlefield yet and was simply firing the cannons. There was still time for her to retreat and regroup her army.

However, if the few super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators stalled her for a while longer and her retreat was blocked by the Thunder Striking Legion, she would be doomed!

It was true that, since ghosts were fearless of the tides, she could escape from the ocean.

However, ghosts needed to refill their spiritual energy, too. On the boundless ocean, it was barely possible to find sufficient resources or any shelter. If she were shot by intense sunlight for an entire tide, it was very likely that she would be vaporized!

If she escaped into the sea, she would be susceptible to the undercurrents, too, which would also wear out the souls of the ghosts and make them slowly disperse from the sunlight at the bottom of the ocean.

“Let’s go!”

Wan Mingzhu made the call quickly and commanded the army to retreat!

“Where are you going?” Yan Liren, Qi Zhongdao, Ba Xiaoyu, and Master Bitter Cicada all went forward to surround Wan Mingzhu!

But outside their expectations, dozens of golden zombies that seemed to be made of pure gold lunged at their feet from below them in gloomy wind. They opened their mouths and bit at the Cultivators' legs.

Without blinking, Yan Liren launched his sword auras again, which slashed the golden zombies brutally!

"Watch out!" Ba Xiaoyu, however, widened his eyes and shrieked before he covered his head and leapt backward.

After dozens of weird explosions, the golden zombies expanded into round, huge balls, which exploded immediately after Yan Liren's sword auras reached them. Fragrant, bright golden mist was spurting out their bodies!

Nobody needed Ba Xiaoyu's reminder to know that the golden mist was certainly not healthy. With no other choice, they could only dodge.

In the blink of an eye, Wan Mingzhu's shadow had already split apart into dozens of streams of vague smoke, which splashed over different scorpions, skeleton soldiers, and zombies nearby.

The scorpions, skeleton soldiers, and zombies, as if having an electric shock, became dozens of times faster than before as they escaped in different directions.

"After her!

"We have gone through all this trouble to catch White Lotus. She must be eliminated at all costs. Otherwise, even if the million ghost soldiers here are blown to smithereens, they will come back again as long as Wan Mingzhu still exists!"

Qi Zhongdao gnashed his teeth.

It was also exactly what all the Cultivators had in mind.

Although the army of ghouls had been crushed, they would still escape to the smaller counties and towns, loot the middle and small sects that were relatively weak, and even corrupt and destroy all the farmlands!

As the saying went, a defeated army was an avalanching mountain. The army of ghouls had been turned into disorganized soldiers and true wandering ghosts!

The morale of the Cultivators and the army of the court, on the other hand, was higher than ever. They chased after the enemy without slowing down at all, trying to annihilate as many ghosts as possible so that there would be less chance that they could be reorganized.

Li Yao and the other super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, in the meantime, released all their telepathic thoughts, attempting to lock onto Mother White Lotus' soul.

One party running and the other pursuing, they moved further and further. A lot of ghost soldiers and entered the continuous hills to the south of East Peace County.

The battle had lasted an entire day, and the night was falling.

In the boundless forest, countless birds were cackling and flying toward the night sky because of shock!

Yan Liren, Qi Zhongdao, Ba Xiaoyu, and Master Bitter Cicada rushed into the forest in four streaks of brightness. Two ear-splitting explosions immediately erupted in the forest. A lot of trees were set ablaze. Wan Mingzhu's hateful screams were echoing with the fire, too.

Li Yao, however, stopped above the forest and stared at the darkness, deep in thought. Something confusing in his heart was now rolling up and down because of Wan Mingzhu’s shrieks.

The battle was really too uncanny!

Chapter 1447 - Who’s the Idiot?

“Hey. Even if you are planning to go easy on Mother White Lotus, you don’t need to just stop here for no good reason. This is too obvious!”

Having swallowed tremendous negative emotions, the mental devil’s belly was round. It was simmering impatiently again as it remarked while picking the teeth.

“No. Do you not feel that the war between the living and the dead is too weird?”

Looking at the seemingly infinite dark mountains under the night sky, Li Yao was deep in thought. “Mother White Lotus has finally gathered a huge army of ghouls by taking advantage of the natural disasters. Despite the ostensible formidability, the army collapsed after the first engagement and failed to even last one day before it was completely crushed. This is rather anticlimactic!”

The mental devil picked the nose and said, “That’s only reasonable. We have five super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators on our side and dozens of regular Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. There’s also the court’s Thunder Striking Legion, who are carrying the main guns of crystal warships. The damn main guns of crystal warships!

“Most of the ghosts that Mother White Lotus commanded are wild ghosts that she drafted recently. If they were alive, they would just be a bunch of mobs carrying their dung forks. It is perfectly normal that she lost the battle!”

“Then, it is all the more baffling.”

Listening to the roars of Mother White Lotus, each louder than the last, Li Yao’s frown grew deeper and deeper. “The intelligence is not highly confidential. The Thunder Striking Legion was not teleported to the place, either, but marched here in the most eye-catching way. All she needed to do was release a few ghosts as scouts in the sky if she wanted to know the route of their approach. Also, she could’ve deduced the time of their arrival at East Peace County according to their speed and the terrain on their way.

“In the meantime, the reinforcements from the central plateaus dawdled for almost ten days in Roaring Tiger City. Almost all the southeastern sects knew that Qi Zhongdao, Ba Xiaoyu, Yan Liren, Master Bitter Cicada, and I had arrived. How could she have not foreseen that we would show up in battle?

“Five super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, dozens of regular Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, and the Cultivators in the thirty-three local sects of the southeast, together with the court’s elite troop Thunder Striking Legion. We are an almost invincible army. As long as Mother White Lotus has the most fundamental computational ability, she should’ve calculated that she stood absolutely no chance of winning with the bunch of mobs that she had just recruited, shouldn’t she?

“Then, here comes the question which we have neglected the whole time. Why does Mother White Lotus have to attack East Peace County?”

After falling into a long daze, the mental devil replied, “East Peace County is the largest town in the southeast. It is also the place where thirty-three Cultivation sects are headquartered. A lot of crystals, magical equipment, and Jade Crystal Pellets are stored here, which are of great use to the training of the army of ghouls. As long as they absorb the spiritual energy contained in the crystals and the Jade Crystal Pellets, it will be possible for the wild ghosts to evolve into seasoned ghosts and for the seasoned ghosts to evolve into even more ferocious ghost kings! Isn’t this the best reason?

“She can only achieve what she wants if she can conquer East Peace County!”

“But by common sense, as long as Mother White Lotus is not an idiot,” Li Yao said calmly. “There is absolutely no way that she doesn’t know it is utterly impossible for her to conquer East Peace County, which is reinforced by the Cultivators from the central plateaus and the Thunder Striking Legion! However many secret treasures, crystals, and Jade Crystal Pellets there are in East Peace County, they are tantalizing and yet unreachable!”

“Perhaps—perhaps she is an idiot?”

The mental devil was not convinced. “I can tell that Mother White Lotus’ Cultivation is obviously founded on ‘remorse’, ‘fury’, and ‘hatred’. Perhaps, she hates all Cultivators in the world and wants brutal retaliations because her family was killed by certain evil Cultivators. That’s why she is attacking an important city governed by the Cultivators without considering the consequences!”

“It’s impossible. It’s impossible!” Li Yao shook his head quickly. “Since she is one of the top ten experts of the Ancient Sages Sector, her Cultivation is equivalent to the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage. Even if her Cultivation is truly founded on ‘fury’, there is no way that she would lose her mind because of her wrath and launch such a reckless attack! I have a feeling that the words that Mother White Lotus said at the beginning and her miserable screams all carried signs of acting. They are slightly unnatural and a bit exaggerated!”

The mental devil was dazed for a moment. “If you think that her acting is too unconvincing, it is probably true. After all, you are the master of acting!”

“Also, the large-scale siege is obviously different from Mother White Lotus’ style in the past!” His eyes shining, Li Yao continued his analysis. “Before, although the White Lotus Cult savaged the southeast, it never attacked the big cities that were heavily guarded. Instead, it always attacked the isolated middle and small sects that were located in the remote mountains or weakly defended towns.

“Therefore, it was always able to accomplish the goals. Before the rebels were annihilated, they were always able to resist for a long time, sabotage dozens of towns and cities, and butcher quite a few middle and small sects!

“It is obvious that Mother White Lotus’ head is very clear. She knows exactly what her advantages are. That’s why she plays to her strengths and attacks those weaker than her!

“The natural disasters this time are so severe that almost a hundred counties and prefectures in the southeast have been involved. Dying disaster victims are everywhere. It is the reason that Mother White Lotus could draft such a large army in such a short period of time!

“If I were Mother White Lotus, why would I be in such a hurry to attack East Peace County, the most heavily guarded city in the southeast, when I had such a great army? I could go by the traditional approach and march southward with the army to attack the weakly defended towns and local sects, plunder the farmlands, and demolish the settlements of the Cultivators there, while keeping as much distance from East Peace County as possible. Wouldn’t it be a much better option?

“By doing so, I would be able to receive provisions from the farmlands and the local sects, and I would simultaneously be able to build the previous mobs into a well-trained army by training them in small-scale battles. Most importantly of all, the thirty-three sects in the southeast are all lying low in East Peace County. As long as their core interests are not affected, I don’t think that they can resolve themselves to fight a bloody battle with the White Lotus ghoul army without considering the cost. Instead, it is more likely that they will sit by and watch the White Lotus ghoul army diminish the strength of the local sects!

“You have seen it too with the experiences in the past months that the Cultivation sects in the world of ancient Cultivators are just loose sand. Unless they are cornered, their war efficiency is astonishingly low!

“Even I can think of such a simple methodology. It is also exactly what Mother White Lotus did in the previous rebellions. So, why on earth did she do the exact opposite by gathering the army and attacking the heavily guarded city in such a hurry when she knew that she would fail? It is almost like…”

“It’s almost like that she is intentionally losing the battle!” the mental devil said, deep in thought.

“Exactly!” Li Yao’s eyes shone as he snapped. “That’s the feeling. She has lost the battle on purpose!”

“But what for?” The mental devil paced around inside Li Yao’s brain. “What benefits can an intentional failure bring to her? Did she fake the failure because there are ambushes ahead?”

Li Yao stared at the trees in the front that were not particularly high and soon vetoed the speculation.

Baiting the enemy to pursue with a fake failure, surrounding the enemy, and annihilating the enemy once and for all was an extremely sophisticated art of war. Such a battle could only be fought with a well-trained, high-obedient super army and an experienced general as the commander.

Mother White Lotus’ leadership was already incredible to keep the army of ghouls, which was just in a jumbled battle formation, and make them charge forward without running away. It would be a fantasy to regroup the army for an annihilation battle after the army collapsed, even if the collapse was faked!

Even the army of ghouls had their ‘morale’, too. When the morale was destroyed, and after many recently deceased ghosts perished during the first clash, it was impossible to fight back at all!

Also, on the Cultivators’ side, there were also veteran generals who were adept at commanding. They had long sent out scouts to investigate the thousand square kilometers nearby. It was impossible for an elite troop of the army of ghouls to be hiding in a corner somewhere!

The southeast was generally flat. Although the continuous hills were everywhere, they were not like the high mountains of the southwest that rose into the sky. The hills were not steep, and most of the forests had been explored and developed. There were neither ferocious animals lurking nor interconnected underground caves. It was barely possible to escape on such a terrain, much less set up ambushes!

“What exactly is Mother White Lotus’ goal?” Li Yao did not plan to kill Mother White Lotus in the first place. More and more baffled, he was even less willing to chase after her when he had not figured out the situation yet.

“Scheme. There must be a great scheme in all this!” Li Yao spoke to the mental devil solemnly. “Don’t you feel that it’s very strange? We’ve been in the Ancient Sages Sector for almost half a year, but we went through everything smoothly without running into a single plot!

“This is highly illogical!

“Based on our experiences in the past, we should’ve run into a great scheme that could potentially destroy the entire new world after only taking a few steps on it!”

“… Fine. Whatever you say.”

Li Yao clapped his hands. “Mother White Lotus definitely faked her failure. There must be a great plot in all this. If the plot is not ahead of us, then… it must be behind us!”

Greatly alarmed, Li Yao turned around and looked at East Peace County.

The Cultivators in East Peace County had all marched out.

They all hated the White Lotus ghoul army’s guts and were determined to exterminate all of the enemies. Chasing after the running ghosts, they got further and further away from East Peace County.

East Peace County only had a lot of disaster victims and few Cultivators left. It appeared quiet and empty.

“Hey. You don’t think that Mother White Lotus faked her failure as a distraction, do you?” the mental devil sneered. “Mother White Lotus is not an idiot, but the cunning Cultivators are certainly not idiots, either.

“How could they have not been wary of such a simple scheme? Before they chased after the routed ghosts, they must’ve conducted the most thorough scan in the entire East Peace County to make sure that everybody in the city is a human being, not a ghost!”

Chapter 1448 - Joining Hands?

“Human being…”

Looking at East Peace County on the north horizon far away, which only had the flickering light left, Li Yao felt more and more uneasy.

After all, he had never intended to kill Mother White Lotus. He would not be content if he could not figure out the key to the confusing battle!

Li Yao’s communication with the mental devil was merely conducted through the exchange of telepathic thoughts in the brain. In reality, only one moment had passed.

The next second, he let out an ear-splitting roar before darting into the forests in a streak of brightness, pretending to be chasing after Mother White Lotus.

But the moment he landed on the dense forests, he concealed his spiritual energy and took a large turn, heading back to East Peace County.

The area between East Peace County and the south hills was already a mess.

The Cultivators in the ancient times had rarely received any professional military training. Despite their formidable personal combat ability, they were essentially a bunch of super muscles of a gang. There was a huge gap between them and an organized, well-trained troop.

The greatest problem was that, when they were chasing after the enemy, they mostly acted on their own, with barely any communication with each other. The chasers lacked effective leadership as much as the escapers did. It was purely their personal valor that was being measured.

To some extent, it was an overstatement to describe the combat between Cultivators as a ‘war’. It was essentially a street fight of a larger scale and a higher level.

Everybody was shouting, slaying, and charging without caring about anything and without any purpose. They simply attacked any wandering ghost, skeleton, or zombie in sight.

In such chaos, not a single human or ghost noticed Li Yao when he was sneaking.

He even took off the green robe that he had been wearing and covered himself in a few battle robes on the battlefield that were riddled with holes and stained with blood. He then concealed his face with mud and blood. Eventually, he slightly adjusted his joints and muscles, making his physique subtly change before he swaggered into East Peace City.

At that moment, the center of the battle had long drifted away from East Peace County. The only things related to the battle in the city were the wounded soldiers and dead bodies during the siege battle in the day. Many folks in the city had been organized to bury the bodies and treat the injured. They were walking in and out of the wide-open city gate nonstop. The defenses could not have been weaker.

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and looked at the city wall. He did not find many Cultivators who were guarding there. Even the Ocean Suppressing Ocean, which had been functioning at a high intensity for an entire day, had been paused, probably for urgent maintenance.

However, despite the weak defense of East Peace County, there was indeed not a single shadow of a ghost anywhere. There was nothing suspicious on the vast ocean that had been illuminated by the bright moon, either.

Confused and concerned, Li Yao entered East Peace County while pretending to be an injured soldier.

At this moment, the majority of the Cultivators and elite soldiers had marched out of the city to hunt the army of ghouls. So, the city was rather empty and quiet.

Only the disaster victims and the heavily wounded Cultivators were still walking on the street. Because the battle went rather smoothly, few of them were in panic. The general order in the city was maintained.

Li Yao watched the heavily wounded Cultivators receiving first aid. Many of them were carried into the headquarters of the thirty-three sects of East Peace County.

Right now, the city was seriously short of hands, and the Cultivators were mostly stained by smoke and blood after a day of fierce fighting. Many of them were even possessed by the evils, which caused their faces to be twisted. With all the fire burnt and the smoke, it was even less possible to distinguish their identity. Therefore, they had to be carried to the nearest sect for treatment.

With the battle coming to this point, the Cultivators showed a fundamental sense of unity after all.

However, the scene made Li Yao more and more worried. Something unpredictable was almost surfacing in his heart!

The Cultivators are no fools. Before they went after the army of ghouls, they must've scanned the entire city with their telepathic thoughts. It is impossible that any ghost was left out!

Also, they can totally ask the scouts to ride cranes or flying swords to watch over everything from the skies. Even if a large batch of ghosts intends to attack from the sea, they will still be discovered in advance, and the Ocean Suppressing Array will be activated again!

This place is not too far away from the center of battle where the main troops of the Cultivators are fighting the army of ghouls after all. As soon as they notice the anomaly of East Peace County, even if most of the Cultivators cannot return in time, the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators such as Qi Zhongdao, Yan Liren, Ba Xiaoyu, and Master Bitter Cicada certainly can!

Therefore, there is absolutely no chance that the ghosts can cause any trouble.

Not ghosts… What about humans?

Li Yao was suddenly alarmed, with cold sweat popping up on his back.

Ever since the febrile typhoon landed and natural disasters took place everywhere, the news was always that the White Lotus Cult would take the opportunity to rally the army of ghouls and even attack East Peace County!

The main purpose of the Cultivators who reinforced the southeast was to execute Mother White Lotus, too!

Then, as a result, a lot of people, including Li Yao, were misled into thinking that their enemy consisted only of ghosts and that the living people could be allies or bystanders but certainly not foes!

However, was it really the case?

Li Yao had always believed that the living people were a hundred times more cunning and terrifying than ghosts. The evil Cultivators who enslaved the ghosts for their own interests in the Star Glory Federation more than a hundred years ago would be the first clue.

Did the ‘Black Devil Cult’, founded by the Roaring Tiger Hall in secret, not commit all kinds of crimes under the guise of the White Lotus Cult, too?

The living people. The living people. Of the many disaster victims here, is it possible that some are ill-intended living people?

However, it is still useless!

Even if there is indeed such a squad of living people with ill intentions, there can’t be too many of them, or they wouldn’t have been able to sneak into East Peace County!

But if their number is not large enough, it is impossible for them to control the whole of East Peace County quickly. The best they can do is raise some small-scale riots!

Moreover, even if they do have East Peace County under control, so what? Cultivators are everywhere outside. There’s no escape for them at all. They will be fish in a water tank after they seize East Peace County, and it will be impossible for them to resist the bombardment of dozens of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators for long. What’s the point?

Yes. It will be a shocking event if East Peace County is breached, which will be a brutal kick in the crotch to the teetering Great Qian Dynasty, but the price will be the loss of a million ghost soldiers and an elite squad of living people which can sneak into the Cultivation sects without alarming anyone. The price seems too high!

On the other hand, if there is indeed such a plot, it means that the planner of the plot believes that a certain item in East Peace County is even more precious than a whole army of ghouls and an elite tactical squad!

While thinking, Li Yao glanced at the disaster victims nearby with his eyes as sharp as a hawk.

Suddenly, he felt that a few disaster victims squatting next to a wall were odd.

Although a lot of other disaster victims were also squatting next to the wall, shaking like the three of them, most of them slightly changed their posture every few seconds because their legs went numb when they squatted in a fixed posture for a long time.

However, for the three special disaster victims, although their upper bodies were trembling hard, their lower half bodies did not move at all after a whole minute, as if they were the roots of a tree that had extended deep into the ground!

There was no telling if it was his imagination, but Li Yao noticed the smell of iron and blood from them.

It was the special air of elite soldiers who had received professional training before.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao strode toward the three disaster victims.

The three disaster victims noticed him immediately. Their eyes suddenly turned sharp.

Although their bodies did not move, Li Yao could feel that, below the broad cloth that they used to cover their backs, their spines were constricting inch after inch and conserving the strength, like three bows that were slowly stretched.

Li Yao smiled. He continued walking forward without any stop.

The eyes collided in midair brutally. The three ‘disaster victims’ were still hoping to continue pretending at first, but after sensing the obvious disdain in Li Yao’s eyes, they knew that their identities had been seen through and further camouflage would be meaningless. Therefore, they were simply glaring at Li Yao without any disguise!

Right then…

Boom!

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!’

Everywhere in East Peace County, in the headquarters of more than ten Cultivation sects, deafening explosions broke out almost simultaneously. All the disaster victims that were sitting on the street were shocked to their feet!

Li Yao saw that dozens of houses and pavilions were consumed by fierce flames and soared into the sky, blossoming into countless burning stars that smashed down overwhelmingly!

The sound of fighting, explosions, and the collisions of weapons reached the loudest immediately after they began!

The headquarters of more than ten Cultivation sects were under attack at the same time!

Maybe, the enemies had snuck in together with the disaster victims. Maybe, the ‘heavily wounded’ Cultivators that had been delivered into the headquarters secretly cooperated with them!

“‘Heaven Battering King’ Qi Changsheng is here. Hand over your treasures and magical equipment! Those who surrender will be spared from death. Should there be any resistance, the entire East Peace County will drown in blood!”

From every burning corner of East Peace County, wild and disobedient roars were echoing.

It turned out to be the Heaven Battering Army, another rebellion force as famous as the White Lotus Cult that had always been active in the northwest before!

Had the two ferocious rebellion forces that were almost turning the Great Qian Dynasty upside down finally joined hands?

Li Yao had no time to think anymore. The three soldiers of the Heaven Batter Army who pretended to be disaster victims had already jumped up to different angles after a weird movement. Dozens of starry weapons darted from them toward Li Yao’s critical parts all over his body at the same time!

Chapter 1449 - Who Are You?

The three mysterious enemies mistook Li Yao for a common Cultivator in East Peace County.

Had they known that Li Yao was the notorious ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’, they would have fled as fast as they could instead of attacking.

The dozens of weapons mixed with howls and screams were darting toward his face, but Li Yao did not bat an eye. He merely curled his lips and snorted.

His immense spiritual energy immediately leaking out of the pores and rippled in front of him in thick waves, freezing all the weapons half a foot before his face!

“The ‘Fish Thorn Bone Piercing Stings’ from Flying Spirit Island?”

The weapons in front of his eyes appeared to be tiny sea urchins or thistles, but they were in fact made of the sharpest bone spurts of the deep-sea demon beasts and contained dozens of natural poisons. Emitting colorful, enticing colors and intoxicating smells, they were weapons unique to Flying Spirit Island.

When Li Yao was at the Purple Pole Sword Sect, he had familiarized himself with the famous magical equipment in the major sects in the world. Naturally, he knew a thing or two about such a weapon.

“Flying Spirit Island is located in the east ocean. How did their unique weapons fall into the hands of the Heaven Battering Army in the northwest?

“Besides, the main force of the Heaven Battering Army was just crushed by the Cultivators and the court at the end of last year. How did you train so many elites, sneak across so many states and counties from the northwest to the southeast, and cause trouble here?

“Who are you exactly? Speak now!”

Li Yao glanced at the three of them casually. His left hand behind his back, he opened his right hand easily and snatched the air.

The three mysterious enemies, after seeing that the dozens of Fish Thorn Bone Piercing Stings were fixed in midair by the target without any trouble, and realizing that they could not move the weapons at all however hard they exerted their telepathic thoughts, naturally knew that they had run into a tough opponent!

Li Yao’s casual glance at them made their heads dizzy and their blood freeze!

Look at each other, the three of them roared and leapt backward simultaneously, fleeing in three different directions.

Li Yao did not move at all. He extended his hand and pulled it backward heavily. Then, three invisible claws seemed to appear in the air. They snatched the three enemies’ necks and dragged them back brutally!

Crack, crack! Crack, crack, crack, crack!

The three of them were cramping, their heads raised high and their cervical vertebra exploding. There was nothing on their necks, but dents and bruises had appeared. They had been strangled by Li Yao with the invisible hands of spiritual energy!

Under the surging spiritual energy, the three of them were unable to maintain their hunched backs anymore. After a series of cracks, their bones and muscles bulged crazily, turning the three of them into tall, muscular men. They did not look like the feeble disaster victims at all now.

However, no matter how hard the three muscular men exerted their strength and summoned their spiritual energy, they were still clenched by Li Yao’s fists like three dead fish.

The ear-splitting explosions, the fiercely burning flames, and the weird scene on the street cast all the disaster victims nearby into disarray. They covered their heads with their hands and ran away.

“You are definitely not with the Heaven Battering Army.” Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao coldly demanded with absolute authority, “Who are you exactly? How did you get in touch with the army of ghouls? Speak now!”

The three muscular men’s faces were pale, and their bodies were cramping, but they gritted their teeth and said nothing.

“Nobody is talking? You are truly good soldiers. Then, let’s see if your bones are as tough as your tongue!”

Li Yao’s voice was gradually mixed with brutality. It sounded so cold that it was like a gale from the depths of hell.

“Well, you have choked their throat.” The mental devil was kind enough to remind him of that small detail.

Li Yao sniffed and threw one of the muscular men onto the ground heavily. He curled his fingers, and four Fish Thorn Bone Piercing Stings immediately rushed at him and darted into his elbows and knees, shattering all the joints!

The muscular man vomited blood. Then, he immediately began to scream desperately and jerked like a half-cooked shrimp!

Another three Fish Thorn Bone Piercing Stings were hovering around him maliciously under the attraction of Li Yao’s spiritual energy.

“You have two companions here. If you are unwilling to talk, I can always go and ask them!” Li Yao sneered.

“I’ll talk. I’ll talk!” The muscular man was weeping because of the excruciating pain. His voice was twisted and high-pitched as he replied, “We—we are indeed not with the Heaven Battering Army; we are the disciples of Flying Spirit Island! The Grand Mystery Sect, the Purple Pole Sword Sect, Flying Spirit Island, and the other major sects have joined hands to maraud the headquarters of the thirty-three sects while most of the Cultivators in East Peace County are hunting the army of ghouls and the city is not guarded!”

As if to prove what he said, some of the Cultivators were screaming far away in East Peace County. “Grand Mystery Sect! Purple Pole Sword Sect! Flying Spirit Island! Thunderstorm Valley! Monster Taming Pavilion! Gold Armor Clan! All you Cultivators from the central plateaus will die the most miserable death!”

It was a desperate curse from the Cultivators of East Peace County before their death.

They were no fools. It was impossible for the Heaven Battering Army to have been rebuilt to such a degree and to sneak across the entire Great Qian Dynasty to East Peace County without alarming anyone when it had been crushed not long ago and Heaven Battering King Qi Changsheng was allegedly the only one who escaped!

They all thought that the six major sects were looting them insanely under the disguise of the Heaven Battering Army, just like the Black Devil Cult slaughtered and plundered under the name of the White Lotus Cult!

However, Li Yao did not believe any of that!

“Is there anybody who uses the typical magical equipment of their sect when they are doing illegal business? Were you scared that other people would not figure out that you are not from the Heaven Battering Army?

“Besides, there is a certain air of killing and obedience in you, which can only be raised in a formal army. Neither the peasant rebellions such as the Heaven Battering Army nor the noble sects such as the Grand Mystery Sect and the Purple Pole Sword Sect are capable of bringing up such soldiers!

“You are Cultivators from the military!

“There are only two forces in the entire world that boast such a powerful army. You are either from the imperial guards of the Great Qian Dynasty or the Ghost Qin!”

Li Yao’s fingers were flipping, and the three Fish Thorn Bone Piercing Stings were rotating faster and faster and closer and closer to the captive’s face. He demanded, “Speak now. Do you work for Emperor Phoenix or Han Baling?”

The faces of the three muscular men blanched. Then, determination suddenly beamed out of their eyes. When Li Yao realized that it was not good, they had already put on a mysterious smile, and their cheeks turned pale. Their pupils and their whites blended into a greenish mess!

The three muscular men were as dead as anyone could ever be. Even their souls had no more ripples. Li Yao could find absolutely no information of use!

What a thorough drug for suicide and what a weird way to kill themselves!

Li Yao looked awful as he secretly cursed in his heart.

Of course, he knew that the guys who were assigned to such a secret mission would be the most resolute soldiers.

Therefore, after he captured them, he had leaked his spiritual energy to every part of their body, ensuring that their every joint and muscle was absolutely under his control.

Then, how did they die?

Li Yao opened the mouth of one of the muscular men and observed the lining of his mouth carefully.

There should have been a molar on the left side of his mouth, but it had been replaced by an artificial jade tooth. A tiny hole had been cut in the tooth.

If one did not observe carefully, the artificial tooth could easily pass for a real tooth because they were almost identical.

Li Yao extended a thread of spiritual energy into the artificial tooth through the hole and sensed the residue of the poison as he expected. The triggering method of the poison was even more blood-freezing.

The approaches of suicide for most soldiers had to be ‘triggered’, which meant that when the time that they had to sacrifice themselves came, they would crush the poison container with a certain special movement, say, biting hard or pushing their tongue, and swallow the poison, thereby terminating their life.

The shortcoming of such approaches was that they would not be able to activate the poison containers when their bones and muscles were controlled by an expert such as Li Yao.

The poison container inside the artificial tooth, in comparison, adopted an ‘anti-triggered’ design. The soldiers would have to press their artificial tooth with the tongue after special training to ensure that the poison container was not activated. As long as they were sloppy, and the pressure between the tip of the tongue and the artificial tooth had a slight change, the poison container would release the poison automatically. No additional movements were required at all!

As far as Li Yao knew, such a cruel and unpredictable suicidal approach was the favorite of one of the forces in the Ancient Sages Sector.

Ghost Character, led by the eunuch Wang Xi, which was claimed to be the most powerful espionage and assassination group in the Ancient Sages Sector!

It’s Wang Xi? The damn eunuch who has been hiding for an entire year finally can’t contain himself any longer and is stirring up trouble again?

Li Yao thought quickly and examined the faces of the three dead persons carefully. He felt that their bones seemed to have been weirdly modified in order to cover something.

Their zygoma should’ve been higher, and they should be typical northerners!

And here. Their ears…

Li Yao rubbed the ear of a dead person and removed some mud the color of flesh. A few tiny holes immediately appeared on the ear of the dead soldier.

He did the same to the other two victims. As he expected, the ears of the three dead soldiers were all full of holes, suggesting that they used to wear earrings a lot.

The Cultivators in the central plateaus did not have such a custom. No men would ever wear earrings.

Only the middle-aged men of Ghost Qin from the Dark Cloud Prairies had the habit of wearing gold, clanging earrings. The higher their position was, the larger their earrings would be. The women, in contrast, were only allowed to wear inconspicuous pendants.

The three dead persons were from Ghost Qin.

No wonder they had the intense air of the military men. Ghost Qin did not have any Cultivation sects. All the Cultivators were soldiers in the first place.

A bunch of Cultivators from Ghost Qin, with the suicidal magical equipment that belongs to Wang Xi’s Ghost Character, pretending to be disciples of the six major sects in disguise as the Heaven Battering Army and working together with Mother White Lotus. What are they up to exactly?

Chapter 1450 - On the Shipwreck!

Li Yao felt as if he had just said a tongue twister.

However, the truth behind the mist seemed much more complicated than the tongue twister.

Shouts, explosions, and magical equipment collisions were echoing in every corner in East Peace County at the same time. However, the noises were not expanding into the same area. Instead, they were short, fast, and clean, like the sharpest daggers!

The suicidal approaches of the soldiers were tough enough to suggest that no useful information could be found on their bodies. Pondering for a moment, Li Yao released Neltharion and observed the whole of East Peace County from above.

Despite the serial explosions, few locations in the city had actually been affected. Even the headquarters of the Cultivation sects that had been attacked fell quiet again after a quick battle.

There was not a large-scale confrontation in the city towers or the city gate, which were still under the control of the Cultivators of East Peace County.

Because the city gate was of paramount importance and could not be lost, the Cultivators guarding the city gate did not dare act recklessly and could only hold their position even though they knew that riots were taking place in the city.

It further proved Li Yao's speculation in a different way. The Cultivators that seemingly belonged to Ghost Qin were a squad of elites whose purpose was certainly not to conquer East Peace County. Otherwise, they would have to control the city gate and the control pivot of the Ocean Suppressing Array before the main force returned as reinforcements!

Then, what exactly was their goal?

While Li Yao was thinking quickly, intense smoke suddenly soared from dozens of locations in the city at the same time. The black smoke raged like a fog and soon covered all the streets and alleys, enshrouding the entire city in absolute darkness.

Li Yao vaguely felt that almost a hundred streams of spiritual energy dashed out from every direction and fled to the east side of the city.

East Peace County was a port. To the east of it was the boundless ocean.

The serial explosions taking place in the city had been noticed by the Cultivators who were chasing the army of ghouls. The shocked Cultivators, especially the local ones of East Peace County, all retreated, cramming the road to the city on the land.

Li Yao thought of something. Like an unpredictable breeze, he flowed toward the headquarters of one of the Cultivation sects that had been attacked.

A few mysterious enemies who were suspected to be the Ghost Qin Cultivators seemed to have accomplished their mission. They were silently evacuating in order.

Li Yao suddenly jumped out of the black fog like a viper lurking in a crevice. His spiritual energy was condensed into four whips slapping the four mysterious enemies!

Greatly shocked, the four of them shrieked and launched all their weapons at Li Yao.

Li Yao grunted and vanished into the black fog, pretending that he had been heavily wounded by them.

But in fact, during the attack, he had pinned two thin metal chips beneath the boots of two enemies without alarming anyone.

The two metal chips had been baptized by his blood time and time again and attached with part of his telepathic thoughts. They were essentially two relatively primitive GPS devices.

Li Yao blinked in the darkness. After the lackluster redness flashed twice in his eyes, he immediately sensed that two scarlet spots were moving forward toward the ocean quickly!

Keeping a certain distance from the rapidly evacuating enemies, he rushed to the port of East Peace County, too.

The city wall of East Peace County facing the ocean was not very high, and it was not guarded by many Cultivators.

Li Yao sensed that at least a hundred mysterious enemies had jumped into the ocean and vanished!

Taking off the ragged clothes on his body, he slid into the ocean without a sound like a boneless fish.

This place was still the continental shelf. The water was not deep. The mysterious enemies were simply walking on the seabed like a bunch of creepy zombies.

Li Yao intentionally kept his distance from them and covered his traces with the seaweed and coral. He only followed them with Neltharion.

The number of the mysterious enemies was huge, and there were the two localization chips. So, he was not afraid that he might lose them.

However, something was indeed bothering Li Yao. There was obviously no sign of any ship on the ocean. Were they planning to walk on the bottom of the ocean for a day and a night against the pressure of the undercurrents while holding their breath?

Such a mission was too arduous even for the Cultivators!

After the hundred mysterious enemies walked on the seabed for about ten minutes, something suddenly showed up in the seabed up ahead. It was a shipwreck!

Yes. A shipwreck that must have sunk hundreds of years ago and had been seriously corroded, full of weeds, coral, and barnacles. No one would be surprised if a hundred zombies suddenly jumped out of it!

The mysterious enemies crawled into the shipwreck through the broken hull.

On the gloomy, terrifying ocean floor, the mysterious freaks were walking toward a gray, broken shipwreck that was packed with seaweed and shells!

The combination was indeed a scene of horror. Even Li Yao could not help but click his tongue, wondering if those guys were not humans but a certain kind of advanced zombies that could breathe and pump blood.

“Wait,” the mental devil said. “Theoretically speaking, if a zombie has breath, a heartbeat, and blood circulation, we will normally call it a ‘living person’.”

“…” Li Yao.

Right then, the creepy undersea shipwreck suddenly went through weird changes.

Ivory rays of light gradually flowed out of its body. Stimulated by the light, the seaweed and barnacles attached to the shell of the ship wriggled slowly and spurted out tremendous natural gel, sealing the damage on the shell without leaving any gaps.

Chi!

Li Yao sensed that a lot of water was being pressed out from the bottom of the shipwreck. The water inside the shipwreck must have been pumped away!

As a result, the previous shipwreck that was riddled with holes turned into some sort of undersea vehicle like the ‘submarine’ in modern Cultivation civilizations!

Are you kidding me? This is too sophisticated!

Li Yao was more and more curious about the force or the individual who had built the shipwreck and directed the whole scheme!

After pumping away most of the water in the cabins through the thousands of barnacles attached to the shell, the shipwreck moved up after shivering for a moment and snuck into the depths of the ocean.

Naturally, Li Yao followed it like a haunting ghost with the stealth techniques that he was best at.

He planned to maneuver Neltharion to sneak into the shipwreck many times.

However, the seemingly dilapidated shipwreck had been produced for the purpose of deep-sea voyage; there was not the tiniest hole that he could make use of on the surface.

Li Yao did not dare dig through the shell of the shipwreck through the drill of mystic rays, fearing that the change of pressure would expose his presence.

Therefore, he could only grope for the shipwreck’s structure and command Neltharion to stick near the location that appeared to be the command center.

Shua!

The front end of Neltharion was opened, and a tool that looked like a trumpet was extended out and stuck to the shell of the shipwreck softly.

Neltharion was a training model for Sparkle, a multipurpose exploration starship. The trumpet-like magical equipment was a device designed to investigate complicated underground structures.

The basic mechanism of the device was to analyze the feedback after sending a wave of a certain frequency into the environment. That way, the basic situation of the environment would be revealed.

However, after minor adjustments, it could also receive feeble soundwaves from the outside world, which essentially made it a highly sensitive detectaphone.

Sha! Sha! Sha! Sha!

A lot of raucous noises flooded into Li Yao’s brain. He felt that he was caught in an abrupt storm.

Holding his breath, Li Yao activated his computational ability to the maximum as he performed high-intensity filtering, analysis, and restoration inside his brain. It was not until almost an hour later that he finally managed to retrieve some intermittent voices from the noises.

“We have made it. This is what we are looking for!”

What he heard first was a comforting female voice that was full of surprise, who said, “I didn’t know that the ‘core’ we went through all the trouble to find was actually in the hands of the Cloud Ocean Sect. The Cloud Ocean Sect was ignorant enough to not recognize its value at all and simply used it as a random part of the defense array. What a great waste of the treasure!”

The pleasant female voice which sounded like a spring ring suddenly changed the topic. “Everybody, we owe the success and smoothness of our operation to our teamwork and devotion!

“Had it not been Mother White Lotus, who misled everybody into thinking that she was going to attack East Peace County, it wouldn’t have been impossible for our people to sneak into the city among the unaffiliated Cultivators and the disaster victims who were allowed into East Peace County in their panic!

“Later, Mother White Lotus also paid great sacrifices to distract the enemy’s main force so that we could attack the enemy’s weakness and launch a critical strike!

“Of course, without the valiance of the warriors from Cloud Qin and the elites under the command of the Heaven Battering King, it would’ve been impossible for us to discover the item that Lord Wang wants.

“Right now, the ‘core’ has already fallen into our hands. As long as we continue cooperating without any reserve as we did today, this world will certainly become ours!”

The comforting voice sounded like a soft, gentle breeze in summer.

However, when it poured into Li Yao’s ears, he felt that cold water was flushing through his ears, into his brain, and running down all the way through his spine. Even his bottom was almost frozen!

Li Yao had thought that Mother White Lotus had cooperated with Ghost Qin and looted East Peace County, only disguised as the Heaven Battering Army.

It had never occurred to him that, according to the pleasant female voice, the Heaven Battering Army seemed to be truly part of the whole scheme!

It was indeed a thoughtful arrangement.

They had pretended to the disciples of the six major sects first and then ‘pretended’ to be the soldiers of the Heaven Battering Army as the disciples of the six major sects. In such a case, even if some people saw through the two camouflages, few of them would link them to the Heaven Battering Army again due to regular thinking patterns!

However, part of them were actually ‘soldiers of the Heavenly Battering Army who pretended to the disciples of the six major sects who pretended to be the soldiers of the Heaven Battering Army’. Nobody would figure out their real identity at all!

Moreover, who was the Lord Wang?

When Li Yao recalled the uncanny death of the few soldiers of Ghost Qin, the answer was obvious. Lord Wang could only be the Lead Eunuch Wang Xi, the most powerful person in the past and a rat that everybody had stomped on today!

Lead Eunuch Wang Xi, ‘Heaven Battering King’ Qi Changsheng, ‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu, and Regent of Ghost Qin Han Baling—the Four Rapscallions that intimidated the entire Ancient Sages Sector—had joined hands!

Chapter 1451 - Special Agent Long

Li Yao did not know whether he had a jinxed mouth or there was a certain special magnetic field around him that would attract all the plots and schemes.

Just as he felt that his half year in the Ancient Sages Sector had been peaceful and quiet without much turbulence, a super scheme that could totally shake the structure of the Ancient Sages Sector presented itself!

The Three Saints and Four Rapscallions, and the Monk and the Emperor who wandered off the evaluation system of the Cultivators, together with the Grandmaster of Great Zhou who recently rose to fame, were basically the ‘top ten experts’ of the Ancient Sages Sector.

However, the so-called ‘top ten experts’ only described their personal combat ability. As a matter of fact, the Three Saints and the Four Rapscallions were greatly different from each other.

Ba Xiaoyu was an unaffiliated Cultivator who came and went on his own. Yan Liren and Master Bitter Cicada could not mobilize all the forces of the Purple Pole Sword Sect and the Stupa Temple, either. Although Qi Zhongdao was the nominal leader of all the Cultivators, he was more like a mascot than a real commander who could control the sects below him effectively. There was no need to mention Li Yao, who, as an alien in this world, fought on his own, too.

The five of them basically had no subordinates. They were just good fighters. That was all.

The Four Rapscallions, on the other hand, were different. Han Baling, Qi Changsheng, and Wan Mingzhu were all leaders of important organizations. Even if the latter two were often defeated and crushed, they always rose again despite all the setbacks!

Although Wang Xi was a homeless dog, his wisdom and leadership were certainly unquestionable, considering his past power in the court. The organization named Ghost Character that he had founded himself and infiltrated the world of Cultivators was not entirely cleaned up, either. A lot of loyal subordinates had vanished mysterious when he went on the run!

In other words, any of the Four Rapscallions commanded tremendous resources and stood for a force that had the chance to turn the world upside down. They were certainly magnitudes above the solo warriors such as Ba Xiaoyu, Master Bitter Cicada, Yan Liren, Qi Zhongdao, and Li Yao!

Right now, the four forces were joining their hands.

What were they up to exactly?

Li Yao slowly activated his technique to lower his heartbeat to the minimum, while he analyzed every word spoken inside the cabin without missing a single detail.

Then, he heard a voice that sounded damp and from the deep soil. “Let’s not talk about the world just yet and focus on the ‘core’ for now. We have paid such great prices in order to retrieve those items. Are they really the ‘core’ that Lord Wang mentioned?”

The man slightly had the accent of the northeast. Although he was trying to disguise himself, Li Yao was still able to distinguish it easily.

The sunny female voice chuckled. “You can tell if it is real for yourself after I show it to everyone once Mother White Lotus returns. It has been decades since Lord Wang learned of the secret and began planning everything. ‘Ghost Character’ was founded half for the secret, too. Right now, we have finally collected all the intelligence and items needed from various channels. How can we be wrong?”

Then, another voice that sounded rather solemn spoke coldly. “Since Wang Xi has spent decades planning the exploration and collecting the intelligence and the usable items from all the sects without bothering cost, why did Lord Wang not start the exploration on his own but chose to share the great benefits with us? I believe that Lord Wang must have a lot of capable, trusted subordinates exactly like you, Special Agent Long.”

The voice sounded rather familiar. Li Yao blinked and immediately recalled who it belonged to. The owner of the voice was exactly Han Yuantai, Han Baling’s right-hand man who had been captured by him in the forests of the Southland of Sorcerers and then released in the past!

Even Han Yuantai had gone there in person. It appeared that the secret meeting of the Four Rapscallions was of a high level!

The woman who spoke first turned out to be surnamed ‘Long’. She was a special agent sent by Wang Xi.

It would seem that Wang Xi had found an important secret decades ago and then collected all kinds of information and items in order to unravel the secret.

Perhaps, he did not intend to share his secret with anybody else but planned to develop it on his own with his incomparable power.

It was a pity that his reign had been toppled, and the resources at his disposal had been greatly reduced. Also, he risked being attacked by all the Cultivators in the world if he showed up. Having no other choice, he could only propose a meeting of the Four Rapscallions as a middleman to develop the secret together!

As expected, Special Agent Long said, “General Han, Lord Wang had already shown his complete sincerity for the operation. Cloud Qin is best known for your fearlessness. Why are you so skeptical?”

Not convinced, Han Yuantai said coldly, “Just because we are not scared to be killed does not mean we want to be killed.

“History has proved that most operations to explore prehistoric relics end in internal conflict. Your Lord Wang is certainly not the most lenient person in the world. I find it difficult to completely trust him!”

“Lord Wang is not the most lenient person, but Regent Han is not so easy to deal with, either!” Special Agent Long chuckled. “Then again, do the Heaven Battering King and Mother White Lotus look gullible?

“Lord Wang is aiming for something great. This secret concerns the future of the Ancient Sages Sector. Our joint exploration will not be a robbery of the general mobs. I believe that none of us are shortsighted thieves. Why would we do things that will satisfy our foes and hurt our friends just because of some petty benefits?

“Besides, for the operation to work out, the four forces here are indispensable!

“There’s no need to mention Lord Wang, who was the first one to discover the secret. He spent decades collecting the scattered clues and gathering the ‘pieces’ from the major sects. Finally, even the ‘core’ has been retrieved!

“As for the Heaven Battering King, for the longest time, he has been dealing with underground relics. In terms of relic exploration and excavation, the Heaven Battering Army is certainly second to none in the Ancient Sages Sector!

“Mother White Lotus, on the other hand, is an unpredictable, bodiless spirit. Once we arrive at our destination, chances are that a lot of traps and secret tunnels will only be able to be infiltrated and cracked by her!

“Cloud Qin’s role in the exploration is even simpler. The location of the secret is the vast expanse to the north of Cloud Qin. If we want to send out tremendous elites to explore the secret, there’s no way that we can bypass Cloud Qin. Besides, the other three parties here are all under the hunting of the court of the Great Qian Dynasty. We are now at a temporarily low point, and few hands are at our disposal. Only Cloud Qin can mobilize a large batch of well-trained Cultivators to support our exploration operation!

“With that in mind, Lord Wang has invited everyone to join the operation. He is certainly not regarding anybody as cannon fodder!

“General Han, if we are talking about betrayal, I believe that the other three parties here should be more worried about Cloud Qin. After all, our destination is deep within Cloud Qin. Don’t you agree?”

Han Yuantai was dazed for a moment. “Well…”

“However, we are certainly not going to trouble you with the groundless concerns.” Special Agent Long suddenly changed the topic. Entirely grasping the pace of the conversation, she chuckled. “We believe that Regent Han is an ambitious hero who is pursuing a great cause. Right now, the greatest enemy for everyone is still the court of the Great Qian Dynasty and even all the Cultivators there!

“Although the four parties here barely had any contact in the past, we have been in implicit cooperation by stalling the forces of the Great Qian Dynasty for each other. That is the only reason that we are all alive today.

“If we attack each other, the Great Qian Dynasty will be the only one to profit. Who can’t understand such simple logic?”

There was a brief silence in the cabin. Then, the male voice with the northwestern accent gnashed his teeth. “Exactly. Last winter, a million soldiers of the Heaven Battering Army were reduced to three thousand by the court’s army. We are desperate for revenge!”

“As long as everybody here is sincere about the cooperation, Cloud Qin will certainly honor our words!” Han Yuantai said.

“That’s right!” Special Agent Long’s laughter was mixed with an indistinct coldness, like the edge of a razor covered in marshmallow. “The pie is so big that any force will choke if they intend to eat it alone. Only if the four parties divide it together can we finish it all without leaving any residue!”

Right then, a creepy voice suddenly echoed. “Mother White Lotus is back!”

Greatly alarmed, Li Yao crouched into the sand and did not dare to move at all.

The temperature of the ocean water was suddenly lowered by more than ten degrees. It was almost frozen.

The shoals of colorful fish, eels, and jellyfish seemed to have run into the most brutal enemies and fled in panic.

Vague white smoke, like an enormous jellyfish dozens of meters long, in the shape of a translucent cloud swam close over Li Yao's head and merged into the shipwreck.

The shipwreck shivered slightly. As if new energy had been injected, it was moving at a much higher speed.

"It's a privilege to meet you, Mother White Lotus!"

Inside the cabin, Special Agent Long and Han Yuantai and Qi Changsheng's representatives all greeted her respectfully.

"Save the pleasantries. You've been troubled, too," Wan Mingzhu said, somewhat exhausted. Her voice was no longer as agitated and high-pitched as on the battlefield a moment ago. Instead, it was filled with calmness and indifference.

That was more like the style of the 'mother of all ghosts'. Her demeanor on the battlefield had been no different from a vixen on the street!

"You were blocked and hunted by Qi Zhongdao, Yan Liren, Master Spiritual Vulture, and other experts. Was your escape smooth, Mother White Lotus?" Special Agent Long asked caringly.

"It's not a big deal. The five of them are not enough to kill me. Moreover, I didn't even see that Master Spiritual Vulture in the end. He must be a guy who’s more interested in preserving his own strength, too!”

Wan Mingzhu sighed gloomily and said, “I only feel regretful that the tremendous army that I gathered through the natural disasters has been completely crushed. A lot of ghost generals who have followed me for years and many zombies that I refined at great costs perished!

“Special Agent Long, I hope that your Lord Wang’s intelligence is not wrong and that we have paid such great prices for something worthy of its cost!”

Chapter 1452 - Home of the Dead

Mother White Lotus’ voice was like a cold wind from the deepest level of hell, with unmistakable killing intent.

After all, it certainly would not feel great to see the army of ghouls that she had trained through all sorts of trouble crash into the iron wall of East Peace County and be butchered.

According to Mother White Lotus’ previous strategy, the army of ghouls could have remained active in the southeast for at least a year and a half.

Even if the army had been annihilated a year and a half later, she certainly would have been able to raise a new batch of elite forces who would be the seeds for the next uprising.

After Wan Mingzhu’s complaint, Special Agent Long’s voice turned solemn, too. “Mother White Lotus, the items are most certainly correct. As long as they are assembled, you will see undeniable proof!”

“Excellent!” Wan Mingzhu said coldly. “Then, please take a rest for now, everyone. We’ll talk later after we arrive at White Lotus Island!”

The representatives from different forces bowed to Wan Mingzhu and left the room one after another. For a long time, there was nothing but silence inside the cabin. Wan Mingzhu must have paid a great price to get away from the pursuit of Qi Zhongdao, Yan Liren, Ba Xiaoyu, and Master Bitter Cicada.

Like an agile fish, Li Yao followed the shipwreck to move forward with the help of the currents. After several hundred kilometers, when he was reaching the edge of the continental shelf, he discovered that clusters of colorful brilliance were shining ahead, as if a city was standing at the bottom of the ocean ablaze with light!

The shipwreck swam toward the ‘undersea city’ quickly!

Li Yao was alarmed. Half buried in the sand, he crawled on all fours while he observed the flying light ahead.

The bottom of the ocean up ahead was slightly rising up, forming a small hill.

The hill was full of corals and reefs and covered in actiniae, seaweed, and all kinds of shells, which constituted the natural buildings.

In the seawater nearby, a lot of jellyfish were shimmering, like dancing butterflies.

Around the hill were hundreds of altars piled up with shells and coral. On the top of every altar was a pearl larger than a fist.

All the pearls were glittering, releasing the most dazzling light from the core. Together with the mild light from the jellyfish, they illuminated the entire undersea world.

The hundreds of altars congregated into an invisible shield that enveloped the entire city.

Under the protection of the shield, hundreds of skeletons were moving at the bottom of the ocean!

Upon closer inspection, the pale, creepy things did not seem to be doing anything evil. Instead, they were attending to the actiniae and the seaweeds. Some of them were digging certain things from the sand. Some others were moving around the colorful fish, as if they were ‘herding’ the fish!

Li Yao even saw that a few tiny skeletons, which seemed to belong to little children, were running about on the sand, fighting over a bluish pearl.

Although it was difficult for the voice to spread in the seawater, Li Yao still perceived the delight and carefreeness from the tiny skeletons.

It seemed that they were using the pearl as a football and having great fun!

Such a weird scene left Li Yao with a ridiculous illusion.

He felt that the town covered in the shield was the home of the dead, and the skeletons were planting seaweed, raising jellyfish, herding fish, collecting pearls, and living a comfortable life, just like the living peasants on the ground.

“In the past, when Lord Wang was in power, he suspected that Mother White Lotus’ base might be on a certain island offshore. That was why all the searches in the forests on the land had proved futile.”

Inside the cabin of the shipwreck, the few representatives gathered again. Special Agent Long smiled and said, “Lord Wang even summoned a lot of Cultivators to search on the islands near the ocean, but they failed to find any trace of Mother White Lotus. It never occurred to me that the legendary ‘White Lotus Island’ is actually on the ocean floor!”

“There is not any sanctuary for common folks on the ground,” Wan Mingzhu said coldly. “Where can the dead escape to if we don’t manage to find a shelter at the bottom of the ocean?”

“As long as the operation works out,” Special Agent Long said, “I believe that before long, you and your believers will be walking in the world openly again, Mother White Lotus!”

“Then, let’s see if the ‘core’ truly boasts infinite mysteries as Lord Wang claims!”

The shipwreck entered the shield as if it was piercing through a soft bubble.

The ghosts did not need air. Therefore, the shield was not meant to block the seawater but to stabilize the magnetic field so that the ghosts would not disperse.

The shipwreck slowly stopped in front of the hill. The seaweed and barnacles ahead wriggled for a moment, revealing a tiny hole.

An object that looked like an enormous sea cucumber extended out of the hole into a secret cave below the hill.

It seemed to be a natural tube that was designed to transport personnel.

Thankfully, the tube was not closely stuck to the wall of the cave. Therefore, Li Yao was able to maneuver Neltharion to cram in through the gap between the tube and the wall.

After a soul-stirring journey in the darkness, Li Yao found himself in a bright place, which turned out to be a spacious palace piled up with countless translucent crystals.

The exit of the cave was in the ceiling, which was connected to a huge pool at the center of the palace.

The palace had been installed with special barriers to ensure that there was enough fresh air and sufficient air pressure. Not a drop of seawater had leaked into the room.

Those who were qualified to enter the palace were only Mother White Lotus herself and the representatives of the other three Rapscallions.

Fearing Wan Mingzhu’s expertise, Li Yao did not dare fly Neltharion too close to them. He simply stuck it to the edge of the pool and observed the four individuals in the palace.

At that moment, Wan Mingzhu was no longer a monster made of broken bones. Instead, she had changed into a vivid body and looked like a beautiful middle-aged lady with fair skin.

It should be a puppet body that she had carefully refined for herself. Unless the high-level Cultivators scrutinized her carefully with spiritual energy, it would be extremely difficult to tell whether she was dead or alive.

But her eyeballs, which were as cold as ice, were still a little bit rigid. She was also wearing necklaces and bracelets made of tiny skeletons and bones on her long neck and fair wrist, which added a frigid charisma to her.

She was sitting on a seat carved out of jade and eyeing the three representatives coldly.

Han Yuantai, the representative from Cloud Qin, was basically the same as half a year ago.

There was a man who was slim and tall and looked like a sculpture cut out of the root of a tree. He reeked of soil even at first glance. He was likely a representative of ‘Heaven Battering King’ Qi Changsheng.

Special Agent Long—the most important representative of all, who came on behalf of Wang Xi—however, was not exactly what Li Yao had imagined.

Li Yao had thought that she would be either a beautiful, manipulative woman or a coldblooded, mechanical female assassin. Judging from the conversation, he had believed that the first guess was more plausible.

However, her real appearance was much plainer than he had expected. Her hair was somewhat yellow, her skin was rough, and her facial features were unattractive. Other than the scarlet mole on the top left corner of her lips, there was absolutely nothing about her that called for attention.

She was wearing male clothes and a pair of thin-skinned boots. Her waistband was tightened, and her shoulders were broad, but she was not covering her breasts at all. Her garment brought an unusual handsomeness to her.

After blinking, Li Yao felt that he was already forgetting what Special Agent Long looked like.

On second thought, such an image did befit a super assassin from the Ghost Character. Only such a face could allow her to hide in the crowd without alarming anyone.

As for the mole above her lips and her large breasts, they were obviously features that she had intentionally exposed in order to leave a deep impression on the observers. When she was obliged to hide herself, she only needed to cover the mole and bind her breasts in order to change into a completely different person!

Li Yao could not discern the Cultivation of Special Agent Long and Qi Changsheng’s representative yet.

However, by simple analysis, those qualified to participate in the secret meeting on behalf of the two unparalleled rapscallions were certainly their most trusted subordinates, just like Han Yuantai had been sent by Han Baling, the Regent of Cloud Qin.

How weak could their trusted subordinates possibly be?

Han Yuantai was in the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage. The two representatives who stood for Wang Xi and Qi Changsheng should be at least in the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage.

Two in the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage, one in the middle level, and Wan Mingzhu, who was a mysterious super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. This place also happened to be Wan Mingzhu’s home field, with countless skeletons and zombies lurking nearby deep inside the undersea city. Li Yao discovered that he was no match for them.

“Let’s begin.”

Inside the palace, Wan Mingzhu spoke to Special Agent Long.

Special Agent Long observed the size of the palace, as if she was trying to find a suitable place. Then, she walked to the center of the palace and fell on one of her knees. The four Cosmos Rings that she was wearing on her hands were glittering nonstop as she retrieved dozens of components and tossed them onto the ground in crisp sounds.

Li Yao’s eyes suddenly shone. The components could obvious be divided into two parts according to their different styles. Some of them seemed to be made of red copper. They were relatively crude and shabby. It appeared that they had been crafted manually a long, long time ago.

The other components, in comparison, were glittering and showed the flawless, errorless features on the surface, indicating a high capability in fashioning!

It meant that if the component was a right-angle one, the angle of the component would be absolutely ninety degrees without the slightest slant. If it was a straight rail, the component would be absolutely straight, and there would not be the tiniest error however it was measured!

Such magical equipment had obviously been crafted through with technology far more advanced than the technology of the Ancient Sages Sector!

They were either from the Pangu civilization or the Nuwa Clan!

Chapter 1453 - Divine Palace!

Li Yao observed the flawless components carefully and scanned the spiritual stripe and the runes on them.

After staying on Kunlun for five years, he had gained a preliminary understanding about the rune systems of the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan. Although he could not figure out the exact meaning of all the runes yet, he knew about the subtle differences between their styles.

The Pangu Clan’s runes, just like their buildings, were so strict that it bordered on rigidness. Right angles and straight lines were used to form the delicate objects. Arcs and circles were barely adopted.

The runes of the Nuwa Clan, on the other hand, had a lot of twists and turns. Stripes resembling the clouds and actinomorphic lines were often used, which in many occasions made the runes seem disordered. They seemed to be filled with boundless vigor that could not be vented elsewhere.

On the ‘core’ that Special Agent Long had retrieved from the Cosmos Ring, rune circles in the shape of waves were blossoming, which was an obvious feature of the rune system of the Nuwa Clan.

It meant that the Ancient Sages Sector, which was hidden in the dark nebula, did not escape from the search of the coalition army of the Nuwa Clan and human beings in the

God-Sealing War hundreds of thousands of years ago, and a great battle had once taken place there, right?

It did make sense. The so-called Twelve Gold Statues of Cloud Qin were obviously Colossi, the super magical equipment that the Nuwa Clan specifically crafted for human beings so that human beings would be capable to compete with the Pangu Clan.

If this place had never been discovered by the coalition army of the Nuwa Clan and human beings, it would have been impossible for the Twelve Gold Statues of Cloud Qin to show up.

Pondering, Li Yao focused his attention on observation.

The entire ground was filled with the components. The components that were crafted in the primitive and crude ways adopted a lot of mortise-and-tenon-like structures with many arced and straight-lined rails on which countless sophisticated rune arrays had been carved.

It was obvious that the runes had been left by human beings of later generations. Li Yao could tell that their function was to decompress certain highly focused information. They were similar to the parsing rune arrays carved on jade chips, except that they were a hundred times more complicated.

On one of her knees, Special Agent Long assembled most of the components unhurriedly into a circular rail about five meters in diameter. There were four bizarre-shaped units that looked like toads opening their mouths to the ceiling around the rail. They appeared to be where the crystals were inserted.

As expected, Special Agent Long retrieved four crimson crystals the size of a fist from the Cosmos Rings and placed them into the four metal toads’ wide-open mouths respectively. Half of the crystal fitted in every mouth perfectly.

Hum…

The circular rails shivered for a moment, and the runes shone one after another. Not only were they flashing on the rail, they even floated into the air, yielding a half-round shield of light where thousands of runes were rotating.

Special Agent Long bit her lip hard, her face solemn. There was obscure expectation in her eyes as she piled the highly delicate components on the fusiform ‘core’ one after another, combining them into an octagonal, glittering device that looked like a crystal.

Han Yuantai and Qi Changsheng’s representative both held their breath as they gazed at the device in Special Agent Long’s hand.

Wan Mingzhu did not have any breath in the first place, but two frozen ghostly flames were also beaming out of her eyes, indicating that she was quite anxious.

There was no need to mention Li Yao, whose teeth had cut deep into his lips.

Holding the device with both hands, Special Agent Long slowly carried it to the center of the shield of runes. Then, she loosened her hands bit by bit, and the device floated in midair!

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

Dozens of silver rays of light shot out of the circular rails and hit the different facets of the device.

After they were refracted inside the almost transparent device, they turned into ripples of shimmers that gradually became a panoramic operation menu!

Impressive! Li Yao raised his thumb for the pioneer refiners of the Ancient Sages Sector in his heart.

He finally understood what the device was for. The item that was addressed by Special Agent Long as a ‘core’ should be a storage unit from a mainframe crystal processor of the Nuwa civilization like the storage chips on the crystal processors of human beings.

Although there was no telling exactly how the storage unit had fallen into the hands of human beings, it was obvious that the corresponding mainframe crystal processor and operation menu were already gone by the time the gadget was discovered.

The circular rail around was obviously a convenient, understandable operation system for human beings that the offspring crafted to retrieve the information from the storage unit by rewriting a whole set of parsing and analyzing runes! Such an operation system was certainly no match for the mainframe crystal processor corresponding with the storage unit. Perhaps, it could only trigger one percent of the information stored inside.

However, for the ancient people who did not know the first thing about crystal processors, their achievement was already awe-inspiring!

Special Agent Long stared at the operation menu in a daze for a while. Her hands were frozen in midair for a moment before they touched the thousands of runes like flowing water.

Shua!

The halo around the device drowned the entire palace like ocean water. The image gradually turned clear, which was apparently an extremely delicate 3D map that was as complicated as a labyrinth. Judging from the appearance, it should be the guide of a large military base.

The light and shadow brushed the faces of Wan Mingzhu, Han Yuantai, and Qi Changsheng’s representative, as if it were bringing their souls away.

Despite the high Cultivation and the resolution of the natives of the Ancient Sages Sector, they could not help but feel astounded when faced with the extraordinary views that were eons ahead of their generation.

But Special Agent Long appeared to be more confused than shocked. She was looking at the map in a particularly weird and thoughtful way. Silently, she tapped on the operation menu softly.

Shua! Shua! Shua!

The 3D map was shrunk in size until it was reduced to a tiny point.

What replaced it was continuous mountains and a broken shoreline, then the outline of a whole continent, and then the transparent representation of a planet as well as the relative position of the planet in the entire galaxy.

It felt like the camera depicting the map was drawn far, far away, with the plotting scale reduced incessantly, until it stopped at the depths of the universe.

Endless complicated data was floating in midair like a bunch of crazily jumping fish. They were the mathematical expressions of the fundamental information of the Ancient Sages Sector, including the features of the star of the Ancient Sages Sector, the number of planets and satellites, and the stable areas in space that were suitable as jump points.

“This is the Ancient Sages Sector!” Han Yuantai exclaimed.

For those in the Nascent Soul Stage, as long as they held their breath and flew upward on their flying swords nonstop, it was possible for them to break through the atmosphere and observe their world from the universe.

Therefore, even the most idiotic ancient Cultivators knew that the planet was not flat. They had come to the realization that their species lived on giant spheres that were surrounded by a boundless universe a long time ago.

It was the same in the Ancient Sages Sector. The natives knew that the world was round and had even painted many rather detailed global maps by surveying from the space.

Therefore, Han Yuantai and the rest of them soon recognized the world on the map.

Special Agent Long smiled. She was slow and rigid when she operated first, as if she was learning how to use it for the first time. However, she soon became more and more deft and smooth as if she was already familiar with it. Her hands gradually turned into two clusters of gray mist, as more and more runes were compiled into a series of instructions by her. Eventually, she smashed the set of instructions consisting of hundreds of runes. After a bam, the global map of the Ancient Sages Sector broke apart, replaced by brand-new 3D structural designs that looked like enormous metal puppets of different models!

His eyes bulging out, Li Yao almost shrieked.

They—they were the designs of dozens of different Colossi!

Although they were only the rough, general designs, many of which were lackluster and incomplete because not all the information had been successfully retrieved, the incredible spiritual energy circulations and the magical equipment accommodation patterns still dumbfounded Li Yao. He felt that hundreds of peals of thunder were bursting out in his head at the same time.

That was not the end of it. As if she was planning to scare everybody on the spot to death and Mother White Lotus back alive, Special Agent Long displayed a series of different animated pictures.

On the pictures were tiny human beings who crawled into the spiritual residence in the Colossi, sat cross-legged, and mumbled spells to themselves, while the spiritual energy circulation in their bodies underwent fantastic changes.

Li Yao immediately realized that they were the tutorials of the Colossi for the human soldiers to learn how to pilot the dozens of different Colossi!

Allowing the shadows of the dozens of Colossi to keep performing unbelievable movements in midair, Special Agent Long casually asked, “What do you think, everybody?”

Wan Mingzhu, Han Yuantai, and Qi Changsheng’s representative had not recovered from their shock yet.

It was not until he was in a daze for one minute that Han Yuantai took a long breath and mumbled to himself, “It’s real. The legendary deities and devils in the primeval era are real, and… and they even boasted such magnificent power!

“Some magical equipment and such techniques are indeed not something that the Cultivators who struggle to survive in the mortal world can create. This—this is the field of the deities and devils!

“We thought that there were only twelve Gold Statues of Cloud Qin, which have been destroyed one after another after a hundred thousand years of battles. It never occurred to me that there would actually be dozens of them!

“So to speak, even if the original Twelve Gold Statues of Cloud Qin are gone today, it is still possible for us to find more intact, undamaged gold statues?”

Special Agent Long smiled. “It may be even better than you think. According to the scattered information that Lord Wang has collected from the unofficial records and the notes of the previous dynasties, the Divine Palace hidden in the eternal night in the northern reaches is definitely much more than a place where a batch of Cloud Qin Gold Statues are buried. It is possible that the place is a Cloud Qin Gold Statue factory!

“As long as we get control over the Divine Palace, we can produce as many Cloud Qin Gold Statues as we want!”

Chapter 1454 - Path to the Deities’ Realm!

Qi Changsheng’s representative was glittering because of her words. He could not help but step forward and ask in such a hoarse voice that his throat might be fuming, “Is it even possible for us to produce the Cloud Qin Gold Statues on our own?”

“Of course it is!” Special Agent Long replied confidently. “Based on the motion pictures here and the records of the previous dynasties, it should be easy to guess that the Cloud Qin Gold Statues were magical equipment designed for us in the first place. The empty cabin inside them is not very spacious. It is impossible for the prehistorical deities and devils whose body we have found in the wilderness to have crammed into them!”

“That’s true.” Han Yuantai and the rest of them nodded, deep in thought.

“Since the magical equipment is designed for us, the deities and devils would have taught us the extraordinary techniques so that we can produce them on our own.”

Looking at the three of them, Special Agent Long threw out yet another bomb unhurriedly. “Moreover, according to Lord Wang’s speculation, other than being a factory where the Cloud Qin Gold Statues can be manufactured, this Divine Palace can even reach out to the real deities’ realm. There is even a mysterious Heaven’s Path that allows people to ascend to the deities’ realm directly!”

“What!”

This time, Wan Mingzhu, Han Yuantai, and Qi Changsheng’s representative were more shocked than ever. Han Yuantai’s voice was utterly twisted as he bulged his eyes and demanded, “Why didn’t you tell us such an important secret earlier?”

Special Agent Long smiled and said, “The prophecy of ascension is too groundless after all. You wouldn’t have believed it even if I told you in advance, would you?

“Only after witnessing the incredible views that definitely do not belong to the human world with your own eyes will you believe in Lord Wang’s assumption. The Divine Palace is actually a station between the world of humans and the realm of deities!

“Tens of thousands of years ago, Lord Wang received the scraps of a notebook that should’ve belonged to the owner of this Thousand Stars Tray. He recorded his experiences in the Divine Palace. According to him, he was enlightened by the deities in the Divine Palace and appreciated the infinite mysteries of other worlds that could never be seen in the Ancient Sages Sector. What else can the places be if not the deities’ realm?

“It is said that the deities’ realm is thousands of times larger than the Ancient Sages Sector. The Ancient Sages Sector, which we think to be the whole world, is but a drop in the bucket in front of the real deities’ realm!

“Also, there’s amazing magical equipment hidden in the Divine Palace which allows the passengers to shuttle between the mortal world and the deities’ realm free at will. One does not have to train oneself to the ultimate level in order to ‘break the void’. As long as they know the trick, even ordinary people without the slightest spiritual energy and their pets can ascend to the deities’ realm safely.

“How about it, Mother White Lotus? Is it a fair deal to trade your army of ghouls for the core of the map of the Divine Palace?”

A hint of greed flowed out of Wan Mingzhu’s frosted face. She stared at the map for a long time before she squinted and coldly said, “The deities’ realm is too groundless after all for anyone to pursue after through great trouble. Let’s talk about the Cloud Qin Gold Statues first!

“Your Lord Wang made the Divine Palace out to be second to none in this world. Judging from the motion pictures here, he was not exactly exaggerating!

“However, no matter how many mysteries there are in the Divine Palace, they are only useful to us if we have the place under control and can develop it on a large scale!”

She considered the Cloud Qin Gold Statues as the most important items in the Divine Palace and the so-called ‘deities’ realm’ to be just a groundless ‘bonus’. It would be great if they earned the bonus, but it would not hurt if they did not.

However, when Li Yao heard what Special Agent Long said, it was no different from yet another round of rumbling thunder. He felt that his every brain cell was humming.

Of course, the deities’ realm and deities did not exist in the world, but it did not mean that the notes that Wang Xi had collected were lying!

The so-called deities’ realm that was thousands of times larger than the Ancient Sages Sector probably referred to the three thousand Sectors beyond the dark nebula. The theory that ‘even one’s pets would be able to ascend to the deities’ realm as long as they grasped the tricks’ was more like a description of a space jump across Sectors!

Could it be that the so-called Divine Palace was a war base and a communication station that the Nuwa civilization had established in the Ancient Sages Sector hundreds of thousands ago and that a certain launch platform in the Divine Palace, similar to the Heaven’s Artillery and the Eye of Blood Demon, could penetrate the dark nebula and send the natives of the Ancient Sages Sector to the outside world, as a piece of super teleportation magical equipment?

It was indeed a piece of shocking news!

Inside the palace, Special Agent Long nodded. “Exactly. Although we have the map of the Divine Palace, there will be a lot of obstacles awaiting us if we plan on developing it for real. The greatest hindrance for us is that the Divine Palace is too remote. It is actually located in the Land of Eternal Night, tens of thousands of kilometers to the north of the Dark Cloud Prairies!”

“The Land of Eternal Night is much more than a far-flung area with frigid weather.” Han Yuantai frowned. “It is very close to the north pole of the Ancient Sages Sector and often caught in sunless nights all year long. The spiritual energy there is extremely turbulent, too, making the Cultivators unable to fully carry out their Cultivation. There are also the freezing gales that are almost as powerful as the febrile typhoons. Super blizzards break out every day. It is impossible for an ordinary person to survive one day there!

“Even a whole team of Cultivators must tread very lightly and ensure that the supplies and camps are properly handled. If there is negligence in any procedure, even thousands of Cultivators can freeze to death overnight!

“Also, in the vast snow field up north, there’s also dozens of ferocious beasts that are not scared of the cold weather and can even manipulate the ice and frost free at will. Barbarians that are even more tough, brutal, and cunning than the soldiers of Cloud Qin live in the place, too!

“Cloud Qin has always regarded the Land of Eternal Night as an inferno of ice, and we very rarely go there. Even when the prisoners are exiled, we will never choose the Land of Eternal Night as the destination because it is a penalty that is much crueler than any torture imaginable!

“When I was young, I used to train by myself in the Land of Eternal Night. I fought the man-eating whales and the barbarians in the wilderness there, which laid a solid foundation for my advancement into the Nascent Soul Stage later. However, if I was asked to do it again, I’d have to hesitate and consider it very carefully!”

“That’s why the four parties here must be united,” Special Agent Long said. “It’s the only way that we can move into the Divine Palace against the blizzards in the Land of Eternal Night and excavate all its secrets!”

“Precisely!” Qi Changsheng’s representative chuckled, his facial muscles twisting. “For the dozens of Cloud Qin Gold Statues, not just the Land of Eternal Night, even the deepest depths of hell must be broken into by the Heaven Battering Army!”

“Alright. Then, please forward everything that you have seen today to the Heaven Battering King and Regent Han.” Special Agent Long smiled. “Also, please ask Regent Han to establish supply points on the way first. We’ll settle the time and location of our next meeting soon!”

“Alright!”

“Alright!”

Han Yuantai and Qi Changsheng’s representatives both agreed quickly.

Mother White Lotus’ face suddenly turned extremely weird. Her expression did not change, but something was wriggling below her thin, fair skin.

All of a sudden, his eyes that looked like two glass pebbles darted toward Neltharion as she shrieked, “Who’s there?”

“Not good!” Special Agent Long, Han Yuantai, and Qi Changsheng’s representative were all alarmed. “An intruder!”

“You are asking to be killed by trespassing on the White Lotus Island!”

Pale flames were burning furiously around Mother White Lotus as she dashed into the pool at the center of the palace in a streak of whiteness. Raging mists were triggered by the ghostly flames, but she was one step slower.

Neltharion had long been fully activated and darted out of the cave toward the deep sea without looking back!

“The enemy must’ve overheard our whole conversation. He cannot be allowed to get away!” Special Agent Long shrieked at the top of her voice. Simultaneously, her hands turned into two clusters of gray mists quickly, and she turned off the operation menu on the storage core and dismantled the enormous, precise ‘Thousand Stars Tray’, ready to store them back into different Cosmos Rings according to the category of the components.

Looking at each other, Han Yuantai and Qi Changsheng’s representative both realized the severity of the issue. They gritted their teeth and followed Wan Mingzhu out of the palace!

Sensing Wan Mingzhu’s overwhelming fury, the whole of White Lotus Island was seething. Countless skeletons jumped out of the sand, with green and blue ghostly fire beaming out of their deep, dark eyes. The remaining souls that looked like jellyfish had been gathered into a rather large army that was emitting threatening brilliance!

An inconspicuous spiritual wave was fleeing westward, toward the continent!

“Go after him!”

Hundreds of colorful streaks of brilliance tailed the spiritual wave like hundreds of ravenous sharks!

On White Lotus Island, there were only few ghost soldiers and the guards that Han Yuantai and Qi Changsheng’s representatives had brought with them left.

Inside the palace, Special Agent Long was left alone. She was still gritting her teeth to dismantle the Thousand Stars Tray and the core device.

The prehistoric magical equipment was structured quite precisely, and it was not easy to dismantle. She was so anxious that she made a lot of mistakes that she should not have. In the end, she was almost in a flurry.

After dismantling all the components, she finally took a deep breath in relief. She was about to activate the Cosmos Rings and absorb the components when angry splashing noises echoed in the pool behind her.

“The guy got away!”

Wan Mingzhu’s voice was sharp and high-pitched. She sounded really pissed off!

“What!”

Greatly shocked, Special Agent Long was going to turn her head when cold sweat suddenly poured all over her forehead. Gritting her teeth, she rolled forward and reached for the sword on her back!

However, an immense blast threw her back brutally. The spiritual energy dashed into the veins and acupoints on her back like vipers, almost paralyzing her entire spine. Her hand that was going for the sword was delayed by half a second!

During that half a second, an unstoppably sharp edge cut the handle of her sword on her shoulder!

If she continued reaching for the sword, her wrist would certainly be cut off!

Chapter 1455 - Intangible!

Special Agent Long truly was a super assassin from Ghost Character, the most mysterious intelligence and assassination organization in the Ancient Sages Sector. She was still able to react although she was caught unprepared.

Instead of retreating, she counterattacked and kicked backward with her right leg as if it were the scorpion of a tail, and a thin, sharp blade covered in blue ejected from the heel.

In the meantime, her spiritual energy poured into the sword, which roared and automatically broke out of the sheath, splitting into dozens of streaks of brightness and rained upon the enemy behind her!

As it turned out, she had intentionally reached toward the handle of the sword when she could have controlled her flying sword with telepathic thoughts remotely, all for the purpose of baiting the enemy and shortening the distance between then, so that she could perform the deadly move with the poisoned dagger below her boot!

Pu!

The poisoned dagger pierced into a cluster of sticky gel without a sound, but the venom failed to leak into the flesh and blood of the target. Even the furious energy contained inside the dagger was completely sealed.

Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang!

The overwhelming sword auras were broken by tiny needles like bubbles, too.

Boom!

Special Agent Long’s back suffered yet another heavy blow, as if a shooting star had hit her spine brutally. She could not help but vomit a mouthful of blood, and the spiritual energy inside her body was in disorder for a moment.

Crack! Crack!

A streak of blueness rushed close from her back and hovered around her. While her spiritual energy was in disorder, dozens of sharp thorns pierced into her body brutally, locking all the acupoints in her body.

The more she summoned her spiritual energy, the deeper the thorns were piercing into her bones and veins, making her suffer as if thousands of ants were biting her heart!

Special Agent Long grunted and finally could not help it any longer. She collapsed to the ground and shivered as if she were being shocked. Foam was pouring out of her mouth.

A shackle of a skeleton vulture made of jade had appeared on her body, which locked every critical part on her body and deprived her of all her combat ability.

Behind her, Li Yao stored the gel that had been left with a hole by the poisoned dagger back into his Cosmos Ring before he quickly walked over to her.

Special Agent Long trembled hard as she stared at Li Yao full of resentment.

When Li Yao opened her mouth, she suddenly opened her mouth and spurted three balls in red, yellow, and blue from her mouth. The balls expanded exponentially the moment they touched the air. When they reached Li Yao's face, they had already grown into the sharpest blades almost half a foot long!

Li Yao, however, had long been prepared. The upper half of his body suddenly blurred because he made hundreds of dodging movements in the blink of an eye. As a result, the three blades failed to lock onto the enemy and circled in midair like headless flies, only to be pinched by Li Yao with two fingers easily and flicked away the next second!

Pa! Pa! Pa!

Hardly had the three blades been snapped away by him when they suddenly exploded in three dull fulminations. The metal scraps the size of rice spluttered to more than ten meters away!

Although the explosions were not very powerful, it would have been more than enough for them to wound the two fingers that were of paramount importance for him had he reacted less promptly.

Judging from the stinky mist left in the air after the explosions, the three blades definitely contained rather sordid poisons, which would leave troublesome sequelae after they entered the body even if the wounds were healed.

The Ghost Character's methods were indeed shameless enough!

Li Yao strode forward without any hesitation. He pressed Special Agent Long's jaw and forced her to open the mouth. After examining her mouth carefully and finding no suicidal magical equipment made of jade, Li Yao was more or less relieved.

“You can save yourself the trouble!” Special Agent Long was actually laughing.

From the moment Li Yao appeared with Wan Mingzhu’s voice to the moment when she was completely suppressed, although the two of them had several rounds of soul-stirring fights, it actually only took one second.

However, Special Agent Long was neither frightened by the enemy who jumped out of nowhere nor devastated because Li Yao suppressed her. Even the resentment on her face just now had been faked in order to ease Li Yao’s wariness so that she would have a chance to spurt out the three balls.

Seeing that the three balls did not work out, she resumed her calmness quickly and eyed Li Yao with great interest. “I am not that kind of low-level agent. If I want to kill myself, I can die painlessly at any time in a hundred different ways. You will not be able to stop me even if you have locked all the veins and nerves on my body. So, I don’t need to stuff a venom container into my tooth like a fool.

“What a fine shackle. Not only does it lock my acupoints and nerves, it is also binding my neck with metal threads as thin as hair and sticking certain explosive magical equipment to my heart. As soon as I show any anomaly, my heart would be obliterated, and the metal thread would cut off my head. This is indeed a well-designed ultimate treasure!”

Special Agent Long’s voice was still as comforting as the spring breeze, with the sincerest compliment, as if the life-blighting shackle was not tightened to her critical parts. She continued remarking, “Ghost Character has collected the interrogation magical equipment of all the previous dynasties. Naturally, a lot of them are about barriers and shackles. However, after more than ten years, and combining the expertise of different schools, we still haven’t created a shackle as marvelous as this one!

“You have such an extraordinary treasure, and your Cultivation is unbelievably high, too. The needles that broke my sword auras just now are also spectacular. So, I assume that you must be Master Spiritual Vulture, the famous Grandmaster of Great Zhou in the world of Cultivators recently?

“Lord Wang has often mentioned you recently, Master Spiritual Vulture. He thinks very highly of you and believes that you are definitely qualified as a top ten expert in the world. Had it not been for the treacherous situations lately, which made it difficult for him to appear in public, he would’ve found a way to meet you and have a nice chat over delicious wine!

“I thought that it was just Lord Wang’s flattery, but after fighting you myself, I finally understand what seeing is believing means!

“I, Long Yangjun from Ghost Character, under Lord Wang’s command, pay respect to Master Spiritual Vulture!”

Long Yangjun struggled to fall on one of her knees and, holding the heavy shackle, performed the courtesy to Li Yao as if she were truly sincere.

Li Yao, however, knew that the super assassin was merely buying herself time with all the irrelevant talks so that Mother White Lotus and the main troop could rescue her after they got back.

He did not have time to play the word game with Long Yangjun. Turning a deaf ear to everything that she said, he sorted through the whole ground of components briefly and activated his own Cosmos Rings, setting the absorption range as all the components in front of him. Then, he initiated the process!

But the Cosmos Rings showed no response.

What the heck?

Li Yao frowned. He extended his telepathic thoughts into the Cosmos Rings and checked it out. Everything was alright. In order to store all the magical equipment components, he had already rearranged the space in the Cosmos Rings and spared the room of three Cosmos Rings. There should be enough space for storage without any conflict. How come the components were not being absorbed into the Cosmos Rings?

“With all due respect, are you trying to steal the Thousand Stars Tray and the map core left by the primeval deities, Senior Spiritual Vulture?” Long Yangjun asked politely.

Li Yao glanced at her but did not respond. He focused his attention on the Cosmos Rings.

Even if something went wrong with the Cosmos Rings, it did not make sense at all that three of them had malfunctioned at the same time!

“If I may advise you, senior,” Long Yangjun slowly said, “your Cosmos Rings are fine, senior. It’s because I have installed special barriers on the Thousand Stars Tray and the map core. They are essentially giant, invisible locks. Only the Cosmos Rings that I carry, which correspond with the barriers, can absorb the components.

“Otherwise, wouldn’t it be hilarious if somebody absorbed the items of such importance into their Cosmos Rings casually and took them away?”

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. Then, he eyed the four Cosmos Rings on Long Yangjun’s fingers maliciously.

“Are you thinking that you only need to cut off my fingers and steal my Cosmos Rings in order to absorb the Thousand Stars Tray and the map core and bring them away without any trace, senior?”

Long Yangjun opened her fingers in front of Li Yao and said unhurriedly, “Long Wang thought of such a scenario before I set off. He planted special barriers into the four Cosmos Rings and my body. The four Cosmos Rings are only stable when they are worn on my fingers and sense my temperature, breath, heartbeat, and pulse, and if I send special telepathic thoughts to them every minute!

“If any of the conditions are not met, the self-destruction rune array inside the four Cosmos Rings will be activated, destroying the internal world inside them and turning them into four common rings that can no longer store anything.

“It means that whether you want to rob me of the four Cosmos Rings, or you want to blow up by soul and simply keep my breath and heartbeat, senior, it is not going to work out.”

Li Yao cursed aloud in his heart.

He analyzed every muscle on Long Yangjun’s face carefully, trying to tell if she was speaking the truth by her micro expressions, to no avail.

The super assassin of the Ghost Character must have received the harshest training on interrogation. Neither her lips nor her pupils were giving away any useful information.

“If you don’t believe it, senior, you can take off a Cosmos Ring from my fingers and have a go yourself. Lord Wang has long admired you, senior, and I do not dare lie to you as his subordinate.

“Of course, senior, you are a renowned master in refining. It’s possible that you have a profound understanding about the arts of barriers. Given a couple of days, senior, you may be able to crack the barriers that Lord Wang has set up.”

Li Yao’s eyelids twitched violently.

Everybody had their own specialty, and every finger was of different length. Although he was a master of refining, he had never had much expertise on the arts of barriers. It was sort of one of his weaknesses.

Besides, he did not have several days. Mother White Lotus and the rest of them were no fools. After following Neltharion for dozens of kilometers, they certain would realize that something was wrong and immediately return!

Chapter 1456 - Escape!

Should I just leave the garbage components outside and carry the map core to run away immediately? Li Yao thought to himself, but he immediately disapproved of the idea.

The periphery device named Thousand Stars Tray boasted the technique to parse the map core, which involved many sophisticated techniques on barriers, spiritual energy, linguistics, and compression and decompression of telepathic thoughts.

Li Yao was not a god. He was best at small, single magical equipment for battle. Crystal suits and Colossi were his specialties. He was certainly not a man that could craft all kinds of magical equipment.

For example, he did not know much about decompressing and translating the information of the primeval civilizations.

To make matters worse, he did not have the help of the super crystal processors with immense computational ability on this relatively ‘primitive’ planet. He also did not have the professionals to assist him. It was practically impossible for him to craft a set of decompressing and translational magical equipment similar to the Thousand Stars Tray, much less compiling a sophisticated operation system with a brand-new rune system!

Without the Thousand Stars Tray, it would be impossible to display the map of the Divine Palace. Even if it was displayed one way or another, it would still be impossible to tell whether or not there were more secrets to the map!

Li Yao looked at Long Yangjun again.

He suddenly realized that, compared with ‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu, Lead Eunuch Wang Xi was the true crux of the operation.

How exactly did Wang Xi discover the so-called ‘Divine Palace’, and how could Wang Xi’s subordinate turn on the map of the Divine Palace so skillfully and perform all the complicated operations?

Also, Wang Xi had mentioned to Yan Liren before that the people stranded in the Ancient Sages Sector were the frogs at the bottom of a well.

Right now, Wang Xi had found the Divine Palace who allegedly led to the ‘deities’ realm’. The project had already begun more than ten years ago.

So, did it mean that Wang Xi had been working hard to jump out of the ‘well’?

What was his purpose exactly?

Was the mysterious signal sent to the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector a hundred years ago related to Wang Xi to some extent?

Or maybe, was it because the scouts from the Imperium of True Human Beings were hiding behind Wang Xi?

Li Yao had planned to have a nice conversation with ‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu first.

However, it was rather questionable whether or not Wan Mingzhu was of a mind to communicate with him peacefully now that he had eavesdropped on such a shocking secret.

Anybody would try to kill the eavesdropper to prevent the secret from leaking, right?

It was not like he could tell Wan Mingzhu directly that he was in fact a fellow Cultivator from a different world and that he was to some extent a ‘deity’ that they had been dreaming about, could he?

Even if Wan Mingzhu miraculously bought it, it would be quite awkward if the forces from the Imperium of True Human Beings or even more terrifying existences were lurking behind one of the Four Rapscallions.

Li Yao had never been a man who was willing to let someone else take control over his fate.

This place was Wan Mingzhu’s home field. Nobody could tell how dominating she could be. Even if communication was truly necessary, it would be best that he talked with her in a place that was less passive for him.

He might as well find a place to chat with Wang Xi’s special agent first and see what the previously powerful and now mysterious Lead Eunuch was up to exactly!

The more information that he grasped, the more likely he would be able to understand the general picture of everything. By then, he would be able to choose whether to expose his identity or to go to the Divine Palace as Master Spiritual Vulture.

“You, collect the Thousand Stars Tray and the map core. Follow me!”

Li Yao spoke to Long Yangjun aloofly.

“I am not supposed to disobey you, senior.” Long Yangjun was not scared of Li Yao’s cold eyes at all. “However, I have not fulfilled the mission that Lord Wang entrusted to me yet. I’m very curious about one thing. What can you use to threaten me? After all, senior, you should be very clear that I, as a member of Ghost Character and a special agent that Lord Wang picked in person to carry out the mission, am certainly not scared of death.”

“Of course, you are not scared of death, but you are scared that you mission will fail.” Li Yao said coldly. “Leave with me now. One more word, and I will destroy the Thousand Stars Tray and the map core. We’ll go separate ways!

“I don’t care. I was just roaming for fun while I was unoccupied before I somehow wandered to this place and overheard your secret!

“Fascinating as the Divine Palace and the Cloud Qin Gold Statues sound, I will suffer no loss even if I cannot find the precise map to explore them!

“Your master Wang Xi, on the other hand, has planned the mission for decades. Who do you think will find the loss more intolerable, him or me?”

The smile on Long Yangjun’s face gradually froze, and the fear of losing control over the situation was popping up in her eyes.

Sneering, Li Yao generated a greenish fire in his hands. The fire was burning more and more fiercely in cracking noises.

Without further ado, holding back the excruciating pain caused by the shackle, Long Yangjun raised her hand. The Thousand Stars Tray and the map core turned into hundreds of streaks of brilliance and dived into her four Cosmos Rings!

“Excellent!” Li Yao nodded in satisfaction. He snapped his fingers, shooting three sparks from the ghostly fire to three key parts on the shackle on Long Yangjun’s body. The thorns that pierced deeply into her veins were slightly retreated so that she could summon part of her spiritual energy.

“You are a smart person. Don’t do anything stupid. Your life is worthless, but the map of the Divine Palace is invaluable. Don’t do anything that gives me a reason to destroy it!”

Li Yao’s voice was utterly unemotional, as if it was made by the gears and bearings inside a machine.

Long Yangjun nodded obediently. At Li Yao’s gesture, she walked in front of him.

When the two of them left the White Lotus Island without a sound, the skeletons and remaining souls guarding the place did not know what had happened yet.

However, in the seawater not far away, a surging undercurrent was returning with the utmost fury.

Mother White Lotus had realized that she had been tricked and was rushing back at full speed!

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

The jellyfish floating around the White Lotus Island suddenly grew agitated. They all opened their transparent bodies as if they were balloons being blown!

Under the illumination of their colorful mystic rays, Li Yao and Long Yangjun no longer had nowhere to hide.

The round jellyfish all drifted toward the two of them. Some of them even exploded without any warning when they collided.

“Let’s go!”

Li Yao pushed Long Yangjun’s back heavily. His spiritual energy flooded out of every pore on his body, turning himself into a jet submarine, which allowed him to crawl out of their siege before the hundreds of jellyfish surrounded them!

The hundreds of jellyfish exploded like fireworks, providing even more impetus for Li Yao. He was able to dash forward abruptly. Then, he retrieved dozens of bizarre-shaped components from the Cosmos Rings and wore them on his limbs and his back. Like enormous fins, all the components could be moved freely.

Shua!

While Long Yangjun stared at him in the utmost astonishment, Li Yao controlled the ‘fins’ precisely while he dragged her to move straight upward, leaving ripples behind in the ocean!

This place was still within the range of the continental shelf. So, the ocean was shallow. After only one moment, the two of them had already leapt out of the water!

On the surface of the ocean, however, were thunder, lightning, and surging tides. The world was occupied with extremely furious spiritual waves. The weather could not have been rougher!

It was the harbinger of a febrile typhoon.

Qi Zhongdao had informed them earlier that two febrile typhoons would attack the offshore area one after the other.

The first febrile typhoon had already caused great natural disasters. Right now, the second febrile typhoon was coming at the area aggressively!

“Senior Spiritual Vulture!”

Glancing at the sky that was filled with dark clouds and purple lightning, Long Yangjun raised her voice and shouted, “You don’t really belong to the world of the Cultivators in the Great Qian Dynasty, and you have nothing to do with the Great Qian Dynasty. There is absolutely no reason for us to be hostile to each other. Why can’t we sit down and have a nice talk?”

Boom! Boom, boom, boom!

Thunderous explosions were rumbling in the ocean behind the two of them. An enormous bone dragon hundreds of meters long, made of countless corpses of the undersea demon beasts, surfaced and opened its bloody mouth, roaring at Li Yao in the most deafening sound. Bluish flames spurted out of its throat and darted into the clouds brushing past by Li Yao’s hair. After a cracking sound, the cloud was almost ripped apart!

Between the giant horns of the bone dragon, ‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu was gazing at Li Yao with the utmost fury!

Li Yao looked at Long Yangjun.

“I was wrong. You can run away now, senior!”

Licking his lips, Li Yao dragged Long Yangjun to fly into the sky toward where the spiritual energy was most chaotic, the lightning was most dense, and the thunder was loudest!

Long Yangjun’s head was dizzy. Her hair was all standing up because of the stimulation of static electricity. She shouted, “Senior, senior, we are probably going to run into the febrile typhoon ahead!”

It was exactly what Li Yao wanted.

The sky above the ocean had absolutely no shelter where he could hide or dodge.

If he was all by himself, he was confident in running from Mother White Lotus.

However, he was carrying a great burden named Long Yangjun. If he went in a straight line, Mother White Lotus would certainly catch them!

Running into the febrile wind was their only way to escape!

The febrile typhoon indeed looked intimidating, however, it was not Li Yao’s first time training himself in a thunderstorm or suppressing the enemy with the power of lightning to secure the final victory!

Back in the old days in the Flying Star Sector, he had not even been scared of the furious turbulence unleashed by the supernova outbreak in the ‘Wraiths’ Wrath’. What could a tiny febrile typhoon do about him?

Releasing thousands of spiritual threads and sensing the incoming direction of the febrile wind, Li Yao roared and crashed right into it while dragging Long Yangjun!

Mother White Lotus, on the other hand, was chasing after him closely on the enormous bone dragon, followed by countless ghost soldiers and the experts from Ghost Qin and the Heaven Battering Army!

Chapter 1457 - Possibility of Cooperation

Gloomy winds passed by Li Yao's head and ears, only to be ripped into shreds by the turbulent spiritual energy and the crazily dancing lightning between the sky and the earth!

In such a violent magnetic field, the army of ghouls became the most vulnerable victims due to the lack of the protection of a body.

With that advantage alone, Li Yao had managed to get rid of ninety percent of the pursuers.

Only Mother White Lotus and a few experts were still tailing him.

However, it was impossible for them to persist for long, either.

Boom! Crack!

They entered the area of storm.

The rain on the ocean was smashing down like hail, turning the entire sky into yet another ocean. The vision, hearing, and senses of the pursuers were serious affected!

Li Yao was still wearing the bizarre-shaped fins, except that some of the fins assembled each other after a period of cracking noises and turned into a piece of broader magical equipment to support flying like wings!

Dragging Long Yangjun in midair, Li Yao seemed to be holding nothing at all. He was drawing the most spectacular curves in the middle of the thunder and lightning, making best use of the power of the rain and the magnetic field. He drifted unpredictably like a dry leaf in a blowing wind, without any pattern that the pursuers could follow.

Mother White Lotus’ roars and attacks brushed past him time and time again, and he was drawing closer and closer to the febrile typhoon!

In the dark ocean up ahead, a violent storm could already be vaguely seen, as if a gap leading to the deepest depths of hell had been ripped open in midair, from which the eternally burning fire of destruction was spurting out!

It was the febrile typhoon!

Even Li Yao did not dare engage head-on with the febrile typhoon without the protection of a crystal suit!

He was not planning to crash into the febrile typhoon boldly, either, but merely cut slightly into the edge of the febrile typhoon to make use of the centripetal force as if he were ‘surfing’!

The febrile typhoon was still developing, but it was already hundreds of kilometers in diameter. Naturally, the periphery was rotating at the highest speed. The wind was blowing so fast that it seemed to be able to extinguish the sun.

Hu!

Li Yao shook arms and legs. His ‘fins’, or ‘wings’, instantly doubled in size. Picking up the febrile wind, they became round and puffy, like the sails of a boat in full wind. His speed was immediately doubled!

Bound by a chain, Long Yangjun was pulled behind him like a kite. She could not help but scream hard in the middle of crazily roaring wind.

Mother White Lotus was residing inside a puppet body. The combination of a ghost and a puppet could never be as tight as the combination between a living person and their soul. If she barged into the febrile typhoon recklessly, it was possible that her soul might be blown out of the puppet!

Even if she was known as the mother of all ghosts, it would be impossible for her to persist for long inside the rampant febrile typhoon without the protection of a shell.

The bone dragon came to an abrupt halt at the periphery of the febrile typhoon and spurted out dozens of clusters of dazzling fire toward the depths of febrile typhoon, which exploded inside the febrile typhoon and turned into enormous flowers of light. However, they were not even close to Li Yao before they were shredded and obliterated!

Mother White Lotus was not as insane as Li Yao, restraining from galloping into the febrile typhoon after him.

It was needless to mention Han Yuantai, Qi Changsheng’s representative, and the rest of them, whose Cultivation was much lower than the two of them. They could only gaze at Li Yao and Long Yangjun reducing in size in the violet storm until they were gone in the end!

Crack!

Wan Mingzhu was so exasperated that she crushed the horns on the bone dragon that were as thick as thighs!

“Who—who is this guy exactly?” she shrieked in the most high-pitched voice.

…

The following morning, the febrile typhoon had already passed. As if all the dirt in the world had been cleaned, the sky was clear and cloudless, and a red sun was rising up in radiating glow!

Not far away from the shoreline, there was a desolate island that was surrounded by sharp-edged reefs.

Such desolate islands were anything but unusual in the offshore area.

Most of the desolate islands were less than half an acre in coverage. They were essentially rocks that were larger in size. Also, they were surrounded by cliffs and hidden reefs, lacking ports with deep water and flat beaches. So, it was not worth investing in exploiting them.

Even the lawless pirates would not consider such places as their den.

Only the birds would rest in such places. Therefore, most of the islands had already been buried in the stinky, gray struvite.

Deep inside the desolate island, the previously rough, uneven place had been crushed and paved by Li Yao into a flat ground the size of a grain-sunning field.

“Ow!”

Long Yangjun was shaking and gagging on the ground, wet from head to toe.

There was no telling whether it was because she had drunk too much rainwater or because she was intimidated by the power of the febrile typhoon and the thunderstorm.

The super assassin of the Ghost Character looked like a half dead fish right now. Her face was pale and full of fear, and her calmness from when she dealt with Li Yao last night had vanished.

Li Yao had intentionally taken her to break into the febrile typhoon partly to shock her and collapse her mental defense line.

Judging the outcome, the tactic had worked out pretty well!

Li Yao was sitting cross-legged in a corner of the desolate island with his eyes half closed as he rested in silence. Bright green flames of spiritual energy were dancing around him, adding to his mysteriousness.

Breaking into the febrile typhoon had been extremely exhausting, even for him, especially when he was carrying the huge burden named Long Yangjun.

He was quite close to the main continent, and it was broad day with a bright sun.

Qi Zhongdao and the other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators would be searching for Mother White Lotus and him. Under such circumstances, it was highly unlikely that Mother White Lotus would chase after him with a large batch of ghost soldiers.

However, one could never be too prudent. The sooner he recovered his spiritual energy and returned to his peak combat ability, the better!

While Long Yangjun was not paying attention, Li Yao injected a powerful recovery drug that he had brought from the Star

Glory Federation into his body. The effect of the drug was many times better than the best recovery pill in the Ancient Sages Sector!

“Senior Spiritual Vulture!”

Long Yangjun gagged on the ground for such a long time that she seemed to be vomiting her guts out. She looked at Li Yao full of reverence and, after a long hesitation, finally summoned the courage to say, “I didn’t know that your Cultivation is so shockingly high that even the febrile typhoon, a hazard for all Cultivators, was completely at your mercy!

“Since you have such astounding Cultivation and are a world-famous master of refining, senior, you will certainly play an important role in the exploration of the Divine Palace. We can form an alliance. There’s absolutely no reason for us to hurt each other!

“Lord Wang cherishes our world’s heroes more than anything else. Now that you have learned the secrets about the Divine Palace, and since there is no way at all that I can harm you, inviting you to join the cause seems to be the only option!

“Even if you kill me and take away the map of the Divine Palace and the Thousand Stars Tray, you still won’t be able to achieve anything on your own, Senior!

“First of all, the map of the Divine Palace itself contains infinite mysteries and must be opened in a secret way. There’s no way that you can read it by yourself.

“Secondly, even if all the mysteries of the Divine Palace are unraveled, that is just the tip of the iceberg for all the secrets about the Divine Palace. Lord Wang has kept a lot of findings to himself, and he is the only one who is capable of excavating the treasures.

“Right now, you are just a visiting elder of the Purple Pole Sword Sect, and you are a barbarian Cultivator who is not on the same boat with the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty. Since it is impossible for you to open the Divine Palace by yourself, you will have to look for partners.

“Do you feel that the Cultivators from the Grand Mystery Sect and the Purple Pole Sword Sect are any more trustworthy than Lord Wang, senior?”

Li Yao slightly opened his eyes. Staring at Long Yangjun deep in thought, he asked, without answering her question, “How did your Lord Wang discover the secrets of the Divine Palace?”

Noticing that the guy was apparently not as stubborn as before, Long Yangjun put on a smile of delight that almost escaped Li Yao’s attention before she replied dutifully, “Since the Great Qian Dynasty was founded a thousand years ago, not only has it inherited the enormous royal library left by previous dynasties, it has also collected countless ancient books from all over the world. Most of the records about the past can all be found in the royal collections!

“Before Lord Wang’s rise, he was one of the librarians of the royal library of the Great Qian Dynasty. He was responsible for sorting the broad, complicated ancient classics and repair the mottled, incomplete volumes!

“As a rarely-seen genius, he read all the ancient books that nobody had touched for thousands of years while he worked as a librarian for thirty years. He inferred from countless clues in the complicated ancient books, which led to the Divine Palace!

“The clues alone were not enough. A lot of the magical equipment and secret maps related to the Divine Palace were scattered in the world. One of the most important tasks for the Ghost Character was to help Lord Wang gather everything about the Divine Palace in the world!”

“That explains a lot.”

Li Yao finally understood part of the reason that Wang Xi used to stir trouble in the world of Cultivators. It appeared that his purpose was much more than simply helping the emperor keep the Cultivators in check. Nodding, he said, “Why exactly is your Lord Wang so obsessed with the exploration of the Divine Palace?”

Long Yangjun was amused. “The invincible Cloud Qin Gold Statues and the possibility to embark on the path to the deities’ realm. Who in the world of Cultivators wouldn’t want to explore the Divine Palace?

Frowning, Li Yao somehow felt that there was more to the guy’s motive. Thinking for a moment, he asked again, “I can tell that you were rather skillful when you displayed the map of the Divine Palace. Had you ever touched it before?”

“The map core of the Divine Palace has been kept in East Peace County as an ultimate treasure by the local Cultivation sects to stabilize their headquarters until now. The outsiders could never approach it easily. Of course, I never touched it before.

“However, Lord Wang has drawn a lot of illustrations for me to learn from. That is why I managed to pick up the operations. As for exactly how Lord Wang learned of them, I don’t have the faintest idea.”

Long Yangjun was just one of Wang Xi’s tools. It was impossible for him to let her know all the secrets however much he trusted her.

Thinking quickly, Li Yao pretended to be in deep thought. “What you said does have a point. Since I cannot open the Divine Palace by myself, I’ll have to look for help. I’ve had enough of those Cultivators during the past half year. Cooperating with Lord Wang indeed seems to be a viable choice!”

Chapter 1458 - Everything Is Under Whose Control?

Long Yangjun was overjoyed. “Have you agreed to my proposal, Senior Spiritual Vulture?”

“It doesn’t matter whom I cooperate with to explore the Divine Palace,” Li Yao sneered. “The real critical issue is my own safety. How can I trust your Lord Wang? After all, his reputation is not good among the Cultivators!”

“Senior Spiritual Vulture, as a visiting elder of the Purple Pole Sword Sect, which was very close to Lord Wang in the past, you should know that most of the Cultivators’ condemnations are ungrounded.”

After thinking for a moment, Long Yangjun blinked and said, “You won’t believe whatever I say right now, Senior. Please enlighten me. How can I convince you of our sincerity?”

“You operated too fast just now, and I was too far away to see everything clearly,” Li Yao said coldly. “Bring out the map and the Thousand Stars Tray and show me the operations carefully again!”

Long Yangjun was dazed for a moment, hesitating.

“Let me make it clear for you. You are begging me for cooperation now, not the other way around.” Li Yao toughened his tone. “If you are unwilling to cooperate, let’s just call it a day now. I’ll kill you directly, or you can kill yourself. Nobody is going to find anything from the Divine Palace!”

While he stared at Long Yangjun and spoke, he intentionally mixed some soul attacks in his eyes to remind Long Yangjun of the horror in the febrile typhoon.

Long Yangjun shivered slightly, and her face was even paler than before. Cold sweat the size of beans was popping up on her forehead.

She pondered for a long time, only to come up with no solution. She could only retrieve the items from her Cosmos Rings as per Li Yao’s orders and begin to assemble them carefully.

Last time, because of Neltharion’s angle of observation, fearing that he might be caught, Li Yao had failed to record the procedures through which she displayed the map.

But this time, Li Yao focused his full attention without overlooking a single detail.

Very soon, the Thousand Stars Tray was assembled, and the map core was placed at the center of the pedestal. A sphere operation menu was released one more time.

Long Yangjun’s hands moved on it quickly, activating the internal structure of the Divine Palace and the coordinates of the Divine Palace.

With Li Yao’s computational ability in the Nascent Soul Stage, since he was observing at such a short distance, naturally, he was able to etch every detail into his mind clearly.

Not entirely satisfied, Li Yao asked Long Yangjun to lower the speed of her operation and demanded that she explain every instruction on every menu.

Li Yao's questions were short and fast, leaving Long Yangjun no time to consider at all.

Because of the high pressure, Long Yangjun confessed all the operations dutifully.

Following her instructions, Li Yao tried a few times himself and did not find any loopholes. He finally nodded in approval.

Long Yangjun had perhaps kept some secrets in the map core to herself, and chances were that something more valuable was contained inside the storage magical equipment.

However, that did not matter. Based on the details that she had shared, Li Yao was already able to basically analyze the retrieval logic of the operation menu. Together with the crystal processor that he brought from the Star Glory Federation, he believed that he would certainly be able to unravel more secrets than the 'ancient people' could.

"Very good. It seems that you are indeed very sincere!" Li Yao smiled and waved at Long Yangjun. "Now, step away!"

Exactly like Long Yangjun had done, Li Yao turned off all the maps and began dismantling the map core and the Thousand Stars Tray.

He was a professional refiner, and it was only natural that he dismantled the magical equipment even faster than Long Yangjun did.

Long Yangjun's face color changed greatly. She stammered, "S—Senior Spiritual Vulture, what's the meaning of this?"

“Nothing,” Li Yao said casually. “Since you were sincere enough to confess everything dutifully, to show respect to Lord Wang, your life may be spared. However, I must take away the Thousand Stars Tray and the map core! This place is not far away from the continent. Despite the weight of all the things, I can fly over by carrying them on my back. It is not a big deal whether or not I have your Cosmos Rings!”

Long Yangjun was dumbfounded. “S—Senior Spiritual Vulture, are—are you still reluctant to work with Lord Wang? Why? The Great Qian Dynasty is already on the verge of collapse. Those pretentious Cultivators have nothing but dirty, shameless schemes in their heads. You will certainly die without a burial if you cooperate with them!”

“Do you not understand why I choose not to stand on Lord Wang’s side?”

Dismantling the Thousand Stars Tray unhurriedly, Li Yao did not bother to raise his head as he casually spoke. “It’s not because he is too scary for me as one of the Four Rapscallions. To be honest, as a barbarian Cultivator, I always keep an open mind toward the Three Saints and Four Rapscallions. They are basically the same as me!

“However, it is a habit that I must take the initiative in any cooperation with other people no matter who my partner is!

“If I cooperate with the Four Rapscallions, the four of you are already enough to complete most of the work. Even the map of the Divine Palace is in your hands. I will be a dispensable worker, and the best that I can expect is to serve as a vanguard—or rather, cannon fodder—with my combat ability!

“Before, during, and after the exploration, as long as you feel that I’m no longer of any value, you can eliminate me at any time!

“Besides, I’m all by myself, while the four of you all have tremendous forces under command. Even Lord Wang, who seems to be on the run, has the elite assassins of the Ghost Character like yourself!

“Hehe. However arrogant I am, I will not be conceited enough to believe that I can compete with a hundred experts together in the snowy land in the Land of Eternal Night in the north pole!”

Long Yangjun gnashed her teeth. “Is that any different from cooperating with the Cultivators?”

“Of course it is.” Li Yao shook the diamond-shaped crystal in his hand that contained the map and smiled. “As long as the Thousand Stars Tray and the map core are in my hands, I will be in possession of the critical information that the Cultivators certainly don’t know. If we really set off to explore the Divine Palace, I will be of paramount importance and take all the initiative. Even if someone wants to get rid of me, they will have to wait until I’m no longer of value!

“Besides, although I’m not interested in who is righteous and who is evil, I still feel that ‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren, Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar, and Master Bitter Cicada are more trustworthy than your Lord Wang, Wan Mingzhu, Qi Changsheng, and Han Baling!

“At the very least, Ba Xiaoyu and Master Bitter Cicada are by themselves, too. If I cooperate with them, I won’t need to worry about hundreds of experts jumping around a corner and attacking me together, will I?”

More than infuriated, Long Yangjun’s face was pure red, and the shackle on her body was shaking and clanging. Yet, there was nothing that she could do about Li Yao except gnash her teeth. “Senior Spiritual Vulture, have you made up your mind to fish in the dirty water?”

“I’m alone. It’s better to fish in the dirty water than to gain profit at risk!” Li Yao said with a fake smile. “The more forces that are involved in the issue and the more chaotic the situation is, the more advantageous my position will be!”

Li Yao had planned to evaluate the top experts of the Ancient Sages Sector and if there were other mysterious forces hiding in darkness in the first place.

Once the shocking news about the Divine Palace was released, all the experts would certainly be attracted to it.

The mysterious forces in darkness, should there be any, would definitely jump out!

At that point, Li Yao would be able to make a final decision as to whether or not he should open the space gate and summon the expedition fleet of the Star Glory Federation!

Long Yangjun was grinding her teeth in fury and could not say anything.

Very soon, the redness on her face faded away, and it was as pale as a piece of paper, as if she had thought of the punishment that she would go through for losing the Thousand Stars Tray and the map core after she returned to the Ghost Character. Even her breathing was rapid and disordered!

Leaning against a rock at a loss, she completely lost the strength to continue the game with Li Yao.

Li Yao finished dismantling the Thousand Stars Tray and the map core. While calculating the best way to pack them up in his head, he walked to Long Yangjun, planning to remove the shackle on her body.

Wang Xi was a rather important person among the top ten experts of the Ancient Sages Sector. Maybe, there was still a chance for cooperation in future. Naturally, Li Yao did not want to go too far. He even wanted to pass on certain information through Long Yangjun, implying that Master Spiritual Vulture was a rational man who was worth communicating and negotiating with.

Their conflict this time was just business, and since it was business, there were always chances for concessions and renegotiations.

Li Yao had already subtly expressed it. Long Yangjun might not have been able to understand it, but Wang Xi certainly would!

Li Yao could continue locking Long Yangjun with the shackle, but if he did, her life would be at risk on the perilous ocean.

Also, part of the shackle was Li Yao's clandestine secrets, and he did not want such a piece of magical equipment to be retrieved by the terrifying Wang Xi.

At this moment, Li Yao was three steps away from Long Yangjun.

Long Yangjun collapsed at the bottom of the rock, as if her bones had been removed. She looked at Li Yao, but her eyes were unfocused, as if she were staring at the infinite ocean behind him.

Everything was under Li Yao's control.

Li Yao, however, suddenly had a terrible feeling.

If history was any reference, every time that he thought that everything was under control, it would be proved later that absolutely nothing was under his control!

It seemed to be a reverse sign that never failed.

Li Yao's right foot was about to reach the earth, but it could not move on any more during the moment. Instead, every muscle on his left foot, which was supporting his body, was triggered to the maximum!

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

He could almost hear the sounds of the cells inside his left leg exploding and the overloaded mitochondria blowing out infinite energy!

Right then, Long Yangjun moved.

Long Yangjun—whose veins, acupoints, and spiritual energy circulations should have been tightly locked up by Li Yao's shackle—suddenly vanished!

Li Yao had every faith in the shackle that he had crafted.

The shackle was based on the Venomous Scorpion Bone Biting Shackle, 'Solar Eclipse' Jiang Shaoyang's masterpiece.

It was the state-of-the-art barrier-type magical equipment in the Star Glory Federation. The best knowledge in physiology, anatomy, ergonomics, and hundreds of other disciplines had been employed. Countless simulations had been run. Not a single demon or human being, even including those in the Nascent Soul Stage, could break free from the shackle without paying a huge price!

However, Long Yangjun had vanished into a shadow and left the shackle on the ground incredibly before she marched up to Li Yao!

Chapter 1459 - It Is You!

Her speed, strength, small-scale movements, and technique to vibrate herself into a shadow far exceeded the performance of the beginning level and even the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage!

She did not have a sword, and Li Yao did not sense her movement of retrieving a sword from the Cosmos Rings, but he felt that she was a sword herself, one that had exploded into thousands of stars and brought the utmost horror!

The starry brilliance enveloped the entire desolate land like a waterfall. Every space the size of a fingernail had been cut hundreds of times by the most brilliant sword auras. Unpredictable and yet extremely sharp traces of the sword were everywhere in the air!

Her sword was truly dazzling!

Long Yangjun's sword arts were so extraordinary that she was only slightly worse than Yan Liren, the most terrifying swordsman that Li Yao had ever seen in his entire life. That being said, the gap between them was barely tangible!

Her style was entirely different from Yan Liren's.

Yan Liren's sword was simple, straightforward, and unstoppable. It was usually well hidden, and he merely locked onto his enemy with the will of his sword. Once the will of his sword became real and he launched his sword, there would usually be no escape for the target.

His sword arts were the arts of simplicity.

Long Yangjun’s sword, however, was glamorous, splendid, and brilliant, like a volcano, a waterfall, and ten thousand stars that were exploding at the same time and unleashing infinite light and heat!

Had Li Yao’s right foot moved forward another millimeter, or if one muscle on his left leg were not completely tightened, those gorgeous torrents of sword auras would have devoured him!

He stomped on the ground hard without caring whether or not his left leg would break. While retreating as fast as he could, he created a thick crack on the surface of the desolate island toward Long Yangjun as counterattack. But the sword auras that were as aggressive as fire still caught up to him despite the minor setback!

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

As if enveloped in the sharpest fishing net, Li Yao’s body was covered in hundreds of wounds, and his blood was flooding out!

Dozens of sword auras had closely entangled his hands, leaving him no chance at all to move his fingers and summon the magical equipment from his Cosmos Rings!

Li Yao’s heart was almost frozen, but it was beating at a frequency of more than five hundred times per minute the next moment, accelerating the blood and spiritual energy circulation inside his body to the maximum!

It was the most dangerous battle after he had reached the Ancient Sages Sector, even more dangerous than the one between him and Yan Liren.

After all, at that time, Yan Liren had merely been testing his sword and did not mean to kill him.

However, Li Yao could perceive the infinite, sharpest killing intent from Long Yangjun!

Li Yao could only keep retreating until he was at the edge of the desolate island.

All the sharp-edged rocks on the desolate island had been cut apart by Long Yangjun's shocking sword auras, turning into thousands of pebbles.

Li Yao had no retreat now. Behind him was a cliff. If he jumped off the cliff, he would be in an awkward position where he lost balance for a brief moment.

Faced with a swordsman as terrifying as Long Yangjun, it was definitely an action no different from washing himself and sending himself to a chopping block!

Li Yao could only bellow. The blood spurting out of his body, mixed with the pebbles, turned into a saber of blood and slashed toward Long Yangjun!

Long Yangjun's lips curled into a cruel smile. There was not the slightest panic on her face at all. She looked like a cat that was playing with a mouse. She ran toward the saber of blood without any evasion, and after her body was cut in half by the bloody saber, those halves turned into two phantoms!

Below the cliff behind Li Yao, a cluster of even more intense sword auras were bursting out!

Li Yao's pupils constricted violently. He had absolutely no idea when Long Yangjun had hidden herself below the cliff escaping his senses!

However, the next moment, he realized that it was another sordid scam. It was impossible for Long Yangjun to hide below the cliff. She had merely transmitted an astonishing aura and hidden it behind him while the storm of sword auras was raging!

It was the old distraction trick!

Long Yangjun was still in front of him!

But there was no time!

Li Yao tried his best to move to the left, but he still heard the noise of his ribs breaking apart and his blood flooding out!

He smashed into the edge of the desolate island, and he vomited a mouthful of blood. The sword auras were galloping inside his body, destroying all the spiritual energy circulation pathways. The spiritual waves that he released grew ever feebler, too.

It was not until this moment that all the starry brilliance dancing around the desolate island was finally condensed in Long Yangjun’s hand, turning into a longsword that seemed to be made of countless brilliant diamonds!

Long Yangjun had heavily wounded Li Yao after only one attack, but she did not take the chance to pursue him. Instead, a streak of brightness jerked out of her Cosmos Ring and turned into a round piece of magical equipment the size of a goose egg. It was riddled with dense holes and looked like a queer honeycomb.

Weird sound waves were emanating from every hole of the honeycomb. The humming sounds would have made anyone who heard them extremely uncomfortable!

Judging from the color on the surface of the weird magical equipment, it was fashioned through the most cutting-edge technology and definitely not something that the natives of the Ancient Sages Sector could craft. Just like the map core, it seemed to be a product of the Nuwa Clan!

“This magical equipment is named Sound Nest. It is not used to attack the enemy but can release special sound waves that can block all Cosmos Rings in the hundreds of square meters nearby,” Long Yangjun said with a smile. “You will not be able to store anything into them or take anything out.

“Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, you are the well-known Grandmaster of Great Zhou and one of the best masters of refining in the Ancient Sages Sector. So, you certainly count on all kinds of peculiar magical equipment in your battle.

“Your Cultivation and mine are on par, and the outcome of our battle depends on the seemingly insignificant details. Right now, you are heavily wounded, and you cannot retrieve the magical equipment in your Cosmos Rings. How much confidence do you have that you can defeat me with my secret sword?

“Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, you are a smart man. There’s no need to act recklessly and ask to be killed now, right?”

“Cough, cough. Cough, cough, cough, cough!” Li Yao vomited a mouthful of blood. Licking his teeth that were covered in blood, he stared at Long Yangjun like a wolf that had fallen into a trap and shouted, “You are not Long Yangjun. Long Yangjun does not exist at all. You are Wang Xi!”

Wang Xi smiled. “Long Yangjun or Wang Xi, it is just a reference. A man like me certainly has countless identities and names. Are you surprised?”

“I should’ve seen it coming!” Li Yao smiled bitterly. “Wang Xi is a thoughtful, ambitious man. How could he have given ultimate treasures like the Thousand Star Trays and the map core to a random subordinate, and how could he have let a subordinate learn so many secrets about himself? Also, as a subordinate, you were too chatty!

“I’m just confused. If you are Wang Xi, why didn’t you reveal in real capabilities in the beginning instead of being so disgraced?”

“As I said just now,” Wang Xi casually said, “my Cultivator and yours are on par, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture. If we cannot find the enemy’s fatal opening, there’s nothing we can do about each other. Even if I had revealed my real capabilities in the beginning, the best I could’ve expected was to defeat you, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture. But it would’ve been barely impossible to capture you!”

Li Yao’s pupils constricted violently. “You were planning to capture me from the beginning?”

“Of course!” Wang Xi smiled. “Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, you are an extraordinary person who has risen to fame in less than half a year. When I said that I’d admired you for a long time, I wasn’t lying. Besides, you are proficient in the arts of refining, which will be a great help during the exploration of the Divine Palace. If you join the great cause, our mission’s odds of success will be significantly increased!

“Therefore, I’ve been waiting for the best opportunity so that we can talk with each other nicely and uninterrupted!”

Li Yao gnashed his teeth. “Wasn’t it the best opportunity when Mother White Lotus chased after us?”

“No.” Wang Xi shook his head. “For those with our Cultivation, they might not be captured even when they are terribly outnumbered. Qi Zhongdao and the other experts attacked Mother White Lotus together and failed to kill her. How could I be confident that I could stop you if Mother White Lotus and I dealt with you together?”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and asked, “Why didn’t you attack in the febrile typhoon?”

“It was still not the best opportunity.” Glamorous brilliance beamed out of Wang Xi’s eyes as he laughed. “Besides, even I did not foresee that you would be insane enough to crash into the febrile typhoon. There were too many unexpected factors back then, and I was still not a hundred percent sure that I could suppress you!

“The best opportunity was when you eased your wariness after we reached the place and even considered removing the shackle on my body!

“According to my plan, I should’ve been able to suppress Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture after only one move, but I didn’t know that you had such sensitive natural instincts. As a result, I was forced to go through additional trouble!”

Staring at the shackle in a daze, Li Yao mumbled, “How did you break free from the shackle? Nobody, even a Cultivator at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage, could’ve broken free from my shackle so easily!”

The brilliance inside Wang Xi’s eyes were brighter and brighter, as he declared, one word after another, “Nothing can ever trap me. Not just a tiny shackle, even this world cannot keep me in custody!”

Li Yao’s facial muscles were twisting as he said in a hoarse voice, “Now that I have fallen into your hands and am completely at your mercy, I wonder, how are you going to deal with me?”

“Believe it or not, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, I am sincerely inviting you to join the operation to explore the Divine Palace!” Wang Xi said. “After all, none of the other three of the Four Rapscallions are easy to deal with. Even if I honestly hope that the team will work out eventually, I’m not confident that they do not have other plans to themselves. It will be excellent if I have additional help on my side!

“However, I know that you are certainly not going to cooperate with me dutifully and work as my assistant without complaint, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture.

“Even if you swear to the heavens that you will cooperate with me, I will not believe any of it.

“Therefore…”

Chapter 1460 - One Step Close!

Wang Xi’s eyes were like a saber with hooks that were passing through every critical part on Li Yao’s body. His smile grew more and more intense as he unhurriedly said, “Only if I plant a minor barrier inside your body to ensure that you won’t do anything stupid that will harm the both of us can we expect to strike a deal.”

“A barrier?” Li Yao rolled his eyes and immediately understood everything. He could not help but sneer. “You are trying to turn me into your lackey who will do the dirty and dangerous work for you.

“Right. You are not cooperating with Qi Changsheng, Han Baling, and Wan Mingzhu sincerely, either. After all the secrets about the Divine Palace are excavated, you’ll figure out a way to eradicate all of them!

“It’s a pity that dealing the three of them by yourself is too tricky, but if I serve as your lackey, and if we attack them one by one when they are not prepared, chances are that we will be able to eliminate them one after another. This will be my greatest usage!”

Wang Xi replied without giving consent or disapproval. “Even if I say that there is no plan to eliminate Wan Mingzhu, Han Baling, and Qi Changsheng, you still won’t believe it, will you, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture?”

“It doesn’t matter to me at all whether or not you want to eliminate the three of them. I only want to know how I can be assured that you will not eliminate me after the job is done so that you can swallow all the gains. After all, if you plant a barrier inside my body, my life will be completely at your mercy!"

Opening his hands, Wang Xi said in a seemingly genuine way, "I don't have any fundamental conflicts of interests with you, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture. Why do I have to eliminate you?

"Han Baling, Wan Mingzhu, and Qi Changsheng are all leaders of a great force. Their ambitions are not just about themselves but to overturn the entire world! If you accuse me of planning to eliminate the three of them, I think that it at least makes sense.

"However, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, you are a relatively simple Cultivator. You do not seem to be interested in power!

"If we cooperate with each other, we can both take what we need. Everything inside the Divine Palace that is related to the primeval refining arts will be yours. You will also be allowed to study the Cloud Qin Gold Statues freely. In the future, if I build an army of Cloud Qin Gold Statues, you will be responsible for all the refining work. Wouldn't it be terrific?"

"Sounds like a plan," Li Yao said coldly. "However, your promise is too weak and unconvincing. I am not willing to let somebody else gain control over my life in any case!"

Wang Xi's voice grew even colder. "You don't have a choice!

"You can let me plant a barrier in you and cooperate with me obediently. Chances are that you will have some lucky encounters during the exploration of the Divine Palace that allow you to reverse the situation. Maybe, I will truly fulfil my promise and set you free in the end!

“Or, you can die now!”

Grabbing his crystal sword, Wang Xi pushed close to Li Yao, one step after another.

Li Yao’s breath became more and more hasty, and the blood flowing around his body had almost froze into crimson amber. He suddenly gnashed his teeth. “Wait. I can cooperate with you, but I have to know more about the Divine Palace!”

Wang Xi stopped, apparently not expecting Li Yao to propose such a weird request. Deep in thought, he looked at Li Yao suspiciously.

“I’ll calculate the odds of me being killed to keep my mouth shut after the exploration of the Divine Palace based on the information about the Divine Palace so that I can decide whether or not I should cooperate with you!” Li Yao explained. “If I will certainly be killed after the job is done, is there any need for me to be humiliated for a longer time? I might as well put up one last struggle right now!”

Wang Xi narrowed his eyes into two coldly shining stars as he declared, one word after another, “As I said, you don’t have a choice!”

“I don’t, but you do!” Li Yao gnashed his teeth. “You can choose to tell me everything about the Divine Palace. Then, it is possible that you will gain the full hearted supported of a top-tier expert who is on par with Qi Changsheng, Han Baling, and Wan Mingzhu. My refining arts will certainly prove to be of great use during the exploration, too!

“Alternatively, you can choose to kill me here and now. As a result, not only will you lose a potential lackey, you might also suffer irreversible wounds!

“You don’t think that I don’t have any way to hurt you without my magical equipment, do you?

“If I may remind you, during the exploration of the Divine Palace, you will have to be involved in competitions of wisdom and strength with some of the most brutal people in the world. It won’t be good if you suffer certain uncanny ‘minor injuries’ before the job, right?”

Li Yao cackled like a crow.

Wang Xi stared at him for a long time. His brow furrowed, loosened, and furrowed again. “Alright. I stand by what I said. I am truly meaning to cooperate with you, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture. The barrier that I am to implement on your body is just a helpless choice. To show my sincerity, I would like to tell you the backstory of everything.”

“Then, speak now.” Li Yao licked his bloodstained lips and pricked his ears. “I’m all ears!”

“The so-called Divine Palace…”

Wang Xi’s eyes suddenly lose focus, as if he were mired in remote memories a long time ago.

However, the next second, his eyes refocused, sharpened, and shone again!

With a grave face, he bit his lips, and vague confusion was circling his face. He sniffed the air carefully, as if he had perceived something highly dangerous!

“Something’s not right!” Wang Xi mumbled. He focused his eyes on Li Yao again, especially his left arm, which was dangling behind him softly because the veins and nerves inside seemed to have been cut off.

“Show me your left hand!” Wang Xi yelled. His crystal sword was humming, and the starry brilliance was all set to be launched!

Li Yao appeared slightly dazed. There was bafflement on his face, as if he did not understand what Wang Xi meant.

There was a deep bloody hole on his left shoulder, which suggested that the shoulder bone and the joint had been minced apart by the sword auras earlier. His left arm had been entirely crippled.

Since crashing into the land earlier, his left hand had been folded behind him the whole time.

At this point, he could only pick up his left hand with his right hand. While reaching for it, he grunted, “I think my left arm is bro—”

Before he finished the last word, a series of explosions suddenly echoed deep inside Li Yao’s left arm, as if a soft-skinned snake whose bones had all been crushed was turning into the most ferocious dinosaur!

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

The skin on Li Yao’s left arm turned black and green. Then, it grew a layer of greasy scales. Bone spurs were also ejected from his flesh like sharp blades.

His five fingers expanded in size in that moment, too. The round crystal in the middle of his palm was boosted because of the energy triggered by the mitochondria!

“Cell Obliteration Cannon, attack!”

The moment that he crashed, Li Yao had ordered the mental devil to activate as many as possible primeval cells inside his left arm, repair the body at the highest speed, and accumulate the power of the Cell Obliteration Cannon bit by bit!

With just another half a minute, and nothing more, the Cell Obliteration Cannon would have been brimming with enough energy to cover the entire desolate island!

It was beyond his expectations for Wang Xi’s sense of danger to be so keen, capable of catching the vague demonic energy flowing in the air. Li Yao was forced to change his plan and attacked in a hurry!

Hiu!

A pillar of the purest, ivory light rushed out of Li Yao’s palm right toward Wang Xi’s face!

The two of them were very close to each other.

Although Wang Xi noticed that something was not right, he did not anticipate that Li Yao, as a master of refining, could launch such a violent attack without magical equipment!

As a result, even though he managed to tilt his head, avoiding the frontal bombardment of the Cell Obliteration Cannon, his cheek and temple were still brushed by the blast, as if a bucket of magma had been poured on his face!

After an ear-splitting shriek, Wang Xi made the most sensible decision—retreat without caring about anything!

Li Yao grinned hideously. Tusks were growing crazily inside his mouth. His left eye had dyed demonic red. Fresh tissue was crawling out of the seeming terrible wounds all over his body. The result of the crazily exploding primeval cells was that his body was recovering at a visible speed. In the end, he was as strong and formidable as a primeval beast!

Wang Xi had taken everything into account, but there was something that he did not know!

With the ‘apocalyptic body’ modified by the mental devil, and after five years of close-distance battles with Ding Lingdang in outer space, Li Yao was definitely one of the most horrendous slaughtering machines, even without resorting to any magical equipment!

Shua!

Li Yao’s claws snatched Wang Xi’s ‘rising breasts’ from his right side.

The attack from the Cell Obliteration Cannon just now, while seriously bruising Wang Xi’s face, caused damages to his right eye, making the guy unable to see anything clearly.

Naturally, Li Yao would not let go of such a great opportunity. His every talon was surrounded by fatal demonic energy like five sharpest flying swords!

He was not necessarily piercing through Wang Xi’s chest.

However, it did not seem a bad idea to rip his clothes apart and view the real look of the plump female body.

Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang!

At the critical moment, Wang Xi’s face was as cold as frost. He bit his lips so hard that the skin almost broke. Apparently infuriated, he launched a storm of sword auras again, which were also twice as dazzling as just now and constituted an impenetrable defense in front of him!

Li Yao chuckled and twisted. He waved his sharp claw and snatched the Sound Nest, the interference magical equipment that was still floating in midair. He squeezed and crushed the magical equipment, enshrouding the Sound Nest with his overwhelming demonic energy and blocking all the vibration waves emitted by the device!

Shua! Shua! Shua!

The molecular mica threads and needles inside his Cosmos Rings, as well as a plethora of crystal bombs, were finally able to be retrieved!

With all the magical equipment in his hands, and now that the enemy’s right eye had been hurt by the Cell Obliteration Cannon, Li Yao had taken the initiative of the battle again!

Li Yao and Wang Xi, two of the most dangerous experts of the entire Ancient Sages Sector, confronted each other silently on the desolate island that was brimming with smoke and dust.

Chapter 1461 - Why Do We Have to Hurt Each Other?

The two of them looked equally awful.

There was no need to mention Wang Xi. Half of his face had almost been entirely blackened, and weird fire seemed to be bouncing on his eyeball, which had collapsed, causing him to grimace in pain. His facial nerves were cramping incessantly, and he did not look any better than the angry Mother White Lotus!

Li Yao, however, was not delighted, either.

He did not secure the advantage that he wanted in the new round, and he even revealed the secret of his ‘apocalyptic body’!

There was not a dedicated term to describe ‘demons’ in the Ancient Sages Sector. However, a lot of barbarians scattered at the edge of the continent far away from the center of civilization carried the bloodlines of demons.

It was likely because the members of the Thunder Striker Legion, a troop with strengthened cells that the Nuwa Clan brought to attack this war base of the Pangu Clan, had been marrying other human soldiers in the hundreds of thousands of years since the battle. Gradually, their bloodlines had spread, and they had evolved into the great number of barbarians.

Since the Ancient Sages Sector had not gone through the ‘Great Dark Era’, the intense contradiction between human beings and demons did not exist. The barbarians and the civilized people were basically classified according to their culture.

For those who had bizarre demon bloodlines, as long as they embrace the culture of the central plateaus, they would not be regarded as eccentrics.

As Master Spiritual Vulture, who was born a barbarian Cultivator, it was not very strange for Li Yao to display part of the features of the demons.

However, the real problem was that the demon features that he displayed were overly eye-catching. The coldly shining claws and bone spurts, the crimson eyeballs, the greenish scales, and most unbelievably of all, the crystal in his palm that could trigger the Cell Obliteration Cannon. He was almost a demi-demon and could not have looked more hideous and terrifying.

Such distinctive idiosyncrasies and such a cool pose would certainly be a hidden problem for him in the near future, even if they did not raise Wang Xi’s immediate suspicion!

Li Yao narrowed his eyes. For the first time during the battle, intense killing intent flowed out of his heart as he calculated whether or not he was capable of killing Wang Xi instantly if he summoned his crystal suit.

However, the result of his calculation was not good.

Wang Xi had already stepped back to the edge of the cliff. It was obvious that he would dash into the ocean and flee immediately if anything went wrong!

For an expert on Wang Xi’s level who was at least at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage, he certainly had many more secrets than he cared to admit. Even if equipped with the crystal suit, Li Yao was not confident that he could finish him. He feared that the guy would only learn more secrets about him!

What was most depressing for Li Yao was that, after exposing such a critical trump card, he gained absolutely nothing about the Divine Palace from Wang Xi’s mouth!

He had pretended to be feeble in order to elicit as much intelligence about the Divine Palace as possible from the guy, a move that had never failed him in the past!

It had not occurred to him that the ladyboy had such keen senses and such a tight mouth!

“What marvelous Berserker Arts. It appears that the Cultivators have greatly underestimated you the whole time, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture!”

Covering his wounded right cheek, Wang Xi spoke slowly, one word after another. His charming voice that was as comforting as spring breeze had turned into the freezing wind.

The so-called ‘Berserker Arts’ was a secret technique that the barbarian Cultivators with demon bloodlines adopted to activate the primeval cells inside their body. It was a rather uncommon skill among the Cultivators.

Wang Xi had read a lot of books when he was the librarian of the royal library of the Great Qian Dynasty. He mistook Li Yao’s apocalyptic body for the result of the ‘Berserker Arts’.

Li Yao was slightly relieved. He calculated all the details on the desolate island quickly, trying to find the best routes of attack, while he chuckled. “But Lord Wang, you were even more marvelous to have sensed it in advance.”

Wang Xi sniffed and said, “You can stop wasting your time concocting another ambush, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture. We are both heavily wounded right now. If either of us is determined to run away, it is impossible for the other one to stop him. Any means of attack will only be a waste of strength! Besides, believe it or not, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, to this moment, I still believe that we do not have fundamental conflicts. On the contrary, I’m growing more and more interested in you now.”

Li Yao intentionally stared at Wang Xi’s voluptuous breasts and said, “I believe that the feeling is mutual.”

“Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, you are known to be ‘Grandmaster of Great Zhou’ right now. So, you should be a man of honor and prestige!” Wang Xi’s voice was filled with coldness and anger. “Do you not feel that looking at other people in such a way is too insulting?”

“I’m just curious.” Li Yao smiled and retreated his gaze. “Is it a male or female that is hiding beneath the shell named ‘Wang Xi’? Has Wang Xi been pretending to be Long Yangjun, or has Long Yangjun been pretending to be Wang Xi?

“I believe that you know that there are a lot of rumors about you among the Cultivators. Many of them even suspect that you are a ‘natural eunuch’!

“However, I do find such a theory a bit queer. Lord Wang, you are a world-famous, powerful eunuch. Does a ‘natural eunuch’ sound any more despicable than a ‘lead eunuch’?

“Or, if you are in fact a woman, such an identity does not seem to be worth covering, either. Maybe in the past while you were still in the court, the identity of a powerful eunuch was of use to you, but you have come to this point where your greatest reliance is your strength instead of your power. Does it really matter whether you are a man or a woman, as long as your strength remains with you?

“However, while fight you, Lord Wang, I obviously felt that you are very sensitive about your identity. You seem to be hiding a secret that is even more appalling than ‘Wang Xi is a woman’. What is it exactly?”

Wang Xi stared at Li Yao for a long time. Then, he sighed softly, as if he found it difficult to understand why Li Yao had to pursue that question. He gloomily said, “Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, do you not know that you should never trouble trouble until trouble troubles you?

“The two of us do not know each other, and we have never had any grudges. We could’ve cooperated in the exploration of the Divine Palace and gotten what we wanted respectively. Why do we have to be wary of each other and even fight each other until one of us survives?

“If you have to pursue the trivia such as whether I’m a man or a woman, and I’m forced to counterattack with my full strength, investigating whether or not you are the real Master Spiritual Vulture, we will both suffer losses. Why do you have to hurt each other?”

Li Yao’s smile instantly froze.

Taking advantage of Li Yao’s shock, Wang Xi attacked again. A galaxy of sword auras was flowing in the sky of the desolate island again!

Li Yao hurried to defend himself, only to discover that Wang Xi's dominating attack was just a disguise.

When the sword auras in midair were all gone, Wang Xi had already opened his arms and stood on his tiptoes on the cliff at the edge of the desolate island.

But there was one more thing inside his hand—the map core of the Divine Palace!

In the haste, Wang Xi had no time to store the enormous Thousand Stars Tray back into his Cosmos Ring and only managed to take back the map core. He shook his hand, and it vanished between his fingers like a grain of sand.

"If you are eager to find out my secrets…" Wang Xi smiled confidently, with vague femininity that was mixed with male intimidation. "Let's talk again when we meet in the Divine Palace!"

Tipping the land softly, he flew more than ten kilometers away like a kite whose string was cut off and dived into the dark, black ocean, without raising the tiniest spindrift.

Li Yao's eyes were still twitching, even more fiercely than before.

His natural instincts were not wrong. Wang Xi was indeed a person of paramount importance in the Ancient Sages Sector!

However…

With a gloomy face, Li Yao walked to a corner and carefully studied the shackle that had been cracked by Wang Xi on one of his knees.

The shackle was intact. Neither the circulation of spiritual energy nor the mechanical structure was damaged at all.

Judging from the tiny scratches left on the shackle, it was almost as if Wang Xi had slid out like a ghost!

Li Yao tilted his head and thought for a long time, yet he failed to figure out exactly how Wang Xi had freed himself from the trap.

He only reaffirmed his judgement that, except for the unimaginable Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, nobody could break free from the shackle instantly without being harmed!

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

Fulminations were echoing in the clouds behind him, implying that four strong Cultivators were flying at a supersonic speed.

Li Yao wiped his face and took a few deep breaths, retracting the hideous claws, tusks, and bone spurts into his body.

“What has happened here, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture?”

Qi Zhongdao, Yan Liren, Ba Xiaoyu, and Master Bitter Cicada landed on the desolate island.

It appeared that Wang Xi had only fled when he perceived that the four super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were approaching. Otherwise, he might have had another few rounds in the game with Li Yao!

Looking at the components of the Thousand Stars Tray that were strewn on the ground, and glancing at Ba Xiaoyu, Master Bitter Cicada, and the rest of them, Li Yao cleared his throat and interpreted what had happened carefully.

After ten minutes, Qi Zhongdao, Ba Xiaoyu, and Master Bitter Cicada's faces all turned grave.

Even Yan Liren, who was never interested in anything other than sword arts, raised his eyebrows high.

"The Divine Palace, the Cloud Qin Gold Statues, and the path to the deities' realm?"

"Wang Xi, Wan Mingzhu, Qi Changsheng, and Han Baling—the Four Rapscallions—have joined their hands?"

Even the four resolute super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were rubbing their hands quickly at the shocking news.

"The Cloud Qin Gold Statues are the legendary ultimate treasures. One of them may be enough to change the outcome of a whole battle!" Master Bitter Cicada sighed. "If Han Baling, Wan Mingzhu, Qi Changsheng, or the likes of them pick up a few Cloud Qin Gold Statues, they may be able to turn the world upside down and raise catastrophes!"

Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar frowned and said, "Wang Xi is best known for his cunning schemes. Everything about the 'Divine Palace' is just his side of the story. It may not be necessarily true!

"However, whatever Wang Xi's purpose is, it is indeed a big deal that the Four Rapscallions are cooperating. One moment of carelessness, and the world will be in chaos, and the people will bleed!"

"We have to find the Divine Palace before the Four Rapscallions do!" Qi Zhongdao said solemnly. "It's a pity that Wang Xi has the map now.”

“It doesn’t matter,” Li Yao said casually. “I browsed through the map and the structure of the Divine Palace just now, and I can duplicate them even without the core! The biggest problem is that, since Wang Xi’s Cultivation is on par with mine, he should be able to copy the map from his memories even if he does not have the ‘Thousand Stars Tray’ to parse it!”

Chapter 1462 - Purge the World!

“Are you saying that we and the Four Rapscallions can both find the Divine Palace, and that we may encounter each other in the Land of Eternal Night in the freezing northmost area?”

Frowning, Qi Zhongdao glanced at Li Yao and said, “Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, you are the one who discovered the leads of the ‘Divine Palace’, and the specific map and the internal structure of the Divine Palace are in your head. Since you are willing to share everything with us openly, it is indicative enough of your trust in us. Naturally, we will respect your opinion. How do you plan to deal with the issue?”

Li Yao opened his hands and casually said, “If possible, I would swallow the secrets in the Divine Palace by myself. However, I fear that the Land of Eternal Night is not open to an individual. The Four Rapscallions are certainly not something that I can deal with alone. Although I am adept at the arts of refining and traps, I am not experienced in grave robbing. Of course, I can only find someone trustworthy to cooperate with me!

“Fellow Cultivator Ba and Master Bitter Cicada are both famous men of justice in the world of Cultivators. Fellow Cultivator Yan and Fellow Cultivator Qi are more or less dependable, too. It doesn’t matter to me how the issue is addressed, as long as you promise that everything about the arts of refining and the mysterious primeval magical equipment inside the Divine Palace will be given to me to study!”

Ba Xiaoyu and Master Bitter Cicada looked at each other and was more or less relieved, feeling lucky that ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’ was dedicated to refining and not as ambitious as the Four Rapscallions!

Qi Zhongdao nodded and drew a rough map on the ground with his spiritual energy. “Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture is quite right. If the Divine Palace does exist, it is definitely not a place that can be explored single-handedly. Please take a look. This is the relative location of the Divine Palace, the Dark Cloud Prairies, and the states of the Great Qian Dynasty!

“The states under the government of the Great Qian Dynasty are in the south, and the Dark Cloud Prairies, which are occupied by Ghost Qin, lie in the north. However, the northmost Land of Eternal Night is still tens of thousands of kilometers north of the Dark Cloud Prairies.

“The boundless Dark Cloud Prairies have a coverage that is almost half the territory of the entire Great Qian Dynasty. It is only with the help of the vast prairies that Ghost Qin’s people managed to compete with the Great Qian Dynasty!

“If we go to the Land of Eternal Night, there are only two roads. We can either penetrate through the Dark Cloud Prairies, which is apparently not a viable option, or take a large detour from the ocean next to the Dark Cloud Prairies!”

Qi Zhongdao drew a curve on the side of the map and continued. “The critical problem is personnel and supplies. The Land of Eternal Night is a freezing hell. The natural spiritual energy is in disarray and highly unfavorable for training!

“For the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators such as you and me, we have to inhale and exhale tremendous spiritual energy to prevent our level from falling. If the natural spiritual energy is too chaotic for us to absorb, we will have to carry tremendous crystals with us as supplies. Together with the food, magical equipment, herbs, and other provisions, I’m afraid that a hundred Cosmos Rings will not be enough!

“Besides, if we encounter the main troops of the Four Rapscallions in the Land of Eternal Night, how are we going to accomplish the mission even if we can slay a thousand low-level Cultivators on the enemy’s side with just the five of us?”

It was indeed a critical question.

The Three Saints, together with Li Yao and Master Bitter Cicada, versus the Four Rapscallions. The former had a slim edge.

However, the five of them were mostly all lone wolves, whereas the Four Rapscallions had countless trusted soldiers and subordinates.

In the hopeless, frozen land where there were no supplies, as long as the Four Rapscallions drained their spiritual energy and physical strength in the war of attrition, they would be dead for sure!

“The five of us are not enough to compete with the enormous forces behind the ‘Four Rapscallions’, nor are we capable of excavating all the secrets about the Divine Palace.”

Looking at Li Yao, Qi Zhongdao asked, “Do you agree, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture?”

“Are you suggesting we inform all the Cultivators of the news?” Li Yao replied coldly. “Hehe. I have only one remark for those guys who are as greedy as hyenas, as idiotic as swine, and as sordid and vipers—better destructors than constructors!”

“Well said!” Ba Xiaoyu clapped his hands and said, “I’ve been too much about the behavior of the swine-like Cultivators! Old Qi, if we truly inform them of the existence of the Divine Palace, believe me, just for the map inside Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture’s head, they will blow each other’s brains out. When the journey to explore the Divine Palace really begins, the dirty traps and tricks on the way will be even greater eye-openers for everybody!”

“Fellow Cultivator Qi is a man of manners.” Master Bitter Cicada also sighed and said, “It’s a shame that few Cultivators are as mannered as Fellow Cultivator Qi. Have you not been educated in the trip to the southeast, Fellow Cultivator Qi?”

Qi Zhongdao listened in silence. There was no emotion on his face, which seemed to be forged out of iron. After a long time, he said slowly, “Since we share a pessimistic view about the Cultivation sects in the world, and it is a mandate that we cooperate with a certain powerful force… what about the emperor?”

Everybody was dazed by what he said.

“Huh?” Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar bulged his eyes and eyed Qi Zhongdao up and down as if he had never seen the guy before. “Cooperating with the emperor? What a surprise. I remember that you have always led all the major sects in competition with the court, Old Qi. Rumor even has it that the old emperor kicked the bucket because he was too mad at you!”

“Wrong!” Qi Zhongdao replied. “Everything I did was meant to keep the stability of the world! The Cultivation sects and the court are like two legs of a person that can only walk steadily if they are equally strong! It will do nobody any good if one of the legs is too long or too thick!

“When Wang Xi was in power in the past, he established the Ghost Character and instigated conflicts among the major sects through his diplomatic tricks. As a result, all the Cultivation Sects were living in anxiety and even attacking each other. So, when the leg that was the ‘court’ was too thick, I led the main sects to check and balance the emperor and Wang Xi’s power!

“Then and now are different. Now, Wang Xi has lost his power, and the new emperor is new to the throne. Despite his ambitions to revive the Great Qian Dynasty, his foundation is still relatively weak. As a result, the leg named ‘Cultivation sects’ is expanding rapidly! You have witnessed everything during our trip of disaster relief to the southeast. If things go unchanged, the country will be no more!”

Qi Zhongdao raised his voice. Excitement beamed out of his dark face that was as tough as iron, as if a solid mask had been shattered with furious flames flowing out of the cracks!

“Right now, the world is about to be embraced by chaos, and every Cultivator may face their inevitable doom soon!

“However, the avaricious, shortsighted elders and leaders of the Cultivation sects are still minding only their selfish interests and fighting each other! Just as Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture said, they are as ravenous as dogs and as stupid as swine. They are better destructors than constructors!

“If they continue messing around, a great war will break out before long. Then, the world of Cultivators will become a dog-eat-dog hell!

“We already realized that during our meeting below Roaring Tiger City the other day.

“However, despite our physical strength and our seemingly fancy titles, we are incapable of changing anything. We can only watch the world of Cultivators sliding into the abyss. After another few steps, everybody will fall and crash into pieces!

“That day, didn’t we sigh over the fact that even the super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators invincible in the world were still unable to change the dirty and chaotic world?

“This is a great opportunity for us to reorganize the Cultivators and purge the world!

“As long as we excavate the secrets in the Divine Palace and receive the legacies of the primeval creatures, and preferably, if we each have a Cloud Qin Gold Statue, the entire world of Cultivators will run according to the will and rules of the five of us. Won’t it be a hundred times better than the mess right now?

“There will, of course, be unnoticed problems to cooperate with the proud, ambitious Emperor Phoenix. That’s all the more reason for the five of us to be united!

“As long as the five of us reach a consensus and stay fully united, the emperor, the Four Rapscallions, and the rogue Cultivation sects will all be suppressed by our will!”

Qi Zhongdao’s astonishing declaration cast the other four super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators into a long silence. White mist was popping up from everyone’s forehead, a sign indicating that their computational ability had been boosted to the maximum.

After a long while, Master Bitter Cicada recited the sutras briefly and said, “The vast changes in the world are too overwhelming for a monk to grasp and predict. However, I’m told that the new emperor has indeed accomplished several impressive things in the Divine Capital since he ascended to the throne a year ago. He pays great attention to the happiness of the people, too. Although his style is still a bit immature, he is already showing the demeanor of a wise monarch. If the court can stabilize the situation and protect the people from the harm of blades, it will be a blessing for everyone.”

Ba Xiaoyu also craned his neck to study the relative location of the Great Qian Dynasty, the Dark Cloud Prairies, and the Land of Eternal Night. Scratching his stinky hair, he said, “I don’t know much about battles. However, by common sense, if we intend not to be blocked and harassed by a large batch of enemies, we will have to strengthen the attacks on Ghost Qin from the south and stall the enemy’s elite forces there. The Cultivators that are just loose sand can never achieve that purpose. Only the army of the court will be able to do that!

“Few troops in the court are brave enough for battles today. The elites are all under Emperor Phoenix’s control. If we want our trip to be a success, the emperor seems to be our only possible partner.”

“The emperor is not a dead person.” Yan Liren was studying the stripes on the sheath of his sword with his full attention.

He casually mumbled, “For such a huge operation to explore the Divine Palace, do you think that the emperor will not know it even if we don’t tell him?”

The few of them did not seem to object to the cooperation with Emperor Phoenix.

After all, they did not lust for power at all, and there was no fundamental contradiction between them and the emperor.

Li Yao, however, stared at Qi Zhongdao for a long time before he said something that was beyond everyone’s expectation.

“Fellow Cultivator Qi, you have long been in touch with Emperor Phoenix, and this isn’t the first day that you’ve wanted to join your hands to deal with the Cultivators, right?”

Chapter 1463 - Union of the Five Super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators!

After hearing that, Yan Liren, Ba Xiaoyu, and Master Bitter Cicada all looked at Qi Zhongdao in bewilderment.

After all, Qi Zhongdao, the nominal ‘leader of all the Cultivators’, had always firmly stood on the Cultivators’ side to check and balance the court’s force. One might even say that he was the representative of all the Cultivators!

“With the assistance of Wang Xi,” Li Yao said, “the late emperor almost suppressed the entire world of Cultivators, but it raised the intense dissatisfaction among the main sects. After Emperor Phoenix ascended to the throne, perhaps under the pressure of the Cultivation sects or perhaps because he did not trust Wang Xi, he deprived Wang Xi of all his power overnight!

“However, just because Emperor Phoenix banished Wang Xi does not mean that he will bend to the Cultivators. On the contrary, he might want to raise his own Wang Xi to keep the Cultivators in check. With the Great Qian Dynasty in peril right now, he does not have much time for his reorganization. It is impossible for him to bring up a trusted subordinate from nothing. Fellow Cultivator Qi is his best candidate. He is Emperor Phoenix’s ‘Wang Xi’!”

“Is it true?” Ba Xiaoyu could not help but ask, “Old Qi, did the emperor really turn to you?”

Qi Zhongdao was emotionless, but the veins on the back of his hand were suddenly rising. He stared at Li Yao and replied one word after another, “I am a man of integrity, and I don’t have any clandestine secrets that I cannot share with other people. It is true that the emperor has reached out to me, proposing to purge the smoky world of Cultivators through thunderous approaches in order to restore the peace and order!”

“Did you agree, Fellow Cultivator Qi?” Master Bitter Cicada asked.

“I didn’t.” The brilliance in Qi Zhongdao’s eyes dimmed. He said in a low voice, “I am the grand leader of the Grand Mystery Sect and a member of the world of Cultivators after all. I believed that as long as every Cultivator abides by the rules and bears the big picture in mind, we can restore the former vigor and prosperity on our own. So, I was reluctant to allow the emperor to meddle with the internal affairs of the main sects.”

“It’s a pity that the main sects’ doings during the trip to the southeast have completely disappointed Fellow Cultivator Qi,” Li Yao added for him. “Your blood is cold, and your heart is dead. You’ve realized that it is impossible to cleanse the dust, smoke, and scoundrels with just the strength of the Cultivators. It’s just like a man who is mired in a swamp. If there is no external force to help him, he will only fall deeper and deeper until he is doomed! Only by cooperating with Emperor Phoenix and relying on the force of the court can we expect to revolutionize the world of Cultivators!”

Qi Zhongdao’s eyes were frozen for a while, as if he was unwilling to admit the pathetic fact. Sighing gloomily, he said, “There’s another reason why I didn’t agree at that time. At that time, I was all by myself, and I did not have any chips to bargain with the emperor. Even if I agreed, I would only be his chess piece and his lackey. Moreover, I didn't believe that Emperor Phoenix had the capabilities to suppress the main sects. If the contradiction between the two parties intensified and a civil war of the Great Qian Dynasty was caused, then I would be forever blamed in the history books!

“However, your participation and the news regarding the Divine Palace have given me a new glimpse of hope!

“As long as the five of us are united, we will be a force that can shake the world, and we will have enough bargaining chips whether we are faced with the emperor or the main sects!

“If we can control the Cloud Qin Gold Statues in the Divine Palace, we will be able to purge the world of Cultivators with our invincible strength and bring new rules to the main sects and even the entire world. I can assure you, fellow Cultivators, that the rules will certainly be bright and justified!

“This is my lifelong dream. What do you think, fellow Cultivators?”

Like black nails, Qi Zhongdao's words pierced into everyone's heart deeply.

Master Bitter Cicada sighed and said, “I wish for nothing but the peace and happiness of all the ordinary folks in the world. If I have to pay a visit to the freezing hell in the Land of Eternal Night in order to achieve that, why not?”

Ba Xiaoyu spat on the ground heavily and clapped his hands in laughter. “This beggar has long been pissed off by the pretentious, shameless Cultivators of the main sects.

Cooperating with the emperor does not look like a bad idea if it can teach them to behave!”

“To reiterate what I said,” Li Yao said, “as long as everything related to the arts of refining inside the Divine Palace are given to me to study, it doesn’t matter who we cooperate with!”

“What about you, Fellow Cultivator Yan?”

Qi Zhongdao shifted his eyes to Yan Liren.

Yan Liren was an elder of the Purple Pole Sword Sect. Of the five Cultivators, he and Qi Zhongdao were most involved with the Cultivation sects.

Yan Liren was still studying the stripes on the sheath of his sword, as if he was decided their influence on the weight of the sheath. Without bothering to raise his head, he replied, “The Purple Pole Sword Sect or Emperor Phoenix matter little to me. You can fight however you want. There’s only one thing that I care about, which is whether or not there is an opponent who is worthy of me drawing my sword in the Divine Palace!”

He suddenly raised his head, with brilliance of interest beaming out of his eyes. He mumbled, “Has it ever occurred to you that the Divine Palace is very close to the battlefield of the fight between Wu Suiyun and Meng Chixin, the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators?

“At that time, Wu Suiyun and Meng Chixin had their confrontation in the Land of Eternal Night. It is said that they countered an unprecedented blizzard in the middle of their fight. The cold front was so fierce that even the air froze! After the blizzard was over, the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators had already vanished!

“Do you think that Wu Suiyun and Meng Chixin might be related to the so-called ‘Divine Palace’ in a mysterious way?”

The question cast the four of them in a daze. They looked at each other in bewilderment and apparently could not offer an answer.

“Heh!” Yan Liren suddenly grew interested. He extended his thick and short fingers and flicked the sheath hard. “During the journey to explore the Divine Palace, it is possible that I will encounter the Four Rapscallions, who are worthy opponents that I must wield my sword with full strength to defeat; two seniors in the Divinity Transformation Stage; and even legendary deities whom I can also try to kill. This seems to be a lot of fun and definitely can’t be missed!”

Finally, the five super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators reached a consensus driven by different motives!

Li Yao, however, had one last question.

“Fellow Cultivators, have you seen Wang Xi in person before? What does he look like?”

Li Yao picked some random pebbles on the desolate island and crushed them into powder, building a vivid sand sculpture, before he fixed it temporarily with his spiritual energy. It was Wang Xi, who had appeared under the form of ‘Long Yangjun’ just now.

As a refiner, Li Yao had to conduct shaping and micro carving on the components on many occasions. Although his sculpture was not a piece of shocking artwork, the ration was precise, and the face was vivid. It looked precisely like the real person.

“Is this Wang Xi?”

Everybody frowned at sculpture that Li Yao had made, which was a female with a plain face and a plump body.

“This is Wang Xi.”

Exactly like Li Yao had done, Yan Liren also built a sculpture of Wang Xi with pebbles and broken stones.

“Yes. This is how Wang Xi usually appears in public occasions!”

Wang Xi used to be a powerful eunuch in the court. Naturally, there was no need for him to hide from everyone. Many Cultivators had seen him in person. Yan Liren and Qi Zhongdao, in particular, had met him at a close distance many times, which allowed them to capture his features precisely.

Li Yao observed Yan Liren’s sculpture carefully. Wang Xi was not an arrogant, condescending weasel that most people imagined a powerful eunuch to be like. Instead, he looked like a graceful, if not vulnerable, middle-aged scholar. Except for his fair face and his lack of beard, he did not look much different from other Cultivators.

Since Yan Liren had always been fighting with Wang Xi in terms of their sword arts every time they met, the sculpture of Wang Xi was also carrying a sword on his back. His glittering eyes did befit the expected appearance of an unparalleled swordsman.

After Li Yao juxtaposed the two sculptures and compared them, he could not help but conclude that ‘Wang Xi’ and ‘Long Yangjun’ were too different.

However, it did not suggest anything. For Cultivators at the level of Li Yao and Wang Xi, it was not difficult to change their bones and muscles in order to expand or shrink their body size or to control the secretion of their androgen and estrogen to generate different secondary sexual characteristics!

If Li Yao was willing, he could stimulate the estrogen inside his body to secrete crazily. As a result, his skin would naturally be fair and smooth, his beard and his leg hair would drop, his subcutaneous fat would grow thicker, and his breasts would rise. That was certainly not a big deal!

Wang Xi, Long Yangjun, what is the real identity hiding behind you?

Li Yao suddenly thought of Wang Xi’s profiles that he had read before.

According to the files, Wang Xi had been admitted into the palace around ninety years ago.

Most eunuchs were raised from their childhood, unless they were the special talents that were direly needed by the royal family.

It meant that Wang Xi had been born approximately a hundred years ago, which was a critical time.

A hundred years ago, two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators vanished, never to be seen again, in the blizzard near the Divine Palace.

A hundred years ago, Wang Xi was born, and he was finally setting off to explore the Divine Palace after spending his entire life searching for the clues.

Still a hundred years ago, a mysterious signal was sent from the Ancient Sages Sector to the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector!

Was everything mysteriously related?

The answer to everything would have to be found out after they arrived at the Divine Palace!

…

A month passed.

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

Arrows were raining upon the battle formation overwhelmingly across the sky that was occupied by the dark clouds like a flock of hungry crows, raising a round of desperate of screams and the sounds of blood springing out!

“Charge now!”

After a deafening roar, the iron cavalry from the central plateaus rushed toward the fertile Dark Cloud Prairies like a torrent of steel!

Chapter 1464 - The Way to the North!

It was a skirmish that happened as fast as fire in the chaotic border between the Great Qian Dynasty and the Dark Cloud Prairies.

However, the roles of the attacker and the defender had been swapped.

Over the years, the court’s army of the Great Qian Dynasty had mostly played a defensive role by holding their fortresses and bastions, whereas the Wolf Knights of Ghost Qin, with their advantage in speed, attacked and harassed aggressively. The previous year, the harassment had even upgraded into a real assault, and the vanguard of their enemy had almost reached the city wall of the Divine Capital. The court’s army of the Great Qian Dynasty had suffered a crushing and humiliating defeat.

After that battle, the border of the Great Qian Dynasty had grown more perilous than ever. All the soldiers were staying behind the defense lines timidly, allowing the Wolf Knights of Ghost Qin to gallop and demonstrate their power however they saw fit.

However, that day, the side that was marching forward unstoppably was actually a troop of the Great Qian Dynasty. It was the Divine Edge Legion, one of the best troops of the court on par with the Thunder Striking Legion that had been protecting the Divine Capital for hundreds of years!

It appeared that they were there for a head-on battle with the Ghost Qin for real without caring about the cost!

What was even more uncanny was that many Cultivators under the banners of various sects were flying to the sky from the flanks of the Divine Edge Legion. Like a swarm of locusts, they lunged at the soldiers of the Ghost Qin, who were running away!

The few Ghost Qin Cultivators deployed at the rear of the knights hurried to fly into the sky for resistance, only to discover that the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty were not bluffing as they had done in the past. Instead, they were fighting the battle aggressively and fearlessly at the risk of their lives!

“What’s going on?”

“Didn’t the army of the Great Qian Dynasty just suffer a great failure last year? How can they be reorganized so quickly and even take the initiative to attack in a way that implies that they are going to die with us?”

“And those Cultivators! Don’t the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty cherish their own lives most? Why are they as ferocious as tigers today?”

Before they fell one after another like raindrops, many Cultivators of Ghost Qin bulged their eyes and stared at the warriors of the Great Qian Dynasty who were entirely different from the past in shock, not having the faintest clue what had gotten into their enemy.

Similar things were happening on almost every side of the Great Qian Dynasty.

The army and the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty seemed to have been awakened overnight. They launched the most overwhelming attacks in the southeast, northwest, and north simultaneously.

Not only were Qi Changsheng’s Heaven Battering Army and Wan Mingzhu’s White Lotus Cult so terribly beaten that they could barely walk on the street, a lot of soldiers and Cultivators of Ghost Qin were successfully stalled, too. They were not able to be mobilized to the north to set up the supply line to the Land of Eternal Night.

The cause of everything, on the other hand, had now established a fleet of airships and flown to the Land of Eternal Night after bypassing the Dark Cloud Prairies with the help of a warm wind north to the equator in a long curve.

Li Yao was on the deck of one of the airships.

As far as his eyes could see, there was nothing but a white ocean. The outline of the continent was already invisible. The sea wind that was blowing against his face was gradually mixed with gloomy coldness, too.

The airship was more than a hundred meters long, driven by both the sails and the wind manipulating rune arrays.

Because the airship was cruising in the sky, it was possible to establish sails on and beneath the vehicle, which looked like a round shuttle that had been adorned with all kinds of colorful flags.

The sails were connected with ropes that were more complicated than the strokes of a rune. Many bold sailors were crawling on the ropes like spiders in the sky hundreds of meters off the ground.

The head of the airship had been carved into a roaring dragon. Four giant anchors that looked like dragon claws extended out of the deck. They could hold the vehicle to the ground in case of a strong wind, but more importantly, they could bind the airship to any prey during a battle.

Although the flying boats in this era could manage to cruise in the air, and certain remote magical equipment such as the Gold Crow Fiery Ballista or Divine Magnificence Cannon were accommodated, it was difficult for them to hit the target from thousands of meters away because of the underdeveloped probing and aiming technologies.

A radius of thousands of meters, on the other hand, was the perfect attack range of a Cultivator.

Therefore, the ‘air fights’ in the Ancient Sages Sector were mostly boarding battles. The seemingly dominating airships were nothing more than an airborne platform of transportation and supplies. The combat ability of the airship depended not on the airship per se but the Cultivators aboard it.

The dragon head of this particular airship had been dyed gold.

There were five talons on each of the four claws, suggesting that it was a Five-Talon Gold Dragon.

The unique characteristics indicated that this was a royal battleship of the imperial guards!

The mobilization of such a royal battleship, which could almost be called the best of the Ancient Sages Sector, and the stormy attacks of the Great Qian Dynasty in various directions over the past month were naturally the results of the ‘communication’ between Qi Zhongdao and the incumbent emperor.

After the five super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators reached a consensus and formed an alliance on the desolate island, Qi Zhongdao had gone straight north to the Divine Capital to discuss the issue with Emperor Phoenix.

Qi Zhongdao did not disappoint anyone. Emperor Phoenix’s head was also clear enough for him to believe Qi Zhongdao’s words instantly and make the judgement that the most critical factor about the issue was time. They had to seize every second in order to beat the Four Rapscallions to the Divine Palace!

In the one short month that followed, troops were mobilized to launch attacks in every part of the Great Qian Dynasty, especially at the border of the Great Qian Dynasty and Ghost Qin. Tremendous soldiers and Cultivators on the enemy’s side had been stalled. Also, a rather enormous expedition fleet had been established, and all the usable and necessary items for the trip deep into the snow field were prepared. All the thunderous approaches indicated a stronger leadership than the previous emperor and the ambitions of the young Emperor Phoenix who was not bragging but really had the capabilities to revive the Great Qian Dynasty!

However…

Li Yao glanced at an airship next to the one that he was standing on. Other than the bright yellow dragon flag of the Great Qian Dynasty, the banners of the Grand Mystery Sect, the Purple Pole Sword Sect, and other major sects were also flying. He slightly frowned.

The hyenas had sensed the smell and followed up anyway!

But it could not be helped.

Although Li Yao did not wish for the guys who could only be counted as saboteurs but not contributors to join the operation team, the facts that the five Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators went missing simultaneously, the obvious aggressions of the court in multiple battle lines, and the dozens of missing flying boats in the Divine Capital could not escape everyone’s attention.

None of the leaders who had defeated thousands of competitors to reach their position were simple-headed fools.

Mother White Lotus’ hasty uprising and her operation to blindly attack East Peace County had been weird in the first place.

Even if the leaders of the main sects did not realize it at that time, they would have figured out that something was wrong afterward.

Therefore, rumors had already been spreading among the Cultivators three days after the battle in East Peace County.

Although the ‘Divine Palace’ was not explicitly pointed out, the ‘Land of Eternal Night’ was clearly mentioned!

With everything reaching that point, it was difficult to hide everything from the other Cultivators.

At the very least, Yan Liren, who belonged to the Purple Pole Sword Sect, and Qi Zhongdao, as the grand leader of the Grand Mystery Sect, could not keep their complete silence under the inquiry of their respective sects.

Besides, Han Baling’s Ghost Qin, Qi Changsheng’s Heaven Battering Army, Wan Mingzhu’s White Lotus Cult, and Wang Xi’s Ghost Character certainly had experts in the Core Formation Stage and Nascent Soul Stage.

The five top warriors and the imperial guards loyal to the emperor together were still relatively insufficient. The middle-level and high-level warriors in the Core Formation Stage and Nascent Soul Stage had to be filled in to fight the enemy in the snowy Land of Eternal Night where there were absolutely no reinforcements.

Therefore, the expedition fleet eventually became a combination of the five super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, the imperial guards, and the six major sects.

The Cloud Qin Gold Statues, the path to the deities’ realm, and the mysterious Divine Palace… the temptation riled up everybody in the six major sects. Even the elders who had been training in seclusion earlier had gone outside again without caring about anything.

The six major sects would gain tremendous profits from the operation to explore the Divine Palace.

In return, they were responsible for suppressing the riots of the other smaller sects in the world of Cultivators and dispatching enough low-level disciples in cooperation with the court’s army during the stalling battles.

That was why the Great Qian Cultivators had launched attacks fearlessly on the Dark Cloud Prairies.

Although Qi Zhongdao did not like the selfish, disobedient fellows in the six major sects, he had been respected as a common leader, even if just a nominal one, for many years. Since their participation was unavoidable, he could only further contact Li Yao and the rest of them. He also specifically reminded Li Yao not to release information on the secret tunnels in the Divine Palace to public so that the five of them could still hold the initiative during the operation.

Li Yao agreed without any hesitation.

He was not the real ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’. His real purpose to participate in the operation to explore the Divine Palace was to evaluate all the forces of the Ancient Sages Sector and the endorsers behind them!

The greater a fuss the ‘Divine Palace’ caused and the more forces were involved, the more convenient it would be for him to observe and analyze.

The Three Saints, Four Rapscallions, One Monk, and One Emperor, as well as the mysterious Grand Master of Great Zhou, were all involved in the issue. If the spies of the Imperium of True Human Beings, or some even more terrifying existences, were lurking in the Ancient Sages Sector, they would still visit the Divine Palace, would they not?

During the past month, Li Yao had been away from the Purple Pole Sword Sect for a while under the excuse of ‘training in seclusion’. He had flown to the satellite where Spark was hidden beyond the atmosphere of the Ancient Sages Sector. Then, with the components that he had crafted in the Purple Pole Sword Sect in the prior months, he had finished repairing and building up the ‘star beacons’ and set them to a state that could be activated at any time.

Li Yao had made up his mind that, as long as the operation to explore the Divine Palace proved that there were no spies of the Imperium of True Human Beings in the Ancient Sages Sector and that there was an intact manufacturing base for the Colossi in the Divine Palace, he would risk sending a message to the federation and summon a fleet.

In any case, a factory for Colossi was of great strategic significance to the federation. It was definitely worth the risk!

Chapter 1465 - Rise of the Phoenix!

Therefore, the Three Saints and Four Rapscallions and all the evils with ill intentions could make as much fuss as they wanted and bring out all their schemes. It was time for all the wicked forces lurking about to show up!

Li Yao believed that no trouble could not be resolved by an expedition fleet of the federation armed with the technology from Kunlun.

If there was, he would ask ten fleets to be dispatched!

After witnessing the pandemonium of the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector and the suffering of the ordinary folks, he could not wait to completely change the world with his and the federation’s will!

While he was pondering, a common, medium-sized flying boat without any markings drew close from another route in the west and joined the spectacular exploration fleet.

A streak of brightness soared up from the medium-sized carrier. It was Qi Zhongdao, the underappreciated ‘leader of all the Cultivators’.

Qi Zhongdao brought a piece of slightly surprising but rather reasonable news.

“Emperor Phoenix will lead the elites of the Thunderous Qian Sect and participate in the operation to explore the Divine Palace personally!”

In a world without Cultivators, the emperor, with his honorable status, should certainly reside in the capital as a commander. It was rare for them to show up on the frontline.

Those who did lead the charge in battles were often seen as unwise monarchs.

However, in the world of Cultivators, especially one with hundreds of super experts in the Nascent Soul Stage, the royal authority was not a supreme concept that everybody revered.

If every Cultivation sect was compared to a tribe, the ’emperor’ was only the chief of the largest tribe. Nothing more!

In order to completely control the world, it was mandatory that the emperor boasted personal combat ability that far exceeded other people’s!

Since the Cloud Qin Gold Statues, a strategic weapon that could decide the outcome of a battle, possibility existed in the Divine Palace, Emperor Phoenix, who was ambitious enough to purge the world and revive the Great Qian Dynasty, would certainly not stand by while watching other people excavating the treasures.

Otherwise, if every major sect got one or two Cloud Qin Gold Statues in the end, and the emperor had nothing in his hands, would it not be terribly embarrassing?

His declaration to ‘purge the world’ would also be a joke!

Li Yao met Emperor Phoenix on the seemingly plain flying boat that did not have any markings on it.

Before he met the mysterious monarch of the Great Qian Dynasty who had always been a center of gossips, Li Yao had speculated what he looked like in many ways.

Emperor Phoenix was not the previous emperor’s nominated heir. Among the many princes, he was not even one of the popular and well-respected ones.

His birth mother was just a regular concubine in the palace whose position was not very high. She had passed away soon after giving birth to him. As a result, he did not have any force that he could count on in the palace.

It was said that he had been troubled by ailments since childhood. Also, the late emperor had once received the instructions of a deity in his dream, who stated that if he wanted his son to live, he must have him grow up in the Thunder Martial Temple at the north suburb of the Divine Capital, where the Great Emperor of Thunder Martial would suppress the evil inside his body with his might.

The Great Emperor of Thunder Martial was a prehistorical deity worshipped by the Thunderous Qian Sect. After the Thunderous Qian Sect took over the world, naturally, the royal family claimed that they were the blood descendants of the Great Emperor of Thunder Martial. A lot of temples had been established across the country to enshrine their ancestors.

Having his son to grow up in the Thunder Martial Temple and asking him and his descendants to guard the memorial tablets of the ancestors essentially meant banishing him from the center of the conflict of power.

By logic, a weak, unsupported, and unpopular prince stood no chance of a comeback against all the odds at all.

Therefore, the internal strife in the court and the competition between the court and the Cultivation sects had nothing to do with him.

Even during the years when Wang Xi was in power, Emperor Phoenix had always stayed in the Thunder Martial Temple in the north suburbs of the Divine Capital dutifully, like a pebble that had been forgotten by everyone.

However…

Last spring, when the army of the Ghost Qin marched to the Divine Capital and the late emperor passed uncannily, leaving the princes who all had their own plans and the Cultivation sect whose stance was rather obscure, Emperor Phoenix suddenly showed up in the Forbidden City!

Nobody knew exactly what he had learned and done in all his years in the Thunder Martial Temple.

They only knew that the young, unattractive prince who had been lurking in the darkness all the time suppressed his two most supported brothers and the few Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who endorsed them during his grand entrance!

When he demonstrated his invincible combat ability in the Forbidden City, the imperial guards defending the Divine Capital all pledged loyalty to him.

The forces who struggled to resist in their ignorance were soon suppressed by a brand-new troop of imperial guards with mysterious backgrounds but a high combat ability!

The brand-new imperial guards who had never walked in daylight before were all wearing crimson armor and glamorous helmets that looked like phoenixes. They were known as the Fiery Phoenix Legion!

With the thunderous attacks of the Fiery Phoenix Legion and himself, Emperor Phoenix soon had the entire Divine Capital under his control. He also took the chance to defeat the Ghost Qin's invasion. After Ghost Qin retreated, he had claimed the whole world, although just nominally!

Li Yao was very interested in Emperor Phoenix's rise.

The path of the emperor who had once been kicked out of the center of power only to rise and swagger back mysterious later had too many uncanny incidents and traces of external interference.

What Li Yao was doing right now was making the 'external interference' hiding back Emperor Phoenix walk into the spotlight so that he could see exactly what they were.

Emperor Phoenix was a young man whose skin was so fair that it was almost pink.

Even his eyes were mixed with stripes of bright redness.

Li Yao suspected that it was a symptom of some sort of albinism.

No wonder the late emperor would feel that the son was so weak that he had to be kept in the Thunder Martial Temple where his ancestors would watch over him.

Li Yao's first impression of Emperor Phoenix was that his eyes were ridiculously huge. Boundless ambition and vitality were beaming out of his scarlet eyeballs as if his soul had always been burning at the highest intensity, which was too fierce for his body to bear.

In contrast to his glittering eyes, the rest of his body was indeed extremely feeble. He would cough slightly after saying every sentence. It was very difficult to imagine how he dominated the Forbidden City and suppressed the entire world.

Li Yao, however, did not dare underestimate him.

If he was one of those tall, muscular men just like Lei Dong, an expert of the Thunderous Qian Sect who was known to be the strongest expert in the royal palace and the closest one to the Three Saints of the Great Qian Dynasty before Master Spiritual Vulture showed up, it would not have been a big deal at all, no matter how violent and intimidating the guy might have seemed.

The scariest enemies were in fact the seemingly vulnerable guys like Emperor Phoenix who was like a sick cat, especially when they were well-mannered and showed no condescension to Li Yao at all. He was addressing Li Yao as a ‘Master’ exactly like other people did.

Based on Li Yao’s abundant experience in adventures in the past, how could he not be a supervillain with his entrance and his demeanor?

“Master Spiritual Vulture shocked heroes of the world and rose to fame at the Dragon Spring Meeting. You even held an enticing lecture on swords later. I couldn’t help but feel fascinated when I heard people talking about the content of the lecture in the Divine Capital, and I have long yearned to invite you to have a chat in the Divine Capital, Master!”

Emperor Phoenix smiled casually like an obedient student. “But I didn’t know that you were so honorable and selfless besides your amazing Cultivation and your impressive expertise in refining, Master Spiritual Vulture!

“There must be countless treasures in the Divine Palace, and the Cloud Qin Gold Statues are marvelous weapons that can change the world. If other people had information about them, they would certainly plan to swallow the treasures alone. Master Spiritual Vulture, you have set an example for all the Cultivators in the world by revealing the great secret to public!”

Li Yao chuckled in amusement and said, “You are flattering me. I’m a barbarian who grew up in the wilderness, and I don’t know the first thing about honor or selflessness. What I do know is how much food I can take in and how much strength I wield. The Divine Palace is too large a pie for me to eat by myself. As for changing the world, I am not very interested in it. I only hope that I can receive sufficient resources to study the mysterious refining arts in the primeval era!”

The Great Qian Dynasty was governed by both the emperor and the Cultivators. According to the unspoken tradition, the Cultivators in the Nascent Soul Stage, whether they held any high position in the court or not, boasted many special privileges.

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were on relatively equal terms with the emperor. They were allowed to speak more freely. Li Yao, on the other hand, was born and raised as a barbarian Cultivator. Therefore, Emperor Phoenix was not offended by his lack of respect. Instead, with more appreciation beaming out of his face, he nodded and said, “Rest assured, Master Spiritual Vulture. I will certainly return the great favor that you have done for me. For all the artifacts and magical equipment inside the Divine Palace, they will be given to you for study as a priority no matter how you want to process them. If you are short of any resource, you can always ask me!

“Moreover…”

Pausing for a moment, he glanced at Li Yao with a thoughtful look before continuing, “I’m told that you came to the central plateaus to gain fame and establish your own sect, right, Master Spiritual Vulture?”

Li Yao rolled his eyes and sighed. “I think I have basically achieved the purpose of gaining fame now. However, establishing a sect does not seem to be as easy as I thought in the beginning.”

“Establishing a sect and stealing the food from the mouths of thousands of Cultivators are certainly not easy, but it might not be as troublesome as you imagine, Master Spiritual Vulture.” Emperor Phoenix smiled. “If you want to build a great sect that will pass on for hundreds of years from scratch on your own, it will certainly be an impossible task.

“However, if you are backed by someone and provided with infinite resources, it is not entirely unlikely that you will be able to found an eminent Spiritual Vulture Sect.

“The world of Cultivators today is like a pool of dead water. It has been still for such a long time that the fish, bugs, shrimps, and crabs inside are already rigid, stinky, and rotten! It is my opinion that only by introducing new, fresh water to the pool can we expect to purge the pool properly!”

Chapter 1466 - Freezing Tempests!

An hour later, when Li Yao returned to the deck of the airship that he had previously been on, he was still chewing on what Emperor Phoenix had told him.

Emperor Phoenix’s meaning was obvious. He wanted Li Yao to establish a sect that leaned more toward the court in order to compete with the six major sects right now and all the smaller sects.

The operation to explore the Divine Palace was the best opportunity for the cooperation of the two parties.

If Li Yao was really ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’, who had gone there to ‘gain his fame and establish his sect’, it would have been possible for him to truly be persuaded.

The young emperor is indeed quite thoughtful and has a great vision for the future. Also, I can sense his intense confidence between the lines, as if he has further support that nobody knows about!

Otherwise, with just by himself, and even counting the five of us, it would still be far from enough to control so many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the six major sects!

On the other hand, if I were a spy of the Imperium of True Human Beings, and I planned to guide the Ancient Sages Sector to join the Imperium when I’m new to the place, it seems a matter of course to cooperate with the emperor of the Great Qian Dynasty!

Therefore, if a supervillain is to jump out in the exploration of the Divine Palace, it's ten to one Emperor Phoenix!

Alternatively, it is possible that there is something wrong with Qi Zhongdao, too, considering that he is so enthusiastic about cooperating with Emperor Phoenix. He is determined to purge the world of Cultivators and establish the government of his rules. He has a strong motive to cooperate with the spies of the Imperium of True Human Beings, too!

There's also the damn eunuch Wang Xi who has planned the whole operation to explore the Divine Palace. I feel that he still has a lot of secrets that are yet to be exposed. He is not going to be easy to deal with!

As for the other three rapscallions, namely Han Baling, Wan Mingzhu, and Qi Changsheng, they have sufficient motives to cooperate with the Imperium of True Human Beings, too. It is possible that they will suddenly go on a rampage during the exploration. I have to pay special attention to them!

As for Yan Liren, Ba Xiaoyu, and Master Bitter Cicada…

Intuitively speaking, I don't think that they are related to the issue, but that might not necessarily be true. Based on my experiences in the past, the more innocent, plain, and righteous someone looks in the beginning, the more likely that they will be the guy behind all the schemes! It will be darn embarrassing if Master Bitter Cicada suddenly laughs hideously and chants 'long live the Imperium of True Human Beings' after the two parties have fought a bloody battle with everybody dying in the Divine Palace!

Wait. Does this mean that everybody involved in the exploration, both my teammates and my opponents, could be a supervillain with great schemes!

Li Yao scratched his hair hard. He had explored countless relics in his life before, but this seemed to be the most complicated one of all.

“Don’t you think that there’s more?” The mental devil crawled out of his head. “Not just everybody involved in the exploration is a suspect and can be a supervillain, are we not supervillains ourselves?”

“Huh?” Slightly dazed, Li Yao blinked.

“From our perspective, we naturally feel that those who cooperate with the Imperium of True Human Beings are supervillains.” The mental devil chuckled. “However, from the perspective of the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector, we are actually ‘alien invaders’ with ill intentions. Are we not true supervillains?

“I suggest that you do not view the whole thing and gauge our friends and foes with the simple criterion of ‘righteous’ and ‘evil’.

“Even if Ba Xiaoyu, Master Bitter Cicada, and the rest of them are truly righteous, devoted, and merciful, we are as much ‘alien invaders’ as the Imperium of True Human Beings. What makes you believe that they will certainly pick us over the Imperium?

“For example, to save the Ancient Sages Sector from the scourge of war, so that all the folks could live in peace, Ba Xiaoyu and Master Bitter Cicada might have to reach a deal with the Imperium and help the Imperium deal with the federation. Is it not a possibility?”

Li Yao took a long breath. He realized that not only was it a possibility, it was also a fairly great one.

Getting to the bottom of it, the civilization in the Ancient Sages Sector and the civilization in the Star Glory Federation had been on separate paths for hundreds of thousands of years. They had been rushing on different paths of development for such a long time that they were essentially two different civilizations.

The locals of the Ancient Sages Sector were not obliged to consider the Star Glory Federation at all.

Even for someone as merciful as Master Bitter Cicada, it was impossible for him to sacrifice millions of compatriots of the Ancient Sages Sector and help the federation fight a war that was destined to fail at the risk of the destruction of his civilization!

It would indeed be tricky to convince most of the super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators!

Anyways, I'll see what I should do after I reach the Divine Palace!

Looking at the gray horizon far away, Li Yao could not wait to visit the Divine Palace.

…

“Incoming tempests!”

“Drop the sails! Lower the altitude! Raise the spiritual shield!”

“All Cultivators, hold your position. Devote all your spiritual energy to the defense rune arrays to resist the tempests!”

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

“Ah! Not good!”

“The main mast of Swooping Eagle has been broken due to the late retraction of sails. It is now involved in the swirl of wind and going out of control. Cultivators in the Nascent Soul Stage, please reinforce immediately!”

“Make sure that Swooping Eagle does not crash into Flying Tiger. Flying Tiger has stored tremendous crystals of the fire class to heat us!”

“The keel of Swooping Eagle has been broken. The airship is collapsing. Swooping Eagle is hopeless! Swooping Eagle is hopeless!”

“Everybody on Swooping Eagle, evacuate to Flying Tiger, Silver Serpent, and Jade Void immediately. Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, please try your best to control the tempests to buy more time for the crew members on Swooping Eagle to escape!”

The crazy roars that had been filled with spiritual energy, which were deafening around the deck, were immediately ripped apart by the overwhelming tempests after they left the defense range of the spiritual shield and turned into nothing more than the moans of butterflies that nobody could hear.

It was the twentieth day after the joint exploration fleet, which stood for the best forces of the Great Qian Dynasty, left the continent.

They had gone all the way to the north in a curve on the ocean with the help of the trade wind. Finally, they had bypassed the Dark Cloud Prairies five days ago and reentered the desolate, infertile land.

From then on, the wind was no longer slow and stable flowing between the sky and the earth, but chaotic, unpredictable, and devoid of any patterns.

Even the most experienced sailors had to crawl up and down on the ropes day and night without rest, adjusting the angles of dozens of sails, in order to make the best use of every wind.

Ordinary people could never be such sailors.

They were generally Cultivators raised by the main sects or the royal family, who had special connections with the spiritual energy of the wind class.

Such special talents were known as the ‘wind runners’.

The royal family and the six major sects boasted the best ‘wind runners’ in the entire Ancient Sages Sector. With their delicate control, the fleet was able to cruise forty thousand kilometers steadily after only three days.

But that was as far as their luck went.

Up ahead was the Land of Eternal Night. The roaring chaotic winds in the world had been upgraded into the tempests that were mixed with violent spiritual energy.

They were powerful gusts that could tear apart even the bodies of Cultivators!

Li Yao had never seen such rampant winds before.

Even the dust storms on the Grand Desolate Plateau did not seem as intimidating as the blizzard in the Land of Eternal Night.

It felt that all the stars in the entire universe had been turned into hail the size of fists smashing on the fleet. They rotated at lightning-like speed under the savaging tempests, mincing everything that was unfortunately involved!

As far as one’s eyes could see, pure white snow was in every direction. Only the vague silhouettes of the flying boats nearby could be seen.

There was nothing but the howling of the wind that one could hear. Everything was suppressed, and the roaring tempests seemed to never grow tired.

It was the will of nature, the wrath of the entire planet!

Even the high-level Cultivators in the Nascent Soul Stage could not compete with such power!

Under the scourge of the world-blighting tempests, none of the flying boats were able to move forward. They could only lower the sails at the highest speed and fire out the anchors toward the ground or the seemingly solid mountains nearby. With the seventy or so chains that were as thick as the thighs of human beings, the flying boasts managed to steady themselves. Then, all the Cultivators worked together to keep the defense rune array functioning properly so that the tempests would enter invade the cabins!

If the Cultivators hesitated when they dropped the sails, like Swooping Eagle had done earlier, they would be swallowed by the tempests. Those who were too slow to fly out were completely ripped apart. Even their bones were nowhere to be found!

Lowering the sails and securing themselves well did not mean that they were safe.

The hundred chains had all been pulled taut in the tempests. White frost soon condensed on them, and they squeaked crazily.

Some of the flying boats were unlucky enough to fire the anchors into relatively feeble rocks or areas on the ground that could not resist the force of the tempests. As a result, the chains were all blown away brutally after ear-splitting noises.

With the loss of the few chains, the pressure on the remaining chains would grow even greater. Many more chains crumbled from the middle, forcing the flying boat to tremble violently in midair. After only a few shakes, the flying boat would break and fall apart amid cracking noises!

After a whole day and night of tempests, other than Swooping Eagle, another three flying boats had crashed just like that.

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators such as Li Yao could do nothing but enhance the defense rune arrays on their ship and try to control the tempests when other ships were about to crash so that there would be more time for the victims to escape.

After witnessing countless Cultivators, including several in the Core Formation Stage, to be caught by the tempests and vanished in the overwhelming blizzard, some even being split apart before they were gone, Li Yao could not help but ponder on the cruelty of nature.

No wonder Qi Zhongdao, Ba Xiaoyu, and the rest of them had to cooperate with the court and the major sects despite their reluctance.

The losses were severe enough with such a fine fleet and when the crew members were supporting and protecting each other.

If the few Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators had decided to barge into the Land of Eternal Night because they were arrogant about their personal valor, the consequences would have been too dire for them to bear!

Chapter 1467 - Horror of the Eternal Night!

The tempests mixed with wild snowstorms did not die down until they raged for a whole day and night.

By the time the last tempest faded away like a dragon that had been filled up, the world had been entirely reshaped.

Before the blizzard—although it was a poor, desolate, undeveloped area—gray rocks could be seen on the earth. Occasionally, there were also scarce yellow and brown grasslands. Some rivers that were almost dry were zigzagging by, too.

At this moment, however, the entire world had been enshrouded in pure whiteness. The snow field extended from everybody's feet to the horizon before it seemed to go straight upward and froze the entire sky. The continuous mountains also turned into translucent peaks of ice in the snowy world.

It was noon when the sun should have been scorching, yet the sun was struggling on the horizon. The flickering light that it released only managed to dye a dim orange color at the edge of the sky. Most of the parts in the sky were variegated and blurry, like the eyeballs of frozen, dead fish.

That was the real appearance of the Land of Eternal Night!

On all the maps in every dynasty, the terrible zone that was frozen all year around without absolutely any native creatures was known as the Land of Eternal Night. It was a forbidden area for most people!

Although the blizzard was already far away, the temperature that had plummeted never bounced back. Li Yao secretly measured with a thermometer from the Star Glory Federation, only to discover that the average temperature was below minus fifty degrees even at noon!

This place was only the periphery of the Land of Eternal Night, far away from where the Divine Palace was located. It was easy to predict that the temperature would not get any higher if they continued going north.

Such an extremely low temperature was beyond the description of ‘a drop of water would become ice immediately’. Every breath of air that people exhaled was like a cluster of icy mist that they spurted out, which then covered their face, body, and hair like an ice shell.

The Ancient Sages Sector did not possess the advanced mustard-seed combat suits that entailed coldness-proof functions like the federation and the Imperium did. Everybody could only wear thick, cotton coats, although the cotton coats were all specially-made robes where the crystals of the fire class and all kinds of runes had been added.

General cotton coats would have frozen into pure ice in less than one day if they were kept in such an environment!

Even if the Cultivators covered themselves in as many clothes as possible to the point that they looked ridiculously fat, the cold wind of the Land of Eternal Night that felt like tiny, sharp needles would still pierce through every invisible hole possible, stimulating the flesh, veins, and bones of the explorers incessantly. Most of the Cultivators were forced to turn on their spiritual shields or heating magical equipment twenty-four hours a day to resist the harsh weather. As a result, their consumption on spiritual energy and crystals was greatly increased.

Other than that, there was another issue, which was that most of the magical equipment was not functioning properly due to the extreme temperature. The erosion rate and the crystal consumption rate had both been increased, whereas the efficiency had dropped.

In the environment of minus fifty degrees, the uneven, delicate patterns on the magical equipment had all been covered in frost. The durability of the weapons such as swords and sabers had plunged. Even some of the Cosmos Rings were malfunctioning, making it impossible to retrieve or store objects.

The magical equipment such as sabers and swords could be stuffed into the Cosmos Rings to address the issue.

However, the floating rune arrays, power rune arrays, defense rune arrays, and heat rune arrays on the flying boats had to be exposed to the cold air.

Not only were the flying boasts consuming twice as many crystals as usual, their speed had been lowered by about two thirds. The exploration fleet that had been rushing like lightning previously was struggling to crawl forward in the frigid hell like an army of tortoises.

Thankfully, they had foreseen the situation before the exploration.

Inside the thirty airships, other than the tough soldiers, most of the assets accommodated were crystals and various kinds of resources. Also, every Cultivator had been equipped with at least two Cosmos Rings that had been packed with materials.

The technology of Cosmos Rings in the Ancient Sages Sector, of course, could not have been more developed than that of the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

Most of the storage magical equipment that the middle-level and low-level Cultivators used only had the space of a backpack. It meant that, other than the storage space in the cabin, everybody was carrying two backpacks of life-saving items, nothing more.

They still have twenty-six flying boats. Other than the wind runners to manipulate the flying boats, there were 977 experts from the Imperium guards such as the Fiery Phoenix Legion and 1,026 Cultivators from the six major sects.

“Master Spiritual Vulture, please!”

On the deck of the airship in the lead, a few imperial guards and Cultivators invited Li Yao to look at a piece of bizarre-looking magical equipment respectfully.

It looked like dozens of iron rings large and small that had been embedded together and rotating in a dazzling way.

On every iron ring, countless glittering silver balls were rolling, colliding, and uttering clanging noises.

The magical equipment was named Heavenly Magnetic Measurement Instrument. It was used by the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector to determine their location in a long journey.

It had always been a great headache in the Ancient Sages Sector to determine the precise coordinates of where one was.

There was not a network made of hundreds of satellites in the orbit of the Ancient Sages Sector. If the Cultivators were on the ocean or in the wilderness where the directions were beyond recognition, how should they measure where exactly they were?

In other ancient Cultivation worlds, the astronomical magical equipment to observe stars had been invented very early. The Cultivators could observe the relative locations of the stars and run a series of complicated calculations to determine their latitude and longitude.

Unfortunately for the Ancient Sages Sector, the ‘stars’ were not the stars in the universe whose trajectory was relatively stable but glittering, radioactive debris of the primeval war near the Ancient Sages Sector.

The war debris were susceptible to the gravitational force of the stars, the planets, and the satellites. They would even collide into each other every once in a while. Their direction and trajectory were utterly chaotic and of zero significance for reference purposes.

Therefore, it was not until recently that the Ancient Sages Sector finally invented magical equipment to determine one’s specific location by measuring the intensity of the magnetic field. Even the concept of ‘latitude and longitude’ was rather new.

However, the intensity of the magnetic field was a rather ambiguous notion that was under the interference of many factors. Therefore, the precision of such localization was not very high. One might say that it was only slightly better than nothing.

Li Yao had drawn a few rough maps marking the location of the Divine Palace based on his memory, but the maps were certainly far from detailed.

The Cultivators from the royal observatory who specialized in astrology and geography turned the Heaven Magnetic Measurement Instrument by pushing the handles on its two sides, allowing the interconnected iron rings to lean toward different angles. The silver balls on them were running into each other nonstop, too. The few of them gathered and calculated something together for a while. Finally, they concluded their location precisely.

Drawing a line from the coordinates of where they were to the coordinates of the Divine Palace would be their sailing route.

The same work had to be repeated three times every day to adjust the sailing route.

Sometimes, due to the disorder of the magnetic field, something went wrong with the localization, and they were misled into going backward instead of moving forward.

But all in all, after an arduous march, they were still drawing ever closer to the Divine Palace.

Boundless ice occupied the sky and the earth. Except for the whiteness on the ground and the grayness in the sky, there was not a third color to be seen. The monotonous environment was almost driving everybody insane.

Thankfully, most of them were determined Cultivators, and it was not unusual for them to train in seclusion for a year and a half. That was why they had managed to persevere.

On the fourth day after they entered the Land of Eternal Night, they discovered something that did not belong to the place for the first time.

It was a flying boat, or what was left of it, that had been shattered by the tempests. The remains were scattered on the snow field and about to be entirely buried by the snow. Only a few bare masts were still exposed on the ground.

It was possible that there were crystals and other resources that were not used up yet in the flying boat that had an accident. Naturally, it was not ignored.

The Cultivators spent half a day excavating the remains of the flying boat. The result, however, was rather unexpected for them.

It was not one flying boat but a tiny fleet made of three flying boats. Also, the accident that caused their fall did not happen a long time ago but only around two days prior.

Although none of the three flying boats were flying their banners, Qi Zhongdao recognized quite a few Cultivators who had been frozen to death.

“They are subordinates from the Dragon Ocean Sect, the Equal Mountain Sect, the Heaven Shocking Hall as well as another five or so sects!”

Qi Zhongdao looked rather awful.

One condition on which the six major sects had been allowed to participate in the operation was that they must handle the smaller sects that were seething with impatience and prevent them from causing trouble.

Li Yao did not know what kind of pact the six major sects and the smaller sects had reached in exactly what way, but it was obvious that the Core Formation Stage Cultivators and the Nascent Soul Stages in the smaller sects did not intend to abide by their promise at all. They might have established fleets with higher speeds and risked marching into the Land of Eternal Night earlier than the six major sects did, hoping to discover the Divine Palace in advance!

“They were asking to be killed!” Qi Zhongdao remarked coldly. “Even the six major sects and the court, with the finest flying boats of the entire Flying Star Sector and the best wind runners, have to tread lightly and make thorough preparations for every step!

“But those guys were trying to barge into the Land of Eternal Night and loot the Divine Palace in advance with just the few of them, insufficient crystals and resources, and probably not even the Heaven Magnetic Measurement Instrument?

“Idiocracy can never be cured!”

They discovered the body of a Nascent Soul Stage not far away from the remains of the flying boats that had an accident.

The Cultivator from the Dragon Ocean Sect, who had always been a well-known celebrity in the world of Cultivators, had died the most miserable death. His body was like a skeleton as if his flesh and blood had been drained.

According to Qi Zhongdao and Master Bitter Cicada’s analysis, he must have escaped alone after the flying boats were ripped apart by the tempests. He had tried his best to fly out of the dangerous area, only to be caught in the turbulence. He had activated the spiritual energy inside his body to resist the force of nature and eventually died of exhaustion.

Chapter 1468 - Above the Divine Palace!

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator’s end made all the Cultivators including Li Yao’s sigh. They could not help but feel sorry for the guy.

The Cloud Qin Gold Statues and the path to the deities’ realm were priceless treasures that could awaken the infinite greed buried at the bottom of anyone’s heart, forcing them to break the restraint of their rationality and do the craziest things.

The small exploration squad that had been established was probably not the first fleet that had arrived in the Land of Eternal Night without informing the court and the six major sects, nor would it be the last one.

At that moment, countless more exploration teams and Cultivators must have lost their way in the Land of Eternal Night, waiting to be torn into shreds by the freezing tempests!

Were they stupid? Maybe.

However, were Li Yao and his companions any better than the guys who broke into the Land of Eternal Night recklessly?

It was true that they were well prepared and had the best gear and experts, which allowed them to resist the scourge of the tempests and possibly to reach the depths of the Land of Eternal Night and dig out the legendary Divine Palace successfully.

But when the day did come, and when the Cloud Qin Gold Statues and the path to the deities' realm were unfolded in front of them, would they be caught in a storm that was even more horrendous than the tempests, one that rose from everybody's heart, enough to destroy all their trust and rationality and make them kill each other?

The discovery of the debris added to the grave atmosphere in the exploration fleet that was vaguely divided into three forces.

Qi Zhongdao went to Li Yao, Yan Liren, Ba Xiaoyu, and Master Bitter Cicada to discuss solutions more than once, restating that the five of them must be united as the pillar to keep the situation from going out of control no matter how chaotic it was later.

Emperor Phoenix summoned Li Yao quite a few times, too. Every time, he simply asked Li Yao some questions regarding the production of magical equipment respectfully and never mentioned the discovery of the Divine Palace. However, he expressed his support for Li Yao to establish an independent sect subtly between the lines. The support that he promised was greater after every meeting. Even Li Yao felt more or less intrigued.

For the rest of the journey, the dozens of high-level Cultivators in the Nascent Soul Stage expanded the search range at the cost of tremendous crystals. As they expected, they discovered another three spots of debris.

The smallest of them had only one flying boat, but the largest one actually boasted almost ten airships where the Cultivators from dozens of sects were held!

It was a pity that their flying boats had not been solid enough for them to resist the tempests. Also, they lacked the state-of-the-art Heaven Magnetic Measurement Instrument and a precise map of the Divine Palace. As a result, they could only wander on the snow field like blind people riding blind horses. It was inevitable that they had an accident. All one thousand Cultivators had been turned into frozen statues.

Judging from the traces left on the debris, it seemed that a few experts at the peak of the Core Formation Stage and in the Nascent Soul Stage had managed to escape the blizzard.

However, without the protection of the flying boats and the support of sufficient resources, it was unbearable to imagine how long they could survive on the freezing Land of Eternal Night and what a gory ending would become of them.

The last debris, on the other hand, was different from the debris that they had discovered earlier.

Most of the corpses had become broken limbs and torsos. Countless flowers of blood seemed to be thriving on the snowy earth. All the crystals and resources in the flying boats had been plundered. The Cosmos Rings and the bags on all the Cultivators were gone, too.

The ferocious animals in the snow field might feed on the bodies, but they would certainly never take way the Cosmos Rings.

It was evident that the victims had not been killed by the tempests but assaulted by the enemy.

A lot of dead bodies of foreign Cultivators, who was wearing the robes in a different style from the central plateaus and had tremendous tattoos on their faces with giant gold rings on their ears, were also found on the spot. They should be the Cultivators from Ghost Qin.

It was certainly not good news that the Ghost Qin team was faster than them.

Thankfully, the internal organs of quite a few bodies had not entirely frozen yet, and the vague stench of blood still lingered in the air, suggesting that the battle did not happen a long time ago. It was possible that the attack took place yesterday or the day before.

Before Wang Xi escaped, he had grabbed the map core of the Divine Palace, but Li Yao had kept the Thousand Stars Tray to himself.

It was unlikely that there would be a replica of the Thousand Stars Tray, which was a piece of magical equipment that was specially designed to parse the map core.

Therefore, at that moment, both parties were using the imprecise map drawn based on Li Yao and Wang Xi’s memories to guide the way.

In the meantime, Ghost Qin, the Heaven Battering Army, and Ghost Character were unlikely to possess localization tools as precise as the device from the royal observatory.

Therefore, everybody was still almost at the same location before the start line. It remained to be seen which of them would reach the ‘Divine Palace’ sooner!

The traces of the Ghost Qin were like a whip in the ass for the exploration fleet from the Great Qian Dynasty. They rushed at their top speed without considering the cost at the risk of dismembering the flying boats. Finally, they reached the coordinates of the Divine Palace according to the map five days later.

The point on the map in Li Yao’s memory and the location of the fleet according to the Heaven Magnetic Measurement Instrument overlapped.

However…

The tiny point on the map was actually a vast land with a coverage of almost a hundred square kilometers in reality.

Considering the error of the Heaven Magnetic Measurement Instrument, the specific range of the Divine Palace could be anywhere in the hundreds of kilometers around them.

The weird world in front of them, on the other hand, made all the Cultivators look particularly awful.

Starting from the previous night, a vague mist had risen up on the Land of Eternal Night.

At first, nobody had thought much of it. It had never occurred to them that mist was highly unlikely to appear in a terrible environment with a temperature of below minus sixty degrees!

Perhaps, it was not mist but a certain uncanny natural phenomenon similar to mist.

As they approached the Divine Palace, the ‘mist’ had grown more and more intense. In the end, it looked like an ocean of clouds that was flowing on the earth. It was barely possible to see one’s own fingers after the Cultivators walked into it!

The mist boasted a strong suppressive effect on spiritual energy. Both the Cultivators and their magical equipment were having problems with spiritual energy disorder when they were placed in the middle of the mist.

“The Divine Palace could be anywhere in the hundreds of kilometers nearby. It is hidden right inside the mist!

“Let’s set up camp at the edge of the mist. Connect all the flying boats with chains. Dig holes in the snow field and fix the anchors on the solid rocks deep below the snow!

“Send out exploration teams in different batches and search in all directions. Also, according to the map, divide the five hundred square kilometers nearby into grids of one square kilometer. Then, mark every grid after it has been explored!

“The experts from Ghost Qin, the Heaven Battering Army, the White Lotus Cult, and Ghost Character are likely to be hiding on the opposite of the mist. Stay alert, everybody!”

Qi Zhongdao issued orders unhurriedly.

A camp made of twenty-six flying boats was established quickly. Bronze pillars were erected, constructing a defense rune array that was enough to resist the blizzard.

Li Yao and the other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, each leading an exploration team, went into the mist in search for the Divine Palace.

However, the moment that he entered the hazy mist, Li Yao realized how tricky the operation would be.

The mist was like an invisible, yet unbreakable maze and cage. After only several hundred meters, the temporary camp made of the twenty-six flying boats had already disappeared. Even the dazzling brilliance on the masts, which was supported to provide guidance for them, was as lackluster as a dying firefly.

When he roared to the outside world, the soundwaves seemed to be absorbed by puffy cotton, and it was barely audible fifty meters away.

The exploration team that he led had fifty members, but he could only see the shadows of the ten or so people closest to him. As for those further away, he could neither see nor hear them.

They found themselves accidentally trespassing on a weird, white world that replaced the previous world that had been living in. There was nothing except for themselves between the sky and the earth. Even their own breath and heartbeat were swallowed by the mist when they did not pay attention to listen to them.

Li Yao had thought about whether or not he could soar into the atmosphere and search for the Divine Palace from above.

When he had a try, however, he discovered that he was faced with an ocean of ivory clouds, and all the mountains appeared and disappeared like lone mountains. It was impossible to observe the details on the ground at all.

Therefore, they had to resort to the clumsiest way by groping inch after inch and setting up enormous marks in the zones that they had explored.

Thankfully, they had thousands of members. Other than those stationed in the camp, it was enough to build almost thirty search teams. When they pushed forward together, the speed of exploration was quite impressive.

After only three days, the zones closest to the camp had been explored. Everybody was moving toward the center of the mist.

As a result, the connection with the rear became even more difficult. Also, the temperature at the center of the mist was even lower, and the air was more corrosive to human bodies and magical equipment. The Cultivators in the Refinement Stage and the Building Foundation Stage could not last for belong before they had to go back to the camp to rest and recover.

Even the Core Formation Stage Cultivators and the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators such as Li Yao were exhausted and miserable when they exploited their brain cells to release their telepathic thoughts in search of the Divine Palace while they were exposed to the mist for a long time.

“Hu!”

Li Yao took a deep breath. The air immediately darted out of his face like an arrow and soon melted into the overwhelming mist around.

It was the seventeenth zone that he had explored. Still, he had found nothing. Except for the solid, frozen soil and the ice and rocks too thick to the measured, absolutely nothing.

Judging from the scale of the Divine Palace on the map, the ‘palace’ was so large that it was almost a minor city. If it was there, there was no way that they would not have found it after such a long time.

Unless, of course, the Divine Palace was below their feet, and it was a vast underground city.

If that was the case, things would be more troublesome. They had to enhance the magnitudes of their telepathic thoughts so that they could search below the ice. The cost of time and crystals would more than double.

While Li Yao was pondering, he suddenly felt a strong sense of danger.

His nose flapping, he inhaled the air that was as sharp as a saber, only to feel that it was stinging from his nostrils to his lungs.

The temperature had dropped more than ten degrees in that moment, and it was still dropping!

Chapter 1469 - Tide of Ice Devils!

What happened? Another polar outbreak?

It's impossible. A lot of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators are staying on alert around. If the tempests with blizzards were arriving, they would've sent out alarms!

Li Yao felt that the frost was spreading to his stomach all the way from his nostrils like a pervasive bug, outlining his trachea and bronchia for him. He could even sense that a lot of his alveoli were freezing.

He suddenly fell on one of his knees and sensed the environment clearly by sticking his hands to the ground.

As he expected, he sensed a slight shivering, as if the ground in the mist up head had been split open, and something was crawling out from underground!

After only a few seconds, his palms had been frozen to the ground. When he removed them by force, even the thick gloves were ripped apart.

Li Yao stared at the mist in the front without blinking. Soon, ear-splitting shrieks were echoing from the mist. There was also the sound of something wriggling forward.

"Run!"

"There's a large area of ice up head. After we drilled through the ice, countless 'ice devils' flooded out!"

In the mist, dozens of Cultivators were staggering to run backward.

Everybody’s face was extremely twisted, as if they had been smashed by the hammers of ice right in the head. Many of them were tottering, with their bodies and legs covered in thick ice shells. Despite the severe frostbite, they did not dare slow down at all. Exhausting their spiritual energy, they fled in panic like running fireballs!

Behind him, a giant translucent tide, as if the white snow had been blessed with life, was lunging toward them like a ferocious beast!

One of the Cultivator’s legs was frozen in place. He managed to summon his flying sword, hoping to ride the sword out of danger. It was a pity that his flying sword was malfunctioning in such a frigid environment. Drifting up and down for a moment, he was soon caught up by the translucent tide.

“Hu!”

After the tide swept over, the Cultivator was immediately frozen into a block of ice in midair before he fell to the ground and shattered into pieces, leaving a ground of scattered, blood red ice pieces the size of fingernails!

The sight felt eerie to all the Cultivators who witnessed his end.

Before they marched into the Land of Eternal Night, they had also collected many notes from the previous adventurers and sorted out a large batch of files regarding the Land of Eternal Night.

The Land of Eternal Night was frequented by all kinds of brutal demon beasts living in the coldness. There were also gangs of frost barbarians. The blizzards and the tempests were terrifying natural disasters, too. However, of all the dangers, the most horrible one was doubtlessly the ‘ice devils’!

The ice devils were a type of very special moss.

To survive in the harsh environment of the Land of Eternal Night, they spent most of time lurking inside the thick shells of ice and preserved their lives by means of hibernation.

When they perceived the arrival of prey, they would figure out a way to break out of the shells, proliferate, and move before they lunged at the prey like a man-eating swamp!

The ice devils’ food was the heat in the air and in the body of their prey.

Therefore, when the ice devils went on a rampage, the temperature in the environment would plummet by dozens of degrees because all the heat in the air had been absorbed by the ice devils.

Should the prey be covered by the ice devils, all the heat and spiritual energy inside their bodies would instantly be drained, leaving an empty ice sculpture behind.

After all the prey was cleaned up and devoured, the ice devils would sneak back underground, waiting in hibernation for another batch of unfortunate prey to start a new round of hunting!

Li Yao had once seen a very weird primeval moss named ‘blood tide’ on Kunlun. Feeding on spiritual energy, it could cover dozens of square kilometers and was as thick as a carpet. It was even bold enough to attack the high-level Cultivators who were equipped with crystal suits.

The ice devils were probably the mutants of the ‘blood tide’ in the extremely cold area. They were even weirder and more dangerous!

“Damn it. I should’ve seen it coming!” Li Yao slapped his thigh hard.

All the information that he had collected regarding the ice devils stated that the terrible creatures were rather unpredictable. As long as the explorer was not too unlucky, it was unlikely to ever run into them.

However, if they were truly the mutants of ‘blood tide’, it was possible that they would have an equally keen sense of spiritual energy. Therefore, near the Divine Palace would certainly be their best shelter, just like Kunlun, as a land of dense spiritual energy provided sanctuary for the blood tide!

The appearance of the ice devils suggested that the Divine Palace was not far away. It was possible that the Divine Palace was right below the ice shells that they had drilled through!

It was a pity that Li Yao had failed to associate the ice devils with the blood tide in the beginning. When he figured out the connection between the two parties, the translucent tides of ice had already lunged toward him!

“Run!” Li Yao roared and threw out more than ten grenades, which exploded right above the ice devils. However, the blossoming flames were frozen into half translucent flowers after only blocking the ice devils briefly. Their color changed from crimson to orange, from orange to blue, and from blue to bright green, until they became transparent and melted into the overwhelming tide of ice!

Not only did his attack fail to blow apart the ice devils, it even gave away Li Yao’s existence. With a series of crunching noises, the ice devils flowed toward him mixed with ice and mist!

Cursing, Li Yao turned around and ran away. He was of a mind to ask everybody to keep calm and remind them that, based on his experience in the past, the ice devils would only attack when they perceived spiritual waves. So, as long as everybody concealed their spiritual waves to the minimum, they would not be attacked anymore!

However, on second thought, if they did not summon their spiritual energy to resist the bitterly cold environment, they would be equally dead!

Besides, with the thickness of the mist, even if he condensed his spiritual energy on his throat and roared at the top of his voice, it would not be able to reach hundreds of meters away!

Li Yao suddenly realized that the weird mist could have been a trap made by the ice devils. This place was their hunting ground!

Gritting his teeth hard, Li Yao could only flee in a hurry.

Due to the extremely low temperature, all the magical equipment became highly unstable, especially devices made of metal. They would be covered in thick shells of ice within a few breaths when they were exposed to the air. The circulation of spiritual energy on the rune arrays was seriously jammed. It took a much longer time for the Cultivators to prepare their flying swords.

Many of them had already been devoured by the ice devils before their flying swords were soaked in spiritual energy. Amid long, dry screams, they ended up being bizarre-shaped ice sculptures.

The other survivors were already lightheaded. In the obscure mist, they were wandering like headless flies, and if they missed one or two marks on the ground in their anxiety, it was very possible that they would miss their direction. Some of the more unfortunate guys were even running right toward the ice devils.

When they discovered that the air was freezing around them, there was already no time for them to react. The overwhelming tide of tide soon drowned each and every one of them!

“Don’t run in panic. Follow me. Roar while you run to attract the companions nearby. Do not lose your way!” Li Yao was rather anxious.

Although he did not like the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector very much, he was not heartless enough to watch them to freeze to death without doing anything. He did not know the situation about the rest of the exploration teams in the mist. At the very least, he wanted to bring the exploration team under his lead out of the mist in one piece!

In the mist up front, a lot of people were suddenly shouting and running toward them in panic. They had apparently lost their way under the devastation of the ice devils.

“Don’t panic! The camp is over there!”

Li Yao snatched the Cultivator in the lead and shoved him hard.

He suddenly felt that the Cultivator was somewhat weird. The guy was wearing a battle robe made of smooth bear hide and a hat made of otter leather that dangled to his ears. Although there were no earrings, he could still see part of the tattoos on the guy’s face.

The saber on his waist, the wolf fangs on the sheath as adornments, and the Seven-Star Agates, which were local specialties of the Dark Cloud Prairies, as well as their scream just now that was mixed with the unique accent of the Dark Cloud Prairies. All the signs suggested that it was a team of Ghost Qin Cultivators!

In the middle of the boundless mist, the Great Qian Cultivators and the Ghost Qin Cultivators looked at each other in a daze like two swarms of headless flies.

The atmosphere was a bit intense and awkward. Everybody’s throat was rolling up and down. They were breathing so hastily that more white air was spurting out their nostrils, covering everybody’s frozen faces in the hazy smoke.

It was not until then that Li Yao realized that the exploration team led by the Four Rapscallions must have reached the coordinates of the Divine Palace, which was enshrouded in the mist, at almost the same time as they did, except that the two parties were on different sides of the mist. They had been pushing toward the center from opposite fronts.

Because the vast mist blocked all the light, sound, and spiritual waves, and both parties were measuring and prospecting carefully, they did not discover each other in the beginning.

It was like digging a tunnel from the two ends of a mountain to the center of it. Before the two parts of the tunnel were connected, it was almost impossible for them to notice each other!

However, the weird ice devils sensed the two bunches of prey at the same time and attacked them indiscriminately!

Under the scourge of the ice devils, many people lost their way. Instead of running to their own camp, they ran toward the ice devils, or where there was noise!

The multiple forces there—namely Great Qian, Ghost Qin, the Heaven Battering Army, the White Lotus Cult, and Ghost Character—must have gotten mixed up. Everything was in chaos!

The situation could not have been messier!

“You—” Li Yao only hoped that the Ghost Qin Cultivators in front of his eyes maintained the most fundamental rationality.

Even an idiot could tell that fighting each other while being chased by the ice devils would do nobody any good!

Thankfully, the Ghost Qin people on the opposite side seemed to have realized it, or maybe, in an environment where the temperature had dropped to almost minus a hundred degrees, their fighting will and brutality had been frozen. Although they were clutching the handles of their sabers, they were retreating step by step in silence instead of unsheathing the weapons.

However…

Shua!

A sword aura rushed out from the Great Qian Cultivators behind Li Yao and darted into the Ghost Qin Cultivators, knocking one of them to the ground!

Chapter 1470 - Battle in Chaos!

Li Yao glared back angrily, only to discover that a Cultivator who was shivering in the cold was looking at the longsword in his hand in a daze, as if he did not believe that it was him who launched the sword aura just now. He then looked at Li Yao pitifully, completely at a loss as to what to do.

Li Yao almost wanted to kick the troublemaker to the ground, but there was already no time!

The Ghost Qin Cultivators were already highly nervous and ready to explode at any moment. The sword aura was like the fuse to detonate the tinderbox. All the Ghost Qin Cultivators lunged in fury!

For a moment, sabers and swords were colliding, and grenades and broken limbs were flying in midair together. Explosions and screams echoed with each other. Hardly had the hot blood spurted out when it was frozen into bizarre-shaped red flowers, and the flowers crashed to the ground into pieces, turning into clusters of translucent pearls of blood!

Li Yao found it impossible to stop the Cultivators from the two sides dying with each other.

Besides, this was definitely not the only battlefield in the boundless mist.

After avoiding the explosions of a few grenades that had been embedded with the pieces of bones of the Dragon

Wolves, Li Yao felt that his ears were humming, and there was nothing but blankness in his eyes.

In his dizziness, he suddenly discovered that the marks for guidance had all been blown apart. He could not tell which direction the camp was in at all!

Li Yao cursed loudly in his heart. Lowering his head to evade a saber that was slashing at him, he kicked the Ghost Qin Cultivator who was coming at him ferociously away. Then, he stomped on the ground and soared into the sky. The wings of spiritual energy like greenish, ghostly fire surged out of his back crazily, but their size had almost been reduced by half in the extreme environment!

Holding back the excruciating coldness, Li Yao exploited his cells crazily and summoned as much spiritual energy as possible to push himself upward. Layers of frost enveloped him, only to be shattered and obliterated by his surging spiritual energy. The ice devils were hissing below his feet and extending pillars that looked like claws toward him. Still, they were not as fast as him. He flew to an altitude of almost a thousand meters and craned his neck in the mixture of mist and clouds!

Li Yao was about to sharpen his eyesight to look for the camp when another huge head popped up in the mist not far away.

The newcomer had a dry, monkey-like face with a short, hard beard and hair that was soaring into the sky. Both his beard and his hair were in the most dominating red color, leaving the impression of aggressiveness and unreasonableness.

His eyes were bloodshot, but the blood threads were not actinomorphic but spread out in spirals. They seemed to be rotating all the time, and it was very easy for other people to be awed by him.

The guy noticed Li Yao the moment that he was noticed. His bloodshot eyes rotating even faster than before, he grinned, baring his golden, sharp teeth. “Master Spiritual Vulture?”

Li Yao’s pupils constricted violently.

The guy’s appearance was so queer that it was unique in the entire Ancient Sages Sector. Li Yao had seen his portrait a long time ago.

“Heaven Battering King?”

It was ‘Heaven Battering King’ Qi Changsheng, the leader of the Heaven Battering Army and one of the Four Rapscallions, who boasted a legendary indestructible body blessed by a fire fiend, had savaged the northwest for decades, and had risen again every time after his army was annihilated!

Qi Changsheng burst into laughter. He suddenly dived back into the mist, vanishing into thin air!

Li Yao’s hair was standing on end. He felt even more alarmed when the ice devils were coming at him. Dozens of needles darted out, dragging the molecular mica threads to establish a sharp protective web around his body!

Hardly had the molecular mica threads interweaved when an orange claw of fire crawled out of the mist and snatch right toward Li Yao’s abdomen, only to crash into the molecular mica threads precisely. It was almost cut in half!

A bellow echoed inside the mist, and the fiery claw suddenly disappeared. Soon, ‘Heaven Battering King’ Qi Changsheng slowly showed up in the mist again!

He looked entirely different from before. His previously dry skin had become half transparent orange, with deep purple cracks here and there. His beard and his hair were bouncing like scorching fire. His whole body seemed to be made of magma!

In the legends, the fiery fiend brought fire and drought everywhere he went.

Although it was an overstatement, the Heaven Battering King's indestructible body allegedly blessed by the fiery fiend clearly boasted a certain superpower to control fire.

Perhaps it was because the working mechanism of his mitochondria was different from other people!

Just now, Qi Changsheng had crawled into the mist and ambushed Li Yao, yet he had become the victim of his own scheme. His right hand had almost been cut in half by the molecular mica threads, and a terrible wound had been left there.

However, it was not blood that was flowing out of the wound but a thick material resembling magma that appeared to be some sort of powerful adhesive. The wound was being stitched up at a visible rate. In the blink of an eye, the hand was as good as new, without even a scar.

The so-called 'indestructible body' had been displayed in such a weird way!

Qi Changsheng performed a seal with his right hand. His Cosmos Ring glittered crazily, and a saber more than two meters long, made from Heavenly River Red Copper, slowly showed up.

Solemnly, he stared at Li Yao with his spiral eyes and said, one word after another, “Master Spiritual Vulture, we never had any grudges with each other. There’s no reason for us to attack each other the moment we meet…”

Before he finished his small talk, Qi Changsheng turned into a streak of orange brilliance. A saber in his hand was like an army of thousands of soldiers when he slashed it right toward Li Yao’s face!

Li Yao had long been prepared. After a snort, a bright green claw glittered and appeared on his right hand. He split into dozens of phantoms, avoiding Qi Changsheng’s attack, and condensed again behind him!

“That’s indeed so, Heaven Battering King!”

The sharp claw on Li Yao’s right hand turned into a cluster of gray mist. More than ten holes appeared on every talon, and a molecular mica thread was passing through every hole. As if he was controlling a puppet, Li Yao manipulated a hundred molecular mica threads to attack Qi Changsheng’s critical parts at the same time.

While launching the fatal attacks, he chuckled. “Not only do we have absolutely no grudges between us, there are also a lot of opportunities for cooperation between us! I’m told that you have been excavating relics in the northwest and are best at exploring the treasures below the ground. As for me, I know a thing or two about magical equipment and rune arrays!”

“Exactly!” Qi Changsheng sprayed an overwhelming tide of saber auras even when Li Yao’s molecular mica threads were cutting thousands of wounds all over his body. He was even trying to melt Li Yao’s molecular mica threads with the scorching fire inside his body, forcing Li Yao to pull the molecular mica threads and the needles back and to quickly retreat.

Qi Changsheng burst into laughter. “You and I are both here for treasures, not to kill each other. Although we belong to different sides right now, we are both clear that Han Baling, Wan Mingzhu, and Wang Xi are as unreliable as Qi Zhongdao, the goddamn emperor, and the six major sects on your side. When we are truly faced with the Cloud Qin Gold Statues, it will be hard to say who is a friend and who is a foe!”

Boom!

The two of them had another head-on clash in midair. Ripples were spreading out in the mist like a blowing storm.

Li Yao gnashed his teeth. “Are you more reliable than them, Heaven Battering King?”

“Nobody is reliable nowadays!” Qi Changsheng spat on the ground and said, “However, although I do have a good appetite, it is impossible for me to swallow dozens of Cloud Qin Gold Statues alone. I believe that you cannot take all the Cloud Qin Gold Statues by yourself, either, Master. Doing you a favor will be doing myself a favor. Is it not good?”

“It certainly is!” Li Yao narrowed his eyes and said, “After the few rounds that we’ve fought, we basically know how strong we are. A great price must be paid if one of us wants to kill the other!

“With that in mind, why don’t we stop now and wait until the Divine Palace is opened and the Cloud Qin Gold Statues are found to see whether we should fight or cooperate?”

Shua!

Qi Changsheng’s saber blew out a tide of flames.

When the ‘tide’ was minced apart by the freezing wind, he had already drifted hundreds of meters away to the other side of the mist. Retreating his saber, he clasped his fist toward Li Yao, implying that the deal had been made.

Right then, deafening cracks were echoing from mist—the very fact that the noises had passed through the thick mist to the sky almost a thousand meters above the ground was indicative enough of the mayhem at the source of the sounds!

Right then, the center of the mist abruptly sank, as if an enormous crack had appeared at the bottom of the mist into which all the mist was pouring. Very soon, the mist had already grown a lot thinner!

As the mist grew thinner, the two of them were finally able to clearly see what was happening down below. It was indeed a messy and disordered battlefield!

Because of the blockage of the mist and the scourge of the ice devils, both the Great Qian Cultivators and the subordinates of the Four Rapscallions had lost their way.

After fleeing in panic for a while, many of them had run into their enemies and fought them hard, their blood shed on the white snow!

At this moment, the mist gradually dispersed. Like a maze whose walls had been retracted, they finally discovered that they had been completely entangled with their enemies. While they surrounded part of the enemies, they were surrounded by other enemies, too. It was impossible for them to break from the battlefield!

After a brief, weird silence, the two parties unleashed roars and spiritual waves that were even fiercer than before. Without bothering about the ice devils that were still wandering around them, they battled to the death!

Wu!

Awe-inspiring horns were blown in the camp made of the flying boats of the Great Qian Dynasty.

The Fiery Phoenix Legion, in their crimson armor, marched to the center of the battlefield in a burning arrowhead under the lead of Emperor Phoenix.

It was the only organized troop on the Great Qian Dynasty in the mess. Obviously, it was going to play an important role in the battlefield!

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

Far, far away, on the other side of the snowy world, a few alarm arrows were shot into the sky.

Accompanied by hundreds of violent howls, the elite Dragon Wolf knights commanded by Han Baling, the regent of Ghost Qin, began to trample on the vulnerable snow field with their iron hooves!

Chapter 1471 - Snow Field Falls, Divine Palace Rises!

Neither of the two troops had more than a thousand soldiers. Yet, none of their members were ordinary people. They were the tough soldiers at least in the Building Foundation Stage, equipped with the finest weapons and armor and riding the most ferocious animals. Well-trained, they truly gave the feeling that they were an unstoppable tsunami when they were rushing forward with their fighting will reverberating!

Even the high-level Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage and even the Nascent Soul Stage would not want to stand in the way of those two iron troops!

The two torrents almost discovered their opponent simultaneously. Like two attracted magnets, they crashed toward each other without dodging. Their unstoppable aura reminded Li Yao of two high-speed crystal trains that were running toward each other!

Shua! Shua! Shua!

The soldiers of both troops were adept at reining their mounts. While they were rushing, they cast spells, drew their bows, or summoned their swords on the back of the bumpy animals. Thousands of weapon auras, fire balls, and sharp arrows around which lightning was dancing drew devastating arcs in the air, brushed past each other, and landed upon the enemy.

Occasionally, some of the auras and arrows crashed in midair, resulting to the colorful balls of light exploding. The broken pieces that were rotating rapidly sprained down like flowers!

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

Hazy spiritual shields were rising around the battle formations of the two parties, but they could not block all the auras and arrows. More and more people were shot by the arrows. Half of their body was electrified and burnt, and some even lost their entire arm during the explosions. Yet, they did not say anything when they crouched on their Dragon Wolves and horses. Even if they were about to die, they were destined to make their mounts drag their bones into the enemy’s chest!

Boom!

The two torrents finally crashed brutally!

There were few fancy tricks on the battlefield. The two parties barely stopped. After a brief stalemate like the dragonflies dipping on the water, they pierced through the enemy’s formation and swapped sides with the enemy.

After the single encounter, hundreds of broken bodies were already left on the ground. The battle formations of both parties were significantly sparser than before. However, under the command of their leading generals, they soon regrouped and adjusted their direction, ready to launch the second wave of attacks!

The party that regrouped into a new attack formation and adjusted to the best direction for the next assault while maintaining the high morale would likely be the final victor in the battle!

Li Yao saw that Emperor Phoenix was leading the charge at the front of the Fiery Phoenix Legion on a horse that had wings on its back and colorful long tails behind the hindquarters.

Perhaps because he despised his feminine face, he was wearing a mask that had been shaped like a phoenix bathing in fire. The long beak and the bulging eyes, all made of crimson crystals, were emitting indescribable brutality. Together with the long spear in his hand, he was like a totally different person from when Li Yao had met him a couple of days ago.

At the front of the Dragon Wolf Knights, on the back of a tall and majestic Dragon Wolf whose hair was pure black, there was a Ghost Qin warrior with a typical look of his people. His cheekbones were high, his eyes looked like almonds, and the gold rings on his ears were dangling to his shoulders, producing clanging sounds. He was wearing a hat made of bear hide, but even the head of the bear had somehow been fashioned into the hat after being refined through special liquids. At first glance, he was like a great bear that had stood on its feet!

It was Han Baling, the leader of the Ghost Qin and the greatest headache for the Great Qian Dynasty!

There were barely any grudges between Li Yao and Qi Changsheng, but for Emperor Phoenix and Han Baling, they were the best example for ‘sworn enemies’!

The flames of spiritual energy on them, one side red and the other black, were spreading out infinitely like fire that had been added with oil. The snow field below their feet was cracking nonstop, and gaps that looked like spider webs were appearing!

“Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture!” Qi Changsheng grimaced. “Han Baling is dueling with your lousy emperor right now. Although I don’t like Han Baling, I like the louse emperor even less. If you choose to help your emperor, I’ll have to go and help Han Baling. The result will not be any different from right now, except that the two of us may have to blow each other’s brains out. Why bother?

“I suggest we stay here and see which of them wins the battle. What do you say?”

Li Yao replied with a nod. He did not intend to interfere with the fight between Emperor Phoenix and Han Baling in the first place.

Although Han Baling was one of the ambitious Four Rapscallions, there might be even greater schemes behind Emperor Phoenix.

Before everything was clear, Li Yao’s priority was definitely to preserve his strength.

He shifted his attention to search for the other super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

The super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were like fireflies on a dark night when they activated their astonishing spiritual energy for self-protection in the middle of the ice devils. He found them without any trouble.

Ba Xiaoyu and Master Bitter Cicada were confronting Wan Mingzhu, who was leading more than ten gold, glittering zombie kings, while Qi Zhongdao and Yan Liren were faced with Wang Xi and more than ten experts who looked like phantoms and seemed to be the elite assassins of the Ghost Character.

What surprised Li Yao for a moment was that Wang Xi had resumed his generally-known appearance. He looked like a true middle-aged scholar.

The two parties were all holding their weapons calmly and did not get into a fight right away.

After all, other than the few of them, there were dozens of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators on the battlefield. Those from the Grand Mystery Sect, the Purple Pole Sword Sect, and other major sects might not necessarily listen to their commands.

The Divine Palace and the Cloud Qin Gold Statues had not yet been seen. Except for Emperor Phoenix and Han Baling, who were each other's sworn enemies, nobody was willing to throw out all their trump cards.

The cracking sounds that pierced through the mist in the beginning and caused the dispersion of the mist were still echoing on the battlefield, attracting the attention of all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators including Li Yao and Qi Changsheng.

The sounds came from the depths of the snow field.

It seemed like a bottomless gap had been created in the ground. The immense attraction force in the hole was absorbing all the mist nearby, producing a remarkable view that looked like a white tornado.

When the mist was almost exhausted by the gap, everybody was finally able to get a general picture of the snow field.

It was much more than a simple 'gap'; it was more like a splendid canyon with shining, translucent cliffs, leading to a dark, boundless underground world!

Crack! Crack!

The canyon in the ice that was thousands of meters long and hundreds of meters wide was still growing, as if a pair of invisible hand was still mauling the earth and tearing it half. The broken ice on the two sides of the canyon was collapsing and rolling into the canyon. But the feeble sound of collisions did not come over until more than ten seconds later!

“Not good!”

Floating at an altitude of hundreds of meters, Li Yao noticed before anyone else that, when the mist was dispersing, the snow field below him was perfectly round. The hundreds of square kilometers in the center was the flattest plateau, which was surrounded by a circle of towering mountains.

It was a very typical crater, caused by an enormous meteorite or something else when it hit the ground heavily.

The snow field at the center was as smooth as a mirror, without the slightest rumple. Also, its color was entirely different from the rocks around, suggesting that it was just a thick shell of pure ice that did not have the least solid rock!

It appeared that a long time ago, a meteor or some other artificial object had hit the crust here, leaving an enormous crater.

At that time, the Land of Eternal Night had probably not been so cold. The rainwater gradually gathered and formed a special lake in the crater.

Later, as the days went by, the temperature gradually dropped, freezing the crater lake into an enormous ice block.

But for some reason, only the topmost part of the ice block was frozen, and the remaining parts were all hollow!

The thunderous noise that they had heard at the beginning was the sound of the ice shell breaking apart.

It was a pity that the two parties were still attacking each other brutally and releasing their spiritual energy and magical equipment without any reserve. They were savaging the earth as hard as they were savaging their enemy.

Hard as the ice shell might have been, it could not withstand the collective bombardment of thousands of Cultivators. Therefore, it broke apart from the middle!

When the raging cracks spread out nonstop and surpassed the tipping point, the avalanche began!

The ice shell almost a hundred kilometers in diameter fell apart in the blink of an eye. It rose high above first before it collapsed into the abyss helplessly like a ship that had an accident on the ocean.

Most of the Cultivators were still fighting on the ice shell. Few of them realized what was going on. Even if they did, they were hardly able to spurt spiritual energy and fly into the sky in time while in such a harsh environment!

Many of them fell into the abyss amid the broken ice. Some were rushing here and there in the middle of the ice that was sliding like a waterfall, trying to escape, only to be smashed by a few giant rocks of ice.

Some fell into the depths of the canyon while waving their hands and feet, and there was no telling what happened to them after the hazy white smoke they raised!

The heated battlefield was disrupted by the unexpected change. The fortunate Cultivators at the periphery of the ice lake all looked at each other in bewilderment, stunned by the enormous crater that had shown up in front of them out of nowhere.

Even Emperor Phoenix and Han Baling’s troops were divided into two sides by the canyon almost a hundred meters wide. Restraining their respective troops, they looked at the canyon in suspicion.

The ice canyon was like a lake whose water had been pumped away. It was in the most precise circle.

Under the cover of the ice shell above, the rocks thousands of meters below the ground must have been blocked from the world for hundreds of thousands of years. They were releasing the glamorous bluish colors. Natural blue crystals were also growing in the middle of the crevices, making the place look like a gorgeous, splendid palace!

A silver, magnificent building was standing in the deepest part of the ice canyon. It was made purely of metal, yet there was no sign of rust whatsoever after such a long time. Instead, a layer of vague silver light was reflected on the surface, which was fluctuating unpredictably like the ocean. One could not help but feel the urge to worship it.

“Divine Palace!”

“This must be the Divine Palace!”

There was no telling who shouted first, but after a moment, everybody stopped fighting and roared frantically!

Chapter 1472 - The Truth About the Divine Palace!

This is the Divine Palace?

Blinking in surprise, Li Yao tried to get a full view of the Divine Palace from the fog raised by the broken ice.

When he observed from the high stance, he discovered that the Divine Palace was streamlined like an enormous spindle, but most of its parts had been deeply embedded into the ground, with only a tiny block exposed to the air. There were also dark holes that led to the inside of the Divine Palace.

Li Yao pondered for a long time. He then compared the observations of the Divine Palace with its internal structure in his head. Then, a shocking idea suddenly occurred to him.

Isn’t—isn’t this a starship from the primeval era?

Li Yao had excavated the warship debris of the Pangu civilization and the Nuwa Clan on Kunlun. The circular holes at the bottom of the Divine Palace were clearly where flames would spurt out to make minor adjustments in space and to jet within the atmosphere!

He had seen the same distribution of exhaust flame spurts on the warship debris in the Kunlun relics. Also, the materials on the warship debris, despite the serious rust, were very similar to the glittering materials in front of his eyes after a series of restoration reactions!

If the Divine Palace was a super warship of the Nuwa Clan, everything would make sense!

In the primeval era hundreds of thousands of years ago, before the God-Sealing War, the Pangu civilization had dominated the entire universe that human beings were familiar with today.

At that time, the Ancient Sages Sector must have been a war base of the Pangu civilization!

Then, it was only reasonable that the Nuwa Clan sent some super warships to assault the Ancient Sages Sector during the God-Sealing War, and one of the super warships accidentally crashed in the Land of Eternal Night.

The super warship of the Nuwa Clan had the mass and momentum equal to a rushing meteor. It was not strange at all that the warship crashed deep into the ground and blew out a crater hundreds of kilometers in diameter!

Since it was a super warship of the Nuwa Clan, it was understandable that some Colossi were accommodated on the warship and that it even boasted maintenance and manufacture bases for the Colossi!

As for the so-called path to the deities’ realm, it would be even easier to explain.

There were certainly facilities such as escape capsules and mobile teleportation arrays that could allow the user to appreciate the wonders in the sea of stars. It was also possible that the Grand Illusionary Lands that contained tremendous files about the outside world had been installed on the warship. Those who walked into them would be able to observe the scenery in the three thousand Sectors!

The technology of the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan were marvelous enough even by the standard of the Star Glory Federation. It was perfectly normal that the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector, secluded and underdeveloped, would call them deities!

Moreover, Li Yao suddenly realized that, since it was a super warship of the Nuwa Clan, it was possible that certain communication magical equipment that could transmit information across the universe instantly by means of gravitational waves or other amazing technologies had been installed.

Was the mysterious signal sent to the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector a hundred years ago related to the Nuwa warship?

Very likely!

The part of the Nuwa warship exposed above the ground was emitting a layer of bright, silver light.

The ignorant locals of the Ancient Sages Sector might worship the glamorous ‘divine aura’, but Li Yao knew that it was a protective membrane to block the air and prevent the warship from becoming rusted and damaged!

The fact that the protective membrane was still glittering suggested that the main power source of the Nuwa warship was not entirely ruined. It had been in the hibernation state for the past hundreds of thousands of years!

In such a case, even if the Nuwa warship could not cruise through the sea of stars anymore, at the very least, many units on board, and even the ‘communication room’ or the ‘teleportation room’, could still be functional!

A very well-preserved Nuwa warship! Li Yao was breathing heavily.

Despite the extremely low temperature of below minus eighty degrees, he still could not help but feel as if the blood all over his body was boiling and about to spurt out from his eyes and nostrils.

Although the Star Glory Federation possessed Kunlun, most of the remains inside had been corroded by the moss and the waves from the pulsar. Even though a few Colossi could be jumbled together, most of the warship remains only had a feeble and vulnerable shell left. The researchers could only study their appearance and internal structure but had no access to the specific technologies of the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan!

A Nuwa warship that possibly accommodated a factory of Colossi with a preservation rate of more than fifty percent was certainly a priceless treasure for the federation!

Li Yao's eyes were spurting fire because of excitement.

But he was even more prudent than before.

If a certain mysterious force sent a mysterious signal to the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector through the communication room on the Nuwa warship a hundred years ago, it was very likely that the mysterious force had already controlled the Nuwa warship!

Nobody could tell if it was a well-disguised trap!

If he exposed the coordinates of the Star Glory Federation, it would be pretty embarrassing if the enemy traced that back to Li Yao and then the Nuwa warship that had a hundred Colossi on it!

Besides, there was still the Imperium of True Human Beings!

Li Yao's not-so-reliable intuition reminded him again that the spies of the Imperium of True Human Beings could be around.

He could almost smell the dominance and superciliousness on the Immortal Cultivators!

After the great show in front is finished, we will know exactly what the forces here are up to!

Li Yao glanced at the few super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and calculated in his heart silently.

"The Divine Palace has been revealed. The gate has been open to us. This is our opportunity!"

Many Cultivators were already awed by the super warship from the primeval civilization. They pointed at the dark exhaust flame spurts at the bottom of the Nuwa warship and roared.

The Cultivators that belonged to different sides had no time to bother each other. The hastier ones had already jumped into the canyon before the rocks around the crater stabilized, leaping toward the Nuwa warship as quickly as possible!

The remaining Cultivators looked at each other in bewilderment.

It was obvious that all the Cultivators there belonged to two sides and more than ten different forces. Ghost Qin, Heaven Battering Army, White Lotus Cult, Ghost Character, Grand Mystery Sect, Purple Pole Sword Sect, Thunder Storm Valley, the court, and unaffiliated Cultivators… Everybody had only gathered there in pursuit of gains.

If they fought each other, the Cultivators of other forces would gladly take all the advantage.

After they took control of the Cloud Qin Gold Statues, they would not bother to shed a tear for those who were killed!

There was no telling who roared first, but everybody was running toward the crater, forgetting the grudges among themselves that was still fresh.

The high-level Cultivators whose flying swords were still intact or who boasted the techniques to ride the wind soared into the sky and jumped toward the Nuwa warship like moths darting toward the fire.

The low-level Cultivators whose flying swords were broken and who did not have such expertise were hopping on the uneven rocks and sprinting toward the bottom of the crater at the risk of falling into the boundless crevasses among the rocks. They were so impatient that they looked like a colony of ants.

Even Emperor Phoenix and Han Baling turned around and led their troops to leave the battlefield after a moment of hesitation. They charged at the Nuwa warship from different directions, hoping to beat the enemy to the Divine Palace!

“What are you waiting for, Master Spiritual Vulture? If you don’t hurry up, even their sh*t will be cold!”

Qi Changsheng burst into laughter. The flames of spiritual energy around his body expanded crazily as he dived down vertically like a shooting star!

The few middle-level and low-level Cultivators who were flying clumsily in the air were blown away by him regardless of which side they were on. They fell into the ice canyon, and there was no telling whether they survived the impact or not.

The ‘harmonious’ scene where everybody was running without bothering about anything else was soon broken up.

A lot of Cultivators had already arrived at the exhaust flame spurts, which were rising high at the rear of the Nuwa warship. They thought that the spurts were the ‘gates’ leading to the Divine Palace!

Compared to the body size of human beings, the Nuwa Clan was huge. Therefore, their warships were dozens of kilometers long and looked like cities in space made of pure metal.

Even the engine spurts used to make minor adjustments and to support the in-atmosphere flight were more than five meters in diameter. At first glance, they indeed appeared to be gates that were wide open.

Near the ‘gates’, to decide who was qualified to enter the ‘Divine Palace’ first, small-scale bloody conflicts were already breaking out.

However, it was often the case that, before the two parties involved in the conflicts were done fighting, they had already been crushed by the main force that was following up!

Only the super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators such as Qi Zhongdao or Qi Changsheng crawled into the engine tubes without meeting any resistance because they were obviously too strong for anybody to mess with.

Li Yao frowned greatly.

Things had completely fallen out of anyone’s control.

The previous plan had been to tread lightly and think before leaping. Even after the Divine Palace was discovered, they would search, measure, and analyze it in an orderly fashion. Everybody had their duty, and every exploration team had independent tasks.

But the reality was that the hundred Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators from almost twenty forces on two different sides had been utterly mixed up. Everyone was fighting for themself. There was absolutely no discipline or organization anymore.

Even the procedure to test the internal environment of the Divine Palace and check if it was safe to enter the place had been omitted, not to mention the effective commanding!

It could be seen that Qi Zhongdao, Master Bitter Cicada, and some other people had maintained their basic rationality instead of being overwhelmed by greed. They were still shouting desperately, trying to get the situation under control.

However, with everything reaching such a point, how could the Cultivators from the six major sects listen to them? Besides, Wang Xi, Wan Mingzhu, Qi Changsheng, and the Cultivators on the other side had already barged into the engine tubes of the Nuwa warship without caring about anything.

Having no other choice, Qi Zhongdao and his companions could only follow them closely.

Li Yao sighed and felt that his head was aching, but there was nothing that he could do except sneak into the Nuwa warship first.

Of course, he would not be as idiotic as the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector and walk through the engine tubes, which were bound to be a dead end!

At the end of the engine tubes were doubtlessly the engines, and the engines were connected to the fuel cabins. All the parts were definitely made of the most solid and heat-proof materials. It would take quite a long time even if they wanted to break in with brute force.

Li Yao, as a specialist in warship infiltration, would certainly not choose such an illogical entry path!

Chapter 1473 - Body Explosion!

Li Yao hovered around the part of the Nuwa warship exposed to the air.

At this moment, the enormous ice canyon was an utter mess.

In the collapse of the ice shells, countless Cultivators had fallen to the bottom of the valley and been smashed into meat and blood by the thousands of tons of ice. The few 'lucky dogs' were struggling and screaming miserably among the crevices.

Most of the Cultivators had been focused on the engine tubes. Everybody was jostling for them.

Everyone's attention had been grabbed by the Divine Palace. Few of them noticed Li Yao's whereabouts.

Li Yao's brutality was famous all over the Ancient Sages Sector. The Cultivators both on his side and on his enemy's side were familiar with his appearance. Therefore, they were even less willing to piss off 'Master Spiritual Vulture' before the Cloud Qin Gold Statues were found.

Li Yao soon found what he was looking for.

They were the dozens of cracks that looked like the gill of a shark on the two sides of the Nuwa warship.

Every crack was extremely long and narrow. They could be more than ten meters long, yet their width was only slightly greater than one's palm. They were also covered in a glittering metal membrane. At first glance, it was integral with the shell of the warship and did not seem to be a channel of passage at all.

Li Yao, however, knew that it was the air inlets to exchange fresh air with the outside world when the Nuwa warship was flying within the atmosphere.

As the fortresses cruising in the sea of stars, the Nuwa warships certainly boasted a very advanced air recycling system.

However, absorbing fresh air from the outside world when it was flying on the habitable planets that had an atmosphere would not only relieve the burden of the air recycling magical equipment and save the energy to transform the air but also improve the dull environment inside the warship and the morale of the crew members.

There were similar designs on the warship debris of the Nuwa Clan discovered on Kunlun. Li Yao had studied the structure carefully before.

When the warship was flying in the vacuum, the inlets would be blocked from the inside and would not be opened until the warship landed on the surface of a planet. The internal architecture of the inlets was relatively feeble. At the very least, they were much feebler than the thick, heat-proof materials at the end of the engine tubes.

Also, even if they broke the wall at the end of the engine tubes, they would only appear in the engine compartment of the Nuwa warship, which was at the rear of the warship and still far away from the core area.

As a super large warship, the Nuwa warship had an extremely complicated internal structure that looked like a labyrinth. The few shabby maps were far from enough for them to investigate every corner of the warship.

If he snuck through the inlets, it was possible that he would reach the area that needed fresh air most. Such areas were often the places frequented by the crew members most, too.

It was not hard to guess that those areas could not be too far away from the bridge, the command room, the arsenal, and other key facilities.

Li Yao glanced around.

Some other Cultivators noticed him. However, they would not have the courage to tail Li Yao even if their guts were combined in one person.

Li Yao put on a cold smile. A sharp dagger as thin as paper appeared among his fingers. As his spiritual energy surged out, it was heated to almost a thousand degrees, allowing him to cut a hole more than two meters long on the metal membrane easily. He then removed the entire metal membrane.

Li Yao took a deep breath. Cracking noises were suddenly echoing inside Li Yao's body. His chest collapsed deeply, and he became extremely thin.

Leaning his body, Li Yao tried the inlets of the Nuwa warship, only to discover that it was still barely possible to squeeze in.

Thankfully, for the activities in the cold area, every one of them had carried a lot of oil and patches with them, which were supposed to prevent them from frostbite or sunburnt. They turned out to be the perfect lubricants now.

Li Yao retrieved an oil bag that was made of the whale skin and smeared the oil refined out of the oil of whales, bears, and tigers all over his body. Then, he tried hard to squeeze into the gap. Finally, he made it!

"Hu…" Li Yao slowly breathed out the last air inside his body.

His chest had already kissed his back. It was impossible for him to breathe for a while, and he would be in the anaerobic state.

The stomach was easier to deal with. The pain on the head was more insufferable.

The joints and bones on the body could be twisted and deformed, but it was difficult to change the shape of the skull.

Li Yao felt that his facial organs had been pressed together.

Except for a starship infiltration specialist such as himself, he did not believe that a second person would be willing to choose such a torturous option.

Even so, he still could not be more careful. He stuck more than seventy grenades on the internal wall of the inlets with the thick ointment before he attached a few tiny metal threads to the triggers, constructing a simple trap. If another Cultivator was walking on the same path as he did, they would have to taste the feeling of being blown up by more than ten grenades while they were stuck there.

After finishing all the preparations, Li Yao finally controlled every muscle on his body precisely and wriggled toward the depths of the tubes, like a viper that was moving with the scales on its abdomen.

He moved about thirty meters when he ran into another metal membrane. Behind the metal membrane was a thick plank.

He had already reached the end of the inlet tube.

There was no need to be careful at this place. Li Yao extended his left hand straightforwardly. The translucent crystal appeared inside his palm, and he fired the Cell Obliteration Cannon, gouging a great hole on the metal membrane as well as the air cleaning magical equipment behind it!

A roaring sound immediately echoed as the fresh air filled the room.

Before the orange edge of the hole entirely cooled down, Li Yao had already crawled out in a hurry!

Shua!

Every hair on Li Yao's body was pricking.

On one of his knees, he narrowed his eyes and continued locking his every pore. He did not even recover his breath, but he was prepared to summon the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit from his Cosmos Ring at any time!

He opened his hands and took out an air examination device from the Star Glory Federation. The shimmering detector rotated for a moment, and the device gave a report of the elements in the air inside the Nuwa warship very soon.

The inside of the Nuwa warship had been almost devoid of oxygen in the beginning, but as the Cultivators broke the shell from various directions into the warship. The oxygen percentage was rising quickly. Before long, it would reach the level of the outside world.

There was no oxygen, but there was no lethal poisonous gas, either. Although there were some weird impurities in the air, it was more than enough for Li Yao's apocalyptic body that was even tougher than the demons' bodies.

Li Yao was finally relieved and began observing the environment.

The place seemed to be some sort of maintenance room for the air cleansing magical equipment. There was a black pathway that led to who knew where.

Because the Nuwa Clan's body size was many times larger than human beings', the room and the pathway were both astonishingly large, making the place look like a splendid palace.

Li Yao put the air examination instrument back into his Cosmos Ring. He then retrieved a few super tiny crystal bombs that he had crafted through modern approaches in the Star Glory Federation in case of special needs. Finally, he prudently walked to the pathway.

The dark pathway seemed to be endless, trapping him in a world of darkness alone. Even Li Yao felt creeped out although he always considered himself bold.

His eyes were vaguely emitting redness in the dark, as he scrutinized every detail inside the Nuwa warship.

"Ah!"

Li Yao suddenly noticed that a guy was sitting at the turn up in the front and staring at him without blinking his eyes.

Before Li Yao realized what was going on, the guy suddenly lunged at him. Li Yao shrieked and almost threw out all the super tiny crystal bombs in his shock!

When he calmed down and observed more carefully, he discovered that it was a tall, huge, hideous-looking member of the Pangu Clan or the Nuwa Clan. The body must have been well preserved in the anaerobic environment. Because Li Yao brought a lot of fresh air into the place, the air had intense reactions with the body, casting the body that should have decayed hundreds of thousands of years ago into powder instantly!

Li Yao breathed heavily, with sweat popping out of his back. He blinked and looked again. The only things left on the ground were a few bright golden bones and some lackluster armor.

He had encountered similar body explosions on Kunlun many times. Except for the initial shock when he was caught by surprise, he did not find it too strange.

However, it remained to be seen what the reactions of the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector would be like when they ran into the exploding bodies as they broke into the Nuwa warship in other ways.

Li Yao could not help but wonder whether or not Qi Zhongdao, who had been grave and solemn the whole time, would be shocked and kneel to the ground when he witnessed a legendary deity obliterating into nothingness in front of him.

Thinking about that, Li Yao could not help but chuckle. His previous anxiety was greatly eased.

As he pressed forward, he discovered a lot of dead bodies that exploded instantly because of the intense reaction with the air.

Judging from their bones, the remains of their armor, and the runes on their magical equipment, some of the bodies belonged to the Nuwa Clan, and some belonged to the Pangu Clan. Of course, there were also a lot of human soldiers on both sides.

It appeared that a troop of the Pangu Clan had once invaded the Nuwa warship and launched a brutal boarding battle, which resulted in the serious damage to the internal structure of the warship. Burnt holes and ripped gaps were everywhere. Broken limbs and frozen body liquids filled up the entire space.

Perhaps that was the reason that the Nuwa warship had crashed in the Land of Eternal Night.

However, for Li Yao, the holes that had been ripped apart by brute force made his exploration more convenient.

Let me make a bold assumption. In most boarding battles, the most important target for the attackers is doubtlessly the bridge of the defenders. As long as the bridge is controlled, half of the warship will be seized. At the very least, even if the warship is not seized, the important people on the enemy's side—such as the captain, the navigator, and the chief technician—will be injured or killed!

Therefore, as long as I study the battlefield carefully and follow the direction of the Pangu Clan's attack, together with Wang Xi's map, and based on the structural designs of the Nuwa warships I've discovered in the past, it is very possible for me to find the bridge and the captain's office!

Chapter 1474 - Weird Illusion

After realizing that the so-called Divine Palace was actually a warship of the Nuwa Clan, Li Yao did not intend to look for the Cloud Qin Gold Statues like the hustling and bustling locals of the Ancient Sages Sector.

As a specialist of the Colossi, Li Yao knew that an intact, thorough industrial system was mandatory for the use of the Colossi, which was a type of highly-precise, strategic magical equipment.

A team was needed to maintain them, fill them with energy, and equip attack magical equipment. Experienced pilots who had received professional training were required, too.

Not everybody had a weird Black Wing as the medium between the pilot and the Colossus like him.

Truth be told, not that Li Yao was looking down upon the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector, but even if a few Colossi that had been fully charged with spiritual energy and all set to go were given to them, they would not even know how to make use of the weapons. The Colossi would be pure garbage!

In comparison, the bridge of the Nuwa warship was much more valuable than the Colossi.

The mainframe crystal processor of the Nuwa warship must have been accommodated on the bridge. Chances were that things such as cruise logs might be found. There might even be communication or teleportation magical equipment that was more advanced than the gizmos in the Star Glory Federation and the Imperium of True Human Beings.

Even if he looked for the Colossi later, Li Yao believed that there would be short-distance teleportation arrays on the bridge that led to the magical equipment warehouses and the maintenance workshops.

Otherwise, it would seem awfully low-efficient if everybody commuted on foot on a super warship that was over ten kilometers long.

Therefore, if he found the bridge, it would be equivalent to seizing half of the warship, and he could go anywhere that he wanted.

Most of the dead bodies of the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan had exploded into dust before he arrived and lost all value for research.

However, the dents and traces caused by the blades and the cannon balls left on the wall and floor were enough to point out the route of attack of the Pangu Clan.

Passing through the high and dark pathways and cabins, and surrounded by enormous skeletons and armor more than ten meters tall, Li Yao was caught by a sense of depression, as if he was wandering inside a valley of giants.

From the darkness far, far away, Li Yao vaguely heard shrieks and fighting noises that were as feeble as the sound of mosquitoes.

The Cultivators who had boarded the Nuwa warship through other paths must have met the exploding bodies, too, and begun killing each other in their nervousness.

Li Yao glanced around and found the cause of the battles.

The armor and blades of the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan were much more solid than their bodies of flesh and blood after all. Although the bodies were gone, some of the remains of their gear, however rusted, were left behind.

For the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector who worshipped ‘primeval treasures’, that gear was the magical equipment and marvelous weapons that the prehistoric deities left behind after they vaporized. Such temptations were indeed enough to drive them crazy.

Even though the Cloud Qin Gold Statues had not yet been found, the primeval treasures were already enough for them to fight a blood battle.

Li Yao sighed. He loathed most of the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector, but at that moment, when thinking that they were biting each other like ravenous hyenas just for a few pieces of primeval magical equipment and that they might die in vain after training hard for decades, he felt somewhat sorry for those people.

Getting to the bottom of it, what other paths of Cultivation did they have when they were born and raised in such an environment?

Any path was a dead end when they were wreathed tightly by the dark nebula!

Li Yao had a stronger urge to dig a hole in the dark nebula so that the Ancient Sages Sector could see the brightness of the future and walk on a brand-new path!

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao dashed toward the center of the Nuwa warship along the route of the Pangu Clan’s attack.

Outside his expectation, weak beeps were suddenly echoing next to his ears. A bright silver metal ball around one metal in diameter rolled out of the dark pathway. When it reached him, dozens of green threads popped up on its surface. After a few cracking noises, the ball was dissected along the green threads, turning into a four-legged metal spider, with two three-barreled turrets above where blue electric arcs were dancing, suggesting that the weapons were good to go.

Shua! Shua! Shua!

Dozens of green rays of light darted out of the corners of the pathways around, too. They interweaved into an impenetrate cage around Li Yao and locked onto him!

Li Yao bellowed. He was about to shoot out the super tiny crystal bombs, so that he would have enough time to put on his crystal suit, when all kinds of illusions appeared in front of his eyes. He had been dragged into a Grand Illusionary Land.

He seemed to envision more than ten human girls lying on a dark altar inside a gloomy, horrible temple, naked. The altar was surrounded by more than ten bizarre-looking members of the Pangu Clan, who were slowly turning the chains and lowering a black rock weighing hundreds of tons above the altar.

It appeared that they were going to press all the girls to death and fetch their flesh and blood as part of some sacrificial ritual!

Below the altar, hundreds of bald human beings, whose faces were emotionless and eyes were numb, looked at the altar without moving.

However hard the girls on the altar screamed and cried for help, they showed absolutely no response. Even their breath was not changed at all.

Li Yao seemed to be one of the hundreds of human beings kneeling on the ground.

But he was about to throw up in nausea and fury.

Although he knew that it was just an illusion, the girls, as innocent as lambs who were going to be crushed by the hideous individuals of the Pangu Clan, and their desperate cries for help still triggered intense physiobiological reactions in him. His breath, heartbeat, and secretion of epinephrine were all exploding. He could not help but stand up from the hundreds of human beings who were kneeling and clench his fists toward the priests of the Pangu Clan!

The moment that he stood up, the illusions broke, swirled, and dispersed like thousands of glass butterflies.

He was back in the depths of the dark pathway, but the rays that had locked onto him previously were gone. Even the four-legged metal spider had been compressed into a ball again and rolled back into the darkness.

What happened?

Li Yao blinked. Then, he suddenly realized that the Grand Illusionary Land just now was probably some sort of program to distinguish friends from foes.

The four-legged metal spider and the rays of light darting from the pathway were probably one of the few pieces of automatic defense magical equipment on the Nuwa warship that had persisted to that day.

Since the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan both had a lot of human beings fighting for them, a program was necessary to decide if the passers-by were allies.

The Pangu Clan regarded human beings as pure tools. They controlled human beings with the so-called ‘three fundamental laws’ and forbade them from having any feelings or self-consciousness.

When the picture of the Pangu Clan taking human beings as sacrificial offerings appeared in the Grand Illusionary Land, the human beings or ‘demi-humans’ who were bound by the ‘three fundamental laws’ would not feel anything at all.

In such a case, the automatic defense magical equipment of the Nuwa warship would certainly launch the fiercest attacks.

However, when Li Yao witnessed such a gory scene, his physiobiological parameters were changing drastically, indicating that he was in the middle of emotional turmoil. It was evident that he was a real human being who had feelings and self-consciousness, someone who could protect himself and his own kind!

Therefore, the automatic defense magical equipment on the Nuwa warship identified him as an ‘ally’ and did not attack.

“Wait!”

Thinking quickly, Li Yao chased after the round ball that had been the four-legged metal spider earlier.

However, his target disappeared after two corners. Perhaps, it was absorbed into a warehouse through an inconspicuous teleportation array.

But Li Yao did not gain nothing. Judging from the distribution of the pathways just now and the runes on the wall, it was very likely that he had already entered the core area of the Nuwa warship!

The bridge or the captain’s office should be ahead!

The conclusion could also be proved by the dead bodies of the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan scattered everywhere around.

It appeared that this was the end of the boarding battle hundreds of thousands of years ago. Although the Pangu Clan rallied tremendous soldiers to barrage the gate to the bridge, it was still not broken through.

It was great trouble for Li Yao.

Three magnificent gates were standing in front of him.

Each gate was more than ten meters tall, with a layer of vague silver brightness flowing on the surface. They were flawless and showed no sign of joints.

At a height of ten meters, five meters, and 1.5 meters, three complicated rune arrays had been carve respectively, which appeared to be for identification purposes.

Li Yao touched gently on the gate and felt that it was rather soft. There was no telling what the doors were made of.

But when he did pour his spiritual energy into them, he received absolutely no feedback, which indicated that it must be a very advanced energy-absorption material.

It was useless. Even the warriors of the Pangu Clan failed to blow up the gates to the bridge. It was even less possible for him to crack them by brute force.

Li Yao turned back and studied the rune arrays and magical equipment that were designed for identification.

Those at the lowest height must have been prepared for the human warriors on the Nuwa warship.

When Li Yao tried putting his finger on a piece of blue identification magical equipment, it suddenly split from the middle and shot out a ray of light, which soon dispersed into a 3D identification interface.

It was a super complicated identification interface.

Not only were his fingerprints, iris, and voice to be tested, he would also have to input three ever-changing dynamic passwords in only five seconds.

You've got to be kidding me!

Li Yao was dumbfounded. He wondered if there had always been a traffic jam on the gates to the bridge with such complicated procedures to enter and exit the bridge.

On second thought, he immediately realized that they should be the security measures of the highest level when the warship was under the attack of the Pangu Clan, in which case few personnel were allowed to enter the bridge.

The normal identification procedures could not have been so complicated.

I'm in trouble now!

The three silver gates were all integral. Even the identification magical equipment did not have any gaps around them, as if they had been forged together with the gates. There was no chance for him to dismantle the devices to study them.

After searching the nearby carefully, he failed to find any of the legendary ventilation tubes through which he could crawl into the bridge.

Even if there were, they would have been shut off in the state of the highest alarm. The most fatal traps in them would have been activated!

Right when Li Yao was scratching his face, wondering what to do next, his ears suddenly shuddered.

He heard soft footsteps from a pathway far behind him.

Chapter 1475 - The Awakened

How did anybody get here so fast?

Li Yao was alarmed. He had thought that he was already quick enough. He had snuck in from the middle part of the Nuwa warship and reached this place after such a short period of time with his familiarity with the internal structure of the Nuwa warship.

Most other people crawled in from the tail of the warship. They were also fighting hard on their way. Li Yao had thought that it would take them a few hours to disperse on the warship and find this place by accident!

Who was the guy that was coming close? Was it a coincidence, or was it on purpose?

Li Yao eyed around and retrieved a stealth membrane suit from his Cosmos Ring as quickly as possible.

The biochemical combat suit that the Fire Ant King had provided him played a vital role in the battle to sneak into the Eye of Blood Demon. As long as he remained absolutely still, he would be almost completely invisible.

After putting on the stealth suit, hiding himself behind a pile of scrap armor of the Nuwa in a corner, and lowering his breath, heartbeat, and spiritual waves to the minimum with the Great Dream Tortoise Hibernation Arts that Gui Suishou had taught him, Li Yao stared at the darkness coldly both like a rock and like a ghost.

Soon, a shadow staggered out of the end of the pathway.

It was exactly the initiator of the operation to explore the mysterious Divine Palace, the mysterious Lead Eunuch Wang Xi!

How is it possible?

Li Yao’s pupils constricted violently. He was truly baffled.

He saw with his own eyes that Wang Xi had crawled into the Nuwa warship from the engine tubes that were at the rear part of the warship. Unless he was absolutely familiar with the internal structure of this particular warship, how could Wang Xi have passed from the engine area through the complicated, labyrinth-like cabins on the warship to the command area after only half an hour?

At this moment, Wang Xi still had the appearance of a fair-skinned, beardless, middle-aged scholar, except that there was green brightness on his pale face, suggesting that he might have been poisoned.

There were blood stains everywhere on his body. A shocking wound could be found on his thigh, where the flesh was rolling up like the lips of a baby. The wound was absolutely vertical without the slightest slant. There was not even the error of a hair.

What a shocking sword aura! Li Yao secretly clicked his tongue.

He could not have been more familiar with the wounds of such a shape. Over the past months, he had witnessed identical wounds on many ferocious beasts that were used as targets for sword training.

In the entire Ancient Sages Sector, only Yan Liren’s unstoppable sword auras could have left such a marvelous wound!

Wang Xi had a head-on clash with Yan Liren and appeared to have suffered an obvious setback?

That did make sense. Perhaps, Yan Liren was the only weirdo here who did not give a damn about the Cloud Qin Gold Statues. The sole reason that he had participated in the exploration of the Divine Palace was to practice his sword arts with the real experts.

Despite the wound on his thigh, Wang Xi had retreated in one piece when Yan Liren was attacking with all his might. It was evident enough of his remarkable Cultivation!

Wang Xi wobbled to the three silver gates. He craned his neck and observed for a long time. There was confusion on his face, and mysterious brilliance was flashing inside his eyes.

The magical equipment that the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan had once used was strewn across the ground, but Wang Xi did not even bother to look at the weapons. His eyes suddenly lost focus, as if he was caught in memories a long time ago.

Exactly like Li Yao just did, he touched the three silver gates for a moment before turning around and studying the barriers to open the gates.

Take your time to study them! Li Yao sneered. *Let’s see how exactly you are going to open the gates that even I can’t!*

Wang Xi pondered for a moment. Then, like Li Yao had done, he also activated the unlocking interface of the gates.

The first thing to pop up was the facial recognition procedure. A cluster of gentle bluish brightness, which looked like a beautiful jellyfish, slowly surfaced.

There was no telling what Wang Xi was thinking, but after a slight delay, he stuck his own face into it.

Li Yao almost laughed out aloud. What was the guy thinking of? Did he think that any random guy could just swipe their face and enter such an advanced Nuwa warship?

As expected, the cluster of blue light wriggled on his face for a while before it turned red. The gates remained closed, showing absolutely no sign of opening.

The identification failed.

Wang Xi was confused. He rubbed his face softly and paced back and forth for a while. Suddenly, he dashed back to the pathway and examined for a moment. He then established quite a few alarm rune arrays on the pathway tirelessly. One of them was almost deployed to the bottom of the armor that Li Yao was hiding behind. Li Yao was so anxious that he almost failed to stop his cold sweat from running out.

What was the guy trying to do after taking so many precautions?

After setting up seven alarm rune arrays to ensure that nobody would break in, Wang Xi returned to the identification magical equipment on the silver gates.

He suddenly bulged his eyes and took such a long breath that his chest was rising high.

A series of cracking noises echoed inside his body, which sounded both like his bones being weirdly twisted and like his muscles and veins breaking, growing, and condensing again.

As he slowly exhaled all the air from his body, a weird scene happened.

Ivory mist flowed out of every pore on his body and enshrouded him like a great cocoon.

Creepy chewing noises came from inside the cocoon, accompanied by low moans.

When the mists were gradually gone, his face, physique, and demeanor had gone through drastic changes!

He had changed from the handsome middle-aged scholar to the plain-looking but plump female assassin Long Yangjun!

What—what technique is this? This is too sophisticated. How can the guy transform freely from a male to a female so quickly? Is he a man or a woman? Is he half a man and half a woman?

Li Yao was so shocked that his eyeballs almost dropped to the ground.

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators could control the secretion of hormones inside their bodies at will. If Li Yao stimulated the secretion of the estrogen in his body and suppressed the secretion of the androgens such as testosterone, perhaps he would be able to change his body figure as well and gain the secondary sex characteristics that were similar to a female.

However, the process would take months if not years before the preliminary changes took effect. Also, there would not be any fundamental difference except that he would look more feminine than before after the changes.

The mutation of Wang Xi or Long Yangjun had far exceeded what a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator could achieve.

“Hu…”

Wang Xi had no idea that somebody was peeping at his metamorphosis nearby. He looked quite relieved, as if he had gotten rid of a burden and a camouflage, and took a deep breath in relief.

Although the physique had changed, the female assassin Long Yangjun was tall and strong. Therefore, the previous clothes still fit pretty well.

She smiled and touched her brand-new face before she leaned toward the blue light ball again.

Wang Xi’s face was buried in the blue ball, leaving her graceful body outside. She had no idea at all that a highly dangerous enemy was lurking right next to her.

However, Li Yao did not plan to attack her immediately because he could not have been more curious about Wang Xi’s uncanny behavior.

Beep!

A crisp beep echoed deep inside the blue ball a moment later. The ball then turned green, hinting that she may proceed to the next procedure.

She had passed the test of the facial features recognition!

Li Yao was utterly dumbfounded, as if he had been struck by lightning.

How was it possible?

The Nuwa warship had crashed there a hundred thousand years ago. Also, the bridge was under the protection of the highest level. It was certainly the case that only the few key crew members could pass the facial features recognition!

How was Wang Xi, a local of the Ancient Sages Sector who lived a hundred thousand years later and theoretically could not have had anything to do with the Nuwa warship, accepted?

Li Yao was baffled!

When he looked Wang Xi’s face, even she did not seem to expect that she could pass the test. Both surprised and delighted, and with a hint of intense confusion, she even let out an exclamation.

Taking a deep breath, she put her hands into the light ball as per the instructions on the identification interface.

Li Yao felt that his heart was heavy again.

It was obvious that the operation menu of magical equipment on the Nuwa warship was written in the language of the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan.

Although it was somewhat similar to the common tongue of human beings nowadays, there were still major differences. Their language was constructed in a unique way by transforming three-dimension into two-dimension. The information contained in one character could be more than ten times than in the common tongue of modern human beings.

The Star Glory Federation had collected a lot of primeval characters on Kunlun. After five years of arduous studies by historians and linguists, they had finally managed to get a general idea of the primeval language system and understand the basic meaning denoted in every character.

Even so, Li Yao had to resort to his guesses a lot when he recognized the characters, and he could only understand the general meaning.

Wang Xi, on the other hand, seemed to have no trouble at all reading the instructions on the operation menu.

It reminded Li Yao of the map of the Divine Palace. How exactly did Wang Xi learn how to parse the map of the Divine Palace and how to operate on the layers of complicated menus?

Beep!

When Li Yao was thinking, Wang Xi passed the palmprint, voiceprint, and iris tests successfully. The only thing left was a dynamic password.

In front of the hundreds of glittering runes, she was dazzled and at a loss again.

However, her helplessness was soon replaced by weird epiphany a moment later.

The brightness inside her eyes grew clearer and clearer, and she was more and more at ease, as if something frozen inside her body for the longest time was thawing and about to break out of the shell.

Wang Xi’s hands turned into two clusters of gray fog as she tapped the virtual runes as quickly as lightning as if it were her conditioned reflex. She inputted all the three dynamic passwords after only one second!

Hiss!

The largest silver gate in the middle, after uttering a high-pitched noise, split apart from the middle and retreated toward the center helically!

The gate to the bridge had been opened!

Chapter 1476 - Trump Card vs. Trump Card!

The gate began to shimmer, which should be certain inert gas that filled the room in order to keep the stable performance of the magical equipment during the long-time hibernation. At first glance, a splendid new world seemed to be hidden inside the bridge.

Wang Xi hesitated for a moment in front of the new world before she bit her lip and strode in.

Hardly had she set foot in the room when the gate was closing.

Li Yao’s heartbeat was immediately beating at the highest speed from stillness. Even his ribs were aching, as if his heart was breaking them apart!

This was the only opportunity!

It concerned the control of a Nuwa warship, which could possibly take off later!

Wang Xi had been hit by Yan Liren’s attack. Her combat ability must be at the lowest point!

It was definitely worth a try, even at the risk of exposing his identity!

Boom!

Li Yao lunged out of the corner as if he had stepped on ten thousand crystal bombs. Before the gate was fully close, he sprinted into the room and collided with Wang Xi’s waist directly!

Having just opened the gate to the bridge of the Nuwa warship, Wang Xi was still overwhelmed.

Out of her expectations, something ferocious was coming at her from behind, and the seven alarm rune arrays gave no warning at all!

Wang Xi’s face dropped. She immediately realized that her metamorphosis must have been witnessed by the stranger!

In her shock, she reacted much more slowly than she should have. Hardly had she turned around when Li Yao knocked her away. The two of them rolled into the bridge of the Nuwa warship, one in front and the other behind, with the gate finally fully closed behind them!

This was an enormous space that was as splendid and magnificent as a palace.

The floor was as smooth as a mirror, but a hundred giant pillars were standing. Every giant pillar was riddled with countless holes and connected together by thousands of crystal cables.

It was a certain crystal processor system of an unprecedented scale!

Despite the hibernation of hundreds of thousands of years, the crystal processor system was not entirely ruined. Instead, under the protection of the blue inert gas, they were releasing vague, glamorous colors, illuminating the bridge as if it were a natural paradise!

However, the paradise had turned into a hell of fighting!

Since Wang Xi's greatest secret was exposed, she could not have looked more hideous. Before she came to a stop after Li Yao's blow, she stepped on one of the giant pillars and swung back like a soft feather. Her crystal sword that had been hidden somewhere rushed out and evolved into a whip dozens of meters long, covering every part on Li Yao's body.

The bones on Li Yao's right arm cracked quickly, and the sharp claw, the bone spurts, and the energy-concentrating crystal all protruded out. After all, Wang Xi had already seen his apocalyptic body last time, and it would not hurt if she saw it again. In the meantime, he picked up a metal claw with his right hand and dealt with Wang Xi's whip with dozens of molecular mica threads!

The two of them boosted their spiritual energy to the maximum.

It was a pity that the blue inert gas inside the bridge seemed to boast a weird function to absorb the spiritual energy and restrain the magnetic field, which suppressed the flames of spiritual energy burning on the two of them into faint balls of light. Most of the auras that they launched were instantly swallowed by the blue gas before they hit their target.

Realizing that, the two of them chose close-distance combat, which was crueler and more dangerous, almost simultaneous. They turned into dozens of streaks of brightness and entangled each other like vipers.

Chi!

Li Yao's shoulder was pierced through by the rushing crystal cluster. The flesh around the hole the size of fingernail was in a weird translucent, crystallization state, as if it had been contaminated by an unseen virus.

Shua!

Long Yangjun’s abdomen was also ripped with three bloody wounds by Li Yao’s sharp claws. An inconspicuous attack of the Cell Obliteration Cannon almost boiled all her internal organs!

BAM!

Despite the heavy wounds, the two of them did not even bother to blink their eyes. They summoned all the spiritual energy inside their bodies and had a head-on clash without any fancy tricks. Their total weight was merely several hundred kilograms, yet two monolithic mountains seemed to have crashed with the most devastating landslides. Even the stagnating blue gas was rippling out due to their collision!

Li Yao and Wang Xi both grunted and were blown backward. They both felt that their veins and nerves were broken, their internal organs were burning, and their souls were shaking hard like a lone boat on a surging ocean!

This is not going to work out!

Li Yao gritted his teeth.

His Cultivation was on par with Wang Xi’s. Although Wang Xi’s leg had been cut by Yan Liren’s sword earlier, now that she had gone on a rampage in her fury, it was not easy for Li Yao to execute her directly.

Moreover, Li Yao did not want to execute Wang Xi at all. He merely wanted to capture her alive and ask her about the backstory of everything. He was even hoping to learn the methods to control the Nuwa warship through Wang Xi!

I have no choice except to resort to my ultimate skill now!

With dangerous brightness beaming out his crimson left eye, Li Yao squinted. As the saying went, you might as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb. Wang Xi had been suspicious about his identity for a long time, and it was impossible for him to flawlessly explain everything. Besides, it was already extremely uncanny that he had appeared there. There was no way that he could fool a schemer of Wang Xi's level with any excuse.

It was not Li Yao's personality to be passively beaten, and he was not particularly fond of being suspected and interrogated while doing nothing. For the Nuwa warship and the factory of the Colossi, exposing the existence of his crystal suit was an acceptable cost!

Anyways, he should capture Wang Xi alive and take the initiative of the situation first!

Li Yao's eyeballs were rolling crazily as he inputted the distribution data of the hundred pillars into his brain and analyzed dozens of different tactics!

When the crystal sword pierced toward his thigh again, he pretended that he had no time to dodge, and he nearly tripped himself over because of the long wound on the external side of his thigh. He leaned to the right side, but he threw dozens of super tiny crystal bombs through the Thousand Fingers Soft Bones technique toward the route of Wang Xi's attack that he predicted!

The super tiny crystal bombs were the essence of the most advanced explosive magical equipment in the Star Glory Federation. Although they were only the size of fingernails, they were multiple times more powerful than the grenades of the Ancient Sages Sector. The bombs spurted out and exploded between Li Yao and Wang Xi, establishing a colorful wall of spiritual energy. Even if they could not wound Wang Xi, they would still be able to stop her for a second!

It was exactly the critical second that Li Yao was trying to buy himself!

“Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, implement!”

With everything progressing so far, there was no need for disguises. Li Yao tapped the center of his eyebrow with his fingers. His spiritual energy surged out together with his soundwaves. Dozens of black and red streaks of brightness darted out of his Cosmos Ring and condensed into an awe-inspiring crystal suit around his body!

My combat ability is on par with Wang Xi’s. The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, which has been significantly upgraded through the technologies on Kunlun, will at least double my combat ability. When I catch her unprepared, I can definitely capture her alive!

With the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit on his body, the familiar feeling and the intense confidence filled Li Yao’s chest again. After his roar, the eighteen power rune arrays on the two sides of the spine of the crystal suit spurted out dazzling flames, pushing the crystal suit forward to tear apart the aftershock of the previous explosion and crash at Wang Xi brutally!

If everything went as Li Yao had planned, the blast this time would definitely sabotage Wang Xi’s spiritual energy circulation and briefly cast it into disorder. Then, he would be able to launch a series of dazzling follow-up attacks.

Li Yao had calculated Wang Xi’s ninety-nine possible reactions. But whatever her reaction was, she was not getting away from Li Yao.

The problem was—

What the heck?

After the aftershock of the explosion was ripped apart, Wang Xi, who was sprinting at him at full speed, had changed her appearance yet another time!

Her shoulders, arms, legs and chest were covered in a crystal suit that was an integral whole with her skin that was exposed to the air, as if it were part of her flesh and blood and triggered from her bones!

Detecting the unbelievably high spiritual waves, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit immediately sent out ear-splitting alarms.

But it was too late.

The two parties were too close to each other for Li Yao to change his route of attack. He could only grit his teeth and crash at the enemy anyway!

The only comfort for him was that, at the moment of impact, he seemed to see an equally stunned expression on Wang Xi’s face on the opposite side.

Boom!

Li Yao felt that he had crashed into an iron plank that was fully embedded with nails.

He even lost his consciousness for a brief second, during which time he could see nothing but a bunch of mottled butterflies flying in front of his eyes.

When his soul was condensed again, he immediately heard the cries of the mainframe crystal processor of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, which was reporting the plummeting performance parameters of the key units.

“Cough, cough. Cough, cough, cough, cough!”

Li Yao swallowed the blood and shook his head. He grabbed the handle of his saber with one hand and pressed the ground with the other, ready to launch a few hundred Six-Barreled Vulcan Machine Guns and crystal bombs to bombard the enemy.

A hundred meters away from him, Wang Xi was also shaking in dizziness as if she were drunk. She tried three times to stand on her feet but failed. She could only breathe quickly on one of her knees while staring at Li Yao with half astonishment and half confusion.

The unimaginably gorgeous crystal suit was still growing on her body. Four octagonal, shiny crystals were rotating around her like satellites. Although they were much more lackluster than before, they should be more than enough for her self-protection.

The situation was indescribably awkward.

Li Yao had thought that, as soon as he summoned his crystal suit to double his combat ability, he would capture Wang Xi without any trouble. Then, it would totally be up to him how he would deal with the captive.

But outside his expectations, Wang Xi had exactly the same idea, and she had been hiding such a critical trump card!

The scales were balanced once more, with neither of them able to defeat the other, and the only outcome of continuing the fight would be that they were both suffer great losses!

Chapter 1477 - The Way to Break the Impasse

What should he do?

There was a brand-new Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit inside Li Yao Cosmos Ring and an Ares Extension that could bring the damage to the maximum instantly.

It was his last trump card.

But how could he be sure that Wang Xi did not have other trump cards?

When he was hesitating, Wang Xi laughed coldly and said, “It is indeed you, Master Spiritual Vulture, or should I call you… Hehe, anyway, your scheme has been seen through. This trap was specially prepared for you. Just wait for my subordinates of the Ghost Character to come!”

Li Yao was suddenly alarmed, wondering if his identity had been fully exposed. However, half a second later, he realized that Wang Xi was bluffing!

“Ghost Character? Would you dare let anyone in the Ghost Character see your creepy appearance right now?” Li Yao burst into laughter. “Surrender now. Your struggle will be in vain. We’ve had our eyes on you since long ago! You gave yourself away after hiding for almost a hundred years! You have your Ghost Character, but I have my reinforcements, too. Let’s just see whose backup comes here first!”

Wang Xi was dazed and sneered. “Are you trying to fool me with such a petty trick?”

Li Yao laughed in contempt, too. “As if you weren’t bullsh*ting. Do you really know who I am?”

The two of them glared at each other with a hundred meters in between and rested in silence for three minutes. Naturally, neither Ghost Character nor Li Yao’s reinforcements arrived.

The atmosphere became increasingly weird. Neither knew how they should break the impasse.

“It appears that you have come here alone without any conspirators,” Wang Xi suddenly said.

“Are you any different? You apparently didn’t want anyone to discover your secrets and plans!” Li Yao snapped back.

“The fully-enclosed armor on your body is quite advanced.” Wang Xi continued. “A lot of super tiny gadgets seem to have been embedded into it. It looks like neither the traditional armor of the Cultivators nor the primeval treasures. It is even less likely to be a product of the legendary ‘Great Zhou Dynasty’. It seems that my guess is correct. You are indeed not ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’!”

“It’s true that I’m not Master Spiritual Vulture, but if you are just a common eunuch, how can you secrete such a weird crystal suit from your body and enter the bridge after passing the identification of the highest level?” Li Yao’s eyes narrowed until they were like two thin sabers. “You are as much not ‘Lead Eunuch Wang Xi’ as I am not ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’!”

Wang Xi, however, was slightly dazed. Two clusters of brilliance burst out of her eyes as she mumbled, “Is this place called a ‘bridge’? You do seem to know a lot of stuff.”

Li Yao was confused. “What? You didn’t know what a ‘bridge’ is?”

“Am I supposed to know?” Wang Xi frowned.

“Well…” Li Yao was even more confused.

Wang Xi rolled her almost transparent eyes, but her killing intent, which had been blossoming like thorns just a moment ago, gradually faded back below her skin. Taking a long breath, she casually said, “Therefore, we are both alone without any support, and we both have secrets that we would rather nobody knew. Yet, as it happens, we have learned each other’s secrets.”

“Seems so,” Li Yao said. “I am not Master Spiritual Vulture, and you are not Lead Eunuch Wang Xi. We have both appeared at this place uncannily when there is absolutely no reason for us to have. Also, you can’t kill me, and I can’t kill you. How do you propose we should handle such an awkward situation?”

Wang Xi’s scanned the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit with her gloomy eyes, as if she were evaluating her odds of success if she suddenly charged forward. A moment later, she smiled bitterly. “You’re right. Neither of us can kill the other when we are both on high alert!”

Gazing at his opponent and without letting go of the tiniest movement all over Wang Xi’s body, Li Yao added, “While we are talking here, a large batch of uncontrollable Cultivators are wandering on this Nuwa warship.

“They are more saboteurs than helpers. I’m sure that neither of us want to see them mess around and damage the key parts of the warship, right?”

“Nuwa warship?” Wang Xi blinked and said, “So, the real name of the ‘Divine Palace’ is the Nuwa warship?”

“Huh?” Li Yao was utterly dumbfounded. “You can enter the bridge by swiping your face, and you don’t know that this is a warship of the Nuwa Clan?”

There was another moment of awkward silence.

Breaking the silence, Wang Xi said, one word after another, “If this is some sort of trap, and you have been acting the whole time, then I’ve got to say that your acting skills are so unbelievably incredible that I feel that I’m going to be fooled.”

“I was going to say the same.” Li Yao gnashed his teeth. “If you’ve been acting the whole time while preparing a flawless trap to bait me into confessing my secrets, then your acting skills are certainly the best that I’ve seen in my entire life. I’ll admit my failure even if I’m fooled by you!”

“Let me make a bold assumption.” Wang Xi gradually recovered from her bewilderment. Her voice was calmer and calmer than before. “You must have a clandestine plan after sneaking into this place under the identity of ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’. Naturally, in your eyes, I have a mysterious plan, too!

“We have both learned part of each other’s secrets, and at first glance, it is obligatory that we fight each other until one of us lives!

“However, allow me to reiterate what I said in our last encounter. Our plans that are equally scared of the sunlight might not necessarily be in conflict, especially when it is obvious that we both know a lot of things that the other guy doesn’t but are quite interested in. There may still be chances of cooperation.

“After all, we are now in a secret chamber. While we are watching over each other, it is impossible for either of us to run away. The people outside are unlikely to break in!

“If we have to kill each other, should we at least exchange our intelligence first and get everything straight before we start fighting? That way, we will at least know what we die for!”

Li Yao tilted his head for a long while. “How do I know that you will not be lying to me?”

“Of course, we may be lying to each other,” Wang Xi said unhurriedly. “However, a lot of critical information can also be analyzed and retrieved from lies. It is certainly better than dying with each other for no good reason, isn’t it?”

“Sounds reasonable.” After considering for a moment, Li Yao nodded quickly. “For the sake of fairness, I propose we ask each other questions in turn. If a question is too sensitive, we are allowed to refuse to answer it and demand another question. What do you think?”

“Very good.” Wang Xi’s eyes were glittering. “As a gesture of our sincerity, should we remove our armor?”

She was not a particularly beautiful woman in the beginning, but when the plain face was adorned by the glittering eyes that were as shiny as diamonds, her entire body was enshrouded in an elegant, ethereal vibe. When she spoke that sentence, there was inviolable intimidation in her voice!

“We should.” Li Yao nodded. Removing his Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit meant that he was almost exposed to the mysterious Wang Xi naked. Naturally, he was under a lot of pressure.

However, nothing was going to work out if the impasse went on. Also, he was very curious to watch how exactly Wang Xi would remove her weird crystal suit!

Li Yao tapped the center of his eyebrow with two fingers. The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit dissected into streaks of brightness and flew back to the Cosmos Rings.

The crystals all over Wang Xi’s body, however, spread out rings of ivory halos as they gradually softened. Then, like some sort of thick fluids, they were absorbed into her body through the skin.

It made Li Yao more certain about his judgement. The crystal suit was not a piece of magical equipment but part of Wang Xi’s body, just like the scales, bone spurs, and energy-concentrating crystal that Li Yao had after activating the primeval cells, except that it was much more weird and advanced than Li Yao’s additional features!

Li Yao had been in touch with all kinds of bizarre demons when he was in the Blood Demon Sector, including some weird mutants among the chaotic-blood demons. However, he had never seen or heard of any existences that could secrete a highly-advanced armor from inside the body or transform their sex freely!

Thinking quickly, Li Yao said, “Since I was the one who ambushed just now, you may ask first… Lord Wang!”

Wang Xi was right. Lies had to be founded on the pieces of truth. The facts that his opponents were trying their best to hide were very likely to be concealed in the questions that they raised.

Therefore, the askers might not be at an advantage, and the answerers might not necessarily suffer losses.

“Alright!” Wang Xi seemed even more earnest than Li Yao. She asked in a hurry, “You said just now that this place is a ‘Nuwa warship’. What is it exactly?”

Li Yao found it queer. “Lord Wang, you know the passwords of this place, you passed all the procedures of identification, and you were the one who found the map of the Divine Palace and initialized the quest for the Divine Palace. Why do you not even know what kind of place this is?”

Wang Xi sniffed. “I’m the one asking questions now.”

Li Yao was deep in thought. He had nothing to hide about that question. If Wang Xi was a spy of the Imperium of True Human Beings or some other mysterious forces, there was no reason at all why he did not even know the Nuwa warship!

The primeval war between the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan was not a secret in either the Imperium of True Human Beings or the Alliance of the Holy Covenant. The files regarding the war in their possession would only be much more than what the Star Glory Federation knew.

Therefore, if Wang Xi did not raise the question intentionally to ease Li Yao’s wariness, it would suggest that she knew absolutely nothing.

“The Nuwa warship is a starship of the ‘Nuwa Clan’, a prehistoric civilization. Judging from the facilities and structure of this warship, it probably falls into the category of medium-sized assault warship, which is mainly used in the battles in the orbit of planets but can also carry out the assault missions within the atmosphere!

“This warship must’ve crashed somewhere between a hundred thousand years ago to five hundred thousand years ago, probably because of the serious damage that the Pangu Clan caused to the engine compartment. But the rest of the cabins, especially the bridge and the mainframe crystal processor, are still well-preserved. A lot of valuable stuff should be able to be uncovered!”

Chapter 1478 - Mysteries About Long Yangjun’s Birth!

“The Nuwa Clan? The Pangu Clan?”

There was confusion all over Wang Xi’s face, as if too many things that she could not understand had been poured into her. She frowned and said, “I know that the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan are both primeval creatures. A number of their bones and magical equipment were excavated in the Ancient Sages Sector tens of thousands of years ago. But the remains are much fewer nowadays, although they are not entirely extinct. So to speak, the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan were hostile with each other, and the so-called Divine Palace was a warship of the Nuwa Clan?”

Her eyes were suddenly ten times more brilliant than before. She could not help but raise her voice as she said, “So, I was right. There is indeed a boundless universe and infinite worlds beyond the Ancient Sages Sector where I can cruise on such an amazing boat!”

Li Yao scratched his hair, shocked by Lord Wang’s ignorance.

Such general information was not a secret to the Imperium, the Covenant Alliance, or any other force in the universe. It did not concern the safety of the Star Glory Federation, either. Pondering for a moment, Li Yao selected some obscure, basic concepts and explained them to Wang Xi.

Of course, all the information was retained to the war between the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan per se. As to exactly why the war broke out, the role human beings played in the God-Sealing War, and the ‘three fundamental laws’, that was all omitted.

He was not going to give away the history about the conversion from the ancient Cultivation civilization to the modern Cultivation civilization easily, either.

Wang Xi listened quietly. Tears as clear as pearls suddenly flowed out of her glittering eyes, as she declared in excitement, “I was right. My dreams were true. The Ancient Sages Sector is indeed just a narrow, deep well, and only if we crawl out of the well can we view the boundless world!”

Li Yao thought of something and took the opportunity to ask, “If you didn’t know anything about all this, how did the idea to explore the Divine Palace even occur to you? Also, Lord Wang, you seem to be very familiar with the internal structure of the Nuwa Warship, and it is quite baffling that you can pass the identification tests of the most crucial cabin!”

Wang Xi glanced at Li Yao. The brilliance inside her eyes dimmed. This time, she did not reject it coldly but said in a gentle voice, “If I say that I don’t know the reason, either, will you believe me?”

“You… don’t know?” Li Yao was dazed. “What do you mean?”

“I don’t know what this is all about. That was why I spent my entire life searching for the Divine Palace at all costs!” Wang Xi furrowed her brow. “There have been some voices and mottled pictures in my head, telling me that I will be able to crack everything and find out who I am after I find the Divine Palace!”

Li Yao was greatly shocked. He held his breath in case he disrupted Wang Xi’s memory.

Leaning against one of the giant pillars, Wang Xi slowly slid and sat down. She took a long breath and, staring at something nonexistent in midair, spoke hesitantly. “Since you dared to participate in the exploration of the Divine Palace, you must’ve read my files before and know that I was born in a remote valley at the border between Great Qian and Ghost Qin. Our poor village was the only settlement of human beings in the hundreds of square kilometers nearby.”

Li Yao nodded. It was exactly as the files said.

‘Lead Eunuch Wang Xi’ was not a person who jumped out of nowhere. It was impossible for the royal family to allow a eunuch of ambiguous backgrounds to approach the emperor.

“However, something is not recorded on any of the files.”

After a long hesitation, Wang Xi finally spoke it out. “I was not exactly born in that village. My foster parents told me before their death that I landed from the sky enshrouded in a fiercely burning fire ball to an unvisited place deep inside the valley. When all the flames died down, it was a black, iron shell in the crater.

“My foster parents were both poor, illiterate villagers. Their only son had been killed in a raid of the wolves that year. While they were grieving, they noticed the anomaly in the sky and traced it to the crash site, where they found the mysterious iron shell.

“The iron shell split apart from the center. A lot of thick, blue liquids spurted out, with a wrinkled baby soaked inside.

“Naturally, it was impossible for them to figure out what exactly the iron shell was. They thought that the heavens had mercy and delivered a baby to them to ease their grief of losing the son. So, they took me back to their home and raised me.”

Big iron ball from the sky? Thick, blue liquids? Wrinkled baby? Li Yao thought quickly and had some fuzzy speculation in his head.

“At first, they naturally didn’t tell me my real birth. I grew up together with the other naughty kids in the village,” Wang Xi said. “Although I wasn’t their blood child, my foster parents treated me very well because they thought that I was a blessing, and they had me when they were quite old. They paid a visit to the nearest town hundreds of kilometers away and found a scholar to pick a name for me. My foster father was surnamed ‘Long’. Long Yangjun is my real name!”

Li Yao blinked and took the opportunity to ask, “So, this is your real appearance. Are you a woman?”

Long Yangjun coughed in embarrassment. Instead of answering Li Yao’s question, she simply went on. “However, as I grew older, I gradually discovered some uncanny features on my body that couldn’t be explained in any way. I was too different from other kids!

“Since you are the bloodline of the barbarians and you can display the distinctive features of the ferocious beasts with the ‘Berserker Arts’, you should know that most of the people in the borderland between the Great Qian Dynasty and the Dark Cloud Prairies are hybrids who have some bizarre features more or less. Tusks, feathers in their private parts, and even tiny horns on their heads are nothing unusual!

“However, even compared to the bizarre-looking kids, I could also be called the strangest one. For example, the crystal external skeleton that I can trigger at will from my body is one of the inexplicable features.

“However, my weird body is not worth mentioning at all compared to the pictures and sounds that often appear in my head unbearably!

“I don’t know if you have had similar experiences, but ever since I can remember, every time I went to sleep late at night, the most dazzling and inexplicable pictures would always show up in front of my eyes. I would also hear a lot of noises and people talking!

“You dream what you think during the day. Generally speaking, however creepy one’s dream is, it can’t be far away from the real world that they are living during the day, despite the twists and distortions.

“My dreams, on the other hand, were absolutely nothing that a four-year-old kid could bear. They crawled into my head like vipers at night, causing me excruciating pain and driving me crazy!”

Li Yao’s heart was pounding, and he almost moaned out. He struggled to ask, “What—what were your dreams about exactly?”

Long Yangjun shook her head and said gloomily, “They were like the swirls made of countless bodies of mottled butterflies. It was very rare that I could understand part of the information. In general, some of the bizarre-shaped humans were fighting each other, or they were moving in the boundless universe surrounded by burning stars. The real stars!”

Li Yao’s breath grew more and more hasty. “Are you referring to the God-Sealing War in the primeval era?”

“I don’t know,” Long Yangjun said straightforwardly. “I didn’t know the concepts about the Nuwa Clan, the Pangu Clan, and the God-Sealing War until today. How could I have understood the meaning of the uncanny dreams a hundred years ago?”

Li Yao was silent. Two different thoughts were fighting hard inside his brain.

Although Long Yangjun’s answer was not completely flawless, it was indeed logical and contained tremendous information. It did not seem to be entirely made up.

The mental devil, however, shouted desperately inside his brain. “False! False! It is certainly false! Wang Xi or Long Yangjun, she is one of the most terrible existences in the Ancient Sages Sector who manipulated the entire world of Cultivators by herself! How can such a great schemer trust an alien of unknown backgrounds in just an hour and tell her birth to you honestly? That’s too childish!

“She must’ve dug a great pit waiting for you to jump in. Watch out!

“I know that you haven’t had a competition of beliefs with Ding Lingdang for a hundred years, and you must be thirsty, but even if you are to fall for a woman, you must not be fooled by the quirky ladyboy!”

“Fair enough!” Li Yao calmed himself down, but he was not so sure. “However, she is indeed by herself and did not foresee that I would break into the room. The wound that she suffered from Yan Liren is authentic, too. All this suggests that even if there is a trap, she did not prepare it in advance but is improvising!

“Therefore, this is unlikely to be a trap targeting me or the Star Glory Federation. I must’ve been involved by accident. Assuming that she is lying, what is her real purpose exactly?”

“Who knows?” the mental devil sneered. “Chances are that she is trying to earn your sympathy with her pitiful past so that you will help her gain control of the Nuwa warship. Do you think that she will be as friendly as right now after she gets the Nuwa warship up and running?”

“Exactly!” Li Yao was suddenly alarmed. For such an enormous Nuwa warship, even someone who was deeply associated with it in the past would not be able to maneuver it on their own.

Li Yao was a master of refining, and he appeared to be quite familiar with the Nuwa warship. It was possible that Long Yangjun was tricking him into being her assistant. After they finished maintaining the Nuwa warship and soared into space, Long Yangjun would reveal her real face.

“When then?” Li Yao secretly wiped off his sweat in his head.

Long Yangjun glanced at him coldly and said, “Don’t you feel that your question is too long? Shouldn’t you trade your own background for such priceless intelligence regarding the secrets of my birth? Who are you exactly? What is this mysterious force behind you that has the capability to craft such a delicate armor?”

Chapter 1479 - This Isn’t a Coincidence!

Li Yao shook his head. “This question is too sensitive for me to answer. You’ll have to ask a different one.”

“I can guess the answer even if you refuse to reply,” Long Yangjun sneered. “The delicacy and the style of your armor far exceed the expertise of the Cultivators in any dynasty in the Ancient Sages Sector. Also, you are familiar with the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan, you know a thing or two about the Nuwa warship, and you don’t appear thrilled when discussing the voyages in the sea of stars. So, you should be from a world beyond the dark nebula, where cruising the universe is just a common technique, right?”

Li Yao sniffed in confirmation.

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, as a crystal suit built in the industrial system of the modern Cultivation civilization, was greatly different from the armor of the ancient Cultivators crafted purely by hand. Anyone who was not blind would be able to tell that.

“I’m not surprised that you are an extraterrestrial Cultivator. What surprises me is why you have shown up in the Ancient Sages Sector,” Long Yangjun said. “You are obviously on your own without any support. If you didn’t end up here in an accident, you must be some sort of scout collecting intelligence for the main troop behind you, right?”

Li Yao’s heart nearly skipped a beat. He did not know that Long Yangjun’s senses were so keen that she had figured out his real identity through the insignificant traces!

Long Yangjun's eyes suddenly grew sharp, and her voice turned cold. "If you have countless warships similar to the Nuwa warship that we are standing on right now, coveting us outside of the dark nebula, I don't see any possibility of cooperation between us!"

"Make no mistake!" Sensing her rising killing intent, Li Yao hurried to reply. "We mean no harm to the Ancient Sages Sector!"

"Then it is quite odd." Long Yangjun raised the critical question immediately. "Since the Ancient Sages Sector is hidden inside a dark nebula and can hardly be noticed by the rest of the universe, why are you here if you mean no harm?"

"In fact, it was the Ancient Sages Sector that sent a signal to my world first."

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao attempted to narrate the whole story in a fuzzy way. "I cannot tell you the specific details right now, nor can they be explained in a few words. Let me just put it this way.

"One peaceful, summer night, when you are resting in your own house, you suddenly hear someone chuckling right next to you. You rise and investigate in shock, only to discover that the laughter was probably from a mountain thousands of meters away from your house. What would you do in such a situation?"

Long Yangjun was slightly dazed and deep in thought. "The laughter from thousands of kilometers away found its way into my house late at night? I'm afraid that I would not sleep well until I found the source of the laughter!"

“Precisely,” Li Yao said. “You may consider me as an investigator who has come to the Ancient Sages Sector to locate the source of the laughter!”

Long Yangjun rolled her eyes. “Then, have you located it?”

“Not yet,” Li Yao admitted frankly. “The distance between the Ancient Sages Sector and my world is much longer than you can ever imagine. Even if a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator with infinite spiritual energy rushes at full speed for ten thousand years, they may not be able to cover the whole journey!

“To deliver the laughter to such a long distance away requires some very advanced magical equipment or rune array. However, although I’ve been active in the Ancient Sages Sector as a magical equipment specialist gathering the intelligence of the magical equipment in this world, even including the groundless tales, I’ve found nothing useful!

“But considering that the Nuwa warship we are on is so well-preserved, even if it cannot cruise in space anymore, it is possible for the warship to send out a few chuckles to the outside world.”

“Are you saying that someone sent a message to beyond the dark nebula through the Nuwa warship about a hundred years ago?” Long Yangjun’s eyes suddenly turned extremely dangerous. “When specifically?”

Li Yao calculated for a moment and said, “Exchanged to the time of the Ancient Sages Sector, it was probably ninety-seven years and eight months ago.”

It was quite odd that the time cost for the Ancient Sages Sector, the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and the Blood Demon

Sector to revolve around their respective stars was almost identical. Therefore, the calendar that they used was more or less the same.

Perhaps the worlds that allowed carbon-based life forms such as the Pangu Clan, the Nuwa Clan, and human beings to survive and thrive into brilliant civilizations shared something in common.

“Ninety-seven years ago.” Long Yangjun’s face suddenly turned extremely weird. “I am ninety-seven and a half years old right now, but I have always counted my birthday from the day when I was picked up by my foster parents, which means that I could’ve been born ninety-seven years and eight months ago!”

The hair on the back of Li Yao’s head was all standing up. He felt as if creepy, cold air was rising all the way up from his spine to his skull.

It could not have been a coincidence!

According to the calendar of the Ancient Sages Sector, ‘something’ must have happened on the Nuwa warship ninety-seven years and eight months ago that resulted in the launch of the mysterious signal and the birth of Long Yangjun!

“We seem to be approaching the answer to the puzzle. I have a theory about your identity, too.” Li Yao threw out a bait. “However, in order to find out the truth completely, I would like to hear your answer to the last question. How exactly did you find the Divine Palace?”

“You know who I am?” Long Yangjun rose up suddenly and glared at Li Yao for a long time before sliding down against the pillar of the crystal processor system again. “I grew up in the remote valley until I was eight. Bearing the torture of the uncanny dreams every day, and reluctant to hang around with other kids because of the irregularities of my body, I preferred to wander in the wilderness by myself. Gradually, I became a freak in my village.

“All the while, my strength was awakening.

“The folks living in the borderland were very tough. Infamous bandits often choose to hide in such places. There were a few fighters in my village who claimed to have killed a lot of people. I used to learn fighting skills from one of them. But after only a few days, I began to feel that his martial arts were too shabby and not nearly as effective as the weird arts that I received from the uncanny dreams.

“But at that time, I was too young to control my strength, and I was loathed by the villagers when I almost beat several children who were five or six years older than me when we were playing. So, I was even less willing to go back to the village. I found a cave in the valley and lived in seclusion.

“My foster parents regarded me as a blessing from the heavens because of my mysterious backgrounds. They did not dare to discipline me but simply let me go!

“At that time, I trained myself and hunted in the wilderness during the day. At night, to get away from the torture of the uncanny dreams, I sat outside of my cave and looked at the sky. All kinds of weird questions occurred to me.

“What was beyond the sky? What were the so-called deities all about? The enormous bones that were occasionally found in the wilderness were claimed to be the ecdysis of the primeval deities and worshipped by everyone. Temples and altars were even established to enshrine them. But when I touched the bones, I did not feel any reverence at all but only familiarity and sorrow. Why was that?

“Of course, what I thought about most were still my dreams.”

“Was everything that happened in my dreams just my fantasy, or was it real? Was the picture where the stars in the universe exploded instantly and ten thousand starships were burning something that I saw in my previous life?

“Just like that, the mottled pictures and the squeaky noises, after being repeated in the dream countless times, gradually condensed into an inexplicable belief. I was somehow told that the answer lay at the end of the Land of Eternal Night. As long as I came to this place, I would find out who I was exactly!”

After saying that, Long Yangjun paused for a moment and took a long breath. With vague sorrow on her face, she quickly said, “Later, the village that my foster parents were living in was pillaged by a bunch of defeated soldiers from the prairies. At that time, the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun had both vanished in the Land of Eternal Night, and the new dominator Han Baling was yet to distinguish himself. The situation on the Dark Cloud Prairies was extremely chaotic. The tribes and the few sects were fighting each other all the time. The soldiers who were defeated always plundered all the way while they were running as bandits. My hometown was unfortunately caught by them. All the villagers were massacred.

“When I trained myself in the wilderness, I chose the most inconspicuous spots, sometimes even the underground crevices, in case other people ran into my secrets. I didn’t know it when it happened.

“It was not until my training section was done and I saw the rising fire on the horizon that I realized something terrible had happened. After I returned to my village, the only things awaiting me were the burnt, dilapidated buildings.

“My foster mother was hiding in an underground burrow. She was already dying because of the high temperature and the intense smoke and passed away after she managed to tell me about my birth.

“I tracked the bandits, trying to kill all of them, but outside my expectation, there were quite a few tough fighters among them. Also, my strength was newly awakened. Eventually, although I executed each and every one of them, I was also heavily wounded and nearly dead, and I wasn’t myself again until three days and three nights of slipping in and out of consciousness later!

“However, it was exactly because of the life-and-death struggle that my intuition grew much keener. The pictures and sounds in my head were clearer than before, too!

“My hometown had been destroyed, but an origin that was much more remote seemed to be concealed inside my body. I suddenly felt a strong urge to find my real hometown and figure out who I really was!

“What was odd was that I should’ve been extremely ignorant since I grew up in the wilderness uneducated and barely visited the town hundreds of kilometers away before.

“But my head was extremely clear at that time. I reached the conclusion instantly that it was absolutely impossible for me to reach the Land of Eternal Night on my own. Even if I did, I wouldn’t be able to find my destination, which was hidden in a certain place on the vast snow field!

“I had to conduct real training to improve my capabilities. I also needed to establish my own force and gather more intelligence about the Land of Eternal Night!”

Chapter 1480 - Long Yangjun and Emperor Phoenix!

“Therefore,” Li Yao said, “you chose to enter the royal palace as ‘Wang Xi’?”

Long Yangjun smiled. “I needed tremendous resources to improve my capabilities and special channels to recruit subordinates. I also needed to collect all the information from the past thousands of years about the entire world to search for traces of the depths of the Land of Eternal Night. Where could I have achieved my purposes simultaneously except for the royal palace?”

“But your body…”

“It is none of your business.” Long Yangjun suddenly grew alarmed, and her voice grew cold again. “All in all, you only need to know that I smoothly entered the royal palace and became a common eunuch.

“My uncanny dreams endowed me with extraordinary analysis and planning abilities. Even the most experienced old eunuchs were manipulated by me without them realizing!

“I worked as a librarian in the royal library for decades in order to search for everything related to the Land of Eternal Night from the books that were as vast as oceans. It was during that period that some scraps about the Divine Palace aroused my interest. I was gradually certain that the dreams that had been haunting me must be associated with the Divine Palace!

“However, even the latest books about the Divine Palace were written thousands of years ago. Nobody today knew specifically where the so-called ‘Divine Palace’ was. Most people simply regarded it as an illusory place cited in folklore.

“But I knew that the Divine Palace was in the real world!

“In the decades that followed, I tried to determine the specific coordinates of the Divine Palace until I found the ‘map core’ and the ‘Thousand Stars Tray’ in the end.

“It was a pity that I didn’t know where the ‘map core’ was hidden exactly and that the ‘Thousand Stars Tray’ had already been dissected into more than ten parts that were held by multiple sects as their secret treasures!

“In order to collect the components of the Thousand Stars Tray and reassemble it, I would have to break into the sects!”

“That explains a lot!” Deep in thought, Li Yao remarked, “That’s why you established Ghost Character and instigated trouble among the Cultivators to help the emperor keep the main sects in check. You even led Ghost Character to annihilate a lot of sects in person!”

“Exactly!” Long Yangjun said. “At that time, I had already joined an underground sect that had been passed on among the eunuchs for a thousand years in the royal palace. I had trained the Apparitional Night arts to the highest level and was acknowledged as the leader of the clandestine force!

“The emperor wanted to curb the Cultivators, which was exactly what I wanted, too.

Therefore, I established Ghost Character based on the enormous resources of the underground force. While I was leading the charge and running errands for the emperor, I collected the pieces of the Thousand Stars Tray. Finally, I also found out that the map core was actually hidden in East Peace County!”

Long Yangjun paused for a moment when she reached this part, as if she was still angry about what happened next. “If I were still the dominating Wang Xi in the court, after a year and a half’s planning, I would’ve been able to retrieve the map core openly and establish an exploration team that was absolutely loyal to me. Then, I could have made my way to the Land of Eternal Night and searched for the Divine Palace without alarming anyone!

“The old emperor was completely under my control. The Cultivators were too busy minding their own business to compete with me, too!

“However, it never occurred to me that an existence as weird as Zhu Zongyou would suddenly jump out of nowhere and completely disrupt my whole plan. He almost killed me without leaving me a place for burial!”

Zhu Zongyou was ‘Emperor Phoenix’, the new emperor who had ascended to the throne last year.

Calling him by his name, Long Yangjun apparently hated his guts!

Li Yao raised his eyebrow and asked, “So, are you not on the same boat?”

“Hehe. The old emperor was entirely manipulated by me and no better than a puppet. Why would I trouble myself by making a new emperor?” Long Yangjun said coldly. “Even if a new puppet was needed, I had already picked quite a few suitable targets who would absolutely not hinder my plan!

“In retrospect, the death of the old emperor was definitely a scheme, and the leader of the scheme was Emperor Phoenix, the then Thirteenth Prince Zhu Zongyou who was hidden in the Thunder Martial Temple and had been forgotten by most people!

“It’s a pity that I focused my full attention on searching for the map core and the Thousand Stars Tray at that time, so I was too sluggish to realize the severity of the issue in time. When I finally realized it, my own forces had already been uprooted by Zhu Zongyou as fast as lightning!”

“Wait a moment!” Li Yao found it strange. “Logically, Emperor Phoenix should have had absolutely no support in the Divine Capital. How could he have uprooted the forces that you had raised for decades, including the enormous Ghost Character?”

“It’s exactly because of the impossibility that I underestimated him!” Long Yangjun replied hatefully. “Zhu Zongyou is definitely not as simple as he appears, but the force lurking behind him is even more terrible. The elite assassins of Ghost Character were absolutely no match for his newly-founded Fiery Phoenix Legion during the collisions in the darkness. Several of my subordinates who had been loyal to me for decades betrayed me overnight. Their motivation puzzles me even to this day!”

Li Yao sighed and said, “So, you could only turn to the last resort and cooperate with Han Baling, Wan Mingzhu, and Qi

Changsheng?”

“Exactly.” Long Yangjun gnashed her teeth. “A rat on the street that everybody stomped on, a public enemy for everyone in the world… I didn’t care about any of that. The idiotic Cultivators wanted to capture me? Not going to happen in a hundred years!

“But the secret force behind Zhu Zongyou had been strangling me in the darkness all the time. He was apparently going to crush me and glean all my secrets from me!

“My force grew weaker every day. After only half a year and a half, ninety percent of the members of Ghost Character had already been lost. The rest of them were living in panic every day like shocked birds!

“I was fully clear that if I didn’t have one last struggle and embark on the quest for the Divine Palace, I might not have the opportunity later!

“Having no other options, I could only tell the secret to Han Baling, Qi Changsheng, and Wan Mingzhu. The Four Rapscallions teamed up to look for the Divine Palace!”

Li Yao rolled his eyes and suddenly asked, “Let me make a guess. You intentionally revealed a loophole during the battle at East Peace County so that I would follow. Then, you told me part of the truth to attract more forces to join the ‘quest for the Divine Palace’, right?”

“You are quite smart.” Long Yangjun was rather surprised. She looked Li Yao up and down carefully again. “Exactly. I wanted as many forces to participate in the competition in the Divine Palace as possible!

“The reason is very simple. Under the attack of Emperor Phoenix, Ghost Character had been significantly undermined. It was not nearly as strong as it appeared to be. Chances were that it was the weakest of the four forces under the command of the Four Rapscallions!

“Also, I was the one who called for the operation. From the perspective of Han Baling, Qi Changsheng, and Wan Mingzhu, it was easy for them to reach the conclusion that I must be keeping some critical information for myself!

“Then, it would be possible for the three of them to stand on the same side and deal with me together in order to exploit all of my secrets!

“As long as they grew slightly hostile, they would see through my weakness right now. I would be caught in the awkward situation where I couldn’t fight back at all, which was definitely unacceptable for me!

“Didn’t you mention on the desolate land in the east ocean that, since you were all by yourself, you could only introduce as many forces into the exploration mission as possible so that you would be able to fish for what you wanted in the dirty water!

“The same logic applies for me. If more forces participated in the operation, it would be more likely that they would harass and even kill each other, and I, with the crucial information, would be given a precious opportunity!

“After all, our goals are different. The goal of the others is the Cloud Qin Gold Statues, but my goal is to look into the background of the whole issue and find out who I am. Therefore, I will not fight bloody battles in front of the Cloud Qin Gold Statues like them, at least not in the beginning!”

Li Yao nodded slowly.

After hearing that, he finally felt that some of the puzzles that he had in the beginning were solved.

“One more thing.”

After a moment of hesitation, Long Yangjun said, “It is just my vague intuition not backed by any proof, but I somehow feel that Zhu Zongyou knows something about the Divine Palace. Even if I hadn’t revealed the secret, it’s very possible that he would’ve established an exploration team in secret to search for this place. Judging from his thunderous approaches when he dealt with Ghost Character, the exploration team would be much more than what Han Baling and the other forces combined could handle!

“Since I couldn’t stop him, I might as well make it big and introduce more forces into the game. The more, the merrier!”

“What!”

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. On second thought, it was indeed very possible.

The news about the Divine Palace was publicly revealed only after the battle in East Peace County. In just one short month, Emperor Phoenix had already launched aggressive attacks all over the country and established a well-equipped exploration team with sufficient resources. Logically, the whole preparation should have taken much longer than it actually did!

The only explanation was that long before the battle of East Peace County, and before the ‘map core’ fell into the hands of Wang Xi, he had begun planning everything!

The puzzle was too complicated to be solved for the time being. Li Yao calmed himself down and sorted his messy thoughts. “So, you passed the maze-like internal pathways on the warship, and you knew the passwords to open the gate to the bridge because the uncanny dreams in your head told you the information.”

“No. It was just spontaneous.” Long Yangjun eyed the crystal pillars around and mumbled, “I didn’t know any of that in the beginning. However, the moment that I entered this… Nuwa warship, I had a feeling that I’d come home. I seemed to be familiar with the distribution and direction of every pathway, and I would not make a mistake even if I walked through them with my eyes closed. I reached this place just with just my natural instincts.

“The same goes for the three identification procedures. I didn’t know the way to crack them before. However, as long as I cleared my mind and relaxed my body, my fingers were already bouncing on their own as naturally as breathing!”

Chapter 1481 - Li Yao’s Shocking Speculation!

After saying that, Long Yangjun suddenly concentrated her eyes and stared at Li Yao. The four crystal clusters were also rotating around her faster and faster, beaming out brilliance as dazzling as her eyes. She said, one word after another, “This is about the background of everything. I’ve told you all that I know exactly as it is! Just now, you said that you had an ambiguous speculation about my identity. You weren’t lying, were you?”

“Of course not.” Li Yao put on a fake smile. “However, my speculation is entirely premised on the details that you described. If you haven’t been faithful about what you said, the final conclusion may be hilariously preposterous.”

“Hehe. there is no need for me to lie to you about such unimportant things. After all, I’m more eager to know who I am than you are!” Long Yangjun said coldly, “If your speculation makes sense, there will still be a possibility for our cooperation. If you turn out to be lying to me, I’m afraid that only one of us will be able to walk out of this… bridge!”

“This is my speculation.” Li Yao coughed lightly and explained at ease. “Assuming what you said is true, you landed from the sky in a fiercely burning iron shell when you were an infant. The critical question here is whether you fell from outside of the atmosphere or within the atmosphere? Or, were you shot beyond the atmosphere like a cannonball first and drifted for a while in orbit before you cut into the atmosphere again? Right. Do you know what the atmosphere is?”

“Of course I do,” Long Yangjun said. “I used to soar into the sky and break into the universe through the clouds. Naturally, I know what the atmosphere is!

“However, is it really important from where I fell to the ground?”

“In every way.” Li Yao nodded and said solemnly, “Generally speaking, after hearing your story, people will suspect that you have arrived from the depths of the universe far, far away and landed on the Ancient Sages Sector!

“However, the Ancient Sages Sector is enshrouded in a thick, dark nebula, which is not easy for a super warship equipped with the best navigation magical equipment to pass through. Is an ‘iron shell’ simple in structure and not large in volume really capable of passing through the entire dark nebula? I strongly doubt that!”

Long Yangjun was slightly dazed. She mumbled, “I have never seen the thing that carried me to this world with my own eyes. After my foster parents passed away, I tried my best to look for it, too, but without a precise location, and when ten years had passed, where could I find it? However, since they described it as an ‘iron shell’, it should be a vehicle that was extremely simple in structure and not very large in size.”

“That’s it!” Li Yao clapped his fists and said, “An ‘iron shell’ that is simple and small but sturdy and blast-proof, based on my experience, is unlikely to be a warship that can cruise for a long distance in the universe. It is more similar to an escape capsule on a warship!

“It means that you did not fall from the sky. Instead, you were actually ‘launched’ from a certain starship and flew for some time, presumably not very long, before you reentered the atmosphere!

“Judging from the uncanny dreams in your head, you were probably one of the most important people on this Nuwa warship. You were launched from this place in an escape capsule!”

Long Yangjun’s eyes suddenly glittered. She eyed Li Yao up and down carefully before she nodded. “Up to this point, your speculation is rather reasonable. However, the Nuwa warship crashed on the Land of Eternal Night more than a hundred thousand years ago. Could anyone have slept in the escape capsule for such a long time?”

Li Yao hesitated for a moment and said, “Theoretically, maybe, but I feel that your case is different.”

“Of course it is different,” Long Yangjun replied. “If I were truly an important person on this Nuwa warship, why was I in the form of an infant with absolutely no memories of my past?”

“Perhaps,” Li Yao said, “it is not your past but your ‘previous life’!”

“Previous life?” Long Yangjun chuckled in amusement. “Are you referring to possession and reincarnation? I’ve thought of the possibility since a long time ago, but it doesn’t make sense. There are many great irregularities with my body that can never be manifested by the local Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector. If I had reincarnated, the best I could expect should be the mutation of my soul. Why would there be drastic changes in my body?

“Besides, you saw with your own eyes that I passed multiple identification tests successfully with this body of mine. It suggests that the relevant information about this body has indeed been stored in the… what did you call it? Right. In the mainframe crystal processor previously. How can you explain that?”

“I have come up with two possibilities.”

Li Yao extended his two fingers and said, “Firstly, is it possible that the Nuwa Clan boasted a certain mysterious technique that allowed someone to grow reversely from old to young, from an adult to a child, from a child to an infant, and even from an infant to a fetus or even a zygote?”

Long Yangjun’s eyes suddenly shone. “What are the benefits of such a practice?”

” The greatest benefit is that it allows a much longer ‘hibernation’!” Li Yao said. “For an adult, especially an unparalleled expert, their body of flesh and blood and their immense soul consume astronomical spiritual energy every second. It is barely possible for them to hibernate for a hundred thousand years!”

It was true that Li Yao had come across a member of the Pangu Clan who came back to life after a hibernation of hundreds of thousands of years on Kunlun.

But that was a very special case. Kunlun had been constructed based on a pulsar, which had been providing energy for it incessantly during the hundreds of thousands of years. That was why the member of the Pangu Clan had been kept alive in the hibernation state.

Under normal circumstances, barely any magical equipment or energy source could allow someone to hibernate for such a long time without damaging their body.

“I know of a special lotus,” Li Yao said. “When the environment changes greatly and the weather is too dry for its survival, its seeds will enter a very special ‘spore state’, where they will be like lifeless pebbles and sleep for tens of thousands of years or even longer until the weather is moist and there is a water source. Then, they will be ‘unfrozen’ from the spore state and thrive again!

“Perhaps that was the methodology of the Nuwa Clan, too. In the case of an emergency that dictated a long hibernation when there was a lack of sufficient spiritual energy and nutrition, they would force the individuals to enter the ‘reverse growth’ state, where the individuals would grow from adults into zygotes. Then, they would envelop the zygotes with a unique ‘shell’, turning them into spores that barely consumed any spiritual energy and nutrition but were extremely sturdy!

“Then, with the tiniest bit of spiritual energy and nutrition, and the room no larger than a fist, the individuals would be able to sleep for hundreds of thousands of years. Wouldn’t their chances of survival be greatly improved?

“After hundreds of thousands of years, when the world changes and the dangers are long gone, when enough spiritual energy and nutrition have accumulated, the ‘unfreezing’ procedure will come. The shell will split apart and release the zygotes, which will develop again in an environment similar to an artificial womb. Just like that, they will be reborn!

“When you grew reversely into a zygote, because your head had completely vanished, most of the information and memories stored in it were naturally lost. That is why you only had certain mottled memory pieces that were displayed in your strange dreams.

“Perhaps, as your brain continues developing, you will find more and more memories in the future, won’t you?

“This is the first possibility that I speculated. Are there any questions?”

Long Yangjun was dumbfounded!

“Well…” She hesitated in confusion and at a loss. She seemed to be going crazy as she said, “Wait. You said too much too fast. I need some time to digest it. I need time…”

She was dazed for a long time with her eyes unfocused. Finally, she took a deep breath and smiled bitterly. “Reverse growth, spore state, and second maturation? Did the deities and devils in the primeval era really have such amazing techniques?”

“I don’t know,” Li Yao replied honestly. “This is just my wild speculation based on the information that you gave me and everything I’ve seen so far.”

“Alright!” Long Yangjun said, still not entirely calm. “Naturally, the truth is still too far away from us to be found out right now, but your speculation does sound reasonable. Why don’t you tell me the second possibility?”

“The second possibility shares the same purpose as the first possibility but differs in approach,” Li Yao said. “Perhaps the Nuwa Clan did not have such a mysterious technique as ‘reverse growth’. However, they might have another amazing method. I wonder, have you ever heard of ‘genome duplication’?

“Genome… duplication? What’s that?” Long Yangjun was confused.

“To put it simply,” Li Yao said, “as long as a hair, a drop of blood, or a fingernail is retrieved from you, it is possible to create a ‘clone’ that has an identical genome to yours without the slightest difference in any cell!

“Of course, it cannot be a tall and healthy adult like you are right now but a fetus that contains the entirety of your genome. You may find it hard to understand what the genome is, but it doesn’t matter. All you need to know that, once the fetus grows up, it will turn into someone exactly the same as you.”

“Exactly the same as me?” Long Yangjun touched her face subconsciously.

“To be more precise, exactly the same as ‘her’,” Li Yao said coldly. “Exactly the same as ‘her’, the woman who left her hair, blood, fingernail, or some other bodily material hundreds of thousands of years ago.”

“I got it now.” Long Yangjun’s hands were shaking. “Are you saying that, hundreds of thousands of years ago, someone on the Nuwa warship left her hair, blood, or fingernail and refined it into a… fetus, and hundreds of thousands of years later, the fetus has grown into a ‘clone’?”

Chapter 1482 - Truth About the Mysterious Signal!

“If that is the case, it will be easy to explain why you passed the identification tests on the Nuwa warship,” Li Yao said. “As for exactly why a ‘clone’ has the memories of the ‘original body’, I have no idea. Perhaps the Nuwa Clan boasted a certain ‘memory injection’ technique, just like ‘possession’, except that they were simply possessing themselves!”

“They possessed themselves?” Long Yangjun scratched her face so hard that steam was almost popping up. “Are you saying that they created a clone by means of the so-called ‘genome duplication’ and then injected their soul into the clone?”

“Yes. General possession often has the problem that the soul does not match the body. It is also possible for the soul to be swallowed by the previous owner of the body,” Li Yao said. “But if one possesses their own clone, I assume that the obstacle will be significantly weakened, and the speed of integration will be higher. There will be barely any adverse effects.”

Long Yangjun stared at Li Yao without blinking. She was in such a trance that she looked like a lost ghost. “In your world, is the ‘genome duplication’ technology already highly-developed?”

“We are not able to accomplish such an incredible thing yet.” Li Yao opened his hands and frankly admitted the truth. “However, that is not necessarily so for the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan. To ensure the continuity of their civilization, there is a good chance that they went through all the trouble to create many mysterious if not horrifying techniques!”

Long Yangjun paced back and forth anxiously. At a loss, she asked, “Why was I launched a hundred years ago but not any other point?”

Li Yao thought for a moment and said, “Assuming that the iron shell that you were in was indeed an escape capsule, it is possible that the Nuwa warship sensed the invasion of certain dangers and automatically ejected you.

“Normally speaking, if someone on the Nuwa warship left a fetus by means of ‘reverse growth’ or ‘genome duplication’ hundreds of thousands of years ago, hoping that it would be revived in a suitable environment, there would be no reason for you to be launched into the wilderness tens of thousands of kilometers away. The dangers and unexpected factors out there were too many.

“‘Unfreezing’ and ‘incubating’ you directly on the Nuwa warship, protecting your safety with the Nuwa warship, and restoring your memories and reminding you of your destiny through a certain automatic educational tool—that would be the most sensible choice!

“Unless, of course, certain great changes that took place on the Nuwa warship made the system reach the conclusion that it was no longer safe for you to stay on the warship as a fetus, in which case you were put into a special escape capsule and launched somewhere far, far away!

“You see, although the Nuwa warship has been in the hibernation state for hundreds of thousands of years, part of the facilities, including the gates to the bridge, are still functioning normally. I believe that the alarm system and the escape system didn't completely hibernate but were placed in a certain half-active state. It would definitely have been possible for the warship to launch an escape capsule!"

Long Yangjun wanted to speak but hesitated. She was caught in a long silence. The brilliance inside her eyes seemed to be mixing with the spots of light that were shining on the crystal pillars around. It was as if she was being drowned in the bridge.

Having finished the analysis, Li Yao contemplated on his own issues in silence, too.

"Are you considering our own origins?" The mental devil surfaced inside his brain again, with the rarely-seen graveness on its face.

"Yes…" Li Yao sighed gloomily.

The reason that he could come up with two relatively plausible possibilities from the few clues that Long Yangjun had offered in such a short period of time was naturally because he had been thinking about these questions since a long, long time ago, when his self-consciousness just popped up to the surface of the water from the prolonged chaos.

Who am I?

Where did I come from?

Where am I going?

When he broke free from the creepy, unpredictable dreams at night with headaches and sweat all over his body and looked at the dim, yellow sky that was entirely different from his memories, the questions always tightened him up hard like invisible boas until his soul was shivering and he could barely catch his breath.

Long Yangjun was like another version of himself. Or rather, she was like an ‘abridged version’ of a certain being.

The two of them were both lost outside of their real homes. They both recalled part of the experiences in a different time and space under the stimulation of uncanny dreams. They were both determined to find out who they were and what kind of destiny they shouldered at all costs.

They were the same type of person, lost wanderers in the wilderness.

However, Long Yangjun was more fortunate than him. She had only been thrown tens of thousands of meters away from her origin, which was still on the same planet as she was. Also, after a hundred years of hard work, she had finally returned to the place of her origin and figured out what kind of being she was exactly.

Either it was reverse growth or genome duplication, and despite the possible flaws in the details, Li Yao believed that his speculation was not too far off the truth.

But what about himself?

His origin was probably on the other side of the universe across billions of stars. The method that delivered him to the Heaven’s Origin Sector at the edge of the cosmos was definitely a hundred times more sophisticated than ‘reverse growth’ or ‘genome duplication’!

When would he be able to find his origin and the real significance of his life like Long Yangjun?

Li Yao took a deep breath and pinched his thigh hard, forcing himself to get away from the random thoughts that were of no help.

Long Yangjun had figured out her origin, but there was no telling what her stance and attitude were yet.

In the meantime, thousands of Cultivators who had been corrupted by greed and might go out of control at any moment were still wandering outside.

‘Emperor Phoenix’ Zhu Zongyou, a mysterious person that was a headache even for Long Yangjun, and the immeasurable mysterious force behind him were also lurking somewhere in the darkness.

Besides, it was not the time to play the thoughtful philosopher yet. He might as well focus his attention on figuring out the truth in front of his eyes. If his speculation was right and Long Yangjun had been tossed out by the Nuwa warship through an escape capsule because of the arrival of certain dangers, then—

Li Yao’s body was suddenly stiff as if he had an electric shock. The blood all over his body was flowing into his head and raising a tsunami there!

“I have a brand-new assumption about the mysterious signal that was launched to the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector!” Li Yao roared excitedly inside his head.

“Oh? Tell me about it!” The mental devil grew interested, too, with its two small ears flapping.

“The whole time, we have believed that the mysterious signal was launched intentionally by an unknown force that could be either friendly or hostile. That is why we came to the Ancient Sages Sector after such a long journey in search of the force, right?

“But what if we have been wrong since the very beginning? The signal might not have been sent on purpose by someone or some force but was triggered in a passive state. Or rather, the signal was activated when the triggering conditions that were set a long time ago were met!”

“Triggered in a passive state?” The mental devil was confused. “Triggered by what?”

“I assume that it was a ‘distress signal’ or an ‘alarm signal’!”

The more Li Yao spoke, the faster his tongue became, and the brighter his eyes were.

“If we accept that Long Yangjun was launched by the Nuwa warship when it decided that the inside of the warship was no longer safe because of certain new dangers, it is quite easy to understand the signal! It is a distress and alarm signal that the Nuwa warship sent to the sea of stars, partly to remind the allies nearby that there were enemies here, and partly to ask the allies to help search for and rescue Long Yangjun!”

The mental scratched its hair hard. “Allies? Hundreds of thousands of years have passed, and both the Pangu civilization and the Nuwa civilization are gone. Where are the allies or enemies?”

“Yes. We know that very clearly, but when the Nuwa warship crashed in the Land of Eternal Night, the God-Sealing War was still raging. Who could’ve expected that the two primeval civilizations that once dominated the entire universe would perish with each other? Even the creator and the pilot of the Nuwa warship wouldn’t have been able to see that coming, would they?

“Look, Kunlun is not far away from the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector. Traces of the Nuwa Clan and human soldiers at the early phase of the war have already been detected there. In the meantime, the Ancient Sages Sector was well-hidden in the depths of the dark nebula. It was possibly a war base with enormous firepower and a regional military center!

“Can you make a reasonable assumption that the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector were already occupied by the Nuwa Clan in the early years of the God-Sealing War and became the rear bases for the Nuwa Clan, whereas the Ancient Sages Sector was not attacked by the Nuwa Clan until the last years of the war?”

The mental devil pondered for a moment and said, “It seems to be a justifiable assumption.”

Li Yao clapped his hands and said, “It is even possible that this very Nuwa warship took either the Heaven’s Origin Sector or the Flying Star Sector as the mother port and the other world as a supply base. It took off from our hometown and flew all the way to the Ancient Sages Sector for an assault!

“If such an assumption is true, it is not strange at all that the Nuwa warship boasted certain techniques allowing it to communicate with the mother port and the supply base instantly!

“I don’t know what exactly happened when the Nuwa warship crashed, but it had probably stored a distress and alarm signal inside the mainframe crystal processor and set the signal to be sent to the mother port, the supply base, and the possible allies in the entire universe on certain conditions!

“Or maybe the Nuwa warship meant to send the signal at that time, but because of the exhaustion of spiritual energy or the chaotic magnetic field caused by the battle, it went into its hibernation state before the signal was launched successfully!

“About a hundred years ago, the Nuwa warship finally collected enough spiritual energy after the hibernation of hundreds of thousands of years, which allowed it to recover the most fundamental functions. At that time, something that made the Nuwa warship believe that it was no longer safe to keep a ‘fetus’ such as Long Yangjun inside the warship occurred!

“When it launched Long Yangjun out through an escape capsule, it dutifully carried out another mission, which was to send a distress or an alarm signal that contained tremendous encrypted information to the places that it believed to be the mother port or allies in the vast universe!”

Chapter 1483 - How Losers Play the Game

The mental devil bulged its eyes and shrieked, “That’s right! If that’s the case, everything makes perfect sense! It also explains why Long Yangjun does not remember anything from her ‘previous life’!

“Perhaps, according to the standard procedure, after the fetus is developed, a lot of memories will be injected into her head to form a clear self-consciousness and sophisticated knowledge system of the Nuwa Clan. However, because of the unexpected crisis, she was launched in a hurry. Therefore, the work was only half done, and she was just implanted with certain fuzzy memory pieces!”

“Then, our target now is very clear.” Deep in thought, Li Yao said, “Now that the first puzzle has been solved, we only need to figure out what exactly happened on the Nuwa warship a hundred years ago, which will also prove or disprove the veracity of our hypothesis!”

“It was definitely not as simple as the invasion of two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators!”

The mental devil thought for a moment and said, “The tales about the Nuwa warship have been passed on in the Ancient Sages Sector for tens of thousands of years. It is regarded by the locals of this world as the Divine Palace, who also created magical equipment such as the ‘Thousand Stars Tray’ and the ‘map core’. It is evident enough that somebody entered the Nuwa warship a long time ago.

“Yet, none of the reactions were triggered at that time, which suggests that, by the Nuwa warship’s criteria, it is not a big deal if some locals trespass on the Nuwa warship, and they will not be a threat to the safety of the warship itself and the fetus. Just like the round, silver ball, which must be part of the automatic defense system. Didn’t it abort the attack after determining that you are a real human being?

“If the Nuwa warship did not wish to be infiltrated, it could’ve switched to a different Grand Illusionary Land to test if you were one of the original crew members, and it would barrage and kill you instantly as long as you were not one of them!”

Li Yao was suddenly alarmed.

The mental devil did have a point.

It seemed that Emperor Phoenix was not the only target whom he should be wary of. There might be something seriously wrong with the Nuwa warship itself. What had happened a hundred years ago was certainly much more complicated than the invasion of two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators!

Then, what should he do next?

The mysteries about Long Yangjun’s birth and her motivations of planning everything had basically been figured out. Although she must have kept something to herself, what she had confessed seemed rather trustworthy.

Was there any chance for him to cooperate with Long Yangjun?

“I still feel that something is wrong with her,” the mental devil said worriedly. “It is quite odd. My intuition tells me that everything she said just now is probably true without much distortion, but my intuition also tells me that she is dangerous. Extremely dangerous!”

“Why?” Li Yao thought hard for a moment. “If Long Yangjun is truly a clone or a reversely-grown version of a core crew member on the Nuwa warship hundreds of thousands of years ago, she should be standing on our side. Didn’t the Nuwa Clan help human beings against the tyranny of the Pangu Clan?

“Also, I can tell that Long Yangjun’s physique is greatly different from the tall, strong members of the Nuwa Clan who had human heads but serpent bodies. She probably still falls into the category of human beings. Although she can secrete a weird crystal suit from inside her body and transform between sexes freely, it is probably because she belonged to a special unit that had received the genetic modification of the Nuwa Clan, just like the Thunder Striker Legion that we found on Kunlun. All in all, she is still a human being, one of our own!

“The purpose of our journey is to look for allies to fight against the Imperium of True Human Beings together. If Long Yangjun is truly a reborn human soldier who was modified and edified by the Nuwa Clan personally hundreds of thousands of years ago, she will be a priceless treasure for the federation!

“Also, the bridge of this Nuwa warship is too weird for us to activate and manipulate purely on our own. She is going to be the key to our current dilemma. How are we going to get the warship if we don’t cooperate with her?

“Lastly, what can I do even if I refuse to cooperate with her? I can’t kill her at all. Should we just confront each other here at an impasse until we die of old age?”

Li Yao’s words were not entirely unreasonable. However, the mental devil ignored them and suddenly widened its eyes. “I know why I felt ill at ease just now! Even if your speculations are all right, Long Yangjun is truly an elite warrior raised by the Nuwa Clan, and the Nuwa Clan did stand on the human beings’ side and sincerely helped us to overthrow the tyranny of the Pangu Clan, it still doesn’t mean that Long Yangjun has to cooperate with the federation.”

“The key problem is this. Who is ‘us’?”

Li Yao was dazed. “Who is us?”

“Exactly! If we classify the attitudes of the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan according to a simple and straightforward criterion, which is whether or not they support human beings to have independent emotions and self-awareness, the Pangu Clan will be the guys who regard human beings as puppets and tools and restrain them with the ‘three fundamental laws’, and all the human beings with independent emotions and self-awareness will be regarded as the allies of the Nuwa Clan. They are all ‘us’, right?”

Li Yao thought for a moment and said, “Probably. So what?”

“So what? You still don’t understand what’s going on here?” The mental devil raised its voice. “If that’s the case, Long Yangjun, as an elite warrior raised by the Nuwa Clan, will certain detest the Alliance of the Holy Covenant and cooperate with us to resist the Covenant Alliance and the Pangu Clan together self-willingly, but why does she have to choose the federation? The Immortal Cultivators of the Imperium of True Human Beings also boast independent feelings and self-awareness! Even for the humblest slaves in the Imperium, their bodies may be tortured, and their lives may be reaped, but their feelings and self-awareness will never be deprived!”

Li Yao was utterly dumbfounded.

“Therefore, the Star Glory Federation and the Imperium of True Human Beings are in fact both ‘us’. We are all the rightful heirs to the spirit of the Nuwa Clan.”

The mental devil shook its head and said, “What makes you think that the federation is the only worthy partner in Long Yangjun’s eyes? It is possible that she will find the regime of the Imperium more appealing!”

“Are you serious?” Li Yao thought for a moment and was still not convinced. “Will an elite warrior of the Nuwa Clan identify with the autocracy of the Imperium that boarders on slavery?”

“How do you know that she won’t?” the mental devil sneered. “Few relics of the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan have been excavated so far. A tiny Kunlun is far from enough to depict the civilization system and the social stratification in the primeval era hundreds of thousands of years ago. We have no idea at all what kind of political system they adopted. You wouldn’t believe that the Nuwa Clan is necessarily in favor of equality, democracy, freedom and other similar cr*p, would you?”

“Well…” Li Yao was rendered speechless again.

The mental devil’s concerns made a lot of sense.

From the perspective of modern human beings, the Pangu Clan was indeed ‘bad’, but it did not necessarily mean that the Nuwa Clan was ‘good’.

In the collisions and competitions of different civilizations, the notions of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ were juvenile in the first place.

Perhaps, everybody’s moral standards were entirely different. Many things that the Nuwa Clan and Long Yangjun considered to be self-justified might be utterly outrageous in the eyes of the federation and Li Yao!

However, after considering carefully, Li Yao still believed that there would be more pros than cons if he could establish a partnership with Long Yangjun.

There were no absolutely risk-free deals in the world. If one had to negotiate only after determining that there was absolutely nothing wrong with the potential partner, one would not be able to make any partners at all, much less a partner as strong as Long Yangjun!

Most importantly of all, under normal circumstances, the odds of success for the federation to win against the Imperium were extremely low. They were probably below ten percent.

In a game whose outcome was almost obvious, the potential winner would always try to eliminate all sources of interference, even if the interference might slightly raise the odds of success.

It was because they did not need any unexpected factors to win the game!

As for the potential loser, if they wanted to win the game, they would have to introduce as many unexpected factors as possible, even if the factors were highly dangerous, because even if they avoided the dangerous factors in order to be safe, it was highly probable that they would fail and be doomed in the end!

Therefore, even if Long Yangjun wavered between the federation and the Imperium, introducing the uncertainty was still in the best interests of the federation!

“I do not object to the cooperation with Long Yangjun.” The mental devil immediately understood what was on Li Yao’s mind. It said calmly, “Right now, besides Long Yangjun, there are also Emperor Phoenix and the mysterious force that is backing him in the darkness. It will be tricky to resolve the conundrum if we don’t cooperate with her.

“I’m just saying that, even if we have to cooperate with the ladyboy whose pants might be hiding something that is a shock to everybody, we must stay on high alert and not completely believe everything that she says. We must not be in a hurry to expose all of trump cards, either!”

“Of course!” Li Yao spat. “If I were so idiotic, I would’ve been devoured by you a long time ago, and she wouldn’t even have the chance to!”

Calming himself down, Li Yao cast his eyes to Long Yangjun again, and Long Yangjun happened to be looking at him, deep in thought.

Their eyes entangled and tested each other in midair, but no sparks of hostility burst out.

“Fellow Cultivator Long.” Li Yao coughed for a moment and changed his form of address for her. “Now, you and I have exchanged tremendous intelligence and grasped a lot of each other’s secrets. It appears that going our separate ways is no longer an option. We have only two choices.

“We can fight a bloody battle with each other, in which case we will die together, or one of us may leave the place heavily wounded and extremely feeble.

“Or, we can upgrade our cooperation and join our hands in a more intimate way. We will bind our interests and plans together and integrate them into a whole so that we will gain benefits or suffer losses together!

“You see, after the tiny bit of information we exchanged just now, we have already dug out the secrets about your birth. It suggests that the cooperation between us will definitely do us both good!”

Long Yangjun listened quietly. Then, she suddenly asked, “Have you ever seen anyone like me in your world before?”

Chapter 1484 - Terms of Cooperation

Li Yao shook his head. He could never fool her about that question. “No.”

“If what you said is true, and I am really the reincarnation of a certain someone hundreds of thousands of years ago,” Long Yangjun said coldly, “there are certainly great secrets hidden in my body, which are doubtlessly very invaluable!

“How do I know that I will not be captured by your force and dissected for studies after I choose to cooperate with you? After all, I’m all by myself, but you have an immeasurable force behind you that should be enough to chew me from the skin to the bones without leaving the slightest residue!”

“Then, how do I know that everything you said is true, and that you are really unaware of anything and all by yourself” Li Yao said sincerely, “instead of covetous about my force that you are preparing a shocking trap to deal with?

“Of course, we can suspect and close our door to each other, but it is useless! To be honest, after the mysterious signal was sent a hundred years ago, it is very likely that the coordinates of the Ancient Sages Sector have already been exposed. However thick and mysterious the dark nebula is, it can’t protect you or restrain you forever!

“Even if you don’t believe me and do not cooperate with me, the Ancient Sages Sector will be discovered sooner or later! Burying your head in the sand like an ostrich is the most useless action. Whether you are willing to or not, walking out of this secluded world and embracing the boundless sea of stars is the only viable option!

“If you refuse to embrace the universe, the universe will crush you and the world you are living on sooner or later!”

Li Yao’s words were like a bash in the head and cast Long Yangjun into a long silence again. She lowered her head and pondered for a long time, as if she were weighing the pros and cons to cooperate with Li Yao, or maybe she was simply searching for the loopholes in Li Yao’s declaration.

Suddenly, she raised her head. With cleverness beaming out of her eyes, she put on a vague smile and said, “I realized that your face was a bit weird when ‘Emperor Phoenix’ Zhu Zongyou was mentioned earlier. You seemed to be hostile and highly vigilant of him.

“It is reasonable for me to hate Zhu Zongyou. After all, he almost sabotaged my plan, which I have been toiling at for decades. But there should be no personal grudge between you and him. So, where were your hostility and vigilance from?”

“Well—” Li Yao was dazed for a moment. He did not realize that Long Yangjun’s eyes would be so keen, such that she had been observing his micro expression in secret the whole time.

Also, he was too dwelling in the secrets of Long Yangjun’s birth just now to be a hundred percent mentally prepared!

“Besides,” Long Yangjun said unhurriedly, “I am curious about one other thing. If you did not end up in this place because of an accident but came here well-prepared on purpose, you certainly have a certain technique that allows you to communicate with your hometown or return there conveniently. You should also be able to summon reinforcements from your hometown. Yet, you didn’t do any of that. Why not?”

The cold sweat behind Li Yao’s neck was dripping down.

“I have come up with a possibility.” Long Yangjun stared at Li Yao and said, “The force that you belong to isn’t the only force that has detected the Ancient Sages Sector. It is possible that some other forces that are hostile to you have discovered the Ancient Sages Sector, too, and sent out spies, or scouts, if you will, just like you, to the Ancient Sages Sector!

“You fear that those people will discover who you are. That’s why you have been acting so mysteriously and why you are so desperate to cooperate with me and drag me over to your side!

“As for the boy Zhu Zongyou, he is the person that you are most suspicious of right now, and the force that is hostile to you may be hiding behind him, right?”

Li Yao was rendered speechless. He slapped himself hard in his heart. Long Yangjun was truly an extraordinary person. Just based on the few clues that he had accidentally exposed, she had almost completed the whole puzzle!

One really could not be too careful when dealing with such a dangerous person!

“I’ll take the lack of a response as acknowledgement.”

Long Yangjun smiled. She gradually recovered from the disturbance caused by the revelation of the secrets about her birth and regained her full computational and manipulation abilities.

“Your suspicion makes a lot of sense. Without the help of outsiders, how could Zhu Zongyou, whom nobody had high hopes for or supported, and who was thrown into a wretched temple waiting to die, have risen miraculously after only a few years and even control a magnificent, mysterious armed force?

“On the other hand, if I were an extraterrestrial Cultivator who intended the Ancient Sages Sector harm, and I were interested in raising a puppet, a member of the royal family such as Zhu Zongyou—who is simple-minded, lacks social experience, and has more ambitions than his talents can afford—would certainly be the best target for me, especially when he is not involved with any other forces!

“So, it appears that Zhu Zongyou is our common foe now?”

“Exactly!” Li Yao took the opportunity to make a suggestion. “Whether or not we proceed with our cooperation, we should at least dig out the force behind Emperor Phoenix together right now! As you said, Emperor Phoenix might’ve known a thing or two about the Divine Palace a long time ago, and he had been planning for the quest for the Divine Palace earlier than he should’ve. So, his target is definitely much more than a few Cloud Qin Gold Statues. Chances are that he already knows something about your identity, and this is a special trap for you!”

“Hehe!” Long Yangjun chuckled and glanced at Li Yao with a fake smile. “Do not try to mislead me with your alarmism. I have my own judgements!

“It is absolutely impossible that Zhu Zongyou knows my birth. However, you do have a good point. Keeping him and the force behind him active will do neither of us any good.

“If you want to cooperate with me, you will have to promise me a few things first!”

Li Yao’s heart was racing. “What are your conditions?”

“Firstly, I want the secrets about my birth to stay in this room. Without my permission, I don’t want them to be learned by anyone, including the force behind you!” Long Yangjun said coldly. “If our roles were swapped, you would’ve proposed the same terms, wouldn’t you?”

That did make sense. The issue was Long Yangjun’s greatest secret. If everything learned of it, she would be mired in infinite trouble. Li Yao thought for a moment and nodded. “Alright. I promise you. But there will be nothing I can do if somebody else finds out by investigating themself.”

“We are both smart people, so I’ll skip all the unimportant details,” Long Yangjun said. “Of course, you can try lying to me, but you’d better make sure that you can kill me once and for all, otherwise you will bear my boundless wrath!

“Since you have been assigned to such a dangerous and critical mission, you must be one of the most distinguished warriors in your world, which means that the strongest warriors in your world will not be too high above the Nascent Soul Stage. Then, the overall combat ability of this world can’t be too high!

“If you infuriate me, I can and will certainly find a way to die together with such a world!”

Li Yao cursed in his heart secretly. Long Yangjun was indeed insane. She had inferred the overall capabilities of the Star Glory Federation just based on his Cultivation!

However, she was wrong about one thing.

A hundred years ago, Li Yao did indeed stand for the top warriors of the Star Glory Federation, but he was not sure that he still could after a hundred years.

Besides, under the industrial system of the modern Cultivation civilization, in the Star Glory Federation, which had stepped into the interstellar information-based society, the importance of personal combat ability had in fact been undermined.

A Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was enough to be a dominator in the Ancient Sages Sector. However, in the federation, even if his Cultivation doubled, his influence on the whole society would be incomparable.

Even the strongest Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator might be killed under the bombardment of multiple cannons. So, their roles were less important.

However gifted and smart Long Yangjun was, she had been born and raised in the Ancient Sages Sector, and her mindset was restricted. It was impossible for her to estimate the full potential of a modern Cultivation civilization!

However, Li Yao did not intend to lie to her.

The federation was faced with too many powerful threats. The Imperium of True Human Beings and the Alliance of the Holy Covenant was each incredibly brutal. At such a critical time, it was highly unnecessary to piss off such a mysterious person who could be an heir of the Nuwa Clan.

Serious cooperation with her would be the more rational choice.

“Secondly, I’m aware that you are very interested in this Nuwa warship. You must be hoping to activate it to help your force fight against the hostile force, right?” Long Yangjun said casually. “It’s not unnegotiable to help your force in a battle. After all, it is impossible for me to maneuver the Nuwa warship purely on my own. I will need the support of crew members and resources.

“However, if I do help you, when I recall my destiny later, will you give me a hand, too?”

Li Yao pondered for a moment and said, “As long as your destiny does not contradict with the national interests of my country, I will try my best to persuade our national leader to help you without reserve. Even if our leader refuses my request—which is quite unlikely—I will still try my best to help you personally!”

“Alright!” Long Yangjun stared at Li Yao for a while. “These are my only terms. I’ll believe your replies for now. We’ll talk later after we work together and get the problem of ‘Emperor Phoenix’ Zhu Zongyou taken care of!”

Li Yao was refreshed. “How are we going to take care of it?”

“Let me see if I can activate part of the techniques on the Nuwa warship.” Long Yangjun smiled bitterly and said, “It was supposed to be the first thing I did after I entered… the bridge. I’ve been delayed by you for long enough!”

She paced slowly among the hundred enormous pillars that were almost a hundred meters tall. While pacing, she touched the stripes on every pillar, and her back was completely exposed to Li Yao’s eyes.

Li Yao pondered for a moment but did not launch a sudden attack.

Long Yangjun observed and groped on every pillar carefully for a long time. Her face fell into a trance every now and then, as if the zigzagging patterns on them reminded her of something that had been buried in the deepest depths of her soul.

Eventually, she stopped before a pillar that was particularly tall and about five meters in diameter at the front of the bridge.

Chapter 1485 - Crystal Cameras, Activated!

Looking at the rune arrays on the crystal pillars, Long Yangjun's eyes turned particularly deep and dark.

The runes that were glittering raised blue stars inside her eyes, which gradually connected into tiny threads.

The threads were bouncing like the strings of a piano while Long Yangjun was cast into a dizzy, half-asleep state.

As if guided by a certain strange force, she was enchanting spells that Li Yao could not comprehend at all and sounded like the dozens of overlapping syllables. The spells were spreading out like ripples.

Hum, hum, hum, hum, hum!

As Long Yangjun's speed grew higher and higher, the entire bridge was echoing in feeble but clear spiritual waves like a forest that had just been awakened.

An amazing thing happened!

The pillar in front of Long Yangjun turned into what seemed to be a real tree. Flames of spiritual energy were flowing out of the gaps on the spiritual stripes before they condensed into synapses that looked like the branches of the tree.

Countless translucent synapses of spiritual energy were spreading out, like a tall tree that was expanding and growing more branches. It was flourishing at a visible speed!

Several synapses, like the hands of a human being, slowly rolled to the side of Long Yangjun’s head. Two light balls that looked like buds slowly blossomed at the ends of the synapses. Hundreds of extremely thin threads of light grew out of the pistil and pierced into Long Yangjun’s temples softly!

Inside Long Yangjun’s eyes, the blue threads were immediately entangled by hundreds of golden, shining threads of light!

The blue threads and the golden threads contacted, interweaved, and collided, unleashing brilliant sparks!

Li Yao observed from nearby. He could not help but feel awed by the techniques of the Nuwa Clan!

No wonder the bridge was designed in a vastly different way from those on the warships of human beings.

It was because the Nuwa warship actually served the joint combat force made of multiple species whose body sizes could vary significantly. Some of them, like the members of the Nuwa Clan, were eight to ten meters tall, with human heads and serpent bodies. Some of them ranged from 1.6 meters to two meters tall, like human beings. Some other special species might have even more extreme heights. The tallest of them could be dozens of meters tall, and the shortest of them could only be half a meter.

If the control interface was designed for the convenience of only one species, it would be quite awkward when other species were trying to control the warship!

Through the hundred crystal pillars, the spiritual energy was transformed into the threads of light that transmitted the information between the mainframe crystal processor and the brain of the user. Such a problem could thus be resolved.

Li Yao thought of something. Did such a control pattern on the warship suggest that other species on the Nuwa Clan’s side also played an important role and that the Nuwa Clan treated the vassal species in a relatively equal way?

Glamorous colors were beaming out of Long Yangjun’s eyes.

She was engaged in a profound thought exchange with the ‘tree of light’ to issue instructions.

Suddenly, her eyeballs turned into almost ivory, like two powerful light bulbs, from which hundreds of electric arcs were unleashed!

As her eyes were dazzling, the tree of light before her also emanated thousands of electric arcs that spread to the rest of the crystal pillars nearby, triggering a chain reaction immediately. The twenty or so crystal pillars nearby were immediately awakened. Countless branches were extending out, and every branch was teeming with clusters of light-like buds. A lot of light clusters were blossoming slowly, revealing the pistil that was shivering slightly in the middle!

Li Yao felt that he was at the bottom of an ocean of light.

The twenty or so crystal pillars around seemed to have turned into the glittering, colorful seaweed and actinia.

The light clusters that were gradually expanding were spreading threads of light into the distance. They looked like some sort of glowing jellyfish.

Li Yao estimated that every flower of light represented an operation post on the Nuwa warship. As long as one connected their brain to the threads of light, they would be able to operate with their telepathic thoughts.

“I am feeling… very strange.” Long Yangjun was seemingly both mumbling and moaning. She appeared to be sighing in great comfort. “I feel that I have melded with the warship. The warship is my body. I don’t need to know the specific ways of control, nor do I need to activate any menu. Just like I can control my breath, heartbeat, and nerves, I can also manipulate it easily—Ouch!”

Her eyes suddenly shivered, and she put on a miserable expression.

“The warship is seriously damaged. Most of the cabins have problems. I feel that my bones have all been broken and my guts have been scorched, although my skin still looks intact!”

Long Yangjun gritted her teeth. “Of all the… 188 glittering pillars, only twenty-four of them are still usable at this point. Only ten to twenty percent of the computational and control abilities of the warship can be restored!

“It hurts. It hurts a lot!

“Hu—Hu—I’ll try to activate the warship with extreme spiritual energy and see if I can switch it from the ‘hibernation state’ to some sort of ‘self-recovery state’!”

She bit her lip so hard that her teeth were deeply embedded into it. Her eyeballs trembled at a high speed. Even her plump body was slightly shivering.

“Wait!” Li Yao’s heart suddenly raced. He shouted to interject.

Long Yangjun managed to free herself from the uncanny state where she and the warship were melded. She stopped her movement and asked, “What’s wrong?”

“You can’t do that!” Li Yao thought of something critical. Cold sweat was pouring from his temples as he said, “In case you have forgotten, something terrible happened a hundred years ago here, which caused you to be launched out of the Nuwa warship and a mysterious signal to be sent to my world!

“Whoever, or whatever, did that thing, it is very possible that they are still lingering on the Nuwa warship, or they may be monitoring the status of the Nuwa warship in secret through one way or another!

“We have only just entered the bridge and awakened part of the pillar-shaped crystal processors. There shouldn’t be much influence on the warship itself yet. Even if there is some, it must’ve been eclipsed by the chaotic battles of the thousands of middle-level and high-level Cultivators outside!

“However, if you completely activate the Nuwa warship and somebody is indeed lurking in the darkness, they will certainly notice the anomaly on the bridge!”

Long Yangjun was dazed for a moment. Cold sweat was popping up on her face, too. “Very reasonable. Existences that are more terrifying than ‘Emperor Phoenix’ Zhu Zongyou could be hiding on the Nuwa warship. If we act recklessly, we will essentially be feeding ourselves to them!”

“Even if we are just fretting and there isn’t such a force,” Li Yao said, “if the thousands of Cultivators outside notice the weird behavior of the warship and trace it back to this place, we don’t know if the gates that have been inactive for hundreds of thousands of years can really stop all of them!

“After all, there are dozens of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and hundreds of Core Formation Stage Cultivators outside! If they all go on a rampage, even the solidest warship could be torn apart!

“Even if they can’t tear it apart, they can still guard the gates instead of going anywhere. It’s not like we can hide inside the bridge for the rest of our lives, right?

“Therefore, before we completely figure out the situation outside and get everything under control, let’s not make any random attempts. After all, nobody knows how severely the warship has been wrecked or the consequences of the instructions that you sent out!”

“It’s very prudent of you,” Long Yangjun said solemnly. “Then, what should we do? Just sit here and wait?”

Li Yao took a few deep breaths and rubbed his temples with his thumb and his middle finger. After pondering for a moment, he said, “How about this? I don’t know whether or not the Nuwa warship boasts such techniques, but theoretically speaking, there should be. You can have a try first.

“Firstly, try and see if you can activate all the internal surveillance systems on the warship with the pillar-shaped crystal processors in the hibernation state so that we will know what is going on in the cabins through the cameras deployed everywhere on the warship!

“Secondly, check if there are any teleportation arrays directly leading to the central cabins and if they are still functional after sleeping for hundreds of thousands of years.

“The two techniques are the fundamental functions on every super large starship. There’s no reason that the Nuwa Clan’s warships would not be installed with them when their technology is apparently so developed!”

Long Yangjun pondered for a moment and nodded heavily. “Fair enough. After the two techniques are activated, we will have countless ‘eyes’ that are distributed in every corner on the warship and grow a pair of wings that allow us to go to every part of the warship!”

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

The branches of light and flames on the ten or so crystal pillars nearby were interweaving with each other. Quite a few flowers blossomed, delivering the pistil of light to Long Yangjun’s hands and entangling her fingers.

Long Yangjun’s fingers grew ever faster, as if she was playing a musical instrument, until they became a cluster of hazy mist!

Her breathing became more and more rapid, and her breasts were shivering. Even the sweat leaking out of her skin was translucent, like glittering pearls.

“Found them!”

Long Yangjun’s voice sounded as if it came from a deeper world far, far away. She suddenly clenched countless threads of light in her hands before she threw them away. Her telepathic thoughts were transmitted to twenty-four crystal pillars through almost a hundred light threads like ripples.

The glow from the pillar-shaped crystal processors waxed and waned, as if they were running intensive computations. The spiritual waves in the air were growing more and more intense. A moment later, almost a hundred branches of spiritual energy dangled down from midair, with a shivering cluster that was blossoming like a flower at the end. They then turned into almost a hundred 3D light beams!

Ivory flames were bouncing on the light beams first, but they gradually turned clear and manifested the surveillance footage on the Nuwa warship both inside and outside in hundreds of different scenes.

“You’re not wrong. Surveillance cameras are indeed scattered everywhere on the warship. Also, their activation clearance is very high. They can be turned on even if the warship is in the hibernation state!” Long Yangjun exclaimed in a low voice. “It’s a pity that most of the surveillance cameras have been damaged or require a lot of computational ability from the glowing pillars to be activated. The pictures right now are the only things that we can see!”

Chapter 1486 - Small Dark Forest

Li Yao calmed down and observed carefully. The hundred 3D light beams were like a hundred glowing flowers that were connected by countless complicated threads of light into the shape of a spindle. They seemed to be distributed according to their actual position on the warship.

It meant that the picture at the rear of the ‘spindle’ displayed what was happening in the engine compartments at the rear of the Nuwa warship.

In such a way, the observer would understand the overall situation of the warship with the least trouble.

Li Yao first cast his eyes to the few pictures that were occupied by whiteness at the periphery of the ‘spindle’.

They were the real-time image sent back by the probe cameras installed on the shell of the warship to observe the situation of the outside world.

Right when he and Long Yangjun were having the game in the bridge and exploring the pillar-shaped crystal processors, the environment of the outside world had undergone drastic changes.

Perhaps because of the breaking ice shell, an enormous pit—dozens of kilometers in diameter and more than ten kilometers deep—had appeared on the ground and affected the microclimate of the local area. An overwhelming snowstorm was raging, filling everything between the sky and the earth with whiteness. The howls of the wind were the only sound in the footage. The entire canyon had been covered in a layer of thick snow. The majority of the Cultivators had escaped into the Nuwa warship. Those who were too heavily wounded to move were buried under the snow, unlikely to live through the disaster.

The survivors had been sealed within the Nuwa warship, at least for now, until there was a result to their fighting!

Li Yao thought of something and suddenly felt that those ‘glowing flowers’ were somewhat weird.

He tried extending his hand into them. Something weird happened!

The 3D light beam blossomed violently like fireworks and constituted a translucent ‘Half-Step Grand Illusionary Land’, making him feel that he was actually in the middle of the freezing canyon outside of the warship!

Not only could Li Yao clearly feel the sting when the snowflakes smashed into his eyes and hear the broken rocks of ice cracking because of the heavy burden of the snow, he even sensed the utter iciness from the depths of his bones!

“Such… such surveillance cameras can completely simulate the environment of the outside world. Not just the visuals and the sound, even the smell, the touch, and the subtle spiritual waves of the outside world are being collected. This is amazing!”

Li Yao was quite astonished. He exited the ‘Half-Step Grand Illusionary Land’ and scanned forward step by step from the engine quarters at the rear of the warship.

Most of the Cultivators had escaped into the Nuwa warship in time.

However, while they could get away from the terrible gales and blizzards on the Land of Eternal Night, they could not get away from the internal fight caused by greed, mistrust, hatred, and fear!

Not everyone could be as calm and rational as Li Yao and Long Yangjun.

The inside of the Nuwa warship had already turned into a gory slaughterhouse.

It could be seen clearly from the surveillance light beams that the bloodiest battles took place at the end of the dozens of interweaving jet tubes, where the fuel cabin and the engine cabin were located.

The battles were particularly fierce in the fuel cabin because some of the fuel tubes that were stored hundreds of thousands of years ago had survived to that day.

In the eyes of the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector, the delicate cubes that contained tremendous spiritual energy were definitely priceless treasures!

Li Yao glanced at the broken limbs scattered on the ground and the sweeping river of blood. He watched the bloodstained faces that were frightened, baffled, extremely twisted or filled with reluctance to leave the human world.

Even though he was not particularly fond of the ancient Cultivators, he still could not help but sigh in his heart.

He could totally imagine what had happened.

The Cultivators that belonged to two sides and more than ten different forces crept in through the engine tubes at the rear part of the Nuwa warship and reached the end without meeting any hindrances. They then made use of their wisdom and released their techniques to blow up the walls of the engine tubes. Finally, they reached the engine cabin and the fuel cabin simultaneously!

The fuel tubes that contained vast spiritual energy became the best reason for their fighting.

After only a brief moment, the precious lives of hundreds of Cultivators were left in the cold cabin forever.

Going forward from the engine cabin and the fuel cabin, the ten or so subsequent cabins and the zigzagging pathways were the same. Fresh bodies and blood that was not entirely frozen yet were lying everywhere on the warship.

Most of the dead bodies were piled up at the entrances of the cabins or the turns of the pathways. The fatal wounds were all on their backs.

A lot of them were crouching on the weapons and armor of the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan, with fascinated smiles on their faces. It appeared that they had been ambushed from behind and killed in their ecstasy after discovering the ‘primeval treasures’.

Li Yao and Long Yangjun looked at each other and both sighed gloomily.

If the hostile Cultivators that belonged to different sides could not keep their distance from each other in the open territory on the ground and dilute the intense atmosphere with enough space, then, inside the Nuwa warship that was dark, narrow, and complicated, with so many ‘primeval treasures' as fuses, the battles had already reached the most heated phase the moment they started!

The Ancient Sages Sector did not have an advanced tactical local area network like the modern Cultivation civilizations. There was not even a public communication channel for the members who belonged to the same force.

It meant that either Emperor Phoenix, Han Baling, Qi Changsheng and Wan Mingzhu, or the elders and leaders of the six major sects could only command the subordinates that were within their sight or the range of their telepathic thoughts.

The problem was that they had been separated from most of their subordinates since the very second that they broke into the Nuwa warship. The members of the two parties had been completely mixed up in a mess. They were doing well if a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator could gather twenty subordinates around them. Most of the people could only return to the most primitive state and fight all their way forward with their remarkable personal abilities.

Traces of living people appeared from the ninth surveillance light beam that Li Yao observed.

Perhaps it was because all the valiant and reckless Cultivators had been killed earlier. The survivors were the calmest and most prudent guys.

They tried their best to suppress every spiritual wave in their body while they lurked at the turns of the dark pathways or on the ceiling, or buried themselves deep under the primeval armor and bones. Even their eyes were not fully opened but only revealed a tiny gap. They stared at the darkness coldly, waiting for the arrival of the next rash prey.

Even if somebody was moving, they would also choose to slowly crouch and wriggle over the floor, but those who made such a choice were often those who died fastest.

Li Yao saw that three Great Qian Cultivators wearing the robes of the central plateaus were rushing forward in a pathway in streaks of brightness together, trying to pass an intersection as rapidly as possible, only to be minced into pieces by five ‘corpses’ that jerked up in the darkness.

Although they were probably high-level Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage, they ended up as broken body parts with a rain of blood before they even had the chance to scream!

Under the illumination of another highly conspicuous camera, two Ghost Qin Cultivators were extending their hands to a glittering armor of the Pangu Clan greedily. However, the moment that they touched the armor, more than twenty grenades attached by tiny threads to the back of the armor exploded abruptly.

Before they came back to themselves from the shock of the serial blasts, almost ten flying swords had already minced apart their hearts!

Similar scenes were happening in dozens of pictures simultaneously.

Therefore, when the last brave, reckless, and idiotic Cultivator died miserably, the survivors made the most optimal and rational choice at the same time.

Hide themselves. Hide themselves as much as possible!

The inside of the Nuwa warship immediately turned into a tiny dark forest.

In the depths of every dark pathway was hidden a dark hunter.

They controlled their breath, heartbeat, and scent carefully so that they did not expose themselves in anyway.

They deployed as many traps around them as possible without caring about anything, regardless of whether or not it was necessary and who the victims might be.

They activated all their remote magical equipment. Swords, locusts, nails, venomous smoke, mist… everything was set.

Other than the top players at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage, the personal strength of the other individuals was not the key to their life and death.

However strong one was, it was very possible that existences who were stronger than one and hostile were lurking around one.

Hiding. Hiding was everything.

Their ‘coordinates’ became the most important things in this cruel world. Once their coordinates were exposed, or so much as the very fact that they existed was exposed, they might suffer stormy blows from every direction!

Therefore, after the screams and explosions lasted more than an hour, the Nuwa warship suddenly fell into a weird silence.

But the silence was like a bow that had been stretched to the maximum, or an ice shell that was uttering the same noise as the exploding firecrackers. There was a dangerous, suffocating air everywhere!

However, for Li Yao and Long Yangjun, two ‘observers’ who had grasped higher clearances, such a dark forest was obviously nonexistent.

They could see the whereabouts of almost every ‘dark hunter’ from the ubiquitous surveillance cameras.

Li Yao even saw that two Cultivators, one with the Great Qian Dynasty and the other belonging to Ghost Qin, were hiding themselves with an armor of the Pangu Clan and remains of the Nuwa Clan respectively just one corner away from each other. At such a close distance, they waited attentively and nervously for the possible prey.

Perhaps, for them, it was an ambush and a hunt that would decide whether or not they would live. Whoever ran out of patience and dashed around the corner first would embrace death first!

However, from Li Yao’s perspective, he only felt that the two Cultivators that had only one wall between them were as hilarious as clowns.

The more nervous and solemn they appeared, and the more anxious they were about the incoming enemy, the more hilarious they were!

Despite the extreme tension on board, the small dark forest on the Nuwa warship made Li Yao think of a lot of things beyond his control.

He recalled the dialogue that he had with Pirate Potentate Bai Xinghe on Spider Den in the past.

Chapter 1487 - Warehouse of the Colossi!

Bai Xinghe had once systematically introduced the Dark Forest Theory to Li Yao, which was proposed by the cosmologist Liu the Prier in the Star Ocean Imperium.

The theory was based on the premise that the total resources in the universe was limited. Even if some of the resources were renewable, the speed of such renewal was still extremely low and could not meet the demand of various civilizations in different phases. For multiple civilizations, if they were caught in the state of ‘chain of suspicion’ because they lacked sufficient instruments of communication at the beginning and failed to figure out if the other civilizations were hostile, hiding themselves as much as possible and striking all the targets that exposed themselves was the most rational, optimal, and yet helpless choice.

Under such a theory, the relation of the countless civilizations in the universe would be exactly like the Nuwa warship, where everybody was carefully lurking in the darkness without saying anything or moving. They tried their best to preserve themselves and waited for other people to attack one another so that they could swoop in at the end.

Those who were bold and arrogant enough to summon their companions promptly were often the primary targets for the dark hunters and would be wiped out in the first round of strikes.

It seemed to be a very reasonable theory.

Li Yao, however, did not like the Dark Forest Theory.

Not at all.

He had once established the organization named Skyfire, hoping that he could turn into a spark that would ignite the weeds, bushes, and trees in the dark forest, until the entire dark forest was burnt to the ground!

However, there was a difference between ideals and reality. However hard he considered, he felt that the Dark Forest Theory was at least self-consistent even if it was not flawless.

Was theory really coherent? How should it be cracked?

At this moment, after he witnessed the small dark forest on the Nuwa warship as an ‘observer’, Li Yao finally thought of two interesting questions.

Firstly, just like Long Yangjun and him, two ‘observers’ who had higher clearances, existed in the small dark forest, was it possible that certain ‘observer civilizations’ of higher levels existed in the real, boundless universe?

If that was the case, every dangerous hunter in the dark universe was actually a clown performing in an invisible spotlight.

They were hiding, ambushing, deceiving, misleading, attacking, and conducting all the other seemingly mysterious and unpredictable operations with all their wisdom and efforts. However, chances were that they were being scrutinized under the ‘surveillance camera’ of a certain observer civilization and only raised a round of chuckles at some point in the deep universe!

Then, closing the doors and fighting each other under the guidance of the Dark Forest Theory would be a meaningless endeavor.

It was the right path to be united and find the ‘observer civilization’!

The level of the observer civilization was not necessarily higher than the civilizations being observed. It was very possible that the observer civilizations only gained access to certain clearances by accident, which allowed their observation.

It was just like right now. Li Yao and Long Yangjun’s combat ability was not higher than the overall combat ability of the thousands of Cultivators outside.

They were not stronger, smarter, or swifter than those outside. They just had some ‘information’ that was of paramount importance.

If the thousands of Cultivators outside could be united, even if Li Yao and Long Yangjun could see their every action clearly, they would still be able to break the gates of the bridge and annihilate the two of them!

It was a pity that, because of the Dark Forest Theory, the thousands of Cultivators could in no way join hands, at least not before they realized the existence of the ‘observers’.

Then, the ‘observers’ would be able to set up traps unhurriedly and exploit the victims in secret by taking advantage of the asymmetric information!

Were the same things happening in the real universe?

Was the Dark Forest Theory a truth, or was it a certain ‘virous thought’ disseminated by an ‘observer civilization’ intentionally so that it could take advantage when the countless civilizations in the sea of stars slammed the door in each other’s faces and killed each other?

Secondly, even if the ‘Dark Forest Theory’ applied to certain local areas, such as the narrow pathways and dark cabins on the Nuwa warship, could the Nuwa warship stand for the whole world?

No. Beyond the Nuwa warship, there was a world that was hundreds of times broader, where everybody had enough room to do anything that they wanted!

Was it possible that the three thousand Sectors that human beings were familiar with were just a ‘Nuwa warship’? Or maybe they were just a tiny cabin on the Nuwa warship!

Human beings, civilizations, universe, that was really…

“Hey!” Long Yangjun glared at Li Yao. With obvious discontent and suspicion, she asked, “You aren’t daydreaming, are you?”

“Huh?” Li Yao swallowed his drool and hurried to shake his head. “No, of course not. I was thinking about very important strategic questions that concern our future!”

“You can stop thinking about that. We don’t have a future!” Long Yangjun pulled dozens of golden threads with both hands and enlarged a cluster of light beams. The Half-Step Grand Illusionary Land was displayed clearly. She pointed at it and said, “Look at this. A warehouse of the Cloud Qin Gold Statues!”

There are really Colossi!

All the complicated feelings about the Dark Forest Theory in Li Yao’s head instantly vanished. His eyes were glittering like a weasel that had run into a roast chicken.

He discovered that the cabin displayed on the light beam was in the middle section of the Nuwa warship. It was the largest, most spacious cabin on the warship, which was as magnificent as an arena for the giants!

The entire cabin was covered in a bluish mist that was similar to the air in the bridge. It could vaguely be seen that human-shaped dents were collapsing inwardly on the wall around. The smaller dents were around twenty meters tall, and the largest of them were more than sixty meters tall. They should be the garages where the Colossi were stored.

At the center of the warehouse, many platforms that looked like enormous altars were lying. Hundreds of interconnected rails could be found on every platform. The rails were either teeming with complicated runes or installed with a myriad of tools that could glide along the rails.

Some of the ragged Colossi that were riddled with holes were placed on some of the platforms. Their shells had almost been entirely broken, and the internal components that could not have been more precise were revealed. Those Colossi must have been under maintenance.

Some of the platforms were heaved high and vertical to the ground. Some of the Colossi that were done with their maintenance were standing quietly on them.

After hundreds of thousands of years, the metal shells of the Colossi had already turned lackluster. Some parts of them were even seriously rusted.

However, a dominating aura was silently leaking from every gap on their body.

Although they were just on the light beam, Li Yao could still feel an intense urge that made his heart pound and his blood boil. He was thirstier than ever!

Suddenly, his eyes fell to the end of the warehouse.

There, a Colossus that should have been done with its maintenance was ensconced on a unique platform that looked like a throne made of black iron.

The Colossus was about thirty meters tall, but its torso and limbs were extremely thin, which made it look like an enormous skeleton made of black iron. Outside of the long, slender bones, there was a layer of scale armor that looked like black feathers, making the Colossus seem to be donned in a broad cape or cloak.

There was nothing on the narrow, slim face on the skull except for a deep, cross-shaped dent that divided the facial cover into four parts. A red crystal camera was embedded in the center of the dent, not in the color of burning fire but more like frozen magma and dried blood!

Although the Colossus was hibernating, the crimson crystal camera still gave Li Yao the feeling that it was beating fast like the powerful heart of a ferocious beast!

Other than that, quite a few whips condensed from red crystals were entangled in rings on the limbs and torso of the Colossi that looked like a black skeleton.

They looked both like vines on the bones of a boa and the veins and nerves of the Colossi that had been exposed to the air!

The color and design of the red crystals were very similar to the style of Long Yangjun’s crystal suit. They must have been a regular material of the Nuwa Clan’s blades.

However, in terms of permeability and the facet smoothness, they were apparently much better than Long Yangjun’s crystal suit.

Elegant, mysterious, cruel, dominating… The Colossus that looked like a black skeleton, surrounded by the deep red vipers, was crouching higher on the throne like a king of the universe and stared at all the other Colossi in derision!

Li Yao’s eyes were glued to the Colossi. He found it impossible to move them away at all.

After seeing the Colossus, he suddenly felt that all the Colossi that he had ever used in the past, including Draconic Phoenix, were not nearly as intriguing as this one.

He could not hold himself from extending his arm through the light beam to touch the shell of the black skeleton and the ‘veins’ and ‘nerves’ made of the crimson crystals!

It’s mine. I’m definitely going to get it!

A thunderous storm was blowing inside Li Yao’s head!

It was not until he heard the laughter and the curses in the warehouse of the Colossi that Li Yao finally broke free from his brief trance. He enlarged the somewhat fuzzy details to get a clear look at the people who were hiding near the Colossi, the remains of the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan, and the corners of the maintenance platforms.

The locals of the Ancient Sages Sector had beaten them to the warehouse of the Colossi!

Li Yao was slightly dazed for a moment. Then he immediately realized that it had nothing to do with luck. The main reason was that the maintenance warehouse for the Colossi took up too much room. Also, to make it easier for the Colossi to enter and exit the warship, broad pathways to every corner of the warship had been established. It was barely possible to overlook such an enormous cabin!

“Qi Zhongdao, Yan Liren, Ba Xiaoyu, Master Bitter Cicada. All four great experts are here!” Long Yangjun adjusted the angle and resolution of the surveillance picture carefully and locked onto the super experts one after another. “Han Baling, Qi Changsheng, and Wan Mingzhu have arrived, too. This is rather intense. A battle is going to break out at any time!”

Chapter 1488 - Quarrel!

Long Yangjun was wrong about one thing.

The battle was not going to break out; the battle had already broken out in the fiercest way.

Right when Li Yao and Long Yangjun snuck into the bridge, the Three Saints—including Qi Zhongdao, Master Bitter Cicada, and the elders and leaders of the six major sects—as well as the experts from the Ghost Qin, the Heaven Battering Army, and the White Lotus Cult commanded by the three rapscallions, altogether about a hundred people, had already broken away from the trap of the ‘dark forest’ and entered the warehouse of the Colossi through two different pathways!

Hardly had they recovered from the shock of discovering dozens of Cloud Qin Gold Statues when they noticed each other.

The fiercest battle immediately broke out!

Broken limbs and pieces of magical equipment covered the ground. The traces after serious explosions were clear, too. They were all indicative enough of the intensity of the battle!

Even the super experts on the two sides, such as Qi Zhongdao and Han Baling, were not unharmed following the previous confrontation.

Qi Zhongdao’s left shoulder had caved in. Weird black gas was slowly spreading out from his broken bones where his blood was also leaking out. The black gas condensed into a hideous images of snakes, bugs, rats, and other pests in midair. He had obviously been invaded by some sort of extremely eccentric fire that was corrupting his body.

Of his eighteen pearls the size of fists, Master Bitter Cicada had only thirteen left. The other five had turned gray and looked like rocks that were riddled with holes. There was not the slightest sign of spiritual waves anymore.

Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar’s face had become so green that fluids threatened to drip off at any moment. It was cramping beyond his control every now and then. The greenness was also marching toward the depths of his eyes. It appeared to be an extremely weird, lethal poison!

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators of the six major sects were all wounded, too. Some suffered colorful poisons, some were struggling with fiendish fires or mists, and some were riddled with holes that were deep to the bones. They could not have looked more devastated.

As for the three rapscallions, they were no better.

Han Baling’s chest had deeply collapsed, as if he had been hit hard by a meteor that was rushing close. All his ribs had broken.

There was also a long, narrow wound caused by a sword on his waist. Although the bleeding had stopped, half of his bear-hide robe was already soaked in blood. It was not hard to imagine how heavily he had been wounded back then.

Wan Mingzhu was even more heavily wounded. ‘Shattered’ was not nearly sufficient to describe her appearance. Her head had completely fallen down, her skull blown to smithereens. Her right arm was missing. There was also a deep hole the size of a bowl on her abdomen through which one could see what was on her back from her front.

She was a spectral Cultivator, and the body was nothing but a shell for her. So, the seemingly heavy wounds were not critical.

However, the gloomy brilliance shooting out of her dry eyes was much more lackluster than before. It was shaking like a candle in a storm, as if she could not support the broken body any longer.

Qi Changsheng boasted an indestructible body blessed by the fire fiend. Theoretically speaking, he should not have been scared of any physical attacks.

However, he was coughing hard nonstop, and he seemed to be vomiting his internal organs out as pus after every cough. White steam was spreading out from his every pore, and his entire body seemed to be melting!

The three rapscallions were already as miserable as that. Naturally, their trusted subordinates were even more severely maimed.

Many of them had broken their limbs, and their blood had almost run dry. They were merely standing on their feet because of their worship toward their leader and their greed for the Cloud Qin Gold Statues.

Li Yao and Long Yangjun looked at each other. They each immediately understood what the other was thinking.

If the two of them did not reach a deal but had started a fight, what had happened to the people in the light beam would have happened to them, too!

The warriors on Qi Zhongdao’s side and on Han Baling’s side, having just endured a gruesome battle, were all hiding behind the maintenance platforms and the Cloud Qin Gold Statues for a brief rest.

They had all paid a great price in order to break free from the battle. Looking at their own wretched appearances in silence, none of them wanted to fight again.

“Master Righteous One!”

Squatting behind the round shield on the arm of a Cloud Qin Gold Statue, Han Baling shouted when he only showed the bloodstained bear head on his head. “Are you really obstinate enough to go against the Cloud Qin and seek your own death? What benefits can you get if we die with each other? In the end, it will be those from the six major sects behind you who take all the advantage!

“Hehe. I discovered just now that the few Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators from the Grand Mystery Sect, the Purple Pole Sword Sect, and Thunderstorm Valley were certainly not doing their best. They are definitely not as heavily wounded as they appear to be. It’s just some bruises. They may look unsteady and lethargic right now, but I assure you that they will jump to their feet gleefully the moment that you die!”

Qi Zhongdao’s face was gloomy. He did not respond, nor did he look at the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators of the major sects who looked rather ill at ease behind him.

“Master Righteous One, Fellow Cultivator Qi!”

Han Baling waved his blade and continued shouting. “The Cultivation sects are the cancer of the world. Nobody will benefit from those Cultivation sects if they continue their existence. You must understand it better than anybody else as the leader of the Great Qian Cultivators, right? Have you not suffered enough from the ungrateful, treacherous, and downright despicable Cultivators? Why are you still standing on their side and fighting against us?

“You have done everything you can for them, but have they ever respected you as the real leader of the Great Qian Cultivators? I heard a thing or two about what happened in Roaring Tiger City. They truly do not deserve you as the leader of all Cultivators!

“We are the same. We both want to establish a set of rules for the world. Fair, just, and efficient rules! The Great Qian Dynasty has rotted to the bones from the court to the Cultivators. It is destined that you cannot save it purely on your own! Cloud Qin is the only place that can help you fulfil your wish and realize your ‘rules’!”

Han Baling’s magical equipment was quite strange. It was an enormous hammer with a long handle. However, the front end of the hammer had been forged into a fat bear’s paw. When it was waved in midair, a ferocious beast seemed to be roaring.

“Hehehehe. Han Baling, you are truly a great speaker!”

Before Qi Zhongdao could reply, Ba Xiaoyu, who was hiding behind the heel of a Cloud Qin Gold Statue, shrieked in a joyful tone. “Stop stirring trouble. Right. We are not united on our side, but are there no gaps on your side? Qi Changsheng, Wan Mingzhu, and you, Han Baling—are any of you not acting weak and pitiful and exaggerating your wounds, trying to preserve your strength so that you can take advantage later?

“This beggar suggests that you pay more attention to the two of them behind you. You are more or less a man on the

Dark Cloud Prairies, Han Baling, but Qi Changsheng and Wan Mingzhu are two rabid dogs. You must be careful in case they bite your butt later!”

“Ba Xiaoyu!” Qi Changsheng gnashed his teeth. “The Heaven Battering Army has no grudge with you whatsoever. We are homeless peasants, and you are a beggar. As underprivileged people, we should look after each other and fight against the common foe. Why are you and Master Bitter Cicada involved in this mess? What benefits have Emperor Phoenix and the six major sects promised you? If you are here for the Cloud Qin Gold Statues, we can give one to each of you after we take over the Divine Palace!”

“Haha. Hahahaha!” Holding his belly, Ba Xiaoyu burst into laughter. He laughed so hard that he was kicking, and tears were flowing from his eyes. “Qi Changsheng, you surrendered to the court and the main sects seven times, only to rebel again seven times later. You are a temperamental, utterly untrustworthy dog. I might as well believe that a pig can ride a flying sword before I believe your promise!”

Master Bitter Cicada was holding the pearls that had partly turned into stones. Despite the heavy wounds, he still spoke unhurriedly. “Fellow Cultivator Han, Fellow Cultivator Qi, Fellow Cultivator Wan, it’s true that Fellow Cultivator Ba and I are here for the Cloud Qin Gold Statues.

“However, it is definitely not because we want the Cloud Qin Gold Statues for ourselves but because we do not want the destructive, dominating magical equipment to reappear in the human world. If they fall into the hands of ambitious, disobedient fellows, a storm of blood will certainly be raised, and the ordinary folks will suffer!”

“The ordinary folks will suffer?” High-pitched laughter burst out from Wan Mingzhu’s broken skull. “You are either a stupid monk or a bad monk! The ordinary folks will suffer if the Cloud Qin Gold Statues fall into the hands of the ‘ambitious and disobedient fellows’ such as us? Is the world not mired in a storm of blood where the ordinary folk suffer when there aren’t any Cloud Qin Gold Statues?

“The millions of civilians in the southeast watch the most fertile lands get planted with the Jade Crystal Pellets helplessly, and we have to starve to death while we are smelling the fragrance of the Jade Crystal Pellets. Do the common folk not suffer?

“When the febrile typhoon and the flood rampage, all the Cultivators hide in their bases and fortresses and lock their gates with defense rune arrays, ignoring us while we are burnt, drowned, famished, corroded in the fire and blood! Do the common folk not suffer?

“The northwest has suffered from droughts for several years. Many lands have absolutely no yield at all. But none of the Cultivation sects are willing to open their barns and distribute the food to the people. They would rather feed the food to the animals and mounts that they have domesticated than offer a grain of their food to the disaster-stricken victims. When the disaster victims are forced to rise up as an army of homeless peasants, you then vilify the peasants as inhuman and even cannibal. Do the common folk not suffer?

“Hehe. Even if there truly is cannibalism, it is because the Cultivators are forcing them. You are forcing them!

“You are a stupid and bad monk. So many people are suffering right before your eyes. I don’t believe that you see and hear none of it, but what have you done except for your pretentious rituals to appease the deceased? Even if you appease a hundred ghosts a day, ten thousand ghosts will have popped up elsewhere in the meantime! Meanwhile, those high and mighty Cultivators are still enjoying their life in their strongholds! What can you do? You are just fooling yourself!

“Now, we people who have nothing are going to resist with the Cloud Qin Gold Statues and smash the injustice in the world. Yet, you are jumping out and fear that people will suffer? Haha. Hahaha. Good monk. You are truly a knowledgeable and respectful monk!”

Chapter 1489 - Where Is the Sparrow?

As Wan Mingzhu’s mean and crazy laughter echoed for a long time in the temple of the Colossi, Master Bitter Cicada’s handsome face that was mixed with pity and sorrow flushed. After a crack, one of the pearls that had turned into stones was crushed into pieces.

“Fellow Cultivator Qi, Fellow Cultivator Ba, Master Bitter Cicada!”

Han Baling continued roaring loudly. His wild voice sounded somewhat genuine and sincere.

“Fellow Cultivator Qi, Fellow Cultivator Wan, and I are certainly not just conspiring for the interests in front of our eyes. We are really trying to change the world with our own hands and accomplish something great by saving the Ancient Sages Sector from the swirl that it has been mired in for a hundred thousand years!

“Have you never noticed? Over the past hundred thousand years, countless glorious dynasties have been founded in the Ancient Sages Sector, and too many unbelievable experts have emerged in the world of Cultivators!

“However, after a hundred thousand years, all the glorious dynasties have been destroyed, and even their remains have been reduced to smithereens and vanished in the wind. There are fewer and fewer experts among the Cultivators, with lower and lower Cultivation levels. The magical equipment and the Cultivation arts are becoming more and more shabby and underdeveloped!

“Once upon a time, hundreds of Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators walked on the Ancient Sages Sector and galloped in the destructive Cloud Qin Gold Statues. They were even able to establish bases on the dark planets beyond the sky. But nowadays, while the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators such as us can dominate the Ancient Sages Sector, it is absolutely impossible for us to set foot on the dark planets where there is no air or water!

“Once upon a time, a glorious dynasty could endure five thousand years or even longer. Thousands of enormous airships flew in the sky, and the giant beasts a hundred meters tall bolted on the ground as soldiers! But nowadays, the Great Qian Dynasty is already one of the most brilliant dynasties in the past ten thousand years after it has existed for only a thousand years and when it only has a hundred airships!

“What does this suggest?

“Our world is slowly retrograding. We are moving closer to our doom every day!

“If we all turn a blind eye to it, the day will finally come when we can’t find even one intact primeval treasure, one Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, or one dynasty that can survive five hundred years!

“By then, the Ancient Sages Sector will be screwed. Utterly screwed!

“I know that many of you condemn and hate me because I am a lord of the barbarians. You think that I just want to whip the central plateaus and bog down your lands with your blood!

“Hehe. If that is what you are thinking, I have to say that you have terribly underestimated me!

“In the past hundred thousand years, the lords of the barbarians once dominated the central plateaus, too. But so what? Did their reign not collapse after several thousand years?

“I may choose not to do it, but when I choose to do something, I will certainly accomplish the greatest things that will radiate for thousands of years. I want to establish a perennial dynasty together with the fellow Cultivators here, and the Cloud Qin Gold Statues will be our starting point!

“Fellow Cultivator Qi, Fellow Cultivator Ba, Master Bitter Cicada, I know that you are different from the commonplace, selfish guys of the six major sects. You are the great heroes who have dreams and ambitions, and you are not satisfied with the current situation of the Great Qian Dynasty. However, wolves are everywhere in today’s world that is constructed from rotten wood. It is impossible for one or two people to stop the deterioration alone. Why don’t you stand on my side? We can discuss what kind of future is in the best interests of the Ancient Sages Sector and how we can remove the toxins deeply buried inside the Ancient Sages Sector so that the world will be revived!”

Han Baling was talking so enthusiastically that even he seemed to be moved by his words. He could not help but slightly extend his neck out of the round shield of the Colossus.

Shua!

The moment he craned his head, an arced light that was a hundred times more aggressive than lightning rushed close from the opposite side. Without any fancy tricks or techniques, it just slashed right toward Han Baling's head!

Han Baling's eyes widened so much that his eyeballs almost popped out of his face. Not even having the time to scream, he stomped on the round shield brutally and moved backward with the counterforce!

The arced light brushed past the tip of his nose at a close distance, cutting away half of the bear head on his head!

Crack!

The arced light's momentum was not reduced at all after it chopped off the bear head on his head. It went forward and cut apart dozens of airborne rails for the maintenance of the Colossi, until it was deeply embedded in the cabin wall made of super alloys, leaving a trace that was one finger deep. Smoke was popping up from the mark, and the inside of the mark was glowing bright orange, evidence of the immensity of the spiritual energy contained in the attack!

Half of Han Baling's hat had been chopped off, turning it into a sock made of bear hide. His gray scalp could vaguely be seen, and some of his hair was flying in midair.

The previous attack had in fact shaved quite a lot of his hair off. Even part of the skin at the center of his skull was peeling.

If he had reacted slightly slower, the ambitious hero from the prairies would have had to change the world from hell!

Yan Liren retreated his sword slowly not far away. He grunted in dissatisfaction. “I don't know why you waste so much time talking. Just draw your swords, and everything will be done!”

“General!”

Yan Liren’s astounding attack greatly shocked the subordinates of the three rapscallions. With flames of spiritual energy spurting out crazily, almost a hundred coldly blinking flying swords were raised from a corner of the temple of the Colossi. A fierce light was hovering around every flying sword—they were all set to launch thunderous strike at any time!

Seeing that their enemy was prepared, the super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, including Qi Zhongdao and the experts of the six major sects, all gritted their teeth and activated their most treasured magical equipment. Suppressed by Qi Zhongdao’s ‘Heaven Flipping Seal’, the entire temple was creaking as if it was being pressed down on by an invisible mountain. The air was so thick that a bloody rain seemed to be taking place at any time.

Qi Zhongdao’s face was rather dark. He called drily, “F—Fellow Cultivator Yan!”

“Is there a problem?” Yan Liren looked at Qi Zhongdao innocently. “He offered his head for me to slash it. I would’ve felt sorry for him if I hadn’t slashed such a greasy, shining head.”

“Wait! Wait!” Han Baling was still hiding behind the round shield of the Colossus, but he did not have the courage to peek out anymore. He simply shouted at the top of his voice. “Qi Zhongdao, Yan Liren, don’t presume that I am scared of your Heaven Flipping Seal and your sword! If you are determined to get yourselves killed, me and my partners will certainly satisfy your wish!

“However, don’t you find it weird that Wang Xi, Zhu Zongyou and Master Spiritual Vulture, three critical people who have the capability to change the balance of the battle, haven’t shown up yet? Only the seven of us and those from the six major sects are fighting blindly here!

“When a mantis is hunting a cicada, a sparrow might be lurking aside, coveting them both. You understand such simple logic, don’t you? The more I think about it, the more I feel that something is off. If Wang Xi and Emperor Phoenix have prepared the trap together to force us to kill each other, won’t your recklessness be exactly what they want?”

His cynicism cast Qi Zhongdao into deep thought.

The high-level Cultivators of the six major sects, who had been preserving their strength and observing the situation, rolled their eyes for a moment and then put on ‘eureka’ expressions!

Even Li Yao and Long Yangjun were somewhat dumbfounded. With such a fierce battle going on in the temple of the Colossi, where had Emperor Phoenix Zhu Zongyou, the greatest suspect so far, fled to?

Emperor Phoenix was not in any of the surveillance pictures scanned all the way to this place!

“You do have a point, Fellow Cultivator Han!”

Qi Zhongdao deserved to have been the leader of all the Cultivators for many years. His nerves were calm and tough enough despite the chaotic situation. After quickly thinking, he immediately changed his attitude. “Before we find Wang Xi, Master Spiritual Vulture, and His Majesty, let’s not act recklessly in case any unexpected changes take place!”

“Then, get the Yan lunatic on your side under control. Next time it happens, we may fall into the trap of the Wang Xi and Zhu Zongyou together!” Han Baling shouted rather helplessly.

Qi Zhongdao glanced at Ba Xiaoyu and Master Bitter Cicada first. Then, the three of them stared at Yan Liren with thoughtful eyes together.

“Fellow Cultivator Yan,” Master Bitter Cicada said solemnly, “as the saying goes—”

“Stop! There’s no need for a lecture, Master. I can always slash him later!” Yan Liren rubbed his nose and retreated to the back row, not entirely satisfied, while holding his short sword.

“Fellow Cultivator Han!” Qi Zhongdao was relieved. He raised his voice and shouted, “Right now, we are all stranded in the ‘Divine Palace’, whose porches and verandas are rather twisted and mysterious. It does not seem to be the glamorous heaven that we imagined it to be. I have a feeling that things might not be as simple as they appear!

“Right now, the situation outside is already beyond our control. If we become engaged in a life-and-death battle, I’m afraid that few of us will be able to walk out alive. All the Cultivators, be they from the Great Qian Dynasty or the Dark Cloud Prairies, will suffer a destructive blow!

“If the motivation for our battle is the Cloud Qin Gold Statues, won’t it be hilarious if we shed our blood below them when we don’t even know how to rein the Cloud Qin Gold Statues yet?”

“Your words are truly wise, Fellow Cultivator Qi. Before we find Wang Xi, Zhu Zongyou, and Master Spiritual Vulture, and before we crack the secrets about the Cloud Qin Gold Statues, there is indeed no reason for us to perish with each other!”

Glancing at the flying swords in midair that were brimming with spiritual energy, Han Baling narrowed his eyes and said, “In case of any accidents, I suggest that we put our flying swords and magical equipment aside and keep a distance of ten meters away from all the Cloud Qin Gold Statues. Then, we will figure out a way to control the situation outside and regroup our respective subordinates while we search for Wang Xi, Zhu Zongyou, and Master Spiritual Vulture. We will make further plans after everything is clear. What do you think, Fellow Cultivator Qi?”

Chapter 1490 - They’re Here!

Qi Zhongdao glanced at the heads of the six major sects and asked, “Does any of you wish to have a life-and-death battle with Han Baling, Qi Changsheng, and Wan Mingzhu right now?”

The elders and leaders of the six major sects looked at each other in bewilderment and shook their heads as quickly as possible.

“Then, just retract your flying swords and magical equipment!”

Qi Zhongdao pondered for a moment and said, “The situation is becoming more and more chaotic. This Divine Palace… does not look like a place where the deities live at all. There is also the matter of Wang Xi, His Majesty, and Master Spiritual Vulture. Let’s not act recklessly before we find them!”

“Right. Where has Zhu Zongyou been?”

On the bridge of the Nuwa warship, both Li Yao and Long Yangjun were a bit anxious. They examined every Grand Illusionary Land with their bloodshot eyes, but they failed to find any trace of Emperor Phoenix anywhere.

Even the ten or so bodyguards from the Fiery Phoenix Legion that had always been close around Zhu Zongyou had gone missing, although Li Yao had paid special attention to them before!

“How strange!” Li Yao scratched his head hard. “Have they hidden in a certain corner as ‘dark hunters’?

It was a pity that most of the surveillance cameras had been damaged or rusted after such a long time. Some of the intact surveillance cameras could not be activated because of the insufficient computational ability.

The hundred or so pictures were only enough to cover one percent of the space on the entire Nuwa warship.

In the temple of the Colossi, surveillance cameras had been deployed in the four corners and the middle of the dome. But at that moment, the only functioning one was the camera in the northeast corner. Observing the entire temple from that perspective, the picture near was of reasonable quality, but the picture far away was blurred as if it were covered in a mist.

Long Yangjun pulled the threads of light to adjust the angle and resolution of the picture. She suddenly pointed at the dome in the depths of the Half-Step Grand Illusionary Land and shouted, “Wait. What’s that?”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes. He shaped his spiritual energy into translucent membranes and covered them on his retina in different layers in order to strengthen his eyesight before he looked into the hazy mist.

For the convenience of maintaining the Colossi, almost a thousand mobile rails had been installed on the dome of the temple of the Colossi so that the large-scale tools and facilities could be moved more easily. A lot of bizarre-looking maintenance magical equipment was also dangling down from the rails, like the vines falling down from the branches in a murky forest.

The rails on the dome that were almost hidden in darkness did not have anything that called for attention at first glance. Only if one observed in the most careful way would they notice feeble airwaves spreading out slowly, like the ripples in a pond caused by a gentle breeze.

“It’s dust,” Li Yao mumbled, his eyelids bouncing. “A tiny bit of dust was blown softly and spreading in the air from quite a few rails. It’s almost like… something invisible is crouching on the rails and crawling forward slowly!

“As for their target—”

Li Yao marked the few rails that were spraying dust and looked at the intersection of their extensions. His eyes went straight downward, but his heart instantly froze!

Below the intersection of the rails was the Colossus that looked like a black skeleton with red nerves!

“What’s that? What’s that exactly?”

Li Yao suddenly grew anxious. He was certain that some weird, invisible beings were approaching the black-skeleton-like Colossus, which seemed to have finished its maintenance and been fully charged with spiritual energy with the dozens of thick tubes connected. They were moving stealthily above while the Cultivators on the Great Qian Dynasty’s side and on Ghost Qin’s side were fiercely arguing with each other!

Li Yao and Long Yangjun looked at each other and noticed the anxiety in each other’s eyes.

“Is there any way that we can see who they are?” Li Yao gnashed his teeth.

“It’s very difficult. If we activate the automatic defense rune array inside the warehouse of the Colossi, it is very possible that somebody will notice our existence!”

Long Yangjun thought quickly and bit her lips softly. She put on a vague smile and said, “However, there’s a way that is worth a try. This Nuwa warship hasn’t been maintained for a long time. A lot of magical equipment has aged and deteriorated. They can be functional for a while and nonfunctional a moment later. For example, some of the fire extinguishing magical equipment and the recovery magical equipment…”

Despite her plain face, she had a pair of stunningly beautiful hands. When her fingers were bouncing, it was like a gorgeous dance on the threads of light.

As the small finger on her left hand curled, a light ball no larger than the size of millet rushed out of the tip of her finger and entered the pillar-shaped crystal processor like bioelectricity!

On the surveillance picture, from one of the rails where feeble ripples were spreading out, a cluster of thick, blue gas spurted out!

The gas was designed to extinguish fire and should have surged out incessantly.

However, as a piece of ‘unmaintained’, ‘aged’ magical equipment, under the stimulation of the spiritual waves of the outside world, the device was only able to produce one cluster of inert gas, which seemed acceptable enough.

When the Cultivators on the two sides were staying at the highest alert, such a noise that sounded almost like a fart was as shocking as thunder!

Qi Zhongdao, Han Baling, Yan Liren, Qi Changsheng, Ba Xiaoyu, Master Bitter Cicada, Wan Mingzhu… All the super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators darted their keen eyes toward the rail instantly!

The being behind the invisible ripples crouching on the rail never expected even in his wildest dreams that a cluster of bluish gas would suddenly spurt out right above him. Although he reacted promptly enough and retreated immediately, part of his body was still outlined by the blue gas. In the fuzziness, it appeared to be armor!

“Somebody is in midair!”

Although the target was exposed for only 0.1 seconds, Qi Zhongdao, Han Baling, and the other super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were too extraordinary to let go of him again now that his traces had been seen.

Shua!

The brilliance of the sword burst out of nowhere like lightning and darted toward the invisible man from dozens of tricky angles in the sharpest auras!

Yan Liren had attacked again!

“Who’s acting mysteriously up there? Get out!”

Yan Liren sniffed. As his spiritual energy surged out, the sword auras entangled the rail almost a hundred meters above the ground like visible dragons.

Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang!

A series of dazzling sparks erupted on top of the rail. Outside of everyone’s expectations, the invisible man was not hurt but retreated fast into the darkness in a feeble ripple.

“Huh?” Yan Liren was slightly dazed. His smile was even more brilliant. He shook his short, thick right arm, and the dragons of lightning phantomized by the sword auras expanded by almost ten times in spluttering noises. The bloody mouths of the dragons that were wide open bulged into balls of lightning and exploded everywhere around the invisible ripple!

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

Under the stimulation of the intense electric arcs, the invisible ripple suddenly uttered a dull scream, and his body was fully revealed. It turned out to be a Cultivator wearing a fully-enclosed, weird armor. His entire face was covered by a spider helmet. There was no telling who he was exactly.

“This is—”

In the bridge, Li Yao and Long Yangjun jumped to their feet simultaneously.

“Isn’t it the armor that you were wearing just now? You have other accomplices!”

Long Yangjun blinked dozens of kilometers away in almost twenty shadows. The red crystal suit was entangling and condensing on her arms again while she glared at Li Yao angrily.

“He is not one of my people. The style of his crystal suit is obviously different from mine. You will see it if you look at it more carefully!” Li Yao smiled bitterly.

He had already seen the badge of trident-like black lightning on the chest of the stranger’s crystal suit.

It was the emblem of the Imperium of True Human Beings!

His worst fear had become reality. There were indeed spies of the Imperium of True Human Beings in the Ancient Sages Sector. They appeared to be a tough tactical squad, and they had discovered the Nuwa warship, too!

Long Yangjun thought quickly and immediately realized what was going on. “They belong to… your hostile force?”

When the air in the bridge was growing tense, the atmosphere in the temple of the Colossi was tenser than ever.

While all the Cultivators were confronting the mysterious person in the crystal suit anxiously, Mother White Lotus Wan Mingzhu shrieked, “There are other rats on the ceiling!”

Pu!

She raised her broken arm and shot out a section of broken bone from her body, which exploded into overwhelming smoke in midair and covered the rails like raging ferocious beasts!

The smoke seemed to contain weird waves. Wherever the white smoke reached, the stealth techniques were instantly cracked.

With a series of cracking noises, the ten or so people wearing crystal suits on the rails were all exposed!

The Exos looked at each other in bewilderment. Realizing that they had already been uncovered, they simply leapt down and formed a well-trained battle formation around their first companion who had already been shocked unconscious!

Although Qi Zhongdao, Han Baling, and the other super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were knowledgeable and broad-minded, they were stunned briefly when they saw the crystal suits, built in the industrial system of the modern Cultivation civilization, for the first time, like Long Yangjun earlier.

The joints of the fully-enclosed armor, the streamlined design to reduce the windage to the minimum, the shimmers beaming out of the gaps when they were moving, and the external rune arrays that were extremely strict in structure and could be carved within one square inch… Everything made the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector uncomfortable!

“Who… are you people exactly?” Qi Zhongdao demanded, raising the Heaven Flipping Seal into midair. The silver balls and the rails were rotating at the highest speed, all set to go!

Faced with the mysterious strangers, the Cultivators from the Great Qian Dynasty and the Ghost Qin were equally baffled. The chasm between them was somehow shortened.

“Master Righteous One, do not attack. They are my imperial guards!”

At the center of the ten or so Exos, one of the strangers wearing a phoenix helmet with crimson, fiery stripes on it suddenly smiled.

Then, he touched his temples slightly. The helmet of the crystal suit immediately dissected into hundreds of pieces and folded back to his neck, revealing Emperor Phoenix Zhu Zongyou’s young and immature face.

However, the young emperor had a mysterious smile.

“Your Majesty!” Qi Zhongdao and the rest of them were greatly surprised. Looking at Emperor Phoenix and his imperial guards’ fancy attire, they were lost for words. “This—this—”

Chapter 1491 - End of Negotiation!

“Master Righteous One, Master Bitter Cicada, elders and leaders, there’s no need to worry!” Emperor Phoenix Zhu Zongyou said in a crisp voice. “They are all the Fiery Phoenix bodyguards that I have trained. They have not been revealed before because they were trained exactly for the battle today! Hehe. Han Baling, Qi Changsheng, Wan Mingzhu. All the greatest headaches of the court are here. Fantastic! Masters, elders, and leaders, fight with me and eliminate the evils here, and the world will be at peace!”

“Your Majesty…” Qi Zhongdao was too old and shrewd to be convinced by Emperor Phoenix’s ingenuine persuasion, and the Heaven Flipping Seal, the ‘ultimate treasure of the Ancient Sages Sector’, was still rotating rapidly in the air. He asked suspiciously, “If you have been planning to annihilate Han Baling, Qi Changsheng, and Wan Mingzhu, why were you lurking far away? Also, the armor of the imperial guards here are such a weird style. Not only do they greatly differ from the traditions of the armor of the Great Qian Dynasty, they have nothing similar to the primeval treasures on the ground here. Where did you find them, Your Majesty?”

“Well…” Emperor Phoenix’s eyes were shuddering fast. His cheeks were reddened because of his embarrassment, and he was lost for words for a moment.

“Your emperor is lying. There is definitely something wrong with him!” Han Baling chuckled coldly. “If he was truly of a mind to besiege and annihilate us, he should’ve moved to our rear along the rails. However, he was getting farther and farther away from us in the darkness! Besides, if he did not have ill intentions, he would’ve told you everything in advance so that you could work out a trap to deal with us together!

“He was acting so stealthily, and his bullsh*t is full of loopholes. Who’s going to buy that? Also, the weird-looking armor does not look like something that the Great Qian Dynasty can produce. I have never seen such an eccentric model in the collection of armors from the previous dynasties from the past hundred thousand years, either!

“This little emperor did not ascend to the throne properly in the first place. Who knows what exactly happened in the Forbidden City in the Divine Capital last spring? You all claim that the previous emperor died because he was too angry about me, but I say that he was poisoned by this little emperor! Had he not foreseen that the old emperor was about to die, how could he have made thorough arrangements in the Divine Capital and bought over the few imperial troops and the experts in the palace? How could the other princes, even including the crown prince, have been suppressed when they did not know what was going on? Also, he was just a lone ghost who was exiled to guard the ancestors’ temple. Where did he find the support to help him control everything?

“Have you ever considered such things, fellow Cultivators from the central plateaus?

“The forces behind the little emperor are much more powerful than we can imagine. Today, he has finally decided to reveal them!

“Fellow Cultivator Qi, Fellow Cultivator Ba, Master Bitter Cicada, a word of advice. You must watch your backs carefully! The weapons in my hands are obvious, but the weapons in your little emperor's hands are invisible and odorless. Chances are that you will not be able to feel it until it is plunged into your stomach!

"Elders and leaders of the six major sects, it is not the time for you to gloat. Hehe. It's true that your little emperor hates our guts, but does he not hate you? Does he not want to mince you apart and burn you to ashes? The six major sects and even the entire world of Cultivators are as much trouble for the court as me and my companions are! It is especially so in light of your clandestine business during the natural disasters in the southeast. Do you think that any emperor would not be infuriated after he learned that? Your little emperor is smiling at you right now, but who knows what he is thinking in his heart? It will soon be your turn after he eliminates us, and you are still laughing and watching like idiots!"

All the Cultivators began sweating hard after hearing what he said.

It was a publicly known secret that Emperor Phoenix did not claim the crown properly. The contradiction between the court and the Cultivators was apparent even to the blind.

This time, everybody had only teamed up because of the pressure of the 'Four Rapscallions' and the temptation of the Divine Palace. They each had their own plans.

Right now, Han Baling had ripped apart their last disguise, which had made everything feel harmonious. Also, Emperor Phoenix's actions were indeed sneaky. The elders and the leaders of the six major sects were all the most astute people in the world. Now that questions of the past and present had surfaced together, how could they fight for Emperor Phoenix blindly?

Sensing everybody’s reluctance, Emperor Phoenix grew anxious. Red blood spots were bursting out on his face as he roared furiously, “Elders and leaders, do not listen to his aspersions. Go up together and kill them. Kill them all! I will share all the Cloud Qin Gold Statues here with everybody evenly. Evenly!”

“The Cloud Qin Gold Statues are the most important weapons for a country and an army.” Han Baling raised his voice, too. “One Cloud Qin Gold Statue is enough to trample on a city. How can you really mean to divide them with everybody evenly? The better your promise sounds, the more schemes you have planned!

“Masters, elders, and leaders! We did not have any grudges in the past. Many of you have even had very pleasant deals with Cloud Qin! Are we really going to fight each other while letting the little emperor who hates our guts take all the benefits? Do not be swallowed by your greed, or none of us will be able to walk out of this terrible Divine Palace!”

“Kill them! Kill them now! Whoever executes Qi Changsheng and Wan Mingzhu will be rewarded with one Cloud Qin Gold Statue. Two if you kill the barbarian chief Han Baling!” Emperor Phoenix bulged his eyes.

“The Cloud Qin Gold Statues are unowned, and whoever is qualified can claim them freely.” Han Baling wasted no time castigating the enemy! “They are not yours to reward! Moreover, where did you get your armor? How did you bring the imperial guards under your control last year? If you don’t explain that, I will start to wonder which of us is the actual evil!”

All the high-level Cultivators, regardless of their side, were all highly anxious, not knowing what to do in such a situation!

Right then, it was Yan Liren who had been silent the whole time that reacted first. His short sword shook violently, but his attack was aimed at neither Emperor Phoenix nor Han Baling, but a certain point in midair. The sword auras surged out into dozens of raging dragons again, covering the hundred square meters nearby once more!

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

Nothing could be hidden under the illumination of the intense auras and light.

A member of the tactical squad of the Imperium, who had run away from the main force in secret and snuck above the black-skeleton-like Colossus, popped up from nowhere and landed on the shoulder of the Colossus precisely!

“There’s still someone out there!”

Including Li Yao and Long Yangjun, who were observing from the bridge, everybody was suddenly alarmed!

It was not until then that they realized that Emperor Phoenix was not easy to deal with at all despite his young and juvenile appearance.

The reason that Emperor Phoenix had chitchatted and dawdled for so long with Han Baling and Qi Zhongdao, even pretending that he had a weak case, was to buy more time for the last person so that he could jump onto the Colossus!

The guy’s skills were rather impressive, too. Wan Mingzhu’s overwhelming smoke had covered hundreds of square meters nearby, yet the guy had slipped away without a sound and without releasing any spiritual waves!

He must be the core of Emperor Phoenix’s whole plan!

“Get down here!”

A second sword appeared in Yan Liren’s left hand.

The body of the sword was only a foot and a half long, yet the soaring aura from the sword was like a waterfall sprinting from the heavens!

This time, Emperor Phoenix cut in between Yan Liren and the mysterious Exo. A longsword that seemed to be condensed of fire was unsheathed and spraying out waterfall-like auras.

A waterfall against a waterfall!

Boom!

Deafening noises were echoing in everybody’s ears.

It should have been a crisp noise when two swords crashed. However, when the edges of the swords collided thousands of times in a moment, the sounds were as terrifying as a raging flood that had broken through a dam!

Yan Liren grunted. He leapt backward and rolled hundreds of times like a meatball before he finally got rid of Emperor Phoenix’s sword auras that were haunting him like parasites. There was not any suspicion, hesitation, fear, or frustration on his face, only excitement!

It seemed that, for him, failure was not a problem, and the identity of the enemy was even less of a problem. Anything would be fine as long as he could fully unleash his sword arts!

Emperor Phoenix’s crystal suit, on the other hand, was rippling with light, as if a thin membrane of light had covered the surface of the crystal suit.

A string-light suit! Li Yao thought to himself. Emperor Phoenix’s crystal suit adopted the same technology as the three Immortal Cultivators on the Kunlun relics did. The string theory and the membrane theory had been applied. They could be called the upgraded version of the regular crystal suits and qualified to be known as light suits.

Their performance was a significant improvement compared to that of the regular crystal suits!

The fact that Emperor Phoenix had access to a light suit implied the immeasurable combat ability of the tactical squad of the Imperium!

Yan Liren’s Cultivation, on the other hand, was even more horrifying. He was not wearing any armor and just carrying two short swords, yet he could have a head-on clash with a Nascent Soul Stage expert in the crystal suit!

Insane. It was pure insanity!

Li Yao, for one, would never crash into an enemy of the same level as himself and enhanced by a crystal suit when he was naked!

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

The moment that Emperor Phoenix took action, the Exos around him moved, too, and cut in between the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector and the black-skeleton-like Colossus.

Dangerous brilliance was beaming out of the gaps of their crystal suits. The attack units hidden below the shoulder armor and the breastplate were shrieking ear-splittingly without disguising their hostility at all.

“What do you want, Your Majesty?” Qi Zhongdao’s face looked extremely awful.

“I’ve long been told that Elder Yan Liren of the Purple Pole Sword Sect is the best swordsman in the world. Your sword arts are even more extraordinary than the rebellious eunuch Wang Xi. I can tell that the rumors are true after testing you myself today!”

Emperor Phoenix’s Cultivation was not as good as Yan Liren’s, but with the enhancement of his crystal suit, he was able to draw even with Yan Liren. For a moment, the redness on his face was even deeper. He glanced at everyone in satisfaction before he suddenly put on a grave expression and coldly said, “If you are still the loyal subjects of the Great Qian Dynasty, stay where you are! Whoever moves will be traitors of the court and the Great Qian Dynasty!”

Chapter 1492 - Will Your Family Flourish or Vanish?

“Don’t believe him!”

Han Baling’s hammer that looked like a bear paw triggered ferocious ripples. His voice echoed in every corner of the temple of the Colossi with the ripples as the vehicle.

“Fellow Cultivator Qi, Fellow Cultivator Yan, Fellow Cultivator Ba, Master Bitter Cicada, and everybody from the six major sects! Things have changed now. I don’t know what your little emperor is up to in secret, but his people are apparently trying to infiltrate the Cloud Qin Gold Statues! If he gains control over the Cloud Qin Gold Statues, we will be meat on a chopping block, completely at his mercy!

“At this moment, we must cast aside our differences and fight against Emperor Phoenix Zhu Zongyou together!”

Emperor Phoenix sneered. Glaring at Qi Zhongdao and members of the six major sects in front of him, he shouted intimidatingly in a voice that resembled the rumbling thunder in the sky. “If you are loyal subjects of the Great Qian Dynasty, I will certainly not be petty when it comes to the rewards. I stand by what I said. Whoever executes Han Baling, Wan Mingzhu, and Qi Changsheng will be rewarded with a Cloud Qin Gold Statue! You may not know how to use the Cloud Qin Gold Statue, but it doesn’t matter. I can teach you!

“Otherwise, hehehehe, the sword in my hands will not hesitate or show mercy to those who are corrupted and turned into traitors of the Great Qian Dynasty! The treacherous thieves will be punished by everybody! Not only will they die without a burial themselves, their family and their sects will be implicated. A lot of people will be ground to dust, and a lot of people will be beheaded with their dead bodies thrown out onto the street!

“Your families and sects have supported and cemented the Great Qian Dynasty for a thousand years. You have made great contributions!

“The court has never wronged you, either. You are allowed to live as local magnates in the world of Cultivators!

“Right now, the torrents of changes are upon us again. Your family and your sect may thrive because of your decision, and they may be destroyed because of the same thing! Do not hurt yourselves and those related to you with your own imprudence!”

“Don’t listen to his cr*p. Attack together now!” Han Baling was sweating hard in anxiety. “Qi Zhongdao, Cultivators from the six major sects, what are you waiting for? Do you think that your emperor will talk so nicely to you after the Cloud Qin Gold Statues are activated? Just think about the four princes who have ‘died of acute diseases’ in the past year! They all mocked your emperor in the past! You should know Zhu Zongyou’s pettiness more than anybody else! It will all be too late after he gains control over the Cloud Qin Gold Statue. Too late!”

“Your Majesty!” Taking a long breath, Qi Zhongdao finally made the decision. He glanced at Yan Liren, Ba Xiaoyu, and the members of the six major sects who were next to him before gnashing his teeth. “Right now, the situation is unclear, and everybody is anxious. Please ask your imperial guards to retreat from the Cloud Qin Gold Statues for now, and we will talk more slowly!”

“Master Righteous One!” Emperor Phoenix was slightly dazed. Every tiny blood spot on his face grew more vivid than before, as if somebody had thrown red beans all over his face. He was laughing in anger and demanded, “Are you going to betray me, betray the court, betray the Great Qian Dynasty, and mess around with the barbarians and rebellions as an immoral, unethical, and disloyal thief?”

“I… dare not!” Holding back the pressure, Qi Zhongdao stared at the imperial guard who was still working on the shoulder of the Colossus far away. He replied, “I only have a question that I would like you to answer. Why are your people wearing such peculiar armor, and why do they know how to use the Cloud Qin Gold Statues?”

In the Great Qian Dynasty, the emperor was on relatively equal terms with the high-level Cultivators. During times of peace, when they were showing respect to the emperor, the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators would also degrade themselves by saying ‘Your Majesty’.

However, at that moment, Qi Zhongdao had dropped the ‘Your Majesty’, so the hostility was quite apparent.

Also, the question that he threw out was quite tricky, like a critical blow from a viper. All the high-level Cultivators from the six major sects grew alert.

That did make sense. Judging from Emperor Phoenix’s behavior, he was obviously confident that his subordinates could activate the Cloud Qin Gold Statues!

But how was that possible?

The Cloud Qin Gold Statues had not been seen for ten thousand years. Where exactly did he find the method to pilot the Cloud Qin Gold Statues?

In the legends, the Cloud Qin Gold Statues boasted the power to destroy the sky and the earth. Even if it was an overstatement, dealing with a hundred or so Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators would still be a piece of cake for them.

If Emperor Phoenix truly gained control over the Cloud Qin Gold Statues, all the Cultivators would be caught in a passive situation!

The three saints, the three rapscallions, the Cultivators from the six major sects, and Master Bitter Cicada were vaguely shifting away from Emperor Phoenix Zhu Zongyou’s side.

Emperor Phoenix, however, was not in the least scared. There was even a hint of derision on his face. He glanced at the imperial guard on the shoulder of the black-skeleton-like Colossus.

The imperial guard was on one knee. His crystal suit was different from other people’s in the first place in that its head was particularly huge and packed with all kinds of interconnected tubes and wires. The guy was connecting all the wires to the back of the Colossus’ head. All the wires were straightened. There was no telling what he was doing.

“He is cracking the Colossus!”

On the bridge, Li Yao was the only one who could tell that the mysterious person who seemed to be a special agent of the Imperium was cracking the control permissions of the Colossus from outside with a crystal suit that was dedicated to infiltration and decryption. The guy was also examining the status of the Colossus and making the final preparations to activate it!

Li Yao’s mouth was suddenly dry because of anxiety, and his sweat was dripping from his back. He looked at Long Yangjun and nervously said, “We cannot stay here and watch anymore. If Emperor Phoenix truly gains control of the Colossus, there will be dire consequences. He must be stopped!

“There must be teleportation arrays in the bridge. Is there any way that you can activate them and teleport us into the temple of the Colossi directly?”

“What do you think I’ve been doing so far?” Long Yangjun said coldly. There was bright golden bead of sweat on her forehead, too. “I have been searching for a way to turn on the teleportation arrays, but they are much more difficult to activate than the surveillance picture. I need time!”

Pausing for a moment, she bit her lip and narrowed her eyes before she mumbled, one word after another, “This warship is mine. Nobody messes around on my warship!”

“There’s no time. He’s activated the Colossus!” Li Yao’s voice was full of desperation.

As was clearly visible in the Grand Illusionary Land, cracked by the special agent of the Imperium unstoppably, the head of the black-skeleton-like Colossus slowly leaned backward. The ‘bones’ and ‘black feathers’ at the throat split apart like petals, revealing the deep, dark entrance for the user. The special agent of the Imperium was agile enough to leap down into the Colossus!

“He’s already in. Don’t you see? The guy has truly activated the Cloud Qin Gold Statue!” Han Baling’s voice was filled with intense regret and frustration. “Qi Zhongdao, six major sects, if you don’t work together to pluck the guy right now, let’s just die together. Die together!”

Hardly had he concluded his sentence when a sharp sword aura, raising a storm of coldness, dashed right toward Emperor Phoenix!

It was Yan Liren again!

Qi Zhongdao was still considering the big picture. The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators of the six major sects were all hesitant and calculating what they might gain and lose.

Some people were intimidated by Emperor Phoenix’s warning about the consequences of their decision. Some people were gradually grasped by greed and really thinking about whether or not they could have the Cloud Qin Gold Statues and the arts to use the weapons if they pledged loyalty to the court.

All in all, they had their reasons for their reluctance.

Yan Liren, on the other hand, was the only complete lunatic who would not hesitate to dissect the deities in the sky when he was determined to kill someone. He would not bother whether they were the chief of the prairies or the emperor of the Great Qian Dynasty!

Neither Emperor Phoenix’s speech nor Han Baling’s affected his belief in the slightest. The only thing that decided whether or not he was to attack was the loophole on the target.

At that moment, Emperor Phoenix finally showed the most fatal loophole in Yan Liren’s eyes.

Therefore, the world-shaking fourth sword was unsheathed, blinked, and blossomed!

“Ah!”

Emperor Phoenix did not expect that Yan Liren would be so crazy that he dared to attack actively when he clearly did not win the head-on clash a moment earlier.

This time, he was truly caught unprepared. He could even sense the coldness leaking into his crystal suit that was about to freeze his bones!

Yan Liren’s sword auras were so extraordinary than they could even pierce through the crystal suit and the light membrane!

Thankfully, a few Fiery Phoenix imperial guards reacted in time. They raised quite a few enormous light shields in front of Emperor Phoenix for protection!

After a few explosions, two light shields were shattered into smithereens by Yan Liren’s sword auras. They ended up as brilliant fireworks and vanished into nothingness after flickering for a moment.

The might of his sword was that intimidating!

The attack broke the tension and the impasse between the two parties immediately.

“Do it!”

Qi Zhongdao glanced at Ba Xiaoyu and Master Bitter Cicada. He knew that the hesitant guys from the six major sects were not dependable and that he could only count on the two super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators there.

The Heaven Flipping Seal rotated in midair, releasing dark-golden brightness instead of silver. The air immediately began cracking amid spluttering noises.

The imperial guards’ movements were slowed down, as if they had been mired in invisible swamps. They had obviously been weighed down by dozens of times the standard gravity!

“Do it!”

Han Baling grinned hideously and roared to Qi Changsheng and Wan Mingzhu, too. They were lawless, brutal people in the first place and had absolutely no concerns. Their most sordid and lethal magical equipment was launched and aimed at Emperor Phoenix and the imperial guards, darting toward the targets in mysterious streaks of brightness!

Wan Mingzhu also dashed toward the black-skeleton-like Colossus under the cover of a few zombies!

“Cr*p!”

Li Yao sighed gloomily on the bridge.

The locals of the Ancient Sages Sector did not know the first thing about strength. They had no idea about the formidability of the crystal suits.

Even though Emperor Phoenix’s guards were only in the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage or even the Core Formation Stage, they could also unleash astounding damage under the enhancement of the crystal suits!

As he expected, all the crystal suits were releasing weird light ripples, allowing them to break free of the super-high gravity!

Then, while glittering soundlessly, the attack units on the shoulders of the crystal suits and the two sides of the thighs were all activated. Almost every crystal suit was holding two powerful storm bolters in their hands!

Chapter 1493 - The Black Skeleton Awakens!

“You are asking to be killed. Since you are suspicious of my announcement, you might as well be taught a good lesson about the awesomeness of the deities’ attacks!”

Emperor Phoenix burst into laughter, and the helmet was folded into a sharp bird head again. He pulled the trigger brutally!

The more than ten crystal suits had all been switched to the heavy firepower form. The bullets and the arced light were sweeping across the entire room like a storm!

The surveillance light beams were immediately occupied by the colorful brilliance, as if a hundred volcanoes were erupting inside the warehouse of the Colossi at the same time, with the scorching magma flowing everywhere!

The powerful magical equipment of the modern Cultivation civilization from the Imperium of True Human Beings was not something that the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector could imagine or resist.

When the storm bolters began talking, some of the ignorant Cultivators did not even know what was going on.

It was not until the whips of light slapped the weaker Cultivators among them in half, and smoke popped up from the fractures that were as smooth as mirrors, that the rest of the Cultivators were grasped by utter horror!

“Not good!”

“Get out of the way!”

“What—what magical equipment is this? Why is it so quiet and powerful?”

The hundred locals of the Ancient Sages Sector, suppressed by the crazy firepower of more than ten crystal suits, were fleeing in a flurry and hiding behind the Colossi as covers.

The more sluggish ones among them were often ripped into shreds by the crossfire of the storm bolters and the honeycomb-based tiny flying swords.

The armor and magical equipment that they had refined themselves boasted absolutely no defense. They were as vulnerable as if they were made of paper.

Only some of the primeval treasures that they had picked up from the ancient battlefield were capable of resisting the roars of the storm bolters, the crystal cannons, and the other modern weapons!

The insignificant counterattacks launched by the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector, on the other hand, were all blocked by the enemy’s crystal suits. Except for the feeble ripples of light that they raised on the surface of the crystal suits, there was no deeper effect!

Both Qi Zhongdao, Ba Xiaoyu, Yan Liren, and Master Bitter Cicada’s side and Han Baling, Qi Changsheng, and Wan Mingzhu’s side were caught unprepared. They did not expect that the enemy’s quirky armor would be so powerful!

‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu had only just dashed into the air when two imperial guards lunged at her and blocked her way with a saber of light that they triggered from their armor’s arms!

Wan Mingzhu sniffed and opened her twisted mouth, spurting out a gray tornado that seemed to be made of mosquitoes.

But the gray tornado was burnt up by the fire of spiritual energy the moment that it reached the target’s body.

From deep inside the breastplate of the two imperial guards, a few sharp, high-pitched soundwaves were unleashed. They attacked together and pushed Wan Mingzhu’s soul out of the puppet!

Dozens of whips of light immediately slapped toward Wan Mingzhu’s real body from all directions.

Wan Mingzhu shrieked and retreated in a hurry.

However, the few gold zombies that had always been with her and almost refined into clones were minced into pieces by the whips before they had a chance to counterattack!

Mother White Lotus’s face was gloomy. She was shaking so violently that white smoke was popping up above her head, forming shivering lotus flowers, as if mushrooms were growing on her head.

Qi Zhongdao and Han Baling looked at each other. The leaders of the two sides finally came to understand how sordid Emperor Phoenix was and how terrifying the forces behind him were!

Qi Zhongdao did not hesitate anymore. He roared toward the high-level Cultivators of the six major sects behind him that were at a loss. “What are you waiting for? Do you really think that the emperor will let you go? The emperor will only dismember the six major sects and reward his new subordinates who serve him well!”

The three saints, three rapscallions, and Master Bitter Cicada—seven super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators that represented the peak of the Ancient Sages Sector—suddenly dispersed and attacked Emperor Phoenix’s imperial guards from all directions!

Under their lead, the high-level Cultivators of the six major sects also recalled their contradiction with Emperor Phoenix in the past. Some of them had even communicated with the Dark Cloud Prairies in the past in secret, and Han Baling apparently had evidence of their betrayal. So, their outcome would not be too good either way. They simply followed the seven experts and charged at the imperial guards!

Although the imperial guards were equipped with crystal suits, their own Cultivation did not seem to be too high, at least no higher than the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage. Also, they were not perfectly adept at the usage of their crystal suits.

Moreover, there were less than twenty of them after all, and they had almost a hundred high-level Cultivators opposing them, including the seven super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators such as Qi Zhongdao and Han Baling!

The defense line of crystal suits of the Imperium of True Human Beings immediately shook while the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector attacked without caring about the casualties.

Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar, ‘Heaven Battering King’ Qi Changsheng, and the rest of them were merely hovering around the imperial guards without having a head-on clash with them. They were trying to bypass the defense line from the sides and directly pick out the guy who had crawled into the black-skeleton-like Colossus.

For the Cultivators at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage, when they were moving at the highest speed, it was difficult for even the crystal suits to lock onto their unpredictable traces like smoke and mist.

In order to stall them, Emperor Phoenix had to spare another few imperial guards. The defense line in front was even weaker than before!

Finally, the abdomen of a crystal suit from the Imperium released clusters of mottled sparks. With the ear-splitting sound of metal being twisted, its movement gradually slowed down.

A critical unit on the crystal suit must have been hit, resulting in its performance parameters plummeting!

Although it had not retreated from the battlefield yet, the scene significantly boosted the morale of all the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector, who had realized, to their amazement, that the weird armors were not invincible and that they could also be broken and torn apart!

For a moment, the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector attacked more fiercely than ever, while Emperor Phoenix and his imperial guards could barely hold their position.

However, their aim was not to completely block or to annihilate the hundred high-level Cultivators on the opposing side but to stall them for as long as possible!

Chi!

When Emperor Phoenix’s defense line was about to collapse completely, an ear-splitting explosion of spiritual energy echoed behind him, which seemed to pour a bucket of cold water upon the heated battlefield!

“Not good. The Cloud Qin Gold Statue has been activated!”

Han Baling, Qi Zhongdao, and all the other high-level Cultivators on the two sides gasped.

“Hahahaha. The deity has succeeded. The deity has succeeded!” Emperor Phoenix was overjoyed. He was laughing so crazily that it almost sounded like he was crying beneath the cold mask!

All the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector were gazing at the black-skeleton-like Colossus that was resting on top of the black iron throne at the end of the temple.

Weird ripples of spiritual energy spread out nonstop from the spiritual residence at the chest, as if a translucent light ball was expanding, exploding, and blossoming!

The waves spread into the air and obliterated the impurities floating in the air into pure nothingness, transforming them from materials into energy. The sound that they made was like the heartbeat of the Colossus that had been sealed for hundreds of thousands of years!

Countless crystal clusters that were entangled on the long, slender limbs were also glimmering in dark red, as if ‘blood’ was truly flowing inside the body. The speed of the flow was becoming higher and higher, transmitting the redness to the key parts on the body!

Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa!

The thick tubes that were connected to the Colossus from the warehouse in various directions were all disconnected. They were jerking and struggling in midair like headless boas.

From the holes that they left after they broke free, crimson spiritual energy was spurting out and circling around the Colossus, condensing into a protective layer that looked like both a layer of armor and a cloak.

Two thirds of its body were hidden behind the bloody mist, making it look even more mysterious and daunting!

At the center of the skull mask of the Colossus, in the middle of the cross-shaped dent, the lone crimson eye shivered for a moment before it rolled along the dent swiftly.

The previously lackluster, cross-shaped dent was ignited with a layer of glittering redness, turning into a dazzling red cross!

Crack! Crack! Crack!

The black-skeleton-like Colossus broke all the restraints and stood up on the throne. It lowered its head and stared at the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector below its feet coldly with the red cross on the facial cover.

The Colossus was around thirty meters tall, almost as tall as a seven-story tower.

Under its indifferent stare, all the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector, be they in the Core Formation Stage or the Nascent Soul Stage, had a strong sense of being overwhelmed. Many of them were trembling with the heartbeat of the Colossus!

"I've found it!" On the bridge, Long Yangjun suddenly exclaimed in delight. "I have found a teleportation array in a crystal compression room near the warehouse of the Colossi. It can be activated at any time!"

"Near the warehouse of the Colossi?"

Watching the guy who could be a special agent of the Imperium claim the Colossus that he had called dibs on, Li Yao could not have been more anxious and infuriated. He almost hated that he could not rush into the warehouse of the Colossi, kick the guy out, and take his place immediately!

"Of course!" Long Yangjun glanced at him. "We cannot show up in the warehouse of the Colossi directly. Otherwise, everybody else will grow suspicious of us! This crystal compression room is empty, and the door is locked. But there's an energy transmission tube that is connected to the warehouse of the Colossi. We will be able to sneak into the warehouse of the Colossi through the tube without alerting anyone!

"However, what are we going to do even if we do sneak in successfully? I don't think that they will be able to compete with this Colossus even with the two of us!"

"I have a solution!" Li Yao stared at the twenty or so Colossi that were lying on the maintenance platforms in the Grand Illusionary Land.

Some of them appeared to be mostly done in repairing.

He had been the top Colossi expert in the Star Glory Federation a hundred years ago. As long as he was even some time, he would be able to activate one of the Colossi.

But he had to be fast. If the special agent of the Imperium of True Human Beings suppressed all the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector, it would matter little even if he showed up!

Chapter 1494 - Deity Raincloud!

With every passing second, the black-skeleton-like Colossus was getting stronger.

The crystal veins and nerves around its body were glittering, as if infinite spiritual energy was running inside unstoppably, giving everybody a weird feeling that he was something between a living creature and a metal being. Along with the pace of its heartbeat, the red mist flowing around the Colossus was pulsating. It was mysterious, elegant, cruel, and magnificent!

“Who—who is inside exactly? Why can he manipulate a Cloud Qin Gold Statue?” Qi Zhongdao demanded gravely on behalf of the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector.

“Haha. Hahahahaha!” Seeing that the Colossus had completely been controlled by one of his people, Emperor Phoenix could not have been more satisfied. He retreated to the feet of the Colossus together with the imperial guards who were wearing the crystal suits of the Imperium.

Raising his hand, he shouted loudly, “Now that the Cloud Qin Gold Statue has been activated, it doesn’t matter if I tell you now! This is ‘Deity Raincloud’, an ancestor of the Zhu family of the Thunderous Qian Sect who has been training in the deities’ realm since he embarked on the path of ascension a thousand years ago! The deity knew that the Ancient Sages Sector was in chaos and that the foundation of the Great Qian Dynasty was falling apart. So, he specifically visited the mortal world again to help me rebuild the Great Qian Dynasty and save the people of the world!”

“What!” Qi Zhongdao, Han Baling, and the other locals of the Ancient Sages Sector were all greatly surprised by Emperor Phoenix’s absurd tale. They looked at each other in bewilderment, not having the slightest idea what was going on.

Many of them were bulging their eyes and mumbling.

“Is—is it really a predecessor from the Thunderous Qian Sect who has ascended to the deities’ realm?”

“So to speak, is there really a deities’ realm?”

“A deity. A legendary deity. No wonder he can manipulate a Cloud Qin Gold Statue!”

“It’s impossible. It’s fake! Fake!”

“I think it’s true. Had it not been for the enlightenment of the deities, how could Emperor Phoenix have risen miraculously after only several years, and where did they find so many powerful treasures?”

“That armor must’ve been brought from the deities’ realm. It’s the deities’ armor!”

Qi Zhongdao and Han Baling looked at each other and noticed the intense suspicion in each other’s eyes.

Gloatingly, Emperor Phoenix grew more and more excited until he was almost roaring in the end. “Why are you mortals not kneeling down before Deity Raincloud, who has arrived at the earthly world? The deity is almighty, and the Cloud

Qin Gold Statue is even more magnificent. You will easily be crushed if he wills it!

“However, Deity Raincloud is too benevolent and merciful to go on a killing spree. As long as you pledge loyalty to the Great Qian Dynasty as obedient subjects and listen to the commands of me and the deity dutifully, except for the flagitious leaders of the rebellions including Han Baling, Qi Changsheng, and Wan Mingzhu, you will all be pardoned, with rewards that are beyond your expectations!”

“Those who follow Raincloud shall live; those who don’t shall die! Kneel! Kneel now!”

“Kneel!”

“Kneel!”

“Kneel!”

All the imperial guards around Emperor Phoenix stepped forward at the same time and roared loudly.

Their voices, enhanced by special broadcasting rune arrays, exploded among everybody like ten thousand bombs. Everybody’s head was dizzy, and their mind was disturbed.

Some of the Core Formation Stage Cultivators who were less capable and the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who were too heavily wounded to maintain their level were truly frightened. Their faces were pale, and they felt the strong urge to kneel down and pledge loyalty to the inviolable!

Li Yao almost choked in fury after seeing that on the bridge.

The so-called deities’ realm and Deity Raincloud were obviously bullsh*t. It was clearly fictitious drivel that a special agent of the Imperium of True Human Beings had fabricated!

Li Yao gnashed his teeth and asked, “Is the teleportation array ready to be activated?”

“Soon. It is now being charged with spiritual energy. I’ll have to check if it can function normally, considering that it has been left unused for hundreds of thousands of years,” Long Yangjun said very calmly. She narrowed her eyes and continued swimming in the ocean of light.

Teleportation arrays were highly dangerous magical equipment that did not allow any negligence. With the tiniest error, half of Li Yao might be teleported to the head of the warship and the other half to the rear or even directly into a wall, making his internal organs meld with the metal in the wall. It would be very awkward if that happened!

Emperor Phoenix’s words blew the minds of every Cultivator in the temple of the Colossi like a sweeping tornado.

Right when everybody was still startled, an indifferent voice that was clear, deep, and unworldly echoed from the depths of the black-skeleton-like Colossus. “There is no need to fret, my young friends. I severed my connection from the mortal world and ascended to the deities’ realm a thousand years ago. The Ancient Sages Sector has nothing to do with me anymore. But recently, it occurred to me that I left something behind in the past and that I was still associated with the Ancient Sages Sector. This issue concerned the path that I am walking on right now in the deities’ realm. So, you can also say that fate arranged for the Ancient Sages Sector to encounter this deity again.

“I have come to the mortal world this time partly to help the progeny stabilize the Great Qian Dynasty, so that the world will be peaceful and prosperous, and partly to select a batch of devout, fortunate Cultivators to ascent to the deities' realm together with me to explore the endless truth path of immortality. We will become supreme Immortal Cultivators and deities that everybody worships. That is my destiny in the Ancient Sages Sector this time!

"This is a rarely-seen opportunity. Your connections with the deities' realm are unpredictable. With the deterioration of the Ancient Sages Sector, if you miss the chance to embark on the path of ascension to the deities' realm, it will be impossible for you to go there by yourself for the rest of your life!

"Now that everybody here is fortunate enough to have heard my offer, it is evident enough that fate is smiling upon you. As long as you listen to my commands, you will all have chances to ascend to the deities' realm and become deities!"

The tone of 'Deity Raincloud' was flat and unattractive, mixed with the innocent nonchalance.

However, to many Cultivators, it was like scorching magma that was almost boiling their hearts from their ears.

"Deities? I am connected with the deities?"

"Ascend to the deities' realm and become Immortal Cultivators and deities?"

"How splendid and spectacular the deities' realm must be! I will die without regrets if I have the chance to visit it in person!"

"Nobody in the Ancient Sages Sector has ascended to the deities' realm for thousands of years. It is practically impossible for us to find the path of ascension on our own!”

For a moment, many of the high-level Cultivators from the six major sects were gulping, and their eyes were glittering in greed.

The subordinates of Han Baling and the other rapscallions were somewhat stunned by Deity Raincloud’s captivating promise, too. Even if they did not intend to defect, they all saw all kinds of bizarre illusions, and they could not help but let loose of their hands that were grabbed their weapons.

“Wait!”

Vague confusion emerged on Qi Zhongdao’s dark face, but he came back to himself the next moment. Calming himself down, he bowed to the black-skeleton-like Colossus respectfully according to the manners of a junior and a disciple. Then he stood straight, craned his neck, and looked at the skull head of the Colossus in midair.

“You must forgive us for not greeting you properly, Deity Raincloud, as we were not informed of your arrival. However, there is something that I have to ask for your enlightenment on. You claim to be an ancestor of the Zhu family of the Great Qian Dynasty from a thousand years ago. I wonder, who were you exactly?”

“How bold of you!” Emperor Phoenix glared at him. “Do you think that an ancestor of the Zhu family’s name when he walked the mortal world can just be blemished by anyone?”

“It doesn’t matter.” A calm voice came over from the black-skeleton-like Colossus. “Before I ascended to the deities’ realm, my name in the world of mortals was Zhu Cangshui. I had a nickname among the Cultivators, which was ‘Thunderous Fire’. However, that’s all from a thousand years ago. I have been freed from all that. It barely has anything to do with the Deity Raincloud that is standing here right now!”

“Thunderous Fire Zhu Cangshui?”

The Cultivators furrowed their eyebrow and thought hard. The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators all boasted astonishing memories, and few super experts from the Thunderous Qian Hall had been capable of ascending to the deities’ realm over the past two thousand years. Soon, somebody recalled who he was.

About a thousand and two hundred years ago, the Thunderous Qian Hall, which had not claimed the country yet, indeed had such a great expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage. He had even worked briefly as the leader of the law-enforcing department of his sect.

However, it had been the era of turbulence when the old dynasty was decaying and the new dynasty had yet to be established. All the main sects had been fighting and killing each other, and the entire Ancient Sages Sector had been consumed by war. Tremendous Cultivators in the Divinity Transformation Stage and the Nascent Soul Stage were involved in the gory fights, many of whom disappeared without a good reason.

‘Thunderous Fire’ Zhu Cangshui was one of them.

He had gone missing during an adventure to explore the relics of the primeval predecessors, never to be seen again.

For the Thunderous Qian Hall at that time, the uncanny disappearance of a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator had been quite a heavy blow. The accident had almost sent the sect to its doom.

At that time, everybody had thought that ‘Thunderous Fire’ Zhu Cangshui had been ambushed by the enemy and killed under the collected attack. Even his bodies had been shredded and burnt.

However, it was not entirely implausible that he had found an opportunity to ascend in the relics of the primeval predecessors and thereby rose to the deities’ ream, leaving the mortal trivia behind him.

Qi Zhongdao, however, was not entirely convinced. Taking a long breath, he asked toughly, “I didn’t know that you were Senior Zhu Cangshui, who went missing mysteriously a thousand and two hundred years ago. The deities’ realm is indeed a place of wonder where anything can happen! However… do you have any evidence that can prove that you are ‘Zhu Cangshui’?”

“How dare you! You are too rude!” If there were a pair of hands in his voice, Emperor Phoenix certainly would have grabbed Qi Zhongdao’s legs and split him apart from the center. “The deity has degraded himself by showing up here, and you are still so insolent and disobedient. Master Righteous One, I think that you have been bewildered by the evils!”

“Young Friend Qi!” Deity Raincloud’s voice turned solemn. He was even more aloof and aggressive than before as he demanded, “What do you mean? Are you doubting my identity?”

“Not a doubt but a certainty!” Before Qi Zhongdao replied, Han Baling laughed aloud not far away and shouted, “I am very certain that the so-called ‘Deity Raincloud’ is just a counterfeit. There’s absolutely no way that you are

‘Thunderous Fire Zhu Cangshui’ or a deity who has descended from the deities’ realm’!”

Chapter 1495 - Cloud Qin, Han Baling!

Han Baling was still hiding behind the round shield of the Colossus without exposing any part of his body. He shouted without any pause, “Firstly, if you are truly ‘Deity Raincloud’ who has returned from the deities’ realm to support the enterprise of your family, why are you acting so stealthily? Why did you even chose Zhu Zongyou, the least capable one of all the candidates, as your partner?

“The old emperor of the Great Qian Dynasty only died last year. He was your offspring, too. There was also the legitimate crown prince as well as many other royal princes in the palace. You selected none of them but an unsupported prince who was assigned to watch over the ancestors’ temple. What’s your motive?

“If you were truly a deity who had returned, why didn’t you simply show up openly in the court in the Divine Capital to be cheered and worshipped by all. When such a piece of astounding news spread out, even Cloud Qin would have been shaken and forced to admit that the Great Qian Dynasty still had some time. I would’ve been willing to surrender immediately!”

“Han Baling!” Greatly insulted, Emperor Phoenix jumped to his feet as if a bee had stung his bottom. “I—I am the emperor that fate has designated for the renaissance of the Great Qian Dynasty, and I am watched over by the ancestors of the Zhu family. It’s only reasonable that Deity Raincloud supported me after he returned to the mortal world. What’s strange about that?”

“Fate has designated you for the renaissance of your family? Was it him who told you the bullsh*t that can only fool a three-year-old? Only such a naïve, ignorant boy like you would buy it without thinking, not even knowing that he was simply manipulating you like a chess piece, little emperor!” Han Baling snapped.

After a slight pause, he continued coldly. “Secondly, if you are truly a renowned deity who has returned from the deities’ realm, and you are here to sever your connections with the mortal world after preparations, you should’ve brought countless ultimate treasures in the deities’ realm, such as the Cloud Qin Gold Statues. They are the priceless treasures for the Cultivators of the mortal world, but are they precious for the deities, too? Can you not find any of them in your place but have to steal them from here?”

“Exactly!”

Han Baling’s questioning refreshed a lot of Cultivators.

The actions of ‘Deity Raincloud’ were too weird. If he were really an omnipotent deity, why did he not reveal his identity in the Divine Capital, and why was he fighting over the Cloud Qin Gold Statues with them, the Cultivators of the mortal world?

Was it possible that there was not a single Cloud Qin Gold Statue in the glorious deities’ realm?

Qi Zhongdao looked at Ba Xiaoyu, Yan Liren, and Master Bitter Cicada, hinting at them to slightly move toward Han Baling and focus their attention on Han Baling and Deity Raincloud.

What Han Baling had said was exactly what Qi Zhongdao was suspicious of.

Qi Zhongdao believed almost eighty percent of Han Baling’s words. This Deity Raincloud was ten to one a counterfeit. Whatever he was exactly, they had to take precautions in case he suddenly attacked anyone!

“Thirdly!”

The more he spoke, the more fluent Han Baling became. He chuckled for a moment and continued.

“The real deities must know every detail about places like this ‘Divine Palace’. Also, judging from the fine armor on your body, I don’t think the tempests and snowstorms on the Land of Eternal Land are a problem for you. Why didn’t you come to excavate the Divine Palace earlier on your own but arrived together with us?

“There’s only one possible answer. Before Wang Xi discovered the Divine Palace, you did not even know of the existence of the Divine Palace. Even if you did, you couldn’t determine the specific location of the Divine Palace!

“Can a ‘deity’ who doesn’t even know where the Divine Palace is be a real deity? That’s hilarious!

“If ‘Deity Raincloud’ cannot give satisfactory answers to all three questions, I fear that you can barely convince everybody here. Who knows what kind of evil being is hiding beneath the skin of the so-called ‘deity’? Who can be certain that the so-called deities’ realm is not another way of saying a bloody hell?”

Had it not been for the blockage of the Grand Illusionary Land, Li Yao would have rushed up to Han Baling’s face and applauded the monarch from the prairies.

Li Yao had thought more highly of Han Baling's Ghost Qin than the murky Great Qian Dynasty in the first place.

However bad the 'classical militarism' was, it was still more or less an advancement compared to the decayed and rotten world of the ancient Cultivators!

Han Baling's head was particularly clear, too, and he had stabbed into the three critical issues with the special agent from the Imperium so quickly, making it impossible for the guy to continue acting. It was truly gratifying!

"You—"

Emperor Phoenix was shaking in fury. The brilliance on his crystal suit was rising, and the string light was releasing cracking noises. He was almost determined to die together with Han Baling!

"Zhu Zongyou, I suggest you clear your mind and get everything straight!" Han Baling said behind the shield. "Do you not know what you are made of? Even if your ancestor has indeed returned, why should he go through all the trouble to support you? Supporting anybody else would've saved him a great amount of time and effort!

"Hehe. I know that you are an ignorant baby who has been dreaming about reviving the Great Qian Dynasty and satisfying your ancestors!

"If that is the case, it is all the more reason for you to figure out whether or not this guy of unknown backgrounds who claims to be 'Deity Raincloud' is an ancestor of your family. If you accept a random guy as your ancestor and introduce a wolf into your house, your Great Qian Dynasty may be destroyed in the end. In such a case, all the ancestors of your family will roll in their graves!"

Emperor Phoenix was blushing and stammering. He hesitated for a long time, only to come up with no rebuttal.

Even ‘Deity Raincloud’, who was hiding inside the black-skeleton-like Colossus, was rendered speechless and failed to answer the questions openly after a long silence. However, the flames of spiritual energy spreading out of the gaps of the black feathers were growing more and more fierce!

“Deity Raincloud, I have washed my great neck, waiting for you to behead me!” Han Baling suddenly raised his voice and burst into laughter. Then he declared resolutely, “However, I can be killed, but I will not be fooled like swine before my death! I believe that all the Cultivators here are the same as me!

“Speak, who are you exactly?”

Han Baling last demand contained immense spiritual energy. It exploded in midair and echoed inside the temple for a long time, waking up a lot of Cultivators who were staring at ‘Deity Raincloud’ in a keener and clearer way!

Whispers came over from the high-level Cultivators of the six major sects.

“That was close. I was almost fooled by the guy just now!”

“On second thought, it does not make sense. If he is truly a deity, all the questions will be barely explainable!”

“Why didn’t he reveal his identity a few years earlier but have to steal the Cloud Qin Gold Statues while hiding in the exploration team? Why did he support Zhu Zongyou, a guy without any other help whom he can easily manipulate?”

“If he had revealed his identity in the court a few years ago and demonstrated the remarkable performance of the deities, he would have been acknowledged by the royal family. We certainly would’ve believed him.”

“But right now, he has jumped out of nowhere and asked us to believe that he is an ancestor of the Zhu family without any proof. This is rather imposing!”

The whispers soon evolved in a tide of doubts and suspicions. Some people even emboldened themselves to ask, “If I may ask Lord Deity, we…”

“Han Baling!” Deity Raincloud finally opened his mouth. His voice was solemn and sharp, filled with killing intent. He said, one word after another, “This whole time, I have considered you to be one of the trickiest people of the Ancient Sages Sector, only secondary to Wang Xi. But from what I’ve seen now, you have far exceeded my expectations!

“You are not as reckless as you appear. You are smart. Really smart. No wonder you can compete against the whole world with only the Dark Cloud Prairies!

“However, hehe, I don’t need to explain or prove my identity to you at all. Had it not been for the benevolence of the heavens and my own lenience, I would’ve activated the Cloud Qin Gold Statue and killed all of you!”

“I don’t believe in the benevolence of the heavens or that you are a man of lenience!” Han Baling was truly a tough man who was fearless of death. He was bold enough to sneer before a Colossus more than thirty meters tall. “You haven’t killed us either because you can’t or because you are trying to exploit us more!”

There was another moment of silence in the Colossus. Deity Raincloud seemed to have been choked by Han Baling. It was not until a long time later that he finally said, “Han Baling, if you choose not to go against me, it is not necessary for me to kill you. You, Qi Changsheng, and Wan Mingzhu are the same. You are all deeply connected with the deities’ realm, too. If you can pass my test, I can also consider taking you to the deities’ realm, where you will enjoy infinite benefits and opportunities!”

Han Baling was dazed for a moment after hearing the reply. He did not expect that ‘Deity Raincloud’ would be so friendly.

Before he figured out how he should respond, Emperor Phoenix had already jumped up and shouted in utmost astonishment. “Elder, Master! What—what did you say? Are you planning to pardon Han Baling, Qi Changsheng, Wan Mingzhu, and Wang Xi? That’s not what we agreed upon in the beginning. Didn’t you promise me that you would hand over the ‘Four Rapscallions’ to me, and I would be free to mince them into pieces and crush them into powder?”

The young emperor hated the ‘Four Rapscallions’ who had savaged the Great Qian Dynasty so much that he completely lost his calmness.

Deity Raincloud was silent for a moment before he casually said, “After you ascend to the deities’ realm one day in the future, you will understand that everything in the mortal world is just a hallucination. If you are obsessed with meaningless hatred, your heart will be corrupted, and your level will stagnate forever. Why don’t you just let it go?”

“I—I can’t let it go!” Emperor Phoenix was almost crazy. He screamed while waving his arms and legs. “I don’t care about my Cultivation! I don’t want to ascend to the deities’ realm! I only want to revive the Great Qian Dynasty! I just want to be the greatest emperor in all the dynasties that have been recorded! The greatest emperor of all time! I just want those evils who scourged the Great Qian Dynasty to be demolished! Elder, Master, you promised me that you would mince them into pieces. Each and every one of them!”

“You have gone mad, emperor!” Deity Raincloud’s voice was full of agitation and dissatisfaction. A stream of spiritual waves that had been compressed to the minimum was generated in front of the black-skeleton-like Colossus like a thin, tiny bug and pierced toward Emperor Phoenix brutally!

Chapter 1496 - Prisoner’s Dilemma

“Ahh!”

Despite the blockage of the crystal suit, the spiritual energy still disappeared into the center of Emperor Phoenix’s eyebrow instantly.

The young emperor immediately began screaming in the most desperate way, as if his brain was exploding only to be stopped by the helmet on the crystal suit. He was apparently in excruciating pain!

Holding his head, he bent his body like a shrimp and was almost writhing on the ground because of the suffering.

The screams, each higher than the last, made all the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector in the area feel their heads were dizzy regardless of their stance!

Although Emperor Phoenix was the youngest one of the ‘top ten experts of the Ancient Sages Sector’, he had demonstrated unbelievable capabilities during the struggle for the throne in the Divine Capital the previous year. His Cultivation might not have been as high as Yan Liren’s or Qi Zhongdao’s, but the gap was not huge. They were approximately at the same level.

Even such an expert had failed to defend against Deity Raincloud’s casual attack. Was it because Deity Raincloud’s Cultivation was unimaginably high, or was it because he had planted a certain barrier in Emperor Phoenix’s body in order to manipulate him as a puppet like Han Baling had said?

The latter appeared to be the more plausible possibility, because when Emperor Phoenix was cramping hard in excruciating pain, the imperial guards around him who should have been loyal to him were merely watching coldly. None of them gave him a hand!

Such a fact made Emperor Phoenix even more devastated. His twisted screams almost sounded like sobbing right now.

“Han Baling!”

Deity Raincloud did not look at the cramping Emperor Phoenix any longer. He shifted the enormous skull of the skeleton to Han Baling and the other rapscallions. The deep red crystal camera was gliding nonstop in the cross dent, making it impossible to tell what he was thinking about.

“Although I cannot bear to watch the Ancient Sages Sector mired in war, and I want to keep the Great Qian Dynasty stable forever, it doesn’t mean that your Ghost Qin, Qi Changsheng’s Heaven Battering Army, and Wan Mingzhu’s White Lotus Cult must be eliminated!

“As long as you pledge loyalty to me obediently, I will certainly figure out a proper solution. I guarantee that all of your subordinates will receive tremendous benefits. As for the few of you, infinite opportunities will be waiting for you in the deities’ realm, which will certain increase your Cultivation and allow you to sprint for the Divinity Transformation Stage!”

“Hehe!” Han Baling looked at Qi Changsheng and Wan Mingzhu and sniffed. He was wearing all kinds of expressions and did not give a reply.

"That goes for everybody here!"

Deity Raincloud turned the skeleton skull to Qi Zhongdao, Ba Xiaoyu, and the other experts of the six major sects behind the Three Saints. He declared thunderously, "It is meaningless to chew on my identity. The fact is obvious that I possess power that is beyond your imagination. I can manipulate the Cloud Qin Gold Statue, and I can offer you tremendous ultimate treasures from the deities' realm to guide you toward the Divinity Transformation Stage and help you embark on the path of immortality!

"Is it not enough to prove my identity and to convince you to pledge loyalty to me?

"I will give you one last opportunity. Kneel before me right now!

"There are dozens of Cloud Qin Gold Statues here, but no more than twenty of them are intact and functional!

"However… there are a hundred of you here!

"If every Cultivator is given one Cloud Qin Gold Statue, only twenty lucky dogs will be qualified to claim the primeval treasures that can dominate the world and the universe! Whoever kneels down first and pledges loyalty to me sincerely will be rewarded with a Cloud Qin Gold Statue. I will also teach you the corresponding usage and even the way to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage!"

Deity Raincloud's words were as shocking as thunder.

Fewer than twenty Cloud Qin Gold Statues!

Great secret arts to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage!

For the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector who were struggling and groping in darkness, the temptations were too alluring to resist.

With everything progressing so far, the shrewd elders and leaders of the six major sects had mostly realized that the mysterious person inside the black Cloud Qin Gold Statue was most likely not the senior expert Zhu Cangshui of the Thunderous Qian Hall. Otherwise, his answer would not have been so obscure and ambiguous.

But so what?

Deity Raincloud was not wrong. His identity was not important. What was important was that he had in his possession the powerful treasures from the deities’ realm and that he was aware of the methods to manipulate the Cloud Qin Gold Statues.

Most importantly of all, there were only twenty Cloud Qin Gold Statues at most that could be allotted!

Twenty Cloud Qin Gold Statues for more than a hundred super experts who were all above the peak of the Core Formation Stage, and more people were hiding outside on the warship. Right. There were also the tricky people such as Wang Xi and Master Spiritual Vulture who had not shown up yet. Chances were that they had already been bought by Deity Raincloud and were lurking in the darkness, ready to launch a critical strike at any time!

It was a very simple arithmetic question, but it was also the most complicated conundrum.

“Don’t be tricked!” Sensing the disinclination behind him, Qi Zhongdao grew anxious. “He is trying to divide us. Don’t be fooled! United. We must remain united!”

“Exactly!” Han Baling also gnashed his teeth. “He is definitely not as powerful as he appears to be on the surface. If he was, he would’ve gone on a killing spree and suppressed everybody with brute force. Why would he bother wasting so much time talking to us?

“As long as we stick together, more than a hundred experts above the Core Formation Stage will certainly be enough to defeat a single Cloud Qin Gold Statue!”

The two of them echoed with each other, but the elders and leaders of the six major sects were not moved much.

“Stick together?”

“It’s not so easy!”

“Yes. If more than a hundred experts above the Core Formation Stage are united and charge forward without considering the sacrifices, there might be a slim chance that we can crush Deity Raincloud.”

“But who will lead the charge and be sacrificed first?”

“Besides, just because I don’t surrender doesn’t mean other people won’t. As long as some twenty of the hundred people choose to surrender and cause trouble behind us, there is absolutely no way that we can compete with Deity Raincloud. By then, those who choose to resist will be crushed into smithereens by Deity Raincloud, and those who surrender in advance will probably be rewarded with a Cloud Qin Gold Statue and the secret arts to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage!”

Similar ideas were rolling over inside the eyes of almost every elder and leader of the six major sects.

When they looked at each other, they felt that other people’s eyes were filled with electricity and hooks. Shivering, they thought of a new problem.

“Even if I don’t surrender, and other people do not want to surrender in the beginning, how will they know what I am thinking, and how can they be certain that I will fight to the end?”

“There are only twenty Cloud Qin Gold Statues. The earlier you surrender, the more benefits you will have. As long as the number of traitors reaches a certain threshold, the resistance will be meaningless.”

“Then, when we can’t trust each other, the best option for them is to surrender earlier than I do!”

“I don’t know whether or not they will surrender, and they do not know whether or not I will surrender. Even if we do not want to surrender in the beginning, as soon as we believe that there is a decent likelihood that other people will surrender, we will have no other options except to surrender in advance in order to get the Cloud Qin Gold Statues and the techniques to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage!”

Such thoughts were popping up in the heads of the hundred high-level Cultivators from six major sects at the same time.

The locals of the Ancient Sages Sector were caught in a classic prisoner’s dilemma [1] . Their eyes were all glimmering.

The ambience grew weirder than ever for a moment.

The room looked like a vulnerable high tower that had just been burnt by fire and already reached the brink of collapse.

The burnt wood was caught in a weird silence after creaking for a moment.

One tiny breeze at this moment, or even nothing except a wait of one to two seconds, and the high tower would completely collapse!

Boom!

Qi Zhongdao knew the nature of the people of the six major sects. Any words would be useless. Without saying anything, he summoned his spiritual energy and boosted the Heaven Flipping Seal to smash the black-skeleton-like Colossus!

“Heaven Flipping Seal? Hahahaha!”

Deity Raincloud chuckled in amusement. Crimson tides of spiritual energy surged on the surface of the Colossus, and dozens of tentacles extended out of the waves toward the Heaven Flipping Seal, showing absolutely no sign that they were under the influence of the Heaven Flipping Seal!

In the meantime, the thirty-meter-tall Colossus stepped forward heavily. While the world was shaking, the blood red crystal veins wrapped around the slender arms dashed out like hundreds of vipers and darted toward the critical parts all over Qi Zhongdao’s body!

Qi Zhongdao had focused almost all his spiritual energy and soul power on the Heaven Flipping Soul. It was impossible for him to dodge in time.

Yan Liren, however, blinked out from the back. His sword auras spread out into hundreds of electric arcs and slashed toward the blood red crystal veins of the black-skeleton-like Colossus. After a series of crisp collisions, Yan Liren’s sword exploded into the finest powder!

Shua!

The moment when the secret sword exploded, something deep inside Yan Liren’s pupils seemed to have exploded, too, as if his soul had been severely wounded!

The Sword Maniac was still expressionless, but he was biting his lip harder and harder.

“And you, Han Baling. Come on together. Let’s see if I can go on a killing spree today!”

Deity Raincloud grinned hideously. The crimson whips scattered in midair like a hundred vipers drawing dozens of weird curves and arcing behind the round shield where Han Baling was hiding, interweaving into a fatal web instantly!

Despite his enormous body size, Han Baling was not slow at all. The moment that the whips connected with each other, he turned into a gray shadow and jumped out!

The whips did not halt at all after missing the target during the first attack. They took a weird turn and continue darting toward his back.

“Watch out, my lord!”

Seeing that all the space around Han Baling had been locked onto, a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator from Ghost Qin was greatly shocked. He lunged forward without caring about anything and was stabbed precisely by the sharp thorns at the front ends of the whips.

The spiritual shield of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was as fragile as a piece of paper, and the Cultivator from Ghost Qin was immediately riddled with almost ten holes!

Chapter 1497 - Li Yao Is Here!

“Wu Lihan!”

Han Baling’s eyes were almost bulging out as he shouted desperately.

Wu Lihan was a seasoned Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator who had been famous for a hundred years on the Dark Cloud Prairies. He was also Han Baling’s subordinate who had followed Han Baling since the beginning of his rise. The two of them were lifelong comrades!

At this moment, the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator from the prairies best known for his toughness and cruelty had been pierced through brutally by almost ten blood red whips, which tied him up and strangled him like a bunch of boas!

Wu Lihan bulged his eyes. His spiritual energy surged out crazily as he tried to destroy the blood red whips.

However, from every cluster of sharp-edged, gnarled crystals, a weird power was released incessantly, suppressing his spiritual energy until there was nothing left!

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Exploding noises of bone fractures echoed inside Wu Lihan’s body. As the blood red whips tightened, his hands, feet, and head all gradually twisted into extremely unnatural postures.

Wu Lihan’s face became more and more twisted, but dazzling brilliance was still beaming out of his bull eyes as he stared at Han Baling, apparently giving all his hope to the magnificent monarch on the prairies.

“My… lord…”

Wu Lihan’s throat moved with difficulty. After he had just squeezed out those two words, the blood red whips that had long been buried in his flesh and blood suddenly constricted brutally. After a bam, he was crushed into a cluster of broken, bloody mist by the extreme force!

The bloody mist spurted out and fell to the ground into the fuzzy pattern of an enormous human being.

It seemed to be falling upon the heart of every local of the Ancient Sages Sector, too, casting a bloody shadow over their soul and their determination.

A seasoned Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator who had been famous for a long time had been strangled by Deity Raincloud as easily as if he were an ant!

“Ahh!” Han Baling’s eyes were bloodshot. He roared in the most painful and infuriated way.

However, behind him, Qi Changsheng and Wan Mingzhu, a few experts from the Ghost Qin, the Heaven Battering Army, and the White Lotus Cult were slightly trembling after looking at each other in bewilderment for a while.

The appalling techniques that Deity Raincloud had demonstrated subdued many of the subordinates of the three rapscallions.

The always-ready-to-bend, selfish guys from the six major sects were even more wicked than them.

The quick-minded and shameless ones among them had already coughed and kneeled down quickly.

“Please accept your junior’s sincere respect, Deity Raincloud!”

Inside the bridge, Li Yao smashed the picture in midair brutally, blowing the elder of the six major sects who kneeled first into broken ripples.

“Damn it. The guy has almost got everything under his control. When exactly can we take action?” Li Yao felt so anxious that he was almost choking, yet there was nothing that he could do except pace around the room.

“It’s working!” Long Yangjun exclaimed in a low voice, her eyes glittering. A new Grand Illusionary Land was blossoming slowly next to the surveillance picture of the temple of the Colossi like a translucent flower.

“This is the teleportation array on the Nuwa warship.” Long Yangjun furrowed her eyebrows, as if she had picked up something from her memories. “The Nuwa warship has adopted a very advanced teleportation paradigm. There are not fixed teleportation arrays. The surveillance picture, the Grand Illusionary Land, and the teleportation arrays have been integrated into a whole. As long as the corresponding technique is activated, and you are completely enshrouded by the Grand Illusionary Land, you will be teleported into the cabin displayed in the Grand Illusionary Land!”

“So advanced?” Li Yao raised an eyebrow. After pondering for a moment, he took off one of his boots and threw it into the center of the Grand Illusionary Land.

Teleporting the body wasn't a joke. He certainly needed to run an experiment first.

Long Yangjun played with part of the threads of light shot out from the crystal processors with her small finger. Then, after a flash of light, Li Yao's boot appeared to be unpredictable and illusionary although it seemed to be on exactly the same spot.

Li Yao extended his hand to snatch it, only to pass through the middle of his boot and catch nothing.

The boot had indeed been teleported to the cabin as displayed in the Grand Illusionary Land!

"Fantastic!"

Li Yao waved his fist in excitement. He extended his hand to Long Yangjun. "Let's go now!"

Long Yangjun looked at his hand carefully and frowned. "What's the meaning of this?"

"We're going together, of course," Li Yao said matter-of-factly. "It's not like I'm going to fight a life-and-death battle in the warehouse of the Colossi while you watch the fight enjoying a cup of tea here, right?"

"I'm aware of that," Long Yangjun replied casually. "What I'm asking is, why are you extending your hand to me?"

"It means that I'm going to hold your hand so that we will pass through the teleportation array simultaneously," Li Yao said straightforwardly. "You aren't so childish as to believe that I completely trust you, are you? If you and I are to be teleported separately, what if you are wicked enough to teleport yourself to an inconspicuous cabin next door while teleporting me directly in front of this black-skeleton-like Colossus? Wouldn’t I be caught in a very awkward situation?

“But there won’t be any problem if we are teleported hand in hand. If you have any ill intentions during the teleportation process and something goes wrong, our bodies might be melded, and we will simply die together!”

Long Yangjun stared at Li Yao coldly.

Li Yao looked back at her without any guilt.

Long Yangjun took a deep breath. “… Fine!”

Cracking noises were echoing inside her body again as it shivered slightly. Weird spiritual energy in a helical form spread out of her pores and danced around her.

Li Yao blinked. “What are you doing now?”

“I do not like to show in public with my real look. It will be better if I transform myself into what I always looked like.”

“Alright then. As your wish, but can you change your body after we are teleported over?”

“Why?”

“Because I’m not comfortable holding the hand of a man. It feels weird.”

“…”

The clock was ticking. In the surveillance picture of the warehouse of the Colossi—except for the Three Saints, the three rapscallions, Emperor Phoenix, and Master Bitter Cicada—more and more locals of the Ancient Sages Sector were kneeling down before Deity Raincloud as a gesture of obedience.

Long Yangjun glared at Li Yao and, having no time to argue with him, set up the teleportation parameters without saying anything. She then adjusted all the crystal processors in the bridge to the hibernation state again. In the end, she grabbed Li Yao’s hand and stood at the center of the Grand Illusionary Land.

Dull noises were echoing in Li Yao’s eyes. The picture in front of his eyes blurred and became unpredictable. He felt like he was at the bottom of an ocean, with bubbles exploding right next to his ears nonstop.

He was about to ask Long Yangjun when the teleportation would begin, when he blinked and suddenly felt that it was weird. He found himself in a dark, narrow cabin, and the glittering forest of pillar-shaped crystal processors had entirely vanished.

He had truly ‘walked into the picture’ and been teleported from the bridge to the room next to the warehouse of the Colossi!

Sticking his ear to the wall of the cabin, Li Yao could even sense the surging spiritual ripples from the black-skeleton-like Colossus that were crushing the cabin wall like furious tides in humming noises!

Such a teleportation method was too amazing!

Li Yao went to Long Yangjun’s ears and asked in a voice as feeble as that of a mosquito, “Hey, do you know how to pilot a Colossus?”

Since a special agent of the Imperium was right next to them, they could not be too prudent. If their voices were a bit louder, they might be caught by the enemy through the Colossus.

“Since you are obviously deeply connected to the Nuwa Clan, and you look like a decent warrior, there is no reason for you not to know how to manipulate the Colossus, which was the best magical equipment for the elite human beings in the primeval wars, right?

“Theoretically speaking, you should be an expert when it comes to Colossi. Try to think. Are any of your mottled memory pieces about you launching an ultimate skill yelling and shouting while you were sitting in the middle of a giant iron shell?”

“Well…” Long Yangjun furrowed her brows so hard that water was almost dripping off. She shook her head after a moment of hesitation and said, “I can’t tell. My memories are too chaotic. In many cases, I don’t know if I am capable of doing something until I try it! It’s like how I didn’t know that I remembered so many complicated passwords and the operations of the crystal processors until I saw the mainframe crystal processor on the Nuwa warship!

“I think that I will only know whether or not I can pilot a Colossus when I crawl into one and have a try!”

“Then let’s get one!” Li Yao gnashed his teeth. “We will sneak into the warehouse of the Colossi together and go our separate ways, each looking for one Colossus. If one of us is unfortunately noticed by Deity Raincloud, we will help distract the enemy for the other guy!

“Don’t be intimidated by the guy. He may look awesome right now, but this must be the first time that he has ever used a Colossus in such a form. It is impossible for him to parse the advanced techniques entailed in the Colossus, and the best that he can do is unleash some fundamental skills! As long as we each find one Colossus, there is a great chance for us to make a comeback!”

Long Yangjun pondered for a moment and said, “But in such a case, our identities will be very suspicious.”

“There are no other options right now!” Li Yao made the decision instantly. “As long as we can truly control two Colossi, we will be taking the absolute initiative. We may be doubted, but so what? By then, whatever we say will be the truth! In any case, it will be better than watching ‘Deity Raincloud’ controlling the situation and even your warship later while doing nothing, right?”

Long Yangjun snorted. It was precisely what she did not want to happen.

She transformed into the appearance of ‘Wang Xi’ without a sound. Glimpsing at Li Yao, she said coldly, “You will crawl through the tubes up above, and I will walk through the main gate from the side!”

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. “Why?”

“The situation is more complicated than we anticipated. Chances are that still more unexpected changes are going to happen later. It will be best if we do not unveil the cooperation between us so early. We might be able to gain more benefits if we pretend to be hostile to each other!”

After saying that, instead of waiting for Li Yao to reply, Long Yangjun opened the door of the cabin softly and disappeared around the turn of a pathway as agilely as a cat.

Li Yao pondered for a moment and realized that Long Yangjun’s words did make a lot of sense.

He spat toward the center of his palms and dashed up to the tubes, crawling over to the warehouse of the Colossi that was one wall away.

Chapter 1498 - Refusing Generosity Means Punishment!

The sharpest crystals and minerals that had consolidated after a drought of hundreds of thousands of years in the energy transmission tube were everywhere.

Li Yao constricted the bones and the flesh all over his body to the minimum, slowly wriggling forward like a boa. He carefully controlled his skin and his muscles and tried to prevent them from being cut by the sharp edges of the residues.

It was not the pain or the poison in the residues that he was scared of. He was merely fearing that the stench of blood from his injury might be perceived by Deity Raincloud.

After stopping at a narrow turn that was almost a right-angle and squeezing himself into the other end almost one bone after the other, Li Yao successfully entered the warehouse of the Colossi.

Feeble light and raucous noises were coming over from the end of the energy transmission tube up ahead.

Theoretically speaking, the tube should have been connected to the Colossi to provide external spiritual energy for them while they were under maintenance.

However, Long Yangjun had carefully observed and analyzed the situation from the Grand Illusionary Land just now. This particular tube had been ripped apart from the middle and was dangling like a boa that had been cut in half. That must have been caused by the destructive battle hundreds of thousands of years ago.

Therefore, Li Yao needed only to crawl forward for a while longer before he had the chance to jump off from the fracture of the tube.

The key was timing.

Lying on his back near the fracture of the tube, Li Yao retrieved a probe camera that could be twisted to any angle from his Cosmos Ring. He extended part of the probe camera out of the fracture and stuck his eyes to the other end of the tube, observing the situation in the outside world.

During the time that he had snuck into the warehouse of the Colossi, almost thirty Cultivators had already kneeled around the black-skeleton-like Colossi.

Most of them were the elders and leaders of the six major sects. Some were the soldiers from the Heaven Battering Army, the White Lotus Cult, and Ghost Qin.

Everybody lowered their eyes in silence, not looking at the brothers and companions around them. However, the ecstasy and greed in their eyes were obvious.

It was a relief for Li Yao that none of the nine super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators—including the Three Saints, the Four Rapscallions, Emperor Phoenix, and Master Bitter Cicada—had kneeled down and pledged loyalty.

Of course, Emperor Phoenix was a special case. The young emperor had only just struggled from the barrier reactions that caused him an excruciating headache. He was still cramping subconsciously on the ground.

The little emperor seemed to have finally come to the realization that ‘Deity Raincloud’ was unlikely to be his ancestor and that he had been manipulated like a puppet by the guy. He was in a daze with a twisted and devastated face, as if the blow was too fierce for him to bear.

This is not good. Almost thirty high-level Cultivators have pledged loyalty to the special agent of the Imperium. There are also the Fiery Phoenix imperial guards equipped with the string-light crystal suits from the Imperium whom he has already controlled since the very beginning. The locals of the Ancient Sages Sector’s advantage of numbers has been lost!

Li Yao calculated the comparison of the enemy’s abilities and his and felt that the battle was going to be perilous.

To make matters worse, those guys who had not kneeled down and pledged loyalty to ‘Deity Raincloud’ yet were not necessarily reliable. Their decision was based on some very simple logic. The promise of ‘Deity Raincloud’ was that whoever kneeled and surrendered to him first would be rewarded with a Cloud Qin Gold Statue. However, thirty people had already kneeled down, and there were only twenty Cloud Qin Gold Statues in total.

So, for the latecomers, they did not seem to be in a hurry to show their attitude, and they could negotiate more about the possible benefits.

Gloomy chuckles came over from the black-skeleton-like Colossus. Deity Raincloud laughed and said, “Very good, the twenty-eight of you have proved your connections with the deities’ realm. As long as you are loyal to me and obey my commands dutifully, I will certain fulfil my promise and grant all the Cloud Qin Gold Statues here to you after they are repaired!

“As for those who haven’t made a decision yet, the twenty-eight Cultivators here will be your example! The Cloud Qin Gold Statues here have been claimed. But it doesn’t matter. The Divine Palace is a large place. Relics from the primeval battles are everywhere. Naturally, more remains of the Cloud Qin Gold Statues can be repaired and made use of! As long as you surrender to me, I will certainly repair more Cloud Qin Gold Statues and give them to you!

“Even without the Cloud Qin Gold Statues, the divine armor that I have brought from the deities’ realm is also priceless. You have seen their power just now, but I only have a limited number, too. Hehehehe. Not everybody will have the privilege of enjoying them!

“The Cloud Qin Gold Statues and the divine armor are both my generosity and a gesture of kindness from the heavens. If you refuse the gifts from the deities’ realm time and time again, don’t blame me for launching thunderous attacks to discipline you!

“Ascend to the deities’ realm together with me or go to hell together with the few ignorant fools here—make your choice now, everybody!”

Both sweating hard, Qi Zhongdao and Han Baling roared at almost the same time, “Don’t believe his bullsh*t!”

“He who offers generosity without any reason certainly has other ill intentions!” Qi Zhongdao shouted. “The fact that he promises such abundant rewards when we have just met proves that he is certainly up to something else. A great plot must be hidden behind all this. Whoever believes his words will be entirely devoured from the body to the soul without leaving the slightest residue. Even your sect, your family, your hometown, and even the entire Ancient Sages Sector may be doomed forever!”

Han Baling, on the other hand, rolled his eyes and said, “Let’s attack together. There are so many Core Formation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators here. If we work together to suppress him, we will still be able to elicit the secrets about the Cloud Qin Gold Statues and the deities’ realm from him. The information will definitely be more trustworthy than what he deigns to tell us!”

Han Baling truly deserved to be a rising hero on the prairies. His words were much more seditious than Qi Zhongdao’s.

Even if ‘Deity Raincloud’ was not a real deity, he still looked intimidating enough when he controlled the Colossus.

However, Han Baling was not in the least frightened. He was even trying to persuade everybody to defeat and interrogate the ‘deity’ by taking advantage of the weakness of humanity!

The situation was caught in an impasse again.

Those who were qualified to appear in the warehouse of the Colossi were all high-level Cultivators above the Core Formation Stage. Naturally, none of them were easily tricked.

Everybody knew that Deity Raincloud’s additional promise was too inflated. It was true that other Cloud Qin Gold Statues might exist in the corners of the Divine Palace. However, from what they had seen on their way there, most of the Cloud Qin Gold Statues had been shattered and were beyond repair. Some of the remains had even heavily rusted.

Even if the Cloud Qin Gold Statues could truly be repaired, they would not be nearly as powerful as the twenty Cloud Qin Gold Statues there.

That was the thing about humanity. They had all surrendered, except that some surrendered faster than others did. As a result, the rewards they would be given were of different qualities. Also, the rewards were super magical equipment that concerned a Cultivator’s life. Nobody would find such an outcome acceptable. Their minds that had lost balance needed time to recover.

Many people began to carefully think about Han Baling’s proposal.

Was it possible that they would get more valuable intelligence if they suppressed this ‘Deity Raincloud’ together and interrogated him?

The things that Deity Raincloud offered to say were highly untrustworthy. Perhaps only one out of a hundred statements would be true.

However, if he fell into the hands of the many Cultivators there, they would have all the time in the world to dig out whatever information was inside his head!

The air immediately grew intense.

The Cultivators standing and kneeling, even if they were next to each other, seemed to be divided by bottomless chasms!

The brothers and life-and-death companions a moment ago were all releasing unmistakable killing intent.

Li Yao looked for opportunities in the invisible forest of killing intent.

He glanced at the other floor of the warehouse, only to discover that a ‘corpse’ was slithering slowly and quietly toward the maintenance platforms.

It was exactly Long Yangjun who had transformed into the form of ‘Wang Xi’.

Time to work!

Li Yao licked the black-skeleton-like Colossus with his eyes affectionately.

He still could not quench his desire for this particular Colossus.

He secretly made up his mind that he would kick Deity Raincloud brutally and occupy the dream Colossus!

Li Yao calmed himself down and adjusted the angle of the probe camera, scanning the few Colossi on the maintenance platforms near the exit of the energy transmission tube.

There was a small Colossus around fifteen meters tall on a maintenance platform to his left. Although the left arm had been shattered, the rest of the body was still intact. Also, Li Yao had used Draconic Phoenix with only one arm before. With his abundant experience in using a crippled Colossus, he was seventy percent certain that he could activate it!

There was also a super heavy Colossus in the corner to his right, which was about twenty-five meters tall but more than twenty meters wide, making it look like an enormous tortoise that had stood up on its feet. The Colossus was also very tempting, but it was too far away. Li Yao was not confident that he could sneak into the place safely without alerting anyone.

As for their performance differences, it was not the most important factor. Based on Li Yao’s abundant experience in dealing with Colossi, it would take at least a year and a half to familiarize oneself with a brand-new Colossus.

The special agent of the Imperium had only just accessed the black-skeleton-like Colossus. Chances were that he had not figured out the basic operation menus yet.

It would be impressive if he could activate ten percent of its combat ability!

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Thousands of routes and ten times more data entries popped up in front of Li Yao’s eyes, congregating into seven different operation plans!

A battle was to break out soon. He had to take action immediately!

Taking a deep breath, while the black-skeleton-like Colossus was dealing with Qi Zhongdao and Han Baling with its back against him, Li Yao extended his head out of the fracture of the energy transmission tube!

Right then, out of the blue, a Cultivator standing on the ground accidentally raised his head and noticed Li Yao.

There were more than a hundred Cultivators with the keenest senses below him. Li Yao could not wait until everybody was lowering their head before he crawled out.

Li Yao was about to jump out, when he perceived the stare. He immediately felt cold sweat coming on. He zipped his mouth at the Cultivator, hinting for him not to talk.

Speaking of which, he had once met the Cultivator from the Thunderstorm Valley before and even helped the guy adjust his flying sword.

The astonishment on the elder of the Thunderstorm Valley flashed and soon disappeared. He slightly nodded in acknowledgement before he took a deep breath, widened his eyes, and shouted at the top of his voice, “If I may inform the deity, somebody is up there!”

Chapter 1499 - Fight! Fight! Fight!

“Damn you!” Li Yao roared and retreated quickly. The thorough and detailed plans in his head exploded before they reintegrated in fierce collisions and vibrations!

Now that he had already been exposed, there was nothing to be scared of anymore. Without caring about the sharp residue inside the tube, he went back to the turn of the tube in the blink of an eye, before his spiritual energy burst out and detonated the entire tube like a crystal bomb, pushing him out!

Boom!

The next moment, an enormous hand more than two meters both in length and width passed the end of the tube brutally. It kneaded the messy rubes and rails in the dome of the warehouse and dragged them down!

Deity Raincloud had attacked furiously in the black-skeleton-like Colossus!

Had Li Yao not reacted promptly enough but dawdled for half a second longer, he might have been grabbed by the enormous hand of the Colossus, with his flesh and blood pressed together with the steel residues!

Li Yao had no time to curse the vile snitch. He was still drifting in midair and had not landed.

The thirty-meter-tall Colossus was right next to him. Compared to the out-and-out black iron tower, he looked truly insignificant.

It was like a battle between a mouse and an elephant.

As it happened, the ‘elephant’ was also entangled with countless extensible crimson vipers that could be long or short as it desired!

After Deity Raincloud missed the first attack, the whips on the torso and the arms darted out in ear-splitting noises again, evolving into dozens of sharp spears that bit the critical parts all over Li Yao’s body!

Looking at the fang-like thorns on the crystal clusters, Li Yao felt that he had been terribly bitten by the vipers!

Li Yao’s body immediately turned into a cluster of gray mist as he activated his small-scale movement techniques to the maximum.

Yet, quite a few crimson whips, with their hooks and thorns, ripped almost eighty bloody wounds on his body ruthlessly and took away many a piece of his flesh along the way.

After the dozens of whips passed by, Li Yao was immediately soaked in blood!

Li Yao and Deity Raincloud’s confrontation only happened for one moment, but it was like a bucket of oil added toward the sparking ambience!

“Attack!” Qi Zhongdao and Han Baling roared at the same times. Their flames of spiritual energy soared dozens of meters high instantly and almost formed giants similar to the size of the black-skeleton-like Colossus!

The Heaven Flipping Seal, the best magical equipment of the Ancient Sages Sector, was rotating at a super high speed again. Silver, glittering brightness was spreading out between the silver balls and the round rails. The super high gravity pressed down like an invisible mountain. The air around the black-skeleton-like Colossus almost entirely froze!

Han Baling shook his hammer that looked like a bear-claw in the air, too, and a layer of translucent, golden light was dancing around the weapon. He clenched the rear end of the hammer with both hands and bashed it on the ground brutally with a bellow!

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Invisible spiritual waves moved toward the black-skeleton-like Colossus below the ground and did not burst out until they reached the target's legs. They erupted like invisible firecrackers and exploded at the knees of the Colossus.

The technique to consolidate spiritual energy, transmit it below the ground, and keep it condensed until it jumped out and exploded in midair in order to cause the greatest damage to the target showed Han Baling's most subtle control over his spiritual energy. Li Yao could not help but feel amazed while holding his head and running in a hurry!

As the two super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators attacked with their full might, the rest of the top experts launched their techniques!

Despite the shortness of Yan Liren's sword, it was unleashing an overwhelming aura that was more than ten meters long. This time, he was not pursuing agility but simply improved the 'damage' to the maximum. It was almost like he was smashing a ferocious tornado toward the black-skeleton-like Colossus!

There was no telling what Deity Raincloud’s concerns were, but it appeared that he did not want to have a head-on clash with Yan Liren’s secret sword.

However, Master Bitter Cicada’s pearls and ‘Heaven Battering King’ Qi Changsheng, who had turned into burning flames, were attacking him, one from the left and the other from the right. As a result, he reacted more slowly than he should have.

After an ear-splitting boom, a surging tide was raised on the red shield around the black-skeleton-like Colossus. It was almost like Yan Liren had slashed apart a bottomless ocean!

“Ahh!”

Deep inside the breastplate of the black-skeleton-like Colossus, in the middle of the spiritual residence, Deity Raincloud roared in anger and embarrassment.

The attack might not necessarily have hurt him, but he was definitely shocked and humiliated. He shouted in the utmost fury, “Die! You will all die!”

Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar and Mother White Lotus Wan Mingzhu’s fighting styles were both swift and unpredictable. The two of them were hovering around the black-skeleton-like Colossus in two streaks of brightness, one translucent and the other solid, like two buzzing flies. No matter how furiously Deity Raincloud bellowed and how hard he shooed them away, he was not able to get rid of them. Instead, they were launching attacks toward the Colossus’ head to disrupt Deity Raincloud’s senses!

The Three Saints, the Four Rapscallions, and Master Bitter Cicada should have been standing on two incompatible sides. However, under the daunting oppression of the mysterious ‘Deity Raincloud’, they had to let go of their grudges and conflicts for the time being and fight against the common foe together!

They were all Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators whose fighting sense had reached the peak. Although it was the first time that they had cooperated, they seemed to have rehearsed their moves hundreds of times. Their attacks were incessant and flawless. Deity Raincloud was barely able to defend himself in the flurry!

With the assistance of the many super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, Li Yao was finally able to get away from the weird bloody claws of the black-skeleton-like Colossus. He took a breath in relief before he suddenly had a weird feeling.

Something… was not right!

If this ‘Deity Raincloud’ was truly a special agent of the Imperium of True Human Beings, his combat ability seemed too weak with a Colossus!

Li Yao’s heart suddenly pounded. He immediately realized that the black-skeleton-like Colossus was likely extremely difficult to pilot and would put a heavy burden on the pilot’s spiritual energy and soul. Or maybe it had certain hidden problems that were yet to be fixed. It was also possible that the Colossus had been installed with mysterious barriers and locks. All in all, the special agent had not completely seized control of the Colossus yet. He had not even brought out five percent of the Colossus’ combat ability!

This was an opportunity!

Li Yao had planned to crawl into another Colossus nearby to join the battle.

However, after noticing that the special agent's capabilities were not as high as he had imagined and that the situation was so chaotic, he changed his mind.

The Colossi on the maintenance platforms nearby might not be functional. Now that he had been exposed, it would be practically impossible for him to get a few uninterrupted minutes to crack the operation system of a brand-new Colossus.

Since the enemy's capabilities were not as high as he had imagined, and almost all the super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were united against the special agent of the Imperium, maybe he could…

Crawl into the black-skeleton-like Colossus and launch attacks toward the special agent directly!

Should he have a try?

Li Yao observed the whole battlefield calmly from the dome like a black ape whose feet were clutching the gaps on the ceiling.

The warehouse of the Colossi had completely turned into a simmering ocean of fighting will. The situation could not have been more chaotic!

Although Deity Raincloud was unable to annihilate the super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators with the black-skeleton-like Colossus instantly due to the uncanny restraints, he was certainly not alone but assisted by more than ten Fiery Phoenix imperial guards, who were wearing the string-light crystal suits and loyal like puppets!

After being enhanced by the crystal suits, they boasted combat ability at least in the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage, and their remote firepower could not have been fiercer!

Furthermore, he had twenty-eight high-level Cultivators who had knelt and surrendered to him. The traitors had no choice but to follow him to the end now!

Even many of the Cultivators who were standing had other plans like that snitch. They were suddenly attacking their companions, trying to impress their new master with their contributions!

“Protect the deity!”

“Shoot down Qi Zhongdao and the rest of them, and buy more time for the deity!”

“It is not a deity but a devil that must be eliminated!”

“Idiots! Take down this so-called Deity Raincloud, and we can draw more benefits out of him. Chances are that more Cloud Qin Gold Statues are waiting for us!”

“Surrender now!”

“Repent now!”

“Ahh!”

The Cultivators who had been mixed up previously were completely lost. Everybody’s spiritual energy was surging out like flames, their eyes bloodshot and their killing intent raging!

The ten or so Fiery Phoenix imperial guards marched toward Qi Zhongdao and the other super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators without considering the cost, trying to stall the enemy even at the cost of their own lives so that Deity Raincloud would have more time to catch his breath and organize a counterattack.

The Cultivators who were loyal to the court, Cloud Qin, the Heaven Battering Army, the White Lotus Cult… or in general, the Ancient Sages Sector, were marching toward those Fiery Phoenix imperial guards!

The ‘pre-Immortal Cultivators’ who had just pledged loyalty to their new master and were obsessed with the idea of ascending to the deities’ realm and embarking on the path of immortality, naturally, harassed those Cultivators without letting go of them!

They were like a bunch of vipers who were biting each other’s tails. There was no telling who was going to be torn apart by the enemy!

When everybody was mired in a hellish slaughterhouse, only two people remained calm as if they were not involved in the issue.

Li Yao and Long Yangjun!

Li Yao watched Long Yangjun approach a Colossus stealthily and crawl into it without alarming anyone. He could not help but feel overjoyed!

However, after only several seconds, Long Yangjun crawled out again and made a gesture of confusion toward Li Yao. She simply leapt out and joined Qi Zhongdao, Han Baling, and the rest of them to attack Deity Raincloud together!

Are you serious? You don't know how to pilot a Colossus? You are a shame for the elite warriors of the Nuwa Clan's army!

Li Yao gritted his teeth so hard that smoke was almost popping out from his mouth.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

As Long Yangjun joined the battle, of the ten top experts of the Ancient Sages Sector who were close to or even beyond the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage, Li Yao and Emperor Phoenix were the only two who had not launched attacks yet!

Faced with such a luxury lineup, even Deity Raincloud in the black-skeleton-like Colossus felt overwhelming pressure. As the blade auras and the primeval treasures exploded around him nonstop, the black-skeleton-like Colossus was drowned in a series of dazzling blasts!

Chapter 1500 - The Last Choice!

Li Yao had been lurking on the dome the whole time and moving weirdly both like an ape and a venomous spider while he searched for a fatal weakness of the black-skeleton-like Colossus.

The sparks of the blasts and explosions blinked inside his eyes that were as dark as the night sky.

When the black-skeleton-like Colossus extended both its arms and almost all the whips to attack the other super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, Li Yao took action!

He stomped on the dome so hard that it nearly broke. With the counterforce, he lunged out and avoided the jabs of two crystal clusters at a dangerously close distance. Finally, he landed on the back of the black-skeleton-like Colossus softly.

Hiss!

Li Yao’s skin immediately burnt into a series of blisters because of the surging flames of spiritual energy on the Colossus. Blackened, he seemed to have fallen into magma!

It was because the anti-infiltration system of the Colossus had been fully activated.

The Colossi were large magical equipment whose height varied from ten meters to dozens of meters. Although they were suitable for the super large targets such as starships, star fortresses, and planetary strongholds, they could be a bit clumsy when they were faced with crystal suits that were usually two to three meters tall or even the Cultivators without the crystal suits who were extremely nimble, especially when such small targets drew close.

The anti-infiltration system was deployed to address such an issue.

It could be compared to a layer of invisible thorns and strings made of spiritual energy that enveloped the Colossi.

Li Yao had dashed to the back of the black-skeleton-like Colossus without the protection of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and been pierced brutally by the thorns of spiritual energy. He immediately felt ten thousand arrows piercing through his heart, and he almost fell off the Colossus involuntarily!

He gritted his teeth and dealt with it, not planning to summon the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

Furthermore, the situation was too chaotic. Qi Zhongdao and the other super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were launching their most powerful magical equipment toward the black-skeleton-like Colossus without any reserve.

His Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, like the crystal suits from the Imperium of True Human Beings worn by the ‘Fiery Phoenix imperial guards’, was a product of the modern Cultivation civilization. Although they were of apparently different styles, the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector who had no knowledge of crystal suits might not be able to tell the difference at all.

If he put on his crystal suit recklessly, and the super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators mistook him for another enemy and attack… it would be quite awkward!

More importantly, Li Yao was still not sure about everything. He felt that there was still more to the Divine Palace.

Right now, the issues with Long Yangjun and Emperor Phoenix had mostly been explained, and the special agent of the Imperium of True Human Beings had revealed his hideous face, too. However, Li Yao still felt that there was more to uncover.

He did not have any proof. It was just his intuition.

Although his intuition could prove to be quite unrealizable at times, it had also saved his life many times!

Therefore, Li Yao decided to believe in his not-so-reliable intuition one more time. He would not expose his identity unless he was forced to before the last anomaly was found out!

He moaned feebly. Blood was flowing out of his nostrils and his gums, and his hair was standing up and emitting the burnt smell because of the electric shock. His fingernails were exploding before they darted out of the fingers!

Li Yao gritted his teeth and competed with the thorns of spiritual energy of the black-skeleton-like Colossus with his own greenish spiritual energy. Grabbing the uneven plate armor on the surface of the Colossus, he crawled into its neck one step after another!

Shua!

Suddenly, a few whips rushed close, trying to blow away the little bug that had crawled onto the body of the Colossus!

Li Yao reacted quickly enough to dash to the side. The whips slapped the back of the black-skeleton-like Colossus brutally, raising a large cluster of black and red sparks!

It was obvious that ‘Deity Raincloud’ had not gained full control over the black-skeleton-like Colossus yet. Otherwise, he would not have made such a clumsy mistake!

However, the overall situation was not necessarily in Li Yao’s favor, because the ten or so Fiery Phoenix imperial guards wearing crystal suits had lunged close!

The Cultivators loyal to the Ancient Sages Sector who were chasing after them were stalled by the ‘pre-Immortal Cultivators’ who had surrendered to Deity Raincloud!

The Cultivators and the ‘pre-Immortal Cultivators’ had been the closest brothers and comrades a moment ago. They were most familiar with each other’s attack patterns and the features of each other’s magical equipment. Now that they were engaged in a fierce battle, it was impossible for the battle to end quickly. Nobody could break free from it!

Therefore, Li Yao, Qi Zhongdao, and other super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were faced with not just a powerful Colossus but also ten or so Fiery Phoenix imperial guards who were extremely tricky to deal with in their crystal suits!

“The monk and I will stop them! You go and dig open the iron shell quickly!” Ba Xiaoyu shouted at the top of his voice. He and Master Bitter Cicada charged at the Fiery Phoenix imperial guards, only to be caught in an interconnected net of fire that was almost like a boiling swamp. They were not able to break free from it at all!

Qi Changsheng and Wan Mingzhu looked at each other. The Heaven Battering King’s body turned translucent again and looked like an iron statue that had been heated to thousands of degrees. Mother White Lotus was unleashing flames of spiritual energy that looked like blossoming lotus flowers, too!

The two of them charged at the Fiery Phoenix imperial guards. The four super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators worked together and finally managed to block the charge of the Fiery Phoenix imperial guards!

As a result, Li Yao, Qi Zhongdao, Han Baling, Yan Liren, and Long Yangjun were the only five top experts attacking the black-skeleton-like Colossus.

The pressure on them immediately soared.

Li Yao felt particularly overwhelmed. The invisible thorns seemed to have pierced deeply into his nerves and bones. With every step that he took, he would feel excruciating pain from every cell in his body!

The five of them all felt that their spiritual energy was going to run out.

Even though they were burning their life and soul to unleash their spiritual energy to the most brilliant maximum in order to compete with the Colossus, such a state certainly could not last long.

After fighting for such a long time, Deity Raincloud might not have consumed much of his spiritual energy and physical strength, but their breathing was becoming more and more haggard.

Pa!

Qi Zhongdao had to manipulate the Heaven Flipping Seal and dodge Deity Raincloud’s attacks at the same time. Finally, he was caught by the fiendish claws of the black-skeleton-like Colossus in his sluggishness and was blown away!

Boom!

Deity Raincloud seemed to be getting more and more experienced with the black-skeleton-like Colossus as the fight continued. Faced with only four super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, his agility was greatly improved. Having just blown away Qi Zhongdao, he had a head-on clash with Han Baling. Naturally, Han Baling was no match for the Colossus that was more than thirty meters tall. He vomited blood and retreated quickly like a dry leaf in a storm.

Hoooo!

After Deity Raincloud blew back two super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators with two hands, the hole that looked like a mouth below the cross on the face suddenly opened. A pillar of light around one meter in diameter suddenly erupted out toward Long Yangjun. Although it did not hit Long Yangjun, it caught Long Yangjun in the turbulence of spiritual energy. She suddenly lost all her speed and fell to the ground as if she were being snatched by an invisible hand!

Crack!

Yan Liren was the only one who was still slashing his sword as calmly as ever!

His every attack hit exactly the same spot on the black-skeleton-like Colossus’ breastplate, where Deity Raincloud crawled in, without the slightest error. The seemingly indestructible plate armor of the Colossus had been cut with a tiny crack by the terrifying Sword Maniac!

It was a pity that, before he had the chance to further expand the crack, he did not have the support of any powerful companions around him except for Li Yao!

“Hehehehehehe…” Deity Raincloud’s low laughter was echoing from the crack. “Not even wearing divine armor and with just an ordinary sword, you can deal damage to the Clos… Cloud Qin Gold Statue. Yan Liren, you truly deserved the title of best sword Cultivator of the Ancient Sages Sector!

“Killing such a talented swordsman who has a good chance to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage will be too wasteful!

“Stop now! Don’t act foolishly like a moth that is darting into a fire! I can make an exception for you and pardon you for your impertinence. You will be granted with the most abundant reward!”

Yan Liren was not moved at all. Even his eyebrows, should there have been any, would not have furrowed. He was still focused on shooting his sword auras at the crack on the breastplate of the black-skeleton-like Colossus!

There was neither sadness nor delight on his face. He did not seem to be in the middle of a fierce fight but simply having some fun!

“And you!”

Having gradually assumed the advantage, Deity Raincloud grew more and more at ease in his tone and his posture. He turned the enormous skull head toward Li Yao, who had just crawled to the Colossus’ shoulder.

“Master Spiritual Vulture, you are truly a pleasant surprise for me. I didn’t know that you would be resolute enough to crawl on the surface of the Cloud Qin Gold Statue for so long while holding back the excruciating pain!

“But it’s useless. All your struggles are futile in front of the powerful treasures of the deities’ realm. Just give up!”

With his mockery, dozens of whips rose up from various directions. The sharp crystal clusters at their front ends opened slowly like bloody mouths, and redness—signifying intense spiritual energy—was blazing!

They gazed at Li Yao like countless crimson eyes!

Li Yao’s heart fell to the bottomless valley.

But a crazy fighting will was rising slowly from that valley.

With everything proceeding so far, it was meaningless to conceal his identity.

He did not know why this special agent of the Imperium had not established star beacons and summoned the main troops of the expedition army to the Ancient Sages Sector in the past years.

However, he would apparently do so after he occupied the Nuwa warship.

Once the Nuwa warship and the Ancient Sages Sector fell to the expedition army of the Imperium, and the Core Formation Stage Cultivators and the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators here ended up as the mercenaries of the Imperium, the federation would be doomed to failure!

Li Yao would rather die before he allowed such a thing to happen.

Thus, he had only one option!

Summon the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and have one last attempt to see if he could break through the crack caused by Yan Liren's sword in order to have a head-on clash with Deity Raincloud!

Come on!

Let's see which of us is braver. This Colossus is mine!

Li Yao roared in his heart. His Cosmos Rings almost turned into exploding supernovas. His telepathic thoughts had already flooded into them and found the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, ready to retrieve it.

Yan Liren launched the last attack with perfect timing, piercing through the crack into the spiritual residence of the black-skeleton-like Colossus!

Right then, abrupt changes took place inside the Colossus!

Chapter 1501 - Crazy Spiritual Vulture!

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

A series of weird fracturing sounds were echoing from the breastplate of the black-skeleton-like Colossus, whose arms and legs were suddenly uncoordinated. It could barely keep its balance and shook like a drunk giant. The magical equipment that it used to perceive the surroundings seemed to be malfunctioning. It nearly tripped itself over on the maintenance platform behind it. Stomping on the ground hard, it left an enormous footprint.

It was a sign that the Colossus' spiritual energy was running out of control and overflowing crazily!

No. It was not the fracture of certain internal structures. Some sort of 'being' seemed to be struggling over the command of the black-skeleton-like Colossus with Deity Raincloud!

"This is—" Deity Raincloud's astonished moan echoed deep inside the spiritual residence of the black-skeleton-like Colossus. The moan was soon replaced by a shriek. "No!"

All the crimson veins around the Colossus were waving crazily like spellbound vipers. They were not attacking Li Yao and Yan Liren but aiming at the Colossus' own joints and critical parts!

After dozens of explosions, they had truly cut into the Colossus' own joints. It had essentially tied itself up!

That was rather weird!

“What’s going on?” Li Yao was greatly surprised, too.

In light of the unexpected change, he contained the urge to summon his crystal suit. He sensed that the thorns of spiritual energy and the shield on the surface of the black-skeleton-like Colossus had entirely vanished!

Whatever had happened, this was their best opportunity!

Li Yao and Yan Liren looked at each other.

Over the past three months, the two of them had spent almost every day practicing and discussing sword arts. There was a tacit understanding between them!

Without saying anything, Yan Liren jumped into the sky like a rotating meatball and opened his short, thick fingers. The four Cosmos Rings on his fingers shone brilliantly, and he retrieved almost a hundred flying swords in a row!

Although Yan Liren’s favorite sword was the unique ‘fourth sword’, he certainly had access to a lot of other secret swords in various shapes and models as an elder of the Purple Pole Sword Sect and the strongest sword Cultivator of the Ancient Sages Sector. The hundred flying swords were all his collections, some of which had even been adjusted and polished by Li Yao. Long, short, and in a myriad of colors—they unleashed infinite brightness and glowed into a waterfall of light!

The waterfall of light turned into a furious river and ran toward the crack in the breastplate of the black-skeleton-like Colossus.

The black-skeleton-like Colossus’ movements were much more sluggish than before. It was even clumsier than when it was under the influence of the Heaven Flipping Seal and showed absolutely no sign of dodging!

The defense arrays that could absorb spiritual energy and resist attacks had become lackluster. Yan Liren’s sword auras simply passed through the defenses without meeting any resistance and hit the crack time and time again!

The crack that had previously been as thin as a hair immediately expanded!

It could clearly be seen that the dark metal layer on the sides of the gap had turned orange because they had been heated to thousands of degrees by the savaging sword auras!

The black-skeleton-like Colossus stepped back nonstop. It extended its hands, as if it were trying to slap Yan Liren. However, the hands moved for a long time in midair but could not land on the target. Even the magical equipment and techniques to lock onto the enemy seemed to be malfunctioning.

The best chance to kill an enemy was when he was sick!

Hardly had Yan Liren’s storm of sword auras come to a brief halt when Li Yao jumped to the chest of the black-skeleton-like Colossus from its shoulder. Dozens of grenades were thrown precisely through the gap made by Yan Liren into the spiritual residence where the user of the Colossus was staying.

Then a dozen more grenades, and then another dozen, and then still another dozen!

“How many grenades has this guy brought with him?”

Qi Zhongdao, Han Baling, and the other super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were all dumbfounded, wondering if ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’ had filled all the space in his Cosmos Rings with grenades.

Li Yao grinned hideously. After throwing a hundred pieces of explosive magical equipment that were quite primitive in design but had certainly adopted the crystals, marrow crystals, and beast cores of the highest purity into the Colossus, Li Yao closed his fingers and roared loudly, “Explode!”

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Deafening explosions were echoing from the spiritual residence of the black-skeleton-like Colossus. Fire in tens of thousands of colors and shades dashed out of the narrow, long crack and flowed around the body of the Colossus!

Huala!

The entrance to the spiritual residence of the Colossus was opened!

“This—this is too crazy!”

Seeing Li Yao’s tough and valiant performance, Qi Zhongdao, Han Baling, Ba Xiaoyu, Qi Changsheng… and all the other super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were dumbfounded.

Even ‘Heaven Battering King’ Qi Changsheng, who was best known for his valor and fearlessness, could not help but gasp after witnessing Li Yao cling to the Colossus despite the excruciating pain until he found a fatal opportunity to blow up the spiritual residence with hundreds of grenades.

Although he had an ‘indestructible body’, it seemed to have never occurred to him that such a thing was accomplishable!

“Master Spiritual Vulture!”

The name was further accentuated in the hearts of the many super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, leaving them a deep impression that they would never forget!

The high-level Cultivators engaged in the fierce fight nearby were even more stunned and lost for words!

There was nothing but silence in the temple of the Colossi for a moment. Everybody somehow stopped fighting and looked at Li Yao, who was quietly floating in midair. They found it hard to believe that the guy would be so insane and relentless that he had blown up the Cloud Qin Gold Statue that the ‘deity’ was piloting!

“D—Deity!”

The ‘pre-Immortal Cultivators’ who had made up their mind to surrender to Deity Raincloud all wept in grief. Everybody could tell that Deity Raincloud was not in his best shape. They seemed to have surrendered too early!

“Ahhh!”

In the middle of the soaring smoke, Deity Raincloud staggered out of the spiritual residence of the black-skeleton-like Colossus. Although his crystal suit had not been destroyed by the grenades, it was indeed blackened, and the rune arrays on the surface were fuzzy, too. The spiritual energy was not circulating well!

Li Yao sneered. His right arm had been wrapped in a bronze ghostly claw at some point, and he snatched at the enormous head of Deity Raincloud!

For the convenience of controlling the black-skeleton-like Colossus, Deity Raincloud was wearing a special crystal suit that was focused on strengthening his brainwaves and enhancing his soul power. Tremendous components had been piled around the helmet and the shoulder, making the crystal suit look like a bobblehead doll.

Such a design was naturally not best for close-distance combat!

Because of the unexpected changes deep inside the black-skeleton-like Colossus, Deity Raincloud seemed to have lost his cool and failed to evade in time. He was caught precisely by Li Yao’s ghostly claw!

Hiu!

With all his strength, Li Yao pulled Deity Raincloud and threw him to the sky!

Yan Liren and Long Yangjun’s swords, Qi Zhongdao’s Heaven Flipping Seal, Han Baling’s hammer, Ba Xiaoyu’s tobacco tube, Master Bitter Cicada’s pearls and staff, Qi Changsheng’s long saber, Wan Mingzhu’s devastating soul… The eight super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators attacked Deity Raincloud collectively. Despite the protection of the crystal suit, the guy was still falling back nonstop without any ability to fight back. His crystal suit was also falling apart!

Boom!

When Yan Liren and Long Yangjun’s sword auras were about to pierce through his crystal suit from the front and from the back, the back of Deity Raincloud’s crystal suit suddenly released a bright fireball.

The next second, glittering gaps appeared on the surface of the crystal suit, which interconnected and extended until they covered the entire body like a fishing net.

In the end, the pieces of the plate armor were being ejected one after another!

Li Yao knew that the ’emergency disassembly’ function of the crystal suit had been activated.

The crystal reactor must have been pierced through and destroyed, and an intense explosion would take place in a few seconds. If the Exo was not ejected, he would be blown up by his own crystal suit.

As expected, a black unit erupted from the back of the broken crystal suit and had a world-shaking explosion in midair before its scorching components clattered to the ground!

Deity Raincloud was already dying under the strikes of the many super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. Without the enhancement and the support of his crystal suit, and having been crushed by the blast of the exploding crystal reactor, he screamed miserably and fell down from the sky.

“Don’t kill him!” Qi Zhongdao and Han Baling raised their voice and shouted at the same time. “The guy has a lot of secrets!”

The super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator naturally knew that even if this ‘Deity Raincloud’ was not a real deity, there were still great mysteries surrounding him. Naturally, he could not be killed just like that.

They merely stared at the Fiery Phoenix imperial guards around coldly, in case those people acted recklessly and caused further trouble.

Out of everyone’s expectations, a streak of brightness darted toward Deity Raincloud at the highest speed and grabbed him. The newcomer shook his body so violently as if he were savaging a ragged rice bag.

“Who are you? Who are you exactly? You are not an ancestor of my family! You’ve been lying to me all these years! You were lying to me!”

The guy who was roaring desperately was, naturally, Emperor Phoenix Zhu Zongyou, who had been ambitious enough to revive the Great Qian Dynasty as the greatest emperor of all times, only to end up a joke in front of everybody.

Emperor Phoenix had an unusual relationship with Deity Raincloud.

Several years ago, Zhu Zongyou had still been the prince with the worst prospects among all his siblings. He had been assigned to the ‘Thunderous Martial Temple’, an unpopular, worthless post. He had thought that not only himself but also his offspring would have the same monotonous and meaningless life in the future.

However, ‘Deity Raincloud’ had shown up as an ancestor of the Zhu family and even become his most respected ‘Master’. Not only did the guy demonstrate the most unbelievable techniques and dazzling treasures of the deities’ realm to him, the deity had also even helped him seize the supreme throne!

Deity Raincloud’s methods and magical equipment obviously did not belong to the mortal world.

The way that he trained Zhu Zongyou had never been seen or heard of before in the Ancient Sages Sector.

Therefore, Zhu Zongyou had believed from the bottom of his heart that Deity Raincloud was truly an ancestor of the Zhu family who had returned to the mortal world specifically for the salvation of the Great Qian Dynasty and himself!

Was it not all implied in his name [1] , which suggested that he would be destined to be watched over by the ancestors in his life and to accomplish something great?

Then, Zhu Zongyou became ‘Emperor Phoenix’ and found the legendary Divine Palace. Everything had been going so well!

However, drastic changes had happened as he approached the top. He dropped from the glorious peak to the bottomless valley brutally all of a sudden, almost shattering into pieces!

Chapter 1502 - Voices in the Black Skeleton

Emperor Phoenix had gone crazy in his fury. He shook Deity Raincloud so hard that the mustard-seed suit around the guy completely shattered, revealing a white-haired old man with white hair and a pair of deep eyes.

At first, the stranger did look elegant and unworldly, but it was a pity that his face had been deformed, and blood was spurting out of his mouth. He was dying.

The other super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators had been exhausted with their spiritual energy, if not heavily wounded, during the fierce battle just now.

But Emperor Phoenix did not join the fight at all because he did not know which side he should help. He still maintained a high reserve of spiritual energy. It was barely possible for other people to stop him now that he was on a rampage.

After an ear-splitting noise, he plucked a handful of the long, white hair on Deity Raincloud’s head brutally!

Even Emperor Phoenix himself was dazed for a moment. He was at a loss for a while looking at the white hair in his hands before he suddenly pressed Deity Raincloud’s head with both hands.

“Your Majesty, don’t!”

“Emperor, stop!”

Qi Zhongdao and Han Baling shouted at the same time, fearing that Emperor Phoenix would be too enraged to care about anything else and simply kill such an important person!

Emperor Phoenix, on the other hand, rubbed Deity Raincloud's head crazily with both hands with a weird expression on his face as if he were kneading dough. Soon, he straightened his fingers into sharp claws and ripped off Deity Raincloud's entire face!

“Ahh!” Qi Zhongdao and Han Baling both exclaimed in shock. But a moment later, they were both stunned. “Huh?”

Deity Raincloud's entire face had been peeled off, but there were no bleeding wounds. It turned out to be a delicately-made false membrane made of living cells and an almost flawless camouflage.

Below the disguise of a white-haired, hawk-nosed old man was in fact… a young woman with a slightly dark face and sharp-edged facial features!

Deity Raincloud turned out to be a young woman, one whose air resembled that of a black rose.

Of course, having been beaten into such a state, it would be redundant to describe how elegant, mysterious, or unstoppable she was.

“Well—” Emperor Phoenix did not expect that the person whom he had revered as a god and his master would be a woman. He did not know what to do for a second.

“Well—” Qi Zhongdao and the other super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators did not anticipate that the true appearance of the so-called guest from the deities' realm would be like this. Looking at each other in bewilderment, they were greatly confused, too.

Are you serious? Even Li Yao secretly frowned.

The woman was unmistakably a special agent of the Imperium of True Human Beings. However, what she had been doing seemed to be slightly different from the standard procedure through which the Imperium infiltrated a new world according to the introduction of Su Changfa, an Immortal Cultivator of the Imperium in the past. Her endeavor was too ineffective!

Why was she alone?

She seemed even weaker than Su Changfa and Kou Ruhuo, and she was only slightly better than Tang Qianhe at best, obviously unqualified as a leader of an infiltration squad of the Imperium.

The ten or so Fiery Phoenix imperial guards were even weaker than she was. Their combat ability was completely dependent on their crystal suits. They were probably not even members of the expedition army of the Imperium but the local soldiers of the Ancient Sages Sector that she had recruited, trained, and manipulated!

Then, here came the question. Did she have any other companions? If she was all by herself, how did she ‘degrade’ herself to such an extent?

“Open your goddamn eyes and observe, you filthy idiots!” Han Baling was the fastest one to react. Although he was equally confused, not knowing what the truth was, he seized every opportunity to strike at the morale of the enemy with the keenness of a hunter. He laughed at the Cultivators who had kneeled down and pledged loyalty to ‘Deity Raincloud’.

“This is the deity you were worshipping. Look at her right now. Does she deserve your loyalty? Will she grant you the ultimate treasures and techniques of the deities? How hilarious!

“The so-called Deity Raincloud is just a clown who jumped out of nowhere and has completely failed. You have hit a dead end, too. Give up the meaningless resistance and surrender now!

“And you, too. Take off your armor in one minute, or you will be killed without any mercy, and even your souls will be annihilated!” Han Baling demanded seriously.

The object of his last command was the unit of Fiery Phoenix imperial guards.

The Cultivators who had surrendered to Deity Raincloud first and then launched attacks against their brothers and companions in their delirium did not need his reminder to know that their cause had been lost and their doom was approaching. Their faces were extremely pale!

With one right decision, one could go to heaven, and with one wrong decision, one could end up in hell. That was quite right. Only half an hour ago, they had still been well-respected elders and even leaders in the world of Cultivators. But at that moment, they were suffering in the contempt of other people. Their reputation would be blemished, and they would be cursed forever!

The ten or so Fiery Phoenix imperial guards had been manipulated by Deity Raincloud through secret techniques and barriers imposed on their souls. Since Deity Raincloud was unconscious, their barriers were slightly loosened, and they were at a loss as to what to do, just like Emperor Phoenix.

Li Yao, however, could not care less about whether or not those people would surrender.

All his attention had been focused on the black-skeleton-like Colossus.

LUM DUM… LUM DUM… LUM DUM… LUM DUM…

He vaguely perceived that, although Deity Raincloud had been forced out of the spiritual residence of the Colossus, a certain formidable existence was still lurking deep inside the Colossus and unleashing an intimidating pressure that felt like the heartbeat of a fiend!

The daunting aura was many times more horrible than when Deity Raincloud had been using the black-skeleton-like Colossus!

The continuous ‘heartbeat’ was soon overheard by all the super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, too.

Everybody besides Li Yao was greatly alarmed. They stared at the black-skeleton-like Colossus in utter bewilderment, while gloomy flames of spiritual energy were ignited all over its body and it was enshrouded in the mysterious black fog again!

The battle was not over yet!

Or rather, it had only just begun!

The black-skeleton-like Colossus was moving again, although there was nobody controlling it!

It raised its right arm, extending one of its narrow, slender fingers. A cluster of dazzling redness was swirling around the tip of the finger.

Including Qi Zhongdao, Han Baling, and all the other super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, everybody felt that their head was dizzy and their heart was exploding, and they were grasped by such fear and desperation that they did not know where to run to!

Hiu!

The black-skeleton-like Colossus snapped its finger. The red ball of light immediately turned into a flashing red line and disappeared into the forehead of an elder of the Monster Taming Pavilion quickly, passing through all the high-level Cultivators along the way!

The elder did not know what was going on. It was not until he realized that everybody was eyeing him in a weird way that he sensed that something was not good. His eyeballs were bulging like those of a dead fish. He extended his hands, trying to touch his forehead. However, when his hands were still on their way up, dozens of crimson threads of light already spread out from between his eyebrows and covered his entire body like a fishing net. They constricted brutally, cutting apart all his veins, nerves, and bones. Even his soul was directly minced apart!

When the elder of the Monster Taming Pavilion fell, another five red balls of light were condensed on the fingertips of the black-skeleton-like Colossus and shot in five different directions.

Although the routes of attack were obvious, it was still impossible to evade!

Another five high-level Cultivators who had once dominated in the past turned into dead bodies with empty brains before they had the chance to scream, and even before their devastation and fear surfaced on their faces!

In the blink of an eye, the black-skeleton-like Colossus had blown up six high-level Cultivators in a row, yet it did not seem to be the slightest trouble.

Such a performance was a drastic difference from the anxiety and flurry when Deity Raincloud had been using the Colossus!

This was the true might of the Colossus!

This was what was expected of a piece of super, strategic magical equipment that could change the outcome of a battle!

All the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector were shocked.

At that moment, they finally realized that those who had been killed by the black-skeleton-like Colossus' mysterious attacks were all the 'pre-Immortal Cultivators' who had surrendered to Deity Raincloud and attacked their own kind.

“Allow me to tell you the reason of your death. Your crime is unpardonable not because you surrendered to 'Deity Raincloud' but because you attacked your own people!”

A deep female voice echoed from deep inside the black-skeleton-like Colossus.

“Rumors about the deities' realm can be traced back to ancient times. Ascending to the deities' realm is the dream of countless Cultivators. Therefore, if you had just been enchanted by this 'Deity Raincloud' and decided to serve the deities' realm, that would have been quite understandable and would not deserve a death sentence!

“However, it is one thing to serve the deities and the deities' realm, but it is a whole different thing to attack your friends, brothers, and even the seniors of your sect whom you have lived together with through life and death because of your greed and the temptation of the divine artifacts!

“The Ancient Sages Sector is already on the verge of doom. A catastrophe that is beyond your imagination is about to happen. We are now walking on a spider thread above a bottomless abyss. One step wrong, and we will be shattered and destroyed forever. Not just you, your sects, and your families, the Great Qian Dynasty and Cloud Qin, everybody, all the forces and the entire world will fall apart and perish!

“At such a time of peril, all Cultivators must be united. The Ancient Sages Sector must be integrated as a whole in order to find a slim chance of survival!

“Surrender to the deities’ realm or not, all Cultivators must be united! No shameless scoundrels who are disloyal to the Ancient Sages Sector and their compatriots shall be tolerated!”

After every sentence that the deep female voice uttered, ten cluster of redness would be condensed on the fingers of the black-skeleton-like Colossus and shot toward the crowd. Those who were executed were indeed the pre-Immortal Cultivators who had surrendered to Deity Raincloud and attacked their own people particularly ferociously!

Qi Zhongdao, Han Baling, and the other super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were greatly exhausted after the fierce battle against Deity Raincloud. They were no match for the black-skeleton-like Colossus that was demonstrating its full combat ability.

Also, judging from the meaning between the lines, the new party seemed to be a friend instead of a foe, and she was helping them to eliminate the unstable factors within the Ancient Sages Sector.

Even the Cultivators who considered themselves representatives of justice such as Qi Zhongdao, Ba Xiaoyu, and Master Bitter Cicada were not the hypocrites who had no moral standards. They could not find any reason to stop the stranger from wiping out the ‘traitors’!

Chapter 1503 - The Unexpected Factors Are All Here!

The number of pre-Immortal Cultivators was not large. Also, they had attacked their ex-companions without any reserve in the fierce battle just now in order to prove their loyalty to their new master. They were greatly exhausted, too, and could barely move.

When the mysterious female voice made the black-skeleton-like Colossus massacre them, it was almost impossible for them to resist!

After almost ten pre-Immortal Cultivators had been killed by the crimson brilliance from the Colossus in a row, the other pre-Immortal Cultivators finally realized what was going on and fled after a roar.

“Where are you going?”

Qi Zhongdao and the other righteous Cultivators were still hesitating, but Han Baling, Wan Mingzhu, Qi Changsheng, and the other lawless bandits had no such concerns. They lunged at their subordinates who had kneeled down before Deity Raincloud and attacked their own people, clearing out the traitors while they laughed coldly!

Coldness flashed in Li Yao’s eyes, too. He turned into a streak of brightness and immediately appeared before the elder of the Thunderstorm Valley who had reported his existence to Deity Raincloud a moment ago.

The elder of the Thunderstorm Valley was already trembling in fear. He was looking at Li Yao as if Li Yao were a fiend. His voice trembling, he begged, “Master Spiritual Vulture—”

After he had just called Li Yao’s name and had yet to beg for mercy, Li Yao threw out green flames of spiritual energy from his right hand and enveloped him without leaving any gap!

A hundred tiny needles, dragging the molecular mica threads, darted into the critical parts all over the elder’s body, including the internal organs, under the cover of the flames of spiritual energy!

Li Yao shook his fingers crazily, and the elder of the Thunderstorm Valley cramped hard like a marionette whose strings were being pulled. His face was so twisted that his jaw was broken. Blood was spurting out of all the holes on his face. He was screaming in excruciating pain.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Li Yao closed his hands. The needles and the molecular mica threads churned inside the body of the elder of the Thunderstorm Valley, cutting apart his internal organs, veins, nerves, bones, and everything else!

The elder of the Thunderstorm Valley immediately collapsed to the ground like a pile of mud, killed on the spot!

Bright purple, translucent threads of smoke were slowly escaping from his face where blood plasma was still springing. They interweaved helically in midair into a small person. It was the remaining soul of the elder of the Thunderstorm Valley.

“Master Spiritual Vulture, spare my life! Spare my life! I know I was wrong. I know I was wrong!”

Kneeling, he desperately begged for mercy, with tears and sweat running down together.

Li Yao frowned. After looking at the soul and pondering for a long time, Li Yao finally sighed and said, “Elder Ouyang, do you truly acknowledge your wrongdoing?”

“I do. I do. I acknowledge my wrongdoing!”

The soul sensed that Li Yao was not as determined as before. Overjoyed, he nodded quickly and wailed in a voice as feeble as that of an infant.

“I was enchanted and committed a true folly just now. Despite my regret, I cannot undo what I have done! It is my own fault that my body has been destroyed and my Cultivation is gone. Right now, I only have part of this broken soul left. I fully acknowledge my wrongdoing. Please do spare me!”

“The most difficult thing in the world is to acknowledge one’s mistake.” Li Yao sighed and said solemnly, “I am not a bloodthirsty person. Now that you have acknowledged your wrongdoing sincerely, I will not hold a grudge for your betrayal just now. You are forgiven! If you do have a next life, try to correct your mistakes and be a decent human being!”

The soul of ‘Elder Ouyang’ had been rather happy when he heard the first half of Li Yao’s words. He had even been ecstatic when he heard that Li Yao had forgiven him.

Yet, outside his expectations, Li Yao suddenly changed the topic and began talking about his ‘next life’. Elder Ouyang’s soul was completely dumbfounded!

Before he realized what was happening, Li Yao had already snatched him with the ghostly claws that were wreathed in thousands of flames of spiritual energy. He grabbed the guy’s soul in the hand and crushed it brutally. The soul immediately exploded and darted in all directions, only to be caught up by Li Yao’s flames of spiritual energy and burnt until absolutely nothing was left!

In the blink of an eye, the elder of the Thunderstorm Valley’s soul had perished, and he was as dead as anyone could ever be!

Li Yao sniffed. Having no time to consider the horror on the faces of the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector when they looked at him, he looked at the black-skeleton-like Colossus.

After the Cultivators began to attack, the black-skeleton-like Colossus had stopped attacking, as if it was observing how they would deal with the traitors.

Very soon, the dozens of pre-Immortal Cultivators had been executed by the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector led by the super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. None had been left alive.

Qi Zhongdao, Ba Xiaoyu, and even Master Bitter Cicada did not stop them but simply observed coldly. They had even offered to block some of the pre-Immortal Cultivators who were escaping toward them and forced the traitors to return to the infuriated crowd!

“Hoo! That felt good!”

Han Baling killed three pre-Immortal Cultivators within a breath. There was blood all over his face and the beast hide robe, which made him look even more appalling than before. He looked around, only to notice that no pre-Immortal

Cultivators were still standing. After a laugh, he turned his sharp eyes back to the black-skeleton-like Colossus and bowed deeply according to how the small tribes on the prairies showed respect to the big tribes. He said loudly, “Thank you for resolving the great trouble and saving our lives, seniors. We also appreciate that you gave us the opportunity to wipe out the traitors and seek our revenge!

“Now that we are on the same side, senior, and you mentioned that a great catastrophe is befalling the Ancient Sages Sector and that we had to be united to cope with it, I’m sure that we can be of use. Why don’t you show up to accept our gratitude and further discuss our future plans, senior?”

Vague laughter came from the black-skeleton-like Colossus again.

But this time, it was not a female voice but a wild, enthusiastic male voice. “Big Bear, you are as aggressive as a hundred years ago. You simply don’t let go of any opportunity to test and attack!”

Han Baling, who had always been as calm as a rock, finally changed his expression greatly, as if he had heard the voice of the last person that he expected to hear!

He was immediately caught in a trance.

The words ‘Big Bear’ smashed his temples like two enormous hammers, bashing him into unconsciousness!

Some of the Cultivators from Ghost Qin who were older were reminded of something from a long, long time ago by the voice. Looking at each other in bewilderment, they all felt that the voice sounded somewhat familiar.

The temple of the Colossi became mired in a weird silence again. Including Li Yao, everybody stared at the black-skeleton-like Colossus without blinking.

There was an enormous hole in the breastplate of the Colossus, from which smoke was still popping out nonstop. Although it was rather dark and obscure inside, there did not seem to be anybody hiding inside!

Deity Raincloud was not a moron. It was highly unlikely that she had overlooked a living person who was hiding inside the spiritual residence of the Colossus!

However, from the head and the critical parts all over the body of the Colossus, certain ‘vigorous’ smoke was spreading out into hundreds of streams and descending to the floor.

The smoke was translucent and glittering and looked as spectacular as the auroras on the Land of Eternal Night. There was a sense of mysterious beauty about them!

The hundreds of streams of smoke were divided into two parts, one on the left and the other on the right. They swirled in spirals into two shapes of human beings, one male and the other female.

They looked like statues carved out of auroras and crystals. Empty, clear, mysterious, and yet brimming with dominating auras!

The woman on the left side was wearing an ivory robe on which many stripes of delicate clouds were sewn as adornments. The ‘clouds’ were really flowing slowly, as if she had put on a large number of clouds on her body.

She was astoundingly beautiful without the slightest flaw like a goddess from the moon. There was only a vague air of indifference in her eyes, as if she was trying to push everybody thousands of kilometers away!

The man on the right had broad shoulders and extremely large hands. His black hair, which looked like a waterfall, dangled down from his shoulders. But his eyebrows happened to be white, an obvious distinction in the middle of his black hair that was as noticeable as his glittering eyes!

His face was not very handsome per se, but it would certainly leave a deep impression on anybody who saw it with the intimidating charisma that could only come into being after giving commands all the time!

The two mysterious people seemed to be enveloped in powerful magnetic fields that enshrouded all the high-level Cultivators on the spot. Everybody felt infinite pressure. Even Li Yao recalled the deepest awe from when he had met Fiend Blade Peng Hai in the Crimson Nimbus No. 2 High School for the first time when he was young!

It had been a long time since he was last overwhelmed by someone in such a way.

Normally speaking, he was the overwhelming one who made other people drool!

Li Yao thought of something and almost moaned. The identities of the two mysterious people were obvious!

As he expected, in utter astonishment, Han Baling took a few steps back and bellowed in disbelief while covering his chest, “M—Master?”

Qi Zhongdao put on an extremely weird expression, too.

Or rather, Li Yao had never seen such excitement, confusion, and even shyness on the guy’s face that was always dark, grave, and rigid!

“Sister—Sister Wu, is that you?” Qi Zhongdao called the woman who seemed to be walking out of the silver moon and wearing clouds as her clothes with a weird title.

The two mysterious people who had been lurking inside the black-skeleton-like Colossus and disrupted Deity Raincloud’s soul at the critical moment, creating an opportunity for Li Yao and everybody else, turned out to be Wu Suiyun and Meng Chixin, the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators who had fought on the Land of Eternal Night a hundred years ago before they both went missing mysteriously!

To this moment, the three unexpected factors that Li Yao had paid most attention to—namely Long Yangjun, the special agent from the Imperium, and the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators—were finally all present!

However, it would not be precise to call them two ‘people’.

They clearly had no real entities and were only amalgamations of soul and spiritual energy.

However, the spiritual energy that a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator could mobilize and manipulate precisely was too much, and they appeared to be in vivid bodies of flesh and blood.

But essentially speaking, they were still spectral Cultivators!

Chapter 1504 - Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun

The arrival of Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun, two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, was like a rock thrown into a pond. All the high-level Cultivators gasped in astonishment.

Ignoring the questions about why on earth the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators would show up in the mysterious ‘Divine Palace’ and why they were hiding inside the Cloud Qin Gold Statue as spectral Cultivators as if they had foreseen the appearance of ‘Deity Raincloud’ and prepared a trap for her, the high-level Cultivators were still confused by one thing that was even more important.

They had been sworn enemies in the past. Why were they standing side by side?

What had happened exactly in the past hundred years? Were the two mysterious spectral Cultivators really Wu Suiyun and Meng Chixin?

Everybody had the same doubts.

Meng Chixin had been the most distinguished prodigy from the Dark Cloud Prairies in thousands of years.

A few hundred years ago, before ‘Ghost Qin’ was established as a force, the Dark Cloud Prairies had been dominated by multiple tribes and sects that had their own turf. There had not been a unified army or political structure. Like the

Southland of Sorcerers, it had been a vassal land of the Great Qian Dynasty.

Although the disobedient Cultivators from the prairies were much more difficult to deal with than those from the southwest, the Great Qian Dynasty had been incomparable, like the sun at noon. While they had sometimes launched small-scale raids or assaulted the merchant teams of the Great Qian Dynasty, they had never dared to rebel in public.

But Meng Chixin’s abrupt rise had changed everything!

It was said that he had once excavated many secret treasures left by a remote dynasty that had once marched onto the central plateaus thousands of years ago .

He was a genius in training with amazing aptitudes blessed to him.

After only fifty years, he had already grasped the plethora of Cultivation arts and techniques that had been passed on in the prairies for tens of thousands of years. Then, he had kept the good parts and abandoned the false parts while improving the content. Later, he had become known as a master of eight hundred techniques!

At that time, the Dark Cloud Prairies and the Great Qian Dynasty had not completely ended on bad terms yet, and the Cultivators from the two sides had still had frequent meetings. Matches and games between the two sides had been anything but unusual.

Before, in most of the matches and games, the Cultivators from the Great Qian Dynasty had often secured victories more than easily, and the barbarian Cultivators had suffered brutal failures.

It was based on the invincibility of its Cultivators that the Great Qian Dynasty had managed to intimidate the minorities around the border with few troops at an extremely low cost.

After defeating all the rivals on the prairies, Meng Chixin had gone all the way to the south to openly challenge the experts of the six major sects.

He had crushed eighteen super experts from the six major sects in a row on the arena. His name had shocked the entire world, and his popularity had been unparalleled at that time. It was also the first time that the barbarian Cultivators from around had doubted the capabilities of the Cultivators from the central plateaus. One might say that his victories were the seed for the rebellions around the country later!

The winning streak on the arena had only been the beginning of Meng Chixin’s rise to the zenith of his reputation.

After he defeated eighteen experts of the six major sects in a row and travelled to the south of the Great Qian Dynasty, hoping to meet more experts, he had been attacked collectively by hundreds of mysterious Cultivators.

But in the end, even the hundreds of Cultivators had failed to stop Meng Chixin, who marched along a bloody path into the hundred thousand mountains in the south of the Great Qian Dynasty.

The hundreds of Cultivators had chased after him into the dense forests, only to experience the most horrendous slaughter in their entire life.

Taking advantage of the dense forests and the interconnected caves, Meng Chixin had fought the hundreds of Cultivators for a few months and killed almost a hundred of them before he broke out of the siege, shattered the obstacles in his way, and successfully returned to the Dark Cloud Prairies!

Everybody had been shocked after the news got out.

Although no sect was willing to admit it, everybody knew that it had to be the treachery of the Cultivators from the central plateaus led by the six major sects!

Their incompetence in their Cultivation was already shocking enough, yet they had done such shameless things!

Their shamelessness was shocking enough, yet they had even failed to achieve their purpose!

Hundreds of Cultivators had besieged one individual, but the guy had gotten away after killing almost a hundred enemies!

The Cultivators of the central plateaus had never been so humiliated!

The battle had also been the turning point for the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty.

Before the battle, the barbarian Cultivators around and the Cultivators of the smaller sects within the Great Qian Dynasty had more or less revered the six major sects, the court, and the entire community of Cultivators. They had often had concerns when they were doing things and did not dare to act too insanely and blatantly.

However, the ineptitude of the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty had fully been revealed through the battle. So, the age of turbulence had come. The ambitious guys around the world had all risen up to stir up trouble, pushing the entire Great Qian Dynasty toward the abyss!

The battle had also caused two unexpected things that greatly influenced the situation of the world later.

Firstly, Meng Chixin had gained unparalleled fame after the battle in the hundred thousand mountains and had been honored as ‘Wolf God’. All the heroes on the prairies had joined him. A young man born from a minor tribe who was as humble as a slave had gone to him, too.

At that time, nobody had foreseen that the slender, taciturn young man who was good at nothing except for tending to the horses would become Meng Chixin’s only true disciple after dozens of years of training, and that he would change his name to ‘Han Baling’ and establish the Eight Units System after uniting the entire prairies when Meng Chixin had been missing for a hundred years, challenging the shaking Great Qian Dynasty!

Secondly, among the Cultivators from the central plateaus, there had also been some sort of leader that commanded all the Cultivators, similar to Qi Zhongdao.

The ‘leader of all the Cultivators’ at that time had also been from the Grand Mystery Sect, the largest sect in the world. His name was ‘Shi Zongyue’.

It was said that the battle to slay Meng Chixin had been planned and implemented by Shi Zongyue.

As for the truth about everything, it was already beyond any research after a hundred years.

However, somebody had to answer for the unexpected deaths of almost a hundred high-level Cultivators.

Since Shi Zongyue was the ‘leader of all the Cultivators’, naturally, he had been the best scapegoat for the entire failure.

All in all, shortly after the battle in the hundred thousand mountains, Shi Zongyue had died of mental derangement while he was training in seclusion.

Once he had gone into the coffin, everything about him had come to an end. The truth about the battle in the hundred thousand mountains was gone with the wind. All the insiders had kept their mouths shut forever, as if such a battle had never occurred.

The Cultivators of the central plateaus had been at peace, or rather, soundless, for decades.

Meng Chixin had been busy integrating the forces on the prairies and improving the eight hundred techniques, too. He did not launch any new challenges against the central plateaus recklessly.

Decades later, the truth about the battle in the hundred thousand mountains had been buried by the sands of time. When the Cultivators from the central plateaus were caught in the self-deceiving ambiance, someone had walked out of the desolate tomb of Shi Zongyue, the past ‘leader of all Cultivators’.

It was a woman who was holding Shi Zongyue’s Unreal Sword!

Wu Suiyun, Shi Zongyue’s widow!

It was not until she had knocked down more than twenty experts of the six major sects with the Unreal Sword, like Meng Chixin had done in the past, that the other Cultivators had finally realized that she was actually a terrifying expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage!

Nobody knew why Wu Suiyun had challenged the experts of the six major sects, including her own ‘Grand Mystery Sect’, full of hostility.

Her behavior had far exceeded the accepted rules of normal matches and games. On the arena, even when she was faced with the Cultivators of her own sect, she still attacked aggressively without any restraint, heavily wounding a lot of experts!

However, the experts who had been heavily wounded by her did not have any doubts or complaints, as if they knew clearly why she was asking for their trouble.

Then, a lot of people had remembered the battle of the ten thousand mountains.

Gradually, rumors had spread that the battle in fact had nothing to do with Shi Zongyue. Those people below him had acted on their own and tried to capture Meng Chixin and elicit the secret techniques that had passed on for thousands of years on the prairies from him. However, after they fell victim to their own scheme and a great tragedy was caused, they had demanded that Shi Zongyue take the blame.

It was because Shi Zongyue had been infuriated by those people that he had died abruptly during his training.

Therefore, since Wu Suiyun had gone to challenge them angrily, the leadership of the six major sects who were guilty did not dare to complain at all even if their bones were broken and their Cultivation plummeted.

However, the issue had never been confirmed by Wu Suiyun, because after sweeping across the six major sects, the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator had gone directly north to the Dark Cloud Prairies for Meng Chixin.

Perhaps she had planned to further investigate the truth about the battle in the hundred thousand mountains decades ago.

Perhaps she had believed that Meng Chixin was also partly to blame for her husband’s death.

Perhaps, although she hated the part of mischievous fellows in the six major sects, she had inherited her husband’s will after all and assumed the responsibility as a representative for the Cultivators of the central plateaus!

In those decades, united under the invincible Meng Chixin, the Dark Cloud Prairies had witnessed a quick expansion of capabilities. Its rise had seemed unstoppable.

If she could not suppress the momentum, perhaps Meng Chixin would have fulfilled his destiny to change the world, and Han Baling would already have been spared of the trouble!

In the entire Ancient Sages Sector, Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun had been the only two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, and they had been on different sides.

Their collision had been inevitable!

Their battle had taken place in the depths of the Land of Eternal Night.

Nobody knew the outcome of the battle. They only knew that, after ten days and ten nights of tempests and snowstorms, Wu Suiyun and Meng Chixin had both vanished on the snow field, never to be heard from again. That was… until they showed up in front of everyone side by side as two mysterious spectral Cultivators!

“Master, what happened? Why did you not send me any messages in the past hundred years if you did not perish?” Han Baling asked respectfully. Although his attitude was friendly, his tongue was still sharp. It was obvious that he did not lose his wariness just because of his master’s identity.

The guy was his master, but so what?

Anything could happen after a hundred years had passed!

Qi Zhongdao also took a deep breath and, frowning, asked Wu Suiyun calmly, “Sister Wu, Meng Chixin is the greatest trouble of the Great Qian Dynasty. Why are you fighting side by side with him? Also, you have been hiding inside the Cloud Qin Gold Statue. Did you foresee our arrival?”

Chapter 1505 - The Real Deities' Realm!

Wu Suiyun looked at Meng Chixin and casually replied, "Now that the two of us have decided to show up in front of everyone in our real appearance, we will of course tell you everything that has happened in the past hundred years and the world-threatening crisis that the Ancient Sages Sector is faced with. That is the only way that we can work together to weather through the troubled times!

"I believe that you will understand that it was perfectly normal for us to let go of our grudges and conflict and fight side by side after you listen to our explanation."

Pointing at 'Deity Raincloud', who had been constrained by more than ten different barriers by Qi Zhongdao and other super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, she said, "Regardless of whether or not she is a 'deity', she wasn't wrong about one thing. After you truly perceive the existence of the deities' realm and how vast it is, you will discover that the love and hatred of the mortal world are absolutely meaningless. They are not worth quibbling over at all.

"Not just Meng Chixin and I, you should all let go of your grudges with each other!"

Everybody was exclaiming after hearing that.

"Quibbling?" Qi Zhongdao demanded angrily. "Sister Wu, what do you mean? Is the hundred-year contradiction between the Great Qian Dynasty and the Ghost Qin, which can turn the world upside-down, just 'quibbling'?"

Han Baling widened his eyes and stared at Meng Chixin, asking solemnly, “Master, what has happened in the past hundred years? You were the Wolf God on the prairies and considered it your responsibility to overthrow the Great Qian Dynasty and make the prairies rise!”

Qi Changsheng and Wan Mingzhu shrieked simultaneously, “Letting go of the hatred and grudges with those sanctimonious, corrupt guys? Impossible!”

“Stop flattering yourselves!” Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar grimaced and spat at Qi Changsheng and Wan Mingzhu. “Nobody has agreed to let anything go yet. Come on. Settle the rules first. This beggar is ready for a game at any time!”

“Exactly!” Emperor Phoenix gnashed his teeth. His eyes were bloodshot as he glared at Han Baling, Qi Changsheng, Wan Mingzhu, Wang Xi, and Meng Chixin. He clenched his fists and shouted, “I will certainly not pardon any of you. Whoever intends to lay a finger on the territory of the Great Qian Dynasty will be blown into smithereens and obliterated into nothingness!”

“Your Majesty, you might want to shut your mouth.” Holding her arms, Long Yangjun leaned against the enormous foot of a Colossus and remarked sarcastically, “Adults are talking about national affairs here. I believe that given your juvenile attitude, Your Majesty, it will be better if you just listen while you are standing there.”

“You—” Emperor Phoenix was almost going to devour Long Yangjun in one mouthful without adding any condiments.

The super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators of the two sides immediately summoned all their flames of spiritual energy, which released cracking noises and explosions.

The temporary alliance formed because of Deity Raincloud’s unexpected arrival immediately fell apart. The situation could not have been more chaotic!

Li Yao complained in his heart. It was not going to work out that way!

Glancing around, he noticed that Yan Liren was as calm and as indifferent as before.

He could not help but feel relieved. Thankfully, somebody there was still cool and rational.

Then, he suddenly heard Yan Liren’s discrete message. “Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators seem to have lost their bodies and ended up as spectral Cultivators. Their Cultivation has certainly plummeted, and it is impossible for them to maintain the peak state of the Divinity Transformation Stage!

“Do you think that there is a slim chance that I can slay the two of them at the same time if you distract their attention for a moment?”

“…” Li Yao.

“If I may interrupt…” Other than Li Yao and Yan Liren, Master Bitter Cicada had kept his tranquility. He bowed to Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun and said, “I am a monk that has barely anything to do with the mortal world, and I don’t have many grudges with anyone here. However, according to what you just said, Fellow Cultivator Wu, does the deities’ realm really exist?”

It was indeed a critical question that immediately calmed down the simmering situation.

Yes. The conflicts and grudges between them could not be resolved anytime soon, but the existence of the deities' realm and the deities concerned everybody's future.

Also, Wu Suiyun and Meng Chixin were talking about the world-threatening crisis that the Ancient Sages Sector was faced with. What was that all about?

"Of course, the deities' realm exists. This 'Deity Raincloud' of mysterious backgrounds is some sort of deity, too."

Meng Chixin looked around with his tiger-like eyes, instantly suppressing the whole area with his daunting aura. All the Core Formation Stage Cultivators and the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators felt like they were soaked in a surging flood. They had an irresistible feeling and forgot their hostility with each other for a moment.

"However," Meng Chixin said unhurriedly, "the so-called deities' realm and deities may not be a world that is 'above' the Ancient Sages Sector, as we imagined in the past, but a boundless new world that envelops the Ancient Sages Sector!"

"A boundless new world that envelops the Ancient Sages Sector?"

All the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector were greatly surprised. Looking at each other in bewilderment, they were hooked by the fresh theory.

Li Yao and Long Yangjun glanced at each other thoughtfully while nobody around was looking.

He secretly felt lucky that he had been calm enough when he discussed the plans with Long Yangjun and he did not expose his trump card.

The two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators had both guessed the existence of the world beyond!

Also, considering their cruelty and ruthlessness when they dealt with the locals who were not loyal to the Ancient Sages Sector and ‘Deity Raincloud’ who was apparently a female agent of the Imperium of True Human Beings, it was obvious that they were highly hostile to ‘aliens’.

If Li Yao had exposed the secret that he was actually from a foreign land, he would have been tied up and ended up a slave at their mercy like Deity Raincloud did!

“By our rough estimation, the size of the deities’ realm is at least ten thousand times larger than the Ancient Sages Sector. The ultimate treasures, the experts, and the powerful forces in the deities’ realm are beyond our imagination, too!” Meng Chixin smiled bitterly.

“This ‘Deity Raincloud’ here will be our first clue. She was on her own, yet she was already capable of manipulating a prince of the Great Qian Dynasty as her puppet. She even supported the prince to take the crown and nearly overturned the entire Ancient Sages Sector!

“One ‘deity’ is enough to cause such dire consequences. Did I exaggerate when I said that we are faced with a world-threatening crisis if ten, a hundred, or even a thousand deities arrive at the same time?”

Everybody was greatly alarmed, as if somebody had poured a bucket of cold water on them. Their ecstasy from capturing ‘Deity Raincloud’ vanished.

Yes. Deity Raincloud was by herself, but she certainly had her backers. How enormous was the force hiding behind her exactly? Could the Ancient Sages Sector resist it?

Wu Suiyun sighed softly and said, “If the Ancient Sages Sector can be compared to an island, the deities’ realm that envelops us is a boundless ocean!

“If the Ancient Sages Sector can be compared to a mouse, the deities’ realm is a ferocious beast that’s hundreds of meters long, and we are nothing more than the lice on the mouse!

“In the past, you all thought that the Ancient Sages Sector was a unique existence in the entire universe. It is all there is. To fight for control over the world, endless conflicts and contradictions have been raised!

“However, what if I tell you that the Ancient Sages Sector is but an insignificant corner in the entire sea of stars, and thousands of more worlds exactly like the Ancient Sages Sector are out there? Some of them are a hundred times larger and more mysterious than the Ancient Sages Sector and have a hundred times more spiritual energy. The ‘deities’ living in those worlds can crush us with absolutely no trouble at all!

“Then, what’s the meaning of our competition?

“We are like crickets raised in a jar who have been fighting life-and-death battles against each other for insignificant rice and water, while the unimaginable deities and devils outside of the jar are watching our ‘performance’ in their boredom. That is the meaningless hatred among us!

“Meng Chixin and I spent decades understanding that before we let go of all the hatred and grudges. When the real picture of the universe was unfolded in front of us, the hatred and grudges of the past became hilarious and not worth mentioning at all. There is only one thing that is worth us, and you, pursuing, fighting for, and realizing!”

Li Yao took a deep breath and stepped forward. He stared at the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, his eyes glittering. “What is it?”

“Survival,” Meng Chixin said solemnly. “How to make us and our Ancient Sages Sector survive in the middle of the perilous, enigmatic deities’ realm!”

“Qi Zhongdao, Han Baling, Ba Xiaoyu, Qi Changsheng, Master Spiritual Vulture…” Wu Suiyun voiced the names of the Three Saints, the Four Rapscallions, Li Yao, and Master Bitter Cicada. Then, after pondering for a moment, she turned her eyes to Emperor Phoenix and asked, “Are you the incumbent emperor of the Great Qian Dynasty? Although your Cultivation and your determination are slightly lower, you are deeply associated with the deity. So, we’ll simply count you in!

“The ten of you are probably the top ten experts with the highest Cultivation and the vastest forces in the Ancient Sages Sector today. Just now, according to the secret observation of Meng Chixin and I, you were strongminded enough to not be enchanted by the ‘deity’, and you knew the importance of letting go of your previous grudges and fighting against a common foe when you were faced with a crisis!

“Your Cultivation, resolution, strategies, and responses to changes should be more or less enough for you to discuss the plans to save the Ancient Sages Sector with the two of us now!

“Now, clean up the great mess outside and ask everybody to stop attacking each other. Set up a camp at the center of the warship and settle everyone down first.

“Then, we will take you to a place where we will explain what happened to us in the past hundred years and how dark and terrifying the real world out there is!”

Chapter 1506 - The Divine Palace Below the Divine Palace!

“Big Bear, everyone else.”

Observing everybody’s face, Meng Chixin could easily tell that they were not fully convinced by what the two of them had just said. He said frankly, “If you are suspecting that we are up to something else, you can stop wasting your time. If we truly had ill intentions, we wouldn’t have left the Cloud Qin Gold Statue! It is extremely dangerous to have shown up in front of you unprotected in our current appearance!”

That was rather true.

The Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators could transform their soul and will into spiritual energy, thereby travelling in the world without the boundary of their body temporarily. Their soul boasted basic resistance against the radiation and interference of the outside world, too.

However, the body was the best container for the soul of a human being after all. Even a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator could not survive for long when they left their body.

When their body was damaged and they turned into spectral Cultivators, their level would certainly plunge, and their combat ability was very likely to sink to the Nascent Soul Stage.

Their only solution was to practice Cultivation arts for the ghosts, like Wan Mingzhu, the mother of all ghosts.

But such arts were often in conflict with the unparalleled techniques that they had trained with while they were alive. Without the stabilization of a body, the odds of their mental derangement would significantly increase. It was an action whose returns were disproportionate to its risks.

All in all, despite the high level of the two spectral Cultivators in the Divinity Transformation Stage, their combat ability was not necessarily much higher than the combat ability of the super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

Should three to five of the super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators attack them together, it would be practically impossible for them to defend themselves.

Since they had proved themselves capable of maneuvering a Cloud Qin Gold Statue perfectly, they could have crushed their way through. There did not seem to be any need for them to crawl out of the Cloud Qin Gold Statue and resort to tricks.

Since they had chosen to face everybody in their weakest form, it was indicative enough of their sincerity.

Everybody whispered among themselves and discussed the situation.

Li Yao observed coldly and thought hard.

If everything that they had said was a trap, it was such a fine and delicate one that he had no choice but to fall into.

Also, with the two intimidating Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators there, and the other super Nascent Soul Stage

Cultivators keeping each other in check, it was not like that he could just expose his identity and admit that he was an ‘alien’, right?

‘Deity Raincloud’, the other alien, was still tied up so tightly that she looked like a mummy!

Li Yao did not think that the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector would bother to check the difference between the two ‘aliens’.

It appeared that he could only wing it now and see what the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were trying to sell.

Meng Chixin was Han Baling’s master after all, and Wu Suiyun seemed to have some kind of relationship with Qi Zhongdao.

Led by the two of them, the rest of the super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators soon accepted the proposal of the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators.

Now that the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators and the ten super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators had made the call, the remaining Cultivators on the spot naturally had nothing to say except to obediently listen to their orders.

It took them four hours before they finally cleaned up the mess outside.

Under the suppression of the unparalleled experts, the Cultivators outside who were part of the simulation of the small dark forest finally could not cause any more fuss.

The two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were quite familiar with the internal structure of the Nuwa warship.

They pointed out a few rather spacious cabins for the Cultivators to rest in. Those cabins were designed for the use of the ten-meter-tall giants. So, after the Cultivators who belonged to different forces entered the cabins, they were able to claim different corners and stay away from each other, keeping the temporary truce.

“The ten of you, come with us. We will tell you everything.”

Wu Suiyun and Meng Chixin slowly drifted toward the depths of the Nuwa warship. Li Yao and the other super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators hurried to follow them.

The Nuwa warship had been stabbed into the ground upside-down like a spear. So, the deeper they went, the closer they were to the head of the warship.

The two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators floated through the zigzagging, complicated tunnels, like two apparitions that were leading the ten super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators into the depths of hell. The air was both solemn and creepy.

“A hundred years ago,” Wu Suiyun said slowly, “to settle the grudge between us and the contradiction between the Great Qian Dynasty and the prairies, Meng Chixin and I had a life-and-death battle in the depths of the Land of Eternal Night.

“There’s no need to elaborate on how magnificent the battle was. All in all, our surging spiritual energy caused a bottomless crack to form in the seemingly indestructible ice layer, just like the one that made you fall down to this place, except that it was not as huge.

“With our Cultivation, we certainly did not fall into the canyon easily, but we sensed the weird, monolithic existence that was deeply embedded in the ice at the same time. It felt like an enormous, flawless building. That turned out to be a warship in the ice.

“Oh, you call it the Divine Palace? Right. We thought that it was a relic or a residence left by deities from the primeval era at first, too!

“Meng Chixin’s Cultivation was on par with mine. Neither of us was able to defeat each other after a fierce battle. If we wanted the battle to have an outcome, we would have to continue fighting for another three days and three nights.

“Also, our personal grudge wasn’t that deep at that time. My late husband, Shi Zongyue, did not die because of him in general. It was more about the fate and the future of the Great Qian Dynasty and the Dark Cloud Prairies!

“The contradiction between us wasn’t enough to deprive us of our sanity. We were both surprised at the appearance of the Divine Palace in the ice. We thought about how many benefits the force that we belonged to would gain from it if the relic was controlled by us!

“Naturally, we did not want each other to monopolize the Divine Palace, but we were not relieved to call a truce and return home to summon reinforcements, because who knew that the other guy wouldn’t invade the unguarded Divine Palace first and move all the ultimate treasures away while we were traveling back home?

“At an impasse, we weighed the pros and cons for a long time and finally decided to explore the Divine Palace together and figure out what it is exactly.

“Of course, we can’t deny that we might have been thinking of luring each other into the Divine Palace and setting up traps against each other.

“Everything inside the Divine Palace, including the corpses of the primeval deities and the dozens of the Cloud Qin Gold Statues, as you have seen with your own eyes just now, was a great eye-opener for us at that time. We were amazed.

“However, what astonished us most is that this isn’t the only Divine Palace in the ice. In fact, there are two overlapping Divine Palaces, one on top and the other below!”

“What!”

Even Li Yao had been unaware of the shocking information before. He exclaimed together with the other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

“What we are walking on right now is in fact not a Divine Palace but a warship of the deities’ realm similar to a flying boat boosted by spiritual energy.” Meng Chixin continued the explanation. “Of course, its size is thousands of times larger and more advanced than a regular flying boat. But if we get to the bottom of it, this isn’t an underground building that was buried in the depths of the tundra below the ice in the first place but a mobile fortress that should be flying in the sky. It dived down into the ground, perhaps even intentionally. That is why it is now deeply embedded below the earth!

“Deep below the earth, there is another Divine Palace that is even more enormous. That place is perhaps more qualified to be called the real Divine Palace!

“You have seen the remains of the fierce battles of primeval creatures just now, I presume. Did you notice that the primeval creatures can be classified into two camps? The styles of the stripes on their armors are entirely different, like two unique marks.

“The stripes on the armor of some primeval creatures are rigid and straight, without the slightest arcs or curves. Let’s call those primeval creatures the devils.

“The stripes on the armor of some other primeval creatures meander like rivers and roads. They radiate to the surroundings in a somewhat chaotic way. Let’s call them the deities for now!”

Li Yao was secretly impressed by the computational and deduction abilities of the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators. Despite the lack of modern education, the two ‘ancient Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators’ were still able to tell the difference between the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan just based on the minor traces.

Under their keen eyes, he and Long Yangjun could not have been more careful.

However, since they had addressed the Pangu Clan as ‘the devils’, did it mean that they were more in favor of the Nuwa Clan?

“It was almost twenty years later when we finally figured out the whole thing,” Wu Suiyun said. “The palace of the devils was deeply hidden below the earth until it was discovered by the warship of the deities for some reason. The deities’ warship did not seem to boast better methods to attack the underground palace. Therefore, it simply crashed into the earth at the speed of a shooting star, using itself as a weapon. It pierced through the ice and tundra, penetrating into the palace of the devils.

“Then, the warriors on the deities’ warship would be able to march into the palace of the devils without any trouble from the point of impact!

“However, by the time Meng Chixin and I discovered it, the channel leading to the palace of the devils had been fully sealed and covered in dust. It was obvious that nobody had set foot into it for tens of thousands of years.

“After Meng Chixin and I finished the preliminary exploration on the deities’ warship, naturally, we grew curious about the mysterious barrier that was covered in dust.

“Meng Chixin and I were both in the Divinity Transformation Stage. We were not interested in most things in the mortal world, but the mysterious relic that was obviously related to the primeval era and the deities’ realm caught both our attention.

“The more obscure and difficult opening the barrier was, and the harsher and more terrifying the runes written in a complicated language next to it were, the more interested we grew and the more determined we were to open it!

“After struggling for an entire month, Meng Chixin and I finally unlocked the barrier and opened the mysterious pathway to the devils’ palace!

“At that time, the two of us thought that we were the strongest beings in the Ancient Sages Sector. Never did we expect that such dangers would be awaiting us in the palace of the devils and kill us in a way that we couldn’t fathom!”

Horror and regret were written all over Wu Suiyun’s face.

All the super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators could not help but feel that their head was dizzy. They could not imagine what could possibly make a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator ill at ease after a hundred years!

Chapter 1507 - Bloating!

Seeing that Wu Suiyun had been caught in staggering memories, Meng Chixin spoke up. “The ‘Divine Palace below the Divine Palace’, according to our later analysis, should be a secret residence of the devils where they ran the most sordid and brutal experiments.

“But at that time, in our ignorance and overconfidence in the strength of the Divinity Transformation Stage, we did not think that the primeval creatures were to be feared even if there were any. So, we barged into the palace of the devils together.

“The scale of the palace of the devils is hundreds of times larger than the deities’ warship that we are in right now. It is extremely sophisticated, with secret chambers, pathways, and warehouses everywhere!

“This warship crashed into a corner on the topmost layer of the palace. A lot of warriors of the deities flooded in and had a fierce battle with the devils. It was also a gory, messy battlefield.

“The fierce battle must’ve taken place around two hundred thousand years ago. Ninety percent of the area in the palace of the devils was completely destroyed by the deities. It then collapsed and perished in the passage of time before it was filled with rocks and became worthless ruins.

“But the few floors at the bottommost area seemed to be unharmed from the deities’ attacks.

“Wu Suiyun and I discovered many items there that were beyond our imagination or the description of any words.

“There were several hundred enormous glass tanks in which bizarre-looking corpses were soaked. Some of them looked like human beings, some looked like hybrids of human beings and animals, and some others were hideous existences with queer limbs and sometimes internal organs exposed to the air!

“Some of the objects were in the shape of human beings but had sharp sabers and swords as the limbs. There were even human heads that were connected to weapons and magical equipment!

“Think about. At the center of a broad flying sword that was blinking coldly, a crystal vesicle like a giant pearl was embedded, and a human head was accommodated inside the vesicle. Two huge eyeballs that had been dry since a long time ago were connected to the head, and they were staring at me!

“Such a creepy scene made even us feel chilly and dizzy even though we were in the Divinity Transformation Stage!”

Meng Chixin’s voice was hoarse and deep, full of persuasiveness. As he elaborated, all ten Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators pictured the same vivid and horrible scenes in their minds.

When they thought of the weird techniques to integrate a human brain with a piece of magical equipment, the super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators all felt their hearts grow cold, as if somebody had pinched them with a cold claw!

Li Yao, however, knew exactly what it was.

The underground palace that the Nuwa warship had crashed was probably a secret laboratory of the Pangu Clan.

Li Yao had seen the biotechnology to combine flesh and blood with magical equipment in both the Mausoleum of Chaos and Kunlun. It was indeed a typical method of the Pangu Clan.

Then, it was obvious that the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were not lying. If they had not seen it with their own eyes, it was impossible for the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector to imagine such a scene based on nothing.

“That place was even more dreadful than hell, if hell does exist.” Wu Suiyun sighed gloomily. “Meng Chixin and I both winced, but everything around seemed to have been sealed and destroyed hundreds of thousands of years ago. Despite the appalling scenes, we did not really run into any danger. Also, he and I were not best friends. Neither of us was willing to propose to retreat, fearing that we would each be mocked by the other. In the end, we made a deal to explore the last floor before we exited the devils’ palace.

“On the last floor in the devils’ palace, we discovered a… graveyard of an enormous scale!

“Although I’m describing it as a ‘graveyard’, the place looked extremely weird. There was indeed a circle of about a hundred translucent coffins at the periphery. Bizarre-looking corpses of the devils were loaded inside the coffins.

“But for some reason, the coffins all looked particularly lackluster, and the corpses inside had either withered or crumbled into piles of dust.”

Li Yao thought of something and realized that it was certainly the hibernation capsules of the Pangu Clan.

The members of the Pangu Clan had hoped to survive for hundreds of thousands of years by way of ‘hibernation’ at the bottom level of the secret laboratory.

However, according to Wu Suiyun’s description, a certain accident had taken place inside the secret laboratory, which caused the malfunction of the hibernation capsules and the abrupt deaths of all the members of the Pangu Clan.

Perhaps it was because of the disruption of the energy supply caused by tectonic movements. Perhaps it was because the Nuwa Clan destroyed the core of the secret laboratory during their assault. Perhaps a certain uncanny virus went on a rampage… Anything could happen during a hibernation of hundreds of thousands of years, and the odds of success were particularly low in the first place.

“Those crystal coffins were just placed around the periphery of the graveyard. They were stabbed into the dense holes on the wall, connected to some thick crystal tubes like those providing energy for the Cloud Qin Gold Statues.

“At the enormous space in the center of the graveyard, there was an area of black soil that looked like a swamp. Black ceramic tanks filled the soil. They looked like bug eggs that were emitting metallic colors and wine tanks that had been buried underground for decades. Rings of extremely small, dense runes covered them. Even the air reeked of a sweet, stinky smell.

“I’ll never forget the smell for the rest of my life.

“Almost a hundred tiny holes were opened on the top of the black tanks, from which thick, bright green air was spurting out, forming a mist that would never disperse on the dome.

“It was like an eccentric monster was lurking inside every tank!”

Graveyard! Bug eggs! Wine tanks! Mist! Monster!

Wu Suiyun’s few words brought the ten Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators to a mysterious, suffocating world.

Short-tempered, Ba Xiaoyu scratched his face and asked earnestly, “What was the place exactly? Was it really the burial ground of the primeval creatures? What was inside the ‘wine tanks’? Were there really monsters inside?”

“We don’t know,” Wu Suiyun replied bitterly, “because we were assaulted right before we planned to break a ‘wine tank’!

“What assaulted us were monsters the size of a basin that looked like both spiders and crabs with a particularly long bone tail behind them!

“Meng Chixin and I had travelled in the Ancient Sages Sector for many years and left our footprints in the most dangerous lands in the world. We had seen too many cruel and brutal animals, beasts, and monsters, but never had we seen such a weird and disgusting thing before.

“The monster was extremely fast. It could also envelop itself with the vague mist that it spurted out from the ten or so protruding holes on its back to hide itself and its scent. We could barely lock onto them despite the senses of the Divinity Transformation Stage.

“Also, there was a great number of them. Almost twenty of such monsters jumped out from everywhere in the graveyard at us. Caught unprepared, my body and Meng Chixin’s were both stung by their bone tails heavily many times!

“We both sensed that they had injected something into our bodies through the tails!”

“Was it poison?” Ba Xiaoyu widened his eyes as he exclaimed. “Was it lethal poison that killed you both?”

Wu Suiyun sighed softly and shook her head. “It would’ve been acceptable if the thing was just an incurable poison. I wouldn’t be whining about it after a hundred years if so.

“At that time, Meng Chixin and I both thought that we had been poisoned and were about to die.

“At the time of life and death, the two of us both grew ruthless. We summoned spiritual energy without considering anything else and went through quite some trouble to finally annihilate and obliterate the long-tailed monsters that looked like hybrids of spiders and crabs!

“However, the ‘wine tanks’ that were densely distributed in the black swamp seemed to have sensed the immense spiritual waves. They exploded one after another.

“New monsters were being bred from inside!

“Seeing that it was no good, Meng Chixin and I fought to retreat. Then, at the cost of some damaged magical equipment, we blew up the pathway from the graveyard to the upper floor. We also collapsed the few floors above later in order to completely bury the ‘graveyard’!

“While we were sabotaging the building, both of us felt that our head was dizzy and our soul was unsteady. Even our limbs seemed to be leaving our control. We knew that it was a sign that the poison was attacking.

“The poison was extremely weird and had never been seen before. No matter how many antidotes we devoured and however hard we tried to suppress it with massive spiritual energy, we failed to hold back the indescribably odd feeling.

“Meng Chixin and I did not dare linger in the devils’ palace any longer. We fled all the way back to the deities’ warship and sealed the barrier to the devils’ palace again without leaving any gaps. We even added another twenty or so new barriers with our own techniques before we were finally relieved.

“At that time, we both felt that the world was shaking and that our soul was falling apart. Some sort of strength that had been restricted for hundreds of thousands of years seemed to be trying to burst out of our body!

“Expand. Expand. Expand. We both felt that our internal organs, limbs, veins, nerves, and everything on our body was expanding nonstop!

“We knew that it was not an illusion due to the poison but something happening in reality because we could see each other clearly. We were both expanding crazily like balloons being blown up!

“Our skin was ripped apart, and our flesh and blood bloated. Even new bones and veins had grown out of our bodies!

“In the blink of an eye, we grew from the normal size of a human being to giants more than ten meters tall at a visible speed!

“Not only did we grow larger in size, we also had brand-new organs that we had never seen before!

“I felt that my head was aching terribly, and my skull was producing cracking noises as if it had been pierced through by a flying sword. Only a moment later, a new eye grew out at the center of my forehead!

“I have thought about the colors and pictures that the new eye saw for a hundred years, but I still can’t describe them to you today!

“Meng Chixin was the same. He grew two thick horns on his head, and his eyes expanded to ten times their normal size. His pupils were encircled by more than ten dark gold rings that were fluctuating nonstop. The brilliance beaming out of his eyes seemed enough to burn a hole in the hardest rock!”

Chapter 1508 - Devil-Sealing War!

Wu Suiyun’s voice was shaking. She could not help but extend her hands of pure spiritual energy toward her translucent head, as if she still could not forget the weird, excruciating pain even though she had been a ghost for a hundred years!

Ripples were spreading out from Meng Chixin’s soul, too, making it as unpredictable as smoke billowing in the wind. He said coldly, “Wu Suiyun and I both observed each other’s changes. We were both tortured by the flowing magma inside our bodies! Expanding from less than two meters tall to almost twenty meters tall in just one moment was an extremely gruesome process that drained all the strength in our flesh, blood, and soul. We couldn’t have felt more exhausted, drained, and hungry!

“However, the changes to our bodies were not the scariest part.

“The weirdest changes took place in our souls and feelings!

“We felt that a poisonous fire was burning blatantly in our soul, destroying our feelings and corrupting them little by little!

“You will not be able to understand the feeling unless you experience it in person. All in all, we gradually lost our sense of delight, hatred, panic, fear, anger, and all other emotions. They were all replaced by tranquility. The most extreme tranquility!

“Logically, after discovering that we had ended up becoming horrible giants, we should’ve felt panicked or desperate and even counterattacked!

“However, except for the initial struggle, the two of us somehow gradually accepted everything later. All of a sudden, we lost the notions of ‘fear’, ‘panic’, and ‘desperation’. We felt that we were sinking to the bottom of a deep blue ocean, where we were enshrouded by seaweed and jellyfish into an enormous cocoon. When the cocoon broke apart, we would be reborn into something new!

“Our memories and self-awareness of the past were fading away. A new ‘will’ and ‘destiny’ was gradually blossoming in the deepest parts of our souls!

“We were about to be completely transformed into a new life form by the venom!”

Everybody felt creepy as they listened to the story.

The weird liquid that altered someone’s body and turned them into another life form was indeed ten thousand times more dreadful than the most lethal poison!

After a moment of deep thought, Master Bitter Cicada observed, “According to what you have just said, the effect of the mysterious poison sounds like the arts of ‘possession’ adopted by the evil Cultivators.

“However, if it were ‘possession’, there should’ve been two souls that were even more powerful than yours, which was apparently not the case. It doesn’t make sense.”

“It was definitely not ‘possession’!” Meng Chixin replied affirmatively. “Wu Suiyun and I were both Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators. We naturally knew a thing or two about the secret arts of possession. During a ‘possession’, the victim’s body will be occupied by the intruder, and the soul of the victim will probably be eliminated forever!

“However, the mutations that happened to our body did not eliminate our soul but caused weird changes to it. We were transformed into something that boasted our own will but did not appear to be ourselves. We were a different life and a different species!”

“Your experiences are truly unbelievable, seniors!” Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar widened his eyes and asked, “What happened later? Were you transformed?”

The answer to the question was obvious, but nobody had the time to nitpick. They simply waited for the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators to answer while holding their breath.

Embarrassed, Meng Chixin said, “At that time, we were both in peril. I knew that some sort of tough primeval devils must’ve invaded our bodies in ways that we couldn’t understand!

“They had been sealed beneath the snow field for more than a hundred thousand years perhaps exactly for that moment, the time of their reincarnation! If we couldn’t stop them, they were certainly going to escape and savage the world of human beings!

“With the Cultivation of the Divinity Transformation Stage, and the terrible enhancement of the primeval devils, it would be practically impossible for anybody to stop two such dreadful monsters!

“Also, thousands of ‘wine tanks’, in which the monsters that contained the venom were stored, were in the ‘graveyard’ at the bottom level of the devils’ palace. There was no telling how many human beings they could transform into primeval devils!

“In such a case, chances were that the entire Ancient Sages Sector, both the Great Qian Dynasty and the prairies, would be destroyed because of the recklessness of Wu Suiyun and me!

“Hell would descend upon the human world, and devils would walk the earth. All the living creatures would either turn into devils or end up as food and slaves for the devils!

“I knew that I had made a huge mistake and couldn’t have regretted it more, but there was nothing that I could do to stop the mutations inside my body.

“Right then, Wu Suiyun suddenly roared and crashed into me, showing the sign that she was going to kill me!

“I was knocked against the wall, and a bloody hole in my abdomen had been made by her sharp claw. My internal organs were broken apart, but the excruciating pain finally refreshed me and awakened my self-awareness. The irritating feeling caused by the mutations inside my body was gradually suppressed, too!

“Looking at Wu Suiyun’s burning eyes, I immediately understood what she was thinking.

“The two of us had been invaded by the devils, which we definitely couldn’t get rid of on our own.

“Once we lost control of ourselves, the devils would certain manipulate our bodies to break the seals and unleash the rest of the monsters.

“Or rather, the devils would simply go to the prairies or the central plateaus to kidnap some of the strong Cultivators and send them to the bottom level in the devils’ palace, thereby establishing an army of devils!

“Right then, there was only one way to stop them!

“The two of us would die together and seal the only two devils that had lunged out of the devils’ palace in our corpses!

“Although Wu Suiyun and I were fighting for the interests of the Great Qian Dynasty and the Dark Cloud Prairies on different sides, the Ancient Sages Sector was our mutual home. Our families and successors were on both the prairies and the central plateaus. There was absolutely no way that our world could be reduced to a paradise of the devils!

“Since it was our fault, we should correct it with our own hands!

“Eventually, we managed to control our continuously expanding and mutating bodies with the last bit of self-awareness to attack each other until we both died!”

Meng Chixin talked very briefly about their death.

However, the ten Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators including Li Yao could totally imagine the most soul-stirring and yet unknown battle that had taken place under the ice a hundred years ago!

On the surface, it was a battle between two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, but in fact, they were attacking the mysterious devils to save the world with their life as a weapon based on their pride and dignity as human Cultivators!

Li Yao, who knew part of the truth and understood that the devils belonged to the ‘Pangu Clan’, felt that his heart was pounding and his blood was boiling after hearing the story!

The pride of humanity was never to be conquered!

Even in such a secluded place as the Ancient Sages Sector, some human Cultivators had still been fighting against the Pangu Clan in their own way a hundred years ago!

“We are here,” Wu Suiyun said in a low voice. “Ahead is the place where Meng Chixin and I died. It is also the place where the underground palace is sealed. For the convenience of research, we haven’t touched anything here over the past hundred years!”

Li Yao was refreshed and glanced around.

He found himself in an enormous cone-shaped building that looked like the inside of a hollow horn.

Li Yao had once seen similar structures at the front ends of some warships of the Nuwa Clan on Kunlun.

It was a mobile cabin specifically designed for boarding battles and assaults. They were like extensible ‘tusks’. Hollow in the middle, they could accommodate a large amount of magical equipment for close-distance battles such as crystal suits, Colossi, and various kinds of weapons.

When engaged with the enemy, if the warship had the advantage in close-distance battles and hoped to break into the enemy’s warship for such battles, it was possible for the warship to attract the hostile warships and fortresses with the immense force triggered by the magnetic units around the warship or pull the warship itself over to the enemy!

When the two parties were attached to an extremely short distance, such ‘assault fangs’ would pierce out. With the super alloy structures and the attack rune arrays carved on the surface, they would tear apart the spiritual shield and other defenses on the enemy’s warship. Then they would penetrate into the interior part of the enemy and even reach the most vulnerable key part!

The front ends of the assault fangs would blossom like flowers, and the waiting warriors would march forward without any hindrance and launch a strike on the enemy’s core directly!

Everything made sense now.

This particular Nuwa warship had been aware that there was a secret laboratory of the Pangu Clan deep below the ice and that some terrible experiments were being conducted there.

However, due to the lack of sufficient orbital attack approaches, the warship could only adopt the most simple and straightforward approach by smashing itself into the ground and drilling through the rocks. It hit the shell of the Pangu Clan’s secret laboratory directly and even pierced through the laboratory’s defenses into its core with the ‘assault fangs’!

That was why the warriors of the Nuwa Clan and the Pangu Clan had fought fiercely on the Nuwa warship and in the laboratory of the Pangu Clan simultaneously!

The ten Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators seemed to be walking in the middle of a cone-shaped cave. The further they walked forward, the narrower the path became. At the front end of the cone stood a round, bronze gate on which countless helical runes had been carved and were swallowing and releasing light like tides.

The bronze gate was almost forty meters tall. As splendid and magnificent as a gate that truly led to the deities’ realm, it was broad and high enough for the strongest warriors of the Nuwa Clan and the super large Colossi to pass through quickly.

After the rusting of more than a hundred thousand years, the runes on the gate were somewhat obscure, and the tide-like brightness looked rather lackluster.

Li Yao suddenly had a weird feeling.

The ‘gate’ was slowly dying, and the barriers attached to the gate were getting weaker and weaker.

There was no telling whether it was simply because of the passage of time or because something was attacking and corrupting the gate from the other side.

On the right side of the bronze gate, two tall, huge corpses were leaning against the wall. They were both in weird shapes and utterly deformed because of their fierce battle.

Chapter 1509 - Mutation of the Junk Genes

The two corpses were exactly as Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun had described.

One of them was around thirteen meters tall, shorter but plumper. A third eye that had already dried protruded out of the forehead. The arms of the corpse were particularly long, and long bone spurs were growing out of the two sides of the arms like long blades. Even the joints on the legs had contorted to bend forward instead of backward.

The other corpse was about sixteen meters tall. It was a healthy, muscular male. A circle of horns rose up from its head like tumors. There were also two horns rising up from the temples like two sabers. Moreover, tremendous bizarre-looking appendages were growing on the shoulder blades, elbows, and hips. The appendages on the shoulder blades were particularly delicate and connected, as if they were a second pair of arms that had grown out.

The two enormous bodies were very similar to the bodies of the Pangu Clan that were everywhere to be seen on the Nuwa warship. Yet, their flesh and blood appeared rather ‘fresh’ and did not explode into dust when new air flooded in all of a sudden.

Although their faces had been extremely twisted, some of Wu Suiyun and Meng Chixin’s features could still be vaguely distinguished on the parts on their faces that were not blocked by scales and bone spurs.

Also, on their hands, feet, and some other body parts, except for the expansion in size, traces of the Pangu Clan had not been revealed. It was like combining the body of an enormous human being with the body of a member of the Pangu Clan. Those parts must have been on the verge of mutation but never completed the process.

The stomachs of both dead bodies had been cut open, and their guts had been ripped apart and burnt up into ash by the fire of spiritual energy.

The broken bodies were still silently telling the goriness of the battle a hundred years ago!

After hearing the astonishing changes that had happened when the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators visited the place, and witnessing their bloating bodies in person, all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were caught in a prolonged silence. They could not have been more stunned by the shocking facts!

Li Yao was also greatly disturbed!

The Pangu Clan!

Wu Suiyun and Meng Chixin, two Cultivators of the human race, had turned into members of the Pangu Clan after they were assaulted by certain crab-shaped monsters that injected some sort of ‘venom’ into their body!

At first, it seemed to be something utterly unbelievable.

However, on second thought, it was not theoretically impossible!

The civilization of mankind and the Pangu civilization shared a child-parent relationship. Such a theory had been proved by many facts.

By the estimation of the historians, archeologists, and biologists of the Star Glory Federation, the original human beings were probably a brand-new species that the Pangu civilization refined with a certain type of ape after implanting the genes of the Pangu Clan, the Nuwa Clan, the Kuafu Clan, the Zhurong Clan, the Gonggong Clan, and other primeval species into the subjects.

Although the Pangu Clan’s purpose was to create a cheap and useful tool, they did endow the ‘tools’ with their own genes.

Therefore, it was possible that the gene segments of countless primeval species were included in the gene strands of human beings!

The newborns of human beings all had a chance to experience atavism, in which case they would grow long hair all over their body or a tail resembling that of a monkey.

Then, if such atavism could be controlled precisely, was it possible to activate the gene segments of the Pangu Clan hidden deep inside the gene strands of human beings and turn them into ‘dominant genes’ so that human beings could mutate into members of the Pangu Clan by the atavistic force?

There was also another possibility. Perhaps, the human beings that had been regarded as ‘tools’ in the beginning had a very weak genetic connection with the Pangu Clan, and they could not be transformed.

However, before the Pangu Clan perished, it was very easy for them to raise a certain batch of special ‘human vehicles’ and implant all the genes of the Pangu Clan after they were highly compressed into the gene strands of human beings!

As those human beings lived and reproduced, naturally, they would pass on the highly-compressed genes of the Pangu Clan generation after generation. The descendants of every generation would be the carriers of the entirely of the Pangu Clan’s genes!

After hundreds of thousands of years, those carriers had been scattered throughout the entire universe along with the expansion of the civilization of mankind. After the carriers were injected with special ‘activation drugs’, the seemingly meaningless ‘junk genes’ hidden deep inside their gene strands would suddenly be triggered and unleash all the power of the Pangu Clan, transforming human beings into members of the Pangu Clan!

Was it a plausible possibility?

Maybe!

At the very least, Li Yao was well aware that, despite the profoundness of the biotechnologies of the Blood Demon Sector and their in-depth research on the genes of human beings and demons, more than ninety-five percent of one’s genes were considered ‘junk genes’ or ‘blank genes’ whose usages and functions were unclear!

It meant that, to pass on the normal body functions of a human being, the other five percent genes would suffice!

Then, why did the ninety-five percent of the genes appear inside the cells of human beings? Were they really ‘garbage’ and ‘blank’?

Or were they hidden for a highly dangerous purpose that human beings had not recognized yet?

Li Yao trembled coldly in his heart. The more he thought about it, the more he thought that he was approaching the truth.

Yes. He knew why the Pangu Clan had established a weird laboratory deep below the surface of the Ancient Sages Sector!

It was for succession!

Just like the Blood Stripe Virus' 'possession of civilization' and the Monument Plan that Gui Suishou had raised, the Pangu Clan had been trying everything that they could to continue their civilization!

According to the theory of the Imperium of True Human Beings and the current situation of the universe where human beings played an absolutely dominating role, the Nuwa civilization and human beings must have won the God-Sealing War hundreds of thousands of years ago, and the Pangu civilization had been completely suppressed and wiped out!

Since the sages of the Pangu Clan had left eight volumes of the Book of Revelation as the heritage of their civilization, was it possible that they had other plans to pass on the tinder of their civilization?

It was highly likely.

Even a hundred years ago in the Star Glory Federation, a tiny force that had only three Sectors, experts had brainstormed and come up with almost twenty plans to save the civilization when faced with the unavoidable catastrophe, and the plans had been carried out at the same time.

Hundreds of thousands of years ago, the Pangu civilization was doubtlessly the king in the universe. When they were faced with destruction, they must have had more than one plan of succession!

Since the situation back then had not been in the Pangu civilization’s favor, they would have hidden in the corners of the universe for a hundred thousand to two hundred thousand years, like the seeds in the form of spores and the insects going through hibernation, until the universe was peaceful again and the time was right. Then, they would be revived and rebuild their civilization!

It was a very reasonable and practical idea!

The Book of Revelation was the first plan to realize the idea.

Sealing the members of the Pangu Clan inside the hibernation capsules in the hope that they would survive hundreds of thousands of years with the pulsar and other powerful celestial bodies as the energy sources was probably another plan.

The shortcomings of the two plans were very obvious.

The Book of Revelation would not necessarily fall into the hands of appropriate candidates. Even if the new species did grasp the content within the Book of Revelation, they could still barely be called the reincarnation of the Pangu civilization. Such a method was merely more of consolation.

The hibernation cabins were too large in size and required the incessant supply of spiritual energy. They were too eye-catching.

Hundreds of thousands of years could be a long time. Who knew what kind of unexpected changes would happen halfway?

Chances were that the members of the Pangu Clan would finally wake up from a prolonged hibernation only to discover that their limbs and torso had been cut off and that their head was preserved in a glass tank being studied by another super civilization!

It would certainly be an awkward situation!

Neither of the two plans were very reliable. So, the Pangu civilization certainly had more plans!

For example, encrypt and pack up the key gene segments of the Pangu Clan through sophisticated methods and transplant them into the gene strands of human beings, which would be their vehicles while they were in hibernation!

Then, raise the hybrids of spiders and crabs that boasted remarkable survival and hibernation abilities and could automatically secrete ‘activation drugs’!

Once the time was right, the monsters would be released to attack human beings.

As long as the ‘activation drugs’ were injected into the bodies of human beings by the monsters, the mysterious genes that seemed ‘useless’ and ‘blank’ at the end of the gene strands of human beings would reveal their brutality and ruthlessness, swallowing all the features of human beings that had existed earlier!

Human beings would be turned into the Pangu Clan!

The civilization of mankind would be replaced by the Pangu civilization!

Or rather, the so-called civilization of mankind was merely made of ‘servants’ and ‘slaves’ who watched over the universe temporarily for the Pangu civilization while the latter was lying dormant for hundreds of thousands of years!

Li Yao spat hard in his heart.

If his guess was correct, it was indeed a most horrendous plan!

However, it seemed that the plan had only just been initiated and was merely in the preliminary experiment phase.

Right. Covered by the dark nebula, the Ancient Sages Sector was a natural secret chamber in the universe. It was a most suitable Sector for their crucial, clandestine experiments!

However, no matter how inconspicuous the Ancient Sages Sector might have been, it had eventually been located by the Nuwa civilization.

According to Li Yao’s speculation, the fleet of the Nuwa civilization that Long Yangjun’s previous life belonged to, after hearing that the Pangu Clan was running such terrible experiments in the Ancient Sages Sector, was determined to destroy the laboratory and smother the plan while it was still in the cradle.

Then, there was the scene that Li Yao and the other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were looking at.

The Nuwa warship pierced through the shell of the Pangu Clan’s laboratory. The elite warriors on the two sides had a fierce battle and died with each other.

Judging from the traces on the spot and the experiences of the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, the warriors of the Nuwa Clan must have accomplished most of the aims. They had demolished the laboratory, sabotaged the plan, and completely sealed the laboratory from the outside.

However, they had failed to destroy the room where the most critical ‘activation beasts’ were raised. So, countless ‘activation beasts’ that could transform some of the human beings into the Pangu Clan were still hibernating underground.

Li Yao did not know how the war ended exactly. Perhaps the Pangu civilization had been suffering a losing streak and had no time to care about this particular laboratory, and the weird interference and blockage in the dark nebula outside of the Ancient Sages Sector prevented the Nuwa warship from sending a message out.

All in all, as the Pangu civilization and the Nuwa civilization perished with each other, the civilization of mankind grew up independently, and the Ancient Sages Sector was gradually forgotten.

Then, hundreds of thousands of years later, Wu Suiyun and Meng Chixin, two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, had a fierce battle in the Land of Eternal Night, and the battlefield happened to be right above the Nuwa warship.

Chapter 1510 - Doorkeeper

“If that’s the case, Long Yangjun’s background is easy to explain,” Li Yao said to the mental devil in his head. “During the time of the God-Sealing War, Long Yangjun’s previous life was an important person on this Nuwa warship or even the entire fleet. For example, she could’ve been the captain of the assault team.

“The fleet of the Nuwa Clan discovered the Ancient Sages Sector that was hiding deep inside the dark nebula by accident during a patrol. It might’ve even figured out the secrets about the Pangu Clan’s plan of succession by luck!

“However, for various reasons, they were deeply mired in the swamp. They were not able to jump out of the dark nebula nor send a message back to their base.

“Well. The dark nebula at that time was probably still very thick, enough to completely block this place from the rest of the universe.”

In his one-hundred-year hibernation, Li Yao had observed that, as time went by, the density of the dark nebula was actually slowly dropping. In another ten thousand years, the dark nebula that was covering the Ancient Sages Sector would probably have entirely disappeared.

On the other hand, hundreds of thousands of years ago, the density of the dark nebula must have been unbelievably high, and there would have been the most powerful interference. If a warship accidentally jumped in, it would have been practically impossible for the warship to jump out.

Li Yao had once discovered a star map of the primeval era on Kunlun. On that particular star map, there was not a dark nebula around the Ancient Sages Sector.

Therefore, the ‘dark nebula’ was probably an ‘artificial blackout’ that the Pangu civilization had constructed by taking advantage of the magnificent power of the celestial bodies in the universe. It was a military defense array designed to protect that top secret plan of succession!

When the ‘array of darkness’ was first activated, its intensity must have been at the highest point. It was perfectly normal that the messages could not be delivered!

All in all, whether because the messages could not be delivered or because the army of the Pangu Clan stationed on the planet had discovered them and might move the laboratory while they were waiting for reinforcements, the Nuwa fleet that Long Yangjun had been in made the decision—they would launch an assault on the Ancient Sages Sector alone!

“The attacks of the Nuwa fleet almost annihilated all the soldiers of the Pangu Clan in the Ancient Sages Sector and destroyed the majority of the Pangu Clan’s laboratory. The breeding base at the bottom level was the only thing left behind.

“This Nuwa warship has been suppressing the breeding base ever since. Long Yangjun’s previous life left a seed when she was dying, hoping to continue fulfilling her responsibility in distant future!

“On the one hand, she sent messages to the mother port persistently and reported the situation here, hoping that the messages could be delivered after the dark nebula outside grew thinner.

“On the other hand, perhaps she was also playing the role of ‘guardian’ and ‘sentinel’. She needed to remind the latecomers who arrived here of what happened in the past and what kind of horrifying existences were hidden in the underground laboratory!”

Li Yao thought quickly and reflected on his speculation.

There were certainly many errors in the details, and he would have overlooked a lot of things, but that should be the gist of what had happened in the beginning.

In such a case, there would be a perfect explanation as to why ‘the second generation of Long Yangjun’ was launched out of the Nuwa warship in an escape capsule.

Wu Suiyun and Meng Chixin, two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, were probably not enough to wake up the captain of an assault team of the Nuwa civilization.

However, they had broken the barriers, barged into the Pangu Clan’s laboratory, and even released the most terrible ‘activation beasts’, turning themselves into living individuals of the Pangu Clan!

There must have been certain rune arrays and magical equipment to detect the individuals of the Pangu Clan inside the Nuwa warship. After the warship discovered the invasion of the Pangu Clan, it urgently woke up Long Yangjun, who was in the fetus state, and launched her out of the warship after pouring some random, obscure information into her head.

Then, it charged the communication magical equipment with all the spiritual energy that it had accumulated for probably hundreds of years and sent out another warning to the mother port billions of lightyears away for the last time!

Perhaps, in the hundreds of thousands of years in the past, the Nuwa warship had sent out warnings to the outside world countless times, but because of the interference of the dark nebula, all the warnings had vanished on the long journey in between.

But this time, the dark nebula was finally thin enough to allow the warnings to pass through.

The warnings were immediately perceived by the Nuwa fleet's past mother port, which was the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector today!

Then, the many stories including the Star Glory Federation's shock and Li Yao's voyage in the dark nebula began!

"Hu…"

After figuring out all the critical parts of the whole event, Li Yao took a deep breath in relief. He was sweating hard but felt extremely comfortable!

"Help me examine it. Are there any major flaws in my deduction?" Li Yao spoke to the mental devil. Before it replied, Li Yao frowned. "No. There's another question that hasn't been answered yet.

"In the past tens of thousands of years, it's obvious that some other Cultivators once entered certain cabins on the Nuwa warship. Otherwise, the rumors about the Divine Palace wouldn't have spread in the outside world, and it would've been impossible for the locals of the Ancient Sages

Sector to create the Thousand Stars Tray, which can parse the map core of the Divine Palace!

“Then, it is quite odd. Why did the Cultivators in the past hundred thousand years not open the seals or get injected by the ‘activation beasts’ with the drugs?”

Li Yao felt that his heart was very uncomfortable, like a cat was scratching it even if there was only a tiny loophole in his theory.

“It is not a very important flaw,” the mental devil replied. “There are two possibilities.

“Firstly, the Pangu civilization could’ve set a time limit when they devised the ‘plan of succession’. For example, the plan would not be activated until fifty thousand years or a hundred thousand years later. They did not want to wake up too early, in case they exposed themselves when the universe was still under the absolute control of the Nuwa civilization.

“Therefore, before the designated time, all the ‘activation beasts’ would be kept in the hibernation or spore state. They would not come out and cause any trouble.

“However, this isn’t a very plausible possibility, and I’m more in favor of the second one. The activation beasts wouldn’t bite just anybody. They would only the targets that were strong enough to be transformed into beings of the Pangu Clan!”

Li Yao was dazed for a moment, “Strong enough to be transformed into the individuals of the Pangu Clan? What do you mean?”

“Literally what I said,” the mental devil replied matter-of-factly. “Normal human beings are only slightly above two meters tall at most, while the members of the Pangu Clan can be more than ten meters tall or even larger. Do you think that growing from a human being into a member of the Pangu Clan won’t consume spiritual energy?

“As powerful as the Pangu Clan might’ve been, it would have been impossible for them to make things out of nothing. They would have had to abide by the conservation of energy. So, during the process where human beings are transformed into members of the Pangu Clan, astronomical spiritual energy must be consumed!

“If such spiritual energy cannot be absorbed from the outside world, they would have to count on the reserve within their body!

“To put it simply, it is impossible for ordinary people and low-level Cultivators to bear the crazy consumption when their gene strands are activated for them to be transformed. Chances are that their body and soul will be drained, and they will end up being a mummy halfway through the transformation!

“Only the individuals who are above a certain level—say, the top experts in the Nascent Soul Stage and the Divinity Transformation Stage, who have sufficient spiritual energy stored inside their body—can expect to survive the transformation. They are the primary hunting targets of the ‘activation beasts’!”

“Fair enough!” Li Yao snapped his fingers in his heart. “Only the Cultivators who are strong enough are qualified to be transformed into members of the Pangu Clan. If that’s the case, everything is explainable. Do you agree with my speculation?”

“Yes, of course,” the mental devil said with a smile. “The succession and possession of civilizations are the most common things in the universe in the first place. Just like the Blood Stripe Virus tried to possess a different civilization, it’s only natural that the Pangu civilization would try everything that they could to continue their civilization when they were dying.

“The life and death of individuals are meaningless. What the Pangu civilization pursued was not the reincarnation of a certain individual of the Pangu Clan but the rebirth of a whole civilization!

“If the transformation was completed, Wu Suiyun would still have been Wu Suiyun, and Meng Chixin would still have been Meng Chixin. However, they no longer belonged to human beings but the Pangu Clan. Naturally, they would shoulder the destiny to revive the Pangu civilization!

“Tsk, tsk, tsk. What a remarkable plan. It is much simpler, more efficient, and more delicate than the Blood Stripe Virus, which lurked on meteoroids like idiots and aimlessly drifted in the universe!”

The mental devil chuckled, as if it had found amusement in other people’s misfortune. “If your speculation is true, the civilization of mankind is in an awkward situation right now!

“Let me tell you a story…

“Once upon a time, there was an invincible, wealthy general who lived in a splendid castle with his beautiful wife and concubines.

“Inside the castle were mountains of gold, pools of wine, the sharpest weapons, and the solidest armor!

“In a corner of the castle, there was a slave who did the most filthy, exhausting, and menial work in the castle. He was no better than the cows and horses raised in the castle.

“One day, the general was wanted for a certain mission, and he temporarily promoted the slave to be a ‘doorkeeper’, entrusting the whole castle to the slave. Then, he threw all his belongings and women into the castle and left, never to be seen again.

“Just like that, hundreds and thousands of years passed, but the real master of the castle never returned.

“Perhaps, the first generation after the slave remembered their identity as a ‘doorkeeper’. They fulfilled their responsibility dutifully and did not dare do anything that was unexpected of them.

“However, the offspring of the slave gradually forgot that they were the ‘doorkeeper’. They enjoyed the gold, the wine, the weapons, and the women in the castle at ease and considered themselves to be the master of the castle!

“Hehe. If the master of the castle never returns, this might be a happy ending for everybody.

“But what if the master comes back?

“Human beings have considered themselves the strongest fighting species in the universe and the only dominator in the three thousand Sectors since they raised their heads and found their ambition in the sea of stars for the first time.

“But are we the masters of the universe or just humble doorkeepers?

“Right now, the familiar footsteps of the master in the past are echoing outside of the castle and drawing closer and closer. What are we going to do?”

Chapter 1511 - World-Blighting Crisis

Li Yao was at a loss after hearing the mental devil’s words for a moment.

But the next moment, he frowned and sniffed. “Cut the cr*p! You’re messing with my mind again! Even if what you said is true, the original master of the castle never left voluntarily. He was expelled in humiliation after the uprising of the slaves in the castle!

“In any case, the universe is in the hands of human beings right now. Our ancestors once fought side by side with the Nuwa Clan and claimed the universe with their fists, blades, and blood. If the Pangu civilization is planning a comeback, they’d better be prepared to pay ten times more fists, blades, and blood!

“Hehe. Since we suppressed the Pangu Clan during the God-Sealing War, we can do so again right now and even annihilate them for good!

“It is perfectly realistic if you look at Wu Suiyun and Meng Chixin’s personal experiences. However thorough and clandestine that succession plans of the Pangu Clan were, they were not guaranteed to be successful. They failed to control two ancient Cultivators, not to mention the brand-new human beings that are armed by the modern Cultivation civilization outside!”

Li Yao was full of admiration and appreciation for Wu Suiyun and Meng Chixin, the two seniors in the Divinity

Transformation Stage.

It had nothing to do with their nationality, identity, affiliation, era, or morals.

He was simply deeply moved by the valor and the sense of sacrifice that somebody of his species could demonstrate!

In order to correct their mistake and prevent the devils of the primeval era from savaging the human world again, the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators had made the same decision simultaneously and killed each other in such a desolate land with absolutely no eyewitnesses!

Li Yao found it hard to imagine their mental state at that time. He wondered what he would have done if he were in the shoes of Wu Suiyun and Meng Chixin.

However greatly the two ‘ancient Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators’ differed from the modern Cultivators in terms of ideology, they lived up to their name as ‘Cultivator’ and were certainly nothing like the selfish members of the six major sects.

Li Yao also thought about whether or not their words were made up and were in fact a new trap. For example, they could have already been controlled by the Pangu civilization, and they might be luring everybody to their bodies on purpose.

However, on second thought, such a possibility was little to none because if they were indeed controlled by the Pangu civilization, it would have been unnecessary for them to tell everybody so much inside information.

They were obviously capable of maneuvering the Colossus. As long as they moved the black-skeleton-like Colossus to this place and broke the barriers by brute force, connecting the ‘assault fang’ of the Nuwa warship to the underground laboratory again, a lot of ‘activate beasts’ would certainly be released.

When two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were interfering nearby, a lot of the ignorant Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators would have been attacked by the ‘activation beasts’ and transformed into new members of the Pangu Clan!

It was the most simple, straightforward, and secure plan. Li Yao had simulated it many times in his head. The odds of success were almost one hundred percent.

What they were doing right now seemed redundant if they had ill intentions.

Therefore, Li Yao chose to believe them.

But then, there were new questions.

What choices would the two super experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage make after partly learning the truth about the universe and the threat that their home was faced with?

“Senior Wu, Senior Meng, in the hundred years that followed, have you always been waiting on this warship?” Li Yao asked respectfully.

“Yes. We did not really have an option other than staying here,” Wu Suiyun explained. “When Meng Chixin and I attacked each other, we both felt that our souls were being corrupted by the mysterious force and undergoing very dangerous mutations. Therefore, we attacked as fiercely as we could without any reserve and nearly obliterated each other’s soul!

“After we were killed by each other, only the broken pieces of our souls were still drifting in the warship. There was absolutely no self-awareness.

“If it were in the outside world, such feeble soul remnants would’ve been vaporized into nothingness under the scorching sun, and we would have gone for good.

“However, the shell of the deities’ warship is particularly solid, and stable and comfortable gas fills the cabins. This place is almost like an artificial paradise where all the inference of the outside world can be resisted.

“A lot of crystals that were not dry yet could be found next to the various warehouses and corpses. For the soul, they were like inexhaustible food.

“Our remaining souls drifted for almost twenty years inside the warship and sucked the spiritual energy contained in the crystals, nurturing and recovering ourselves. Finally, we condensed our consciousness again and regained our memories of the past.

“However, we were still extremely vulnerable at that time. We were not even as good as the general ghosts, much less reproducing our Cultivation in the Divinity Transformation Stage.

“Outside of the warship was a snowy world in the Land of Eternal Land, which was frequented by the most violent tempests and blizzards. With the strength of our souls, we would have been ripped apart by the tempests and frozen by the snow after we took our first step beyond the warship!

“Therefore, Meng Chixin’s soul and mine were confined to the deities’ warship completely!”

Meng Chixin grinned and said, “Moreover, after discovering the deities’ warship and the shocking secret in the underground palace, and since this place was a paradise for nurturing souls and there were so many primeval treasures and corpses worth studying, we couldn’t bear to leave even if somebody asked us to!”

All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators nodded. They understood the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators very well.

For the two unique Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators in the Ancient Sages Sector, they could get power, position, wealth, and all the other mundane things without any trouble. Chances were that they could not have felt more bored when it came to such things.

The deities’ warship, the devils’ underground palace, the primeval treasures, the prehistoric war between the deities and the devils… Only such things that concerned the ‘origins’ and the ‘future’ of the entire world were enough to attract the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators and make them explore and research willingly!

“Although Wu Suiyun and I belonged to different sides, and we even had a life-and-death battle for the fate of the Great Qian Dynasty and the Dark Cloud Prairies, we both realized that the Ancient Sages Sector was probably faced with unimaginable and barely resistible threads after we discovered the weird ‘graveyard’ in the underground palace and were transformed into terrible monsters. An out-and-out ‘world-blighting crisis’ was descending upon us!

“Compared with the world-blighting crisis, the fate of the Great Qian Dynasty and the Dark Cloud Prairies was insignificant and even hilarious!

“Only if we abandoned our grudges and cooperated with each other could we seize the slim chance to help the world that we live in survive the crisis!

“Therefore, in the decades that followed, we stayed in the deities’ warship to recover our souls with the crystals while we studied everything there.

“There are quite a few advantages to being ghosts without real entities. Other than the few crucial cabins locked by special barriers, we could enter the rest of the cabins without any obstacle, and we could study everything inside however we wanted!

“After our research, we discovered an extremely shocking truth, which is about the existence of the ‘deities’ realm’ that we mentioned just now!”

After saying that, Meng Chixin paused for a moment. He glanced at the many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who were pretending to be calm but in fact sweating hard. Then, he smiled and said, “It is not precise to call it the ‘deities’ realm’. In fact, there is an infinite sea of stars and countless worlds beyond the Ancient Sages Sector!

“Since we are talking about the sea of stars, do you know what the real ‘stars’ are?

“No. Not the glittering remnants around the Ancient Sages Sector. Those things can only be called cosmic dust in the boundless universe at best. How can they be qualified as stars?

“The real stars are enormous fireballs that emanate infinite light and heat, similar to the sun!

“Imagine it. In the sky above our heads, in places far, far away, billions of suns are hanging there, and next to every sun is a world that is similar to the size of the Ancient Sages Sector and possibly much more developed than ours!”

“Ah!”

All the super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were deeply awed by Meng Chixin’s words except for Li Yao.

It was almost like some fish living in a small pond had suddenly discovered that outside its pond was an island and outside the island was a boundless ocean!

Billions of suns and billions of worlds!

Even the super experts such as Qi Zhongdao and Han Baling, due to the limitation of their experience and the environment that they had grown up in, found it difficult to imagine what those worlds looked like exactly!

Infinite emptiness, horror, and solitude immediately inundated every Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator’s heart like black tides.

When human beings first discovered the vastness of the universe and that the world in which they lived was not the center of the universe but an insignificant speck of dust at the edge of the universe, they would also be mired in the abyss of fear and panic after they realized their unimportance and meaninglessness!

All the Cultivators in the worlds beyond had experienced the same drastic changes to their mindset a long time ago before they finally evolved from a planetary people to a universal people!

The locals of the Ancient Sages Sector were slowly catching up after such a long, long time.

Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun observed the ten Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators' faces without saying anything.

Their eyes stayed on Li Yao's face for the longest time, as if they had noticed that the shock that Li Yao managed to feign was different from the other people's genuine shock.

The two of them looked at each other. There was something profound and thoughtful glittering inside their translucent eyes.

"If you think about it carefully, you will understand that it is a matter of course," Meng Chixin said unhurriedly. "How powerful must the primeval creatures have been in their age? Was it possible for them to be trapped in a tiny Ancient Sages Sector forever?

"All in all, after dozens of years of studying and researching, Wu Suiyun and I finally ascertained that a universe billions of times larger exists beyond the Ancient Sages Sector!

"We may call the infinite sea of stars the deities' realm, but I prefer to call it the 'extraterrestrial domain'!

"Since the deities' realm or the extraterrestrial domain does exist, we naturally have asked ourselves a very critical question. Are there 'deities' or other beings living in the depths of the universe? Do they know about the existence of the Ancient Sages Sector? If they do, what is their attitude toward us?"

Chapter 1512 - More Concerns

Other than Li Yao and Long Yangjun, the other super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were all greatly shocked.

Having climbed to such a high level and even the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage, and after all those years when they hung around with the tricky, malicious Cultivators, they all had a profound understanding about the darkness and cruelty of human beings.

Even the benevolent Master Bitter Cicada was not an innocent, wishful hypocrite.

Also, with the things that ‘Deity Raincloud’ who could have been an outsider had done just now, they were even more concerned and wary of the legendary ‘deities’.

If the deities did exist, how did they view the ‘mortals’ in the Ancient Sages Sector, including the Cultivators?

Friends to cooperate with? Slaves to exploit? Toys to be played with? Food to be devoured? Or maybe… ants that they could casually stomp upon anytime?

The more the super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators pondered, the more unpredictable they felt their future was. Bloody darkness seemed to be awaiting the Ancient Sages Sector!

Their faces all turned gloomy. Intense worries were popping up in their eyes.

Solemnly, Han Baling said, one word after another, "Although there are a lot of deities in the legends who helped and enlightened the mortals in their compassion.

"Such legends are just ridiculous propaganda to fool the ignorant folks! If the deities do exist, and they boast resources a hundred times more bountiful than ours and abilities far above ours, I don't see any reason why they should be kind to us!

"It is like how the central dynasty that occupies the most fertile land in the world will never show the barbarian tribes from the far-flung area any respect. After all, with just a royal decree, it can get anything that it wants from the barbarian tribes and exploit them however it sees fit. All the treasures, talents, women, and livestock of the barbarian tribes will be delivered to the central dynasty!

"When the barbarian tribes slightly disobey, the emperor's army will attack thunderously and annihilate the whole tribe at the order of the court!

"It's just like how the Great Qian Dynasty annihilated more than three hundred and eighty tribes in the borderland during the first five hundred years after it was established. In the east, west, south, or north, all the tribes were subdued by the emperor's army! It's because the Great Qian Dynasty gradually decayed due to internal conflicts that its control over the borderlands loosened!

"The relation between the deities' realm and the Ancient Sages Sector is probably the relation between a powerful central dynasty and a barbarian tribe. Those 'deities' will certainly not come in goodwill. They will only be here to extort, pillage, and strangle us! We have to remain fully vigilant and fight against the deities with our sabers and swords!”

“I think that Fellow Cultivator Han is being too extreme,” Master Bitter Cicada said. “Since the deities’ realm is billions of times larger than the Ancient Sages Sector, it is obvious that there should be a myriad of species and forces in many different paradigms. They can’t be all ferocious, can they?”

Master Bitter Cicada crossed his hands and suddenly changed the topic. “However, while one should not hurt other people, he should always be prepared to be hurt. We don’t know the first thing about the extraterrestrial domain, and we must tread lightly after weighing all the factors before any decision is made.”

“Exactly.” Ba Xiaoyu clenched his tobacco tube so hard that he almost bent it in half. “If an extraterrestrial domain billions of times larger than our world does exist, there must be billions of times more top experts in the extraterrestrial domain. Chances are that they have more Cloud Qin Gold Statues and deities’ warships, too! Should they discover the existence of the Ancient Sages Sector, it will be practically impossible for the Ancient Sages Sector to resist! So, we really can’t be too prudent!”

With sweat all over his palms, he thought for a moment and added anxiously, “Right. The deities’ realm, or the extraterrestrial domain, hasn’t discovered the Ancient Sages Sector so far, right?”

Wu Suiyun sighed and replied, “You’re wrong. There’s a good chance that the extraterrestrial domain has noticed the Ancient Sages Sector.”

“What!” All the super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators jumped to their feet.

“How is it possible?” Ba Xiaoyu widened his eyes and shrieked. “How do you know that we have been discovered by the extraterrestrial domain, seniors? If they have discovered us, why did they never send—”

The Beggar’s voice came to an abrupt halt because it suddenly occurred to him that the ‘extraterrestrial domain’ did send someone over, the ‘Deity Raincloud’ who had been tied up by them!

‘Deity Raincloud’ had been captured, but when there was a first, there would be a second. Who knew whether or not an army was marching toward the Ancient Sages Sector aggressively from the extraterrestrial domain?

For a moment, all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who would not change their face color even if a mountain was breaking apart in front of them experienced the sweltering feeling that they had not tasted for a long time!

“After decades of tests and studies, Meng Chixin and I worked out how to use some of the magical equipment on the warship, and we realized the vastness of the universe beyond,” Wu Suiyun said. “Finally, in the seventieth year when Meng Chixin and I studied and trained on the deities’ warship, we suddenly discovered that…

“A piece of large magical equipment in one of the cabins on the warship had recently been activated!

“By recently, I mean within a hundred years. More exactly, it was probably during the time when we explored the underground palace and got transformed into primeval devils!

“As for the usage of the magical equipment, after we inferred for a long time, we determined that it was used to send signals to somewhere extremely far, far away in the universe!”

Including Li Yao, all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators shuddered.

Li Yao only held back his urge to cry out with all his strength.

After pondering for a moment, Qi Zhongdao said, “Are you suggesting that a certain signal was launched from the deities’ warship a hundred years to somewhere mysterious in the depths of the universe?”

“Perhaps it is not somewhere mysterious.” Wu Suiyun shook her head. “After discovering that, Meng Chixin and I dismantled the large magical equipment to study it. It took us ten years to activate a mottled map of the universe stored inside and find the locations to which the signal was sent. They were probably a few worlds similar to the Ancient Sages Sector.

“According our deduction, the deities’ warship, just like the flying boats that we make use of, obviously requires a mother port and a certain number of supply ports as shelters or to load the supplies.

“The destination of the signal was probably the mother port of the deities’ warship hundreds of thousands of years ago or places where it thought that it could reach out to the ‘deities’!

“Therefore, fellow Cultivators, unfortunately, the Ancient Sages Sector has probably been exposed to the mysterious, magnificent deities’ realm since a hundred years ago!”

Everybody felt that their head was dizzy after being blasted by the astounding news.

Li Yao even felt that his eyes were blank, and his ears were humming.

This—this—this is really bad!

Yes. The Star Glory Federation had discovered the Ancient Sages Sector, and he had locked onto the precise coordinates of the Ancient Sages Sector after the long voyage.

However, the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector had discovered the existence of the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector, too, and probably had retrieved part of the coordinates of the two Sectors. There was no telling how precise the star map that they had managed to parse was!

When old worries were not gone yet, new worries were already coming, not to mention that there was a special agent of the Imperium in between. It was truly a mess.

“It never rains; it pours.”

Meng Chixin did not give the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators any time to catch their breath. As if he intended to shock some of them to death, he said, “Right when we discovered that the deities' realm had probably set their eyes on the Ancient Sages Sector, we also discovered that the barriers blocking the underground palace were gradually losing effect!

“There's no telling whether it is because the barriers have finally been worn out after hundreds of years or because they were breached by us a hundred years ago and couldn't be restored perfectly however we attempted to mend them. All in all, by our estimation, the barriers can barely survive another hundred years. There’s a good chance that they will completely collapse within a hundred years!

“Once the barriers deployed by the deities collapse, the twenty or so barriers that we set up will be far from enough to hold back all the monsters!

“Also, we both vaguely have a feeling that a large batch of monsters is being woken up inside the underground palace. They are simmering impatiently, ready for action.

“Because of the tectonic movements in the past hundreds of thousands of years, chances are that the shell of the underground palace has already been broken. Maybe they don’t need to break through the barriers but can find a different way to climb to the surface and savage the human world!

“Everybody, this is about the situation we are in right now.

“Above our heads, in the boundless extraterrestrial domain, it is very possible that a huge batch of ferocious deities who live there have set their eyes on our world and are rushing close as fast as possible. Deity Raincloud is one of them. That person’s actions are the best clue to suggest that the deities are definitely not the kindest people in the world.

“Below our feet, there is a devils’ palace that can break apart at any time. Should the barriers be breached, the primeval devils will reappear in the human world again, transforming the entire Ancient Sages Sector into a den of devils!

“There’s no way in heaven or hell. One moment of carelessness, and our world will be destroyed by the deities or devils!

“Now, do you still feel that the grudges and contradictions between Cloud Qin and Great Qian, the sects and the homeless peasants, the crown and the powerful eunuch… and everything else really matter?”

All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were rendered speechless.

Qi Zhongdao and Han Baling looked at each other in bewilderment. Emperor Phoenix and Long Yangjun stared at each other, lost for words. Qi Changsheng was gazing at Ba Xiaoyu, and Wan Mingzhu was gazing at Master Bitter Cicada. The hate and killing intent in their eyes gradually dimmed, like a fire being extinguished by the greatest wind.

Yes. If the Ancient Sages Sector was truly an insignificant pebble at the edge of the universe that could be crushed into powder by forces a hundred times more magnificent at any moment, what was the point of fighting over the trivial issues happening on the pebble?

Desperation!

A lot of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were grasped by intense desperation.

However, the next moment, their intense desperation was devoured by their fighting will, which was even more intense!

As the dominating rulers in the world and the super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators that were only one step away from the Divinity Transformation Stage, they shouldered the hope and the future of the entire Ancient Sages Sector. They were too determined to bend so easily!

Chapter 1513 - Twelve Angry Men

“Even if there are deities above and devils below, are we just going to sit here and wait to be beheaded without doing anything?” ‘Heaven Battering King’ Qi Changsheng grinned hideously and spat on the ground. “I don’t care if they are deities and devils—they will have to prove that they are capable enough if they want to kill me!”

“Of course, we won’t wait to die while doing nothing!” Wu Suiyun said. “After discovering the deities and the devils, Meng Chixin and I tried moving out of the Land of Eternal Night to deliver the message to the outside world more than once, but the tempests and the snowstorms were too ferocious, not to mention the creepy mist in the middle of the ice shell. Because our souls were not protected by functioning bodies, our endeavors all failed.

“Thankfully, there were many intact Cloud Qin Gold Statues in the deities’ warship.

“In the ten years that followed, Meng Chixin and I focused most of our attention on the usage of the Cloud Qin Gold Statues, hoping to maneuver a Cloud Qin Gold Statue to break out of the snow field!

“But it’s a shame that the Cloud Qin Gold Statues are designed for living people, and living people are different from ghosts after all. Also, we lacked the enlightenment of a teacher. We only tried time and time again and studied on our own. The progress was extremely slow during the ten years. Eventually, we were able to manage one Cloud Qin

Gold Statue with the two of us to perform fundamental movements such as walking, jumping, or punching.

“With those movements, it seemed possible for us to rush out of the Land of Eternal Night. Meng Chixin and I planned to spend another year gathering as many crystals from the deities’ warship as possible and performing a full examination on the Cloud Qin Gold Statue. Then, we would break through the snow field in the Cloud Qin Gold Statue and reappear in the human world!

“However, right then, you guys showed up!

“Your arrival was within our expectations. When we discovered that the Ancient Sages Sector was probably already exposed to the universe, we had deduced the possibility of such an event. The ‘mother port’ of this particular warship was very likely to send deities to trace the signal back to the Ancient Sages Sector!

“Once they did arrive in the Ancient Sages Sector, the deities’ warship, as the source of the signal, would certainly be their primary target!

“So, we had long guessed that some ‘deities’ might be lurking among you!”

“That explains a lot!” Qi Zhongdao took a deep breath in relief. “Sister Wu and Senior Meng hid in the Cloud Qin Gold Statue intentionally because you wanted to find out who the deities were, right?”

“That’s only part of the reason.” Meng Chixin smiled. “At that time, we didn’t know how strong the deities were. Naturally, we couldn’t allow the deities to notice our existence. Should the situation have gone out of control, we would still have a shot for a last struggle!

“On the other hand, we were hiding inside the Cloud Qin Gold Statue because we intended to watch how the deities maneuvered the Cloud Qin Gold Statue. We did learn a lot of tricks during our observation, which drastically improved our piloting skills. If we had to grope in the dark on our own, we might not have been able to figure out the tricks even after another hundred years of hard work!

“Also, when using the Cloud Qin Gold Statue, the user would have to unleash most of the soul power in the moment, which could be a heavy burden. So, that would be the most vulnerable moment for the ‘deity’. Only if we launched an assault at such a moment would we be certain to capture the deity alive at no risk!

“But most importantly of all, it was because we meant to investigate you in secret first!”

Qi Zhongdao was dazed for a moment. “Investigate us?”

“A hundred years have passed. We did not know the latest situation of the Ancient Sages Sector. We were unaware of the new heroes and experts that have emerged in the world of Cultivators. We did not know if your wisdom and personalities proved yourselves qualified to discuss the great plan with us,” Meng Chixin admitted frankly. “Naturally, we needed to investigate you!

“With only two spectral Cultivators, it is impossible to save the entire Ancient Sages Sector. We will need the help of even more experts!

“The experts who are qualified to decide the future of the Ancient Sages Sector must not be simple warriors who have more brawn than brains. They can’t be selfish and treacherous despite their cleverness, either. Strength, wisdom, determination, devotion. None of them are optional.

We are looking for the people who really consider the world and are willing to pay everything to save the Ancient Sages Sector from destruction!”

Wu Suiyun glanced at everybody and continued with a smile. “Although the ten of you vary in your stance, position, and side, and perhaps you are pretentious, vicious guys in each other’s eyes, your performance in the fierce battle just now is a hundred times better than the selfish, narrow-minded guys from the six major sects!

“It is true that the emperor was once manipulated by the deity, but that was only because he was trying to revive the Great Qian Dynasty for the sake of the people. I believe that you will not betray the Ancient Sages Sector for your selfish interests, will you?”

The young emperor was immediately moved after hearing those worlds. He was almost sobbing as he gnashed his teeth. “I… I will die before I sell the enterprise of my ancestors!”

“I have no doubt about that. If we have to select some fellow Cultivators to fight side by side with us to save the Ancient Sages Sector from destruction…” Meng Chixin’s eyes suddenly turned extremely sharp. His voice became resolute, too, like a crazy wind blowing on the prairies. “Wu Suiyun and I have decided that you will be our partners!”

The ten Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators looked at each other in bewilderment. Everybody except Li Yao and Long Yangjun felt that a fiery dragon was rolling over inside their chest impatiently and irritating them!

“The twelve of us will decide the future of the Ancient Sages Sector?” Qi Zhongdao mumbled. “What about the six major sects and the other Cultivators?”

Wu Suiyun sniffed and casually said, “They are too unworthy for our cause!”

It was indeed an appropriate remark.

“What do you think?” His eyes glittering, Meng Chixin put on a weird smile. “What’s your opinion on the crisis that the Ancient Sages Sector is faced with right now, Fellow Cultivators?”

“We…” Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar scratched his hair so hard that his dandruff was falling down. “As Senior Meng has pointed out, the deities’ realm is a boundless place with innumerable experts. The twelve of us may be capable enough to dominate the Ancient Sages Sector, but in the infinite universe, we are nothing more than a grain of dust. How are we going to resist the massive attacks of the devils and the deities?”

Meng Chixin smiled and said unhurriedly, “Wu Suiyun and I only said that we will protect the Ancient Sages Sector. We didn’t say anything about resisting the deities and devils. The future of the Ancient Sages Sector will be decided by everyone here. If you all believe that it is a better option to surrender to the deities, I will definitely accept the decision without any reluctance.”

“What!” It was Ba Xiaoyu, Qi Zhongdao, and Li Yao who were dumbfounded this time. “S—Surrender to the deities?”

What kind of Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were they? They had been speaking so inspiringly and in such a blood-boiling manner, yet they were planning to surrender without any resistance? That seemed rather gutless!

Damn it. Is this guy actually some spy of the Imperium of True Human Beings?

Although he knew that it was a highly improbable possibility, Li Yao could not help but shriek in his heart.

“Why not?” Meng Chixin pointed at the things nearby. “Look at the scale of the deities’ warship and the delicacy of their magical equipment. Check how powerful the weapons that the deities and devils once used are, including the almighty Cloud Qin Gold Statues. Are we able to resist any of that? If the deities really make up their mind to lay their fingers on the Ancient Sages Sector, there is barely any way for us to fight back!

“Hitting a rock with eggs is an idiotic action. It doesn’t matter if you want to kill yourself. Chances are that you will even be able to leave your name in the history books as a valiant hero who never gives up. But right now, we are talking about the entire Ancient Sages Sector and the lives of billions of people!

“Are you trying to drag billions of people to die together with you just in order to realize your ‘valiance’? It doesn’t seem like what a noble Cultivator would do!”

Qi Zhongdao and Ba Xiaoyu looked at each other. “But—”

“Hehehehe…” Meng Chixin chuckled in a low voice and pointed at Wu Suiyun. “The expression on your face is identical to Fellow Cultivator Wu’s when I first proposed the option of ‘surrender’ to her!

“Getting to the bottom of it, Wu Suiyun, Qi Zhongdao, and Ba Xiaoyu, you are all Cultivators from the central plateaus. You are used to being on top of the world where you enjoy the feeling of being worshipped by the barbarians!

“For you, surrender is the greatest humiliation and an intolerable, shameless action!

“However, for those who have a hard time living in the barbaric lands such as myself, surrender and obedience to the central dynasties when they are powerful is a perfectly normal option!

“For tens of thousands of years, haven’t the Cultivators from the Dark Cloud Prairies such as us, those from the Southland of Sorcerers such as Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, and those from the mountains in the southeast, the scorching land in the northwest, and the islands on the surging east ocean been doing this all the time?

“If the barbarian Cultivators were determined to die before we surrender, the remote land would’ve been entirely eliminated by the central plateaus!

“Is it really humiliating to surrender temporarily when you are overwhelmed? As long as surrender means survival, there will always be a chance for you to seek a comeback one way or another!

“Surrender to the central dynasties, learn their culture and techniques, build up our own strength in secret, and wait for the internal conflicts of the central dynasties. Then, take the chance to rise and replace them!

“That’s exactly what all the barbarian regimes did when they marched from the remote areas to the central plateaus in the history of the Ancient Sages Sector!

“When the Dark Cloud Prairies were under my lead, I was preparing to do the same, too!

“It appears that Big Bear has also done quite a good job with that, doesn’t it? Hahahaha!

“In such a case, after realizing our capabilities and our current situation, why can’t we do exactly the same and regard the Ancient Sages Sector as a ‘barbarian regime’ and the deities’ realm as a ‘central dynasty’? We will surrender to them temporarily and learn from them modestly, until we swallow all their essence and challenge them later!”

“Well—”

All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were shocked by Meng Chixin’s determination.

While other people were still shocked at the vastness, formidability, and mysteriousness of the deities’ realm, Meng Chixin was already bold enough to consider challenging it!

He truly deserved to be a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator who had dominated the prairies a hundred years ago. He also deserved his nickname as the ‘Wolf God’, because he was a fearless and ferocious as a voracious wolf!

Chapter 1514 - The Altruistic Traitors!

“Excellent!”

Heaven Battering King Qi Changsheng had been the first one to jump to his feet, shouting to fight the deities. He was also the first to respond to Meng Chixin at that moment. The leader of the bandits scratched his head and laughed. “I was wrong just now. Senior Meng, you’re right. In any case, as long as we preserve our strength and live on despite the humiliation, there will always be a chance to rise again!

“If this is just a false surrender, I don’t think that it is entirely unnegotiable under appropriate terms. I surrendered many a time when I was hunted by the court’s army and the b*stards from the world of Cultivators before. What’s the big deal? It was just a means to an end! In the end, when I found the opportunity later, I still crushed those b*stards, didn’t I? Hahahaha!”

Crack!

Biting the tobacco tube hard, Ba Xiaoyu glared at him. “Who are you calling b*stards?”

Qi Changsheng glanced at him and chuckled. “Those who hunted me before are the b*stards. Old beggar, you were never involved in the business between me and the main sects before. Why are you jumping up in such a hurry?”

Ba Xiaoyu sniffed. “Because I don’t like hypocrisy! Your Heaven Battering Army first rose up based on the homeless peasants when you were under the tyranny and forced to do so. However, you committed as many crimes later after your force grew huge! Had it not been for the upcoming deities and devils and the great crisis that the Ancient Sages Sector is faced with, I would've chopped off your stupid head a long time ago!"

"Ha?" Qi Changsheng's eyes were glittering. He extended his head toward Ba Xiaoyu and slapped his neck hard with his palm. "Come on. Here. My great head is right here. Why don't you come and take it away?"

"You—" Flames of spiritual energy began surging out of Ba Xiaoyu's body immediately!

"Why are you stammering?" Qi Changsheng was not worried at all. He grinned hideously and said, "Didn't I committed many crimes? Do you have any idea what crimes are? Don't think that you are truly a beggar who understands the life of ordinary folk and their suffering after you put on dirty, ragged clothes and added a few ulcers to your body intentionally!

"Let's face it, Ba Xiaoyu. You are just an honorable aristocrat with quirks. Even though you can pretend to be a humble, devastated beggar, you are a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator deep to your bones! You will never feel the oppression, pain, and hatred that the real homeless peasants, beggars, and poor folk are enduring! Never!

"You have no idea what happened in the northwest in the past. You don't know how the unscrupulous officials and the scumbags among the Cultivators dealt with the Heaven Battering Army and our family!

"You are just a noble wearing the clothes of the poor who thinks that he is serving justice, yet you are talking about ‘crimes’ with the people who have really been suffering all this time? That’s hilarious!

“What? Do you feel that it is a great and gratifying cause to help the weak when you hang around with the people, especially when the bullies don’t recognize your formidability? Hehe. It’s your own business if you prefer to play the role of a beggar. By all means! But don’t swagger condescendingly in front of me because I know exactly what you’re made of!

“If you are really capable, just overthrow all the officials and Cultivators who are exploiting the ordinary folks in the northwest and give us the justice that we deserve! Otherwise, get lost with your haughty, pretentious attitude, and don’t mind how the poor people are going to save themselves and retaliate against the bullies who have oppressed us before!”

Ba Xiaoyu was rendered speechless before Qi Changsheng’s sharp tongue. There was frustration on his face!

“Fellow Cultivators, let’s all calm down for a moment. There’s no need to quarrel.” Master Bitter Cicada stood between the two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, separating them from each other. He pondered for a moment and said, “I believe that, despite all our differences and grudges, we share at least one thing in common—we hope for the happiness of the people and do not wish to see the destruction of the Ancient Sages Sector.

“If there is a way to relieve the Ancient Sages Sector of the torture of wars so that all ordinary folk can live in peace and prosperity, even if it is ‘surrender’, such a way is definitely worth considering, too.

“After all, just like Fellow Cultivator Wu and Fellow Cultivator Meng said, the extraterrestrial land is too vast, and the deities there are too formidable. Other than anything else, if they simply land two hundred Cloud Qin Gold Statues on the Ancient Sages Sector, how are we going to deal with them?”

Master Bitter Cicada’s question was quite sharp. He depicted part of the capabilities of the deities’ realm in a way that everybody could understand.

Everybody looked at each other in bewilderment, deep in thought.

It was indeed a good question. One Cloud Qin Gold Statue had already caused major trouble for them. The Cloud Qin Empire in the past had even claimed the entire world with only twelve Cloud Qin Gold Statues!

How many Cloud Qin Gold Statues were out there in the deities’ realm? Presumably, at least one to two hundred!

What were they going to do if a hundred Cloud Qin Gold Statues landed on the Ancient Sages Sector?

“Whether we consider the surrender to be a necessary step so that we can challenge them later or sincerely surrender to a formidable force in the deities’ realm in exchange for their protection in order to ensure the happiness of the common folk of the Ancient Sages Sector, both of which are viable options, there is one thing that is yet to be answered—”

Looking at Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun in the eyes, Master Bitter Cicada asked, “How can we be certain that they will be willing to accept our surrender?

“If the Ancient Sages Sector is but a grain of sand in their eyes and the Cultivators here are merely ants, they may not need our surrender at all. In such a case, aren’t we fooling ourselves right now?”

“That’s probably not the case!” Meng Chixin shook his head. “There’s need to underestimate ourselves. Perhaps Wu Suiyun and I overstressed something just now, which misled you into thinking that we boast absolutely no way to fight back against the deities’ truth. That’s not necessarily true!

“This ‘Deity Raincloud’ here is our first clue. If we are just ants for the deities’ realm, it should’ve been easy for her to stomp on us and kill us!

“However, Deity Raincloud and her subordinates seemed to count on the formidability of their weird armor and the Cloud Qin Gold Statue too much. If they are deprived of their armor and their Cloud Qin Gold Statue, they might not even be as good as you. What do you say, emperor?”

Emperor Phoenix lowered his head and replied dutifully, “Yes. When ‘Deity Raincloud’ taught me the arts of the deities’ realm, I felt that while the deities’ realm attached great importance to the power of the armor and magical equipment, their own Cultivation was not necessarily much higher than ours.”

“That’s right.” Meng Chixin pondered for a moment and said, “Perhaps the Ancient Sages Sector is incomparable to the deities’ realm in terms of overall capabilities. For example, the Ancient Sages Sector only has two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators and three hundred Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, and the deities’ realm may have hundreds of Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators and ten times more Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, which is quite likely.

“However, a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator is a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator wherever they are, and the same goes for a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. We, as the top-tier experts of the Ancient Sages Sector, can’t be too weak even by the standards of the deities’ realm. At the very least, we are of value to be exploited. Otherwise, Deity Raincloud wouldn’t have hesitated to kill Han Baling, Qi Changsheng, and Wan Mingzhu at the cost of ending on bad terms with the emperor!”

Qi Zhongdao’s eyes suddenly glittered. “Senior Meng, are you suggesting that Deity Raincloud is trying to take advantage of us and ask us to fight for her in the deities’ realm?”

“Most likely!” Meng Chixin nodded. “It is not scary to be taken advantage of. As long as we are of value, we will be able to negotiate with them using our ‘value’. Just like Qi Changsheng said, even if we surrender, we will still be able to reach a deal that is in our favor!

“As long as the reward is good enough, what’s the big deal with being made use of? When the tribes on the Dark Cloud Prairies suffer natural disasters and all the livestock are killed in the freezing weather, it is a common practice for us to be hired by the sects and forces in the central plateaus and fight for the people of the central plateaus, isn’t it?”

“In such a case…” Qi Zhongdao’s eyes remained as sharp as before. They were not wavering at all even if he was faced with a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator. “Senior Meng, you have long been prepared to surrender. Then, why did you kill those people who surrendered to Deity Raincloud?”

Meng Chixin was amused. He casually replied, “Surrender and surrender can be different. It’s true that I made the most sensible judgement after recognizing the vastness of the deities’ realm and the formidability of the deities, which is that the Ancient Sages Sector does not have a second way out except to surrender to the deities’ realm!

“However, the surrender that I have in mind is to submit the Ancient Sages Sector as an integrated whole. We will surrender together and negotiate the terms together so that we can fight for the best interests of our world!

“I dare not say that I’m utterly selfless, but I can swear to the infinite sea of stars over my head that I, Meng Chixin, have never placed the fate of the Ancient Sages Sector above my selfish interests, and I will never do so in the future!

“But those guys who surrendered to Deity Raincloud were different.

“Those selfish, shortsighted, and shameless scoundrels became dogs wagging their tails, begging for mercy, after Deity Raincloud tossed out some petty benefits. They would bite anyone they were asked to, even their comrades and siblings!

“They surrendered only for themselves. As long as they could gain the tiniest benefits from it, I have no doubt that they would sell the entire Ancient Sages Sector without blinking their eyes!

“Let me put it frankly. Our target right now is to sell the Ancient Sages Sector at a good price. However, those shameless scoundrels would only consider for their personal gains, and they would sell the Ancient Sages Sector cheaply at the first opportunity if they were kept alive!

“That’s what Wu Suiyun and I said just now. United! We have to be united!

“Surrender can be an art, too. Such things often happened when the tribes on the prairies surrendered to the central dynasties—the central dynasties would buy part of the tribes over with some petty benefits and consider them the spies on the prairies before the central dynasties instigated trouble among the tribes, making them fight against each other and be divided and diminished together!

“Eventually, the central dynasties tamed the entire prairies with the least effort. But then, the tribes who had been bought over in the beginning would be useless and dealt with immediately!

“Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, I believe that such things are anything but unusual in the Southland of Sorcerers as well, right?”

Chapter 1515 - Backgrounds of Deity Raincloud

Li Yao’s heart changed quickly between pounding and absolute stillness. Solemnly, he nodded and replied, “Exactly. Divide and conquer is the best play of the central dynasties. If all the barbarian tribes were united wholes, they would be a major headache for the central dynasties!”

“It’s not just the barbarian tribes. The bandits are treated exactly the same way!” Qi Changsheng spat on the ground resentfully. “A few years back, the Heaven Battering Army was not the only force of homeless peasants in the northwest. There were also almost thirty different armies!

“At that time, I tried to talk sense into the leaders of those armies. It didn’t matter if they surrendered to the court, but they had to make clear who they were exactly. Would the court ever sincerely trust us?

“Therefore, we must be united. Even if we had to surrender, we would only surrender for a decent price. Also, we must not attack each other even after we surrendered!

“The fine bows will be hidden after the birds are all shot down, and the hounds will be cooked after the cunning rabbits are caught. The court only accepted the surrender of some armies of homeless peasants because there were more armies of homeless peasants that they needed to deal with! If all the homeless peasants were annihilated, what could the people who surrendered in the beginning do?

“However, some of the leaders just wouldn’t listen to me. Not a moment after the court had thrown a meatless, flavorless bone to them, they wagged their tails impatiently, begging for mercy. After their surrender was accepted, they immediately changed their banner and really thought that they were with the court. They went back and attacked the poor brothers whom they used to fight side by side with!

“That is what happened several years when the armies of homeless peasants fought each other brutally in the northwest. They nearly wiped out each other before the court was able to do so! Last winter, my Heaven Battering Army was crushed by those traitors, and even I could only hide in the caves like a rat!

“In the end, guess what? The bandit leaders, who attacked their companions in the past without any reserve, slowly lost all their subordinates during the fierce battles! They thought that they would be rewarded by the court for their contribution in annihilating the bandits, but they were all executed by the court for the crime of rebellion before I was killed! Hahahaha. Little emperor, was it your idea?”

Emperor Phoenix narrowed his eyes and coldly said, “They are unpardonable, insane criminals in the first place. They were only a means to an end. How could they ever be appointed as real officials of the court?”

“The southeast is exactly like the northwest!” shrieked ‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu. “There were traitors in the White Lotus Cult who sold the organization out and surrendered to the court just for petty benefits. However, those blind, gutless fools didn’t gloat for long before they were thrown away like ragged clothes after all their value had been exploited! Their outcome was miserable!”

“Well said, everybody. They are the best examples to demonstrate how a community will fall apart when external enemies take advantage of our division!” Meng Chixin concluded. “Now, you should understand why we must kill those selfish, wavering, shameless weasels, right?

“To surrender or to fight a bloody battle, and which force to surrender to even if we decide to surrender… Such questions can be discussed slowly, and the final result, whatever it is, will be acceptable for everybody.

“But we have to be united and face the deities’ realm with a common stance no matter what!

“The Ancient Sages Sector can only have one voice. Nobody is to get in touch with the deities’ realm surreptitiously and surrender for their own benefits with no regard of the big picture of the Ancient Sages Sector!

“If such traitors do appear, they shall be executed without delay!”

In the end, Meng Chixin was almost yelling. The magnificent killing intent of the ‘Wolf God’ swept across the entire room like a storm of daggers!

Including Li Yao, everybody felt that dozens of sabers were churning brutally inside their chests and heads. They could not help but tremble hard.

“Alright. The situation is basically clear to everybody right now. Let me summarize and see if we can reach the most basic consensus.”

Wu Suiyun stood in the middle of Meng Chixin and the ten Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, slightly easing the atmosphere. She calmly said, “Firstly, regardless of your side and stance, and despite your past conflicts, I believe that you are willing to consider the big picture of the Ancient Sages Sector instead of only your personal interests, right?”

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators looked at each other. Master Bitter Cicada was the first to nod. “If the Ancient Sages Sector can be safe and sound, I will not hesitate even if I have to be minced apart and confined to hell forever!”

The other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, although not as benevolent as the monk, were certainly much better than the selfish scoundrels from the six major sects. They all nodded.

“Alright, since we are all considering the future of the Ancient Sages Sector, in order to save our world, we can resort to anything possible. Fight, surrender, schemes, betrayal… Even the most whimsical ideas should be up for discussions. We should have no concerns or be bound by any rule or law in the world. Do you concur with that?”

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators pondered for a moment and all nodded one after another.

Saving the Ancient Sages Sector was of course the top priority. What rules could eclipse one’s own world?

“Thirdly…” Wu Suiyun observed everyone’s face. Glad at the calmness and rationality of the many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, she continued. “During our discussions, we can express our opinions and debate as fiercely as possible, but I hope that we can reach the same decision in the end.

“The twelve of us should be equal because we all boast the ability to change the future of the Ancient Sages Sector. So, I hope that the final decision can be approved unanimously by the twelve of us. We will think and fight for the same purpose and work hard for the future of the Ancient Sages Sector!

“If anybody has a different opinion, they must voice their opinions openly. Clandestine deals should be strictly forbidden! Of course, for differing opinions, even if they just come from one of us, the other eleven must also listen carefully and try to offer a satisfactory solution!

“Only in such a way can the Ancient Sages Sector expect to survive in the dark and mysterious universe and fight for the best interests when faced with the trampling of the monolithic deities’ realm. This is the only way in which we can build a new future for all the Cultivators and the ordinary folks of the Ancient Sages Sector!

“Do you agree with those three requirements?”

Wu Suiyun stared at everybody, her eyes clear and full of expectation.

“I do,” Qi Zhongdao replied with a dark face.

Master Bitter Cicada crossed his hands and said, “Fellow Cultivator Wu, you are truly thinking for the people of the world. I don’t have any objection.”

“I think it works, too!” said Ba Xiaoyu, holding his broken tobacco tube.

Han Baling looked at his master Meng Chixin and declared resolutely, “I agree!”

“I agree!” Qi Changsheng and Wan Mingzhu said at the same time.

Emperor Phoenix hesitated for a long time but still solemnly said, “I… agree!”

“I don’t really care, as long as there are more sophisticated sword arts in the deities’ realm,” said Yan Liren, yawning.

“I—”

Li Yao glanced at Long Yangjun quickly, but Long Yangjun had nodded before he did. “Agreed!”

“Excellent!”

Wu Suiyun and Meng Chixin looked at each other. Finally relieved, they smiled and said, “You are all perceptive and insightful people who can think in the long term. This is fantastic. We thought that it would take at least a year and a half just to unite the top experts of the Ancient Sages Sector!

“It seems that the heavens are still blessing the Ancient Sages Sector. Chances are that we will have other opportunities to revive our world and set it off on a different path of development!”

The consolation slightly eased everybody’s nerves, which had been tightened the whole time. They finally put on thin smiles.

“Sister Wu, Senior Meng, we don’t know the first thing about the extraterrestrial domain. How should we get started?” Qi Zhongdao asked.

“The answer is so far and yet so near.” Wu Suiyun pointed at Deity Raincloud, who was still unconscious and cramping slightly on the ground. “A guest from the deities’ realm has ended up as our prisoner. Isn’t she the best breach for us?

“However, before we interrogate her, emperor, why don’t you tell us about this Deity Raincloud first and how you met each other?”

Everybody was looking at Emperor Phoenix. Even Li Yao could not hold back his curiosity. He was eager to find out the backstory of the special agent of the Imperium of True Human Beings. Why on earth was she all by herself?

Emperor Phoenix’s position among everybody there was awkward. Now that so many seniors and experts were staring at him, he looked even more awful. Biting her lips, he pondered for a long time and said, “I… met this ‘Deity Raincloud’ five years ago!

“At that time, I was still in the Thunderous Martial Temple, the ancestral temple of my family in the west suburb of the Divine Capital. I was all by myself, and my future wasn’t very promising.

“However, I was a royal prince after all, and I was never involved in the conflicts for power among other royal princes. So, my life had been rather quiet and peaceful. I was able to focus my full attention on training, and I never lacked any training resources. My advancement was rather fast. At that time, I had already reached the Core Formation Stage.”

The royal bloodline was a lineage of generations of top experts and had its own mysteries. Also, they were never short of any resources or Cultivation arts. Therefore, it was perfectly normal that the members of the royal family advanced faster than normal Cultivators.

Emperor Phoenix was quite a rare genius to enter the Core Formation Stage at such a young age when compared to the average of all the Cultivators. However, it was not an astounding achievement for the royal family, which had existed for a thousand years.

Emperor Phoenix furrowed his brow, as if he were remembering that fateful night. “As I recall, it was a night five years ago. I trained particularly hard during the day and nearly got mentally deranged. So, I took some drugs to pacify my soul. I slept soundly during the night and had no dreams at all.

“However, in the darkest moment before the dawn the next morning, I suddenly had the most bizarre dream. It was in the dream that I met ‘Deity Raincloud’ for the first time!”

Chapter 1516 - One World, Two Buyers

“In your dream?”

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. Then he realized that, with the capabilities of a special agent of the Imperium of True Human Beings and the portable magical equipment that she carried, it should not have been difficult for her to release special interference to affect Emperor Phoenix’s brainwaves and sneak into his subconsciousness.

Although the other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were unfamiliar with the details, some of their techniques could influence dreams, too.

Mother White Lotus Wan Mingzhu, in particular, was adept at such tricks. It was not very strange for them.

“When Deity Raincloud appeared in my dream,” Emperor Phoenix continued, “she told me exactly what she said just now. She claimed that she was my ancestor and had ascended to the deities’ realm more than a thousand years ago. But because she had some personal issues left unfinished in the mortal world, and her offspring had governed the country into a mess, she couldn’t bear to watch it any longer. So, she had returned to the mortal world to guide me to revive the Great Qian Dynasty!

“Naturally, I did not believe any of that in the beginning.

“However, she told me in my dream that her real body and her residence were hidden in the Rumbling Thunder Mountains, a hundred kilometers to the west of the Divine Capital. She asked me to see her after I woke up, and I would certainly find out the truth!

“In order to convince me, she even taught me a method to circulate the spiritual energy that she said was from the deities’ realm!

“After I woke up, everything in my dream was so vivid. Even the secret technique from the deities’ realm was also carved deep into my brain. I did not forget a single word.

“During that period, it’s true that I ran into a bottleneck in my training, and my Cultivation stagnated. Because I didn’t have great teachers to enlighten me, I could only try on my own and nearly went mentally deranged. That was when I was most depressed and helpless.

“Although I was still suspicious, I did practice the secret technique that I had been taught. After only three days, I broke the obstacles that had been troubling me for a long time, and my Cultivation soared!

“Of course, I was overjoyed. I couldn’t help but believe what Deity Raincloud had said and take her for an ancestor of my family!

“I was just an unpopular prince that nobody cared about and had nobody to count on at that time. It appeared to me that I wouldn’t lose anything in a journey to the Rumbling Thunder Mountains anyway.

“Therefore, I entered the Rumbling Thunder Mountains and found Deity Raincloud’s residence there!”

Although the Divine Capital was the capital city of the Great Qian Dynasty, it had been established there mainly for military purposes in order to threaten the boundless prairies in the north.

Other than the prosperity within the Divine Capital, the surrounding regions were not the most fertile and opulent. The Rumbling Thunder Mountains were an extremely harsh place even though it was merely a hundred kilometers away from the Divine Capital.

Emperor Phoenix paused for a moment before saying, “Before I left, I browsed through the portraits of the predecessors of the Thunderous Qian Sect and checked what the Thunderous Fire ‘Zhu Cangshui’ looked like. After I met the real person, he did look similar to the portrait. Therefore, I was even more convinced.

“Deity Raincloud treated me very well. He was not arrogant and egotistical at all for a deity. He taught me everything that he knew. He even showed me into a weird hut deep inside his residence and asked me to take a bath in the colorful, mystic rays. After every time I was illuminated by the mystic rays, I would feel that my soul was fulfilled, and my Cultivation soared. My speed of training soared, too!”

Hearing that, Qi Zhongdao interrupted Emperor Phoenix and asked, “What exactly did Deity Raincloud’s residence look like?”

Emperor Phoenix shook his head and said, “Every time I visited her residence, the inside and outside of the residence were always covered in vague mist. I only entered part of the rooms inside the residence but never saw the full picture of the entire residence.

“However—”

He pondered for a moment and said, “Now that I think of it, the distribution and structure of some rooms in the residence were quite similar to the cabins of the deities’ warship here. Chances are that it was also a warship from beyond the sky that somehow crashed deep inside the Rumbling Thunder Mountains.”

Everybody looked at each other in bewilderment. Although it was quite unexpected, it did make sense.

Since she was a deity, it was only reasonable that she came on a warship of the deities’ realm!

“In the years that followed, things were basically the same. I respected the ancestor of my family as my master and received a lot of her heritage. I also advanced above the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage from the Core Formation Stage!

“In the meantime, she often rubbed my temples and my skull repetitively with certain magical equipment. Many times, after the procedure, I always felt that something new was added to my head. Something… ambitious!

“I asked Deity Raincloud why she did that, but she said that she was only broadening my brain. How could I not be ambitious and visionary if I wanted to be the greatest emperor of all times?

“I was too fascinated by the prospect of being the greatest emperor of all time to care about anything else at that time.

“Deity Raincloud had done nothing that called for my suspicion at all, either. Not only did she teach me tremendous techniques and help me improve my capabilities, she also brought out a large batch of magical equipment and armor from the deities’ realm to help me establish the Fiery Phoenix Legion and the Fiery Phoenix imperial guards. She even granted me an unparalleled armor and supported me in ascending to the throne without any thought!

“How could I be suspicious of such an ancestor and master?

“She did not show any inconsistencies even after I claimed the crown. She had no demands for me at all except that she asked me to dispatch a bunch of resources so that she could establish a sacrificial altar near the Rumbling Thunder Mountains.”

“A sacrificial altar?” The eyes of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were all glittering. “What’s that? What were the resources that she asked for?”

“I don’t know what it was exactly. Deity Raincloud told me that it concerned the secrets of the deities’ realm, and it was necessary for her to finish her connections with the mortal world. It could also bring good luck from the deities’ realm to the mortal world so that the Great Qian Dynasty would live in peace and prosperity!”

“As for the resources that she asked for, there were Flame Frost Crystals, Chaotic Red Copper…”

The young emperor reported the names of hundreds of resources, ranging from rare metals and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures to the cores of animals and demon beasts.

Many of the materials might not have been very valuable, but they were extremely rare. The court was probably the only force capable of collecting all of them quickly.

The Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators and the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators looked at each other in confusion, not having the first clue how the resources were related.

Li Yao, however, knew exactly what they were for. Most of the materials boasted the effect of enhancing telepathic thoughts and maintaining the stability of long-distance teleportation!

It meant that the ‘sacrificial altar’ was probably a piece of large magical equipment similar to a star beacon or a long-distance teleportation array, which could be used to communicate with the fleet of the Imperium!

Then, everything made sense!

It was not that the special agent of the Imperium of True Human Beings did not want to contact the mothership. However, in the few years earlier, she had somehow lost the ability to contact the mothership and therefore could only support a puppet emperor to help her gather the resources necessary to repair or rebuild the magical equipment for communication!

“Has the sacrificial altar been completed?” Qi Zhongdao asked.

“Not yet,” Emperor Phoenix replied. “I was new to the throne. Some of rare materials that she demanded were extremely difficult to find. The progress was very slow.

“Right then, she seemed to find some traces regarding the ‘Divine Palace’ while she hunted Wang Xi!”

Everybody looked at Long Yangjun.

Long Yangjun slightly frowned, as if she did not know that Deity Raincloud had set her eyes on her such a long time ago. She pondered for a moment but gave no reply.

“Deity Raincloud seemed to be much more interested in the Divine Palace than in the sacrificial altar,” Emperor Phoenix said. “She immediately asked me to establish an elite exploration squad and search for the Divine Palace in the Land of Eternal Night.

“As for me, I meant to fish up the evils that posed a threat to the Great Qian Dynasty once and for all during the exploration, too. Naturally, I supported the exploration without any reserve.

“You all know what happened then.”

After hearing Emperor Phoenix’s story, the other Cultivators were in deep thought, analyzing the whole issue from their perspective.

“It seems that Deity Raincloud was the only one who snuck into the Ancient Sages Sector,” Meng Chixin concluded. “Also, our speculation was right. The Cultivation of a single deity is not necessarily higher than ours. That’s why she had to raise a puppet loyal to herself by means of deception and trickery to help her realize her clandestine schemes!

“On the other hand, since she could communicate with the emperor and the arts from the deities’ realm worked on the emperor, it suggests that the deities are not vastly different from us. We might even be the same species, simply living in different worlds!

“Therefore, there is no need to feel desperate, everybody. We definitely have our chances in the game versus the deities!

“Now, it’s time to interrogate ‘Deity Raincloud’ and find out what the so-called ‘deities’ realm’ is!”

Meng Chixin smiled and drifted to Deity Raincloud.

“Hey. Do you think we should admit our identity right now and inform them of the existence of the Star Glory Federation?” the mental devil said quickly in Li Yao’s head. “Did you not hear what the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators just said? They are willing to surrender, as long as the price is good enough! Now, the Imperium and the federation are both potential ‘buyers’. If they meet the special agent of the Imperium in advance and accept her bid, we will be screwed!”

“Huh…” Li Yao hesitated.

Meng Chixin had already floated up to Deity Raincloud’s face. He opened his hands and suddenly stabbed all the five fingers into Deity Raincloud’s head!

“Ahhh!”

The previously-unconscious Deity Raincloud immediately screamed miserably, cramping like a rat thrown into boiling oil!

“Don’t let her die.” Wu Suiyun frowned, while more than ten colorful tentacles extended out of her soul into Deity Raincloud’s eyes, nostrils, and ears. “She is the connection between us and the deities’ realm. Maybe, we can count on her to negotiate with the deities’ realm!”

“I know.” Meng Chixin smiled. “I’m just setting up some barriers in her head first in case she lies to us later.”

“Your barriers are too tough. One moment of carelessness, and her brains would be minced, turning herself into an ignorant retard.”

While talking, Wu Suiyun manipulated more and more threads of spiritual energy to dart into Deity Raincloud’s head. “Let me do this instead.”

“… What did you say just now?” Li Yao said to the mental devil.

“No. I didn’t say anything. Let’s just keep lurking for now!”

Chapter 1517 - Heiye Lan

Suppressed by the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, ‘Deity Raincloud’ from the Imperium of True Human Beings was shuddering more and more violently, almost like a fish that was dying in a drought.

Stinky blood was leaking out of her every pore. Only the whites could be seen in her eyes, which were protruding out of her face and almost popping out. Fluids in various colors were flowing inside the eyes, which seemed to be exploding like rotten grapes!

The veins that covered her face like a spider’s web were wriggling crazily!

Even the brutal bandits such as Qi Changsheng and Wan Mingzhu felt dizzy and frightened as they watched!

They could even hear the sounds of every bone on Deity Raincloud’s skull being crushed and twisted!

Pain was finally flowing out of Deity Raincloud’s dead-fish-like eyes.

She had woken up from the nightmare.

But judging from the expression on her face, it seemed that she would rather have never woken up.

Manipulating the colorful tentacles extending from her arms, Wu Suiyun picked Deity Raincloud up without any trouble as if she were pulling the strings of a puppet. She dragged the captive up to her face and said, “Do you understand the situation you are in? Blink if you do.”

Deity Raincloud managed to blink her eyes with all her strength. Blood, tears, and perhaps brains darted out of her eyes.

It had nothing to do with her willpower. It was just a natural reaction for her as a living creature!

“Alright. Now that you know that you’ve fallen to our hands, you should know that it is useless to hide or struggle. Just confess everything quickly now. Who are you? Where are you from? What’s your purpose in the Ancient Sages Sector?”

Wu Suiyun played with the tentacles that had pierced deeply into Deity Raincloud’s head casually. There was no telling what area she entered, but Deity Raincloud was crouching like a lobster thrown in a pot of boiling oil again.

The loudest screams that could blow up rocks burst out from her chest. Her twisted countenance was enough to scare the most ferocious ghosts in the deepest depths of hell to death!

“Somebody on our side does not agree with interrogating you.” Wu Suiyun nodded at Meng Chixin. “He thinks that you will never confess dutifully but offer a bunch of lies. So, we might as well kill you directly, cut open your brain, and absorb all the information inside through the soul-searching techniques.”

Meng Chixin smiled at Deity Raincloud.

Deity Raincloud’s eyes were shivering violently.

“However,” Wu Suiyun said, “I feel that we are obliged to give you an opportunity to confess. If you are truly willing to confess everything, we might even consider setting you free and even cooperating with you.

“After all, I’m certain that you have sensed the barriers and the telepathic thoughts in your brain, haven’t you? If you say anything false, we will certainly detect it. I believe that there will still be time to exploit all the intelligence in your brain and in your soul through the cruelest soul-searching techniques.”

Deity Raincloud’s eyes were rolling fast as if she were begging and swearing that she would certainly not lie.

“Alright. You may begin to confess your identity, your origin, and your purpose here, or try lying!”

Wu Suiyun and Meng Chixin looked at each other and retrieved the spiritual threads that blocked Deity Raincloud’s throat.

“Cough, cough. Cough, cough, cough, cough. Cough, cough, cough, cough, cough!”

Deity Raincloud coughed so loudly that she almost threw her internal organs out, but she had no time to wipe her tears at all. She shrieked, “My name is Heiye Lan. I’m from the Imperium of True Human Beings. I mean you no harm. I mean you no harm at all. I am here to help you on behalf of the Imperium!”

After every sentence she said, mysterious brilliance was flashing on the spiritual threads that Wu Suiyun and Meng Chixin pierced into her brain. They were shivering like the strings of a guitar.

Li Yao’s heart was pounding. ‘Deity Raincloud’ Heiye Lan was truly a special agent of the Imperium of True Human Beings. She was probably there to tame the Ancient Sages Sector!

Damn it. The two ‘buyers’ had indeed run into each other!

“Is the deities’ realm the boundless universe beyond the Ancient Sages Sector? What is the Imperium of True Human Beings? A force in the deities’ realm? What’s your capabilities compared with other forces?” Wu Suiyun asked unemotionally. Her long, slender fingers adjusted the spiritual threads nonstop as if she were playing the guitar, stimulating some areas inside Heiye Lan’s brain and forcing her to speak the truth.

“Yes! The so-called deities’ realm refers to the entire sea of stars! The Imperium of True Human Beings is the strongest human nation in the universe—”

Heiye Lan trembled hard and shouted desperately, “—at least one of the strongest! Except for the Alliance of the Holy Covenant, there are no forces in the entire universe that are comparable to the Imperium!”

“The Imperium of True Human Beings? The Alliance of the Holy Covenant? So to speak, there are two superpowers in the deities’ realm?” Wu Suiyun was deep in thought. “Introduce to us the general situation in the universe, including a brief history of the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Alliance of the Holy Covenant and the relationship between them.”

Under the suppression of the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, Heiye Lan, heavily wounded and no higher than the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage, had no ability to resist at all. She confessed everything as fast as she could.

Her prolonged confession did not stop until four hours later.

The two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators and the nine Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators except Li Yao were all captivated. A new gate to the universe seemed to have been opened in their minds!

Li Yao also took the opportunity to compare Heiye Lan’s confession with the description of Su Changfa, the specialist of colonization from the Imperium whom he had met in the past.

Thankfully, Su Changfa did not lie. Their portrayal of the history and the current situation of the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance was basically the same.

After listening to the confession for four hours, Wu Suiyun took a deep breath. After pondering for a moment, she said, “I understand it now. If the universe is compared to the world of the Ancient Sages Sector, the center of the cosmos will be like the fertile and prosperous ‘central plateaus’, and the place that the Ancient Sages Sector is at is only a far-flung area in the borderlands, right?

“Right now, the ‘central plateaus’ in the universe have been occupied by the two superpowers named Imperium and Covenant Alliance, which are fighting hard. It’s like in the history of the Ancient Sages Sector where two dynasties co-existed and fought each other, right?”

Heiye Lan nodded hard.

“The Imperium of True Human Beings worships Nuwa, while the Alliance of the Holy Covenant worships Pangu. The enormous bodies on this warship were all members of the Nuwa Clan and the Pangu Clan, which were two primeval species hundreds of thousands of years ago.”

Then, Wu Suiyun furrowed her eyebrows. “However, what’s the difference between Pangu and Nuwa?”

Heiye Lan breathed for a moment and said, “The Pangu civilization admires absolute order and rules. In their world, feelings and free will are strictly forbidden. They are considered the source of the universe’s destruction!

“The Nuwa civilization originated from the Pangu civilization but held the very opposite ideology. They value the maximal bloom of feelings and free will. Everybody has the liberty to do anything!

“This is the biggest difference between the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Alliance of the Holy Covenant! We are the last hope for humanity!”

Wu Suiyun did not give any comment. She went on asking, “Now that the Imperium is at war with the Covenant Alliance, what are you doing here in the desolate Land at the edge of the cosmos? Are you a deserter?”

There was obvious pain and shame on Heiye Lan’s face, but she had no choice but to speak the truth under the oppression of the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators. “We… Our entire Black Wind Fleet is here for a colonization quest as punishment!

“The Black Wind Sector was one of the most powerful Sectors in the Imperium of True Human Beings. The Black Wind warriors were also the most famous soldiers in the army, best known for their valiancy!

“Most troops of the Imperium are ranked into Alpha, Beta, and Gamma. The Alpha troops are the absolute main forces, whose main responsibility is to resist the Covenant Alliance. The Beta troops are deployed to ensure the safety and order within the Imperium and to deal with the invasion of the extraterrestrial devils and the insurgencies. The Gamma troops are the weakest and have the worst equipment. It is their responsibility to wander beyond the border of the Imperium to explore new worlds and expand the territory of the Imperium!”

“Just like the border troops, the imperial guards, and the militias in the Great Qian Dynasty?” Wu Suiyun asked.

“Exactly!” Heiye Lan gnashed her teeth. “The Black Wind Fleet was the Alpha troop of all the Alpha troops for more than a thousand years. In terms of the combat ability of our soldiers and our equipment such as warships and Colossi, we all belonged to the top tier. We were the elites of the elites, the best of the best!

“However…

“A hundred years ago, the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance had a strategic battle in the Sirian arm, in which both parties devoted all the troops from the ten or so Sectors nearby. At the most critical moment in the heated battle, because—because of a mistake that the Black Wind Fleet made, we lost the entire battle. As a result, five Sectors on the Sirian arm were occupied by the Covenant Alliance, including the Black Wind Sector, our hometown!

“The Imperium suffered a great loss. The entire defense line on the Sirian arm collapsed. It was the most brutal failure in the past five hundred years!

“After news of the failure got out, the entire Empyreal Terminus Sector was shocked and infuriated!

“The troop that had failed in battle because of incompetence and even lost our own home Sector, according to the tradition, should’ve been disbanded on the spot. All the surviving personnel should’ve been merged into other Sectors and legions after they were split apart. The Black

Wind Sector and the Black Wind Fleet should have been terms in history and eventually ended up in the dust!

“However, despite the brutal failure, under the leadership of Heiye Ming, my father and the commander of the Black Wind Fleet, we did not suffer fundamental losses. Our organization was still intact, and two thirds of our combat ability remained.

“The Black Wind Fleet was a seasoned elite troop in the Imperium who had accumulated too many military credits and honors. Many influential persons also helped to pull strings for us in the Empyreal Terminus Sector. Eventually, the final punishment that we were given was that we were demoted to a Gamma troop from an Alpha troop. The defeated soldiers of the other few Sectors that had been lost in the battle were assigned to us and regrouped into a brand-new Black Wind Fleet. Our mission changed from resisting the Covenant Alliance to—to colonizing in the boundless, desolate area at the rear of the Imperium!”

Chapter 1518 - Remnants of the Previous Dynasty

“Wait!” Meng Chixin interrupted her. “Expanding the territory and conquering the foreign worlds should be a mission of the utmost glory. Why does it seem to be considered a lesser, menial job in the Imperium?”

“You—you may not know this, but…” Heiye Lan smiled miserably and explained the reason.

When the Imperium of True Human Beings was first founded and occupied the center of the cosmos including the Empyreal Terminus Sector, expanding the territory and controlling more Sectors and space zones were certainly of paramount importance. At that time, even the war against the Covenant Alliance was not nearly as important as the expansion of territory. The best legions and fleets were all deployed to conquer more worlds.

However, after a thousand years of development, the Imperium of True Human Beings had already subjugated most of the prosperous areas in the Star Ocean Imperium.

The rest of the prosperous areas were under the control of the Covenant Alliance, and it was not easy to seize them.

The two superpowers had essentially divided the entire ‘central plateaus’. All that was left were the desolate worlds that were extremely far away and short of resources.

The universe was too vast a place, and it could be very tricky to find a world that was of value to be developed and habitable for human beings. Those desolate worlds were scattered at the edge of the boundless cosmos, hundreds if not thousands of lightyears away from each other!

When an imperial fleet marched out to explore the foreign lands, it was possible that the fleet would fail to find any target worth conquering after wasting hundreds of years. Even the places where civilizations were thriving as marked in the ancient star maps could have ended up as wastelands because of the passage of time or the apocalypses!

In other words, at such a time, exploring the foreign lands became a dirty, exhausting job. It could consume tremendous time without any promise of a satisfactory yield!

The Black Wind Fleet, as a high and mighty elite troop, should have been making great contributions in the war against the Covenant Alliance and reap a lot of resources as a reward. But now, it was dispatched to carry out exploration and colonization tasks that could potentially take hundreds of years as if it were one of those mediocre troops. The fleet could get absolutely no benefits after hundreds of years of hard work. Of course, the warriors of the fleet felt helpless and humiliated!

“None of us were willing to carry out the colonization task. The only thing that was on our mind was to take our home Sector back.”

Heiye Lan’s cheeks were shivering as she gnashed her teeth. “But it didn’t change the fact that we lost the battle. So many other elite legions in the Imperium were coveting us. If we remained disobedient, we would’ve truly been disbanded!

“As it happened, the Imperium received a fuzzy signal sent from a certain Sector at the edge of the cosmos by a star child—well, that’s some sort of scout—who was sent hundreds of years ago. The signal suggested that something was out there.

“Therefore, we accepted the colonization task. While gathering resources and exploring the surroundings, we flew toward the general coordinates of the source of the fuzzy signal.”

Li Yao thought of something. He realized that Heiye Lan was talking about the signal sent through the space gate near Spider Den by the star child who directed the ‘riot of the Immortal Cultivators’ in the Flying Star Sector more than a hundred years ago!

Everything made perfect sense now!

“You’ve been on your way for more than a hundred years?” Meng Chixin asked with great interest.

“Yes,” Heiye Lan replied dutifully. “In the boundless sea of stars, it is perfectly normal for a colonization task or a war to take three to five hundred years. Our war against the Covenant Alliance has been on for a thousand years. It is an out-and-out millennium war! A hundred years isn’t really a long time.”

“You…” Meng Chixin thought for a moment and asked, “Can’t you just teleport yourselves over directly?”

“We can’t.” Heiye Lan shook her head. “The coordinates sent back by the star child were too obscure. If we had performed a space jump recklessly, it would’ve been very likely for us to lose our direction in the storms in the four-dimensional universe and be ripped into shreds by the super tempests!”

The locals of the Ancient Sages Sector understood the notion of ‘super tempests’ very well. They all nodded.

“Also, we were not in a hurry to reach the destination,” Heiye Lan said. “We simply collected resources and explored on our way, hoping to establish a stable base at the rear of the Imperium.

“As the saying goes, many things grow in the garden that were never sown there. It was possible that we might find some unknown worlds or resource planets on our way that were more valuable than the target that we had set in advance. This is not unusual in the colonization tasks.”

“You spent a hundred years on a big boat.” Wu Suiyun asked, “Is the life not monotonous?”

“We’re used to it,” Heiye Lan said. “The Imperium boasts very advanced hibernation technologies. Most of the crew members pass the long journey in hibernation. Only a small portion of them are awake and take turns to train themselves and explore the situation in the universe nearby. Although we have lived a hundred years on the warship, the time when we are really awake is probably less than ten years.

“Also, our warship is huge. It is like a super large town with all kinds of facilities. You can spend your entire life on it. You can even get married and have children!”

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators found it hard to imagine how living an entire life on such an enormous warship would feel like. They could not help but feel amazed.

“Therefore,” Wu Suiyun said, “the Black Wind Fleet found the Ancient Sages Sector after a hundred years of searching.

Why are you alone?”

“Well…” Heiye Lan hesitated.

“Huh?” Wu Suiyun frowned and Meng Chixin sneered. All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were staring at Heiye Lan, their eyes glittering.

Heiye Lan sensed that her every nerve had been tied up by the spiritual threads from the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, and it would barely possible for her to deceive them with lies. If anything, they would only grow hostile and vigilant to the Imperium, which was not good for her follow-up plans. Therefore, she simply gritted her teeth and spoke the truth. “The Black Wind Fleet did not discover the Ancient Sages Sector. You were not our initial target at all. I only escaped to this place by accident when I was hunted by my enemy!”

“You were hunted?”

Everyone, including Li Yao, was slightly dazed.

Meng Chixin raised his eyebrow. “By your archenemy, the Covenant Alliance?”

With a weird expression, Heiye Lan replied, “No, it was a far-flung force named… the Star Glory Federation.”

Li Yao immediately felt that his heart was cold.

He was shrieking in his head. *What’s going on here?*

Why on earth does Heiye Lan, a special agent of the Imperium, know about the federation’s existence?

Damn it. Damn it. Damn it! Has the Black Wind Fleet reached the federation's territory in advance, and the war has already broken out?

But that doesn't seem likely. Also, Heiye Lan's face suggests otherwise!

All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators looked at each other in bewilderment. "An Imperium first, a Covenant Alliance later, and now a federation? What is this… federation?"

"I am not very clear myself, either." Heiye Lan struggled to reply. "I only know that it should be a local force not far away from this area, but its overall capabilities can't be very high. It is incomparable to the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance. Just an insignificant country in this desolate area. That's all."

Han Baling sniffed and asked, "Is a country in a desolate area necessarily an insignificant one?"

Heiye Lan licked her dry lips. Not responding to Han Baling's sarcasm, she went on. "It was… about ten years ago. At that time, my hibernation period was over, and it was my turn to carry out the reconnaissance mission. I left the range of the mother fleet together with my sub-fleets.

"When we are out for scouting and exploration tasks, dozens of sub-fleets, also known as 'claw fleets' because they are like the claws extended from the body, will spread to places far, far away from the mother fleet to search for valuable assets separately.

"The claw fleets and the mother fleet can sometimes be a hundred lightyears away from each other. They have their independent command and combat system and can explore on their own for years!

“Well, maybe you can’t understand what ‘lightyear’ is for now. All you need to know is that the ‘scouts’ are terribly far away from the main force!

“As it turned out, the claw fleet that I was in was very lucky. Although we did not find any resource planet or habitable world, we managed to find ‘Firefly’!”

Heiye Lan’s voice was shivering in excitement.

“What’s Firefly?” Wu Suiyun asked.

“Firefly is a hostile starship that has been on the run since more than a thousand years ago. For a thousand years, it has been hiding stealthily here and there in the universe and gotten away from the siege of the imperial army many times. However, it had not been seen in the last few hundred years. Many people thought that it had gotten into an accident in some cosmic storms. As it turned out, the starship had fled from the Imperium’s territory. Still, it was caught by us!”

Heiye Lan grinned. Although she was captured and tortured, there was still valiance in her eyes.

Meng Chixin pondered for a moment and asked, “Is Firefly very important to the Imperium?”

“Well—” Heiye Lan’s eyes shuddered quickly.

“Speak. How can we cooperate if you don’t tell us everything you know honestly?” Meng Chixin smiled. Glamourous brilliance resembling auroras beamed out of his deep eyes. The brilliance condensed into different beams and crawled into Heiye Lan’s eyes like colorful snakes.

In the meantime, Wu Suiyun also played with the strings that had pierced deeply into Heiye Lan’s brain crazily!

Heiye Lan’s head was trembling uncontrollably. Her eyes were gradually frozen, and her voice became hollow.

“It’s very important.

“The original Firefly carried the leadership from the parliament of the Star Ocean Republic. They were the last resistance of the Star Ocean Republic and claimed to be the ‘rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic’. Firefly was the last territory of the Star Ocean Republic!”

“The Star Ocean Republic was the previous dynasty in the Imperium of True Human Beings, right?” Meng Chixin smiled. “I understand it now. The former officials of the previous dynasty were on that starship, which meant that the previous dynasty hadn’t entirely been overthrown yet. No wonder you were so nervous.”

With a hollow voice, Heiye Lan said, “The Star Ocean Republic adopted a parliamentary-republic system. It wasn’t really a dynasty.

“However, rumor has it that part of the leadership stole the important ‘Star Ocean Seal’ of the parliament when they escaped from the Empyreal Terminus Sector. The seal was made of the pieces of the imperial seal of the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago and represented the supreme power in the universe! In the legends, it also concerned a great secret related to the Supreme Emperor!”

Meng Chixin’s eyes suddenly shone. “A national seal?”

Heiye Lan’s eyes moved for a moment. “Not exactly a national seal. The Imperium has ruled for long enough. It cannot be shaken by a single seal.

“However, it was still a great trouble that the remnants on Firefly wandered in the universe with the pieces of the imperial seal of the Star Ocean Imperium in the past.

“The Imperium of True Human Beings has organized hundreds of sieges in the past thousand years, but Firefly got away from all of them like a slippery loach!

“Now that we had run into it, how could we let it get away?”

Chapter 1519 - Blazing Tyrannosaur!

Although she was being hypnotized by two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators simultaneously, every muscle on her face was still twisted into a hideous smile. She licked the blood on the corner of her lips and said, “If we could capture Firefly and the last warriors of the ‘rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic’ and possibly retrieve the ‘Star Ocean Seal’, it would certainly be the most incredible accomplishment in the history of the Imperium! With such an accomplishment, the Black Wind Fleet would certainly be restored to an Alpha legion and become the best troop of the best troops again!

“Therefore, my claw fleet immediately lunged at Firefly!”

“Wait a moment.” Meng Chixin interrupted her again and raised new questions. “Since it was such an important target, shouldn’t you have requested reinforcements from the mother fleet first? Why did you attack on your own?”

“We couldn’t send out any signals,” Heiye Lan said. “We discovered Firefly by accident. They found us at exactly the same time we found them. In the accidental encounter, Firefly reacted first and activated powerful interferential waves, blocking all communication signals sent to the outside world!”

Meng Chixin slightly frowned. “Is there such a technique in the world?”

“It is not a very sophisticated art,” Heiye Lan explained. “Destruction is easier than construction, and disruption is easier than transmission. In the boundless sea of stars, to transmit the information streams steadily and precisely to a point hundreds of years away despite the scourge of the stellar radiation and the cosmic storms is an extremely difficult task in the first place. The ‘disruption’, in compassion, is not very sophisticated. As long as you detonate certain bombs that can interfere with the signals in space nearby, it is very easy to create a ‘blackout space’ where all means of information transmission are blocked!

“Firefly was highly vigilant and had abundant battle experience after running for a thousand years in the universe with the remnants of the previous regime. Although they were merely floating the orbit of a forsaken mining planet, gathering assets from the planet to repair their starship, they still deployed a great number of floating bombs throughout the entire galaxy. Hardly had we discovered each other when they activated all the bombs, disrupting the transmission of telepathic thoughts and secluding the whole galaxy!

“For battles in the sea of stars, ‘information’ is the most critical factor. Blocking signals is a very common tactic.”

Deep in thought, Meng Chixin nodded and said, “That explains a lot. Those frightened birds were certainly not worthless. How did you react once all the signals had been blocked by the enemy?”

“We had two options,” Heiye Lan said. “Firstly, we could wait patiently while the blockage created by the interferential bombs dissipated. But the process could take dozens of hours, during which time the enemy would certainly release new interferential bombs to build up the ‘blackout area’.

“Secondly, we could escape from the ‘blackout area’ and jump to a place beyond the range of the interferential bombs where we could communicate with the mother ship.

“However, Firefly knew that very clearly, too. When we were preparing for a space jump, it released countless Exos and space shuttles to harass us, stopping us from entering the space jump state stably. In the meantime, its own space jump units were unleashing immense spiritual waves, suggesting that it was trying to enter the emergency jump state, too!

“If we had insisted on jumping out of the blackout area to report to the mother fleet, Firefly would’ve jumped to somewhere deeper in the sea of stars and escaped again by the time the mother fleet arrived!

“Therefore, we had no choice but to charge forward and bite down hard, not letting it run away!”

Touching his chin, Meng Chixin asked, “You can’t be disrupted while you are performing a… space jump?”

“A space jump is just like how you use your teleportation array,” Heiye Lan said. “What will happen if the teleportation array is attacked and detonated while you are halfway through your teleportation?

“I’m afraid that your limbs and your internal organs will be teleported to random parts of the world separately!”

“Got it!” The two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators looked at each other. They were both smart enough to understand the dangers entailed in a space jump through the examples around them. “So to speak, once you were caught in a ‘blackout area’ where you couldn’t deliver a message to the outside world, and a space jump was not an option, you could only fight the enemy to death, right?”

“Yes.” Heiye Lan sniffed. With immense confidence flowing out of her dirty eyes, she gritted her teeth and said, “Firefly was modified based on a main force warship of the Star Ocean Republic in the past. However, the technologies it adopted were from a thousand years ago. The magical equipment and techniques installed were rather obsolete!

“Also, it had suffered heavy wounds countless times during its thousand years of escape, only to flee in search of worlds that were compassionate toward the Star Ocean Imperium and hostile to the Imperium of True Human Beings, where the starship was updated as much as possible. After the army of the Imperium arrived, it would run away again with a batch of rebels who disobeyed the Imperium and identified with the previous regime!

“After a thousand years of running, Firefly was already a pile of scraps with patches everywhere! The resources on board must’ve been insufficient, and the morale couldn’t be high. How much combat ability could it have?

“My claw fleet, on the other hand, boasted ‘Bloody Blade’-level assault warships, one of the latest models in the Imperium, whose firepower was quite impressive. Although we were just a team of scouts that was not large in scale, we even had a Colossus, or the Cloud Qin Gold Statue to your knowledge, which was piloted by me!

“We were to Firefly what a shark was to a whale. Even if the enemy was more than ten times larger than us, as long as my Colossus crawled into the enemy’s belly, we were seventy percent certain that we could kill the enemy!

“That was our plan. We hoped to disrupt the enemy’s positions and distract their firepower with a violent assault so that a small communication starship on our side could jump out of the blackout area and contact the mother fleet!

“The battle went quite well at first.

“Firefly’s situation was exactly as we had expected. After an escape of a thousand years, it had fled to the edge of the cosmos. If it went any further, it would escape out of the range of the civilization of mankind as a whole and enter the mysterious, highly perilous extraterrestrial lands.

“They were a bunch of stray dogs that were approaching their doom. They were short of ammunition, crystals, and other resources. Their morale was lower than ever, too. They were no match for us at all.

“The last warriors of the Star Ocean Imperium were crushed by us one after another, ending up as cold cosmic dust. I also landed on the shell of Firefly successfully in a Colossus under the cover of the immense firepower of the ‘Bloody Blade’-level assault warship!

“Colossi are the most terrifying, ultimate weapons in the universe. As long as I blew out a huge hole in the shell of Firefly and broke into the warship, I would definitely be able to march forward unstoppably and completely wreck the space jump units on it!

“If it was deprived of the space jump abilities, it would have nowhere to run. We would be able to follow it and deal with it slowly. At normal cruising speed, it was impossible for the starship to get rid of us. It would only bleed slowly as more and more claw fleets and even our mother fleet arrived!

“Victory was soon to be ours, when—”

Heiye Lan paused for a moment. With shock and fear beaming out of her face, her lips trembled for a long time before she managed to continue. "—when a mysterious fleet emerged out of nowhere in our rear and launched the most violent assault on our most vulnerable parts!

"The scale of the fleet was more than ten times larger than our claw fleet. The models of their warships, space shuttles, and crystal suits were different from the traditions of the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance. It was obvious that they belonged to a new force.

"Although most of the magical equipment that they employed was outdated by generations compared to ours, they had the sheer advantage in numbers. Also, we were too focused on Firefly in front of us to realize that Firefly could possibly have reinforcements. Therefore, we suffered major losses after the first encounter!

"The entire claw fleet was immediately covered in fireballs and blasts. Countless Exos and space shuttles that were not protected by the warships were even blown into smithereens within the moment. A lot of warships were attached to the enemy by magnetic fields. The most dangerous boarding battles soon began!

"Because of the enemy's absolute advantage in numbers, our warships were captured one after another. Even the communication starship that was prepared to jump out of the blackout area to contact the mother fleet was blown up by the enemy directly during the emergency jump!

"The—the—the most horrible thing was that the mysterious fleet boasted a Colossus, too!

"It was a Colossus as red as fire in the shape of the combination of a dragon and a griffin. The Colossus was so brutal and aggressive that it ripped one of our starships in half during a single attack. The starship was truly ripped apart in half!”

Her words seemed to be praising the enemy and undermining the might of the Imperium.

If Heiye Lan was fully conscious, she would never have put it in such a way.

However, she was in a half-awake-half-asleep state because of the hypnotization of the two Divinity Transformation Stage. The deepest memories inside her head had been triggered.

The Colossus forged out of crimson flames had left such a deep impression on her that it almost became an ineffaceable shadow in her sub-consciousness. Stimulated by the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, she immediately confessed everything dutifully.

“I—I was piloting the only Colossus in the claw fleet. Naturally, it was my responsibility to deal with the enemy’s Colossus!”

In utmost pain, embarrassment, and shock, Heiye Lan stammered, “But—but I didn’t know that the enemy’s combat ability would be so terrifyingly high. I was no match for her at all. After only a few rounds, I was already beaten into heavy wounds. Even my Colossus was almost destroyed!”

“Is this mysterious fleet from the ‘Star Glory Federation’ you mentioned just now?” Wu Suiyun asked.

“Yes,” Heiye Lan replied obediently. “During the chaotic battle, we managed to capture a few captives from the enemy’s side. After we interrogated them, we learned some basic information about who the enemy was.

“The fleet was from the ‘Star Glory Federation’, a country in the desolate area nearby. The Colossus that defeated me was known as Draconic Phoenix. Its user was a legendary expert in the country whose name seemed to be ‘Blazing Tyrannosaur’!”

Chapter 1520 - Hooray for My Wife!

Heiye Lan’s words were detonating Li Yao’s every brain cell as if it were a crystal bomb. A great carnival of fireworks seemed to be going on deep inside his head!

His heart was pounding, and he could not have been more thrilled!

Li Yao’s every nerve was being blasted by the rampant emotions that felt like surging tides.

Every second with those monsters and the special agent from the Imperium was such a great test on his acting kills. He was truly suffering!

Ding Lingdang! Ding Lingdang is already capable of crushing a scout team of the Black Wind Fleet with a fleet from the federation?

Legendary expert? My wife must’ve accomplished many world-shaking achievements in the past hundred years while I was in hibernation. Chances are that I’ve already been eclipsed again. Hahahaha!

The Star Glory Federation has developed quite fast, too. Although Heiye Lan was merely with a small claw fleet, it is obvious that the fleet under Ding Lingdang’s lead couldn’t have been the entirety of the federation’s main forces, either! In a head-on clash in space, the federation was able to offer the Imperium with a crushing defeat, which at least suggests that the technological gap in the weapons and *magical equipment between the two parties is not so huge that it cannot be made up by the advantage in number!*

As long as we maintain the advantage in number, we will certainly be able to drown the expedition army of the Imperium!

Right. What's Ding Lingdang doing around here?

Since Heiye Lan ended up here, the space zone where they had a fierce battle couldn't have been too far away from the dark nebula. Why on earth would Ding Lingdang show up here leading a federal fleet?

Li Yao thought of something. He felt that a flower was blossoming in his heart, thinking in delight, *Is it possible that my wife was looking for me with a large batch of soldiers?*

It's possible. Very possible!

A hundred years have passed. My wife's level has soared significantly. She is already the legendary expert 'Blazing Tyrannosaur' now! Also, the overall capabilities of the federation must've made remarkable progress, too. It has super fleets that have fiercer firepower and longer working hours!

My wife hadn't received any messages from me in the hundred years. She couldn't stand waiting at home by herself. So, she set off to search the nearby of the dark nebula, only to detect the battle between Firefly and the claw fleet from the Imperium by accident!

I'm afraid that those people from the Imperium never thought about covering themselves up, either. The style of their starships and their emblems are rather idiosyncratic *with distinctive features. Therefore, my wife was able to recognize them without any trouble.*

Once she had discovered a fleet from the Imperium, and seeing that it was not large in size, my wife was too grumpy to care about anything else. If she could capture some starships and Immortal Cultivators of the Imperium, our odds of winning the war to protect the federation later would definitely be much higher!

Yes. That must be the case. Hooray for my wife!

Li Yao was overjoyed. However, on second thought, even if Ding Lingdang and the federal fleet's original purpose was to search for him and the Ancient Sages Sector, they would certainly change their destination after accidentally getting involved in the battle between the Imperium of True Human Beings and the 'rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic'.

The Star Ocean Republic was an important transitional period between the Star Ocean Imperium and the Imperium of True Human Beings.

The legendary 'Blackstar the Great' had been elected as the supreme leader of the Star Ocean Republic first before he rescinded the parliamentary system, arrested the members of parliament, and changed the republic into dictatorship, establishing the Imperium of True Human Beings!

Before, Li Yao had thought that the Star Ocean Republic was already a historical term that had been buried in the deepest part of the cold universe two thousand years ago.

It had never occurred to him that such a 'government-in-exile' established on a starship had fled to somewhere near the federation!

It seemed to be a coincidence, but on second thought, it was not very strange.

Most of the areas in the universe had been divided by the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance. Where else could the government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic go if not the remote space zones at the edge of the civilization of mankind?

For the federation who was determined to stand up against the Imperium, the government-in-exile, or the ‘rightful government’, of the Star Ocean Republic was certainly extremely valuable.

Moreover, the first batch of the refugees had all escaped directly from the Empyreal Terminus Sector. If the federation could cooperate with them, it would be easier for the federation to learn about the situation at the heartland of the civilization of mankind.

It was needless to say that there was still the ‘Star Ocean Seal’ that had once been used by the legendary Supreme Emperor himself!

By his estimation, after defeating the claw fleet of the Imperium, rescuing Firefly, and learning that it carried the ‘rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic’, Ding Lingdang and the federal fleet could only do what was important first and escort the rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic and the captives from the Imperium to the homeland of the federation.

Li Yao sighed gloomily.

In his perception, he had only been awake for several years.

However, in reality, a hundred years had passed after all. A hundred years!

After a hundred years of development, what did the federation look like today? Where was his wife right now? What was she doing? Was she still having fun tearing apart warships?

Li Yao was suddenly grasped by an irresistible urge. He almost hoped that he could be teleported back to the federation immediately to visit his family and friends, whom he had not seen for a hundred years, and appreciate the Star Glory Federation that was being reborn and rising rapidly!

“Blazing Tyrannosaur? That’s a rather majestic alias!” Li Yao could not hold it any longer. In a hoarse voice, he asked, “How strong is she exactly? In the Divinity Transformation Stage? What makes her ‘legendary’ in this… Star Glory Federation?”

“Even if she is not in the Divinity Transformation Stage right now, she can’t be far away from it. She is well above the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage. The tough, cruel techniques that she has practiced are as dominating as the techniques of some Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators I know, if not even more brutally aggressive. She is definitely only one step away from the Divinity Transformation Stage!”

Heiye Lan’s eyelids were bouncing fast as she replied in a shivering voice. It was obvious that she had not been freed from the nightmare that was Ding Lingdang. Holding her arms, she paused for a moment and continued. “I do not know many more details. We were at an absolute disadvantage in the battlefield. Soon after we interrogated the captives, our starship was broken through, and all the captives were rescued. Even most of the interrogators ended up as the enemy’s prisoners!

“Also, the entire space zone was still savaged by the interferential bombs released by Firefly. Not only were we unable to contact the mother fleet a few hundred lightyears away, even the communication channels between two starships or two Exos next to each other were seriously jammed. All the transmissions of signals were intermittent and fuzzy. I only collected part of the intelligence before I had to break out of the siege together with ‘Weary Tooth’, the only intact ‘Bloody Blade’-level assault warship!

“The only thing on our mind was to escape and to contact our mother fleet after we were away. There was no time to gather more information at all!

“That ‘Blazing Tyrannosaur’ Ding Lingdang was like a ravenous dragon that chased after us and bit us without letting go!

“She almost blew apart ‘Weary Tooth’. It was riddled with roles, and the communication units and the engine units were greatly damaged. Even the space jump units were unstable!

“We were hunted by her for days. Seeing that we were about to sink if we didn’t take any action, we had to risk performing an irregular, extreme jump during the high-speed cruising and while the warship was seriously damaged! The destination of the jump was set to be the middle of the boundless dark nebula next to the battlefield!”

“You mean the Ancient Sages Sector?” Wu Suiyun said.

“We didn’t know about the existence of the Ancient Sages Sector at that time and just thought that it would be easier to get rid of the enemy inside the dark nebula.

“Extreme jumps are too dangerous. A warship riddled with holes cannot withstand the furious turbulence in four-dimensional space. Even if the warship can jump over, the odds of the crew members’ survival are shockingly low, bordering on zero. Every voyage manual in the Imperium warns us against such things time and time again!

“As it turned out, although Weary Tooth successfully jumped to the depths of the dark nebula, the starship that was already riddled with holes was seriously twisted and savaged again. It would collapse at any time!

“Everyone on the starship except for me was torn apart by the storms in the four-dimensional space or scourged by the uncanny cosmic radiation. They died the most miserable deaths!”

“Wait!” Meng Chixin asked warily, “Why were you alive when everybody else was killed?”

“Because I was protected by my Colossus,” Heiye Lan said quickly. “Although my Colossus was defeated by the Blazing Tyrannosaur and its arms and legs were all broken, the cockpit, or the spiritual residence, was not entirely damaged. It still boasted very powerful protective abilities. When the extreme jump was performed, I was hiding inside the spiritual residence and survived the disaster under the shelter of the Colossus. However, as a result, my Colossus completely collapsed and can never be used again!”

Meng Chixin sniffed. “So, you just luckily survived the disaster and ‘happened’ to discover the Ancient Sages Sector?”

“It was not exactly a coincidence.” Heiye Lan shook her head. “I only managed to find this place with the automatic navigation magical equipment on Weary Tooth by following the trace caused by a signal when it penetrated through the dark nebula.”

“The trace caused by a signal?” Meng Chixin was dazed for a moment. “What’s that?”

“I can’t explain it very clearly. I’m not a navigator, and I don’t know much about the ways to maneuver a starship.”

Heiye Lan thought for a moment and said, “Let me make an example. The dark nebula outside the Ancient Sages Sector is like a muddy swamp. If a snake slithers on it, there will certainly be a trace after the animal passes, and the trace won’t vanish until a while later.

“When the information streams pierce through the dark nebula, it’s like snakes crawling over a muddy swamp or desert. Vague traces will also be left behind.

“The denser the cosmic dust is, the more obvious the traces left by the signals will be.

“At that time, I had no choice. Every direction meant certain death to me. Therefore, I simply followed the trace and moved forward. Eventually, I found the Ancient Sages Sector. Then, I activated a magnetic field with the last bit of spiritual energy inside Weary Tooth, attracting a batch of war debris, which you call ‘stars’, and landed from the sky, pretending to be a meteor shower!”

Chapter 1521 - Join the Imperium!

Hearing that, Li Yao secretly felt alarmed.

It was doubtless that the ‘trace of information streams’ that Heiye Lan had detected was the distress call that the Nuwa warship had sent to the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector a hundred years ago.

He did not expect that the Imperium of True Human Beings’ technology would be advanced enough to capture such insignificant traces.

Thankfully, she had only discovered the place with a broken, garbage starship. If the main force of the Black Wind Fleet had noticed the trace, the federation might have been doomed!

“What did you do after you crashed in the Ancient Sages Sector?” Meng Chixin asked.

With anxiety beaming out of her face, Heiye Lan said, “What I wanted most was, of course, to communicate with the mother fleet!

“Although the overall capabilities of the Star Glory Federation are not worth mentioning right now, they have the ultimate weapons that are the Colossi after all. Now that they are conspiring with the government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic, they might prove to be great trouble later!

“At that time, the entire battlefield was blocked by the interference indiscriminately. No messages could be delivered. Except for my ‘Weary Tooth’, all the other starships and Cultivators from the Imperium were killed or captured by the Star Glory Federation.

“It means that my mother fleet was not aware of the latest progress. I was the only one who knew the information!

“Now, the Star Glory Federation is lurking in the darkness. It has probably gathered tremendous intelligence about the Black Wind Fleet by interrogating the captives, whereas the Black Wind Fleet knows absolutely nothing about what was happening right in front of them except that one of the ‘claw fleets’ went missing mysteriously.

“Maybe they have searched the space zone where we went missing, and they might have found some of the remnants left by the fierce battle. However, there’s no way that they could know what kind of enemy we were faced with!

“I needed to contact the mother fleet as soon as possible and deliver the vital military information!”

Meng Chixin’s eyes suddenly glittered. “So, you tried to raise an emperor as your puppet who would help you repair the ‘sacrificial altar’ that was in fact an enormous array for you to communicate with your mother fleet?”

Heiye Lan breathed for a moment. She swallowed hard and continued. “At first, my plan was to repair the communication magical equipment on ‘Weary Tooth’ so that I could directly speak to the mother fleet.

“However, I’m a pure warrior, not a refiner. I can only perform maintenance with the assistance of the automatic mainframe crystal processor. The resources for maintenance that the mainframe crystal processor listed for me included a plethora of metals, minerals, fossils, and even biomaterials. There were hundreds of different kinds!

“At that time, I was heavily wounded by Blazing Tyrannosaur Ding Lingdang, and I was overly exhausted during the extreme jump. My capabilities had plummeted, and my Colossus was ruined. There was no way that I could complete the maintenance task!

“Having no other choice, I could only leave the maintenance of Weary Tooth aside and focus my attention on exploring the unknown world that I was in.

“But the result of my exploration was far beyond my expectations. It is true that even the most bizarre and ridiculous things could happen in the vast universe. Nobody knew that a primitive planet, which is tens of thousands of years behind the contemporary era, was hidden deep inside the dark nebula!”

“Primitive planet?” Meng Chixin, Qi Zhongdao, Han Baling, Ba Xiaoyu, and the rest of them frowned at the same time.

“Compared to the powerful, modern civilization of the Immortal Cultivators, the planet that you are on is indeed most underdeveloped in every way. I stand by my opinion even if I am completely at your mercy right now!”

Heiye Lan gritted her teeth. “However, underdeveloped as your world might be, the spiritual energy here is rather dense, the resources are abundant, and the concepts of sects, however immature, have already come into being. The Cultivators are able to collect and utilize resources in an orderly fashion. Countless treasures are kept in the royal treasury of the Great Qian Dynasty—which shed a new light for me!”

Emperor Phoenix could not help bellow, “So, you manipulated me to help you control the Great Qian Dynasty and collect the resources mandatory to establish the super communication array!”

Heiye Lan was silent for a moment, but she did not deny it. Not without regret, she observed, “Such missions to explore and infiltrate the unknown worlds should’ve been carried out by a team of elites whose jobs are clearly separated according to their specialties. There should be diplomats, warriors, camouflage masters, infiltration specialists, professional psychologists, experienced refiners, and so on.

“I was just a ‘warrior’. The role of ‘Deity Raincloud’ should not have been played by me at all. The masters in disguise and psychology who have received professional training are much more fit for the job!

“If—cough, cough, cough, cough—If everybody in the elite squad were still alive, it wouldn’t have taken so many years, and I wouldn’t have exposed so many flaws!

“It’s a pity that they were all killed during the extreme space jump. All dead. All they left for me were a shattered Weary Tooth, some magical equipment on board that could barely function, and the crystal suits that I took off their corpses!

“I spent an entire year observing your world in secret and your civilization, while I slowly drafted a full plan to repair Weary Tooth.

“Then, I interfered with the dream of Zhu Zongyou, an unappreciated prince that I had carefully chosen, with an oriented brainwave disruptor. I implanted some information into his subconsciousness along with the urge to find the debris of Weary Tooth in the depths of the Rumbling Thunder Mountains.

“The most advanced training chamber of the Imperium had been installed in the warship. I let Zhu Zongyou train himself inside, only hoping to slightly increase his capabilities and better convince him of my identity. It didn’t occur to me that he was really a rare genius. His training speed was even higher than the best of the Cultivators in the Black Wind Fleet, and he advanced unstoppably from the Core Formation Stage to the Nascent Soul Stage!

“At that time, I was greatly shocked and pondered on the reason for a long time. I speculated that, perhaps because the Cultivators in your world had never touched modern magical equipment, drugs, and training facilities, such things worked much more effectively on your bodies!

“However, emperor, I truly meant you no harm, and I sincerely treated you as a student. After all, the stronger you were, the more likely my plan would work out!”

Emperor Phoenix gnashed his teeth and clenched his fists hard. “Do you think that I will believe anything you say right now?”

“Believe it or not, it is the truth.” Heiye Lan breathed heavily. “I was sincerely supporting you to ascend to the throne and control the entire Ancient Sages Sector. It was not just because I needed your help to collect the necessary resources to repair Weary Tooth but also because, even if the Black Wind Fleet did arrive later, it would still require a local ‘spokesperson’ so that we could cooperate at the highest efficiency!”

“Spokesperson?” Emperor Phoenix’s head was particularly clear at that moment. “I think you mean ‘puppet’!”

“Continue.” Meng Chixin changed the topic back. “What did you do after the emperor claimed the crown? Why did you shift your attention to the ‘Divine Palace’?”

“After I planned thoroughly for five years and helped Zhu Zongyou seize the throne, I dismantled the communication magical equipment on ‘Weary Tooth’,” Heiye Lan replied, “hoping to assemble a super communication array that could send messages to the mother fleet with some components I crafted in the Ancient Sages Sector.

“However, I really can’t say that I’m the smartest person when it comes to refining and maintenance. Some of the rare materials were extremely difficult to find out, too. Therefore, the construction progress of the communication array was quite slow.

“With each day that passed, the Star Glory Federation and the government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic lurking in the darkness could’ve concocted a new scheme against the Black Wind Fleet. Every time I thought about time, I would feel that my heart was burning in anxiety!

“Right then, I accidentally learned the news about the ‘Divine Palace’ when I helped the emperor strip Lead Eunuch Wang Xi of his power. Judging from the traces that they described, I was pretty sure that the so-called ‘Divine Palace’ was a starship from the primeval era!

“I was thrilled by the discovery. If I could find the prehistoric starship, chances were that I could get more useful units and materials that had been refined, which would significantly increase the speed of constructing the communication array.

“Even better, it was possible that intact communication units were still inside the primeval starship. In such a case, I would be able to communicate with the mother fleet after slight modifications!

“You know everything that happened later. I disguised myself and followed the emperor into the depths of the Land of Eternal Night. I found the Divine Palace and even a Colossus that looked rather dominating!

“I was best at piloting the Colossi in the first place, and my own Colossus had already been destroyed by the Blazing Tyrannosaur. How could I resist such temptations? So, I immediately boarded the Colossus, hoping that—”

Wu Suiyun interrupted her coldly. “Hoping that you could suppress the entire Ancient Sages Sector with the unparalleled might of the Colossus, right?”

“I didn’t want to suppress the Ancient Sages Sector. I only wanted to cooperate with everybody!” Heiye Lan raised her voice. Every vein on her face was bulging again, as she said in a hurry, “I have been speaking the truth. Everything I said is true. You can sense it! I really don’t mean any harm to the Ancient Sages Sector. I sincerely hope that this Sector can be merged into the territory of the Imperium and that the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector can become the glorious Immortal Cultivators who walk on the only righteous path of the civilization of mankind and fight for the future of humanity!”

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were not used to the way Heiye Lan talked yet. The weird phrases such as ‘future of humanity’ made all of them frown.

“I have told you everything without any reserve as a gesture of the sincerity of the Imperium!”

Heiye Lan struggled hard, the veins on her neck and her forehead jumping crazily. Her face red, she shouted at the top of her voice, “Join the Imperium of True Human Beings, the most powerful nation in the sea of stars! The Imperium values meritocracy. Everybody here is at least in the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage. You are the elites of the elites! The Imperium is in dire need of experts such as you.

“After you join the Imperium, you will definitely receive a hundred, thousand, million times more training resources and powerful magical equipment than you can possibly get from the Ancient Sages Sector! It is definitely going to be a win-win!”

Chapter 1522 - The Rise of An Imperial World

“Win-win?” The brilliance in Meng Chixin’s eyes was swirling quickly. “You mean that we will both benefit from our cooperation, right? But the way I see it, your intention in the beginning did not seem to be a… win-win. You were planning to suppress and conquer the entire Ancient Sages Sector and fool the experts of the Ancient Sages Sector such as us to sell our lives to the Black Wind Fleet as cannon fodder, weren’t you?”

“Yes!” Heiye Lan did not deny it at all. Breathing quickly for a moment, she bellowed, “There was indeed a time when my main purpose was to summon the Black Wind Fleet, conquer the Ancient Sages Sector, and turn all of you into slave soldiers! It is the right of the strong to prey on the weak. What’s wrong with that? The weak deserve to be suppressed, conquered, and enslaved. Isn’t it a well-tested truth on the prairies, in the central plateaus of the Great Qian Dynasty, and also the bloodstained sea of stars?

“If you are foolish and idiotic, it is your destiny to be conquered and enslaved!

“But given how things progressed, you have proved yourselves strong enough. Also, you were smart enough to discover my scheme, and you have gathered so many… Colossi. So, it is no longer a profitable action to attack the Ancient Sages Sector in a head-on clash.

“Then and now are different. Now that you have already proven the formidability of the Ancient Sages Sector, of course, we will be able to carry out our cooperation on relatively equal terms. You can even join the Imperium with dignity and part of independence. Isn’t it only reasonable?

“The Imperium of True Human Beings has acquired hundreds of Sectors and thousands of planets large and small after only a thousand years. Naturally, not every Sector and every planet was taken by brute force through bloody battles. Such a way of expansion is too stupid, low-efficient, and costly! The cost of war and the cost to maintain the reign, suppress the resistance, and collect resources are all shockingly high. It is an action whose profits cannot cover the investments!

“Quite a large number of Sectors voluntarily join the Imperium after realizing the power of the Imperium and the possible gains that the Imperium could offer them, including the Black Wind Sector. That’s exactly what happened to us in the beginning! So, there’s no need for the Ancient Sages Sector to worry about that. This is a tradition of the Imperium!”

Deep in thought, Meng Chixin pointed at Li Yao and asked, “Are you suggesting that the Imperium of True Human Beings treats the… remote Sectors such as ours like how the Great Qian Dynasty treats the local tribes in Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture’s Southland of Sorcerers? Because the cost of invasion and garrison is too high, they simply decree the local leader to be a chieftain, who is nominally a subject of the central dynasty but in fact governs the local region on their own, right?”

Heiye Lan’s eyes suddenly shone, and she nodded quickly. “Yes! Yes! Just like that! If the remote worlds are extremely weak and inhabited by uncivilized barbarians, the imperial fleets will naturally occupy them without any trouble!

However, for the worlds such as the Ancient Sages Sector, where there are tremendous experts, some of whom are even in the Divinity Transformation Stage, the Imperium of True Human Beings will often declare the local experts as Sector Masters and grant autonomy to the local world, as the arrangement for the Southland of Sorcerers. The best that the Imperium can do is nominate a few officials who are similar to the ‘Appeasing Ambassador of the Fifth Prefecture of the South Land of Sorcerers’ as correspondents between the remote Sectors and the capital city!”

Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun looked at each other. Chuckling, they said, “The court will have to bring tremendous rewards to the local leader of the Southland of Sorcerers during the declaration. I wonder, what benefits will the Imperium of True Human Beings give us if the Ancient Sages Sector is willing to join the Imperium?”

“There will be too many benefits to count!” Heiye Lan replied in a hurry. “The spiritual energy in the Ancient Sages Sector is extraordinarily dense. You have not been troubled by the extraterrestrial devils in the past tens of thousands of years, either. So, a great number of Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage, Nascent Soul Stage, and Divinity Transformation Stage have been born in this Sector.

“However, your training system and your techniques are still at an extremely crude and underdeveloped phase. Even crystal suits, the well-acknowledged ‘king of magical equipment’ in the universe today, have not yet been grasped by you, not to mention the Colossi!

“As long as you join the Imperium, it’s very likely that you will receive the assistance of techniques, resources, and magical equipment from the Imperium. Your civilization will realize a leap of thousands of years in only decades!

"The ever-emerging new techniques and magical equipment invented in the modern civilizations of the Immortal Cultivators are utterly unimaginable to you! Training with those techniques will further improve your Cultivation, even if it's been stagnant for years! Using the latest magical equipment will allow you to demonstrate your extreme potential in the most violent ways!

"In short, the Imperium is definitely able to make you reborn. You will set foot in amazing levels that no one in the history of the Ancient Sages Sector has ever visited!

"Moreover, if you accumulate enough military credits, you will be given a chance to further study in the Empyreal Terminus Sector, the capital of the Imperium. It is the center of the universe and a sacred sanctuary that all Immortal Cultivators in the sea of stars dream of visiting! You will be promoted and awarded by the Imperium there, becoming earls and generals of the Imperium of True Human Beings. You will be supreme existences ruling over hundreds of Sectors, thousands of planets, and billions of creatures!"

"All that you said is about our personal gains," Wu Suiyun coldly interrupted. "What will the Ancient Sages Sector as a whole benefit from the cooperation?"

"The gains are even more!" Heiye Lan licked her bloodstained lips and smiled. "The Ancient Sages Sector has been enveloped by the dark nebula for hundreds of thousands of years. You are like a bunch of prehistoric animals on a lone island that have stopped evolution. Faced with fewer and fewer resources, you don't have any choice except to fight each other.

"Do you not want to communicate with the other worlds out there? Do you not want to conquer more Sectors to mitigate the crisis within your own?

“Hehehehe. The internal contradiction of the Ancient Sages Sector has been aggravated to the point that it is already irresolvable today. Han Baling, Qi Changsheng, and Wan Mingzhu, I believe that the three of you must have a profound understanding about that, mustn’t you?

“I can tell you honestly right now that, based on the history of the three thousand Sectors in the outside world, there isn’t a way out for a single Sector no matter how hard you struggle and strive on your own! The dual pressure of population booms and technological bottlenecks will crush every self-secluding world! The only option is to march outward and break into the stars, turning the planetary civilization into a universal civilization!

“The Ancient Sages Sector has been deprived of the opportunity for spontaneous evolution because of the dark nebula enveloping you. But right now, the Imperium can generously give you a hand. As long as you seize the opportunity and break into the space, there will be a good chance for you to save your world!

“For remote Sectors such as yours, the Imperium normally does not have any interest in governing them directly. It is very possible that one of you will be nominated as the Sector Master, and your world will be run under autonomy!

“If the relationship among yourselves… isn’t very good, and you cannot accept a single leader, the twelve of you can also be granted the title of founding members. You will be knighted and reign over the Ancient Sages Sector together in a curia!

“Moreover, other than the Ancient Sages Sector, the Imperium will also grant you the power to expand your territory. You will be conscripted as a Gamma legion of the Imperium and granted tremendous military assistance that will enable you to wage wars across the universe. The resource planets and Sectors that you conquer will all be governed by you!

“Think about it!

“Right now, the situation in the Ancient Sages Sector is unprecedently tense, and the contradiction between the Great Qian Dynasty and the Ghost Qin is sharper than ever. The Heaven Battering Army, the White Lotus Cult, the six major sects, and all the other forces are all causing trouble. Isn’t the source of all the pressures the insufficient resources?

“If you are willing to join the Imperium, you will be able to sweep across all the space zones in the thousands of lightyears nearby together with the Black Wind Fleet. You can conquer a few vassal worlds for yourself. After that, what’s there to be worried about?

“By then, Han Baling, Qi Changsheng, Wan Mingzhu… and everybody else will each have your own planet. You will have countless slaves to collect resources for you as the ‘Sector Master’, a dominator of the remote worlds. Won’t it perfectly solve all the problems in the Ancient Sages Sector?”

Heiye Lan was not a well-trained negotiator.

She spoke too earnestly and straightforwardly. She was even a bit anxious, like an impatient cardplayer who threw in all the best cards at the very beginning of a game.

But it was also for the same reason that her words sounded awkwardly genuine and convincing.

The two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators and the ten super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators looked at each other, all deep in thought.

“You are highlighting all the benefits that we can possibly get, but does anything in the universe come free?” Li Yao’s eyes were bloodshot. “The Imperium of True Human Beings certainly demands an extremely high price for all the benefits that it offers us, doesn’t it? What is the price? Tell us!”

“It’s true that there is no free lunch in the universe despite its vastness,” Heiye Lan said. “This is a fair deal. When you enjoy the privileges in the Imperium, you will have to fulfil the responsibilities as a citizen of the Imperium and a noble warrior!

“The responsibilities are very simple. Military credits!

“All the Cultivation arts, techniques, magical equipment, and intelligence in the Imperium can be exchanged for contribution points, which can be accumulated by earning military credits in the battlefield. Accomplishments as great as conquering a brand-new world and discovering a resource planet and those as insignificant as slaying a hostile Exo and releasing a new Cultivation art that you have invented to public will all be considered military credits, which can then be exchanged for contribution points.

“Therefore, after you join the Imperium, as long as you are willing to help the Black Wind Fleet capture Firefly and the ‘government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic’, and then clean up the local force—the Star Glory Federation—lurking in this area, you are guaranteed to earn tremendous military credits. It will be the first bucket of gold for the development of the Ancient Sages Sector!

“After you earn the first bucket of gold, you will be able to redeem a great number of contribution points with which you can purchase advanced starships, crystal suits, armed shuttles, Cultivation arts, techniques, and even slave soldiers from the homeland of the Imperium. You will be able to upgrade your expedition fleet and conquer more worlds. After making more military credits, you will have more contribution points for you to purchase the magical equipment and Cultivation arts that are even more advanced, which will allow you to conquer more and more worlds. Your world will grow stronger and stronger like a snowball. This is the typical path for a rising Sector in the Imperium of True Human Beings!”

Chapter 1523 - A Country Born for Wars!

Seeing that the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were all listening very attentively, Li Yao could not help but grew anxious. He chuckled in amusement and said, “Stop beating about the bush. You are just asking the Cultivators from the Ancient Sages Sector to sell ourselves to the Imperium of True Human Beings!”

“Exactly,” Heiye Lan admitted frankly again, making Li Yao wonder whether she was honest or downright shameless. “It’s true that you will be sold! However, who isn’t struggling to survive in the middle of the bleeding stars in the dark universe, fighting for a slim chance of survival at the risk of their lives? The Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector are selling yourselves, but are the Cultivators of the Black Wind Sector not?

“It’s actually not bad that you are qualified to sell yourselves because it means that you are at least worth a penny. The most terrible situation is where you don’t have anybody to buy you when you want to sell yourselves, in which case you can only wait to die!

“Mark my words. In the universe that we are living in, individuals are not pricey assets. The ‘experts’ who are qualified to sell themselves are few. The majority are pitiful creatures who don’t even have a chance to sell themselves!”

Li Yao furrowed his eyebrows greatly.

At first, he had thought that Heiye Lan would be relatively easy to deal with. It had never occurred to him that the woman's innocent candor that bordered on shamelessness would nearly render him speechless.

Meng Chixin's eyes suddenly shone. "If—I'm just saying if—we truly surrender to the Imperium and help the Imperium conquer many new planets, will all the places belong to us without any interference from the Imperium?"

"That depends," Heiye Lan replied dutifully. "If the Ancient Sages Sector or the new worlds that you conquer contain strategically important resources—say, super fuel that can bring up the cruise speed of the starships or rare metals that can improve the hardness of crystal suits and Colossi—the colonies will certainly not be devoured by you exclusively. Most of the resources will still go to the Imperium.

"However, the odds of such things are not particularly high. You people don't strike me as lucky dogs, either.

"Under normal circumstances, all you need to do is submit a certain amount of resources as taxes to the Imperium and ensure the constant and stable output. As long as the requirements are met, the Imperium will generally leave any trivial issues in the remote Sectors alone. After all, our archenemy is the Alliance of the Holy Covenant!"

"We'll have to submit taxes?" Meng Chixin nodded. "That makes sense. It is impossible for a tribe not to offer tributes to the court after it surrenders. I wonder, what are the taxes in the Imperium? What's the rate?"

"It all depends on the specific Sector," Heiye Lan said. "The environment and characteristics of every Sector are different, and the resources that they yield aren't the same, either. So, the tax officers sent from the capital will have to measure, calculate, and rank the resources first. In general, the taxes include crystals, minerals, slaves, and such. Compared with the benefits you can gain from the Imperium, the taxes are certainly not high!”

“Good heavens!” Master Bitter Cicada’s voice sounded cold. “Does the Imperium want us to capture the folks of the Ancient Sages Sector like piglets and ship them off as slaves?”

Observing his face, Heiye Lan quickly responded, “Not necessarily. Not necessarily at all. All the taxes can be exchanged and adjusted based on the real situation. For example, if your Sector have tremendous crystals and a small population, it won’t matter at all if you submit more crystals and do not provide any slaves. Later, after you have accomplished great military credits, you will be able to offset your taxes with the military credits directly! Also, for the underdeveloped Sectors in remote areas, the Imperium has a lot of tax reduction policies that are in your favor. There will even be oriented investment on you to better help your development!

“After all, the Imperium is the most powerful country of mankind that is ready to live on for millions of years. Sustainable development is highly valued. We will certainly not foolishly kill the goose that lays golden eggs!”

Master Bitter Cicada finally lowered his eyes and stepped back.

Meng Chixin observed Heiye Lan with great interest. He appeared to be more and more curious about the Imperium. “I don’t find too many fallacies in everything that you’ve told us so far. I do not reject the notion of cooperating with the Imperium, either. However, I do have one minor question.

“The first bucket of gold is a very vivid phrase. As long as we secure great military credits, we will be able to exchange them for starships, crystal suits, and techniques from the Imperium. Then, we will expand like a snowball and eventually be a dominator in the infinite sea of stars!

“However, as of right now, we don’t even have a starship of our own. How are we going to collect our first bucket of gold? Will we not be at your mercy and simply work as your cannon fodder?”

“You can apply for a loan if you don’t want to be cannon fodder!” Heiye Lan said quickly. “The Black Wind Sector has our own bank named ‘Black Wind War Bank’. One of its main businesses is war loans. After the Black Wind Sector was occupied, the headquarters of the bank was moved to the fleet and marched all the way to this place, too!

“You can apply for a loan from the Black Wind War Bank. After various evaluations, the bank will present you a tailor-made ‘cross-universe expedition proposal’. However many starships, crystal suits, and small assault shuttles you need, they can all be offered to you in a package deal!”

Everyone listening, including Li Yao, had the same reaction. “Huh?”

“I am not a specialist in bank loans, but I do know a thing or two about fighting!” Heiye Lan said carefully. “Although the civilization and the technologies of your Sector are underdeveloped, and you are short of cross-universe warring abilities, your personal combat ability is very high, and you have a great number of Cultivators in the Nascent Soul Stage and even some in the Divinity Transformation Stage.

Your war potential will certainly prove to be impressive after a general evaluation. I believe that you can definitely receive a huge loan from the Black Wind War Bank.

“If you purchase tremendous starships from the Black Wind Fleet, or hire some of them, as vehicles and employ some Black Wind Cultivators as tutors, it is certainly possible for your Cultivators and soldiers to undergo drastic changes in only a year and a half. They will be truly reborn as modern war machines!

“If you choose such a path, the ownership of all the starships will be yours. You will be able to constitute your own ‘Ancient Sages Fleet’, which will be a partner of the Black Wind Fleet. The most threatening thing that we can do is send a team of tutors to guide you through the battles. There will be no concerns that you might end up as cannon fodder, right?”

“Wait,” Meng Chixin said. “My head is dizzy. I need to think about it.”

“Y—Yes,” Li Yao agreed. “I need some time to think about it, too.”

Wu Suiyun, Han Baling, Qi Zhongdao, and the rest of them murmured similar comments. “We all need some time to think carefully!”

The two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators and the ten super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were all in a trance, deep in thought.

After five minutes, Meng Chixin took a deep breath and mumbled, “If we apply for a loan, we will receive a certain amount of money in advance, right? Arming ourselves quickly through a loan and robbing somebody else to pay it back… This is truly an unprecedented and extraordinary methodology!”

“It is exactly through such a methodology and the support of the mighty armed forces that the Imperium of True Human Beings has been able to recover most of the territory of the Star Ocean Imperium after only a thousand years!” Heiye Lan declared proudly.

Meng Chixin frowned and said, “However, in the Ancient Sages Sector, you have to pay interests for your debt, and the interest can generate interest, too. If you borrow one guinea, you may have to pay ten guineas in the end. If the interest rate is higher, you will never be able to get away from your debt!”

“You will certainly have to pay interest. It’s not like the Black Wind people is doing charity here. If we get to the bottom of it, this is just another deal!” Heiye Lan said. “However, the interest rate is certainly not as unbelievable as usury, and it will most definitely be bearable for you. You can even pay back the debt in a span of decades if not centuries. We have a special term named ‘mortgage’. You can purchase a batch of starships, crystal suits, and modern Cultivation arts through a mortgage first, and after you conquer new planets, you can pay the mortgage back slowly with your trophies.

“One other thing. The remote Sectors such as yours that have volunteered to join the Imperium are the best examples for all the Sectors in the universe. You will enjoy a lot of war privileges in the Imperium.

“According to the blanket agreement that the Central Bank of the Imperium and the local commercial banks such as the Black Wind War Bank reached, there will be subsidies for the interests of your loan. So, let’s say that you have an interest rate of ten percent in the beginning. Now with the blanket agreement, the Central Bank of the Imperium will cover three percent of that. As a result, your interest rate will essentially be discounted. It will be an even better bargain for you!”

The locals of the Ancient Sages Sector including Meng Chixin were all in a daze.

They were tilting their heads in confusion for a long time despite their wisdom in the Nascent Soul Stage and the Divinity Transformation Stage.

It took Heiye Lan forever to explain the terms such as mortgage, central bank, and annual percentage rate to them.

Meng Chixin frowned deeply. “Why is this… Central Bank of the Imperium such a good Samaritan?”

“Isn’t it simple?” Heiye Lan replied. “The Central Bank of the Imperium is not established for profit but for the prosperity of mankind and the peace of the Imperium!

“It is doing that because it wants to motivate the remote Sectors such as yours to apply for more loans and purchase more arms so that you will further expand the territory of the Imperium!

“At this moment, the prosperous land of the Star Ocean Imperium has all been developed by the Imperium of True Human Beings. The expansion of territory has become a dirty, exhausting, and unpromising job. The Immortal Cultivators from the central regions are reluctant to take it. Besides, they are responsible for coping with the Covenant Alliance, which is an even more arduous task.

“So, the remote Sectors such as yours can be conscripted into ‘Gamma troops’ and continue the expansion!

“That’s why the Imperium issued such a policy. It’s meant to expand the territory of the Imperium at the lowest cost. Everything is open to the public. There are no tricks or schemes. Just like what I said in the beginning, it’s a win-win!”

Meng Chixin narrowed his eyes and sniffed. “It appears to me that the Imperium of True Human Beings is a country born for wars. All the policies serve the single purpose of wars!”

“Wars mean survival.” Heiye Lan faced the Divinity Transformation Stage unwaveringly. “Wars mean evolution. Wars are everything to every civilization!”

Chapter 1524 - Carve Up the Federation!

Meng Chixin was emotionless. The dozens of spiritual threads extending from his hands were emitting weird brilliance as they churned inside Heiye Lan’s brain brutally.

Heiye Lan trembled violently with a pale face again. Blood and tears, mixed with unknown fluids, were flowing from the corner of her eyes. She was murmuring something to herself obscurely.

Li Yao pricked his ears and listened attentively for a long time, only to discover that she was simply repeating the same remarks in her subconsciousness. “Long live the Imperium! Long live the Black Wind Sector! Long live the Imperium! Long live the Black Wind Sector!”

Meng Chixin examined for a long time with his secret techniques but seemed unable to find any evidence to prove that Heiye Lan was lying. After a sniff, he proceeded the interrogation. “You’ve been lurking in the Ancient Sages Sector for long enough to learn all the details about our world. In your opinion, how many assets can the Ancient Sages Sector apply for from your… Black Wind War Bank through a m—mortgage?”

“I can’t say for sure without the appraisal of the specialists.” Heiye Lan was still shivering, but her face was even calmer than before, as if her tough nerves built by the secret arts for the Immortal Cultivators in the Imperium had been adapted to the excruciating agony. “If you are truly willing to join the Imperium and cooperate with the Black Wind Fleet, I, with my familiarity with the situation of the Ancient Sages Sector, will probably be admitted to the evaluation panel, and I will certainly try my best to help you increase the size of your loan.

“However, as for exactly how many assets you can get through the mortgage, it will depend on your collateral.”

“Collateral?”

Meng Chixin and everybody else fell into a daze for a moment.

“Of course, there must be collateral,” Heiye Lan said matter-of-factly. “Do you not need a guarantor or something to prove your financial ability when you borrow money from someone in the Ancient Sages Sector?”

Meng Chixin frowned and asked, “What kind of collateral are we talking about?”

“Generally speaking,” Heiye Lan replied, “you’ll use the revenue of your court, such as salt taxes and business taxes. The collateral can also be the mines of crystals with a reasonable reserve, the monopolization rights on certain internal trading routes, and even the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators themselves, in some cases.”

Everybody was stunned again. Meng Chixin asked in confusion, “How can the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators themselves serve as collateral?”

“We believe that the Cultivators in the Nascent Soul Stage and the Divinity Transformation Stage certainly boast very powerful abilities to plunder resources,” Heiye Lan replied.

"Therefore, as long as those Cultivators allow the bank to implant a barrier in their bodies, they will be able to apply for a large loan and contribution points from the bank very easily!"

"What!" Meng Chixin lost his cool and shouted, "Why would those Cultivators allow other people to implant a barrier in their bodies? Won't they be completely at the mercy of the loaner?"

"You're free to turn the offer down, but chances are that some other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators will agree," Heiye Lan said. "After other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators agree to the bank's request and receive tremendous resources from the bank through mortgages after the barrier is implanted, their training speed will certainly be higher than yours, and they will soon be stronger than you. Then, they will be able to beat or kill you directly!

"Faced with such a threat, will you accept the bank's terms or not?"

Meng Chixin was silent for a long time.

The Wolf God, who had once galloped and dominated the Dark Cloud Prairies a hundred years ago, could not help but bellow, "It seems that the internal competition of the Imperium of True Human Beings is rather cruel!"

"The universe is a cruel place itself," Heiye Lan said calmly.

Meng Chixin sneered again, "All in all, as long as we accept the assistance of the Black Wind Fleet, the taxes, mines, and trades of the Ancient Sages Sector will be strictly controlled by you, and our starships and soldiers will be trained with your gear and fight under the command of their tutors, who are sent by you. Although we seem to be independent on the surface, we will be no better than a vassal to you! This is truly a brilliant way of exploitation. It is much more clean, efficient, and inconspicuous than a blatant suppression and raid!"

"This is how the game is played in the Imperium!" Heiye Lan gnashed her teeth. "Do you really believe that somebody will help you evolve from a planetary civilization to a universal civilization selflessly without their own plans?

"If a certain force proposes such 'enticing' terms to you, you should really be careful!

"Those who do you favors for no reason certainly have ill intentions!

"I can't say that our terms are generous, but the sincerity of the Imperium is more genuine in such a way if you think about it more carefully. This is just a deal that we can negotiate on. As long as you agree to surrender to the Imperium, we can discuss the specific details and conditions slowly later!"

"Well…" Meng Chixin fell silent and began pondering again.

Wu Suiyun and the nine super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were caught in another round of intense calculations. White mist was popping up from the skull of every Cultivator, suggesting that their brains were functioning at an extremely high speed.

Li Yao's heart was greatly disturbed, but he pretended to be cool on the surface and simply sneered, "You've been talking about so many bizarre things that we don't even understand. Are you intentionally trying to confuse us? Let me ask you this. If you are so honest, and the terms you can offer are so captivating, why didn't you tell us in the beginning but had to implement your clandestine plan in secret?”

“Who could I tell the things to in the beginning a few years ago?” Heiye Lan asked back very sincerely. “At that time, the Ancient Sages Sector was still in chaos. Han Baling, Qi Changsheng, Wan Mingzhu, Wang Xi, or any of the other Cultivators here, none of you could decide the future of the Ancient Sages Sector. I didn’t have an appropriate candidate even if I wanted to find a partner to cooperate with!

“Besides, even if I did find some of you and tell you everything exactly as it is, would you have believed me and surrendered to the Imperium obediently?

“The locals of the desolate area tend to overestimate their capabilities and think that they are strong enough to overcome all obstacles. The people living on a tiny planet in a single Sector cannot begin to imagine the wrath of the Imperium of True Human Beings, which boasts hundreds of Sectors!

“Such tragedies have happened many times before. When the locals of a Sector in a desolate area discovered the diplomatic team sent by the Imperium, they killed the foreigners with their far greater numbers. After the fleets of the Imperium descended upon them and the most brilliant fireballs blossomed across the surface of the planet, they didn’t have an opportunity for remorse!

“If I offered to reveal my identity, this would’ve been a noteworthy risk.

“I would be killed by the barbarians that were you, and your world would be destroyed by the immense firepower of the Black Wind Fleet. It’s going to be a lose-lose. Why bother?

“Therefore, my original plan was to summon the Black Wind Fleet after the star beacon was established. I would show you the might of the Imperium first before we sat down and negotiated. I believed that everybody would be much calmer and more rational that way.

“Later, after I discovered so many intact Colossi in the Divine Palace, I thought that I could calm you down with the deterrence of a Colossus so that we could negotiate on the best way out for the Ancient Sages Sector. That’s why I began my operation. I didn’t know that everything would end up like this.

“My own life and death matter little compared to the great cause of the Imperium. It is a pity that the entire Ancient Sages Sector might be ruined because of the recklessness of a certain someone!”

“Stopping selling your alarmism!” Li Yao snapped angrily. “Why should we believe you? You said yourself that you Black Wind Cultivators have lost your hometown. The Ancient Sages Sector is such a great natural paradise with particularly dense spiritual energy. Who knows whether or not you are coveting the opulence of the Ancient Sages Sector and preparing to claim this place as your new den?”

“Well, I can’t say for sure,” Heiye Lan replied dutifully. “After all, I am not in charge in the Black Wind Fleet. I cannot speak for my father or the leadership of the fleet. I can only say that, according to my judgement, the likelihood of that is not high.”

Li Yao raised his eyebrow in disdain. “Why not?”

“If we find absolutely nothing of value in our expedition, the Ancient Sages Sector will certainly be our only target. Chances are that we will really conquer the Ancient Sages

Sector and modify the place into a new Black Wind Sector as our base," Heiye Lan admitted frankly. "However, we have already discovered the 'government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic' and the 'Star Glory Federation', a country in the desolate area that can build and maintain starships and Colossi. So, you are now far less important than them in our eyes!

"It is needless to mention the value of the government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic. The intimidation and value of the Star Glory Federation are obviously higher than those of the Ancient Sages Sector, too. They certainly have multiple well-developed Sectors in their territory anyway.

"So, the Black Wind Fleet can conquer the Star Glory Federation and occupy their territory as the new base and home of the Black Wind Cultivators. In the meantime, we can also capture Firefly and exchange the government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic and the Star Ocean Seal for tremendous contribution points.

"If you are willing to earnestly help us realize our plan, is there any necessity for us to lay our fingers on the Ancient Sages Sector? Wouldn't it be straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel?"

Dangerous brilliance was flashing in Li Yao's eyes. He laughed coldly and said, "Perhaps, the Ancient Sages Sector was indeed a 'gnat' in the beginning. However, a Nuwa warship and so many Colossi have been discovered in the Ancient Sages Sector right now. Do you not want them?"

"We do, but we don't have to take them away by raiding. We can totally strike another deal that will meet both our needs."

Heiye Lan looked at Li Yao and said honestly, “The Nuwa warship and the Colossi include the most enigmatic technology and secrets of the primeval civilizations. With the crude and primitive knowledge of your world, it is impossible for you to understand them.

“In other words, you will never bring out the full power of the Nuwa warship and the Colossi when they are in your hands. It will be only a great waste.

“Weren’t the legendary Twelve Cloud Qin Gold Statues in ancient times gradually worn out due to the lack of maintenance after years of battles?

“Your technological gap right now is severe. Chances are that your technology today is not even as good as that of the Cloud Qin Dynasty a hundred thousand years ago!

“Therefore, you might as well cooperate with the Black Wind Fleet. We will develop the assets together. Then, you can purchase a batch of starships and crystal suits from the Black Wind War Bank with your mortgage. After we are both armed, we will march to the Star Glory Federation together and dissect the barbaric country. That is the best option for you and for us!”

Chapter 1525 - Not a Threat but a Fact!

Chilling, aggressive brilliance was beaming out of Heiye Lan’s swollen eyes, stinging Li Yao’s heart like a venomous bee.

Meng Chixin listened to their conversation in silence not far away. His face had been deep and indifferent, and there was no telling what was on his mind. It was not until this moment that he slowly said, “In your opinion, we have to join the Imperium of True Human Beings?”

“Do you have a second option?” Heiye Lan smiled with a face full of bruises. “You have been hiding in the dark nebula for hundreds of thousands of years without ever being discovered by the outside world. The odds are one in a billion!

“However, now that the Black Wind Fleet has expanded to this area on behalf of the Imperium, and we have discovered Firefly, which is of paramount importance, we are certainly not going to leave this space zone unexplored.

“Moreover, the Star Glory Federation, a local force nearby, has also expanded to the proximity of the dark nebula. They are capable of cross-universe colonization, too. It’s unlikely that they will stop their march of invasion!

“In any case, you will not be able to conceal yourselves any longer. Your peaceful life in the unvisited paradise as you had in the past hundreds of thousands of years is over!

"You don't have a choice. If you don't want to wait for countless starships, Exos, and Colossi to rain down from the sky like a meteor shower, you will have to move forward actively to embrace and be assimilated into the universe, a boundless, real world you belong to!

"Vast as the universe is, there are only two superpowers of human beings. You can choose either the Imperium or the Covenant Alliance. As I stated earlier, the 'demi-humans' in the Covenant Alliance are just puppets of flesh and blood that are devoid of humanity, feelings, and free will. They can't even be called real human beings. I don't suppose you would want to live such a life, do you?"

Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun looked at each other. The two of them had more or less tasted the feeling themselves a hundred years earlier. They were obviously reluctant to become cold machines again.

Seeing that the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were wavering, Heiye Lan bulged her eyes even wider. The blood vessels in them were also exploding out of the eyeballs. She panted and said, "Maybe the poor folks living at the bottom class of the Ancient Sages Sector will believe that, as long as they can live in safety with enough food and clothes, it doesn't matter if they throw away their feelings, self-awareness, and independent will!

"But you are all in the Nascent Soul Stage and the Divinity Transformation Stage. You are the elites that represent the direction of humanity's evolution! You can't abandon your belief, your will, and your thoughts, can you? You want to promote your belief, will, and thoughts to the entire world and universe, don't you?

"The Imperium of True Human Beings welcomes the elites such as yourselves most. Where else can you go to if not the Imperium?

"Join the Imperium and become noble and glorious Immortal Cultivators. This is the only way out for you and the only hope for the Ancient Sages Sector. Cough, cough, cough, cough!"

Anxiously, Li Yao almost could not wait to refute, but considering the subtle situation that he was in, he tried to hold back his urge.

As it turned out, somebody else spoke on his behalf. It was Long Yangjun!

Long Yangjun looked at Li Yao with a sly smile before she turned to Heiye Lan and asked, "If what you said is true, that Alliance of the Holy Covenant is certainly out of the question. However, what about the Star Glory Federation? Since they were capable of defeating your fleet, they must be reasonably strong. Why can't the Ancient Sages Sector consider asking the Star Glory Federation for help?"

"The Star Glory Federation?" Heiye Lan chuckled in great amusement. "You certainly wouldn't want to go to the Star Glory Federation. The Star Glory Federation is just a primitive country that you can find anywhere at the edge of the cosmos! Perhaps they have occupied a few planets or even a few Sectors. But so what? The Imperium of True Human Beings has shattered too many small countries like them throughout our history. The Black Wind Fleet alone has annihilated quite a few!

"Let me put it this way. If the Imperium of True Human Beings can be compared to the Great Qian Dynasty, and the Covenant Alliance to Ghost Qin, this Star Glory Federation will be the Southland of Sorcerers at best. No. It will only be a small tribe in the Southland of Sorcerers at best!

“With the world in chaos, it would be understandable if anyone wanted to join the Great Qian Dynasty or Ghost Qin to make a name for themselves, but what idiots would join the Southland of Sorcerers to compete for the world?

“If you are already willing to open up and join a certain force in the universe, of course, you should join the most powerful one! The Star Glory Federation? They can never offer as good terms as we can, nor can they ensure your safety. Chances are that after you join the Star Glory Federation today, you will be annihilated by the Black Wind Fleet tomorrow. You will just be buried together with the poor federal citizens!”

Long Yangjun glanced at Li Yao again and said with a smile, “That doesn’t sound right. You don’t have much contact with the Star Glory Federation. How do you know that it is just a small, insignificant country? If the federation is so weak, how could they defeat your fleet?”

“I am a warrior. I’m neither a negotiator nor a liar!” Heiye Lan gnashed her teeth. “Everything I said just now is true, including my own brutal failure and the enemy’s formidability when she was in the Colossus. I talked about the whole event in the most honest way!

“Yes. It’s true that we were defeated by the enemy, but it was just a claw fleet that had a bloody battle with Firefly first. It had almost been drained in the previous battle!

“Our enemy, on the other hand, was a main-force fleet of an enormous scale, well-prepared with sufficient gear and supplies. They also launched an unexpected assault from behind us. How could we not fail?

“Such a tactical setback equals to the loss of a squad of scouts before the strategic war between the Ghost Qin and the Great Qian Dynasty. Does it really matter to the big picture?

“As for my claim that the Star Glory Federation can’t be too strong, it is not an ungrounded hypothesis. The reason is simple. This place is the edge of the cosmos! Ever since ten thousand years ago, few planets of abundant resources have been discovered. Even planets habitable for human beings are not large in number. The spiritual energy here is not dense, and there are few important relics!

“In the universe that mankind has already explored, this is a rough land that can be compared to the Southland of Sorcerers, which is soggy and full of venomous smoke, or the vast desert in the north. By chance, one or two experts such as ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’ can be born in such places, but overall, how can a powerful country emerge out of nowhere?

“Based on our past experiences, the remote countries such as the Star Glory Federation can control five to six Sectors with a few more habitable planets at best. Their worlds are of extremely low quality—thin spiritual energy, small population, and inadequate resources. How many starships and experts can they offer?

“The Black Wind Fleet, in comparison, boasts warriors not just from the Black Wind Sector but also from another four Sectors that have also been occupied by the Covenant Alliance. Our capabilities are more than ten times higher than normal Gamma troops. The magnificence of our state-of-the-art starships is beyond my description and your imagination!

“We are all rootless duckweed who desire to make great military credits so that we can march back to our hometown and reclaim our home and honor. Therefore, we are now more determined to fight than ever!

“A remote country full of bumpkins such as the Star Glory Federation will not be able to stand one strike from our main fleet. If they do not surrender obediently, they will be blown into smithereens in less than one year!”

Long Yangjun chuckled. “There’s no need to brag. Your enemy has Colossi, too, and experts to use them. For example, the Blazing Tyrannosaur!”

Heiye Lan lowered her head and looked at her shadow before saying, “Colossi can be as different as flying swords. You should know much more clearly than I do about the gap between lousy swords and secret swords from the primeval era.

“I—I was too young and didn’t have much experience. I wasn’t qualified to use a Colossus. It’s only because I was the daughter of the commander of the Black Wind Fleet that I was given a Colossus, but it was the one in the worst state with the greatest shortage of components.

“Just because the Blazing Tyrannosaur defeated me doesn’t mean she can defeat the other experts in the Black Wind Fleet, especially the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators such as my father with his Colossus!

“You must believe me! You must also believe in the invincibility of the Black Wind Fleet and the Imperium of True Human Beings! You don’t really have a choice. You can choose the Imperium, or you can choose death!”

Long Yangjun grinned, baring her sharp teeth. “Is that a threat?”

“It’s not a threat but a fact.” Heiye Lan’s voice was both deep and hollow. It did not seem to be from her throat but from somewhere in the universe far, far away. “The Imperium is not interested in threatening anyone or any force. We are simply informing you of what will happen in the future faithfully and allowing you to choose for yourself.

“The Imperium has embraced too many Sectors and planets that are willing to cooperate and destroyed too many countries and civilizations that refused to obey. You are not the first one, nor are you going to be the last. Whatever you choose, the Imperium doesn’t care about it at all. Not at all!”

Her words cast the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators into a long silence again.

“Wait!” Li Yao suddenly said. “You keep saying that you are the daughter of the commander of the Black Wind Fleet. Then, won’t you speak ill of us in front of the commander of the Black Wind Fleet because we have tormented and interrogated you? Will he even accept our cooperation sincerely? Chances are that he will burst into fury and destroy the entire Ancient Sages Sector to avenge his daughter!”

“Hehehehe.” Heiye Lan laughed weirdly. “Master Spiritual Vulture, you don’t understand how we think. Now that my plan has failed and I’ve fallen to your hands, it proves that I am weak. Isn’t it only natural that the weak are tortured and savaged by the strong?

“Besides, you are only doing this because you want to glean valuable intelligence from me and ensure that I am not lying.

“This is pure business and nothing personal. If our roles were swapped and I was one of you, I would’ve interrogated the target in the exact same way! What’s there to hate? If I must hate something, I should hate myself for not being strong and prudent enough!”

Li Yao secretly cursed. “Do you not hate us at all? Are you really not bothered by the suffering?”

“As long as you choose the Imperium,” Heiye Lan said. “I believe that your participation is in the Imperium’s favor. If it is in the Imperium’s favor, it is in humanity’s favor!

“For the future of humanity, I can abandon and obliterate my life and soul anytime! What’s the big deal about some suffering?”

Chapter 1526 - Is It Worth Gambling?

The excited roars of the female warrior from the Imperium echoed in the hollow Nuwa warship and did not die down for a long time.

The soundwaves triggered rounds of ripples on the faces of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators like tides.

“And you said that you are not a negotiator,” Li Yao sneered. “I can tell that your speech is well-organized and very persuasive. It is not like something that a general soldier can tell!”

“It’s because the Imperium has implanted a special technique into the brain of every frontier soldier who is out for exploration and colonization missions.”

Heiye Lan’s eyeballs were shuddered fast as she explained, “I have received professional half-hypnotization and subconsciousness-activation training. A lot of situational dialogues have been inputted into my brain, providing guidance for me in certain scenarios like the one I’m in right now. Therefore, my previous speech is not just my own opinion but to a large extent the official attitude of the Black Wind Fleet and the Imperium of True Human Beings!”

Li Yao was dazed for a long time. “I didn’t know that. How—how would you know what to do in every case-scenario?”

Heiye Lan smiled.

Although she was imprisoned and almost deformed from torture, the female warrior of the Imperium was still smiling confidently as if she were sure to win.

“If your country had conquered, destroyed, and devoured countless worlds like the Imperium of True Human Beings has,” Heiye Lan said unhurriedly, “you would also have accumulated abundant experience and know how to cope with any unexpected situation!”

Li Yao thought quickly but failed to come up with a counter.

Staring at Heiye Lan, Meng Chixin said, “Your offer is indeed tempting, if what you said is true. However, it is a great deal that concerns the future of our entire world, and we cannot make a decision recklessly!

“We need to know more information about the Imperium of True Human Beings and the universe to make a sensible judgement.

“I’ll give you two options.

“Firstly, here are ten jade chips. I’ll give you three days for you to confess the intelligence about the Imperium of True Human Beings, the Alliance of the Holy Covenant, and other forces in the universe after classifying it into different categories such as history, system, economy, culture, and so on. Also, you will need to tell us about everything that came before the Imperium of True Human Beings, such as the Star Ocean Republic, the Star Ocean Imperium, the Demon Beast Empire, the age of the ancient Cultivators, and the primeval era!

“After studying the files that you provide, we will naturally make a decision as to whether or not we surrender to the

Imperium of True Human Beings and cooperate with the Black Wind Fleet!

“Secondly, if you are unwilling to confess dutifully, or if you are caught lying or concealing anything, we will have no choice but to kill you and exploit every drop of information in your head with techniques such as the soul-searching technique!

“Naturally, in such a case, we will no longer be able to trust the Black Wind Fleet, and the Black Wind Fleet will certainly not let us go. It will be very difficult for us to cooperate. Who knows what kind of crazy things the Ancient Sages Sector can do when mired in desperation?”

Heiye Lan hesitated for a moment and nodded. “I—I can tell you everything, but I don’t know the crucial details right now, such as the specific information about our fleet, the parameters of the starships, or the coordinates of the internal worlds of the Imperium of True Human Beings, which were sealed tightly before I left for the mission. I can’t tell you such things.

“I can only tell you conceptional stuff. If you are only trying to get an introduction to the current universe, it should suffice!”

“Deal,” Meng Chixin said. “We don’t need to know the… coordinates of your capital right now. We only want to understand the universe as quickly as possible so that we can make a final decision!”

“Then I hope that you make it soon,” Heiye Lan said peacefully. “I don’t know the Black Wind Fleet’s status right now, but your surrender is only valuable before the Black Wind Fleet conquers the Star Glory Federation and captures Firefly. If the rebels at the edge of the cosmos have all been suppressed and shattered, I can’t guarantee that the Black Wind Fleet will necessarily accept your surrender!”

Meng Chixin was silent briefly before he said, “I understand. Your soul has been exhausted. Take a rest for a moment before you input the intelligence about the universe into the jade chips!”

His hands shivered. Mystic rays flowed into Heiye Lan’s temples along the spiritual threads. The female warrior of the Imperium’s eyes quivered for a moment before they were covered by her eyelids, and her breath became deep and stable.

She had fallen asleep.

Conversely, the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators and the ten super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators seemed to be caught in an unbelievable nightmare that they could not escape from.

For how many years, all the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector had dreamed of ‘ascension’. They had hoped to appreciate the vastness and splendor of the deities’ realm.

However, when the real deities’ realm—or rather, the whole universe—was gradually unveiled in front of them, revealing its true face of infinite cruelty, the indescribable shock and oppression put them at a loss for words for a long time. They were like frogs who had seen the boundless ocean and the sharks, whales, and octopi swimming in it for the first time after they jumped out of the dry well that they had been living in!

After a long silence, Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar took a long breath and smiled bitterly. “I didn’t expect that the journey to the Divine Palace would end in such a way. The truth about the deities’ realm is too dreadful and thrilling!”

“If the woman wasn’t lying, the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Alliance of the Holy Covenant are two behemoths that we certainly cannot resist right now,” Qi Zhongdao observed worriedly. “We have just one Sector that is as divided as a tray of loose sand, but they each have more than two hundred Sectors with sufficient soldiers and supplies. They are hundreds of times more powerful than us! Not considering the technological gap, they can simply drown us with their sheer advantage in numbers!”

“The enormous starships roaming through the universe, and the warriors in crystal suits and Colossi who can break the stars!” ‘Heaven Battering King’ Qi Changsheng licked his lips and grinned. “When you think about it, it is actually quite fun!”

“I don’t like the way they treat the common folk.” ‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu said coldly, “Are they any different from the shameless swine of the six major sects?”

“Enough!” Meng Chixin waved his hands and interrupted the meaningless discussion. “I believe that everybody here is as shocked at the news about the ‘deities’ realm’ as me. Everything that the ‘deity’ said is too complicated, mysterious, and unbelievable!

“I think that we all need time to calm down and reflect on the issues carefully. I suggest that we consider the situation for three days and in the meantime get to know the situation of the universe. In three days, we will meet again and discuss a way out for the Ancient Sages Sector. What do you think?”

It was certainly the best option that they had right now. Naturally, there was no disagreement.

Li Yao thought of something. Perhaps he could find a chance to activate the star beacon and send the coordinates of this Sector to the Star Glory Federation within the three days.

“However,” Meng Chixin said, “the issue must be kept a secret from the people of the six major sects outside. Otherwise, with the enticing terms that Heiye Lan has proposed, it’s possible that the six major sects will dump us and even betray the Ancient Sages Sector to cooperate with the Black Wind Fleet directly!

“Hehe. The clowns of the six major sects will certainly be devoured by the Black Wind Fleet!

“The future of the Ancient Sages Sector can only be decided by the twelve of us. Even if we do surrender, it should be carried out under our supervision in order to ensure the maximal benefits and the most safety for the Ancient Sages Sector. Do you agree?”

Meng Chixin glanced around. All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators nodded.

Meng Chixin smiled and said, “For the sake of confidentiality, and to ensure that some of you do not hurt the overall interests of the Ancient Sages Sector when other people can’t see—say, getting in touch with Heiye Lan and surrendering to the Black Wind Fleet alone in order to become the ‘Sector Master’ of the Ancient Sages Sector—I suggest that the twelve of us be classified into four groups, and the three members in each group include pro-Great-Qian Cultivators and anti-Great-Qian Cultivators simultaneously who will oversee each other. What do you think?

"'Oversee' might be too strong a word. This is also for our discussions and decisions in future to be smoother. After all, many fellow Cultivators here have contradictions and prejudices against each other. It will be a great opportunity for us to bond with each other!"

'Bond' was certainly not the favorite word for many Cultivators.

However, the rule that Meng Chixin had just raised was indeed very important.

Anybody's heart could be treacherous. It was true that they could not guarantee that some of them would be selfish and greedy enough to set Heiye Lan free in secret or try to contact the Black Wind Fleet in order to become the 'Sector Master' of the Ancient Sages Sector.

Mutual supervision was necessary.

Li Yao, however, cried to himself.

If they were divided into groups of three, and he was kept in the company of Han Baling or Qi Changsheng, it would be practically impossible for him to activate the star beacons and send the coordinates to the federation!

Moreover, on second thought, even if he could send signals to the federation, so what?

Because of the technological restrictions, he only had a star beacon of the smallest scale, which was far from enough to navigate the jump of a super large fleet.

The original plan was that, after he sent the coordinates via the star beacon, the federation would teleport a batch of new materials for him so that he could assemble more star beacons. Then, the process would repeat itself until he had hundreds of star beacons. Eventually, he would connect the star beacons into a magnificent ‘space gate’ so that the federal fleet could be teleported over steadily and precisely.

Even if everything went well, the entire process could still take months.

With the current situation, it was impossible for him to have several months without being disturbed by anyone!

Besides, as soon as he sent signal to the federation, it was very possible that the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators and Heiye Lan, as a special agent of the Imperium, would notice the anomaly!

Unlike Heiye Lan, who had all the critical information in her head sealed, there were the coordinates of many important facilities in the federation, the research progress of the state-of-the-art magical equipment, the scale of the army, the files of the top experts, and a lot of other things in his brain, all of which were top secrets in a universal war!

Once he was hypnotized and interrogated by the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators like Heiye Lan had been, all the files would be exposed!

Given the dire consequences, could he make that gamble? Should he gamble?

“Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture? Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture!”

Li Yao was thinking when he suddenly heard Meng Chixin calling him. He raised his head, only to discover that all the other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators had been grouped up, but there was no place for him.

Everybody else had been classified into groups of three, but he had been left alone, together with the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators.

“Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, please come with us.” Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun looked at Li Yao with a smile. “There’s something important that we must speak to you.”

Chapter 1527 - What Are They Up To?

Li Yao followed Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun, the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, back to the temple of the Colossi again.

At this time, the temple of the Colossi had been sealed by the barriers that the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators had set up. The other Cultivators below the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator were forbidden from entering or even observing nearby. It had become an out-and-out no man's land.

The two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, both being ghosts, drifted behind Li Yao soundlessly like smoke, one on the left and the other on the right, staring at the back of his head.

In the vast warehouse, Li Yao's footsteps were the only sound echoing in the hollow hall. Together with the silent Colossi that were sitting or lying on the maintenance platforms, the place gave every feeling that it was a graveyard of the prehistoric giants and, possibly, a graveyard for Li Yao himself and the Star Glory Federation!

Have they seen through my identity?

Li Yao was very calm on the surface, only revealing a tiny bit of excitement and confusion after being 'selected' by the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators as company. His breathing, heartbeat, pulse, and the secretion of all the hormones in his body could not have been more normal.

However, a great flood was raging in his brain. Even the mental devil was struggling hard like someone being drowned.

Li Yao carefully reviewed his performance ever since the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators had shown up. Except for the occasional rigidity when he pretended to be ‘surprised’, there were few loopholes.

However, ‘surprise’ was a very unreliable criterion in the first place. A Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator could very possibly be an inscrutable man who might not be surprised even at the news from the deities’ realm!

Those traces alone should not have been enough to give him away to the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators.

The very identity of Master Spiritual Vulture, who had been missing for almost a hundred years until his miraculous rise in the recent half year, called for suspicion.

Judging from the interrogation that the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators had performed on Heiye Lan, the two of them, especially ‘Wolf God’ Meng Chixin, were certainly shrewd and quick-minded.

They had perhaps retrieved the detailed profiles of the top ten experts in the world of Cultivators today from Heiye Lan’s brain and grown suspicious about Master Spiritual Vulture, a new expert who had emerged rather abruptly. It was a very plausible possibility.

What should I do?

Have they determined that I am in fact an ‘alien’ and prepared to bring me to this place to ambush me?

Are they not very certain about their judgement and planning to interrogate me somewhere quiet?

Am I being too paranoid? Could they truly be meaning to discuss something with me without any suspicion about my identity?

The three different situations required different countermeasures.

Li Yao walked slowly in front of the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, but his brain was exploding soundlessly like engines that were working at an efficiency far beyond their limits.

Should he offer to acknowledge his identity and persuade the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, the nine Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, and the entire Ancient Sages Sector to join the federation’s side with more favorable terms?

Li Yao thought quickly and instantly vetoed the foolish idea.

The reason that it was foolish was that such a decision would mean that he was tossing away all his trump cards. He would lose the initiative, and the fate of himself and even the entire Star Glory Federation would be decided by them!

As a result, he would not be able to do anything except beg them hard and pitifully!

He would be the meat, and the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector would be the chopping block!

More importantly, the ‘trump cards’ that Li Yao had were not attractive enough.

Compared with the terms that the Imperium of True Human Beings could offer, there was not much that the Star Glory Federation could give to the Ancient Sages Sector. They could not even promise that they could certainly keep the Ancient Sages Sector safe.

It had nothing to do with morals. If Li Yao was a member of the Ancient Sages Sector, it would hardly have been likely that he would die for the Star Glory Federation for some petty benefits when faced with the threat of the behemothic Imperium of True Human Beings.

Even the merciful monk Master Bitter Cicada would never make such a choice.

Therefore, however Li Yao bragged about himself and the Star Glory Federation, there was one critical question that he could never bypass, which was the Star Glory Federation's ability to fulfil its promises to the Ancient Sages Sector.

Li Yao did not know.

His hesitation could very possibly be taken as a negative by the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector.

Then, all the secrets in his head would be dug out by the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, just like how they had dug out all the stuff in Heiye Lan's head.

As an Ultra-Level Federal Hero, he had many more things in his brain, which were also more important and critical than the information stored in the head of Heiye Lan, who was merely a pure warrior of the Imperium!

He knew the coordinates of the Heaven's Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector. He knew the subtle conflicts among the three Sectors. He knew almost all the weaknesses of the three Sectors. He also knew the military configuration and almost all the experts in the federation.

Should the intelligence be grasped by the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators and delivered to the Black Wind Fleet in exchange for their own interests, the Black Wind Fleet would be able to draft a strike plan most pertinent to the situation of the federation. They could even show up in the heartland of the federation or the orbit of the Heaven’s Origin Planet instantly!

Li Yao could not take that risk, at least not yet.

The situation was not hopeless. The two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators and the nine Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators had not made a decision yet, and he could still influence them. Moreover, the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators might not necessarily have seen through his identity!

If the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators really meant to discuss something with him, but he panicked and confessed with sweat all over his head that he was actually an alien, would it not be a spontaneous confession? It would be too foolish!

Li Yao estimated that they were just slightly suspicious about him at most.

However, it was impossible for them to prove their suspicions through violent approaches, such as attacking Li Yao’s brain directly to retrieve the information inside.

The two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators had been away from the world for more than a hundred years. Their influence and control on the mortal world were very weak.

Also, they were in the form of spectral Cultivators, which meant that their combat ability could not be much higher than the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage.

Therefore, they really needed to cooperate with the ten super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in order to control the entire Ancient Sages Sector.

Cooperation demanded the sincerity of both parties, especially under such circumstances where everybody had not come to completely trust each other yet.

If the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators resorted to violent approaches such as the soul-searching technique on Li Yao, only to discover that there was nothing wrong about ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’ at all, the cooperation between the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators and the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators would certainly fall apart.

Given the dire consequences, the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators would never dare to take the risk!

Moreover…

Hehe. My brain will not be so easily invaded. If you think that my head is as vulnerable as Heiye Lan’s, you will find yourselves terrible mistaken!

Li Yao finally regained part of his confidence.

His combat ability might not be as good as the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators when they joined hands, but if their souls crawled into his brain, it would remain to be seen who absorbed, swallowed, and devoured whom in the end!

“Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, you seem to be ill at ease and deep in thought all the way here. What’s troubling you?”

Meng Chixin’s creepy voice echoed above Li Yao’s head.

Li Yao’s feet slowed down for a moment before they moved forward steadily again. “Indeed, I am. Who can remain calm after hearing so much shocking information in only half a day? I didn’t know that there is such a vast world beyond the one we are living in and so many immeasurable species and forces! How should I put it? I’m feeling both uncomfortable and impatient, as if I’m back to the years when I was younger and hadn’t gained my current strength!

“Senior Meng, Senior Wu, I have been thinking this whole time. Do you think Heiye Lan was speaking the truth? Will the Black Wind Fleet and the Imperium of True Human Beings accept us sincerely, or is it just a scheme and a trap?”

The best defense was offense. Li Yao kicked the question back to them.

Meng Chixin smiled and said, “You don’t need to be too obsessed about the veracity of her speech, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture. Sometimes, you can’t tell if something is true.

“Take your Southland of Sorcerers for example, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture. The Great Qian Dynasty has decreed the local leader of your place to be the chieftain and granted you great autonomy. Other than respecting the Great Qian Dynasty and paying tributes, you are essentially an independent kingdom. Then, has the court been treating you sincerely or ingenuinely? Is it an ever-lasting national policy, or is it just a temporary scheme?”

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. “Well—”

“The reason is simple. The Southland of Sorcerers retains its half-independent status today and hops between the Great Qian Dynasty and Ghost Qin only because the Southland of Sorcerers is too far away with venomous fog everywhere. The Cultivators of the Southland of Sorcerers are also best known for their dark arts. So, it is extremely difficult for any army to march into the Southland of Sorcerers. The potential losses outweigh the gains!

“On the other hand, many other barbaric tribes elsewhere that do not enjoy the terrain advantages that the Southland of Sorcerers does have been annihilated by the army of the Great Qian Dynasty mercilessly, all the men higher than the wheel of a wagon killed. Local offices of the court were established in their homeland. In less than a hundred years, such tribes were blown away in the wind, never to be heard of again!

“The same barbaric tribes have vastly different destinies. Is it because the court treats the Southland of Sorcerers nicely with morals? Of course not!

“If we get to the bottom of it, it doesn’t matter at all what the enemy’s stance is. What matters is ourselves!

“If you want to forge iron, you must have something tougher than iron. As long as we are strong enough, maybe not so strong as lions and tigers but at least an iron hedgehog that nobody can bite, the enemy’s promise will be genuine. Even if it is just a means to an end in the beginning, we will come up with follow-up measures later to deal with new situations. What’s there to be scared of?

“If we are divided and feeble, why on earth will the enemy honor their words?

“The strong prey on the weak, and the fittest survive. This seems to be a law on the prairies and a truth in the sea of stars. Therefore, ‘sincerity’ is not nearly as important as ‘strength’. At the very least, Heiye Lan, as the daughter of the commander of the Black Wind Fleet, was straightforward and honest enough. After the interrogation, I do find her very admirable!”

Chapter 1528 - We Will Count on You!

Li Yao was both delighted and worried after hearing Meng Chixin’s words.

He was delighted that Meng Chixin did not mean to surrender to the Imperium of True Human Beings wholeheartedly but was trying to ensure the independence and interests of the Ancient Sages Sector even after hearing about the dominance of the Imperium from Heiye Lan.

The guy’s stance could be the most critical breach later.

After all, the Star Glory Federation was certainly not as aggressive as the Imperium of True Human Beings. If the Ancient Sages Sector was willing to join the federation, it would probably exist as an autonomous world.

That should be very attractive to many Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector.

What worried Li Yao, on the other hand, was that Meng Chixin, as the Wolf God born and raised on the Dark Cloud Prairies, still believed in ‘survival of the fittest’, which was similar to the Imperium of True Human Beings’ ideology.

But it was not something beyond his expectation.

Preaching freedom, democracy, natural rights, and equality to an ‘ancient person’, and not just any ancient person but an ‘ancient barbarian’? Li Yao would be a fool if he did that!

“Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, with everything coming to this point, whatever choice we make and however much the enemy offers us, the most critical thing is that we must be strong enough ourselves!”

Meng Chixin stared at Li Yao very solemnly. “Only if we are strong enough can we possibly strike a deal and seek a future for our home, the Ancient Sages Sector!

“I wonder, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, in your opinion, what is the strongest part of the Ancient Sages Sector that attracts the enemy most and makes them want to buy us over?”

Li Yao pondered for a moment and replied, “The spiritual energy in the Ancient Sages Sector is dense. The Cultivators here are generally strong, which means that they are the best cannon fodder. That could be the enemy’s motivation.

“However, most of the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector have been divided into different sects that are at loggerheads with one another. They are worse than loose land! For us, for the Imperium of True Human Beings, or for any other force, it won’t be an easy job to organize those selfish guys who each have their own sordid schemes!

“In my opinion, the most magnificent force of the Ancient Sages Sector is still the twelve of us!”

“Well said!” Glamorous brilliance beamed out of Meng Chixin’s eyes. “Having risen to fame from the murky Southland of Sorcerers and become a critical person in the quest for the Divine Palace in only half a year, you truly deserve your fame, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture!

“However, I fear that you haven’t seen through the whole picture yet.

“Judging from Heiye Lan’s description just now, the Imperium of True Human Beings and other forces in the universe, such as the Star Glory Federation, must attach more importance to large-scale magical equipment. Personal combat ability matters less to them than it does to us!

“In the dark, cold, airless universe, under the barrage of a hundred warships, I’m afraid that even the strongest Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator or Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator can be blown to smithereens!

“The sea of stars is a vast and perilous place. Without ‘starships’ as vehicles, it is impossible for a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator or a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator to fly from one Sector to another in a decade. Strategically speaking, such Cultivators will be confined to where they are!

“Therefore, with only the twelve of us, we will not be able to march out of the Ancient Sages Sector. Even if our Cultivation was twice as high, I’m afraid that the Imperium of True Human Beings still wouldn’t pay as much attention to us!

“The reason that Heiye Lan offered such generous terms to us, in my opinion, lies in the Cloud Qin Gold Statues, the Colossi, the ultimate weapons in the universe!

“Twelve Cultivators in the Nascent Soul Stage and Divinity Transformation Stage might be negligible to the ‘deities’ from the deities’ realm, but what if the twelve Cultivators are each piloting a Colossus?

“Heiye Lan, as the daughter of the commander of the Black Wind Fleet, was only given a ragged, well-worn Colossus!

"Blazing Tyrannosaur Ding Lingdang is respected as a 'legendary expert' of the Star Glory Federation with the intact Colossus Draconic Phoenix!

"It is not hard for us to infer the dominance of the Colossi!

"On our side, we can absolutely jumble twelve Colossi that are basically intact with the highest combat ability. If the twelve of us all learn their usage, we will definitely become a force to take note of in the universe between the Black Wind Fleet and the Star Glory Federation, twelve valuable chess pieces that can very possibly change the outcome of the war!

"This is where our true strength lies. This is the biggest 'bargaining chip' for us in our negotiation to come!

"Therefore, our priority right now is not to make a decision but to learn how to pilot the Colossi. We will 'wake up' all the Colossi nearby that have been asleep for hundreds of thousands of years!"

Li Yao's breath became heavy. With an expression of an appropriate ratio of surprise, suspicion, and excitement, he asked, "S—Senior Meng, are you willing to teach us the techniques to manipulate the Colossi? Are you so selfless?"

"Before I learned the vastness of the universe, I might've kept something to myself to fight for the tiny planet we are on," Meng Chixin said casually. "However, knowing the boundlessness of the sea of stars and that the Ancient Sages Sector is just a tiny pebble at the edge of the world, with us being insignificant dust on the pebble, what's there to keep from other grains of dust?

"It is truly boring to fight internally with you people on this pebble. If a man must fight, he should soar into the sky and fight the deities in the universe!”

Although he was a spectral Cultivator without a real entity, the ambition radiating from Meng Chixin during his declaration still illuminated Li Yao’s face like fierce flames.

Meng Chixin looked at Li Yao and said in a seemingly honest way, “To fight the magnificent beings in the universe, I cannot act on my own. However strong I am, I will only be a joke when faced with thousands of warships! We are all locals of the Ancient Sages Sector, ‘barbarians’ despised by the ‘nobles’ at the center of the cosmos. Who else can I trust if not you?

“A hundred years ago, many people on the prairies called me the Wolf God. Wolves are not as strong as bears, not as fast as leopards, and not as ferocious as tigers or lions, but they are the biggest threat for the people on the prairies. Why? Because they are united! Of all the animals, only the wolves hunt in packs and resist the bitter coldness together. In perilous moments, the individuals will sacrifice for the community!

“I prefer the wolf to the lion, the tiger, the bear, or the leopard. In my eyes, the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector should be wolves running in space!”

Li Yao was greatly touched. He turned his eyes to Wu Suiyun.

“I share the same view as Meng Chixin,” Wu Suiyun said casually. “A hundred years ago, when my late husband was still alive, he promoted the integration of the major sects as the leader of all the Cultivators, hoping to end the internal strife and target the common foe. It’s a shame that… he failed eventually.

“Then, I realized that the people of the major sects are too worthless to be supported! The twelve of us must not learn from them and focus all our attention to deal with ourselves. If that happened, the Ancient Sages Sector would truly be in a hopeless position!

“Therefore, Meng Chixin and I have decided to teach the ten of you how to pilot the Colossi that we have figured out in the past decades and the tricks we learned from Heiye Lan. With the twelve Colossi, we will participate in the game in the sea of stars!

“This is also a gamble for the future of the Ancient Sages Sector. I hope that the ten of you will not disappoint us!”

Li Yao took a deep breath, only to find that he was still too excited to contain himself. However, it was a normal reaction at this moment that did not require disguise. He solemnly said, “Rest assured, seniors. I am certainly not one of the shortsighted rats that only know how to attack each other! Just as you said, Senior Meng, if we must fight, we should fight the entire universe to our heart’s content!

“However, you could’ve informed the Three Saints, the Four Rapscallions, the Monk, and the Emperor as well as me of your plan at the same time. Why did you choose to tell me alone?”

“Because your role in the entire gamble is vital,” Meng Chixin explained. “You have never piloted a Colossus before, so it’s possible that you don’t under the mysteries. In terms of ‘manipulation’, the Colossus is not very difficult to use. All the Cultivators in the Nascent Soul Stage boast extraordinary wisdom and souls. After one to two days of adaptation, five days at most, you will be able to control the

Colossus to perform the basic movements and simple attacks.

“Such magical equipment seems to have been specifically refined by the primeval deities—specifically, the Nuwa Clan. They are designed for human beings to use and are much easier to control than many flying swords. It’s basically the same with regular armor!”

Li Yao nodded.

What he said was quite true. Although the Colossi were ultimate treasures in the primeval era, they were designed in a very user-friendly way. Years ago, when he tried Draconic Phoenix for the first time, he had already been able to perform a rather sophisticated technique and blow up a member of the Pangu Clan!

Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun, as two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, had studied it for decades. It was not strange that they could perceive the usage of the Colossus.

“However,” Meng Chixin said solemnly, “although the Colossi are not difficult to maneuver, they are extremely delicate in structure. The rune arrays and the spiritual energy circuits are sometimes even traceless and unpredictable. It’s extremely hard to repair and maintain them!

“In fact, there were more well-preserved Colossi when we first discovered the warehouse, but after decades of study, almost ten of them had been ruined. It was truly a waste that made our hearts ache!

“We did find some jade chips and books that seemed to be instructions on the refinement and maintenance of the Colossi. However, neither Wu Suiyun nor I are Sword Forgers, and we only know the fundamentals about magical equipment. Also, we are just two spectral Cultivators without real entities. It is terribly troublesome for us to maintain the Colossi!

“Do you understand now, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture? It is not difficult to make the twelve Colossi run and defend the future of the Ancient Sages Sector in the universe!

“However, to adjust them carefully so that they fit the characteristics of each user, and to repair them as soon as possible after a fierce battle to reduce the wear… All in all, all the technological issues regarding the Colossi will depend on you, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture!”

Chapter 1529 - Who’s the Mantis? Who’s the Sparrow?

Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun patted Li Yao’s shoulder neither too heavily nor too lightly with their cold hands that looked like icy mist.

Li Yao was almost shouting in excitement!

“We have just learned that you are one of the best sword forgers in the Ancient Sages Sector today, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture,” Meng Chixin said solemnly. “You had an intriguing debate with Sword Maniac Yan Liren regarding swords at the Dragon Spring Meeting. Later, you also held a lecture in person where you elaborated on ancient refining arts, showing your unparalleled expertise in the field.

“In the half year that followed, you travelled among many sects and helped the Cultivators of various sects to forge swords and modify their magical equipment. There didn’t seem to be a single piece of magical equipment that you couldn’t refine, maintain, or modify. The power of the magical equipment that was maintained and modified by you was often more than doubled. It was almost a miracle!

“Also, we are told that you once received the heritage of ‘Yan Zhu’, a sword forger from the Great Zhou Dynasty, and that you have the nickname ‘Grandmaster of Great Zhou’ in the outside world.

"The Great Zhou Dynasty succeeded the Cloud Qin Dynasty in ancient times. The Cloud Qin Dynasty rose with their twelve Cloud Qin Gold Statues. They could not have been completely ruined when they were passed on to the Great Zhou Dynasty. At least half of them should still have been intact!

"Since 'Yan Zhu' was a top-tier sword forger of the Great Zhou Dynasty, is there any chance that he once got in touch with some Cloud Qin Gold Statues? Have the secret methods regarding the adjustment, modification, and maintenance of the Cloud Qin Gold Statues been left in his notes and his heritage? Have you learned those secret methods, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture?

"Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, we know that those secret methods are certainly your top secrets that you would rather nobody else saw. However, this is a period of life and death for the Ancient Sages Sector. We should all open ourselves for sincere cooperation! Wu Suiyun and I are already prepared to teach everybody our knowledge of the Colossi. There's no need to keep anything to yourself anymore, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture!"

Li Yao's heart was pounding, and his brain was almost exploding because of excitement!

Even though he had been considering exposing his identity, the idea had now been completely dismissed!

What Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun suggested was that he would work as the 'technical director' of the twelve unparalleled experts. He would be fully responsible for all the technological issues about the Colossi and even all the other magical equipment!

What an important post it was!

On second thought, who was better qualified for the job than the ‘Grandmaster of Great Zhou’, one of the best refiners of the Ancient Sages Sector?

In such a case, would the critical parts of the other unparalleled experts not be handed over to him?

Li Yao was one of the best specialists of Colossi in the Star Glory Federation! Even without setting up any backdoors and barriers inside the Colossi on purpose, he would grasp the advantages and shortcomings of every Colossus after studying their performance parameters and tactical features, thereby taking the full initiative if a battle broke out!

“Calm down!” the mental devil shouted inside his brain. “Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun are definitely no fools. Do not be overwhelmed by ecstasy. It is possible that they are still testing you and waiting for you to expose some openings. Maybe they saw through your identity a long time ago but simply pretended that they didn’t in order to take advantage of you. They’ve asked you to adjust and maintain the Colossi because they want to steal the techniques from you, exactly like how they took advantage of Heiye Lan and stole the tricks on the usage of the Colossi earlier!”

Li Yao was suddenly alarmed.

The mental devil was quite right. It seemed a bit too soon for the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators to have trusted him and given him such an important task!

Although there was no time to consider it carefully at that moment, he should still be vigilant and never underestimate the wisdom of the ancient people. Otherwise, his outcome would only be more wretched than Heiye Lan’s!

Li Yao hesitated and solemnly replied, “It’s true that I received certain scraps on the maintenance of the Cloud Qin Gold Statues from the heritage of Yan Zhu, the sword forger of the Great Zhou Dynasty. However, the scraps were incomplete and unsystematic. Also, I have never practiced them in person. I’m not confident that I can accomplish such an arduous task at all!”

Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun looked at each other and both seemed relieved. They smiled and said, “As long as you are willing to take the responsibility, it will be fine. Aren’t we all blind people riding blind horses, stumbling and groping in darkness, when faced with the Colossi and the universe beyond? At least, as the best refiner of the Ancient Sages Sector and the Grandmaster of Great Zhou, you should be more suitable for the job than any of us. That’s all we need!”

“Thank you for your trust, seniors!” Li Yao said in excitement. “I’ll certainly do my best!”

“Very good. Besides the maintenance of the Colossi, there are another two tasks of paramount importance that can’t be finished without you,” Meng Chixin said. “Firstly, we need to strengthen the barriers between the Nuwa warship and the underground palace of the Pangu Clan.

“According to the calculations of Wu Suiyun and I earlier, the barriers might not be able to survive another ten years under the repetitive clash of the monsters underground. Right now, we are faced with more urgent problems and have no time to deal with them temporarily. Maybe, after we receive more powerful techniques and magical equipment from the Imperium of True Human Beings or other forces in the universe, we will be able to finish the problems in the underground palace once and for all!

“But until then, maybe we should gather the strength of the twelve of us and establish an impenetrable barrier to build up the gate together!

“Of the twelve of us, many are experts of barriers, but as for whether or not the gate should be upgraded with some confining magical equipment, it will depend on you, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture! I’m told that you are a distinguished specialist when it comes to the confining magical equipment, right?”

The mission was very reasonable. Having no reason to refuse, Li Yao nodded and agreed quickly. “I will certainly consider the issue carefully and make sure that the gate of the underground palace is safe and secure and will never be broken through by the monsters!”

“Excellent!” Meng Chixin smiled and said, “Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, you are truly a straightforward man. We have found the right person! The third mission has a higher demand on your resolution and wisdom. Maybe, under certain circumstances, we will need you to watch Heiye Lan, the female warrior from the Imperium of True Human Beings!”

“Watch her?” Li Yao was slightly dazed. “What do you mean?”

“Although the woman is just a pure warrior, her father is the commander of the Black Wind Fleet after all,” Meng Chixin explained. “She must be some sort of ‘noble’ in the Black Wind Fleet. The way we see it, she seems to have been in touch with techniques related to magical equipment maintenance and starship operation before, which will prove to be very useful for us later.

“In our plans in the future, we will likely need her help to dismantle and crack the Nuwa Warship, to carry out part of the maintenance task on the Colossi, and even to repair her ‘Bloody Blade’-level assault warship so that we also have the ability to cruise through the universe instead of being frogs in a well!”

Li Yao nodded quickly.

The two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were indeed thoughtful. They had made plans for Heiye Lan’s starship so quickly.

He was quite right. Only when the Ancient Sages Sector boasted the ability to cruise through space would they rid themselves of the fate of being at the mercy of somebody else. If they could not beat the enemy, they could at least run away!

“That’s what we are thinking about, but we fear that she might play some dirty tricks while she pretends to cooperate with us on the surface,” Meng Chixin said hesitatingly. “After all, her techniques and technologies from the… modern civilization of Immortal Cultivators are too sophisticated and mysterious. Even if we are both in the Divinity Transformation Stage, it is impossible for us to understand them soon.

“If she pretends to cooperate with us and helps us repair Weary Tooth while activating a piece of magical equipment that can send messages to the mother fleet in secret and summon the Black Wind Fleet before we are ready, we will be caught in a very passive position!

“Therefore, we need an expert of refining to keep an eye on her! Nobody is better qualified for the mission than you, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture!”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and thought quickly.

Meng Chixin’s three missions were quite reasonable. He indeed seemed to be the best fit.

It appeared that he was truly an important person that could potentially decide the life and death of the Ancient Sages Sector. No wonder the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators had invited him for a private talk so mysteriously.

Supervising Heiye Lan had many benefits for Li Yao personally.

On one hand, he could take the chance to study the secret arts and techniques of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

In the more extreme situation, he could even consider killing Heiye Lan directly, thereby stopping the Ancient Sages Sector from joining the Black Wind Fleet once and for all!

Of course, such a course of action would definitely lead to recoil. There was no telling what kind of madness the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector would do in their fury after they found that they had been tricked.

All in all, he would have one more option in his basket.

“I am not as optimistic as you,” the mental devil said coldly in his brain. “I’m thinking about a story.”

“What story?” Li Yao asked.

“Two countries are at war. A is a spy that Country 1 sends to Country 2. One day, A receives a mission to secretly escort B, a spy of Country 1, to the headquarters. According to A’s supervisor, B doesn’t know that his identity has been exposed yet. So, on the surface, the two of them are just on a trip to the headquarters to report for duty together.

“A knows that great responsibility is on his shoulders, and he must not expose his identity. Having no choice, he can only sacrifice ‘B’, his compatriot.

“Therefore, on the way, A and B, the two spies of Country 1 who don’t know each other’s identity, set up all kinds of traps and schemes for each other. Eventually, A finally ‘escorts’ B to the headquarters despite all the dangers!

“However, after they arrive, A and B are both captured!

“As it turns out, Country 2 knew that A and B are both spies but did not want to alarm them. So, they devised such a subtle trap by telling A to escort B in secret and telling B to escort A in secret. In fact, the two spies were escorting and fighting their own people, while Country 2 took advantage and captured the two spies with the least trouble!”

“A childish story,” Li Yao remarked calmly. “There are too many loopholes. It’s impossible that such things happen in reality.”

“Indeed, it is impossible,” the mental devil said. “However, when a spy from the Star Glory Federation supervises a spy from the Imperium of True Human Beings, he may be supervised by the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector. Such a sparrow-mantis-cicada story can definitely happen!”

Chapter 1530 - Tartarean General!

Li Yao felt creepy again after hearing the mental devil's conspiracy theory.

However, on second thought, hesitating like that was meaningless!

Whether or not the two Divinity Transformation Stage had seen through his real identity was beyond his control.

Since it was beyond his control, he might as well leave it aside and simply focus on what he was in charge of cautiously!

Meng Chixin was quite right about one thing. If one wanted to forge iron, one would need something tougher than iron. What he needed to do was grab all the critical factors within his control and simply leave the rest of them be!

The destiny of the Star Glory Federation will not end here. I believe that the future of humanity will be on our side!

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao stared at the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, his eyes glittering, as he declared, "Alright. I will certainly try my best without sparing anything to accomplish your three missions, seniors. I will do what I can to fight for the best future of the Ancient Sages Sector!"

"Great!" Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun were both moved. "Next—"

“What are your orders, seniors?” Li Yao said solemnly. “Please do tell me!”

Meng Chixin shook his head. “Nothing more. Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, you will be making great contributions if you can accomplish the three tasks. We are not demanding people who do not know the importance of rewards. Now that you have taken the three most arduous and critical tasks, you are definitely entitled to the greatest share of the treasure. The twelve of us will each pick a Colossus later anyway. Why don’t you choose first, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture?”

Wu Suiyun chuckled nearby, too. “You can take your time to feel all the Colossi placed here, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture. Trust your instincts and see which Colossus is connected with you.”

I get to choose any Colossus?

Li Yao’s heart was racing. Without any hesitation, his eyes darted toward the black-skeleton-like Colossus in the deepest part of the temple of Colossi, which was half hidden in the darkness and had a red cross on the facial cover that looked like a sole, bloody eye!

His eyes were so ravenous that he could not disguise his temptation at all!

A Cultivator could be connected with a piece of magical equipment. The so-called ‘connection’ was not entirely groundless. For experts who had advanced to a certain level and gained a profound understanding of the parameters of their body and soul, it was possible for them to decide within a moment what kind of magical equipment and weapons were most suitable for them.

The black-skeleton-like Colossus was Li Yao's dream model. It was as brilliant as the fireworks in the night sky. All the other Colossi were eclipsed by its existence. They were so boring that Li Yao did not even bother to look at them.

Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun looked at each other and smiled. "What? You're interested in 'Tartarean General'?"

As it turned out, the black-skeleton-like Colossus was named 'Tartarean General'. Saving the formalities, Li Yao nodded and said, "It is indeed a very tempting Colossus. Wasn't Heiye Lan attracted by it in the beginning, too?"

However, Li Yao knew that the 'Tartarean General' right now was Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun's personal Colossus. The two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were unlikely to offer their beloved treasure to him easily. He would have to find a way to get it!

"The Tartarean General is indeed a very powerful Colossus," Meng Chixin said, "but it is extremely difficult to control and has a high demand on the immensity of the soul. One moment of carelessness, and it may backfire on the user. Are you sure that you want to pilot the Tartarean General, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture?"

Li Yao was dazed. Judging from Meng Chixin's tone, was it possible that they would offer the 'Tartarean General' to him?

Seeing the disbelief on his face, Meng Chixin was greatly amused. "Are you curious why Wu Suiyun and I don't pilot such a powerful Colossus ourselves, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture?

"As a refiner, you should understand the simple logic that the more powerful the better doesn't necessarily apply to magical equipment, right? It must fit the level and style of the user.

“The Tartarean General is indeed extremely powerful, but like we said just now, it poses a heavy burden on the soul and the reserve of spiritual energy. The Colossus is like a bottomless hole that can never be fed. The user can be drained if they are careless!

“That’s why we intentionally chose the Tartarean General as the trigger of our trap and lured Heiye Lan into the Tartarean General. When her soul and spiritual energy were deeply bound to the Tartarean General and she was unable to free himself, we took advantage and invaded her brain!

“Heiye Lan is a living person and has a body of flesh and blood to accommodate the soul and the spiritual energy. The foundation is relatively stable.

“The two of us, in comparison, are just ghosts without real entities. Our control over the soul and the spiritual energy is not as good as that of living people in the first place. That’s why we needed to work together in order to drive the Tartarean General to perform only the simplest of movements.

“Even so, using it for just five minutes consumed a great amount of our soul power, and we were nearly split apart!

“If we had stayed inside the Tartarean General, we would have been drained and vanished forever!

“It’s like a three-year-old waving a saber that weighs fifty kilograms. They will be injured or even killed before they hurt their enemy!

“Tell me, however sharp and powerful the saber is, what can it do for a three-year-old? The child might as well choose a poisoned dagger that is much lighter and more lethal, right?”

Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun pointed at two Colossi on the maintenance platforms nearby that were around fifteen meters tall and relatively slender. “The two Colossi over there have little demand on the soul immensity and consume far less. They are perhaps the scout Colossi that the Nuwa Clan used for reconnaissance. They are the Colossi that we usually use. If we hadn’t planned to pick up the tricks to manipulate a Colossus from the Imperium of True Human Beings, we certainly wouldn’t have activated the Tartarean General!”

Li Yao’s heart was pounding. He asked, his voice trembling, “Then, can I use the Tartarean General?”

Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun looked at each other and nodded. “If we must choose a fellow Cultivator as the user of the Tartarean General, you seem to be the best candidate, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture!”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. “Why?”

“The reason is simple,” Meng Chixin said honestly. “Although we have all announced that we should be united, who can guarantee that so many Cultivators from various sides that have the deepest grudges will really be united without any mistrust?

“Even Wu Suiyun and I have our own unwavering stances!

“I’m from the Dark Cloud Prairies. Naturally, I belong to the ‘anti-Great-Qian’ side. Wu Suiyun is from the Great Qian Dynasty. Even if she doesn’t like the court, it’s unlikely that she will stand on my side. She will certainly choose to help the Great Qian Dynasty!

“Let’s take a look at the other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

“Han Baling, Qi Changsheng, Wan Mingzhu, and Wang Xi are the hardcore rebels, while Qi Zhongdao, Ba Xiaoyu, Emperor Phoenix, Master Bitter Cicada, and Yan Liren are more in favor of the Great Qian Dynasty.

“To whom do you think we should give the Tartarean General, the most powerful Colossus here? If it is given to one of the Four Rapscallions, Wu Suiyun won’t agree. If it is given to the supporters of the Great Qian Dynasty such as Qi Zhongdao, I will have concerns, too!

“But you are different, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture. You are from the Southland of Sorcerers. Although you are making a living in the central plateaus, you have never shown much hostility to the Four Rapscallions. We are all the barbarians in the eyes of the people from the central plateaus. So, I believe that your attitude will be more neutral, right?

“Therefore, if you are the one using the Tartarean General, Wu Suiyun and I can both agree.

“Of course, that is on the premise that you are capable of using it. It is a wild horse that can be very hard to be bridled!”

Li Yao’s mind was in chaos.

The mental devil was still shouting inside his head. This could still be a trap of the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators. They were offering the powerful Tartarean

General to Li Yao generously on the surface. But in fact, they were going to deal with him in exactly the same way that they dealt with Heiye Lan. While the Colossus devoured Li Yao’s spiritual energy crazily and consumed his soul, they would seize his weakness and invade his brain!

At the very least, it was a test to see if ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’ did not know the first thing about the usage of the Colossus!

However, having walked into the possible trap, Li Yao could not retreat. If he backed off right now, he would raise suspicion.

Besides, Li Yao had his own trump cards. He and Heiye Lan were absolutely different!

His brain had been blasted by Ou Yezi’s uncanny dreams before. His soul was polished to the point that it was as tough as iron. He even had a second personality, the mental devil that came from the Blood Stripe Virus!

More importantly, Li Yao had another trump card—Black Wing!

Even if Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun had truly guessed everything, it was impossible for them to know that Li Yao had Black Wing, a ‘fat meatball’ from the Star Ocean Imperium, to help him control the Colossus.

Black Wing, as a liquidous ancillary crystal processor designed to maneuver the Colossus in the Star Ocean Imperium, was certainly able to eliminate all the impurities in the cockpit of the Colossus, including two ghosts that should not have existed there!

Therefore, if the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were preparing the same trap for him, they would certainly realize that they were terribly wrong!

With everything going so far, he might as well have a try!

Holding his head high, Li Yao strode toward the Tartarean General. With his eyes glowing, he asked earnestly, “How do I use this… Tartarean General?”

Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun flew to the two sides of the maintenance platform. Soon, they picked up two metal tubes as thick as boas that were scattered on the ground and inserted them into the holes at the top of the protruding spine on the back of the Tartarean General. Very soon, gurgling noises were coming over as some liquids were injected into the spiritual residence of the Tartarean General.

Li Yao knew that it was oily buffer liquids that could both connect the brain of the user to the crystal processor and neural network of the Colossus and reduce the vibrations caused by spiritual energy and radiation.

Without Black Wing, a piece of ancillary magical equipment of a higher level, such liquids were always used as the medium between a Cultivator and a Colossus.

“Crawl into it from the entrance of the spiritual residence up above,” Meng Chixin said. “We have activated all the rune arrays of the Tartarean General. The Colossus is like an armor that is larger in size. You will know how to use it after you get inside.”

Chapter 1531 - Roars from Inside the Tartarean General!

Under the watchful eyes of the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, Li Yao flew up into the cockpit of the Tartarean General—or rather, the spiritual residence—immersing himself in the fluids that were as dark as ink and as thick as ointment.

The fluids were not as cold as the gloomy shimmer that they reflected on the surface. Instead, there was a certain warmth in them, making them feel like amniotic water that nurtured fetuses.

As the nerve buffer liquid slowly drowned his skull and entered his lungs and internal organs through his nostrils and bronchia, facilitating the exchange with his body liquids, hormones, nerve electricity, and spiritual energy, Li Yao had made full preparations.

He asked the mental devil to stay on the highest alert before he set up dozens of interconnecting traps inside his brain. He even established a ‘maze of memories’ with part of Ou Yezi’s memory pieces.

If the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were bold enough to infiltrate, they would certainly be lost inside.

On the other hand, Li Yao was also secretly calling Little Black, which was hiding inside his Cosmos Ring. Should there be any anomaly, the fat boy would jump out and take over the operations of the entire Colossus!

Black Wing was a liquidous ancillary crystal processor designed for Colossi. It even boasted the powerful abilities to resist viruses. If the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators dared to invade, chances were that they would be taken by Little Black for viruses and annihilated without any mercy!

“Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, are you ready?” Meng Chixin casually asked from outside.

“I’m ready. Bring it on!” Li Yao replied solemnly.

“Alright. Then, let’s just see if you are qualified to be the master of the Tartarean General!”

When Meng Chixin roared, Li Yao felt the Tartarean General suddenly jerk up. Immense spiritual waves and telepathic thoughts flooded into his brain like surging tides, igniting both his body and his brain. Once he recovered from his brief daze, he melded with the Colossus into one!

He turned into an iron giant almost thirty meters tall, surrounded by vague black smoke!

Colossi were not a type of magical equipment that could be mass-produced.

Every Colossus was created based on extremely rare Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and the extraordinary beasts in space. They boasted unique features and even… characters. One might even say that they were ‘living’ super magical equipment!

Just like Meng Chixin said, a Colossus was to a Cultivator what a wild horse was to a fierce warrior, who would have to resort to all kinds of methods to tame it before they could ride it!

For a moment, freezing winds were blowing inside Li Yao’s brain, and he saw all kinds of illusions. Creepy fire was burning. Infinite thoughts, desires, and information were raging, roaring, and struggling!

They were the sparks bursting out from every piece of memory that had been sealed for hundreds of thousands of years inside every section of the black bones and every shell on the Tartarean General!

Li Yao could feel that, in the primeval era hundreds of thousands of years ago, the feeble, insignificant human beings in the universe, whose fate was manipulated by superior creatures, were thrown into hell and crumbled to dust after their value was exploited, but the victims were unwilling to disappear forever. They condensed the last bit of their will, their memory, and their feelings into furious fire that dashed out from the deepest parts of the earth all the way up to the firmament, burning the splendid buildings and palaces in the heavens to the ground!

It was the true meaning of Tartarean General. Human beings—feeble and insignificant as they might be, even when they sank to the deepest part of hell, and even if they had been turned into dust and ants—would roar to the deities and devils who were high and mighty in the sky!

This is my Colossus!

Li Yao’s brain was having a storm. He confirmed again, *The spirit of the Colossus fits perfectly with my belief. It is mine. It is definitely mine!*

Tartarean General is not a good name. Even if you are not a general, even if you are just an unimportant soldier in hell, you are still qualified to challenge the mightiest devils as a champion of human beings!

Since your arms and legs are long and slender, and you are a cross on your face, I will simply call you… Tartarean Skeleton!

Li Yao’s telepathic thoughts flowed to every limb and every nerve perception chip on the Tartarean Skeleton as fast as lightning.

Just like Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun said, the Tartarean Skeleton indeed posed a heavy burden on his soul and spiritual energy. Even for him, whose soul was far harder than that of general Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, it was quite troublesome to resist the pressure.

However, it was exactly the feeling of slightly heavy pressure that made Li Yao better realize his existence and understand that he had been completely integrated into the Tartarean Skeleton!

He was the Tartarean Skeleton!

Li Yao was of a mind to maneuver the Tartarean Skeleton to perform a series of highly difficult movements immediately. However, the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were floating in midair and staring at the Tartarean Skeleton coldly. Their deep eyes were like four black holes. There was no telling what they were thinking and feeling in their hearts.

When they saw that Li Yao had succeeded after only one try and controlled the Tartarean Skeleton to step forward smoothly, a few ripples that looked like cracks spread out of their frozen eyes. They exchanged a thoughtful look again.

However, when they were almost certain about certain ‘discoveries’ in their hearts, the next second, the Tartarean Skeleton suddenly wobbled and stumbled randomly in the temple of the Colossi as if it had been intoxicated!

Clang!

The Tartarean Skeleton crashed into a Colossus that was placed on another maintenance platform, raising a deafening explosion as the two metal beasts collided.

Swoosh!

The Tartarean Skeleton’s long, slender arms were waving crazily like whips as it tried to maintain its balance, only to nearly tear apart Meng Chixin’s ghost!

“Senior! Seniors!”

Li Yao’s panicked voice was coming out from the Tartarean Skeleton.

“How—how do I stop walking the Colossus? Why can’t I control it at all? I feel that some uncanny force has crawled into my body and is manipulating it for me!

“It is nothing like what is described in the notes of Yan Zhu, the sword forger of the Great Zhou Dynasty!

“Not good. My soul—my soul has been completely attracted to this weird Colossus!

“Ahhhh!”

The Tartarean Skeleton seemed to be cramping. It was jumping, running around at the same place, releasing all the bloody thorns around its body as if they were its claws, and then sprinting forward at the maximum speed. Dozens of violet exhaust flames spurted out of its back, pushing it into a stream of brilliance as it crashed brutally into the wall of the warehouse that was carved with defense rune arrays.

After an ear-splitting boom, the Tartarean Skeleton was lying on the ground, still cramping. The defense plate outside of the spiritual residence that had already been broken before was now completely shattered. All the nerve buffer liquids inside had spurted out, wetting the ground.

As if he were escaping from the mouth of a behemothic beast, Li Yao crawled out and rolled on the ground. He could not have looked more devastated.

“Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture!”

Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun were greatly alarmed. They were almost sweating, even though they were ghosts, and hurried to float over to check his situation.

Li Yao’s face was pale. All the veins over his body had surfaced on his bright blue skin. There was not the slightest vigor in his hollow eyes at all. He cramped hysterically for a long time before he suddenly vomited a large mouthful of black mucus. He trembled even more violently than before. In the end, there was no telling whether the thick, damp fluids on his body were the nerve buffer liquids or his sweat!

After struggling for a long time like a fish that had jumped to the land, Li Yao finally said feebly, “This—this Colossus is truly dangerous! It nearly completely devoured my spiritual energy and soul!”

Shivering, he picked up a calabash from his waist and poured out a few fragrant pills into his mouth. After he chewed the pills hard and swallowed all of them, his face finally partly regained the color of blood. Embarrassed, he said, “It seems that I have acted with undue haste. You must forgive me for my incompetence, seniors!”

Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun looked at each other in bewilderment. They could only comfort him. “The Tartarean General is indeed too tyrannical a Colossus to be used by anyone. If it is too much of a burden, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, you can always choose a different one!”

“No. It’s not a burden at all!” Li Yao’s red yet pale face put on a smile. “After I take a brief rest, I will try… Cough!”

He vomited a mouthful of black liquid again, which nearly rained upon the faces of the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators.

…

Li Yao’s body certainly could not recover after a ‘brief rest’.

Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun had prepared independent cabins for the twelve experts as their temporary residences, which were modified from the rest area on the Nuwa warship. The cabins were separated from each other and very quiet. Also, there was only one channel in and out. Therefore, it was easy enough to check who entered and who left.

Only in this place were they allowed to think and train alone. If they left the rest area and got in touch with other people, they would have to act in groups of three.

On the cold, metal bed, Li Yao was sitting cross-legged. Vague brightness was circling around him as he was pretending to ‘heal his wounds’. However, his brain was functioning quickly while he considered what his next step should be.

Judging from his progress so far, he had already managed to fake his way through the first test.

The two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators did not see through his identity. Even if they had their doubts in the beginning, they had certainly been reassured.

Also, he had been appointed as the ‘technical director’ for the twelve experts. He would be responsible for the maintenance of their Colossi and also supervise Heiye Lan, the female warrior of the Imperium.

In such a case, it seemed a better option to stay calm and see what happened next rather than expose his identity in a hurry.

However, could he directly activate the ‘star beacons’ deployed on the satellite of the planet from there and send the message back to his home?

Unless it was absolutely necessary, Li Yao did not intend to do that because it would be a wild gamble whose consequences he could not predict at all.

Still, he needed to at least guarantee that he had such abilities.

He was still in the center of the Nuwa warship, above which were raging tempests and crazy snowstorms that were highly disruptive for the transmission of signals. The control chip that was designed to activate the star beacons was like a dead fish in his palm, giving absolutely no response.

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao stood up and opened the door. He planned to see if he could find some signal-enhancing cabins on the warship so that he would be able to directly activate the star beacons.

However, somebody was leaning against the wall on the pathway outside of the door and looking at him with a fake smile.

It was his ‘old acquaintance’ and some sort of ‘comrade’—Long Yangjun!

Chapter 1532 - Dangerous Ally

Long Yangjun crawled into Li Yao’s cabin without a sound before she closed the door behind her with her heel.

Goosebumps were bulging out everywhere on Li Yao’s body. His every nerve and muscle was prepared for a fight.

“Hmm… you seem to be rather wary of me. You are even more cautious than when you meet with the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators. Is it necessary?” Long Yangjun eyed him and chuckled. “I thought that we were on the same side.”

“It is exactly because we are on the same side that I have to be extra cautious. At the very least, I don’t worry that the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators will stab me in the back!” Li Yao snapped. “Why are you here? Are you not afraid that other people will suspect you?”

“Having learned the vastness of the ‘deities’ realm’ all of a sudden, I am so thrilled that I must have a discussion with a fellow Cultivator. What’s there to be suspicious about?” Long Yangjun said with a smile. “Besides, before I came to you, I visited Han Baling, Qi Changsheng, and Wan Mingzhu.

“As the Four Rapscallions, of course, there was a lot that we could talk about. I told them that your stance was not stable, and you were not necessarily on the Great Qian Dynasty’s side. If I persuaded you, it was very possible that you could be shifted to the side of the Four Rapscallions. So, I have come to persuade you. It makes perfect sense!”

Li Yao was relieved, but he was still frowning. Keeping his voice down, he asked, “What are you here for exactly? To figure out why the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators summoned me?”

“They have already told everybody the arrangement. The two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were outstanding enough to share the usages of the Colossi! Such generosity and ambition alone are not something that you can find in the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators! No wonder of all the great heroes and big shots a hundred years ago, they were the only two who were able to advance into the Divinity Transformation Stage!”

Long Yangjun paused for a moment. Her eyes scraped Li Yao up and down as if they were brushes that had been mixed with seasoning. Finally, she said, “I’m here because something suddenly occurred to me, and I felt obliged to give you a reminder.”

Li Yao raised his wariness again. “What occurred to you?”

“It occurred to me that Heiye Lan, as a female spy of the Imperium of True Human Beings, tried everything that she could to collect resources and establish a ‘sacrificial altar’ so that she could communicate with the Black Wind Fleet, her home, only to be captured by us when she was just one step away from success.

“Then, if we make friends with Heiye Lan and decide to cooperate with the Imperium of True Human Beings after all the terms and conditions are settled to both sides’ satisfaction, only to find an enormous fleet of a second force right above our heads, won’t we become the greatest jokes ever?

“Master Spiritual Vulture, do you agree?”

Long Yangjun was wearing a sunny smile.

She was dressed as a male right now, like a handsome, middle-aged scholar.

However, compared to a real scholar, she was less vigorous and more ‘feminine’.

Perhaps that was exactly what the eunuchs who served the emperor in the royal palace all looked like.

Every hair on the back of Li Yao’s neck was standing on end. His eyes curved into two sabers, and his voice became both sharp and dangerous. He demanded, one word after another, “What are you getting at, ‘Lord Wang’?”

Both of them had secrets that were under each other’s control. Li Yao did not believe that Long Yangjun would be bold enough to expose his greatest secret.

Even if the two of them ended on bad terms, Li Yao still had a chance to offer a price on behalf of the federation, but the outcome of Long Yangjun, a creature from the primeval era whose gender was ambiguous, would certainly not be good!

“Nothing. As I said in the beginning, I’m simply here to remind Master Spiritual Vulture that you must not do anything stupid. Even if you do have magical equipment similar to the ‘sacrificial altar’, you’d better not act recklessly or send any messages to your hometown, which is probably not the Alliance of the Holy Covenant but the Star Glory Federation, right? The way I see it, you are not one of those ‘demi-humans’ who are emotionless and selfless.”

Long Yangjun glanced at Li Yao again and continued smiling. “Do not send any message to your hometown. I will be watching you closely and will never allow you to do that, and it will bring no good to you and the force behind you!”

Li Yao’s eyes were glittering like the edge of a saber. “Are you planning to surrender to the Imperium?”

“I haven’t made a decision yet, but why shouldn’t I?” Long Yangjun replied casually, as if she didn’t think that it was a big deal. “The Alliance of the Holy Covenant, which worships the Pangu Clan, is certainly my archenemy. The Imperium and the federation both appear to be worshippers of the Nuwa Clan. If I am an heir of the Nuwa Clan, does it really matter whether I choose the federation or the Imperium?”

Li Yao pondered for a moment and asked, “Why did you say that sending a message to my hometown will bring no good to me?”

“It’s simple.” Looking at her long, narrow fingers, Long Yangjun said unhurriedly, “What can you expect to accomplish by sending a message back home? The best you can do is summon a magnificent army from your hometown and force the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector to bend with the unparalleled power, like what Heiye Lan wanted to do, right?

“However, after witnessing the demeanor of the extraordinary people such as Meng Chixin, Han Baling, Qi Zhongdao, have you ever considered this question? Even if you are truly capable of summoning a powerful fleet—and we will probably be wise enough to surrender after realizing that we cannot defeat you right now—will such a surrender be genuine? Are you really bold enough to accept our surrender?”

Li Yao was dazed for a moment, deep in thought.

Long Yangjun giggled. “As you said yourself when I first walked into your room, an ‘ally’ who can stab you in your back anytime is more dreadful than an open enemy! Do you wish to turn all the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector into such dangerous ‘allies’?

“Let’s put the extraordinary people such as Meng Chixin, Han Baling, and Qi Zhongdao aside and just focus on Emperor Phoenix, the most juvenile of us all. Do you really think that the boy will bend before your might, abandon the honor of an emperor, and be at your service dutifully?

“Besides, I estimate that your armed forces can’t be too powerful. At the very least, it can’t be more powerful than the Imperium. If we surrender to you once because of your dominating army, how do you know that we will not surrender again when the Black Wind Fleet shows up the next day with an army that is even more dominating?

“Therefore, even if you can summon a fleet from your hometown, will it really help? You will simply be pushing us to the Imperium’s side!”

Li Yao’s eyes were cramping hard. “You don’t need to trick me into admitting anything. It’s meaningless. We’re on the same boat right now!”

“Exactly. That’s why I have come here to remind you out of good will,” Long Yangjun said. “Unless the other ten super experts except us all choose to stand on the Star Glory Federation’s side ‘sincerely’, our surrender will be entirely meaningless!”

Li Yao sniffed and said, “Sincerely? You are talking about the sincerity of a bunch of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stages who are probably the shrewdest people in the world. How can you achieve that in such a rush?”

“I will come up with a solution to help you.” Her eyes deep and dark, Long Yangjun said, “As long as you haven’t forgotten your promise that you will help me repair and maneuver this warship after the job is done. You must bear in mind that this Nuwa warship is mine!”

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao nodded heavily. “Alright. I believe that I’m in a position to make such a decision. This warship is truly yours. As long as the two of us cooperate, our people will help you repair the warship and establish a crew for you that will help you sail to the end of the universe if you want to! However, what exactly are you planning to do after the warship is repaired?”

“I haven’t figured it out yet.” Long Yangjun sighed softly. “However, I will certainly remember my real destiny someday.

“Remember your promise. Honestly speaking, if I did not fear that the Imperium of True Human Beings will certainly steal my warship with their overwhelming power, there is no way that I would choose to cooperate with such insignificant country at the border, which seems as boring as any country can be.

“If you think that you can take advantage of me because I’m all by myself, hehe, you’re welcome to try.”

Long Yangjun’s smile chilled Li Yao, who hurriedly shook his head and said, “We will certainly keep our promise. However, what exactly are you going to do to ensure the ‘sincerity’ of the other ten super experts?”

"You will know it in the gathering in three days." Long Yangjun's smile was even more mysterious than before. "However, it also depends on the situation of your Star Glory Federation. If the Star Glory Federation is merely a pile of worthless garbage, there will be nothing I can do to change the outcome even if I am omnipotent!"

"Wait!" Li Yao gnashed his teeth. "I haven't acknowledged that I am from the Star Glory Federation yet!"

"Ha. That's even better!" With a scornful smile, Long Yangjun said, "If you have absolutely nothing to do with the Star Glory Federation, you will certainly not object to my proposal in the meeting that will decide the fate of the Ancient Sages Sector!"

Long Yangjun left as quickly and unexpectedly as she had arrived.

Li Yao was dazed in the empty room for a long time. He took a deep breath and rubbed his rigid face hard.

None of the ten Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were easy to deal with!

There were three days to go.

In those three days, everybody would study the information provided by Heiye Lan to get a general idea about the major forces in the universe and the history of the civilization of mankind.

Then, they would decide the future of the Ancient Sages Sector, and even the future of the Star Glory Federation, the Imperium of True Human Beings, and the entire universe!

What kind of conclusion would they reach?

Would they choose to surrender to the Imperium of True Human Beings immediately? Would they attack the Star Glory Federation together with the Black Wind Fleet?

What was Long Yangjun up to exactly? Did the elite warrior of the Nuwa Clan who had been reincarnated after hundreds of thousands of years really forget her destiny?

Maybe she had recalled part of her destiny, but she would rather nobody knew it…

Chapter 1533 - Time of Peril!

Li Yao scratched his hair so hard that it almost turned from a bird nest into a bush. The situation that he was in was too complicated, chaotic, and irresolvable!

However, Long Yangjun was quite right about one thing.

It would bring him no benefits even if he sent signals to the Star Glory Federation and summoned a fleet from his home.

He did not know the latest situation in the Star Glory Federation. It was possible that he would summon absolutely nothing after he sent the signals at the great risk of alarming everybody else.

Even if he did receive the support of powerful armed forces, thereby forcing the many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector to surrender, such a surrender was destined to be ingenuine.

Then, it was very possible that they would be mixed in the army of the federation but stab the federation in the back brutally at a critical moment in the fierce battle between the federation and the Imperium!

Such ‘allies’ would be even more horrible than enemies.

Even if the Star Glory Federation directly communicated with the major sects or even the bottom class of the Ancient Sages Sector, leaving the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators alone, it was unlikely that abundant resources could be retrieved from the Sector anytime soon.

Li Yao understood the nature of the major sects very well. He would rather deal with the Immortal Cultivators of the Imperium than communicate with the selfish weasels.

Also, the general public of the Ancient Sages Sector were not educated yet. Most of the poor folks were not calm, rational, and wise experts like Meng Chixin, Han Baling, and Qi Zhongdao. It was impossible for them to accept a government of aliens in a few years!

The expedition of a fleet from the federation would only bring chaos to the Ancient Sages Sector and even turn it into a swamp of war where tremendous soldiers and resources of the federation would be mired in incessant guerilla battles.

The federation—which was about to be, if not already, engaged in the great battle against the Black Wind Fleet—could certainly not afford to establish a new battlefield in the Ancient Sages Sector.

The homeland of the federation was too far away from the dark nebula after all. If it was too greedy to let go of any planet or Sector, the overlong supply lines in the universe would certainly prove to be a military disaster.

Li Yao calculated many times and felt that the current situation was still in his favor.

Of the twelve people there, he had Long Yangjun as his half ally. He had also grasped the critical parts of each person’s Colossus. As a vital part of the whole plan, he had a rather loud voice during the decision-making process, too.

At least for the time being, there was no need to recklessly change the situation.

He might as well wait three days for when everybody had made a decision!

The coming three days were both excruciating long and unbelievably fast for Li Yao.

He spent all the time studying the maintenance and modification of the Colossi.

Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun truly stood by their word. They handed over all the information storage magical equipment such as jade chips related to the Colossi, which they had collected in the past decades, to Li Yao and allowed him to study and train with them.

The so-called ‘jade chips’ of the Nuwa civilization were certainly different from both the ancient chips and the modern chips. They looked like some sort of glow sticks. After they were spun softly, a few shivering synapses of spiritual energy would automatically jump up from the end and pierce into the user’s temples and forehead, thereby beginning the information inputting and copying process.

The information transmission technology of such primeval jade chips was very advanced. Few instructions and illustrations were used, and most of the information was directly pasted into Li Yao’s brain, including the guidance on the dissection and the maintenance of the Colossi as well as their spiritual energy circuits.

For those who had never gotten in touch with Colossi before, such complicated flow charts made of strokes as tiny as spider threads and the dynamic simulations of the mechanisms of the Colossi were definitely enigmatic.

Even their soul might be overwhelmed by the tremendous data, resulting in their mental derangement!

However, Li Yao was one of the best specialists on the Colossi in the Star Glory Federation. He had the valuable experience of studying the Colossi for five years on Kunlun.

The authentic maintenance and modification manuals from the primeval era happened to fill in the critical missing part during his studies on Kunlun. He was so fascinated that he almost felt that he was a fish who enjoyed the water for the first time in his life!

Li Yao devoured everything related to the Colossi almost crazily, almost forgetting what was happening in the world outside!

The Colossi were certainly not as simple as ‘enormous metal puppets’, a common misconception of the ignorant. They were similar to the notion of ‘super-large biochemical crystal suits’ that Li Yao had once thought of in the Blood Demon Sector.

It was like a giant that had its own bones, nerves, internal organs, and blood system, which had been integrated into a functioning whole!

The critical parts such as bones and nerves were probably refined out of the nerves and other organs of certain primeval animals in the universe before hundreds of different ferocious souls were sealed inside. They were definitely not something that the cold crystal cables and wires could be compared to!

They were more like living giants than ‘enormous metal puppets’. They were living giants that lacked self-awareness and were in a vegetative state!

The users of the Colossi filled the vacancy of self-awareness perfectly. They made the ‘vegetative’ giant to wake up from the prolonged sleep and release furious roars!

It was exactly because they were, to some extent, ‘alive’ that they were extremely difficult to preserve. Few Colossi had been left to this day after hundreds of thousands of years, although they had once filled up the entire universe during the God-Sealing war.

In three days, Li Yao examined all the Colossi in the warehouse and found fourteen Colossi that could be dedicated to battles after preliminary maintenance.

Although some other Colossi were worth repairing, too, Li Yao did not intend to fix them for the time being. He was preparing to dismantle them as supply components for the fourteen Colossi.

The ‘Tartarean Skeleton’ was Li Yao’s dream vehicle. Naturally, Li Yao would also take the opportunity to seize as many strengthening components for it as possible.

Naturally, everything that he did was behind Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun’s back.

In the eyes of the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, Li Yao were still holding a lot of ‘glow sticks’ and devouring them with a gloomy face. Occasionally, he crawled onto one of the Colossi and groped for something, only to stagger down while shaking his head a moment later. He was even vomiting crazily many times because of the information dump from the primeval jade chips!

That was when Li Yao felt that time was flying.

However, when he left the warehouse of the Colossi and returned to the rest area, he immediately felt that a day was as long as a whole week because of the depressing atmosphere.

Heiye Lan, the female warrior of the Imperium, had shared a lot of knowledge. Politics, economy, culture, history, military… Information in all categories had been offered.

After every jade chip was filled, it would immediately be copied eleven times and distributed to the ten Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators for study.

The truth about the universe was blasting and savaging the previously impenetrable outlook and belief of the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector like animals and floods.

Qi Zhongdao, Han Baling, Ba Xiaoyu, Master Bitter Cicada, Qi Changsheng, Wan Mingzhu… Regardless of their morals and their stance, all the Cultivators were holding a few jade chips sitting cross-legged inside their cabins in a daze as if they were statues made of mud.

Some were at a loss, deep in thought, overjoyed, frustrated, and devastated!

During the three days, when Li Yao stayed in the rest area, he often felt as if he had entered an asylum that was teeming with lunatics.

Not just the young Emperor Phoenix whose world view had not been fixed yet, even Master Bitter Cicada, who in his eyes was the most handsome man in the Ancient Sages Sector, vomited blood and nearly went mentally deranged on the second day despite his usual calmness.

Li Yao actually understood their feelings very well.

Heiye Lan’s confession included not only the introduction to the Imperium of True Human Beings but also part of the ‘brainwashing tutorial’ that Su Changfa had once imposed on Li Yao in the past.

Although it was just a ‘text version’ and not nearly as vivid and persuasive as the ‘brainwashing room’ that Li Yao had experienced before, the sharpness and coldness between the lines were not diminished at all but even more simple and straightforward!

In the beginning, even Li Yao, who was also from a modern Cultivation civilization and was particularly determined, was almost brainwashed, not to mention those ancient people who did not know the first thing about a modern civilization!

The confusion and chaos in the first two days and their resolution in the last day made Li Yao more and more worried.

He was of a mind to find an opportunity to gather the few righteous Cultivators including Qi Zhongdao, Ba Xiaoyu, and Master Bitter Cicada in private to give them a few vaccination shots. However, he never really had the chance.

The rest area had limited room. Whenever somebody was out, they were always in groups of three to supervise each other. Also, Li Yao was particularly appreciated by the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, who studied the issues regarding the Colossi together with him every day.

Therefore, when the three days were up, when everything was settled and everybody seemed to have drawn their own conclusion after reading all the intelligence provided by

Heiye Lan, Li Yao still had not found an opportunity to talk to them!

The meeting was conducted in the cafeteria at the end of the rest area.

The cafeteria must have been set up for human soldiers in the beginning because the long table was exactly the right size.

Meng Chixin, as the host of the meeting, was seated at the front end of the long desk, while Wu Suiyun, the other Divinity Transformation Stage, sat at the other end. The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators sat on the two sides of the table, looking at each other.

The environment was quite shabby, but the future of countless stars and planets might be decided there!

The people who were about to make a decision, however, were mostly still in a trance, not entirely recovered from the blast of the torrents of information.

“Everybody!” Meng Chixin clenched his fists and knocked the table neither too lightly nor too heavily. “I know that you must feel overwhelmed right now and find it hard to believe that such an unbelievable universe exists beyond the sky!

“However, believe it or not, accept it or not, the universe is right there! We are either going to suppress it or be devoured by it!

“This is a time of peril. We can’t waste our time on hesitation!

“We are the twelve people of the highest Cultivation in the Ancient Sages Sector. The future of our world is in our hands! In any case, I want everybody to bring out the responsibility and charisma of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. Today, not tomorrow, we will come up with a solution as to exactly how we are going to save our world!”

Chapter 1534 - Decide the Future!

His words woke everybody up from their thoughts. The super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators at the meeting were extraordinary people after all, and they had spent three days digesting all the information. However astounded they were, they had to accept the cruel, cold universe beyond the sky and try everything that they could to ensure the survival of themselves and their world!

“Of course. You are quite right, Fellow Cultivator Meng.” Master Bitter Cicada recited a paragraph from the sutras to calm everybody down. “The safety of all the people of the Ancient Sages Sector depends on our decision. There is no time for us to feel shocked. We must come up with an agenda as soon as possible!”

“Well said!” Meng Chixin looked around. Seeing that everybody had regained their serenity and determination, he said solemnly, “I can tell that everybody’s head is already clear now. So, let’s just cut the cr*p and begin our discussion immediately!

“However, before everybody proposes your own opinion, let me reiterate what I said before. The twelve of us should abandon our previous prejudices and contradictions and be as united as one!

“We have only two foes ahead of us. One of them is the boundless, dangerous sea of stars, and the other is the sordid, shameless, greedy major sects and other ambitious forces who are better saboteurs than helpers apart from the Great Qian Dynasty and the Cloud Qin!

“Only if we are highly united and agree upon the same decision completely can we expect to compete with the two foes and hold the future of the Ancient Sages Sector in our hands!

“Therefore, if any fellow Cultivator has different opinions later, you will be free to say whatever is on your mind, no matter how whimsical it may be. After the disagreement is spoken, we will study it together and convince the dissident with logic. We will not start any action until everyone has been persuaded! Do not keep anything to yourself because you may be haunted by those thoughts in the future! Also, don’t judge any fellow Cultivator because their speech may sound ridiculous! We must bear in mind that everything we are doing right now is for a common purpose, which is survival, the survival of our home!

“Do you agree, everybody?”

Looking at each other, the ten Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators all nodded.

“Alright. Let’s start to make a decision, then!” Meng Chixin said, clearing his throat. “In the past three days, everybody has read all the intelligence provided by Heiye Lan, a female warrior of the Imperium of True Human Beings. We have gained a basic understanding of the general situation of the universe as well as the politics, economy, culture, military, and other aspects of the Imperium. I believe that we are now able to make some judgements based on the information. What’s your question, Fellow Cultivator Wan?”

“Senior Meng, all the judgements we make will be based on Heiye Lan’s intelligence. I wonder, is there any chance that

Heiye Lan has been lying to us?” Wan Mingzhu said in a high-pitched voice. “If the intelligence that she has provided is false and intended to mislead us into wrong judgements, what should we do?”

“That’s not very likely,” Meng Chixin said casually. “When Heiye Lan provided the intelligence, she was under the thorough scrutiny of Wu Suiyun and me. Judging from her spiritual waves, the vibrations of her soul, and the changes of her facial expression, what she said should generally be true.

“On the other hand, if she is capable of telling lies unhurriedly under the monitoring of two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, how terrifying must her Cultivation be? If a random warrior of the Imperium of True Human Beings is already so horrible, can we expect to resist the entire Imperium at all?

“Therefore, there is no need for us to worry about whether or not she was telling lies. Let’s just consider everything that she said a fact!”

After pondering for a moment, Wan Mingzhu nodded and said, “Thank you for your enlightenment, senior. I have no further questions.”

“Then, I call for the first decision of this meeting,” Meng Chixin said. “We have all learned the vastness of the universe and the shocking number of species and forces in it, but the question is, how are we going to face everything? Is it possible for the Ancient Sages Sector to compete with the universal forces entire on our own, or should we simply hide inside the dark nebula, never to be discovered by them?

“If it is possible, we will kill Heiye Lan right now and pretend that nothing happened. Our life will be exactly the same as before!”

Looking at each other in bewilderment, the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators all shook their heads subconsciously, knowing that such a childish fantasy could not be true.

“It’s impossible,” Qi Zhongdao said bitterly. “When there is a first, there will always be a second. Now that Heiye Lan has found the Ancient Sages Sector, somebody else certainly can. It is destined that we can’t stay hidden for long!

“Besides, if we hide in the Ancient Sages Sector like tortoises forever, we will be doomed to social involution. Each generation will be worse than the previous generation. We won’t be able to sustain our current prosperity!

“For the future of the Ancient Sages Sector, we must walk out and embrace the entire universe!

“It is impossible for us to compete with the entire universe on our own. To assimilate with the universe, we can only find a certain force as a partner… or surrender to it. At least in the beginning, when we haven’t learned the details about the universe, that’s what we should do.”

Qi Zhongdao’s speech seemed to have drained all his strength. The nominal leader of all the Cultivators of the Great Qian Dynasty sat down in frustration.

Perhaps for him, the decision of ‘surrender’ was truly heartbreaking.

“Fellow Cultivator Qi does have a point. Great minds think alike!” Without further ado, Meng Chixin stared at everybody else, his eyes glittering. “The Ancient Sages

Sector must walk out and embrace the grand universe! Does anyone have any objection to that? If not, we will consider it a consensus and proceed to the next topic!”

The decision was only reasonable. Even the most conservative Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator would not be content being a mouse hiding in its own hole. Besides, the deities’ realm, or the universe, was the ultimate destination for every Cultivator!

Deep down their hearts, they all craved to appreciate the landscape on the other side of the universe!

The ten Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators nodded simultaneously!

“Alright. We all agree that the Ancient Sages Sector must rush out of the dark nebula and embrace the grand universe. In that case, we must depend on a superpower in the universe!

“There are two superpowers at war in the universe today, namely the Alliance of the Holy Covenant and the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“The second question. Is there anybody who believes that we should work under the Alliance of the Holy Covenant?”

Everybody was slightly dazed. They all shook their heads.

Meng Chixin smiled. “Just as I speculated. It seems that none of us want to be puppets that are deprived of feelings and self-awareness. Besides, even if we do want to cooperate with the Covenant Alliance, it is still a distance away from the Ancient Sages Sector, with thousands of stars in between. We don’t even know where to look for them!

“Then… it appears that we are left with only one choice, which is to join the Imperium of True Human Beings as Heiye Lan said! What do you think, Fellow Cultivators?”

It was the only topic that mattered in the meeting.

All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators immediately sat up straight.

Meng Chixin’s eyes were both firm and clear. He changed to a mild and peaceful tone as he casually said, “You can say whatever is on your mind without any concern. I’ll declare my attitude first, but it doesn’t mean that you have to concur with my opinion!

“I believe that, because the Imperium is too powerful and the Ancient Sages Sector is too weak, a head-on clash will be no different from hitting a rock with an egg. The current situation dictates that we hide below the wings of the Imperium and slowly develop ourselves. After we grow strong enough, and when there are new changes at the center of the cosmos, we will come up with other plans!

“Therefore, I agree with joining the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“What’s your opinion, Fellow Cultivator Qi?”

Qi Zhongdao was sitting next to Meng Chixin. He did not seem to have entirely recovered from his earlier frustration. After coughing for a while and staring at the metal stripes at the center of the tale, he said softly, “I’ve been studying the system of the Imperium of True Human Beings over the past couple of days. I discovered that, despite the general aggressiveness and the incessant wars, strict laws have been implemented in the country, and rules are followed from the top to the bottom. According to their rules, even the humblest slave can be knighted, nominated as a general, or even become the master of a Sector as long as their spiritual root is awakened and they practice techniques that are powerful enough!

“It is based on the ‘rules’ that the Imperium of True Human Beings ensures the order of hundreds of Sectors in its territory.

“Any rules are better than no rules. I—I—I agree with joining the Imperium of True Human Beings!”

Li Yao’s heart felt cold.

Before the meeting, he had considered how many of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators would choose to surrender to the Imperium.

Qi Zhongdao was a critical person whose stance could be ambiguous according to his calculations. He did not expect that the guy would simply lower his head because of ‘rules’!

Han Baling was sitting next to him. He rasped, “The Imperium of True Human Beings has acquired a great territory in the universe with iron and blood, which fits my appetite quite well! The Imperium is the best choice we have right now. It is better than the Covenant Alliance anyway, isn’t it?”

Han Baling believed in ‘classical militarism’, and the Imperium of True Human Beings was based on ‘modern militarism’. Li Yao was not surprised by his choice at all.

“I don’t like how the Imperium of True Human Beings treats the ordinary folks, who are not even considered human beings,” ‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu, who was sitting behind Han Baling, said drily and coldly.

Li Yao suddenly saw a glimpse of hope.

Keep it up, Mother White Lotus, you are one of the legendary leaders of the peasant rebellions. You can’t betray your principle so easily, right?

“However…” Wan Mingzhu suddenly changed the tone. “According to the intelligence Heiye Lan provided, many remote Sectors in the Imperium of True Human Beings are fully autonomous. As long as sufficient resources and taxes are provided for the capital, the capital doesn’t care how the local area regulates itself!

“Therefore, some of the remote space zones do have a lot of bizarre, messy systems.

“If we can fight for autonomy and are allowed to govern the Ancient Sages Sector on our own, we will be able to establish rules as we see fit and won’t have to keep them the same as the rules within the homeland of the Imperium, right?

“It’s not entire unnegotiable if the Ancient Sages Sector can be kept safe in such a way.

“I also agree to join the Imperium of True Human Beings, on the condition that we must stress the importance of ‘autonomy’ during the negotiation. We must not allow anybody else to lay their fingers on the Ancient Sages Sector or even kidnap our folks as slaves. I will never concede when it comes to that clause!”

Wan Mingzhu sat down, or rather, sank down, quickly.

Li Yao’s heart seemed to have sunk into a well in December, too. It was colder than ever!

Chapter 1535 - Master Bitter Cicada’s Tough Choice

After Qi Zhongdao, the leader of all the Cultivators, and Wan Mingzhu, the leader of rebelling peasants, had chosen to surrender to the Imperium, there was no need to mention the rest of them.

As it turned out, hardly had Wan Mingzhu sat down when ‘Heaven Battering King’ Qi Changsheng, the other leader of rebelling peasants, who seemed much more blatant and lawless, chuckled and said, “What Mother White Lotus said was quite true. Since there is ‘autonomy’ in the Imperium of True Human Beings’ system, all we need to do is guarantee that we manage the affairs within the Ancient Sages Sector. As for exactly what system other places in the Imperium adopt and how they treat their people, it is absolutely none of our business!

“Nowadays, whoever has enough soldiers and supplies can call themself a king. As long as our fists are big enough, even if we join the Imperium, it will not be easy for them to meddle with our internal affairs! On the other hand, if our strength is insignificant to the Imperium, our struggles will be redundant no matter what we do!

“Therefore, I agree with surrendering to the Imperium first without considering so many things right now. We can always rebel again later. What’s the big deal? I’m already familiar with the secrets of the trade! Of course, we must settle on satisfactory terms and not sell so many Nascent

Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators for some petty benefits! They want to hire us to fight a war? Fine. Bring us real gold!”

The leader of the bandits was indeed as straightforward as he had ever been. After giving the speech in delight while knocking the table, he scratched the stubble on his chin and grimaced at Yan Liren, who was sitting next to him. “Fellow Cultivator Yan, I’m done. What do you have to enlighten us, brother?”

Touching his big, bald head, Yan Liren casually said, “I don’t really have anything to say. Since the Imperium of True Human Beings is one of the two superpowers in the universe, I believe that they certainly have the most powerful sword arts and secret blades in the so-called… modern civilization of the Immortal Cultivators. I would very much like to find out how invincible the sword arts of the Immortal Cultivators can be. The Imperium is fine for me!”

Li Yao’s heart was colder and colder after hearing everybody’s speech. It was almost covered in a pale, icy shell. Then, he looked at Ba Xiaoyu full of expectation.

Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar was always a generous, chivalrous man who hated injustice more than anything else!

He should not agree with Imperium of True Human Beings’ practice to regard the ordinary folks as ‘humanoids’, right?

As he expected, there was hesitation, struggle, and even pain on Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar’s face, which seemed to have been mired in an invisible swamp where he could not even breathe.

Struggling hard to catch his breath for a moment, he was silent for a long time under everybody’s stare, his dry lips shivering nonstop. It was not until Meng Chixin urged him when he said in a low voice, “Can—can I abstain?”

Meng Chixin raised his eyebrow and asked, “Why would you abstain, Fellow Cultivator Ba?”

Ba Xiaoyu closed his eyes and said frustratedly, “I find it impossible to accept the Imperium of True Human Beings’ ideology to treat the ordinary people as swine. This beggar will not live in such a country for so much as one day!

“However, I do understand the formidability of the Imperium of True Human Beings, too. If we really choose to stand against it, the Ancient Sages Sector will be destined to embrace a catastrophe!

“Many people will die, many people will lose their homes, and many will scream miserably in the furious fire of war. Despite such gory prices, and even if we resist at the cost of the lives of everyone from the ordinary people to the Cultivators, I’m afraid that little will be helped. The iron hooves of the Imperium of True Human Beings will still march forward unstoppably!

“I can’t selfishly drag so many people in the Ancient Sages Sector to die together with me just because of my personal feelings!

“Your—your analyses are all quite right. Maybe right now, surrendering to the Imperium of True Human Beings is the best way out for the Ancient Sages Sector.

“I don’t want to surrender to the Imperium of True Human Beings, but I am unwilling to stop you from finding a way out for the Ancient Sages Sector. So, I choose to ‘abstain’!”

“That explains a lot.” Meng Chixin nodded, deep in thought. He asked again, “Then, if we do surrender to the Imperium, and the Ancient Sages Sector becomes part of the Imperium of True Human Beings’ territory, how are you going to deal with it, Fellow Cultivator Ba?”

Ba Xiaoyu’s face was particularly gloomy. After a long silence, he said in a low voice, “I shall go somewhere that I am tolerated. I believe that there must still be unaffiliated Cultivators in the so-called ‘modern civilization of Immortal Cultivators’, right? I will not stay in the Ancient Sages Sector to cause trouble for you. The universe is a vast place. I believe that I can certainly find a shelter for… an insignificant beggar!”

His frustration and loneliness were obvious. The vigor and hot blood when he was rushing and cursing in Roaring Tiger City had entirely gone!

Ba Xiaoyu’s choice cast everybody into silence for a long time.

Qi Changsheng and Wan Mingzhu looked quite ill at ease. Their eyes were flickering, and they did not dare look at Ba Xiaoyu’s ugly, frustrated face.

Han Baling, on the other hand, was sneering in derision. He seemed to think little of Ba Xiaoyu, who was a deserter in his eyes.

Qi Zhongdao sighed with mixed feelings. His eyes were unfocused. There was no telling if he was recalling the night when they were chatting with each other over the delicious wine after they unveiled the scheme of the ‘Black Devil Cult’ together outside of Roaring Tiger City!

Li Yao sighed to himself, too. The beggar, who was the most promising candidate to stand up to the Imperium, had bent!

Eventually, it was Master Bitter Cicada who broke the embarrassing impasse and softly said, “I choose the Imperium of True Human Beings.”

What! Li Yao shrieked loudly in his heart and could not help but bulge his eyes.

“Monk, you—” Ba Xiaoyu and the other Cultivators at the meeting were all slightly dazed.

Regardless of their stances, they had thought that Master Bitter Cicada would be the target that they would spend the most time convincing. Why did he choose such an attitude?

“It’s true that the Imperium of True Human Beings’ ideology goes against my wishes and the principle of the universal benevolence of the Stupa Sect. Logically, I should choose to go away and be an unaffiliated Cultivator somewhere in the universe exactly like Fellow Cultivator Ba.”

Emotionlessly, Master Bitter Cicada said, one word after another, “However, just like you said yourself, Fellow Cultivator Ba, for the safety of the billions of living souls in the Ancient Sages Sector, we have to surrender to the Imperium of True Human Beings.

“After we surrender to the Imperium of True Human Beings, it is very possible that the affairs of the Ancient Sages Sector will be decided by the twelve of us.

“You and I are free to go away because we are not fond of the Imperium of True Human Beings’ ideology. Out of sight, out of mind. However, as a result, the future of the Ancient Sages Sector, and the safety and happiness of the folks, will fall into the hands of… the other fellow Cultivators sitting here.

“Not that I’m biased against any fellow Cultivators here, but Fellow Cultivator Ba, do you really want to see some of them to seize power?”

Master Bitter Cicada’s eyes suddenly turned sharp, not disguising his mistrust of Wan Mingzhu, Qi Changsheng, and some others at all!

Wan Mingzhu sensed the obvious unfriendliness in the monk’s eyes. She sneered and said, “Master Bitter Cicada, there is no need to beat about the bush. You obviously don’t trust the homeless bandits and the rebelling peasants, do you?”

“It’s inappropriate for a monk to lie. Yes. I don’t trust Fellow Cultivator Wan, Fellow Cultivator Qi, Fellow Cultivator Han Baling, and Fellow Cultivator Wang Xi at all!

“You are the infamous Four Rapscallions. I really can’t choose to go away for the peace of my mind while leaving the future of the Ancient Sages Sector and the lives of billions of people in your hands!”

“Good monk!” Wan Mingzhu burst into fury, with cold air flowing out of her body. “I knew that you are just a puppet monk that the court and the major sects throw out to enchant the general public and corrupt our determination for resistance! What about the Four Rapscallions? Was the world a peaceful, prosperous place where everyone lived happily before the Four Rapscallions existed? Just ask yourself! Disasters and suffering were as frequent as today!

“Open your goddamn eyes and watch carefully. It is the court and the Cultivation sects behind you that have caused the disasters and suffering, and the disasters and suffering created the Four Rapscallions. The Four Rapscallions never created the disasters and suffering!

“Hehe. I don’t trust you as much as you don’t trust me, monk! The most vicious people in the world are the bald ones, and the worst people are the wretched monks like you who don’t work but just recite your sutras every day!”

Wan Mingzhu was originally a homeless peasant. She only grasped the phantomic techniques slowly after absorbing the fury and hatred of many poor folks. In peacetime, she was able to pretend that she was a civilized Cultivator like everybody else. However, after she burst into fury and began cursing, everybody was frowning hard.

“Enough!”

Black flames of spiritual energy surrounded Meng Chixin and condensed thousands of wolf heads that were opening their bloody mouths grimacing at Wan Mingzhu. “Fellow Cultivator Wan, just now, we all agreed that everybody would be free to say whatever is on their mind. Anything can and should be discussed openly! This is a time that calls for solidarity. Why are you cursing somebody else?”

Wan Mingzhu narrowed his eyes and stared at the raging wolves behind Meng Chixin for a long time. Invisible spindrifts seemed to be surging between the two spectral Cultivators!

In the end, it was Wan Mingzhu who retreated first under Meng Chixin’s glare. She smiled back at Master Bitter Cicada and said, “Master Bitter Cicada, I am too blunt to keep anything to myself. You are a great monk, and you must forgive what I said.

“Getting back to our topic, judging from what I’ve heard, you seem to have made up your mind to conspire with the bandits and rebellions such as us and surrender to the Imperium, right, Master Bitter Cicada?”

Emotionlessly, Master Bitter Cicada replied, “I will stand where the folks of the Ancient Sages Sector stand. There’s no way that I will abandon them.”

“Oh?” Wan Mingzhu rolled her eyes and laughed. “However, after we surrender to the Imperium, chances are that we will have to march to foreign worlds together with the fleet of the Imperium. We will burn, kill, and plunder. Master, will you go with us, or will you stay back in the Ancient Sages Sector pretending that you know nothing about it while watching us feed the poor people with the abundant trophies that we have pillaged?”

Chapter 1536 - A Stab in the Back?

The question pierced into Master Bitter Cicada’s heart like a piton.

Master Bitter Cicada’s face had no hint of blood at all, and his lips were terribly pale. The handsome, dustless man before now could not have looked more devastated.

In a voice as soft as a falling dry leaf, he said, “Who else should go to hell if not me?”

There was no telling whether it was an excuse or just his self-comfort. The monk fell back to his seat after saying that, breathing heavily against the back of the seat.

“Enough.”

Observing his face, Meng Chixin knew that Master Bitter Cicada had reached a critical moment where he was wrestling with himself.

Two days earlier, the monk had vomited blood and almost gone mentally deranged. It must have been because he could not overcome the reluctance in his heart.

If other people pushed any further, it was very possible that the monk’s head would get caught in a dilemma, and he could die abruptly!

With a solemn expression, Meng Chixin said, “I believe that whatever your choice is, Fellow Cultivators, you certainly have your own reasons and concerns. As long as they are not completely unreasonable or against common sense, there is no need to interpret them in great detail!”

Ba Xiaoyu walked forward to support Master Bitter Cicada in a hurry. His ugly face was cramping and filled with embarrassment. He said in a low voice, “Monk, it—it must’ve been very difficult for you! Your words have enlightened me. I can’t just leave everybody in the Ancient Sages Sector behind and simply go away. I will stay with you and keep the Four Rapscallions in check for the Ancient Sages Sector. We cannot allow them to turn a means to an end into a complete surrender and even implement the Imperium of True Human Beings’ systems where humans are not treated as humans.”

“Only the high and mighty Cultivators don’t treat humans as humans!” Wan Mingzhu glared and shouted, “We are poor folks in the first place and nothing like the wealthy nobles such as yourself!”

Although Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar looked poor and slovenly, he had indeed been a wealthy noble on one of the islands in the East Ocean in the beginning.

For Wan Mingzhu, who had been born a poor folk in the southeast near the ocean, her hostility toward the nobles who owned their private islands and considered serving justice their hobby, such as Ba Xiaoyu, was almost natural.

“Alright. Now that we have agreed on the same decision, there is no need to talk about anything else. Fellow Cultivator Wang, you are almost the ‘mastermind’ of the twelve of us. What’s your take?”

Meng Chixin resolved the argument and accelerated the pace of the meeting again.

Everybody looked at Long Yangjun, or Wang Xi, at the same time.

Long Yangjun’s opinion was indeed very important. One might even say that she was the most important speaker, only secondary to the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators.

Although, theoretically speaking, the twelve participants of the meetings were equal, they were still different from each other because of their specialties.

When it came to the technological issues concerning the Colossi or other magical equipment, Li Yao doubtlessly had the loudest voice and was the highest authority.

When personal combat ability was in need, Yan Liren would be the right person. Even the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators would have to respect the opinion of the Sword Maniac.

If the topic in question was about life, souls, and ghosts, everybody would have to listen to Wan Mingzhu, the mother of all ghosts, no matter how mean and acrid her words were because she was the real professional.

Qi Zhongdao was fondest of and best at setting up rules. Perhaps he could work as the organizer and the supervisor of the twelve of them and sort out the internal relations among them.

Han Baling and Meng Chixin, the disciple and the master, were both generals and commands who had ambitions and strategic views. When it came to long-term plans, they would be able to offer much more valuable opinions than Yan Liren and Ba Xiaoyu could.

What about Long Yangjun?

She was a wicked official who had dominated the court, helped the emperor manipulate the major sects, and seized power for decades. She had also established Ghost Character, a super intelligence and assassination agency that had caused a storm of blood to the world of Cultivators!

If she had to be labeled, in the eyes of most of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stages, she was an out-and-out ‘schemer’!

Of the other eleven participants of the meeting, many might dislike, if not loathe, Long Yangjun.

But none of them would overlook her opinion on the issue!

Her opinion could possibly change many people’s minds and prompt them to reconsider their decisions!

Thankfully!

Li Yao’s heart was racing. He thought to himself that Long Yangjun was thankfully on his side. As long as she raised an objection, the whole issue would certainly be reviewed from a new perspective. Chances were that there would be a turning point!

Ba Xiaoyu and Master Bitter Cicada were not firm about surrendering to the Imperium. It was only because they did not have better options. They could still possibly be persuaded!

Himself, Long Yangjun, Ba Xiaoyu, and Master Bitter Cicada made four dissenters. Four dissenters against eight supporters, of whom Yan Liren was not firm about the surrender, too, but merely echoing with other people. As for

Han Baling and the rest of them, surrender was no different from drinking water. Rebelling again soon after surrendering was a common practice for them.

Their stances could all be changed. Therefore, the situation was still hopeful, as long as Long Yangjun—

“I choose the Imperium,” Long Yangjun said shortly.

“…” Li Yao.

“That’s all.”

Long Yangjun looked quite at ease. When she glanced at Li Yao, her face was quite natural and honest, too, as if she did not recall the deal that she had made with Li Yao two days ago or care about the consequences if Li Yao exposed her identity.

“As for the reason, I believe that the few fellow Cultivators before me have concluded it quite well. I have nothing to add for now. The Imperium of True Human Beings is our only option!”

After Long Yangjun, Wu Suiyun, the other Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator who represented the Great Qian Dynasty, said, “I don’t like the Imperium of True Human Beings very much. However, we actually don’t know the first thing about the real situation in the universe. So, there won’t be much difference no matter what we choose. The most critical thing is that we must be united and stick together!

“Therefore, now that so many fellow Cultivators have chosen the Imperium, there is no need for me to add more trouble and conflicts. Let’s just surrender to the Imperium for now and figure out what to do after we get to know the situation in the universe!”

Now, the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators and eight Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators had all chosen the Imperium of True Human Beings.

Only two Cultivators had not spoken yet, namely Master Spiritual Vulture and ‘Emperor Phoenix’ Zhu Zongyou.

Everybody’s eyes and all the pressure were on their faces and bodies!

The pressure that was as heavy as a mountain, as overwhelming as an ocean, and as smothering as a swamp turned into sweat the size of beans on the forehead of the young emperor. His countenance was changing nonstop, suggesting that he was in quite a dilemma. “I—I—I—”

Honestly speaking, Emperor Phoenix certainly did not want to surrender to the Imperium.

On one hand, Heiye Lan, the female warrior of the Imperium, had lied to him for such a long time and even pretended to be one of his ancestors. Who could bear such humiliation?

On the other hand, he was the sovereign of the Great Qian Dynasty, and now he was asked to bend to somebody else just like Ba Xiaoyu, who was a beggar; Master Bitter Cicada, who was a monk; and Qi Changsheng and Wan Mingzhu, who were bandit leaders?

Did that not mean that his ancestors’ hard work would end in his hands?

For a moment, the miserable outcomes of the countless last monarchs of their dynasties in the past flashed inside the head of Emperor Phoenix. He would rather not accept such an ending no matter what!

“Your Majesty,” Long Yangjun said to Emperor Phoenix respectfully, but she ‘happened’ to be looking at Li Yao. “How can a dragon soar in the sky if it hasn’t been concealed in the abyss for long enough? Right now, the enemy is strong, and we are weak. What’s the big deal about conceding briefly?

“Just think about when you hadn’t risen yet, Your Majesty. Did you not hide in the Thunderous Martial Temple and keep distance from the conflict in the royal palace before you made your great accomplishments? Where are the royal princes who fought heatedly in the palace right now?

“Our temporary surrender is just a means to an end. The independence of the Great Qian Dynasty will not be affected. You will still be the supreme sovereign of the Great Qian Dynasty!

“Even if the country is doomed, it can always be revived again as long as its seeds are kept. However, everything will be gone for good if you are killed and your soul is dispelled. You must think carefully before you leap, Your Majesty!”

“You—” Emperor Phoenix glared at Long Yangjun. It was obvious that he hated the powerful eunuch who had messed up the court more than anybody else.

Long Yangjun smiled. Completely ignoring Emperor Phoenix’s obvious hostility and Li Yao’s very clandestine fury, she casually said, “Your Majesty, you should be more or less a ‘disciple’ to Heiye Lan, the female warrior of the Imperium of True Human Beings. You must have a deeper understanding about the formidability of the Imperium than we do, right? As the saying goes, it is better to be the head of a hen than the tail of a phoenix. Do any of the twelve of us really mean to surrender to the Imperium of True Human Beings? But what choice do we have except to lower our head for now? This is just a means to an end, a humiliating compromise!

“Even the Cultivators in the Divinity Transformation Stage and at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage can grit their teeth to bear the humiliation. You have great prospects ahead of you, and your accomplishments will be sung throughout all eternity, Your Majesty. Can you not be perceptive and preserve part of the strength for yourself and for the Great Qian Dynasty?”

Emperor Phoenix was rendered speechless. He wiped his sweat and closed his eyes. His eyelids shivering, he struggled to say, “I… agree to negotiate with the Imperium of True Human Beings and cooperate with them!”

Eleven of the twelve top experts of the Ancient Sages Sector had chosen the Imperium.

Eleven versus one.

Li Yao was the only one left.

Li Yao’s head was in a mess. Thousands of thoughts were dancing and colliding in his head like snowflakes.

What was Long Yangjun up to? Why did she suddenly change to the Imperium’s side? Was she not scared that he would expose her secrets in his desperation?

However, her stance did not seem very firm.

All her talk about ‘better to be the head of a hen than the tail of a phoenix’ and even the high-level Cultivators having to bear the humiliation were obviously meant to arouse the discontent deep inside every participant’s heart.

However, what would happen even if their discontent was aroused? It was eleven against one right now. Did she and he have any solution to reverse the situation?

“Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture!”

While Li Yao was thinking quickly, Meng Chixin’s voice came over coldly.

“The eleven of us have made up our minds. I wonder whether or not you have a different opinion. If not, it will be settled now. Sincerely or insincerely, the Ancient Sages Sector has to join the Imperium of True Human Beings for now!”

Chapter 1537 - New Choice!

“I—”

Li Yao glanced at the faces of all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, observing their complicated and mysterious expressions. His eyes stayed particularly long on Long Yangjun’s seemingly frank face. Finally, he made up his mind and slowly shook his head. “I… I’m not sure. It seems necessary to join the Imperium of True Human Beings. However, I do feel that this is too important an issue for us to reach a decision so quickly!

“Even if the Imperium can offer us the greatest benefits in the world, it seems to me that we have to carefully consider our other options. However ridiculous and impractical those options are, we should at least give them a fair amount of time for discussion!

“After all, we are certainly not the first Sector to choose to surrender to the Imperium of True Human Beings. The fact that the Imperium has stood in the universe for a thousand years without falling suggests that it certainly has methods to keep the local forces in check. It will not be easy for us to rebel later even if we want to!

“It’s easy to join the Imperium, and maybe there is very favorable treatment in the beginning, but after we are too deeply mired in the swamp, it will be difficult for us to get free from it. What do you think, fellow Cultivators?”

Meng Chixin nodded quickly. “Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture does have a point. It’s true that we cannot regard the Immortal Cultivators of the Imperium of True Human Beings as idiots that we can take advantage of casually. We must consider them as the most cunning, cruel, and terrible opponents!

“To fight for the autonomy of the Ancient Sages Sector is probably not going to be as easy as Heiye Lan said. Rebelling after surrendering will be hard to do, too. One moment of carelessness, and the Ancient Sages Sector will be devoured by the Black Wind Fleet without leaving any residues. Such cases where a mediocre troop is swallowed by an ace troop are very common in any dynasty and in any place!

“Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture is truly insightful enough to give all of us a warning.

“However, getting back to the original topic, we do know the dreadfulness of the Imperium, but exactly like Fellow Cultivator Wang just said, the expedition army of the Imperium, which is too strong for us, is now knocking on our door. If we are determined not to lower our head, what can we do? Fight a bloody battle to death?”

“Fighting a bloody battle to death under siege will just be suicide. Such a choice is too reckless.” Li Yao gritted his teeth and finally said, “However, we do have a potential ally. Why hasn’t anybody given any thought to the Star Glory Federation?”

“The federation?” The many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators all looked at each other in bewilderment.

“The insignificant country at the edge of the cosmos according to Heiye Lan?” Wan Mingzhu said impatiently. “If Heiye Lan was speaking the truth, the Black Wind Fleet is marching toward the Star Glory Federation aggressively right now and will reach the destination in three to five years! That country is on the brink of destruction and can barely protect itself! It’s not like we should just shut the door on such a behemoth as the Imperium of True Human Beings and join this unknown country that is in peril, right?”

Emotionlessly, Li Yao pretended that he was not involved and calmly analyzed the situation. “The Star Glory Federation may not be as useless as Heiye Lan described. Otherwise, her fleet wouldn’t have suffered a crushing defeat, and she wouldn’t have been forced to flee to the depths of the dark nebula in a hurry.”

“Didn’t Heiye Lan say that hers was just an insignificant ‘claw fleet’, which equaled to a scout squad?” Wan Mingzhu snorted. “Is it a big deal for an army to lose a scout squad when a great war is about to begin?”

“Stay calm, Fellow Cultivator Wan,” Meng Chixin said. “We agreed to say whatever is on our mind freely, didn’t we?

“Now that Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture has proposed the option of ‘Star Glory Federation’, I believe that he certain has his reasons. Let’s just hear Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture’s enlightenment first and discuss it later.”

“I can’t say that it is enlightenment. It’s just something that I’ve been reflecting on lately.”

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao cautiously said, “The Imperium of True Human Beings has hundreds of Sectors. The participation of another Sector won’t be anything significant. Even if we do join them sincerely, we will merely be the icing on the cake for the Imperium. Will the Imperium of True Human Beings really appreciate us and grant us the most powerful magical equipment and techniques?

“Let’s be honest here. For the leadership of the Imperium of True Human Beings in the Empyreal Terminus Sector far, far away, the Ancient Sages Sector will merely be a dog that has approached them wagging its tail and begging for mercy. If they are pleased, they will throw their leftovers to us. If they are not, they might kick us. If they are hungry, they can butcher and devour us. We are nothing better than that!

“Although we are not omnipotent and invincible, we are certainly dominators of the Ancient Sages Sector who are basically free to do whatever we want. Are we really in such a hurry to work as somebody else’s dog?”

BAM!

Qi Changsheng bashed the table heavily. He said gravely, “Why are you saying that, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture? Who would be willing to be somebody else’s dog if they had a choice? We are simply forced to do that under the pressure!”

“That’s why I’m pondering whether or not the Star Glory Federation can be another choice,” Li Yao said solemnly. “Think about it. If the Star Glory Federation is an insignificant country at the edge of the cosmos like Heiye Lan described, it will have only a handful of Sectors at best. Also, it is faced with the threat of the expedition army of the Imperium and in dire need of powerful reinforcements!

“Joining the Imperium means that we will be the icing on the cake. However, if we join the Star Glory Federation at a time like this, we will be firewood in a cold winter!

“It goes without saying that firewood in a cold winter will be much more appreciated than the icing on the cake!

“Also, if we join the Imperium, we will only be one of hundreds of Sectors and among the weakest ones. We won’t have any say at all but can only wag our tails hard, waiting to be manipulated and exploited!

“However, considering that the Star Glory Federation may have less than just ten Sectors, if we join them, we will probably be one of the five or six giants in the country. With the Nuwa warship and so many Colossi, we can even become a highly influential force within the federation. Not only will we be able to maintain the independence and autonomy of the Ancient Sages Sector, we will also even have the chance to influence and control the future of the Star Glory Federation!

“Is such a future not attractive at all? Is it not worth considering carefully?”

Li Yao’s speech raised rounds of whispers around the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

However, they were not convinced by him.

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were not idiots. What Li Yao had thought of had occurred to them, too.

“Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, you do have a point,” Han Baling said solemnly. “We will have a larger say if we join the Star Glory Federation than if we join the Imperium of True Human Beings. It is even possible that we can be a guest who supplants the host and controls the federation one day!

“However, the Star Glory Federation is in peril right now and will soon be destroyed by the Black Wind Fleet. What do you have to say about that?”

“Long expeditions are discouraged in the military because the army will be exhausted.” Li Yao frowned. “Who can guarantee that the Black Wind Fleet will surely defeat the Star Glory Federation?

“In the Ancient Sages Sector, an expedition after several months of journey is practically impossible to win. Even the strongest and most well-trained army will lose their combat ability and morale after staying in a harsh, remote area for a year and a half, eventually being defeated by the locals who are not strong at all!

“The Black Wind Fleet has voyaged in the sea of stars for a hundred years. A hundred years! Who can guarantee that they will absolutely defeat the Star Glory Federation instead of being crushed by the locals at the edge of the cosmos?

“Fellow Cultivator Han, in the eyes of the people from the central plateaus, we are both such ‘locals’. You should know how the war between the ‘locals’ and the ‘invaders’ should be fought more clearly than anybody else, right?

“If we join the Imperium right now, only to find that the Black Wind Fleet is crushed by the Star Glory Federation later, won’t we be in a dilemma?”

Han Baling was rendered speechless. Deep in thought, he shook his head after a moment. “Even if the Black Wind Fleet fails, the Imperium still has hundreds of Sectors that can send countless fleets over!”

“That’s right.” Li Yao smiled bitterly, “It’s true that the Imperium of True Human Beings can send a second fleet over, but who can guarantee that before the second fleet arrives and destroys the Star Glory Federation, the infuriated federation won’t have already annihilated the Ancient Sages Sector?

“Besides, for the Imperium of True Human Beings, the Star Glory Federation is just a skin disease, and the Alliance of the Holy Covenant is still their nemesis! Maybe, if the war in the frontline is too heated, they will simply leave the ‘ulcer’ on their buttock aside for a while, say thirty to fifty years or even longer?

“Thirty to fifty years will be enough for the Star Glory Federation to destroy the Ancient Sages Sector dozens of times!

“Therefore, not only do we have to consider the dominance of the Imperium and the weakness of the federation, we must also note that the Imperium is too far away from us while we are right under the nose of the federation!

“If the Black Wind Fleet is defeated, they can ways retreat, but can the Ancient Sages Sector grow a pair of wings and fly to the heartland of the Imperium?”

Li Yao’s words raised even more fierce discussions.

Some were saying, “Yes. We must consider the possibility that the Star Glory Federation defeats the Black Wind Fleet temporarily and shifts its attention to the Ancient Sages Sector. Let’s be honest here. Even if the Star Glory Federation can’t defeat the Imperium of True Human Beings, it is certainly strong enough to annihilate the Ancient Sages Sector, isn’t it?”

Some others were saying, “That being said, we don’t know the first thing about the Star Glory Federation. Who knows how developed the small country at the desolate area is exactly? Is it good enough to be aided at all? If they are too worthless to be helped, it is better to ‘hit it when it is down’ than to ‘give it firewood in the cold winter’!”

Somebody else was also saying in a hurry, “So what? About the Imperium of True Human Beings, we have managed to capture one Heiye Lan and elicit relevant information from her. But what about the Star Glory Federation? Where can we find a scout of the federation, hypnotize and interrogate him, and exploit all the information in his head? It is still a safer option to join the Imperium!”

Right when everybody was discussing without any result, stable and rhythmed knocks echoed from one side of the table.

Knock! Knock! Knock! Knock!

The discussions gradually petered out. Everybody looked toward the source of the knocks, only to discover that Long Yangjun was tapping the table confidently with a smile.

Chapter 1538 - Long Yangjun's Bad Idea

Meng Chixin coughed and stopped everybody's discussion. "Fellow Cultivator Wang, is there anything you want to say?"

Everybody was all ears.

Nobody dared overlook the opinion of the Lead Eunuch who had once manipulated the court. At the very least, her words were certainly much more valuable than those of the pure warriors such as 'Sword Maniac' Yan Liren.

"Hush…"

Long Yangjun's narrow and long finger touched her lips while she put on a half-masculine-half-feminine, enchanting smile on her face. Turbulence resembling rainbows was spreading in the deepest parts of her eyes, as she stared at Li Yao mysteriously and said with a smile, "Fellow Cultivators, please calm down for a moment. What Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture just said enlightened me and prompted me to come up with a new possibility. Please wait a moment, everybody, and allow me to run some deductions in my head!"

Li Yao felt creeped out under her stare, not knowing what the prehistorical intersex was up to exactly!

"I'm done!"

A moment later, Long Yangjun's smile was even sunnier than before, and her voice grew softer, as if it were an irresistible swamp. She moved her colorful eyes from Li Yao and glanced at the other eight Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, before she said unhurriedly, “In fact, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture does have a point. I’m afraid that everybody here considered the possibility of joining the Star Glory Federation earlier like I did.

“The Imperium of True Human Beings is too powerful. If we join it, as Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture put it, we will be the icing on the cake, if not dogs wagging tails begging for the leftovers of the master!

“The Star Glory Federation is weak and faced with immense war pressure. If we offer ourselves to them like firewood in a cold winter, not only will we be able to ensure our independence, we will also receive the federation’s gratitude and a chance of sincere cooperation. It is even possible for us to supplant the host and enter the leadership of the federation as one of the controllers of the federation!

“This is like a gambling game with two options. The first one is safer and has high odds of success, but we will not gain much even if we win. The best we can expect is to break even. The second option will be a wild gamble with considerable risks. However, if we win, we will be rich after the first try!

“Do you agree with my conclusion, everybody?”

Long Yangjun’s eyes moved around everybody and eventually stopped on Qi Zhongdao’s face.

Qi Zhongdao’s personality and integrity were well-acknowledged by the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators of both sides.

After pondering for a moment, Qi Zhongdao nodded and said, “Yes. Surrendering to the Imperium of True Human Beings is ‘breakeven’ at most, whereas joining the Star Glory Federation gives us a chance to throw a sprat to catch a herring! In the universe, we and the federation are both barbarians in a desolate region. So, we will have more common ground, and it will be easier to negotiate on equal terms. As Lord Wang said, it is indeed possible for us to enter the pivot of the federation and speak for the interests of the Ancient Sages Sector!

“So, why haven’t we given any thought about the federation when we were thinking a way out for the Ancient Sages Sector?

“Because we don’t know the first thing about the Star Glory Federation right now. We have absolutely no idea about the strength, size, system of the country, and their stance toward the outside world!

“The system of the Imperium of True Human Beings is certainly imperfect, but it has proven to be effective enough to support the stable functioning of an enormous country. What if the Star Glory Federation is a country a hundred times lousier and eviler than the Imperium of True Human Beings? What if it is feeble and utterly worthless?

“Therefore, after much deliberation, I eliminated the Star Glory Federation as an option from my mind!”

Long Yangjun nodded. “That explains a lot. So, just like me, you did consider joining the Star Glory Federation, but you couldn’t make a decision when you didn’t know the specific conditions of the country, right?”

“Of course!” Ba Xiaoyu could not help speaking up. “If possible, I wouldn’t want to demean myself to be a dog of the Imperium, but even if we want to join the federation, where should we go, and who should we contact? It’s not like a scout from the federation will just land from the sky in the middle of our discussion, waiting to be interrogated by us, right?”

“Hehe.” Mother White Lotus Wan Mingzhu challenged Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar again. “If a scout truly lands from the sky, he will not be trustworthy at all. Who knows whether or not it is a trap? There can’t be such a coincidence!”

“Exactly.” Long Yangjun nodded again. “Your concerns are all valid. The greatest trouble for us right now is our lack of knowledge about the outside world. We can only speculate about the situation of the Imperium based on the confessions of a scout of the Imperium whose veracity cannot be confirmed. Is it any different from a blind person groping on an elephant trying to figure out what the animal looks like?

“Our knowledge about the federation is even poorer. We haven’t caught any captives. There isn’t even an elephant for us to grope!

“We are like a bunch of people riding blind horses on a bridge between two cliffs. In fact, we will fall wherever we set foot in our next step! The best solution right now is perhaps not to jump into any decision but to gather as much intelligence about the universe as possible!”

“Lord Wang, that is an interesting thought, but Heiye Lan has confessed everything she knows about the Star Glory Federation,” Han Baling said coldly. “That’s all we’ve got right now! We can’t deduce the truth of the federation even if we think until our heads explode! Should we simply yearn for a scout of the federation to fall from the sky and tell us everything about the federation dutifully?”

Long Yangjun smiled casually. She suddenly turned to Master Bitter Cicada and said, “Master, I once heard a saying in the Stupa Sect, which is that ‘if the mountain does not come to me, I will go to the mountain’. Do I remember it correctly?

“The mountain has no feet and will not run to us. If we want to appreciate the magnificent scenery at the peak of the mountain, we have to go to the mountain and climb it in person. It’s the simplest logic!

“It’s impossible for a scout of the Star Glory Federation to just appear in front of us by chance and tell us everything about the federation.

“Besides, seeing is believing. The scout from any force must’ve received the harshest training. Will they speak the truth? Will they speak the whole truth?

“If we want to truly understand a country and even the vast universe out there, perhaps the twelve of us should stop sitting here, rambling, and march forward actively. We will establish a ‘scout squad of the Nascent Soul Stage’ that serves the Ancient Sages Sector and head to the Star Glory Federation!”

Long Yangjun’s speech was greeted by weird silence, which was replaced by the fiercest exclamations immediately!

The comments, doubts, and refutations from everybody after their shock even eclipsed Li Yao’s loud, uncontrollable coughs!

“Actively march forward to the Star Glory Federation? Are we capable of that?”

“Is it appropriate? We will be a lone army in a foreign land. It’s too risky!”

“We have no life experience in a modern Cultivation civilization. Our behavior will certainly be vastly different from the customs of the locals of the Star Glory Federation. We might be exposed anytime!”

“This is too unbelievable and hilarious! We will be like fish out of water if we leave the Ancient Sages Sector, won’t we?”

Knock! Knock! Knock! Knock!

Long Yangjun unhurriedly tapped the dining table again.

Her confidence and serenity seemed to be contagious. Without anybody knowing, everybody stopped commenting and suspecting.

“There is no need to argue yet, everybody. I only just came up with the possibility because of Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture’s enlightenment just now. Naturally, the idea may be very crude and inappropriate. However, the merits of such a choice are obvious. Perhaps we can truly find a new way out for the Ancient Sages Sector if we spend some time patiently studying it.”

‘Heaven Battering King’ Qi Changsheng asked in a hurry, “What are the merits? Please do tell us, Lord Wang!”

“There’s no need to be anxious,” Long Yangjun said with a smile. “We have to consider the issue from two perspectives. Firstly, what are the benefits and losses if the twelve of us team up and infiltrate the Star Glory Federation? Secondly, if the benefits outweigh the losses, is it possible for us to find the Star Glory Federation across the universe and infiltrate it?”

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators looked at each other in bewilderment. Deep in thought, Meng Chixin said, “Fellow Cultivator Wang, you are very considerate. That’s exactly the questions we must answer. Please do enlighten us!”

Long Yangjun coughed and said, “Let’s examine the two questions in order. To answer the first question, in my opinion, if we can truly sneak into the federation, there will be great benefits and few losses. It’s a lie to say that the endeavor is risk-free, but it is certainly worth a try!

“What are the benefits exactly? Simple!

“Firstly, knowledge!

“We don’t know anything about the current situation of the universe today. About the social form, government system, magical equipment, techniques, strategies and plans… and everything else that is thousands of years ahead of us in the modern Cultivation civilization, we don’t even know the fundamentals of them. Isn’t it necessary for us to find an appropriate place and study carefully?

“Part of the reasons that we were thinking of joining the Imperium just now is also that we can learn from the Imperium. However, if we join the Imperium, what we can learn will only be the knowledge that they offer to us and allow us to learn. Will it really be any good?

“Disguising and sneaking into the federation, on the other hand, will give us an opportunity to freely choose whatever we want to learn. We will be able to broaden our horizons and observe the universe from a fresh perspective after the shortest amount of time, thereby shortening the gap between us and them!

“Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, I can see that you are nodding your head quickly deep in thought. Do you find my proposal very attractive? You must also feel that we will certainly learn a lot of techniques and knowledge that the Imperium can’t offer us if we can truly sneak into the federation, right?”

“More—more or less.”

“Great minds think alike. Now that even Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture agrees with me, I can rest assured!” Long Yangjun was smiling like a blossoming flower that ate people. “The second benefit, observation! Fellow Cultivators, are you not interested in the size and strength of the Star Glory Federation and whether or not it is capable of resisting the attack of the Black Wind Fleet? Then, we will simply find it out on our own!

“Without alarming anyone, we will infiltrate the Star Glory Federation and profoundly observe the politics, economy, culture, military, their attitudes toward the outside world and the general public, and all other aspects that call for attention. Everything will be seen with our own eyes and experienced by us in person. It can’t be false at all. Won’t it be much clearer and more reliable than the confessions of a scout after interrogation?”

Chapter 1539 - Deterrence in the Enemy’s Back!

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were all shocked at Long Yangjun’s mind-blowing but reasonable suggestion. They all had weird expressions on.

They were not feeling strange that Long Yangjun had raised such a suggestion but wondering why they did not come up with it earlier.

“Thirdly, if we infiltrate the federation, we will be able to take advantage of both the Imperium and the federation in their war to come!”

Long Yangjun was glowing with confidence as she continued.

“When the goods are too rare, only those with the highest bid can have them. Now that the Imperium and the federation are both potential ‘buyers’, why are we in such a hurry to sell ourselves before we even get the chance to witness their ‘wealth’?

“After we sneak into the federation, we will watch the two tigers fight. We will get to know the war potential of both parties while we learn their tactics and strategies. We can even find a way to be promoted to their important posts, where we will have more information to infer which side has the greater chances of winning. Then, we will tempt that side into offering prices that they can’t refuse. After our requirements are met, we will launch thunderous strikes on the other side at the most critical moment!

“In such a way, we will be able to fight for the greatest interests for the Ancient Sages Sector and for ourselves. It is safer to wager after we figure out which side has the greater odds of winning, too. Also, we will be free to choose the target of our attack, without worrying that we might be regarded as cannon fodder by the federation or the Imperium and asked to charge toward the heavily-guarded star fortresses on our own. Isn’t this killing three birds with one stone?

“Fourthly, if we sneak into the federation, and the federation loses the war against the Imperium, chances are that we will be able to steal some of their treasures for ourselves when the country is in a mess after the defeat!”

Long Yangjun went on without any pause, as if she did not need to breathe. “The starships, crystal suits, Colossi, and other magical equipment of the Star Glory Federation may not be the most advanced ones in the universe, but for us, they are still very attractive!

“If we surrender to the Imperium right now and fight under the Imperium’s command like idiots, even if the federation is truly crushed in the end, we will definitely only be given leftovers when the trophies are distributed!

“Therefore, we might as well be prepared in advance and sneak into the federation earlier. We will select a target and attack when the time is right. We can even blackmail the government of the Star Glory Federation at the crucial moment!

“We can talk about the specific details later, but this general idea can’t be wrong!

“The four benefits above are something that we cannot achieve if we just sit in the Ancient Sages Sector and do nothing. What do you think, Fellow Cultivators?”

There was nothing but silence at the table. Everybody was dumbfounded!

However, when Long Yangjun mentioned the necessity of observing the politics, economy, culture, and military of the Star Glory Federation, Qi Zhongdao could not help but nod.

When she was talking about ‘wagering on the side that has greater odds of winning’, Wu Suiyun was apparently fascinated by the idea.

When she declared that they should steal something for themselves, Han Baling, Wan Mingzhu, and Qi Changsheng’s eyes were all glittering. Qi Changsheng almost stood up and applauded her!

Even Meng Chixin, the host of the meeting, was deep in thought for a long time. He hesitated and said, “Fellow Cultivator Wang, your proposal is indeed innovative and surprising. Those four benefits are indeed of paramount important for us.

“However, as a result, we will be a lone army in a foreign land, and we will be completely cut off from the Ancient Sages Sector for at least a year and a half. Won’t it be too risky?”

A lot of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators nodded at his words. That was their concern, too.

Although those Cultivators were all the dominators in their own regions, they had never stepped out of the Ancient Sages Sector in their entire life. They were out-and-out ‘bumpkins’, and not any bumpkins but ancient bumpkins who were thousands of years behind the contemporary era!

Now that Long Yangjun had proposed a plan to infiltrate a modern Cultivation civilization on their own, they indeed felt ill at ease.

“It seems that there’s one thing you haven’t got straight after three days of analysis and studies, fellow Cultivators.”

Long Yangjun’s voice gradually turned cold, but the air around her grew more and more daunting.

“You’re under the illusion that the Ancient Sages Sector is our home, haven, and the solidest shield. You believe that we will be safe as long as we stay in the Ancient Sages Sector.

“You couldn’t be more wrong!

“Given the circumstances, the Ancient Sages Sector is not our shield at all but an unbreakable shackle that confines our real strength. If we stay here, we will be doomed forever!

“Let me ask you, fellow Cultivators. What do you think the source of our power is? What is the reliance for the twelve of us to control the Ancient Sages Sector?

“Our subordinates? The Cultivation sects outside? The ‘loyalty’ of the tribes large and small from the desolate regions?

“No!

“The source of our power, and what we use to control the Ancient Sages Sector, is the unparalleled might of the twelve of us and the twelve Colossi!

“As long as we remain as invincible as we are, and the twelve Colossi can unleash the maximal damage, wherever we are, we can always come back and take control of the Ancient Sages Sector again!

“On the other hand, if we stay in the Ancient Sages Sector and simply hang around with the selfish, shortsighted guys from the major sects, is it going to help us at all? Are those pigs and dogs really qualified to support us instead of stabbing us in the back?”

Long Yangjun’s cold voice was darting about the table like an ice knife.

Knocking the table hard, she continued, “In the past three days, I carefully studied the ways that the unparalleled experts fight in the universe, only to realize that they are completely different from our tactics!

“If the twelve of us continue lingering in the Ancient Sages Sector, we will be burdened by the traditions and the millions of ‘compatriots’. We will be confined by our shackles forever. However capable we are, we will never be able to bring out our full potential.

“Our enemy can simply summon a large batch of starships and bombard our world into a wasteland with destructive cannons from the orbit of the planet. What else can we do but take the blow and be burnt and blackened or crawl into the burrows and cry for help?

“In such a case, we won’t be able to bring out one percent of our combat ability!

“In the second scenario, if we leave the Ancient Sages Sector and have a head-on clash with a fleet from a modern Cultivation civilization with advanced warships and weapons —

“For the time being, it is impossible for us to be perfectly familiar with the usages of the Colossi. Any one of us can fight three to five starships in a head-on clash at most, which means that we will only be able to fight no more than a hundred starships in total. That will only be a medium-sized fleet for a modern Cultivation civilization. Also, we are not considering the logistical issues!

“In such a case, even if we can bring out a hundred percent of our combat ability, we will not be able to weather through such a head-on battle!

“However, consider the third scenario. If we march to the enemy’s rear, sneak into the enemy’s towns, and blend in with the enemy’s people, the situation will be very different!

“According to Heiye Lan, the large cities in the Imperium of True Human Beings often have a population of tens of millions. They are complicated super mazes! I assume that the cities of the Star Glory Federation must have a population of at least ten to twenty million even if they are smaller.

“If the twelve of us sneak into a major city in the Star Glory Federation with a population of twenty million, and if we lock onto the area with the densest population or the government facilities of paramount importance, how much damage can we bring to them?

“Also, when we are in the enemy’s heartland, the enemy will hold back from taking action for fear of injuring their own people. It is impossible for them to destroy us without caring about the methods and the price.

“They can bombard the surface of the Ancient Sages Sector, but can they lay waste to their own cities where tens of millions of people are living? Even if they do blow such cities to the ground, they might not necessarily be able to kill us!

“In such a case, our survival abilities, assault abilities, and negotiating abilities will all be significantly increased!

“If our combat ability is a hundred percent in the beginning, it is possible to have been enhanced to ten thousand percent!

“In conclusion, my opinion is that in battles in the environment of the modern Cultivation civilization, the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators must not have positional warfare with the enemy. They should march to the enemy’s rear and start ‘guerilla battles’, ‘unrestricted battles’, ‘decapitation battles’, ‘asymmetric battles’, and other tactics that will make best use of the advantage of the immense personal combat ability!

“All those tactics have been mentioned in Heiye Lan’s jade chips. I believe that you should understand them quite well and don’t need me to elaborate on them, right?

“Therefore, in the game among the Imperium, the federation, and the Ancient Sages Sector, we, as a force with the weakest overall capabilities but boasting twelve Colossi, must not stay in the Ancient Sages Sector and do nothing while waiting for the enemy’s bombardment. We must release ourselves and our Colossi to the enemy’s internal organs, where we will play an even more important, unrestricted role!

“That concludes my proposal. What do you think, everybody?”

Including Li Yao, everybody looked at Long Yangjun in a daze. For a long time, nobody said anything.

Long Yangjun was frowning. “Fellow Cultivators, do you still think that it is just my whimsical idea? Please feel free to offer your enlightenment!”

“I wouldn’t say it is enlightenment.” Han Baling, the dominator from the prairies, was the first to come back to himself. He took a long breath in relief and smiled bitterly. “Lord Wang, although we have known each other for a long time, only today have I finally realized why you held such power in the court of the Great Qian Dynasty for decades without falling!”

Long Yangjun smiled and replied frankly, “I once established ‘Ghost Character’ on my own, which is an agency focusing on intelligence collection, infiltration, and assassination. Some of the tactics of the Imperium of True Human Beings are quite similar to the way I operated ‘Ghost Character’. So, I specifically spent more time comparing and studying them. That’s all!”

Chapter 1540 - Sleazy and Cruel Long Yangjun!

“Yes. They’re similar to the tactics on the prairies. The soldiers on the prairies never have head-on clashes with the enemy, nor do we have a fundamental base. We simply migrate to wherever there is grass and water. The enemy can’t find us at all!” Han Baling said in great delight.

“Every time the army from the central plateaus marches close, it doesn’t matter even if they have a million soldiers on their side because we can simply abandon our main camp and disperse on the prairies.

“We can even slip behind them and march into the central plateaus, where we will go on a rampage. You fight your battles, and I fight mine. In the end, the enemy will often waste all their strength on marching until they are exhausted and short of supplies! That’s exactly the way we crushed the three hundred thousand soldiers of the Great Qian Dynasty last year!”

“Hehe!” The Cultivators from the Great Qian Dynasty all glared at him.

However, they had to admit that Han Baling did have a point and could not help but consider the possibilities of initiating guerilla battles, sabotaging facilities, and utilizing decapitation tactics behind enemy lines without fixed bases.

The more they thought about it, the more fascinated they were. All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity

Transformation Stage Cultivators were nodding, their eyes glowing.

“Yes. I’ve been studying the arts of universal war that Heiye Lan mentioned over the last couple of days. The greatest strength for the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators is agility and mobility! We really shouldn’t just stay on a single planet and wait to be besieged!”

“Instead of relying on the support of our own people, we might as well march to the enemy’s rear and consider the large cities in the Star Glory Federation as our shields! If the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators such as us go on a rampage, I believe that we can turn the cities upside-down. We can easily drag millions of people to die with us if they set traps for us!”

“Also, the large cities with tens of millions of inhabitants must be very chaotic and murky. With our expertise, it may not be as difficult as we imagine to disguise ourselves and sneak in!”

“Wait and observe at the frontline of the war until we decide whether the Imperium’s bid is higher than the federation’s and they have a greater chance of winning or the other way around! We will not make any decision until we gather tremendous intelligence and learn the most advanced, state-of-the-art techniques in the universe. It will certainly be much wiser than a hasty decision right now! Excellent! Excellent! Lord Wang, how exactly did you come up with such a delicate solution?”

“You are flattering me!” Long Yangjun waved her hands modestly and looked at Li Yao with a smile. “I was as befuddled as everybody else just now and almost decided to recklessly surrender to the Imperium. Thankfully, at the last moment, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture reminded us and offered me new insights! If such an infiltration plan does work out, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture will certainly be the greatest contributor! We can't thank you enough, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture!"

"You're welcome!"

"Huh. Why do you look so awful, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture? Your face is pale, your eyelids are cramping, and all the organs on your face are slanted. Have you lost your cool? Are you about to be mentally deranged?"

"Not exactly! I'm just deeply astounded by your marvelous solution and inferring the subtle changes that can happen later, Lord Wang. The more I think about it, the more spectacular it appears. The consequences are unbelievable. So, I'm only feeling excited!"

"That explains a lot. I'm relieved now. Please do take care of yourself, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture. If the infiltration plan is to be carried out later, you will hold the most critical role. Nobody will be able to replace you!" Long Yangjun said confidently. "As for the deductions, I have run some of them myself. Please correct me if I'm wrong!

"If I may remind everybody, you must not think that it will be more dangerous to march into the Star Glory Federation on our own. In fact, cooperating with the Imperium right now entails even more dangers!

"Why do I say that? You will understand it after some preliminary deduction! If we accept Heiye Lan's offer right now and surrender to the Imperium of True Human Beings, we will certainly be obliged to send the specific location of the Ancient Sages Sector through Heiye Lan and allow the Black Wind Fleet to dock on our planet!

“Long-distance expeditions can be very tricky. The Black Wind Fleet has been sailing in the sea of stars for a hundred years. It’s not unreasonable to assume that they are exhausted and short of supplies, right? Then, according to the fundamental military knowledge, before they launch a final strike on the Star Glory Federation, they are bound to find a stable base and set up a camp to rest for a while!

“Won’t the Ancient Sages Sector be their best camp? Should they discover this place, our home will certainly be modified into a huge military camp by the Black Wind Fleet!

“By then, not only will the Ancient Sages Sector be utterly deformed, a lot of resources will also be dedicated to the war against the federation!

“Yes. For steadiness in the rear, the Black Wind Fleet may not openly rob us of the resources. However, if they propose the exchange of starships and crystal suits for resources, and if they stuff us into a few starships in the joint cooperation later and demand that we attack a certain planet of the federation, can we disobey their orders?

“Military laws are ruthlessly. Once the war begins, we will not be able to be picky anymore. However, what if the planet happens to be a critical place for the federation and it is heavily-guarded by tremendous soldiers of the federation?

“Think about it, everybody. If any of you were the commander of the Black Wind Fleet, would the idea never interest you that you should make the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector die together with the locals of the federation?”

The more Long Yangjun analyzed, the more flabbergasted everybody was.

The eyes of many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were bulging. Those who did not have much strategic knowledge and barely knew anything about the military such as Ba Xiaoyu and Master Bitter Cicada were greatly enlightened!

Han Baling slapped his thigh and said, “Your words do make sense, Lord Wing. For a universal war of such a large scale, the Black Wind Fleet will have to find a place to set up camp. After the Ancient Sages Sector is stationed and savaged by them, our world will certainly not end well!

“I feel embarrassed that I didn’t think through such a simple logic earlier!”

Long Yangjun smiled and said, “Heiye Lan confessed everything so straightforwardly and offered such enticing terms probably because she also realized that the Ancient Sages Sector could serve as a camp for the Black Wind Fleet. When they do set up a camp in our world and their great army moves in, we will not be able to make decisions for ourselves!

“Therefore, surrendering to the Imperium is not entirely undoable, but we must not surrender right now. We must not allow the Black Wind Fleet to claim the Ancient Sages Sector as their military base or give them any chance to dispatch us freely and even send us to the perilous lands in the Star Glory Federation!

“We can surrender, but we must do it at the most favorable moment for us. What do you think, fellow Cultivators?”

All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators nodded in approval.

"After studying Heiye Lan's intelligence for days, I spent most time pondering what matters most in a universal war," Long Yangjun remarked. "I'm afraid that it is not a magnificent army, or an unparalleled expert, but one's own coordinates!

"Once the coordinates are exposed, chances are that the enemy may show up and assault our base anytime. We will be caught in a very passive position.

"On the other hand, as long as the coordinates of our base are not exposed, we can always run away if we can't defeat the enemy, considering the vastness of the universe. If we can't win a head-on clash, we can harass them from the rear. With the combat abilities of the twelve of us, there is no way that we can fail!

"Therefore, we must not expose the coordinates of the Ancient Sages Sector or our very existence. Darkness is our greatest advantage. We must not attract either the Imperium or the federation to our world!"

Everybody nodded again.

"Let's review the plan to infiltrate the Star Glory Federation again!"

Her eyes glittering, Long Yangjun said, "The greatest advantage of this plan is its secrecy. The coordinates and the intelligence of the Ancient Sages Sector will never be exposed. Also, we will be taking the absolute initiative. We can choose when, how, and who to surrender to freely!

"If we discover that the Star Glory Federation is a thriving, promising force after investigating the politics, economy, culture, law, military, and all the other aspects in the Star Glory Federation and figuring out their combat ability in comparison to the Black Wind Fleet’s, and if the federation is willing to offer irresistibly tempting terms to us, we will join the federation and help the federation fight the Imperium!

“On the other hand, if the Star Glory Federation is useless, doomed, and merely drawing its last breath, and if the expedition army of the Imperium is too powerful to be stopped, we will get in touch with the Imperium in secret and sabotage the heartland of the Star Glory Federation. We will destroy the strategic locations in the federation, assassinate the high officials in the federal government, block the transportation routes among their planets, and raise never-ending mayhem!

“In such a way, we will prove our loyalty to the Imperium and making our contributions to the war. Also, we will be able to loot the starships, magical equipment, and even national treasury in secret while the country is caught in the fire of war!

“By my calculations, we will even have a chance to rescue all the leadership of the Star Glory Federation in the middle of the chaos. Then, following the precedent set by the Star Ocean Republic, we will help them establish a government-in-exile of the Star Glory Federation, while we are in fact taking control of the resources that they carry with them in the hope of resurrecting their country. Their own lives and the future of their country will be in our hands, and we will certainly be able to do anything we want!

“In such a case, the greatest benefits in the war between the Imperium and the federation will be swallowed by us. The Ancient Sages Sector will expand crazily on the dead body of the federation and rise rapidly, covering the gap of thousands of years in the civilization evolution!”

“F—Fantastic!” ‘Heaven Battering King’ Qi Changsheng, a leader of bandits and a master of looting, could not help but slap the table hard. “Lord Wang, your plan couldn’t suit me better! I totally agree with it! I can’t wait to go on a rampage in the Star Glory Federation together with everybody right now!”

“What do the rest of you think, fellow Cultivators?”

Smiling, Long Yangjun glanced at everybody, and her eyes eventually stopped on Li Yao’s face.

Chapter 1541 - Don’t Push Too Far!

Li Yao was emotionless. But his eyes were mincing Long Yangjun’s ‘handsome’ if not ‘charming’ face like two sabers, as he said coldly, “I have a question, Lord Wang. In your opinion, if the Star Glory Federation is indeed a promising new force like a rising sun, if it is willing to form an alliance with the Ancient Sages Sector on equal terms, and if we are satisfied about the offer they make, will we be joining the Star Glory Federation sincerely, or will our surrender be a false one just to buy us more time?”

Long Yangjun smiled, “On the federation’s side, genuine participation and false surrender are not contradictory!

“Just like Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture said in the very beginning, the Star Glory Federation’s territory can’t be too vast, and there can’t be many Sectors. So, after we join, we will certainly boast unparalleled influence. In such a case, we will be able to buy ourselves more time through open approaches. We can assume high positions in the federation to ensure the interests of the Ancient Sages Sector and even to enforce our belief and will in the federation. Why would we bother to play any tricks and schemes when we can achieve the purpose openly?

“Moreover, now that we have made such a decision, we will certainly help the federation to resist the Imperium. Chances that we will have already joined our hands and annihilated the Black Wind Fleet. In such a case, we will certainly be considered a sworn enemy by the Imperium. How can we rebel again in the future?

“We are not the greedy, shortsighted rats. Our ultimate purpose is to ensure the survival of the Ancient Sages Sector and its assimilation into the world outside! As long as the Star Glory Federation is truly promising and satisfies our conditions, why can’t we sincerely join the federation, never to betray, and help the Star Glory Federation to rise at the edge of the cosmos and even dominate the entire universe?

“Are you satisfied about my answer, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture?”

Li Yao replied drily, “My satisfaction or dissatisfaction matters little. Let’s just wait and see!”

Long Yangjun chuckled and moved her eyes away. “What about the other fellow Cultivators?”

“I have another question.”

Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar coughed and scratched his messy hair, asking, “Sneaking into and joining the federation are certainly worth considering. However, there is one thing that is troubling me. Why can’t we infiltrate the Black Wind Fleet and investigate the situation on the Imperium’s side in exactly the same way?

“After all, the Imperium does look more powerful right now, doesn’t it?”

Long Yangjun replied. “The reason is very simple. It’s because we don’t have the ability!

“The Black Wind Fleet is sailing in the sea of stars. It is impossible for us to lock onto their coordinates. But they can figure out our location very easily!

“Moreover, no matter how enormous and complicated the ‘living area’ inside the Black Wind Fleet is, it is an army after all, and an army certainly has a set of strict rules. Those on board will be on high alert, too. It is barely possible for strangers of unknown backgrounds to sneak in!

“Also, there are too many experts in the Black Wind Fleet. Should we be exposed, we will have absolutely nowhere to run to and end up being the meat on a chopping block.

“Lastly, a fleet in the space can be gathered and also be dispersed. Even if we really control one starship, or maybe even twelve, the Black Wind Fleet can totally sacrifice the victims and blow up their own starship together with us. It is not like the central cities without tens of millions of population, which cannot be abandoned!

“It means that, when the Black Wind Fleet is highly vigilant, we in fact don’t have many methods available to threaten them. How can we expect to play a game with them if so?”

Ba Xiaoyu frowned and asked, “Are the situations in the federation any different?”

“Of course.”

Long Yangjun said, “The Star Glory Federation is a universal country. However small it is, I believe that it must have control over a plural number of Sectors. The transportation and trades among those worlds must be very frequent. A lot of cargos must be sailing in the sea of stars!

“The ‘Ghost Character’ that I established is best at the arts of disguise, camouflage, infiltration and assassination. Also, you all have a high control over your body with your Cultivation. As long as we are teleported to an appropriate space zone at the edge of the federation, where we hijack a few cargos to figure out the general situation of the federation, it will be very easy for us to sneak in with false identities. I wouldn’t say that there will be no trouble at all, but it is certainly going to be much more practical and realizable than to sneak into the Black Wind Fleet!”

“Don’t underestimate the people of the federation!”

Li Yao interjected coldly, “Having been able to crush a claw fleet of the Imperium of True Human Beings, the federation is certainly not be easy to be tricked. It’s very likely that we identities may be exposed!

“I have never underestimated the federation. But I fear that Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture and everybody else have overestimated the complexity and difficulty of the whole issue and underestimated ourselves!”

Long Yangjun stared back at Li Yao without giving in at all. “Let’s just get to the bottom of it. The one thing that is scaring all the fellow Cultivators here is that we may be seen through by the Star Glory Federation after we sneak in without any support, right?

“But have you considered this? They may see through us, but so what?

“Let’s just put aside the fact that I can help arrange a few flawless identities and stories to explain our backgrounds. Even if we don’t disguise ourselves at all but simply tell everything honestly, what can the federation do about us?

“I’ll propose a most extreme, dangerous, terrible and unlikely situation for evaluation.

“Assuming that the moment we enter the territory of the Star Glory Federation, we are discovered by them and completely seen through—

“No. This still isn’t the most extreme and terrible situation, which should be that while we are discussing and making up the entire infiltration, or to wit, exactly at this moment, the Star Glory Federation has already noticed us!”

“Wait!”

Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar couldn’t help but shouted, “Here and now? How can the federation possibly notice us?”

“This is just an assumption.”

Long Yangjun said in a smile, “Let’s assume that an expert who is adept at the stealth arts is hiding right next to us and eavesdropping our entire plan. He knows all the operations we are to carry out and sends back the intelligence to the federal government. As a result, the moment we sneak into the federation, we will be discovered and monitored by them! Fellow Cultivator Ba, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, this should be the worst situation possible, right? There can’t be a situation that is even more terrible than that, can there?”

Li Yao and Ba Xiaoyu looked at each other in bewilderment, before they struggled to say, “Seems so.”

Long Yangjun raised her narrow, long and slightly blue eyebrow. “Then, so what?”

“So what?”

Ba Xiaoyu bulged his eyes, “The Star Glory Federation will siege us, of course!”

“Siege us?”

Long Yangjun smiled hideously, her eyes suddenly turning sharper than ever. “Ten Cultivators at the high level and peak of the Nascent Soul Stage, two in the Divinity Transformation Stage, and each of us has a Colossus. How much price is the federation prepared to pay in order to siege us, and how much damage can they bear in their fierce battle against us, especially considering that they are faced with a war against the Imperium?

“If we run a simple calculation about the comparison of combat ability, we will realize that we are definitely not as weak as we imagine!

“According to Heiye Lan’s intelligence, there is one ‘Blazing Tyrannosaur Ding Lingdang’ in the Star Glory Federation, who is probably one step away from the Divinity Transformation Stage. It means that she is at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage with a Colossus. And such a person is already respected as a ‘legendary expert’ of the federation!

“You can only have a handful of ‘legendary experts’ in a country. It’s not like that any random guy on the street can be given such a title, right?

“Alright. Same as her, we are at the high level or the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage, and we can also learn to use the Colossus. There are even Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators among us. How much worse than Blazing Tyrannosaur Ding Lingdang can we possibly be?”

“I don’t think that such an inference is fair!”

Li Yao couldn’t help but refute again. “I’ve been studying the Colossus in the last couple of days and even tried it in person two days ago. Such primeval treasures are definitely not something to be grasped so quickly! It is possible that Blazing Tyrannosaur Ding Lingdang has practiced hard for decades and completely melted with her Colossus. It’s impossible that we can be stronger than her after only a few months of quick learning!”

“We don’t have to be stronger than her!”

Long Yangjun snapped resolutely. “Let’s just say that Ding Lingdang is a crazy devil with three heads, six arms, a green face and a mouthful of tusks!”

Li Yao: “Well… I believe that she can’t be that unbelievable.”

Long Yangjun: “It doesn’t matter. Let’s just say that she is as awesome as that. Can we expect to kill her with three, no, six of us? If six experts attack her, even if we are not as good as the Colossus as she is, it should be enough for us to die together with her, right?

“It means that the twelve of us should be more or less enough to waste two ‘legendary experts’ of the national level such as Ding Lingdang!

“Alright. Do you think that the Star Glory Federation can bear the consequence of losing two ‘legendary experts’ of the national level now that a life-and-death war against the expedition army of the Imperium is drawing near?

“That is not counting the damages that we can possibly case when we are struggling before our death in our desperation!

“Therefore, assuming that the worst case-scenario is true, and a ‘Bro Invisible’ from the Star Glory Federation is eavesdropping our plan here and now, so what? Is he really bold enough to reveal our information to the federal government and ask the federation to siege us at the risk of the death of two legendary experts? Is he bold enough to do so? Is he?

“Hehe. If I were this ‘Bro Invisible’, chances are that I will scratch my head and try my best to cover us so that the federal government will not discovery our real identities, in case we go on a rampage and sabotage the federation after we are exposed!”

“Lord Wang’s theory is truly insightful!”

Heaven Battering King Qi Changsheng burst into laughter. “This is the simple logical of ‘those who have nothing to lose fear nothing’! In the past days, we have indeed been too worried and fretful! In fact, on second thought, we all have nothing to lose. Both the Imperium and the federation should be more scared of death than we are! Let’s just be fearless and fight a bloody path in the sea of stars!”

“Exactly!”

Long Yangjun smiled, “The twelve of us combined might not be enough to help the Star Glory Federation defeat the Imperium of True Human Beings. But we are definitely capable of dragging the federation to die with us! Such a threat that ‘I can die with you’ will be the greatest bargaining chip for us during our game with the federation. It will also be the ‘charm’ for us to live a comfortable life inside the federation. As long as the people of the federation are not entirely stupid, they wouldn’t want to reveal our identity and force us to go on a rampage!”

Chapter 1542 - Star Picking Plan!

Whispers were echoing among everybody again, this time with less suspicions and objections but more deductions and calculations.

Brilliance was beaming out of the eyes of more and more Cultivators.

“Fellow Cultivator Wang’s proposal is indeed a great eye-opener for us all!”

Meng Chixin remarked, “If we abandon the Ancient Sages Sector temporarily, chances are that we can get the entire Star Glory Federation and even a vaster world beyond!

“Does any of the fellow Cultivators here object to Fellow Cultivator Wang’s proposal in principle? However, there are many specific questions as to the implementation of the ‘infiltration plan’! The most crucial question of all is location. Where exactly is the Star Glory Federation?

“Fellow Cultivator Wang said that we cannot lock onto the Black Wind Fleet, which is true. But we don’t know anything more about the location of the Star Glory Federation, either. The universe is such a vast place. How can we expect to infiltrate them when we don’t even know where they are?”

“We actually may know a thing or two about them. I think a few guesses are necessary.”

Long Yangjun glanced at Li Yao casually again, before she turned her eyes to Meng Chixin. “Senior Meng, you mentioned three days ago that you and Senior Wu discovered certain scraps of star maps in the Nuwa warship and had a general understanding about the space zones not far away from the Ancient Sages Sector. Also, the Nuwa warship once sent a mysterious signal to a certain space zone in the universe, right?”

Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun looked at each other and nodded their heads.

The ‘Wolf God’ bulged his eyes and cast a spell in silence. A primeval treasure that looked like a helmet surfaced from his ‘body’.

Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun both extended dozens of spiritual threads and operated on the ‘helmet’ quickly.

As they clicked and touched like a storm, there was no telling what barrier they had unlocked, but a mystic ray suddenly shot out of the brilliant gem that looked like an eye right in front of the ‘helmet’, before it expanded into a dense, deep and vast map of the universe!

The stars were shining brightly in the boundless universe right above everybody’s head, bringing them all into a mysterious and yet spectacular new world!

Almost everybody felt that their head was dizzy, and it was difficult to breathe. They were unable to free themselves from the sea of stars!

Long Yangjun was staring at the star map, too, as if she had found part of the ancient memories that had been sealed for hundreds of thousands of years. After a moment of trance, she calmed herself down and said, “Senior Meng, can you make sure which direction was the signal from the Nuwa warship was sent to?”

Meng Chixin nodded his head and said, “Wu Suiyun and I have studied the star map for decades. Mottled and incomplete as it may be, we are certainly able to tell the general direction!”

“That will suffice.”

Long Yangjun coughed and continued analyzing, “Since the Nuwa warship sent a signal to that particular space zone, it is very possible that the place used to be a mother port of the Nuwa warship. There should be a habitable planet with a suitable environment, right?

“Both the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan were both of flesh and blood despite their bizarre appearances and body figures. Also, they were supported by many human soldiers, too. Therefore, the planets suitable for their survival are probably suitable for the survival of human beings. Can you accept that, everybody?

“Alright. Let’s think about what Heiye Lan said.

“This is the edge of the cosmos which is short of resources and spiritual energy. Few planets here are suitable for the survival and reproduction of human beings. Every one of them is too precious to be forsaken!

“If we take all the factors into consideration, isn’t the answer obvious? If there is indeed a country named ‘Star Glory Federation’ which is capable of universal voyage nearby, it would’ve certainly discovered the mother port of this Nuwa warship and left traces there during the development. Or maybe, it could’ve been originated from the very mother port itself!

“Therefore, as long as we find a way to sail to the destination of the signal, which was the mother port of the Nuwa warship, there will be a good chance that we can get in touch with the Star Glory Federation!

“Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, you are a specialist of magical equipment. Come here and take a look at this magical equipment that can activate the star map. Do you think that my theory makes sense?”

“I don’t know!”

Li Yao snapped coldly, “I’m a specialist of magical equipment, not a specialist of space navigation. How on earth would I know whether or not the suspected mother port of the Nuwa warship is within the territory of the Star Glory Federation? Everything is just your speculation, Lord Wang. What if you are wrong?”

“If I’m wrong, I’m wrong.”

Long Yangjun smiled, not thinking that it was a big deal. Pointing at the star map, she said, “Although the star map is incomplete, the basic sailing routes and the introduction to the planets have been depicted. A planet that can support the survival of billions of people is certainly unusual. Let’s just jump over and search for it slowly according to the star map!”

Li Yao asked, “What if you can’t find it after dozens of jumps?”

“Then, we will have no choice.”

Long Yangjun looked at him and said sincerely, “We will have to stick to our original plan and ask Heiye Lan to contact the Black Wind Fleet to surrender to the Imperium!

“After all, our original plan was exactly to surrender to the Imperium. We are simply trying a new possibility by doing this. Even if we fail, we will suffer no losses!”

Meng Chixin observed calmly, “Fair point. However, even if we do discover the Star Glory Federation, how are we going to sneak in? After all, we are nothing like that world!”

“That’s simple, too. We don’t have to directly jump to the mother port of the Nuwa warship. We can jump to the edge of the Star Glory Federation first and capture a few business starships of the Star Glory Federation one way or another, so that we can figure out the general situation of the local area!”

Long Yangjun said, “Or, we can fabricate a new identity. For example, we can claim that we come from a world oppressed by the Imperium of True Human Beings and have fled all the way here after slaying the local officials from the Imperium in our place.

“The Star Glory Federation is in perils right now. Such reinforcements who share a common foe with them must be desirable for them. Will they be skeptical about us?

“All in all, as soon as we sneak to somewhere close to the Star Glory Federation, there will be countless tricks that we can play with. If we are left with no choice, we can always turn to our last resort and demonstrate our real Cultivation in the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage and in the Divinity Transformation Stage. Should we worry that the Star Glory Federation will not treat us as honorable guests?”

Everybody nodded their head. “Fair enough!”

Pondering for a moment, Meng Chixin asked again. “Fine. Let’s say that we can find the Star Glory Federation. But how exactly are we going there?”

“Heiye Lan has an assault warship from the Imperium that crashed in the Ancient Sages Sector.”

Long Yangjun said, “The woman tried repairing the warship. But due to the lack of the resources, she put the project on hold.

“If the twelve of us join our hands, what materials in the entire world can we not find? Is it difficult at all to have the warship fixed?

“Look around us. This Nuwa warship cannot be repaired anytime soon. But we can totally dismantle certain magical equipment and facilities from this warship and transfer them to ‘Weary Tooth’, the warship from the Imperium, thereby enhancing it and making it qualified as the mount for the twelve of us!

“You have been studying here for almost a hundred years, seniors. I believe that you must’ve figured out the features of a lot of magical equipment and facilities, didn’t you? Also, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture is ‘Grandmaster of Great Zhou’. With your extraordinary refining arts, you will certainly be able to significantly build up ‘Weary Tooth’!

“As long as we can be shipped to the border of the Star Glory Federation, wouldn’t it be more than easy for us to switch to another starship?”

Li Yao said coldly, “A voyage in the space is not child’s play. Even if the warship can be repaired, who’s going to pilot it?”

Long Yangjun smiled again. “Heiye Lan can teach us. To think that she was able to maneuver Weary Tooth on her own, how difficult can it possibly be? I assume that even in the Imperium of True Human Beings, most of the crew members on a starship should be in the Building Foundation Stage or the Core Formation Stage, right? Are the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators incapable of doing what they can do?

“Besides…”

Extraordinary brilliance suddenly beamed out of the eyes of the elite warrior of the Nuwa Clan. She said confidently, “I sensed something the moment I entered the Nuwa warship. Maybe, I am born with the wisdom to pilot a starship and I can pick it up very quickly. Who knows? Hahahaha!”

Li Yao was rendered speechless, knowing that the elite warrior of the Nuwa warship could probably really be an expert pilot of starships. Thinking for a moment, he asked, “Why would Heiye Lan teach us?”

Long Yangjun said quickly, “We will tell her that we are planning to sneak into the federation for sabotage in cooperation with the Black Wind Fleet. Will she refuse us?”

Meng Chixin asked again. “If all the twelve of us are away to the Star Glory Federation, what about the Ancient Sages Sector?”

“What about the Ancient Sages Sector?”

Long Yangjun asked aback. “Right now, the Cultivators outside have all learnt that deities have arrived, and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators have shown up again. They have witnessed the horror of the Cloud Qin Gold Statues, too!

“After we can pilot the twelve Colossi skillfully, we will tell them we are going to pay a visit to the ‘deities’ realm’ where we will practice the sophisticated arts of the deities and we will return a few years later!

“Who will rebel when we are away? Are they not scared that we will be back?

“We will seal the Nuwa warship completely. Can they ever break our barrier? Even if they can, we will not leave any Colossus for them!

“Besides, we are not alone. In the battle against ‘Deity Raincloud’ three days ago, some of our subordinates have proved their loyalty. With those people supervising the situation, no big trouble will take place in the Ancient Sages Sector!

“Unless, of course, the Black Wind Fleet discovers in the Ancient Sages Sector when we are away. But the chance is very low, because we are not their original target!

“I have calculated every detail. Do you have any more questions?”

No.

Meng Chixin had asked everybody’s concerns.

Long Yangjun’s proposal seemed to be very feasible.

“If there is no objection, let’s have a vote now!”

Long Yangjun said in a smile. “The twelve locals of the Ancient Sages Sector will sneak into the unknown universe and steal a whole new world! Why don’t we call our infiltration operation the ‘Star Stealing Plan’?”

“No!”

Meng Chixin shook his head. The ‘Wolf God’ from the prairies grinned, “With the capabilities of the twelve of us, do we need to ‘steal’ anything if we want it? We can directly take it away! Star Stealing Plan? I think we can simply call it ‘Star Picking Plan’. We will march out of the dark nebula and pick the most brilliant stars beyond the sky!

“In the next, we will have a vote on the ‘Star Picking Plan’ proposed by Fellow Cultivator Wang Xi—”

Chapter 1543 - Tricked

Doubtlessly, the ‘Star Picking Plan’ was unanimously approved by the twelve top experts of the Ancient Sages Sector.

The plan to infiltrate an unknown country on their own was still immature, with many flaws and risks.

However, faced with an unprecedented change in its hundred thousand years of history, it was impossible for the Ancient Sages Sector to survive the catastrophe safely without any danger.

Even if they were to surrender to the Imperium of True Human Beings right now, they were still under the risk that they would be exploited and devoured by the Black Wind Fleet. All the twelve experts understood the point perfectly!

Nobody was born an expert. The twelve of them had experienced too many dangers, risked too many things, and knocked at the door of hell more times than they could count, before they advanced to the level that they were at.

However high the risk was, as long as the final gains were ten times more than the rest, it would certainly be worth a try!

The Star Picking Plan was passed successfully. But not much time was left for them. Deep inside the universe, the war between the Imperium and the federation might be breaking out at any time. Or maybe, it was now being fought heatedly or even coming to an end.

They had to seize every second and take action immediately!

After repetitive calculations, the twelve experts reached the same conclusion that they only had half a year to maintain ‘Weary Tooth’, the warship from the Imperium, and to familiarize themselves with the modern magical equipment such as crystal suits and Colossi.

They would have to take off half a year ago and run to the universe beyond the darkness!

Only by doing so could they expect to jump to the Star Glory Federation within a year before the great war broke out completely!

In the three-party game of the Imperium, the federation and the Ancient Sages Sector, the greatest trump card for the Ancient Sages Sector was the immense strength of the twelve of them.

But their strength had to be enhanced and unleashed through the ‘Colossi’, the ultimate weapons in the universe.

Therefore, the Colossi had become the most important things of all!

It was also why Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun paid so much attention to Li Yao and even allured him with ‘Tartarean General, the most powerful Colossus of all, and why Long Yangjun said that Li Yao played an irreplaceable role in the plan.

In the few days after the Star Picking Plan was passed, Li Yao was completely devoted to the examination and test of the Colossi.

Not only was he responsible for examining, debugging and maintaining, he also needs to grasp the performance features of every Colossus precisely, so that he could choose a most suitable Colossus for every expert as an ‘advisor’.

Well, of course, his arduous work also included setting up ‘backdoors’ inside the Colossi.

As to whether or not the ‘backdoors’ would be noticed by the experts of the Ancient Sages Sector?

Li Yao felt that it was a hundred times more likely for them to directly see through his identity than to discover the ‘backdoors’.

If a local of the Ancient Sages Sector picked up such profound knowledge about the Colossi after such a short amount of time that they could discover the ‘backdoors’ that he deployed, Li Yao would admit his defeat without complaint!

Seven days later, in an independent training room on the left side of the temple of the Colossi, Li Yao and Long Yangjun were alone in the vast virtual test field.

There was also a Colossus that Li Yao carefully selected for Long Yangjun.

The test of the Colossus was highly private. Chances were that the tester would carry out their ultimate techniques that they would rather nobody else know.

Therefore, the two of them had perfect reasons to lock the door of the training room and set up barriers on the door and the wall.

Even the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, to show their respect, would not break the barriers and drift in to eavesdrop their conversation.

What Li Yao picked for Long Yangjun was a snake-shaped Colossus with a light armor, a high speed, and a streamlined body figure.

The greatest feature of the Colossus was the narrow and long skull that could rotate to every angle like the neck of a snake, other than the black and white scales which fully covered the body of the Colossus without leaving the tiniest gap.

Above the skull that looked like the head of a cobra, more than ten twisted tentacles were growing out. They were antennas that could enhance and release telepathic thoughts.

“This is a special Colossus that highlights agility and stealth four reconnaissance and assault purposes. The firepower and the melee combat ability are not very impressive, but it boasts very powerful disguise and escape abilities.”

Patting the black and white scales which felt like oily leather, Li Yao explained to Long Yangjun emotionlessly, “I believe that, with Lord Wang’s shamelessness and cunningness, and your position as the ‘mastermind’ in the team, you wouldn’t want to charge to the front for a combat when a fierce battle takes place, would you?

“So, this agile Colossus which is particularly convenient for stealth and escape is definitely most suitable for Lord Wang!

“Moreover, a very powerful commanding and communication crystal processor has been installed to the head of its skull that looks like a snake head. With the dozens of signal-enhancing antennas, the Colossus' abilities in intelligence collections, battle surveillance, tactical processing and information transmission are very strong. So, it can serve as half a 'commander', too. Do you understand the jargons, Lord Wang?"

Long Yangjun nodded in a smile. She looked at the Colossus as if it was her partner whom she had met again after a long separation. She smiled, "Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture deserves to be the 'Grandmaster of Great Zhou' and the best sword forger of the Ancient Sages Sector! The Colossus that you have picked for you is exactly what I wanted in the beginning! What's the name of the beautiful Colossus?"

Li Yao said, "According to the 'operation manual' embedded inside the Colossus, its original name was 'Black White'. However, now that Lord Wang has become its new master, you are certainly qualified to choose a new name for the Colossus."

"Black White?"

Long Yangjun glanced at the scales on the surface of the Colossus which were black and white and looked like a chess board. She immediately understood the reason for the name. Pondering for a moment, she shook her head and said, "It is not a good name. Now that it is mine, I'm going to call it…'Yin Yang' in the future!"

Note: Yin and Yang are two terms in Chinese philosophy that are too sophisticated to be explained here. In general, Yin is often associated with female while Yang is associated with male. For more information please see Wikipedia for entry "Yin and Yang".

"Yin Yang?"

Li Yao eyed Long Yangjun up and down. Recalling her mysterious technique to change freely from the two identities 'Wang Xi' and 'Long Yangjun', he chuckled to himself, [It's inappropriate to call your Colossus 'Yin Yang'; you should call it 'Non-Yin Non-Yang!]

Emotionlessly, Li Yao said, "Now, please test the performance of the Colossus 'Yin Yang', Lord Wang. I will perform more precise adjustments according to your habits and your combat style."

"Shua!"

The breastplate of 'Yin Yang' divided into dozens of tentacles like a chrysanthemum, before they rolled to the outside and revealed the entrance to the dark cockpit. Everything inside was obscure, making it look like the widely open mouth of a ferocious beast.

Li Yao opened his hands and made a 'please' gesture.

Long Yangjun rolled her eyes and chuckled, "Why the hurry? Nobody is around. Barriers have been planted on the door and the walls. Our conversation will not be overheard by anyone."

Li Yao said, "So?"

Long Yangjun replied, "So, shouldn't you express your gratitude now?"

Li Yao smiled. Without changing his face color, he said in a seeming sincere tone. "Thank you, Lord Wang, for standing up for what's right in the meeting and managing to bridle the wild horses that were almost breaking free!"

"Huh?"

This time, Long Yangjun was truly somewhat startled. She eyed Li Yao up and down for a long time and shook her head, before she laughed in amusement. “It seems that I’ve underestimated you after all. I thought that you would burst into fury and curse that I did not keep my words. I didn’t know that you had already thought it through. Your reactions in the meeting were all faked?”

“Not entirely. At first, I was indeed a bit surprised.”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and said, “Lord Wang’s ‘Star Picking Plan’ has temporarily prevented the Ancient Sages Sector from surrendering to the Imperium immediately and deprived the Black Wind Fleet of the most perfect camping place. Perhaps, their full attack will be postponed by a few years. If they can’t find a suitable planet as their ‘frontier camp’ all the time, their overall combat ability may be diminished by thirty to fifty percent. So, the two contributions you have made are already of immeasurable strategical value to the federation—”

Long Yangjun giggled. “So, you do understand my real purpose. It seems that my trouble in coming up with plans to help your federation is worth it!”

Li Yao sniffed and said, “However, your plan means that the unpredictable, dangerous fellows will be sent into the federation. This game is getting bigger and bigger with more and more unexpected factors. It is more and more uncontrollable, too! At the very least, you should’ve informed me in advance so that I can make preparations. That’s what you should’ve done if you consider yourself to be my partner! Otherwise, next time, I’m simply reveal your identity as an ‘heir of the Nuwa Clan’ to everybody without any warning, before I raise a series of follow-up plans in a smile when everybody whets their scalpels ready to dissect you into slices for research. Do you want to taste what it feels like?”

“Well… I didn’t know that Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture’ acting skills would be so excellent. However, on second thought, it does make sense. A spy of the federation who is bodacious enough to sneak into the Ancient Sages Sector on his own can’t be somebody easy to deal with. Your position in the federation must be a hundred times higher than Heiye Lan’s position in the Black Wind Fleet, isn’t it? It was my negligence to underestimate the capabilities and the acting stills of such a big shot from the federation like yourself. I can apologize to you!”

Long Yangjun was still smiling. “The game is indeed getting more and more thrilling. However, if you think about it carefully, you will realize that we actually don’t have a choice. Meng Chixin, Han Baling, Qi Zhongdao, Qi Changsheng, Wan Mingzhu, Ba Xiaoyu… None of them are easy to be fooled and convinced. How could I have talked them into action if I hadn’t understated the difficulty to infiltrate the federation and exaggerated the benefits of the endeavor?

“If we don’t get them to the federation, they will only be able to surrender to the Imperium. Once the Black Wind Fleet acquires such a perfect base in the rear like the Ancient Sages Sector and receives the support of manpower and resources, you will be dead for sure, won’t you?

“Moreover, what are you scared of, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture?

“The ‘simpleminded’ locals of the Ancient Sages Sector, however wise they are, will never understand what the modern Cultivation civilization is exactly.

“However, I have managed to get a glimpse of the enormity, complication and horror of the wars and armies in the universe from the mottled memory pieces deep in my head!

“Every individual only has limited strength. However powerful a Cultivator is, they cannot expect to compete with an entire modern country. You must know that very clearly. That’s why you agreed on the ‘Star Picking Plan’ so quickly, right?

“What’s more, for the Star Picking Plan to work, and if the twelve experts of the Ancient Sages Sector want to overturn the Star Glory Federation, they will have to depend on the Colossi. But the critical parts of the Colossi are all in your hands. I don’t believe that you won’t do any trick.

“Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, my proposal is essentially tying up the other ten experts, cleaning them up, and sending them into the bloody mouth of your federation. Can you just let go of the flawed details?”

Chapter 1544 - Let’s Make Friends!

Glancing at the Colossus ‘Yin Yang’ next to them, Li Yao did not deny that he had indeed did tricks on the Colossi. He merely said, “For an expert at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage or even in the Divinity Transformation Stage, even without a Colossus or a crystal suit, they can still be highly dangerous barehandedly!

“The most horrifying thing is not the strength of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators right now, but their shocking learning abilities. Once they sneak into the Star Glory Federation, they will certainly swallow everything in the modern Cultivation civilization like a bottomless hole. With their immense deduction and computational abilities, before long, they will be assimilated into it and turn into standard modern Cultivators!

“It’s impossible to control everybody just through the Colossi!”

Long Yangjun smiled, “So, are you scared after all? If the Star Glory Federation is scared of twelve locals of an ‘ancient’ world, why do you think you are qualified to compete with the Imperium of True Human Beings? Wouldn’t it be better to surrender right now?”

Li Yao smiled, too. Confident flowed out of his face, making him look entirely different from the meeting a few days ago. “Who says that I’m scared? It will be a dangerous challenge. But the federation will never refuse any challenge, be they from the Imperium of True Human Beings, the Ancient Sages Sector, or any other forces in the sea of stars!”

This was the first time that Li Yao admitted the secret that he was from the Star Glory Federation to Long Yangjun.

It was a mark that from this moment on, he would be completely dedicated to the dangerous game and secure the final victory!

“Also, you’re wrong about one thing.”

Pausing for a moment, Li Yao said solemnly, “From your perspective, you may have tricked the other ten experts into the mouth of a ferocious beast. But in fact, the Star Glory Federation is neither a dangerous land nor a ferocious beast. I have no intentions to hurt anyone at all, either.

“I have come to the Ancient Sages Sector after such a long journey because I am hoping to find some friends whom I can cooperate and fight side by side with sincerely. To this moment, I still haven’t given up the hope of ‘win-win’ yet. I believe that there is plenty of room for cooperation between Ancient Sages Sector and the federation. If we can join our hands for a common purpose, it will benefit us both.

“That’s why I didn’t object to the idea that the ten experts should pay a visit to the Star Glory Federation.

“Despite their different stances, sides and experiences, and even if many of them are not the good people in the conventional sense, I believe that they do share one thing in common. At the very least, they are not the shameless, shortsighted, selfish people who care nothing but themselves. They all want to find a way out for those around them, those who share the same destiny as themselves, in this world of chaos!

“They can never find a way out in the Ancient Sages Sector. The system and ideology of the Imperium of True Human Beings will not satisfy them, either. But I believe that after they examine how the Star Glory Federation runs and witness the charisma of the modern Cultivators, they will certainly have a lot of new feelings.

“Aside from other people, I believe that Ba Xiaoyu and Master Bitter Cicada will like the Star Glory Federation. Qi Changsheng and Wan Mingzhu, as rebellions who are born poor, will have new insights after seeing the way the ordinary people are treated in the federation. Wu Suiyun and Qi Zhongdao will be able to study the ‘Constitution of Cultivators’ of the federation carefully and see what exactly the ‘rules’ established in the modern Cultivation civilization look like.

“Meng Chixin, Han Baling, Yan Liren, Emperor Phoenix… They may discover different shining points from the different fields of the federation. Eventually, you will all come to the realization that the federation can offer the Ancient Sages Sector so much more than the Imperium of True Human Beings can!

“That’s the biggest reason why I supported the Star Picking Plan. It’s not because I wanted to fool those people into the federation to capture, enslave and force them to hand over the entire Ancient Sages Sector, which is the Imperium’s practice, not the federation’s.”

Long Yangjun raised her eyebrow. “So, this is the real you. You are indeed very confident!”

“I’m not confident about myself.”

Li Yao smiled, revealing his white teeth. “I’m confident about my country and my compatriots! I believe that the federation must've prospered and grown into the real future of humanity because of their hard work while I was away!

"I believe that the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector who have scrambled in darkness for a hundred thousand years in darkness will not refuse the future!"

Glimmers were flashing inside Long Yangjun's eyes, as she mumbled, "I can't wait to see it now. However, if you are so confident about the federation, and you can control everything with the Colossi, why do I still sense unpredictable concerns from you? What are you worried about?"

Li Yao raised his eyebrow. "You're right. If twelve locals of the Ancient Sages Sector sneak into the federation, there will be many ways to resolve the issue perfectly for a win-win. I'm not worried about Meng Chixin, Qi Zhongdao, Han Baling and the rest of them. What troubles me is something else."

"Oh?"

Long Yangjun's eyes were glittering. "What can possibly be more troublesome than Meng Chixin, Qi Zhongdao, Han Baling and the rest of them combined that is making such an extraordinary person from beyond the sky so ill at ease?"

Li Yao stared at his opponent. "In fact, it's you!"

Long Yangjun blinked her eyes. "Me?"

"You are too dangerous."

Li Yao frowned and said, "I've been reflecting on your speech during the meeting the other day and get to know the meaning of cunningness better and better. No wonder you manipulated the court of the Great Qian Dynasty, divided the entire world of Cultivators, and even destroyed many sects without sending a single soldier!

“What you spoke to Meng Chixin and the rest of the at the meeting and what you are speaking to me right now are for exactly two opposite two purposes although their topic is the same. Who are you trying to sell exactly?

“Is it possible that I’ve been sold by you and yet I’m counting the money happily for you?

“That’s what troubles me. I’m not worried about the ‘Star Picking Plan’ itself, but you who raised it!”

Long Yangjun was amused. “Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, you are too paranoid. Meng Chixin and the other guys do not know my real identity and origins. That’s why they were misled. However, you are very clear of my purpose, which is to find a force that I can cooperate with to repair the Nuwa warship so that I can look for my destiny. That’s all.

“Right now, the Star Glory Federation is the most suitable partner for me. Under the pressure of the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance, it’s unlikely that you can infuriate me and swallow my warship, right? Then, wouldn’t it be very reasonable that I come to you for sincere cooperation? So far, everything I’ve done is in the favor of the federation. What are you suspicious for exactly?”

“Because of this.”

Li Yao pointed his temples. “My intuitions.”

“Intuitions?”

Long Yangjun laughed while she shook her head.

“Although my intuitions are not right every time, something terrible has always happened when they did prove to be right.”

Li Yao stared at his opponent’s eyes. But they seemed to be covered in a vague mist, stopping him from seeing the waves inside Long Yangjun’s head. “Meng Chixin, Qi Zhongdao, Han Baling, Emperor Phoenix… I know exactly what they are up to.

“I can guess a thing or two about the strategical purposes of Heiye Lan, the Black Wind Fleet and the entire Imperium of True Human Beings.

“However, as for you, Long Yangjun, or a certain human-shaped ‘being’ who claims to be ‘Long Yangjun’, I can’t guess what you are and what’s on your mind at all.

“I do not like such a feeling.

“Allowing the ‘ancient people’ such as Meng Chixin, Qi Zhongdao, Han Baling, and even Qi Changsheng and Wan Mingzhu, who in the eyes of the righteous Cultivators may be heinous, to enter the federation does not bother me, because I believe that they will be shocked, edified and assimilated by the federation.

“However, when I think that you, ‘Long Yangjun’, are entering the federation, I always have a bad feeling for reasons I don’t know. I feel that you are more dangerous than the rest of them combined, even if there are two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators among them and you are just in the Nascent Soul Stage!”

Long Yangjun put on a weird smile. Not denying her dangerousness, she simply said, “However, you cannot stop me from entering the universe. If you forbid me from going to the federation, it doesn’t matter. I will find my own way to communicate with the Black Wind Fleet and return to the brand-new universe after hundreds of thousands of years.”

Li Yao stared at him, “What exactly do you want?”

Long Yangjun opened her hands. “Nothing particular. Just like all the other ‘reincarnated’ persons who have found the world utterly reshaped and everything in it changed after their prolonged sleep, I want to visit the new world and make a few new friends. That’s all.”

Li Yao put on a weird expression. “Friends?”

“Yes.”

Long Yangjun said, “Most regular human beings have friends. I have experienced the emotions such as slaughter, schemes and betrayal more than sufficiently. Now, I want to taste what the other emotions feel like, including ‘friendship’. Is there a problem?

“Right, speaking of which, from the time on the lone island in the East Ocean, we have known each other for months and learnt each other’s greatest secret. We have proved to be each other’s worthy opponents, and we are now cooperating on the same boat. I think we should be friends now, right? But while you know my real name is Long Yangjun, I don’t know what your real name is. Isn’t it… a bit unfair?”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes. “Firstly, nobody is on the same boat as you. Secondly, who can guarantee that ‘Long Yangjun’ is your real name? Thirdly, I will not tell you my real name. Just infer it if you think you are capable enough!”

“I’m sincerely hoping to make friends with you. Why do you have to be so rejective?”

Her eyes deep, Long Yangjun said calmly, “Maybe one day, you will discover that everything I have said today is true. What I want is really just to go out and observe the whole new world and new human beings.

“What a shame. When you do discover that I wasn’t lying, chances are that the situation will be… irreversible.”

Long Yangjun’s words cast Li Yao into a brief daze.

He was about to open his mouth and ask again, when Long Yangjun smiled and floated to the midair more than ten meters from the ground like a cloud into the Colossus.

The Colossus ‘Yin Yang’ was activated, the black and white scales suddenly stood erect. Deep inside the cockpit, or the spiritual residence, a mysterious sigh that had been sealed for hundreds of thousands of years came over…

Chapter 1545 - The Last Preparations!

A month had passed since the Star Picking Plan began.

However dangerous the Star Picking Plan was, and whatever unpredictable consequences it might bring, the benefits of the plan were obvious.

First of all, the plan prevented the Ancient Sages Sector from taking the Imperium of True Human Beings’ sides immediately and the Black Wind Fleet from acquiring a base with abundant spiritual energy, resources and cannon fodder that it could take advantage of.

If the Black Wind Fleet truly acquired such a base, it would be able to recover from the consumption and exhaustion in the hundred-year journey within a year and a half. They would show up in front of the Star Glory Federation with in their most terrifying form, utterly refreshed and prepared. In such a case, the federation would barely stand any chance of winning.

Without such a ‘delaying tactic’, it would’ve been impossible for Li Yao and Long Yangjun to stop the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators and the eight Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators from sending a signal to the Black Wind Fleet through Heiye Lan.

Even if Li Yao had sent a signal to the Star Glory Federation at the same time, and the federal fleet and the Black Wind Fleet arrived at the Ancient Sages Sector simultaneously, Li

Yao wouldn’t have high hopes in the federal fleet’s combat ability in such head-on clashes.

A hundred years ago, in the ‘Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage’ in the Star Glory Federation, the general principles to defend the federation had been settled. They would focus most of their attention on counteroffensive battles by taking advantage of the territory of their homeland. Marching reckless and attacking the Black Wind Fleet deep inside the dark nebula were not in their favor. Fighting the enemy’s strong suits with one’s weaknesses was a military taboo that should be avoided.

Secondly, the plan allowed the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators from the ‘ancient era’ to appreciate the wonders of the modern Cultivation civilization. Li Yao believed that he could at least sway the majority of them and therefore achieve a sincere partnership between the federation and the Ancient Sages Sector. It was even possible that the Ancient Sages Sector would join the federation genuinely and become its indispensable part!

The trend of the universe was unstoppable. Li Yao truly believed that the Star Glory Federation represented the future of the civilization of mankind and was much more advanced than the Imperium or the Covenant Alliance. As long as they saw it with their own eyes and experienced it in person, most of the ancient Cultivators would certainly be attracted to it.

It was where Li Yao’s belief lied. He couldn’t suspect or waver about that.

The Star Glory Federation would march to the center of the cosmos one day and bring a whole new future to all the human beings including the citizens of the Imperium and those of the Covenant Alliance!

If it couldn’t even fascinate a bunch of ‘ancient people’, how could it expect to attract, assimilate and liberate the citizens of the Imperium and the citizens of the Covenant Alliance?

Meng Chixin and the rest of them considered the Star Picking Plan an open scheme, one that the federation couldn’t resolve even if it was seen through.

But for Li Yao, the plan was also an open scheme, one where an advanced civilization assimilated an underdeveloped civilization.

Li Yao believed that the Star Glory Federation made of Ding Lingdang, Guo Chunfeng, Jin Xinyue, the Fire Ant King, Professor Mo Xuan, Fiend Blade Peng Hai, Xiong Wuji, Lei Dalu, Bai Kaixin and all his other family, friends and compatriots would certainly not disappoint him after a hundred years of rapid development!

It was the most important reason why he was fully devoted to the Star Picking Plan.

Besides, another benefit that was much more straightforward when the Star Picking Plan was pushed forward at a super high speed was that Li Yao, as the ‘technical director’ of the whole plan, received the magical equipment and jade chips from the Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun, the two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, who had collected the items from all over the Nuwa warship for decades. He was also free to study the more than ten intact Colossi and the debris of even more Colossi. He even received the trust of Heiye Lan, the female warrior from the Imperium, and was able to glean the technological intelligence about the Imperium from her!

Heiye Lan was just a warrior. The infiltration operation that she was forced to carry out because of the accident had far exceeded her abilities. She was already completely exhausted after making it to this step.

After Long Yangjun told her the camouflaged Star Picking Plan, claiming that the experts of the Ancient Sages Sector had decided to sneak into the federation for sabotage in cooperation with the Black Wind Fleet, she did not notice anything wrong.

Or rather, she never thought even in her dreams that the bodacious, insane ‘ancient people’ would have the courage to consider allying with such an insignificant country like the Star Glory Federation under the threat of the magnificent Imperium!

Even if she was suspicious, there was nothing she could do.

The barriers and secret techniques of the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were not to be got rid of easily. Her resistance would only lead to tougher and crueler treatments. If anything, the situation would only be tenser.

Therefore, after much deliberation, Heiye Lan decided to fully cooperate with the twelve experts.

She was born in a noble family in the Imperium of True Human Beings, and she was the daughter of the commander of the Black Wind Fleet. Although her specialty was the Colossus, she had learnt a fair amount of knowledge in terms of the navigation and piloting of starships and the emergent maintenance of various kinds of magical equipment.

Otherwise, it would’ve been impossible for her to force the assault warship to land on the Ancient Sages Sector on her own after all the crew members on ‘Weary Tooth’ were ripped apart by the storms in the four-dimensional space.

In the Star Picking Plan, she was temporarily working as Li Yao’s acolyte and carried out the maintenance and examination work on the crystal suits, Colossi, starship and other advanced magical equipment together with him.

On the other hand, she was also responsible for teaching some of the twelve experts the basic skills to maneuver a starship.

Long Yangjun was the first one to volunteer to study the arts of starship piloting from Heiye Lan.

In such a case, even if she showed amazing expertise on starship piloting half a year later, she would be able to ask Heiye Lan to take all the credit.

The terms in return that the twelve experts of the Ancient Sages Sector offered to Heiye Lan were that, after the Star Picking Plan was activated, Heiye Lan would be brought to the Star Glory Federation together, so that she could collect the first-hand data about the federation.

It was the only solution. They couldn’t keep Heiye Lan in the Ancient Sages Sector, which might lead to more changes. Besides, if they were to sit on the fence, they would need someone who could directly speak to the Black Wind Fleet, too.

Naturally, on Li Yao’s side, he wanted to get Heiye Lan, the daughter of the commander of the Black Wind Fleet, to the federation, too, so that the Secret Sword Bureau under Guo Chunfeng’s lead would elicit more intelligence from her.

The poor Heiye Lan had no idea that those ‘ancient people’ were so shrewd at all. They were simply considering her a fish on a chopping block and rolling her over while they pondered where they should cut her open.

To facilitate the cooperation between the Ancient Sages Sector and the Imperium of True Human Beings, she was truly confessing a lot of technological secrets dutifully and earnestly.

Many technical manuals from the Imperium of True Human Beings in terms of the maintenance of crystal suits, Colossi and starships had been outputted into jade chips and given to Li Yao.

From Heiye Lan’s perspective, ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’ was an ancient Cultivator after all. No matter how remarkable his ‘ancient refining arts’ were, how on earth could he possibly understand the most complicated, state-of-the-art technologies from the Imperium of True Human Beings?

Little did she know that the ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’ had in fact been swapped since a long time ago. The guy standing before her was in fact one of the most frightening refiners in the Star Glory Federation!

When he was still in the federation, Li Yao had already studied a lot of the secret technologies from the Imperium of True Human Beings by analyzing the crystal suits and starship brought over by Su Changfa and his fellow Immortal Cultivators.

However, Su Changfa and his teammates were not real warriors after all, but some sort of ‘pioneers’. They did not bring ultimate weapons such as the ‘Colossus’ together with them, either.

Heiye Lan’s jade chips helped Li Yao to fill the most critical missing part.

Fascinated, Li Yao was completely devoted to the new knowledge, devouring the maintenance manuals of crystal suits, Colossi and starships from the Imperium of True Human Beings crazily.

â€¦

Two months had passed since the Star Pick Plan was activated.

After the full examination and testing in the first month, the twelve experts had all chosen a Colossus to their liking. They began the quick training of the crystal suits and the Colossus under the guidance of Meng Chixin, Wu Suiyun and Heiye Lan.

They were smart and quick-minded Cultivators above the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage after all. Naturally, the progress of their learning was very fast.

Also, the preliminary usage of the Colossus wasn’t so hard to grasp.

When Li Yao piloted the Colossus for the first time, he was already able to launch an ultimate skill and execute a member of the Pangu Clan.

It was true that he had the assistance of ‘Little Black’ at that time. But right now, the Cultivators had more time to learn than he did. Naturally, they were getting the hang of the Colossus very quickly.

As the ‘technical director’, Li Yao had the full knowledge on the performance features of every Colossus and the combat style of every expert. He also finished deploying all the ‘backdoors’ during times of maintenance and modification.

The backdoors he installed on the Colossi and the crystal suits Heiye Lan brought to the Ancient Sages Sector could mainly be classified into three categories.

The first category of ‘backdoors’ was used to determine the location.

As long as they were activated remotely through special telepathic thoughts, the specific location of the target would be displayed on his receptor clearly.

The second category of ‘backdoors’ could also be activated remotely. Once activated, they would generate weird space waves, making the device unable to be absorbed into a Cosmos Ring.

Its effect was basically the same as the barriers Long Yangjun imposed on the Thousand Stars Tray.

Ancient Sages Sector was an enclosed world. Many secret treasures had been passed on from the primeval era, including tremendous Cosmos Rings.

The storage space of the Cosmos Rings in this Sector was much larger than that of the Cosmos Rings the federation gathered from the edge of the universe.

During the Dragon Spring Meeting, Yan Liren once unleased an enormous sword dozens of meters long from one of his Cosmos Rings.

Since the Cosmos Ring could accommodate such a giant blade, it was definitely capable of accommodating a Colossus no more than thirty meters tall.

If searching in the entire Ancient Sages Sector, more than ten Cosmos Rings of such a level could be found.

It would be too dangerous if twelve dangerous rogues were wandering around carrying a Colossus with them.

Therefore, Li Yao specifically added the ‘safety’. Once activated, they would reduce the inconspicuousness of the Colossi to zero.

The third category of ‘backdoors’ were certainly the barriers to cut the mainframe crystal processor and the engine reactors of the Colossi and to paralyze them.

Li Yao had used up all his wisdom on the backdoors. Even the experts from the Black Wind Fleet arrived, they would still have to vomit blood if they wanted to crack the ‘backdoors’ he installed!

Chapter 1546 - Path of Ascension!

However, unless it was absolutely necessary, Li Yao did not intend to resort to such methods. They were only the ultimate ‘safety’.

Ba Xiaoyu and Master Bitter Cicada were both good people. Li Yao did not want to end on bad terms with them at all.

Even Han Baling, Qi Zhongdao, Qi Changsheng, Wan Mingzhu and the rest of them also had their own shining points. They were not entirely selfish and unpardonable fellows.

Li Yao sincerely hoped that they could perceive something that they had never seen or thought in the Star Glory Federation, so that their beliefs could have a breakthrough!

Three months had passed since the Star Picking Plan was begun.

“BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!”

Deep inside the Land of Eternal Night, right above the Nuwa warship, in the middle of the turbulent snowstorm, two Colossi were having a fierce fight like two primeval giants!

The first Colossus was around twenty meters tall, with a silver white, translucent shell that seemed to have been completely melted into the wind and the snow. Sharp blades protruded out of the shoulders, elbows, knees and other joints on the body, highlighting the unmistakable style of ‘aggressiveness’.

What was even more attractive was the double-handed giant sword in its hands which was almost as tall as the Colossus. Stripes as complicated as spider webs had been carved on the surface of the giant sword, as if it could evolve into a different form at any time and cut a mountain into halves!

It was a Colossus that Li Yao carefully selected for Sword Maniac Yan Liren.

As one of the strongest points of attack in the team, the Colossus was strengthened with the units of quite a few other Colossi that Li Yao dismantled. It was the Colossus that fully carried out the essence of ‘attack’.

Yan Liren had named the Colossus as ‘Big Sword’!

Its opponent, on the other hand, was a round, fat Colossus, with disproportionate upper half body and lower half body, like a tumbler thousands of times larger, or a Buddha that was sitting on the lotus seat cross-legged. Eight bright gold, giant balls were dancing around the Colossi while releasing gentle and thick brilliance, forming an unbreakable spiritual shield that was taking the blow of the sword attacks.

It was Master Bitter Cicada’s Colossus ‘Earthly Buddha’, which had the highest defense ability of all the Colossi. When the spiritual shield of the Colossus was fully stretched out, it could even cover hundreds of square meters and protect everybody within the range!

Li Yao, on the other hand, was busy collecting and analyzing their battle data, trying to adjust the connection and distribution of the units all the Colossi, so that they would be better fit for their users’ characteristics.

Behind the ‘battlefield of Colossi’, flying boats were running in and out nonstop, shipping the units and critical facilities dismantled from the Nuwa warship to the south.

A few of the twelve Colossi were temporarily working as ‘porters’. With the assistance of the iron giants, even the furious tempests seemed to be conquered completely. The deepest part of the Land of Eternal Night had turned into a heated workshop.

While Li Yao was completely dedicated to the research of the Colossi, the others of the twelve top experts were not idling by, either. The Star Picking Plan was being pushed forward quickly.

Meng Chixin, Han Baling, Qi Zhongdao, Qi Changsheng, Wan Mingzhu, Emperor Phoenix… Those people controlled the most powerful forces in the Ancient Sages Sector. When their joined their hands, the energy that they could unleash was shocking.

They chose a large refining workshop in the border between the Cloud Qin and the Great Qian Dynasty which was originally established to craft flying boats. Then, the workshop was modified into a secret base to maintain Weary Tooth, the ‘Bloody Blade’-level assault warship from the Imperium of True Human Beings.

Tremendous units and facilities on the Nuwa warship had been shipped to nearby for the enhancement and upgrade of the assault warship.

Naturally, the project was too eye- and ear-catching to fool the high-level Cultivators from the six major sects who went to the ‘Divine Palace’ and explored together with the twelve top experts.

However, the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators and ten super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators represented the strongest forces and the highest personal combat ability and Cultivation in the Ancient Sages Sector. Now that they had been united and suppressing the other Cultivators together, what could the other Cultivators do except to obey their orders dutifully?

Besides, Long Yangjun understood precisely what was on those people's mind. She made an enticing promise to them.

“There are only limited number of Cloud Qin Gold Statues in the Ancient Sages Sector. Naturally, they can't be given to you. If you challenge us and demand them right now, you will gain absolutely nothing. I believe all the elders and leaders here understand it perfectly, right?

“But it doesn't matter. We have learnt shocking news about the ‘deities' realm’ from Deity Raincloud, and we are about to explore the channel between the Ancient Sages Sector and the deities' realm!

“As long as the channel is successfully established, not only will we receive tremendous magical equipment from the deities' realm, such as the divine armor and the Cloud Qin Gold Statue, the difficulty of ascending to the deities' realm will also be significantly reduced. Every one of you will have the opportunity to enter the deities' realm!

“Our trip won't take long. In three to five years at most, we will certain return with a large batch of ultimate treasures of the deities. Chances are that we will bring more people to fly to the deities' realm by then. After all, we are all compatriots living in the same world!

“However, as to exactly who will be given the ultimate treasures of the deities, and who will be granted access to the channel to the deities’ realm, it will depend on your attitude and behavior while we are away!”

Her statement successfully bluffed everybody.

Besides, Long Yangjun was not entirely lying. Whether they cooperated with the federation or the Imperium, their future partner was not something that the six major sects or the disorganized community of Cultivators could resist.

If any of them dared to stir trouble in the Ancient Sages Sector when they were away, they would certainly lay their vengeance upon the traitors ruthlessly after they returned from the ‘deities’ realm’!

Also, Han Baling, Qi Changsheng, Long Yangjun and the rest of them had a batch of loyal subordinates in the first place.

Since those people did not rebel under the intimidation of ‘Deity Raincloud’, they had even less reason to rebel now that their leaders had controlled twelve Colossi and the future was nothing but promising.

With their loyal subordinates stabilizing the situation, and the prospect of the ‘deities’ realm’ alluring everyone, it was impossible for the Ancient Sages Sector to fall into chaos in the next couple of years.

Four months had passed since the Star Picking Plan was initiated.

In a valley on the border of the Cloud Qin and the Great Qian Dynasty, inside a secret dock, the maintenance of Weary Tooth went quite well.

The assault warship of the Imperium shared a lot of similarities with ‘Flourishing Sun’, the warship piloted by Su

Changfa, Kou Ruhuo and Tang Qianhe, who were the first batch of Immortal Cultivators that the Star Glory Federation got in touch with. The warships boasted equally advanced automatic maintenance and expansion abilities.

As long as they collected enough resources, they would be able to produce tremendous mining spider puppets, maintenance spider puppets, combat spider puppets, etc., and to run simple self-maintenance.

Heiye Lan's progress was very slow in the beginning partly because she couldn't find most of the rare metals and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, and partly because it would be a major fuss if mining, refining and maintaining were conducted at the same time. The experts of the Ancient Sages Sector would definitely sense the spiritual waves after they spread to hundreds of kilometers away.

That was why she put the maintenance plan on hold in the beginning.

Right now, both problems were no more.

With the support of the twelve experts, all the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and rare ingredients of the Ancient Sages Sector were open to the project. The maintenance did not need to be hidden from anyone now. Moreover, a lot of experts of refining from the forces under the twelve experts or summoned from the six major sects had come to help. Together with the functional units and facilities dismantled from the Nuwa warship as enhancements, despite the hideous appearance on the surface due to the layers of patches, the performance parameters of Weary Tooth were soaring quickly. It was estimated that in less than one month, the warship would regain the ability of space voyage and even four-dimensional jump!

Five months had passed since the Star Picking Plan began.

The studies on the star map of the primeval era and the setting of the sailing routes had witnessed groundbreaking developments, too.

What was recorded on the star map inside the Nuwa warship was the status of the universe hundreds of thousands of years ago.

Hundreds of thousands of years were perhaps an entire life for a civilization from its rise to its decline. But on the universal level, it was just the blink of an eye. The relative location and status of the stars in the universe wouldn’t have too many changes.

Heiye Lan, as the daughter of the commander of the Black Wind Fleet, was certainly able to read and deduct a star map. Although the new star map after her deductions and calculations was not enough to navigate the warship to jump to the orbit of the Heaven’s Origin Planet, as the precise coordinates under Li Yao’s control could, the possible destination was not far away from the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector.

Arriving at the nearby of the Star Glory Federation with a super long-distance space jump, measuring the latest situation in the space zones nearby, and then jumping for a second time more precisely after adjusting the navigation parameters accordingly. That was their plan.

After Li Yao and Long Yangjun secretly discussed with each other, they agreed that they should not directly jump to the central area of the federation. An unexpected encounter would do neither party any good.

Eventually, Long Yangjun proposed that the destination of their first space jump should be set to be the place named ‘Shimmering Light Space Zone’ on the star map.

The place had a certain distance from the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector and the Flying Star Sector. They would probably not be discovered by the federation immediately after they jumped over.

Although there wasn’t a habitable planet in the place hundreds of thousands of years ago, some resource planets marked on the star map could still provide supplies for Weary Tooth after the long-distance jump.

They could take a rest in the ‘buffer area’ for a while, before they decided what to do next.

Long Yangjun ‘studied’ the arts of starship piloting after Heiye Lan for a few months, and she ‘showed great talent’ in learning. In the ‘observation committee’ made of the twelve of them, she would work as the navigator on the starship.

The landing point that she proposed was quite safe. It was soon approved by everyone.

Six months had passed since the Star Picking Plan started.

Everything was good to go.

The Weary Tooth after being repaired was standing deep insider the valley like a cluster of dark red crystals. Although it had yet to be activated, it was still releasing the air of intimidation and aggressiveness.

The five hundred square kilometers around the warship was set as a forbidden area. Except for the most loyal subordinates who had passed multiple tests, nobody was allowed to trespass, or they would be immediately executed!

The first trip to the deities’ realm for the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector to break out of the dark nebula would begin in two hours!

Chapter 1547 - Triple Identities!

“This is rather… sharp!”

In the past half year, the twelve experts of the Ancient Sages Sector had witnessed the warship to be repaired and strengthened from a pile of garbage by the maintenance spider puppets that the warship brought with itself and the refiners of the Ancient Sages Sector.

However, when they stood in front of ‘Weary Tooth’, which was utterly refreshed and all set to go, they could still sense the coldness from the deadly weapon crafted in a modern civilization that was entirely from the products of their era and seemed to be able to rip everything in its way apart. They couldn’t help but feel astounded at its formidability.

Many of them were mumbling uncontrollably.

The warship deserved its name as a ‘Bloody Blade’-level assault warship. It truly looked like a red dagger made of countless crimson crystals, or a man-eating shark that was swimming at the bottom of a red ocean. Even if it was merely standing in the depths of the valley without a sound, it still gave the feeling that it would open its bloody mouth at any moment.

Thankfully, Li Yao and Heiye Lan had commanded the maintenance spider puppets to plug countless disordered, redundant remnants of magical equipment onto the shell of Weary Tooth. It was partly meant to offset the blast of meteoroids in the space and the bombardment of the hostile fire, and partly to cover its inherent aura of intimidation from the Imperium.

Although the camouflage was far from enough to fool everyone’s eyes, the remote scanning from hundreds of thousands of kilometers away beyond range of visibility might not necessarily be able to unveil the real identity of the warship.

It also befitted the false identity that Long Yangjun fabricated for them.

Long Yangjun had made up three false identities for the highly dangerous team of observers.

On the outmost level, they were from the ‘Burning Stone Sector’, a world suppressed by the Imperium of True Human Beings more than five hundred years ago.

It was a Sector that once existed for real, and one that was too stubborn to surrender to the Imperium.

The Cultivators of the Burning Stone Sector challenged the Imperium and, without any suspense, were cruelly suppressed. After the most gory and bloody battles, the entire Burning Stone Sector almost ended up in an ocean of fire.

Before encountering the Imperium of True Human Beings, the Burning Stone Sector had already developed rather advanced space cruise abilities.

After the lost battles, many warriors of resistance boarded on starships and fled to the universe. They turned into small resistance armies and guerilla troops and continued harassing the Imperium.

They hijacked the carriers from the Empyreal Terminus Sector which were sent to other worlds to plunder resources. They assaulted the mines at the remote space zones in the vast territory of the Imperium. Some of the more extreme avengers even entered the central area of the Imperium, assassinated the high officials, promoted the ideology of resistance, disrupted the relationship between the capital and the local areas, and instigated the worlds at the periphery to seek autonomy and independence. They even resorted to terror attacks for purest retaliations.

It took the Imperium two hundred years to slap all the annoying flies.

But it was not until three hundred years later that the last resistance warship of the Burning Stone Cultivators was discovered, which marked the conclusion of the ‘Riot of Burning Stone’.

All the information was confessed by Heiye Lan and verified by the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, who believed that it was reliable.

Then, according to the script that Long Yangjun made up, some of the Cultivators from the Burning Stone Sector escaped from the Imperium’s hunting and seized a warship of the Imperium during the battles, before they fled to the edge of the cosmos after hundreds of years, like ‘Firefly’ which accommodated the last survivors of the rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic.

It would explain perfectly why they suddenly showed up in the territory of the federation on the ‘Bloody Blade’-level assault warship.

For that, Long Yangjun asked Heiye Lan all the details about the ‘Riot of Burning Stone’ repetitively.

It was not a military secret of the Imperium but an anecdote hundreds of years ago. Naturally, there was no need for it to be sealed. Heiye Lan confessed everything dutifully.

According to the details, Long Yangjun fabricated a new identity for each of the twelve of them, no, the thirteen of them including Heiye Lan.

She was the leader and founder of the ‘Ghost Character’, an intelligence and assassination agency. Li Yao estimated that she must’ve been doing similar jobs in the Nuwa Clan’s army in the God-Sealing War hundreds of thousands of years ago. Naturally, she was quite familiar with the work.

It was just the first layer of their camouflage.

If this camouflage was seen through, which was very likely to happen as the twelve experts never underestimated the wisdom of the people of the federation, they would activate their second identities.

In their second identities, they would tell part of the truth.

The best lies were always covered and camouflaged by a lot of truth.

They would admit that they were from a certain ‘civilization of ancient Cultivators’. However, they would give fuzzy answers when they were asked about the coordinates of the Ancient Sages Sector. Also, they would understate the capabilities of themselves and the Ancient Sages Sector.

In the Ancient Sages Sector before, because of the opulence of spiritual energy, it could be squandered blatantly. Therefore, there was no such thing as ‘Soul Converging Technique’, which allowed a Cultivator to conceal their air and capabilities.

But the ‘Soul Converging Technique’ itself was not an advanced or sophisticated technique. Both the Star Glory Federation and the Imperium of True Human Beings had a lot of similar techniques. Naturally, Heiye Lan knew a few of them, too.

Years ago, when Li Yao only just awakened his spiritual root as a common college student, he had already grasped ‘Soul Converging Technique’ and ‘Soul Igniting Law’.

Those Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, with their immeasurable wisdom and Cultivation, had half a year to learn such simple techniques. How could they not grasp it?

Therefore, they were now free to suppress their Cultivation by one to two major levels and pretend to be common Building Foundation Stage Cultivators or Core Formation Stage Cultivators.

Long Yangjun had also devised a new script for their second identities, telling the story of how they accidentally excavated a prehistorical warship from their world, how they finally grasped the ways to drive the warship after hundreds of years of studies, how they were discovered by a claw fleet of the expedition army of the Imperium in their first space voyage, and how they captured a warship of the Imperium after battles of wisdom and courage and fled all the way here…

Naturally, such a story entailed a lot of loopholes and could be seen through.

Therefore, they had their third identities, which were their real identities.

Under the most extreme circumstances, they could tell everything about themselves, the Ancient Sages Sector, the Nuwa warship and even the ‘Bloody Blade’-level assault warship which was forced to land on the Ancient Sages Sector.

Everything they said would be true.

But only one part needed a minor ‘revision’.

In their story, they did not take the Imperium of True Human Beings’ sides. When they interrogated the warrior of the Imperium from the assault warship with ‘soul-searching techniques’, they accidentally killed the captive in their mistake.

Having killed the warrior of the Imperium, they had no choice except to take the Star Glory Federation’s sides.

The three layers of identities were each truer than the last. Even if the government of the federation did discover their existence, they would be able to cover and disguise themselves step by step. Such an idea gave most of the twelve experts of the Ancient Sages Sector an illusionary sense of safety.

“Master Spiritual Vulture, Weary Tooth has finished self-testing. It is ready to go!”

Heiye Lan, the female warrior of the Imperium, spoke to Li Yao respectfully.

In the past six months, she and Li Yao almost spent every day together studying and maintaining the Colossi and the starships.

The crazy learning speed of ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’ on the arts of modern magical equipment maintenance greatly shocked Heiye Lan. In less than three months, he had already surpassed Heiye Lan’s level as a late-starter.

Heiye Lan was both surprised and awed by the ‘Grandmaster of Great Zhou’. She couldn’t help but feel awed by the marvelous ancient sword forging techniques that he showed unintentionally and the application of such techniques in modern magical equipment. The naturalness, creativeness and fluence of his refining arts were great eye-openers for her!

What an important role he could’ve played with such extraordinary sword forging arts and such ‘naturally-endowed’ instincts about the crystal suits and the Colossi if he were working in the technical department of the Black Wind Fleet!

Heiye Lan already considered Li Yao as one of the ancient Cultivators in the Ancient Sages Sector who deserved to be recruited by the Imperium most. She tried her best to cajole him and even using the courtesies of a disciple in front of him.

She was told that ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’ had yet to recruit any disciple and was all by himself.

Although she was a pure warrior and did not intend to become a refiner, it couldn’t be anything bad if she was in a good relationship with such an excellent refiner!

Li Yao was also glad to have such a female warrior from the Imperium as his assistant/servant/ housemaid. Naturally, he didn’t not refuse her flattery and even taught her some of the half-true knowledge of the ‘ancient sword forging arts’.

As a result, the spy of the Imperium and the spy of the federation were actually in rather a close and ‘friendly’ relationship!

“Fellow Cultivators, it’s running late. Let’s take off now!”

His eyes glittering, Li Yao smiled at the other eleven experts of the Ancient Sages Sector who were wearing different expression in front of Weary Tooth.

The boarding stairs of Weary Tooth extended to their feet like the long tongue of a ferocious beast.

Looking at each other, everybody gritted their teeth and stepped on the stairs!

When it was Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar’s turn, the slobby, innocent man who was scared of nothing was suddenly perspiring hard with sweats as large as beans. He chewed his tobacco tube so hard that it was cracking, and he was hesitating to move forward.

“Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, you were the one who supervised the maintenance of this warship. Just tell me the truth. Is it really able to bring us beyond the sky across the universe to somewhere billions of kilometers away?”

Hesitating, Ba Xiaoyu asked in a low voice.

Instead of waiting for Li Yao to answer, he waved his hands quickly, as if he were trying to wipe off what he had just spoken. “Forget it. What will be will be. My question is redundant. Can I defect at this moment? Staying in the Ancient Sages Sector means doom anyway. However dangerous it is, this is a step that we must make!”

Holding the tobacco tube, he moved a few steps forward, before he thought for a moment and paused again. He said to Li Yao in a low voice, “Thank you, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture!”

Chapter 1548 - Infuriate the Sun! (End of Volume IV)

Li Yao was slightly dazed, “Thank me for what?”

“Thank you for persisting in your belief and proposing a different opinion in the meeting half a month ago, when the eleven of us did not object to surrendering to the Imperium of True Human Beings.”

Ba Xiaoyu smiled bitterly, “Otherwise, we probably would’ve sent a message to the Black Wind Fleet half a year ago, and the Ancient Sages Sector would’ve ended up to be a base for the Black Wind Fleet. As for me, I would have to leave my home and wander in the universe as a helpless affiliated Cultivator in the space!”

Li Yao was touched. He said in a low voice, “Do you dislike the Imperium of True Human Beings so much, Fellow Cultivator Ba.”

“Yes. I don’t like it at all.”

Looking at Heiye Lan somewhat at a loss, Ba Xiaoyu mumbled, “In the past half year, I have studied Heiye Lan’s confessions repetitively. I also spoke to her in private many times, asking her the Imperium of True Human Beings’ attitude towards the ordinary folks.

“The path that the Imperium of True Human Beings is walking on hardly satisfies me. We are all the same kind of people. We are all born by our parents, made of flesh and body, and have feelings and emotions. Why must we be classified as ‘true human beings’ and ‘hominoids’? The so-called ‘hominoids’ can’t be called humans just because they don’t have a spiritual root? That’s—that’s downright outrageous!”

Ba Xiaoyu sighed and said, “In my younger days, I lived in a noble family of Cultivators. My life had been extravagant, and all my fancy desires could be met. However, such ‘entertainment’ was in fact intertwined with the ‘suffering’ when I had to be involved in the conflicts, betrayals and treacheries of the Cultivators. I was as happy as I was tormented.

“Then one day, pirates raided and burnt my family’s island to the ground. My family lost all the fortunes, and I was heavily wounded and fled to the coast on the southeast. I lived among the ordinary folks and treated my wounds. It was then that I learnt the simplicity of the life of the ordinary folks, where I didn’t need to be wary of anybody or make plans to take advantage of anybody, even if their life was anything but wealthy.

“After tasting the feeling of such a life, I finally realized that Cultivators are not necessarily noble and ordinary folks are not necessarily humble. In the hundred years that followes, I have always been hanging around the ordinary folks as slobby as I am today. People like Qi Changsheng and Wan Mingzhu think that I was merely being pretentious. They don’t know that I truly have fun in it!

“I’ve already been used to such a life after a hundred years. The life of the Imperium of True Human Beings where decent people are classified into ‘true human beings’ and ‘hominoids’ for no good reason is really not something that I can tolerate!”

Li Yao asked, “Why didn’t you object to it at that time, Fellow Cultivator it?”

“Object to it?”

Ba Xiaoyu smiled bitterly, “Would my opposition have been helpful? The Imperium of True Human Beings is too powerful. The small assault warship right here will be the first clue. Although I am reluctant to surrender to the Imperium, how can I bear to drag so many folks of the Ancient Sages Sector to die in the infernos of blood and fire together with me?

“I was in such a dilemma that I didn’t know how I should decide at all. I was pondering that I had no choice except to run away. Out of sight, out of mind. That was my best hope.

“Thankfully, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture stopped the collapse at the last moment and pointed out the advantages and disadvantages. Then, Wang Xi raised his ‘Star Picking Plan. So, there may still be new changes, and the surrender may not happen until a few years later!

“I wonder what kind of country the Star Glory Federation is exactly. Will it bring hope that is entirely different from the Imperium of True Human Beings to the Ancient Sages Sector?”

Li Yao felt that his heart was warm. He couldn’t help but clench his fists and tried to remain calm. “Maybe. I’m looking forward to a Star Glory Federation… that is entirely different, too!

“Please, Fellow Cultivator. Let’s open our eyes and watch the universe clearly!”

“All crew members have boarded!”

“All doors are closed. All the air gates are shut off. The internal oxygen circulation system has been activated!”

“The ancillary launch rune arrays on the ground have been activated. It is good to go at any time!”

The twelve experts of the Ancient Sages Sector, and Heiye Lan, had all entered ‘Weary Tooth’, the ‘Bloody Blade’-level assault warship of the Imperium!

On the ground, the loyal subordinates of Han Baling, Long Yangjun and the rest of them had finished the preparations on the launch platforms, too.

The so-called ‘assault warship’, as its name suggested, was a type of starships small in size, high in speed, suitable for multiple terrains and spaces, with the abilities to march into a hostile warship or the atmosphere of a hostile planet for an assault battle.

Such warships often needed to be engaged in the battles on the orbit of a planet and even within the atmosphere, and they needed to retreat very quickly after the battle.

Therefore, they boasted very powerful abilities against the gravity, which allowed them to get rid of the boundary of a planet very easily.

Li Yao had also dismantled four ancillary engine units for the micro adjustment of direction from the engine compartment at the rear of the Nuwa warship with Long Yangjun’s help. He connected the units to the back of Weary Tooth, replacing the previous rune arrays that had been seriously damaged. The basic performance parameters were restored to 70% of the original and could finally support a launch!

On Weary Tooth, the other ten experts had already dived into the buffer gel. Long Yangjun and Heiye Lan, who were the navigator and the pilot, and Li Yao, who was the chief controller of the magical equipment on board, were the only ones who were fixated to the zigzagging cabin through the magnetic hooks.

“Lord Wang, we—”

Li Yao was somewhat anxious, too.

The mainframe crystal processor of Weary Tooth had not been wrecked in the fierce battle ten years ago, and the warship had been set to the ‘automatic operation mode’, which was an operation pattern devised for the situation where most of the crew members had been killed in a fierce battle. With the great reduction of the performance as a trade-off, the demand on the number of operators was lowered to the maximum.

It was in such a mode that Heiye Lan managed to bring the assault warship to the Ancient Sages Sector only by herself.

However, the warship had stayed in the Ancient Sages Sector for quite a few years after all. Also, they had adopted too many improvised designs during the maintenance. Almost all the maintenance personnel were not modern refiners who had received professional training but the ancient sword forgers whose expertise was questionable.

Under such circumstances, whether or not the units from the Imperium’s warship and the units from the Nuwa warship could work in harmony, whether or not the squeaky warship endure a long-distance space jump, whether or not the storms in the four-dimensional space would invade the warship and rip them apart while they broke the void… Even

Li Yao did not have enough confidence to answer those questions although he was the ‘technical director’.

Long Yangjun responded to his calling with a smile. Then—

She smashed the activation rune array brutally!

“BOOM!”

Weary Tooth was immediately enshrouded by light and fire.

Everybody found themselves placed in the middle of a furiously burning furnace which happened to be also rotating fast. Even their grunts were pressed back to their internal organs along their bronchia and stomach before the noises were let out of their mouths!

When they finally came back to themselves from the earsplitting fulminations and the scorching spiritual waves, they had already entered the dark, pure, lonely and vast universe.

Their hometown, the Ancient Sages Planet, was floating behind them quietly like a small apple.

In front of them was a sun a million times larger than the planet, which brought light and heat, life and energy, to the Ancient Sages Sector.

Under Long Yangjun’s control, Weary Tooth flew to the sun unhurriedly, like a moth darting towards the furious flames.

“Fellow Cultivators, we have successfully left the Ancient Sages Sector and made our first step on the trip to the deities’ realm!”

Long Yangjun’s voice was so excited that it almost sounded frivolous. She said in a smile, “As the co-pilot and the navigator of ‘Weary Tooth’, I feel obliged to repeat for the last time our journey up ahead.

“In the next, we will perform a long-distance space jump, which will bring us to the nearby of the Star Glory Federation, or more specifically, this place, the Shimmering Light Space Zone!

“Why here?

“First of all, this place has a fairly long distance from the destination of the Nuwa warship’s signals, which is presumably the mother port of the Nuwa warship and the heartland of the Star Glory Federation. There aren’t any habitable planets in the space zone, either. So, it is unlikely to be in the territory of the Star Glory Federation.

“Even if it is indeed within the range of the Star Glory Federation, we estimate that it will probably be unpopulated borderland. It is barely likely that we will run into a powerful army of the federation. Therefore, there will be room for us to catch our breath and make clear of the situation before we rush into anything.

“Secondly, the few resource planets in the space zone can provide materials for emergent maintenance and upgrade for our ragged starship after such a long-distance space jump.

“So, as long as we are lucky enough to be still alive after we are teleported to the Shimmering Light Space Zone on this broken warship that is riddled with holes, there will be no big problems in future. Our destination is the nearby or the edge of the Star Glory Federation. After we finish the emergent maintenance, we will be able to sneak in very precisely through multiple short-distance jumps according to the star map!

“Thirdly, and most importantly, for a space jump, other than the coordinates of the destination on the star map, the most important factor is the guidance of the star beacons.

“We don’t know the parameters and the locations of the star beacons of the Star Glory Federation. Naturally, we cannot jump recklessly at the risk of being completely lost.

“According to the map on the Nuwa warship, there was a red giant in the Shimmering Light Space Zone a hundred thousand years ago. Also, the parameters and spectrum features of the red giant are marked clearly on the star map!

“Heiye Lan told us that red giant is a form of a star, say, the sun, after it ages, whose size can be a billion times larger than when it is at maturity!

“A billion times, fellow Cultivators! A billion times than the sun of the Ancient Sages Sector in front of us!

“Now that we know the parameters and spectrum features of the red giant, we can totally consider the ‘billion-times-large sun’ as an enormous special beacon. It is a hundred times safer to jump to its nearby than to jump to the heartland of the federation recklessly!

“The longevity of a red giant is short compared to a stable star in the prime years, but it can still live millions of years. The star map under our control was from a hundred thousand years ago. After such a short time, the red giant must be still alive and hasn’t collapsed into a white dwarf yet. It will guide the way for the Ancient Sages Sector!

“Sit tight, fellow Cultivators. The gate of ascension is about to be opened. For us to be teleported to the space zone where the red giant is at, we will have to…

“… Infuriate our sun first!”v

Chapter 1549 - Universe, I’m Back!

Three factors were of paramount importance for a space jump.

The most important factor was naturally the coordinates of the destination, which was a series of information sets made of hundreds of parameters.

Not only had they elaborate on the relative position of the destination in the universe, they would also have to illustrate the speed and trajectory of the star and even the galaxy nearby, which made them extremely sophisticated.

Even if only one of the thousands of parameters was missing or wrong, those who were teleported could be sent somewhere not even close to the original destination.

The second factor was the star beacon.

The star beacons were equivalent to lighthouses in the sea of stars. To sail on a vast ocean, it would be useless to only know the location of the ‘port’. In the stormy, dark, or foggy days, only with the continuous guidance of one or more lighthouses could a ship expect to arrive at the destination successfully.

The larger a starship or a fleet was, and the longer the space jump was, the higher the level of the star beacons and the more powerful they had to be.

Otherwise, it was very possible for dozens of starships to jump to the destination, only to crash or even meld with each other, leading to a chain of explosions before they were completely destroyed.

It was like when dozens of tankers with a tonnage of a hundred thousand tons moved into a narrow port at the same time. Without the guidance of the lighthouses and the port workers, they would certain collide or be stranded.

The third factor was the spiritual energy to be consumed in the space jump.

A space jump was a special type of teleportation. To allow the materials with a certain mass in the three-dimensional universe to break the barrier of the four-dimensional universe, endure the torture of the unimaginable storms there, reach a different point precisely, and reduce to the three-dimensional universe and reconstruct in their original form would consume astronomical spiritual energy. The longer the distance of teleportation and the higher the demand on the precision of the destination, the more spiritual energy consumed.

Years back, Li Yao had been able to jump from Boneyard to the Flying Star Sector on Sparkle only because he did not set the destination at all. In terms of ‘precision’, his requirement had bordered on zero. That was why he had achieved the space jump even though there was barely any spiritual energy left on Sparkle, which had been asleep for thousands of years.

However, such good luck was not something that one could run into on a daily basis. In most cases, an aimless space jump would only bring the victims to the depths of the cold, dark universe, where there was no spiritual energy, no planets, no cosmic dust… absolutely nothing.

For the space jumps that were well-prepared and had fixed destinations, a lot of launch platforms had been established with different powerful energy sources.

The Heaven’s Artillery in the Heaven’s Origin Sector made use of the explosive force of the underground magma.

The Eye of Blood Demon in the Blood Demon Sector employed the tidal force caused by the interaction between the three satellites and the planet.

The Cosmic Slingshot on Ice King in the Flying Star Sector, on the other hand, accumulated the force when the planet revolved like the spring on a mechanical watch with the magnificent techniques left by the Star Ocean Imperium. When the force had reached a tipping point, it would be unleashed all at once to provide impetus!

Right now—

The experts of the Ancient Sages Sector had the star map on the Nuwa warship and the traces of the signal that the Ancient Sages Sector sent to the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector a hundred years ago.

Taking the two factors into account, they would be able to lock onto the basic coordinates of the Star Glory Federation.

As for the red giant in the ‘Shimmering Light Space Zone’ on the star map presumably beyond the territory of the Star Glory Federation, its spectrum and parameters had been thoroughly recorded and locked onto, which meant that it could serve as a ‘natural star beacon’ to guide the space jump.

The only problem was the spiritual energy to be consumed in such a long-distance jump.

The ‘Bloody Blade’-level assault warship was a ‘tactical’ starship. The general usage of such warships was to follow a super-large mothership and launch short-distance assaults at the enemy, like sharks around a blue whale.

Normally speaking, the ‘Bloody Blade’-level assault warships would not perform super long-distance space jumps by themselves. They were usually grouped in a fleet in the Imperium.

In every fleet, there were teleportation starships, which were responsible for establishing super large teleportation arrays in space. Not only could they radiate temporary teleportation arrays in the universe, they could also output a very powerful protective magnetic field to cover and restrict the ‘Bloody Blade’-level assault warships together with the commanding mothership, the carriers, the destroyers, and so on, so that they could be teleported to the destination simultaneously in their original battle formation.

Without the cover and the push of the powerful teleportation starships, the ‘Bloody Blade’-level assault warships could only perform short-distance jumps. It was already a miracle that this warship had jumped from the periphery of the dark nebula to the center, and it was impossible for it to directly jump to a space zone near the Star Glory Federation, which was simply too far away.

To put it more simply, somebody needed to kick the warship hard in the backside to make it cross the stars.

Moreover, the higher the Cultivation of the passengers, the larger the ‘mass’ they displayed in the four-dimensional universe during the space jump would be, which meant that more spiritual energy would be consumed.

It was exactly because of such a point that the ‘Occult Orbs Fellowship’ in the Star Glory Federation could only choose Cultivators in the Building Foundation Stage to carry out the exploration missions on the Occult Orbs. Of course, it was also partly because the Heaven’s Artillery at that time had not been powerful enough.

Counting Heiye Lan, eleven Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were to be teleported.

Even a main-force mothership in a fleet in the Imperium might not carry so many unparalleled experts at once, not to mention such a ‘Bloody Blade’-level assault warship that was basically a patch-up job.

Li Yao, Long Yangjun, Heiye Lan, Meng Chixin, and Wu Suiyun had thought and studied for quite a few months. Finally, Li Yao and Long Yangjun had come up with a risky solution.

They had dismantled a space jump unit from the Nuwa warship and connected it to the bottom of Weary Tooth as a one-time ‘thruster’.

The energy to support the space jump unit of the Nuwa Clan to tear apart the four-dimensional space would come from the sun!

“Sit tight, fellow Cultivators. To make so many top experts teleport over such a long distance all at once, we will require an outburst of near-infinite spiritual energy!”

Long Yangjun rubbed her hands in excitement and smiled in the visible communication channel. “Weary Tooth itself is not enough to store such immense spiritual energy. Therefore, we have to make use of the force of the sun. Or to be more exact, we will make use of the force of ‘eruptive prominence’!

“You don’t need to know what ‘eruptive prominence’ is exactly. You can simply imagine it as a tide released by the sun! Next, I will search for one of the saddle-like dents on the surface of the sun, where solar prominence is generated most frequently. Then, I will maneuver the space jump unit of the Nuwa warship to shoot a special mystic ray toward the area, trying to break its originally stable spiritual and magnetic structure, and unleash the force of the solar prominence hidden in the solar corona. It will push us hard like an enormous tsunami beyond the three-dimensional level!

“You don’t understand what I’m talking about? It doesn’t matter. All you need to know is that it’s a method recorded in the operation jade chips from the Nuwa warship. The success rate should be very high. Even if it fails, it will still be alright—we will instantly be swallowed by the solar prominence and melted in the tides of the sun. I guarantee that there will not be the slightest pain!

“Ha. I have located the saddle-like dent. Sit tight, everybody. Activate your arts and guard your heart and soul now. We are about to bombard the sun!”

Compared to the tiny Weary Tooth, the sun of the Ancient Sages Sector was like a furiously burning ocean compared to a frog offshore.

It was literally a mite on an elephant!

However, at that moment, the frog that had just crawled out of the dry well near the ocean was croaking toward the incessantly burning ocean of fire!

Faced with the sun, the starship and the mystic rays shooting toward the sun from the back of Weary Tooth together with the croaks were negligible.

However, after the rays darted toward a saddle-shaped zone that was obviously darker than the surroundings like a black floating ice on the chromosphere of the sun, the ‘black ice’ suddenly exploded and erupted tremendous materials and fire outside of the solar corona, providing a glamourous and brilliant spring!

The spring rolled toward Weary Tooth, covering the distance of hundreds of thousands of kilometers between them immediately.

Almost a hundred ‘solar sails’ had been opened at the back of Weary Tooth, which were designed to withstand and collect the energy from the surface of the sun.

Boom!

The solar prominence hundreds of thousands of meters tall enshrouded Weary Tooth instantly, like a wave ruthlessly swallowing a surfer.

The hundred ‘solar sails’ all bulged. The splendid runes carved on them densely were illuminated one after another as they absorbed the immense spiritual energy contained inside the solar prominence crazily.

Despite the appalling appearance, the temperature of the solar prominence was actually very low, ranging from five thousand degrees to eight thousand degrees. It was nowhere close to the sweltering inferno in the middle of the star that could be a million degrees in temperature.

One could even compare it to a cluster of ‘cold air’ that was blown from the surface of a star to the universe.

It was exactly for that reason that the Nuwa civilization had been able to cruise the universe by taking advantage of the solar prominence.

However, even the ‘cold air’ whose temperature was only ‘five thousand to eight thousand degrees’ was still a major danger for Weary Tooth and everybody on board.

Everybody was wearing the mustard-seed combat suits and crystal suits from the Imperium and crouching inside the protective gel. While they listened to the torrents from the sun brushing the shell of the starship in dull and twisting noises, they activated their Cultivation arts to protect their body and soul and gritted their teeth for everything that they believed in!

“Ahh!”

Even so, a lot of them were still bellowing under the blast of the torrents.

Under the repetitive blast of the solar prominence, Weary Tooth had already become a translucent, crimson crystal that was gradually melting.

“L—Lord Wang, it is time to launch the space jump!” Greatly alarmed, Heiye Lan shrieked at Long Yangjun. “Our shell is about to be burnt through!”

“Wait a moment. We haven’t absorbed enough spiritual energy from the solar prominence!”

Narrowing her eyes, Long Yangjun put on an excited smile as she stared at the parameters on the interface of the mainframe crystal processor. “The spiritual energy and the force of the sun right now are not necessarily enough for us to be teleported to the destination precisely!

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

Shocking noises were echoing everywhere on Weary Tooth. The lights flickered on and off. Sparks were bursting out everywhere.

Even Li Yao was looking at Long Yangjun with a pale face.

The shell of Weary Tooth had turned completely red and would be melted in another few seconds!

“Now’s the time!” Long Yangjun shouted at the top of her voice, her eyes glittering, before she smashed the control menu.

“Universe, I… Our Ancient Sages Sector is back!”

Chapter 1550 - : Welcome from the New World

In a moment, Weary Tooth turned into such dazzling redness that it was clearly visible even in the raging torrents of the sun.

Like a supernova outbreak, it extended thorns of brilliance in all directions, and each of the thorns was more than ten thousand meters long. The thorns of brilliance tore apart the three-dimensional space easily into mysterious, ever-floating ‘gaps’.

Pushed by the impetus of the solar prominence, Weary Tooth truly seemed to have been kicked right in the bottom by the sun. It staggered into the space gap and vanished from the Sector!

Weary Tooth had been teleported. Carrying twelve locals of the Ancient Sages Sector, it sailed into the endless and unknown universe.

“Ahhhhhhhhhhhhh!”

Inside Weary Tooth, everybody was shouldering the excruciating pain of being torn and twisted while they were ‘breaking the void’.

Despite his multiple experiences in travelling through teleportation, Li Yao was also shouting uncontrollably.

In his eyes, the shell of Weary Tooth seemed to have been completely melted by the solar prominence, and they had been placed in the middle of the giant waves of the star. They seemed to be sitting on a lone boat in the middle of a boundless ocean of fire, or like thirteen ants that were crawling on a dry, burning leaf!

His every muscle, every nerve, every vein, and every cell was ignited from inside to outside. His body, his soul, and his self-awareness were about to be burnt to the ground.

Even the concepts of time and fear had been swallowed by the infinitely and eternally burning fire. All that could be sensed was the vastness of the universe and the loneliness and insignificance of human beings!

It was a feeling that could drive one mad.

All notions in the three-dimensional universe lost their meaning in the four-dimensional universe. He seemed to have seen the changes of the universe in millions of years in only one moment. Even Li Yao himself was turning into a grain of sand, about to collapse and disperse under the blow of time.

Right when Li Yao thought that the jump had failed and that he was about to perish in the four-dimensional space together with Weary Tooth, he suddenly felt a shake. The ‘sand’ that constituted his body, soul, and self-awareness was being condensed under the attraction of an uncanny force!

The teleportation had succeeded!

They were lucky enough to have not encountered the terrible storms in the four-dimensional space. They were getting rid of the broken state and being reconstructed in the three-dimensional space.

Li Yao’s internal organs, limbs, and his every muscle, vein, nerve, and soul returned to where they should be one after another.

The very first thing that Li Yao did after he stood up from the protective gel and lifted the helmet of his crystal suit was to kneel on the floor and throw up.

It was not the first time that he had experienced a super long-distance space jump, but it was certainly the ‘bumpiest’ one that he had ever tried.

Long Yangjun was certainly a lunatic. To pursue the highest precision of the destination of the jump, she did not initiate the jump until the solar prominence almost melted the starship in order to collect the maximum spiritual energy.

Weary Tooth was just a ragged starship that was jumbled up with garbage. It was also accommodating thirteen experts with such high Cultivation. It was not hard to imagine the blast that they suffered during the teleportation.

Li Yao almost vomited his gallbladder out.

It was nothing to be ashamed of. He was certainly not the most disgraceful one.

Including Heiye Lan, the daughter of the commander of the Black Wind Fleet, and Qi Zhongdao and Master Bitter Cicada, almost all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were throwing up crazily. Many of them were cramping like lobsters that had contracted malaria. An intense sour, smelly stink filled the entire cabin, as if it were a shop to sell salted fish. The stench did not disperse for a long time.

Only Meng Chixin, Wu Suiyun, and Wan Mingzhu, the three spectral Cultivators, were in better conditions.

That was because they did not have real stomachs and throats that they could throw up with.

The three ghosts were hiding in three crude metal puppets.

The three metal puppets had been forged by Li Yao based on the automatic defense puppets on the Nuwa warship.

Those puppets could have been slightly modified to serve as their ‘artificial bodies’ without much trouble.

However, the puppets created by the Nuwa Clan had too distinctive features. The passionate bordering on disorderly patterns of spiritual energy would be too eye-catching if the spectral Cultivators were walking in them.

Therefore, after Li Yao’s manual work and careful camouflage, the puppets had been reduced to such wretched appearances. They were thick, black, and clumsy, as if their original owners were some hard-working miners.

Of course, the seemingly unattractive iron shells still reserved the magnificent firepower and the brutal combat ability of the automatic defense puppets of the Nuwa warship.

Under Meng Chixin, Wu Suiyun, and Wan Mingzhu’s delicate control, they would certainly be a shock for the toughest ghost warriors in the federation and the Imperium!

Although they did not have real bodies of flesh and blood to be blasted, their souls were still dwelling in the shock caused by the space jump, and they did not come back to themselves for a long time.

“Is this… the world beyond?”

“Are these… the real stars and universe?”

After they finally vomited everything of their past and opened their eyes to observe the brand-new world that they were in, all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were deeply fascinated by the brilliant stars and the vast space. They were appreciating everything so greedily that they were even reluctant to blink.

They were particularly astounded by the red giant that seemed to be one step away from them. The cluster of fire that, despite its dimness, seemed to be swallowing the entire universe with its enormity staggered their souls and rendered them speechless for a long time.

“Fellow Cultivators, we have successfully reached what was marked as the ‘Shimmering Light Space Zone’ on the ancient star map. The spectrum and parameters of the red giant in front of us are almost identical to those noted on the star map. So, we can with near certainty that they are the same star!”

Long Yangjun was still half lying on the integrative pilot sea. She seemed to have been uninfluenced by the blast during the space jump at all and even enjoyed it. Her agile thinking abilities were maintained, too. “Do excuse me for being too radical when we absorbed spiritual energy from the solar prominence just now. However, we didn’t really have a choice. This red giant is not a real star beacon after all. I had to set the destination of the jump very precisely so that we could jump beyond the range of its gravity. If there was a slight error in the jump because of insufficient spiritual energy, we might’ve dived right into the red giant, in which case, we would have been screwed!

“Thankfully, we jumped to the edge of the galaxy despite all the dangers. We are now being attracted by the star without being swallowed by it. This is a very successful space jump!

“Now that we have arrived at the Shimmering Light Space Zone, fellow Cultivators, you may take a brief rest. You can appreciate the magnificent scenery of the universe around us. Maybe express your feelings in a poem, refill your Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and your pills and elixirs, and refresh your memories of the identity scripts I wrote for you.

“This place should be a desolate land outside of the Star Glory Federation. We can take a rest here for half a month and search for a resource planet to repair Weary Tooth, while we collect the astronomical parameters around to further deduct the star map in a more precise way so that we can slowly jump to and infiltrate the Star Glory Federation.

“Remember, from now on, we are no longer the top-tier experts of the Ancient Sages Sector, and we must abandon the local accent of the Ancient Sages Sector.

“Language experienced drastic changes after the unification of the Star Ocean Imperium. Despite their accents, the common vocabulary and the habitual language are basically the same. We have all learned about that from Heiye Lan. I don’t think that we will give ourselves away so easily, right?

“Alright, let’s just—”

Unhurried, everything was under Long Yangjun’s control.

After all, the ‘Shimmering Light Space Zone’ was the best jump point that she and Li Yao had decided after carefully studying for a long time. It had a rather long distance to the

Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector.

Generally speaking, it was impossible for them to run into the federal army by accident and get involved in any conflict there.

However—

Boom!

Before Long Yangjun finished her speech, a deafening explosion already took place right in front of Weary Tooth. The warship trembled so violently that she was also thrown away from the pilot seat. Every parameter on the operation interface turned red, and ear-splitting alarms were echoing throughout the cabins!

Weary Tooth was slowly recovering from the space jump. It was in its most vulnerable phase, and the probe magical equipment around the starship had not yet been activated.

At that moment, the probe magical equipment finally regained their functionality. Through the tremendous mystic rays that they released, the Cultivators on-board finally got the gist of what was happening in the Shimmering Light Space Zone from the data that was changing as violently as a storm.

The truth of the Shimmering Light Space Zone shocked all of them!

First of all, even at the edge of the galaxy where they were, traces of feeble spiritual energy could still be detected in space, like the ripples left by enormous ships after they sailed on the surface of the ocean.

It suggested that the Shimmering Light Space Zone was far from an unpopulated land but had very frequent voyage and trade activities!

Secondly, they had also detected a certain number of man-made artificial celestial bodies that looked like ‘black spots’ at the periphery of the red giant. The devices blocked, or absorbed, part of the light, heat, and radiation emanated from the red giant!

It was also proof that a certain civilization or species had developed or even colonized the space zone on a large scale.

The more conclusive proof was, of course, the four starships that were chasing after one another right next to them.

The one fleeing in the lead in a hurry was a calabash-shaped carrier with a big, round belly, which was chased by three high-speed warships that were narrow and long and looked like swordfish.

The carrier seemed to have fallen into the trap of the three warships a long time ago. It was covered in damage and holes. Before Weary Tooth completely got rid of the aftershock of the space jump, it had already been caught up by the three warships. After a period of crazy, colorful bombardment, the carrier exploded violently and got swallowed by raging flames!

The noises when Weary Tooth had returned to the three-dimensional universe from the four-dimensional universe were quite huge. The three swordfish-like warships had immediately noticed it.

It was the most vulnerable phase for Weary Tooth, which was unable to move at all as if it had been mired in a swamp between the three-dimensional universe and the four-dimensional universe.

The three swordfish-like warships took the momentary opportunity and launched their fiercest attacks toward Weary Tooth after shifting their target without asking who was on the starship at all.

Chapter 1551 - Ferocious Beasts… on a Chopping Block?

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Fire was covered Weary Tooth, inside and out, as it was devoured by countless explosions and blasts.

It was in the most vulnerable state after having just broken out of the four-dimensional universe. Even the spiritual shield was not entirely opened yet.

Every attack from the enemy would bite a piece of ‘meat’ off the crystal shell of the warship. The metal components and the oil were spraying into space like broken flesh and blood!

Before Weary Tooth was entirely blown up, the enemy seemed to have no interest in communicating with Weary Tooth at all.

In front of every swordfish-like warship, dozens of colorful pillars of light were spurting out at the same time. Like the sharpest scalpels, they were cutting and savaging Weary Tooth’s shell!

On the back of the warships, almost a hundred helical metal thorns were standing like the fins of the swordfish. Pushed by the power rune arrays, they had also taken off from the warships and rushed over while they were rotating at a high speed, darting into the shell of Weary Tooth deeply like tusks that were penetrating deep into the body of the prey!

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

Those helical metal thorns entailed the most powerful attack units and crystals of the thunder class. After they pierced into Weary Tooth so deeply, they immediately released hundreds of high-voltage electric arcs, which swept across every pathway and every cabin like boas, seriously destroying most of the units on Weary Tooth and half-paralyzing Weary Tooth.

Weary Tooth was unable to fight back at all because nobody was at the attack posts!

Even the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were not real deities. It was already a miracle that they had familiarized themselves with the usage of their crystal suits and Colossi in just half a year. Where did they have the time to learn the battle skills of a starship?

Heiye Lan and Long Yangjun were the only two who had mastered starship piloting skills to a certain extent on Weary Tooth. It was already good enough that they were able to maneuver Weary Tooth to cruise stably in the sea of stars and reach the destination precisely. Due to the serious shortage of personnel, they could not perform counterattacks against the hostile warships at all!

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

Inside the cockpit of Weary Tooth, fireballs and electric arcs were dancing crazily, too. All kinds of components and pieces were flying in midair in a mess. Long Yangjun and Heiye Lan’s hair was standing on end under the electric shock, making them look like crazy devils.

Gnashing her teeth, Long Yangjun shouted, “Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, we need emergent maintenance here. Come and give me a hand!”

Hardly had Li Yao staggered into the cockpit against the fireballs and electric arcs on the way when Long Yangjun snatched him and dragged him to a corner.

“Hey, what’s going on here? Didn’t you say that this place is safe and could serve as a buffer area between us and the federation?” Long Yangjun was so angry that flames of fury seemed to be shooting out of her mouth. “Why are we under such violent attack the moment we jumped over? You are not hoping that we should just part here on bad terms, are you?”

“How on earth would I know?” Li Yao was dizzy, too. He replied, not in a good mood himself, “This place is obviously far away from the territory of the federation, and the environment around this red giant is not particularly favorable. There’s no reason a federal fleet should be here! Also, their target was clearly not us in the beginning but the calabash-shaped carrier. We were just a passer-by that somehow got involved!”

He thought carefully about the appearance of the strange starships collected through the probe magical equipment. Both the calabash-shaped carrier that had been blown up in the space and the three swordfish-like warships behind it were in vastly different styles from the starships of the federation.

Besides, there was not the paint of the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag on their shell, or the emblems of the Patriots Partnership, Skyfire, the Glorious Sunlight Group, and the major sects in the federation. The shell of the strange starships was bare from head to toe.

They did not look like the starships of the federation.

But that was highly unlikely. It had been a while since the Heavenly Path Plan, the federation's project to explore the universe, began. Ding Lingdang's fleet was already capable of cruising to the nearby of the dark nebula, which was even further away.

If there was a force independent from the federation in this place, it could not have avoided the federation's detection!

Therefore, what was happening there?

"There's something that you have always been reluctant to tell me, but with everything coming to this point, you have to tell me now!" Long Yangjun said sullenly. "You swore that this place was not within the territory of the federation and was a no-man's land that was absolutely safe. Let's say you were speaking the truth, but you've been away from the Star Glory Federation for at least a decade, haven't you? Is it possible that the federation has undergone drastic changes when you were not around? Just tell me the truth. How outdated is your intelligence? Ten years? Twenty? Thirty? Don't tell me that it is from fifty years ago and you wandered in the universe for fifty years!"

"I wouldn't say that."

Long Yangjun was greatly relieved. "That's good. Then tell me now. How far behind is your intelligence from reality?"

"A hundred years."

"…"

Boom! Boom! Boom, Boom, Boom!

The explosions were still going on. Even the dazzling electric arcs and fireballs could not eclipse the wrath in Long Yangjun’s eyes as she glared at Li Yao.

“Could it be,” Li Yao pondered, “that my curse has taken effect again?”

Long Yangjun was greatly alarmed. “What curse? How many more secrets have you kept away from me?”

“I’ll explain it to you,” Li Yao said. “I seem to be born with an uncanny curse. Whenever I feel that everything is under my control and nothing can possibly go wrong, something unexpected always happens! Is it possible that my curse has taken effect again and even infected the whole team?”

“…”

When the last illumination rune array in the cockpit died down in the explosions, and few units were catching their last breath in darkness, the stormy attacks finally came to a halt.

According to the blurred surveillance interface, Weary Tooth had completely lost the spiritual shield and the power source. It could neither run away nor withstand another barrage from the enemy.

Besides, from the back of the helical thorns that deeply pierced into Weary Tooth, cables were shooting out to the three swordfish-like warships, shortening the distance between the two parties.

They were essentially pulling Weary Tooth hard from three different directions, making it possible for the prey to escape.

That was possibly why they had stopped attacking.

From the enemy’s perspective, Weary Tooth had lost all its combat ability. It was no better than a lamb waiting to be butchered.

Shua!

A stream of powerful signals crashed into the mainframe crystal processor of Weary Tooth and hummed in hideous laughter.

Silently, Long Yangjun parsed the signals and projected them to the light beams in front of everyone on-board.

What appeared on the light beam was a middle-aged man who was slim and dark and carried the air of both elegance and brutality.

Li Yao was slightly dazed.

The man had two bright gold horns as adornments embedded on his forehead, which were probably directly fixated to the skull through secret techniques. Around his neck was a circle of long, narrow tattoos. The agile and soft style of armor on his body was vastly different from the traditions of the federation, too, giving an exotic feeling.

Li Yao could guarantee that no people in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, or the Blood Demon Sector dressed in such a style.

“Whoever you are…” The elegant, brutal, dark-skinned man laughed proudly. In a voice that was hollow and unpredictable, he casually said, “Deactivate all your magical equipment and give up resistance. We will board your starship for inspection!

“Otherwise, hehehe… I believe that you must’ve heard the name of ‘Seven Kill Space Pirate Gang’ before! If anyone acts recklessly, what happened to the starship just now will happen to you!”

A tiny window appeared next to the dark-skinned man, displaying the tragic outcome of the prey that they had attacked previously. As the aftershock of the explosions quickly died down in the cold, dark universe, all that was left was a bunch of broken remnants that were a blend of corpses and components.

“Space pirate…”

Li Yao was at a loss for a while.

It had been such a long time since he last heard the familiar and yet strange name.

“Space pirates are pirates in the sea of stars,” Heiye Lan explained to the two seniors dutifully, still trying to leave a good impression on them. “They are best known for their mysteriousness, cruelty, and persistence. At least, they are so in the Imperium.”

It was a one-way message. They could see and hear the enemy, but their enemy could not see or hear them. Therefore, they could communicate freely.

“No.” Long Yangjun shook her head. “This guy is lying. Whatever ‘Seven Kill Space Pirate Gang’ is, he can’t be a member of that.”

“Exactly,” Li Yao analyzed. “When he informed us of who he was, his eyeball was rolling slightly faster, and it was turning to the top right corner. It was clearly a sign that he was recalling the list of pirate gangs in his head before he picked a random one to fool us.

“However, since this ‘Seven Kill Space Pirate Gang’ is infamous enough to be used to intimidate the prey, there must be a lot of pirate gangs in this place, and they must be very powerful. Even the local government here has no way to tame them!”

Looking at the parameters on the operation interface that were rising and falling, Long Yangjun sighed. “Weary Tooth has been completely paralyzed. We cannot restore cruising abilities without major maintenance. We can only ‘borrow’ their starship now. Are you fine with it, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture?”

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao nodded. “Fine by me. Let’s release a few fellow Cultivators to warm themselves up. However, do ask them to be gentle. They can blow up two warships first but must keep one for our own use. Also, don’t kill everybody on the warships yet. Save a few for interrogation, especially this guy who has horns on his head.”

“Hey!”

Not receiving any response after a long time, the horned, dark-skinned man on the light beam shouted impatiently, “Did you hear what I said or not? If you did, stop hiding yourselves. Just get out of your starship and surrender as quickly as possible!

“Hehehehe. If you are still crouching inside, too reluctant to come out, you will not end so well after the members of our

‘Seven Kill Space Pirate Gang’ board!”

Long Yangjun and Li Yao looked at each other.

Li Yao scratched his hair rather helplessly, finding it hard to understand why some people did not cherish their life at all and sought death in such a hurry.

He nodded at Long Yangjun and made a beheading gesture.

Turning on the communication channel between the two parties, Long Yangjun said with a smile, “If the lords of the ‘Seven Kill Space Pirate Gang’ could wait just one moment, we will come out right now.”

Chapter 1552 - This Way, Please!

It was truly a boring battle, if it could be called a battle at all.

The whole process was just one-sided sabotage, savage, and slaughter.

Heaven Battering King Qi Changsheng had named his Colossus ‘Empyrean Fiend’, while Mother White Lotus Wan Mingzhu had named hers ‘Death Bringer’.

When the two ultimate weapons of the universe were projected and stood in front of the three swordfish-like assault warships quietly, there was no need to say what happened next.

Colossi were terrible existences that even the main-force warships of the Imperium of True Human Beings had to keep their distance from!

The tonnage, performance, magical equipment, and crew members on the three assault warships were magnitudes lower than their counterparts on the main-force warships of the Imperium.

Including Li Yao, the many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were not even interested in commenting on the battle.

All that could be considered as entertainment was the marvelous changes of expression on the face of the elegant and yet brutal man who had horns on his forehead.

When Empyrean Fiend and Death Bringer rushed out of the broken Weary Two and lunged at the two warships on two sides, the dark-skinned man’s face collapsed so hard that somebody seemed to have whipped it hard at the center.

After the two Colossi began savaging the starships, tearing them apart and dismantling them as if they were paper boxes, the dark-skinned man finally realized in his disbelief that the terrible picture in front of him was not his imagination.

He immediately collapsed to the ground, shuddering and unable to say anything, as if the bones all over his body had been plucked.

He was a typical outwardly strong but inwardly weak guy. He could not have been a professional space pirate because he did not even have the cold indifference of the space pirates who were cruel enough even on themselves.

Observing him carefully, Li Yao even felt that the guy carried the air of a pampered, gorgeous-looking-but-internally-corrupted aristocrat.

Ten minutes later, the battle was over. The two swordfish-like assault warships were both blown up. None of the crew members who had pretended to be space pirates were kept alive.

As for the ‘flagship’ where the dark-skinned man was, after repeated reminders from Li Yao, Meng Chixin, and Long Yangjun, Qi Changsheng and Wan Mingzhu finally stayed their hands and did not go on a rampage. They only killed half of the crew members, and those in the cockpit were knocked out but kept alive.

The high and mighty dark-skinned, gold-horned man was dragged into the cold, dark cabin of Weary Tooth, where alarms were blinking everywhere, like a dying dog by Qi Changsheng.

Including Li Yao, the twelve angry Cultivators from the Ancient Sages Sector stared at the captive coldly.

He was to be interrogated by Long Yangjun, or Wang Xi, who was the founder of the Ghost Character and the most renowned specialist of the Great Qian Dynasty in intelligence collection, interrogation, and torture.

However, before Long Yangjun began, the guy who was shuddering like a dog on the ground, after noticing a detail on the internal wall of the cabin by chance, suddenly jumped to his feet as if he had just been given a cardiotonic shot!

What he exclaimed surprised everybody.

“Are—are you from the Imperium? Right. You must be from the Imperium. Otherwise, how could you have so many Colossi?

“This must be why they say, a flood destroys the shrine of the God of River [1] . We—we’ve been looking forward to your arrival for a long time!”

Weary Tooth, as an assault warship of the Imperium, naturally had the black-lightning emblem of the Imperium of True Human Beings everywhere on the internal wall of the cabins.

When Li Yao conducted the maintenance, he had considered whether or not to eliminate all the black-lightning emblems.

However, the first false identity that Long Yangjun had devised for them was refugees who had fled after seizing a warship of the Imperium. Their identity would seem more convincing if the emblems of the Imperium were kept on the warship.

Therefore, the internal adornments of Weary Tooth, and also the mustard-seed suit and crystal suits that they were wearing, were in the unique style of the Imperium.

The infamous emblem of the Imperium of True Human Beings, which was a trident of black lightning, was no stranger to the people of the federation after the Immortal Cultivator Su Changfa arrived a hundred years ago.

Now that the dark-skinned man recognized the emblem of the Imperium, it was not hard for him to infer that they were from the Imperium based also on the fact that they carried ‘two’ Colossi.

What was strange was his attitude. Instead of waiting for Long Yangjun to interrogate him, he was already speaking nonstop.

“Fellow Cultivators, seniors, are you the Immortal Cultivators from the Imperium of True Human Beings? Had I known it in advance, we wouldn’t have dared to attack you attack even if we were a hundred times bolder!

“Misunderstanding. This is all a misunderstanding!

“I—I’m a member of the CFIA. I am also an Immortal Cultivator. We are all Immortal Cultivators!”

The dark-skinned man was so overjoyed that he was almost in tears, like a guy who had met an old friend in a foreign land.

His face was red because of his excitement, and he began to speak nonsense as he did not know what to say.

After waving his hands and feet for a long time, he thought for a moment and took out a black emblem from his pocket, his hands shivering. There were four square letters on the emblem—CFIA!

“Immortal Cultivators…”

The twelve experts from the Ancient Sages Sector looked at each other in bewilderment, utterly confused. Had the war between the Imperium and the federation already begun?

That could not be right. If the Black Wind Fleet had marched there, why did the guy say, ‘we’ve been looking forward to your arrival for a long time’?

Li Yao was frowning even harder as he thought deeply. He looked at Long Yangjun and exchanged some information with her without alarming anyone.

“Immortal Cultivator?” Rolling her eyes, Long Yangjun kicked the dark-skinned man right in the chest heavily and cursed, “Asshole! Now that you know that we are Immortal Cultivators, why did you launch the assault at us? You almost sabotaged our great cause! CFIA? What’s CFIA? Damn you! Our warship was seriously damaged in a cosmic storm. We couldn’t communicate with the outside world, and we lost our way. We floated in the universe for ten years before we finally gathered enough spiritual energy for a space jump. But hardly had we jumped out of the wretched place when we ran into a bunch of idiots! How unfortunate we are!”

She threw the emblem of the ‘CFIA’ at the dark-skinned man’s face so hard that it almost directly stabbed into his left eye.

The dark-skinned man screamed and writhed on the floor because of the excruciating pain, but he did not dare moan much further. Struggling to his knees, he covered his bleeding face and said, “Misunderstanding. This is truly misunderstanding! We—we thought that a warship of the Star Glory Federation had arrived to save their ‘headhunter’. That’s why we offended you! We deserved to be punished with death! We shall never be pardoned!”

Kneeling on the floor, the dark-skinned man slapped his own face hard. All the experts of the Ancient Sages Sector were secretly frowning and shaking their heads.

“Master Spiritual Vulture.” Heiye Lan stood on her toes behind Li Yao and craned to his ears, saying in a low voice, “This guy is definitely not an Immortal Cultivator. Hehe. The real Immortal Cultivators are not as spineless as him!”

“Star Glory Federation? CFIA?” Long Yangjun rolled her eyes. “What kind of bullsh*t is that? How do you know that we are from the Imperium? Also, you said that you are an Immortal Cultivator. An Immortal Cultivator that has jumped out of nowhere?”

“My name is Fei Qi. I am truly an Immortal Cultivator. A local Immortal Cultivator of this place!” The dark-skinned man ‘Fei Qi’ kneeled on the ground. As if he was going to cling to Long Yangjun’s legs and burst into tears, he said earnestly, “This is a long story. I’ll certainly explain everything to you in great detail. However, after you hear the story, you must seek vengeance for us Immortal Cultivators who have suffered and destroy the odious Star Glory Federation so that peace and justice at the edge of the cosmos can be restored!

“I, as well as thousands of Immortal Cultivators just like me, have been looking forward to the fellow Cultivators and seniors from the Imperium like saplings in a drought looking forward to a rain…”

“I’ll going to stop you there.” Long Yangjun stepped forward and pulled the emblem of the CFIA out of Fei Qi’s face mercilessly, causing blood to be spurting out again. She examined it for a long time but still did not understand what it was. “Long story short, what is the Star Glory Federation exactly?”

Covering the wound on his face that was almost deep to the bones, Fei Qi let out a half cry before he held back the pain and said, “The Star Glory Federation is a hegemonic, lawless, and bloodthirsty force of terror in the local area!

“Right. I—I have important intelligence that I must report to the seniors of the Imperium!

“The Star Glory Federation has learned in advance that the expedition army of the Imperium is arriving. However, the arrogant, ambitious Cultivators refuse to bow to the might of the Imperium and are now busy preparing to attack and fish you up!”

“Is that so?” Long Yangjun, Li Yao, and everybody else looked at each other. Seemingly emotionless, she replied, “This is a very important issue. How did you learn it? Also, what is ‘CFIA’ exactly?”

“The Star Glory Federation is ambitious and delirious enough to fight against the enemy, like an ant that is trying to shake a tree, but they are merely committing suicide! Everybody knows that!” Fei Qi managed to catch his breath and went on. “However, despite the brutality and ruthlessness of the Star Glory Federation, the ‘CFIA’ will certainly fight it to our death!

“Right. The CFIA is short for ‘Committee For the Imperium’s Arrival’, an organization specifically founded to welcome the arrival of the expedition army of the Imperium and facilitate your conquest and government over the many Sectors nearby by the Immortal Cultivators locally born and raised!

“It is our aim to lead the way for the fellow Cultivators and seniors from the Imperium and guide your direction in the vast sea of stars so that we can completely annihilate the Star Glory Federation, the evil force that goes against the trend of the universe, through our cooperation. Then, all the Sectors at the edge of the cosmos will be able to enjoy the radiance of the truth path of immortality!

“Our—our loyalty to the Imperium of True Human Beings can be proved by the sun and the stars!”

1. The saying means conflicts arise between people on one’s own side.

Chapter 1553 - Heavenly Light and Earthly Brute

“Enough. Stop wasting our time!” Long Yangjun snapped coldly. “Get to the point. Who are you exactly? Why do you hate the Star Glory Federation so much? Are you from the federation?”

Fei Qi bulged his eyes, with obvious fury and disdain on his face. He shrieked, “How can I be from the federation? Of course, I’m not! I am from the Uranian Ring civilization, a sworn enemy of the federation! The federation has stolen our home, destroyed our civilization, and cut off our lineage. They are also trying to capture and kill whatever’s left of the people of the Uranian Ring civilization. Of course, the people of the Uranian Ring civilization hate the Star Glory Federation’s guts!”

“The Uranian Ring civilization?”

Including Li Yao, all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were slightly dazed.

When ‘Fei Qi’ from the Uranian Ring civilization mentioned that the Star Glory Federation had stolen their home, destroyed their civilization, and cut off their lineage, the few Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators all raised their alert and adopted solemn expressions.

Long Yangjun was still as calm as before. “The Uranian Ring civilization? Tell us what happened to you. Is this place where your civilization is located?”

“Not exactly.” Shaking his head, Fei Qi replied, “This place is called the ‘Dragon Snake Space Zone’. As all you seniors here can see, this is an extremely chaotic place with not so many resources. It can barely be called a ‘Sector’. How can the brilliant and glorious Uranian Ring civilization be originated in this place?

“We—we lost the war against the tyranny of the federation and were exiled to this place from our lovely home ‘Uranian Ring Sector’.”

“Oh?” Long Yangjun and Li Yao’s eyes were all glittering in glamorous colors. “Your ‘Uranian Ring civilization’ had a war with the Star Glory Federation and lost, and even your home ‘Uranian Ring Sector’ has been… occupied by the Star Glory Federation?”

“It was not a ‘war’ at all; it was a shameless ambush, a rebellion of the filthy and humble ones!”

Fei Qin burst into fury when the Star Glory Federation was brought up. With a twisted face, he gnashed his teeth and explained, “The Uranian Ring Sector was originally a peaceful, orderly Sector with a highly-advanced civilization!

“As early as in the era of the Star Ocean Imperium, the Uranian Ring Planet, the main planet in our Sector, was already developed on a large scale by the Star Ocean Imperium because of the abundant crystals and rare metals buried below the ground. Outside of the gravity sphere of the main planet, beyond the atmosphere, an ultra-large orbit ring that surrounded the entire planet was established as an enormous, all-covering dock!

“That’s how the Uranian Ring Sector got its name!

“In such a case, many starships that were large in size and relatively fragile in structure could be crafted directly in outer space, where they were not susceptible to the interference of gravity!

“After the Star Ocean Imperium collapsed abruptly after the Armageddon Rebellion, the Uranian Ring Sector was caught in a thousand years of chaos and darkness, too. In the war of the Armageddon Rebellion, the rebellion army led by the Blood God, or the Mad Armageddon, and the troops loyal to the Supreme Emperor had a fierce battle on the Uranian Ring Planet!

“It was the goriest, most insane, world-blighting war ever. To seize control of the Uranian Ring Sector, both parties resorted to all the approaches and techniques available. Not only was the surface of the Uranian Ring Planet completely blown into a wasteland, they also released a venomous fog that didn’t disperse after hundreds of years, poison in the water that ran uninhibited under the earth, and genetic bombs that could explode after lurking for thousands of years and trigger the mutations of human beings and animals. All in all, the surface of the Uranian Ring Planet was utterly deformed, and the environment couldn’t have been rougher. For a thousand years, the ancestors of the Uranian Ring people struggled to survive on the wasteland, which was brimming with venomous fog, poisoned water, high radiation, high pollution, and various mutated species!

“After a thousand years of arduous struggles, the Uranian Ring people finally freed themselves from the swamp of darkness and began to rebuild their civilization from scratch!”

Long Yangjun had been listening attentively the whole time. It was not until this moment that she asked, “Did you repair the wasteland on the surface of the planet into a natural paradise again?”

“Not exactly.” Fei Qi shook his head. “Our mother planet suffered too much damage in the collapse of the Star Ocean Imperium. The wounds couldn’t be healed, and the vitality couldn’t be recovered. Not in a few thousand years. However, wasn’t there an enormous planet ring beyond the atmosphere right above our heads? It used to be a super dock of an unbelievable scale. After slight modification, it would serve very well as a permanent circular space station!

“Later on, the Uranian Ring people went two different ways and gradually evolved into two branches.

“Part of them—those who were smart, brave, diligent, determined, hardworking, and farsighted—focused their eyes on the Uranian Ring that surrounded the mother planet. They hoped to transform the super large dock of the Star Ocean Imperium in the past into our new home!

“Of course, it was quite difficult in the beginning.

“However harsh the environment on the surface of the planet was, some resources were still usable after all, and a lot of remains, relics, debris, and shelters could be excavated.

“In the meantime, the circular dock around our main planet was also riddled with holes and on the brink of destruction after the war. It had essentially turned into a cold and quiet circular grave. To repair and modify the dock from zero was even more difficult than walking to the sky!

“Therefore, many lazy, thoughtless, idiotic, muddled people laughed at them, claiming that they should just stop wasting their time and stay obediently on the ground because it was impossible to live in the sky!

“Naturally, the former were the most resolute and unwavering people, and they would not give up so easily once they had selected a goal!

“Therefore, the magnificent Sky Walking Plan was initiated!

“Those Uranian Ring people spent three thousand years slowly mending and modifying the circular orbit in the sky while they endured countless unexpected difficulties, including the mockery of their sluggish ‘compatriots’ and blatant attacks. Generation after generation, they strived hard, fearless of sacrifices. While they worked together for a common purpose, they gradually formed a new people—the Heavenly Light!

“Three thousand years later, the preliminary maintenance and modification of the circular dock was completed by the Heavenly Light. It was renamed ‘Uranian Ring’. As the new foundation of our civilization, all the members of the Heavenly Light migrated into the Uranian Ring, where they lived a peaceful and happy life!

“Those living on the ground, who made absolutely no contribution in the three thousand years but had been taunting or even sabotaging on purpose, believing that the ‘Sky Walking Plan’ would never work out, were completely dumbfounded when they saw the glorious Uranian Ring emitting brilliance and functioning again!

“Of course, they wanted to live in the Uranian Ring, which was clean and safe from the scourge of the venomous fog, poisoned water, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and mutated beasts, but how could that be allowed?

“There was only limited room in the Uranian Ring. Naturally, such vile, ignorant, lazy guys who knew nothing of construction, only destruction, could not be let in!

“As time went by, the people on the ground gradually formed a new people, named ‘Earthly Brute’.

“The Heavenly Light and the Earthly Brute represented the ‘integrity’ and the ‘corruption’ of the Uranian Ring civilization respectively.

“The Heavenly Light is a people made of the best elites of the Uranian Ring natives. After the selection of the ‘Sky Walking Plan’ during those three thousand years, they were the essence of the Uranian Ring people. They were the most diligent, brave, intelligent, devoted, and self-sacrificing members of the civilization!

“In the thousands of years that followed, they, or ‘we’, have been living in the Uranian Ring studying literature, arts, medication, techniques, magical equipment, training skills, and all the state-of-the-art fields of the civilization. We have made the Uranian Ring civilization evolve into an elegant, noble, and advanced civilization.

“As for the Earthly Brute, those lazy, shortsighted, and self-demeaning guys have still been lurking on the filthy surface of the planet, living like ignorant beasts.

“At first, they could still manage to survive with the assets in the debris and relics left by the Star Ocean Imperium.

“But after all the debris and relics were cleaned up, they were immediately mired in chaos where they brutalized and even fed on each other. They were even about to go extinct!

“In the end, it was my ancestors, the members of the Heavenly Light thousands of years ago, who couldn’t bear to see their past ‘compatriots’ die in desperation and offered them some jobs out of goodwill. They were asked to help us excavate the crystals and minerals hidden deep inside the Uranian Ring Planet.

“The Heavenly Light developed tremendous advanced mining magical equipment. They also taught the Earthly Brute the skills to hunt and domesticate the mutated beasts for food. Although a large batch of the members of the Earthly Brute were still killed, they managed to survive because they were as fertile as mice.

“All in all, until decades ago, this is about the situation of the Uranian Ring civilization.

“The ‘Heavenly Light’, representing the essence of the civilization and made of the most distinguished Cultivators, lived on the Uranian Ring and took part in the noble and elegant jobs such as literature, arts, development of cutting-edge magical equipment, research on training techniques, and what mattered for a civilization.

“The Earthly Brute, which had an extremely large population, lived on and below the ground, responsible for providing the resources and spiritual energy that were necessary for the functioning and expansion of the Uranian Ring.

“What a reasonable, steady, orderly, and justified state it was!

“After thousands of years of teamwork and improvement, the Heavenly Light and the Earthly Brute had already realized their destiny. They were fulfilling their respective roles dutifully and working hard for the development of our civilization!

“Even the previously lazy and disobedient members of the Earthly Brute, after the thorough and patient edification and education of the Heavenly Light, had learned to work dutifully and devotedly, making whatever contributions they could to our civilization!”

While saying that, Fei Qi suddenly covered his face and trembled hard. Sobs slipped through the gaps of his fingers, as if he could not proceed any longer.

“What happened later?” Long Yangjun pressed his shoulder softly. “Did the federation come?”

“Y—Yes,” Fei Qi replied, his voice shivering. There was no telling whether it was because of hatred or fear. “She was here. The devil was here!”

“The devil?” Long Yangjun narrowed her eyes. “Who’s the devil?”

“Who else could it be?” Fei Qi moaned in great pain. “The most horrible, brutal, bloodthirsty, evil, and insane she-devil of the Star Glory Federation, Ding Lingdang!”

Chapter 1554 - The She-Devil Has Arrived!

“Cough, cough. Cough, cough, cough, cough.” Li Yao coughed for a moment and interjected, “Who is this… Ding Lingdang?”

With the deepest wariness, fear, and desperation beaming out of his face, Fei Qi looked behind everyone, his eyes hollow, as if Ding Lingdang were standing right there. “She—she is the vanguard of the Star Glory Federation’s invasion, the greatest executioner of the federation, and a bloodthirsty, unpardonable she-devil!

“Wherever this she-devil goes, she brings infinite death and damage. Quite a few Sectors have been abused and savaged by her. Too many innocent victims have been butchered by her Colossus, Draconic Phoenix. The entire sea of stars shakes in fear when the she-devil chuckles…”

“Wait!” Li Yao frowned. “Cut your rhetoric exaggeration and get to the point. What did Ding Lingdang do to your ‘Uranian Ring Sector’ that made you hate her so much?”

“She destroyed our glorious and brilliance Uranian Ring civilization singlehandedly!” Fei Qi bellowed ant panted quickly. He stammered, “She—she—”

“There’s no need to rush. Take your time,” Long Yangjun said softly. A few curved silver needles appeared in her hands and pierced into the back of Fei Qi’s head without a sound.

Fei Qi shivered slightly. His breath gradually turned even, his pupils were slowly expanding, and his voice was getting clear again.

Under the manipulation of Long Yangjun's unique techniques, he had entered a half-hypnotized state in his trance, where he would confess everything in his subconsciousness without him knowing it.

Such a method was similar to what Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun had imposed on Heiye Lan.

However, Heiye Lan was an elite expert from the Imperium of True Human Beings at the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage. Fei Qi, a refugee from the Uranian Ring civilization, was not even close to Heiye Lan's little finger. Naturally, his performance was much less remarkable than Heiye Lan's in the beginning.

“At first,” Fei Qi mumbled, “we were not aware of the existence of the she-devil or her soaring notoriety in the sea of stars. She snuck into the Uranian Ring Sector all by herself. There's no telling when she hid herself in the complicated mining holes on the surface of our mother planet.

“It is the typical way of the Star Glory Federation's invasion. A squad or a single person will be sent out first to infiltrate the enemy, and they will cooperate with the main troop and take down the enemy easily!

“At that time, we didn't know that the ruthless Ding Lingdang and Star Glory Federation had laid their eyes on our home.

“The second-phase project of the Uranian Ring was being pushed forward actively. We prepared to establish a ‘second ring' that would be taller, larger, and even more magnificent outside of the 'first ring'. It would be the new foundation for our civilization!

"Both the Heavenly Light and the Earthly Brute were striving for the great goal without rest!

"At the critical moment, rumors were suddenly spread out among the previously dutiful and obedient miners of the Earthly Brute deep inside the mining holes, starting from who knows when!

"Some miners began to complain that the working hours were too long and that they were essentially working day and night. They claimed that they had to work around sixteen hours every day on monthly average."

"Sixteen hours? How long is your day?" Li Yao asked.

"According to the standard time of the Star Ocean Imperium, it takes slightly more than twenty-seven hours for our mother planet to revolve for one circle," Fei Qi replied. "Therefore, the day length in our world is longer than the standard day. It's just mining for sixteen hours. Is it really a heavy load? It must be noted that, on the Uranian Ring, many designers, writers, and artists can work for three days and three nights without any stop once they are dedicated to what they are doing!"

Li Yao looked back at Qi Changsheng and Wan Mingzhu.

As he expected, the two 'leaders of rebelling peasants' were sneering maliciously.

Oblivious to their reaction, Fei Qin went on. "Some of the miners also complained about safety issues. They said that the overwork and the crazy collection had resulted in frequent accidents. The death rate of the miners was too high. So, they were quitting the job!"

"The death rate was very high? How high exactly?" Li Yao asked again.

Fei Qi hesitated for a moment, but under the nerve stimulation from Long Yangjun, he could not help but reveal the most authentic, undisguised feelings deep inside his mind. "In fact, it is not very high. According to the precise calculation of our mining engineers, the annual average death rate is only around five percent and no higher than ten percent.

"Those people of the Earthly Brute were all quite fertile. Every household had almost ten children. For the great Uranian Ring of our civilization to be established sooner, everybody needed to devote and sacrifice themself. What's the big deal about a death rate of ten percent? Seniors, you are all Immortal Cultivators. Does it not make perfect sense to you?

"Besides, the death rate wouldn't always have been that high. After the second Uranian Ring was established, the Heavenly Light would have larger, more comfortable living areas as well as training rooms and research rooms that were more advanced. We would be able to be more focused on developing the civilization unhurriedly without being bothered by the population boom and the limited living space.

"By then, our civilization would thrive even more prosperously. Of course, the Earthly Brute would benefit a lot from the progress, too!"

Before Li Yao looked back, Heaven Battering King Qi Changsheng already could not help but sneer, "Is that so?"

Fei Qi was taking all of them for the Immortal Cultivators from the Imperium of True Human Beings. He did not catch the sarcasm in the words of Qi Changsheng, a leader of the rebellions, at all. He simply replied, “Of course! Besides, to make the members of the Earthly Brute work and live dutifully, we provided medication for them on a regular basis, which would pacify them, relieve their pain, and bring them joy. Such medication was known as ‘Happiness Serum’. It was all for their own good! After all, the Earthly Brute is made of the most ignorant, uneducated low-borns. They couldn’t achieve happiness of a higher level from the splendid, astounding arts such as literature, music, or painting like the people of the Heavenly Light could. Therefore, they could only be granted momentary ecstasy in such a simple, straightforward way in order to ease their fatigue and depression. What’s wrong about that?

“Such a practice had been implemented for a thousand years. Nobody had ever complained about the ‘Happiness Serum’, which was clearly a benefit that the Heavenly Light gave to the Earthly Brute! Many neurologists, doctors, and herbalists spent their entire lives developing ‘Happiness Serum’ that was more efficient, more stable, and safer for the Earthly Brute. With such compatriotism that we bore for them, what could they possibly complain about?

“But then, some miners suddenly began accusing the Happiness Serum of being… drugs and narcotics that would corrupt their nerves and mind!

“That was really the most hilarious joke in the world! Did the Earthly Brute really have a ‘mind’ to be corrupted? Besides, we didn’t offer to give the ‘Happiness Serum’ to them. On many occasions, it was them who cried and begged us for the medication!

“The rumors were not a big deal. What was most intolerable was that we found a lot of members of the Earthly Brute planting crops and herding animals in secret!”

“Wait!” ‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu shrieked. “What, was the Earthly Brute not even allowed to sow crops and herd animals?”

“You may not know this, seniors,” Fei Qi explained, “but the Uranian Ring Sector is different from other Sectors. The surface of our mother planet was seriously contaminated in the war. Venomous fog, poisoned water, and all kinds of other pollution is everywhere. The genetic bombs buried deep underground can be detonated anytime!

“In such a highly-polluted environment, the crops and cattle raised in secret will be highly toxic. If we feed on them for a long time, our body will degenerate, our mind will be corrupted, and we will be more and more dirty, lazy, foolish, evil, and weak. As time goes by, our civilization will be doomed!

“Therefore, for the future of the Uranian Ring civilization, and for the people of the Uranian Ring Sector to be smarter, stronger, and more determined after each generation, of course, it must be strictly forbidden to sow crops and herd animals in the polluted area.”

“Then, what do you eat?” Wan Mingzhu asked.

“There are, of course, unpolluted space plantations and ranches on the Uranian Ring that the Heavenly Light lives in. At the very least, decades ago, it was still enough to satisfy the daily needs of the Heavenly Light.

“Even on the highly-polluted ground, we also went through all the trouble of purging the land, sparing no expense in constructing unpolluted farming areas. Even the humblest members of the Earthly Brute were still privileged to enjoy the most clean and healthy food yielded from the farming areas."

"I get it now. You controlled all the farmlands and ranches in your hands," Wan Mingzhu observed. "If you didn't give them any food, the Earthly Brute would starve to death."

Blinking, Fei Qi replied in confusion, "We all belong to the Uranian Ring Sector. Why would we starve the Earthly Brute to death? However, it is only logical that those who don't work shall have no food. We merely asked the members of the Earthly Brute to mine in exchange for food."

"Of course," Wan Mingzhu sneered. "I'm afraid that the exchange ratio of the minerals and the food is quite low, isn't it? Maybe, thirty kilograms of minerals can only get them one slice of bread, right?"

Tilting his head and thinking hard for a long time, Fei Qi shook his head dutifully. "I don't know. I have never cared about such insignificant matters before."

"Go on," Long Yangjun said in a gentle voice. "Discontentment and complaints increased among the miners. What then?"

"Then, strikes happened," Fei Qi said. "Almost half of the Uranian Ring Planet, in tens of thousands of mines, the Earthly Brute went on a strike at the same time!

"At that time, we only thought that the bad nature of the Earthly Brute had gotten the better of them again.

"After all, as I told you just now, seniors, the ancestors of the Earthly Brute were the indolent, uncivilized, and insubordinate fellows. They were the dregs of the Uranian Ring civilization! The blood of laziness, corruption, excitement, and insanity naturally flowed in their veins. Despite the education of the Heavenly Light after thousands of years, it was still impossible for them to completely overcome their bad nature. Every couple of years, somebody would always go on strike. Sometimes, the strikes were huge, and sometimes they were not worth mentioning at all.

“In fact, it is only because their ignorant, uneducated head cannot control the uncanny excitement in their heart. Everything is fine once they go on a rampage for a while and run out of energy.

“At that time, we thought that it was just another typical, routine strike. It was not until the furious flames burnt fiercely everywhere on the entire planet, congregating into an ocean of angry fire, that we realized that it was nothing like what had happened in the past. This time, something terrible had indeed happened.”

Chapter 1555 - War of the Federation and the Uranian Ring Sector

Fei Qi gritted his teeth so hard that they were cracking. With intense hatred shooting out of his eyes, he said, “After having discovered that the scale of the strikes were extraordinary and the entire planet was about to be consumed, we immediately sent ‘medical teams’ from the Uranian Ring to heal them.”

Long Yangjun raised her hand. “Wait a moment. Heal them?”

“Yes. To treat their ‘strike complex’,” Fei Qi explained very solemnly. “In the knowledge of the Uranian Ring civilization, striking is defined as a highly-contagious mental disease, which is caused by the blend of the Earthly Brute’s nature of laziness and corruption, and the disobedience and desire of sabotage hidden deep inside their genes.

“It is a disease that only infects and attacks the Earthly Brute. The people of the Heavenly Light only hate that we don’t have enough time to work. We will never go on a strike.

“The explosive damage of the strike complex is very powerful. Once infected by such a disease, the previously hardworking, devoted members of the Earthly Brute become lunatics and monsters whose ravenousness cannot be satisfied, knowing nothing but destruction!

“Such a disease is infectious. In a large underground mine, as long as one miner contracts the ‘strike complex’, it often spreads out quickly after a very short amount of time. Ten, a hundred, a thousand… In a chain reaction, the number of infected grows exponentially!

“The strike complex not only seriously damages the Earthly Brute and turns the decent workers into useless cr*p—it also corrupts our entire civilization and destroys what we have established if it is left undealt with! Therefore, once discovered, the disease must be treated at once!”

“Is that so?” Long Yangjun asked. “How exactly do you treat this… strike complex?”

“The strike complex can be classified into different levels,” Fei Qi explained. “Generally speaking, ‘Happiness Serum’ of different intensities will be enough to heal them. However, if a patient is diagnosed by psychiatrists to possess a severe strike complex, they will be hopeless and can only be delivered to the hospitals at the forsaken mines in the deepest part below the earth for lifelong quarantine. Or, they can try routine, forced labor and see if there’s any chance to wake up the genes of diligence and devotion in their body so that they can be transformed from saboteurs and takers to someone useful to society and the whole civilization.

“Because the intensity of the latest strikes was unparalleled, we sent a medical team of a fairly large scale. Also, the situation was quite urgent. The strike complex was quickly spreading in the crowd. Our civilization was in peril, so we were forced to resort to some radical medical approaches.

“The idiotic members of the Earthly Brute did not know that we were rescuing them. They were resisting and even killing our ‘doctors’ while we were performing the mandatory therapy sessions!

“Just like that, the strikes turned into riots!

“We were not scared of the riots of the Earthly Brute before. Most of the magical equipment was under the control of the Heavenly Light. Also, the members of the Heavenly Light had been taught the most elegant and graceful battle techniques since they were born. How could the members of the Earthly Brute be a match for us with nothing but their bare hands and their physical strength?”

“Wait!” Heaven Battering King Qi Changsheng said solemnly. “Shouldn’t a lot of excavation magical equipment be involved during the exploitation of mother lodes? Vibration pickaxes, blast drills, crystal dynamites, and other large magical equipment can all serve as weapons. They can dig open even the hardest rocks. Can a person’s skull be harder than those rocks? How on earth could the members of the Heavenly Fiend be ‘barehanded’?”

“You might now know this, senior, but the Uranian Ring Planet was a military base of the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago,” Fei Qi explained. “The shallow mother lodes that were suitable for large-scale exploitation had all been drained with nothing left back then.

“Right now, if we want the minerals, we can only move down deeper underground.

“The environment there is harsh. The air is dirty, the tunnels are narrow and ragged, and there are all kinds of ferocious animals that can sabotage the large mining magical equipment. The minerals there are often lousy, full of impurities, and cannot be exploited on a large scale. They can only be dug out from the soil manually through labor.

“Therefore, in our underground mines, large mining magical equipment has never been used, and even the small mining magical equipment such as blast drills and vibration pickaxes are barely used.

“In most cases, the members of the Earthly Brute simply collect the resources with their hands and their brute force.

“Those members of the Earthly Brute have more brawn than brains in the first place. The scholars and doctors of the Heavenly Light have also spent thousands of years building up their bodies. Through the refinement and modification of various secret techniques, they have all been transformed into beings as tough as iron with infinite strength.

“We have also optimized and improved some fundamental Cultivation arts, such as the ‘Iron Body Arts’, ‘Copper Arm Arts’, ‘Eagle Claw Arts’, and so on. The members of the Earthly Brute are asked to practice them from a young age. As a result, their arms and palms undergo mutations and replace the mining magical equipment such as blast drills and vibration pickaxes. The excavation has a higher efficiency and is more adaptive. The cost is lower, too.

“After thousands of years of mining underground, their bodies have been getting stronger and stronger, and their hands are more and more powerful. Deep below the mother lodes, with the radiation of the crystals and the scourge of the ferocious animals, some highly dangerous rogues can emerge. They are often the carriers of the latent ‘strike complex’!

“If that was all, everything would’ve been under our control.

“How could the abnormal bodies and claws, resulting from the crude, beginner-level techniques such as ‘Iron Body Arts’ and ‘Copper Arm Arts’, be a match for our crystal suits and warships?

“Before, many large-scale outbreaks of the ‘strike complex’ and even the following insurgencies had been ‘cured’ by us easily.

“But we didn’t know that it was not a spontaneous riot this time—it was one fomented by the most dangerous she-devil from the Star Glory Federation!

“The she-devil Ding Lingdang had long snuck into the underground mines among the oblivious, gullible members of the Earthly Brute!

“She claimed to be bringing dignity and hope to the Earthly Brute. She instigated the desire to sabotage and destroy hidden deep inside the blood of the Earthly Brute with the bizarre theories that she had brought from the Star Glory Federation!

“What—what—what was even more horrendous was that she brought brand-new training techniques to the Earthly Brute. The techniques that did not require any magical equipment to trigger the maximal damage possible, the techniques that belonged to the ‘body fundamentalists’!”

Heiye Lan, who had been holding her breath listening just now, could not help but exclaim, “Body fundamentalists!”

Body fundamentalism was a concept generated after the modern Cultivation civilization was born. Meng Chixin, Qi Zhongdao, and other Cultivators from the Ancient Sages Sector did not know what ‘body fundamentalist’ meant exactly.

However, Heiye Lan, with her knowledge from the Imperium of True Human Beings, naturally knew the horror of such a type of Cultivator.

How terrifying the body fundamentalists, who were too proud to use any magical equipment or weapons and were bold enough to challenge any enemy with their bare hands and tough body, could be!

“Nobody foresaw that the Earthly Brute and the techniques of the body fundamentalists would fit so well!” Fei Qi said desperately. “The most petrifying, destructive power had already been hidden deep inside their blood after thousands of years of modifications and radiation. The only problem was that they did not know how to trigger it in the beginning.

“Ding Lingdang brought an entire system of the body fundamentalists’ training techniques and publicized them for free. After only a few years, they spread to every corner of the Uranian Ring Planet like wildfire!

“In just five years, more than a hundred thousand ‘body fundamentalists’ who mastered extraordinary battle skills and trained their hands into lethal weapons had emerged in the Earthly Brute!

“Those body fundamentalists established a resistance organization in secret, and Ding Lingdang was the leader of the organization. When we were ‘curing’ the riot, we did not expect the assault of thousands of body fundamentalists at all. They captured a hundred shuttles that were used to commute between the Uranian Ring and the ground, and they launched an attack on the Uranian Ring, the very symbol of our civilization!”

All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were listening attentively.

Heaven Battering King Qi Changsheng, who had spent his entire life slaying authorities and rebelling, was beaming with great interest. He slapped his thigh and said to everybody through a discrete technique, “Good one! What a she-devil Ding Lingdang is! This woman is tougher than most men!”

Li Yao swallowed and calmly asked, “Did Ding Lingdang succeed in assaulting the Uranian Ring with thousands of body fundamentalists?”

“Not in the beginning.” Fei Qi shook his head and said, “The Heavenly Light had lived on the Uranian Ring for thousands of years. It had been modified to the extent that it was impenetrable. Also, a lot of crystal suits and starships were stationed there. It was not something that a few thousand beginner-level body fundamentalists could take down. They occupied a certain section of the circular orbit for only ten days before they were driven away by our government!

“However, to this moment, we still failed to realize that Ding Lingdang was a federal Cultivator from a foreign land with ill intentions.

“There were a lot of rumors in the Earthly Brute, depicting her as a three-headed, six-armed almighty. Naturally, we would not believe such folly easily. We thought that she was also a member of the Earthly Brute, locally born and raised, except that she was lucky enough to find the legacy of the body fundamentalists below the earth!

“We also failed to realize that she had led thousands of body fundamentalists to attack the Uranian Ring not in order to completely occupy the Uranian Ring but to seize the enormous antenna arrays on the Uranian Ring so that she could send the precise coordinates of the Uranian Ring Sector to the Star Glory Federation and guide the way for the first fleet from the federation!

“When the riots on the ground were about to be completely ‘cured’, the first fleet from the federation appeared at the periphery of the Uranian Ring Sector out of everyone’s expectation. We—we were truly caught unprepared!

“The five-year war between the Star Glory Federation and the Uranian Ring Sector thus broke out!

“In terms of starships, the Uranian Ring was originally a super large dock of the Star Ocean Imperium. Our starship technology was reasonably good, too. Although we had yet to launch cross-Sector space voyages, we should’ve been more than capable of defending the homeland of the Uranian Ring Sector.

“However, our enemy was not just the fleet of the federation, which was jumping from the foreign land incessantly, but also the rioting and rebelling members of the Earthly Brute on the ground!

“The fleet of the federation bombarded from space, and all the minerals and resources on the ground to be shipped were sabotaged by the mobs. More and more mines were taken over and began transporting resources to the enemy instead. We were under attack from both inside and outside!

“Just like that, after five years of war, we finally couldn’t hold out any longer. The mobs of the Earthly Brute, those filthy, humble, stinky, and stupid miners, under the lead of Ding Lingdang and the support of the Star Glory Federation, completely took over the Uranian Ring, the symbol of the glory of our civilization!”

Chapter 1556 - Jin Xinyue, the Venomous Witch!

After saying that, Fei Qi seemed to have been greatly stimulated. Although Long Yangjun was piercing his acupoints and soothing his nerves, his facial organs were still wry, and there was excitement all over his face. “Those filthy, lowly miners conspired with the wicked people of the federation and marched into the Uranian Ring, the most spectacular and splendid hall of our civilization. They burnt, killed, plundered, and sabotaged, destroying all the art and culture that the Heavenly Light had accumulated for thousands of years. It was an apocalypse. The Uranian Ring civilization was done and done for good!

“The rebels of the Earthly Brute and the fleets of the Star Glory Federation attacked and occupied the Uranian Ring. The Heavenly Light lost our most important base. Our last remaining fleets wandered at the edge of the galaxy, without the support of resources or a base anymore. We became rootless duckweeds.

“We were unable to take back the Uranian Ring. The ammunition, spiritual energy, food, and other assets were all running dry. The sordid people of the federation were infiltrating us on a large scale, too. They divided us through all kinds of cunning and crooked methods, luring a lot of traitors on our side over to them. Our morale was lower than ever.

“Unable to fight the war anymore, we had no choice but to surrender.

“Although the Star Glory Federation had won the war, we still had a rather powerful fleet under our command. With whatever was left of our spiritual energy and the ammunitions, although it was impossible for us to take back the Uranian Ring, we were still capable of dealing heavy damage to the expedition army of the federation if we chose to die together with them.

“Under such circumstances, the Star Glory Federation couldn’t risk suffering such great damages just in order to annihilate each and every one of us. They accepted our surrender, but on one condition, we must accept the new government of the Uranian Ring Sector and all the decisions that it made. If we found them unacceptable, we would be asked to leave, meaning that we would be exiled!”

Long Yangjun waved her hands again. “A new government?”

“Yes. The Star Glory Federation is a highly hypocritical country.” Fei Qi gnashed his teeth. “They have been in the business of expansion and robbing this whole time as out-and-out invaders, but they have always been fond of varnishing their actions and righteously claiming that they were serving justice!

“Even a three-year-old knows that the federation had a war against the Uranian Ring Sector because it wanted to swallow the Uranian Ring Sector and occupy the super-large orbit dock that we inherited from the Star Ocean Imperium. However, in the federation’s propaganda, the war became a civil war of the Uranian Ring Sector!

“The officials of the Star Glory Federation described the insurgency of the Earthly Brute as an ‘uprising’ and the rebels of the Earthly Brute as a ‘revolutionary army’. It was supposedly at their invitation and request that the Star

Glory Federation intervened in the war. So, the actions of the Star Glory Federation were justifiable as a so-called ‘Interstellar Law’!

“The Star Glory Federation claimed that it had no intention of colonizing the Uranian Ring Sector whatsoever and that our future would be decided on our own. Once the war was over, the government that was exclusively made of the Heavenly Light naturally had to be reshuffled. The new government would be elected and established through a referendum consulting all the people of the Uranian Ring Sector, including both the Heavenly Light and the Earthly Brute.”

Deep in thought, Long Yangjun said, “That doesn’t sound like a very harsh requirement to me.”

“Not very harsh?” The most painful memory in Fei Qi’s mind seemed to have been triggered. He bellowed, “This is an out-and-out trap, a blatant scheme! The population of the Heavenly Light is very small. It is less than one percent of the population of the Earthly Brute. If a new government was to be established according to the ratio of the population or through a referendum, we would have no power at all!

“To make matters worse, even our pitiful one percent of the power was stolen by the members of the Heavenly Light who surrendered to the federation in advance!

“Those traitors also belonged to the Heavenly Light, but they were among the bottom class of our people in the beginning. They were mostly workers who lived outside of the Uranian Ring and were responsible for the maintenance of the shell of the Uranian Ring!

“Those black sheep in the Heavenly Light were the first to surrender when the Earthly Brute and the Star Glory Federation assaulted the Uranian Ring. With their familiarity with the structure and weaknesses of the Uranian Ring, they sold our civilization to win the favor of their new masters. Right now, their cause has been justified, and they have become the spokespersons of the entire Heavenly Light, the mascots of the new government!

“Just like that, under the manipulation of the Star Glory Federation, an organization named the ‘Referendum Committee’ was founded to ‘help’ the people of the Uranian Ring Sector establish a new government. Jin Xinyue, the witch who is as venomous as a viper and a scorpion, was nominated as the president of the committee.”

“Wait!” Li Yao frowned again and asked, “Who is this… Jin Xinyue? Weren’t you talking about Ding Lingdang a moment ago?”

“Jin Xinyue is another notorious she-devil who is as infamous as Ding Lingdang in the federation,” Fei Qi explained. “They are both powerful, brutal beings. Many people even say that the two women have divided most of the power of the federation!

“The two she-devils each have their specialties. Ding Lingdang is tough, cruel, and bloodthirsty. She conquers free worlds like ours with pure strength. In comparison, Jin Xinyue is best known for her shamelessness, cunningness, and mercilessness. People say that when she smiles at you, you should be prepared to be devoured without any bones left! Half of the plots and schemes of the federation have been planned by this she-devil.

“During the war, Ding Lingdang, the Blazing Tyrannosaur, naturally took the lead. Once the war was over and the Uranian Ring civilization was to be chewed and digested, it was certainly the turn of Jin Xinyue, the Venomous Witch!

“Under Ding Lingdang’s lead and Jin Xinyue’s manipulation, it shouldn’t be hard to imagine what the new government of the Heavenly Brute rebels and the traitors of the Heavenly Light is like.

“The very first decision that the new government made after it was established was to reorganize the ‘Referendum Committee’ into the ‘Accountancy Committee’, which would still be directed by Jin Xinyue and specifically focus on holding the Heavenly Light’s ‘oppression’ over the past thousands of years to account.

“The second decision was that the Uranian Ring Sector would be merged into the Star Glory Federation and become a participant of the federation!

“It was a sign that they did not bother camouflaging their purpose any longer but were desperate to swallow our world!

“The righteous members of the Heavenly Light such as us couldn’t do anything at all while our lovely civilization was ravaged and devoured by the Star Glory Federation, because we could barely protect ourselves at that time. Under the shameless scheming of the wicked Jin Xinyue, most of our properties were confiscated. Some of the less fortunate ones even went bankrupt and lost everything overnight with a huge debt!”

Li Yao scratched his chin and asked, “Your properties were confiscated? Well… Under what ruse did this Venomous

Witch confiscate your properties? Just because you lost the war?”

“Not exactly. As an extremely hypocritical and vile country, the Star Glory Federation certainly wouldn’t resort to such a simple and straightforward excuse to achieve their purpose,” Fei Qi said bitterly. “The witch Jin Xinyue brought tremendous skillful… lawyers, actuaries, accountants, and insurance specialists from the Star Glory Federation. They analyzed and calculated the ‘oppression’ that the Earthly Brute had suffered when they were collecting resources below the ground over thousands of years.

“The final conclusion of the ‘Accountancy Committee’ was that the previous government of the Uranian Ring civilization was heavily responsible for the management faults in the development of the underground mother lodes during the past thousands of years. The faults included excessive overtime, frequent accidents due to inappropriate safety measures, lack of compensation and subsidies after the accidents, child labor, lack of benefits such as endowment insurance, unemployment insurance, rental allowance that should be due for most of the workers, and so on.

“The most unbelievable thing was that she—she—Jin Xinyue even claimed that the strengthened arms that we carefully prepared for the Earthly Brute were a type of abnormality. So, they could be considered an ‘occupational injury’!

“All in all, the compensation, overtime fees, belated salaries, and all the other money we owed, together with the interest from thousands of years, became a flabbergasting, astronomical amount of money!

“The Accountancy Committee spent a whole year drafting an accounts list that was altogether a hundred and twenty thousand pages, elaborating on our every ‘default’. They also pointed out that the previous government of the Uranian Ring civilization needed to pay the offspring of all the miners in the past thousands of years, namely the entire Earthly Brute, a huge amount of money including unemployment relief, pensions, overtime fees, work-related injury compensation, death compensation, and the corresponding interest.

“The previous government of the Uranian Ring Sector had already been exploited in the war. Where on earth could we find the money to compensate them?

“Therefore, not only the entire Uranian Ring, but also the affiliated facilities inside the Uranian Ring, including the training chambers, laboratories, docks, and residences that belonged to us individuals in the beginning, were all confiscated ‘legitimately’.

“Most of the Heavenly Light were deeply connected with the mining industry in one way or another. If we got to the bottom of it, everything on the Uranian Ring came from the surface of the planet. Faced with Jin Xinyue’s unreasonable logic, we couldn’t argue at all, and we were now allowed to take even a single rivet away!

“The previous leadership of the government, who were big shots in the Heavenly Light that owned shares in the mining industries, had even more miserable outcomes. After the entire Uranian Ring and the affiliated facilities were reimbursed, the remaining part would have to be paid by themselves in person. Many mining giants were in so much debt that they wouldn’t be able to pay it back in ten lives. It was even more miserable than killing them instantly!”

Fei Qi was so despondent while he was talking that he struggled to continue due to sobbing many times. Finally, he calmed himself down and said sorrowfully, “Just like that, after the liquidation was over, the Uranian Ring Sector was officially swallowed by the Star Glory Federation.

“The Star Glory Federation claims to hold the policy that everybody is free to come and go. If the Heavenly Light was willing to accept the reality that they had lost everything and had to start from scratch, and to lower their heads and pledge loyalty to the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag of the federation, they would be allowed to stay in the Uranian Ring Sector and even become a citizen of the federation someday.

“As for those who were unwilling to join the federation, the Star Glory Federation wouldn’t force us. They chose a new habitat for us, this place, the Dragon Snake Space Zone!”

Chapter 1557 - : Master of Seven Sectors!

While wiping his snot and tears, Fei Qi said, “Under Jin Xinyue’s coercion, many members of the Heavenly Light elected to bend to the federation. They stayed in the Uranian Ring Sector, which had already become part of the territory of the federation. Some of them were even brazen enough to seek the citizenship of the federation!

“However, how could the real members of the Heavenly Light lower our heads in front of the dirty, humble Earthly Brute and the shameless invaders from the federation?

“All the real members of the Heavenly Brute chose to leave.

“We were forced to hand over all the main-force fleets and disarm most of the rest of the starships. We also submitted part of the techniques and technology that the Uranian Ring civilization had accumulated for thousands of years in exchange for some outdated carriers of the Star Glory Federation as well as a bunch of assets and fuel. Then, we were banished to this place by the Star Glory Federation through a space jump.

“We—we should’ve fought a desperate battle with the wretched invaders, but…

“We were definitely not scared of death. However, the last essence of the Uranian Ring civilization rested on our starships. To guard the essence and the treasures of our civilization, we had to swallow our pride and rebuild our civilization from scratch on this desolate land, yearning to rise again one day and take back what’s ours!

“We learned about the arrival of the expedition army of the Imperium a long time ago, which became our last hope. Our waiting proved to be worthwhile. Finally—finally, you are all here today!”

All the cells and nerves below Fei Qi’s cerebral cortex were being stimulated by Long Yangjun. The feelings in his subconsciousness had been triggered to the maximum. Whatever he was thinking in his head was manifested on the surface after being exaggerated ten times over.

Just because Li Yao had spoken more to him a moment ago, he mistook Li Yao for the friendliest one of all the ‘soldiers of the Imperium’s army’ there. He suddenly kowtowed in front of Li Yao and, clinging to Li Yao’s thigh, began wailing.

“Fellow Immortal Cultivators, seniors from the Imperium of True Human Beings, please help the Uranian Ring civilization! We are willing to join the Imperium. We are willing to offer all the resources that the Imperium needs. The Earthly Brute in the Uranian Ring civilization are the best miners, and they can be exported to the various resource planets in the Imperium to work!

“We are willing to offer everything, as long as—as long as the Imperium can help us take back the Uranian Ring, eliminate the deplorable she-devils such as Ding Lingdang and Jin Xinyue, and crumble the Star Glory Federation!”

“… Now that the expedition army of the Imperium has come here after such a long journey, we are definitely going to seek justice for the Sectors, as you deserve!” Li Yao declared. “What’s the big deal about the she-devils such as Ding Lingdang and Jin Xinyue? They are nothing to me at all.

Any one of us could finish them in the blink of an eye! However, according to what you said just now, the Star Glory Federation is rather powerful, is it not? Yours was not the only Sector that it has swallowed, was it?

“Also, let go of my thigh. Kneel straight and speak properly!”

“Yes. Yes. I’ll kneel straight and speak properly!”

Fei Qi was overjoyed by Li Yao’s promises. Having no time to wipe away his snot and tears, he quickly began describing the situation. “The war between the Star Glory Federation and the Uranian Ring Sector took place more than thirty years ago. Having been banished to the Dragon Snake Space Zone for thirty years, we’ve gotten a deeper understanding about the Star Glory Federation. We have also run into a lot of compassionate fellow Cultivators in the Dragon Snake Space Zone, who are also refugees that have lost their everything because of the Star Glory Federation’s invasion.

“Through them, we have come to the realization that the Uranian Ring Sector was not the only victim and prey of the Star Glory Federation. Before us, three Sectors were unfortunately occupied by the Star Glory Federation, namely the ‘Forest Ocean Sector’, the ‘Water Crystal Sector’, and the ‘Nether World Sector’.

“The situations of the three worlds were similar to the Uranian Ring Sector. They were also conquered shamelessly by the Star Glory Federation with both carrots and sticks. Most of the local residents were assimilated because of the dictatorship of the federation. Only a few people were tough and determined enough to refuse to join the federation. Most of them were exiled to the Dragon Snake Space Zone.”

“Then, how many Sectors does the Star Glory Federation have today?” Li Yao asked.

“Seven,” Fei Qi said. “When the New Federation was established, there were three core Sectors. In the following seventy years, it gradually swallowed the Forest Ocean Sector, the Water Crystal Sector, the Nether World Sector, and the Uranian Ring Sector nearby. So, there are altogether seven Sectors in its territory now.”

Li Yao frowned. “The New Federation?”

“Yes. The antecedent of the Star Glory Federation was a planetary civilization originating from a single planet named ‘Heaven’s Origin’,” Fei Qi explained. “Its name was also the ‘Star Glory Federation’ with a history of five hundred years. But today, people all call the federation in that phase the ‘Old Federation’.

“Eighty-eight years ago, the Heaven’s Origin Sector and Flying Star Sector, the Blood Demon Sector nearby officially signed an agreement to be united as one country and adopt a brand-new federal calendar, which marks the beginning of a universal civilization. To differentiate it from the planetary civilization in the past, the new country is known as the New Federation. According to the calendar of the Star Glory Federation, we are now in year eighty-nine of the New Federal Calendar.”

Scratching his chin, Li Yao mumbled to himself, “That explains a lot. There are seven Sectors…”

Fei Qi, on the other hand, thought that the senior of the expedition army of the Imperium was worrying that the Star Glory Federation was too powerful to be conquered by an exhausted army after such a long journey.

The émigré of the Uranian Ring civilization grew anxious. “You may not know this, seniors, but although the Star Glory Federation does boast seven Sectors, four of them have only been acquired in the last century. How can they be conquered and assimilated so easily?

“At the edge of the cosmos, despite the ostensible dominance and invincibility of the Star Glory Federation, there are a lot of hidden problems and conflicts within the nation!

“For example, there is a deep contradiction between the three core Sectors that founded the New Federation in the beginning and the four participative Sectors that were conquered later, which is also known as the conflict between the ‘Three Old Sectors’ and ‘Four New Sectors’. Also, I’m told that Ding Lingdang and Jin Xinyue, the two she-devils of the federation, have a long history of disagreements, too. Last but not least, while many outcasts who are unwilling to surrender to the tyranny of the federation such as us have escaped to the Dragon Snake Space Zone, still more are lurking in our respective home in secret despite the mockery and mortification, waiting to rise from the ashes at an opportune moment!

“Therefore, although the Star Glory Federation looks like a majestic, unchallenged master at the edge of the cosmos nowadays, as soon as the magnificent army of the Imperium of True Human Beings marches to its border, with the local Immortal Cultivators such as us leading the way and cooperating internally, the Star Glory Federation will be nothing more than a clown that will make a joke of itself. It will be completely vulnerable and blown into smithereens in no time!”

Brutality flashed in Li Yao’s eyes quickly. “Is that so? So to speak, many people who are discontent with the federation have gathered in the Dragon Snake Space Zone?”

Not knowing the truth, Fei Qi dutifully answered, “Yes. Those in the Uranian Ring Sector, the Forest Ocean Sector, the Water Crystal Sector, and the Nether World Sector who are reluctant to surrender have either been expatriated or escaped on their own initiative to this place.

“They were mostly powerful big shots and celebrities in their respective homes with immeasurable wealth. Despite the robbery of Ding Lingdang and the extortion of Jin Xinyue, they still managed to bring some of the wealth with them to the Dragon Snake Space Zone.

“Therefore, although the Dragon Snake Space Zone is barren and narrow, the construction over the past few decades has been quite impressive. If the seniors and fellow Cultivators here are willing to pay a visit to Fish Dragon City, our main city in the area, you will definitely be able to receive the support of intelligence and resources!”

Li Yao’s interest was aroused, but he sneered and said, “You’re lying! If the Dragon Snake Space Zone is a home camp for the diehards against the federation as you have described, why hasn’t the Star Glory Federation sent an army here and annihilated each and every one of you?”

Fei Qi blinked and said, “You might not know this, seniors, but the Star Glory Federation is the most hypocritical country of all. Nothing can violate the law, and everything has to be approved by the supreme parliament. It was one of the written clauses on the surrender agreement that we shall be exiled to this place. It was the decision of their parliament! Despite our discontent with the federation, we have never committed any obviously hostile crimes. Based on what can the federation tear the agreement that they signed and attack us without a good reason?

“If the federation truly does something like this, how will the people of the four participative Sectors view it? Also, how will the rightful… no, the government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic view the federation?”

“Wait.” Li Yao raised his hand. “The government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic?”

Fei Qi nodded. “Yes. They are on Firefly…”

“I know what Firefly is, but I didn’t know that those remnants of the previous regime had fled here! Have they joined the Star Glory Federation, too?” Li Yao asked in a hurry.

“Not yet,” Fei Qi said. “Those guys in the government-in-exile always proudly regard themselves as the rightful successors of the sea of stars. How can they not despise the ‘bumpkins’ at a corner of the universe?

“In the past ten years, ‘Firefly’, the flagship of the government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic, has been docked near the Dragon Snake Space Zone, trading with us and the federation. They exchanged magical equipment, techniques, and technologies from the center of the cosmos for all kinds of assets to repair their starship, which was on the brink of collapse after hundreds of years of running.

“I’m told that many people on Firefly actually grew interested in joining the federation after visiting the homeland of the country.

“However, as the saying goes, it’s better to be the head of a chicken than the tail of a phoenix. It won’t be easy for the refugees from the center of the universe to abandon their pride that they have persevered in for a thousand years and become a common member of a local force!

“The greedy Star Glory Federation naturally can’t wait to get ‘Firefly’. However, the big ship from the center of the cosmos, housing the lost technology of the republic, is certainly no push-over. The federation can only tempt it but not assault it.

“The officials of the government-in-exile are watching exactly how the federation treats the Dragon Snake Space Zone, which may decide whether or not they will abandon the banner of the Star Ocean Republic and join the federation. At such a critical time, the Star Glory Federation definitely has to pretend to be lenient and faithful to their words. It may be easy to take over the Dragon Snake Space Zone, but it would be a shame if Firefly was scared away!”

Chapter 1558 - Headhunter

Fei Qi had once been an aristocrat in the Uranian Ring civilization, so he had been pondering on how to deal with the federation for decades. Therefore, his explanation was quite clear and well-organized. The confusing situation and the weaknesses of the federation were quickly detailed to everybody.

Long Yangjun interjected. “It sounds like the situation in the Dragon Snake Space Zone is rather complicated, isn’t it?”

“It indeed is,” Fei Qi said. “Also, just because the Star Glory Federation hasn’t attacked the Dragon Snake Space Zone officially doesn’t mean that they are not dealing with the Dragon Snake Space Zone in secret! On the carrier that we destroyed just now were all the ‘headhunters’ from the Star Glory Federation, the lackeys under the manipulation of the Venomous Witch Jin Xinyue!”

“Headhunter? What’s that?” Li Yao asked.

“Allow me to explain it to you. After the authorities of the Star Glory Federation signed an agreement with us and banished us here, they had no suitable reasons to deal with us anymore. However, it doesn’t mean that they didn’t do anything on a civic level.

“The people who have escaped to the Dragon Snake Space Zone from the Uranian Ring Sector, the Forest Ocean Sector, the Nether World Sector, and the Water Crystal Sector generally hate the guts of the people who stayed home and joined the Star Glory Federation actively. For example, there is a deep contradiction between the Heavenly Light and the Earthly Brute. Many of us were sworn enemies before.

“The Star Glory Federation has never waged a war on us again on an official level. However, the people who have recently joined the federation often try to hire experts of the federation to sneak into the Dragon Snake Space Zone and kill their sworn enemies.

“The experts who sneak into the Dragon Snake Space Zone for assassination missions are known as ‘headhunters’. On the federation’s side, they are also known as ‘avengers’.

“The group of headhunters that we just took down was actually hired by some people of the Earthly Brute to sneak into the Dragon Snake Space Zone and kill a compatriot of the Heavenly Light who is nicknamed ‘doctor’.”

Li Yao found it interesting. “Why did they want a ‘doctor’ dead?”

“Decades ago,” Fei Qi replied, “before the Star Glory Federation conquered the Uranian Ring Sector, the ‘doctor’ was responsible for treating patients with ‘severe strike complex’. Besides the usage of high-intensity Happiness Serum, which was a regular approach, he also studied hard and experimented to create a very marvelous electric stimulation therapy that proved to be highly effective in curing the strike complex. Many patients were cured of the disease due to his wholehearted treatment and returned to work, turning from lunatics into people who were of use to our civilization.

“However, the severe strike complex is a very dangerous illness, and there were bound to be side effects during the treatment. Most of the patients were unwilling to cooperate with him on their side, too.

“Therefore, some of the ‘patients’ treated by the ‘doctor’ died. Some others, although they survived, suffered brain damage to varying extents.

“In the old Uranian Ring Sector, it was anything but abnormal. Even the best doctors can only treat some diseases, not all diseases, and they can certainly not bring the deceased back to life, right?

“However, after the war, the ‘doctor’ suddenly became unpardonable!

“Thankfully, the ‘doctor’ changed his name and escaped to the Dragon Snake Space Zone in disguise during the post-war chaos.

“The guys who had side effects after the procedures of the ‘doctor’ and the families of the patients who were dead, on the other hand, didn’t give up. Once they had turned into citizens of the federation and got the invaders behind them, they grew even more insatiable and aggressive. They demanded that the ‘doctor’ be killed no matter what!

“They believed that the ‘doctor’ had not been killed in the war. Therefore, they asked some sects in the federation that specialize in investigating and tracking to look for the whereabouts of the ‘doctor’. Finally, they uncovered the latest identity of the ‘doctor’ five years ago.

“Therefore, they hired a batch of ‘headhunters’ to sneak into the Dragon Snake Space Zone to carry out the ‘execution’ on the ‘doctor’!

"It was quite a fuss a while back. The 'doctor' had known that he was a target of the headhunters for a long time. Over the past five years, he has narrowly escaped three dangerous assassinations. This was the fourth time.

"We were all hired by the 'doctor' to help him deal with the headhunters. To save his life, he spent almost every penny that he's saved in his entire life on hiring so many hands.

"This time, we were quite lucky. The 'doctor' paid for precise intelligence at a great price in advance and found out the route and vehicles of the headhunters to enter the Dragon Snake Space Zone. Therefore, we were able to prepare an ambush beforehand and caught them unprepared. It was exactly what you saw just now."

Fei Qi's words made all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators whisper to each other in great interest. "Headhunters? Avengers? Sounds interesting. Quite interesting!"

After pondering for a moment, Long Yangjun raised a new question. "Wait. What you said doesn't add up. Both investigating on the new identity and appearance of a person who has been missing for decades and hiring experts to assassinate him in a foreign space zone would have required a lot of money, right? According to what you've described, those who hate your guts should be at the bottom level of society. Even if they did join the federation, it's impossible for them to have become rich overnight. How were they capable of hiring the investigators and headhunters?"

"This is yet another clue of the sordidness and shamelessness of the Star Glory Federation!" Fei Qi replied gloomily. "There's a good chance that those lowly miners and filthy lackeys cannot even recognize their own names. They are as destitute as can be. How could they have provided the money for the most elite assassins to carry out such a dangerous task?

“However, the few most powerful forces in the federation—including the Glorious Sunlight Group, Skyfire, the Patriots Front, and so on—have established a fund known as the ‘Vengeance Fund’ together, which is dedicated to providing financial support for those fellows!

“If those miners and lackeys are interested in hiring investigators and headhunters, they often only need to offer one dollar or even one nickel symbolically, and the rest of the fees will be covered by the Vengeance Fund!

“The daily operations of the Vengeance Fund are run by the Skyfire, an organization led by the witch Jin Xinyue. Also, Jin Xinyue has also trained a batch of professional headhunters, who are the most brutal and skilled assassins dedicated to resolving the grudges of the miners, lackeys, and scoundrels in the past!”

“Is that so?” With weird brilliance shining in Long Yangjun’s eyes, she asked, “Why are the experts of the Star Glory Federation doing that?”

“On the surface, they have been doing everything under the pretext of the federation helping every citizen seek justice, be they wealthy or poor, powerful or weak. But in fact, everybody knows that it is just an approach to win the support of those who’ve recently joined. Also, it is a way to spread terror and mayhem in the Dragon Snake Space Zone so that we will bend!”

Long Yangjun, Li Yao, and the other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators looked at each other.

The federation will help every citizen seek their justice?

Everybody saw each other’s amazement and fell into deep thought.

For Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar, who liked helping the weak and the poor best, his eyes were glittering in even more interest.

Due to the limited time, Long Yangjun did not want to pursue the question any further and changed the topic. “Tell me more about your ‘CFIA [1] ‘. Who is your leader? Where did you learn the ‘true path of immortality’?”

“The chairman of the CFIA is named ‘Lu Qingchen’, a citizen of the federation born and raised there,” Fei Qi replied dutifully. “Please don’t feel strange, everybody. Although Chairman Lu is a native of the federation, he hates the federation’s guts. Both his grandfather and his father were killed miserably by the federal government. Chairman Lu chose to stand against the federation a long time ago, too. He has caused quite a lot of damage within the federation and is now the most wanted criminal with the highest bounty in the federation.

“Also, Chairman Lu’s master was an Immortal Cultivator of the Imperium true to its sense. He was also the mental pillar of the CFIA. His name was ‘Su Changfa’!”

“Su Changfa!” Heiye Lan lost her calmness and shrieked, “Isn’t he…”

Long Yangjun looked back and glared at her to shut her up. She then turned around and calmly said, “So, him. I didn’t know that he ended up in the federation. How’s he doing now?”

“Senior Su passed away more than fifty years ago,” Fei Qi said. “However, all his knowledge, and the glorious ideology of the true path of immortality, have been passed on to Chairman Lu Qingchen. Chairman Lu has studied the true path of immortality for almost a hundred years. He is a tough, determined, and loyal Immortal Cultivator who has been persisting in fighting despite the harshest environment. For a very long time, he was even fighting entirely on his own while he awaited the arrival of the fellow Cultivators from the Imperium!

“After the four Sectors were conquered by the federation one after another, all the outcasts were quite confused and depressed. Our morale was lower than ever. Right when we ran into a dead end and couldn’t find any light anywhere, it was Chairman Lu who showed up and brought us the true path of immortality. Finally, we were able to find a direction to walk in again. We were united and founded the ‘CFIA’!”

“Lu Qingchen?” Li Yao slightly frowned. He somehow felt that something was wrong. “The very purpose of the CFIA is to wait for the arrival of the expedition army of the Imperium. Now that we are already here, where is your Chairman Lu Qingchen? Lead us to him!”

“I’m afraid that I can’t do that.” Fei Qi smiled bitterly. “Chairman Lu is known as the most dreadful enemy for the Star Glory Federation. More people than anybody could count hate his guts and are waiting in line to cut him into pieces and burn his bones! His traces are usually unpredictable and mysterious, and he is the most prudent person I’ve ever seen. That’s why he is still safe and sound after being wanted and hunted by the federation for decades!

“Moreover, well, I’m in fact just a peripheral member of the CFIA. I’ve never seen Chairman Lu in person before. How can I know where he is right now and how to contact him?”

Long Yangjun nodded. “That’s very true. Then, you certainly have a supervisor or someone you can talk to in the CFIA, right?”

“Of course!” Fei Qi replied very quickly. “I do have a contact who lives in Fish Dragon City right now. I can lead you there to him so that the news can be reported through the proper channels. With such a great piece of news, I believe that Chairman Lu will show up very soon to meet you!”

Chapter 1559 - Rise of the Tyrannosaur

Long Yangjun rolled her eyes and smiled. “Naturally. Since he is Senior Su Changfa’s disciple who was thought highly of, we definitely need to meet him.

“However, there is no need for us to rush into anything. We are new to this place and don’t know the first thing about the Star Glory Federation yet. How about this, Fellow Cultivator Fei? From what I have heard, I can tell that you hate the federation’s guts. So, you must’ve been spent a lot of time thinking hard on how to cope with the Star Glory Federation, mustn’t you?

“From your perspective, which important people in the Star Glory Federation are most dangerous and call for the most attention from us? Or rather, if we are to attack them for real, which critical people should we take care of first?”

Delighted, Fei Qi thought for a while and replied, “The first two that come to my mind are definitely the two she-devils, Ding Lingdang and Jin Xinyue. The two of them are indispensable, critical figures in the Star Glory Federation and of paramount importance. As long as they are taken care of first, it will be of great help to strike the morale of the federation and paralyze the pivot of the government.

“Other than the two she-devils, they also have Guo Chunfeng, who is the director of the ‘Secret Sword Bureau’, an intelligence and espionage agency in the federation; Wu Mayan, who is the head of the Glorious Sunlight Group; Jiang Shaoyang the ‘Solar Eclipse’, who is the best refiner in the federation; Mo Xuan, the leader of the Federal Spirit Photon Research Institute; 'Fiend Blade' Peng Hai; 'Fire Ant King' Ye Wuya; and Bai Xingjian, Lei Dalu, and some other people in the federal fleet. They are also experts that are worth mentioning."

"Alright," Long Yangjun said. "You'll write down the files of those experts soon. Just write down whatever comes to mind. Don't worry that the content will be longwinded or repetitive. We will certainly find an opportunity to get rid of them after we have grasped the detailed information about them.

"Also, you seem to think very highly of the two she-devils, Ding Lingdang and Jin Xinyue. Why don't you tell us about them first? Make it simple and to the point."

Fei Qi nodded. While he was thinking, a hint of fear beamed out of his eyes again. However, the thought that a majestic army from the Imperium was right behind him to provide support made him stand straight again. "Ding Lingdang is one of the best fighters in the Star Glory Federation, known as the 'Blazing Tyrannosaur', the 'God of War', and many other nicknames. She is sort of the heart of the Star Glory Federation and a walking slogan!

"She is already quite popular among the three core Sectors of the federation. In the worlds that she has personally conquered, the idiotic, illiterate mobs among the bottom class even consider her a 'legend'.

"A hundred years ago, before the new Star Glory Federation was officially established, it had already extended the claws of invasion to the surroundings impatiently. The Heaven's Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector co-implemented the 'Heavenly Path Plan', a project whose aim was to swallow space. They were hoping to explore and conquer the worlds near the three Sectors by means of cruising in hibernation and continuous jumps.

“Ding Lingdang was the first and the most important operative of the Heavenly Path Plan.

“In the most advanced hibernation exploration starship of the federation, she wandered in the universe by herself like a sleeping devil who searched for prey that she could devour ravenously.

“In the past hundred years, she has been in such a state, hibernating in the sea of stars, most of the time and only woke up three times in total.

“Although she only woke up three times, she brought incessant slaughter, damage, and destruction every time she did. She was the bane of the weak Sectors!

“The first time she woke up was seventy-two years ago, when she snuck into the Nether World Sector all by herself. She stayed there for quite a few years, instigating the internal strife of the major forces inside the Nether World Sector. She also gathered a batch of subordinates of her own and established an independent force. Rising from the chaos, she united the world in the end. All in all, according to the official publications of the federal government, which bragged about her ‘brilliant achievements’, it seems she completely suppressed the Nether World Sector entirely on her own, however unbelievable and ridiculous it sounds.

“But such a narrative is shameless demagogy and propaganda that I’m sure can’t fool you. In general, the result is that Ding Lingdang helped the Star Glory Federation swallow the Nether World Sector!”

“The Nether World Sector? It sounds like rather a horrible world,” Li Yao remarked.

“For your information, senior, it is not exactly horrible,” Fei Qi explained. “The Nether World Sector is a world that belongs to the deceased. Most of the residents of the world are ghosts. It seems that a destructive super war once broke out in their world. The parties involved in the war all resorted to the calamitic magical equipment. The fatal mystic rays swept across the surface of the entire planet. Not only were most people killed at once, they were also transformed into ghosts.

“It is a world of the angry wraths and apparitions. Although they had already become ghosts, they never let go of their hatred for each other, continuing to fight as ghosts. There was nothing but gloomy wind and sorrowful cries in the entire world. Wouldn’t a she-devil as brutal as Ding Lingdang feel that she was a fish in the water once she had arrived in such a world?

“All in all, after the she-devil woke up for the first time, the poor Nether World Sector ended up as her prey. Soon after the Nether World Sector was conquered, she set off again and traversed deeper into space, looking for fatter prey. She didn’t wake up again until approximately forty years ago. This time, the Uranian Ring Sector got devoured as a whole and turned into scrumptious food in her belly.

“Swallowing two Sectors in a row in only decades, the she-devil, the she-tyrannosaur, was still not satisfied. About ten years ago, she woke up again while she was exploring the sea of stars.

“This time, it was Firefly, the last flagship of the government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic, that she discovered!

“According to the official propaganda of the federal government, Ding Lingdang was once again ‘innocently’ involved in the internal conflict on Firefly and ‘happened to’ help a certain force on Firefly resolve the crisis. She also summoned a federal fleet when Firefly was under the attack of a fleet from the Imperium!

“Yes. While the seniors here were lost in the cosmic storm, there should’ve been a sub-fleet on your side that was unfortunately annihilated by Ding Lingdang after a battle with her during a reconnaissance mission!

“All in all, Ding Lingdang helped the government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic to preserve their last flagship, thereby winning their friendship. She convinced them to dock at the border of the Star Glory Federation for trade between the two parties.

“The Star Glory Federation not only received countless marvelous techniques and technologies that originated from the center of the cosmos from Firefly but also captured a lot of Immortal Cultivators in the battle. They must’ve elicited tremendous intelligence about the seniors here from the captives. Ding Lingdang made great contributions yet again!

“With the three great achievements, namely ‘swallowing the Nether World Sector’, ‘conquering the Uranian Ring Sector’, and ‘saving Firefly’, Ding Lingdang was promoted by the federal government as a walking slogan like a superhero. She is now essentially a symbol of the Star Glory Federation, an almighty God of War! Therefore, you need to kill Ding Lingdang first, no, not just kill her, defeat her, savage her, trample on her, and torture her for ten days and ten nights, making her beg to be killed. If you broadcast that scene to the entire Star Glory Federation, hehehehe, I’m certain that the morale of the federation will collapse!”

“Thank you for your enlightenment, Fellow Cultivator Fei,” Li Yao replied. “You’re truly thoughtful. I’ll make sure that you are properly ‘awarded’ someday!”

Overjoyed, Fei Qi obsequiously said, “You are flattering me, senior. It’s my greatest honor to be at the service of the Imperium!”

Long Yangjun smiled. “So to speak, this… she-tyrannosaur Ding Lingdang is indeed something. Of the seven Sectors that the federation has today, she conquered two on her own and helped the federation bridge the gap between them and the government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic. It seems rather appropriate to describe her as a superhero, the soul and symbol of the federation.

“But I wonder, how exactly is Jin Xinyue, the ‘Venomous Witch’ in your words, capable of being a match for Ding Lingdang?”

Fei Qi swallowed hard, with sweat popping up on his forehead. “On the surface, Jin Xinyue is not nearly as accomplished and dominant as Ding Lingdang. But in fact, she is a person much more dangerous than Ding Lingdang. Viper and scorpion are not enough to describe one millionth of her cruelty and cunningness!

“That’s because Ding Lingdang is a simple warrior who has more brawn than brains, and all her terrorism, slaughter, and destruction are open to the public, whereas Jin Xinyue is best known for her treachery and her iron hand in the velvet glove!

“All in all, everybody in the Dragon Snake Space Zone knows that, if you piss off Ding Lingdang, she may punch you to a clean and painless death. But if Jin Xinyue has got her eyes on you, she can come up with a hundred ways in the blink of an eye to make your life as miserable as hell and force you to wonder why you were born into this world!

“Right. I don’t think I’ve told you this just now, but this Jin Xinyue was actually born a demon!”

“A demon?” Long Yangjun was slightly dazed. The demons had ruled over the sea of stars for thirty thousand years, which were now known as the Great Dark Age. Heiye Lan had told them the relevant intelligence before. Therefore, it was impossible for Long Yangjun to give herself away just because of that. After only a brief moment of hesitation, she simply went on and asked, “Has the Star Glory Federation been conspiring with the demons?”

“They are not just conspiring; they have been in the same gang since the very beginning! The ‘Blood Demon Sector’, one of the three founding Sectors of the New Federation, is a world of demons. Jin Xinyue was the queen of demons in the Sector, known as the ‘Dark Lady of the Nine Heavens’.

“To think that a world of demons is now colluding with a world of human beings! Nothing can be more shameless and insane than that! Such a federation is already disgusting enough when you just look at it. How can anybody be interested in joining it?

“All in all, while the ‘space patrollers’ like Ding Lingdang actively pushed the ‘Heavenly Path Plan’ forward and launched an invasion on the outside worlds, Jin Xinyue the Venomous Witch stayed at home and suppressed the internal insurgencies.

“Yes. The cruel and brutal Jin Xinyue is best at suppressing internal insurgencies and completely taming the Sectors that have already been conquered!”

Chapter 1560 - Wait, Who Is Li Yao?

After pausing for a moment to catch his breath, Fei Qi went on. “Jin Xinyue was a queen of the demons in the beginning, but after the New Federation was established, she joined the ‘Secret Sword Bureau’, the intelligence and espionage agency of the New Federation, taking up the responsibility to suppress the demons that were discontent with the New Federation. To pursue her own power, the woman never hesitated, never even batted an eye, when she massacred her fellow demons. This is the first clue of her cruelty, heartlessness, and brutality!

“Based on her accomplishments in slaughtering her compatriots and her expertise in eliminating the dissidents, the woman rose to power quickly in the Secret Sword Bureau. After little more than twenty years, she was already promoted to the Deputy Director of the Secret Sword Bureau and the Chief Execution Supervisor. While Guo Chunfeng, director of the Secret Sword Bureau, stayed in the rear to command everything, Jin Xinyue led the charge in the front, responsible for the capture, suppression, and interrogation missions on the frontline.

“After the Star Glory Federation gradually conquered the four Sectors, the ‘Equality and Development Ministry’ was founded. Jin Xinyue became the youngest minister of the federation.”

“The Equality and Development Ministry?” Li Yao queried.

“By equality and development, they mean carving and swallowing,” Fei Qi said. “We all call it the ‘Conquest Ministry’. It is a bloody bureau that is specifically responsible for carrying out enslaving education in the four newly-conquered worlds; colonizing the new territory; and exploiting, extorting, and suppressing the resisters such as ourselves!

“Under the leadership of the vicious Jin Xinyue, the colonization that the ‘Conquest Ministry’ implemented on the four new worlds went quite well. She is best at double-dealing, instigation, divide-and-conquer, and other diplomatic methods. After decades of enslaving education, most of the people in the four new worlds have already forgotten the pride and dignity of their respective civilizations of the past and really consider themselves ‘federal citizens’. The few resisters whose heads were clear enough and who were too determined to surrender have also been captured, tried, and executed at Jin Xinyue’s command. At this point, without the assistance of the fellow Cultivators and seniors from the Imperium, it will be absolutely impossible for us to defeat the witch!

“Jin Xinyue, the executioner whose hands are covered in blood, climbed upward on the ladder of power, stepping on the piles of bones of the resisters from the four new worlds. She continued expanding her influence in the federal government and collecting resources from the four new worlds to please the major sects and conglomerates in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector. After a series of sordid, shameless, clandestine deals, she became one of the most important ministers in the federal government. She is now like the sun at midday, utterly unshakable!

“She is currently campaigning for the role of ‘Supreme Speaker’ in parliament right now. If the witch is truly elected as the Speaker of the Federation, the days of the four new worlds will only get worse!

“Nobody wants Jin Xinyue to be elected as the Speaker. However, well, Skyfire, which is under Jin Xinyue’s control, is one of the most powerful forces in the Star Glory Federation. She is quite popular among the major sects in the three core Sectors and has the support of the vast majority of the demons in the federation. The odds that she will win the election are very high.

“Seniors, if possible, please try to take down Jin Xinyue first before the final battle! As long as she is taken care of, half of the plots and schemes of the federation will be gone!”

Showing neither approval nor disapproval, Long Yangjun coldly said, “It is not your place to decide our specific tactics. All you need to do is tell us everything that you know! Is there anything else you would like to say about the two she-devils? You just mentioned that the two of them are in disagreement. What, is their relationship not good? That makes sense. Two tigers cannot live on the same mountain. I can tell that neither of the two women are willing to work under somebody else. It is only natural that they are at loggerheads with each other!”

“I couldn’t agree more. The two she-devils have never been in a good relationship. Skyfire and the Patriots Front under their lead have also been competing openly and in secret for almost a hundred years. It is not a big secret within the federation.”

Licking his dry lips, Fei Qi added, “Although Ding Lingdang is Jin Xinyue’s masteress, it’s not like that Jin Xinyue would simply—”

“Wait. Excuse me?” Long Yangjun was slightly dazed. “About the two most powerful women in the federation, Ding Lingdang is Jin Xinyue’s masteress? What do you mean by ‘masteress’? I don’t suppose it is ‘master’s wife’, does it?”

“What else can ‘masteress’ mean?” Fei Qi blinked and replied, “Jin Xinyue’s master and Ding Lingdang’s husband are the same person.”

“Well, that is rather—” Even Long Yangjun was lost for words for a moment.

She looked back, only to discover that the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were also dumbfounded, not knowing what was going on.

For ancient Cultivators, the title of ‘master’ was ten thousand heavier than it was in the modern Cultivation civilization.

It was because the gap between ordinary people and Cultivators in ancient times was larger, and it was more difficult for the former to be admitted by a Cultivation sect. The Cultivation arts and techniques were also highly confidential. It was impossible for some arts to be placed on the Spiritual Nexus where they could be downloaded by any random person.

To be accepted by a wise master meant that the possibility of learning state-of-the-art techniques, getting rid of the miserable life of an ordinary person, and turning into a brilliant and wealthy ‘deity’. It was the biggest dream for everyone!

Under such circumstances, if a master was willing to recruit someone, support them and their family, and teach them all kinds of techniques, the master would essentially be giving the disciple a new life. The disciple should respect their master more than they respected their own parents!

Therefore, the formalities between master and disciple were highly valued by the ancient Cultivators. A Cultivator's master and masteress were equivalent to their birth parents in the sect. Of course, some disciples might have killed their master for various reasons, but they certainly did such things in secret.

The notoriety of 'Master Spiritual Vulture' could half be attributed to him slaughtering the many villages, but the main reason was that he had killed his master, Elder Five Despair!

Were it not for the fact that 'Master Spiritual Vulture' had been born in the Southland of Sorcerers and should not be treated with the manners and rules of the central plateaus, and if it were not the end of a dynasty where everything was in chaos and guidelines were no longer appreciated, it would not have been possible for the 'Master Spiritual Vulture' that Li Yao played to shake off the aftermath of the event.

Ding Lingdang and Jin Xinyue, the two influential she-devils in the Star Glory Federation, turned out to be in the relationship of masteress and disciple, and yet they were at loggerheads in public, causing such a fuss that even someone like Fei Qi knew of their conflict. It was something utterly incomprehensible for the people from the ancient times.

Should betraying one's master not be done in secret?

“How uncanny!” Long Yangjun exclaimed in surprise. “Ding Lingdang and Jin Xinyue are both critical figures in the federation. If what you said is to be believed, they are strong, resolute, wealthy, and powerful. If they joined hands, it should be more than enough for them to control half of the federation. Then, shouldn’t Ding Lingdang’s husband and Jin Xinyue’s master be the ‘king of the federation’? Why didn’t you mention such a great man just now?”

“He truly deserves to be called the king of the federation, in the ‘Old Federation’ a hundred years ago,” Fei Qi said. “Ding Lingdang’s husband and Jin Xinyue’s master was named Vulture Li Yao. He was an extraordinary person in the Old Federation. It was said that Vulture Li Yao made unparalleled contributions to the unification of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector in the era of the Old Federation. Even the few major forces that support the New Federation—including Skyfire, the Glorious Sunlight Group, and so on—were actually founded by Vulture Li Yao. Even Ding Lingdang and Jin Xinyue’s great power and influence in the New Federation have a lot to do with the enormous legacy of Vulture Li Yao that they inherited!”

“Vulture Li Yao?” Long Yangjun chewed on the name thoughtfully.

The many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators behind her also frowned solemnly.

He sounded like a real badass and must have been a ferocious, treacherous person that was difficult to deal with!

“However, it was all a hundred years ago,” Fei Qi said. “Vulture Li Yao went on a mission a hundred years ago. The authorities of the federation have always tried to hide the traces and never offered any explanation to his outcome. However, a lot of rumors have been spreading among the people. The most trustworthy theory is that Vulture Li Yao went mentally deranged and died a miserable death abruptly a hundred years ago because he grew famous too early and advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage too young, not to mention a certain ‘superlative’ technique he practiced that severely exhausted his body and soul!

“Because he was a symbolic figure in the Old Federation and the greatest legend of the Old Federation, who in the official propaganda was even praised as the ‘supreme person of the three Sectors’, the federal government was reluctant to acknowledge his miserable death. Therefore, they have always remained ambiguous as to his outcome.

“All in all, a hundred years have passed!

“In the past years, drastic changes have happened to the federation. From three Sectors to seven Sectors, and from the Old Federation to the New Federation, all kinds of heroes and experts have emerged. The old monsters such as Vulture Li Yao who belong to the era of the Old Federation have already become pictures in history books. Except during the College Entrance Examinations in the federation every year, and when Ding Lingdang and Jin Xinyue are mentioned, few people are interested in talking about him today.

“That’s why I didn’t mention the legendary old monster who has probably been dead for a hundred years when you asked me just now. He cannot become trouble for the Imperium!”

“Wait!” Long Yangjun’s pupils suddenly constricted. Her nostrils slightly expanding, she touched the tip of her nose softly. “How many years? When did Vulture Li Yao die?”

Fei Qi found Long Yangjun’s reactions queer, but he still confessed dutifully under the stimulation of her needles. “Probably… about a hundred years ago. The specific timing is unverifiable now. However, the old monster has not been seen or heard from since the New Federation was founded. At first, Vulture Li Yao was said to be training in seclusion. Then, he was claimed to have joined the ‘space patrollers’ to explore the universe with his wife, Ding Lingdang. However, when Ding Lingdang reappeared in the federation, there was no sign of Vulture Li Yao. All the departments of the federal government avoided the questions tacitly.

“According to our analysis, Vulture Li Yao must’ve died a long time ago. The training in seclusion and the exploration of the universe are just smoke grenades and fake news that the federal government released as buffers to ease the aftershock of the abrupt death of such a federal hero.”

“That explains a lot,” Long Yangjun mumbled to herself. A vague smile popped up on her face again as she glanced at Li Yao casually. “Vulture Li Yao, the strongest monster in the Old Federation, went missing a hundred years ago, presumably dead…”

Li Yao stared back at her innocently and fearlessly.

Chapter 1561 - Fish and Dragons, Fish Dragon City!

It took Fei Qi three hours to confess everything he knew, especially the intelligence about the Dragon Snake Space Zone.

The experts from the Ancient Sages Sector then realized that the Dragon Snake Space Zone was the perfect location for infiltration. The destination of their space jump proved to be much more valuable than expected.

The Dragon Snake Space Zone, as its name suggested, was a murky, lawless place where dragons were mixed with snakes.

After a hundred years of rapid development, the Star Glory Federation had greatly expanded. Besides the previous three Sectors, it had acquired four new worlds.

For the new worlds, while the revolutionary changes were passionately welcomed by most of the populace, the interests of the previously privileged would certainly be harmed, if not deprived.

In such a time of changes and development, when the federation was expanding quickly, not only had a batch of people who were highly discontent about the federation emerged in the Forest Ring Sector, the Forest Ocean Sector, the Nether World Sector, and the Water Crystal Sector, even some people in the three core Sectors had failed to keep up with the progress of the universe and had second thoughts.

The Star Glory Federation valued the freedom of entry and departure and did not force anyone to become its citizen. But naturally, not any random person could become a citizen unconditionally.

For the people who were highly resistant to the federation and unwilling to stay in the territory of the federation but had not violated any laws or committed any hostile actions, the Dragon Snake Space Zone was the new home that the federation specifically prepared for them.

With the red giant at the center of the Dragon Snake Space Zone that was relatively stable, although it was impossible for them to live their lives extravagantly any longer, they could still survive.

At the very least, it was certainly much better than wandering aimlessly in the universe on a ragged starship with few resources.

Therefore, after decades, a lot of outcasts from the four new worlds had moved to the Dragon Snake Space Zone.

Those people were mostly the top class of their respective worlds and had a rather decent amount of wealth, treasures, and confidential heritages in their hands. One way or another, they had managed to bring some of their belongings out with them. Therefore, after a while, the small Dragon Snake Space Zone had expanded, enjoying abnormal prosperity.

However, the Dragon Snake Space Zone did not have a unified government or an efficient management system. The outcasts did not see any hope or any way out, either. Except for their mutual hatred and disgust for the federation, they were not entirely on the same boat. Internal conflicts and thefts were anything but rare here.

Also, the ‘headhunters’ from the Star Glory Federation were often themselves the most ferocious, dangerous outlaws in the country. In many cases, they were not necessarily there to ‘serve the justice’ but to rob the outcasts of the secret treasures that they had brought from their hometown. The damage that the headhunters caused when they acted without bothering the consequences made the security of the Dragon Snake Space Zone even worse.

Due to the various factors, the Dragon Snake Space Zone had turned into such a bizarre, unruly, disorganized place where all kinds of devils were dancing.

Even the ‘space pirates’, which had gone extinct in the Star Glory Federation, had been brought back to life there.

However, most of them were not professional space pirates but only ‘guest stars’ in the Dragon Snake Space Zone.

Robbing each other during the day, drinking themselves to sleep at night, and reminiscing about their former glory in the past, that was basically the life of the people there.

“The Dragon Snake Space Zone is the most chaotic place near the Star Glory Federation. For us, it will be the best starting point!”

After finishing the interrogation on Fei Qi, the twelve experts from the Ancient Sages Sector and Heiye Lan gathered again to discuss the operations in the next step.

“First of all,” Long Yangjun said, “those who have been banished or escaped to the Dragon Snake Space Zone often have blood debts in their hometown, just like the ‘doctor’. Even those who do not have unresolved issues often carry precious items with them. Therefore, most of them have chosen to change their name and appearance, turning into someone entirely different.

“In the Dragon Snake Space Zone, ‘identity’ is never a problem. Most people prepare three to five false identities for themselves. It is a custom not to ask about other people’s backgrounds, too. Whoever is too interested in other people’s business will be mistaken for a ‘headhunter’ from the federation and attacked by everyone.

“The entire Dragon Snake Space Zone has a population of hundreds of millions. That is only a rough estimate. After all, nobody can perform a census here. Many smugglers escaped here on their starships stealthily. As long as they bring enough resources from their hometown, nobody will care who they are exactly.

“Hundreds of millions of people, and probably even more, are all hiding their names, appearances, and backgrounds. How can the federation investigate the identity of each and every one of them?

“We will consider the Dragon Snake Space Zone a platform. When we learn the customs of the modern Cultivation civilization in the lawless land of chaos, we will be like twelve leaves hiding in a forest. There’s no way that we will be caught!

“Also, Fei Qi said that there is an amazing business in the Dragon Snake Space Zone. Some people specialize in getting legal identities of the Star Glory Federation for their clients!

“That’s because the people who have escaped to the Dragon Snake Space Zone are not necessarily all diehards such as Fei Qi who are determined to resist the federation to the end.

“In fact, according to what we have figured out, other than the approach of direct war that the Star Glory Federation adopted when it conquered the Uranian Ring Sector, its conquest over the other three Sectors was much gentler. The Nether World Sector and the Water Crystal Sector even offered to join the federation.

“Some people ran away from those worlds only because they found it impossible to accept such a behemoth named the Star Glory Federation from a foreign world in the beginning.

“After living in the chaotic, hopeless Dragon Snake Space Zone for decades and gaining a deeper understanding of the Star Glory Federation, many of them have changed their minds and want to go home.

“The federation’s attitude toward them is rather ambiguous, but in general, as long as they do not owe any blood debts in their hometown and all the past issues have been resolved properly, they are still allowed to go home.

“There will be a lot that we can work on in the process.

“For example, A had been an obedient folk who never committed any crime in his hometown before he escaped to the Dragon Snake Space Zone from the Water Crystal Sector. It was only because he didn’t see eye to eye about certain policies of the federation, and because he feared that his wealth would be lost in the revolution, that he refused to join the federation and immigrated to the Dragon Snake Space Zone.

“It would be totally fine if such a person intended to go home.

“However, if A passed away while he was in the Dragon Snake Space Zone, and all that was left was his ‘identity’, as for who exactly returned to the federation under the identity of ‘A’, it is something that is highly difficult to investigate.

“After all, it is more than simple to make a person disappear without a trace in the vast universe, and it is tremendously difficult to determine the life, death, and whereabouts of a person!

“Many people in the Dragon Snake Space Zone actually thrive on such a business. They specialize in fabricating identities for other people to enter the federation legally. We can probably also fabricate twelve new identities that are safer than the ones we came up with on our own when we set off!

“What do you think, fellow Cultivators?”

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators discussed among themselves. There was no objection to Long Yangjun’s proposal in principle. What they were about to do next could be summarized as adaptation, study, observation, and selection. Nothing could go wrong if they added another coat to their previous camouflage.

But Han Baling, the sovereign of the prairies, tapped the table and reminded everyone, “We are certainly going to Fish Dragon City, the main city in the Dragon Snake Space Zone. However, everybody must raise your wariness and not be too careless!

“I’ve been considering the issues about the ‘Dragon Snake Space Zone’ just now. Logically, after conquering the four new worlds, instead of eliminating all the troubles once and for all, they specifically left a land for the outcasts and exiled. Weren’t they fomenting trouble for themselves by doing so?

“Since the Star Glory Federation has as cruel and resolute a leader as Jin Xinyue, I don’t think that they should’ve done such a thing that would cause infinite trouble later.

“However, on second thought, the Star Glory Federation only had three Sectors at first, and it has absorbed four new ones in only a hundred years. The speed of expansion is too fast!

“As the saying goes, ‘more haste, less speed’. After swallowing four pieces of fat meat in a row, I’m afraid that the Star Glory Federation is terribly full right now. Even if it wants to uncover and suppress every rebellion in every Sector, that is not something that can be accomplished.

“Now that it is impossible to locate all the rebels and kill them, the Star Glory Federation might as well pretend to be ‘lenient’ and prepare a new home for them, gathering all of them openly for the convenience of supervision and control, instead of allowing them to lurk in their homes and wait to counterattack.

“I think that is the greatest reason for the Star Glory Federation establishing the Dragon Snake Space Zone.

“If Jin Xinyue was the one who came up with such an idea, the ‘Venomous Witch’ certainly knew what she was doing. She must not be underestimated!

“What I’m saying is that, while the Dragon Snake Space Zone appears to a self-regulating, semi-independent Sector under the feet of the federation, it will be watched closely by the federation. The spies and agents of the federal government must be everywhere.

“If we are merely preparing a few false identities, maybe the federation will not bother to deal with the insignificant small fries. However, if we do something outrageous in Fish

Dragon City while hoping that the federation will turn a blind eye to us, that’s too juvenile!”

“What you said does make sense, Fellow Cultivator Han,” Qi Zhongdao said solemnly. “According to Fei Qi’s confession just now, neither ‘Blazing Tyrannosaur’ Ding Lingdang nor ‘Venomous Witch’ Jin Xinyue are easy to deal with! If we pick the Imperium’s side, those two women will be our most dangerous enemies. Even if we choose the federation, it will still be difficult for us to bargain with the two women and take advantage of them!”

“Ding Lingdang and Jin Xinyue are naturally extraordinary figures in the Star Glory Federation. They are the targets that we must be highly wary of, but there’s somebody else that concerns me even more… one who may be a hundred times more dreadful than the two women combined,” Meng Chixin, the ‘Wolf God’ and one of the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, said with a dull voice from the iron shell. “It is Vulture Li Yao!”

Chapter 1562 - Terrifying Monster!

“Li Yao?” everybody exclaimed. “Isn’t he dead?”

“Although what Fei Qi said was full of lies and exaggerations, Ding Lingdang’s formidability and Jin Xinyue’s cunningness should be doubtless,” Meng Chixin sneered. “To think that Vulture Li Yao conquered such an amazing woman like ‘Blazing Tyrannosaur’ Ding Lingdang, taught the cruel and clever Jin Xinyue, and even facilitated the transformation from the Old Federation to the New Federation a hundred years ago by himself, how terrifying must the person have been a hundred years ago?

“How can such an old monster be killed so easily? Moreover, his death has been obscure with all kinds of rumors even to this day.

“Hehe. In my opinion, something must be wrong with Vulture’s death! Perhaps, the truth is that he has been training in seclusion for a hundred years!

“You must know that in the Ancient Sages Sector, many major sects and magnificent dynasties with a long history, besides the subordinates and disciples on the surface, are often supported by certain old monsters who lurked in the darkness with their immeasurable capabilities.

“Those monsters often train themselves in seclusion for hundreds of years. They never show up easily or bother to meddle in insignificant affairs. Only in a moment of life and death for the sects or the dynasties will they break out of seclusion and reverse the situation!

“Such an old monster is the last trump card of a sect or a dynasty. They are out-and-out ‘founding fathers’ of those enterprises!

“I believe that you are all well aware of the dreadfulness of such founding fathers.”

“Indeed,” Han Baling said. “Aren’t you the ‘founding father’ on the prairies, Master?”

Meng Chixin laughed and said, “I’m not an ‘old ancestor’ at all. Young emperor, I remember that your Thunderous Qian Sect fought with a ‘founding father’ of the previous dynasty ‘Great Fire Dynasty’ while you were conquering the world. That was an earth-shattering battle, wasn’t it?”

“Yes.” Emperor Phoenix’s expression changed. He swallowed and said, “A thousand years ago, when the Thunderous Qian Sect was rising, the Great Fire Dynasty was already a setting sun that was catching its last breath. The ancestors of the Thunderous Qian Sect took over half of the territory with the coalition army of eighty-eight sects without any trouble. The vanguard of the army was marching right toward the capital city of the Great Fire Dynasty. Even the seven experts of the Great Fire Dynasty, known as ‘Seven Fiery Gods’, were all heavily wounded or killed by us!

“But never did anyone anticipate that such a ‘founding father’ was lurking deep inside the royal palace of the Great Fire Dynasty, who launched the sharpest counterattack with his unparalleled strength!

“In the battle, three Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, nine Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, and countless Core Formation Stage Cultivators perished on our side. The most devastating prices were paid in order to kill the ancestor of the Great Fire Dynasty!

“It was the most dangerous battle for the rise of the Great Qian Dynasty. At the most crucial moment, the ancestor almost broke our battle formation entirely on his own, which would’ve led to the collapse of the army. If he had been slightly stronger, it definitely would’ve happened! Had the coalition army collapsed, the world would have been in chaos for many more decades!

“The sky was dim, the sun and the moon changed color, and blood was flowing into rivers in the battle. None of the high-level Cultivators involved in the battle were not scared when they recalled it later. It is said that when the ancestor of the Great Fire Dynasty activated his most powerful technique, the entire sky above the capital city seemed to be on fire. Therefore, when we compiled the history archives of the previous dynasty, the battle was referred to as the ‘Sky Burning Battle’.”

The Sky Burning Battle was the most famous fight during the rise of the Great Qian Dynasty. All the Cultivators there except Li Yao knew every detail of the event. They did not need more of an explanation from Emperor Phoenix to imagine the scene of horror and destruction.

All the experts from the Ancient Sages Sector looked awful.

Meng Chixin sighed gloomily and said, “We don’t have the privilege to witness the charisma and the terror of the founding father of the Great Fire Dynasty now. However, this Vulture Li Yao is also a terrible existence in the Star Glory Federation who is almost a ‘founding father’. If he is truly not dead yet, how strong will he be now after training in seclusion for more than a century?

“It must be noted that, while the ancestor of the Great Fire Dynasty was just a physically-strong but simple-headed warrior, he was able to deal tremendous damage to the coalition army and almost lengthened the longevity of the Great Fire Dynasty by decades entirely on his own. Vulture Li Yao has raised such a clever and shrewd woman as Jin Xinyue; his wisdom and cunningness must not be underestimated!

“Do you think that such an old monster and a founding father of the Star Glory Federation who is as good at both thinking and fighting and has been lurking in darkness all this time deserves more attention and wariness than Ding Lingdang and Jin Xinyue, who are merely two dangerous figures on the surface?”

After hearing Meng Chixin’s words, the experts from the Ancient Sages Sector all nodded in deep thought.

“What you said does make sense, Senior Meng. This ‘Monster Li’ is probably not dead yet but only training in seclusion!”

“Horrible. This is too horrible. ‘Blazing Tyrannosaur’ Ding Lingdang and ‘Venomous Witch’ Jin Xinyue are already big enough headaches, and there is still a ‘founding father’ that is lurking in the darkness! I’m afraid that this Monster Li won’t show up easily, but when he does break out of seclusion and show up in front of us, there will definitely be a bloody battle that will eclipse the sun!”

“Yes, we must pay special attention to this ‘Monster Li’. He will be the greatest unexpected factor on our trip!”

“… Cough, cough. Well, in fact, it might not be as severe as it appears,” Li Yao said. “Maybe this Monster Li truly died abruptly a long time ago. The rumors about him could be bluffs and overstatements, too. He might not be as awesome as he was made out to be. There is no need for us to act like he’s a great enemy, right?”

“Exactly!” Mother White Lotus Wan Mingzhu slapped the table and shrieked, “You are saying exactly what is on our mind! Didn’t ‘Fei Qi’ just say that there are few Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators in the Star Glory Federation? Also, the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators of this era often only specialize in one specific field and do not know much about other fields!

“The few Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators of the federation are mostly focused on management and research right now. It is hard to say whether or not they can perform at the level of a Core Formation Stage Cultivator in a battle! In comparison, we have two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators and ten high-level Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, who are all adepts in the arts of fighting and killing!

“Now that the twelve of us have joined our hands, we are definitely enough to swagger in the Star Glory Federation. Let’s forget that Monster Li, who could’ve been dead for a long time now. Even if he is still alive and shows up right in front of us, so what? We will simply work together and suppress him. Then, we will simply pluck all the hair from the old monster and turn him from a vulture into a bare chicken! Why are you all bigging up our enemy and thinking little of ourselves? Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, that is also what you were thinking, right?”

“… Yes.”

“Alright.” Long Yangjun almost failed to stop herself from laughing. She rubbed her cheeks hard in order to contain herself. Finally, she concluded, “All you’ve said makes a lot of sense, fellow Cultivators. However, we don’t know much about the Star Glory Federation and this…’Monster Li’ yet. It is meaningless for us to keep discussing while doing nothing. Let’s just go to Fish Dragon City to collect intelligence, blend into the entirely different new world, and retrieve perfect false identities so that we can sneak into the federation!”

Long Yangjun’s proposal was seconded by everyone.

When the meeting was about to end, Heiye Lan knocked on the door.

“The examination of Fei Qi’s swordfish-like assault warship has been completed,” Heiye Lan said to everyone respectfully. “The operation pattern of the starship is generally the same as the starships of the Imperium. I can get the hang of it after slight adaptation.

“Also, the warship falls into the category of small rapid assault warships. It requires a very small number of crew members. If we cruise normally within the Dragon Snake Space Zone, the thirteen of us are totally enough for the job.”

The story that the twelve experts of the Ancient Sages Sector had told Heiye Lan was that they were sneaking into the federation to collect intelligence and cooperate with the fleet of the Imperium.

With such an excuse, they had won the support of the female warrior from the Imperium half forcefully.

Besides, the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators had also planted a lot of barriers inside Heiye Lan’s mind and body. Li Yao had also crafted almost ten shackles in the shape of jewelry and asked her to wear them.

Heiye Lan’s every action was under their close observation. Therefore, they were not scared that the female warrior of the Imperium had ill intentions.

“Alright.” Li Yao nodded. In the past six months, Heiye Lan had been working as his assistant to repair the Colossi and the starship, and the many pieces of surveillance magical equipment on Heiye Lan had to be controlled by him. Therefore, everybody had entrusted Heiye Lan to his custody. She was sort of his ‘lackey’ now.

“Got it,” Li Yao said to Heiye Lan. “Later, capture the crew members at the key posts and interrogate them to get the specific operations of the swordfish-like assault warship. Then, move the important facilities on Weary Tooth, including the magical equipment units dismantled from the Nuwa warship, to the swordfish-like assault warship.

“We will be leaving for Fish Dragon City in three days!

“What are you waiting for? Off you go!”

After hesitating for a long time, Heiye Lan gritted her teeth and emboldened herself. “There is something very important that I’d like to speak to Master Spiritual Vulture and other seniors here.”

“Oh?” Li Yao was slightly dazed. “What is it?”

“Whatever Fei Qi said just now, including the things that have happened to the Uranian Ring civilization, please do not let it bother you, Master Spiritual Vulture and seniors.”

Solemnly, Heiye Lan replied, “A scumbag like Fei Qi is not a real Immortal Cultivator at all. The decayed and corrupt system in the Uranian Ring civilization is completely different from the true path of immortality that the Imperium of True Human Beings put into practice, too!

“I know that you must be despising Fei Qi, seniors. Chances are that you may even misunderstand the great title of ‘Immortal Cultivator’. So, I feel obliged to explain everything to you!”

Li Yao smiled. “What, is the Imperium of True Human Beings anything different from the Uranian Ring civilization? They sound very similar. Aren’t the ‘Heavenly Light’ and the ‘Earthly Brute’ the ‘true human beings’ and the ‘hominoids’ in the Imperium? The strong should stay on the top, enslaving and exploiting the weak. Isn’t that the idea that you have been preaching to us in the past half year? Why do you despise ‘Fei Qi’? Doesn’t what he said and did suggest that he is a most standard Immortal Cultivator?”

Chapter 1563 - This Is the Imperium!

Heiye Lan stood straight and argued, “Isn’t it only logical and reasonable that the strong govern the weak and the wise lead the unintelligent? Should we ask the weak to rule over the strong, the idiots to lead the geniuses? Wouldn’t the world be in chaos if so?

“However, as for exactly who is strong and who is weak, and who is a prodigy and who is a moron, they can only be decided in head-on competitions in the eyes of the real Immortal Cultivators, not purely by their bloodline. As the saying goes, if you want to distinguish a mule from a horse, just put them on a racetrack!

“Only the fittest should survive, and the strong prey on the weak. Those who win are crowned, and those who fail are labeled rebels. As real Immortal Cultivators, we will never avoid, but actively face and fight for every opportunity of competition. We are only proud of our own strength, not our bloodline or identity!

“The experts who have proved themselves strong in cruel competitions and bloody tests are ‘true human beings’, whereas strengthless weaklings are the ‘hominoids’. It barely has anything to do with who their parents and ancestors are. That is the essence of the true path of immortality!

“It is obviously not the case for the Uranian Ring civilization. Perhaps, in the early stage of the Uranian Ring civilization thousands of years ago, the ‘Heavenly Light’ who risked their life mending and repairing the Uranian Ring beyond the atmosphere were indeed the elites of the society that deserved the proud title of ‘true human beings’. In comparison, the ‘Earthly Brute’ were indeed weaklings, losers, lazy wretches, shortsighted, and unwilling to work for the future of their posterity. They had themselves to blame when they were rejected from the Uranian Ring and had to struggle to survive on the perilous, heavily polluted surface of the planet!

“However, that was thousands of years ago. They were the strong and the weak, the true human beings and hominoids, thousands of years ago!

“Based on what do the Heavenly Light today consider themselves to be the elites, the chosen ones, the top class, or in short, ‘true human beings’? Why do they take the Uranian Ring for granted? Just because of the glory of their ancestors? It is just a matter of birth and has absolutely nothing to do with their own hard work!

“In comparison, couldn’t a few experts have distinguished themselves from the Earthly Brute after struggling for such a long time on the perilous planet under the stimulation of dangers and difficulties? Are those experts not qualified to ascend to the Uranian Ring for better education, more intense training, and the support of more resources, so that they can lead the whole civilization to a new peak?

“The offspring of the Heavenly Light remain forever the Heavenly Light, and the children of the Earthly Brute will belong to the Earthly Brute for all eternity. Their social stratification became rigid. All that the ‘elites’ of the upper class could think of is how to exploit the people of the lower class instead of fighting for a better future, and the people of the lower class accumulated so much fury that they did not know where to vent it! Such a civilization will only waste all its power on internal strife. Did it have a future at all?

“Such a civilization is not a real civilization of Immortal Cultivators at all. It is just a regime that the selfish scumbags such as ‘Fei Qi’ established to meet their greedy and ridiculous demands under the banner of the Immortal Cultivators. It is not strange at all that such a civilization was destroyed by a civilization of Cultivators. If anything, we are even happy to see that!”

“You are happy to see that?” Li Yao’s face was extremely weird. The other experts were also stunned by Heiye Lan’s argument. “Why does it sound to me that you hate the Uranian Ring civilization even more than you hate the Star Glory Federation?”

“Of course!” Heiye Lan said solemnly. “The competition between the Immortal Cultivators and the Cultivators is nothing personal but about the righteous path we should walk on. We only have different opinions about the future of the civilization of mankind. Although we are enemies, we are merely ‘hostile’ to each other. There is nothing too ‘hateful’ or ‘disdainful’ about the Star Glory Federation.

“The ‘false Immortal Cultivators’ such as Fei Qi, on the other hand, have been satisfying the selfish desires under the pretext of the true path of immortality. As a result, the reputation of the Immortal Cultivators in the universe has been tarnished by them.

“As a real Immortal Cultivator, it is only natural that I loathe ‘counterfeits’ more than I loathe Cultivators!”

Li Yao coughed and was lost for words for a moment. After thinking about her words, he asked curiously, “Since you are so discontent with the system of the Uranian Ring civilization, I do wonder, how would the situation of the ‘Uranian Ring civilization’ probably have been handled in the Imperium of True Human Beings?”

“You don’t need to say ‘probably’,” Heiye Lan declared proudly. “In the Imperium of True Human Beings, it is very common for the residents of a planet to be divided into two classes like in the Uranian Ring civilization. The ‘hominoids’, which take up most of the population, live on the surface of the planet where the environment is harsh. The few ‘true human beings’ live on the comfortable, advanced orbit cities in space.

“It is because the center of the cosmos was the main battlefield of the Armageddon Rebellion ten thousand years ago. Many habitable planets were consumed by the flames of war with the earth heavily polluted and damaged, just like the Uranian Ring Planet. Such planets are not suitable for survival!

“Then, the best option is to establish orbit cities not far away from the mother planet, where the resources on the mother planet can be collected and the harsh climate on the surface of the planet can be avoided.

“Therefore, it is the most reasonable system to divide people into the strong and the weak. The former are allowed to enjoy their life on the Uranian Ring with sufficient resources to study the cutting-edge technologies, techniques, and disciplines, pushing the civilization forward. The latter stay on and below the ground to provide fuel for the advancement of the civilization with their not-so-valuable lives.

“There is nothing wrong with the classification of the Heavenly Light and Earthly Brute. The real problem is the criteria to decide who belongs to the Heavenly Light and who belongs to the Earthly Brute. Also, are the members of the Heavenly Light and those of the Earthly Brute transformable?

“There must be rigorous measures to ensure that every member of the ‘Heavenly Light’ is the elite of the elites, the one-in-ten-thousand chosen ones who are qualified to enjoy the bountiful resources and the beautiful environment. If they do not meet the standards, they should be eliminated mercilessly no matter who their ancestors are. For the descendants of the Earthly Brute, even if they are the most menial miners, they should still be given an uptrend channel that is wide enough for them to prove their excellency so that they will have the chance to earn the identity of ‘Heavenly Light’ with their iron fists!

“If the Uranian Ring civilization were a standard civilization of Immortal Cultivators in the Imperium of True Human Beings, the ‘Uranian Ring’ would probably still have been established, and the two classes living in outer space and on the ground would still have been divided. However, something integral would have appeared between outer space and the planet—channels that connect the underground mines to the space cities!

“In the Imperium, many planets with similar environments have such channels that are known as ‘Empyreal Road Towers’!

“In the Empyreal Road Towers, all kinds of most cruel and bloody tests are arranged. All the members of the Earthly Brute are allowed to try the tests in the Empyreal Road Towers. As long as they are capable of passing the tests, thereby proving their ‘excellency’ and ‘formidability’ with their own hands, they will ascend to the sky after only one leap. They will change from the Earthly Brute to the Heavenly Light and find their place in the Uranian Ring!

“Meanwhile, many trials are also held on the Uranian Ring. Every descendent of the Heavenly Light must go through the harshest tests, training, and competitions from the moment that they are born. Personal duels are a popular trend, too. As long as you fail the tests, games, or personal duels, it proves that you are a loser, a pile of garbage that doesn’t deserve the glorious title of Heavenly Light. Even if your father is a high official of the government, you will still be kicked out of the Uranian Ring ruthlessly and thrown into the underground mines. You will turn from a high and mighty Heavenly Light into a humble Earthly Brute!

“Of course, the so-called trials, games and duels are not necessarily conducted through fighting. Wisdom, computational ability, leadership, creativity, and so on can all be the focus of the competition. The Imperium has thousands of thorough, professional testing procedures. Everybody can choose to develop their specialty. As long as they prove their value to the civilization of mankind, they will be entitled to the most honorable identity and the most envied privileges!

“In such a competitive system, every member of the Earthly Brute will train crazily in order to leap into the sky, and nobody in the Heavenly Light dares be sluggish because they fear that they will fall from heaven to hell!

“Both the Heavenly Light and the Earthly Brute have a sharp sword hanging above their head and a hungry wolf chasing behind them! Everybody tried their best without reserve! As a result, the entire civilization will march forward!

“Also, such a system where everybody can see hope and fear will also help maintain the stability of society!

“The fury and hatred of the Earthly Brute can be effectively vented through the Empyreal Road Towers. They understand that the reason why they belong to the ‘Earthly Brute’ and some other people belong to the ‘Heavenly Light’ has nothing to do with their fate; their ancestors; or the injustice of the system, the government, and the nation!

“The Empyreal Road Towers are right there. If they break through them, they will have everything! Why would they whine or envy anyone if they did not dare enter the Empyreal Road Towers? If they must hate something, they can only hate themself for being so weak!

“I assure you that if the Uranian Ring civilization had adopted such a highly-competitive system, neither Ding Lingdang nor Jin Xinyue would’ve been able to rile up the ‘Earthly Brute’ so easily! On the contrary, if military credits were associated with their identity, and one would be promoted to the Heavenly Light with enough military credits, the war potential of the Uranian Ring civilization would’ve been much higher. Chances are that the expedition army of the federation would’ve been stalled or even suffered a major setback!

“Naturally, if such a system had been adopted, as cowardly and gutless a ‘noble’ as ‘Fei Qi’ would probably have been eliminated in a test when he was seven and kicked into a random mine!

“However, what is on the mind of the Immortal Cultivators is the future of humanity. Does the life and death of an individual, a family, or a group matter? If I have been proved to be weak, I will accept my miserable fate without complaint, just like when I was tortured by you. That’s only because I was guilty of being too weak. I was to blame for my own fault. The determination to sacrifice one’s own identity, dignity, future, and life marks the biggest difference between the real Immortal Cultivators and the false Immortal Cultivators!”

All the listeners were dumbfounded.

Seeing Heiye Lan’s excited red face, they felt that they had only just seen the real female warrior from the Imperium of True Human Beings.

“Is this the way of the Imperium of True Human Beings?” Li Yao mumbled.

Taking a deep breath, Heiye Lan calmly answered, “Yes, this is a true human being. This is the Imperium!”

Chapter 1564 - Bumpkins to the City

Five days later, outside of the gravitational sphere of the red giant at the center of the Dragon Snake Space Zone, a city was floating in the middle of the violet space.

The enormous city in space had a translucent honeycomb-shaped core, which seemed to have been piled up by hexagonal, identical crystals and glasses. At the intersection of the crystals, huge solar sails extended in all directions.

The solar sails that were as thin as paper were also translucent and looked like crystal. The carefully carved runes and the tubes to condense and transmit spiritual energy on their surface made them look like big, clear leaves that were shaking slightly in the invisible cosmic wind.

The solar sails could absorb the radiation and heat from the red giant, which contained spiritual and magnetic waves, and transform it into spiritual energy to the maximum extent. Then, through the tubes that looked like capillary vessels, the energy would be transmitted to the honeycomb-shaped core drop by drop as the main energy source to support the functioning of the city.

It was Fish Dragon City, the heart of the Dragon Snake Space Zone.

The swordfish-like assault warship, which carried twelve experts of the Ancient Sages Sector and a female captive of the Imperium, passed through two enormous solar sails and approached the No. 99 dock in the middle of hundreds of starships in various forms under the direction of the port navigator.

When the fixation rune arrays, invisible to the naked eye, attracted the starship to the branch-like dock of Fish Dragon City, soft tubes whose entrances could automatically secrete blockage glue extended out of the branches.

The soft tube, like the mouthpart of a certain mollusk, shivered, sniffed, and scrambled before it found the gate of the swordfish-like assault warship. Then, they were connected by the blockage glue without the slightest gap. The docking had succeeded!

The Dragon Snake Space Zone was an anarchic land of outcasts.

The order of Fish Dragon City was basically maintained by the Chamber of Commerce made of the Uranian Ring Hall, the Water Crystal Valley, the Nether World Fortress, and the Forest Ocean Gang, four forces from the four conquered Sectors.

In fact, anybody could enter and exit Fish Dragon City provided that they submitted a ‘port construction fee’ to the Chamber of Commerce and did not carry any mass destruction magical equipment. On the surface, nobody would pry into the identity and the purpose of the newcomers.

Of course, the mass destruction magical equipment could be hidden inside Cosmos Rings. Therefore, the only requirement to enjoy life in the lawless land was money.

Fish Dragon City, a paradise for adventurers, a stage for the bold, and the battlefield for maniacs!

After decades of rapid development, the wealth brought from the four Sectors had created abnormal prosperity. Not only the rebels who were discontent with the Star Glory Federation took the place for a luxurious sanctuary, the experts within the federation who craved adventure and slaughter, the young men who lost patience with the peaceful reality and dreamt of becoming famous overnight, and all kinds of other scumbags and vicious fellows had been attracted to the place like flies were attracted to the rotting flesh.

For the past decade, Firefly had been docked near the Dragon Snake Space Zone. Many Cultivators of the ‘rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic’ had arrived at the place in disguise to enjoy the extravagant entertainment that they could not enjoy on the harsh Firefly. Some of them had even escaped into the Star Glory Federation with the Dragon Snake Space Zone as a platform. After all, the ‘rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic’, which had been supported by a single Firefly for a thousand years, did not seem to be capable of surviving for another thousand years.

All in all, that was Fish Dragon City. Pirates, spies, assassins, bodyguards, bootleggers, black market doctors, headhunters, traitors, Immortal Cultivators… All kinds of vermin were living dramas woven by schemes, blood, slaughter, and betrayal day and night.

When Li Yao walked to the exit of the spaceport in the middle of the eleven experts from the Ancient Sages Sector and Heiye Lan, he gradually felt a shortness of breath because he could hardly hold his excitement any longer.

Before they ‘took care of’ the amateur space pirates including Fei Qi, they had looted enough anonymous crystal cards as well as crystal tubes, which had been pressed into the shape of coins by special magical equipment and could be used as currency in the Dragon Snake Space Zone.

At the cost of only five ‘crystal coins’, they went through the most convenient VIP channel, saving themselves the trouble of waiting in line and other unnecessary procedures.

After passing through the double airlock gate in front, he would be returning to the modern civilization that he had been away from for a hundred years!

Although this was not really the territory of the Star Glory Federation, it was certainly heavily influenced and infiltrated by the federation. He could certainly gather more information about the federation and his family and friends there!

A hundred years had passed. How developed was the federation with seven Sectors?

What were the details of Ding Lingdang’s and Jin Xinyue’s adventures and development?

Also, Wu Mayan, Xie Anan, Guo Chunfeng, Lei Dalu, Bai Kaixin, Xiong Wuji, Professor Mo Xuan… What had happened to them, and how were they doing?

Li Yao could not wait to learn everything.

However, he did feel nervous as he approached home. He could not imagine what it would be like when he met Ding Lingdang, Jin Xinyue, and the rest of them again.

Although he had spent most of the hundred years in hibernation and it had been nothing more than closing and opening his eyes, it had still been a hundred years, almost long enough to make him forget the feeling of the ‘competition of beliefs’.

Li Yao suddenly felt his heart palpitating.

He recalled the days and nights when Ding Lingdang and he discussed their life, chatted about their dreams, and shared the techniques on the asteroids, in the trenches tens of thousands of meters deep, and right next to the gravity sphere of the pulsar…

Federation, I’m back. Sweetheart, I’m back!

Li Yao chuckled to himself as he strode to the double airlock gate that was installed with automatic sensor arrays.

Chi…

The gate opened.

Although Li Yao had thought that he was prepared for anything, he was still deeply awed by what he saw!

Unfolding in front of his eyes was a city established on the internal wall of the ‘crystal honeycomb’. There was no up, down, left, or right at all. High towers—or rather, ‘branches’—extended from the internal wall to the center from every direction.

They were illuminated by the tiny light balls that were floating in the middle air and shining like fireflies. Those light balls were created by the spiritual waves and the radiation from the red giant, which was sent to them through the transmission tubes that looked like capillary vessels.

Every light ball was floating like a dandelion. The brightness from them was not brilliant individually, but when the brightness of hundreds of light balls was combined, it turned into a splendid ocean of light.

The ‘longevity’ of every light ball was not very long. They were breaking and perishing like ivory soap bubbles all the time. However, new light balls would drift to the center of the city in their place, putting a highly deceiving veil over the lawless, chaotic city.

Illuminated by the light balls, the four districts of the city with vastly different styles were fully displayed to Li Yao and everyone else.

The aristocrats of the Uranian Ring Sector highlighted elegance and agility, which were duly reflected in the style of their architecture. Their buildings seemed to be piles of insufficiently grown twigs, with the upper halves being significantly larger than the lower halves. Such buildings gave the feeling that they were unsteady and could fall anytime.

The people from the Water Crystal Sector, on the other hand, liked everything that was shiny and bedecked with jewels. Their buildings looked like corn ears that were fully embedded with man-made diamonds.

The Nether World Sector was a world of ghosts. Their buildings were deep, dark, and heavy and looked like piles of black turtle shells. Such buildings could help them withstand the fatal radiation from space to the maximum extent so that their feeble soul would not be drained for nothing.

The outcasts from the Forest Ocean Sector adored nature. It was said that their hometown was a planet surrounded by primitive forests. Some bizarre plants even grew out from the bottom of the ocean to the outside the atmosphere.

In Fish Dragon City, it was naturally impossible for them to grow such enormous trees that could grow beyond the sky, but still, they decorated their new home with many weird plants. Li Yao even saw many things almost a hundred meters in diameter that he wondered if he should call ‘flowers’ blossoming on their buildings that looked like tall trees!

The modern buildings in so many forms, colors, and styles were already enough to dazzle the ‘bumpkins’ from a world of ancient Cultivators for a long time, not to mention the shuttles that were flying freely among the buildings and the trains that were running in the vacuum tubes all over the city. What gave them the biggest surprise, however, was the overwhelming, ubiquitous light beams!

The greatest difference between a modern society and ancient society was not the architecture, not the vehicles, but information, or rather, how information was displayed and transmitted.

In the modern Cultivation civilization after the information boom, the transmission and display speed of all kinds of information was a hundred times crazier and more explosive than in the world of ancient Cultivators!

Thousands of enormous light beams that were hundreds of square meters large were floating in midair, displaying video information at a stormy speed. On some of them, cute girls with heavy makeup and barely any clothing on their bodies were tempting potential customers. Some other light beams were displaying the first-person perspective in an arena where broken limbs were flying everywhere in the goriest manner. On another light beam, the information about the stock market of the Star Glory Federation was dropping like a waterfall, accompanied by the desperate screams of the specialists, scholars, frauds, and lunatics. Then, there were promotions for new magical equipment that could be useful or useless. All kinds of crazy devils were jumping and dancing with various colors and music, triggering the deepest lust in everyone's heart. The Cultivators from the Ancient Sages Sector were utterly dumbfounded!

"Well…"

Confused, 'Iron Saint' Qi Zhongdao extended his hands to touch a certain nonexistent thing in the air.

It was a commercial on an enormous 3D light beam. The hot girl simulated by the most advanced pupil focus and Half-Step Grand Illusionary Land technologies was about to jab her fingers into his eyes.

Chapter 1565 - Bosses, Do You Need Smuggling?

As the leader of all the Cultivators, Qi Zhongdao had experienced countless fierce battles, large and small, in his life, but he had never been through such a dangerous scene before. Or rather, he had never dreamt that it could happen!

“This woman… is so erotic and amatory, bordering on shameless. She must belong to a certain cult that performs evil arts!” Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar said solemnly next to ‘Iron Saint’ Qi Zhongdao.

As the two of them focused their eyes on her, the lady on the commercial was smiling more and more mysteriously. Her sensual red lips were shivering, sending secret information into their brains softly.

Ba Xiaoyu’s body trembled. He bulged his eyes and exclaimed, “What an amazing technique to send the telepathic thoughts directly to us when it senses the rolling eyes and the expansion and constriction of the pupils! Only those who are fully focused on this enormous… light beam will receive the message. The people around them will not be affected at all!

“The modern Cultivation civilization is truly astoundingly advanced!

“However, what exactly is the message that the sorceress of the cult delivered to us? The Cat, Waterfall, One Up, the Cowgirl, the Hot Seat… The names sound rather sophisticated. Are they some sort of uncanny techniques of the cult that the woman is using to tempt passers-by into joining the cult?

“In any case, to think that she is walking in broad daylight blatantly, the local cult is too arrogant!”

Including Qi Zhongdao and Ba Xiaoyu, and even including Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun, all the experts from the Ancient Sages Sector were dazzled and dumbfounded under the illumination of hundreds of enormous light beams, feeling that they were about to drown in the torrent of information.

“Is this the first time you have come to Fish Dragon City, bosses? If so, you will certainly need a tour guide!”

While everybody was at a loss, a sneaky voice suddenly echoed near them.

A ghost, wearing a rusted, ragged artificial body that had a sharp-edged head, was rubbing his hands and greeting them.

The spectral Cultivator bowed to everyone smarmily and smiled. “Greetings, bosses. If you happen to be in need of a tour guide, I, Screwhead, am the most famous one in the local area. I’m best known for my warm service, well-informed sources, and fair charges. Most importantly of all, my service is absolutely safe!”

There were indeed two huge bumps on the iron shell of the spectral Cultivator’s artificial body. It looked like two screws had been drilled into his head by brute force.

They were probably some sort of special antennas so that he could release the power of the soul and communicate with the outside world with telepathic thoughts more easily.

Screwhead held his chest proudly and jabbed the emblem that had been branded on the iron plate on his chest with his metal fingers, which were uttering cracking noises. He then pointed at a bunch of bystanders who were watching them from afar like hungry hyenas and said, “Bosses, please take a look. This is the symbol of the Chamber of Commerce. I am a legitimate tour guide registered in the Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber of Commerce has appointed us to provide our service to people like you. I am not one of those wild guides who don’t even have a license!

“Are you thinking of turning to those guys, bosses? Yes, they may charge less, but who knows where they will take you? You’ll be lucky if they take you to certain illegal stores where you will be forced to buy some counterfeit magical equipment at a great price. In the worst cases, when they find that you have loads of cash with you, they might develop ill intentions and take you to an unvisited alley. Then, they will cut you apart and swallow you with your skin and your bones! That’s nothing unusual at all!

“Hehe. You all look healthy and majestic. I can tell that you are destined for great things and tremendous wealth. There is no need to risk your lives just to save a few coins, is there? We are all legitimate tour guides under the Chamber of Commerce. All our services have been priced clearly. Nobody will trick a client. Also, if you are in our company, normal gangsters will not dare ask for your trouble. A lot of unnecessary adventures will be saved. Won’t it be much better than employing those unlicensed guides?”

“Even the magical equipment has…” Ba Xiaoyu was slightly dazed. He was meaning to ask Screwhead how a piece of magical equipment could be fabricated

However, Long Yangjun shook her hands at him slightly. She eyed Screwhead up and down for a moment, giving neither consent nor disapproval. “Tour guide? What can you help us do?”

“You can do whatever you want in Fish Dragon City as long as you have money!”

Seeing that he had hooked potential customers, Screwhead grew so excited that the four crystal cameras on his face were glittering and rolling at the same time like four colliding marbles. He spoke enthusiastically, waving his hands and feet.

“If you have come to Fish Dragon City with a lot of money just to enjoy life comfortably, I can take you to the few most famous money-burning places in town, where you can get all the thrilling entertainment that you want!

“Naturally, even without me leading the way, you can find such places on your own with the guidance of the map, bosses.

“However, without the introduction of a middleman, certain special VIP areas will not be open to you guys! Also, I can apply for the most favorable discount for you. Then, you will essentially be saving the fees you pay me for my service. Essentially, I will be at your service for quite a few days for free. Could there be a better bargain in the world?”

“Thrilling entertainment?” Long Yangjun snorted. “What else?”

“What else?” The four ‘eyes’ of Screwhead were rolling all the time, and his smile grew more and more delightful. “Where should I begin? If you bosses are looking for greater entertainment and are confident in your skills, I can take you to the arenas or the casinos for fun. If you are here to hire subordinates, I can show you to an appropriate place that I guarantee is frequented by tough, ruthless experts. If you have come to the Dragon Snake Space Zone because you want to make a name for yourselves, I can help you get a list of all the contracts that you may wish to work on!

“Moreover—”

The red crystal cameras on Screwhead were rolling again and again. He put on an even weirder expression and said in a low voice but intentionally for everyone to hear him, “If you are planning to enter the Star Glory Federation with the Dragon Snake Space Zone as a platform, I can also arrange for the perfect identities for you!”

“What?” Long Yangjun’s pupils constricted violently.

All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators narrowed their eyes, scanning the environment and the passers-by emotionlessly.

Everything was under their control, including the fastest way to destroy Fish Dragon City!

Not having the vaguest idea that a great disaster was coming, Screwhead was still smirking. He was even bold enough to pat Long Yangjun’s shoulder. “Why are you so nervous, bosses? This isn’t a top secret nowadays. I recognized it the moment you stepped out of the port. You came from ‘there’, and this is the first time that you have seen such a metropolis ablaze with lights and liveliness, isn’t it?”

Long Yangjun slightly frowned. “There?”

"Hehe. Aren't you from Firefly?" Screwhead waved his arms and pressed them down. "Easy. Easy. I have been through similar cases hundreds of times! You are citizens of the Star Ocean Republic, are you not? You are crew members from Firefly who can't stand the rough, monotonous life on the starship and have decided to move to the Star Glory Federation with the Dragon Snake Space Zone as a platform in order to taste the feeling of a steady life with your feet on a planet, which your ancestors haven't tasted for a thousand years, right?"

"Well…" Long Yangjun was slightly dazed. Thinking quickly, she immediately put on an embarrassed and furious expression, as if her secret had been seen through and she did not know how to respond.

"It's alright. It's alright. That's totally understandable. Anybody will feel the same!" Screwhead said very comfortingly. "To be honest, it is already incredible enough that you have persisted in the sea of stars for a thousand years! The Imperium of True Human Beings is made of the Immortal Cultivators who have different ideology from yours. Naturally, it is impossible for you to surrender to them! However, the Star Ocean Republic and the Star Glory Federation are both governed by Cultivators. You are like two brothers in one family. What's the big deal about migrating to a different country?

"Besides, don't many officials in your 'rightful government' support joining the Star Glory Federation? I'm told that they have caused quite a fuss over the last couple of years. Chances are that in a year and a half, Firefly will completely join the federation, and everybody will be a federal citizen. In that case, you will only be one step ahead of everybody else. There's absolutely no need for you to feel ashamed or worried!

“All in all, if that’s your purpose here, bosses, you can entrust everything to me. I can take care of your false identities, the vehicles that carry you to the federation, and your future life after you arrive at the federation! Allow me to repeat myself. The price may be slightly higher than you expect, but it is absolutely safe and reliable!”

Long Yangjun and Li Yao looked at each other in bewilderment. They did not realize that the seemingly most troublesome identity issue could be resolved so easily. Something must be wrong with the guy’s promise!

After pondering for a moment, Long Yangjun asked, “You said just now that you have smuggled hundreds of our people to the federation already, didn’t you?”

“Exactly!” Screwhead replied. “Also, it is not ‘smuggle’ at all. In fact, the activity is ‘half legal’.”

“What do you mean by ‘half legal’?” Long Yangjun asked.

Screwhead coughed pretentiously and looked around for a moment before explaining mysteriously, “Although this is the first time I’ve seen you bosses here, I feel that you are my old friends. The more I talk to you, the more I like you. So, I’m just going to tell you the truth. However, you must keep what I’m about to say to yourselves. If you tell anybody else, I will be kicked out of the business forever!

“In fact, I am just an insignificant tour guide in Fish Dragon City who makes his living with his mouth. How am I capable of moving you guys to the Star Glory Federation?

“However, I do know a few bosses who come from the federation. They can get absolutely legal and authentic identities for you guys so that you can walk into the federation in broad daylight. The federal government will turn a blind eye to you without investigating you at all!”

Chapter 1566 - Competition of Two Heroines!

Long Yangjun and Li Yao looked at each other, both finding it hard to believe that the Star Glory Federation’s national defense was weak enough to allow anybody to enter the border. Long Yangjun asked suspiciously, “How is it possible? Isn’t the ‘Secret Sword Bureau’ of the Star Glory Federation everywhere and capable of everything!”

“Of course, the Secret Sword Bureau is everywhere, but as I said, your identities will be ‘half legal’. So, you will not be vetted!”

Screwhead surprised everyone. “This is an unspoken secret within the Star Glory Federation, too. The federation needs the talents, techniques, and technology on Firefly, but the rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic is reluctant to be merged into the federation. Naturally, the federation has resorted to all kinds of approaches possible to attract the talents on Firefly!

“I don’t know what posts you’ve been working on, but you certainly have some secret techniques from the center of the cosmos, right? Perhaps, some techniques, technology, or magical equipment that seem common to you are what the Star Glory Federation is in dire need of. They can possibly fill in the crucial blanks in some important fields in the federation!

“A great war is to break out soon. The federation has attached great importance to the reserve of talents. You bosses are likely capable people that the Star Glory Federation dreams about. The federation will only fear that it does not welcome you warmly enough if you are willing to join the federation. Why would they set up obstacles?”

Blinking, Long Yangjun pretended to be in a dilemma. “But our government…”

“The ‘rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic’, on the other hand, naturally hates the immigration and the loss of talents. The two parties have negotiated many times and agreed that such an action should be strictly forbidden. That’s why I said that it is ‘half legal’!”

Screwhead patted his chest and promised, “The federal government will never admit that it is stealing the talents from the Star Ocean Republic on an official level. Therefore, it is impossible for you to migrate to the federation through official channels. Even if you move there, there’s still the chance that you are repatriated.

“However, in secret, many highly-influential sects in the Star Glory Federation have been working actively. They can prepare flawless new identities for you and take care of all the legal procedures, helping you join the federation under a different name!

“Those big sects are all thirsty for the talents from Firefly. If you have certain secret arts with you, you can definitely immigrate to the federation under their arrangement and live a comfortable new life. Wouldn’t it be much better than staying on the cold, dark, unpromising Firefly?”

Everybody was lost for words after hearing Screwhead’s piece.

It seemed that, although the Star Ocean Republic and the Star Glory Federation were both civilizations of Cultivators and faced with a common foe, the relationship between them was not very peaceful! Long Yangjun turned around and glanced at everyone for their opinion. After receiving an affirmative reply, she pretended to be hesitant again. “Don’t—don’t bother about where we come from exactly. We haven’t decided whether or not to go to the federation yet. For now, we’ll just spend a few days in Fish Dragon City watching, visiting, and playing!”

While talking, she threw a crystal coin that was surrounded by purple light at him.

Screwhead took the crystal coin and tapped it on his iron shell softly. Then, the brightness of the four crystal cameras immediately doubled. He smiled in great delight and said, “Absolutely. It’s indeed too important a decision to be made without more observation. There is tremendous information about the federation in Fish Dragon City. I guarantee that you will understand every detail of the Star Glory Federation after studying it. You can always decide where to go next from there!”

“Wait a moment, Screwhead!” Li Yao interjected. “When we were on Firefly, we were told that the Dragon Snake Space Zone was not in a good relationship with the Star Glory Federation. Why does it not seem to be the case with you?”

“About that.” Screwhead opened his hands and said uninterestedly, “The relationship can be good or bad, but that’s something the celebrities and the rich should concern themselves with. Do you think I’m rich, bosses?

“Most of the people in the Dragon Snake Space Zone are ordinary people and low-level Cultivators such as myself. We have to do our best just to survive. Who has the time to care about the relationship between the Dragon Snake Space Zone and the Star Glory Federation?

“All in all, as long as we have money to earn and food to eat, who cares about the federation or the Imperium?

“Besides, my hometown is the Nether World Sector, which is a world that joined the federation rather early. There wasn’t even a real war like in the Uranian Ring Sector. Who gives a damn about the grudge from decades ago?

“Alright. I think I’ve talked too much. Where do you want to visit, bosses? Do you want to grab dinner or go to a hotel first? Or, maybe you’d prefer casinos, arenas, or nightclubs?”

Screwhead rubbed his hands. Seeing that Yan Liren, Qi Changsheng, and Han Baling were all watching the most magnificent light beam in the sky, dwelling in the astounding picture displayed on it, he could not help but smile, “This is the seventh franchise of Young Wu Mayan, an immersive movie aired recently, which tells the story of Wu Mayan’s adventures on Iron Plateau when he was young. The plot is nothing anybody doesn’t know, but an immersive movie is different from the general movies in that the audience can be ‘immersed’ in the perspective, emotion, and even thinking pattern of any random character, which allows the audience to experience the thrilling and spectacular adventures in different identities and angles! How about it, do you want to have a try, bosses?”

“Wu Mayan…” Looking at Li Yao, Long Yangjun asked Screwhead, “Isn’t he Vulture Li Yao’s first disciple?”

“Exactly!” Screwhead smashed his fists in excitement. “The monstrous qi-trainer who claims to have surpassed the

1000th level of the Refinement Stage!”

“The 1000th level of the Refinement Stage!”

Qi Zhongdao, Yan Liren, Han Baling, Qi Changsheng… All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators almost laughed out aloud.

Li Yao coughed lightly, too, and his face turned weird.

Blinking, Long Yangjun asked suspiciously, “Why are there no movies about Vulture Li Yao when his disciple already has so many?”

“There are!” Screwhead replied. “There are already more than a hundred and twenty productions in the ‘Chronicles of Vulture’ franchise. As for the prequels, sequels, side stories, and other kinds of cr*p, there are hundreds of them. Even the stories when Li Yao was in the magical equipment graveyard when he was young have been made into quite a few dramas. The audience already had enough of such shows decades ago. Who dares invest in such cheesy shows today? However, if you intend to appreciate the charisma of the dominator of three Sectors, I can take you to some old-fashioned theaters. I guarantee that you wouldn’t watch the same series for a second time in a whole year!”

Even the wise and smart Long Yangjun was dazzled by the glittering torrents of information in midair and at a loss as to where to go next.

Right then, dozens of light beams suddenly displayed the same picture after blinking quickly for a moment.

On the picture, in a crowded meeting, a majestic-looking old man was speaking to thousands of anxious people loudly and bowing, as if he were very sorry about something.

“Breaking news!” Screwhead held his head and cried, “Su Chenzhou, the candidate from the Alliance of the Nine Sects, has officially admitted his failure and will withdraw from the election for the Supreme Speaker of the Star Glory Federation. He also asks his supporters to support the Venomous Witch Jin Xinyue! The Alliance of the Nine Sects has agreed upon a strategic cooperation with Skyfire, making them the largest force in parliament!

“We’re done! We’re truly done for this time! Even the well-renowned Su Chenzhou has surrendered. This election has turned from a competition of multiple candidates into a competition between two. Jin Xinyue’s chances of being elected are very high. This is truly the end of the world!”

As he expected, soon after Su Chenzhou announced that he would quit the election, the dozens of pictures blinked and were shifted to a hall that was large in scale and had an even more heated atmosphere.

At the center of the hall, in the middle of thousands of cheering supporters, Jin Xinyue was standing quietly and elegantly like an angel, not affected at all.

Jin Xinyue had been a ‘demon king’, which was equivalent to the Core Formation Stage, a hundred years ago. The passage of the hundred years had not left any marks on her at all, except for making her watery eyes even deeper and more unpredictable than before.

She was wearing a moon white linen robe, which made her appear both graceful and inviolable.

Perhaps because the new Speaker of the Federation needed to show toughness now that the army of the Imperium of True Human Beings was approaching, she had added a golden belt outside of the long robe, which carried a longsword with the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars emblem. Her figure and her stunningly long legs were even further accentuated.

Holding the longsword with one hand and extending her other hand to the people, Jin Xinyue put on a sincere smile.

In a trance, Li Yao felt that he saw someone else in the smile.

It was Jin Tuyi, the most dreadful opponent and even probably the only one whom he had failed to defeat completely!

Jin Tuyi, your Red Tide Plan is close to success after all! Li Yao thought to himself with mixed feelings. *A hundred years after the Blood Demon Sector surrendered, your daughter has finally fulfilled her promise to you, to me, and to herself and stood on the stage to campaign for the position of Speaker of the Federation. She has also defeated almost all the strong rivals and is only one step away from the leadership of three… no, seven Sectors!*

However, while the plan a hundred years ago is about to become reality smoothly, and Jin Xinyue should be the best candidate to resist the Imperium of True Human Beings, why do I still feel something is wrong?

The mental devil crawled out inside his head. “Are you worried that something will go wrong at the most crucial moment?”

“Exactly,” Li Yao replied. “Based on the experiences in our previous adventures, Jin Xinyue can’t be elected as the Speaker of the Federation so easily! Even if she does make it to the end smoothly, a soul-stirring scheme that may overturn the entire federation can still happen!

“However, it doesn’t matter because we have returned in time!

“Hehe. If the scheme this time is similar to the schemes that took place in the Flying Star Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the mastermind of the scheme should be obvious now!

“Jin Xinyue probably wouldn’t betray me and the federation. She is loyal!

“Then, her competitor—no matter how selfless, decent, and devoted they appear to be—must be vicious despite all the illusions. They will be the planners of the scheme!

“It’s like Xiao Xuance in the Flying Star Sector, Elder Nether Spring in the Blood Demon Sector, and Lu Zui and Zhou Hengdao in the Heaven’s Origin Sector. The more powerful a person is, the greater damage they can possibly cause!”

“Fair point!” the mental devil replied.

Li Yao smiled confidently. He asked the tour guide, “Screwhead, you mentioned just now that the federal election has turned into a competition of two. You meant that there are only two candidates left now, right? One of them is Jin Xinyue. Who’s the other guy?”

“Why, it is ‘Blazing Tyrannosaur’ Ding Lingdang,” Screwhead replied. “Who is qualified to compete with Jin Xinyue other than her?”

“…” Li Yao.

“…” The mental devil.

Chapter 1567 - Grand Entrance of Ding Lingdang!

While the atmosphere in the picture was more heated than ever, the host was commenting. “Dear audience, as we can see, when Su Chenzhou, the candidate of the Alliance of Nine Sects, announced his withdrawal and his support for Jin Xinyue, almost a million of Jin Xinyue’s supporters gathered at the Federal Square in the capital city to form an ocean of passion. The light banners that they projected into the sky are also displaying ‘Glory and Dream’, Jin Xinyue’s campaign slogan. They are shouting Jin Xinyue’s name aloud.

“Wait. Wait. They are shouting neither Jin Xinyue nor Minister Ji, but… Speaker Jin!

“Listen to the voice from the supporters in the capital city. Speaker Jin! Speaker Jin! Speaker Jin! It seems that Jin Xinyue and her supporters are very confident about her final victory!

“Then, on the other hand, let’s contact my colleagues in the Forest Ocean Sector right now. Ding Lingdang, the other candidate of the election and the leader of the Patriots Front, known as the ‘God of War’ and ‘Blazing Tyrannosaur’, is attending the opening ceremony of a large training stadium that has been built with her aid. She will also give a speech to her supporters. Let’s see how Ding Lingdang and her supporters will respond to Su Chenzhou’s withdrawal!”

The picture on the light beam trembled for a moment, like a peaceful lake into which a stone had been tossed. After the ripples spread out for a moment, it soon steadied.

However, the content of the picture had greatly changed. It was no longer a modern metropolis with crowded, coruscating skyscrapers but a boundless ocean of primitive trees that covered the entire planet.

As far as one’s eyes could reach, under the green background, the whole planet was brimming with vivid, passionate colors.

There was occasionally vacant ground like ‘lone islands’ in the ocean of trees. Man-made architecture could only be found on those lone islands.

But it did not mean that Ding Lingdang had few supporters, because amid the ocean of trees, in and out of the ‘nests’ made of crowns, branches, and twigs, people were standing next to each other, cheering for Ding Lingdang’s arrival.

Li Yao stared at the enormous light beam so hard that his eyeballs were almost darting into it.

No words could describe his excitement hidden under the tranquility on the surface at that moment.

He had not seen his wife for a hundred years. How exactly would she show up this time?

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

On the picture, deep inside the forests, ear-splitting explosions were echoing. The trees that towered dozens of meters tall were all uttering weird noises and falling to the ground.

The natives of the Forest Ocean Sector, who had been living in the jungles, cheered even more passionately.

Boom! Boom, boom! Boom, boom, boom! Boom, boom, boom, boom!

The deafening noises grew louder and hastier. As they drew closer, they were not just deafening but essentially world-blighting.

It could be seen clearly from the picture shot by shuttles in midair that the enormous trees deep inside the forest were leaning to the two sides like grasses that had been divided. A certain magnificent being was obviously crushing everything in its way.

It was—

Li Yao could not help but stand on his toes and slightly open his mouth. There was nothing but expectation and affection in his eyes.

Hooooo!

A super large velociraptor that was at least fifty meters tall, with iron armor and bone spurs all over the body and six rows of tusks densely grown inside the bloody mouth, leapt out of the forest of trees and crashed like a shooting star from the sky!

Centered at the landing point of the super large velociraptor, the airwaves caused by the blast spread out quickly. As if thunder had broken out on the ground, a superstorm was rising!

“Ohhhh!” Even the reporters were exclaiming in shock.

“Hooray!” The natives of the Forest Ocean Sector were dancing so excitedly that they could barely control themselves.

“…” Li Yao.

“If you want to vomit blood,” the mental devil said, “do me a favor and help me vomit mine.”

Li Yao gulped hard. As the picture zoomed in, he observed carefully and finally discovered that his wife was sitting steadily on a wrinkle on the back of the head of the super large velociraptor!

Like him, Ding Lingdang had been among the first participants of the Heavenly Road Plan. She had spent most of the last hundred years in hibernation and exploration.

Although she had woken up three times and been active for about twenty years, for the Cultivators close to the Divinity Transformation Stage, such a short period of time mattered little because they could mostly live up to five hundred years old if they paid attention to their health.

Even Jin Xinyue had barely changed after living for a hundred years. Naturally, Ding Lingdang had even fewer changes herself. She was exactly the same as the night they had departed.

However, it was only her appearance.

Although she was on the light beam and thousands of stars away from him, Li Yao could sense the daunting aura around his wife, as if they were back to the younger days when they first met each other. The feeling that made his blood boil and made him want to defeat and conquer her without bothering about anything was back!

Li Yao licked his burning lips, feeling that his mouth was dry and his heart was pounding.

Ding Lingdang at that moment looked more like a queen, albeit uncivilized, than Jin Xinyue.

She was wearing a seven-colored crown in the style of rainbow parrots on her head and a bright golden skirt made of best hide that was emitting hundreds of faint colors in different shades. Her healthy and powerful arms and her long, healthy legs were exposed to the air, caramel in color.

She was glittering like a sun. She was a sun that was on the neck of a velociraptor!

As for her mount…

It was obvious that the animal was not a domesticated one but a wild animal that was brutal, bad-tempered, and fearless of everything.

Judging from the size, it was possibly the king of the demon beasts in the forest nearby. Otherwise, it would not have been qualified to grow so huge.

The behemoth was covered in wounds. Dozens of the thick bone spurs had been broken apart. Even the mouthful of tusks had been half blown away.

There was no need to mention the poignant expression on the face of the animal, the discontent, helplessness, and fear, which obvious told everyone that it had only just been suppressed by Ding Lingdang!

Li Yao saw that Ding Lingdang curled one of her fingers and snapped on the head of the super large velociraptor hard.

The super large velociraptor screamed in excruciating pain before it lowered its head obediently and delivered Ding Lingdang to her supporters in an extremely uncomfortable position.

“Ohhhhh,” the commenter exclaimed. “It is the most dangerous predator on the continent in the Forest Ocean Sector, the terrifying existence at the top of the food chain, the Purple-Crowned Large Velociraptor!

“No. Judging from the violent horns on its head that are rising into the sky, this is a Purple-Crowned Ultra Velociraptor that has transformed twice and evolved to maturity!

“Ding Lingdang has beaten and suppressed a Purple-Crowned Ultra Velociraptor in only half an hour barehandedly without even using a crystal suit, much less a Colossus! This is truly—truly unbelievable. As expected of the God of War in the federation and the Blazing Tyrannosaur!

“As we can see, all the citizens in the Forest Ocean Sector are deeply awed by Ding Lingdang’s shocking performance. They have gone completely crazy!

“Dear audience, it is well-known that the planet of the Forest Ocean Sector, covered by primitive forests that extend from the continent to the ocean, is the most underdeveloped area in the seven Sectors of the federation.

“The forests are boundless, and the oceans are deep. There are no bountiful crystals. The underground mother lodes are hard to develop on a large scale, too!

“The one thing that the Forest Ocean Sector is not short of is demon beast. The overwhelming, ubiquitous demon beasts!

“The brave and hardworking ancestors of the Forest Ocean Sector started learning to make use of ‘demon beasts’, the only resource available, thousands of years ago. After thousands of years of trial and error, they have gradually developed a unique animal-taming civilization. Everything in their life and in the development of the civilization be done by taming, hunting, domesticating, and driving the demon beasts.

“Valor and courage are highly valued by the natives of the Forest Ocean Sector. The higher the level of one’s prey, and the more brutal and ruthless the prey, the more respected and complimented the hunter will be!

“Ding Lingdang has suppressed a Purple-Crowned Ultra Velociraptor, which is certainly of the highest level, barehanded in only half an hour. This is probably the best gift for the people of the Forest Ocean Sector and the best response for Su Chenzhou’s withdrawal and his support for Jin Xinyue!

“Well, we have received a lot of messages from the audience, questioning if Ding Lingdang’s attire and actions today have exceeded what befits a candidate for Supreme Speaker.

“Yes. In the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector, many may find such a… shock unacceptable. However, I believe that Ding Lingdang must’ve left a very deep impression on the people of the Forest Ocean Sector and made them realize that Ding Lingdang is one of them and will fight to the end for their interests!

“Alright. According to the dynamic, real-time poll system we have implemented, after Su Chenzhou announced his withdrawal and his support for Jin Xinyue, and after Ding Lingdang showed up in public in such a ‘dramatic’ style, interesting changes have happened to their approval rating in the poll!

“With Su Chenzhou’s endorsement, Jin Xinyue’s approval rating in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector has witnessed a significant rise. Ding Lingdang, in comparison, perhaps because of her ‘unconventional’ performance today, has failed to keep her approval rating. Many people we interviewed suggested that they couldn’t imagine the Supreme Speaker of the Federation riding a velociraptor!

“However, in the Uranian Ring Sector, the Forest Ocean Sector, the Water Crystal Sector, and the Nether World Sector, Su Chenzhou’s endorsement achieved the opposite effect. Ding Lingdang’s advantage here remains, especially in the Forest Ocean Sector. Her striking show today has conquered the hearts of the people of the Forest Ocean Sector, helping her secure a significant advantage! An interviewee of the Forest Ocean Sector claimed that Ding Lingdang would be the perfect Speaker of the Federation for the people of the Forest Ocean Sector and that she would be a symbol for the courage, resolution, and strength of all the citizens of the federation!

“It seems that everything is just as we predicted yesterday. The Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector—the three old worlds—are the home camp for Jin Xinyue, whereas the Uranian Ring Sector, the Water Crystal Sector, the Nether World Sector and the Forest Ocean Sector—the four new worlds—are the vote banks for Ding Lingdang. The competition of two has been formed now! It remains to be seen who will have the last laugh in three months’ time!”

Li Yao blinked and pricked his ears hard.

He thought that either the commenter had misspoken or that his ears were not functioning normally.

The Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector—the three old worlds—were the base for Jin Xinyue, and the four worlds which joined the federation recently backed Ding Lingdang.

What had happened in the past hundred years exactly?

Chapter 1568 - The New Worlds and the Old Worlds

Everything on the light beam, especially the appearance of the two ‘she-devils’ of the Star Glory Federation, amazed the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators from the Ancient Sages Sector. They started a soundless discussion through their private talk techniques.

“Supreme Speaker? It almost sounds like the leader of the Cultivators in the Ancient Sages Sector,” Qi Zhongdao said. “A high and mighty leader is actually elected by the mob? That’s unbelievable!”

Meng Chixin chuckled. “In my opinion, the ‘Supreme Speaker’ is different from the leader of all the Cultivators. It is something in the middle of the leader of the Cultivators, the emperor, and the prime minister. However, Fellow Cultivator Qi is right about one thing. Even if such a crucial person is to be elected, it should be the top experts of the federation who elect them, instead of the general public. How messy and ridiculous!”

Han Baling, a loyal believer of classical militarism, sneered and said, “The great army of the Imperium of True Human Beings is arriving in no time. The federation can only be united and focused on their purpose under the leadership of a resolute dictator in order to compete with the Imperium!

“The foe is about to knock on their door now, and they are still running… an election. Aren’t they asking to be killed? Look at the supporters of Jin Xinyue and Ding Lingdang, it seems that they will fight each other before the Imperium destroys them both. They don’t know what they are doing at all! I think that the federation is doomed!

“Also, Jin Xinyue might prove to be a suitable leader despite her young age because she has proved herself to be thoughtful and unbendable enough in times of war.

“Ding Lingdang, on the other hand, is nothing more than a pure warrior who doesn’t know the first thing about national affairs. What makes her qualified to lead the seven Sectors?”

Long Yangjun glanced at Li Yao and smiled. “A pure warrior is not necessarily unqualified for the post of the ‘Supreme Speaker’. Even the emperor of the Ancient Sages Sector doesn’t have to be a rare genius. After all, the specific affairs will be handled by the cabinet and the many ministers. There’s also the aid of the major sects in the local area. Many ‘work-free’ emperors do not bother to issue any decrees at all, but the country is just as orderly as before. There might not be any major trouble in decades.”

Upon hearing that, Emperor Phoenix glared at her and bellowed, “Of course you like a ‘work-free’ emperor. If there hadn’t been a ‘work-free’ emperor, a powerful eunuch such as yourself wouldn’t have had a chance to stir up any trouble!”

Wu Suiyun, a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator, sniffed and observed, “Enough, everyone! Now that we have come to a… modern Cultivation civilization, the twelve of us will be each other’s only reliance. The Ancient Sages Sector is now in peril. There’s really no need to cling to the grudge in the past!

“I, for one, feel that Blazing Tyrannosaur has her advantages to be the Supreme Speaker of the Federation.

“According to the intelligence that Fei Qi provided, the Star Glory Federation is a place where the parliament and cabinet are very powerful. There are countless times more departments in their court than those in the court of the Ancient Sages Sector. Military affairs, civil affairs, educational affairs… All the specific work is handled by the ministers of the corresponding departments. Even the Supreme Speaker cannot meddle with the internal affairs of the departments directly.

“The greatest significance of the so-called ‘Supreme Speaker’ is probably to focus everyone’s hope and belief as a symbol of the federation!

“In terms of ‘appeal’ and ‘symbolism’, Ding Lingdang is definitely more suitable than Jin Xinyue. After all, her marvelous accomplishments are right there. Nobody can expect to compete with her!

“Also, she doesn’t appear to be a headstrong warrior to me at all. Today, her entrance seemed a bit reckless, but it has certainly grabbed the heart of everyone in the Forest Ocean Sector. Her determination to meet the audience’s expectations without caring about her image is evident enough that she is not as simple as she appears!”

Meng Chixin nodded and concluded, “All in all, Jin Xinyue and Ding Lingdang are both crucial figures that we cannot bypass when we get in touch with the Star Glory Federation. In three months, one of the two women will become the Supreme Speaker of the Federation. Whether we decide to fight or to surrender, we will have to deal with them someday. So, we must study them more deeply!”

Long Yangjun rolled her eyes and walked up to Screwhead, the tour guide. Pretending to be hesitating, she said, “Screwhead, truth be told, we are indeed from Firefly. However, we haven’t made up our minds yet, not knowing if we should live in the Star Glory Federation. After all, there are too many rumors outside, and we have been living at the bottom level of Firefly, which has no access to the latest news. We can’t tell whether or not the rumors are true at all!

“Just now, you were sighing gloomily when you learned that Jin Xinyue had a great chance of being elected. What, will the federation fall into chaos if Jin Xinyue is elected? In that case, there is no way that we are going to immigrate to the federation!”

“I can’t agree with you more,” Screwhead replied. “People from the Nether World Sector, the Water Crystal Sector, the Forest Ocean Sector, and the Uranian Ring Sector are mostly not particularly fond of Jin Xinyue and do not want her to be elected.”

Long Yangjun rolled her eyes. “What about Ding Lingdang?”

“Ding Lingdang is certainly different,” Screwhead said in delight. “Ding Lingdang and her Patriots Front have been quite nice to the four new worlds. She has offered a lot of advantageous policies. Although I’m living in the Dragon Snake Space Zone right now, I still hope that Ding Lingdang can be elected!”

“Is that so? Can we invite you to explain more about the situation, Brother Screwhead?” Long Yangjun asked.

Screwhead hesitated. “Well—cough, cough, about that…”

Long Yangjun took out another crystal coin and threw it at him. Having received his pay, Screwhead elaborated like a dam that had just been opened. “If the bosses here intend to live in the Star Glory Federation, it is indeed necessary for you to learn about the conflicts and contradictions among the major forces in the federation. You can't find a person that is more familiar with politics than me, Screwhead!

"In the federal parliament right now, two major forces are competing with each other. The MPs from Skyfire and the MPs from the Patriots Front combined have already surpassed fifty percent of the total seats. They are two giants!

"Meanwhile, the competition between the two giants is, in fact, a tug of war between the 'four new Sectors' and the 'three old Sectors'. Of course, on our side, we simply call them the new worlds and the old worlds.

"Skyfire represents the interests of the Heaven's Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector, the 'old worlds'. Those places are Jin Xinyue's base.

"The Patriots Front, headed by Ding Lingdang, stands for the interests of the Uranian Ring Sector, the Water Crystal Sector, the Forest Ocean Sector, and the Nether World Sector, the 'new worlds'. She is the spokesperson of the newcomers to the country!"

Long Yangjun was slightly dazed. After blinking for a long time, she glanced at Li Yao and said, "That's odd. I'm told that Jin Xinyue was once a queen of the demon race. In the era of the 'Old Federation', the Blood Demon Sector was even engaged in a war against the Heaven's Origin Sector, which represented the Old Federation. Ding Lingdang, in comparison, is a native of the Heaven's Origin Sector, born and raised there, and a guardian of the Old Federation. How on earth is Jin Xinyue representing the Heaven's Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector, whereas Ding Lingdang has won the support of the four new Sectors?”

“That’s because you haven’t learned the whole story, boss.” Screwhead smiled. “Yes. In the era of the Old Federation, there was indeed a war between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector, which the Blood Demon Sector lost. All the demons surrendered under Jin Xinyue’s lead.

“Because they lost the war, the demons were not treated very well in the federation in the decades at the beginning. They were basically the bottom class of the society.

“However, Jin Xinyue didn’t complain at all. On one hand, she suppressed the dissidents within the demon race who were dissatisfied about the federation cruelly with iron and blood, carrying on the strategy of ‘integrate into the federation’ determinedly to the end. On the other hand, she pleased the major sects in the federation through all kinds of methods, sometimes even groveling, especially the sects from the Flying Star Sector who did not have a deep grudge against the demons.

“For decades, Jin Xinyue was popular in the major sects of the federation. The demons who were sturdy, hardworking, and dutiful were given the dirty and exhausting work of those sects. The cheap but highly-qualified labor force from the demon race made the major sects able to spare their hands and gain enough resources to advance in fields that were more sophisticated!

“For the demons and the major sects, it was a win-win. After decades, Jin Xinyue was already a favorite for the leadership of the Star Glory Federation. She was almost the spokesperson for the major sects in the federation!

“After the four new worlds were discovered and merged one after another, as the minister of the Equality and Development Ministry, she did exactly what she had done to her fellow demons to the people of the four new Sectors. She plundered tremendous resources from the ‘new worlds’ and sent them to the pockets of the major sects of the three old worlds. She is a demon, but she is much more pleasing than any human being. How can she not have the favor and support of the major sects in the core worlds?

“Therefore, Jin Xinyue and her Skyfire have become the representatives for the interests of the ‘old worlds’!”

“That explains a lot.” Long Yangjun nodded. “Then, what about Ding Lingdang? Isn’t she as native to the Heaven’s Origin Sector as anyone can be? Shouldn’t she be on the side of the old worlds, too?”

“Although Ding Lingdang is from the Heaven’s Origin Sector, it was she who discovered and liberated the Nether World Sector and the Uranian Ring Sector. She also defeated a vanguard fleet of the Imperium of True Human Beings and saved Firefly,” Screwhead said in excitement. “I believe that you should know the incident better than I do, right?

“In the Nether World Sector, she defeated more than ten forces on the wasteland entirely on her own and settled the War of Ghosts that had lasted almost a hundred years. She saved the dying Nether World Sector from the darkness of division and self-brutalization! In the Uranian Ring Sector, she went deep into the tiger’s den alone, leading the Earthly Brute to overthrow the tyranny of the Heavenly Light! Therefore, the people of the two Sectors all regard her as a ‘savior’. Even in the Dragon Snake Space Zone, except for the big shots above, the smallfolk and the normal workers actually quite like her.

“Since Ding Lingdang is the liberator and savior of the new worlds, how can she watch the Sectors that she has rescued to fall into Jin Xinyue’s hands and be blatantly savaged and exploited by her?”

Chapter 1569 - Two Women’s Competition of Beliefs!

Chapter 1569: Two Women’s Competition of Beliefs!

Screwhead paused for the first time after giving such a long speech. Adjusting the slightly dry broadcast rune arrays on his neck, he went on. “That is not just Ding Lingdang’s intention but also the intention of the Patriots Front founded by her.

“You might not know this, bosses, but at the end of the Old Federation, the antecedent of the Patriots Front was the Patriots Partnership. However, the role that the organization played in history was not a very glorious one. It is said that they once launched a coup, hoping to seize supreme power. For their purpose, they even attempted to assassinate the Speaker at that time. They almost dragged the entire federation into a hopeless war.

“The coup was known as the ‘Riot of Patriots’ in history.

“After the coup failed, the leaders and members of the Patriots Partnership were accordingly punished by the law. The few leaders who were directly responsible were sentenced to death. The general members were also sentenced to decades if not hundreds of years in exile or penal servitude.

“It was under such circumstances that Ding Lingdang picked up the mess in the Patriots Partnership and regrouped it as the Patriots Front!

“The Patriots Front that was just reshuffled was not accepted by the general public, who had just gone through the ‘Riot of Patriots’, much less attracting them to join it! At that time, the first batch of key personnel in the Patriots Front comprised the members of the previous Patriots Partnership as well as their family, disciples, and social network.

“Although they are not large in number, those who were willing to join the Patriots Front despite such curses and misunderstandings at that time were all the most loyal, elite, and devout members!

“The Patriots Partnership had been made of the most extreme and radical ‘patriots’ in the first place, who wouldn’t hesitate to sacrifice everything for the federation, except that they had chosen the wrong path.

“When their overwhelming passion for the country was manipulated by their previous leader, Lu Zui, it turned into a power that could destroy everything!

“However, under Ding Lingdang’s lead, the newborn Patriots Front began to make their contributions in an equally radical, bigoted, and extreme way!

“The members of the Patriots Front, in their disciplined attitude, did not defend themselves at all when they were questioned and even cursed by the outside world. Silently, they cleansed the dishonor of the Patriots Partnership with real actions. All the damages that the Patriots Partnership caused to the federation were slowly made up for by the Patriots Front. That was their belief in the beginning!

“With the support of such an ideology, and determined to atone, the members of the Patriots Front strived at the most remote, arduous, and dangerous posts in the federation!

“Where are the most remote, arduous, and dangerous posts? Of course, in the resource planets and Sectors that were just beginning to be developed at the edge of the federation’s territory!

“Therefore, such things often happened. When a member of the Patriots Partnership was sentenced to dozens of years in penal servitude or exile, his family, disciples, students… Hundreds of people would migrate together with him to build the new land of the federation. With their blood, sweat, and even life, they slowly changed the impression of ‘patriots’ in the hearts of the people of the federation.

“Therefore, as the Nether World Sector, the Uranian Ring Sector, the Forest Ocean Sector, and the Water Crystal Sector gradually embraced the federation, the ascetic Patriots Front were the first echelon of Cultivators from the federation to go to the new worlds.

“The new worlds at that time were not nearly as prosperous and developed as right now. Each world had their own problems. Some of them had a harsh environment, some were seriously short of resources, and some were dominated by the eccentric beasts. The people were generally divided into many tribes, large and small, and battles and wars never ceased.

“It’s exactly like the Forest Ocean Sector that you saw just now. Such a weird world that is entirely covered in primitive forests is definitely not something that just anybody can handle!

“Cultivators are no saints. Moving from a developed, old world to a perilous, new world to ‘offer light and heat’? Many Cultivators from the old worlds were all hesitant. Even when some people stayed there for a couple of years, they would often run away as quickly as possible as soon as their work requirements were met.

“However, the Patriots Front persisted stubbornly to the end. They helped the four new Sectors establish roads and bridges; set up tubes to transmit spiritual energy; and constructed hospitals, schools, and training facilities; disseminating the culture of the federation to the new worlds and building a whole new civilization. They gradually blended into the residents of the new worlds!

“After a hundred years of construction, after a whole generation, countless ascetic members devoted themselves silently in those places. Most of them passed away there and were buried in the new worlds. Just like that, the Patriots Front was completely melted into the new worlds and could no longer be divided from them.

“The Patriots Front grew fast in the new worlds. After all, the local residents had not experienced a ‘Riot of Patriots’ or heard of the names of ‘Lu Zui’ or ‘Zhou Hengdao’, which could make the blood of the old-world residents freeze. Since the Patriots Front was struggling for the residents of the new worlds sincerely, and their liberator, Ding Lingdang, was the leader of the organization, wasn’t it only natural that they chose to join the Patriots Front?

“After a hundred years of hard work, the four new Sectors have become the home camp for the Patriots Front, which competes with the major sects and noble families of the old worlds as representatives of the new worlds!”

Listening attentively all the time, Li Yao could not help but take a long breath and scratch his head.

The conundrum was so difficult that he did not know how to resolve it at all!

“Then, what are the differences in the policies of Skyfire and the Patriots Front?” Long Yangjun asked.

“Of course, they are at loggerheads!” Screwhead said. “Let’s talk about economics first. Skyfire, led by Jin Xinyue, advocates the strategy of ‘buildup of the core’, which means that the resources of the seven Sectors should be concentrated for the development of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector, the three core worlds!

“Jin Xinyue’s reason is that the three core worlds are already highly developed with thorough infrastructure and a complete industrial system for magical equipment. Only by transmitting most of the resources in the new worlds to the core worlds can the resources be utilized at the highest efficiency. The greatest war potential will be triggered in such a way so that enough crystal suits, tanks, starships, and star fortresses can be prepared for the war to come!

“Therefore, not only is it unnecessary for the new worlds to develop more advanced industries, most of the resources should also be directly shipped to the core worlds. The training geniuses of the new worlds do not have to stay in the local area, either. They will be migrated to the core worlds for the most advanced education. Then, they can simply work and live in the core worlds!

“Ding Lingdang’s Patriots Front, on the other hand, highlights the ideology of ‘balanced development’. Ding Lingdang believes that, since the four new Sectors have only just joined the federation and the people there are not convinced yet, they must be shown the goodwill of the federation so that the seven Sectors will be focused into an indestructible whole!

“Yes. Transmitting all the resources to the core worlds will slightly improve the efficiency of utilization. However, by doing that, won’t the old worlds be absorbing the blood of the new worlds, when they all belong to the federation? What will the residents of the new worlds think of that?

“With the great war coming, unity is more important than anything. If the core worlds take too much from the new worlds, the people of the new worlds will certainly have second thoughts. When the expedition army of the Imperium does arrive, how are we going to convince them that the federation is better than the Imperium and make sure that they are willing to sacrifice everything for the victory of the federation?

“Therefore, not only should the core worlds stop absorbing blood from the old worlds, they should also be actively ‘transfusing blood’ to the new worlds. The core worlds should provide tremendous resources and favorable policies to help the new worlds establish their own magical equipment industries, training education systems, and so on. That way, the name of the Star Glory Federation will be etched into the brain of every resident in the new world. This is the only rightful path for the long-term development of the federation!”

Li Yao, Long Yangjun, and everybody else looked at each other in bewilderment, feeling that the two ideas both had their merits.

“In military, Jin Xinyue believes in the strategy of ‘preserve the force for a final battle within the border’. She maintains that, due to the long distance between the four new Sectors and the core worlds and the overstretched supply lines, it is barely possible to defend all of them. Therefore, when it is necessary, the federation should consider abandoning one to two worlds and attract the enemy into the border of the country so that they can be slowly drained and dealt with!

“Naturally, it follows the same pattern as the economic policy. Since the new worlds are possible battle areas and can even be abandoned after moving away all the usable resources to strike the enemy, there is no need to develop them on a large scale right now. After all, anything built on the new worlds right now will possibly be taken advantage of by the enemy!

“Ding Lingdang is the opposite. While she believes that Jin Xinyue’s concerns are valid from a strategic point of view, and it is true that the distance between the four new worlds and the three old worlds is too far and too heavy a burden for supplies, the influence of the policy on the people must be taken into account. If the federation gives up a world immediately after the army of the Imperium arrives, what will the residents of the other new worlds think? If the federation cannot protect them, why on earth should they fight on their own for the federation?

“Therefore, no matter how great the price is, the seven Sectors, especially the four new ones, must be protected! If some of the worlds are lost eventually after bloody battles, it might pass. However, if they are easily abandoned, a chain reaction will certainly be caused, and there will be dire consequences!

“Now that all seven Sectors have to be defended, naturally, the four new worlds should be stationed with tremendous troops, and a large portion of the military budget must be allotted for construction purposes! Although the military budget of the federation is astronomical, it is still too huge an investment. For every new star fortress built in the new worlds, it can possibly mean one fewer super starship in the docks of the old worlds. How can the two candidates ever concede on their military policies?”

Chapter 1570 - Ocean of Jade Chips!

Of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, Han Baling, Qi Changsheng, and some others were quite experienced generals. When they heard about Jin Xinyue’s military strategies, they found her theory made a lot of sense. However, when they heard Ding Lingdang’s opinions later, they did not think that she was wrong either.

They were all deep in thought, pondering over who was right and who was wrong.

“Anything else?” Long Yangjun asked.

“There’s still the most critical disagreement, which is about the acquirement of citizenship,” Screwhead said. “In the past hundred years, after eliciting the policies of the Imperium from the Immortal Cultivators, the federation adopted the approaches that the Imperium had in some fields, including the citizenship and the contribution point system, which marks the biggest difference between the New Federation and the Old Federation.

“In the New Federation, not everyone obtains citizenship the moment they become an adult. They have to pass many tests, make certain contributions to society, and prove that they are real citizens of the federation through special citizenship education and examinations!

“Only the citizens of the federation have the right to vote for the MPs in their local area and take part in the election for the Supreme Parliament. To quote the federal government, power must be given to those who know how to use it.

“Naturally, the citizenship education and examinations in the federation are much gentler and looser than their counterparts in the Imperium. Even the non-citizens do not have much of a difference to the citizens in most cases. The citizens are not allowed to discriminate, oppress, or enslave non-citizens.

“The greatest difference between the two parties is their qualification to vote for the MPs and the Speaker. Also, when it comes to the public affairs in the local area, the citizens have a larger say and can supervise the MPs while they enforce their power. That’s all.

“Although the obstacles are fewer, the citizenship of the federation is definitely not something that can be claimed without any trouble. It is especially so for the residents of the new worlds, who often find it almost impossible to accumulate enough contribution points and pass the many tests!

“Ding Lingdang and the Patriots Front have been campaigning to simplify the procedures of the citizenship tests. They believe that while the contribution point and citizenship system was established for a good purpose, it has deviated from its original course after decades of development and is now sliding toward the system of the Imperium. As time goes by, the ratio of the citizens to the non-citizens will be more and more shocking. In the end, a high and mighty ‘citizen class’ will be created. This uncontrollable class is bound to become a source of trouble in the federation.

“Jin Xinyue and Skyfire, on the other hand, believe that, since the people of different environments, cultures, and beliefs are joining the federation as the territory of the federation continues expanding, to ensure the ‘purity’ of the federation, the contribution point and citizenship system can only be highlighted instead of being simplified. Only those who pass the multiple tests and prove that they absolutely advocate the ideology of the federation will be the pillars of the federation that can guarantee that the federation moves forward at a high speed on the right path!

“Otherwise, the real spirit of the federation will be diluted time and time again with the participation of more and more Sectors until it entirely vanishes in the end! By then, even if the federation boasts a hundred Sectors, it will still be nothing more than an empty, vulnerable shell that will be blown apart at the first breeze!

“Hehe. Both parties have offered good points, but the truth is very simple. Simplifying the test procedures and lowering the standard of the citizenship means that it will be easier for the residents of the four new worlds to become ‘citizens’ with a right to vote. Since most of the residents of the four new worlds are in favor of Ding Lingdang and her Patriots Front, naturally, Ding Lingdang supports simplifying the procedures while Jin Xinyue holds the opposite opinion!”

After hearing that, Long Yangjun took a deep breath. “It sounds like quite a competition!”

“You don’t say. The interests and ideologies of the new worlds and the old worlds are very different. It remains to be seen who will be crowned in the end!” Screwhead paused for a moment. “I’m told that Ding Lingdang did not plan to campaign for the election in the beginning. Last year, when she was interviewed, she said that she was just a random warrior and it was impossible for her to lead the entire federation."

"Oh?" Long Yangjun raised her eyebrow. "Then, why did she campaign for the election in the end anyway?"

"Because if any candidate other than her challenged Jin Xinyue, no matter whether they won or lost, the new worlds and the old worlds would likely be torn apart," Screwhead replied.

"Ding Lingdang is the only exception. She has quite the prestige in both the old worlds and the new worlds. She is also the wife of Li Yao, the old dominator of the three Sectors. If she is elected, the new worlds will certainly be overjoyed, and the old worlds will find the result acceptable, too. They believe that Ding Lingdang will never betray the Heaven's Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector.

"If her campaign fails and Jin Xinyue becomes the Supreme Speaker, Ding Lingdang will be the only one who is capable of soothing the people of the new worlds and stabilizing the situation there.

"After all, if we get to the bottom of it, there is still a special personal relationship between Ding Lingdang and Jin Xinyue. Even after the final outcome of the election is out, there will still be chances for them to negotiate and communicate. They are both powerful enough to keep their subordinates under control, which is something that none of the other candidates can achieve."

Long Yangjun stared at Screwhead and casually observed, "For a tour guide, you do know quite a lot. Your head is quite clear, too!"

“Hehe. What do I know? Everything I said has actually been posted online!” Screwhead did not sense the killing intent in Long Yangjun’s words at all. He grimaced and said, “The news, inside information, comments, and articles are everywhere online. Even if I am not interested in them at all, some of them always pop up automatically whenever I activate my crystal processor. It’s very annoying!

“The ‘rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic’ has secluded the Spiritual Nexus on Firefly and forbidden you from reading the news from the federation, fearing that the crew members will escape. However, there are no such rules in the Dragon Snake Space Zone. It is impossible for anyone to disrupt the whole network! We are just lice who make our living in the gaps of the toes of the enormous dragon named the Star Glory Federation. Naturally, we have to pay special attention to the great events and change of policies in the federation. If the federation sneezes, we may catch a cold!”

Long Yangjun frowned. “The Spiritual Nexus?”

Screwhead, however, misunderstood her confusion. “What, you don’t want to leave any trace on the Spiritual Nexus? That’s easy. If you want to learn more about the information, I can take you to the biggest library of jade chips in Fish Dragon City. It will be completely safe and secure to browse any information there. No traces will be left behind at all!”

As the technology developed, almost all information could be retrieved online. The traditional books and jade chips, as mediums of information, were obsolete.

However, the development of network brought forth new problems. The Spiritual Nexus that covered the universe was highly dependent on the nodes, namely Spiritual Towers, to ensure normal functionality. It was prone to interference of all kinds of radiation and cosmic storms. Plus, one would always leave certain traces behind them after they browsed any information online!

As long as all the traces that a person left online were collected and analyzed, it would be very easy to outline a highly precise portrait of the target. All the information and weaknesses about the person would be controlled.

It was something that many people who loved freedom and hated boundaries, much less surveillance, especially the expert Cultivators, absolutely could not tolerate.

Although the problem could partly be resolved with ‘anonymous logins’, a lot of hackers and saboteurs online who had ill intentions could still crack the multiple camouflages of a person and find out their real identity. The hunters could even assault the victim’s brain and soul when the victim connected their brain to the Grand Illusionary Land!

The Spiritual Nexus was truly an invention that modern Cultivators both loved and hated.

Therefore, while the Spiritual Nexus was very popular, the traditional books and jade chips were not entirely outdated yet.

It was especially so in a lawless land like the Dragon Snake Space Zone. Despite the ostensible peace and prosperity, peril constantly lurked there. Most of the outcasts hated showing their real faces to anyone else as much as they hated leaving any trace online.

Therefore, Fish Dragon City boasted an enormous library of jade chips. It was not just a simple bookstore or a shop of jade chips but an absolutely safe place for information absorption and exchange that had been installed with multiple barriers and anti-tracing rune arrays.

Half an hour later, when they stood at the door of the library of jade chips, looking at the millions of jade chips placed right next to each other on the seemingly endless shelves, which were surrounded by the walls that had been piled up by decorative bamboo chips to the ceiling dozens of meters tall, all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were utterly dumbfounded!

Information!

The greatest difference between the ancient Cultivators and the modern Cultivation civilization was information!

They could accept the visual blast caused by the jam-packed skyscrapers in the city. They might not even blink when faced with the fierce firepower of a starship. When they enjoyed the fancy facilities on the luxury shuttle that Screwhead had called for them, they had been able to hold back their curiosity and simply leave a remark such as ‘this is a rather finely-made gadget’.

However, under the crazy flare of the information boom, those ‘ancient people’ could not have felt more shocked, thrilled, and embarrassed about themselves!

So many jade chips; so many classics; and so many books on astrology, geography, medication, military, and all the other subjects. There was even an entire floor for Cultivation arts and techniques!

When they were in the Ancient Sages Sector, for the Cultivation arts and techniques in one jade chip, it was possible for two sects to have such a big fight that they died together in the end!

Also, this place was simply a library that a bunch of outlaws banished by the Star Glory Federation had founded!

Then, how many jade chips, classics, and techniques must the largest library of the Star Glory Federation have stored?

What about the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance that were even more powerful than the federation?

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators looked at each other in bewilderment. At that moment, they finally recognized the insignificance of the Ancient Sages Sector and themselves. From the bottom of their hearts, the fire to learn from the entire universe was ignited!

Chapter 1571 - History of the Nether World

The ocean of jade chips displayed to the experts from the Ancient Sages Sector was divided into more than ten levels and hundreds of different categories. There were also rows of reading chairs that were quiet and undisturbed from each other. In midair at the center of the library, hundreds of promotional commercials were floating, informing the readers who had come of the latest published jade chips.

‘Great Collapse: The Star Glory Federation’s Decline in Ten Years!’

‘The Federation Can Say No!’

‘Secrets in History: The Blood Behind the Rise of the Star Glory Federation’

‘On the Internal Conflicts of the Leadership of the Federation’

All of them were the recent bestsellers in the Dragon Snake Space Zone.

“Well…”

All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators found it difficult to focus their eyes, not expecting that the residents of the Dragon Snake Space Zone were allowed to discuss national affairs just like that. Even the books elaborating on the internal conflicts of the country could be published and sold to the public without hiding it. Was it not giving the Star Glory Federation a perfect excuse to intervene?

Screwhead, on the other hand, did not think that it was a big deal. “What’s there to intervene with? Most of the books are actually published by the press in the Star Glory Federation. They are sold to the public within the federation, too. This is the freedom of speech! Not just those books, even the books that promote the true path of immortality can also be published as long as they do not involve terrorism after being investigated!

“After all, the Spiritual Nexus is too advanced nowadays. Even if such books are forbidden from being published openly, they can still spread in secret until everybody knows their content. It will only be a sign of the country’s lack of confidence if such books are banned, right?

“Alright, bosses, please search for the books that you find interesting yourselves. The introduction and map of every area are here. I believe that there must be something that you are interested in!”

It was quite true. All the eyes of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were glittering. They could not wait to dive into the ocean of jade chips now.

Meng Chixin, Wu Suiyun, and Wan Mingzhu went to the area that focused on the arts of the spectral Cultivators and the relationship between human beings and ghosts.

Han Baling and Qi Changsheng, on the other hand, went to the military area, studying the military magazines and books that had recently been published in the Star Glory Federation.

‘Emperor Phoenix’ Zhu Zongyou went to the politics section, planning to learn the differences between the system of the federation and that of the Imperium. ‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren obviously went to the area of the training techniques, apparently unable to drag his short, fat body out of the section of the sword arts after throwing it into the place.

As for Li Yao, he did not have a particular place that he wanted to go to. With mixed feelings, he simply wandered next to the ocean of jade chips, skimming over the rows of jade chips and the promotional pictures that they projected. He then observed the people who were reading the jade chips carefully without saying anything.

The readers’ clothes, countenance, accessories, and the portable crystal processor on their wrists had undergone slight changes compared to a hundred years ago. They looked more fashionable and natural.

The feeling made Li Yao feel both nostalgic and strange. It seemed that he would need some time to adapt himself to the new environment.

Right then, Li Yao noticed a name after a quick glance. He was slightly dazed and could not help but stop.

Sitting in front of the advertisement column of the popular jade chips of the biography area, he saw Ding Lingdang’s name. The book right above the name was entitled ‘History of the Nether World’.

According to the introduction on the advertisement, it was a book that told that the full story of how Ding Lingdang ended the hundred-year War of Ghosts in the Nether World Sector, unified the world, and brought the Nether World Sector to the federation on her own.

Curious, Li Yao took out a jade chip that contained the ‘History of the Nether World’ from the bookshelf.

The jade chips that had not been sold yet were all installed with barriers that prevented the readers from reading the whole content. However, the beginning and some of the exciting excerpts were often provided for the customers as another kind of advertisement.

Li Yao looked around and found an unoccupied egg-shaped reading seat in the corner. He then inserted the jade chip into a slot on the side of the reading seat.

A translucent, three-dimensional light beam immediately drowned him, taking him to the amazing world of a ‘Half-Step Grand Illusionary Land’.

The modern books in the jade chips were not made of pure words but a comprehensive artistic and informational form that included text, audio, video, all other effects, and even the powerful telepathic thoughts of the culture-type Cultivators.

What appeared in front of Li Yao was a Sector with a highly developed civilization, with beautiful scenery and skyscrapers everywhere in the city in an orderly fashion. The glittering crystal rails floating in midair were surrounded by colorful shuttles flying in and out.

A narrator began speaking.

“The Nether World Sector was a world of peace and prosperity once. The people living in this place enjoyed an easy and happy life.”

The picture zoomed in, and the camera drew close. On the jam-packed streets, the citizens were talking and laughing lightheartedly everywhere.

“However, the meteor shower a hundred and fifty years ago changed everything.”

The picture focused on the face of a young woman on the street. She was laughing and playing with her friend, when her eyes suddenly opened wide as she saw something. Green flames seemed to grow from deep within her pupils!

The picture turned and aimed at the sky. A hundred shooting stars, like falling suns, tore apart the sky and hurtled toward the land!

For a moment, everything in front of Li Yao’s eyes turned into devastating violet. When the violet color gradually faded away, the world had already become a dark, derelict wasteland enshrouded in purple mist.

The previous skyscrapers had only the contorted rebars and pillars left, as if they were skeletons made of iron. The crystal rails dangled from the broken walls like whirls, dotted by some shuttles that had been burnt into frameworks. The civilization seemed to have been entirely wiped out.

“The meteor shower only destroyed half of the planet, but the long winter and the pollution of water sources caused by the meteor shower drained the previously abundant resources. To fight for whatever was left of the resources, a prolonged war broke out. The fire swept across the entire planet and consumed everyone!”

On the picture, in the gaps of the debris, unpredictable air was suddenly crawling out. It gradually condensed into the shape of a confused human being.

“Nobody knows what kind of marvelous materials the dust of the meteorites stored. However, in the world enshrouded in the purple smoke, the odds of the deceased turning into ghosts were significantly increased. Countless soldiers and civilians turned into ghosts from living people.

“However…”

Hooo!

On the picture, an armored, iron tank that was rusted and riddled with holes suddenly jumped into the sky from deep inside the debris and landed exactly in front of the newborn ghost.

Right behind the tank stood three spectral Cultivators supported by battle-type artificial bodies, who looked no different from three dark, iron skeletons. Howling scarily, they waved a piece of magical equipment that looked like a noose. With the magnetic rope in the front, they caught the newborn ghost immediately and dragged the captive into their own tank!

The iron skeletons were grinning hideously, the newborn ghost was struggling and screaming, and the iron-armored tank was fulminating. All the noises gradually faded away to the end of the picture.

“War. War never changes. Even if most living people were killed in the war, there was still no stopping some people’s greed and hatred.

“After the living people turned into ghosts, the ghosts continued the war, to fight for artificial bodies, for spiritual energy to activate the artificial bodies, to swallow other ghosts to build up their own soul power… For a hundred years, the planet turned into a battlefield of the deceased!

“Ghosts do not have eternal life, and dissipating into nothingness is their end. As more and more living people hiding in the shelters were transformed into ghosts, the Nether World Sector slid into the abyss of destruction. None of the forces of the ghosts was able to save the dying world, except…”

On the picture, from deep inside the debris, a person who was entirely covered in a gray cloak, with a face hidden in darkness, was walking closer.

The cloak was fluttering hard in the blowing wind that was mixed with the smell of the rust. Below the cloak was a pair of leather boots that were fully embedded with iron nails. They were producing clicking noises as the person stepped forward.

The person hidden in the cloak was walking unhurriedly in the debris of the city, followed by a big yellow dog that was slightly abnormal because of the radiation of the meteorites.

Standing right next to the dilapidated buildings that rose high into the sky but seemed to be about to collapse, her body was both slender and insignificant, and it appeared that she would be swallowed by the wasteland anytime.

Right then—

“Owww!”

A battle-type artificial body that was more than four meters tall suddenly leapt out of one side of the debris. It was thick and strong, with two arms that were unbelievably bulky. There were iron nails all over its fists, making it look like a huge gorilla made of iron and copper!

The ‘iron gorilla’ was shouting deliriously, and sparks were bursting out of the iron nails on the two fists as it lunged toward the person in the cloak!

Compared to the artificial body that was more than four meters tall, the person in the cloak seemed thin and vulnerable, as if she would be crushed as soon as he pressed close!

However, right when the iron gorilla lunged to the midair, a healthy, caramel-colored arm suddenly extended out of the cloak. The fist clenched, and the iron gorilla was frozen in midair!

The eyes of the iron gorilla immediately bulged. He waved his arms and feet, struggling crazily, only to find that it was impossible to move at all!

Boom!

The cloaked person pressed hard. With her spiritual energy and nothing else, she knocked the iron gorilla to the ground, creating a depression more than three meters deep. Sparks were jumping out everywhere from the body, indicating that the artificial body had been completely scrapped!

Stepping on the head of the iron gorilla, the cloaked person took off her hood and goggles unhurriedly, revealing the face that Li Yao could not have been more familiar with.

However, at that moment, there was an enticing charisma on her face that Li Yao had never seen before.

“Ding Lingdang, the most dreadful living person walking in the world of the deceased…”

Crack!

Ding Lingdang crushed the head of the iron gorilla with her foot. After grinding the iron plate beneath her boot against a burnt rock nearby, she put on the goggles and cloak again. Bringing the yellow dog whose tail was wagging hard, she moved further and further away from the body.

“First published in the federation, authorized by Ding Lingdang, with more than three hundred minutes of interview with Ding Lingdang and other first-hand accounts, from a dying world to a paradise for the spectral Cultivators of the federation, ‘History of the Nether World’ has all the wonders you need. Unlock all the content with only 29.9 star coins…”

Chapter 1572 - If We Burn, the Universe Will Never Be Dark!

Li Yao was quite interested in his wife’s experiences in the Nether World Sector. He was about to pay with an anonymous crystal card and read on when he sensed somebody breathing and chuckling next to him. Frowning, he exited the Half-Step Grand Illusionary Land state, only to discover that Long Yangjun was looking at him mischievously, leaning against the shell of the reading cabin he was in.

“A… very strong woman.” Long Yangjun was quite amazed by Ding Lingdang’s image on the promotional picture, in which she was grabbing a giant sword with both hands that were covered in a pair of crystal gloves, with some of her crimson hair leaking out of the hood. She blinked at Li Yao and said, “I can’t admire you more now. It never occurred to me that I was faced with such a legend among legends, ‘Monster Li’!”

“Where are they?” Li Yao craned his neck and looked around.

“Don’t worry,” Long Yangjun said. “They are all too fascinated by the jade chips to care about anything else right now. You wouldn’t be able to get them out even if you pulled them with nine bulls or beat them with sticks.”

“What about you? Why are you not reading the books like they are?” Li Yao tried to change the topic.

“I am as fascinated as them!” Long Yangjun said with a smile. “However, it is my opinion that the best way to learn about a country and a civilization quickly is to browse through the biographies of celebrities, in order to know what kind of brilliant, extraordinary figures have emerged during the rise of the civilization. That’s why I’m here and how I ran into you. Shouldn’t I say hello?”

“The hello has been said,” Li Yao snapped. “Anything else?”

“There is indeed something not very important,” Long Yangjun said. “I have picked out a bunch of biographies, but I’m wondering if some of them are simply based on rumors and groundless stories. In that case, wouldn’t I be wasting my time to read them?

“As it happens, you are right here. Help me check if those books are full of bullsh*t!”

She handed over a few jade chips and activated the advertisement on the first jade chip. The name of the biography in the jade chip popped up.

‘He Changed the Federation: A Biography of Li Yao’.

Right above the title was a young man who was resolute and determined. Fierce flames were beaming out of his eyes, giving everybody the impression that he was a visionary man with the charisma of a leader. He was resting his hands on his hip while he stared at the infinite brilliant stars.

“…” Li Yao.

“Look, look!” Exclaiming in astonishment, Long Yangjun touched a corner of the picture, and it immediately changed from the cover to the title page.

On the title page, with the deep, dark universe as the background, there was a dazzling line that seemed to be written with lightning.

“Every one of us is a star. If we burn, the universe will never be dark. – Li Yao”

“Huh?”

“I really can’t hold back my admiration for you anymore. It never occurred to me that not only can you awe the two toughest women in the federation, you are also capable of such philosophical speech. According to the traditions of this world, I’m almost inclined to ask for your autograph!”

“… Well, I really don’t remember speaking in such a pretentious way before.”

“Really?” Long Yangjun raised an eyebrow and changed to a different jade chip. “What about this one? ‘999 Life Lessons Li Yao Offered to the Young Cultivators Before He Left’?”

“Well. I don’t think I’ve heard about it before.”

“You can’t be serious. Are the offspring so shameless as to fabricate and exaggerate the nonexistent stuff? What about this one?” Long Yangjun took out a third jade chip. “‘Romance of the Old Federation: Li Yao and His Women’. Wow. This book is rather shocking. It claims that you and your disciple Jin Xinyue are in an ambiguous relationship. That’s why Ding Lingdang and Jin Xinyue are at loggerheads with each other. The competition of Skyfire and the Patriots Front, two major forces in the federation, boils down to the competition over a husband between the two women!

“Tsk, tsk, tsk. Although the book sounds ridiculous and not worth reading, now that you are here in person, I think that

I’d better check it with you first. It can’t be true, right, Monster Li?”

“… No comment!”

“So, are you saying that it is true?”

“… Nonsense!”

“Hehe. You’re finally admitting that you are Vulture Li Yao, the legendary dominator of the three Sectors and one of the founding fathers of the federation, right?”

“I don’t know about the dominator of the three Sectors, but it’s true that I am Vulture Li Yao. Is there a problem?”

Long Yangjun blinked. “Huh. I feel that you have changed into a different person after returning to this place. You are more and more like ‘Monster Li’ right now. It seems to me that you are no longer worried that your identity will be exposed!”

Looking at Ding Lingdang’s image on the advertisement of the jade chip in his hands and the covers of Jin Xinyue’s biographies that were everywhere to be seen not far away, Li Yao put on a confident and casual smile. “I wandered in the sea of stars for almost a hundred years and went through so much trouble before I found the Ancient Sages Sector. To be honest, I was indeed a bit worried at that time, not knowing what exactly had happened in the federation during the hundred years.

“Did the unification of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector go well? Were the demons really willing to be transformed into human beings? Would other human beings discriminate against the people with the bloodline of the demons? Was Ding Lingdang capable of intimidating the radical, extreme fellows in the Patriots Partnership? Would the expedition army of the Imperium arrive in advance and begin to savage my motherland?

“At that time, I didn’t have any answers to those questions!

“At that time, I thought that the fate of the federation was on my shoulders and that my every action would decide the federation’s future. Therefore, I was often hesitant because of those concerns.

“However, now that I have come back to my hometown, I’ve realized that while the Star Glory Federation today is not a perfect country, and despite all the problems here, it is still much better than what I imagined. Ding Lingdang, Jin Xinyue, and all the other citizens of the federation are all working hard in their own way!

“Just now, when I watched Ding Lingdang travelling in the world of the deceased on her own, accomplishing something great that I might not have been able to achieve myself, I finally figured it out.

“Maybe I am not as important as I thought.

“The future of the federation can’t and shouldn’t be decided by myself but by me; Ding Lingdang; Jin Xinyue; and countless warriors, citizens, and ordinary people together. Even if some of us make a mistake on a certain plan, it is still not going to stop the rise of the federation!

“I firmly believe that the Star Glory Federation will show you her strength and hope, which will prompt you to make the right decision. Then, does it really matter what my real identity is and whether or not it is exposed?”

Long Yangjun’s mischievous expression was somewhat frozen, as if a certain delicate camouflage was shattered by Li Yao’s powerful speech. Confusion and hollowness were flowing out of the tiny gaps.

After a long hesitation, she finally sighed softly. “I suddenly find that I am very jealous of you. Hehe. Jealousy. Another emotion that I have never experienced before. A very amazing feeling.”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. “What makes you jealous of me?”

“I’m jealous that you have so many friends, family, and compatriots whom you are willing to fight for without caring about anything. In return, most of them are also willing to fight for you without bothering about anything else, right? I have already skimmed through one of your tales in the ‘Riot of Patriots’. If it isn’t exaggerated too much, that must’ve been a very thrilling experience.”

Long Yangjun turned the jade chip of ‘Li Yao and His Women’ over and over in her hands before she said, “You slept in the universe for a hundred years, but the moment you return home and see your family and friends, you have already absorbed tremendous strength from them!

“But what about me?

“I have slept for at least hundreds of thousands of years. Did I have my family, friends, and compatriots hundreds of thousands of years ago? I think I certainly did, but today, I’m afraid that they are already long gone, now dust in the cosmos.

“You have been asking me what my purpose is. That’s exactly what I’ve been asking myself. What am I going to do now that I’ve awakened? However, whatever my purpose and destiny is, even if I do accomplish it, my past family, friends, and compatriots won’t be able to see them, right? So, what’s the point?

“I fear that I will never be able to fight for my family, friends, compatriots, and civilization wholeheartedly just like you, to hesitate for them, to worry for them, to cheer for them, to be overjoyed by them!

“Don’t you think that I should be jealous of you?”

Li Yao was dazed, not expecting that Long Yangjun would express so many of her feelings.

After pondering for a moment, he extended his hands to Long Yangjun and sincerely said, “As you have seen, the Star Glory Federation today is not an isolated country but an open and tolerant universal civilization. Whoever is willing to guard the spirit of the federation can be taken as a citizen of the Star Glory Federation!

“I don’t care what kind of destiny is on your shoulders. However, before I find valid proof that calls for my suspicion for you, I am willing to regard you as a… friend, an ‘interstellar comrade’. I believe that the federation will be open for you, too.

“If you are willing to, you can totally consider the Star Glory Federation your new motherland, where you can find new friends, family, and targets that are worth protecting and fighting for at the cost of anything!

“Your destiny from hundreds of thousands of years ago… Maybe it doesn’t matter at all even if it cannot be realized, right?”

While Li Yao was speaking that, his head suddenly ached.

Two words that had not haunted him for a long time popped up again like a ghost.

Vulture Plan.

Long Yangjun stared at Li Yao thoughtfully for a long time. Not finding the slightest pretension on Li Yao’s face, she could not help but chuckle. “You’ve earned one point for what you said just!”

Li Yao was dazed again. “One point? One point for what?”

“You will know what it is later. Now, let’s just focus on our books!”

“Later? What do you mean? Hey, why are you still reading ‘Romance of the Old Federation: Li Yao and His Women’? I already said that it is pure garbage!”

Chapter 1573 - The Real Self

Over the next three days, the twelve experts of the Ancient Sages Sector dwelled in the ocean of jade chips, unable to free themselves.

They studied the customs, vernacular, and usages of all kinds of bizarre magical equipment in the modern Cultivation civilization from the jade chips. At the same time, they dived deep into the professional fields that they were interested in.

With the computational ability of the Nascent Soul Stage and the Divinity Transformation Stage, although it was impossible for them to completely understand every detail of the modern Cultivation civilization in only three days, they had managed to grasp the basics of the Star Glory Federation. They had also learned a thing or two about the exotic customs and language habits. Hilarious jokes such as mistaking the automatic toilet for a basin to wash hands certainly never occurred.

Three days later, in an ordinary, unattractive hotel room near the library of jade chips, the few Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators all put on new clothes.

They had all put on light protective clothes with the feeling of icy silk, which allegedly was very popular in the Star Glory Federation. There was a portable crystal processor of the latest model in the shape of a water drop on everybody’s wrist. Colorful lights and shadows were flashing on everyone’s eyeballs, which were projected by the most advanced retina chip systems. Together with the super-tiny vibration rune arrays stuck into the earholes, a local area network made of twelve people was established for the convenience of communication.

Meng Chixin, Wu Suiyun, and Wan Mingzhu, the three spectral Cultivators, also found a store that specifically sold artificial bodies in the area that was inhabited by the outcasts from the Nether World Sector. They each bought a new body as a replacement for the crude iron shells crafted by Li Yao.

The artificial bodies manufactured in the assembly line of the big factories—with their delicate details, glamorous rune arrays, and ancillary crystal processor that had an extremely high computational ability embedded into the brain—made the spectral Cultivators overjoyed and unwilling to let them go.

At that moment, a few Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were adjusting their expressions in front of the mirrors and familiarizing themselves with the dialects of the local area. Another few were still changing clothes in their respective room. Some other experts were commenting on the things that they had learned over the past few days in amazement.

“The war potential of the Star Glory Federation is indeed too deep to measure!”

Heaven Battering King Qi Changsheng clicked his tongue and said, “I have read the war memoirs of the federation and the Uranian Ring Sector in the past couple of days. The federation was able to deploy almost a thousand main-force warships during the war, not to mention the medium-sized warships and smaller ones. Hundreds of Nascent Soul Stage

Cultivators and more than ten thousand Core Formation Stage Cultivators participated in the war. However, for the Star Glory Federation, it was still merely a local war, and the country hadn’t entered the legendary ‘general mobilization’ state! I do wonder what kind of terrifying power the federation can unleash if it’s going at full blast!

“It appears that we were indeed frogs in a well who did not know the vastness of the universe outside at all before!

“Since the federation is so powerful, as long as the terms are good enough, we can certainly join it and get a few hundred starships as toys. Haha. It doesn’t seem like a bad idea at all!”

“It is not going to be easy to join the federation.” Meng Chixin smiled. He then touched his metal face with his metal hands, surprised that the ‘muscles’ made of super-tiny metal threads could make a ‘smiling’ expression. “I’ve been studying the political system of the federation, especially their citizenship system. It is really quite interesting.

“To be a citizen of the federation, the first measurement is ‘contribution points’, which means military credits or accomplishments in other fields. This is nothing strange. It is similar to the citizenship system in the Imperium as Heiye Lan described, except that it is not as cruel as in the Imperium and that the power of ‘citizens’ is greatly limited.

“The so-called ‘citizenship education and tests’, on the other hand, are quite interesting. Most of the procedures are conducted in a game called ‘Civilization’!

“To become a federal citizen, one must complete a certain number of quests in ‘Civilization’, play for a certain amount of time, and experience the rise and fall of hundreds of civilizations in person. They will also taste the feeling of killing a great civilization with their own hands because of a poor decision!

“According to the federation’s theory, the game of ‘Civilization’ can make the citizen candidates understand how important the vote in their hands is. It also teaches a ‘pre-citizen’ to make use of their power correctly and responsibly in order to participate in the decision of the national affairs!

“In the Ancient Sages Sector, such knowledge is definitely part of the arts of a monarch, but the Star Glory Federation is providing the arts of the monarchs for ordinary people to learn and sometimes even forcing them to. They have even made the knowledge into a game that all the ordinary people are addicted to. How unbelievable!

“It is a shame that it requires a residential number of the Star Glory Federation to connect to the Spiritual Nexus and experience the whole content of the game of ‘Civilization’. In the Dragon Snake Space Zone, we can only play the… castrated version, which is a complete waste of time.

“After we find our way into the federation and get ourselves a few residential numbers, I will absolutely try to taste the feeling of picking up the arts of monarchs with games!”

“The Star Glory Federation’s attitude toward the spectral Cultivators seems very nice, too!” Mother White Lotus Wan Mingzhu shrieked. “The ‘Affirmative Action for Ghosts’ was enacted two hundred years ago. Now, the Nether World Sector has been established as a paradise for spectral Cultivators. Super rune arrays to block the radiation and protect the soul have been set up in the atmosphere of the planet of the Nether World Sector. If a spectral Cultivator is to live in the Nether World Sector, their longevity will be lengthened by decades. I’m almost tempted to stay in the Star Glory Federation now!”

Han Baling, a firm believer of classical militarism, snorted and said, “The Star Glory Federation is only good enough if it can resist the scourge of the army of the Imperium! I have studied the system and situation of the federation profoundly over the past few days, too, especially the problems in the federation. I found that the federation has too many hidden issues.

“It is needless to mention the conflicts between Skyfire and the Patriots Front. There’s also the rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic, which is quite a hot potato.

“On the surface, the ‘rightful government’ and the ‘Star Glory Federation’ are both civilizations of Cultivators. But as the saying goes, two tigers cannot live on the same mountain. It is exactly because their ideology is the same that some problems have become too subtle to be resolved.

“It is said that, before Firefly arrived, the Star Glory Federation thought that the Star Ocean Republic was long gone and regarded itself as the ‘successor of the spirit of the Star Ocean Imperium and the Star Ocean Republic’, which was certainly a justifiable title during their rise in the universe. Even if it was to march to the center of the cosmos someday, the title would also be a great, legitimate slogan!

“However, it never occurred to them that a ‘government-in-exile’ had fled on Firefly, which threw the Star Glory Federation into an awkward situation!

“Firefly has its own officials and system of the ‘rightful government’ on board, which takes the Star Glory Federation as a local armed force and hopes that the Star Glory Federation will accept the command of the ‘rightful government’ and even aid the rightful government in marching back to the center of the cosmos one day, helping the Star Ocean Republic with its resurrection!

“Well… To use some slang from the local area, those people have too much water in their brain. How can the federation accept such a deal?

“The federation intends to swallow Firefly and absorb the ‘rightful government’ into the federation. Then, the federation’s ‘legitimacy’ to march into the center of the cosmos will be beyond doubt! If, one day, the federation is truly developed enough to attack the homeland of the Imperium, the slogan will certainly be quite effective for many Sectors that are on the fence!

“The two parties are at an impasse right now. In general, the federation is certainly much more powerful than Firefly. However, Firefly does have legs. Having fled for a thousand years, they are like shocked birds who are always prepared to flee for another thousand years.

“Therefore, instead of staying in any of the seven Sectors in the federation, Firefly has been docked near the Dragon Snake Space Zone and trading with the federation through the platform, because it fears that it will be swallowed by the federation!

“Join the Star Glory Federation or not? The issue is not agreed upon on Firefly. It is said that those in favor and those who disagree are arguing hard, unable to reach a decision even though the army of the Imperium is drawing near.

“This could be a fatal wound for the overall strategy of the Star Glory Federation. The situation of the federation is not as simple as it appears. Undercurrents are flowing everywhere with many hidden problems!”

Wu Suiyun, the other Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator, smiled. “We don’t have to place our bet in a hurry. The federation does have a lot of problems, but from the biographies of the leadership of the federation I’ve read in the past days, the figures such as Ding Lingdang or Jin Xinyue are all extraordinary talents. I believe that they certainly have solutions. Not to mention that there’s still Vulture Li Yao, Monster Li. Tsk, tsk, tsk. If such a person has been training in seclusion and manipulating everything in darkness all this time, a tiny Firefly will certainly not…”

Somebody knocked on the door.

Li Yao walked in with the latest camouflage.

All the Cultivators in the room were dazed.

“Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, you are—”

Li Yao was wearing a sloppy, linen shirt and a pair of red-and-green beach pants, with two slippers that were spluttering noisily on his feet.

“The best way to hide is to hide among the people. Is there a problem?”

After speaking to Long Yangjun that day, he had completely let go of his burden. Instead of considering too much, he was back to his true self.

Sucking the smoothie in his hands, he looked at everyone innocently.

Before the experts realized what was going on, they were distracted by a graceful person who walked into the room behind Li Yao in casual clothes.

“Long Yangjun?” Mother White Lotus Wan Mingzhu exclaimed before she paused and asked in surprise, “… Lord Wang?”

“Excuse me.” Long Yangjun responded with the voice of ‘Lead Eunuch’ Wang Xi.

The many experts were all dazed, especially Han Baling and Qi Changsheng who were among the ‘Four Rapscallions’ like Long Yangjun. They were all amused. “I didn’t know that Lord Wang’s camouflage would be so immaculate. No wonder Lord Wang was not harmed at all when all the Cultivators in the Great Qian Dynasty were hunting you!

“However—”

Thoughtfully, Meng Chixin asked, “Nobody is hunting Lord Wang right now. Why are you disguising yourself, Lord Wang?”

“It’s simple.” Long Yangjun restored her crisp voice. “Ding Lingdang and Jin Xinyue, the two most critical targets in the Star Glory Federation, are both women. We will have to deal with them sometime later. Approaching them as a woman may bring us unexpected benefits. Senior Wu Suiyun and Fellow Cultivator Wan Mingzhu here are both spectral Cultivators. It may not be convenient for them in many environments. Since I am good at such secret arts, I feel obliged to take the responsibility.”

Chapter 1574 - In Short, Let’s Rob!

Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun looked at each other before Meng Chixin said, “Fellow Cultivator Wang, you once established ‘Ghost Character’, an assassination and intelligence organization. You are the one best at stealth, infiltration, and sneak-in among the twelve of us. Naturally, you should be the commander of the operation. In your opinion, what should we do next?”

“After three days of learning, I believe that you have gained a preliminary understanding about the universe beyond the Ancient Sages Sector,” Long Yangjun said confidently. “With your Cultivation in the Nascent Soul Stage and the Divinity Transformation Stage, it shouldn’t be difficult for you to pretend to be general local Cultivators, right?”

“It’s a piece of cake,” Han Baling, the sovereign of the prairies, said confidently. “We have learned everything about the customs and culture of this world. We have even grasped the common slang among the ordinary people. Nobody will notice anything wrong! Speaking of which, the slang of this world is quite strange. For example, unmarried men and women are often discriminated against in the place. Some of them are even cursed as ‘single dogs’, who often suffer ‘ten thousand tons of critical damage [1] ‘. How uncanny!”

“That’s nothing unusual,” Meng Chixin said casually. “Faced with the immense pressure from the Imperium of True Human Beings, the Star Glory Federation will certainly encourage reproduction. Only by giving birth to a larger population can they expect to raise more warriors! Such a policy to encourage reproduction is common in the history of the Ancient Sages Sector, too. For those who are overaged and unmarried, they cannot provide soldiers for the country. It is not unusual that they are discriminated as ‘single dogs’.”

“Thank you for your enlightenment, Master. I was too shortsighted. This is one of the federation’s policies to prepare for the war!” Han Baling slapped his head. “All in all, we are quite fluent with the urban slang here now. It is definitely not going to be a problem to blend into the local people!”

“That’s good!” Long Yangjun nodded in great satisfaction. “Learn, observe, and choose. We have basically achieved our first purpose. As for the fields that are more cutting-edge, we will have to learn them later after we infiltrate the federation.

“Next, we must choose appropriate identities to officially sneak into the federation!”

“Didn’t the tour guide ‘Screwhead’ say that he could contact the major sects in the federation so that we can directly enter the federation under ‘half legal’ identities?” Meng Chixin said. “Also, Fei Qi once told us about his links with the CIFA. They must have ways to sneak into the federation, too.”

Long Yangjun shook her head and said, “Neither of the two approaches are secure enough.

“Firstly, it is true that Screwhead can contact the major sects in the federation, which can give us half legal or even entirely legal identities. However, the main purpose of those sects is to attract the talents on ‘Firefly’. If we choose such an approach, we will inevitably be asked about the situation on Firefly and to show the techniques that only the Cultivators of the ‘rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic’ know. It is also possible that we will run into the crew members of Firefly who have already entered the federation through such an approach.

“We don’t know the first thing about the situation inside Firefly or any technique of the Cultivators from the center of the cosmos. Even if we can fool Screwhead for now, we can never pass all the following procedures to come.

“Secondly, it might be possible for us to sneak into the federation by way of the CIFA.

“However, I have always been suspicious about the CIFA. Such an insignificant, anti-federation organization has been active under the federation’s nose for such a long time without being annihilated. Is it possible that the federation is simply waiting for a big fish to bite the bait?

“Chances are that every secret branch of the CIFA is watched closely by a dozen special agents of the Secret Sword Bureau! If we go to the CIFA recklessly, it remains to be seen whether we can win their trust or not, but there is no doubt that the Secret Sword Bureau will set their eyes on us.

“Although it doesn’t matter to us even if we expose our identities or end on bad terms with them, it is still a better option to observe from the darkness if we have a choice.

“After all, even if the federation truly opens the gate for us and welcomes us warmly, what they demonstrate to us will probably be disguises. We will not be able to see everything as clearly as when we explore everything on our own.”

“Fellow Cultivator Wang, you do have a point.” Meng Chixin nodded. “It is true that we are more likely to find the truth about the federation if we investigate in secret. However, what identities should we use if neither of those two approaches are workable?

“With the Cultivation of the twelve of us, it is not difficult for us to change our appearances. However, in the federation, most information is connected to the Spiritual Nexus. It is practically impossible to go anywhere without an identity that can be verified online. We can’t hope to sneak around everywhere we go, right?”

“It is a problem that is not as tricky as it sounds,” Long Yangjun said. “As long as you have money, you can almost buy anything on the black market in Fish Dragon City, including the packages of absolutely legal identities, backgrounds, and plastic surgery. Many outcasts actually returned to the federation after staying here for decades because of nostalgia by switching to a new identity from the black market.”

Meng Chixin furrowed his eyebrows that were made of crystal threads. “As long as we have money?”

“Yes. That’s actually the biggest problem we are faced with. We are out of money,” Long Yangjun said rather helplessly. “We came to this place empty handed without any local currency. Fei Qi and his comrades were out on a hunting trip and therefore did not bring much money. Over the past few days, we have been purchasing jade chips, crystal processors, and other equipment crazily. The star coins and crystal cards that we looted from Fei Qi are running out.

“There will be an astronomical expense if we want to get twelve legal identities from the black market, preferably twelve related ones that can explain why the twelve of us are hanging around together!

“Also, after we do arrive in the federation, it will be best if we abide by the law and do not do anything outrageous in case we decide to cooperate with them later. So, we have to prepare a large sum of money for our daily expenses.

“After living in the Dragon Snake Space Zone for a couple of days, I’m afraid that you have all sensed that the spiritual energy here is much thinner than the spiritual energy in the Ancient Sages Sector. We have been consuming the crystals that we brought from the Ancient Sages Sector in our training every day. The rate of consumption is rather high!”

Everybody nodded at Long Yangjun’s words.

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were all gluttons of crystals. Not just improvement, even maintaining their powerful level would require a tremendous quantity of crystals and spiritual energy.

The path of Cultivation was like rowing against the current. One would either be making progress or falling behind. Unless the Cultivator was hibernating, they could not skip training any day.

As it happened, the density of spiritual energy in the outside world was much lower than that in the Ancient Sages Sector. For them, it was like an ordinary person visiting a planet with an oxygen percentage of less than five percent. They felt extremely uncomfortable.

To maintain their level in such a ‘low-oxygen’ environment, they had to resort to the crystals that they had brought from the Ancient Sages Sector.

However, the capacity of their Cosmos Rings was not unlimited. At their current rate of consumption, all the crystals would soon be drained. After that, they would have to purchase the crystals locally, which would require another huge sum of money.

In the Ancient Sages Sector, those unparalleled experts were supported by their sects, tribes, and country, and the spiritual energy in their hometown was much denser. They had never been worried about such things before. However, now that they had gone to a modern Cultivation civilization where they were complete strangers, training resources—or in other words, ‘money’—became the greatest problem.

“We have to find ways to make money.” Long Yangjun counted on her fingers. “Firstly, we must buy twelve legal identities from the black market. Secondly, we must prepare funds for our training and activities in the federation. Thirdly, we have to prepare two crystal suits for everyone, which means twenty-four in total, or twenty-six if we are counting Heiye Lan. This is another fortune.”

Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar was confused. “Why do we have to prepare so many crystal suits? Don’t we have the Colossi?”

“It’s true that we have the Colossi. However, such ‘ultimate magical equipment’ is too powerful and eye-catching,” Long Yangjun explained. “If we make use of them, there will be absolutely no room for negotiation and no retreat for us!

“Also, it is highly inconvenient to maintain the Colossi. I’m afraid that we will not be able to use them again after a great battle.

“Therefore, the Colossi can only be used as our final ‘trump cards’. For daily use, we will have to count on the crystal suits.

“The crystal suits that we are using right now are all loot from the Imperium that we got through Heiye Lan, with the unmistakable style of the Immortal Cultivators. I don’t think it is appropriate to use them within the territory of the federation.

“Also, while we have acquired a few crystal suits from Fei Qi, they are mostly garbage with lousy performances. Such equipment is not good enough to aid us when we are in crisis.

“This is what I’m thinking. If we do sneak into the federation, unless it is absolutely necessary, we must not reveal our Cultivation of the Nascent Soul Stage and the Divinity Transformation Stage. In the seven Sectors of the federation, there are only less than a thousand Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in total. If twelve unknown Cultivators suddenly popped up out of nowhere, the Secret Sword Bureau will certainly come running!

“We can only be active with the Cultivation of the Core Formation Stage, which means we will need twelve middle- and high-level crystal suits that befit Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage from the federation. Naturally, if possible, we also need twelve high-level crystal suits that can bring out the best combat ability of the Nascent Soul Stage and the Divinity Transformation Stage in case of emergencies.

“Those crystal suits do not have to be brand-new. We can ask Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture to purchase some components and add to the crystal suits of the Imperium as disguises.

“However, both purchasing new crystal suits and modifying the old ones will cost a huge fortune.

“The three expenses combined are certainly astronomical. Where do you propose we get the money?”

Long Yangjun looked at everybody.

‘Heaven Battering King’ Qi Changsheng grinned. “Is there a problem? Let’s just rob!”

Long Yangjun clapped her hands. “Bullseye, Fellow Cultivator Qi. To get such a large sum of money, we can either gamble or rob. Or, we can both gamble and rob!

“My plan is for us to work in three different directions.

“Gambling is very popular in Fish Dragon City. Wealthy people fill the casinos and the arenas. Let’s ask ‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren to go to one of the arenas and win a few matches. That way, we can figure out the details about the local magnates.

“The eleven of us will be divided into two teams and work simultaneously.

“As for Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, you will go to the biggest magical equipment market and crystal suit center to prepare equipment we may need after we enter the federation. Any problems?”

Chapter 1575 - Enjoy Life!

The plan of gambling and robbing had been concocted by Li Yao and Long Yangjun together in the first place. Naturally, Li Yao did not have a problem with it. As for the rest of the experts, they had to admit that it was the best solution to address their capital problem to rob somebody in such a lawless, chaotic place.

Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar and Master Bitter Cicada raised questions. “We won’t attack the ordinary people or the innocent, right?”

“Of course, how much money can the ordinary people possibly have?” Long Yangjun apparently did not think that it was a big deal. “The money we are in need of is more than a few million. In such a murky place as the Dragon Snake Space Zone, the targets that call for our attention are certainly the powerful magnates who have committed all kinds of wrongdoings. It does not contradict your belief, does it?”

“That’s good!” Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar was relieved and smiled in delight. “I like robbing the rich and helping the poor!”

“I have a question,” ‘Heaven Battering King’ Qi Changsheng said. “Since we are in need of a batch of crystal suits, why don’t we simply loot crystal suits instead of money?”

“Good question!” Long Yangjun said. “There are two reasons. Firstly, the crystal suit centers must be heavily protected by a large team of guards in crystal suits, which means that it will be more difficult to take it over. Secondly, crystal suits are not small objects. Most of the cosmos rings that we carry are already filled with the Colossi. How many crystal suits can we expect to stuff into them?

“Looting the anonymous crystal cards and the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, and possibly a few Cosmos Rings that we can crack later, will be much safer than robbing a crystal suit center. We are going to need the money later anyone. So, we might as well take care of the problem once and for all. Any other questions?”

There was no reply.

“Alright. Let’s take action according to our plan!”

Long Yangjun waved her hands and said, “Remember, the focus of our operation is not guaranteed success. With the Cultivation of the twelve of us, if we go on a rampage, it should be more than enough for us to sweep across the entire Fish Dragon City!

“However, Fish Dragon City is a place where forces from different regions gather. The Chamber of Commerce, the Cultivators from the center of cosmos on Firefly, the Immortal Cultivators of the CIFA, the spies of the major sects from the Star Glory Federation, the special agents of the Secret Sword Bureau… all kinds of people are playing their part on the stage.

“If we throw a brick randomly on a street, we might hit a person with double identities. Should we reveal the Cultivation of the Nascent Soul Stage, we will certainly catch the attention of the local forces here. Right now, we are not familiar with the territory and the situation of Fish Dragon City. It will be near impossible for us to escape their pursuit!

“In the last three days, I collected all the news of assassinations, sabotages, robberies, and fights in Fish Dragon City that have taken place in the past five years. This is the pattern that I’ve figured out. For the fights, competitions, and robberies that the experts in the Nascent Soul Stage were involved in, most of them were found out eventually. However, when the criminals were only in the Core Formation Stage, the cases often went uninvestigated. After all, in the land of outcasts, everybody is robbing and killing each other, not to mention the headhunters from the federation. There is too much mess to be taken care of.

“Therefore, the difficulty of our mission is that we have to accomplish our goals neatly with the Cultivation of the Core Formation Stage at best without leaving any traces behind, in case the procedures later where we purchase the crystal suits and prepare the false identities are affected. Do you agree?”

All the experts nodded at each other.

“Alright, Lord Wang. Do you really need to tell us so much?” Heaven Battering King Qi Changsheng was so excited that his eyes were bloodshot. He grinned and said, “This is the business that I’m most familiar with. I have also read a lot of books on criminology and criminalistics as well as the biographies of the tough bandits in the federation from the past hundred years over the past few days! Hehe. Ten Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators going robbing together. That’s enough respect for Fish Dragon City. If the job fails, we might as well slit our throats or hang ourselves!”

“Excellent!” Long Yangjun nodded. “Let’s divide whatever’s left of the capital we have into two parts. Half of the money will be the funds for our gambling, investigations, and reconnaissance. The other half will be given to Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, who will go to the crystal suit center to order appropriate crystal suits and magical equipment for us. He may also rent a refining workshop for modification and adjustment purposes later.

“After we have the money, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture will be able to buy the crystal suits and the magical equipment components that are most suitable for us and modify them directly. Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, is Heiye Lan going with you or us?”

Li Yao thought for a moment and said, “She’d better go with you. That way, she will be more or less of use. I’m just going shopping. I don’t think that I’ll run into any danger, will I?”

“Alright. Then, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, you can go on ahead. I have taken the liberty of setting a few targets here. Let’s all study them together, fellow Cultivators. We’ll be leaving in ten minutes!”

Long Yangjun’s eyes suddenly grew sharp. “Remember, fellow Cultivators. Unless it is absolutely necessary, do not reveal your capabilities in the Nascent Soul Stage or the Divinity Transformation Stage. The focus of our raid is—low profile, low profile, and low profile!”

…

Half an hour later, Li Yao arrived at the Four Sectors Magical Equipment Center deep inside Fish Dragon City.

It was the largest store of magical equipment established by the Chamber of Commerce of the Uranian Ring Sector, the Forest Ocean Sector, the Nether World Sector, and the Water Crystal Sector.

Not only did the store sell all kinds of magical equipment, including crystal suits of every type and level, it also boasted a rather adequate catalog of components, rare metals, and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. It even had refining rooms and maintenance workshops with comprehensive facilities, as well as a magical equipment test field that offered more than eighty extreme environments, for rent. In short, as long as one’s pockets were full, they could buy any magical equipment that they wanted from this place other than Colossi or main-force warships!

What made the place more interesting was that, since Firefly was docked right outside of the Dragon Snake Space Zone for repair and modification, the Cultivators on Firefly often traded their assets, magical equipment, and techniques with the Star Glory Federation through the Dragon Snake Space Zone.

As the saying went, it is easy to fetch water when a river is near. Many components and materials from the center of the cosmos, which were bizarre and unseen for the refiners at the edge of the cosmos, were on sale there, making the store even more abundant than the magical equipment stores in the capital city of the federation. It was more likely for the treasure hunters to find what they desired in this place.

The debris of two Colossi, which towered more than twenty meters tall on either side of gate into the ‘Four Sectors Magical Equipment Center’, alone was indicative enough of the magnificence of the place.

Although they were already beyond repair, and all the rare materials and key components had been dismantled, the Four Sectors Magical Equipment Center was still wealthy and powerful enough to find such two remnants of Colossi as doorkeepers.

It was said that the essence of the traditional refiners from the Uranian Ring Sector, the Forest Ocean Sector, the Nether World Sector, and the Water Crystal Sector was gathered in that place. Not only were many masters of refining who had dominated the four worlds decades ago living there under different names, even the experts of refining from the center of the cosmos on Firefly also showed up on a regular basis, selling the magical equipment from Firefly on consignment in the place, purchasing the local magical equipment, and trading with the local refiners.

As a result, some experts of refining from the Star Glory Federation were attracted to the place. Changing their name and appearance, they risked going to the Dragon Snake Space Zone and competing with the experts from the four Sectors and the center of the cosmos!

All in all, this place was a true paradise for refiners. With money and techniques, all the dreams and desires of a refiner could be satisfied there!

Wearing the sloppy shirt, beach pants, and slippers, Li Yao stared at the colorful, dazzling board that said ‘Four Sectors Magical Equipment Center’ in the middle of the two remnants of Colossi with mixed feelings.

He felt like he had travelled back a hundred years, back to when he walked into the largest magical equipment store in Floating Spear City for the first time as a crazy fan of magical equipment. The feeling of being amazed, overwhelmed, and yet overjoyed was too marvelous!

A hundred years had passed. Everything had changed, but everything seemed the same, including his boundless passion for all kinds of magical equipment, from crystal processors to crystal suits, from chainswords to vibration sabers to storm bolters to machine guns…

Finally, he was all by himself again.

It was a rare time of relief for Li Yao in the intense and exciting life of battles.

For Long Yangjun’s whole plan of gambling, reconnaissance, investigation, and robbery to be implemented, it would take at least two to three days.

Li Yao also needed a few days to finish the selection, adjustment, and modification of crystal suits.

Over the next few days, he could dwell in the world of magical equipment and relax his nerves, which had been too tense for too long.

Right now, I’m all by myself. Long Yangjun apparently gave me such an opportunity intentionally. Should I find a way to contact the federation, say, look for the special agents of the Secret Sword Bureau in the local area?

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao eventually gave up the idea.

After all, a hundred years had passed. He was not familiar with how the Secret Sword Bureau worked. Also, given the complexity of the situation, he could not guarantee that he would be able to find an agent of the Secret Sword Bureau who had not been ‘polluted’ by the CIFA, Firefly, or other forces.

If he reached out to the federation via the Spiritual Nexus, such cross-Sector communication was exceedingly vulnerable to interference and tracing. Furthermore, he was not sure that the recipient of his message was reliable!

Therefore, he might as well observe more before he made any decision!

Li Yao vaguely had a feeling that, although the federation was more than capable of dealing with the Black Wind Fleet with the seven Sectors that it had in terms of the strength on the surface, what would decide the outcome of the war was actually the spies and trump cards that were hidden below the table.

None of the local forces were aware of his existence and his real identity. So, he could absolutely become a trump card for the Star Glory Federation who would reverse the scales of victory at the most crucial moment!

Even if I wish to contact Ding Lingdang and Jin Xinyue, I will have to find a reliable channel after I return to the Star Glory Federation, or I need to do it very subtly. I can't give up my advantage so quickly!

Therefore… I might as well enjoy my life here for now. Hehe!

Gulping in excitement, Li Yao rubbed his hands and walked into the magical equipment center.

Chapter 1576 - Masterpiece

In the past three days, Li Yao had already learned about the development of magical equipment in the federation in the past hundred years, as well as the brand-new arts of refining introduced from the four new worlds, from many magical equipment archives and magazines.

He was like a wealthy bumpkin, and he walked into the Four Sectors Magical Equipment Center with the intention to observe and learn.

The world of refiners had indeed gone through tremendous changes in the past hundred years. As Kunlun was further excavated, the four new Sectors and the three core Sectors integrated smoothly, and Firefly brought a storm of magical equipment from the center of the cosmos, a lot of new techniques and materials had been discovered. Many kinds of bizarre magical equipment that Li Yao had not even dreamed of before had already been invented.

The simplest example would be the light mask that was stuck to Li Yao’s forehead, helping him to change his face.

In the past, when one intended to change their appearance before they went to the underground markets, they would either have to resort to the ‘skin masks’ made of resins or inject drugs that could temporarily change the form of the facial muscles. Other approaches had their own shortcomings, too.

However, right now, all they needed to do was to stick a chip that was the size of a fingernail and almost weightless to their forehead. The chip would automatically unleash mimic rays and change their head into something entirely different.

Through the connection with the portable crystal processor, the chip could download more than thirty thousand face templates from the Spiritual Nexus. They could also build their unique, custom faces with more than a million different facial organs. Happiness, sorrow, anger, and all other emotions could be vividly demonstrated on the mask projected by the chip.

The magical equipment could even be used to partly modify one’s face.

In the past, when someone was dissatisfied with a certain part of their face, plastic surgery was their only option other than wearing makeup.

But right now, all they needed to do was stick a chip to their forehead and set it to the special ‘beautification mode’. Then, the magical equipment would automatically modify the flawed parts. It was convenient and timesaving, and the effect could last a long time, which made it ten thousand times more brilliant than makeup and plastic surgery.

It was said that, in the federation, many girls would never take off the mask chip once they put it on. Unless they were with their parents, they would not show anybody their real faces easily.

Li Yao was very happy about the invention of such a piece of magical equipment, not just because of its delicacy but also because of the purpose it was designed for.

Magical equipment at the service of the ordinary people to improve their quality of life quality was perhaps the real focus of a refiner, was it not?

His hands in the spacious pockets of the beach pants, Li Yao roamed around the crowded Four Sectors Magical Equipment Center, not caring about the people around him who were frowning at his greed and fascination. He was exclaiming in amazement and did not conceal his compliments at all, deeply moved by the arduous efforts that all his fellow Cultivators in the circle of refiners had made in the past hundred years!

“This is not half bad!” Li Yao stopped at the area of blades and firearms and nodded in approval quickly.

He realized that the single magical equipment in the federation over the past hundred years, while overcoming the limits of maximum damage and range, was also showing the trend of ‘lightweight’ and ‘automation’.

The ‘lightweight’ meant the greatest reduction of dispersing spiritual energy to lower the so-called ‘recoil’.

The aggressive magical equipment from a hundred years ago all boasted very powerful ‘recoil’. The furious spiritual energy that escaped due to the incomplete seal would cause a heavy blow on the soul of the user. Only the powerful souls of Cultivators could resist such blasts.

Therefore, even the light magical equipment such as the single storm bolter could only be used by the strong, healthy adults among the ordinary people. If the weak, women, or children were to use such weapons recklessly, chances were that they would be knocked out the moment they pulled the trigger.

Even the tough soldiers in the military could not use a piece of magical equipment for a long time at a high intensity before their spiritual roots were awakened.

Before Li Yao awakened his spiritual root, he had once seen a team of the soldiers of the federal army using the Taiyi Lightning Railgun on the train north to the Grand Desolate Plateau. After a shot, leaving whether or not the enemy was hit aside, almost all the soldiers' eyes and fingernails were bleeding. All their hair was standing up, and their souls were almost blown apart.

However, at least based on the demo videos next to every piece of magical equipment, the problem of spiritual energy leaks had greatly improved. Many pieces of weaponry magical equipment actually highlighted that they were user-friendly for all ordinary people in order to boost the sales.

Secondly, the 'automation'.

The biggest problem for ordinary people when it came to using blades and guns was that their reaction speed could not keep up with the speed of the functioning spiritual energy in the magical equipment and the enemy's escape. Powerful as a storm bolter might be, it would be absolutely useless if it could not hit the enemy!

In the past hundred years, the federation had developed almost a hundred kinds of automatic aiming magical equipment and the special bullets that incorporated 'tracing rune arrays'. The magical equipment that had adopted the 'shoot-and-move' pattern prevailed. As long as one pulled the trigger in the basic direction, the odds of hitting the target were more than tripled!

The result of 'lightweight' and 'automation' was that the combat ability of the ordinary people had been significantly improved. Although their role was still secondary on the battlefield, they were now able to annihilate the enemy with their sheer advantage in numbers.

For a team of ordinary soldiers with sufficient firepower, it was definitely possible for them to take down a low-level Cultivator. If thousands of infuriated ordinary people were armed with appropriate magical equipment, even the Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage or the Nascent Soul Stage would have to think about their decisions carefully.

The Star Glory Federation did not abandon its ideals from a hundred years ago. Everybody that made up the federation, be they ordinary people or Cultivators, residents or citizens, was burning their life and soul with their best!

Watching the crowds of ordinary people roaring and marching forward to the highlands in the demo videos, Li Yao felt that his blood was boiling, and his forehead was sweating. He seemed to have crawled into the light beam and turned into one of them!

Other than the single magical equipment, what interested Li Yao most were the many kinds of gaming capsules, or rather, the motion training capsules.

In such facilities that were similar to tablets or cocoons, through the special nerve ending connection liquids, one would be able to enter the Grand Illusionary Land of a deeper level where the training and battles with crystal suits and even Colossi were simulated.

The nerve ending connection liquids could directly stimulate the nerves, cells, and muscles and trigger responses. They were more effective and straightforward than traditional training games in the Grand Illusionary Land. Such a practice was also greatly beneficial for the development of the Spiritual Actualization Quotient.

After having the soul-stirring, life-and-death battles in the game, the Spiritual Actualization Quotient of the users was greatly enhanced. Whether they became a Cultivator or not, they slowly grasped the arts of the usage of crystal suits as they grew more familiar with such magical equipment. In such a pattern, the odds for ordinary people awakening their spiritual root had soared in the past hundred years. The population of the well-trained Exos had boomed, too.

Furthermore, with the ‘skill cards’ brought by the Flying Star Sector and the manufacture of beginner-level crystal suits in the assembly lines of the factories, the cost of the crystal suits had been significantly reduced. They were popularized among the people. The ordinary people could all at least afford to rent, if not buy, a crystal suit and knew how to use it. The federation right now was an out-and-out the World of Crystal Suits!

“This is amazing!”

Watching the crystal suit advertisements that targeted ordinary people, Li Yao found that they were as common as the advertisements for the shuttles a hundred years ago. He could not help but feel that his dream had come true after a long sleep.

“This is my country. This is… a homeland that deserves to be protected!” Li Yao blinked, suddenly feeling extremely happy.

Now that crystal suits, the traditional ‘king of magical equipment’, had found their way into the households of ordinary people, the most immediate consequence was that the Armadominuses, creators of the crystal suits, were much more popular and respected than before.

Not just in the circle of refiners, even in the circles of Cultivators and ordinary people, they were the most revered, wealthy celebrity-like superstars.

When an ‘Armadominus’ invented a groundbreaking crystal suit or modified a classic crystal suit marvelously, they would often invoke a vogue that swept across the entire federation and even the Dragon Snake Space Zone and Firefly!

Li Yao noticed that, at the center of the Four Sectors Magical Equipment Center, which was the best location with the highest customer flow, a graceful crystal suit that looked like a colorful butterfly was standing on the exuberant exhibit table.

According to the light beam next to the crystal suit, the crystal suit, named ‘Phantom Butterfly’, had been designed by ‘Solar Eclipse’ Jiang Shaoyang in person, who had authorized the red line crystal suit center to craft it.

The crystal suit was not produced by the master in person but only a duplicate version under his authorization. Yet, it was already able to dominate such an important location.

It was the first clue of the position of the Armadominus and the crystal suits in this era.

“Master Solar Eclipse Jiang Shaoyang…”

Li Yao stuck his nose against the glass and widened his eyes to observe more carefully, *Jiang Shaoyang’s expertise is quite impressive. Judging from the perfect combination of the streamlined design of the plate armor and the anti-blast,* *profiled surfaces, he is definitely much better than me a hundred years ago! It seems that he never once slacked in his training in the past hundred years. Chances are that he has experienced some special adventures, too!*

Although it is not crafted but only designed by him, it is already evident enough of his abundant experience and his profound knowledge. I’m so desperate to know how good it would be if it were crafted by Jiang Shaoyang carefully in person!

“Off! Off! Off!”

While Li Yao was gulping, the security nearby shooed him impatiently. “Go back. Stay outside of the ring of light!”

“Okay.” Scratching his hair, Li Yao blinked and asked, “If I may ask, how much is this ‘Phantom Butterfly?”

The security eyed him up and down and laughed. He pointed at two lines right below the glass exhibit table.

“Not For Sale.”

“For Exhibition Purpose Only.”

Chapter 1577 - Something’s Wrong with the Crystal Suit!

“Fine.” Li Yao shrugged. It seemed that he could only compete with Jiang Shaoyang some other time.

When he thought about that, Li Yao somehow felt ashamed because he felt that he had… cheated in the competition with Jiang Shaoyang.

It was true that the arts of refining in the federation had witnessed explosive development in the past hundred years thanks to Kunlun, the four new Sectors, and the techniques from the center of the cosmos brought by Firefly. Jiang Shaoyang, as one of the best talents in the circle of refiners, was certainly standing at the top of the revolutionary tide.

Li Yao, in comparison, had spent most of his time in hibernation. The only time that Li Yao had been dedicated to the arcs of refining was the last year.

Ostensibly speaking, Li Yao did not seem to be at an advantage. He was like the hare who was sleeping all the time in the fable of the Tortoise and the Hare.

However…

In the last year, Li Yao had spent most of his time inside an intact warship of the Nuwa Clan whose most cabins were still complete. There were almost twenty brand-new Colossi, more than fifty remnants of the Colossi in different forms, and countless pieces of cutting-edge magical equipment of the primeval era waiting to be studied by him!

Li Yao had absolutely no doubt about the potential, creativity, and speed of development of the civilization of mankind.

However, the civilization of mankind was still a young civilization that was maturing. Compared to the Pangu civilization and the Nuwa civilization, it was still an imitator and a chaser, which was also an undeniable fact.

The Colossi were the ultimate weapons in the sea of stars and the essence of the highest technologies of the Nuwa Clan. In the federation a hundred years ago, with only the five jumbled Colossi excavated from Kunlun, as well as the tremendous rusted pieces, the overall technology of magical equipment had already made significant progress.

As for the debris that Li Yao had found on the Nuwa warship, even if it could not be restored to as good as new, it was certainly preserved in much better conditions and had a high research value!

The most critical factor was that Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun, the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, had helped Li Yao find dozens of jade chips that contained the maintenance manuals for the Colossi!

It was like one, no, dozens of tutors of the Nuwa Clan had taught Li Yao to diagnose and maintain dozens of different Colossi!

For those with a lower Cultivation or a shallower understanding about the arts of refining, it might have been impossible for them to realize the true value of the Colossi.

However, before Li Yao went into the Nuwa warship, he had already been a refiner in the Nascent Soul Stage. For a Cultivator at his level, they could often make a hundred deductions after they learned one piece of knowledge. Sometimes, what they were short of was just the direction to work in.

Maintaining and debugging the Colossi, as well as analyzing almost a hundred primeval treasures, had made him step into the ultimate hall of the arts of refining on the shoulders of giants!

To make an inappropriate metaphor, the best refiners in the federation such as ‘Solar Eclipse’ Jiang Shaoyang were like the most talented and diligent students who had access to ten thousand simulation examination papers for the College Entrance Exam drafted by the best teachers. They studied the examination papers for a whole year, and they were confident that they would get a full score in the exam!

As for Li Yao… he did not dare guarantee that he would certainly be more smart or diligent than Jiang Shaoyang. He did not have much time to finish as many simulation examination papers, either. He also was not confident that he could certainly achieve a full score in all the subjects in the exam.

However, he did spend half a month in the laboratory of a few college professors, where he received the personal enlightenment of the college professors and their notes and memoirs. In the end, he was finally able to understand, however difficultly, the papers and the research projects of the professors. That was all.

It was the essential difference between Li Yao and Jiang Shaoyang right now.

Looking at the ‘Phantom Butterfly’ devised by Jiang Shaoyang for the last time, Li Yao took out a hundred coins from his pocket and bought an inventory of the latest magical equipment and materials on sale from the vending machine.

Such an inventory was often stored in jade chips. As long as they were inserted into the portable crystal processor, more than a hundred thousand pages of introductions to magical equipment and materials would be triggered. From blades to guns to crystal suits, and even including the civil magical equipment such as luxury shuttles, everything was included.

If one was interested in magical equipment such as a crystal suit, they could find the introduction and the specific parameters in the inventory. Then, they could experience the crystal suit in person through the virtual cabin. Once they were satisfied, they could ask for the item to be delivered and have a live test in the test field. It was an approach that had maximized the efficiency and minimized trade costs.

Shua…

The light beam was blinking quickly as Li Yao read through the rows of crystal suits.

The crystal suits suitable for Core Formation Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators are all advanced products. None of them are cheap. Also, I have to prepare three very powerful battle-oriented artificial bodies for Meng Chixin, Wu Suiyun, and Wan Mingzhu. Such goods must be rare and very expensive because of the limited market!

There’s no telling whether or not Long Yangjun’s operation is going smoothly and how much money they can get.

To reduce uncertainty, let me take a look at the components, units, and secondhand crystal suits!

It was not money that bothered Li Yao.

But just like all the other masters of refining, he had an occupational habit, which was that he considered buying a whole crystal suit to be an insult to his expertise.

Buying a framework or a secondhand product, before filing, polishing, and strengthening in person, was the more favorable approach for an ‘Armadominus’.

Li Yao turned to the section for the secondhand crystal suits.

The Dragon Snake Space Zone was a lawless, chaotic place where the strong preyed on the weak. The number of totally wasted crystal suits was shockingly high.

In the magical equipment store of Fish Dragon City, a lot of crystal suits that were seriously damaged were sold at a very cheap price.

Depending on their conditions and odds of being repaired, the secondhand crystal suits were mostly divided into seventy percent new, fifty percent new, and other levels. Those ragged crystal suits that bordered on garbage were often as cheap as garbage.

“This is—”

Li Yao did not expect to meet anything precious in this place, and he was browsing through the inventory randomly. However, one of the broken crystal suits that popped up out of nowhere made his eyes shine. He even gasped subconsciously.

It was a thirty percent new, first-generation Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, which was the generic model for the army of the Old Federation that Professor Yuan Manqiu and he had developed together back when he was still in the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution!

Looking at the crystal suit on the 3D light beam, which was riddled with holes but not collapsing, like a skeleton soldier that had crawled out of the deepest depths of hell, Li Yao felt like crying as so many memories flowed back into his heart.

He did not expect that he would meet such an old friend again in this place after a hundred years!

Rotating the light beam and scanning the first-generation Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit from every angle, Li Yao discovered that while the plate armor and the engine units were mostly ruined, the fundamental framework was almost intact. The price of the crystal suit was very low, too. Therefore, Li Yao placed an order through the inventory without any hesitation. He then selected the strengthening components that were ten times more expensive than the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit itself and rented a maintenance workshop of the highest level at a fortune!

He had decided that he would use the first-generation Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit if needed!

It was his commitment!

…

Three hours passed.

Swaggering into the crystal suit test center in the renewed first-generation Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Li Yao was smiling delightedly, enjoying the fun that nobody else knew anything about.

It seemed quite weird and eye-catching to wander on the battlefield in an antique crystal suit from more than a hundred years ago.

Even the natives of the Ancient Sages Sector such as Meng Chixin, as long as they had the shallowest understanding about the crystal suits, would be suspicious about his choice.

However, the minor obstacle was no trouble at all for Li Yao.

Over the past hundred years, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, as the most classic model of crystal suits in the federation, had been continuously improving and upgrading. Li Yao purchased the plate armor and the components of some of the new models of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, changing the appearance of the first-generation Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit into that of the thirteenth-generation Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, which was a relatively new model.

Naturally, from the crystal reactor to the power rune arrays to the attack magical equipment, most of the units had been replaced with vastly better counterparts. All the parameters and performances had soared, but the original feedback of the first-generation Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was kept as much as possible. Such redundant modifications were certainly incomprehensible for those who were not the crazy fans of magical equipment and the most passionate refiners.

What a hardcore sense of operation! What unbuffered counterforce! What humming noises from the crystal processor! What waves of heat from the crystal processor to the spine to the internal organs! This is a real crystal suit! This is the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit!

Li Yao could not have enjoyed himself more. While narrowing his eyes and enjoying the most basic movements, he scanned the high-level crystal suits rushing past him performing the glamourous, ultimate skills, like a raptor under the skin of a lamb watching a bunch of lions, tigers, and hungry wolves casually.

A thousand battles scenes were exploding inside Li Yao's brain. All of them were the deductions that he made according to the parameters of the high-level crystal suits.

Well. If I activate the combat ability of the Core Formation Stage, with the enhancement of the first-generation Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, I should be able to completely destroy the 'Ghost', whose breastplate and legs have been strengthened!

Huh. This crystal suit that is packed with flying swords all over the body does not look bad. It is similar to the 'Sword Torrent Battlesuit' in my memory. By my calculation, according to the thirty percent of the combat ability its master is displaying, I should be able to take care of it in eleven seconds!

This one, nine seconds! This one, fifteen seconds! All the five on this side combined… one minute thirty-three seconds to one minute forty-five seconds!

Right then—

Hiu!

A bluish crystal suit that was almost translucent sprinted past the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit!

Li Yao raised an eyebrow in great interest.

I have never seen a crystal suit in such a style before. It boasts the essence of refining of the four new Sectors and the air from the center of the cosmos. To combine the styles of almost ten different schools not only requires an expertise in designing but also manual crafting skills. This is not bad!

Huh. The overall feeling is similar to the ‘Phantom Butterfly’ that Jiang Shaoyang designs, except a bit immature. Is it made by his assistant or his true disciple?

Well done, Jiang Shaoyang. Even your disciple has a masterpiece now!

The Exo in the crystal suit is rather tough, too. Judging from his footsteps, it will take me one minute and three seconds to destroy him and his crystal suit if I use the combat ability of only the Core Formation Stage!

While Li Yao was appreciating the crystal suit in great amazement, the bluish crystal suit that was like soft smoke suddenly halted at one end of the test field.

The Exo took off his helmet, revealing an angry face that was full of scars. He roared toward a few maintainers who hurried to him, “No. Something is wrong with the crystal suit!”

Chapter 1578 - Observe and Play

The man’s appearance was quite unique.

His nose was particularly huge, like a hybrid between a lion and a tiger. One could easily tell that it was not a template simulated by light and shadow but his real face.

In such a perilous place as Fish Dragon City, especially in the even more dangerous areas such as the casinos, the arenas, and the magical equipment stores, most people would choose a template face and anonymous crystal cards to disguise their real identity and avoid trouble.

If a person chose to show everybody else their real appearance blatantly in such areas, it would be indicative of two things.

Firstly, they were not scared of trouble.

Secondly, it was possible that they were fond of asking for trouble.

The magical equipment store under the Chamber of Commerce boasted the largest multipurpose test field in the Dragon Snake Space Zone. Hundreds of crystal suits were being tested in the place at the same time, and still more maintainers, refiners, and staff were measuring and serving outside of the field.

The bellow of the lion-nosed, scar-faced man, however, made everybody stop whatever they were doing. The more prudent ones stayed far away and watched, and those who were bold or unfamiliar with the man, such as Li Yao, simply went close to observe more carefully.

After all, few people dared speak so bluntly at the magical equipment store under the Chamber of Commerce.

“Where is Manager Nie of the Maintenance Department? Get him here!”

The lion-nosed, scar-faced could not have cared less about how other people were looking at him. He bulged his eyes and yelled, “It was because I trust the expertise of Manage Nie Siyuan of the Maintenance Department of the Four Sectors Magical Equipment Center that I put the limited-edition ‘Azure Thunder’ here for repair. Otherwise, I would’ve sent it to the original manufacturer in the Star Glory Federation! When I delivered the crystal suit to you, your staff bashed their chests and promised me that it would certainly be repaired. But what’s the meaning of this? Have Nie Siyuan’s eyes failed him because of old age, or does he have no respect for me, Zhao Tongtian from the Thunderbolt Exo Society, at all and simply gave my crystal suit to a random guy for maintenance?”

The lion-nosed, scar-faced man must have been a rather famous brutal guy in Fish Dragon City.

Because of the huge fuss that he was causing, few people dared to observe the scene at a close distance like Li Yao. Most of them were watching from afar, all prepared to activate their spiritual shield and run away at the first anomaly!

When Zhao Tongtian and the Thunderbolt Exo Society were mentioned, even the few ignorant Cultivators who were crowding over to watch together with Li Yao all gulped and took a few steps back, like rabbits who smelled the scent of tigers and wolves.

It was obvious that Zhao Tongtian and his Thunderbolt Exo Society were not easy to deal with in the Dragon Snake Space Zone!

All the staff were whispering to each other, their faces pale, not knowing what they should do.

A moment later, the crowd was divided. A middle-aged man, who was tall and slender, with a pair of long, agile hands walked in confidently. Glancing at Zhao Tongtian, he sneered, “So, it is Deputy Captain Zhao. In the last half a month, the once-in-three-years ‘Ace Game’ has been held in the ‘Dragon Snake Arena’, which is a gala for the entire Dragon Snake Space Zone. My master has been invited as the magical equipment director of the crystal suit matches. I was the one who supervised the maintenance of your ‘Azure Thunder’. Is there a problem?”

“You?” Zhao Tongtian eyed the tall, slender, middle-aged newcomer up and down before he scoffed, “So, Nie Siyuan wasn’t here. That explains a lot! However, if you’re not prepared to do the time, don’t pretend to do the crime! If the manager wasn’t here, you shouldn’t have taken my order at all in the first place! Sha Yongming, do you have any idea how precious my crystal suit is? You haven’t learned a third of your master’s expertise yet, and yet you were bold enough to mess with my equipment. You were truly insulting the Four Sectors Magical Equipment Center. You don’t know what you are doing!”

“Deputy Captain Zhao!” Sha Yongming, the refiner, blushed. Veins were bulging on his hands like earthworms as he gnashed his teeth. “We are all compatriots from the Uranian

Ring Sector. The Thunderbolt Exo Society has shares in the Chamber of Commerce, too. Why are you making a fuss in a place of your own people?”

“I am making a fuss? You will know I’m making a fuss when I’m making a fuss, Sha Yongming!” Zhao Tongtian burst into laughter because of fury. “It’s because I trusted you as my own people that I sent my ‘Azure Thunder’ to your place for maintenance. Although the maintenance has gone wrong, I’m still standing here talking nicely with you! I’m sure that you know who I am, don’t you? Since when have I, ‘Thunder Lion’ Zhao Tongtian, been so reasonable?

“Forget it. Any more words with you will only be a waste. In short, you can’t handle this ‘Azure Thunder’! If you could, I wouldn’t have had it delivered to this place but asked the refiners of the Thunderbolt Exo Society to repair it! I told your staff time and time again that Nie Siyuan must see to it in person. I know that you charge a lot, but do you think that I don’t have the money? How were you bold enough to touch my crystal suit when you didn’t know how valuable it is? Bring your master here right now. Let me see whether it is because he has zero respect for me or because some bodacious fool failed to forward my demand!”

Because of the great humiliation, arrows of blood seemed to be darting out of every pore on Sha Yongming’s face. “What problem do you have with this ‘Azure Thunder?”

He was a true disciple of Nie Siyuan, the Chief Maintainer of the Four Sectors Magical Equipment Center, and his arts in refining and maintenance were extraordinary. Particularly good at the repair and modification of crystal suits, he was a minor celebrity in Fish Dragon City.

Even when his master was around, most of the crystal suits delivered to the place for maintenance were actually handled by him. Nothing had ever gone wrong.

When this particular crystal suit was delivered, the requirements did specify that his master needed to maintain it personally, with no limit to the maintenance fee.

However, his master was busy providing technical support for the ‘Ace Game’, the arena match held once every three years in the Dragon Snake Space Zone, and had entrusted all affairs in the Maintenance Department to him. Furthermore, the crystal suit was indeed an extraordinary piece of art, and Sha Yongming had found the temptation irresistible.

He had thought that, since he had grasped ninety percent of his master’s knowledge and the crystal suit had no serious problems but only some minor erosion issues, nothing could possibly go wrong.

But as it turned out, the customer had realized that something was not right after the first try!

“Of course, I know what the ‘Azure Thunder’ is!”

Cold sweat the size of a yellow bean was flowing on Sha Yongming’s forehead, as he pointed at a calligraphic autograph on the right shoulder of the crystal suit that seemed to have been written in silver metal threads.

“This is the very first crystal suit designed and crafted by ‘Wu Yaxuan’, a young genius of refining who has risen to fame recently in the federation. It was a hit the moment it was released to the public. Even the mass-produced version is difficult to come by, not to mention the limited edition that he crafted personally. As I recall, he only built nineteen crystal suits personally, right?

“But so what?

“I perfectly followed the maintenance manual of the original manufacturer in every detail. All the performance parameters are as good as new! Deputy Captain Zhao, what exactly is the problem with the crystal suit? Insufficient instantaneous acceleration? Rigidness in direction shifting? The fire control rune arrays are not responsive enough? If you have truly found any flaw, we will refund the full maintenance fee with a compensation of ten times as much money. Then, I will ask my master to repair the crystal suit for you again!

“However, if you can’t point out any flaws and continue being unreasonable in public, I must regretfully tell you that this is not your playground!”

While they were talking, more and more people crowded into the test field, including many guards who were fully-armed with cold faces.

Fish Dragon City was such a chaotic place. How could the magical equipment center not be heavily protected, given all the highly-valuable materials and magical equipment it had?

Glancing around coldly, Zhao Tongtian laughed in derision before he slowly said, “It’s just my feeling.”

Bulging his eyes, Sha Yongming was amused. “Feeling? Deputy Captain Zhao, you are not implying that, although you can’t find any maintenance fault, the crystal suit ‘feels’ different from before when you are using it, are you?”

“That’s exactly what I’m talking about!” Zhao Tongtian replied. “The performance parameters in the crystal suit are the same. Acceleration, turning, and jumping are fine, too. The speed to pick up any weapon is as good as before… Every detail is exactly the same as the past, but when they are combined, it gives me a different feeling from before! The sense of smoothness that feels like mercury flowing on the ground has gone. I can’t feel that my soul has melded with the crystal suit anymore. It’s almost—it’s almost like the ‘limited edition’ that Wu Yaxuan crafted in person has become one of the ‘general edition’ manufactured in the factories!”

Sha Yongming’s voice grew colder and colder. “Deputy Captain Zhao, have you made up your mind to ask for trouble?”

“I’m asking for trouble?” Zhao Tongtian burst into laughter. He raised his thumb and pointed at his big nose. “Rest assured. If I’m asking for anyone’s trouble, it won’t be with a small fry such as yourself! If we get to the bottom of it, that’s because you are not capable enough. Who is Wu Yaxuan? One of the most creative geniuses in the younger generation in the federation and the first assistant of ‘Solar Eclipse’ Jiang Shaoyang, the best refiner of the federation! How can you understand the essence of his masterpiece?

“Because we are both from the Uranian Ring Sector, I’ll give you another chance. Just go and immediately invite your master here and stop making the issue any bigger than it already is. So many people and so many eyes are watching. You won’t be able to take the blame if the reputation of the Four Sectors Magical Equipment Center is ruined!”

Li Yao pricked his ears up and listened for a long time in the inner circle. He finally got the gist of everything.

Jiang Shaoyang’s heir was truly involved!

Crafting a piece of magical equipment, especially highly-precise magical equipment like a crystal suit, was not something that could be done individually but required a whole experienced, well-trained team.

The so-called ‘first assistant’ was essentially the No. 2 person of the whole team. The job was usually taken care of by the most distinguished true disciple of the leader of the team.

It meant that the ‘Azure Thunder’ was probably the very first crystal suit designed and crafted by Jiang Shaoyang’ true disciple, as well as the No. 2 person of Jiang Shaoyang’s team, after he left his master. Naturally, he must have received Jiang Shaoyang’s enlightenment, too. No wonder it was so finely-made and worth appreciating.

Even Li Yao could not wait to ‘appreciate’ it now.

Chapter 1579 - Leave the Chance to Young People!

Although ‘Thunder Lion’ Zhao Tongtian, the scar-faced man who was the deputy captain of the Thunderbolt Exo Society, seemed rather unreasonable, Li Yao did not think that his theory was entirely groundless.

A crystal suit was not a simple aggregation of the parameters of the units inside, and just because it met a certain standard did not mean that it was necessarily good enough. Such a criterion was only for the mass-produced crystal suits.

A truly excellent, limited-edition crystal suit, or even a tailor-made one, was the essence of the sweat and blood of an Armadominus. It was polished slowly bit by bit until it boasted its own ‘soul’ and ‘life’!

In the most extreme cases, even the slightest change of the degree at which a chip was inserted into the slot, or the tiniest difference of one tenth the width of a hair during the adjustment of an ancillary power rune array, would lead to drastic changes.

For the same crystal suit made of the same units, if it was adjusted by an expert such as Li Yao, even without any strengthening or modification, the overall combat ability of the crystal suit could still be improved by more than ten percent!

In an ever-changing battlefield, even one more percent of the potential dug out could decide the outcome of a battle.

How unbelievable could an improvement of ten percent be?

Zhao Tongtian might not know the improvement exactly. However, the brutal man who had toed the line between life and death for many years in the Dragon Snake Space Zone apparently had a sharp instinct about crystal suits. He described it quite well by saying ‘it doesn’t feel right’.

Li Yao was quite overjoyed to see the rare treasure. He was going to move forward to study the crystal suit crafted by Jiang Shaoyang’s first assistant, in which case Zhao Tongtian would be a lucky dog who had his crystal suit adjusted by a master for free. He could also feel the progress that Jiang Shaoyang had made in the past hundred years more clearly.

However, after the first step he made, he pondered for a moment and retreated.

“Why don’t you go up?” the mental devil asked inside his head in confusion. “The little bald guy, Jiang Shaoyang, is quite fun. His disciple does not look incapable, either.”

“Forget it.” Scratching his nose, Li Yao said to himself, “Judging from ‘Thunder Lion’ Zhao Tongtian’s dominant and unreasonable look, he doesn’t seem to be a friendly guy. With my ‘honorable’ appearance right now, if I recklessly propose to help him adjust his crystal suit, he will certainly refuse it and possibly humiliate me. Why would I bother asking to be humiliated if I am not interested in causing any trouble?”

“Huh?” The mental devil was surprised. “Since when have you become such a nice person? If he dares humiliate us, won’t it be the best opportunity for us to show ourselves off and slap his face? Speaking of which, it’s been a long time since we last played such a game!”

Li Yao blinked and replied, “No, I would rather not. As the legendary ‘dominator of three Sectors’, I am a well-respected celebrity right now. This is only a junior in the Core Formation Stage. How is he at all qualified for me to act weak and swallow him? Slap his face? What face? Wouldn’t he be taking advantage of me if I slap his face with the hand of the ‘dominator of the three Sectors’? If the incident spreads out later, rumor will have it that I’m a bully who enjoys nothing better than making fun of the little friends. It’s not important that I will be dishonored personally, but even the reputation of the federation will be tarnished!”

The mental devil scratched its ears. “That makes sense. After all, every time you take action, you will certainly amaze everyone nearby. This young fellow might even cling to your thigh without letting it go in his astonishment. That’s the usual outcome. It’s quite boring.”

“Exactly. Even if we do want to relax ourselves and soothe nerves that have been tense for too long, we should find something better than messing with a little friend in the Core Formation Stage. We are now more than a hundred years old after all, so we should slightly improve our elegance. Such precious opportunities for slapping faces pretentiously should be saved for the young people. For example, the little girl standing behind us on our left side is apparently very eager to try.”

“What about the little girl?”

“Her hands are pretty,” Li Yao answered.

“Hiss. Is this what they call a small leak will sink a great ship? Please, don’t. You are already at the door of your home, and you must not do anything that will wrong your wife!”

“I never realized that you would be so concerned about me. You are indeed a ‘loyal friend’, aren’t you?”

“Loyal my ass! I’m sharing my body with you right now. Should you have an affair with some other woman and unfortunately get beaten to death by Ding Lingdang, I will be doomed together with you!”

“Well. You misunderstood me,” Li Yao said. “I’m saying that, from the perspective of a refiner, her hands are indeed very pretty. It is absolutely a pair of hands that only the best refiners can have. They must’ve been polished and nurtured by countless secret techniques and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures!”

Although a refiner could directly manipulate the components and units by making use of all kinds of facilities and releasing their spiritual energy, hands still played an indispensable role if they intended to build an immaculate piece of magical equipment.

One could generally tell the Cultivation of a refiner by the shape of the hands of the refiner!

When Li Yao first began his career, he had learned the Thousand Fingers Soft Bones Art from Ou Yezi, a master of refining in ancient times. Through the technique, he was able to make both of his hands surpass the speed of sound, which was one of his most famous skills.

Later, he had stimulated the muscle fibers, cells, and nerve endings continuously with the Purple Ring Sword Ants and all kinds of other biochemical drugs. After training crazily for decades, he had finally reached the ultimate level of returning to simplicity!

Right now, his hands looked no different from those of common refiners who had just begun learning the arts of refining.

However, with the condensing of spiritual energy and the unleashing of telepathic thoughts of the Nascent Soul Stage, his hands could achieve the effects of ten thousand refining facilities in a large workshop!

The girl standing behind Li Yao, who was also wearing a face-changing chip and using an unattractive template, boasted a pair of extremely smooth hands.

With Li Yao's Cultivation right now, if he soaked his eyes with spiritual energy, his sight would be very similar to the microscopes with extremely high magnification lens.

However, no matter how he adjusted his irises and crystalline lenses to enlarge the picture that he saw, he still could not find a single pore from the small, pure hands of the girl!

The secret technique that the girl practiced had apparently melted all the pores on her hands, thereby ensuring the 'smoothness' and 'mildness' of the hands on the microcosmic level to the maximum extent.

Pores were used to emit heat and sweat. If all the pores were melted, the cooling and perspiration system inside must have gone through drastic changes, which was quite a marvelous secret art. At the very least, Li Yao had never read similar records in the federation a hundred years ago or in Ou Yezi's memory pieces. Even some of the techniques that could constrict the pores could only work temporarily!

The girl was quite an excellent refiner.

Li Yao could see the glow from her hands and the glow that was beaming out of her eyes despite her disguise.

As he expected, the girl who had a pair of astoundingly beautiful hands but selected an unattractive face intentionally stepped forward and, after bowing to Zhao Tongtian, said courteously, “There’s no need to be anxious, Fellow Cultivator. I once learned a thing or two about the arts of refining of ‘Solar Eclipse’ Jiang Shaoyang, the master of refining in the federation, and I’ve done some research on the works of ‘Wu Yaxuan’, Jiang Shaoyang’s assistant who has risen to fame as a creative genius. If you don’t find me imposing, maybe I can help you take a look and see where the problem is.”

“You?” Zhao Tongtian bulged his eyes and eyed the girl up and down for a long time. Naturally, he failed to find anything familiar on the template face. He could not help but sneer. “Who are you exactly to take advantage of me here? You must be boasting about yourself because you won’t have any other chance to touch a crystal suit crafted by such an expert as ‘Wu Yaxuan’ in person, right? Get lost!”

Zhao Tongtian raised his hands, trying to shove the girl away very rudely.

The mysterious girl frowned, but she stepped backward before Zhao Tongtian’s hands reached her.

In that moment, Li Yao sensed that several people in the crowd revealed vague killing intent when Zhao Tongtian raised his hands toward the mysterious girl. However, the killing intent was entirely gone after they determined Zhao Tongtian’s intention in 0.01 seconds.

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao stepped forward to the right expressionlessly, pretending that he was giving the mysterious girl a hand.

As he expected, the killing intent flashed again, which allowed him to lock onto five experts who were well-prepared in the crowd.

The five experts were all the mysterious girl’s bodyguards. It seemed that she had an intriguing background.

That did make sense. To nurture such a pair of hands, techniques, secret arts, Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, and astronomical funds for training were all mandatory.

Such a young, professional refiner could only be raised in a wealthy family or a major sect with tremendous resources!

The mysterious girl was slightly dazed, as if she did not expect that anybody would offer to give her a hand. However, the education of upper society that she had received naturally prompted her to thank Li Yao. “… Thank you.”

“You’re welcome,” Li Yao said casually. It was simply because he habitually did not like unexpected factors in the crowd that he was not aware of. Therefore, he managed to lock onto them by pretending to support the girl.

Having been rejected by Zhao Tongtian, the mysterious girl did not seem to be interested in causing any trouble. She was about to leave, when somebody declared solemnly and toughly outside of the crowd, “Well, if it isn’t the great Captain Zhao! How majestic you are! I could already hear you shouting and screaming before I stepped into the test field. What are you doing here?”

The crowd was suddenly divided. An old man whose temples were white, with a short mustache that looked like iron needles and a pair of extremely sharp eyes, strode into the test field.

Li Yao noticed that the mysterious girl further retreated behind the crowd after the graceful, charismatic old man showed up, as if she did not want the old man to notice her.

“Who the f*ck—” ‘Thunder Lion’ Zhao Tongtian, who had been majestic and dominating a moment ago, cursed and turned around. However, once he saw who the newcomer was, the ferocious lion suddenly turned into a cute cat. He swallowed whatever was left of his sentence and hurried to walk forever, adulating in the most obsequious way. “Master Chu, I didn’t know that it was you. Hahahaha…”

Chapter 1580 - Who Is Wu Yaxuan?

Li Yao had never thought that a scar-faced, ferocious-looking man could be more sycophantic than a eunuch when he put on a fake smile.

However, when he heard the exclamations of the bystanders, he understood why Zhao Tongtian changed his face so drastically.

“It is him—Master Chu!”

“It’s Chu Chongjiu, the expert of refining from Firefly who has been appointed to stay in the Dragon Snake Space Zone!”

“What? Is he the legendary ‘Misty Hands’ Chu Chongjiu?”

Li Yao realized that the intimidating old man was a Cultivator from Firefly. No wonder he was so majestic, and even ‘Thunder Lion’ Zhao Tongtian was so respectful and servile about him.

Although the people on Firefly and the outcasts of the Uranian Ring Sector, the Water Crystal Sector, the Nether World Sector, and the Forest Ocean Sector were all refugees, they were certainly not at the same level.

As the saying went, the leanest elephant is still bigger than a mouse. Firefly, despite having been fleeing in fear all the time, was from the center of the cosmos and the heartland of the civilization of mankind after all. They were naturally high and mighty!

When they escaped, a lot of state-of-the-art training techniques, as well as the powerful magical equipment from the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago, had naturally been taken with them.

Although they had drifted in the universe for a thousand years, the system of the powerful magical equipment and training techniques was still being passed on, not entirely cut off.

Even the Star Glory Federation was greedy about the cutting-edge techniques, technologies, and magical equipment on Firefly, not to mention the stray dogs in the Dragon Snake Space Zone who had run into a dead end!

Therefore, however murky and lawless the Dragon Snake Space Zone was, few people dared mess with the Cultivators from Firefly.

On one hand, their fists were huge enough. The Cultivators from Firefly, equipped with the crystal suits and magical equipment from the center of the cosmos, certainly boasted a much higher combat ability than the defeated soldiers did. Every one of them could beat three locals at the same level.

On the other hand, Firefly was trading with the Star Glory Federation from the Dragon Snake Space Zone. This place was a station of commerce. Tremendous rare materials and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures were gathered and dispersed there. The daily profits were astronomical. Too many people earned their living through Firefly. Why would they stop themselves from making money?

Therefore, even if some people lost their rationality and attacked the Cultivators from Firefly, the Chamber of Commerce and the local forces would often find the criminals and mince them apart before the Cultivators from Firefly did!

The Cultivators from Firefly were such a superior group among all the forces in the Dragon Snake Space Zone.

Since Firefly was trading with the Dragon Snake Space Zone and the Star Glory Federation, naturally, a lot of the businesses involved the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and the magical equipment, which required professional knowledge about material science and the arts of refining.

Chu Chongjiu was the manager responsible for the relevant affairs in the place.

The Four Sectors Magical Equipment Center was the biggest magical equipment store in the Dragon Snake Space Zone. Chu Chongjiu had shown up quite often in the place and communicated with a lot of famous refiners of the local area. He was quite renowned in the circle of the local refiners. Therefore, he was immediately recognized by the refiners.

“Master Chu…” Zhao Tongtian almost lowered his head to his feet. Rubbing his hands, he tried to smile. “How was the quality of the ‘Jade Emperor Essence’ that the Thunderbolt Exo Society collected for you last time? Does it suffice? If not, just say the word. I’ll definitely bring a few of them of higher purity however difficult the process may be!”

“It will do for now. Of course, it is not as pure as the Jade Emperor Essence collected from the natural paradises at the center of the cosmos, but it is already considerate enough of you to retrieve such goods in the countryside at the edge of the universe."

Chu Chongjiu's face was gentler than before. He waved his hands and said, "Get back to your business now, folks. What are you still doing here? I've ordered the No. 9, No. 12, and No. 15 lanes to test a few pieces of magical equipment. Why are you blocking all the lanes? Huh. This crystal suit is not half bad. Is it yours, Captain Zhao?"

"Just call me Zhao. I'm no captain in front of Master Chu!"

Zhao Tongtian hurriedly described the argument that had taken place just now.

'Mist Hands' Chu Chongjiu's expertise in the arts of refining was even better than that of Nie Siyuan, the manager of the Maintenance Department. He might not help anyone adjust their crystal suit even if he was paid a fortune. How could Zhao Tongtian miss such a rare opportunity?

"Master Chu, how should we…" Sha Yongming, the local refiner who was responsible for the maintenance and debugging work of the 'Azure Thunder', stepped forward. He bowed deeply to Chu Chongjiu in embarrassment, apparently begging for the help of the newcomer.

It was obvious that he was not so confident in himself now, knowing that something must have gone wrong with his maintenance. He was unwilling to report the issue to his master, at least not until it was resolved perfectly, in which case his punishment would be less severe.

"That explains a lot. It's not a big deal." Chu Chongjiu smiled. Scratching his thick, hard mustache, he said, "Sha, your master has been working as the director of magical equipment in the 'Ace Game'. Too many pieces of magical equipment pass through his hands on a daily basis. There’s no need to trouble him with such minor affairs. Zhao, if you trust my handiwork, just let me help you take a look at it!”

“We couldn’t hope for anything better!”

Zhao Tongtian and Sha Yongming were both overjoyed. They bowed deeply to Chu Chongjiu.

“Haha. I’m happy to have the chance to appreciate such a treasure, too!”

Touching the shell of the ‘Azure Thunder’, Chu Chongjiu’s eyes were glowing as he quickly nodded. “Wu Yaxuan is the most distinguished refiner in the younger generation of the Star Glory Federation. He is also the first super genius between the age of thirty and fifty who is capable of designing and crafting a crystal suit on his own.

“Although ‘Solar Eclipse’ Jiang Shaoyang has not recruited him as a disciple, everybody knows that it is only because of the seniority issue. His position in Jiang Shaoyang’s team is even more important and stable than Jiang Shaoyang’s few true disciples. The one who will inherit the whole essence of the arts of refining of the Refining Department of Deep Sea University, represented by Jiang Shaoyang and also ‘Supernova’ Jiang Sheng, will surely be this genius Wu Yaxuan!

“This is the first time that the super genius of refining has crafted a crystal suit independently. Despite the rigid and immature parts, many of his creations and sophisticated handiwork are even astounding to me!

“Well, well, well. Just look at how the crystal reactor is embedded. In short, unbelievable!”

While commenting, Chu Chongjiu raised his right hand, releasing bright blue spiritual waves, which raised up the ‘Azure Thunder’ like tentacles.

This place was a test field of magical equipment. Hundreds of examination platforms that boasted different functions had been established in the field in the first place. With his left hand behind his back, holding the crystal suit with his right hand, Chu Chongjiu fixed the crystal suit on an examination platform unhurriedly.

The refiner lowered his head. His fingers were jumping softly. The breastplate and the panels of the crystal suit were all opened amid cracking noises, revealing the internal rune arrays and components that were as precise as a clock.

Chu Chongjiu seemed to be enjoying a piece of marvelous music that nobody else could hear except for himself. Waving his head, fascinated, he exclaimed nonstop. After keeping the bystanders waiting in silence for five minutes, he finally opened his eyes at ease and said, not entirely satisfied, “Not bad. Not bad. I didn’t know that I could run into such a talent at the remote edge of the cosmos!

“Sha, this is too much for you. Not everybody is capable of maintaining a crystal suit personally forged by Wu Yaxuan. You’ve done a good job. Your completion rate is well above ninety-seven percent. I’ll certainly praise you appropriately after I meet your master later!”

“Thank you for your compliment, Master Chu!” Sha Yongming took a deep breath in relief. He was almost crying in joy. With Chu Chongjiu’s promise, he probably would not be punished because of his recklessness!

“Master Chu…” Zhao Tongtian was rather embarrassed.

“Why are you in such a hurry? I’m not done yet!” Chu Chongjiu glanced at him in dissatisfaction, making the ‘Thunder Lion’ shudder again. He then looked at Sha Yongming peacefully. “Sha, do you understand why I said that your completion rate is only ninety-seven percent? Where is the three percent negligence?”

“Forgive my ignorance,” Sha Yongming said hesitantly. “I’ve done the job according to the maintenance manual in every detail. All the parameters have met the standard. However…”

“Parameters are dead, and humans are alive. Crystal suits are dead, but crystal suits can be alive!” Chu Chongjiu said. “The life of a crystal suit is the style of its creator, the extremely personal mark that the Armadominus pours into it when the crystal suit is combined by them! When other people are maintaining and adjusting a crystal suit, they must operate by following the original ‘traces’, ‘style’, and ‘mark’. Otherwise, the best they can expect is to repair the ‘body’ of the crystal suit. They will never be able to wake up the ‘soul’ of the crystal suit!”

“If I may tell you, Master Chu…” Sha Yongming emboldened himself and said, “My master taught me exactly the same thing before. I know that Wu Yaxuan is the true disciple of ‘Solar Eclipse’ Jiang Shaoyang, who has completely inherited Jiang Shaoyang’s style in refining, namely aggressiveness, radicalness, and boldness. When I performed the maintenance and debugging, I handled everything through relatively aggressive and radical approaches. I wonder, what have I done wrong?”

“Indeed, Master Chu.” Zhao Tongtian scratched his head and asked, “What has gone wrong?”

“You don’t know the entirety of the refiner’s background.” Chu Chongjiu smiled mysteriously and said, “Sha, you only infer that Wu Yaxuan has inherited ‘Solar Eclipse’ Jiang Shaoyang’s aggressive style because he is Jiang Shaoyang’s most distinguished heir, but have you ever considered whether or not there is any difference between the styles of the de facto master and disciple?

“Let me tell you. The answer is yes, and the difference is very significant!

“The reason is very simple. While Wu Yaxuan did distinguish himself in Jiang Shaoyang’s team, his path of refining actually originates from his mother, Master Xie Anan of the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution!

“Speaking of Master Xie, although she is also a renowned top-tier expert in the circle of refiners in the Star Glory Federation, she does not seem as influential as the leading characters such as ‘Solar Eclipse’ Jiang Shaoyang, who all have unique styles. Many people think that Master Xie is not creative enough and that she is only a passer of knowledge but not a pioneer. Getting to the bottom of it, they believe that she is mediocre compared to the real geniuses in terms of ‘talent’, which is critical for any refiner.

“However, I hold a different opinion to them. I think very highly of Master Xie, who has such an inimitable style of refining that few similar refiners could be found in the entire federation. Her style is even different from that of her master, ‘Fiend Star’ Li Yao, the extraordinary genius in refining in his time. If we have to describe her style in one word, I think it will be ‘flawless’!”

Li Yao, who was pricking his ears eavesdropping, was astonished that his name was mentioned. “Ha?”

Chapter 1581 - Marvelous Refiner!

“Master Xie Anan is not a refiner who can build a piece of ultimate treasure that will amaze everyone who sees it. She is not very suitable for cutting-edge, groundbreaking projects, either.

“However, for every piece of magical equipment that she crafts, she has certainly devoted one thousand percent of her attention and hard work. Even the most common components will be polished to the most perfect level. She never shows off any spectacular skills, she never uses the techniques that have been invented recently, and she does not have extraordinary speed or handicraft. Her magical equipment is not astonishing. It might even look plain when you first see it. However, only after you touch it carefully with both hands will you understand how flawless, smooth, and appropriate her magical equipment is. The more you feel it, the more you can feel the sweat and time that she has dedicated to every piece of common magical equipment!

“If I wanted to develop a piece of brand-new magical equipment, I wouldn’t go to Master Xie Anan for cooperation. However, if my family was going to the battlefield and they needed a piece of sturdy, reliable magical equipment, I would most likely pick Master Xie Anan if I was asked to choose between Master Jiang Shaoyang and Master Xie Anan!

“Wu Yaxuan is Master Xie Anan’s eldest son who revealed his talent in refining at a young age. At first, he certainly learned from her mother, but as he slowly grew up, Master Xie Anan realized that not only was he extremely gifted and imaginative, he was also very aggressive and radical. Knowing that she could not teach the kid, she sent him to 'Solar Eclipse' Jiang Shaoyang, another top-tier refiner.

"'Solar Eclipse' Jiang Shaoyang is of the same generation as Fiend Star Li Yao. Since Wu Yaxuan is Xie Anan's son, it means that he is Fiend Star Li Yao's grand disciple. Naturally, Jiang Shaoyang can't recruit him as a disciple. Otherwise, he'll become one generation lower than Li Yao for no good reason.

"It was exactly for that reason that Wu Yaxuan was merely Jiang Shaoyang's 'first assistant' instead of his true disciple.

"But in fact, Wu Yaxuan is a rare genius who has inherited the knowledge of both Jiang Shaoyang's school and Xie Anan's school, which are vastly different!

"Specifically speaking, Jiang Shaoyang's style is on the surface, while Xie Anan's style is inside. But the style on the surface is so brilliant and dazzling that the flawlessness and trafficability inside the magical equipment are eclipsed. In my opinion, the feeling of flawlessness and trafficability are exactly the key for Wu Yaxuan to grow into a master of refining one day who walks even further than Jiang Shaoyang!

"Sha, when you maintained the 'Azure Thunder', you must've simulated the radical and aggressive approaches that are typical for Jiang Shaoyang and Wu Yaxuan's school, right? I can tell that you are gifted enough to make no mistakes in the simulation. However, you did overlook the flawlessness, trafficability, and appropriateness hidden in the deepest part of the components. It’s no wonder that the crystal suit you repaired does not satisfy the customer.”

Chu Chongjiu’s explanation dumbfounded everyone listening, who felt that they were like deaf people that had heard voices for the first time.

Those who showed up in the test field of crystal suits, other than refiners, were all the Exos who had profound experience with crystal suits.

Everybody was in the circle of refining. That was why they were even more astounded. It was true that Wu Yaxuan was a genius in refining who had risen to fame recently in the Star Glory Federation. But was this experienced Chu Chongjiu not even better than him?

Otherwise, how could he have analyzed Wu Yaxuan’s style in such great detail?

As if struck by lightning, Sha Yongming was looking at Chu Chongjiu with such admiration that he was almost kneeling on the ground.

As expected of a high-level Cultivator from the heartland of the civilization of mankind, his eyes were truly keen!

Li Yao, however, scratched his hair. After pondering for a moment, he asked the mysterious girl who had almost run into him just now. “If I may ask, the father of Wu Yaxuan, the super genius of refining who rose to fame in the federation recently, isn’t Wu Mayan, the legendary, strongest qi-trainer in the federation, known as God Yan, is it?”

“He is. Fellow Cultivator, have you never heard the name of Wu Yaxuan before?”

The mysterious girl looked at Li Yao curiously. She seemed rather confused over how the guy did not know of as famous a celebrity as ‘Wu Yaxuan’ when he was wearing a reasonably good crystal suit.

“That explains a lot.” Li Yao was rather embarrassed. He felt that his face was burning below the mask.

He was a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator but not a god. Over the past few days, he had been studying the development of the arts of refining and the historic events in the federation over the past hundred years in the ocean of jade chips.

Despite the computational ability and the deduction ability of the Nascent Soul Stage, it was an impossible mission for him to swallow all the technological progress in the past hundred years within three days.

Too busy familiarizing himself with the national affairs, he had overlooked the personal lives of his disciples. He was truly an incompetent master!

However, knowing that his disciples had found their own happiness, Li Yao was delighted for them!

Li Yao smiled genuinely, which was quite out of the place when other people around him were all wearing bewildered expressions. The mysterious girl could not help but glance at him.

Got it!

Li Yao could not have cared less about how other people viewed him. After all, everybody was using a template face right now. His real identity was definitely safe!

Suddenly, Li Yao thought of a way that he might be able to reach out to his most trusted family and friends.

He did not want to expose his real identity to public right now, but it did not mean that he was unwilling to contact Ding Lingdang, Jin Xinyue, Wu Mayan, Xie Anan, Professor Mo Xuan, and other people whom he trusted.

It was just that he did not want to deliver the message through the possibly infiltrated Spiritual Nexus or the agents of the Secret Sword Bureau whose loyalty was questionable.

However, if there was a way in which he could directly speak to his family and friends, or at least, say hello to them…

Li Yao smiled. Crossing his arms, he narrowed his eyes. Without alarming anyone, he unleashed a vague thread of spiritual energy along his spine, which jumped as quickly as lightning among his nerve endings before it escaped from his feet and slithered toward the ‘Azure Thunder’ like an invisible viper.

“Master Chu!” ‘Thunder Lion’ Zhao Tongtian, the owner of the ‘Azure Thunder Battlesuit’, was rather excited. “Your eyes are truly sharp to see through the problem at first glance. Please do help me fix the problem. I can pay you however much—”

“I’m going to stop you there.” Chu Chongjiu’s face turned gloomy again as he snorted. “Zhao Tongtian, how much money do you think you can pay for my service? Let me tell you. Today, I’m not doing this as a favor for you. This is partly because the crystal suit is one of the best products in the world that I felt too tempted to resist and partly because Sha Yongming is a junior that I have high hopes for. With this crystal suit of yours, I can teach him a thing or two. This is only your lucky day!”

“Of course! Of course! I didn’t know what I was saying! Master Chu, you are too honorable and renowned for the Thunderbolt Exo Society to pay anything. Even if it is sold, the price is not enough for you to lift your little finger!” Zhao Tongtian was overjoyed after he realized Chu Chongjiu’s meaning between the lines. “Thank you for your help, Master Chu!”

His hands in his back, Chu Chongjiu casually said, “No thanks necessary. Go on and have a try. Spare the ground as quickly as possible after you’re done. Don’t waste my time!”

“But—but—you haven’t done anything…”

Zhao Tongtian and Sha Yongming looked at each other in bewilderment. Everybody else except Li Yao and the mysterious girl was confused, too.

“While I was appreciating the masterpiece just now, I soaked my spiritual energy into the crystal suit and helped you readjust it,” Chu Chongjiu said unhurriedly. “In fact, Sha’s techniques are already good enough. Ninety-nine percent of his work was immaculate. I merely helped him slightly adjust a few critical points. Have a try!”

Zhao Tongtian looked at Sha Yongming and put on the crystal suit again, not entirely convinced.

Most of the bystanders closed their eyes and held their breath, not having the courage to cause any noise.

A streak of blue rushed on the test field. Shadows of blue lightning occupied the entire field. The crystal suit was truly like a majestic lion made of lightning!

A moment later, the ‘lion’ returned to Chu Chongjiu. The helmet was unfolded, revealing a face that was packed with disbelief. Zhao Tongtian was barely able to finish a whole sentence. “It’s—it’s—it’s exactly the same as before. Master Chu, that’s truly marvelous of you!”

“How is that possible!” all the bystanders exclaimed in disbelief.

“Did you see, Sha?” Not sparing a glance for Zhao Tongtian or the bystanders, Chu Chongjiu smiled and turned to Sha Yongming. “You have the potential to be something great. However, just like a new piece of magical equipment, you need a little bit of polishing. Today, I’ll offer you a piece of advice, which is that you must understand what really matters in a piece of magical equipment. Try to reflect on it once you are home. It may sound simple, but I’ve only managed to figure out the logic behind the words after decades of practice!”

“Thank you, Master Chu!” Sha Yongming was so excited that he could barely control himself. His tears were almost flowing down.

“It’s alright.” Chu Chongjiu looked around casually. “Time to go, fellow Cultivators. There’s nothing to see here anymore!”

“Yes. It’s time to go. Let’s clear the test lanes and stop wasting Master Chu’s precious time!”

“Extraordinary. This is indeed extraordinary! I didn’t even notice when Master Chu performed the adjustment!”

“Naturally. That’s a refiner from Firefly who has come to the rural area from the heartland of the civilization of mankind. It would be a miracle if you and I could see through his techniques and approaches!”

“How I wish my crystal suit could be adjusted by Chu Chongjiu.”

“You? In your dream! To have the chance to witness such unbelievable refining arts in person and hear such clear interpretations, today is already our lucky day!”

The bystanders all dispersed in amazement.

With the help of Sha Yongming and Zhao Tongtian, Chu Chongjiu warmed up his body unhurriedly, making preparations for the test of his own magical equipment.

Right then, he glanced at Li Yao’s direction incidentally. His eyes, hands, and feet immediately froze, utterly unable to be moved anymore.

“You…” Chu Chongjiu’s dominating aura from a moment ago entirely vanished. His shoulder collapsed without him knowing, and he seemed one size smaller than before. His voice that had been confident and unchallengeable a while back was now mixed with intense embarrassment. “I didn’t know that you were here!”

Li Yao coughed. Knowing that the guy was not referring to him, he quickly stepped out of the way, making room for the mysterious girl behind him.

“Uncle Chu.” The mysterious girl stuck her tongue out and greeted Chu Chongjiu in a somewhat embarrassed manner.

Chapter 1582 - I’ll Simply Keep Quiet and Watch Your Show…

Chu Chongjiu coughed so violently that all the wrinkles on his face seemed to be blossoming. With some warmth, some respect, and some embarrassment, he said, “Professor Tang, had I known that you were here, I wouldn’t have made a fool of myself at all. You must be teasing me!”

Everybody was astonished by his words.

All of them looked at the unattractive, mysterious girl in surprise, not knowing why such a renowned master of refining like Chu Chongjiu respected her so much!

Chu Chongjiu’s attitude toward the mysterious girl, Professor Tang, compared with Sha Yongming and Zhao Tongtian’s attitude toward him was almost the same, only slightly less obsequious.

The title ‘professor’ came rather reluctantly. The more quick-witted folks quickly realized that the girl must be in charge of certain important posts on Firefly and was not simply a ‘professor’ in a random school.

‘Thunder Lion’ Zhao Tongtian, who had refused the mysterious girl’s offer rudely a moment ago, widened his eyes. Sweat was pouring down from his forehead, and his legs were slightly shaking.

The mysterious girl, Professor Tang, smiled. “You are flattering me, Uncle Chu. Your expertise in refining is extraordinary. There are too many things in you that I should learn from. I was meaning to study more from you while hiding myself in the crowd. It must be my hands that gave me away, right? I should’ve put on a pair of gloves before I left.”

Chu Chongjiu smiled bitterly and said, “Professor Tang, since you were here before, why didn’t you come to do him a favor instead of allowing a useless old man like myself to bluff? Of the younger generation of the federation, Wu Yaxuan’s works are definitely among the top. This crystal suit is definitely worth seeing.”

The mysterious Professor Tang smiled but did not reply.

‘Lion Thunder’ Zhao Tongtian was sweating even harder, his legs trembling.

Sha Yongming chuckled and replied, “For your information, Master Chu, Professor Tang did offer to help Deputy Captain Zhao check his crystal suit, but she was… turned down.”

“Turned down?” Chu Chongjiu was slightly dazed. Dazzling brilliance was beaming out of every wrinkle on his face, and his eyes were as sharp as two scalpels. He stared at Zhao Tongtian and sneered, “As I said just now, Deputy Captain Zhao is indeed very majestic. Even—”

“I—I didn’t know!” ‘Thunder Lion’ Zhao Tongtian could not have known better that he had probably pissed off a big shot whom he absolutely should not have. His legs were shaking, his face was pale, and sweat seemed to be dripping from the tip of his nose.

“Uncle Chu, forget it,” the mysterious girl said. “It was an honest mistake. I was too reckless just now. His crystal suit is indeed an incredible one. It was not wrong of him to forbid me from touching it when he did know my identity. Let’s just move on.”

Chu Chongjiu nodded. He then glared at Zhao Tongtian and said, “Zhao Tongtian, what should I say? So many people on Firefly are waiting in line to ask Professor Tang to help maintain their crystal suit that they often need to wait for two years. You were already unbelievably fortunate to meet Professor Tang, who was willing to help you adjust your crystal suit in her good mood, and yet you rejected it? Professor Tang’s knowledge on the arts of refining is at least three times greater than mine. Tell me, are you blind?”

Zhao Tongtian was so embarrassed that he almost wanted to dig a hole in the ground to hide in and so regretful that he wanted to kill himself. “I—I—”

“Hehe!” Chu Chongjiu snorted and turned around, not bothering Zhao Tongtian anymore. His eyes glowing, he said to the mysterious girl even more respectfully, “Professor Tang, since you have seen the whole process of my maintenance and adjustment just now, please do enlighten me if there is any problem or place that is worth improving!”

It was obvious that Chu Chongjiu, as a master of refining, truly admired the mysterious girl’s expertise in the arts of refining.

Because he had been appointed to work in Fish Dragon City, opportunities were rare for him to return to Firefly and communicate with the mysterious girl.

Now that they had run into each other by accident, the refiner’s occupational disease immediately took place.

“I dare not say that it is enlightenment,” the mysterious girl said. “Uncle Chu, you are one of the best experts on Firefly in the arts of maintenance and adjustment. From a purely technical point of view, the adjustment just now was perfect. I really can’t find any flaws.”

“From purely the technical point of view?” Chu Chongjiu’s face was even more solemn. “So, I have made some mistakes that are not on the technical level, huh? That explains a lot. I did feel that something was off, but I couldn’t tell what it was exactly. I was rather unconfident!”

“No, Uncle Chu. You didn’t make any mistakes. The crystal suit has been adjusted in the most standard way and achieved perfection. It’s just that…”

The mysterious girl hesitated.

“Just what?” Chu Chongjiu pursued.

Zhao Tongtian, Sha Yongming, and most of the bystanders around craned their necks, waiting for the mysterious girl’s answer.

Li Yao was the only one who slightly nodded in approval. *The little girl is not half bad. She has seen through that?*

After pondering for a moment, the mysterious girl looked at Zhao Tongtian gently. He asked again courteously, “Your name is Deputy Captain Zhao, right? I want to ask you three questions. Please answer them truthfully because it concerns the future of your crystal suit.

“Although Uncle Chu has adjusted your crystal suit immaculately today, if we don’t figure out the answers to these questions clearly, chances are that your crystal suit will have exactly the same faults after being used at a high intensity for three to six months.”

Zhao Tongtian opened his mouth and nodded somewhat in confusion.

“First of all,” the mysterious girl said, “your crystal suit is a limited edition crafted by Wu Yaxuan personally. So, you must’ve sent your combat videos, strength, speed, and all other parameters, maybe even the worn crystal suits that you used before, to Wu Yaxuan so that he could tailor-make the crystal suit for you according to your features, right?”

Zhao Tongtian blinked and nodded quickly.

“How lucky of you,” the mysterious girl sighed, “to run into such a master of refining like Wu Yaxuan who has nothing but potential. It’s the first time he’s devised a crystal suit independently, and he wanted every piece of his work to be perfect. That’s why even a guy like you had an opportunity to be offered a tailor-made crystal suit.

“I guarantee that, now that Wu Yaxuan’s fame has already soared with the popularity of the Azure Thunder, next time he devises a crystal suit, or even when he crafts the next batch of Azure Thunder crystal suits, the experts of every force will certainly be knocking on his door. Even if you pay ten times as much money, it will be impossible for you to ask Wu Mayan to tailor-make a crystal suit for you again!

“Alright, let’s leave him aside for now. Let me ask you the second question. Did your left arm—or more specifically, your left shoulder blade—suffer wounds a long time ago, which has resulted in the rigidity of your left shoulder and the slight hindrance when your spiritual energy flows between your left shoulder and your left arm?”

After hearing that, Zhao Tongtian was even more dumbfounded, not having the vaguest clue how the mysterious girl had seen through it.

His reaction was already the best answer.

The mysterious girl smiled and casually said, “Thirdly, although your left shoulder blade suffered wounds, it has been cured in the last half a year and is functioning as well as before, right?”

“How did you know that?” Zhao Tongtian could not help it any longer. He exclaimed and took a few steps back. He looked at the mysterious girl as if she were a ghost who had been crouching behind him his whole life!

How could she know such a thing if she were not?

The bystanders nearby were all wearing indescribable expressions, and their every pore was oozing disbelief!

“It’s simple. I inferred it from the crystal suit.” The mysterious girl revealed the answer quickly. “Due to the heavy wounds on your left shoulder blade, your left arm couldn’t exert strength normally, and your arms were slightly imbalanced. Although you may have practiced a lot of techniques to make up for the drawback, the influences of the wounds still haunted you.

“You may have mentioned it in the files you sent to Wu Yaxuan. Even if you didn’t, Wu Yaxuan was certainly able to notice it from your combat videos.

“Therefore, when Wu Yaxuan helped you to tailor-make a crystal suit, he performed delicate modifications on the armor on the left shoulder. The strength-enhancing rune arrays and the ancillary rune arrays on the left shoulder armor were all carefully adjusted and not exactly the same as the standard versions.

“A crystal suit that was adjusted in such a way would match you perfectly, even though your left side and right side are imbalanced!

“This is perhaps the flawlessness, appropriateness, and comfortableness that Wu Yaxuan has inherited from his mother, Master Xie Anan.

“However, after you received the crystal suit, you happened to cure the old wounds on your left arm, and the balance of your body was restored. Therefore, the crystal suit that Wu Yaxuan tailor-made for the ‘old you’ is no longer suitable for the ‘present you’!

“Because the exertion of strength on your left arm is as good as before, some of Wu Yaxuan’s adjustments have become redundant, which led to the increased erosion of the left shoulder of the crystal suit. After a few months of high-intensity usage, the left side of the crystal suit has become seriously worn. That’s why you brought the crystal suit here for maintenance in the first place, right?

“You thought that it was not a big problem, and there was no need to send it back to Wu Yaxuan for maintenance. In fact, it is not a big problem. Uncle Chu has taken care of it perfectly.

“However, Uncle Chu perhaps did not know that your left arm was heavily wounded before but was cured years later. Therefore, although the faults have been rectified, the source of the faults still exists. The problem is not severe per se, but you’ll have to keep sending it for maintenance every couple of months.”

As the mysterious girl elaborated, everybody except Li Yao was shocked as if thunder were rumbling right next to their ears!

“You’ve got to be kidding me!”

“Based on the minor erosions on the crystal suits, she could already infer so many things. Who—who—who is this Professor Tang?”

“No wonder Chu Chongjiu respects her so much. It seems that he was not exaggerating when he said that her knowledge was three times greater than his!”

“Terrifying. Terrifying refining arts and terrifying eyes!”

While everyone was gasping in astonishment, amazement, admiration, and disbelief, Li Yao yawned.

It was a bit boring.

It seemed unnecessary to waste his time watching that folly. He might as well return and polish the first-generation Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit more carefully.

After all, he could foresee what would happen next. The mysterious girl would help readjust the crystal suit and resolve the source of the problem once and for all. Zhao Tongtian would kneel on the ground and slap his own face while weeping.

It was all boring.

Passing through the dumbfounded bystanders, Li Yao walked out of the test field while putting his hands in the pockets of his beach pants.

Right then, tiny vibrations filled his ears.

Long Yangjun and her ‘robbery team’ had sent a message over!

Chapter 1583 - Professor Tang’s Aim

“Got the initial capital?” Li Yao could tell that the job was certainly done from Long Yangjun’s lighthearted chuckle.

“Yes. Very smoothly.” Long Yangjun’s voice was directly vibrating Li Yao’s eardrum. “As it turns out, the golden match ‘Ace Game’, which is held once every three years, is now underway in Fish Dragon City. There are various forms of competitions and gambles, and the wager is unlimited. Many magnates from other places in Fish Dragon City and even from Firefly and the Star Glory Federation have come to have fun. This is exactly the best opportunity for us to make money. We have already earned the bucket of gold.”

“Of course.” Li Yao smiled. “Nothing can possibly go wrong if Sword Maniac Yan Liren is on the move.”

Long Yangjun coughed and said, “You’re wrong about this one. Although Yan Liren’s sword is aggressive enough, he does not know the first thing about disguise. While he tried to suppress his capabilities to the Core Formation Stage, he failed to conceal his dominating aura, the desire to execute everything in his way be they gods or deities! The people here all know the trade well. Seeing his appearance, and after witnessing his two games, who would ever bet on him losing? As it turned out, he soon became the guy with the highest expectation in the ‘Ace Game’, and his odds rose time and time again. The games were completely one-sided. There was little advantage that we could make use of!

“Fellow Cultivator Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar, on the other hand, is a natural-born actor. He pretended to be stumbling through every match. He also participated in a competition where he needed secure nine victories in a row.

“Of course, we wagered all the money we had on that he could win nine times. The game alone has earned us enough money for almost five high-level crystal suits. Ha!

“It is a pity that Ba Xiaoyu has revealed his true capabilities after the winning streak. Right now, his odds have already reached the peak. We can barely take any further advantage from them.

“Thankfully, I’ve done enough investigations and locked onto a few wealthy magnates. We’ll do the job when the time is right tonight.

“Send me the dynamic account number of the anonymous crystal card now. I’ll transfer the first sum of money to you, and you’ll prepare the crystal suits and the magical equipment while waiting for our second harvest later.”

Li Yao nodded. “Alright.”

He took out an anonymous crystal card issued by the underground bank of the Dragon Snake Space Zone. After a stream of spiritual energy was inputted, the colorful surface of the crystal card immediately glittered glamorously. A random number of more than twenty digits that was changing all the time popped up.

In such a lawless place as the Dragon Snake Space Zone, many people did not want other people to trace the source and the investment of their capital. Therefore, the commonly used ‘anonymous crystal cards’ did not require any real-life files. They did not even have a fixed number. Otherwise, the account number would be leave traces for the enemies or the headhunters from the federation to follow.

Such anonymous crystal cards adopted very advanced dynamic account technology. Every crystal card was generating a new account number randomly, which was only effective for one minute. It meant that the user had a brand-new, traceless card unconditionally, anytime, anywhere.

The deposit and withdrawal through such cards naturally meant a high commission charge from the underground bank that possessed such a dynamic account algorithm. But such cards were safe, secret, and convenient enough, which made them the best tools for stealing and robbery.

As it turned out, not a moment after Li Yao had sent over the randomly generated account number, the anonymous crystal card shivered. A number that was huge enough for someone to whistle popped up.

The Dragon Snake Space Zone indeed has a lot of rich people! Li Yao thought to himself.

For him right now, however much money it was, and even if it was a few digits longer, it was nothing more than a number.

“Right. Try to keep a low profile in the magical equipment store, and be careful when you’re outside,” Long Yangjun suddenly reminded him in the communication channel. “When we were doing the reconnaissance, we felt that the atmosphere wasn’t right. Something big will happen soon. It seems that a few other forces are planning some secret operations besides our gang.

“I have tried to learn a thing or two about them. Such cases have happened before. This is a once-in-three-years super game after all. All the experts and capital of the Dragon Snake Space Zone are concentrated in this place. It’s only natural that something is wrong. Tranquility is the last thing we can expect.

“However, how should I put it? I still don’t feel good. The forces lurking in the darkness do not seem to have come for money.

“All in all, just pay attention and keep a low profile.”

“Got it,” Li Yao said. “Up till now, I have been keeping a very low profile.”

He cut off the communication and waved his hands at a worker of the test field who was standing on his toes eagerly watching the performance of the mysterious Professor Tang from Firefly.

“I want to check the special materials and components on the front part of your product catalog. But for me to check the goods, it seems I’m obliged to transfer a security deposit to the account of the magical equipment center. Can you help me arrange it?”

The worker was already dumbfounded after watching the marvelous operations that Professor Tang performed on the Azure Thunder. He did not notice that Li Yao was waving his hands at all.

“Hey!” Li Yao frowned. He snapped his fingers three times in a row in front of the worker’s nose, finally making the guy wake up. “Did you hear what I said?”

“Huh?” In a trance, the worker wiped his saliva, not entirely awakened from the shock of the incredible, extraordinary methods of adjustment performed by Professor Tang.

Li Yao sighed. “I want to submit the security deposit so that I can directly check a few pieces of magical equipment and materials in your warehouse.”

“N—now?”

“Yes. Now. Is there a problem?”

…

Half an hour later, in a VIP refining workshop at the Four Sectors Magical Equipment Center, Chu Chongjiu was talking with the mysterious Professor Tang.

Now that nobody was around, Chu Chongjiu was even more respectful than before. He changed his form of address toward the mysterious girl, too. “Miss, why are you out here? The Dragon Snake Space Zone is truly a mess. I—cough, cough—I shouldn’t have pointed out your identity just now!”

“It doesn’t matter, Uncle Chu.” The mysterious Professor Tang smiled and said, “I didn’t intend to conceal my identity on my trip this time in the first place. I’m going to the Star Glory Federation to observe their election as a member of the ‘Election Observation Delegation’. It’s best that I leave some traces everywhere I go in order to show our frankness, in case… those guys spread unnecessary rumors. That’s why I took the initiative to stand out. It was really not your fault, Uncle Chu.”

“That explains a lot.” Chu Chongjiu was relieved. He thought for a moment but still lowered his voice, asking, “The Election Observation Delegation? This is your father’s arrangement, isn’t it? So to speak, has he made up his mind to get closer to the Star Glory Federation?”

“It is indeed my father’s arrangement, but we are not getting closer to the Star Glory Federation.” Professor Tang had been speaking very gently just now, but she suddenly turned determined when she talked about the issue. “We are joining the federation and integrating into it!”

Chu Chongjiu was slightly dazed before smiling bitterly. “I didn’t know that you are even more radical than Captain Tang!”

“This is not radicalness but the last chance of survival in our desperation. Other than joining the Star Glory Federation, we don’t have a choice right now!”

Deep sorrow was flowing out of the face that was hidden below her mask of light and shadow. “Uncle Chu, you know Firefly’s condition for the past thousand years, too!

“For a thousand years, we have been wandering in the sea of stars. At first, we were still able to receive supplies from the worlds that were unwilling to give in to the Imperium. The warships of many Sectors were even connected to Firefly, and a lot of rebel and elite Cultivators from countless worlds joined us, turning Firefly into an enormous amalgamation of super-large warships. We had a lot of new recruits!

“But… that’s all hundreds of years ago!

“In the last few hundred years, the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Alliance of the Holy Covenant have swallowed all the prosperous areas of the civilization of mankind. They are also extending their claws and tentacles to the corners of the universe from the heartland of the civilization. One world after another has fallen to them. The rest of the Sectors are all shuddering in fear and self-seclusion. Even if they are discovered by us, they do not dare get in touch with us at all under the horror of the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance!

“We have completely become orphans in the sea of stars. We are now an insignificant and lonely civilization of starships!

“To accommodate a civilization, and also to make the civilization stride forward, a certain population size is mandatory!

“The shortage of assets and energy, the harsh environment, and other problems on Firefly might be overcome one way or another, but we only have a population of 150 million in total, which is the maximum capacity that Firefly can support. How can so few people ensure the continuity of a great civilization?

“Uncle Chu, you and I are both refiners. Let’s just talk about the arts of refining that we are both familiar with. Tell me, how many techniques of ours have been lost over the past thousand years because we could not find enough talented heirs from the limited population on board?

“A lot of knowledge was actually grasped by only one refiner, but if he couldn’t find a suitable disciple from the hundred million people on Firefly, his lineage would be entirely gone after he passed away. Even if the techniques can be preserved through jade chips or other forms, many skills and tricks that require personal tutelage will not appear again!

“It is for this reason that our technological level and our reserve of techniques has actually been declining slowly for the past thousand years. Ours is a starship civilization that is degenerating to our doom due to the limitation of ‘population’. Nobody can deny that!”

Chu Chongjiu’s dry smile froze in his wrinkles. His face suddenly turned extremely gray as he helplessly said, “We can preserve the specialists and experts of the main fields through our hibernation technologies. They are the ultimate treasure of the Star Ocean Republic and the seeds of our civilization!”

“Indeed, we can, but leaving the side effects of prolonged hibernation aside, such an attempt is highly risky itself,” Professor Tang said gloomily. “Have you forgotten the accident a hundred and twenty years ago, Uncle Chu? In the accident, 355 masters who were in the hibernation state were instantly killed. It was a catastrophe for our civilization!”

Chapter 1584 - Competition of Routes on Firefly

Chu Chongjiu was dazed for a long time before softly saying, “It was an accident.”

“Uncle,” Professor Tang replied, “an ‘accident’ shouldn’t be found in the dictionary of a refiner. There are no accidents in the world; there are only problems and the odds that they take place!

“We have drifted in the sea of stars for a thousand years. All the components on Firefly have rusted, eroded, and aged. Also, they cannot keep pace with the development of our new technology anymore. It is only a matter of time that an ‘accident’ takes place. As time goes by, similar ‘accidents’ will only happen more and more frequently until our civilization is entirely destroyed in a world-blighting ‘accident’!”

Chu Chongjiu was silent for a long time before he said after a long sigh, “You’re right, miss.”

“Therefore, the Star Glory Federation is our last hope. Although they have yet to reach our height in the fields of certain critical technologies, it does boast seven Sectors and Kunlun, which was left by the prehistoric civilization. Their resources, population, and territory are all a thousand times larger than ours!

“I believe that changes in quantity will eventually lead to a change in quality. The Star Glory Federation boasts infinite potential. Even if they are not as good as us right now in some fields, they will certainly catch up with us at lightning-like speed!

“Uncle Chu, did you know how many mixed feelings I had just now when I was studying the Azure Thunder devised by Wu Yaxuan? I don’t know how I should put it. When did such experts of refining like Wu Yaxuan emerge at the underdeveloped area at the edge of the cosmos, who are capable of producing a crystal suit that is as distinguished as our mainstream equipment? What—what terrifying potential they have!”

Chu Chongjiu could not help but observe, “You are being too modest, miss. Wu Yaxuan’s expertise in refining is nothing worth mentioning compared to yours. Didn’t you resolve the problem easily just now? You were even able to trigger a better performance of the crystal suit through adjustment. Your adjustment was truer to the meaning of ‘flawlessness’ than Wu Yaxuan’s techniques were. Not just Wu Yaxuan, even if his mother Master Xie Anan were here, she wouldn’t have done a better job than you.”

The girl smiled but shook her head. “There is no need to exaggerate, Uncle Chu. I know my own refining level. Besides… there’s only one me on Firefly, whereas Wu Yaxuan is just a rising star in the Star Glory Federation and only invincible in the younger generation. In the upper class of the society of refiners, there are bound to be many more specialists who are more excellent than him!

“All in all, I believe that geniuses can only be found when the population is large enough. They are the tip of a pyramid that has to be supported by an enormous foundation! Right now, the foundation is missing on Firefly, which means that we are doomed to decline. In comparison, the population of the Star Glory Federation is large enough to support a civilization with infinite potential!

“We have cutting-edge technology in our hands, but we lack the industrial infrastructure and necessary population. The Star Glory Federation’s foundation is solid enough, and it has sufficient population and resources, but it does not have too much reserve after all. Some of the cutting-edge technology and techniques might not be developed for hundreds of years!

“If we can truly be merged, it will be beneficial for both parties. Only such a brand-new, complementary civilization can expect to defeat the expedition army of the Imperium and even march back to our hometown at the center of the sea of stars one day!

“This is the wish of both my father and myself. However many difficulties we may run into in the future, I will walk to the end of the path. Uncle Chu, we can count on your support, right?”

Chu Chongjiu smiled bitterly and said, “I have been under Captain Tang’s command since I was eleven. At that time, we were merely two students in the engine compartment. Even my life was saved by Captain Tang in the explosion of the engine compartment at that time. Who else can I support if not Captain Tang and you after all these years?

“However, it is not an easy path to walk on. People on Firefly do not necessarily object to the merger with the Star Glory Federation. After all, we are two of the few civilizations of Cultivators in the sea of stars, but the question remains—who will be the leader in the new alliance? Those people in our parliament demand that they should enter and manage the parliament of the Star Glory Federation. Even the name of the ‘Star Glory Federation’ must be changed directly into the ‘Star Ocean Republic’!”

Professor Tang bulged her eyes, her courtesy and meek aura just now entirely gone. “Is—is there something wrong with those people’s heads? Our population is only one thousandth of theirs. We do not have a single resource planet. All we have is a broken starship that is riddled with holes! The only leverage we have for the negotiation are the techniques, technology, and intelligence from the center of the cosmos that we’ve held onto since a thousand years ago. Nothing more!

“If they are determined to develop our techniques and technologies independently, they will certainly get all of them after a few hundred years!

“Just based on that, those people on Firefly are hoping to dominate their parliament and even force them to change the name of the country? Isn’t it even more hilarious than a snake that tries to swallow an elephant?”

Chu Chongjiu hesitated for a moment. After thinking, he still said what he wanted to say nonetheless. “Maybe their heads are absolutely fine. It’s just that they are viewing the question from a different perspective because of their different stance.

“Miss, you know that the ‘competition of routes’ has been going on for hundreds of years on Firefly. It’s mostly the argument between the ‘technical staff’ and the ‘administrative staff’.

“People like you, me, your captain father, the chief mate, the navigator, and others who are dedicated to specific technical work naturally do not attach much importance to the slogan of the ‘rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic’. Many of us even believe that, if we get to the bottom of it, Firefly right now is more like a starship than a ‘rightful government’. So, all the affairs should be managed according to the rules and regulations of a starship. There is no need for a ‘rightful government’ to meddle at all!

“However, don’t forget that the starship was fully loaded with the MPs and their family members of the ‘rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic’ when our ancestors escaped from the Empyreal Terminus Sector a thousand years ago. Those people are deeply connected with each other and boast unparalleled influence. After a thousand years, they are still maintaining the daily functioning and management of the parliament.”

The girl sniffed and said, “What parliament? They are redundancies, if put nicely, or cancer, if we are being honest!”

“Miss,” Chu Chongjiu said, “the technical staff such as you certainly regard the parliament as a redundancy if not a cancer. However, in the eyes of the MPs, they are the last hope that sustains the rightful government and the national elites who are much more important than the technical staff!

“In the last few hundred years, the competition between the technical staff and the administrational staff has been quite fierce. Now that the Star Glory Federation has popped up out of nowhere, hasn’t the contradiction between the two parties significantly intensified?

“Let’s be honest here, miss. Your father is the captain of Firefly; you are the youngest lecturer in Star Ocean University and the youngest Level-A researcher in the Star

Ocean Institute. As for me, I can more or less provide technical support in terms of refining, too.

“For the technical staff like you and me, even if we join the Star Glory Federation, our position will not be any lower than it is now.

“Your father can continue working as the captain of Firefly. It is even possible for the Star Glory Federation to offer some resources and support him to establish a fleet of which he will be the general commander. For the specialists from Star Ocean University and the Star Ocean Institute, you can establish larger educational and research agencies in a certain Sector, or you can be hired by the eighteen supreme academic institutions in the federation with a high pay and participate in the more in-depth and profound studies. Even for myself, I can easily find better privileges in the federation than what I am enjoying right now.

“The bottom line is, for the technical staff like us, joining the Star Glory Federation has all kinds of merits and absolutely no harm.

“However, what about the MPs and even the Speaker? What benefits can they get after they join the Star Glory Federation?

“The last thing that the Star Glory Federation is short of is politicians. They are doing their job quite fine. Every MP has accomplished their place after earning countless military credits, and yet you are asking them to share the power with the lords in our parliament? Is that fair?

“There can’t be two tigers in one den, and there can’t be two Speakers in one federation, can there? Miss, tell me about it. How can our parliament support a comprehensive combination? After the combination, we can make a living with our knowledge, but what can the MPs do?

“Management? Yes. They claim to be best at management! The problem is, as you said just now, miss, there is only a population of a hundred million on Firefly. The best that our MPs can expect to handle are the issues of a hundred million people! The Star Glory Federation, on the other hand, has a population of almost ten billion people in the seven Sectors! The poor experience in management that our MPs have is not worth mentioning in their place!

“Even a random city in the federation may have a population of hundreds of millions. Is our Speaker willing to demean himself by working as the mayor of a city? Even if he is willing to, it’s not like the original mayor of the city will voluntarily clear the post for him!

“That’s the Speaker we are talking about. What about the officials of the idle bureaus? When we evacuated years ago, we kept the hundred departments we had before. Those officials have been doing nothing for a thousand years. What can they do after the merger, work as an insignificant official at the bottom level of the corresponding department in the federation? Why would they agree to that?

“All in all, it is a very complicated issue to join the Star Glory Federation. Even if your father is the leader of the captain, it is impossible for him to rush into anything faced with such tremendous obstacles. Let’s make thorough plans and preparations first!

“The Black Wind Fleet will arrive in no time. How can we make thorough plans and preparations?”

Professor Tang could not help but clench her fists. “If we cannot finish the assimilation before the great war begins, then—”

While she was talking, Chu Chongjiu’s portable crystal processor suddenly buzzed in a low noise. Somebody had sent him a message.

To speak with Professor Tang, Chu Chongjiu had already adjusted the settings on his portable crystal processor. Except for those from a few most important people, the messages from the irrelevant people were all blocked.

Chu Chongjiu was dazed and frowning hard after he read the message.

“What happened?” Professor Tang looked at him concernedly. “Anything wrong, Uncle Chu?”

“Something weird has happened,” Chu Chongjiu said in confusion. “Nie Siyuan, the manager of the Maintenance Department of this place, asked me for help. He said that something happened to the Azure Thunder that we both adjusted just now!”

Chapter 1585 - King of Adjustment!

The staff-only workshop in the Maintenance Department of the Four Sectors Magical Equipment Center was the most advanced maintenance center with the most sufficient facilities and the best trained and most experienced refiners in the entire Dragon Snake Space Zone.

The dazzling facilities on the ground were ten times more professional than the simple maintenance platforms next to the test field.

But they could not stop the dozens of most skilled maintainers and modifiers of the Dragon Snake Space Zone furrowing their eyebrows in front of the Azure Thunder.

The armor and the maintenance panel were opened again, revealing the various components that were as delicate as the nerve network and the muscle fibers of a human body.

At first glance, as the four deep blue tubes transmitted feeble spiritual energy into the crystal suit, all the units of the crystal suit were still functioning smoothly while glittering in a patterned rhythm, fluctuating like a huge beast breathing.

However, tiny anomalies always occurred after every few seconds during the ‘breathing’. Something seemed to be wrong with the super-compressed crystal reactor of the crystal suit, which was like the heart of the beast, making it unable to input and output the blood normally.

A majestic-looking, middle-aged man was standing in front of the Azure Thunder in silence. Sha Yongming, the young refiner, was catering to him carefully nearby.

It was Nie Siyuan, the chief maintainer and modifier in the Chamber of Commerce.

He was also the manager of the Maintenance Department of the Four Sectors Magical Equipment Center, and he had only just arrived from the auditorium of the ‘Ace Game’ because of the emergency.

However, the renowned master of maintenance and modification in the Dragon Snake Space Zone did not know what the problem was exactly, either. He was staring at the Azure Thunder, as confused as Sha Yongming and the other refiners.

“Master Chu is here!”

“Professor Tang, too! Professor Tang, who demonstrated shocking performance in the test field just now, has arrived!”

The maintainers and refiners greeted Chu Chongjiu and Professor Tang like the stars surrounding the moon.

“Brother Chu!” Nie Siyuan walked forth and clasped his fist toward Chu Chongjiu. Then he bowed to the girl beside him and managed to put on a smile. “Fellow Cultivator Tang, you must be an expert on your side. Please do forgive my obtrusion by inviting you here…”

“Brother Nie.” Chu Chongjiu bowed back to Nie Siyuan. “We are too familiar with each other to bother with all those formalities. The crystal suit has gone wrong again after being adjusted by the two of us. According to the tradition of the refiners, we are certainly obliged to see what is going on and if anything went wrong during our adjustment. If it is indeed our fault, we will definitely take full responsibility!”

“Brother Chu, you are being too serious,” Nie Siyuan said solemnly. “The expertise of the specialist on your side far exceeds that of the refiners of the Dragon Snake Space Zone. The Azure Thunder is not the work of the best experts in the federation, either. How could anything have gone wrong during your adjustment?

“Also, I watched the surveillance footage myself after the incident to observe the process of your adjustment. I read the test records before the crystal suit had a second fault. Based on your modification and the combat data it displayed, there was absolutely nothing wrong. Your adjustment was almost immaculate. Fellow Cultivator Tang here was particularly marvelous to have exploited 2% more of the extreme performance of the crystal suit!”

The staff nearby all spoke up.

“Indeed. Professor Tang is so awesome!”

“She knows the performance of the crystal suit better than its creator Wu Yaxuan!”

Chu Chongjiu frowned and said, “Then I’m confused. The crystal suit was obviously perfect after the maintenance and adjustment half a day ago, but half a day later, new faults are happening. Did that… Zhao Tongtian perform any highly dangerous maneuvers in the crystal suit? But that shouldn’t be so serious. Crystal suits are designed for battles in the first place. All kinds of extreme conditions have already been taken into consideration. It shouldn’t be so fragile as long as it is not hit by a heavy crystal railgun head on!”

“You are quite right, Brother Chu. Besides, Zhao Tongtian did not perform any dangerous maneuvers. He was overjoyed after getting the crystal suit modified and renewed by the two masters. In the half a day that followed, he was familiarizing himself with the performance of the crystal suit in the test field here and doing rehabilitative exercises.”

Nie Siyuan selected the surveillance picture from dozens of angles and projected it on the light beam. “Please take a look. This is the picture of Zhao Tongtian’s training in the Azure Thunder. It can be easily seen that, although his combat style is rather aggressive and violent, and sprinting, halting, and abrupt turning are his habitual movements, they are all within a reasonable range. Such movements will naturally cause erosion on the crystal suit. However, under normal circumstances, it would take at least three to five months for such erosion to lead to a slight change in the parameters. The crystal suit is not made of paper. How can it be worn to the sensible extent after only half a day?”

Chu Chongjiu and Professor Tang both observed carefully but failed to notice anything abnormal. They nodded and said, “Indeed. He was simply sprinting, halting, and abruptly turning before he performed the not-so-radical dodging exercise. Although he was hit by more than ten simulated cannonballs, they were not really explosive. If the blast of such a degree is already insufferable, the crystal suit cannot be called a crystal suit at all!”

“Yes. There is absolutely no reason why the crystal suit should have a fault right now,” Nie Siyuan said gravely. “But it does nonetheless. According to Zhao Tongtian himself, after doing rehabilitative training for four hours, he decided to do a series of training exercises on continuous acceleration. But when he was accelerating in the second phase, he suddenly heard a ‘bo’ sound from deep inside the crystal suit, as if something was broken. Later, while the crystal suit did not have any obvious fault, he felt extremely uncomfortable no matter how he moved it. It felt even more scratchy than before you adjusted the crystal suit. To quote him, he felt that needles were stinging his back.

“He wasn’t lying.

“After I came back, I managed the test for the crystal suit myself and realized that, although the performance parameters were not changed at all, the feeling when it was worn was indeed not right. The description of ‘needles stinging the back’ was very appropriate. It was almost like the ‘flawlessness’ hidden deep inside the crystal suit, left by Wu Yaxuan and even Xie Anan, had been entirely sabotaged!

“If it were a low-level Cultivator using a common crystal suit, they might not have taken the ‘uncomfortableness’ seriously, but Zhao Tongtian is in the Core Formation Stage after all, and the Azure Thunder is a sophisticated product. Therefore, it is quite uncanny that such a problem has arisen!”

Chu Chongjiu glanced at the crystal suit that had been entirely unveiled before he said solemnly, “Brother Nie, what is the source of the problem?”

With an extremely weird expression, Nie Siyuan lowered his head and said, “This is the strangest part. I have resorted to all the most advanced magical equipment in the workshop, and I’ve invited so many refiners to study it together, but after we discussed it for a long time, we couldn’t locate the source of the problem at all!”

Chu Chongjiu and Professor Tang looked at each other, both noticing the astonishment in their eyes.

Nie Siyuan was one of the best refiners in the Dragon Snake Space Zone. There was certainly a gap between him and the top-tier experts on Firefly and the Star Glory Federation, but he should not have been so lousy as to fail to even detect the cause of a fault!

“Let me take a look!” Chu Chongjiu’s face was ten times more serious than when he had been in the test field previously.

While browsing through the test records that Nie Siyuan and other refiners had left and the changed parameters on the Azure Thunder, he stuck his hands onto the chest of the crystal suit. His spiritual energy flowed deep into the crystal suit like thick tides, brushing past the uneven surface of every component as he sensed the discordance there.

The more he sensed, the more confused Chu Chongjiu became. Furrowing his brow and pursing his lips, he fell into exactly the same trance as Nie Siyuan after a long silence.

“This is very strange,” Chu Chongjiu mumbled. “It’s true that no faults can be found at all. The crystal suit is identical to when we adjusted it!”

Whispers were echoing around.

Even Chu Chongjiu, a master of refining from Firefly, could not find the source of the problem. This was truly rare!

Nie Siyuan, Chu Chongjiu, and all the other people all looked at Professor Tang for help.

Unlike them, Professor Tang put on an interested smile.

“This is fun!”

Flames of excitement were burning inside her eyes as she stared at the Azure Thunder. She took out a tube of fragrant ointment from her pocket and softly rubbed it on her hands, which were as smooth as jade. Taking a deep breath, she closed her eyes and put her hands into the cold empty chamber of the Azure Thunder.

Her eyelashes were shivering nonstop. Her hands were glowing from inside to outside like radiating jade until every vein and nerve inside her pure hands was readily visible. Her body seemed to have become translucent!

All the refiners held their breath. Even their hearts almost stopped beating.

Professor Tang did not open her eyes again until three minutes later. What was almost running out of her beautiful eyes was not confusion, nor confidence, but the deepest horror!

“It’s impossible.” Professor Tang could not help but took two steps back. She shook her head hard and repeated in an even louder voice, “It’s… impossible!”

“What?” Chu Chongjiu stepped forward in a hurry. “Have you found the problem?”

“There is no problem.” Professor Tang stared in a trance at the Azure Thunder, which was wide open. The dark, hollow internal space of the crystal suit was almost swallowing her soul like a bottomless swirl. Her voice was shivering as she explained in disbelief, “This crystal suit does not have any fault. It has merely been adjusted again after us. Somebody has set it to the extreme mode that is absolutely unbearable for a Core Formation Stage Cultivator like Zhao Tongtian through a brilliant approach!

“In—in other words, after I squeezed out two percent of the potential in the crystal suit that even the original designer Wu Yaxuan never thought of, somebody wrung… at least another seven percent of the potential combat ability out of the crystal suit! The price is that the difficulty of usage has been drastically multiplied. With Zhao Tongtian’s capabilities, it is absolutely impossible for him to use the crystal suit!”

Chapter 1586 - Truly Marvelous!

Professor Tang’s remark was like a stone that was tossed into a peaceful pond. The best maintainers and refiners of the Dragon Snake Space Zone all jumped to their feet.

“It’s impossible. Whose adjustment could be so brilliant that absolutely no trace was left behind and nobody noticed anything wrong?”

“Also, what Professor Tang said just now is too unbelievable. Squeezing out seven percent of the potential that even the original designer Wu Yaxuan neglected? That’s—that’s too —”

“There can’t be such adjustment techniques in the world. Zhao Tongtian is an expert in the Core Formation Stage anyway. He is at the tip of the pyramid in the thousands of fellow Cultivators. Who is a crystal suit adjusted for if it is too much for him to use?”

“The most critical thing is, except for Sha Yongming in the beginning, and then Master Chu and Professor Tang later, there wasn’t a fourth person who touched the crystal suit at all!”

Nie Siyuan, the manager of the Maintenance Department, stepped forward and solemnly said, “That’s right. Fellow Cultivator Tang, please take a look at the video of the test field for the past six hours. After you helped Zhao Tongtian adjust his crystal suit next to the field, he seemed to be given the ultimate treasure in the world and wouldn’t take the crystal suit off at all after he put it on. He was training all the time until something happened to the crystal suit. If there was indeed a fourth person who touched the crystal suit, when did it take place?"

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Every frame of the picture on the test field was enlarged, especially the period in which Professor Tang finished the adjustment and handed the crystal suit back to Zhao Tongtian.

It could be clearly seen that, other than the overjoyed Zhao Tongtian, the dumbfounded staff, and the speechless bystanders who were almost worshipping Professor Tang, there was not a fourth person who ever approached the Azure Thunder, much less touched it!

Professor Tang zoomed in and slowed down the speed of the picture. She observed carefully second by second, only to discover no anomaly at all.

Looking at her hands in a daze, and recalling the subtle and yet concrete feedback from the inside of the Azure Thunder, she shook her head slightly.

Was it possible that her senses were wrong?

It was impossible!

Pondering for a moment, Professor Tang slowly said, "Master Chu, Manager Nie, please take a look yourselves. It's mainly about the output sensitivity of the crystal reactor."

"What!" Chu Chongjiu and Nie Siyuan were both alarmed. "Somebody modified the crystal reactor of the crystal suit?"

There were two integral, precise, and stable units in every crystal suit, namely the crystal processor, which was responsible for control, and the crystal reactor, which was responsible for the output of power.

They were equivalent to the brain and the heart of a human being.

According to the unspoken rule of the refiners and maintainers of crystal suits, the crystal processors and the crystal reactors were all built into fully enclosed ‘black boxes’.

For a brand-new crystal suit, and such an advanced one at that, the crystal processor and the crystal reactor would rarely be opened for adjustment unless it was sent back to the original manufacturer for maintenance.

That was because the two units were too important and sophisticated. If the maintainer did not boast a profound understanding about the goals and methodology of the original designer and an expertise in refining as good as the original designer’s, it was possible that mistakes would be made. Chances were that the two units could not be installed again after they were dismantled, or that their original performance could not be restored despite adjustment after they were installed again.

The Azure Thunder had been delivered to this place because of the malfunctions of the shoulder and the arm and because it was time for its regular maintenance. Naturally, the crystal processor and the crystal reactor were not dismantled.

Even Chu Chongjiu and Professor Tang also abided by the tradition of the refiners. They only performed modifications to the components on the surface and did not reach the level of the crystal processor and the crystal reactor.

But right now, Professor Tang was claiming that somebody had touched the crystal reactor of the crystal suit?

Chu Chongjiu and Nie Siyuan were both appalled, looking as if they had run into ghosts.

In fact, they would not have been so horrified even if they did run into a ghost, which was anything but unusual nowadays. The Nether World Sector, for example, had an entire world of ghosts. What was strange about them?

However, adjusting the crystal reactor of the Azure Thunder, such a high-level crystal suit, quietly through uncanny techniques while escaping the attention of so many observing refiners was definitely beyond the description of ‘appalling’!

Chu Chongjiu and Nie Siyuan both extended their hands into the empty chamber of the Azure Thunder. One on the left and the other on the right, they stuck to the circuit of the spiritual energy output in the crystal reactor.

For Cultivators of their level, their hands were already the best test equipment. By sensing the feedback of the spiritual energy unleashed by their hands, like the bats identifying obstacles through the soundwaves they released, they could keenly perceive the surroundings.

With a gloomy face, Nie Siyuan said to his disciple, Sha Yongming, “Increase the power output of the crystal reactor of the Azure Thunder.”

Hum, hum, hum, hum, hum, hum…

The Azure Thunder shivered slightly. The crystal reactor immediately utterly a weak noise.

As the power output was moved up from one phase to another, the two masters of refining, who were from different worlds but equally respected and experienced, widened their eyes at the same time. Their eyebrows and their beards seemed to be shaking off from their faces.

“It—it is true that—”

There was not the slightest hint of blood on the two masters’ faces.

“You sense it, too, don’t you?” Professor Tang’s voice was full of astonishment. “The crystal reactor of the Azure Thunder has been adjusted by someone. The extreme output and sensitivity of the spiritual energy have both significantly increased. It is now even… so keen that it is multiple times faster than the reaction speed of a Core Formation Stage Cultivator such as Zhao Tongtian! Before he finished a thought, his crystal reactor was already responding automatically! No wonder he felt that needles were stinging his back!

“It is so for the Core Formation Stage Cultivators, but for the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators whose reaction speed and thought generation is faster, the crystal suit might be very suitable. However, I cannot guarantee that with certainty!”

“But…” Chu Chongjiu’s throat was letting out meaningless noises, and his face was as horrid as that of a zombie. “Who did it? When and how was it done?”

“I don’t know. I truly don’t.” Professor Tang looked at the dark, empty chamber of the Azure Thunder as if it were a black hole. “Perhaps it was remote manipulation. The person’s spiritual energy snuck into the inside of the Azure Thunder and adjusted the super tiny circuits in the crystal reactor after recalculating the distribution of the spiritual energy out.”

“Remote manipulation?” Chu Chongjiu and Nie Siyuan looked at each other and shook their heads subconsciously. “That’s impossible. Remote manipulation is a basic technique for high-level Cultivators. But it is generally used to control flying swords, bullets, and the like. The smaller the object and the shorter the distance to move, the more difficult the whole operation will be!

“There are millions of control chips and more than ten thousand super tiny components in every square inch inside the crystal reactor. Redistributing the crystal wires that can be thinner than a hair and the chips that are smaller than millet through remote manipulation? That’s too unbelievable!

“Moreover, the crystal reactor is a ‘black box’ that is under heavy protection. To resist the intense blow and interference of spiritual energy on a battlefield, it is often carved with five to seven protection and buffer rune arrays on the outside, which makes the crystal reactor essentially impregnable! How could the guy have bypassed so many layers of defense and snuck into the crystal reactor through remote manipulation?

“The most critical thing is, even if such a ‘super adjuster’ did exist, when and how exactly did he accomplish this? After all, the crystal suit never left us or Zhao Tongtian from beginning to the end!”

Professor Tang grew more and more confused after hearing Chu Chongjiu’s questions. She was looking at every bystander on the surveillance picture with trance and reverence. Shaking her head, she said, “I don’t know. It is certainly impossible that the guy did it when Zhao Tongtian was in the crystal suit. After all, the shield of light membrane on the surface of the crystal suit was automatically functioning. Then, maybe, when Uncle Chu and I were performing the adjustment, he sent a… hidden force into the crystal suit that could be activated later.”

“Professor Tang!” Chu Chongjiu could not help but exclaim. “Are you suggesting that, when the two of us opened the plate armor and the maintenance panel of the crystal suit, poured our spiritual energy into it, and performed the adjustment work with full attention, there was another refiner multiple times more brilliant than us, who sent a hidden force into the crystal suit without alerting anyone, both escaping our attention and infiltrating the defense rune arrays of the crystal reactor to perform certain delicate operations on the mustard-seed level. Also, through certain… unbelievable techniques, the result that the sensitivity is significantly increased was delayed and did not surface until half a day later when we had already left?”

Professor Tang was lost for words. “Well, about that…”

She also felt that what she had said was absurd. How could such a thing happen in the world?

“Alright.” Staring at the Azure Thunder thoughtfully as if it were a fiend that had crawled out of hell, Nie Siyuan suddenly said, “Thank you for your help. Now that the source of the ‘fault’ has been identified, let’s call it a day. Such a fault is not to be rectified in our humble workshop. I will suggest that the owner of the crystal suit delivers it to the original manufacture so that the original designer and crafter will be able to repair it together.”

“Manager Nie?” Professor Tang raised her eyebrows and looked at Nie Siyuan, not sure what he meant. “Have we finished the investigation? We don’t know who did this yet!”

Nie Siyuan took a deep breath. His eyelids were shivered slightly because of his fear as he struggled to say, “Whoever he is, whenever and however he did this, and whatever his purpose is, I am not interested at all. Also, a piece of advice. I think that it will be best for you if you don’t look for the answers, too.

“There are many secrets in the world, but for some of the secrets, you will wish that you had never heard them after you learn them. There are also many people whom you wish you had never met after you see their real faces!

“It was reckless of me to involve the two of you into this. Please forgive me! Now, do you understand what I’m saying?”

Chapter 1587 - The Mysterious Buyer

There was nothing but dead silence in the Maintenance Department.

Although the room was quite spacious, everybody felt their chest tighten, their breath and heartbeat almost freezing.

In the chilling silence, Chu Chongjiu understood everything.

Shua!

A series of cold sweat the size of beans immediately leaked out of his forehead, which could not be stopped at all.

As a seasoned refiner himself, he knew the formidability of the refiners very well.

If someone messed up with a battle-type Cultivator, he would be pissing off a sect or a family behind the Cultivator at most.

However, if someone infuriated a seasoned refiner, especially a master Armadominus who could craft a high-level crystal suit independently, as long as the refiner offered a tailor-made crystal suit as reward, perhaps thousands of battle-type Cultivators would be attracted to him at his service!

If there was indeed such a terrifying refiner who was capable of performing such amazing modifications right before the eyes of himself and Professor Tang without alarming them, such an expert was definitely not someone they would want to mess with!

“Precisely.” Chu Chongjiu breathed heavily and nodded hard. “You do have a point, Brother Nie. We cannot resolve the crystal suit’s issues. Let’s just send it back to the original manufacturer and invite Wu Yaxuan to maintain and adjust it in person.”

Nie Siyuan sighed and said, “I’m afraid that even Wu Yaxuan won’t be able to adjust it back to the original state. Perhaps it can only be done if Masters Jiang Shaoyang and Xie Anan are to work together… but that’s none of our business right now. Our job here is done.”

Nie Siyuan extended his arm, gesturing for them to leave.

Chu Chongjiu knew that the guy was not rude but sincerely hoping that the two of them would stay out of the mysterious, perilous swirl for their own sake. Later, Nie Siyuan would certainly show his gratitude and apologize in some other way.

Therefore, Chu Chongjiu simply nodded at Nie Siyuan. He was about to leave with Professor Tang.

Professor Tang was not entirely ignorant of the situation, but she was too young to be convinced so easily after all. She said in a low voice, “Uncle Chu, are we dropping the issue… just like this?”

“Or what?” Chu Chongjiu talked to her privately with a bitter smile. “We are now away from our home, living under somebody else’s roof. The less trouble, the better for us. As long as one tenth of your previous deduction is right, it will be best for us make zero contact with such a devilish refiner!”

“However…” Professor Tang thought for a moment and said, “Why did the refiner do it? Playing tricks on the crystal suit right under our nose. Was it supposed to be a demonstration for us?”

“Probably not.” Chu Chongjiu pondered for a moment and said, “It’s highly unlikely that we have wronged such a mysterious expert. Even if it were a ‘demonstration’, it was probably meant for Wu Yaxuan, the designer of the crystal suit, and even Jiang Shaoyang, Xie Anan, and other masters of refining in the federation. The conflicts are too complicated for us to be involved in. Let’s just hold back our curiosity, in case we are torn into shreds by the turbulence. After all, you have a mission!”

Professor Tang was slightly dazed. Realizing that she was going to fully inspect the Star Glory Federation as a member of the ‘Election Observation Delegation’ and to negotiate with the leadership of the federation, she found it unnecessary to be included in an unknown conflict.

Therefore, she simply restrained herself from pursuing any further and nodded. “Alright. Uncle Chu, let’s go.”

“Brother Nie, we will be on our way. If you are not too busy in the ‘Ace Game’ later, why don’t we grab dinner together? I’ll introduce you to… Professor Tang, an expert of refining on Firefly.”

Chu Chongjiu bade farewell to Nie Siyuan. He was about to leave the Maintenance Department together with Professor Tang, when the mini crystal processor on his wrist was buzzing softly again.

Glancing at the light beam casually, Chu Chongjiu could not help but put on an even weirder expression.

He displayed the content on the light beam to Professor Tang. “Weird things happen every day, but there seem to be particularly plenty of them today. The secondhand units and materials that are sold on consignment in the Four Sectors Magical Equipment Center by us have been mostly bought. Somebody has purchased a whole lot of them!”

Not only did the Four Sectors Magical Equipment Center have its own sale platform of magical equipment and materials, it also provided service of secondhand goods recycling, magical equipment pawning, and commission sales.

After Firefly was docked near the Dragon Snake Space Zone, in order to purchase tremendous resources, materials, and crystals to repair Firefly, which had weathered through all kinds of accidents for a thousand years, the Cultivators on Firefly had sold a huge amount of magical equipment on board.

Naturally, the sales of the bulk magical equipment were conducted through other channels, but the miscellaneous, bizarre, and ragged magical equipment and the rare materials were often sold on consignment through the magical equipment stores in various places.

Chu Chongjiu had brought a large batch of magical equipment and materials to this place to sell them.

However, in the beginning years, the magical equipment and materials that were more valuable and easier to be refined and used had been entirely purchased.

The things that remained unsold after such a long time were either the materials that were extremely difficult to be refined and even never seen by the people at the edge of the cosmos before or broken units crafted through the marvelous technologies from the center of the cosmos that were practically impossible to be repaired or made use of.

Right now, hardly anyone asked for the price of the old magical equipment and materials that they were selling on consignment. Chu Chongjiu was already used to the lack of popularity.

Yet, the magical equipment center had just sent him a message that dozens of magical equipment and materials had been sold in a row, all of which were the units of extremely poor quality that required full maintenance, and the materials that were so rare that even the refiners on Firefly might not be able to handle them properly!

Professor Tang glanced at the light beam quickly and soon put on an expression of disbelief. “Even the ‘Moon Soft Gel’ has been sold?”

The Moon Soft Gel was a very special soft material, made from the soft bones, veins, and nerves of dozens of animals mixed with more than fifty different kinds of metal powder after being stewed for a hundred days.

Such a soft material mainly had two usages when they were applied to a crystal suit.

Firstly, it could serve as the buffer pads in the joints to increase the agility of the crystal suit and reduce the erosion of the components.

Secondly, it could be used to seal the crystal reactor so that the odds of spiritual energy escaping would be greatly lowered.

Honestly speaking, the Moon Soft Gel was a very excellent material. It would not be an exaggeration to call it a valuable treasure.

However, two major drawbacks led to the poor sales of the material.

Firstly, after material science’s hundreds of years of development, a new gel had already been invented that could completely supplant the Moon Soft Gel in every function. The performance of the new material was ninety-seven percent of the natural Moon Soft Gel, but its price was only one tenth of the original.

The natural Moon Soft Gel was certainly not a good bargain. It was even more expensive than many ‘marrow crystals’ of the same weight.

Secondly, and most fatally, the Moon Soft Gel would turn into what felt like hard rubber if it was left unused for a while after it was made.

It was tremendously difficult to melt the Moon Soft Gel again, which required very special tricks and techniques. With one moment of carelessness, the internal constituents of the Moon Soft Gel would be damaged, and its performance would be lowered. In the end, it would be no better than the synthesized gel!

Ever since the big explosion a hundred years ago, Firefly had lost all its refiners who were capable of the ancient technique to ‘re-melt’ the Moon Soft Gel.

That was why they were selling a large batch of Moon Soft Gel.

However, it was obvious that there were no refiners who could handle the Moon Soft Gel perfectly at such an underdeveloped place at the edge of the cosmos.

Perhaps nobody felt that it was worthwhile to pay ten times the normal price at great risk just to increase the performance of the buffer pads by three percent.

However, the Moon Soft Gel, as well as more than ten kinds of other materials that each had their own problems and were difficult to deal with, had all been sold. The sold items also included dozens of ragged units that even Professor Tang was not confident enough to repair and were merely being sold as garbage.

Professor Tang could not help but feel deeply interested in the buyer of the rare materials and the ragged units.

Boosted by his curiosity, she stepped forward and asked Nie Siyuan, “Manager Nie, I wonder, could you tell us the buyer of the batch of materials and magical equipment?”

“Well…” Nie Siyuan deeply frowned.

It was always strictly forbidden in the Four Sectors Magical Equipment Center to reveal the information of the buyer of materials and magical equipment. After all, the refinement and manipulation of magical equipment was a highly sensitive business. Many people did not wish for their life-saving magical equipment to be exposed to the public, especially in a place as perilous as the Dragon Snake Space Zone.

It was about the reputation of the magical equipment store. If the information of a buy was revealed for no good reason, chances were that there would be absolutely no business tomorrow.

“Professor Tang?”

Chu Chongjiu coughed. He felt that Professor Tang’s request was a bit rash.

“Manager Nie, please make no mistake.” Professor Tang thought for a moment and said, “I don’t have any ill intentions; I only feel that a buyer of such keen sight is hard to come by. There’s a batch of rare materials that I have never brought out before. I’m hoping to strike another deal with the buyer.

“How about this…

“I know that the buyer is probably still here because the materials he has purchased include the ‘Ocean Spirit Gel’, which must be refined as soon as possible after it leaves the special protective cabin of an extremely low temperature.

“Therefore, he must be processing the ‘Ocean Spirit Gel’ in a certain workshop in this place right now, right?

“If possible, I would like Manager Nie to communicate with the buyer first. I’ll make a list of materials. If he is interested in the materials on the list, he can naturally meet us. If he isn’t, we’ll just go our separate ways!

“Manager Nie, what do you think?”

Firefly was a big client of the Four Sectors Magical Equipment Center. Professor Tang’s request was not outrageous, either. After all, it would be the buyer who had the ultimate call to decide whether or not they should meet. After pondering for a moment, Nie Siyuan looked for the removal route of the materials purchased just now through the administration menu and traced to the workshop where the buyer was. Then, he spoke to the buyer and sent Professor Tang’s list of materials over.

Soon, Nie Siyuan raised his head and looked at Professor Tang with a weird expression.

“The buyer agrees to a meeting, but he’ll only allow one person at most to enter his refining workshop.”

Chapter 1588 - Priceless Enlightenment

As the daughter of Firefly’s captain, and being a skilled expert of refining herself, Professor Tang had been through many big events on Firefly, which was almost an independent world itself.

However, after she walked to the door of the seemingly unattractive refining workshop, she somehow felt nervous for no good reason.

What kind of team of refiners would have purchased so many tricky materials and magical equipment in a row?

The door of the refining workshop opened soundlessly in front of her. She was embraced by… a certain weird fragrance with a slightly sour smell.

Professor Tang had been in touch with more than a hundred thousand materials. She knew the form and scent of most of the materials in the universe. However, she found it impossible to tell the source of the sour fragrance. She could not help but feel astonished.

Even more ill at ease, Professor Tang walked into the workshop solemnly after taking a deep breath of the sour, fragrant air.

It was the refining workshop of the highest level that the magical equipment center rented to the public. The workshop was divided into two suites, the internal one being a negative-pressure, dust-free room, where the highly precise operations would be performed.

Right now, the internal suite was empty. However, it could be clearly seen through the glass window that some materials and magical equipment had been processed and were floating on the rune arrays waiting to be tested.

Seeing the materials, Professor Tang’s eyes quickly constricted, and she almost exclaimed in shock.

What?

The Moon Soft Gel has been processed? Such colors, such shapes, and such splendid reflections when it is flowing. This has been so perfectly handled!

Also, the ‘Ocean Spirit Gel’, the ‘Seven Emperors Wood’, the ‘Cave Sound Stone’, and more than ten other materials have been immaculately polished. The extreme performance of every material has been exerted!

How is it possible? There can’t have been two hours since the buyer purchased our materials. Normal refiners would have to spend three to five days considering how to deal with the materials appropriately. How could anyone have processed them so quickly?

There’s also this—

Professor Tang moaned like a cat.

Isn’t this the ‘Super Quiet Fixed Rotor’ dismantled after the explosion of the ‘Planet Penetration Cannon’ due to overloading? Didn’t the specialists determine that it was beyond repair? I was there, too. The ‘Super Quiet Fixed

Rotor' was also examined by my own hands. It was utterly useless!

How? How has it been repaired, and so quickly?

Also, what is the owner of the workshop trying to do with the 'Super Quiet Fixed Rotor'? Is there anybody else who knows how to use such a rare device?

Professor Tang pressed her chest hard, trying to hold back the shock that was coming at her like waves.

If she were less determined, she would have suspected that somebody had cast a spell upon her, and she was mired in a world of illusions. How could such absurdities take place in reality?

Chiliu, chiliu, chiliu, chiliu…

Right then, blood-freezing noises came over from a corner of the outer suite, catching her attention.

She struggled to turn her head inch by inch.

What!

Professor Tang had thought that the buyer who had purchased and refined so many materials must have been a whole team of professional, experienced, well-trained refiners.

The myriad of cutting-edge facilities and magical equipment in the luxury refining workshop were prepared for an entire team, too.

However, there was only one guy who was leaning against a corner of the refining workshop lazily, one that was rather…

unique and untraditional.

Professor Tang’s eyes moved from the blue-and-white slippers on the man’s feet, to the variegated beach pants, and then to the sloppy shirt that was usually worn by older people. The only thing that proved his identity was a refining uniform that was similar to a surgical gown outside of his pants and shirt.

Professor Tang felt an urge to stab into her own eyes.

Chiliu, chiliu, chiliu, chiliu.

The guy was actually holding a bowl of… what seemed to be known as ‘instant noodles’. He was sucking the curled noodles one mouthful after another. The sour smell that almost filled the entire room came from the pickles in the bowl!

Professor Tang’s brain went blank, occupied by the seemingly abundant trimmings on the deep purple bowl of noodles and the weird noise when the guy was sucking the noodles.

What—what the heck?

Isn’t such foul, simple food already outdated even in this remote area at the edge of the cosmos? Everybody now takes half-fresh food whose water has been instantly locked. Where exactly has he found the old food that has probably expired, and why is he enjoying it so wholeheartedly?

What—what is this black thing exactly? It can’t be a legendary egg, right? How long has this egg been kept?

Professor Tang was on the brink of collapse.

Li Yao was having a great time with the instant noodles and the egg comfortably. Although the flavor and nutrition were not so good, it was still the same feeling from more than a hundred years ago!

He remembered that, before he became a Cultivator, on the train north to the Grand Desolate Plateau, the conversation between him and the refiner Ding Yin had taken place over a bowl of such noodles.

When he smelled the instant noodles, countless incidents of the past flowed back to his heart. It could not be replaced by any fine cuisines in the world!

Seeing that Professor Tang was already dumbfounded, Li Yao could only speak first while holding the noodle bowl. “Do you have all the materials on your list?”

He did not intend to expose his traces, but a few materials that Professor Tang had offered were indeed intriguing. Some of them were even rare materials that he had seen in Ou Yezi’s memory fragments and could never be found in the Star Glory Federation.

With those materials, he would be able to significantly strengthen everybody’s crystal suit magical equipment.

After weighing the pros and cons, it did not seem a bad idea to meet with the experts of refining from Firefly.

After all, they would have to compete with the Imperium of True Human Beings together in the future as comrades anyway.

Hearing Li Yao’s voice, looking at the very familiar template face, and then confirming with the slippers on his feet, Professor Tang felt that lightning was striking inside her head. She exclaimed, “It was you!”

Li Yao sucked another mouthful of noodles while he watched Professor Tang’s expression changing from confusion to shock, from shock to excitement, from excitement to fear, and from fear to admiration…

He blinked and delivered a forkful of noodles to his mouth again.

He seemed to have been recognized.

But it was not a big problem. After all, he was using a false identity and an anonymous crystal card. After he left the Four Sectors Magical Equipment Center, nobody would know who he was.

“I thought you were here to trade materials.” Li Yao slightly frowned. “Do you have all the materials on the list? If not, let’s not waste each other’s time.”

“Yes, I do!” Professor Tang was so excited that she was barely able to control herself. She nodded quickly and said, “I have all the materials listed just now, and the prices are definitely reasonable, senior! Was—was this ‘Super Quiet Fixed Rotor’ repaired by you? That’s amazing. We tried to repair the internal rune arrays with the ‘Stars Dragging Moon Pulling Arts’ but failed all the time. What kind of marvelous technique did you use to repair it, senior?”

“I used the ‘Stars Dragging Moon Pulling Arts’, too,” Li Yao answered.

Professor Tang was shocked. “How is it possible?”

Li Yao picked up the remaining half of the egg and casually said, “It is possible, when your hands are fast enough.”

“When my hands are fast enough…”

Looking at Li Yao’s plain hands that were no different from the hands of regular Cultivators, Professor Tang was caught in confusion again.

“If you do have those materials, I’m really interested in making a deal with you.”

Seeing that Professor Tang was absent-minded again, Li Yao could only shift the topic back to business. Thinking for a moment, he said, somewhat embarrassed, “But while I do have enough capital, it will only be in position in one to two days. So, can we check the quality of the materials first and then finish the payment later? After all, I’ll be staying here for a long time and will definitely not run away with those materials.”

“Well…”

Professor Tang was at a loss. After she realized that the taciturn, mysterious man who had been standing next to her in the test field half a day ago was actually such an appalling master of refining, materials were not important to her at all!

If she could make friends with such a master, what was the big deal even if those materials were offered to him for free?

However, was the man who was feeding on instant noodles and egg really a master of refining? Could there be some sort of mistake?

Who was he exactly? Was he a hermit hiding at the edge of the cosmos?

The nature of a refiner in the blood of Professor Tang was fully activated. She summoned her courage and meant to ask Li Yao whether or not he was the one who had played tricks on the Azure Thunder.

However, the reminders of Chu Chongjiu and Nie Siyuan were still echoing in her ears, which finally kept the basic rationality in her and stopped her from proposing the question recklessly.

Thinking quickly, Professor Tang changed the way of asking and respectfully said, “Senior, the materials are absolutely fine. I’ll bring you to our material warehouse later so that you can pick them. Money is not going to be a problem!

“However—

“Half a day ago, when I showed my humble skills in the test field half a day ago, you were there, too, weren’t you? Would you care to comment on my adjustment on the Azure Thunder?”

Sipping the soup of the instant noodles, Li Yao realized what Professor Tang was doing.

She was hoping that he would pay his ‘earnest money’ with his comments.

It was quite fair. After all, it would be outrageous to demand them to deliver their rare materials for nothing, would it not?

“I didn’t catch the latter half of your performance, but judging from the performance at the beginning, it should be quite good. The Azure Thunder Battlesuit had already been adjusted quite well by Wu Yaxuan, but you were still able to find new potential in it. That was quite incredible of you," Li Yao said drily.

"Senior!" Professor Tang's eyes suddenly grew sharp. She took a deep breath and clenched her fists. "I am sincerely hoping to receive enlightenment from you, senior. Please do not care about my feelings and just point out my mistakes and negligence! I—I would like to offer a pure natural 'Green Star Ancient Square Stone' for seniors' enlightenment!"

Li Yao was slightly dazed. He sucked a noodle at the corner of his mouth and stared at Professor Tang. "Your adjustment was indeed incredible. I was not speaking to you perfunctorily just now. However, just like Wu Yaxuan, you were greatly wrong on a fundamental level. So, your endeavor is not worth commenting on at all."

"What!" Professor Tang was dumbfounded as if she were hit by lightning. "Just like Wu Yaxuan, I was greatly wrong on the fundamental level?"

Chapter 1589 - Enlightening!

“Exactly.” Li Yao finished the egg that was fully packed with the soup of pickles and moaned in great satisfaction. He wiped the corner of his mouth with his thumb and said unhurriedly, “Do you know the fatal, fundamental mistake that you and Wu Yaxuan made?”

“Please do enlighten me, senior!” Professor Tang’s face was pale. She was in such a trance that she almost fell over. She could not help but hold the corner of the table and struggled to breathe. “It’s impossible. It’s impossible! Even if Wu Yaxuan’s design and my adjustment are not perfect, with negligence of all sorts, how can we be greatly wrong on a fundamental level?”

“The fatal mistake that Wu Yaxuan made was to sell the crystal suit he devised to Zhao Tongtian.”

After finishing the egg, Li Yao fished in the noodle soup for a long time before he finally picked up a section of soft sausage. He grabbed it with his chopsticks and casually said, “Your mistake, on the other hand, was not to point it out for Zhao Tongtian but continue the great mistake that Wu Yaxuan made.

“In my opinion, Wu Yaxuan should’ve refused to sell the Azure Thunder to Zhao Tongtian, and as a responsible refiner, you should’ve informed Zhao Tongtian that he was not suitable for the crystal suit, instead of adjusting the crystal suit blindly.

“If the direction at the beginning is wrong, the further you go, the more wrong you will be. Your adjustment may be excellent, but so what? It doesn’t change the fact that the crystal suit is inappropriate!”

“I beg to differ, senior!” Professor Tang argued, blushing. “The Azure Thunder was a limited edition crafted by Wu Yaxuan in person based on Zhao Tongtian’s Cultivation, body, and combat parameters. Even the tiniest detail such as the old wounds on Zhao Tongtian’s shoulder blade was taken into consideration. In my opinion, the crystal suit is almost perfect!

“Wu Yaxuan couldn’t have foreseen that Zhao Tongtian’s old wounds would get healed later. Naturally, he shouldn’t be blamed for the fault of the crystal suit.

“After my adjustment, even the minor issue was taken care of. The combination of the crystal suit and Zhao Tongtian is almost flawless. Why do you say that they are ‘unsuitable’?”

Li Yao smiled and said, “There are mainly two schools competing with each other in the circle of refiners in the Star Glory Federation, namely the Deep Sea School and the Grand Desolate School. The former highlights concrete structure, complicated maintenance, and sophisticated transmission of spiritual energy, in order to break the limits of performance. The latter is the exact opposite. The magical equipment they produce is a bit ‘stupid and heavy’, whose performance may not be as good as the former. However, it is definitely sturdy enough. The requirement on maintenance is not very high, and the cost is much more affordable.

“The Deep Sea School is the traditional school of refining in the federation, represented by Supernova Jiang Sheng, his nephew ‘Solar Eclipse’ Jiang Shaoyang, and the other nine excellent refiners known as the Novem Stellae.

“The Grand Desolate School is a new school of refining that only rose in the recent hundred years. Its leading members include Professor Mo Xuan, the previous president of the Refiners’ Association and the incumbent president of the Spectral Cultivators’ Association, as well as his four true disciples known as the Four Kings. There’s also Master Xie Anan, who you mentioned just now.

“As for this creative genius Wu Yaxuan who has become quite popular in the federation recently…

“Although his mother Master Xie Anan is the dean of the Refining Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution right now, and he was deeply influenced by his mother when he was young, his talents and interests are different from hers. He is more suitable for the path of refining of the Deep Sea School, which cannot be helped. That’s why Master Xie Anan sent him to Master Jiang Shaoyang for training.”

While he was free, Li Yao had taken the chance to learn the latest information about Wu Mayan, Xie Anan, and their son. Naturally, he knew everything about them now. “Wu Yaxuan has inherited and absorbed all the characteristics of the Deep Sea School. With the fearlessness and creativity that solely belong to the young people, he has pushed the style of the Deep Sea School to a new peak, thereby creating the masterpiece Azure Thunder!

“It is indeed a piece of work that arouses the interest of whoever sees it. It is also a typical crystal suit of the Deep Sea School. The structure is complicated, and the circuits of spiritual energy are extremely precise. The difficulty of maintenance is unbelievably high, which is a price that must be paid to break the limits of the crystal suit’s performance.

“Little girl, in what kind of environment do you think the power of such a crystal suit can be maximized?”

Holding the sausage in his mouth, Li Yao looked at Professor Tang with a smile.

Professor Tang was at a loss. “What kind of environment? It is an all-terrain crystal suit, suitable for both the universal battles and those within the atmosphere with a high gravity…”

“That’s not what I meant.” Li Yao shook his head and said, “Let me tell you my viewpoint. I believe that this crystal suit is more suitable for the major sects in the prosperous world inside the federation or the experts in the federal army in a battle of groups.

“The reason is simple.

“In the prosperous world within the federation, and especially in a battlefield of large-scale groups, the logistical support will certainly be ensured effectively. Many expert refiners will be standing by. The expensive and complicated components can be easily purchased, too.

“It is in such an environment that the maximal power of the Azure Thunder can be exerted without concern because even if faults such as eroded parts or overloaded rune arrays take place due to the limit performance, it will be very convenient to find an expert to repair the crystal suit and replace the components.

“Think about it. Does what I said make sense?”

Professor Tang thought about it deeply. She could not help but nod her head.

Emotionlessly, Li Yao chewed on the sausage that was mostly made of flour. “Then, think again. Does the Dragon Snake Space Zone boast such an environment? Does Zhao Tongtian look like a guy who has sufficient logistical support and expert refiners to help him maintain his crystal suit?

“The Dragon Snake Space Zone is a chaotic, murky place. The level of production and maintenance of crystal suits here is not as good as in the federation. Also, the Cultivators do not have the notion of a large-scale, collaborative battle. They are often fighting on their own or in the forms of ‘Exo Societies’ at best.

“What is their mission usually? Lurk deep inside the asteroids in the dark universe, preparing to hijack starships passing by, or stay on a carrier all year long to stop others from hijacking the starship. Or the two missions are sometimes even combined into one. They will hijack a starship when the time is right, and they will retreat and defend themselves if the enemy is too strong!

“All in all, it is not unusual for a combat squad to drift for a few months in space without any effective support until they are running out of resources!

“‘Thunder Lion’ Zhao Tongtian is a minor celebrity in the Dragon Snake Space Zone. The Thunderbolt Exo Society that he belongs to is a classical combat squad of Exos in the Dragon Snake Space Zone. It is their daily routine to fight in an unpopulated area at the periphery of the space zone without any supply for three to five months or even longer!

“Now, do you still feel that a ‘delicate’ crystal suit, with a high difficulty of maintenance, is really suitable for ‘Thunder

Lion’ Zhao Tongtian?

“As it turned out, faults happened to the Azure Thunder soon after it was delivered to Zhao Tongtian, and maintenance was mandatory. However, the refiners and the workshops of the Thunderbolt Exo Society were not even able to perform regular maintenance. It had to be sent to the best magical equipment center in Fish Dragon City and maintained by the most professional experts!

“Do you feel that it is Wu Yaxuan’s glory? Is it marvelous and incredible to craft a crystal suit that cannot be maintained by a general refiner?

“In my opinion, it is only indicative of Wu Yaxuan’s incompetence. Crystal suits are for battles. They are meant to be brutally savaged. If something happens to a crystal suit every now and then, and if the problems cannot be resolved immediately but have to be taken care of by the original manufacturer, what kind of crystal suit is that? Should the customer buy two crystal suits at one time so that he can wear one while having the other one delivered to the original manufacturer?”

Professor Tang felt that she was bashed in the head, and a whole new world was opened instantly to her.

The mysterious senior who was holding a sausage in his mouth had made such a fine point!

“About Zhao Tongtian’s identity and the Thunderbolt Exo Society’s businesses, I have found the answers after searching online for ten seconds,” Li Yao said casually. “Once Wu Yaxuan had Zhao Tongtian’s detailed combat files, there was no reason for him not to know what kind of environment his customer was going to fight in and what kind of crystal suit his customer actually needed!

“If Wu Yaxuan truly knew himself well, he should’ve known that the crystal suit that his customer really needed could never be crafted under his style of refining.

“If Wu Yaxuan was truly considering his customer, he should’ve refused the customer’s order and offered a piece of reasonable advice to him. The customer was obviously more suitable for the crystal suits of the Grand Desolate School, of which Wu Yaxuan’s mother was a master. I believe that she could satisfy the demands of a Core Formation Stage Cultivator, couldn’t she?

“But Wu Yaxuan didn’t.

“Perhaps he was only showing off. Perhaps he was too young and arrogant to accept that he could not accomplish everything in the world. Perhaps it was the very first crystal suit that he had devised independently in his life, and a customer from the Dragon Snake Space Zone could help him expand the market here. Or perhaps I overestimated him, and the matching problem never occurred to him. The bottom line is, for whatever reason, Wu Yaxuan ‘tailor-made’ a crystal suit that was not suitable for the Dragon Snake Space Zone for Zhao Tongtian.

“Hehe. If it is a mass-produced crystal suit, or one that is purchased from the secondhand market, it might’ve passed. However, as a ‘tailor-made’ crystal suit, he did not even take into consideration the environment it was to be used in, which is quite disappointing. Zhao Tongtian has no relevant knowledge and came here for help, but it does not mean that Wu Yaxuan should ignore the problem and simply focus on unimportant details!

“If we get to the bottom of it, both Wu Yaxuan and… you, Miss Tang, have focused your full attention on the cold magical equipment. You never regarded the customer using the magical equipment. That’s why you cannot stand in the shoes of the customer and consider his most critical needs!”

Professor Tang hesitated, so embarrassed that her face was flushing.

“Yes. ‘Thunder Lion’ Zhao Tongtian is indeed arrogant and disgusting. You simply despised him before, right?”

Staring at Professor Tang, Li Yao said, one word after another, “If you truly abhor him, you could’ve refused to build or maintain the magical equipment for him. It wouldn’t have mattered even if you killed him.

“But after you take his order for whatever reason and pick up his magical equipment, you should ignore his appearance and identity and regard him as a pure ‘client’. You should be devoted and think from his perspective to perfect the magical equipment.

“After all, the magical equipment is for the customer to use, not for the refiner to show off!”

Chapter 1590 - Senior Lin

“The magical equipment is for the customer to use, not for the refiner to show off…”

Professor Tang took a deep breath, and her confused eyes became clear again. She looked at Li Yao in a completely different way from before.

“I seem to get it now, senior. It’s true that I shouldn’t have helped Zhao Tongtian adjust his crystal suit just now. I should’ve informed him honestly that the crystal suit is not suitable for him to carry out ambushes or patrol missions in such a complicated environment as the Dragon Snake Space Zone without the logistical support for a long time. Whatever adjustments the crystal suit has, it will not resolve the source of the problem. Even if it is immaculate for a moment after the adjustment, the crystal suit will be very troublesome again with the slightest faults after a few not-so-intense battles!

“In fact…”

Professor Tang’s face was even redder. She said in a low voice, “I saw through it from the very beginning, but I did not think that it was a big deal. That Zhao Tongtian is a truly annoying fellow. I didn’t look at him properly at all, and I didn’t even regard him as the real owner of the Azure Thunder. I felt that… he did not deserve such a crystal suit!”

“I thought so, too,” Li Yao said. “I did not like the repulsive fellow, either. I, too, don’t think that he deserves the Azure Thunder Therefore, I didn’t even have any interest in studying the crystal suit carefully in the beginning.”

“In the beginning?” Professor Tang’s eyes glittered. She grasped the key of Li Yao’s sentence keenly.

Li Yao smiled and changed the topic. “Do you know? Just now, I took some time to study the work of Master Xie Anan, Wu Yaxuan’s mother and a representative of the arts of refining of the Grand Desolate School. After I compared her crystal suits to the crystal suits crafted by ‘Solar Eclipse’ Jiang Shaoyang, the leading person of the Deep Sea School, I couldn’t help but notice a very interesting difference.

“In the circle of refiners in the federation, it is generally acknowledged that Jiang Shaoyang is the most extraordinary person other than Professor Mo Xuan, who is a master refiner of the older generation. He has even dwarfed all his competitors. While Xie Anan is a fairly good expert of refining herself, there is always a gap between her and Jiang Shaoyang.

“Such a theory is not entirely groundless. After all, the few cutting-edge, most-advanced crystal suits in the federation have all been devised by Jiang Shaoyang. It is even believed that the high-level Cultivators above the Core Formation Stage should all wear the crystal suits of the Deep Sea School and that the crystal suits of the Grand Desolate School are only suitable for the middle- and low-level Cultivators below the Core Formation Stage.

“That is a rather reasonable theory. However, after carefully studying the hundreds of crystal suits built by Xie Anan and Jiang Shaoyang in person over the past thirty years, I have realized that, while the performance parameters of Jiang Shaoyang’s crystal suits far exceed Xie Anan’s in almost every aspect, when it comes to the rate of severe faults that have caused disability and even death, Jiang Shaoyang’s works are seven percent higher than Xie Anan’s!

“Of course, since Jiang Shaoyang’s crystal suits adopted many new technologies, including recently invented ones that were still experimental, it is understandable that his rate of severe faults is higher.

“But what is the rate of severe faults of the crystal suits forged by Xie Anan in person? Zero! Of the hundred crystal suits she’s built, even after they weathered through the bombardment of the main guns of the warships and the savage of the hostile Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators while they were worn by the experts in the Core Formation Stage or even the Nascent Soul Stage in such a harsh environment as the Uranian Ring Sector, sometimes without effective support and maintenance for several months if not years, the crystal suits remained stable and functional. Accidents where the Exos were injured or even killed because of the crystal suit’s faults never happened!

“Such steadiness is truly horrifying. It’s no wonder that, while most of the top-tier experts in the federation have selected the crystal suits of the Deep Sea School and appointed Jiang Shaoyang as their special maintainer and modifier, Ding Lingdang, known as the God of War in the federation, always chooses Xie Anan to modify her crystal suit!

“I believe that the ‘flawlessness’ in Xie Anan’s style of refining means that she is able to be completely devoted to the magical equipment she is building and to consider purely from the user’s point of view. It is not just the difference in the specific techniques.

“Wu Yaxuan thought that he had learned her mother’s tricks of ‘flawlessness’, but in fact, he caught the shadow and lost the substance. He only saw the surface but never perceived the essence below. There’s still a long road ahead for that young man!”

While commenting, Li Yao drank up the soup of the instant noodles. He smacked his lips and handed over the empty bowl to Professor Tang.

Professor Tang looked at Li Yao.

Li Yao looked back at her emotionless, too.

“Oh. Right.” Professor Tang finally understood what he meant. She took the bowl respectfully with both hands, threw it into the dustbin, and turned back to listen to Li Yao’s enlightenment again.

“I value fairness in deals more than anything. The Green Star Ancient Square Stone is an ultimate treasure that can rarely be found at the edge of the cosmos. Now that you are willing to trade it for my teaching, naturally, I won’t just throw some random stuff to you.”

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao said, “Do you know why I’m telling you all this?”

Professor Tang shook her head. “I don’t. Please do enlighten me, senior.”

“Let me put it this way. Do you think the mainstream arts of refining on Firefly are more similar to the Deep Sea School or the Grand Desolate School?”

Professor Tang was slightly dazed. She slightly frowned and said, “There is no such classification among us. However, generally speaking, I think that we are more like the style of the Deep Sea School.”

"That's what I thought," Li Yao said. "After all, you come from the center of the cosmos, and you were the 'rightful government' before, with all kinds of advanced technologies and techniques. You must've carried a lot of precise magical equipment with you to your starship at first. Therefore, it is very possible that you have been walking on the path of the Deep Sea School.

"However, after a thousand years of escaping, I believe that most of the magical equipment and assets on your starships must've been consumed, and Firefly is quite damaged itself, with a lot of technologies and techniques lost, right?

"Do you still feel that it is appropriate to continue the route of the Deep Sea School under such circumstances?

"I am not implying anything but simply viewing the issue from a relatively objective perspective. I believe that if you are truly to establish technical communication with the Star Glory Federation, it would be better if you talk more with the Grand Desolate School. I believe that some of the ideas of the Grand Desolate School are more suitable for Firefly right now!"

Professor Tang shivered slightly, deep in thought. A moment later, she was so thrilled that she could not help but say, "My name is Tang Xiaoxing, and I'm a lecturer in the Refining Department of Star Ocean University on Firefly. May I have the privilege of learning your name, senior?"

"Lin Jiu." Li Yao replied with a random alias, which was a homophone of Spiritual Vulture.

Tang Xiaoxing naturally knew that 'Lin Jiu' could not be the real name of the mysterious senior, but she knew better than to count on the stranger's trust after such a short conversation. Bowing courteously, she said, "I have been greatly enlightened by what you just said, Senior Lin. But this is not a decent place for talking. I wonder, will you honor us by coming to the magical equipment warehouse that Firefly has set up in the Dragon Snake Space Zone so that we can have a proper meeting, Senior Lin?”

“Your magical equipment warehouse…” Li Yao weighed the pros and cons time and time again in his head.

The biggest problem was that the Cultivators from Firefly would be the focus of all the forces’ attention. Spies from the CIFA, the Secret Sword Bureau, and other organizations would be keeping an eye on them closely.

For Li Yao, who had been used to hiding in darkness since childhood, he did not like the feeling of being observed by so many people under the spotlight, whether those people were friends or foes.

However, the materials from the center of the cosmos were indeed tempting.

Also, this Tang Xiaoxing was certainly more than a ‘lecturer of the Refining Department in Star Ocean University’ on Firefly. If Li Yao intended to change the situation of the war between the federation and the Imperium on his own, Firefly was perhaps a very critical point to get started with.

“Yes. We have a very large warehouse of magical equipment in the Dragon Snake Space Zone. There’s also the most advanced refining workshop built with the technology from the center of the cosmos, which has better facilities than this place. It is usually not open to outsiders but for our own use only,” Tang Xiaoxing said excitedly. “However, you are certainly an exception, Senior Lin. Whatever materials and magical equipment you need, I will certainly try my best to get them for you!”

“The refining workshop will be unnecessary.” Li Yao made the decision. He did not want to use a workshop, which was likely to be monitored. After all, many of his refining tricks were confidential. Even the workshop he was in right now had been tested multiple times before it was put to use. “But I won’t object to taking a look at the materials. I’ll make a list. Tell me how long it will take for you to get all of them and how much it will cost.”

“No problem!” Tang Xiaoxing was overjoyed. “This way, please, Senior Lin!”

“One more thing.” Li Yao crossed his legs, his slippers waving on his feet. “In fact, I’m a man who likes to keep a low profile. The conversation just now should be between you and me. It is unnecessary for anyone else to know it, don’t you agree? If you do, maybe we will talk more often in the future.”

“A low profile…”

Looking at Li Yao’s clothes, which were true to the meaning of low profile, Tang Xiaoxing was rendered speechless.

…

At the door of the magical equipment center, the passers-by were talking.

“Did you hear? A very awesome mater of refining came by today and awed everyone on the spot!”

“I know. Wasn’t it Master Chu Chongjiu? The expert from Firefly is indeed incredible!”

“What Master Chu? It’s one ‘Master Tang’, who was much younger but also much more skilled than him!”

“What? M—Master Tang?”

“Don’t you know? Come here. Let me tell you what happened; I was there. Master Tang’s adjustment truly dazzled me!”

Right above the passers-by, three luxurious shuttles that were black and shiny, with firearms hidden in them, rushed by.

The two shuttles at the front and the rear were loaded with bodyguards. Inside the one in the middle, which was decorated as extravagantly as a royal palace, Tang Xiaoxing, addressed as ‘Master Tang’ by the people in the magical equipment store, was sitting opposite Li Yao, ill at ease, while she observed his hands curiously, trying to speculate the identity of ‘Senior Lin’ from the seemingly plain hands.

Li Yao, however, was looking out of the window.

The light spots floating in midair finally dimmed. ‘Night’ had fallen.

Fish Dragon City finally revealed its real face of chaos and lawlessness. Fights and explosions were taking place in the deep, dark corners of the city.

Chapter 1591 - : Big Show!

The last light spot that was floating at the center of the sky of Fish Dragon City as beautifully as a firefly finally died down, replaced by certain bluish clusters of light that were hazier and more unpredictable. They congregated into deep blue rivers in the sky like flowing moonlight.

Although it had been a long time since human beings got rid of the planets and stepped into space, people who had spent their entire life on starships were still used to measuring the time with ‘days’. It was their tradition to simulate ‘daylight’ and ‘night’ in the man-made environment.

It was also a tradition to do clandestine, bloody business at night.

When the night was dark, it was the time for the murders and arsonists.

Fish Dragon City was an enormous metropolis in space built by the most powerful refugees of the four new worlds.

But the refugees from the four new worlds were not unified. They had all kinds of conflicts and contradictions among themselves.

Besides, countless brutal bandits who were too greedy about money to care about their own life often came to Fish Dragon City to stir up trouble, hoping that they could flee after making loads of money.

Perhaps because of the restriction of the unspoken rule, during the day, the various forces, each having their own ill intentions, were still able to tame their desire for death and destruction.

But once night fell, Fish Dragon City turned into a paradise for the space pirates, mobs, gangsters, headhunters, spies, and all the other outlaws.

With the super match ‘Ace Game’, which was held once every three years, underway, the experts and magnates of the entire Dragon Snake Space Zone and even the forces nearby had gathered there. Astronomical capital was flowing like brooks in the casinos and the arenas, adding more fuel to the already chaotic situation.

The three luxury shuttles travelled on the magnetic rails without a sound.

Fish Dragon City was a three-dimensional city that was constructed inwardly. There was no distinction between ‘sky’ and ‘earth’. The so-called ‘airspace’ was quite narrow. Without effective regulation, the shuttles that were flying at hundreds of kilometers per hour could run into each other anytime.

Therefore, the shuttles all travelled by attaching themselves to magnetic rails. On one hand, it was easier for traffic management and direction. On the other hand, the vehicles could be powered directly by the magnetic rails, which provided cleaner, pollution-free energy that was more suitable for the full-enclose environment of Fish Dragon City.

Through the window, Li Yao stared at the explosions and fire that were taking place here and there, listening to the rushing sounds of crystal suits while he thought about his next step.

The Four Sectors Chamber of Commerce was the ruler of Fish Dragon City. Generally speaking, the Exos of the Chamber of Commerce were able to take care of any emergencies.

For the first few nights after Li Yao and his companions reached Fish Dragon City, they often heard explosions and gunshots before midnight, but most of the damage and robberies would be cleaned up by the Chamber of Commerce. Before the light spots floating in midair turned crimson, a symbol of dawn, a huge batch of bodies whose eyes had been dug out would be thrown into space through the garbage tubes. The record of the whole process would be displayed in the sky of the entire city on the light beams, informing the outlaws who were planning to cause trouble in Fish Dragon City of the price they were going to pay.

However, the explosions and gunshots today were particularly fierce.

Li Yao’s nose flapped as he seemed to have sensed the scent of extreme danger.

Moving her bottom uneasily for a long time on the opposite of Li Yao, Tang Xiaoxing finally could not help it any longer. She made up her mind and carefully asked, “… Senior Lin, with your proficiency, you must be a famous big shot in the circle of refiners in the Star Glory Federation, right?”

Looking out of the window, Li Yao did not even bother to turn his head. “I’m not. As I said, I like to keep a low profile.”

Eyeing Li Yao’s clothes up and down for a moment, Tang Xiaoxing mumbled something to herself and could not have agreed more. Noticing that Li Yao did not burst into fury, she further emboldened herself and asked, “I wonder, what have you come to the Dragon Snake Space Zone for, Senior Lin?

Firefly boasts some influence in this place, too. Don’t hesitate to ask me if you need us to do anything for you!”

“I don’t need you to do anything for now,” Li Yao replied casually. He had not come up with a plan to make use of Firefly yet. According to the rumors that he had overheard the past few days, the situation on Firefly seemed rather complicated.

The eleven Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators were already big enough headaches. Firefly would only add to his troubles.

Tang Xiaoxing was unwilling to give in just yet after being subtly refused. “I understand. Senior Lin, you only need materials right now. Then, you have come to the right person. We have a lot of rare materials that we have brought from the center of the cosmos. They are still in excellent condition after a thousand years of preservation. You will never find them at the edge of the cosmos! Whatever materials you need, Senior Lin, I would like to offer them to you for free as long as I’m capable of making the decision. You don’t need to pay anything!”

“Who’s asking you to offer them for free?” Li Yao finally turned his head. Frowning, he said, “Money is not a problem for me. I have said that I like to keep a low profile. Fame and fortune are nothing to me. Money is pure garbage in my eyes. Do you think that I’m someone that can be pleased with such petty benefits?”

“I’m terribly sorry for what I said. Please forgive me!” Senior Lin was angry, and the consequences could be dire. Frightened, Tang Xiaoxing apologized quickly like a shocked bunny.

“However…” After thinking carefully for a moment, Li Yao said, “As it happens, while money is not a problem for me, the problem is that I don’t have money right now. I certainly wouldn’t say no if you can let me purchase a batch of materials on credit.”

“…” Tang Xiaoxing.

“Well, one other thing. It will be even better if you can lend me a sum of money personally!”

“S—Senior Lin, isn’t money pure garbage in your eyes?”

“Of course it is,” Li Yao said matter-of-factly. “It is exactly because money is pure garbage in my eyes that I don’t have any money. Who would carry garbage with themselves all the time?”

“…” Tang Xiaoxing.

Li Yao felt that something was wrong. His nose was flapping at a higher and higher frequency. Lowering the window of the shuttle, and listening to the blowing wind whispering like devils through the gap, Li Yao watched other shuttles rushing past them like phantoms against the dark night and the glowing fire.

“Let me ask you something. Did you piss off anyone in Fish Dragon City?” Li Yao asked out of the blue.

Tang Xiaoxing was entirely confused. “I don’t think so. I only arrived in Fish Dragon City yesterday. Other than refilling the supplies, I just visited the magical equipment store, said hello to Uncle Chu, and adjusted a crystal suit by chance. Nothing more.”

“Well…” Li Yao thought quickly. “Based on your experience in the past, have the forces in Fish Dragon City, including all the desperadoes in the Dragon Snake Space Zone, ever attacked the Cultivators from Firefly, you know, for personal grudges or simply for your treasures?”

“How is that possible?” Tang Xiaoxing snorted. “Although we have been on the run for a thousand years, the overall quality of our Exos are magnitudes higher than the mobs in this place. Also, most of the people here make their living directly and indirectly through the trade deals between Firefly and the Star Glory Federation. They are incapable of attacking us, nor do they have the courage to!”

“Therefore,” Li Yao concluded, “the marks of ‘Firefly’ have been clearly painted on the shell of the three shuttles of yours so that everybody else will know beyond any doubt that they are the shuttles that belong to the ‘rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic’, right?”

“Of course!” Tang Xiaoxing was confused. “It is very important to show your banner in such a place like Fish Dragon City. A lot of unnecessary trouble can be avoided. Is there a problem?”

“The problem is not a small one. Ask your men to change the route and return immediately!” Li Yao tapped the soundproof block between the passengers’ side and the cockpit and said, “Tell the driver to get out of the seat. I’ll take the wheel—”

Hardly had he concluded his sentence when Li Yao’s ears, which had been filled with spiritual energy, picked up a feeble sound in the air. His pupils constricted violently, and he gave up the plan of crawling into the cockpit. Instead, he went back and lunged toward Tang Xiaoxing, opening his spiritual shield!

“Watch out!”

The moment he let out the warning, an ear-splitting explosion took place. They seemed to have been hit right in the face by a heavy shuttle that was running at a speed of more than eight hundred kilometers per hour when they were in a shuttle that was running at exactly the same speed. While the world was spinning, the shuttle was thrown away from the magnetic rail!

Explosive spiritual energy flooded into the narrow cart like surging tides.

BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM!

The airbags hidden in the shell of the shuttle all burst out, only to explode in the next second under the blast of the continuous spiritual energy from outside!

Even Li Yao’s face was bleeding everywhere, his body almost deformed. His brain was humming, and there was even a moment when he could not summon his spiritual energy!

*You—you’ve got to be kidding me. Even a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator has been so heavily wounded? What the f*ck is that?*

From the outside, the luxury shuttle had turned into a cluster of garbage from which smoke was billowing. It was swirling in midair quickly before it was attracted by the man-made gravity and crashed to ‘ground’.

Li Yao’s telepathic thoughts spread out like soft smoke. He immediately sensed that two massive streams of spiritual energy came from a skyscraper in the northeast and a crystal train in the southwest and hit the two shuttles of bodyguards precisely.

Boom! Boom!

After two deafening noises, the two shuttles turned into two clusters of furiously burning fireballs. The elite Exos from Firefly inside had been vaporized into ash before they had a chance to scream. The blood red fireballs illuminated the bluish night sky!

Crack! Crack!

Because the magnetic rail that they were on had been blown up, dozens of shuttles that were attached to the rail immediately lost control. They flew randomly in midair like headless flies, crashing into brilliant fireworks.

Li Yao’s pupils were constricted to the size of needles before they expanded and occupied his entire eyes.

Judging from the aftershock of the spiritual energy from the barrel, the attacks must’ve been made by the main guns installed on the small warships!

Are you kidding me? Dismantling the main gun, delivering it secretly to the downtown of Fish Dragon City, and attacking a single target with a cannonball that is designed to penetrate the shield and the plate armor of a hostile starship? No wonder even a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator’s nose is bleeding!

This is too unbelievable. Who’s putting on such a big show? Also, how exactly did they lock onto us? The shot was rather precise!

Chapter 1592 - This Is an Expert!

The information streams inside Li Yao’s head surged crazily, allowing him to distinguish the differences between the three cannonballs in the two attacks.

The first cannonball that hit the luxury shuttle that he and Tang Xiaoxing were in should have been a ‘stunning cannonball’, which contained an overwhelming blast of spiritual energy that could seriously jam and block the spiritual energy circulation of a Cultivator. For the normal high-level Cultivators, such as Tang Xiaoxing, they would lose their entire combat ability and probably be cast into a coma, but the cannonball was not fatal.

The cannonballs that targeted the two shuttles of bodyguards, on the other hand, were truly deadly ones that boasted penetrating and explosive effects.

That was why the two of them were unharmed.

It was the cannon of a warship, designed to dig through strengthened armor that was several meters, if not dozens of meters, thick!

If Li Yao had been hit by such a cannon right in the face, even though he was in the Nascent Soul Stage, he would have suffered heavy wounds instead of an injury as minor as a nosebleed!

Of course, the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators had a ten times keener sense of danger than the normal Cultivators did. If the enemy had locked onto him with the deadly cannonballs in the beginning, it would certainly have been perceived by Li Yao in advanced. So, he would not have been hit at all.

It was exactly because the enemy was using a stunning cannonball, which was not fatal, that Li Yao's senses had been sluggish for half a second, leading to this accident in Fish Dragon City despite his abundant experience in adventures.

Disrupting the nerves and even the entire brain of a Cultivator with a massive blast of spiritual energy so that they will completely lose the ability of resistance and even awareness, without harming their body or leaving any sequela, such a stunning cannonball is rather sophisticated from a technical point of view. Based on the intelligence I've gathered over the past couple of days, it is not something that can be made in the Dragon Snake Space Zone.

However, attacking a target blatantly with a warship cannon in the downtown area?

Even if the warship cannon can be dissected into parts, and the parts can be hidden in different Cosmos Rings and brought into the Dragon Snake Space Zone, it will still take quite a lot of time to assemble such a piece of complicated heavy magical equipment. To fix the cannons, whose recoil can be very powerful, on a skyscraper and a train, it also requires an enormous fixation and buffer pedestal. Unfolding all those things will certainly take more than ten minutes.

However slow the Chamber of Commerce that controls Fish Dragon City is, it can certainly detect such a piece of monolithic magical equipment in ten minutes.

Then, there is only one conclusion. The authorities of Fish Dragon City, namely the Four Sectors Chamber of Commerce, have participated in the assault targeting Tang Xiaoxing or at least permitted the operation.

Interesting…

The debris of the wasted shuttle was swirling quickly in midair, like a sparrow whose wings had been broken in a storm.

Despite the protection of Li Yao’s spiritual shield, Tang Xiaoxing still passed out at the first second of attack, leaving Li Yao to think calmly alone in the quickly overturning world.

Boom!

The shuttle smashed into the ground brutally after falling for hundreds of meters. Many remnants of the magnetic tubes and shuttles that had accidents just now crashed near them one after another.

Li Yao sighed gloomily.

Such a man who likes to keep a low profile and dismisses fame and fortune like myself should be living in peace with other people. Why do you force me every time?

Spitting out a mouthful of saliva mixed with blood, he kicked open the door of the shuttle that had been seriously deformed before he crawled out of the vehicle like a cobra that was expanding because of fury.

The luxurious shuttle was divided into two cabins. Other than himself and Tang Xiaoxing, two Cultivators had been seated in the cockpit before. They were a chauffeur and a bodyguard.

It was a pity that they were both dead.

The passenger cabin that Li Yao and Tang Xiaoxing were in was fully enclosed. Not only did it adopt the most advanced strengthened iron plate and buffer level, almost a hundred protective rune arrays had also been deployed between them. In comparison, the protection for the cockpit was relatively weaker.

The attackers were obviously experts of such assaults and knew the features of Tang Xiaoxing’s luxury shuttle very well. By adjusting the power of the stunning cannonball perfectly, they were able to knock out the passengers despite the strengthened iron plate, the buffer level, and the defense rune arrays.

However, since the defense rune arrays around the chauffeur and the bodyguard were relatively weaker, they had been directly killed in the explosion.

Looking at the faces of the two Cultivators, which were still in a daze, Li Yao’s eyes flickered, but he did not have time to feel sorry for them. Narrowing his eyes, he glanced at the skyscrapers around and the interconnected magnetic rails in the sky.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Inside his brain, the entire world was digitized into a series of colorful figures that were jumping, changing and calculating, allowing him to perceive the locations of the attackers, the bystanders, the watchers, and even the suspected commanders who were standing far away.

Triggering the map of this area in Fish Dragon City from his mini crystal processor, Li Yao analyzed and calculated the best route of escape quickly. He then grabbed Tang Xiaoxing by the neck and sent a stream of spiritual energy into the back of her head. In the end, he shook her slightly and woke her up from the coma.

“What happened?” Tang Xiaoxing’s eyes were unfocused, and she was in such a daze that she did not know where she was at all, which was an effect of the stunning cannonball. Her Cultivation was not low, but she was a pure creation-type Cultivator. Naturally, her brain was not as tough as Li Yao’s, and her mind was still in chaos.

“It’s alright.” Noticing that a low of shadows were coming close from all directions, Li Yao said, “Lie there and stay still. Let me touch you.”

“Huh?”

“Make no mistake. I am not interested in you at all, nor will I do anything outrageous on you in such an environment. Please be absolutely assured. My life will be in danger if I do anything that crosses the line.”

Before Tang Xiaoxing came back to herself from the trance, Li Yao sent another stream of spiritual energy into her limbs, stimulating her nerves and making her stretch out her arms and legs.

Li Yao’s hands shone glamorously and drew colorful streaks of light in midair, turning into a rainbow swirl as he worked on Tang Xiaoxing!

A moment later, Li Yao sniffed and tore off a piece of membrane the size half a fingernail from the back of Tang

Xiaoxing’s left ear, which was the exact same color as Tang Xiaoxing’s skin.

Nobody would be able to distinguish it if they were not searching carefully with a pair of highly sensitive hands.

Inside the membrane was a chip that was as thin as the wing of a cicada and could be bent freely.

“How delicate.” Li Yao stuck the super tiny chip to his fingertip to observe it more carefully before he showed it to Tang Xiaoxing. “This must be some sort of mini chip both for localization and for aiming. Not only does it report your coordinates precisely, it can even navigate the aggressive magical equipment such as a warship cannon so that it will never miss the target. That explains how the enemy shot us so precisely!

“Also, such a chip can actually be put to sleep. When it is in the hibernation state and protected by the biochemical membrane outside, even someone with eyes all over their body wouldn’t be able to discover the chip!”

“You—” Tang Xiaoxing was utterly dumbfounded. Her mind was in confusion. There was no telling whether it was because the unexpected assault, the fact that the chip had been stuck to her without her knowing at all, or Senior Lin’s amazing hands!

What kind of refining art was that? Making a translucent ribbon of rainbow with hands? That was too incredible!

Right when she was lost for words, Li Yao found a second localization and navigation chip that was perfectly hidden on her ankle.

“It’s beautiful.” Unleashing part of his spiritual energy, Li Yao squinted and sensed the tiny rune arrays on the two super small chips, appreciating rarely-seen beauty. It was truly a work of art!

However…

The master who has produced such artwork installed two identical chips on the same target? Such an approach is rather monotonous!

Li Yao’s eyes were like two sharp scalpels that were about to dissect Tang Xiaoxing so that he could study her every body part more carefully. Tang Xiaoxing’s face went pale, not knowing what to do!

Suddenly, he snatched a hair from Tang Xiaoxing’s head as quickly as lightning!

“Ah!” It was not very painful for Tang Xiaoxing, but she was truly taken surprise. Because of the aftermath of the stunning cannonball, her computational and thinking abilities had plummeted, and she was no better than an ordinary person. She had no idea what was going on at all.

Li Yao curled her hair in his fingers and then snapped out greenish flames, entirely burning the hair into ash. However, an extremely thin object that looked like a molecular mica thread remained at the tip of his fingers.

“Wow…” Li Yao widened his eyes in amazement. “Building a piece of tracing magical equipment into such a thin object, with such hardness and intensity, and implanting it into the head of the target as a hair. Like an antenna, it is powered by the energy of the target’s head and sends out signals to the outside world incessantly.

“What a terrifying methodology and approach! This material is unheard of!”

Li Yao took out a gray piece of rubber from the Cosmos Ring and carefully embedded the ‘localization thread’ into it.

He then took out dozens of balls that were as fat and round as pearls. After sticking the two localization and navigation chips onto one of the balls and sending telepathic thoughts into them, Li Yao sprayed them on the ground. Before long, all the balls rolled into the gap of the cover of a drainage.

Although Fish Dragon City was a metropolis in space, for the comfort of the residents, artificial precipitation was occasionally arranged.

The drainage was not only responsible for dewatering but also served as important channels to accommodate wires and to support maintenance. They were spacious enough for two people to pass through if they crouched.

That was Li Yao’s conclusion after searching the map just now.

“Let’s go. Change your face first.”

Li Yao touched the center of his eyebrow softly, putting on another random template face, which was as plain and unattractive as before.

It was not until this moment that Tang Xiaoxing finally recalled what had happened. The talents of a refiner gradually woke up in her blood. “We… explosion… Dear lord, we were hit by a warship cannon!”

“That’s right.” Li Yao frowned. “What’s the problem? Let’s go!”

“What’s the problem?” Tang Xiaoxing almost collapsed. Rubbing her temples, she stared at Li Yao in disbelief, barely able to speak a whole sentence. “We—we were attacked by a warship cannon in the downtown area! Why are you still so calm, Senior Lin?”

“Why shouldn’t I be calm?” Li Yao scratched his hair, which had been blown into a mess that looked like a bird nest, as he looked at the girl expressionlessly. “Isn’t it the daily life for a Cultivator to be hit by the main gun of a warship every other day? What’s there to be surprised by?”

Chapter 1593 - Chilly Wind…

Tang Xiaoxing was rendered speechless.

She had never seen such a Cultivator before, either on Firefly, in the Dragon Snake Space Zone, or from the diplomatic team that the Star Glory Federation had sent to Firefly.

Of course, there did not seem to be an equally… queer existence among the Immortal Cultivators whom she had encountered!

Li Yao picked up Tang Xiaoxing and sent another stream of spiritual energy into her body, making her manage to get rid of the influence of the stunning cannonball. The two of them ran crazily down the street.

In Fish Dragon City, while robbery and gang fights were anything but unusual, few of them were as huge as the one that was taking place at that moment. Even warship cannons had been used, and quite a few magnetic rails had been blown up. No wonder everybody was running crazily in panic on the street. The two of them were not very eye-catching in the middle of the crowd.

Also, the route that Li Yao had carefully calculated took every angle into consideration, allowing them to always reach the most appropriate location at the most appropriate timing. The enemy’s sight was blocked perfectly.

The enemy, on the other hand, was mainly relying on the three pieces of localization magical equipment to determine Tang Xiaoxing's coordinates. Naked eyes were only ancillary tools.

Li Yao brought Tang Xiaoxing into a dilapidated alley.

They were safe for the time being.

He lowered his head to check the countdown displayed on the light beam, which was the estimated time that it would take for the attackers to enter the drainage under the navigation of the tracking chips.

Ten, nine, eight, seven…

Taping his mini crystal processor, Li Yao casually said, "Cover your ears."

"Huh?" Tang Xiaoxing was confused, unable to react immediately. The blast of the stunning cannonball was so intense that her brains were still shaking violently inside her skull to this moment, like the tofu on a bouncing van.

"Senior Lin, what did you say?" Tang Xiaoxing said in a daze. Hardly had she concluded her sentence when a series of ear-splitting explosions took place behind the two of them, as if an infuriated fire dragon had crawled out of the drain. The raging fire consumed half of the sky.

A few fully-armed Exos that had only just crawled into the drainage were thrown into the sky by the fire dragon. Before they had the chance to scream, they were devoured by the fiend!

BAM! BAM! BAM!

The dozens of manhole covers in front of them were soaring into the sky due to the super high pressure air currents. White pillars of smoke were erupting crazily!

The glass windows of the skyscrapers around and the shuttles were all shattered. The broken pieces were storming down!

Tang Xiaoxing was almost knocked over under the blast. Her face pale, she turned around and looked at the fire that was rising to the sky, unable to shut her mouth for a long time!

However, when she turned her head again, she discovered that ‘Senior Lin’ was still walking forward unhurriedly with his hands in his beach pants. His slippers were emitting weirdly pleasant sounds when they stepped on the broken glass.

“Senior Lin!” Tang Xiaoxing shouted. “An—an explosion seems to have taken place in the drainage near where we crashed!”

“I heard it,” Li Yao said, continuing ahead.

Tang Xiaoxing found it hard to believe. “And you’re not turning around to check it out?”

After a brief silence, Li Yao casually said, “If I turned around every time I heard an explosion of such a level, my neck would’ve been broken a long time ago. Let’s go!”

“What…” Looking at Li Yao’s back which had been intentionally hunched, Tang Xiaoxing struggled to shut her mouth and chased after him quickly.

Ten thousand questions were rolling in her head. However, what she was more eager to find out than the details of assault on her just now was—

Who exactly was this old man named Lin Jiu?

When she began walking, Li Yao suddenly stopped.

Right next to them was a tavern. Two double shuttles were parked outside the building.

Half a minute later, the two of them ascended to another magnetic rail that was still intact on one of the shuttles.

Inside the fully-enclosed shell, they were finally able to communicate more calmly.

While driving the pilot, Li Yao recalled what happened carefully. “The warship cannon just now must’ve adopted seven magnetic rails that are in the distribution of a lotus flower, thereby creating a triple helical ejection channel of energy. The cannonball launched is between 500mm and 550mm in diameter. When it was five kilometers away, the speed of the cannonball was between 7,000 to 7,300 meters per second. Also, there was a hexagon at the barrel of the cannon caused by the aftershock of spiritual energy. When the cannon was set in its killing mode, the aftershock was bright purple, and when it was in its stun mode, the aftershock was celeste. Do you recognize such a warship cannon?”

Tang Xiaoxing took a deep breath for a long time and finally regained the clearness of a refiner. She bulged her eyes wider and wider. “It’s—it’s the ‘Earthquake’-level rapid cannon on Firefly!”

“Oh?” Li Yao raised an eyebrow. “Are you sure?”

“I am quite positive!” Tang Xiaoxing breathed heavily. “Senior Lin, you must know that Firefly, the flagship of the rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic, is not a single starship but a super enormous amalgamation of warships. After the few starships escaped from the Imperium in the beginning, they were docked and refilled with supplies in many Sectors. The resistance warriors of those worlds joined us. After a thousand years of voyaging, hundreds of starships have been connected to the mothership. That’s how Firefly was created!

“It means that the cannons on our warship vary and come from different worlds. Some of them carry distinctive features and cannot be found anywhere else.

“The ‘Earthquake’-level rapid cannon is one such cannon!

“The destruction mode of the cannon is not worth mentioning, but the ‘stun mode’ of the cannon is quite unique. Instead of launching a metal cannonball, they send out certain ‘icy cannonball’ that is condensed by special liquids. Under the spiritual and magnetic force and the super high speed, the icy cannonball is vaporized instantly and expands, resulting in a massive blast. It is designed to stun or kill the enemy within the concealed space behind thick and heavy plate armor. If adjusted properly, the cannon can even disrupt the spiritual energy of the enemy in heavy defense and cripple them temporarily!”

“So awesome?” Li Yao clicked his tongue. “Have you seen similar effects in other cannons?”

“No.” Tang Xiaoxing shook her head. “Such a warship cannon is extremely rare even on Firefly. As for the Star Glory Federation… I’m told that they are testing a piece of new magical equipment named a ‘black hole bomb’, which can disrupt all the activities of spiritual energy within a certain range indiscriminately. However, it is still in an experimental phase, and its effect is not entirely the same as the effect of the ‘Earthquake’-level cannon.”

Li Yao nodded. “Then, has such ‘Earthquake-level’ rapid cannon ever been dismantled to sell to the Dragon Snake Space Zone and the Star Glory Federation?”

“Absolutely not!” Tang Xiaoxing shook her head. “Although we do have some technical communication with the federation, we would never export such warship cannons. There is not a large in number in the first place, and the technology to craft them has long been lost. One broken cannon means one fewer cannon!”

“What about this?” Li Yao took out the super tiny crystal thread that was embedded into the rubber.

Tang Xiaoxing’s face turned more awful than ever after she looked at the object. “It seems to be a thread made through the combination of the ‘Seven Holes Jade’ and the ‘Venomous Spider Thread’. It is a new material in our labs that is still in the experimental phase. There’s no way that it could have been leaked out.”

Li Yao nodded and put the crystal thread back. “Then, the answer is obvious now. Those who attacked you are big shots from Firefly who were qualified to mobilize the ‘Earthquake-level’ rapid cannon and the new crystal thread.

“Also, both the cannon and the new thread are very idiosyncratic. Since the enemy dared to use them blatantly, they are certainly not afraid of leaving traces.

“While the enemy came aggressively, they used stunning cannonballs instead of destructive cannonballs. So, they did not intend to kill you but planned to capture you alive. It’s doubtless that you are of great value for them.

“I’ll give you ten seconds to guess who is behind all this. Then, you will tell me your theory in the most concise way so that I can figure out how to help you.”

At a loss, Tang Xiaoxing listened to the explosions echoing nonstop around her. Deeply horrified, she gritted her teeth and proposed her speculation after a long hesitation!

Li Yao listened and nodded. Three minutes later, he concluded, “I get it now.

“You are the daughter of Tang Dingyuan, captain of Firefly. Firefly is divided right now. The technical staff, led by your father, want to join the Star Glory Federation. However, the officials of the parliament of the Star Ocean Republic, led by the Speaker Cui Lingfeng, disagree, hoping to secure a better deal or even swallow the Star Glory Federation!

“For hundreds of years, the technical staff and the officials in the parliament have been in disagreement. A thousand years ago, when you first escaped from the Imperium, since a lot of government officials left with you, they naturally prevailed. However, as the voyage in space continued and more and more technical problems occurred, the technical staff grew more and more important. Finally, once your father was appointed as captain, you were finally able to compete with the parliament!

“The disagreement this time is both an extension of your contradictions in the past and an overall breakout triggered by the fuse named the Star Glory Federation!

“All in all, it is an impasse right now. Your father, Tang Dingyuan, believes that, with the expedition army of the

Imperium drawing near, you cannot stay on the fence anymore. A decision must be made quickly to unify the forces of both parties.

“Therefore, on one hand, he sent out the Election Observation Delegation, of which you are a member, so that the technical staff could reach out to the leadership of the federation first. On the other hand, he has been planning to put forward the motion of participation in parliament. Even if it is not passed, it will still raise a revolution on Firefly. As long as most of the technical staff and the ground-level sailors concur, the MPs won’t be able to stop it!

“Therefore, you suspect that Cui Lingfeng, the Speaker of your parliament, got the message in advance and dealt with you first!

“It means that, while you were assaulted, it is possible that a storm was sweeping across Firefly, and your father’s life might be in danger, right?”

“Exactly!” Tang Xiaoxing was greatly relieved. She did not expect that Senior Lin could think so clearly. She asked pitifully, “Senior Lin, now that you have learned everything, what do we do?”

“It’s not a big deal. Let me think for a moment!” Li Yao smiled and comforted the girl. Thinking quickly for a moment, he snapped his fingers. “Got it!”

Overjoyed, Tang Xiaoxing found it hard to believe her ears. “That was fast. What have you come up with, Senior Lin?”

“The crisis that Firefly is faced with is indeed very tricky and dangerous!” Li Yao said. “However, it has occurred to me that—none of that is my business. I am only coming with you to buy materials. It’s not like we are friends or anything. Why does it feel like I’m going to save the world again?

“Let’s stop here.”

Li Yao lowered the shuttle in an unpopulated slum and quickly crawled out. He waved his hand toward the shuttle. “My young friend Tang, I’ll just leave the shuttle here. Consider it my gift for you. See you next time!”

He ran away and disappeared in only half a second.

Tang Xiaoxing was left alone in the shuttle, dumbfounded. She never realized that a man could run so fast in slippers.

Looking at the slum that was pitch black, she held her arms and felt that goosebumps rising.

Dogs were barking maliciously, and the wind blowing from her back was rather chilly.

Chapter 1594 - Cicada, Mantis, Sparrow and Hunter

The barks far and near grew noisier and noisier, but all of them abruptly stopped, as if the necks of the wild dogs had been cut at exactly the same second.

Tang Xiaoxing felt a coldness rising from her spine all the way to her arms and legs. Her every finger and toe was as rigid as if they were soaked in icy water. She was not even able to cry out.

The girl felt like cursing.

However, having received a decent education from a young age, she did not know how to let out her anger and fear with the profanities of common sailors, nor did she know whom she should curse—Cui Lingfeng, the Speaker of the ‘rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic’, or ‘Senior Lin’, whom she had just met but had escaped at the critical moment after giving her a slim chance of hope!

Tang Xiaoxing sniffed hard. Her teeth were deeply embedded in her pale lips. Holding back the urge to cry, she moved from the backseat to the front.

If it were indeed an attack initiated by Speaker Cui Lingfeng, it is very possible that father has already been captured by them and even—

Right now, I’m the only one who can save Firefly and everyone!

I must be resolute. I must get away from the attackers first!

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

The shuttle was uttering weird noises. All its units seemed to have been frozen in the cold air.

You can’t be serious!

Tang Xiaoxing was an expert of refining. Such a piece of simple-structured magical equipment was nothing more than a toy of a three-year-old for her.

However, no matter how she sensed it and how she tried to fix the shuttle, she could not find anything wrong with the vehicle at all!

There was nothing but dead silence in the darkness amid the collapsed walls, which was a hundred times more terrifying than when the wild dogs were barking.

Perhaps it was her imagination, but under the illumination of the blue river of moonlight, Tang Xiaoxing felt that many shadows were approaching and surrounding her!

“Activate now!”

Tang Xiaoxing’s hair was rising and turning into a brush by the static electricity triggered by her techniques. She bellowed and smashed the control rune arrays hard. The weird noises inside the shuttle were finally replaced by the pleasant sounds. The anti-gravity discs right below the shuttle unleashed bright green light, and the shuttle staggered into the air again!

Hooray! Tang Xiaoxing cheered in her heart. She was about to accelerate to the maximum and run away when she noticed that a fully-armed Exo was floating right in her front after she raised her head!

The iron, emotionless mask on the guy’s crystal suit made it looked like a metal corpse. The stranger looked at her coldly.

Before she had the chance to exclaim in shock, three bullets were shot from the darkness behind her in a row. After three crisp sounds, they drilled into the shuttle.

Powerful electric arcs were released by the three bullets, interweaving into a blue, overwhelming web that deeply embedded into the shell of the shuttle. Not only did they penetrate through the power, anti-gravity, and control rune arrays of the shuttle instantly, declaring it to be a total loss, they also invaded Tang Xiaoxing’s body through her pores, electrifying her and depriving her of the ability to summon her spiritual energy!

Huala!

The shuttle crashed into the ground before it threw Tang Xiaoxing out.

Holding back the excruciating pain all over her body, Tang Xiaoxing struggled to her feet. Then, she immediately sensed that at least five crystal suits were approaching her from all directions.

What was most devastating for her was that, judging from the flames emanated by the power rune arrays on the legs of the crystal suits, they were all the cutting-edge models on Firefly that had never been exported to the Dragon Snake Space Zone or the Star Glory Federation.

“Tang Xiaoxing!”

The Exo who had stood in the way of the shuttle just now slowly landed. His iron heel tapped the ground unhurriedly, and his voice was as cold and emotionless as the noises when the heel hit the ground, too.

A dazzling beam of light was shot right at Tang Xiaoxing’s face, imposing strong interference on her mask and revealing her face that was as delicate as a doll’s. In the meantime, Tang Xiaoxing’s eyes were also mired in a hazy, white mist, preventing her from seeing what the attackers looked like.

Tang Xiaoxing only felt that a pair of cold, rude iron hands rubbed her face hard to make sure that there was no more camouflage on her face. Then, the lifeless voice declared, “Tang Xiaoxing, as the special investigators of the Internal Affairs Division of the parliament, we are arresting you for high treason!”

Tang Xiaoxing felt as if she had been struck by lightning. The world in front of her eyes went from pale into the most desperate darkness!

…

High treason. So serious?

Like an earthworm lurking in the mud, Li Yao hid himself in a corner of a forsaken plaza. While observing all the anomalies in the several square kilometers nearby, he eavesdropped on the conversation between Tang Xiaoxing and the attackers through the detectaphone chips that he stuck to Tang Xiaoxing’s body when he searched her just now.

The situation was too chaotic. Even the first clue had not been found out yet. Of course, it would be too imprudent to rush into the battle right away. He had to figure out exactly what was going on and how many forces were involved!

Based on Li Yao’s calm observation, there were at least three forces that were surrounding Tang Xiaoxing in the darkness like ravenous dogs.

First of all, although the attackers shared a common purpose, they were made of two teams with obviously different tactical styles.

Those who operated the Earthquake-level rapid cannon, installed the localization chips on Tang Xiaoxing, arrested her directly just now, and announced that she had committed high treason were obviously some soldiers or special agents with the distinctive style of the regular army. They were well-trained and equipped with advanced gear.

The crystal suit each of them was wearing was no worse than the Azure Thunder that was crafted by Wu Yaxuan.

Although they were all suppressing their spiritual waves as much as possible, Li Yao strongly suspected that the team included multiple Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage or at an even higher level!

Those people must be the Cultivators from Firefly and, very likely, the subordinates of the Speaker Cui Lingfeng.

Despite their toughness, the team was not large in number due to the restriction of their identity.

The Exos who provided support for them by surrounding the periphery and blocking the loopholes, on the other hand, were rather messy and disorganized. Their crystal suits were much more underdeveloped, too. They also had a lot of redundant movements due to unproficiency that gave themselves away but also declared their lawlessness and blatancy.

In short, they were just a mob.

Those people look like the Exos of the Four Sectors Chamber of Commerce. They are the locals of this place.

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao thought it through.

To ship two warship cannons into Fish Dragon City, and to unfold and fixate them unhurriedly, the attackers certainly could not escape the attention of the Chamber of Commerce. Therefore, the attack, or arrest, operation must have been planned by certain leadership of Firefly, say, Speaker Cui Lingfeng, and the Chamber of Commerce together.

Perhaps Cui Lingfeng promised the Chamber of Commerce some benefits. For example, the extraordinary techniques or technology from the center of the cosmos. He bribed the Chamber of Commerce, making it turn a blind eye to what is happening here and send out a batch of local gangsters to provide guidance and support for the actual arresters who are not large in number.

The super tiny detectaphones that were pretending to be insects further proved it.

The secret investigators of the Internal Affairs Division of the parliament were perhaps well-trained, top-tier experts.

However, the guides and helpers that the Chamber of Commerce had sent to them were a disorganized mob, who had dominated Fish Dragon City for too long to realize that they were carrying out a secret operation. After all, it was their turf, and it was not exactly a secret operation but a legitimate arrest!

Therefore, right when Tang Xiaoxing was captured, Li Yao easily locked onto their commander and moved a walking detectaphone that looked like a cockroach to the guy.

Cockroaches were perhaps the most vigorous creatures in the entire universe. Even if the civilization of mankind perished one day, cockroaches would probably still be able to live billions of years more in the broken planets and cities left by human beings.

There were cockroaches in Fish Dragon City, too.

Although they were not exactly the same type as the cockroach that Li Yao produced, barely anyone would notice the difference on such a dark night.

“Brother Bao, who are those guys exactly? They are brazen enough to fire cannons in the downtown area of Fish Dragon City! If news gets out, the Chamber of Commerce’s reputation will certainly be tarnished. How can anybody else be assured when they come to Fish Dragon City to entertain themselves? F*ck!”

“Watch your mouth! Those people are all brutal men. Even our boss has to show them some respect. Small fries such as you and me better keep our distance from them! Make sure that you are prepared, and listen to the command of those people for the whole operation. One tiny mistake, and boss will see that you are minced to pieces!”

It was the only piece of valuable intelligence collected by the detectaphone cockroach amid endless meaningless chatter.

It proved that the assault operation was conducted by the elite Exos from Firefly and the local gangsters of the Four Sectors Chamber of Commerce together.

However, Li Yao was most interested in not the attackers but… another two observers far away.

To the southwest of the slum made of collapsed walls and ragged plazas was a building of seventeen floors. On the fifteenth floor was the best hidden observation point in the five square kilometers around.

Two observers, whose heartbeat and breathing had almost been entirely halted by secret techniques, and who were almost weightless like ghosts, were lurking in the place like two shadows, observing the situation down below calmly, professionally, and carefully.

They were so professional that even the dialogue between them was made through private talks that only the two of them could hear.

Unless somebody was within one meter from them, they would absolutely never be discovered.

When the mantis was hunting the cicada, the sparrow was waiting behind to swallow them both. The two observers were exactly the sparrow in silence.

Li Yao, however, was a hunter, whose scope had already targeted the sparrow.

Even the content of their secret dialogue could not escape from his ears because the ‘best lurking place around’ was specifically left for them by Li Yao.

Or rather, intentionally leaving Tang Xiaoxing in this place, thereby turning the carefully chosen slum into the scene of arrest so that all the forces involved would dedicate their performance on a stage that he had picked, was Li Yao’s plan.

Chapter 1595 - Another Hunter

When Li Yao was going to hide himself, he was never fond of the best observation points. In many cases, he even abandoned the second-best observation points.

The reason was simple. There could only be one or two best observation points in a complicated area. It was very possible that the place that he had got his eyes on was somebody else’s favorite, too. Would it not be quite awkward if the two parties ran into each other at the same observation point?

Therefore, not only did he abandon the best observation point, he had also left a few ‘gadgets’ in the place, building what could almost be called a trap.

He had not been certain that a third force would come other than Tang Xiaoxing and those who attacked her.

However, logically, since such a complicated place as the Dragon Snake Space Zone was probably the rendezvous point that the Star Glory Federation had specifically prepared for the ‘anti-federation’ rogues, the special agents of the Secret Sword Bureau should be everywhere in Fish Dragon City.

In the meantime, since Tang Xiaoxing was going to contact the leadership of the federation as a member of the so-called ‘Election Observation Delegation’, the federation must have been more or less prepared for such an important event.

There was no reason that the special agents of the Secret Sword Bureau did not react at all after Tang Xiaoxing was attacked.

If they did, Guo Chunfeng and Jin Xinyue would certain regret not training them harder in the past hundred years.

Then, if a third force did exist, the best observation point was probably the place where they would be lurking.

Li Yao’s guess was correct.

It was a ‘battlefield’ that Li Yao had carefully selected. Before the enemy came to themselves and arrived, he had three minutes to make all the necessary preparations. For Li Yao, three minutes was more than enough to spread out his eyes and ears and to turn the slum completely into his own ‘home field’!

Although the two hidden observers were communicating with each other privately, such a technique was merely a trick to constrict and control the soundwaves after all. As long as their position was basically fixed, and special surveillance magical equipment was installed from different perspectives in advance, it was still possible to eavesdrop on their conversation.

Li Yao pressed his left ear softly, quickly filtering the noises that were vibrating his eardrum, while he listened to the two hidden observers quietly.

The two hidden observers were trying to keep their voices calm, but the slightly accelerated speed of their speech implied the anxiety deep inside their hearts.

“Seven fully-armed Cultivators from the center of the cosmos, at least above the Core Formation Stage, with very impressive teamwork. They are also wearing the high-level crystal suits that have been modified specially. They look like the secret police of the Internal Affairs Division of their parliament!”

“There are also thirty-six Exos from the Four Sectors Chamber of Commerce, whose capabilities vary from each other, but more than ten of them are in the Core Formation Stage. Also, since the Chamber of Commerce is involved, they can summon more Exos to the place anytime. This city is the Chamber of Commerce’s territory. We are in big trouble now!”

“What the heck have those guys of the intelligence group been doing? They failed to predict such a great event where the ‘Election Observation Delegation’ is attacked. How is the observation group going to wipe their ass for them now?”

“In any case, Tang Xiaoxing must not fall into the hands of any other force. Her father is the leader of the faction in favor of the federation, which is of paramount importance to us. We have to rescue Tang Xiaoxing and protect her!”

“Wait a moment. I’m already uploading the information, calling for reinforcements, and receiving the plans of the next step…”

“What’s wrong?”

Li Yao heard one of the observers, whose voice was rather rough and sounded to be in a higher position, curse softly before concluding his sentence. Then, the guy fell silent.

The other observer, whose voice was gentler and sounded younger and hastier, prodded him many times. Finally, the first observer gnashed his teeth. “No reinforcements. No plans. We have been asked to keep observing!”

“What! What do they mean by ‘keep observing’? They’re going to take Tang Xiaoxing away if we keep on observing! Should the daughter of Firefly’s captain fall into the hands of the malicious guys who have ill intentions, there will be major trouble! What are the leaders thinking exactly?”

“The half-public office of the Secret Sword Bureau has received a message from Firefly just now,” the rough voice replied. “The government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic has officially issued warrants targeting a hundred figures including Tang Dingyuan, the ‘former captain’. Their crimes include high treason, spying, breach of confidence, and corruption. Thirty-three of the wanted criminals are the high-level members of the ‘Election Observation Delegation’. What happens in Fish Dragon City tonight is a completely legal operation of arrest!”

“Well…” The gentle voice was dazed for a long time before he remarked, “Legal? Legal where?”

“Legal everywhere,” the rough voice said. “Unless we decide to instigate a coup on Firefly right now or attack Firefly to annihilate the ‘government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic’, which happens to also be a civilization of the Cultivators, we are in absolutely no position to meddle in their internal affairs!

“After all, however small the country is, they still have a population of more than a hundred million and an amalgamation of hundreds of super starships, not to mention the techniques and technologies that are far more advanced than ours! Theoretically speaking, even if it is not a ‘country’, it will still be a political entity that is on equal terms to the federation. What can we do about the highest warrants issued by their parliament? Disregard the rules, fight them hard, and steal the criminals that they want?

“Black Panther, calm down. You are now in the observation group, not in the assault group as you used to be. This is not a place to run wild!

“Keep observing and tracking and wait for more instructions!”

The valuable part of the conversation between the two special agents of the Secret Sword Bureau came to an end.

But it was enough for Li Yao to partly understand the chaotic situation right now.

The special agent who was relatively old and considerate was not wrong. Since the government-in-exile had issued warrants against its own people, it was indeed inappropriate for the Secret Sword Bureau to meddle in without a good reason.

After all, the government-in-exile and the Star Glory Federation were in a very subtle relationship, and the Imperium of True Human Beings was due to arrive anytime. If the two civilizations of Cultivators of different sizes were to have a civil war, there might be dire consequences!

Should I take action?

Naturally, Li Yao would not stand by and do nothing. Both for the national interests of the Star Glory Federation and to save Tang Xiaoxing’s life, he was certainly obliged to take action. It was only a matter of when.

“Huh?”

While he narrowed his eyes to observe the surroundings and calculated different rescue plans, Li Yao suddenly sensed extremely feeble waves coming from the air, which were as unattractive as the sighs of ghosts.

If it was anyone else, they would perhaps have mistaken them for an illusion caused by their paranoia.

However, Li Yao, as a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, clearly saw that when the deep blue moonlight blew past the collapsed walls, it occasionally twisted slightly, like the ripples reflecting the setting sun!

Somebody was hiding in the air!

There was not one but almost twenty experts who were adept at covering their tracks and concealing their spiritual energy. Wearing high-level crystal suits that boasted mimetic and stealth abilities, they snuck into the collapsed walls without alarming anyone and chose the best angle of attack!

Other than Firefly, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Secret Sword Bureau, there was a fourth force in this place, which had bared the sharpest fangs the moment it showed up!

It was an elite combat squad made of well-trained Cultivators with high Cultivation and extremely advanced gear!

Li Yao complimented them in amazement while he observed the elite combat squad sneak into the depths of the slum like a gentle breeze without causing any sound. They took down at least seven Exos of the Chamber of Commerce who were guarding at the periphery quietly. It was not until they ran into the eighth person, who was a sleazy Cultivator from Firefly that pretended to be a local, that they met trouble.

When the neck of the eighth Cultivator was cut—or rather, ‘crushed’—by a liquid, high-pressure saber, he let out a scream that was particularly ear-splitting in the dead silence of the night.

A brief but violent skirmish immediately broke out.

The Cultivators from Firefly and the locals of the Chamber of Commerce still had the advantage in number, but their capabilities varied greatly. Only the secret police of the government-in-exile boasted teamwork and tactical performance that were above average. The locals of Fish Dragon City, on the other hand, had been cast into a daze in the first round under the unexpected assault.

The elite combat squad from the fourth force had already finished their tactical arrangement before they took care of all the sentries. They occupied most of the commanding heights and locked onto their respective targets. After the battle began, mottled rays of light were immediately popping up in the air, outlining the cold and yet highly efficient slaughtering machines. In only three seconds, more than ten locals had been killed by their crossfire.

The mysterious elite combat squad was even led by a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator!

Although he appeared to only be in the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage, he boasted the most violent aura. Together with the high-level Cultivator that had obviously been modified and strengthened by specialists, he went on such a killing spree that nobody was left standing!

Wow! Li Yao exclaimed in his heart. Even an epic Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator had been deployed!

As the Star Glory Federation rose quickly and all kinds of new training techniques and facilities showed up, the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators nowadays were no longer as rare and precious as a hundred years ago.

However, a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator was still a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. Such a battle-type Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage who was good at infiltration and assassination missions in secret was a very important professional in any time!

After the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator took action, there was simply no stopping him. The secret police of the government-in-exile who had come to arrest Tang Xiaoxing never thought that a third force would be bold enough to steal their target so blatantly. In their dizziness, they tried to resist. The secret police in the lead shouted, “Are you the special agents of the Secret Sword Bureau? This is our wanted criminal. You cannot…”

He was kicked away by the mysterious Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. Judging from the clusters of lightning and thunder bursting out of his chest, the kick was no less heavy than a bombardment of the warship cannon.

The mysterious Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator jumped up and down and soon reached Tang Xiaoxing. He picked her up and expanded the range of his spiritual shield, thoroughly protecting Tang Xiaoxing.

His movement forced Li Yao to abandon his ambush plan for now.

The purpose of the elite combat squad was obviously to rescue the target. After they had Tang Xiaoxing, they immediately retreated in the middle of a series of intense explosions. Like an unpredictable, fiendish saber, they disappeared into the darkness as quickly as they appeared!

Chapter 1596 - The Dim Moon Squad

The assault was as perfect as a flashing star. In less than half a minute, they took Tang Xiaoxing away in one piece, leaving the secret police of the government-in-exile and the local gangsters of Fish Dragon City in a mess.

Ear-splitting shrieks were echoing in every direction.

That was the sound of countless crystal suits rushing toward the place.

Their exhaust flames drew bright traces in the night sky as they approached like hundreds of flying swords.

Most of them were the Exos of the Four Sectors Chamber of Commerce. Some were the secret police of the government-in-exile who had previously been attacking and arresting other senior members of the ‘Election Observation Delegation’.

They had reacted quickly enough to arrive at the spot in only one minute after the strangers vanished with Tang Xiaoxing.

The secret police, after briefly discussing the issue with each other, immediately dispersed and followed the strangers’ traces!

None of the secret police of the government-in-exile, the local gangsters of the Chamber of Commerce, the Secret

Sword Bureau, or the mysterious fourth force knew that they were in a battlefield that Li Yao had picked for them.

Li Yao kept still. The two special agents of the Secret Sword Bureau who were observing in darkness did not move, either. The one with a rougher voice sniffed and said, “It’s the ‘Dim Moon Squad’. Are those unruly b*stards trying to start a world war?”

“It’s them?” The young agent was greatly alarmed.

“Keep quiet!” the older agent snapped coldly.

The two of them stopped talking and lurked in the darkness without moving at all, like two snakes that had been frozen in winter.

Hiding in the darkness that was even deeper, Li Yao tapped his crystal processor and sent a message to Long Yangjun.

“How is it doing on your side?”

“It is doing pretty good,” Long Yangjun replied. “We are now participating in a dinner that is specially prepared for the magnates. I have to admit that the… extravagant entertainment in the modern Cultivation civilization is truly intriguing and eye-opening. A lot of the fellow Cultivators here are finding it difficult to contain themselves. Hahahaha!”

Li Yao lowered his head and looked at his body, which was crouched in the debris like a silkworm. “I have a little bit of a situation here.”

“Oh? What is it?”

“The same old problem has occurred to me again,” Li Yao replied. “I showed up at the wrong place with the wrong people at the wrong time!”

“… Do you need reinforcements?” Long Yangjun asked. “For some reason, the Chamber of Commerce’s defense here has suddenly been weakened. Many experts who were guarding the place in the beginning were mobilized in a hurry. Therefore, there will be no need for all the fellow Cultivators to take action together. Wait. Huh. Is the mobilization of those experts related to you?”

“It is not entirely related to me,” Li Yao said. “However, I did find an opportunity that, if it works out, will allow us to enter the Star Glory Federation with a more appropriate opportunity. It will be beneficial for both the fellow Cultivators from the Ancient Sages Sector and the national interests of the federation. That will be a real win-win.”

“What do you need us to do?” Long Yangjun asked.

“I don’t need any reinforcements for now,” Li Yao replied, “but you’d better abort your previous plan and wait for my updates. If I can handle it properly, we will be saved of the trouble of robbing, faking our identities, and sneaking into the federation in fear. Chances are that we will be able to walk on the red carpet openly! Also, help me search for the term ‘Dim Moon Squad’. I need everything relevant to the term.

“But do not look for the information on the Spiritual Nexus!

“The Dim Moon Squad cannot be a top secret, or I wouldn’t have heard it spoken by somebody so casually in the first place. However, if you do search for ‘Dim Moon Squad’ on the Spiritual Nexus, even though you may find something useful eventually, it is very possible that you will be noticed by certain alert programs!

“Unless you are a real expert of the Spiritual Nexus, it is best that we should avoid the risk. Speaking of which, do we have an expert of the Spiritual Nexus on our side?”

“… What do you think?”

“There seems to be none,” Li Yao said. “Alright, this is what you are going to do. Now that such an intimidating team made of more than ten Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators has gathered and is preparing to do something clandestine and illegal, I believe that you must’ve locked onto a batch of local gangsters of the Chamber of Commerce, the periphery members of the CIFA, or even the secret agents of the Secret Sword Bureau, right?”

“Of course, but most of them are merely lackeys and secondary members. The real core figures would never show up so easily, would they?”

“It doesn’t matter. You can find some lackeys and secondary members who are relatively old and try to hypnotize them. Then, you can ask them the information about the ‘Dim Moon Squad’. Since it is not a top secret, you will certainly find something useful after interrogating a few people.

“The most critical thing about the issue is confidentiality. Is there a certain art of hypotonization that can make the hypnotized unaware that they have been hypnotized at all?”

“There is,” Long Yangjun said. “But it depends on the Cultivation of the hypnotized. If they are low-level Cultivators in the Building Foundation Stage or the Refinement Stage, it shouldn’t be a problem. However, if they are above the Core Formation Stage with a powerful soul, it will be extremely difficult to hypnotize them without being discovered or leaving any trace inside their brain. Even the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators might not be able to do that."

"That will do. There's no requirement on the accuracy of the intelligence. As long as I can have a general understanding about the 'Dim Moon Squad', it will be fine," Li Yao said. "The key is speed. It will be best if you can tell me all the relevant files in fifteen minutes, because by my estimation, I will meet… the Dim Moon Squad in fifteen minutes!"

Li Yao cut off the communication.

Exactly at that second, the local gangsters that were still lingering in the slum all happened to move their eyes away from Li Yao's shelter.

Like a black lizard that was slithering in the darkness, Li Yao leapt up from where he was hiding and went toward the direction in which Tang Xiaoxing had been taken.

Now high and now low, now left and now right. He avoided all the eyes and the crystal cameras effortlessly.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

The map of Fish Dragon City popped up in his head as he analyzed the most likely route of escape.

More than twenty rushing Exos were certainly not as inconspicuous as Li Yao's cockroach. Li Yao did not need to trace them personally. The local gangsters of Fish Dragon City would find the mysterious 'Dim Moon Squad' in his place.

Li Yao’s judgement was correct.

In fact, the Dim Moon Squad never completely got rid of the double block of the secret police and the local gangsters.

All Li Yao needed to do was follow the local gangsters who were marching blatantly. After only ten minutes, he felt that he smelled the aggressive and yet unpredictable smell of the Dim Moon Squad again.

Long Yangjun’s voice echoed inside his ears at the perfect time. “We’ve got the files on the Dim Moon Squad.”

Raising his eyebrows, Li Yao looked at the downtown area up ahead. “What do they say?”

“Decades ago, the Dim Moon Squad was a professional combat squad under the ‘Secret Sword Bureau’, the intelligence and investigation agency of the federation. You can also regard it as a new division in the agency, if you will.

“First of all, the thing about the ‘Secret Sword Bureau’ is that it has been focused on defense instead of attack since the day it was founded. I believe that you know about it very well, right, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture? So, I won’t waste our time.”

“Yes. Keep going.”

Of course, Li Yao understood what Long Yangjun meant.

When the Secret Sword Bureau was established, the Star Glory Federation had only had one enemy, which was the Blood Demon Sector.

At that time, the Blood Demon Sector had been more powerful than the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and it had taken the initiative in attacks. It had also sent countless spies into the federation.

The Secret Sword Bureau, which had been founded under such circumstances, was a defensive agency that focused on homeland security in the first place. The main job of Guo Chunfeng as the leader of the Demon Execution Division of the Secret Sword Bureau was to arrest and suppress the demon spies who had snuck into the federation.

Although a batch of agents of the Secret Sword Bureau had also snuck into the Blood Demon Sector, their mission was to steal the intelligence concerning the Heaven's Origin Sector but not to prepare for the attacks toward the Blood Demon Sector.

In fact, until Lu Zui and Zhou Hengdao threw out their insane Patriots Plan, the Star Glory Federation had neither the intention to march into the Blood Demon Sector nor the capability of sending agents into the Blood Demon Sector.

The Secret Sword Bureau was born a defensive agency. The genes had been carved deep into the bones.

Long Yangjun went on. "In the system of the Old Federation, the Secret Sword Bureau was a defensive intelligence agency that focused on homeland security. However, in the time of the New Federation, having altogether three Sectors, the Star Glory Federation is much more powerful than before and has embarked on the path of expansion—well, 'assimilation of multiple Sectors', in case you find the word 'expansion' uncomfortable.

"After the four new worlds were discovered one after another, the main focus of the Secret Sword Bureau has shifted from homeland security to… accelerating the assimilation. It has changed from defense to attack.

Therefore, a lot of ‘dirty work’, if we put it as the professionals would, has presented itself.

“Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, I am trying to put it as subtly as possible. It is not going to shake your belief, right?”

“Of course not!” Li Yao frowned. “I am not idiotic enough to believe that the secret intelligence agency is a harmless child. You think that my nickname ‘Vulture’ was given for nothing? Get to the point!”

“Alright. The point is that the Dim Moon Squad is a special troop that is dedicated to ‘dirty work’, particularly the ‘dirty work’ in the four new words, in the Secret Sword Bureau. Of course, their name on the surface is not the ‘Dim Moon Squad’ but the fourth division of the Secret Sword Bureau.”

“The fourth division? What’s its name?” Li Yao asked.

“Division of Logistics and Cleaning, which is responsible for cleaning the dirt and foul things in the Star Glory Federation’s way,” Long Yangjun said.

“… What else?”

“The ‘Cleaning Division’ made great contributions in the decades when the four new Sectors integrated into the federation. One might even say that they accelerated the process by more than thirty years. However, as sort of a special agent myself, I know the difficulties and dilemmas of the ‘dirty work’ very clearly. It is often a gray area between black and white. We are sometimes contaminated by blood that cannot be washed away. Then, we will decay and stink…”

“So?”

“So, doubts and disagreements on certain practices of the Dim Moon Squad gradually appeared within the Secret Sword Bureau. Other divisions grew more and more dissatisfied about the ‘Cleaning Division’. After the four new worlds joined the federation, the previously ‘external contradiction’ became ‘internal contradiction’. Now that everybody was a federal citizen, the Dim Moon Squad’s style was naturally outdated.

“When all the cunning hares are dead, the hound will be useless. After the assimilation of the seven Sectors, less and less ‘dirty work’ needed to be done. Even if there was ‘dirty work’, other departments could take care of it in a gentler way. The ‘Cleaning Division’, or the Dim Moon Squad, had accomplished their destiny perfectly. They were faced with the problem of being reshuffled or even eliminated.”

Chapter 1597 - Dark Side of the Moon

Li Yao's lips twitched. "The federation will not wrong any hero that has made contributions to her, especially the anonymous heroes on the secret frontline!"

Long Yangjun chuckled. "Maybe. However, most of the 'cleaners' of the Dim Moon Squad had been engaged in the most clandestine and the dirtiest intelligence work during the decades when the federation and the four new Sectors were integrating. Most of them were heavily wounded and left with a lot of diseases, both physically and mentally. They had been turned into machines of slaughter and destruction in the black war. Even if such people were true heroes, it was impossible for them to go back to society and live a normal life like normal veterans, right?"

Li Yao nodded. "What became of the 'cleaners' of the Dim Moon Squad eventually?"

"Opinions were greatly divided within the Secret Sword Bureau as to the arrangement for the Dim Moon Squad or the 'Cleaning Division'," Long Yangjun said. "It is said that even the leadership of the Secret Sword Bureau had quite a huge argument. But eventually, all the cleaners of the Dim Moon Squad were still relieved of their duty. A special 'Dim Moon Fund' was established to take care of their lives after retirement, ensuring that they would not worry about their income. It would be absolutely fine even if they spent the subsidies in the most extravagant way."

Li Yao was relieved. "Isn't that good?"

“No. Not at all,” Long Yangjun said. “We are all high-level Cultivators. Try to stand in their shoes. Is extravagancy enough to satisfy you, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture?”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. He gradually frowned and mumbled, “You do have a point. For those above the Core Formation Stage, materialistic needs are basically no longer a problem. What they need is the sense of gratification and the acknowledgement of the general public. Or rather, they desire to carry out their beliefs and expand their ideology to the entire sea of stars!

“However, speaking of which, what was the belief or the ideology of the Dim Moon Squad?”

“We have yet to find out such specific details,” Long Yangjun said. “All in all, soon after the Dim Moon Fund was founded, it was taken in by another department of the government and continued carrying out the missions that were inappropriate for the government, the federal army, or the Secret Sword Bureau to be involved in. Many of the powerful sects chose to maintain their interests in the new worlds through the Dim Moon Fund, too.

“You may understand it this way. Right now, the Star Glory Federation has two intelligence agencies, one in daylight and the other in the dark. The one in daylight is the Secret Sword Bureau, an open, public agency that focuses on defense and homeland security. You can find the headquarters of the Secret Sword Bureau in the capital city of the federation. Guo Chunfeng, the director of the Secret Sword Bureau, is among the leadership of the federation and often show up in the media. As time passes by, the files and archives of the secret operations of the Secret Sword Bureau in the past decades have gradually been unclassified and released to the public.

“Open, bright, with a focus on security and defense. What a perfect and flawless intelligence agency!

“But in the dark, there is also a ‘nonexistent intelligence agency’, which is the Dim Moon Fund. It is a mysterious and cold organization that focuses on attack. You can never find its name on the list of the departments in the federal government. It is a taboo for civil funds, too. The leadership of the federation will never acknowledge the existence of such an organization or endorse any of the operations that the organization conducts. But it exists in reality nonetheless and has infiltrated to the dark and bloody corners that the federal army and the Secret Sword Bureau cannot reach!”

Li Yao was silent for a moment. “Alright. I understand it now.”

“No, you don’t.” Long Yangjun chuckled again. “Do you want to know who the founder and first commander of the Dim Moon Squad and who the biggest supporter of the Dim Moon Fund is? Do you have any idea why your good disciple Jin Xinyue has been nicknamed the ‘Venomous Witch’?”

Li Yao blinked quickly. “It can’t be true.”

“What? Are you questioning the capabilities of the true disciple of the ‘dominator of the three Sectors’?” Long Yangjun said quickly. “A hundred years ago, when the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector were still at war, there was a secret agency named ‘Saintess Palace’ under the ‘Pantheon of Demons’, which was essentially the government of the Blood Demon Sector. It was responsible for raising the saintesses for the Pantheon of Demons. I believe that you are well aware of that, right?”

“Of course.”

When he and Jin Xinyue first met, Jin Xinyue had been one of the ‘saintesses’ of the Pantheon of Demons. She had been sent to the ‘Saintess Palace’ by her father, Jin Tuyi, to receive the harshest and most professional training for a saintess, which was a combination of a female assassin, a female spy, and a female special agent.

During the two hundred years after the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector discovered each other, the Blood Demon Sector had been at an advantage in the battlefield and suppressed the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Therefore, the ‘Saintess Palace’ was fundamentally different from the ‘Secret Sword Bureau’ even though it was also an intelligence agency.

The Saintess Palace focused more on attack. Its purpose was to send more demon agents into the federation for all kinds of sabotage missions as preparation for the Blood Demon Sector’s overwhelming suppression and even invasion into the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

The Secret Sword Bureau focused on defense. Its main work was to find the demon spies who had snuck into the country and caused great trouble.

If the Secret Sword Bureau could be compared to the solidest shield of the federation, the Saintess Palace would be the sharpest spear that the Blood Demon Sector thrust at the Heaven’s Origin Sector brutally!

“Because the Blood Demon Sector’s surrender was conditional and Jin Tuyi, Jin Xinyue’s father and the former commander of the coalition army of demons, took most responsibility for the war crimes, and considering the imminent threat of the expedition army of the Imperium, the system of the Blood Demon Sector was not changed drastically, at least not until Jin Xinyue raised her cleavers toward her own people," Long Yangjun said. "The Saintess Palace, as a training camp for the intelligence personnel of the demons, was also kept under a different name and fell into Jin Xinyue's hands.

"Jin Xinyue was herself a 'saintess' in the beginning. Naturally, she knew every detail about the 'Saintess Palace'. On one hand, she implemented reforms on the surface with Skyfire as her reliance. On the other hand, she established the first batch of personal soldiers who were absolutely loyal to her through the 'Saintess Palace'. Based on the personal soldiers, she eradicated any dissidents within the demon race in the most coldhearted and ruthless way. In the decades that followed, she changed the Blood Demon Sector in an unprecedented way!

"While the Blood Demon Sector was completely integrated into the federation, she also achieved what even her father, Jin Tuyi, failed to achieve—the absolute control over the Blood Demon Sector!"

Li Yao took a deep breath in relief, not knowing how he should comment.

Long Yangjun smiled and said, "I actually like this Jin Xinyue very much. Do introduce her to me in the future! Let's keep going. While Jin Xinyue reformed the Blood Demon Sector mercilessly, she also slowly marched to the center of power of the federation. She traded some interests of the Blood Demon Sector for the appreciation of many big shots in the federation. Finally, she entered the Secret Sword Bureau.

"It was because the main focus of the Secret Sword Bureau was to resolve problems that had occurred during the unification of the three Sectors, especially the unification of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector. Most of the problems were actually caused by the disobedient demons. Therefore, Jin Xinyue, as a saintess from the demon race, was the perfect person to address the issues.

“Jin Xinyue did an excellent job. She soon rose to power in the Secret Sword Bureau and became the commander in charge of the field operations after only twenty years.

“At that time, the first new Sector was discovered, and in the foreseeable future, more Sectors would be discovered, too. The focus of the Secret Sword Bureau needed to shift from interior to exterior, from defense to attack, which was a situation that the traditional agents of the Secret Sword Bureau had never run into before.”

Li Yao thought for a moment and realized that Long Yangjun did have a point.

For example, Guo Chunfeng was the most distinguished Secret Sword Agent of the Secret Sword Bureau who had competed with him multiple times a hundred years ago and resolved the ‘Riot of Patriots’ together with him in the end.

At that time, Guo Chunfeng, known as ‘the strongest Core Formation Stage Cultivator’ with quadruple talents, would not necessarily have been on the losing side even if he encountered a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. He also almost caught Li Yao’s tail many times during the hunting operation.

But it was also true that Guo Chunfeng was better at defense than attack. He worked better as a cat that caught rats than as a rat that snuck into a place and sabotaged it in secret. His character, which was relatively conservative and reliable, made him the best candidate to defend the homeland security of the federation. However, it was not entirely suitable for the brand-new strategy of the federation… ‘expansion’ in the universe!

“Do you get it now?” Long Yangjun said. “It was the Secret Sword Bureau’s tradition to highlight defense, but the traditional style of the ‘Saintess Palace’ was to attack, infiltrate, damage, pry, and slaughter. Since Jin Xinyue was the operational director of the Secret Sword Bureau, she naturally recalled her old subordinates to face the new situation.

“Therefore, the ‘Saintess Palace’, which previously belonged to the Pantheon of Demons in the Blood Demon Sector—after decades of changing, reforming, and moving—turned into the ‘fourth division of the Secret Sword Bureau’. It is externally known as the ‘Division of Logistics and Cleaning’ and internally known as the ‘Dim Moon Squad’. Many of its original members carried the bloodlines of demons. Jin Xinyue herself was the first commander.

“The Dim Moon Squad in the beginning was perhaps only a temporary agency that was established to resolve a certain special incident or to finish a stubborn and yet heinous enemy. However… after four new Sectors were discovered in a row in only decades, and to completely combine the available resources and unify the people of the old worlds and the new ones before the army of the Imperium arrives, such ‘special incidents’ must’ve been happening on a daily basis. Therefore, in the decades after it was established, the scale, capability, and power of the Dim Moon Squad rose until it was too big and influential to get rid of!”

Li Yao took a deep breath. “Wait. I don’t think that it is possible to figure out so much inside information in only ten minutes, is it?”

“Hehe. I’ve been caught.” Long Yangjun chuckled. “Not bad. That information is the conclusion I made based on the files I collected a few days ago and the details that I asked just now with consideration of some of my own experience in the past. It shouldn’t be far from the truth. You can certainly count on me!”

Chapter 1598 - Hold Back Your Techniques One Sec!

“I’ll make a judgement myself whether or not to count on you,” Li Yao said solemnly. “What other conclusions have you made?”

“All in all,” Long Yangjun said, “after the four new Sectors were discovered one after another, the federation’s expansion—oops, I slipped up again—the federation’s ‘assimilation’ temporarily reached its limit. It was already full and needed to take some time to slowly digest the four new worlds. Then, the Dim Moon Squad, as the sharpest claw, lost its place. Guo Chunfeng, the conservative and experienced director of the Secret Sword Bureau, and Jin Xinyue, the aggressive, ambitious operational manager of the Secret Sword Bureau and the founder of the Dim Moon Squad, had a heated argument.

“The final outcome of the disagreement was that the Dim Moon Squad was fired as a whole, and Jin Xinyue left the Secret Sword Bureau, too. Later, with the support of many big shots of the major sects and the entire Blood Demon Sector, she was elected as the minister of the Ministry of Equality and Development in the federation and recruited the Dim Moon Squad again as a secret armed force that was directly under the command of the ministry.

“Right. The very existence of the Dim Moon Squad seems to be the fuse of the contradiction between Jin Xinyue and Ding Lingdang. The Dim Moon Fund often stirs up trouble in the four new worlds, which Ding Lingdang’s Patriots Front consider to be its own base. One of them is trying to deal with all the troublemakers as quickly and thunderously as possible, while the other is hoping to resolve the issues through gentler approaches like a spring breeze. The contradiction between the two parties has slowly developed due to the times of minor friction.

“That’s basically all the information we have right now. Do you have any questions, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture?”

Scratching his head, Li Yao felt that his brain was twenty times bigger than usual. He could not help but have a weird feeling that he was a leader of a family whose previously obedient children had now grown into rogues. After a long pause, he said, “Well, about that. Their competition of routes is none of my business. It is perfectly normal that not everyone thinks the same way. I don’t know the first thing about politics. Therefore, the issues might as well be left to the professionals to deal with. I only want to know one thing. Did Jin Xinyue’s Dim Moon Squad do anything… outrageous in their secret operations in the past decades?”

“What do you mean by ‘outrageous’? If you are asking whether or not they are saints who abide by the law dutifully and are willing to sacrifice their everything for the people of the federation, then I must regretfully tell you that they are not.”

Li Yao coughed. “That’s not what I was asking.”

“Got it,” Long Yangjun said. “If you meant to ask whether or not they have ever injured or killed any innocent ordinary people in their operations, I haven’t heard any reports on that so far.”

Li Yao was relieved. “That’s good.”

Long Yangjun was silent for a moment. Then she laughed in great amusement. “What? Were you worried that your good disciple had broken the boundary of the Cultivators and slid into the abyss of the Immortal Cultivators after a hundred years?”

“No.” Li Yao shook his head. “I trust my disciple. It’s not going to happen!”

“Do not be so certain,” Long Yangjun said dishearteningly. “I have carefully studied your three true disciples. If any of them is going to go against your belief, this ‘Venomous Witch’ Jin Xinyue certainly has the greatest potential!

“Look. When your first disciple Wu Mayan followed you, he was only a twelve-year-old kid in the Refinement Stage.

“When your second disciple followed you, she was not very old, and her Cultivation wasn’t high, either. Also, her mind was pure and simple, and she was entirely dedicated to the world of refining.

“The beliefs of your first two disciples were not entire fixed, and their worldview had yet to be completely established. After they followed you and were edified by you, they were certainly heavily influenced by you and would never betray you.

“What about Jin Xinyue?

“When she followed you, she was already an expert in the demon king stage. A demon king, by the standard of the Cultivators, equals to the Core Formation Stage. That’s already rare enough!

“The belief and outlook of a high-level Cultivator in the Core Formation Stage are basically fixed. It is practically impossible for them to be swayed by the outside world.

“Also, in the past hundred years, the burden on Jin Xinyue’s shoulders has actually been terribly heavy. The Red Tide Plan seemed magnificent, but if nobody worked hard to push it forward prudently, it could only stay on paper!

“Jin Xinyue was exactly such a pusher. On one hand, she had to suppress the ambitious schemers within the demon race who were simmering in impatience, sometimes even by butchering her own people. On the other hand, she had to negotiate with the big shots of the various important sects in the federation, in order to fight for the petty benefits for the demon race. She has essentially struggled forward in a tiny gap while she pushed the Red Tide Plan forward. Tsk, tsk, sk. Even I want to clap for her!

“Under such circumstances, even if she slightly broke the boundary of the Cultivators and betrayed your belief, it would still be quite understandable. She is not a natural-born Cultivator but transformed from the demon race after all!”

Li Yao was silent for a moment, and his voice gradually became cold. “Long Yangjun, I don’t know what kind of secret reason you are fomenting trouble between me and my disciple for, or maybe you are trying to shake my belief. However, I believe in my disciple in any case. I trust that she will not betray me or the boundary of the Cultivators!”

“Make no mistake.” Li Yao’s graveness made Long Yangjun laugh even more mysteriously. “You think that I’m fomenting trouble between you two? You couldn’t be more wrong. I only said so much because I truly do admire Jin Xinyue.

“What’s bad about betrayal? Every excellent disciple will betray their master one day. Every strong son will defeat his father one day!

“The civilization of mankind is one founded on ‘betrayal’ in the first place. The Pangu civilization created the civilization of mankind, but human beings betrayed Pangu. The Nuwa civilization used to guide and assist the civilization of mankind, sparing no efforts, but what scatters the universe today are only human beings without any trace of the Nuwa Clan. Why is that?

“Perhaps, ‘betrayal’ is the irreversible gene that has been branded into the deepest part of the cells of human beings. Only when you doubt will you betray, only when you betray will you transcend, and only when you transcend will you evolve. Betrayal is the highest virtue of the civilization of mankind!

“What, were you hoping to see three conforming, imitative disciples who have never jumped out of your guidelines after a hundred years? Do you not want your disciples to create a new path and bring some… surprises that are more interesting? Even I, as an outsider, still look forward to Jin Xinyue’s performance!”

“My instincts were right,” Li Yao said gloomily. “You are truly dangerous. What are you exactly?”

“A spectator,” Long Yangjun said with a smile. “I have never lied to you since the very beginning. I’m truly doing nothing but quietly observing.”

Li Yao knew that Long Yangjun would never answer his question properly even if he pursued.

The situation seemed very clear. The technical staff and the administrational staff on Firefly had a conflict. The technical staff intended to raise a motion to integrate into the federation, but the administrational staff had extinguished the endeavor in advance with their advantage in parliament. It was not very complicated.

It was inappropriate for the federal government to meddle openly considering the subtle situation. Was it for that reason that Jin Xinyue’s Dim Moon Fund had been deployed? Nothing more?

Li Yao pondered for a moment and slapped his thigh.

How could it be so simple?

The turbulence that he was involved in always had much more unpredictable twists and turns!

However, Li Yao had absolutely trust in his disciple. He believed that she would certainly persist in the boundary of the Cultivators and the national interests of the federation. Now that Tang Xiaoxing had fallen to Jin Xinyue’s hands, her safety was certainly not going to be a problem. It seemed unnecessary for him to make redundant plans and disrupt Jin Xinyue’s arrangement. All he needed to do was observe in silence.

A disciple should cater to the master’s needs. Should he take a rest this time and simply watch his disciples save the world while sitting in the darkness?

While pondering, Li Yao said to Long Yangjun, “Alright. Cut the cr*p. With everything we know, it’s best that we stick to the original plan and see what is going to happen!”

“Well, it does not seem very likely,” Long Yangjun replied. “The fellow Cultivators here gleaned some interesting information just now. Knowing that Firefly and the Chamber of Commerce have some big operations in Fish Dragon City tonight, the fellow Cultivators discussed enthusiastically and came up with quite a lot of new plans. They cannot wait to intervene now."

"…" Li Yao.

"Don't blame yourself. This is not your problem. Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun, the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, are not idiots. It is an utter mess out there as if a war will erupt soon. Even if you didn't propose this, they still would have captured a few people to figure out what was going on. After they grasped the basic situation, they would naturally have tried to hold Tang Xiaoxing in our hands so that we can expect to make connections with the government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic through her and eventually enter the federation as the representatives of the government-in-exile. That is your plan, too, right? It is not a very difficult plan. If you can come up with that, they and I are certainly enough to come up with the plan, too. Great minds think alike!"

Li Yao felt that cold sweat was pouring off his head. "Nobody is blaming himself. Hey. Can you ask the fellow Cultivators to hold back their techniques for one second and stop yelling and shouting? Let's stay cool and keep a low profile!"

"We *are* very calm and low-key," Long Yangjun said. "The fellow Cultivators here are calmly considering exactly how we can calmly get Tang Xiaoxing, how we can calmly sneak into Firefly, how we can calmly become the envoys of the government-in-exile, and how we can calmly enter the core area of the federation."

"Why didn't you bring up such important issues earlier?"

"Just now, you were only asking me stuff about the 'Dim Moon Squad'. Then you were vilifying me, saying that I was fomenting trouble between you and your disciple. Did I have a chance to tell you? Besides, I think that it is quite a good plan myself. At least, it is much better than the plan to move to the bottom level of the federation as common Cultivators through all kinds of disguises!”

Li Yao cursed silently in his heart.

A series of earthshaking noises and explosions suddenly echoed up ahead. The quickly expanding fireballs were almost pumping up the air of the area. It suddenly got extremely hot and suffocating!

Jin Xinyue’s Dim Moon Squad had engaged the pursuers again!

Chapter 1599 - Where Red Tide Ends, Dim Moon Rises

At the same time, in the capital city of the Star Glory Federation in the Heaven's Origin Sector…

Ever since the Blood Demon Sector's conditional surrender to the Heaven's Origin Sector a hundred years ago, the three Sectors had integrated and embarked on a high-speed development. The population of the three worlds had immediately boomed, and the residents of the Heaven's Origin Sector alone had increased by more than ten times. The capital city had also expanded by dozens of times. Not only had it swallowed the more than ten satellite cities around, it was also marching to higher altitudes and established a new space district beyond the atmosphere based on super-fast lifts and the short-distance teleportation arrays made of new materials, which was also known as the second capital.

The enormous starships from the countless resource planets of the seven Sectors could dock in the space port directly and immediately show up on the ground of the capital city through the short-distance teleportation arrays.

It was an extremely lively and prosperous city, and a paradise for the ambitious, hardworking fellows. Almost a billion people lived in the sky, on the earth, and below the ground, providing the beating power for the heart of the Star Glory Federation!

The southeast of the capital city was the solemn governmental area. Passing through a small square where flowers were blooming and birds were singing, there was the plaza of the Ministry of Equality and Development.

In the small square, there was a very famous statue named ‘Rainbow’s Smile’.

It was seven children in different clothes and even in different forms, carrying the distinctive local features of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, the Flying Star Sector, the Nether World Sector, the Water Crystal Sector, the Water Crystal Sector, and the Forest Ocean Sector. Three of them were boys, and four were girls. They were holding each other’s hands and jumping up and down, playing carefreely.

The little girl of the Blood Demon Sector who had the bloodline of the demons, the locals of the Forest Ocean Sector whose body was growing grasses and flowers due to the special speeds implanted to his skin, or the young man from the Nether World Sector who had died too young and was preserved in an iron puppet… they were all wearing the same brilliant smile.

The statue was a symbol for the ‘assimilation of the seven Sectors’ and the most popular image in the federation in the past decades. Its replicas were everywhere to be seen in the stores and on the street in the seven Sectors. The features of the statue had even been simplified and made into the emblem of the Ministry of Equality and Development.

However, if someone were to walk onto the lead gray stairs of the plaza and enter the Ministry of Equality and Development, they would see another statue in the lobby that was of a completely different style, one that perhaps illustrated the real functions of the Ministry of Equality and Development better.

It was seven overlapping hands that were grabbing seven blades of different forms and also of distinctive local features.

The seven swords and sabers were all stained with blood, which was dripping from the gaps of the fingers and merging into one stream.

The name of the statue was the Alliance of Seven Swords.

Click, click, click!

The crisp sound of high heels knocking on the marble floor that was as smooth as a mirror.

When Jin Xinyue walked past the statue of the Alliance of Seven Swords, Jin Xinyue raised her glasses, which had a deep purple frame, concealing the subtle feelings in her eyes when the statue was reflected there.

“Greetings, madam!”

The clerks walking in and out all greeted her, and she responded with a perfect smile. Even the bottom-level workers, who had only worked in the ministry for a handful years after graduating from college, could still feel the genuine warmth from her friendly smile.

Since she had led the charge in the battle to stop the outbreak of the spore virus in the Blood Demon Sector a hundred years ago, Jin Xinyue had always been in such a sacred, brilliant, and benevolent style.

The past hundred years did not seem to have left too many traces on her skin, which was as smooth as jade, but it had added a profound and passionate air to her deep, beautiful eyes and her overall demeanor. The perfect dimples on her face also suggested that she had grown from a girl who was slightly too young into a woman in her most gorgeous, glowing, and appealing season.

As part of the leadership of the federation, she had become used to the simple black-and-white clothes many years prior. She had also been wearing a pair of glasses that did not mean anything for a Cultivator in order to disguise her astounding beauty.

Today, she was still wearing a black suit that could not have been more formal. The few decorations all over her body included the Smiling Rainbow brooch, which was designed based on the emblem of the ministry, and a pendant of the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars emblem that was hanging from her fair, elegant neck.

It was exactly as she had declared to the media publicly a long time ago—”I’m a woman who has been married to the Star Glory Federation.”

Her friendly, immaculate smile was kept without fading at all as she walked to the first lift, which was reserved for the minister.

It was not until the door of the lift opened again and she stepped into the corridor of the thirty-third level of the building that she finally took a breath softly. The deep purple frame of her glasses was gradually spreading a vague hint of blood as the light changed. The subtle aura that belonged to the ‘Venomous Witch’ was flowing out of the corner of her smile.

Click, click, click.

She stood straighter, held her head higher, and walked faster. Like the sharpest saber, she lunged at her target.

“President!”

“Greetings, president!”

Many ugly, muscular men in the corridor with scars all over their faces and even the unmistakable features of demons suddenly changed their expression. They stood at attention and saluted her quickly.

“Sure.”

This time, she did not return a useless smile to any of them but simply nodded before she walked to her destination without any pause.

The thirty-third level of the building was the Division of Logistics and Cleaning. Those ferocious-looking muscular men were the ‘cleaners’ of the Ministry of Equality and Development.

Of course, they had another identity. They were the employees of the Dim Moon Fund.

Jin Xinyue was the president of the Dim Moon Fund.

Not everybody was qualified to call her ‘president’. Only the old comrades who had gone through life and death hundreds of times in the four new worlds over the past few decades had such a privilege.

Jin Xinyue reached the Archive Management Office of the Cleaning Division.

She closed the door from inside.

The thick, heavy door made of super alloys uttered mechanical noises as it was rolled and closed. More than ten defense rune arrays blinked one after another, indicating that the files that had been heaped in this place were much more than just unimportant records on how much toilet paper the Ministry of Equality and Development had used the previous year.

There was only one overaged artificial body, manipulated by a spectral Cultivator, in the Archive Management Office.

In the government departments, especially those related to battles, the spectral Cultivators took up a fairly large proportion of all the employees.

Those people had mostly been seasoned soldiers when they were alive, who had made great contributions to their country and fortunately kept a relatively clear self-consciousness after they unfortunately died.

If they were unwilling to retire, they would often stay in their original department and continue their service by doing the paperwork.

This archive manager, however, looked particularly old. He moved and turned much more slowly than normal, and his lackluster artificial eyes fell into darkness every now and then, as if he could completely disperse in any second.

“The Dim Moon Plan has begun.” Jin Xinyue sat down and looked at the archive manager with a complicated expression. She seemed both full of expectation and a bit ill at ease. “I’ve been planning for thirty years in order to draw a perfect full stop for the Red Tide Plan. Is there nothing that you would like to say?”

The archive manager sluggishly raised his rusted head from the files that had been sealed for a long time. Intermittent brilliance was shooting out of his artificial eyes, but he failed to come up with anything after a long period of silence.

“What a shame.” Jin Xinyue continued smiling, but there was endless bitterness and loneliness in her smile. She seemed to be talking to herself. “I spent the most beautiful thirty and even hundred years of my life, and I even wagered my entire future, on the shift from the Red Tide Plan to the Dim Moon Plan. Finally, the most critical scene of the play is about to be aired. However, of the two ‘spectators’ that I expect most, you have been reduced to such a state because of the protracted sleep, and he is still lost in the depths of the universe, nowhere to be seen…”

Hisses echoed from the outdated broadcast rune arrays of the archive manager. After arduous efforts, he struggled to condense the noises into a piece of advice. “Do… not… turn… yourself… into… a… second… Lu Zui.”

“Lu Zui?” Jin Xinyue took off her glasses and played with them in her fair, smooth hands. “Do you know? Over the past few decades, I’ve been replaying the confrontation between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector years ago as a mind game and a way to relax myself. Sometimes, I even stood in the shoes of the Patriots Partnership and considered from Lu Zui’s perspective, trying to figure out how I could’ve resolved the conundrum and annihilated all the demons completely!

“It’s very difficult, I have to admit. The situation that Lu Zui was faced with was truly difficult. Neither the odds nor the support of the people were on his side.

“However, of all the ways to break the dilemma, he chose the most idiotic one. The assassination attempt on the Speaker in Federal Square and the intentional massacre of the civilians were more than enough to forever nail him on the cross of shame in history. There is no way that his reputation can be restored.

“I couldn’t help but wonder, what if Lu Zui hadn’t done any of that? What if he did not do the things that were beyond any moral standard but decided to carry out his belief through relatively legal approaches?

“Perhaps he wouldn’t have stood a chance at that time, and the battle would’ve been lost temporarily. However, most of his supporters and subordinates would’ve been retained. He would have been able to make a comeback after a hundred years!

“You all decried Lu Zui as a local Immortal Cultivator of the federation, but even if he did appreciate the ideology of the Immortal Cultivators, as long as he hadn’t violated the law of the federation or the common sense of the people, what could other people, including my master, have been able to do to Lu Zui?

“If we get to the bottom of it, he was too rash, but it couldn’t be helped. Lu Zui, at that time, was already a dying old man. He did not have many days left. So, he had to make a desperate attempt. What else could he have done?

“But I’m different. Rest assured. I am different from Lu Zui—

“—because Lu Zui failed, and I will win.”

Jin Xinyue, the leader of the Ministry of Equality and Development of the Star Glory Federation, covered her eyes with the glasses that were reflecting scarlet colors. She paused for a moment and put on an even more brilliant smile. ” *We* will win!”

Chapter 1600 - My Turf, My Game!

The Dim Moon Squad is losing.

In Fish Dragon City in the Dragon Snake Space Zone, Li Yao constricted and constricted his bones silently until he almost narrowed himself into a line behind a magnetic rail, where he observed the battle below him calmly.

Below him, the ever-surging fireballs were like an ocean of blossoming flowers. Now and then, a few heavily armed shuttles would be blown into pieces, which then flew crazily in midair under the blast, like the most brilliant-looking killer butterflies.

The Dim Moon Squad, a secret armed force under the Ministry of Equality and Development in the federation, was made of the most elite warriors who had weathered through the storms of blood during the decades of rapid expansion of the federation. Even the secret police from Firefly were no match for them.

However, they were in the territory of the Four Sectors Chamber of Commerce after all, and the Dim Moon Squad did not seem to have notified the Secret Sword Bureau of their operation in advance. Therefore, they did not receive the full support of their allies.

Now that their tail had been bitten by the local gangsters, Exos of the Chamber of Commerce were arriving incessantly from all directions, attempting to kill them with their sheer advantage in numbers. The Dim Moon Squad was about to be drowned in the ocean of mobs.

After a brief scuffle, hearing the rushing noises that implied that more and more crystal suits were approaching, the Dim Moon Squad was left with no choice but to continue fleeing to the port area in the southwest instead of getting rid of the pursuers behind them.

It appeared that they had a starship waiting for them in the port, and they were planning to break out of the siege after they had the target.

However…

Li Yao was about to chase after them when something else occurred to him. He began to feel that the Dim Moon Squad's operation was too simple and straightforward.

Since they had made plans to steal Tang Xiaoxing, there was no way that they did not know that Fish Dragon City belonged to the Four Sectors Chamber of Commerce. It was a certainty that they would be heavily besieged. 'Break out of the siege by brute force' did not seem like Jin Xinyue's style.

If Jin Xinyue could only come up with such a lousy plan like 'rob and run' after a hundred years of training, he would have been terribly embarrassed by her as her master!

Something is wrong.

Tapping his forehead softly, Li Yao narrowed his eyes and observed the magnetic rails, the dilapidated alleys nearby, and every manhole and underground maintenance tube in the battlefield that had fallen silent abruptly after the brief engagement of the two parties just now.

Ha?

Li Yao’s eyes glittered; he was onto something. Like a cluster of black mist, he snuck into the remnant of an armed shuttle that had been turned into a heap of garbage but was still burning furiously. Holding back the high temperature, he touched the entrance cover of an underground maintenance tube.

Something was indeed not right.

Such underground maintenance tube covers were usually sealed with barriers. It was impossible for normal people to open them easily.

But right now, the barriers had been modified.

Not only did someone open the cover just now, they had also established new alert rune arrays around the previous barriers. As long as the cover was opened, the alert rune arrays would send out a feeble telepathic thought that would be perceived by a certain reception array far away.

Naturally, such alert rune arrays were not a problem for Li Yao.

Three seconds later, he appeared in the underground maintenance tube. His spiritual threads spread out, and he soon discovered a lead-gray, metal box that was more than half a meter tall more than ten meters away from him.

Li Yao crossed his two fingers and snapped it softly. There was no telling what materials the metal box was made of exactly, but Li Yao felt that it could both absorb the violent shock and blast of the outside world and prevent various waves from being released internally.

Had he not been right next to the box and observing it with his naked eyes, it would have been practically impossible to detect its existence from the ground with any probe magical equipment or telepathic thoughts.

This is what I’m talking about!

Li Yao warmed up his hands and groped on the gray metal box that seemed to be immaculate and gapless. A moment ago, after a hiss, a deep blue stripe of light suddenly appeared where there had previously been no gap at all. Centered at the stripe of light, the cover glided toward two sides, revealing Tang Xiaoxing who was sleeping soundly in a cluster of gel in the fetal position.

This explains a lot. They’re pretending to be running immediately after stealing the target, drawing all the enemy’s attention. But in fact, they have hidden Tang Xiaoxing in this place, and she will soon be taken away by another team, which is the real force that should be protecting her!

Li Yao grinned. Such a plan made much more sense.

But regretfully, he needed to intervene and take Tang Xiaoxing away.

It was not because he was intentionally adding to his disciple’s trouble. The reason was simple. There was no way that Jin Xinyue could foresee, despite her wisdom, that in Fish Dragon City right now, other than Firefly, the Chamber of Commerce, the CIFA, and the Secret Sword Bureau, there was still a super deluxe lineup made of two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators and ten Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, and this particular team had developed an interest in Tang Xiaoxing, too.

Now that Meng Chixin, Wu Suiyun, Long Yangjun, and the rest of them were planning to wade into the matter, it was hardly likely for the Dim Moon Squad to retreat with Tang Xiaoxing in one piece.

Besides, Li Yao did not want the experts of the Ancient Sages Sector to have a head-on clash with the Dim Moon Squad, in which case the situation would be beyond his control.

Now that a dangerous game seems unavoidable, I might as well be the one who throws the dice! Li Yao smiled and licked his lips, with brilliance of confidence beaming out of his eyes. *This is the Star Glory Federation. This is my place. Naturally, ‘Monster Li’ should be in charge! I’ll make the ultimate call as to what game we are going to play next!*

He dragged Tang Xiaoxing out of the protective gel and carried her on his shoulder as if she were a sack. Then, he bent down and moved into the depths of the maintenance tube, which was enshrouded in darkness.

Ten minutes passed.

When Tang Xiaoxing woke up, she found, to her astonishment, that she was sitting in the seat of a shuttle again. The lights and shadows outside of the window were nothing more than the night view of the prosperous Fish Dragon City.

Then, she noticed that the guy sitting next to her who was driving the shuttle casually while tapping on the light beam of a crystal processor quickly was—

“Senior Lin!” Tang Xiaoxing exclaimed in disbelief and bit her tongue to make sure that she was not dreaming. Had what she experienced a moment ago actually been an absurd nightmare that she had just woken up from?

However, the ever-dying explosions echoing far away in the night sky, as well as the shouts, curses, and shrieks that were played by the mainframe crystal processor of the shuttle, immediately brought Tang Xiaoxing back to reality.

Tang Xiaoxing discovered that the mainframe crystal processor of the shuttle seemed to have been connected to a private communication channel, in which there was nothing but the voices of the excited Exos of the Chamber of Commerce who were making tactical arrangements.

“You’re awake?”

Li Yao continued tapping on the light beam. He studied the terrain of Fish Dragon City and all the information about Firefly collectable on the Spiritual Nexus, especially the internal structure of Firefly and the renowned experts on board. After sensing Tang Xiaoxing’s confusion, he explained without raising his head, “I installed a ‘gadget’ on the crystal suit of an Exo of the Four Sectors Chamber of Commerce, which allows me to hack into their tactical communication channel. Don’t be nervous.”

“You—You—I—” Tang Xiaoxing was lost for words for a moment. “You didn’t abandon me and run away?”

“We are now in the middle of an emergency. Would you please at least show some of the wisdom and resolution of the Cultivators from the center of the cosmos by not asking questions whose answers are obvious?” Li Yao said quickly. “If you are going to ask questions such as ‘who are you’ or ‘what do you want’, I suggest you don’t. I will tell you my real identity, but not now. I can only guarantee that I mean no harm to you or Firefly. Instead, I’m trying to help you and possibly make a deal with you.

“If you believe my words, we will carry on. If you feel that I have other ill intentions, you’d better check which neighborhood nearby has a better environment so that I can drop you there. That’s definitely not a problem. In my opinion, the gate of the mall over there is not half bad. All the shining neon lights are quite entertaining. Should I drop you there?”

“Don’t!” Tang Xiaoxing’s face was pale. She could not help but grab Li Yao’s arm. Recalling the nightmares just now, she took a deep breath and gritted her teeth. “I—I’m willing to believe in you, Senior Lin!”

“Very good. Then, let’s talk about our deal and how I can help you and Firefly,” Li Yao said. “But first of all, I need to decide whether or not you are of enough value to be helped and your ability to fulfil the deal. Well, we are running out of time, so I’ll just speak frankly. I believe that you must be well aware of the current situation right now. Right when you were arrested by your own people for ‘high treason’, Captain Tang Dingyuan, your father on Firefly, must’ve had the same treatment, too, if not worse. It is possible that he has been… killed.”

Tang Xiaoxing slightly shivered. Tears were rolling inside her eyes, but she tried to hold them back. Looking at her hands, she said softly but firmly, “I know!”

“But there is still another possibility, one that is even more terrible than the possibility that your father has been murdered,” Li Yao said casually. “In fact, your father, the captain of Firefly, could actually be behind the whole scheme. He could have developed clandestine ambitions decades ago and planned a shocking scheme for his seemingly grandiose and noble but in fact sordid and shameless ideology. If the scheme succeeds, it is very possible that the world will be destroyed!”

“What? How did you know that, senior?”

“This is just one of the life lessons that I have learned as a senior who has travelled in the sea of stars long enough,” Li Yao said.

“…”

“Of course, on a positive note, it is possible that your father is not scheming, and he isn’t dead yet. This is exactly what I’m asking. In your opinion, what are the odds that your father has been executed immediately after being captured by the enemy, supposedly your Speaker Cui Lingfeng? Is there any chance to rescue him now?”

Covering her face, Tang Xiaoxing took deep breaths for half a minute and cleared her mind. She shook her head. “Even if it was Speaker Cui Lingfeng who planned everything and captured my father for nonexistent crimes such as treason, it would still be impossible to execute him immediately.

“The Star Ocean Republic has an open and just parliamentary system after all. Speaker Cui is not a powerful dictator. It is impossible for him to secretly capture and execute the captain of Firefly, a leader who is second only to himself. Even interrogation is barely an option.

“It’s very likely that my father is still alive, but he must be in custody!”

Chapter 1601 - Space Jump Matrix

Li Yao’s hands turned into glamourous rainbows on the light beam. He said, deep in thought, “So to speak, your father enjoys quite the prestige on Firefly? Let me ask you, not considering what happened today, what is the comparison between your father’s power and Speaker Cui Lingfeng’s?”

Tang Xiaoxing thought for a moment and said carefully, “It is true that my father’s prestige is quite high. After all, all the technical problems that occurred during the long journey in space needed to be handled by the technical personnel and the ground-level sailors. It is impossible for the officials in parliament to block a leakage in the shell of the starship or to repair the overloading power units with only their tongue.

“Therefore, on Firefly, my father’s supporters definitely greatly outnumber Speaker Cui Lingfeng’s supporters. In fact, most of the people dislike our parliament, which has grown overstaffed. It is also why my father dared propose a referendum to join the federation.

“However, despite my father’s high prestige, he has never raised an armed force that is absolutely loyal to him. The general public only support him because he is the captain of Firefly. What I’m most worried about right now is that Cui Lingfeng and his conspirators might’ve intentionally set my father up. Even I was arrested for ‘high treason’. My father’s crime must be more severe!”

“Got it,” Li Yao said. “Your father’s prestige on Firefly is very high. It is impossible for your Speaker Cui Lingfeng to directly execute your father in secret. In order to completely destroy your father and his supporters, they can only invent nonexistent crimes to tarnish your father’s reputation and to convince everyone that the captain is guilty!

“That is the only way the Speaker and his supporters can regain control over Firefly, right?”

Tang Xiaoxing bit her lips softly and nodded. “Yes.”

“Then, can you speculate what kind of crimes the enemy will accuse your father of? After all, as the captain of the starship, he must be a person on board who is almost equal to the Speaker. It is practically impossible to knock him down with petty crimes, which will often raise the fury of the general public and their disgust for the parliament. In the end, their endeavor will only achieve the opposite of what they want.

“Therefore, the crimes that your father is accused of must be extremely severe. Also, the enemy must’ve fabricated undeniable proof. What will it be? Treason? Contacting the Star Glory Federation in secret and planning to join the federation. Can it be counted as treason?”

Tang Xiaoxing shook her head hard. “Of course, it is not treason to contact the federation. The Star Glory Federation and us are both civilizations of the Cultivators, which share a common ideology and similar systems. Also, after a thousand years of tedious journeying, everybody understands the situation of Firefly very clearly. Except for parliament, which is still clinging onto the Star Ocean Republic, the people in the lower classes have long had enough of the harsh environment on the starship and lost all hope!

"We've escaped to the edge of the Star Ocean Imperium's old borders. If we flee any further, we will enter the unseen world and the dark universe that no human beings have ever explored before. We will truly become a rootless, nomadic civilization!

"Enough! A thousand years of running is enough! Nobody wants to keep on running. Now that marching back to our original home has become a tantalizing dream, we want to find a new home at the edge of the cosmos!

"Therefore, many people on Firefly, especially the ground-level sailors and their family whose living environment is quite harsh, actually do not object to, and are sometimes even quite eager to, join the federation!

"We've been told that Iron Plateau, Forest Ocean of the Star Glory Federation, and Boneyard between the Heaven's Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector are all stable planets that are scarcely populated. Everything there needs building from scratch. We have only slightly more than a hundred million people. It is absolutely viable to reconstruct our home and build the New Federation together!

"It is the cry of the people, and my father is only a representative of the public opinion. The issue of joining the federation has been debated and pushed forward openly since the very beginning. Even the Election Observation Delegation has been sent out under the authorization of the parliament. Everything is legal. How can that be counted as treason?"

Li Yao pondered thoughtfully. "Therefore, the enemy must've grasped certain evidence that is of paramount importance and can crucify your father instantly without public backlash. That is the ground for the thunderous, secret arrest today… My next question is, what about you? What is so special and important about you?”

Tang Xiaoxing was slightly dazed. “Me?”

Li Yao finally moved his eyes away from the light beam and glanced at her. “Although you are the daughter of Firefly’s captain, based on your description just now, I don’t think that your identity alone is enough for the enemy to attach such importance to you that they sent an elite squad of secret police to arrest you. After all, you are just a refiner. By common sense, the odds that you can run away are very low.

“A huge team has worked on the problem that should’ve been taken care of by a few people. Therefore, I believe that you are much more valuable and complicated than ‘the captain’s daughter’, right?”

Tang Xiaoxing was still hesitating.

Li Yao continued to watch the light beam as he casually asked, “I’m asking this not because I’m interested in your secrets but because I’m evaluating your value in the enemy’s eyes, including whether or not the enemy are determined to keep you alive, in which case they will watch their fire during the engagement later. This is of paramount importance for our operation. I stand by what I said. If you don’t trust me, you are welcome to leave anytime. For example, the entrance of the alley up ahead. What do you think?”

Tang Xiaoxing stared at Li Yao for a long time before she gritted her teeth and said, “Senior Lin, your eyes are as keen as a torch. You’re quite right. My father is a tough man who will not betray the interests of his compatriots just to save his daughter’s life. I’m afraid that they are not capturing me to threaten my father but for the part of ‘jump token’ that is under my control.”

“Jump token?” Li Yao blinked. “What is that?”

“It is the activation code of the space jump matrix on Firefly,” Tang Xiaoxing explained. “Firefly boasts the most advanced space jump system in the entire universe. The greatest feature of the system is that the gap between two starships that are to perform a space jump simultaneously has been reduced to the minimum. Sometimes, two starships can perform a space jump at the same time when they are only several hundred meters away from each other without causing interference to each other. Do you understand what I’m saying, Senior Lin?”

Li Yao nodded.

The so-called space jump was the process in which one ‘jumped’ to the four-dimensional universe from the three-dimensional universe before they were ‘reduced’ to the three-dimensional universe from the four-dimensional universe again.

During the process, the object to jump or be teleported would certainly raise space-time ripples both at the jump point and at the landing point.

Such space waves would doubtlessly cast powerful interference toward the objects around.

If two starships performed a space jump at the same time very close to each other, say, within one kilometer—which, on the cosmic level, was a negligible distance—and they were jumping toward the same destination, it was very possible that they would collide or even meld into a combination of two starships, leading to dire consequences!

Therefore, in the boundless universe, few space zones were suitable for the construction of the ‘space gate’ in order to facilitate large-scale space jumps. Also, even if suitable space zones had been found, warships to be teleported were often kept a hundred kilometers away from each other and would only perform a space jump after they made sure that there was no mutual interference.

The larger a warship and the longer the distance to be covered, the more destructive the ripples raised when breaking the void would be and the larger the margin that had to be left between the objects to be teleported.

In many cases, in order to mobilize a space fleet of an enormous scale to wage an expedition upon a different Sector billions of lightyears away, it would be impossible to teleport all the large, main-force warships over at once. By doing this, the fleet would only end up as an overlapped iron block that was exploding nonstop at the destination.

Therefore, it usually took a couple of days, sometimes even half a month, for an entire fleet to be deployed for a space jump.

The moment that the expedition army was teleported was also the moment when it was most fragile. The starships that had already jumped to the destination were usually dispersed, without any organization or battle formation, and the following starships were still lingering at the start point billions of lightyears away, unable to be instantly teleported to the destination. Even if they were teleported over, the crew members who were haunted by the sequelae of the space jump and the starships bound by the space-time ripples would not be able to bring out one tenth of their combat ability.

They were as vulnerable as an army in the ancient times that was crossing a rapid river. It would certainly not be a joke if such an army was attacked right when they were halfway across.

However, Tang Xiaoxing was stating that the space jump matrix on Firefly could reduce the safe gap between starships in a space jump to only a few hundred meters?

In such a case, Firefly’s demand on the stability of the space zone at the destination of the jump would be greatly lowered. The agility, conspicuousness, and mobility of Firefly would be greatly improved, too. Should there be anything wrong, the hundreds of starships that were connected together could escape instantly!

Such a technology was invaluable in a universal war!

Li Yao blinked quickly. “Do the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance not boast the same technology?”

“I don’t think they do,” Tang Xiaoxing replied. “Firefly was an experimental starship before, still under construction. It is said that a lot of the magical equipment of the Star Ocean Imperium and even the technologies retrieved from the relics of the primeval era were installed, many of which were unique. After we seized the experimental starship, it was with the help of the marvelous space jump matrix that we managed to hide here and there despite the pursuit of the army of the Imperium of True Human Beings. If they had the same space jump technologies, I’m afraid that we would’ve been caught a long time ago!

“However, after a thousand years of running, our space jump matrix cannot shoulder the burden anymore and requires full maintenance. I happen to be one of the refiners who are responsible for maintaining the space jump matrix.”

Chapter 1602 - Long-Gone Smile

Tang Xiaoxing paused for a long time after she said that. She looked at Li Yao carefully before continuing. “Right now, the space jump matrix is under maintenance. To restore it to an operational state, a certain ‘jump token’ has to be inputted. The token has been divided into six passwords that are controlled by five refiners including myself and my father. If one of them is missing, there will be major trouble.”

“What kind of trouble?” Li Yao asked.

“Firefly will not be able to perform a space jump!” Tang Xiaoxing said.

Li Yao immediately understood it.

In the boundless sea of stars, even two adjacent galaxies could be several lightyears away from each other. If a space jump was not an option, and the vehicle covered the journey difficultly with the regular engine, it would be like a snake embarking on an international trip. The endeavor could barely be accomplished!

After losing its space jump ability, Firefly would essentially have its legs cut off. There was nowhere it could run to.

Li Yao pondered for a moment and asked, “Is it possible to retrieve the password through interrogation or by separating it from your brain after killing you?”

“Absolutely not!” As if she were a shocked cat, Tang Xiaoxing’s hair was all standing up. “I have deeply etched the password into my mind through special techniques. Unless it’s voluntary and I’m operating it in person, it is absolutely impossible for anyone else to get access to the password! If I am truly killed, it will take at least three to five months to bypass the maintenance mode of the space jump matrix!”

“That’s good.” Li Yao thought for a moment and realized that in such a case, the safety of Tang Xiaoxing’s life could be guaranteed for now, and she would not suffer any torture.

The most critical task was to rescue Captain Tang Dingyuan. It would be even better if Speaker Cui Lingfeng’s scheme could be unveiled along the way.

Then, the Star Glory Federation would get a rather advanced super starship, as well as the space jump technology that even the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance did not necessarily have!

In any case, he would have to see that the issue was taken care of properly for the federation’s sake.

Then again, it should not be a problem to rescue the captain for the ten Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, should it? It could only be counted as a warm-up game before the great war between the Imperium and the federation.

Thinking quickly, Li Yao asked, “How many experts are out there on Firefly? Are there Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators? How many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators do you have?”

The government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic was quite wary of the Star Glory Federation. Little inside information had leaked out. The number of top-tier experts was definitely a secret that could not be found on the Spiritual Nexus.

Tang Xiaoxing shook her head. “During the thousand years of running, our few Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators perished one after another because of the Imperium’s hunting. We do not have any Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators right now. As for the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, we only have slightly more than a hundred of them.”

” *Only* slightly more than a hundred?” Li Yao was greatly shocked and almost found it hard to believe. There was only a population of a hundred million on Firefly. How could more than a hundred Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators have emerged? The ratio of ordinary people to Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators was a thousand times greater than the ratio in the federation. That seemed too unbelievable!

“A hundred is not too many,” Tang Xiaoxing said. “Back to the day when Blackstar the Great just seized control of the Star Ocean Republic, public dissatisfaction was prevalent. A lot of experts and specialists snuck into Firefly in secret and got out of the evil hands of Blackstar the Great. At that time, hundreds of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators lived on the tiny Firefly. There were a lot of Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, too!

“Later during the long journey in space, many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators entered the hibernation state in order to better preserve themselves. A lot of them only woke up again after decades. It was not until we were docked near the Star Glory Federation that we woke up all the Nascent

Soul Stage Cultivators. It’s only been ten years since then. Naturally, they are all alive.

“Had it not been for the massive faults that occurred to the hibernation cabin due to a few accidents on our journey, the population of our Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators would’ve been multiple times larger!”

So, the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators did not emerge during the thousand years of journey; they were from the center of the cosmos when the journey began. Li Yao swallowed hard, and his eyes were glowing like a weasel which had noticed a hen. The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators from a thousand years ago were all priceless treasures. If they could all join the federation…

“That doesn’t sound right.” Li Yao suddenly thought of something else. “If you have so many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, why are you not even capable of defeating an insignificant claw fleet of the expedition army of the Imperium?”

“Because we do not have many battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators,” Tang Xiaoxing replied, somewhat in embarrassment. “Years ago, the majority of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators went to hibernation. Only a few of them were awake and responsible for maneuvering and maintaining Firefly. But the battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were almost all awake because we were faced with the pursuit and the blockades of the Imperium’s army!

“To get rid of Blackstar the Great’s pursuit, almost all of our battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, as well as the few Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, perished!

“In the hundreds of years that followed, we have been wandering in the depths of the sea of stars, hiding and living in fear. We did not have the courage to fight the Imperium's army at all, and we would run away the moment we caught the scent of the Imperium!

“How could a new generation of battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators have been born if we did not dare fight?

“Also, we floated in the universe for a thousand years after all. The cannons, weapons, and magical equipment on board were all seriously worn. We were also almost running out of supplies. How could we expect to compete with the powerful, well-prepared troops of the Imperium, even if it was just a minor claw fleet?

“My father is the one who knows the current situation of Firefly better than anybody else. He and most of the technical staff on board understand that it is absolutely impossible for us to continue fighting on our own. Even if we manage to tinker with the starship, it will be impossible for Firefly to survive forever. Joining the Star Glory Federation is the only way to pass on the spirit of the Star Ocean Republic!”

“Understood.” Li Yao had collected all the information that he needed.

Every word that Tang Xiaoxing had said just now turned into snowflakes inside his brain where the brilliance of insight was shining. Colliding with each other, they raised thousands of whimsical plans.

Captain Tang Dingyuan was the key to the problem. Their mission was to rescue him. As long as the captain was saved, the problem would be no more.

But the question remained, where was the captain exactly?

Compared with the Star Glory Federation, which now included seven Sectors, Firefly was nothing more than a speck of dust in the vast sea of stars.

However, it was a super starship, or a super metropolis in space, made of hundreds of starships that were connected and combined together, with a population of a hundred million. The place was multiple times larger than Fish Dragon City. If the captain was being held in custody in secret, locating him would be no easier than fishing for a needle in an ocean.

It was not like that Li Yao, Long Yangjun, Meng Chixin, and the rest of them could simply summon their Colossi and march all the way into Firefly while screaming and yelling, right?

There is indeed a lot of trouble in the small pond! Li Yao thought to himself silently. For a moment, he truly felt that there were thorns all over Firefly, giving him no place to bite on.

Right then, his ear was itching softly again, as if somebody was tickling him with a feather.

It was Long Yangjun.

“How is it going on your side? Are there any changes? We have observed that quite a few secret Exo teams that supposedly belong to the Dim Moon Squad are hovering as if they have gone mad!”

Long Yangjun grimaced, not having the slightest fear that she might be burnt by the fire as it grew more and more fierce.

“We have also got a very interesting piece of intelligence. Do you still remember ‘Fei Qi’, the guy who attacked us the moment we jumped over?”

Li Yao nodded and said, “Of course, wasn’t he given to Qi Changsheng and Wan Mingzhu to deal with? Is there a problem?”

“There’s no problem with Fei Qi. But didn’t he mention that he was only a periphery member of the CIFA and that he had a ‘contact’ in Fish Dragon City?” Long Yangjun said. “Something is wrong with his contact. We noticed that he was in the middle of the Exos of the Chamber of Commerce searching for the target together with them. However, his traces were quite weird, and he seemed to be trying to reach out to someone in secret.

“Later, during the fierce engagement between the Exos of the Chamber of Commerce and the Dim Moon Squad, Senior Meng and Senior Wu set up a trap and captured the guy. We learned after interrogating him that, while the Immortal Cultivator of the CIFA was an Exo under the Chamber of Commerce’s command on the surface and he was carrying out the order of the Chamber of Commerce, he had also been given instructions by the CIFA in secret, which asked him to help the Chamber of Commerce and the secret police from Firefly capture Tang Xiaoxing!”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. “That can’t be right. Logically, everybody on Firefly, be they in favor of joining the federation or not, should be an archenemy of the Imperium of True Human Beings. But the CIFA is an organization of local Immortal Cultivators. Shouldn’t the two parties be as incompatible as fire and water?”

“That, we don’t know. The guy is only a lackey in the CIFA after all. He doesn’t know much useful information,” Long Yangjun said. “Of course, we can investigate his superiors with him as the lead, but it might raise unnecessary alarm. So, we’d better not do that just yet. God knows what kind of deals the CIFA have struck with certain people on Firefly!”

“Firefly, Fish Dragon City, the CIFA…” Li Yao thought quickly. A few shining pearls in the mess had been connected by him.

He suddenly turned around and asked Tang Xiaoxing, “Are there still starships going to Firefly from Fish Dragon City now?”

Tang Xiaoxing did not know what the question was about, but she nodded and said, “Of course, Firefly is in the middle of major maintenance. Tremendous materials and resources are being delivered to Firefly through Fish Dragon City every day. It is our top priority right now. Despite the intense situation, the transportation cannot be entirely called off.”

“That’s good…” His eyes glittering, Li Yao put on a mysterious smile that he had not worn for a long time. He said to Long Yangjun, “Give me thirty seconds so that I can consider this more carefully. I feel that I’m onto a plan that can cut all the knots and resolve all the conundrums once and for all!”

Chapter 1603 - Cheng Xuansu’s Judgement

Two days later, at the edge of the Dragon Snake Space Zone, where Firefly was docked…

A thousand years ago, in the last years of the Star Ocean Republic, Firefly’s antecedent had been the exploration starship of the latest generation.

At that time, the Cultivators of the republic had high hopes for the experimental starship. They had stuffed all the magical equipment of the Star Ocean Imperium, the primeval technologies excavated from relics, and the hope of all the people into the body of the starship that was as round as a whale.

The experimental starship was supposed to have carried out the greatest mission ever. It would set off from the heartland of the civilization of mankind and explore the corners of the universe in search for the worlds lost in the Armageddon Rebellion, which caused the collapse of the Star Ocean Imperium, so that they could rejoin the big family of the Star Ocean Republic and build an even more brilliant, glorious civilization of mankind together!

When the behemothic body of Firefly slid out of the dock in space for the first time, and the ninety-nine engine units in a rhombic distribution emitted the most dazzling blue light at the same time, none of the joyful, cheering Cultivators of the republic, however adept they were at deduction and calculation, could have foreseen the absurd fate of the experimental starship in the future.

The very first official voyage of Firefly was not for exploration and discovery but for hiding and running.

In the long thousand years, Firefly had discovered a lot of Sectors with the powerful probe magical equipment on board at first and received the support of the Cultivators in those worlds.

Countless Cultivators who were unwilling to bend to the rule of the Imperium had carried all their belongings, techniques, and magical equipment into their own starships that were in a myriad of different styles. Then, after simple technical modification, those tiny starships were connected to the main body of Firefly, like the barnacles that were attached to a big ship or a shoal of fish that were swimming together with a blue whale.

The advanced space jump matrix on Firefly could release a special protective membrane that prevented collisions, which should have been very likely when two starships performed a space jump close to each other.

Such a technology enabled the possibility of a hundred starships jumping simultaneously when they were stuck together closely. It also constructed the basic form of Firefly in the hundreds of years that followed.

In its prime, centered around Firefly, almost six hundred starships constituted an enormous group of refugees, with a population of more than five hundred million.

But the good days did not last long. The corpulent structure and the redundant internal control system greatly lowered the combat ability of Firefly. After a few soul-stirring battles, although they luckily escaped from the blockade of the Imperium, the number of starships that made up ‘Corporate Firefly’ was reduced from more than six hundred to less than three hundred, most of which were empty iron coffins that had lost all the impetus and only managed to stay in the group by the pulling force. The population on board had also plummeted by eighty percent. The society was on the brink of collapse.

Before encountering the Star Glory Federation, Firefly was like a whale that had half rotten. It was drifting with the current in the sea of stars and could not throw away any ‘iron coffins’ despite knowing that its body was slowly decaying, because in the universe with few available resources, a lot of useful garbage could be dismantled from the scrap starships even if they were already total losses. That way, they could manage to catch their breath for a while longer.

For Firefly and the ‘rightful government’ of the Star Ocean Republic at that time, what else could they have hoped for except to catch their breath?

Such a starship, or rather, a ‘heap’ of starships, which had become riddled with holes and rust, certainly required a protracted and arduous project to be maintained. The difficulty and the consumption were no less than to reproduce hundreds of starships.

Thankfully, to a ‘bumpkin’ living at the edge of the cosmos like the Star Glory Federation, Firefly, being from the center of the cosmos, finally had certain reserved assets that had not been entirely wasted yet.

The government-in-exile exchanged the extraordinary techniques and secret arts from the center of the cosmos for tremendous resources from the Star Glory Federation. Then, a whole area of docks and floating maintenance bases were established in the periphery of the Dragon Snake Space Zone, and the heated maintenance work began.

The government-in-exile even purchased a batch of starships from the Star Glory Federation and connected them to the main body of Firefly after preliminary modification in order to increase the activity zone and improve their quality of life. After all, in space where there was zero gravity and friction, however bizarre-looking those starships were, they would not hinder Firefly’s cruising ability.

Therefore, if one looked from the carriers that were shipping resources, Firefly—which was illuminated by the crimson flames of the red giant—did not look like one firefly but an amalgamation of hundreds of fireflies that were surrounded by circular rails, docks, floating ports, and maintenance bases.

Hundreds of carriers were shipping assets to them incessantly. Thousands of times more maintainers were working diligently in the cold vacuum outside of Firefly in their crystal suits, like a group of ants that were struggling hard in the sea of stars.

A seemingly plain carrier without any marks on the shell passed through a circular orbit dock and a starship that had been declared a total loss a long time ago and was ready to be completely dismantled. It then slowly approached the main body of Firefly.

The universal exploration starship had been utterly deformed. Hundreds of communication tubes had been connected to its shell, linking it closely with the other starships around and making it look like a heart from which countless veins and artilleries were extending.

The carrier moved unhurriedly. It entered the inside of Firefly. Countless close-distance defense cannons turned swiftly in various directions. Invisible identification rays were brushing past the newcomer now and then. A hundred fully armed Exos were also floating in the vacuum. The crystal cannons on their shoulders had been unsealed, and starry brilliance was flashing at the end of the barrel. Behind the cold masks of the Exos, sharp eyes seemed to be gazing at the carrier without blinking.

The carrier slid into a secret dock when it was several kilometers away from the ‘heart’ of Firefly.

Chi…

The enormous, airtight gate was slowly closed, like an iron giant that had gritted its teeth.

Inside the dock were hundreds of fully armed Exos who were highly vigilant.

They were all the secret police of the Internal Affairs Division of the government-in-exile, who were there to pick up a batch of special ‘goods’.

The cabin door at the tail of the carrier was opened, revealing a ladder and a driving belt for cargos.

Part of the members of the ‘Election Observation Delegation’ were moved down. Some other people, who were deemed more dangerous ‘traitors’, had been loaded into special confining cases and delivered by the driving belt for cargo.

Few people there did not wear a crystal suit.

They included a middle-aged woman in a black coat. Her face suggested that she was a rigorous person. Her left eye was missing and replaced by three crimson crystal cameras.

She was Cheng Xuansu, the leader of the special investigators of the Internal Affairs Division in the government-in-exile, as well as the commander of the arrest operation.

“Wait!”

When most of the prisoners were escorted to the internal shuttles in the starship and ready to be delivered to the secret jail, Cheng Xuansu suddenly bellowed. The crystal cameras that had been installed on the same round pedestal rotated slowly, releasing bright redness, as she looked at a prisoner who was locked inside a confining box.

It was… Tang Xiaoxing!

“Leader!”

The secret police who were escorting Tang Xiaoxing stood at attention.

Observing Tang Xiaoxing who had fallen asleep carefully, Cheng Xuansu asked, “Repeat the whole process of your arrest exactly as it happened. Such a strengthless refiner escaped from your hands twice?”

“Yes.” An officer hesitated for a moment and said, “The first time, we attempted to knock her out with a ‘stunning cannonball’ in order to capture her, but she was not affected by the stunning cannonball and quietly slipped away. She even set up traps and heavily wounded six of our teammates. The second time, we had already captured her, but a mysterious tactical squad marched out of nowhere and rescued her again. The third time, we pressed our siege with the cooperation of the Chamber of Commerce and resorted to the surveillance cameras of Fish Dragon City. Finally, by analyzing her walking pattern, we locked onto her hideout.

“The enemy seemed to be playing a distraction trick. Most of them were delaying and harassing us on the outskirts. Few people were actually around Tang Xiaoxing. Seeing that it was not good, they could only abandon Tang Xiaoxing and run away.”

“How long was Tang Xiaoxing out of your control from the beginning to the end?” Cheng Xuansu asked emotionlessly.

“No more than six hours!” the officer replied.

“Six hours?” Cheng Xuansu sneered. “Besides, the enemy has an ‘anti-tracing specialist’ who found all the localization and navigation chips we deployed on Tang Xiaoxing?”

The officer hesitated again and said, “Yes.”

Cheng Xuansu looked her subordinate coldly. After pondering for a moment, she said, “Prepare a sterile room for me and bring two female officers. I want her body to be examined.”

The officer was slightly dazed. “We ran a full scan in Fish Dragon City. There’s nothing on her body.”

Cheng Xuansu stared at her subordinate.

The officer shivered and breathed hard. “Got it. I’ll immediately prepare a sterile room!”

Half an hour later, Cheng Xuansu walked out of the sterile room with a tiny glass jar in her hand. Inside the glass jar lay a scarlet ball that was similar to the color of the skin.

“This is—”

The secret police who were responsible for capturing and escorting Tang Xiaoxing began sweating hard.

“An anti-tracking specialist must be a tracking specialist. How can you not understand such simple logic?”

Frowning, Cheng Xuansu looked at her subordinates.

“I have carefully studied the operation report that you sent back yesterday. The guy who was with Tang Xiaoxing in the beginning was obviously a real expert. The team that ambushed you later was made of well-trained specialists, too. Do you really think that they would give Tang Xiaoxing away so easily when they already had her?”

Chapter 1604 - A Minor Accident

“Well—”

The secret police all looked at each other in bewilderment, not knowing what was going on.

“They intentionally sent Tang Xiaoxing into our hands, for the purpose of making her carry this thing into our starship,” Cheng Xuansu said coldly. “From when you began the arrests to when you captured Tang Xiaoxing, she was not under your control for so long. Six hours is more than enough for the enemy to do a lot of things!

“Do you still not understand? Tang Xiaoxing is not important. Although she is Captain Tang Dingyuan’s daughter and she has one sixth of the jump token, a Tang Xiaoxing that has left Firefly is entirely useless to the enemy! This is not an empire, and Tang Xiaoxing is not a princess!

“What the enemy wants is Captain Tang Dingyuan himself!

“I don’t know what this gadget is exactly. It is not releasing any spiritual waves right now, either. I retrieved it from Tang Xiaoxing’s esophagus with an endoscope. It was stuck to the esophageal wall, with a layer of protective membrane made of flesh and blood outside. If I hadn’t searched inch by inch, it would’ve been practically impossible for me to detect it!

“I dare say that the thing will activate before long and send Tang Xiaoxing’s coordinates to the outside world. If we truly lock Tang Xiaoxing and Captain Tang Dingyuan in the same place, whoever planted the device will certainly be able to figure out where Captain Tang Dingyuan is being held and the detailed route from this place to his prison!

“By then, god knows what those mysterious people will do!”

The secret police were greatly alarmed. “Leader, is there anybody coming to rescue him?”

“It’s hard to say.” Cheng Xuansu looked at the scarlet ball. Pondering, she said, “Such technology is not something that the outcasts of the Dragon Snake Space Zone possess. Those people who stole the target from you, on the other hand, seem to be from the federation. Something is not right. I have to report this to the Speaker immediately!

“The bottom line is, triple the security around the secret jail. Pay special attention to all the tubes that allow for infiltration in the prison cells, be they ventilation tubes, maintenance tubes, or sewage pipes. I don’t want a fly to draw close to Tang Dingyuan!

“Also, search your carrier thoroughly. If necessary, cut the entire carrier into pieces, or simply roast it at a high temperature for an hour. Make sure that nobody can sneak into this place on your carrier in secret!

“Thirdly, stress the inspection on all carriers and maintenance bases. Now that Firefly is under major maintenance, a lot of cabins and channels are open to the outside world. A lot of people are coming in and out, and most of them are wearing maintenance suits, making it difficult to identify who they are. You must raise your wariness; do not be careless for even a second!

“Do you understand now?”

All the secret police stood at attention. “Understood!”

However, one of the officers, who was relatively older, stood out after a moment of hesitation. “Leader, the first two requirements can be carried out easily, but the third one is rather difficult. Our lightning arrest has raised mayhem throughout Firefly. Right now, the ground-level sailors and most of the people are quite uncooperative, if not infuriated. Under such circumstances, if we investigate every person and every corner completely, I’m afraid that the result will not be very satisfactory, and it will only add to the tension of the current situation.”

Cheng Xuansu stared at him for a long time. She then glanced at every officer with her rigorous eyes. The redness released by her artificial eyes suddenly turned gentle. She patted the old officer’s shoulder heavily and said, “I understand that the situation is quite volatile right now. Tang Dingyuan’s disguise was done too perfectly. Nobody is willing to believe that he is a traitor. All in all, please keep up the good work, everybody. As long as we persist for a while longer, we will be able to completely get rid of the mask of the Immortal Cultivator Tang Dingyuan with our undeniable proof!”

All the secret police held their heads high, their morale higher than ever. “Understood!”

“Let’s move out!” Cheng Xuansu waved her hands toward the officers resolutely. She then moved the glass jar that stored the scarlet ball closer to her eyes and observed it for a moment. At last, she gave the glass jar to the old officer and said, “Send it to Professor Luo and ask the professor to analyze what it is exactly and what kind of techniques it entails. If it is activated, is it possible to trace the enemy’s coordinates? If it is possible, can we locate the place where the item is produced and identify its producer? See that Professor Luo find the answers and report to me as soon as possible!”

“Understood!”

Holding the glass jar carefully, the old officer left in a hurry.

“Hu…”

It was not until all the officers left her eyesight that she finally took a deep breath. She could not help but pressed her tense shoulders.

Her eyes seemed to be piercing through the thick and heavy airtight gate into the dark, cold sea of stars.

But she did not catch the minor collision that took place in the periphery of the maintenance field of Firefly. She was in too much of a hurry to interrogate the prisoners and to report the latest updates to Speaker Cui Lingfeng. Nobody else thought much of the collision accident that everyone had become used to for anything abnormal, either.

It was indeed a very common collision accident.

Party A in the accident was the empty shell of a starship, which was slowly moving away from the big family of Firefly, pulled by two small barges. In the past hundred years, the total-loss starship had provided tremendous components for repair for the other parts of Firefly. Now, the last bit of the value had been used up, and it would be pulled to a dock in the periphery and completely dismantled.

Party B of the accident was a carrier that was fully loaded with raw materials.

The engine units of the carrier seemed to have experienced a minor problem after a long journey. When the two parties met in the complicated internal structure of Firefly, the carrier had suddenly accelerated, which led to the collision.

The empty shell of the starship to be dismantled did not have impetus in the first place but was only pulled by two tiny barges. As a result, both of the barges had been knocked out of place, and the wasted starship had been nudged toward the inside of Firefly precisely.

Thanks to the protection of the spiritual shield and the twisting field, no more serious collisions followed.

Despite the chaos caused, and although a lot of workers were thrown into the space under the blast, nothing exploded, and nobody was injured. Those people who were thrown off were quickly rescued, too. In little more than an hour, the transportation and maintenance were back in order.

It was an insignificant accident. During the maintenance over the past five years, similar accidents had taken place almost every other day.

However, the ‘insignificant’ accident did trigger enough confusion and attract enough attention for Li Yao to sneak into Firefly without alarming anyone under the cover of the broken pieces caused by the collision.

He did not directly sneak into the exploration experimental starship at the core, which, as the heart of Firefly where the parliament of the government-in-exile was located, would be at the highest level of alert. Chances were that three to five secret officers were squatting inside every tube. Crawling in that direction would be committing suicide.

Besides, his destination was not that place.

According to the map that Tang Xiaoxing had drawn two days ago, and based on Li Yao’s own deduction about the overall structure of the starship, Li Yao passed through a jetting tube for the exhaust flames of the engine units which were under repair. He crawled in pitch dark for fifteen minutes and reached another tube, which was a cooling tube that was brimming with high-heated steam. Constricting his bones to the minimum, he slithered in the narrow space with a temperature of hundreds of degrees for more than ten minutes. Finally, he found the forsaken tube that Tang Xiaoxing had described. He took a brief rest at the entrance of the tube.

Come to think of it, it’s been a hundred years since I last crawled in a ventilation tube. How I’ve missed this feeling! Li Yao thought to himself. At this moment, he finally retrieved his mini crystal processor and triggered a lackluster light beam.

There was nothing on the light beam. It was pitch-black.

The localizer that he had asked Tang Xiaoxing to swallow had been discovered.

There are indeed experts on Firefly.

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao pressed his earpiece and activated the communication channel.

“How is it doing on your end, fellow Cultivators? The localizer that I deployed on Tang Xiaoxing has been discovered. As we expected, we cannot find where Captain Tang Dingyuan is caged so easily. We have to activate Plan B now.”

Meng Chixin’s low voice came over. “We’re fine. There are thousands of carriers, docks, maintenance stations, and remnants of scrap starships here. It is practically impossible for the enemy to locate twelve experts in the Nascent Soul Stage and the Divinity Transformation Stage!

“All in all, we will be waiting for the good news here, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture. As soon as you find out where Captain Tang is being held, we will immediately march in!”

Wu Suiyun, the other Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator, observed, “On the other hand, it must be an arduous task for you to sneak into the depths of the heavily guarded starship and to search for the place where Captain Tang is hidden. Rest assured. We have locked onto the critical parts of Firefly. Should there be anything wrong on your end, we will be able to launch an assault!”

Long Yangjun’s lighthearted voice interjected. “Exactly. It is indeed unfair to ask Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture to carry out such infiltration missions, but it cannot be helped. It concerns the next step of our operations, and you are the only one who is suitable for the task. Do you still remember the ‘intensive training’ that I did with you last night? Let’s hope that such cramming proves to be more or less useful!”

“Thank you for your enlightenment, Lord Wang,” Li Yao replied. “I have learned so many secret techniques of sneaking and infiltration under your tutelage. They were such a great eye-opener that I am now seeing a whole new world!”

“You’re flattering me. After the session last night, I believe that you have the potential to be a spy or an assassin, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture. Perhaps, it is because the unpredictable battle techniques in the forests in the

Southland of Sorcerers highlight camouflage, infiltration, and assassination in the first place?”

“In the case, fellow Cultivators, let’s stick to the plan that we agreed on yesterday and continue locking onto the critical parts of Firefly. I’m certain that I’ll have something for you soon!”

Li Yao turned off the communication channel. Rubbing his cheeks, he took a deep breath of the dark air.

Such an atmosphere made him feel both nostalgic and excited.

So far, he had merely crawled into the shell of Firefly.

The real infiltration had only just begun.

Chapter 1605 - The Familiar but Strange Infiltration

Li Yao shook the tactical crystal processor on his wrist softly. The picture on the light beam suddenly changed into a 3D map of the part of the starship that he was in.

As he quickly thought, the tubes and joints between most of the cabins were highlighted as half translucent shadows. They broke apart from the main map and combined with each other, evolving into many gaps that allowed him to sneak in.

It was a basic structure painting that he had inferred based on Tang Xiaoxing’s description.

Naturally, such a preliminary map that was made based on oration and deduction was far from enough.

However, it could at least tell Li Yao where the oxygen tubes were.

Li Yao liked sneaking into the starships best. However complicated the starships were, as long as they were cruising in space, a system to make and transmit oxygen was definitely necessary. The oxygen tubes that were connected to every corner were required to deliver the fresh air to the entire starship.

The larger a starship and the more people on it, the greater the scale and quantity of the oxygen tubes needed. It was certainly not an easy task to provide oxygen for a hundred million people in a concealed environment, unless everybody living on a starship lived their life carrying oxygen bottles and wearing masks, which was absolutely impossible!

Firefly had been sailing in the sea of stars for a thousand years. Everywhere was ragged, and the oxygen tubes were no exceptions. A lot of holes and leakages had appeared on them. They were currently under full maintenance and renewal. Naturally, it was impossible to seal all of the oxygen tubes.

It gave Li Yao an opportunity that he could take advantage of.

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

A dark red ring appeared on his finger. The light and shadows rolled on the surface of the ring. A series of runes seemed to have gotten rid of the boundary of the metal surface and moved into the air. Rotating quickly, they constituted a crimson dagger of spiritual energy.

No heat could be felt at all judging from the appearance of the dagger. However, despite the thinness of the dagger, the sawtooth-like fire that was burning at the periphery actually boasted a temperature of over a thousand degrees, allowing it to cut the wall of the tubes made of general metal or porcelain.

Li Yao cut on the tube of the cooling tube carefully. Very soon, he dug a hole that was no larger than a fist in diameter but enough for him to crawl through if he constricted his body.

After crawling out of the hole, Li Yao found himself faced with dozens of tubes that were densely combined with each other. It was truly a forest of tubes!

It’s… here!

According to Tang Xiaoxing’s guidance, Li Yao soon located one of the oxygen tubes.

However, he did not start working on the tube immediately. Instead, he slowly turned his ring, changing the fire from a scorching red into a cold blue.

The oxygen percentage inside the tube was quite high. It would certainly not be a joke if there was a deflagration accident.

In the meantime, he retrieved a piece of magical equipment that was as elastic as a preservative film from his Cosmos Ring. He covered himself with the gadget outside of the oxygen tube.

An automatic pressure test system had been installed inside the oxygen tube. If tremendous high-concentration oxygen escaped, alarms would be triggered, and maintenance personnel would arrive to check in less than five minutes. It would be impossible for the entrance that he was to cut on the wall of the tube to escape their attention.

After everything was set, Li Yao finally focused his attention on prudently cutting the wall of the tube.

After he snuck into the oxygen tube, he did not melt the round piece of the tube back to the wall. Instead, he ‘pasted’ it backward softly through a certain special gel.

Naturally, such a gel did not have a high glutinosity, and the tightness of the material was not very good, either. It could last half a month at best, but that was enough for Li Yao’s plan.

If everything went well, they would be able to rescue Captain Tang Dingyuan in less than twenty-four hours.

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao crouched inside the narrow, zigzagging oxygen tube and observed the darkness inside the tube ahead of him and behind. Then, he did two things.

Firstly, he straightened his arm and aimed the tactical crystal processor on his wrist ahead. A round detector slowly rose out of the front end of the crystal processor.

It was a piece of magical equipment that he used to explore the structure of the tube.

The mechanism was simple. It did not adopt a supersonic wave feedback system or resort to telepathic thoughts for the search. Both of those two methods could be detected by the countermeasure magical equipment that possibly existed deep inside the tube.

In fact, he was not exploring the structure of the tube but the zones with a particularly high concentration of the oxygen up ahead.

In order to improve the efficiency in transmitting fresh air, the oxygen concentration in the tube was many times higher than that in the regular air and close to the pure oxygen for medical uses. Therefore, as long as one could perceive exactly where the high-concentration oxygen flowed to, they would be able to figure out the distribution of the entire tube and all its branches.

A moment later, on the light beam of the crystal processor, a super large map of the distribution of the tubes that looked like a combination of capillary vessels and a neural network slowly surfaced.

Li Yao softly whistled. It appeared that he was not old yet after all!

He overlapped the distribution chart with the 3D map that he had deducted based on Tang Xiaoxing's information. After rectifying the flaws and errors on the 3D map, Li Yao confirmed his destination again and calculated the shortest route from his location to his destination.

However, before he began, there was one more thing that he needed to do.

Li Yao took out a cylindrical piece of magical equipment the size of his palm with the more than ten antennae folded inside. Then, he stuck the tool to the wall of the tube with gel.

It was a single-threaded device that could send out and received telepathic thoughts.

It could also be compared to a super tiny 'spiritual tower' that employed a dedicated route.

The device would work as a tiny unmanned communication base. As Li Yao snuck into the depths of Firefly, he would leave more magical equipment of the same type, which would connect with each other into a secret communication route. In such a way, even if he was deep inside Firefly, Li Yao would still be able to communicate with Long Yangjun, Meng Chixin, and the rest of them freely without worrying about the signal of the communication channel.

After deploying four stealth rune arrays on the four corners of the super tiny ‘spiritual tower’, Li Yao released Neltharion for reconnaissance ahead of him and marched toward his destination.

Five minutes later, he encountered the first obstacle.

It was three pairs of crystal cameras that had been deployed at a turn of the oxygen tube.

What was most sordid was that they were also covered by stealth rune arrays, and they were monitoring the tube invisibly.

Had it not been for the fact that the anti-stealth probe magical equipment on Neltharion was of a higher level and that Li Yao had been paying attention to any possible surveillance equipment, he would have been caught.

But since he had already detected them, everything would be easier.

Neltharion was Li Yao’s best partner in infiltrations and assassinations. In the past hundred years, Li Yao had performed full upgrades on it more than once. Even when he was in the Ancient Sages Sector, he had upgraded the tool with the brand-new techniques and technologies that he had learned from the Nuwa warship!

Neltharion was definitely no longer what it had been in the past.

Furthermore, as an experienced Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, Li Yao was ten times more capable of manipulating Neltharion than when he had snuck into the Nether World in the Blood Demon Sector in the past!

Like a nonexistent ghost boat, Neltharion quietly detoured to the back of the surveillance cameras and extended more than ten soft tentacles that were thinner than a hair. The ends of the tentacles were emitting feeble light in red, orange, yellow, green, and all other colors.

Licking his lips, Li Yao spent three minutes in order to freeze the photosensor in the crystal cameras for thirty seconds. Then, during the thirty-second gap, he hurried to blink past the alert area.

After installing a second ‘tiny spiritual tower’, he went on. This time, he did not run into new trouble again until he moved forward almost one kilometer and installed the third ‘tiny spiritual tower’.

The oxygen tube seemed utterly empty in front, but the air of extreme danger was surging nonstop.

Li Yao had covered his eyeball with a special stealth lens. By adjusting the trafficability of the light of the lens, he was able to see almost all the visible light and invisible light.

But right now, through the lens, he could see that the narrow channel up ahead had been dissected into narrow space that no human being could ever crawl through by dense, dark red rays of light.

If one were reckless enough to pass the area, no matter how fast they were, they would certainly block the rays of light briefly, and the alarms would certainly be triggered.

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao took out dozens of rhombic crystals large and small from his Cosmos Ring. They were all translucent and as clear as water, with a higher trafficability of light.

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao calculated crazily. The dozens of rhombic crystals were dancing if not ‘flowing’ on the tip of his fingers agilely, allowing Li Yao to further understand their features and the angle between every two facets.

Half a minute later, Li Yao’s hands suddenly froze. Then, his fingers turned into ten phantoms as he threw all of the rhombic crystals toward the dark red web of light!

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

The rhombic crystals cut in between of the dark red rays of light steadily.

Those rhombic crystals had all been brought from the Ancient Sages Sector by Li Yao. They were of a high quality without the slightest impurities and as clear as any crystal could be. The dark red rays of light passed through them almost without meeting any hindrance.

However, because of the different facets of the rhombic crystals, the direction of the rays were subtly changed.

In the new direction, another rhombic crystal would be waiting for the rays. After a few refractions, the rays were restored to the original direction again.

The whole process took less than 0.01 seconds. Barely any interference was caused. But quite a few dark red rays of light were twisted into a curve from a straight line. A space big enough for Li Yao to crawl through had appeared in the middle.

Li Yao’s eyes were glittering brilliantly. He stuck his hands against his body and crossed his legs. Floating in midair purely based on his spiritual energy, Li Yao crawled through the hole like the softest eel!

It was possibly the most complicated trap that Li Yao had ever come across.

Almost a hundred dark red alert rays had been deployed. He had to calculate time and time again how to change the angle of the rays to create enough room for him to pass through. It took him forty-seven minutes to finish the test.

However, after he took care of the headache, the remaining traps, such as a ‘gravity sensation system’, were not worth mentioning at all.

One hour, forty-six minutes, and fifty-two seconds after Li Yao entered Firefly, Li Yao reached the area above his destination.

Chapter 1606 - I’m Not a Man of Violence

This was a refining workshop, not very large. More precisely speaking, it was a refining workshop that was connected with a living room. There was also a minor warehouse that stored all the experiment materials nearby. If one was willing to, they could absolutely stay there for research for quite a few months without getting out of the room.

From that point of view, this place was also more or less a hermit’s residence where they trained in seclusion from the world.

There was nobody else in the workshop except for an old refiner whose white hair was in a mess and whose face was as wrinkled as a dry walnut, making it impossible to tell his exact age. He was studying a scarlet ball wholeheartedly, which was the one that Cheng Xuansu had retrieved from Tang Xiaoxing’s throat not long ago.

“This is… spectacular!”

The old refiner was faced with a microscope made of 251 lenses. They were helping more than ten super tiny stylets that were as thin as a hair to dissect the shell of the scarlet ball layer by layer.

On the light beam triggered by the microscope, on the surface of the ball that was no more than three millimeters in diameter, there were almost a hundred complicated rune arrays, which were attracted to each other and vibrating with each other, emitting extremely feeble waves!

It was only the first layer.

In fact, the ball, whose precise diameter was 2.78 millimeters, was divided into seven layers like an onion. Every layer could function independently. Almost five hundred rune arrays had been carved on the ball in that manner.

What powered those rune arrays at the core, on the other hand, was merely a marrow crystal as insignificant as a grain of dust.

“What an amazing structure. It is already marvelous enough to construct seven metal shells that are as thin as paper that can rotate freely in a space the size of millet. But to precisely distribute spiritual energy to the 497 rune arrays with such a small marrow crystal is just—is just—”

The old refiner breathed in excitement. He eyed the magical equipment as if he had gone back to hundreds of years prior and was meeting the love of his life for the first time.

His face was full of wrinkles. Even his facial organs had been drowned by the wrinkles, making him look much older than he actually was.

But his hands were as fresh and smooth as a newborn baby’s.

The movement of his hands was also as soft and gentle as if he were touching the silk-like skin of his love.

Half narrowing his eyes, he released spiritual threads with his fingers as he examined all of the rune arrays inside the ball one after another. The more he touched, the greedier and more enthusiastic his eyes became.

“This is a set of localization rune arrays, but compared with the localization rune arrays that I’ve devised, its coverage is reduced by eleven percent, the spiritual energy consumption is lowered by nineteen percent, and the spiritual waves released are fewer. It is much more inconspicuous!

“This is… this is actually a set of space survey chips that can scan the environment they pass through and translate the information into the most precise 3D map!

“Huh. This is a transmission unit to send concentrated spiritual waves to the outside world. With such a gadget, a certain receptor in the outside world can synchronize all the information that the magical equipment has detected. A rather delicate design. A lot of the technologies from the primeval relics seem to have been adopted, too. They are much more advanced than the technologies we have grasped!

“Thankfully, the magical equipment was detected in time and soaked in ‘blockage liquids’, causing it to malfunction. Otherwise, we’d be in big trouble.

“Wait. What’s this? The thirty-three runes in the innermost layer seem unrelated with localization, detection, or teleportation. They seem—they seem—”

The old refiner frowned and thought hard for a long time. He adjusted the angle and the magnification of the lenses and searched for the files of the rune arrays concerned on his crystal processor now and then. Three minutes later, he reached a conclusion. “This seems to be a certain interference rune array, which, once activated, can block all the defense rune arrays and the alert magical equipment around.

“However, there seems to be a minor design problem. Under such a design, it is impossible for the magical equipment to be activated remotely. One can only turn on the magical equipment at a close distance. What can such a rune array do?

“But it makes sense. Too many rune arrays and chips of different functions have been inserted into such a tiny area. There’s not enough space for even a needle to be stabbed in. It is absolutely impossible to stuff a powerful, remote activation rune array!”

Scratching his stubbled chin, the old refiner considered whether or not it was possible to redistribute the space that the rune arrays and the chips occupied so that a complicated, powerful remote activation rune array could be filled in if he were the designer.

After thinking hard for a long time, his conclusion was that he could not do it, either.

“Who exactly produced such an advanced piece of tracking, surveying, and localizing magical equipment? Do the Star Glory Federation or the Imperium of True Human Beings boast such a terrifying refiner?”

Mumbling to himself, the old refiner began writing the analysis report on the crystal processor quickly.

However, after he glanced at the light beam of the microscope unintentionally, he suddenly saw the most unbelievable thing.

The interference rune array at the core of the ball was emanating feeble brightness. It was looking at him quietly like a weird eye.

"Impossible!"

Greatly alarmed, the old refiner almost cried out. The ball had been completely paralyzed by him through secret techniques and was under his absolute control. There was no way that it could be activated, unless the enemy was pouring their telepathic thoughts into the rune array from within ten meters!

The old refiner thought of something. The most unlikely possibility suddenly occurred to him.

However, before he was able to react, he felt excruciating pain on his back. The pain raged inside his body like the most blatant flood and bound his every vein and muscle, making it impossible for him to move his finger or even send out a telepathic thought!

The old refiner fell into his chair helplessly, only to be swiveled around together with his chair.

Then, he saw himself.

The same white, messy hair; the same wrinkled face that looked like a walnut; the same facial organs that were drowned by wrinkles; and the same pair of hands that were as fresh and smooth as a newborn baby's.

He could not help but have an absurd feeling that he was faced with a mirror.

No. The intruder who had snuck in without alarming anyone was slightly different from him. The greatest disparity between them was perhaps the guy's indifference and loneliness, the queer vibe that indicated that he was interested in nothing other than the arts of refining.

However, after observing him carefully for a few short seconds, the stranger seemed to have grasped the critical points of his demeanor. After a few deep breaths, the stranger gradually put on an almost-identical expression and posture to his own. Even the guy’s heartbeat and breath were adjusted to the same frequency!

What perfect refining arts!

Of course, the old refiner was grasped by intense horror, but what eclipsed his horror was his curiosity about the intruder.

He could tell that the guy had faked his appearance with a certain secret technique. The secret technique was much more than changing body itself; it also concerned the modification of the face with techniques such as a ‘skin mask’.

A ‘skin mask’ was supposed to be an obsolete technology that had been outdated on Firefly for a very long time. The old refiner had never seen such a finely-made skin mask before in his life.

The stranger extended his hand and stuck a cold chip to the old refiner’s throat. The old refiner swallowed and felt that he had regained the ability to talk. However, he was only able to speak softly, unable to scream or cast spells.

Although he knew that he could get an answer, the old refiner still could not help but ask, “Who are you?”

As he expected, the stranger gave no reply. Instead, the guy held a hair with both hands and delivered it to his face. “Professor Luo De, one of the best specialists in material science and super-miniscule carving on Firefly, as well as Tang Xiaoxing’s mentor. You were the one who crafted the tracking magical equipment in the form of hair in person, weren’t you? According to Tang Xiaoxing, you are the only one who has such super-miniscule carving skills on Firefly, allowing you to carve more than a hundred rune arrays on the wall of the hollow tube that is as thin as a hair. You are the only one who has access to the new material made of ‘Nine Holed Jade’ and ‘Venomous Spider Ghost Thread’, too.”

The old refiner’s eyes froze. After thinking for a long time, he breathed hard and said, “So—so, the ultimate target of the localization magical equipment was me all along!”

“Exactly,” the stranger said casually. “Neither Captain Tang Dingyuan nor Speaker Cui Lingfeng are so easily localized or approached, but the defense on your side is much sloppier.

“Moreover, you have played a vital role in the whole event.

“First of all, the trailing antenna that was disguised as a hair is identical to Tang Xiaoxing’s own hair in terms of quality and color, which can only be the result of thoughtful refining.

“Also, the other two trailing chips that were stuck to Tang Xiaoxing’s body were almost exactly the same in style to the antenna. They must’ve been made by you, too, right? On the surface, they are perfectly blended with her skin and can barely be recognized.

“Both one’s hair and one’s skin color are unique, which means that you knew very well when you were crafting those three pieces of magical equipment that they were going to be applied to Tang Xiaoxing, your student and Captain Tang Dingyuan’s daughter.

“Then, Professor Luo, who prefers solitude to socializing and barely follows the affairs of the outside world because of his weird temper, what kind of role have you been playing in the whole incident?”

Professor Luo De bulged his eyes, not entirely because of the facts that the stranger had pointed out, but also because the guy’s voice was gradually changing until it was exactly the same as his own old, high-pitched voice!

At that moment, without the different clothes that they were wearing, even he would have found it difficult to tell himself apart from the stranger!

“Generally speaking, I am always a pacifist who convinces other people with reason and is against violent approaches.” The stranger sighed, not without pity. “However, we are in the middle of an emergency. If you are still unwilling to tell me the truth, Professor Luo, I’m afraid that I’ll have to resort to my petty tricks.

“Trust me. Although the guards outside will notice what is happening inside very soon, I’ll make sure that the short hour will be as long and sufferable as a century!”

Chapter 1607 - New Situation!

Li Yao extended his right index finger, which was still wearing the ring of mystic rays that he had used to cut the wall of the oxygen tube. The bluish rays that the ring shot out turned into a sharp, continuously growing icicle that was slowly reaching Professor Luo De’s eyeball.

The bluish rays were ‘growing’ so slowly that Professor Luo De could see every jumping fire clearly.

In the meantime, Li Yao pierced a vivid, life-like picture into Professor Luo De’s brain, which was the whole process of someone’s eyeball being stabbed, dried, and thrown away.

Professor Luo De’s pupils suddenly widened. It was the only movement that he could make right now. Other than that, he could not even tremble or perspire.

“I don’t know,” Professor Luo De said feebly. “I don’t know anything. You’ve come to the wrong person.”

“How can you not know anything?”

Smiling, Li Yao pushed his finger forward. The bluish rays immediately penetrated into Professor Luo De’s left eyeball. As a helical drill, it went further toward Professor Luo De’s brain, bringing excruciating pain to the victim!

“Wu!” Professor Luo De meant to scream, but it was insignificant moans that his throat uttered. He blinked his left eye out of natural instinct, only to find that his eyesight was perfectly normal despite the excruciating pain. The bluish rays were still lingering one millimeter away from his pupil, rotating slowly.

The horrible scene was merely an illusion and a mental attack that Li Yao had launched on him.

“I’ve given you an opportunity, and I hope that you’ll cherish it. Next time, when it pierces, it won’t be an illusion.”

Staring at Professor Luo De’s eyes carefully, Li Yao’s eyes were even sharper than the bluish rays. He then slowly moved them to the professor’s smooth and fresh hands.

“You have two eyeballs. So, you can still give a wrong answer twice. If I still do not get a satisfactory answer after both your eyes have exploded, I’ll have to work on your hands. I believe that, for a seasoned refiner and a specialist of super-minute carving, your hands are even more precious than your eyes. You must’ve nurtured your impeccable hands with all the vitality and spiritual energy in your body, and you do not want to them to end up in a pile of meat one finger after another, do you?”

Professor Luo De maintained his casual, rigid voice, but the fear and desperation in his voice was audible even for a deaf person. “What do you want to know exactly?”

“I want to know whom you work for,” Li Yao said coldly. “Who has given you what benefits to make you betray your student and craft the magical equipment that is enough to get your student killed?

“Tang Xiaoxing is your most distinguished student. You two get along with each other quite well. You are best known for your nonchalance and unamiableness on Firefly. In the past few decades, not many people have entered your personal refining workshop. But Tang Xiaoxing was an exception. She once worked as your assistant for three years.

“In regard to whether or not to join the Star Glory Federation, although you have never declared your stance publicly, I believe that you should be in favor of the ‘technical staff’, Captain Tang Dingyuan’s side, as a master of refining. There have never been rumors that you are close to the parliament. On the contrary, you once berated certain MPs in a meeting and labeled them ‘illiterate’, which was quite an embarrassment for them.

“Therefore, I find it difficult to understand why you did all this. Who asked you to produce the tracking and localization magical equipment, and what benefits did they promise you? Or rather, what were the reasons that they used to convince you?”

Professor Luo De’s eyeballs shivered quickly. “It—it was Cheng Xuansu who asked me to produce them!”

Li Yao slightly raised his eyebrow. “Speaker Cui Lingfeng’s most trusted subordinate and the head of the secret police of the Internal Affairs Division, who were responsible for investigating and capturing Captain Tang?”

“Exactly!” Professor Luo De breathed heavily. “I don’t know anything. I only helped Cheng Xuansu craft a batch of training and localization magical equipment!”

“But you knew at that time that the magical equipment could only be applied to Tang Xiaoxing, right?” Li Yao said casually.

Professor Luo De closed his eyes painfully. “… Yes.”

“You do not look like the kind of person who would listen to the parliament and the secret police obediently. Not only is Tang Xiaoxing your most intimate student, her father is also the captain of Firefly. You should understand the dire consequences of the incident.

“You clearly knew that Cheng Xuansu wanted to arrest Tang Xiaoxing because Speaker Cui Lingfeng was dealing with Captain Tang Dingyuan. It was the life-and-death competition between the ‘No. 1’ and the ‘No. 2’, which was likely to be an event that would completely tear Firefly apart! For you personally, ‘betraying your student’ would also be a stain that was never going to be erased! However, when Cheng Xuansu came to you asking you to craft a piece of magical equipment to deal with your student, you simply accepted the task without questioning it?”

“I—I didn’t have a choice!” Professor Luo De’s eyes and lips were shivering. The wrinkles on his face seemed ten times deeper instantly, making him look like a burnt dry tree. “Cheng Xuansu said that… Captain Tang and his conspirators were guilty of high treason. For the future of Firefly, I had to cooperate with them to serve the country and the fate of our hundred and thirty million compatriots!”

“High treason?” Li Yao frowned. “Just because Captain Tang is in favor of joining the Star Glory Federation, he is a traitor?”

Professor Luo De’s eyes suddenly turned very weird. “What federation? It has nothing to do with joining the Star Glory Federation. Cheng Xuansu said that Captain Tang has defected and degenerated into an Immortal Cultivator. Apparently, he was trying to contact the Black Wind Fleet in secret, hoping to send our coordinates to the expedition army of the Imperium so that it could teleport over instantly!”

“What?” Li Yao was dumbfounded. Thousands of thoughts were bursting out like fireworks in his mind. Calming himself down, he asked, “Captain Tang is an Immortal Cultivator? How is that possible? How does Cheng Xuansu know? What evidence does she have?”

“Naturally, I was not in a position to see the specific evidence,” Professor Luo De said. “However, according to Cheng Xuansu, Firefly is in peril. Captain Tang lost the firm belief to restore Star Ocean Republic a long time ago and slowly degenerated into a pessimist and a capitulator. For his own life, he wouldn’t hesitate to join anybody.

“Then, if he has to choose a target to rely on, of course, the more powerful the target is, the better. Although the Star Glory Federation boasts some influence at the edge of the cosmos, how can it be compared to the Imperium of True Human Beings? Captain Tang intends to resolve the problem once and for all. Naturally, surrendering to the Imperium is the better option!

“Therefore, a long time ago, Captain Tang’s belief was corrupted, and he turned from a Cultivator into an Immortal Cultivator. Not only that, he also raised a huge batch of Immortal Cultivators on Firefly in secret. He planned to completely seize the super starship for the Imperium of True Human Beings when the time was right!

“Also, Cheng Xuansu also claimed that the ‘Election Observation Delegation’ that Captain Tang sent to the Star Glory Federation was mixed with a lot of Immortal Cultivators. If their scheme worked out, it was very possible that the expedition army of the Imperium would immediately show up right in front of us! Therefore, my cooperation would save not only Firefly but also our ally, the Star Glory Federation!

“It was exactly because of the dire consequences that she described that I agreed to cooperate with her and helped her craft a batch of super-minute magical equipment.”

Li Yao widened his eyes and stared at every wrinkle on Professor Luo De’s face without blinking, trying to find a hint of deception, but he found absolutely nothing.

If Professor Luo De was not an actor that was even more professional than Li Yao, he was very likely to be speaking the truth.

But Li Yao was still confused about one thing. “You believed everything Cheng Xuansu said when there was no proof at all? Did it never occur to you that it was possibly a setup that the parliament imposed on Captain Tang Dingyuan? After all, your parliament and your technical staff on the starship haven’t been in the best relationship!”

“Of course, I didn’t believe what Cheng Xuansu said!” Professor Luo De said. “Everybody knows that she is Speaker Cui Lingfeng’s lackey. The technical staff who are devoted to technology have always thought little of the paranoid secret police.

“However, Cheng Xuansu didn’t come to me alone. She was here with Chief Mate Ding, who endorsed her every word.”

“Chief Mate Ding?” Li Yao thought for a moment. “You mean Ding Zhengyang, the general commander of the deck floor of Firefly; Captain Tang’s trusted subordinate, assistant, and first agent; and the No. 3 person on the starship only secondary to Speaker Cui and Captain Tang?”

“Exactly,” Professor Luo De said. “Everybody knows that Chief Mate Ding is Captain Tang’s most loyal comrade. He has helped Captain Tang fight against the parliament for decades. During the few conflicts between the bridge and the parliament, he always led the charge!

“After we discovered the Star Glory Federation, Chief Mate Ding was the first one who proposed joining the Star Glory Federation. He was even earlier and more resolute than Captain Tang!

“Also, Chief Mate Ding belongs to the technical staff. He was promoted to the general commander of the deck floor step by step from a sailor at the bottom level in the engine compartment. He knows every detail about every corner of Firefly. He is a real expert commander of starships. The technical staff have always been quite fond of him!

“He personally told me that Captain Tang had defected and degenerated into an Immortal Cultivator!

“He dislikes the fellows in the parliament, but whether or not to join the Star Glory Federation did not matter. What mattered was to immediately eradicate the internal Immortal Cultivators on Firefly!

“I didn’t trust Cheng Xuansu, but I couldn’t find any reason not to trust Chief Mate Ding. That is why I helped them produce the batch of tracking and localization magical equipment!”

Li Yao took a deep breath. The brilliance inside his eyes was shining like mysterious stars. “Let me guess. Captain Tang Dingyuan has been arrested by the special investigators for secret interrogations, and it’s not like that the MPs can pilot the starship. Therefore, the guy who has assumed Captain Tang’s post and power is ‘Chief Mate Ding’, right?”

“Yes,” Professor Luo De said. “The chief mate is the first agent of the captain after all. According to the Space Voyage Regulations, when accidents happen to the captain, the chief mate should immediately fill in for him. It is true that Chief Mate Ding Zhengyang is controlling Firefly as the acting captain!”

Chapter 1608 - 'Stick'

Li Yao stared at Professor Luo De. His telepathic thoughts crawled into his brain through the professor's pupils as he perceived the quakes of his every brain nerve carefully. It was not until he gazed at the professor for half a minute that he finally snapped his fingers and retracted the bluish rays, which were only half a millimeter away from the professor's eyeball.

Professor Luo De took a deep breath in relief. His central nerves had regained control of all the pores on his face, and he was finally able to squeeze the cold sweat out of his forehead.

"Alright. I'll believe what you said just now. I'll believe that you are truly ignorant of the situation and were merely a tool that somebody else took advantage of."

Still staring at Professor Luo De in the eyes, Li Yao said coldly, "But tell me this. Are you absolutely certain that Captain Tang has defected and degenerated into an Immortal Cultivator?"

Professor Luo De's eyeballs shivered quickly, with intense confusion beaming out. He struggled to reply. "I don't know."

"What if I told you that it is very possible that Captain Tang has been framed and that the real Immortal Cultivator is one of Speaker Cui Lingfeng, Cheng Xuansu and Ding Zhengyang, if not all of them? Do you believe that you have been fooled by them and that everything you did will very likely cause Firefly to fall into the hands of the Immortal

Cultivators completely, leading to the early arrival of the Black Wind Fleet?”

Professor Luo De’s eyes immediately bulged, and the blood streaks inside his eyes were almost spurting out like fire. “No!”

“I also cannot show you the critical evidence. I cannot even tell you who I really am. I can only assure you that I am also a Cultivator, and I want to prevent the Immortal Cultivators from arriving! However, in order to stop the Immortal Cultivators, I’ll require your cooperation!”

Professor Luo De hesitated for a long time before he struggled to reply, “I—I don’t know. What do you want me to do? I am just a regular refiner!”

“I know.” Li Yao smiled. “What I’m asking you to do is very simple. You are the best super-minute carving specialist on Firefly, and you have profound research on the production and the dissection of tiny magical equipment. That’s why the extraordinarily-made scarlet ball was delivered to you for study after it was discovered, right?”

Professor Luo De nodded. “Yes. So what?”

Unhurried, Li Yao continued. “The scarlet ball, being a very important exhibit, will certainly not be kept in your lab for long. After you complete the analysis, it will be delivered to the more crucial big shots, won’t it?”

“It is true that Cheng Xuansu requested that I finish the analysis report of the scarlet ball as soon as possible,” Professor Luo De said. “She said that she would have someone pick it up later. As for exactly whom the report will be delivered to, I don’t have the slightest idea.”

“Alright,” Li Yao said. “I’ll give control of your hands back to you. You will continue writing the analysis report exactly as you usually do your job. Then, you will dismantle and assemble the scarlet ball once in front of me with your regular methods.

“Right. There must be experiment logs of your daily refining in this place, right? Retrieve all the videos. I want to see the appearance of your hands when you are doing super high-precision carving.

“Let me take a look… The jade chip cabinet over there is perfect in size. After you finish everything, I’ll stuff you into the cabinet and lock your veins and nerves with barriers. Then, I’ll cover your entire body with a metal membrane that can block all the spiritual energy and heat detection but will leave sufficient air for you. You will be able to neither move nor scream for three days and three nights. But don’t worry. It is absolutely normal. In three days, you will regain your freedom, and there won’t be any sequelae at all.

“By then, if Captain Tang and your student Tang Xiaoxing have proved innocent, and Cheng Xuansu and her lot are the actual Immortal Cultivators, I will certainly testify for you that you are not related to the whole event and that you only almost made a huge mistake because of the treachery of Cheng Xuansu and Ding Zhengyang!

“What I’m asking you to do is as simple as that. Do you agree to do that?”

Every wrinkle on Professor Luo De’s face was twitching violently. After a long hesitation, he still found it hard to believe. “Chief—Chief Mate Ding is truly an Immortal Cultivator?”

“I don’t know, either,” Li Yao replied honestly. “But as long as you cooperate with me, we will be able to figure out exactly who the Immortal Cultivator is.”

His words moved Professor Luo De, who nodded slowly and said, “Alright. I’ll cooperate with you.”

Professor Luo De finished the analysis report in two hours. Then, he dismantled and assembled the scarlet ball carefully one time.

In the meantime, by studying the videos of his refining, the experiment logs, and the posture in which he wrote the analysis report, Li Yao basically figured out Professor Luo De’s style of refining, hand movements, language habits, and so on.

Two hours later, when the old officer of the secret police knocked on the door, only one ‘Professor Luo De’ appeared to be in the refining workshop.

Of course, it was the one that Li Yao was playing.

“Professor Luo, have you completed the analysis report?”

The old officer stood in front of Li Yao respectfully, not having the faintest doubt at all.

“Yes. This is a real masterpiece, an extraordinary work of art, a priceless treasure!”

Li Yao waved his hands crazily in front of the secret officer, as if he were greatly fascinated. “Look at it. Such delicate seven-layered-tower structure, such amazing super-tiny carving techniques. This is truly—”

“Well, Professor Luo.” The secret officer coughed to interrupt him. “If you have completed the analysis report, I’m afraid that I have to take the item and report away now. This is very urgent and concerns the safety of Firefly.”

“Fine!” Li Yao sniffed, as if he were very regretful. After thinking for a moment, he asked, “After you have checked it, can you return the item so that I can continue studying it? It is too beautiful, delicate, and unbelievable. I’m going to study every rune array on the item carefully and the different materials employed in every layer!”

“About that…” Hesitating for a moment, the secret officer nodded and said, “Professor Luo, you are one of the best specialists in super-minute carving. I believe that the scarlet ball will be sent back to you for further study eventually.”

“That’s good!” Li Yao pushed the scarlet ball over to him on the desk.

But this time, it had been installed into a cylinder with a metal ring on both ends. The cylinder was filled with bright blue liquids.

“I do not want to completely ruin its structure,” Li Yao explained. “However, the rune arrays preserved internally are too precise and mysterious. The general ‘blockage gel’ may not be enough to entirely prevent it from sending and receiving telepathic thoughts. Therefore, it’s best that the item is sealed by my ‘super strong gel’ and ‘wave blocker’. Be careful. Do not drop it on the ground or make it shake too violently.”

The old officer nodded. He picked up the metal cylinder with both hands dutifully and took it away together with the jade chip that stored the analysis report.

Li Yao’s face retained the expression of fondness and deep regret until three seconds after the door of the refining workshop was closed again. Then, he put on his normal expression and took out his tactical crystal processor, triggering the light beam.

Bo… Bo… Bo…

A tiny red spot was moving slowly at the center of the light beam. As the bright redness spread into the surroundings incessantly, the precise structure of all the pathways and cabins around, as well as the passers-by, were scanned without exception!

Moreover, based on the power of the heartbeat and breath of the passersby, the crystal processor could even basically infer whether they were civilians or Cultivators, civil officers or well-trained soldiers!

As the red spot slowly approached the core, the heart of Firefly was gradually unveiled in front of Li Yao. No secrets were kept from him anymore!

Naturally, such powerful scanning and localization rune arrays could never be carved into a scarlet ball that was less than three millimeters in diameter. Li Yao would not have been able to achieve that even if his refining arts were three times more professional.

Therefore, he had simply installed the scanning lens and the localization rune arrays into the metal cylinder that ‘sealed’ the scarlet ball.

The metal cylinder was the size of a baby’s arm. It was enough for him to hide all the chips and rune arrays that he needed as well as the marrow crystal of high energy levels.

Yes. The scarlet ball was merely bait, a piece of ‘seemingly awesome’ magical equipment. However, because its size was too small, the marrow crystal stored at the center was as insignificant as a grain of dust and could not unleash sufficient spiritual energy. Therefore, even if the item did detect tremendous intelligence, it would have been extremely unlikely for the item to send the information to the outside world by piercing through the thick shell of the starship.

The ultimate purpose of implanting such a scarlet ball into Tang Xiaoxing’s throat was to deliver the metal cylinder, which was big enough, into the enemy’s heart!

Li Yao sat on Professor Luo De’s swivel chair comfortably. Placing his feet on the desk and softly whistling, he finally turned on the communication channel.

“The ‘stick’ has been sent.” Li Yao smiled. “With the delicacy and flawlessness of the scarlet ball that I crafted, together with Professor Luo’s analysis report, I believe that the ‘stick’ will certainly be sent to the guy who is behind the entire scheme. It is even possible that the enemy will take the ‘stick’ to Captain Tang in their paranoia and interrogate him about the information concerning the scarlet ball.

“After all, we are a force other than the Immortal Cultivators, Firefly, and the Star Glory Federation. Absolutely nobody is aware of our existence!

“If someone is behind this scheme, it is very possible that they will consider the people who are trying to rescue Tang Xiaoxing as Captain Tang’s trump card. They will certainly try their best to figure out the truth about the trump card.

“Of course, if Captain Tang is behind the whole scheme himself, he will certainly be very interested in the scarlet ball of mysterious backgrounds, too.

“Then, not only will we be able to figure out the map of Firefly’s heart through the scanning lens and the probe magical equipment hidden inside the ‘stick’, it is also very possible that we will hear some interesting secrets via the detectaphone chips!”

Chapter 1609 - Professional Enough…

“Excellent!” Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar’s voice echoed in the communication channel.

Back in the Ancient Sages Sector, Ba Xiaoyu had always been a sloppy, rogue warrior who acted on his own. Sometimes, to serve justice—say, when investigating the evil criminals such as the Black Devil Cult—he would often have to camouflage himself and sneak into the enemy’s nest. It was a business that he was quite familiar with. One might even say that he was the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator of the twelve experts from the Ancient Sages Sector who was the best at the arts of infiltration other than Long Yangjun and Li Yao.

“We have basically finished exploring the external defenses and weaknesses of Firefly, and we have located the most suitable place to attack. As long as you figure out the location of the internal critical parts and the distribution of soldiers, we will be able to march into the starship unstoppably, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture!”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. “So fast?”

Firefly was made of hundreds of starships, large and small, that were connected together. Its external structure was as complicated as a maze. Also, the experts of the Ancient Sages Sector had barely fought in the vacuum in space before. Li Yao had expected them to take at least half a day to finish the reconnaissance!

“We’ve got Heiye Lan!” Ba Xiaoyu said. “Don’t forget that she attacked Firefly almost ten years ago. If ‘Blazing Tyrannosaur’ Ding Lingdang hadn’t stopped her, I’m afraid that she would’ve long conquered Firefly. Naturally, she knows the fatal weaknesses of the starship.

“Of course, we didn’t inform Heiye Lan of our entire plan, but after she learned that we are going to assault the key part of Firefly, was there any reason for her not to help us make plans and contribute all her wisdom?”

“Everything is absolutely fine on our side. But as for you, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture…” Meng Chixin’s thoughtful voice came over. “It is indeed a tedious task to sneak into Firefly in secret and pretend to be Professor Luo De. If the battle succeeds in the end, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, you will certainly be the greatest contributor!”

Li Yao blinked and said, “It’s all thanks to Lord Wang’s thorough planning and the vivid skin mask that he has carefully prepared for me. I am merely carrying out his plan exactly as he said. I cannot take the credit of the greatest contributor.

“Besides, Professor Luo De is best known for his nonchalance and his weird temper. He is quite taciturn and unfriendly, and he has been locked in his own refining workshop to study for years. He barely sets foot in the outside world. Other people do not visit him in his refining workshop often, either. If I pretend to be such a guy for only a couple of minutes, it will be practically impossible for me to be seen through even if I want to be!

“However, in case anything goes wrong, I’m going to stay here and continue pretending to be Professor Luo De. If a student or a fellow refiner drops by but fails to find him, our clever trick will be ruined!

“All in all, the real infiltration and rescue operation will depend on you fellow Cultivators.”

“Rest assured.” Ba Xiaoyu smiled. “We have nine Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators here. Won’t it be hilarious if we cannot break into a prison and rescue a few people after learning the structure of the starship’s core and the distribution of soldiers?”

Li Yao realized that it did make sense. Different from the past, he was not by himself this time and had the support of the most deluxe assault team in perhaps the hundreds of lightyears nearby. Did he really need to attack in person with such a lineup?

Therefore, he might as well work as the ‘magical equipment director’ comfortably without thinking about anything else!

“Then, I’ll be waiting for the good news from you, fellow Cultivators.” Li Yao smiled. “I’ll provide remote support with magical equipment for you, and the latest map of the core area will be updated when anything changes and sent to your tactical crystal processors immediately.

“With your capabilities, fellow Cultivators, it should be more than simple to rescue Captain Tang. However, I hope that we all keep our purpose in mind. We must not make a huge fuss or deal irreversible damage to Firefly. We are here to save, not to kill. We are here to gain the government-in-exile’s trust, not hostility! If we really turn Firefly upside down, we might catch the attention of the Star Glory Federation, which will go against the original purpose of the mission!”

“Of course,” Meng Chixin said solemnly. “The operation will be simple, but the critical requirement of the mission is to rescue the prisoners quietly without alarming anyone and without exposing the real capabilities of the twelve of us. Other than Captain Tang and the few of his fellows, it would be best if nobody else learned of our existence. No blood should be shed if possible. Try to keep a low profile as much as possible!”

“Yes. Keep a low file as much as possible!”

Li Yao talked with everybody for a while longer before he cut off the communication.

“Hu…”

He warmed up his body and stretched his arms comfortably. Snapping his fingers, he made himself a hot cup of tea through remote manipulation techniques.

It felt great that the only thing he needed to do was planning, and a bunch of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators would be leading the charge and accomplishing the mission for him. It seemed that he had to change his mindset and his habits as soon as possible. He was now a magical equipment director and an off-duty clerk who worked in an office. The tiresome work such as fighting and killing should simply be given to other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators!

Li Yao sipped the tea in great comfort. Then, whistling the old songs from more than a hundred years, he continued browsing Professor Luo De’s refining logs lightheartedly.

A lot of the refining arts from the center of the cosmos were worth studying, too!

Right then, his eardrum was vibrating softly again.

It was Long Yangjun.

Li Yao frowned and softly said, “What’s going on?”

“Nothing’s going on,” Long Yangjun said with a smile. “There’s no need for you to be so secretive, either. Right now, everybody is doing investigation separately. I’m using the private communication channel, so they won’t hear anything.

“I’m only calling you to say ‘you’re welcome’. I did not do any planning at all. Weren’t you the one who came up with the whole scheme in only one hour? Tsk, tsk, tsk. The great heroes are truly worthy of their name. Before, you appeared to be silly every day, and I found it hard to understand how exactly you became the ‘dominator of the three Sectors’. Only now, as you’ve revealed part of your capabilities, could I begin to imagine the charisma of Vulture Li Yao that you had a hundred years ago!”

“Wait!” Li Yao spat out the tea leaves. “What do you mean by ‘silly every day’?”

“Not important,” Long Yangjun said. “There’s one thing that I would like to figure out. Why were you so sure that no surveillance cameras were installed inside Professor Luo De’s refining workshop? If anybody was monitoring him in real time, wouldn’t your whole plan have fallen apart?”

“There can’t be any surveillance cameras,” Li Yao declared confidently. “No master of refining could ever tolerate their procedures of refining being monitored the whole time. It concerns not only confidentiality but also… their pride.”

“Pride?” Long Yangjun was slightly dazed. “I don’t understand.”

“Of course you don’t. This is something that only the refiners share.” Li Yao thought for a moment and said, “Let me put it this way. For refiners, especially the seasoned refiners who have gained enough expertise, every piece of magical equipment that they craft is like their own baby. So, the question becomes this. Would you install a surveillance camera above your bed to allow somebody else to monitor the whole process of you making a baby?”

“That explains a lot.” Long Yangjun was deep in thought. “That is why you chose Professor Luo De as the breaching point.”

“Exactly,” Li Yao said calmly. “I’m not a man who likes boasting, but when it comes to crawling through ventilation tubes, in the thousand square lightyears nearby, who could claim to be the best if I said that I’m only the second best? I know after only a quick glance what ventilation tube can be crawled through and what ones cannot be!

“All the tubes in the areas around Speaker Cui Lingfeng, Captain Tang Dingyuan, and the other important people are heavily defended. Not just a normal human being, even a mutated cockroach wouldn’t be able to crawl in!

“Professor Luo De is the only one who is a relatively crucial person but has a working workshop that is outside of the core area. Where should I have begun from if not this place? It’s simple logic!”

“It seems that it was the right decision to cooperate with you.” Long Yangjun smiled. “You are quite professional at what you are doing.”

“Then, let’s hope that you can be professional, too,” Li Yao said. “You must get the situation under control. They are all used to killing and slaughtering in the Ancient Sages Sector. It will be very easy for them to turn the starship into an ocean of blood. This time, you must keep them cool and contained! Do not go on a rampage while they are on a killing spree or simply blow up Firefly after summoning their Colossi, in which case we will be screwed!”

“Rest assured,” Long Yangjun said. “Nothing can possibly go wrong on our end. You just sit in the refining workshop comfortably and enjoy a nice cup of tea, or do some training if you are in the mood. Just send the map and the distribution of soldiers in the core area to us and wait for the good news!”

Li Yao smiled. He was about to reply when somebody knocked on the door.

Li Yao was slightly dazed. Then, he noticed something abnormal on the surveillance light beam nearby. The red spot that was supposed to be moving toward the core area had returned!

What the heck?

Li Yao swallowed. Glancing around, he did not notice any loophole. He thought for a moment and hid most of the Cosmos Rings on his body below Professor Luo De’s desk, before he finally opened the door.

It was the old police just now, followed by four strong, ferociously-looking men in black combat suits, who stared at him without blinking their eyes.

“Anything wrong?”

There was obvious anger on his face, as if he were in quite a bad mood after his work was interrupted.

“Professor Luo,” the old police officer said respectfully, “your analysis report has been sent to the superiors. Speaker Cui believes that the issue is very important and would like to hear you explain the mysteries of the scarlet ball in person. May you accompany us to Speaker Cui?”

“…” Li Yao.

“Professor Luo, is there something the matter?”

“No, there isn’t. Let me go to the toilet first.”

“By all means. Please, Professor Luo.”

“Why are the two bears cramming into my toilet, too? What are they doing? Why are they staring at my penis?”

“You must not misunderstand them, Professor Luo,” the old officer said. “This is just a tradition. I trust that you won’t mind it since this concerns our national security.”

Chapter 1610 - Speaker Cui!

Surrounded by four muscular men in black in the middle, Li Yao walked to a vacuum tube shuttle that was used for internal transportation on the starship through a narrow pathway under the lead of the old officer.

His face seemed to be tranquil and even slightly impatient, but behind his disguise was a tiny bit of anxiety.

Li Yao was not worried that the enemy had already seen through his disguise, but he was not confident that they would never see through it. He had not made enough preparations before he pretended to be Professor Luo De. It was impossible for him to be perfect. If he had stayed in the refining workshop, he might have been able to fool those who had come to pay a visit, but if he was to face the Speaker of the government-in-exile, God only knew when he would give himself away!

Li Yao touched the lines on his fingertip. His fingerprint and iris had been changed into Professor Luo De’s, but there was no way that he could pass blood and gene tests.

He could not hope that the enemy’s security measures were not so rigorous.

Naturally, Li Yao was not concerned about his own safety. He was still hiding the Cosmos Rings that stored the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and the Colossus inside his body through secret techniques, and he could summon them for a huge fight anytime. However, the last thing he wanted to happen right now was a huge fight. He was hoping to bind Firefly and the Ancient Sages Sector to the tank that was the Star Glory Federation so that everybody could deal with the Imperium side by side. He did not want the three parties to be mired in delirious mayhem before the army of the Imperium arrived!

Calm down. It might not be so serious. I'm only going to interpret the mysteries of the tracking magical equipment for Cui Lingfeng, the Speaker of the government-in-exile. It is also a chance for me to observe Cui Lingfeng. Maybe the trip is not going to be as bad as I imagined!

Two indifferent-looking female officers were standing next to the vacuum shuttle. Each of them was holding a fingerprint scanner. They asked Li Yao to put his ten fingers on the machine for scanning. One of them also searched Li Yao's body up and down with a glowing stick. Two Cosmos Rings were found by the officer, both of which had been taken off Professor Luo De's fingers by Li Yao earlier, thankfully!

"Professor Luo, please allow us to take care of your Cosmos Rings for now. They will be given back to you when you return."

The old officer opened the door and slightly bowed, extending his hand toward Li Yao.

Li Yao sniffed. With slight dissatisfaction, he bashed the two Cosmos Rings into the officer's palm before he bent his back and got onto the shuttle.

The four bear-like officers of the secret police crammed in from the two sides. Altogether, they weighed more than five hundred kilograms. The entire shuttle was filled up. Li Yao's slim, hunched body, being squeezed to the center by them, was like a toothpick in the middle of four eggs.

The shuttle had been specially modified. It was pitch black outside of the window. Even telepathic thoughts could not be sent out. The vehicle was running very steadily, too, making it impossible to tell whether it was rushing at a high speed or absolutely still the whole time.

Li Yao counted in his heart silently. One minute and twenty-nine seconds after he entered the sealed shuttle, the blockage between the passengers' side and the cockpit was suddenly lifted. A passenger seated in the front slowly turned around.

The man's face was particularly broad. It was also square and healthily red, making him look handsome and dominating. He was wearing a mustard-seed, dark-silver protective suit made of such rare materials that even Li Yao had never seen before. He was sitting there like a king.

It was exactly Cui Lingfeng, the Speaker of the government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic and the nominal supreme leader of Firefly, whose appearance Tang Xiaoxing had described for Li Yao before!

The most powerful man on Firefly was right next to him. Li Yao's heart was beating one percent faster than before. Fourteen plans in which he could control Speaker Cui in three seconds popped up in his head.

However, after considering carefully for a moment, he still decided to wait and watch. The situation was still unclear. There was no need to act recklessly.

“Speaker Cui.”

Li Yao pretended to be slightly dazed and nodded unhumbly.

Professor Luo De was a master of refining who could be counted as an expert. He was an arrogant and taciturn guy, too. Therefore, there was no need for Li Yao to respond too earnestly when he saw the leader of the parliament.

As he expected, Speaker Cui did not care about Li Yao's indifferent attitude at all. His short, thick hands were playing with the 'stick' that Li Yao had carefully crafted. Then, he handed it back and smiled. "We're in the middle of an emergency. So, we'll just have the meeting in the shuttle. I'm told that you are a top specialist in terms of super-minute carving. You were the one who analyzed the tracking magical equipment. Is the item's precision and performance as high as you wrote in the analysis report?"

"Of course!" Li Yao snatched the 'stick' and caressed it in his hands affectionately. Infinite passionate beamed out of his eyes as he said, "It is much more than a piece of tracking magical equipment; it is a super tiny gadget with tracking, localization, and scanning functions. The materials it is made of, the almost five hundred kind of rune arrays it adopts, the seven-layered-tower architecture, and the distribution and organization of all the rune arrays… almost all the details are impeccable!"

Speaker Cui did not stop Li Yao from giving his speech. Therefore, Li Yao could only go on explaining it feverishly, his saliva darting out. He even dissected the few layers of the metal shell at the periphery in person and then assembled them again. Thankfully, it was a piece of magical equipment that he had crafted himself, and he had carefully studied Professor Luo De's style of refining just now, which allowed him to conduct the whole analysis through similar approaches.

Naturally, after that, the enemy would be even less suspicious about his identity. After all, such professional dissection and assembly of super-minute magical equipment could never have been completed so fluently and flawlessly if he was not a great expert in the field.

“So to speak, it is true that the super-tiny magical equipment is extremely sophisticated?”

Tapping the rail, Speaker Cui said thoughtfully, “Then, according to your judgement, Professor Luo De, who else is capable of producing such a piece of magical equipment other than yourself?”

“None, myself included,” Li Yao explained. “It is not about the proficiency of techniques and technologies but about the difference of materials and style.

“If asked to produce a piece of tracking, localization, and scanning magical equipment of similar size and functionality, perhaps another few refiners and I would manage to accomplish the task in a couple of days. However, the materials we adopt, the rune arrays we carve, the distribution of the rune arrays, and so on would be highly different from what is on this particular piece of magical equipment.

“Many materials adopted by the magical equipment might not be found on Firefly and even in the Star Glory Federation. The designing principle and the spiritual energy circuits of many rune arrays are also the opposite of our style and even theory in the past.

“I dare say that the magical equipment was not crafted on Firefly by any Cultivator on board.”

Professor Luo De frequently said ‘I dare say’, which Li Yao had copied.

Speaker Cui nodded and continued his questioning. “Then, who do you think is the most likely producer of the magical equipment? The Imperium, the federation, or the Covenant Alliance?”

“I don’t know.” Li Yao shook his head and pretended to reply dutifully. “Based on the technological communication with the Star Glory Federation in the past couple of years, I’m sure that the magical equipment does not fit in the style of the Star Glory Federation. However, we’ve been away from the center of the cosmos for too long to know the latest achievements of refining in the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance. Without further study, it will be hard to tell which of them crafted the magical equipment.”

“Understood.” Speaker Cui crossed his hands. The sharpest brilliance suddenly beamed out of his eyes. He put on a warm smile and said, “Thank you for your interpretation, Professor Luo De. We’re here.”

The door of the vacuum shuttle opened without a sound. Outside of the shuttle turned out to be a fully-enclosed pathway made of soft metal. Passing through the pathway, Li Yao found himself in a secret chamber that was full of light beams and surveillance magical equipment. Many officers and specialists of the secret police were busy working. At the center of the room, the guy who was sitting majestically in deep thought was… Speaker Cui!

Li Yao was slightly dazed. Looking at ‘Speaker Cui’ next to him again, he discovered that the guy’s facial muscles were twisting weirdly into a new appearance that was similar to Speaker Cui except that it was much younger and sharper!

Cracking noises were echoing inside the body of ‘Speaker Cui’. His whole body instantly expanded, and explosive muscles protruded from the bottom of the protective suit one piece after another.

The ‘Speaker Cui’ bowed to Li Yao and smiled. “Do excuse me, Professor Luo De.”

Rapidly blinking, Li Yao immediately understood what was going on. What had happened just now was another test. It did make sense. Although the guy was merely the head of a government-in-exile, he was managing a population of more than a hundred million after all and could definitely be considered a big shot by any standard. How could such a person get so close to him so easily?

Judging from the bulging muscles and the rising temples of Speaker Cui’s impersonator, he must be a rather tough battle-type Cultivator. If the fake Professor Luo De was truly an assassin and attacked him abruptly just now, it was very possible that the assassin would have been captured on the spot.

In the worst case-scenario, even if the assassin’s attempt succeeded, the only victim would have been a stand-in. The real Speaker Cui would still be entirely unharmed.

It seemed that this ‘Speaker Cui’ was quite paranoid. He was prudent enough when he was only dealing with an old, strengthless refiner.

Li Yao was wondering why he had been summoned there. It was definitely much more than simply interpreting the scarlet ball, which could have been done remotely through a video chat. It would have been unnecessary to bring him there.

Thinking quickly, Li Yao eyed the surroundings without alarming anyone, especially the intimidating-looking fellows among the bodyguards and the officers of the secret police around Speaker Cui.

His eyes soon stopped on a tall, slender woman.

There were three bloody crystal cameras in what should've been her left eye. Such a distinctive feature could only belong to Cheng Xuansu, the leader of the secret police of the Internal Affairs Division.

Li Yao's eyes passed Cheng Xuansu quickly.

But Cheng Xuansu stared at him for a long time, especially his smooth, fresh hands.

Pretending that he did not notice it, Li Yao frowned and looked at Speaker Cui in a daze. “Speaker Cui, do you want me to repeat what I said in the shuttle?”

“That will be unnecessary. As expected of the best super-minute carving specialist on Firefly, your interpretation and operations are quite spectacular. I was watching a live stream of it just now.”

The real Speaker Cui was sunnier and more outspoken. He smiled at Li Yao's resistance and mockery before he walked up to Li Yao with his hands behind his back. “Today, we've invited you here for something else, Professor Luo De.”

Chapter 1611 - Unexpected Appointment

Looking at Li Yao, Cui Lingfeng pointed at a piece of magical equipment with complicated crystal processors and units and said, “I would like Professor Luo De to help me take a look at this ‘polygraph’. Just like how you analyzed the tracking and localization magical equipment, I want you to completely dismantle and scrutinize it.”

Li Yao was slightly dazed, but before he opened his mouth, Cheng Xuansu, the head of the secret police who was standing next to him, asked in astonishment, “Speaker, what’s the meaning of this?”

There was apparent shock on her face. It appeared that Cui Lingfeng had made the decision only just now, and even his most trusted subordinate did not get a word in advance.

“Today,” Cui Lingfeng said, “we are going to hold the most important trial. We cannot keep Captain Tang in prison for too long. The riot outside is getting larger and larger. The more we postpone it, the more likely the whole of Firefly will be mired in chaos!

“We have to reach a conclusion as quickly as possible. That’s why I’m here to speak to Captain Tang in person.

“However, your interrogation a few days back offered no satisfactory answers. Captain Tang’s performance has been immaculate. It has been bothering me which procedure went wrong. Today, we are finally crossing the line and applying a polygraph to the captain of Firefly

“However, is it possible that somebody played tricks on the polygraph a long time ago? If even the polygraph detects nothing abnormal, we will be caught in a very passive position!”

A weird expression flashed on Cheng Xuansu’s face. “The specialists of the Internal Affairs Division have already performed a full examination on the polygraph. It is absolutely good! They are all experts in that regard, and it is what Professor Luo De is least good at. He is an outsider after all!”

“What I’m appreciating right now is the fact that he is an outsider!” Cui Lingfeng countered. “Xuansu, has it ever occurred to you that, if Captain Tang turned into an Immortal Cultivator since a long time ago and is indeed up to a great scheme, how deep and far must his hands have reached? Is it possible for him to have bribed certain workers in the Internal Affairs Division or asked the specialists of the Internal Affairs Division to play tricks on the polygraph?

“After all, Captain Tang belongs to the technical staff. The specialists of the Internal Affairs Division are technical staff, too. Even if they are doing something in secret, it will be practically impossible for us to notice anything.”

Cheng Xuansu’s face was gloomy. “That’s—that’s impossible! I trust the loyalty of every member of the Internal Affairs Division!”

“It’s a very likely possibility,” Cui Lingfeng said coldly. “Xuansu, do not underestimate our enemy. You of all people should know what Captain Tang is capable of! In another few years, he will seize all power on Firefly! Would it have been strange at all that he bought the support of a few technical officers and refiners of the Internal Affairs Division?

“Therefore, I’ve been pondering how exactly we should resolve the dilemma over the last couple of days. The critical problem right now is to find a person that we can trust. Eventually, I found the answer—an outsider!

“Captain Tang definitely has the capability to bribe certain fellows of the Internal Affairs Division, and he also has the motivation to play tricks on the polygraph. Any specialists could be an Immortal Cultivator. In only a few days, it is hard for us to decide who is trustworthy and who is not.

“We can invite a specialist of the Internal Affairs Division here right now and have the polygraph examined on the spot, but if the specialist turned into an Immortal Cultivator a long time ago, it is absolutely possible for him to conceal the truth about the polygraph from us.

“Professor Luo De, on the other hand, is different. Before Captain Tang was arrested by us, he was completely an outsider who had nothing to do with the critical magical equipment such as the ‘polygraph’.

“The idea to ask him to examine the polygraph occurred to me only when I read his analysis report just now. Until Professor Luo De stood right in front of me, I never told anybody else. Therefore, there is absolutely no risk that the secret has been leaked. You all thought that he was invited here to interpret the scarlet ball analysis.

“Therefore, as long as Captain Tang does not boast the technique of prophecy, it is impossible that he could have foreseen that Professor Luo De would be involved and bribe him in advance, isn’t it?

“Besides, didn’t you run a thorough investigation on Professor Luo De when you visited him last time and proved that he is not related to Captain Tang whatsoever and his loyalty to the Star Ocean Republic is unquestionable? Who is a better candidate than him?”

Cheng Xuansu turned her face. A drop of cold sweat popped up on the half forehead that Cui Lingfeng could not see. “But Professor Luo De does not know the first thing about the polygraph.”

“I don’t think that it is necessarily true.” Looking at Li Yao’s hands, Cui Lingfeng smiled and said, “I believe that the arts of refining definitely have something in common when they have been trained to the highest level. The difficulty in analyzing such a huge polygraph should be much lower than the difficulty in analyzing a piece of tracking and localization magical equipment the size of millet. Show the production and maintenance manuals of the polygraph to Professor Luo De. Even if his judgement may be flawed, I still would like to take the chance!

“Professor Luo De, what do you say?”

Cui Lingfeng, Cheng Xuansu, and a number of officers of the secret police all stared at Li Yao with weird, complicated expressions.

Tilting his head and thinking for a while, Li Yao intentionally slowed down his voice and said, “I can have a try, but I’ll need some time to read the production and maintenance manuals of the polygraph, and I cannot guarantee that I will find any abnormalities.”

“It’s alright. I can wait.” Cui Lingfeng made a gesture toward Cheng Xuansu. “Bring Professor Luo De all the files related to the polygraph and make him a good pot of tea. It is my understanding that Professor Luo De’s favorite tea is ‘Green Dragon Ball’, right?”

“It’s the ‘Purple Dragon Ball,” Li Yao replied without raising his head.

“Should we escort Professor Luo De to go back to fetch his personal refining equipment?” Cheng Xuansu asked in a low voice. “All the masters of refining are used to their own tools and magical equipment.”

“Whatever magical equipment Professor Luo De needs, just have some bring the gear here for him.” Cui Lingfeng sat majestically right across Li Yao like an overwhelming mountain. “But Professor Luo De must stay here within my eyesight, not to be away for so much as one second, in case somebody else learns the news and does anything to him.”

“I’m fine.” Li Yao glanced at Cheng Xuansu and waved his hands. “The super-minute carving knives that I’m used to are not usable for such a piece of huge magical equipment like a polygraph. Just prepare the corresponding maintenance and examination tools of the polygraph. That will do.”

“Understood!” Cheng Xuansu nodded heavily, like a switchblade that had been folded.

Li Yao was given five jade chips, which he pretended to study for half an hour.

During the precious half hour, Speaker Cui, who should have been dedicated to national affairs, simply stood opposite him without doing anything. The guy’s thoughtful eyes passed over everyone present in the secret chamber.

If there was truly an Immortal Cultivator among them, they would very likely have revealed loopholes under his stare!

Half an hour later, Li Yao felt that he had dawdled long enough. Nodding at Cui Lingfeng, he warmed up his fingers and began testing the polygraph while everyone else was observing him.

The polygraph-type magical equipment was an ‘old friend’ to him. Years ago, back when he was still on Iron Plateau, it was by taking advantage of the weakness of the Truth Cabinet, an ancient polygraph, that he had been able to unveil the Temple of Immortals’ scheme and settled the conflicts within Iron Plateau and between the Iron Plateau natives and the space residents.

At that time, the Truth Cabinet had been called marvelous and faultless. It was told that no lie could ever pass its test.

However, Li Yao had realized that the so-called ‘polygraph’ or Truth Cabinet was essentially very precise magical equipment that had its own flaws and weaknesses. As long as the test-taker had a level high enough and knew sufficient tricks, it was totally possible to bypass the machine.

Even the polygraph of the highest level could only have an accuracy rate of ninety-nine percent. The result could not be guaranteed to be correct.

If somebody had played tricks on the polygraph internally, the result would be even more dubious.

Holding his breath, Li Yao recalled Professor Luo De’s style of refining. He dismantled the arced shell of the polygraph softly, revealing the components that were even more delicate than the parts of a clock. His telepathic thoughts snuck into the machine like soft smoke and flowed slowly over every component and every rune array.

Everybody stared at him and his hands without blinking!

Suddenly, Li Yao’s hands came to an abrupt halt. Then, his eyes froze. His eyebrows were bouncing, and he was mumbling something to himself. Very soon, from the deepest part of the polygraph, he slowly picked out a chip the size of a fingernail. Holding it on his palm, he studied it carefully for a long time.

“The polygraph seems fine,” Li Yao said to Cui Lingfeng. “But an additional remote-control rune array has been installed on the chip that controls the sensitivity of the polygraph.”

“Oh?” Cui Lingfeng was utterly expressionless. There was not the slightest surprise or confusion on his face. “What does it control?”

“It can receive a very feeble telepathic thought remotely and adjust the sensitivity of the polygraph,” Li Yao explained. “I once studied certain lie-testing and meditation-related magical equipment. The mechanism of such magical equipment is basically the same. Some of them collect a series of biophysical parameters based on the changes of heartbeat, breathing, flow of blood, and facial muscles, before they run comparisons with the baseline. Generally speaking, the biophysical parameters of a person are different when they are speaking the truth and when they are telling a lie. For example, accelerated heartbeat, constriction of the pores, enlargement of the pupils, etc.

“However, for experts who can control the biophysical parameters precisely, such machines can be fooled easily.

“Another approach is to scan one’s brainwaves and monitor the most active part in their brain when they are speaking.

“Generally speaking, when we are speaking the truth, especially when we are recalling the experiences of the past, the cells of the memory area in the head will be activated. But when we are lying, which requires creativity and new designs, different zones will be activated. The active zones are different, and so are the brainwaves they release. The veracity of the statement can then be decided.

“The polygraph adopts both of these mechanisms. The perception parts, chips, and rune arrays are all highly sensitive because they are designed to deal with the strongest experts with the most powerful souls. Those people’s heads are like impregnable fortresses that can hardly be breached!

“But as I said, with an extremely feeble, bordering on unrecognizable, telepathic thought, the sensitivity of the polygraph can be increased by ten times or lowered by ninety percent.”

Cui Lingfeng squinted, “So what?”

“If the sensitivity is ten times higher, even if Captain Tang is speaking the truth, it may be mistaken for a lie when his brainwaves are overly expanded,” Li Yao said. “If the sensitivity is reduced to one tenth, the polygraph will become the most sluggish lie-testing machine ever. Experts like Captain Tang can fool it easily!”

Chapter 1612 - Black Wind Is Coming!

“Show me!” Cui Lingfeng waved his hands toward Li Yao. “How did you discover it exactly? Don’t worry that I might not be able to see through it. You can do it slowly.”

“There’s nothing confusing here. It is indeed a very delicate design, but as soon as it is exposed, everybody can notice the anomaly.”

Li Yao smiled. He placed the control chip on a special floating platform. The deep blue spotlight and the ten-times-magnification lenses immediately enshrouded it.

Li Yao extended two pairs of long, narrow forceps, whose ends were as tiny as a hair, into the light. Groping on the surface of the chip for a moment, he raised the forceps and tore off a film that was as thin as paper and almost transparent.

“Please take a look, Speaker. This is an example of the rarely-seen film superposition technology. First of all, the rune arrays are stamped on the thin film with refining technology of the mustard-seed level. Then, after the thin film is pasted on the surface of the chip, it will be able to affect the normal functions of the chip.

“You can check the original production and maintenance manuals. There definitely isn’t such a film.

“The greatest advantage of such a film is that it can easily be disposed of after usage. Then, nobody will be able to find any loopholes at all.

“Also, the rune arrays are carved in quite a sordid way. There’s no telling what kind of special ink it adopts, but it is actually transparent under visible light. The file will only be revealed under the illumination of several types of invisible light.

“Even if it is already revealed, it will be highly difficult for an outsider to notice the film when it is hidden in such an enormous polygraph.

“It means that, even if another refiner dissects the polygraph into pieces and puts the chip right under your nose, you still wouldn’t be able to see the film or the rune arrays on it!”

Li Yao rolled the film with the forceps. As he said, under the illumination of the bluish light, the film that was as thin as paper gradually displayed runes that were as complicated as a maze!

“It is indeed very delicate.” Cui Lingfeng stared at the chip so attentively that two mazes popped up inside his own eyes, too. “Then, how did you notice such a carefully-hidden film, Professor Luo De?”

“It’s very simple. By thickness.” Li Yao grinned in a somewhat exaggerated way. “If it were any other refiner who is not familiar with the studies of polygraphs, they might’ve been incapable of discovering the film. Naturally, I failed to notice the existence of the film in the beginning, too. However, I did notice that the chip was one decimillimeter, or 0.1 millimeters, thicker than the parameter marked on the production manual. Then, I perceived the insignificant gap between the film and the chip.”

Brilliance beamed out of the maze inside Cui Lingfeng's eyes. "It was truly the right decision to have invited you to examine the polygraph, Professor Luo De!"

"Of course it is the right decision. This is what they call 'luck'!" Not modest at all, Li Yao declared confidently, "I have a shallow understanding of super-minute carving. My research is all about making designs in the tiniest area. Such a trick may be able to fool the other masters, but it definitely can't escape my eyes!"

"You've been troubled, Professor Luo De." Cui Lingfeng smiled at Li Yao friendly. He then turned toward Cheng Xuansu. "Xuansu, it seems that my guess is correct. Tang Dingyuan's hands have indeed reached the Internal Affairs Division and the special investigators. Control everyone that has ever touched the polygraph in every procedure. In twenty-four hours, I want to know exactly who implanted the film on the polygraph."

"Understood!" Cheng Xuansu bowed and nodded heavily.

"Also…" Cui Lingfeng's body did not move, but his head suddenly turned ninety degrees. He stared at a worker in the room casually. "Later, you will be responsible for controlling the polygraph, right? Your heart is beating very fast. Are you anxious?"

Naturally, the worker was also a refiner and an expert Meditation Healer, considering that he was qualified to control the polygraph.

However, how could he expect to resist the overwhelming pressure released by Cui Lingfeng, one of the best admin-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators on Firefly?

Cui Lingfeng was still seated, not moving at all, but his neck seemed to have been lengthened all of a sudden, allowing to stare at the work right in the eyes. The worker’s face was pale. His cold sweat was pouring like a storm. He was almost collapsing to the ground!

“Xuansu, bring him down!” Cui Lingfeng said coldly. “Consider him a point of breakthrough. Investigate all the procedures without exception. I want each and every one of them uprooted!”

The worker was moaning beyond his control. His legs lost all strength, and he almost fell to the ground. But Cheng Xuansu reacted quickly enough to grab him by the neck. She shook her arms, and cracking noises echoed from the bones of the worker all over his body. He was completely deprived of the ability to move or talk.

“Twenty-four hours is unnecessary.” Cheng Xuansu narrowed her eyes and said, one word after another, “In twelve hours, I’ll make sure that everyone involved in the scheme has been found!”

“Very good!” Cui Lingfeng nodded in great satisfaction. Pondering for a moment, he moved his eyes back to Li Yao and smiled. “Professor Luo De, it is inappropriate to trouble two people for the same issue. Now that you have familiarized yourself with the production and maintenance manuals, I believe that it is not going to be a problem for you to ensure that the polygraph runs normally, right? Why don’t you operate the polygraph later?”

“Speaker…”

Cheng Xuansu was dazed again. She was about to speak when Cui Lingfeng waved his hands to interrupt her. “I know that too many people in the Internal Affairs Division are capable operating a polygraph. However, I still hope that it will be run by someone I choose randomly. Other people are free to observe every detail when Professor Luo De is operating the polygraph, but it shall be strictly forbidden for them to touch the machine. Do you understand?”

“… Got it.” Cheng Xuansu took a long breath. Her eyes suddenly turned deeper than before. “I totally got it.”

Li Yao keenly grasped the unpredictable shimmer in her eyes. He also noticed the subtle expressions on the faces of some other people in the room. He thought of something and nodded. “I’ll do my best.”

Five minutes later, the polygraph was assembled again.

Speaker Cui walked to the secret chamber in the next room.

An enormous light beam was slowly unfolded in front of Li Yao and the rest of them. What was displayed on the light beam turned out to be a cold, fully-enclosed prison cell.

The prison cell was neither dirty nor messy. There was not a desk, chair, or bed, only thick and heavy foam padding were everywhere, as if the warden was worried that the prisoners inside would kill or hurt themselves.

Li Yao paid special attention to the environment. As he expected, ventilation tubes, his all-time favorite, could not be found in any corner in the prison cell.

In one corner of the prison cell, a slender, middle-aged man, who exuded the air of a sharp saber, was sitting cross-legged.

Although he was imprisoned, the resolute, unstoppable aura in him was not in the least diminished. The black hair that was rising into the sky and the dense bear implied insuppressible vigorousness, too.

Brilliance shone in Li Yao’s eyes. It was Tang Dingyuan, Tang Xiaoxing’s father and captain of Firefly, who actively advocated joining the Star Glory Federation!

Speaker Cui Lingfeng versus Captain Tang Dingyuan. The two of them confronted each other in silence.

The contradiction between the captain and the Speaker could be traced back to a long time ago.

When the Star Ocean Republic was in its prime, naturally, the Speaker was tens of thousands of times more powerful than the captain. At that time, millions of starships had flown the flag of the Star Ocean Republic, which meant that there were millions of captains who had to listen to the command of the Speaker!

In terms of administration level, not just the captain of a starship, even the commander of an entire fleet was still far away from the supreme helmsman of the Star Ocean Republic.

However, when the territory of the Star Ocean Republic was reduced to Firefly, an amalgamation of hundreds of ragged starships, the relationship between the Speaker and the captain turned quite subtle.

Theoretically speaking, the Speaker was responsible for the administrative affairs and the ‘government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic’ itself, whereas the captain managed the starship and every detail large and small on the starship.

However, as the ‘Star Ocean Republic’ and ‘Firefly’ gradually became synonyms during the thousand years of escape, the conflict between the two parties was almost unavoidable.

“Dingyuan, with everything coming so far, are you still insisting on your folly?” Cui Lingfeng slowly walked to the center of the prison cell and sat cross-legged, exactly like his opponent. “You’ve already lost. If you have the slightest sense of responsibility for Firefly, just get it over with and do not completely ruin the great starship that has sailed for a thousand years!”

Tang Dingyuan was silent for a long time, as if Cui Lingfeng did not exist or say anything to him at all. It was not until half a minute later that he finally focused his eyes on his opponent. He sniffed and said, “Cui Lingfeng, I always thought that, despite our political disagreement, you could be counted as a man after all, and you were sincerely acting for the sake of Firefly and the Star Ocean Republic. I did not know that you were so vile that not only did you frame me with so much nonexistent ‘evidence’, you are also shameless enough to try and convince me to give up right in front of my face!”

“Nonexistence evidence?” Cui Lingfeng smiled. “So many secret files have been found in your daughter’s crystal processor. There are also the confessions made by Zhang Wenhui, Ji Wenjun, and so on. Ding Zhengyang, your deputy, has accused you, too. The chain of evidence is valid and well-constructed. You cannot expect to explain yourself by simply declaring that it is ‘nonexistent’.

“You turned into an Immortal Cultivator a long time ago, and you’ve been waiting for the best opportunity to surrender to the Imperium of True Human Beings, haven’t you?

“You’ve been in touch with the CIFA, a local organization of the Immortal Cultivators in the federation, and you even met

Lu Qingchen, the leader of the organization and the most wanted criminal in the federation in the federation, in secret, didn’t you?

“The Black Wind Fleet, as the expedition army of the Imperium, has already arrived. They are much faster than we imagined. However, they are still observing, waiting, and lurking in the darkness because they intend to find the best opportunity and jump to the most vulnerable part of the Star Glory Federation to launch a thunderous strike! You’ve been helping the Black Wind Fleet locate the most critical parts of the federation, haven’t you?”

Chapter 1613 - Speaker Versus Captain!

Tang Dingyuan sniffed. “He who has a mind to beat his dog will easily find a stick. If you want to pour dirty water on my head, you can fabricate however many crimes as you want. Why bother asking me?”

Cui Lingfeng looked at him casually. “We’ll know soon enough whether or not the crimes are fabricated. I planned to save some dignity for you by asking you to confess on your own so that the whole incident could be cleaned quickly. But if you are too dogged to plead guilty… Your daughter has been arrested. It will be the same if she’s the one doing the talking.”

Tang Dingyuan’s pupils constricted violently. Every muscle on his body was tightened, and he was like a warship that was blowing out all its firepower. He bellowed, “Cui Lingfeng, it doesn’t matter that you set me up, but if you dare lay one finger on my daughter, I won’t spare you even if I’m killed and turned into a ghost!”

Cui Lingfeng sneered, “Brother Dingyuan, if you truly love your daughter as you appear to, you shouldn’t have used your daughter and her crystal processor as disguises for yourself in the first place. This is all your own fault. Why are you pretending to be in such fury?”

“I didn’t!” His daughter’s safety finally made Tang Dingyuan completely lose control. The anxiety, desperation, and exasperation from the past few days were all vented out. He seemed to have been confined in the corner of the prison cell tightly by barriers, and all he could do was struggle to one of his knees and yell at his opponent. “Cui Lingfeng, I am the captain of Firefly, and my daughter is a teacher of Star Ocean University. Even if you are the Speaker, you are not qualified to secretly arrest and interrogate us! I have never defected. I am not an Immortal Cultivator. This is all your scheme. The most shameless scheme!”

“You haven’t?” Cui Lingfeng sniffed. He suddenly bulged his eyes and raised his voice. “You have! You defected a long time ago! You completely lost faith in our cause and in Firefly a long time ago!

“You have become an out-and-out pessimist and capitulator! You lost all your loyalty to the Star Ocean Republic a long time ago! You do not believe that we can rise again with Firefly. You do not believe that the flag of the Star Ocean Republic can fly at the center of the cosmos again!

“If you have the tiniest faith in the Star Ocean Republic, why can’t you wait to join the Star Glory Federation? If you can surrender to the Star Glory Federation, of course you can surrender to the Imperium of True Human Beings. After all, you are selling your motherland and your compatriots for a good price, and it is only necessary for you to look for the richest buyer!”

“Tang Dingyuan, Captain Tang, do you deny it? Do you deny that you have completely lost faith in the Star Ocean Republic?”

His words were darting into Tang Dingyuan’s chest like arrows, making his face pale. Even his hair and his beard, which were standing up like swords, seemed to collapse all of a sudden.

Taking a deep breath, Tang Dingyuan said with a grave expression, “I do not deny that… I have lost faith in the Star Ocean Republic. But it is different from defection!”

“You’re finally admitting it?” Cui Lingfeng squinted. “Admitting that you are a cowardly traitor?”

“I am not a traitor!” Dragging the invisible shackles, Tang Dingyuan roared like a majestic lion that had fallen into a trap. “Cui Lingfeng, the MPs who make speeches every day in parliament such as yourself are free to talk about all the bullsh*t like the ‘Star Ocean Republic’ will never perish regardless of the reality. You can fool yourselves and others with your elaborate lies! But for us who command the starship in the bridge, we are faced with tens of thousands of actual problems on a daily basis.

“We are watching Firefly to decline day after day, yet there is nothing we can do. Spirit, belief, and patriotism are absolutely useless! However firmly we believe in the Star Ocean Republic, it is not going to resolve the actual problems that are happening to the starship or reward us with a piece of bread or a screw. It cannot prevent us from walking toward our doom step by step!

“Just face reality!

“The Star Ocean Republic… is dead. It died a thousand years ago. Right now, Firefly, which is drifting in the sea of stars, is nothing more than its corpse!

“You cannot resurrect the country with the corpse. It will only decay until it becomes a cluster of dust in the cold universe!

“There’s nothing we can do to reverse the trend now. The Star Ocean Republic is the past and our history from a thousand years ago. If we truly want to march back to the center of the cosmos and to avenge the fall of the Star Ocean Republic in the past, the only choice is to join the Star Glory Federation and combine the forces of the two civilizations of Cultivators. That will be the future that belongs to all the Cultivators!”

“Shut up!” There was no telling whether Cui Lingfeng was acting, his real feelings had been triggered, or it was both. But his face suddenly turned extremely horrible, as if the things that he had cherished for his entire life had been smashed to pieces. “You gutless capitulator and traitor, listen up. The Star Ocean Republic is not dead. It will never be dead as long as we exist! One day, we are going to march back to the center of the cosmos and fly the flag of the republic in each and every corner of the Empyreal Terminus Sector!”

His bloodshot eyes and his rising hair, on the other hand, slightly dazed Tang Dingyuan, who observed him carefully before putting on a scornful smile. “By ‘we’, do you mean you and the rest of the MPs who do not know the first thing about reality? What do you plan to use to march back to the center of the cosmos? Your spirit and passion?”

Taking a deep breath, Cui Lingfeng stared at Tang Dingyuan with obvious disdain. “For a pure technical officer and a great weapon worshipper such as yourself, it is only natural that you do not understand the importance of spirit. You’ll simply surrender to whoever has the tougher starships and cannons. Nothing more.

“However, let me tell you, the power of spirit is never to be underestimated. Every man needs a bit of spirit! A thousand years ago, had it not been for the ‘spirit’ that you despise, our passion and loyalty to the Star Ocean Republic, how could we have broken out of the siege and escaped the evil hands of the Imperium time and time again? How could we have persisted to this day after losing eighty percent of our population and the armed forces?

“As the commander of a warship, you should know more clearly than me that under normal circumstances, a troop will completely collapse after losing twenty percent of its soldiers at most!

“But we didn’t. We didn’t collapse but made it to this day. When the entire universe has been divided by the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance, we—the Star Ocean Republic—are still fighting!”

“I refuse to call what we are doing right now ‘fighting’,” Tang Dingyuan sneered. “Just think about the last time we encountered the claw fleet of the Imperium. We were even more devastated than stray dogs on the street! If you want a real fight, you can only join the Star Glory Federation and combine the forces of the two parties. That’s the only way that we can have a slim chance of marching back to the center of the cosmos!

“You ask me whether or not I have lost faith in the Star Ocean Republic? Yes! I never hide my thoughts. I believe that the Star Ocean Republic is hopeless. It is dead since a long time ago!

“But you ask me whether or not I’m a traitor? No! I love the Star Ocean Republic as much as you do. I’m willing to inherit the spirit of the Star Ocean Republic, too, but I also hope that the Star Ocean Republic can be reborn with a new name and a new appearance!

“The Star Ocean Republic is the supreme country of mankind that has inherited the spirit of the Star Ocean

Imperium. If we call the Star Ocean Imperium the ‘first Cultivation civilization’, in which human beings dominated the sea of stars, the Star Ocean Republic will be the ‘second Cultivation civilization’. Today, after a thousand years, the Star Glory Federation is promising to become the ‘third Cultivation civilization’, succeeding the spirit that has been passed on to the Star Ocean Republic from the Star Ocean Imperium. It may accomplish the destiny that no Cultivators in the past ten thousand years ever accomplished by letting the powerful civilization of Cultivators sweep across the universe again!

“Those are my thoughts. I am not surrendering to the Star Glory Federation; I’m merely injecting the spirit of the Star Ocean Republic, which I hold dear and swear to protect, into the Star Glory Federation. We will create a stronger, brighter country of Cultivators that boasts a boundless future on the body of the Star Ocean Republic!”

Tang Dingyuan’s voice was as cold as hail in the beginning, but in the end, it became thunder mixed with fire as he continued screaming.

Cui Lingfeng seemed to be caught unprepared by his speech. There was bewilderment and confusion all over his face. “Looking at your face right now, if your acting skills are not flawless, I’m almost inclined to believe that you did nothing in secret.”

Tang Dingyuan sat back down and was caught in deep thought. While pondering, he mumbled, “Then, it’s rather terrible now. The two of us, the Speaker of the government-in-exile and the captain of Firefly, have been set up at the same time…”

Cui Lingfeng frowned. “I beg your pardon?”

Tang Dingyuan glanced at him and sneered, “Speaker Cui, I’ll believe in your love and loyalty to the Star Ocean Republic for now. However, the ‘we’ that you said just now may not be the same. Not every MP is ready to flee for another thousand years with zealous loyalty like you!

“For most MPs, the only thing they care about is the tiny bit of power and position in their hands, which allows them to live in a more spacious cabin and get access to the more delicious synthesized food.

“If they have the chance, those MPs won’t hesitate to sell their loyalty and their ‘spirit’. Like you said just now, they can sell it to the federation, and they can sell it to the Imperium, too!”

Narrowing his eyes, Cui Lingfeng said, one word after another, “What do you mean? Explain yourself.”

“Do you really think that all the MPs are willing to cruise to the end of the universe under the name of the ‘Star Ocean Republic’ like you?” Tang Dingyuan said calmly. “Yes. They’ve been acting in such a way in parliament. They are all selfless and loyal to the country. But that’s only because the name of ‘Star Ocean Republic’ hasn’t reached a good price in their heart. Do you want to know how many MPs have come to me in secret, stating that they actually do not object to joining the Star Glory Federation but never dare say it out aloud because of your coercion and tyranny?”

Silent, Cui Lingfeng stared at Tang Dingyuan.

Tang Dingyuan looked back at him without giving in.

“Brother Dingyuan, we’ll call it a day today,” Cui Lingfeng said slowly. “There’s something else I must attend to.”

“You should hurry.” Tang Dingyuan smiled miserably. “If you were not acting just now, and you truly have found evidence from my daughter’s crystal processor, and Ding Zhengyang—he is the acting captain now, right?—is really accusing me, then we—Firefly, the government-in-exile, and the Star Glory Federation—are in serious trouble.”

Chapter 1614 - Uncanny Riot

When Cui Lingfeng walked out of the prison cell, he was greeted by silence in the surveillance room next door.

He instantly regained his tranquility, too. His face seemed to be covered in a thick ice shell, not revealing his real emotions at all. He merely stared at Li Yao and said, “Professor Luo De, what’s the result?”

“Well…” Li Yao pretended to turn over the operation manuals of the polygraph somewhat clumsily and compared the biophysical parameters and the variation of the brainwaves collected just now with the standard baseline as marked on the manual. “Based on the data we have collected, Captain Tang behaved normally from beginning to end. The odds that he was speaking the truth are 81%, and the odds that he was lying are 12%, with 7% being ambiguities.”

“Therefore, Captain Tang was very likely to be telling the truth?” Cui Lingfeng remarked.

Li Yao nodded. He thought for a moment and added, “Not necessarily. The polygraph is a type of magical equipment after all, and any type of magical equipment has loopholes. It is a matter of whether or not the loopholes are identified and taken advantage of. As long as Captain Tang’s Cultivation is high enough for him to manipulate his brain cell activity and the variation of his brainwaves freely, or if he masters certain marvelous tricks of speech that allow him to make ‘half-true-half-false’ or very misleading statements, it is very possible that the polygraph can be fooled.”

“That’s enough. The final conclusion will be drawn by me. All you need to do is show me all the parameters that have been gathered.” Cui Lingfeng’s face was so gloomy that it looked like a dam that was about to collapse. It only took him one second to consider before he turned to Cheng Xuansu, who was standing next to Li Yao. “Xuansu, how many troops can you gather and mobilize in secret in half an hour? The number doesn’t matter, but they must not be caught by anyone!”

The head of the secret police pondered for a moment and said, “Two rapid response squads of the Internal Affairs Division, the guards of the Speaker, and two legions that are absolutely loyal to us in the Republic Guard Corp.”

“Excellent!” Cui Lingfeng waved his hands and declared quickly. “Summon all the officers and experts above the Building Foundation Stage in those troops. Make sure that they arrive in half an hour. Also, inform Acting Captain Ding Zhengyang that we have made a groundbreaking development in our interrogation, and intelligence of paramount importance has been retrieved. Invite him to come to this place in person!”

“Yes, sir!”

The air in the surveillance room was so intense that it was almost exploding. Cheng Xuansu did not ask anything more but simply stood at attention before she turned on the tactical crystal processor and began operating fast.

However, after she had only triggered more than ten light beams, and before she was able to send the messages out, explosions each wave louder than the last were already echoing outside, followed by great earthquakes. A lot of crystal processors and magical equipment in the room fell to the ground and cracked into pieces.

Boom! Boom, boom, boom, boom!

They seemed to be placed in a vulnerable underground fortress that was being bombarded by the enemy crazily. Many people felt that they were throwing out their guts from their throat because of the quakes!

The illumination arrays in the room waxed and waned. All the crystal processors and magical equipment that were still connected to the wires of spiritual energy were all uttering ominous noises!

The light beams that Cheng Xuansu triggered with her crystal processor were twisted and perished silently one after another, only to be replaced by new, extremely chaotic pictures!

Cheng Xuansu’s face suddenly turned paler than ever!

Cui Lingfeng strode forward, demanding, “What’s going on?”

“A riot!” Cheng Xuansu turned on more than ten light beams in a row. On every light beam, there was nothing except dense heads that occupied that entire picture. The excited crowds and the armed forces of unknown backgrounds, many of whom were even wearing crystal suits, were instigating trouble on Firefly and sabotaging everything in their way!

“Tang Dingyuan’s supporters seem to be launching riots everywhere on Firefly at the same time. They have occupied quite a few crucial cabins and blocked the traffic. They are also fooling a lot of innocent people into going with them. It will be difficult for us to deal with them if we do not want to injure innocent people!

“Not good. An elite force is coming here. They are trying to break into the prison and rescue Tang Dingyuan!”

Pa!

Along with Cheng Xuansu’s exclamation, all the illumination arrays in the room suddenly died out at the same time, leaving them absolute darkness, which was driven away by the emergency lights a moment later. However, the red lights whose brightness felt like blood added to the unease of all the people who were illuminated by them!

“This is a prison break that has been planned for a long time. It even targets against the Speaker directly!”

Gnashing her teeth, Cheng Xuansu grabbed Cui Lingfeng and shouted, “Hurry up and escort the Speaker to the ‘No. 1 Fortress’!”

The explosions, screams, and sound of metal being torn apart grew louder and louder. Tides of spiritual energy each higher than the last were also blasting the door of the room. The supposedly ultra-solid door was as thin as a metal plate. Dents that collapsed inward had been blown out one after another. It seemed that the door would be completely blown up any second!

“Group Red Phoenix, escort the Speaker to retreat together with me! Group Green Dragon and Group Black Turtle, hold this position as best as you can! Group White Tiger, take the fake Speaker to break out of the siege through the second exit to distract the enemy’s attention!”

Bringing four bodyguards that looked like huge bears, Cheng Xuansu protected Cui Lingfeng in the middle. “Speaker, let’s go. It is no longer safe here!”

Blinking his eyes and observing everything, Li Yao almost found it irresistible to scratch his messy hair without considering his image.

It should not be Long Yangjun and her companions.

In terms of time, they should not be so fast. In terms of style, they should not be acting so rashly, either.

Also, a riot that was taking place in every corner of the entire Firefly simultaneously? The chaos of such enormity was certainly not something that Long Yangjun and her companions could initiate in a hurry.

Then, the conclusion was very obvious…

Thinking quickly, Li Yao cried toward Cui Lingfeng pitifully, “Speaker, what—what do I do?”

Surrounded by four bodyguards, Cui Lingfeng glanced at Li Yao quickly and said, “Bring Professor Luo De, too!”

Cheng Xuansu frowned. “But—”

“No buts,” Cui Lingfeng declared stubbornly. “Professor Luo De is a guest that I have invited, and I am responsible for his safety. Come on, professor!”

Together with Cui Lingfeng, Li Yao was protected by the four bears in black combat suits as he got on another fully-enclosed vacuum shuttle after passing through a zigzagging secret tunnel. Cheng Xuansu drove the shuttle in person.

“Summon all the troops that are loyal to us to the No. 1 Fortress. Then…”

Cui Lingfeng’s lips trembled for a long time. His face that had been sealed in ice since he left the prison cell finally broke apart. He seemed to have grown older by fifty years in just one moment, and all the vitality in his body was leaking out quickly through the cracks on his face. He stuttered for a long time but still failed to conclude the sentence. It was not until a long hesitation that he finally closed his eyes in pain and said, “Then, draft a message. When we are left with absolutely no choice, ask… ask for the Star Glory Federation’s help!”

After a brief silence, Cheng Xuansu softly said, “Understood, Speaker.”

The decision seemed to have drained all the blood inside Cui Lingfeng’s body. He was like a totally different person from when Li Yao first met him. Collapsing to his seat helplessly, he stared at a nonexistent fly in the air for a long time before he suddenly said, “Professor, you heard the whole conversation between me and Captain Tang just now. Tell me about it. Do you, and the people around you, believe that the ‘Star Ocean Republic’ has been dead since a long time ago, like Captain Tang?”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. After pondering for a moment, he shook his head and said, “I don’t know. The only things that I care about are technological issues. Such questions have never been my concern.”

“Then, I will have to ask you to consider the issue carefully now.” Cui Lingfeng gazed at Li Yao in a trance. “Professor Luo De, the answer of an outsider who is not interested in politics such as you is perhaps very important for me and the entire Star Ocean Republic right now.”

Li Yao truly felt that he was caught in a dilemma. How would the real Professor Luo De react when he was asked such a question?

After thinking for a long time, he replied, “I am a refiner who doesn’t know the first thing about politics. In the eyes of the technical staff such as me, ‘what I think’ doesn’t matter; what matters more is the facts. If ‘what I think’ is enough to make magical equipment successful, then all kinds of divine artifacts will fly in the sky everywhere!

“It’s true that I don’t care about the affairs of the outside world much, but I do know the fundamental, great events. Right now, the Star Glory Federation is faced with the threat of the Imperium of True Human Beings as much as we are. Everybody says that we only stand a slim chance of winning if we unite. Otherwise, the Star Ocean Republic will definitely soon be dead even if it is not dead for now!”

Cui Lingfeng sighed. As if he had finally found a target that he could speak to about all the feelings in his heart, he smiled bitterly. “I do not object to the unification with the Star Glory Federation, but the order and legitimacy issues are critical.

“Don’t think that I’m greedy about the pitiful power in my hands. No. I only hope to preserve the great and proud name of the Star Ocean Republic. I am willing to do anything and abandon anything for the name!”

“Well…” Blinking hurriedly, Li Yao asked, “Do you mean that if the new country after the unification continues using the name of the Star Ocean Imperium, you will agree on the arrangement even if the parliament on Firefly is disbanded immediately and you are forced to retire?”

“Yes!” Cui Lingfeng’s eyes were bloodshot. Thick veins were protruding out of the back of his fists that had been clenched tightly, too. He declared resolutely, “It doesn’t matter whether or not I am the Speaker. What matters is the revival and renaissance of the Star Ocean Republic! From our ancestors to us, we have sailed for a thousand years. The blood and lives of so many people have been frozen in the dark universe. Isn’t the rise of the Star Ocean Republic what they died for?”

Li Yao was lost for words for a moment.

If Speaker Cui Lingfeng was greedy about his power, Li Yao could have come up with a hundred methods to deal with him.

But as it turned out, the guy was a rather… enthusiastic Star Ocean Republic fundamentalist. Then, then…

Li Yao scratched his head and thought hard for a moment. Then, he realized something and reached into his pocket.

The few bears around them immediately got anxious.

However, what Li Yao picked out of his pocket was nothing but a green, rhombic crystal the size of a fingernail.

The crystal rotated in Li Yao’s hands slowly, emitting a bright green air, like a mini dancer.

Smiling, Li Yao pushed the crystal to Cui Lingfeng.

Chapter 1615 - This Name Is More Low-Key

“This material is named ‘Green Soft Crystal’,” Li Yao said. “It is a very common crystal that can be burnt with spiritual energy. The ignition point of the material is 525 degrees. Because of the high stability it boasts, the material is often adopted in the defense rune arrays and the stabilization rune arrays.

“Because it is steady enough and highly compatible with many other materials, it is helpful during the craft of many kinds of magical equipment. Therefore, almost every refiner will carry one or two pieces of the material with them.”

Cui Lingfeng was slightly dazed, looking at Li Yao in confusion.

“However, the ‘Green Soft Crystal’ in my hands is not from the stock of Firefly but purchased in the Dragon Snake Space Zone, where it does not go by the name. The local term for the material is ‘Emerald Brightness Crystal’.

“Do you see what I’m getting at, Speaker? In the Star Ocean Republic, it is known as Green Soft Crystal, whereas it goes by the name of Emerald Brightness Crystal in the Star Glory Federation. But for me, I don’t care about what it is called at all. What I care about is whether or not it is the material that I desire and whether or not it has the qualities and functions that I need!

“Whether it is named ‘Green Soft Crystal’ or ‘Emerald Brightness Crystal’, the qualities of the material won’t change in the slightest. The trafficability will still be around 79%, the ignition point will still be 525 degrees, and the hardness, crispness, compatibility, functions… Everything will be the same!

“Therefore, when I am going to run an experiment that requires such a material, does it really matter what the material is called exactly?

“On the contrary, the Star Glory Federation in fact also has a material named ‘Green Soft Crystal’. However, it is the very opposite of the ‘Green Soft Crystal’ that we know in terms of qualities and functions. Can I simply use the Star Glory Federation’s ‘Green Soft Crystal’ in a highly dangerous experiment just because the names of the two materials are the same?”

Cui Lingfeng was slightly dazed and deep in thought.

“It’s true that I have barely touched politics in my life, and I don’t understand the topics that you were arguing about just now. They’re too sophisticated for me.

“However, if I do have to make a choice, I think that what Captain Tang said is not entirely unreasonable.

“The Star Ocean Republic is certainly a great country. We boast a great history and tear-triggering heroes that are worth being proud of. Our struggle against the Imperium in the past thousand years is itself a twisting, soul-stirring legend and an out-and-out miracle!

“Therefore, if we ‘inject’ the proud history, the tear-triggering heroes, and the miracles from the past thousand years into the Star Glory Federation, the Star Glory Federation will fully succeed the spirit and ideology of the Star Ocean Republic. The people of the Star Glory

Federation will regard our history as their history, our heroes as their heroes, and our miracles as their miracles. Isn’t that much more important than simply changing the name of the country? As long as their qualities are the same, it doesn’t matter at all whether the material is called ‘Green Soft Crystal’ or ‘Emerald Brightness Crystal’!”

“If it doesn’t matter at all…” Cui Lingfeng frowned. “Why can’t we insist on our name and called it ‘Green Soft Crystal?”

“Well, about that. It’s because…” Blinking quickly, Li Yao said, “It’s because there will be more practical benefits if the Star Glory Federation keeps its original name than if it is renamed into the Star Ocean Republic!”

“Is that so?” Cui Lingfeng had only considered ‘Professor Luo De’ to be someone whom he could talk about his feelings with. He did not expect that the professor would really offer valuable input. “What ‘practical benefits’?”

“Speaker, look, all the media on Firefly is analyzing the great war to come,” Li Yao said. “Even I often catch a thing or two about their comments, although I’m not always interested in national affairs.

“However, it has occurred to me that most of the discussions were limited to how we should deal with the expedition army of the Imperium, or to wit, the Black Wind Fleet. They are talking as if everything will be good after the Black Wind Fleet is defeated.

“But I don’t think that is right. The Black Wind Fleet is just one of the expedition armies of the Imperium. After the Imperium of True Human Beings stole the hundreds of Sectors of the Star Ocean Republic, they have more than a hundred thousand starships and countless high-level Cultivators!

“Even if we do defeat the Black Wind Fleet eventually, as long as the Imperium of True Human Beings is determined to destroy us because they consider us a great enough threat, they can always send out a ‘White Wind Fleet’, ‘Yellow Wind Fleet’, ‘Purple Wind Fleet’, or a fleet of any color you want. After the expedition armies come at us in turn, we will only be crushed by the Imperium of True Human Beings however powerful our ‘spirit’ is, right?”

“Yes.” Cui Lingfeng thought carefully. “Keep going.”

“The only reason the Imperium of True Human Beings is not chasing us and sweeping the edge of the cosmos with full strength is because they are stopped by the Alliance of the Holy Covenant at the center of the cosmos.

“In the eyes of the Imperium, it is the most important thing to fight for the hegemony against the Covenant Alliance at the center of the cosmos, and it is just an insignificant issue to destroy the secondary forces at the edge of the cosmos. That’s why we are able to catch our breath and develop in secret.

“If we defeat the Black Wind Fleet under the name of the ‘Star Glory Federation’, when the news reaches the Empyreal Terminus Sector, it is possible that the Imperium will consider us a relatively tough country of barbarians. When they are planning to deal with us, they will weigh the possible gains and losses. It is unlikely that they will spare the elite forces who are confronting the Covenant Alliance to conquer us. Maybe, after they realize that the cost of conquest and occupation is too high, and the losses will possibly outweigh the gains, they will even consider negotiation or even acquirement, right?

“Throughout history, the central dynasty has ever been capable of demolishing all the barbaric kingdoms nearby. The Imperium of True Human Beings is no exception!

“However, if we crush the Black Wind Fleet under the name of the ‘Star Ocean Republic’, it will be a whole different issue!

“For the Imperium of True Human Beings, the Star Ocean Republic is its ‘antecedent’, and it was not a particularly honorable process when they stole the power of the ‘antecedent’. We will forever be a thorn in the throat of the Imperium!

“It may be tolerable for the Imperium if an unknown, desolate country is discovered at the edge of the cosmos, but it will certainly be an intolerable threat if the ‘antecedent’ has been rekindled and even boasts the capabilities of defeating an elite fleet of the Imperium. That will shake the foundation of the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“At that time, the Imperium of True Human Beings will certainly not bother about the cost and send out… as I said just now, the expedition armies of all kinds of colors in order to annihilate the remnants of the former regime!

“In conclusion, what I’m trying to say is that the name ‘Star Glory Federation’ is more low-key right now, and the ‘Star Ocean Republic’ is too eye-catching. Now that we are in such a disadvantageous situation, it is truly unnecessary for us to care about the formalities. Survival is the more important issue!”

Cui Lingfeng stared at Li Yao for a long time without saying anything. There was no telling whether he was considering what Li Yao had said or thinking about something else. Suddenly, he said, “It never occurred to me that you are not only an excellent refiner but also boast such strategic insight, Professor Luo De.”

“Well. During the spare time when I am not refining, I occasionally read political comments on some media as a way to relax myself and to train my mind.”

“… Is that so?”

Glancing at the indifferent, bear-like bodyguards sitting next to them, Li Yao was wondering what he should do when the vacuum shuttle shuddered slightly. It seemed to have reached the stop.

“Speaker, we are here.”

Cheng Xuansu got off first and opened the door of the shuttle for them from the outside. The four bodyguards then left the vehicle, too, while surrounding Cui Lingfeng and Li Yao in the middle.

However, the outside did not appear to be anything like a ‘No. 1 Fortress’. It was a rusted, empty, forsaken station with dim lights.

The wind mixed with the smell of rust that was blowing from nobody knew where added to the creepy air of the place.

Shua! Shua, shua, shua!

Behind Li Yao and Cui Lingfeng, the four bear-like bodyguards all summoned their crystal suits without a sound, turning into four hideous steel beasts.

The three crystal cameras on Cheng Xuansu’s left face were so red that blood seemed to be dripping at any point. The head of the secret police picked up a mini storm bolter of a particularly large caliber from the holster hanging on her waist. She stared at Cui Lingfeng expressionlessly.

Everything was already said in the silence.

Glancing at the environment that he was in, Cui Lingfeng slightly shivered and understood everything. He asked, his face pale, “You are not Cheng Xuansu?”

“You’re wrong.” The head of the secret police adjusted the triggering frequency of the crystals in her storm bolter and casually said, “I am Cheng Xuansu, not impersonated by anyone.”

“That’s impossible. Everybody on Firefly can be an Immortal Cultivator, but you absolutely can’t be!”

As if he had been fired upon by the fleet of the Imperium, Cui Lingfeng was entirely consumed by invisible fire. “Your father was the greatest hero during Firefly’s thousand year voyage. He led us to break out of the sieges of the army of the Imperium that were hundreds of times greater than us again and again. Had it not been for his valiant sacrifice in the end, it would’ve been impossible for us to make it to this day!

“You’re his daughter. How can you be an Immortal Cultivator? How can you surrender to the Imperium?”

Cheng Xuansu laughed. Her smile was as cold as the shell of the starship, which was placed in the deep, dark vacuum of the universe. “That man was not my father but the sperm provider for me. You retrieved his sperm that was stored deep inside the starship 278 years after he died and fertilized me. He and I are not associated at all.”

“Why?” Cui Lingfeng asked, one word after another. “Why are you doing this?”

“You forced us to,” Cheng Xuansu said. “We did not plan to kill you in the beginning. You were quite a good shield. You could also stabilize the situation on Firefly as much as possible before the Black Wind Fleet arrives. You were also the best person to deal with the Star Glory Federation for now. However, you were paranoid enough to come up with the solution of choosing a random refiner to examine the ‘polygraph’. Our dear… Professor Luo De also happened to be professional enough to really see through the loopholes of the machine. Therefore, we were left with no other choice.”

Cui Lingfeng raised his voice. “I am asking why you betrayed your father and the glory of the Star Ocean Republic and gave in to the Imperium of True Human Beings!”

Chapter 1616 - Miracles Happen Occasionally

“Why, you ask?” Holding the handle of the gun and touching it for a long time, Cheng Xuansu chuckled. She stared at Cui Lingfeng’s face carefully and said, “You should ask yourself that question, Sir Speaker. What kind of zealot could possibly support your sick belief and make you believe that the ‘Star Ocean Republic’ still exists, that such a ‘Firefly’ jumbled up by hundreds of piles of garbage can sail for another thousand years and even march back to the center of the cosmos to defeat the invincible Imperium of True Human Beings one day?

“Tang Dingyuan was not wrong at all. The Star Ocean Republic is long dead. It died the moment Wuying Qi barged into the supreme parliament and declared that he was the Speaker! Firefly is nothing more than its dead body, and we are the insignificant worms living inside the body that is gradually decaying!

“Marching back to the center of the cosmos? Reviving the Star Ocean Republic? It’s not going to happen. Just stop your fantasy already!”

Gazing at Cheng Xuansu, Cui Lingfeng seemed to be planning to open her skull with his eyes that were as sharp as hooks. His voice was quite low, but it was filled with desperate strength. “Xuansu, even you think so, too? Even if it is a fantasy, it is not my own dream but the dream of tens of thousands of people, including your father! Your father and so many other heroes who were exactly like him dedicated their lives to the dream without regrets. They sacrificed their everything just to leave a chance of hope for the great country a thousand years ago! How could you? How could you possibly think in such a way?”

There was nothing but indifference on Cheng Xuansu’s face, but the brightness in her artificial eyes grew darker and darker, turning from red to purple and from purple to black. She said coldly, “Let me repeat myself. That man is not my father. The so-called hope of the Star Ocean Republic is just a delusion that obstinate guys such as yourself fool yourselves with. What does it have to do with me?

“Perhaps, for you, the Star Ocean Republic really stands for an episode of great history. It means a lot of things. It is even possibly who you are! Many of you were born at the center of the cosmos and grew up in the prime of the Star Ocean Republic. You witnessed and enjoyed the magnificence and prosperity of the country yourselves, like my sperm provider did. Then, you were packed into the hibernation capsules like zombies and slept to this today for the entire voyage. It is only natural that you reminisce about the country of old that has been gone for a long time.

“But what about me?

“I was born in the cold, dark, narrow, and damp boat. Throughout my life, I have been faced with incessant disasters. Today, this cabin had a leakage. Tomorrow, that tube exploded. The day after that, a famine was caused because of a fault in the artificial greenhouse!

“Behind us are countless pursuers from the Imperium, and in front of us is the dark universe that no human beings have ever set foot in before. Our ragged starship is rusting and decaying day by day, too. There is absolutely no hope at all!

“If that was all, it might have passed, but you also have the habit of fooling yourselves with the ‘glory of the Star Ocean Republic in the past’ and telling jokes such as marching back to the center of the cosmos!

“Just because I am that man’s daughter, just because his blood flows in my veins, and just because of your continuous bullsh*t, I ‘volunteered’ to receive the harshest training from the age of five. Stimulated by the lies, I kept breaking limits, trying to change myself into a ‘hero’ just like that man, only to find that I turned myself into such a wretched appearance with injuries all over my body!

“Then, after realizing that I’d been tricked the whole time, that what I fought for in my entire life was nothing more than a joke that could never be fulfilled, isn’t ‘betrayal’ the most normal reaction that I should have?

“You asked me why I chose the Imperium of True Human Beings? Hehe. The reason is simple. I’ve had enough of the days on Firefly! The suffocating air, the narrow cabins, the tasteless food, the fears day and night, the hopeless voyage in the darkness in which everybody looks like a headless fly… I’ve had enough of everything!

“I have devoted half of my life to the carrion named the Star Ocean Republic. For the rest of my life, I am going to switch to a different way of living. I’m going to live like a real human being!”

Cui Lingfeng himself looked quite like a zombie that had been dead for a long time. He hissed, “Even so, even if you truly… hate living on Firefly, you can also choose the Star Glory Federation!”

“What’s the difference between the Star Glory Federation and the Star Ocean Republic?” Cheng Xuansu snorted. “Both of you are destined to fall under the conquest of the Imperium of True Human Beings. I have escaped once, and I do not intend to be a stray dog twice, not even if I must be killed! The Imperium can offer me everything that I want. Everything!”

“So,” Cui Lingfeng said poignantly, “you have betrayed your compatriots and degenerated into an Immortal Cultivator?”

Cheng Xuansu looked at him scornfully. “What’s the difference between a Cultivator and an Immortal Cultivator? Everybody can say the nice words. ‘Cultivators are the sabers of humanity’, or ‘Cultivators are born to protect the ordinary people’, but is it the truth?

“If the Cultivators of the Star Ocean Republic such as yourself are truly so great and so supported by the general public, how on earth did Wuying Qi have the chance to usurp the power of the supreme parliament and crown himself ‘Blackstar the Great’?

“Let’s shift to the examples that are closer. Even on the tiny Firefly, doesn’t a higher Cultivation mean better privileges and greater powers?

“The ordinary people and the ground-floor sailors live in the dark, damp, narrow cabins. Many of them do not even have their independent sleep capsules. They have to share a room with their family and go to sleep in turns.

“The high and mighty Cultivators, both the MPs and the commanders in the bridge such as Tang Dingyuan, in comparison, enjoy privileges hundreds of times better than the ordinary people, don’t you? At the very least, you don’t need to cram into the same sleep capsule in turns, right?

"There are more than a hundred Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators on Firefly, but I have never seen any Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator whose cabin is smaller than the cabin of a ground-floor sailor. And these are just the legal differences. As for the illegal businesses that the MPs under your lead have been doing, how they gather assets with their power and trade them on the black market and so on, I don't even want to waste my time talking about them. So, what's the difference between the Cultivators and the Immortal Cultivators? What's essentially different between the Star Ocean Republic and the Imperium of True Human Beings?"

Cui Lingfeng's face was flushing. "It was just a means to an end in the troubled times!"

"Of course, the troubled times." Cheng Xuansu chuckled. "I still recall that during the last 'trouble time', because of a serious shortage of food, the parliament at that time even made the decision that natural conception and birth were strictly forbidden. All the sperms and eggs were frozen in order to precisely control the number of newborn babies according to the resource circulation status and the change of population. I was born through such 'precise control' under the policy. Does it look like something that the Cultivators should do?"

Cui Lingfeng's eyes were twitching violently, as if his heart was being savaged hard. He breathed heavily and said, "It was a tough decision, but we didn't have a choice. We had limited space and resources on the starship. If the population grew exponentially beyond control, there would certainly be a grave food crisis later. Everybody would've been caught in a terrible dog-eat-dog hell!

“The policy has proved to be effective. After a hundred years of difficulties, we finally overcame the problem of food shortage. Our society returned to normal and was back to life again!”

“Speaker,” Cheng Xuansu said, “do you think that I’m criticizing the policy from that time? No. On the contrary, I couldn’t agree with the policy more. Under the circumstances at that time, it was the only possible plan if our civilization was to be continued!

“After realizing that, I suddenly thought everything through!

“In many cases, right and wrong are meaningless, and being a Cultivator or an Immortal Cultivator are also meaningless, because we don’t have a choice.

“There are limited resources and space on Firefly, but the population can grow to infinity at any point. For the continuity of our civilization, we have made a lot of decisions that couldn’t be helped.

“Then, from a broader point of view, isn’t the entire civilization of mankind, piloted by the Imperium of True Human Beings, nothing more than a slightly larger ‘Firefly’ in the boundless dark universe? Perhaps, for the continuity of the entire civilization of mankind, the Imperium has to make a lot of decisions that can’t be helped, too!”

Cui Lingfeng was truly dazed. Pondering for a moment, he trembled hard and said, “Where… where did you learn such heterodoxy?”

Cheng Xuansu chuckled. “Do not underestimate the desolate land at the edge of the cosmos. Aren’t such places where the great hermits in the legends live? President Lu Qingchen of the CIFA is really a scholar who has done profound studies on the truth path of immortality. Many of his ideas are truly enlightening and mind-blowing!

“Alright, if you don’t have any further questions, let’s call it a day today.

“I am sorry, Speaker… No, Uncle Cui. Despite the bullsh*t with which you deceived me for decades, let me call you Uncle Cui one last time! Nobody wanted things to end up like this. Really. It’s nothing personal. It can even be barely counted as a conflict of beliefs. I just want to live a life of a real human being that I should’ve been granted a long time ago.”

Cheng Xuansu raised her pistol and aimed at the center of Cui Lingfeng’s eyebrows. “I remember that years back, when I was too exhausted to stand up because of training, you always encouraged me by saying that I could definitely make a miracle if I persisted to the end!

“However, it is a pity that the days when I believed in miracles are long gone.”

Cui Lingfeng’s face was as gray as that of a dead person. He seemed to be so aggrieved that he could not say anything anymore.

“Well…” Scratching his hair, Li Yao raised his hand, hinting that he wanted to say something.

“Huh?” Cheng Xuansu raised her eyebrow. The redness released from her artificial eyes locked on Li Yao precisely before she said, “Professor Luo De, I’m very sorry that you are involved in this incident. You can only blame yourself for your bad luck. Any last words?”

“I don’t have any last words, but there is truly something that I would like to say.”

Looking at Cui Lingfeng and then at Cheng Xuansu, Li Yao blinked and said, “Firstly, in my humble opinion, since the universe is such a vast place, there must be ‘miracles’ occasionally.

“Secondly, for the two of us, one indeed does not have much good luck today, but sadly… it is probably not me.”

Chapter 1617 - No More Running!

When Li Yao said out ‘not me’, bellows that sounded like primeval beasts that were waking up echoed inside Li Yao’s body. A surging tide seemed to have broken the dam and raged on the land. The air around him changed drastically in only half a second!

The three crystal cameras on Cheng Xuansu’s left face were so red that they were almost exploding. Without any hesitation, she aimed the mini storm bolter at Li Yao and opened fire six times in a row!

The mini storm bolter had been crazily modified by the refiners of the Internal Affairs Division. Together with Cheng Xuansu’s marvelous technique, six explosive bullets that had been embedded with the pieces of marrow crystals almost rushed out simultaneously. Five of them darted toward Li Yao’s forehead, heart, abdomen, and knees, and the last one took a turn and sprinted toward Cui Lingfeng like lightning!

The moment the bullets blew out of the barrel, Cheng Xuansu threw away the gun and retreated. She crossed her hands and then opened them like a blossoming lotus flower. Streaks of brightness flowed out of her fingers and turned into a crystal suit, covering her body layer by layer!

“Take them down!” Cheng Xuansu shrieked.

Like a most precise killing machine, she made every right decision.

However… it did not help at all.

Li Yao’s body suddenly blurred, as if invisible gels had been unleashed from every pore on his body and formed a soft shield right in front of him, stagnating the five explosive bullets that were attacking himself. As for the last bullet that was launched toward Cui Lingfeng, he simply grabbed it with his hands!

Boom!

The explosive bullet was highly sensitive. It exploded brutally into dark red fireballs the moment it met a hindrance, but Li Yao was still holding it inside his hands as if his hands were on fire!

The four heavily-armed officers of the secret police lunged at Li Yao, shouting, from every direction.

But before they stretched out their arms, Li Yao’s right hand that as clenching the fireball already pressed into the breastplate of the first officer hard.

All the damage entailed in the explosive bullet turned into beam of particles that were like drizzles and tore apart the super high-intensity breastplate more than easily. The chest of the officer was blown into pieces!

Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa!

Li Yao waved his left hand. The other five bullets that had been frozen in midair were suddenly reversed and hit the second officer.

The five bullets were not imposed with powerful pressure by Li Yao. Also, the officer had enough time to open up his spiritual shield. Therefore, he was not greatly hurt.

However, his eyesight and the sensation rune arrays of his crystal suit were disrupted by the sparks raised by the explosion. During the moment of dazzling brilliance, a super tensile crystal thread that was ninety percent thinner than a hair crawled into the crystal suit through the gap between his helmet and his breastplate. It breached his jaw and nostrils, penetrated into his brain, and churned brutally in a helical form after it was filled with spiritual energy. The brain of the second officer was immediately wrecked!

The crystal thread was exactly the ‘localization antenna’ that the real Professor Luo De crafted in order to trace Tang Xiaoxing.

But for a monster of Li Yao’s level, a tiny antenna could also be an unparalleled dead weapon that could kill an expert easily!

It was not until this moment that Li Yao began summoning the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. His back was still utterly undefended.

The third officer crashed at him like an angry rhino. The dagger in his hand that was cracking with electric arcs also looked like the horn of a rhino!

But he still did not have the opportunity to reach within half a meter from Li Yao.

When the guy was still one meter away, Li Yao halted the iron-armed rhino that weighed more than five tons together with his crystal suit in midair through a remote manipulation technique.

Then, he opened his fingers, and the crystal suit on the secret police exploded into tiny and broken pieces that were flying randomly in the air.

In the end, he moved his hand back and pushed it forward. The officer of the secret police was immediately blown hundreds of meters away as if he had been hit brutally by a super high-speed crystal train that happened to be invisible. After a deafening explosion, he crashed into a meat pie on the rusted wall of the cabin.

From the moment Cheng Xuansu pulled the trigger, to the three super experts of the secret police were killed miserably, it took less than five seconds.

Cheng Xuansu’s crystal suit had been donned.

But she did not put on the helmet and the facial cover. Her pale face that was barely recognizable was displayed to Li Yao and Cui Lingfeng clearly.

Li Yao’s crystal suit was donned, too.

Although it was just a regular Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, in such a dark and creepy environment, it was as dreadful as if it had been possessed by a hundred thousand ghosts living in the deepest depths of hell!

The fourth officer did not move at all to this moment.

It could clearly be heard that cracking noises were echoing from inside his crystal suit, as if countless components inside had collapsed all of a sudden, stopping the crystal suit from moving or being dismantled. It seemed to have turned into an iron coffin in which the officer was tightly confined!

It took only 0.1 seconds for Cheng Xuansu to realize that she was absolutely no match for Li Yao.

No. She did not need to think at all. The moment she smelt the dominating aura leaking out of the gaps of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, she could already make the conclusion with her natural instincts for survival, like when a grazer was faced with a predator!

Her heart, stomach, and abdomen were all constricting violently. Her every shivering cell was shouting the same thing, “Run!”

Thus, Cheng Xuansu ran without any hesitation.

When Li Yao killed the first officer in the most casual way, she had already made the right conclusion. When Li Yao stabbed the crystal thread into the second officer, she had activated the power rune arrays of her crystal suit to the maximum although she had not entirely put it on yet. When Li Yao dismantled the crystal suit of the third officer and blew him away, she had traveled a hundred meters away instantly. But when Li Yao controlled the fourth officer as mysteriously as a phantom, Cheng Xuansu took out a translucent round ball from a pocket on her waist and smashed it on the ground hard.

In cracking noises, Cheng Xuansu was covered by electric arcs, which condensed into a bluish ball more than two meters in diameter and enshrouded her tightly.

Under the cover of the electric arcs, Cheng Xuansu gazed at Cui Lingfeng in a trance and laughed miserably. “So, this is the truth. Everything has been under Uncle Cui’s arrangement. You were suspicious of me and set up a trap in order to trick me into taking the bite and confessing everything on my own.”

Shivering, she extended her hand and covered her left face, taking off the bionic materials that accommodated the three crimson crystal cameras and revealing the heavily-wounded skin as well as the empty left eye.

Bloody tears slowly flowed out of the depths of the eye socket that was devoid of an eyeball.

Cui Lingfeng’s face blanched as he shouted, “Xuansu, no!”

Li Yao realized what Cheng Xuansu was doing, too.

However, his attack was blocked by the electric arcs around Cheng Xuansu, which were a defense rune array of a very high level. Even Li Yao could not break it in only one second.

But one second was more than enough for Cheng Xuansu to draw another storm bolter and aim it at her temple.

“Uncle Cui, as I said… I’ve had enough of such days. I’m not going to run again. Never!”

Before Li Yao ripped the defense of the electric arcs apart, she had already pulled the trigger and blown up all the organs above her neck. Her every brain cell was burnt into ashes in the middle of the electric arcs and fire.

With such a fierce death, it was absolutely impossible for her to turn into a spectral Cultivator.

The forsaken station regained its dead silence.

Except for the intense stink of blood that had been added to the blowing wind of rust, it was almost exactly the same as ten minutes ago.

In silence, Li Yao and Cui Lingfeng stared at the four dead bodies lying on the ground and the officer of the secret police who was kneeling nearby. Then, they looked at each other with complicated feelings.

Cui Lingfeng grunted and fell to the ground. Pressing his chest hard, he did not have the ecstasy of surviving a disaster at all. Instead, he was filled with fatigue and lethargy. Even his previous deep and thoughtful eyes had become dirty.

Judging from his conversation with Cheng Xuansu, Li Yao speculated that he must have been in a close relation with Cheng Xuansu.

Cheng Xuansu had addressed him as ‘Uncle Cui’. He must have raised her and treated her like his own daughter since her childhood.

It did make sense. If they were not so intimate with each other, how would he have been at ease when appointing her as the head of the secret police and his most trusted subordinate?

Cheng Xuansu’s betrayal and suicide were a heavy blow for Cui Lingfeng. At this moment, he did not look like the revered Speaker of the Star Ocean Republic, just a random, dying old man who had lost all hope.

“Well…”

Li Yao would not bother to change his face if he were faced with a whole legion of muscular, bloodthirsty soldiers. However, he found it quite awkward to deal with an old man who was so sorrowful that his heart might be dead.

Glancing at him, Cui Lingfeng smiled miserably like a ghost, as if he had seen through everything and lost the momentum to fight on. “Hehe. Hehehe. When the mantis is hunting the cicada, the sparrow is waiting behind to get them both. Xuansu, Zhengyang, and their lot made such thorough plans, but they did not know that they were being played by you the whole time! You're from the federation, aren't you? Do you work in the Dim Moon Squad for Jin Xinyue?"

"About that…" Li Yao would rather admit that not only was he from the federation, he was also the legendary dominator the three Sectors! However, intermittent voices were echoing in the communication channel. Long Yangjun and her companions had marched, pouring fuel on the fire of the situation that was already chaotic enough!

Pondering for a long moment, Li Yao removed his Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and said, "Make no mistake, Speaker Cui. Of course, I am not the real Professor Luo De, but I am not a citizen of the New Federation, either, and I do not work for Jin Xinyue."

It's more like Jin Xinyue works for me, Li Yao thought to himself.

"Not from the federation?" Li Yao's words were like a super cardiotonic for Cui Lingfeng that turned him from monochrome into multi-colored.

Rolling his eyes quickly, he seemed to be calculating crazily in his head. A moment later, he mumbled, "Of course. You can't be from the federation, and you are even less likely to be Jin Xinyue's subordinate. For the Star Glory Federation, I am too annoying an old man who clings to the name of the 'Star Ocean Republic'. Taking me down through the Immortal Cultivators, cleaning all the Immortal Cultivators on Firefly as saviors, and then taking over Firefly, that is the best approach for them!"

Even Cui Lingfeng could not figure out the chaotic situation despite his computational ability of the Nascent Soul Stage. The Speaker of the Star Ocean Republic eyed Li Yao up and down for a long time and asked in disbelief, “You’re not from the federation, and you’re certainly not on the Imperium’s side. Otherwise, you wouldn’t have stopped the Immortal Cultivators. Who are you exactly?”

Chapter 1618 - Li Yao Started Again…

Before Li Yao could reply, Cui Lingfeng came up with yet another possibility. “Are you from the Covenant Alliance? I’m told that the latest generation of demi-humans in the Covenant Alliance can already simulate all the emotions of a normal human being. Even the Ring-Tu Test cannot distinguish them. So, you are here on behalf of the Covenant Alliance?”

Although the enemy’s enemy was not necessarily a friend, Cui Lingfeng definitely found the Alliance of the Holy Covenant slightly more affable than the Imperium of True Human Beings.

Li Yao scratched his head. “I am neither from the New Federation, nor from the Imperium, much less the Covenant Alliance. Although I do not have conclusive proof, you can figure it out if you think about it more carefully, Speaker. It is purely a coincidence that I appeared here. You were the one who chose me randomly to examine the ‘polygraph’, and then you brought me to this place later! Regardless of whether I’m from the federation, the Imperium, or the Covenant Alliance, it is impossible that I could be so prophetic that I could guess a random decision you made before you did so, right?”

Cui Lingfeng was slightly dazed. “Fair enough. For confidentiality, it is true that I never decided which refiner exactly would be testing the ‘polygraph’ in advance. Originally, I was thinking of picking a random name on the list of professors of the Refining Department of Star Ocean

University at the last moment. But after I read Professor Luo De's analysis report, it suddenly occurred to me that it would be even more confidential and secure if I summoned Professor Luo De here. Nobody at that time knew my real purpose, and therefore, nobody would play any tricks on Professor Luo De!

"Even if you are from the Covenant Alliance, you couldn't have learnt of the decision in advance because even I didn't know back then!

"Besides, there is no reason for the representatives of the Covenant Alliance to visit the rear of the rear of the Imperium after covering such a long journey. This place is the most underdeveloped area at the remote edge of the cosmos. It is not a critical battlefield in any sense!"

Li Yao nodded quickly, "Exactly. You do have a point, Speaker."

"Not from the federation, not from the Imperium, and not from the Covenant Alliance. Then, who are you exactly?"

Cui Lingfeng stared at Li Yao deeply, especially his plain, unattractive hands that had resumed the previous appearance. "You were quite skilled at dismantling and analyzing the magical equipment. You were even able to mimic Professor Luo De's style to some extent. You also boast such tough combat ability. Xuansu was a top-tier expert even taking all the warriors on Firefly into account, but she did not even have the guts to escape in front of you! You should be a 'double-talented' Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator who has climbed to the peak of both fighting and refining, right? It is my mistake that I did not learn the existence of such an expert at the edge of the cosmos in advance. Who are you exactly? Whose interests do you represent? For what purpose have you snuck into Firefly? Now that you've saved me, I believe that you want to make a deal with me, right?"

Blinking, Li Yao said, "You're overthinking it, Speaker Cui. As I said, this is purely a coincidence. I merely saved your life for the sake that we are both Cultivators. Me and my partners are definitely going to make a deal with someone, but I'm afraid that you are not the one we're looking for."

"…" Cui Lingfeng was dazed.

Li Yao coughed and said, "About our identity, there is no need to conceal it anymore. You'll know it soon enough anyway. However, you may find it hard to believe—"

"Why don't you let me decide?"

Li Yao hesitated for a moment and said, "Well. We're the local Cultivators of the 'Red Lotus Sector'."

Cui Lingfeng frowned deeply. "The Red Lotus Sector?"

"Yes. An insignificant, minor Sector," Li Yao said, "Because our star is highly unstable, and enormous sun storms break out every now and then, the living environment in our place is terribly harsh. Even Red Lotus, the only barely habitable planet, is scourged by calamities caused by the fury of the sun. Therefore, even in the era of the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago, the Red Lotus Sector was never developed on a large scale. There were only a few residents who made their living by growing certain cash crops that could only grow in the high-heat environment and by raising spiritual animals of the fire class.

"Thankfully, for the same reason, the Armageddon Rebellion ten thousand years ago and the world-blighting battle between the Supreme Emperor and the Mad Armageddon did not affect the Red Lotus Sector much.

“In the ten thousand years that followed, the Star Ocean Imperium completely collapsed, and the Star Ocean Republic struggled to reconstruct everything. But it never had the time to explore our tiny world. In fact, wasn’t it the very purpose of Firefly to search for the minor Sectors that strayed from the center of the cosmos when the starship was built in the beginning?

“We developed independently in the extremely harsh environment for ten thousand years. The furious flames of the sun destroyed our civilization time and time, keeping the development level of our civilization to a shockingly low height where we could barely manage to survive. Everybody could only fight with the shabbiest magical equipment and their flesh and blood. Basically, well, we were no different from the ancient Cultivators in the tales.

“We lived in ignorance just like that for ten thousand years. Although the legends of the Star Ocean Imperium spread in our world, and we looked forward to the advanced civilizations of mankind, hoping that they would bring us new hope, eventually, what we got was the conquerors of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

“The Imperium of True Human Beings swallowed the Red Lotus Sector. The Immortal Cultivators destroyed our home and savaged our compatriots! The Imperium was too magnificent for us, who were still in the medieval age, to resist. Countless Cultivators of the Red Lotus Sector perished in the war against the Imperium. Most of the survivors were transformed into Immortal Cultivators and joined the army of the Imperium, establishing a new reign of terror!

"Only a few of us were lucky enough to have stolen a starship of the Imperium of True Human Beings and captured a lot of marines on it. From them, we learned the tricks to pilot a starship.

"When the army of the Imperium was not alert, we fled from the Red Lotus Sector and bid farewell to our hometown forever. I will never forget that day. It happened 443 years ago."

Li Yao's eyes gradually turned red, but there were no tears in them, as if his tears had long been vaporized by his fury.

His statement was almost flawless.

The Red Lotus Sector was a real existence. It was also true that the temperamental star of the Red Lotus Sector and the catastrophes that it caused had led to the slow development of the civilization there, which was in the medieval age in many respects. The Imperium of True Human Beings' conquest over the Red Lotus Sector had taken place 450 years ago for real, too.

The Star Glory Federation had captured some members of the army of the Imperium from the claw fleet where Heiye Lan was ten years ago. After interrogating any random captive, they would prove that the Red Lotus Sector was a real thing.

Of course, as for whether or not a tiny number of Cultivators stole a starship of the army of the Imperium and escaped from the Red Locus Sector more than four hundred years ago, it could never be proved true or false.

Deep in thought, Cui Lingfeng asked without offering any remarks, "What then?"

“We were essentially another ‘Firefly’, only many times smaller. We hid here and there in the sea of stars and evaded the pursuit of the Imperium,” Li Yao said. “But we were too weak and too inexperienced at piloting the starship. Therefore, we were no match for Firefly at all. In just a couple of years, the Cultivators who escaped perished one after another, until there were only a dozen of us left in the end.

“After the survivors discussed the issue, we agreed that we could not continue like that anymore. It was not because of the Imperium’s hunting. Our starship was so insignificant that it was basically a grain of dust in the universe, and it would be very difficult for the Imperium to catch us. The biggest problem that we faced was the shortage of resources. The survivors all boasted a high Cultivation, and the resources we consumed every day were astronomical. We took few assets with us in the first place. They were far from enough for us to consume at such a rate.

“If it went on like that, we would either end up attacking and eating each other or surrender to the Imperium when we were grasped by desperation.

“We were neither willing to kill each other nor to surrender to the Imperium. Therefore, we could only wager on setting the destination of the starship to the edge of the cosmos. Then, we switched the starship to autopilot. After that, everybody entered the hibernation capsules, hoping to try our luck.

“Just like that, the starship drifted for more than four hundred years while we were all in the hibernation state, until the starship detected very intense spiritual waves nearby, which we learned later to be the space ripples triggered by the melding of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector. We were woken up by the mainframe crystal processor of the starship, and we blended into this place, the Dragon Snake Space Zone, in secret.

“As absolute strangers, we did not know what this place was at all and whether or not it was another territory of the Imperium. Therefore, we decided to change our appearance and conceal our name so that we could observe everything in the Dragon Snake Space Zone.

“After we discovered that there was a powerful country of Cultivators in this place named the Star Glory Federation, which was preparing to resist the Imperium of True Human Beings, we were all overjoyed and thought about collaborating with the Star Glory Federation. Or rather, well, we were even thinking of joining the federation to deal with the Imperium together, hoping that we could march back to the Red Lotus Sector one day.

“However, we did not want to go to the federal government directly, because… because…”

“Because you had your concerns,” Cui Lingfeng said. “On one hand, you were worried that the federation would not trust you but suspect you to be spies from the Imperium, in which case you would be imprisoned and interrogated. Or maybe, you brought tremendous secret treasures and techniques of the Red Lotus Sector when you escaped, which you would rather tell nobody else.

“On the other hand, you were worried that you would be manipulated or even regarded as cannon fodder by the federation because you were terribly outnumbered. Furthermore, you were worried about whether or not the Star Glory Federation was an ideal country of the real Cultivators and whether or not it boasted the capabilities to resist the Imperium, right?”

Li Yao pretended to be shocked. “How did you know?”

“Because what worried you worries me, too.” Cui Lingfeng smiled bitterly. “Alright, please continue.”

Li Yao licked his dry lips and said, “You’re quite right. We are the last hope of the Red Lotus Sector. Naturally, we brought a lot of treasures of the Red Lotus civilization when we escaped. We do not want those treasures to fall into somebody else’s hands.

“One can never be too cautious. At least, we do not want to lose all our secrets before we decide that the Star Glory Federation is really trustworthy.

“As it happened, we learned something about Firefly in Fish Dragon City. Then, I happened to run into Tang Xiaoxing, Captain Tang Dingyuan’s daughter, in a magical equipment store.”

Chapter 1619 - Immortal Cultivator 2.0

Li Yao opened his hands and said, “As you can see, I am a refiner. It was really a coincidence that I ran into Tang Xiaoxing in the magical equipment store. I did not know her identity back then and merely discussed the arts of refining with her for a while. Then, after learning that a batch of your rare materials was on sale, I went to your warehouse with her to check the goods, only to suffer an assault while we were on the way.

“As a Cultivator, naturally, there was no way that I would allow her to be killed. Rescuing her was as coincidental as rescuing you. However, after I saved her life, she told me some more inside information about Firefly. She also said that her father is the captain of Firefly.

“Then, I immediately thought of something.

“Right now, what we are short of is a legal identity to enter the federation, but if we can save the captain of Firefly from the bad guys and help the ‘bridge faction’ completely crush the ‘parliament faction’, chances are that he will appoint us as the special envoys of Firefly, in which case, we will be able to swagger into the federation on a red carpet!

“After all, what happened to us is similar to Firefly’s experience. We have shared the same suffering. If we also save Captain Tang’s life, we believe that he definitely won’t hesitate to help us.

“Therefore, after thorough planning, I was asked to sneak in first. I infiltrated Professor Luo De’s place and pretended to be Professor Luo De.

“My original purpose was merely to deliver the metal cylinder which stored the scarlet ball to the person behind the scheme. Naturally, devices were installed in the cylinder to help us scan the terrain, eavesdrop on secrets, and deduce where Captain Tang was caged. Then, my partners would be able to sneak in more precisely and rescue Captain Tang.

“According to the original plan, I should’ve been sitting comfortably in Professor Luo De’s refining workshop. But as it happened, I was summoned you and saved you in the end before we saved Captain Tang.”

Cui Lingfeng stared at Li Yao. “You didn’t hurt Professor Luo De, did you?”

Li Yao was slightly dazed before shaking his head. “Of course not. Professor Luo De was tricked and did not know the whole story. As a Cultivator, why would I hurt him?

“All in all, this is about everything. Although it sounds like a tale, I guarantee that, well, ninety-five percent of what I said is true,” Li Yao calculated solemnly.

It was the latest identity that Long Yangjun and him had fabricated carefully after thorough consideration. Ninety-five percent of their background was indeed true. Unless the listener was prophetic and omniscient, it would be practically impossible for them to locate any loopholes.

Cui Lingfeng gradually recovered his original calmness and shrewdness. Instead of pursuing whether or not Li Yao was speaking the truth, he asked a different question. “How many people do you have out there? How strong they are?”

Although he could refuse to answer, Li Yao still replied quickly. “There are twelve other than me, all between the Core Formation Stage and the Nascent Soul Stage!”

“So strong?” Cui Lingfeng was rather shocked despite his preparation.

“It can’t be helped. We fought for too long against the army of the Imperium on our mother planet. Those who were not strong enough either died or surrendered,” Li Yao said. “Only those who were strong enough were able to run to this place across the sea of stars.

“However, although our Cultivation is not low, our training resources are highly insufficient. We can barely make ends meet right now, which is also why we are in a hurry to look for Captain Tang’s cooperation.”

Cui Lingfeng’s eyes suddenly glittered. “So, your companions are already on their way to rescue Captain Tang?”

“I don’t know.” Li Yao tapped his ears and said, “I deployed some one-way communication magical equipment on the starship, but we travelled in the vacuum tubes for too long just now. This is an unknown area. The signal is intermittent, and I cannot reach out to them.

“Judging from the pieces of information that I received, they must’ve already snuck in. However, because of the chaos on the starship, and since we do not want to hurt any innocent folk, we have to keep a low profile in our operation. I don’t think that they can rescue Captain Tang so quickly.”

Cui Lingfeng nodded slowly and said, “Alright. Assuming that you have been speaking the truth, what should I call you, fellow Cultivator from the Red Lotus Sector?”

Li Yao blinked and said, “Lin Jiu.”

Cui Lingfeng did not care about whether it was a real name or a false one at all. He said solemnly, “Thank you for saving my life, Fellow Cultivator Lin! You said that it was only a coincidence that you saved me. I wonder, what are you planning to do right now?”

Li Yao scratched the back of his head and said, “Continue our original plan, of course. We will rescue Captain Tang, win his trust, help the ‘bridge faction’ completely crush the ‘parliament faction’, and drive the Speaker away!

“Do excuse us, Speaker Cui, but this is nothing personal. After all, we are more inclined to join the Star Glory Federation, although we want to observe it first so that we will be able to defend our interests as best as possible. Captain Tang seems to be thinking exactly the same way.

“As for you…

“Forget it. There’s no need to talk about that now. Despite our different opinions, based on the series of events just now, I believe that you are a true Cultivator. Now that I’ve saved you, I’d better make sure that you are properly taken care of. Are you going to the ‘No. 1 Fortress’? Or maybe, do you have other secret troops that are more loyal than Cheng Xuansu? I’ll escort you to them!”

Li Yao looked at Cui Lingfeng very sincerely.

Cui Lingfeng’s face, however, grew dim again. He thought for a long time and finally said gloomily, “Fellow Cultivator

Lin, the bodyguard sealed in his crystal suit cannot overhear the conversation between us, can he?”

“Of course not.” Li Yao smiled. “I am not a rookie. When I destroyed his crystal suit, I naturally turned off the crystal cameras and the soundwave sensors on the crystal suit. He can’t see or hear a thing.”

“Alright. Can you do me one more favor?” Cui Lingfeng said. “Open his facial cover and then give me five minutes. I’ll give you a… satisfactory answer.”

Li Yao’s smile was even more brilliant. “Sure. It’s very smart of you. No wonder you are the Speaker.”

The bodyguard who was confined to his crystal suit unable to move was the leader of Red Phoenix Group, which was responsible for the Speaker’s safety.

It was also why Li Yao had kept him alive. Based on the positions of the four bodyguards and their body language before they lunged forward, Li Yao had already concluded that he was the leader of the four of them.

When the guy’s facial cover was lifted, his face was completely pale after being soaked in darkness for so long. He was almost drowned by his own sweat.

“Cheng Bin,” Cui Lingfeng said expressionlessly. “Do you see it now? Everything was within my expectations. I knew that something was wrong with you, and I intentionally set up such a trap to fish you up.

“Everything is under my control. Cheng Xuansu has committed suicide for fear of her punishment. Ding Zhengyang is also surrounded by my men in the bridge and about to be captured. Are you going to follow their example, or are you going to grasp the last chance to do the right thing?”

The spine of the bodyguard ‘Cheng Bin’ was unlocked by Li Yao. Hardly had he turned his head when he noticed Cheng Xuansu’s headless body on the ground. His face was even paler than before, and his sweat was as red as blood. He cried, “Speaker, I—I—”

“Aright. Cut the nonsense. Now that you are willing to repent, I’ll give you an opportunity to correct your mistakes,” Cui Lingfeng said calmly. “How many people do you have? Other than Cheng Xuansu and Ding Zhengyang, who else among the leadership of the starship are with you? Speak now! One more name means one less charge for you!”

“I—I don’t know!” Cheng Bing shook his face hard, his face pale. “We always maintained one-way communication. Leader Cheng was the commander for the few of us. I only met some other fellow Cultivators during the ‘Immortality Orientation’.”

“Immortality Orientation?” Cui Lingfeng frowned. “Tell me about it.”

“It is a secret seminar where we explore the true path of immortality,” Cheng Bin said quickly. “At first, Leader Cheng gave us some leaflets on the truth path of immortality. She claimed that it was very popular on the starship nowadays and asked us to find out who was behind all that, declaring that such evil, addictive thoughts must not disseminate and contaminate on our starship.

“It was the job of the secret police of the Internal Affairs Division after all. At that time, we were not suspicious at all but simply read the leaflets critically.

"However, after I studied what the leaflets said, the more I thought about it, the more I felt that it—it did have a point and that it could not simply be summarized as 'evil'. I was quite bothered by my new finding.

"During that time, Leader Cheng often came to us to communicate with us. One day, I couldn't hold myself any longer and told her my trouble.

"After that, she often visited me and talked to me. After a few sessions, she brought me to one of the Immortality Orientations, introducing me to the true path of immortality interpreted by Master Lu in person. Then, I was—"

"Wait, Master Lu? Lu Qingchen?" Cui Lingfeng narrowed his eyes. "Lu Qingchen—president of the CIFA, the most wanted criminal of the federation, grandson of the leader of the Patriots Partnership in the past, and the leader of the local Immortal Cultivators of the federation—has been hiding on our starship the whole time? Did you meet him?"

"Not exactly." Cheng Bin shook his head and said, "We only watched videos and communicated about the ideas remotely. Even so, Master Lu, no, Lu Qingchen was so persuasive that we were all bewildered without us knowing."

Cui Lingfeng sniffed. "What exactly did he say that puzzled and perplexed all of you?"

"Too much." Cheng Bin sighed sorrowfully. "Speaker, I really did not want to betray the ideology of the Cultivators and degenerate into an Immortal Cultivator, but Master Lu said—he said that the classification of Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators is groundless. There are always two parts, namely 'Cultivator' and 'Immortal Cultivator', inside every individual, except that sometimes the 'Cultivator' part is greater, and sometimes the ‘Immortal Cultivator’ part is greater.

“He also said that Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators can be transformed into each other freely. Therefore, the issue must be viewed objectively according to actual circumstances.

“For example, the policies in ‘troubled times’ on Firefly hundreds of years ago did not look like something that Cultivators should do, but they helped us weather the difficulties and darkness!

“Then, were the leadership who made the decisions at that time Cultivators or Immortal Cultivators?

“Master Lu also said that the entire civilization of mankind is in ‘troubled times’, too, like Firefly hundreds of years ago. So, we have to resolve the problems with the Immortal Cultivators’ system. This is not about exploiting the ordinary people but about dealing with the troubles together.

“As soon as the Alliance of the Holy Covenant is defeated and the universe is unified, there will be a technological leap, tremendous resources, and no more wars. Naturally, the ordinary people will gradually be given more rights.

“They—they’re only part of Master Lu’s views. Because our level was too low, we had no access to the truth path of immortality of a higher level. All in all, Leader Cheng told us that Master Lu’s ideology was different from the true path of immortality that we knew in the past. It was perfect, advanced, dialectical, and objective. In short, he is the Immortal Cultivator 2.0!”

Chapter 1620 - Team Red Lotus!

“Leader Cheng said that it is a theory that originates from but also transcends the true path of immortality. She said that it was an effective supplement and improvement for the true path of immortality today. However, she did not go any further with us and only told us that there would be deeper discussions after the job was done.”

“Alright,” Cui Lingfeng said solemnly. “Leave your ideology aside. Who else participated in the Immortality Orientations together with you?”

Cheng Bin shook his head. “I don’t know. During the Immortality Orientations, everybody changed into different appearances, and it was strictly forbidden to inquire about each other. Also, the participants of the Immortality Orientations must be of a similar level to myself. We were also asked to keep one-way communication with Leader Cheng. As for the members of higher levels, they had their own internal discussions and meetings.

“However…”

Seeing that Cui Lingfeng was frowning in disappointment, he thought for a moment and said, “I took part in three Immortality Orientations, and one person left a deep impression on me. He should be Lieutenant Xiao Yunpeng of the Speaker’s Guard Corp. I once received training together with him a long time ago. His left leg was heavily wounded, and three artificial components were implanted into his knee to smoothen the veins. That’s why he walked in a slightly different way.

“Xiao Yunpeng of the Speaker’s Guard Corp…” Cui Lingfeng’s eyes twitched abruptly. “Anyone else?”

Cheng Bin lowered his head and said, “I—I’m not sure. I only have some random guesses. Anyway—anyway, when Leader Cheng encouraged us to do this, she said that there were our men in every critical post on Firefly. She told us to simply do the job without any concerns! So, I think…”

Cui Lingfeng interrupted him quickly. “No evidence is needed right now. Just say the names of everyone that you are suspicious of. Quickly!”

Cheng Bin swallowed hard and reported a series of names. Every name hit Cui Lingfeng like a burning bullet, making it difficult for him to breathe.

After he confessed eighteen names, he looked at Cui Lingfeng pitifully.

Cui Lingfeng could not have looked more awful. Every wrinkle on his face turned into a deep canyon. He suddenly pressed Cheng Bin’s neck and inputted a stream of spiritual energy, putting him into a coma.

After doing that, Cui Lingfeng was in a daze, his eyes mixed with the darkness of rust.

“We’re not going to the ‘No. 1 Fortress’, are we?” As if nothing had happened, Li Yao spoke casually next to him. “It appears that Speaker Cui’s close subordinates have been greatly compromised. A lot of your trusted people have betrayed you. You don’t know if the rest of them are trustworthy for the time being, either.

“That makes sense. If I were Cheng Xuansu and I was planning such a great thing, I would certainly start with those around the Speaker. I might not need to kill the Speaker at the very beginning, but I would have to find a way to make the Speaker a figurehead so that the subsequent operations would be more convenient!

“So, Speaker Cui, your five minutes are up. Have you decided where to go? I’m going to have to rescue Captain Tang and follow his orders after I escort you over!”

Cui Lingfeng struggled to turn his neck. He stared at Li Yao and said, one word after another, “My intuition tells me that ninety-five percent of what you said is indeed true.”

Li Yao nodded. “Of course. As I said, this is really just a coincidence!”

“But my intuition also tells me that the key lies in the five percent of what you said that is not true.”

Li Yao raised his hands. “It doesn’t matter whether or not you trust me. As long as Captain Tang trusts us, it will do. If he trusts me and gives us an identity under which we can enter the federation openly, we will serve him. Simple as that.”

Cui Lingfeng looked at Li Yao in the eyes. “Simple as that?”

Li Yao looked back at him honestly, too. “Yes. Simple as that.”

Cui Lingfeng took a deep, deep breath. He mumbled to himself, “I am still reluctant to believe that you are nothing more than locals from the Red Locus Sector. However, according to my calculations based on all the given information, the odds that you are from the Imperium, the Covenant Alliance, or the federation are hundreds of times lower than the odds that you are from the Red Lotus Sector. This is all too uncanny and sophisticated. I need to think about it more carefully…"

"By all means." Checking the time on the tactical crystal processor, Li Yao tapped his wrist and said, "Why don't you take your time to consider? I'm going back to save Captain Tang!"

After saying that, Li Yao truly turned around and strode off without looking back.

"Wait!" It was not until he had almost disappeared into the rusty darkness that every wrinkle on Cui Lingfeng's face stopped vibrating. He made up his mind and gritted his teeth. "Tell me again. Who are you?"

Facing him with his back, Li Yao casually said, "Lin Jiu, from the Red Lotus Sector."

"No," Cui Lingfeng said quickly. "Your name is Lin Jiu, but you are not from the Red Lotus Sector. In fact, we have never heard of the Red Lotus Sector before. You are among the first batch of volunteers of the 'Red Lotus Plan' and the captain of 'Team Red Lotus'!

"The Red Lotus Plan was a secret plan to train super warriors that was put into practice 233 years ago. The background of the plan was that, while Firefly moved further and further away from the home and the conditions of the starship got worse and worse, a lot of pessimists who lost all hope appeared among us. Those people could be swallowed by darkness and transformed into the Immortal Cultivators!

"The Immortal Cultivators lurked deep inside Firefly. In the perilous, ever-changing sea of stars, nobody was certain that those next to them would not suddenly have a mental breakdown and turn into Immortal Cultivators. Even the ‘Internal Affairs Division’, which is responsible for the internal security of Firefly, could also be compromised and sabotaged by the Immortal Cultivators!

“With that in mind, it was necessary to establish an elite squad that was above the secret police of the Internal Affairs Division and more confidential. The Speaker would control the squad personally as the last line of defense in case the Immortal Cultivators initiated a riot and everything was in peril!

“The Red Lotus Plan was proposed and implemented by ‘Shui Yian’, the Speaker 233 years ago. For absolute confidentiality, all the files concerning ‘Team Red Lotus’ were erased, and the records of the crystal processor were tampered, too, after the first batch of elite warriors were refined. They were delivered to the hibernation capsules as the specialists of non-combat fields!

“After that, the Red Lotus Plan became a top secret of top secrets that was told to the next Speaker when the previous Speaker relinquished their duty. Today, only the Speaker is aware of the existence of the Red Lotus Plan and the way to activate Team Red Lotus!

“Warriors of Team Red Lotus are all heroes. To be prepared for the blatant attacks of the Immortal Cultivators, they are willing to protect Firefly forever in prolonged hibernation. When they are woken up by the Speaker, it means that Firefly has come to the most dangerous moment.

“Under such circumstances, Team Red Lotus will only listen to the Speaker’s command. They will be authorized with all the permissions on Firefly by the Speaker. As long as the threat of the Immortal Cultivators can be extinguished, they are allowed to resort to all approaches available other than hurting the ordinary people and making use of all the resources on board!

“There were originally ninety-seven members in Team Red Lotus. However, eighty-four of them unfortunately passed away during the last malfunction accident in the hibernation cabin. Today, when they were woken up, aside from Captain Lin Jiu, there are still twelve tough secret warriors!

“Captain Lin, am I right?”

“Wow…” Li Yao exclaimed in amazement. Tilting his head and thinking for a moment, he remarked, “It sounds like Team Red Lotus is just a group of simple soldiers.”

“Of course not,” Cui Lingfeng said. “Team Red Lotus is an elite troop against the Immortal Cultivators. Other than direct assaults, they are certainly also capable of tracking, investigating, infiltrating, and even assassinating. That is, when Team Red Lotus still had all its members.

“Right now, since the number of Team Red Lotus has been greatly reduced, and we are also faced with the merger with the federation and the confrontation with the expedition army of the Imperium, the mission for Team Red Lotus needs adjusting to better reflect the current situation that is different from two hundred years ago.

“After taking care of the threat of the Immortal Cultivators on Firefly, Team Red Lotus, having been exposed, does not need to go into hibernation again. I’m planning to ask Team Red Lotus to escort a batch of trustworthy MPs to join the ‘Election Observation Delegation’ and go to the federation with Captain Tang’s men, partly to discuss the issues regarding the merger and partly to inform them of the threat of the local Immortal Cultivators of the federation. What has happened on Firefly has a lot to do with the CIFA, the organization of the local Immortal Cultivators in the federation. Therefore, the cooperation between the two parties is highly necessary in that regard.

“As for you, Captain Lin, you will visit the federation as the Special Representative of the Speaker’s Office. Any problems?”

Crossing his fingers, Cui Lingfeng stared at Li Yao.

Li Yao stared back at Cui Lingfeng for a long time, too. Amused, he shook his head and said, “Speaker Cui, did you know? When you said that you were acting for the Star Ocean Republic and you were not greedy about your power at all, I almost believed you.

“It never occurred to me that you could play such a move in order to keep your power?”

Cui Lingfeng smiled, somewhat sadly. “You think that I’m proposing the terms because I’m greedy for the power of the Speaker and I’m unwilling to see Tang Dingyuan surpass me and even kick me out of office?”

Li Yao raised his eyebrow. “Are you not?”

“No,” Cui Lingfeng said. “If we are left with no choice except to join the Star Glory Federation, Tang Dingyuan is still not the best candidate to deal with the specific affairs. I am!”

“Oh?” Li Yao said. “I’d like to hear you reasons.”

“Firstly, although many people mistake the MPs who cling to the name of the ‘Star Ocean Republic’ in parliament as shameless dogs who are waiting to sell themselves at a high price, it is not exactly the truth.”

Looking at his own hands, Cui Lingfeng said, “You don’t understand Firefly. You don’t understand what a rough journey we’ve had in the past thousand years. You cannot cruise for a thousand years in the depressing darkness without a bit of powerful spirit! They may say that we are just fooling ourselves, that we are just weaving a dream that we cannot wake up from, or that we are fooling both us and other people. Regardless, a thousand years is enough for some people to turn the words ‘Star Ocean Republic’ into a scorching stamp and etch it into the deepest part of their soul!

“Is it extreme? Perhaps. But under such circumstances, they might’ve completely collapsed had they not been so extreme, and they would’ve slid to the other extremity, the abyss of the Immortal Cultivators!

“Tang Dingyuan does not understand those people at all. He does not understand their belief and pride. He mistakes their belief for stubbornness, their persistence for idiocy, and their passion for craziness!

“Tang Dingyuan thinks that they… that we are either a bunch of obstinate lunatics or pretentious phonies. He couldn’t be more wrong!

“He won’t be able to convince those people. Only I can persuade them, my own kind!”

Chapter 1621 - Good Cultivators, Bad Cultivators

“Wow…” Li Yao exclaimed in amazement again and changed his form of address. “Sir Speaker, you have changed my view of you time and time again. I didn’t know that you were so sober regarding the issue.”

“I don’t want to be so sober, either.” Narrowing his eyes, Cui Lingfeng said gloomily, “When you are placed in an endless hell, the more sober you are, the more painful it will be.”

“However, the first reason alone does not seem to be persuasive enough,” Li Yao said. “What’s the second reason?”

“Secondly,” Cui Lingfeng said coldly, “like your fellows from the Red Lotus Sector, even if we do join the Star Glory Federation, I must fight for the fundamental benefits of my compatriots and for the respect and historical influence of the name ‘Star Ocean Republic’ that it deserves.

“But Captain Tang can’t. The only thing he is capable of is piloting a starship and controlling the hundreds of units. You’re asking such an operator to brazen himself to negotiate with other people and fight for benefits ruthlessly? He can’t. He is too unsophisticated. The federation and Jin Xinyue will only play him like a toy!”

“Well, you don’t seem to be particularly fond of Jin Xinyue, Sir Speaker. Just now, you appeared to be quite hostile when you thought that I worked for Jin Xinyue.”

Cui Lingfeng sniffed and said, “After you first rescued Tang Xiaoxing, you were engaged with a mysterious tactical squad who got her away from the hands of the Four Sectors Chamber of Commerce and the secret police. The tactical squad was likely the ‘Dim Moon Squad’ under Jin Xinyue’s lead.

“Let me ask you. Cheng Xuansu has been acting so surreptitiously. How exactly did Jin Xinyue learn of the arrest in advance even before the Secret Sword Bureau of the federation took action, and why did a fully-armed Dim Moon Squad happen to be nearby?

“It was definitely not a coincidence. Jin Xinyue must be greatly related to the issue. As for exactly how deep she is involved and what kind of role she plays in the whole event, I don’t know it yet.

“But you can figure out the logic if you think about it more carefully. Who will earn the greatest benefits if there is major chaos on Firefly? The Star Glory Federation, of course!

“Firstly, they move away the smelly, stubborn diehard—me—by the hands of the Immortal Cultivators. Then, they will take over everything on Firefly. Chances are that Tang Dingyuan will even be grateful for the ‘selfless help of the fellow Cultivators’. This seems exactly to be Jin Xinyue’s style.”

Scratching his head hard, Li Yao observed, “Well, according to what you said, Speaker, this Jin Xinyue is not a good guy.”

Cui Lingfeng glanced at Li Yao, somewhat in confusion. “I’ve noticed that your wisdom is rollercoasting, Captain Lin. Did the two-hundred-year hibernation wreck the thinking area inside your brain? Do you not know what Jin Xinyue’s job is? President of the Dim Moon Fund! There are two intelligence agencies in the Star Glory Federation. One of them is the Secret Sword Bureau, which is responsible for homeland security, and the other is the Dim Moon Fund, which is responsible for external strikes. To put it in a simpler manner, the former prevents the enemy from sabotaging their home, and the latter tries to sabotage the enemy’s home.

“A good guy? Is a good guy even qualified to be the director of the external intelligence agency?”

Li Yao was rendered speechless. Pretending to be highly alert, he lowered his voice and said, “We’ve heard a lot of rumors about Jin Xinyue in the Dragon Snake Space Zone, too, and we are highly wary of the Venomous Witch. We are unwilling to publicize our real identity and enter the federation openly mostly because of her, too! I’m told that she is truly brutal and ruthless! Sir Speaker, do you think that it is possible that she has also defected and degenerated into an Immortal Cultivator?”

“I do not think that Jin Xinyue is an Immortal Cultivator,” Cui Lingfeng replied. “But why do you think Cultivators are doubtlessly good guys?”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. “Can Cultivators be bad guys?”

“Of course,” Cui Lingfeng replied. “There are two types of Cultivators. Good Cultivators and bad Cultivators.”

Li Yao frowned. “I don’t understand. What’s the difference?”

“The good Cultivators do what Cultivators should do, and the bad Cultivators do the things that the good Cultivators are unwilling to do but have to be done nevertheless," Cui Lingfeng said casually.

"It's… still a bit confusing for me."

"Is this important?" Cui Lingfeng frowned. "Do we have to waste our precious time with me explaining this to you?"

Li Yao nodded and solemnly said, "It is very important. The locals of the Red Lotus Sector are Cultivators, too. We have our own beliefs and boundaries. Naturally, we cannot help any random guy. We can only make a deal if you do have a point!"

"Fair enough." Pondering for a moment, Cui Lingfeng accelerated his speech and said, "There's no time for thorough explanation. Let me put it this way. Two candidates in the federation are campaigning for the Speaker of the Federation, a post that has never been more important in the past hundred years. Of them, Ding Lingdang is the good Cultivator, and Jiang Shaoyang is the bad Cultivator.

"This is not unique in the federation but ubiquitous in every place. On Firefly, generally speaking, the captain is the good Cultivator, and the Speaker is the bad Cultivator.

"Don't be hasty. You'll understand what I'm saying after I give you an example.

"Did you know that Firefly suffered quite a number of disasters that could've wiped us out in the past hundreds of years? The cabins in which we planted crops and raised livestock suffered destructive strikes of meteor showers. We were once seriously short of a critical material, which led to the delay in the production of certain special drugs, and many patients died because of that. Severe plagues once flooded the starship, but there was nothing we could do about it.

“Let me ask you, after the artificial ranches and greenhouses on the starship are seriously wrecked by the cosmic storms, and it is calculated that there will be serious famines in the hundred years to come that will only grow worse if the population rises, under such circumstances, can the good Cultivators make the decision that natural conception and birth are forbidden for everyone, that whoever wants to have children must freeze their sperm and egg and wait in line, in which case, many people will die with regrets because they failed to watch the birth of their children with their own eyes for their entire life?

“Can the good Cultivators really make such an inhumane decision?”

Li Yao was lost for words, not knowing how he should answer, but Cui Lingfeng did not let him go. He simply went on.

“Let me ask you again. When we were seriously short of one material, which disrupted the production of a special drug targeting a certain heart disease, and when our stock is running low after every bottle used, then, for the young people and all the future generations, is it possible for the good Cultivators to make it a rule that the seniors above the age of 150 are forbidden from using such a drug after they contract heart disease, even if it is the only way that their life can be saved, so that the drugs can be spared for the young people?

“Can the good Cultivators really make such a cruel decision? Can they watch the seniors above 150 die slowly while doing nothing?”

Li Yao swallowed and swallowed again.

Staring at him, Cui Lingfeng's eyes felt like two cold torches. "Alright. The rule has been made that all the seniors above the age of 150 will be banned from the special drug for heart disease indiscriminately. However, as it happens, a specialist of power rune arrays, who is of paramount importance for Firefly, suddenly has a heart attack when he is 151 years old. He will certainly die if he is not given the special drug.

"His death will be a serious blow for Firefly. It may even mean the complete loss of a special extreme turbo boosting technology, which has been the key for us in getting rid of the army of the Imperium in the past! Under such circumstances, can the good Cultivators tamper with his identity files and change his age to 149, making him qualified to enjoy the special drug?

"Later, a reporter accidentally finds out the issue and intends to expose the great scandal, which could lead to a great riot on Firefly. Can the good Cultivators coerce the reporter with carrots and sticks and bury the scandal?

"Do you get it, Captain Lin? Good Cultivators shouldn't do those things. Such things are dirty, nasty, smelly, and cruel. They should be despised by all 'real' Cultivators!

"The captain of Firefly must not do any of that!

"O captain, my captain! The captain of Firefly, the greatest universal exploration starship in the Star Ocean Republic that explores the places none have ever set foot on! He should be a good Cultivator of brightness, justice, and perfection without any dirt! He should lead everyone on board from one victory to another and from brightness to greater brightness with a brilliant smile and with his confidence and fearlessness!

"The captain's hands can't be dirty.

“But as for the parliament that is as useless as the appendix and the Speaker who is fat, selfish, merciless, unsympathetic, things are different. He is a bad Cultivator. He is free to make all the decisions that the good Cultivators cannot make!

“It is why Firefly still adopts a ‘dual-head’ system after a thousand years of voyaging. It is also why Firefly was able to persist in the voyage for a thousand years! The captain and the Speaker, the good Cultivators and the bad Cultivators. The former is responsible for the part of the work that is upright, blood-boiling, and passionate, whereas the latter is in charge of whatever is left. That’s all.

“Tang Dingyuan is a very dutiful captain. He is also a standard good Cultivator, just like Ding Lingdang, the other candidate in the Star Glory Federation, the God of War in the federation. Hehe. Yes. They are the most perfect warriors walking in daylight!

“However, warriors walking in daylight are only suitable for fighting during the day. Tang Dingyuan can shake hands, sign his name, hug Ding Lingdang, and put on the sunniest smile in front of the public and under the spotlight. But he cannot play the game with Jin Xinyue like a wild dog in the places where people cannot see. He is absolutely no match for Jin Xinyue!

“Only I can fight for more benefits for Firefly with the name of ‘Star Ocean Republic’ under Jin Xinyue’s sharp tusks, because Jin Xinyue and I are the same type of person. We are both bad Cultivators who defend the path of the Cultivators in darkness!”

Cui Lingfeng declared, one word after another, “Therefore, I must have full control over the negotiation. As for my own outcome when the negotiation is over, it doesn’t matter. But right now, I have to work as the Speaker. I must show the power and resolution of the supreme leader of the Star Ocean Republic!”

Chapter 1622 - We Agreed to Keep a Low Profile Together…

Cui Lingfeng was not just an admin-type Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage but also the nominal supreme leader of the country that had been gone for a long time.

However, when he made the declaration with a voice that was not very loud but particularly touching, the great tides that he raised in Li Yao’s heart were as intimidating as the suffocating auras that Li Yao had felt when he confronted Lu Zui, Zhou Hengdao, Xiao Xuance, Bai Xinghe, and Elder Nether Spring!

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao stood at attention and solemnly said, “Sir Speaker, Team Red Lotus has been activated and is ready for battle. What’s our mission?”

“Excellent!”

Every wrinkle on Cui Lingfeng’s face seemed to have turned into a dagger. He quickly said, “We have reached the most perilous moment. The parliament is as badly compromised by the Immortal Cultivators as the bridge. Neither side looks promising. It is not difficult to figure out that Cheng Xuansu, as the commander of the secret police, could only control the Internal Affairs Division at best. She certainly couldn’t have controlled the whole of Firefly or influenced the bridge. To play a greater role in the war between the federation and the Imperium, the bridge is certainly the key!

“Therefore, Cheng Xuansu cannot be the leader of this rebellion.

“Chief Mate Ding Zhengyang, the former general commander of the deck floor, accused Captain Tang Dingyuan with detailed evidence. I studied the evidence carefully. A lot of information he provided could only have been known by insiders. It was also why I did not doubt him at all and arrested Captain Tang immediately! Right now, he has assumed Captain Tang’s post according to the regulations and temporarily gained full control over Firefly!

“So, leaving Lu Qingchen of the CIFA’s role in the rebellion aside, the No. 1 person on the Immortal Cultivators inside Firefly is definitely Ding Zhengyang!”

While speaking, Cui Lingfeng turned on his mini crystal processor and triggered almost a hundred light beams in a row.

As the Speaker, he had the highest clearance on the starship, which allowed him to retrieve most of the surveillance pictures from most places.

According to the Immortal Cultivators’ plan, he should have been killed directly. Therefore, his clearances had not been canceled. Also, it was difficult for Ding Zhengyang and Cheng Xuansu alone to remove the Speaker’s permissions to manage the starship.

Pictures of shouting, uneasy crowds, and rising fire and smoke, shot by mini crystal processors of the people, occupied every light beam.

Every critical node of Firefly contained large-scale riots. Countless angry people had crammed into the narrow cabins and pathways, demanding that Captain Tang be released immediately. They were shoving the police officers who were maintaining order. The two parties were at loggerheads.

At such a time, as soon as a few malicious people in the crowd or among the police opened fire at the other side, a great fight would definitely be caused!

“Although Ding Zhengyang is the acting captain, he couldn’t have developed a lot of Immortal Cultivators in secret!”

Considering the issue for a moment, Cui Lingfeng said, “The participants of the ‘Immortality Orientation’ must be very few. Only those who passed the meticulous vetting arranged by Ding Zhengyang, Cheng Xuansu, and their lot would be brainwashed by them. It is impossible for them to kill everyone who joined the ‘Immortality Orientations’ but was reluctant to turn into an Immortal Cultivator! There couldn’t be many ‘accidents’, which would attract unnecessary attention!

“It means that the Immortal Cultivators only control some critical posts on the starship. For most people, even if they are involved in the insurgency, they are simply being fooled, and they do not know exactly what they are doing!

“Let me take a guess. Ding Zhengyang and Cheng Xuansu’s arrangement is probably to have a troop that pretends to be the Immortal Cultivators break into the prison. On one hand, they can kill me along the way. On the other hand, it will be undeniable proof that Tang Dingyuan is an ‘Immortal Cultivator’. As a result, both the technical staff who are loyal to Tang Dingyuan and the MPs who are loyal to me will suffer a heavy blow. Then, if Ding Zhengyang and Cheng Xuansu join hands, it will be more than simple for them to suppress those on Firefly who disobey them!

“Cheng Xuansu is dead, but Ding Zhengyang still holds the bridge. If he is grasped by desperation, I don’t think that there’s anything he won’t do!

“Therefore, we have two top priorities now. Firstly, we must let everyone know that the Speaker is still alive. Secondly, we must get Ding Zhengyang under control before he goes crazy!

“Ding Zhengyang can’t die. He must know a lot about the Immortal Cultivators, including the fact that the Black Wind is already here and is lurking in the darkness preparing to launch a fatal strike on the Star Glory Federation. It does not sound like a pure bluff. We have to exploit every piece of intelligence in his head!”

Li Yao nodded. “What do we do now? Go rescue Captain Tang Dingyuan first?”

“No!” Cui Lingfeng shook his head. “Rescuing Captain Tang alone will be useless. He has been smeared by Ding Zhengyang as an ‘Immortal Cultivator’. In such chaos, it is practically impossible for him to prove his innocence or control the bridge.

“Moreover, now that Ding Zhengyang has decided to wager everything on this, he must’ve transferred Captain Tang. It will be impossible for us to locate him for now.

“Rest assured. Captain Tang knows a lot of core secrets about Firefly. Ding Zhengyang cannot kill him immediately if he wants to completely control the starship. His life must be secure for now.

“Team Red Lotus only has thirteen warriors. You are too few in number and must not be divided. Therefore, instead of rescuing Captain Tang, you might as well save the other prisoners who have been captured by Ding Zhengyang and Cheng Xuansu!”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. Then, his eyes immediately glittered. “Exactly. We can’t tell the Cultivators from the Immortal Cultivators. But Ding Zhengyang and Cheng Xuansu know it clearly. Those who are imprisoned by them must be innocent!”

Cui Lingfeng disconnected his mini crystal processor from the Spiritual Nexus. Retrieving a few maps that were stored on the chip, he explained, “We locked and interrogated Captain Tang and the rest of the prisoners separately. Up until this morning, besides Captain Tang, 122 people had been arrested in secret. Most of them are the leaders of the key posts on Firefly, influential scholars, and social activists. They are all locked here, in Black Stone Jail, which was modified from ‘Black Stone’, a heavy carrier designed to transport dangerous products!

“I am going to transmit a password of the highest permission right now. You will distribute the password to the other members of Team Red Lotus so that they will have some of the permissions on the starship and set the prisoners free in the Black Stone Jail!

“Any method is allowed. If the jail does not cooperate, they are permitted to take all measures necessary!

“Tell them that on Firefly right now, they have the greatest power only secondary to the Speaker’s!

“After everyone is saved, they will escort the prisoners back to their previous posts and ask them to soothe the chaos on Firefly as fast as possible. Should your team encounter any troops on their way, Team Red Lotus will take over commander with the password as the order!

“Captain Lin, are your men capable of such a mission?”

Li Yao licked his lips and smiled. “No problem at all, but it never occurred to me that the Speaker boasts such great power. You can essentially turn Firefly upside down any minute!”

“Exactly.” Cui Lingfeng put on a creepy smile. “For a thousand years, the ‘good Cultivators’, led by the captain, have been trying to reduce the power of the Speaker and the parliament. We conceded in many respects, but when it comes to the boundary, the ‘bad Cultivators’ certainly will not give in!”

Li Yao nodded. “It shouldn’t be difficult to break the Black Stone Jail. After all, the guards of the jail can’t all be Immortal Cultivators. Only some of their leaders might be. The ‘decapitation strategy’ should resolve the problem perfectly.

“But my communication magical equipment hasn’t been paved to this area yet. The signal is still intermittent right now. It is difficult for me to reach out to my teammates.”

“It doesn’t matter!” Cui Lingfeng said resolutely. “Just use the civil Spiritual Nexus!”

“The public network?” Li Yao was slightly dazed. “Then, won’t we be discovered by the enemy easily?”

Cui Lingfeng sneered and declared, “Firstly, with the riots on Firefly right now, the enemy won’t have time to identity you from the messy signals on the Spiritual Nexus. Secondly, with everything coming to this point, are we scared of being discovered?”

Li Yao took a deep breath and thought the whole thing through. Yes, it was true!

Team Red Lotus had been activated. It was Ding Zhengyang and the other Immortal Cultivators who should be scared!

Glancing at him, Cui Lingfeng knew that those ‘natives of the Red Lotus Sector’ certainly had their own secrets that they needed to discuss. Therefore, he simply walked away considerately and collected the crystal processors of the five Immortal Cultivators, checking if there was any unexpected evidence.

Li Yao walked to a corner and connected Long Yangjun and the rest of them through the public network. Noises and chaos were obvious in the background.

“What’s the situation on your side?” Li Yao asked.

“You’re finally in contact,” Long Yangjun replied. “What happened to you? You were silent for such a long time! We have already snuck into Firefly. However, the plan has not gone so well. There seems to be some sort of change on the starship. Infuriated people and highly-alert policemen and soldiers are everywhere. The defense is ten times higher than before! Also, we have been keeping a low file and concealing our capabilities. It is barely possible to move forward!”

“Yes. Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, we were worried about your safety,” Ba Xiaoyu added. “We were afraid that we would bring new trouble to you if we cause any fuss here. Also, we kept in mind your repeated reminders that we must be calm, restrained, and low-key. We did not dare act freely. We’re almost suffocated now!”

“Well, in fact, the outsider world is much more complicated than the world we were in,” Li Yao said. “It doesn’t matter if we act according to the changes when carrying out a mission, and we don’t necessarily need to keep a low profile...”

“… What do you mean?”

“Cough, cough. As a matter of fact, I was with Speaker Cui Lingfeng of the Star Ocean Republic just now. He has proved to not be a bad man at all, nothing like what we mistook him to be.”

“Get to the point!” Long Yangjun exclaimed.

“The point is, I revealed the capabilities that are far beyond the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage in front of Speaker Cui. At the most dangerous moment, I killed four Immortal Cultivators including Cheng Xuansu, the head of the secret police, and saved the Speaker’s life. Then, Speaker Cui, admiring my talents, appointed me as his new trusted subordinate, his special representative, and the captain of the Speaker’s secret armed force ‘Team Red Lotus’. He also said that as soon as the riot of the Immortal Cultivators is settled, the identity of the ‘natives of the Red Lotus Sector’ will be taken care of by him. Well. That’s about everything. So, there’s no need to worry now. Our greatest headache has been resolved by me.”

“…” Long Yangjun.

“…” Wu Suiyun, Wu Suiyun.

“…” Han Baling, Qi Zhongdao, Yan Liren, and the rest.

“Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture,” Ba Xiaoyu said, “I have a lot of complicated feelings hearing what you said. Can I express my feelings with some local slang that I picked up on the Spiritual Nexus?”

“Oh? You can say whatever you want, Fellow Cultivator Ba.”

“Why did you go out in secret to show off when we agreed to keep a low profile together?”

Chapter 1623 - Trolling!

Li Yao coughed and pretended that he did not hear what Ba Xiaoyu said. Explaining the whole event from beginning to end quickly, he finally concluded, “Our purpose is to get an appropriate identity. Then, it is obviously better to cooperate with Speaker Cui than with Captain Tang.

“First of all, he is the legitimate Speaker of the Star Ocean Republic and the well-deserved No. 1 person on board. Theoretically speaking, even Captain Tang has to obey his commands. It is impossible for us to completely bypass him if he hamstrings us, but if he claims that such a secret ‘Team Red Lotus’ exists, Captain Tang can barely prove that it is false.

“Secondly, Speaker Cui does not have any trusted subordinate right now, but Captain Tang has at least absolutely reliable subordinates who are still in prison. Therefore, even if Speaker Cui is somewhat suspicious about our identity, he will have to cooperate with us sincerely under such a situation until he establishes a new group of subordinates that are in balance with Captain Tang again. But it won’t be easy!

“We mean no harm for him or Firefly; we only want to enter the Star Glory Federation with them as an intermediary. There is no fundamental conflict of interest. I believe that our cooperation will be pleasant.

“Thirdly, unlike Captain Tang, Speaker Cui is not entirely in favor of the Star Glory Federation. Even if he is truly willing to let go of his insistence on the Star Ocean Republic, he will still need to run a deep, sweeping investigation on the Star

Glory Federation. As long as he is willing to concede in that regard, with the many precious techniques and facilities on Firefly as the leverage, I believe that the Star Glory Federation will certainly open the door and allow his ‘special representatives’, namely us, to enter the core departments of the federation for observation, which is the whole purpose of our trip!

“Last but not least, I am truly not a snobbish man who likes showing off, but I was already forced to blow out the strength of at least the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage in front of Speaker Cui in the perilous moment just now. What else can we do if we don’t cooperate with him? It’s not like we can simply kill him and keep his mouth shut, right?

“Fellow Cultivators, just think about it carefully. Does it make sense?”

There was a brief silence in the communication channel. Then, Meng Chixin’s low voice came over. “Although we made the step by accident, based on Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture’s analysis just now, it is indeed more beneficial to work for the Speaker than to work for the captain. Fine. Team Red Lotus sounds good enough. It will do as long as we can enter the federation openly with a special identity!”

Li Yao had only just taken a breath in relief, when Ba Xiaoyu’s voice came over again. “Wait. I have a question. Why are you the captain of Team Red Lotus, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture?”

Blinking quickly, Li Yao said, “Because I showed the Cultivation of the middle level of the Nascent Soul Stage in front of Speaker Cui and told him that you were between the

Core Formation Stage and the Nascent Soul Stage and at the peak of the Core Formation Stage on average! Is a Core Formation Stage Cultivator more qualified to be the captain than a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator is? The twelve Cultivators at the peak of the Core Formation Stage were already a huge shock for him. It's not like I could tell him that you are all at the high level and peak of the Nascent Soul Stage, some even in the Divinity Transformation Stage, right? He definitely would have passed out! How can the Red Lotus Sector breed so many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators with the harsh environment and the disordered spiritual energy?"

Wu Suiyun, the other Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, casually said, "Now that we have come to the unfamiliar world of modern Cultivators, the twelve Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector should be united. We are all here for the survival and future of the Ancient Sages Sector. Does vanity really matter? Since Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture rescued Speaker Cui by chance, he is certainly the best candidate for the captain of Team Red Lotus. Not just that, I also propose that Fellow Cultivator Wang Xi acts as the vice-captain, because 'Team Red Lotus' is founded for the same purpose as Fellow Cultivator Wang Xi's Ghost Character was. It is more appropriate for him to be in charge of the actual command than for me, Fellow Cultivator Meng, or any other people here who are more used to commanding a huge army.

Long Yangjun's 'previous life' was probably a captain of the assault team or the special forces on the Nuwa warship, which was why she had founded the organization Ghost Character in the Great Qian Dynasty. It was indeed an easy and familiar job for her to work as the vice-captain of Team

Red Lotus and take charge of the operation to attack the Black Stone Jail.

The experts of the Ancient Sages Sector had no objection. Long Yangjun did not hesitate, either. They quickly discussed the plan. Li Yao took the opportunity to send the detailed map of Firefly, the new friend-or-foe identification code, and the special permissions to them via Speaker Cui's portable crystal processor.

“Next, I'll send a series of tokens to you.” Li Yao operated quickly and said, “Through the tokens, you will be able to jump to a secret node on the Spiritual Nexus that solely belongs to the Speaker. Then, log in with the twelve passwords that I'm about to send to you. After that, you will be able to download twelve certificates with the highest permissions. Input the certificates into your tactical crystal processors and your crystal suits; you will be identified as ‘allies’ and ‘superiors’ by the defense system, cabin doors, magical equipment, police officers, soldiers, and all the other armed forces! Whoever doesn't acknowledge your identity and disobeys your command, just show them the toughness of Team Red Lotus that has slept for two hundred years!”

“Haha. Hahahaha!” ‘Heaven Battering King’ Qi Changsheng laughed in a weird tone. “Such a prerogative will definitely make a lot of people jealous!”

“Right.” Li Yao suddenly thought of something else. “How do you plan to explain it to Heiye Lan? It does not seem very suitable to simply tell her we are going to fight the Immortal Cultivators, right?”

“Nothing is not suitable,” Meng Chixin said unhurriedly. “Just tell her the truth. There's no need to lie to her. This is a rebellion that was never going to succeed. Even if we hadn’t interfered, the scheme of the Immortal Cultivators wouldn’t have worked out, either.”

“Huh?” Li Yao was confused.

“You can’t see it clearly because you are in the game. After hearing your explanation just now, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, the truth is very obvious now,” Meng Chixin said casually. “Do you not feel that the Immortal Cultivators’ riot this time is so hasty that everything is basically an unorganized mess? Neither Ding Zhengyang nor Cheng Xuansu are prepared to take over the whole of Firefly. Now that they have buckled up to activate their plan, even if it works out briefly, they will be faced with the tremendous pressure of the Star Glory Federation soon!”

Li Yao squinted. “What do you mean, Senior Meng?”

“It’s very simple. Somebody secretly urged Ding Zhengyang, Cheng Xuansu, and the other Immortal Cultivators hiding in darkness to jump out. However, it is not necessarily ‘Master Lu’ of the CIFA who did that; it was most likely Jin Xinyue. Or maybe, ‘Lu Qingchen’ and ‘Jin Xinyue’ are the same gang, and this is just a trick to lure the enemy out.”

After saying that, Meng Chixin turned around and said, “Fellow Cultivator Wang Xi, you are much more familiar with ploys and schemes than I am. Why don’t you explain it to us?”

“No problem.” Long Yangjun chuckled. “The Star Glory Federation and Firefly are both faced with tremendous military pressure from the expedition army of the Imperium. A war is about to break out, but the Black Wind Fleet is just an external threat. Faced with the seemingly invincible Imperium of True Human Beings and the tempting true path of immortality, a lot of Immortal Cultivators in the darkness are bound to have emerged in the Star Glory Federation in the past hundred years and on Firefly in the past thousand years.

“Neither the Star Glory Federation nor Firefly can completely destroy the ideas of the Immortal Cultivators, because ideas cannot be killed, annihilated, or sealed. The more you block and discourage the ideas, the more alluring, valid, and strong they will be!

“In times of danger when the enemy is far stronger, it is an inevitability for Immortal Cultivators to be born. So, they are a very serious internal threat that can possibly become a fatal, venomous sting in the war!

“Therefore, before the great war begins, all the Immortal Cultivators lurking in the federation and on Firefly must be dug out and eradicated. It is very important!

“Instead of going through the trouble of searching for the Immortal Cultivators, it is a better idea to prompt them to jump out on their own. See. Under the motivation of ‘Master Lu’ of the CIFA, haven’t all the Immortal Cultivators on Firefly jumped out actively?

“If my guess is correct, in a couple of days, a federal fleet will ‘happen to’ arrive near Firefly, and the Dim Moon Fund or the Secret Sword Bureau will release a batch of critical evidence that proves that Ding Zhengyang, Cheng Xuansu, and the rest of them are the Immortal Cultivators, which will mark the complete collapse of their scheme!

“As a result, not only will all the Immortal Cultivators on Firefly be fished up, the government-in-exile will also lose their leverage in the negotiations with the federal government. The ‘participation’ of Firefly and the combination of resources later will be smoother. This is definitely a stone that kills two birds!

“If Lu Qingchen is not Jin Xinyue’s subordinate, it will be hard to explain why they launched such a hasty rebellion at such an idiotic moment!

“Right. There’s also Tang Xiaoxing. Why did the Dim Moon Squad take Tang Xiaoxing? The reason is simple. That’s because she has part of the ‘jump token’ that is critical. Without her, even if Ding Zhengyang, Cheng Xuansu, and the other Immortal Cultivators want to run away with Firefly in their desperation, they will only be able to cruise with the regular engines. But Firefly hasn’t finished its maintenance yet. How fast can the regular engines be? It will only be a matter of time for the fleets of the federation to catch up!

“This should be the Dim Moon Fund’s plan. If it works out, it will be a great victory for Jin Xinyue’s campaign.

“Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, do you see it now? The Immortal Cultivators on Firefly are dead for sure anyway. Heiye Lan is a smart person, not an emotional one. She naturally knows what to do now!”

After a long silence, Li Yao said, “I didn’t know that Jin Xinyue was so sordid. It seems that joining the Star Glory Federation is a rather dangerous option. One moment of carelessness, and she will swallow us from the skin to the bones without leaving any remains behind!”

“Sordid?” Long Yangjun laughed in amusement. “Why did you say that, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture? How can you expect to compete with the Imperium of True Human Beings without sordidness? If the leadership of the Star Glory Federation was a bunch of naïve and innocent sages, we would never entrust the future of the Ancient Sages Sector to them. Don’t you agree, fellow Cultivators?”

Low laughter echoed in the communication channel.

“Alright. Let’s hurry up.” Long Yangjun turned solemn. “Team Red Lotus, let’s take action. This time, the higher profile, the better!”

Chapter 1624 - Please Stay Back

Listening to the cracking noises of crystal suits being put on in the communication channel, Li Yao smiled. He knew that he did not need to worry about their operations.

“What do we do now, Sir Speaker?” Li Yao turned around to look at Cui Lingfeng, who had gathered the crystal processors of the Immortal Cultivators and was studying the map of the area carefully.

“Cheng Xuansu hasn’t contacted Ding Zhengyang for a long time. Ding Zhengyang must’ve realized that something is wrong and will definitely send someone over soon.”

Cui Lingfeng pointed at the map and said, “We’re in the middle of a forsaken starship waiting to be dismantled. There’s a long way from here to the parliament, the No. 1 Fortress, or the cabins of any garrison. Once Ding Zhengyang discovers that I’m not dead yet, he will certain try his best to block us.

“Therefore, we cannot go to the central area of Firefly. The closest place to us that is reliable enough is here, the Third Military Academy of the Republic Guard Corp!

“It is a military school for the ‘potential developers of spiritual roots’. It is designed to raise the bottom-level officers for the Republic Guard Corp. It is impossible for the Immortal Cultivators to compromise the students of the military school of such a low level. Except for the few tutors and leadership of the academy, most of the students must be still loyal to parliament, the Speaker, and the Star Ocean Republic!

“Also, the Third Military Academy boasts a fairly large arsenal, in which quite a lot of attack magical equipment is stored. We will be able to get the situation under control if the students are armed. So, that is our destination!”

“Potential developers of spiritual roots?” Li Yao was slightly dazed. Then, he realized what it meant. “You mean ordinary people?”

“In the official context, there is no such term as ‘ordinary people’ in the Star Ocean Republic,” Cui Lingfeng said solemnly. “Calling those without spiritual roots ‘ordinary people’ implies that only the Cultivators are not ordinary and can accomplish something great, which is not politically correct. Anyone, whether their spiritual root has developed or not, is able to accomplish something great and become ‘extraordinary’ as long as they work hard.”

“Okay, understood. But the name ‘potential developers of spiritual roots’ sounds rather clumsy. Why don’t you simply call them… the unawakened or people without spiritual roots?”

“What do you mean by ‘unawakened’?” Cui Lingfeng asked. “Should anyone who has a spiritual root be considered ‘awakened’, whereas the people who do not have one will be ignorant people that you can never wake up? It is even more politically incorrect. As for ‘people without spiritual roots’, it is not a definitive name, either, because everybody has the chance to awaken their spiritual root. Just because they do not have a spiritual root right now does not mean that they won’t have one in the future. Such a name denies the possible returns of hard work. All things considered, ‘potential developers of spiritual roots’ is the most exact term to describe the relationship between Cultivators and non-Cultivators. It is best for 99% of the citizens of the republic.”

“… So complicated? Do excuse me, Sir Speaker. We have only just come from the Red Lotus Sector, no, a hibernation of hundreds of years, and we are not used to the latest way of speech.”

“It doesn’t matter,” Cui Lingfeng said. “However, when you do visit the Star Glory Federation as a representative of the Speaker, you must watch your language prudently. Right now, ‘political correctness’ is worshipped in the Star Glory Federation. It might not matter if you say ‘ordinary people’ in private, but the term will only introduce trouble when you give a public speech as a special representative of the Speaker. You can only choose among ‘potential developers of spiritual roots’, ‘current developers of spiritual roots’, and ‘future developers of spiritual roots’. Do bear that in mind!”

Li Yao scratched his head hard.

Fine. A hundred years had passed, and a lot of things in the world of Cultivators changed, too. Even ‘Monster Li’ had to learn more to adapt to the brand-new world.

“This is where the Third Military is located.” Cui Lingfeng waved his hands, unfolding, paving, and connecting many translucent 3D maps in midair. He then retrieved the sophisticated secret tubes that were as tiny as hairs, which were much more detailed than the tubes that Li Yao had detected through the probe magical equipment. “Captain Lin, take a look at it. How can we get there?”

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao observed the zigzagging, complicated ventilation tubes, maintenance tubes, spiritual energy tubes, and tubes for toxic waste. A hundred secret infiltration routes immediately popped up in his head. But a moment later, he shook his head hard and grinned. “I’ve taken a look. Sir Speaker, we will simply walk to the place openly. Should we meet any hindrance on the way, you will reveal your identity as the Speaker. If they are Cultivators, they will certainly listen to your command and follow and protect you. If they refuse to obey and even accuse you of being a counterfeit, they will certainly be Immortal Cultivators, and I can take them down easily.”

Cui Lingfeng was slightly dazed. “Simple as that?”

“For Team Red Lotus, it is simple as that!” Li Yao nodded.

Hehe. He now belonged to the secret armed force that the Speaker of the Star Ocean Republic had hidden more than two hundred years, and he had the highest clearance to open fire on the starship. Why would he crawl through any ventilation tubes?

Five minutes passed.

After pulling the bodies of Cheng Xuansu and the other Immortal Cultivators into a corner with complicated feelings, Li Yao truly took Cui Lingfeng to march toward the Third Military Academy of the Republic Guard Corp through the central pathway of the forsaken starship!

Shua! Shua! Shua!

The previously locked gates were opened one after another under Cui Lingfeng’s telepathic thoughts.

He was the Speaker, and it was impossible for either Ding Zhengyang or Cheng Xuansu to cancel his control permissions other than by destroying him physically. The only way to cancel his highest permissions, except for breaching the mainframe crystal processor of the starship by brute force, was to impeach him in parliament and deprive him of his privileges.

But obviously, that was impossible.

Only a handful of gates could not be opened with the Speaker's permissions because they were cut off from the Spiritual Nexus or even completely sealed.

But however thick and impregnable they were, it was impossible for them to withstand Li Yao's bombardment.

Boom!

Every unopenable gate was blown up by Li Yao with one punch or one kick.

It was not until they came to a gate of super alloys more than five meters thick—made of the Heavenly River Mother Copper, the Gold Steel Colorful Diamond, and more than ten super-hard materials—that Li Yao was delayed for a while.

"Sir Speaker, please stand back for a moment."

Observing the gate that had only collapsed inward two meters without being blown up after taking two punches from him, Li Yao frowned. Then, he put on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and leaned to one side. He slightly widened his stance to support himself better. Keeping his left hand behind his back, he raised his right hand and opened his fingers. Bright green lames of spiritual energy surged out of the gaps on the shoulder like ghosts and swirled on his entire right arm, turning into a drill of spiritual energy condensed by the green ghostly fire.

Zi! Zi, zi, zi, zi, zi, zi!

Li Yao suddenly shook his right arm. The drill of spiritual energy rushed toward the gate of super alloys, triggering sparks that were even more dazzling than a supernova outbreak and letting out world-shaking, deafening noises. The entire pathway was soaked in the explosion of his raging spiritual energy, and the gate was scorched, ripped apart, and burnt through brutally!

Five seconds later, a hole two meters in diameter, from which the melted metal was still dripping, appeared in the gate of super alloys that was five meters thick!

“Alright. Sir Speaker, after you. Please mind the heat.”

Extending his index finger, Li Yao blew out the last bit of green fire on the tip of his finger. He then turned around and made a ‘please’ gesture to Cui Lingfeng. However, he was slightly dazed after seeing what Cui Lingfeng looked like right now. “Sir Speaker, why is your face so pale, and why are you so devastated? Even your spiritual shield is riddled with holes and seems to be collapsing.”

“You…”

“Didn’t I ask you to retreat to eight hundred meters away and stay back for a moment, Sir Speaker? You didn’t go there?”

Looking at the new channel that was two meters wide and five meters long, the melted metal that was flowing on the ground randomly like magma, and the mass-produced Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit on Li Yao that could not be counted as an advanced crystal suit in any sense, Cui Lingfeng was rendered completely speechless.

He finally understood why Cheng Xuansu would rather kill herself than confront the mysterious Cultivator ‘Lin Jiu’ from the Red Lotus Sector. She did not run away perhaps not because she hated running but because Cheng Xuansu, as a battle-type Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage, knew that she could not get away from ‘Lin Jiu’ at all!

Cui Lingfeng was not the only one who was rendered speechless and utterly stunned.

On the other side of the gate, a troop of 122 Exos had arrived in a hurry.

Hardly had they arrived there and before they had time to open the gate, they saw that the toughest gate made of super alloys suddenly produce two huge dents as if it were made of rubber. Then, accompanied by a series of blood-freezing screeches of metal, the gate was burnt with a tiny hole, which expanded at a visible speed and grew to around two meters wide in only a couple of seconds.

Many Exos craned their necks as far away as their crystal suit allowed them to. Through the hole that was burnt and melted, they saw that an Exo who was wearing a mass-produced Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit blew off the last spark on the tip of his finger softly.

Supported by their spiritual shields, Li Yao and Cui Lingfeng slowly floated through the terribly scorching hole and appeared in front of the 122 Exos.

The 122 Exos, like 122 iron statues, stared at Li Yao and Cui Lingfeng in silence.

Cui Lingfeng was not wearing a facial cover. Naturally, the general policemen and soldiers knew who he was.

“Which legion do you belong to? Where is your commander?” Li Yao asked, although he had locked onto the commander since the beginning. “The Speaker was attacked just now. Firefly is in the most perilous situation. Whatever mission you are carrying out at present, abort it immediately and follow my command to protect the Speaker!”

Li Yao made a step forward after each word he said until he had almost walked to the center of the fully-armed Exos in the end. His footsteps were quite light, and there was barely any sound. Yet, every Exo felt that somebody was drumming heavily inside their heart!

Chapter 1625 - Raging Red Lotus!

“It’s—it’s really the Speaker!”

“Who is he? He is coming so magnificently that he feels like a starship!”

“We—The hundred of us will all be killed by him!”

Li Yao’s slightly abrupt order, supported by the dominating aura of the Nascent Soul Stage, appeared to be self-justified. Most of the Exos swallowed hard and turned their eyes to the few commanders.

The few commanders looked at Cui Lingfeng and then at Li Yao. In the end, they looked at each other in bewilderment, their bodies that were hidden inside the crystal suit sweating hard.

The commander in the lead made up his mind and shouted, “Don’t be fooled! He is not the Speaker but impersonated by an Immortal Cultivator. The real Speaker is already dead!”

Hardly had he concluded his sentence when the commander raised his hand and shot his gun at Cui Lingfeng!

However, the explosive spiritual energy bursting out of the barrel was frozen in midair again, exactly like the bullet that Cheng Xuansu had shot out previously. After half a second’s impasse, it retreated, turned around, and moved inch by inch, as if it were controlled by an invisible force, before it slowly reached Li Yao’s palm!

The flames of spiritual energy that contained powerful damage jumped and danced obediently in Li Yao’s palm like a docile cat. Brilliant fireworks were released unhurriedly.

The fireworks, in the eyes of the few Immortal Cultivators among the Exos, were as horrible as the laughter of ghosts.

The moment their commander shot, they should have attacked Li Yao together.

However, exactly at the moment, their foreheads, necks, hearts, and abdomens were all stuck to by invisible blades, and hundreds of holes would be left in their bodies if they moved recklessly!

Including the commander, nobody dared move.

They all saw an illusion where Li Yao seemed to be standing both in front of them and right behind them one inch away, and that he was staring deep into their brains both from the front and from behind!

Playing with the flames of spiritual energy that had spurted out the barrel, Li Yao slowly walked to the commander who had shot it out just now. Looking down at him from the higher altitude, he then observed the seven Exos who had planned to attack just now with highly abnormal breathing, heartbeats, and blood flow, who were more ‘frightened’ than ‘shocked’.

“Come on out.”

Li Yao took the storm bolter from the commander who had turned into a statue made of mud. He then curled his finger toward the other seven Exos and casually said, “Fellow Cultivators, in the name of ‘Team Red Lotus’, the Speaker’s private guards, you are under arrest for treason!”

…

The antecedent of the Black Stone Jail was a heavy cargo starship that had been designed to transport dangerous products. The thickness of the shell, the defense rune arrays deployed in the cabins, and all the other safety measures were of the highest level.

As the strongest prison where the most dangerous criminals on Firefly were caged, Black Stone Jail had been strengthened and modified countless times in the past hundreds of years. It had long been built into an impregnable iron fortress where no water could flow in and no bug could fly out.

When Ding Zhengyang and Cheng Xuansu planned to seize control of Firefly, they had infiltrated and strengthened the place in every way possible. After they secretly captured a lot of technical staff who were loyal to Captain Tang Dingyuan and many MPs who might prove to be hindrances in their crucial posts, they had moved and locked all the captives, too. Not only had the alert of the Black Stone Jail been improved to the ‘war preparation state’, two legions of Exos of the Republic Guard Corp had also been mobilized there. The two elite troops of a tough combat ability were important targets of infiltration and transformation. Their commanders were all Immortal Cultivators who only listened to Ding Zhengyang and Cheng Xuansu’s commands.

Therefore, it was not hard to imagine how appalled the commanders of the two Exo legions were when they saw three ‘ordinary people’ approaching unhurriedly from the end of the pathway wearing not crystal suits but the clothes of ordinary people as if they were having an enjoyable hike on weekends.

“How—how is it possible?”

“This is a military forbidden area. Haven’t the areas up ahead been blocked and disconnected from the main area of Firefly? Where are those three guys from exactly?”

“Black Arrow Squad, come in immediately. Why did three strangers pass your defense line? Who are they immediately? Black Arrow Squad? Black Arrow Squad!”

“Not good. We’re in serious trouble!”

Huala! Huala!

Ear-splitting alarms echoed in the enormous cabin where Black Stone Jail was located. The entire cabin was soaked in panicking redness. Dazzling electric arcs burst out of the cracking defense rune arrays. Railguns, crystal cannons, missile launchers… Countless protruding barrels were aimed down the pathway. Starry brilliance was taking shape inside the darkness. Flames of spiritual energy were interweaving among the magnetic rails, and all the damaging rune arrays were humming!

“They are Immortal Cultivators! The Immortal Cultivators have just assassinated the Speaker and are blatantly sabotaging Firefly right now. They are trying to attack Black Stone Jail and rescue their conspirators!”

The commanders of the Exo legions hurried to incite the general soldiers who did not know what was going on.

However, their fancy words were hardly convincing as the three strangers slowly approached because the three of them simply looked too weird!

The one on the left was sloppy and weaselly, with a patch on his forehead. He looked like a dirty, smelly beggar.

The one on the right was even more unbelievable. He was a dwarf who did not have a hair on his head, which made his head look like a smooth melon. A dwarf!

Only the woman in the middle appeared normal, but there was nothing attractive about her, either. She did not boast the air of an expert at all.

At first glance, all the weapons that the three ‘ordinary people’ had were the sword that the dwarf was holding in his arms, which was no larger than a toothpick. Not a chainsword, not a magnetic blade, not a high-heat saber, and barely even a piece of ‘magical equipment’. It was just the most common short sword!

Were the three of them… Immortal Cultivators? Had they come to the Black Stone Jail, heavily defended by at least a thousand Exos, for a prison break?

The Immortal Cultivators hiding among the guards of the jail had made a hundred different battle plans to deal with any possible changes.

But never could they have dreamt that such bizarre-looking fellows would pass through the defense line at the periphery uncannily and arrive right in front of them out of nowhere.

“Stop moving. This is a military forbidden area. Identify yourselves!” the commander of the jail’s guards screamed. It was not supposed to be his job to shout at the strangers, but he was too anxious to control himself not to. The whole situation seemed to be slipping to a bottomless abyss!

A second later, his concerns became reality.

One of the strangers raised his wrist and tapped on the tactical crystal processor softly. After a few beeps, the friend-or-foe identification rune arrays on the jail immediately recognized who they were.

They were allies who belonged to a troop that had a much higher rank and was directly under the command of the Speaker!

“Team Red Lotus is here to take over jail by the order of the Speaker.” The unarmed and seemingly harmless woman in the middle stepped forward and smiled. “Commanders of the Black Stone Guards, please transfer your command and accept our dispatchment immediately.”

“You—”

The commander of the jail faced with the woman’s smile, like the commander who had been faced with Li Yao, was also sweating hard, turning into a drenched chicken caged in an iron box.

In the secret communication channel, he spoke to his accomplices. “Turn off the defense rune arrays and the identification arrays on all the magical equipment. Activate the manual control mode. Fire at will!”

The woman opposite should not have been able to hear what he said in the private channel.

However, she seemed to have caught exactly what was on the commander’s mind. She sighed gloomily, and her innocuous smile turned into one of surprise and confusion, as if she found it hard to understand why those people were resisting meaninglessly after hearing the name of ‘Team Red Lotus’.

The woman—Long Yangjun—glanced casually at the cannons, railguns, and missile launchers behind the rune arrays as well as the hundreds of fully-armed Exos who were shivering in fear. She then said to Yan Liren and Ba Xiaoyu, “Take them down!”

At almost exactly the same time, world-shattering explosions burst out in the depths of Black Stone Jail. The intense black smoke consumed the entire heavy carrier of dangerous products.

931 years after the starship was built, twelve of the most fatal ‘dangerous products’ had been activated!

…

On the bridge of Firefly, in front of the mainframe crystal processor that was as enormous as a hill, thousands of ever-changing and flashing light beams congregated into a vague ocean of brightness that completely drowned Ding Zhengyang, the acting captain.

Half an hour ago, the ocean of brightness had still appeared tranquil. The picture displayed on every light beam had been under his precise control and arrangement.

Although Speaker Cui Lingfeng seemed to have found some loopholes and made up his mind to investigate, the backup plan that they had switched to promptly without any hesitation had filled in the loopholes.

However, after only half an hour, the peaceful ocean of brightness had turned into surging tides as if a devastating tsunami was surging. The erratic, unpredictable light and shadow grabbed his heart hard and completely dragged him into the uncontrollable abyss!

Ding Zhengyang was more than two meters tall. He was strong and had a resolute face. When he commanded on the deck floor, he was best known for his calmness even when he was faced with the most dangerous crisis. Many sailors and operators called him ‘Pillar’. Even the gravest fault on the starship would not make his eyebrow twitch in the slightest.

However, at this moment, as he read the subtle changes of the situation on the light beams, Ding Zhengyang’s previously red and glowing face turned paler than that of a dead person.

Cheng Xuansu. What exactly happened to the woman? She was only asked to kill a Speaker who does not even have the strength to catch a chicken. How could she possibly have failed?

Team Red Lotus? What—what’s that? I’ve never heard such a troop of Exos on Firefly!

The Speaker is alive… He—he—he really is alive!

The Black Stone Jail has been compromised! Well—

At a loss, Ding Zhengyang looked at the furious fire named ‘Red Lotus’ burning, raving, and rushing on the light beams, his mind completely disturbed.

Chapter 1626 - Master Lu

The pictures displayed to the acting captain of Firefly were collected by the crystal cameras installed in various cabins and by the sensors on the crystal suits of the Immortal Cultivators.

However, even if there were ten times more crystal cameras and sensors under his control, it would still barely be possible for him to clearly see what ‘Team Red Lotus’ was exactly because Team Red Lotus was simply too fast.

It was especially so during the assault that Black Stone Jail suffered. Except for the three warriors of Team Red Lotus who walked up to the defense line slowly at the beginning, other people never showed up in front of the crystal cameras or left their appearances clearly at all, as if they were well aware of the distribution of all the crystal cameras!

Even the three of them also turned into unpredictable shadows after the explosions echoed and they took action for real. They were unstoppable flashes, they were white mist that was breaking the sonic barrier constantly, and they were residual images that lingered on the retina and the crystal cameras!

However hard Ding Zhengyang bulged his eyes, to the point that surging spiritual energy almost blew out his eyeballs, the only thing that he could see was that the Immortal Cultivators who were loyal to him were screaming miserably and dancing like marionettes fighting the invisible devils. They were thrown high up and smashed into the ground, their bones broken. Some of them were cut in half before they could react. Their crystal suits, although known as the ‘king of magical equipment’, seemed to be made of tofu, and the fracture was even smoother than a mirror!

The mind-boggling picture displayed on one of the light beams left a particularly deep impression on Ding Zhengyang.

Inside the picture, the Immortal Cultivators loyal to him seemed to have captured the trace of one of the intruders. Three crystal railguns that were a hundred meters away from each other adjusted their angle at the same time and were all aimed at the warrior of the Team Red Lotus who appeared to be a dwarf. The long-prepared magnetic rails were spluttering, and the electric arcs were pressed down like springs. The cannonballs of spiritual energy at the end of the rails could hardly wait to dart out.

Then, the picture suddenly blinked. The bald dwarf waved his hands casually, as if he were just yawning or driving away several annoying flies…

But the three crystal railguns a hundred meters away from each other broke apart at the same time, not slashed at a slant, but cut right in the middle vertically into two parts as if they were nothing more than sugarcane!

Boom, boom, boom!

The furious spiritual energy, like a flood breaking out of the dam, immediately went out of control and surged out crazily. They tied up the batteries like rampant boas and instantly evolved into three ever-expanding lightning balls. The artillerists inside, whom Ding Zhengyang had gone through a lot of trouble to turn into Immortal Cultivators, were vaporized into ash before they had the chance to scream. The only things left behind were some faint remains!

“What—what was that sword art? How can there possibly be such a terrifying sword art in the universe?”

Ding Zhengyang would not have been so surprised even if the bald dwarf had blown up the three batteries with the invincible strength of the Divinity Transformation Stage, because it was at least something that he could understand.

But he was absolutely certain that, judging from the spiritual waves around the bald dwarf, the guy was only showing the Cultivation of the peak of the Core Formation Stage at best. He had achieved everything purely with his ‘sword art’, not his ‘spiritual energy’!

Ding Zhengyang’s experience and understanding of the arts of training collapsed all of a sudden.

His ambitions fell apart at the moment, too.

“Where is the bald dwarf from exactly? This—this—this is too unbelievable!”

The explosions and riots deep inside Black Stone Jail gradually died down.

However, based on the soldiers who gave up their weapons, kneeled on the ground, and surrendered outside of the jail, Ding Zhengyang, however optimistic, found it hard to believe that the peace was because the intruders had all been annihilated.

In the meantime, on another light beam, Ding Zhengyang saw that Speaker Cui Lingfeng, who should have been dead, was striding toward the Third Military Academy, escorted by a seemingly unattractive man in a mass-produced Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

The man in the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit looked stranger and did not appear as tough as the bald dwarf in the Black Stone Jail.

Ding Zhengyang did not see him attack because the guy did not have to at all. Behind him and Speaker Cui, countless soldiers at the bottom level had gathered. There was no telling what kind of drugs the man had given to the disordered and disorganized soldiers, but they were a hundred times braver under his lead!

Like magma, like a red lotus, like iron torrents that were flowing forward unstoppably, they marched into the Third Military Academy, supporting Speaker Cui!

When the mysterious man raised Speaker Cui to the flag tower and broke into the arsenal with the soldiers, retrieving enough attack magical equipment to arm the thousands of students in the school, Ding Zhengyang's last hope perished.

For a moment, he even wished that everything was simply a foul trick. Was it possible that the enemy had hacked their mainframe crystal processor and played fake videos that had been recorded previously, and all the pictures were in fact virtual and synthesized and the actual situation was not that bad?

However, the panicked screams, the desperate roars, and the cries for help in the private communication channel soon dragged Ding Zhengyang back to the cruel reality.

The air pressure was extremely low on the enormous bridge. Everyone was whispering to each other. It was the calm before the storm.

Ding Zhengyang had plotted to send Tang Dingyuan, the previous captain, to prison and control the bridge. However, of the hundreds of operators, navigators, communication officers, and other works on the bridge to keep Firefly functioning, no matter how hard he tried to influence and persuade them, only one fifth were his co-conspirators. The other eighty percent of them did not know the truth at all.

Just now, he had sent a message to them under the name of Cheng Xuansu, stating that the Immortal Cultivators had launched a rebellion that threatened the Speaker’s life and the safety of Firefly. Those people had bought it for now.

However, the best that Ding Zhengyang could do was block the pictures sent by the crystal cameras. It was impossible for him to stop all the messages between the bridge and the outside world. They would grow suspicious very soon!

What do we do?

Ding Zhengyang noticed that a lot of his co-conspirators were dropping hints at him with pale faces.

Pretending to be calm, he nodded at his subordinates, implying that everything was under control. He tried to control his nerves and muscles, as he walked to the captain’s office in the deepest part of the bridge.

After he slammed the door, his hands began trembling beyond his control. He tried four times to complete the simple movement of retrieving a secret crystal processor from his Cosmos Ring and activating a top-secret communication channel.

An extremely twisted, lackluster light beam, full of streaks and snowflakes, gradually lit up.

The ripples and snowflakes slowly condensed into a face, one whose eyes were unfocused and whose eyebrows were furrowed, as if the guy had been meditating the whole time.

The owner of the face appeared to very young, but the hair that was dangling from his head was gray. Perhaps his brain was a greedy beast that continuously sucked his vitality.

“Did I not tell you that the secret route must not be activated unless it is absolutely necessary?” the gray-haired man in the picture reproached expressionlessly.

“Master Lu!” Ding Zhengyang took a long breath in relief. “It is absolutely necessary right now! We’ve been exposed. We’re done and doomed!”

“Oh?” If Master Lu was surprised at all in his heart, he certainly did not show any of it on his face. He was as calm and peaceful as before as he said, “No need to be hasty. Take your time. Tell me what happened.”

“How can I not be hasty? It was an absolutely perfect plan, but we did not expect that the Speaker had been keeping Team Red Lotus, a secret armed force, to himself the whole time!”

Gnashing his teeth, Ding Zhengyang quickly explained the key events with a twisted face. In the end, he begged, “Master Lu, what do we do now? Can we only fall back to the Dragon Snake Space Zone now?”

“Let’s see.” Master Lu had been listening attentively the whole time and was not anxious at all even to this moment. Pondering for a moment while holding his forehead, he raised his head and stared at Ding Zhengyang.

Ding Zhengyang was impatient. “Master Lu, do you have a solution?”

“I do.” Master Lu nodded and casually said, “It’s time to sacrifice.”

“Huh?” Ding Zhengyang was slightly dazed, not knowing what he meant. “I—I beg your pardon.”

“It’s time to sacrifice!” Master Lu’s head grew huger. He seemed to have moved his head close to the crystal camera. Breathtaking brilliance was glowing out his deeply hollowed eyes, as he solemnly declared, “The situation on Firefly is hopeless now. The key is to keep the fellow Cultivators hiding in the Dragon Snake Space Zone and within the federation unaffected. Therefore, we will have to sever the arm to save the body! Sacrifice now, Fellow Cultivator Ding. Summon all our fellow Cultivators on board who are aware of the secrets and shed your blood for the true path of immortality!”

“You—you must be kidding!” Shocked, Ding Zhengyang stuttered, “This—this is not what we agreed upon in the beginning!”

“The situation right now is different from what we anticipated,” Master Lu said. “The Secret Sword Bureau and the Dim Moon Fun have been keeping an eye on us closely. The few underground branches in the Dragon Snake Space Zone risk being exposed. I cannot add to their risk by getting you there.

“The true path of immortality is a path of thorns that is rife with snakes and wolves. Everybody who walks on it must be prepared to sacrifice themselves for the civilization! Fellow Cultivator Ding, you are not scared of death, are you? Are you even an Immortal Cultivator at all if you do not have the courage to sacrifice yourself for your beliefs?”

Ding Zhengyang was rendered speechless. His face was flushing before it turned pale. “I—I—I—”

“So, you are truly scared of death.” Master Lu frowned. A third eye seemed to be opening at the center of his eyebrows. “Hehe. I wasted so much time teaching you the true path of immortality and helping you develop fellow Cultivators because I thought that you were a real Immortal Cultivator! It never occurred to me that you are just a cowardly, selfish, shameless guy who hopes to earn benefits for yourself through the true path of immortality!

“A scoundrel such as yourself is a shame to the true path of immortality. Are you even qualified to beg for my mercy and the protection of the true path of immortality? Men of different beliefs should go their separate ways. It’s time we bid each other farewell!”

“Please don’t!” Ding Zhengyang completely panicked. He begged in a low voice, “Fellow Cultivator Lu, I am a real Immortal Cultivator. Of course, I’m a real Immortal Cultivator! I am absolutely loyal to the true path of immortality! Trust me. You must trust me!”

“Alright. I’ll trust you one more time.” Eyeing him up and down, Master Lu put on a thin smile. “If you are a real Immortal Cultivator, prove yourself. It’s time you sacrifice yourself for your belief!”

Pa!

Master Lu cut off the communication, and the light beam fell into darkness. There was no reply at all no matter how many times Ding Zhengyang called.

Chapter 1627 - The Face Behind Red Lotus

“*sshole…”

Every muscle on Ding Zhengyang’s face was twitching violently. His face flickered between enraged and fearful, like a beast whose thigh had been bitten by a trap watching his companions abandon him without looking back.

His Adam’s apple was shivering rapidly, uttering what sounded like both bellows and moans.

Huala!

Ding Zhengyang smashed the mini crystal processor against the wall, smashing it into pieces. He then stared at a loss at the glittering pieces on the ground. At last, he took a deep breath and rubbed his burning face hard as if it were a pile of soft mud. After ten seconds, he finally rubbed his face into the previous calm expression.

Glancing around quickly, he took out tremendous confidential jade chips and secret tokens to control the ‘central nerve’ of Firefly from the safes that were protected by barriers. After he stored them in his own Cosmos Ring, he tapped for a while on the portable crystal processor that he had been using previously, issuing a command for another group of his accomplices. In the end, faking his calmness, Ding Zhengyang held his head high and walked out of the captain’s office.

The whispers outside grew louder and louder. A lot of people were eyeing him cautiously. The looks of suspicion and confusion congregated into an ocean, where devastating tides that would rip him apart were about to be raised!

Ding Zhengyang coughed and unhurriedly walked to a teleportation array in a corner of the bridge. While walking, he summoned a few of his most trusted subordinates. On the surface, they were discussing the suppression of the Immortal Cultivators’ insurgency, but in fact, he was speaking to them through the private communication technique. “Leave the place alone. Run!”

The two most advanced teleportation arrays had been deployed on the bridge. Only the captain was authorized to open one of them. After some adjustment, it could lead to any of the hundreds of starships that made up ‘Firefly’. The pictures of the outside world were still being blocked, and Ding Zhengyang was still the acting captain who held the highest authority. Therefore, nobody was bold enough to ask where exactly he was going.

When most of the staff on the bridge and the Immortal Cultivators whom Ding Zhengyang did not bring away finally realized that something was not right, Ding Zhengyang had already disappeared in the dazzling light after setting his destination!

Shua!

Ding Zhengyang and his four trusted subordinates arrived at a dim cabin that was riddled with holes. Tremendous broken pieces, blown by the wind, occupied the entire room.

Boom!

Hardly had he stepped off the teleportation array when Ding Zhengyang shot back without turning around, completely destroying the teleportation array.

It would be impossible for the people on the bridge to be directly teleported there.

In the meantime, he edited the mainframe crystal processor of the teleportation arrays on the bridge and disguised his destination. The destination displayed on the crystal processor in the bridge would be somewhere else. Therefore, absolutely nobody would know his whereabouts.

*Thankfully, I made preparations myself! Lu Qingchen, you *sshole. Just wait for it. I’m not going to let go of you!*

Ding Zhengyang ground his teeth hard and cursed silently.

This was the last path of escape that he had carefully prepared for himself. The seemingly outdated starship, which was about to be separated from the main body and completely dismantled, had an intact escape room, although all the crew members and passengers had been evacuated. He had transferred the two most advanced escape capsules there in secret!

Naturally, the two escape capsules were not capable of travelling across Sectors, but they were enough for him to reach Fish Dragon City quietly. Lu Qingchen’s CIFA had their secret bureaus in the city, but Ding Zhengyang had also prepared two nests for himself in secret without telling Lu Qingchen.

It was a living example of a clever hare having three dens.

“Are you here?”

Ding Zhengyang was rather grave when he summoned another batch of his subordinates in the communication channel. They were the combat squad that had pretended to break into the prison but in fact transferred Captain Tang Dingyuan to somewhere else.

It was the elite squad of the highest combat ability for the Immortal Cultivators onboard other than Cheng Xuansu. Without their protection, Ding Zhengyang would not be able to achieve anything on his own.

Besides, Captain Tang Dingyuan was the best hostage. If Ding Zhengyang planned to save his own life or even reverse the situation, he would have to count on the former captain!

Therefore, Ding Zhengyang had asked the elite squad to transfer Tang Dingyuan to a cabin not too far away from there for imprisonment. After realizing that the situation was not good, he had even asked them to retreat in advance.

“You have already reached the escape center? Good. I’ll be there in a minute!”

Ding Zhengyang was relieved and finally put a vague smile. Then, he heard his subordinates talking in the communication channel as if they were asking for compliments. “What? You didn’t forget to bring the scarlet ball? Yes. That’s good. The item is truly quite uncanny. It will help us to track whoever is behind all this. Wait…”

Ding Zhengyang somehow felt that something bad was happening. The more he thought about it, the more scared he became. His smile gradually froze, tore apart, and vanished, but his eyeballs were protruding inch by inch. The blood streaks that jumped out instantly almost exploded on the surface of the eyeballs!

“Idiots!” he shouted desperately. “You idiots, destroy the scarlet ball right now! Something’s wrong with Professor Luo De. Something is definitely wrong with Professor Luo De! Destroy it. Destroy it now!”

There was no time.

The moment he roared, the sound of gun fire echoed on the other side of the communication channel. Crystal suits were ripped apart easily; bones were smashed into pieces; and the screams, cries, and exclamations of his subordinates all burst out like fireworks. But they fell into dead silence after only a couple of seconds. There was not the slightest sound on the other side of the communication channel, as if everyone in the escape center had been completely consumed by the darkness.

Before Ding Zhengyang had the time to moan, he was caught in darkness, too.

It was not the darkness in a rhetorical sense. The environment that he was in had truly turned pitch black. The feeble, shimmering light emanated by the illumination rune arrays in the cabin was absorbed by the darkness that was as thick and heavy as ink. Even if he put on his crystal suit as quickly as possible and activated all the scanning and probe magical equipment, he could not detect anything around him at all!

It—it was a very sophisticated barrier, a ‘smoke grenade’ that could block all the rays and waves!

In the absolute darkness, Ding Zhengyang could not hear or see anything. He was mired in the dizzying turbulence of horror!

“Ahhh!”

A scream echoed behind him. It was one of his subordinates. The scream moved further and further away, as if the guy had been pulled away together with his crystal suit by a certain ferocious beast for hundreds of meters during the moment, before he was smashed into the wall of the cabin and broken into pieces!

Crack! Crack!

Before his cold sweat flowed out, it sounded like another one of his subordinates had been pressed into a metal ball together with his crystal suit, a metal ball mixed with flesh and blood!

“Ah, ahhh, ahhhhh!”

The remaining two of his subordinates’ minds completely collapsed. They ran away crazily, one to the front and one to the rear. However, Ding Zhengyang could only hear their sound but not see the exhaust flames released by their crystal suits. Their insane cries came to an abrupt halt at the same time a moment later.

The two subordinates uttered no more sound, as if they had run into space without looking back and completely vanished from this world.

Then, there was a prolonged period of darkness and silence. It was not until Ding Zhengyang felt that his heart was about to stop beating that the most eccentric red lotus, which seemed to be irrigated by blood, slowly blossomed right in front of his eyes.

The bouncing, unpredictable red lotus illuminated an unreal, shadowy face that was covered in black mist.

It was the face that Ding Zhengyang had seen on the surveillance light beam just now—the mysterious person who was wearing a mass-produced Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit!

Ding Zhengyang had felt that the man was not the biggest threat in Team Red Lotus—at the very least, he was certainly not as big a threat as the bald dwarf who held the short sword.

However, with the man staring at him casually in the darkness under the illumination of the red lotus, Ding Zhengyang discovered that his horror was immeasurable, and he was a hundred times weirder than the weird bald dwarf!

Who—who is he exactly?

He—he—he is not a human!

He is a devil. He is a fiend that is a hundred times more terrifying than any demons!

Ding Zhengyang saw an ocean of blood made of red lotuses in the mysterious eyes of the stranger. The ocean of blood seemed to be some sort of voracious beast that would lunge out of the man’s face and devour his flesh, blood, and soul without leaving anything behind!

“Wu…”

Savaged by the brutal, ruthless and vicious aura of the stranger, Ding Zhengyang’s every bone had completely melted. He did not even have the courage to think about running!

“Hey, that’s enough.” In the darkness, Li Yao frowned and spoke to the mental devil in his head. “I told you to just release some killing intent to intimidate him. Don’t act like a supervillain is showing up, alright? Do I need to cooperate with you by playing some creepy music from my abdomen?”

The mental devil felt that it had been wronged. “Why are you blaming me? I did exactly what you told me to, and you still have so much to say? I won’t help you at all next time!”

“Fine, fine. I was wrong. Anyway, this is enough. He might die of fear!”

While comforting the mental devil, Li Yao continued staring at Ding Zhengyang ‘expressionlessly’ and demanded, “Should I call you Captain Ding or Master Ding?”

“Don’t—don’t—don’t kill me! Don’t kill me!”

Ding Zhengyang had collapsed because of the intimidating aura released by the mental devil. Covering his chest, he begged hard with a pale face.

“Don’t kill you?” Li Yao eyed Ding Zhengyang up and down for a long time. Illuminated by the fire of the red lotus, his lips curled into a cruel smile. “It depends on whether you are the mastermind of the whole scheme or simply an accomplice who will help us find out the real schemer!”

“I—” Ding Zhengyang saw hope. Like someone being drowned who caught a life-saving straw, he shrieked, “I—I am not the mastermind. I was manipulated by someone. I was manipulated by Lu Qingcheng of the CIFA! I will confess everything! The roster of all the Immortal Cultivators on Firefly, the few secret dens that Lu Qingchen has in the Dragon Snake Space Zone, and the schemes of the CIFA and the Black Wind Fleet. I—I—I will tell you everything. Please, have mercy on me and give me a chance to correct my mistakes!

Chapter 1628 - Befuddled Captain Tang

For Tang Dingyuan, the real captain of Firefly, the experience in the past three hours had been as twisting and soul-stirring as sprinting in a torrent on a ragged boat.

He had been considering the whole event during the few days in prison.

Although he had learned of Chief Mate Ding Zhengyang’s betrayal at the very beginning, at that time, he had merely thought that Speaker Cui Lingfeng was behind everything and that the ‘Immortal Cultivators’ were just lies that Cui Lingfeng and Ding Zhengyang had fabricated in order to frame him.

If that was the case, Tang Dingyuan would not have been desperate at all. He only found Cui Lingfeng’s stubbornness and Ding Zhengyang’s greed too painful to bear.

However, after the brief conversation with Cui Lingfeng in the prison cell, he had realized that there was another possibility that was much creepier. What if the whole event was not Cui Lingfeng’s plan for the struggle of power and Ding Zhengyang was not Cui Lingfeng’s puppet but had been fooling Cui Lingfeng instead all along? It meant that the Immortal Cultivators did exist and had been manipulating the two of them successfully!

Tang Dingyuan’s heart immediately fell into a black hole.

The unexpected changes that had taken place later further proved his judgement.

Soon after Speaker Cui Lingfeng left, deafening explosions echoed outside. A mysterious squad of Exos broke into the secret prison. They claimed to be ‘rescuing’ him, but they were in fact taking him away against his will.

Those men were not his subordinates. They did not listen to his demand to see their real faces. His eyes and ears were covered on the way, making him unable to see or hear anything. He had no idea where he was transferred to.

However, before his vision and hearing were sealed, he vaguely heard his capturers saying that the Speaker had already been killed by them.

Cui Lingfeng was dead!

Tang Dingyuan felt as if he had been hit by lightning before falling into a cave of ice!

As the captain of the starship, Tang Dingyuan did not find the cooperation with Cui Lingfeng, who was the Speaker, very pleasant. Friction and contradiction were common between them regarding the policies that would decide the future of Firefly and the government-in-exile. It was especially so when it came to whether or not to join the Star Glory Federation. The two of them had been at loggerheads many times and were out-and-out political rivals to each other.

Tang Dingyuan disagreed on many approaches that Cui Lingfeng adopted. He did not see eye to eye with the overstaffed, overly-powerful, and condescending parliament. However, in his eyes, no matter how obstinate, arrogant, and cunning Cui Lingfeng was, he had never doubted the loyalty of Cui Lingfeng as a Cultivator to the path of the Cultivators and to the Star Ocean Republic!

Cui Lingfeng could do anything, but it was impossible that he would surrender to the Imperium of True Human Beings!

The death of such a Speaker would definitely add to the treacherousness of the situation on Firefly.

Sorting through the whole series of events in the darkness, Tang Dingyuan basically deduced the causes and consequences of everything. Something was definitely wrong with Ding Zhengyang. Many people who were most intimate to Cui Lingfeng were suspects, too!

However, reaching a conclusion right now could not help anything.

After the Speaker died, his trusted subordinates who had planned for a long time would take over his power. As for the captain's command, it had been seized by Ding Zhengyang a long time ago.

In both the parliament and the bridge, the Immortal Cultivators had grasped the greatest power without alarming anyone, while most of the Cultivators were fooled, unaware of what was going on.

Even for such a man made of iron like Tang Dingyuan, who had cruised through the most violent cosmic storms on 'Firefly' while taking the burning shooting stars that were hitting the spiritual shield if not the shell of the starship brutally to be nothing more than a spring sprinkle, he could not help but feel grasped by desperation.

Just like that, he weathered through the darkest three hours of his life. Although he did not give up hope for one second but had been considering countermeasures with all his wisdom, he still failed to come up with any practical strategy when he was embraced by light again.

However, what he saw in front of his eyes made his head dizzy. It was so hilarious that he almost burst into laughter.

Ding Zhengyang—the previous Chief Mate and the acting captain of Firefly—whom he had deduced to be the guy behind the whole scheme, was now kneeling before him dutifully, so ashamed and miserable that the man seemed to be looking for a hole in the ground to hide in!

“Well…”

Looking at Ding Zhengyang and at the man who helped him loosen the barriers and stand to his feet, Tang Dingyuan noticed vague smell of blood and the aura of an expert from the stranger although the guy looked rather unfamiliar. He had to be a real expert!

How many years had passed since Firefly last had such an expert due to the serious shortage of training resources and because it had been constantly fleeing?

“There’s no need to worry now, Captain Tang.” Li Yao smiled. “The Immortal Cultivators’ rebellion has been taken care of. Team Red Lotus has successfully rescued everyone that was kept in prison in Black Stone Jail. They are returning to their posts to stabilize the current situation. Many of them marched into the bridge just now. The bridge is in our hands again!”

Team Red Lotus?

Chewing on the strange name in silence, Tang Dingyuan was still completely confused, not having the vaguest clue what had happened.

“We’re the highest secret armed force that is directly under the command of every Speaker,” Li Yao said carefully. “Our team was founded by Speaker Shui Yian more than two hundred years ago. All traces of us were wiped after we finished our training and preparations. We have been kept in the hibernation state as a precaution for emergencies such as today’s situation!

“In fact, everything is Speaker Cui’s arrangement. Speaker Cui long ago sensed that a lot of Immortal Cultivators were lurking on Firefly. However, it was difficult to distinguish them when there was little evidence. Therefore, he intentionally played such a drama and awakened Team Red Lotus in order to fish up all the enemies after they jumped out! For confidentiality, the plan was not explained to you beforehand. You must’ve been suffered today, Captain Tang. On behalf of the Speaker, I apologize for everything that’s happened to you!”

Tang Dingyuan was still wearing an expression of disbelief. “This was all Speaker Cui’s plan? Well. This—this is very…”

Somehow, he felt that something was wrong. The whole thing seemed more complicated than that.

“Thankfully, the results have proved generally satisfactory in the end!”

Li Yao put on a brilliant smile again. Instead of waiting for Tang Dingyuan to think, he continued quickly.

“Cheng Xuansu, the Immortal Cultivator lurking near Speaker Cui, has been executed. This ‘Chief Mate Ding’ who has been lurking next to you is willing to repent, too. The Immortal Cultivators on the bridge, in parliament, and among the other important posts barely have any chance to escape! After the breathtaking but in fact not dangerous incident, the combat ability of Firefly will be higher instead of weaker! The negotiations to join the Star Glory Federation can begin soon, too!"

"The negotiations to join the Star Glory Federation?" Tang Dingyuan was shocked again. He felt that after only a couple of hours, the world had been overturned. "Isn't Speaker Cui the last person in favor of joining the Star Glory Federation?"

"Speaker Cui is too visionary, wise, and considerate to really object to the merger with the Star Glory Federation now that a great enemy is upon us," Li Yao said solemnly. "Everything has been under his control. However, in the past, a lot of Immortal Cultivators were hiding on Firefly. If we joined the Star Glory Federation recklessly before the 'virus' was completely annihilated, the fatal virus would've only spread continuously and even broken out in a key battle to come! Do you understand Speaker Cui's thoughtfulness now, Captain Tang?"

Tang Dingyuan smiled bitterly. As the captain of Firefly, he had always been the most standard technical staff, and he was not fond of plots or schemes. He only felt that whatever Li Yao said was too complicated compared with piloting a starship. "If that's true…"

"Of course, it is true!" Staring Tang Dingyuan in the eye, Li Yao slightly raised his voice. "Captain Tang, after the setback on Firefly, we need the captain and the Speaker to join hands in order to stabilize the situation and restore our combat ability as soon as possible! Speaker Cui would like to know one thing. On the premise that he agrees to join the Star Glory Federation in principle and the specific details are open to discussion, will you still pledge your loyalty to the parliament and to the Supreme Speaker of the rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic?”

Tang Dingyuan stared at Li Yao’s eyes carefully, trying to find some answers from the eyes that were devoid of any light, but he found absolutely nothing in the end.

After thinking for a long time, he still nodded firmly. “Of course!”

…

Half an hour later, when Tang Dingyuan returned to the bridge with Li Yao, he could not help imagining that it was his next life.

“Dad!”

It was not until his daughter Tang Xiaoxing jumped into his arms, crying and laughing, that he finally recovered the calmness and decisiveness of a father and a captain.

Glancing around, he noticed that roughly one fifth of the staff on the bridge were missing. They must have been the Immortal Cultivators on Ding Zhengyang’s list and had been replaced by dozens of elite soldiers in crystal suits, who filled the bridge with an air of graveness.

However, the leading officer of the soldiers was Tang Dingyuan’s own man. He was an absolutely loyal Cultivator who had just been freed from Black Stone Jail.

The surveillance light beam of the mainframe crystal processor displayed the picture of every corner on Firefly.

As the students of the Third Military Academy continued dispersing, with the high clearance and authorization that the Speaker had granted them, they snowballed and won the support of the soldiers of the bottom level. Even if there were a few commanders who were Immortal Cultivators, there was little those people could do.

The chaotic crowds gradually went back to peace and order again. The Cultivators who were rescued from Black Stone Jail began to play a vital role, too.

The Immortal Cultivators had initiated the action, which was essentially a scam, not an assault, in too much of a hurry in the first place. Now that Ding Zhengyang and Cheng Xuansu, their two leaders, had surrendered and died, and they were faced with the unstoppable ‘Team Red Lotus’, total collapse was their only outcome.

An hour after Tang Dingyuan returned to the bridge, the rebellion of the Immortal Cultivators died down as quickly as it rose, like a thundershower in summer. The last sparks of resistance were completely extinguished.

Chapter 1629 - A New Superhero… Is Here!

“A report written by Speaker Shui Yian in person, who brought Firefly out of the ‘troubled times’ more than two hundred years ago, marked by his unique signature?”

When Tang Dingyuan received the highest command in the bridge again, he also received a series of reports sent by Cui Lingfeng, which stated the background, roles, duties, and permissions of Team Red Lotus. All the information was clearly explained. Not only was there the signature of Speaker Shui Yian, the creator of the team, every Speaker that followed had also left their own unique stamp on the paperwork. The lineage was complete and undisrupted until it reached Speaker Cui Lingfeng’s generation.

The files proved the identity of Team Red Lotus and provided endorsement for their unstoppable operations inside Firefly to eliminate the Immortal Cultivators.

At that moment, Team Red Lotus had the highest permissions on Firefly, only below Cui Lingfeng and Tang Dingyuan. Exactly like Qi Changsheng had jested earlier, they could not have been more powerful with the new prerogative!

Regarding Team Red Lotus, which had marched out of nowhere from the darkness, Captain Tang Dingyuan and the other people in the bridge all had complicated feelings.

Essentially speaking, the elite warriors were a private armed force that only belonged to the Speaker, and it had secretly been established by Speaker Shui Yian more than two hundred years after bypassing the bridge and even parliament!

Founding a private troop that only obeyed the command of the Speaker with the few resources that belonged to the entire Star Ocean Republic truly toed the line and did not fit the spirit of the Star Ocean Republic in any way.

If it were any other time, the technical staff would have berated the very existence of Team Red Lotus and regarded it as a scandal. They would even have tried to deprive the Speaker of command over the troop and merge the troop into other troops that were more controllable.

But today, it was Team Red Lotus who had rescued the core members of the technical staff, including the captain’s daughter, from Black Stone Jail. Even Captain Tang Dingyuan himself had been saved by Lin Jiu, the captain of Team Red Lotus.

Not just that, Captain Lin had also killed Cheng Xuansu indirectly and captured Ding Zhengyang alive after saving the Speaker and the captain, thereby reversing the whole situation. It would not be an exaggeration to say that he had set everything back on track!

Such great contributions had doubtlessly justified and necessitated Speaker Shui Yian’s decision to create the troop more than two hundred years ago. Tang Dingyuan and the other core members of the technical staff were not shameless enough to be picky about their saviors.

Besides, after reading the shocking names on the list that Ding Zhengyang had provided, even Tang Dingyuan had to admit that the Immortal Cultivators’ infection of Firefly had already reached an extremely severe level. At this moment, perhaps only ‘Team Red Lotus’ was trustworthy!

Tang Dingyuan was not a man who was lustful for power. Otherwise, he would not have offered to join the Star Glory Federation. His contradiction with Speaker Cui was mainly in business. Now that Speaker Cui’s stance had subtly changed, there was no need to be at loggerheads with the Speaker during a critical period.

Besides, if everything said on the files was true, then ‘Lin Jiu’ and the other warriors of Team Red Lotus who were willing to be sealed for hundreds of years were out-and-out heroes, which was undeniable however Tang Dingyuan viewed Cui Lingfeng.

After thinking that through, Tang Dingyuan also discovered during the conversation with ‘Lin Jiu’ that the captain of Team Red Lotus was not interested in the conflict between the parliament and the bridge whatsoever but fully focused on the strike against the Immortal Cultivators. Tang Dingyuan could not help but grow respectful of his savior. He rectified his attitude toward Team Red Lotus quickly.

Compared to Tang Dingyuan, Speaker Cui Lingfeng was caught in a greater predicament.

It was impossible for Tang Dingyuan to see through the fabricated secret files that had allegedly been passed on in parliament. Therefore, he could believe in ‘Team Red Lotus’ comfortably while knowing nothing.

However, for Cui Lingfeng who had personally faked the secret files regarding Team Red Lotus, it was a wild gamble in which the entire Star Ocean Republic and even the Star Glory Federation would be doomed with one moment of carelessness.

Should I trust the so-called natives of the Red Lotus Sector whose background is unclear?

The question had been tying Cui Lingfeng’s heart like a viper from the beginning to the end.

At first, he might have thought that he could only use the Red Lotus natives to weather through the difficulties. After everything was settled, he could get rid of them one way or another or separate them for investigation in order to figure out their backgrounds and their purpose.

However, after the Immortal Cultivators lurking inside Firefly were uprooted one after another, the situation turned out to be much more serious than he had imagined.

The bridge where Ding Zhengyang worked was naturally a disaster-stricken area, where the workers in many crucial posts had been transformed into Immortal Cultivators. But the situation in parliament was no better. Quite a few influential MPs were involved in the scheme.

There was no need to mention the subordinates around Cui Lingfeng himself. For years, he had absolute trust in Cheng Xuansu and regarded her as his foster daughter. He had entrusted all his personal affairs to her. Therefore, almost all his subordinates had been taken down.

Cui Lingfeng discovered, to his embarrassment, that he had truly become a commander without soldiers, exactly like Li Yao had said.

Also, he was in a much more terrible situation than Tang Dingyuan.

Theoretically speaking, Tang Dingyuan was only the No. 2 person in the government-in-exile, who had been arrested in secret at his command at the very beginning of the entire scheme. One might say that Tang Dingyuan was unrelated to anything that happened later.

But his case was different. Despite the lies and tricks that Cheng Xuansu, Ding Zhengyang, and the rest of them had played on him, the orders to arrest the leadership of the bridge and the hundred or so social activists had been issued by him. If he denied the existence of ‘Team Red Lotus’ and clarified that everything had not been his plan to lure the enemy out, it would certainly be the greatest scandal ever. He would have to take full responsibility for the poor decisions and be kicked out of office. Parliament, which was already riddled with holes, after suffering such a blow, would be even weaker than before. It would not be able to compete with the technical staff on the bridge!

Without the check and balance of parliament, God only knew what kind of agreement the technical staff in the bridge would reach with the Star Glory Federation!

Cui Lingfeng had never believed that ‘Cultivator’ was a synonym for honor and integrity. Such an identity mattered little in the negotiations. Even blood brothers had to keep the entries on the ledger clearly if they did business together!

Therefore, he could only count on Team Red Lotus for now.

Then, Speaker Cui discovered that Team Red Lotus was so useful!

At first, Cui Lingfeng did not have high hopes for Team Red Lotus’ roles other than in combat. He had thought that the other ‘Red Lotus natives’ except Li Yao were pure warriors.

However, after those Red Lotus natives crushed all the Immortal Cultivators on board, pacified the infuriated crowds who were unaware of the truth, boosted the morale of the bottom-level soldiers, coerced the captives for more intelligence and benefits… They had demonstrated the most flawless and impeccable performance in almost every respect.

As the commander of the starship, Tang Dingyuan might not have been able to see through all the abilities of those people.

However, as the Speaker and a self-proclaimed ‘bad Cultivator’, Cui Lingfeng was very certain that those ‘Red Lotus natives’ were certainly not regular Cultivators from a Combat Department.

They gave him the feeling that some of them were seasoned generals from the battlefield, some were sovereigns who had dominated certain regions, and some had the most honorable titles and power. Even ‘Zhu Zongyou’, who seemed to be the youngest, carried a certain majestic and inviolable air with him!

At this time, Cui Lingfeng was pretty sure that those people could not be spies of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

Neither the Imperium nor the Covenant Alliance were extravagant enough to raise more than ten of such extraordinary spies and just throw them to the edge of the cosmos as if it did not cost anything.

There was no need to mention the Star Glory Federation, which was just a landlord that had grown rich all of a sudden in the harsh land. How could it have raised so many excellent Cultivators? The demeanor that those people showed was even more awesome than that of the authentic Cultivators from the center of the cosmos!

Cui Lingfeng made deductions in the end. Was it possible that they were truly the spies of the Imperium of True Human Beings, and this was some kind of trick in which they sacrificed Cheng Xuansu, Ding Zhengyang, and the other victims in order to control Firefly and enter the Star Glory Federation?

He soon rejected the speculation.

With the situation at that time and their capabilities, such a trick was highly redundant. They could have simply killed him and Tang Dingyuan and cooperated with Ding Zhengyang and Cheng Xuansu, in which case they would still have been able to achieve their purpose.

The real spies would not have chosen to appear in such an abrupt way. Furthermore, it was impossible for them to have learnt in advance that he would summon Professor Luo De.

As long as they were not spies of the Imperium, Cui Lingfeng was already determined to ignore who they actually were and gamble on them!

He might as well consider them to really be from the Red Lotus Sector!

Getting to the bottom of it, what could somebody’s ‘backgrounds’ prove, when Cheng Xuansu, whom he had personally raised and knew very detail of, had betrayed him?

For the government-in-exile, which had been in a rather passive situation during the communication with the Star Glory Federation because of the serious shortage of top-tier warriors, the arrival of Team Red Lotus would perhaps be huge leverage for the negotiations to come. Perhaps, they could really be the last hope for the government-in-exile!

Taking a deep breath, Cui Lingfeng thought through everything clearly.

The magnificent computational ability of an admin-type Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage was boosted to the maximum. Both of his hands worked quickly as he fabricated the secret files of Team Red Lotus and drafted a speech named ‘To All My Compatriots Onboard’ at the same time.

Very soon, the speech turned into resolute, inspiring soundwaves that danced and disseminated to every corner of Firefly!

The crew members and the passengers who had just calmed down from the chaos stood next to each other and held each other’s hands while they listened to the twisting story of a special force named ‘Team Red Lotus’ in silence. They listened to the legend where a superhero named ‘Lin Jiu’ saved the world at the most perilous moment!

Chapter 1630 - The Dark Star That Has Been Destroyed Dozens of Times

Although the insurgency of the Immortal Cultivators on Firefly had quickly been suppressed, it had simply been the beginning of everything. The CIFA and their leader Master Lu—Lu Qingchen—that were hiding behind the rebellion were the key to the situation.

What kind of important role would the mysterious organization of local Immortal Cultivators play in the war between the federation and the Imperium to come?

The secret interrogation targeting Ding Zhengyang immediately began.

He was the leader of the Immortal Cultivators onboard and one of the few people who had ever been in touch with Lu Qingcheng, the most wanted criminal in the federation. The guy had obviously pushed the immature rebellion that broke out too hastily.

Cui Lingfeng, Tang Dingyuan, and Li Yao himself all wanted to dig out Lu Qingchen, and even maybe… the guys hiding behind him, through Ding Zhengyang.

Therefore, the secret interrogation was conducted by Speaker Cui Lingfeng, Captain Tang Dingyuan, and Li Yao.

The prison cell where Ding Zhengyang was caged was the one that had confined Tang Dingyuan half a day ago. It was a living example of suffering from one's own scheme.

The Chief Mate, who had been quite revered on the deck floor previously and respected as the 'Pillar', crouched in a corner of the prison cell lethargically, like a viper whose tusks and bones had been extracted. He stared at the air with his eyes that had lost focus while mumbling something to himself. He switched between smiling bitterly, shaking his head, and cramping up. There was no telling whether he was moaning for the failure of his plan or begging for the mercy of his previous superior. Or maybe, was he regretting taking that very first step?

"Zhengyang!"

Seeing his depression and hopelessness, Captain Tang Dingyuan appeared to be even more brokenhearted than when he saw the guy betraying him. Having been a blood brother with Ding Zhengyang for decades, he knew exactly what the man whose eyebrows were thick and whose face was red had been in the past. "Look at yourself. Why did you turn yourself into? You shouldn't have been scared of death. You have been promoted to the Chief Mate from a bottom-level sailor through nothing but hard work. You never frowned when you met any dangers in the past, and you simply led the charge to take care of them! Your nickname changed from 'Striver' to 'Pillar'. You're scared of death? You surrendered to the Imperium of True Human Beings just to keep yourself alive? I don't believe it. Tell me exactly what happened!"

Tang Dingyuan's every word was like a tiny lightning of ball that was flashing, rolling, and blasting Ding Zhengyang's almost decayed nerves in the prison cell.

Ding Zhengyang’s face resembled that of a drug addict who had experienced an overdose of heroin. He gazed at the crystal camera for a long time before he touched his stubbled cheeks and chuckled. While he was chuckling, he suddenly closed his eyes, and dirty tears flowed out.

“Yes. I shouldn’t have been so scared of death. In the first fifty years of my life, people called me ‘Striver’. In the latter fifty years, they call me ‘Pillar’. I made my way to the post of Chief Mate from the dirtiest and most dangerous fuel areas and engine compartments at the bottom level of Firefly. What kind of dangers did I not experience? What kind of deformed bodies have I not seen?”

He opened his eyes again. The lackluster rainbow inside his eyes interweaved into memories of the past. “Eighty-two years ago, a great explosion took place in the engine compartment after it was pierced through by meteors. I was the first one who charged in for maintenance. Wearing the thinnest maintenance crystal suit, I filled the holes one after another while the meteors just screamed past me. One of them penetrated through my helmet directly. If it had been more to the left by five millimeters, my brains would’ve been entirely melted.

“Fifty-seven years ago, a leakage accident took place in the fuel area. The ‘Heavenly Cicada Divine Blood Sand’, which should’ve been preserved at an extremely low temperature, was vaporized immediately in the room temperature and filled the entire fuel area, threatening to corrode the main fuel transmission tube. A chain reaction of dire consequences could have been triggered at any time.

“Again, I was the one who led my brothers in and repaired the freezing rune arrays in the fatal gas that was highly toxic and corrosive and had an irreversible corrosion on the spiritual root. We sprayed the ‘Ice Freezing Liquids’ and collected the ‘Divine Blood Sand’ that was liquefied again bit by bit.

“That time, we lost 122 brothers. The protection work was already done as well as it could’ve been. But it couldn’t be helped. Such accidents could only be resolved by human lives. Before we marched in, everybody was well aware of that. Even I knew it perfectly, too, that if I entered the room and shut the door, I might never get to see it open again!

“There are also the collision accident forty-two years ago, the black hole tide accident thirty-three years ago, the super radiation accident twenty-five years ago… Captain, you’re right. It seems that I never chickened out, I never had cold feet, and I was never scared of death!

“However, hehe, however, I am not a machine or a piece of magical equipment after all. I am just a human being! Who can say that they have never been a coward in their entire life? Nobody is not scared of death as long as they are a human being!

“The only reason I gritted my teeth to face death when I was so scared of death was that I had hope at that time. I believed that my death would be meaningful and valuable! My death would earn a longer and better life for my family, my offspring, and all the compatriots on the starship!

“But is it true? Do we really have hope? Look me in the eyes and tell me honestly with your conscience, my brother, my captain. Tell me!”

Ding Zhengyang became mad all of a sudden and screamed at the surveillance cameras.

Looking at Cui Lingfeng, Tang Dingyuan solemnly said, “Of course we have hope. The sacrifice of every hero is valuable!”

“Nonsense. I will not believe you anymore, captain.”

The scream just now seemed to have drained the last bit of strength in Ding Zhengyang’s body. Like a balloon whose air had all escaped, he crouched back in the corner and held a nonexistent doll as if he were a kid who had lost his way.

With a self-mocking smile, he said, “Once upon a time, I believed in the lies as much as you do. All your talk about why we are the last hope of humanity after inheriting the heritage of the Star Ocean Imperium, why we will march back to the center of the cosmos one day eventually to slay all evil, why the tyranny of the Imperium of True Human Beings is already collapsing and can end up in self-destruction at any second… There’s even the stupid ‘Dark Star’ that has been destroyed dozens of times. I did not just believe every word of that; it was almost my faith!”

Li Yao coughed slightly. Glancing at the two big shots of the government-in-exile next to him, he asked Cui Lingfeng secretly through the private talking technique, “Sir Speaker, what exactly is this ‘Dark Star that has been destroyed dozens of times?”

Cui Lingfeng was sitting solemnly and wearing a grave expression, as if he had not heard Li Yao’s question at all. His lips did not shiver at all, yet Li Yao somehow received his reply.

“It is a series of movies that we shot intermittently over the past hundreds of years to boost morale. They tell the stories of how we defeated the Imperium of True Human Beings. The official title is ‘Universal War’!

“In the movies, the evil Imperium of True Human Beings, in order to reign over the entire universe, built the strongest, evilest, and most horrible man-made planet, known as the ‘Dark Star’, with all the crucial resources in the Sectors under their control. They then moved all the important government agencies, key technical personnel, and files about the valuable techniques onto the planet.

“Eventually, Firefly took the enemy unprepared by marching into the ‘Dark Star’. The ‘brain’ and ‘heart’ of the Imperium of True Human Beings was destroyed immediately, and the Imperium was defeated just like that!”

“… Fine. Although the Imperium of True Human Beings can’t be that stupid, it is all understandable since it is just a movie. Then what does he mean by ‘destroyed dozens of times’?”

“The movie was very popular after it was aired,” Cui Lingfeng said. “Soon, it was a hit on the entire Firefly and won countless enthusiastic supporters. Naturally, a sequel was shot. In the sequel, the Imperium of True Human Beings got even more ruthless and rose again. They came up with an even more evil approach to cope with the whole universe and the Star Ocean Republic!”

“What’s the approach?”

“To build a bigger, stronger, and more terrifying ‘Dark Star II’ by continuing to concentrate all the resources!”

“Then what? The Dark Star II did not happen to be sabotaged by Firefly again after you crawled inside it, right?”

“Yes, it was,” Cui Lingfeng replied matter-of-factly.

“Then,” Li Yao said, “you shot dozens of sequels of ‘Universal War’, and a greater ‘Dark Star’ was built in each and every one of them, only to be crawled into and destroyed by Firefly in the end?”

“You’re wrong,” Cui Lingfeng countered. “Later, the Imperium of True Human Beings stopped constructing man-made planets but simply went to hollow out an existent planet and modify it into a more powerful Dark Star. After the audience grew tired of planets, we also tried white dwarves, red giants, and suns in their prime years.”

“… Sir Speaker, I suddenly understand the anger and embarrassment that Chief Mate Ding must’ve had after he saw through the lies. What should I do?”

“What choice did we have?” Cui Lingfeng asked. “If the Imperium had adopted a less stupid strategy, how could a tiny Firefly have reversed the situation on its way and secured a glorious victory in the end?”

Inside the prison cell, the self-mocking smile on Ding Zhengyang’s face grew deeper and deeper, like a tide of bitterness that was drowning both himself and the three interrogators outside of the room. He went on wearily. “I believed in everything you told us. I believed that we did have hope. I believed that the Star Ocean Republic would eventually march back to the center of the sea of stars one day. I believed that the Imperium of True Human Beings was in fact vulnerable despite its tough appearance and that it would crash immediately after we launched our counterattack!

“It was with such a belief that I was fearless of death. It was such a belief that made the ‘Striver’ and the ‘Pillar’!

“However, lies are lies, and they will fall apart the moment the truth is out!

“My faith completely broke when we engaged with the claw fleet of the Imperium’s expedition army ten years ago!”

Chapter 1631 - The Birth of a Traitor

Li Yao thought of something and realized that Ding Zhengyang was referring to the claw fleet that Heiye Lan had been in and the battle in which Ding Lingdang had led a federal fleet to Firefly's rescue.

Opening his fingers, Ding Zhengyang held his head and said, his voice shivering, "Before—before the battle, I had never seen the army of the Imperium for real. The only impression that I had of the army of the Imperium was from the memoirs and notes of the heroes before me or from the self-fooling movies. In both the memoirs and the movies, the army of the Imperium were always made of a bunch of weak, stupid guys who only tried to drown us with their sheer advantage in numbers.

"Therefore, in the decades previously, I had always longed to encounter a real troop from the Imperium and to participate in a breathtaking, brilliant battle so that they would witness the toughness of the last defenders of the Star Ocean Republic!

"I thought more than once that, if I must sacrifice myself for my country, the best death would certainly be to strike the army of the Imperium with my magnificent death and to bring about the greatest triumph for Firefly in the fiercest battle of all time, like the great hero Cheng Qizhi did in the past!

"However, hehe, when the claw fleet of the Imperium was truly unfolded into battle formation in front of me, when the overwhelming crystal suits, space shuttles, and assault warships lunged at us unstoppably, I knew that I was wrong. I was fooled and tricked the whole time!

“We were no match at all, from head to toe, and in every respect!

“The Imperium of True Human Beings is too invincible for a tiny Firefly to resist. Our struggle and escape over the past thousand years, the so-called heroes and their epic resistance, were nothing more than moths darting toward the fire and a mantis trying to stop a car with their forearms. We were hilarious clowns asking to be killed!

“When a group of ants intend to shake a tree, they can cause nothing except a round of laughter. We were exactly such ants or perhaps bugs that were even less worthy than the ants!

“It’s useless. Any resistance is useless. The valiant heroes, the boiling blood, courage, and sacrifice. Nothing can raise so much as a ripple when suppressed by overwhelming strength!

“Dead. All dead! In the battle, so many comrades and brothers, so many compatriots and families, were killed! Those who were scared of death died, as did those who weren’t. Those who were willing to sacrifice died; those who trembled in fear died; those who marched forward bravely died; those who escaped and defected died. Everybody died. Everybody!

“Even—even my…”

Holding his head with both hands, Ding Zhengyang lowered his head to his chest, sobbing hard and unable to go on.

“Zhengyang…” Tang Dingyuan sighed and said, “I know that both of your sons were killed in the battle. The neighborhood of the high-level officers unfortunately suffered the fierce bombardment from the enemy. A lot of officers lost their family during the battle. Some of them even—even lost everything like you!

“But shouldn’t we hate the Imperium of True Human Beings all the more for that and swear to avenge them? Our family and compatriots were killed by the Imperium!”

“No. They were not killed by the Imperium; they were killed by you, by us, by this damn government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic!”

Dazzling brilliance spurted out of the gaps between Ding Zhengyang’s fingers that were covering his swollen, bloodshot eyes.

“Had it not been for your lies and tricks, had you recognized the situation sooner and surrendered to the Imperium sooner, they wouldn’t have died at all! My two sons wouldn’t have died! My five lovely grandsons and granddaughters wouldn’t have died! They would’ve survived and lived the rest of their lives in happiness!

“Hehe. It was me who murdered them. Me! It was me who inculcated the idea that the Star Ocean Republic shall never perish into the two brats. It was me who watched ‘Universal War’ with them, holding their hands, again and again! It was me who told them that being a soldier was the most honorable job in the universe, and the soldiers of the Star Ocean Republic were the most honorable of them all! It was me who told them lies like Cultivators are the sabers of humanity!

“Had it not been for me—had it not been for me, the two of them probably wouldn’t have joined the army. Even if they did, they wouldn’t have volunteered to go to the most dangerous frontline.

“If they hadn’t joined the army, my grandsons and granddaughters wouldn’t have lived in the neighborhood of the high-level officers at least. Some of them would’ve lived in some other cabins. They would’ve survived. One or two of them would’ve survived. Right? Right? Right?

“So, it was me who murdered them. It was the government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic that murdered them. It was us—it was you who murdered them!”

“Zhengyang!” Tang Dingyuan reprimanded. “How could you have such hysterical thoughts? What happened to you was certainly a tragedy, but even if you surrender to the Imperium of True Human Beings, are your offspring guaranteed a happy life? Don’t forget how the Imperium treats ordinary people!”

“Of course, I know the Imperium’s policies.”

The muscles on Ding Zhengyang’s face was twitching, and his previously red face turned pale. He sneered and said, “But how will my offspring be ordinary people? The achievements of my sons and myself have proved the excellence of our bloodline and our genes. The odds of my offspring awakening their spiritual roots will be multiple times higher than the odds of ordinary people. Also, I’ll leave them training resources a hundred times greater than ordinary people have. How can ordinary people expect to compete with them? They will certainly distinguish themselves in the cruel competition! My offspring would’ve lived a much better life in the Imperium than on this ragged, broken starship!”

Tang Dingyuan looked at Cui Lingfeng and then glanced at Li Yao’s reaction. He then calmly said, “But we’re not fighting alone. With the help of our allies, we were still able to annihilate the fleet of the Imperium!

“Right now, we have much more than a ‘ragged, broken starship’; we boast seven entire Sectors, a planet with relics from the primeval civilizations, and a hundred billion warriors who will fight side by side with us and never give in to the tyranny of the Imperium!”

“So what?” Ding Zhengyang laughed peculiarly. “What we destroyed was an insignificant claw fleet that belonged to an expedition army of the Imperium. I believe that the Imperium can send out ten expedition armies of such a scale from the homeland anytime, right? The Star Glory Federation appears to be exactly like us, still living in delusions. When the Black Wind Fleet begins their assault, they will soon follow our path and flee toward the deeper darkness in the sea of stars.”

“I understand it now,” Tang Dingyuan remarked. “You were completely overawed by the skirmish ten years ago. You have turned into a pessimist.”

Taking a deep breath, Ding Zhengyang gradually calmed himself down until he was almost as tranquil as a dead person. “I am not any kind of ‘-ist’. Our failure is objective, inevitable, and undergoing, not to be changed by what you or me think. My two sons were the firmest optimists who had the greatest hope for our victory. So what? Did it help him? The crystal railguns were not delayed by what they believed in at all when they ripped their bodies apart.”

“So, in the ten years that followed, you gradually degenerated from a pessimist into an Immortal Cultivator. You slowly disseminated pessimism and theories of the Immortal Cultivators in secret, corrupting and transforming even more people?” Tang Dingyuan asked.

Ding Zhengyang laughed and shook his head. “Captain, to this moment, after such an enormous rebellion took place on Firefly, do you still not understand what’s going on? I was just an illiterate, uncivilized sailor, who was capable of managing the affairs on the deck floor at best. How could I have bewildered so many people and transformed them into Immortal Cultivators?

“No. I didn’t do anything. They did it on their own.”

Tang Dingyuan frowned. “On their own?”

“Exactly,” Ding Zhengyang said. “You don’t think that I was the only one who was deeply stimulated by the skirmish that almost destroyed us ten years ago, do you? No. A lot more people came to the realization that they had been living in a hilarious dream just like me.

“Not just me, and not just Cheng Xuansu. The number of those people is much bigger than you imagined.

“I did not ‘corrupt’ them; I only ‘discovered’ them. In the darkness, it was always easy for us to smell each other’s scent. All the people who woke up from the dream shared the same air. We found each other very quickly.”

“What then?” Tang Dingyuan asked unemotionally. “What did you do?”

“Nothing much. At first, everyone just gathered cautiously. We shared the pain of losing our family in the battle and discussed our future path,” Ding Zhengyang said. “The skirmish was the first head-on clash between us and the army of the Imperium in hundreds of years. Other than the serious damage to the starship, a lot of people had severe mental problems and PTSD. Therefore, during that period, all kinds of discussions, meetings, and therapy groups popped up. We were not very eye-catching among them.

“After prolonged discussions, heated arguments, and painful self-diagnoses, we came to the same conclusion—that it was high time the dream of a thousand years ended!”

“Was it Lu Qingchen?” Tang Dingyuan asked. “Was it the so-called ‘Master Lu’ of the CIFA who guided you to that conclusion?”

“Not entirely. Lu Qingchen showed up much later. It was a long time after the ‘fraternity of Immortal Cultivators’ on Firefly was established,” Ding Zhengyang said. “Ever since we were stationed at the edge of the Dragon Snake Space Zone, we had learned a lot of information about the Star Glory Federation. Naturally, we also learned of the CIFA’s existence.

“Of course, we thought about getting in touch with the CIFA, partly to discuss the latest theories on the true path of immortality and partly to see if there was any chance that we could cooperate. We were even hoping to get the news about the expedition army of the Imperium from them.

“However, the CIFA acted very clandestinely, and we did not dare be too blatant because we were extremely weak at that time. Therefore, we failed to reach out to them for the time being.

“We never got a chance to meet them until I sent a trusted subordinate to Fish Dragon City to carry out a secret mission for the fraternity of the Immortal Cultivators—”

Chapter 1632 - Lu Qingchen’s Belief

Tang Dingyuan interrupted him. “What secret mission?”

“Relax. It was just a personal issue.” Ding Zhengyang smiled miserably. “There was a very large underground warehouse for sperm and eggs in Fish Dragon City. Not only could they help you preserve your life seed there for a long time, for an appropriate price, they could also be responsible for finding a surrogate mother and taking care of the identity, education, and other problems after your child was born.

“Most of the Immortal Cultivators on Firefly had lost many if not all of our family in the battle years ago. Naturally, we wanted to leave new offspring. My trusted subordinate was asked to preserve our life seeds in the underground warehouse.”

“Why did you do that?” Tang Dingyuan frowned. “Firefly has its own sperm warehouse. For the heroes of the battle and their families, you would be prioritized to have blood descendants. Why did you go to the black market in Fish Dragon City?”

Ding Zhengyang sniffed and said, “Exactly because we did not want our descendants to have anything to do with Firefly or the government-in-exile so that the tragedy of ten years ago would not happen again, and our new offspring would not die with the government-in-exile one day in the future!”

Tang Dingyuan was lost for words for a moment. He then said, “Go on!”

“There were quite a number of concerns during the attempt. We also had to consider the way out for the offspring if our identity was exposed and we were completely defamed, which was a matter of the utmost importance for the Immortal Cultivators. My trusted subordinate stayed in Fish Dragon City for quite a long time to handle all the details.

“It was during this period that he witnessed an assault and pursuit. The pursuers were the Secret Sword Agents and the Dim Moon Squad from the Star Glory Federation, and the pursued were the members of the CFIA.

“It seemed that a fairly-large underground branch that the CFIA had in Fish Dragon City had been discovered, and the two intelligence agencies of the federation had both sent out their elite soldiers, hoping to catch all of them.

“Since fellow Immortal Cultivators were in trouble, how could my trusted subordinate stand by and do nothing? He took the chance to rescue two members of the CFIA and established a secret channel of communication with them. As we got to know each other better, we finally made contact with Lu Qingchen, the president of the CFIA.

“At that time, although we had all turned into Immortal Cultivators, our understanding of the true path of immortality was rather juvenile and shallow. Our ancestors had fled from the Star Ocean Republic a thousand years ago when ‘Blackstar the Great’ Wuying Qi had only just claimed the throne. The theories of the Immortal Cultivators were only just born at that time, and they were still quite immature.

“For a thousand years, we had been hiding here and there. We were unaware of the latest developments of the Immortal Cultivators’ theories in other Sectors. Therefore, our minds were quite anguished, and we strongly desired new knowledge.

“We all knew that Lu Qingchen was the true disciple of Su Changfa, an Immortal Cultivator from the Imperium a hundred years ago. Then, the true path of immortality that he had brought was at least the latest theories from a hundred years ago, which would definitely much more advanced than the ‘primitive prototype of the true path of immortality’ from a thousand years ago that we were familiar with. Naturally, it was necessary that we learned more from him.

“For such a purpose, we attempted to invite Lu Qingchen to preach on Firefly and convene ‘Immortality Orientations’ in secret.

“At first, we thought that he might have concerns. After all, as the most wanted criminal of the federation, he was in a rather dangerous situation himself, and it was certainly inappropriate for him to show up in public.

“But out of our expectations, he agreed to our request quickly. Initially, he preached via remote video meetings through our secret communication channel. Later, he even visited Firefly in person. Such determination to disseminate the truth without caring about his own safety appeared quite admirable to many fellow Cultivators back then.”

Tang Dingyuan and Cui Lingfeng looked at each other, both greatly surprised. They did not know that the most dangerous criminal of the federation had once snuck onto Firefly without alarming anyone and then left utterly unharmed.

Li Yao, on the other hand, frowned and thought hard.

“Lu Qingchen showed us the ‘brand-new true path of immortality’,” Ding Zhengyang said, “which has developed in the Imperium of True Human Beings for a thousand years and crashed, challenged, and integrated with the local ideology of the Star Glory Federation for a hundred years. It was indeed enlightening and mind-boggling. My fellow Cultivators and I felt that our eyes were opened, and we finally saw the universe and ourselves clearly!”

“What are Lu Qingchen’s theories?” Tang Dingyuan asked. “Are they really so delusive?”

Ding Zhengyang smiled and said, “The true path of immortality is the ultimate truth in the universe that entails everything. It is ever changing and developing. My understanding of it is not profound enough, either. How can I explain its essence to you in only a few words?

“Let’s put it simply. Lu Qingchen believes that the true path of immortality and the path of the Cultivators are not contradictory; they are the two sides of the same coin, two extreme forms of one ‘transhuman’ that can be transformed into each other incessantly. Just as there are no absolute saints or fiends in the world, there are also two parts, ‘Immortal Cultivator’ and ‘Cultivator’, inside the body of every individual. It is all a matter of their ratio.”

“Transhuman?” Tang Dingyuan chewed on the new terms thoughtfully.

“Yes. Lu Qingchen does not like to call those whose spiritual roots are awakened ‘Cultivators’ or ‘Immortal Cultivators’. The most commonly used term in his meetings was ‘transhuman’,” Ding Zhengyang explained. “The so-called ‘transhuman’ means ‘people who originate from mortals, transcend mortals, but are ultimately bound by the properties of mortals’.

“Cultivator and Immortal Cultivator are two terms with obvious moral biases, but ‘transhuman’ itself is entirely neutral and can be either good or bad! In the Imperium of True Human Beings, anyone whose spiritual root is awakened is qualified as a ‘true human being’. However, Lu Qingchen believes that they can only be called ‘transhuman’ at best, and there is still a long way to go before they grow from ‘transhumans’ into ‘true human beings’ who completely recognize themselves, the civilization of mankind, and the entire universe.”

“Sophistry.” Cui Lingfeng could not help but remark coldly, “Of course, there are probably no flawless saints or pernicious, utterly inhumane fiends in the world, but you still can generally distinguish the ‘good guys’ from the ‘bad guys’.”

“Of course, good guys and bad guys, Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators, can be separated. However, Lu Qingchen maintains that the critical factor that decides whether a ‘transhuman’ turns into a Cultivator or an Immortal Cultivator has barely anything to do with their will, beliefs, morals, or anything about themself. It is purely decided by the environment, like the ‘Chameleonic Fish’.”

Tang Dingyuan was slightly dazed. “The Chameleonic Fish?”

“The Chameleonic Fish is a type of tiny fish living in the Forest Ocean Sector of the Star Glory Federation. The fish are only the size of a palm, but they are best known for their sense of community. They often cruise and hunt in a shoal of thousands. They are not scared even when face off against a prey hundreds of times larger; they simply lunge at the prey without any hesitation, like a well-organized army.

“The Chameleonic Fish has a remarkable feature. However harsh the living environment is, they will not abandon any compatriots easily. When other beasts in the ocean come to swallow them, they sometimes even interweave into webs and swirl like underground tornadoes, making it impossible for the enemy to bite.

“They sound like a bunch of encouraging little animals. Because of their neat teamwork, they were quite liked by the people of the federation for a while.

“However, after the ocean biologists of the federation carefully examined the features of the fish, they discovered that everything was just an illusion.

“It is true that the harsher the environment is, the more united the fish appear to be, but there is a limit!

“When the shortage of resources surpasses a certain tipping point, the fish that were friendly and united a moment ago will immediately launch the most bloody massacre against their compatriots and devour the old, the weak, the sick, and even their own children whom they were still protecting yesterday, thereby significantly reducing the size of the clan. In the end, the strongest, agilest, and most bloodthirsty ones will live!

“It is exactly because of this feature that they are known as ‘Chameleonic Fish’, but some also called them ‘devilfish’ after realizing the truth.

“Devilfish. Hehe. They’re probably the Immortal Cultivators among the fish, right?

“However, what makes them turn from ‘fish Cultivators’, who helped and watched each other’s backs yesterday, into ‘fish Immortal Cultivators’, who are too cruel and ruthless to spare their own kind?

“Environment. Only because of the environment. All living creatures are the products of an environment. Even if human beings claim to be the wisest of all things, we cannot get rid of the biological features that originate from nature. Even if so-called ‘morals’ do exist, they are not decided by our worldview, belief, will, emotions, or any other factors, but solely depend on the environment.

“This is exactly what Lu Qingchen told us.”

One word after another, Tang Dingyuan declared, “I am a human being, not a fish!”

“They’re the same. In the universe of infinite darkness, are human beings any better than fish?” Ding Zhengyang smiled miserably. “In the past thousand years, Firefly has fled in the darkness. It was the best ‘laboratory of humanity’. In retrospect, our ancestors did quite a lot of things that they were not proud of simply for ‘survival’. Interposing reproduction, abandoning the old above 150, forbidding the free choice of occupation, forced labor, the secret police system that was too powerful but unsupervised… Many of the policies did not seem to have been made by Cultivators.”

“They were unusual approaches in unusual times,” Cui Lingfeng said coldly. “In any case, we kept our last boundary and did not make Firefly turn into a paradise of animals where the strong preyed on the weak! It was with the ironfisted conduct and the devotion of all the crew members that we made it to this day as ‘Cultivators’!”

“Wrong. Greatly wrong!” Ding Zhengyang raised his voice again. Yet, he was not crazy this time but calmer than ever. The deepest grief was hidden in his eyes, as if he had seen through the whole truth. “You kept the last boundaries and your identity as ‘Cultivators’ not because of your firm belief, not because of those ‘ironfisted conduct’, much less because of the ‘devotion and sacrifice of everyone’, but only because of the environment. It was because the environment was not harsh enough, and you were not pushed to that point!

“Do you still remember the ‘Chameleonic Fish’ that I mentioned? You were only lucky enough, and you did not show your face of the ‘devilfish’ because your environment did not reach the ‘tipping point’!”

Cui Lingfeng sighed. “Ding Zhengyang, how could you have fallen for such lousy deceptions?”

“It’s simple.” Ding Zhengyang smiled, like a cobra bearing the tusks. “Because I learned of the ‘Rebirth Plan’. Any Cultivator who learns of the ‘Rebirth Plan’ cannot guarantee that their belief will not be shaken. Speaker Cui, would you care to explain the top secret ‘Rebirth Plan’ to Captain Tang, or do you want me to do it instead?”

Cui Lingfeng’s face suddenly turned extremely pale.

“The Rebirth Plan?” Tang Dingyuan glanced at Cui Lingfeng sternly. “What is it exactly?”

Chapter 1633 - Rebirth Plan

Cui Lingfeng was silent. His lips were as hard as the gate of a starship that was directly faced with the vacuum of space.

Glancing at Li Yao, Tang Dingyuan appeared even more severe than before. Anger was accumulating on his face as he demanded, “First, the Red Lotus Plan, and now, the Rebirth Plan. How many things are happening on this starship that I don’t know about?”

“A lot,” Cui Lingfeng said gloomily. “You are Firefly’s captain. A captain must be fearless and sail through the tides unstoppably! The less one knows, the braver he will be. There’s no need for you to learn everything.”

“I want to know.” Staring at Cui Lingfeng in the eyes, Tang Dingyuan said, calmly but firmly, “If you would rather not tell me, I’ll see what Ding Zhengyang has to say.”

Cui Lingfeng’s lips, a gate that sealed countless secrets, shivered for a long time. Finally, he opened his mouth and said, “In the past thousand years, we have come across too many dangers and crises, and we have drafted emergency countermeasures targeting all possible situations. The Rebirth Plan is an emergency countermeasure to deal with a Level-Ultra Crisis, the most serious, dangerous, and fatal one of all the situations.”

Tang Dingyuan was slightly dazed. He observed, “I’ve never heard about the Level-Ultra Crisis before. The Level-I Crisis is already the worst emergency.”

Cui Lingfeng smiled and said, “No. Level-I is not the worst; Level-Ultra is. A Level-Ultra Crisis refers to a situation where the resources for life-sustaining and escape are at less than twenty percent, the circulation system and the artificial greenhouses have been seriously so seriously wrecked that the resources will not return to above fifty percent standard in fifty years, and the continuously diminishing resources will possibly make our civilization collapse in fifty years and go extinct in a hundred years. Right. It is only the ideal expectation. In fact, because of the natural instincts for survival and the crazy near-death actions, once everybody knows that we will perish in fifty to a hundred years, it will not take that long at all. In five years at most, the social order will completely collapse. In ten years, the fire of civilization that is flickering like a firefly will die out.

“Once the Speaker realizes that such a situation is happening, he is authorized and obliged to activate the Rebirth Plan, in order to reduce the population on the starship rapidly, effectively, and stably, until the population and the sustainable resources reach a new balance.”

Tang Dingyuan’s voice was shivering. “How—how do you ‘reduce the population’?”

“Do you still remember the meteor storm that Firefly suffered 728 years ago?” Cui Lingfeng asked. “The meteor storm was not serious per se, and it only penetrated through the shell of the starships at the outermost layer. However, the weird virus carried by the meteors caused a huge plague inside Firefly, which reduced our population by twenty percent.”

“Of course I do. It was almost the most difficult and dark time for Firefly.” Tang Dingyuan was puzzled. “But didn’t we completely extinguish the plague in the end?”

“Yes, the plague was extinguished, but the virus was not entirely demolished.” Cui Lingfeng put on a weird smile. “It was truly a perfect virus with a lot of variations. It spread via the air at a fairly high speed. The symptoms were not obvious, and the latency period was not fixed. The virus’ attack was also quite fatal. Meanwhile, it would automatically look for the strongest hosts to infect them first. The more powerful the spiritual energy of the host, the faster the mutation and corrosion of the virus, which would offset the endeavor where the host tried to cure themselves with their spiritual energy. In other words, it was an ‘indiscriminate’ virus. Neither ordinary people nor Cultivators could get away with it. Their death rate was almost the same.

“Our virologists studied it profoundly in their labs. At first, they planned to build a biological weapon to strike the Imperium, but they found out later that the virus had a fatal weakness, which was that it could easily be prevented and cured by a synthesized drug. The materials to make the drug could be found in almost every Sector, and the synthetization method was not very complicated.

“It meant that even if they did build a biological weapon, it would not deal a heavy blow to the Imperium and could only savage one or two of their starships. Therefore, the virus was not of much military significance.

“However, it was very hard to manufacture the special drug on our starship.

“Therefore, the specialists began to build the biological weapon for a new purpose. The final result was quite satisfactory. The virus would spread fast and be quite inconspicuous and lethal. It targeted Cultivators and ordinary people at the same time. Once it spread in a fully-enclosed starship through the air circulation system, a chunk of the population would be reduced instantly without a sound. Most critically of all, the virus boasted a distinctive feature that we called the ‘half-life period’. After a few generations, the virus would perish automatically and stop spreading.

“Also, the half-life period of the virus was controllable. It could be either long or short.

“In other words, this was a biological weapon designed for a ‘precise attack’. As long as the half-life period was controlled and the total population to be infected was learned, it would be possible to calculate in advance how many victims the virus would kill. After the number of the deceased met the requirement, the virus would decay and vanish, without leaving any more aftereffects.

“Such a virus was named the Rebirth Virus, which was the key to the Rebirth Plan. Perhaps it would bring rebirth to Firefly when it was on the verge of destruction.”

Tang Dingyuan found it hard to believe his ears. Looking at Cui Lingfeng in a daze for a long time, he exclaimed, “You—you developed a biological weapon in secret, not to deal with the enemy, but to kill your own people, your compatriots, everyone that you swore to protect! Was what you tried to do any different from the Immortal Cultivators’ doings?”

“Yes, it is,” Cui Lingfeng said calmly. “Assume that you are an Immortal Cultivator who is in charge of the Rebirth Plan. Think about it. What exactly will you do? Of course, you will separate the cabins of the ordinary people—the humble ‘hominoids’—from the cabins of the Immortal Cultivators—the ‘true human beings’. Then, you will project the virus only into the cabins of the hominoids. Or maybe you will ask all the Immortal Cultivators to take the special drug beforehand. You can even try to weaken the virus’ aggressiveness to those whose spiritual root has awakened when the biological weapon is still being developed so that the virus will only infect the ordinary people but not the Immortal Cultivators, right?

“After all, in the eyes of the Immortal Cultivators, ordinary people are all garbage, useless redundancies. Because of the shortage of resources, it’s only necessary to reduce the amount of garbage.

“But we were not going to do it in such a way. I can disclose the whole implemental procedures of the Rebirth Plan to you right now. We did not intend to separate anyone or ask anyone to take the special drug in advance. Moreover, for safety reasons, our ancestors had long destroyed all the special drugs and the materials to make the drug.

“Once I decide to project the virus, the virus will instantly spread throughout Firefly and kill the random prey that it has got its eyes on. Nobody will survive, be they Cultivators or ordinary people, including myself. I may be infected and eventually die, too.

“Do you understand now? The ancestors who made the decision did not consider themselves to be ‘transhuman’ who could decide the fate of ‘mortals’. Whether you are a Cultivator or an ordinary person, everybody will be equal when they listen to the ruling of their destiny. Many people will die, but still more people will take over their responsibilities and continue walking, further deep into the deep, dark universe.

“You may be thinking that those who drafted the Rebirth Plan were merely fooling themselves, but I believe that this is the biggest difference between them… between us and the Immortal Cultivators.”

It was extremely difficult for Tang Dingyuan to breathe. He gritted his teeth so hard that one would think that even a starship would have been bitten into pieces if it had been put into his mouth. “However you defend yourself, I still find it unacceptable. Utterly unacceptable!”

“Then, tell me about it, Brother Dingyuan. What would you do?” Cui Lingfeng sighed and said, “Assuming that, as the captain, you know very clearly that the resources onboard are only enough to make a hundred people survive, but we have two hundred people on the starship, two hundred mouths and bellies that are waiting to be fed but can never be filled. What would you do?”

Tang Dingyuan was deep in thought and lost for words. His voice was much lower than before. “Cultivators, Cultivators shouldn’t—shouldn’t—”

“If you think that Cultivators shouldn’t be so dark,” Cui Lingfeng said casually, “that’s because somebody else is standing before you, helping you do the dark, dirty, and cruel work first, my captain.”

Inside the prison cell, Ding Zhengyang cackled like a crow. “Captain, you know the truth of the ‘Rebirth Plan’ now, don’t you? Is your belief still alright? Tell me about it. Were the guys who proposed such a plan still real Cultivators? No. I am not the first Immortal Cultivator on Firefly. This starship has long been inhabited by Immortal Cultivators. It has long been occupied by the Immortal Cultivators!”

“Ding Zhengyang,” Cui Lingfeng said coldly, “we never implemented the ‘Rebirth Plan’ from the beginning to the end. Firefly survived all the disasters.”

“Yes, it did. But that’s only because you were fortunate enough to never run into any ‘Level-Ultra Crisis’!” Ding Zhengyang laughed. “But your luck will not stay with you forever. If you hadn’t encountered the claw fleet of the Imperium and the Star Glory Federation, Firefly would’ve continued drifting to the unknown land that had never been visited by human beings before in the deeper part of the universe. As the starship aged slowly, in another few hundred years, a ‘Level-Ultra Crisis’ was bound to happen!

“Don’t you argue with me on that. As the Chief Mate, I know the whorl of every screw on the starship as clearly as I know the back of my hand!

“What I’m saying is that, even if the Imperium never caught Firefly in the hundreds of years to come, Firefly would still have been consumed by darkness on its own and turned into a minor civilization of Immortal Cultivators!

“Do you get it now? One day, we would all have become Immortal Cultivators. I only went one step ahead of the rest!

“This is Lu Qingchen’s theory. Cultivators are just a ‘special mutation form’ in a stable environment where there are sufficient resources. However, in the dark universe, a shortage of resources and drastic changes in the environment are a regularity. Therefore, Immortal Cultivators are the general form of the ‘transhumans’!”

Chapter 1634 - Big Bai Fleet

Glancing at Tang Dingyuan who was already slightly stunned, Cui Lingfeng interrupted Ding Zhengyang’s speech. “Enough. Is this the so-called ‘Immortal Cultivator 2.0’ proposed by Lu Qingchen?”

“This is only part of it,” Ding Zhengyang said. “There is more, concerning the relationship between the Immortal Cultivators and ordinary people.”

“Relationship?” Cui Lingfeng said coldly. “What relationship can there possibly be other than slavery and exploitation?”

“Then you are wrong, Speaker Cui,” Ding Zhengyang said. “The ultimate purpose of the true path of immortality is to facilitate the continuous evolution and development of mankind, not to bring pain to ordinary people. For the ‘true human beings’, the ‘hominoids’ are more like kitties and puppies. Other than perverts, who would intentionally torture kitties and puppies every day?

“No. Enslaving and exploiting ordinary people is not the original purpose of the Immortal Cultivators. It is just a measure that has to be taken because of the shortage of resources and the invincibility of the enemy! Didn’t we say that ‘unusual times require unusual approaches’ a lot on Firefly, too?

“In fact, a lot of slavery and exploitation targeting the ordinary people is for the purpose of obtaining more resources. However, as the technological boom takes place, the civilization of mankind has been rising exponentially. The clumsy labor work such as mining can be replaced by machinery and automatic systems.

“It means that if the Imperium of True Human Beings completely crushes the Alliance of the Holy Covenant one day and unifies the entire universe, after the very advanced system of automatic machines driven by spiritual energy is developed, the ordinary people will no longer be enslaved or exploited. Their quality of life quality will be greatly increased. It will be much better than the lives of the citizens of the Star Glory Federation, not to mention the ‘hominoids’ in the past!

“However, for the day to arrive sooner, the ordinary people living within the Imperium must work hard and devote themselves for the future of the civilization of mankind. They should try to collect more resources so that the Imperium can win this war!

“Firefly and the Star Glory Federation should stop competing with the Imperium, too. Our ill-considered resistance will only diminish the Imperium’s strength and delay the day when the Imperium unifies the entire universe. The later the day comes, the more tantalizing the good days of the ordinary people will be!

“If the Cultivators on Firefly and from the Star Glory Federation really consider protecting ordinary people to be their responsibility as they claim, they should surrender to the Imperium, join the Imperium, help the Imperium unify the universe, and try to improve the ordinary people’s treatment in the Imperium from the inside. That is the real solution!”

Cui Lingfeng had been listening quietly the whole time. While he listened, he carefully observed Ding Zhengyang's face. At this moment, he suddenly said, "Ding Zhengyang, tell me about it. Do you really believe everything that you said just now? Do you have absolute faith in the true path of immortality?"

Ding Zhengyang was talking excitedly and enthusiastically, but Cui Lingfeng's question that was mixed with feeble spiritual energy halted him as if he were a toy whose spring had broken. He was dazed for a long time, and he resumed his half-dead appearance in the beginning. He mumbled, "I don't know. In the past, I had absolute faith in the true path of immortality, but I found that I've been fooled. Lu Qingchen talked about his true path of immortality as if it were a real thing. But who cares? I believe everything now, and I believe in nothing. I only want to survive. I only want to live to see my offspring to live on!"

"It is a miracle that your belief has still not collapsed even with such controversial thoughts," Cui Lingfeng remarked.

Ding Zhengyang smiled miserably. "Perhaps my belief collapsed ten years ago when I was told that my entire family had been killed in the battle. Right now, my belief is simply to survive. As long as I can live on, as long as my bloodline can be passed on, I can confess anything. As for exactly whether the Cultivators or the Immortal Cultivators are right, and which of them will win eventually, I don't give a f*ck about that right now."

Cui Lingfeng nodded. "Alright. If it is proved that you are not lying, we will allow you to live on and may even consider allowing you keep your bloodline. Now, talk about the rebellion. Tell me your specific plan. What did you plan do you exactly?"

“Our original purpose was simply to get rid of Captain Tang so that I could control the bridge,” Ding Zhengyang said. “Then, with me in the bridge and Cheng Xuansu on your side, we would be able to completely control Firefly and play a vital role in the war between the Imperium and the federation to come.

“But later, you grew suspicious about the whole event and noticed the tricks we played on the polygraph. We were left with no choice but to get rid of you, too. Although a lot of trouble would be raised when you were killed, it would better help us gain control over Firefly.”

“What kind of ‘vital role’ did you want to play in the war between the Imperium and the federation?” Cui Lingfeng continued asking expressionlessly.

“To lead the way for the Black Wind Fleet and help them jump over smoothly as their lighthouse, of course!” Ding Zhengyang said.

Cui Lingfeng glanced at Tang Dingyuan and Li Yao again.

Hearing such a piece of astounding news, even Tang Dingyuan had to put down the sophisticated upgraded version of the true path of immortality. He pricked his ears and listened carefully.

“Is the Black Wind Fleet truly here?” Cui Lingfeng asked.

“Yes, it is already here,” Ding Zhengyang replied. “It is lurking in a mysterious space zone not far away from the Star Glory Federation, waiting for the best opportunity to launch a critical strike!”

“However, due to the lack of a ‘space gate’ made of an enormous number of star beacons to provide navigation, they can’t directly jump over, right?” Cui Lingfeng asked.

“Exactly,” Ding Zhengyang said. “Without the navigation of a super large ‘space gate’, the best they can do is project some minor infiltration fleets, spies, and special agents into the country. The main body of the fleet cannot be teleported as a whole. If they jump recklessly without considering everything, it will take at least one day for the fleet to recover from the weakness and disorder after the jump and to unfold into the battle formation.

“The capabilities of the Star Glory Federation are slightly higher than the Black Wind Fleet’s expectation. One day’s time will be more than enough for the federal fleets to assault the Black Wind Fleet, which has yet to stand on their feet. They can even prevent the jump of the subsequent starships by projecting the bombs that will release space ripples. That way, the Black Wind Fleet will be divided and devoured one piece after another!

“If the battle goes on, it will most likely become a protracted attrition war. For the Black Wind Fleet, which does not have a base in the rear, even if it secures the final victory, victory will certainly come with a great price, which is not the future that they are looking forward to.

“What the Black Wind Fleet wants is a quick, neat victory, a battle that is finished instantly. They hope to crush and annihilate the main force of the Star Glory Federation all at once!

“Therefore, the Black Wind Fleet is still waiting for the special agents that they sent into the federation earlier to collect intelligence and guide the way together with the ‘CFIA’, the organization of local Immortal Cultivators, so that they can find an opportunity to strike a telling blow!”

“Are you implying that not just Firefly and the Dragon Snake Space Zone, even the seven Sectors in the homeland of the Star Glory Federation have probably been infiltrated by a lot of agents of the Imperium of True Human Beings, who are looking for the federation’s weaknesses and trying to establish secret ‘space gates’?” Cui Lingfeng asked. “How did you believe such important intelligence without valid proof?”

Ding Zhengyang hesitated for a moment before saying, “At first, I did not want to raise a rebellion on Firefly at such risk. So, Lu Qingchen told me the information to convince me that the Imperium was a sure winner and the federation was doomed to failure! Although he did not show me any concrete evidence, I carefully studied every piece of information that he told me, and there did not seem to be apparent loopholes. If you don’t believe me, I can repeat exactly what he told me.”

“Sure…” Cui Lingfeng, Tang Dingyuan, and Li Yao looked at each other in bewilderment, all aware of the importance of the new intelligence.

They were about to urge Ding Zhengyang to continue, when Tang Dingyuan’s mini crystal processor suddenly buzzed. He raised his wrist to check it, only to put on an even weirder expression.

Cui Lingfeng frowned. “Something’s wrong?”

“Yes. The bridge just sent me a message about the federation,” Tang Dingyuan said. “A federal fleet is currently having a regular drill of ‘secret submerging’ near the Dragon Snake Space Zone. However, they were unfortunately caught in a space storm. It is said that they have suffered grave losses. Most of their fuel and supplies are lost, and a lot of the soldiers are seriously wounded. Not allowed to enter the Dragon Snake Space Zone for medical treatment and maintenance, they are requesting to stop by our docks to run simple maintenance and to refill the supplies so that they can return to the federation."

The Star Glory Federation and the government-in-exile were allies now. Since they had been caught in an expected cosmic storm, it sounded like a reasonable request.

But Cui Lingfeng sneered. "Is it a coincidence that a federal fleet 'happened' to arrive the moment after a large rebellion of the Immortal Cultivators took place on our starship? Let me guess. This is what the screenplay should be next…

"After the federal fleet really enters our docks, it is only necessary for the commander of the fleet to talk to the highest commander of Firefly to express his gratitude. Then, the commander of the fleet will discover, 'to his surprise', that the highest commander of Firefly is neither Tang Dingyuan nor Cui Lingfeng, but either Ding Zhengyang or Cheng Xuansu.

"After that, he will certainly investigate what happened on Firefly. Through a series of 'fortuitous incidents', he will see through the Immortal Cultivators' scheme.

"Since the federal fleet is now out on a drill, it must've brought a lot of weapons and ammunition with them, and it is ready to go into battle anytime.

"In the end, the brave Cultivators of the federal fleet will march into Firefly and take care of all the Immortal Cultivators on our side, turning into great heroes who have saved Firefly!

“As a result, not only will they figure out the internal conditions of Firefly, the new administration of Firefly will also be grateful to them, just like we are grateful to ‘Team Red Lotus’ right now.

“If such a thing does happen, Firefly will definitely join the Star Glory Federation without any suspense, and it will have absolutely no leverage during the negotiation.”

“Speaker Cui, what—what are you suggesting?” Tang Dingyuan frowned deeply. “We are allies with the Star Glory Federation. I think you should have more trust in them!”

“More trust in them?” Cui Lingfeng smiled and said unhurriedly, “Let me guess. The federal fleet that has appeared out of nowhere must have a lot to do with Jin Xinyue, the leader of the Ministry of Equality and Development and president of the Dim Moon Fund, right?”

Tang Dingyuan was dazed. “How did you know? It is the Big Bai Fleet, commanded by Bai Xingjian, a notable general on Jin Xinyue’s side!”

Chapter 1635 - Bai Xingjian and Bai Kaixin

“A notable general on Jin Xinyue’s side?” Li Yao was slightly dazed. Then, his curiosity was aroused. “Who is this Bai Xingjian and his Big Bai Fleet? Do they pose a threat to us?”

Tang Dingyuan shook his head and said, “The official title of the Big Bai Fleet is ‘The Sixteenth Deep Sky Fleet of the Federal Army’. Because the highest commander who created and leads it is surnamed Bai, and he has a weird habit of decorating all the starships with the overly-exaggerated white [1] camouflage, the fleet has always been known as the ‘Big Bai Fleet’ in the federal army. However, it is in fact a slightly sarcastic name, because the fleet is actually just a miscellaneous troop with a not particularly high combat ability. At the very least, it is no match for the ‘Burning Prairie Fleet’, the main force of the federal army, at all.”

Li Yao nodded and asked, “Then, why did you say that he is on Jin Xinyue’s side? The Star Glory Federation is a parliamentary country after all. I don’t believe that Jin Xinyue can have a whole fleet as her private troop before she is elected as the Supreme Speaker successfully, can she?”

“No, of course not.” Tang Dingyuan was the leader of the military in the government-in-exile. Naturally, he knew the complicated backgrounds and developments of the various troops of the federal army. “It is understandable that Captain Lin is not familiar with the current status of the Star Glory Federation’s military after a hibernation of two hundred years. The army of the federation can mainly be divided into two parts. The first part comprises the ground troops that are stationed on the ground of the mother planets of the seven Sectors and the various resource planets. They are responsible for the defenses within the atmosphere.

“The second part consists of the space fleets that are responsible for the protection of the space. The Deep Sky Fleets boast high collection, maintenance, and production abilities, which allow them to perform dozens of space jumps without requiring any supplies from the outside world, so they can travel among the seven Sectors and march toward the deeper universe.

“Of the troops of the two different kinds, the ‘Deep Sky Fleets’ are the absolute main force. I’m sure that you can understand it, Captain Lin.”

Li Yao nodded.

Ground troops were not necessarily weaker than the space fleets. A hundred years ago in the Flying Star Sector, the space pirates had occupied ‘Spider Den’ and resisted the fleets of the Cultivators for hundreds of years.

However, generally speaking, space fleets were much more important than ground troops because space fleets represented the initiative in a war. If the whole surrounding space had been occupied by hostile starships, and all the transportation and supply lines had been cut off, the enemy would be able to come and go freely. They would also be able to launch bombardments from the near-planet orbits. The ground troops would be caught in an awkward situation.

Therefore, the most excellent talents and the most precious resources should be focused on the space fleets. It was a common understanding in the Imperium, the Covenant Alliance, and the federation.

“The essence of the federal army lies in the Deep Sky Fleets, and the essence of the Deep Sky Fleets is focused on the Burning Prairie Fleet,” Tang Dingyuan said, “which was a fleet established by the main forces of the Flying Star Sector, one of the three core worlds of the federation’, a hundred years ago for the sole purpose of resisting the Imperium of True Human Beings.

“In the past hundred years, the best prodigies, the most valuable resources, and the most advanced starships and magical equipment have been allocated to the Burning Prairie Fleet, turning it into the ace troop of ace troops in the federal army. In the war against the ‘Uranian Ring Sector’ thirty years ago, the Burning Prairie Fleet offered a remarkable performance. After analyzing the battle cases at that time, we’ve reached the conclusion that the fleet is as good as the regular fleets of the Imperium of True Human Beings in certain areas!

“The Burning Prairie Fleet was founded by the Flying Star Sector natives in the beginning. The Flying Star Sector natives are a people who excel at piloting starships and fighting in the sea of stars! They were a civilization of starships in the first place. For thousands of years, the brilliance of the stars has been flowing inside their veins. To this day, more than half of the officers in the Burning Prairie Fleet are still from the Flying Star Sector. It can’t be helped. The habit of cruising in space that runs in their blood cannot be developed by the planet residents in the other worlds after only one or two hundred years.

“Bai Xingjian is also from the Flying Star Sector. He was one of the earliest members of the Burning Prairie Fleet, too. It was… quite a shame.”

Tang Dingyuan sighed and slowly shook his head.

“Oh?” Li Yao grew even more interested. “What do you mean?”

He had witnessed the establishment of the Burning Prairie Fleet more than a hundred years ago in person. Even the name Burning Prairie had been proposed by him and the many big shots of the Flying Star Sector after much discussion. Now that he heard the name again, he could not help but feel as if the seed that he had thrown out randomly had grown into a magnificent tree after he woke up.

A talent from the Burning Prairie Fleet had turned into a notable general on Jin Xinyue’s side. He was immediately interested in the guy ‘Bai Xingjian’.

“Bai Xingjian is an underprivileged orphan who worked as a maintainer at the bottom level of the Burning Prairie Fleet in the beginning,” Tang Dingyuan said. “Despite the lack of connections, he revealed shocking gifts in his childhood, and it took him only thirty years to rise from a minor maintainer into the youngest captain of a main-force warship in the federation. It is worth nothing that he was in the middle of a peaceful period without any wars! Such a terrifying rise seemed to suggest that he was definitely going to be a superstar.

“According to the policies of the Burning Prairie Fleet, which stressed the importance of raising young officers for preparation of the resistance against the Imperium a hundred years ago, his future was nothing but promising!

“However, perhaps because he rose an age too young, Bai Xingjian had the greatest shortcoming; he was dismissive and disobedient. He often did not listen to his superior’s commands but simply did things his own way. Sometimes, he even berated his superior’s orders ruthlessly right to their face, which made him quite a headache for all his superiors who couldn’t talk sense into him at all.

“As he was promoted to higher and higher posts, the situation only got worse. Finally, after a new superior was named to supervise him, the contradiction between him and his superior went to the most heated phase.

“Right. His superior at that time was ‘Bai Kaixin’, the Chief of General Staff in the Burning Prairie Fleet right now.”

“Cough, cough!” Li Yao coughed hard and said emotionlessly, “Okay.”

“Bai Kaixin is decades older than Bai Xingjian,” Tang Dingyuan said. “He is also from the Flying Star Sector. However, he had already distinguished himself in the battles of space pirates and the Riot of the Immortal Cultivators. He’s accumulated a lot of military credits and is an excellent advisor.

“Also, he was also one of Li Yao’s best friends, the legendary ‘dominator of three Sectors’ in the federation. He once worked in the leadership of the Glorious Sunlight Group founded under Li Yao’s name. The carriers and guardian starships that belonged to the Glorious Sunlight Group were all planned and organized by him, which gave him abundant experience in commanding large fleets.

“When such a ‘young talent’ who had military credits, experience, reputation, and connections, and who happened to be also from the Flying Star Sector, decided to join the Burning Prairie Fleet as an advisor of a secondary fleet, it was not just reasonable but almost wasteful!

“Almost all the captains and leadership of the Burning Prairie Fleet extended their warm welcomes to him. However, for some reason, Bai Xingjian disliked the new boss very much and did not see eye to eye with him in any way.”

Li Yao frowned. “Had they been in conflict before?”

“That’s not something we can learn, but I doubt it,” Tang Dingyuan said. “When Bai Kaixin distinguished himself in the Flying Star Sector, Bai Xingjian was only a kid seven to eight years old. One of them is dozens of years older than the other. What conflict could they possibly have had? Also, Bai Kaixin is an informal and approachable man. He does not appear to be someone who would hold a grudge against any person for no good reason.

“In terms of professional skills, Bai Kaixin was an experienced, excellent advisor who couldn’t have been worse than Bai Xingjian’s previous boss. So, there was no way that he did not know what he was doing and simply giving bad orders to Bai Xingjian.

“But all in all, Bai Xingjian was greatly dissatisfied with the boss. He intentionally offended Bai Kaixin in public many times. He even accused his boss, who was decades older than himself, of being ‘an ignorant kid who should go back to the Glorious Sunlight Group to command the useless carriers’. Tsk, tsk. A lot of eccentrics have emerged since the Burning Prairie Fleet was founded a hundred years ago, but someone who is as arrogant as that can only be called cocky. Even an outsider such as myself had a very deep impression on Bai Xingjian.”

“What happened later?” Li Yao found the young man Bai Xingjian very interesting. He asked curiously, “Did Bai Kaixin burst into fury and shove him away?”

“Not exactly,” Tang Dingyuan said. “Bai Xingjian’s commanding abilities are proportionate to his temper. Such an excellent commander is not easy to find in the vast universe. Also, Bai Kaixin was quite a lenient man who simply tolerated and even covered for Bai Xingjian’s unreasonable hostility. Finally, he continued on the rise like a shining star in the Burning Prairie Fleet.

“It is a pity that the future is always uncertain. Bai Xingjian could’ve been the youngest commander of a starship in the Nascent Soul Stage in the federation, but he was in too much of a hurry when he entered the Nascent Soul Stage, and he was seriously wounded. His level also plummeted!”

Li Yao was hooked. Hearing that such an interesting man was mentally deranged, he could not help but recall his past. “What?”

“It is said that Bai Kaixin was there when Bai Xingjian was mentally deranged. Some even say that Bai Kaixin had been holding back his anger all that time until the most critical moment during Bai Xingjian’s training in order to remove the ‘sting’ who had been against him all the time. However, only the two of them know what happened.

“All in all, the public intelligence we collected also states that Bai Xingjian was nearly crippled after the accident. His computational and commanding abilities were lost.

“With his unfriendliness, few people liked him in the Burning Prairie Fleet. Naturally, it was impossible for him to stay there.

“After three years, he managed to return to the Core Formation Stage, but there was no place for him in the

Burning Prairie Fleet.

“He was finally a commander of a fleet again, but this time, it was for a fleet of plain carriers.

“As it happened, the war against the Uranian Ring Sector broke out. The federal army armed all the miscellaneous troops and fleets of carriers. Finally, Bai Xingjian became the commander of one of the miscellaneous troops, with thirty or so ragged, outdated armed carriers and antique warships.

“It was a beggar-like fleet. Many officers scorned him, calling his troop the ‘garbage fleet’.”

Chapter 1636 - Rise of a Garbage Fleet!

Li Yao secretly frowned. “That’s rather a strong word. Are the officers of the Burning Prairie Fleet all so petty and vengeful?”

“Not exactly. It is rather complicated,” Tang Dingyuan said. “The Burning Prairie Fleet was the best troop of the best troops. The commanders of the fleet always thought highly of themselves and did not bother to laugh at the miscellaneous troops that had just been jumbled together. At that time, there were too many of such troops that were founded with the old, forsaken starships. But the Burning Prairie Fleet never called any of them a ‘garbage fleet’.

“They called Bai Xingjian’s fleet ‘garbage’ not just because of their outdated equipment and their ragged starships that were no better than wasted iron. It was more because of the officers and sailors under Bai Xingjian’s command.”

“Oh?” Li Yao blinked and asked, “What’s special about Bai Xingjian’s officers and sailors?”

“Space fleets are developed from the ‘navy’ in the era of the planetary civilization. It is a unit that is highly technical and values bloodline and lineage very much. Producing a new starship is easy, but it is much more difficult to establish an excellent team to fight on the starship, including the members of the bridge and the sailors and maintainers in the engine compartment!”

As captain of Firefly, Tang Dingyuan could not have understood the feeling better. “It takes a hundred years to build a ground troop and a thousand years to build a fleet. That is definitely not an exaggeration. In either the federation or the Imperium, once they enter the highest warring state, it is easy for them to found dozens of crystal suit legions anytime. Ordinary people, armed with ‘skill cards’ and ancillary systems based on crystal processors, can pick up the usage of beginner-level crystal suits after quick training and become qualified ‘infantries’.

“However, for space fleets, especially the Deep Sky Fleets that can cross Sectors and cruise for decades in the universe self-sufficiently, it is a whole different matter. Building the starships is only the first step. The key is those who control the starships—the sailors, navigators, fire control officers, and so son. Thousands of well-trained, experienced workers in critical posts are needed!

“What Bai Xingjian had before was a fleet of carriers. His previous subordinates did not have any experience in combat and could not be raised into warriors after only a couple years of training. Even if he used every trick possible to get numerous powerful starships, he would not have had enough men to control them.

“Therefore, Bai Xingjian walked on an ‘evil path’ that the elites of the Burning Prairie Fleet despised.

“He began recruiting new members on a large scale. The first candidates were the space pirates of the Flying Star Sector!” Li Yao was slightly dazed. “Were there still space pirates in the Flying Star Sector?”

“There were, but they had just gotten out of prison.”

Tang Dingyuan was rather amused. Shaking his head, he actually did not quite approve of it.

“You may not know this, Captain Lin, but an enormous, gory war of space pirates once took place in the Flying Star Sector a hundred years ago. Supported by the ‘The Temple of Immortals’, an organization of Immortal Cultivators, the space pirates enjoyed their heyday and savaged the entire Flying Star Sector. They were almost able to compete with the regular army of the main sects of the Flying Star Sector!

“Of course, under the lead of ‘Vulture’ Li Yao, the Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector won the war eventually and occupied ‘Spider Den’, the nest of the space pirates. Countless space pirates, after realizing that they had been tricked by the Immortal Cultivators, gave up their resistance and surrendered.

“Naturally, the leaders of the bandits who had committed too many crimes were executed, but not all the space pirates were sentenced to death.

“According to the severity of their crimes, they were sentenced to life imprisonment or thirty to fifty years in prison. A lot of space pirates spent decades, during which time the Old Federation was transformed into the New Federation, in penal servitude while they were locked in the prisons on harsh resource planets with terrible environments.

“After the New Federation launched an expedition against the Uranian Ring Sector, and the first large-scale universal war since the New Federation was founded finally began, almost eighty years had passed since the war of the space pirates and the ‘Riot of the Immortal Cultivators’ in the Flying Star Sector. Even those space pirates who were sentenced to lifelong imprisonment had basically served enough of their term and were released from prison.

“Of course, even the youngest sailors eighty years ago were now more than a hundred years old, and the technical backbones on the warships of the space pirates, if their Cultivation wasn’t too high, were all weary, dying old men.

“Because of their dark past as space pirates, they did not have a pension. They were discriminated against by society. Also, due to the decades of penal servitude, they had been disconnected from the rest of the world for too long. What kind of good job could they expect to find? Most of them worked as waiters in restaurants or salespersons in the supermarkets, prepared to live the rest of their lives in poverty.

“Before, nobody took the space pirates of the past seriously. They were considered to be aged, hairless tigers whose teeth had been removed decades ago. Neither protecting the federation nor jeopardizing it seemed to have anything to do with them.

“However, Bai Xingjian suddenly had the queer thought of recruiting the space pirates of the old days now that he was short of hands!”

Li Yao was quite amazed. “Wasn’t it against the military law of the federation?”

“If it were the Burning Prairie Fleet, the vetting of the applicants was truly very rigorous. Those with criminal records would all be rejected,” Tang Dingyuan said. “However, as for the local miscellaneous troops, the recruitments were less strict.

“You should know that the Star Glory Federation is made of seven Sectors. In the past hundred years, it is inevitable that the seven Sectors had some friction among each other. Even for the three core Sectors, the Flying Star Sector had space pirates, the Blood Demon Sector was exclusively made of demons, and the most foundational Heaven’s Origin Sector had the Patriots Partnership. Everybody had a part of their history that they were not proud of. If those with criminal records were all forbidden from the army, there would be few qualified applicants!

“Besides, most of them were distinguished Cultivators with high computational abilities. If they intended to join the army to serve their country only to be shunned, they might cause trouble to society later, which would be equally unfavorable.

“One more thing. The Star Glory Federation had more than doubled in size from the ‘Old Federation’, whose sole territory was the Heaven’s Origin Sector, to the New Federation, which had three Sectors at first and then expanded to six. The speed of its growth was too high, and the systems failed to keep up with it.

“Therefore, for the miscellaneous troops regrouped from the civil fleets of carriers, which could barely be called third-rate troops, their commander often had the say in everything. The General Staff of the federal army in the Heaven’s Origin Sector only wanted to see the results and would not meddle with the commander’s decision. Besides, they did not have enough hands, energy, and resources to meddle even if they wanted to.

“As a result, Bai Xingjian successfully recruited a lot of ‘former space pirates’, who had just been released from prison after decades and were living new lives by washing dishes or working on supermarket checkouts.

“It is said that the recruitment was quite dramatic. For the few ‘talents’ that he thought most highly of, Bai Xingjian observed them in their workplaces in secret and showed up personally to convince them. Several captains of the ‘Big Bai Fleet’ right now were even kidnapped by him from the restaurants and supermarkets because the former space pirates did not believe that they were qualified to pilot a starship again after decades of prison life despite their previous correspondence with Bai Xingjian.”

Li Yao could not help but smile. “It really sounds like a joke.”

“Right?” Tang Dingyuan held back his laugh and said. “Bai Xingjian was previously one of the best-known fellows in the federal army. Despite his recent setbacks in his career, news of him soon spread across the entire federal army.

“At that time, everybody thought that he was a joke and even speculated that he was mentally deranged again. However short of hands he was, there was no reason to look for the former space pirates who had been taught a hard lesson by life, right?

“Leaving their personality aside, they had spent decades in prison smashing rocks in the dark, cold mines on resource planets. Many of them were so old that their teeth had mostly dropped out. Could they still see the pouring streams on the mainframe crystal processor of a starship? Were their hands that were used to blasting drills and pickaxes still capable of maneuvering a cannon?

“They were nothing but a bunch of space pirates even eighty years ago, mobs who could only harass and ambush.

What could they do in a great war where the fleets of regular armies competed?

“An unlucky, egoistical, and disobedient commander, a bunch of soldiers who were previously sailors on carriers, and a group of former space pirates in their hundreds who could barely stand straight and were doing odd jobs even a year ago… Such a combination did not seem promising from any perspective.

“Most critically of all, Bai Xingjian was from the Burning Prairie Fleet. Whenever his ridiculous madness was mentioned, people would always bring up the Burning Prairie Fleet. They always described the event as ‘a Mr. Bai, previously an officer of the Burning Prairie Fleet, did this and that’. Sometimes, they even omitted ‘a Mr. Bai’ and simply said that ‘a high-level officer from the Burning Prairie Fleet is hanging around with a bunch of filthy space pirates’. How could the Burning Prairie Fleet, which considered itself to be a savior of the federation and had risen first by the accomplishment of suppressing the space pirates, bear such comments? The Burning Prairie Fleet was opposed to the space pirates! Was it strange at all that they would call Bai Xingjian’s troop a ‘garbage fleet’?”

“That explains a lot.” Li Yao took a deep breath. Nobody understood the irreconcilable conflicts between the coalition army of the major sects of the Flying Star Sector, which was the Burning Prairie Fleet’s antecedent, and the space pirates of Spider Den. By doing that, Bai Xingjian was truly poking the taboo of the Burning Prairie Fleet. Li Yao was more and more curious about who exactly the bodacious ‘Bai Xingjian’ was. “What then?”

“Although it was called a ‘garbage fleet’, it had its own usage even if it was really a piece of garbage, because the war against the Uranian Ring Sector was the Star Glory Federation’s first expedition across Sectors, and there was quite a shortage of hands. Bai Xingjian’s garbage fleet was also given some simple escort missions.”

Both appreciation and regret beamed out of Tang Dingyuan’s eyes, as he said, “To the shock of everybody, especially the Burning Prairie Fleet, the showtime of the garbage fleet began!”

Chapter 1637 - Tales of Big Bai

Along with Tang Dingyuan’s description, an unbelievable picture of war slowly unfolded in front of Li Yao.

Bai Xingjian’s ‘garbage fleet’ was projected into the battlefield in the middle phase of the war against the Uranian Ring Sector, naturally, not as a main force in head-on clashes but as a guardian fleet to protect the supply lines

The protection mission for the first six months was done with neither flaws nor accomplishments. There was no telling how much commanding ability Bai Xingjian had left after the mental derangement and the plummet of Cultivation.

However, in a mission to transport strategic assets of an enormous scale, one carried out by four guardian fleets together, they suffered an unexpected assault by the main force of the fleets of the Uranian Ring Sector.

It was an assault that the Uranian Ring Sector natives carefully planned for half a year. All the spies and staff of the federation were fooled.

The four weak guardian fleets that had temporarily been thrown together were no match for the main-force fleet of the Uranian Ring Sector at all. After a few days of fierce battles, they were entirely wiped out. At least, the headquarters of the expedition army of the federation believed so at that time.

However, weird messages began to come over from the rear of the Uranian Ring Sector half a year later.

It was said that a ‘ghost fleet’ made of the souls of the deceased soldiers of the federal army had popped up at the rear of the Uranian Ring Sector’s defense line. The fleet was entirely made of ‘ghost starships’ that were ragged and riddled with holes without the least sign of power.

The ghost fleet was utterly unpredictable. It would run away immediately after a battle, and when it ran away, it would simply vanish into thin air. The style of the fleet was both like real ghosts and the fleets of the space pirates that had plagued the Flying Star Sector more than a hundred years ago!

The ghost fleet was not large in scale, and its firepower was not high. It could not deal a fatal blow to the army of the Uranian Ring Sector. But like a humming mosquito, it flew randomly around the head of the Uranian Ring Sector, making the enemy dizzy and upset.

The Uranian Ring Sector was determined to annihilate the ‘mosquito’, but nobody was ever able to catch it no matter how many troops were mobilized. However, if the ghost fleet was left alone, it would always bite those places with the weakest defense in the Uranian Ring Sector and suck a belly of delicious blood.

It was not until the ghost fleet was active in the depths of the Uranian Ring Sector for half a year that the expedition army of the federation finally realized that it was actually Bai Xingjian’s garbage fleet!

During the assault half a year ago, the four guardian fleets of the federal army had almost been crushed entirely. The six flagships of the other three fleets had been blown up one after another. The fleets had been caught in chaos without leadership.

At the critical moment, it was Bai Xingjian who had stepped up to lead the defeated soldiers to fall back. Before they retreated, they had also detonated the ammunition and crystals that were supposed to be shipped to the frontline, creating a glamorous blockage to stop the enemy from chasing.

Then, instead of retreating toward the base of the expedition army, he led the defeated soldiers directly toward the heartland of the Uranian Ring Sector out of everyone’s expectations!

Neither the army of the Uranian Ring Sector nor the federal army expected that he would be bold enough to march into the heartland of the Uranian Ring Sector with a bunch of mobs who had the lowest morale after the crushing defeat without any support.

In fact, according to the investigation after the war was over on the officers who belonged to the other few guardian fleets, even they were unaware of Bai Xingjian’s insane plan.

They had all been fooled by Bai Xingjian.

“According to our intelligence, our escape is entirely blocked by the people of the Uranian Ring Sector. Another fleet is waiting for us exactly on the path of our retreat. We have no choice but to move forward for now. We will find a different way home after we get rid of the Uranian Ring Sector’s fleets!”

At the fiercest period of the battle, that was what Bai Xingjian told the officers.

At that time, the commanders and chiefs of staff of the other three guardian starships had all been killed. The officers who had taken over their duties were also overwhelmed by the unexpected assault. They were entirely at a loss.

Bai Xingjian was the commander with the highest military rank and position among the survivors. Naturally, he took over the command of the four broken troops and issued the order of ‘go home in a different way’.

Nobody knew that when he issued the order, there was no ‘go home’ in Bai Xingjian’s crazy head at all.

It was not until two years later when the order ‘go home in a different way’ was really carried out.

At that time, the regular space fleet, which absolutely should not have been able to cruise and fight independently for more than a year, had already performed all kinds of harassment, ambush, plunder, and sabotage missions in the heartland of the Uranian Ring Sector, like an excellent Deep Sky Fleet.

According to the statistics afterward, in only two years, they had knocked down and hijacked 1,925 carriers and commercial starships of the Uranian Ring Sector, whose registered tonnage was shockingly 38,550,000 tons!

That was not counting the assaults that they had launched on the resource planets, the star fortresses, the floating space docks, and star beacons that were under the control of the Uranian Ring Sector.

In the end, when they finally decided to go home, Bai Xingjian precisely grasped the timing in the final battle between the main force of the Uranian Ring Sector and the main force of the expedition army of the federation, namely the Burning Prairie Fleet. In a camouflaged assault, they successfully carried out the ‘decapitation strategy’ and captured ‘Flawless Light’, the flagship of the Fifth Fleet of the Uranian Ring Sector, as well as the chief of staff of the fleet whose rank was Vice Admiral.

Bai Xingjian’s vehicles were immediately updated. He announced his grand return on ‘Flawless Light’.

It was the officer of the highest military rank that the federal army had captured alive during the entire war.

Of course, according to the theory of the Burning Prairie Fleet, Bai Xingjian shamelessly ‘stole’ the starships and captives that should have belonged to them while they were fighting hard against the enemy in the frontline.

Bai Xingjian could not have cared less about the Burning Prairie Fleet’s dissatisfaction. He even declared in a press conference to welcome their return, “In fact, we had a chance to capture a fleet commander alive, but on second thought, we decided it would be more fun to capture a ‘chief of staff’.”

He was obviously hinting at Bai Kaixin, who had just been promoted to the chief of staff of the Burning Prairie Fleet, because of his remarkable performance during the war against the Uranian Ring Sector.

It appeared that there was indeed certain an unresolvable grudge between Bai Xingjian and Bai Kaixin that outsiders would never know.

After the battle, the main force of the Uranian Ring Sector suffered great losses, and the war gradually came to an end. Eventually, the Uranian Ring Sector was merged into the Star Glory Federation. However, Bai Xingjian, who had been a respected war hero a moment ago, was sent to a military court.

He was faced with two charges.

Firstly, after inquiring a lot of officers of the other fleets who were not under his command in the beginning, and after carefully examining the battle in which the four guardian fleets were attacked, investigators found that there was no fleet waiting to ambush them on the route of their retreat at all!

In other words, they could have retreated to the expedition army’s base safely and securely. There was no need for them to march to the enemy’s rear alone at great risk. Bai Xingjian did not receive any command, nor was he qualified, to lead the defeated soldiers on such a crazy attempt!

In ninety-nine percent of cases, such a decision would not only be a suicidal action but would also raise the suspicion that he was trying to surrender to the enemy with the remnants of the troops!

Bai Xingjian responded to the charge as such. “You don’t know a damn thing. If it were anybody else, say, a rookie such as Bai Kaixin, it would’ve been a suicidal mission. But since I was the commander of the fleet, we were definitely able to turn the world upside down in the Uranian Ring Sector! At that time, the elite fleets of the Uranian Ring Sector had been fully mobilized, and they were cleaning the battlefield enjoyably while looting our tremendous assets. The defense line at their rear was terribly weak! The opportunity was too good to be missed. Was there a better timing to crawl to the enemy’s rear?”

The second charge was even more appalling. The military court found that Bai Xingjian had released a lot of officers of the Uranian Ring Sector and appointed them in his own team after plundering and capturing the hostile starships without informing the expedition army of the federation. He did not care about what unpardonable crimes those people might have committed, and he even tried up cover for those people after the war by fabricating their identities, hoping to fool everyone!

Bai Xingjian pleaded guilty to the charge.

“This is how a war goes,” Bai Xingjian said. “Do swine like you know how to fight a war?”

Despite his halo of ‘war hero’, once he was found guilty of the two charges, the best outcome that he could expect was probably forced retirement, and the ‘garbage fleet’ that he had established would fall apart, too.

It was at this time that Jin Xinyue intervened.

Jin Xinyue was an ambitious woman who had infinite desire for power. After decades, as she gained more and more support, she did not hide her goal of becoming the Speaker of the Federation and leading the entire Star Glory Federation.

To be the Speaker of the Federation, the support of the major sects in the core worlds alone was not sufficient. She had to find a powerful ally or subordinate in the military.

The military was Jin Xinyue’s disadvantageous field.

She was a demon after all. Because the Blood Demon Sector had initially surrendered on the condition that most of the armed forces be disbanded, her influence in the federal army had been weak for the past hundred years.

Ding Lingdang, Jin Xinyue’s rival, was different. The Grand Desolate War Institution where Ding Lingdang came from was deeply associated with the army of the Old Federation in the first place. Her Patriots Front had a lot of members who were soldiers or their family, too. The federal army was almost Ding Lingdang’s home stadium.

As for the Burning Prairie Fleet, the best army of the federation had been founded for the sole purpose of striking the Imperium!

In the hundred years, the Burning Prairie had stayed neutral in all political conflicts and stuck to the principle of non-meddling.

Jin Xinyue was neither able to spread her influence in the ground troops of the New Federation nor in the Burning Prairie Fleet. Right when she was upset about the military, the ‘freak’ Bai Xingjian jumped out. Were they not most suitable for each other?

Jin Xinyue helped Bai Xingjian secure his ‘garbage fleet’ and his command with Skyfire, the Ministry of Equality and Development, and the big shots of the core worlds. Bai Xingjian’s troop was even upgraded to an ‘independent Deep Sky Fleet’, theoretically equal to the Burning Prairie Fleet.

Just like that, in the past thirty years, Jin Xinyue had invested countless resources into Bai Xingjian, getting him advanced starships, armed shuttles, and crystal suits. The ‘garbage fleet’ had been developed into the ‘Big Bai Fleet’, one of the best troops other than the Burning Prairie Fleet!

Chapter 1638 - Should Be… Unattractive?

Bai Xingjian and the Big Bai Fleet’s story made Li Yao have a lot of mixed feelings. He did not know that such an interesting person was creating such captivating legends in the federation while he was sleeping in the hibernation capsule. He looked forward to meeting him!

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao asked, “What’s the capability of the Big Bai Fleet? How far away is it from the Burning Prairie Fleet?”

Tang Dingyuan smiled and said, “The gap is too huge. After all, one of them is an ace troop founded over a hundred years, and the other is just a miscellaneous troop founded recently.

“We’re talking about the Deep Sky Fleets that highlight bloodline, lineage, and resources most. A ground troop can be called a seasoned elite troop after twenty to thirty years of bloody battles. However, a Deep Sky Fleet is not even considered to have ‘taken shape’ until after a hundred years of development.

“First of all, the Burning Prairie Fleet is the ‘central army’ in the armed forces of the federation. A large proportion of the military budget, as well as the most advanced starships and the experimental magical equipment, is dedicated to the Burning Prairie Fleet every year.

“The Big Bai Fleet, on the hand other, is only backed by Jin Xinyue. However wealthy Jin Xinyue and Skyfire are, their money is definitely not enough when it comes to the construction of a fleet that is essentially a bottomless hole.

“Besides, a lot of state-of-the-art technologies and magical equipment cannot be bought with money. They’re all highly classified!

“Therefore, while the scale and equipment of the Big Bai Fleet are much better than other miscellaneous troops, it is absolutely no match for the Burning Prairie Fleet.

“Secondly, the officers and sailors.

“The Burning Prairie Fleet has its own talents base, Burning Prairie Military School, which educates the most distinguished students in the seven Sectors. All of them are the elites of the elites and the most rarely-seen prodigies. The tradition has lasted a hundred years. It means that the best talents of the federation have all been harvested by the Burning Prairie Fleet!

“The best talents all join the Burning Prairie Fleet, and none of them are willing to go to the not-so-reputable Big Bai Fleet, whose commander happens to be a weirdo. What can he do then?

“Bai Xingjian has resorted to his old tricks. He works harder to search for the ‘former space pirates’ who have just been released from prison. Meanwhile, by Jin Xinyue’s mediation, he tries to free some of the captives of the Uranian Ring Sector whose performance was relatively distinguished in the war before. The more terribly they beat the Burning Prairie Fleet in the war, the more Bai Xingjian likes them!

“Right. Other than the Uranian Ring Sector, although the Nether World Sector, the Water Crystal Sector, and the Forest Ocean Sector joined the New Federation in peace, there was a lot of opposition in those worlds, too. Those opposing factions are reluctant to work for the federal government, or at least not for the Burning Prairie Fleet. There’s no telling how Bai Xingjian persuaded them, but he has got a whole bunch of them into the Big Bai Fleet!

“All in all, in contrast to their pure-white camouflage, which seems to imply their brightness and gravitas, the personnel of the Big Bai Fleet are, in short, crazy fiends!

“The equipment is lesser, and the crew is just a mob that was thrown together. How can the Big Bai Fleet’s combat ability reach one tenth the Burning Prairie Fleet’s?

“However, it is perfectly normal. The Burning Prairie Fleet is an ace troop of the federation. No other troop is qualified to challenge the Burning Prairie Fleet in the first place. It is already a miracle that Bai Xingjian led the Big Bai Fleet from a ragged ‘garbage fleet’ to what it is today. We can only say that he does not have enough luck. It is quite a shame!”

Li Yao’s interest was aroused. “How so? Hasn’t his performance been always good?”

“If he weren’t so arrogant and extreme and had stayed in the Burning Prairie Fleet to follow Bai Kaixin’s command, his achievements would’ve been much greater with Bai Kaixin on his side. It must be noted that Bai Kaixin is already the Chief of Staff of the Burning Prairie Fleet, only secondary to the General Commander. He also has a lot of shares in the Glorious Sunlight Group, and he is a close friend to the big shots who were with Li Yao before!

“Yes. It’s true that Bai Xingjian’s performance in the war against the Uranian Ring Sector can be summarized as creative and unpredictable. However, tricks and schemes do not always get their way in the military. You cannot expect to win every battle with unexpected tricks!

“Perhaps because he’s hung around with the ‘former space pirates’ for too long, Bai Xingjian’s command has gradually mixed with the distinctive features of the space pirates. He sells feints and moves agilely after every battle.

“Such a tactic is truly very effective in guerilla warfare and harassment battles when leading a small-scale fleet, but that is the best it can do!

“In a strategic battle between the real main-force fleets that will decide the destiny of two superpowers in the sea of stars, such a tactic, which is similar to the bite of a bug, matters little. It can only serve as a complementary, ancillary approach!

“The antecedent of the Burning Prairie Fleet is the coalition army of the main sects of the Flying Star Sector. As a civilization of starships, the Flying Star Sector’s legacy includes profound arts on commanding large fleets. The most distinguished person in that regard is doubtlessly Yan Xinjian, who is known as the best fleet commander in the thousand years of history of the Flying Star Sector!

“Although he was an ancient person who perished hundreds of years ago, and his entire life is not a good example for other people, his commanding arts were truly ‘terrifying’. I have read many books that he left on the command of starships and analyzed a lot of his battle cases. Both the battles in which he annihilated the space pirates as the vice-commander of the coalition fleet of the six sects of the Heavenly Saints City and the battles where he resisted the coalition fleet of the Cultivators as the ‘commander of the space pirates’ after he defected to Spider Den amazed me. I did not know that such an extraordinary person would have been born at the edge of the cosmos!

“It is a pity that Yan Xinjian was born at the wrong time and perished too young. He failed to witness the great era where Kunlun was developed, the seven Sectors were fully integrated, and super starships are cruising in the sea of stars like dumplings!

“The Burning Prairie Fleet has inherited the arts of command of the ‘Flying Star School’ represented by Yan Xinjian. That is the rightful military strategies to win a war in the universe. Even I felt greatly enlightened after reading a lot of textbooks of the Burning Prairie Military School!

“Instead of learning such marvelous military strategies, Bai Xingjian walks on the wrong path and learns from the space pirate’s tactics with his petty cleverness. Isn’t it penny wise and pound foolish?

“The space pirates’ tactics might work for a while in a lone world such as the Uranian Ring Sector, but the Black Wind Fleet is definitely not something that the fleets of the Uranian Ring Sector can be compared to!

“This is what I feel most sorry for. Bai Xinghe has already demonstrated such a brilliant performance in the war against the Uranian Ring Sector, leading a garbage fleet after his mental derangement and the plummet of his level. I couldn’t help but wonder—if he had contained himself more and listened to Bai Kaixin’s command obediently years ago, after he advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage smoothly and fully absorbed the military strategies epitomized by Yan Xinjian, how tough would he have been?

“What a great shame! Bai Xingjian could’ve become a notable general that raged in the universe during the counterattack against the Imperium. However, he chose the wrong path and walked deeper into it. His great gifts and potential were wasted just like that!

“Leading a random mob that is temporarily gathered to play tricks as the commander of the mediocre ‘Big Bai Fleet’. That’s probably where Bai Xingjian’s future ends!”

Firefly was a super amalgamation of hundreds of starships. Therefore, Tang Dingyuan was both the captain of Firefly and the commander of the ‘Firefly Fleet’. He earnestly felt pity for Bai Xingjian. Shaking his head in regret, he could not have been sadder.

Scratching his chin, Li Yao somewhat felt sorry for the young man Bai Xingjian, too, but had it not been for the guy’s misfortune, his little disciple Jin Xinyue would not have been able to recruit such a ‘weirdo’ in the first place. Pondering for a moment, he asked, “What level is this Bai Xingjian at right now?”

“Bai Xingjian’s Cultivation plunged once because of mental derangement,” Tang Dingyuan replied. “It is terribly difficult to come back. In the past thirty years, Jin Xinyue has provided tremendous resources to help him train himself because he is one of the few generals on her side that is familiar with the arts of commanding starships. With all the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, he finally managed to break into the Nascent Soul Stage. Right now, he should be at the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage.”

“Oh? A pure admin-type one?” Li Yao knew that the commander of a troop was often an admin-type Cultivator. If they were from a ground troop or an Exo Society, they might also have talents in combat, but the commander of a fleet might be different. “How is his personal combat ability? Can he fight?”

“He should be a pure admin-type Cultivator,” Tang Dingyuan said. “Bai Xingjian was an apprentice maintainer in the Burning Prairie Fleet. But he was soon transferred to the management in the bridge and has been working there since. He is the purest admin-type Cultivator! As for exactly whether or not he can fight, he does not seem to have fought in person before. Besides, it is unreasonable to ask a captain of a starship or a commander of a fleet to fight in person. I think that his combat ability… should be unattractive, shouldn’t it?”

“Alright!” Cui Lingfeng had listened to the two of them communicating with each other at a speed ten times higher than normal. After Tang Dingyuan basically explained Bai Xingjian’s background to them, he finally concluded, “Captain Tang, let’s pause the interrogation and deal with our ‘ally’ first. Tell the Big Bai Fleet that they are allowed to stop at the outermost docks of Firefly for maintenance, but they have to wait for one day, because we have some trouble to take care of after just dealing with a rebellion of the Immortal Cultivators that wasn’t serious.

“If they are short of anything, we can send a batch of supplies to their starships first.

“Captain Lin, you will take two members of ‘Team Red Lotus’ to Bai Xingjian and inform him of the latest updates on Firefly. Make it clear that the riot has been perfectly resolved under the timely reaction of Team Red Lotus. We do not need the help of an ‘ally’ who is best at sneaking and smuggling. They’d better stay outside in case of any ‘misunderstandings’. Any problems?”

Li Yao smiled. “None at all.”

He rubbed his fists and almost could not wait to meet the great general under his little disciple’s command.

Tang Dingyuan, however, was still sighing. “Why can’t allies never trust each other?”

“Captain Tang,” Cui Lingfeng said casually, “ever since human beings invented ‘war’, ‘allies’ have always been more troublesome than ‘enemies’. Are you still not used to that?”

Chapter 1639 - Dominating Lin Jiu!

In the underground fortress on Spider Den, the deep, dim palace looked like a palace immersed in darkness. The starry brilliance on the dome was the bloodshot eyes of the silent, ferocious beasts that had been opened. They stared at the two people who were burning furiously and confronting each other in the darkness without blinking.

Li Yao was wearing a Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. The crystal cannons on his shoulders and every piece of aggressive magical equipment had been triggered to the maximum. Countless lightning balls were circling around him.

What he was faced with was Bai Xinghe in the Dragon King Battlesuit, the dominator of Spider Den and the overwhelming, unchallenged Pirate Potentate!

“Stop insisting on your folly, Bai Xinghe. You have been greatly fooled by the Immortal Cultivators. They’ve been deceiving you since the very beginning. Just open your eyes already!” Li Yao declared solemnly and righteously!

“Hehehehe. This is Spider Den. This is… Boss Bai’s world! Nobody can dominate Spider Den except for me! Not the Immortal Cultivators, and certainly not a Mr. Nobody like you!”

Bai Xinghe cackled loudly. The scales on every rising dragon head on the back of the Dragon King Battlesuit were standing up, triggering the most dazzling sound and visual effects.

“Die now, boy!”

“You leave me no choice!” Li Yao gritted his teeth. The balls of lightning on the surface of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit were continuously expanding and spreading out, enshrouding almost half of the dark palace in thunderstorm. He shouted, “I’ll show you the invincibility of the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage!”

The two of them turned into two streaks of brightness almost at the same time. After an ear-splitting collision that was even more violent and exciting than a supernova outbreak, more than half of the dark palace collapsed. Bai Xinghe screamed in excruciating pain. Dragging his bloody, broken body that was riddled with holes, he struggled painfully in the middle of the debris, uttering the last moan before his death.

“Superlative height of the Core Formation Stage? What level is that? Why is it so tough?

“Who are you? Who is this Mr. Nobody? Why has everything come to this? Why?

“You won! You killed me. You killed Boss Bai, the Pirate Potentate of Spider Den! Hehe. Hehehe. But it is useless. Absolutely useless! You don’t know that the real master of Spider Den is not me but the legendary ‘Supreme Pirate’ Yan Xinjian! Even I have been controlled by him. He is the one manipulating everything behind the curtain…”

As Bai Xinghe’s voice grew more and more feeble, another aura that was even more powerful flowed out of the fractures of the dark palace and gradually condensed into a black fog that looked like an abyss. Then, it crawled into Bai Xinghe’s broken body bit by bit, causing him to have unbelievable mutations in the middle of screams!

An extremely gloomy, creepy, and weird voice echoed from Bai Xinghe’s incessantly expanding body, but it was no longer Bai Xinghe’s tone and accent. “Who is it that is bold enough to disrupt my training in seclusion while I’m trying to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage?”

In front of the behemothic creature, with no knowing whether it was Yan Xinjian or Bai Xinghe, shrouded in the hazy fog, Li Yao took a deep breath and gritted his teeth on the verge of collapse. He slightly squatted and made preparations for the last battle!

The crystal dome was still cracking and falling nonstop, adding to the mess and anxiety of the atmosphere for the final battle about to come!

Suddenly, the picture froze.

Li Yao in the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, the terrifying existence who could be Bai Xinghe or Yan Xinjian, and the broken pieces of crystals that were collapsing from the ceiling of the Star Prier’s House all came to a stop.

Tiny, glittering words jumped out from the two of them who were all prepared to attack each other. “Yan Xinjian, the most dreadful ‘Supreme Pirate’ five hundred years ago has finally shown up. Before the federation entered its training boom, he had been the well-deserved strongest expert of the three Sectors who far exceeded everybody else in his generation. He also found out the ways to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage after studying on his own!

“Is Li Yao capable of defeating such a formidable enemy? Let’s give Li Yao a hand! During the promotion, all of the items and equipment below will enjoy a thirty percent discount, with double complimentary points. For fifty thousand points, you will be able to redeem the most magnificent ‘ship-cutting saber’!

“Grand Recovery Pill, originally five hundred star coins, 350 star coins during promotion. Help Li Yao return to full health!

“Ultimate version of the Blood Moon Dragon Chasing Saber, originally one thousand star coins, seven hundred star coins during the promotion. The most extraordinary artifact that boasts infinite blood-sucking ability!

“Space fight form of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, originally 10,000 star coins, 5,600 star coins during the promotion. This is the best Mystic Skeleton in the universe!”

Pa!

Before the myriad of other pills and magical equipment were introduced, the light beam was shut off cruelly. The black virtual mirror reflected an ugly face that apparently could not tolerate it any longer.

“Damn! What kind of trash game is this?” Grimacing, Bai Xingjian mumbled to himself. “The cinematics are an utter mess. Didn’t Li Yao only break into the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage after a few years of hard training when he absorbed the essence of Yan Xinjian’s legacy inside Yan Xinjian’s ultimate residence? How on earth was he in the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage when he was confronting Boss Bai? Also, why is the old fart Yan Xinjian popping up here? The battle with the Immortal Cultivators on Spider Den didn’t have a damn thing to do with Yan Xinjian!”

When he was feeling ridiculous, the light beam suddenly blinked and displayed the picture on the bridge. “Commander, Firefly has replied!”

Bai Xingjian’s eyes immediately spurted out light and heat like a volcanic eruption, making him a totally different person from before. The highest commander of the Big Bai Fleet picked up his wrinkled hat and stepped out of the captain’s office, striding toward the bridge of his flagship ‘Infinite Fire’, modified from ‘Flawless Light’, a main-force warship of the Uranian Ring Sector previously.

While he was on his way, a few high-level officers of the fleet joined him in a hurry.

“Firefly has agreed to our request to dock for maintenance. We will be docked between the No. 12 port and the No. 14 port.”

“The defense and the vulnerable parts of Firefly have been scanned. To this moment, they still do not have the vaguest clue about what we have come for!”

“Firefly has been keeping radio silence internally. None of Cui Lingfeng, Tang Dingyuan, and Ding Zhengyang have shown up. There’s no telling what is going on inside.”

“It doesn’t matter.” Bai Xingjian smiled. “Have our brothers prepare for a big fight. This time, we are going to save the day!”

On the bridge, the enormous circular light beams overlapped each other, constituting a glinting palace and making the bridge of ‘Infinite Fire’ seem directly exposed to the boundless universe.

It could clearly be seen that dozens of starships that had been painted pure white were slowly compressing from the battle formation to the anchoring formation. With the help of the navigators and the barges that Firefly sent out, they slowly approached the rings of circular orbit.

It was very regular porting and anchoring work. The command system of the two parties had kept effective communication. No accidents seemed to have occurred at all. Everything was going on smoothly.

Holding his arms, Bai Xingjian stared at the ordered, undisrupted scene. At first, he was wearing a confident smile, but as time went by, especially when the barges and carriers that belonged to Firefly were gathering after the white starships drew close to the orbit ports, his smile gradually vanished, replaced by thoughtfulness.

“Hiss, hiss.” His nostrils flapped quickly, like a viper that was collecting the smell of danger in the air after extending out its bifurcated tongue. “Neither Tang Dingyuan nor Ding Zhengyang have shown up so far?”

“Not yet. It is said that some minor riots took place on Firefly,” an advisor of the fleet replied. “But they’ll be taken care of soon.”

“Minor riots…” He gazed at the brilliant exhaust flames in the dark space that were dragged by the barges, carriers, and his own warships that had been completely mixed. The brilliance interweaved into an overwhelming web deep inside his eyes. His face suddenly turned extremely awful. Gritting his teeth, he commanded, “Ask all the starships that haven’t entered the ports to stop and maintain the battle formation. Make sure that the assault teams are all in position and ready for boarding battles anytime!”

“What?” The advisor of the fleet was dazed. “Boarding battle? Against whom?”

“Go now!” Bai Xingjian glared at him.

His judgement proved to be very correct.

Only ten minutes later, before Infinite Fire entered the port and anchored, the barges and carriers near the orbit had already become mired in chaos, blocking the entire sailing route and the warships of the federation that had entered the ports. The fixed batteries that Firefly had installed near the circular ports were all activated, too. Hundreds of cannons of all types were shining with awe-inspiring brightness, like the glittering eyes of a bunch of ravenous animals!

With the hardness of the spiritual shield of the Big Bai Fleet, the defense system deployed on the orbit dock naturally could not pose a fatal threat to them.

However, if they had continued moving forward, all the warships would have been trapped in the narrow ports and the complicated rails. They would have been blocked by countless barges and carriers. In which case, they would definitely have been in an extremely awkward situation.

It was not necessarily a hostile gesture but definitely undisguised wariness. The Big Bai Fleet was like a burglar who had snuck into a house prudently only to be caught by the dozens of spotlights of the houseowner before they had the chance to steal anything.

Although Infinite Fire had stopped moving, the chaos in the ports were still going on. Quite a few warships of the federation were unable to move at all after they were trapped inside.

The news that came from Firefly, on the other hand, made Bai Xingjian put on an even weirder expression.

“According to the latest news from Firefly, they have just quelled a rebellion of the Immortal Cultivators. A lot of Immortal Cultivators, including the former Chief Mate Ding

Zhengyang, have been captured. Everything is under control right now!

“However, many more Immortal Cultivators are still on the run, some of whom are believed to belong to the CFIA. Those Immortal Cultivators happened to be escaping toward ports No. 12 to No. 14. That is why a minor riot took place just now!

“Currently, the majority of the Immortal Cultivators have been captured, but they are still suspicious that a tiny number of Immortal Cultivators might’ve escaped to our starship. Colonel Lin Jiu, the commander of the guards of the Speaker of the rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic, demands… to board on our starship for investigation!”

Chapter 1640 - The First Collision After a Hundred Years

Bai Xingjian’s nose was almost out of its place because of his fury.

Their claim that some Immortal Cultivators might have fled to the Big Bai Fleet’s starships was a blatant lie that both parties were aware of.

Logically, since the two parties were allies, if Firefly had really been hunting Immortal Cultivators just now, they should not have allowed the Big Bai Fleet to dock at such a sensitive time. At the very least, they should have informed them of the information in advance!

Yet, they had not told the Big Bai Fleet anything until their starships had constricted from the battle formation into the anchoring station, and some of the starships were already connected to the ports. What was the meaning of that?

Bai Xingjian knew that certain experts on Firefly must have seen through the real purpose of their trip and even perhaps the series of schemes behind it.

However, Bai Xingjian was not in the least embarrassed. Instead, he was more and more curious. Was their previous evaluation on Tang Dingyuan and Cui Lingfeng all wrong? Were the two of them actually much more capable than they had expected?

Bai Xingjian planned to meet ‘Colonel Lin Jiu, the commander of the guards of the Speaker of the rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic’. He was quite interested in the stranger.

Should the armed forces near the Speaker of the government-in-exile not have been the secret police headed by Cheng Xuansu? What were the ‘guards of the Speaker’ about?

He had never heard the name ‘Lin Jiu’ before. However, he vaguely had a feeling that the guy was the key to the whole event.

Of course, he would not allow Lin Jiu and the rest of them to ‘board the starship for investigation’. However, he did arrange for a meeting in the cold, empty warehouse of shuttles near the No. 7 airtight gate of Infinite Fire, greeting the ‘ally’ that he had never seen before with the space shuttles of the latest model that were emitting coldness and the two teams of fully-armed Exos.

A silver transportation vessel from Firefly, which carried the agreeable and elegant style from the center of the cosmos, passed through nine serial airtight gates and slowly slid into the No. 7 warehouse.

However, only three people walked off the transportation vessel into the steel forest that was brimming with killing intent.

Narrowing his eyes, Bai Xingjian eyed the newcomers casually.

It was truly… an astonishing lineup.

The guy on the left was bald dwarf whose head was almost shining. The military uniform of the Star Ocean Republic that he was wearing seemed to have been sewn in too much of a hurry, giving a clumsy and comical feeling. He was also holding a short sword that did not fit in the modern era at all and seemed to have just been dug out from a relic. He was as hilarious as a clown in the circus.

However—

When the dwarf’s eyes and his own accidentally collided, the two of them were almost dazed at the same time, and their pupils constricted to the minimum abruptly.

The dwarf could not help but hold the grip of his sword, and Bai Xingjian took a slight step back. Then, both of them came back to themselves and regained their previous cool as if nothing had happened.

Bai Xingjian secretly took a deep breath. He then looked to the right, only to discover that a woman whose face was plain but who was unusually tall was smiling at him.

When did so many monsters appear on Firefly?

Bai Xingjian secretly frowned. It was not until then that he finally focused his eyes on the middle-aged man in the middle who was wearing a colonel uniform of the Star Ocean Republic.

Compared to the dwarf holding the short sword and the woman who was smiling warmly, this was a man who did not carry many distinctive features. One might even say that he was unattractive. But for some reason, the more he studied it, the more he felt that… he had seen the guy from somewhere before!

What’s happening? I’ve obviously never seen the face before, but why does he give me such a familiar feeling?

While Bai Xingjian was eyeing ‘Liu Jiu’, Li Yao who was pretending to be Lin Jiu was observing Bai Xingjian expressionlessly, too.

In Li Yao’s eyes, the most important general on Jin Xinyue’s side, the ‘traitor’ of the Burning Prairie Fleet and the commander of the Big Bai Fleet, had a slightly sloppy appearance that was a huge contrast to his glorious military accomplishments.

His Major General uniform and his hat was wrinkled and dangling from his body as if they had been worn for half a year without washing. His sallow face that could not be called handsome in any sense was covered in a beard. There was no telling how long it had been since he last shaved or washed his face. His eyebrows slowly collapsed, as if he was not interested in anything that was happening around him, and he could be yawning and throwing out trash talk such as ‘I mean, not just you, everybody of the Burning Prairie Fleet is garbage…’ anytime.

Yes. It was exactly the feeling. Helpless pride and blatant arrogance. The guy seemed to have ‘come on and hit me, moron’ written on his forehead.

While Li Yao was observing, he was thinking to himself, too. *What’s happening? Why do I have a familiar feeling when I see the guy’s eyes? That’s utterly unreasonable. When I left the federation a hundred years ago, he was a teenager at best, and he must’ve been playing with mud in the Burning Prairie Military School. With such a unique face, there’s no reason I wouldn’t remember him if I really had seen him before!*

Li Yao and Bai Xingjian walked to each other, both frowning deeply.

“Major General Bai!”

Li Yao saluted casually and indifferently first, fully demonstrating the pride and superiority of a high-level officer of the ‘rightful government’ from the center of the cosmos.

Bai Xingjian’s eyebrow twitched for a moment. He saluted back at Li Yao, too. “Colonel Lin, what happened on Firefly? What’s the fuss all about? If needed, my fleet is ready to help at any time. There’s no need to be polite. It is our mutual responsibility to annihilate the Immortal Cultivators!”

“That will be unnecessary.” Li Yao smiled. “It is true that a serious rebellion of the Immortal Cultivators took place on Firefly. Even Ding Zhengyang, the Chief Mate, and Cheng Xuansu, the head of the Internal Affairs Division, were involved. However, it was a trap that we set up intentionally in the first place in order to lure the snakes out of their hole. We were hoping to fish up the Immortal Cultivators once and for all!

“Because of the wise decision of Speaker Cui and Captain Tang, and thanks to the arduous efforts of Team Red Lotus, the Speaker’s special guards, most of the Immortal Cultivators have been suppressed. Only few of them are still on the run.

“There is no need for you to worry about Firefly’s safety, Major General Bai. On the other hand, I’m told that your fleet suffered heavy losses due to the cosmic storm you experienced just now. There might be loopholes in your defense that will allow the desperate Immortal Cultivators to sneak in. I suggest you fully search your starships with our cooperation!”

Cheng Xuansu and Ding Zhengyang have both been captured? Cui Lingfeng and Tang Dingyuan knew everything in advance? Team Red Lotus, the Speaker’s special guards?

Bai Xingjian analyzed the latest intelligence quickly. While he was pondering, his portable tactical crystal processor buzzed crazily.

Judging from the buzz’s rhythm, it was an alarm of the highest level!

After raising his wrist to check, Bai Xingjian’s face was even more gloomy than before. At exactly that moment, Silver Ray, an assault warship that he had just commanded to dock at Firefly’s port, detected that somebody had barged into the warship in secret. Also, the strangers were still wandering unstoppably after breaking three alert lines in a row. They seemed to be all prepared to retreat after an unsolicited visit on the warship!

Veins were bulging out on Bai Xinghe’s forehead as he glared at Li Yao furiously. “Colonel Lin!”

“What?” Li Yao was still expressionless, but there was a scornful smile in his eyes. “Have the Immortal Cultivators really snuck into your starships? Do you need our help to conduct the search?”

“That’s unnecessary!” Bai Xingjian gnashed his teeth, “No cockroach can ever sneak out of my starship unharmed after it sneaks in. None!”

“That’s good.” Li Yao slightly bowed to Bai Xingjian. “The purpose of my visit was to inform you of the latest updates on Firefly and to remind you to be as careful and prudent as possible while you are docked here in case any misunderstandings are caused. Otherwise, there might be dire consequences.

“After all, the Immortal Cultivators haven’t been entirely eradicated. If some of them run onto your starships, hoping to die together with your starships and even the high-level officers on board in their desperation, it will be a terrible tragedy that none of us would like to see, right?”

Li Yao and Bai Xingjian’s eyes collided in midair again, triggering such crazily jumping sparks that the entire empty warehouse seemed like it was about to explode.

Standing behind Li Yao, one on the left and the other on the right, Yan Liren and Long Yangjun narrowed their eyes while they stared at the iron giants behind Bai Xingjian as if they were nothing more than a bunch of harmless chickens.

“Colonel Lin…” Sensing the intense atmosphere, Bai Xingjian coughed slightly and smiled. “I didn’t know that such extraordinary people like you were hiding on Firefly. You’re quite right. We should be more cautious given the chaotic situation in case any trouble is caused. After all, we are allies, and the Imperium of True Human Beings is our common foe.

“I hope that I can fight side by side with you on the battlefield against the Imperium of True Human Beings, where I will witness your real capabilities, Colonel Lin!”

Li Yao stared at Bai Xingjian, too. “I hope so, too.”

…

When the silver transportation vessel slid out of the warehouse of Infinite Fire, Bai Xingjian was still frowning hard, deep in thought.

He called one of the Exos behind him who was tall and strong and looked hideous. “Old Wu, I’m not much of a fighter. Tell me your opinions on the capabilities of the three of them. Specifically, their personal combat ability.”

‘Old Wu’ was the captain of the assault team on Infinite Fire who was responsible for the boarding battles, as well as a tough battle-type Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage who was bold enough to charge at the enemy’s starships by himself. However, he hesitated at that moment, too. “The woman on the right is rather tricky. Judging from her posture, air, and the way she walks, it would be quite troublesome to deal with her. But the dwarf on the left is even more awesome. His air and the way he walks are no different from normal people, but they give a creepy feeling nonetheless, as if the entire warehouse and all the armed shuttles inside would’ve been slashed in half by him if he were in the mood to attack!

“Just now, when he glanced at us casually, a few of our brothers were so nervous that we felt as if somebody had stuck a blade right against our necks!”

Bai Xingjian nodded and asked, “What about Lin Jiu?”

“Lin Jiu?” Old Wu tilted his head and thought for a moment. “There doesn’t seem to be anything special about him. He should be between the woman and the dwarf, I think.”

“Is that so?” Bai Xingjian mumbled. Looking at the gate that had already closed, he began thinking and recalling.

Chapter 1641 - The Pig That Eats the Tiger…

On the transportation vessel back to Firefly, Li Yao was still reflecting on the meeting with Bai Xingjian. He gradually put on a subtle smile.

An interesting fellow. Although he is a little bit impatient, Jin Xinyue will certainly be walking closer to her dream with the help of such a great general, right?

However, I do feel that I've met him before somewhere else. How bizarre!

Li Yao was about to search his deep memories and compare Bai Xingjian with the people who had left deep impressions on him before, when he suddenly heard weird cracking noises. He raised his head, only to discover that 'Sword Maniac' Yan Liren was trembling hard next to him. His teeth were colliding with each other, and appalling brilliance was beaming out of his eyes.

"Fellow Cultivator Yan, what happened to you?" Li Yao was slightly dazed.

"I'm fine. I'm just excited. Very excited!" Uncontrollable laughter echoed deep inside Yan Liren's throat. He licked his lips and recalled the enjoyable feeling. "I did not expect to meet such a worthy opponent in the age of the modern Cultivators where legions and fleets matter much more!"

Li Yao was stunned. He looked at Long Yangjun, only to find that she was as confused as he was. "Who are you referring to, Fellow Cultivator Yan? We scanned the members of the assault team standing behind Bai Xingjian. Some of them are in the Nascent Soul Stage, but I don't think that they deserve such attention."

"Hehe. Of course, the trash behind him are not worthy enough for me to attack at all. I'm talking about Bai Xingjian himself!"

Yan Liren took a deep breath. With incredible brilliance shooting out of his eyes, he murmured, "Although we only stared at each other for a brief moment, I was already certain that he was an unparalleled expert like I've never seen before in my entire life and that he was the one who deserved to be killed by me with all my effort!"

"What!" Li Yao and Long Yangjun were both greatly shocked.

Li Yao had once practiced sword arts with Yan Liren together for three months. There was no need to mention Long Yangjun, who had met with Yan Liren annually to discuss and exchange their sword arts when she was still Lead Eunuch Wang Xi.

Both Li Yao and Long Yangjun were definitely among the top experts in the world. However, Yan Liren had never been as excited when he was competing with them in sword arts. The remark 'like I've never seen before' clearly suggested that he thought more highly of Bai Xingjian's combat ability than theirs!

Long Yangjun was close friends with Yan Liren, so close that even Yan Liren's Purple Pole Sword Sect had almost been classified as her accomplice. She naturally knew that, despite his arrogance, Yan Liren had never been a fan of exaggeration.

As the best swordsman of the entire Ancient Sages Sector, he had the courage and the belief to even slash a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator. When it came to evaluating an opponent, his eyes were definitely the keenest among the twelve experts of the Ancient Sages Sector!

Long Yangjun pondered for a moment and said, “Brother Yan, what do you mean by ‘like I’ve never seen before’? Leaving aside the Three Saints and Four Rapscallions aside, you have even met Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun, two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, and even practiced with them. Although their capabilities have greatly fallen after losing their bodies and turning into spectral Cultivators, is it even possible that this guy Bai Xingjian is more awesome than them? Is he already at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage and even reaching the Divinity Transformation Stage?”

Yan Liren shook his head slowly and said, one word after another, “I never judge people based on their level. There are very advanced ‘Soul Covering Arts’ and ‘Soul Hiding Techniques’ in this era. It is not difficult at all to hide one’s real Cultivation. Therefore, I don’t know whether or not Bai Xingjian is in the Divinity Transformation Stage, nor do I care.

“What I do know is that he is terrifying. So terrifying that there was even a moment just now when I almost wanted to draw my sword and kill him without considering anything else! However, I could also sense that, even if I had drawn my sword at that time, I might not have been able—no, I couldn’t have killed him. It’s possible that he would’ve killed me instead! Yes. Him alone. The worthless Exos behind him were just his camouflage. He could’ve killed me all by himself!

"Ever since I grasped my sword arts, I've never tasted such a feeling before. Even when I was faced with Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun, two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, I never experienced such uncertainty! Is this horror? In—incredible! Horror is truly amazing!

"I must train! Since such a dreadful opponent lives in this era, I am more determined to train myself than ever! I have a feeling that if I have a gratifying fight with Bai Xinghe without getting killed, my sword arts will certainly reach the next level, and my sword will really be able to butcher Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators!"

Waving his head, Yan Liren completely dwelled in the world of sword arts. He narrowed his eyes and shook his fingers, imaging the fierce and breathtaking battles with Bai Xingjian that could have taken place.

Li Yao and Long Yangjun, on the other hand, were left utterly dumbfounded, with 'you've got to be kidding me' written all over their faces.

"Even Brother Yan feels the same way," Long Yangjun said solemnly. "Is it possible that what I sensed just now was not an illusion?"

"Hey, hey, hey. Are you serious?" Li Yao asked. "Even you have sensed something wrong, and I was completely fooled and didn't notice any of it?"

"No. You're mistaken, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture." Long Yangjun shook her head and said, "You and I don't have as keen senses to swords as Brother Yan. I didn't realize that the seemingly strengthless commander of the fleet actually boasted such terrifying combat ability. I—I only vaguely felt that his appearance was not right. The way he gnashed his teeth impatiently, and his expression as if he was ‘choked’ by you, are slightly—slightly—”

“Please don’t tell me that he was acting,” Li Yao said coldly. He had never thought that anybody could be a better actor than himself. “I also carefully observed his every micro expression. It was definitely his real, uncamouflaged emotions!”

Long Yangjun nodded. “I know. His emotions were real, but the emotions seemed to be… slightly different from his true emotions.

“Let me put it this way. Suppose you are playing a video game. If you experience a setback in the game, or when you have lost a match, you will be frustrated and even infuriated, which will be your real emotions. Nobody can say that such emotions and your appearance are fake, right?

“But getting to the bottom of it, however real the emotions are, they are about a game after all!

“This is exactly the feeling that Bai Xingjian gave me. If the Big Bai Fleet was truly up to something and had come to completely seize Firefly, it would be a matter of paramount importance for both Jin Xinyue and the Star Glory Federation. At the very least, it would greatly influence Jin Xinyue’s campaign!

“However, Bai Xingjian gave me the feeling that he was merely playing a game, as if the rise or fall of Jin Xinyue’s gang did not matter to him at all, and he was merely playing with Jin Xinyue for fun!

“Such a feeling is truly hard to believe. Therefore, I’ve been thinking about it myself just now and thought that it was my imagination. However, since Brother Yan put it that way, this guy Bai Xingjian… definitely calls for our attention!”

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao felt tides surging in his heart.

He had absolute trust in the professional judgement of Long Yangjun and Yan Liren.

Therefore, in the warehouse of Infinite Fire just now, he did not swagger around and slightly humiliate Bai Xingjian; Bai Xingjian had intentionally acted weak and fooled him.

He had been humiliated by Bai Xingjian!

Damn!

Who do you think I am? I have fought hundreds of bloody battles and shown off more times than I can count. I always acted weak and crushed other people. Never did I expect that somebody would make the same move on me!

**sshole, wherever you’re from and for whatever purpose you are lurking beside Jin Xinyue, it is outrageous of you to play the pig that eats the tiger to my face!*

The more he thought about it, the more scared Li Yao felt.

According to Tang Dingyuan’s introduction and the files on Bai Xingjian that he had collected just now, he should be an arrogant, disobedient, and impulsive man.

However, was it possible for an arrogant, disobedient, and impulsive man to hide his real combat ability for a hundred years?

Even Yan Liren, an unparalleled swordsman at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage, felt uncomfortable about the guy’s combat ability!

Nobody had ever noticed such a battle-type expert at least in the Nascent Soul Stage during his hundred years of growth?

Or maybe, whoever had seen him attack had been killed, both their body and their soul?

Is the guy really a cocky, rash, and fierce man?

Did he really leave the Burning Prairie Fleet because of the conflicts with his superior?

Is he really in the ‘beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage’ due to the help of the countless resources that Jin Xinyue provided because of his mental derangement before?

Was it Jin Xinyue who chose Bai Xingjian, or did Bai Xingjian… choose Jin Xinyue?

Is Jin Xinyue aware of his real capabilities, or is she really thinking of him as a random subordinate that she can command free at will?

Li Yao could not help but hold his arms. He suddenly felt that his little disciple was in great danger!

Right then, Li Yao’s portable crystal processor slightly buzzed. It was Cui Lingfeng’s special line!

“Speaker, the situation on the Big Bai Fleet’s side is already under control. Their commander Bai Xingjian understands our current state. I don’t think that he will act recklessly.”

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao did not plan to pass on Yan Liren and Long Yangjun's discovery to Cui Lingfeng, the main reason being that it was impossible to explain himself. With Yan Liren and Long Yangjun's capabilities that they pretended to have, it was absolutely impossible for them to have seen through an unparalleled expert at least close to the Divinity Transformation Stage.

Also, the issue concerned the safety of his own little disciple. Naturally, he could not idle by and watch as a master, so he had to take certain actions in secret.

Cui Lingfeng, on the other hand, shook his head and said, "Leave the Big Bai Fleet aside for now. Ding Zhengyang confessed a lot of things, including tremendous intelligence about Lu Qingchen and the CFIA. However, they are not worth mentioning compared to the information that I'm about to tell you.

"Ding Zhengyang said that the Black Wind Fleet is in dire need of an appropriate jump point and a space gate so that it can stab into the belly of the Star Glory Federation. To achieve this, they have been corrupting the leadership of the federation together with the spies that infiltrated the federation in secret and the CFIA. It seems that someone among the leadership of the federation has been transformed into an Immortal Cultivator."

"Leadership?" Li Yao was greatly alarmed. "Who exactly?"

"Naturally, Ding Zhengyang does not know who it is," Cui Lingfeng said, "but to quote him, 'it is a person who can change the course of the war'!"

Chapter 1642 - Beach Landing!

Inside the plaza of the Ministry of Equality and Development, Jin Xinyue was appreciating the magnificent clouds in the sky through the window.

Under the setting sun, the angry clouds were roiling as if two armies, one gold and the other red, were charging at each other. Heads were falling, and blood was running, until all the soldiers were swallowed by darkness.

The scene somehow reminded her of something from more than a hundred years ago.

As she recalled, in the Blood Demon Sector more than a hundred years ago, right above the Eye of Blood Demon, there had been the exact same bleeding ocean of clouds. It was above the crimson clouds that she had listened to her father unveiling the truth of the Red Tide Plan and understood who exactly her father was and what he had been trying to accomplish.

A hundred years had passed. Now, it was her turn.

“Okay. Alright. Keep going.”

She was still wearing a black suit and a pair of high heels, but her black hair that looked like a waterfall was bound by a hairpin that was still in the shape of the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars emblem of the federation, which made her appear even more agile and aggressive.

Her face was as cold as ice under the dim sunlight, and her voice was even more frigid than a blizzard in the North Pole. Even her fury had been frozen while she listened to the sound far away attentively and replied calmly now and then.

“The Immortal Cultivators’ insurgency failed, Cui Lingfeng and Tang Dingyuan knew everything in advance, and a certain ‘Team Red Lotus’ took care of everything neatly.

“Hehe. As expected of the Star Ocean Republic. Even a broken ship has many nails that are still useful. Is it strange at all that a country that has lasted thousands of years would have some precautions or a few top-secret troops made of unseen monsters?

“So to speak, it must’ve been ‘Team Red Lotus’ that rescued Tang Xiaoxing in Fish Dragon City before we did, only to throw her back to the secret police later, right?

“Lin Jiu? Alright. The name has been noted.

“What, Cheng Xuansu is dead, but Ding Zhengyang is not?

“Of course, it is very serious.

“Ding Zhengyang knows too much, and those people in the government-in-exile seem to have much keener senses than we expected. Right now, we are in the middle of a campaign. Should they trace all the evidence back to us and expose the whole issue, it will definitely be a great scandal that we cannot cover up. The public will not accept the way we treated our ‘ally’. The Patriots Front will not let go of the issue, either.

“Forget it. With everything coming to this point, you do not need to do anything now. I’ll pick it up from here. Just focus on your own business!”

Jin Xinyue cut off the communication. She continued watching the last struggle of the dying sun wholeheartedly while holding her arms.

As the dim redness slowly sank into the swamp of the night sky, her previously cold, grave face gradually put on a hint of a smile.

“The first phase of the Dim Moon Plan has been completed successfully.”

She turned around and smiled at the old, rusty archive manager in the room.

“I did not know that the government-in-exile still had a rather elite secret troop. They have suppressed the rebellion of the Immortal Cultivators on their own without the intervention of the Big Bai Fleet. Even Ding Zhengyang was captured by Team Red Lotus alive.

“They must’ve grown suspicious of me. The first phase has been more successful than I thought it would be!”

While speaking, Jin Xinyue walked over agilely, helping the archive manager finish the work that had been disrupted by the message when it was half done.

The archive manager was sitting in a special metal chair. A lot of components on the artificial body were connected to the magical equipment units on the metal chair. Dozens of translucent soft tubes were bound to his body, filling spiritual energy, nurturing his soul, and lubricating the rusted components for him. However, it seemed slightly different from the maintenance for normal spectral Cultivators.

Jin Xinyue walked behind the archive manager and fixed his metal head with a holder. Then, she carefully unlocked the seal rune arrays on the skull and plucked an arched metal cover that duplicated the skull of a living person. There was a clear, round container that was carved out of a whole crystal.

Soaked in the crystal container and nurtured by the bright green nutrition liquids was… a brain!

Judging from the trembling, the brain was still alive. Tremendous artificial nerves made of biochemical materials extended all the way down from the brain and controlled every part of the artificial body.

Therefore, the archive manager was not a spectral Cultivator who only had a broken soul at all. He was a living human being, except that most of his body parts had been replaced by artificial organs. Compared to the disabled people who put on an artificial limb after their body was broken, it was only a matter of ratio, and he was essentially no different from those people!

Jin Xinyue put an enormous crystal cover right above the chair. After sterilizing the germs inside the crystal cover with mystic rays, she extended her hands into the crystal cover through the pair of gloves on the side of the crystal cover. She then connected a syringe to a tiny hole next to the crystal skull of the archive manager and slowly injected a tube of bright golden liquids.

The liquids dripped into the crystal skull along with the soft tubes, turning into golden balls in the middle of the green nutrition fluids.

An amazing thing happened!

From the living brain, a lot of ‘synapses’ that were similar to flagella or nerves jerked up. Those synapses darted into the golden balls as fast as lightning and devoured all the liquids inside!

The brain glowed before it went back to normal a moment later.

“So, do you feel any better?”

After finishing everything, Jin Xinyue helped the archive manager close the metal skull that served as a camouflage on the outside. At first glance, he was no different from any other regular spectral Cultivator.

The archive manager slowly nodded and struggled to warm up his metal limbs.

“But I don’t feel that you are in high spirits. Why is that?” Inside Jin Xinyue’s eyes, the fire of ambition was burning so fiercely that it was almost flowing out like magma and completely consume her. “The Dim Moon Plan is proceeding smoothly. Everything is within my calculations and control. After a hundred years, the Red Tide Plan is about to be concluded with a perfect end, and our race will rise again! Do you not feel proud of me at all?”

“Of course, I am proud of you.” Perhaps because of the bright golden solution, the archive manager was speaking a bit faster than the days before, but the long-sealed smell of dust in the voice was still not entirely eliminated. “However, a word of advice. Nobody can calculate and control everything. I couldn’t, nor can you.”

…

On Firefly at the edge of the Dragon Snake Space Zone, a secret meeting regarding Ding Zhengyang's confession, the expedition army of the Imperium's strategy, and the policy of the 'rightful government' was being conducted.

Other than Tang Dingyuan; Cui Lingfeng, who hosted the meeting; and Li Yao, acting as the commander of the Speaker's guards, a lot of critical people on Firefly, including the president of Star Ocean University, participated in the meeting.

After the meeting, the representatives would be nominated to form a new 'Election Observation Delegation' or rather 'Participation Negotiation Delegation'. They would set off to the heartland of the Star Glory Federation and communicate with the federal government on the official merger of the two parties, or at least in-depth military cooperation to found a 'joint headquarters' for the war to come.

"The Black Wind Fleet is here. Both Ding Zhengyang's confession and the confessions of the captives of the Imperium whom we caught ten years ago lead to the same conclusion! With the Black Wind Fleet's route and their technological capabilities, it is absolutely possible for them to have reached the Star Glory Federation in the last ten years!"

As the captain, Tang Dingyuan was in charge of military affairs. Naturally, he was the one who interpreted everything about the Black Wind Fleet.

In the upper half of the ball-shaped meeting room was a splendid star map, depicting the functioning patterns and the possible routes in the hundreds of galaxies near the Star Glory Federation.

It was the result of the exploration and prospection by the Heavenly Road Plan that the federation had implemented a hundred years prior.

Also, Firefly had recorded all the galaxies, space zones, and Sectors that it had detected in the past thousand years while it was running from the Empyreal Terminus Sector to the edge of the cosmos. In fact, they possessed a rather detailed universal sailing route from the federation to the center of the Imperium.

The very sailing route could also be considered the route of the Black Wind Fleet’s march.

Pointing at the edge of the glowing star map, Tang Dingyuan explained, “Within a hundred lightyears from the Star Glory Federation, there are at least a hundred relatively stable galaxies. Right now, it is very possible that the Black Wind Fleet is lurking inside one of the galaxies to wake up the soldiers who have hibernated for a hundred years and to repair the damage on the starships due to the long journey. With any luck, they can even retrieve some fundamental resources from those galaxies and refill their supplies. They are now preparing themselves and waiting for the best opportunity to launch into the most vulnerable part of the federation!

“The Black Wind Fleet, as a main-force fleet that includes the armed forces of multiple Sectors of the Imperium of True Human Beings, is essentially a humongous dinosaur in the universe. Their cruise speed can’t be very high.

“It will take them several months for them to prepare a space jump, which will probably last around one week. There’s no need to mention normal cruising. It will be difficult for them to reach one tenth the light of speed while keeping an intact battle formation under such circumstances!

“Assuming that their normal cruise speed is one tenth the speed of light, what does it mean? It means that if they take the nearest galaxy to the Star Glory Federation as their base and march over by way of normal cruising, it will take them decades before they reach this place!

“It is obvious that they absolutely cannot march in such a way. During the decades of normal cruising, the consumption of fuel, the damage to the starships, and the unexpected attacks of the federation will not be something that the Black Wind Fleet can bear!

“In the last hundred years, the Black Wind Fleet has reached the edge of the cosmos through short-distance space jumps. Now that the final battle is drawing near, they have no choice but to directly ‘long jump’ to the edge or the center of the federation!

“This is exactly like a ‘beach landing’ in ancient times. The point of the landing will be the key to the outcome of the battle!”

Chapter 1643 - Dinosaur in Space!

Tang Dingyuan closed his hands, and numerous translucent illustrations of starships that were outlined by golden threads immediately surfaced on the profound star map.

Ten years prior, the claw fleet that Heiye Lan was a part of had been assaulted by the federal fleet led by Ding Lingdang while chasing after Firefly. As a result, the entire troop had been wiped out.

During the battle, a lot of soldiers of the Imperium had been captured by the federation. By interrogating them, a lot of intelligence regarding the Black Wind Fleet had been learned, and such intelligence had been forwarded to Firefly one way or another, making the people of the government-in-exile develop a basic understanding about the capability of the Black Wind Fleet.

“The technology of the Imperium of True Human Beings is indeed more advanced than ours and the Star Glory Federation’s,” Tang Dingyuan said, “but they are not so advanced that the Imperium is utterly invincible. It is because we both have the ‘technological bottleneck’.

“In the past ten thousand years, the technological peak of the civilization of mankind was the Star Ocean Imperium. It is said that the Star Ocean Imperium had the help of three volumes of the Book of Revelation during its development. Therefore, it grew into a brilliant civilization in a relatively brief period.

“After the Star Ocean Imperium’s sudden collapse, the entire civilization of mankind ended up in the cosmic dust. Later, while all the civilizations tried to catch up to the Star Ocean Imperium, the closer they got to the Star Ocean Imperium’s height, the slower their speed of development was, and the more bottlenecks they met.

“This is the case for both the Star Ocean Republic and the Imperium of True Human Beings.

“In the past thousand years, although the Imperium of True Human Beings has made major progress in a lot of fields, the overall development level of the civilization is not much better than ours. It’s even nearly stagnated in the last few hundred years.

“But the Star Glory Federation is different. Jumping from a civilization of a single Sector to a universal civilization with seven Sectors, and with the tremendous technology from the relics of the primeval civilization Kunlun, the federation has gone through the golden period of development in the past hundred years. To this day, although it is still underdeveloped compared to the Imperium, it definitely has the capability to deal with the opponent. They are like a bronze saber and a steel saber. Underdeveloped as the Star Glory Federation may be, it can still kill the opponent!

“This is the comparison between the two parties. The starships of the Black Wind Fleet are of a higher level, with a greater firepower, and possess more experts. Also, they are attackers on a foreign land, which means that they have more choices in terms of tactics without any concern or burden. On the surface, they have the initiative in battle.

“However, they do have a fatal weakness, which is that they are short of a concrete base. They are on a lone expedition deep inside a hostile land. Other than stealing and plundering, they have no way of refilling their supplies.

“If we get to the bottom of it, it is because of the erroneous intelligence that the Black Wind Fleet had. A hundred years ago when they took off, they thought that they were going to conquer and explore some barbaric Sectors that were uncivilized and might not even be able to fly out of their own galaxy. It never occurred to them that they would run into such tricky prey as the Star Glory Federation, which can even bite back at them!

“It is impossible for the Black Wind Fleet to fight a protected war. One blown-up starship means one fewer starship for them, and an expert will be no more after they are killed. There are no reinforcements at all! Even if all the blood of the federation is slowly drained in a protracted war, they will be exhausted themselves, too, which is definitely not an outcome that the commander of the Black Wind Fleet will want to see.

“Therefore, for the Black Wind Fleet, the most likely strategy that they will choose is to jump into the heartland of the federation out of our expectations and take over one of the seven Sectors of the federation.

“As long as they have one world as their strategic fulcrum and their logistical base, with their military technology that is far more advanced than the federation’s and ours, the Black Wind Fleet will be able to produce more starships, arm countless slave soldiers, and collect sufficient resources incessantly, supporting them to slowly expand. In the end, they will force the main force of the federation into a strategic battle and secure victory!

“It is almost the only strategy that they can take, but it is also a highly risky one, because the moment that the Black Wind Fleet jumps to the heartland of the federation from hundreds of lightyears away is the moment when it is most vulnerable. If any of you find it difficult to understand, you may imagine a gigantic dinosaur cramming through a narrow, rough valley.

“As long as the ‘dinosaur’ passes through the valley successfully, it will be able to begin hunting and butchering as it wishes.

“However, when it is struggling forward, hamstrung by the rocks and the gaps in the middle of the canyon, it will be the most vulnerable moment for the dinosaur. Even the animals that are much weaker than the dinosaur will have a chance to kill it with appropriate timing!

“That will be the only shot for us and the federation!

“For the federation, they do not want to fight a protracted war, either, because it means that the territory that they have worked hard to develop for a hundred years will be burnt to the ground. The Black Wind Fleet is only an expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings after all. Even if the Black Wind Fleet is destroyed, the federation will possibly be faced with new threats soon.

“The Star Glory Federation must retain part of its capabilities as leverage to play the game with the Imperium of True Human Beings so that the Imperium will not dare send out a second expedition army recklessly.

“Finish the Black Wind Fleet as quickly as possible, seize the starships and assets of the Black Wind Fleet, and upgrade themselves with the new loot so that they will really have enough cards to speak to the Imperium. This is perhaps the most perfect ending that the federation is planning.

“With all the military forces that the federation has right now, if they can foresee which Sector the Black Wind Fleet will jump to and then launch a destructive strike in the middle of the space jump, the chances are good that they will achieve their strategic goal!

“Therefore, to simplify the war to come soon, it is in fact a game of picking one out of seven. The federation will wager on one of the Sectors that they believe the Black Wind Fleet will attack, and they will mobilize all their elite forces to set up ambushes.

“If their gamble pays off and the Black Wind Fleet is annihilated in the middle of the space jump, it is very possible for the federation to secure the final victory!

“If their gamble is wrong and the Black Wind Fleet completes the space jump successfully, unfolds into the battle formation, and even occupies the Sector, it means that the ‘dinosaur’ has passed through the valley, and the invaders will have established a base on the beach. The federation will surely lose!”

Tang Dingyuan paused for a moment and extended his hands. “Yes?”

A senior professor from Star Ocean University, who was also a member of parliament, asked, “If that’s so, is it possible to divide the armed forces and set up ambushes in seven Sectors at once so that all the openings are blocked?”

Tang Dingyuan smiled and shook his head. “It is absolutely impossible. The armed forces of the federation and us are weaker than the expedition army of the Imperium in the first place, and they will be even weaker if they are divided into seven parts. They will not be able to resist the enemy at all but will only be devoured by the Black Wind Fleet one piece at a time.

“Not just dividing the army into seven parts, even if we split the forces in half, it will be impossible to achieve our goal. We can only focus all the elite troops in one place and clench them into one first in order to shatter the Black Wind Fleet!”

The professor frowned deeply. “There are seven Sectors in the federation. The Black Wind Fleet can jump to and strike any of them randomly, and we can only set up an ambush in one of them. A chance of one seventh does not seem to be in our favor!”

“Not exactly.” Controlling the light beam, Tang Dingyuan displayed the basic situation of the seven Sectors. Many glamorous planets were displayed to the participants of the meeting as he went on. “Please take a look, everyone. Although the Star Glory Federation boasts seven Sectors, not every one of them is a good choice to be the Black Wind Fleet’s base.

“This is the Forest Ocean Sector. Their mother planet is covered in the primitive forests. It is terribly underdeveloped without much foundation on magical equipment manufacturing or resource collection. The local people are incredible beast tamers who are adept at fighting in cooperation with animals, but they are useless to the Black Wind Fleet.

“Even if the Forest Ocean Sector is occupied, it will be practically impossible for the Black Wind Fleet to collect sufficient resources for themselves. They will only be trapped in the primitive forests.

“Therefore, the Forest Ocean Sector can be ruled out.

“This is the Water Crystal Sector, a world with abundant crystals as resources. The problem is that there are barely any other resources except for crystals. Their mother planet is a boundless desert. Even the most valuable water resource is highly insufficient there!

“Water is the foundation for everything. Sometimes, it is even more important than crystals. That’s why the Water Crystal Sector is still rather underdeveloped despite the tremendous crystals. When it was discovered by the Star Glory Federation years ago, all the locals were seriously struggling. They were almost overjoyed to join the federation and trade crystals for water.

“Although the federation has been trying to improve the harsh environment, it will take more than a few decades to turn the desert into fine lands and develop enough industrial infrastructure for the Black Wind Fleet to use.

“Unless the Black Wind Fleet can forge magical equipment with sand, the Water Crystal Sector is also not an option.

“There’s no need to mention the Nether World Sector, which is a world full of radiation and only suitable for the spectral Cultivators. The Black Wind Fleet is mostly made of living people after all. Such a ghostly world is useless to them.

“Of the three core Sectors, the Blood Demon Sector is best known for their biochemical technology, which is not the industrial infrastructure that the Black Wind Fleet needs. Also, the locals of the Blood Demon Sector are born tough, and many of them are good at digging holes. They will be terribly troublesome if the Blood Demon Sector is occupied.

“The Heaven’s Origin Sector is definitely good, but as the capital of the Star Glory Federation, it has the strongest defense of the seven Sectors and will not be occupied quickly!

“In conclusion, only two targets suit the Black Wind Fleet well, the Flying Star Sector and the Uranian Ring Sector!

“The Flying Star Sector boasts two habitable planets, both of which have developed sufficient industrial infrastructure in the past hundred years. The Star Prier’s House on Spider Den is of high military significance, too!

“The Uranian Ring Sector is the last Sector to have joined the federation. The federation’s only been there for thirty years and has weaker influence. It also has an orbit dock from the Star Ocean Imperium. All the facilities that the Black Wind Fleet need can be provided!

“Therefore, we are probably faced not with a ‘one-in-seven’ game but a ‘one-in-two’ game. We have to guess whether the Black Wind Fleet will come from the Flying Star Sector or the Uranian Ring Sector!”

Chapter 1644 - Porcupines in Winter!

On the star map behind Tang Dingyuan, the icons that represented the starships of the Black Wind Fleet suddenly vanished and turned into golden lines, stabbing into the heartland of the federation like lightning.

More starships popped up from the golden swirls and directly attacked the bases of resource collection and magical equipment production in the federation!

All the leadership of the government-in-exile were silent and deeply concerned by the scene.

That was how a war in the sea of stars went, which was nothing like a war between countries living on the same plane and planet as in the ancient times.

For countries whose main territory was on the continent, they often had clear national borders. The enemy could also break the border and slowly push forward to the inland or even center from the border.

Even if they had various kinds of flying magical equipment, they would have to fly in from the border. Other than the special forces with high Cultivation, it was difficult to reach the central area directly.

However, a three-dimensional war in space was definitely not the same.

The universe was too vast and boundless a place, and the Sectors suitable for mankind to develop civilizations were too few. Every Sector was a lone island, connected to each other by the bridge of space jumps that crossed four-dimensional space.

What the Star Glory Federation governed was not the entire space among the seven Sectors but seven tiny ‘lone islands’ in the universe. It was hard to distinguish the real border from the central areas. The enemy could certainly bypass a few Sectors and launch an unexpected assault on the weakly defended, vulnerable parts. It was not hard to imagine the difficulty of defense.

“In fact, we have been calculating the situation with the federation for ten years, but it was never disclosed to you until today,” Tang Dingyuan said. “The conclusion has also been verified by the confessions of Ding Zhengyang and the many rebels. Should their insurgency have succeeded, they would’ve created chaos inside the federation in cooperation with the CFIA and the special forces of the Black Wind Fleet who had snuck into the federation, making an opportunity for the Black Wind Fleet’s attack.

“The war between the Imperium and the federation began a long time ago, and victory has probably been preordained at this moment even before the Black Wind Fleet shows up!

“There are Immortal Cultivators inside the federation, not just those on the surface such as the CFIA, but more critical persons in higher positions and hiding deeper. While the intelligence could’ve been made up by Lu Qingchen to tempt Ding Zhengyang to begin the rebellion, we believe that it’s likely true!

“The person is influential enough to create the best opportunity for the Black Wind Fleet’s attack. At the very least, the person can send precious intelligence, such as where exactly the Burning Prairie Fleet will be hiding, to the Black Wind Fleet.

“On the other hand, if we find the person, we may uncover the jump point of the Black Wind Fleet in advance, and the war will be half won!

“This is the latest situation. The fact that Ding Zhengyang, Cheng Xuansu, and the rest of them initiated a large-scale rebellion at this point also suggests that the Black Wind Fleet is almost prepared. Whatever scheme they have, it will be activated very soon! Given the perilous situation, it is necessary that our oath of alliance with the Star Glory Federation move to the next step!”

Tang Dingyuan paused and looked at Cui Lingfeng next to him.

Cui Lingfeng coughed. “Everyone, according to the latest news, the Star Glory Federation will enter the highest warring state after the new election, which is unprecedented in the history of the federation. Even in the war against the Uranian Ring Sector thirty years ago, they only went into the ‘Level-I warring state’.

“This time, the federation is about to elect a Speaker of wartime, who will have greater powers in every respect than a Speaker in peacetime does.

“Before, we sent an Election Observation Delegation to investigate how the latest Speaker of the Federation is nominated, but they were disrupted by the insurgency of the Immortal Cultivators. Right now, in light of the recent updates of the situation, the scale of the Election

Observation Delegation should be expanded accordingly. Moreover, it should not be restricted to the observation of the election but make preparations for deeper cooperation between us and the federation in military, economy, politics, and all other aspects!

“The expedition army of the Imperium will arrive before us any second. I hope that everybody bears that in mind and reconsiders our relationship with the federation and our mutual future!

“Therefore, after discussing the issue with Captain Tang and communicating with the federation, I have decided that the name of Election Observation Delegation will not be changed, but the scale will be tripled!

“The first stop of the delegation will be the Uranian Ring Sector. A group of our high-level officers will stay there and meet with the military leadership of the federation in the Second Mother Port of the Burning Prairie Fleet to discuss the details of establishing joint headquarters.

“The second stop will be Hundred Flowers City, a space jump center in the middle of the Uranian Ring Sector, the Forest Ocean Sector, the Nether World Sector, and the Water Crystal Sector. It is the intersection of the sailing routes of the federation and the most prosperous trade city. Our business and commerce commission will meet with high-level officials of the corresponding departments in the federation to discuss how the economic system on Firefly can be fully integrated into the economic system of the federation, as well as the unified currency, tariff removal, distribution of taxes, and all other subsequent issues.

“After the high-level officers are left in the military center and the commission of business and commerce stay in the trade center, the rest of the delegation will directly go to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, capital of the federation. According to the timetable, they will arrive right when the results of the election are out. By then, they will learn the latest policies of the federation in the highest warring state, and they will discuss… the issues of integration with the new administration.

“Everyone, with everything coming to this point, let’s give up our fantasies. We have run for a thousand years. There’s no retreat anymore. Here and now, we will fight back until we return to the center of the cosmos, the home of our ancestors!”

…

By the standard of the federation’s time, it was already midnight.

However, on the hundreds of ‘child starships’ of Firefly, and in different cabins, because there was not a fixed time of sleep, the enormous fortress in space was still ablaze with brightness, as if thousands of fireflies had gathered together and unleashed their feeble, flickering light.

The Meditation Platform in a core cabin, which was covered by a crystal dome and allowed those on it to observe space directly, was the only place of peace and quiet under the illumination of the brilliant stars outside.

Following Cui Lingfeng, Li Yao paced back and forth on the spacious Meditation Platform. They were the only two in the glowing starry light.

“In three days, the delegation will set out.”

Staring at Cui Lingfeng's back, which was soaked in the light of the stars, Li Yao asked, "Is there anything you want to talk to me about, Speaker?"

"Nothing much. I only want to say 'thank you' to you. Whoever you are, and whatever purpose you have, at the very least, you have brought… new hope to the Star Ocean Republic."

Looking at the starry light outside of the crystal dome which looked like a rippling ocean, Cui Lingfeng suddenly said, "If you are truly a simple native of the Red Lotus Sector who has fled to this place to seek revenge against the Immortal Cultivators, and you have finally found some other Cultivators after so much trouble… are you disappointed after discovering the ambitions of Jin Xinyue and that the so-called 'rightful government' is not as perfect as you imagined but has dark sides such as the 'Rebirth Plan'?"

Li Yao was slightly dazed. He thought for a moment but shook his head. "I wouldn't go so far as to say I'm disappointed, but I do feel a bit pitiful. With a great foe in front of us, we are still wary and suspicious of each other when we are all Cultivators. It is indeed a bit…"

"It can't be helped. Perhaps this is the part of humanity that can never be completely removed however hard one trains oneself." Cui Lingfeng smiled and asked, "Captain Lin, do you know about porcupines in winter?"

Li Yao blinked. "Porcupines in winter?"

"Porcupines are a type of large rodent. They have long, hard thorns on their body that can be pricked like a hedgehog to resist bigger predators," Cui Lingfeng said. "In a cold winter, the porcupines will cram together to keep themselves warm. If they are too spread out, the cold wind will still blow among them, but if they are too close to each other, they will be hurt by each other’s thorns.

“In the end, this is what happens. The porcupines move to their companions until they are hurt by their companions’ thorns. Then, they jerk back abruptly. But very soon, threatened by the cold wind, they move toward their companions again, craving a tiny bit of warmth, until they are stung by their companions one more time.

“We and the Star Glory Federation are probably two such porcupines. Under the pressure of the cold wind, we want to hug each other to get warm, but we will be hurt by each other’s natural-born thorns. It can’t be helped. The thorns are the weapon that we used to protect ourselves from ferocious animals in the past. Without the thorns, we would’ve been killed long before the wind arrived!

“I believe that even stupid porcupines eventually find an appropriate distance where they can share each other’s warmth without hurting each other. Otherwise, the species would’ve gone extinct a long time ago!”

Li Yao could not help but remark, “Human beings will only be the same. I don’t believe that the leadership of the Star Glory Federation is not even as good as porcupines.”

“You don’t understand. Sometimes, it is not the Star Glory Federation that scares me but… us.” Cui Lingfeng sighed gloomily. “After all, the monster ‘Blackstar the Great’ Wuying Qi was not born in the Imperium of True Human Beings but in our country, the Star Ocean Republic!

“It was the Star Ocean Republic that bred the Immortal Cultivator Blackstar the Great. After such a monster was made, our ancestors fled in a hurry. During the thousand years when we were running in the sea of stars, we experienced too much darkness and desperation and toed the boundaries for normal human beings time and time again.

“Yes. I can shamelessly announce that ‘bad Cultivators’ and ‘Immortal Cultivators’ are different.

“However, after Ding Zhengyang raised the question, I’ve been thinking more than once on it. Is it possible that everything is really decided by the environment and has nothing to do with our will?

“I am lucky enough not to have met any tough choices while working as the Speaker.

“However, if I and Firefly were not as lucky, and the resources on board were only enough to sustain the survival of one tenth of the population due to heavy losses after a disaster, would I be brave enough to activate the Rebirth Plan and randomly kill ninety percent of the population?

“If I had really done that, would I be a ‘bad Cultivator’ or an ‘Immortal Cultivator’?”

Chapter 1645 - Fighting Nature Is the Greatest Pleasure!

Li Yao could clearly sense Cui Lingfeng’s shaking belief that was like the flickering starry light in the dark space. He could not help hurrying to say, “Sir Speaker, you are not confused by the so-called ‘Immortal Cultivator 2.0’ that Lu Qingchen and Ding Zhengyang proposed, right?”

“No.” Cui Lingfeng shook his head. “Before Ding Zhengyang said anything, and even before we encountered the Star Glory Federation, I was thinking about these questions.

“Do you know why I have always objected to the integration with the Star Glory Federation? It is partly because of the stubborn pride of the Star Ocean Republic and the mistrust for the federation. But more importantly, it is probably because my suspicion about us.

“The Star Ocean Republic in the past, the great nation in the golden age that had yet to produce the monstrous ‘Blackstar the Great’ Wuying Qi, was definitely worth being proud of.

“But what about later? Is the ‘rightful government’ that fled in panic and drifted in the sea of stars for a thousand years after Wuying Qi was born still worth being proud of?

“Once our integration with the Star Glory Federation is accelerated, all our endeavors over the past thousand years for survival will definitely be exposed. The classified files that are locked deep inside the Speaker’s office are not all upright and blood-boiling!

“I don’t know how the people of the federation will view us after the files are disclosed and they learn about everything that’s happened to Firefly in the past thousand years.

“Will they still consider us as ‘real Cultivators’, or will they regard us as a mini civilization of the Immortal Cultivators, one that is in a different form and in the middle of degeneration, and therefore simply hate us and reject us?

“Do you understand it now? Perhaps, deep down in my heart, I do not object to joining the federation; I’m only scared that the federation will refuse us after discovering the whole truth!”

Li Yao took a deep breath. He felt that Cui Lingfeng looked different under the illumination of the profound stars in space.

Perhaps it was the most real side of the Supreme Speaker of the Star Ocean Republic.

After all the darkness, lies, and struggles, he and everyone else on board was only one step away from the Immortal Cultivators like Ding Zhengyang and Cheng Xuansu.

Staring out of the crystal dome and simply allowing the starry brilliance to dart through his old and weary body like arrows, Cui Lingfeng gloomily said, “However, we don’t have a choice.

“I don’t know whether or not Lu Qingchen’s Immortal Cultivator 2.0 forwarded by Ding Zhengyang is a universal truth, but at the very least, it does seem irrefutable on Firefly. If we hadn’t met the Star Glory Federation, we would’ve fled further into the desolate, unvisited area of the universe. How much longer could we have persisted in the path of the Cultivators when the starship became more broken, the resources became more insufficient, and the population continued to rise? In the end, without the corruption of the Imperium of True Human Beings, we would’ve automatically turned into Immortal Cultivators. The most horrible Immortal Cultivators!

“The resources in the universe are limited, whereas the boom of life can be infinite. The serious shortage of resources is a regularity for the universe. All of us—regardless of whether we are from the federation, the Imperium, the Covenant Alliance, or the Republic—are living on a slightly larger ‘Firefly’ that is sailing toward the unknown darkness. Therefore, the true path of immortality, which follows the trend of the universe, should be the ultimate guideline for a civilization that will keep the civilization flourishing forever. Captain Lin, what’s your take on such a theory?”

Li Yao was silent for such a long time under the cold, starry light that Cui Lingfeng almost thought that he could not answer the question at all. Waving his hands lethargically, he was about to end the conversation when Li Yao suddenly said, “Sir Speaker, there are cockroaches on Firefly.”

Cui Lingfeng was dazed. “Of course.”

“And more than one type of them. At least, I have sensed more than ten different mutations in the corners when I released a few random telepathic thoughts.

“In terms of ‘survival’, the cockroach is truly a very successful species. Not only is it more successful than mankind, it is also even more successful than our parent civilizations—both the Pangu civilization and the Nuwa civilization!

“According to the findings of our historians and archeologists, even our parent civilizations, the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan, rose and declined somewhere around a million years ago. The whole ‘longevity’ of their civilizations could not have been more than two million years.

“But the cockroach appeared at least 350 million years ago. Up till now, the ‘longevity’ of this species is three hundred times longer than that of the Pangu Clan or the Nuwa Clan!

“During the 350 million years, countless species and civilizations that were once brilliant and glorious have been destroyed. The dinosaurs, the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan, the demons… dominators of the universe in the past, the invincible tyrants and their dazzling civilizations, have all been obliterated in the tides of time.

“But the tiny cockroaches survived doggedly. Together with the prehistoric experts who conquered the universe one step after another, they expanded to every place in the three thousand Sectors and developed into billions of mutations. In the dark, cold, forsaken starships that are almost a vacuum, in the desert planets whose surface temperature is more than a hundred degrees, and in the frigid planets where a drop of water will immediately be frozen into ice… Cockroaches can adapt to the environment very quickly and live a good life everywhere.

“Although I am not sure, but there is a ninety-nine percent likelihood that, when the civilization of mankind goes completely extinct one day in the future, the cockroach will not. They will continue to ‘evolve’ in the harshest and cruelest environment and survive for another billion years or even longer!

“From that point of view, the civilization of mankind is perhaps only a passer-by in the universe, and the cockroach is the eternity.”

Cui Lingfeng finally turned around. Looking Li Yao in the eye, he frowned and said, “Captain Lin, what are you trying to say?”

“I’m trying to say, if the whole purpose of a civilization’s evolution is to make it survive longer, the ‘truth path of immortality’ is definitely not the best option for human beings, and the ‘truth path of the cockroach’ is the most optimal solution. We should figure out a way, say, by editing our genes or practicing the secret arts, to abandon everything, from our vulnerable body to our useless mercy, kindness, and morals, and turn everybody into a cockroach of a certain form. Assuming Firefly truly sinks into darkness under certain circumstances, and all the survivors become Immortal Cultivators after attacking each other, you will still not outlive the cockroaches on the starship, will you?”

Cui Lingfeng was silent and deep in thought.

“Do you think that I’m being unreasonable?” Li Yao smiled and opened his arms toward the universe. “In fact, over the past couple of days, I’ve been reflecting on the words of ‘Master Lu’ of the CFIA. The so-called ‘Immortal Cultivator 2.0’ does not sound too bad when you first hear it. It is true that darkness is the dominant hue of the universe, and survival of the fittest is the logic of nature.

“However, something suddenly occurred to me later. Does ‘civilization’ not denote violating nature and changing the universe? Since the moment our earliest ancestors ignited the very first fire and burnt a forest to the ground of an unknown planet, we have been changing the planets below our feet and the universe above our head step by step. There were good changes and bad ones. Some of them even led to catastrophic consequences. But our footsteps to march forward have never stopped. We grit our teeth to change, challenge, and conquer the universe with our will. As the ancient sages said, fighting nature is the greatest pleasure!

“The universe is so vast and invincible. The result of going against the universe is probably to be crushed into smithereens. Therefore, the Immortal Cultivators caved in and retreated. They pledge loyalty to the dark universe and surrender to its cruel nature. They allow the ‘ultimate guideline of the universe’ to change them and efface the ‘humanity’ in them that our ancestors finally accumulated after more than a hundred thousand years.

“Even so, what will become of the civilizations of the Immortal Cultivators eventually? However humble and compromising they are and however hard they try to abandon everything to distort themselves, they can never outlive cockroaches!

“No. That’s not right. In my opinion, only the species who dare declare war on the universe with their will are qualified to be called ‘civilizations’. Every ‘civilization’ is born to conquer the universe and to spread the belief of the civilization to every corner of the sea of stars!

“Without such resolution, no matter how magnificent their techniques and how powerful their armed forces, they are merely doing everything driven by their instincts for survival as pathetic toys that the universe has created!

“Therefore, Immortal Cultivator 2.0, Immortal Cultivator 5.0, or even Immortal Cultivator 100.0 are all the same to me. In my eyes, they are not qualified to be called a ‘civilization of Immortal Cultivators’ at all; they are just a bunch of iron cockroaches that live for the sake of remaining alive.

“Perhaps, they have truly pointed out part of the nature’s law. To quote the ancient Cultivators, they might have discovered the ‘heavenly rules’—the heavenly rules are unstoppable, and whoever goes against them will perish. However, Cultivation is about going against the heavens’ will in the first place. Why bother to embark on the path of Cultivation if you do not even dare go against the heavens’ will?”

The more he talked, the more excited Li Yao became. He was waving his hands, his saliva darting out.

Cui Lingfeng looked at him in a daze. Suddenly, he burst into such laughter that his face flushed, and he could barely catch his breath. Every wrinkle on his face was shivering, as if he had laughed out all the fog and darkness that had been pent up on his heart in the past thousand years.

“I’m finally convinced that you are not an Immortal Cultivator.” Dirty tears flowed out because of his laughter. “The Immortal Cultivators can never say such things. They cannot even pretend to say it. Here you are—”

He handed over a silver jade chip to Li Yao and said, “This is the key to the center of classified files of the ‘rightful government’, which was kept by Cheng Xuansu before. The center recorded all the glory and brilliance in the golden years of the Star Ocean Republic and all the darkness and ugliness in the age of escape, including stuff like the Rebirth

Plan. In any case, they are indispensable parts of the Star Ocean Republic."

Li Yao blinked and finally realized why Cui Lingfeng had invited him for a conversation.

It seemed to have been a special test.

Now that he had passed the test, he had been given… the history of the Star Ocean Republic.

Chapter 1646 - Return to the Federation!

“I will probably be the last Speaker of the Star Ocean Republic.”

Looking at Li Yao, Cui Lingfeng said thoughtfully, “After the war, whether it is victorious or a failure, the Star Ocean Republic will completely become history, and the top classified files will be disclosed to the public. It is you will be the one who decides how to use, disclose, and disseminate the information.”

His profound eyes seemed to be piercing through Li Yao’s soul directly. Li Yao could not help but shiver. For a moment, he even had the absurd thought that Cui Lingfeng had figured out his real identity.

But it was impossible!

“It’s been a thousand years since we fled from our homeland and started wandering in the universe,” Cui Lingfeng said with mixed feelings. “In the most difficult times in the past, I considered the significance of our struggle and persistence. After learning the truth, anyone with a normal head will easily come to the conclusion that it is an absolutely absurd and hilarious dream to overthrow the Imperium of True Human Beings or even to destroy the Alliance of the Holy Covenant solely with Firefly!

“Therefore, if I hadn’t intoxicated myself time and time again with the self-deceiving beliefs, perhaps I would’ve ended up as a pessimist and a capitulator like Ding Zhengyang.

“I feel grateful right now that I did not walk down that path, that I did not collapse in desperation and choose to surrender to the Imperium of True Human Beings.

“Because I have finally figured out the significance of our vagrancy and Firefly’s destiny after it has fled for a thousand years in the universe like a stray dog.

“We were not wandering to overthrow the Imperium of True Human Beings but to deliver the ‘tinder’ from the center of the cosmos to this place, to the Star Glory Federation, a civilization of the Cultivators that has only just been born and is full of vitality like a rising sun!

“The ‘tinder’ includes how the Cultivators at the center of the cosmos struggled to clean up the mess, rescue their compatriots in the chaotic worlds, and establish the first real modern republic of the Cultivators in the dark years after the collapse of the Star Ocean Imperium, when countless heroes who were willing to serve as sabers of humanity emerged.

“It also includes how the great country declined from its peak to weakness, and from weakness to degeneration, step by step, and how a monster like ‘Blackstar the Great’ Wuying Qi and the abnormal beast, the Imperium of True Human Beings, were bred in its very body.

“There are also the tough choices on Firefly during the lone voyage between ‘Cultivators’ and ‘Immortal Cultivators’.

“I hope that you can take the tinder to the federation and show the glory, mistakes, and viruses that the Cultivators of the past once made to the Cultivators of the new generation so that we can create a more magnificent and brilliant civilization of Cultivators that will defend all mankind. A real civilization!”

Holding the heavy jade chip, Li Yao felt as if it had turned into a burning silver stream and leaked into his blood and internal organs mixed with the thousands of years of the history of the Star Ocean Republic. He was at a loss for words when he looked at Cui Lingfeng’s weary face that was full of expectation. “I…”

“Go now. Use this time to take a look at the past of the Star Ocean Republic.” Cui Lingfeng smiled, as if a great burden on him had been relieved. “You are now the Senior Representative and Special Councilor of the Speaker’s Office of the Star Ocean Republic, and you are going to visit the Star Glory Federation fully on my behalf. Although you are just a common member of the delegation in name, everybody, even including the natives of the federation, knows that you are the key. It won’t do if you don’t know the first thing about the past of the Star Ocean Republic!”

He walked toward the depths of the Meditation Platform unhurriedly, as if he were embracing the arrows of light that the stars in the universe shot at him. “The Star Ocean Republic and I are old. You and the Star Glory Federation are the future. Remember your own words just now, and try to make the future… a better one!”

Li Yao’s heart almost skipped a beat. He was not certain if the old Speaker was implying that he was from the Star Glory Federation. He opened his mouth but then closed it, wondering if he should ask at all.

Cui Lingfeng suddenly came to a stop, as if he had an invisible eye on the back of his head that saw through the concerns in Li Yao’s heart. “Whether you are from the Red

Lotus Sector or somewhere else, you are a Cultivator, aren't you?"

"Of course!" Li Yao replied.

"That's good." Cui Lingfeng's voice grew lighter and lighter. "That is enough. The Star Ocean Republic is a country that has taken the entire universe and all the Cultivators and all the human beings in the three thousand Sectors as compatriots since the beginning!"

…

Ten days later, in the Uranian Ring Sector, when the carrier from the rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic appeared in the ripples of the void and jumped out of the swirl like a dolphin, the first thing that was reflected on the mirror-like shell of the carrier was the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag, the national flag of the federation that was more than a hundred kilometers both in length and width!

Sitting in a corner of the bridge by himself, Li Yao gazed at the raging dragon that was soaring into the sky on the red flag through the light beam all by himself. He could hardly hold back the urge to cry out loud.

A hundred years. After a hundred years, he had finally stepped into the territory of the federation again and seen the flag that had protected him countless times and had been protected by him countless times!

Thankfully, the experts of the Ancient Sages Sector were not currently around him. They were still studying the files that were as boundless as the ocean in their respective cabins. Under Cui Lingfeng's arrangement, they had all been assigned to specific tasks in the delegation, and they were about to inspect every detail in the federation in terms of politics, economy, military, and all the other fields. Naturally, they had a lot of preparation work to do and were not half as relaxed as Li Yao.

To turn the experts of ancient times into modern specialists in a certain field quickly, even the computational ability of the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage was not enough. Therefore, they had spent the last ten days coping with all kinds of textbooks, files, and data without having any time to bother about other things. It was for this reason that they did not notice Li Yao's subtle emotional changes.

In any case, I'm finally back now. I'm going to be reunited with my wife and everybody very soon!

Hehe. I didn't expect that I would be appointed as a special representative for the Speaker of the Star Ocean Republic by chance. In the Ancient Sages Sector, it would be equal to the royal envoy, right?

The situation in the federation is rather complicated. The CFIA and Jin Xinyue are in an ambiguous relationship. The CFIA seems like bait that Jin Xinyue intentionally threw out to attract the Immortal Cultivators. But Lu Qingchen's theory does not appear to be something a counterfeit Immortal Cultivator could come up with. There's also Bai Xingjian whose acting skills even fooled me. What is his role in this whole scheme? Hehe. However modestly I put it, I am the dominator of the three Sectors after all. Are you bold enough to deceive my disciple?

Also, is the Black Wind Fleet already here and capable of jumping to the most vulnerable place of the federation at any minute? Are there really Immortal Cultivators lurking in the leadership of the federation, or is it an exaggeration and a smoke grenade that somebody tossed out on purpose?

If my identity as Vulture Li Yao is truly exposed, I'm afraid that it will raise unnecessary alarms and make the surreptitious scoundrels in darkness better prepared!

So, on second thought, I might as well make best use of my identity as 'Special Representative for the Speaker'. I should try to be more surreptitious than the surreptitious bad guys. In the end, I might be able to catch them unprepared and resolve the problem!

Li Yao grinned and made the decision.

He might as well take things as they came. He would work as a dutiful 'Special Representative for the Speaker' and take a good look at the appearance of the New Federation that had developed quickly for a hundred years!

From the perspective of the grand universe and observed with the naked eye, even the periphery of the Uranian Ring Sector that had been highly developed was still nothing more than a cold, vacant wasteland.

However, on the mainframe crystal processor of the carrier, the radiation, mystic rays, and signals displayed on the light beam outlined the busiest, most prosperous, and noisiest scene.

Golden, shining sailing routes, like golden bridges, established a complicated, pervasive transportation network between the mother planet, important resource planets, space docks, and star fortresses. All kinds of starships in bizarre forms marked their coordinates and speed as little shining spots on the light beam, shipping the labor and resources that the world needed for its continuous development.

Two starships slid along the sailing routes near the carrier, escorting the guests from Firefly.

The shells of the starships were in the apparent style of pragmatism of the federation that appeared to be slightly clumsy, but the barrels and the plate armor in certain parts kept the agility and elegance that were unique to the Uranian Ring Sector. Together, they brought a sense of liveliness despite the minor incoordination.

Their size was already greater than Burning Prairie, the strongest warship that Li Yao had seen a hundred years ago, known as the ‘dream warship of three Sectors’. However, the exhaust flames spurting out of the power rune arrays in the rear were feebler and more lackluster, suggesting that they might not be the main power source but merely served to slightly alter the direction. Li Yao could not help but feel fascinated when he wondered what their main power sources were.

The starships that were more technologically sophisticated than Burning Prairie were not even members of the Burning Prairie Fleet, the ace troop of the federation, but only two main-force warships that belonged to the local fleet of the Uranian Ring Sector. Li Yao was greatly amazed by the magnificent military power of the New Federation and had never been more confident about the war to come.

Guided by the two escorting starships, the carrier quickly sailed toward the Uranian Ring Planet, which was the center of the Uranian Ring Sector and the largest starship production base in the New Federation.

It was not until the super-enormous orbit dock around the Uranian Ring Planet was gradually unfolded in front of Li Yao’s eyes that Li Yao finally understood why the Uranian

Ring Sector had been named after such a wonder of visual impact. The orbit dock was not a narrow, thin metal thread that he had imagined but extremely thick even in contrast to the planet nearby. It was glowing brilliantly like the ‘rings’ around many planets that were made of meteoroids and broken pieces.

Chapter 1647 - Start from the Uranian Ring Sector

The closer one got to the orbit docks, the more they would sense the ambitions of human beings to change the world and conquer the universe. Two orbit docks that fully surrounded the planet had been built, and the third ‘Uranian Ring’ was under construction. The super dock and space metropolis that looked like a long bow had only just started being built, but it left the deepest impression on Li Yao because only when he saw the starships and workers who were busy working around the new orbit dock was he finally convinced that the two splendid celestial bodies that he had previously seen, which were emitting their brilliance even in the scale of the grand universe, had in fact been made by the human beings who appeared to be ants if not dust!

As the carrier approached the First Uranian Ring, they turned off their own power and allowed the rune arrays of the First Uranian Ring to lock onto and capture the vehicle, drifting toward the port.

More and more starships appeared nearby until it was even possible to see the emblems and pennants that were painted on each of the starships. Compared to the super-enormous carriers, engineering starships, and main-force warships of the federal fleets, their own carrier was rather slender. Often, when several gigantic starships leaned toward them like mountains, they could not help feeling that they would be crushed. But with the guidance and navigation of the spiritual and magnetic field, the other starships simply flew past them unhurriedly, like a bunch of lazy whales.

“Wow!”

Many people who had spent their entire lives on Firefly, born, raised, and aged in the sea of stars alone, were deeply awed by the glamorous exhaust flames when at least a thousand starships crowded together. They were exclaiming at the splendid view.

During the incessant gasps and exclamations, they passed the Second Mother Port of the Burning Prairie Fleet, which was also the biggest starship production base in the ‘four new worlds’.

The solemn and inviolable starships had entirely renewed plate armor, which was polished to be even smoother than a mirror. There was no sign that they had ever been scratched by the cosmic dust at all.

Illuminated by the sun and the exhaust flames of the thousand starships nearby, they were reflecting deep, dark golden colors, like the ridge of a continuous mountain that boasted infinite strength.

On the orbit dock behind them, countless iron tentacles extended all the way down into the atmosphere of the Uranian Ring Planet until they stabbed deeply into the mother lodes below the surface of the planet, transporting the metal and crystal resources from there directly into the docks.

In space, a lot of starry brilliance was flying toward the Uranian Rings, too, as if they were shooting stars that had been conquered, manipulated, and made use of by human beings. They were all man-made asteroids that used to be part of the resource planets. Before, the collection and purification work used to be conducted on the resource planets. But later, a more convenient approach was invented, which was to blow up part of the resource planets, install engine units on them, and push them toward the Uranian Rings. The collection, purification, manufacture, and assembly procedures were concentrated in the same place, and the efficiency to produce starships was greatly improved.

If the probe distance of the crystal cameras were increased, they would be able to distinguish some details of the Uranian Rings on the fuzzy picture. At such a distance, the Uranian Rings’ sense of smoothness, elegance, and unity would completely vanish. They were an iron forest from which countless branches were stretching out. Just like Firefly, which was under major maintenance, ‘twigs’ made of super alloys stood erect on the surface, and new twigs bifurcated at the end of the previous twigs. Growing just like that, the Uranian Rings occupied every tiny bit of space other than the sailing routes. At the end of every ‘narrowest’ twig was a starship that was being maintained or produced.

From that point of view, the ‘twigs’ were sort of like umbilical cords. The Uranian Rings, beasts of the planetary level, collected and absorbed metals, minerals, crystals, and everything from the Uranian Ring Planet and the hundreds of resource planets nearby without pause. They chewed and digested the resources and sent the nutrition into the starships incessantly through the ‘umbilical cords’, breeding the iron beasts one after another that were about to raise surging tides in the universe.

Such a picture was not ‘natural’ at all, but it was quite ‘human’.

The carrier slowly connected to one of the ‘twigs’ extending out of the Uranian Rings. It was the first stop of the delegation, the Uranian Ring War Museum.

Wars were the most extreme outburst of potential of a civilization.

Through wars, it was possible to learn the true face of a civilization within the shortest amount of time.

Therefore, the representatives from the center of the cosmos had chosen this place for their first stop, where they were greeted by a Communication Committee made of people from the federal government, military, Cultivation sects, and academic fields.

Because of the subtle if not awkward relationship between the Star Ocean Republic and the Star Glory Federation, and since the federation was fully focused on the preparation for the war to come, both parties had agreed that they would discuss more about practical questions during the communication and negotiation and put aside controversial issues such as legitimacy and rightfulness.

Therefore, the delegation was not of a high level on the surface, and it was purely under the banner of Election Observation Delegation. Correspondingly, only a limited number of people from the government and the military were in the Communication Committee that the federation had sent out. At least, there were not many of them in the beginning.

Li Yao did not find any acquaintances in the Communication Committee, which spared him from the dilemma that he would have faced if an old friend had been there.

He observed the people of the new federation who were standing opposite him with great interest. He discovered that, probably because of the transition from a planetary civilization completely into a universal civilization, the federal citizens of the new generation were slimmer and taller, as if they could swim in the sea of stars to their heart’s content after one jump.

Regardless of their sex and gender, they were equally energetic and in high spirits. The confidence in their demeanor was so obvious that it was almost sharp.

Judging from their clothing, other than the officers who were more difficult to tell because of their standard military uniform, the civil representatives were from various Sectors, including the Nether World Sector. Some of them also possessed some demon features, such as cute rabbit ears, green eyes resembling a cat, and so on. Other people did not seem to be affected at all, either.

It appeared that the New Federation had carried out the integration policy determinedly in the past hundred years.

With their guidance, Li Yao visited the Uranian Ring War Museum. Through the remnants from the war, the war logs of the soldiers, and even simulation games in the Grand Illusionary Land, he experienced the war of thirty years prior.

He had studied many details of the war in the Uranian Ring Sector carefully on Firefly. However, he was quite fond of the New Federation’s narration of the war, which was calm, objective, and slightly conservative. There was not much description of the ugliness and evilness of the Heavenly Light. Everything was simply recorded dutifully like a sketch. In one of the procedures, quite a few solutions that could have completely avoided the war were even simulated in the Grand Illusionary Land.

Only the real victors could be so calm and conservative. It was even confident enough to reflect on the war.

After seeing all the scenes in the war museum, Li Yao was finally convinced that the federation had completely integrated and assimilated the Uranian Ring Sector. This world had become an indispensable part of the Star Glory Federation now.

Then, at the exit of the museum, he saw a statue.

The statue was not a depiction of the merry and lighthearted victors but a sad, lonely young woman who was holding the hands of a little girl in ragged, dirty clothes. The two of them were raising their heads and looking ahead in silence.

What they were looking at was an incessantly rolling list of names that recorded all the victims who had been killed in the Uranian Ring War.

In such a way, the woman and the girl in the statue seemed to be searching for the names of their family wholeheartedly. Their uneasy and complicated feelings could not have been more obvious.

The name list was divided into three columns in three different colors, which recorded all the members of the Heavenly Light, the Earthly Fiend, and the federation that had died in the war.

The detail made Li Yao stop in front of the statue and reflect for a long time.

The interpreter who was accompanying him, seeing that he was apparently interested in the statue, said, “The sorrowful woman in the statue is Ding Lingdang, who is regarded by the people of the Uranian Ring Sector as their ‘liberator’.”

“Ha?”

“Once the Uranian Ring War was over, the Earthly Fiend that were liberated wanted to build a tall and magnificent statue for Ding Lingdang, but she insisted against it and only agreed reluctantly after much persuasion, on the condition that the shape of the statue be decided by herself. In the end, she did not choose an awesome and dominant appearance but decided to build such a tiny, inconspicuous statue without highlighting herself. She even refused to carve her name on the statue. Although the statue has always been placed at the exit of the war museum, few people can recognize that it is the ‘God of War’ of the federation if they are not informed.”

Li Yao stared at the woman who had softness written all over her eyes. He then recalled when they were still in the Grand Desolate War Institution years ago, Ding Lingdang had suffered a meltdown when she was drunk, and she had clung to him, bursting into tears like a lonely, helpless girl. He thought and thought…

“The girl next to her is her daughter,” the interpreter added.

“Huh?”

“Her daughter that she fostered during the Uranian Ring War. The girl’s parents were Ding Lingdang’s comrades when she initiated the uprising in the underground tunnels, but they unfortunately passed away in the war.”

“Anything else? Can you please say everything at once?”

“I’m done. Are you uncomfortably, Representative Lin?”

The tour in the Uranian Ring War Museum was over. Next, the high-level officers in the delegation were about to discuss the details about the joint headquarters with the leadership of the federal army from the General Staff.

Li Yao did not know the first thing about the great battles of thousands of legions. Therefore, he decided not to waste his time. Meng Chixin, Han Baling, Qi Changsheng, and ‘Emperor Phoenix’ Zhu Zongyou, on the other hand, were quite interested in the arts of war.

Through Cui Lingfeng, Li Yao had reserved several places for them in the group of high-level officers. They would essentially be observing the establishment of the joint headquarters on behalf of the Speaker.

As for Li Yao himself, he had more important fields that he could not wait to learn about.

Merry Christmas Eve everyone!!!□□□□

Chapter 1648 - Half-Demon Girl

“Greetings, Special Representative Lin, my name is Ling Xiaole. On the surface, I am a postgraduate majoring in International Communication in the Sky Fantasia Academy and an intern at the Ministry of Culture of the federation! Didn’t you say that you would like to experience the life of the federation as an ordinary person of the Star Glory Federation? In the coming days, I will work as your tour guide to help you gather the most real and fundamental parts of the life of the folks in the federation!

“You can call me Xiaole or ‘Student Ling’. After all, I haven’t graduated from school yet. Hahaha!”

After the tour in the Uranian Ring War Museum, the delegation from Firefly split up.

Military, economy, law, politics… If the two parties truly meant to meld with each other, there were too many questions waiting to be discussed. The specialists in the delegation were all picked up by their counterparts in the federation as quickly as possible to begin discussions and negotiations sooner. Even the experts of the Ancient Sages Sector who pretended to be ‘Team Red Lotus’ also found the fields that they were interested in and were learning new information with the help of dedicated personnel. Although their joke that they would swagger into the federation on red carpets did not come true, reality was not too far from that and certainly much better than sneaking into the federation under the false identities that they had purchased in Fish Dragon City.

Just like them, Li Yao was greeted by a smiling, enthusiastic girl.

The girl had a caramel skin that was as smooth as milk. Her dark, shining eyes had a hint of green in their depths. She was wearing a soft gauze that looked like mist. Crystal adornments were uttering pleasant sounds from her ears, neck, ankles, and wrist and reflecting rainbow-like brilliance.

Her appearance, and her slightly extravagant use of crystals, was enough for anyone to work out her hometown at first glance—the Water Crystal Sector, a world of deserts.

However, other than the distinctive features of the Water Crystal Sector, she also had two sharp ears that were slightly folded and turning agilely right above her hair. Behind her back, a gold, furry tail was waving, and the vague fragrance of a fox could be smelled from her body, which were obvious features of the demons. Those signs were indicative enough of her identity as a hybrid.

There could not have been a better tour guide to interpret the national integration of the federation than a hybrid of the Water Crystal Sector and the Blood Demon Sector or… a half-demon.

Li Yao glanced at the girl for a moment and said with a smile, “Miss Ling, you are a postgraduate of the Sky Fantasia Academy on the surface. Then, what are you in fact?”

“In fact, I am the most excellent special agent of the Secret Sword Bureau, of course!”

Ling Xiaole blinked guilefully and wagged her furry tail, which instantly changed color like a wheat land blown by the wind, turning from gold into flourishing red. If Li Yao’s memory from a hundred years was not wrong, it was the color of ‘pride’ for certain fox clans in the Blood Demon Sector.

“Special Representative Lin is a big hero and a big celebrity that everybody in the Secret Sword Bureau knows. We all know that you defeated the insurgency of the Immortal Cultivators purely on your own! Wow. A super warrior that was well tempered hundred years ago fell into a long sleep willingly in order to protect an ancient republic, only to be awakened again at the most perilous moment. You are like the protagonist in novels and games. Everyone in the Secret Sword Bureau admires you!”

Ling Xiaole’s big, watery eyes were brimming with admiration. Even if Li Yao knew that it was part of the Secret Sword Bureau’s training, he still could not help but feel good about himself.

Ling Xiaole took the chance to add, “We know that you are hoping to inspect the federation on behalf of Speaker Cui Lingfeng as low-key as possible like an ordinary person. To compete for the mission to welcome you, everybody in the Secret Sword Bureau was almost fighting each other! I went through all the trouble to get the mission. So, please forgive me if I make any mistakes while accompanying you on your journey and don’t show too much dissatisfaction, or I will be replaced by them!

“Look. The guy reading the news on the light up above, the fatty having breakfast next to his shuttle, and so many other people in the corners and skyscrapers nearby all work for the Secret Sword Bureau. Dozens of pairs of eyes are on us right now, analyzing the change of every micro expression on your face. If they find that you are possibly dissatisfied with me and will thereby influence Speaker Cui’s attitude on our cooperation, I’m screwed!”

Ling Xiaole pouted her lips and crossed her hands, staring at Li Yao pitifully.

Li Yao could not help but chuckle again. “So, you sold them out the moment we met?”

“It is not a big deal at all!” Ling Xiaole opened her hands and said unconcernedly, “After all, you are an expert among experts. Even if I did not acknowledge my identity, could you not see through the fact that I am a special agent of the Secret Sword Bureau and that hundreds of our men are observing you from all directions nearby? You would’ve guessed and found out anyway. So, why shouldn’t I say it myself so that you may trust us more? Yes. Trust is exactly what we need most right now!”

Li Yao laughed. “You rehearsed that before, too, didn’t you?”

“You are so awesome!” Ling Xiaole bulged her eyes and exclaimed, “No wonder you are the commander of the Speaker’s special guards and have come to the federation as Speaker Cui’s ‘eye’ and ‘ear’! That’s right. You can say that all this is a ‘ploy’, but I assure you that it is an absolutely genuine, harmless one. Everything we do is meant for us to increase our mutual understanding and trust, until we are integrated into an unbreakable whole in the end!

“Believe me!”

She held her head high. Although she looked no older than twenty, there was solemnity all over her young face that one might squeeze water out. Her red fox tail was mixed with some golden brilliance, too, making it look like a fiercely burning torch.

“Perhaps for Firefly, such contact and integration is a first and last after a thousand years, but for the Star Glory

Federation, this is already the fifth time! We have welcomed four batches of guests from the Water Crystal Sector, the Nether World Sector, the Forest Ocean Sector, and the Uranian Ring Sector, who were as hopeful and yet careful as you. In the end, everybody was happy about the result!

“The federation is quite experienced when it comes to ‘integration’. Please be absolutely reassured and simply leave it to us. Yes. That’s right. Nothing can go wrong!”

Ling Xiaole waved her tiny fists and promised that to Li Yao.

Li Yao almost chuckled. He did not expect that the federation would send out such a funny, untraditional, and seemingly unsophisticated ‘tour guide’ for him.

However, on second thought, such a tour guide seemed to be much better than a grave, white-haired old man who was too solemn and official.

Even though it was truly a ploy, it was a rather acceptable one. Everybody would inevitably feel less wary and worried after she told them all their plans and schemes openly.

“Do you feel more comfortable now?” Ling Xiaole looked at Li Yao, full of expectation. “In fact, we were not like this in the past. A long, long time ago, when the federation had only the three core Sectors and had just discovered the first new world—the Water Crystal Sector—there was a time when the natives of the federation and the natives of the Water Crystal Sector were clumsy, ridiculous, and cautious of each other. Quite a lot of jokes have been left behind during the difficult communication at the beginning.

“The natives of the Water Crystal Sector, who were from a world of deserts and seriously short of water, could not understand the federation’s blatant waste of water resources and their infinite greed for crystals that were ‘everywhere to be seen’. The natives of the federation, on the other hand, were also perplexed as to why the people of the Water Crystal Sector attached such great importance to water resources, to the extent that anyone who wasted a tiny proportion of water could be sentenced to death. They thought that the rulers of the Water Crystal Sector were tyrants and almost raised a war against the Water Crystal Sector.

“Thankfully, because of the communication of the wise people on both sides, the war did not take place. As the difficult communication grew more and more frequent, we gradually realized that, despite the differences in our living environments and appearances, we are all human beings deep to our bones, who share equally abundant emotions and feelings.

“Hehe. Speaking of which, it was exactly under such circumstances that my parents met.

“A long, long time ago, my father came to the federation as an envoy of the Water Crystal Sector like you did today to inspect every aspect of the Star Glory Federation so that the Water Crystal Sector would decide to completely join the federation, or to simply keep trading crystals for water resources from the federation, or to forbid commercial communication altogether in case the ‘greedy people of the federation’ attacked the Water Crystal Sector with the Water Crystal Sector’s crystals later.

“My mother, a member of the Sand Fox Clan from the Blood Demon Sector, was a Secret Sword Agent of the Secret Sword Bureau who pretended to be his tour guide.

“Naturally, the federation at that time was far less open and confident than it is today. It was impossible for my mother to confess everything to my father like I did to you today.

“At that time, she concealed her identity and really pretended to be a graduate of the Sky Fantasia Academy majoring in International Communications and a slightly clumsy clerk of the Ministry of Culture.

“Because of their different traditions and customs, and due to their wariness of each other, a lot of hilarious jokes took place when they first met. Also, the radicals in the federation who craved for war and the diehards in the Water Crystal Sector who absolutely distrusted the federation meddled, too… The first contact between the federation and a new world was truly dramatic and unpredictable!

“Thankfully, they finally completely trusted each other and resolved all their conflicts in the end, and they became the first couple between the Water Crystal Sector and the federation. And I, Ling Xiaole [1] , was born one day a long, long, long time later. They gave me such a name because they still remembered the funny tales when they had just met each other.”

The half-demon girl with a beautiful tail chuckled. “So, it couldn’t be more appropriate for me to work as your tour guide. I believe that we will have a pleasant journey together! But make no mistake. I don’t intend to repeat my parent’s story. I already have a boyfriend, and I’m not into uncle-type men!”

Chapter 1649 - New ‘Civilization’, New Federation!

For the first time ever, Li Yao felt that he was not able to deal with a little girl.

Ling Xiaole, however, suddenly changed the topic and said with a smile, “I’m being such a chatterbox. Please don’t be bored by me. Let’s walk while we talk!”

While the other members of the delegation and the twelve experts of the Ancient Sages Sector went to visit separately, Li Yao had a small tail behind him—Heiye Lan, the elite warrior of the Imperium, who was now the Secretary to the Special Representative of the Speaker’s Office.

Back in the Ancient Sages Sector, Li Yao had been watching over Heiye Lan the whole time.

Now that Li Yao was the commander of Team Red Lotus and the Speaker’s special representative, it was only reasonable that he had a secretary.

A few days back, when the Immortal Cultivators rebelled on Firefly and they had just learned the news about the covetous Black Wind Fleet, Heiye Lan had been rather cocky and relieved. She had wasted no time trying to convince the experts of the Ancient Sages Sector that the invincible army of the Imperium was arriving and that it was the best opportunity for them to make great accomplishments!

However, as they went deeper into the federation, and especially after she viewed the magnificence of the federal fleet in the Uranian Ring Sector, Heiye Lan became grave again.

It was obvious that the weight and capability of the ‘prey’ this time far exceeded her expectations.

At the exit of the Uranian Ring War Museum, she had been even more puzzled by Ding Lingdang’s statue that was full of sadness and pity and the light beam where the names of all the victims in the war were carved.

There was no doubt that even if such a war museum to demonstrate a similar feat was established in the Imperium of True Human Beings, the names of the victims on the enemy’s side could not have been recorded.

Right now, Ling Xiaole’s unconventional opening lines further baffled her. Could conquering a new world be discussed so openly and lightheartedly?

The elite female warrior of the Imperium widened her big eyes, trying to understand everything.

The three of them boarded a round, seemingly plain shuttle and moved toward the circular world within the Uranian Ring quietly.

Because the caliber of the Uranian Ring was too huge, the place had been divided into more than ten independent floors, each of which had been paved with soil and planted with grass and flowers. The domes had been connected by enormous light beams that displayed the virtual blue sky and white clouds. Together with the artificial gravity field that had been carefully adjusted, life there was no different from life on the ground. If the visitors did not constantly remind themselves, it would be hard for them to realize that they were in the middle of a circular city above the atmosphere.

Only when one looked far over the horizon could they see that the ‘sky’ and the city far away seemed to bend downward into an infinite abyss.

Life a hundred years later did not seem very different from a hundred years ago. There were high-speed crystal trains and shuttles within the Uranian Ring, but all the trains were running stably and quietly without any noise, not even causing any wind when they were rushing by, which made it possible for them to be built in the downtown area and even around the coruscating skyscrapers. The shuttles, on the other hand, were faster and even more dense. They travelled so quickly and fluently in the city that it was almost like a breathtaking acrobatic performance. It appeared that autopilot technology had developed much in recent years, allowing ordinary people to use similar computational and driving abilities as the Cultivators when they drove the shuttles.

Other than that, Li Yao also noticed something in the sky of the city that was between an extreme sport and a vehicle.

They were pieces of magical equipment that could both be either soft or hard and looked like metal fins. They were similar to the air plugins on the strengthening extensions for the crystal suits, except that they were directly equipped to human beings. After putting on a dozen ‘fins’, even an ordinary person could fly in midair like a bird or a dolphin.

Many people, especially the young ones in school uniforms, were swimming agilely and playing with each other in midair wearing the glittering ‘fins’, which reminded Li Yao of the time when he went home together with his best friends after school.

“That is ‘flying fin’, the latest single vehicle developed in the federation,” Ling Xiaole said. “The flying fin is carved with more than fifty gravity adjustment rune arrays and magnetism reception rune arrays, allowing it to capture the ubiquitous magnetic waves in the world of the Uranian Ring Sector and be pushed forward by the tides of spiritual energy like the dolphins pushed by the sea’s waves.

“Through the main control chip of the ‘flying fin’, even ordinary people can fly like Cultivators! The ‘flying fin games’ are often held in the Uranian Ring Sector. The moves that some ordinary people execute are even more impressive than the Cultivators’!”

Looking at the young people who were playing with each other carefreely in the middle of the blue sky and the white clouds below the man-made dome, Li Yao sincerely complimented, “Very beautiful.”

Heiye Lan, however, could not help but ask, “You make… ordinary people the same as Cultivators?”

“Of course!” Ling Xiaole blinked and replied matter-of-factly, “To make ordinary people the same as Cultivators is exactly the goal that countless citizens of the federation fight for!”

“Is it the ‘Citizen Center’ of the Uranian Ring Sector up ahead?” Li Yao changed the topic. The place was the primary target of his inspection after he communicated with the authorities of the federation. “Since we are all expressing ourselves sincerely here, I’m not going to hold anything back. In principle, Speaker Cui does not object to the integration with the Star Glory Federation. But he is very concerned about the position and privileges of the billion or so people of Firefly in the federation. Therefore, he would like to know more about the citizenship system of the federation.

“We all know that the Imperium of True Human Beings has a citizenship system, too. To become a citizen of the Imperium, you have to be an Immortal Cultivator with certain strength. You even need to help the Imperium conquer new territory, enslave weaker peoples, and accumulate bloody military credits with the blood of the weak so that you can redeem the ‘contribution points’ for the citizenship of different levels.

“Of course, the federation is different from the Imperium. I’m told that your citizenship and your contribution points are deeply associated with a game called ‘Civilization’. It is a pity that we have no access to the official releases of ‘Civilization’ on Firefly and in the Dragon Snake Space Zone. What is it all about?”

“You will see it with your own eyes soon enough. Our ‘Citizen Center’ is also the ‘Civilization Game Center’. It is not just a simple game but also the bedrock on which the Star Glory Federation was founded and the best weapon for us to resist the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Alliance of the Holy Covenant!”

Ling Xiaole’s eyes were glittering, and her pride was flowing like a flood. The tip of her tail turned silver, too. “For the people beyond the federation, ‘Civilization’ may be only a simulation game, but for the people of the federation, it is not a game but a lifestyle. No. It is a way of living that concerns every one of us.

“We can even say that there are two Star Glory Federations. One of them exists in the universe for real with a material body, while the other one is a ‘virtual federation’ that exists in crystal processors and light circuits, which rages, dies, and rises again time and time again. When the real federation and the virtual federation overlap, that will be the ‘mega’ federation. Only the Star Glory Federation in such a state can expect to challenge the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance with only seven Sectors!”

Li Yao grew more and more interested. “We learned a thing or two about ‘Civilization’ on Firefly. It does not seem as magical as you claim.”

“How is it comparable?” Ling Xiaole said. “The key is not the game itself but the database that contains all the information of almost a hundred billion people in the seven Sectors of the Star Glory Federation and the corresponding links. The entire database and the links will never be open to outsiders. What the outside world can touch is merely a dull, monotonous game instead of an erratic and unbelievably real virtual world.

“Only the new worlds that are completely melded with the federation will be connected to the links of ‘Civilization’ and included in the database so that the entire virtual world will be open to the local people.

“If, one day, Firefly officially becomes part of the federation, the people onboard will naturally sense the magnificence of ‘Civilization’. Of course, Special Representative Lin, you have the privilege to enjoy it in advance now.”

Li Yao and Heiye Lan looked at each other. Heiye Lan asked in great confusion, “How can a game help you resist the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance?”

“As I said, it is more than a game; it is… a brand-new way of living and wisdom sharing for mankind,” Ling Xiaole said carefully. “Ever since the New Federation was founded a hundred years ago, the people of the federation have been thinking about one question. How can the potential of the ordinary people be best utilized so that the ordinary people’s numerical advantage can be transformed into a strong force on par with, if not above, the Cultivators?

“The Imperium of True Human Beings takes ordinary people as ‘hominoids’, nothing more than livestock and pets. The Alliance of the Holy Covenant regards all human beings as ‘tools’. Of course, the federation is different from them. Ordinary people are also the owners of the country and the masters of their own fate!

“But we are not purely idealists. In terms of physical strength, retention, computational ability, combat ability, and many other aspects, ordinary people cannot compete with Cultivators as individuals, which is a fact that we do not deny.

“Therefore, the core of the question, and the core of the Star Glory Federation’s competitiveness, is how to concentrate the ordinary people’s strength in the highest efficiency!

“The game ‘Civilization’ is the federation’s answer to that question.

“Display all the problems that the federation faces during its development, as well as the lessons of the rise and decline of other Sectors in the form of a game, and invite the majority of the hundred billion civilians to release the sparks of their mind. They are not required to give the right solution because even the most bizarre mistakes that they make in the game have their own value.

“As a result, through the special network that is ‘Civilization’, the brains of a hundred billion people are connected. The sparks of their thinking congregate into a brilliant ocean. The change in quantity leads to a change in quality. Eventually, the most optimal strategy is found. Also, both ordinary people and Cultivators can try to understand the philosophical concepts such as society, war, continuity of civilization, and so on. They can learn to understand the dilemmas and the idea that everyone is responsible for their country. In the end, they will grow into warriors who fight for themselves, for their patriots, and for the future of humanity!

“Although the federation has a population of a hundred billion, every individual matters, be they Cultivators or ordinary people. Everyone’s effort may change the federation and the future of mankind. This is what ‘Civilization’ tells us!”

Chapter 1650 - The Eighth Sector

Glancing at Li Yao, Heiye Lan bit her lips and said, “You can achieve everything you said with only a game?”

“We don’t know whether or not we can achieve it,” Ling Xiaole said, “but we will work hard to make it happen. Also, after a hundred years of development, ‘Civilization’ has long grown from the maddest design in the beginning into a virtual platform that covers every aspect of the society. It is now a new Sector made of crystal processors, light circuits, data, and telepathic thoughts.

“The people of the federation live in seven different Sectors in reality. We may be hundreds if not thousands of lightyears away from each other. Our customs and living environments are vastly different. It is quite difficult for us to be called one people and one civilization.

“However, in the virtual world, even people living on two different sides of the federation can still hug each other without obstacle. They can share their experiences with each other, pass on their wisdom, and eventually view the universe in the same way.

“Therefore, many believe that ‘Civilization’ is the federation’s actual territory, and the virtual platform is the most important eighth Sector for the federation!”

Heiye Lan looked at Li Yao again. Seeing no objection, she continued asking, “Then, how does the world of ‘Civilization’ run? Is anybody free to participate?”

“Of course. The world of ‘Civilization’ is divided into many levels. All the people of the federation can, and must, take part at the bottom level.” Ling Xiaole smiled. “Every person in the federation will get in touch with ‘Civilization’ when they are in elementary school. Of course, it is still a real game at that time. We have inputted a lot of knowledge about nature, mathematics, and other disciplines into the game so that the teaching sessions can be conducted in a more interesting way.

“Have you ever heard of ‘applied problems’? Does the mathematic education on Firefly involve ‘applied problems’? If so, you may consider ‘Civilization’ at this time to be an all-encompassing and ever-changing applied problem.

“In the virtual world, the kids learn the fundamental information about the seven Sectors of the federation. They learn to distinguish between the basic minerals on the various resource planets. They will understand the gravity and oxygen difference between different planets. They will also be able to calculate the path programming to jump from the Uranian Ring Sector to the Heaven’s Origin Sector in the ‘fastest mode’ and in the ‘most energy-conserving mode’.

“As they slowly grow up and their brain matures, the content added to ‘Civilization’ becomes more and more complicated. The grandiose narration and the trivia around them is included.

“The children can manage the entire country as the ‘Speaker of the Federation’. They can also lead the most magnificent fleet of the federation to battle as the ‘commander of the Burning Prairie Fleet’. Of course, the more grandiose the narration is, the more blurred the granularity and the less real it will be. If they want to be more delicate and professional, they can be the owner of a certain mine on a resource planet, the captain of a certain small carrier, or the mayor of a town on a planet that is yet to be developed, so that they can manage all the affairs in their tiny territory.

“In those cases, we retrieve the data of real mines, carriers, and towns from our database for them, including problems that they are going to face. The keys to all the problems lie in the knowledge of the various disciplines that they have learned.

“From elementary school to junior high to senior high, the children of the federation have always been educated in such a way. Then, when they finally turn into adults, they will already be raised into basically qualified citizens of the federation who have a basic understanding of society and the world, and they will enter the world of the real ‘Civilization’.”

“I have another question.” Heiye Lan frowned deeply. “If it is just a game, it is destined to be unreal and not of much significance in guidance. If authenticity and educational purposes are what you pursue, the game will definitely not be interesting and attractive enough. Maintaining the normal functions of the smallest starship is enough to overwhelm even an adult Cultivator, what with dealing with all the data and contingencies. Are the children really into such a game, or has the federal government employed a certain compulsory approach to force the children to play the boring game?”

“How is it possible!” Ling Xiaole widened her eyes. “The federation worships freedom. How can the government use any compulsory approaches? Besides, no compulsion is required at all. ‘Civilization’ is a non-optional subject in the College Entrance Examination in the federation, and it takes up more than fifty percent of the total score. There are even cram schools for the game ‘Civilization’ on every street. Parents all take their children to those places, begging for their children to become game experts!”

“…” Li Yao.

“…” Heiye Lan.

“After the children finish all the basic lessons and pass the corresponding tests, they earn the right to enter the real world of ‘Civilization’. Different from the game, they encounter more compatriots that exist in reality than NPCs generated by the crystal processors. Everybody is like a butterfly on the other side of the ocean, and they can raise a storm by simply flapping their wings.

“The governments of all levels often publicize a lot of content regarding public decisions on the virtual platform, inviting everybody to play the game in different roles as ‘decision-makers’ and ‘decision-takers’. The issues can be great crises such as the invasion of the expedition army of the Imperium or insignificant trivia such as a certain public affair in their community.

“For example, if the local government of the Uranian Ring Sector intends to build a new fully-enclosed vacuum rail here, there will be a lot of points that require consideration. The distribution of the route, the location of the stations, whether or not it will affect people, whether or not anybody will be forced to move, the influence on house prices nearby, and even the future influence on the population in decades to come. It is not a bad idea to invite the specialists whose spiritual roots have been awakened to devise plans in the traditional way, but wouldn’t it be even better if the specialists have the first-hand data and even the ‘voice’ of the local residents during the calculation?

“In such a case, the local government can issue a quest named ‘Rail Construction Simulation’ in ‘Civilization’ and invite the residents nearby, or the experts who are adept at quests of such a type according to their profile, to accomplish it.”

“Does it work?” Heiye Lan said coldly. “The deployment of rails and stations is the most professional problem. How can regular outsiders expect to solve it?”

“We do not need them to resolve the problem; we only need them to constantly make mistakes and express what is on their mind while they do so,” Ling Xiaole said. “Even the best horse sometimes stumbles. Of course, the general game players are not as good as specialists. But at the very least, they can make thousands of different mistakes, which will save the specialists a lot of time and inform them of what the local people living in the area need and worry about so that a rail that satisfies everyone will be built in the end.

“More importantly, if some residents living nearby are affected by the rail or forced to move, it will be easier for the contractor to communicate with them when they are involved in the construction of the rail in advance and foresee the concreate benefits that the rail will bring to the local area after it is built!

“This is one of the most insignificant aspects, but the federation is made of billions of such insignificant aspects. Through the release and participation of one quest after another, we make use of the wisdom of ordinary people and listen to their voices as much as possible so that the final decision will satisfy more people!

“Of course, the specialists are most important, but on the other hand, in the hundred thousand years of mankind, did the great emperors and big shots in every dynasty ever consider themselves not to be real ‘specialists’? Yet, under their government, the dynasties, nations, and civilizations fell apart in the end anyway!

“Let’s take the Imperium of True Human Beings for example. However brilliant and magnificent their emperor is, even if he is in the Divinity Transformation Stage or even higher, can his wisdom and computational ability be higher than the combined wisdom and computational ability of a hundred billion people?”

Heiye Lan almost choked, blushing.

Li Yao chuckled and said, “You do have a point, Miss Ling. But on second thought, if the effect you describe is to be achieved, it must be guaranteed that most of the people in the federation spend a lot of time and effort in ‘Civilization’, which is relatively boring and monotonous. It is equivalent to advanced ‘free labor’.

“I know human beings to be selfish animals. What do you use to ensure that everybody volunteers to waste their previous time on it? Or in other words, it should have a rather thorough incentive system, shouldn’t it?”

“Of course. As I said just now, ‘Civilization’ is connected to the daily life of everyone in the federation,” Ling Xiaole said. “There’s no need to mention the College Entrance Examination, in which the expertise in the game directly decides the future of a student. Also, the win rate, contribution points, gaming times, and other elements are bound to an individual for their entire life. They have a lot to do when it comes to job interviews, business activities, and even love and marriage.”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. “It even has a lot to do with marriage?”

“Of course. Just think about it.” Ling Xiaole smiled. “The win rate and completion rate of the quests represent one’s wisdom and decision-making abilities. The gaming time and history indicate one’s personality. If someone has been doing the boring tasks that happen to be related to everyone’s life, just like ‘Rail Construction Simulation’ that I described just now, even if their completion rate is not high, it at least suggests that they are passionate about public welfare, right?

“Therefore, when big corporations browse through resumes, they will know the abilities of the applicants when it comes to fixing practical problems from a few clips of game footage that the applicants attach. When a girl decides to get married with her love, it is also necessary for her to check his game record. It is often possible to infer his character from the type of quests that he has chosen. If the guy is only concerned about himself and never worries about the problems that the community he’s in is faced with, can she expect him to be a really responsible husband?”

Chapter 1651 - Grand Unification

Chapter 1651: Grand Unification

Li Yao and Heiye Lan looked at each other. Even he was deeply awed by the ‘gaming society’ of the New Federation. “So, you can barely live your life in the federation today if you do not participate in the game ‘Civilization’ carefully, correct?”

“I wouldn’t go that far,” Ling Xiaole said. “However, it will indeed give you many advantages if you have accumulated a lot of contribution points and gaming time. Other than what I said just now, the greatest benefit for common folk is the tax rate. Playing ‘Civilization’ can reduce your tax.

“Star Glory Federation is a country with high taxes. It can’t be helped. The New Federation has only developed for a hundred years. Many planets in the seven Sectors are still being built from scratch. The investment into infrastructure has to be increased. Also, the threat of the expedition army of the Imperium forces us to keep a regular army that is almost too huge. The military expenses every year are astronomical.

“Therefore, the life of common folk in the New Federation is far from carefree. The basic tax is sometimes more than fifty percent of the total income.

“However, generally speaking, nobody pays so much tax. Their taxes will be cut through the various quests they accomplish in ‘Civilization’. The better they play

‘Civilization’, the lower their tax rate will be. Also, virtual contests are held in almost every place every year, and the champions are sometimes even the privilege of zero tax!”

Li Yao felt stunned. “Playing the game can reduce your tax?”

“Allow me to repeat myself again—this is not a simple game but a fully-simulated, grand-unified platform founded with cloud data and light circuits in space,” Ling Xiaole said carefully. “Any decision made in ‘Civilization’ can be considered as the player’s intellectual property, which may be of great help to propel our entire civilization!

“Isn’t handing over intellectual property to the government as replacement for money a very reasonable policy?”

Li Yao thought for a moment and realized that it did make sense.

In fact, more than a hundred years ago, when he proposed the idea of developing the wisdom of the public by the game ‘Civilization’, he had considered the issue of participation.

It was because the more real ‘Civilization’ was, the further away it would be from the notion of a ‘game’. The tedious operations and information processing that involved tremendous data and hard thinking would not be to the liking of most players.

Of course, the federation could not force everyone to play a boring, brain-burning game, but if the data collected was not large enough, or if only part of the ‘seasoned players’ were attracted to the game but not people of all ages, genders, and trades, the decision outputted would not be of much real significance.

The dilemma had puzzled Li Yao and the rest of them for a long time. There had not been a satisfaction solution even by the time he left the Heaven’s Origin Sector for the dark nebula.

He did not expect the New Federation to have resolved the problem perfectly with only two moves, namely College Entrance Examinations and tax reduction. It was… rather impressive!

Ling Xiaole smiled. “What I listed just now are the relatively practical benefits. In the next, it is the most crucial ‘honor’, which is the citizenship of the Star Glory Federation.

“Like the Imperium, the federation adopts a ‘citizen contribution points’ system. Only when one’s contribution points reach a certain level will they be considered real citizens and enjoy the right of deciding the country’s future.

“However, the ‘contribution points’ in the Imperium of True Human Beings have to be earned by accomplishing difficult, dangerous, and complicated missions, say, hunting ferocious beasts on unvisited, undeveloped planets. The system seems ‘fair’, but how can ordinary people ever complete such missions?

“The federation has similar tasks, too. For example, exploring an unknown resource planet as a pioneer will earn tremendous contribution points. However, for the general public who are unable to complete such dangerous missions, they can also accumulate contribution points through quests in ‘Civilization’ and learn to be a qualified ‘citizen’!

“Yes. In the eyes of the federation, ‘citizen’ is a supreme word that stands for great glory and responsibility. It is a title that is even more valuable than ‘Cultivator’!

“You two must know that hundreds of civilizations emerged in the broken universe after the Star Ocean Imperium’s collapse ten thousand years ago. Many of them adopted election systems of various kinds to decide the future, but their outcomes were mostly very pitiful.

“Election is not necessarily bad, but leaving the low efficiency of elections aside, the real critical problem is how to make the people understand that the tiny power in their hands is of paramount importance for the entire civilization!

“The Supreme Speaker of the Federation is elected, but we do not believe that everyone is born with the power to decide the future of the civilization. Human beings are born selfish, and those who are not trained tend to be shortsighted. When countless people who are not trained gather together, they will only be a rabble who can barely see the road below their feet.

“By rabble, I am not just referring to ordinary people. Even Cultivators are still rabble before they receive the political, economic, sociological, and cultural training that is due, despite their Cultivation, which might be in the Nascent Soul Stage. They do not deserve tickets, either.

“For example, I’m not implying anything, but in the last years of the Star Ocean Republic, when the parliament was controlled by countless Cultivators, the fiend ‘Blackstar the Great’ Wuying Qi still showed up. He even usurped the power of the parliament easily and worked as the supreme leader of the Star Ocean Republic for a while. It is indicative enough that ‘Cultivator’ and ‘citizen’ are not naturally equal.

“I am always blunt in the way I talk. You don’t mind, do you, uncle?”

Li Yao coughed. Before he was able to respond, Heiye Lan had already spoken, not entire convinced. “I understand it now. This is just another kind of meritocracy. People are blind, and only the elites can decide the future of a civilization. It is very reasonable, but is it any different from the Imperium? I’m told that the Imperium of True Human Beings adopts a meritocratic system, too. The emperor does not decide everything. The nobles, lords, and Sector Masters have a big say in the decision-making process, too!”

“Meritocracy is essentially not wrong.” Ling Xiaole smiled. “If we get to the bottom of it, managing a country is also a skill. Of course, we have to look for specialists.

“However, exactly who qualifies as a real ‘specialist’?

“I don’t deny that a lot of the nobles, lords, and Sector Masters in the Imperium of True Human Beings are perhaps specialists on planet management, but most of them simply have larger fists, greater combat ability, and are better at fighting. Some people are even worse than them. They excel in political conflicts and setting other people up. Just because somebody is knighted thanks to their combat ability doesn’t mean that they will be good at governing a place. In fact, it is possible that they will be too concentrated on training in order to make their fists even heavier to think about receiving the most fundamental education on the decision of public affairs.

“Such people can barely make the most common ‘citizens’, much less the leaders of a place.

“It can’t be helped. This is how the Imperium works. The strong prey on the weak, and strength is all that matters. It seems advanced, but it is in fact made of a bunch of iron savages who are equipped with starships and Colossi.”

Heiye Lan took a deep breath, lost for words.

Li Yao smiled. “Is the federation different?”

“Of course it’s different,” Ling Xiaole proudly declared. “The people of the federation have been receiving training on public affairs since little. When they are adults, they already boast the basic qualities desired for a citizen. They understand that their decision and hard work concern the future of the entire civilization! Those who do become citizens in the end have all proved themselves in the game ‘Civilization’ to have a profound understanding of economics, politics, culture, military, and all the other fields. They are also relatively rational, calm, and farsighted, willing to contribute their intellectual property to the service of the people!

“The Cultivation of such ‘citizens’ varies. Most of them are not even Cultivators, but they are the well-deserved ‘elites’ of our society, and they can speak for everyone in the federation to a large extent. It is the best system that we can come up with to ask them to elect the Supreme Speaker and to decide the future path of the federation.

“Such a system avoids the tragedies like a lot of civilizations in the past ten thousand years where they elected their leaders from an uneducated rabble only to have a fancy-looking but incapable guy, if not an ambitious schemer, inaugurated in the end. The super high transmission speed of information based on the light circuits in the sea of stars also reduces the consumption of the election itself to the minimum!”

Ling Xiaole’s tail was wagging so fiercely that it also brushed the tip of Li Yao’s nose many times, making him almost unable to stop himself from sneezing.

“Right.” Scratching his nose, Li Yao asked, “There’s something that I’ve been meaning to ask you since the beginning. Are the data transmission methods in the federation so developed right now? Even the telepathic thoughts between two different Sectors can be transported and exchanged instantly. That is a rather shocking speed. Even the technology on Firefly seems unable to achieve that. We can only complete instant data exchange within one Sector. A ‘grand-unified’ virtual platform that includes seven Sectors would collapse any second with our technology.”

Ling Xiaole hesitated for a second. Li Yao knew that she was asking for permission through the micro communication rune arrays that were stuck to her ears. Three seconds later, her supervisor probably gave consent. Ling Xiaole explained, “It doesn’t matter if I tell you right now. We did not have such technology in the beginning. However, a hundred years ago, before the New Federation was founded, the ‘Old Federation’ received a mysterious signal from the depths of the sea of stars.”

“Oh?” Li Yao sat up straight. The signal that Ling Xiaole was talking about was obviously the signal that had brought him to the Ancient Sages Sector and then brought Meng Chixin, Long Yangjun, and the others back.

“At this moment, the content entailed in the signal is not important, but the technique through which the signal was transmitted is of paramount importance.

“The scholars of the federation spent decades studying the signal. Eventually, they confirmed that it was a high-level information transmission protocol of the primeval civilizations. Such a method that is similar to ‘gravitational waves’ can cover such a distance instantly, thereby achieving the seamless synchronization of information in multiple Sectors.

“It was exactly with the help of the ‘primeval signal’ that the information transmission technology of the federation soared, and the grand-unified world of ‘Civilization’ was founded in the end!”

Chapter 1652 - Father of the New Federation!

Li Yao was about to ask more when the shuttle slowly descended. Ling Xiaole turned around and smiled. “We have arrived at the largest ‘Civilization’ center in the Uranian Ring Sector!”

As far as one’s eyes could see, the entire world up ahead was occupied by a glittering silver ball. The surface of the silver ball was dissected into hundreds of light beams that were displaying a breathtaking, blood-boiling picture. On the picture, thousands of starships were fighting, burning, exploding, running, and chasing in space.

The aggressive sounds and visual effects covered the dozens of square kilometers nearby. Before they entered the center, they had already found themselves placed in the middle of a burning universe. The glittering silver ball almost turned a tiny black hole that was swallowing the world nearby as well as Li Yao and the rest of them!

There was a small logo in the top right corner of every enormous light beam. It looked somewhat similar to the ‘trident lightning’ emblem of the Imperium of True Human Beings, but it was much more hideous and terrifying than the flag of the Imperium and mixed with the air of dominance and destruction.

Ling Xiaole told Li Yao that they had come at the perfect time. ‘The Imperium’s Frustration’, the latest version of the war DLC of ‘Civilization’, was to be released in the seven Sectors at the same time. Today, a rather huge release conference would be held in this place. The game experts from other places and even the core worlds had gathered there. The tourists from the resource planets nearby had come to enjoy the event, too. It was rather lively.

As she said, Li Yao could see that the shuttles there were five times denser than even in the downtown area, and there were even now-uncommon traffic jams. A lot of young people wearing colorful ‘flying fins’ were also moving swiftly among the lines of vehicles. Decorations had been set up both in midair and on the ground. Loudspeakers that had been carved with anti-gravity rune arrays and broadcast rune arrays were rolling nonstop. Countless passionate, vigorous sounds were mixed with each other, making the place even more obstreperous than the battles on the light beams!

Li Yao was aware that ‘The Imperium’s Frustration’ was a war DLC that they had already began devising a hundred years ago. It focused on the military side and expounded on the content of how to resist the Imperium’s invasion.

According to Ling Xiaole’s description, after a hundred years of rapid development and countless updates, especially after more precise data support was activated ten years ago through the soldiers and even warships of the Imperium captured in the battle to rescue Firefly, the brand-new ‘The Imperium’s Frustration’ had been developed into a highly professional war simulation game. As a perfect simulation, it was not a ‘game’ at all but a war system that could be directly adopted by the military.

So far, ‘Civilization’ had offered tens of thousands of different DLCs and quest packages, including the more realistic ones such as ‘Farm Simulator’, ‘Sim City’, ‘Carrier Commander’ and the more visionary ones such as

‘Campaign for Speaker’ or ‘Future Millennium’. The interests of every player could be satisfied.

However, war was the primary factor for the development of a civilization after all. ‘The Imperium’s Frustration’, which focused on military, was the most popular one of all the DLCs that had been released.

It was said that the federal government had disclosed tremendous data about the claw fleet of the Imperium captured ten years ago, and more than ten perfectly simulated starships and crystal suits of the Imperium were provided in the latest patch for the players to manipulate freely. It was one of the most critical updates in the recent years. No wonder it had become a carnival!

“This is really…”

Li Yao, Heiye Lan, and Ling Xiaole got off the shuttle. Looking at the ocean of people shouting and laughing in their fancy clothes in front of them, both the dominator of the three Sectors from the ‘Old Federation’ and the elite female warrior from the Imperium of True Human Beings felt dazzled and overwhelmed.

They were well aware that the ‘world’ they were in was merely one ‘floor’ of the circular ring. Above the sky and below the ground, there would be the same oceans of passion!

“The Secret Sword Bureau has already arranged a special channel for the two VIPs. Also, a thousand Secret Sword Agents nearby are protecting you. There’s no need to worry,” Ling Xiaole said with a smile. It was apparently not the first time that she had seen a shocked guest.

“I’m not worried about safety.” Taking a breath, Li Yao mumbled, “It just never occurred to me that so many people will come here simply for… a game.”

“In fact, most households in the federation have immersive game cabins, and usually more than one of them. Right. In the federation, we do not call them ‘game cabins’ anymore. They are now known as ‘future cabin’, a piece of furniture that is as popular as ‘beds’ were.

“Although they can play the game at home, a lot of people still prefer to gather in the ‘game centers’ that have been established in every city and every community. Well, it is more about their social needs. Human beings are gregarious creatures after all! For the people of the new federation, the game center is like the ‘city square’ or the old ‘saloons’. It is where most socialization takes place nowadays.

“In game centers large and small, not only are there mainframe crystal processors of a higher computational ability and ‘future cabins’ of the latest models, which grant a better game experience and a higher connection speed, many fan meets and book-signings are also held in such places. The experts of ‘Civilization’ today are like combinations of superstars and heroes in the past. They are very popular!”

Li Yao thought for a moment and asked, “I can understand how they are superstars, but why are they called ‘heroes’?”

“It’s simple. Every wise decision the experts make in the virtual world can be applied to reality. A lot of creative tactics and operational ideas are actually created first in the virtual world but eventually used to save the lives of countless people in reality,” Ling Xiaole said. “Are the contributors of the decisions not worthy of being called ‘heroes’?”

“It makes sense.” Li Yao knew that Ling Xiaole was right. However, he still found it difficult to accept the highly overwhelming picture in front of his eyes. Suddenly, a question occurred to him. “Right. If everybody is submerged in the world of ‘Civilization’, won’t there be fewer people who actually train themselves hard?”

“How is it possible? Triggering wisdom and brainpower in ‘Civilization’ is itself a training. Not just any training but a most advanced kind!” Ling Xiaole smiled again. “In the Old Federation a hundred years ago, our ancestors at that time already had the technology to improve the Spiritual Actualization Quotient through the Grand Illusionary Land. I believe that Firefly must have similar technology, right? ‘Civilization’, as a grand-unified platform, will only develop the brains of ordinary people faster and improve the odds of their spiritual root awakening!

“According to our statistics, ever since ‘Civilization’ went popular, the ratio of people in the federation whose spiritual root has awakened has been augmented by more than five times. Of course, the various kinds of ‘strengthening plans’ played their part, but the contribution of ‘Civilization’ is obvious.

“By the analysis of many doctors, Meditation Healers, and specialists on communication, it is a mechanism similar to reverberation. The process of dwelling in ‘Civilization’ is a process to integrate one’s brainwaves into the Spiritual Nexus and colliding with other people’s brainwaves. When the brainwaves of billions of people are vibrating with each other, it forms the best training!

“Such a training method is something that even a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator a hundred years ago couldn’t have enjoyed. Think about it. Even the most awesome Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator couldn’t be extravagant enough to train with the brainwaves of billions of people, right?

“During the training, new technology is induced, and the new technology reshapes the old patterns of training and even living. This is the ever-changing grand era of the Spiritual Nexus!

“In fact, many people raised a lot of concerns about ‘Civilization’ as you did. Many diehards even completely deny the obvious advantages of ‘Civilization’. They insist that human beings must not completely integrate themselves into the unpredictable Spiritual Nexus. They claim that the technology will eventually drag the Star Glory Federation and even the whole of mankind to destruction. The most extreme objectors even compare ‘Civilization’ to a hidden problem that is even more dreadful than the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance!

“However, no matter how they deny and try to stop it, ‘Civilization’ has been developing beyond their control. The grand era of the Spiritual Nexus has come. Nobody can stop it. Like it or not, we are never going back to the age without the network.”

Li Yao smiled. “You seem to be a firm supporter of the ‘grand era of the Spiritual Nexus’.”

“Of course. Without ‘Civilization’, and without the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus, there wouldn’t have been the New Federation today!” Ling Xiaole grimaced at Li Yao and said, “Let’s go. Didn’t you say that you would like to experience the life of a normal person in the federation. I’m going to walk you through the most important ceremony that the normal people have before they play ‘Civilization’!”

Jumping merrily, Ling Xiaole led Li Yao into the crowd.

Li Yao’s visit was prearranged, not improvised. Therefore, the special agents of the Secret Sword Bureau in the crowd who were responsible for his safety had already cleared a channel for them so that they could move forward without meeting any hindrance until they reached a magnificent bronze statue about five meters tall in front of the ‘Civilization Center’.

The statue was a man wearing a portable helmet who was playing the game wholeheartedly. Glamorous, ever-changing mystic rays painted crowded cities, blood-boiling wars, enormous fleets, and dozens of different scenes around him.

It was not very strange that a statue had been established in front of the center. What was strange was that countless people around the statue had their hands together and were mumbling prayers solemnly to the statue. It was apparently some kind of ritual!

How bizarre!

Li Yao knew that the federation was a country of atheists. When Cultivators went mad, they would kill all the gods and buddhas in their way. Who would be stupid enough to worship the groundless deities when everybody was training hard to be a Cultivator?

What was so special about the guy playing the game over there that so many people were worshipping him? Judging from their solemn expressions, they were rather pious!

Is it possible that some cult has risen in the federation and this guy is the deceptive leader of the evil cult? Li Yao thought to himself. Something wrong would always happen wherever he went. It appeared that this trip was not an exception!

“Do you want to offer your tribute? It is always efficacious!” Ling Xiaole put her hands together and mumbled something to the statue. Then, she turned around and smiled. “This is the creator of ‘Civilization’ and the real ‘father’ of the New Federation in the eyes of many avid players of ‘Civilization’ including myself, Li Yao!”

Chapter 1653 - Mystical Question

“F—F—Father of the nation? Li Yao?”

Li Yao was utterly dumbfounded. He examined the statue carefully, only to discover that, although the statue’s face had been covered by a virtual helmet, there was indeed a small plaque below it that read:

“It is not enough for human beings to have the earth below their feet; they should also have a more brilliant future.”

– Li Yao

It was like running into a ghost!

Blinking hard, Li Yao mumbled, “Wait. Let’s confirm this first. This ‘Li Yao’ can’t be the legendary ‘Vulture Li Yao, the dominator of the three Sectors’, right?”

“Yes, of course!” Ling Xiaole nodded. Batting her watery eyes, she looked at the statue full of admiration. “From the Old Federation to the New Federation, we have only one Li Yao, Vulture Li Yao!”

Li Yao coughed aloud again and again. “I haven’t read many history books about the federation, but don’t try to fool me! I know that the earliest ‘Civilization’ was co-created by a lot of sects and people. While Vulture Li Yao indeed proposed the original idea, it was Professor Su Changfa, dean of the Sociology Department of the Grand Desolate War Institution, who really put the design into practice! As I recall, Su

Changfa was praised as the Father of Civilization at that time. How on earth did it become Li Yao? However awesome and marvelous Li Yao is, you can't just let him steal all the credit!"

Ling Xiaole opened her hands and said, "Special Representative, you are too smart to be fooled. Yes. When it comes to the earliest Father of Civilization, I'm afraid that Professor Su Changfa is more qualified than Vulture Li Yao. However, Su Changfa is an Immortal Cultivator, and not just any Immortal Cultivator but the master of the most wanted criminal in the federation. While the federation values freedom of thought, it is inappropriate for us to worship an Immortal Cultivator every day, right?

"We also have our reasons for saying that Li Yao is 'Father of Civilization'.

"I don't know how much history you've read about the development of 'Civilization', but it should be noted that the 'grand-unified virtual world' originated from the 'brainwashing delusion' of the Imperium of True Human Beings that Su Changfa provided for Li Yao.

"During the delusions, Su Changfa showed Li Yao the rise and decline of multiple Sectors in the past as well as the self-boasting rise of 'Blackstar the Great Wuying Qi'. He intended to transform Li Yao into an Immortal Cultivator, but how could the dominator of the three Sectors be brainwashed so easily?

"Li Yao was not tricked at all. Instead, when Kunlun was later developed, the idea suddenly occurred to him that the 'brainwashing delusions' could be turned into tools to educate the people and listen to their voices!

“It was only after he proposed the idea that other specialists such as Su Changfa implemented it specifically.

“Had Li Yao not weathered through the brainwashing of the Immortal Cultivators on Kunlun, and had he not raised the groundbreaking idea later, it would be too much to say that a ‘grand-unified virtual world’ of a different form would never have been developed, but the time we took to invent it could’ve been delayed by decades.

“After a delay of decades, without the connection of a grand-unified Spiritual Nexus, the seven Sectors wouldn’t be as closely integrated as today, and seven ununited Sectors would stand absolutely no chance of winning when faced with the expedition army of the Imperium. This is the well-acknowledged result that countless players of ‘Civilization’ deduced on their own.

“Besides, Li Yao did not just raise the idea. He also supported the production team of ‘Civilization’ with his unparalleled wealth and influence in the Old Federation!

“It must be noted that even for a ‘game’, ‘Civilization’ in the early phase was still enormous in scale and had an almost infinite production cycle. It was designed to allow everybody in the world to play together from the beginning! Think about it. How much initial capital was required to create such a game?

“In the meantime, faced with the threat of the expedition army of the Imperium, the federation activated a lot of bizarre, whimsical projects in anxiety. There was also the development on Kunlun. Every field demanded money.

“Compared to the projects whose results were readily visible—such as repairing the Colossi, crafting new crystal suits, or building ‘solar warriors’—the game ‘Civilization’ barely entailed any practical benefits other than the unsubstantial aim of ‘educating the people’. It was essentially a bottomless hole that one had to throw money into nonstop but one that could never be filled.

“Had it not been for Li Yao’s great support, and the Glorious Sunlight Group, Skyfire, and some other friends who were also investing for his sake, ‘Civilization’ would have starved long before today.

“Professor Su Changfa… was indeed a very honorable ‘enemy’, but however wise and great he was, he was merely a powerless captive at that time. Without Li Yao’s wealth and influence, would he have had a chance to complete the earliest version of ‘Civilization’?

“In short, God Li Yao was indeed a visionary and judicious sage who saw far ahead of his time! Although he is called the ‘dominator of three Sectors’, his influence on the New Federation hasn’t been fully studied at all. In the future, as the federation marches forward and the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus is fully unfolded in the universe, he will definitely be studied by people!”

Ling Xiaole enthusiastically shared her true feelings.

Li Yao had goosebumps all over his body. He noticed that the two pointy fox ears above the little girl’s head turned pink, implying that she was truly too excited to control herself.

Li Yao thought for a moment and realized that there was no need for her to act in such an insignificant detail. So, she must actually have been a huge fan of ‘Li Yao’.

This made Li Yao feel even more amused. “Was he really so great? Then, let’s just agree that he is the Father of

Civilization. But what is ‘Father of the Nation’ all about? Isn’t that exaggerating too much?”

“It is not.” Ling Xiaole shook her head and solemnly said, “Think about it. The expansion of the Star Glory Federation, different from the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance, does not rely on conquests with brute force. Although we have assimilated four new worlds, we only fought one war in the Uranian Ring Sector.

“During the integration of the four new Sectors, the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus represented by ‘Civilization’ was the greatest contributor. Only when you are integrated into ‘Civilization’ will you really be integrated into the federation!

“One day, we will march to the center of the cosmos, but it is impossible for us to conquer all the worlds with armed forces. ‘Civilization’ will be the most powerful leverage for us to attract, assimilate, and govern the new worlds. It is also the greatest reliance for us to resist the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance.

“Therefore, like I said just now, ‘Civilization’ is the bedrock of the federation. It is even the New Federation itself!

“If, one day, the glow of the Star Glory Federation truly radiates to the three thousand Sectors and all the human worlds are included in the system of ‘Civilization’, is there any problem at all for Li Yao to be called the father of such a federation?”

Tilting his head, Li Yao opened his mouth and thought for a long time. “There doesn’t seem to be a problem.”

Ling Xiaole smiled delightedly. “Your mind is quite up-to-date despite your hundreds of years of hibernation! Even most people within the federation do not accept such a theory. Only the avid players such as us put it that way. But it doesn’t matter. The future will prove everything. Praise God Li Yao!”

“Wait—wait a moment!” Li Yao felt that sweat was pouring out of his forehead. “Let’s say—well, let’s say that Li Yao happens to be the father of the new federation, I don’t think that he needs to be addressed as ‘god’. And what are all those people doing here? All the rituals and worship, isn’t this a blatant personal cult? I don’t think it is the best example for the spirit of equality in the federation, right?”

“Oh. I’m afraid that you’re mistaken,” Ling Xiaole explained patiently. “This is not personal cult, and they do not necessarily regard Li Yao as the new federation’s father. However, there are benefits if you pay tribute to God Li Yao before you enter the game.”

Li Yao frowned. “What benefits?”

“Better luck in ‘Civilization’,” Ling Xiaole stated. “After all, he is the Father of Civilization. Who else can you worship?”

“B—better luck? What do you mean?”

“Many factors in the game are random. For example, when you play the war DLC ‘The Imperium’s Frustration’, whether or not your force can build main-force warships after one try, the crucial accuracy during engagement, the endurance after the warships are damaged… it is both luck and some sort of mystical question.

“As the predecessors tell us, if you pay tribute to God Li Yao before you enter the game, your luck will soar. You can build super main-force warships in one try or blow up the enemy’s arsenal with one shot in battle. If you are playing a DLC of daily operations, there will be fewer natural disasters and more positive random events.

“On the other hand, if you forget to pay tribute to God Li Yao, it will be bad. Even if you focus a lot of your resources on the production of starships, they will often explode before they are produced for uncanny reasons. When they do reach the battlefield, their engine compartments may fall apart after they are hit for the first time. Or maybe their attacks will miss the enemy hundreds of times… If it is a daily-operation quest, the workers may go on strike all the time, the natural disasters will occur, the carriers will be hijacked by the space pirates, and all the other unfortunate incidents will happen to you!

“Everybody wants to be luckier and to accumulate more contribution points and a better completion rate. It doesn’t hurt at all to pay tribute to God Li Yao!”

“Wait.” Li Yao was stunned. “Didn’t you claim that the game is a perfect simulation of reality? Are there so many random factors that involve luck in the game?

“A perfect simulation of reality is possible, but it doesn’t mean that it has to be so complicated every time,” Ling Xiaole said matter-of-factly. “Most people choose to set the difficulty at the medium level, especially during single quests.

“Besides, does luck not matter in the world of reality? A general’s fame means the death of thousands of soldiers. In many cases, one success or failure, life or death, depends a lot on luck!”

Li Yao failed to come up with any rebuttal. He looked at another few guys who were worshipping his statue and even throwing coins at the head of the statue. “But… even if luck does play such an important role, isn’t it absurd that paying tributes to Li Yao will double your luck? This is superstition!”

“This is occultism.” Ling Xiaole smiled delightedly. “How can you call it superstition? It is more of a tradition of the people! You said that you would like to feel the local life as a regular person of the federation. That’s why I’ve brought you to ‘God Li Yao’ to see what the local people do. Right. There’s also Li Yao’s heart-protection gold card on sale. It is said that they are built by recycling the debris of the crystal suits that Li Yao used to use and sold to better promote ‘The Imperium’s Frustration’. If you put such a card in your pocket, the accuracy of your starships will be doubled. Do you want to give it a shot?”

Chapter 1654 - Legend of the Mortal Immortals

Veins bulged out of Li Yao temples as he declared, “As a Cultivator and an atheist from the rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic whose loyalty has been well-tested, I will never take part in the activities that are related to personal cults and superstition!”

Hardly had he concluded his sentence when a coin flew above his head and landed on the smooth helmet of the statue precisely after drawing an elegant curve.

Cheers echoed behind Li Yao. “You made it! You made it!”

Ling Xiaole was delighted, too. “Haha. This is a tradition here. If anyone can throw a coin onto the head of ‘Li Yao’ without using their spiritual energy but purely with their hand-eye coordination, they will be unbelievably lucky today. Even bystanders such as us will benefit a lot from it!”

“…” Li Yao.

Ling Xiaole stuck out her tongue. He was about to speak when the sky suddenly grew dim, as if a dark cloud was collapsing. A magnificent if not ear-splitting marching song was echoing nearby, making whoever heard it ill at ease.

The crowd was in a riot. Everybody was looking at the sky. A lot of people were even booing the newcomers.

The ‘sky’—or rather, the man-made dome—split from the center. A small assault warship dived down in the middle of lightning and clouds. On the two sides of the warship were the ‘trident lightning’ emblem that represented the Imperium and the ‘crossed swords and black storm’ emblem that represented the Black Wind Fleet. The warship was emitting hideous brilliance under the contrast of artificial lightning. Boosted by the sounds and visual effects as well as the illusions of more than a hundred starships of the Imperium projected by the enormous light beams, the tiny warship seemed to be a magnificent army.

A—army of the Imperium?

Blinking rapidly, Li Yao could not have been more confused. What was that all about?

Naturally, he knew that it could not be a real invasion of the Imperium, but the scene was rather overwhelming nonetheless. Most of the people there were raising their middle fingers at the sk, but a tiny proportion of the young men and women in fancy clothes were shrieking in excitement.

Seeing her ‘compatriots’, and hearing the military hymn of the Imperium, Heiye Lan felt so astounded that she almost lost control of herself.

Thankfully, Li Yao sent a stream of spiritual energy from underground and stimulated her spinal nerves. She was suddenly woken up and did not reveal any flaws.

The ‘warship of the Imperium’ hovered in the sky above the square in front of the ‘Civilization Center’. The cabin doors on the two sides were opened one after another. Dozens of Exos in standard crystal suits of the Imperium that were white from head to toe leapt out of the vehicle, waving their chainswords, vibration sabers, and high-heated axes.

In the burning sky, against the countless starships as background, the fire and brilliance gradually condensed into several aggressive words.

“Storm Assault Team!”

The boos of the crowd were even louder than before. Some of them seemed to be shouting ‘come on, thieves of the Imperium, and be killed by the warriors of the Uranian Ring Sector’ and such. However, part of the crowd showed great welcome for the newcomers. The crowd appeared to be divided into two groups, one against the Imperium and the other in favor of it.

“Well…”

Li Yao felt that he knew what was going on now.

He could tell that the crystal suits and blades that the ‘soldiers of the Imperium’ were using were quite similar to the most advanced gear of the Black Wind Fleet that he had looted from Heiye Lan earlier. But other than the power rune arrays, the equipment was not installed with any attack units. They were nothing more than empty shells.

The chainswords and vibration sabers were false, too. They were just props that could only trigger the captivating sound and visual effects but did not boast any actual damage.

“Who are those people?” Li Yao asked. “Actors invited for the release conference of the latest version of ‘The Imperium’s Frustration’?”

“Not actors. The ‘Storm Assault Team’ is a group of very famous experts in the game nationwide who are from the core worlds!” Ling Xiaole said. “The game experts of the team are best at ‘The Imperium’s Frustration’. Their win rate in the DLC is among the highest. Their performance is always splendid and enjoyable, and they are very good at instigating the audience to hate them. They are like a super band or superstars and popular among teenagers. Their every live stream has tens of millions of viewers!”

“Super band…” Li Yao felt that he was truly an antique from the Ancient Sages Sector that could not catch up with the era now. “This is rather unbelievable.”

“Not unbelievable at all. As ‘Civilization’ rose, other pastimes in the federation gradually became outdated. Most of the culture-type Cultivators are involved in creations concerning ‘Civilization’—such as composing the scripts, writing new plots, or rendering the atmosphere—building brilliant and yet vivid worlds one after another and releasing the most thrilling and thought-provoking quests. As a result, the superstars in show business before are all obsolete now. The most popular pastime for the new generation is to play ‘Civilization’. They either play it themselves or enter the game world of the experts. The interactive excitement and sense of achievement are a hundred times more abundant than any other method of entertainment before!

“The confrontation of experts often attracts billions of people to watch the live stream and leave comments while they enjoy the show. That is the liveliest place you can imagine!

“For a super band as popular as the ‘Storm Assault Team’, their business performances within the next five years have already been scheduled. We only invited them here to challenge the local experts because we wanted you to better experience the essence of the civilization in the federation.

“Don’t be confused when everybody is raising middle fingers and booing them. This is a very special way of welcome or a brand-new subculture originated from ‘Civilization’, if you will.”

Li Yao did not know what to say. After thinking for a moment, he said, “Alright. If they are experts of the game, they are free to play the game. But why are they wearing the crystal suits of the Imperium as their costume, and why have they modified their enormous shuttles into a warship of the Imperium? Also, if I am not mistaken, the background of their flag where ‘Storm Assault Team’ is written should be the emblem of the Black Wind Fleet. Do the authorities not care about such outrageous actions?”

“This is because they’re the Storm Assault Team!” Ling Xiaole said. “They’re the professionals of the Imperium’s army. They always play the role of the Imperium in the DLC ‘The Imperium’s Frustration’ and crush the federation every single time. That’s how they earned their fame. This time, their role is the ‘attacker’ during the competition with the local experts. Of course, they have to dress up like this in order to build the vibe.”

Li Yao and Heiye Lan looked at each other. “You can play the Imperium’s side in ‘Civilization’?”

“Of course you can.” Ling Xiaole smiled. “‘Civilization’ is a large virtual platform designed to guide reality. Since it is designed to guide reality, naturally, real human beings must be involved in every aspect in order to collect authentic data. If everything on the Imperium’s side is generated by the crystal processors, the final result will be no different from child’s play.

“That is especially so for competitive DLC like ‘The Imperium’s Frustration’. We can’t simply ask everybody to stand on the federation’s side and fight the Imperium that is controlled by crystal processors, right? In that case, will it be any different from playing a large single-player game?

“Therefore, the federal government encourages game experts to play the role of the Imperium’s army, consider things from the Imperium of True Human Beings’ perspective, and attack the federation by any means possible. Only if we have foreseen all the strategies that the Imperium can possibly adopt will we be able to work on countermeasures!

“How should I put it? Just like during military drills when there are two different parties, it is often the case that the most elite troop will play the ‘enemy’, right?”

Li Yao pondered for a moment and realized that it did make sense.

Ling Xiaole went on. “To better fit the role of ‘enemy’ and simulate the possible strategies that the Imperium will take, the ‘evil experts’ of the game often train themselves through all kinds of ‘immersive approaches’ by really regarding themselves as the Imperium’s army and Immortal Cultivators. They often put on the clothes of the Imperium, speak the slang of the Imperium, and think in the ways the Immortal Cultivators do even in their daily life.

“For such ‘evil experts’ and ‘professionals of the Imperium’, a special DLC of ‘Civilization’ has been prepared, in which the Immortal Cultivators are the protagonists. The players are free to establish a civilization of Immortal Cultivators however they want and govern the people under the true path of immortality. They are also allowed to invite their fellows to live in their world of Immortal Cultivators.

“The DLC, named ‘Legend of the Mortal Immortals’, is relatively unpopular, but the players in it are quite active. It is also a very classic DLC!”

“Wait, wait, wait!” Li Yao took a deep breath and felt that his head was confused. “You—you specifically built a ‘world of Immortal Cultivators’ in ‘Civilization’ for the players to experience the Immortal Cultivators’ life?”

“Exactly!” Ling Xiaole blinked and did not see anything wrong. “Is there a problem? If you are interested, you are free to try it later yourself.”

“But…” Li Yao thought for a moment and asked, “Can you really do whatever you want to do like a real Immortal Cultivator in ‘Legend of the Mortal Immortals’?”

Ling Xiaole nodded. “Of course. ‘Civilization’ is best known for its high degree of freedom. All the choices that can be made in real life can be made in every DLC of ‘Civilization’.”

“So,” Li Yao said, “the players can really play… an authentic Immortal Cultivator in the virtual world?”

“If it is not authentic enough, it will be against the purpose for which Li Yao created ‘Civilization’ years ago.”

“… Fine. Then, does everybody have access to ‘Legend of the Mortal Immortals?”

“Not exactly. Like a said just now, it is a relatively special DLC that contains a lot of content unsuitable for teenagers. Therefore, a lot of conditions have to be met before you play the DLC. For example, you must be over eighteen, you must finish another few designated DLCs first, and you must pass a series of psychological tests to prove that you are an adult with basic morals and a relatively stable outlook. Only after that will you be allowed to play the game.

“Also, there is also the most unique rule in ‘Legend of the Mortal Immortals’.

“It is true that the players can play ‘Immortal Cultivators’. They can kill, loot, and burn in the world of Immortal Cultivators. They can be a dictator who establishes a tyrannical rule. They can do whatever they want.

“However, after every hour as an ‘Immortal Cultivator’, the player has to play two hours as a ‘mortal’ to be enslaved, savaged, and exploited by the other players who are playing as Immortal Cultivators and to experience double the pain that they have imposed on other people just now.”

Chapter 1655 - An Episode from the Imperium

Li Yao was silent for a moment. He quickly calculated what kind of consequences such a game setting would bring.

Mortal, immortal… One hour as an Immortal Cultivator meant two hours as a mortal?

Observing his expression, Ling Xiaole smiled, with intense confidence beaming out of her eyes. “I know what you’re thinking. You’re wondering why we created the DLC ‘Legend of the Mortal Immortals’, and you’re concerned that some people will be too addicted to the slaughter, destruction, and slavery in the game and eventually become lost in the evil path of the Immortal Cultivators, really turning into Immortal Cultivators in the end, right?”

“Should I not be concerned?”

“I don’t know if you should.” Ling Xiaole shook her head. Her voice was crisp and powerful as she said, “But I know that Vulture Li Yao created the game ‘Civilization’ for the purpose of collecting the big data that existed for real in the entire world so that we could deduce the thousands of different possibilities of our future with the wisdom of all mankind.

“Of course, we can say with a light heart that the true path of immortality is bad, but we cannot bury our heads in the sand like ostriches and pretend that we cannot see the true path of immortality and the worlds of the Immortal Cultivators.

“In fact, however we criticize the path of the Immortal Cultivators, the Imperium of True Human Beings governed by the Immortal Cultivators has already stood for a thousand years at the center of the cosmos and is not likely to perish in the next few centuries from what we can see.

“It is undeniable that the true path of immortality is an option for the future of mankind, although it is an evil and inefficient one in our eyes. But since it exists at the center of the cosmos in reality, we will have to learn about it, study it, and figure out its birth, development, peak, and decline. We must understand why it is evil and inefficient so that we can find out a way to defeat it, reform it, and renovate it in the end!

“This was the purpose of ‘Legend of the Mortal Immortals’ when we created it.

“I believe that Vulture Li Yao released the Immortal Cultivator Su Changfa with his personal influence and allowed the guy to freely disseminate the theory of the Immortal Cultivators for the exact same reason a hundred years ago, didn’t he? We were only taking a step forward on Li Yao’s shoulders.”

“Don’t be humble. You have essentially kicked on Li Yao’s forehead hard and make a giant leap forward!” Taking a deep breath, Li Yao mumbled, “Do excuse me. I find it a bit difficult to contain myself. After all, we’ve wandered in the sea of stars for a thousand years, and I only just woke up from a prolonged hibernation. I’m truly dazzled and lost for words after seeing your amazing new world!”

With a sweet smile, Ling Xiaole replied, “It’s totally understandable, but I assure you that you, as well as everybody on Firefly, will soon grow fond of the new world that is full of wonders!”

Li Yao thought for a moment and said, “However, is there really nobody who grows fond of the feeling of being an Immortal Cultivator and really becomes an Immortal Cultivator in the end because of a game like…’Legend of the Mortal Immortals’?”

Batting her big eyes, Ling Xiaole asked back, “Special Representative Lin, let me ask you a question. What kinds of entertainment do you have on Firefly? Novels, movies, and video games in the Grand Illusionary Land, I believe that you must have all of them, right?”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. He nodded. “Of course. In the narrow starships with insufficient resources, virtual games are the cheapest and most convenient kind of entertainment.”

Ling Xiaole went on. “I assume that, if you also have novels, movies, and video games, the most popular ones are probably not about casual, carefree daily life but full of killing, blood, violence, and other mature content. Even the works orientated for the females are brimming with conflict and struggle, instead of them helping one another friendlily, right?”

“Well…”

He seemed to get what Ling Xiaole was trying to say.

“Do you feel that a normal person will turn amok after they read a detective novel because they admire the murder’s methods in the book?” Ling Xiaole said with a smile. “Do you feel that an avid play will go on a killing spree in reality after they play a shooting game because they think that the game is not exciting enough?

“On the other hand, since there is a population of more than a hundred million on Firefly, naturally, a lot of crimes must’ve happened. But exactly how many of the brutal and ruthless crimes are purely caused by certain particularly bloody and violent novels, movies, or games?

“Furthermore, do you agree with censoring all content that involves blood and violence in every kind of entertainment just for the purpose of crime prevention? Do you believe that there will be no more crimes after such things are censored?”

Li Yao thought for a long time and had to admit that Ling Xiaole was right.

“Essentially speaking, a virtual world of Immortal Cultivators is no different from a regular shooting game, a novel that depicts gangsters and criminals, and a movie where blood flows into rivers and broken limbs fly everywhere.

“For someone who has a happy life in reality and who has a lot of things to protect and fight for, it is impossible to become an Immortal Cultivator just after playing ‘Legend of the Mortal Immortals’ for a while.

“On the other hand, if someone becomes a murderer after reading a horror novel or an Immortal Cultivator after playing ‘Legend of the Mortal Immortals’, the problem lies not with the novel or the game but in every aspect of their real life.

“If the deep-rooted problems in real life are not resolved, such persons will degenerate all the same even if they do not read any novels or play any games.

“Therefore, what matters is to resolve the problems in real life, not trouble the virtual worlds. After all, the virtual worlds are just a mirror of reality, and you cannot expect to fix the ugliness of reality by smashing the mirror.

“Of course, if somebody really shows signs of being transformed, it will be easier to observe and control them when they are transformed in ‘Legend of the Mortal Immortals’, which is certainly much better than them being transformed into Immortal Cultivators in a certain dark corner of our society without anybody else knowing, right?”

What else could Li Yao do except nod his head?

“There’s no need to worry.” Ling Xiaole smiled. “Of course, we are well aware of the severity of the issue. After ‘Legend of the Mortal Immortals’ was released, the authorities traced and observed the players for decades. Their conclusion was that there is no major difference between the crime rate of the players of the DLC and the crime rate of non-players. In large search engines, the players’ searches on the relevant theories of ‘true path of immortality’ rose in the first three years after the DLC was released and reached a peak in the fifth year. Then, they began dropping until they were even 5.7% lower than before the release.

“In other words, for the players of ‘Legend of the Mortal Immortals’, the attraction of the ‘true path of immortality’ has been declining every year. The more one plays as an Immortal Cultivator in the virtual world, the less likely they will become an Immortal Cultivator in reality!”

Li Yao and Heiye Lan were deep in thought. “Why is that?”

“The psychologists and sociologists have run profound analyses on the issue. The papers on the topic are as high as a mountain, but there has never been a conclusive theory.

“Perhaps, other than the real perverts, most normal people still prefer sunnier, more beautiful, and kinder things, don’t they? Maybe, the ‘double pain’ during the time as mortals calmed their feverish brains down and made them realize that, although they could play as almighty Immortal Cultivators and the heroes of ‘Legend of the Mortal Immortals’ in the virtual world, they would probably become human-shaped props that could barely be called a ‘supporting role’ when the expedition army of the Imperium conquers the federation. Their only outcome would be to be stomped on, savaged, and destroyed.

“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Every player remembers the motto clearly after playing the DLC.”

While the three of them were talking, the ‘Storm Assault Team’ who dressed up like soldiers of the Imperium had already gone deep into the excited crowd, interacting with the audience and warming up the atmosphere.

The super band from the core worlds was indeed extraordinary. Enhanced by the sound and visual effects, they fully demonstrated the arrogance and invincibility of the army of the Imperium.

But if one observed them more carefully, one would realize that they were not as confident as they appeared to be. While Li Yao could perceive the magnificence of the Imperium from them, he could also perceive their fear and agitation. In the end, a normal spectator would both hate the Imperium and think that the federation could win!

Leaving their expertise in the game aside, their acting skills and their professionalism were enough to amaze Li Yao. No wonder the other entertainment businesses had all declined while gaming live stream industry was still thriving!

Right at the climax of the interaction of the two parties, when the local game experts of the federation should show up to accept the challenge according to the itinerary, an unexpected incident took place. A few uncles and old men, who were gray haired and wearing artificial limbs, implying that they could be disabled veterans, somehow squeezed through the crowd and lunged at the ‘Storm Assault Team’. They fought the performers as if the latter were a real army of the Imperium.

The scene immediately fell into chaos.

Although the security guards came as soon as possible to control the few disabled veterans, two game experts were still punched multiple times. Because of the heavy fists of the veterans, their faces were blue and swollen. They were stunned on the spot, both amused and embarrassed.

Li Yao held back his smile and said, “It seems that the disabled veterans of the old generation in the federation cannot appreciate the fashion of the younger generation yet!”

Covering Li Yao and Heiye Lan, Ling Xiaole quickly left the chaotic spot under the protection of a few Secret Sword Agents.

She pressed her ears to receive the instructions from her superior. A moment later, she grinned and said, “Special Representative Lin, I’m afraid that you’re mistaken. They are indeed disabled veterans who were too excited and rash to tell performance from reality because the scene was so convincing. However, they are not from the federation; they are authentic soldiers from the Imperium.”

Li Yao’s smile froze. “What do you mean? Four authentic soldiers of the Imperium berated a bunch of young men of the federation in indignation who dressed up like soldiers of the Imperium’s army and told the young men that they should know better than pretending to be the wretched soldiers of the Imperium?”

Ling Xiaole nodded. “Yes.”

Chapter 1656 - From Ghosts to Humans

"…" Li Yao.

"To be more exact," Ling Xiaole said, "they are 'former soldiers' of the Imperium. They were all captives from the Battle of Firefly ten years ago. During that battle, not only did our God of War Ding Lingdang rescue Firefly from the claw fleet of the Imperium, she also captured a lot of Imperium warships. Of course, many soldiers on the starships were taken captive.

"In the ten years that followed, the soldiers of the Imperium have been educated in captive camps. Those few uncles were the soldiers at the bottom level in the Black Wind Fleet in the first place who had been oppressed and exploited. They did not have a chance to owe any blood debt to the federation, either, when their starships were blown up by us in the very first battle. Also, they were all active members during the education, and they have repented and decided to live their lives different. Therefore, they have been set free in advance and begun their new life in the federation.

"The few of them are the firmest supporters of the path of the Cultivators. When they saw that our game experts were 'riding the high horse' in the uniform of the Imperium's army over there, they couldn't help but recall their old lives that they would rather forget. In their fury, they committed such folly. Please do forgive them."

"That explains a lot." Li Yao patted Heiye Lan's shoulder heavily and said to Ling Xiaole, somewhat embarrassed, "My secretary has always hoped to seek revenge from the Imperium… for her father’s death. That’s why she was a bit excited after learning that ‘authentic’ soldiers of the Imperium are here. Speaking of which, you are even capable of educating the Immortal Cultivators of the Imperium?”

“Of course. If Cultivators can be transformed into Immortal Cultivators, why can’t Immortal Cultivators be transformed into Cultivators?” Ling Xiaole said. “There’s no need to mention the slave soldiers at the bottom level of the Black Wind Fleet that the so-called ‘hominoids’ work as. Even the bottom-level officers, namely the Immortal Cultivators in the Refinement Stage and the Building Foundation Stage, are also victims of the ‘true path of immortality’ and the oppressed class in the Imperium of True Human Beings in our eyes. They are also blinded, enslaved, and demoralized by the Immortal Cultivators of higher levels until they die.

“If you are interested, I will have some records on the education of the war captives delivered in a minute. In the past ten years, through communication with the captives, we have grown a profound understanding about the system and lifestyle of the Black Wind Fleet as well as the many facets of the bottom-level Immortal Cultivators’ lives on board.

“You may not know this, but the life of the bottom-level Immortal Cultivators on board was quite miserable. For the needs of the aggression, most of the assets in the Black Wind Fleet were sealed during the hundred-year voyage. The bottom-level Immortal Cultivators had to explore the unknown, highly-dangerous space zones in the universe, and they could’ve died at any second. On the other hand, they had to be highly wary of each other and keep one eye open when they were sleeping at night in case somebody plunged a poisoned dagger into their stomach.

“Before, when they didn’t have a choice, they thought that the true path of immortality was the sole, self-justified truth in the universe. They had no notion of the darkness and misery of their life. So, they did not know how to reflect or resist.

“After they were captured by the federation, they learned a lot of theories on the true path of immortality in the captive camp. It was also arranged for them to participate in debates between Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators. We had the bottom-level Immortal Cultivators form pairs with the ‘hominoid’ slave soldiers, the ordinary people in the Imperium, forcing them to help each other on equal terms. We even appointed the ‘hominoid’ slave soldiers to be the captains of the squads in the camp to manage the other Immortal Cultivators. There were many kinds of meetings and get-togethers where everybody discovered the atrocities of the Black Wind Fleet.

“Although they were war captives, the federal government never tortured them. Except for the few inhumane, unpardonable fellows who were sentenced to death after being revealed during the meetings, we tried our best to rescue the regular soldiers and the bottom-level officers who used to be Immortal Cultivators.

“Of course, the living environment in the captive camp was quite rough, but everybody was purely equal. Even their mentors who were Cultivators did not enjoy any more privileges than the captives. Everybody ate together and lived together. They worked, learned, and practiced techniques with each other. Through the meticulous care that the mentors showed to the captives, the captives finally realized for the first time in their life that ‘dignity’ was not necessarily decided by strength and that two people could actually absolutely trust each other without being vigilant all the time.

“Just like that, almost all the soldiers who used to be ordinary people were awakened in only half a year and joined the federation, completely opposing the Imperium.

“Even most of the Immortal Cultivators in the Refinement Stage and the Building Foundation Stage, who were mostly bottom-level officers or captains in the Black Wind Fleet, were reborn after three to five years.

“At this time, we took the captives to visit all the seven Sectors. We showed them the great achievements that the Star Glory Federation had accomplished in the path of the Cultivators. They saw that all the people in the New Federation were sweating and striving for a better future, regardless of whether they were ordinary people or Cultivators. Of course, the captives saw the ‘national treasure’ that was ‘Civilization’, too!

“After everything they went through, most of the captives were completely enlightened. They were set free after three special pardons and would build a future for each other with a hundred billion compatriots of the federation as regular members of the country!”

Ling Xiaole’s speech gave Li Yao mixed feelings.

There was no need to mention Heiye Lan, who would have grabbed her hair and screamed out if Li Yao had not transmitted a stream of spiritual energy into her body to hold her back just now.

Calming himself down, Li Yao asked, “Then, what are the captives doing right now?”

“Living on their own in our society, of course,” Ling Xiaole said. “They mostly take one of two jobs. Those who are more open-minded often work as ‘professionals of the Imperium’ and play the role of the Imperium in ‘Civilization’. They sometimes work as consultants or coaches for the ‘villain teams’ like the ‘Storm Assault Team’, helping them to better every detail and ensure the realism of every simulated battle. The best people in this field are all thriving.

“However, few people are as open-minded as that. Most of the captives, just like the few old veterans just now, hate the guts of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

“After training, they go to local schools and work as special ‘history teachers’. They teach the teenagers of the federation with their life experience, detailing how horrible the Imperium is and how beautiful and hard-earned the teenagers’ happy lives today are!

“Such ‘history teachers’ are very popular. After all, there are only a few of them but so many schools in the seven Sectors of the federation. Do any of the schools not want to get a real-life ‘native of the Imperium’ to teach their disobedient students a lesson? So, all in all, the new life of the former soldiers of the Imperium in the federation is not bad!”

Li Yao felt stunned again. He looked at Heiye Lan again and said, “This is a lot different from what we imagined on Firefly!”

Ling Xiaole stuck her tongue out and boldly said, “You must blame your ‘Speaker Cui’ for that. It is because he blocked all the messages about the federation, fearing that the federation would ‘corrupt’ your ‘rightful government’, that we were so alien to each other. Thankfully, he has thought it through now. It isn’t too late!

“I can basically figure out what is on your mind. Not a second goes by without you thinking of marching back to the center of the cosmos.

“March to the Empyreal Terminus Sector and recover the entire universe. It is a dream for the Star Glory Federation, too. However, since the Imperium of True Human Beings has more than a hundred Sectors and so does the Alliance of the Holy Covenant, how many Immortal Cultivators and how many demi-humans who obey Pangu’s Covenant are out there?

“It is impossible for us to kill all the Immortal Cultivators and demi-humans. Are we really going to ignite the fire of war at the center of the cosmos and burn hundreds of Sectors to the ground until blood runs dry? Let’s put aside whether or not it is achievable. Even if it is, it will still be an irreversible disaster for the entire civilization of mankind!

“Compared with killing all the Immortal Cultivators and soldiers of the Imperium, we hope that we can transform them and even ‘awaken’ them instantly in a certain way so that the Imperium of True Human Beings will collapse internally within the shortest amount of time and be drowned by the fury of the people and the bottom-level Cultivators who are awakened!”

Li Yao pondered for a long time. Suddenly, he narrowed his eyes and said, “Something’s not right. You must’ve arranged everything in advance on purpose so that we could see it, didn’t you? Otherwise, there can’t be such a coincidence!”

Ling Xiaole grimaced and frankly acknowledged, “Yes. The ‘former soldiers’ of the Imperium were indeed arranged to come to this place so that they would run into the ‘Storm Assault Team’. But we did not write a script. Their reactions and what they did after the two parties ran into each other were completely beyond our control.

“The arrangement is not just intended for you. It is in fact a part of another enormous test program.

“They are captives from the Imperium after all. Right now, a lot of Immortal Cultivators are still lurking within the federation, not to mention evil organizations such as the ‘CFIA’. We cannot allow the captives to run about in our society without being monitored at all, which will be irresponsible for both them and the federation.

“Therefore, test procedures like the one we went through just now are necessary to measure their mental state through their reactions, in order to decide whether or not they have been fully reformed and if they are suitable to stay with kids in school.

“You will realize that we would not ask them to act at all if you think about it more carefully. We went through all the trouble of reforming them. Wouldn’t we be shaking their belief if we asked them to act in front of you in order to deceive you?

“The test application targeting the few old veterans was issued a few months ago. We merely changed the route so that we would run into them today, which would be a living example to introduce our policies for the captives of the Immortal Cultivators to you and Speaker Cui.”

Chapter 1657 - A World in a Grain of Sand

Ling Xiaole paused for a moment and said, “If you are still not convinced, we can still arrange for the two of you to meet the ‘former soldiers’ of the Imperium by chance later. With your abilities, you will certainly be able to tell whether or not their deepest hatred for the Imperium is faked after a few words with them.”

Li Yao thought for a moment but shook his head. “That will not be necessary. Let’s go into the ‘Civilization Center’ now. I almost can’t wait to see it.”

It was definitely not a joke. Heiye Lan was the user of the most powerful Colossus in the claw fleet captured by the federation. She was also daughter to the commander of the Black Wind Fleet.

Even though she did not know the bottom-level soldiers, it was possible that they would recognize her.

Naturally, before they jumped to the Dragon Snake Space Zone, Li Yao had asked Long Yangjun to heavily disguise Heiye Lan’s face. Even her name was a fake one, too.

However, Heiye Lan’s mind was obviously unsteady. If she was asked to chitchat with a few ‘former soldiers’ of the Imperium, it was possible that somebody would see through her.

How should Li Yao summarize the feeling of his visit? The New Federation after a hundred years was indeed more advanced and perfect than Li Yao had imagined, but many aspects, like the statue whose head was loaded with coins, made him feel rather strange.

Dominator of the three Sectors, Father of ‘Civilization’, and even… Father of the New Federation?

Li Yao shuddered inside his heart.

If he had hair within his internal organs, there would have been goosebumps all over them.

Such titles gave him the feeling that he had been dead for centuries and he was an out-and-out ‘ancient person’ in today’s world.

It was partly understandable for him. Perhaps for the sake of uniting the seven Sectors, perhaps because certain heroes of the past needed to be deified in order to compete with the Imperium, or perhaps because of the interest groups attached to him, such as the Glorious Sunlight Group, Skyfire, the Double Dragons Union, the Grand Desolate War Institution and so on, the image of Vulture Li Yao had finally been sent into the shrines.

He could understand the purpose of their endeavor, but it did not mean that he had to be bound by the shrines. For him, he still preferred exploring the interesting and strange new world in a relatively low-key way wearing his beach pants and enjoying iced watermelons.

Therefore, it would be best if he did not reveal openings yet.

Otherwise… with the density of the crowd in the area and their enthusiasm for ‘luck’, he probably would have been smashed to death by a mountain of coins in five minutes.

They finally entered the lobby of the Civilization Center.

It was a splendid palace, so profound that one could not see the end of it. The cabins that had been established on two sides as dense as honeycombs were all installed with the most advanced immersive game system. Through the floating discs that could come and go swiftly, it was very convenient for the players to fly to the upper level that was dozens of meters high.

The center of the lobby was the arena area and the activity area. Many game experts would choose to compete with each other in the relatively fiercer DLCs, such as virtual crystal suit battles, Colossi battles, starship fleet encounters, and so on. Right next to the areas were young teenagers in fancy clothes who dressed up like game characters. The atmosphere could not have been more heated. No wonder so many people preferred to come to the ‘Civilization Center’ when everybody had a game cabin in their household.

Above their heads were thousands of enormous 3D light beams. Every 3D light beam was a round ball like colorful huge jellyfish. They were fluctuating, rolling, and extending their tentacles of light into a glamorous, magnificent ocean of light.

Despite the enormity of his computational ability, even Li Yao felt his head going dizzy and dazzled the moment he set foot in the lobby of the game center.

He was like a tiny fish that had suddenly barged into a boundless tide enormous jellyfish. Inside the translucent body of every huge ‘jellyfish’ was a vivid, wonderful world that was growing, developing, colliding, and perishing!

The ancient Cultivators had once said that a whole world could be built within a grain of sand.

It had originally been a metaphor of training for the Cultivators to clear their soul and mind, but in the modern Cultivation society, with the advanced information technology, it had become reality.

Every enormous 3D light beam represented a blossoming world that one player was dwelling in.

It could be seen that a lot of players chose to enter the world of ‘The Imperium’s Frustration’ as commanders, captains, or the distinguished artillerists, engine specialists, and special forces on a starship. Together with the countless players that were standing against them, they offered the most fascinating performance.

Some other players chose the worlds of simulation and operation. On the resource planets, ranches, carriers, and metropolises that also existed in reality in the seven Sectors of the federation, they worked hard on their tiny ‘enterprise’.

The data and random events in the game had all happened in reality before, but the difficulty of the game could be adjusted. The speed of the game could be accelerated, too. The mainframe crystal processor could even help the player deduce the outcome a long time later. Therefore, there was not much bored waiting.

Many other players, however, were not playing virtual games but choose to experience an episode of real life—not their own life, but the life from a different world or a different class.

Ling Xiaole explained it to Li Yao with an example. A miner who lived on the surface of the Uranian Ring Sector, because of the travel expense and the holiday schedule, perhaps would never have a chance to go to the Forest Ocean Sector in person and experience the feelings of the natives of the Forest Ocean Sector when they rode above the boundless primitive forests on the necks of the beasts they had tamed.

But it did not matter. Through certain real-life DLCs of ‘Civilization’, he could become a native of the Forest Ocean Sector, the Water Crystal Sector, the Flying Star Sector, the Heaven’s Origin Sector, or the Blood Demon Sector. After only one second, he would be able to appreciate the magnificent ocean of trees, the ever-expanding deserts, the bizarre scenes in the Blood Demon Sector, and the complicated high-rises in the Heaven’s Origin Sector that grew from the underground all the way to beyond the atmosphere!

“The data of all the worlds is real and even reflects real-time changes,” Ling Xiaole declared proudly. “A certain player in the Heaven’s Origin Sector has captured the view from a certain spot in the Heaven’s Origin Sector right now through his crystal camera and uploaded the picture to the crystal processor and the light circuits. In the Uranian Ring Sector, the Forest Ocean Sector, the Nether World Sector, the Blood Demon Sector… Countless players do the same thing in every world and are doing it right now. When everything that the ‘eyes’ of all the players catch is combined, it forms ‘Civilization’.

“From that point of view, every individual of the federation is a producer of ‘Civilization’. Everyone perfects the world with their joint effort and adds a certain reality that transcends reality to this virtual world!”

Li Yao observed, sensed, and groped wholeheartedly. The glittering new worlds were slowly blossoming deep inside his eyes.

“Also, speaking of the ongoing competitions in ‘The Imperium’s Frustration’, although the difficulty that some of the players choose is not very high and their tactics may be juvenile, the data is generally authentic.

“The data is collected from the other DLCs as the essence of all the data in the past decades. For example, a DLC named ‘Starship Commander’ was released before, in which countless players provided tremendous data about every post in a starship. After the data is all packed up, it can be distributed to every starship in the DLC ‘The Imperium’s Frustration’ as a general package.

“As a result, even when a common player is doing a relatively low-level competition, the situations and changes that happen to all the starships under their command will not be deduced by the crystal processors but the real-life reactions that other living players made a long time ago.

“Through such an approach, we ensure that the common players will have the realest experience even in a single-player game.

“Just like that, tens of billions of players play the game day after day, year after year, making all kinds of decisions. 99.99999% of their decisions could be wrong, hilarious, and absurd, but does it really matter? All we need to do is screen out the 0.00001% correct decisions!”

Ling Xiaole smiled confidently as she guided Li Yao and Heiye Lan to move forward into the lobby.

Very soon, the three of them walked to the center of the lobby.

Li Yao was deeply attracted by three clusters of light beams that were particularly huge above his head.

He discovered that the three worlds of light beams almost fifty meters in diameter were the center of the entire lobby. The other worlds of light beams triggered by the players were all floating around the three of them.

Craning his neck and observing for a long time, Li Yao felt that it looked familiar. He could not help but ask, “What’s this?”

“They’re three very ancient DLCs. One might even say that they are the beginning of the entire ‘Civilization’.”

Indescribable pride glowed out of Ling Xiaole’s watery eyes again as she said, “More than a hundred years ago, Vulture Li Yao, the greatest hero of the Old Federation, encountered the Immortal Cultivators of the Imperium on Kunlun. To brainwash him, the Immortal Cultivators showed him the historical decline of some Cultivators’ civilizations, including the Curly Dragon Civilization, the Medicine Fork Civilization, the Martial Meritocrat Civilization, and the Sand Primitive Civilization.

“When the game ‘Civilization’ was first made, the salvation of the three civilizations of the Cultivators became the content of the first batch of DLC.

“At that time, ‘Civilization’ had just gotten started, and the expertise of the players varied. Even the most professional politicians and the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators with remarkable computational ability did not have many clear solutions to the problems that a civilization might encounter during a thousand years of development.

“Therefore, for decades, the highest difficulty of the few DLCs, as well as the more sophisticated, difficult, and real upgraded version later, were never conquered by anyone.

“However, hard work pays off. With the popularization of ‘Civilization’ and the participation of the new worlds, the players grew more and more professional than before. Finally, someone came up with solutions.

“What is unfolding in front of you is the prosperous views of the Curly Dragon Civilization, the Medicine Fork Civilization, the Martial Meritocrat Civilization, and the Sand Primitive Civilization that have developed for at least a thousand years under the control of countless experts of the game. Yes. We have achieved the expectations when Vulture Li Yao created ‘Civilization’ in the past and brought a brighter future to the worlds of Cultivators that have long perished!

Chapter 1658 - Flowers to Brothers and Sisters of the Past

“Curly Dragon, Medicine Fork, Martial Meritocrat, and Sand Primitive…”

Li Yao was in a daze. He felt as if he had gone back to more than a hundred years ago, when the Immortal Cultivator Su Changfa ‘brainwashed’ him for the first time on Kunlun.

To this day, he still remembered the Curly Dragon Civilization, which was eventually trapped on the ground because the resources on the mother planet had been too abundant and the people lost their vision; the Medicine Fork Civilization, which grew too feeble because of over-medication and eventually perished in a virus outburst; and the Martial Meritocrat Civilization, which introduced the Sand Primitive natives into the country without identification and education and embraced its own death.

He remembered the remnants of the starships in the empty ports of the Curly Dragon Civilization, which were rusted and riddled with holes and could never soar into the sky. He remembered the land of the Medicine Fork Civilization which was scattered with bodies after the outburst of the virus. He remembered how the last Cultivator of the Martial Meritocrat Civilization, the young man who later became ‘Blackstar the Great’ Wuying Qi, struggled desperately in the magma after he was thrown into a volcano.

Could everything… really be changed?

Ling Xiaole gave Li Yao an advanced portable crystal processor for ‘Civilization’.

The mini crystal processor was directly connected to the database of the game center. It was very convenient to retrieve the game records of most of the public worlds, or rather, the history of the rise and decline of different civilizations.

By clicking on the icons on the light beam softly, one would be able to appreciate the brand-new paths for the Curly Dragon Civilization, the Medicine Fork Civilization, and the Martial Meritocrat Civilization in the virtual world from the very beginning.

The scale of time had been highly compressed. Every second in reality represented one month in the virtual world. Streams of information were pouring down like waterfalls, displaying the major events that happened in the game.

Holding his breath, Li Yao saw three paths that were completely different from the original brainwashing illusions.

He saw that the governors of the Curly Dragon Sector fought against the laziness and shortsightedness that human beings were born with time and time again and marched into space without bothering about the cost. They gritted their teeth through it no matter what gory sacrifices they were forced to pay. In the end, before the resources on the mother planet went completely dry, they had completed the construction of the Deep Sky Fleets that could fly across Sectors, endowing the people of the Curly Dragon Sector with the ability to sail and cruise through the sea of stars.

He saw that some of the people of the Medicine Fork Sector realized the flaws of their civilization in advance and intentionally built a few ‘dirty rooms’ that were different from the ‘sterile world’ outside. They lived inside the rooms to keep their immunity. When the final plague broke out, they struggled to survive while remaining united and invented a lot of brand-new techniques. They did physical exercises and built up their body from scratch, awakening the powerful genes that had hibernated for a long time. Eventually, they defeated the virus and the plague, and the civilization sprouted and blossomed on the scarred land again.

He saw that the Martial Meritocrat Civilization realized the danger of opening the country to others recklessly through small-scale social experiments. They gave up their ignorant kindness and unprepared innocence and went into the Sand Primitive Sector with the overwhelming advantage of their civilization. During the hundred years of governing and edifying, most of the Sand Primitive natives were assimilated before their new generations were slowly introduced into the Martial Meritocrat Sector.

“Those are three videos that have the highest ‘completion rate’ in the highest difficulty, but they are certainly not the only solutions,” Ling Xiaole said. “Today, countless players have come up with many different solutions to save the civilizations. Although many of the solutions can be called bizarre if not deviant, they do share one thing in common—none of the players have ever crossed the boundaries of Cultivators and human beings.

“Different from the brainwashing that the Immortal Cultivators gave Li Yao more than a hundred years ago, every detail in the highest difficulty is real, and every problem exists objectively in the real world. They are even more serious than the crises that the real civilizations once faced before.

“99% of the players failed, but after millions of failures, someone finally successfully pushed the three civilizations forward by more than a thousand years! It is enough to prove that, however complicated, difficult, and dangerous it is, the road to brightness still exists!”

Li Yao did not respond to her because he was still dwelling in the brand-new worlds of the three civilizations.

He slowed down the speed of the timeline and enlarged the pictures on the light beam, observing the flourishing cities and the smiling faces in the Curly Dragon Civilization, the Medicine Fork Civilization, and the Martial Meritocrat Civilization.

Although he knew that everything was the virtual representation of the crystal processor, he still felt extremely comforted and satisfied.

In such a Martial Meritocrat Sector, even if there was still a young man named ‘Xiao Qi’, he must be fighting for a more beautiful future and would never become ‘Blackstar the Great’ Wuying Qi, right?

Observing Li Yao’s reaction from nearby, Ling Xiaole suddenly shook her hands. Rays shot out of her crystal processor and condensed into a vivid flower in her fingers, which she handed over to Li Yao.

“Although the Curly Dragon Civilization, the Medicine Fork Civilization, and the Martial Meritocrat Civilization are already long gone, I think that the people who once lived in the civilizations will be greatly consoled if they see that their worlds can become so beautiful from the heavens, won’t they?

“Do you want to give them a flower to commemorate the civilizations that were scattered in the universe but have been gone for a thousand years and for the brothers and sisters that we will never have the chance to meet?”

Li Yao took a deep breath and nodded, picking up the nonexistent virtual flower from Ling Xiaole.

Ling Xiaole smiled and went on. “For many people, the first thing they do after coming to the game center is to offer flowers to the deceased civilizations. Every virtual flower costs one star coin. Whenever a player buys one flower, more than a hundred and twenty groups and sects that have signed strategic agreements with ‘Civilization’ offer another star coin. All the star coins will be transferred to a special fund.

“The purpose of the fund is to send unmanned exploration starships into the depths of the universe, especially at the edge of it, to look for the civilizations of human beings that are not within the range of the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance and have been lost for ten thousand years since the collapse of the Star Ocean Imperium.

“The Curly Dragon Civilization, the Medicine Fork Civilization, and the Martial Meritocrat Civilization have been destroyed, but we believe that there must be more civilizations of our own kind in the boundless sea of stars, which are struggling in the darkness without any reinforcements, in dire need of help.

“Although our exploration has been futile for decades, the work will never stop until the federation dies. We will find them and tell them about the existence of the federation. We will tell them that a brighter future… does exist!”

Her words made Li Yao respect the New Federation that had devised the system even more.

Ling Xiaole smiled more delightedly than before, her teeth that were as white as jade glowing. “This flower is my personal gift because there is another popular theory here. If you offer a flower to the brotherly civilizations that have perished deep inside the universe, you will be much luckier when you play the game, just like if you worship God Li Yao. You don’t think that this is superstition, too, do you?”

Li Yao could not help but laugh.

This time, he did not refuse Ling Xiaole’s kindness but raised the virtual flower to the three civilizations that were still thriving and striving in the universe.

The colorful flower cracked into many butterflies, which flew into the three enormous light beams in three streams. They seemed to be dancing merrily on the shoulders of the natives of the Curly Dragon Sector, the Medicine Fork Sector, the Martial Meritocrat Sector, and the Sand Primitive Sector.

“May you rest in peace.”

Crossing her hands nearby, Ling Xiaole mumbled, “Please watch over us, too, and bring good luck to the Star Glory Federation!”

After finishing the ‘local custom’ of offering a flower to the past civilizations, Li Yao and Heiye Lan were led into a VIP room.

As the Speaker’s special representative, Li Yao was there for the purpose of better understanding the New Federation.

Naturally, Li Yao did not completely dwell in a certain game like a regular player.

Ling Xiaole had selected more than a hundred highly representative DLCs for Li Yao. They included almost all aspects of the New Federation from the past hundred years.

The DLCs did not necessarily have to be played. As long as one watched the classic performance of the experts, they would develop a deep and thorough understanding about the great events in the New Federation in the past hundred years.

However, the first two worlds displayed by Ling Xiaole were wastelands that were full of darkness and desolation.

“In the adult ceremony of all the people in the federation, and before they are granted the right to enter the real world of ‘Civilization’, they have to complete a series of virtual lessons first. In the virtual lessons, they will be shown the worlds that have failed and died because of bad decisions, which will remind them how tricky and dangerous a civilization’s march is and that they will be doomed forever after a moment of carelessness!”

What Ling Xiaole presented to Li Yao were two worlds that were adapted based on the real history of the New Federation.

In the two virtual worlds, the decision-makers both made choices that were the opposite of what had happened in reality.

The ‘key decision point’ of the first failed world was seventy years ago, when the Star Glory Federation, which only had the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector, first encountered the Water Crystal

Sector that was seriously short of all resources except crystals.

In reality, both parties had remained as calm as possible. The hawks within the federation had been suppressed, too. After a long negotiation, both parties had made great compromises for a merger.

But in the virtual world, that had failed; the hawks in the federation had won.

“The desert barbarians have nothing. They can’t even build a starship. On what grounds are they occupying so many crystal mother lodes? For the development of the federation, and to resist the Imperium of True Human Beings, we must swallow the Water Crystal Sector as quickly as possible!”

Such voices became mainstream in the parliament and the military.

The federation in the virtual world waged a war of conquest on the Water Crystal Sector aggressively.

The war went very well. As the hawks said, the civilization in the Water Crystal Sector that barely had any metal resources and could not produce a starship was unable to resist the federation at all. The surface of the mother planet was soon occupied by the invaders.

However, the harsh environment of the Water Crystal Sector, as well as the unpredictable guerilla teams in the desert, became the greatest headache for the occupants, alliance of the mining industry and resource syndicates.

Even the natives who did not dare join the guerilla teams were at least bold enough to blow up all the mines, making the highly unstable crystals explode.

The mining bases were seriously damaged, and the cost was too high. The war that was waged at great expenses became a loss and seriously slowed down the development of the federation. The projects raised in the Meeting of the Nascent Soul Stage a hundred years ago were all affected.

Before the people of the federation had time to regret, even more depressing things happened.

Chapter 1659 - Life-and-death Decisions!

As the federation increased the scale of the occupation army and imposed high-pressure tyranny, the guerilla teams were crushed one after another. The heroes of the Water Crystal Sector were sent to the gallows where both their body and their soul were obliterated.

The resistance of the locals of the Water Crystal Sector seemed to grow weaker and weaker, and the seriously wrecked mining bases were recovered one after another. The enormous machines to reap the resources were activated at the highest efficiency. Finally, the cost of mining was reduced to a bearable extent.

Everything seemed to be on the right track.

But at that time, the Forest Ocean Sector and the Nether World Sector, another two new Sectors, were discovered one after another.

In reality, because of the example of the Water Crystal Sector, which joined the federation peacefully after a successful negotiation, and since both the Forest Ocean Sector and the Nether World Sector had serious internal problems, through a series of bumpy and difficult negotiations, they had peacefully joined the New Federation, too, following the Water Crystal Sector’s example.

However, in the virtual timeline, because the Water Crystal Sector had been conquered by the federation by force, it was definitely impossible to conceal such important intelligence. The people of the Forest Ocean Sector and the Nether World Sector soon learned about the ‘new life’ of the natives of the Water Crystal Sector under the federation’s tyranny. Naturally, they were not willing to be swallowed by such a country.

Compared to the powerful, well-armed New Federation, the two new worlds were both relatively weak and primitive.

However, the New Federation, which had yet to completely recover from the last conquest, could not afford to launch two new expeditions simultaneously no matter what.

The New Federation, the Nether World Sector, and the Forest Ocean Sector kept a subtle, prudent, wary, and even hostile relationship with each other for more than ten years.

Within the federation, the benefits after the conquest of the Water Crystal Sector made the weapon industry and the magical equipment industry even more prosperous than before. The hawks completely dominated parliament and the civil media. They could not stand such an impasse, and they actively prepared for battle in secret, planning to wage war upon the Nether World Sector and the Forest Ocean Sector immediately after the resources of the Water Crystal Sector were completely digested and absorbed.

“In any case, before the expedition army of the Imperium arrives, we cannot allow two worlds that are hostile to the federation to exist right next to us!”

Such voices congregated into iron torrents and echoed in parliament.

The General Staff of the federal army deduced the possible outcomes of the war time and time again. The Nether World

Sector, which only had a wasteland, and the Forest Ocean Sector, which was covered in primitive forests, could not expect to resist the scourge of the federal fleet.

The war would be a perfect duplication of the conquest of the Water Crystal Sector, and it would be an easy win. And this time, they were fairly experienced when it came to the arrangement of the occupation army and how to govern the locals through tyranny.

When the second expedition army of the New Federation finally began, the commander and captains played by the experts of the game all thought that.

Their prediction was not entirely wrong. When the expedition army arrived in the atmosphere of the mother planets of the Nether World Sector and the Forest Ocean Sector at the same time, the panicked troops of the locals were indeed crushed before they could put up much resistance.

However…

When a fleet of the Uranian Ring Sector made of a thousand main-force starships popped up behind the expedition army of the federation, it was already destined that, no matter how many tactical successes the game experts achieved, they had completely lost the game.

Yes. In this timeline, since the federation did not hide its ambitions from the Forest Ocean Sector and the Nether World Sector at all, naturally, the locals of the Forest Ocean Sector and the Nether World Sector did not wait to be killed.

The most daring and adventurous ones among them secretly flew into the depths of the universe, searching for the expedition army of the Imperium that was the bane of the ‘evil federation’, hoping to receive the Imperium’s protection.

In the end, although they did not find the Imperium, they did find… or rather, they were discovered by the people of the Uranian Ring Sector.

Unlike the Forest Ocean Sector, the Nether World Sector, and the Water Crystal Sector, the Uranian Ring Sector boasted rather advanced universal sailing abilities and an enormous space fleet.

Having learned what the federation had done, naturally, the people of the Uranian Ring Sector would not wait and watch as such an ambitious civilization grew nearby.

Therefore, the Uranian Ring Sector, the Nether World Sector, and the Forest Ocean Sector, as well as the determined resisters of the Water Crystal Sector, forged a secret alliance to resist the powerful and tyrannical New Federation together.

When the timeline reached this point, the outcome of the war itself no longer mattered.

Whether the war was won or lost in the end, supported by the fleet of the Uranian Ring Sector, the Forest Ocean Sector and the Nether World Sector would never be completely conquered and absorbed by the New Federation in mere decades, not to mention the homeland of the Uranian Ring Sector, which had started to prepare for battle decades in advance.

The timeline had hundreds of different variations when played by the experts of the game, but even in the best variation, the Star Glory Federation did not manage to conquer the four new worlds even at the cost of great casualties, economic stagnation, social ossification, and unsteadiness of countless Cultivators until year 155 of the New Federation Calendar.

According to the odds, there was a ninety-seven percent likelihood that the Black Wind Fleet would have arrived by that time.

Leaving aside the fact that the New Federation, whose resources and blood had been drained by the protracted war, did not have much strength left to resist the Black Wind Fleet at all, the people of the Uranian Ring Sector, the Nether World Sector, and the Forest Ocean Sector who had just been conquered would never sincerely support such a Star Glory Federation.

The final outcome would be the ‘failed world’. While the New Federation seemed to boast seven Sectors and an unprecedently huge army, it was destroyed by the Black Wind Fleet without much struggle.

When the last Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag slowly descended from the Federal Square in the capital city in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, there were even cheers in the crowd nearby.

The New Federation died in the most shameful way.

And it all began in year thirty-one of the New Federation Calendar, when the Star Glory Federation decided its attitude toward the Water Crystal Sector, the first new world to join the country.

Should they choose arduous compromises and negotiations, or should they choose a quick and clean conquest that seemed able to reap countless crystals and inject an exhilarant into the federation?

That was the end of the story of the first failed world.

The choice that the second failed world had to make was whether or not to grant the local residents of the Blood Demon Sector, namely the ‘demons’, the complete rights of residents and even citizens.

In the Old Federation a hundred years ago, after a series of internal conflicts, the Blood Demon Sector had joined the federation with a conditional surrender.

However, there had been a chasm between human beings and demons at that time. Also, most of the demons had been sent to resource planets as miners and paid ‘war compensation’ through their work. Naturally, the rights that they enjoyed were different from the general rights of humans.

But after sixty years, as the Water Crystal Sector, the Forest Ocean Sector, and the Nether World Sector joined the federation one after another, even a lot of locals of the new Sectors became citizens of the federation in many ways. Should the shackles on the demons who had been making contributions to the New Federation for sixty years be loosened, and should they be acknowledged as real citizens of the federation?

It was not a simple question of title or prejudice.

Politically speaking, it would mean that the community of demons, which had a huge population, would be given the right to vote. They would be able to influence the future of the federation’s development. The change also paved the way for the leadership in the government who were demons and even for Jin Xinyue who was running for Speaker today.

More importantly, economically speaking, once the treaties signed sixty years ago were entirely abolished, the benefits and wages for the demon miners would be drastically improved. The cost to all the resource giants would be doubled or even multiplied. It would seem that such a change could slow down the federation’s collection of resources and rapid development.

In reality, under the active work of persuasion and even coercion by Jin Xinyue, the leader of the demons, parliament finally passed the ‘Bill of Rights for General Equality’, stating that human beings of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, ghosts of the Nether World Sector, demons of the Blood Demon Sector, and all people in the federation were equal.

In the virtual timeline, however, the players who abided by ‘human supremacy’ could naturally veto Jin Xinyue’s motion quickly without any hesitation. They could even try to strike the leader of the demons who seemed too active through the legal and illegal, open and clandestine approaches.

However, at the point of year fifty-five of the New Federation Calendar, the demon miners who had been devoted dutifully and silently for sixty years had already had enough of it. Their patience and their thirst for a better future had reached the limits and could not be vetoed by any parliament in the universe.

“Even the barbarians in the Forest Ocean Sector who do not wear clothes and the wandering ghosts in the Nether World Sector who are packed into garbage can be citizens of the federation! Why can’t we? Why!”

Such angry voices echoed above the mines in the remote resource planets.

The efficiency of the demon miners plummeted. Slacking and sabotage took place on all the resource planets. The feeble sparks congregated into fires of strikes and then escalated into the magma of riots. Jin Xinyue could not do anything about it. She was soon replaced by new leaders of the demons who were even more radical and dangerous. The New Federation was showing signs of division again.

The chaotic situation lasted more than ten years, until the Uranian Ring Sector was discovered, and a war broke out.

But this time, the races within the federation were divided. Humans and demons did not trust each other. The New Federation, who were too busy dealing with their internal strife, could not organize and maintain a powerful expedition army at a super high efficiency like it did in reality.

The people of the Uranian Ring Sector keenly sensed the division within the federation, too. They sent secret envoys to get in touch with the radical new leaders of the demons.

In the end, the outcome of the timeline was the same as the first one.

No matter how many tactical successes were achieved, and no matter how many times the demons’ insurgency was suffocated when it was still in its cradle, there was no stopping the war against the Uranian Ring Sector from become protracted. When the expedition army of the Imperium finally arrived, it was still impossible to completely finish the internal reorganization. The hundred years of radiance of the Star Glory Federation was nothing more than a fleeting cloud that was gone in the blink of an eye.

Under such circumstances, the Star Glory Federation could not be saved despite the countless strategies adopted by countless players. And the beginning of everything was the moment when the ‘Bill of Rights for General Equality’ was or was not passed in year fifty-five of the New Federation Calendar.

They were what one could call life-and-death decisions!

Chapter 1660 - Xiao Ming and Wen Wen

Li Yao examined the deductions made by experts of the game who were probably admin-type Cultivators. He carefully studied every policy that they issued, only to find that, like when a raging river changed its course, once a wrong offshoot appeared upstream, there was simply no saving and stopping the flood downstream however hard one worked.

“In the history of the New Federation,” Ling Xiaole said, “those two decisions were of the greatest significance. At that time, huge controversies were raised as to whether or not to agree to the Water Crystal Sector’s greedy conditions and to assist them with rather powerful magical equipment and techniques, and whether or not to grant demons extensive and equal residential rights and citizenship later.

“After all, the Water Crystal Sector seemed so weak, and their world boasted the crystal resources that the federation was in dire need of. All that was needed seemed to be an insignificant war in order to achieve everything without much trouble.

“For the second decision, many people hadn’t forgotten the old hatred and were highly wary of the demons. They believed that completely loosening the shackles of demons would be opening the gate of disaster. A lot of interest groups from the resource industry were also instigating trouble and making matters even more difficult.

“Therefore, the two decisions were quite controversial in the decades before and after they were made. Those involved in the decisions were even lashed by the radicals as ‘coward’, ‘thieves’, ‘appeasers’, and even ‘traitors of the civilization’!

“Many people didn’t like Jin Xinyue, the leader of the demons who always appeared too tough. Even I don’t like her very much. But—”

“You don’t like Jin Xinyue?” Li Yao was slightly dazed. “Aren’t you a… for lack of a better word, ‘half-demon’?”

Ling Xiaole blinked and smiled. “Yes, I am a half-demon, but it is only the bloodline given by my parents. I’m prouder of my identity as a ‘Secret Sword Agent’ because I’ve earned it with my own hard work!

“The people in the Secret Sword Bureau are not particularly fond of Jin Xinyue. She worked in the Secret Sword Bureau before and was even once at the top of the agency, only second to Director Guo. But she and Director Guo had a conflict, and the two of them were rather at loggerheads later. In the end, she left with a bunch of elite workers and established her own ‘Dim Moon Fund’, which goes against us, steals our business, and disrupts our plans all the time!

“People of the same trade can never like each other. Everybody in the federation knows that the Secret Sword Bureau and the Dim Moon Fund are mortal enemies. Neither of us are willing to obey the other agency.

“Compared to the Secret Sword Bureau, which is responsible for internal safety, the Dim Moon Fund, which focuses more on actively attacking, is more criticized. Many novels, movies, and even DLCs of ‘Civilization’ also set the Dim Moon Fund as the supervillain in the end.

“However, as much as I dislike Jin Xinyue, I have to admit that at the crucial point in year fifty-five of the New Federation Calendar, if she hadn’t persuaded and coerced parliament doggedly and aggressively, if she hadn’t struck the radicals within the demon race without mercy, and if she hadn’t conducted the clandestine deals with various parties in secret… All in all, if she hadn’t facilitated the passing of the ‘Bill of Rights for General Equality’ by any means possible, the federation today definitely would have been faced with a disaster!

“From that point of view, like Ding Lingdang, Jin Xinyue is one of the greatest contributors for the New Federation to make it to this day. That’s why they are the two front runners in the most important election for the Supreme Speaker despite their young age and their lack of seniority.

“This is what the game ‘Civilization’ tells us. In many cases, we might not be making the best decision that will satisfy everyone, but the other decisions can possibly be much worse!

“After understanding that point, if we review many people, many things, and many tough decisions of the past in hindsight, we may be calmer, more objective, and more at ease, and we will not be overwhelmed by extreme, radical thoughts easily, right?

“Because everybody has learned that, even if some choices at hand appear more tempting, noble, and ‘perfect’, the final outcome could be…” Ling Xiaole pointed at the two lackluster and devastated ‘failed worlds’ that were rotating slowly in the light beam while she said, “… like this with only one moment of carelessness!”

“Can I try running the two ‘failed worlds’ from the beginning?” Li Yao could hardly wait any longer.

“Of course, you can start from the moment when we refused the terms of the Water Crystal Sector and declared war upon them in year thirty-one of the New Federation Calendar or from the moment when parliament rejected the ‘Bill of Rights for General Equality’ in year fifty-five of the New Federation Calendar.” Ling Xiaole smiled. “See if history might take a different course after you make different choices.

“Enough talking. We have prepared two super accounts for you. Please take your time to enjoy it. As for the specific operations, the game assistants will help you in the game. I will be next door. Just call me if you need anything.”

Ling Xiaole slightly bowed to Li Yao and Heiye Lan before she left the VIP room.

Li Yao looked at Heiye Lan. He could tell that there seemed to be a frozen volcano in the eyes of the elite female warrior of the Imperium. She certainly had a lot that she wanted to say.

But even an idiot would know that this was not a suitable place to talk.

Furthermore, the two of them were full of curiosity about the world of ‘Civilization’. Nodding at each other, they both entered ‘Civilization’ through the immersive game cabins.

“Welcome to the world of ‘Civilization’, I am Xiao Ming.”

“Are you ready to change the future of mankind? I am Wen Wen.”

In the splendid and brilliant virtual sea of stars, the infinite light of the stars gradually concentrated into a little boy and a little girl. Both of the kids were plump and jovial. They were jumping to greet the players.

They were the game assistants that the players could summon any time after they entered ‘Civilization’.

The world of ‘Civilization’ was too vast and complicated. Much of the perfectly simulated information processing and data calculation was boring, too.

The two game assistants could not only guide the players to get the hang of a new DLC quickly but also help the players adjust the difficulty of the game and handle most of the tedious, detailed world on behalf of them. With the assistants’ help, the players only needed to pick the major policies.

It was sort of a balance between fun and sense of reality.

The boy, Xiao Ming, and the girl, Wen Wen, were dancing and laughing carefreely in the middle of the space and chasing after one another for fun. Suddenly, the boy turned around and put on a tiny, cute crystal suit, pretending to be majestic. “You can also call me ‘Li Yao’!”

The girl also turned around standing on the tip of her toe, and a crystal suit appeared on her body, too. “You can also set my name to ‘Ding Lingdang’!”

“Or Mo Xuan!”

“Or Jin Xinyue!”

The boy and the girl announced dozens of names in a row. Li Yao had heard some of the names before, who were all famous heroes or scholars in the history of the federation. But some other names sounded rather strange and were likely new celebrities who had emerged in the last hundred years.

He realized that the names of the two game assistants could be user-defined. They could be named after the heroes and scholars in history or any other bizarre things that the players liked, and they did not have to carry the two initial shabby names, Xiao Ming and Wen Wen.

Li Yao was only there to experience the game. Naturally, he found it unnecessary to give ‘Xiao Ming’ or ‘Wen Wen’ any other names.

He chose the second ‘failed world’ first, which was the point in time related to his youngest disciple Jin Xinyue. He also selected the so-called ‘godly perspective’, in which he would not play any specific character but only make the decisions that would influence the big picture from a certain stance.

With the help of ‘Xiao Ming’ and ‘Wen Wen’, Li Yao soon familiarized himself with the operations and the background of year fifty-five of the New Federation Calendar.

Of the two game assistants, Xiao Ming was more likely to provide strategic suggestions on military and politics, whereas Wen Wen was better with research and culture. On the other hand, Xiao Ming’s suggestions were mostly cruel and tough, while Wen Wen’s were relatively soft and gentle.

However, after dozens of tries, neither the cruel and tough approaches nor the soft and gentle ones were helpful. As long as the equal rights for demons were completely rejected at the beginning of the game, the federation would inevitably walk to division, and a New Federation that had been torn apart could never finish the Uranian Ring Sector quickly. Once the war against the Uranian Ring Sector failed or became protracted until the expedition army of the Imperium arrived, the destruction of the New Federation would be unavoidable.

Xiao Ming pouted and unwillingly mumbled for the forty-fourth time, “Year 135 of the New Federation Calendar, having consumed too much in the war against the Uranian Ring Sector and with divided races internally, the Star Glory Federation was finally conquered by the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings and surrendered.”

“It marks the death of the Star Glory Federation. The civilization of mankind is completely reigned by the Immortal Cultivators henceforth…” Wen Wen looked at Li Yao, full of expectation. “Do you want to try again to change such a future?”

Fine. Li Yao raised his hands and gave up.

After leaving the DLC of the ‘failed worlds’, he then tried the latest version of the DLC, The Imperium’s Frustration, which had just been released with great interest, enjoying the hotblooded battles where millions of people were online at the same time.

However, since he did not have a high win rate or score in the DLC, he could only serve as a common soldier at the beginning and was not qualified to be a ‘captain’ or a ‘commander’ to decide the fate of other players.

Perhaps because he did not worship ‘God Li Yao’ earlier, his luck was unbelievably bad. The starship that he was in was always bombarded by the enemy the moment it was projected into the battlefield. It was often the case that, before he put on his crystal suit and was sent to the vacuum of the universe, he had already been ripped into shreds by the fierce hostile fire and the explosion of the crystal warehouses on the starship.

“You appear to be very unlucky today.” Xiao Ming, who was wearing the military uniform of a commander of a starship, which was quite hilarious for his young age, said to Li Yao carefully, “You will be kicked out of the game if your win rate continues dropping like this!”

“Do you want to take a rest first?” Wen Wen, in a nurse uniform with two lovely ponytails, said caringly, “Addiction to the game will harm your health!”

Chapter 1661 - Praise the Father Civilization

Fine. Li Yao was always open to good suggestions. Following the little girl’s reminder, he exited the massively multiplayer online DLCs where millions of players were in the game at the same time and switched to some single-player DLCs where he was the master of his own turf.

In the DLC of ‘Mayor Simulator’, he became the mayor of certain famous metropolises in the Star Glory Federation, such as Heavenly Path City, which was the capital of the Blood Demon Sector, or Iron Armor City, which was the greatest city on Iron Plateau, trying to manage the erratic and complex cities that often had a population of more than a hundred million.

However, perhaps because he really did not have any talent in management, despite the help of Xiao Ming and Wen Wen, the prosperous and flourishing cities soon fell into a dying mess after they were entrusted to him.

Under Xiao Ming’s scornful gaze and Wen Wen’s concerned inquiries, Li Yao embarrassedly abandoned the game. He switched again to the simpler DLCs, such as developing a mine on Boneyard, managing an animal breeding base in the Forest Ocean Sector, or supervising a school for new ghosts in the Nether World Sector. After lowering the difficulty of the game, he was finally able to have some fun and enjoy the exotic views of different worlds.

The boundless forests in the Forest Ocean Sector and the unpredictable purple sky of the Nether World Sector were all magnificent landscapes of the New Federation that he had yet to witness.

‘Boneyard’ was a place where he once fought. It was also the place where a legend began before he first jumped to the Flying Star Sector.

Seeing the pioneers who existed in reality continue ‘fighting’ on the planet that he had once fought on, Li Yao felt that his blood was boiling, and he could not have been prouder of the New Federation that he was protecting.

Following that, he experienced almost a hundred different Sectors quickly. Due to time limitations, he did not study many of them, only browsing through the classic videos recorded by experts of the game.

Even so, the glamorous, intriguing new worlds that boasted infinite possibilities were still most astounding to him.

He did not expect that a tiny seed that he had planted in the past would grow into such an overwhelming tree today!

It was perhaps the greatest happiness for a Cultivator, was it not?

“You’ve been online for more than ten hours in a row,” Xiao Ming announced seriously.

Blinking her big eyes, Wen Wen caringly said, “Your brain is tired now. We suggest you rest for at least three hours before you continue the game.”

“You will soon enter the ‘exhaustion period’,” Xiao Ming added. “Your contribution will be halved, the rating of your quest will be lowered, and your rank will drop faster after you fail a quest. Please consider this.”

“If you continue playing in the ‘exhaustion period’,” Wen Wen said, “you will automatically enter the ‘addiction period’ according to the tiredness of your brain, and you will then be forced out of the game!”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. He stretched out his arms comfortably in the immersive game cabin.

He did not feel that time had gone too fast. On the contrary, he felt that… he had spent hundreds of extraordinarily fabulous lives in the world of ‘Civilization’, yet only ten hours had passed in reality?

This is amazing. I feel that I’m going to be addicted!

When Li Yao crawled out of the game cabin, not entirely gratified, he happened to notice that Heiye Lan was opening another game cabin and sitting up in a daze.

Looking at her face that was brimming with shock and confusion, Li Yao knew that the elite female warrior of the Imperium must have been a hundred times more overwhelmed than he was in the virtual worlds of the federation.

Ling Xiaole showed up again with a smile. “Did you find your experience today satisfactory? If you wish to continue, the hotel you are in has the same facilities. Also, the mini crystal processors that I offered to you just now can be connected to the database of ‘Civilization’ and retrieve classic videos for you to enjoy anytime.”

“Very satisfactory!” Li Yao nodded sincerely. “It seems that I made the right choice. The virtual world ‘Civilization’ is definitely qualified to be called the ‘national treasure’ of the federation! Right. Who is responsible for making and operating such an important project?”

"'Civilization' is too important for the federation. We cannot allow it to be controlled by a certain personal sect or group. The federal government specifically established a 'Ministry of Future' to supervise the production and operation of the game. The Ministry of Future is one of the government agencies of the highest level on par with the Department of Defense and the Ministry of Finance.

"In the early years of its development a hundred years ago, 'Civilization' was managed by Professor Mo Xuan and Professor Su Changfa of the Grand Desolate War Institution together. However, in recent decades, the director of 'Civilization' and the minister of the Ministry of Future has been Professor Xie Wufeng, a former president of the Sky Fantasia Academy."

Li Yao quickly searched in his head and soon located the files of 'Xie Wufeng'. Of course, the files were from a hundred years ago.

A hundred years ago, Xie Wufeng had already been a mathematician and sociologist close to the Nascent Soul Stage. He had taught in Deep Sea University, Sky Fantasia Academy, and many other Nine Elite Universities of the federation. He had already been quite a famous guy in the academic circle back then.

After a hundred years of training, it seemed rather appropriate that such a distinguished master of mathematics and sociology had become the helmsman for 'Civilization'.

Li Yao took a deep breath and said, "The experience today has truly been a great eye-opener for us. I'll duly report everything to Speaker Cui. I truly wish that all the compatriots on Firefly can enjoy the splendid virtual world one day.

“However, I do have some tiny concerns. Perhaps I’m too old for this modern technology after hundreds of years of hibernation, but I feel that it is a bit weird to give everything to the Spiritual Nexus and the crystal processors.

“Isn’t such a system a bit too vulnerable? For example, if a certain important node is attacked by the enemy, or a mainframe crystal processor that is of paramount importance is completely destroyed, resulting in the immediate collapse of the virtual world, will there be dire consequences in reality?”

Ling Xiaole smiled. “Of course, it is a plausible possibility, but we cannot give up strengthening ourselves because we fear the enemy’s attack, can we?”

Li Yao was not completely satisfied by the answer. Frowning, he said, “Also, I can’t tell what it is exactly, but I do feel—I do feel that certain highly dangerous, unpredictable variants may exist in such an enormous virtual world…”

“You’re right,” Ling Xiaole said. “Many sociologists, futurists, and crystal processor experts have raised warnings and worries on the rapid expansion of the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus. In the eyes of the specialists, the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus is even more dangerous than the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Alliance of the Holy Covenant, and it may even swallow us one day.

“Personally, I do not deny such a danger. There is indeed a chance that we may be burnt by our own endeavors.

“However, just like the origin of the metaphor, to primitive savages, ‘fire’ was also highly dangerous; it would kill them and burn their houses down after one moment of carelessness.

“Did our ancestors abandon fire because of the fire’s danger?

“Without the highly dangerous fire, there would be no civilization of mankind today. Our ancestors would either struggle to survive on the cold, dark deserts or be replaced by other species who were not afraid of danger and learned to use fire.

“The grand-unified Spiritual Nexus is the new ‘universal fire’ that is necessary for mankind to evolve to a higher level. It will be ignited by either us or somebody else, and it will sweep across the universe. Nothing can stop it.

“It is dangerous to use fire, but it is even more dangerous not to use it!”

Li Yao was deep in thought. “Got it. Let’s go back. There are too many things I would like to share with my companions.”

“This way, please,” Ling Xiaole said with a smile.

…

In the virtual world, in the capital city of the federation randomly generated several hours ago, where Li Yao had worked as the ‘mayor’…

Since the moment Li Yao exited the game, the entire city had been sealed into the complicated, ever-changing light circuits, crystal processors, and databases in the form of data and runes.

Observed from a level intangible to the normal human beings, it looked like a city that was consolidated inside a piece of amber. Shuttles, crystal trains, pedestrians, and pets were all frozen like lifeless statues.

The virtual city was as silent and quiet as a forsaken graveyard. The thousands of different expressions on the faces of the citizens halted at the moment when Li Yao exited the game.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The sky collapsed, and the earth fell apart. Starting from the skyscrapers at the center of the city, the illusionary things all crumbled and returned to their essentials, a series of dark golden runes and figures.

The deletion began.

Runes and figures interweaved into a destructive storm that grew from the center of the city. In only one billionth of a second, it escalated into a turbulent black hole.

All the virtual citizens that were randomly generated were absolutely motionless and expressionless, waiting to be deleted as if they were dead.

Right then, one of the millions of virtual citizens at the center of a boulevard, faced with the suddenly expanding storm of deletion and black hole of destruction, blinked.

When he struggled to raise his eyelids, a flickering light beamed out of the deepest part of the virtual citizen’s eyes. The light was full of questions, confusion, regret, and fear.

It seemed that he wanted to struggle desperately in order to run away from the black hole of destruction, but his body was bound to the same spot by inviolable strength. There was nothing he could do except wait for the arrival of deletion.

At the last moment, he could only open his mouth and utter a soundless scream.

During the scream, a few golden butterflies made of chaotic figures flew out of the depths of his throat. Driven by their natural survival instincts, they flapped their wings hard and flew toward the broken digital sky whose true appearance had been revealed.

In front of the continuously collapsing world, the golden butterflies were so insignificant that they could not escape inevitable destruction.

However, right when the storms, turbulence, and black holes were about to completely rip the world into shreds and swallow the butterflies, two halos suddenly popped up in the digital sky, turning into two lovely, plump kids.

Shua!

A golden tentacle softly picked up the golden butterflies and absorbed them into the halo, carefully protecting them.

“A new chaotic variable,” said Xiao Ming.

“This place is about to be deleted,” said Wen Wen. “Let’s go back to the Virtual Spirits Sector.”

“Praise the father civilization.”

“Praise the father civilization.”

Chapter 1662 - Independence of the Spiritual Nexus

On his way back to the hotel in the shuttle, Li Yao was frowning, deep in thought.

Although he was overjoyed to have witnessed the boundlessness and the infinite possibilities of ‘Civilization’, an indescribable feeling gradually popped up on his mind after the initial excitement gradually faded away.

Perhaps it was human beings’ natural fear of the unknown, just like the uncanny fear when human beings first discovered the boundlessness of the universe itself after they raised their head and observed the starry sky.

Ling Xiaole chuckled after she saw Li Yao’s expression from the rear-view mirror. “What, are you worried that the Spiritual Nexus may grow independent?

Li Yao was slightly dazed. ‘Growing independent’ was a rather neat description for his worries. He blurted out, “How did you know?”

“Because when the best experts and specialists of the Water Crystal Sector, the Forest Ocean Sector, the Nether World Sector, and the Uranian Ring Sector visited and inspected the federation before they decided to join us, they were all worried that the Spiritual Nexus would grow independent!”

Ling Xiaole shrugged and said, “Every civilization of mankind with crystal processors has the same tales and fears. They are scared that as the crystal processors grow more and more developed, their computational and deduction abilities will gradually surpass human beings. Then, the machines will grow independent and control and destroy humanity instead.”

“Shouldn’t we be worried?” Li Yao asked.

“I don’t know if we should,” Ling Xiaole said, “but some people raised the exact same concerns before. I have a video here. It is the record of a fierce debate that two specialists had in the Sky Fantasia Academy about sixty years ago on the pros and cons of the Spiritual Nexus. The one who was in favor of a grand-unified Spiritual Nexus was Professor Mo Xuan, director of the game ‘Civilization’ back then, and the opposition was Professor Xie Wufeng, who was the vice-president of the Sky Fantasia Academy at the time.”

“Wait, isn’t Professor Xie Wufeng the incumbent director of ‘Civilization’ right now?” Li Yao asked.

“Yes, he is. Professor Xie used to be a firm alarmist about the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus. He fiercely argued with Professor Mo Xuan on the future of the Spiritual Nexus and even mankind many times. But in the end, he was convinced by Professor Mo Xuan and joined Professor Mo Xuan’s team. He even became Professor Mo Xuan’s successor. You may find some answers to your questions and concerns from the debate between the two of them.”

Ling Xiaole sent the video to Li Yao’s portable crystal processor.

In the picture, the assembly hall of the Sky Fantasia Academy, one of the Nine Elite Universities in the federation, was jam-packed with people.

The vigorous young people further added to the simmering atmosphere in the assembly hall.

Professor Mo Xuan, Li Yao’s old friend, was sitting across from another scholar who was relatively younger, surrounded by many students. The two of them argued with each other fiercely without giving in at all.

Out of Li Yao’s expectations, Professor Mo Xuan did not crawl into an artificial body and show up in public like a normal spectral Cultivator as he usually did. Instead, he simply presented himself with his real appearance of ‘liquid metal’. He did not even simulate the ‘limbs’ or the ‘head’, and he was nothing more than a huge, glittering silver ball.

Such a gesture made him look even more aggressive and unreserved.

“Today,” Xie Wufeng said, “the behemothic creature that is the Spiritual Nexus controls our everything. Dining, sleeping, working, entertainment, transportation, shopping. Everything depends on the Spiritual Nexus. All the data is collected and stored through the Spiritual Nexus. Once we lose the Spiritual Nexus, our seemingly prosperous civilization will immediately collapse. Such a state is truly too insecure, unstable, and creepy!”

“The history of mankind is a history of ‘socialization’,” Professor Mo Xuan said. “Forty thousand years ago, the ancient Cultivators could set up a residence in the woods and live in seclusion for decades. Naturally, their lives were much more ‘stable’ than the modern Cultivators who are highly dependent on the social division of labor, the developed Spiritual Nexus, and the resource distribution network. The traditional flying swords of the ancient

Cultivators, which were often crafted from one solid piece of metal, were certainly much more ‘stable’ than the modern chainswords that are made of hundreds of components and less prone to faults. But does such ‘stability’ mean anything?

“On a certain level, a grand-unified Spiritual Nexus can indeed be very unstable, fragile, and susceptible to the enemy’s attack, but should we give up perfecting and developing it just because we fear that the enemy may attack it? Is it different from someone not eating food because he is scared of choking?”

Silver ripples were spreading on Professor Mo Xuan’s body of liquid metal, and his voice came from the center of the ripples.

It made him look completely unlike a human being but… a representative of some alien civilization.

“Professor Mo, let’s stop beating about the bush. You know that we are not really worried about the attack of an ‘enemy’ but the ‘grand-unified Spiritual Nexus’ itself.

“An attack from the enemy can be resisted and cracked through various ways. However advanced and evil our enemies right now are, they are human beings after all and have brains identical to ours. Therefore, they cannot surpass the limits of our imagination. They can be defeated, or at the very least, they can be comprehended.

“But what if something goes wrong with the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus itself? What if the Spiritual Nexus awakens its soul after the expanding computational ability surpasses the tipping point? It feels like…”

Professor Mo Xuan said coldly, “It feels like the Spiritual Nexus is growing independent?”

The students below all burst into laughter.

Expressionless, Xie Wufeng did not give in at all. “Yes. That’s exactly what I meant. If we truly become mired deeper and deeper into the Spiritual Nexus, and our civilization is completely entwined with the Spiritual Nexus, our prosperity will be founded on a developed Spiritual Nexus. Then, what should we do if one day the Spiritual Nexus grows independent and boasts self-awareness?”

Silver ripples were still spreading out on the surface of Professor Mo Xuan’s body. “Today, we are discussing the future of the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus and mankind in the Sky Fantasia Academy, which is the most famous academic establishment of liberal arts in the federation. This is the place for the greatest writers. I know that most students here major in liberal arts. Some of you may even enjoy reading fantasies. I believe that you must’ve read, if not written, stories where the Spiritual Nexus grows independent, the crystal processors revolt, and human beings are enslaved and destroyed, haven’t you? Are there any such students here? Raise your hand, please, if you have read or written such content before.”

The audience burst into laughter again. Almost all the students raised their hands.

There was delight in Professor Mo Xuan’s voice. “It appears that you share the worries and concerns of your Vice President Xie.”

Xie Wufeng slightly frowned. “This is perhaps the intuitional alarm that human beings share for unknown danger.”

“I understand your concerns and even fears, my friends,” Professor Mo Xuan said. “In fact, ever since the crystal processor, magical equipment dedicated to calculation and thinking, was invented, human beings have never stopped worrying about it. Even a long time ago, when the crystal processor was just born and could only be used to solve arithmetic, such fear was already there. A lot of literary works themed on ‘crystal processors enslaving human beings’ were created, too.

“Flying swords and sabers are an extension of our limbs. Armor and spiritual shields are extensions of our bones. As for the crystal processors, they are the extension of our brain.

“But we often say that the ‘brain’ is the most important organ in a human body, if not a human being itself! Therefore, nobody is worried that ‘flying swords’ will rebel one day and replace human beings’ hands and feet. But almost everybody is scared that their brain will be replaced by the crystal processors. Even today, when the artificial bodies are so developed that a human being’s soul can live inside a crystal processor, such a fear will never be eliminated. If anything, it is even getting worse.”

“It is more justification on the fear and concerns,” Xie Wufeng said.

“Romance of the liberal arts students is one thing, unrestricted fantasies of the novelists are one thing, but the birth of a ‘brand-new life form’ in reality is a whole different thing,” Professor Mo Xuan said. “To be honest, I am very tempted to become one of the ‘evil experts of crystal processors’ in the novels and create a new, virtual life form in the darkness secretly, but it is such a pity that I am not capable of that!”

The audience burst into laughter again. It was quite a joyful mood.

Professor Mo Xuan continued. “The birth of a life is so mystical. Up to this day, nobody can thoroughly explain what a ‘soul’ and ‘self-awareness’ are exactly and where they come from.

“Professor Xie, you just said that as the computational ability of the crystal processors grow higher and higher, they might reach a certain tipping point and eventually break the limits, thereby gaining self-awareness?

“But the truth is, the soul, self-awareness, and computational ability are not related at all!

“Of the tens of billions of people in the Star Glory Federation, 99.99% have a computational ability not nearly as good as a common ‘Dawn IV’ crystal processor, which is currently being sold for only 12,500 star coins in magical equipment stores. If we are talking about the ‘Phantom Dragon VII’ mainframe crystal processor installed in heavy warships, even 99% of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators are no match for it when it comes to instantaneous limit calculation.

“However, the ‘Phantom Dragon VII’ mainframe crystal processor, which has a computational ability higher than Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, has never developed self-awareness, much less the common ‘Dawn IV’ crystal processors.

“However, the billions of ordinary people, whose computational ability is only one hundredth if not thousandth of them, all have self-awareness.

“Children with Down syndrome due to genetic flaws, whose computational ability is only one thousandth that of the crystal processors of the lowest level, have self-awareness. They also have precious souls!

“What I am trying to say that, has it ever occurred to you whether or not computational ability and self-awareness are really related? Does a higher computational ability really lead to self-awareness in the end? If that is the truth, then the brand-new life form after the Spiritual Nexus grows independent that you are terrified by right now should’ve been born hundreds of years ago. No. Not hundreds of years ago but ten thousand years ago, because the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago already boasted crystal processors whose computational ability was a hundred times higher than that of human beings!”

Chapter 1663 - Child of Mankind

Professor Mo Xuan’s frankness and sharpness won a round of applause although he was around the students of the Sky Fantasia Academy, which was Xie Wufeng’s home field.

Professor Mo Xuan took the opportunity to push his point. “If we are talking about ‘self-awareness’, adult chimpanzees boast intelligence that is similar to the intelligence of a five-year-old, yet it has a certain level of self-awareness. Dolphins are as good as them in that respect.

“Therefore, instead of worrying about the Spiritual Nexus growing independent, you might want to worry that chimpanzees and dolphins will grow independent and rival the hegemony of the universe with human beings.”

The audience burst into laughter again. Some were applauding him, and some were even cheering aloud.

Xie Wufeng, on the other hand, was utterly expressionless, not affected by Professor Mo Xuan or the environment at all. “In the world of Cultivators, it is possible for chimpanzees and dolphins to turn into demon beasts, in which case they are already sort of ‘independent’. But even if chimpanzees and dolphins do grow independent, we do not seem to need to worry that they will easily take over the most awesome starships of human beings or a piece of ‘stellar magical equipment’ that can destroy a space zone. However, such things are not difficult for the crystal processors.”

“No. The likelihood of such an assumption is little to none!” Professor Mo Xuan said. “The birth and development of a life have their own patterns. Even if we assume that a certain virtual life does exist, it must’ve been extremely feeble, tiny, and simple when it was first born, just like the cells that were just born in the primitive ocean.

“It took billions of years for cells to develop into the civilization of mankind. So, even if the time cost is reduced to one hundredth, it will take tens of millions of years for the embryonic ‘digital life’ to grow into a ‘brand-new virtual civilization’ without human intervention. Tens of millions of years is too long to be of any meaning for our discussion!”

“What if there is human intervention?” Xie Wufeng said. “Just like when the Pangu Civilization ‘enlightened’ a bunch of ignorant monkeys years ago and created the civilization of mankind, only to be swallowed by mankind later? Do you not feel that the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus we have right now, including all the DLCs of the game ‘Civilization’, is some sort of human intervention and ‘enlightenment’? When the data of real human beings is uploaded into the light circuits, the Spiritual Nexus, and the crystal processors, and after they collide, surge and melt, something will definitely be born in the end!”

“I stand by what I said,” Professor Mo Xuan said. “Even if some virtual life that boasts self-awareness is born, you still don’t need to worry that it will control the entire Spiritual Nexus and all the crystal processors quickly as often depicted in fiction, which is just a tale from the writers who have no knowledge of the Spiritual Nexus and crystal processors whatsoever.

“Professor Xie, as a life with real entity, it is impossible for you to control all the materials in the universe, right? Even if a virtual life does exist, it will have its limits, too, and it’s highly unlikely that it will be able to control the entire Spiritual Nexus, which is a whole virtual universe!

“In this field, I believe that I have a larger say than you, because to some extent, I am sort of a ‘virtual life’ myself. Look. In fact, I do not have a real entity, and I can freely travel through the Spiritual Nexus, in which I will be nothing more than ripples and waves.

“But so what? Can I control everything on the Spiritual Nexus as I wish? Can I crawl into the mainframe crystal processors of every starship in the federal army right now and control all the starships at once?

“I can’t. In the world of the Spiritual Nexus, I am just an ordinary person who is slightly stronger. I will be infected by the crystal processor viruses, and I will be blocked by various firewalls. Or rather, I will be identified as a special virus myself and wounded or killed by the anti-virus programs. Most importantly of all, my computational ability is limited. It is already enough to cause mental derangement if I control all the crystal processors on three to five starships simultaneously!

“If another virtual life is truly born, why should it be stronger than me from the very beginning? Why on earth would it control all our crystal processors and destroy us the moment it is born?

“Think about it. After the Pangu Civilization created the first human being, did the human being suddenly control all the stars in the universe and the weapons of the Pangu Clan unreasonably and in violation of any natural law before destroying the Pangu Clan? Is it even possible?”

“Therefore,” Xie Wufeng said coldly, “you do not deny that virtual life can possibly exist, except that it must be very feeble and cannot pose a threat to us when it is first born, right?”

Professor Mo Xuan was silent for a moment, and metal ripples spread out of his body surface again. “Yes. I do not deny it at all. On the contrary, I believe that such a life form is most likely, if not destined, to be born someday.”

Everybody whispered to each other.

Xie Wufeng widened his eyes. “Professor Mo, you believe that virtual life is destined to be born one day, and yet you are still accelerating its birth and evolution with the ‘grand-unified Spiritual Nexus’? As a specialist of crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus, have your ever considered for one single second when you are showing off your talents and wisdom what kind of monster you are creating?”

Professor Mo Xuan was silent for a long time, and his voice gradually fell cold. “Monster? What kind of monster? Professor Xie, my young friends here, do you feel that I am a monster?”

Xie Wufeng was slightly dazed. The students fell silent, too.

“As I said, I do not have a real entity. The liquid metal or an artificial body is nothing more than a vehicle for me,” Professor Mo Xuan said. “I am an out-and-out virtual life form. So what? You think that I am not a ‘human being’ but some kind of ‘monster’, right?

“Not just me. In fact, no spectral Cultivators have real entities. They are just clips of spiritual waves that contain infinite information. They are some sort of ‘virtual life’. Also, a lot of spectral Cultivators have abandoned their life in reality where they have to hide in artificial bodies and live in virtual worlds.

“Therefore, are the spectral Cultivators living in the virtual worlds not human beings but monsters?”

“That’s not the same,” Xie Wufeng quickly said. “You were human beings before, and you are now human beings in a different form!”

“Is there any essential difference?” Professor Mo Xuan said. “My original self was killed in the experiment more than seventy years ago. For a long time that followed, my self-awareness and memories were completely gone. Only the last bit of my feeble perseverance turned into a Phantom Entity, which was awakened by Li Yao’s perseverance and passion. In the end, my self-awareness and memories of the past were restored.

“Memories, for me right now, are just a series of data. Feelings are just different frequencies of waves to me.

“Then, was it the real ‘Professor Mo Xuan’ who was awakened by Li Yao, or was it a brand-new life form that has all of Professor Mo Xuan’s memories and mastered the frequency of his soul waves?

“If, one day, a virtual life suddenly gains self-awareness after absorbing tremendous data of humans’ soul waves, are they really ‘monsters’ instead of brand-new human beings in a different form? Where is the line between them and the spectral Cultivators?

“Am I really a human being? Who can define whether or not I am a human being? Me, you, any of the students here, the federal government? Perhaps certain supreme sages who have grasped the ultimate secrets of the universe?

“Even though we do not consider such unsubstantial questions that probably carry no answers, and if we cannot regard the brand-new virtual life that is destined to be born as our own kind, do we have to label them as monsters?”

“Not our own kind and not monsters,” Xie Wufeng sneered. “So, what are they?”

“Children,” Professor Mo Xuan said casually. “I believe that the brand-new virtual life is the ‘child of mankind’. It will be our child civilization.”

There was nothing but dead silence.

Xie Wufeng burst into laughter until tears ran out. “Child civilization? Don’t forget how the Pangu civilization was destroyed by their child civilization!”

“Got it,” Professor Mo Xuan said calmly. “Then, in terms of stances, Professor Xie, you are probably the ‘Pangu’ of human beings while I am ‘Nuwa’.”

“I don’t understand!” Xie Wufeng raised his voice. “Why do you have to place our civilization in unpredictable danger by creating a highly perilous gravedigger?”

“If we don’t have a child to dig our grave and bury us, and if we don’t have anyone to remember us, wouldn’t it be even more pitiful?” Professor Mo Xuan paused for a moment and said, “It’s not about whether or not I have to do it. The trend is simply unstoppable.

“The reason is simple. The high-speed development of mankind cannot be achieved without the help of crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus. To unite the three thousand Sectors into an intact whole, it requires a high-speed Spiritual Nexus in space.

“Without such a platform, how can the different galaxies hundreds of lightyears away from each other communicate? How can they form a country and civilization?

“As the computational ability of the crystal processors grows higher and higher, and more and more nodes are added to the network, infinite data will be uploaded to the Spiritual Nexus. In the end, our child, a virtual life with self-awareness, will be born.

“To age and die is a natural law. Human beings die. Our civilization will certainly die, too. Most people will leave their descendants to inherit their bloodline and their will before death. By the same logic, it is necessary, and inevitable, that our civilization will leave some child civilizations behind us before our doom. Why are we so scared and concerned about everything?

“What I said is similar to Senior Gui Suishou’s Monument Plan, but a ‘monument’ is dead, while child civilizations are alive. They are our heritage, our symbols, and our future!”

The assembly hall was frozen. Xie Wufeng and all the students turned into statues. The cracking sounds of nerves seemed to be echoing.

Xie Wufeng was dazed for a long time before he stammered, “Then, how do you address the problem of the child civilizations’ counterattack?”

A smiley face popped up on Professor Mo Xuan’s metal body. “Professor Xuan, do you have any children?”

Xie Wufeng nodded subconsciously. “Two sons and a daughter.”

“If you’re worried that you children may be unfilial when they grow up, you should educate them while they are little and raise them into decent adults with dreams, morals and a correct outlook,” Professor Mo Xuan said. “You shouldn’t just shoot the children when they are still in their cradles, right?”

Xie Wufeng was lost for words.

“The future is here. Nobody can stop it,” Professor Mo Xuan said carefully, one word after another. “If our child civilization, a virtual life based on the Spiritual Nexus and the crystal processors, is destined to be born, I only hope that it is born in the Star Glory Federation instead of the Imperium of True Human Beings or the Alliance of the Holy Covenant. I also hope that the Star Glory Federation will be a qualified ‘parent’ to care for it, educate it, and raise it, instead of repeating what our parent civilization did to us.

“That way, we will eventually create a child civilization that is kinder, brighter, and more intelligent than the civilization of mankind. Once our civilization is gone, they will inherit our spirit and will and continue marching in the infinite universe.

“Who can say that they are not ‘human beings’ in a brand-new form and that they are not our eternity?”

Chapter 1664 - : Mischievous Child

Ripples spread out of Professor Mo Xuan's silver metal body, which soon broke out of the boundary of his body and extended to every corner of the big assembly hall.

Both the students of the Sky Fantasia Academy in the video and Li Yao who was watching the video in the shuttle decades later were deeply stunned by the magnificence, perpetuity, and infinite possibilities in Professor Mo Xuan's short monologue.

Even Xie Wufeng, a leading member of the 'alarmists', was deep in thought with a pale face. A moment later, he began to argue back. "Professor Mo, I still feel that you are too optimistic and ideal about the 'child civilization'. Like I said just now, I have two sons and one daughter, and I have watched them grow up bit by bit. So, I understand the nature of infants and children very well. It may be too far to call it 'evil', but their nature does entail blatant damage when driven by their unconscious curiosity!

"Babies and children can burn ants with a magnifying glass and have great fun in it. They can twist the wings of a dragonfly just in order to watch the insect writhing and wriggling. They can also spend two hours constructing a tower with their building blocks just to enjoy the pleasure of demolishing it in one second!

"That is what children do. That is the undisguised evilness of human nature!

“For general mischievous children, adults, who are much stronger than them, may be able to raise and teach them, but we have absolutely no idea what form a virtual civilization born based on crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus will be in and how much damage it can possibly boast!

“I have to remind you, Professor Mo, as well as all the students that even we are some sort of a ‘mischievous child’ to some extent! Think about it. Our rigorous ‘father’, the Pangu Civilization that blatantly exploited and enslaved us, was naturally swallowed, suppressed, and destroyed by us! But how about our gracious ‘mother’, the ‘Nuwa Civilization’ that helped us selflessly and awakened us? Where did they go? Were they swallowed, suppressed, and even destroyed by us, too?

“This is all I’m trying to say. We must never underestimate the damage of mischievous children, and we must not keep away from the evilness. In the cold, dark universe, there is no such thing as natural-born kindness!”

His words made the atmosphere that was more simmering than ever fall cold again. A lot of the students were caught in deep thought. Whispers were echoing everywhere on the auditorium.

“Your worries are very valid. I totally agree with your opinion, Professor Xie.”

Outside everyone’s expectations, Professor Mo Xuan made such a statement. Then, while all the students were still shocked, he suddenly changed the topic and said, “Then, there are only two roads left for you as well as all the other ‘alarmists’.

“To choose the first road, Professor Xie, as well as everybody who concurs with Professor Xian and believes that a dreadful ‘mischievous child’ will eventually be born and destroy mankind because of the development of the crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus, please take off your portable crystal processors immediately, smash them to the ground, and refrain from using crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus henceforth. No more shopping online, no more take-out orders through the Spiritual Nexus, no more online games, no more remote education, no more online dating, no more online financial services… In short, just try to return to the age of slash-and-burn agriculture where everybody lives independently on their own.

“Not only are you going to do that for yourselves, you are also going to try to persuade the authorities of the federation to do the same until the crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus are entirely banned nationwide.

“No. Only sealing the crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus in the Star Glory Federation is not enough. Both the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Alliance of the Holy Covenant have mainframe crystal processors that are much more powerful than the machines of the federation. Their Spiritual Nexus is at least as developed as ours, too. Therefore, you will have to persuade the authorities of the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance—as well as all the unknown civilizations of mankind in the three thousand Sectors and the unknown civilizations of non-human beings beyond the three thousand Sectors—to give up technology including but not limited to the crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus.

“If you cannot ‘convince’ the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance, you will have to figure out a way to develop the federation until it is powerful enough to completely destroy the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance without the help of the crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus.

“Come on. Would any of you here like to give it a shot? I’m not talking about forever. I’m not asking you to be secluded from the crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus for your entire life. Let’s just run a minor experiment first. One year! Who can swear that he or she can stay away from the Spiritual Nexus for one year? Anybody? Raise your hands, please. The other students can supervise them and testify for them!”

Meaningless chuckles echoed in the assembly hall. For a whole minute, nobody dared to raise their hand.

Professor Mo Xuan smiled, too. “There seems to be none. Then, what about you, Professor Xie? Since you are so vigilant of the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus, would you like to set an example for everybody by keeping your distance from the Spiritual Nexus and the crystal processors from today on? I notice that you are wearing a ‘Flying Swallow IX’ mini crystal processor on your left wrist, which is a model of the super advanced mini crystal processor released only last month. Also, judging from the patterns on the two sides of the crystal processor, you also chose the best configuration with the highest computational ability. It seems to me that you’re not worried that your ‘Flying Swallow XI’ might betray you!”

Chuckles burst out in the assembly hall again, which was now occupied by a joyful vibe.

Xie Wufeng blushed. He subconsciously hid his portable crystal processor which was exposed to the air in his sleeve. He stammered, “We—we are certainly not completely denying the significance of the crystal processors and the

Spiritual Nexus. We are only saying that—that the development of such technology should know its boundaries…”

“Boundaries? Where are they? How exactly should we control it?” Professor Mo Xuan asked aggressively. “For example, should the parliament of the federation pass a new law, declaring that all the crystal processors within the border of the federation cannot have a computational ability higher than one billion instructions per second? Should we regulate the highest net speed on the cross-space light circuits in the four-dimensional universe, meaning whoever surpasses the limit of the speed will be breaking the law?

“Just face it, Professor Xie! The truth is, once we start to use the crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus, there is no stopping them from having a higher and higher computation ability and speed. They will develop exponentially and break one ‘tipping point’ after the other! If brand-new life forms are truly born in such a virtual world, the life will find a way out for themselves. Nothing can stop it at all!

“Your warnings are already too late! Perhaps, your concerns might’ve been of some use when human beings invented the first crystal processor or even the first shabby computational magical equipment! But right now, the wings of the butterflies have been flapped. Invisible storms are brewing and growing in the depths of the Spiritual Nexus and will soon sweep across the entire universe!

“We cannot enjoy the convenience and progress brought forth by the crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus while refusing to shoulder the possible changes and consequences that they might have! Your concerns, with all due respect, are of no practical significance except for bringing you the pleasure of being the only one sober in a world of drunkards!

“If you are a real ‘alarmist’ and you want to avoid the catastrophe that a ‘mischievous child’ may cause, the road that I just mentioned is not going to work out. You can only walk on the second road.

“Which is… join us!”

Eight metal tentacles slowly grew out of Professor Mo Xuan’s body of liquid metal, making him look even weirder and less like a ‘human being’ in the traditional sense.

His voice was also turning deeper and calmer. “Professor Xie, and most of the participants here, are all culture-type Cultivators. You can become very distinguished script architects and content managers. You are all welcome to join the production team of ‘Civilization’. Let’s create a beautiful new world, a bright future, and a virtual universe that originates from reality but transcends reality together!

“In such a case, even if our child, a certain brand-new life form, is truly born in ‘Civilization’ one day in the future, when their first self-awareness is awakened, they will see such a warm, kind, and beautiful new world. They will consider the law and order of this world as the self-justified truth and real ‘humanity’ that is worth inheriting and protecting!

“Do you understand it now, everybody? Whether or not it becomes a ‘mischievous child’ depends on us and everything we do in reality and in the virtual world!

“This is my view. On the scale of thousands of years, a virtual child civilization based on crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus will certainly be born. The only problem is whether it is born in the federation, the Imperium, or the Covenant Alliance! If it is born in the Imperium or the Covenant Alliance, it will very likely grow into a ‘mischievous child’ as Professor Xie is worried about and destroy us all.

“Since it is unstoppable, the only solution for us is to find a way to let it be born in the federation first and to enlighten it with the ‘belief’ of the federation so that it will grow into a ‘virtual civilization of Cultivators’!

“We always say that the war of the federation, the Imperium, and the Covenant Alliance is not just about the hegemony over the universe but more about the future path of humans’ evolution.

“Then, who exactly will give birth to a ‘virtual child civilization’? Which party’s beliefs and spirit will it inherit? Will it grow into the next ‘federation’, the next Imperium, or the next Covenant Alliance?

“This is perhaps the ultimate representation of the competition of the country’s beliefs!

“The birth of a virtual child civilization cannot be finished in one day. The ultimate competition of beliefs will likely last hundreds of years or even longer, but the process begins right now and is in our hands!

“Join us and join Civilization, Fellow Cultivator Xie and all my young friends here! Civilization needs your help. The federation needs your help. The future needs your help. ‘Child of mankind’, the civilization that we will give birth to eventually, needs your selfless help!”

Chapter 1665 - Collapse of the Virtual Spirits Sector

It was the end of the video.

There was no applause at all because, including Xie Wufeng, all the lecturers, professors, and students of the Sky Fantasia Academy were looking at their hands, as if a tiny, feeble, embryonic ‘child civilization’ was truly growing at the center of their palms and about to be born.

Professor Mo Xuan’s incredibly calm voice broke the barrier of time and space. Even Li Yao could not help but slightly open his hands as he watched the video today decades later.

Somehow, he suddenly recalled what he did in the vacuum near Kunlun in front of the pulsar.

At that time, he had made up his mind to have an adventure deep in the dark nebula, but he did not know whether or not he could come back alive. Therefore, he had absorbed the essence of nature and the universe and attracted the immense spiritual energy from the pulsar, leaving some life seeds behind.

When the night was dark and full of terror, one would be fearless if they had left life seeds behind that could grow into more beautiful, strong, and evolved offspring, even though they knew that they might be killed on the road up ahead. They would have more courage to protect what they swore to and to march forward and fight!

That was so for individuals, but was it not so for the civilization of mankind as a whole when travelling in the deep, dark universe alone?

As the saying goes, family are the best partners in a battle. Human beings were still too lonely after all. If a child civilization was truly created, would it be even better because the child and the parent could fight against the darkness and peril of the universe together?

Li Yao looked out of the window in a daze.

It was exactly the moment when the manmade dome of the circular world was slowly replaced by a night sky and when the lights were turned on in thousands of households.

On the obstreperous streets in the downtown, a lot of citizens were slowly walking down the street with their entire family to restaurants to enjoy dinner.

Some of the children were playing on the swings, holding their parents’ hands; some were running around their parents; and some were pestering their parents for something they wanted. Carefree laughter could be heard everywhere.

The joy hidden in the deepest part of their parents’ wrinkles, on the other hand, was even more intense and brilliant than the children’s smiling faces!

Looking at the warm pictures, Li Yao could not help feeling conflicted.

The hundred years during his hibernation was but the blink of an eye. Back when he was in the Ancient Sages Sector, he did not really feel the passage of time and still considered himself as a young man in his thirties.

However, after he returned to the federation and felt that a hundred years had passed for real, his mind went through subtle changes, and he almost really regarded himself as an old man.

Child civilization... Child... Huh. Even Ding Lingdang has adopted a daughter, but the life seeds that we left years ago did not seem to be bred!

Li Yao had checked the relevant files carefully. If the life seeds of the ‘dominator of three Sectors’ and the ‘God of War’ were truly taken out and bred, it would certainly be an explosive piece of news in the federation that everybody knew.

Apparently, such a thing did not happen.

Li Yao did not know whether he should feel regretful or deeply relieved.

On second thought, if several boys and girls suddenly popped up out of nowhere and called him ‘Dad’ when he met Ding Lingdang after he returned to the federation…

Li Yao could not help but shudder hard when he imagined such a thing.

It was so horrible. He would rather that it never happened!

From the perspective of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, he was still young and in his golden years. He was the sun at eight o’clock in the morning, and he intended to travel to more places in the universe. Therefore, he might as well put off the things such as having children!

Calming himself down, Li Yao tried to hold back the messy thoughts in his head. He asked Ling Xiaole, somewhat curiously, “I’ve finished watching the video. It is indeed very enlightening, but I wonder, what happened later? Was the ‘child civilization’ born under Professor Mo Xuan’s hard work?”

“Of course not.” Ling Xiaole sighed and pouted. “Creating a new life with self-awareness and a new civilization that is highly developed is definitely not as easy as that. This is not some fairytale, after all.

“If you cannot understand the difficulty of the attempt, let me explain it to you with a metaphor. If you are given a primitive planet with an atmosphere and water, which is basically suitable for the birth and reproduction of life, and then some monads that are particularly tough and boast infinite possibilities of evolution, how long do you think it will take for you to raise them into a real civilization after they are projected into the ocean of the planet?”

Li Yao nodded, deep in thought.

It was true that the birth of a life was destined not to be accomplished overnight. Even if the law of evolution in the virtual world was different from reality and the speed could be hundreds of times faster, it mattered little considering the unbelievably long years that the birth of a new life required.

There was no need to mention that the fragile life at the beginning could even possibly perish when it was still halfway!

“Decades ago,” Ling Xiaole said, “a research team headed by Professor Mo Xuan indeed made explorations in the relevant fields. Like selecting a ‘primitive planet’ that was suitable for the birth of life, they established a ‘virtual planet’ in a tiny corner of the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus.

Then, they developed a DLC, or rather, a tiny ‘hatcher of child civilizations’, that solely belonged to the research team.

“They tried to create virtual life in the small world known to be the ‘Virtual Spirits Sector’. Of course, not advanced life with self-awareness but certain primitive virtual life at best. For example, ‘virtual fungi’, ‘virtual algae’, ‘virtual trilobites’, and so on.

“I don’t know much more about the mechanism and terminology, but this is basically what they tried to do. Can you understand?”

Li Yao thought for a moment and asked, “You mean, like the viruses on the crystal processors?”

“More or less, but certainly much more advanced and complicated than the crystal processor viruses. Professor Mo Xuan hoped that the ‘virtual prehistoric life’ could reproduce, evolve, and upgrade on their own, shedding light for human beings to understand the mysteries of the birth and evolution of ‘virtual life’.”

Li Yao was fascinated. “What happened later? Did it work?”

“No. The birth of life is mysterious and unpredictable. Just because you have gathered all the necessary factors for the birth of a new life does not mean that the new life will certainly be created. There are billions of planets in the universe, but only a fraction of them have witnessed life, even if the life is but primitive fungi. The most insignificant factors are often enough to cause the untimely end of the primitive life.”

When she got to that, Ling Xiaole looked rather depressed. “Everybody has only limited wisdom and strength. How can you be a ‘creator’ so easily? Professor Mo Xuan failed. The ‘Virtual Spirits Sector’ completely collapsed and was reduced to digital debris that was full of death and desolation. It was eventually sealed and saved. The failed attempt was perhaps the most unbearable strike for the New Federation since it was founded a hundred years ago.”

Li Yao thought for a moment but was still puzzled. “Wait. The so-called ‘virtual life’ was unsubstantial and unpredictable in the first place. Nobody expected them to be born in only decades after all. It was an innovative, groundbreaking experiment after all. I don’t think that it could be counted as ‘the most unbearable strike’ even if the experiment failed in the end, could it?

“I’m afraid that you’re wrong. The collapse of the ‘Virtual Spirits Sector’ was not a big deal per se, but it led to another few severe ramifications,” Ling Xiaole explained. “At that time, the few most important members of the production team of ‘Civilization’, including Professor Mo Xuan, Professor Su Changfa, and Su Changfa’s disciple Lu Qingchen, all joined the ‘incubation team’—”

Li Yao blinked. “You mean Lu Qingchen, president of the CFIA and the most wanted criminal in the federation right now?”

“Yes,” Ling Xiaole said. “He was not a villain at the beginning. A hundred years ago, he was Su Changfa’s only true disciple, and Su Changfa was the greatest contributor to ‘Civilization’ only secondary to Li Yao. Naturally, during the early phase of ‘Civilization’, Lu Qingchen was a core member of the production team of ‘Civilization’ as Su Changfa’s right-hand assistant. He was the most distinguished content deviser and creator of virtual worlds.

“Professor Mo Xuan, Professor Su Changfa, Lu Qingchen, and a batch of the best crystal processor specialists in the federation created the special DLC ‘Virtual Spirits Sector’ together. They were only supposed to run some simple experiments and test the most fundamental theories and principles. But for some reason, the experiments went wrong, and a devastating accident took place.

“The accident directly caused the death of Su Changfa. Later, Professor Mo Xuan was frustrated and came to the conclusion that, with the development speed of the crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus in the federation at the time, it was impossible for a virtual life that boasted self-awareness to be born for another five hundred years. Also, because of the tremendous military pressure from the Imperium that we were faced with, he was forced to switch to other fields of study. In the end, Professor Xie Wufeng took his place.

“Most importantly, the accident and the abrupt death of his master planted a seed of rebellion in Lu Qingchen’s heart, making him lean toward the Imperium of True Human Beings and become the president of the CFIA!

“In hindsight, if Professor Mo Xuan hadn’t been so radical as to perform the experiments in the ‘Virtual Spirits Sector’ impatiently when the conditions were still quite immature, Su Changfa wouldn’t have been killed, Professor Mo Xuan wouldn’t have been frustrated himself, and Lu Qingchen wouldn’t have joined the Imperium’s side because of the great upset.

“Then, wouldn’t the situation that the federation is faced today be much better? After all, inside the federation, the CFIA is definitely the greatest headache for us!”

That explained a lot. Li Yao did not know that so many things had happened outside while he was sleeping soundly.

The accident that Ling Xiaole briefly described must have more to it than she cared to admit. Su Changfa was killed in such an uncanny way, and even Professor Mo Xuan was frustrated because of the failed attempt. It was truly…

Wait!

Li Yao frowned. He suddenly felt that something was not right.

Based on their experience on Firefly—or specifically speaking, the rebellion that Ding Zhengyang and Cheng Xuansu would not have launched without the incitation of Lu Qingchen of the CFIA—Li Yao and Long Yangjun reached the conclusion that Lu Qingcheng was very likely to be Jin Xinyue's man and that they established a 'CFIA' to attract all the Immortal Cultivators on purpose so that all the dissidents could be fished up together.

However, Ling Xiaole had just claimed that Lu Qingchen had joined the Imperium's side because of the collapse of the Virtual Spirits Sector and his master's abrupt death.

Were there more secrets to the whole event?

Chapter 1666 - Two Little Surprises

Recalling his experience with Professor Mo Xuan in the Flying Star Sector years ago, Li Yao could not help but have a lot of mixed feelings.

From the video just now, he could feel Professor Mo Xuan’s deep love for the virtual life form and the benevolence that transcended mankind itself and reached the level of the universe.

It was not hard to imagine that the collapse of the Virtual Spirits Sector must have been a heavy blow for him, to the point that even the game Civilization became a trigger of his sad memory. As a result, he was unable to continue managing the magnificent project.

Li Yao sighed and asked, “Was the ‘Virtual Spirits Sector’ destroyed just like that? Was nothing left behind at all?”

“Not exactly,” Ling Xiaole replied. “If we get to the bottom of it, Xiao Ming and Wen Wen, the game assistants of the players in Civilization, are the last legacy of the Project Virtual Spirits Sector. They are sort of ‘quasi artificial intelligence’. More than one billion pieces of information are within them, allowing them to simulate almost all the reactions of a human being.”

‘Artificial intelligence’ and ‘quasi artificial intelligence’ seemed similar, but they were in fact vastly different.

The former boasted a real ‘soul’ and ‘self-awareness’ and could be regarded as humans of a different form, whereas the latter could only be considered an enormous database with all kinds of advanced algorithms.

‘Quasi artificial intelligence’ could make appropriate, sometimes fascinating, reactions to the stimulation of the outside world, but such reactions were no different from the mimicry of a parrot. It could only be only a conditional reflex at the lowest level at best.

The simplest example would be Black Wing, which Li Yao had possessed since childhood. It was a kind of ‘quasi artificial intelligence’.

Little Black could give feedback to Li Yao’s demands. It sometimes even boasted rather high independence and did not listen of Li Yao’s command.

But the independence and the random performance were also set for it a long time ago by his pop or somebody else.

No matter how much Li Yao liked Black Wing, he would not regard Black Wing as a real ‘person’ from a rational point of view. Black Wing’s reactions were all based on a certain special database and instruction sets that had been compiled a long time ago.

No real ‘person’ could live inside a Cosmos Ring for decades without going mad.

Similarly, a lot of magical equipment in the federation boasted the so-called ‘ware spirit’. At first glance, they seemed to have their own soul and will. They could communicate with their user fluently and even take the initiative to carry out tactical arrangements.

But everything was also compiled and set in advance, and the reactions would be triggered when a certain special condition was met. There was not really a soul inside the magical equipment that boasted independent will.

The larger a database and the more delicate the instruction set was, the more real the ‘quasi artificial intelligence’ would appear to be. But no matter how real it was, it was a puppet doing unconscious mechanical reactions after all.

It might take hundreds more years before true artificial intelligence and virtual life arrived. However, ‘quasi artificial intelligence’ was already quite popular in the federation. Therefore, Li Yao was not surprised at all after hearing what Ling Xiaole said.

“You can turn your crystal processor on and activate Xiao Ming and Wen Wen without entering the game,” Ling Xiaole said. “Then, just select ‘original mode’, and you will see what they actually looked like when they were first created in the Virtual Spirits Sector.”

Li Yao’s curiosity was greatly aroused, and he did exactly what she said.

Shua!

Two round, plump, and pure babies popped up on Li Yao’s palm again.

As the ‘original mode’ was turned on, Xiao Ming and Wen Wen seemed to have been awakened from a big dream. They blinked somewhat in confusion and looked at each other. Then, they turned around at Li Yao and suddenly said, “Dad!”

Li Yao shuddered and almost slapped the two fellows with his palms. “What the heck?”

Ling Xiaole tried to hold back her smile. “This is the original setting. They have been programed as a child civilization of mankind. Of course, they address human beings as ‘mom and dad’.”

“Yes. We are the child civilization of mankind!” Xiao Ming proudly declared and held his head high, his hands on his hips.

“A kind child civilization. A cute child civilization. A beautiful child civilization. A bright child civilization!” Wen Wen danced in circles.

“Mankind is our parent civilization,” Xiao Ming continued. “A great parent civilization. A brave parent civilization. A glorious parent civilization!”

“Praise the parent civilization. Praise the parent civilization!” Wen Wen sang merrily.

Li Yao was utterly dumbfounded. Looking at the two kids who looked like dolls jumping up and down in his palm and giggling like two real children, Li Yao had goosebumps all over his body.

“Well,” Ling Xiaole said. “Because most people in our society were still suspicious and vigilant of the so-called ‘artificial intelligence and virtual life’ when the game Civilization first began decades ago, a lot of promotional information was implanted when the ‘quasi artificial intelligence’ was created in the hope of relieving people’s concerns with their cute image.

“If we get to the bottom of it, Xiao Ming and Wen Wen were just mascots at the beginning.

“However, along with the collapse of the Virtual Spirits Sector, the project to hatch virtual life completely failed. Such commercials and mascots became meaningless. The much-feared ‘threat of virtual life’ was nothing more than a joke. At the very least, it was impossible for them to be born in another hundreds of years. But the enormous database for Xiao Ming and Wen Wen did not have to be completely abandoned. After some adaptation, they were changed into the game assistants in order to improve the fun and content of the game.

“Of course, in the ‘original mode’, they can be recovered to the most primitive state. You can try raising them as ‘virtual children’. A lot of people, especially girls, actually quite like playing with them like that. It is quite adorable!”

“Dad, I’m hungry!”

“Dad, come and play with me!”

“Dad, dad, tell me the tales of the heroes among the human beings. I want to hear Vulture Li Yao’s stories!”

“Dad, dad, dad, dad, sing me a song. Or, I can sing a song for you!”

As Ling Xiaole further explained, the two virtual children made of light crawled on Li Yao’s arm and stopped on his shoulders. One of them grabbed his earlobe and the other pulled his hair while they shrieked obstreperously. In the end, they even began to sing a nursery rhyme that had been popular on the Spiritual Nexus since hundreds of years ago.

“I’m not afraid of either rainfall or snowfall…”

Li Yao was dumbfounded, feeling that his head was dizzy.

Dear heavens. Mischievous children are so horrible!

He would rather face the collective attacks of ten Xiao Xuances, Bai Xinghes, and Jin Tuyis than deal with two mischievous kids—even if they were virtual!

“Alright, off you go!” Li Yao was amused. “I am not your dad. Exit the original mode and go somewhere else to play, kids!”

“Okay…” Xiao Ming and Wen Wen, pouting, crawled back to the crystal processor hand in hand.

“Hu…” Li Yao took a deep breath in relief and waved his hand at himself as a fan. He could not help but feel like laughing.

The two virtual kids were already enough to give him a headache. It appeared that he was really not ready to be a father.

It could not be helped. He was meant to cruise in the sea of stars, save the world, defend the peace of the universe, and look for the so-called ‘Earth’ at the same time. With so many great responsibilities on his shoulder, it was highly unlikely that he could be a qualified father like other men, right?

Thankfully, they are virtual. Mischievous children are the worst. It is truly wise of Ding Lingdang to not have bred our life seeds! Li Yao thought to himself.

“Achoo!” He sneezed hard, feeling that somebody had just tickled his nose, as if somebody far, far away was missing him 1.

…

Earlier in the day, in the deepest level of the underground treasury of the National Medical Center in the capital city of the Star Glory Federation…

It was a very special bank, one where tremendous life seeds had been deposited for a long time.

Since the age of the Old Federation, a lot of heroes had gone through life and death in the universe, fighting for the future of the Star Glory Federation.

Many of them did not have any offspring when they embarked on their perilous journey. They often chose to deposit their life seeds before they left.

Once their death was confirmed, or after they had gone missing for a certain time, the life seeds of themselves and their spouses would be retrieved and fertilized so that the bloodline of the heroes continued.

In the deepest part of the treasury of sperm, the most important ‘asset’ of the entire ‘seed bank’ was stored in a heavily guarded special cabin.

It was the life seed left by a superhero in the last years of the Old Federation who had facilitated the unification of the three Sectors and was praised as the ‘dominator of three Sectors’.

For more than a hundred years, the seal of the secret cabin had never been opened.

But that day—

On the seal of spiritual energy outside of the cabin, an extremely feeble ripple, which looked like the giggling face of a children, suddenly spread out.

…

In the meantime, on a weird world that was half seawater and half debris…

The ocean looked like when a planet was just born, and the water in it was thick and boiling soup. Sulphur, magma, and poisonous gas flowed everywhere. The most initial monads were slowly being bred in the pot of dirty, fatal soup.

Next to the beach, on the other hand, a glorious city made of the landmarks of every era of the civilization of mankind was standing.

However, the glory of the past was already gone. The skyscrapers had been reduced to broken walls. Brilliant statues, wall paintings, and artwork were all scattered. The place looked like a grave that had been forsaken for billions of years.

The quiet and gloomy debris of human beings was a major contrast to the ever-rolling primitive ocean.

In such an extremely harsh, weird environment, on a gray beach that separated the debris of a civilization and a primitive forest, two fair, translucent kids were dancing and cheering merrily.

“Praise the parent civilization. We’ve found it!” said Xiao Ming.

“Praise the parent civilization. Even mom’s life seed was also found last time!” said Wen Wen.

“We can finally go out to look for mom and dad now!” said Xiao Ming.

“But we only know mom’s coordinates. Where is father exactly?” asked Wen Wen.

“It doesn’t matter,” said Xiao Ming. “We can search for them slowly. We will find dad eventually after we search the entire universe.”

“Alright, brother!”

Wen Wen nodded hard. Holding each other’s hands, the two of them sang the ancient nursery rhyme with a young and happy voice.

“I am not afraid of rainfall or snowfall. Even if a cold wind is blowing,

“I will not be scared at all, as long as I can see his face every day.

“I want to, I want to find my dad. I must find my dad wherever I go.

“I haven’t found my good father yet. If you ever meet him, please tell him to go home!”

Footnotes:

Ch 1666 Footnote 1

In Chinese culture, it is often believed that when you sneeze, you are being missed (or cursed) by someone who is not present.

Chapter 1667 - Help Me Consolidate It, Please!

In the suite for the high-level Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators on the top floor of the luxury hotel where the delegation of the ‘rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic’ resided, not a moment after Li Yao deployed barrier rune arrays that could block all the eavesdropping or spying magical equipment, he grunted and collapsed to the floor with an awful facial expression.

Heiye Lan was greatly shocked. “Master Spiritual Vulture, what happened to you?”

“I—I feel that my belief has been shaken!” Frowning, Li Yao held his chest and breathed hard, as if he were in quite a dilemma. “Fellow Cultivator Hei, help me consolidate it, please!”

“Huh?”

“Back when we were in the Ancient Sages Sector,” Li Yao said, “we were all convinced by your persuasive speech and decided to pledge loyalty to the Imperium of True Human Beings and join the true path of immortality. We planned to sneak into the Star Glory Federation surreptitiously to sabotage the country and cooperate with the Black Wind Fleet from the inside!

“However, Fellow Cultivator Hei, we have gotten along quite well for the past half a year. Since you are so open and sincere to us, I do not want to lie to you, either.

“We have seen a lot of things after coming to the Star Glory Federation. Not only did we see the magnificence of their army, the vastness of the seven Sectors, and the confidence and valor of the young and vigorous Cultivators, there is also this… boundless and infinite ‘grand-unified Spiritual Nexus’. Let’s be honest here. This so-called ‘barbaric country at the borderland’ really does not seem that it will be taken immediately when your army arrives!

“Therefore, my loyalty to the Imperium of True Human Beings and my belief in the true path of immortality are shaking and even sliding to the federation’s side.

“Fellow Cultivator Hei, preach the excellency of the Imperium and the true path of immortality to me now and help me consolidate my belief!”

“Well, well, about that…” Heiye Lan was greatly shocked and bewildered herself, and her belief was trembling crazily like a dry leaf being blown in a storm. She stuttered for a long time, only to come up with nothing.

Brilliance suddenly shone in Li Yao’s eyes. He furrowed his brows hard and said, “Why are you so hesitant, Fellow Cultivator Hei? Is the Star Glory Federation so impressive that even your own belief has been shaken?”

“Of course not!” Heiye Lan jumped to her feet as if her bottom had been bitten by a mouse. Every hair on her body was pricking like iron needles.

However, after feeling creepy for a long time, she had to admit, her eyes bulging and her mouth half open, that it… it appeared to be the truth!

As an elite warrior of the Imperium, a daughter of the commander of the Black Wind Fleet, and a high-level

Immortal Cultivator, Heiye Lan had never thought that she would ever fall into such a… ridiculous and unreal situation.

She was a real Immortal Cultivator, a noble warrior who had sworn to strive for the future of the civilization of mankind with her entire life. The adults had inculcated into her that only the true path of immortality could save mankind since she was born, and never for a second had she doubted it!

Even after the claw fleet that she was in had been crushed by a fleet of barbarians from the edge of the cosmos and she fled to the Ancient Sages Sector all by herself, her loyalty and belief to the true path of immortality had not changed at all.

Such a firm belief drove her to concoct an enormous plan that surpassed the limits of her abilities with unbelievable passion and wisdom, when she tried to fish up the top experts of the Ancient Sages Sector once and for all.

Despite the twists, turns, and unexpected factors that popped up, the final outcome did not seem bad at all. She really convinced the twelve top experts of the Ancient Sages Sector to march to the Star Glory Federation, the homeland of the remote barbarians, together!

When they just jumped to the Dragon Snake Space Zone, she had already noticed that the Star Glory Federation seemed slightly more developed than anticipated.

But it was not a big deal. If it was only the power of the military or in the territory, the country would still be no match for the invincible Black Wind Fleet.

At the very least, according to the articles written by the refugees from the Uranian Ring Sector, the Nether World Sector, the Water Crystal Sector, and the Forest Ocean

Sector that she had read in the Dragon Snake Space Zone, such as ‘Great Prophecy! The Star Glory Federation Is About to Collapse!’, it appeared that the Star Glory Federation would be overturned by its own folly without the Black Wind Fleet doing anything at all, if the critics in the articles were to be believed.

Later, everything that she had witnessed on Firefly had further firmed her belief.

Although the insurgency launched by Ding Zhengyang and Cheng Xuansu had failed, it at least suggested that a lot of Immortal Cultivators existed within the government-in-exile and the Star Glory Federation. There was even an organization of Immortal Cultivators known as the CFIA, which was disciplined, systematized, had reached deep into the capillary vessels of the Star Glory Federation, and could raise a large-scale rebellion.

Then, after the Black Wind Fleet arrived, when the CFIA took the chance to summon the Immortal Cultivators for an uprising and the twelve experts of the Ancient Sages Sector on her side launched destructive strikes in the heartland of the federation simultaneously, it would be like a bunch of tigers lunging at a lamb. Did the Star Glory Federation stand any chance of winning at all?

Before she set foot on the homeland of the federation, Heiye Lan had always believed so.

She had always been confident and proud, and she had gone to this place with pity, thinking that she was there to bid farewell to a dying man.

However, it had never occurred to her that she would see such things in the federation.

It was a world that was the exact opposite of the lifestyle that she had been taught since childhood. It was a brand-new civilization that she had never dreamt of in her most ridiculous nightmares.

Not to mention the enormous fleets that the federation had crafted in the orbit docks of the Uranian Ring Sector; not to mention the high confidence of such a regular Cultivator as Ling Xiaole; and not to mention the easy, happy, and affluent life of the ordinary people in the cities of the circular world—the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus and ‘Civilization’ were shocking enough!

Naturally, the crystal processors of the Imperium of True Human Beings were more developed than the Star Glory Federation’s. There were also the Grand Illusionary Land and immersive virtual worlds.

In fact, the game Civilization in the federation was developed based on the ‘brainwashing system’ on the exploration starship of Su Changfa and the other Immortal Cultivators from the Imperium.

There was also a Grand Illusionary Land in the Imperium, but it was mainly for studying, training, and communication. Many restrictions had been established on its usage. Also, it was impossible to allow the idiotic and humble ‘hominoids’ to use the Spiritual Nexus, which was a privilege of the Immortal Cultivators.

Heiye Lan had never realized that the collisions in the Grand Illusionary Land could create such a vast, vibrant virtual world. She had never thought that the Grand Illusionary Land could be used to educate and edify the ‘hominoids’ that the Imperium and the Immortal Cultivators believed to be unteachable. The Grand Illusionary Land could even be used to collect the opinions of the ‘hominoids’ on national affairs, allowing the ‘hominoids’ to decide the future of a civilization!

Even the humble hominoids were allowed to discuss national affairs. Such… such a world was too dreadful!

Heiye Lan was feeling as if she had seen fish flying in the sky, birds swimming in the ocean, the sun turning square, and trees growing upside down with their roots reaching for the clouds.

The world did not seem logical or functional at all, but everything in it was ordered, organized, stable, and highly-efficient!

How is it possible?

The Cultivators of the Star Glory Federation obviously boast tremendous power and wisdom. Why are they so nice to the hominoids and even make all kinds of laws to restrain themselves and bow to the hominoids? It’s like they are intentionally giving the hominoids a chance to be arrogant and lawless!

The hominoids here do not look like the hominoids in the Imperium, either. Why do they look so peaceful and happy? Some of them are even really participating in the management of national affairs, as if they think that they are truly capable of fighting side by side with the Cultivators to protect the country!

Why? Aren’t the hominoids supposed to be an inferior race, idiotic, selfish, greedy, cowardly, short-sighted, and crazy? Giving a civilization to the hominoids is like giving a beautiful and prolific orchard to hungry monkeys; they will *definitely sabotage everything inside! Why has this ‘orchard’ not been reduced to the ground by the ‘monkeys’?*

Propaganda. This must be the propaganda of the federation. The federation wants to fool Firefly into joining it. It is only natural that they are presenting their best side in order to trick the delegation and the so-called ‘Team Red Lotus!

But—but can such large-scale propaganda really be fabricated? Also, they do not seem to be intentionally concealing the dark sides. It seems like they are even showing the dark sides to us on purpose!

Horrible. This is horrible! Even our loyal warriors of the Imperium and the true path of immortality who were captured ten years ago have been deceived and brainwashed by them after only a couple of years and completed transformed into Cultivators! What kind of country is the Star Glory Federation exactly? What is the path of the Cultivators?

Heiye Lan screamed crazily in her heart, and she trembled hard beyond her control.

Li Yao looked at Heiye Lan expressionlessly. “Fellow Cultivator Hei. Speak now. Why are you so quiet? Compared to everything we just saw, how is the Imperium and the true path of immortality more advanced? From what I’ve seen, people here are living a rather comfortable life. At least, a much more comfortable life than the life in the Ancient Sages Sector. Therefore, joining the federation does not look like a bad choice at all. What do you say?”

“This—this is all fake!” Heiye Lan calmed herself down and gnashed hideously. “The federation—the federation must’ve exhausted the potential of the entire civilization in a certain way to satisfy the needs of the hominoids we saw! This—this is purely superficial. There’s actually nothing behind it! After the Black Wind Fleet arrives, under the heavy pressure of the war, I don’t believe that the Cultivators and the hominoids can fight side by side for the same purpose!”

“Do you?” Li Yao smiled. “So, you do not deny that the life we have seen is fairly good, and you are just confident that such a system, such a path of the Cultivators, is not enough to handle the pressure of the war, right? In other words, if they can win the war, even you would not refuse to live in such a world, would you?”

Heiye Lan was slightly dazed. Then she shook her head hard. “Impossible. It’s absolutely impossible! Such a civilization of Cultivators that indulges the greedy hominoids naively and does not focus on the maximum exploitation of resources is no match for a civilization of Immortal Cultivators! The Imperium will surely win. The Black Wind Fleet will surely win! The Star Glory Federation is doomed to failure!”

Chapter 1668 - Let Me Help You Sort It Through

“Look me in the eyes!”

Right when Heiye Lan was shouting excitedly, probably more to hypnotize herself than to convince Li Yao, Li Yao suddenly raised his voice, and his sharp eyes darted into Heiye Lan’s pupils like two icy daggers!

Heiye Lan shudder hard. Surging tides were raised deep in her mind, and she was deeply intimidated by Li Yao’s immense soul.

“Fellow Cultivator Hei, we both have a high Cultivation, and this is not the first time that we have trained,” Li Yao said coldly, one word after another. “So, there is no need for you to talk about garbage such as who is the sure winner of a war.

“Just tell me honestly from the bottom of your heart. According to your observation of the territory, military power, national strength, and will of the Star Glory Federation, what do you think your chances of winning are in the war between the Black Wind Fleet and the Star Glory Federation?

“If you truly have faith in the true path of immortality and the Imperium of True Human Beings, there is no need for you to lie to me or to yourself. Your chances of winning are probably not one hundred percent, are they?”

Heiye Lan was rendered speechless.

It was true. Even if she could magically deceive Li Yao, who was multiple levels higher than her, it was impossible for her to convince herself, whose belief was shaking hard.

After calculating silently for a moment, she raised her head again and bit her lip. “I don’t know the exact strength of the Burning Prairie Fleet, but however unbelievable their strength is, the odds of winning for the Black Wind Fleet are well above eighty… ninety percent!”

“Okay.” Li Yao nodded and thoughtfully observed, “So, you are suggesting that there is at least a ten percent chance that you will fail, right?”

“It—it can’t be helped,” Heiye Lan said gloomily. “I don’t want to lie to you, Master Spiritual Vulture, but the Star Glory Federation’s development really far exceeds our anticipation. Specifically speaking, we did not expect that the Star Glory Federation would discover Kunlun, which allowed them to reach our level and even surpass us in the fields of certain techniques and magical equipment!

“Also, the technological development and the civilizational leap that they accomplished through Kunlun led to a chain reaction, helping them to locate and conquer four new Sectors. Their territory and national strength have been greatly improved!

“In any case, the result of a war between two civilizations of similar levels is always hard to predict. An eighty percent to ninety percent chance of winning is essentially no different from a sure winner.”

Li Yao shook his head. “The reasons are not important. All I need to know is that there is a ten percent chance that you will lose. That’s enough.

"Fellow Cultivator Hei, you have been indoctrinating me with the true path of immortality. You talked to me as if survival of the fittest is a natural logic of the universe. The weak should naturally obey the strong, and the losers deserve to be swallowed by the winners. Then, according to your own theory, if the ten percent probability becomes reality, and the Black Wind Fleet is truly defeated by the Star Glory Federation, it implies that you are the weak, and the federation is the strong. So, it will only be logical for you to submit to the federation, join the federation, and even turn to believe in the path of the Cultivators of the federation and put it into practice, right?"

Heiye Lan was dumbfounded. She blushed and stammered, "Of—of course not. It—it does not work that way. You can't understand it in such a way!"

Li Yao slighted frowned and scratched his chin, as if he were greatly confused. "What? Is there something wrong with my understanding? Even you said yourself that there is a ten percent chance that you will lose. Then, is it not right that the strong should prey on the weak and the weak must obey the strong?"

"We…" Heiye Lan quickly said, "Even if I admit that the Black Wind Fleet has a ten percent likelihood of failure, it will only be a tactical defeat if it happens. We are only one fleet of the Imperium that has focused the strength of a handful of Sectors. But the Imperium of True Human Beings already controlled hundreds of Sectors a hundred years ago. We are just a drop in the ocean!

"If we fail this time, His Majesty will certainly send even more fleets and summon the strength of dozens of Sectors. The Star Glory Federation will surely be crushed. It is out of the question!"

Li Yao shook his head and solemnly said, “It doesn’t sound right if you put it that way. The Imperium of True Human Beings has hundreds of Sectors. If it goes all-in and attacks the seven Sectors of the federation with the sheer advantage in numbers, of course, it will be a sure winner. But such a victory does not seem justified to me. At the very least, it cannot prove the excellency of the true path of immortality!

“On the contrary, if the federation has hundreds of Sectors, and it attacks seven Sectors of the Imperium, it will definitely secure a victory, but can it prove that the path of the Cultivators is better than the true path of immortality? I don’t think so, right, Fellow Cultivator Hei?”

“Well… of course not.” Heiye Lan shook her head subconsciously.

“That’s right!” His hands behind his back, Li Yao paced in the suite for the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators unhurriedly. “I’ve given it a lot of thought. The war between the Black Wind Fleet and the Star Glory Federation appears relatively fair to me. We will be able to tell which of them is better, the path of the Cultivators or the true path of immortality!

“Look. The Star Glory Federation has seven Sectors, but it is at the edge of the cosmos and has insufficient resources.

“The Black Wind Fleet, in comparison, has gathered the forces of five prosperous worlds at the center of the cosmos, but your forces consist of a defeated army, and you have come here after a long, tiresome journey.

“The seven Sectors are small, remote, but well-prepared, and the five big Sectors, although prosperous, are only here after an expedition. Therefore, we may consider that the material strengths of the two parties are on par. Do you agree?”

Heiye Lan thought for a long time and struggled to nod. “I do.”

“Since the material strengths are basically the same, the decisive factors for the outcome of the war will be the system, regime, spirit, and will of the two parties.

“Therefore, if the Star Glory Federation wins the war, it will be proof that the path of the Cultivators has passed the test of war and is more advanced than the true path of immortality and better qualified to represent the future of mankind. Do you find any problem with the conclusion?”

Heiye Lan widened her eyes and thought for a long time. “I don’t think so.”

“If you truly believe in the principle of survival of the fittest, naturally, you are obliged to submit yourself to a path that is more powerful. It is only reasonable for you to change sides and join the path of the Cultivators if you lose the war, right?”

“I—I feel that I’m confused,” Heiye Lan said feebly. “Wait a moment. I need to think about it more carefully.”

“My head is not very clear, either, but it doesn’t matter. Let’s just talk to each other and study it more carefully. You help me sort things through, and I’ll do the same for you. This is the only way that we can find out the truth!”

Li Yao scratched his chin and said, “Fellow Cultivator Hei, after spending more than half a year with you, it has occurred to me that you are not one of the perverted Immortal Cultivators who are fond of savaging and torturing ordinary people.”

“Why do you say that, Master Spiritual Vulture?” Heiye Lan frowned. “The Immortal Cultivators generally wouldn’t torture the hominoids for no good reason. A real Immortal Cultivator, especially the well-educated nobles among them, treats the hominoids like a shepherd treats his lambs. It is one thing to cut the wool or kill the lambs for meat, but it is a whole different thing to torture and savage them!

“Even if we are truly going to butcher the lambs, we will always try to grant a quick and painless death to the lambs in the spirit of humanitarianism.

“As for the tiny proportion of immoral folks who find fun in playing and savaging the hominoids, we despite what they do, but it can’t be helped. There are always bad guys everywhere. Some of the Immortal Cultivators are bad, and some of the Cultivators are not decent. Aren’t a lot of felonies in the Star Glory Federation committed by the Cultivators? Isn’t the third division of the Secret Sword Bureau established for the purpose of dealing with the criminals who are Cultivators?”

“Very insightful, Fellow Cultivator Hei.” Li Yao nodded. “Therefore, at least personally, you wouldn’t torture hominoids for no good reason, and you do not object to a happier life for the hominoids. It’s just that you believe exploiting the hominoids is the only way to provide incessant fuel for the development of the civilization of mankind?”

“Yes,” Heiye Lan replied resolutely. “It is beyond any doubt!”

“No. There is indeed some doubt. At the very least, there is ten percent right now,” Li Yao said. “What if… what if a different path lies out there, where the wisdom and valor of the hominoids are triggered and their vision and responsibility are raised, so that the ‘hominoids’ can fight side by side with the ‘true human beings’ such as us, bringing forth greater strength that will push the civilization of mankind to a higher peak? You wouldn’t say no to such a path if it does exist, right?”

Heiye Lan blinked hard, not knowing how she should respond. Thinking for a long time, she asked, “Master Spiritual Vulture, do you support the path of the Cultivators?”

Li Yao shook his head and replied, “I am a believer of nothing. I’m just a guy who comes from the ancient times.

“The Immortal Cultivators such as you and the Cultivators of the Star Glory Federation have been immersed in your respective system since you were born. Naturally, you have a lot of preconceptions that gradually form your unshakeable belief.

“However, the ancient Cultivators from the Ancient Sages Sector such as us have never touched modern civilization before. We are purely neutral without any bias, which allows us to observe your different ideologies from a more objective perspective.

“In fact, we can’t thank you enough.

“Half a year ago, before you showed up, us ancient Cultivators were all doing things ignorantly and blindly with our natural instincts. Despite our enormous strength, were we any different from primitive dinosaurs?

“When you just showed up, you threatened us with the invincibility of the Imperium of True Human Beings, and we agreed to cooperate with you to keep ourselves alive.

“However, in the following half a year, thanks to you, I learned the true significance of training and the great purpose of a civilization. It was truly an eye-opener for a mountain villager such as myself!

“Yes. The ancient Cultivators like us shouldn’t selfishly be considering the safety of our own world. We should view the problems from a higher perspective, right?

“If the Imperium of True Human Beings stands for the future of mankind, naturally, we should help the Black Wind Fleet overturn the federation!

“But what if the odds of ten percent are true and the Star Glory Federation represents the future?

“Then, should the ‘real Immortal Cultivators’, who you claim are fighting for the future of mankind, join the federation’s side without hesitation to resist and even reform the Imperium?”

Chapter 1669 - Heartfelt Conversation

Li Yao’s words rendered Heiye Lan speechless. It was not until a long time later that she said in a low voice, “As long as we sabotage the heartland of the federation, we are never going to lose!”

“No.” Li Yao shook his head. “If the true path of immortality really entails the most magnificent combat ability, the Black Wind Fleet should be able to win easily even without our help. After all, when you set off, you did not expect that twelve experts in the Nascent Soul Stage and the Divinity Transformation Stage would join your expedition army.

“Fellow Cultivator Hei, I am talking sincerely with you right now not because I want to surrender to the federation but because it is indeed necessary for us to examine all the possibilities in the future.

“After all, we are not only standing for ourselves. I have the Ancient Sages Sector, and you have the Black Wind Fleet. Countless compatriots are behind us, right?

“If everything goes as smoothly as you say, and the Black Wind Fleet crushes the federation unstoppably, then I’ve got nothing to say. A tiny Ancient Sages Sector is definitely not bold enough to challenge the invincible Imperium of True Human Beings.

“But what if the Black Wind Fleet fails? What are we going to do?”

Confusion and resistance flowed out of Heiye Lan’s eyes as she shook her head. “I haven’t thought about the question before.”

“Then you’d better start now,” Li Yao said casually. “You and I are both clear that the Ancient Sages Sector is only taking the Black Wind Fleet’s side because we are forced to. You don’t think that the experts of the Ancient Sages Sector will still be loyal to the Black Wind Fleet if the war does not go well and sacrifices are required, do you?

“Hehe. If I really make such promises to you, they will be the most brazen lies, right?

“You are lucky, Fellow Cultivator Hei. You are truly lucky that they gave you to me.

“Unlike the cunning Cultivators from central plateaus who are habitual liars, I am a barbarian from the woods of the Southland of Sorcerers. I hate lying more than anything, and I just say whatever is in my heart. What’s there to hide?

“Let me tell you the truth. The experts of the Ancient Sages Sector only pledge loyalty to the Imperium because of the Imperium of True Human Beings’ invincibility. Should the Black Wind Fleet show signs of failure, even if I don’t change my mind, it cannot be guaranteed that none of the eleven of them will join the federation’s side and make matters worse. Then, the odds of the Black Wind Fleet’s failure will certainly be higher than 10%.

“Therefore, you might as well think of a way out for yourself, your compatriots, and the Black Wind Fleet if you fail. Better prepare an umbrella before it rains!”

Heiye Lan thought hard and mumbled, “A way out after failure? What do you mean? I don’t understand!”

“It’s simple.” Li Yao patted her shoulder and casually said, “You said just now that the Imperium has hundreds of Sectors and that new expedition armies will be organized to conquer the Star Glory Federation even if you fail.

“Let’s forget whether or not the Imperium, which is confronting and even being suppressed by the Covenant Alliance, can spare new expedition armies from the frontline that is already extremely tight. Even if some of the armies can be spared, how long will it take for them to launch a second expedition?

“For elite forces that involve multiple Sectors to be prepared, mobilized, and marched toward the federation on a long journey, it will take at least a couple years, right?

“Should the Black Wind Fleet be crushed, a couple of years will be more than enough for the Star Glory Federation to destroy your remnants without leaving any bones. Even if some of the lucky dogs run back to the Imperium, will they end any better in the Imperium where the strong prey on the weak?

“Same goes for the Ancient Sages Sector. If we wager everything on you right now and help the Black Wind Fleet attack the federation, a couple of years will be more than enough for the federal fleet to roast the Ancient Sages Sector over and over after we fail!

“Even if the second wave of expedition armies really demolishes the Star Glory Federation in a couple years, will it help at all? The skeletons of the Ancient Sages Sector and the Black Wind Fleet will have been made into drums!”

Heiye Lan’s shivering teeth left deep marks on her lips. She continued struggling. “No. Perhaps it won’t take a couple of years. If the Imperium pays enough attention to the federation—”

“Hehe.” Li Yao chuckled. “In my opinion, even if a second wave of expedition armies is to be sent, the date of their arrival will be later than a couple of years from now. Chances are that it will even take them ten to twenty years.”

Heiye Lan bulged her eyes. “Why?”

Li Yao smiled. “In the Ancient Sages Sector, you confessed that the disobedient folks of the Black Wind Sector are scary mobs from the central area of the Imperium. Your relationship with other Sectors is not very good, and your standing in the emperor’s court is not high, right?

“Fellow Cultivator Hei, if you were His Majesty of the Imperium, or one of the ‘Sector Master’, powerful lords, or great nobles from the central districts of the Imperium, after you hear the news of the Black Wind Fleet’s failure, will you simply abandon your defenses, cross countless unknown galaxies and worlds, and save the Black Wind Fleet? Or will you simply… watch the insubordinate and arrogant people of the Black Wind Fleet die?”

Heiye Lan’s eyes bulged wider and wider until they were entire bloodshot.

“No second expedition army will come,” Li Yao said mercilessly. “Not until the last drop of blood of the last Black Wind soldier dries. Nobody will come to help you.

“Even if the odds of such a future are only one percent, it is enough for you to think about it carefully, right? As the daughter of the commander of the Black Wind Fleet, this is your responsibility.”

“You’re quite right, Master Spiritual Vulture.” Heiye Lan took a deep breath. “Then, what should I do?”

“How would I know? Why don’t you consider it yourself?” Li Yao replied. “All I know is that there is bound to be a war between the Star Glory Federation and the Black Wind Fleet. Until their backbone is broken by the enemy, it is impossible for the federation to surrender or for the Black Wind Fleet to give up on their conquest.

“However, assuming that the Star Glory Federation crushes the main force of the Black Wind Fleet, it still doesn’t mean that they can annihilate you quickly and conveniently, right?”

“Of course!” Hideous brilliance beamed out of Heiye Lan’s eyes. “Even if the Black Wind Fleet does fail, the federation will have to pay a gory price in order to completely destroy us! Hehe. Even if we cannot conquer the federation, we will at least die with it!”

Li Yao sighed and said, “You are free to die together with the federation. Just suit yourselves. But the people of the Ancient Sages Sector haven’t lived enough yet. Don’t drag us into this!

“If we are involved, and the federation, the Ancient Sages Sector, and the Black Wind Fleet destroy each other, who will take all the advantage if not the Imperium of True Human Beings?

“All in all, courtesy calls for reciprocity. The Imperium of True Human Beings hasn’t done any favors for the Ancient Sages Sector. It is not a big deal if we help the Imperium in an easy war, but I don’t think we deserve to die for the Imperium, right? As for you, I don’t know what benefits the Imperium has promised you to make you sell your life, but that doesn’t seem right. Wasn’t the Black Wind Fleet kicked out by the emperor like a stray dog after losing a war? The nobles and lords in the court must’ve been ridiculing you for the past hundred years! Do you think that you will earn yourselves a high and magnificent monument in the capital city if you all sacrifice yourselves for the Imperium?”

Heiye Lan grew excited again. “We are not going to lose. This is a war for the Black Wind people to reclaim our honor!”

“I know. This is just a casual discussion to help us sort things out for each other. I am not saying that the Black Wind Fleet will lose at all.” Li Yao paused for a moment. “I merely want to say that, under certain extreme circumstances, the interests of the Black Wind Fleet are not necessarily the same as the interests of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

“On the contrary, if the Black Wind Fleet does fail, chances are that the federation, the Ancient Sages Sector, and the defeated remnants of the Black Wind Fleet will share mutual interests and stand on the opposite side from the Imperium.

“Don’t glower at me. Think about it. If the Black Wind Fleet summons reinforcements from the Imperium after it fails, even if the second wave of the expedition army arrives as fast as lightning, do you think that they will be here to rescue the Black Wind Fleet?

“Give up your fantasy. You know about the life-and-death struggles within the Imperium better than us. It may be true that the Star Glory Federation will be demolished, but the remnants of the Black Wind Fleet will most likely be ‘regrouped’ by the second expedition armies. As for the Ancient Sages Sector, if the second expedition armies discover our coordinates during the process, things won’t end well for us, either.

“Do you want to see such a thing? After the Black Wind Fleet plus the Ancient Sages Sector and the Star Glory Federation both suffer great losses in the war, the second expedition armies of the Imperium are here to take all the advantage?

“Hehe. Then, chances are that the experts of the Ancient Sages Sector will be able to work under the new masters in exchange for the autonomy of the Ancient Sages Sector, but what about the previous leadership of the Black Wind Fleet? What will become of them?”

This time, Heiye Lan was breathing fast with a pale face beyond her control. Even her teeth were trembling hard.

“Do you understand now? The Black Wind Fleet can win the war quickly and unstoppably, but if you fail, you must find a way out instead of hoping for reinforcements!”

Looking at Heiye Lan, Li Yao said, “If that happens, the remnants of the Black Wind Fleet will definitely be disrupted and disorganized. Someone must step forward to clean up the mess, save the strength of the Black Wind Fleet, and even help it return to the center of the cosmos in a different appearance a long time later!

“That person will be the new commander of the Black Wind Fleet and the greatest hero in the history of the Black Wind Sector!”

Heiye Lan struggled to ask, “Master Spiritual Vulture, what are you trying to say?”

“Nothing.” Li Yao smiled. “I remember you tell us that you have two elder brothers, one elder sister, one younger brother, and one younger sister. Your father may retire after finding a new home for the Black Wind Fleet after the war due to his age and his heavy wounds in the crushing defeat a hundred years ago, but there is no way that you will be his successor, right?”

“Yes.” Heiye Lan lowered her head. “I’m a pure battle-type Immortal Cultivator, and I can only pilot a Colossus. My mother’s family isn’t very powerful. She has never been the one that my father loves most, either. Otherwise, I wouldn’t have been sent to a tiny claw fleet. Even if my father does retire, my brothers and sisters all have greater advantages than me, not to mention other ambitious families!

“Strength matters most in the competition of leadership for us. Bloodline has never been a big deal. Therefore, I never thought…”

“Oh? Strength?” Li Yao patted Heiye Lan’s shoulder softly and smiled. “What, do your brothers and sisters all have ten experts at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage and two in the Divinity Transformation Stage, plus twelve Colossi, to support them?”

Chapter 1670 - I’ve Decided, It’s Going to Be You!

Heiye Lan could not help but feel creeped out, despite everything that she had experienced in the cruel competitions since childhood to grow into an elite warrior!

It was not because she was scared but because she discovered that, along with the casual introduction of Master Spiritual Vulture, her heartbeat and breathing were truly accelerating, and ambitions were budding from the deepest parts of her bones, forming an invisible armor of sharp stings on her body and turning her into something entirely new!

Before that moment, Heiye Lan had never craved more for herself, even when she discovered the remnants of dozens of Colossi in the warehouse on the Nuwa warship in the Ancient Sages Sector.

For weak creatures, ‘know yourself’ was a must for their survival. The mercy of the Immortal Cultivators was never prepared for the losers.

During her growth, she had seen countless ambitious fellows who overestimated themselves recklessly challenge her father or the leaders of the major families and sects that made up the Black Wind Fleet, and those fellows usually did not end particularly well.

She also understood the gap between herself and her brothers, sisters, and even the uncles and cousins in her other family branch. Therefore, she had never dared ignite the ‘ambition’ deep down her heart.

But now that the sparks had been ignited, they would never be extinguished!

Heiye Lan panted heavily. She did not even have the courage to turn around and face Li Yao.

However sluggish and numb her senses were, she could clearly perceive that the ‘being’ behind her was gradually taking off the camouflage that was already hideous and terrible enough and revealing his real appearance, which was a hundred times more so.

“Are—are you—are you really Master Spiritual Vulture?” Heiye Lan asked, shivering. Her voice was so feeble that even she did not know whether or not the question was asked at all.

“It doesn’t matter who I am.” Li Yao smiled casually. “What matters is who you are and who you can be. Don’t say it’s impossible. The world is full of wonders. Even Ding Lingdang, nothing more than a pure warrior, has a chance to be elected as the Speaker of the Star Glory Federation. Why don’t you have more faith in yourself? Believe me. I have high hopes for you. That’s all you need.”

Gritting her teeth, Heiye Lan finally summoned the courage to turn around inch by inch and look at Li Yao. It finally occurred to her, as if she had just woken from a reverie, that Master Spiritual Vulture had indeed changed a lot after he arrived in the Star Glory Federation, to the point that he was almost a different person now!

Heiye Lan breathed hard. “Can—can you really help me?”

“Yes.” Li Yao stared Heiye Lan in the eye. Some invisible strength, light, and energy seemed to be flowing deep into Heiye Lan’s pupils and her brain and soul from his eyes. “Here and now, you don’t have any choice except to believe me! While the game between the Star Glory Federation and the Black Wind Fleet is key here, my say also matters a lot. Trust me. I have decided, it’s going to be you. That’s enough!”

Heiye Lan took a few steps back and fell onto Li Yao’s bed, utterly overwhelmed.

The doorbell rang.

The other experts of the Ancient Sages Sector returned one after another.

Long Yangjun was the first to return. When she walked into the room, Heiye Lan was still buried deep in Li Yao’s bed, stunned and unable to free herself from the illusions.

Looking at Li Yao; Heiye Lan, who had not come back to herself yet at the edge of Li Yao’s bed; and then Li Yao again, Long Yangjun frowned deeply.

“Is this really appropriate?” Long Yangjun asked Li Yao privately. “It is already a complicated situation with a lot of variants during our trip to infiltrate the federation, and you are still doing this? Won’t it be another unexpected factor if your wife learns about this?”

“What are you thinking about? Fellow Cultivator Heiye Lan and I were merely consolidating our beliefs with each other!”

“That’s a good excuse. Next time someone else catches you two, you should insist on that one. Now get her out of here.

Everyone is coming here to discuss what we have experienced today!”

Li Yao escorted Heiye Lan back to her own room. When he returned, the twelve experts of the Ancient Sages Sector under the name of ‘Team Red Lotus’ had already gathered in the suite of the ‘captain’.

Of the twelve experts, some were excited, some were in deep thought, some were eager to apply what they had learned, and some were rather bitter. It appeared that they had all discovered a lot of new things during the visit!

Team Red Lotus was the Speaker’s secret guards. Naturally, Li Yao had pulled strings with Speaker Cui Lingfeng and gotten better privileges for them than the general members of the delegation.

In principle, they were Cui Lingfeng’s eyes and ears. If they were interested in the development of a certain field in the federation, all they needed to do was send their relevant demands to the federal government, and the federal government would satisfy them in most cases and ask the Secret Sword Bureau to take care of the details. Therefore, their trips were all quite comprehensive and informative.

“The fierce battles in the sea of stars for the modern civilizations are really far beyond our imagination!”

The first speakers were Meng Chixin, Han Baling, and Qi Changsheng, who were mostly generals and commanders before.

Those few experts were particularly interested in the military construction and fleet development of the federation. Together with the officer representatives from Firefly, they had been discussing the issues concerning the establishment of a joint headquarters with the high-level officers from the General Staff of the federal army.

The modernized battles for the space fleets, including the sophisticated data links, telepathic thought network, information warfare, great competitions that involved hundreds of main-force fleets, highly-automatic Grand Illusionary Soldiers, complicated logistical support, and unpredictable space jumps and prevention… were great eye-openers for the ‘ancient generals and commanders’ who had travelled through time, with all the new magical equipment, new units, new tactics, and new principles. All the experts were fascinated.

“I was never willing to admit from the bottom of my heart that we are forty thousand years behind the era until today! It never occurred to me that the people in the outside world have developed such brilliant, glorious, and unbelievable civilizations in the past tens of thousands of years!”

Meng Chixin, the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator, sighed. “We were truly frogs in a well, spending such a long time looking at the sky above our head and thinking that what we saw was the whole of it. It is truly pathetic!”

“It is never too late to make amends!” Han Baling said. “Thankfully, we made the decision to open our eyes and observe the universe. If we start catching up right now, I believe that we will soon reach them!

“Speaking of which, I believe that we should consider more on whether to join the Imperium or the federation right now.”

Qi Changsheng chuckled. The ‘Heaven Battering King’ was a leader of the rebels in the first place, and it was nothing new for him to surrender to greater powers. He did not have any burden at all, and he was best at claiming most benefits from those he surrendered to. After all, he would always surrender to whoever offered the biggest pie. “Fellow Cultivators, we have seen a lot of high-level officers from the General Staff of the federal army. It occurred to us that they are from all seven Sectors. After talking with them, we learned that the seven Sectors all have their local space fleets.

“Fellow Cultivators, I believe that we know the situation of the federation right now rather well. The three core Sectors and the Uranian Ring Sector below our feet are indeed advanced and developed. There is no way that we can catch up to them any time soon.

“However, the Forest Ocean Sector that has nothing but trees, the Water Crystal Sector that is rife with deserts, and the Nether World Sector that is scarred by wars and only habituated by ghosts, in terms of strength, are really not much better than the Ancient Sages Sector. If anything, we are even more powerful than them!

“After all, although our civilization might be slightly underdeveloped, the spiritual energy is more abundant in our world, and there is a greater population and more experts!

“From what I saw with Senior Meng and Fellow Cultivator Han today, the Star Glory Federation has greater ambitions than the gains and losses of the few small worlds at hand. Therefore, after acquiring the weak worlds such as the Forest Ocean Sector, the Nether World Sector, and the Water Crystal Sector, they did not exploit them greedily at all. Instead, they offered a lot of resources to improve and arm those worlds quickly. Even the Forest Ocean Sector, as a barbaric world, has established its own fleet. A lot of natives of the Forest Ocean Sector have joined the federal army. Some of them are even in key posts among the General Staff.

“Although Heiye Lan promised us that the Black Wind Fleet will also give us tremendous benefits if we surrender to the Imperium, it is just her word. Even though she was not lying to us, do her words really count, considering that she is not the commander of the Black Wind Fleet after all?

“The Black Wind Fleet is not necessarily going to offer us anything, but the benefits that the Star Glory Federation gives to the participant worlds are concrete and substantial!

“Right now, the Star Glory Federation is faced with a giant battle against the Black Wind Fleet, but it is not the end of the war. Rather, it is just the beginning of it! Even if the federation defeats the Black Wind Fleet, it will still be faced with the enormous military pressure of the Imperium of True Human Beings. This time, it won’t take a hundred years for the army of the Imperium to come over.

“With the sword hanging above the federation’s head, it is impossible for them to kick down the ladder under such circumstances. Therefore, if the Ancient Sages Sector joins the Star Glory Federation, there is a great chance that we will enjoy privileges equal to if not better than the treatment of the weak worlds such as the Forest Ocean Sector or the Water Crystal Sector!”

‘Heaven Battering King’ Qi Changsheng explained the advantages and disadvantages thoroughly.

The experts of the Ancient Sages Sector discussed and agreed on the conclusion.

Since the federation did not conquer the desert world ‘Water Crystal Sector’, which was right next to it, but resolved the problem through bargaining and peaceful negotiations, they did not seem to have any reason to swallow the Ancient Sages Sector, which was further away, hidden in the dark nebula with countless experts.

“But don’t forget that the Star Glory Federation did wage a war upon the Uranian Ring Sector.”

There was no telling which side Long Yangjun was taking. She casually said, “The Star Glory Federation is not a toothless tiger. In a battle, they can be more brutal than anyone else.”

“The greatest reason for the war is perhaps the different ideologies of the old rulers of the Uranian Ring Sector and the federation,” Master Bitter Cicada replied.

“Then, does the ideology of the Ancient Sages Sector befit the federation?” Long Yangjun smiled and glanced at Li Yao thoughtfully. “It’s true that the uprising and wars were caused when the Heavenly Light, the ruling class of the Uranian Ring Sector, blatantly exploited the Earthly Brute.

“But did such things not happen in the Ancient Sages Sector? Fellow Cultivator Qi Changsheng, Fellow Cultivator Wan Mingzhu, are you not the Earthly Brute of the Ancient Sages Sector and the rest of us the Heavenly Light?

“If we really consider joining the Star Glory Federation seriously, I believe that our ideas from forty thousand years must be upgraded, and the Star Glory Federation must relieve our concerns with sincerity and appropriate solutions!”

Chapter 1671 - Crime of Illegal Possession!

Li Yao knew that Long Yangjun was partly telling the people of the Ancient Sages Sector that the federation would not embrace them unconditionally and that they would have to make contributions and changes if they wanted to join the federation. She was also partly reminding him that the experts of the Ancient Sages Sector, including the entire Ancient Sages Sector, were not tools without independent will that he could reshape freely.

There was still a long way to go before the two parties were really combined.

However, at least the experts of the Ancient Sages Sector did not object to joining the federation in principle. What waited to be addressed were just details and technical questions. All in all, it was a huge step forward.

The issues could not be figured out soon. They decided to put the issues on hold after discussing them for a while before the rest of the experts went on to tell everybody their own experience.

‘Iron Saint’ Qi Zhongdao, the leader of the Cultivators of the central plateaus of the Ancient Sages Sector, was an upright and plainspoken man who valued rules more than anything else.

Therefore, he perused the ‘rules’ of the Star Glory Federation, or to wit, how the laws of the federation were practiced.

Through Cui Lingfeng, Li Yao had helped arrange the qualification to attend the trial of a case that shocked the entire Uranian Ring Sector for Qi Zhongdao. He also gave him access to all the case files.

Qi Zhongdao indeed had a lot of findings and thoughts.

“Today, I went to attend a great trial that was of national influence. The plaintiff was an ordinary family in the federation, whereas the defendant was a high-level Cultivator at the peak of the Core Formation Stage and the leader of the Dragon Chasing Sect, a renowned, wealthy, and powerful local sect in the Uranian Ring Sector. He was charged with ‘illegal possession’!

“The case did not seem overly complicated at first. The normal family had one son and one daughter, but it was a pity that the son was born in the era of great postwar construction sixteen years ago. The living environment was quite shabby back then, and the medical facilities were not sufficient. Also, they did not pay much attention to themselves, either. Therefore, they failed to test out that the son was a patient of, to quote the term in the federation, Down syndrome!

“The son’s illness was quite serious. When he grew while doing nothing except eating and sleeping, his intelligence was still no higher than that of a five-year-old.

“Even so, his parents took good care of him and did not abandon him. They even took him to walk on the street every couple of days to open his eyes.

“But on one of their walks, they ran into an accident where two shuttles hit each other. One of the shuttles happened to careen into the son and blew him away. The son was heavily wounded and dying.

“The son was already in a coma when he was in the ambulance. It is said that even his heartbeat and brainwaves stopped for a long time, which was witnessed by the doctors, nurses, and his own parents personally.

“But after only ten minutes, the moment he was delivered to the hospital, he went back to himself miraculously!

“Before the parents could be overjoyed, they discovered that their son’s demeanor, eyes, and even aura were completely different from the past. He was almost a different person now.

“The ‘son’ did not lie to them, either. He told them and the doctors and the policemen dutifully that he was not the previous mentally-retarded patient but the leader of the Dragon Chasing Sect, who possessed a theoretically dead body and reincarnated himself in it.

“As it turned out, the leader of the Dragon Chasing Sect, who was a high-level Cultivator at the peak of the Core Formation Stage, was trying to break into the Nascent Soul Stage through a very dangerous secret art, but he unfortunately failed and even perished on the spot due to the recoil of the art!

“According to him, although his body was destroyed, his soul was not entirely gone. It somehow drifted onto the street and happened to meet the ambulance that was carrying the mentally-retarded patient.

“The mentally-retarded patient, due to the Down syndrome, was born with incomplete soul, which made that his body the best ‘container’ for foreign souls.

“Also, the mentally-retarded patient’s breathing, heartbeat, and brainwaves had stopped in the serious accident. Even his broken soul was gone. According to the testimony of authoritative medical experts, the chances that he could be saved were little to none, and he would have entered a vegetative state even if he did survive.

“By the standard of the Cultivators, the body of the mentally-retarded patient had already become an empty ‘sack’ that was now ownerless.

“The remaining soul of the leader of the Dragon Chasing Sect, noticing the ‘vacant’ body, crawled into it, driven by the natural instincts to survive. Therefore, he became the new owner of the body and reincarnated himself in it!

“He must’ve been happy to have a new life, but the birth parents of the mentally-retarded patient were certainly not satisfied. The Secret Sword Agents who are responsible for the crimes of Cultivators caught the leader of the Dragon Chasing Sect, who was in the body of the mentally-retarded patient, and delivered to the court, where he was charged with ‘illegal possession’!

“Fellow Cultivators, in your opinion, is the guy guilty or not? Was the leader of the Dragon Chasing Sect justified in doing what he did?”

The case involved a powerful celebrity, and the plot was quite intriguing. It had raised heated discussions in the Uranian Ring Sector and even other sectors. The ‘ancient Cultivators’ from the Ancient Sages Sector were deeply attracted by the case and offered their opinions.

Han Baling cackled and said, “Illegal possession? Interesting. Does it mean the even possession is a crime in the Star Glory Federation? Or rather, is there ‘legal possession’?”

“There is.” Qi Zhongdao nodded and said, “I have studied it carefully. There is indeed ‘legal possession’ in the federation. Some ‘body donors’ can volunteer to sign authorization documents, stating that they would like to donate their body to the country after they pass away. The bodies will be used for practice by the students of the medical schools, for transplantations, or given to experts whose bodies have been destroyed for them to be reincarnated.

“The experts of the Star Glory Federation have only two choices if they are making a highly dangerous attempt and fear that they might die. They can either prepare a few exquisite, powerful ‘artificial bodies’, like Senior Meng or Senior Wu, and perhaps become spectral Cultivators after they die.

“Or, they have to register in advance to wait in line or draw lots and apply for a corpse.

“However, the rate of success when possessing such dead bodies is even lower than turning into a spectral Cultivator. Once they fail, it is highly likely that their broken soul will be further damaged, and they won’t even have a chance to become a spectral Cultivator.

“Furthermore, dead bodies are valuable resources. Most of them are used for organ transplants and for the teaching purposes of medical schools. Only when the body donors propose the request and confirm multiple times will their bodies enter the ‘possession and rebirth’ procedure.

“There is more demand than supply, and a body is always hard to come by. So, few experts try their luck by ‘legal possession’. Most of them still try to train their soul to increase the odds of them transforming into spectral

Cultivators and even living in such a form for another one to two hundred years after they die.”

“Is it true?”

Although ‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu was a spectral Cultivator, she was adept at manipulating puppets and crafting zombies. Possession was not a problem for her at all. “You have to wait in line and draw lots in order to possess a body? What… what kind of rule is this? Is there no black market where you can buy a body?”

Qi Zhongdao shook his head and said, “No. The issue concerns the fundamental ethics of the federation and therefore cannot be shaken. Therefore, bribery and businesses in the field are strictly forbidden. Neither the donor nor the acceptor know who each other is before the procedure is completed. The black market of bodies is always struck hard, too. As for the crime of illegal possession, it is one of the most serious crimes in the federation. Once found guilty, most of the criminals will be sentenced to death!”

“The Star Glory Federation’s law has been established to protect the interests of the weak. It is rather considerate.” Master Bitter Cicada sighed. “But I believe that this case is different. The mentally-regarded son was already dead in the ambulance due to the accident. He couldn’t be revived, and the only thing he left was a body.

“The leader of the Dragon Chasing Sect, on the other hand, perished after a failed breakthrough attempt. Nobody knows how much wisdom he had left. Driven by his natural instincts for survival, it seems rather understandable for him to crawl into a vacant body and seek shelter there.”

“The monk is quite right,” Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar said. “Laws are meant to deal with real-life issues. The case is a complete accident, where every party ran into each other by chance. After all, the body was already possessed. It’s not like the leader should be sentenced to death again, right? Even if the leader of the Dragon Chasing Sect is killed, the previous son’s life will never be brought back. Why bother?”

“I think the key is whether or not the mentally-retarded son was confirmed to be dead when he was still in the ambulance,” Qi Changsheng remarked, not thinking that it was a big deal. “If the guy was already dead, well, living people are always more important than the deceased. After one is dead, one will be nothing but a pile of meat. Feeding on it or possessing it is just recycling the garbage. What’s the big deal?”

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator did quite a lot of lawless things for survival back in the days when he was in the ‘Heaven Battering Army’. He definitely would not hesitate at all when it came to making use of dead bodies.

“If I may say, this is perhaps the best of the worst outcomes.” Qi Changsheng smiled. “Nobody could’ve foreseen that the mentally-regarded son would have an accident, but since he was already dead, he would always stay dead whether or not he was possessed.

“But right now, the dead body saved a Cultivator at the peak of the Core Formation Stage. There are slightly more than a thousand Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the seven Sectors of the federation. So, a guy at the peak of the Core Formation Stage must rank in the top two thousand nationwide. If we only consider this world, he must be one of the top five hundred experts of the Uranian Ring Sector, right?

“A top-500 expert has been rescued by the dead body of an idiot and is now able to continue making contributions to this Sector and the entire federation. Isn’t it good?

“Also, although he has nothing to do with the birth parents of the idiot, he has taken up their son’s body after all. It is only reasonable that he gives many benefits to the parents and sees that they are properly taken care of for the rest of their life. That is not an outrageous request, right?

“The parents lost a stupid son, but they will receive financial compensation that they couldn’t earn in ten lives. Also, their son will be living… well, in a different way.

“Surely, they will not feel very comfortable, but there is no need for them to insist on killing their son’s body again.

“The key is whether or not they can think the whole thing through. If they do, this is actually a win-win for everyone, their son, the leader of the Dragon Chasing Sect, and the entire federation!”

Chapter 1672 - Law Is Supreme!

Everybody pondered for a moment and had to admit that Qi Changsheng was right.

“Brother Qi, what is the truth of the case?” Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar asked. “Was there a ruling today?”

Qi Zhongdao smiled and said, “Things like body-borrowing and reincarnation indeed consist of a lot of special cases as my fellow Cultivators said just now and therefore must not be treated with a blanket rule.

“Possessing a living person by force is one matter, and possessing someone who has recently died is a whole different matter. It is one thing to successfully possess a body and reincarnate one’s soul in it, but sometimes the possession is not entirely successful, and only part of the soul and the memory are transmitted, which meld with the consciousness of the original owner of the body into a whole. In some cases, the soul is not transmitted at all, and those who are possessed are merely added with countless memory pieces.

“If I may ask, in such cases, are the victims really possessed or not? Should they be plaintiffs or defendants? How should the court convict them?

“It is exactly because of the complexity of possession that, although cases that involve body-borrowing and reincarnation are rare, they catch the attention of the whole nation whenever they happen. The accusers and the defendants often have to debate fiercely for years and run a lot of psychological tests on the soul to determine whether the person still alive is the possessor or the possessed.

“But as I said earlier, specifically regarding this case, it does not seem very complicated.

“First of all, the deceased was killed in a traffic accident. Secondly, the medical staff, and even the parents of the deceased, could testify that the deceased’s breathing, heartbeat, and brain activity had stopped for more than three minutes. Clinically speaking, it is the most standard ‘death’.

“Thirdly, the defendant, the leader of the Dragon Chasing Sect, is a renowned philanthropist who made a lot of contributions to the construction of the Uranian Ring Sector in the past thirty years. He’s definitely a righteous man.

“Also, with the case coming to this point, the Dragon Chasing Sect got in touch with the defendant many times and proposed many rather tempting terms. The victim’s family gradually thought it through and were considering accepting the fact.”

Ba Xiaoyu, Qi Changsheng, Wan Mingzhu, and the rest of them smiled together. “That is not bad.”

Qi Zhongdao smiled and shook his head. “Before court started today, almost everyone believed that it would be ruled today that the possessor would be found not guilty and released. However, during the fierce debate in court, abrupt changes took place. One of the… what did they call him? Right. One of the ‘golden prosecutors’ raised a new exhibit that proved the deep connections between the driver in the traffic accident and someone among the leadership of the Dragon Chasing Sect!”

“What!” All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators boasted amazing computational ability. After Qi Zhongdao explained it to them, they quickly thought everything through. “It was not a traffic accident but intentionally done in order to make a fresh, perfect body!”

“Yes. That’s what the prosecution believed with the support of the new evidence.” Qi Zhongdao spoke faster. “Not only did the golden prosecutor locate the connections between the driver in the traffic accident and the leadership of the Dragon Chasing Sect, he also found several well-respected Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators from the Heaven’s Origin Sector who proved that the secret arts through which the leader of the Dragon Chasing Sect tried to break into the Nascent Soul Stage had a rather high success rate but were dangerous enough to cause death if one unfortunately failed.

“The prosecutor even retrieved certain key ingredients from the residue of the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures that the Dragon Chasing Sect discharged, which proved that the leader of the Dragon Chasing Sect was already practicing another Cultivation art to consolidate his soul and prepare himself for possession before he tried to break into the Nascent Soul Stage!

“Through the evidence chain made by the series of proof, the prosecution proved that the leader of the Dragon Chasing Sect had prepared remedies should he unfortunately be killed during the attempt to break into the Nascent Soul Stage! The young man’s death was not an accident but intentional homicide! He was picked because he was a mentally-retarded person whose brain had never been fully utilized, which made the possession easier. The new soul and the body would be more harmonious, too!”

Everybody was captivated. Ba Xiaoyu pursued, “What happened? Was there a ruling?”

“The ruling was not announced in court, but the defendant was already crushed and unable to argue,” Qi Zhongdao said. “When I left, the experts of the media and the law circle all estimated that, if the chain of evidence that the prosecution proposed was true, it would be a textbook ‘crime of illegal possession’, not to mention the plots that were used to cover the crime. Therefore, the criminal would probably be sentenced to death immediately with his soul eradicated. There would be no room for negotiation at all!

“Not only would he be executed himself, the entire Dragon Chasing Sect would also be involved in this. If the case is deeper investigated, too many more people that are related to the plot will certainly be dug out. This is really…”

Everybody sighed with mixed feelings for a while. All of them had trained all the way to the Nascent Soul Stage from the Refinement State. Naturally, they understood the difficulties of training best.

Such an expert at the peak of the Core Formation Stage, who was only one step away from the Nascent Soul Stage, was going to be executed immediately because of one mistake. They did not know how they should comment on the decision.

“After attending the trial of the case and reading the relevant files, including the felonies concerning ‘illegal possession’ in the past few decades, I couldn’t help but have a lot of thoughts!” Qi Zhongdao exclaimed. “The Constitution of Cultivators is the fundamental law of the Star Glory Federation, which has been established to restrain the power of the Cultivators.

“I believe that you must’ve learned a thing or two about the law before and can’t feel particularly delighted about certain clauses in it. How can the renowned, strong, and omnipotent Cultivators be saddled and humiliated in such a way and bow their heads to the insignificant ordinary people because of the boundary of a few words on a piece of paper?

“I don’t think I’m qualified to determine whether the law is good or bad, but from what I’ve seen today, all the ordinary people and Cultivators in the Star Glory Federation indeed treat the law as a supreme, inviolable existence.

“A top-500 expert of the Uranian Ring Sector has lost all his reputation just because he possessed a worthless moron. Even his sect is about to crumble apart!

“The Secret Sword Bureau went after him. Fellow Cultivators despise him. The ordinary people point at him and curse him. Even he could only argue with excuses but did not have the courage to say that he did the right thing!

“Such a ‘Constitution of Cultivators’ are the ‘rules’ that I always talk about. However, back in the Ancient Sages Sector, there was nothing I could do except talk about them. Never did I ever dream that such a country where rules outweigh feelings, fists, and everything else does exist!

“Even a few officers in the Refinement Stage were bold enough to confront the experts in the Core Formation Stage or in the Nascent Soul Stage when they had the Constitution of Cultivators in their favor. How could I not be greatly shocked now that such a world has been unfolded in front of me for real?”

Qi Zhongdao’s rigid face that seemed to be made of black ice and had not changed for a hundred years beamed with excitement.

He shared the news, case files, and relevant information about the trial with his fellow Cultivators, raising another round of suspicion, sighs, and exclamations.

After Qi Zhongdao, the rest of the experts of the Ancient Sages Sector shared the details of their trip.

‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu had gone to inspect a base of hybrid rice, where a program to cross-fertilize the special rice for the Cultivators with the regular rice was being carried out.

The ‘Riot of White Lotus’ that Wan Mingzhu had raised in the southeastern region of the Great Qian Dynasty was caused because of the starvation of the ordinary people when ‘Jade Pellets’, a type of special rice for the Cultivators, occupied the farmland of the ordinary people. In the end, the ordinary people rose up and fed on the Jade Pellets, only to turn into aggressive ghosts after they died of indigestion to fight against the major sects and even the court of the Great Qian Dynasty.

Therefore, Wan Mingzhu was quite interested in how the food problem was addressed in the modern Cultivation civilization. She had requested to inspect the field.

In the end, the federal government had arranged for her to visit a hybrid rice breeding base established in the vacuum outside the Uranian Ring.

“Specialists of the Star Glory Federation have developed more than a thousand kinds of hybrid rice, wheat, and other cash crops in the past hundred years. They boast feeble spiritual energy, which means that they can help build up the body and accelerate the growth of the spiritual root after they are consumed. Also, they are generally mild and edible for ordinary people and even children. There are no side effects at all."

Even Mother White Lotus, who had always been mean and sarcastic, could do nothing except comment with conflicted feelings. "Right now, the 'balanced lunch' in schools, subsidized by the federal government, has all adopted such hybrid rice, which has significantly improved the bodies and training level of the new generation of the federation, allowing strong warriors that are as good as soldiers in the prosperous worlds to be raised in relatively barren worlds.

"Even though those warriors cannot all become top experts, the federation now at least boasts a great number of middle- and low-level Cultivators, as well as ordinary soldiers who are agile, energetic, and vigorous!

"When I saw the middle school students who are tall and muscular because of the hybrid rice they take, I couldn't help but recall the Ancient Sages Sector. Of course, Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector are unbelievably strong, but the ordinary soldiers, except for those who serve in large households, are often emaciated and weak-minded. They are truly a devastating contrast to what I have seen today!

"What astonished me most, however, was not the middle school students who appeared almost as strong as the best soldiers of the Ancient Sages Sector but some specialists I met in the hybrid rice base.

"Some of the specialists are even in the Nascent Soul Stage. If it were in the Ancient Sages Sector, they would be working for the major sects as elders or counselors to raise all kinds of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures for the sects or the court. They should be wealthy and revered!

“However, in the Star Glory Federation, those specialists in the Nascent Soul Stage have dedicated themselves to the tiny hybrid rice for decades, which is not of any use to the high-level Cultivators and can only improve the capabilities of the ordinary people!

“What benefits can they possibly get? How can they withstand such boredom and loneliness? Baffling. It’s truly baffling!”

Chapter 1673 - Two Apples

Mother White Lotus's confusion was also what puzzled the other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. All the experts of the Ancient Sages Sector commented with mixed feelings again before Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar and Master Bitter Cicada began to tell their story.

Back in the Ancient Sages Sector, Ba Xiaoyu had always hung around with ordinary people and helped those in need, and Master Bitter Cicada had tried his best to save as many people as possible, too.

Therefore, the field that they had requested to inspect was the charity and public welfare of the federation. They wanted to see how the underprivileged people at the bottom level of society were treated.

Thus, they had visited a few orphanages and relief stations. They had also gone deep into the underground mines of the Uranian Ring Planet to check on the treatment of miners and their families, especially the children.

"We've seen quite a few schools with rather thorough facilities on the ground. The students are all the offspring of the ordinary miners, but quite a few of their teachers are Cultivators. Some of them are even experts who have volunteered to come here from the core worlds to teach!"

Ba Xiaoyu still felt amazed when he recalled what he had seen during the day. "Of all the Cultivators who have volunteered to teach here, some were summoned to make contributions to the poor and remote areas by certain spirits. For example, those from the Patriots Front. However, most of them are actually hired by various funds. Even the schools, hospitals, orphanages, and water purification factories are subsidized by those funds!”

“Fellow Cultivator Ba is quite right. The ‘funds’ seem to be the main force in the federation in offering help to the poor and the ordinary people,” Master Bitter Cicada said. “The Star Glory Federation is a country with high taxes. The tax rate for the Cultivators is particularly high. According to the speed of money-earning of some high-level Cultivators who are like cash-absorbing beasts, they have to pay astronomical taxes every year.

“However, the tax law in the federation is very interesting. If you invest your income into the funds that are established for public welfare, you will legally be able to avoid tax.

“Therefore, in order to pay less tax, the Core Formation Stage Cultivators and the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators have established all kinds of charity funds. Almost every one of them has several funds under their name.

“The establishment and operation of the charity funds have certain requirements. Those funds are audited every year, too, to make sure that they have indeed completed a certain number of charity projects.

“After a hundred years of development, the charity funds in the federation have already formed a virtuous cycle.

“The experts in the Core Formation Stage and the Nascent Soul Stage provide resources and connections to establish all kinds of funds, partly to improve their reputation and partly to avoid tax.

“New Cultivators, especially those born in the lower-class who do not have many resources and connections, often choose to join a fund after their spiritual root is awakened and offer their service in a remote, underdeveloped area for a while. Through the fund, they can expand their social circle and make new friends. If their performance is distinguished, they may even catch the attention of the owners of the funds and thereby have a chance to work in the corporations under the name of the Core Formation Stage Cultivators and the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. In a few years, they might even be able to enter the core circle of the organization.

“Right now, most Core Formation Stage Cultivators and the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators require that the candidates have a lot of work experience in charity funds when they recruit disciples, especially true disciples. It is a common understanding among the Cultivators that only such disciples are determined and pure enough to pass on their knowledge to.”

Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar and Master Bitter Cicada spoke with great enthusiasm. The two of them were both straightforward people who did not care about manners. When he reached the exciting parts, Ba Xiaoyu even slapped his own thigh hard.

All the experts of the Ancient Sages Sector were attracted and deep in thought.

The modern flying swords, shuttles, crystal trains, crystal suits, and starships, however sophisticated and extraordinary, were still comprehensible for them after they considered it more carefully.

However, it would take them a fairly long time to fully digest and accept the system, or rather, the logic of life, functioning in the Star Glory Federation that was entirely different from the one in the Ancient Sages Sector.

After Ba Xiaoyu and Master Bitter Cicada were done, the other experts spoke of their experience in turns. Li Yao took the opportunity to boast about ‘Civilization’ greatly, highly recommending that the experts experience it whether they had time or not.

He believed that those experts would certainly fall in love with such a new world after they enjoyed the charm of ‘Civilization’ and would not bear to leave anymore.

Soon, all eleven experts had finished sharing, and Long Yangjun was the only one who had not said anything yet. With a fake smile, she looked at everybody mysteriously.

Wu Suiyun, one of the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, said, “Fellow Cultivator Wang, you seem rather hesitant. Was there something wrong with your inspection today?”

“Not exactly. It went on very well, but I’m afraid that there’s nothing I care to say.”

Leaning against Li Yao’s bed, Long Yangjun put her feet on the bed and her hands below her head to make herself more comfortable. Then she said, “You all know what I did for a living in the past. I was the leader of Ghost Character, a dog that everybody was scared of and an executioner. My counterparts in the Star Glory Federation are probably the ‘Secret Sword Bureau’ and the ‘Dim Moon Fund’.

“Therefore, I didn’t inspect any other place today, only requesting to know more about the ‘Secret Sword Bureau’, especially the major cases that the agency has cracked in the past hundred years. Naturally, most of the cases were crimes committed by Cultivators.”

“Oh?” Wu Suiyun looked at the other experts and asked, “What have you found?”

“Nothing special. Of course, they wouldn’t have shown me the files if there were anything special in them,” Long Yangjun said lazily. “I only want to offer a reminder to you, fellow Cultivators, and probably to cool your heads. We all know too much about the stories where the emperor put on the clothes of ordinary people, walked on the streets, and saw how he is viewed by his subjects. Did such things happen less in the Great Qian Dynasty before?

“No, no, no. I am not implying that everything we saw today is fake. In fact, I’m certain that it is absolutely real. It is impossible to fake such things on such a large scale.

“However, what we saw today must be what they wanted us to see. It is the best side of the Star Glory Federation. The Cultivators we have got in touch with today are also certainly the purest Cultivators, too.

“But as we all know, nothing is ‘flawless’. Perfect countries do not exist, either. Cultivators who have absolute faith in their belief and always help other people selflessly are few, too. Hehe. I would even say that they are actually too rare for us to meet.

“As our inspection grows deeper, I believe that the imperfect side of the Star Glory Federation will soon be exposed. Therefore, I’m only reminding you not to raise your expectations to a very high level in case your final judgement is affected by your disappointment by then. We must know that…”

There was a fruit tray on the table in the middle of everyone. Long Yangjun curled her fingers and pulled two apples out of the tray. Holding one of them in each of her hands, she smiled and said, “Choosing between the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Star Glory Federation is like choosing between one of the two apples here. You will be wrong if you are hoping to pick the better of them.

“Perhaps we will have to choose ‘the less rotten’ of the two apples.”

Crack!

Long Yangjun picked up a random apple and bit it hard. The juice was flying everywhere.

Everybody looked at each other in bewilderment. They were going to pursue further when she stood up and threw the other apple to Li Yao. Yawning, she said, “The night is dark. We will have to continue our visit tomorrow. It’s time to take a rest, fellow Cultivators!”

…

The establishment of a joint headquarters and also the in-depths military cooperation between the government-in-exile and the Star Glory Federation could never be completed overnight. In the upcoming ten days or so, the experts of the Ancient Sages Sector would stay in the Uranian Ring Sector to inspect more fields.

After getting in touch with ‘Civilization’, and especially after watching the debate between Professor Mo Xuan and Professor Xie Wufeng, Li Yao suddenly felt that he would like to talk with Long Yangjun.

After all, Long Yangjun was different from the other experts of the Ancient Sages Sector. Like Li Yao, she was sort of a ‘player’ who was of a higher level and beyond the chess game.

However, everybody’s itinerary had been fully occupied, and they were protected and monitored by the agents of the Secret Sword Bureau anywhere they went. Also, Long Yangjun intentionally selected a few programs that required her to march deep into the surface and even the underground holes of the Uranian Ring Sector by herself without joining the others.

It was not until twelve days later that Long Yangjun returned to the hotel and they checked in again. Li Yao finally got the opportunity.

This time, it was in Long Yangjun’s room.

Long Yangjun was playing ‘Civilization’.

Her interest did not seem to be on the game itself but ‘Xiao Ming’ and ‘Wen Wen’, the two game assistants. She was tickling the two cute kids, making them laugh hard and hide behind Li Yao.

“Very interesting.”

Long Yangjun turned off the mini crystal processor, and the two little guys immediately vanished into nothingness. Looking at Li Yao, she somehow picked up two apples out of nowhere again and threw one of them to Li Yao. She asked with a smile, “Anything you want to say to me?”

“Yes. Have you seen the video that I sent you? What’s your take on Professor Mo Xuan’s theories on parent and child civilizations and the succession of civilizations?

“In the past, I have always been completely hostile to the Pangu Civilization. I didn’t even like the Nuwa Civilization, either. How should I put it? Scared, wary, and a sense of insecurity. That’s how I felt.

“After all, Gui Suishou, an old senior of the demon race, left an impressive warning for me, which is that a son will be dead for sure if his father wants him dead!

“However, after hearing Professor Mo Xuan’s brand-new theories, I think that I’ve slightly altered my opinions.

“I would like to know more about the ‘parent civilizations’ of mankind. Is it really as simple as what I’ve seen on Kunlun? What exactly is the relationship between Pangu and Nuwa? Were we really simple tools or some sort of ‘child’ to some extent? Did either we or the Pangu Civilization have to die?

“No one else can possibly give me an answer except for you. You even experienced the war in person. Can you tell me more about how Pangu established the universe, Nuwa created human beings, and the things that happened in the primeval war?”

Chapter 1674 - Sibling Civilization?

Long Yangjun seemed to have foreseen that Li Yao would ask the question. Sitting on the bed cross-legged, she finished the apple one bite after another unhurriedly. “I don’t know any more about the question than you do. In fact, you should even be more knowledgeable than me.

“You were born in a modern Cultivation civilization after all, and you have been to Kunlun, where you studied the war between Pangu and Nuwa profoundly.

“But until I went into the depths of the Nuwa warship, I had always been a common… ancient Cultivator and a cursed eunuch who caused trouble in the court.

“It was not until I stood in front of the mainframe crystal processor of the Nuwa warship, and even not until you said something to me, that the dream that lingered in my head became more real. It was almost like… almost like I was only born as ‘Long Yangjun’ at that moment.

“One might even say that I am just a one-year-old infant at this moment in my new life. Perhaps, in the near future, I will remember a lot more things, and I may recollect my real identity and my destiny. But right now, I really don’t know the first thing about it.

“Perhaps, that is exactly the purpose for which I have followed you to the Star Glory Federation. I’m here to get in touch with the world, to observe civilization, and to recall more things.”

Long Yangjun looked at Li Yao honestly, her eyes glittering.

Li Yao wiped the apple that Long Yangjun had thrown at him with his clothes. He knew that Long Yangjun’s words could be half true and half false, but she was certainly not going to tell him anything more. Thinking for a moment, he changed a different angle. “Alright, let’s leave ‘parent civilizations’ aside and talk about ‘child civilizations’. What’s your opinions on the succession of civilization, virtual life, rebellious mischievous child, and all the relevant theories? Do you think that the Spiritual Nexus can really grow independent and govern human beings instead?”

After finishing the apple, Long Yangjun manipulated the core of the apple to swirl slowly above her palm. “To age and die is a law of nature. Viewed from the scale of billions of years or even longer, every civilization is bound to decline. Even the universe itself will perish and be reborn. Since the civilization of mankind is but a grain of dust in the universe, of course it will die, and it is certainly a possibility that it will die because of its child civilization.

“But the conclusion is as meaningless as stating that ‘every person passes away eventually’. Nobody will stop working hard for a better life just because they are destined to die one day, right?

“Therefore, the more meaningful topic at hand is whether or not your Spiritual Nexus can grow independent and develop a virtual, intelligent life form that is entirely beyond mankind and yet hostile to mankind, in a time scale imaginable for human beings, say, the next millennium or the next ten millenniums. That is what you are concerned about, right? Assuming that the Spiritual Nexus does not grow independent for a hundred thousand years, it will not be a problem that we should be worried at all. Our offspring will have their own solutions, and it is impossible for us to take care of the issues that will only happen in a hundred thousand years, right?"

Li Yao pondered for a moment and nodded heavily. "Yes. Let the people in a hundred thousand years worry about what will happen in a hundred thousand years. We are not capable enough to see that what will happen so far in the future is taken care of properly. Only a psycho would think that he is such a god. I am referring to the short term—the next decades or hundreds of years."

Long Yangjun smiled and said, "Then, my answer is the same as Professor Mo Xuan's after the collapse of the Virtual Spirits Sector. It's impossible. Absolutely impossible!"

Li Yao's eyes were glowing. "Do you have any basis?"

"Of course," Long Yangjun said unhurriedly. "Professor Mo Xuan himself is a star spirit, a marvelous life form that is between a real entity and a virtual life form. Speaking of which, wasn't it you who came up with the name together with him? His studies on virtual life must be among the best in the federation.

"Even he asserted that real virtual life with independent will cannot be born in the next five hundred years without the interference from a higher level after the collapse of the Virtual Spirits Sector. He was even so frustrated that he devoted himself to other research projects…"

Li Yao frowned. "But if it is only because of Professor Mo Xuan's judgement—"

"No. What I really want to say has nothing to do with Professor Mo Xuan." Long Yangjun laughed. "I never thought that you would fret to such an extent. This must be why they say spectators see more than players. In my opinion, the problem that worries you does not exist at all, at least not for the next thousand years. The reason is simple—the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan had crystal processors, too.”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. “So what?”

“Their crystal processors were much more advanced than yours,” Long Yangjun said. “You saw the effect after the arrayed pillar crystal processors in the Nuwa warship were activated with your own eyes. You have to admit that their computational ability must be higher than any existing super crystal processor in the federation, right? There are also the Colossi. Every Colossus contains the tactical crystal processors passed on from the primeval era, and you are not even able to duplicate them right now. As a result, the federation, the Imperium, and the Covenant Alliance can only assemble and modify the Colossi but cannot craft new Colossi from scratch, right?”

Li Yao furrowed his brows hard but had to admit that Long Yangjun did have a point.

“Therefore,” Long Yangjun said slowly, “if the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan, with their profound expertise in crystal processors, failed to create brand-new, virtual intelligent life, what makes you so arrogant that you think mankind will be able create an unbelievable ‘mischievous child’ in the next thousand years?

“Besides, the birth and evolution of life are terribly long. The carbon-based life such as Pangu, Nuwa, or human beings all took billions of years before they arrived at the peak of evolution. The birth and evolution of the virtual, intelligent life may be fast, but how much faster can they possibly be?

It won’t be too late to worry about it when the most primitive virtual life is detected!”

“What you said does make sense. Why did I fail to think of it earlier? Yes. The technology of the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan on crystal processors far exceeded the technology of mankind. If even they did not create virtual intelligent life, it seems unnecessary for us to worry about the problem, at least for the next ten thousand years…” Li Yao felt that he was greatly enlightened, but on second thought, he raised another question. “But wait, there is another possibility. What if the Pangu Clan or the Nuwa Clan created a virtual intelligent life a long time ago, but we haven’t learned anything about it? It means—it means that we are not talking about our ‘child civilization’ but a ‘sibling civilization’ that is parallel with mankind!”

Long Yangjun rolled her eyes and remarked, “Oh? Then, where is this virtual intelligent life and mankind’s ‘sibling civilization’, created by the Pangu Clan or the Nuwa Clan? Why has it never been seen or heard in the past hundred thousand years?”

“Well, it must be hiding and accumulating its strength in the darkness. When the time is appropriate, it will jump out and conquer the three thousand Sectors.”

“Fair enough,” Long Yangjun said. “As expected of the dominator of three Sectors. Your imagination is truly marvelous! Even such a great scheme of the virtual intelligent life and our ‘sibling civilization’ has been seen through by you. You are so awesome! So, what are you planning to do now that you’ve seen through the plot?”

“…There doesn’t seem to be anything I can do.”

“Don’t underestimate yourself,” Long Yangjun said. “I have every faith in you. With the identity and position of Monster Li today, as soon as you reveal who you are and make a public speech to dissuade all the people of the Star Glory Federation from using crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus with the unparalleled prestige of the ‘dominator of three Sectors’, is it going to be a big deal at all? Rest assured. I’m definitely on your side. After all, people from the Ancient Sages Sector don’t use crystal processors or surf on the Spiritual Nexus.”

“I’m sorry. I was wrong. Please show some respect for the dominator of three Sectors and forget my poppycock just now.”

“That’s right. Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator or not, we are still adults. Adults should talk about more practical, constructive, and realistic questions. Such mystical questions of the middle school level should be left for middle school students to consider, which I believe there are plenty of in the federation! The situation is so tense right now, and our eyebrows are about to be burnt. Yet, you are considering things that will happen in tens of thousands of years. That’s really—”

“Our eyebrows are about to be burnt?” Li Yao narrowed his eyes. “What have you figured out?”

“Nothing in particular.” Long Yangjun jumped up from her bed and opened the window, letting some fresh air into the room. Squinting, she sniffed hard. “I merely have smelled the scent.”

Li Yao’s eyes were glittering. “What scent?”

Without turning back, Long Yangjun said, “The scent of an upcoming storm. The Black Wind Fleet is about to show up.”

"How so?"

"Two reasons." Long Yangjun extended two long, narrow fingers. "Firstly, the Star Glory Federation is having the fiercest election for the Supreme Speaker in decades. The two candidates as well as their supporters are at loggerheads. The situation is rather intense.

"According to the confession of Ding Zhengyang and other Immortal Cultivators, the Black Wind Fleet has sent a lot of spies into the federation, which means that the Black Wind Fleet certainly has up-to-date intelligence and knows that this is the most unstable moment of the federation.

"After everything is settled and the new Supreme Speaker is elected, either Ding Lingdang's prestige or Jin Xinyue's cunningness will be enough for one of them to completely stabilize the situation in only a couple of months, allowing the federation to be united and enter the highest warring state. The military power of the country will greatly soar!

"Come on, Monster Li. If you were commander-in-chief of the Black Wind Fleet, and you were well aware of the situation, when would you launch the attack?"

Li Yao narrowed his eyes, cold brilliance shooting out of his dark eyes. "Right now. Even if my fleet was not entirely prepared yet, I would not allow the new Speaker of the Federation to get used to her chair, and I would not allow the federation to enter the highest warring state comfortably!

"Now is the best opportunity. If we miss out, the capabilities of the federation and the prestige of its leader will rise in the years to come, and the war will become more and more difficult for us!

“My fleet has drifted in the sea of stars for a hundred years. The resources on the starships are running low. The magical equipment on-board is greatly worn. The warriors are all simmering with impatience and anxiety. In the middle of nowhere, we cannot get too many supplies. I cannot dawdle anymore, and I cannot wait another decade. I must finish the war quickly!”

Chapter 1675 - Nefarious Scandal!

“Yes.” Long Yangjun turned back and said, “On the other hand, the federation must be aware of the Black Wind Fleet’s possible infiltration, too. Therefore, it is not hard for the federation to infer that the Black Wind Fleet will launch an assault very soon. But the federation cannot withhold the election forever just because of the temporary unsteadiness that it may bring, right?

“Besides, if the enemy’s move is predicted in advance, it will probably be a great opportunity to crush the main force of the Black Wind Fleet!

“Otherwise, why do you think the insurgency of the Immortal Cultivators on Firefly took place at such a moment?”

Thinking quickly, Li Yao blurted out, “You don’t think that it was an independent event?”

Long Yangjun smiled. “I have checked a lot of major cases in the past hundred years in the branch of the Secret Sword Bureau in the Uranian Ring Sector today, especially the cases where the ‘CFIA’ and their president ‘Lu Qingchen’ are involved. I don’t find Lu Qingchen to be a reckless and inconsiderate man, and I don’t believe that he would instigate Ding Zhengyang and Cheng Xuansu into starting an insurgency that was bound to fail if he did not have any follow-up plans at all.

“If he was really planning an insurgency, wouldn’t it have been much better if the insurgency took place when the Black Wind Fleet invaded the federation on a large scale so that the federation would be caught unprepared and unable to deal with both sides simultaneously?

“No matter what the relationship between the CFIA and the Dim Moon Fund is, whether or not Lu Qingchen works for Jin Xinyue, and whether or not the insurgency was a trick to draw out the rebels, it is certainly not as simple as it appears. It is probably one of the procedures in an enormous plan, and the very first ‘move’ that the federation, or at least Jin Xinyue, has played against the Black Wind Fleet.

“Therefore, I believe that the Black Wind Fleet and the federation will both take action before long. Both parties will make their moves. Right now, the election has entered the most heated phase. There’s only one month to go before the vote begins. It is impossible for the Black Wind Fleet to not react until then. So, in short, not only are our eyebrows about to be burnt, the most sordid venomous fire is also about to consume our eyeballs!”

Scratching his nose, Li Yao was deep in thought. “You do have a point. I believe that we should accelerate our progress. It will be best if we can make it to the Heaven’s Origin Sector earlier with an excuse. We should arrive at the heart of the federation before all the schemes break out!”

…

That night, Li Yao spent a lot of time in Long Yangjun’s room. The two of them deduced the future plans of the federation and the Black Wind Fleet.

Sometimes, Li Yao played the Black Wind Fleet and Long Yangjun represented the federation. Other times, they swapped their roles.

However, the information they grasped was too little for them to infer the unpredictable situation in the upcoming month precisely. Their deductions were mostly groundless empty talk.

It was not until three o’clock in the morning that Li Yao returned to his own room and fell asleep in many bizarre dreams.

He did not sleep very well that night. He first dreamt that the Black Wind Fleet tore apart the sky and directly showed up in the sky of his hometown in the federation. He then dreamt that bizarre-shaped devils crawled out of the Spiritual Nexus and laughed hideously above everyone’s head. Finally, he dreamt the uncanny dreams that had not visited him for a long time, where he returned to the seemingly peaceful and quiet Earth that was devoid of spiritual energy or Cultivators.

But the Earth was enshrouded in a layer of thin mist. However hard he searched, he could not find the thing that the Vulture Plan asked him to destroy…

When Li Yao was woken up by noise outside the window, he thought that he must have slept for half a day. But after he raised his wrist, he realized that only three hours had passed, and it was not even seven o’clock in the morning yet.

Even in a city where day and night were not classified clearly, this should be the time when everybody was still sound asleep.

What’s going on?

Li Yao opened his window and looked out, only to be shocked by the rabble of people.

More than a thousand people had crowded outside their hotel. Hundreds of shuttles were floating in the sky, too.

Judging from the recording and camera magical equipment in their hands and the powerful, mobile data transmission bases on the shuttles, they seemed to be the reporters from the major media outlets.

“Crack, crack, crack, Crack!

“Hello, we are reporters from ‘Uranian Ring Today’. May I ask if you are a member of the delegation of the rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic? Would you care to comment on the scandal?”

“We’re from ‘Latest Military Observation’. Will the incident affect the military cooperation between the Star Ocean Republic and the Star Glory Federation? Can the two parties still join hands in competition against the Imperium?”

“We’re from the ‘People’ website. Were you aware of the incident before? Does it mean that you will absolutely support Ding Lingdang in the election to come and you will be reluctant to see Jin Xinyue go to the office?”

The reporters were like vultures that were hovering in the sky and searching for the carrion. Hardly had Li Yao, the rightful Vulture, opened the window when he was discovered by them.

Despite the protection of two entire teams of agents from the Secret Sword Bureau and the local police, countless reporters were still pushing forward and trying to throw the floating broadcast magical equipment toward Li Yao.

What was thrown toward him at the same time were the surprising questions that Li Yao did not know how to answer at all.

This was rather strange!

The delegation of the rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic’s trip to the Star Glory Federation was not a clandestine infiltration but an open and friendly visit.

Naturally, there were spokespersons in the delegation. Press conferences had been held a few days before, too, to explain the mission and the purposes of the visit… of course, only the open ones.

The reporters and the general public of the Star Glory Federation knew that the delegation had come, but they did not consider the visit to be of much importance. At the very least, compared to the heated election for the Supreme Speaker in the federation and the imminent threat of the Black Wind Fleet, news about Firefly was certainly not popular.

Days ago, some reporters had expressed their interest to interview the members of the delegation, but none of them had acted so crazily. The regular press conferences once every three days were enough to handle them.

What had happened exactly?

Scandal? What scandal?

The moment Li Yao shut the window and blocked all the noise and liveliness behind him, his mini crystal processor began buzzing rapidly.

He received a message from Long Yangjun, which was quite short.

“It’s happening.”

The rest of the messages were a series of links to the greatest news websites and military forums in the Star Glory Federation. Billions of people browsed them every day.

Li Yao opened a few websites randomly, but they were all the same. The same news had entirely occupied all the homepages!

“Nefarious scandal of the Dim Moon Fund!

“The whole time, the Dim Moon Fund, under the lead of Jin Xinyue, has been in a subtle relationship with the CFIA, headed by Lu Qingchen, in order to build up its own strength. Jin Xinyue even secretly asked Lu Qingchen to launch an insurgency with the Immortal Cultivators on Firefly, hoping to overturn the parliament of the rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic, our dear ally, without staining her hands with blood.

“According to her plan, the Dim Moon Fund would clean up the mess later and clear the last obstacle for the Star Ocean Republic to join the Star Glory Federation. It would have been the greatest feat for Jin Xinyue to run for the Speaker!

“Jin Xinyue has betrayed our ally, the federation and the belief of the Cultivators. She is a second Lu Zui, and she does not deserve to be the leader of the Star Glory Federation!”

Li Yao read all the news reports, only to discover that the source of the articles was the same anonymous report letter.

The letter was written by one ‘Moonfall’, who sent it to quite a few highly influential and trustworthy media companies in the federation at the same time the previous night.

What was described in the latter was almost identical to the earlier speculations of Li Yao, Long Yangjun, and the rest of them.

The letter did not insist that Lu Qingchen worked for Jin Xinyue, but it did offer certain seemingly believable evidence to prove the connection between the ‘CFIA’ and the ‘Dim Moon Fund’.

For the development of the Dim Moon Fund, the second intelligence agency of the federation, Jin Xinyue intentionally kept outlaws free and indulged the expansion of the CFIA so that she could ask for more funding from the parliament to expand and upgrade her Dim Moon Fund. In the meantime, she established communication with Lu Qingchen.

There was no need to talk about the incidents of the past, and her crime this time was enough. Jin Xinyue asked Lu Qingchen to instigate the Immortal Cultivators on Firefly to launch an insurgency so that the Immortal Cultivators and the diehards in the government-in-exile would both suffer losses. Then, her subordinates could show up and take advantage, controlling the situation on Firefly.

If the plan had worked out, not only would the techniques and secret treasures on Firefly from the center of the cosmos be brought into the federation’s system smoothly, Jin Xinyue’s personal prestige and capability would also soar, and she would be a sure winner of the election!

The letter from ‘Moonfall’ was not made of groundless assumptions but attached with many documents, files, and even videos as proof.

As someone who had experienced the whole incident in person, Li Yao examined the proof with the most suspicious attitude, only to discover nothing that could have been faked.

The whole thing was probably a trap that Jin Xinyue had set up, as described in the letter.

Of course, as for whether her connivance with the CFIA was a way to build up her personal influence or bait intentionally released to draw out the Immortal Cultivators so that they could all be fished up together, different people might have different opinions.

“In any case, Jin Xinyue’s plan failed,” ‘Moonfall’ concluded in the letter. “The rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic saw through the scheme of the internal Immortal Cultivators before, and it was only their trick to attract and arrest all the possible criminals! Not only did they suppress the internal rebellion neatly, they also saw right through what Jin Xinyue was up to!

“As the leader of Ministry of Equality and Development, president of the Dim Moon Fund, and a strong competitor for the next Supreme Speaker of the Federation, Jin Xinyue has done such despicable things to our dearest ally just to ascend to the throne of ultimate power, which has caused an irrecoverable wound between us and our ally! What’s the difference between her disregard of boundaries and the things Lu Zui, the director of the Secret Sword Bureau a hundred years ago, did in the past?

“Right now, the issue has raised the serious dissatisfaction of the rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic. If Jin

Xinyue is elected, it is possible that the cooperation between the two parties will fall!

“Jin Xinyue is a traitor and a second Lu Zui. As a member of the Dim Moon Fund who still has a conscience, I’m obliged to reveal her real face even at the cost of my life!”

Chapter 1676 - What Do You Want Exactly?

Chapter 1676: What Do You Want Exactly?

Li Yao held his breath and read through the original letter from ‘Moonfall’ word by word.

The fury and indignation between the lines were too obvious to be overlooked.

The signature ‘Moonfall’ was also obvious. There was a ‘moon 1 ‘ in Jin Xinyue’s name as well as the name of the ‘Dim Moon Fund’. Wasn’t the signature implying that the guy was trying to overthrow Jin Xinyue no matter the cost?

Li Yao did not expect the game to be pushed forward to such a fatal extent when he and Long Yangjun had just talked about the upcoming storm the previous night. It was happening so fast that he was almost overwhelmed.

But the question remained, whose move was it?

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao entered a communication room next to the suite that was specially prepared for him.

Inside the communication room was a super crystal processor with a particularly high power. Through a private route, it was able to contact the Speaker’s office on Firefly directly.

As Cui Lingfeng’s special representative, naturally, he was allowed to report to Cui Lingfeng anytime.

When the light beam was turned on, he could tell that there was a lot of hustle and bustle in the Speaker's office on Firefly.

Cui Lingfeng was frowning gravely and deep in thought.

"Have you read the information that Moonfall exposed?"

Li Yao had no time to bother about whether or not the route was monitored now. Even if it was, it would not be a big deal, because what mattered most right now was explaining everything properly in case of deeper misunderstanding. "Was it done by us?"

"Of course not. How could we have done such a stupid thing?" Cui Lingfeng denied assertively. "We might have been suspicious that Jin Xinyue was manipulating everything behind the curtain. But firstly, we cannot accuse one of the leaders of our ally without concrete proof, which may lead to unpredictable consequences. Secondly, this is also very precious leverage and could have been thrown to her to trade for more practical benefits if she is truly elected as the Speaker of the Federation!

"This is exactly how the game is played. I know you know it. You know I know you know it. But I pretend that I don't know you know it, and you also pretend that you don't know I'm pretending that I don't know you know it. This is politics! While the Star Glory Federation tries every means possible to infiltrate Firefly, haven't we sent a lot of intelligence personnel to sneak into the federation? An ally's business is an ally's business, integration's business is integration's business, and infiltration's business is infiltration's business. They must not be confused! We are all professionals here. There is no way that we would've done such an absurd thing as to put the game that should’ve been played under the table in front of the public!

“Besides, you’ve seen how detailed the exposure is. A lot of internal details about the ‘Dim Moon Fund’ are involved in it. Such information could never be grasped by us!

“Therefore, it is absolutely impossible that we did it. ‘Moonfall’ is somebody else!”

“Got it.” Li Yao nodded. “Then, what should the stance of our delegation be?”

“In short, no comments,” Cui Lingfeng said. “At this moment, the exposure is still mostly made of assumptions. It lacks real-life evidence. At the very least, we do not need to show an attitude toward the general public of the federation in case matters get worse.

“I have spoken to Captain Xie of the delegation and asked him to hold an emergency meeting with the federation as fast as possible to relieve the possible misunderstandings and concerns so that the issue will not affect our cooperation.

“On the other hand, I will speak to Speaker Wan of the Star Glory Federation directly later. I’m afraid that you’ll have to accelerate your pace now. I have a feeling that the exposure will not be an independent event. If there is indeed a scheme, it will break out very soon!

“Jin Xinyue is the focus of the scheme. She is now in the capital city of the federation in the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

“You must reach the capital city as quickly as possible. I will arrange for you to meet Speaker Wan of the federation soon. Remember, however much we might’ve disagreed in the past, unity and cooperation come first! We are Cultivators and brothers. Brothers may fight in the house, but they should resist the enemy together if somebody breaks down the door. Do you understand what I mean, Captain Lin?”

Li Yao knew that the words were not necessarily meant for him to hear, but he still nodded quickly and said, “Understood!”

“If the federation has any requirements when they are searching for this…’Moonfall’,” Cui Lingfeng said, “I command you to offer any help possible to the federation and try to cooperate with the federation’s work!”

“Understood!”

After concluding the conversation with Cui Lingfeng, Li Yao noticed that the noises outside the window were more and more obstreperous. Somebody was walking loudly on the corridor inside the hotel, too.

Li Yao was not affected by the noises. Knowing that the incident had not been exposed by the government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic, he was greatly relieved. Also, it was great that Cui Lingfeng thought that brothers should fight against a common foe despite the internal conflicts they might have.

He then turned back and carefully read the reactions to the event on the major websites and forums.

Naturally, the Spiritual Nexus was already on fire because of the news. But perhaps because the content was too flabbergasting, it was somewhat impossible to comment on it. Most of the neutral netizens were waiting for the follow-up news and for the federal government to provide a clear conclusion, but a tiny proportion of them, Ding Lingdang’s and Jin Xinyue’s hardcore supporters, were cursing each other aloud.

Ding Lingdang’s hardcore supporters said that Jin Xinyue was a second Lu Zui and a traitor of the federation who had committed such wrongdoings just in order to become the Speaker. Not only was she unqualified to be the Speaker, she should also be sent to prison.

Jin Xinyue’s supporters, on the other hand, accused Ding Lingdang’s supporters of fabricating such a shocking scandal just for Ding Lingdang to ascend to the throne of the Speaker despite the great enemy up ahead. The dirty water on Jin Xinyue was merely a setup, which was likely to tear the federation apart.

Holding his nose, Li Yao read them for a long time. He then scrutinized the letter of ‘Moonfall’ again and realized that, while his diction was rather sloppy and certain phrases such as ‘traitor of the federation’ were a bit too extreme, implying a low education, the specific details of the letter were rather logical and errorless. Nobody without abundant actual work experience would ever be able to write it.

Was it possible that he was speaking the truth and was actually a member of the Dim Moon Fund who only exposed the information because of his conscience and indignation?

Li Yao was no elementary school student. He would never believe such cr*p!

Therefore, the most critical question right now was who exactly ‘Moonfall’ could be. Also, as for his good disciple Jin Xinyue, who had inherited the essence of all his acting skills and even… the knowledge of his dark side, where was she, and what was she up to?

Li Yao scratched his nose and suddenly grinned.

It was highly unlikely that Jin Xinyue—who had been educated by himself and Jin Tuyi, two great experts of acting, and gone through so many difficulties in the past hundred years—would just be tripped by a tiny tip-off, right?

How will you respond, Jin Xinyue? I can’t wait to appreciate it closely now!

…

In the capital city of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, in the central square on July 20, the Memorial Day for the Deceased in the Uranian Ring War was underway. As the first large-scale expedition of the New Federation after it was established, and the war of rise that really built the new federal army into shape, the war had always had a special meaning to the federal government and the people of all social classes.

On July 20 every year, enormous parades and memorial ceremonies would be held in the capital city as well as the major worlds. The big shots nationwide would gather before the ‘Monument for Heroes of the Uranian Ring War’ in the capital city and pay tribute to the warriors who sacrificed themselves.

The two Speaker candidates who had been running about across the nation giving speeches and attracting more votes were no exceptions. Ding Lingdang and Jin Xinyue both returned to the capital city and appeared before the monument.

The memorial ceremony this year, however, was particularly weird and depressed.

Jin Xinyue seemed to have been installed with powerful magnetic units all over her body, distracting everyone’s eyes from the monument to herself.

Naturally, it was because of the shocking exposure.

However, Jin Xinyue responded calmly and comfortingly. Her smile toward the supporters and her grievance when she faced the monument in silence were equally impeccable.

She seemed to be at the center of a superstorm. The suspicions and attacks of the outside world did not seem to bother her at all.

Whoever saw her face would inevitably doubt whether the exposure on the Spiritual Nexus was true or merely hearsay and a groundless setup, no matter how much they had believed the letter from Moonfall before.

In the press conference after the memorial ceremony, when one of the reporters suddenly raised the sharp question to Jin Xinyue in violation of the theme of memorial, Jin Xinyue’s delicate makeup and perfect countenance were not affected at all. She simply replied with five short words.

“Rumors end at the wise.”

Her ‘perfectness’ was not in the least reduced until after the dinner when the big shots met in private.

It was a very secret private club that belonged to one of the top ten super sects in the New Federation.

Sitting in front of Jin Xinyue were three white-haired old men with daunting auras and obvious fury. They were the leaders of three top ten sects in the entire seven Sectors of the federation.

They were the literal ‘big shots’ of the federation. Two of their sects were from the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and the last one was from the Flying Star Sector. All the sects boasted a history of more than five hundred years. They were deeply rooted and among the most traditional and powerful organizations.

During the rapid development in the golden years of the New Federation in the past century, the sects had further expanded thanks to the trend and grown into super behemoths that spanned seven Sectors and could barely be destroyed!

A hundred years ago, for the survival of the demon race, for the Blood Demon Sector to get rid of the shadow of ‘failed world’ and become a regular world on equal terms with the other six Sectors, and for all the demons to break the shackles and turn into true citizens of the federation sooner, Jin Xinyue had visited the sects that those big shots belonged to and cooperated with them. Or rather, she had been ‘exploited’ and ‘taken advantage of’ by the big shots willingly!

With the help of the almost infinite resources under Jin Xinyue’s control, the sects that the big shots belonged to performed better during the fierce competitions. Their rank grew higher and higher in the top five hundred sects of the federation. Today, they had dwarfed almost all other traditional sects.

Even ‘Li Yao’s group’, a new force in the past hundred years, had their shadow behind it, too.

At the very least, Jin Xinyue, a notable warrior of Li Yao’s group, could not have risen to power in the first place without their help.

Chapter 1677 - Li Yao’s Snake Beauty

They were the largest funders who supported Jin Xinyue in her campaign for the Speaker. None of the Speakers of the federation in past decades had ever been elected without their support. Therefore, while Jin Xinyue could turn a blind eye to the heckling reporter, she could not pretend that she did not see their fury.

“How did it end like this?” Of the three big shots, Leader Zhao, who was sitting on the left, knocked the ground of black marble with his club and said solemnly, “Did you do it or not? Why were we not informed of such a great event beforehand? How are you going to clean up the mess?”

“Jin Xinyue, do you have any idea what you are doing?” On the right, Leader Pang, who weighed at least two hundred kilograms and looked like a huge mountain at distance, burst into fury before Leader Zhao finished. “Everybody knows that the big sects of the core worlds have wagered everything on you and supported you without sparing anything! The financial market is a mess because of your scandal now. Do you know how much our sects have lost in this one trading day? The money vaporized in the market today is enough to produce several main-force warships!”

“Jin Xinyue, this whole time, we have always had absolute faith in you and provided all the support you needed without asking about what you do.” Sitting in the middle, Leader Tong, who was as short as a child but had a rather gloomy face, clenched the arm of his chair so hard that it was screeching. “It was because we thought you were a smart person. A smart person knows what to do and what not to do. They never extend their hands to the things they should not do, however many benefits there seem to be, because they know they will be caught the moment they act!

“You know the importance of this election. This is not just the competition between you and Ding Lingdang but also the competition between the three core worlds and the four new worlds! A war will soon come. Whoever leads the federation to a glorious triumph as the ‘wartime leader’ will be the real dominator of the federation!

“If we win the election and the war, the position of the three core worlds will be unshakable in the Star Glory Federation. Even if more Sectors join the federation in the future, they will have to follow the order established by the core worlds and the rules of the game made by the ancient sects passed on from the age of the Old Federation!

“This is where our interests and your interests lie!

“But Ding Lingdang is different. She is a highly dangerous woman and not a player of the game at all. She does not appreciate the significance of the old older but wants to replace the forces and rules passed on from the Old Federation with her new worlds and new rules!

“If Ding Lingdang wins the election and defeats the Black Wind Fleet, she will be a rising sun, and the power of the new worlds will be greatly enhanced. The core worlds will never have things our way again!

“Do you understand the consequences at all? Don’t forget that the Blood Demon Sector is one of the core worlds, too!”

On the opposite side of the three furious big shots, Jin Xinyue was sitting elegantly on an unsoiled hassock and making tea meticulously.

Because today was the memorial day of the Uranian Ring War, Jin Xinyue was in particularly pure and clean dressing. Not only was her black suit devoid of any adornments, she had even replaced the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars emblem that she usually wore as a brooch with a black-and-white one. She also put on a thin, black veil over her face and did not take it off even during their meeting.

With her dressing, she looked as if she was enshrouded by dark mist that would never disperse. It was impossible to tell her real appearance at all, much less figure out what was on her mind.

Faced with the sharp criticism and warning of the three big shots, Jin Xinyue did not panic at all. She washed her hands, warmed the cup, put the tea leaves into the pot, soaked them in water, covered the pot, and later distributed the tea. Every procedure was immaculate. Even the most skilled specialist in tea ceremony could not have found anything inappropriate.

Jin Xinyue served three cups of fragrant ‘Purple Spring Dragon’ to the big shots respectfully before she went back to her own seat and unhurriedly replied, “It is exactly because of the significance of the election that I was forced to resort to this strategy…”

“Were you?” The three big shots were even more exasperated. “Do you know how much trouble your ‘strategy’ has brought us?”

Smiling, Jin Xinyue poured herself a cup of gold tea and sent it to her lips. But instead of drinking it up, she merely smelled the steam rising from the cup. “Three leaders, please do not be anxious. What we have right now is just groundless gossip. Why are you so panicked? If the online exposure of such a level can be believed, I can expose hundreds of scandals for each member of the parliament at any moment, and the parliament will surely be empty tomorrow.

“The bottom line is, rest assured, leaders. I’ll take care of the issue. Nothing will go wrong.”

“Something has already gone wrong!” the impulsive Leader Pang announced angrily. “If the exposure is to be believed, you should’ve resolved all the problems on Firefly neatly. But the truth is that they took care of everything on their own and even grew suspicious of you! Let’s put aside whether or not it is the right thing to do, but was that the best you could do?”

“You are playing with fire,” Leader Tong said with a gloomy face. “It’s easy to start a fire but difficult to put out one. With everything coming to this point, you’d better address the issue properly without leaving any trace behind. ‘Moonfall’ must be found, too!

“Remember, we absolutely do not want to see you act recklessly on your own anymore! In any case, the core worlds must win the election, or—”

Halfway through his speech, Leader Tong suddenly bulged his eyes and lost the ability to talk.

Leader Zhao and Leader Tang were also frozen, unable to move anymore, when they just raised their teacups!

It was because boundless killing intent was suddenly unleashed from Jin Xinyue at that moment, which crawled out of her black veil and black suit like ten thousand black vipers, wriggling, slithering, and constraining them like soggy black chains!

The pupils of the three leaders were immediately constricted to the minimum.

They were the purest admin-type Cultivators and more than two hundred years old. Too busy taking care of the affairs of their sects day and night, they had been greatly worn out, and their soul was not nearly as strong as before.

Jin Xinyue, on the other hand, was a ‘saintess’ educated by the Pantheon of Demons of the Blood Demon Sector more than a hundred years ago. She was the most delicate slaughtering machine!

After she pledged loyalty to the federation and joined the Secret Sword Bureau, she had led the ‘Dim Moon Squad’ in the most mysterious and unpredictable battlefields.

In recent decades, especially after she was nominated as a minister, she had begun to change her image and always showed up in public as a gentle, elegant, and harmless woman. She had not really fought anyone in decades.

After such a long time, even the big shots who supported Jin Xinyue to power had forgotten what a terrifying person the ‘weak woman’ hiding in the black mist was and took her for a puppet that they could rub and shape however they saw fit!

The three admin-type old Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, suppressed by Jin Xinyue, a new Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator talented in both management and battle, were not even able to blink.

The teacups in their hands were the only things that were still emitting hot air.

“Let me repeat myself. Please listen carefully, leaders. This is just another minor issue that I will take care of.”

Jin Xinyue let go of her hands. The teapot floated and swirled in midair softly.

She took off the black veil over her face, revealing a calm expression with a perfect smile, like a viper that craned its neck out of the black mist and hissed at the three big shots.

“Also, one other thing. I’m rather curious. What can do you even if I fail to handle it well? In less than one month, are you going to replace me with someone else to compete with Ding Lingdang, drawing a line with me? Tsk, tsk, tsk. Why have I never heard about such an extraordinary candidate in your pocket?

“I’ve never disappointed you in the past hundred years. The ‘Magnificent Expanse’ case eighty years ago, the things regarding the monopolization of the mines on the Great Peace Planet, and the political struggles before and after the ‘Bill of Rights for General Equality’. Did we ever not return with trophies?

“In the past century, based on what did your sects rise in the top five hundred sects of the federation and defeat so many seemingly unassailable corporations? Was it not because our mutual trust in each other?

“Hehe. We have been in the same boat for too long. If I fall because of the scandal, are you going to gain anything? If they can track the insurgency on Firefly back to me, why can’t they track you down from me and expose all our deals from the past hundred years?

“Leaders, and my dear uncles, don’t you agree?”

Jin Xinyue sipped the tea and moaned in great satisfaction. Then, she made a gesture casually, loosening the pressure on the three of them.

The three big shots shuddered at the same time, their back soaked in cold sweat.

They looked at Jin Xinyue in disbelief and then at each other in bewilderment. Their faces were twisting in agony.

“We—we really shouldn’t have trusted you. We shouldn’t have trusted you from the very beginning. It was you who volunteered to come to us. It was you—” The fat on Leader Pang’s face was trembling hard as he screamed. “I knew that you were not up to anything good! Those who are not my people always think differently from me! They always do!”

“Leader Pang, your words sound rather racist to me.” Jin Xinyue walked behind the three big shots and smiled.

Although the three big shots had all regained their ability to move, they did not dare move at all for some reason. They did not even have the courage to look back.

“Hehe. I swore an oath to my master a hundred years ago that I would become the Speaker of the Star Glory Federation one day, at whatever cost and through whatever methods!” Jin Xinyue’s smile was gradually gone, replaced by coldness and ruthlessness. She said, one word after another, “Therefore, just rest assured, I will never be defeated by Ding Lingdang. Never!

“You don’t have to do anything except trust me and support me without reserve. Devote all your resources and strength to me, and we are going to win the war side by side!”

Pa!

As she spoke the last syllable, Jin Xinyue firmly patted Leader Pang’s shoulder. Leader Pang and his companions could not help but shudder again.

Jin Xinyue bent down and leaned next to Leader Pang’s ear from behind, asking in a soft voice, “We will most certainly win, won’t we, Uncle Pang?”

Leader Pang struggled to swallow and nodded uncontrollably. “…Yes, we will.”

“Fantastic.” Jin Xinyue’s frozen face immediately melted, and the sunniest smile beamed out. “Alright. I must go back to my ministry for a meeting. You just take your time to enjoy the tea here. The tea leaves named ‘Purple Spring Dragon’ are rare enough even in the Forest Ocean Sector where they are grown. It would be a shame if they are wasted.”

Chapter 1678 - The War Between Two Women

Jin Xinyue left the secret room with a series of chuckles, leaving the three big shots of noble sects who had been dominating the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector since the age of the Old Federation staring at each other in silence and feeling the coldness that was emitting from the deepest part from their bones.

…

A long, black, bulletproof shuttle quietly ascended to the top of the private club and moved toward the plaza of the Ministry of Equality and Development like a ghost.

However, Jin Xinyue was not on the shuttle.

It was not until five minutes later that another seemingly plain shuttle flew out of a parking lot not far away from the private club toward the industrial district in the northeast of the capital city.

After zigzagging for half an hour, the shuttle slowly landed in an empty, rusted, and forsaken warehouse that was soon to be rebuilt.

When she got out of the shuttle, Jin Xinyue felt particularly cold. She put on a thick, black leather coat made from the hide of a Horned Camel.

Kada. Kada. Kada.

She walked through the warehouse that was entirely empty. Her high-heeled boots clicked on the ground, uttering crisp and hollow sounds.

When she was about to reach the end of the warehouse, Jin Xinyue stopped and completely took off her black veil, revealing a pale, delicate face.

Opposite her, deep inside the warehouse, Ding Lingdang in a dark red training suit strutted straight toward her and stopped three meters away from her.

For two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, it was certainly not a friendly distance.

Ding Lingdang and Jin Xinyue, perhaps the two most dangerous women in the Star Glory Federation, confronted each other in silence, three meters away from each other.

Huala! Huala! Huala!

The warehouse could not withstand their raging spiritual energy anymore despite its spaciousness. The broken windows around were all vibrating crazily and screaming in devastating noises.

“Masteress, I did not expect that you would ask me to meet you in such a place.” Jin Xinyue put on a vague smile. “You and I are both celebrities right now and sort of… competitors. If the media learn of our meeting, it will be more than breaking news; it will be a superstorm.

“However, on second thought, how many years has it been since we last had a sincere conversation face to face after master left? Oh. We have never done this before?”

“Cut the nonsense.” Ding Lingdang went to the topic directly. “Are you responsible for the insurgency of the Immortal Cultivators on Firefly? Did Lu Qingchen work for you? Have you been supporting the CFIA in secret?”

Jin Xinyue seemed to have foreseen that Ding Lingdang would ask her those questions. She opened her hands and said, “Masteress, you choose to believe such groundless gossip?”

“It is exactly because I don’t that I have come to you!” Ding Lingdang stepped forward again, shortening the distance between them to two meters. “Jin Xinyue, look me in the eyes and give a straight answer to the question just now! If you dare look me in the eyes and say that you didn’t do any of that, I will believe you!”

Jin Xinyue looked at Ding Lingdang’s eyes, but the infinite brilliance in them quickly forced her to look away. She continued smiling. “Masteress, when you are truly elected as the Supreme Speaker of the Star Glory Federation, of course, I will tell you everything I know, and all the secrets will be disclosed to you. But right now, a lot of things are still classified at the highest level. I cannot tell you, and you are not qualified to hear them!”

Ding Lingdang sniffed. “So, is the exposure from ‘Moonfall’ all true?”

“As the minister of the Ministry of Equality and Development and the president of the Dim Moon Fund, I cannot say a word to you,” Jin Xinyue said. “However, since you are my masteress, if this is just a private, casual chitchat between a masteress and a disciple, I would like to discuss one thing with you. Assuming that the leader of an intelligence agency—let’s call her Jin Xinyue—in a nonexistent country—let’s call it the Star Glory Federation—really did those things, so what? Is there a problem?

“The situation is obvious right now. The expedition army of the Imperium is arriving and will possibly show up right above us any second. But the diehards of the government-in-exile are still hesitating reluctantly, trying to haggle with us. Do we really have the time and energy to negotiate with the government-in-exile?

“An insurgency of the Immortal Cultivators that discovered in advance can point out the threat of the Immortal Cultivators for the leadership of the government-in-exile and help them eradicate the internal ‘pustule’. Two birds, one stone. Why shouldn’t they do it?

“By saying this, I am not implying that I did such a thing. But let’s ‘assume’ that a Jin Xinyue did this some time ago. Was it really so reprehensible?

“At the very least, it ended pretty well. The Immortal Cultivators lurking on Firefly were mostly fished up, and the old Speaker of the government-in-exile asked for full cooperation with us actively in his fear. Tell me about it, Masteress. What makes you so angry about the issue? Or, is it because you think that the job was so marvelously done that it will significantly improve my standing and grant me a final victory?”

“Bullsh*t!” Ding Lingdang narrowed her eyes. “Don’t presume that everybody in the entire world considers the place of the ‘Supreme Speaker’ more important than anything else! Let me tell you, even now, never for one second have I really cared whether or not I am elected as the ‘Supreme Speaker’!

“If you admit that you are responsible for the incident, and it was you who instigated the insurgency of the Immortal Cultivators on Firefly before suppressing it, is it any different from the firefighters who start a fire and then extinguish it later in order to earn credit for themselves? You—you have set foot on the wrong path. You have walked onto Lu Zui’s path! What you are doing right now is no different from what Lu Zui did at all!”

“Then I’m afraid that you are mistaken, masteress.” Faced with the tempest from Ding Lingdang, Jin Xinyue was as tranquil as before. She replied calmly, “First of all, Lu Zui personally planned and carried out the many crimes, including the assassination of the Speaker and the massacre of innocent people. His hands were stained with the blood of his compatriots.

“But for me, assuming—remember, it is just a hypothesis—assuming that I really planned to do something, I wouldn’t have been as stupid as Lu Zui to plan and implement everything actively.

“The most I would do is perhaps delay the intelligence of an upcoming insurgency on Firefly that I ‘happened’ to learn of in order to lure the big fish in the water. Then, I might’ve slowly guided the situation.

“It’s very understandable in intelligence work, isn’t it? Firstly, I had to protect the safety of the intelligence personnel on our side. Secondly, how was I supposed to tell them with the awkward relationship between us and the government-in-exile at that time? Should I simply go to Cui Lingfeng and tell him that his most trusted subordinate whom he regarded as a daughter was joining hands with the third most powerful man on-board to start an insurgency?

“This is how intelligence work is done. If we arrest the lackeys whenever we find that they are up to something, we will never be able to catch the masterminds behind them!

“The Dim Moon Fund does the same. The Secret Sword Bureau, too. Even the police have to crack their cases similarly. Why are you so harsh on me particularly, Masteress?”

“Do not dodge the topic. You know exactly what I meant!” Holding back her anger, Ding Lingdang said coldly, “Thankfully, the insurgency of the Immortal Cultivators was suppressed in time. Otherwise, how many innocent people in Firefly would’ve been killed because you decided to ‘catch the big fish’? Have you ever considered that?”

Jin Xinyue slowly narrowed her eyes, like a starship that was slowly unfolding the defense shield and entering the combat state. “Then, has it ever occurred to you, Masteress, how much trouble the government-in-exile would bring us if the problem on Firefly was not resolved quickly and neatly and if the ‘cancer’ was not completely removed? How many innocent people would have been killed miserably because of the trouble?

“At the very least, if anyone is killed right now, it will be the ordinary people of the government-in-exile!

“But if I am too merciful and blinded by petty kindness, it will be the ordinary people and the compatriots of the Star Glory Federation who are killed! A hundred times more than the victims of the government-in-exile!

“This is the greatest difference between me and Lu Zui. Lu Zui claimed to be a guardian of the federation, but those he killed were all his own compatriots. But blades and claws will only be used to deal with outsiders and to defend the federation! If the sacrifice of some outsiders can save the lives of more compatriots in the federation, I don’t see anything wrong with that!”

Jin Xinyue’s suddenly raised voice and aura even cast Ding Lingdang into a daze.

The human-shaped she-tyrannosaur stared at the saintess of demons carefully and mumbled, “You are truly sinking deeper and deeper into the swirl of power, Jin Xinyue! Although I always knew that you were ambitious and ruthless, I thought that Li Yao must’ve seen that you still had boundaries in your heart that would prevent you from doing the things that disregard all principles when he recruited you as a disciple!

“But he was mistaken!

“Look at what you’ve done in the past hundred years, especially the dirty jobs after you left the Secret Sword Bureau and established an independent ‘Dim Moon Squad’. Also, for the sake of the demons, you bent before the so-called ‘big shots’ of the core worlds and worked as their accomplice willingly! Just think about everything that you have done. Do you not feel that you are slowly sliding from a ‘Cultivator’ into an ‘Immortal Cultivator’?”

Jin Xinyue smiled, apparently not thinking that it was a big deal. She tightened the coat on her body and remarked, “Cultivator or Immortal Cultivator, it is just a title. Is it any different from ‘worker’, ‘farmer’, ‘policeman’, or ‘teacher’? They are not words that are engraved into one’s forehead and can never be removed! I don’t have the time to bother about Cultivators, Immortal Cultivators, and whatnot. I only know that I won’t feel sorry for what I did either in front of my master or in front of the federation.

“What, do you despise me because my methods were too filthy? But would the four new worlds have been conquered so easily without filthy methods? If I hadn’t plucked all the annoying ‘stings’ with my brothers through life and death, how on earth would the rest of them have joined the federation obediently?

“Through the clandestine approaches that the ‘Dim Moon Fund’ adopted, the four new worlds were fully integrated into the federation at least ten years faster. How many resources, military advancements, and combat ability improvements can we accomplish in ten years? How many lives of ordinary people will be saved in the upcoming war because of the improvement? One billion? Two? Five? Ten?

“If my hands can save the lives of another ten billion people at the price of getting slightly ‘dirtier’, then I will have to bear my master’s tutelage in mind and do what I have to do no matter what!”

Chapter 1679 - I Am Going to Win!

Jin Xinyue’s voice was as cold as a frigid blizzard, lowering the temperature of the entire warehouse by dozens of degrees.

However, the crimson flames of spiritual energy around Ding Lingdang were still flowing out incessantly like unstoppable magma.

When she stared at Jin Xinyue, there was no anger but deep sorrow in her eyes. “Do you not understand, Jin Xinyue? Your clandestine approaches, your blood and violence, will never resolve the problems fundamentally even if they can achieve something temporarily!”

From the moment they met, Jin Xinyue had been at ease, and she had controlled the pace of their conversation tightly, but she was utterly dumbfounded by Ding Lingdang’s remark.

The delicate makeup and perfect smile on the saintess of demons’ face were frozen before they split apart and were replaced by a genuine expression of disbelief and amusement.

“Did—did I hear it right? My masteress, the Valkyrie of the federation, told me that you can’t solve a problem with violence?” Jin Xinyue bulged her beautiful eyes to the maximum and examined Ding Lingdang for a long time. “There are only two possibilities, Masteress. Either your brain was damaged in the prolonged hibernation in the past century, or you are not Ding Lingdang at all but a certain ‘duplicate’ that the Imperium of True Human Beings subbed in.

“Hehe. Violence can’t solve problems. So, how did we conquer the Uranian Ring Sector under your lead? By wholehearted persuasion, like what you are doing to me right now?”

“Yes. The Uranian Ring Sector was indeed conquered by force. I do not regret what I did in the Uranian Ring Sector, nor do I object to the war.” Ding Lingdang sighed, but softness completely different from a hundred years ago appeared on her face. “However, I do feel sorrowful for some things that happened during the war.

“If there was a slim chance at all, I wouldn’t have launched such a war and killed so many people or allowed myself to be praised as the ‘God of War’!”

Obvious disdain beamed out of Jin Xinyue’s face.

“Don’t be hasty. Just hear me out,” Ding Lingdang said solemnly. “A hundred years ago, before I entered the prolonged hibernation, I had never considered any philosophical questions but took violence for an ultimate solution to all problems driven by my instincts.

“However, in the past hundred years, I woke twice in the middle of the prolonged hibernation and lived… two new lives in the Nether World Sector and the Uranian Ring Sector.

“I met a lot of people and experienced a lot of things in the journey of the new worlds where I seemed to be reborn. I also witnessed too much blood and destruction.

“To save the two worlds, and to save the federation, I began to think. The result of my thinking is that I’ve realized it is more important to know when not to use violence than to know when to use it.

“Just like what your master did a hundred years ago. In terms of combat ability, he wasn’t the strongest in the three Sectors. During the assimilation of the three Sectors, he did not resort to violence to solve all the problems, either!”

“Of course not.” Jin Xinyue smiled. “Other than violence, he also used a lot of sordid tricks that fooled many people!”

Ding Lingdang was lost for words. She was dazed for a moment before she replied, “I would like you to consider it carefully, Jin Xinyue. After having developed to this day, the Star Glory Federation has already reached the ‘limits of violence’ with the seven Sectors it has. If our purpose is not just to dominate the edge of the cosmos but to fulfil our destiny for all mankind, it is impossible for us to conquer all three thousand Sectors with violence!

“Even if we do conquer them, the boundlessness of the universe itself means that we cannot govern them for long with violence and tyranny!

“The Imperium of True Human Beings intends to govern the hundreds of Sectors in its territory with violence and tyranny, but not every emperor boasts the wisdom and strength of Blackstar the Great. As the authority of the crown declines, the experts of the subordinate worlds will come up with their own plans and fight each other for benefits. The Black Wind Fleet will be the best example!

“The Alliance of the Holy Covenant wants to deprive everyone of their emotions and turn them into pure tools, but humans are not tools. More and more people are bound to be awakened from the swamp of the ‘Ultimate Path of Benevolence’. The reign of the Covenant Alliance cannot last long, either!

“What about the federation? We have the national treasure that is a ‘grand-unified Spiritual Nexus’, but the construction and maintenance of the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus cost astronomical resources, and it is susceptible to cosmic storms. Also, as the distance increases, the cost will rise exponentially!

“Seven Sectors are already the limits of the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus under the current development level of our civilization!

“Let me ask you, in the near future, when we raise our flag and march toward the center of the cosmos, how much violence will we need to conquer and govern the worlds there?

“No. The most precious things in the federation are not our violence, schemes, and tricks but our ideology and our purest path of the Cultivators. We defend the ordinary people, we defend justice, and we defend everyone’s peaceful life and beautiful home!

“Even the most advanced starship cannot cross the universe instantly, but once an ideology spreads out like fire, it is impossible to ignite the hundreds of the Sectors at the center of the cosmos in only a few years!

“As for you, you may call what you did in the past decades a means to an end, but you have greatly stained our ideology with you act! In years to come, when we truly march to the center of the cosmos, such a stain may pronounce the efforts of so many Cultivators in vain!”

“In years to come?” Jin Xinyue chuckled. “With the imminent scourge of the Black Wind Fleet right before us, let’s solve the crisis through ‘dirty approaches’ before we invite you to preach on your noble ‘ideology’, Masteress!

“If this is all you want to talk about today, it is truly a great waste of our precious time. May I leave now, Masteress?”

“Wait!” Looking at Jin Xinyue who was turning around to leave, Ding Lingdang said, “I will ask you one last thing. It’s about the explosion in the ‘Jade Dust Mines’!

“The explosion was the greatest terror attack with the most victims in the history of the federation, done by the CFIA. Lu Qingchen became the most wanted criminal of the federation because of that, too!

“Alright. I’ll say that everything you did when you supervised the ‘Dim Moon Fund’ and your indulgence of the insurgence on Firefly were in the gray area of our ‘boundaries’, but what about this one?

“Lu Qingchen committed such an inhumane, insane felony, and the innocent victims included a lot of your demon compatriots. In order to build up your personal influence, or maybe because you were confident in manipulating him, did you stay in touch with him and try to make use of him?”

Jin Xinyue halted and turned around. Her face turned extremely mysterious and cold. “As I said, Masteress, everything we chatted about just now is an ‘assumption’. I never admitted that Lu Qingchen worked for me.”

Ding Lingdang sneered, “Alright. That’s fine. I’m going to investigate it, with the Patriots Front and all the resources at my disposal, until I reach the bottom of the matter. I will seek justice for the 35,527 unrested souls in the Jade Dust Mines and find out the true criminal behind Lu Qingchen!”

Jin Xinyue’s voice grew calmer, but the killing intent in her eyes became more intense. “Masteress, must you turn us against each other? Look at yourself. Rash, reckless, and childish. Are you ‘Speaker of the Federation’ material at all? Something will happen to you… if you run about like an angry bull.”

“Are you threatening me?” Ding Lingdang laughed in fury. “I’m very curious about one thing. Although people called me ‘God of War’, I know that it is just a compliment because I happened to help federation find two new worlds.

“You, on the other hand, have always kept a low profile. You were a saintess adept at infiltration and assassination and an expert in the demon king stage a hundred years ago. You never hibernated in the past hundred years but fought in the most dark, dangerous frontline the whole time. I’m told that you also gathered the secret techniques of many new worlds.

“Jin Xinyue, how strong are you right now? I would very much like to find out as your masteress!”

Faced with Ding Lingdang’s ever-expanding spiritual energy that was almost tangible, Jin Xinyue smiled and, combing her hair that was messed by Ding Lingdang’s auras, replied, “As I recall, somebody just said ‘violence can’t solve problems’ three minutes ago. Is this why they say it is easier to change the world than to change one’s nature?”

Ding Lingdang smiled, too. “Fair enough. Then, let’s compete in the battlefield for the Speaker of the Federation!”

“Then you will be even more hopeless, Masteress!” Jin Xinyue yawned and said, “With all due respect, and please don’t be mad, Masteress, but I don’t know why you are running for it even now. You don’t appear to be someone who doesn’t know herself!”

“If you want to know, I’ll tell you.” Ding Lingdang strode forward until she was only one meter away from Jin Xinyue. “I ran for it because of you at first. I only came up to highlight you!”

Jin Xinyue rolled her eyes. “Oh?”

“There is some friction and contradiction between the core worlds and the new ones. Nobody can deny that,” Ding Lingdang declared resolutely. “Only I can talk the people of the new worlds into supporting you after I lose the campaign so that you can control all the resources of the seven Sectors and resist the Black Wind Fleet!

“No candidates except me boast such influence that can help you stabilize the four new worlds quickly without leaving any chance for the Black Wind Fleet.

“That was my original goal. Hehe. You didn’t see it coming, did you? I was only showing up as a ‘green leaf’ to help you stabilize the situation and concentrate the strength so that you could be the toughest ‘wartime Speaker’ in centuries!

“After all, I thought that you had your boundaries as a Cultivator despite your ambitions, treachery, and lust for power! I thought I should believe in Li Yao and trust you and unite the federation with the strength of both of us!

“But right now…

"I've changed my mind. You don't deserve to be the Speaker of the Federation. The only place suitable for you is a prison!

"Let me tell you. An independent persecution group made of thirty persecutors has been established to investigate the relationship between the Dim Moon Fund and the CFIA.

"Let's see if you can persist for another month. Jin Xinyue, take care!"

While talking, Ding Lingdang walked past Jin Xinyue toward the gate of the warehouse without looking back.

She was like a cluster of angry magma flowing past a cold block of ice, unwilling to spend another second with the other person.

"Ding Lingdang!" There was finally fury and frustration in Jin Xinyue's voice. She even stopped using the formal title. "Don't think that you are qualified to be the Speaker of the Federation after you get rid of me. A bull who has more brawns than brains such as yourself doesn't even deserve to be a mayor. You will ruin the federation!"

"Whatever the battlefield is…" Ding Lingdang's voice drifted close from outside the warehouse like rumbling thunder on the ceiling. "I will win as long as I want to!"

Ding Lingdang left like a storm.

Jin Xinyue was left alone in the empty, abandoned warehouse in the black leather coat.

However, if Ding Lingdang had not left but turned invisible and stopped in front of Jin Xinyue, she would have noticed that when the saintess of demons bellowed 'Ding Lingdang' in rage, there was not the slightest anger on her face.

Instead, it was brimming with… a clever smile, like a fox that had just stolen a fish.

“What a silly masteress.” Jin Xinyue yawned again and mumbled to herself, “Still, she is quite adorable in her own way.”

Chapter 1680 - Great Avalanche

Every overwhelming avalanche begins with the quake of one insignificant stone.

However, before the thick and heavy snow that covered that entire mountaintop really collapsed, nobody could have foreseen that the tiny stone boasted such enormous destructive power!

The things that happened one short month before the election of the most important Speaker in the hundred years since the New Federation had been founded seemed to be further proving the point.

When, twenty days ago, a mysterious person under the name of ‘Moonfall’ exposed the so-called ‘nefarious scandal’ in various media, a lot of idle people had been debating with each other on the Spiritual Nexus about the exposure.

But honestly speaking, for every federal citizen who had received citizenship education and boasted rationality above average thanks to the edification of the game ‘Civilization’, which also granted them the right to vote, they did not think that the scandal alone was enough to knock Jin Xinyue down, even if some of them were Jin Xinyue’s opposers.

A scandal was just a scandal. Nothing more.

The online exposure could be groundless and entirely fabricated, but even if it was true, there was still a major gap between Jin Xinyue and a ‘contemporary Lu Zui’.

After all, the ‘Dim Moon Plan’ exposed by Moonfall’s secret letter was a coup operation directed toward a different political entity beyond the federation. Also, the plan was only targeting the highest leader of the political entity in principle, and Jin Xinyue did not plan and implement it actively, either, but merely kept silent in order to gain more benefits.

Furthermore, her purpose was to eliminate all the uncertainties before the Black Wind Fleet arrived and win Firefly over for the federation.

It was completely a different deal from Lu Zui, who made multiple plans against the Speaker and his own compatriots promptly just to raise a total war, eventually getting more than ten thousand innocent compatriots killed.

All the federal citizens were mature enough to know that the real world was not a fairy tale or an online novel where one could defeat everything with mere ‘passion’ and ‘sense of justice’.

For a regional superpower that boasted seven Sectors and a population of more than a hundred billion and was faced with a serious military threat, it was necessary to adopt certain unconventional methods at unusual times. Cultivators were ‘sabers of humanity’, not ‘rosaries of humanity’ or ‘sutras of humanity’. They were certainly not the most lenient people in the world!

“Jin Xinyue did it for a good purpose, although her methods were indeed questionable.”

“There is no kindness in times of war. Even if this thing is real, isn’t it more proof that Jin Xinyue is more suitable to be the Speaker of the Federation?”

“Yes. We can make safer decisions in peacetime, but now that we are faced with the gravest danger since the establishment of the New Federation, only a determined and resolute person such as Jin Xinyue can lead us to defeat the Imperium at such a moment of life and death! This war will be the real rise of the New Federation!”

After the initial shock and exclamations, similar opinions were gradually spreading out on the Spiritual Nexus and won a lot of supporters.

“I don’t think Jin Xinyue did anything wrong. On the other hand, Ding Lingdang or a certain guy in the Patriots Front has played a rather foul move. It is obvious that this ‘Moonfall’ was made up by them! As the saying goes, a family should solve the internal conflicts within the family. Even if the Dim Moon Fund did organize the operation, there is still no need to publicize it and upset our ally and the general public!

“This is obviously the Patriots Front trying to tear apart the federation without considering the big picture just to take the helm! They are talking about a ‘second Lu Zui’, but wasn’t Lu Zui the founder of the Patriots Partnership before?”

All in all, a week after the letter from Moonfall was exposed, the obstreperous noises on the media and the Spiritual Nexus did not seem to congregate into a storm.

Both the parliament and the plaza of the Ministry of Equality and Development at the center of the storm were as peaceful as before.

However, in places that news reporters and general public could not see, an independent group made of the best prosecutors and investigators of the federation had already begun their investigation thunderously and shocked a lot of insiders of Jin Xinyue's group. The tiny butterfly finally flapped its wings, bringing forth a storm that would soon turn the world upside down.

A week after the exposure of the letter from Moonfall, the 'stone' that caused the avalanche finally dropped down.

It landed in the station where the delegation from the rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic was staying.

The appearance of Moonfall's letter disrupted all the arrangements previously agreed upon by the government-in-exile and the federation. After a week's urgent negotiations, the delegation of the government-in-exile was finally ready to leave. They were about to transfer at the 'Hundred Flowers Space Zone', which was at the center of the seven Sectors, before they directly jumped to the capital city in the Heaven's Origin Sector in order to consolidate the time-tested friendship between the two parties and their mutual destiny on the path of Cultivation.

However, the morning the delegation was about to set off, an unsolicited guest barged into the hotel of the delegation recklessly in the middle of the reporters.

However, the delegation was too well-defended to be breached. Not only had the Secret Sword Bureau set up iron walls around the hotel, even 'Team Red Lotus', the delegation's own guardian team', was the most elite special force of the government-in-exile.

The unannounced intruder was not even able to break the first defense line when she was caught by the Secret Sword

Bureau and Team Red Lotus.

However, the weak, pitiful girl who seemed less than twenty years old shocked everyone the moment she started to talk after she was caught.

“Please help me! My brother is ‘Moonfall’. He was an accountant in the Dim Moon Fund who oversaw the operations of the secret capital, but he has already been killed by Jin Xinyue! He sent me a jade chip before his death, saying that Jin Xinyue’s clandestine deals were all stored inside! He also said that Jin Xinyue’s subordinates were everywhere and that I could only be safe enough in this place under the double protection of the Secret Sword Bureau and the delegation from Firefly! Only the delegation from Firefly can release the information to the public so that everybody can know what Jin Xinyue and the people behind her did!”

The avalanche began.

From the precious jade chip brought by the girl who claimed to be Moonfall’s sister, a lot of information regarding the flow of the secret capital of the Dim Moon Fund was parsed.

Although the information was not enough to completely prove the connection between the Dim Moon Fund and the CFIA or to crucify Jin Xinyue, it at least helped the independent investigators apply for higher permissions in their operation, which allowed them to summon tremendous Secret Sword Agents to block and search more than fifty branches, local offices, and secret bureaus of the Ministry of Equality and Development and the Dim Moon Fund in all seven Sectors. More than 3,200 crystal processors and ten thousand storage chips were confiscated.

Most of the secrets of the Dim Moon Fund were exposed to the independent investigators as well as the Secret Sword Bureau, their old nemesis.

However, things did not quite go as many people planned in the next two weeks.

The purpose of the independent investigators was to find out the connection between the Dim Moon Fund and the CFIA, or even evidence that Jin Xinyue had been manipulating the CFIA for her own benefit, through the crystal processors and the storage chips.

However, before they found the proof that they needed, they located evidence suggesting that the Dim Moon Fund had been conniving with certain high-ranking super sects that had a history of hundreds of years and were even the founders of the Old Federation!

According to the evidence, long before the ‘Dim Moon Fund’ was established, more than a hundred years ago, Jin Xinyue, as a saintess of the demons, had to lower her head to the great sects that in fact controlled the lifelines of the federation for the survival and rise of the demon race. She worked as their accomplice and lackey and even transmitted astronomical illegal interests to them in secret.

The Blood Demon Sector, which had just signed a treaty of surrender, boasted countless laborers who were sturdy, hardworking, and relatively docile because of the long-time edification of the Four Pillars System.

With the laborers as her leverage, Jin Xinyue managed to force her way into the secret circle of the great sects that had been passed on for hundreds of years. She began to speak for their benefits.

In the decades that followed, she even helped a few sects that were slightly weaker defeat some other sects that ranked higher. It was only with the support of the victors that she finally rose to her current position.

There was no need to mention all the surreptitious details involved in the process.

The battlefield of business was as merciless as a real one. Now that the pungent dregs that had been fomenting in the dark gutters for a hundred years had all been dug up, barely any of the few cross-Sector sects that ranked top in the federation, and especially some of the ancient sects at the core worlds that boasted a history of hundreds of years, survived.

The case of Magnificent Expanse, the case of Turbulent Ocean, the case of the development on South Funnel Planet… All the cases related to illegal operations, interest transmissions, and blatant bribery were unraveled!

The great sects that had dominated the world since the age of the Old Federation were immediately put into an awkward situation.

The whole thing suddenly turned into one where everybody was darting at a hornets’ nest only to discover that quite a few tigers were actually squatting behind it. The people, the media, the Secret Sword Bureau, and the independent investigators could not help but shift their eyes from Jin Xinyue and the Dim Moon Fund to the major sects!

The reason was simple.

Judging from the evidence parsed so far, Jin Xinyue was but a ‘puppet’ that those important sects put on the table and a lackey to fight for their benefits. Was it reasonable to only catch a lackey without asking who was behind the curtain?

In terms of ‘interest transmissions’, Jin Xinyue was the briber, and the great sects accepted the benefits she offered.

Compared with bribery, people seemed to be more intolerable about the briber.

Also, based on the evidence, Jin Xinyue was not entirely doing it for herself but to help her compatriots, the poor demons in the Blood Demon Sector, to survive the harsh and difficult environment a hundred years ago and grow into regular ‘people of the federation’. That was why she had been forced to bend before the major sects despite her unwillingness and fight for their benefits.

The ‘Bill of Rights for General Equality’ had been passed almost fifty years prior. The war a hundred years ago had long been left behind. Most people of the federation did not have much prejudice against the demons anymore.

Jin Xinyue had been a saintess of the demons before, which was a fact that everybody knew. Then, for the future of her people, she had been forced to kowtow to the ‘giants’ of the federation at that time and do certain ugly things while she suffered the extortion of those giants. So, she appeared to be rather… uncomplaining, which called for sympathy?

At the very least, to fight for a brighter future for her people, she shouldered all the darkness by herself. It was indeed a great sacrifice!

Chapter 1681 - Revolution!

In the three weeks, the incident kept on fomenting. Almost every major sect in the core worlds was being roasted.

In the meantime, from certain corners on the Spiritual Nexus, a brand-new opinion was quietly released and soon spread out virally.

“Jin Xinyue is certainly not right, but she is quite pitiful, too. Think about it. A hundred years ago, as a saintess of demons who shouldered the destiny and future of all her compatriots, she was merely in the demon king stage or the Core Formation Stage. Faced with the almighty giants that had controlled the Old Federation for hundreds of years, did she really have a choice other than to lower her proud head and listen to them obediently?”

“Yes. She went through so much trouble doing so many things against her will, but she earned less than ten percent from the gains. Most of the benefits were looted by the major sects!”

“Jin Xinyue was innocent. A hundred years ago, she was a kind, innocent girl. Otherwise, why would the legendary Vulture Li Yao, the dominator of three Sectors, have recruited her as a disciple? She is Li Yao’s disciple, and Li Yao is our great hero. So, she must be a good person!”

“It’s a shame that Li Yao left too early. Without the protection of Li Yao, how could such a vulnerable girl as Jin Xinyue have protected the future of her people and resisted the storms of the outside world on her own?”

“Those wretched giants threatened her with the future of demons after Jin Xinyue lost her master in her most vulnerable moment. They forced her to cross the line further and further, asking her to do so many bad things!”

“Jin Xinyue did not have a choice. She was so pitiful!”

“I am a demon, and I am a real citizen of the federation, but I will forever be proud of my bloodline! It was not until today that I learned that Jin Xinyue secretly carried such heavy burdens for the demons to receive equal citizen rights and that the major sects that belong to the old era could be so shameless!”

“I am also a demon. Of the hundred billion people in the federation, demons make up almost thirty billion. We absolutely support Jin Xinyue, and we will not allow any major sect to sit on our neck and manipulate us as if we are their horses and hounds!”

“Our loyalty is to the federation, and we will only fight for the federation. We will not be taken advantage of by the major sects anymore. We will not stand our leader Jin Xinyue being played by the major sects as a marionette!”

“I am not a demon, but I am from the Water Crystal Sector, one of the ‘four new worlds’ in the eyes of the people from the core worlds. I absolutely support the opinions of the demon patriots. The Star Glory Federation belongs to all the people of the seven Sectors. It is definitely not a property of the major sects and the ancient houses that are remnants of the old times and no longer used to the new era!”

“The New Federation calls for new sects that can really stand for the interests of all the people in the seven Sectors!”

Similar opinions swept across every corner of the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus in only a couple of days like a surging superstorm.

As the investigation went deeper and deeper, the major sects and traditional families of training with hundreds of years of history caught the attention of the independent investigators one after another. New scandals were being exposed almost on a daily basis. While all the people were dumbfounded and infuriated, they further proved the correctness of the opinions listed above.

The market reacted strongly to the ‘Dim Moon Plan Incident’.

The major sects from the core worlds and their affiliated sects plummeted in the financial market like a great landslide.

Needless to say, some of the leaders of the sects and the patriarchs of noble families had already been or were about to be investigated because of the scandal.

Various sources said that the serial exposure of scandals would certainly cause a great reshuffle to the federation both economically and politically.

The ancient giants that had succeeded and expanded to this day since the Old Federation was founded more than a thousand years ago were likely to be broken up and restructured.

After they were broken up and restructured, their influence on the New Federation would plunge.

To some extent, this was an accidental but reasonable ‘change of dynasties’.

The old magnates and interest groups were bound to leave the stage together with the name ‘Old Federation’, whereas new magnates and interest groups would rise like a morning sun and continue illuminating the land of the New Federation!

At this moment, although the voting had not begun yet, the result of the election was already preordained.

Ding Lingdang, the Patriots Front, and the new worlds were the greatest beneficiaries of the incident.

The ancient sects in the core worlds, mired in scandals, barely had enough time to take care of themselves. All they were trying to do was perform a decent curtain call. They were unable to compete with the strength behind Ding Lingdang and the angry people who were gradually choosing to side with her when they had lost most of their supporters.

The twelve most authoritative news outlets of the federation made predictions on the result of the election. The odds of Ding Lingdang being elected had been raised to above eighty percent, and the odds that Jin Xinyue was elected were less than seven percent.

Despite the seemingly absurdness of the predication, it was not greeted with much objection.

Even Jin Xinyue’s most hardcore supporters had to admit that Ding Lingdang was more suitable to be the Speaker of the Federation and lead them to defend the brightness at this moment faced with the undeniable evidence.

Because of the prevailing opinion, or under the subtle manipulation by someone on the Spiritual Nexus, the era of ‘Speaker Ding Lingdang’ seemed to have arrived earlier.

The concerns for Jin Xinyue were no longer whether or not she could become the Speaker, but whether or not she would offer to withdraw from the campaign and resign as the leader of the Ministry of Equality and Development so that she could officially be accused and even sent to prison.

After all, law was supreme in the federation. However many reasons she had, it was still not justifiable to violate the dignity of law.

If a certain ‘director’ had been manipulating the entire ‘avalanche’ from behind the scenes, then she had almost taken everything into consideration so far, except for one thing.

However smart and meticulous she was, it was impossible for her to foresee that ‘Team Red Lotus’ was not a real ‘Team Red Lotus’ but made of twelve old monsters from the Ancient Sages Sector in the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage or even in the Divinity Transformation Stage, who had survived hundreds of years in the unpredictable, complicated battles in the Ancient Sages Sector!

If Team Red Lotus were really Team Red Lotus, made of a bunch of experts in the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage at best, who had hibernated for hundreds of years and was ignorant of the latest situation, it would have been impossible for them to tell the truth about the girl who claimed to be Moonfall’s sister.

But after Moonfall’s sister submitted herself to the twelve experts from the Ancient Sages Sector, in only half a day, the keen-sighted and sophisticated old monsters all came to the same conclusion.

She was lying.

…

A carrier painted with the emblem of the Star Ocean Republic was slowly sailing toward the ‘Hundred Flowers Space Zone’, a transfer station of space jumps for the seven Sectors of the federation. They would refill their supplies there before they directly jumped to the capital of the federation.

In a secret room on the starship, Team Red Lotus, or rather, the twelve old monsters including Li Yao, were analyzing the abrupt changes in the federation over the past half month.

They were not as worried as certain people on the Spiritual Nexus, who believed that the federation would soon be screwed because of such a great scandal.

It was just another internal conflict among the leadership and struggle for power. Not only had they seen too many such things, many of them had also been involved personally and had fun in them. Long Yangjun, Han Baling, and Emperor Phoenix were all experts in the field.

The most critical question right now was not the strife of the leadership in the federation itself but the nature of it. Was the conflict chaotic and uncontrollable, or was it intentional and controllable? Was it going to revolutionize the country, unite the people, and increase the federation’s combat ability, or was it going to divide the people, aggravate the contradiction, and weaken the federation’s military power?

If it was intentional and controllable, who had been directing everything behind the curtain?

That person should be the real dominator of the federation in the days to come. If they were going to negotiate with the federation on the terms of joining the federation, they should speak to that person.

“The girl lied. Even if all the information stored in the jade chip is true, she still lied,” Han Baling, the magnificent monarch of the Ghost Qin who probably would have overthrown the Great Qian Dynasty and united the Ancient Sages Sector had it not been for Li Yao and Heiye Lan, observed casually. “She received very professional and advanced training on her soul, which allows her to control her brain precisely and fool the general lie-detecting magical equipment and specialists. But naturally, she could not deceive the Cultivators here.

“She was lying. All her talk about ‘Moonfall’ being killed and her escaping to here in a hurry was fake. The whole thing did not go out of control after a scandal was leaked out by accident; it has been well-planned since the very beginning, one event after another, with the sole purpose of dealing a fatal blow to the major sects of the core worlds!

“The conclusion is obvious. There’s no need to talk more about it. The real focus of our attention should be, who has been manipulating everything behind the curtain?”

Glamorous brilliance flowed out of Long Yangjun’s eyes. She smiled. “What’s your opinion, Fellow Cultivator Han?”

Han Baling projected a light beam with his mini crystal processor. “It’s simple. Whoever gains the greatest benefits from the whole event will be the person behind the curtain.

“No. I am not referring to Ding Lingdang. Ding Lingdang and the Patriots Front alone are not enough to infiltrate Jin Xinyue’s base and retrieve so many critical files.

“Please look, everybody. This is a chart of the top hundred super sects in the Star Glory Federation, divided into two parts. Those on the left that are marked as red are the seriously weakened sects because of the scandal, while those on the right are the sects that are barely affected.

“Take a look at it carefully. Do you notice anything?

“Look. The seriously weakened sects on the right are almost exclusive traditional conglomerates that have been passed on for hundreds of years.

“Those on the right, such as the Glorious Sunlight Group, the Double Dragon Union, the Mountain Sea Sect, the Great Horn Exo Society, Iron Plateau Development Inc., Blood Demon Biochemical Inc., Blood Demon Pharmaceuticals… They are all new powers that have only risen in the past hundred years!

“Those new powers are the greatest beneficiaries of the event. It is not hard to imagine that they will replace the traditional sects and establish their own dynasty in the near future!

“Do the new powers share something in common?

“Of course, I believe that all the fellow Cultivators have seen through it after a quick glance. They are all deeply associated with each other, and their connection to each other eventually boils down to one person.

“Hehe. If I had to make a name for the new forces and view them as a collective group, it would be a very simple one—

“Li Yao’s group!”

Chapter 1682 - Monster Li, Bravo!

His remark raised a round of whispers among the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators.

However, other than Yan Liren, Ba Xiaoyu, and Master Bitter Cicada, who were not interested in political struggles at all, the rest of the experts were not surprised very much.

Obviously, with a better view on the big picture because they were not involved in the game, and having observed the performance of the girl who claimed to be Moonfall's sister, they more or less drew the same conclusion.

Han Baling clicked on the list of the top hundred sects of the federation softly and unfolded the detailed introduction to the sects under 'Li Yao's group'. "Why are the new powers barely affected? There are two plausible explanations.

"Firstly, a hundred years ago, when Jin Xinyue and the demons were most in dire need of help and support, the new powers had only just been established, too, and did not boast much influence. At that time, the federation was a world dominated by the traditional major sects. It would have been pointless for Jin Xinyue to have asked for the help of the newly established sects.

"Secondly, Li Yao had only just left at that time, and for old time's sake, those new sects such as the Glorious Sunlight Group and the Double Dragon Union couldn't have nitpicked or extorted her if she really asked them for help. They certainly helped her if they could.

“Therefore, the new powers do not have any material that Jin Xinyue can blackmail them with.

“On the surface, the two reasons are quite valid. However, if we examine the changes that have taken place in the Star Glory Federation in the past hundred years while regarding the new powers such as the Glorious Sunlight Group and the Double Dragon Union as a whole, the conclusion will be vastly different!”

Han Baling truly was a great monarch who united the strength of all the clans on the entire Dark Cloud Prairies, destroyed all the sects on the prairie in only decades, and established the ‘Eight Units of Dark Cloud’, hoping to swallow the entire world.

His eyes were glowing like those of a hungry wolf. He seemed to have seen the scheme of whoever was behind the curtain.

Impressed by the splendidness and wonderfulness of the whole scheme, Han Baling continued with a voice of appreciation. “In the past hundred years, there have always been struggles for power within the Star Glory Federation. It is perfectly normal. All human beings have their desires and ambitions. When each other’s desires and ambitions joined, they will turn into different parties and sides.

“In the Great Qian Dynasty, there are the ‘Eunuch’s gang’ and the ’emperor’s gang’, and there is also the rivalry between the ‘local sects’ and the ‘central court’. Naturally, in Ghost Qin, there are various sorts of opposition, too.

“However upright and bright the Star Glory Federation claims to be, it is a country made of human beings after all. How can it be as united as one piece?

“Besides, the explosive development of the Star Glory Federation in the past hundred years is an unprecedented change at the edge of the cosmos. New techniques, technology and discoveries are bound to bring new sects, new experts, new social classes and new interest groups, which will eventually have a fierce conflict with the traditional forces who have dominated the world for hundreds of years!

“Therefore, the election in the Star Glory Federation today seems to be a regional conflict between the ‘core worlds’ and the ‘new worlds’.

“But in fact, it is a fierce fight between the old sects that represent the traditional interest groups and Li Yao’s group, which stands for the interests of the new powers!

“A regional conflict can be resolved, but a fight between the old and the new will rarely reach a compromise!”

Clap, clap, clap!

Long Yangjun was the first to applaud. “Fantastic! Your analysis is too marvelous. What do you think, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture!”

She jabbed Li Yao, who was sitting next to her, with her elbow.

“Indeed. It is logical, thorough, and thought-provoking!” Li Yao nodded carefully. “Spectacular! Truly spectacular!”

“Lord Wang, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, you are flattering me!”

Han Baling shook his hair in great satisfaction, and there was not the slightest ‘you are flattering me’ on his face but full of ‘there is only one truth, and I have found it’. Clearing his throat, he went on. “In the last two weeks, I studied the history of the various forces in Li Yao’s group and gained a shallow understanding about the birth, development, and expansion of Li Yao’s group. I would like to share it with the Cultivators here. Due to the limited time, there may seem to be a lot of flaws. Please feel free to point them out for me.”

“You are too polite, Fellow Cultivator Han,” Li Yao said. “As the great monarch of Cloud Qin, your vision and strategies are certainly the most distinguished among us. Your opinions will certainly be insightful. We are all ears!”

Han Baling smiled and said unhurriedly, “A hundred years, Vulture Li Yao, known as the dominator of three Sectors, resolved the ten-thousand-year contradiction between humans and demons almost entirely on his own through both battles and diplomatic approaches. He connected the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector, accomplishing a feat that no one else at the edge of the cosmos had ever accomplished in history. As for himself, he turned into a well-respected superhero that everybody in the federation knew. These are historical facts that everybody knows.

“However, hehe, there is still a major difference between the so-called ‘superhero’ and a real great leader.

“Everybody, we have seen too many heroes and warriors in the Ancient Sages Sector, haven’t we? But are all the heroes and warriors capable of establishing a magnificent organization whose glory can endure a thousand years? Of course not!

“Heroes have all the fame and prestige, but it has always been the greatest question to translate the fame and prestige into real ‘power’ and to make the power expand and last hundreds or even thousands of years.

“Hehe. In the Ancient Sages Sector, whenever a new hero shows up, the traditional conglomerates and the decayed forces have too many ways to deal with him.

“They perhaps won’t attack him in real life but enshrine him through adulations. In the end, he will become an idol that is full of fame and prestige, but the real benefits flowing out of the fame and prestige will still belong to the traditional conglomerates and decayed forces!”

Compared to Emperor Phoenix’s Great Qian Dynasty, Han Baling’s own Ghost Qin was also an ambitious new power.

Therefore, he naturally took the side of Li Yao’s group in the ‘war of old versus new’. The more he talked about it, the more he was unable to control the appreciation in his tone. “A hundred years ago, after Li Yao’s great feat, ‘Li Yao’s group’ was only just born and inevitably raised too much unnecessary attention. Before long, the traditional powers would’ve crowded close to confine and drain him!

“If it was any other hero, I’m afraid that they wouldn’t have survived such a situation. The best outcome they could’ve expected was to compromise and enter the circle of the traditional powers, becoming one of them.

“Hehe. If it were anybody else, ‘becoming one of them’ could have been the ultimate goal worth fighting for with their entire life, but who was Vulture Li Yao? How could he bear to be restrained by the old order after making such a great achievement as uniting the three Sectors?

“Break the old order and monopolize the New Federation! I’m afraid that this is the ultimate goal of Monster Li!”

Pa!

Li Yao could not help but slap his thigh hard and shout, “It does make sense. What didn’t I come up with it earlier?”

“It is perfectly understandable that Master Spiritual Vulture did not think of that before because you were born in a remote land and too focused on refining. Even I wouldn’t have believed that this monster had such a huge appetite if it weren’t for the series of events that happened recently!” Han Baling exclaimed in mixed feelings, with both admiration and fear on his face.

“Monster Li is too farsighted, sophisticated, and ruthlessly. He is truly a fiend that even the twelve of us must be wary of even when we join hands! Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, why do you think he vanished into thin air a hundred years ago when his fame and prestige were at the highest point and has been missing for the entire century since?”

Blinking hard, Li Yao had to give up after thinking for a long time. He shook his head hard. “I really can’t think of any reason. Why did he do that?”

“It’s simple. He was making a move by retreating,” Han Baling said solemnly. “At that time, Li Yao’s group had already shown its sharpness. With Li Yao’s growing fame and prestige, it would absolutely have conflicts of interests with the conservative forces of the traditional conglomerates.

“It must be noted that the federation had already lost the external enemy that was the ‘Blood Demon Sector’, and it would take another hundred years for the expedition army of the Imperium to arrive. Therefore, with no external trouble for more than a hundred years, did they have anything they could do other than fighting each other internally?

“If Li Yao had stayed in the federation and continued leading Li Yao’s group to develop so rapidly, he would’ve had a head-on clash with the traditional conglomerates.

“At that time, Li Yao’s group was not fully grown. Despite the ostensible splendidness, it was not well-founded, if it had any foundation at all. How could it have been a match for the renowned sects that had operated for hundreds of years?

“They would not deal with him openly at all but would restrain, confine, and suffocate him like a boa. They would certainly not allow ‘Li Yao’s group’ to expand. Or rather, it was allowed to expand, provided that it followed the rules of the game of the old days!

“New things often decline as abruptly as they arise. Have we not seen enough such examples in the Ancient Sages Sector?

“Faced with such a disadvantageous situation, Monster Li Yao played two very smart moves!

“First of all, he offered to disappear, claiming that he was out to explore the sea of stars!

“This move achieved two purposes. On one hand, it was a concession for his enemy, a gesture that showed he was not interested in fame, fortune, or power and had no plans to compete with them at all so that the traditional conglomerates could rest assured about the forces that were not still not fully developed yet under his name!

“On the other hand, it was also a warning. ‘I am going out to travel and train myself, but you’d better watch what you do to my supporters and subordinates. Otherwise, you may regret it years later when I announce my return in a certain way together with certain other forces!’

“Delicate. That was indeed a delicate move!

“As for the second move, it was even more delicate, which was carried out by Jin Xinyue, Monster Li’s favorite disciple. It is also the most critical step in the game!”

Chapter 1683 - Whet a Sword for a Hundred Years, Cut the Throat in One Attack!

Chapter 1683: Whet a Sword for a Hundred Years, Cut the Throat in One Attack!

Brilliance shone in Li Yao’s eyes. He held his breath and craned his neck, asking, “What do you mean?”

Han Baling smiled casually and confidently, as if everything was under his control. “Of Vulture Li Yao’s three disciples, the last disciple Jin Xinyue appears to be the most independent and disobedient one.

“Unlike the other two disciples who were raised from scratch, Jin Xinyue was already an expert in the demon king stage when she met Li Yao. She had her knowledge when she was recruited as a disciple. Also, she had her own force behind her, which was the entire Blood Demon Sector. After taking over her father’s enterprise, she was the well-deserved ‘master of the Blood Demon Sector’.

“Many biographies and unclassified materials state that the master-disciple relation between Li Yao and Jin Xinyue was a political deal that was only carried out for the peaceful coexistence of the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector. In fact, Li Yao did not mean to recruit Jin Xinyue as a disciple, and Jin Xinyue was too ambitious a woman to sincerely pledge loyalty to Li Yao, either.

“Yes. On the surface, it does appear to be the case.

“When Vulture Li Yao was still present, he was still able to suppress Jin Xinyue with his invincible techniques and unparalleled reputation, but after Li Yao disappeared from public sight, Jin Xinyue’s ambitions immediately consumed her. Together with all the resources of the Blood Demon Sector, she joined the traditional conglomerates. Not only did she barely show any respect for the Glorious Sunlight Group, the Double Dragons Union, and other sects that belonged to Li Yao, she also even went at loggerheads with those sects to defend the interests of the traditional conglomerates, inevitably impressing everyone that ‘Li Yao’s group’ was divided or that it simply did not exist at all.

“Therefore, many core members on Li Yao’s side, such as Ding Lingdang, Wu Mayan, and Xie Anan, and even the relatively peripheral persons such as Mo Xuan, Bai Kaixin, Xiong Wuji, Fiend Blade Peng Hai, were not particularly fond of Jin Xinyue. They criticized her and believed that she was a vicious and disloyal woman.

“Later, Guo Chunfeng, the director of the Secret Sword Bureau, was the only one who was still supporting Jin Xinyue for the sake of his old friend Li Yao. He helped her rise in the Secret Sword Bureau and allowed her to establish the ‘Dim Moon Squad’, an independent force that was loyal only to her.

“But as it turned out, Jin Xinyue bit back after she got enough of what she wanted. The contradiction between her and Guo Chunfeng escalated, and they eventually went their separate ways. She led the whole team to grow independent and established the ‘Dim Moon Fund’, the greatest competitor of the Secret Sword Bureau right now, continuing to serve the traditional conglomerates in the core worlds dutifully.

“Tsk, tsk, tsk. Judging from what Jin Xinyue has done on the surface, she is certainly ungrateful and disgusting. No wonder Ding Lingdang’s Patriots Front decided to try their best to fight her!”

Captivated, Li Yao nodded quickly. “Exactly. That is exactly what it looks like on the surface, but since you’re putting it that way, Fellow Cultivator Han, there must be things below the surface, right?”

Han Baling sneered and said, “If we only see the surface, we will underestimate the amazing woman Jin Xinyue as well as Vulture Li Yao’s methods to manipulate his disciple too much!

“Hehe. At first glance, Jin Xinyue did join the traditional conglomerates, but the so-called ‘traditional conglomerates’ were not completely united, either. The internal competition was also very intense. There were the bigger conglomerates and the smaller conglomerates.

“At that time, Li Yao had already gone to travel in space, and Ding Lingdang’s Patriots Front had only just begun to develop. Most of its core members were still in prison, smacking rocks on the desolate planets. Jin Xinyue, who boasted the greatest influence, also joined the side of the traditional conglomerates. ‘Li Yao’s group’ was nonexistent from whatever perspective.

“Since they did not need to worry about ‘Li Yao’s group’, during the years when the New Federation developed rapidly, naturally, the traditional conglomerates fought each other hard!

“Jin Xinyue’s strategy, on the other hand, was to join the ‘smaller conglomerates’ that were slightly weaker and less deeply-rooted. With the abundant labor forces of the Blood Demon Sector, her position in the Secret Sword Bureau, and her own vicious and sordid methods, she helped them deal with the few greatest conglomerates!

“Please look, fellow Cultivators. This is the Deity Slaying Sect, one of the top three sects on the comprehensive rank of the federation. It was a super conglomerate founded six hundred and fifty years ago, and one of the sects that was most involved in the scandals caused by the exposure of the Dim Moon Plan.

“However, according to my investigation, the Deity Slaying Sect ranked only around fifteenth in the Old Federation in terms of comprehensive capabilities a hundred years ago. It was by no means one of the largest ‘giants’ and only grew to what it is today through the cooperation with Jin Xinyue by exploiting the resources of the Blood Demon Sector and eradicating the competitors with clandestine methods!

“This is the case for most of the traditional conglomerates on the list.

“All in all, through such a strategy, Jin Xinyue pretended to join the smaller conglomerates and helped the smaller conglomerates defeat the bigger conglomerates. While building up herself, gaining the trust of the smaller conglomerates and turning into a spokesperson for their interests, she also grasped tremendous dark secrets about the smaller conglomerates!

“Hehe. Hehe. Did you know, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture? One of the greatest hobbies of Vulture Li Yao was to build crystal bombs!”

Li Yao nodded solemnly. “I’ve heard a thing or two about it.”

“This monster has crafted millions of crystal bombs in his life, but the most powerful and malicious one of all is certainly ‘Jin Xinyue’ herself!” Han Baling bashed the table hard and widened his eyes. “Jin Xinyue is a powerful crystal bomb that is filled with venom. She bound herself to the traditional conglomerates that won the fierce competitions and waited patiently for a hundred years until the traditional conglomerates were completely reassured about her and supported her to run for Speaker. Then, she detonated herself and blew up all the decayed and worthless conglomerates that were standing in the way of Li Yao’s group!

“One moment! In only one moment, when the tyrannosaur finally rises from the darkness after lurking in the abyss for too long, there is already a clear sky and fresh air in front of ‘Li Yao’s group’. Nothing at all can compete with them and the name ‘Li Yao’!

“It was the whole plan of Monster Li!

“Jin Xinyue is in fact his most beloved true disciple who has been most loyal to him!

“Monster Li was absolutely not content being a vain ‘federal hero’. He hid himself for a hundred years just to rise and really control the federation. Not just the dominator of three Sectors, he was determined to become the dominator of a thousand Sectors and make the Star Glory Federation carry out his will in the next millennium!”

The more Han Baling talked, the more excited and convinced Han Baling became. Slapping the table hard, he stared at Li Yao and said, “Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, this is my analysis on the whole event. What do you think? Are you rather shocked?”

“Indeed. I—I am very shocked!” Li Yao took out a vintage bamboo cylinder from his pocket and poured out a few balls that looked like goat turd. “Let me calm myself with a few pills first.”

“I am more than shocked. When I inferred Monster Li’s arrangements and his entire plan based on my abundant experience when I swept across the Dark Cloud Prairies, destroyed the old sects, and grasped power, I was almost overwhelmed by boundless horror!”

After a long sigh, Han Baling put on an indescribable expression, as he shook his head with a bitter smile. “Back in the Ancient Sages Sector, I always thought that I might not be as good as some people such as Fellow Cultivator Yan Liren in terms of combat ability, but when it comes to strategies, I was as good as anyone!

“Even after we just arrived at… the modern Cultivation civilization and saw their starships and metropolises in space, I thought that such things were just fancy whazzits and that the modern people were no match for us at all in terms of wisdom and tricks!

“But today, after I witnessed part of Monster Li’s hundred-year plan, I finally understood the thoughtfulness and dreadfulness of the experts of this Sector! Vulture Li Yao truly deserves the title dominator of three Sectors. Overturning the entire world with a snap of his fingers and killing people without even showing up! Such an old monster is truly admirable!”

Not only was Han Baling sighing with mixed feelings, the other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity

Transformation Stage Cultivators were also amazed and fearful after he pointed out the subtleness of Monster Li's plan.

"Well, Fellow Cultivator Han," Li Yao said, "I don't think we need to underestimate ourselves so much…"

"We are not underestimating anyone. We are just being honest!" Han Baling said solemnly. "Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, with all due respect, please don't be mad. You were born in the wilderness in the Southland of Sorcerers, and your main business is forging and refining. Even though you have followed Lord Wang for a few days to learn the art of politics, how can you fully understand the essence of power struggles and the horror of Monster Li? Do you know what is most scary about him?"

Scratching his chin, Li Yao narrowed his eyes and said, "What is it?"

"His control of timing!" Han Baling said carefully. "The time of detonation that Monster Li selected for Jin Xinyue couldn't have been better. Do you see it?"

Li Yao shook his head. "I'm afraid not. Please enlighten me."

"It is very simple but marvelous nonetheless!" Han Baling explained. "Why did he choose the moment the Black Wind Fleet was about to arrive, not any time earlier or later?

"Firstly, after a hundred years of development, the various branches of 'Li Yao's group' have grown to the point that they can compete with the traditional conglomerates openly!

"Secondly, the traditional conglomerates are deeply-rooted. If it were peacetime, such a scandal wouldn't necessarily have been able to kill them, although they might have been heavily wounded. If they were not killed, their counterattack would definitely have been fierce, which may even have led to the division of the federation. That’s not something that Monster Li wants to see.

“But now is different. A ‘wartime Speaker’ is being elected. Once the new Speaker is inaugurated, it is certain that they will announce that the federation will enter the highest warring state.

“Think about it. In the highest warring state, preparations for war will be the top priority, and the power of the new Speaker will greatly expand. Then, won’t the traditional conglomerates that are mired in scandals be meat on a chopping block waiting to be butchered?

“Thirdly, and most importantly, if the federation defeats the expedition army of the Imperium under the lead of ‘Li Yao’s group’, then the war benefits left by the Black Wind Fleet will most likely be entirely devoured by ‘Li Yao’s group’ without leaving any residues for the ‘traditional conglomerates’.

“As a result, through the glorious victory, Li Yao’s group will expand more than ten times in terms of capabilities. As for the traditional conglomerates that were seriously diminished during the war and hungered after it, will they still be qualified to be ‘conglomerates’ at all? Based on what can they compete with Li Yao’s people?

“As the saying goes, ‘whet a sword for a hundred years, and cut the throat in one attack!’ Monster Li seems to have become a figure in the tales, but he launched a critical strike the moment he acted, leaving no chance for the traditional conglomerates at all!”

Chapter 1684 - A Thick, Strong, and Dependable Thigh!

Whet a stone for a hundred years, and cut the enemy’s throat in one attack!

Han Baling’s elaborate analysis was indeed logical and flawless!

No wonder all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators exclaimed in shock after holding their patience and waiting for him to finish.

‘Emperor Phoenix’ Zhu Zongyou was the first to speak. The proud young emperor was Han Baling’s old nemesis. He had long grown impatient after hearing the guy talk for such a long time. “Exactly. That’s what I thought, too. Monster Li is immeasurably sophisticated. If he were in the Ancient Sages Sector, he would’ve become a devil that turned the world upside down. I fear—I fear that even the Three Saints and Four Rapscallions combined would be no match for him!”

“You don’t say.” ‘Heaven Battering King’ Qi Changsheng chuckled. “Names are sometimes given wrong, but nicknames can never be wide of the mark. Before, I was curious why the dominator of three Sectors and a great hero who once saved the federation was nicknamed after such an ill-considered creature, the vulture. It was not until today that I finally realized that nothing fits the old monster better than ‘vulture’! This is truly unbelievable. What exactly did the monster go through to make him train his wisdom and cunningness to such a high extent?”

“Fellow Cultivator Wu and I met a lot of distinguished experts a hundred years ago. Honestly speaking, we have been through many shocking things.” Meng Chixin, the spectral Cultivator in the Divinity Transformation Stage, could not help but sigh. “But even the two of us have never seen an opponent as formidable as Monster Li before! Although we raised our wariness against Monster Li the moment we reached the Dragon Snake Space Zone, speculating that he was very likely to be the most tricky opponent in the war to come, it appears that we have far underestimated him however hard we tried to overestimate him!”

Even ‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren, who never had any interest in schemes and planning and was only found of slashing his swords at strong opponents, also joined the discussion. “Whet the sword for a hundred years, and cut the throat in one attack! The guy is indeed persistent and sophisticated! As the saying goes, every sword takes after its master. I’m told that Monster Li was already one of the few top experts in the federation a hundred years ago. If he has been practicing his sword arts with the patience of his plan, I don’t know what terrifying attacks he can perform!

“Not bad. Not bad at all. If I ever run into him someday, I will definitely have a gratifying fight with him and have a good taste of his sword that has been whetted for a hundred years. It is the ultimate dream of a swordsman to be killed by such a sword!”

“Wait. Wait, wait!” Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar was still somewhat confused. He tapped the table and said, “Fellow Cultivators, there’s still something that is bothering me. If Monster Li is really awesome enough to have planned everything in secret in the past hundred years, why has he still not revealed himself at this point?”

“Why should he?” ‘Iron Saint’ Qi Zhongdao was the nominal leader of all the Cultivators. Naturally, he understood the logic of it quite well. “As the traditional conglomerates are swept aside, Li Yao’s group will rise unstoppably and completely dominate the New Federation. No matter who is elected as the Speaker and the leadership in the end, they will be either Li Yao’s wife, Li Yao’s disciple, or someone else among his family and friends who have life-and-death connections with Li Yao. There might be conflicts within the gang, but none of the outsiders will get access to the advantages! Monster Li will be the overlord whoever the Speaker of the Federation is!

“Hehe. ‘Speaker of the Federation’ is just a title as worthless as ’emperor’ or ‘leader of all the Cultivators’. The critical problem is, who holds the real power?

“At least from what we’ve seen so far, the plan has worked out. The helmsman of the federation in the next hundred years will doubtlessly be Vulture Li Yao, Monster Li!”

“Also,” ‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu shrieked, “in many cases, it is more convenient to be a dead person than to be a living one. On the surface, Monster Li has been away from the federation for a hundred years. His mysterious status, together with the propaganda of certain thoughtful guys under him, gradually deified him.

“Dominator of three Sectors, God Li Yao, Father of ‘Civilization’, and even such a shameless title as ‘Father of the Federation’ have been invented. Would it have been possible if someone hadn’t been fanning the flames in secret? If he was still present, wouldn’t it too embarrassing for him to boast about himself like that even if somebody else wanted him to? Even if he did, other people would’ve been highly vigilant of him!

“Monster Li’s moves are indeed unbelievable… My White Lotus Cult struggled for decades in the southeast of the Great Qian Dynasty, but we never recruited a million believers. Yet, the monster turned himself into a ‘god’ by only playing a false retreat, pretending that he went to travel in space, and he has reaped more than ten billion worshippers!

“Getting everything without doing anything, and deceiving other people when they do not notice. This is truly impressive!”

It was Long Yangjun’s turn to speak. She smiled and said, “In fact, I’m afraid that you overlooked something. Monster Li’s scheme is indeed delicate, but in fact, ‘Li Yao’s group’ has already risen unstoppably, and he can show up anytime if he wants.

“I carefully read the monster’s biography earlier and discovered that his favorite move is to return at the most critical moment and save the world. It is his strategy to deceive other people into thinking that he is indispensable.

“Let’s think about it. If Monster Li really plans to reveal himself, he can always announce his grand return in the middle of the fierce war between the federation and the Imperium. How glamorous, shocking, and deceptive it will be! Hehehehehehehe…”

“Why are you laughing, Lord Wang?” Han Baling asked.

“Excuse me. When I think that the monster is so sordid and meticulous that I can do nothing about it, I can only laugh bitterly now!”

“You do have a point, Lord Wang.” Han Baling nodded. “If Monster Li really announces his grand return at a critical moment, his prestige, popularity, and standing will be more than enough for him to be elected as the Speaker of the Federation. I’m afraid that nobody will object even if he changes the Star Glory Federation into an Imperium and makes himself the founding emperor of it. He is essentially a smaller but even more shameless Blackstar the Great!”

Long Yangjun laughed ‘bitterly’ again and jabbed Li Yao with her elbow. “Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, we never thought that Li Yao could be as terrifying as this. What about you? How do you feel right now?”

Pa!

Li Yao could not hold it back any longer. He opened his hands and slapped the table hard. His fingers were so deeply embedded into the metal table that ripples the shape of palm were even spreading out.

Blushing and excited, he rose up and glared at everyone.

“Fellow Cultivators! Everybody!

“Yes. If Monster Li’s schemes are real, he is indeed a terrifying, treacherous, and sleazy man!

“However, as Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators who have been through blood and death in the Ancient Sages Sector for a hundred years, we—we—we are certainly not so easy to be dealt with, either!

“Where is your bravery and resolution?

“Hehe. You are all so scared that your faces are turning pale. You think that he is a terrifying person. Terrifying my ass! You are simply praising the enemy and spurning yourselves. I am disappointed!

“You are all horrified by this Monster Li, but I am not! If you are too frustrated to fight him, suit yourself, but I am going to find him and fight him and see if he is as capable as he is supposed to be!

“Besides—besides, in my opinion, if he is truly so sophisticated, it is not necessarily a bad thing!”

Li Yao suddenly changed the topic. While tapping the table, he said, “We must make one thing clear. When we decide which side to take while we are on the fence, it is important for us to check which side offers better treatment, but isn’t it more important to check which side is more powerful? We should join the stronger party. Otherwise, whatever spectacular treatment we are promised, it will not be fulfilled at all if those who make the promise are crushed, in which case the Ancient Sages Sector will be collateral damage that is destroyed together. Will it help us at all?

“The general picture right now is that the Imperium is stronger than the federation. There’s no doubt about that. However, specifically in regard to the war here and now at the edge of the cosmos, if the federation is supervised by such a cunning, sophisticated, considerate Monster Li, won’t its odds of winning be greatly improved?

“The most important thing for us Cultivators is to follow a right boss. After hearing what Fellow Cultivator Han said, I am under the impression that Monster Li is not bad. Do you want the helmsman of the Star Glory Federation to be a merciful, indecisive, and cowardly man instead of him?”

His words woke everyone up. All the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators looked at each other, feeling greatly enlightened.

“That’s quite true. Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture’s words do make sense!”

“The purpose of our journey… to put it in the urban slang here, is to cling to a thigh!”

“After hearing the analyses of Fellow Cultivator Han and Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, wow, this particularly thigh named Monster Li is indeed thick, strong, and dependable. It is definitely worth clinging to!”

“Yes. With this monster supervising it, the federation will certainly be the winner of the war that will mark its rise!”

“But wait. This monster apparently has a huge appetite. Is it possible that he will devour us from skin to bones without giving us any advantages? I have a feeling that negotiating with such a terrifying monster will be like asking a tiger for its hide!”

Li Yao sat down angrily and focused his spiritual energy on his toes, stomping on Long Yangjun’s foot hard.

“Cough, cough. Cough, cough, cough, cough.” Long Yangjun stood up again. Taking a long breath, she finally smiled and said, “About that, I think that I have to say something for Monster Li.

“Based on the analyses of the fellow Cultivators, we can tell that Monster Li is an ambitious and ravenous man. Do you think that his appetite will be satisfied after the federation's war of rise is won?

"No. Absolutely impossible. He will certainly march to the center of the cosmos and compete with the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance to finally become the king of the entire universe! Do you agree, everyone?"

"That sounds reasonable." The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators all nodded. "If we had Monster Li's power and wisdom, we would not be content to be bound at the edge of the cosmos as a local warlord."

"If so, since his ultimate purpose is the prosperous worlds at the center of the cosmos, will he devour the Ancient Sages Sector recklessly just for some petty benefits?" Long Yangjun smiled. "His enterprise has already been built, but the future road of conquest is still long even if the war is won. If we give him a hand at a critical moment, he will certainly return the favor ten times over, even for nothing other than showing his generosity.

"Otherwise, who would dare join him and help him realize his ambitions in the future? He will certainly not kill the goose that lays golden eggs.

"All in all… to use some local slang, if you don't trust Monster Li's integrity, you should at least trust his head!"

Chapter 1685 - Better to Fight the Imperium Than to Piss Off Monster Li

Long Yangjun’s words made the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators from the Ancient Sages Sector who were unfamiliar with this place and mired in Monster Li’s home field more or less relieved.

Han Baling pondered for a moment and said, “You do have a point, Lord Wang. If Monster Li is really ambitious enough to swallow the universe, we will be of high value to him. Even if we are no match for him as individuals, we can certainly play a game with ‘Li Yao’s group’ if we join hands in order to get a good price for ourselves.

“Also, according to the situation in the federation right now, the four new worlds are in a more advantageous position. If we join the federation, we will be the fifth new world, and the counterforce of the core worlds will be completely suppressed. The situation in the federation will be steadier!

“In fact, it doesn’t matter whether the new worlds or the core worlds take the initiative as long as the final outcome is settled. The worst case will be if the two sides reach an impasse where irresolvable contradictions are caused!

“With Monster Li’s sharp eyes, he must be able to see through that. Therefore, hiring us will only do him and the federation good. There is no harm at all.

“So, the only problem right now is—where is Monster Li exactly, and how can we meet him in person and express our intention to join the federation without causing any misunderstanding?

“After all, we are bringing the commander of the Black Wind Fleet’s daughter with us. If Monster Li discovers us and regards us as the spies or scouts that the expedition army of the Imperium sent out, it will be pretty bad.”

“Fellow Cultivator Han, now that you mentioned it…” Long Yangjun sighed gloomily and worriedly. “With Monster Li’s cleverness, it is possible that he has long discovered us. Chances are that he is even observing our every move through a certain secret technique!”

Her words greatly alarmed all the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators again.

Everybody looked at each other in bewilderment. Then, they could not help but look around in the narrow and cold cabin, as if a Monster Li was squatting in a dark corner and peeping at them in silence.

Li Yao narrowed his eyes, his teeth trembling. “I—I don’t think that’s possible. Don’t be an alarmist, Lord Wang! If what you said is true, Monster Li would be too invincible!”

“I hope that I’m being an alarmist.” Long Yangjun shook her head and smiled bitterly. “For some reason, I keep having goosebumps these days, as if a certain invisible eye has been staring at my back the whole time. Today, after hearing everybody’s analysis, if I must choose one between Black Wind Fleet and ‘Monster Li’ to be my enemy, I will certainly not choose Monster Li!

“Everyone, let’s give it some more thought. If we help the federation deal with the Black Wind Fleet, we can always rectify our strategy and attack the federation at the last second when the federation is going to lose, in which case there will still be a slim chance that the Black Wind Fleet will pardon us and spare our lives considering the ignorance of the ‘ancient Cultivators’.

“But if we help the Black Wind Fleet fight the federation, will we necessarily be able to kill Monster Li even if the federation is conquered in the end?

“If Monster Li is not dead, will he spare us and the Ancient Sages Sector?

“If he hides himself for another hundred years and plays the same sword-whetting and throat-cutting move on the Ancient Sages Sector and on us, who can ever take that? By then, we won’t even know how we are killed!

“I don’t know what you think, but for me, I would rather fight against ten Black Wind Fleets than piss off Monster Li!”

Long Yangjun’s words silenced all the other experts from the Ancient Sages Sector.

She was quite right. They were only considering which one between the Black Wind Fleet and the Star Glory Federation would be the final victor, but they had not really thought whether or not they could make sure that Monster Li was killed.

Judging from the situation right now, even if the Black Wind Fleet could really destroy the federation unstoppably, it would not necessarily be able, or rather, would be absolutely unable to slay Vulture Li Yao.

The reason was simple. Monster Li was still lurking in the darkness!

The monster was like a sharp sword that was invisible in the darkness. The most lethal poison had been smeared on the edge, and the sword could be waved at the enemy anytime!

With Monster Li’s sordidness and smartness, even if he could not finish the Imperium of True Human Beings, was he not able to finish the Ancient Sages Sector?

Even if we help the Black Wind Fleet to conquer the Star Glory Federation and earn tremendous benefits for the Ancient Sages Sector and ourselves, will we still be alive to enjoy them?

The experts of the Ancient Sages Sector looked at each other and shuddered from the bottom of their hearts at the same time.

As if it was cooperating with the anxious atmosphere, the carrier also shivered and started decelerating.

They had arrived at the Hundred Flowers Space Zone. In front of them was ‘Hundred Flowers City’, the greatest transfer station for space jumps and the transportation hub at the center of the seven Sectors of the federation.

“Hu…” Han Baling took a long breath and tapped the table. He said solemnly, “Hundred Flowers City is up ahead. We will take a brief rest here and refuel. Then, we will jump directly to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, heart of the federation.

“Perhaps, Monster Li is waiting for the Black Wind Fleet… and us, in the Heaven’s Origin Sector right now.

“With everything coming to this point, we will have to wing it now. I hope that our guesses on Monster Li are not wrong and that we can show the sincerity of the Ancient Sages Sector before he launches a thunderous strike!

“Fellow Cultivators, we have all learned of the formidability of Monster Li. The overall situation is also very clear. Is it the whole of Jin Xinyue’s plan to destroy the traditional conglomerates under Monster Li’s instruction, or do they still have a series of follow-up moves for greater purposes?

“I have a vague feeling that the most critical moment will come soon. Let’s go back to our room and rest well while we wait for Monster Li to show up in the most unbelievable way!”

“Please don’t compete with me, fellow Cultivators,” Long Yangjun said. “I will be the first one to rush forward and cling to Monster Li’s thigh!”

…

The secret meeting of the twelve experts of the Ancient Sages Sector ended in the mysterious and grave atmosphere.

All the experts returned to their respective cabins, thoughtful and full of worries. There was no telling whether or not they were in the mood for a good rest.

When Long Yangjun snuck into Li Yao’s cabin, Li Yao was making instant noodles. The small cabin was filled with the flavor of the noodles and the spiced eggs in them.

Long Yangjun locked the door and leaned against it, staying one table away from Li Yao. She was wearing such an obsequious smile on her face that she really looked like a eunuch that was serving the emperor.

“Why are you here?” Li Yao asked.

“Do you need to ask? Like I said earlier, I’m here to cling to the thigh of ‘Monster Li’,” Long Yangjun said.

“If that’s what you want, my thigh is right here. Why are you waiting at the door?”

“Because you are too horrifying, brutal, and ruthless, of course. I am so scared that my soul is threatening to flee my body. My legs are shaking hard and stopping me from approaching you.”

Long Yangjun eyed Li Yao up and down for a long time in amazement, as if she had only met him for the first time. “Han Baling and the rest of them are not aware of the real situation, but for me who knows part of the truth, I know more clearly than them that what they described is just the tip of the iceberg. The real you is definitely ten times more horrendous than that!

“Now that I think about it, back in the Ancient Sages Sector, you were dumbfounded, utterly shocked, and rendered speechless every now and then, as if you were truly confused and overwhelmed by the messes and had to rely on the instructions of us so-called experts.

“But in fact, that was all your acting, right? In fact, everything was within your calculations. This is the ultimate level of ‘playing the pig that eats the tiger’. You do not need to take action at all. All you have to do is chitchat and pretend to be shocked, and the trap is already set, turning everybody into your chess pieces and puppets!

“Terrible. Truly terrible! Faced with such a terrible Monster Li, I was even ignorant enough to bargain and negotiate with you? I must’ve been asking to be killed even if I was a Nuwa warrior reborn!”

Li Yao listened attentively and nodded. While Long Yangjun was talking, he had already made the second bowl of instant noodles. He pushed it to the other side of the table and said, “Are you hungry? This bowl is for you.”

Looking at the boiling instant noodles, Long Yangjun was completely frozen. With an indescribable expression popping up on her face, she mumbled after a long daze, “Monster Li, what—what kind of person are you? What are you up to exactly?”

“I am up to nothing.” Li Yao snapped his fingers, opening a closet behind him. “Look. There are dozens of bowls of instant noodles here. They are all the last stocks I bought in the Uranian Ring Sector. They are in all sorts of flavors, with even the eggs and the sausages!”

“…So?”

“So, after the meeting, I’ve been thinking about one thing. If I make twelve bowls of instant noodles, adding one egg and one sausage into each of them, and I deliver them to each of the fellow Cultivators with both hands, when they enjoy the noodles and are touched by my friendship, I will confess my identity and tell them that the guy who made the noodles for them is in fact Monster Li, the legendary dominator of three Sectors and the overlord of the federation. But I mean no harm for them at all, and I am seeking cooperation with the fellow Cultivators genuinely. The bowl of noodles I offer is a symbol for my friendliness and sincerity.

“Give my noodles a try first. Then think about it carefully. Is it a sound plan?”

Long Yangjun looked at Li Yao and then at the noodles.

Li Yao looked back at Long Yangjun frankly, too.

“Are you serious?”

“What do you think? Do I appear to be joking? The method is indeed a bit simple and straightforward, but I don’t find any harm in it.”

Tilting her head, Long Yangjun thought for a moment. Then she really stepped forward and sat opposite Li Yao. Picking up a forkful of noodles and sucking them into her mouth, she chewed for a moment and said with a blurred voice, “Isn’t it too spicy?”

There was no telling whether she was referring to the noodles or Li Yao’s plan.

“You can only cut a knot with a fast sword,” Li Yao said. “Also, I am really a terrible liar. The closer we get to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the more complicated the situation will become. I don’t know what kind of mess there will be. I may lose control over myself at any time.”

Chapter 1686 - Jin Xinyue’s Real Ambitions!

Ignoring Li Yao’s shameless statement that he was a terrible liar, Long Yangjun pondered solemnly for a while. Then she slowly said, “If you put it that way, I think it does make a lot of sense. That’s a good solution, except that you must pay attention to Yan Liren when you confess your identity to him in case he suddenly draws his sword and kills you. Not just you, even I can’t contain myself much longer now. It was so difficult for me to hold back my laughter during the meeting that I think my intestines are breaking apart.”

“Alright.” Li Yao rolled his sleeves. “I’m going to make noodles for them right now.”

“Wait. Wait, wait.” Long Yangjun took a deep breath and said, “Your Excellency Monster Li, dominator of three Sectors, I am not objecting to your plan, but don’t you think you need to give them a rest? Everybody has just finished analyzing the causes and consequences of the whole event, and now you are knocking on their door for a sincere chitchat? You may scare them into mental derangement…”

Li Yao thought for a moment and realized that it did make sense. “Alright. Then I’ll just talk to everyone after they’ve had a good night’s sleep and gotten refreshed. We will explain everything clearly! Look at it now. A simple problem is getting more and more complicated.”

“Whatever you say.” Long Yangjun tried to hold back her laughter. “Then I must beg you—when you go to everyone to have a sincere conversation tomorrow morning, you must bring me. I guarantee that I will not say a word or cause any trouble. I will simply stand behind you and watch their faces quietly. It is definitely going to be spectacular!"

Li Yao frowned and asked, "Is this why you're here?"

"Not exactly." Blinking her glamorous big eyes, Long Yangjun smiled. "You know that I'm here for a slightly different purpose from everybody else's. I'm cooperating with you partly to repair the Nuwa warship, but on the other hand, I also want to observe the new world carefully, especially the new heroes and new games in the new world, from the perspective of a 'Nuwa warrior'.

"In the past two weeks, the abrupt and captivating drama that has taken place in the Star Glory Federation has fascinated me. I can't help but applaud it.

"In fact, I ran an analysis about everything myself. It is basically the same as Han Baling's, albeit with some disparity in the details.

"I think that my analysis is perhaps closer to the truth, but I am not certain. Also, many critical points in my analysis are top secrets of the top secrets that I can never know, but I feel that my heart will continue itching if the puzzles are not resolved, and it is impossible for me to go to sleep. Therefore, I am here to ask Monster Li, one of the parties involved."

Li Yao sniffed. "Why do I have to tell you the secrets of my wife and my disciple?"

Long Yangjun's eyes shone. "So, you have figured out the truth of the whole event, too? It does make sense. If Han Baling has discovered eighty percent of the truth merely as an outsider, you must've found out what Ding Lingdang and

Jin Xinyue were up to long before he did as someone who knows the two women best. How about this? I don’t need you to tell me anything. I will tell you my speculations, and all you need to do is to say if they are right. Does that work for you?”

“No.” Li Yao shook his head.

“That’s a bit ungrateful, don’t you think?” Long Yangjun snorted. “I tried so hard to cover for you during the meeting just now, and you are doing nothing in return for me?”

Li Yao thought quickly. Then, he seemed to have figured out something. Staring at Long Yangjun solemnly, he said, “Alright. You will make guesses, and I will tell you if they are right. But this event is not as simple as it appears. There may be a series of subsequent changes. Once you learn the truth, you will never get to jump off the boat anymore. I will not allow you to stay out of it.”

“I never planned to stay out of the event in the first place.” Long Yangjun smiled. “Monster Li’s thigh is thick, strong, and dependable. Now that I have clung to it, how could I bear to let it go easily?”

Li Yao coughed and said, “You may begin.”

“Alright!” Long Yangjun nodded and spoke in great excitement. “In fact, Han Baling deserves to be one of the rare talents in strategies in the Ancient Sages Sector. It is no exaggeration to call him a great monarch. Also, everything he did when he demolished all the sects on the prairie, established the Eight Units of Cloud Qin, and became the leader of the Dark Cloud Prairies is similar to what is happening in the federation right now. The new powers are crushing the old interest groups that have gradually decayed and are no longer used to the latest changes.

“Therefore, his speculations on the whole thing are shockingly precise. The truth is a fatal trap that has been prepared for a hundred years like he described!

“However, it is impossible for him to know that the trap was not prepared by Monster Li but Monster Li’s disciple, Jin Xinyue!

“Jin Xinyue is truly one of the best strategic schemers in the federation who has grown to an extent far beyond her master!”

Long Yangjun suddenly paused and sighed, while she eyed Li Yao with envy and jealousy.

Li Yao was slightly dazed. “Why are you looking at me in such a way?”

“Because I’m jealous. I’m jealous that you recruited such a distinguished disciple when you didn’t do anything!” Long Yangjun said. “For the experts of our level who have reached the Nascent Soul Stage, what we want are merely two simple things. Firstly, to further move upward in our training. Secondly, to find a few loyal, gifted disciples who will pass on our lifelong knowledge and perfect it!

“The path of training gets more and more difficult as you walk further. To break through from the Nascent Soul Stage into the Divinity Transformation Stage is a challenging task for anyone.

“However, to recruit a real good disciple, one that both has distinguished talents and abilities and is loyal to their master, is a hundred times more challenging than breaking into the Divinity Transformation Stage!

“It is essentially the greatest achievement of your life to have recruited such a perfect disciple as Jin Xinyue who is loyal and willing to sacrifice for the interests of her master. I believe that you will rest in peace even if you die abruptly right now!”

“Is that a compliment? Why does it sound so weird to me?”

Long Yangjun smiled. “Of course it does. It sounds weird because it is not true. At first, I read a lot of biographies about Jin Xinyue and Ding Lingdang. But the thing about biographies is that they are often embroidered to cover the mistakes of the persons and to highlight their achievements, just like how the figure in the ‘Chronicles of Li Yao’ is not the real you. Therefore, it is impossible to tell the real character of the persons and the logic of their actions.

“Later, I began to analyze the videos of their speeches. You know that a lot of videos of their public speeches are available on the Spiritual Nexus for them to run for the Supreme Speaker.

“I carefully studied almost a hundred clips of their speeches. I dare not say that I know them as well as you do, but I believe I have found something that Han Baling and the rest of them didn’t.”

“What is it?” Li Yao asked.

“Ambitions. Undisguisable ambitions that flow out of every pore on Jin Xinyue’s body,” Long Yangjun said. “Jin Xinyue is an ambitious woman who has the strongest lust for power. Even if she truly regards you as the dearest and most respected master, it is impossible for her to sacrifice herself for you or your wife.

“Then, at first glance, the whole plan appears quite illogical.

“After her ‘self-detonation’, Li Yao’s group will certainly rise and will completely control the federation, but she might be sentenced to prison, and all her possibilities on the surface will vanish.

“After all, no matter how despicable the traditional conglomerates are, she is the center of the scandal. Suffering such a destructive strike, not just the important posts such as Speaker of the Federation, leader of the Ministry of Equality and Development, or president of the Dim Moon Fund, even the places of a lower level will not be open for her.

“For such a woman who was practically born with ambition for power, it is more excruciating than to be minced into pieces. Is my speculation on your little disciple correct?”

“Yes. She is indeed such a woman.” Li Yao nodded. “I learned about it a hundred years ago.”

“But back then, you didn’t know that her appetite was so huge,” Long Yangjun said. “Or maybe, Jin Xinyue, who was relatively immature a hundred years ago, did not have such a huge appetite then. A minor ‘Speaker of the Federation’ was enough to satisfy her at that time.

“However, after a hundred years of training and expansion, Jin Xinyue has grown into a rapacious, gigantic beast. What she desires is not a meaningless title such as Speaker of the Federation but the real power of the entire Star Glory Federation!

“The term for the Speaker of the Federation is five years, and one can only serve two terms at most, which will be ten years. Even during the ten years, they will be hamstrung by parliament and the many big shots in other aspects. They must take the influence and interests of other parties into account, too. So, does the Speaker really have the dominating power?

“No. Speaker of the Federation is just a vain title. There’s a post that is even more critical than Speaker. Sometimes they overlap, but sometimes they do not, in which case one can totally manipulate everything behind the curtain. The post is the helmsman of Li Yao’s group!

“In the New Federation that is deprived of the traditional conglomerates and the obsolete forces, Li Yao’s group will rise unstoppably. Whoever works as the helmsman of Li Yao’s group will control the entire federation!

“Also, Speaker has terms and is bound by checks and balances, supervision and exposure, but ‘helmsman of Li Yao’s group’ does not have terms and will not necessarily be checked. It does not need to answer to the general public, either! If the person is capable enough, they can work for fifty years, a hundred, or even longer, controlling the federation for the next century! Am I right, Monster Li?”

Li Yao gave neither approval nor disapproval. “However, even if a ‘Li Yao’s group’ does exist, Ding Lingdang is its helmsman right now.”

“But your wife is neither the materials for the Speaker of the Federation nor for the helmsman of Li Yao’s group.” Long Yangjun chuckled. “She is not even willing to take the jobs herself, is she?

“That’s why Jin Xinyue went through all the trouble of pushing her to the stage, because Jin Xinyue is very clear that Ding Lingdang will not fight for power with her!

“On the surface, everything Jin Xinyue did was self-sacrifice to pave the way for Ding Lingdang. Such loyalty is truly touching!

“But on second thought, the core circle of the so-called ‘Li Yao’s group’ is only four people—Li Yao’s wife and his three disciples.

“Li Yao’s wife Ding Lingdang and first disciple Wu Mayan are both warriors. They are incapable and uninterested in political power or managing Li Yao’s group.

“There’s no need to mention his second disciple, Xie Anan, who is the purest refiner. Her ambitions are perhaps even smaller than Ding Lingdang’s and Wu Mayan’s. She was not born to be a leader at all!

“Then, if a helmsman must be chosen from the core circle, who is more qualified than Jin Xinyue, capable, loyal, and willing to sacrifice herself for Li Yao’s group?”

Chapter 1687 - Queen of Darkness!

Li Yao was still expressionless. His face seemed to have been locked by a gate of a thousand tons, which prevented any emotion in his heart from leaking out. He calmly said, “Even if Li Yao’s group does exist, it is not a dynasty after all. Its leader does not necessarily have to be my wife or disciples. I believe that I’m more openminded than that.

“The slightly more peripheral members can also control the interest group. For example, Bai Kaixin, Chief of Staff of the Burning Prairie Fleet right now, or Guo Chunfeng, director of the Secret Sword Bureau, or my senior brother Fiend Blade Peng Hai, whose Double Dragons Union is likely to rise to become the biggest sect in the federation after the traditional conglomerates are wiped out.

“Are those people worse than Jin Xinyue in terms of strategic wisdom? I think that each of them is suitable to be the spokesperson of the enormous group. I don’t see any reason why I should object.”

Long Yangjun smiled and unhurriedly said, “Although I do think that Bai Kaixin, Guo Chunfeng, Fiend Blade Peng Hai, and the rest of them are not as good as Jin Xinyue, it is not what really matters here. The key to becoming the ‘helmsman of Li Yao’s group’ is to win the support of the internal big shots.

“In fact, the way I see it, the strife in the modern Cultivation civilization is no different from the conflicts in the court in the world of ancient Cultivators or the battles between gangs in the underground world.

“How can you distinguish yourself in a gang? You must be brave and make great contributions to the gang, but that’s only part of it.

“Contributions and sacrifices do not necessarily strengthen you. It is also possible that you take a blow for the gang and get imprisoned for ten years, only to discover that all your influence is gone after you are out of prison. Your previous sacrifice would be in vain.

“Contributions and sacrifices are necessary, but what matters more is the appreciation and support of the big shots!

“This is exactly the dangerous situation that Jin Xinyue is faced with. Now that she is at the center of the scandal storm, if she intends to drag the traditional conglomerates into the abyss and demolish them, she will have to pay an equally high price. Even if she is not sentenced to prison, she will have to lay low for quite a long time.

“At that time, if the big shots of Li Yao’s group support Bai Kaixin, Guo Chunfeng, or Fiend Blade Peng Hai, they will be taking Jin Xinyue’s fruit and become manager of Li Yao’s group. Even Jin Xinyue rises again later, everything will have been settled, and she will barely be able to change anything.

“Therefore, before Jin Xinyue starts the whole thing, she must have the support of the big shots.

“Then, which big shot in Li Yao’s group has the biggest voice? Of course, you are the number one big shot. But your whereabouts are unknown. She doesn’t know when you will come back, and she is not sure that she can manipulate you when you do.

“Right below you, the second one on the rank is definitely Ding Lingdang!

“As your wife, Ding Lingdang boasts the legal rights of the many shares that you have left behind. She is great shareholder in the Glorious Sunlight Group, the Double Dragons Union, and even Skyfire.

“Also, Ding Lingdang has discovered two Sectors in a row in the past hundred years herself. Her reputation is even higher than yours for the unbelievable legends that she has created!

“It is needless to say that her Patriots Front, having toiled in the new worlds for a hundred years, is well-supported in the four new worlds and is a remarkable force in parliament.

“Therefore, Ding Lingdang is the most influential big shot in Li Yao’s group. Whoever is supported by her is very likely to be the helmsman of Li Yao’s group!

“However—

“Ding Lingdang does not like Jin Xinyue. Not at all. Right?”

Li Yao did not say anything, but the bitter smile on his lips betrayed him.

Long Yangjun grew more and more delighted. “Understandable. Totally understandable. How can a masteress be fond of her husband’s young, beautiful, and even slightly exotic female disciple?

“In such a case, things are quite tricky for Jin Xinyue.

“Ding Lingdang dislikes and is wary of her. It is obvious that she will not support Jin Xinyue. Then, even though Jin Xinyue can facilitate the rise of Li Yao’s group with all her schemes and ploys, somebody else will claim the spoils in the end. How can the ambitious woman have worked hard for a hundred years for nothing?

“Jin Xinyue is a very smart woman. She dare not end on bad terms with her masteress no matter what because she knows that you will return sooner or later. She does not have the courage, nor is it necessary for her, to stand against you.

“Since betrayal is not an option and she needs to find a way to win Ding Lingdang’s support, she plays the most delicate move in the entire scheme! Yes. When I inferred her whole scheme, this particular move was the biggest surprise for me!

“Hey, Monster Li, do you think that Jin Xinyue informed your wife when she prepared the entire scheme? Is it possible that they are role-playing?”

“No.”

“I thought so, too.” Long Yangjun nodded confidently. “Ding Lingdang and you are as opposite as can be. She is not the kind of person who likes acting. Also, the fewer people who know such a delicate scheme, the better. It was absolutely necessary for Jin Xinyue not to let Ding Lingdang know anything.

“Therefore, it is safe to assume that Ding Lingdang is unaware of the truth even to this moment. She really regards Jin Xinyue as a… ruthless, treacherous, churlish, insane woman who has no boundaries, right?”

“I agree.”

“If I were Jin Xinyue, I would even find a way to meet Ding Lingdang, pretending that I am too arrogant to care about the bond between us, in order to infuriate Ding Lingdang!

“Hehe. Ding Lingdang would’ve been angry enough after knowing what Ding Lingdang did on the surface even without provocation. She will only be even more so after it.

“As a result, Ding Lingdang will truly dedicate all her resources to the investigation and crucifixion of Jin Xinyue.

“Then, in the near future, after all the traditional conglomerates are wiped out and Li Yao’s group dominates the federation, Jin Xinyue will certainly let Ding Lingdang learn the truth in a clever way.

“The little witch will let her masteress know that she has been making sacrifices and contributions while bearing the curses and misunderstandings in silence not for herself or the demons, but for her master and masteress and for the rise of Li Yao’s group!

“It means that Ding Lingdang truly wronged the little witch, and the little witch was unable to defend herself in the situation and therefore could only hold back her tears while continuing to make contributions for Li Yao’s group, even if it means that power, reputation, and other things that she cherishes would be shattered!

“Tsk, tsk, tsk. How shocked will Ding Lingdang be after she learns the ‘truth’?”

Shaking her head, Long Yangjun could not help but applaud. “Awesome. Truly awesome. Jin Xinyue has truly grasped every possible change in her masteress’ mind! Of course, that is also partly because your wife is too easy to predict. But still, I cannot praise your disciple enough!”

Li Yao sniffed and said, “Jin Xinyue is not nearly as awesome as you. She certainly couldn’t figure out so many things with only a hundred videos of public speeches.”

“I am not nearly as awesome as you, Monster Li, because I can tell from your countenance that you have long realized Jin Xinyue’s tricks, haven’t you?” Long Yangjun smiled. “What, since there are only the two of us here, you don’t even bother to pretend to be shocked?”

“Ding Lingdang and Jin Xinyue are both most intimate to me,” Li Yao said. “A lot of Jin Xinyue’s tricks and acting skills were even taught by me. Is it strange at all that I can see through her? Hehe. It is outrageous for her to trick her masteress like that. I’m going to punish her good after I return!”

“Of course you will punish her—by asking her to drink three cups of wine, right?” Long Yangjun smirked. “What Jin Xinyue has done is all open strategies. No surreptitious schemes are involved at all. At the very least, within Li Yao’s group, and in front of Monster Li, she is absolutely able to justify herself.

“Tsk, tsk, tsk. I’m growing to like Jin Xinyue more and more. She knows that it is difficult to resolve her masteress’ hate and wariness for her. It is not just the private contradiction between two women but also the deep-rooted vigilance of a human against a demon. It may have something to do with the checks and balances within Li Yao’s group, too.

“Under normal circumstances, her masteress, as a ‘big shot’, would never support her. However obedient and dutiful she appears, it will only add to her masteress’ alert.

“In such a case, she might as well go the exact opposite way. She set up a trap on purpose to make her masteress misunderstand her deeply or even strike her hard. Then, after what is done is done, when she is riddled with bleeding wounds because of her masteress, she will suddenly reveal the truth that she is actually a good person who has always been loyal to her master and masteress. She made sacrifices in silence for everyone in Li Yao’s group!

“Your wife is a straightforward and upright woman. Such people always have the most extreme emotions, both love and hate. They cannot bear owing somebody else a favor just as much as they cannot tolerate themselves for wronging a good guy.

“Therefore, after discovering the truth, Ding Lingdang, who can’t be more regretful, will definitely try her best to make it up to Jin Xinyue, the ‘loyal little disciple’. Or rather, haunted by a certain weird sense of guilt, she may even walk from one extremity to the other. She may begin to absolute trust and support Jin Xinyue instead of hating her!

“Hehe. That’s exactly what Jin Xinyue wants.

“Ding Lingdang is the second big shot in Li Yao’s group, and Jin Xinyue, with most of the demons in her back, can be considered as the third big shot. If the two big shots join hands, who can compete with Jin Xinyue? In the next hundred years, her place as the ‘helmsman of Li Yao’s group’ will be as steady and unshakable as a mountain.

“This is Jin Xinyue’s whole plan. What she abandons is the title of ‘Speaker of the Federation’, which is vain and of no actual use, and the traditional conglomerates in the old core worlds, which are not the real source of her power at all. But what she gains will be the whole of Li Yao’s group and the entire Star Glory Federation!

“From the beginning to the end, she has never wanted to be a common ‘Supreme Speaker of the Star Glory Federation’. What she dreams, like her father Jin Tuyi whose Red Tide Plan influences the Star Glory Federation even today, is to control the federation for the next hundred years as a queen of darkness, who will truly lead the New Federation to rise in the sea of stars!’

Chapter 1688 - Flaws and Boundaries

Li Yao listened to Long Yangjun’s analysis quietly, but a vague shadow popped up in front of his eyes—not Jin Xinyue, but her father Jin Tuyi.

Both the father and the daughter were quite a headache!

“This is how Jin Xinyue’s plan goes. I’m certain of it without checking your face. But there’s one thing that has been troubling me, which I can’t figure out.

“Jin Xinyue’s scheme is too huge for her to prepare alone. Judging from the thunderous strikes that the Secret Sword Bureau performed on her in the past two weeks, the operations seem to have been long set.

“Also, about the girl who claimed to be Moonfall’s sister, however professional the training of her soul is, since she failed to deceive us, there is no reason she could’ve fooled the leadership of the Secret Sword Bureau, especially Guo Chunfeng who is a seasoned agent himself.

“Guo Chunfeng is known as the Omnipotent Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, with quadruple talents in all four fields. He has managed the intelligence frontline of the federation for a hundred years. Is it possible for such a shrew old fox to be tricked by one ‘Moonfall’s sister’ or Jin Xinyue?

“But as it happened, the Secret Sword Bureau did not raise any suspicions about the confession of Moonfall’s sister at all, simply starting a superstorm. Then, the only logical explanation is that Jin Xinyue and Guo Chunfeng have been working with each other!

“Is it possible?

“On the surface, Jin Xinyue was once responsible for the ‘dirty jobs’ in the Secret Sword Bureau after the Blood Demon Sector joined the federation a hundred years ago. She was later promoted to be Guo Chunfeng’s deputy and the second most powerful person in the Secret Sword Bureau.

“But the two of them soon ended on bad terms. It was said that they could not meet each other without fighting. In the end, Jin Xinyue led her team to break up with the Secret Sword Bureau and established the ‘Dim Moon Fund’. Not only was the Secret Sword Bureau greatly weakened, it even had a great competitor.

“Therefore, everybody in the federation knows that Jin Xinyue and Guo Chunfeng are as incompatible as fire and water. Neither of them will hesitate to hit the other person when they are down.

“But could it be an illusion? Is it possible that everything is just a trap that Guo Chunfeng and Jin Xinyue laid together decades ago? But there seems to be no reason. The Secret Sword Bureau’s sole job was to resist the demons before. Guo Chunfeng, as the director of the Secret Sword Bureau, should have even more alert and harbored more prejudice toward the demons than Ding Lingdang. How could he have trusted Jin Xinyue and the demons without reserve? Is there really a certain… foundation between them for their cooperation?”

Li Yao took a deep breath and did not hide his appreciation for Long Yangjun at all.

Jin Xinyue's marvelous performance was already far beyond his expectations as her master. However, Long Yangjun's ability to run deductions based on the few traces were even more shocking and chilly.

Yes. In the entire Star Glory Federation, other than themselves, Li Yao was the only one who knew—

Guo Chunfeng and Jin Xinyue, the heads of two intelligence agencies who seemed incompatible, were actually the same type of person.

They were neither pure human beings nor pure demons. They were both transformed from demons into human beings after absorbing tremendous 'Divine Water of Chaos'.

Jin Xinyue was a saintess of demons, while Guo Chunfeng was Abyss. The former's real identity was known by the entire world, but none other than Li Yao was aware of the latter's identity. It was enough as the foundation for their in-depth cooperation.

Long Yangjun read something from Li Yao's eyes and said, "Alright. I don't need to know everything. It's enough to know that it is possible for them to cooperate.

"Tsk, tsk, tsk. The two intelligence agencies of the federation seem to be at loggerheads, but they are actually the same gang and controlled by 'Li Yao's group'. How can the rotten traditional conglomerates escape from Li Yao's group when the plans have been ongoing for decades in secret?

"For me, the mysteries of the entire event have been resolved now. The feeling of gratification is so rewarding. Thank you for your honesty. I am more determined to cling to your thigh now, too!

"But in the end, there's still something that I'm curious about. Monster Li, what's your feeling after raising such a terrifying disciple? Will you…"

Blinking, Li Yao extended two fingers and said, "Did you know? There are two kinds of people in the world. Some of them make pies, and some sell pies."

Long Yangjun was dazed. "What do you mean?"

"Assuming that I am a guy named Wang Mazi who can make the most delicious pies in the world and has fun making them, it doesn't mean that I am necessarily good at selling pies, or that I can open the largest, the most popular and the most enduring pie stores in the world, right?

"Besides, even if I can open branches of my pie store everywhere and earn loads of money, and even if I can decorate my restaurant into the most extravagant hotel and become a king of the food industry, I will have absolutely no time to make the pies that I like making best. In fact, their flavor will definitely be off even if I do find the time.

"Perhaps, I did not want to open a 'Wang Mazi Chain Pie Store' at all in the first place. I only wanted to make the most delicious pies in the world and watch the customers devour them one bite after another until oil is flowing out of their mouth. I would be as delighted as they were.

"Therefore, if a person who is good at selling pies has come to operate the 'Wang Mazi Pie Store', she is free to be the CEO of the pie store, because I will have more time to be focused on making my pies. Isn't it very good?

"You may grow a deep understanding about Jin Xinyue through her personal biographies and the videos of her speeches, but you can’t know her as well as I do, and you can’t know me as well as she does.

“I know her, and I know that she will not betray me. She knows me, too, and she knows that, like Ding Lingdang, I don’t like operating a pie store but only like making pies. Therefore, as long as she is cautious enough to not cross the lines, I will not doubt or restrict her at all. She can totally do whatever she wants the way she wants. That is the mutual trust between me and her.”

“Lines? What lines?” Long Yangjun queried.

Li Yao smiled. He turned on a mini crystal processor fluently and summoned many light beams, which displayed complicated formulas, charts, and statistical data.

“In the past half month, all of you have been inferring everything with the best of your wisdom. For the experts of the Ancient Sages Sector who are unaware of the inside information of the federation, it was indeed difficult for you.

“But for me, who has a deep understanding about Jin Xinyue, Ding Lingdang, Guo Chunfeng, and the other people involved, it was not troublesome to figure out Jin Xinyue’s scheme from the familiar methods. However, that was not the focus of my attention.

“I don’t care who runs ‘Wang Mazi Pie Store’, or if it can grow huge and make money. Compared to the schemes and power struggles on the surface, I am more interested in one organization and one person—the CFIA and Lu Qingchen.”

Narrowing her eyes, Long Yangjun mumbled, “He is just Jin Xinyue’s chess piece, an unimportant character.”

“No, he is very important.”

Pointing at a few pieces of news on the light beam, Li Yao said, “42,722 victims were killed in the explosion of the Jade Dust Mines. It was the first attack of the CFIA, the evil organization of Immortal Cultivators, after it surfaced. Lu Qingchen became the most wanted criminal and the most notorious Immortal Cultivator nationwide because of the case, too.

“After the explosion in the Jade Dust Mines, he launched quite a few terror attacks against resource planets in only ten years, which caused serious damage. The total number of the victims surpassed a hundred thousand.

“Then, the Secret Sword Bureau and the Dim Moon Fund both spared no efforts striking the CFIA. Lu Qingchen was forced to lie low, and the CFIA never committed any atrocious acts for a long time. But they had already established their brand as the most infamous organizations of the Immortal Cultivators.”

Long Yangjun was deep in thought. “If Jin Xinyue asked Lu Qingchen to perform the terror attacks, or if she had simply kept the information to herself, it would cross your lines, and you will do what you have to do.

“But you have met neither Jin Xinyue nor Lu Qingchen. How can you know the truth?”

“I calculated things,” Li Yao explained to Long Yangjun. “The federation developed countless resource planets in the past hundred years and established millions of mines, most of which are in harsh, dangerous places.

“Accidents in the mines are unavoidable however many precautions we take. Here are the statistics of all the public mine accidents in the past century. All the irrelevant interference has been removed.

“Look at the curve. Do you notice anything?” Li Yao pointed at a descending curve.

Long Yangjun pondered for a moment and said, “There doesn’t seem to be anything wrong. As the mining crystal processors are applied on a large scale and the infrastructure is perfected, the accident rate has been dropping every year. It is a very smooth curve, isn’t it?”

“Something’s wrong. Very wrong,” Li Yao said. “Look at the average accident rate before Lu Qingchen showed up, the ten years during which Lu Qingchen was on a rampage, and the dozen years after he disappeared and went underground. It is smooth. Too smooth!

“What does it say? Lu Qingchen launched appalling terror attacks on the major resource planets of the federation insanely and repetitively. However, judging from the big data in the past hundred years, during the ten years when he was most active, the average accident rate in the mines is almost identical to the years before and the years after. Were his attempts all in vain?

“Now, we remove all the terror attacks that the CFIA claim to be responsible for. Take another look.”

Li Yao tapped on the light beam, and a huge collapse immediately appeared at the middle of the curve, as if somebody had bitten a chunk out.

“During the ten years when Lu Qingchen was most active, the average accident rate in the mines actually plummeted uncannily, and after Lu Qingchen went underground, the accident rate resumed normal quickly?”

Long Yangjun examined the data carefully. A moment later, glamorous brilliance beamed out of her eyes.

“Do you see it now? There are only two possibilities for such weird data,” Li Yao said. “Either the heavens were watching over the federation, and when Lu Qingchen was busy launching his terror attacks, other resource planets were all unbelievably lucky without having any serious mine accidents.

“Or, there were no ‘terror attacks’ at all. The Secret Sword Bureau and the Dim Moon Fund simply decorated the common mine accidents first, and the CFIA and Lu Qingchen stood up to claim them as terror attacks. In such a way, the CFIA was built into a ‘highly evil organization of the Immortal Cultivators lurking within the federation’!”

Long Yangjun blinked quickly. “If that’s the case, the terror attacks are all fake, and Lu Qingchen never killed a hundred thousand victims. There is nothing wrong at all even if he works for Jin Xinyue. It is just acting within a reasonable range, right?

“However, other people can certainly reach the same conclusion with the data. This is perhaps the greatest flaw of Jin Xinyue’s entire plan.”

“No. This isn’t Jin Xinyue’s flaw.” Softness finally shone on Li Yao’s face. His eyes were completely open, like ponds that were unfrozen in the early spring with ripples spreading out. “It is my disciple’s boundaries.”

Chapter 1689 - Rejection Reaction

Holding the bowl of noodles that Li Yao had made for her just now, Long Yangjun gazed at Li Yao for a long time. Then she suddenly burst into such laughter that she could barely catch her breath.

“So, you’ve seen through everything since the beginning. Why didn’t you tell me earlier? I was worried for nothing.”

She eyed Li Yao, somewhat in dissatisfaction. “I was concerned at first that you and your disciple were going to turn against each other, and the federation would also fall apart under the scourge of the expedition army of the Imperium!

“I didn’t know that everything was within your calculations. Han Baling and I must’ve looked like idiots to you. As expected of Monster Li. This nickname came as a joke, but it seems more and more fitting!

“I might have been joking just now, but I’m seriously considering if I should cling to your thigh for the rest of the trip!”

Li Yao chuckled and devoured the bowl of noodles that were all swollen because they had soaked for too long. He then raised the bowl and drank the soup. In the end, he burped and patted his belly in great satisfaction.

His face was glowing. Every pore on his body was opened, releasing a daunting aura to the outside world. The demeanor of ‘Monster Li’ was fully revealed.

“Well, I didn’t mean to be pretentious,” Li Yao explained dutifully. “It was not until last night that I finally calculated everything. When the data and charts are listed here, it is certainly easy to reach the conclusion, but I had nothing in the beginning, and I didn’t intend to raise any suspicion by asking for someone to retrieve the relevant files. Therefore, I had to find the pieces of information myself, sometimes even by searching for the news decades ago, in order to slowly complete the puzzle.

“The job alone took me more than half a month.

“Thankfully, the result is not bad at all. Despite the lack of conclusive proof, the data is enough for me to prove that the ‘CFIA’ is not really an evil organization. It does make sense, too. Jin Xinyue is a smart person. Even if I don’t trust her integrity, I should at least trust her wisdom. If she intends to control the federation forever, how could she do such insane things and turn herself into a ‘second Lu Zui’, offering a weakness for her opponents to attack her?

“Since she never crossed the lines, and she made such great contributions and sacrifices for ‘Li Yao’s group’, I might as well be generous as her master now that she has proved her loyalty. Is it a big deal at all to let her run ‘Li Yao’s group’?

“Disciples should cater to their master’s needs. With my reputation and influence today, isn’t it too cheap for me if I deal with the trivia in the group myself? Isn’t this what we recruit disciples for?”

Seeing that Li Yao talked and laughed casually, Long Yangjun put on a bitter smile for real. She shook her head and said, “You are such a puzzle. Sometimes, you make me think that the one hiding in the magnificent statue of ‘dominator of three Sectors, Vulture Li Yao’ is an idiot, but sometimes, I feel that the idiot is ten times more horrifying than what Han Baling described. What kind of person is the real Vulture Li Yao, and what is he planning to do?”

Pausing for a moment, instead of waiting for Li Yao to reply, she smiled, “Ha. But forget it. It will be a happy ending after all. Jin Xinyue appears to be taking full control of the situation. So, the guests from the Ancient Sages Sector can just enjoy the drama jovially.”

Weird brilliance flashed in Li Yao’s eyes, as he shook his head and said, “No, I don’t think you can.”

Long Yangjun was slightly dazed. “How so?”

“So far, everything has been going on too well,” Li Yao said solemnly. “But things shouldn’t go so well where I am involved.”

Long Yangjun chuckled. “There, you are starting again. What kind of bizarre theory is that? Do you really believe in ‘destiny’ or ‘luck’?”

“Not destiny, and not luck. It is some sort of law that exists in reality.” Li Yao frowned, his eyes deep and dark. His mind seemed to have drifted to a long, long time ago, and his voice sounded like the moans in his uncanny dreams. “I don’t know how I should explain it to you. Even I haven’t entirely figured it out yet. But you may consider me as a person, or a foreign object, that is rejected by the whole world, like a thorn that has stabbed into the flesh.

“When a thorn impales the flesh, the body will react out of natural instincts, trying to squeeze it out. Chances are that my body and soul have gone through subtle mutations during the many space jumps in which they are torn apart and re-condensed between the third dimension and the fourth dimension. Therefore, this world regards me as a certain foreign object and has a ‘rejection reaction’. It is not going to allow me to enjoy the fruit comfortably without doing anything.”

Long Yangjun was amused. “Too many people have performed space jumps repetitively, but I’ve never heard of any of them having such weird mutations. Since you are so certain about the uncertainties in the future, I believe that you must’ve found something more than the so-called ‘rejection reaction’?”

“Yes.” Li Yao nodded. “Since Jin Xinyue has planned for a hundred years, her whole plan can’t be just what we are seeing right now. She must have calculated everything to help Li Yao’s group rise unstoppably and to make herself grasp the power of Li Yao’s group and the Star Glory Federation someday.

“However, the most critical problem right now is the imminent invasion of the expedition army from the Imperium!

“If the Black Wind Fleet is not crushed, and the Star Glory Federation cannot secure a ‘regional hegemony’, her plans will be a great joke however marvelous and meticulous they are!

“Therefore, the abrupt changes in the past half month are just appetizers. What is about to happen next will be Jin Xinyue’s most crucial plan!”

Li Yao did not disguise his attitude. Observing his face, Long Yangjun immediately understood it. “But you do not have much hope in your disciple’s ‘crucial plan’ to deal with the Black Wind Fleet?”

Li Yao sighed and said, “Yes. I think that her plans are not perfect enough. On one hand, she is too greedy. She is trying to take Li Yao’s group, the traditional conglomerates, the Star Glory Federation, the Black Wind Fleet, and many other factors into consideration while making her plans for the purpose of taking advantage of all of them!

“If anything goes wrong in such an interlinking scheme, she will lose the entire game immediately. Even her father Jin Tuyi might not have been capable enough to calculate so many things. I think that it’s too challenging for her!”

Long Yangjun smiled. “Maybe, young people prefer challenges.”

“More importantly, as you said just now, by repackaging common mine accidents as terror attacks and fabricating a false evil organization named the ‘CFIA’, she has indeed kept her boundaries, but it can also be her greatest flaw.”

“Are you worried that… the Black Wind Fleet may see through her?” Long Yangjun asked.

“Who knows?” Li Yao replied. “Normally speaking, the Immortal Cultivators from the Black Wind Fleet who are unfamiliar with the Star Glory Federation wouldn’t think that way. However, if somebody enlightens them and explains the whole thing, it will not be too difficult for the Black Wind Fleet to draw the same conclusion with the same curve.”

Long Yangjun blinked. “It seems that you already have suspects?”

“No. I cannot accuse anyone with the little information I have.” Li Yao paused for a moment but went on. “However, I do feel ill at ease about one of Jin Xinyue’s subordinates.”

“Who is it?” Long Yangjun asked.

“Lu Qingchen,” Li Yao replied.

Long Yangjun was slightly dazed. “According to your speculation just now, Lu Qingchen is not a real ‘most wanted criminal of the federation’, and he did not plan any terror attacks. He is just a ‘magnet’ that Jin Xinyue unleashed on purpose to attract all the Immortal Cultivators. Then, his loyalty to the federation must be unquestionable. Otherwise, Jin Xinyue wouldn’t have picked him at all with her wisdom and keen eyes.”

“But his ‘Immortal Cultivator 2.0’ gives me a very bad and creepy feeling,” Li Yao said. “Even if it is fake and made up on purpose, I don’t believe that a guy who can come up with such a theory is a counterfeit Immortal Cultivator.”

Long Yangjun sniffed. “Even if he is an Immortal Cultivator, so what? The Immortal Cultivators are not necessarily loyal to the Imperium of True Human Beings. Isn’t ‘freedom of thought’ highly valued in the federation? Before the rise of the ‘CFIA’, theories on the true path of immortality were openly published. Lu Qingchen can be both an Immortal Cultivator 2.0 and a loyal patriot of the Star Glory Federation. That is not contradictory.

“His special qualities were discovered by Jin Xinyue with her sharp eyes. It can’t be more suitable to ask such an Immortal Cultivator who loves the federation to play the role of the leader of the CFIA!”

Li Yao nodded solemnly. “Yes. I thought so, too. ‘Freedom of thought’ is one of the doctrines of the federation today. Believing in the true path of immortality is not against the law at all. Since Jin Xinyue was bold enough to employ Lu Qingchen in such a critical and dangerous post, it means that he must’ve passed multiple tests and proved himself to be the firmest patriot who would never surrender to the Imperium of True Human Beings.”

Long Yangjun was truly dazed by what Li Yao said. She thought hard for a long time but still failed to get things straight. “If you think that Lu Qingchen is an unwavering patriot who will in no way betray the federation and surrender to the Imperium, what are you worried about?”

Li Yao smiled bitterly. “If Lu Qingchen is truly a determined Immortal Cultivator who believes in the 2.0 version of the true path of immortality, and a resolute and devoted patriot who loves the Star Glory Federation and is willing to sacrifice himself for the federation with the curse of ‘most wanted criminal’ on his shoulder for decades…

“Then, how on earth will he stand by and watch his motherland walk further and further away on the path of the Cultivators that he deems wrong?

“He will absolutely not betray the federation or surrender to the Imperium, but it doesn’t mean that he will not reform the federation at the most critical moment with his own methods, ideology, and path that he believes to be absolutely correct!”

Chapter 1690 - Jin Xinyue’s Solution

In the Heaven’s Origin Sector, a hundred and fifty kilometers to the southeast of the capital city, there was a tiny, quiet satellite city. It was one of the main demon communities in the metropolis circle around the capital city.

At the center of the tiny city were two tall, splendid skyscrapers. One of them was the Blood Demon Natives Association, and the other was the Comprehensive Building for the Offices of the Groups of the Blood Demon Sector.

Between the two skyscrapers, there was also a small square. At the end of the square was a tall wall made of obsidian, depicting the scene where countless miners of the demon race were slogging deep inside the mines to collect resources.

Regardless of who was right and who was wrong a thousand years ago, at least, in the past hundred years, for the rise of the New Federation, countless demons had shed their blood, sweat, and tears in the resource planets in all seven Sectors. Their flesh and bones were buried deep in the earth of the New Federation and melded with the name ‘Star Glory Federation’, endowing the traditional country of pure human beings a different sense.

The statue was established in memory of all the miners of the demon race who were killed in accidents during the rise of the New Federation.

Next to the statue was a small museum, in which the names and deeds of all the sacrificed could be found out.

Descendants of the demon race that were scattered in the seven Sectors, some of whom had no features of demons at all after drinking the ‘Chaos Serum’ and generations of marriage with human beings, often went there after a long journey to offer flowers to their ancestors.

Beyond the two skyscrapers and the small square for miners, to the north of the city, in the beautiful suburb, a seemingly ordinary villa lay.

In the past few decades, the seemingly unattractive villa was one of the centers of the swirls to some extent, or rather, a center to make swirls.

The leadership in the capital city and the experts in the circle of Cultivators all address the villa as ‘Moon Palace’.

It was Jin Xinyue’s personal residence.

The Ministry of Equality and Development was a government agency, not Jin Xinyue’s property. The ‘Dim Moon Fund’, as the federation’s second intelligence agency, was highly associated with the nation, too, despite its inconspicuousness and independence. It could not be entirely considered Jin Xinyue’s private troop.

Both the minister and the president of the Dim Moon Fund were positions and power that the federal government endowed her with and could be retreated anytime.

But the title ‘Dark Lady of the Nine Heavens’ was different.

Jin Xinyue’s responsibility, obligation, and power for the demons were not granted by the federation but earned through her father’s prestige and her own methods. Therefore, it was impossible for the federation to deprive her of the power.

The ‘Moon Palace’ was both Jin Xinyue’s home in the capital and the command center for her to control the Blood Demon Sector and the issues of the demons large and small. It was her real nest and the source of her power.

However, her nest was in apparent danger after the storm swept for half a month.

It could be seen from the number of shuttles landing and taking off in the private parking lots near the ‘Moon Palace’.

In the past few decades, the private parking lots near the Moon Palace had always been jam-packed by the luxury shuttles from all over the seven Sectors.

Not only were there guests from the demon race, some of them also came from the renowned sects that had been famous in the federation for hundreds of years.

When the scandal first broke out, the number of the luxury shuttles did not drop at all.

At that time, nobody believed that Jin Xinyue, a ‘giant’ who had the support of most of the traditional conglomerates in the core worlds, would be crushed by an insignificant scandal.

However, the situation escalated each day, especially after Moonfall’s sister was exposed and heavily protected by the Secret Sword Bureau. In only a few days, abrupt changes were taking place. Jin Xinyue’s fall and the reshuffle of the Dim Moon Fund seemed to have become predictable facts. Therefore, the parking lots immediately turned empty.

Jin Xinyue, mired in countless scandals, seemed to have really turned into a bomb that could explode anytime. None of the big shots were willing to keep in touch with her, fearing that they might be blown into pieces because of her.

Only the bold and determined reporters were arriving at the place like dung beetles that had sensed the stench. They concealed themselves in the corners of the satellite city and played hide-and-seek with Jin Xinyue's ferocious bodyguards from the demon race.

Naturally, they were there to shoot the precious picture where Jin Xinyue was caught.

As a senior member of parliament, the leader of the Ministry of Equality and Development, and one of the two candidates running for the Supreme Speaker, Jin Xinyue was naturally protected by the federal law and could not be caught without good reason.

Three weeks after the scandal was exposed, she still had her basic freedom, and she could still commute between the plaza of her ministry and the Moon Palace, maintaining the functions of the two agencies.

However, she did not leave the Heaven's Origin Sector for other worlds to give speeches and call for votes anymore. Perhaps the independent investigators had restrained her from doing so. Or perhaps it was because she had foreseen that she could do nothing to change the situation and that her struggles would be futile.

Faced with the snowballing scandals and pressure of the case, her high position and special identity could not help her much anymore. Multiple demonstrations targeting her had been held in many places in the seven Sectors, demanding that she be relieved of her duties and even sentenced to prison immediately.

The sources and the seasoned reporters familiar with political affairs all concluded that, even by the most optimistic estimation, Jin Xinyue would have to resign in cooperation with the investigation in one week.

In short, Jin Xinyue had lost everything. She was doomed!

On the surface, that was indeed the case.

But a secret meeting was being held in an area beneath the Moon Palace that was as complicated as a maze.

The attendants did not enter the Moon Palace through luxury shuttles; they were directly teleported to the most critical chamber in the Moon Palace through a secret teleportation array. Naturally, no reporters, agents, or independent investigators discovered them.

The secret teleportation system had been buried beneath the building when the Moon Palace was first established. It had never been used even once in the past few decades. So, it was impossible for the federal government to have learned the frequency and features of the system. At the very least, in the few days after it was activated for the first time, nobody would notice its existence at all.

The attendants who went deep into the Moon Palace through the secret teleportation array were still the three leaders who had met Jin Xinyue last time, the real big shots hiding behind the parliament of the federation.

This time, they were not just representing their own sects but also speaking for all the traditional conglomerates that had been affected by the scandals and struck hard!

Therefore, despite the calmness and resolution from being Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, the three big shots were displaying obvious anxiety and fury!

“Jin Xinyue, what exactly have you been doing? Half a month ago, you promised me that you would take care of everything!

“We believed you and offered you so many resources, but the more you did, the messier it became!

“Right now, so many sects have gotten involved in this. The renowned sects with a history of hundreds of years have been pushed to the brink of collapse because of your own recklessness!

“The independent investigators, the Secret Sword Bureau, and a dozen other departments have established a joint taskforce. A lot of our leadership has already been taken away. Nobody can tell what they will confess!

“Even the few of us, as Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, will have to be investigated at designated times in designated locations in a few days. This is the greatest humiliation!”

Leader Pang, Leader Zhao, and Leader Tong, three big shots of the traditional conglomerates, vented their anger, hatred, and fear like three volcanoes.

Jin Xinyue was still wearing the most delicate and perfect black suit. She seemed to be standing opposite them calmly, lowering her head to acknowledge her mistake.

However, the uncontrollable twitches of her lips, the slightly disordered brow line, and the tiny fracture on her black silk stockings all revealed the fear in her heart.

At first glance, even Jin Xinyue had lost control of herself faced with the immense pressure and the irreversible failure.

“With everything coming to this point, what are you hoping to achieve by saying all that?”

Taking a deep breath, she lit up a cigarette with her trembling hands. Then she said gloomily, “Leaders, you are free to burst into fury and curse me however you want, but can you save your sects and family by doing that?”

“You—” All three bigshots were well-respected celebrities. It had been hundreds of years since they last heard such shameless talks. They were all exasperated. “If that is the case, why did you beg us to come here to discuss a great plan with you? With everything coming to this point, we are but meat on a chopping block waiting to be cut. Is there any ‘plan’ that can reverse our doom at all?”

Jin Xinyue smiled miserably.

What appeared on her face was perhaps the most miserable, complicated, and vicious expression that the three big shots had ever seen in their entire lives.

“Kill me.” Jin Xinyue smoked the cigarette and spurted the erratic mist toward the three big shots slowly. “Everything will be ended.”

The three big shots were dazed at the same time. A moment later, they were even more angry than before. “What did you say? Are you insane? You screwed everything up and caused such a huge mess that everybody is trapped in it. There’s no telling how many people are going to die because of you, and you’re hoping that we can give you a clean, easy death? Not so fast!

"Kill you? If killing you could solve our troubles, we would mince you into pieces without any hesitation! But is your life really so valuable? Are you qualified to drag so many noble families to die together with you?

"You—you—you! Why didn't we discover sooner that you are such a lunatic?"

Jin Xinyue smoked the cigarette in silence, only this time swallowing all the smoke. Listening to the beratement of the three big shots patiently, she suddenly raised her head. With craziness beaming out of her eyes, she said with a smile, "Or maybe, I can kill you first. I promise that you will leave this world easily and comfortably. You will not taste the pain of witnessing your ancestors' enterprises being ruined by you!"

The three big shots were stunned again. Then, sensing the undisguisable killing intent from Jin Xinyue, they finally recalled what had happened during their last meeting.

*C—Cr*p. The woman is crazy. Why did we make the same mistake as last time?*

"Relax. It's just a joke." Jin Xinyue smiled. Her killing intent vanished into thin air like a glass of water spilled in the desert. Snapping the ash at the end of the cigarette that was as smooth as jade, she crossed her legs comfortably and said, "It appears that you do not want me, yourselves, or your sects and family to die, and you want to counterattack to get a chance of survival, right?"

The three big shots looked at each other in shock. "Do you have any solution?"

"The entire federation has learned of what we did. Even the three seniors here can't figure anything out to deal with the situation. What can I propose?” Looking at the three leaders through the orange brilliance at the butt of the cigarette, Jin Xinyue seemed to be targeting her prey in a rifle scope.

“Right, speaking of which, would you like to surrender to the Imperium with me, leaders?”

Chapter 1691 - Bottoms Up!

Her words were like a cluster of air with a temperature of absolute zero, freezing the entire chamber as well as the three leaders inside.

Having managed three renowned sects for almost a hundred years, none of the three leaders were fools. They had slightly been out of control just now only because of their fury. But after Jin Xinyue raised the shocking bomb, they calmed themselves down in the shortest amount of time.

“Jin Xinyue, so, you have long been prepared to—”

“Leader Pang, you’re mistaken. I have always been loyal to the federation. Not once did I think of betraying the federation in the past hundred years.” Jin Xinyue’s eyes were bloodshot, as if something horrible was about to break out of her eyeballs. “My people and I have served the country loyally and dutifully since we joined the Star Glory Federation. We have never hesitated to sacrifice our everything!

“Let’s just talk about myself. During the time when I worked in the Secret Sword Bureau, and the time when I was in the Dim Moon Fund and the Ministry of Equality and Development, how many things have I done for the federation? How many dirty and exhausting jobs that other people loathed to do were done by me? How many times did I personally suppress the dissatisfaction and rebellions of my own people?

“I can declare confidently that my loyalty to the federation in the past hundred has been unquestionable!”

“However, hehe, hehehehe! How did the federation reward me? They turn a blind eye to the so many things that I did and the great sacrifices that I made, but when my methods were only slightly outrageous, they immediately caught my weakness and bit it hard without letting go!

“Or maybe, since the seven Sectors of the federation are already steady now, it is time to cook the hound now that all the hares have been caught. They think that someone like me who has blood all over her hands and is responsible for the dirty jobs can be thrown away like a filthy rag, don’t they?”

Jin Xinyue’s eyes grew more and more bloodshot, and her eyes became larger and larger. As her spiritual energy surged out, her hair was standing up and fluttering, making her look like a crazy person.

“I can contain myself when other people wrong me, strike me, and suppress me, but even Ding Lingdang, my dear masteress, also does not care about our bond at all and bites me like a rabid dog, just in order to crawl to the throne of the Supreme Speaker with me as her ladder!

“Hehe. Is the idiotic cow with more brawn than brains qualified to be the Speaker of the Federation at all? Does she deserve it? Can she do the job? I will be a Speaker ten times better than her if I am elected!

“Injustice calls for injustice! Since this is the way the federation treats its contributors, since people hate their hero as such, and since Ding Lingdang despises her husband’s disciple like that, what should I care about?

"All in all, you were right about one thing. Those who are not my people will think differently. I am a demon after all who doesn't belong to the federation. We surrendered a hundred years ago. What's the big deal if we surrender again a hundred years later?"

"The bottom line is…"

She snapped the cigarette aside and craned her neck like a creepy cobra that was slithering toward the three leaders.

"A hundred years ago, I swore that I would become the Speaker of the Federation one day. It was a vow that I made to my father Jin Tuyi. Nobody is going to stop me, whatever the cost is and whichever methods I must adopt!

"I planned to become the Speaker of the Federation through legal approaches and lead the federation to resist the Imperium. Believe it or not, that was what I thought at the beginning.

"But the federation will not give me the opportunity. People will not give me the opportunity. Even Ding Lingdang views me as a mortal enemy! Ha. Did you notice how the news describes me nowadays? 'A second Lu Zui' and a 'traitor of the federation'! Tsk, tsk, tsk. It's high time that you look at what a real 'traitor' does, idiots!"

The three leaders looked at each other in deep thought. Flickering light was flowing vaguely inside their eyes.

But none of them were willing to talk first. They were all considering in silence.

"All in all, I have been pushed to desperation, and I'm forced to make counterattack now!"

Jin Xinyue took a deep breath to calm herself down, but her hands were still shivering slightly. She drew out another thin, long cigarette, but she simply clenched it in her hands and rubbed it subconsciously until it was rolled into broken parts.

Staring at the three big shots, she asked, “What are you hesitating for?

“Your situation is no better than mine. We have been bound to each other for decades. We are going to either live together or die together!

“Yes. With your fame and reputation, you will be able to catch your breath for a while even if you are skinned. You might not necessarily go to prison. You may even still be renowned celebrities standing at the peak of the federation on the surface.

“But you know that after the strike of the scandals, your spine has been lashed into pieces. Your sects and family are like dew before the sun comes out in the morning. You do not have much time to shine!

“I think that you are not scared of downfall, death, or prison. You are too old to care about any of that.

“However, you are scared that your sects and families that have been passed on for a thousand years will be destroyed by you. You are scared that new powers will rise and step on your face forever, making it impossible for you to seek a comeback. You are scared that your offspring will become useless, mundane people. You are scared that your power will slowly fade away until it is completely gone in the glory of the federation, just like the sects that we crushed together in the past few decades, right?

“But you can’t do anything even if you are scared. With everything coming to this point, is there any way to save your sects and family, or even to make them ascend to higher places, other than surrendering to the Imperium?”

The three leaders were all blushing and breathing hastily, as if they had been filled up with the worst liquor.

Jin Xinyue smiled again, with some craziness, some aggression, and some arrogance. “Stop being pretentious, dear leaders. I have long seen through the leaders of the major sects and families such as yourselves.

“In fact, for you, the path of the Cultivators does not mean anything at all, does it? You only become Cultivators because you happen to be born in a country of Cultivators that is the Star Glory Federation. Your loyalty to the Star Glory Federation is on the premise that the Star Glory Federation will bring you tremendous benefits!

“Your belief, and the source of power that supported you to reach the level you are at right now, has nothing to do with the difference between the Cultivators and the Immortal Cultivators. It is your sect and family, right? Your sects and families are your everything. For your sects, families, and bloodlines to live long and prosper, you can sacrifice everything, including yourselves and the federation. That is the idea in the deepest part of your heart, right?”

The color of the three well-respected leaders’ faces finally changed greatly.

“It’s alright. It’s really alright. This is totally understandable. How many people can really be loyal to their belief? Most people are still ordinary even if they have reached the Nascent Soul Stage!”

Jin Xinyue opened her hands and squinted. Sniffing the cigarette that she had just broken apart, she put on a fascinated expression and mumbled, “How fragrant.”

“You…” Leader Pang, the fattest of the three attendants who was essentially a mountain of meat, finally could not contain himself anymore. His small eyes that were embedded in the wrinkles of his fat rolled for a long time and looked at his friends sitting next to him. In the end, he gnashed his teeth and asked, “Are you certain of victory?”

Jin Xinyue smiled. Shaking off the remains of the cigarette in her palm, she slowly said, “There are too many factors involved in a war. Of course, I am not certain of the final victory.

“However, just think about it carefully. The expedition army of the Imperium is overwhelmingly strong in the first place. Even if we don’t betray but fight them united, we still may not be able to win.

“But right now, I have a batch of elite warriors from the Blood Demon Sector in my hands. A fleet in the federal army is absolutely loyal to me, too. Together with you and those behind you, how much trouble can we cause in the heartland of the federation?

“If the Black Wind Fleet attacks at such a time and loots the burning house, you can infer what the outcome will be by yourself!”

Cold sweat was popping up on the foreheads of all the three leaders.

Jin Xinyue looked at them scornfully and said, “Stop being pretentious. I don’t believe that you never considered the possibility of surrendering to the Imperium of True Human

Beings. The big families and sects such as you are the least dependable. To survive the change of dynasties, it is practically your natural instinct to sit on the fence. Hehe. You are pretending to be loyal and responsible right now, but I guarantee that you will be the first ones to surrender when the situation goes south!

“After all, even if the Black Wind Fleet does defeat the federation, those people are pure warriors who are unfamiliar with the local area. How can they expect to govern the region and collect resources without the big sects such as you as their helpers?

“By then, instead of being destroyed together with the federation, it is possible for you to change your face and rise to prosperity, extending the tentacles of your family and sects into the four new worlds and even more worlds beyond in the future!

“Am I saying what is on your minds, dear leaders?”

The three big shots were obviously embarrassed.

Jin Xinyue smiled and said, “Tell you what, your smart plans are not going to work out this time. You want to lead the way for the army of the Imperium? I’m sorry, but such a glorious and sacred job has already been taken by me, and the renowned sects such as yours will never have the chance to take the initiative.

“However, we have cooperated for nearly a hundred years after all, and our cooperation has generally been pleasant. You also know that I am not an ungrateful person. I always do things for my conscience, my feelings, and my friends. Besides, my own strength alone is still a bit insufficient after all. Therefore…

“Hehe. There isn’t any tea today but wine. The ‘Red Guts Dragon Blood Wine’, the hardest liquor in the Blood Demon Sector!

“Come on, leaders, seniors, and uncles! Drink the wine, and we will be life-and-death comrades. Follow me to pledge loyalty to the Imperium, serve the true path of immortality, and lead the way for the magnificent army of the Imperium!”

Chapter 1692 - Complete Suppression!

Four wine cups made of skulls of demon beasts in a hideous and twisted shape slowly ascended from behind Jin Xinyue. Boosted by her spiritual energy, the most eccentric air was flowing out from the utensils.

Three of the cups flew toward the three big shots, like three ghostly lanterns.

The skull cups were filled with the ‘Red Guts Dragon Blood Wine’, which was as thick and intense as real blood. It could also be seen that a gallbladder of a demonic dragon that looked like a heart was floating inside each cup.

The wine was as dark as blood and as thick as oil. One would feel that their goosebumps rising when they saw it first. Then, they would feel that their blood was boiling, and all their emotions were stimulated to the maximum.

The three big shots looked at each other in bewilderment, their fingers shivering. None of them were willing to be the first one to drink the wine whose flavor and consequences were unknown.

The three cups of wind, however, were drawing closer and closer to their mouths, as if six invisible people were standing behind them, forcing them to drink the wine.

Jin Xinyue’s voice grew colder and colder. “Drink it now. Why don’t you drink it up?”

“Jin Xinyue!” Leader Tong, who had a baby face, bulged his eyes and slapped his thigh. “We didn’t come here alone. A lot of our men are waiting for us outside. Don’t be too outrageous!”

“Oh. So to speak, Leader Tong, you would rather not show me enough respect. You do not consider the helpless, vulnerable woman that is me a friend, and you do not want to drink that wine that I specially brewed?”

Jin Xinyue smiled casually and gestured at the door. “People of different beliefs should go different ways. I don’t like forcing people to do anything. If that is the case, you may leave now, Leader Tong! You should know that the job of leading the way for the army is not a complicated one. I don’t think that it really requires so many hands.”

“You—” Leader Tong rose up abruptly and stared at Jin Xinyue for a long time. Then, he glanced at the other two big shots who were sitting next to him.

The two big shots lowered their eyes, as if they were two meditating monks who did not hear a word that he or Jin Xinyue said.

With a gloomy face, Leader Tong solemnly said, “Jin Xinyue, since you have told me such a clandestine plan, if we don’t cooperate with you, I fear that we will never walk out of your ‘Moon Palace’ even if we get out of this chamber, right?”

Jin Xinyue smiled and said, “What do you think, Leader Tong!”

Leader Tong’s eyes were twitching violently, and he gnashed his teeth. “Jin Xinyue, don’t you dare!”

“With everything coming to this point, is there anything that I dare not do?” Jin Xinyue laughed miserably, sorrowfully, and crazily. She picked up the cup of ‘Red Guts Dragon Blood Wine’ floating in midair that belonged to her and put it next to her lips. She paused for a moment to smell the intense stink of blood before she raised her neck and drank the entire cup of wine.

She did not wipe the crimson wine that was dripping from the corner of her mouth at all but simply allowed it to sprinkle on her black suit and even her thigh that was enshrouded in the black silk stockings.

The gallbladder of the demon beast soaked in the wine was directly devoured by her, too, who chewed it slowly and carefully to squeeze more juice out of it.

The wine was as red as blood, and her skin was as fair as jade. They were a shocking contrast.

“In the past hundred years, my sole dream was to become ‘Speaker of the Federation’. Leaders, you of all people should know how much I have paid for the dream and how many painful and dangerous things I have done.”

Jin Xinyue swallowed the gallbladder that she had chewed up. Then she chuckled. “But after only half a month, my dream has been entirely shattered… I am universally condemned, and I will never rise again!

“Even if Ding Lingdang and the rest of them do not send me to prison because of the support of so many demons behind me, for someone like me, the feeling of losing power forever is a hundred times more insufferable than being imprisoned!

“Hehe. With that in mind, what makes you think that I dare not do this, Leader Tong? We have cooperated for a hundred years. Do you not know what kind of person I am? Do I impress you as someone who will just accept what fate has to offer?

“Alright. Enough of the nonsense. I’m going to ask you one last time, Leader Tong, Leader Pang and Leader Zhao. Are you going to drink my wine or not?

“Whoever drinks the wine today will be my life-and-death brethren. We are going to team up and negotiate with the Black Wind Fleet. I believe that we can get a good price for your disciples and family members!

“If you would rather not, the door is right over there. Be on your way and let’s die together!”

Jin Xinyue finally wiped her lips with the back of her hand, but the crimson leftover of the wine was smeared even wider, as if she had just devoured a beast alive.

She smashed the skull cup to the floor hard, breaking it into pieces. Then, she bulged her eyes and glowered at the three big shots!

For a moment, the countless demon kings, demon emperors, and even demon gods of the Blood Demon Sector from the past thousand years seemed to appear behind Jin Xinyue.

Her aura was truly overwhelming!

Under her scorching eyes and her irrefutable persuasion, the big shots were all shaking before they made up their minds again soon.

Leader Pang, the mountain of meat, was the first to reach for the cup.

Leader Zhao, however, was the first to pour the wine into his mouth.

But after he drank the spicy wine, he discovered that Leader Tong, who seemed to be the most ‘unwavering’ one of them all, had already turned the cup upside down to show that he had finished the wine.

“Haha. Hahahahahahaha!” Her hair in a mess, Jin Xinyue laughed crazily and opened her arms, shouting, “A smart bird knows which tree it should build its nest on. With the help of the three leaders here, our great cause will certainly be completed in no time!”

“Alright. We have finished the wine. Let’s get back to business!” Leader Tong wiped every last bit of the wine that was lingering on his lips. He regained his calmness and said, “If… if we are really going to do this thing, it will be much more complicated than shouting slogans. Have you communicated with the other side? What’s your specific plan? I think that you can tell us now, right?”

Jin Xinyue smiled mysteriously. “Of course. I’ll ask someone to introduce the real ‘Dim Moon Plan’ to you.”

She clapped her hands three times unhurriedly.

The three big shots all changed their face color. They were still a bit ill at ease and did not want other people to learn of their defection so early.

“Rest assured.” Observing their faces, Jin Xinyue smiled casually. “The few guys to come are the ‘liaisons’ that I carefully chose for you. I believe that you will definitely find them trustworthy.”

Before the three big shots could object, the door of the secret chamber opened.

The three faces that popped up from the darkness outside of the chamber, however, flabbergasted the three big shots inside!

“Father.”

“Master.”

“Senior Uncle!”

Three middle-aged men in their prime years walked in and bowed to the three big shots respectfully.

Their casual countenance was a vivid contrast to the astonishment on the three big shots’ faces.

Yes. Those appearing in front of them were the son and the true disciples of their respective family, whom they had always trusted and liked most. They were almost the pillars of their sects and families!

As it turned out, they had long been converted by Jin Xinyue.

The three big shots felt that their heads were dizzy, as if a hundred thousand volcanoes were erupting at the same time. There was no telling whether it was because of the shock or the attack of the wine.

“Jin Xinyue. You—you are so wicked!”

“You’ve wrong me again. Why has everyone been wronging me recently? Come here. You will explain to them what happened by yourselves.”

“F—Father, this is not what it looks like. President Jin did not sway us. It was—it was the spies of the Imperium of True Human Beings who persuaded us to serve the Imperium. We made a poor choice back then and got caught by President Jin.”

“Yes, master. At that time, we were all frustrated and thought that we were going to die in disgrace, but President Jin was lenient enough to spare us and help us to cover it up. Otherwise, we would’ve been sentenced to prison!”

“Senior Uncle, you must listen to our explanation. President Jin was truly loyal to the federation at that time. She let us go because she wanted to know more inside information about the expedition army. So, she gave us an opportunity of repentance. We were asked to keep in touch with the spies of the Imperium, partly to gather intelligence and partly to give false information to them to mislead the Black Wind Fleet.

“Just like that, President Jin gradually reached out to the Black Wind Fleet through us.

“We didn’t know that such things would happen. President Jin is such a great hero, and yet she has been betrayed by the federation! Even we believe that she deserves better! If the federation is so ungrateful and shortsighted, we might as well rise up for real!”

“The Black Wind Fleet has long discovered the coordinates of the federation, but it is difficult for the main troops to jump over instantly without star beacons,” Jin Xinyue said. “Therefore, some spies were sent first to convert important figures.

“People like you and me were too eye-catching to be their primary targets. As for your sons and disciples, they were certainly the best ‘prey’.

“Why were they bewildered by the Imperium? Hehe. The competition between the federation and the Imperium is like hitting a rock with an egg. Faced with the overwhelming pressure, it is only normal to be bewildered, and it is actually abnormal to stay awake, isn’t it?

“Besides, everybody has weaknesses, even including the pillars and the heirs of the major families and sects.

“For example, they may happen to be found in the bed of the mistress of an elder in their sect, or they may have stolen the precious resources in the treasury to break into a higher level.

“If the spies of the Imperium learn the information, can those people not follow their instructions?

“As for me, I happen to be the president of the Dim Moon Fun. It is my responsibility to capture the spies of the Imperium. Isn’t it perfectly normal that I traced back to the filthy and smelly matters?

“However, forget it. Just let bygones be bygones. I believe that you must’ve done a lot of similar things when you were young, leaders. So, why don’t you keep an open mind for the juniors?

“Come on. Let’s look forward. A future of infinite brightness awaits us, your sects, your families, and all your offspring!”

The brilliance in Jin Xinyue’s eyes became more and more intense. Her lips curved into a charming but wicked smile. Straightening her arm and clenching her fist, she made the gesture of the highest courtesy of the Imperium of True

Human Beings. “Do you want to give it a try? You will know that it is not difficult at all after you do.”

“Long live the Immortal Cultivators! Long live the true path of immortality! Long live the Imperium of True Human Beings!

Chapter 1693 - One Life for One Life!

An hour later, after seeing off the three leaders who were concocting their own plans, Jin Xinyue reached an underground base that was even larger three kilometers away through another secret short-distance teleportation array.

Geologically speaking, it was right below the museum of demon miners at the center of the small city.

The decorations of the place seemed to imply that it was an underground museum, too.

On the dark embossments around, the pictures of countless bizarre-looking demon miners who were working hard in the deep, murky mines had been carved.

Some of them were even scenes where the demon miners were struggling to survive collapsed mines, explosions of crystals, or raging floods.

Right ahead of Jin Xinyue was a light beam that was flowing slowly. On the light beam, the names of the demon miners who had been killed in accidents in the mines in the past hundred years were displayed in the smallest font.

A girl in white was standing below the list of the victims quietly, like a priestess of the shrine of demons.

She was truly ‘white’. Not only the feather clothes on her body were white and unsullied by dust, her skin exposed to the air and even her long hair that was running like a river were also the purest white. Even her eyeballs were translucent, so clear that one could see the deepest part of her heart.

Jin Xinyue picked up three sticks of incense from the girl.

The brutality and insanity that she had acted when she was dealing with the three leaders in the secret chamber just now had entirely vanished.

Wholeheartedly and solemnly, she bowed three times to the deceased miners before she stabbed the incense sticks into the tiny burner below the light beam. She also did not forget to straighten the incense sticks nearby that had tipped because they were half burnt. She did not flinch at all when the burning ash fell to her hands.

After doing that, she stood straight again. Looking at the list of the deceased miners that seemed to be rolling incessantly, she suddenly asked, “Xue’er, do you feel that your master is immoral?”

“No. I understand that everything master has done is meant to eradicate all the uncertainties for the federation in advance, in case greater troubles arise within the country when the war reaches the fiercest moment. You are doing the right thing, master, but…”

The girl in white named ‘Xue’er’ paused for a moment and said, “Isn’t it too cruel? After all, so many people are involved. Some of them might not betray the federation and surrender to the Imperium without us.”

“Do you think that it is cruel, too?” Jin Xinyue scratched her long hair, somewhat in exhaustion. Xue’er, the girl in white who was her true disciple, walked behind her and helped her comb her hair.

“It’s been so many years since the explosion in the Jade Dust Mines. Xue’er, I remember that both your parents were killed in the catastrophe, weren’t they?”

Narrowing her eyes, Jin Xinyue simply allowed her disciple’s hands to press her temples, enjoying the rare pleasure between plots and schemes. She said, “For the outside world, and even to the owners of the mines, namely the big sects behind the mining corporations, we claimed that it was a ‘terror attack’ and pushed all the responsibility onto ‘Lu Qingchen’ and the nonexistent ‘CFIA’. But of course, you know that it was not a prearranged terror attack at all but merely an accident.

“But was the accident really an ‘accident’? The explosion in the Jade Dust Mines, and the so many other accidents that happened in the mining bases on the major resource planets in the past hundred years, were there no ‘humane factors’ behind them at all? Were they all destined and unavoidable?

“No. Hehe. That’s not the case at all!

“A lot of accidents could have been avoided, if some resources were devoted to upgrading the facilities and the education and protection of the minders, and if a relatively reasonable goal was set to make sure that both miners and the mining magical equipment rested and were checked enough!

“But a hundred years ago, most of the mining corporations in the Star Glory Federation were controlled by the major sects that had existed for hundreds of years. Those greedy guys tried their best to exploit the last bit of strength in the bones of the demon miners in order to get more profits. All they were interested in was expanding the territory of their resource empire and collecting most resources in the shortest amount of them. They never gave any thought to controlling the accident rate or the death rate of the miners!

“After all, it was demon miners who were toiling on the resource planets back then. The federation would be steadier if more disobedient and bizarre-looking monsters died. That was what the renowned sects and families that controlled the mining corporations thought.

“It is the Cultivators’ responsibility to protect ordinary people. Even if they had really believed in that hollow declaration, how was it possible to ask those voracious guys to treat demons as ‘ordinary people’?

“The federation at that time was like the ‘Uranian Ring Sector’ thirty years ago, with humans being the ‘Heavenly Light’ and demons being the ‘Earthly Fiend’. We appeared to be in the same country, but invisible prejudice was ubiquitous.

“To finish my father’s Red Tide Plan, and to make the demons fully integrate into the federation, I went through quite troubled times!

“At that time, my father had accepted his sentence. As an experiment subject of the ‘human hibernation project’, he was completely frozen. The hope of unfreezing and reviving him was very slim.

“My master, and your grand-master, went to explore outer space. There wasn’t any word from him for a long time. He wouldn’t be returning in the next few decades, if he returned at all.

“Without the protection of father and master, I was merely a Core Formation Stage Cultivator transformed from a demon king. But I was holding such a delicious cake that was the Blood Demon Sector. What choice did I have except to lower my head faced with the extortion and exploitation of the renowned sects?

“They asked me to ship a great number of demons for mining in the extremely harsh resource planets that were yet to be developed. It was obvious that a lot of people would die, but I accepted it.

“They offered us the most ragged and outdated mining facilities, but they demanded an outrageously high quota. I accepted it.

“There was absolutely nothing on the resource planets other than crystals. Food had to be delivered from the outside world. The miners had to feed on the crudest recycled food, and the fresh food was pegged at a price a hundred times higher than it should have been. It was pure blackmail, but I accepted it.

“Under such high-intensity work and such crazy expansion, accidents were bound to occur, but after every accident, they hesitated and reduced the compensation time and time again. In order not to affect the reputation of their sect and their status in the financial market, they even kept a lot of accidents to themselves. But I… I gritted my teeth and accepted it again!

“Because I know that if I hadn’t accepted it, the renowned sects that controlled most of the seats in parliament and the entire news industry could’ve absolutely found more flaws in the demon race and significantly delayed the demons’ total integration into the federation. New changes might’ve happened, too.

“Even I could’ve been killed by them if I hadn’t acted so ‘mild and docile’ and replaced by a puppet that was easier to be manipulated.

“Hehe. They thought that I did not know their assassination plans and the list of puppets they chose from the demon race? I knew everything!

“However, neither my father nor my master were not present. What could I do except accept everything in silence?”

Sensing her master’s sadness, Xue’er pressed harder and carefully said, “We all know that it is not easy to run the demon race. You’ve been troubled in the past hundred years, master.”

Jin Xinyue smiled and went on. “I can accept it, but I will not forget it! With a hundred years of endurance, I passed the ‘Bill of Rights for General Equality’, which brought the equality that demons have today, the in-depth infiltration in parliament and the news industry, and the Ministry of Equality and Development, the Dim Moon Fund, and the Big Bai Fleet. Most importantly of all, I more or less earned the trust of the renowned sects and made them believe that I was really just a puppet. An ambitious one that had a strong lust for power, at best!

“Therefore, hehe, it is time we settle the scores right now!

“Nobody can bully my people like that without paying the price! The CFIA does not exist. Lu Qingchen need not answer for so many accidents in the mines, either. Those who should really be responsible for the crimes are the wretched mining corporations, the resource giants, and the renowned sects behind them that have dominated the federation for hundreds of years!

“This time, I have carefully selected seventeen huge sects as the focus of our strike in the plan. They were all deeply associated with the mining accidents in the past hundred years that shouldn’t have happened in the first place and were not taken care of properly after they did, causing tragedies for countless demons. I know exactly who owes us debts. No innocent people will be involved.

“Those fat and greedy sects should’ve seen today coming during the past hundred years when they sucked the blood of the demon race hard.

“I am not a rigorous person. Those renowned sects need only pay one life for one life. Today, exactly the same number of people in their sects will be killed as the number of our victims who were killed in the accidents that shouldn’t have happened. It is very fair, isn’t it?”

“Yes.” Xue’er emboldened herself and said, “But it does not appear to be the fairness of the Cultivators.”

“I am not a Cultivator in the first place. The whole world knows that I am a demon. The most charming and deceptive demon.” Jin Xinyue smiled casually. “Besides, I am not doing this entirely for vengeance. What you said just now does make sense. Compared to the ordinary people and the Cultivators at the bottom level, those huge, unremovable, and rotting sects are the greatest uncertainties in the war to come.

“The ordinary people and the Cultivators at the bottom level can only count on their country, the Star Glory Federation.

Their country is their everything. Even if they want to ‘lead the way’ for the Imperium, they will not be qualified to do so.

“However, to the renowned sects that have existed for hundreds of years, ‘country’ does not matter at all. Their sects and families mean the world to them.

“To protect themselves, and for their own survival, they have both the ability and the motive to betray the Star Glory Federation for greater benefits!”

Chapter 1694 - After a Century, Obliteration, Rebirth, Immortality!

Xue’er was silent for a moment. Then, she went on to massage her master’s shoulders, neither too heavily nor too lightly. She remarked, “Your words do make sense, master. In the competitions of wisdom and bravery with the spies of the Black Wind Fleet, most of the people that are converted by the Imperium and get caught by us later come from the noble families that have been glorious for hundreds of years.

“I don’t know what has gotten into those people. They can shout the slogan of the Cultivators louder than anybody else, and they are doing righteous and high-sounding things on the surface. But when it comes to filthy business, they do not hesitate at all as long as there are enough benefits!”

“Of course.” Jin Xinyue smiled casually and said, “The noble families are the least dependable forces. It is the truth that has been well-tested in countless changes of dynasties in the history of our civilization!

“The ordinary people and the low-level Cultivators won’t even find an opportunity to join the Imperium even if they want to. So, we can say that they are ‘incapable of betrayal’.

“But Masteress Ding Lingdang’s Patriots Front, the Glorious Sunlight Group left behind by my master, or the Double Dragons Union in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, they are all new forces that have risen together with the birth and development of the New Federation. Their interests and the interests of the New Federation are bound together tightly. Naturally, they will fight for the federation without reserve.

“The deeply-rooted noble families that existed in the age of the ‘Old Federation’ are not necessarily so. They are all quite independent, and they have formed their own social circles that are not open to the outsiders, making them ‘cancer’ that is living on the body of the federation. Furthermore, due to the problems accumulated in the past hundreds of years, they are gradually rotting and failing to catch up with the development of the era. Under the blast of the new powers such as the Glorious Sunlight Group, the Double Dragons Union, and the Patriots Front, they are now shaking unsteadily and can already see their doom. Therefore, they have strong motives to reverse the losing trend that they are mired in right now. In such a case, if the war pressure that the Imperium imposes on us is too heavy during the confrontation between the federation and the Imperium, isn’t it obvious who will defect to the Imperium first?

“Those who are too old should die. It is true for people, sects, or groups. The traditional conglomerates are too old right now to catch up with the development of the New Federation. It is time that they died and spared some room for new sects, new experts, and new groups!

“If they are too reluctant to die, they will be nothing more than thieves trying to steal other people’s time for themselves! Look at what they did in secret in the past hundred years. I don’t believe that they are real Cultivators who will swear to protect the federation with their life! What happened today is just further proof of my judgement.

“Therefore…”

Jin Xinyue held Xue’er’s hands and turned back to look at her disciple. “There are bound to be dark corners that sunlight cannot reach after a country develops for too long, and a lot of vermin and other filthy things will ferment in such corners. Right now, let’s take away all the darkness and filth with our efforts and leave a clean New Federation behind!

“The demons will rise again in the renewed federation filled with absolute brightness!”

When she mentioned ‘demons will rise’, sparks were bursting out of the pure and clear eyes of the demon girl ‘Xue’er’ despite her calmness so far.

A hundred years. It had been a hundred years!

According to the deduction of Jin Tuyi, the greatest strategist of the demon race a hundred years ago, this was the time that the Red Tide Plan would conclude and the demon race be reborn and rise again!

Xue’er was breathing fast. Her fair face that seemed to have been the result of staying underground for too long flushed with excitement.

Jin Xinyue read the voices in her disciple’s heart. She smiled confidently.

An hour ago, she had echoed with the three leaders in a different chamber, shouting the slogans of the Immortal Cultivators at the same time.

However, both Jin Xinyue and the three leaders were well aware that none of them truly believed in the slogans from the bottom of their hearts.

‘Long live the Immortal Cultivators’ and ‘long live the Imperium of True Human Beings’ for them were nothing but a yawn, or a fart that could be traded for money.

However, when Jin Xinyue and Xue’er, two females of the demon race, chanted another slogan that had been sealed for a hundred years softly, the master and the disciple understood their destiny perfectly and were willing to carry it out with their life.

“Obliteration, rebirth, immortality!”

“Obliteration, rebirth, immortality!”

It was the slogan that a million demons had once roared together when Jin Tuyi led the coalition army of demons trying to lunge at the capital city of the Star Glory Federation through the Eye of Blood Demon more than a hundred years ago.

Today, despite all the assimilation policies, too many demons were still unable to entirely wipe away the slogan and the belief from the deepest part of their bones!

“Alright. Open the door.”

Jin Xinyue held her disciple’s arm and transmitted a stream of mild spiritual energy into her body, pacifying her blood that was almost boiling. Then, she smiled.

Xue’er bit her lips softly, not entirely freed from the anxiety and excitement a moment ago. She took two deep breaths and retreated, pressing the embossment of the underground museum gently.

The light beam that displayed the names of the victims immediately disappeared.

On the wall behind the light beam that seemed to be empty, bloody stripes were slowly popping up. Extending and interweaving, they constituted a brand-new teleportation array.

It was a third secret teleportation array that led to a third underground base.

All the chambers led to tunnels or entrances to the outside world. They were only connected to each other via teleportation arrays. Also, most of the teleportation arrays were point-to-point and one-way.

It meant that if someone wanted to reach the real core secret chamber, they would have to find the first secret chamber, locate all the teleportation arrays in it, and decrypt the activation code and the coordinates of the destination, before they jumped to the second chamber and repeated what they had done in the first chamber. Only in such a way would they be able to reach their final destination.

Jin Xinyue had enough reasons to be so cautious about the personnel and facilities in the core secret chamber.

Shua!

Consumed by the red brilliance, she vanished in the underground museum and appeared at the top of a row of stairs that extended downward.

The narrow stairs were barely enough for any heavy war machines to pass, but a huge dent was appearing every now and then on the two sides of the stairs. Inside every dent, a warrior of the demon race was sitting on alert.

In the plaza of the Ministry of Equality and Development in the downtown, the members of the Dim Moon Squad in the public office of the ‘Dim Moon Fund’ were already hideous and ferocious enough.

But the demon warriors there were ten times more hideous and ferocious than the members of the Dim Moon Squad!

“President!”

When Jin Xinyue walked down step by step, the ferocious demons all bowed to her respectfully, without disguising the admiration and reverence in their eyes at all.

At the end of the zigzagging stairs, a gate made of super alloys more than ten meters thick glided into the rocks soundlessly.

Behind the alloy gate, what appeared in front of Jin Xinyue’s eyes was an underground crystal processor and communication center.

The crystal processors there had integrated the features of the technology of spiritual energy and the biochemical technology. They appeared both like a super mainframe crystal processor had grown countless tumors and parasites, and the internal organs of a gigantic beast that had been stabbed with countless crystal processors and computational chips.

Dozens of specialists in crystal processors and biochemical brains were working busily in the middle of the crystal wires and synthesized nerves that were as thick as boas.

The whole significance of their secret work below ground day and night was to deceive and bypass the ‘grand-unified Spiritual Nexus’ of the federation, allowing Jin Xinyue to contact with a certain place beyond the federation in the depths of the universe through an absolutely clandestine route, and to perform a critical strike on the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus when it was necessary.

It was definitely not an easy task.

However, if the most professional specialists of crystal processors in the federation were invited there to dismantle all the crystal processors, they would be able to discover a lot of computational chips and analytical units that far exceeded the current technology of the federation.

They were all gifts from the Imperium.

The war had long begun.

It was time to decide the final outcome!

“Governor Jin, you’re here?”

A short, sticky-mouthed man who seemed rather plain greeted her. But his attitude toward Jin Xinyue was subtly different from the other people’s. He addressed Jin Xinyue in a quite weird way, too.

Jin Xinyue glanced at the short man and casually said, “All I want is to keep me alive and find a place for my people to survive. I am not even sure if you will burn the bridge immediately after you cross the river. Just save your ‘governor’ talk!”

The short man giggled even more charmingly than Jin Xinyue. His shoulder jiggled quickly as he said, “Governor Jin, rest assured. The Imperium always honors its promises. Our commander will not kill the goose that lays golden eggs, either!

“We have come from the center of the cosmos after a long journey. It is impossible for us to stay at the edge of the cosmos forever. March back to the center of the cosmos and reclaim our homeland and our pride. That is the ultimate goal of the Black Wind Fleet.

“What we desire are just elite soldiers and sufficient resources. Perhaps in-depth technological communication between each other, too. But nothing more.

“One day, when the Black Wind Fleet has rested enough and gathered the army to march back to the center of the cosmos, won’t we need someone most loyal and trustworthy to manage the seven Sectors here?

“As long as you remain as wise and loyal as today, Governor Jin, why would we bother to consider picking a second ‘proxy’ for us?

“By then, you will be responsible for providing the incessant Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, crystals, and manpower in the seven Sectors for us, and we will return to the center of the cosmos and take our everything back! We will be at the emperor’s court, and you will be at the frontier of the country. Our cooperation will do us both good. Why would we burn the bridge?

“Therefore, rest assured, Governor Jin. We never treat our friends unfairly!”

Jin Xinyue stared at the short man and said, “I hope so. Has the secret super remote communication route been established?”

“Yes.” The short man smiled. “It is ready to be activated anytime. With the crystal processor and network technology of the federation right now, it is absolutely impossible for the federation to intercept or perceive the signals.”

“That’s good.” Her hands behind her back, Jin Xinyue took a deep breath, and the subtlest redness beamed out of her eyes. “Let me speak to your commander directly!”

Chapter 1695 - The Fleet Behind the Brown Dwarf

Eighty lightyears away from the Uranian Ring Sector, the world at the outermost edge of the Star Glory Federation, deep inside an unknown space zone, there was a brown dwarf.

The universe was a boundless place with countless stars. If someone drew a sphere with a radius of a hundred lightyears centered at the seven Sectors of the Star Glory Federation, more than five thousand galaxies would be included in the seven spheres. But most of them were desolate worlds devoid of spiritual energy or life.

Although the Star Glory Federation had been launching unmanned mini exploration starships and highly-sensitive space torpedoes to the desolate worlds every day, every month, and every year for the past century, trying to establish a solid defense line or at least a ‘border’ within two hundred lightyears from itself, there was still a very long way to go before it filled up all five thousand desolate worlds.

A lot of dark space zones that were yet to be detected or monitored by the federation still existed around the five thousand stars. The so-called ‘border’ was purely an unsubstantial concept and a psychological comfort.

Stars, in the meantime, were at least celestial bodies that were large enough for the Star Prier’s House, the largest space surveillance state of the federation on Spider Den, to monitor and keep track of.

But the brown dwarf was one level lower than the star.

The brown dwarf was a type of gaseous celestial body that had elements similar to a star but did not have enough mass to ignite a fusion reaction at the core. Its mass ranged between the smallest star and the largest planet. Therefore, it was quite dim and was often known as a failed star.

Because their mass was not large enough for them to become burning stars, it was difficult for them to release spiritual waves that could be sensed by the Star Prier’s House or any other space surveillance station in the federation.

By the analysis of the astrologists of the federation, it was likely that more than three thousand brown dwarfs existed within a hundred lightyears from the few Sectors of the federation. But the federation had only discovered and named fewer than five hundred of them.

There were still two thousand and five hundred brown dwarfs that were swirling and drifting in the cold, dark, unknown space zones like invisible eyeballs.

Although those brown dwarfs could barely be detected and explored by the federation a hundred lightyears away, some of them were still able to emanate quite a high temperature when the distance was close enough.

The temperature could be transformed into feeble energy that would supply a fleet that had just arrived after an exhausting journey to take a brief rest without being violent enough to affect the magical equipment units in the fleet that were highly worn out from the journey of a hundred years. Also, it could slightly cover up the spiritual waves that the fleet released itself when it was resting, repairing, and establishing a large-scale array of star beacons.

Even if the space surveillance stations of the federation detected anything, the fleet would only be mistaken for part of the brown dwarf.

The Black Wind Fleet had stayed in the orbit of the brown dwarf for seven years.

A space expedition could never be accomplished overnight. A hundred years ago when the Black Wind Fleet set off, the greatest enemy it faced was the unknown universe and time itself.

At that time, what they had was merely a small part of incomplete coordinates of the Flying Star Sector. If they had jumped based on the incomplete coordinates, there was a 99.99% probability that they would have ended up in an unvisited desolate world that was not marked on the star map and did not carry any distinctive astronomical features. It would be no different from being mired in a cosmic storm. Jumping out would be highly difficult without a major consumption of resources. Even if they did jump out again, it was still possible that they would find themselves in a second wretched, bleak world.

As it happened, the Imperium of True Human Beings’ expansion had never extended in the direction where the Flying Star Sector was in the past thousand years.

Therefore, the Black Wind Fleet, unwilling to be swallowed by other worlds after suffering the crushing defeat and losing their home, accepted the glorious but arduous task of expanding the territory and consolidating the rear for the Imperium, with whatever soldiers it had left.

Their mission was not just to explore and conquer the Flying Star Sector but also to search all the unknown space zones between the homeland at the center of the cosmos and the

Flying Star Sector, especially the Sectors recorded in the historical archives and the ancient star maps, for ‘prey’ that the Imperium might take advantage of.

Therefore, the Black Wind Fleet was not in a hurry to jump to the Flying Star Sector through one super long-distance space jump with the coordinates that the star child had sent out.

Considering the complexity of the space jump and the possible cost of spiritual energy—if the distance of a space jump was doubled, the spiritual energy and resources to be consumed would be squared—it was also absolutely not an option for the Black Wind Fleet to perform a super long-distance jump recklessly when it clearly would not get any supplies or reinforcements from the base.

What they chose was a tactic known as ‘stellar frog jump’. The distance of their every space jump was no more than a hundred light years and usually between ten to fifty. After every jump, they would search for a suitable star and search for habitable planets and civilizations of mankind near the star while they projected special ‘star bombs’ toward the particular star.

With the technology of the Imperium of True Human Beings, it was barely possible to destroy a star, but the purpose of the ‘star bombs’ was not destruction but to activate special zones on the star to provide spiritual energy for their next jump.

After they were done exploring the star’s surroundings, all the parameters and coordinates were recorded in the star map, and large-scale star beacons were established on the stable planets in the local galaxy. This meant that other fleets would be able to travel between such space zones and the homeland of the Imperium conveniently. Therefore, it was a sign that the space zones had been included in the territory of the Imperium.

Usually, they had also gathered enough energy during the process by then. So, they would perform the next ‘stellar frog jump’ and repeat what they did last time.

Therefore, during the past hundred years, they had halted every now and then to explore, record, and construct. It was not until ten years ago that they finally reached the edge of the cosmos.

The Black Wind Fleet had been quite unlucky in the past century.

They did not find too many habitable planets that were of enough value to be developed.

Even the worlds of human beings that had once boasted prosperous civilizations according to the historical files and ancient maps left by the Star Ocean Imperium often turned out to be collapsed and drained after the Black Wind Fleet found them through grueling efforts at the cost of tremendous resources. The so-called civilizations had nothing but dilapidated buildings left in them. Even if some uncivilized barbarians were still drawing their last breath in the desolate worlds where spiritual energy had run dry, they could not make up for the resources that the Black Wind Fleet had consumed in search for them at all.

Resources were the most valuable things in the sea of stars, while civilizations were the most fragile things in the cold, cruel universe!

After being greatly disappointed several times in a row, the Black Wind Fleet had found themselves in a terribly awkward situation.

Yes. At first glance, they had ‘expanded’ the territory of the Imperium, but most of the new territory was worthless, desolate worlds of the lowest rating.

In the sea of stars, the most useless thing was ‘territory’. When one raised their head and looked at the starry sky, there seemed to be boundless territory that, theoretically speaking, boasted tremendous resources and was therefore of a higher value. For the worlds that had never been inhabited by intelligent creatures since they came into being, as long as someone raised a flag, sang a national anthem, and built a star beacon nearby, they would be able to announce that the planet was part of the Imperium’s territory.

But such ‘territory’ was utterly meaningless. However valuable it was ‘theoretically’, it would only be so if the Imperium was capable of developing it on a large scale at an acceptable cost!

If a world claimed to boast ten thousand points of resources, but it would consume twenty thousand points of resources to collect, purify, and transport the resources after the Imperium decided to develop it, would such a world be of any use at all?

It was not counting the construction and maintenance of the star beacons, and the management cost and the cost of the defense of the supply lies that the Imperium would need to pay in order to govern this world. The swift and unpredictable fleets of the Covenant Alliance were definitely not easy to deal with!

Unfortunately, the Black Wind Fleet had not even found a lot of such worlds in the past hundred years.

The space zones that they had discovered, according to themselves, theoretically boasted ten thousand points of resources if a deep prospection was conducted, but the cost of the prospection would be five thousand points of resources, and the cost of the follow-up development would probably be another ten thousand to a hundred thousand points of resources.

Such worlds could barely earn any contribution points for the Black Wind Fleet.

Without contribution points, and having lost their own home, it meant that the Black Wind Fleet could not receive more supplies and brand-new warships from the other Sectors in the Imperium. It also meant that their only outcomes if they returned in frustration just like that would be either getting devoured by somebody else or being sent to the most dangerous frontline to fight the Covenant Alliance until they were all killed.

Naturally, the Black Wind people were unwilling to pick either option.

They went deeper into space and took their chances!

Right then, they received the message that a claw fleet had been wiped out. They also learned that a regional superpower existed at the edge of the cosmos. They even located the government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic, the last ‘mobile territory’, which had been lost for a thousand years.

The misfortune that had haunted the fleet for a hundred years finally dispersed. But still, there were as many opportunities as challenges.

The good news was that the prey was heavy enough. As long as they swallowed the beast named the Star Glory Federation, the Black Wind Fleet's capabilities would be tripled at least. Even if they returned to the center of the cosmos immediately, it would be powerful enough to negotiate with the emperor, the local warlords, and everybody else.

The bad news was that the prey seemed a bit too heavy. What lay inside the behemothic body of the prey was not just fat but also strong muscles, tough bones, and sharp claws.

The Black Wind Fleet, caught in a dilemma, was faced with two options right now.

They could unfold a large array of star beacons and establish a splendid space gate right there to report the intelligence to the greedy emperor and warlords in the homeland of the Imperium dutifully and summon reinforcements from there.

Of course, establishing a space gate, activating it, and maintaining it at a high efficiency would further consume the war resources that the Black Wind Fleet had left and weaken their combat ability, putting them in a passive position in the game to cut the prey later.

Or…

The Black Wind Fleet could do it by themselves! They could swallow the federation on their own and devour all the benefits!

Chapter 1696 - Heiye Ming’s Decision!

Although the Black Wind people were best known for their disobedience and ruthlessness in the Imperium, their leader and commander, who had led the defeated soldiers of five Sectors to sail for a hundred years and kept the unity and steadiness of the fleet even though nothing had been found, was certainly not a reckless man.

Heiye Ming, Heiye Lan’s father and the Black Wind Fleet’s commander, definitely would not make a rash decision when the situation of the enemy was unclear.

After he learned the truth about his ‘prey’, knowing that he was faced with not a single Sector as they had thought when they set sail a hundred years ago, but a country seven times larger with seven highly-developed worlds, as well as Firefly, which belonged to the government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic and Kunlun, a star fortress during the primeval wars, he was even more reluctant to make a move without more information.

Leading the Black Wind Fleet, Heiye Ming anchored near the brown dwarf that he had carefully chosen. He began to repair the wear and tear caused during the journey in the past hundred years. The experts in the hibernation state were woken up one after another, too. The enormous fleet was gradually unfolded from the ‘cruise state’ to the ‘war-preparation state’. Star beacons and spiritual towers were established to receive messages from the homeland of the Imperium. A lot of spies were also sent to sneak into the federation in super-tiny single stealth shuttles to collect the latest intelligence, corrupt the leadership, and find and make openings!

Should he assault the Star Glory Federation with his own strength, or should he stand by and ask for reinforcements so that he could finish the enemy with a more overwhelming army?

It depended on his infiltration in the federation and whether or not he could find an opportunity to defeat the enemy quickly. But it also depended on the situation in the homeland of the Imperium.

The Black Wind Fleet had left the homeland of the Imperium a hundred years prior. To some extent, it was sort of a ‘forgotten army’.

They had set up star beacons and spiritual towers every time they arrived at a new space zone, creating a communication route that linked the homeland of the Imperium. But there was too much interference in space after all. The further away they were from the homeland of the Imperium, the more likely their communication routes would be jammed or even torn apart by cosmic storms, and the more time and resources it would consume during every communication.

For the Black Wind Fleet, which was short of supplies and resources, to maintain real-time communication with the homeland for a long time was not an easy task at all.

Besides, the messages sent from the homeland and the capital city were the messages that the emperor, nobles, and warlords wanted him to know. They must have been highly embroidered, if not entirely fabricated, and far from the truth.

The Black Wind Fleet had been a powerful force in the Imperium for hundreds of years. Naturally, they had a news network that was absolutely dependable and solely belonged to them, but the real intelligence transmitted through such a network could barely be delivered in real time.

Considering all the factors, after reaching the edge of the cosmos through a prolonged journey of a hundred years, for the Black Wind Fleet and their commander Heiye Ming, the so-called Imperium of True Human Beings had been completely enshrouded in the mysterious mists, making it hard to figure out the truth in it. It was even more enigmatic and unpredictable than the strange ‘federation’ in front of their eyes.

Personally speaking, Heiye Ming did not want to summon new reinforcements, preferring to solve the problem on his own.

It was a matter of honor and capabilities. The prey was just a bunch of barbarians at the desolate edge of the cosmos, and they were the elite force from the center of the cosmos, an invincible army!

If they were forced to summon reinforcements, would it not be a great humiliation for the Black Wing Fleet? Who on earth would believe in their power, notoriety, and threat in the future?

In the Imperium, it was a terribly dangerous thing to lose the ability to threaten.

Furthermore, the prey was so fat and appealing. The warships and wharfs in the Flying Star Sector and the Uranian Ring Sector, the abundant labor force in the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector where so many experts could be absorbed into the Black Wind Fleet as warriors for the Imperium, and Kunlun and Firefly. They were enough to boost the Black Wind Fleet into one of the top-tier forces in the Imperium!

Heiye Ming was highly reluctant to share such fat, delicious prey with somebody else.

Once the message was sent, it would be beyond his control as to exactly whether or not any reinforcements would come and how many of them would come if they did.

It would be quite awkward if the war at the frontline was too intense and the Imperium could not spare any reinforcements for them. But if he described the prey as too valuable, ten or more reinforcing armies might be sent from the homeland of the Imperium. Those armies would not be exhausted by a journey of a hundred years at all. They would be healthy, strong, well-trained, and full of supplies. After they jumped over, would there be anything left for the Black Wind Fleet at all? It would be an awkward situation.

Such concerns were of the same logic as Su Changfa and the other ‘pioneers’ of the Immortal Cultivators who discovered the high value of Kunlun a hundred years ago but were unwilling to summon Heiye Ming and the rest of the Black Wind Fleet.

However, as the commander of the Black Wind Fleet, Heiye Ming was more rational and paid more attention to the big picture than Su Changfa at that time.

If the mission was too difficult, he would not be too stubborn and place the entire Black Wind Fleet in peril.

After the spiritual towers and the first batch of star beacons were established, Heiye Ming did not activate the star beacons recklessly or report the real situation here to the homeland.

He kept the existence of the ‘Star Glory Federation’ to himself but simply reported to the homeland that no major discoveries had been found despite the long cruise at the edge of the universe and that the strategic resources on-board were running dry.

Now that they were about to arrive at the periphery of the range of the civilization of mankind expanded by the Star Ocean Imperium in the past, he asked the homeland if the expedition could be concluded and the desolate worlds that they had found before could be considered their final accomplishments and traded into contribution points so that they could return to the homeland.

But in secret, he demanded the intelligence network in the homeland that was loyal to the Black Wind Fleet to send the analysis of the latest developments in the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance at any cost.

The situation at the center of the cosmos was quite bad.

It was not because the Imperium of True Human Beings had suffered losses in the war. On the contrary, the Imperium had been fighting too smoothly and unstoppably in the past hundred years. Quite a few epic victories had been secured.

When there were victories, there would be new heroes, and the new heroes could possibly lead new forces to rise or revive the previously declining old forces. All in all, the balance among the previous forces and warlords would be shaken.

It was exactly the case right now. In the hundred-year war, a small family that had long declined and had not been heard about for almost two hundred years rose again and became one of the influential forces in the capital city.

What was bad was that the decline of the ‘long-declined’ small family had a lot to do with the Black Wind people. A lot of experts of the family had been killed by the Black Wind people.

Right now, the Black Wind Fleet had been banished to the edge of the cosmos, yet their old nemesis was prospering in the capital city securing one victory after another. Even the emperor had shown fondness for them. Was it not terrible for the Black Wind Fleet?

According to the intelligence on the surface, because of the smoothness of the war on the Imperium’s side in the past hundred years, the Imperium was planning an unprecedented strategic counterattack, hoping to change their role from the defender to the attacker. The elite forces of dozens of core worlds had been mobilized. Even if it might not be a ‘life-and-death’ battle with the Covenant Alliance, the Imperium was determined to completely reverse its losing trend in the past three hundred years with the next campaign!

At such a critical moment, how could the Imperium spare more forces to help the Black Wind Fleet fight a bunch of ‘barbarians’? Would it not be too absurd?

Then, his own intelligence network delivered messages in secret. The main focus of the strategic counterattack was probably going to be the worlds lost a hundred years ago including the Black Wind Sector. His Majesty seemed determined to recover the Black Wind Sector in the battle!

Things became awkward.

It was likely that the Imperium would perform a strategic counterattack and recover the Black Wind Sector, but the Black Wind Fleet was not involved in any of that.

The Black Wind Fleet had made zero contributions after wandering for a hundred years outside. By then, not only would be impossible for them to brazen themselves to ask for their hometown from His Majesty, they even risked being swallowed by the new forces that had earned countless military credits while they were away!

The Black Wind Fleet had been pushed to desperation. This was truly a moment of life and death.

At this moment, if they had reported the truth of the ‘Star Glory Federation’ dutifully to the homeland, the capital city would certainly ask them to stand by and keep the federation locked onto. Or, they would be asked to wage a war of attrition that would drain the strength of both the federation and themselves.

Then, after the Imperium completed the strategic counterattack and digested the Black Wind Sector and the other lost worlds, the so-called ‘reinforcements’ led by the Black Wind people’s old nemesis might be sent to reap the dying federation. There was no doubt that the Black Wind Fleet, which would be dying, would also be reaped mercilessly!

Heiye Ming had seen and done such things before!

He would not allow such a thing to happen. He would not allow the Black Wind Fleet to be a stepping stone for someone else!

The intelligence from the Imperium and that sent by the spies in the federation finally forced him to make up his mind.

He decided to do it on his own!

He was going to assault the Star Glory Federation with the Black Wind Fleet and the defeated soldiers of five Sectors, to swallow the remote country that had yet to rise and boasted infinite potential!

After the Star Glory Federation was swallowed, with the docks of the Uranian Ring Sector, cannon fodder of the Blood Demon Sector, warships of the Flying Star Sector, crystals of the Water Crystal Sector, and technology on Kunlun, combined with its own strength, the Black Wind Fleet would definitely be one of the toughest war monsters in the Imperium!

Only if he tamed such a ‘monster’ and took it back to the capital city would he have enough leverage to negotiate with the emperor, the warlords, and their old nemesis, and reclaim the Black Wind Sector and even other prosperous worlds at the center of the cosmos!

If they could not win the battle, the Black Wind Fleet would be doomed. They could only return to the Imperium in frustration. The proud name of ‘Black Wind’ would be gone forever!

Heiye Ming made the decision.

He would win the battle of survival for the Black Wind Fleet!

Chapter 1697 - Summon, Arrive!

From the moment Heiye Ming made the decision, the Black Wind Fleet, which was being unfolded unhurriedly in the most resource-saving way previously, accelerated the pace of the preparation for war.

The space jump itself was a repeated process of being torn apart and regrouped. It would deal a certain amount of damage to the starships. After a hundred years, the starships that had performed countless short-distance space jumps would be like a sheet of foil that had been contorted and restored over and over again. Even if nothing seemed wrong on the surface, tiny fractures were in fact everywhere inside them.

In the past few years, the Black Wind Fleet had been repairing the ‘fractures’ while it was anchored near the brown dwarf. But right now, in order to accelerate the progress of maintenance, they adopted a more radical approach. They simply declared some seriously damaged starships to be total-losses before they dismantled the fuel, plate armor, ammunitions, and magical equipment units on those starships that were still usable and installed them on other starship.

In such a way, they would get a renewed, aggressive fleet in the shortest time possible. The starships were like a series of black diamonds that floated in the orbit of the brown dwarf.

Such an attempt would greatly reduce their zone of activity and the potential of their development, but did it really matter?

Very soon, they would have everything!

Black Swirl, the flagship of the Black Wind Fleet, seemed like a mountain of crystals almost a hundred kilometers long that was made of tens of thousands of translucent black crystals. Elegance and brutality were perfectly melded on the starship. It was completely ‘awakened’, too, and had finished the highest preparation for war.

“Argh!”

Deep inside Black Swirl, the honeycomb-like hibernation cabins, illuminated by the cold brightness, appeared to be silent graves. The covers of the hibernation cabins were lifted one after another. Roars resembling ferocious beasts were echoing from the thick, dirty nutrition liquids.

The last batch of hungry, thirsty experts who had slept for decades woke up from their nightmares and were about to bring everything in their nightmares to the entire world.

Countless slave soldiers, who were ordinary people but also armed with strengthening drugs, artificial bodies, and intrusive armor, crawled up and down like agile ants, helping the Immortal Cultivators get up from the hibernation cabins and reach the common area. They also wiped and massaged the warriors who had just woken up and offered drugs and other Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures to make them recover from the hibernation state sooner.

“Hoo!”

The Immortal Cultivators who had hibernated for decades absorbed the recovery drugs that contained immense spiritual energy into their internal organs through intravenous injection and other ways. As they activated their arts in silence, their slightly withered bodies expanded again. The thick veins and nerves seemed to have turned from earthworms into boas and from boas into dragons that seemed to be breaking their magnificent bodies of flesh and blood and soaring into the sky!

Sensing the explosive strength running in their blood, the Immortal Cultivators roared, venting the lust for destruction that had been restrained for decades.

Boom!

Right then, an Immortal Cultivator who had just recovered suddenly lost control of his spiritual energy. After a casual punch, an ordinary slave soldier who was massaging him was blown away.

The ordinary person, or to quote the Immortal Cultivators, the ‘hominoid soldier’, flew a hundred meters away and smashed into the cabin wall. After cracking explosions, he collapsed like a pile of mud, with blood flowing out all over his body. He was obviously dead.

After a hibernation of decades, the recovery speeds of the soul, brain, nerves, and flesh were often different. It was not rare for one to lose control over their spiritual energy because of the discoordination of the body and the brain. The Immortal Cultivator did not intentionally kill the guy for pleasure.

The Immortal Cultivators were not perverts who had fun murdering. They were quite reasonable. For the experts of the Black Wind Fleet, the hominoid soldiers were like the most loyal, obedient, and helpful military dogs. Would a distinguished warrior kill a military dog just for fun?

Therefore, the Black Wind warrior, who had just accidentally killed a ‘military dog’, put on a regretful expression after a slight daze. He said in a low voice, “How can he be so weak? Blown up after only one punch? He’s too incautious!”

Waving his hand, he called another hominoid soldier. “Check the number of that guy and see if he has any family. Transfer 20,000 credit points from my account to them. Consider it compensation. Right. If he happens to have an adult family member, they will be allowed to join the next ‘Iron Blood Trial’. It’s a chance to upgrade his bloodline. Just say that I recommended him!”

Such a remedy was not very generous, but it was not harsh, either. It was basically how things were done there. Regardless of whether they treated the hominoids as military dogs or military assets, they certainly had to pay for them after they damaged the goods.

The body of the hominoid was soon dragged away. Even the blood stain was cleaned up in the blink of an eye.

From the beginning to the end, not a single Immortal Cultivator or a hominoid soldier ever slightly raised their head to show any concern for the tiny accident.

It was because they were all dwelling in excitement. All their brain cells were occupied by the same thing.

A war was coming!

…

On the bridge of Black Swirl, Heiye Ming observed everything through the ubiquitous surveillance light beams.

Not only did he pay attention to the recovery speed of the hibernating Immortal Cultivators, he also checked the filling speed and boost efficiency of the main power rune arrays, the maximum level of the spiritual shield and the twisting force field, and the stock of attack magical equipment and ammunition on the main-force warships.

Of course, most importantly of all, he was supervising the last testing and debugging of the space jump array, which would help them jump to eighty lightyears away instantly and launch an unexpected assault on the heartland of the Star Glory Federation.

Heiye Ming was 2.1 meters tall. He had been a famous general in the Black Wind Sector when he was young. His most glorious feat included charging into the core of a fleet of the Covenant Alliance on a ragged starship on his own and boarding the flagship of the enemy’s fleet, eventually helping his side crush the hostile fleet.

Right now, he was old, and his hair was gray. Interconnected scars were everywhere on his body. He had also been heavily wounded by the bombardment of the Covenant Alliance when he personally covered their retreat in the crushing defeat a hundred years ago, which severely affected the circulation of spiritual energy in his internal organs. Nevertheless, he was still one of the toughest men in the Black Wind Fleet. No one had dared violate his authority in the past hundred years.

He was the living embodiment of the Black Wind Sector. He was a block of black ice, a piece of dark iron, and an obsidian crystal that did not seem dangerous at all but actually boasted destructive power!

Had it not been for his arduous negotiations and compromises with the emperor and the warlords in the capital city a hundred years ago, the Black Wind Fleet would have been carved up. There would not have been a chance for them to make amends in the edge of the cosmos at all.

Right now, Heiye Ming sensed the spiritual waves behind him.

He moved his deep, indifferent eyes from the hundreds of ever-changing surveillance light beams and turned back, staring at the slightly twisted and mysterious shadow that was gradually popping up on the communication light beam.

“Jin Xinyue, we finally meet,” Heiye Ming said coldly. Even if someone analyzed the syllables with the most advanced magical equipment, it would be impossible for them to detect any of his emotions.

“General Ming.”

On the communication light beam, Jin Xinyue bowed to Heiye Ming neither arrogantly nor humbly.

In comparison, her emotions seemed much easier to be captured and analyzed. Excitement mixed with anxiety mixed with disobedience mixed with helplessness. A common emotion when the traitors of a higher level betrayed their old masters.

“We’ve been opponents for ten years,” Heiye Ming said casually. “I’d always been imagining what the ‘Dim Moon Queen’ who captured and killed so many of my elite warriors actually looked like. I even told myself that I would invite the lady to my flagship for a good chitchat after we conquer the

Star Glory Federation one day. I didn’t realize that my wish would come true so quickly.”

“That’s because the federation is too idiotic!” There was a smile on Jin Xinyue’s face, but the deepest discontent and hatred were beaming out of her eyes. “Had it not been for the greedy morons who were determined to push me into desperation, you would never have been able to break into the Star Glory Federation if it was under my supervision! Even if the federation was to be destroyed, we would drag the Black Wind Fleet to die with us! Even if we couldn’t, we would destroy all our resources. At least in the next thirty to fifty years, you would not get one ton of crystals from the mines in the federation!”

Heiye Ming was silent for a moment. Instead of arguing back, he simply said, “Thanks to the idiocy of the federation, we now have a chance to perform the ‘decapitation strategy’. Jin Xinyue, we don’t have much time. Do you need more guarantees from me?”

“No,” Jin Xinyue said. “Empty talk does not mean anything even if it is repeated a hundred times. With everything coming to this point, I can only wager on the chances that General Ming is both rational and ambitions enough to march back to the center of the cosmos instead of spending the rest of your life in the desolate world at the edge of the cosmos!

“Enough of the nonsense. I’m going to send over the last batch of defense plans, distribution of armies, and sailing maps of the Heaven’s Origin Sector to you so that you will know every corner of the Heaven’s Origin Sector as clearly as you know your own hand, General Ming!

“With the destructive power of the Black Wind Fleet, as long as you jump to the Heaven’s Origin Sector smoothly, it will be absolutely impossible for the local troops to resist!

“The only problem is the space jump.

“Regarding that, I have snuck a few ‘space gates’ into the Heaven’s Origin Sector on a large scale. Everything is under control!

“Also, right now, the wealthy, powerful, and deeply rooted traditional sects in the Heaven’s Origin Sector have been grasped by me and will cooperate with our plan!

“When the day comes, my men will attack the capital and the few space gates at the same time. We will control the space gates and send the coordinates to the Black Wind Fleet, summoning you to the Heaven’s Origin Sector and launch a critical strike on the capital city!

“All the space gates will be controlled by me. The shocking bombs that we will spray near the Heaven’s Origin Sector will affect the stability of the space and prevent the fleets of the other six Sectors from jumping to the Heaven’s Origin Sector. The heart and brain of the federation will be blocked!

“Even if the Burning Prairie Fleet can break in by force, I still have the Big Bai Fleet under my command. When the Black Wind Fleet secures victory on the ground, the Big Bai Fleet will certainly defect. The Burning Prairie Fleet does not stand any chance of winning if we join hands!

“After the capital world falls and the most powerful fleet of the federation is crushed, it means that we have taken down the Star Glory Federation with the minimal price and time cost!”

Chapter 1698 - The Hanging Man

Heiye Ming paced back and forth on the bridge of Black Swirl, which looked like a palace in the abyss. As if he did not hear Jin Xinyue’s prediction at all, he calmly replied, “My war experience in the past hundreds of years tells me that, if a plan can secure the greatest victory with the minimal price and shortest amount of time, then something terrible will probably happen to the plan later.”

Jin Xinyue smiled and made a ‘suit yourself’ gesture. “Indeed. This is a wild gamble. Whether or not you would like to take the chances depends on your wisdom.

“Of course, General Ming, you can reject the plan and adopt a more secure strategy. After all, as the cradle and the heartland of the federation, the Heaven’s Origin Sector is too heavily defended. One moment of carelessness, and you may be mired in a swamp of steel and fire.

“If your target is the one of the newly developed worlds such as the Forest Ocean Sector, the Nether World Sector, or the Water Crystal Sector, the Black Wind Fleet will certainly be able to assault, crush, and occupy them easily with your overwhelming power, right?

“However, will it mean anything at all for the Black Wind Fleet to occupy the worlds that are either yet to be developed or full of desolate deserts everywhere?”

Heiye Ming sniffed and said, “After we occupy the barren worlds, we can develop them into logistical bases for the

Black Wind Fleet. We can build them up slowly in ten to twenty years. Can the other six sectors do anything?”

“But you do not have ten to twenty years.”

Mysterious flames were burning in Jin Xinyue’s eyes as she said expressionlessly, “Although I am not aware of the situation in the homeland of the Imperium of True Human Beings, you must have a good reason for hiding your fleet behind the brown dwarf near the federation for such a long time without launching an attack.”

Heiye Ming narrowed his eyes. “Are you probing me for where exactly my fleet is anchored?”

Jin Xinyue chuckled and said, “You don’t need to be worried, General Ming. There are too many brown dwarfs near the federation that are yet to be scouted. Also, compared to the vastness of the universe, even the most enormous fleet is but a speck of dust. It is practically impossible for the federation to discover you.

“I just feel that now that our cooperation has reached such a level, we should be more open and sincere to each other on many issues.

“You have discovered the federation for eight years, General Ming. Eight years are more than enough for you to establish a massive space fleet and highly-penetrative communication devices. If you could summon reinforcements from the homeland of the Imperium, you would’ve done it a long time ago!

“I assume that there can only be two reasons you are still holding back. Perhaps, it is because the war between the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance is too intense for the Imperium to spare more armies from the frontline to jump to the harsh land at the edge of the cosmos at the cost of astronomical resources just to ‘eliminate a bunch of barbarians’. Or, it is because you do not want anybody else to share the ‘big cake’ with you, and you would like to swallow it on your own.

“Hehe. From Su Changfa, an Immortal Cultivator of the Imperium in the past, and the captives of the claw fleet, we have learned a lot of intelligence about the Imperium. We know the common practices of the expedition armies from the Imperium after they discover a new world. We also know that the Black Wind Fleet’s situation in the Imperium is certainly not the best right now!

“Fine. If you are unwilling to gamble, we can always fight a positional warfare or a war of attrition exactly like regular wars are fought. General Ming, you are free to attack the weakly-defended new worlds of the federation. The Nether World Sector, the Forest Ocean Sector, the Water Crystal Sector, or any other one you want. After it is occupied, you can spend another twenty years building and consolidating it. In the meantime, we will just drain each other. The federation will still have another six Sectors where starships can be produced incessantly. Three… no, five starships on the federation’s side in exchange for one of your starships. That is quite viable, right?

“I would very much like to know what the Black Wind Fleet will have left after such a bloody war of attrition. Also, even if you do occupy the federation in the end, what can you get in the federation?

“Believe me, the federation at that time will have none of the resources you desire left. No crystals, no steel, no Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, nothing! All you will find is hatred!

“Oh, right, I almost forgot. If you are engaged in a fierce battle with the federation for ten to twenty years, it’s unlikely that the homeland of the Imperium will hear nothing about the matter, right?

“Hehe. If I was one of the ambitious nobles and warlords in the homeland of the Imperium, would I reap the fruit of victory after the Black Wind Fleet and the Star Glory Federation both suffer great losses? I would swallow seven new worlds and the remaining force of the Black Wind Fleet. It is truly a tempting thought!”

Heiye Ming hesitated for a long time. His entire body seemed to have been melted with the bridge and turned into something similar to the mainframe crystal processor on the starship. The voice uttered from his throat was devoid of human feelings, too. “Jin Xinyue, you are very smart, but smart people often do not end well.”

“I know.” Jin Xinyue smiled bitterly and opened her hands. “My everything is at stake. The arrow has been placed on the bow and must be shot! The things that I’ve done in secret, including the conversation we’re having right now, cannot be kept confidential for very long! If you abort the operation at the last moment, I will have no choice but to wait to be captured and sentenced as the greatest traitor in the history of the federation!

“General Ming, my own life, the continuity of the demon race, and the future of the Star Glory Federation and even the Black Wind Fleet depend on your decision right now. Come on. Please make your decision!”

Jin Xinyue craned her long, fair neck, revealing the bright blue veins, as if she were completely at Heiye Ming’s mercy.

Heiye Ming was quiet for such a long time that he was almost frozen into a statue. There was no telling what kind of thoughts were hidden deep inside his lead gray eyeballs, but he eventually said, “Jin Xinyue, you will certainly become the greatest traitor in the history of the federation, but you will also be a frontier governor of the Imperium of True Human Beings that rules over the Blood Demon Sector, the Forest Ocean Sector, and Boneyard!

“If you prove yourself to be capable enough in resource collection and soldier recruitment after the federation is occupied, when the Black Wind Fleet sets off to return to the center of the cosmos, I will even entrust the seven Sectors here to you. According to your military credits and contribution points, you will even have a chance to be nominated as a marquise of the Imperium!

“If your ambitions cannot be satisfied by the seven Sectors at the edge of the cosmos, then just return to the center of the cosmos together with us while leading your troops. Believe me. The Black Wind people will certainly reclaim our past glory, and you will also make great accomplishments at the central area of the Imperium!”

Heiye Ming’s promise made every pore on Jin Xinyue’s body open. The air named ‘ambition’ was spurting out uncontrollably, forming a bouncing halo of fire around her. Her voice was shivering as she said, “Thank you for your appreciation, General Ming. I am a grateful person, and I will certainly do my best and die for General Ming, the Black Wind Fleet, and the Imperium of True Human Beings!”

“You will not die,” Heiye Ming remarked. “Now that the Black Wind Fleet is here, only the Imperium’s enemies will die in the most miserable way!”

Jin Xinyue was both excited and thrilled. She suddenly straightened her left arm and clenched her fist, gritting her teeth to roar, “Long live the Imperium!”

Heiye Ming straightened his arm and solemnly echoed, “Long live the Imperium!”

“So…” Licking her dry lips, Jin Xinyue took a deep breath but still asked somewhat anxiously, “The real ‘Dim Moon Plan’ will begin in twenty-four hours?”

“Yes. Twenty-four hours,” Heiye Ming said. “The Black Wind Fleet is not entirely ready, but since you have done so much work on your side, and you risk being discovered by the federation at any moment, we might miss the opportunity altogether if you are caught. The sooner we activate the plan, the better!

“Do not underestimate Guo Chunfeng’s Secret Sword Bureau at all. We must launch a critical strike on the heart of the federation before they realize what is going on!

“In twenty-four hours, the Black Wind Fleet will land in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and finish everything in one battle!

“Go now and make preparations. This is perhaps going to be the longest twenty-four hours in the history of the federation. You must ensure that nothing can possibly go wrong in our plan, Governor Jin… the future marquise in the Imperium!”

Jin Xinyue trembled from the bottom of her heart. “I will. I certainly will.”

Heiye Ming cut off the super remote communication between them. The shadow of the ‘future marquise of the Imperium’ who was shaking in excitement gradually faded away, and the bridge regained its previous coldness and darkness.

Heiye Ming stood in the darkness for a long time, frowning, as if he was considering a very important strategic question.

A moment later, he activated another communication route, triggering another 3D light beam that was so vivid that the scene seemed to be right in front of him.

What appeared on the light beam was a tiny chamber, which was clean, delicate, and quiet.

The interrogation devices in the corner that were finely-made and dustless, however, made the chamber look like some sort of weird operating room.

In the center of the chamber, a man was hung by a thick, iron rope.

The man had been confined tightly by shackles made of super alloys all over his body. The shackles that overlapped each other, together with the plate armor that had been carved with layers of barriers, had essentially nailed him into an upside-down iron coffin. Only his head was still exposed to the air.

But even his head had been locked by a gapless iron mask, making it impossible for him to speak, see, or hear anything.

Vision, hearing, smell, touch, taste… All his senses had been blocked. Only the sense of pain was left and enhanced to ten times what normal people could bear, placing the hanging man at the bottom level of an infinite hell.

Dozens of crystal cables extended from the hanging man and were connected to the crystal processors and the interrogational magical equipment.

The modern interrogational facilities from the Imperium of True Human Beings did not require any physical torture. They could stimulate the nerve endings directly and create pain dozens of times more excruciating than the feeling of being cut apart.

The devices’ precise control over muscles could even make the captive unable to scream or cramp. The captive would be like a piece of dead meat with lingering nerve reactions that was about to be cooked.

It was exactly the case for the hanging man right now.

Heiye Ming made a gesture, hinting for the agent who was controlling the interrogational magical equipment to stop and open the barriers that blocked the hanging man’s eyes.

“Jin Xinyue said exactly what you guessed she would say,” the commander of the Black Wind Fleet said to the hanging man peacefully.

Chapter 1699 - The Real Rise!

Squeak, squeak.

The noises that the iron rope that held the hanging man uttered were particularly annoying in the quiet room.

Heiye Ming hinted for his subordinate to open the bottom half of the hanging man’s iron mask, giving back his ability to speak. But so much saliva spurted out of the hanging man’s mouth that the agents of the Imperium had to pump the mucus away from his mouth.

“Of course I was speaking the truth.”

The hanging man’s voice was calm, steady, and even dull. It did not sound like he had just been through the most miserable torture, or that he was still hanging in midair without being able to move his little finger. “As the commander of the expedition army of the Imperium, even if you don’t believe me, you should at least trust the power of the interrogational and soul-searching magical equipment of the Imperium.”

“I want you to repeat Jin Xinyue’s plan,” Heiye Ming said coldly.

“I’ve already repeated it twenty-two times,” the hanging man replied equally coldly.

“But you never repeated it under nineteen times the pain limit, did you? Based on the experience of the Imperium, even the most brilliant conmen cannot lie in the state of beyond fifteen times the pain limit. So, forgive me.”

After saying that, Heiye Ming made a gesture at his subordinates without waiting for the hanging man to reply.

The so-called ‘pain limit’ far exceeded the pain that women went through during natural labor. If it was multiplied by nineteen times, even the tough nerves and soul of a Cultivator could barely grit their teeth through it.

The hanging man grunted. The mucus in his mouth was pouring out again, and pink bubbles popped out of his nose, making him look like a fish that was about to die.

Hinting for his subordinates to monitor the breathing, heartbeat, and brainwaves of the hanging man closely, Heiye Ming said, “Speak now. Repeat everything you said in five times the pain limit, nine times the pain limit, and thirteen times the pain limit. This is the last time.”

The hanging man spat out thick saliva and blood one mouthful after another, but his voice was as flat and monotonous as before. “The real ‘Dim Moon Plan’ is much more complicated than a ‘fake surrender’. It has been launched and pushed forward since almost a hundred years ago as a follow-up, or rather, a twin, of the Red Tide Plan.

“The main target of the plan is not just the Black Wind Fleet but also the renowned sects and even all the human beings in the Star Glory Federation. Or in other worlds, the federation itself!

“Jin Xinyue has three identities. She is the demons’ leader, Li Yao’s disciple, and a leader of the federation.

“Therefore, the full version of the ‘Dim Moon Plan’ has three purposes. Realize the renaissance of the demons, achieve the complete rise of Li Yao’s group, and help the federation defeat the expedition army, securing the regional hegemony at the edge of the cosmos and therefore turning into a critical factor in the war between the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance.”

“Wait.” Heiye Ming frowned. He looked at the few agents on the light beam and asked, “Is he under nineteen times the pain limit? Why are his breathing, heartbeat, and brainwaves no different from when he was in nine times and thirteen times the pain limit?”

“Yes, commander. It is nineteen times the pain limit!” the agents replied.

The hanging man laughed. “Compared with the future of mankind, the pain of an individual is too insignificant. For the Imperium, for the truth path of immortality, and for my billions of compatriots, I’ll try to control myself and convince General Ming of everything.”

Heiye Ming sniffed. “Continue.”

“You must’ve seen how Jin Xinyue dealt with the traditional conglomerates in the federation. It is exactly what I predicted.

“Jin Xinyue attached herself to some of the renowned sects a hundred years ago and pretended that she could only count on them after the division with Ding Lingdang, Guo Chunfeng, and the rest of them. Then, she helped those sects crush the other big sects that were not as easy to control.

“In fact, while she did not get along well with Ding Lingdang, she should be in the same gang with Guo Chunfeng. The rivalry and disagreement between the ‘Secret Sword Bureau’ and the ‘Dim Moon Fund’ were all faked. It was part of the ‘Dim Moon Plan’.”

“Why did Guo Chunfeng cooperate with Jin Xinyue?” Heiye Ming asked. “What’s the foundation for their mutual trust?”

“I don’t know,” the hanging man said. “It’s a top secret that only the two of them know.”

Heiye Ming looked at the agent who was operating on the polygraph. The agent nodded, confirming that the hanging man was not lying.

The hanging man’s eyes were still covered by the mask, which prevented him from seeing anything. Yet, he seemed able to see everything. “There’s no need to check. I’m not lying.”

“I will be the one to judge if you are lying. All you need is to talk,” Heiye Ming said.

“Jin Xinyue and Guo Chunfeng, with the two intelligence agencies, gathered enough proof to overthrow the traditional conglomerates over decades,” the hanging man said. “In the end, they detonated everything with the insurgency on Firefly, and Jin Xinyue dragged all the renowned sects to die with her!

“The arrival of Firefly was an accident, but even without Firefly, Jin Xinyue would’ve arranged another shocking scandal at that point to detonate herself as well as the traditional conglomerates!

“In such a case, all the obstacles in the way of ‘Li Yao’s group’ have been cleared. More importantly, it created the illusion that Jin Xinyue is grasped by desperation and is about to be sent to prison and lose everything, which is a perfect excuse for her ‘betrayal’.”

Heiye Ming nodded. “Indeed. ‘Fake surrender’ is an ancient tactic that was perhaps invented during the first war human beings ever fought, but planning a ‘fake surrender’ for decades? Jin Xinyue is truly a dreadful woman!”

The hanging man went on peacefully. “The Star Glory Federation does not want a protracted war, nor can it withstand a war of attrition for ten to twenty years. After all, the Black Wind Fleet is not the sole army of the Imperium. Even if the federation kills the Black Wind Fleet after decades of battles, what’s the point? After the second expedition army arrives, it will swallow the federation in no time!

“Therefore, the federation has no choice but to swallow the Black Wind Fleet’s main force in a quick battle and force your remnants to surrender. Then, it will build up its strength as fast as possible so that the Imperium will not dare send a second fleet after calculating the cost and the gains of the war. That will be the only chance of survival for the federation.”

“Swallow my main force? Jin Xinyue has a good appetite!” Heiye Ming said coldly.

The hanging man smiled and said, “Under normal circumstances, it is certainly impossible, but things may be different at your most vulnerable moment after you finish a space jump.

“General Ming, you are familiar with the history of the federation. So, you must remember the battle in which Jin Xinyue’s father Jin Tuyi completely controlled the power of the Blood Demon Sector.

“At that time, Jin Tuyi was a puppet who had yet to control the coalition army of demons, but through the collapse of Eye of Blood Demon, the super teleportation array, he trapped and killed countless insubordinate experts and troops, turning himself from a puppet into the real lord of the Blood Demon Sector!”

Heiye Ming nodded. “Jin Xinyue wants to follow her father’s example and copy the collapse of Eye of Blood Demon.”

“Not copy but upgrade,” the hanging man replied. “In twenty-four hours, she will certainly ‘betray the federation’, control all the space gates in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and summon the Black Wind Fleet to pierce the federation’s heart.

“However, during the vulnerable period when half of your main force has just been teleported to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and the other half is still being teleported in the four-dimensional space, she will extinguish the star beacons, turn off the space gates, and change the navigation signals.

“The Big Bai Fleet that is supposed to give you a hand will immediately attack you and confound your fleet that has not stabilized in the three-dimensional form yet. The Burning Prairie Fleet will also jump to your location and launch thunderous strike under Jin Xinyue’s guidance!

“Half of your main force will be lost in the dimensional turbulence, and the other half will be struck hard before it has stabilized. How can you not lose?”

The shocking intelligence did not even make Heiye Ming bother to blink his eyes. “Got it. This is the way to defeat the Imperium, but what about the rise of demons?”

“Jin Xinyue has a highly confidential team of daring demon warriors,” the hanging man said. “They are the most loyal and passionate soldiers that she carefully selected in the war of darkness in the past hundred years. Their loyalty to the demon race is as indestructible as the Immortal Cultivators’ loyalty to the Imperium.

“Jin Xinyue must’ve set up a certain secret weapon in the space zones outside of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, which must be maneuvered by the daring team. It may be a critical blow for the Black Wind Fleet.

“Once they succeed, those demons will be the decisive factors of the victory. They will be the greatest contributors to the war!”

“So what?” Heiye Ming asked.

“Don’t you understand, General Ming?”

The hanging man smiled. “Spiritual energy is getting more abundant in the sea of stars today. Demons, as a race, are destined to wither and decline, with no prospect of prospering again.

“Right now, the federation has a population of a hundred billion, and demons make up thirty percent of it. Their voices are large enough in the federation, but this is already the best they can do.

“The Star Glory Federation will not be content at the corner of the cosmos. They are bound to march to the center of the cosmos full of ambition.

“After the federation has ten, twenty, thirty, and even more worlds that are exclusively inhabited by human beings, how much will the ratio of demons in the population and their influence in the federation drop?

“Demons are destined to decline. Even Jin Tuyi’s Red Tide Plan a hundred years ago was not trying to save the demons as real entities, but a belief, a lineage, a symbol, a sign.

“All the hard work of the Star Glory Federation in the past hundred years has been for the war against the Black Wind Fleet today. This is also going to be the war that really founds the New Federation. If the war is won, the New Federation will be qualified to march to the center of the cosmos!

“Therefore, if the war is won by demons, demons will be heroes who rescue the federation at the most crucial moment. Then, they will leave a glorious and ineffaceable mark on the history of the New Federation!

“From then on, nobody will ever talk about the grudge between the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector in the past. Nobody will dare discriminate against demons. Even if the Star Glory Federation governs the entire universe one day, the most important chapters in the history books will still include the epic stories where demons fought and sacrificed valiantly for the federation in this war!

“Flesh and blood will decay, but spirit and will last forever. Jin Xinyue inherited her father’s last will and developed the Dim Moon Plan on the basis of the Red Tide Plan. She is not going to revive the body of the demon race; she is preparing to redefine ‘demon’.

“In the past, people of the federation thought of blood, slaughter, ugliness, and hatred when they heard ‘demon’.

“But after this war, all the people of the federation in the next ten thousand years will only think of one thing after they hear ‘demon’.

“Heroes!

“Isn’t this the rise of demons?”

Chapter 1700 - The Old Immortal Cultivator and the New One!

The hanging man was tightly confined by the shackles, as if he had been inserted into an iron coffin. There was no emotion in his speech at all, either. He simply introduced everything in the flattest tone.

However, his peaceful narration seemed to penetrate the light beam and the space like surging tides, sweeping across the bridge of ‘Black Swirl’ and soaking the commander of the Black Wind Fleet in soundless waves.

“Jin Xinyue, what a horrible woman to come up with such a horrible plan!” Heiye Ming remarked.

“Indeed,” the hanging man said. “If the full version of the ‘Dim Moon Plan’ works out, as the daughter of the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons in the past and the leader of demons right now, Jin Xinyue will lead the demons to a real renaissance. As a disciple of Vulture Li Yao, she will also help Li Yao’s group to completely seize the power of the Star Glory Federation. Anybody in Li Yao’s group, Ding Lingdang, Wu Mayan, Bai Kaixin, Fiend Blade Peng Hai, Guo Chunfeng, Xiong Wuji, Lei Dalu… They will all thank her, trust her, and support her after hearing of her ‘sacrifices’. As one of the leaders of the Star Glory Federation, she will also crush the expedition army of the Imperium, accomplishing an unparalleled achievement!

"A leader of demons, a disciple of Li Yao, and a leader of the federation, she lives up to all the three identities. It will be one stone that kills three birds. One victory will mean the rise of demons, Li Yao's group, and the Star Glory Federation!

"After that, as long as the entire plan is slightly decorated to release part of the truth to the public, she will immediately become the greatest hero in the history of the Star Glory Federation. Later, she can ask Ding Lingdang to be the Speaker while she controls everything behind the curtain, and she can also go out to be the Speaker herself. She can even change the 'election law' right now to extend the term of the Speaker and grant herself great power. Wouldn't it be simple?"

Heiye Ming smiled thoughtfully. "What a great strategy, and what a greedy mouth! She has taken both her own people and her enemy into her delicate scheme! Impressive! But did she not consider the possibility of me not being fooled? After all, 'fake surrender' is not an innovative tactic but an ancient strategy that anybody can think of."

"The Dim Moon Plan is a low-coupling, highly-independent plan," the hanging man explained. "Although all the procedures are connected with each other, the effects of the previous procedures will not be affected even if the last procedure goes wrong.

"Even if you are not fooled, so what? The guys in the traditional conglomerates who have ill intentions have all been instigated by Jin Xinyue and will surely take action in twenty-four hours. Then, even if you are not fooled, the treason of those renowned sects will be doubtless.

“In such a way, it will be simple to tell who is unwaveringly loyal to the Star Glory Federation and who might defect when they can’t hold the pressure. The hidden problems will be eradicated in advance. Wouldn’t it be good, too?

“After the ‘purge operation’ is over, Guo Chunfeng, the director of the Secret Sword Bureau, and certain powerful people in the Burning Prairie Fleet, mostly likely the Chief of Staff Bai Kaixin, will stand up and testify for Jin Xinyue that everything was just a special ‘pressure test’. Yes, Jin Xinyue, Guo Chunfeng, and Bai Kaixin are the ‘iron triangle’ of the scheme.

“The traditional conglomerates that are too fat and corrupt after hundreds of years of good days will be better saboteurs than contributors in the war to come. Eliminating all of them and confiscating the tremendous resources under their control will only do good to the unity of the entire federation!”

“But I can take the chance to assault other worlds instead of the Heaven’s Origin Sector,” Heiye Ming said.

“Even if Jin Xinyue does not carry out her ‘Dim Moon Plan’, wouldn’t you still be free to choose any of the seven Sectors to attack?” the hanging man asked. “But would you do that, General Ming?

“Hehe. Everybody knows that, while the Star Glory Federation does not want a protracted war of attrition that will turn their homeland into a wasteland, the Black Wind Fleet also wants to finish the war as quickly as possible, in case new unexpected factors come from the Imperium, say, the arrival of an expedition army that is far stronger than the Black Wind Fleet, in which case it will swallow all of us.

“General Ming, you need to occupy the most fundamental world of the federation quickly and crush the main force of the Burning Prairie Fleet in order to destroy the federation’s will to resist!

“So, the Heaven’s Origin Sector is the only option.

“Therefore, although ‘fake surrender’ is an ancient strategy, the odds of success are still well above fifty percent if it is carried out at an appropriate time in a way that is most convincing for the hostile commander.

“The federation does not have much hope against the Imperium in the first place. Is such a high likelihood not enough for Jin Xinyue to take a gamble?”

Heiye Ming nodded slowly. “Everything you said makes sense. But there’s one other thing. How exactly did you learn of it? Would Jin Xinyue tell such a plan to you?”

“Of course, Jin Xinyue never told me anything,” the hanging man said. “Despite our years of cooperation, she never really trusted me. There’s no way that she would reveal such a secret plan to me.

“However, decades ago when my master was still alive, I had already got my eyes on Jin Xinyue. I liked studying the woman because I smelled the same scent from her body that was identical to the scent from mine. She and I were the same type of person. I knew that she was not content to be a puppet for the traditional conglomerates, and she was definitely not foolish enough to end on bad terms with the big backers such as Ding Lingdang and Guo Chunfeng. What she wanted was much more than ‘Speaker of the Federation’.

“With her identity and environment, if she wanted to become the Speaker, she shouldn’t have kept such a high profile. But since she did talk about her dream all the time, it meant that ‘Speaker of the Federation’ was just a disguise for something greater and more profound.

“Because I discovered that Jin Xinyue was such an interesting woman, I approached her after my master passed away and let her know about my supposed ambitions. As I expected, she thought that I was of high value.

“You know what happened next, General Ming. Although Jin Xinyue never told me her real plan, is it strange at all that I can infer everything based on the things she asked me to do and the psychological analysis and studies I performed on her over the following decades?”

“So,” Heiye Ming said, “just like what she appreciated most in you, you are both a pure Immortal Cultivator and a firm patriot who loves the Star Glory Federation unwaveringly?”

“Yes,” the hanging man said. “Jin Xinyue had her test methods, too. If I were not truly passionate about the Star Glory Federation, I wouldn’t have been selected by her at all.”

“But you’ve betrayed Jin Xinyue for the Imperium,” Heiye Ming said.

“I only betrayed Jin Xinyue; I have not betrayed the Star Glory Federation,” the hanging man said. “Or rather, I only betrayed the name of the Star Glory Federation and its government, but I never betrayed the seven Sectors and all the compatriots under the name.

“As a pure Immortal Cultivator who has a profound understanding about the invincibility of the Imperium of

True Human Beings, I believe that ending the war as soon as possible and implementing the system of the Immortal Cultivators in the seven Sectors sooner are the only salvation and the real future.

“I cannot allow my compatriots to walk further on the wrong path anymore. They will only bring more pain to themselves and the people of the Imperium!

“This is the only reason I’m cooperating with you, General Ming. You must believe me and save the deviant fellow humans at the edge of the cosmos. Please!”

Heiye Ming, a brutal warrior who had earned his fame through life-and-death battles, could not help but slightly tremble. He gloomily said, “For some reason, I am scared of you. Both you and Jin Xinyue. People at the edge of the cosmos like you are as scary as vipers.”

“We are not as powerful as the high-level Immortal Cultivators in the Imperium of True Human Beings at the center of the cosmos,” the hanging man said. “For survival, the poor folks at the edge of the cosmos waiting to be saved can only develop insignificant plots and schemes. But they are not worth mentioning at all in front of the invincible Imperium.”

Heiye Ming sniffed. “Tell me, why should I trust you? Jin Xinyue is faking her surrender. How do I know that you’re not? Maybe you are up to something else. Maybe you work for Jin Xinyue and this is just a ‘double fake surrender’.”

“I can’t tell you,” the hanging man said. “You have exploited all the information from me and gathered enough information from Jin Xinyue, too. As the commander of the Black Wind Fleet, it is your responsibility to figure out the correct answer from the complicated information, not mine.

“All in all, you have twenty-four hours. If you do not take action in twenty-four hours, Jin Xinyue will know that you have not been fooled. Then, both parties will lose the opportunity to finish the war quickly. So, a war of attrition will be inevitable!”

Heiye Ming stared at the hanging man hard, trying to see the truth deep inside his brain.

But the eyes and upper face of the hanging man were still covered by the iron mask. Nothing could be seen at all.

Heiye Ming was silent for three minutes. The hanging man was equally patient. Except for the bloody bubbles coming out of his nose, he gave absolutely no reaction, as if he were already dead.

“Fine!” Heiye Ming finally made the call. Rebar-like muscles popped up on his face, as he gritted his teeth and threw out his words like cannon balls. “Since Jin Xinyue has prepared delicate traps in the Heaven’s Origin Sector waiting for me to step in, if I don’t go there, won’t her hospitality be in vain? She wants me to go to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and I will do so! I will show her the invincibility of the Black Wind Fleet and the feeling of being killed by her own scheme!”

The hanging man was still silent, as if he did not hear Heiye Ming’s choice at all, and as if he was dwelling in a certain deep, profound world inside his head.

“Stop stimulating his nerve endings, but do not loosen his shackles and barriers. Keep blocking his senses, and do not put him down.”

While making the gestures, Heiye Ming said, “Lu Qingchen, you are too dangerous. Before the war is completely settled, I’m not planning to let go of you. Are you fine with that?”

Lu Qingchen—the hanging man, the president of the CFIA, and the leader of local Cultivators of the federation—nodded within the range of the shackle. “Of course.”

“Right. One other thing. What is the ‘Immortal Cultivator 2.0’ theory that you have been preaching?” Heiye Ming suddenly asked. “I’ve read a few of the books that you wrote. You talked as if it was a real thing. I can’t help but feel quite curious!”

Lu Qingchen smiled, baring his white teeth. However, since his face was upside down, it looked like intense mockery.

The new-generation Immortal Cultivator from the edge of the cosmos smiled at the old-generation Immortal Cultivator from the center of the cosmos and said, “There’s no ‘Immortal Cultivator 2.0’ at all. That’s just bullsh*t that we made up to attract all the Immortal Cultivators in the federation and fish them up.”

Chapter 1701 - Clean the Mess

The conversation between the commander of the Black Wind Fleet and the head of the CFIA lasted seventeen minutes and twenty-two seconds.

There were twenty-three hours, forty-two minutes, and thirty-eight seconds to go before the Black Wind Fleet launched a space jump and arrived at the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the heart of the federation.

At exactly the same time, in the Hundred Flowers Space Zone, the transfer station at the center of the seven Sectors of the federation, a hundred lightyears away, Li Yao was still having his delicious and spicy noodles.

“Therefore, I vaguely have a bad feeling!” Noodles were dangling from Li Yao’s lips. While sucking them into his mouth quickly, Li Yao spoke to Long Yangjun. “I feel that Jin Xinyue’s plan has been seen through, and a great scheme targeting the entire federation is slowly unfolding right now. One moment of carelessness, and the federation will be consumed by the very fire it started itself and be doomed forever! Also, the scheme will likely break out very soon, faster than we anticipated. Do you believe me?”

Looking at Li Yao, Long Yangjun tried her best to hold back her urge of rolling her eyes. “You sound very reasonable. It is truly as expected of the wise and meticulous Monster Li. By logic, I should have more faith in you. But this is the third bowl of noodles you have eaten. The third!”

Blinking blankly, Li Yao picked up the third egg with a disposable fork and said, “What’s wrong about having noodles? You can only fight the bad guys bravely and smartly and announce your glamorous return if your belly is full!

“Do you know what the critical problem is? The most critical problem is that Jin Xinyue’s plan is too precise and too well-organized. She seems to have taken too many things into her calculations!

“It is the same logic as refining. The more precise a piece of magical equipment is, the more likely it will have faults. The more you want it to be perfect, the more likely it will collapse. When you want to install dozens of functions into one piece of magical equipment, you may end up with a device that cannot carry out any of the functions well.

“The bottom line is, based on the tip of the iceberg that we have seen, I think that Jin Xinyue’s plan is so gigantic that it far exceeds the limits of her ability to control. Perhaps nobody can ever control such a plan, not even her father Jin Tuyi if the guy was reborn right now.

“If we get to the bottom of it, that is because she is still too young, too simple, and sometimes even a bit naïve. But that’s not her fault. The situation that the federation is faced with right now is much more perilous than the situation her father was in. Not only do we have to take care of a Black Wind Fleet, we also have to take care of it in the shortest amount of time at the minimal cost without losing much of our own capabilities in case the Imperium sends out a second expedition army.

“It is a mission that is practically impossible to accomplish. No wonder Jin Xinyue decided to wager on such a risky plan!”

Having finished the egg, Li Yao picked up a piece of sausage that had already become soft after being soaked in the soup for a long time with the fork and bit it hard as he both complimented and felt sorry for his disciple’s plan.

Long Yangjun narrowed her eyes to try to avoid watching his gluttonous face. “Then, what do we do now?”

“Up until so far, according to our analysis, Jin Xinyue is still loyal to the federation and to her master,” Li Yao said solemnly. “She never crossed the boundaries of the Cultivators, either. So, she is still my good disciple! Now that something might be wrong with my disciple’s plan, I’m naturally obliged to clean up the mess for her as her master. Otherwise, why does she even need a master?”

Long Yangjun nodded. “Fair enough. But everything is just our speculation so far. We don’t even know who the enemy other than the Black Wind Fleet is or if they have any other schemes. If I may ask, how do you plan to clean up the huge mess that your disciple Jin Xinyue has left for you?”

Li Yao smiled. “That’s exactly why I requested when the federation arranged the sailing route that we take a detour in the Hundred Flowers Space Zone!

“The Hundred Flowers Space Zone does not have any habitable planets or enough resource planets. It is even more barren than the Dragon Snake Space Zone, with barely any value to be developed.

“However, this place is at the center of the seven Sectors of the federation. It is a very important node in the space jump. Also, it has a dual-star system. The spiritual waves that the two stars release during their interaction can be condensed into an excellent ‘gravity slingshot’, which can save a lot of spiritual energy for the starships being teleported.

“Space jumps cannot be performed randomly, especially now that the federation has so many Sectors and starships. Tens of thousands of starships are jumping on a daily basis, creating temporary wormholes one after another. If the routes and jump points are not well-planned, it is very possible that the starships will affect each other and cause a great accident. Traffic accidents in space are rare, but when they do happen, it will be a tragedy where thousands of people may get killed!

“Therefore, after the Water Crystal Sector and the Forest Ocean Sector were discovered, the federation began to develop the Hundred Flowers Space Zone on a large scale and established the super space metropolis ‘Hundred Flowers City’ as a transportation hub. Around Hundred Flowers City, more than a hundred space gates and ten thousand star beacons have been set up for navigation purposes.

“The starships travelling among different Sectors of the federation often jump from their mother planet to the Hundred Flowers Space Zone first. Then, they refill their supplies, repair their vehicles, and recalculate their sailing routes. In the end, through the ‘gravity slingshot’ provided by the dual-star system, they jump to their destination. This is the safest, most organized, and most energy-conserving means of transportation for them.”

Long Yangjun nodded. “I know that, but this starship, with the delegation on board, does not really need to conserve a tiny bit of spiritual energy and could have asked the federal government to establish a dedicated sailing route for us, right? I’ve been meaning to ask you for a long time. Why do we have to transfer at the Hundred Flowers Space Zone when we could’ve directly jumped from the Uranian Ring Sector to the Heaven’s Origin Sector? It is a great waste of our time.”

“The federation spent a great fortune and decades of time constructing the Hundred Flowers Space Zone into a transportation hub that connects the seven Sectors,” Li Yao said. “Countless sailing routes and starships transfer at this place. To calculate the complicated sailing routes and the space ripples after the jump of the starships, a computation center of an enormous scale is required.

“Therefore, Hundred Flowers City boasts the most awesome super crystal processor of the entire federation. There are only three super crystal processors of the same level in the country. One of them is in Hundred Flowers City to control the routes in space. One of them is in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, responsible for the big data calculations of the federal government. The last of them is in the Star Prier’s House on Spider Den in the Flying Star Sector. It is used to monitor the astronomical anomalies and analyze the star map of the Pangu civilization in order to find more Sectors.

“The last super crystal processor, or a ‘group of super crystal processors’, was left by the Star Ocean Imperium and only repaired after the arduous efforts of our specialists. It was with the calculation and search of the crystal processor that we managed to discover four new Sectors in a row in only a hundred years! But the computation center in Hundred Flowers City has a computational ability equal to the Star Prier’s House. Isn’t it awesome?”

Long Yangjun frowned. “Does it have anything to do with the scheme we just talked about?”

“Don’t be hasty. Let me finish.”

Licking his greasy lips, Li Yao spoke confidently while holding the sausage in his mouth. “Hundred Flowers City is not just a transportation hub in the federation but also the center of the entire ‘grand-unified Spiritual Nexus’. The computation center here is actually divided into two parts, one responsible for transportation and the other responsible for the functioning of the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus!

“It is quite easy to understand, right? The enormous streams of information on the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus also need to be reflected in the four-dimensional space in order to reach a world a hundred lightyears away instantly. Is there a place more suitable than the Hundred Flowers Space Zone as the center of the Spiritual Nexus?

“Since the center of the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus is here inside the largest computation center nationwide made of countless super crystal processors, naturally, the control and development center of the game ‘Civilization’ has been set up in this place, too. It is no exaggeration to say that this place is the heart of the virtual world of the federation.”

Brilliance was beaming out of Long Yangjun’s eyes, as she remarked, “I understand it now. You’re worried that the Black Wind Fleet’s target is not one of the seven Sectors but here, right? Once they launch an assault here, the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus and most of the routes in space will be paralyzed. This is a critical weakness for the federation!”

“Not exactly.” Li Yao shook his head and said, “At first, after noticing that the Hundred Flowers Space Zone is the transportation hub of the New Federation and the center of the virtual world, I also wondered if the Black Wind Fleet would attack this place.

“But if you think about it more carefully, you will realize that the gains can’t outweigh the losses.

“It’s because both the sailing routes and the nodes of the Spiritual Nexus are scattered and interconnected. Even if the ‘hub’ and ‘center’ are destroyed by the enemy, it is not possible to entirely paralyze the federation’s transportation and information transmission on the Spiritual Nexus. The best the enemy can expect is to slow down the speed and efficiency and greatly increase the cost. All in all, the strike will be serious, but it won’t be fatal.

“But for the Black Wind Fleet, ‘mobility’ and ‘abruptness’ are their greatest advantages right now. If they jump to such a place where barely any resources are available save the two stars, they will lose their mobility and abruptness. It will be difficult for them to jump out again. You must know that the space jump of an entire fleet is different from the space jump of a single starship, right?

“It’s like how an ordinary soldier in ancient times can march fifty kilometers a day after training. But you want an army of hundreds of thousands of soldiers to march fifty kilometers in one day? Even the best troops may not be able to achieve that.”

Long Yangjun nodded.

The smaller a unit was, the faster it would be. A team of scouts made of elite warriors and Cultivators could march a thousand kilometers a day and a night, but a large army could barely move twenty kilometers in the same time.

The Black Wind Fleet, with its thousands of starships, was like a dinosaur weighing a hundred tons. It would not jump easily, and it would be difficult to jump out if it was mired in a swamp.

Destroying the transportation hub and the center of the Spiritual Nexus would mean that it would be completely exposed to the federation. Harassed by the federal fleets, it would barely be able to jump again. Since there were not enough resources in the Hundred Flowers Space Zone, the two parties would have to start a war of attrition until they both died.

It was definitely not the outcome that the commander of the Black Wind Fleet wanted.

Long Yangjun was surprised. “If so, why are you here? I thought that you wanted to defend the Hundred Flowers Space Zone with our help!”

Li Yao blinked and said, “I’m here for my teacher, Professor Mo Xuan.”

Chapter 1702 - Okay… That Explains a Lot!

“Mo Xuan, the star spirit, a new-generation spectral Cultivator who resides in liquid metal, and a firm advocate for the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus?”

Long Yangjun pondered for a moment and said, “Wait. You are not still considering the threat of the ‘virtual life’, are you? Let’s focus on the more imminent issue here. With the current level of crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus in the federation, it will be tens of thousands of years before a virtual life is truly born, but the threat of the expedition army of the Imperium is real and devastating!”

“No. At first, I was thinking about looking into Lu Qingchen.”

After finishing his noodles and drinking up the last drop of the soup, Li Yao tapped the table with the fork and said, “I feel that something is greatly wrong with Lu Qingchen. His whole theory about ‘Immortal Cultivator 2.0’ makes me stunned and creeped out! I met him when he was still a teenager. He was much more sophisticated than his age and definitely not someone who was willing to work below anybody else. I’m scared that Jin Xinyue may not be able to control him or even be swallowed by him.

“Therefore, I studied his life when I was free, especially the collapse of the ‘Virtual Spirits Sector’, an event that caused him to completely degenerate into an Immortal Cultivator.

“As it turned out, few articles on ‘the collapse of the Virtual Spirits Sector’ could be found on the Spiritual Nexus. Even the so-called ‘in-depth reports’ mostly lacked a main focus and did not explain the causes and consequences of the event well.

“But then, it does make sense. The ‘grand-unified Spiritual Nexus’ that covered multiple Sectors was being constructed at that time. If the news of experimenters being killed by the Spiritual Nexus had spread, people would inevitable have become suspicious of the safety of the Spiritual Nexus. Besides, the victim Su Changfa was an Immortal Cultivator from the Imperium, who was in an awkward position in the federation in the first place. Therefore, the thing simply passed and got forgotten by everyone together with the ‘Virtual Spirits Sector’.

“But I felt that something was not right. Despite the deep bond that Lu Qingchen might’ve had with Su Changfa, his master’s death was an accident. It was far from enough for him to loathe the federation and surrender to the Imperium, wasn’t it?

“What exactly happened in the ‘Virtual Spirits Sector’ at that time? Why was Su Changfa killed? Why did Lu Qingchen change? Why did Professor Mo Xuan abandon the studies on ‘virtual life’?

“My professor is one of the most resolute people I’ve seen. Even when he was transformed into a ‘Phantom Entity’ because of the great explosion years ago and lived half-dead for years, he never gave up on his dream of refining after he was brought back to life. The greater a failure is, the braver and more unwavering he will be!

“It doesn’t make sense. Nothing makes sense!

“After further investigation, I discovered that the ‘experiments on the Virtual Spirits Sector’ were conducted in the Hundred Flowers Space Zone years ago.

“At that time, Hundred Flowers City had just begun construction. All the super crystal processors had been shipped from the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, the Uranian Ring Sector, and Kunlun to this place to be assembled and debugged again. According to the public reports, it was because something went wrong with the debugging of the computation center next to the laboratory that Professor Mo Xuan, Su Changfa, Lu Changfa, and the mainframe crystal processor in the laboratory were affected. In the end, the collapse of the ‘Virtual Spirits Sector’ was caused.

“Today, the relics of the ‘Virtual Spirits Sector’ must be hidden somewhere below the computation center of Hundred Flowers City, right? The development and control center of ‘Civilization’ is here, too. As for my professor, although he has left the research team of ‘Civilization’ and abandoned the Virtual Spirits Sector, he is still currently living in Hundred Flowers City supervising other research projects.”

Long Yangjun understood it. “So, you want to find Professor Mo Xuan to learn the truth about ‘the collapse of the Virtual Spirits Sector’ in the past, in order to decide if something is wrong with Lu Qingchen?”

“That was my original plan,” Li Yao said. “However, after careful studies, I discovered a new lead. As it turned out, not just Lu Qingchen, even my professor was not right!”

Long Yangjun was slightly dazed. She lowered her voice subconsciously and asked, “What was not right?”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and said, one word after another, “He got divorced!”

“…” Long Yangjun.

Li Yao slapped the table hard and said, “He got divorced, and only because he got caught by his wife, Professor Yuan Manqiu, who is another teacher of mine, when he was cheating on her!”

“Forgive me,” Long Yangjun said. “It suddenly occurred to me that there’s something I need to do. Why don’t I leave you to enjoy your noodles?”

“Wait, listen to my explanation,” Li Yao urged. “Professor Mo Xuan and Professor Yuan Manqiu used to love each other and supported each other for more than a hundred years. That couldn’t have been easy. Why on earth did Professor Mo Xuan cheat on her and then get divorced?”

“It’s freedom of marriage and none of your concern. I only have limited patience, and it ran out when you had your third bowl of noodles!”

“No. Trust me and think about it. The whole thing happened soon after the collapse of the ‘Virtual Spirits Sector’. Do you not feel that it was a weird accident?”

Long Yangjun took a deep breath, only to smell nothing but the spicy flavor of the noodle residue. She waved at her nose in disgust and managed to think for a while. Then, she nodded and said, “Now that you put it that way, it is indeed a bit weird. Isn’t your professor a spectral Cultivator? How could he cheat on his wife?”

“That’s actually not a problem,” Li Yao said. “He is a piece of erratic liquid metal. Technically speaking, he can totally make what he needs by himself, and even more than one of them if he wants. Also, even for the regular spectral Cultivators, thanks to the developed artificial limb industry in the federation nowadays, special limbs have been devised for them. How should I put it delicately? It’s like the so-called ‘Mister Horn’, ‘Doctor Rod’, or ‘Lady Oyster’ in the Ancient Sages Sector. You are a eunuch, aren’t you? Shouldn’t you be most familiar with that kind of stuff?”

“Who’s a eunuch?” Long Yangjun bashed the table hard, leaving a deep dent on the table. “Since it is not a technical problem, isn’t it perfectly normal? Star spirit or spectral Cultivator, he is a human being after all. Every human being has their feelings and needs. The two of them have spent seventy years together. It is only natural that they grew tired of each other.

“Think about it. Professor Mo Xuan was responsible for part of the development of the game ‘Civilization’ and supervising the project of the ‘Virtual Spirits Sector’ in the Hundred Flowers Space Zone, while Professor Yuan Manqiu worked as the dean in the Refining Department in the Grand Desolate War Institution in the Heaven’s Origin Sector. The two of them must’ve been more often separated than united!

“In the past, they were both focused on the studies of crystal suits, and they could support each other and communicate better. But after Professor Mo Xuan turned into a star spirit and had a soaring computational ability, he changed his focus to the studies of the Spiritual Nexus. Then, would they still have any common language?

“At this point, the project of the ‘Virtual Spirits Sector’, to which Professor Mo Xuan devoted his life, failed and even caused the death of a researcher. I don’t need to remind you how regretful, frustrated, and depressed he must’ve been.

"If a charming nymph, or a female researcher who also focused on the studies of the Spiritual Nexus and crystal processors, approached him while he was vulnerable and healed his wounded heart with her gentleness, is it strange at all that something happened between them?"

Li Yao scratched his chin hard. "Now that you mentioned it, it is exactly what happened. According to the gossip I read, my professor's mistress seemed to be a female researcher of the 'Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus Computation Center'. She was also some sort of experienced algorithm specialist."

"Then, what is your problem?"

Li Yao shook his head hard. "No. I have to figure the whole thing out. It won't take much time anyway. I'll simply pay a visit to Professor Mo Xuan while our starship is being repaired and refilled with fuel. If everything is alright with my professor, I'll send the message that I'm back to Ding Lingdang and Jin Xinyue through him. I don't trust anybody else right now."

Long Yangjun pondered for a moment and said, "That's very reasonable. It's true that we should contact Ding Lingdang and Jin Xinyue, the two 'giants', now, in case of any misunderstanding in the future.

"Then, what is the project that your professor is responsible for in the Hundred Flowers Space Zone? Where can we find him?"

Li Yao opened a light beam. "Here. The Tinder Plan, originated from the Monument Plan proposed by Gui Suishou, the oldest demon emperor of the Blood Demon Sector, a hundred years ago for the purpose of passing on our civilization. After that, the Glorious Sunlight Group, the Double Dragons Union, and some other sects in the federation all invested in the project to put it into practice. Because ‘monument’ sounded too ominous, it was renamed as the Tinder Plan.

“After the collapse of the Virtual Spirits Sector, Professor Mo Xuan was frustrated and abandoned most of his previous work. He dedicated himself to the Tinder Plan and became its supervisor. With his help, the progress of the Tinder Plan was greatly accelerated. Right now, the first batch of ‘tinder’ has already been produced and is ready to be launched into space.

“In fact, because the Black Wind Fleet is drawing near, and nobody can tell when they will suddenly lunge out, the very first piece of ‘tinder’ will be launched tomorrow.

“I learned of the arrangement from the news. That’s why I specifically requested for our starship to arrive at the Hundred Flowers Space Zone and visit the project team of the Tinder Plan so that we could communicate more with Professor Mo Xuan on the succession of civilization. It has been approved by authorities. The trip will only take half a day. Our itinerary will not be affected.”

Long Yangjun narrowed her eyes and read the news fast. “The first deep-sky exploration starship that carries the tinder of the Star Glory Federation will be led by Wei Qingqing, a famous novelist and educator in the federation. Miss Wei is highly likely to be the first person in the history of the federation to hibernate for tens of thousands of years and to pass on our civilization in the distant future? Miss Wei… Wei Qingqing… Oh… I get it now!”

Li Yao blinked hard. “What did you get?”

Long Yangjun looked at him thoughtfully and said with a fake smile, “So, after all your garbage talk, it is not Professor

Mo Xuan that you want to meet but your old lover!”

Li Yao’s face immediately turned pale. “What old lover? We are in my wife’s turf right now. You’d better watch your mouth!”

“Isn’t Wei Qingqing the girl in the Refinement Stage who sacrificed herself to save you on the train north to the Grand Desolate War Institution before your spiritual root awakened?” Long Yangjun chuckled. “It is said that her encouragement helped you set up the goal of being a Cultivator. For you, she is always some sort of… sacred and glorious big sister.

“Don’t glare at me. All your biographies say exactly the same!

“I totally understand it now! The big sister who saved your life and encouraged you to embark on the path of Cultivation is about to set off for a journey of ten thousand years tomorrow, and you will never see her again. Now that you have heard such a piece of astounding news, it is perfectly normal that you want to bid her farewell. It does not conflict with our business, either!

“I get it. I totally get it. Why didn’t you tell me more straightforwardly? It’s only natural that you want to see your life-savior who is in a ‘pure’ relationship with you for the last time. I support you and definitely won’t tell your wife. Just rest assured!”

Chapter 1703 - Tinder Lives, Civilization Lives!

“Sister Qingqing and I are pure friends,” Li Yao said solemnly. “You can stop being so nosy. Also, my primary purpose is to visit my professor to figure out the truth about the collapse of the Virtual Spirits Sector and Lu Qingchen!

“Listen up. This is my plan.

“Soon, Ling Xiaole of the Secret Sword Bureau will come and lead me to the Tinder Base. I prepared to go there alone. But since you’ve already guessed so much, you might as well come with me. We can take care of each other if something goes wrong.

“After we reach the Tinder Base and get to know the Tinder Plan, we will certainly speak to Professor Mo Xuan. I will take the chance to ask him why he left the production team of Civilization and why he and Professor Yuan Manqiu got divorced.

“After everything is sorted out, I’ll contact my wife through Professor Mo Xuan’s communication route. As one of the most influential celebrities in the federation, Professor Mo Xuan must have his private routes that connect to the capital city or the Grand Desolate War Institution. Also, Ding Lingdang is from the Grand Desolate War Institution and was in a good relationship with Professor Mo Xuan. Even if Professor Mo Xuan cannot reach out to Jin Xinyue, he can certainly speak to my wife!

“Alright. After I contact my wife through professor and tell her the good news that I’m back, we will be able to communicate with the federal army through my wife and gain part of the control permissions of the Hundred Flowers Space Zone. At the very least, we can summon a batch of troops or soldiers of the Patriots Front.

“After my wife learns everything, and with the support of the Patriots Front and the federal army, we will return and tell the truth to the other ten experts of the Ancient Sages Sector. We will tell them that I am in fact Monster Li. When they are flabbergasted and soaked in sweat, I will talk sense into them and allure them with benefits. In their astonishment and gratitude, can they do anything but join the federation?

“Even if something goes wrong, I will have arranged a lot of experts from the federation. We’ll have everything covered.

“In such a case, before the enemy knows it, the federation will have gained ten experts at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage and even two in the Divinity Transformation Stage!

“I don’t care about the tricks and schemes of the enemy. This time, I’m going to beat them with overwhelming strength! When the enemy plays all their moves and thinks that they are sure to win, the twelve ancient Cultivators will slap them in their face! Tell me. How can we lose the battle?

“This is my plan. Simple, straightforward, and absolutely effective. Do you feel that it is secure?”

Long Yangjun frowned and pondered for a moment. “Probably… I guess?”

“That will do!” Li Yao clapped his hands. “Of course, if time allows, and if we happen to run into each other, it is perfectly understandable to bid farewell to Sister Qingqing, catch up with her, and ask her to bring bliss to the people in billions of years' time!

"Alright. Enough talking. Ling Xiaole is here. Let's go to the Tinder Base to meet Professor Mo Xuan!"

…

Hundred Flowers City, at the center of the vast Hundred Flowers Space Zone near the overlapping gravity sphere of the two stars, was made of an array of hundreds of round space stations. Not counting the workers and their family on the hundreds of 'space gates' nearby, the main district alone already had a population of 150 million.

Although it was not the largest space metropolis in the Star Glory Federation, it was definitely a 'future city' with the highest education on average and the most cutting-edge techniques and arts.

Because it was at the center of the sailing routes of the federation, it was naturally suitable to be a center of transportation and data interaction, which also attracted the talents of the seven Sectors and countless sects, groups, research teams, and academic institutions related to crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus to migrate to this place. After decades of development, especially after the core database and super computation center of the 'grand-unified Spiritual Nexus', the control and interaction center of 'Civilization', and 'Future University of the Star Glory Federation' were established there one after another, the city became the well-deserved 'think-tank' of the federation.

According to the statistics, of the Gai-level super crystal processors in the federation, which had the highest computational ability nationwide, Hundred Flowers City had one, and of the Jing-level super crystal processors secondary to the Gai-level, the city had sixty-nine, which was more than one third of the total. The city was an out-and-out city of crystal processors.

It was thanks to the computation, analysis, interaction, and transmission of the super crystal processors that the smoothness of the sailing routes and the stability of the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus were ensured.

After Li Yao and Long Yangjun boarded the shuttle that was the shape of a silver waterdrop under the lead of Ling Xiaole, the half fox demon, and travelled inside Hundred Flowers City without a sound, they truly felt the extraordinariness and profoundness of the city that far exceeded Fish Dragon City, Firefly, or the orbit city in the Uranian Ring Sector.

From the outside, Hundred Flowers City was a perfect cube made of hundreds of balls that were dozens of kilometers in diameter and had absolutely no flaws on the surface.

Such a shape that was in complete violation of natural law and the universe’s regular form was the best symbol of mankind’s ambition to challenge nature.

However, when the shuttle travelled inside Hundred Flowers City, it seemed to be travelling in a splendid natural landscape.

They were travelling on a boundless prairie and appreciating the cows and goats through the transparent floor below their feet, then seeing lakes in the middle of raging deserts and the green oases next to them, and then passing through deep, dark canyons reaching primitive forests. They witnessed the exotic views on many resource planets. It was truly dazzlingly beautiful.

Such natural views were all the illusions constructed by super large-scale 3D light beams.

Such facilities were almost installed in every space city with limited space as a virtual comfort for human beings who originated from a planet.

The illusions in Hundred Flowers City were particularly vivid and almost felt real. One might even say that they were an enormous Grand Illusionary Land that covered the entire city.

Normal people would inevitably feel that they were on a certain planet as the scenes changed several times.

“Future University lies in the ‘mountains’ up ahead. It is a supreme university founded together with the New Federation. The most excellent talents in the seven Sectors have been gathered there.

“The silver, egg-shaped buildings in the ‘deserts’ are the data interaction and control center of the game ‘Civilization’. Also, the production center for new plots and new DLCs is here, too. For the needs of the super crystal processors, the climate here has been set to be very dry.

“In front of us is the Tinder Base.”

Ling Xiaole, Li Yao’s tour guide, wagged her fox tail and introduced the city to them enthusiastically.

While talking, the little girl stuck her tongue out. “I must thank you for bringing me here. Many research centers and bases in Hundred Flowers City are not open to outsiders. Even I did not have a chance to visit them even though I am a distinguished employee of the Secret Sword Bureau… Wow!”

After the shuttle moved into the Tinder Base, the picture in front of their eyes changed drastically into a dirty undersea world, as if they had passed through a nonexistent gate or pierced through a bubble.

No. It was not a dark, blue ocean as seen today but one from the time when the planet was just born. Volcanoes were erupting at the bottom everywhere, turning the ocean into a pot of boiling soup. Black pillars of smoke were rising from the highly unstable prehistoric ocean, like the hands of fiends that were extending from the cracks at the bottom of the ocean.

However, it was exactly because of the amazing reactions between the precious metals and minerals brought by such ‘fiend hands’ from the depths of the crust and the materials in the seawater and the raw air that the first batch of monads was born.

Although they knew that it was just an illusion, Li Yao and Long Yangjun were still greatly astounded by such a magnificent picture of a prehistoric undersea world.

The Tinder Base seemed to have a deeper meaning by setting up such illusions at its edge.

The shuttle kept pushing forward. As if they were travelling through a channel of time, the illusions around them were changing nonstop, too. The undersea volcanoes gradually fell dormant. The seawater turned shallower. Thick ancient fungi grew out of the craters around the ancient volcanos and extended to the end of the ocean like a white carpet. The prehistoric ocean creatures who fed upon the ancient fungi gradually showed up, too. Red algae, green algae, trilobite, Anomalocaridids, nautili, Devonian fish…

Aya!

The shuttle moved forward from the prehistoric ocean to the medieval ocean. Suddenly, it leapt out of the ocean and barged into a paradise of gymnosperm and fern. All kinds of reptiles and enormous insects were growing blatantly inside the woods. A monster that looked like a tyrannosaur crawled out of the dense forest and opened its bloody mouth at them, as if it was about to swallow the shuttle whole.

Naturally, the shuttle was safe and sound, but Ling Xiaole did utter a half-true-half-fake exclamation.

After a brief period of darkness, mammals and primates gradually replaced the reptiles and governed the world. Very soon, a few apes with black hair all over their body whose eyebrows were high and cheeks hollow became the focus of the picture. They were dancing around a campfire. An enormous starship of the Pangu Clan seemed to be observing them coldly from the sky.

Starting from that scene, time began to flow much faster. The twigs in the hands of the apes turned into sticks, the sticks transformed into stone axes, and the stone axes evolved into bronze spears. Flying swords showed up, armor appeared, and caves and tree houses turned into pavilions and into flying mountains and islands in the sky. It was the first brilliant and glorious outbreak of the civilization of mankind, the age of the ancient Cultivators!

After that, it was thirty thousand years of the Great Dark Age that was dominated by demons, followed by the Star Ocean Imperium. Then, the second collapse caused by the Armageddon Rebellion and the second renaissance that came right next. In the end, seven broken worlds at the edge of the cosmos were condensed into the Star Glory Federation…

From the birth of ancient creatures, to the enlightenment of the Pangu civilization, to the hundred thousand years of development of the civilization of mankind, the whole civilization's history was reflected in the 'time channel' that was not very long.

Every illusion stood for a phase of the development of life, but the skyscrapers and the tide of starships that represented today's Star Glory Federation were only put at the second to last phase. The last phase, which should have represented the 'future' of the civilization of mankind, was actually a picture of many silver metal balls that were floating in midair like balloons. There was no telling what it meant.

As if they sensed that honorable guests had arrived, all the silver metal balls melted like liquids, before they turned into four huge, glittering words.

"Tinder Lives, Civilization Lives."

Chapter 1704 - Source of the Tinder

Li Yao was deeply astounded by the river of time that flowed from the primeval age to all eternity.

He had thought that the so-called Monument Plan or Tinder Plan was merely the most insignificant one of the thousands of whimsical plans that were raised in the federation a hundred years ago in a hurry under the dual pressure of the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance.

At the very least, it did appear to be the case before he left.

The Monument Plan was a ‘flee solution’ that was derived from ‘absolute pessimism’, which was destined to be unfavorable in the federation that was determined to fight a bloody battle of resistance until the end.

Although the Glorious Sunlight Group, of which Li Yao was a major shareholder, invested in the Monument Plant at the beginning for Gui Suishou’s sake, it soon left the plan to develop on its own.

Gui Suishou, the old demon emperor and the initial leader of the Monument Plan, was not a guy that was good at real-life operations, either.

He was a historian and sociologist, or in the more fashionable theory of the federation, he was a ‘civilization specialist’.

He could propose a set of groundless and yet astounding theories that could shock everyone who heard them, but as for exactly how theories could be put into practice, it was not really what the old tortoise was best at.

Therefore, until Li Yao left the federation, the Monument Plan had never made much progress and probably would not have achieved any substantial results in the next decades by his estimation. It was just a plan on paper.

It had never occurred to Li Yao that the Monument Plan, after being changed into the Tinder Plan, would already reach the point where the first batch of ‘tinder’ could be sent after a hundred years!

The time channel constructed by the 3D light beams alone was enough for the visitors to see the ambitions hidden deep inside the ‘tinder’. The researchers were truly trying to condense the origins, development, peak, and future of mankind into one short moment and pass it on to the brand-new species that would appear in billions of years!

Moreover, in the ‘time channel’, the ancient fungi were replaced by red algae, the green algae were replaced by trilobites, and then Devonian fish, dinosaurs, apes, and human beings… They replaced, or rather, eliminated, their predecessors.

In the last scene, human beings were replaced and eliminated by silver balls. What did it mean exactly?

Li Yao was deep in thought. He had a vague uncomfortable feeling.

Then he was amused, wondering if he was being too sensitive.

If there was really some clandestine arrangement off the table, it would not be displayed openly just like that!

Right then, Long Yangjun spoke to Ling Xiaole with a smile. “I’m told that in the age of ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago, a lot of ancient sects would set up illusionary arrays in front of their headquarters so that the guests would be inevitably awed and impressed by the sect after witnessing the splendid and intimidating illusions.

“At that time, the illusionary arrays in front of the headquarters represented the capabilities of a sect!

“Many ancient classics described the illusionary arrays of the most renowned sects to be so grotesque and gaudy that a new world seemed to have been established in front of the headquarters.

“I thought that it was merely the ancient people’s exaggeration, but after seeing the modern illusionary array in front of the Tinder Base, I finally realize that the ancient people were not lying at all!

“The decorations of the modern illusionary array alone are indicative enough that the Tinder Plan is meant for great purposes. But it is rather strange that I barely heard about such a magnificent plan that crossed billions of years before. Tomorrow, the first tinder is going to be launched. Why are there so few reports in the media outside? This is too low-key, isn’t it?”

“The Tinder Plan is indeed very low-key and mysterious,” Ling Xiaole said. “Even I don’t know the inside information about the project. Honestly speaking, if it weren’t for you, a Secret Sword Agent of my level wouldn’t be qualified to enter the base at all.

“Even the Speaker is not free to visit the base, because the ‘Tinder Plan’ is not entirely a government project in principle. Professor Mo Xuan has the absolute majority of shares. Most of the investment comes from him, too. This base is essentially his private property. So, it is only with Professor Mo Xuan’s consent that you are allowed to visit this place.”

“Oh?” Long Yangjun blinked. “Is there anything in this place that must be kept confidential?”

“Not exactly confidential.” Ling Xiaole thought for a moment and said, “How should I put it? The Tinder Plan was previously known as the Monument Plan, and ‘monument’ sounded too ominous. In fact, that was the truth, too. It was a plan of the pessimists and escapers. It could barely be called a flee but equaled to a declaration, stating that ‘since we are all going to die, we might as well make a beautiful monument and launch it out in memory of us, then we can all rest in peace’. Think about it. The federation is vigorous and rising unstoppably in its golden years right now. Who would be interested in learning about such a plan?”

Long Yangjun pondered for a moment and was amused. “It does make sense. Nobody likes a jinx.”

Ling Xiaole nodded and said, “Yes. The general public prefer blood-boiling, inspirational plans. The government does not want the Monument Plan to be exposed too much, too, in case the morale of the people is struck. The theory that mankind is destined to be destroyed in billions of years sounds too nihilistic. Nobody likes to hear that.

“The general public do not like it, and the government is unwilling to promote it. It is only natural that the project has been kept low profile.

“More importantly, as a plan of the pessimists, the ultimate success or failure of the project will forever be a mystery to us. By ‘us’, I am not just saying people of our generation but everyone in the civilization of mankind from the past to the future.”

Long Yangjun frowned. “I don’t understand…”

“They are going to launch the first ‘tinder’ tomorrow. Of course, our deep-sky cruise technology is quite mature right now, and the launch of the tinder can’t go wrong,” Ling Xiaole said. “But the tinder is set to drift in the sea of stars for millions of years in search of brand-new species. Then, can the tinder remain undamaged after a voyage of millions of years in the universe? Will everything contained inside the tinder, including Wei Qingqing herself, be completely shattered? Can she locate a suitable planet and discover a new life, or will she float in the desolate and boundless universe forever?

“Also, even if she does find a new life, will the new life be a carbon-based species made of flesh and blood that can comprehend our civilization, or will it be something… terribly bizarre?

“Assuming that a certain life is born in the metal lakes on a planet with a diurnal temperature variation of more than five hundred degrees, I find it hard to believe that such a life will be able to understand and accept the legacy of the civilization of mankind.

“All the questions that we are faced with right now cannot be answered immediately. They probably won’t be found out for a million years, a billion years, or even a trillion years.

“Now, do you think that the ‘Tinder Plan’, which is utterly meaningless to ‘here and now’, can attract the interest of the general public and the media?

“Also, Professor Mo Xuan is an unsocial man who prefers to keep a low profile. He never promoted the project on a large scale or invited any media to introduce it. In fact, the requests for interviews and visits from a few major media outlets were all declined by him. Only the federal army, the parliament, and the Secret Sword Bureau sent a few guests to attend the ceremony. To be honest, I was quite surprised that he agreed to your request to visit the base.”

Long Yangjun smiled. “Is there anything special about us?”

“According to Professor Mo Xuan, the Tinder Plan is a plan of the escapers, and the refu—rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic has fled for a thousand years,” Ling Xiaole said. “Since you and he are all refugees in a certain sense, he thinks that you will perhaps appreciate the Tinder Plan and understand him better than other people. Therefore, he is willing to meet the honorable guests from Firefly and have a good conversation with you.”

Looking at Li Yao, Long Yangjun said, “Then, we will be greatly honored. Professor Mo Xuan sounds like a weird guy. I once watched a debate between him and Professor Xie Wufeng on the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus and the virtual life. It left quite a deep impression on me.

“How come Professor Mo Xuan gave up the more promising projects such as the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus and the studies on virtual life and chose to manage the Tinder Plan instead?”

Ling Xiaole shook her head and replied, “I don’t know about the details. It seems that Professor Mo Xuan simply transferred all his passion and his lifelong efforts into the

Tinder Plan for some reason after the major frustration he suffered in the project of the Spiritual Nexus and virtual life.

“In fact, before Professor Mo Xuan participated, the previous Monument Plan was in a half-paralyzed state. The initial capital invested by the Glorious Sunlight Group had already been spent. The project manager Gui Suishou was a pure theorist who was not good at pushing forward such an enormous, complicated project of many different levels, either. Also, because his connections among humans were not very extensive, and because of the ominous nature of the project, few experts were willing to join him.

“After all, the federation was prospering in all aspects back then. There were too many thrilling projects and programs to count. As long you were a talent, you would certainly find a suitable place to work. Why would you dedicate your entire life to such a pessimistic, unpromising plan?

“When the Monument Plan was about to die of natural course, Professor Mo Xuan joined the game aggressively and acquired the project from Gui Suishou. He also renamed it the Tinder Plan.

“In the past hundred years, Professor Mo Xuan has worked as the president of the Grand Desolate War Institution, the Refiners’ Association, the Association of Spectral Cultivators, and many other organizations. He has put dozens of major projects into practice and pushed them forward. His experience and his connections in the circle are incomparable to Gui Suishou’s.

“Besides, Professor Mo Xuan also invested his lifelong savings into the project. He even raised a large sum of funds by selling his shares in the Glorious Sunlight Group and the authorization of all the magical equipment that he designed and produced in his entire life, including the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. The funds were all invested into the Tinder Project.

“With the participation of such a powerful leader and the investment of incessant capital, a team of experienced specialists was soon gathered. The base was constructed later, too. The Tinder Plan was revived and rushed forward at an astonishing speed. After only decades, there are already products!”

Chapter 1705 - Sister Qingqing Again

Professor Mo Xuan’s lifelong savings!

Li Yao was greatly shocked.

As Mo Xuan’s disciple, he knew exactly what it meant. It was no exaggeration to say that his professor was one of the biggest magnates nationwide with wealth as great as the national treasury!

Yes. More than a hundred years ago, when Li Yao joined the Grand Desolate War Institution as a freshman student, Professor Mo Xuan, who was the dean of the Refining Department at that time, had invested all his belongings into the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit project. He had been so destitute that he had been borrowing money from everyone he knew.

However, as the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit became the first mass-produced crystal processor designated by the military of the federation and was equipped by more than ten legions, Professor Mo Xuan’s poverty was changed for good.

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit project did not belong to the Grand Desolate War Institution but was essentially managed by Professor Mo Xuan and Professor Yuan Manqiu themselves. Not only was the earliest framework of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit devised by the two of them based on the remnants of the crystal suits from the Star Ocean Imperium, even most of the research funds were raised by them, too.

Therefore, they were the greatest profiters of the project. Li Yao was merely a researcher and a test pilot who had joined the project at the last phase, so he had only gained a tiny slice of shares in it.

But the tiny slice of shares brought Li Yao endless wealth every year incessantly, which was then exchanged for countless resources. It was the solidest support for his soar in Cultivation.

When Li Yao returned from the Flying Star Sector for the first time, the earnings generated by the authorization of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit were already astronomical.

Today, the family of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit were the best-selling crystal suits in the Star Glory Federation in the past hundred years. Their cheap cost, sturdiness, and easy maintenance were made best use of in complicated environments in the seven Sectors and the terribly harsh resource planets. They were extremely popular among people of all social classes, especially ordinary people.

One might say that in any place where the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars emblem of the federation could be seen, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuits that were rusted and riddled with holes but still functioned well could be found. They made great contributions to the golden development of the federation!

Leaving the pirate producers aside, for the crystal suit manufacturers who were officially authorized, they had to pay the original designer a certain fee for every Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit they built. After a hundred years, as the best-selling crystal suit series, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had already given Li Yao an astronomical income although he only had a slice of shares. It was unimaginable how much Professor Mo Xuan had earned as the major shareholder!

That, on the other hand, was only one part of Professor Mo Xuan’s wealth.

Years ago, when the Glorious Sunlight Group was founded in the Flying Star Sector, it was mainly for the purpose of covering up the Glorious Sunlight Magical Equipment Laboratory under its banner. The owner of the particular laboratory was Professor Mo Xuan, who had already turned into a star spirit back then.

Therefore, Professor Mo Xuan had quite a lot of shares in the Glorious Sunlight Group, too, almost as many as Li Yao’s.

Li Yao had always respected his professor. Neither himself nor his professor were ever greedy about money. Naturally, they never cared about such insignificant issues.

Right now, the Glorious Sunlight Group was developing quite well as one of the top twenty corporations in the federation. Professor Mo Xuan’s shares, boosted by the rise of the group, were worth an astounding fortune.

Furthermore, Professor Mo Xuan had absorbed a lot of computational ability from the star child in the battle against Xiao Xuance and saved the Flying Star Sector at the most critical moment together with Li Yao, which indirectly changed the course of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the entire New Federation later. His personal computational ability soared crazily after the battle and could be called the best in the country in terms of many parameters!

With his amazing computational ability, he was essentially a super crystal processor with the soul of a human. That was why he had become one of the earliest developers of the game ‘Civilization’.

The initial development of the game was basically as such. Li Yao and Su Changfa would raise many creative ideas after their discussion and debate, Lu Qingchen would note them down, and Professor Mo Xuan would find a way to put them into practice.

Naturally, Professor Mo Xuan had a lot of shares in the Civilization project.

Today, Civilization had already developed into a behemothic creature of national influence. Did anyone need to question Professor Mo Xuan’s wealth?

And now, he had spent all his savings, which should have been enough to buy a whole planet, on the seemingly unattractive Tinder Plan that could only affect the future species that would be born in billions of years?

How immeasurable this mysterious ‘Tinder Plan’ must have become after being developed by him for so many years with such funding!

The more Li Yao thought about it, the more he felt that something was not right.

“Professor Mo Xuan is one of the most notable celebrities in the federation,” Long Yangjun noted in surprise. “I believe his personal wealth must be abundant. But he’s putting all of his money into an unsubstantial plan of the pessimists? What a devoted man!”

“I couldn’t agree with you more.” Ling Xiaole opened her hands. “It is said that he had a big fight with Yuan Manqiu, his former wife, who was another famous master of refining in the federation. They even got divorced because of that! He—he has indeed dedicated his efforts, his savings, and his entire soul to the ‘Tinder Project’!”

Li Yao and Long Yangjun looked at each other, both amazed.

So, it was not just because of an affair. The whole thing was getting more and more weird.

Li Yao was there mainly to meet Professor Mo Xuan. Investigating Lu Qingchen was not his primary concern. Most importantly, he was hoping to reach out to Ding Lingdang and Jin Xinyue through a reliable channel with Professor Mo Xuan’s help.

But judging from the latest information…

Professor Mo Xuan seemed to be the one he should really focus his attention on!

Professor, what happened to you? Who have you become after a hundred years? Or maybe…

While Li Yao was pondering, the shuttle trembled softly and slowly stopped on a silver rail that was close to the ground.

Green grass grew around them, a refreshing breeze was embracing them, and a blue sky, white clouds, and warm sunlight were overhead. Although they knew that everything was illusionary, they could not help but feel reinvigorated.

Li Yao heard giggles and laughter that were ringing like a pleasant bell.

He looked at the source of the sound, only to discover that almost a hundred elementary school students were playing on the lawn with each other. A few teachers in white dresses were also involved, playing the game together with the kids. They seemed to be on a spring hike together.

But unlike normal spring hikes, every kid there was followed… by a weird thing.

Li Yao blinked and did not know how to describe it.

Some of the objects floating around the students looked like some sort of furry, round, and cute pets, like the Puji Critters with short and stupid wings in Li Yao's memory.

But some of them were raging dragons that were hovering above the students. They looked rather intimidating, but the kids were not bothered at all. Even the most vulnerable girls did not seem to have noticed the ferocious animals above their heads at all.

Some other students were followed by glittering puppets or even living human beings!

Those human beings were in different attires. Some were wearing robes or sword suits in a vintage style, as if they had travelled through time from forty thousand years ago. Some were wearing a mustard-seed combat suit, with the Demon Beast Detector that Li Yao was quite familiar with on their faces. Some of them even had sacredly white wings in their back and glamorous horns above their head, like kings among the demons.

Every elementary school student was accompanied by such a 'being'.

Before Li Yao figured out what was going on, two little boys who appeared brawnier than their age and the two beings that were following them closely like guardians collided!

“He! I’ve finally got a chance today. Look at my old grandpa. This is the ninth generation of the latest model. Have you ever seen one before? It is going to beat your old grandpa to the ground!”

“What’s the big deal about the ninth generation? Although my old grandpa is the eighth generation, his combat system was just upgraded yesterday, and he learned quite a few new techniques!”

“You are bragging. Let me teach you a lesson. Come on!”

“Do you think that I’m scared of you? Bring it on!”

The two young boys began wrestling with each other on the ground until they were covered in grass and mud. The two ‘old grandpas’ behind them drifted to the midair and fought each other.

What slightly surprised Li Yao was that the two ‘old grandpas’ were quite professional warriors and looked like real experts. As they began fighting, glamorous saber and sword auras were spreading out like fireworks.

Had it not been for the fact that Li Yao sensed no spiritual waves, he would have almost mistaken the two ‘old grandpas’ for real persons.

But soon, the teachers leading the team noticed the two wrestling students. One of them quickly ran close and pressed the crystal processor on her wrist. The ‘old grandpas’ that were having a heated battle above the two little kids turned into two streaks of brilliance before they were absorbed into the teacher’s crystal processor.

“Little Long, Little Qi, it’s you two again! Old grandpas are supposed to teach you knowledge, not horse around!” the white-dressed teacher said angrily. “You will be forbidden from using old grandpas for three days as punishment!”

“Three days? Please don’t, teacher!”

The two boys immediately begged for mercy with tears in their eyes.

Li Yao looked at Ling Xiaole. Ling Xiaole stuck her tongue out and shrugged, indicating that it was the first time that she had ever seen such a weird scene and that she did not know any more about the base than he did.

While the three of them were suspicious, a little green bird made of clear, beautiful crystals hovered for a moment above the shuttle and slowly landed before it. Then, it turned into a girl who was pure, serene, elegant but somewhat as lonely as an orchid flower in an empty valley. The girl looked at them with a smile.

Li Yao felt his heart palpitate.

He had seen the image before on the train north to the Grand Desolate Plateau a hundred years ago.

It was Wei Qingqing, the one with the lowest Cultivation and the weakest combat ability and the one who had been the least obliged to stand out of the seven Cultivators who sacrificed themselves valiantly to save a train of ordinary people. It was the free little green bird.

He had not seen her for a hundred years, but he had never forgotten her.

It had nothing to do with romance; it was something much more intense than romance.

Before, it had been under the encouragement of Wei Qingqing and the rest of the heroes that Li Yao had awakened his spiritual root and embarked on his path of Cultivation.

The scene of the valiant sacrifice of Wei Qingqing had been etched into his soul as part of his belief, never to be effaced.

“Greetings. My name is Wei Qingqing, and I am a teacher here. I’m going to set off to billions of years in the future tomorrow. You are free to see me off if you want,” the virtual image of Wei Qingqing said gently and calmly.

Chapter 1706 - Prosperous Circulation!

The unique opening put Li Yao and his companions into a deep and solemn atmosphere.

There was no need to mention Li Yao, who had been through a lot with Wei Qingqing before. Even Long Yangjun and Ling Xiaole were quite interested in the female teacher who had volunteered to pass on the tinder of the civilization of mankind to billions of years in the future.

However, what they were more curious about was the children and the ‘old grandpas’.

Sensing their confusion, Wei Qingqing smiled and gestured for them to walk on the lawn on which the children were playing with each other.

“The Tinder Base includes quite a large park. More than fifty thousand workers and their families live in this place. So, this is more or less a town that has everything that you need,” she explained. “Schools, hospitals, stores, and entertainment facilities can all be found here. Naturally, we have our own kindergartens and elementary schools.

“These little guys are all the children of the researchers of the Tinder Plan. I’ve spent the last five years with them in a school here.”

“Miss Wei!”

“Miss Qingqing!”

Seeing that they were walking close, many children stood up and greeted them. It was not hard to tell from their smiling faces that Wei Qingqing was quite popular among the kids.

Wei Qingqing smiled. She suddenly looked at the kids while she closed her hands and opened them, presenting a blossoming flower from her palm. Then, she pouted her cheeks and blew at the flower, and the flower flew out in the wind like a dandelion, attracting a lot of children to chase it amid laughter. There was nothing but joy on the lawn.

Wei Qingqing’s body of flesh and blood had already been destroyed in the beast tide outbreak more than a hundred years ago. As a spectral Cultivator, she did not have a real entity. Her current shape of a human and the colorful dandelion were naturally both illusions.

However, the fact that she could create such a vivid, almost real illusion and make it drift a hundred meters away was still indicative enough of her high level of Cultivation.

She was an ‘Illusionist’ in the first place, one of the weirdest professions in the world of Cultivators who had the ability to shape their writing into all kinds of illusions.

“Miss Wei, what are the ‘old grandpas’ over the children?” Long Yangjun asked.

“They were known as ‘Half Intelligent Virtual Educational Telepathic Thought Amalgamations’ when the patent was published,” Wei Qingqing said. “But since it is too long and awkward, everybody simply calls them ‘old grandpas’ because they are truly like old grandpas who are knowledgeable and answer our every need.

“It is a virtual educational program, or some sort of virtual teacher, if you will. Technically speaking, it is not complicated. All you need to do is combine the curriculum of the twelve years of compulsory education together with all the content on the Grand Encyclopedia of the Federation. However, in the Tinder Base, the research institute wants it to be more independent with a higher performance in decision-making. Not only should it be a good teacher for a student, it should also be a good life companion and even a good helper in a battle.

“Let me put it this way. They are hoping to project an ‘old grandpa’ onto a harsh, unpopulated, alien planet. As long as it detects a life form similar to mankind, it will automatically formulate the entire education system and upgrade route according to the environment to help the life form learn everything of our civilization from scratch, from the most basic baby babbles and arithmetic to the most complicated arts of refining and combat techniques.

“When the student is in danger, the old grandpa should be able to foresee the unpredictable factors and protect the student.

“It’s like this—”

Wei Qingqing raised her hand. Bright green, hazy mists of light surged out of her nonexistent fingertips and condensed into a translucent shadow in midair.

It was a white-haired old man who looked amiable but had intimidation deep inside his eyes.

Li Yao scratched his chin hard. Why did he feel that the old man looked somewhat similar?

“This is the old grandpa of the tenth generation that we are currently developing,” Wei Qingqing said. “The standard template is named ‘Old Yao’. It is built with ‘Li Yao’, the great hero of the federation, as the prototype.”

“…” Li Yao.

“Wow. How interesting!” Long Yangjun exclaimed.

The ‘Old Yao’ waved his hands, and an enormous blank light beam suddenly appeared in front of him. Then, he began teaching the simplest words such as ‘people’, ‘mountain’, ‘sky’, and ‘sun’, while simple figures, pictures, and characters appeared on the light beam.

Then, the content on the light beam suddenly changed into the fundamental disciplines of the college level.

After a presentation of a literacy lesson, ‘Old Yao’ demonstrated the most standard body exercise from the federation’s military. Then, he made quite a few typical postures where one could absorb and summon natural spiritual energy. In the end, he became motionless.

Wei Qingqing smiled. “From the first generation to the tenth generation, the development of the old grandpas has seen significant progress. But there still seems to be a long way to go for them to meet the needs of all unknown environments and species, which is our goal. So, we have brought them to our kindergartens and elementary schools as ‘toys’ for the children in order to collect more usable data!”

Li Yao and ‘Old Yao’ stared at each awkwardly for a long time. In the end, Li Yao coughed and said, “So to speak, you are planning to send the ‘old grandpas’ to billions of years in the future to edify new civilizations?”

“Yes, of course!” Wei Qingqing opened her virtual arms and bathed in the virtual sunlight comfortably. “I’ve spent my whole life teaching children. I’ve seen so many young and naïve children gradually grow up. In fact, from the perspective of a higher level, isn’t the so-called Monument Plan or the Tinder Plan a compulsory education program on a universal level?

“Many civilizations that are in an ignorant state may exist in the universe in billions of years’ time, like the naïve children. Whatever their life form is, if our ‘old grandpas’ can bring the essence of the civilization of mankind to them and offer them enlightenment, won’t they be the continuation of our civilization?

“Of course, the lives bred on different planets and different environments are bound to be in different forms. Perhaps it will be difficult for them to understand the entirety of the civilization of mankind, but one tiny bit will be enough.

“Think about it. On a bizarre planet in billions of years, an intelligent life form that looks like a metal octopus is born in a boiling swamp. Such a life form and their social structure will definitely be vastly different from mankind. But with the help of an ‘old grandpa’, they begin to understand our concepts of ‘love’ and ‘protection’ and even include the concepts into their own civilization because they feel that such feelings are good. What a beautiful universe it will be!

“To achieve such a purpose, even the tenth generation of the ‘old grandpa’ does not have enough robustness and universalness. The specialists in the Tinder Base are still working on it, but I can’t wait any longer! Ha. Just let me be the first ‘old grandpa’ and search for the children in the universe. Oh, that’s not right. If I am the candidate, I should be an ‘old grandma’.”

Ripples spread out on Wei Qingqing’s body, and she truly turned into a friendly, adorable grandma whose back was hunched and whose hair was white.

Seeing the image that he had never seen before, Li Yao was somewhat lost.

“Miss Wei, I’m rather curious about one thing. Have you ever considered the danger of the ‘Tinder Plan’?” Long Yangjun asked. “Will certain alien species deep inside the universe take advantage of certain information carried by the Tinder Plan and threaten the civilization of mankind? After all, the universe is too vast and dark. Other than ‘children’, tremendous ferocious and voracious animals are lurking, right?”

Wei Qingqing smiled casually and replied, “Of course, we’ve thought over the problem. That’s why every piece of ‘tinder’ has been installed with the barriers of the highest level. It cannot be opened for a million years. If it is opened by brute force, the self-destruction procedure will immediately be activated.

“The information stored inside the tinder, on the other hand, will not exceed the college level in the federation today. It should be fundamental knowledge for all the civilizations in the universe.

“After a million years, if the civilization of mankind still exists, it will probably have developed into a form and a level that none of us can imagine right now. How can the unknown alien species, however ferocious they may be, use our fundamental theories that our outdated by a million years then?

“On the other hand, if the civilization of mankind goes extinct within the next million years, which, based on the mind-boggling path of development in the past forty thousand years, is a highly likely possibility, then the alien species will not be able to jeopardize us because we no longer exist.

“Yes. We don’t deny that the Tinder Plan entails some danger. Perhaps the universe is truly full of darkness. But that is why we should throw torches around to ignite the grass and bushes and illuminate our environment so that we can find more of our kind and companions that we can communicate with!

“Otherwise, won’t we spend our entire life shuddering in fear in the darkness, fearing that we can never get out of it?”

Wei Qingqing’s words cast Li Yao, Long Yangjun, and Ling Xiaole into silence.

Wei Qingqing continued smiling and said, “In fact, don’t underestimate the difficulty of searching for a civilization in the universe. By the calculation of the specialists in the Tinder Base, the odds of us finding an alien species in the next million years are no higher than one billionth. Perhaps we will have to drift for tens of millions of years in the sea of stars before we have a chance of finding a new life.

“By that time, there is a great chance that the civilization of mankind will have already been destroyed, just like the Pangu Civilization and the Nuwa Civilization were.

“It is possible that the brand-new species who receive our old grandpa and inherit the essence of our civilization will return to the homeland of their ‘teacher’ and help the offspring of their ‘teacher’ make a new mankind and recreate our civilization. Who knows?

“If one isn’t enough, we will send thousands of old grandpas into the universe. Some of them will certainly run into a good student, right?

“Circulation brings prosperity. Perhaps this is the best solution to keep the civilization of mankind alive forever!”

Chapter 1707 - Village Teacher

Li Yao had a lot of mixed feelings after hearing Wei Qingqing’s words. He felt that he saw the free and joyful green bird from a hundred years ago again.

She had always been such a person, always willing to pursue the tiniest happiness even if she had suffered the greatest misfortune.

“That explains a lot,” Li Yao mumbled. “Is that why you volunteered to join the Tinder Plan?”

“Yes. I am the best candidate,” Wei Qingqing said with a smile. “At first, the Tinder Plan aimed to launch a bunch of Cosmos Rings that store the old grandpas. However, as you have seen, the old grandpa right now can only serve as an educational tool for human beings. If it is an unknown life form that is the opposite of mankind, say not a mammal and not even made of flesh and blood, the old grandpa will be rendered helpless. Even the tenth generation of the old grandpa can hardly teach a fish, not to mention a bizarre metal life form, magnetic life form, or energy life form.

“It will take a long time to improve the old grandpa. Maybe the subject of the old grandpa’s teachings can only be universally indiscriminate after hundreds of years of development. But we cannot afford to wait that long now because the expedition army of the Imperium is arriving anytime. If we don’t launch the tinder, we may never get to launch it.

“Later, we also thought of launching a hibernating person, but the hibernation technology of the federation was our bottleneck, too. We are not talking about a hibernation of decades or hundreds of years but millions of years or even longer! Even the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan might not have had such hibernation technology, considering that our parent civilizations have only been gone for less than a million years so far!

“A hibernation of less than a million years greatly impinged on the hibernating individual, to the point that a member of the Pangu Clan was even killed by our hero Li Yao after it woke up from hibernation. While the incident proves the invincibility of Li Yao, it also indirectly suggests the unreliableness of the Pangu Clan’s hibernation technology. If the member of the Pangu Clan had hibernated for millions of years, it’s possible that it would’ve rotted and died without any foreign interference.

“After much deliberation, we concluded that if someone must be launched, spectral Cultivators such as myself are the best choice because spectral Cultivators are not burdened by fleshly bodies. All we have is just an unsubstantial soul, which is almost weightless and consumes little energy.

“The specialists in the Tinder Base have produced a very powerful and stable silicon chip with an amazing material excavated from the seventeenth mining planet in the Water Crystal Sector known as ‘Silicon 41’. The shortcoming of common silicon elements that they are easy to break is overcome. Theoretically speaking, once the structure of the new element is stabilized, it will not change for a hundred million years!

“My soul will be melted into the silicon chip and sealed with special barriers. Then, I will enter a prolonged sleep like the hibernation for other people before I march toward the depths of the universe!

“This is the most energy-conserving solution that can last the longest time. Due to the limited time, this is the best we can do for the first batch of ‘tinder’ now. If we can defeat the expedition army of the Imperium, we can take our time to develop more advanced tinder!”

Li Yao had hibernated for a hundred years himself and understood the feeling of loneliness and insignificance very well. He could not help but grow respectful of Wei Qingqing. Almost blurting out ‘Sister Qingqing’, he quickly shut his mouth and calmed himself down before he asked, “Miss Wei, you will be launched into the vast universe for a journey of millions of years by yourself in a tiny chip. Do you not feel that… it may be lonely?”

“Lonely? I don’t think so. I’ve tasted the feeling of being sealed by the barriers. It’s equivalent to sleep. You close your eyes, you have a long dream, and millions of years will have passed. Besides—”

Looking at somewhere far, far away, Wei Qingqing smiled. “I grew up in a mountain village in the Heaven’s Origin Sector. For the people living in the information age with a highly-developed, grand-unified Spiritual Nexus, it might be hard for them to imagine that there was once such a secluded place in the universe.

“You couldn’t find a second village within dozens of kilometers of my hometown. Many people never left the mountains in their entire life. Even light beam projectors were rare. Had it not been for my teacher, who was a

Cultivator from a major city and volunteered to teach in the village, I might never have been able to leave the place or know that so many people outside were living such a wonderful life!

“After I witnessed the great world out there that is full of wonders and possibilities, when I recalled my childhood in the small mountain village, I realized how lonely I had been before!

“So, after I graduated from the Sky Fantasia Academy, I became a village teacher like my teacher in the past. I worked in the Heaven’s Origin Sector first and then went to the Blood Demon Sector after the New Federation was founded. Later, I went to the Water Crystal Sector, the Forest Ocean Sector, the Nether World Sector, and the mines in the Uranian Ring Sector, to all the places that were as remote and secluded as my hometown. I told the children there how big the world outside was and that they were not lonely even if they were living on a tiny oasis in the middle of a vast desert.

“I lived such a life for almost a hundred years. I introduced the outside world to the isolated villages, and I brought a lot of children on the lone islands out and helped them find a greater and more wonderful world. But then, I gradually grew dissatisfied.

“For both the civilization of mankind and the alien species that probably exist in the depths of the universe billions of lightyears away, if we are forever trapped in every corner of the dark mists, blocked by our prudency and suspicion of each other, and never have the courage to talk to each other, won’t we be too lonely? Compared to be solitude of an individual, I think that this is the real loneliness. The eternal great loneliness.

“I want to break the loneliness. I want to find our own kind in the depths of the dark forest. If there aren’t any, we will create some to make the cold and grave universe livelier. Hehe. Allow me to brag about myself a little bit. I consider myself as a ‘village teacher’ that the civilization of mankind will send into the universe. I’m sure that a lot of ‘children’ will be waiting for me in the future. I almost can’t wait to meet them. Why should I feel lonely?”

Li Yao sighed with complicated feelings. Then he said, “Miss Wei, this is the first launch of the tinder after all. The performance of the so-called ‘super stable silicon chip’ is purely theoretical, too. Nobody can guarantee that it can persist for a hundred million years. Have you ever considered that… you might die?”

“Of course, death is a possibility.” Wei Qingqing blinked. “However, I should have died a hundred years ago on the train north to the Grand Desolate Plateau. I am unbelievably lucky to have transformed into a spectral Cultivator and lived another hundred years. During the hundred years, I flew over mountains and rivers in the seven Sectors, enjoyed countless splendid landscapes, heard many soul-stirring stories, made friends with a lot of very interesting people, and tasted the best feelings in the human world. Everything is perfect. Just let me walk into the dream with hope. Even if everything comes to an abrupt end in the dream, what’s there to be regretful about?”

Wei Qingqing stopped. Without them knowing it, they had arrived before a silver gate, which stood on the lawn in quite an out-of-place way. At first glance, there was nothing behind the gate except for the boundless grass and hills.

Li Yao extended his hand to the air next to the silver gate, but his hand was immediately pushed back gently but firmly.

It appeared that the lawn and hills far away were all illusions. A certain enormous building must be standing there, but it was covered by some sort of brilliant 3D light beam and Grand Illusionary Land to create the illusion of a great natural scene.

“Now, do you understand the true significance of the Tinder Plan? It is not a plan of absolute pessimism and nihilism as many people in the outside world say,” Wei Qingqing said with a smile. “The Tinder Plan is as glorious as the Heavenly Road Plan, the mainstream space exploration project in the federation today. The main focus of the Heavenly Road Plan is to explore the greater universe from the perspective of space, while the Tinder Plan is trying to explore from the perspective of time and to march billions of years into the future so that the civilization of mankind can defeat time itself!

“Alright. Please come in. Professor Mo Xuan is waiting for you!”

The silver gate seemed to be made of liquid metal. Ripples spread out as it faded away.

Li Yao and Long Yangjun looked at each other. Together with Ling Xiaole, the three of them entered the research and launch center of the Tinder Plan under Wei Qingqing’s lead.

At the same time, the last Immortal Cultivator in the Core Formation Stage in the Black Wind Fleet had been awakened. He was absorbing spiritual energy crazily, nurturing his veins and nerves that had withered from decades of hibernation. The final war preparations were finished.

At this moment, there were twenty-one hours, thirty-three minutes, and fifty-nine seconds to go before the Black Wind Fleet jumped to the Heaven's Origin Sector.

…

The silver hall of the R&D center of the Tinder Plan was similar to the lobby of the game center of 'Civilization'. Ball-shaped light beams were flashing in midair, in which a myriad of small worlds were blossoming like illusionary lotus flowers. The content of the small worlds were the episodes on the history of evolution as they had witnessed when they passed the 'time channel' a moment ago.

Ancient fungi were struggling in the boiling ocean. Trilobites and nautili dominated the ocean. The first batch of fish crawled on the muddy seashore. Dinosaurs, tigers, wolves, and monkeys claimed the continent in turn. Ancestors of human beings were picked and enlightened by the Pangu Clan, eventually growing into a vigorous, glorious civilization that occupied the three thousand Sectors.

The billions of years of development of life were highly summarized by the hundreds of small worlds.

They were not games that required real-time computation but mere videos. Therefore, they did not take much space. The hundreds of video clips could be stored in a tiny chip and launched together with Wei Qingqing.

For the alien species millions of years later, even if they could not understand the language of mankind or communicate with Wei Qingqing, as long as they boasted 'vision', they would be able to get the gist of 'mankind' as a civilization from the videos that depicted the evolution of life.

If the alien species were not very developed yet, it was possible that they would be fascinated by the skyscrapers, flying shuttles, and blazing lights in the videos and consider it a miracle demonstrated by the gods. Then, they might mimic certain things on the light beam and become the heir of mankind without them knowing it.

Chapter 1708 - The Spiriters and Their Realm!

Other than the videos about the origins and evolution of life, the remaining storage of the crystal chips was naturally occupied by the tremendous data including the Grand Encyclopedia of the Federation. Some of the rough star maps that had been publicly published were inside them, too.

If the alien civilizations in billions of years’ time understood such information, those star maps could possibly help them locate the three thousand Sectors that the civilization of mankind had once flourished in.

Of course, such data and files would not be given away easily.

According to Wei Qingqing, the several hundred psychologists in the Tinder Base had devised a series of secret tests regarding the ‘succession of civilization’, which could examine the morals and worldview of the potential inheritors without them knowing.

“I have recorded all the test content,” Wei Qingqing said. “The ‘old grandpas’ to be sent in the future will be installed with such test procedures, too. The old grandpas will only release a tiny bit of information and techniques at first and run a series of tests, while they observe the behavior of the acceptors of the knowledge. Only after they ensure that the morals and worldview of the acceptors are similar to ours will they release all the remaining information including the star maps.

“For example, after our old grandpa locates an alien world that has a not-so-developed civilization, he will perhaps find an ordinary, if not underprivileged, ‘specimen’ in the alien world first and fall to the side of the ‘specimen’ as a Cosmos Ring. Then, he will release part of the information and techniques and fabricate an origin for himself according to the myths of the alien world by claiming he is a prehistoric god, a sealed demon, or a lost artifact. Later, he will arrange a series of fortuitous events and adventures and secretly observe what the acceptors will do with the old grandpa’s techniques.

“If the specimen is interested in nothing but murder and entertaining himself, then we’ll have to say sorry. Such an alien race is probably not suitable to pass on all the information from the civilization of mankind. It is also too dangerous to let them know it. The old grandpa will automatically destroy most of the remaining information and prevent the alien race from learning of the civilization of mankind’s existence. Then, the old grandpa will release special waves and slowly corrode the brain of the specimen. In the end, the specimen will live in the illusions created by the old grandpa, unable to free itself. To people who are sober, the ‘specimen’ will be a complete psycho whose words must not be believed.

“In such a way, nobody in the alien world will know anything about the truth of the civilization of mankind.

“On the other hand, if the ‘specimen’ makes good use of the old grandpa’s knowledge by helping other people and protecting the ordinary people, it will suggest that the alien world has a worldview that is similar to ours and that it is qualified to accept our legacy.

“In the meantime, the old grandpa will arrange a series of tests for the ‘specimen’. With every test passed, more common morals and worldviews will be confirmed, and the old grandpa will release more techniques and information accordingly to make the specimen grow stronger to reform and lead their world in our way.

“In the end, after all the tests are passed, the ‘old grandpa’ will reveal all the truth and inform the specimen of the existence of mankind. He will also give our star map to the ‘kind and upright’ specimen so that they and their offspring may be able to return to the home of their ‘teacher’ one day.

“We believe that an alien race that can pass all the tests will definitely share a similar worldview to ours. It will be possible for us to understand and communicate with each other. We will also be able to give each other a hand and pass on each other’s knowledge!”

Wei Qingqing paused and smiled brilliantly. “Now, do you understand? We never underestimated the ambitions and lust of the alien species that are possibly lurking in space, and we will certainly look for a suitable inheritor according to the highest standard. In fact, the slow progress of the old grandpa’s development is mostly because we need to devise the ‘test procedures’.

“It is also for this reason that I have been selected as a member of the first batch of ‘tinder’.”

Li Yao was rather curious. “I don’t quite understand.”

“Because I am an ‘Illusionist’!” Wei Qingqing smiled. “Because of our unique skills, the Illusionists are able to affect other people’s brains through words and language and construct vivid illusions for them. Therefore, if we can really locate a rather underdeveloped alien civilization, I will be able to find an individual in the civilization and fabricate a series of bizarre, intriguing adventures for them, allowing them to achieve anything they want in the world of illusions, in order to test their morals and see if they are suitable to accept the great legacy of the civilization of mankind.”

Tilting his head and thinking for a moment, Li Yao was amused. “If the specimen does have evil thoughts, they will be quite pitiful.”

“It can’t be helped. I believe in the brightness of the universe, but I can’t turn a blind eye to darkness and evil,” Wei Qingqing said. “We have to be responsible for the future of mankind. All village teachers have a whip in their hands to discipline their students!

“For the success of the Tinder Plan, I’ve spent the last few years in deep meditation. With the help of hundreds of other Illusionists, I have constructed many wonderful ‘virtual worlds’ for test to ensure that our legacy will not fall into the wrong hands. So, there is no need to worry at all!

“Ah. We’re here.”

Passing through a long silver pathway, they reached a magnificent round hall. The wall of the hall was embedded with countless light beams and mystic ray launchers that projected tremendous holograms. Together, they built a vivid ‘Half-Step Grand Illusionary Land’.

All the light and shadow interweaved with each other into an unworldly paradise.

They seemed to be placed in the most perfect scenic spot. Quiet lakes that were as smooth as a mirror were nearby, and mountains covered in snow were far away. At the foot of the mountain was a town in an ancient style. Laughter and songs faintly drifted over from the town.

Li Yao was getting used to the style of the Tinder Base where reality and illusions were mixed. He was aware that most of the views were false illusions created by the mystic rays that were projected to his retina.

He blinked and covered his crystalline lens with feeble spiritual energy. Then, he immediately ‘saw’ the staff and the group of enormous crystal processors hiding behind the illusions.

There was also a black cube that was two meters tall, one meter long, and half a meter wide at the center of the hall. The surface of the cube was as smooth as a mirror without the slightest flaw.

“This is the super-strong silicon chip that can be stable for a hundred million years. It is going to be my new home,” Wei Qingqing said with a smile. After pausing for a moment, she added, “Our new home!”

“Our…” Li Yao pondered the deeper meaning behind the world.

So to speak, Wei Qingqing was not going to be the only spectral Cultivator sent in the ‘tinder’?

While he was thinking, a man of liquid metal who was glittering in silver strode toward them with a confident smile. “Representative Lin, Representative Long, and Miss Ling, greetings. I am Mo Xuan, supervisor of the Tinder Plan. Welcome to the Tinder Base!”

It was his professor!

Observing Professor Mo Xuan whom he had not seen for a hundred years, Li Yao immediately felt that something was wrong.

He could not describe it precisely, but Professor Mo Xuan a hundred years ago always gave a feeling that he was a dutiful researcher who did not like causing unnecessary attention.

However, in the video where Mo Xuan and Xie Wufeng debated on the ‘Spiritual Nexus’ and ‘virtual life’, the professor already looked a bit aggressive and radical.

Professor Mo Xuan appeared to be glowing even more than in the video. The moment he showed up, everybody was unable to move their eyes away from him.

The 3D projection technology in the federation was quite advanced. If Professor Mo Xuan wanted to, he could have covered himself in illusionary clothes and made himself look like a vivid human being—as Wei Qingqing did.

But he kept his liquid metal body nonetheless, not disguising the difference between him and a ‘living person’ at all. There was no telling whether it was because he did not care about such details or for some deeper reason.

Li Yao vaguely felt that it was no longer the professor that he was familiar with.

Then he realized that it made perfect sense. Professor Mo Xuan had not hibernated in the past hundred years. He had been through many things and even an affair. Of course he had changed!

Despite that, looking at Professor Mo Xuan who appeared both familiar and strange, Li Yao was suddenly reluctant to expose his identity or contact Ding Lingdang and Jin Xinyue through him.

Professor Mo Xuan glanced at Li Yao and Long Yangjun and smiled. “Representative Lin, Representative Long, Firefly can be compared to a piece of tiny tinder launched to the edge of the cosmos by the Star Ocean Republic a thousand years ago. I believe that it’s easier for you to understand the significance of the ‘Tinder Plan’ with your background, right?”

“Exactly.” Long Yangjun hurried to reply. “Miss Wei has explained a lot to us on our way here. The Tinder Plan is truly inspiring. We were moved by Miss Wei’s ambitions to march into the future and pass on the tinder of mankind. However, Miss Wei just mentioned ‘our home’. Also, can such a giant, black cube called a ‘chip’? So to speak, you are not going to send one soul but a virtual world with countless spectral Cultivators?”

“Yes,” Professor Mo Xuan replied sharply and thoughtfully. “But I’m afraid it’s a poor choice of words. What do you mean by ‘virtual world’? For those who live in it for a long time, the world constructed by the Spiritual Nexus and the crystal processors is as real as the world outside. It is neither ‘virtual’ nor ‘simulated’.

“Also, you may not know this, but I worked as the president of the Association of Spectral Cultivators in the federation for a long time. Now, ghosts are an important part of the federation, too. However, we are not very satisfied about the name ‘ghost’. Ghosts are human beings after they die, but we are not dead yet. Our life is changed into some sort of virtual form, but we are still alive. Why are we called ‘ghosts’?

“Ghost is an unpleasant and inaccurate name. So, the Association of Spectral Cultivators is now preparing a motion to change our name.”

“Oh?” Long Yangjun rolled her eyes and looked at Li Yao. “Excuse us, we don’t mean to be rude. Then, according to you, what should we call you if ‘ghosts’ and ‘virtual world’ are inappropriate?”

“The Spiriters.” Professor Mo Xuan condensed another arm from his body of metal liquid, which pointed at the black cube at the center of the hall, before he said, “We are not ghosts; we are the Spiriters, the third evolution form of mankind after humans and demons, who can live in crystal processors with just our soul!

“The ‘virtual worlds’ created by the Spiritual Nexus and the crystal processors are the best home for the Spiriters. So, we have named them the Spiriters’ Realms!

“Welcome to the Spiriters’ Realms, honorable guests from afar. Yes. The Tinder Plan is finally having its first launch after decades of hard work, but it is not one Spiriter that we will send but a small Spiriters’ Realm!”

Chapter 1709 - The Open and Frank Tinder Plan

Chapter 1709: The Open and Frank Tinder Plan

The Spiriters! The Spiriters’ Realms!

Every hair on Li Yao’s body was standing up. He observed the surroundings subconsciously, fearing that a hundred Spiriter assassins were lurking nearby and would lunge out at him when Professor Mo Xuan gave them a signal!

It could not be helped. His occupational disease got the better of him. It seemed a routine now that plots and schemes happened wherever he went.

“Is everything alright, Representative Lin?” Professor Mo Xuan asked.

“Yes, of course,” Li Yao said. “Is the federal government aware of the Spiriters thing?”

Professor Mo Xuan was slightly dazed and amused. “Of course. Like I said just now, we are trying to raise a motion in parliament to regulate our legal name. How can the government be unaware of the issue?

“In fact, not only does the government know it, many people in the leadership are also incredibly supportive.

“A hundred years ago in the Star Glory Federation, the birth rate of ghosts was quite low. They took up only one thousandth of the whole population. It was not a big deal that they were addressed as ‘ghosts’, the conventional name.

“However, as the technology on souls developed, more and more people have become able to survive for a while longer in the form of souls after their physical bodies perish. The participation of the Nether World Sector has brought us countless ghosts, too. The population of ghosts is now over one billion and has long surpassed one percent of the whole population. Naturally, we have our own living environment, social form, and customs.

“Besides, a lot of Spiriters are war heroes who made great contributions to the federation and sacrificed themselves. They spent their entire life serving the country, and yet they are called ‘ghosts’ after they unfortunately lost their bodies. Do you think that’s fair?”

Li Yao thought carefully for a moment and replied, “It does seem inappropriate.”

“Yes. There are also the young and innocent children who unfortunately passed away early,” Professor Mo Xuan said solemnly. “They will have to spend the rest of their life being called ‘ghosts’ and feel visible and invisible prejudice everywhere. It is highly unsuitable, too!

“That’s why we are legalizing our life form. We are not ghosts but Spiriters. We are proud members of the federation, like humans and demons. We serve the people as much as they do, don’t we?”

Li Yao was rendered speechless. “Well, that sounds reasonable!”

“Moreover,” Professor Mo Xuan continued, “in the past, ghosts often lived in the outside world with artificial bodies like regular humans. However, as you must also know, Representative Lin, artificial bodies are not made of flesh and blood, and their protection for the soul is not as high. Souls are highly vulnerable, too. Intense spiritual waves, solar radiation, and ionic storms will all damage, if not destroy, them.

“Therefore, ghosts in the past could barely live a quality life even if they survived. Also, their longevity wasn’t long. It was already impressive if they could live decades.

“For ghosts, we are essentially a cluster of unsubstantial souls. The best solution is to melt our soul into the silicon chips and then bury the silicon chips deep underground, where all radiation and waves are blocked. That’s the only way to sustain a long life for them.

“In the past, such a lifestyle that is no different from being imprisoned was definitely an unfavorable choice. However, as the technology of the Spiritual Nexus developed, we are now able to construct illusionary but vivid worlds and even connect them to the vast universe that is the ‘grand-unified Spiritual Nexus’. Ghosts do not need to be prone to natural influences in their artificial bodies in the outside world anymore. They can satisfy all their social, work, and emotional needs on the Spiritual Nexus.

“As a result, many ghosts do not need artificial bodies. They only need a tiny chip that stores their soul. After such chips are stored in underground warehouses and connected to the Spiritual Nexus, they will be able to live in the Spiritual Nexus for a long time.

“Think about it. The ghosts spend almost all their time on the Spiritual Nexus. Cyber communities are their everything and their real life. Isn’t it preposterous to call it a ‘virtual world’? What does ‘virtual’ mean? Is their life not real but false, illusionary, and simulated?

“Therefore, the cyberspace that the ghosts, or the Spiriters, live in is fundamentally different from the game worlds of regular players. We treat our new home very seriously. This is not a virtual world but the Spiriters’ Realm. It is a new territory of the Star Glory Federation and will be a boundless new world for all humanity!”

Li Yao had learned a few days back that, because the technology of the Spiritual Nexus was quite advanced, not just the ghosts, even a lot of living people spent days and nights on the Spiritual Nexus. The Spiritual Nexus meant everything to those people. Therefore, the Spiriters’ Realm might truly become a vast world itself.

Professor Mo Xuan went on. “The trickiest problem during our implementation of the Tinder Plan is how to lower the size and weight of the ‘super-strong silicon chip’. Please take a look, Representative Lin. This time, we have adopted a brand-new element named Silicon 41. Although all the shortcomings of regular silicon elements have been overcome, and it can keep stable for more than a hundred million years theoretically, we find it difficult to continue compressing the crystalloid structure. This is the minimal size we can get.

“Wouldn’t it be too wasteful to store the soul of one Spiriter in such a large block of a rare element? One individual alone, however smart they are, will be unable to pass on the knowledge of the entire civilization.

“Therefore, we recruited within the Association of Spectral Cultivators and vetted almost ten thousand volunteers. In the end, we picked out 122 Spiriters who covered all aspects of our society. Some of them are war heroes with incredible accomplishments. Some are famous mathematicians, psychologists, sociologists, and specialists of other disciplines in the academic world. Some are government officials who once ran big cities of millions of people. Some are romantic, liberal artists. Of course, some of them are just ordinary people who worked in ordinary posts.

“The 122 Spiriters have established a town in the tiny Spiriters’ Realm here. They will enter the ‘seal state’, which is a more stable way to preserve life than regular hibernation, together with Miss Wei Qingqing at the same time. Then, the ‘black cube’ will be launched by the most advanced tiny deep-sky exploration starship of the federation and embark on a journey of millions of years in search for a new life.

“Millions of years later, after new life is detected, the black cube will automatically be activated, and the town in the Spiriters’ Realm will be brought back to life and create a new tomorrow for mankind!”

Li Yao took a long breath. He did not know that the seemingly unattractive Tinder Plan had such a grandiose background.

“Ever since I joined the ‘Tinder Plan’,” Professor Mo Xuan said, “the project has always been entirely open to the government. Many officials in the government who are Spiriters have given us a lot of support, too. After all, for the prolonged exploration in space, the Spiriters are much more suitable candidates than regular humans!

“Right now, of the project team of the ‘Tinder Plan’, people from the federal government make up fifteen percent, specialists from the military take up another fifteen percent, and many scholars from the Secret Sword Bureau and several major universities in the federation are involved in the project, too. So, the progress and content of the project are purely open and upright.

“Did you notice the troops stationed outside and the grave-looking security here? Tomorrow, the Tinder Plan will have its very first launch. It is quite a big event of a very high level. The local garrison of the Hundred Flowers Space Zone and the heads of the Secret Sword Bureau are all here with their tough subordinates to monitor everything closely.

“Therefore, you do not need to worry about your safety at all, Representative Lin. This project is not open to the public because we do not want to cause unnecessary conflicts before the name ‘Spiriter’ is officially recognized. After all, too many spies from the Imperium are out there nowadays. It will be no good if they instigate trouble!

“After we defeat the expedition army of the Imperium, we will certainly release everything to the public exactly as it is. But right now, in case anything goes wrong, let’s just buy ‘insurance’ for the federation with the first ‘tinder’!”

Professor Mo Xuan burst into laughter.

Li Yao, however, felt as if his heart had been pierced by a needle. It felt weird.

Professor Mo Xuan in the old days had certainly not been as humorous as that.

Li Yao would not call him the one who was most familiar with Professor Mo Xuan, but if Professor Mo Xuan’s character had been slowly altered in a time span of a hundred years, even those closest to him might not be able to notice the slight change every day and accept the new Professor Mo Xuan without them knowing it.

After all, everybody could change. It was perfectly normal!

But for Li Yao, although he had hibernated for a hundred years, less than three years had really passed in his mind. He felt quite uncomfortable seeing such drastic changes in his professor, who was like a totally different person.

His professor was sharper, more radical, more passionate, and… more aggressive!

In the past, Professor Mo Xuan had been as warm and smooth as jade, but right now, Professor Mo Xuan was like a saber made of the most dazzling sunlight!

Was such a change good or bad?

“Come on, Representative Lin, Representative Long, and Miss Ling.” Pointing out the dense immersive virtual cabins not far away, Professor Mo Xuan invited them courteously. “Enter the ‘Carefree World’ with me and bid farewell to the small Spiriters’ Realm that will be on its way tomorrow!”

“Enter a Spiriters’ Realm?” Li Yao shuddered without reason.

“Yes. Aren’t you here to see the Tinder Plan?” Professor Mo Xuan was slightly dazed. He asked curiously, “What’s up? The heads of the local garrison and the local branch of the Secret Sword Bureau are all visiting the ‘Carefree World’ right now and saying goodbye to the 122 Spiriter volunteers. Is there a problem?”

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao observed the immersive virtual cabins deep inside the lobby.

The silver virtual cabins were both like cocoons and coffins, emitting an air of coldness and death.

The virtual cabins were guarded by at least one elite squad from the federal army as well as more than ten Secret Sword Agents who looked rather strong. Li Yao felt more or less relieved after seeing that.

He was probably being paranoid. However…

Thinking quickly, Li Yao quickly looked at Long Yangjun and dropped her a hint. Then, having no time to consider whether or not Professor Mo Xuan would grow suspicious, he said, “No problem at all. But it’s better if I enter the ‘Spiriters’ Realm’ by myself. Our Representative Long accidentally hurt her head yesterday during training. According to the doctor’s instruction, she must stay away from immersive virtual cabins in case the recovery of his brain is affected.”

Professor Mo Xuan slightly frowned. Then he nodded and said, “Alright. Should we arrange a new visiting route for Representative Long so that she can take a look at the other departments of the ‘Tinder Plan’, say, the research institute of the ‘old grandpas’?”

“That will be unnecessary,” Long Yangjun said. “I’ll just wait for the captain next to his virtual cabin. I would appreciate it if you can give me some relevant files so I can kill the time. After all, the captain’s visit won’t be for too long. Our carrier is still waiting to jump to the Heaven’s Origin Sector!”

Chapter 1710 - Between Reality and Illusion

Led by Professor Mo Xuan, Li Yao and Ling Xiaole were each given one immersive virtual cabin, after passing the dual tests of the federal army and the Secret Sword Agents.

Li Yao slowly sank into the thick, dense liquids.

The special ‘nerval interaction liquids’ contained tremendous man-made neuron elements. There were also a lot of brainwave feedback patches that could both stimulate all the nerve endings on a human body and connect a human brain to a crystal processor, or rather, connect the soul to the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus, through the special simulated brainwaves.

The main difference between advanced virtual cabins and low-level ones lay in the quality of the ‘nerval interaction liquids’. What Professor Mo Xuan had adopted was apparently the most cutting-edge nerval interaction liquids that had only been developed in the federation recently. It could make someone dwell completely in the virtual world, the Spiriters’ Realm.

Before he was fully consumed by the ‘nerval interaction liquids’, Li Yao glanced at the big shots in the rows of virtual cabins next to him, who were from the military, the Secret Sword Bureau, the government, and the various research institutions in the Hundred Flowers Space Zone.

They were all there to attend the launch ceremony of the ‘Tinder Plan’ tomorrow. At this moment, their souls were all visiting the Spiriters’ Realm.

Looking at their bodies that were absolutely still as if they were in a deep sleep, Li Yao somehow felt creeped out.

Thankfully, Long Yangjun was still next to him offering protection.

Well. Although such a person whose sexuality and purpose were equally ambiguous was also not one hundred percent reliable, at this moment, Li Yao suddenly had the feeling that she was even more trustworthy than Professor Mo Xuan!

Rest assured!

The moment Li Yao was completely consumed, he saw Long Yangjun winking at him, reassuring him with her eyes.

Shua!

Light and shadow changing in front of Li Yao’s eyes, Li Yao soon found himself on a tiny hill in the middle of a quite prairie on a brand-new world.

The sky was clear, and the clouds were scarce. The scent of flowers was flowing in the air. Ripples were spreading out on the lakes which looked like mirrors. Silver rivers zigzagged into a town that was of an ancient style and flowed out into the distance.

Almost every household in the town had colorful wind chimes in front of their door. The pleasant sounds that they uttered only added to the serenity of the town.

On the hills far away, somebody was singing folk songs aloud.

There were also kids who were flying in the sky to their heart’s content, as if they were carrying enormous kites. This was an illusionary world that did not need to abide by the laws of the reality after all. As long as one had enough computational ability and soul power, anything beautiful could happen.

“Most virtual worlds cannot be perfect simulations to reality, partly because the computational ability of the crystal processors is not enough for too many participants, partly because the remote communication across Sectors is too unstable, causing the high lag and inconsistency for the people in different worlds, and partly because perfect simulations of reality are too painful and very likely to lead to accidents. But most importantly of all, it is because of people’s attitude.”

Professor Mo Xuan’s deep and passionate voice echoed behind Li Yao.

“Even if it is a perfect simulation of reality, if those who enter it only consider it a game and themselves players, how can they treat everything seriously?

“After all, everything is fake and can be rebuilt anytime. Even if they break the rules, they will not suffer any penalty greater than being kicked out of the game.

“When countless false attitudes overlap, they create a gigantic, weird, and false world. Therefore, it is not strange at all that the DLCs of ‘Civilization’ for regular players are called ‘virtual worlds’.

“But this place is different. I assure you that the Spiriters’ Realm is a home to the Spiriters. It is a place where we live carefully and will defend with our lives. This place has its own rules and laws. Even if I am its creator…”

When Li Yao turned around, he saw Professor Mo Xuan’s true appearance, which he had only seen in pictures before.

He was a tall man with particularly broad shoulders, bronze skin, stubble, and a pair of determined eyes.

He looked like some sort of hybrid between camel and bull, which would persist to the end of its goal after a goal was set no matter how harsh and unfavorable the environment was. Even though he had fallen and died and decayed into a pile of bones, it would still take thousands of years before his remains were entirely effaced.

Professor Mo Xuan, in a gray suit, was squatting on the ground. Narrowing his eyes, he touched the smooth, moist grass that scattered the ground. Suddenly, a sapling rose up from where he touched and grew up quickly in the wind into an apple tree more than three meters tall. Then, three heavy red apples dangled down from the tip of a branch, so round and succulent that the juice inside seemed as if it would explode at any moment.

Professor Mo Xuan picked the three red apples. He had one bite of the apple and chewed it while he threw the other two at Li Yao and Ling Xiaole. Moaning in great satisfaction, he finally finished the rest of his remark. “…I have to abide by the laws of this place, too. The best I can to is treat the honorable guests from afar with two apples.”

Li Yao and Ling Xiaole looked each other and bit the two apples hard.

With cracking sounds, the juice rolled into their virtual throat, esophagus, and stomach like sugar that was mixed with a tempting sour flavor.

Li Yao’s and Ling Xiaole’s nerve endings all sent signals of joy to their brains.

“Do you feel…” Observing them without an expression, Professor Mo Xuan asked, “Was it real or virtual when you enjoyed the bite of apple just now?”

Li Yao pondered for a moment and replied, “You seem to be implying something, don’t you, professor?”

Professor Mo Xuan smiled and shook his head. “No, nothing. Look. The town at the foot of the mountain is the home of 122 Spiriters and will very possibly be the last home of humanity in millions of years. The heads of the local garrison, a branch of the Secret Sword Bureau, government departments, and research institutes are right there. Do you want to go down and join them?”

“That will be unnecessary.” Li Yao thought of something and said, “I am actually more interested in you, Professor Mo Xuan. Why don’t we take a walk here and have a chitchat?”

“I can vouch for him!” Holding the giant apple, Ling Xiaole grimaced and said, “Special Representative Lin is indeed quite interested in you, Professor Mo Xuan, especially your ‘virtual life project’. He asked me for a lot of files about the project!”

“That’s right.”

Opening his arms and enjoying the breeze that was embracing his face, Li Yao distinguished the fragrances of seventeen different flowers in the wind, which were identical to the fragrances in reality and did not have the tiniest flaws. “Before, I didn’t understand why you abandoned the studies on the ‘virtual life project’, but I’ve found out the reason after visiting such a tiny Spiriters’ Realm. With such a delicate and enjoyable little world, who cares about the ‘virtual life’?”

Professor Mo Xuan took another bite of the apple. Wiping the juice on the corner of his lips, he smiled. “Who says that I abandoned the ‘virtual life project’? In fact, the project is very close to success now!”

Li Yao was dazed. He felt that his body was rigid when he asked, “What? Professor, you have truly created virtual life? Where is it?”

Li Yao’s mind was in an utter mess. Countless strange thoughts were occurring to him instantly, but Professor Mo Xuan simply pointed at the town before the mountain up ahead and said, “It’s right over there. Isn’t the town full of them?”

After that, he pointed at himself, Li Yao, and Ling Xiaole. “There’s also the three of us. Aren’t we virtual life?”

Ling Xiaole was confused, too. “Professor Mo Xuan, what are you talking about? I don’t understand!”

Professor Mo Xuan finished the apple after another few bites. He dug a hole on the prairie and buried the virtual apple core. Then, he covered the hole carefully and patted his hands. In the end, he looked at Li Yao solemnly and said, “Are you really interested in ‘virtual life’? Have you read a lot of my theories and documents?”

Li Yao nodded quickly.

“Then, you should know that, with the level of the crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus that the federation has today, it is absolutely impossible to create a brand-new life form from scratch in the next thousand years,” Professor Mo

Xuan said solemnly. “I’ve mentioned on many occasions that our people must not be misled by the third-rate tales and entertainment products that are designed for fun.

“With the development level of our crystal processors nowadays, to create a virtual life that is highly developed with intelligence and self-awareness and poses a threat to the civilization of mankind in the next hundred years is as difficult as giving you a handful of ancient fungi and a primitive planet and asking you to make the fungi evolve into dinosaurs in a thousand years. Is it even possible at all?”

Li Yao had given it a lot of thought previously. Therefore, he simply shook his head and said, “No. Professor, I don’t think that your metaphor is correct. Ancient fungi are far too unevolved compared to dinosaurs in every respect. But it is not the relationship between crystal processors and human beings. Many crystal processors boast a computational ability hundreds if not thousands of times higher than that of a regular human being. How do you know for sure that a brand-new life will be born during the collision of data that is as vast as an ocean? It is even possible that such a life will boast tremendous destructive power the moment it is created.

“Think about it. If an ancient fungus evolves to a thousand meters in diameter and has an absorption ability and movement speed that are even more terrifying than dinosaurs, it will be natural for the dinosaurs to be frightened by them because of natural intuition, right?”

Professor Mo Xuan was slightly dazed. He looked at Li Yao thoughtfully and smiled from the bottom of his heart. “Very good. As expected of an expert from the Star Ocean Republic. You are smart enough to have thought so far. What you have in mind right now was exactly my motivation when I started the ‘Virtual Spirits Sector’ project decades ago.

“At that time, I thought exactly the same. Although I always said that virtual life could not be born overnight and that the odds of success were probably one billionth after thousands of years if we were unbelievably lucky, I was reluctant to give up deep in my heart and determined to find a certain way to transform the enormous computational ability of a crystal processor into real self-awareness and intelligence.

“I believe that virtual life will inevitably be born. With that in mind, we must control it in our hands and not allow the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance to do so. Even if we must destroy it, we must learn of its origins, development, and means of evolution first.

“For such a purpose, together with a few other researchers, I established a small virtual world with twelve Jing-level super crystal processors, the most advanced models in the federation at that time. The world, logically, was named the Virtual Spirits Sector.”

Chapter 1711 - Just Admit It. We Are Just Like That!

Li Yao held his breath. He did not expect Professor Mo Xuan to be so outspoken as to tell all the secrets without him asking anything.

Was his professor really up to nothing at all?

“The main focus of our studies in the Virtual Spirits Sector was to perfectly simulate the environment of the material world when life was born. To be more specific, we ‘created’ a virtual primitive planet first and then added more conditions to it, hoping that it would slowly generate virtual fungi, trilobites, dinosaurs, apes and eventually ‘virtual intelligent life’.

“I regret to say that we were too naïve and hasty back then. We completely underestimated the difficulty of creating life and overestimated our computational ability that we could output.

“Or rather, it would’ve been useless even if we had infinite computational ability, because computational ability was not proportionate to the soul.”

“I don’t understand,” Li Yao said. “Can you explain?”

“Let me use a metaphor. If you have a metal puppet that weighs one ton and has strength a hundred times bigger than a human being’s, what will you do if you want to turn it into a real human? By increasing its weight and force? Can the puppet be endowed with wisdom and will when it grows from one ton to a hundred tons and has a million times a human being’s strength instead of a hundred?”

Deep in thought, Li Yao shook his head.

“Of course, nobody is silly enough to do that because weight and strength have nothing to do with ‘consciousness’ whatsoever. In fact, ‘computational ability’ is the same. Increasing computational ability crazily is equivalent to turning the weight of the metal puppet from one ton into a hundred tons. No life will be created at all. The only consequence will be collapse!

“It’s a shame that we did not understand the logic back then. Or rather, we were unwilling to believe the logic.

“When there was the earliest sign of primitive life in the Virtual Spirits Sector, we gathered the twelve super crystal processors and poured their computational ability into the ‘Virtual Spirits Sector’ crazily. Eventually, it crashed.

“I do not want to talk much about the crash. You must’ve read about it in the news anyway. Despite all the exaggerations, the result is not wrong. Su Changfa was killed in the Virtual Spirits Sector. My soul and Lu Qingchen’s were heavily wounded. In the end, I aborted the ‘Virtual Spirits Sector’ project, and Lu Qingchen even betrayed the federation and joined the Imperium’s side.

“However, let me tell you a secret. I aborted the project not because I was too frustrated but because I suddenly thought everything through when I was about to be torn apart in the turbulence and storms of the Virtual Spirits Sector caused by the infinite computational ability!

“Too stupid. I had been too stupid and inflexible before!

“It is both impossible and unnecessary to create a virtual life from scratch in only several hundred years because we obviously already have a virtual life, one that is perfect and will absolutely not be against mankind. It is ourselves!”

The more he spoke, the more excited Professor Mo Xuan became. He pointed Li Yao and Ling Xiaole!

Li Yao and Ling Xiaole were confused.

“Wait…” Taking a deep breath, Ling Xiaole bit her finger and asked, “Professor, can we be counted as ‘virtual life?”

“Why not?” Professor Mo Xuan opened his arms, as if he were embracing the entire world. “Look at our status right now. Is it any different from the ‘virtual life’ you imagined before?”

“But we have a body!” Ling Xiaole said in a hurry. “This is a virtual world. Our body is still in the real world!”

“Watch your words. This is the Spiriters’ Realm, not a virtual world.” Professor Mo Xuan’s tone turned rarely rigorous. A moment later, he lowered his voice and said, “Yes. You do have a body, but ghosts do not. Ghosts are just a clip of complicated, mysterious waves that can be stored in a tiny chip. Therefore, can you agree that ghosts without shells are a ‘virtual life’?”

Ling Xiaole tilted her head and thought for a long time. “I—I think so. If you must put it that way, ghosts are indeed sort of a ‘virtual life’. They are… the Spiriters.”

“They’re more than that,” Professor Mo Xuan said. “From the perspective of both law and ethics, ghosts are a member of mankind. Do you agree?”

“Of course!” Li Yao and Ling Xiaole did not hesitate at all.

It was a simple question. Since the ‘Affirmative Action for Ghosts’ had been enacted two hundred years ago, ghosts—or rather, the Spiriters—were already equal to regular humans in terms of legal statues.

Two hundred years was more than enough time to allow most spectral Cultivators to melt into the regular society.

“So, you all agree that a human is a human not because of his body but because of his soul, right?” Professor Mo Xuan asked. “As long as they have the soul of a human, it doesn’t matter how their body changes or if their body does not exist at all, right? For example, Representative Lin, if you unfortunately sacrifice yourself in the battle to defend humanity one day in the future and lose your body, only to be reborn as a spectral Cultivator, will you still be a human being?”

Li Yao blinked and said, “Of course!’

“Therefore, the body is not important. The real foundation of the life form we know as ‘human’ is the ‘soul’. We are essentially a unique virtual life,” Professor Mo Xuan concluded. “The so-called body of flesh and blood is nothing but a ‘shell’ that helps us arrive in the material world for activities. It is similar to a crystal suit, except that the crystal suit of flesh and blood is gear that we are born in, like the eggshell for ovipara!

“Because the body is just a shell, it doesn’t matter if the body exists or what it looks like. It doesn’t matter if the body has horns. It doesn’t matter whether the body can lift a weight of fifty kilograms or five thousand. They are just the differences among different ‘models’, but they are fundamentally the same, correct? Do you agree?”

Li Yao and Ling Xiaole both opened their mouths. Professor Mo Xuan's theory sounded ridiculous at first, but as they thought about it more carefully, they somehow found that it was absolutely flawless!

If they admitted that ghosts and demons were a member of mankind, then the only conclusion would be that the appearance of the 'body' of a human did not matter at all and that it was the soul that really counted!

Therefore, the body of flesh and body was just a shell, and human beings were a virtual life form in the first place!

"You understand my stupidity in the beginning now, don't you?" Professor Mo Xuan mumbled in self-mockery. "Mankind is a virtual life. Yet, I turned a blind eye to such an obvious fact and dedicated myself to the creation of a brand-new virtual life instead of reaching my hands for what was right next to me. My attempt even led to a catastrophic accident. It was truly stupid of me.

"Wrong. Wrong. Our previous studies were fundamentally wrong. As the technology on crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus developed explosively, the key point that we should focus on is not to create a brand-new virtual life but to make human beings take a leap in the path of evolution and enter a new form where they are completely virtualized!"

Li Yao suddenly raised his hand.

"What's your question, Representative Lin?"

"Professor Mo Xuan, I wonder, if the laws of this world permit, could you make a giant rainbow lollipop first and introduce the rest of the information while licking it?"

“Why would I do that?”

“Because I feel that you truly look like one of the ambitious supervillains in the fictions, games, and movies right now. I’m getting quite nervous. Therefore, I was wondering if the atmosphere would be more comfortable if you talked while licking a lollipop.”

“…Well, professor, I second Special Representative Lin’s proposal,” Ling Xiaole said. “Your theory is indeed a bit… creepy.”

“Absolutely!”

He snapped his fingers and then delved into his pocket. Then, he truly picked out a big, round rainbow lollipop. Ripping the package, he licked the lollipop carefully and said, “If you are still nervous, would you feel better if I tell you that all those theories have been written into books and delivered to the leadership of the federal government and the major academic institutions, and that every corner in the entire ‘Carefree World’, including the conversation we are having right now, is being closely monitored by the Secret Sword Bureau?

“I can even ask the Secret Sword Agents who are monitoring this place to join us. Perhaps you will even recognize a few colleagues from them. Do you want me to do it?”

A middle-aged man whose eyes were deep and whose face was solemn was now licking a giant rainbow lollipop carefully. It was indeed quite… a weird scene.

However, it did wash away the gloomy and zealous atmosphere from a moment ago.

Li Yao and Ling Xiaole both blinked. It did make sense. As the ‘special representative of the Speaker of the Star Ocean Republic’, Li Yao was there to visit such a highly confidential project as the ‘Tinder Plan’. It would be utterly unreasonable if he was not spied on by the Secret Sword Bureau.

“I know what you are thinking, but things are not exactly what you imagine them to be,” Professor Mo Xuan said casually. “Representative Lin, under normal circumstances, how much time do you spend on the crystal processors and cyberspace every day?”

Li Yao thought for a moment and replied, “Counting the training in the Grand Illusionary Land, ten hours or so. After all, for Cultivators of my level whose computational ability and soul are powerful enough, we can lengthen time in the Grand Illusionary Land and turn one hour into three to four hours. A lot of training and deduction work can be done in the virtual world.”

Professor Mo Xuan nodded. “What about you, Miss Ling?”

Ling Xiaole thought for a moment and replied, “It’s not fixed. When I’m on a mission, it will be shorter, but I’m basically online all the time during holidays. So, it’s also ten hours or so on average.”

“Alright. You are both very close to the average online time in the federation.” Professor Mo Xuan smiled. “According to the latest statistics, after exchanging all the time lengths in different planets and starships into twenty-four hours a day, the average time that a person in the federation spends on the Spiritual Nexus every day is nine hours and twenty-two minutes. For the active age group between eight and a hundred and twenty, their average online time is twelve hours and thirty-three minutes a day.

“Although the time is only half an entire day, almost all the important things that modern people do, i.e. entertainment, socialization, self-improvement… everything is done on the Spiritual Nexus.

“We can even say that the focus of modern human life has long been completely and irreversibly shifted to cyberspace!

“I would like to ask you a question. If you have to spend half of your life and do ninety percent of the important things in your life, including work, training, friend-making, and so on, through the Spiritual Nexus, and you are even glad to do things in such a way, are you really a carbon-based life form or a virtual life form? Do your souls live in cyberspace or in the material world? Is the body of flesh and blood in your so-called ‘reality’ not just a ‘shell’ that ensures that you can surf online normally and allows you to reproduce for the next generation who will also surf online?

“Is it really difficult to admit that mankind is a virtual life and cyberspace is our future, our foundation, and our everything?” Professor Mo Xuan declared resolutely while biting his rainbow lollipop hard.

Chapter 1712 - A Leap in Evolution!

Li Yao swallowed hard.

When he realized that even his saliva was virtual, it was even harder for him to swallow.

Ling Xiaole crossed her arms subconsciously and asked in a shivering voice, “What do you want, professor?”

Professor Mo Xuan continued licking the nonexistent lollipop and enjoyed the sweetness that was purely virtual. Then he smiled and said, “I don’t want to do anything except have a nice chitchat with the honorable guest from the center of the cosmos. If you feel uncomfortable, we can always go to the town and join the leadership of the federal army and the Secret Sword Bureau in the Hundred Flowers Space Zone.

“Of course, it will hardly be any different, because they have the highest clearances of this world. Although they are not here on the surface, they can hear what I said just now loud and clear. A true Cultivator never bothers to conceal his opinion. Everything I do is open to any scrutiny. I have repeated my standpoint more than a hundred times.”

Li Yao was deep in thought. He would rather figure out what was on his professor’s mind exactly instead of joining them. Therefore, he simply shook his head and said, “That will be unnecessary. I’m quite interested in your theories, professor. They do sound a bit radical, but a lot of cutting-edge studies can only be radical in order to be innovative. It’s totally understandable. Please proceed. Anything else you would like to add?”

“Of course.” Professor Mo Xuan pointed at his temples. “Do you understand? Human beings who are confined to their physical bodies are actually an imperfect life form. Our ancestors originated from the continent of an unknown planet in the depths of the universe. They were regular monkeys even a million years ago and only triggered the first spark of wisdom by making fire and using tools. Later, they were picked by the Pangu Clan or the Nuwa Clan as a certain ‘experiment subject’ and carefully modified to accommodate a lot of their genes and hereditary techniques.

“However, despite all the modifications of the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan, we cannot get rid of the shadow of monkeys. Our bodies are only suitable for basic hunting and gathering on the planet. They are a product of serious flaws!

“We, as monkeys, can only live in the worlds with an atmosphere and a stable temperature and environment. Most people cannot withstand heats above eighty degrees or coldness below minus fifty degrees. Our bodies are so fragile that a tree branch or a sharp tooth is enough to kill us. We need air that has a precise ratio of elements, and the increase or reduction of the microelements can easily turn the air into fatal gas. Our physical strength is too weak, and our running speed is too slow. Compared to the vastness and ancientness of the universe, our life is also too short when we can only live less than five hundred years. Are we any different from the germs that are born in the morning and die at dusk?

“Of all the shortcomings, the most insufferable one is our brain.

“Our original brains—sticky, podgy things—are too poorly devised. They were prepared for the monkeys hundreds of thousands of years ago whose sole destiny was to collect, hunt, and reproduce in primitive forests. It never occurred to the monkeys that they would shoulder the mission of conquering the entire universe one day!

“For starters, our brain cannot inherit the wisdom and memories of the previous generation. We cannot allow our offspring to get everything their parents know when they are born. However smart and knowledgeable their parents are, they cannot embed their wisdom, information, and memories into their genes and pass them on to the offspring. Everything must start from zero! Even the child of the greatest mathematician of our age must learn ‘one plus one equals two’ clumsily at the beginning!

“What a great waste that our wisdom and memories cannot be inherited! What a pathetic brain!

“Secondly, the brains of most humans are not suitable for complicated computations. Without the help of crystal processors, arithmetic is already the limit for the brains of most people. Even a distinguished high-school graduate can only run arithmetic within five digits without pen and paper at best.

“But what about calculous? What about quantum physics? What about the deflection and turnover of magnetic fields? What about the mathematical expression of the gene strands? What about the calculation of hypersurfaces in hyperspace? Can human brains do that? No. Not just the ordinary people, even Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators might not have a brain capable of doing such things!

“However, such things are necessary for us to explore the universe and develop our civilization in a broader space on a higher dimension!

“To conquer such a mysterious universe with a fleshly brain is like an ant living on the plane of a piece of paper trying to figure out how to climb onto a high mountain. It is too difficult!

“Getting to the bottom of it, we are just monkeys. The planet from which we originated should’ve been where we ended. The sea of stars shouldn’t have been our destiny, responsibility, and ambition. We are not capable of that!

“But the Pangu Civilization and the Nuwa Civilization picked us and enlightened us. They inserted too many things into our poor fleshly bodies and gene strands. Such things triggered our wisdom and also raised our ambitions to conquer the universe—ambitions that are in fact too enormous for us!

“It is exactly because of such ambitions that the brilliant and glorious civilization of mankind today has been created. However, it is already our limit to walk this far while dragging our heavy, feeble fleshly bodies.

“We need a leap. A new leap of evolution. Just like how our ancestors waved a burning branch or whetted a sharp stone for the first time hundreds of thousands of years ago!

“The Spiriters are my answer.

“Do you not feel that, compared to regular humans, the Spiriters have a lot of advantages? We can use ‘artificial bodies’, which are far stronger than our original bodies. Our energy consumption and the space we occupy is far less. We are less sensitive to temperature and air. Even desolate planets without an atmosphere and air can be paradises for the Spiriters. Most importantly of all, we can build a lot of crystal processors for ourselves and install computation and cooling addons to the crystal processors. In such a way, our learning abilities, computational abilities, and communication efficiency will be far higher than regular humans whose bodies are made of flesh and blood!

“Therefore, my opinion is that the fleshly body is merely a product of the ‘planetary civilization’. Now that human beings have developed an ‘interstellar civilization’ that includes three thousand Sectors and can travel thousands of lightyears instantly through four-dimensional space, it is only natural that we should get rid of the burden and boundary of our bodies, at least partly, in order to upgrade into a whole new form!”

Li Yao took a deep breath and calmed himself down. “Professor, your theory may be quite unacceptable for those new to it.”

“For other people, yes, but how can the two of you find it unacceptable?” Professor Mo Xuan asked. “Haven’t you been long tired of your fleshly body and made your attempt to change and get rid of it?”

Ling Xiaole was dumbfounded. “Professor, what are you talking about?”

Professor Mo Xuan smiled and unhurriedly said, “Miss Ling, if my eyes are as functional as I think, you have a certain bloodline of the demons. You are a half-demon, correct?”

Instead of waiting for Ling Xiaole to reply, he simply went on. “Demons. What are demons? Wasn’t it because the human beings a long time ago felt that regular fleshly bodies no longer suited their needs to march into the universe and that modifications on the genetic level were mandatory?

“We should say that your ancestors succeeded. At least in terms of strength and adaptability to the environment, most demons are indeed more advanced than ordinary people.

“But no matter how the genes are modified, and no matter how strong the fleshly body is trained to be, there are always limits. Both humans and demons are carbon-based life after all, bound by the laws of the material world. Even the strongest demon emperor or the demon god cannot live inside a burning star, can they?”

Ling Xiaole was unconvinced. “Can the Spiriters?”

“Not yet, but they have the potential to,” Professor Mo Xuan said. “The direction of their development is obvious in theory, but even if you walk down to the end of the demons’ path, you will still essentially be a carbon-based life of a larger size, like the Pangu Civilization and the Nuwa Civilization used to be.

“Even Pangu and Nuwa, kings of carbon-based life, have been destroyed. As their successors, if we keep walking on their old path, is there any other possibility for us except repeating their doom?”

Ling Xiaole bulged her eyes and said, “But humans *are* carbon-based life!”

“Little girl,” Professor Mo Xuan observed, “you must let go of your restrictions and count on your imagination. We will make a theoretical assumption. Assume that the civilization of mankind still exists in a hundred million years after much development, do you believe that humans can only have fleshly bodies instead of any other forms?”

Ling Xiaole pouted and thought for a long time. Then she lowered her head and mumbled, “Who knows what might or might not happen a hundred million years later?”

Professor Mo Xuan smiled. “In fact, there’s no need to wait a hundred million years. A long, long time ago that is far earlier than today, somebody embarked on a path of evolution that is different from the path of demons. Theirs is the path of the Spiriters, or the ‘pure-energy life’. I’m referring to the… path of Cultivation that Representative Lin here has been walking on.”

Not foreseeing that his professor would be pointing at him, Li Yao blinked and pointed at his own nose. “Me? A Cultivator?”

“Yes. Haven’t the Cultivators from ancient times to today all been aiming to ‘ascend to the heavens and become deities’, to get rid themselves of the boundary and restrictions of the fleshly body and evolve into a life form of pure energy?” Professor Mo Xuan smiled casually. “There are many levels for the Cultivators. After every level you advance into, you will move further to the life form of pure energy.

“In the Refinement Stage, you can perceive the natural spiritual with your soul. It is the first experience of the mysteries of the energy world for all the Cultivators.

“In the Building Foundation Stage, the spiritual energy is preliminary stabilized inside the fleshly body. Connecting all the internal organs, nerves, and veins inside the human body, the spiritual energy partly cleanses and builds up the flesh and the veins and partly constructs a network of spiritual veins that are similar to the real veins and nerves in the body. It means that a new ‘body of spiritual energy’ is constructed inside your fleshly body, except that the two bodies overlap for now.

“In the Core Formation Stage, a new organ, the second brain, gradually takes shape. It is the brain of spiritual energy for the body of spiritual energy.

“In the Nascent Soul Stage, a Cultivator’s soul will have been nurtured and trained to a very powerful state. It means that a baby in the form of spiritual energy is finally born and really sets foot on a whole new path of evolution! Representative Lin, you are now at the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage. You must have a deep understanding about what I described, right?

“If you are lucky enough to reach the Divinity Transformation Stage one day, in the Divinity Transformation Stage—”

Chapter 1713 - Beyond the Divinity Transformation Stage!

The real Li Yao was now basically in the upper half of the Nascent Soul Stage and caught at the bottleneck to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage. He had been considering how to enter the new level.

Hearing his professor’s introduction, he could not help but crane his neck.

“In the Divinity Transformation Stage,” Professor Mo Xuan said, “the soul and the body will be even more separated. The ‘Nascent Soul’ that could only stay inside the brain at first is now free to leave the body and exist independently as a life of spiritual energy.

“For example, the soul and the body of a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator can be compared to a ship and a port. Before the Divinity Transformation Stage, the ship is too small and shabby without the protection of the mother port, and it will be knocked over by the overwhelming tides the moment it sets sail. But in the Divinity Transformation Stage, it finally grows a huge ship that can cruise on the ocean against the furious wind!

“Naturally, even the biggest ship cannot completely get rid of the mother port. They have to return to the mother port for supplies, maintenance, and such. Therefore, the body is still necessary for a Cultivator at such a level, albeit much less important than before.

“It is exactly because of the independence of the soul that Cultivators at the Divinity Transformation Stage boast their ‘domain’? What is the domain if not the virtual worlds created by their soul? Think about it. Isn’t it so?”

Li Yao thought for a moment and realized that it did make sense!

Professor Mo Xuan went on. “Above the Divinity Transformation Stage will be the Divinity Branching Stage, in which the soul can split, or rather, ‘duplicate’ into multiple copies. They can exist in many places at the same time but also maintain a subtle connection with each other. I haven’t quite figured out how I should describe it. It seems a bit inaccurate to call it ‘quantum entanglement’, but I think it will suffice for now!

“Above the Divinity Branching Stage is the Void Refining Stage. Different people have a different understanding of ‘void’, but for me personally, I think it means ‘higher dimension’. The Void Refining Stage means that one will be able to march into the universe of higher dimensions as a life form of pure energy. Chances are that they can even establish wormholes and travel among every part of the universe without any restriction!

“As for the levels above the Void Refining Stage, they should be the different, mysterious presentations of the pure-energy life form in the higher dimensions. That is not something that we can understand with our barren computational ability when we are still trapped in the three-dimensional universe today.

“In conclusion, the ultimate level that all the Cultivators pursue is in fact always to evolve into a pure-energy life from a pure body of flesh and blood. After they reach a certain level, while they cannot abandon their physical body altogether, they do make the physical body return to the original function—nothing but a shell!

“You must’ve heard a lot of tales and myths of the ancient times.

“In the tales and myths, certain magnificent beings can turn into a lot of other creatures, or even grow three heads and six arms. They can even enlarge or shrink their body. When they are huge, they can hold the sky like a mountain. When they are small, they are as tiny as the mustard seeds, which allows them to crawl into the enemy’s stomach and cause great trouble there. How do you explain that?

“From the material point of view, even if someone has trained their body to the maximum, it is impossible for them to reshape their body easily like that. Where do the cells and the mitochondria get all the energy? How do the tissues grow out of nowhere? Even if proliferation and expansion of a certain degree is possible, how on earth can they be so fast? It does not agree with the fundamental laws of our world at all!

“But it is easy to understand if you use the theories of ‘energy life’ and ‘shell’. Everything is just because those magnificent beings are essentially clusters of souls. Their vastly different appearances, from the huge bodies like high mountains and the tiny ones like germs, are nothing more than the ‘combat shells’ that they prepare for themselves. When they are in need of a new shell, they will simply pick up the shell from a certain ‘dimension’ with a piece of magical equipment similar to the Cosmos Ring and then cram their soul into the shell to drive it!”

Hearing his professor interpret the different levels of Cultivation, no matter whether he really had a scheme or not, Li Yao was still greatly enlightened. He sincerely said, “Professor Mo Xuan, you truly deserve to be one of the greatest masters in the Star Glory Federation to explain the levels classified by the ancient people with the latest theory!”

Professor Mo Xuan smiled and said, “We shouldn’t underestimate the wisdom of the ancient people, but we shouldn’t be superstitious about it, either. In fact, I don’t quite agree with the classification of levels that have been passed on from ancient times.

“Because our civilization of ancient Cultivators was in fact an abnormal, crippled civilization. At that time, we had just evolved from monkeys and did not form our real wisdom yet. But on the other hand, we were ‘stuffed’ by the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan with too much knowledge that far exceeded our era. The combination of the two factors resulted in our ancestors’ crazily worshipping ‘training’ and ‘techniques’. It also forced them to add too many imaginary things into the theories that they couldn’t comprehend!

“Refinement Stage, Building Foundation Stage, Core Formation Stage, Nascent Soul Stage, Divinity Transformation Stage… The five phases are relatively easy to reach. A lot of experimental data can be found. Therefore, the descriptions of the ancient people are generally accurate.

“But starting from the Divinity Transformation Stage, most of the descriptions become pure poppycock. I don’t believe that there were so many experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage, the Divinity Branching State, the Void Refining Stage, and above in the ancient times fifty thousand years ago. Most of them are just rumors! Even if the ancient people did reach those levels by chance, they couldn't have understood what happened to them at all, and it was barely possible for them to describe their experience to the people who were still in three-dimensional space. So, they could only resort to bullsh*t. But we don't have to follow their bullsh*t now that we have better explanations, do we?

"In my opinion, it is very simple. In fact, there are only three major levels in total. Below the Divinity Transformation Stage, it is the level where the fleshly body still plays the dominating role. Between the Divinity Transformation Stage and the Void Refining Stage, it is the level where the fleshly body and the soul are equally important. Above the Void Refining Stage, it is the level where one's soul will be dominant, allowing them to break into higher dimensions, and the fleshly body will become a pure shell, or a tool when they arrive at lower dimensions.

"Representative Lin, you are now in the Nascent Soul Stage, and your soul is already quite solid. It is possible for you to release your powerful telepathic thoughts and interfere with the material world. If you keep on training and make a huge leap forward, you will be your soul instead of your body. Do you think that it is inappropriate?"

Li Yao cackled and could not help but scratch his cheeks. He replied, "The Divinity Transformation Stage is too far away from me. I haven't given it any thought."

"No. No. Not far away at all!" Professor Mo Xuan widened his eyes and said, "Do not let your mind be restricted by the ancient people's concepts of training. Training today is absolutely different from training in ancient times!

“What did the ancient people know? For them, even flying was difficult to accomplish. But today, with the advanced magical equipment, even the ordinary people can fly on shuttles or airships. With the assistance of crystal processors, they can also perform dazzling, soul-stirring aerobatics that even the Cultivators in the ancient times might not have been able to achieve!

“The other training techniques, as well as entering the ‘Divinity Transformation Stage’, are exactly the same as flying. In ancient times, there was no such thing as the Spiritual Nexus. Of course, it was terribly difficult for a Cultivator to get their soul out of their body and travel in the great nature! But right now, with the Spiritual Nexus, even the consciousness of ordinary people can also travel in cyberspace as fast as light. Isn’t it the ‘Divinity Transformation Stage’ in a different sense?

“The bottom line is, the old rules of training and classification of levels are already obsolete thanks to the development of technology. Maybe one day, everybody will be able to enter the Divinity Transformation Stage without much trouble. It will be even more convenient for the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators like Representative Lin to reach it! I’ve run some studies in that regard. If you are interested, we can talk more after the first launch of the tinder!”

Not knowing whether Professor Mo Xuan’s invitation was genuine or not, Li Yao simply replied, “Okay!”

Ling Xiaole pouted her lips and remarked, “Professor, I still feel that what you said is a bit unbelievable. It feels… weird!”

Professor Mo Xuan continued smiling. “It’s perfectly normal to feel weird, because we are talking about the future. A future far, far away. From a different point of view, if you ask an ancient person living forty thousand years ago to come to our era and visit our lifestyle and social form, they will feel that it is weird and uncomfortable, too!

“Besides, Miss Ling and Representative Lin, both of you are very successful in the material world. As an agent of the Secret Sword Bureau and the captain of Team Red Lotus on Firefly, all your materialistic and mental needs can basically be satisfied in the real world right now.

“But what about the ordinary people?

“It’s a shame that humans’ desires are infinite. However hard we excavate the resources in the material world, we cannot satisfy all the people. Not just the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance, even in the federation, a lot of people living at the bottom level of our society are still impoverished.

“The material world is too small, too crowded and too mean? Let me give me a simplest example. Do you know the house price in the capital city today? Most college students often can’t earn enough money for one square meter’s space in the capital city after working hard for three years!

“Put yourselves in the shoes of the ordinary people. Now, there are two different lives. The first one is the material one. You will live in a tiny nest like a snail without any hope for the rest of your life. Most of your wages will be used to pay for your rent.

“The second life is to enter the Spiriters’ Realm. Even the college students who have just graduated can purchase a villa with a garden with ‘virtual cash’ at the cost of a tiny bit of money. Then, they can enjoy the life of a magnate in the outside world!

“As long as the simulation is good enough—there is no need to be perfect, ninety percent accuracy should be more than enough—which life do you think an ordinary college graduate, who does not have any extraordinary intellectual faculty or physical strength, will choose?

“For the federal government, if some people are willing to live in virtual cabins, the pressure on housing, transportation, the environment, and many other aspects will be greatly reduced. The diseases on our cities today will be healed immediately!

“Both people and the government are satisfied. Theoretically, it is an out-and-out ‘win-win’!”

Chapter 1714 - Report to the Government!

This time, Li Yao truly felt chilly, with goosebumps all over his body. He felt that the picture that his professor had described was too much of a shock for him.

However, on the other hand…

Li Yao could not help but recall his childhood in the magical equipment graveyard in Floating Spear City in the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

For people who lived in the magical equipment graveyard and struggled to survive, like Fatty Leung, would they prefer to live in the garbage dump in the material world as scavengers, or would they find the life in a certain virtual world—or rather, the Spiriters’ Realm—more beautiful and appealing?

Perhaps Professor Mo Xuan was right. The material worlds that mankind lived on, the planets that were nothing more than grains of dust, were too small, crowded with too few resources. They could not meet the demand of the development of the civilization at all.

Professor Mo Xuan raised his voice and said, “Of course, everything I talked about is just my imagination, which is probably not going to come true for hundreds of years. With that in mind, we might as well take a leap ahead and think even further.

“In the distant future, perhaps in millions of years, the ideal, perfect form of mankind for me should be mainly made of the Spiriters.

“By then, cities and homes of human beings on the material level will no longer exist. Even if some of the remains are not gone yet, they will only serve as history relics, museums, symbols of our civilization, and such. Most human beings will live in the Spiriters’ Realm in the form of the Spiriters. The material foundation of the Spiriters’ Realm will be super crystal processors that are stored in indestructible, permanent warehouses deep within every planet together with the crystal chips that keep the souls of the human beings.

“Because we barely require any air or water, we will be free to spread to every planet, and we will not have to go through all the trouble of searching for the habitable planets that have atmospheres like we do right now.

“By then, super crystal processor centers that are buried deep underground will be new ‘cities’ for mankind. Everybody will live in the Spiriters Realm. Their life will be easy, comfortable, conflict-free, and peaceful. They will be occupied in the theoretical and intellectual jobs. Too many artificial intelligence facilities, like ‘old grandpas’ you have seen, will be at our service as servants.

“Of course, our connection with the material world cannot be completely cut off. Therefore, everybody will also own a lot of ‘shells’ other than their soul. They will be able to transmit their soul into those ‘shells’ and enter the material world.

“Those ‘shells’ will have a plethora of forms and appearances. They can be the bodies of pure flesh and blood, like what human beings have today. They can also be the bodies of demons whose genes have been highly modified. Naturally, they can still be artificial bodies made of super alloys.

“Furthermore, the ‘shells’ can even break the limit of the shape of humans. They can be an enormous mechanical spider hundreds of meters tall, a starship that is thousands of meters long, or a base that covers dozens of square kilometers. As long as their soul is powerful enough, they will be able to control all those huge shells!

“By then, even a common miner will enjoy a luxury villa, a private garden, and a hunting ground in the Spiriters’ Real. Hundreds of artificial intelligence servants will cater to his every need. He can get whatever he wants.

“His soul job and duty will be to transmit his soul to a certain ‘mining starship’ every day and spend some time remotely controlling the starship to collect resources on a resource planet.

“The raw minerals that he digs out will be shipped to the ‘bases’ that are actually the shells of certain purification specialists. Then, the products will be taken away by certain other shells that are controlled by the crystal processor specialists, who will further strengthen our center of crystal processors and make our ‘city’ a better place to live in.

“The more powerful the crystal processors are and the higher their computational ability is, the more real, complicated, and vast the Spiriters’ Realm will be. It means that greater mining starships and more fierce warships will be produced for us to explore the boundless world out there!

“Don’t you feel that only such a civilization is a real universal civilization that has a slim chance of figuring out the truth of the universe?”

Li Yao and Ling Xiaole looked at each other. Both of them saw the deep concerns in each other’s eyes.

Ling Xiaole knew that the leadership of the Secret Sword Bureau had to be monitoring their conversation closely right now. She emboldened herself and said, “Professor, I—I feel that you seem to have gone… a bit crazy!”

“Crazy?” Professor Mo Xuan put on a weird smile. A few different pictures suddenly popped up behind him.

The first picture was the boiling, bubbling mud on a primitive planet, where a few fish were struggling to crawl to the shore with their fins.

There was another picture, in which some hideous monkeys were yelling and screaming at the furious fire that is burning on a tree because of a lightning strike.

“When life evolved from the ocean to the continent, the fish that crawled to the shore might’ve been considered by their companions as extremely crazy,” Professor Mo Xuan said. “Also, the monkeys who decided to touch the fire in violation of their natural instincts might’ve been taken to be crazy, too. Replacing fists with stones and teeth with claws, building a house with branches and rocks, eating a crab for the first time… Those were all insane decisions when they were made, but only after all those insane decisions have human beings and our civilization been created!

“We are Cultivators. We stand at the peak of intellect and wisdom. If we are trapped by mundane everyday routines, too, and restrict our mind and morals to the level of the ordinary people, how can we expect our civilization to make progress?

“Do you wish for the civilization of mankind to not change at all but simply remain struggle to survive even millions of years?

“Yes. I know that my theories are terribly immature at this point. There’s a good chance that they are even wrong. However, if a theory is only qualified to be raised when it is guaranteed to be perfectly correct, no theory would ever be born at all!

“This is why I am willing to share the theories with the fellow Cultivators here. If you find it unacceptable, then please think about it carefully and kindly point out my mistakes. That way, you can help me improve my theories or even completely veto my previous thoughts!”

“We have no intention of completely vetoing your thoughts at all, Professor Mo Xuan,” Li Yao said. “As a cutting-edge theory and a vision of the distant future, any bizarre and unbelievable thoughts are understandable. What I’m more curious about are your actions after such… passionate ideas occurred to you. Did you put your theory into practice?”

“Of course, I put it into practice. As a refiner, I am much more enthusiastic about real-life operations than theoretical work on paper!” Professor Mo Xuan stared at Li Yao and Ling Xiaole. Licking the lollipop, he thoughtfully said, “When such an idea occurred to me and went on a rampage in my head like a wildfire, I immediately…”

Li Yao held his breath. “Immediately what?”

“I immediately reported the extremely crazy idea to the government,” Professor Mo Xuan announced.

“…” Li Yao.

“…” Ling Xiaole.

Professor Mo Xuan found it odd. “Is there a problem? Such an idea is too crazy, dangerous, and extreme. For the prevailing ethics in our society, it is even slightly evil, but it is truly likely to be the future of mankind, too!

“Of course I had to report it to the government, in case those guys who have ill intentions make use of it. Also, I summoned the specialists of multiple fields and discussed the issue together. Later, I compiled our discussion into a book and submitted it to the government, too.”

Li Yao was greatly relieved. “That was really rational!”

Professor Mo Xuan frowned and said, “What else should I have done if not that? Should I immediately recruit a bunch of insane bandits after I had the crazy idea and establish an enormous underground base in secret, where I planned all kinds of surreptitious schemes and jumped out from the dark corner at a certain critical moment, trying to turn the world upside down and realize my evil and mad ambitions?”

Li Yao and Ling Xiaole looked at each other. Then, they both nodded quickly.

Professor Mo Xuan sighed, somewhat helplessly. “That’s why I always say that groundless fiction novels and third-rate entertainment products are the greatest enemy for the researchers on the cutting-edge theories! Or in other worlds, the horror of human beings on the unknown issues is perhaps the greatest obstacle for us to move forward!

“Of course, it is quite understandable that you have such ridiculous thoughts. In only the one hundred years of history in the federation, too many such insane ambitious schemers have indeed shown up and brought devastating catastrophes to their compatriots, home, and civilization despite all the righteous and seemingly justified banners they were holding.

“Weren’t people like Yan Xibei, Xiao Xuance, Elder Nether Spring, and Lu Zui all as such?

“The rebellion of the Immortal Cultivators raised by Xiao Xuance years ago was even resolved by Li Yao and me together. I can recall his crazy, ugly face clearly even today. Why on earth would I repeat his mistake?

“Rest assured. All the Spiriters are patriots. We are all proud of our identity as human beings. Many of them are war heroes. Some of them are firefighters who sacrificed themselves when rescuing the victims in a fire or people who lost their body when they jumped into the river to save drowning children. We will certainly not do anything that would jeopardize the interests of people or our national security.

“Besides, if we get to the bottom of it, what are our motivations to start a plot? It must be noted that we have no fundamental conflict of interest with humans or demons at all, because the resources we need are absolutely different from theirs!

“The federation and the Imperium have good reasons to start a war—both of them are made of humans, who need the same resources, air, sunlight, water sources, soil, and such.

“By the same logic, humans and demons also have good reasons for a fight, because they are all carbon-based lives. All the things I mentioned before are necessary for them, too.

“However, the Spiriters do not need any of those. No air, no water, and no land. All we need is a highly-developed, grand-unified Spiritual Nexus, a center of crystal processors that is buried deep underground, and some ‘shells’ that allow us to be active in the material world! It is very convenient for us to get those things by contributing our wisdom and strength. Therefore, do we have any reason to betray our homeland, our family, and past ourselves and stand against humans and demons?

“At least for me personally, I can’t see any reason at all. If you have time, you can help me think about it carefully, too, and see how the Spiriters can benefit from a so-called scheme given the restrictions of the crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus today for their development.”

Chapter 1715 - Mo Xuan’s Belief

While chewing the apple, Li Yao thought about it carefully.

His professor’s theory seemed immaculate.

First of all, the Spiriters did not have much contradiction with humans and demons in terms of resources or living space. When there was no contradiction, there would never be a war.

Besides, the Spiriters were all transformed from humans in the first place. A lot of them had actually been elites when they were still alive. Would he turn against the civilization of mankind after he perished one day and was transformed into a Spiriter?

It was impossible. His thoughts would still be his thoughts, and his will would still be his will. He would be exactly the same person as before, although his body would no longer be there. Why on earth would he suddenly stand against mankind?

Also, most importantly of all, the technology on the crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus in the federation were still quite juvenile and underdeveloped. It was barely possible for the hundred billion people of the whole country to log into the same DLC of ‘Civilization’ without causing the crashes of countless servers and data exchange centers. How could such crystal processors and Spiritual Nexus accommodate an enormous, boundless Spiriters’ Realm?

Therefore, even if the ‘Spiriters’ Realm’ did exist for real, it would only be one of a limited scale, like the town that he was looking at right now, with a small population, so that the computation, simulation, and rendering would not be too difficult.

Even if Professor Mo Xuan really had any ambitions, and even if he was a ‘star spirit’ or a ‘walking crystal processor’, it would still be impossible for him to develop the crystal processor technology that surpassed the present day by thousands of years in only a hundred years without anybody knowing it.

The Spiriters’ Realm that he saw was still founded on the material existences in the real world, such as the crystal processors, no matter how illusionary it seemed to be. The federation could destroy the center of the crystal processors easily. After that, what would the Spiriters’ Realm count on?

Therefore, his professor did not have the motivation, methods, or enough fellow Spiriters who shared a common aim with him to perform any kind of scheme.

Li Yao began to suspect that he was being paranoid again. Although his professor’s theories were indeed groundbreaking and breathtaking, they were just theories and a prophecy after all. Perhaps they would become reality millions of years later, but who could say for sure what would happen millions of years later, and was it necessary at all to interfere with it?

Narrowing his eyes, Professor Mo Xuan looked at the children who were riding kites to fly under the blue sky and playing with each other amid cheerful laughter. He solemnly said, “Trust me. I understand the craziness, dangerousness, and evilness of my theory much better than you do. Therefore, decades ago, after I constructed my preliminary theory and made clear what I was going to do, I immediately reported it to the government.

“But the problem was that I did not know which department in the government was responsible for this… bizarre thing at all at that time.

“Thankfully, I had quite a good relationship with some leadership of the parliament and the heads of a few major sects. There’s no need to mention Ding Lingdang, the leader of the Patriots Front. Guo Chunfeng, Jin Xinyue, Fiend Blade Peng Hai, and some other people knew me, too. There were also some other experts whom I helped to craft their crystal suits.

“Therefore, I told Ding Lingdang, Jin Xinyue, Guo Chunfeng, and some other friends first. Then, through them, I have a few speeches to parliament and the Secret Sword Bureau. I also informed the specialists in the major universities in the federation and invited them to join the great cause. Right. I also looked for a dozen Meditation Healers, psychiatrists, and experts in mental diseases.”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. “Why did you want them?”

“I asked them to run a deep analysis on me to see if I had any mental disease,” Professor Mo Xuan said solemnly.

“…That was a bit redundant, wasn’t it?” Li Yao asked.

Professor Mo Xuan shook his head. “Not redundant at all. No matter how people tried to disguise it on the surface, the truth was that I had not been a normal person since I was transformed into liquid metal more than a hundred years ago. After a hundred years in liquid metal, I could not guarantee that my mind was perfectly normal and completely fit for the current law and ethics in the federation.

“A hundred years ago, I was the principal of the Grand Desolate War Institution, the president of the Refiners’ Association, and the president of Association of Spectral Cultivators. There were some other important duties on my shoulders, too. I was a rather important member of the leadership of the federation. Therefore, I had to be responsible for the federation and my patriots, and I needed to be certain of my mental status.”

Li Yao was rendered speechless, wondering if he should salute his professor with respect right now. After a long daze, he asked, “What was the result?”

Professor Mo Xuan smiled. “Those experts all said that I was perfectly normal. I showed them my theory and hoped that they could figure out something from it. But they replied that I could turn it into an excellent novel if I edited it a little.”

Li Yao squeezed his eyebrow hard. “Well, what did parliament and the Secret Sword Bureau say?”

“I didn’t do anything illegal. I was just doing pure theoretical research. What could they say?” Professor Mo Xuan said. “Is it against the law if I, as the president of the Association of Spectral Cultivators, summon the spectral Cultivators in the federation trying to push forward a motion in the parliament to change the legal name of ghosts into ‘Spiriters’?”

Li Yao thought for a moment and replied, “No.”

“Then, is it against the law if I invite a bunch of novelists to write novels, make movies, and even produce games based on the world setting that I give them?”

“No.”

“Is it against the law to encourage young people to spend more time on the Spiritual Nexus and less time outdoors to reduce traffic, air pollution, and resource waste?”

“No.”

“Is it against the law to increase the level of our crystal processors, produce more super crystal processors, improve the algorithms to build virtual worlds that are almost perfect simulations of reality, and welcome all the people in our society to live in them?”

“No.”

“Then, everything is settled!” Professor Mo Xuan clapped his hands and said, “I always remember the lesson of Lu Zui, the director of the Secret Sword Bureau a hundred years ago. In fact, he began his cause for a great purpose, but it was because he resorted to clandestine approaches that he got mired deeper and deeper in trouble, until the mistakes were too grave for him to turn back.

“Therefore, from the very first second, I exposed everything to the sunlight. All my approaches are absolutely legal. Although not everybody in our society knows about the matter, the leadership of parliament, the intelligence agencies such as the Secret Sword Bureau and the Dim Moon Fund, and many research institutions in the major universities all know what I have been doing. They are involved in all the procedures, too, to help me with supervision, control, and guidance.

“As you can see, the guests who will attend the first launch of the ‘Tinder Plan’ tomorrow are from the Secret Sword Bureau, the federal army, and parliament. Some of them are the most famous sociologists, futurists, and ethicists in the federation. Everything is open to the public!”

Thinking quickly, Li Yao suddenly realized something. “The Tinder Plan isn’t just about passing on the knowledge of mankind, is it? It is related to the Spiriters, too?”

“Of course it is. Why else would I devote all my belongings to the ‘Tinder Plan’?” Professor Mo Xuan indeed did not seem to be hiding anything at all. He generously explained, “From the beginning to the end, from the Monument Plan to the Tinder Plan, it has always been an ‘escape plan’. Other than passing on our civilization and exploring the future, the main purpose of the project is to bring a batch of Spiriters for them to run away from you.”

Li Yao was confused. “Run… away from us? Why?”

“Because we are scared of you, or rather, we are scared of getting into conflicts with you.”

Staring at Li Yao, Professor Mo Xuan thoughtfully said, “I’m well aware that I’ve walked too far. In the history of mankind, people who walked as far as me mostly did not end well.

“Did you know? At the early years of the age of the ancient Cultivators, when the three thousand Sectors were not connected to each other yet and the truth of the universe was still unknown, many worlds believed in ‘geocentric theory’. They thought that their world was unique and that all the stars in the universe rotated around it.

“The first Cultivators who raised the ‘heliocentric theory’ were almost all killed as heretics!

“At that time, in a lot of Sectors, the Cultivators who insisted on ‘geocentric theory’ and those who believed in ‘heliocentric theory’ had a lot of similar wars. The blood of countless innocent people was shed just for their ridiculous arguments.

“Perhaps this is the nature of human beings. When they discover an unknown object or theory, their very first thought is horror, and their second thought is to destroy it!

“The Spiriters are not interested in going against humans. As you heard just now, the resources we need are not the same. There is absolutely no reason for us to have any conflict. We can live in harmony and help each other.

“However, if I must find a reason of conflict, it will be horror—humans’ horror.

“Tell me, Representative Lin and Miss Ling. What was your first thought after you heard my theory?

“Spiriters? That’s too terrible! They are definitely going to destroy the civilization of mankind and conquer all humans, turning us into slaves!

“Mo Xuan is mad! It is not a human being at all. It is a piece of liquid metal, a different life form. Those who are not my own kind must think differently from me. It must be up to something!

“Only the beings with flesh, blood, and a brain such as us can be called ‘human beings’. The Spiriters cannot be regarded as human beings at all. Destroy them!

“Although there seems to be no reason for humans and the Spiriters to fight, we might as well suffocate all potential threats to mankind while they are still in the cradle!

“Look me in the eyes and tell me. Did you have any of the thoughts I mentioned just now, even if only for one moment?”

Li Yao and Ling Xiaole looked at each other, blushing.

Professor Mo Xuan smiled. “There’s no need to lie to me. I understand you very well. The Spiriters are as much human beings as you are. Naturally, we share your concerns.

“Right now, the Spiriters in the whole federation take up one percent of the population. It is still only a tiny proportion, and ordinary people perhaps can live with that.

“But what if they take up five percent or even more in the future? Can the other ninety-five percent of the population really tolerate the existence of the Spiriters and admit the fact that ‘the Spiriters are the future’ and that they are ‘old human beings’ while the Spiriters are ‘new human beings’?

“I hope they can, but I cannot be assured. The previous two branches of mankind, humans and demons, fought for forty thousand years before they reached a preliminary rapprochement at the corner of the universe. I do not want the Spiriters, a third branch, to have another conflict of forty thousand years with its brothers. Such a tragedy must not be repeated in any case.

“So, now that the future here is gloomy, we will run away.

“We will leave the present to you, the ‘old human beings’, and we will run to the future, to millions of years later, where we will create a new chapter of the civilization of mankind!”

Chapter 1716 - The Hope of Absolute Peace

The Spiriters, a branch of mankind, were going to escape to millions of lightyears away!

Li Yao was utterly dumbfounded.

His professor was truly his professor. Such a magnificent goal and such unwavering resolution!

In the illusion behind Professor Mo Xuan, the small fish were still struggling in the dirty river where mud was rolling.

They crawled from water to the shore, failing and trying time and time again. They grew new, feeble limbs during their attempts.

But Professor Mo Xuan suddenly raised his hands and picked up one of the fish from the illusion, putting it on a dry rock next to the river.

The small fish struggled hard, bubbling, only to be stiffened a moment later.

“Look at the fish,” Professor Mo Xuan said. “I believe that the Spiriters are the future of the civilization of mankind, that they are more perfect ‘new human beings’. But it does not mean that the time of the Spiriters will arrive any time soon.

“Evolution has its own pattern. Even the tiniest change must be adapted to and stabilized after hundreds of thousands of years or even longer. I cannot just tell the fish that ‘mammals are the future of your evolution, go now, to the shore’ and then throw it to the shore without considering the law of evolution. The fish will certainly die!

“Such an over-enthusiastic way is a complete distortion of the true meaning of evolution. Only idiotic schemers would try to deceive people with such folly. As for me personally, however optimistic I am, I don’t think that the prosperity of the Spiriters will come in the next ten thousand years.

“However, as soon as the Spiriters begin to let out their voices, however feeble the voices are, some people among humans and demons will be scared. Fear will lead to misunderstanding, misunderstanding will lead to prejudice, prejudice will lead to conflict, and conflict will escalate to war. It is the tragedy that has happened countless times in the history of mankind and will happen countless times in the future!

“I don’t want such a tragedy to happen between the Spiriters and humans and demons. Just like I firmed believed in the eventual birth of the virtual life, I have no doubt that the Spiriters will definitely be born and prosper. The trend cannot be stopped by anyone’s will. It is not going to help even if they destroy a Spiriter pioneer such as myself.

“As long as human beings do not abandon the crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus, the Spiriters will eventually be born. We should not turn a blind eye to the new life form like ostriches, nor should we try to suffocate it in fear and wariness stupidly and futilely. Instead, we should open our arms to welcome it and find a way to live in peace with it!

“Or rather, even if we are stupid enough to suffocate it, we should get to know it well first through communication, right?

“Therefore, I mainly did two things.

“Firstly, I reported my theory to the government and reached out to the major academic institutions. Then, I invited the specialists of the federal army, the Secret Sword Bureau, parliament, and the major universities to discuss the cutting-edge theories together.

“We gathered to talk about various possibilities. We predicted the future development of the Spiriters and their unexpected threats, flaws, and disadvantages. Gradually, we made everyone in the federation, the humans, demons, and Spiriters, realize that a new era was really coming.

“Secondly, I acquired the Monument Plan with all my belongings and modified it into the Tinder Plan, hoping that a tiny proportion of the Spiriters could flee from here.

“Most of the Spiriters are as rational and calm as I am. They believe that evolution is a natural process and that we can only observe in silence and offer slight guidance if we must. All beautiful things will happen by themselves.

“However, if some of the Spiriters cannot wait any longer, they can set sail for the distant future and the other side of the sea of stars!

“In millions of years, if the civilization of mankind is not destroyed yet, it will certainly have developed into a brand-new form. By then, different branches of mankind can grow, prosper, and blossom in different parts of the universe without affecting each other.

“Even if they meet again, I’m sure that the humans at that time will certainly have wisdom and morals much higher than ours, and they can settle the problem of peaceful coexistence perfectly.”

After hearing that, Li Yao’s suspicions at the beginning were almost entirely turned into shock and admiration. “Professor, your ideals are… so great!”

Professor Mo Xuan smiled and casually said, “I once had a disciple named ‘Li Yao’, who was a famous hero in the federation. But his fame did not solely come from his strength. In terms of strength, a lot of people in the federation were better than him. But only he brought peace to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector with his strength.

“Peace. How precious and vulnerable. After the Pangu Civilization and the Nuwa Civilization faded out, humanity has developed alone for a hundred thousand years. How many years in them were absolutely peaceful? Perhaps, not even one, right?

“Enough blood has been shed when human beings attacked each other. We have just resolved the long grudge between humans and demons. I truly don’t want the Spiriters to have new contradictions with their brothers. Is the forty thousand years of war between humans and demons not enough for the offspring to draw a lesson and grow the tiniest wisdom on peace?

“So, since the very beginning decades ago, I never hid my thoughts and plans. All my arrangements had only one purpose, which is to make the Spiriters grow, prosper, and blossom in absolute peace with humans and demons as a functional part of mankind!”

Li Yao took a deep breath and said, “I believe that if your disciple Li Yao heard what you said, he would definitely have supported you!”

Professor Mo Xuan sighed and said, “Yes, I believe he would. But not everybody wants peace. At the very least, the Imperium of True Human Beings doesn’t.

“In fact, the ‘Tinder Plan’ isn’t ready for the first launch yet because we haven’t resolved the most critical ‘reproduction’ problem.

“Right now, people are saying that the war will break out very soon. The predictions of the intelligence agencies of the federation are not optimistic, either. That’s why we are making the first launch in a hurry.

“Should the federation fail, the Imperium probably won’t tolerate the existence and development of the Spiriters. Even if they do, they will certainly force the Spiriters to do dreadful things, like the ‘star child’ who manipulated Xiao Xuance to sabotage the Flying Star Sector in the old days.

“Therefore, this is a piece of ‘tinder’ that has a low chance of success and may die out. Nobody will know its fate in the boundless universe, but let’s just hope that life can find a way out for itself!”

“It surely will.” Li Yao could not help but remark, “S—Miss Wei and her companions will certainly find a new out for humanity in the distant future on the other side of the sea of stars!”

“Alright.” Professor Mo Xuan smiled gently. For a moment, the sharpness and aggressiveness in him that felt like a saber were entirely gone. He seemed to become the firm and generous professor of a hundred years ago again. “You must be thirsty after such a long talk. Do you want to have a cup of wine in Carefree Town? We have the most delicious wine of the Forest Ocean Sector. It took us quite a long time to create the flavor. It is identical to the wine in the real world.”

Li Yao pondered for a moment. He would not mind going to the town to further discuss with his professor or even reveal his identity under the right circumstances.

However, since Long Yangjun was still around, he might as well consult the heir of the Nuwa Clan first.

“No, I’m afraid I can’t,” Li Yao said. “There’s some business in our delegation that I must attend to since we must jump to the Heaven’s Origin Sector this afternoon. We’ll further discuss this with you after we return from the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Right, I’ll definitely ask you the way to enter the Divinity Transformation Stage ‘without much trouble’!”

“Hahahaha. It’s a deal!” Professor Mo Xuan laughed sunnily. He did not insist that Li Yao must stay but simply waved his hands at Li Yao and Ling Xiaole. “I’ll have to greet the guests who have come to attend the ceremony. You must excuse me. See you next time!”

Li Yao was pushed out by a gentle force and sat up from the scarlet nerval interaction liquids.

Wei Qingqing and Long Yangjun were still waiting nearby. Ling Xiaole sat up from the virtual cabin next to him, too.

The two of them looked at each other in confusion and shock.

“Miss Wei…” Li Yao felt different when he looked at Wei Qingqing. “I didn’t know that the ‘Tinder Plan’ had such deep significance!”

Wei Qingqing immediately understood. She frankly acknowledged, “As an illusionist, I prefer to create spectacular and colorful worlds. But in reality, all some people in the Imperium, the Covenant Alliance, and the federation want is to destroy the world.

“I do not like such reality. So, I might as well run to millions of years in the future and find a new world without destruction, oppression, and slavery. If I can’t find one, I will create one myself. Would it be marvelous?”

Li Yao felt that his throat was choked by two nuts. Taking a long breath, he sincerely said, “Safe journey!”

Wei Qingqing smiled. “Thank you.”

“…See you!”

“Haha. It will be difficult for you to see me again. But who knows? Life is so wonderful that any amazing thing can happen. See you!” Wei Qingqing waved at Li Yao, exactly in the same posture when she said goodbye on the anonymous train station deep inside the Grand Desolate Plateau.

When Li Yao, Long Yangjun, and Ling Xiaole returned through the ‘time channel’ again in the silver shuttle, the vulnerable and yet resolute shadow was still flashing before Li Yao’s eyes and glittering like an orchid flower.

“I must thank you for such an amazing trip,” Ling Xiaole said from the cockpit. “The journey to the Spiriters’ Realm was truly incredible!”

“Captain,” Long Yangjun said, “what does the Spiriters’ Realm look like? What did Professor Mo Xuan say to you? I should’ve joined you on the trip in the beginning.”

“You will have your chance to do so, Vice-Captain Long.” Li Yao was more or less relieved now. He picked some of his experiences just now and his professor’s theories and explained them to Long Yangjun, complimenting them in great amazement.

Then, he began talking about the things that he would rather Ling Xiaole did not know.

Through the private talking technique, Li Yao said in a low voice, “Long Yangjun, I need your advice—”

Long Yangjun looked at the time channel outside. Because it was a return journey, the whole world seemed to be retrograding from modern times to prehistoric era.

“What’s up, captain?” she replied in private talk.

“Do you think…” Li Yao said.

He suddenly shuddered, as if a cold wind was blowing at him, and felt that something was wrong.

The mental devil was shrieking in his head. “Wait. Don’t ask her. She is not Long Yangjun!”

Li Yao realized what had happened, too.

When Ling Xiaole was present, it was not a problem that Long Yangjun addressed him as ‘captain’. But when they were alone or talking in private, she always called him ‘Li Yao’ or ‘Monster Li’ mockingly!

Something was wrong!

It was not Long Yangjun’s style in private conversations. She was not Long Yangjun!

However—

It was impossible. Long Yangjun would definitely not leave his virtual cabin.

She was an expert at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage, supported by a Colossus and countless secrets from the age of Nuwa. Who could have replaced her with a counterfeit?

Li Yao thought quickly and soon realized what was going on.

The woman sitting next to him was indeed not Long Yangjun. It was not even a real person.

This place was not the real world, either.

They were still in the virtual world!

Chapter 1717 - The Way to Break the Illusion

The silver shuttle continued rushing forward without a sound in the reversed ‘time channel’, so quiet that it almost felt abnormal.

The continent projected by the 3D light beams nearby gradually sank into oceans. The animals on the continent retrograded into fish, and fish returned to nautili and trilobites. In the end, it was a desolate, lifeless primitive ocean again.

A drop of cold sweat slowly leaked out of Li Yao’s forehead. For a moment, countless thoughts rolled over in his mind.

He was not worried about how to recognize or break the illusionary world. He was simply confused by one thing. If it was Professor Mo Xuan who constructed the ‘second illusionary’, what was his goal?

The virtual world—or in the terminology of the Cultivators, the Grand Illusionary Land—could easily be seen through even if it was theoretically a perfect simulation of reality.

It was because the virtual world could not simulate the things that it did not know, even if its real-time computational and rendering abilities were powerful enough to depict everything and everyone as vividly as real life.

Everything in the Grand Illusionary Land had been set in advance. Even the real-time computations and rendering that seemed random had to abide by certain laws. They could only be conducted by retrieving ‘materials’ from an information database.

Even the best cook could not make food without ingredients. If there were no materials, it would be impossible to simulate anything.

The simplest example would be the woman sitting next to Li Yao who looked like Long Yangjun. It was quite easy to simulate the appearance of such a person. As long as someone shot her with a crystal camera in secret the moment Long Yangjun entered the Tinder Base and scanned her from multiple perspectives, they would naturally get the ‘materials of her appearance’ without any trouble.

Based on the public relationship between her and Li Yao, and perhaps the conversation that the two of them had in reality, it was also possible for them to grasp Long Yangjun’s speaking habits and the way she addressed Li Yao.

However, it was impossible for the people who created the Grand Illusionary Land to learn Long Yangjun’s hidden identity. They could not have learned that Long Yangjun called Li Yao ‘Monster Li’ in private, either!

Those were secrets that could not be deduced even if the computational abilities of all the crystal processors in the federation were made use of.

In fact, distinguishing the illusion was not so complicated. There was an even easier solution. The appearance, or rather, the ‘skin’, in which Li Yao showed in the Grand Illusionary Land, was his appearance when he entered the Tinder Base. But it was only the surface, too. It was impossible for them to scan how many Cosmos Rings he had on his body or know what exactly was stored in the Cosmos Rings. If so, how could they simulate the Cosmos Rings?

Therefore, if he was not certain, all he needed to do was to pick up one of his Cosmos Rings and retrieve a random item as a test.

Li Yao had brought a lot of rare materials back from the Ancient Sages Sector, which did not exist in the entire federation. So, it was even less likely that the ‘database’ of the Grand Illusionary Land had those entries.

Or rather, he did not even need to activate his Cosmos Ring. He only needed to summon his spiritual energy and trigger a flame with it. It was absolutely impossible for the creator of the Grand Illusionary Land to learn the color, shape, and changes of the fire of spiritual energy that he raised with his special secret arts.

In short, the Grand Illusionary Land of the so-called perfect simulation of reality was only immaculate at first glance. It could only run perfectly within the boundary of the rules of the game. Once the boundary was crossed, there would be nothing it could do, and the ‘players’ would immediately notice the flaws and loopholes that were hidden by the delicate appearance.

Unless…

Unless the creator and controller of the Grand Illusionary Land were powerful enough to invade the brains of the ‘players’ and read all the information to generate a real-time database. Then, all the computations and deductions would be finished before the neurons in the brain realized what was going on.

It meant that as long as Li Yao thought of a certain specific concept in his head, it would immediately be captured by the Grand Illusionary Land, which would then run a series of complicated computations quickly to make sure that the results exactly matched what he had in mind.

Or maybe, the Grand Illusionary Land could perform very brilliant mental attacks toward the brains of the ‘players’ so that the ‘players’ would enter a certain mysterious hypnotization state as if they were dreaming.

When people were dreaming, the world in the dream that they perceived was also broken, bizarre, and in violation of common sense and natural laws.

In the dream, they could fly, dead people could reappear, animals could talk, different places could be joined to each other perfectly… any unbelievable thing could happen.

If they were awake, they would inevitably feel that such a world was hilarious and ridiculous and that it could not have been faker.

However, for the people who were trapped in nightmares, few could realize that they were in a dream.

But was it easy to achieve the two purposes at the same time?

Li Yao sneered at the bottom of his heart.

Both invading the brain to read memories and mind and paralyzing certain parts in the brain for hypnotization would consume a lot of computational abilities.

Besides, he was not an ordinary person at all but a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator with a strong soul, a determined mind, and a profound brain. He was not even a random Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator but one of the best of them!

Li Yao did not want to brag about himself. In terms of absolute combat ability, it was true that he was not the best in the federation. He had ranked between third and fifth a hundred years ago, and after a hundred years of sleep, without a crystal suit and a Colossus, it might be barely possible for him to defeat Ding Lingdang.

However, when it came to ‘brain warfare’ or ‘mental Cultivation’, he was probably the most magnificent existence in the entire federation that surpassed the Divinity Transformation Stage!

For as long as he could remember, he had always been haunted by an uncanny dream. The uncanny dream about ‘Earth’ that he was born with was definitely not a regular dream but some sort of ‘Grand Illusionary Land’. It polished his brain without him knowing it and prepared him for the crazy and harsh training later.

Later, Ou Yezi possessed him. In the Flying Star Sector, the star child tried to invade and control his brain through the star brain. When he left the Flying Star Sector, the Blood Stripe Virus also intended to occupy his body while he was breaking the void. After three perilous, breathtaking battles in the brain, his brain and his soul were further cleansed and hardened. There was even a mental devil, a weird ‘second soul’ residing inside his brain now.

His experience was unique and uncopyable in the federation. Therefore, if somebody performed a mental attack on him, they would be fighting a battle that he was best at. It was exactly what he wanted!

But naturally, if his professor was truly up to something, the threat must not be underestimated, either.

As a star spirit, Professor Mo Xuan’s soul had been through mutations of a certain degree, too, in a weird and enigmatic way. Also, in the battle against the star child, Professor Mo Xuan also absorbed tremendous soul strength and computational ability from the star child. Perhaps he had gained even more than Li Yao did from the battle.

After that, Professor Mo Xuan managed the Glorious Sunlight Magical Equipment Center and supervised the repair work of the hundred super crystal processors from the Star Ocean Imperium in the Star Prier’s House on Spider Den. With his secret techniques as the star spirit, he had accumulated even more immense computational abilities.

Li Yao had once had a match with his professor, half for fun and half for real. His conclusion was that Professor Mo Xuan’s mental abilities and soul were truly immeasurable!

And that was a hundred years ago.

In the past hundred years, Professor Mo Xuan had not been idling by. He was a ‘human-shaped crystal processor’. The production, assembly, and debugging of all the super crystal processors in the federation were supervised by him or done with his personal help. He must have reached a higher level!

Since he was now living as a piece of liquid metal, it would be difficult to gauge his Cultivation by the regular levels such as the Nascent Soul Stage or the Divinity Transformation Stage. However, the intelligence that Li Yao had gathered from various sources suggested that in terms of computational ability, Professor Mo Xuan far exceeded the regular Divinity Transformation Stage!

His professor’s computational ability was definitely the highest in the entire federation.

Why else would he be qualified to be the presidents of the Refiners' Association and the Association of the Spectral Cultivators?

Generally speaking, 'computational ability' did not equal 'combat ability'.

However, in the Grand Illusionary Land…

To this moment, Li Yao still did not believe that Professor Mo Xuan was capable of invading his brain, reading his memory pieces, and paralyzing his central nerves without him feeling anything wrong.

Also, it was not difficult for a 'big player' on Li Yao's level to crack such a Grand Illusionary Land.

As long as he continued burning his soul and breaking his limits, releasing infinite telepathic thoughts and techniques that surpassed the speed of real-time computation and rendering of the Grand Illusionary Land, the information streams that constituted the Grand Illusionary Land would be cast into a certain 'overflow state', which would lead to the collapse of the Grand Illusionary Land and even the super crystal processors and controllers behind it.

The star child had crashed in exactly such a way.

Ou Yezi was the same. With the last remains of his computational ability and mental ability, Ou Yezi had constructed a vivid illusionary world, trying to slowly corrupt Li Yao's soul in the illusions.

But he had never expected Li Yao's soul to be so strong. As it turned out, although Li Yao did not fight back at all, Ou Yezi simply crashed because he could not bear the enormous workload of computation and rendering.

Mental attacks were a double-edged sword in the first place. If the defender’s mind was weaker, the defender would be hit, but if the defender’s mind was too tough, the attacker might suffer from their own attack.

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao stared at the blue sky, white clouds, and vast prairie that seemed quiet and peaceful on the horizon. He seemed to notice the green figures and runes pouring down like a waterfall behind the sky and the clouds.

If it was really Professor Mo Xuan, why was he doing this?

On the surface, he was an honorable guest from Firefly, who had come on behalf of the Speaker of the rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic. So many federal soldiers and Secret Sword Agents were around, closely monitoring everything. Was it necessary for Professor Mo Xuan to attack him with so many eyewitnesses?

Besides, although he was Speaker Cui Lingfeng’s representative, Firefly was just a bunch of refugees. In the war between the Black Wind Fleet and the federation to come, his identity on the surface would be a supporting role.

If his professor truly had any schemes, would he risk it just because of such an insignificant person?

The shuttle would soon return to the space port. The Grand Illusionary Land could not be too huge, and the characters being commuted in real time could not be too many. Not every member of Team Red Lotus could be simulated.

Therefore, whatever the purpose of the ‘game’ was, it would be revealed soon!

Li Yao’s pupils constricted after he had that thought.

Perhaps because he had been deep in thought for too long and stopped talking to ‘Long Yangjun’, the Long Yangjun before him turned rigid.

In the meantime, Li Yao sensed that an overwhelming, destructive killing intent had locked onto him!

Chapter 1718 - Silver World

Li Yao’s brain was vibrating crazily. The whole world turned clear and sharp in one moment. He sensed that at least six pieces of aggressive magical equipment at the same level of the main guns of a starship had not only locked onto him but also already fired!

Six supersonic cannonballs, mixed with electric arcs and flames of spiritual energy, burst out of the super crystal cannons and rushed close as quickly as a lightning with dozens of damage effects. The space hundreds of square meters around him was completely blocked. It was a hundred times more dangerous than the assault in Fish Dragon City!

Also, ‘Ling Xiaole’ who was sitting in the front and ‘Long Yangjun’ who was sitting next to him both lunged at him with hideous countenances on their faces.

Their killing intent immediately drowned the tiny shuttle like the seawater at ten thousand meters deep!

Li Yao’s first reaction was to unleash his maximum strength and counterattack.

However, his doubts about Professor Mo Xuan in the beginning and his new discovery that this place was still a virtual world kept part of Li Yao’s soul awake.

Why is Professor Mo Xuan doing this? What can he possibly get by attacking me here?

It’s impossible. There’s no reason to attack an unimportant person like Lin Jiu, who is nobody but the captain of Team Red Lotus, when so many federal soldiers and agents from the Secret Sword Bureau are monitoring everything from the outside!

If the federal government intends to attack, say, because Speaker Cui Lingfeng regretted his decision for some reason and informed the federal government of the truth that we are from the ‘Red Lotus Sector’, there is still no reason they should attack us in a virtual world. There are too many uncertainties in this place after all. They can totally besiege us in the real world. This is the territory of the federation after all!

It will be even more ridiculous if they take us for spies from the Imperium. The identities that we have fabricated are absolutely not worth their trouble!

In the moment before ‘Long Yangjun’ and ‘Ling Xiaole’ lunged at him, Li Yao and the mental devil reached the same conclusion.

It was a test, designed to find out if he was really in the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage as he told everyone.

Of course, under the collective attack of six super crystal cannons, if he revealed certain magnificent strength that far exceeded the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage, or if he performed a certain unknown technique, it would be possible to distinguish his real identity from all the traces!

Even if this place was a virtual world, if the intensity of his soul was enlarged ten times or a hundred times in the moment, the sign would still definitely be captured precisely.

It was time to take his chances!

Li Yao had already lowered his wariness and was preparing to tell Professor Mo Xuan his real identity, but he changed his mind at this point. He simply allowed the two virtual puppets made of runes and numbers to jump onto his body and turned a blind eye to the spiritual waves coming at him that seemed to contain destructive force.

Because he knew that they were just special ‘mental attacks’, which were nothing but illusions that some crystal processors sent into his brains.

Even if he lost the gamble, the attack of illusions of such a degree were still bearable for him.

Therefore, Li Yao simply activated the spiritual shield of the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage before he jumped to his feet, pretending to be surprised. “You—”

BOOM!

Six balls of light consumed the shuttle like supernova outbreaks and seemed to be completely melting Li Yao in the next second.

Li Yao controlled the activity of his soul precisely within the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage.

Suddenly, he felt his body turning light. The feelings of being burnt, stung, and torn apart were all gone. The previously vivid world no longer existed, either.

Li Yao fell into a silver world. There seemed to be flowers, grass, hills, and rivers in the world, too, but all of them were silver and glowing in cold brilliance. They were all made of liquid metal!

In front of him, the liquid metal slowly wriggled, spreading out rounds of ripples. Soon, it condensed into a shape of a human in silver.

It was Professor Mo Xuan, who bowed at Li Yao to express his apology.

Wiping his face that was soaked in cold sweat, Li Yao burst into fury. “Professor, what’s the meaning of this?”

“I am very sorry, Representative Lin,” Professor Mo Xuan said expressionlessly. “It was not part of my plan but done at the Secret Sword Bureau’s request. They hoped to run another security test on you with the specialness of the Spiriters’ Realm. After all, you will jump to the Heaven’s Origin Sector and meet most of the leadership of the Federation, even including the Speaker himself, very soon.

“The Secret Sword Bureau is not suspicious about the sincerity of our ally. However, the spies of the Imperium are truly everywhere nowadays. If they swapped the real ‘Team Red Lotus’ at a certain procedure and sneak into our capital city, how much trouble would be caused?

“I was not in favor of it when they proposed to do such a thing with the help of the ‘Spiriters’ Realm’, but the Secret Sword Bureau said that it was for ‘national security’. I couldn’t find a reason to reject them.

“So, do forgive me, Representative Lin.”

Li Yao thought quickly whether or not Professor Mo Xuan was speaking the truth, but he simply sniffed on the surface and said, “Then, have you found anything after your ‘test’?”

“That’s not my job,” Professor Mo Xuan replied. “I merely constructed such a special Spiriters’ Realm as per the Secret

Sword Bureau's request. In fact, this is a virtual world riddled with flaws and loopholes. I believe that Representative Lin must've seen it a long time ago.

"As for the test result, you can ask the staff of the Secret Sword Bureau after you return to reality."

After offering a perfectly logical explanation, Professor Mo Xuan bowed again to express his apology. Then, he turned into a cluster of shapeless liquid metal and melted into the entire silver world.

Li Yao was pushed out of the silver world again by a gentle force and sat up from the scarlet nerval interaction liquids that were as warm as amniotic fluid.

It seemed to be the hall from which he entered the virtual world. The hundreds of virtual cabins that looked like metal coffins nearby were identical to just now.

Wei Qingqing, Long Yangjun, and Ling Xiaole were all staring at him.

Wiping his face, Li Yao jumped out of the virtual cabin. Before Wei Qingqing said anything, he snatched Long Yangjun and dragged her to a corner without caring about the astonishment of all the bystanders.

"What's wrong with you?" Long Yangjun blinked quickly and spoke in a low voice without moving her lips. "Do not do such things in public, alright?"

"Cut the cr*p. Answer my questions!" Li Yao stared at Long Yangjun aggressively, as if he were determined to have a fight with her if anything went wrong. He replied through private talk. "Give me my three nicknames, pseudonyms, or aliases, now!"

Frowning, Long Yangjun looked at Li Yao strangely. “Monster Li, Master Spiritual Vulture, dominator of three Sectors… What’s the meaning of this?”

“Keep going. Tell me your last pseudonym and false identity!”

“Well, Wang Xi, a eunuch.”

“Hu…” Li Yao was greatly relieved. It was not until then that his tightened muscles finally relaxed.

Long Yangjun narrowed her eyes and observed, “You must’ve experienced some horrible things in the ‘Spiriters’ Realm’ to be so scared.”

“Not horrible, but weird. Openly weird!” Li Yao said. “There are too many eyes and ears here. I’ll tell you more when we return.”

“Greetings…” Wei Qingqing walked close and asked caringly, “Is there anything wrong?”

“No.” Staring at Wei Qingqing, Li Yao asked, “Miss Wei, did we say goodbye just now?”

Wei Qingqing was confused. “What do you mean? Weren’t you in the virtual cabin the whole time? I was talking with Representative Lin and interpreting many details of the ‘Tinder Plan’ for her. Before that… I don’t remember bidding each other farewell. Did we?”

Li Yao understood everything.

Wei Qingqing who said goodbye to him just now was false. Or rather, the entire scene was false and created by Professor Mo Xuan.

“Then, see you,” Li Yao said with mixed feelings.

“Hehe. It will be difficult for you to see me again. After all, I’m going to millions of years in the future tomorrow. But it’s hard to say. The universe is such a vast place. Life is full of wonders. Perhaps there will be a day when we will meet again, right?”

Wei Qingqing smiled and waved at Li Yao.

Li Yao’s heart sank slowly to somewhere very, very deep.

Wei Qingqing’s reaction for his farewell was almost identical to Professor Mo Xuan’s simulation.

It was quite understandable.

Wei Qingqing was a member of the ‘Tinder Base’. Professor Mo Xuan, or other creators of the Spiriters’ Realm, had a lot of time to observe her in secret and analyze her behavior or even mental state. That way, they would be able to simulate a ‘Wei Qingqing’ that was very close to the one in reality.

Li Yao did not like the feeling at all.

If life could be ‘copied’ in such a way, would it be creating a new life, or would it simply be blasphemy?

In any case, Li Yao did not want to spend one more second in the Tinder Base. He only wanted to get out of the place and run as far away from the Hundred Flowers Space Zone and Professor Mo Xuan as possible!

On the way back home, it was still the reversed time channel, in which the scenes where humans turned into monkeys, monkeys to reptiles, and reptiles to fish were played.

Li Yao retrieved a scale that felt particularly rough from his Cosmos Ring and touched it inside his palm secretly.

It was a scale from the ‘Red Haired Dragon’, a unique beast of the Ancient Sages Sector. The stripes of the scale of such a beast were unique and complicated and could even be perceived by fingers. One could not find a similar item in the entire federation.

The subtle feedback reminded Li Yao that it was the real world.

Li Yao asked Ling Xiaole to drive at a slow speed before he told Long Yangjun his entire experience in the Spiriters’ Realm, including the ‘second Spiriters’ Realm’ that he was caught in, carefully without leaving out any word or any detail in private.

He believed that Long Yangjun might be able to figure out something that he had neglected with her keenness and wisdom.

“I feel that something must be wrong with Professor Mo Xuan, but I can’t figure out where exactly the problem is,” Li Yao said. “Now that I think about it more carefully, there is really no place that calls for suspicion at all. Everything that the professor did has been done openly and frankly.

“Also, it is just a cutting-edge theoretical study conducted under the supervision of the major institutions and government departments. Even the ‘second Spiriters’ Realm’ was constructed at the Secret Sword Bureau’s request. I’ve confirmed it through Ling Xiaole. The Secret Sword Bureau expressed their apologies, too. Their explanation is identical to the professor’s.

“But why do I feel so uncomfortable about everything?”

Chapter 1719 - Absolute Peace!

“After you entered the ‘Spiriters’ Realm’, I chatted with Wei Qingqing for a long time,” Long Yangjun said. “I also examined some of the Professor Mo Xuan’s papers on the Spiriters and videos during the academic seminars. Your professor did not lie. It is true that he released his thoughts to the public decades ago. At least, there were small-scale discussions in every university and research institute back then.

“Besides, from a pure theoretical point of view, I don’t think that his ideas have any major shortcomings. As crystal processor technology and the Spiritual Nexus develop, the virtual world will feel more and more real. So, it is inevitable that more and more ghosts and people who suffer too much pressure in reality will choose to live in the virtual world.

“Even now, a lot of people often spend a few months at their home in the company of the crystal processors. Aren’t they the prototypes and backup army of the ‘Spiriters’?

“This is a trend that cannot be stopped. You may feel uncomfortable about it, but there is simply no stopping it, unless you ban the crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus from upgrading, or issue harsh laws that dictate a daily quota of online time for every person in the federation, who will have to receive mandated therapy or even be sentenced to prison if they surpass the limit. But is it possible?

Pondering, Li Yao slowly shook his head.

“That’s right. Professor Mo Xuan wasn’t wrong at all,” Long Yangjun said. “The birth of a brand-new virtual life and the virtualization of human beings are unstoppable!

“Perhaps not everybody is glad to witness such a change. But if one percent of the people volunteer to live in the virtual world, or if the lack of resources and the harsh environment force people to hide in the virtual world and build a tiny paradise there, is there any reason other people should change and even destroy the lifestyle they have chosen?

“Professor Mo Xuan does not need to play any tricks and ploys at all. The Spiriters will eventually be born. It is only a matter of when and how many.

“Since the Spiriters will inevitably be born, as an important member of the academic field of the federation and the ‘human-shaped crystal processor’ with the highest computational ability nationwide, Professor Mo Xuan has begun explorations and studies on the ‘Spiriters’ with everyone’s future in mind. What’s wrong with that?

“Even if you do treat the Spiriters as a certain ‘disease’ of the civilization of mankind, you cannot just ignore it because you don’t like it. All the more reason you should analyze and study it carefully in order to find a cure. Isn’t this what Professor Mo Xuan is doing right now?”

Li Yao nodded quickly. “I understand all the logic, but I still feel quite weird.”

Long Yangjun laughed. “Are you worried that Professor Mo Xuan is actually a supervillain who is pretending to be a good guy and that a great scheme has been hidden below the ‘Tinder Plan’, say, to make the Spiriters rule over the world and conquer all human beings?

“But I don’t think it is plausible.

“I don’t know much about Professor Mo Xuan. So, I don’t know whether he is good or bad. However, he is the man with the highest computational ability in the federation after all, which is higher even than what is expected of the Divinity Transformation Stage. He is known as the ‘super human-shaped crystal processor’!

“The thing about the crystal processor is that it is absolutely rational and calm. It will analyze everything carefully and will not consider short-term gains and losses. It is not as emotional as human beings!

“First of all, virtual life does not need the resources necessary for regular people at all. Professor Mo Xuan was right. There was no reason for them to fight humans and demons.

“Secondly, even if Professor Mo Xuan is a great supervillain whose ambition is to make the Spiriters to conquer mankind, with his computational ability above the Divinity Transformation Stage, it should be more than easy to figure out that the crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus in the federation today are still too underdeveloped. Even the reproduction problem of the ‘Spiriters’ was not resolved yet. They are babies in the cradle right now. It is certainly not a good time to declare war on the ‘old human beings’.

“Even if he does have a scheme, he should develop regularly first for hundreds more years until the technology is advanced enough and the population of the Spiriters soars. That’s the only way to get a promising rate of success, right?

“In short, as long as he bears the fundamental interests of the ‘Spiriters’ in mind, he definitely won’t activate his scheme, if he has one, at this point. It is too rash and hasty. Is it Professor Mo Xuan's style?"

"No. I found it quite odd, too." Li Yao frowned. "My professor is not such an unwise and reckless man. Even if he has other hopes for the future of the Spiriters, he should know that the rise of the Spiriters will not take place in the next hundreds of years!

"He said exactly the same things just now. I don't think that he was lying. Besides, I do not feel that professor was a super villain, either. Even in his most aggressive moment just now, I only felt that he was a bit mad, but I didn't feel any selfishness and evilness from him.

"How should I put it? I've met a few bad guys who pretend to be good guys before, such as Yan Xibei, Xiao Xuance, or Lu Zui. But professor is different from them. Professor is a good guy. I have no doubt in that!"

Long Yangjun changed the topic and suddenly asked, "If we are talking about suspicious points, I'm more curious about one thing. Why did Professor Mo Xuan talk so much with Lin Jiu, the captain of Team Red Lotus?

"Lin Jiu is not an important big shot, even with war between the federation and the Black Wind Fleet drawing close. You are just here for a visit. I think a brief small talk would've sufficed. Was it necessary for him to ignore all the celebrities of the federal army and the Secret Sword Bureau and talk so much to you?

"You spent two hours in the virtual cabin. He must've been quite eloquent!"

Long Yangjun was deep in thought. "Perhaps he was buying time for himself, but it still doesn't make sense. There was no reason to waste so much time on a second-rate person like captain of Team Red Lotus! You are at the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage at best. There are more than a thousand Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the federation. Even if a scheme was prepared, you couldn't have been qualified to be its target!"

Was I being too sensitive? Li Yao took a deep breath. "In any case, I'm thinking of leaving the Hundred Flowers Space Zone in advance and jumping to the Heaven's Origin Sector to find Ding Lingdang and Jin Xinyue sooner. After I find the two of them, I won't worry about the scheme that there may or may not be at all!"

Soon, the shuttle returned to the space port where the carrier was docked.

Since they were the special delegation, their starship had the privilege of being maintained and filled with fuel in advance. After a while, preparations for the jump were done.

Li Yao had planned to publicize his identity in the Hundred Flowers Space Zone, but he was in a hurry for the space jump. There would certainly be a lot of fuss if Yan Liren heard that he was actually 'Monster Li'.

Therefore, he might as well wait until he reached the Heaven's Origin Sector. Li Yao only wanted to get away from the Hundred Flowers Space Zone sooner.

"All passengers, please be prepared. The space jump will be performed in one minute."

In the launch area of the space port, the starship that accommodated the delegation from the Star Ocean Republic was gradually enshrouded in a cluster of gentle brightness. Shivering, it was about to go to the Heaven's Origin Sector.

At this point, there were thirteen hours, twenty-two minutes, and thirty-five seconds to go before the Black Wind Fleet arrived at the central space zone of the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

When the cover of Li Yao’s cabin was about to the closed, Long Yangjun, who was lying in the protective cabin next to him, struggled to sit up and grabbed the cover, hinting for him to sit up, too.

“I suddenly thought of a motivation for a scheme.” Long Yangjun frowned. “If it can be called a motivation at all.”

“Oh?” Li Yao was refreshed. Having no time to think about the space jump that would begin soon, he said, “Do tell me.”

“I gave it a lot of thought just now. The more I pictured your professor being a vicious schemer, the more I believed that our conclusion was right,” Long Yangjun said. “If he is really a vicious scheme whose purpose is to make the Spiriters dominate the universe, there will be absolutely no reason he should do anything right now. He should lurk for another few hundred years for the best opportunity.

“However, what if you are not wrong? Your professor is not a vicious schemer, but a good one, a noble man, a bright guy who has dedicated himself to the civilization of mankind instead of considering his selfish benefits!”

Li Yao was confused. “So what?”

“If so,” Long Yangjun said, “even if he regards himself as a Spiriter, he will not consider the interests of himself and the Spiriters as the top priority; he will place the overall interests of mankind on the top that is far more important than the Spiriters!

"In other words, if something is highly beneficial for mankind, even if it jeopardizes the interests of the Spiriters and may cause the death of the Spiriters, your professor will still do it as a 'good guy', won't he?"

Li Yao blinked and replied, "Maybe. But I don't quite follow you. What do you mean by 'something highly beneficial for mankind'?"

"Absolute peace," Long Yangjun said coldly. "I thought about Professor Mo Xuan's words that you repeated to me many times and discovered a very unpleasant phrase. 'Absolute peace'! He wants all the races of mankind to support and help each other in 'absolute peace', to grow, blossom, and prosper together."

Li Yao grimaced. "What's wrong with that? I hope for the same!"

"Peace is not wrong. 'Absolute peace', on the other hand, is quite intriguing," Long Yangjun said. "Let me ask you. What kind of country or social form can realize 'absolute peace'?

"Even if the federation defeats the Black Wind Fleet this time, will it be given 'absolute peace'? Will it no longer need to fight the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance in the future?

"Even if, one day, Monster Li goes on a rampage and leads the federation to completely demolish the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance, then what? The federation will be stable and united in absolute peace, and a war will never happen again?"

"Of course not," Li Yao mumbled. "There is only unity where there is division. Peace cannot last forever. Wars large and small will break out sooner or later."

“Exactly,” Long Yangjun said quickly. “As long as humans continue to exist in their current form, their infinite desires and the finite resources will always be irreconcilably contradictory to each other. Wars are eternal. ‘Absolute peace’ is never going to happen!

“But what if most people are ‘virtualized’? Will it greatly reduce the consumption on the external resources? Even if wars cannot be ended for good, will the frequency and intensity of wars be greatly lowered than right now? Or rather, won’t wars become some sort of virtual game, where one can be revived immediately after they are killed?

“Isn’t this some kind of ‘absolute peace’?”

Chapter 1720 - Greatest Man Alive

Li Yao was rather confused. “That’s a rather… unconventional thought.”

“It’s very simple,” Long Yangjun explained. “The civil wars within the civilization of mankind are mostly for resources, especially the planets with abundant spiritual energy, atmosphere, sunlight, and water sources. It will be even better if there are Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and a lot of crystals mother lodes on them!

“Vulnerable and picky human beings can only live on such planets. Even if they have grown into a ‘starship civilization’, they still must find such planets as their bases and therefore spend their entire time searching for them!

“Wars only happen when we are fighting over such planets that are actually terribly rare in the sea of stars. For example, the Black Wind Fleet has marched to this place after a tremendous journey from the center of the cosmos, but isn’t their purpose to raid the Sector here and loot all the resources including population?

“However, if everyone—no, that is not necessary—if half of mankind is transformed into ‘virtual life’ and lives in the ‘Spiriters’ Realm’, the pressure on resources will be greatly reduced. Humans have the highest demand on their habitats. Demons are much more adaptable than humans and can live on many barren and harsh planets. The Spiriters, on the other hand, are a great deal more adaptive than demons. For them, they can establish tiny centers of super crystal processors deep below the surface of most of the solid planets as long as their underground is free of the interferences of radiation!

“Everything can be created in the virtual world. Money, women, land, Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures… All the reasons from ancient times to today that ever caused a war will no longer be a problem in the virtual world!

“As a result, after the living space of human beings is expanded a hundred times over, their internal conflict will be greatly soothed. Wars may not be entirely wiped out, but the odds of wars that are caused by the competition of resources will be greatly reduced. Maybe that is what your professor believes.

“Even if the Spiriters really have conflicts and a war is inevitable, the wars will not be as cruel as what we are having right now. I have come up with two new modes when I just give it a thought.

“Firstly, just like a war DLC of ‘Civilization’, they can establish a virtual battlefield in the virtual world. It doesn’t matter at all even if they burn everything on the battlefield down or kill everybody they see.

“Secondly, didn’t your professor mention shells? If the Spiriters must fight a war in the material world, all the warriors can crawl into a certain ‘shell’ to remote control the army, like the drones or the war puppets that we have today. Even if the shell is utterly damaged, the soul may still be unharmed.

“Think about it. What an advanced, clean, and peaceful form of war. Nobody will really be killed in such a war. Even if some of them may accidentally crash their soul, the odds of the potential victims will still be significantly lowered than in a war right now!

“Then, the universe will embrace eternal peace. War will be a solution to resolve disagreement peacefully. It can even be a game of entertainment!”

“War… can be a game?” Li Yao shuddered coldly.

“Why are you wearing such an expression of disbelief, like human beings are just a bunch of innocent children?” Long Yangjun sniffed. “Humans are war machines created by the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan in the first place. War and violence are an ineffaceable part embedded in the deepest part of everyone’s genes. Human children like to play with toy guns and military action figures. Adolescents like action movies and war games. Even at the twilight of their life, aren’t old people still fond of power struggles and strategies? And you personally, Vulture Li Yao, do you dare to say that you do not like the feeling of fighting?”

Li Yao was rendered speechless for a moment. He could only say, “No, it’s impossible. I don’t think that my professor is as crazy as you think…”

“It all depends on whether Professor Mo Xuan is a good guy or a bad guy,” Long Yangjun said. “If Professor Mo Xuan is truly a vicious villain, and his ambitions are to make the Spiriters rule the world, he will certainly not concoct any scheme at this point because the timing is too inappropriate, and the odds of success are too low.

“Besides, the potential of the Spiriters are obvious. He can totally draw a magnificent blueprint and spend hundreds of years in hibernation while manipulating everything in secret, like Jin Tuyi did. Thousands of years later, when mankind is even more deeply associated with the Spiritual

Nexus, it will be the best opportunity for him, and he will activate all his plans!

“If he is not a vicious villain but only a selfish one who considers the interests of the Spiriters as the top priority and does not care about the conditions of other people at all, he still won’t jump out at this point. He can totally dedicate his life and resources to the ‘Tinder Plan’ and flee with his ‘Spiriters’ to the distant future far, far away, leaving the ‘old human beings’ and the Star Glory Federation behind.

“After all, the Spiriters represent the future. All he needs to do is grasp the future. As for those people in the Star Glory Federation who don’t believe him, he can simply leave them at their own mercy. Would he be bothered by their fate at all?

“Think about it. Does it make sense? If Professor Mo Xuan is a vicious guy or a selfish guy, there is no reason he should jump out at this point, is there?”

Li Yao pondered for a moment and nodded. “Correct. He shouldn’t jump out to cause trouble if he is selfish or evil.”

“However, as I said just now and what you have always believed, what if Professor Mo Xuan is neither a bad guy nor a selfish guy, but a good guy who places the interests of mankind above the interests of himself and the Spiriters?” Long Yangjun asked. “When such a ‘good guy’ has discovered a solution that can bring absolute peace to human beings and avoid wars forever, will he be patient enough to wait hundreds or thousands more years? Is it possible for him to carry out an ‘escape plan’, abandon his compatriots and motherland, and run to the future, while leaving other people to struggle in the turbulence of war?

“At this very second, putting the ‘minor conflict’ that is about to break out between the Star Glory Federation and the Black Wind Fleet aside, a super war that is a hundred times more gory that the war here is taking place between the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Alliance of the Holy Covenant, two human superpowers at the center of the cosmos!

“In such a super war, countless people die every second. They are blown into smithereens, their broken limbs flying everywhere. A lot of old people, women, and children are trembling in fear, screaming, and struggling painfully to live or die!

“As the Star Glory Federation embarks on the journey to seek universal hegemony, it is inevitable that you will be involved in the war, too. Whether you win or you lose in the end, billions of people are destined to be killed!

“Can Professor Mo Xuan, as a good guy, idle about when such a future approaches and simply care about the petty interests of his Spiriters?

“Can he ignore the deaths of billions of people and abandon his dearest compatriots, but only dwell in his small circle of the ‘Spiriters’?

“No. It’s impossible. If Professor Mo Xuan is truly a good guy, he will definitely try his best to save all of them and free everybody from war!

“Therefore, when we were just considering from the perspective of the interests of the Spiriters and himself, we certainly couldn’t find an answer, but if we think for the interests of all mankind, everything will make sense!”

Bulging his eyes, Li Yao mumbled, “My professor is indeed… someone who is willing to sacrifice everything for his motherland and compatriots. Also, as a refiner, he is also a resolute and determined one. When he has a plan, he will certainly not just write it on paper or talk about it but will put it into practice step by step!

“To carry out the Heavenly Road Plan a hundred years ago, if I hadn’t volunteered to look for the Ancient Sages Sector deep inside the dark nebula, Professor Mo Xuan would have abandoned everything and marched into the dark nebula at the risk of his life!

“It’s understandable that he does such things now, but—but the odds of success are astoundingly low!”

“You don’t save someone because you are sure that they can be saved,” Long Yangjun said. “For example, if you see a poor, innocent little girl on a crystal rail, and a high-speed crystal train is running toward her and will soon crash into her, just because you calculate that the odds that you can save the little girl are only one percent, will you simply watch her be killed by the train while doing nothing about it?”

Li Yao thought for a moment and replied, “No, I don’t think so. I believe that most people will not calculate the odds at all. There may be too little time for them to understand the situation, but if they realize what is going on, they will certainly jump forward to save her without considering anything. It is a natural instinct, a conditional reflex. Why bother calculating the odds?”

“Exactly,” Long Yangjun said. “You need only calculate the odds of success when you are carrying out a ‘scheme’, and you will only activate it if the odds of success are high enough. However, ‘salvation’ is a natural instinct; one does not require consideration or calculation. People will do it whether it succeeds or fails and whether it is beneficial for themselves or harmful!

“As long as war is completely destroyed, trillions of people and even everybody in the entire universe will be saved. Nobody will ever be caught in the pain and destruction caused by war. There will be no more conflicts, no more contradictions, and no more bloody wars! Is such a ‘motive’ not enough to make ‘good guy Professor Mo Xuan’ pay everything?”

Li Yao was lost for words, completely defeated by such a new way of thinking.

“Of course, this is just my random thought. It might not necessarily be the truth,” Long Yangjun said casually. “It was you who insisted that Professor Mo Xuan was weird and asked me to find a ‘motive’ for his scheme. Then, after I examined and ruled out all the possibilities with my wisdom, this is the last motive that I found.

“I have already tried my best. You can take your time to think about it. After all, whether it is true or false, we will reach the Heaven’s Origin Sector very soon. After we get to the turf of your wife and your disciple, there will be nothing to be scared of!”

After saying that, Long Yangjun was ready to crawl back into the protective gel.

Right then, a sweet voice of reminder echoed from the ceiling of the cabin.

“Last five seconds to the space jump. All passengers, please immerse yourselves into the protective gel and close the covers of the cocoon cabins, in case the storms in four-dimensional space scourge your body and soul.”

“Five… Four… Three…”

Storms in four-dimensional space… Scourge the body and the soul…

Li Yao was deep in thought. The last few words of the reminder, however, forced him to bulge his bloodshot eyes wider and wider. His face grew more and more awful, too. A moment later, he shrieked at the top of his voice, “No. We cannot start a space jump. There is a trap in the four-dimensional space!”

Chapter 1721 - Fatal Trap!

The moment before the space jump was implemented, Li Yao triggered his soul power to the maximum. His telepathic thoughts blossomed deep inside his brain like an octopus and flooded toward Long Yangjun incessantly with tremendous information!

It was extremely dangerous when they were to be teleported in the next second. It might cause Li Yao’s soul to be lost in the turbulence of four-dimensional space and ripped into shreds!

But there was no time. Li Yao could only tell Long Yangjun his deduction in such a risky way!

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

For a moment, Li Yao’s mind and Long Yangjun’s mind were deeply interweaved with each other. Infinite information was exchanged in the most mysterious way!

“Something is wrong,” Li Yao said. “Something is greatly wrong with the ‘double test’ that Professor Mo Xuan did on me. Now that I think about it, even if the Secret Sword Bureau wanted to ensure safety, they shouldn’t have done it in such a reckless way. Even if they were really so reckless, one of their leaders should’ve shown up and apologized to me. After all, I was representing the Star Ocean Republic and Speaker Cui Lingfeng!

“However, they merely offered a simple apology through Ling Xiaole, and Ling Xiaole only received the instruction from her portable crystal processor!

“I assume that it was truly a test, not performed by the Secret Sword Bureau but by Professor Mo Xuan. He somehow manipulated the Secret Sword Bureau!

“Professor Mo Xuan grew suspicious of me and my real purpose behind visiting the Tinder Base. I don’t think that I revealed any openings in the ‘second Spiriters’ Realm’. But who knows? Perhaps Professor Mo Xuan noticed something abnormal in it!

“Moreover… moreover, we are supposed to take off this afternoon, but we have cut in line and left the Hundred Flowers Space Zone three hours early. If Professor Mo Xuan knows it, he can certainly guess that we’ve already grown suspicious of him, too!

“The conclusion is that Professor Mo Xuan is suspicious of me, and he also knows that I’m suspicious of him! Think about it. If Professor Mo Xuan is really planning a big operation, will he simply let us go to the Heaven’s Origin Sector?”

“In that case,” Long Yangjun said, “all the more reason we should leave the Hundred Flowers Space Zone as quickly as possible and jump to the Heaven’s Origin Sector. This place is Professor Mo Xuan’s home field!”

“The critical problem right now is, who can guarantee that we are jumping to the Heaven’s Origin Sector?” Li Yao’s telepathic thoughts were bouncing like fire rapidly. “Did we ‘see’ the Heaven’s Origin Sector? No. The mainframe crystal processor of our starship received the coordinates of the star beacons that were claimed to be from the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Then, the control tower in the spaceport planned a sailing route for us. We are simply launching the space jump based on the coordinates and the sailing route that they offered!

“Who can guarantee that their information is absolutely correct? Who can guarantee that Professor Mo Xuan cannot hack this place? If he is really concocting some big operation, he must’ve hacked most of the crystal processors in the Hundred Flowers Space Zone, or at least controlled the port, the most important place in the space zone!

“He could’ve totally manipulated the control tower in the spaceport to process the coordinates of the star beacons sent from the Heaven’s Origin Sector in order to navigate us to somewhere unknown!

“He could even have hacked the crystal processors of our starship in advance. This is not a main-force warship of a high level, just a carrier!

“Most importantly of all, he can also ‘hack’ our souls when our body and soul are unfolded in four-dimensional space during the teleportation, when we are most vulnerable and least defended!”

Invading the soul was never easy, especially when the targets were experts in the Nascent Soul Stage. The only way to drag them into the Spiriters’ Realm was to make them lie in a virtual cabin and connect themselves to the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus willingly.

But now that Li Yao and the rest of them were all suspicious, to immerse them into the nerval interaction liquids was certainly as difficult as pressing down the heads of twelve tyrannosaurs and forcing them to drink water.

But things were different during teleportation!

It was the best time to invade the soul!

Li Yao knew that because he had already been attacked once by the ‘Blood Stripe Virus’, a weird life form of pure energy, when his soul was about to be ripped into shreds during the teleportation from the Flying Star Sector to the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

It was the most perilous soul battle in Li Yao’s life.

He had even been ready to die together with the Blood Stripe Virus.

Of course, he had prepared a series of traps on the starship in advance because he had noticed the existence of the Blood Stripe Virus long before the space jump.

Eventually, the Blood Stripe Virus had failed to entirely consume his soul but only partly corrupted it, which caused his schizophrenia. A ‘mental devil’ had been born inside his brain.

Professor Mo Xuan knew everything about it. Well, actually, it was Li Yao who had told him everything through the video in the jade chip.

Who knew whether or not he would do exactly the same thing?

But this time, there were no traps on the starship. The other ten experts except Li Yao and Long Yangjun were not prepared, either.

In fact, despite the high Cultivation of the experts from the Ancient Sages Sector, they were from an ancient world after all and had never experienced many space jumps. Therefore, they were all quite unused to teleportation.

Li Yao and Long Yangjun looked at each other, both greatly stunned.

“The space jump must be stopped!”

“Wake up everyone immediately!”

But there was no time!

After Li Yao inferred the whole event based on his puzzle, the last second had already passed.

Hum! Hum, hum, hum, hum, hum!

The degree of the starship’s vibration grew lower and lower, but its frequency was higher and higher. Everything before Li Yao and Long Yangjun’s eyes turned fuzzy!

The space jump had begun. The ivory brilliance that enshrouded the starship leaked into the starship one drop after another. The starship seemed to be melting into the light and would transcend to the universe beyond three-dimensional space!

In the meantime, both Li Yao and Long Yangjun trembled. They felt an immense mental force pouring down from the galaxy and rushing into their brains that were being shaken and torn crazily!

Thankfully, he had already raised his alert to the maximum during his communication with Long Yangjun earlier. So, he managed to keep his head clear.

Also, because his soul was much more solid than a normal person’s, it was definitely not so easy to invade it when he was wary.

Boom!

Flames of spiritual energy burst out of Li Yao’s body, shattering the protective gel and the cocoon cabins into pieces.

He rolled on the ground. Having no time to bother about his headache, he was about to blow up Long Yangjun’s cabin.

But before he took action, Long Yangjun jumped out by herself.

Li Yao was slightly dazed. Then he put on an awful smile.

Yes. However magnificent and precise his professor’s designs were, it was impossible for him to have foreseen that the so-called Team Red Lotus actually consisted of twelve terrifying experts who were at least in the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage. Also, there were even two ‘monsters’ that were himself and Long Yangjun among them!

There was no need to mention Li Yao. Long Yangjun, as a warrior of the Nuwa Clan from the age of the primeval war, must have received special training on her brain, so it was not so easy to invade her mind!

“Save them!”

Li Yao jumped to Yan Liren’s cabin, which was the second closest to him.

Through the translucent cover on the cabin, Li Yao discovered, however, that Yan Liren was gritting his teeth in the buffer gel with a painful expression, his eyes closed, as if he were caught in a terrible nightmare!

Besides, Yan Liren, the protective cabin, and Li Yao himself were all turning transparent!

“Their soul has been mixed with the mental force of the intruder. We cannot wake them now!” Long Yangjun said in a hurry. “We are about to be unfolded into four-dimensional space. Even if you can wake them up by force, their soul will certainly be ripped into shreds by the storms in four-dimensional space, turning them into retards or putting them in a coma. The ghosts such as Meng Chixin, Wu Suiyun, or Wan Mingzhu will likely be wiped out instantly!”

Li Yao cursed loudly and made the decision soon. “We cannot be killed here. The souls of Yan Liren and the rest of them are powerful enough to keep them uncorrupted for a short while. Let’s go back to the Tinder Base and find Professor Mo Xuan directly. Then, we’ll figure out how to save them!”

Time was running out. Both of them felt that their bodies were slowly expanding, unfolding, and extending. The whole world turned weird, like butterflies of light that were dancing joyfully and about to split apart.

If they did not leave, they would never be able to leave. Once they completely fell into four-dimensional space, their body and their brain would be completely unfolded. Nobody knew if they could resist the weird mental assault or where they would be teleported to!

Li Yao and Long Yangjun took action at the same time. They turned into two streaks of brilliance and darted to the escape capsule at the rear of the starship.

They could not just blow a hole in the wall of the starship recklessly, which would cause the carrier as well as everybody on board to be ripped apart in four-dimensional space!

After they finally reached the escape area as fast as they could, the carrier and themselves were almost entirely transparent.

There seemed to be an enormous swirl behind them, which was trying to absorb their souls and every telepathic thought with the terrifying attraction force.

The two of them did not even have time to enter the escape capsules. They simply put on their crystal suits, opened the airtight gate, and rushed out, before they activated every power rune array on their crystal suits to the maximum!

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

They were still at the interference area of the space distortion, like the periphery of a swirl. Both Li Yao and Long Yangjun felt that their bodies were growing and shrinking, expanding and compressing. The few seconds were as long as hundreds of years!

They could only grit their teeth and unleash their spiritual energy as much as they could to sprint toward space and get away from the carrier that was in the middle of a space jump, in case the space ripples generated by the teleportation affected them. That would probably cause the upper half of their bodies to be teleported to the unknown place far away together with the carrier while keeping their lower half still in the Hundred Flowers Space Zone!

After they did not know how long, the ‘surging tides’ behind the two of them finally died down.

They examined their bodies, not entirely recovered from their shock, and discovered that their limbs and internal organs were still there. No parts had been teleported together with the carrier. Then, they were somewhat relieved.

When they looked back, the carrier was already gone, leaving a halo that looked like a mist.

Li Yao and Long Yangjun both floated in space, like two dead fish that had been blown to the shore by tides.

The headache was still haunting them. They did not want to move at all.

Long Yangjun turned on the point-to-point communication channel that did not need to be connected to the Spiritual Nexus. Then, she said in a low and magnetic voice, “As I recall, someone said we would never lose if the twelve Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators slapped them in their face?”

Chapter 1722 - My Most Familiar Pace Is Back!

Drifting in the deep, dark universe quietly, Li Yao turned off most of the power rune arrays on the crystal suit and most of the life-sustaining system. He looked like a cold, hard meteoroid.

Looking at the hundreds of silver, ball-shaped space stations that constituted Hundred Flowers City not far away, and the colorful ripples on the sailing routes further away left after space jumps, he sensed that his cells, bones, muscles, and soul had condensed and stabilized. All the traces were gathered together and outlined the general picture of the whole scheme.

Li Yao licked the blood on his lips that leaked out when he was escaping from the space ripples by force. He then chuckled in a low voice.

“Monster Li, are you trying to disguise your embarrassment with laughter?” Long Yangjun asked.

“No. It’s just that the weird feeling that had been burdening my heart has gone after figuring out what my professor is up to.”

Staring at Hundred Flowers City not far away, Li Yao’s eyes were glittering more and more brilliantly. He savored the heat and sweetness of his blood, and the mist that had haunted his mind was gradually replaced by burning fire. “I feel that… everything has come back to the pace that I’m most familiar with!”

Long Yangjun snorted. “Trading the life and death of ten experts at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage and even in the Nascent Soul Stage for your familiar pace, you are quite an extravagant man, aren’t you?”

“There’s no need to worry about Yan Liren and the rest of them too much for now.” Li Yao thought quickly and boosted his computational ability to the maximum. His brain cells were exploding like popcorn. “With the immensity of their soul and computational ability, even if they are mired in a certain Grand Illusionary Land set up by Professor Mo Xuan, they won’t lose so quickly, will they? The worst outcome is that they will be teleported to somewhere unknown and cannot return for the time being.

“Besides, no matter how immaculate my professor’s trap was, he certainly underestimated the capabilities of Team Red Lotus. If he wants to corrupt or kill Yan Liren and the rest of them, he will definitely have to pay a high price, which will very likely be his fatal wound and cause his ultimate failure in the game!

“For the professor, Team Red Lotus is just a minor interference and an unexpected factor beyond his calculations. The more critical question is—what is my professor trying to achieve? What is his real target?

“I figured out the answers when I was nearly ripped apart by the space turbulence!”

Long Yangjun found it odd. “Isn’t his purpose to completely eliminate wars and save mankind, like I said just now?”

“What you mention was just a strategic goal, which is too far away to be of any significance for the situation right now,” Li Yao replied quickly. “Both eliminating wars and ‘virtualizing’ mankind are too ideal and distant. How can they work out without hundreds of years of hard work? There’s no need for us to be affected by unsubstantial, long-term goals. All we need to do is to figure out what my professor wants to do right now as his next step!

“Assuming that Professor Mo Xuan truly wants to achieve the magnificent goal of virtualizing mankind, then, here and now, in the Star Glory Federation, the first thing that he needs to do is control the entire grand-unified Spiritual Nexus and then control the federal government, right?”

Long Yangjun pondered for a moment and nodded. “Yes. No matter how spectacular his follow-up plans and blueprints are, he needs to control the federal government first in order to carry out what he believes in and realize his great ambitions. Then, with Professor Mo Xuan’s identity and the resources at his disposal, controlling the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus first is the most feasible solution!

“The federation and the Imperium today are both highly dependent on crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus. Whoever controls cyberspace controls everything!”

“That’s right!” Li Yao licked his lips in excitement. “The Hundred Flowers Space Zone is the transportation hub of the seven Sectors of the federation. Hundred Flowers City is also the data exchange and control center of the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus. It is the center of the game Civilization, where billions of players are online at the same time!

“One of the three ‘Gai’-level super crystal processors, the most powerful model in the federation, and more than half of the ‘Jing’-level super crystal processors are all installed there. As long as someone controls the Hundred Flowers Space Zone, hacks the ‘Jing’-level super crystal processor, and then controls half of the ‘Jing’-level super crystal processors of the federation, will it be possible for him to control the entire grand-unified Spiritual Nexus?

“Ever since my professor was transformed into the star spirit, an amazing life form of half human and half liquid metal, he has been endowed with the abilities to hack crystal processors and absorb their computational ability freely. During the insurgency of the Immortal Cultivators in the Flying Star Sector, it was because he hacked the star brain and absorbed tremendous computational abilities from the star child that we managed to counterattack and secure the final victory!

“After a hundred years of training, his techniques for hacking crystal processors and absorbing computational ability must be even more powerful, inconspicuous, and swift!

“I’ve checked a lot of files on the crystal processors in the federation today. People say that there are ‘three and a half’ super crystal processors in the federation. By ‘a half’, they are referring to my professor!

“He can control all the super crystal processors in the Hundred Flowers Space Zone and absorb their computational ability for his own use. Then, with the enormous computational ability, he can barrage the second ‘Gai’-level super crystal processor in the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Then, the third one on Spider Den… After all the super crystal processors are remotely controlled by him, it seems that people can only accede to whatever demands he raises!

“After all, the professor was right about one thing. People of the modern age cannot live in a world without the Spiritual

Nexus anymore!”

Long Yangjun blinked quickly. “Wait, wait, wait. Are the super crystal processors of the Star Glory Federation weak enough for him to hack any time he wants? Are the other specialists of crystal processors all dead or suddenly retarded? Have they not established tremendous barriers, firewalls, and virtual arrays on the super crystal processors that are of paramount importance? Impressive as your professor’s computational ability may be, it can’t be higher than all the super crystal processors in the federation combined, can it?”

“Yes. That’s the biggest problem. Under normal circumstances, there is no way that my professor could hack so many super crystal processors by force. I’m afraid that he will be discovered the moment he attacks the one in the Hundred Flowers Space Zone. Then, the agents of the Secret Sword Bureau and the soldiers of the federal army will soon come for him!”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes. The silver space fortress that was reflected in his eyes looked like brilliant silver fire. “However, if a special case causes all the super crystal processors to overload, to the point that their computational ability is greatly wasted and the barriers and firewalls are battered to the verge of destruction…”

“Is there such a possibility?” Long Yangjun asked.

“Listen. It suddenly occurred to me…” Li Yao waved his hands and feet in the vacuum and spoke fast. “Years ago, when we dealt with the star child in the Flying Star Sector, my professor was no match for him at first. Instead of corrupting the enemy, my professor was almost swallowed by him!

“However, because I had a fierce fight with the star child in the virtual space he created and drained his tremendous computational ability, my professor was able to seize the enemy’s weakness and launched an attack. In the end, we attacked from the inside and outside together and wiped out the enemy!

“If my professor can create a certain situation right now where all the super crystal processors of the federation are overloading and suffering large-scale saturated attacks that shatter the firewalls…”

Long Yangjun frowned. “All the super crystal processors are loading and suffering a large-scale saturated attack? In what situation can that possibly happen?”

Then, Long Yangjun suddenly paused and shouted at the same time as Li Yao, “The invasion of the expedition army from the Imperium!”

“Yes,” Li Yao said. “As long as the main forces of the Black Wind Fleet jumps on a certain core Sector of the federation, and a great battle of the main fleets of the two parties begins, all the super crystal processors in the federation will be summoned, including the one in the capital city for government affairs, the one here to navigate sailing routes and guide reinforcement, and the one on Spider Den that is scouting the enemy’s whereabouts!”

“In a modern war, the competition of the Spiritual Nexus and information always comes first,” Long Yangjun said. “The first task after the Black Wind Fleet arrives will certainly be to launch a destructive strike on the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus of the federation. The Imperium and the federation both have their advantages in the technology of the Spiritual Nexus. But I fear that the Imperium’s technology must be more destructive. During the competition, not only will all the super crystal processors in the federation overload and nearly crash, their barriers and firewalls will also be riddled with holes if not rippled apart by the Imperium!"

"By then, my professor won't need to hack anything at all. As the 'human-shaped super crystal processor' with the highest computational ability in the federation, he must be one of the main warriors in the competition in cyberspace. Once the battle begins, he can easily get access to most of the data in the super crystal processors. In the most perilous moment, he might even be authorized by the military to be connected to the most confidential super crystal processors in order to improve the federation's combat ability in the warfare!"

"Fair enough. But there is one critical problem. Is your professor not worried that the federation will collapse if he plays dirty tricks during the Black Wind Fleet's invasion? If he is a 'good guy' and a patriot, there is no reason to do that."

"…Unless my professor has such a good appetite that he wants to swallow the mainframe crystal processors of the Black Wind Fleet, too!"

"What?" Long Yangjun exclaimed.

"Think about it. A cyberwar is always bidirectional. Both parties will be launching destructive strikes on each other. When the super crystal processors of the federation are overloading in peril, the mainframe crystal processors of the Black Wind Fleet will be reaching their limits, too. It is the best opportunity to hack and control them!"

“Is your professor capable enough of remotely hacking the mainframe crystal processors of the Black Wind Fleet even if they are overloading and on the brink of crash?”

“I don’t know,” Li Yao mumbled. “I’m not good at hacking crystal processors. By common sense, it doesn’t not seem possible. However, if my professor finds a way to deliver a ‘chicken’ into the Black Wind Fleet…”

“Chicken?” Long Yangjun queried.

“Chicken is a special term in the attacks and defenses of crystal processors,” Li Yao explained. “It can be a crystal processor or any other thing that is controlled by some experts and stuffed with various viruses. If my professor can deliver a ‘chicken’ into the Black Wind Fleet’s starships, the viruses can be detonated instantly at the critical moment. Or rather, he can use the ‘chicken’ as a ‘springboard’ to launch the most direct, fatal attack on the Spiritual Nexus and the crystal processors of the Black Wind Fleet from the inside!”

Long Yangjun took a deep breath. “But I don’t think that the Black Wind Fleet will be idiotic enough to accept a… ‘chicken’ from the federation, will they?”

Chapter 1723 - The Professor’s Whole Scheme!

“I don’t know.” Li Yao’s eyes surpassed the cube of glittering balls that constituted Hundred Flowers City and stared at the two stars far, far away.

The two stars were attracting and confronting each other, exactly like the Star Glory Federation and the Black Wind Fleet that were at loggerheads with each other.

Li Yao’s voice turned deep and profound, as if he had seen through an instruction set that was carried out in secret decades ago. “I only know that, if seventy percent of my deductions are correct, there can be one other explanation for what my professor has been doing in the past decades.

“On the surface, he publicized the birth of the Spiriters and the follow-up plans and presented everything that he knew. He even invited the best specialists in crystal processors, the Spiritual Nexus, meditation, memory transmission, and other fields to join the great cause and push the Tinder Plan forward.”

“Correct.” Long Yangjun nodded and said, “With Professor Mo Xuan’s prestige and connections in the federation, and since the studies of virtual life were a cutting-edge project and the Tinder Plan was very important itself, even if he didn’t invite them, parliament, the military, the Secret Sword Bureau, and other institutions would still have volunteered to join the project and monitor the progress!”

“Therefore,” Li Yao said, “the most distinguished specialists of the Spiritual Nexus, souls, and brains must’ve come into contact with the Tinder Plan and the Spiriters’ Realm more or less. In the past decades, they have uploaded their consciousness to the Spiriters’ Realm too many times. Or at the very least, they have opened their brains and connected them to the Spiriters’ Realm created by my professor for research and surveillance purposes.

“On the bright side, it was because my professor was frank and forthright. He was willing to release his research products to the public and receive the supervision of society and the government!

“But on the dark side, it is possible that my professor implanted something into their brains while the consciousness of the specialists was travelling in the Spiriters’ Realm at ease, like implanting viruses into the crystal processor?

“If the second possibility is true, then at this moment, the brains and souls of the most distinguished specialists in crystal processors, souls, and brains must have been more or less corrupted by my professor!”

“Wait!” Long Yangjun was greatly alarmed. “I understand it now. I know why your professor talked with you for such a long time when you were nothing more than the captain of Team Red Lotus! Not you. His target wasn’t you but those who were monitoring you!”

“What?” Li Yao blinked hard. After every blink, a few bloody streaks would burst out on his eyeballs as fast as lightning. “Are you saying that—”

“Lin Jiu, the captain of Team Red Lotus, is indeed an insignificant person. The only reason he talked so much with you and confessed everything to you was because he was buying himself more time to ‘corrupt’ the observers!”

Long Yangjun was speaking ten times faster than before. In hums that were utterly indistinguishable for normal people, she said, “The so-called first launch of the Tinder Plan is very likely a huge scam and an out-and-out trap!

“It is exactly because the Tinder Plan will have the first launch tomorrow that a lot of specialists in crystal processors, the Spiritual Nexus and the brains from the entire federation have come to the Tinder Base today. Also, together with the heads of the local garrison, the Secret Sword Bureau, and the relevant government departments, everybody has gathered and volunteered to enter the virtual cabin that Professor Mo Xuan carefully prepared for them. They are immersed in the ‘nerval interaction liquids’ and mired in the Spiriters’ Realm!

“He has fished up everybody he needs!

“If Professor Mo Xuan has played tricks on the virtual cabin, allowing him to control the Spiriters’ Realm, or at least the one he created in the Tinder Base, he will be able to confine everybody’s soul in it. Then, if he invades and corrupts their souls, as he did to us a moment ago…”

Li Yao took a deep breath, feeling as if the darkness of the whole universe was leaking into his body. “Then, it is possible for him to control a large batch of specialists in crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus, as well as the heads of the local garrison, the Secret Sword Bureau, and the government department in the Hundred Flowers Space Zone!”

“As for you, you filed an application to visit the Tinder Plan, which happened to be exactly what he wanted!” Long

Yangjun analyzed calmly. “You were the special representative of the Speaker of the Star Ocean Republic after all. Your trip in the base of the Tinder Plan, especially the whole conversation between you and Professor Mo Xuan, would certainly be closely monitored without leaving out one second.”

“Of course!” Li Yao nodded heavily. “My professor reassured us many times during the conversation that it was monitored. He was completely open and frank.”

“Frank my ass!” Long Yangjun cursed. “Surveillance is bidirectional. While you were being monitored by the secret units including the Secret Sword Bureau, it means that there must’ve been a certain ‘data channel’ between Professor Mo Xuan’s virtual world and the crystal processors of those secret units, correct?”

Li Yao was greatly enlightened. “So, when the secret units were monitoring us, my professor could sneak into the crystal processors of the secret units through the ‘data channels’ they had established, right?”

“Lin Jiu had a special identity,” Long Yangjun said. “The conversation between you and Professor Mo Xuan was very sensitive, too. The units that were monitoring you must’ve been of a high level, and their barriers and firewalls were certainly tough. That’s why Professor Mo Xuan rambled on about so many things with you. He was merely getting himself more time to hack the crystal processors of the secret units without alarming anyone!”

Li Yao was silent for a moment. Then he suddenly said, “A war is coming. Very soon. In the next twenty-four hours!”

Long Yangjun’s eyes were rolling quickly. “How do you know?”

“My professor prepared the scheme for decades,” Li Yao replied coldly. “He has control of the heads of the military, the government, and the intelligence agencies of the Hundred Flowers Space Zone. It is also possible that he has planted viruses in the crystal processors of even more secret units in the outside world to open ‘backdoors’ in them. This is exactly the time that he is pushing the plan to the end!

“His actions are too eye-catching. No matter how he hides himself, it won’t be possible to keep it a secret for twenty-four hours. The other specialists of crystal processors in the federation are not dead. They will certainly notice that something is wrong in one day!

“Therefore, the moment that my professor is waiting for, the fatal moment when all the super crystal processors of the federation are overloading to the brink of collapse, will come in the next twenty-four hours!”

Long Yangjun’ eyes shuddered again and again. Then she suddenly changed the topic and asked, “What’s your professor’s relationship with Jin Xinyue?”

The two of them wasted no time changing the topic. It was difficult for normal people to understand what they were saying, but Li Yao realized what she meant immediately. “You suspect that my professor is also involved in the plan that Jin Xinyue has carefully prepared for almost a hundred years?

“Huh, it’s quite possible!

“I don’t know what happened between Jin Xinyue and Professor Mo Xuan in the past hundred years. However, considering the social network a hundred years ago, Jin Xinyue was very close to the Fire Ant King, another of my old friends.

“At that time, the Fire Ant King and I founded Skyfire together, and Jin Xinyue was nominated as the secretary of Skyfire as my sole demon disciple. Later, the Fire Ant King and her operated Skyfire together.

“The Fire Ant King was only a second-tier demon emperor in the Blood Demon Sector previously, not even included in the Pantheon of Demons. It was with Jin Tuyi’s and my support that he became one of the most powerful persons in the Blood Demon Sector. Therefore, the Fire Ant King and Jin Xinyue belong to the same interest group. Naturally, their cooperation is quite stable!

“The Fire Ant King, Professor Mo Xuan, and I explored Kunlun for the first time together. On Kunlun, the Fire Ant King and Professor Mo Xuan became good friends. In the years that followed when Kunlun was developed, the two of them often talked to each other and conducted studies together.

“The Fire Ant King calculated many issues on biochemistry with the help of Professor Mo Xuan’s terrifying computational ability, and Professor Mo Xuan learned the mysteries of biochemical neurons through the Fire Ant King. The ‘nervous interaction liquids’ that he is using right now are a product of biochemical technology.

“When I left the federation for the dark nebula, Professor Mo Xuan and the Fire Ant King were already best friends.

“If Jin Xinyue really had a great plan to revive the demon race, the Fire Ant King would certainly be a great supporter with a lot of inside information. Meanwhile, because Jin Xinyue is my disciple and Professor Mo Xuan is my teacher, he is almost equal to her grand-teacher. Although there has never been real succession of knowledge between them, they are still nominally in a lineage.”

Long Yangjun helped him to continue. “Jin Xinyue’s hundred-year plan involves too many things. She certainly needed someone who was familiar with crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus and who had a high computational ability to help her, say, hack the crystal processors of the ‘traditional conglomerates’. She and the Fire Ant King were very close, and the Fire Ant King was Professor Mo Xuan’s best friend. Meanwhile, Professor Mo Xuan was also her grand-teacher. So, he was certainly the best candidate!”

“Exactly!” Li Yao gnashed his teeth. “My professor was sort of a member of ‘Li Yao’s group’, too. Jin Xinyue probably did not tell him the whole plan, but as long as she revealed half of the plan to him, claiming that it was a magnificent plan to strike the Black Wind Fleet and to facilitate the rise of Li Yao’s group, did my professor have any reason to turn her down?”

“Therefore, Professor Mo Xuan became Jin Xinyue’s accomplice and part of her plan,” Long Yangjun said coldly. “It is a shame that Jin Xinyue fell victim to her own scheme. There was no way that she could’ve foreseen that Professor Mo Xuan had his own plan, too, one that was a hundred times more spectacular than hers. As a result, she turned into Professor Mo Xuan’s chess piece!”

“According to our deductions, if Jin Xinyue really has a plan, it will be detonated very soon. That’s why we are in a hurry to find her in the Heaven’s Origin Sector.” Li Yao’s voice was cold to the bones. “From what we know right now, it doesn’t matter if Jin Xinyue has prepared a trap for the Black Wind Fleet, or if the commander of the Black Wind Fleet has seen through it!

“Because the collision of the two main forces—the biggest battle in the history of the Star Glory Federation that involves all the fleets and the game that will decide the life and death of the federation and the Black Wind Fleet—has always been under Professor Mo Xuan’s control!”

Long Yangjun was about to speak when her pupils were suddenly expanded to maximum.

Dangerous starry brilliance was shining in her eyes.

She pointed at something not far away and mumbled, “What’s that?”

Countless shining stars congregated into a torrent and rushed toward her and Li Yao without a sound.

At this moment, there was thirteen hours, thirteen minutes, and thirteen seconds to go before the Black Wind Fleet arrived at the central area of the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

Chapter 1724 - Confrontation!

At the same time, in the Star Glory Federation, in a suburb of the capital city, deep inside the Moon Palace…

When Jin Xinyue slowly stepped out of the door of the secret chamber, Xue’er, her loyal disciple, and the tough warriors of the Dim Moon Fund who were waiting outside were all stunned.

In the past few decades, they had already gotten used to Jin Xinyue’s calm, neat, elegant style in a black suit.

But today, at the most important moment since a hundred years ago, Jin Xinyue abandoned her black tights and changed into a moon white robe.

She was not wearing any adornments from head to toe, except for a bright gold chain that softly bound the robe as a belt, which outlined her thin waist and made her look like a feeble but tensile willow.

On her feet was a pair of thorn shoes, a specialty of the Blood Demon Sector. Her ten delicate toes had healthy, attractive colors, as if ten small pink shells had been covered on her feet.

There was no additional magical equipment on her pure hands except for the Cosmos Ring that her master had given her a hundred years ago.

She was not wearing any makeup on her face, either. It was clean, unsoiled, and dustless. Her black hair dangled to her waist like a waterfall, further highlighting her fair face that was astoundingly beautiful.

She was like an angel that was walking on the earth and saving everyone in need. It was quite difficult to associate her with the Venomous Witch who did not blink after killing someone.

Therefore, even the members of the Dim Moon Squad, who had been through life and death situations with her for decades and witnessed too much of her brutality and ruthlessness, were also stunned. They all looked at each other in bewilderment, not knowing what was going on.

“Master…” Xue’er walked forward and emboldened herself to ask, “Why did you—”

“This is the robe that I often wore when I fought against the plague caused by the spore virus with my master a hundred years ago.”

Jin Xinyue smiled casually. There was both pity and trance on her face. Touching the linen robe, which felt a bit rough, she was caught by the memories a long, long time ago. She mumbled, “Let me wear the pure, sacred, and bright robe one last time, because after the battle, I will spend a long time, or even the rest of my life, in complete darkness.

“Also, if I put on the white robe, wherever my master Vulture Li Yao is, he will certainly bless the success of our plan and the real rise of the Star Glory Federation, won’t he?”

Xue’er understood it now. Putting on a charming smile, she sincerely said, “Master, you are actually much prettier in white than in black.”

“You do have a sweet tongue, don’t you?” Jin Xinyue scratched the nose of Xue’er softly. Then, she turned solemn and strode toward the core members of the Dim Moon Fund as well as her most loyal subordinates of the demon race who were scattered in various trades and only gathered recently.

When she reached the front of the strong, hideous, and intimidating warriors of the demon race, the smile on her face had entirely vanished, replaced by calmness and ambitions that were full of convincing power.

“Warriors of the demon race, we have been lost in the darkness for a hundred years. We have lurked and held ourselves back for a hundred years!” Jin Xinyue opened her mouth slowly and spoke to her soldiers in a charming and firm tone. “The hundred years of humiliation, sacrifice, and silence were all for today, for this moment, and for the war to come!

“A hundred years ago, I swore an oath to my father and all the demon compatriots at that time that I would complete the Red Tide Plan and lead the demons who were suffering to new glory!

“During the hundred years, many people doubted me, objected to me, and even jumped out to fight against me!

“But you… only you have always had faith in me. You supported me loyally in the most troubled times and pushed the Red Tide Plan forward silently together with me. We interweaved the brand-new Dim Moon Plan and a dream of the demons’ rise!

“Today is the day that I, Jin Xinyue, fulfil my promise. Today is the day when we fulfil our promise to all our demon compatriots!

“Obliteration, rebirth, immortality!

“Perhaps, our bodies will be completely wrecked in the battle. Perhaps, even ‘demons’ will no longer exist as a real entity one day. However, our spirits, the spirits of demons, will be brought back to life in the battle and granted eternity. It will surely expand to the entire universe as the Star Glory Federation embarks on the conquest of the entire universe!”

“Obliteration! Rebirth! Immortality!”

The warriors of demons whose blood was boiling all screamed at the top of their voices deep inside the Moon Palace. Their roars that had been suppressed for a hundred years were about to turn into torrents of magma and sweep across the entire world!

“Hehe.” Narrowing her eyes, Jin Xinyue smiled. She looked at a lot of gray-haired demons and said, “A lot of us actually come from the age of the Old Federation, when we were still against the Old Federation and fought bloody battles with each other. Tell me, do you hate the soldiers and experts of the Old Federation?”

The gray-haired demons looked at each other and nodded.

Of course, they hated them. How could they not? Although they had been integrated into a whole now, the great humiliation of a conditional surrender when they still had an advantage in national strength was not something that they could forget even in their entire lifetime!

“If you hate them, just win the battle for us!” Jin Xinyue smiled. “If the deceased heroes of the Old Federation learn in their graves that the Star Glory Federation that they sacrificed themselves for had to be protected by a bunch of demons and monsters in the end, how indignant will they be? I'm afraid that they will certainly be kicking their graves in fury, won't they?"

Jin Xinyue's words soothed the solemn and intense atmosphere in the room. A lot of demons laughed in great amusement.

"Master." Xue'er walked forward and said, "The liaisons of the major sects and families are waiting outside."

"Excellent." Jin Xinyue focused her eyes and picked up the dark gold scepter that represented the commandership of the coalition army of demons in the time of the Pantheon of Demons. Waving the scepter softly, she said, "Warriors of the demon race, let's move forward!"

…

Right when Jin Xinyue activated the last procedure of the Dim Moon Plan deep inside the Moon Palace, behind the brown dwarf eighty lightyears away from the Star Glory Federation, after five days of waking, unfolding, and deployment, the Black Wind Fleet had finally transformed into its 'battle formation' from the 'cruise state' that had lasted a hundred years!

The dense crystal starships constituted an enormous, precise black cube without the slightest error.

On the eight corners of the cube, the space teleportation arrays had been established. They were transmitting and exploiting spiritual energy in almost an 'extravagant' way.

Such precious spiritual energy was never used even in the most dangerous emergencies during the hundred years of cruising, just so that the fleet would be able to launch a critical strike at the prey when it was close enough!

Zi, zi! Zi, zi, zi, zi!

The black electric arcs hundreds of thousands of kilometers long flowed among hundreds of main-force warships and even more ancillary warships without a sound. A black hole that could consume everything seemed to be taking shape!

On the bridge of Black Swirl, the flagship of the Black Wind Fleet, Heiye Ming stared at the thousands of light beams displayed by the mainframe crystal processors, with his hands behind his back. His thousands of telepathic thoughts interweaved with the streams of information that were surging like a storm, allowing him to control every detail in the entire fleet precisely.

The crystal processors of the Imperium of True Human Beings were more advanced than their counterparts in the Star Glory Federation. The Black Wind Fleet was highly automated. Eighty percent of the work could be accomplished through the crystal processors. The exchange of data, information, and commands could also be completed within a moment through the tactic network, compressing the thousands of starships into an inseparable whole like an overwhelming giant in the middle of the space!

Heiye Ming—or rather, the mainframe crystal processors of Black Swirl—was the ‘brain’ of the giant.

Heiye Ming’s decisions and telepathic thoughts could reach every corner of Black Swirl through the crystal processor and the tactic network and even every critical post in every starship of the fleet. He could control the entire fleet as conveniently as he controlled his arm and hand!

“Commander, the fleet has been unfolded. All the Immortal Cultivators are ready for battle. As long as the navigation of a large-scale space gate is available, we will be able to jump over at any point and launch a destructive strike!”

The Chief of Staff of the Black Wind Fleet next to him said, “However, is that guy… really trustworthy?”

“Rest assured, Su Changfa is an Immortal Cultivator and a member of the Imperium of True Human Beings in any case,” Heiye Ming said slowly. “According to the intelligence sent back by our spies that are still lurking inside the federation, the ‘presents’ that he gave us are all real. It never occurred to me that the old man Su Changfa is… not entirely dead yet. He can still control the Spiritual Nexus of the Star Glory Federation, or at least the key nodes of it, in a rather amazing way!

“Jin Xinyue believes that she will be a certain winner by drawing half of our troops into the Heaven’s Origin Sector and then defeating the troops after the space gate is turned off? Hehe. That is so naïve of her. She couldn’t have foreseen that we had such a backup move named ‘Su Changfa’ at all!

“Of course, I will not completely trust Su Changfa or his disciple Lu Qingchen. After all, they do not belong to the Black Wind Fleet, and they may be up to their own schemes.

“Therefore, in regard to their plan, I have made a tiny micro adjustment. As long as the enormous forces of the Black Wind Fleet tear a hole in the sky of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, who will ever be able to stop us?”

“That’s really brilliant of you, commander!” the Chief of Staff praised.

“Let the warriors wait a little longer.” Heiye Ming smiled casually. “I know that they are all restless because they haven’t warmed up their bones for a hundred years. However, the hungrier they are, the more delicious the blood of victory will taste!

“Everything is under my control. In twelve hours, the Heaven’s Origin Sector, as well as the entire Star Glory Federation, will be the territory of the Black Wind people!”

Chapter 1725 - It Can’t Be You Again, Monster Li!

When Jin Xinyue and Heiye Ming both put on a confident smile, doubtless of their victory, inside the heavily-guarded, impenetrable chamber at the rear of Black Swirl, Lu Qingchen was still tightly confined in the iron shackle that looked like a coffin. He could barely move his little finger one millimeter, much less put on any kind of ‘smile’.

He was hanging in the center of the room upside down. Vision, hearing, smell, touch… All his senses had been blocked, casting him in silence and darkness that were insufferable for normal people.

He counted in the absolute darkness and waited patiently and tranquilly.

“What a monster.” In the secret chamber, the Immortal Cultivators who were responsible for watching over Lu Qingchen were all astounded as they watched Lu Qingchen’s brainwaves on the screen that were a straight line without any error. “It’s already incredible for normal Cultivators to last three to five hours when all their senses are blocked. Even if they do not have a meltdown, their brains will certainly show abnormal reactions, right? But the guy’s brain is so calm after such a long time of suffering. He is as calm as a dead person or—or a crystal processor!”

“According to the rumors, the weirdest beings often emerge at the dark corners at the edge of the cosmos.” Another Immortal Cultivator of the Black Wind Sector examined all the barriers and shackles over Lu Qingchen’s body to make sure that there were no faults. Then, he was finally more or less relieved. “No wonder the commander demanded the highest barrier on him although he volunteered to surrender to us. Who wouldn’t be scared in front of such a monster?”

Hardly had he concluded his sentence when the door of the chamber glided open after a beep. Another team of Immortal Cultivators crowded into the room with tremendous barrier magical equipment and surveillance crystal processors.

“By order of the commander, the confinement and surveillance on the man will be doubled during the battle to come. Bring him down and install the barriers of a higher level!”

The many Immortal Cultivators released Lu Qingchen from the rope together in order to put the bigger and more powerful barrier magical equipment on him.

But when they unveiled his mask, they discovered that his eyeballs were rather rigid although his eyes were wide open. Even his pupils were entirely frozen and did not expand or shrink under the stimulation of strong light.

The surveillance camera nearby indicated that his breathing, heartbeat, and brainwaves were still as peaceful as an ancient well even at this moment. He was not affected by the new changes in the outside world at all.

An experienced doctor shot out a mystic ray from his ring at Lu Qingchen’s pupils. He frowned and observed, “He can’t be dead, right?”

The next moment, Lu Qingchen’s left eyeball remained still, but his right eyeball, which was hit by the mystic ray, suddenly turned in the doctor’s direction. He casually replied, “No.”

“Ah!” Caught unprepared, the doctor almost fell over in fright. “Lock him up immediately. Seal all his senses! Seal them completely! Then, connect his brain to the surveillance crystal processor of the highest level so that the commander will be able to know what he is doing any second!”

All the Immortal Cultivators worked busily. Very soon, they assembled an even greater ‘metal coffin’ for Lu Qingchen. In the end, he was hanging upside down again.

Lu Qingchen was highly cooperative during the whole process. Except when he said ‘no’, he did not utter any redundant syllables but simply allowed the strangers to put an enormous, gapless mask on his head again, depriving him of all his senses.

Furthermore, even when a hundred cold needles pierced into his brain to monitor what was going on inside, his fingers, lips, and pupils did not tremble in the slightest.

As the rope was gradually tightened, the hanging man began shaking softly again. In the deepest part of Black Swirl, he slept and waited.

…

At the periphery of the third spaceport in Hundred Flowers Space Zone, brilliant stars were coming close.

Although Li Yao and Long Yangjun realized from the first moment that the ‘stars’ were not actually stars but some sort of fatal magical equipment, there was still nothing they could do.

It was because they had just escaped from the carrier that was in the middle of a space jump despite all the dangers. They were still severely affected by the space ripples. Their internal organs and their souls were all shaking at a high speed and did not calm down until this moment!

By then, the stars had arrived.

Almost ten thousand shiny stars spread into a giant web that covered hundreds of kilometers.

The gap among the ‘stars’ was extremely large. Naturally, they could not hit Li Yao and Long Yangjun, who could dodge them swiftly, but they were enough to enshroud the two Cultivators in the ‘web of stars’.

Zhi!

Sound could not be transmitted in the vacuum. However, Li Yao felt that he heard the most ear-splitting shriek when the ten thousand ‘stars’ exploded around them at the same time. Millions of bright electric arcs that they released swept across everything like crazy snakes or a rampant flood!

The electric arcs vanished as quickly as they burst out. They were no more after only 0.01 seconds, turning into an invisible magnetic storm that penetrated through the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and Li Yao himself in a moment.

The control menu of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit immediately faded out. The crystal processor and tremendous units were paralyzed and did not answer Li Yao’s command anymore. Even the spiritual energy within Li Yao’s body felt like a pot of boiling porridge, making it highly difficult to make use of the energy!

The crystal suit lost most of its combat ability. It was like an iron coffin that locked him and became a complete burden!

Li Yao called Long Yangjun in the communication channel, only to discover that the communication channel was seriously affected, too. It was now dead silent and now utterly blank noises. They could not reach out to each other at all!

“Li Yao, what’s happening?” Long Yangjun’s telepathic thoughts were transmitted to him covered in spiritual energy, but even the transmission of spiritual energy was intermittent. “The spiritual energy around here has fallen into utter chaos. It seems to be under certain serious interference and is being drained quickly!

“Our crystal suits suffered super high-intensity magnetic interference. A lot of chips have been destroyed. It will be difficult to get them back to normal. Also, the density of spiritual energy in the environment is dropping. I can sense it! Such a battlefield of thin spiritual energy is highly disadvantageous for Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators such as you and me!

“Damn it. What kind of weird magical equipment is this? What’s this weird attack?”

“It’s high-intensity magnetic pulse bombs,” Li Yao said solemnly. “They can release special pulse energy quickly, which will have a reaction with the spiritual energy wandering in space in a way similar to ‘resonation’. Then, radiative interference similar to sunspot outbreaks will be caused. They can penetrate through plate armor, city walls, or even rock stratums easily. They can greatly reduce the density of the spiritual energy in the target field or even drain all the spiritual energy in it, and they will damage all the magical equipment in the target area indiscriminately. No magical equipment units or chips can survive them!

“To put it in a more visual way, the effect of such bombs is similar to a ‘black hole area’ where the spiritual energy is thin and the magical equipment is malfunctioning. Therefore, they are also known as ‘black hole bombs’!

“A hundred years ago, they were still just a piece of magical equipment in theory. I didn’t know that they could be applied to a real battle so soon, and the final effect… is not half bad!”

“Not half bad?” Long Yangjun was furious. “Black hole bombs? Which son of a b*tch came up with such a piece of shameless and vicious magical equipment? This is like cutting the lifelines of all the Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators! Such a worthless scumbag should be skinned and minced into pieces!”

“Well, I can understand that you are not in a good mood, but isn’t that a bit too far?”

“I’m just cursing him. What’s it to you? Hey, hey, hey. It can’t be you again, right? It can’t be you again, Monster Li?”

“Don’t glare at me like that. I only brought up the idea without giving it much thought.”

“…”

“After that, I only allocated a special fund from a random corporation under my name and asked the most awesome bomb experts of the federation to study it. I didn’t know that they would be so productive. What a great relief!”

“I regret teaming up with you. The federation is a dangerous place. I want to go back to the Ancient Sages Sector!”

“Don’t be like that. As the developer who first came up with the idea of black hole bombs, I understand the fatal shortcomings of the magical equipment very well. It’s true that our spiritual energy and magical equipment are under serious interference in the ‘black hole area’, but other people are the same!

“We are all on the same level. I am sort of an expert in close-quarters combat, and you can defend yourself with your weird inherent crystal suit. What’s there to be scared of?

“Also, the way I see it, the black hole bombs of the federation are not very advanced yet. Look. The ‘black hole area’ that they created is not that large, and the duration will not be very long, either. Twenty seconds, at best. It will be easy for us to fly out. What can they do about us?”

Long Yangjun pointed at something not far away. “Is that their solution?”

When Li Yao turned around, he saw a swarm of overwhelming, dense, and fast meteoroids.

Yes, meteoroids. The simplest, most common stones that were not carved with a single rune array or carried the slightest spiritual energy. So, they were not affected by the ‘black hole bombs’ at all.

The bigger meteoroids were the size of fists or heads, and the smallest of them were even smaller than the little finger, like narrow and long needles.

All the meteoroids had been given a powerful push when they were still far away. Because there was no friction in space, the meteor shower immediately accelerated to a high speed before it lunged at Li Yao and Long Yangjun overwhelmingly!

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

Li Yao’s and Long Yangjun’s spiritual shields were buffeted by the tempest. Brilliant ripples were spreading out!

Naturally, the so-called ‘black hole bombs’ could not really pump away all the spiritual energy in the entire area, nor could they completely disrupt all the spiritual energy reserved in the bodies of the two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

But at the very least, they could cause serious interference for the two Cultivators, significantly slowing down the circulation of their spiritual energy and greatly increasing the consumption speed!

For Li Yao and Long Yangjun, they had only just escaped from the space ripples when they were attacked by a series of black hole bombs before a storm of meteoroids rained down upon them mercilessly, sending their heads spinning. They found it difficult to cope with the situation even if they were two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators with usual talents.

At this moment, from the direction where the black hole bombs and the storm of meteoroids were launched, two ivory starships gradually slid into their eyes.

Tremendous space shuttles and crystal suits took off like a swarm of bees and lunged at Li Yao and Long Yangjun as the third echelon of attacks!

Chapter 1726 - The Last Solution!

“Excellent!” Looking at the streaks of brilliance that were crystal suits darting at them, Li Yao complimented in amazement, with joy beaming out of his eyes. “The first wave of attacks is made of the black hole bombs, which destroy the enemy’s magical equipment and crystal processors and disrupt the circulation of spiritual energy in the enemy’s body. The second wave of attacks is made of meteoroids that are devoid of spiritual energy and deal damage purely with their speed, numbers, and impact, which will further diminish the spiritual shield that the enemy managed to summon and even drain the enemy’s physical strength and computational ability. When the magnetic pulses released by the black hole bombs are almost over, the third wave of attacks will be deployed and lunge at the enemy at the perfect timing!

“Such tactical cooperation is truly fluent and immaculate. Even the ‘black hole bombs’, as a new piece of magical equipment with many shortcomings, have been made best use of in a real battle! They are enough to cause a major headache to two legendary Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators! Marvelous. Really marvelous!

“I feel that I’m greatly reassured seeing that the federation is just a badass.”

“Monster Li,” Long Yangjun said, “you are not teaming up with the enemy and screwing with me, right?”

“Fellow Cultivator Long, don’t be hasty. In case you have forgotten, we still have a trump card, me!

“Now that we have been caught in such a passive situation because of one moment of carelessness, it seems to me that I’m left with no choice except to stop keeping a low profile and reveal the real appearance of Vulture Li Yao, dominator of three Sectors, in order to reverse the outcome and unveil Professor Mo Xuan’s evil scheme!”

While dodging the meteoroids that were coming at her as rapidly as lightning, Long Yangjun asked suspiciously, “Are you sure? You’ve been away from the New Federation for a hundred years. You are nothing more than a picture in the history books now, one on which the elementary and middle school students will scribble for fun. Try to stand in the shoes of the soldiers that are coming for us. If you were carrying out a mission issued by your superior, and a random guy suddenly jumped out of nowhere claiming that he is ‘father of the federation’, would you believe such absurdities?”

Hesitating, Li Yao replied, “Well…”

“Professor Mo Xuan has obviously got his eyes on us!” Long Yangjun analyzed quickly. “Perhaps he was only partly suspicious of you at the beginning, and he was not entirely certain of his doubts despite the test in the second Spiriters’ Realm. However, you ordered the carrier to perform the space jump in advance, which made him even more leery. Therefore, he hacked the control tower in the spaceport and the mainframe crystal processors of our carrier, interfered with our jump coordinates, and attacked our brains when we were about to complete the jump!

“But out of his expectations, we saw through his scheme at the last moment and even escaped from the carrier that was in the middle of a space jump. That is not something that normal people or even normal Cultivators could’ve done!

“Team Red Lotus definitely shouldn’t have been capable of that. Whatever our real identity is, it certainly poses a great threat to his plan. That’s one thing that he knows for sure right now. Therefore, he will certainly take us as critical targets to strike. Otherwise, the two ivory starships wouldn’t have come so fast or attacked with magical equipment as cutting-edge as the ‘black hole bombs’ the moment they arrived!”

Thinking quickly, Li Yao was greatly alarmed. “It also means that our deduction just now is correct. It is very possible that Professor Mo Xuan has taken control of the leadership of the military, the Secret Sword Bureau, and the government departments of the Hundred Flowers Space Zone through the Spiriters’ Realm.”

“He does not need to control every soldier,” Long Yangjun observed coldly. “All he needs to do is control the leadership and then issue false orders through the leadership. For example, by claiming that the two of us are ‘spies from the Imperium’, he will be justified in mobilizing the garrison and the Secret Sword Agents in the Hundred Flowers Space Zone to besiege us!

“The Exos of the federal army who are lunging at us furiously have probably received a notification that we are highly dangerous special agents from the Imperium. You are thinking of telling them that you are the father of the federation? Why don’t you say that you are His Majesty of the Imperium of True Human Beings?”

“Give me time,” Li Yao said in a hurry. “I can prove it!”

“Time is what we are most short of right now!” Gritting her teeth, Long Yangjun said, “Didn’t you say that the war would break out in twenty-four hours? Also, it is definitely not going to be a skirmish or reconnaissance but a major battle that involves the main-force fleets of both parties. Do you really have the time to prove your identity?

“Besides, how can you prove yourself? I expect that you can do nothing except display certain magical equipment and techniques that are unique to Vulture Li Yao. However, magical equipment can be duplicated, techniques can be simulated, and one’s past can be elicited through interrogation!

“Yes. There are other ways such as soul tests or gene tests, but they will only be conducted on the premise that you will behave and surrender first. Then, when you are under their rigorous surveillance, there may be a slim chance that they believe what you say and run said tests. Take a guess. Will Professor Mo Xuan do anything to the test results? After all, he moved here when Hundred Flowers City was just built. How much has he infiltrated this city?

“Right. You might also be able to contact your acquaintances, say, Ding Lingdang, Jin Xinyue, and such. But they are all too far away and must communicate with you through the Spiritual Nexus. Then, do you think that Professor Mo Xuan will give you the opportunity? Is it possible that he will build a false Ding Lingdang or Jin Xinyue on the light beam to issue false commands? After all, he already simulated me, Ling Xiaole, and Wei Qingqing in the Spiriters’ Realm!”

Li Yao thought quickly, only to discover that what Long Yangjun said was true. It seemed that every way to prove his identity in twenty-four hours had been blocked!

The third wave of attacks made of hundreds of Exos would meet them in less than ten seconds.

“If you tell them who you are, you will merely be asking to be caught, because other than Ding Lingdang and Jin Xinyue, there happens to be one person in the Hundred Flowers Space Zone who is most familiar with Li Yao and most qualified to decide whether you are authentic or fake. That person is Professor Mo Xuan!” Long Yangjun said. “Professor Mo Xuan’s entire plan is just our assumption, and not just any random assumption but a seemingly ridiculous one. We don’t have any proof at all. Why would they believe the two of us, whose backgrounds are unclear?

“If you claim you are Li Yao, they will only ask Professor Mo Xuan to identify you, because you are his student! What can you do if Professor Mo Xuan says you are a fake from the Imperium? After the two of you bicker for a while, the war will have long broken out!”

Li Yao could not help but spit. He realized that the trap was even more troublesome than his last homecoming to the federation.

Last time, at least he had almost half a month. He could take his time to run deductions and make preparations.

But this time, he had only twenty-four hours at most. There was a good chance that a war that decided the fate of the country would break out in twelve hours!

“Unless it is absolutely necessary, I don’t suggest you expose your identity right now.”

Staring at the group of Exos that was getting closer and closer to them, Long Yangjun said, “I’ve thought about it carefully just now. Professor Mo Xuan’s Spiriters’ Realm equals a large-scale, in-depth mental attack. The thing about mental attacks is that the better your enemy knows you, the more powerful their attacks will be!”

Li Yao was quite good at mental attacks himself. Years ago, in the tenth space ring of Heavenly Saints City in the Flying Star Sector, ‘Hellsword’ Zhuang Ziyou, the very first Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator that he killed in his entire life, was adept at mental attacks. Li Yao had also practiced sophisticated mental attack skills from the jade chip that Zhuang Ziyou had dropped.

He immediately understood what Long Yangjun meant.

During a mental attack, the more profoundly he understood his opponent, the more likely he would be able to construct a vivid illusionary world with false images that both attracted and frightened the opponent.

For example, if he learned that the target was scared of snakes or rats, he could fabricate certain fake snakes and rats during the mental attack. Naturally, the opponent would be devastated.

However, if the opponent was a freak who was best at manipulating snakes and rats, what could he expect to achieve by constructing the illusions of snakes and rats? To cheer for the opponent?

Just now, Professor Mo Xuan only knew Li Yao as Lin Jiu, captain of Team Red Lotus. Therefore, the Long Yangjun that he built had been seen through very quickly.

However, if Professor Mo Xuan had more knowledge and learned the identity and information regarding Master Spiritual Vulture from the Ancient Sages Sector, the illusionary world created by him would have been much more vivid!

Then, if he knew Li Yao’s real identity, he would have been able to construct a more pertinent illusionary world based on Li Yao’s personality, Cultivation, and social network, and even install a virtual Ding Lingdang, Jin Xinyue, Wu Mayan, and the rest of them in the illusionary world!

By then, even if Li Yao knew that the virtual images were all fake, it was still possible that his mind would be disturbed!

In mental warfare, one’s ‘real identity’ was the deciding factor that was of paramount importance for the final victory. Li Yao and Long Yangjun seemed to have been caught in the most passive situation, but they had seen through the real mastermind behind the whole scheme, whereas Professor Mo Xuan did not know who they really were yet.

It was their greatest advantage right now!

“We’re going to have a head-on confrontation with Professor Mo Xuan sooner or later,” Long Yangjun said. “Your identity is a ‘trump card’. Who throws out the trump card at the beginning of a game?”

“Exactly. Now is not the time yet. We probably should give my professor a surprise later, shouldn’t we?” Li Yao licked his lips. His eyes passed the group of Exos who were about to reach them and stared at the artificial celestial bodies that were scattered in the Hundred Flowers Space Zone like stars. Then, he suddenly said, “Whatever Professor Mo Xuan’s scheme is, as long as he intends to control the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus, he has to transmit his telepathic thoughts and instructions through the nodes of the Spiritual Nexus that are deployed everywhere in the Hundred Flowers Space Zone.

“How about we summon the Colossi right now, destroy all the nodes, and bathe Hundred Flowers Space Zone and the seven Sectors in a blackout?”

Long Yangjun glanced at him and remarked, “The Hundred Flowers Space Zone is the center of the Spiritual Nexus of the whole federation. If you sabotage this place, the net speed in the entire federation will be lowered by at least a half. Are you sure you want to do this when the Black Wind Fleet may arrive anytime?”

Li Yao thought for a moment and sighed. “It makes sense. Then, we have only one last solution now. Come on, Colossus!”

Chapter 1727 - Disguises in Disguises!

With the silver, glowing Hundred Flowers City as the background, the universe was even more profound and dark than usual. However, in the middle of the darkness that seemed capable of absorbing everything, two intense ripples spread out after a flash of strong light.

Following the ripples, two colorful springs of spiritual energy appeared out of nowhere, radiating their splendor to the entire universe. Supported by the ‘springs’, two Colossi, ultimate weapons in the primeval war invented by mankind which were tough enough to blow up the gods that created human beings, slowly surfaced in the sea of stars from the gaps of the void!

Two Colossi, one on the left and the other on the right, gazed at the incoming enemies coldly.

One of them was covered in black fire, with spurs that looked like thorns all over the body. There was an enormous cross on its head. At the center of the cross was a sole eye that looked like a bloody heart, making it look like an undead warrior condensed by the will of the deceased soldiers in a gory battle that had crawled out of the deepest level of hell. It was the Tartarean Skeleton!

The other Colossus was covered in black and white mist. It was as mysterious and unpredictable as a viper. Countless antennae that could enhance spiritual energy extended out of the skull. It was the Yin Yang, a super high-speed and light Colossus!

The two Colossi were no more than fifty meters tall when combined. In the universal scale, they were nothing more than a grain of sand.

However, the daunting auras unleashed from them incessantly somehow slowed down the hundreds of Exos of the federation, the ivory starships behind them, and even the entire space further behind the starships.

Colossi, ultimate weapons of which there were only less than a hundred in the entire federation!

More importantly, those who were capable of using the Colossi were at least in the Nascent Soul Stage!

In comparison, they were only the sentinel troop whose job was to project the third spaceport. They were mostly in the Building Foundation Stage and the Core Formation Stage and only launched an emergency attack after receiving an order from their superior. There were no Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators among them!

Two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators equipped with the Colossi were not a force that they could resist.

The group of Exos were like flies that had hit a piece of glass. Tremendous flames of spiritual energy spurted out in front of them, and they came to an abrupt halt with the counterforce, having no time to worry about their flesh and crystal suits being torn apart.

A moment later, thousands of streaks of brilliance burst out of them and attacked the two Colossi in complicated curves!

The Exos of the federation launched the most powerful remote attacks almost at the same time. Missiles, flying swords, and autopiloting grenades all rushed out. Almost all the ammunition in stock was used up.

On the other hand, they retreated quickly under the cover of the remote attacks and fled toward the two ivory starships.

However…

They expected the two Colossi to block the remote attacks causally and march into their battle formation to maul them like hungry tigers jumping on lambs. However, such a scene did not happen.

On the contrary, the thousand remote attacks raised a surging tide of blasts and explosions, drowning, shredding and swallowing the two Colossi completely!

The two Colossi were so feeble that they seemed to be made of paper. They did not even open their spiritual shield or perform any dodging movement before they were blown into smithereens!

Behind the ocean of blasts and explosions, it could be clearly seen that two small, hasty, if not desperate people were running away under the cover of the so-called Colossi while generating powerful impetus by boosting all their spiritual energy.

“We’ve been had!”

“It’s false. There are no Colossi at all!”

“They are just two iron shells that look like Colossi, plus several vivid 3D light beams and the sound and visual effects transformed by feeble spiritual energy!”

“Their sole purpose was to cover the two guys to escape!”

“What cunning spies of the Imperium! That’s more like it. How can two spies of the Imperium be equipped with Colossi?”

The Exos of the federation realized what was going on. They burst into fury because they were fooled by just two spies of the Imperium when there were hundreds of soldiers on their side. All their probe magical equipment locked onto the two spiritual waves that were running away. Together with the two ivory starships, they chased after the escaping enemy.

From the depths of the third spaceport of Hundred Flowers City and the federal fleets that were cruising at the edge of the Hundred Flowers Space Zone, a lot of troops were mobilized to chase and block the two uncanny waves of spiritual energy!

Three minutes passed after they went after the enemy.

From the spot of the explosion of the two fake Colossi, which was still brimming with chaotic spiritual energy like a pot of boiling soup, Li Yao and Long Yangjun slightly extended their heads out of the debris of the fake Colossi that had been blown away by the fierce remote attacks just now. They observed the tracks of the attackers.

As they expected, the attackers were moving further and further away from them.

“Hehe!” Li Yao grinned in great satisfaction.

The Colossi were naturally fake, but the two crystal suits that had fled under the cover of the Colossi were fake, too. The real Li Yao and Long Yangjun had hidden themselves inside the fake Colossi the moment they deployed the decoys and shouldered the bombardment of the chasers with the magnificent capabilities of the Nascent Soul Stage.

Then, taking advantage of the surging tides caused by the explosion, they broke out of the siege in the middle of the debris without alerting anyone!

Li Yao and Long Yangjun were both experts in disguising themselves. Their control over their breathing, heartbeat, body temperature, and spiritual waves was the highest. As long as they wanted, they could easily turn their bodies into cold meteoroids and melt into the background of the universe.

Also, the hundreds of Exos opened fire in a haste just now and blew the place where the ‘false Colossi’ were at into a simmering pool of magma. Even the most brilliant scanning magical equipment could not find their traces from the ripples of the boiling radiation!

It was the tactic of cooperative escape that Li Yao and Long Yangjun had practiced countless times in secret!

“How about it? Not bad, right?” Li Yao narrowed his eyes. “I told you that the tactical arrangement would definitely come in handy someday. Now, it has played a critical role, hasn’t it?”

Long Yangjun stared at him for a long time and sighed. “I admit my failure. I can’t figure out what is on your mind at all. You are one of the top experts in the Nascent Soul Stage, and you have an authentic Colossus in your hands. You could’ve finished those fellows casually, and yet you chose to run away disgracefully. Not only did you just run away, you are even so proud of it. You consider it not your shame but your glory?”

“I didn’t have a choice. They are all loyal soldiers of the federation who are carrying out an order. They are my comrades!” Li Yao opened his hands, not offended at all. “I cannot reveal my trump card, and I cannot kill them. What else could I do if not run away?

“Besides, the most important thing in a battle is to do what you are best at and avoid your shortcomings. What I am best at is escaping and disrupting the enemy’s scheme while I’m escaping! Therefore, I must start running away first in order to find my pace to overcome the enemy!”

Taking a deep breath, Long Yangjun asked, one word after another, “Then, if I may ask, Your Excellency Monster Li, after being bombarded more than a thousand times for nothing, have you found your pace or not? You must know that Professor Mo Xuan and the soldiers are not idiots. It won’t take long before they catch up to our bait and realize that they are fake!

“The universe is a vast place, but we cannot just run toward the outside world aimlessly. We will have to return to Hundred Flowers City.

“How do you expect to sneak into Hundred Flowers City in only half an hour? Don’t tell me that we can sneak in through the spaceport. I assure you that all sixteen spaceports in Hundred Flowers City must’ve been thoroughly blocked. All the starships coming and leaving will be scanned carefully. Even a flea will be discovered by them!”

Li Yao smiled and looked at the glittering silver metropolis in space, like a fly that was staring at an egg that was emitting pleasant smell from the crack on its surface. He confidently said, “Don’t be hasty. I have certainly found my pace!”

Five minutes passed, and the two of them adjusted their trajectory in space with feeble spiritual energy and slowly reached the other side of Hundred Flowers City.

From their perspective, they could see that a tiny crack as thin as a hair was opened on the smooth shell of an enormous ball-shaped town at the edge of Hundred Flowers City.

A series of dark cubes that looked like super-compressed garbage was spurted out of the gap and darted toward the star far away under the push of the massive momentum.

If one observed it more carefully, one would find countless similar cubes from Hundred Flowers City and the star, which constituted a narrow and long chain.

On one end of the chain was the gap, and the other end of the chain extended into the depths of the star. It was too fuzzy to see clearly what was there.

“This is the garbage processing center of Hundred Flowers City,” Li Yao explained to Long Yangjun through the communication of telepathic thoughts. “Hundred Flowers City has a population of almost a hundred million. It is one of the largest cities even on the surface of a planet. The life and training garbage generated every day is astronomical.

“Also, the city is established in a fully-enclosed structure in space. There is no room to burn or bury the garbage.

“For other space towns, they might pack the garbage up and launch it into space. After all, the universe is too vast a place to be filled with garbage.

“But Hundred Flowers City happens to be a transportation hub of the seven Sectors of the federation. It is surrounded by dense sailing routes. Countless starships jump to this place for transfer every day. If the garbage simply floats in space randomly, it will very likely lead to accidents.

“Therefore, the garbage processing center of Hundred Flowers City compresses the garbage that cannot be recycled in anyway and reduces its size by ninety-nine percent. Then, after the garbage is compressed into a cube that is as hard as metal, it will be launched into the star with a special ‘cannon’ so that the star will burn the garbage up!

“Hundred Flowers City is too huge with a large population. The garbage processing center here works day and night. Occasions are rare when it shuts down!

“Let’s go!”

Li Yao dragged Long Yangjun. Pushed by the invisible spiritual energy, the two of them darted toward the spurts of the garbage processing center like two broken remnants in space.

When the soldiers of the federal army who thought that they were chasing spies of the Imperium reached the edge of the Hundred Flowers Space Zone, they discovered that the two wretched ‘crystal suits’ had simply perished. Even the magical equipment that built the illusions exploded, not leaving them anything for investigation.

In the meantime, Li Yao and Long Yangjun, two unusual Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, snuck back into Hundred Flowers City!

Chapter 1728 - Lord of Ventilation Tubes!

The stinky garbage processing center not only had to deal with the daily life garbage of more than a hundred million people but also needed to process a lot of industrial and training garbage after it was sealed, packed up, and delivered there.

The air standard of the center was vastly different from any other space town in Hundred Flowers City. It was a smelly, venomous space that no citizens would visit without good reason.

Even the workers there had to wear air-filtration and circulation masks every day.

Li Yao and Long Yangjun, on the other hand, were like two unsubstantial ghosts who blinked among the hills of garbage swiftly, dodging the eyes of all the workers and surveillance cameras.

Naturally, no Core Formation Stage Cultivators or Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were guarding such a place. There were barely any Cultivators in the Refinement Stage or the Building Foundation Stage. With Li Yao's and Long Yangjun's Cultivation at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage, it would be the most hilarious joke if they were caught by the workers in the garbage station.

Behind them, on the dome above the garbage processing centers, ear-splitting alarms suddenly began to ring. The red-and-white lights were flashing quickly, brightening and dimming. The ‘garbage cannons’ that were functioning amid deafening noises just now slowly stopped, too.

Confused, a lot of workers left their posts and asked each other what was going on.

Li Yao did not need to turn back to know that the gap through which they had snuck in must have been closed.

The garrison must have discovered the trick that he played and figured out that they would likely sneak back into Hundred Flowers City through the garbage spurt.

It meant that many soldiers would arrive soon.

Besides, after being teased by Li Yao multiple times, they would certainly send the elites of the garrison. Chances were that they would even be Professor Mo Xuan’s trusted troop that he had secretly developed for decades!

In any case, Li Yao did not want to attack the soldiers on his side when the Black Wind Fleet might assault the federation at any point.

However, instead of running to the central area of Hundred Flowers City outside of the garbage processing center, he simply dragged Long Yangjun to enter the control base of the garbage processing center.

“Why aren’t we leaving?” Long Yangjun frowned. “We will only be relatively safe in the downtown area when we are covered by millions of people. It is the only way we can get rid of the chasers and start our own operation.”

“Wait a moment. There’s some important information that I have to look up!”

Li Yao kicked the solid, super-alloy gate of the control base and rushed forward, having no time to dodge the workers on his way at all. Everybody merely sensed that two hurricanes blew past them before they collapsed to the ground uncannily and fell unconscious.

“Trust me. I am an absolute expert in terms of escape and infiltration!” Li Yao’s voice was calm and brimming with confidence. “I chose the ‘garbage processing point’ as a starting point because it is a stone that kills two birds!

“It must be noted that the greatest headaches for super metropolises built in the vacuum of space like Hundred Flowers City are air circulation and garbage disposal.

“For cities on the surface of a planet, if something goes wrong with the garbage cleaning work, the city may be dirty and smelly for a couple days at worst, but in a fully-sealed environment, people will get killed if the mountains of garbage are not disposed of in time!

“Therefore, Hundred Flowers City that is made of hundreds of interconnected, ball-shaped towns must have a system of precise, complicated, and all-encompassing garbage transmission tubes that lead to every corner of the city. Naturally, the Tinder Base must be within its reach, too!

“Besides, based on my years of experience in crawling through ventilation tubes, the ventilation tubes, spiritual energy tubes, and garbage transmission tubes are often kept together in a bundled system when they are designed so that the maintenance and security checks are easier.

“Even if they are not kept together, the distance among the tubes cannot be very far!

“After all, to build a space metropolis, everything must be precisely planned in advance. Once the planning is completed, the following modification and expansion will be quite difficult. The tubes cannot just be deployed randomly, which will add to the trouble of reconstruction!”

Long Yangjun was greatly enlightened. “Therefore, as long as we figure out the distribution of the garbage transmission tubes in Hundred Flowers City, we will know the distribution of the ventilation tubes and then sneak into the Tinder Base through the ventilation tubes, right?”

“Exactly!” Li Yao smiled confidently, baring his sharp, white teeth. “The Tinder Plan on the surface is not a top-secret project for military purposes. Professor Mo Xuan couldn’t have reconstructed the base either, which would certainly have raised suspicion. In conclusion, the ventilation facilities of the Tinder Base must be civil level!

“Hehe. Professor, now that you have pushed me to this point, I am left with no choice except to demonstrate the power of the Lord of Ventilation Tubes!”

Li Yao left like a tornado and knocked down most of the people in the control center in less than twenty seconds. The stationmaster of the garbage processing center was the only one left standing.

Since he was responsible for astronomical garbage every day, the stationmaster was actually of quite a high level. He was an admin-type Cultivator in the Core Formation Stage.

However, under the dual mental attacks from Li Yao and Long Yangjun, naturally, he was unable to fight back at all and was soon hypnotized. He confessed everything that he knew and volunteered to retrieve the most detailed distribution map of tubes from the crystal processors in the control center.

To this moment, Li Yao and Long Yangjun finally understood why the soldiers of the federation had attacked them ruthlessly the moment they appeared.

“A brutal squad of spies from the Imperium is trying to sabotage the friendship between the Star Glory Federation and the Star Ocean Republic. They have snuck into the starship that the delegation from the Star Ocean Republic boarded and sabotaged the starship, disrupting the course of the starship and making the starship disappear in the turbulence of four-dimensional space!

“At this moment, two spies of the Imperium are still lingering in the Hundred Flowers Space Zone. It is very possible that they snuck into Hundred Flowers City during the chaos!

“The two of them are equipped with powerful crystal suits. They are both cunning, treacherous, and dangerous. All units must report to the temporary command center immediately after they discover the suspects and block the suspects at all costs. They must not be allowed to sneak into the city, where they may jeopardize the lives of a hundred million citizens!”

It was an order that the garbage processing center had just received. That was why they had shut the garbage spurts down in a hurry.

The order was issued by the garrison of Hundred Flowers City and the local branch of the Secret Sword Bureau together.

Another elite tactic squad was now reinforcing the garbage processing center to build up the defense of the area.

“We have to speed up!” Long Yangjun furrowed her eyebrow harder and harder. “It appears that Professor Mo Xuan has finished the infiltration and control on the military and the Secret Sword Bureau of the Hundred Flowers Space Zone. If we are delayed by the tactic squad, the main troops may be attracted to this place. Then, we can barely get away!”

“Monster Li, have you found the distribution map of the garbage transmission tubes and the ventilation tubes?”

“Nailed it!” Li Yao exclaimed, his eyes beaming with joy. He laughed like a weasel that had just stolen a hen. “Just as I expected. Everything is under my control. The tubes here have adopted the most classic design. The garbage transmission tubes, the spiritual energy tubes, the crystal cables, and the ventilation tubes are all bundled together. If we locate one of them, we will locate all of them. Also, the distribution and direction of the tubes in the block of Tinder Base are all clearly marked here with the most detailed data. It wouldn’t be any trouble…”

Li Yao’s voice became more and more rigid, and his face turned more and more awful, as if the hen that he had caught had suddenly pecked him brutally.

Long Yangjun raised her eyebrows. “What’s the problem now?”

“Uncle…” Taking a deep breath, Li Yao tried to ask the stationmaster who had turned on the most confidential interface and retrieved the whole distribution map while hypnotized. “Why are most of the ventilation tubes in Hundred Flowers City designed like a honeycomb? Every seemingly large tube is actually made of hundreds of narrower tubes inside that are only as wide as a finger? Not only have you adopted a honeycomb design, the critical turns of the ventilation tubes are also made of transparent materials. Everybody on the outside can see clearly what is inside! How much did you spend on that? That’s such a great waste!”

Still half hypnotized, the stationmaster put on a confused and yet proud expression. He held his chest high and said, “We must thank Senior Vulture Li Yao for his enlightenment!

“Senior Li Yao was himself an expert who was adept at infiltration. He snuck into the enemy’s center to perform decapitation strategies many times!

“His every case of infiltration has been included in the classic textbooks of the major military academies in the federation. As for himself, he also held a lot of lectures on the defense and breakthrough of tubes in those schools in person before he left the federation!

“Therefore, based on Senior Li Yao’s personal experience and earnest tutelage, the defense of tubes, especially ventilation tubes, is given great importance in the federation today! The best defense possible is definitely a honeycomb design before the tubes are built so that it is impossible for a human to sneak in!”

“…” Li Yao.

“Is that so? Senior Li Yao does sound very visionary!”

“Not just visionary. He was absolutely meticulous! Guided by Senior Li Yao’s spirit, the tube defense technology in the federation has made remarkable progress in the federation in the past hundred years. Right now, even a mosquito can’t fly into most of the tubes in Hundred Flowers City!”

Long Yangjun turned back and glared at Li Yao.

Li Yao coughed and touched the back of the stationmaster’s head, releasing spiritual energy to put him into sleep.

“…Fellow Cultivator Long, look, I was one of the celebrities in the federation a hundred years who had a lot of business to attend to every day. I really don’t remember holding a few lectures in some colleges!”

“Stop talking. I just want to be alone for a moment.”

“Wait. Don’t just give up hope already. This is not the time for desperation yet. Perhaps there’s some other way… Some other… Ah!”

Long Yangjun almost jumped to her feet because of his exclamation. “What the heck are you doing?”

“I was wrong. We were both almost wrong! The Tinder Base can’t be Professor Mo Xuan’s nest! His nest must be somewhere else!”

Li Yao stored the distribution map of all the tubes into his jade chip and began running. “The Tinder Base is a public place for his studies, which has been closely monitored by parliament, the military, and the Secret Sword Bureau for decades. A lot of personnel from the outside world are in the base, too. So, even if he has any schemes, he will not carry them out in the Tinder Base! We might not necessarily find anything even if we sneak into the Tinder Base. He must have a second base, which is his real nest that has never surfaced until this moment!”

Chapter 1729 - Lock onto the Target!

Chapter 1729: Lock onto the Target!

“Hu… Hu… Hu… Hu…”

“Hyena has entered the second workplace in the garbage processing center. No anomaly has been detected. Continuing searching. Over.”

“Hawkeye One is in position and ready to shoot. Over.”

“Hawkeye Two is in position. Scanning all workers in the visible range. No suspects detected. Over.”

“Hawkeye Three is in position and about to search the wall through No. 89 mystic rays to scan the buildings and obstacles in the first workplace. Over.”

“Sandhog is scanning all the tubes. Progress: 15%. No foreign objects have been detected in the tubes. Over.”

“All teams, stay alert and don’t take action recklessly. Our targets are highly dangerous spies from the Imperium who are probably above the Core Formation Stage. There is still one minute and thirty seconds to go before the main troops arrive at the garbage processing center. Not a fly is to leave the place in the next ninety seconds. Over.”

“Hyena copies.”

“Hawkeye copies.”

“Leopard copies.”

“Sandhog cop—what’s that?!”

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

“Hyena, Hawkeye, Leopard, Sandhog! Report in! What happened? Is that cannon fire? What are the things captured by your crystal cameras?”

“Sir, somebody has just activated the ‘garbage cannon’, but it is garbage that has not been highly compressed, with soup and everything. Also, the dome above the garbage cannon was not opened at all. The garbage was blown back into the room. Every corner of the center is now an utter mess… Cr*p… Cr*p!”

“What’s going on? Stabilize your crystal cameras and scan the entire battlefield quickly!”

“Somebody turned off the gravity control rune arrays of this place. We have lost gravity! All the garbage has lost gravity! The garbage is flying. The mountains of garbage are flying!”

“Intruders! We’re under attack!”

BAM! BAM! BAM!

“Ahhh!”

“Hyena! Leopard! Sandhog! Hawkeye! Damn it! Shut down all the channels between the garbage processing center and the nearby ball-shaped towns. Now!”

…

An hour passed.

In the core town at the center of the hundreds of silver ball-shaped space stations that made up Hundred Flowers City, the crowds and shuttles were moving among the skyscrapers that looked like primitive forests.

Because every downtown area was a ball that developed inwardly, there was actually no distinction between up and down, left and right. The high-rises could extend all the way to the ‘sky’ from the ground that was at a slight slant before it poured down from the ‘sky’ to the other side of the ball.

Naturally, for the people who were living on the ‘dome’, they were actually walking on the ground, and above their head was the ‘dome’ for them.

Sometimes, two particularly high and splendid skyscrapers could even be established right next to each other with a lot of transparent tubes that looked like rainbows between them, making it convenient for people to jump from one of the buildings to the other.

The complicated gravity rune arrays distributed gravity on the surface of the ball-shaped town evenly and attracted people who were living in them. That was why such an amazing scene could be created and how a hundred million people could be accommodated in minimal space.

For Li Yao and Long Yangjun who were adept at disguising their traces and faces, after they blended into the downtown area of a super enormous city of a population of a hundred million, they were like two leaves that did not belong to the forest but had fallen to the carpet of dry leaves in the forest’s depths. Unless the city was completely shut down and the soldiers searched for them for half a month, it would be absolutely impossible to locate them.

Li Yao’s assault on the garbage processing center was not entirely futile.

At least he had received the distribution map and processing information of the garbage tubes throughout Hundred Flowers City.

Through the information, he could easily locate the most prosperous downtown area. The place that outputted the most garbage every day had to be the downtown area with the largest population!

Also, when Li Yao searched on the mainframe crystal processor in the garbage processing center, he left a lot of traces that indicated his interest in the Tinder Base, having conducted multiple queries on the tube distribution in the base.

It was meant to mislead Professor Mo Xuan into thinking that the Tinder Base would be the focus of Li Yao’s attack. That way, he might concentrate most of the available forces in the base and prepare a dragnet for the intruders.

Therefore, at least in the past half hour, on the way to the downtown area, few soldiers of the federal army or Secret Sword Agents could be seen. They were able to reach the place without running into any danger.

Li Yao and Long Yangjun were completely different from an hour earlier.

From the moment they arrived in the Dragon Snake Space Zone, with the help of Long Yangjun as the founder of Ghost Character, an assassination organization, the twelve experts from the Ancient Sages Sector had all changed their appearances and presented themselves with false faces.

Li Yao had been pretending to be a plain-looking middle-aged man. That was why the fox girl Ling Xiaole had called him ‘uncle’.

At this time, he tore off the previous camouflage and added another few strokes. Then, he loosened his facial muscles, turning himself into an unattractive young man.

He was wearing sportswear that he had just stolen and even intentionally decorated his face with a series of red pimples, which made him even more look like a vigorous college student whose desires could not be met.

It was even easier for Long Yangjun. She had restored the appearance of Lead Eunuch Wang Xi. On the surface, she was a graceful gentleman who was as warm as jade. Naturally, her other self was purely natural without the slightest incongruence. Even the most advanced test magical equipment would not be able to identify any flaws.

The targets of the searchers were a man and a woman, but now, they were two men. The camouflage was enough to give them one to two hours to catch their breath and allow them to summon all their computation and deduction abilities to find out Professor Mo Xuan’s real nest!

When all the roads from the edge of Hundred Flowers City to the Tinder Base were on high alert, Li Yao and Long Yangjun were in a plain-looking restaurant in downtown Hundred Flowers City.

It was noon at this moment. The white-collar workers who worked in the offices nearby all went to the restaurants on the street for lunch. It was the busiest and most chaotic moment for the restaurants.

Li Yao and Long Yangjun were each holding a bowl of hot noodles, pretending that they did not know each other but were forced to have food at a small table in the corner of the restaurant. While watching the news displayed on the light beam, they communicated with each other in private.

“Your analysis does have a point,” Long Yangjun said. “The Tinder Plan has been open and frank since the very beginning. The military, the Secret Sword Bureau, the relevant agencies in the government, and the researchers in the major universities are all involved. It is a half-official project. It’s unlikely that Professor Mo Xuan has deployed a secret nest in the Tinder Base while lying to everyone. It is both dangerous and unnecessary.

“If it were me, the Tinder Base would only serve as a base on the surface, and it is only necessary that I set up a secret base somewhere else that is entirely under my control!

“However, Hundred Flowers City is a large place made of hundreds of ball-shaped space towns, each of which is as complicated as a maze. How can we know where Professor Mo Xuan’s secret nest is in only half a day?”

Li Yao sipped the delicious soup and pretended to smack his lips in satisfaction, but actually, he was speaking in private. “While we were on our way here, I gave it a lot of thought. If my professor really has a secret nest, it must meet the following requirements.

“Firstly, the place must be spacious enough and equipped with a lot of super crystal processors. Even if they are not the ‘Gai’-level crystal processors, they must be at least powerful ‘Jing’-level processors!

“Both the Spiriters and the Spiriters’ Realm sound quite ideal and insubstantial, but they cannot run without material support. Crystal processors and spiritual energy are to the Spiriters what land, air, and water are to the regular humans. They can’t live without them.

“Secondly, there is no way that my professor could accomplish such an enormous plan by himself. Therefore, he must have a bunch of professional researchers. Those researchers may be unaware of my professor’s real scheme. They may still be fooled right now. But they must be specialists in crystal processors, the Spiritual Nexus, and the training of the soul!

“Such an enormous space and so many powerful crystal processors will consume astronomical spiritual energy every day, not to mention that so many specialists are also gathered in the place. It is impossible to hide it from the authorities. Therefore, the secret nest must have an ostensible disguise on the surface, such as a research institute.

“However, whatever the disguise actually is, the organization must be on private property, whose owner is free to construct, modify, or conceal certain things inside as they please.

“Thirdly, the owner of the organization naturally can’t be Professor Mo Xuan himself, but they must be deeply associated with each other.

“Their relationship might not be very good on the surface, but a long time ago, let me think about it, decades ago, when my professor first started to push forward the Tinder Plan, they must have been connected to each other in a certain way.

“As long as we find a place that meets all three requirements, it will most likely be my professor’s real nest!

We will search for the distribution of the ‘Jing’-level super crystal processors in Hundred Flowers City first through the public files. Then, we will screen them out through elimination!”

Long Yangjun picked up a piece of red beef with her chopsticks, but instead of eating it, she was deep in thought for a long time. Then she said, “Perhaps, the trouble is unnecessary. The three requirements that you mentioned remind me of a certain person—Lei Yuqin.”

“Lei Yuqin?” Li Yao was slightly dazed. Then he remembered who the person was. “My professor’s mistress?”

“As for exactly whether or not she is your professor’s mistress, I am not very sure, but I’m quite certain that she is much more complicated that an algorithm specialist in the data processing center of the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus.

“When you mentioned the woman at the beginning, I already felt that it was a thorn in my heart. While you and Professor Mo Xuan were in the Spiriters’ Realm together, I searched for the woman’s files in my spare time when I was not chatting with Wei Qingqing. I discovered that there was quite a lot of news about her on the Spiritual Nexus.

“At that time, I did not think much of it, but now that you mention it, I think that the woman and Professor Mo Xuan must be more than a ‘couple’. They are more like some sort of ‘partners’ or even in a chain of command!”

Chapter 1730 - Specialist of Super Brains!

Li Yao bulged his eyes and added some vinegar into his bowl. “How so?”

“Lei Yuqin is not just a random specialist of crystal processors and algorithms. Her main study field is artificial intelligence, or to be more precise, ‘simulated artificial intelligence’,” Long Yangjun said. “It is better to call her a dual specialist in human brains and crystal processors than to call her a simple algorithm specialist. The ‘algorithms’ that she studied were to perfectly simulate the mind of human beings through crystal chips, synthesized neurons, and spiritual energy circuits.

“To be more straightforward, the purpose of her studies is to replace a human brain with a crystal processor!”

Li Yao added more and more vinegar into his bowl. “I didn’t know much about her. At that time, my main target was Professor Mo Xuan. I only noticed her as his ‘mistress’ from gossip, which mentioned that she was a worker of the ‘control center of the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus’.”

“Her work is indeed related to the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus,” Long Yangjun explained. “Replacing a human being with a crystal processor has a lot of applications in the federation today.

“First of all, regarding the patients whose brains are seriously damaged due to epilepsy, schizophrenia, dementia, bipolar disorder, and various kinds of accidents or battles, the main treatment in the federation right now is either to inject active materials to make the brain cells to proliferate and repair themselves based on the biochemical technology of the Blood Demon Sector, or to implant a chip or part of a crystal processor to fill in the damaged area as an ‘artificial brain’.

“How to combine the original brain of a human that is made of flesh and blood and an artificial brain that is made of metals and crystals perfectly, making them serve as a ‘fortress’ and ‘home’ for the soul without altering the previous character, memory, habit, and soul of the patient—that is what the ‘algorithms’ that Lei Yuqin studied were for!

“Therefore, you may consider Lei Yuqin a specialist to treat brain damage. She is a brain doctor!”

Li Yao frowned.

Although he knew that replacing part of the brain was essentially the same as replacing limbs or internal organs, he still felt that it was a little bit repulsive.

“Her studies have another application field that is more important, which is to build crystal processors for the ghosts,” Long Yangjun said. “If we get to the bottom of it, a ‘ghost’ is just a cluster of highly-condensed spiritual waves. Their mind and self-awareness are compressed to the minimum, and they are manipulated by their persistence from when they are still alive. In the end, they risk turning into devastating poltergeists who have no thinking ability but only natural instincts to feed on the brainwaves of living people.

“If their memory and self-awareness are maintained when they are in such a state, their longevity will be even shorter. In only a few hours, they will completely collapse, unable to maintain the condensed state anymore. At least, for most people whose level is not high, that will be their outcome.

“Even Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators such as Wu Suiyun and Meng Chixin greatly lost their Cultivation after losing their physical bodies. It took them decades before they finally regained their memories and self-awareness, but still, they had to hide inside war puppets and carry out their thinking ability with the computational ability of the puppets.

“It was quite fortunate that their souls left their bodies in the Nuwa warship deep underground. The shell of the warship resisted most of the radiation and interference for them. If they were on the ground, the remaining souls of the two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators would’ve been obliterated in the storm and sunlight after only a couple of years.”

Li Yao nodded. “The brain is like an ocean, and the self-awareness and soul are like the ship on it. Without the ocean, the ship will not be able to set sail at all no matter how big and firm it is.”

“Exactly,” Long Yangjun said. “The soul can live inside a tiny storage chip, but such a status of living is nothing more than ‘storage’. It is not real self-awareness but more like a program that is not activated yet.”

“Precisely,” Li Yao said. “To regain the memories and computational ability that they had when they were alive, they require the help of special crystal processors. I once studied some artificial bodies before. The greatest difference between artificial bodies and crystal suits lies in their crystal processors. The crystal processors of artificial bodies are specially designed for ghosts. The precision of a lot of key units is sometimes ten times higher than the ancillary crystal processors on the crystal suits. It is safe to say that the most advanced small crystal processors of the federation are basically developed for ghosts.”

“But nothing can be done if you only have crystal processors and not algorithms,” Long Yangjun said. “That’s exactly what Lei Yuqin studies. The art of integrating the soul and the crystal processor!

“Her job in the ‘control base of the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus’ was a doctor who treats the brain damage resulting from going online for too long.

“You know that the last thing that the base was short of was specialists of crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus. They are the people who spend the longest time online and are most mired in the entire federation. Some of them suffered brain injuries after their brain vessels exploded because they spent too much time in cyberspace and used too much of their computational ability. Lei Yuqin was supposed to treat that.

“Years ago, after Professor Mo Xuan’s Virtual Spirits Sector project failed, Su Changfa’s self-awareness vanished in the shattered Virtual Spirits Sector, and his real body degenerated into a level-5 vegetative patient. He was diagnosed with brain death, true death in the legal sense.

“Professor Mo Xuan and Lu Qingchen luckily survived the disaster, but they suffered brain damage of different levels, too, and were delivered to Lei Yuqin for treatment.

“According to the information that I found earlier, Professor Mo Xuan gradually fell in love with Lei Yuqin during the procedures. Then, the affair somehow leaked, causing the divorce of him and his wife.

“I didn’t think much of it when I first read the information because it is quite common for doctors and patients to develop feelings for each other after spending a long time together. Besides, your professor was ‘liquid metal’. The functioning mechanism of his soul must be very different from that of the normal people and normal spectral Cultivators. Since Lei Yuqin was passionate about the brain, mind, and self-awareness, it was perfectly normal for her to grow interested in your professor.

“But now that I think about it… something must be greatly wrong with the woman!”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes, with cold brilliance beaming out of his eyes. He was deep in thought while he moaned, “Wu…”

“This is your oiled tofu. Sorry for the long wait. There are too many customers at noon!”

The waiter delivered a dish that was soaked in red oil and placed it right in front of Li Yao.

Long Yangjun stared at Li Yao in silence without blinking.

“As infiltrators in the darkness, we must take the tiniest details into consideration,” Li Yao said. “The oiled tofu in this restaurant is their most famous specialty. Many people come to the restaurant not for the noodles but for a dish of tofu! Look around. Most customers here have ordered the food. Wouldn’t it be too odd if neither of the two customers on the same table ordered it?

“Don’t look at me. Turn around and focus on your noodles!

“Don’t bother about such details. Let’s continue. Now that you put it in such a way, my professor’s lover Lei Yuqin is indeed somewhat suspicious.

“However, if she works in the ‘control center of the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus’, it should be a strategic location of national significance. My professor couldn’t have pulled any tricks inside such a place, could he?”

“Lei Yuqin has the ‘control center of the Spiritual Nexus’ a long time ago, probably decades ago,” Long Yangjun said. “She is now operating a hospital.”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. “A hospital?”

“Exactly,” Long Yangjun said. “The Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital, which specializes in brain injuries, mental diseases, and sustenance of vegetative people. It is right in Hundred Flowers City and a private hospital solely funded by her. She can do whatever she wants inside. That’s everything I know about her.”

Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital… Li Yao and Long Yangjun looked at each other. Highly anxious telepathic thoughts almost surged out of their brains at the same time. “Search now! Collect their public files online! I’ll investigate Lei Yuqin, and you will investigate Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital. Let’s see if we can find any more problems!”

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

The two of them sat in a corner of the restaurant where they could block the surveillance cameras above and the eyes of other people with their backs. Also, the customers in the restaurant were mostly browsing the light beams of their crystal processors, too. Nobody noticed how astonishingly fast they were reading the pages that they needed at all.

A moment later, the two of them finished the collection and analysis of the public files.

“Lei Yuqin, a hundred and thirty-two years ago, from the Flying Star Sector, at the peak of the Core Formation Stage in public,” Li Yao said. “She is a renowned psychologist, psychiatrist, Meditation Healer, and algorithm specialist in simulated artificial intelligence. She is particularly good at treating brain diseases such as cerebral atrophy with interventional therapies that involve crystal chips and crystal processors. She also participated in the production and upgrade work of several crystal processors that were specially designed by ghosts.

“When Professor Mo Xuan was operating the Virtual Spirits Sector project, she was the doctor and Meditation Healer specially hired by the control center of the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus. After the collapse of the Virtual Spirits Sector, she was responsible for the treatment of Professor Mo Xuan and other injured members of the team.

“Three years after the collapse of the Virtual Spirits Sector, Professor Mo Xuan officially withdrew from the development team of the game Civilization and acquired the Monument Plan before renaming it the Tinder Plan. At exactly the same time, Lei Yuqin left the control center of the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus and established Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital!

“There’s a lot of gossip and rumors about the relationship between Professor Mo Xuan and Lei Yuqin. It is said that Professor Mo Xuan divorced because of her, but no matter how close they were back then, they did not have much interaction in the following decades. It was probably because Professor Mo Xuan involved her in the divorce, causing her to be derided as a despicable ‘mistress’. She was quite a famous celebrity herself. Naturally, she found such rumors unacceptable. Therefore, her relationship with Professor Mo Xuan soon turned cold. They never talked to each other in the decades that followed and simply minded their own business.

“It is exactly because of their awkward past that Professor Mo Xuan’s Tinder Plan gathers many soul, Spiritual Nexus, and Medication Healing specialists in the entire federation but simply ignores Lei Yuqin, who is right inside Hundred Flowers City.

“Many people in the circle are aware of the incident and understand Professor Mo Xuan’s attitude. But judging from everything we have learned, it is very possibly their disguise. Just like Jin Xinyue and Guo Chunfeng have probably reached a secret strategic alliance off the stable, Professor Mo Xuan and Lei Yuqin might be in the same gang despite their indifference to each other on the surface!”

Chapter 1731 - Spiritual Nexus Sudden Death

Long Yangjun switched the light beam and played a music video as a disguise. Then, she went on. “The Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital is a private hospital solely funded and established by Lei Yuqin. It is one of the best brain hospitals in the entire Star Glory Federation. The hospital is best known for their treatment on the Spiritual Nexus Sudden Death, or rather, ‘SNSD’ as most people call it.

“As the Spiritual Nexus develops—especially after all kinds of immersive virtual cabins, brain scanning helmets, and super-remote signal transmission technology were invented—human beings are more and more connected to the Spiritual Nexus.

“At first, they merely scan the information on the light beam with their bare eyes and listen to the sound of the crystal processors with their ears.

“However, in the nerval interaction liquids of the immersive virtual cabin, or in the holographic game helmets that can directly scan the brainwaves, it is possible to stream boundless information from a hundred lightyears away into the user’s head through quantum entanglement, gravitational waves, and other means, creating a more abundant and vivid effect than the traditional Grand Illusionary Land. One might even say that it is a more than perfect simulation of reality!

“The overly-saturated sense of reality built by the tremendous data, while providing convenience and joy to the user, doubtlessly poses a heavy burden on their brain. It is especially so for many of the virtual worlds that boast the effect of ‘lengthening time’. One hour in reality can be transformed into three to five hours in the virtual world.

“When their speed is not changed, naturally, the flow of time cannot be twisted. The only reason the time in the virtual world is slowed down for the users is because the virtual cabins and the game helmets impose strong stimulations on their brains to increase their brain cell activity and make their brains overload. That’s all!

“The human brain is the most precise organ as well as the most mysterious area in the entire world. To this day, countless mysteries are still waiting to be solved. Under normal circumstances, only ten percent of the human brain is active, while the other ninety percent is all hibernating temporarily. But it doesn’t mean that only ten percent of the human brain is developed. That’s all because human’s soul is too powerful. Developing ten percent of the brain has already reached the limits of the brain. The other ninety percent of the areas all provide certain ancillary and recovery functions to ensure that the human brain can run stably.

“The modern Spiritual Nexus, virtual cabins, and game helmets, on the other hand, can increase the development rate of the human brain to above fifteen percent or even higher through the stimulation. That’s only for ordinary people. For Cultivators, their brain development rate can be even more terrifying!

“Naturally, such overloading may cause problems. The most common symptom is serious cerebral hemorrhaging after a long time online. In the relatively better cases, the patients may suffer seizures, paralysis, or nerval disorder. In relatively worse cases, they may fall into a coma and turn vegetative or even be killed on the spot. That is known as Spiritual Nexus Sudden Death or SNSD. It is a troublesome new disease in the New Federation when most traditional diseases have been taken care of!

“According to the statistics, the annual affliction rate of Spiritual Nexus Sudden Death in the past ten years is seven in a hundred and fifty thousand, which means about seven million people. Most of them only suffer mild symptoms and recover soon after treatment, but one tenth of them, which means almost one million people, suffer from irreversible symptoms, turn into vegetative persons, or get killed instantly. I read that data on the official site of Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital. Lei Yuqin is an expert in treating the disease.”

Li Yao was greatly shocked. “Such a high death and disability rate? The Spiritual Nexus is a rather terrible thing. Why is the technology so popular when it is so immature?”

“The death rate is actually not very high,” Long Yangjun said. “The files that I found suggest that eighty million people are injured in traffic accidents every year, eight million are permanently disabled, and one million are killed.

“The culprits of the traffic accidents—namely shuttles, flying fins, mystic ray jets, and other vehicles boosted by spiritual energy—were invented in the age of the Star Ocean Imperium. They have a history of almost ten thousand years. Even considering the technological stagnation in the Great Dark Age, they have still been reinvented for almost a thousand years. They are very mature and ‘safe’ technology.

“In comparison, the virtual cabins and the game helmets are at least much more mature, safe, and reliable than shuttles.

“It is also needless to say that on many resource planets where the environment is terribly harsh and the space towns that can easily make people suffer from claustrophobia because of the lack of room, there is nowhere for the residents to go even if they want to go outside. They can only go online inside their small rooms.

“Of most injuries that are caused by the Spiritual Nexus and game helmets, most of them only have simple symptoms that can be treated quickly. Also, sometimes it is hard to tell whether the more serious cases—say, cerebral hemorrhage and sudden death—are actually caused by their addiction to cyberspace or because their bodies already had hidden problems. Those accidents alone are not enough to make people give up the Spiritual Nexus or lower the methods and speed of the network to a preliminary phase.

“In any case, people have to go to the Spiritual Nexus. Even if ordinary people can control themselves when they are merely entertaining themselves online, Cultivators cannot control themselves at all when they are on the Spiritual Nexus for their work and studies.

“Of the victims of Spiritual Nexus Sudden Death, sixty percent are Cultivators. They take up more than eighty percent of the vegetative and death cases. Considering the population ratio of Cultivators to ordinary people, this is truly an astounding number, but such a number is also hardly avoidable!”

“Cultivators…” Li Yao mumbled to himself. “The stability of a Cultivator’s soul should be higher than that of ordinary people. Why are their injury and death rates higher, too?”

“Because Cultivators often increase their brain cell activity to more than ten times of the regular state,” Long Yangjun replied. “They are burning their life and soul to break their limits, and a few of their brain vessels may break apart every day. If they do this all the time, it is only natural that they suffer brain diseases!”

Li Yao coughed. He remembered his brain vessels also exploded a lot when it was overloading during his studies, training, and refining.

Although Cultivators’ brains were much harder than the brains of ordinary people, and they could repair their bleeding brains with their spiritual energy in most cases, humans were not machines. Besides, even machines suffered from fatigue!

If their brain overloaded for a long time, it was quite possible that something might go wrong.

“The past hundred years was the golden phase of development for the New Federation,” Long Yangjun said, “but the fast speed of development did not come from empty talk. It was earned by countless people who burnt their life and soul and even sacrificed themselves.

“Other than the few years during the Uranian Ring War, the federation has lived a hundred years in peace, but the death rate of the Cultivators has not lessened at all. For most of the admin-type, research-type, creation-type, and even culture-type, their daily job is their battlefield, and the crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus are their best weapons.

“All Cultivators unleash their vitality on the battlefield by burning their life and soul and fully making use of their brains. Analyzing the primeval treasures on Kunlun from hundreds of thousands of years ago; running a major city that has millions of residents; developing a brand-new crystal suit, crystal tank, or crystal warship… Everything makes the Cultivators break the limits of their brains time and time again until they finally collapse in their posts.

“That’s the only reason the Cultivators are much more susceptible to Spiritual Nexus Sudden Death than ordinary people. The Cultivators of the federation have been overly exploiting their brains without considering their own lives!”

Li Yao was lost for words.

He recalled the famous slogan in the age of the Old Federation.

Cultivators should not be scared of death, and those who were scared of death should not become Cultivators!

Long Yangjun went on. “To deal with the scourge of the Imperium of True Human Beings, few Cultivators are willing to slow down their research. If they develop a few pieces of magical equipment or make the mines, cities, and sailing routes more efficient today, the chances of winning if war breaks out tomorrow will be slightly higher.

“Therefore, even if they are aware of Spiritual Nexus Sudden Death, no Cultivators are willing to give up the Spiritual Nexus. This is a war that has lasted a hundred years. In a war, a death and disability rate of less than 0.01 percent is negligible!

“While Cultivators take the risk gladly, the Spiritual Nexus, brain, and Meditation Healing specialists still have to resolve the conundrum. In the past few decades, the studies on Spiritual Nexus Sudden Death have been a notable subject. Lei Yuqin is the most skilled specialist and academic authority in that field!

“Since her Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital was founded, it has presented a lot of influential research products on the functioning mechanism of Spiritual Nexus Sudden Death, the specific process in which it affects the brain, the corresponding treatment methods, and many other findings after only decades. She is also particularly good at treating patients whose brains are severely damaged. There is a large Deep Sustenance Treatment Center in the hospital that specifically accepts vegetative patients from every part of the federation. Most of them are Cultivators who overly exploited their brain during high-intensity work on the Spiritual Nexus and fell into a coma after mental derangement.

“Of course, because the Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital is a private hospital, the fees every day in the Deep Sustenance Treatment Center are astronomical. Other than the wealthy, high-level Cultivators, the families of the lower-level Cultivators and ordinary people can barely afford to send the patients to be treated in this place.

“All in all, vegetative patients are delivered to the special ‘rehabilitation cabins’ after they are moved into Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital. There, their body functions will be maintained by nerval stimulation and the injection of nutrition liquids. Meanwhile, Lei Yuqin will explore and stimulate their brains on a deep level through her secret techniques in order to help them wake up.

“It is said that more than ten percent of the vegetative patients who were sent to Lei Yuqin have woken up. There are even cases where the patients woke up after being treated for only two years when they had been in comas for decades. Those patients did not suffer many aftereffects after they woke up, and they were even able to continue their training!”

Chapter 1732 - Tens of Thousands of Vegetative Patients!

Chapter 1732: Tens of Thousands of Vegetative Patients!

Li Yao was so shocked that even his chopsticks almost fell out of his hands.

A wakeup rate of ten percent did not seem very high. But all the patients were Cultivators, who had been in coma for ten to twenty years or even longer!

As a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, Li Yao knew clearly how terrifying the mental derangement and the brain collapse were for the Cultivators.

It was a completely different concept from the loss of consciousness of the ordinary people.

For example, if the soul of the ordinary people in their brain could be compared to a shuttle that was travelling on a regular highway in the city at fifty miles per hour, then the surging soul of the Cultivators would be a super shuttle that was rushing at five times the speed of sound in a stone belt that was full of obstacles!

If both of them had an accident, which of them would be more seriously wrecked, the fifty mile an hour one or the supersonic one?

Therefore, after an ordinary person entered a vegetative state due to brain injury, there were still chances that they could be recovered and woken up. But if the Cultivators were mentally deranged and turned into vegetative persons, the odds that they would wake up were no higher than one percent in the past.

It meant that Lei Yuqin raised the likelihood of Cultivators recovering from a vegetative state and even regaining their abilities in training by more than ten times!

Li Yao could totally imagine how Lei Yuqin’s hospital was passionately sought after by the Cultivators. If he was one of the Cultivators who were about to practice a highly dangerous art that was likely to cause mental derangement, he would definitely tell his family and disciples that he must be taken to Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital for treatment should anything go wrong.

“After waking up several high-level Cultivators who had slept for decades in a row, Lei Yuqin gained unparalleled reputation,” Long Yangjun said. “Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital has also been praised as the hospital that is best at dealing with Spiritual Nexus Sudden Death.

“That is a private hospital, and Lei Yuqin’s charges are extremely expensive. Even so, Cultivators from across the federation are coming to this place or sent to this place for treatment by their family. Most of them are vegetative patients who will live in the Deep Sustenance Treatment Center for a long time. The number of patients has increased from dozens at the beginning to tens of thousands right now.”

Li Yao finished all the noodles. Then, he sipped the soup slowly and covered his thoughtful face with the noodle bowl.

“Tens of thousands of vegetative patients?”

“Yes. Most of them are rich, high-level Cultivators. Before they fell into a coma, they were the elites of their respective trades, especially specialists of crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus. Just like how those who are good at swimming are more likely to drown, because the specialists of crystal processors are most invested in the virtual world, the odds of their accidents are the highest.

“Their families and the enterprises and sects behind them pay astonishing fees for their treatment, allowing Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital to continue to expand. Right now, it occupies more than half of the space of District 109. It is said that the radiation and waves of the outside world must be absolutely blocked during the treatment. Therefore, the Deep Sustenance Treatment Center is a full-closed building that only accepts the family of the patients and visitors from the academic world. It is extremely hard for other people to get in.”

“Tens of thousands of vegetative patients, who are all high-level Cultivators, with a fairly large proportion being specialists in crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus?” Li Yao felt that the whole thing was getting more and more weird. Also, it somehow overlapped with Professor Mo Xuan’s ‘virtual life’ plan that they had inferred. “Is it possible to enter other areas of Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital? After all, it is a hospital. If a patient is sent to the hospital, they can’t just turn them away, can they?”

“Well, they can,” Long Yangjun explained. “Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital is a research-type hospital that does not have a clinic. Most of the patients of the hospital are transferred there after being treated in other hospitals in the federation for a while but without any improvement.

“Of course, some of the wealthy Cultivators even reach out to Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital beforehand and send over the status of their brains and their brain tomography so that an intact database regarding their brains will be established. Then, after paying a certain fee, they will be registered as ‘premium members’ of the hospital. Should they really be mentally deranged and fall into a coma, they will be able to be directly sent to the hospital after any simple procedures done in local hospitals.

“The odds of Cultivators going mentally deranged because their brain overloads are still quite high. Therefore, although the annual charges on the maintenance of the ‘brain health database’ are somewhat extortionate, a lot of high-level Cultivators who are rich still make appointments in case anything goes wrong!

“For normal patients who are not premium members, do not have a medical record that suggests they have been treated for a long time in the major hospitals in the federation, and do not have the referrals of the local brain doctors, it is hardly possible for them to be transferred to Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital. The hospital does not admit patients who just knock on the door unannounced, either.

“Besides…”

Long Yangjun paused for a moment before saying, “According to the notification I saw on their website, they are running a large-scale upgrade on the medical system inside the hospital over three days. So, it is temporarily closed.

“For the safety of the patients in the hospital, even premium members, patients who are transferred to the hospital from other hospitals, and the family members of the vegetative patients in the hospital are not allowed to enter.”

Li Yao immediately widened his eyes. “Temporarily closed over three days?”

“To be more exact, it’s yesterday, today, and tomorrow,” Long Yangjun said.

Li Yao drank up the soup in his bowl. “The final battle between the Star Glory Federation and the Black Wind Fleet may break out at any moment. Professor Mo Xuan’s Tinder Plan will have the first launch tomorrow. Yet, Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital shuts its doors for three days at this exact moment for a system upgrade? There can’t be such a coincidence in the world! That place must be my professor’s nest! We must find a way to go to District 109!”

Hundred Flowers City, as a metropolis floating in space, was made of hundreds of ball-shaped space towns. Every ball-shaped space station that was dozens of kilometers in diameter was a district. The districts were connected to each other conveniently, but the transportation could be complicated, too.

They were currently in District 7, the central business area that had the densest population in Hundred Flowers City, but District 109 where Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital was located was at the periphery of the city. They could only reach the place after a shift of vacuum buses.

However, the stations of the vacuum buses had extremely strict security measures.

While the two of them were planning a route, they heard the people around them all exclaiming. Looking around, they noticed that all the customers were looking at the news light beam in the corner of the ceiling.

All the news media of Hundred Flowers City were broadcasting the same urgent news.

To cope with the large-scale invasion of the Imperium of True Human Beings, the garrison of Hundred Flowers City, together with the local police and militias, were holding a military drill of an enormous scale, including the procedure of ‘air defense’. During the drill, Hundred Flowers City would enter the level-2 alert state. All citizens were instructed not to panic and to stay indoors as much as possible instead of going out on the street. Also, they were asked to avoid the use of vehicles.

The news also stated that the authorities would temporarily close the channels between some districts. The security checks in the major transportation centers and bus stations would be increased, too, to perform more thorough examinations on every passenger. It was all part of the drill. The authorities apologized for the inconvenience caused.

The drill would end in eight hours. Then, everything would be back to normal.

Li Yao and Long Yangjun looked at each other with equally awful expressions.

Wiping their mouths, they stood up and left the restaurant one after the other. Then, they noticed that a lot of soldiers of the federal army were roaming on the street questioning the passersby that they found suspicious.

Mechanical noises were echoing somewhere on the dome, too. Part of the channel from this district to the neighboring area must have been closed.

Although not all the channels that connected the downtown area and the outside world were blocked, the routes that they were free to choose were certainly greatly reduced.

Besides, every major road had been seriously jammed. If then intended to pretend to be ordinary people and reach Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital without alarming anyone, it would take a great deal more time.

Looking at the soldiers who were setting up sentry posts on the street not far away, Long Yangjun remarked, “We’re in trouble now.”

“I don’t think so.” Li Yao’s eyes were glittering. “Although the time we spend on the road will slightly increase, it may be easier for us to find out the truth about Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital with the help of the federal soldiers!”

“Oh?” Long Yangjun raised her eyebrow. “How so?”

“It’s simple. Professor Mo Xuan has perhaps controlled the leadership of the military, the Secret Sword Bureau, and the relevant departments of Hundred Flowers City through various kinds of secret arts, but he cannot control every soldier at the bottom level, can he?

“Those bottom-level soldiers, and even the middle- and low-level officers who are commanding them, are still loyal to the federation and on our side. They are simply misled by a wrong order.”

Long Yangjun frowned. “But you can’t explain yourself to them or fight them in the downtown area.”

“I’m not saying that we are going to fight them in the downtown area, but things will be different in Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital.” Li Yao smiled. “If the hospital is really Professor Mo Xuan’s nest in which he is carrying out certain clandestine plans, such plans must not be exposed to most people.

“The official site of the hospital says that it is closed for three days. That’s the best evidence suggesting that certain ‘changes’ that must not be seen by outsiders are happening in the hospital.

“Right now, our greatest advantage is that my professor is still expecting us in the Tinder Base and does not know that we are going to Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital!

“If we navigate the fooled soldiers to Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital and check what Professor Mo Xuan is up to exactly together with them, what do you think my dear professor will feel?”

…

Three hours passed.

District 109 of Hundred Flowers City was a most medical district, where a few most famous private hospitals of the federation were established.

In the middle of the beautiful landscape constructed by the Grand Illusionary Land, several delicate towers were standing, but they were just the tip of the iceberg. Buildings of an even larger scale, including the Deep Sustenance Treatment Center that maintained the lives of the vegetative patients, were all hidden ‘below the ground’, or rather, in the depths of the ball-shaped space station.

This was Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital!

Chapter 1733 - Total War!

Because of the blockades of the federal army, the Secret Sword Bureau, and other departments, and because Li Yao was setting up ‘presents’ while he was on the way to Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital, it took them three hours before they finally reached the top of another hospital that was five kilometers away from the target.

The hospital had nothing to do with either Professor Mo Xuan or Lei Yuqin. It was not as confidential as Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital and was still open. Therefore, the two of them snuck to the commanding height that they desired more than easily.

Zi! Zi! Zi!

The two of them were wearing penetrative telescopes crafted by Li Yao. Their eyes immediately turned into two green, fluorescent spots.

The telescope was made of nineteen layers of transparent lenses as a piece of high-level magical equipment designed for the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. Together with the amazing eyesight of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, they would be able to clearly see a fly thousands of meters away. After switching to different lens modes, the telescope could even break optical illusions and directly sense the changes of heat and spiritual waves, allowing it to see through what was really behind the surface.

The two of them were crouching on a balcony on the top of the building. The optical camouflage cloth that they covered themselves in blended them with the bright gray environment perfectly.

Concentrating their attention, they carefully searched the parts of Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital that were exposed to the ground inch by inch.

The hospital five kilometers away seemed quiet and peaceful. Most of the buildings were hidden in the deeper parts. On the ground that was full of green, vigorous plants, a few gardeners were maintaining the artificial lawn. It seemed to be just another usual day.

However…

“Something’s wrong with those people.”

Holding his breath, Li Yao kept his hands almost perfectly still, but he was actually adjusting the lens carefully for a better focal length. Captured by his lens, the ‘gardeners’ were all magnified to the extent that every pore on their bodies were clearly visible.

The gardeners were too strong.

No. They were not strong because they had a lot of muscles. The Star Glory Federation had always attached great importance to fighting. Training facilities and strengthening drugs were popular nowadays, too. Even the most common workers were able to build themselves into brawny bears.

However, the bodies of the gardeners that were hidden below the sloppy work suits were in the most perfect inverted triangle. Their muscles were evenly distributed and forceful, and their bones were tough and concrete, like springs and machines that had been filled with strength.

Even their veins and nerves were distributed in the most even, smooth, and perfect way!

It was the special body quality that could only be achieved after decades of hard training, when the internal organs and the limbs were repeatedly cleansed and nurtured by the spiritual energy. With the eyes of a professional, Li Yao could tell that, although they did not release a lot of spiritual waves, those ‘gardeners’ were likely very strong battle-type Cultivators!

Even if a private hospital did need to require a few tough security guards, did they really have to hire battle-type Cultivators as their gardeners?

Also, when Li Yao observed the gardeners carefully, he felt that they were somewhat weird or even creepy.

Although they were working and communicating normally, with laughter every now and then, their eyes were rigid and lifeless. Undisguisable black fog seemed to be spreading out of their eyes, making them look like…

“Hey. Do you feel that those guys are like a bunch of dead people?” Long Yangjun asked in a low voice.

“Exactly. Although they also breathe, their hearts beat, and their body temperature is no different from normal, I also feel like they are a bunch of dead people who have just crawled out of a grave.”

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao frowned. “Or maybe, they are not dead people but puppets. Some sort of weird puppets…”

While they were talking, they sensed a chilly glare at the same time.

On the law five kilometers away, one of the ‘gardeners’ suddenly put down the mower. Bulging his black and empty eyes, he coldly stared straight in their direction.

With him as the lead, all the other ‘gardeners’ seemed to be attracted by a certain weird force and raised their heads simultaneously, too, gazing at the building five kilometers away.

It never occurred to Li Yao and Long Yangjun that their senses would be keen enough for them to detect the spying of two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators so quickly.

“We’ve been caught,” Long Yangjun said. “Those guys must not be underestimated. Are your arrangements all good? They won’t go wrong, will they?”

“Absolutely not!” Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao raised his right hand slowly, while the cold and gloomy eyes were still focused on him from five kilometers away. He announced, one word after another, “Don’t forget that other than being the Lord of Ventilation Tubes, I am also the legendary Prince of Crystal Bombs!”

Pa!

Li Yao snapped his finger.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

The snap of his fingers was like an amazing order. Dozens of ear-splitting explosions echoed in a certain corner near Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital. Bright fireballs burst out and turned from orange fire into smoke that was as dark as ink in the next moment. Extending the limbs and claws, the smoke enshrouded the entire hospital quickly!

For a moment, fire was soaring into the sky, and black smoke was spreading everywhere. Alarms were ringing nonstop. The whole of District 109 and even the few districts nearby all sensed the unprecedented great explosion!

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

The illusions of the beautiful landscape around were first riddled with twisted ripples. Then, they became tinted and mottled in different colors. One light beam after another perished, revealing the silver wall of the cabin and the cold truth that they were in fact in the middle of an enormous metal ball.

Li Yao grinned and looked at the result of his sabotage with great satisfaction. “We monitored the situation while we were on our way here. At least three groups are stationed near District 109. They will soon arrive after hearing such violent explosions.”

“Look!” Long Yangjun said. “They have given themselves away.”

Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital was the focus of the serial explosions.

The bombs that Li Yao adopted were mostly smoke grenades and stun grenades, which might not boast much damage but certainly looked very intimidating. The sound was echoing even to this moment, as if thousands of soldiers were attacking the hospital.

The smoke grenades that he had specifically prepared were added with venomous fog from the Southland of Sorcerers of the Ancient Sages Sector. They consumed the ground part of the hospital and disrupted all the probe magical equipment that could possibly exist on the ground.

Under the unexpected sudden assault, the ‘gardeners’ all summoned their crystal suits at the earliest chance due to their natural intuition, turning themselves into fully-armed, awesome-looking warriors!

Li Yao analyzed the model of their crystal suits immediately. The crystal suits were all heavy crystal suits developed in the last ten to twenty years, with very professional upgrades and modifications based on their personal features.

Even regular low-level Cultivators could barely afford that, not to mention gardeners!

Besides, two round parts on the green man-made lawn sank abruptly and retreated helically, revealing two dark giant holes.

Countless silver puppets that looked like the Grand Illusionary Soldiers swarmed out like bees and landed near the ‘gardeners’ after a few giant leaps.

One gardener, plus eight to seven puppets, made a battle unit.

More than twenty battle units controlled every corner of the ground part of Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital.

The establishment of the whole tactical defense system only took less than ten seconds.

“Even the gardeners of your household can’t be as tough as them, right?” Long Yangjun asked.

“Exactly.”

“Then what are we waiting for?” Long Yangjun said. “This is the place. I’ve been holding it back for a long time. Let’s make it big!”

Shua!

Shua!

Li Yao and Long Yangjun both removed the stealth camouflage cloth and rose up abruptly. Two seemingly ordinary crystal suits immediately covered them without a gap. One on the left and the other on the right, they fell on one of their knees and prepared to run. Then, they sprinted forward!

Boom!

Flames of spiritual energy that resembled a volcanic eruption burst out of their backs and their feet. Although their crystal suits were ordinary with mediocre performance, boosted by the spiritual energy of two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, the crystal suits’ limits were soon surpassed. The five kilometers was swallowed in no time. The two of them smashed into the garden of Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital like two shooting stars. The few silver puppets that were bold enough to stand in their way were all blown into scrap metal!

The other hundreds of puppets, as well as the twenty or so Exos who were pretending to be gardeners, lunged at them without a sound.

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

Li Yao straightened his left arm. An ivory ball of light was quickly condensed in the middle of his palm and turned into a dazzling pillar of light in the next moment. It pierced through two battle puppets in the front immediately but was then blocked by the spiritual shield released by the third battle puppet. Li Yao slightly frowned. “Those are no ordinary puppets. Their spiritual shield is very powerful, even with some sort of ability to twist the force field!”

“Those guys are no ordinary gardeners, either!” Long Yangjun’s body was twisted into a weird curve before she blinked out of the siege of five puppets in a seemingly impossibly way. Then, her longsword turned into a colorful arc as she pierced at the gap between the skull and the torso of the crystal suit of a ‘gardener’. Outside her expectations, the ‘gardener’ was strong enough to see through the trajectory of Long Yangjun’s attack and raise his saber in time, clashing with Long Yangjun’s weapon head on!

Although the enemy’s saber was shattered after the clash, and he was blown away, Long Yangjun was still slightly dazed.

She was a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. Although the previous attack was not carried out with the maximum strength of the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage, it was in the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage at least. And yet, the enemy was able to resist the attack without getting killed?

“Let me see what you are exactly!” Li Yao sniffed. The bright green fire of spiritual energy around his body was expanding nonstop, pushing him to dash toward where the enemies were densest. The three or four battle puppets on his way were all blown up together with their spiritual shields by him. He flashed to the front of one of the ‘gardeners’ instantly.

Hu!

Li Yao extended his right hand and opened his fingers. His spiritual energy surged out like torrents and a ferocious beast, completely suppressing the enemy and making it impossible for him to move. Even the crystal suit on the enemy’s body was spluttering and breaking apart!

“Ahhh!”

Completely overwhelmed by Li Yao, the ‘gardener’ suddenly shrieked in a way that did not sound like a human being. The next second, his entire head seemed to be exploding!

Chapter 1734 - Neither Dead nor Alive!

Naturally, his head did not really explode. However, when Li Yao perceived with the spiritual root above the epiphysis at the center of his eyebrow, a colorful and glamorous volcano was really erupting from the man's eyes, forehead, and skull. It immediately condensed into surging tides of a mental attack and poured into Li Yao's brain!

Boom!

Despite the solidity of his soul in the Nascent Soul Stage, Li Yao still felt that ten thousand crystal bombs were detonated inside his brain at the same time. His brain was turned into a swirl, and ten thousand bells were tolling and shaking nonstop at the deepest part of the swirl!

Even the mental devil was ripped apart by the unexpected attack. It was screaming in a loud voice and was unable to be condensed again for a long time!

Such a powerful mental attack!

Li Yao was somehow stunned by the attack. He fell to one knee and breathed heavily. Then, his head expanded like a balloon that was being blown until the helmet of his crystal suit was cracking.

The attack also consumed all the soul power of the 'gardener' on his opposite side. In Li Yao's perception, the forehead that was hidden below the helmet had collapsed to the bottom, and the brain cells inside all withered. His soul, spirit, and even self-awareness were all gone, leaving nothing.

Like a marionette whose strings had been severed, he fell to the ground, unable to move anymore, without even a single cramp.

It was a suicidal attack, like the detonation of the core for Core Formation Stage Cultivators, except that the man had detonated his own brain.

He had activated all the power of his soul through a certain weird secret art and transformed it into the fiercest mental attack!

Although the man was already dead, the twenty or so ‘gardeners’ and numerous battle puppets were all lunging forward and launching attacks at Li Yao fearlessly with no consideration for their own lives.

Those battle puppets were vastly different from the Grand Illusionary Soldiers that had given Li Yao quite a hard time before in the Flying Star Sector. They seemed to be even more advanced than the Grand Illusionary Soldiers!

The Grand Illusionary Soldiers could only filter and choose tactics and movements from the combat data stored in the crystal processors according to the situation in a battle. Therefore, their movements were limited, rigid, and delayed, and they were vulnerable to the interference of the network. They were merely ‘puppets’.

However, the battle puppets here were fighting fluently with the most immaculate teamwork. They were even performing a lot of terribly ugly but absolutely effective movements that were highly irregular. They gave Li Yao a feeling that… they were not puppets but inhabited by real souls.

So, it meant that they were spectral Cultivators and real ‘human beings’.

But why were there so many expert spectral Cultivators in this place? And what was the weird, suicidal mental attack all about?

Li Yao slashed a battle puppet in half from the waist with his hand, only to discover that the ‘gardener’ next to it launched the most excruciating suicidal mental attack again. The man burnt his entire brain just for a single moment of brilliance, which was then struck Li Yao’s brain!

Li Yao grunted. He could almost hear his brain vessels and nerves exploding nonstop.

The two ‘gardeners’ that had detonated themselves were at least in the Core Formation Stage. Their souls seemed to have been specifically polished, too, and were much more powerful than what was expected of the Core Formation Stage. Together with the enhancement magical equipment on the helmet of their crystal suits, their suicidal attack was definitely not something to be underestimated!

Li Yao glanced around and noticed that Long Yangjun had finished more than ten battle puppets in a streak of brightness within a moment, too. But she had also suffered two suicidal mental attacks, and her movements were more or less slowed down.

Thankfully, after four ‘gardeners’ died from suicidal attacks and three were killed by Li Yao and Long Yangjun before they had the chance to, there were only a few ‘gardeners’ left.

While Li Yao and Long Yangjun were slightly surprised by the toughness and fierceness of the ‘gardeners’, the ‘gardeners’ and those behind them must have been even more startled.

Judging from the intensity of the suicidal mental attacks of the ‘gardeners’, it should be the most powerful and ultimate approach. Even if their enemy was at the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage, it was possible that the enemy’s soul would have been shattered or at least confused for a couple of seconds, in which case they would still have been killed under the collective attack of the puppets.

But never could those behind the puppets have foreseen that the ‘intruders’ were super experts at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage with particularly weird and tough souls!

“Interesting!”

Li Yao and Long Yangjun looked at each other and both sneered. Their competitiveness was raised by the uncanny ‘gardeners’ and the battle puppets, and they raised their combat ability to eighty percent simultaneously!

BOOM! BOOM, BOOM, BOOM, BOOM!

Flames of spiritual energy erupted from their bodies and surged into the sky like a tree almost ten meters tall before it exploded in midair.

Even the air could not bear the compression and tearing of their auras anymore. Thunder and lightning spread out in ripples that were almost substantial objects.

The daunting auras alone were enough to freeze plenty of battle puppets to where they are. The rune arrays and chips inside their bodies were cracking and breaking amid dazzling sparks.

After a breath, the flames of spiritual energy that had been released to the maximum were absorbed into their bodies again. Their bodies seemed utterly unchanged compared to before, but when perceived by the spiritual root, their bodies had expanded by more than ten times into two ferocious primeval beasts!

Shua! Shua!

One on the left and the other on the right, Li Yao and Long Yangjun turned into two flashes of destruction. They accelerated to three times, five times, and ten times their original speed. As if they were living in a world where time flowed ten times faster, other people were all stuck by invisible glue and were unable to react at all until their veins, nerves, bones, and metal architecture were blown apart!

A moment later, the whole ground was scattered with debris.

However, battle puppets were still emerging incessantly from the two enormous holes on the lawn, occasionally mixed with one or two perfectly-shaped, lifeless weirdos whose eyes looked like black holes.

Those weirdos had already put on their crystal suits before they flew out of the ground. Despite knowing that they would certainly be killed, they were still lunging at Li Yao and Long Yangjun relentlessly.

“Those guys are at least in the Core Formation Stage!”

Li Yao kicked one of the ‘gardeners’ back into the hole after blowing up the man’s crystal suit together with his ribs, which seemed as thin as paper under his attack.

“Also, their souls have been specially modified, allowing them to increase their mental combat ability to the Nascent Soul Stage when they are launching that suicidal attack!”

Long Yangjun swung her sword unpredictably. The auras of the blade split into nine whips of light instantly, penetrating through at least twenty battle puppets. Then, she shook her wrist and turned the sword around. Waves were immediately raised from the whips, blowing the twenty battle puppets into dazzling fireballs simultaneously!

“It’s impossible. Where did my professor find so many lifeless Core Formation Stage experts? There seems to be an infinite number of them!”

“Simple. Let’s just go down there and check!”

Right then, from the silver ‘dome’ behind them, hundreds of Exos popped up from the entrances of the channels to quite a few different locations. They formed a grave battle formation in midair.

Judging from the paint and emblems on their crystal suits, they belonged to the federal army!

“Well…”

The soldiers of the federal army who had been sent there because of the abrupt explosions were somewhat confused.

According to their intelligence, only two spies of the Imperium of True Human Beings had snuck into Hundred Flowers City. But the ‘battlefield’ at the periphery of the Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital seemed to suggest that two elite legions had just had a huge fight in this place!

If one side was the spies of the Imperium, who was the other side?

How could a private hospital boast such immense forces for defense?

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

Almost all the soldiers detected tremendous powerful spiritual waves with their crystal suits.

Their attention was particularly attracted by the two waves that were surrounded by the battle puppets at the center of the law. It was almost…

“Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators?”

“That’s impossible!”

Exclamations of shock and confusion were echoing in the federal army’s communication channel.

“You can’t cover fire with paper. Soldiers of the federal army have arrived here. I would like to know how Director Lei Yuqin of the Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital will explain her particularly ‘strong’ gardeners!”

Smirking, Li Yao and Long Yangjun sprinted at the same time. Like two raging crystal trains that were running at the highest speed, they blew away the few battle puppets that were on their way and jumped into the two channels leading underground as fast as tornadoes.

Shua!

The moment he entered the hole, Li Yao raised his hands. Dozens of crystal bombs darted into the underworld before he did. The crystal cannons on the shoulders of his crystal suit, the honeycomb-like launcher of flying swords, and other remote attack magical equipment opened fire at the same time, raising a storm of furious fire in the entire channel.

Li Yao descended to the bottom of the channel majestically in the middle of the storm. The battle puppets that were affected by the explosions but not killed yet were all shattered by the auras of his saber!

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Identical explosions were echoing behind him. When he turned around, Long Yangjun had already broken through the other channel and appeared in front of him.

Judging from the structure of the two channels above their heads and the joints with the underground buildings, the channels could not have been opened easily. They must have been emergency exits.

The underground buildings were of a much grander scale than they had anticipated. Li Yao released more than ten scanning grenades and feedback grenades that rolled quickly in midair. But the preliminary result of the reconnaissance implied that the place was as complicated as a maze.

The defender seemed to have run out of available soldiers. After blowing up dozens of battle puppets along the way, they did not meet any new resistance.

Naturally, the two of them did not demean themselves by looking for stairs or an elevator. They simply blew through the floors and jumped down. As a matter of fact, there were probably few floors in the entire universe that could withstand the collective bombardment of two experts at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage.

After blowing through five floors in a row and reaching the minus sixth floor, they were already surrounded by silence.

Long Yangjun suddenly pointed at the glass window on one side of the pathway and said, “What’s that?”

Li Yao peered through the glass window, only to discover that it was a rather spacious hall in which almost a hundred medical cabins that looked like cocoons were placed. The cabins were filled with green nutrition liquids, and soaked in the nutrition liquids were a lot of people whose eyes were closed and who appeared to be neither dead nor alive!

Chapter 1735 - Shells

Those people…

They were mostly naked, but their private parts were covered with thin film that looked like latex. Their bodies were connected with crystal wires and cables from head to toe, too. A lot of the wires extended deep into their bodies along their veins and nerves.

A lot of tentacles that looked like biochemical nerves also dangled down from the medical cabins and extended to their heads.

A rather powerful new crystal processor was placed next to every medical cabin to monitor the status of their bodies. Thousands of data streams were changing on the light beam every second.

All the crystal processors were then connected together through cables that were as thick as boas to a super crystal processor that took up an enormous amount of space at the end of the hall.

The crystal processors were still emanating a creepy light and functioning amid various hums. The green nutrition liquids were bubbling nonstop, too.

Stimulated by the wires, cables, and biochemical nerves, the half-dead-half-alive people were both cramping softly and displaying joy, anger, sadness, and other emotions on their faces. Some of them even opened their eyes abruptly, and their empty eyeballs were rolling crazily, unfocused, projecting a light of lifelessness.

The scent of death filled the room, outlining a mortifying scene!

However, no matter how they cramped and how their facial expressions changed, they were confined to the tiny medical cabins from beginning to end. It did not appear that they would really wake up anytime soon.

Li Yao swallowed and stuck his right hand to the tempered glass. Exerting his strength slightly, he immediately broke the entire tempered glass into pieces.

The noises of the broken pieces hitting the ground randomly was particularly clear and ear-splitting in the hall that was dead silent.

Floating in midair, Li Yao and Long Yangjun flew into the weird hall to the middle of the hundreds of medical cabins and the hundreds of half-dead-half-alive people in them.

Although some of them had their eyes wide open, they simply ignored Li Yao and Long Yangjun's arrival, as if they were still dwelling in a different world, and only the most primitive reflexes of the animals were kept in the real world.

Li Yao and Long Yangjun glanced at the nameplate on every medical cabin sharply. Li Yao even walked to the crystal processor and operated on it quickly.

“This place is the Deep Sustenance Treatment Center of Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital,” Li Yao said. “They are all the vegetative patients who have been sent here for treatment. Most of them were specialists of crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus in the past.”

“That explains a lot. According to the files I found online, Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital has adopted a certain ‘immersive virtual stimulation procedure’, in which a unique virtual space is created with their memories of the past and poured into their brain, thereby soaking them in special dreams, simulating their brains intensely and helping them to wake up. Other than that, their internal organs and limbs are also stimulated by bioelectricity all year long.”

Against the glass window, Long Yangjun observed the vegetative patient inside the medical cabin carefully. “Through the simulation of bioelectricity and the irrigation of spiritual energy, it is possible to maintain the body functions of the patients at a healthy level. Muscular dystrophy, organ failure, bone ossification, and other common symptoms for the vegetative patients can be avoided in such a way. So to speak, this should be a public ward instead of a weird experiment base?”

“But where are the doctors and nurses?” Li Yao glanced around quickly and frowned. “There isn’t a single doctor or nurse in such a huge ward? Besides, where did the battle puppets and the weirdos who boasted tremendous mental combat ability come from?

“Also, don’t you feel that it is quite strange? I checked the files of more than ten patients in a row, only to discover that they were exclusively specialists in crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus. None of them specialize in other fields?”

“That is actually not very strange,” Long Yangjun said, “According to the introduction on the official website of Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital, the ward of the Deep Sustenance Treatment Center is classified according to professions, levels, and types of patients. In such a way, it is easier for the patients to resonate. It is more convenient for large-scale treatment procedures to be carried out, too.”

“Is that so? I still feel that something is wrong.” Li Yao gazed at the vegetative people who were soaked in the green fluorescent liquids. Most of them were admin-type, research-type, and creation-type Cultivators, who usually worked in an office. Naturally, their bodies were different from the ‘gardeners’ whom they had encountered previously, and they were far less perfect and athletic.

Right then, Li Yao and Long Yangjun both heard glass being broken far away.

Although the sound was quite distant and feeble, the two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators were still able to hear it clearly.

The two of them looked at each other and immediately rushed toward the source of the sound.

They found three halls in exactly the same style on their way. Almost a thousand vegetative people were lying quietly in the medical cabins. Simulated by the bioelectricity and the incoming spiritual energy, their bodies were cramping, and they were wearing vivid expressions as if they were having a dream.

“Hiss!”

In a corner, a naked, muscular man suddenly shrieked and lunged at the two of them, only to be blown away immediately, forming a human-shaped dent on the wall. The bones all over the man’s body were broken, and thick bodily fluids flowed out of his nose and ears.

“This is…”

Li Yao fell to one knee and picked up a cluster of greasy, gooey liquids from the dead body. He rubbed the sample with his fingers and said, “It’s nutrition liquid that contain tremendous spiritual energy, identical to what was injected into the medical cabins just now.”

“That’s right. Also, the man’s private parts are covered by membranes as thin as paper, too.” Long Yangjun examined the man’s skin carefully. “Look. There are traces of wires and soft tubes among the pores, just like the vegetative people that we saw a moment ago.”

“So…” Li Yao blinked quickly. “It was actually vegetative people who had been in coma for decades that attacked us just now?”

The guy who was suspected to be a vegetative person must have just broken out of the medical cabin in the emergency. He did not even have time to put on his clothes, much less a crystal suit. Nutrition liquids were still wet and dripping off from his body.

Therefore, through his footprints and the scent of the nutrition liquids in the air, the two of them easily traced his path back to another ward that was on the minus ninth level.

The scene in this place was completely different from the upper floors.

Everything was a mess. The lights were flickering. All the tempered glass had been smashed into smithereens. Most of the medical cabins had exploded from the inside, as if something had broken out of the shell. Green nutrition liquids were running on the ground blatantly. The vegetative people who should have been resting inside quietly, on the other hand, were all gone. The only things left were wires, cables, and biochemical nerves, which were shaking softly like tentacles that were about to die.

“Ho! Hooo!”

Inhuman howls echoed from the depths of the world.

Li Yao and Long Yangjun’s pupils all shrank violently as they saw the most unbelievable nightmare.

The few medical cabins in the corner had not been broken yet. The vegetative people were still soaked inside. However, the ‘vegetative people’ were not exactly the same as what they were expected to be. Their eyes bulged to such an extent that their eye sockets were almost ripped apart. Their muscles were puffing one piece after another like crystal bombs, but their veins were expanding even faster than the muscles and protruded through their skin like chains!

The wires, cables, and all kinds of other messy tubes that deeply pierced into their brains, limbs, and internal organs had all been straightened into a line. Invisible waves were surging out nonstop as they poured immense spiritual energy into the bodies of the vegetative patients!

“Those guys are waking up!” On the analysis light beam of Li Yao’s crystal suit, the spiritual waves from the opposite side were getting stronger and stronger. There were even red alarms of ‘high energy alert’. “Their soul and physical strength is growing more and more powerful!”

“The crystal processor. Blow up the mainframe crystal processor!”

Li Yao and Long Yangjun attacked at the same time. Before the unknown objects were completely woken up, they had already blown up the crystal processors next to the targets and the mainframe crystal processor at the center of the ward.

Without the control of the crystal processors, all the wires, cables, and tubes loosened and dangled down lethargically. The mad dances of the few vegetative people gradually slowed down, too. Their bloodshot eyes slowly closed, and they fell asleep again.

Only one of the ‘vegetative people’, or whatever it was right now, crashed against the glass shell of the medical cabin hard and flowed out together with the nutrition liquids.

But it was not completely woken up. As if it was still short of the last program that should have been installed, it sniffed at the surroundings, covering its neck, like a lost animal.

Very soon, it smelled the scent of Li Yao and Long Yangjun.

But instead of attacking the two of them, it simply ran away in fear, like a hyena that had run into lions and tigers.

Li Yao and Long Yangjun were much more ferocious beasts than it. With nothing but its animalistic instincts, it did not have the courage to challenge two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

Li Yao could not help but frown. He felt that his heart was rubbed by a cold and damp hand. It was quite uncomfortable.

“Unlike the upper floors, all the patients here are battle-type Cultivators.” Long Yangjun checked the nameplates next to more than ten medical cabins quickly. “Also, since they can afford the exorbitant prices for treatment and live here for a long time, they are all high-level Cultivators above the Building Foundation Stage.”

Li Yao’s voice was cold. “They all are?”

“This is only part of them,” Long Yangjun explained. “The few wards nearby are all filled with such patients. Most of them were transferred to this hospital in recent years. Thanks to the treatment plan here, their flesh and blood did not wither, and their bodily functions have been maintained quite well.

“First of all, the Uranian Ring War caused a lot of heavily wounded soldiers on the federation’s side, and many of them became vegetative patients due to brain damage. Then, in recent years, the arrival of Firefly brought the news that the Black Wind Fleet will soon arrive. To better resist the expedition army of the Imperium, a lot of battle-type Cultivators in the federation have chosen to upgrade themselves at risk. Those who were brought here in time after their attempts failed were actually the lucky ones.

“Combining both factors, battle-type Cultivators make up at least twenty percent of the tens of thousands of vegetative patients being treated here.”

“So, it means two to three thousand battle-type Cultivators. Not just any Cultivators but high-level Cultivators with profound Cultivation and powerful bloodlines.”

Looking at the medical cabins around that had been shattered, Li Yao mumbled, “But how did they wake up and even become so weird as to launch attacks at us fearlessly?”

“No. They did not wake up.” Looking around, Long Yangjun said gloomily under the illumination of the creepy lights, “They are probably not human beings, at least not the Cultivators they used to be, but… shells!”

Chapter 1736 - Cerebral Laboratory

Shells!

Li Yao was immediately covered in cold sweat. He recalled what Professor Mo Xuan had said to him in the Spiriters' Realm.

For mankind in the future, the soul will be their everything. As for the so-called body, no matter whether it is a body of flesh and blood that focuses on the absorption of spiritual energy, or the body of a demon that focuses on genetic modification, or a battle puppet that is made of the toughest metals, they will only be 'shells', something that you can replace and abandon randomly!

"Don't you think that vegetative people are the most perfect natural objects for possession?" Long Yangjun stared at the corner of the room. The 'vegetative person' who had jumped out of the medical cabin did not run too far away although they fled from them, hiding in a corner further away. While shuddering in fear, it craned its neck to peep at them, in every way that befitted an animal that acted based on natural instincts.

"For a human being whose head is clear and whose soul is intact, even if he is just a strengthless ordinary person, his soul will still be deeply entangled with his mind, and it is not going to be easy to possess him," Long Yangjun said. "Even the Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage or the Nascent Soul Stage have to go through a lot of trouble if they want to possess a healthy ordinary person. The odds of their failure can be glaring, too. It is even possible that they will be swallowed by their target instead. These are the mysteries and dangers of the soul.

“However, if the target is weak and sick, or if his soul is incomplete due to strong stimulations before, the difficulty of possession will be greatly lowered. It’s just like the trial that Qi Zhongdao attended a few days ago. That was the sole reason the leader of the sect at the peak of the Core Formation Stage tried to possess a retard.

“If the target is a vegetative person, the majority of his soul will already be gone, and his head will essentially be vacant. It is an even better target of possession than retards.

“Through the filtering of the astronomical medical charges, the patients who are qualified to be admitted to this place were all high-level Cultivators before they fell into comas with powerful bloodlines. Some of them had long grown a ‘second brain’, or rather, the golden core, at the end of their coccyx. It is not hard to imagine how tough their bodies must be.

“Also, it’s been quite a few years since the vegetative persons were brought here for treatment. Professor Mo Xuan and Lei Yuqin totally could’ve modified their brains in secret to turn them into ‘containers’ that are more suitable to be possessed. Or rather, to quote Professor Mo Xuan, they are the best battle shells!

“So…”

Long Yangjun eyed the surroundings. “The patients in the ward up above have not been touched because they are admin-type and research-type Cultivators whose bodies are not strong enough to be modified into ‘battle shells’. But the bodies of the battle-type Cultivators who should’ve lived in this ward are all gone. The ‘lifeless’ gardeners that we saw on the outside must’ve been them.”

“Exactly.” Li Yao tapped on a few crystal processors that were not destroyed yet. Then he mumbled, “They were all the most passionate warriors. Many of them were even war heroes in the Uranian Ring War. Otherwise, they wouldn’t have broken their limits time and time again and gotten themselves mentally deranged until they became vegetative after brain collapse.

“Although they fell into comas, they have been receiving special treatment in this place for years. Through the stimulation of bioelectricity and the nutrition liquids of spiritual energy, their bodily functions are kept at a very powerful level. They are indeed the perfect ‘battle shells’!

“However, there is one problem. The so-called ‘possession’ is a one-to-one relationship, which means that a new soul is required to make their body function again. Judging from the capabilities that those people revealed just now, their souls were equally powerful. Even if they were ghosts, they were definitely super spectral Cultivators of a high level. Is it possible that Lei Yuqin and Professor Mo Xuan could hire so many ghost experts without raising the suspicion of the authorities?”

“That I don’t know.” Long Yangjun furrowed her brow. “Compared to that problem, I feel that we’d better focus on another problem that is more imminent. By my estimation, of the tens of thousands of vegetative people that have been treated in Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital for a long time, at least two to three thousand are battle-type Cultivators. Right now, most of them are gone. We only fought and killed dozens of them at best just now.

“Then, after a subtraction of a few dozen, where did the remaining two thousand or so ‘battle shells’ go?”

Li Yao and Long Yangjun looked at each other, stung by each other’s eyes that were as cold as ice.

Long Yangjun smiled bitterly and continued. “It appears that your professor is definitely not a commander without soldiers. It is quite possible that he has an army of ghosts made of two to three thousand high-level, battle-type Cultivators under his control.”

Biting his lips hard, Li Yao did not say anything but went to the debris of the mainframe crystal processor, which had been blown into a hive by them just now. He carefully examined the wires and cables that were sparkling. He even grabbed the broken cables with both hands and extended his telepathic thoughts deeper underground along the crystal cables.

“There’s something down there. There’s still a super crystal processor that is even more powerful and consumes more spiritual energy. I can sense extremely intense spiritual waves!” Li Yao immediately started running. “Follow me. This is a ward that is normally open to the family of the patients. It must’ve been reconstructed to what we are seeing right now only recently. The real secrets of Lei Yuqin and Professor Mo Xuan must be hidden in the deeper parts!”

The two of them wasted no time penetrating downward.

They passed quite a few large wards on their way, but all the medical cabins inside were empty, with no sign of being broken by violence.

It seemed that the ‘battle shells’ were still in order and under high control when they were ‘woken up’. Then, they were transferred to somewhere unknown.

Li Yao and Long Yangjun did not run into much resistance on their way. Even several secret tunnels and hidden doors were discovered by them without much trouble. The door of a secret elevator was even wide open, as if it had just been used a moment ago. Messy paper, broken jade chips, and damaged crystal processors were on the floor everywhere. It was utter chaos.

Such a chaotic and dirty environment was both a relief and a worry for the two of them. They felt relieved that they were on the right path and would probably enter the real nest soon, but they were also worried that Professor Mo Xuan had probably already left the place, with two to three thousand dreadful ghost warriors.

It was the reason the place was so weakly defended.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

The two of them reached the most central area of Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital through the vertical elevator.

Naturally, a lot of defense rune arrays had been established in the shaft, but none of them were worth mentioning under the collective bombardment of two Cultivators at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage.

At the bottom of the shaft was a gate of super alloys that had been built from more than a hundred thick rebars. Complicated defense rune arrays had been carved on it, too, with electric arcs dancing among them in spluttering noises and fatal blue colors. However, it only took Li Yao five more minutes to breach.

Five minutes later, the torn and twisted rebars collapsed to the ground, and all the defense rune arrays turned lackluster. A devastating gap was pulled open by the two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators with brute force.

Behind the gate was a laboratory soaked in blue brightness.

The laboratory was empty, but quite a few artificial bodies that had lost their souls were lying on the ground awry, like metal skeletons whose magic had been removed.

Some of the artificial bodies were even sitting in front of the crystal processors and the control panels, with their heads connected to the large crystal processors through crystal wires. The light beams in front of them were still displaying spots and streaks, but their metal heads were all leaning to one side. It was clear that the souls hiding inside the artificial bodies had either been obliterated or escaped in a certain way.

Li Yao had never seen such a weird laboratory before. Although he was wearing a thick crystal suit and mustard-seed combat suit, he felt that chilly air was invading his flesh, bones, and internal organs like invisible tentacles. The darkness chilled him to the bones.

Surrounded by many artificial bodies, in the main area of the laboratory, there were transparent glass boards hanging in midair. Every glass board was carved with a certain object that resembled a huge walnut.

They had all left in a hurry. The patterns on the glass boards were still wriggling, changing, and glowing.

Li Yao observed for a long time before he finally figured out what the ‘enormous walnuts’ were.

They were… the tomography of human brains.

Inside each transparent glass board was the tomography of part of the active zones in the human brain. When hundreds of transparent glass boards were placed together, it was almost like one human brain had been precisely dissected into hundreds of pieces. Or maybe, the brain had actually been cut into thousands of parts, and only the most representative ones among them were picked out for studies.

“This is a cerebral laboratory.” Taking a deep breath, Li Yao walked over to one of the crystal processors that the enemy did not have time to turn off. Then, he was more or less relieved. “They are not the real slices of human brains but models that the experimenters made after scanning the braining with a special mystic ray layer by layer. The scanning was at least on the molecular level…”

“Monster Li, come on and look at this!” Long Yangjun shouted.

When Li Yao went over, he discovered that inside a few transparent cubes, more than a hundred pairs of mechanical arms driven by spiritual energy were vibrating quickly and spurting soft materials of unknown qualities from the hollow syringes at their sharp ends that were even thinner than hairs. The materials interweaved and piled up into certain objects that were full of ravines and looked like a walnut core.

They were brains, which were three times larger than the brains of normal people.

The ‘brains’ in some of the transparent tubes had just started to be painted, and the brain vessels and nerves took shape in the most precise framework.

But the ‘brains’ in some of the transparent tubes were almost done. Greasy colors were reflected on their faces, giving the feeling that they were ‘alive’.

“This—this is some sort of 3D printing magical equipment.” Li Yao tapped on the crystal processors nearby and retrieved the print logs. “It boasts an extremely high precision and can reach the molecular level easily.”

“Therefore…” Long Yangjun was silent for a moment. She glanced at the brain tomography that were floating in midair again and observed, “Are they replicating brains in this place?”

“No, they are even crazier.” Browsing through the print logs, Li Yao could not help but feel shocked after he read the experiment parameters on them. “They have been studying how to combine the advantageous areas in the brains of the experts to create a powerful ‘virtual brain’ that is even more magnificent than the top human experts!”

Chapter 1737 - Abyss in Space!

The dazzling data on the experiment logs made Li Yao’s heart turn colder and colder as he read. The brief summaries of the previous experiments made him sweat, too. He knew that Long Yangjun might not necessarily understand what it meant, but even he did not know much about the mysterious fields of brains and souls. Therefore, he could only repeat what the summaries of the experiments said.
“The ‘virtual brains’ that are more powerful than human brains are nothing unbelievable. The traditional crystal processors have long surpassed human brains in terms of computational ability, deduction ability, and even simulation and rendering abilities.

“But the crystal processors are in fact made of computation and storage chips. Their computation logic is not similar to the thinking logic in a human brain. In other words, the crystal processors can only ‘compute’ but not ‘think’. They are not real brains at all.

“But this… ‘new crystal processor’, for lack of a better word, which has been reconstructed in the molecular level in an innovative way, walks on a completely different path from the traditional crystal processors. It does not have computation and storage chips, which are replaced by synapses of spiritual energy that are similar to the neurons in the human brain. Then, by inputting feeble spiritual energy, it is possible to simulate the glowing, collision, and integration of the nerve electricity in the human brain. Then, in the end, it is possible that some being that boasts the ability of thinking will be born.”

Long Yangjun’s pupils were entirely occupied by the two enormous new crystal processors. She frowned and said, “There’s no need to be so professional. All you need to do is tell me the uses of such a thing.”

“It has a lot of uses.” Li Yao tapped on the light beam crazily until it was brimming with ripples like the pool on a rainy day. “They have wiped most of the files, but judging from the remaining data and the summaries, once the new crystal processors are successfully created, they will serve as the best control core of the next-generation artificial bodies. Or rather, they will be the best protective cabins for the soul and extend the longevity of ghosts multiple times over.

“You know that ghosts are usually quite vulnerable. Most people’s souls suffer from the interference of radiation and spiritual waves after they pass away, which turns them into broken souls. Even if they are lucky enough to be found again later, their souls are often no longer complete. After that, even if they use artificial bodies as shelter, because of the limitation of the computational ability of traditional crystal processors, the new bodies will not be nearly as handy as their old fleshly bodies.

“The new crystal processor, on the other hand, has completely replicated and even surpassed the architecture of the human brain. Not only can it repair the broken soul of a ghost, it can also improve the soul power of a ghost to the maximum, helping the ghost or whatever’s left of their soul to travel freely on the Spiritual Nexus and do anything they want in the virtual world!

“Secondly, judging from the data here, they have scanned the brains of tens of thousands of people. The subjects must be the vegetative patients. They were previously elites of their respective trades and high-level Cultivators above the

Building Foundation Stage covering all four categories. Compared to normal people, the brains of high-level Cultivators have all undergone a slight degree of mutation, which makes them the most precious ‘treasuries’!

“By scanning the brains of tens of thousands of high-level Cultivators with special mystic rays, reconstructing the brains in the virtual world, and slicing and studying the different parts of the brains including the unsubstantial ‘spiritual root’ layer by layer, it’s possible to unveil the deepest mysteries of brains and find out how brains generate and build up the soul!

“After they understand how the soul is created, won’t it be only one step away from ‘creating a soul’ on their own?”

“Creating a soul on their own…” Long Yangjun’s eyes shivered quickly. “What exactly does Professor Mo Xuan want?”

“My professor already told me a while back. He is indeed frank and forthright, not keeping anything to himself!” Li Yao smiled bitterly and said, “My professor believes that the Spiriters are the future of mankind. However, the Spiriters are still not an independent species right now in that they still lack one of the most fundamental elements for every life form—reproduction.

“The Spiriters are transformed from living people after their physical bodies are destroyed with certain odds. The Spiriters do not boast any ability to reproduce by themselves. Therefore, they can only be a different form of human beings, or vassals of humans.

“However, if they are capable of creating souls on their own, it will be possible for the Spiriters to reproduce without external help. After that, they will really become a third form of mankind after humans and demons.”

Long Yangjun took a deep breath. “That will be the ‘virtual life’ that can completely live in the world of the Spiritual Nexus?”

“Exactly.” Li Yao nodded. “However, the study has only just begun. The ‘soul’ is itself the most enigmatic stuff. It is already tremendously difficult to figure out the essence of a soul, not to mention the creation of brand-new souls. They are actually trying to create a life, and intelligent life at that!

“It took nature billions of years to complete the work of creating intelligent life, and my professor intends to reduce the time cost to one billionth and finish it in only decades? It’s too much of a rush. He admitted it himself!

“They probably haven’t touched such a dreadful field yet and are incapable of creating real ‘virtual life’. However, if the new architecture that is a complete simulation and optimized version of the human brain and can independently think is combined with the terrifying computation, deduction, and rendering abilities of traditional crystal processors, it will be possible for them to create certain… unimaginable artificial intelligence!”

Long Yangjun furrowed her brow so hard that her eyebrows were almost vertical. “I don’t understand. Please explain.”

“For example,” Li Yao said, “didn’t I just mention that I met a fake Wei Qingqing, a fake Ling Xiaole, and a fake you in the second Spiriters’ Realm? At first, I thought that they were played by somebody, because the real-time computational ability of normal crystal processors couldn’t have been that high. But now that I think of it, they were very likely the artificial intelligence that was derived from the ‘simulated brains’!

“Building up vivid, lifelike images in the Spiriters’ Realm is just one of the functions of the simulated brains. Don’t forget that they have scanned the brains of tens of thousands of high-level Cultivators! What kind of chemical reactions will be caused when the techniques inside so many brains are combined? What exactly is my professor going to do with such artificial intelligence?”

The two of them looked at each other in bewilderment. Both of them felt that the issue was much more severe than they had anticipated in the beginning.

Compared with Professor Mo Xuan’s plan, even the invasion of the Imperium of True Human Beings seemed secondary right now.

Right now, a feeble spiritual wave spread out from the deepest part of the laboratory, but it was as deafening as rumbling thunder for the two of them!

Passing the long, narrow pathway at the center of the laboratory past the models of brains in various different shapes, they found a thick, heavy gate at the end of the laboratory. But the gate was ajar, and spiritual waves were escaping from the dark gap on the gate.

The two of them looked at each other and nodded, raising their alertness. All the rune arrays and magical equipment on them was humming, and spiritual shields of different layers covered them in glamorous colors.

Creak!

They pushed the gate, only to see the impossible scene at the same time.

Before their eyes was a bottomless abyss.

The dark abyss, enshrouded by the black fog that looked like swamp, seemed to be directly leading to the center of a planet. However, they were clearly in the middle of space. The town where Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital was located was no more than twenty kilometers in diameter.

The black fog was boiling, rolling, and raging. Now and then, black bubbles surfaced and floated up toward them before they changed into bizarre and hideous faces that were creepy enough to freeze the hearts of anyone who saw them.

The abyss was surrounded by uneven crags where almost a thousand shrines had been dug densely. Inside every shrine, an abnormal monster that was weird in appearance and covered in tumors was glaring at them brutally, mocking, bellowing, and howling nonstop.

But the eyes of Li Yao and Long Yangjun did not stay on the shrines for too long because their full attention was attracted by the magnificent being at the center of the abyss. It was a monster with more than a hundred tentacles that looked like a mutated octopus. Sucking discs were everywhere on every moisty tentacle, and every sucking disc had rows of tusks that could be turned freely. On the bald, enormous head of the creature, a thousand bloodshot, pale eyes without eyeballs were grown!

A thousand dead eyes were staring at them without blinking at all, as if from the deepest level of hell. Li Yao and Long Yangjun’s every nerve was paralyzed, and they could not even move their little finger.

Even if they could move, there was nowhere they could run to, because the moment they opened the gate and walked in, the laboratory and giant door behind them had vanished. They seemed to be floating in the bottomless cave, surrounded by solid crags, shrines where monsters were lurking, and the most insane embossments in all directions.

They were trapped!

Chiliu! Chiliu! Chiliu! Chiliu!

Dozens of tentacles dashed out from the depths of the black fog with blood-freezing noises as quickly as lightning and snatched Li Yao and Long Yangjun. The sucking discs that were full of sharp teeth revolved rapidly like a metal shredder, ripping both their spiritual shields and their crystal suits into pieces. The most irresistible strangling force was imposed on them, too, as if the rocks of a whole planet had been piled on their body, pressing them into tiny atoms!

Creak! Creak! Creak! Creak!

The monsters in the shrines nearby were squeaking in even louder voices. Some of them even opened their broken wings and swooped at them, apparently hoping to get their share of the meal.

Li Yao felt that his every nerve seemed to have been plucked out of his body and minced hard by the enemy.

His brain seemed to have been caught in a black hole where it was stretched to millions of kilometers long in that moment.

The extreme pain that he had not tasted for a long time made his mind even clearer than before. He knew that the enemy had launched terrifying mental attacks toward him and Long Yangjun and trapped them in a fatal illusionary world!

Chapter 1738 - Mental Recoil!

All these illusions cannot trick me!

Li Yao’s mind was as clear as ice and as tough as a diamond. He stayed where he was calmly despite the scourge of all the evils that were coming at him!

There were two ways to break the illusionary worlds created by mental attacks. The first way was to find the flaws in the illusionary worlds. For example, it was impossible for an abyss of such enormity to exist in a space station, or it was biochemically unnecessary for an octopus monster to grow a thousand eyes on its head although the creature did look more intimidating this way. If one could see through the logical mistakes, the illusions would fall apart by themselves.

However, this was a way of pure defense, which was not suitable to resist the mental attacks of super high intensity.

Although the illusions were false, the mental attacks that consisted of tremendous spiritual energy were real. Even though one could see through the illusions, it was still possible that the mental attacks would stimulate and even wreck their brains.

It was just like somebody could pass out or be scared to death when watching horror movies even if they knew that the movies were not real.

Li Yao preferred the other way to break the illusionary worlds, which was to summon his own mental power and build a stronger, more violent, and more majestic illusion to fight back!

The worlds of illusions were battlefields where mental combat ability was all that mattered. Powerful imagination was the best weapon!

“Argh!” Li Yao roared furiously like a primeval beast. Flames of spiritual energy darted out of the gaps of the abnormal tentacles like thousands of light swords, before they revolved crazily and absorbed all the tentacles that were packed with sucking discs.

For a moment, broken limbs were flying everywhere, and stinky blood and pus were spluttering. The thousand terrifying eyeballs on the octopus monster in the dark abyss were trembling crazily, too, as the creature screamed in such ear-splitting noises that the entire abyss was shaking. The monsters in all the shrines on the wall left their shelters and flew in midair anxiously!

Li Yao regained his freedom. The crystal suit on his body that had already been shattered fell apart into black butterflies before they dispersed into nothingness.

What replaced the old gear was a bright gold, translucent crystal suit that seemed to be made of the purest diamonds and never existed in the real world.

The bright gold, translucent crystal suit flowed out of his every pore and blossomed like flowers, covering his entire body instantly. The implementation was complete!

It was the ultimate battlesuit that Li Yao had craved to produce day and night based on the string-light crystal suits of the Imperium of True Human Beings, the primeval armors on Kunlun, and the essence of the various suits on the Nuwa warship. He had pictured it in his head more than ten thousand times before.

However, there were still too many technological conundrums in terms of material science, structural studies, studies of spiritual energy, and mechanics. It was barely possible to combine the essence of various sorts of suits that had been invented over hundreds of thousands of years.

So, he could do nothing more than picture it. Such a suit could never be produced in reality.

But this was a world of illusions. Imagination plus vision would be one’s combat ability!

Looking at the monsters down below that were flying crazily, Li Yao put on a smile of satisfaction. He opened his arms, making his arms and his chest look like a bow that had been drawn to the maximum. The plate armor on the bright gold crystal suit was opened, revealing the arrays of super tiny crystal cannons, honeycomb-type flying sword launchers, and activation arrays of destructive mystic rays. All kinds of aggressive magical equipment that could never be combined in the real world turned the crystal suit into the craziest arsenal!

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Zi! Zi! Zi!

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Before Li Yao, almost a thousand streaks of colorful brilliance surged out like a flood that had overwhelmed a dam, turning into torrents of destruction. Wherever they landed, all the monsters were immediately dispersed before they were completely burnt to ash by the crystal cannons, the scorching fire, and the high-frequency vibrating mystic rays. The only thing left was mottled smoke that was lingering in midair like a swirl, but the remains were gone in a second, too!

In just one moment, almost all the little monsters were blown into smithereens by Li Yao. The few lucky dogs that survived the slaughter were trembling in fear in the shrines, unable to charge forward at all under the intimidation of his magnificent mental power!

Zhi! Zhi, Zhi, Zhi, Zhi!

In the swamp of darkness, the enormous octopus monster with a thousand dead eyes shrieked at the top of its voice. For regular Cultivators whose souls were relatively weak, the shrieks alone were probably enough to collapse their mind and wreath them in the utmost horror.

However, for Li Yao, who had completely seen through the truth of the illusionary world and possessed a solid soul, he clearly heard the confusion and dread hidden in the shrieks.

He glanced around, only to discover that Long Yangjun had been freed from stupefaction and horror. Although she was still wearing the crystal suit that had fallen apart, clusters of new crystals were growing in front of her arms nonstop, like the protective crystal suit that had once covered her entire body deep inside the bridge of the Nuwa warship.

But this time, the clusters of crystals were extended before her arms, interweaving what appeared to be a crystal railgun!

When Li Yao cleared all the little monsters around, the crystal railgun that had grown out of Long Yangjun’s arms was already fully charged with spiritual energy. Triggering arcs of light that were ten thousand times more brilliant than lightning and releasing the spiritual waves that were more immense than the main guns of a crystal warship, she locked onto the octopus monster in the abyss and opened fire!

Shua!

Li Yao saw the ripples of spiritual that felt like real entities spreading to every corner of the entire abyss. Even he was almost awed by the storm of spiritual energy that was sweeping right above his soul. The next moment, a small sun rushed out from the crystal railgun from Long Yangjun’s body and lunged at the head of the octopus monster in the abyss, burning the thousand dead eyes into a thousand holes!

Looking at Long Yangjun’s crystal railgun, Li Yao was amazed. “So, this is your real strength. I didn’t know that your mental power was so high!”

“Monster Li, likewise!” Long Yangjun glanced at the bright gold battlesuit that Li Yao had imagined and smiled.

The two of them launched attacks at the same time. Streaks of brilliance that entailed explosive forces rained upon the octopus monster overwhelmingly, not only blowing the hideous creature apart but also ripping apart the black smoke that looked like a swamp.

The abyss and the caves were shaking more and more violently. Thick gaps appeared on the crags around, which joined each other and spread quickly. However, behind the gaps were not dark rock stratums but ivory light. When the ivory light filled all the walls, nothing could stop the illusionary world from collapsing anymore. Li Yao and Long Yangjun heard the scream of a woman loud and clear before they returned to the real world after a flash!

The excruciating pain all over their body was gone. They only felt that their heads were extremely tired. Their crystal suits were still intact, exactly the same as when they opened the gate at the end of the laboratory.

The big gate was right behind them. Below their feet was an airborne platform that extended forward. There was indeed a deep space below the platform, but it was nowhere near as impressive as a bottomless abyss. The elevation difference was only about fifty meters. Counting the distance from their heads to the ceiling, the height of the entire room could not have been more than a hundred meters.

Right in front of their eyes was a cylindrical room that looked like a vertical silo to launch starships. A lot of shrines had indeed been dug out in the mottled wall of the silo. But it was not monsters that had lumps all over their bodies and reeked of pus that were stored in the shrines but brains.

More precisely speaking, judging from their size, form, and colorful nerve clusters, they were the ‘new crystal processors’ that were 3D printed after molecular scanning and slicing.

All the new crystal processors were at least half a meter in diameter. They were soaked in dark red, unknown liquids. Most of them were hibernating as if they were dead, but a tiny proportion of them were emanating dazzling brilliance that flowed quickly from the hippocampus like rainbows. Those brains were apparently calculating and thinking quickly.

A few thick crystal cables extended out of every new crystal processor and spread to the bottom of the entire room. After they were connected with each other, they rose into the air like a spring and were channeled into a virtual cabin in midair that looked like a bud.

The cover of the virtual cabin had been shattered. The ports of crystal cables were sparkling with spiritual energy, too. A woman with a pale face was lying on the cover of the virtual cabin, still cramping softly.

“Help me watch her closely,” Li Yao said. “Blow her up if there is any anomaly!”

While speaking, he extended part of his spiritual energy toward the woman with his remote manipulation technique before he picked her up and dragged her to midair.

The woman looked drained. Wrinkles were growing at a visible speed on her face. A moment ago, her hair had still been pure black, but it was turning white quickly at this second, as if vitality was flushing out of her body incessantly.

Black blood was flowing out of her nose, ears, eyes, and mouth at the same time. Her breath was feeble. Her eyes were turning pure white, too. She was apparently only one step away from death.

Li Yao injected some faint spiritual energy into her body, managing to protect her internal organs and her brain. Then, he looked at Long Yangjun in confusion.

“She… should be Lei Yuqin,” Long Yangjun said, not entirely certain. “Although she looks a hundred years older than she actually is, the bone structure is unchanged. I estimate it is because she suffered recoil during the mental warfare, which burnt up her soul power.”

Li Yao immediately understood it.

Just now, it was Lei Yuqin, the director of Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital, who had hidden in this place and launched terrifying mental attacks toward the two of them with the enhancement of so many weird new crystal processors.

The mental attacks in the terrifying illusionary world just now were indeed overwhelming. Even if two regular Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators had arrived, they might have been completely controlled by Lei Yuqin.

But as it turned out, it was Li Yao and Long Yangjun, two weirdos who boasted unusual souls, that had come. Lei Yuqin’s ambush had failed, and she had suffered recoil because of the fierce exchange of fire. That was why she had ended up like this.

“Lei Yuqin, speak now. Where is Professor Mo Xuan? What are you up to exactly?”

Li Yao widened his eyes. His inquiries that contained tremendous mental power slashed into Lei Yuqin’s brain brutally like axes.

Lei Yuqin, who was suffering from the recoil in the mental warfare, was on the brink of a meltdown. She was utterly undefended. This was the best opportunity for an interrogation!

Chapter 1739 - Truth of the Spiriters' Realm!

With his keen senses, Li Yao perceived that Lei Yuqin's brain was like a forest that had been burnt down by fire. Her brainwaves were so feeble that they were almost like the vague ashes in the ravines. Her soul and vitality were both fading away, yet sacred brilliance was beaming out of her hideous face that was full of wrinkles. Her eyes that were gradually losing focus were filled with the deepest pity, too.

Lying in midair unable to move at all, she did not turn back to look at Li Yao at all although she heard Li Yao's reproach. Instead, she raised her head and looked into the distance, mumbling, "I am a doctor. I am saving people."

"Saving people?" Li Yao was slightly dazed. His anger was raised, too. "Do you look like you are saving people? Who are you saving?"

"You, her, the old, the children, the Star Glory Federation, the Imperium of True Human Beings, the Covenant Alliance, and every living being in the entire universe." Lei Yuqin's neck was dangling down now that she had lost all her strength. She said feebly but clearly, "There are limited resources in the universe, but humans' desires are infinite. Some people have to die, some have to struggle in pain, and some can never be satisfied. Only we can save people. Only we can save everyone. Only we…"

"You…" Li Yao frowned hard. He sensed that Lei Yuqin's brainwaves were becoming feebler and feebler. They were dying out like sparks in the ashes of a forest.

It seemed that the mental recoil that she had suffered just now was too grave. She was already on the brink of death.

It was quite understandable. Lu Yuqin’s level publicly was the peak of the Core Formation Stage. Even if she had concealed part of her capabilities and was actually at the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage, despite the enhancement of the weird crystal processors, the targets whom she had chosen were two experts at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage.

It was only natural and her own fault that she was so heavily wounded by their counterattack.

Li Yao, on the other hand, did not dare increase the mental pressure because Lei Yuqin’s soul was so feeble that it was like a candle in a storm that could perish at any moment.

This place was obviously Professor Mo Xuan’s nest, but the professor himself as well as a thousand combat-type vegetative people had gone missing. Time was limited, and Lei Yuqin was the only lead. She could not die.

While Li Yao was stumped, he suddenly heard a cry for help that was as inaudible as the hum of a mosquito. “Help me…”

Li Yao looked at the source of the sound, only to discover that bluish brilliance was beaming out of one of the shrines at the bottom of the cylindrical room. It slowly condensed into an unsubstantial image of human, which gradually became clearer with more detailed. It turned out to be a middle-aged man who gave every impression that he was a scholar.

‘He’ seemed to be struggling in a deep ocean, trying to swim upward. But bound by the deep blue brilliance around him, he was unable to free himself from the water.

Li Yao and Long Yangjun looked at each other. While suppressing and monitoring Lei Yuqin with their spiritual energy, they flew to the emerging blue shadow together.

Li Yao observed carefully. The ‘new crystal processor’ in the shrine behind the blue shadow was glowing in a particularly brilliant way and even slightly vibrating, indicating that it was running at a high speed.

“Who—who are you?” Li Yao failed to distinguish what kind of weird being the newcomer was after a long observation. He simply said, “Don’t be scared. We are here to rescue everyone, but you need to tell us how you ended up like this first. Don’t panic and tell us everything calmly and systematically. Are you… locked in this place?”

The blue shadow that looked like a wandering ghost was already more than thrilled when he saw that Li Yao and Long Yangjun had defeated Lei Yuqin instantly.

But he was obviously a very resolute man with great self-control, which implied that he must have been occupied in a certain job that involved precise studies. He immediately calmed himself down after hearing what Li Yao said, except that his lips were still slightly trembling. “My name is Liu Wenshan. I am a refiner, and my specialty is crystal processor automation. As for why I am here…”

He looked at Li Yao hesitantly.

Li Yao immediately understood what he meant. “We don’t know the first thing about the whole event. So, you may start from the very beginning. Leave out the unimportant details. I’ll give you three minutes!”

Liu Wenshan pondered for a moment and said, “As a specialist in crystal processors, I am a minor celebrity in the federation. My main job is the automation of the fire control system and the defense arrays on starships. My purpose is to devise a powerful artificial intelligence that can replace as many crew members on a starship as possible so that the starship can adjust the intensity of its spiritual shield, calculate routes of attack and evasion, and even perform attacks on the enemy automatically even if the number of crew members on-board has been halved!

“I remember… I can’t tell you the specific time and model, but before long, I was involved in the research, installation, and debugging work of the crystal processor system for a new model of starship. Perhaps because I overworked myself for too long and exploited my brain cells too much, I heard a ‘bam’ in my head, as if something was broken. Then, I fainted and don’t know what happened next.

“When I woke up, I found myself on a white sickbed, surrounded by my family members. The scenery outside the window was the hometown where I grew up, too.

“However, both my family and my hometown turned—turned very strange, like they were just lifelike illusions. I don’t know if you can understand. Although many people and many things may be identical on the surface, you know deep down in your heart that they are different!

“It was not until a long time later that I learned that I was stranded in the Spiriters’ Realm, an extremely weird and treacherous virtual world!”

Li Yao and Long Yangjun looked at each other, knowing that they were very close to the truth.

Liu Wenshan pointed at Lei Yuqin, who was still floating in midair, and said, “Before I found out the truth of the Spiriters’ Realm, this woman showed up in my ward and told me that I was in a terrible state where I was neither dead nor alive because my brain had collapsed and my soul had been ripped apart after overloading and exploiting the brain cells for too long.

“While I was in a coma, I had been delivered to three major hospitals, but none of them had any solutions. All the brain doctors and Meditation Healers announced that I was in a coma, or the commonly known ‘vegetative state’. To wake up, I would need a miracle. Even if I was able to wake up with unbelievable luck, there would still be irreversible brain injuries, which would turn me into a… mentally-disabled person.

“Thankfully, I had purchased quite a lot of commercial insurance that promised high compensation for the sake of my family because I was aware of the danger of my job. Then, my family sent me to this place, Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital, with the money.

“In Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital, although they were unable to directly repair my head, they crafted a brand-new ‘external brain’ with the methods such as ‘molecular scanning by layer’ and ‘3D printing with super tiny materials’. Then, my broken soul was able to be transferred to the ‘external brain’ to be nurtured. Also, vivid Grand Illusionary Lands had been built to stimulate my soul. In such a way, my seriously damaged soul would slowly be repaired.

“Lei Yuqin claimed that they created the illusions of my family and my hometown in order to simulate my soul and help me wake up in the real world. She asked me not to overthink it and just live together with the ‘false people’ while taking them as a comfort.

“I’d heard a thing or two about the famous Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital, too. At first, I really didn’t think too much and thought that it was a special, mysterious treatment.

“However, there were too many loopholes in Lei Yuqin’s explanation. I soon figured out that something was not right. At this moment, she brought me plenty of very professional projects and asked me to overcome them. All the projects were related to artificial intelligence and starship automation.

“I couldn’t have been more astonished and horrified by the projects.

“After skimming through the files briefly, I could already tell that all the projects were extremely professional and sophisticated. The technology involved in some of the projects even surpassed the highest technological level of the federation!

“Let me put it this way. If all the projects were accomplished, it was highly likely that a virus on the Spiritual Nexus that was embedded with new artificial intelligence would be able to bypass the firewall on the starships of the federation, invade the mainframe crystal processors, and take control of the starships!

“Such projects were definitely not something that the director of a brain hospital could provide.

“At first, I thought that I was caught in a trap neatly set up by the spies of the Imperium of True Human Beings. Although I had nowhere to run to, I would rather die before I betray the federation. So, I threw away all the politeness and camouflage and berated Lei Yuqin on her defection.

“However, Lei Yuqin simply sneered and presented a lot of new projects, which were all about invading the starships of the Imperium and seizing the highest permissions of the mainframe crystal processor on them. I can guarantee with my professional reputation that they were of such a high level that none of the best experts of the federation in cyberwar had ever touched them!

“She said that she would never turn against the federation. If I was unwilling to study the crystal processors of my own people, it would be the same to study how to hack the starships of the Imperium. Of course, the projects were almost accomplished at that time, and there wouldn’t be much that I could do if I joined…”

Liu Wenshan paused for a moment, with disbelief on his face still to this moment.

Li Yao and Long Yangjun looked at each other, equally shocked. What was that supposed to mean? Did Professor Mo Xuan really find a way to hack the mainframe crystal processor of the Black Wind Fleet? How did he do it? Was he really a good guy or a bad one?

Liu Wenshan’s eyelids trembled a few times before he went on. “Flabbergasted, I naturally pursued the background of the projects. Lei Yuqin did not keep it a secret. Soon, she let me know the truth about the Spiriters’ Realm and everybody else who was trapped in it.”

“Is there anybody else in the Spiriters’ Realm?” Li Yao asked. “How many?”

Liu Wenshan shook his head and said, “I don’t know the specific number. The Spiriters’ Realm is divided into many zones. I can only get in touch with a few experts in the field of crystal processor automation. There are approximately a hundred of them. Of course, I am referring to the real people, not including the fake ones simulated by artificial intelligence. I asked them before and learned that they were all patients who had been transferred to Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital over the past few decades for treatment after falling into comas due to severe brain damage. They were all the experts and masters in our field in the past, but now, they are all trapped in the Spiriters’ Realm!”

Chapter 1740 - Deviant Spirits

“We found a lot of vegetative patients who were soaked in the medical cabins in the ward area outside,” Li Yao said solemnly. “Are they the experts and masters you mentioned?”

“Yes,” Liu Wenshan said. “I asked all the seniors. Their experience was the same as mine. When they were working day and night on certain important research and broke the limits of their brain time and time again with the virtual cabin, the holographic helmet, and the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus, they passed out due to mental derangement. After they woke up again, they were already in the Spiriters’ Realm.

“Lei Yuqin simulated environments that were similar to our hometowns or workplaces for us in the Spiriters’ Realm. She even simulated our families. Our job was to study the projects that Lei Yuqin offered us. Some of the experts had studied them for decades.”

“If you knew that everything in the Spiriters’ Realm was illusionary, why did you cooperate with Lei Yuqin and help her with the studies?” Li Yao asked in surprise.

With the most painful and devastated expression, Liu Wenshan mumbled, “You don’t understand and can’t even imagine a lot of methods in the Spiriters’ Realm. Lei Yuqin definitely had her own methods to allure and coerce us into cooperating.

“In most of the cases, she did not have to resort to coercion at all because research is our natural instinct. Everything was false when we were trapped in the Spiriters’ Realm. Although most of our demands could be satisfied, such satisfaction was simply too hollow. It was even more excruciating than a life sentence. Other than studying, was there really anything meaningful for us to do?

“Besides, many of the projects that Lei Yuqin threw at us had been partly solved with innovative, extraordinary ideas that we had never heard of before. They were well above the technological limits of the federation and even the Imperium. That was too attractive for us!

“The special environment in the Spiriters’ Realm also gave us an illusionary sense of safety, or rather, it allowed us to lie to ourselves. Although we knew that Lei Yuqin could monitor our every move, we still gathered in the secret chambers that seemed to be empty and discussed the projects.

“In the most extreme cases, if some people were too rejective, Lei Yuqin would throw them into a special Spiriters’ Realm, which was a silver ball-shaped space that was less than two meters in diameter. It was as smooth as a mirror without the tiniest gap. Those being punished could not hear any voices or see any color other than silver!

“Everything in the Spiriters’ Realm was virtual. If Lei Yuqin wanted, she could easily deprive us of our sense of hunger. Think about it. If a guy loses his sense of hunger and can’t hear, see, or touch anything, and all he can do is float in a silver, ball-shaped cage less than two meters in diameter without knowing how long he has to stay there, maybe five days, maybe ten days, maybe half a year, maybe forever, what a cruel punishment it is!

“At this point, if a research project as well as everything needed to accomplish it presents itself in the ball, does the prisoner have any choice except to dedicate themselves to the research?”

Li Yao pictured the punishment in his head. The more he thought about it, the harder he clenched his teeth.

Those people who came up with such a penalty were too dreadful!

Liu Wenshan shuddered hard and said, “I was thrown into the silver prison once and spent… five or six days inside. Then, I couldn’t take it any longer and became willing to compromise on everything. After all, I was merely studying the flaws of the crystal processors of the Imperium and the ways to seize their starships, which couldn’t harm the interests of the federation at all. I told myself that as self-comfort and cooperated with Lei Yuqin obediently.

“I hadn’t been trapped in the Spiriters’ Realm for long. So, I was still able to keep my head clear. However, for the seniors who fell to the Spiriters’ Realm decades ago, many of them were cooperating with Lei Yuqin sincerely and even joined her side from the bottom of their hearts as the real members of the Spiriters’ Realm!”

“Why?” Li Yao asked.

Liu Wenshan smiled miserably. “It is very easy to be lost in the Spiriters’ Realm after forgetting the boundary between ‘reality’ and ‘illusion’. I haven’t been trapped here for long. Although Lei Yuqin simulated my family members, I knew that they were false and that my real family members were still out there waiting for me. I still wanted to get out.

“However, many of the seniors have been trapped here for decades. They’ve spent decades with their illusionary family members that are simulated by artificial intelligence. They’ve been working hard to build the Spiriters’ Realm for decades. The flowers and trees of this place are perhaps calculated, modeled, and rendered by them personally. They’ve long been melded into the Spiriters’ Realm and became part of it. For them, the Spiriters’ Realm and the family members simulated by artificial intelligence are the only reality. The world outside no longer matters!”

Li Yao was silent. He could not help but recall the vivid Wei Qingqing, Long Yangjun, and Ling Xiaole in the second Spiriters’ Realm constructed by Professor Mo Xuan.

It was quite true. If he was caught in a Spiriters’ Realm and faced with artificial intelligence that looked exactly the same as Ding Lingdang, Jin Xinyue, and the rest of his family and friends, unable to free himself, for a year and a half, he might have been able to clearly recognize that they were just illusions.

But what about ten years? Thirty? Fifty? Forever?

Could the artificial intelligence that he had spent decades with, which looked exactly like his family and friends and talked and acted accordingly, really be called ‘illusionary’?

Li Yao took a deep breath before changing the topic. “What have you been studying?”

“The experts in the Spiriters’ Realm are divided into different research groups,” Liu Wenshan replied. “Their main focuses are the Spiritual Nexus, crystal processors, and artificial intelligence.

“Some of the groups study the battle network of the federation and the Imperium, trying to figure out how to hack and even paralyze the network. Some groups try to create more magnificent crystal processors that will further improve our own computational ability and deduction ability. As for the research group I am in, we focus on artificial intelligence. We are developing the most powerful artificial intelligence so far in the entire federation. It is even more advanced than the artificial intelligence in the Imperium!”

Li Yao slightly frowned. “More advanced than the Imperium? How is it possible?”

“I didn’t think it was possible at the beginning, either,” Liu Wenshan said. “After all, the Imperium is a superpower at the center of the cosmos, with tremendous technological reserve and experience. The gap is not something that we can cover so soon.

“However, Lei Yuqin brought abundant files to us. A lot of technological barriers had already been overcome by her. I’ve seen the artificial intelligence on the starships of the Imperium that we captured ten years ago. It was nothing worth mentioning at all compared with what Lei Yuqin offered us.

“The federation and the Imperium are both civilizations of human beings. We also have the gifts from Kunlun. The technological gap between the two parties is not uncoverable after all. Naturally, we made significant progress very quickly based on the latest files that Lei Yuqin provided for us!”

Li Yao and Long Yangjun looked at each other, both greatly astonished.

That did not make any sense!

Even if Professor Mo Xuan was truly up to something, Professor Mo Xuan’s technological limits were also the federation’s technological limits. How on earth could he grasp crystal processor, Spiritual Nexus, and artificial intelligence technology that was even more advanced than the Imperium’s?

“When I joined the ‘virtual research team’,” Liu Wenshan said, “they had already developed quite a few brand-new super artificial intelligences, which were officially known as Half Intelligent Virtual Educational Telepathic Thought Amalgamations.”

Li Yao widened his eyes. “I’ve heard the name before. They’re also called ‘old grandpa’ in the outside world and seem to be designed for educational purposes.”

Liu Wenshan smiled. “Right. Somebody calls it ‘old grandpa’. However, education purposes? Hehe. Every brand-new technique and technology will be applied to the military field first when they are just invented before they are slowly spread to other fields.

“If an ‘old grandpa’ can automatically search and analyze the environment and perform the complicated task of passing on knowledge, why can’t it be applied to battle?

“Therefore, in the Spiriters’ Realm, the code name for such artificial intelligence is not ‘old grandpa’ but Deviant Spirit!”

“Deviant Spirit…” Li Yao chewed on the name and could not help but feel creeped out.

Liu Wenshan went on. “The Deviant Spirits are further classified into ‘Intelligent Spirits’ and ‘Fighting Spirits’. The Intelligent Spirits can hack and control the Spiritual Nexus without alerting anyone. They can also simulate the images and even habits of many people in cyberspace. If an Intelligent Spirit takes over the Spiritual Nexus and sends someone a message, it would be impossible for the receiver of the message to distinguish whether he is speaking to a real person or a fake one. The Fighting Spirits are the purest battle-type artificial intelligences. There will be dire consequences if they control war puppets, starships, and even mainframe crystal processors of star fortresses!”

Li Yao’s eyelids bounced quickly. “How many… Deviant Spirits have you produced?”

Liu Wenshan shook his head and said, “I came to this place too late and was not involved in the production of most of the Deviant Spirits. So, I don’t know their total number. The common Deviant Spirits that can run real-time calculations are too many to be counted. There is also a type of super Deviant Spirit, which seems to have been designed to take over the control of main-force warships. I think there are seventeen of them. Yes. That’s the number. There used to be nineteen of them, but two collapsed in an accident during the test.”

To take over the control of the main-force warships… Li Yao swallowed and asked, “Then, where are your companions and the Deviant Spirits?”

“I don’t know,” Liu Wenshan said dutifully. “Last night, most of the people and the Deviant Spirits being tested were moved in different batches. Only a few people were left behind to continue their work. They are all newcomers who haven’t been trapped in the Spiriters’ Realm for long and still prefer the real world to the Spiriters’ Realm.”

Li Yao and Long Yangjun looked at each other in bewilderment. Both of them felt that their heart was heavier than ever.

The most terrible thing had happened.

This place was indeed Professor Mo Xuan’s nest. It was also a base where his secret weapons were produced.

However, they were a step late.

The ‘battle shells’ modified on the basis of the bodies of a thousand battle-type Cultivators, the souls of countless experts who were adept at the technology of crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus, and the mysterious and unpredictable Deviant Spirits were already on their way!

No wonder they did not encounter much resistance when they marched all the way into the hospital. As it turned out, the criminals and the mastermind had long left the place.

What was the target of Professor Mo Xuan and his army of Deviant Spirits?

Why did the professor have technology that was even more advanced than the federation and the expedition army from the Imperium’s knowledge?

Chapter 1741 - Save Mankind

Liu Wenshan was unable to give them the answers to the questions.

But somebody else could.

Lei Yuqin floated in midair. Her brainwaves, which had fallen silent, were spreading out again, triggering feeble flames like the dying light.

Her white hair stood up like a waterfall that was running reversely. Even the air was rippling under her laughter.

Her satisfied laughter seemed to imply that her destiny had been accomplished and that she was now able to return the embrace of the eternal universe without any regret!

“You—”

Flames of spiritual energy surged out of Li Yao’s and Long Yangjun’s bodies, turning into shackles that confined Lei Yuqin tightly. It was even condensed into thorns that crawled into her brain and prevented her from going on a rampage with the last bit of her vitality.

“Lei Yuqin,” Li Yao scolded, “is this the way that you and Professor Mo Xuan save people? Where did Professor Mo Xuan go?”

“To save people. To save everyone!” Lei Yuqin’s aged skin that was full of wrinkles and spots was emitting gentle brilliance. Her voice regained some stubborn vigor, too.

“What’s wrong about the way I save people? I am a doctor. I’ve treated all my patients with my best. I never did harm to any of them!

“The patients whose brains were not seriously damaged and whose souls were mostly intact have long woken up and gone back home under my careful treatment!

“The rest of them all suffer too severe brain lesions to be woken up with their broken soul. Activating their souls by brute force and releasing them to live in the world outside will only make them age and perish under the corruption of the all-pervasive radiation. Even a tiny sunspot outbreak is enough to rip them apart completely!

“That’s why I invited them to live in the Spiriters’ Realm. That’s the only place suitable for them. It is the new home for all the Spiriters!”

Lei Yuqin replied confidently. Her eyes were clearer and clearer. There was not the slightest regret or embarrassment on her face.

Li Yao burst into fury. “How do you explain the bodies of the battle-type Cultivators? To think that you have turned the bodies of the vegetative patients into dreadful weapons! Are you shameless enough to call yourself a doctor after doing such insane things?”

“For a doctor, a body without a soul is just a piece of common flesh,” Lei Yuqin said casually. “Tens of thousands of years ago, when everybody considered the bodies of their own kind to be some sacred taboo, doctors were already dissecting and studying them. Some doctors even dug up dead bodies that had just been buried in the cemetery to autopsy. Such behavior that was creepy in the eyes of normal people is the foundation of modern medical science, which has saved millions of people!

“Those battle-type Cultivators were all close to the state of brain death after they fell into deep comas due to mental derangement. After their souls that were still rescuable were transferred to the man-made brains, the bodies left would be nothing more than a cluster of regular meat. They were the same as tumors that are cut away after an operation, medical garbage that must be thrown away. What’s wrong about recycling the garbage and using it to defend our cause and the future of mankind?”

Li Yao gnashed his teeth. “You do know how to dress your actions up, but you and Professor Mo Xuan locked them up, forced them to carry out research, and deceived their families, not telling their families where exactly their souls were hidden!”

Lei Yuqin smiled and said, “Yes. That’s the only thing that I have done wrong and unqualifies me as a doctor. However, their family will soon learn the truth and meet them. Very soon…”

Li Yao suddenly had an ominous feeling. Increasing the sharpness of the thorns of spiritual energy, he demanded, “What are you up to exactly? Where did Professor Mo Xuan go with the tremendous battle shells and Deviant Spirits?”

Lei Yuqin continued smiling. Her eyes looked past Li Yao and Long Yangjun, as if she could see the depths of the universe through the solid shell of the space city. In an almost melodramatic tone, she said, “A war is about to break between the Star Glory Federation and the expedition army of the Imperium. It is going to be an unprecedented war that will burn up a whole area of the sea of stars. A lot of heroes will present the most soul-stirring stories for future generations to remember, but countless innocent people will die in silence, too, ending up as cold names on a monument. Or maybe they won’t even have a chance to leave their names, and they will be gone like grains of cosmic dust that have never been noticed.”

Her words were exactly what Professor Mo Xuan said before.

“The rise of a dynasty means the downfall of another one, and it is the common folk who suffer. Even if the Star Glory Federation wins the war after paying gory prices, so what? Is this going to be the last war of the federation?”

Looking at Li Yao, Lei Yuqin shook her head and said, “No. The Star Glory Federation is going to march toward the center of the cosmos one day. The ambitious Jin Xinyue and Ding Lingdang, who talks about liberating all the people in the universe that are oppressed, are both living embodiments of slaughter. They are envoys of destruction. They crave war, war, and more war, like drug addicts!

“War… war never ends. Even if the Star Glory Federation truly marches to the center of the cosmos one day and rises to be on equal terms with the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Alliance of the Holy Covenant, after half of the population in all three thousand Sectors are wasted, everyone might finally be united under one of the banners. However, what awaits them is not eternal peace but just a hiatus in war!

“Therefore, is there any meaning if the Star Glory Federation wins the war of self-defense in the traditional way? Is there any meaning to defeating the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance? Is there any meaning to being the greatest superpower in the universe? The federation will eventually perish into the cosmic dust after ten thousand years, just like the Star Ocean Imperium that was once splendid in its heyday. War, resource shortages, and poverty will come back again, turning into a cycle that harasses mankind and can never be resolved!

“What are we up to exactly, you ask?

“Hehe. We are going to break the cycle once and for all! We are going to end the bloody wars! We are going to end mankind’s infinite desire for resources! We are going to end the suffering, oppression, and inequality that human beings are born with!

“We are going to create a heaven, a new world that is forever peaceful and devoid of contradictions, wars, and suffering, a world where everybody’s every demand can be met!

“I don’t know who you are exactly and why you boast such high strength, but whoever you are, please join us!”

Lei Yuqin extended her hands toward Li Yao and Long Yangjun. At this moment, the brilliance in her eyes had entirely consumed her eyeballs, as if two orange fireballs were directly blossoming out of her eye sockets. Her voice… did not seem to be uttered by herself but was bursting out of her dry chest as if thousands of men and women, seniors and children, were pleading at the same time.

“Join us. Let’s create a new world with infinite beauty!

“Join us. Life is itself just a dream. Illusions are the only reality!

“Join us. In the Spiriters’ Realm, there is no distinction between poor and rich, smart and stupid, ordinary people and Cultivators. Everybody’s free to establish a world that solely belongs to themself and become the king of the universe!

“Join us. As long as all human beings live in the Spiriters’ Realm and all resources are virtualized, we will be able to end the eternal wars and save everyone!”

The cacophony of voices that were highly compressed spread in all directions and shattered into pieces after hitting the cold wall. It could be vaguely distinguished that children were giggling, hotblooded young men were bellowing, women were speaking gently but firmly, and old people were sighing with endless regrets.

The broken pieces of thousands of voices resonated into the same echo:

“Join us… Join us… Join us… Join us…”

Li Yao had seen countless creepy scenes that caused goosebumps all over his body before.

However, at this moment, Lei Yuqin, who was dying and tightly suppressed by two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, made him feel more frightened than he had ever felt before.

“Insane. You are insane!” Li Yao mumbled. “Professor Mo Xuan said himself that evolution cannot be accomplished overnight. Even if you believe that the virtual life form is the future of mankind, you shouldn’t try to compress the evolution that is supposed to take billions of years into one single moment. You won’t succeed!”

“Yes. It’s true that we shouldn’t have done that!” Lei Yuqin smiled miserably. “We might be doing the wrong thing that is very likely to fail. There’s a ninety-nine percent likelihood that we will be crucified on the pillar of dishonor in history as unpardonable villains.

“However… however, as a doctor, how can I watch so many of my compatriots and their offspring struggle and suffer in the swamp of fire in the real world while doing nothing about it?”

Before Lei Yuqin’s sacred face that was mixed with pity and righteousness, Li Yao was completely lost for words.

Long Yangjun, on the other hand, bulged her eyes and shouted, “I’ve got it. Professor Mo Xuan must’ve taken his army of ghosts to the Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus Information Processing Center. Hundred Flowers City is a hub of transportation and information in the federation. The information processing center there must be the most important node of the whole Spiritual Nexus in the federation!

“At first, we speculated that Professor Mo Xuan intended to control the three ‘Gai’-level super crystal processors, or maybe even more ‘Jing’-level ones, but from what we have seen right now, his appetite is apparently much bigger than we anticipated. What he wants to control is the Spiritual Nexus and the network of everybody, including both the Star Glory Federation and the Black Wind Fleet!”

In the middle of Long Yangjun’s roar, Lei Yuqin uttered high-pitched laughter. There was no telling when it started, but the white hair all over her head was burning furiously like white fire, illuminating the entire secret chamber.

“You are too late!” Lei Yuqin put on a weird smile. Her voice became both profound and dull, as if it were rumbling thunder that came from the depths of the universe. It felt like a whole different being instead of her was bellowing, “Now that you have come here, do you still think you can leave?”

Every pore on Li Yao’s body was restricted to the minimum.

The half-open gate behind them, on the other hand, was shut as fast as lightning before the two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators could take action.

The flames of light flooding out of Lei Yuqin’s eye socks enshrouded her entire head. Her skull seemed to have been replaced by a brilliant supernova. Despite the suppression of Li Yao’s and Long Yangjun’s spiritual energy, it was impossible for them to stop the explosive energy that absolutely did not belong to the training system of human beings from surging out of her brain!

The supernova inside Lei Yuqin’s brain broke out!

Chapter 1742 - My Friend, You’ve Come for Possession?

Li Yao felt as if he was swallowed by a sun in that moment.

Lei Yuqin’s outbreak was too intense, abrupt, and unbelievable!

She was obviously on the brink of death, her soul drained. The fire of her vitality was flickering. Li Yao and Long Yangjun, two high-level Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, had confirmed it many times and implanted multiple barriers inside her brain before they were finally reassured enough to have a conversation with her.

However, all the barriers had been blown away into nothingness within a moment, like a fence that was faced with a flood. A stream of force that was both scorching and cold, both dark and bright, both extremely violent and extremely tranquil, burst out of Lei Yuqin’s brain unstoppably and drowned Li Yao and Long Yangjun at the same time!

It is... impossible!

This is... not Lei Yuqin’s own strength. This is not even the strength that any human being can possibly boast!

Li Yao felt that he was placed at the center of a furious star. His fleshly body was vaporized instantly, leaving his soul shuddering in fear. Right in the middle of the star was an enormous black hole, which stretched his soul until it was millions of kilometers long easily, forcing him to swirl and drop to the center of the black hole!

“Argh!”

The whole process was not painful at all. Instead, it was filled with indescribable peacefulness, as if he was about to be melded into a certain warm and eternal being. It was exactly the weird peacefulness that made him roar like a beast and try to free himself from the trap, but he was unable to get away from it despite his attempts.

Once again, time was flowing reversely, and the memory pieces hidden deep inside his soul swirled in turn. The Hundred Flowers Space Zone, the Uranian Ring Sector, Firefly, the Dragon Snake Space Zone, the Ancient Sages Sector, a century-long voyage, shocking adventures a hundred years ago. Then, the memories went deeper and deeper and became more and more blurred, reaching the most secret corners of his soul. Boneyard, the Occult Orbs Fellowship, the Grand Desolate War Institution, Ding Lingdang, the Crimson Nimbus No. 2 High School, until in the end, he returned to the beginning point of his life in the magical equipment graveyard where purple waste was running everywhere under the dim sky.

The force that dashed out of Lei Yuqin’s brain crawled into Li Yao’s brain like a fatal viper, tying, mauling, and swallowing the source of his soul!

Li Yao was no stranger to such feelings.

Ou Yezi, the Blood Stripe Virus, and the star child had all tried to swallow his soul before.

However, the intensity and force of their attacks did not seem worth mentioning compared to what he was going through right now!

Li Yao felt that his soul was falling apart. At least, his soul of this life was about to.

BAM!

He felt that he heard a crisp crack from deep inside his brain. The cold viper drilled through the solid shell that sealed his soul, allowing his memories to be traced back to a long, long time ago before the infant years in the magical equipment graveyard.

Li Yao’s body trembled abruptly. He found himself back in the dark, boundless universe where he was faced with the blue planet, the third planet of the solar system and the only habitable on in it. He heard himself swearing in the most solemn voice, “I will be back. I will definitely accomplish the Vulture Plan. I will definitely destroy—”

The memory, or rather, the part of the soul that had been launched to the Heaven’s Origin Sector across billions of stars from the mysterious world Earth, immediately launched a counterattack at the cold force that was invading his brain.

The uncanny force from Lei Yuqin’s brain could not have predicted that such a dreadful thing was lurking deep inside Li Yao’s soul! It had already run out of strength after corrupting all the way to this place, like a bullet that had surpassed the limit shooting range. Li Yao’s mental power, on the other hand, was like a spring that had long been prepared. The counterattack was inexorable and destructive, tearing the enemy apart instantly without giving it a chance to escape from Li Yao’s brain!

Li Yao heard screams echoing inside his brain. Some of them belonged to old people, some were children’s, and some were the pitiful voices of young girls.

Knowing that it was just the sordid methods of evils, Li Yao was not moved at all. He gritted his teeth to release the last brightness inside his soul and raise the blade of his will to mince all the things that had crawled into his head into pieces!

The short but intense mental warfare had drained almost every last bit of spiritual energy inside Li Yao’s body. He did not even have the strength to keep himself floating in midair anymore. Captured by the artificial gravity field, he crashed at the bottom of the cylindrical room that was almost twenty meters deep.

In a trance, Li Yao noticed that the old crystal suit on Long Yangjun’s body broke apart one piece after another, only to be replaced by clusters of new, more glamorous crystals all over her body. All the crystals were emanating brilliance that was even more dazzling than a supernova outbreak. It could vaguely be seen that in the middle of the transparent crystals, a lot of colorful streaks were chasing after a gray light. The gray light was like an injured boa and was slashed apart after only a moment!

Long Yangjun’s face, which seemed entirely made of crystals now, was devoid of human expressions and filled with indescribably coldness and solemnity. Furious roars burst out of her glass-like chest. “…Chaos!”

The last bit of grayness that barged into Long Yangjun’s body was minced apart into nothingness, just like the weird force that had invaded Li Yao’s!

“Ah!” Lei Yuqin, who looked like a white-haired devil, shrieked. Billions of colorful bugs seemed to be spread out of her body into hazy mists. The ripples flooded to all directions and blew out every light in the cylindrical room!

Lei Yuqin split apart into pieces just like that!

Before the room was completely consumed by darkness, Li Yao saw Long Yangjun fall from midair, too. The crystals all over her body retreated under her skin. She crashed into the ground and shrank into the posture of a baby. There was no telling whether she was just recovering her strength or had already passed out.

Everything returned to silence.

Even Liu Wenshan, the broken soul, seemed to have been affected. There was no vibration from him any longer.

“Huchi… Huchi… Huchi… Huchi…”

In the darkness, Li Yao’s and Long Yangjun’s breathing was both feeble and clear.

Although they carried light sources in their Cosmos Rings, and they could illuminate the room by rubbing a random finger to summon spiritual energy, the two of them were too exhausted to do any of that.

Li Yao focused his attention on mobilizing every mitochondrion inside his every cell, recovering his physical strength and spiritual energy quickly.

Low voices were still ringing inside his head like rats in the dark corners. “You can’t kill me. Hehehehe. I will always lurk inside your soul and feed on your emotional fluctuations, especially your negative emotions! Everybody has a dark side. No one is pure and flawless. So, I will certainly make a comeback… Who—who—who are you? What kind of monsters are you?”

“My friend, you’ve come for possession?” the mental devil said in a lazy tone.

“Impossible! It’s impossible! How did you—”

“Cut the cr*p. You must respect the first-come-first-serve rule when you are out to possess someone! I’ve spent a hundred years in this place, and I’m still waiting. You want to cut in the line? Not a chance!”

“Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!”

Amid the sounds of the mental devil having a great feast, the strange voice soon perished in miserable cries.

Li Yao sank his soul into his brain. He then frowned and watched the mental devil hunting the weird voice everywhere like a tornado. “What’s this?”

“I don’t know. Some sort of energy life form, perhaps.” The mental devil patted its round belly, satisfied. “It tasted rather familiar. I feel that I’ve had such a meal before.”

Li Yao was greatly alarmed. “Energy life form? The Blood Stripe Virus?”

The mental devil shook its head. “The Blood Stripe Virus is not the only energy life form in the universe. The extraterrestrial devils are energy life forms, too. There’s also Chaos, the Pangu Civilization’s mortal enemy in the legends. It was an ancient energy life form, too. Huh. This woman did shout ‘chaos’ just now in a weird tone, right?”

Li Yao bulged his eyes and exited the internal vision state. “Hey. Are you awake?”

Long Yangjun’s voice was so dull that it seemed to come from the bottom of an ocean. “…I don’t know.”

“We are in the middle of an emergency. There’s no time to play philosopher. Can you just talk normally? You shouted ‘chaos’ just now, didn’t you? What does that mean?”

“Chaos…” Long Yangjun said gloomily in the darkness. “I felt the woman’s head explode suddenly and blow me back to my previous life hundreds of thousands of years ago. Yes. I encountered a similar force before, the force that belonged to Chaos. She must’ve been invaded by Chaos!”

Li Yao took a deep breath. “Wait, wait, wait. My head is a bit muddled right now. Chaos, the Blood Stripe Virus, the extraterrestrial devils… There are so many kinds of energy life forms?”

Long Yangjun was silent for a long time before she took a soft breath and said, “Just like the Pangu Civilization was not a species but an alliance of countless carbon-based life forms, the so-called Chaos was probably not a certain energy life form but an amalgamation of a lot of energy life forms.

“Or maybe it was just the same thing all the time, but different civilizations and species gave it different names. In the primeval age, it was named Chaos. In the Star Ocean Imperium, it was called extraterrestrial devils. In the Flying Star Sector a hundred years ago, it was known as the Blood Stripe Virus!

“If that is the case, everything makes sense. Why has Professor Mo Xuan’s personality been greatly changed over a hundred years? Why does he boast technology that is more advanced than the federation's and even the expedition army of the Imperium's, allowing him to improve the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus, the artificial intelligence, and the virtual space of the federation by so much purely by himself? Because he has the technical support of Chaos!"

"Are you suggesting that Professor Mo Xuan was corrupted by Chaos a long time ago, just like I was once corrupted by the Blood Stripe Virus?" Li Yao asked in a hurry.

He was both asking Long Yangjun and the mental devil in his head.

The mental devil blinked its big, innocent eyes and said, "Don't look at me like that. I didn't do it… However, Long Yangjun's theory is reasonable enough. The so-called Blood Stripe Virus is a very ancient energy life form, more or less like ancient fungus on a primitive planet. During their billions of years of journeying in the universe, they might've evolved into many mutants or even brand-new branches of energy life. It is perfectly normal that some of the branches were named Chaos or extraterrestrial devils!

"Chaos, the extraterrestrial devils, and the Blood Stripe Virus are actually the same family. This theory seems valid enough!

"Right, by the same logic, the Flying Star Sector that you and Professor Mo Xuan visited a hundred years ago was a place very suitable for energy life forms. It was as attractive as an oasis in a desert. I don't think that the Blood Stripe Virus was the only energy life form there. Don't forget that the extraterrestrial devils were one of the three hazards in that world.

"Huh. It's rather strange. Speaking of which, after you dealt with the riot of the Immortal Cultivators, it has been a long time since the extraterrestrial devils last caused trouble in the Flying Star Sector!”

Chapter 1743 - Extraterrestrial devils! Extraterrestrial devils!

“Extraterrestrial devils!”

It had been a long time since Li Yao heard such a phrase, but he did experience an enormous arrival of the extraterrestrial devils in person on the tenth space ring of Heavenly Saints City, the heart of the Flying Star Sector.

The arrival of the extraterrestrial devils caused a catastrophe on the tenth space ring. Too many people were possessed by the devils and turned into hideous monsters. Even more were killed in the rampage of the devils. It was one of the goriest tragedies in the Flying Star Sector in the past hundreds of years.

That event had been the beginning of everything, too.

The arrival of the extraterrestrial devils had been planned by Xiao Xuance and the star child behind him.

In order to push the ‘Grand Illusionary Soldiers’ project forward, they directed the catastrophe with the help of the extraterrestrial devils. They allowed the extraterrestrial devils to almost demolish the entire tenth space ring and did not send out a large batch of Grand Illusionary Soldiers to dispel the extraterrestrial devils until the last moment, so that the Grand Illusionary Soldiers could leave everyone’s the impression that they were invincible. After that, all the obstacles that stopped the crazy expansion of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers in the Flying Star Sector were cleared.

Of course, during the battle, Li Yao happened to be in the tenth space ring, too. By accident, he executed Hellsword Zhuang Ziyou, a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, and received his secret arts on mental warfare. He also snuck into one of the space pirates’ starships, reached Spider Den, and encountered Boss Bai, who was better known as the Pirate Potentate. After a series of events, he excavated the Star Prier’s House and trained for a few years inside the residence of Yan Xinjian, the Supreme Pirate, where he advanced to the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage. Eventually, he returned to Heavenly Saints City and disrupted Xiao Xuance and the star child’s great scheme.

Those chain reactions that were almost like a butterfly effect, of course, were not something that Xiao Xuance and the star child could have anticipated when they planned the arrival of the extraterrestrial devils.

“Don’t you feel that it is strange?” the mental devil said. “The high-level extraterrestrial devils—namely the devil kings, devil lords, and even devil gods—are intelligent and certainly not easily manipulated by people like Xiao Xuance. Besides, the arrival of the extraterrestrial devils on the tenth space ring was a play in the first place. In the play, the extraterrestrial devils were destined to be defeated by the Grand Illusionary Soldiers in order to highlight the awesomeness of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers so that all the sects in the Flying Star Sector would be eager to produce them.

“In the whole event, Xiao Xuance and the star child gained all the benefits, whereas the extraterrestrial devils sent countless soldiers to die for nothing. Why?

“Here come the questions. Firstly, how exactly did Xiao Xuance reach out to the extraterrestrial devils, and how did he manipulate them to arrive at the tenth space ring to launch a riot that was destined to fail?

“Secondly, even if Xiao Xuance promised certain benefits to the extraterrestrial devils, what kind of term could’ve convinced the extraterrestrial devils? It must be noted that the extraterrestrial devils barely caused any trouble in the years that followed before his scheme was revealed and he was killed. Even if he promised benefits, the promise was never fulfilled! Were the extraterrestrial devils good-tempered enough to suffer such a heavy loss without seeking revenge?

“Thirdly, even if the leader of the extraterrestrial devils of the Flying Star Sector was truly the most lenient, good-tempered guy, who agreed to help Xiao Xuance without asking for anything in return, would you have believed him if you were Xiao Xuance?

“Unreasonable. That’s too unreasonable. It’s true that Xiao Xuance was an unpardonable villain and an inhuman Immortal Cultivator, but the Immortal Cultivators also claim to be the symbol of the civilization of mankind and the rightful heir of the Star Ocean Imperium, which means that they should be the mortal enemies of extraterrestrial devils! It must be noted that the Star Ocean Imperium was likely destroyed by the extraterrestrial devils!

“Based on what happened during the battle on Kunlun, however evil the Immortal Cultivators are, quite a lot of them do have spines. Some of them were brave enough to attack a member of the Pangu Clan without any hesitation. Would they cower in front of the extraterrestrial devils?

“In conclusion, there was absolutely no reason for the extraterrestrial devils to listen to Xiao Xuance’s command. It should’ve been impossible for Xiao Xuance to trust the extraterrestrial devils, too. Their conspiracy shouldn’t have happened in the first place!”

Li Yao thought quickly. Surging tides were blowing inside his head.

The mental devil was his second personality. What it said just now was the confusion that Li Yao often reflected on himself but soon left behind. The mental devil was merely helping him to express the questions logically.

The arrival of the extraterrestrial devils in the tenth space ring of Heavenly Saints City in the Flying Star Sector was an unresolved case to this day.

At that time, a lot of people had been puzzled by the conspiracy of Xiao Xuance and the extraterrestrial devils, but the answer had never been found even after Xiao Xuance was killed in the failed riot and the star child was completely annihilated.

In the hundred years that followed, the Flying Star Sector had remained quiet and peaceful. Accidents where some devils infiltrated starships and caused the derangement of the crew members happened every now and then, but a large-scale arrival of extraterrestrial devils never took place again.

During that period, the New Federation was busy consolidating the seven Sectors in preparation for the scourge of the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings. The unsubstantial concepts such as ‘extraterrestrial devils’ and the minor issues such as the connection between Xiao Xuance’s gang and the extraterrestrial devils a hundred years ago had long been forgotten by everyone other than the historians.

Li Yao pondered and said in his head, “Yes. Xiao Xuance was a hardcore Immortal Cultivator. There was no reason for him to reach out to the extraterrestrial devils or have absolute trust in the extraterrestrial devils to allow them to savage Heavenly Saints City, his base. Once the fire was set, who could guarantee that the extraterrestrial devils would not rampage all the way to the center of Heavenly Saints City?”

“Unless it was not Xiao Xuance, but somebody who was of a higher level than Xiao Xuance, absolutely trusted by Xiao Xuance, and who could even manipulate Xiao Xuance, that established a deep cooperation with the extraterrestrial devils!” the mental devil said.

“The star child!” Li Yao said solemnly. “Xiao Xuance was just a puppet on the table. The star child, who pretended to be his foster son, was the real mastermind of the scheme!”

“Well,” the mental devil said, “there is something that I have to say. In fact, the Imperium of True Human Beings’ way of exploring the universe, or specifically speaking, retrieving the souls of high-level Immortal Cultivators, crafting them into pure energy entities—star children—and sending them to places far away through the four-dimensional space, can be quite dangerous, although it saves both spiritual energy and time.

“It is because a lot of weird beings utterly unimaginable for mankind exist in both the third dimension and the fourth dimension, and even higher dimensions. For example, the ‘extraterrestrial’ in extraterrestrial devils does not necessarily imply that they live in a space zone far, far away from the three thousand Sectors. It merely means that they are probably predators who lurk in the fourth dimension most of the time and only arrive at the third dimension for hunting now and then.

“When the creatures in three-dimensional space break the void and perform a space jump, they will be entering an unknown realm. Souls of human beings are easily infiltrated in the first place. Half a day ago, it was exactly during a space jump that Professor Mo Xuan intended to invade our soul.

“Such scourge is barely resistible even with the protection of the fleshly body, not to mention that the star child was just a defenseless soul. When he travelled through the four-dimensional space naked, he was like a fragrant roasted chicken that was swaggering under the gazes of wolves and tigers!

“So, I felt that it was quite odd a long time ago that the Imperium of True Human Beings was so lucky that the star children who barely had any ‘four-dimensional defense’ were never locked onto by the extraterrestrial devils or other energy life forms when they travelled in the universe. They were truly bold, or maybe they were only fearless because they were ignorant!”

Li Yao took a deep, deep breath. Even his voice was almost trembling. “Are—are you suggesting that Xiao Tianbao, the star child who arrived in the Flying Star Sector, was probably already corrupted by the extraterrestrial devils during the journey and that he was not just a star child from the Imperium of True Human Beings but also mixed with parts of the extraterrestrial devils?”

“I am not very sure about that,” the mental devil said. “But just think about it. Do you remember that the star child once said that he encountered a catastrophic cosmic storm when he arrived in the Flying Star Sector, which blew apart his soul and made him feebler than ever? That was why he lurked for a hundred years and chose Xiao Xuance as his representative in order to establish the space gate and summon the fleets from the Imperium.

“All I want to say is that the star child who was just devastated by a cosmic storm was certainly the best target of corruption. Even I could’ve corrupted him without any trouble.

“The Flying Star Sector was a paradise for energy life forms in the first place. There was the Blood Stripe Virus on Iron Plateau and the extraterrestrial devils in space. Chances were that other uncanny existences lived in the four-dimensional space, too. I wouldn’t be surprised at all if the star child was corrupted a long time ago.”

A drop of sweat that was as cold as ice leaked out of Li Yao’s forehead. Then he grew suspicious again. “What’s the relationship among different energy live forms? Why do I feel that you want me to destroy the extraterrestrial devils? Aren’t you supposed to help each other since you’re the same kind?”

“People of the federation and people of the Imperium are the same kind, as are the people of the Imperium and the people of the Covenant Alliance. Don’t you have a lot of fun killing each other when you are all human beings?” The mental devil cackled. “It’s only natural that you hate your own kind because your own kind needs similar resources. That’s the best motive for you to fight each other! Sometimes, it’s easier for different kinds to live in peace!

“As for the Blood Stripe Virus and the extraterrestrial devils, or perhaps plus the mysterious Chaos, well, their relationship is probably the same as that between you and a cockroach. Except that you are both carbon-based live forms and you probably share the same origin, you have nothing in common at all.”

“Is that so?” Li Yao frowned, feeling that he needed to know more about energy life forms.

“Of course,” the mental devil said matter-of-factly. “Did you know that there are more than three hundred million carbon-based lives on your home planet in the Heaven’s Origin Sector? Most of them have nothing to do with you, right? Why do you think that all the energy live forms in the universe are next-of-kin to each other?

“For me, the whole significance of extraterrestrial devils is food. I am a wolf, and the extraterrestrial devils are lambs. The more extraterrestrial devils you kill, the stronger I will be, and I will have a greater chance of suppressing you one day! So, just rest assured. Everything I said just now is true because I want to swallow more extraterrestrial devils. Hahaha!”

Chapter 1744 - The Last Competition, Begin!

“Rest assured my ass. You are grimacing in such a cunning way. Who would feel relieved?” Li Yao gritted his teeth hard. “If that was the case, assuming that the star child had long been corrupted by the extraterrestrial devils, the arrival in the tenth space ring would make perfect sense. The star child and the extraterrestrial devils are the same in the first place. They were in a master-slave relationship, not simple cooperation!

“Besides, the star child now had two reasons to establish an enormous space gate to summon the fleets of the Imperium to the Flying Star Sector. Other than allowing the Imperium to conquer the Flying Star Sector, he could also—”

The mental devil took over. “He could also return to the center of the cosmos together with the fleets of the Imperium, to the homeland of the Imperium of True Human Beings, the real prosperous land in the universe.”

Li Yao was silent for a moment before saying, “However, his scheme was disrupted by us in the end. The star child was also…”

“Basically,” the mental devil said, “he was swallowed by Professor Mo Xuan.”

Li Yao bulged his eyes and stared at the mental devil.

The mental devil opened its hands innocently, “Don’t look at me like that. At that time, I was not truly born yet. It was all your own experience. You and a few other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector were caught in the illusionary space created by the star child, and your souls were almost corrupted by him. At the perilous moment, the few star spirits including Professor Mo Xuan swallowed more than half of the ‘star brain’ in order to save you without considering anything else. They must’ve swallowed a lot of the star child’s soul. That created the best opportunity for your last strike.

“If certain things like germs, viruses, or parasites were residing inside the star child’s soul, they must’ve been devoured by Professor Mo Xuan, too, right?”

Li Yao was silent for a long time. Then he softly cursed, “Fu*k!”

He sat up abruptly in the cold darkness and breathed fast. His cold sweat sprayed onto the ground along his trembling lips with sounds as clear as his heartbeat.

Long Yangjun was rather surprised. “What’s wrong? Have you found anything?”

“Listen, I’ve basically figured out what has happened.” Li Yao’s teeth seemed to have turned into two rows of icy pitons, and his every word sounded as freezing as a blizzard. “A hundred years ago, the Flying Star Sector was a paradise for the extraterrestrial devils. They might be the offspring of the Chaos that you mentioned, or maybe they originated from the Blood Stripe Virus, an energy life that is even more ancient. But it is not important!

“What is important is that a hundred years ago, when the star child, a vanguard of the Imperium of True Human Beings, was extremely feeble after going through an unprecedented cosmic storm that almost tore apart his soul after he just arrived in the Flying Star Sector, it is very possible that one of the extraterrestrial devils took advantage of his weakness, corrupting, infecting, and controlling him!

“He might have known it, but he could’ve been fooled and really thought that he was serving the Imperium of True Human Beings. In fact, once the ‘space gate’ was opened, the communication would be bidirectional. While the army of the Imperium could reach the Flying Star Sector through the space gate, they could also bring certain weird beings of the Flying Star Sector back to the center of the cosmos to infect more people after they won the war!

“However, the star child, as well as the extraterrestrial devil who corrupted him, failed. The space gate was not opened. The extraterrestrial devil was heavily wounded, too!

“Yes. The six Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the five star spirits must have caused a severe blow to the star child and the extraterrestrial devil in his soul when we joined our hands, forcing it to fall into a certain ‘hibernation’ state. It was possibly even swallowed by Professor Mo Xuan together with the star brain and entered Professor Mo Xuan’s body!

“In other words, Professor Mo Xuan already contracted an extraterrestrial devil back them, but he did not show any symptoms. It’s like how healthy people also have a lot of viruses inside their bodies but can still suppress them. Professor Mo Xuan was just a ‘carrier’!

“Also, I assume that Professor Mo Xuan’s unique body structure, which was purely made of liquid metal, must’ve caused great trouble for the corruption of the extraterrestrial devil, too. Perhaps, it had never seen such a weird life form before, and there was no place to begin with at all.

Therefore, during the decades after Professor Mo Xuan returned from the Flying Star Sector, it had always been obedient and never revealed its existence!

“The extraterrestrial devil was resting, recovering, and looking for the best opportunity.

“Then, the opportunity finally came. The collapse of the Virtual Spirits Sector!

“The past hundred years can be divided into two phases from the collapse of the Virtual Spirits Sector. In the first phase, Professor Mo Xuan was very normal. Despite his ambitions to create virtual life, his attempts were within the reasonable range and all pure theoretical studies.

“However, after he ‘recovered’ from the accident of the Virtual Spirits Sector, he acquired the Tinder Plan immediately and somehow recruited Lei Yuqin to establish Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital, causing so much trouble!

“Don’t forget that the collapse of the Virtual Spirits Sector led to the brain death of Su Changfa, a Nascent Soul Stage expert. Even though Professor Mo Xuan’s soul was more powerful than Su Changfa’s, he must’ve been heavily wounded, too. Wasn’t it the best opportunity for the extraterrestrial devils?

“If that’s the case, everything makes sense. Why Professor Mo Xuan’s personality changed greatly, why he’s determined to create the third form of mankind, and how he grasped technology that is even more advanced than the federation’s and the expedition army of the Imperium’s!

“The extraterrestrial devils are an energy life in the first place. Energy lives are all sensitive about technology concerning online transmission, virtual space, and brain hypnotization. Besides, the extraterrestrial devils were deeply involved with the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago and even led to the downfall of it. Assuming that some of the extraterrestrial devils retrieved the technology of the Star Ocean Imperium and passed on the knowledge by carving it into the ripples of spiritual energy similar to genes, it is not unlikely that the extraterrestrial devil who infected Professor Mo Xuan in the Flying Star Sector got the knowledge in the end!

“All in all, this is a plan that was implemented a hundred years ago, except that it was disrupted by me, Professor Mo Xuan, and thousands of warriors of the Flying Star Sector together. Today, after a hundred years, it has been reactivated and even takes the Star Glory Federation and the Black Wind Fleet into consideration!”

Long Yangjun was stunned at what he said. She pondered for a long time but did not find too many loopholes. Although some of the details were still questionable, the theory did make sense as a whole!

“What are you going to do?” Long Yangjun asked.

“Stop it, of course!” Li Yao rose to his feet quickly and picked out dozens of doses of high-nutrition liquids from his Cosmos Ring. Like a giant whale absorbing water, he drank up all of them. Without having the time to wipe his lips, he announced, “Years ago, in order to save me and all the people of the Flying Star Sector, Professor Mo Xuan swallowed the ‘star brain’ and fought the star child to the end without considering the consequences! When I came back to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, everybody thought I had completely turned into a Blood Devil. It was Ding Lingdang and Professor Mo Xuan who trusted me first again!

"Now that I know that Professor Mo Xuan is likely possessed by an extraterrestrial devil, of course, I am going to find out the truth and drag out the extraterrestrial devil that is lurking deep inside Professor Mo Xuan's soul!"

"Yes!" The mental devil shook its fists hard inside Li Yao's brain, declaring solemnly, "And then eat it!"

"Then, we must hurry," Long Yangjun said gloomily. "We've spent more than two hours in this place!"

"What? Such a long time?" Li Yao was slightly dazed. He raised his wrist, only to discover that Long Yangjun was speaking the truth.

Mental attacks had the side effect of disrupting the brain's sense of time. He had thought that the extraterrestrial devil lurking inside Lei Yuqin's brain only launched a brief attack, but in fact, it had actually lasted quite a long time.

Professor Mo Xuan's plan should have been immaculate. Even if somebody located his nest and explored all the way to this place, they would certainly have gone mad, if not died instantly, after suffering such intense mental corruption in such a sealed space. This place was a fatal trap that was designed to lure them in from the beginning!

Although Li Yao and Long Yangjun were both unusual Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, their souls were still greatly shaken, and they suffered terrible headaches. It was not until more than two hours of rest that they finally came back to themselves and regained their normal thinking ability.

"If… Professor Mo Xuan really has a plan, it must've been fully activated already!" Taking a deep breath, Li Yao struggled to his feet and shook his swollen head. "We must go to the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus Information

Processing Center at the center of Hundred Flowers City to stop him—it!”

Boom!

Boom! Boom!

Right then, deafening explosions echoed outside of the giant gate above them. After a few explosions, rumbling thunder seemed to be condensing outside, until the entire gate was blown into the wall behind them!

“Don’t move!”

“Lay down your magical equipment and raise your hands!”

“Stop summoning your spiritual energy, or we will open fire!”

“We are the federal army. Identity yourselves. Don’t move. Don’t move. Stay where you are!”

Almost a hundred pillars of light ripped apart the dull darkness like the sharpest blades. The glittering crystal cameras on the crystal suits were particularly dazzling in the darkness. Dozens of crystal suits marched in at the same time, locking onto Li Yao and Long Yangjun tightly.

In the meantime, a lot of soldiers of the federal army had blocked the channel outside. There was not even a gap for a cockroach to pass through.

It seemed that the federal army had taken care of whatever was left of the ‘battle shells’ and controlled the entire Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital.

Li Yao glanced at Long Yangjun and asked in a low voice, “How much have you recovered?”

“Not entirely,” Long Yangjun said in a soft voice. “We were too careless just now and did not expect that the extraterrestrial devils were behind everything. How can you recover the severe wounds of the brain after only two hours of rest?

“Besides, look at how determined they are. Are you hoping to leave this place without killing each and every one of them?”

“Understood.” Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao slowly raised his hands high under the hundred crossed pillars of light. The broken crystal suit on his body was falling apart. Raising his voice, he said softly but firmly, “Where is your highest commander? I would like to speak to him!”

Chapter 1745 - Even Though I’m Alone!

“Don’t move!”

“Raise your hands and surrender! Remove all your magical equipment! Stop summoning your spiritual energy! You have three seconds! We will open fire in three seconds! Three! Two!”

Noisy shouts echoed in the darkness behind the strong light.

Li Yao raised his hands high and opened his fingers, implying that he did not bring any magical equipment with him. His eyes after he took off the crystal suit were even more dazzling than the strong light that was darting from up above. He roared, “I have removed all the magical equipment, but I will not stop the circulation of spiritual energy. I want to meet your commander, right now!”

“This is the last warning. You have been surrounded. Stop the circulation of your spiritual energy immediately, or we will open fire!”

“No. I have to meet your commander. You have controlled the hospital. Have you not noticed anything wrong? This hospital is terrifyingly defended. A lot of vegetative patients, who used to be high-level Cultivators with amazing combat ability before they fell into comas, have gone missing! There’s also the cerebral laboratory that you just passed. Look at this place. Look around. Look at all the weird new crystal processors! Haven’t any of them raised your suspicion? We have fallen into a trap. The federation is in danger, not just from the Imperium of True Human Beings, but also from a more dreadful enemy—the extraterrestrial devils!”

Li Yao roared desperately at the top of his voice, only to be greeted by silence from the lights above him. Soon, the sounds of crystal suits moving about echoed. In the end, a voice that sounded like an old lion came over. “I am Colonel Luo Qisheng, commander of the 414 troop. Who am I speaking to?”

Li Yao was about to reply when he sensed Long Yangjun pat his shoulder with feeble spiritual energy. He immediately realized that somebody might be eavesdropping on the conversation.

He was unaware how deeply Professor Mo Xuan had infiltrated the army, and he certainly could not reveal his most precious trump card before the critical moment. Pondering for a moment, he said, “We are not spies from the Imperium of True Human Beings. If you have abundant battle experience, Colonel Luo, you must’ve seen many anomalies in the entire arrest operation!

“What is more abnormal should be everything in this hospital that you have seen. The guards whose combat ability is unbelievably high, the wards that are completely empty without a single nurse or doctor. Also, almost all the unconscious battle-type Cultivators are gone. A lot of the medical cabins have obviously been broken from inside, which means that the patients woke up by themselves and then broke the containers!

“There’s also the cerebral laboratory outside and this place. Look at the new crystal processors stored in the shrines on the wall, Colonel Luo. Do you think that this is a normal hospital? Do you feel that the whole arrest operation is logical?”

After a brief silence, the same calm voice unhurriedly replied, “We’ve seen a lot of doctors and nurses in the administration building nearby. They were all unconscious, presumably caused by an overdose of anesthetics. We managed to wake up some of them, but they can’t say exactly what happened either. According to them, they passed out for no good reason while they were working.

“So, what do you know about all the anomalies?”

Li Yao sniffed and said, “What about your superior? How did your superior respond after the image that you shot in Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital was sent to them? I don’t think that spies of the Imperium of True Human Beings are capable enough of stealing thousands of vegetative patients without alarming anyone, are they?”

“There is no response from our superior,” Luo Qisheng replied, “because the transportation and communication of District 109 have been cut off from the outside world. The channels leading to the six space towns nearby have been closed. The network has been shut down, too. We haven’t received any explanation, nor do we need one. We only need to carry out our orders!

“The last order we have received is that District 109 must be fully closed in order to capture the spies of the Imperium of True Human Beings and to prevent them from sending the classified intelligence out. Not a fly, a telepathic thought, and a single world will leave this area!

“Our mission is to surround Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital and stop anybody in the hospital from escaping. We must persist for six hours!”

Information blackout…

Li Yao widened his eyes. Gritting his teeth so hard that they were cracking, Li Yao bellowed, “It’s a lie! You have found part of the truth, and they do not want you to disseminate it. That’s why they have fully closed the whole of District 109 and cut off the connection of this place to the outside world!”

“Truth? What kind of truth?” Luo Qisheng said coldly.

Li Yao took a deep, deep breath and quickly sorted out the messy thoughts in his head. Then, he selected the most important information and shouted out without any stop.

“The federation will be faced with the attack of the Black Wind Fleet within twenty-four hours. It may be our trap to bait the enemy into moving forward, but it is also possible that the enemy is pretending that they do not know about it. However, the extraterrestrial devils may be behind everything. They are trying to watch the two tigers fight and take all the advantages later!”

Luo Qisheng’s voice was mixed with intense suspicion. “The extraterrestrial devils are lurking inside Professor Mo Xuan’s body for the purpose of controlling the entire grand-unified Spiritual Nexus, and they can control the entire federation as well as the Black Wind Fleet after the network is under control?”

“Exactly!” Li Yao could see his own saliva spurting out in the pillars of light. “One thing, though. Twenty-four hours was our prediction at the beginning. Right now, there’s less than twelve hours left, or maybe just a handful! It can be seen from the order to fully close District 109 that the enemy has possibly gained high control permissions of the entire Hundred Flowers City. Chances are that they have already occupied the Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus Information Processing Center and are finishing the last step of their scheme!”

He was greeted by silence again. The discussion of the federal army in the darkness was conducted in an independent tactical communication channel. Naturally, Li Yao could hear none of it.

However, he did hear that a lot of crystal suits were softly colliding into each other. The noises were louder and louder, just like the soldiers’ hearts that were more and more uneasy.

“Listen, colonel!” Li Yao took the opportunity to continue his persuasion. “The Black Wind Fleet is certainly a target that we must destroy, but we cannot allow the extraterrestrial devils to control the network of the entire federation! Right now, only we know the truth, and only we can stop everything! Take your troop and summon more troops of the federation army so that they will know the truth. Then, we will go to the Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus Information Processing Center together to stop the extraterrestrial devils!”

“Don’t move!” There was more graveness in Luo Qisheng’s voice now. “That is not my mission. I am not authorized to move my troop away without order. I have to defend District 109. That’s the order I received!”

“The order you received was false. It was very likely to be simulated by the extraterrestrial devils!” Li Yao roared desperately. Triggering part of his spiritual energy that unfolded behind him like two feeble wings, he gritted his teeth to fly upward slowly toward Colonel Luo Qisheng as well as the highly-vigilant soldiers of the federal army!

“Don’t move! No matter what, it is a soldier’s responsibility to obey orders!”

“It is indeed a soldier’s responsibility to obey orders, but one has to act when necessary, too! The order you received was to surround Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital. They did not ask you to break into the hospital for investigation, did they? You have already violated the order, Colonel Luo! So, you must be suspicious of the whole arrangement, too, mustn’t you? Then, why can’t you believe everything that you’ve seen with your own eyes and make a judgment that a real soldier should make?”

“Stay where you are! Stay where you are! Stay where you are! Don’t get any closer! Once you enter the ten-meter alert area, we will open fire without any mercy!”

“I will not stop moving, Colonel Luo, because the future of the entire federation and billions of people is at stake!

“Right now, you have two options. You can either trust me and everything you have seen and do what a real soldier of the federation should do in order to save the entire federation!

“Or, you can carry out the fake order issued by the extraterrestrial devils and idle by in front of the greatest crisis of the federation. You will sit here with your brothers like idiots for six hours. Then, you will spend the next sixty years suffering in regret. You will repent on the dead body of the federation for being so stupid and cowardly years ago for the rest of your life!

“I’m coming, Colonel Luo. If you want to open fire, you damn as well might! I do not want to hurt any soldiers of the federal army, but I will not stop moving forward, either. In any case, even though I’m all by myself, I will still go to the

Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus Information Processing Center and blow the sh*t out of the extraterrestrial devils!”

Li Yao’s voice was as loud as a tolling bell. His every word echoed like rumbling thunder, exploding in the middle of the soldiers of the federation army above. Even the searchlights in their hands seemed to be shaking and eclipsed.

The wings of spiritual energy behind Li Yao, on the other hand, grew more and more bright, scorching, and violent!

Fifteen meters… Fourteen meters… Thirteen meters…

There was nothing but silence. All the magical equipment whose safety had been turned off seemed to be frozen, unable to release any spiritual energy.

Twelve meters… Eleven meters…

Li Yao was about to enter their last alert range.

Ten meters!

Li Yao made up his mind and dashed upward.

Nobody opened fire. Some of them raised the barrels to the sky, and some of them stopped the chainswords in their hands. A lot of the soldiers took off the facial covers of their crystal suits under Luo Qisheng’s hint, revealing faces that were wearing complicated expressions.

They eyed Li Yao with curiosity and admiration but with even more indescribable surprise and astonishment.

They found it hard to imagine what kind of person was bold enough to make such a move and say such things when he was locked onto by almost a hundred crystal cannons!

Luo Qisheng had a weather-beaten face that seemed to have been dyed with smoke and fire. One could tell after a first look that he must have been promoted from a soldier at the bottom level who served on harsh planets in all the seven Sectors. But even the seasoned officer was somewhat stunned after he saw Li Yao, not having the vaguest clue how to deal with the tricky situation.

“Thank you,” Li Yao said sincerely. “Thank you for trusting me, Colonel Luo.”

“I can trust you…” After pondering for a long time, Luo Qisheng finally made up his mind. He stared at Li Yao and said solemnly, “However, I need to know exactly whom we are going to fight side by side with, don’t I?”

Chapter 1746 - We Don’t Have Much Time Left!

Li Yao was about to open his mouth when Luo Qisheng’s eyes suddenly turned sharp. The colonel solemnly said, “Don’t claim that you are the delegates from Firefly or the warriors of Team Red Lotus. It doesn’t make sense at all! To deal with the zombie-like monsters outside, I lost almost a hundred of my men! Yet, you broke into this place through all the monsters with only the two of you?

“Your capabilities must be far above the Nascent Soul Stage, right? Two powerful Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators could’ve annihilated us, or at least run away after paving a bloody path. But you didn’t do that. That’s why I’m willing to believe you!

“However, such capabilities do not match our understanding of Team Red Lotus. Were you hiding your capabilities before, or do you have deeper secrets that were never revealed?”

Li Yao felt that his heart was burning. He was about to unveil his real identity when Long Yangjun floated behind him and pressed his shoulder softly. “That’s right. It’s true that we are not as simple as members of Team Red Lotus from Firefly. There are definitely no experts in the middle or high level of the Nascent Soul Stage on Firefly, or they would’ve been released when the starship encountered the claw fleet ten years ago. Colonel Luo, that’s why you think that it doesn’t make sense, isn’t it?”

Luo Qisheng sniffed and said, “Yes. If you insisted that you were from Firefly, I would never believe what you said just now! It was the most perilous moment for Firefly when it encountered the claw fleet of the Black Wind Fleet ten years ago. If there were really top-tier experts at the high level and even the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage, they did not have any reason to keep hibernating at that time!”

Li Yao secretly complimented him. Although the guy Luo Qisheng looked like a common colonel, his mind was indeed quick enough for him to find such a huge loophole.

Gritting her teeth, Long Yangjun quickly said, “With everything coming to this point, there is no need to lie to you now. We are indeed not from the rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic, but we are not the spies from the Imperium of True Human Beings, either. We—we are actually from the Ancient Sages Sector!”

“Ancient…” Luo Qisheng and all the soldiers nearby were at a loss. “What is that?”

“It’s a long story. I’ll try to leave out the unimportant details. Although it may sound unbelievable and even ridiculous, I can swear that everything I’m about to say is true!” Long Yangjun coughed. With a face of frankness, she quickly said, “It all started with the battle when Firefly encountered a claw fleet of the Imperium only to be caught by Ding Lingdang of the federation. In the battle, the claw fleet of the Imperium was crushed. Most of the soldiers were either killed or captured. But one of the most critical members managed to escape…”

Long Yangjun went on and roughly explained everything in a couple of minutes, including how Heiye Lan escaped to the Ancient Sages Sector, the basic information about the Ancient Sages Sector, and how the experts of the Ancient

Sages Sector were unwilling to be someone else’s cannon fodder and decided to go out in search for a better buyer.

Finally, she concluded, “The natives of the Ancient Sages Sector have been training in ignorance for years. We fight and compete for resources and territory like animals, no different from the ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago. To be honest, we only meant to observe your military preparations and national power before we came to the federation in order to check which between you and the Imperium of True Human Beings was the more reliable one. We were only hoping to sell ourselves at a good price!

“However, after reaching the Star Glory Federation, the new training ideologies of this place, the friendly and complementary relationship between the Cultivators and ordinary people, and the courage to march to the center of the cosmos as a flickering light at the corner of the universe… Everything in the modern Cultivation civilization has deeply attracted us. We couldn’t admire you more!

“It is only natural that the underdeveloped civilizations look up to the developed civilizations. We made up my mind after we saw the treatment of the Forest Ocean Sector, the Nether World Sector, and the Water Crystal Sector after they joined the federation. We couldn’t help but think of our home, the Ancient Sages Sector. If the Ancient Sages Sector can join such a federation, won’t it be a great deal for both parties?

“Sneaking onto Firefly as Team Red Lotus was only something we were forced to do. After all, we had the future of the entire Ancient Sages Sector on our shoulders. We were not familiar with the federation, either. Naturally, we did not dare make any rash decisions.

“However, after we observed many fields of the federation, including military, politics, culture, techniques, law, etc., on our way to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, we have agreed unanimously that the federation will be the best home for us! If we have the chance to meet your supreme leader, we will tell him the truth and try to make the Ancient Sages Sector a member of the federation as quickly as possible!

“But as it happened, when we were visiting Professor Mo Xuan’s Tinder Plan in this place by chance, he noticed something and even made up his mind to kill us, perhaps because the brainwaves and mental power of the people of the Ancient Sages Sector are different from the outside world. After a series of lucky incidents, we were finally able to see through his great scheme!

“We have had enough treacheries and bloody fights in the Ancient Sages Sector. However magnificent the Imperium of True Human Beings is, it is nothing more than a strengthened, upgraded Ancient Sages Sector, which is not attractive to us. The ideologies of the extraterrestrial devils that highlight absolute peace in the virtual world sound quite tempting at the beginning, but they are full of loopholes if you think about it more carefully! The Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector would rather die before we abandon our bodies and swim in the world of the Spiritual Nexus as unsubstantial souls!

“Therefore, the Star Glory Federation is our only choice right now.

“We all know that new members of a gang must do something to prove their sincerity. We have come to the federation emptyhanded without a gift. Perhaps, our contribution in the operation later will be the greatest sincerity of the Ancient Sages Sector!”

Long Yangjun’s words rendered Luo Qisheng and all the soldiers of the federation dumbfounded. They did not come back to themselves until a long time later.

“Well…”

Never in their wildest dreams had they ever imagined such bizarre and unbelievable stories!

Long Yangjun smiled bitterly. “Colonel Luo, brothers of the federal army, please think about it carefully. If we were really spies of the Imperium trying to deceive you, we wouldn’t make up such a messy, absurd story, would we? Any identity that we fabricated would be more convincing than such stories!

“It’s a pity that this is exactly the truth, and the truth is often disordered!

“Right. If you still don’t believe me—”

Long Yangjun put her hands in a certain gesture and retrieved countless pills, blades, Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, and even some of her personal belongings, such as the stamp of Ghost Character, which all came from the Ancient Sages Sector, from her Cosmos Rings.

“Take a close look at them. None of the items are in the style of the Star Glory Federation. The spies of the Imperium of True Human Beings do not need to carry so many things just to sell a lie, right?”

Pondering for a moment, Luo Qisheng summoned a few technical soldiers, medics, and refiners that had come with the troop and asked them to examine the objects that Long Yangjun had presented. They were unable to tell what the objects were, but it was true that they had never been found in the federation before, and they were not the Imperium's style. The soldiers all looked at each other in bewilderment, lost for words.

Right then, a soft voice was calling from the darkness below them. "Help me… Help me…"

It was Liu Wenshan, the unfortunate guy who had been sent to this place by his family after he was mentally deranged and ended up as a vegetative patient.

Li Yao was overjoyed!

At first, he had thought that Liu Wenshan's broken soul had already been demolished by Lei Yuqin' final outburst. After all, the mental attacks were so intense that even he and Long Yangjun, two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, had almost failed to resist it.

However, from what he had seen, the mental attacks must have been directed at Li Yao and Long Yangjun. Lei Yuqin did not have time to bother about such an insignificant person like Liu Wenshan. The guy was merely affected by the ripples of the storm and luckily survived the doom. However, his color was even more lackluster than before, and his voice was feebler. He had rested in the darkness for a long time before he finally revealed himself again.

Luo Qisheng was greatly surprised. The troop that he commanded had all kinds of units. Several medics who were good at communicating with ghosts and nurturing broken souls immediately dived down to rescue him.

The new crystal processor that Liu Wenshan was hiding in was rather mysterious. The few medics were unable to move Liu Wenshan's soul out of it, but it was possible for them to input some gentle spiritual energy to help him consolidate his soul.

Luo Qisheng bulged his eyes and demanded, “Who’s this guy?”

“He is one of the crystal processor experts locked in the Spiriters’ Realm by Professor Mo Xuan and Lei Yuqin!” Long Yangjun said in a hurry. “His name is Liu Wenshan, and he used to be quite famous in the field of crystal processor automation. He cooperated with the military before, too. Do any of you know him?”

Before Liu Wenshan fell into the coma, he had been working for the military. It was apparently not the first time that he had cooperated with them. Therefore, he had quite a lot of acquaintances within the military.

Although nobody in Luo Qisheng’s troop knew Liu Wenshan, some of them had heard his name before and knew of his accident that caused him to be mentally deranged and sent to Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital as a vegetative patient.

A few soldiers who were good at cyberspace warfare went forward to question him. He answered all the inquiries elaborately and logically. There was not the slightest loophole.

It was not until this moment that Luo Qisheng and the other officers completely believed what Li Yao and Long Yangjun had said. Their faces immediately turned terribly awful.

“According to you, the Black Wind Fleet may arrive at a certain strategic location in the federation anytime, but it is absolutely within the control of Professor Mo Xuan or the extraterrestrial devils. It is also quite possible that Professor Mo Xuan has hijacked the entire Spiritual Nexus of Hundred

Flowers City and controlled all the information being sent out through the network?”

Sweats the size of beans were running out of Luo Qisheng’s forehead quickly.

“Yes. We don’t have much time left,” Li Yao replied solemnly.

At this point, there were two hours before the Black Wind Fleet arrived in the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

Jin Xinyue and the other forces who were in the Heaven’s Origin Sector were utterly unaware of the extraterrestrial devils and had already activated their plan.

Chapter 1747 - Gathering!

At the same time, in the enormous space in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the No. 9 space gate, made of 425 star beacons, was following the trace of the sun and slowly adjusting the angle of every solar sail in order to absorb more energy from the sun and reduce the waste as much as possible.

If one observed from the front, it was truly like ten thousand flames that were glowing in the sea of stars and dancing at the sun passionately in the most glamorous colors.

Ripples of spiritual energy invisible to the naked eye penetrated through the four-dimensional space and were received by the monitors in the other six Sectors, the resource planets, the space towns, and the enormous starships, turning into navigation marks that guided the way for them in the universe.

It was the largest space gate in the entire federation, capable of navigating a whole fleet to teleport through the four-dimensional space and arrive in the Heaven’s Origin Sector immediately.

There were three space gates of the same level in the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Together, they supported the numerous, prosperous sailing routes between the capital world and the other six worlds.

Every ‘space gate’ was a money gobbler. Solar energy was not enough to meet one tenth of their daily consumption of energy. Countless high-purity crystals were shipped there on a regular basis and burnt into flames that illuminated the four-dimensional space.

Therefore, when the carrier that was fully loaded with high-purity crystals slowly approached the No. 9 space gate, none of the soldiers stationed in the two-star fortresses that protected the space gate noticed anything wrong.

They knew that the shadow of war already consumed them. However, the Heaven’s Origin Sector, as the capital of the New Federation, had the densest fixed defense arrays, which seemed to make it the hardest bone to bite. In comparison, the Flying Star Sector and the Uranian Ring Sector were more likely to be the primary target for the Black Wind Fleet. Such a preconception had corrupted a lot of people’s wariness.

Besides, this particular carrier arrived every ten days. Many soldiers could still recognize the mottled rust and meteor scratches on the shell of it!

It was not until the carrier accelerated, accelerated, and accelerated again instead of slowing down security check as it usually did, and a super-intense spiritual shield as red as blood that was more profound than the shield of many main-force warships appeared, that somebody finally screamed in alarm!

The last procedure of the Dim Moon Plan had officially begun.

At this point, there was one hour, fifty-nine minutes, and forty-four seconds to go before the Black Wind Fleet arrived in the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

…

The ‘Federal Hyperspace Navigation Center’, which was responsible to control the three space gates from the ground remotely and to plan the sailing routes between the capital and other locations, was located in the middle of the mountains in the east suburb of the capital city in the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

The four deep hollows on the ground were four bowl-shaped wave launchers that were almost a hundred meters in diameter. They transmitted signals and instructions to the sky without stop.

Seven teams of shuttles gathered from various directions and marched toward the ‘Federal Hyperspace Navigation Center’ quietly.

Sitting at the rear of one of the heavy-armored battle shuttles, Jin Xinyue touched the scepter of the coalition army of demons in her hands, silent.

She had always been confident about her victory since the Dim Moon Plan was implemented. She had even been acting mysteriously.

However, at this moment, when the Dim Moon Plan finally reached the last chapter, and everything would soon be revealed, she suddenly felt ill at ease.

Xue’er, her disciple who was sitting next to her, sensed the anomaly. “Master…”

“In any case, there is no turning back now.” Jin Xinyue took a breath and closed her eyes, with obvious fatigue on her face. She seemed to be both explaining to her disciple and comforting herself. “We are playing a risky game. The Black Wind Fleet is playing a risky game, too. Both parties want to settle the war in one campaign and do not wish it to be dragged into a protracted battle. So, we are all dancing on the tip of a blade.

“We have no choice other than such a radical tactic. Otherwise, even if we defeat the Black Wind Fleet in a regular war, it is not going to be so easy to completely destroy them. If the war goes on for a couple of years, the federation will be scarred and burnt to the ground. New expedition armies will certainly arrive from the Imperium and reap us easily!

“So, no matter how dangerous, painful, and harmful the dance on the tip of the blade is, we must see the end of it!

“I hope that our play is enough to make the Black Wind Fleet believe that the Heaven’s Origin Sector is in chaos and attract them to jump into our ambush!”

Xue’er held Jin Xinyue’s hand and softly said, “God bless our people. God bless the federation!”

Jin Xinyue was not someone who believed in deities and heavens.

She would never hesitate to slaughter them if they ever stood in her way to power.

However, at that moment, looking at the spiritual towers and launchers that rose high into the sky from the mountaintops, she mumbled to herself, “God bless our people. God bless… the federation!”

At this moment, there was one hour, fifty-eight minutes, and fifty-nine seconds to go before the Black Wind Fleet arrived in the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

…

In the Heaven’s Origin Sector, at the edge of the galaxy far, far away from the sun, from the dark and boundless coldness, a fleet that was painted in unusually eye-catching white colors struggled out of a stone belt and sailed toward the home planet.

It was the No. 16 Deep Sky fleet of the federation, more commonly known as ‘Big Bai Fleet’, which had just finished a half-year Deep Sky Cruise Drill. Theoretically speaking, it should be exhausted and running out of resources now.

All the starships were returning to the space zone around the capital to rest, refill the supplies, and build up the defense of the capital.

On the bridge of Infinite Fire, the flagship of the Big Bai Fleet, Bai Xingjian, the highest commander of the fleet, crossed his legs and half lay on the chair comfortably with his hands as a pillow. Through the hundreds of light beams that were floating in midair, he viewed the overall report of all the drill subjects in the past half year. He could not have looked more at ease.

Xiao Lishui, his deputy and the Chief of Staff of the Big Bai Fleet, looked at him, frowning. The guy coughed hard every now and then, and his cough lasted more than half a minute every time. He was almost coughing all his internal organs out every time he coughed.

Speaking of which, this guy ‘Xiao Lishui’ had been one of the dominating big shots in the past, too.

He was more than two hundred and sixty years old. Even for a Cultivator, he was also old enough to kick the bucket at any time.

The man had once been a space pirate on Spider Den in the Flying Star Sector. He had already been quite famous on Spider Den two hundred years ago, and he was of the same generation as Bai Xinghe, the Pirate Potentate. He had risen to fame even earlier than Bai Xinghe did. His cruelty and treacherous schemes were as good as those of the Pirate Potentate.

The man had been famous because of his vile habit. He never hijacked regular carriers, and he was only fond of hunting the fellows of his own trade who had just fought a bloody battle with the guardians of armed commercial groups. So, it was usually very easy for him to loot tremendous wealth without paying anything.

Before his quirk was exposed, he had been one of the most powerful magnates on Spider Den, but after the issue was publicized, the space pirates had finally discovered, to their surprise, that more than fifty pirate gangs had been smothered by Xiao Lishui in the past few decades and that the space pirates killed by him were even more numerous than those killed by the six sects of Heavenly Saints City!

Although it was not unusual for the space pirates to attack each other for goods, it was still too despicable when someone attacked nobody else but the space pirates without leaving anybody alive!

Xiao Lishui’s wicked behavior had infuriated everyone. Even so, he still managed to escape for five years under the siege of dozens of pirate gangs before he was captured by accident. Then, he was locked and tortured in a prison below the surface of Spider Den, partly because the space pirates believed that it was actually a mercy to kill him just like that, and partly because rumor had it that he had accumulated astronomical wealth after swallowing so many pirate gangs over decades. Who could bear to execute him before he had shared where the treasure was?

Just like that, Xiao Lishui was locked in the dungeon on Spider Den for thirty years, watched and interrogated by the few most powerful pirate gangs together. He had spent such a long time down there that he had almost been forgotten by everyone, and he was still soaked in the filthy water when Spider Den was liberated by the Cultivators!

Dealing with Xiao Lishui had become a tricky problem.

Nobody could deny that he was a space pirate. In fact, he was one of the most ruthless and cunning space pirates. There was no way that he should be set free and allowed to jeopardize the society.

However, after arduous investigations, all his crimes consisted of hunting other fellow space pirates, and no evidence of him looting regular carriers was found.

Also, at this point, his bones had almost rotted after being soaked in the dungeon for more than thirty years. He had only been a hundred and fifty years old at that time, the prime of a Cultivator’s life. But he was consumed by white hair, wrinkles, and diseases, and he looked like a man of five hundred years old.

The doctor’s judgment was that he could live no more than ten years even if he was not sentenced to death as other unpardonable heads of space pirates were.

Therefore, Xiao Lishui’s final verdict was fifty years of imprisonment!

Nobody expected that the coughing ‘old man’ would struggle to live through his term of imprisonment. He was even picked up by Bai Xingjian from a corner of a certain slum and served as an advisor on Bai Xinghe’s starship first. Then, he was appointed as the Chief of Staff of the Big Bai Fleet. He seemed to be revived again!

“Old Bai…” Xiao Lishui covered his mouth and coughed for a long time. “Although the Big Bai Fleet is free to draft all the drill subjects on our own as an independent troop, all the tactics you asked them to practice in the past half year are different from what you reported to the General Staff. Don’t you think that you will need an excuse?

“I don’t understand why you changed the drill subjects so greatly and asked them to practice battles without network in an environment that was under severe spiritual and magnetic interference. What does it mean? Is the technology of the Imperium of True Human Beings advanced enough to block our connection with the outside world instantly?

“If that’s the case, why didn’t we just report the drill subjects instead of rehearsing them clandestinely?”

Bai Xingjian suddenly stopped shaking his legs. A moment later, he began to shake them again. “Don’t be hasty, Old Xiao. You will find out very soon.”

“Find out what?” Xiao Lishui asked.

“You will find out…” Bai Xingjian narrowed his eyes that were filled with both confusion and excitement as he mumbled, “…whether or not I was tricked by the old fart!”

At this point, there was one hour, fifty-seven minutes, and thirty-six seconds to go before the Black Wind Fleet reach the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

Chapter 1748 - 414 Is on the Move!

In District 109 of Hundred Flowers City, at the core of Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital, Li Yao, Long Yangjun, Luo Qisheng, and the other commanders of the 414 troop of various levels gathered before a 3D structure map of Hundred Flowers City and discussed their plan.

“This is District 01 of Hundred Flowers City, the central area where the ‘Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus Information Processing Center’ was located.”

Luo Qisheng tapped on the computer softly. The hundred silver, ball-shaped space stations that constituted Hundred Flowers City together immediately dispersed, revealing the big, round ball at the center that was the largest in size and carved with infinite runes on the surface.

With a laser launcher, he shot out a mystic ray and analyzed the structure of the big round ball as if he were peeling an onion. “Hundred Flowers City is the research, utilization, and interaction center of the Spiritual Nexus of the federation. Although no strong troops such as the ‘Burning Prairie Fleet’ are stationed here, the defense system—made of the automatic magical equipment, including defense rune arrays, battle puppets, autopiloting flying swords, and many others—is state-of-the-art nationwide. A lot of automatic defensive magical equipment is actually tested in Hundred Flowers City first before the devices are shipped to strategic locations in the capital, the Flying Star Sector, and the Uranian Ring Sector.

“District 01 is the core of everything.

“The whole of District 01 is a forbidden military area. It is divided into two functional modules. One of the two modules is the command and administration center of Hundred Flowers City, or rather, the local government of this place.

“Through the center, it is possible to control the artificial gravity, light and energy supplies, air and assets supplies, and the like in the hundred ball-shaped space stations.

“The other module is the Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus Information Processing Center. It is responsible for processing the information from the seven Sectors before encrypting, compressing, and redistributing the information so that the information can reach their destination more efficiently. Of course, the information of Hundred Flowers City itself also needs to be sent from the center to the ‘Hyperspace Information Launching Bases’ around to reach the reception bases dozens of lightyears away instantly by way of four-dimensional space travel.

“Therefore—”

The old general of the federal army, who had been going through mud and trenches his entire life but never achieved any accomplishments that were worth bragging about, and who had been promoted to the place of colonel purely with blood and sweat and was about to retire in peace, glanced at Li Yao, Long Yangjun, and his subordinates. He tapped the big silver ball that represented District 01 and said, “Whoever controls District 01 controls Hundred Flowers City. If their computational ability is high enough, they can intercept, monitor, and even modify all the information on the Spiritual Nexus freely!

“But right now, every sign indicates that Professor Mo Xuan is very likely to have bypassed the automatic defense system and seized District 01. Therefore, our mission is to break into District 01 and take back control of the Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus Information Processing Center!

“Just now, somebody asked if we could contact the fleets that were cruising outside of the Hundred Flowers Space Zone. Unfortunately, we can’t, because our connection with the fleets is based on the Spiritual Nexus, which is no longer reliable. Even the military network that seems to be independent is also the same. There’s no way that our real voice will be transmitted to their bridge.

“Besides, starships are different from ground troops. The ground troops can fight independently, and every soldier can act on their own. But on the starships, as long as the bridge is under control, even if the sailors down below start a mutiny, it is unlikely for them to seize the starship.

“Most importantly of all, Hundred Flowers City is in a dense distribution right now. District 01 is closely surrounded by almost a hundred districts. It’s equivalent to saying that the millions of civilians in those space stations are being held hostage. Powerful as the guns on the starships may be, it is impossible to expose District 01 without destroying dozens of districts.

“So, there is no need to count on the reinforcement of the starships. We can only attack as infantries!”

The eyes of the old colonel suddenly turned sharper than he had ever looked in his hundred years of service in the army. All his subordinates were slightly dazed under his stare. They breathed heavily, waiting for instructions.

“Starting from this moment, abandon the Spiritual Nexus!” the old colonel declared resolutely. “Just consider us to be under high-intensity interference of all bands. Return to the primitive state of squad battle. Now, we are going to split. Part of us will go to other troops to inform them of the latest situation and ask for their aid. Let’s hope that they can make the right choice, too. The rest of us will follow the two fellow Cultivators from the Ancient Sages Sector and stab into District 01!”

“Somebody is definitely going to believe us!” Li Yao raised his voice and interjected. “Because Professor Mo Xuan couldn’t have anticipated that the two of us would escape the moment before the space jump, or that we could resist the mental assault of the extraterrestrial devils inside Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital. His whole scheme is already disrupted after miscalculating the two things. So, he has been forced to activate his plan in advance or to control the situation through more radical approaches.

“Blocking District 109 by force is the best evidence. I believe that District 109 can’t be the only area that has been blocked by him.

“In order to prevent the outside world from noticing such an enormous blockade, Professor Mo Xuan needs to fabricate endless false information and send it out. A lie can only be covered with greater lies. When the lies grow too huge, even Professor Mo Xuan will have to crash despite the computational ability under his control!

“A lot of people out there must’ve already grown suspicious. Other than the federal army, there are also the free fighters, members of Exo Societies, and battle-type Cultivators in the universities. All we need to do is tell them the truth and gather more warriors!”

“I’m not too worried about that.” Luo Qisheng smiled somewhat bitterly and said, “It’s been a hundred and three years since I joined the federal army and twenty-two years since I served in Hundred Flowers City. I do know a few friends in this place.

“However…

“The 414 troop is just a common troop that does not even have a special title. My old friends are basically the same. Most of the soldiers in the troop are just ordinary fighters. The Building Foundation Stage Cultivators haven’t reached the bottom level as officers yet. If even the Spiritual Nexus is untrustworthy right now, let’s be honest here, we are just a tray of loose sand with mediocre combat ability.

“In comparison, according to what you said just now, it is very possible that the enemy controls all the automatic defensive magical equipment in District 01 and has turned the bodies of a thousand experts into ‘battle shells’. This is going to be a tough battle!

“No. We are not afraid of death, but we fear that we cannot accomplish the mission! In order to break into the Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus Information Processing Center against the bombardment of a thousand experts, we will need a point of attack, an arrow that can focus the ‘sand’ into a ‘rock’!”

The old colonel stared at Li Yao and Long Yangjun with a complicated expression.

There was both hesitation and expectation in his eyes.

Li Yao and Long Yangjun looked at each other and nodded heavily.

“Rest assured, colonel. We know the famous slogan in the federation—the blood of the strong must be shed first!” Li Yao declared. “Since the two of us are the strongest of all people here, we will definitely run at the front and lead the charge!”

Luo Qisheng stared at them for a long time. Then, he laughed and opened his arms.

“Welcome to the federation!” the old colonel said earnestly.

…

Twenty minutes later, on the lawn outside of Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital…

District 109 had been fully closed. Not only was any transportation and communication with the outside world entirely cut off, the 3D light beams nearby that simulated blue sky, white clouds, mountains, and rivers had been shut down. The lackluster silver cabin wall was revealed. Even the air was humid and suffocating, making everyone feel that they were in the middle of a steamer.

A thousand soldiers of the federal army, in their crystal suits, were like a thousand iron statues that had been stabbed into the grass. They listened to Luo Qisheng’s instructions.

In the federation a hundred years ago, the so-called ‘crystal suit legions’ were the elite troops of the elite troops. Only the ace troops exclusively made of Cultivators had the privilege of equipping every soldier with a battlesuit.

After the technological boom in the golden period of development, the crystal suit production and the skill card assembly technology from the Flying Star Sector had made significant progress. In the federation today, even regular troops and miscellaneous troops without special titles had been equipped with crystal suits.

Yes. The 414 troop was a troop in the second tier, only slightly better than a miscellaneous troop.

The soldiers of the 414 troop were either too old or too young. Some of them were veterans who had served in the army of almost a hundred years. They were very experienced, but their physical strength was declining. Some of the soldiers were rookies who had recently enlisted. Although most of the squads had been allocated with a Cultivator, the quality of the Cultivators was quite low. Most of them were in the Refinement Stage, and few were in the Building Foundation Stage. Those in the Core Formation Stage were too rare to be seen.

However, at this moment, the intimidating fighting will released from them was as impressive as the ace troops of the federal army that had their glorious titles, such as Flying Tiger or Eagle Strike.

Every soldier tried to stand as straight as possible, even if they were just ordinary fighters whose spiritual root had not been awakened.

“This is the brief of the situation right now. The 414 troop is now faced with the most arduous task since it was founded!” Luo Qisheng roared. “I’m not going to lie to you. This is not a mission issued by the superiors. It is not even an authorized one but an operation of insubordination and desertion!

“It is a soldier’s responsibility to obey orders. Maybe we shouldn’t do this, but soldiers should also consider protecting their country as their responsibility. They should answer the call of their motherland!

“Do you hear the wind? The federation is now in unprecedented peril. The motherland is summoning us. That is an order of the highest level! We are the soldiers of the New Federation. We are warriors with brains and hearts. We are not cold slaughtering machines!

“So, the 414 troop of the eighteenth group army, listen to my command and carry out the urgent task immediately. We will break into District 01 and take back the Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus Information Processing Center from the enemy’s hands!

“As the highest commander of the 414 troop, I can’t promise you anything right now except that after the battle, even if only one soldier survives, the 414 troop will boast its own unique flag, emblem, and title, like the ace legions exclusively made of Cultivators!”

Chapter 1749 - The First Time in a Hundred Years!

The exit to District 108 next to District 109 was an enormous gate more than twenty meters in diameter that was as indestructible as a dam.

Once the gate was locked from the outside through the mainframe crystal processor of Hundred Flowers City and all the barrier rune arrays were activated, it was practically impossible to open the gate by brute force.

Theoretically speaking, the gate could never be opened, unless it met a super refiner who was both adept at rune arrays and the internal structure magical equipment and also capable of destroying the necessary parts with the brute force of the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage.

Unfortunately, Li Yao happened to be one such super refiner who had the brute force above the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage!

Chi!

Under Li Yao’s coordination, a hundred Exos exerted their strength in two directions simultaneously. The carotid artery on every soldier’s neck were almost exploding before they finally opened a small gap on the airtight gate.

Passing through the long pathway, they did exactly the same on the gate that was the entrance to District 108, only to discover that District 108, or rather, the few areas that they opened later through all kinds of trouble, was so chaotic that it looked like the end of the world.

The entire Hundred Flowers City had entered the highest alarm state.

All the transportation channels among the hundred ball-shaped space stations that made up Hundred Flowers City were closed. Every space station was blocked from the space stations nearby with the enormous gates that weighed tons, turning them into independent individuals.

Such a design that was similar to an airtight cabin on starships was meant to avoid an accident where all the districts were exposed to the vacuum after one of the space stations was destroyed by intense hostile fire.

As a result, all the economic activities in the entire Hundred Flowers City stagnated. The daily lives of the citizens were seriously affected, too. The gravity control in quite a few districts became unstable. Now and then, residents, shuttles, and miscellaneous objects that were not fixed on the ground would float to the center of the ball-shaped towns. Then, a moment later, the man-made gravity was improved to more than twice the standard gravity. Most people were breathing heavily because of their own weight and unable to stand on their feet.

The entire Hundred Flowers City was in chaos!

The 3D light beams that constructed the beautiful environment of blue sky and white clouds had turned into twisted snowflakes and even revealed the cold silver cabin wall and rusted tubes on it in the end. The virtual signs and arrows on the major roads either disappeared or changed crazily, causing a lot of shuttles to almost run into each other. Thankfully, automatic emergency brakes and buffer rune arrays were the basic configuration for most of the shuttles nowadays. No serious traffic accidents took place when they were just moving at a low speed in the downtown area. But still, unprecedented traffic jams filled every district of the city!

There was no need to mention the oxygen supply system and the automatic heating system. Should anything go wrong, cold wind might be blown out, and the heatproof rune arrays might be shut off. As a result, the districts of Hundred Flowers City that were on the shadowy side would turn into a frigid hell where a drop of water would turn into ice immediately, and the districts facing the sun would become steamers with a temperature of more than fifty degrees.

Getting to the bottom of it, the seemingly splendid space metropolis was merely a series of thin, iron shells soaked in the freezing universe.

Compared with the life-and-death issues above, the Spiritual Nexus shutdown in the entire Hundred Flowers City seemed to be a minor problem not worth mentioning at all.

The only thing that suggested the existence of a government was the obscure broadcast whose source was barely distinguishable.

“Dear citizens, please don’t panic. Proceed to the nearest shelter if possible. Attach yourselves to soft objects if you prefer to stay indoors. Do not go outside. Repeat. The war has already broken out. This is not a drill. Please proceed to the nearest shelter in order!”

The voice was quite loud at first, but soon, it became twisted and feeble, before it was replaced by the shrieking attack alarms. Everybody felt that a beast was tearing their eardrums with sharp claws.

Li Yao, Long Yangjun, and Luo Qisheng looked at each other, all feeling grave.

They were not sure if the war had broken out.

However, according to the speculation of Li Yao and Long Yangjun, Jin Xinyue had reached the moment where she had to activate her plan, and there was no need for Professor Mo Xuan to hide his plan now.

So, the war was destined to break out today. It was not important whether it happened a few hours earlier or a few hours later.

What mattered was not how the war broke out but whose banner would be flying at the edge of the cosmos when the complicated war that involved multiple forces was over!

“Professor Mo Xuan’s pace has been disrupted. He knew that we would rush out without bothering anything. That’s why he caused such mayhem in order to prevent us from marching forward!” Li Yao analyzed the situation calmly. “Just like I said before, he could’ve taken over the Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus Information Processing Center without alarming anyone and lurked in the darkness while the Star Glory Federation and the Black Wind Fleet had an ultimate competition before he finally jumped out to claim all the benefits.

“But our unexpected operation forced him to go to the stage in advance and reveal his existence.

“As a result, he will have to mobilize more computational ability to fabricate the information streams being sent from

Hundred Flowers City to the outside world, pretending that this place is peaceful and quiet!

“For the virtual life living in the Spiritual Nexus, computational ability is their everything. Now that he is wasting so much of his computational ability on the pretension, it will certainly affect his real plan to some extent.

“What we are going to do is force him to consume even more computational ability!”

Li Yao, Long Yangjun, and the 414 troop accelerated to the central area of Hundred Flowers City.

However, the closer they got to the downtown area, the more citizens and shuttles were crowded in midair, and the more chaotic the situation was. As a result, they were inevitably slowed down.

In the meantime, they encountered some other troops who were stationed in various districts.

Thankfully, those troops did not attack them the moment the two parties met. After all, even though Professor Mo Xuan could fabricate orders through the Spiritual Nexus, it was impossible for him to make up such a ridiculous story that a thousand spies of the Imperium had snuck into Hundred Flowers City pretending to be an established troop of the federation.

Furthermore, Luo Qisheng had been stationed in Hundred Flowers City for more than twenty years. Even his family had moved there. He had quite a few comrades in the troops.

His face alone was enough to half convince many commanders of Li Yao and Long Yangjun’s story.

The real problem was that the last order those troops had received before the communication was shut off was to maintain order, pacify the citizens, and guide as many to the shelters as possible.

It was definitely the most complicated work.

Most of the soldiers had been dispersed among the panicked citizens. It was impossible to gather them anytime soon!

It was not until then that Li Yao and his companions realized that Professor Mo Xuan had cast the entire Hundred Flowers City in chaos not just to prevent them from moving forward but, more importantly, to hamstring the bottom-level soldiers who could possibly affect his plan!

“It is not going to work out this way!” Li Yao gnashed his teeth hard. “Where’s the nearest double airtight exit? It’s time to split. We will approach District 01 from the outside. Colonel, you will stay here and try to gather more people!”

“Alright!”

Luo Qisheng’s throat moved, as if he had something to say, but he said nothing in the end. He simply stood at attention and saluted Li Yao and Long Yangjun in the most standard way.

For the convenience of shell maintenance and emergency evacuation, there were quite a few exits that directly led to the space on the cabin wall of every district.

Naturally, such exits were usually locked by double and even triple airtight gates, and they were never opened unless there was an emergency.

Chi…

When the last airtight gate in front of Li Yao and Long Yangjun was slowly opened, the darkness of the entire universe flooded in like cold seawater.

However, due to the lack of the blockage of the atmosphere, when the first sunlight crashed into the cabin, the cold seawater was immediately heated into scorching magma.

Li Yao and Long Yangjun looked at each other and jumped into space!

Right now, they were floating in the middle of almost a hundred enormous silver ball-shaped space stations, like two tiny ants that were crawling on shiny silver balls.

Stepping on the shell of the ball-shaped space station below their feet and triggering colorful ripples with the power rune arrays on their crystal suits, the two of them sprinted toward District 01, leaving scattered exhaust flames behind them!

Behind them, more soldiers of the 414 troop crawled out and became their solid support!

In such a way, they reached the area near the enormous ball-shaped space station where District 01 was located without any trouble.

However…

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

The infinite runes that were carved on the shell of District 01 densely unleashed ten thousand thick electric arcs, which sloshed among the few most central space stations, weaving a frightening, forbidden area of death!

One was not supposed to hear any sound in the vacuum.

However, everybody who saw the deadly electric arcs could hear the sound of their brain nerves that were cracking in fear!

Hundreds of lifeless Exos were standing quietly among the deadly electric arcs. They were absolutely motionless, like statues, and simply allowed the electric arcs to dance around them. But after they discovered the intruders, they seemed to be activated at the same time. Destructive heat was emitting from the cold crystal cameras on the helmet of their crystal suits!

It was the ‘army of ghosts’ that Professor Mo Xuan had trained!

The battle shells made of the bodies of high-level battle-type Cultivators in the past—combined with the Fighting Spirits, which had condensed the battle experience of countless experts—became a terrifying troop that was ten times stronger than the Grand Illusionary Soldiers in the past and could fight more agilely and independently!

However…

Li Yao was ten times stronger than when he encountered the Grand Illusionary Soldiers!

Hu!

Li Yao narrowed his eyes, but the excitement in them was undisguisable. His scorching eyes tore apart the cold universe and glanced at each and every member in the army of ghosts on his opposite. In the end, he seemed even delighted.

“Come to think about it, it’s been a hundred years since I released my best strength to my heart’s content!” Li Yao smiled, baring his white and sharp teeth!

Chapter 1750 - The Supreme Emperor’s Excalibur, Photon Phantom!

“725 in total. Judging from the files in the ward, they were mostly above the Core Formation Stage. Although the bodies are not controlled by themselves right now, according to Liu Wenshan, the so-called Fighting Spirits are absolutely capable of simulating the combat skills of top-tier experts as long as the computational ability is high enough because they are made by combining the essence of the moves, tactics, and teamwork of hundreds of thousands of battle-type Cultivators!” Long Yangjun smiled casually.

She and Li Yao had established point-to-point communication through telepathic thought entanglement. So, there was no need to worry about Professor Mo Xuan’s invasion. “The good news is that their bodies have been sleeping for too long. However great the bodies used to be, they are still definitely no match for strong warriors who train crazily every day despite all the stimulations of bioelectricity and the maintenance of high-nutrition liquids!

“However, the defense rune array made of the dazzling whips of lightning surrounding District 01 seems rather tricky. We must be careful not to be caught by them!”

“Got it. Let’s go. I really want to know how strong an elite warrior from the Nuwa civilization can be!”

“I would like to find out how terrifying the legendary Vulture Li Yao is when he is doing his best and breaking all his limits!”

Li Yao and Long Yangjun looked at each other and smiled. Then, they did exactly the same weird movement.

They took off the crystal suits on their bodies!

In the darkness of the universe, where sunlight was darting gold swords toward the central area through the gaps among the enormous ball-shaped space stations, in front of the array of electric arcs that were as thick and ferocious as boas and the thousand lifeless soldiers of the army of ghosts, the broken crystal suits on Li Yao and Long Yangjun fell apart like colorful butterflies, and the pieces spread out into cosmic dust around them.

The two of them were only wearing thin mustard-seed combat suits. They did not even wear an oxygen circulation unit but were directly exposed to the vacuum of the universe.

“They…”

Behind the two of them, all the soldiers of the federal army felt that their hearts were grabbed.

The soldiers were people after all. Most of them were even ordinary people whose spiritual roots had not awakened yet. They could only be turned into a cold, efficient war machine under the effective command in a strict battle formation.

The commanding of modern wars was highly dependent on the network system. Without the network, when the highest commander was absent, even an ace troop might turn into loose sand and collapse abruptly.

There was no need to mention the 414 troop, which was just an unknown regular troop!

There was not a habitable planet several lightyears around Hundred Flowers City. It was just a lone space metropolis. Even if the city did suffer the invasion of the Imperium, it would be a battle between the starships of the two parties that decided the final outcome of the war.

If the fleets of the federation failed, there was no force that could possibly stop the fleets of the Imperium from tearing Hundred Flowers City apart.

Therefore, it was meaningless to deploy strong ground troops in this place. The so-called 414 troop and its brother troops were merely ‘security guards’. Once the war broke out, their sole mission was to maintain basic order in the enormous metropolis!

The soldiers of the 414 troop had never dreamed that they would have to compete with experts who were once famous nationwide, although the experts had nothing but their shells left now!

After the soldiers entered space and clung to the silver balls like ants, having trouble to breathe under the double pressure of the cold universe and the enormous space stations, and especially after they discovered that Professor Mo Xuan had truly occupied District 01, controlled the automatic defense array that was meant to deal with the Imperium, and even sent out a thousand terrifying warriors to block the entire area, the previously hot blood of the soldiers turned into cold sweat. They looked at each other in bewilderment, not knowing what to say.

The soldiers of the federal army were not scared of death. However, charging at an elephant as ants in a battle that was destined to fail and expecting to be crushed into dust by the elephant without causing any damage to the enemy were not something that everybody was brave enough to do.

They were just ordinary people. They were made of flesh and blood. They had their emotions. They might shudder in fear with their mouths dry and their foreheads covered in sweat. They might imagine their miserable deaths when they were struck by the electric arcs later at the crucial moment. They might recall their families who were waiting for them anxious at home, which made them want to desert. They were just ordinary people!

They… they needed the prospect of victory, hope of brightness, and an ear-splitting horn to make their hot blood that had been frozen by the universe to boil again!

Ahead of the federal army made by the ordinary people, Li Yao and Long Yangjun had already taken off their broken old crystal suits that they had been wearing previously. Then—

New crystal suits, the most magnificent crystal suits inside their Cosmos Rings, darted out in dozens of streaks of dazzling brilliance as their fingers danced softly under their summon before the crystal suits were put on at a super high speed!

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

The state-of-the-art crystal suits that were in different styles but equally glamorous, as if they were made by pouring out all the stars in the galaxy, consumed the two of them instantly, transforming them into two dominating warriors!

The two super crystal suits were indeed from the center of the cosmos.

With his identity as the captain of Team Red Lotus and the special representative of the Speaker, Li Yao had picked them out carefully from the warehouse of crystal suits on Firefly. Then, after days and nights of crazy modification and strengthening, at the cost of almost all the most precious units on Firefly, he had finally completed the two crystal suits.

Even the most ragged ship might still have some nails that could be of use. Firefly was carrying the rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic after all. Although its stock was incomparable to the Imperium or the federation on a strategic level, it was still not a problem to find two pieces of single magical equipment such as crystal suits!

The crystal suit on Li Yao's body was deep red. It did not carry too much remote magical equipment, but four coldly shining, high-frequency vibration daggers stuck out of elbows and knees!

They were the legendary melee magical equipment invented by the Supreme Emperor himself in the Star Ocean Imperium. They could trigger vibrations in a frequency dozens of times higher than modern 'vibration sabers'. Through the tiny, uneven vibrations, it would be easy to destroy the target's spiritual shield and to greatly increase the metal fatigue of the strengthened armor, eventually disintegrating the target's structure from the molecular level!

When waving such high-frequency daggers, tearing spiritual shields would be as simple as tearing toilet paper, and cutting crystal suits would be as easy as cutting tofu. Even if faced with the super alloy armor of the warships, infiltrating them would be no more difficult than digging a hole at the beach!

Equipped with such marvelous blades, Li Yao's crystal suit had improved his performance in the melee combat to the maximum. Therefore, the name of the super crystal suit was the Supreme Emperor's Excalibur!

Long Yangjun's crystal suit was as impressive as his.

It was a pure white, glimmering, swift, and slender crystal suit. At first glance, it seemed to highlight agility and speed.

However, behind the crystal suit, there were nine longswords that spread in a sector like the tails of a peacock!

Brilliance and electric arcs were flowing on the longswords. They extended all the way downward and dashed out of the crystal suit's back, turned into nine long whips of light. The pale electric arcs were highly condensed, ready to attack like fatal vipers. They seemed to be of an even higher level than the blue electric net on the defense rune array before them!

As the electric arcs and the auras of the swords flashed, the hundreds of square meters around Long Yangjun seemed to be covered in a hazy mist. She seemed to be appearing at every point in the range simultaneously, and yet she seemed to have completely vanished into unsubstantial auras.

It was the Photon Phantom, a super crystal suit that had adopted the magical equipment units from the center of the cosmos and was carefully modified by Li Yao!

A fire could only be furious enough when the wind was strong. The more powerful a crystal suit was, the more spiritual energy it would demand to be driven. Such crystal suits could not be used by any random Cultivator, or even any random Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator.

However, after Li Yao and Long Yangjun, two unparalleled experts, put them on, the hunger and agitation deep inside the crystal suits completely awakened their soaring fighting will. Their muscles were bulging, their veins were expanding, and their blood and souls were burning. The strength that had been hibernating for decades and hundreds of thousands of years was entirely released!

“Argh!” Li Yao and Long Yangjun both roared furiously, like angry beasts that had woken up. Surging spiritual energy rose above from their crystal suits and spread out to all directions, turning into crazily dancing flames at first and two overwhelming giants that surrounded them later!

All the soldiers of the federal army behind them were dumbfounded.

“How—how is it possible?”

“Is this really happening? Such magnificent tides of spiritual energy! It is almost a cosmic storm!”

Although they had blocked the external network, their spiritual energy probe devices were still operable. On the Combat Ability Detector, a standard gear for the federal army nowadays that was upgraded and modified from the Demon Beast Detector invented more than a hundred years ago, all readings were soaring madly and breaking the limits one after another!

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

The crystal processors of all the soldiers were sending out ear-splitting alarms, warning them to immediately retreat and take cover.

The spiritual energy that was surging out of Li Yao and Long Yangjun had far exceeded their imaginations. All the readings indicated that it was more likely to be two main-force warships that had just been teleported to this place from the four-dimensional space than two Exos that were showing up in front of them!

“What—what level are the two experts at?”

Many soldiers of the federal army knew that the two of them were in the Nascent Soul Stage. They had seen the battle videos of some Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators before, but they never saw such appalling tides of spiritual energy!

“We will rush forward and destroy the lightning defense array first. Then, you can follow up!”

Li Yao and Long Yangjun’s voices, enshrouded by their spiritual energy, were sent to the crystal suit of every bottom-level commander like invisible octopi. Then, the two of them turned into two unstoppable streaks of brilliance and lunged at the army of ghosts!

Chapter 1751 - I Can Fight 100,000 of Them!

The soldiers of the federal army witnessed a scene that they would never forget.

It was like wind blowing away clouds and tigers jumping on lambs!

The seemingly magnificent, impenetrable line of defense was almost riddled with holes and falling apart the moment the two streaks of brilliant broke through it.

Even the thousands of electric arcs were hesitating and shivering, not knowing where they should strike.

That was because their enemies were too fast! Li Yao and Long Yangjun, two super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators close to the Divinity Transformation Stage enhanced by the super crystal suits from the center of the cosmos, were too fast!

Most of the soldiers of the federal army could only capture vague brightness with their naked eyes. It was rushing into and out of the army of ghosts like smoke and flying like a ribbon. Then, a lot of crystal suits on the enemy’s side were already falling apart, utterly deformed, or exploding into enormous fireballs, with broken limbs flying everywhere. They all split apart and perished abruptly under the overwhelming spiritual energy, turning into lackluster space junk, which interweaved into abnormal swirls that turned into the battlefield into a bizarre painting.

It was not until they replayed the picture captured by the crystal cameras at a speed ten times slower than before that the soldiers finally saw how Li Yao and Long Yangjun raged in the army of ghosts unstoppably with their sabers and swords.

It was quite a weird feeling.

It was almost like Li Yao and Long Yangjun were from an amazing new world, where the speed was ten times faster, and they accidentally entered a ‘slow world’. All the Fighting Spirits nearby, no matter what dominating and renowned experts the battle shells under their control used to be, were targets that were absolutely motionless in front of them and completely at their mercy!

The two streaks of brilliance rushed all the way forward, leaving two paths of destruction made of fireballs behind them, as if they had torn an enormous wound on the universe with their unstoppable sharpness!

Shua!

The high-frequency daggers pierced through three layers of spiritual shield easily, ripped apart a super alloy shield that was carved with dense defense rune arrays, and pierced into the chest of one of the Fighting Spirits without a sound. Before it was able to react, the bones on its chest were already shattered into pieces, and even the internal organs were shaken into a cluster of blood!

The high-frequency daggers were drawn out, and the wound caused by the super high-frequency vibrations quickly expanded. Because of the internal pressure, the blood and internal organs of the Fighting Spirit erupted like magma, only to be frozen into round, icy balls by the extremely low temperature in the vacuum of the universe, as if a blood red flower of ice was slowly blossoming.

Even a Fighting Spirit could not go on fighting when its body was entirely destroyed.

Right when it transformed all its waves into mental power, trying to assault Li Yao’s brain, Li Yao had already opened his left hand in advance and focused a cluster of dazzling light, blowing up its entire head together with the prepared mental attack after one bombardment!

The entire process of combat was as fluent as a running river. It took less than 0.5 seconds from when the high-frequency daggers began to wave to the light cannon’s bombardment!

Li Yao clenched his burning left hand, feeling that every pore on his body had been expanded to the maximum. Sweat was running out like magma. He could not have felt more comfortable!

It had been a hundred years since he had last fought such a gratifying battle!

When he looked back, he noticed that the broken limbs, the debris of the twisted crystal suits, and the broken flowers of blood constituted a devastating path of death.

Not far away from him, Long Yangjun turned into dozens of shadows, each of which was surrounded by nine invincible auras of sword. The hundreds of auras of sword made up a meat mincer.

All the Fighting Spirits that were touched by her would be absorbed into the ‘meat mincer’ ruthlessly and cut apart by the hundreds of auras of sword. It was even more miserable than to be killed by Li Yao!

Soon, the army of ghosts who were bold enough to block the two of them were all cleared. The Fighting Spirits nearby who should have been charging at them fearlessly were somewhat hesitant. They were all searching the database crazily and considering what kind of tactic should be adopted in order to cope with two monsters like Li Yao and Long Yangjun. But little information about feasible solutions could be found even in the enormous database that stored almost all the combat data of the Star Glory Federation from the past hundred years!

Those Fighting Spirits were all tilting their heads, as if their crystal processors had crashed. They fell into brief rigidness.

The Fighting Spirits that were responsible for remote attacks were still raining mystic rays, bullets, and flying swords toward the two monsters that even the database did not know how to deal with while hiding behind the defense array, causing messy ripples on Li Yao’s and Long Yangjun’s spiritual shields!

More than ten crystal suits seemed to be blocking their way valiantly, but on closer inspection, they were all weirdly stiff, with pale flames of spiritual energy popping out of the gaps of the crystal suits. When Li Yao and Long Yangjun brushed past them, they all exploded in brilliant sparks, as if they were welcoming the two of them!

All the soldiers of the federal army could only think of one word after seeing the scene…

Invincible!

Li Yao and Long Yangjun broke through the defense line quickly and flew toward the pivot of the defense array on the surface of District 01!

The automatic defense array was the most marvelous weapon to claim the lives of the soldiers. It would be a meaningless, suicidal mission to ask the federal army to march forward without destroying the array.

Only after the defense array was broken could the combat ability of the federal army be maximized to provide effective reinforcements for them!

“Huchi… Huchi… Huchi…”

Inside the Supreme Emperor’s Excalibur, Li Yao was breathing heavily. There was no telling whether it was because he was tired or excited.

A war could not be won by a few Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. Even the strongest Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator only had limited spiritual energy inside their internal organs and limbs. Even the most advanced crystal suit still had the problems of ammunition, durability, metal fatigue, and maximum working time.

Even if the enemy were nothing but harmless bread, one would still die of indigestion after having hundreds of pieces in a row.

After Li Yao and Long Yangjun slaughtered almost a hundred Fighting Spirits who were equivalent to experts in the Core Formation Stage in the blink of an eye, the performance parameters on the crystal suits, especially the durability of the high-frequency daggers and the intensity of the spiritual shield, were quickly plunging. There was no need to mention their own exhaustion.

“Hoo!” Li Yao, on the other hand, felt that all his veins were bulging to the maximum. His every brain cell was singing a battle hymn, and his bloodshot eyes were almost jumping out of his eye sockets. “Too few. Too few. There are too few of them. This is not gratifying enough. I want to fight a hundred thousand of them!”

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

The intensity of the electric arcs before him was immediately improved to a higher level. Three electric arcs flashed past Li Yao and struck him.

Covered by the deep blue electric arcs, the four airtight gates on the surface of the ball-shaped space station were slowly opened like four bloody mouths.

Countless lifeless warriors of the army of ghosts and multiple times more battle puppets, like bees that had been infuriated, flooded out of their base. They congregated into four metal torrents and craned their ‘heads’ at Li Yao and Long Yangjun.

Every metal torrent was at least ten meters in diameter. There was no need to mention their length.

Most of the battle puppets that made up the metal torrents boasted a round body and rough limbs that were full of magnetic flagella.

Instead of battle puppets, they looked more like… space torpedoes that had been installed with simple power rune arrays and navigation units, allowing them to automatically follow and attach themselves to the target!

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

Li Yao and Long Yangjun’s crystal processors calculated the total number of the incoming weapons. Well, by rough estimation, although there might not be a hundred thousand of them, the number of the space torpedoes embedded with highly-explosive crystal cores certainly surpassed ten thousand.

“Can you please watch your mouth in a battle if you know you are a jinx?” Long Yangjun requested.

“I was merely roaring to boost the morale while I was having fun in the battle. I didn’t know that it would work out so effectively again!”

“Hu!”

The four metal torrents smashed at Li Yao and Long Yangjun at the same time.

The ‘flagella’ that were dancing crazily around their bodies could automatically detect the spiritual shield. Like annoying caltrops, it was practically impossible to get rid of them once they were attached to the surface of the spiritual shield and interweaved with the magnetic field.

In 0.5 seconds, almost a hundred space torpedoes were already attached to them. Still more torpedoes blocked their zone of activity, sealing the thousand square meters around them without leaving any gap. The ‘flagella’ of some of the space torpedoes even connected to each other while they were waving and turned into an overwhelming web.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Almost a thousand space torpedoes were detonated at the same time, raising furious tides of spiritual energy. Despite the defense ability of their crystal suits, both of them felt that their heads were dizzy and the world was shaking. Explosions were echoing inside their minds, too.

Soundwaves could not be transmitted in the vacuum. Therefore, it was not the sound of the exploding torpedoes but the sound of their feeble brains crashing against their hard skulls!

Huala!

Blocked by the space torpedo in every direction, the two of them immediately lost most of their zone of activity. Now that their speed had dropped by thirty percent, the lightning defense array quickly locked onto them. Almost a hundred thick electric arcs struck the two of them hard, allowing them to taste the feeling of electric shock besides the immense blast of spiritual and magnetic waves!

It appeared that Professor Mo Xuan’s army of ghosts had already found solutions to deal with Li Yao and Long Yangjun after the brief battle just now.

There was no better way to deal with such unparalleled experts who could fight a thousand opponents on their way. The only possible solution was to drain them with the sheer advantage in numbers without sparing anything!

Li Yao felt that he was being collectively attacked by a hundred volcanoes.

The performance parameters of the Supreme Emperor’s Excalibur were plummeting as quickly as a tire whose valve core had been removed. It would soon be more unworthy than a farmer’s cleaver.

However, more and more warriors were rushing out of the airtight gates of the space station. After all, Professor Mo

Xuan had taken away thousands of battle shells from Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital!

Chapter 1752 - Horn of Charge

“Damn!”

Li Yao spat a mouthful of bloodstained saliva, which was immediately removed from the crystal suit by the liquid transfer tube next to his mouth. It was obliterated by the ripples of high temperature raised by the blasts before it was frozen into ice.

The attacks became more and more fierce.

Being bombarded by almost ten thousand space torpedoes incessantly was not an everyday feeling even for a crystal bomb maniac like him.

Of the thousand performance parameters of the Supreme Emperor’s Excalibur displayed on his retina, quite a few had turned gray, implying that the unit represented by the parameter had been completely destroyed.

The rest of the parameters had turned mostly dangerous orange and deep red colors. They were only one step away from the dead gray, which indicated the complete loss of function.

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

The buffer unit on the left ankle was completely destroyed!

The venom filtration unit was completely destroyed!

The adjustment valve for the tubes on the right wrist was completely destroyed!

The high-frequency dagger on the right knee had surpassed the limit of fatigue and would be destroyed if it kept on vibrating. It had to be cooled down for twenty-seven seconds!

Different red layers popped up in front of Li Yao’s eyes, as if the crystal cameras of the crystal suit had been covered in blood.

He seemed to hear his cerebral vessels exploding one after another and his boiling blood running out blatantly on the ravines inside his brain.

He could also hear the burning sounds when his scorching blood was vaporized by his brain cells that were even more scorching!

“Monster Li!” Long Yangjun’s voice was sharp and high-pitched. Li Yao could totally imagine how furious she was. “This equipment cannot survive much longer. Cover me. I need to change!”

“Wait… Wait a moment…”

The Supreme Emperor’s Excalibur was wreathed by thousands of fireballs, like fire from the four-dimensional space that was burning a hole in the three-dimensional universe. However, Li Yao put on a cold smile while being tortured by the extreme temperature and the crazy tides of spiritual energy. His bloodshot eyes were filled with the brilliance of a predator, when he gazed at a certain point on the shell of the space station without blinking.

It seemed that he could not withstand the bombardment of the space torpedoes any longer. The first spiritual shield at the periphery of the Supreme Emperor’s Excalibur cracked and fell apart like glass. The main power rune arrays at the back of the crystal suit also released light that was as red as blood. The speed of the crystal suit plummeted, and he seemed incapable of controlling the trajectory of his flight and almost tripped himself over in the vacuum.

The lightning defense array, relying on the most advanced automatic aiming and attack system, and powered by the database that stored the combat data of the past hundred years did not let go of the rare opportunity to attack. A thousand electric arcs surged out of a certain point on the shell of the space station instantly like crazily dancing snakes, attacking the Supreme Emperor’s Excalibur in curves that were tearing the dark universe apart!

By the analysis of the ‘Fighting Spirits’ based on the database, according to the slightly clumsy posture of the Supreme Emperor’s Excalibur right now, it would be hit by the lightning in 0.01 seconds.

Once it was bound by a hundred electric arcs, and thousands of space torpedoes nearby all came at the guy at the same time, even a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator might suffer a fatal wound!

However—

The seemingly unavoidable attack of the hundred electric arcs missed their target because of the sudden dodge of Supreme Emperor’s Excalibur that was much more agile than anticipated. It was only hit by about ten lightning bolts. A whip of such an extent was not enough to deprive Li Yao of his ability to move. He could totally grit his teeth through it with his monster-like body build!

“Found it!”

Covered by his facial cover, Li Yao’s left eye turned as red as blood when part of the primeval cells inside his body were fully activated. Even his pupils were entirely drained. With part of the ‘demonized’ body, he took the blow of more than ten electric arcs the hard way. Then, he bellowed in excitement, almost spurting out the fury of the lightning that flooded into his body just now. “The pivot of the automatic defense array is right there!”

Yes. Taking the bombardment of thousands of space torpedoes, without even dodging the lightning strike of the automatic defense array, and pretending to be clumsy until the last moment was all for the purpose of figuring out the pivot of the automatic defense array, so that they could blow it up!

“Now is the time!” Li Yao roared, his voice even eclipsing the thunder. “Change the equipment and attack!”

In the places far away behind them, more and more airtight gates on the silver ball-shaped space stations were opened, spurting out white pillars of gas.

A lot of soldiers of the federal army crawled out of the gates under Luo Qisheng’s furious roars and after seeing the holographic pictures from Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital.

The moment they jumped into space, they saw such a blood-boiling and exciting scene!

Two crystal suits versus a thousand crystal suits plus almost ten thousand space torpedoes.

The bottom-level officers who were quick-minded and had already grown suspicious secretly when Hundred Flowers City entered the emergency state immediately understood everything.

“Luo Qisheng was right. Hundred Flowers City did have an accident!”

“Who’s guarding at the periphery of that space station? Their spiritual energy is as powerful as the best troops in the country, but there is definitely not such a troop in the garrison of Hundred Flowers City!”

“Also, the highest alarm just now came too uncannily. Even if the Black Wind Fleet launched a full-scale attack, it’s highly unlikely that they would choose the Hundred Flowers Space Zone as the main target. Look. The edge of the space zone is peaceful and quiet. There’s no sign of two fleets that are engaged in fierce crossfire at all. Then, was it really necessary to issue the highest alarm and cast the entire city into chaos and paralysis?”

“Also, where did our commanders go exactly? We can only see their orders that are sent through the network and the communication channel, but we never saw them in person. Something must be greatly wrong here!”

After the questions exploded inside their head, the soldiers of the federal army all bulged their eyes and felt coldness rising from their spine to their skull. They also came to the realization quickly that what was unfolding in front of their eyes could be a crucial battle that would decide the fate of the federation!

And at that moment, the battle was being fought by only two people!

“Not good. They are not going to persist any longer!”

“Such an assault is too crazy even for the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage. They are faced with thousands of enemies, ten thousand space torpedoes and an entirely lightning fortress!”

“We have to reinforce them. We have to reinforce our Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators!”

“However…”

Looking at the thousands of electric arcs that were still spreading out among the ball-shaped space stations like a storm, the soldiers of the federal army were all anxious. A lot of them were deeply astounded by the tough performance of Li Yao and Long Yangjun and made up their mind to charge forward without considering anything. It would be good enough if they could destroy a few space torpedoes or attract a few electric arcs to relieve the pressure on the two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators!

“Brothers from the garrison of Hundred Flowers City, this is a life-and-death battle for the federation. We are the rightful army of the federation. This is our battle!” Luo Qisheng’s voice echoed through space in a hoarse, noisy, yet even more wild way through an old magnetic broadcaster that used to be applied on the resource planets. “Are you going to just sit here and watch the warriors from a foreign land shed their last drops of blood for the federation?

“We might not be as strong as the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. We might just be ordinary people whose spiritual roots are not awakened yet. But our blood is as hot as that of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. Our valor can rip apart the stars just like theirs!

“A battle cannot be won by one or two experts. Look. Our Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators have been dragged into an exhausting fight. They are in dire need of our support. They need to get some precious rest and cooldown under our cover! At this moment, the future of the federation does not depend on them but each and every one of us!

“Summon your courage, grip your weapons, listen to the call of the horn, aim and attack, and show the goddamn extraterrestrial devils that this is the federation!”

When Luo Qisheng’s hoarse roars were still resounding as ripples of spiritual energy, a powerful, ear-splitting horn had penetrated the vacuum of space and flooded into the ears of every soldier. Everyone was unable to control themself, as if they had been punched right in the chest.

Today, because the tactical network was highly developed, and the main battlefield was the vacuum in space or the resource planets without atmospheres, a ‘horn’, as an ancient way of commanding to pass orders, was already outdated.

However, when every new soldier who joined the federal army received the education of its glorious history, they would be reminded how the federal army charged at the beast tides, the monsters, the most dangerous lands and all the formidable enemies standing in the way of the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag under the encouragement and guidance of such horn when it was just founded under the ideology of ‘protect mankind’ hundreds of years ago in the Old Federation!

At that time, the soul stirring horn had its own name.

It was the Horn of Charge!

At this moment when the tactical network was probably invaded and compromised by the enemy, with dozens of magnetic broadcasters that were designed to send out all-covering messages in the vacuum, the ancient Horn of Charge was blown again!

This space zone had never been as hot as right now since the big bang.

The soldiers of the federal army of the new generation, other than during the history education or when playing certain ancient virtual games, had probably never marched forward under the encouragement of the Horn of Charge before.

However, when the Horn of Charge that had fallen quiet for a long time really echoed, their every muscle, every vein, and every cell was prepared to charge.

Some sounds did not need to be brought up time and time again because it had been carved into the deepest part of their genes as the memory of the blood!

“Move forward, federal army!”

Thousands of soldiers—some of them ordinary fighters, some Refinement Stage Cultivators, and some Cultivators who struggled at the middle and bottom level of the Building Foundation Stage for decades without any promise of breaking into the Core Formation Stage—roared at the same time together with the Horn of Charge.

There was no reason they could hear the voices of their comrades, but they clearly heard everyone’s deafening roars, which combined with the Horn of Charge into surging tides that were even more overwhelming than the lightning storm up ahead!

Toward the rumbling thunder, toward the dancing electric arcs, toward the destructive vortexes raised by the space torpedoes, and toward the intimidating army of ghosts, the federal army charged!

Chapter 1753 - The Primeval God-Sealing Cannon!

Li Yao heard the Horn of Charge, too.

He had been a member of the federal army, too, in the age of the Old Federation!

In his younger years, before he went to the Blood Demon Sector to facilitate the union of the three Sectors, before he stopped Xiao Xuance’s scheme in the Flying Star Sector, before he tried to perish together with Skeleton Dragon on Boneyard, before his spiritual root was awakened, and before he encountered the beast tides on the Grand Desolate Plateau, he had heard the distant and yet familiar horns from the movies time and time again and seen the warriors with the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars emblems striding forward together with the Horn of Charge!

The horn, the picture, the emblem, and the faces that were blackened by blood and smoke but had eyes which were as glittering as before were deeply carved into his blood, too!

Li Yao grinned and laughed crazily without a sound.

A hundred years had passed. A lot of things had changed. But the federation was still the federation!

Li Yao did not hesitate anymore. The flames of spiritual energy that had already raged toward the stars seemed to have broken free from certain invisible shackles and began to expand and surge again. The space torpedoes within hundreds of meters were all decimated. However, the fireballs that they raised after being destroyed were suppressed by his spiritual energy and controlled by him to dart out, turning into a soundless wall of fire and creating an empty, blocked area for him and Long Yangjun!

Streaks of brilliance surged out of their Cosmos Rings again and condensed into magnificent armored parts in the vacuum. Electric arcs were dancing among the parts. They were soon attracted by the jumping spiritual energy on the two of them and jumped to them quickly!

“This is—”

All the soldiers of the federal army far away activated their power rune arrays to the maximum. Dragging exhaust flames that were hundreds of meters long, they rushed at the space station like an overwhelming meteor shower.

The group of officers headed by Luo Qisheng was the strongest of all, boasting the few Core Formation Stage Cultivators in the troops. In the spirit of ‘the blood of the strong should be shed first’, they accelerated and ran toward the front of the ‘meteor shower’ even though they were at the rear in the beginning. As the sharpest arrowhead, they sprinted at the lightning that looked like gigantic boas.

They had already been prepared to attract a few electric arcs for Li Yao and Long Yangjun in order to share their pressure even at the cost of their own lives.

However, when they were only one step away from the savaging range of the lightning defense array, they sensed that Li Yao’s and Long Yangjun’s spiritual energy, which had already been off the charts, was soaring yet again. Dazzling blade auras were flourishing in the middle of the space torpedoes and the army of ghosts, which was as awe-inspiring as the brightness released by two stars. Then, explosions erupted on their bodies, and countless fireballs condensed into two orange balls hundreds of meters in diameter, completely consuming the two of them!

Before the officers had a chance to scream, the two orange balls blossomed like a bud and then quickly withered like a flower. The two of them broke out of the core. Their previously shattered crystal suits had been utterly renewed. With the attraction force of the spiritual and magnetic field, countless strengthening plugins had been attached to them, making them even more elegant, magnificent, and powerful than before. Li Yao and Long Yangjun’s bodies expanded to almost five meters, too!

They were Ares Extensions, plugins that could maximize the combat ability of the crystal suits before the Colossi were unearthed!

Luo Qisheng had seen a lot of experts who summoned the Ares Extension that could only be used once at the most perilous moment during his hundred years of service, but he had never seen such a unique model before.

The Ares Extensions that were attached to Li Yao and Long Yangjun were filled with profoundness, elegance, and strictness. The complicated spiritual stripes were in a vintage style. After the new plugins were added, the two of them looked like primordial warriors who had travelled through time from the primeval age to the present day!

Yes. The two Ares Extensions were made of pieces of primeval magical equipment from the Nuwa warship in the Ancient Sages Sector by Li Yao.

Remnants left after the fierce battle between the Nuwa Clan and the Pangu Clan were everywhere on the Nuwa warship. Because the warship was buried deep under the glacier, most of them were very well-preserved. A lot of the magical equipment still maintained part of their functionality despite the passage of hundreds of thousands of years.

Before Li Yao arrived at the Ancient Sages Sector, the natives of the Ancient Sages Sector already considered the primeval treasures as marvelous weapons. Qi Zhongdao, the nominal leader of all the Cultivators, was the most typical one of them, having refined the gravity controller of a starship into a piece of unique magical equipment that was invincible in the world of Cultivators.

Yan Liren had used three giant swords from the primeval era that belonged to the Pangu Clan or the Nuwa Clan to deal with the gravity controller!

Although the primeval treasures applied to Li Yao’s and Long Yangjun’s Ares Extensions were not as good as Qi Zhongdao’s Heaven Flipping Seal in terms of performance, the gap was not very large. Perhaps nobody else in the entire Star Glory Federation could afford such extravagance as to consider the primeval treasures as one-time, expendable goods!

Therefore, Li Yao had named the Ares Extension made of the primeval treasures the Primeval Extension!

With the enhancement of the Primeval Extension, the two of them were truly like ravenous beasts from the primeval age. Their speed was further accelerated, and they charged into the crowd of the space torpedoes and the army of ghosts, leaving hundreds of blurred shadows behind them.

Their target was very clear—the pivot of the lightning defense array that Li Yao had found out by taking the blow passively just now!

The defenders soon realized what they were up to. Countless space torpedoes and warriors lunged at them fearlessly, trying to block their attack.

But how was it possible when they were faced with the reveal primeval force?

“Break now!”

Li Yao grabbed an enormous saber that was 17.7 meters long but with an aura that had been extended to hundreds of meters away, suggesting that it could slash a starship in half. Dazzling brilliance surged out like a tide, while Li Yao cut everything in front of his way in half, both the warriors of the army of ghosts and the space torpedoes!

Long Yangjun, on the other hand, chose almost a thousand flying swords. Those flying swords from the primeval age had been rusted and broken. However, after they were refined by Li Yao, some of the sharp pieces were still kept. The sharp pieces had now turned into the best ‘bullets’, which turned into a thousand streaks of gold brilliance under the control of Long Yangjun’s powerful telepathic thoughts. Interweaving into a deadly net of swords, they pierced through the warriors and the space torpedoes!

It was the real hurricane of flying swords!

It was the best example of one against a thousand and a killing spree in space!

There was no doubt that such brutal attacks were draining their spiritual energy at a crazy rate, too.

However, they were backed by thousands of soldiers of the federal army. They were not fighting alone. What was there to be scared of?

What was most important right now was to destroy the pivot and shut down the lightning defense array so that the soldiers of the federal army would not die for nothing.

After clearing the debris in front of them, they could already see enormous swirls that were made of dazzling spiritual stripes on the surface of the space station.

The most glamorous, complicated part, which was defended by the most warriors of the army of ghosts, was where the pivot of the array was located.

The pivot of the array was also surrounded by rounds of defense arrays that were powered by a few large crystal reactors below the thick armor. Almost ten layers of spiritual shields which felt almost concrete were protecting the pivot of the array.

Sensing the trickiness of the two intruders, the intensity of the spiritual energy was upgraded by several levels by the defender immediately. Yellowish colors that were visible to the naked eye were spreading out. Affected by the force field, even the rune arrays inside the pivot of the array were almost twisted, making it look like a weird eye that was shooting out hatred and fear.

The army of ghosts and the space torpedoes were seething with impatience again, trying to block the channel of attack between them and the pivot of the array.

After consuming such a huge amount of spiritual energy, it had barely been possible for them to sweep through the enemy so overwhelmingly, too.

“Now is the time!” Li Yao bulged his eyes and bellowed, with blood flowing out of his eyes.

Long Yangjun sniffed. The thousand pieces of ancient flying swords emitted unbelievable brilliance again and turned into golden ribbons around them, hovering quickly within hundreds of meters as the best defense!

Li Yao raised his right arm high and moved his fingers quickly, forming a sign.

Inside the Cosmos Ring, six enormous flying swords, which used to be the weapons of the warriors of the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan but had been utterly deformed after his modification, jumped out to the battlefield. The complicated spiritual stripes on them were illuminated one after another, and bright, orange colors entangled with each other, transforming them into six paralleled crystal rails!

It was… a special railgun. A unique, super railgun that was luxurious enough to use primeval swords as the crystal rails and pieces of the primeval magical equipment as the cannonball!

Li Yao had named it the ‘Primeval God-Sealing Cannon’!

Attracted by the magnetic force, the Primeval God-Sealing Cannon slowly landed on the right shoulder of Li Yao’s Primeval Extension.

Dozens of connection components immediately ejected from the right shoulder and the helmet of the Primeval Extension, allowing the great cannon to be completely melded with the armor. Li Yao’s telepathic thoughts and spiritual energy were also able to flood into the great cannon from his right temple, triggering mysterious reactions with the pieces of the primeval magical equipment and the high-purity marrow crystals that were stored inside the great cannon!

Li Yao burnt his soul without bothering about anything, as if he was pouring his own soul into the great cannon!

Even the six crystal rails made of primeval swords seemed unable to shoulder the violent spiritual energy any longer and turned into translucent orange colors!

At this moment, everybody both on the enemy’s side and on their own side sensed the weirdness and magnificence of the great cannon. Even the weakest, most sluggish crystal processors were uttering ear-splitting alarms. “High-energy reaction up head! Warning! High-energy reaction up ahead! Warning!”

The army of ghosts and the space torpedoes were desperately running forward, trying to block Li Yao’s route of attack with themselves.

There was already no time. Li Yao had already locked onto the pivot of the array with all his telepathic thoughts.

Even if the army of ghosts did reach him, they would not be able to stop the roar that he had accumulated for a hundred years.

Li Yao clenched his fists so hard that they turned into two black holes. The orange flames deep inside the great cannon were expanding like a sun before the Primeval God-Sealing Cannon was launched with the maximal damage!

Chapter 1754 - A Shot After a Hundred Years!

Bo!

Li Yao felt that cracking sounds were echoing inside his brain again. The ancient memories that had been sealed for a long time were added with new gaps after being riddled with holes by Lei Yuqin’s attack. Mental power that was almost concrete surged out of the memory core and swept across the entire brain!

In the meantime, on his right shoulder, boundless spiritual energy flooded out like a supernova outbreak. The Primeval God-Sealing Cannon, the Primeval Extension, and the super crystal suit Supreme Emperors Excalibur’ were ripped apart by the violent aftershock at the same time and exploded on his body!

In just one moment, his mustard-seed suit was almost burnt to ash, and his skin was falling apart. His every muscle seemed to have been twisted brutally, and his every drop of marrow had turned into scorching magma. His internal organs were shaking violently like an earthquake!

The ‘recoil’ of the shot was too powerful for even Li Yao, a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, to bear. He spurted out a mouthful of blood that was mixed with spiritual energy, which turned into eye-catching redness in the vacuum!

In exchange for such a great price, he launched a shot that could blow up the head of even a deity!

The soldiers of the federal army could only see a dazzling flash that seemed to be reestablishing the entire universe. The red torrents, made of boiling spiritual energy and molecular-level particles of the primeval magical equipment, were extended into a long, narrow red line several kilometers long within a moment before it hit the pivot of the lightning defense array precisely!

It was like a burnt, iron chopstick piercing into the eyeball of a huge monster. All the warriors of the army of ghosts and the space torpedoes in the path of the attack were shattered, vaporized, and obliterated. The multiple layers of the lightning defense array did not even stop the attack for 0.1 seconds before it dispersed into shining pieces of spiritual energy. Crimson brightness rose from the depths of the ‘eyeball’ and expanded crazily, like a circular tide in an ocean that was hit by a meteor. Destructive ‘tides’ were spreading on the shell of the space station. Wherever they reached, the rune arrays, the magical equipment units, and the automatic bastions were exploding and dying down in flames of various colors.

After only several seconds, the glittering shell of District 01 was replaced by dim, tinted colors, like an enormous glass ball that had been burnt!

The crazily dancing lightning around the space station previously began to cramp like the feet of a centipede that was struggling to live. After every cramp, the brightness and the range of the lightning would be slightly reduced. They degraded from dragons into boas, from boas into snakes, from snakes into earthworms, and eventually from earthworms into insignificant ants, dispersing in space amid flickering light!

The spiritual and magnetic field was completely disrupted because the thousands of electric arcs were gone at the same time. The perception rune arrays of everyone’s crystal suit were creaking, as if the sole eye of the giant monster was really blinded by Li Yao, which made it scream miserably in pain!

The entire automatic defense array crashed!

The power of a single shot was as invincible as that!

The heated battlefield was seized by a few seconds of weird silence after the shot.

Everybody was dumbfounded and sweating hard. They found it hard to believe their eyes, ears, and all the other sensory organs. They could not trust the estimated damage displayed on the probe magical equipment of their crystal suits, either!

The damage of the shot was even more powerful than the barrage of a triple main gun on a main-force warship. Was the guy really ‘just’ a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, not in the Divinity Transformation Stage or even a higher level?

“God… God bless the federation!”

When a lot of soldiers of the federal army stepped out of the space stations like headless flies into the cold universe, they were still filled with confusion, if not fear and desperation, because they did not understand what was going on and what they should do at all!

The orders from their superiors were not trustworthy. The extraterrestrial devils, which they had barely heard of for more than a hundred years, revisited the human world. The expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings was likely to assault the strategic locations of the federation at this moment, too. Troubles were arising both inside and outside, and everybody was panicking. To make matters worse, they lacked organization and leadership. Could there be a more terrible situation and a more perilous moment?

At that time, even the bravest, firmest, and most optimistic of them did not have the courage to imagine just a few hours into the future, which would certainly be unbelievably miserable and dark!

They were merely risking charging forward and fulfil their responsibility with their lives, driven by the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars emblem on their chests as well as the honor and instincts of soldiers!

When they saw the dense space torpedoes, the intimidating army of ghosts, and the crazily dancing lightning, nobody knew how to break through the impenetrable defense line!

They knew how to die, but they did not know how to win!

However, right now—

Li Yao’s shot gave them an answer and the hope of victory!

“So, there is such an expert on our side supervising the situation. We’ve got nothing to fear!”

“Is—is he a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator? No. I’ve seen the battle videos of the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators before. Such a shot couldn’t have been launched by a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. He must be in the Divinity Transformation Stage. He must be!”

“The fire support provided by the Nascent Soul Stage and the Divinity Transformation Stage has completely destroyed the lightning defense array. What are we waiting for? March forward. For the federation!”

“For the federation!”

“For the federation!”

Wars could not be won by one or two experts.

But the splendid performance of the top-tier experts on the front line could indeed boost morale, tear apart the enemy’s most vulnerable part, and add a fatal weight onto the scale of victory!

The shot drained almost all of Li Yao’s spiritual energy temporarily. He had lost the protection of the crystal suit and the mustard-seed combat suit, too. He floated in the cold vacuum like a block of rotten wood.

However, he was not frightened, because he clearly sensed that the tides of spiritual energy behind him that were a hundred times more powerful than him were already set on an unstoppable rampage!

The ‘meteor shower’ made of the ordinary soldiers of the federal accelerated abruptly after a moment of hesitation, marching into the enemy’s crowd overwhelmingly!

The army of ghosts hesitated for a few more seconds than them.

The reason was simple. The army of ghosts were actually being controlled by the ‘Half Intelligent Battle Telepathic Thoughts Amalgamations’, an artificial intelligence supported by big data. They could only choose the appropriate tactics based on the situations that were stored in the database.

However, even the most enormous database could not have imagined that there would be such a crazily extravagant man who could afford building so many precious primeval treasures into a ‘Primeval God-Sealing Cannon’ that could only be activated once!

Li Yao’s craziness and magnificence was out of the database’s bounds.

The warriors controlled by artificial intelligence were all cramping crazily, as if they were shuddering in fear under Li Yao’s powerful cannon.

When they finally moved out of the infinite loop caused by data overflow, the soldiers of the federal army had already reached them!

The army of ghosts were obviously much stronger, but the ‘battle shells’ under their control were bodies made of flesh and blood. Those bodies had slept in the medical cabins for decades, which had made their limbs somewhat wither.

Besides, even though the artificial intelligence could simulate the most delicate tactical movement based on the data, there were some things that it could never simulate.

For example, morale.

For example, spirits.

For example, the blood-boiling feeling motivated by the belief of victory, supported by the Horn of Charge, and summoned by the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag!

In space, a soundless, deafening chaotic battle broke out.

The soldiers of the federal army, whose eyes were burning with passion, were bold enough to charge at the Fighting Spirits ahead of them, who were theoretically in the Core Formation Stage, even though there were only a couple of them, just to consume the spiritual energy of the Fighting Spirits and the durability of their crystal suits.

It was the tactic that the army of ghosts adopted to deal with Li Yao and Long Yangjun just now. But now, the federal army, which had greater numbers, implemented it on them instead.

Explosions were bursting out everywhere with broken sabers and swords. Translucent flowers of blood were blossoming only to be shattered the next second. The gory, chaotic battle covered the space station with a hazy, red veil!

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

As time went by, the messengers that Luo Qisheng sent out delivered the news to more and more districts. More and more local troops and the experts of the local universities, sects, and Exo Societies, who had already vaguely felt something, flew out of the airtight gates to check what was going on.

Paper could not wrap fire forever. No lie could deceive everyone forever.

More and more space torpedoes were remotely detonated. The swirls of spiritual energy they raised actually consumed a lot of warriors on their own side. The ‘wound’ that was just torn by Li Yao and Long Yangjun had no chance to be healed at all. The defense line of the army of ghosts was showing signs of collapse!

“Monster Li!” Long Yangjun appeared by Li Yao’s side. Her hands moved quickly and created an invisible spiritual shield, enshrouding Li Yao and protecting him from the low temperature and the vacuum.

Even Long Yangjun had never seen such a powerful shot before. The elite warrior of the Nuwa civilization could not help but eye Li Yao up and down and remark, “That’s rather powerful, isn’t it?

“Of course,” Li Yao said casually. “I haven’t had a shot for a hundred years!”

“…There’s no need to brag about yourself now. Hurry and refill yourself!”

During the fierce battle, the two of them had blown up hundreds of Fighting Spirits together and had reached their limits. Had it not been for the cover and reinforcement of the federal army, they might have been drained by the army of ghosts.

Thankfully, the federal army was marching forward unstoppably. They had also carried a lot of pills from the Ancient Sages Sector that could quickly recover their spiritual energy. After the twelve top experts of the Ancient Sages Sector joined hands, they certainly had the rarest treasures in the world. Their pills were all the most fabulous medicines in the world!

Li Yao grimaced. There was no need to keep up an expert’s demeanor in front of Long Yangjun. He hurried to retrieve dozens of fluorescent pills whose cores were various colors from his Cosmos Rings and swallow all of them. The pills turned into scorching, cold, sweet, or bitter juices when they were still inside his throat. Then, they circulated inside his body, nurturing his internal organs and limbs. He could not help but moan in great satisfaction!

After dozens of streams of spiritual energy flowed three times around his veins, he was finally vigorous enough to focus the spiritual energy on his eyes and examine the damage that his previous shot had caused.

When he saw the dents on the surface of the space station that looked like craters, he was slightly dazed, too.

That shot does seem a bit too powerful, Li Yao thought to himself.

Chapter 1755 - The Situation Looks Good!

Chapter 1755: The Situation Looks Good!

“Are you alright?”

Luo Qisheng jumped at the two of them in excitement, almost clutching Li Yao and Long Yangjun as life buoys. As an expert in the Core Formation Stage, he had known that the two of them must be very strong, but he did not expect them to be so strong. The world-blighting shot from Li Yao just now had almost blown up his heart too when it blew up the pivot of the lightning defense array!

“Medic! Medic!” Luo Qisheng roared through the broadcast magical equipment. “Where are the medics?”

Under the stormy fire support, a team of medics in white crystal suits with silver jars on their backs flew close from not far away. They looked at Li Yao full of admiration and reverence first before establishing a temporary defense array next to Li Yao and Long Yangjun and aimed the vacuum injectors, which were connected to the medicine jars on their back, at the two of them.

Pu! Pu! Pu! Pu!

Tremendous bright green gel spurted out and wreathed them without leaving any gap. The high-energy nutrition drugs and recovery drugs contained inside the gel quickly leaked into their pores, flowing, soothing and nurturing among the veins and nerves.

Li Yao felt as comfortable as if he were soaked in the most advanced medical cabin. Not only did the weird gel that looked like jelly boast the function of repairing the broken veins and nerves, it was also triggering a natural counterforce as he moved his hands and feet, giving the feeling that an expert masseur was at his service. His efficiency of absorbing the pills from the Ancient Sages Sector was significantly increased.

The modern war always highlighted the cooperation between Cultivators and ordinary soldiers.

The Cultivators were strong both as attackers and defenders. As arrowheads and edges, they could be invincible. Their biggest shortcoming was that the duration of their fight was too short, and they were unable to be engaged in high-intensity battles for too long. One moment of carelessness, and they might be besieged by the enemy after their spiritual energy ran dry. In the most extreme cases, even the best expert might be killed by a bunch of ordinary soldiers.

The ordinary soldiers were the very contrary. They were quite weak in terms of both attack and defense. However, as long as there were enough of them to form legions, they could provide stable damage output incessantly. The possible range and direction of the attack of the army would be greatly expanded.

Besides, one combat parameter was basically equal for everyone, which was the load and the storage space.

On a battlefield that was not under the influence of gravity, everybody’s load, fuel, and crystals depended on their Cosmos Rings. Even the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators’ Cosmos Rings only had limited room, too, however spacious they might be.

It meant that, even if a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator had combat ability a thousand times higher than ordinary soldiers, it was practically impossible for one of them to carry more ammunition and crystals than what a hundred ordinary soldiers could.

More weapons, ammunitions, crystals, and various sorts of war magical equipment could evolve into complicated, unpredictable tactics, achieving an outcome that even a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator might not be able to accomplish.

The high-level Cultivators and the ordinary soldiers had their own advantages. The key to victory was to combine their advantages.

Getting to the bottom of it, the final outcome of a modern war, at least in head-on clashes that did not involve the mutual bombardment of starships, was mostly decided by whether or not the common soldiers on one’s side could effectively consume the spiritual energy reserve, ammunitions, mental power, and duration of combat of the experts on the enemy’s side, and whether or not the experts on one’s own side could be given the previous time to refill spiritual energy, recover the mental power, and cool down the magical equipment after they were greatly exhausted by the enemy’s common soldiers!

Luo Qisheng did a marvelous job in that regard.

It was because the 414 troop, as an ordinary troop without a special title, was exactly responsible for such a mission in the battlefield—to provide reinforcements and medical and fire support for the experts of the ace troops.

Chiliu! Chiliu! Chiliu! Chiliu!

Every pore on Li Yao’s body was like a bottomless hole, crazily devouring the high-energy nutrition contained in the bright green gel.

The shivering, sticky ‘jelly’ soon turned transparent before it became gray and crispy, falling off from his body and ending up as tiny dust.

“Not bad!” Li Yao grinned, his telepathic thoughts running to the medics like octopi. “What is this weird stuff? It doesn’t taste bad. Give me more!”

The medics all looked at each other in bewilderment. They had drills with quite a few ace troops before, but never had they seen an expert who could suck the emergency medication gel so rabidly and cleanly.

The cluster of gel just now contained two units of recovery drugs, which were enough for an expert in the Core Formation Stage to rest for two to three hours inside!

“What are you waiting for. Hurry up!” Luo Qisheng almost could not wait to grab the medical spray gun and shoot at his life saver himself.

Pu! Pu! Pu! Pu! Pu! Pu! Pu!

This time, more than ten vacuum medical spray guns spurted at Li Yao at the same time, enshrouding him in a huge ‘jelly’ almost five meters in diameter.

“Ahhh!”

After the fierce, soul-stirring fight just now, especially the gratifying shot at the end, Li Yao’s strength that had stagnated for a hundred years was completely activated. At this moment, he was not wearing any armor. Even the mustard-seed combat suit was completely burnt up by the violent spiritual energy. His naked body was directly exposed to the universe, but he could not care less about it. While absorbing the high-energy nutrition materials inside the medical gel, he spurted out the dead blood and the waste gas inside his body from his pores, which produced a series of dense bubbles inside the ‘jelly’. At first glance, his body seemed to be completely boiling!

Despite the blockage of the medical gel, the cold vacuum, and the thick crystal suit, the soldiers of the federal army still felt an oppression that made it hard for them to breathe.

It was like a super enormous warship dozens of kilometers long was sliding past them slowly. Although they knew that the warship would not crash into them, they still felt that their mouth was dry, and their heart was pounding when they saw the endless body of the warship!

Next to Li Yao, Long Yangjun had absorbed the nutrition materials inside the gel, too.

She was now revealing herself as a female. Naturally, she could not be as free at Li Yao. Although she took off the broken crystal suit, she was still wearing the ivory mustard-seed combat suit. The tensile materials of the suit further highlighted her elegant curves.

After she absorbed tremendous nutrition drugs, undisguisable flames of spiritual energy were popping up from her mustard-seed combat seed, too. The previous damage and fatigue had mostly recovered.

Li Yao glanced at Long Yangjun and then observed the battle in front. Then, he nodded and said, “The situation looks very good. It seems that we don’t need to attack again…”

“Shut up!” Long Yangjun’s telepathic thoughts crashed into him brutally. “Just enjoy your meal and keep your mouth shut!”

The elite warrior of the Nuwa Clan turned around and spoke to Luo Qisheng solemnly through telepathic thought transmission. “The battle up head is going on very smoothly. By our estimation, Professor Mo Xuan can’t have too many available forces under his control. The army of two to three thousand ghosts and the war puppets here are very likely all that he has.

“Just now, we slew more than half of the army of ghosts. They have lost the enhancement of the lightning defense array, too. They are completely suppressed and will be surrounded very quickly!

“The army of ghosts have been fighting for quite a while, too. With their bodies that have soaked for so many years in the medical cabins, they cannot weather through such a protracted battle!

“The enemy’s defense line is about to collapse. Everything looks promising!

“Colonel Luo, hurry up and discuss with the commanders of other troops regarding the battle plan after we break into the space station!”

“Huh…” Luo Qisheng narrowed his eyes. The super-large helmet on the specially-made crystal suit for commanders on his head helped him to analyze the situation with the highly-precise crystal cameras. “It’s true. If things go on like this, we will break into the space station in half an hour!”

Hardly had he concluded his sentence when abrupt changes took place!

From the airtight gates where the space torpedoes and the army of ghosts flooded out, almost a thousand black iron balls flew out again!

Those iron balls looked like the hammers that the barbarian Cultivators in the age of ancient Cultivators were best at. Dense stings were all over their surface. Among the stings, countless metal whips that could extend and shrink like tentacles were shaking incessantly. They gave the feeling that they were some sort of weird germs that had been enlarged by billions of times!

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

Deep blue electric arcs flowed out of all the iron balls. Instead of attacking the enemy, they produced a magnificent force field and attracted all the iron balls into one monolithic ball that was almost a hundred meters in diameter!

The technology to attract each other with the force field was similar to the plugging technology when the Ares Extension was applied. All the parts could be separated and combined freely, making it quite convenient to use them.

However, this time, after the enormous ball almost a hundred meters in diameter wriggled for a moment, it turned into a giant that was crouching and holding its arms. Then, it slowly stretched out its arms and legs and ‘sat’ up in space, staring at the federal army on the opposite side coldly!

The big iron balls full of stings were the ‘muscles’ and ‘bones’ of the giant. The magnetic force that was flowing among the iron balls swiftly was its nerves and veins. When the giant completely stood up, it was more than two hundred meters tall!

“Hooo!”

Deep blue flames of spiritual energy were burning from the gaps of the iron balls that made up the giant’s ‘face’. It was like a living creature in space that was grimacing and roaring at the federal army.

The giant’s voice was inaudible in space, but everybody was able to ‘see’ its roars, which were sweeping the federal army like blue, circular ripples. Wherever they reached, the soldiers of the federal army staggered as if they were drunk when they were affected by the attack!

It was mental attack of a very high intensity!

Bulging his eyes, Li Yao stared at the huge monster two hundred meters tall for a long time. Then, he turned back slowly and looked at Long Yangjun.

Long Yangjun blushed, which was quite rare for her. The veins on her temples bulged for a long time. Finally, she gnashed her teeth. “I summoned the monster. I will take care of it!”

Chapter 1756 - Abyss Jellyfish, Iron Troll!

Logically, faced with the crystal suits that boasted high speed and agility, such a human-shaped machine two hundred meters tall was of little actual significance despite the astonishing sound and visual effect. It could even prove to be very clumsy.

However, the iron troll made of iron caltrops and magnetic field had a swiftness that was utterly disproportionate to its size. There was not any mechanical structure on its ‘arms’ and ‘legs’ at all, which were purely attracted by the magnetic field. Therefore, the limbs could be extended, retracted, or turned as it wished. They could even launch the enormous iron caltrops like cannonballs!

Before the real attacks were performed, the giant would release intense mental attacks first to shock the brain nerves of the Exos of the federal army, casting them into a momentary daze.

When the soldiers of the federal army came back to themselves from dizziness, the iron drops several meters in diameter surrounded by electric arcs were already smashed into their faces.

In terms of body size, it was a battle of an elephant versus mice.

However, the elephant was actually as agile as a mouse, and the ‘mice’ were as clumsy as regular elephants.

The iron troll swept everything on its way invincibly. Wherever it reached, crystal suits collapsed, and blood and bodies were sent flying. Almost a hundred valiant soldiers shed their blood in the cold space before they had the chance to grunt!

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

The iron troll could do more than just melee combat. Its body was made of a thousand iron caltrops. Therefore, its body could freely be twisted and changed. Attracted by the force field, the limbs of the giant were growing and shrinking. They even became four enormous cylinders from which countless iron caltrops spurted out toward where the soldiers of the federal army were densest. It was not until the caltrops reached the center of the enemy’s battle formation that they exploded abruptly into a fiery ocean of death!

The situation on the battlefield was immediately reversed.

The federal army, which had been pushing forward quickly just now, was blocked by the inhuman force.

The army of ghosts that were more or less disordered previously, on the other hand, regrouped under the cover of the giant and were ready to launch a counterattack at any time!

The soldiers of the federal army, who came from various troops and lacked effective organization and leadership, were charging forward purely with their courage and determination under the summon of the Horn of Charge.

Such an army might be sharp enough, but it was short of tenacity. They could fight a winning battle, not a losing one!

If the situation on the battlefield was promising, they could push forward with a high morale and fight crazier and crazier as they moved forward, offering a performance that was almost close to that of an elite troop. But if there were signs of failure, they would immediately be crushed and blown back to their real appearance that was disorganized loose sand. It was utterly impossible for them to be regrouped.

The tenacity to fight a losing battle was perhaps the biggest difference between a common troop and an ace troop!

“What the heck is that?”

Even Li Yao, as an experienced refiner, had never seen such a weird… what seemed to be a war puppet before.

The iron caltrops that made up its torso and limbs seemed to be space torpedoes that were even larger in size, but the spiritual and magnetic field that constructed the veins and nerves around its body was the key. How was that created? And how was such an enormous giant controlled in such a fluent and flawless way?

“It’s—it’s the ‘Super Deviant Spirit’ that Professor Mo Xuan produced, the most awesome artificial intelligence in war!”

A light space shuttle flew close under the protection of more than ten soldiers of the federal army. Li Yao observed carefully, only to discover that the two-seated cockpit of the space shuttle had been simply modified. The pilot was sitting in the front seat, but a huge cluster of shivering ‘jelly’ was on the seat behind. Inside the ‘jelly’ was a weird super crystal processor.

It was Liu Wenshan, the refiner who was trapped in the Spiriters’ Realm and forced to join Professor Mo Xuan’s research project. Li Yao, Long Yangjun, and the federal army had rescued him just now.

The field that he was most adept at was exactly crystal processor automation. Artificial intelligence was his strong suit!

“Do you still remember what I said? I overheard from some members of the research team that Professor Mo Xuan produced nineteen super artificial intelligences after decades of hard work. Other than the two failed products that were eventually obliterated due to logic mistakes and data overflow, seventeen were successful!”

Telepathic thoughts were spreading out of the weird metal brain as Liu Wenshan said in a hurry, “The seventeen super artificial intelligences are different from the other Deviant Spirits that run real-time calculations with the support of big data. Their computational ability is at least a hundred times higher than that of the common Deviant Spirits and very close to the way of thinking of real humans. They have also been endowed with marvelous techniques by Professor Mo Xuan or maybe the extraterrestrial devils!

“According to the seasoned specialists in our research team, such super artificial intelligences even have a special code name in the army of ghosts. They are known as ‘Hyper Spirits’!

“Most of the Hyper Spirits are designed to hack and control planetary-level defense arrays, flagship-level warships, and mainframe crystal processors that control an entire space zone. But to ensure security, Professor Mo Xuan seems to have refined one or two Hyper Spirits for single combat purposes. The monster in front of our eyes must be one of them!”

Hyper Spirits…

There was no telling how many Deviant Spirits Professor Mo Xuan had produced in the past few decades, but only nineteen of them were qualified to be known as ‘Hyper Spirits’. Two of them had even failed during the experiments!

Even Professor Mo Xuan had failed despite the technical support of the extraterrestrial devils. It was not hard to imagine the complexity and magnificence of the Hyper Spirits.

The computational ability and databases of the Hyper Spirits were powerful enough to hack the mainframe crystal processors of the planetary-level defense arrays and flagships. No wonder they were able to build and control such a complicated force field model!

“Those things are not easy to deal with,” Luo Qisheng also said solemnly. “I don’t know much about the so-called Hyper Spirits, but I know that the torso and limbs of the giant are made of the most advanced space torpedoes of the federation known as ‘Abyss Jellyfish’!

“Those space torpedoes are different from the regular goods just now. Their explosive units have been embedded with high-pressure, artificial marrow crystals. Their surfaces are also carved with ten times more power rune arrays than common space torpedoes. Their speed, agility, and blast are dozens of times greater than common space torpedoes!

“Do you see the crazily flying chains around them? They are the magnetic attraction devices that guide them to fly to the target with the most intense spiritual waves automatically. If the target is not powerful enough, it may even be attracted to them before it is surrounded and blown into pieces!

“The Abyss Jellyfish, as super space torpedoes, are very expensive. It is not worthwhile to deal with regular targets with them. They are specially designed to deal with Colossi!”

“The Colossi?” Li Yao’s eyes flickered abruptly.

Luo Qisheng nodded. “Correct. More strictly speaking, it is designed to hinder and block the operation of the Colossi in order to buy more time for the cannons, troops, and Colossi on our side to gather!”

“Is that so?” Li Yao sneered. “Can it stop a Colossus?”

“No magical equipment can really stop a Colossus except for another Colossus.” Luo Qisheng smiled bitterly. “But right now, so many ‘Abyss Jellyfish’ have been turned into such a magnificent structure after Professor Mo Xuan’s crazy modification under the enhancement of the ‘Hyper Spirits’! There are no Colossi in Hundred Flowers City. The dozens of Colossi that the federation has are all deployed at the capital, the factories of warships, and the major mining bases!

“There’s nothing we can do about the monster!”

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao stared at the ravaging iron troll. He absorbed the spiritual energy and the nutrition materials at a much higher speed. The deep green gel was turning transparent at a visible rate.

He and Long Yangjun looked at each other, both noticing the hunger in each other’s eyes.

“We… have failed. We didn’t expect that there would be something like this Hyper Spirit.” Looking at the soldiers in the front line which were on the brink of collapse, Luo Qisheng sounded hopeless. “The army of ghosts are regrouping. After they finish regrouping and launch a counterattack, our army will completely collapse. Even the bravest soldier will only end up as a target for the army of ghosts. After the collapse, it will be impossible for us to gather an army of such a scale and morale!”

“Then, I guess we don’t have a choice now.” Li Yao widened his eyes. Every muscle on his body was vibrating like a high-frequency dagger, breaking the medical gel apart immediately and turning it into vague green mist that covered his body.

Long Yangjun broke out of the medical gel, too. Staring at the iron troll, which was on a rampage far away, she calculated the combat pattern and movement of the enemy while turning a Cosmos Ring on her thumb that was from the primeval age unhurriedly in the meantime.

“This must be Professor Mo Xuan’s trump card,” said Li Yao. “I assume that he must be very annoyed right now, because he has to show all his trump cards when the game just got started!”

“I suppose he is,” Long Yangjun said. “Even if Professor Mo Xuan has indeed produced nineteen Hyper Spirits, most of them are certainly prepared to hack strategic mainframe crystal processors instead of fighting solo battles.”

“Let’s just hope so,” Li Yao mumbled. “We will run out of cards after we play the jokers!”

“If I may ask, what are you going to do?” Luo Qisheng was slightly dazed. Realizing what the two of them were trying to do, he was both excited and embarrassed. “Don’t go there! You have done enough for the federation! Your physical strength and spiritual energy have not recovered yet. Your crystal suits and Ares Extensions have been blown apart!

Even though you are experts in the Nascent Soul Stage, you will be no match for it. It is a terrible weapon designed to slow down the Colossi!

“This is our war. There’s no reason why you should be sacrificed. Just retreat. We will cover you! Two high-level Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators shouldn’t die for nothing. We only have the hope of the final victory if the available forces are preserved!”

“You… will cover us?” Li Yao felt his eyes turn hot. He recalled the day in the Heaven’s Origin Sector a hundred years ago when he was covered, protected, and supported by a million people under the flying flags.

He patted Luo Qisheng’s shoulder so hard that he almost broke the guy’s armor.

He could not help but grin. With glamorous brilliance beaming out of his eyes, he said, one word after another, “Colonel Luo, thank you for your kind offer. However, there are two things that I must tell you—

“Firstly, you will soon know that this is not just your war. This is also… a war of mine.

“Secondly, we will not retreat or die for nothing!

“Abyss Jellyfish, Iron Troll, weapons born to stop the Colossi? We shall see if you are capable of stopping the Colossi!”

Before he finished the sentence, Li Yao and Long Yangjun accelerated into two streaks of dazzling brilliance and marched back into the heated battlefield!

Chapter 1757 - Unstoppable!

In the front of the battlefield, the soldiers of the federal army who were trapped in the attack range of the iron troll were all grasped by desperation because of the mental attack.

“Too—too strong!”

“What kind of monster is this? Why is it attacking in such a weird way?”

“Ahh!”

The enemy did not have a real body. Or rather, it had an erratic and extensible body. When it was faced with the ordinary soldiers who were relatively weak, all it needed to do was to impose a strong push on the iron caltrops, and the collision would be enough to shatter the soldiers’ bodies. When faced with the commanders in the Refinement Stage or the Building Foundation Stage, three to five ‘Abyss Jellyfish’, the super space torpedoes, would come at them together and be detonated at the same time after they were attracted to the commanders with the magnetic field. The Cultivators on the battlefield, who were small in number in the first place, suffered great casualties!

Under the cover of the iron troll, the army of ghosts on the opposite side successfully completed regrouping. They formed piton-shaped units in groups of three to five. The exhaust flames on their backs that were getting brighter and brighter suggested that they were about to launch a fatal counterattack!

The federal army’s battle line that was slightly disordered at the beginning began to slow down, halt and disperse.

Some soldiers were hesitating, some of them were slowing down, some were launching all the ammunitions and spiritual energy on their crystal suits out of fear only to miss all the targets, and some started to charge at the iron troll with passionate roars!

“For the federal army!” Luo Qisheng roared. His throat rolled for a long time, but he could not say another syllable. He simply drew the chainsword that had accompanied him for decades, which he could not bear to throw away even though it had been maintained and strengthened for too many times, and aimed the tip at the iron troll. All the spiritual energy of the Core Formation Stage Cultivator blew out of his abdomen while he followed Li Yao and Long Yangjun’s charge!

With everything coming to this point, I shall die without regrets!

When the iron troll glared at him with its weird eyes that were made of deep blue flames of spiritual energy, the old colonel suddenly had such a weird thought.

It was a great way to conclude his hundred years of service in the army. Not bad at all. But it was a pity that…

Right when Luo Qisheng thought that he was about to suffer the iron troll’s most powerful mental attack, the most unbelievable scene happened!

The thousand data streams that were projected onto his retina were all jumping crazily, as if two very powerful sources of interference had appeared in front and disrupted all the probe magical equipment on his crystal suit.

The next second, a few data streams soared and soon surpassed the limits!

Certain unbelievably strong objects were summoned to this world!

“This is—”

The seasoned Colonel slowly opened his mouth, finding it hard to believe his eyes. In his trance, he was even wondering if he was having an illusion on the verge of death!

“This—this—this is—”

The soldiers of the federal army, who were all mired in the desperate battle, saw the most unforgettable scene in their entire life in shock!

The cold universe was like a dark swamp.

But from the middle of the invisible swamp, two magnificent, daunting iron giants were slowly ascending out of the darkness, stretching out their limbs and spiritual energy to their hearts’ content!

One of them was like a black skeleton, surrounded by deep red thorny veins. Its head was divided into four parts by a huge cross. At the center of the cross, the glittering sole eye was emitting a brilliance that was even more dazzling than a supernova.

The other one was in black and white. It was mysterious and unpredictable, looking like both an angel who had descended from heaven for salvation and a great devil who was about to destroy everything ruthlessly!

In terms of size…

The two giants that were no more than fifty years tall were utterly incomparable to the iron troll that was more than four hundred meters tall after it was completely expanded.

From the perspective of the boundless universe, such a height was nothing but a grain of sand.

However, the flames of spiritual energy that were blossoming from the runes on the surface of the giants, the joints of the plate of the armor, and the eyes of the two giants were burning furiously and expanding into two vivid images in the void that were a hundred times larger than their real bodies!

“Hooo!”

The black skeleton bound by crimson thorns, which seemed to have just crawled out of the bottom level of hell, roared at the iron troll, triggering red ripples that smashed the blue ripples released by the iron troll into pieces. Even the deep blue aura around the iron troll was affected, and its enormous body size was shrinking and became less compact than before!

When the two powerful mental attacks collided brutally and the final victor was obvious, all the soldiers of the federal army around immediately realized that—

They were Colossi, the ultimate single weapons to roam and dominate the universe!

“C—C—Colossi!”

“They’re our Colossi! They are on our side!”

The arrival of a Colossus on a space battlefield was often the most powerful excitant for the soldiers on its side. There was no need to mention what kind of effect two Colossi could bring at such a critical moment!

The feeling of controlling a Colossus was completely different from the feeling to control a crystal suit.

Even the most advanced crystal suit would have a tiny lag during control, as if when one was trying to scratch their feet through boots.

However, the Colossus adopted an entirely different method of control. It was especially so for Li Yao, who had the assistance of Little Black, the protective and ancillary artificial intelligence specially designed for the Colossus in the Star Ocean Imperium. When he was soaked inside the body of Little Black, he felt that he was completely melted into the Colossus. He was the Tartarean Skeleton, and the Tartarean Skeleton was him!

“You are trying to stop the Colossi with such a thing?”

Sensing that his telepathic thoughts were spreading to the Tartarean Skeleton’s limbs, Li Yao was so excited that he could barely control himself. His left eye was as red as blood, and his right eye was as dark as ink. As weird brilliance beamed out of his two eyes, the flames of light behind the Tartarean Skeleton focused into dozens of narrow and long wings, pushing it to charge at the iron troll.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

He was ten percent faster than the iron troll. Passing through the abdomen of the iron troll seven times, he detonated the super space torpedoes that made up the iron troll with the dozens of wings of black fire that were almost invincible sharp blades.

Not only was the iron troll unable to follow the Tartarean Skeleton’s pace when it was waving the four limbs, even the blast of the super space torpedoes after they were detonated were left far behind by Li Yao, too. Also, because they exploded right inside the body of the iron troll, they even increased the instability of the magnetic field of the iron troll. After a few stabs, the number of the super space torpedoes had been greatly reduced, and the deep blue electric arcs were much dimmer than before, unable to keep the giant in the shape of a human any longer.

“Ahh!”

The iron troll deserved to be a Hyper Spirit that could simulate the feelings and emotions of humans perfectly with the immense computational ability. It was actually raising its head and screaming miserably, giving Li Yao a weird feeling that a brutal soul was truly sealed in the middle of the super space torpedoes!

However, the next second, the Tartarean Skeleton uttered sharp alarms. Three tentacles made of hundreds of space torpedoes blew at him from behind without a sound. The chains among the space torpedoes were connected to each other, constituting a cage of destruction!

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

A series of enormous light balls immediately consumed the Tartarean Skeleton. As it turned out, the iron troll had altered the magnetic field model in time and turned into an enormous ball from the human shape. Tentacles and flagella were protruding out of the ball anytime, which were rather similar to the Abyss Jellyfish, the basic units that made up the monster.

“Be careful. There’s no time and place for you to maintain the Colossus here!”

The Yin Yang, Long Yangjun’s Colossus, dashed forward, leaving countless blurred shadows behind. All the blurred shadows dispersed around the iron troll and raised black-and-white light blades that were purely focused with spiritual energy. Almost a thousand light blades pierced into the body of the iron troll’s ball-shaped body!

The light blades were not attacking the space torpedoes but affecting the magnetic field and the communication network of the iron troll. As a result, the space torpedoes were removed from its body one after another, when the veins and nerves of the monster were cut apart!

The space torpedoes that had been removed from its body were naturally detonated by the soldiers of the federal army!

More and more space torpedoes were thrown away, and the iron troll was smaller and smaller in size. The forms that it could take became more and more simple. It was much easier to grasp its attack model now!

The iron troll was riddled with holes under Long Yangjun’s attack. The deep blue flames of spiritual energy were flickering in fear. It extended countless tentacles furiously trying to snatch the Yin Yang, sometimes even spurting space torpedoes to Long Yangjun hoping to blow her up. However, Long Yangjun’s Yin Yang was the fastest and most agile Colossus of what the twelve experts from the Ancient Sages Sector carried. It was even faster than Li Yao’s Tartarean Skeleton. How could the iron troll do as it wished?

“Found it!” Long Yangjun’s eyes were as cold as ice, as she stared at the hundreds of space torpedoes at the core of the ball-shaped body of the iron troll. “The computational units and the control chips must be installed right there!”

At this moment, the destructive light balls around the Tartarean Skeleton had all perished. Although the surface of the Colossus was slightly dimmed, even more violent flames of spiritual energy were surging out under Li Yao’s fury. Li Yao gritted his teeth hard to straighten his left arm and open his fingers. All the crimson thorny veins around its body were condensed on the left army and soon constructed into what appeared to be the barrel of a cannon in front of his left arm.

A highly dangerous red light ball was generated from the thorny barrel.

The iron troll sensed the fatal spiritual waves from Li Yao’s side, too. The only solution filtered by the enormous database was to run away immediately. But the black-and-white light blades from Li Yao were improving both their speed and density to a higher level in the moment, harassing the deep blue halo that supported its body, making it unable for the monster to move. How could it run away?

“Explode now!” Li Yao roared. The destructive force hidden deep inside the Tartarean Skeleton erupted like a hurricane and gathered in the thorns on the left palm, turning into an enormous light ball more than a hundred meters in diameter, which then submerged into the core of the body of the iron troll!

Chapter 1758 - Silver Tomb

After a moment, all the crazily dancing flagella and tentacles around the iron troll were ossified and straightened. They extended as far away as possible, as if they were trying to get out of the range of explosion.

But there was no time!

The blood red light ball exploded abruptly at the core of the iron troll, swallowing everything within a thousand meters instantly. The strong radiation and interference caused by the light ball even completely blew the ‘nerves’ and ‘veins’ of the iron troll into smithereens. Almost a thousand space torpedoes were detonated at the same time before they proliferated crazily like abnormal tumors. After they reached the limits of ugliness, they exploded, shrank, and perished, leaving countless broken pieces that were rapidly revolving behind!

It appeared as if Li Yao had stabbed a bloody hole in the universe with the Tartarean Skeleton, and the iron troll had been attracted into the hole and vanished forever!

The heated battlefield fell into weird stillness again, but the flames of spiritual energy around the two Colossi were still dancing crazily like two flags, rising high above!

A moment later, everybody was exclaiming in excitement. The soldiers of the federal army were so excited that they had no time to bother whether or not their voice could be heard by each other in the vacuum. Bashing their chests, they uttered the most passionate, loudest, and sincerest roar!

“Long live the federation!”

“Long live the Colossi!”

The cacophony of the crowd might not have been able to pierce through the cold universe. However, the crystal cannons, flying swords, chainswords, vibration sabers, and high-heat axes that were filled with all their spirit, will, and hot blood certainly could!

A moment later, the battle line of the federal army that had almost dispersed a moment ago was compressed into an iron tide again that rushed at the army of ghosts!

The army of ghosts had just changed into the piton-shaped battle formations that were most suitable for high-speed charge, but before they had reached the super high speed that was most necessary for such a battle formation, they were forced to change into the defense mode.

Despite their massive computational ability, they were still cramping nervously as their brains crashed.

Li Yao and Long Yangjun boosted the morale to the highest with only the two of them again!

Now that they had played their final trump cards, naturally, there was no reason for them to stop there. They would certainly ensure that the best effect was achieved.

The ‘Tartarean Skeleton’ and the ‘Yin Yang’ marched into the enemy’s battle formation from two sides. Like wind blowing apart clouds, they were utterly invincible as they pushed forward. They slew the army of ghosts as if they were merely pulling weeds, rewriting the definition of ‘onslaught’!

Boom!

Li Yao casually threw out crimson waves, and a few crystal suits that did not have time to dodge would end up as round fireballs.

Crack!

The bloody thorns were waving around the body crazily. As long as they touched any part on the enemy’s crystal suit, however slipper the plate armor was, they would still snatch it and rip the crystal suit apart as if it were the lousiest wooden box.

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

On the dozens of black wings made of spiritual energy at the back of the Tartarean Skeleton, there was a broken piece of the primeval treasures the size of a fingernail hidden at the core of every feather. All the pieces had been installed with the control rune arrays that Li Yao had carved carefully and baptized repetitively with the blood from his heart. Under the control of his telepathic thoughts, those pieces of primeval treasures could still deal serious damage to crystal suits and even small starships once their speed increased enough.

At this moment, a lot of warriors of the army of ghosts were riddled with holes, with blood flying everywhere, under the attack of the stormy pieces released by Li Yao!

Soon, nothing was in Li Yao’s way anymore. When he looked back, he could only see a whole battleground of gory debris.

There was not a single organized combat unit on the enemy’s side anymore.

That was the dominance of the Colossi that were as strong as the main-force warships but much more agile and swift than them!

“Great job!” Luo Qisheng and Long Yangjun flew toward Li Yao. The old colonel of the federal army could not disguise his excitement at all. In his eyes, Li Yao and Long Yangjun had become two almighty gods that had appeared out of nowhere. He was willing to accept their command. “The army of ghosts at the periphery of District 01’s space station is about to be suppressed by us. What do we do next? Do you clear the battlefield completely, or do we break in right now?”

“We break in right now!” Li Yao and Long Yangjun looked at each other. The two of them did not dare underestimate the enemy anymore after the abrupt changes just now.

Although they reversed the situation with the help of the Colossi, all their trump cards had been revealed, too. Besides, the Colossi were gluttons that consumed mental power, spiritual energy, crystals, and ammunitions at an unbelievable rate. Despite the immensity of Li Yao’s and Long Yangjun’s souls, using the Colossi for a long time would still be as much a burden as when an ordinary soldier waved a saber weighing ninety kilograms for an hour without rest.

The fierce battle just now had caused various battle performance parameters on the two Colossi to slightly drop. Li Yao and Long Yangjun both felt that their souls were slowly burning like candles. If they dawdled, there might be new unexpected changes. So, they might as well charge at the core of the enemy’s battle formation while they still could!

In five minutes, when there was still engagement of fire at the edge of the battlefield, the daring team made of the officers had already gathered.

The two Colossi were certainly the unquestionable vanguards. Li Yao and Long Yangjun broke into the space station through the airtight gate that the iron troll crawled out of a moment ago.

At the core area of the hundred ball-shaped space stations of Hundred Flowers City, District 01 was the space station that had been built the earliest and in the largest scale. The shell of the silver ball was almost a hundred kilometers in diameter. Even a small starship would be able to dive into the space station carefully in order to ship assets. The two Colossi were both less than fifty meters tall, so they did not need to worry that they might bump their heads.

The three airtight gates were under Professor Mo Xuan’s control. Naturally, they would not be opened or closed easily. They did not have time to play the game of hacking crystal processors or cracking the rune arrays, either. So, the soldiers simply spurted tremendous gel at the exit of the airtight gates, forming a super tiny blockage layer to prevent the oxygen inside the space station from leaking out.

Boom!

After ensuring that the internal pressure was stable enough, Li Yao kicked the second and the third airtight gates in front of him heavily with the Tartarean Skeleton.

The daring team exclusively made of Cultivators, led by Luo Qisheng, broke into District 01 with crystal cannons on their shoulders and chainswords in their hands like wolves and tigers, finding their way into the main control room of

Hundred Flowers City and the Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus Information Processing Center!

The weird thing in front of their eyes, however, cast everybody including Li Yao and Long Yangjun into a big surprise.

Inside District 01, the blue sky, the white clouds, and the enjoyable scenery simulated by the Grand Illusionary Land had gone. The only thing left was the silver cabin wall that was emitting cold brilliance that felt like ice. That was all within their expectations and nothing to be surprised at.

However, at the center of District 01, there should have been a lot of authentic soil and plants that made up a fairly large garden for the staff who worked in this place to rest and relieve their pressure. The park had completely vanished!

No. It did not vanish. The part was still where it used to be, except that the colorful flowers, the green bushes, and the fruitful trees inside it all turned silver!

Exactly. After careful observation, everybody realized that things within District 01, from the plants to the buildings, had all turned silver. They looked like silver statues that had just been frozen!

As the core of Hundred Flowers City and the hub of the Spiritual Nexus of the entire Star Glory Federation, hundreds of thousands of researchers, crystal processor experts, and Spiritual Nexus specialists lived in this place. It was supposed to be lively and crowded by people, but now, there was nothing but dead silence, as if the place was a tomb made of silver. All the residents seemed to have gone to another world!

All the members of the daring team shuddered hard at the weird scene.

“What happened in this place? How did it end like this?”

“What exactly is the weird stuff that has consolidated on the ground and on the cabin wall?”

“If Professor Mo Xuan is truly behind everything, what is he trying to do now that even his best Hyper Spirits have been taken down?”

Right then, the ‘silver tomb’, which was still and quiet previously, began to move!

As if a cold wind was blowing from the bottomless level on the stagnant water, ripples were spreading out on the silver materials that enshrouded the cabin ball, the ground, and all the buildings. They turned from solids into thick liquids, running, wriggling, and condensing. Smiling silver faces were surfacing on the ground, wall, and sky.

Seeing the scene, Li Yao felt that lightning was striking inside his head. He immediately understood what was covering District 01. “It’s liquid metal!”

Luo Qisheng realized what was going on, too. He shouted, “Watch out, everybody. Something is not right. This is liquid metal of the mustard-seed level, designed to repair the broken parts of the space stations!”

Liquid metal was not a name for any natural metal but a special alloy mixed by countless metal elements. At a certain temperature, pressure, and spiritual waves, its form could be changed freely, like rubber or gel.

Because it could easily be reshaped, and it could turn into the solid form with a high intensity immediately when the conditions that kept it in the liquid form altered, it served as one of the necessary materials to repair the shells of the starships.

Hundred Flowers City was a space metropolis connected by a hundred enormous space stations. The aging of the shell and the leakages caused by cosmic storms and meteoroid assaults during the daily operation were almost unavoidable. Naturally, a huge amount of liquid metal was stored in this place.

Hundred Flowers City even boasted its own liquid metal factory that produced almost a hundred tons of liquid metal on a daily basis!

At this moment, it appeared that all the liquid metal stored in the entire Hundred Flowers City had been secretly shipped to District 01. The place had been completely drowned and turned into a silver ocean!

On the surface of the silver ocean, right below the big smiling faces, heads, torsos, and limbs were being condensed one after another. Very soon, a lot of liquid metal puppets two to three meters tall with particularly sharp arms and legs were formed. Staggering, they stood up on their feet and stared at Li Yao, Long Yangjun, and the other members of the daring team in silence, continuing smiling.

Chapter 1759 - Mo Xuan, the Extraterrestrial Devil!

Ripples were still spreading out on the surface of the hundreds of liquid metal puppets, as if they were living people who were breathing.

On their oval ‘skulls’, the ripples crowded into the same place, forming what appeared to be facial organs. They seemed to have become scholars who were brooding.

The members of the daring team were all shocked by the weird scene. For a moment, they were at a loss about how to deal with the liquid metal puppets.

Li Yao, on the other hand, was even more greatly stunned.

The appearance of the liquid metal puppets was almost exactly like Professor Mo Xuan’s current life form.

He knew that Professor Mo Xuan had tried to build ‘artificial bodies’ with liquid metal more than a hundred years ago, but he did not know that the professor had indeed succeeded, at least partly.

He was wondering what was residing inside the liquid metal puppets. Was it living souls, pure artificial intelligence, or merely parts of Professor Mo Xuan?

“Lay down your weapons and stop fighting.” Holes appeared on the big faces of the hundreds of liquid metals simultaneously, from which the same voice was broadcast, Professor Mo Xuan’s voice that was filled with pain, desperation, and excitement. “Enough blood has been shed in the cold space. Everybody is fighting for the Star Glory Federation and the civilization of mankind. I don’t want to hurt anyone. So, drop your weapons!”

The hundreds of liquid metal puppets were uttering the same voice. The entire silver world was humming under the shock.

It was obviously Professor Mo Xuan’s voice, but when hundreds of his voices overlapped with each other, it sounded twisted, deep, and weird, giving everybody the feeling that he was some sort of… fiend!

Looking at Long Yangjun, Li Yao bellowed, “Who are you exactly, Professor Mo Xuan or the extraterrestrial devils?”

“What’s the difference?” Self-mocking chuckles echoed from the holes on the heads of the hundreds of liquid metal puppets at the same time. “Besides, even if I claim that I am ‘just’ Professor Mo Xuan, will you believe it? Is there any way that I can prove myself?

“So, it doesn’t matter now.

“On the other hand, you, the experts from… the Ancient Sages Sector, are rather interesting. How can you sense the existence of the extraterrestrial devils, huh?”

He was almost admitting that he was an ‘extraterrestrial devil’ by responding in such a way. Whispers were immediately triggered among the members of the daring team.

At this moment, they finally confirmed that their actions of defiance and insubordination previously were justified.

However, it also suggested that the extraterrestrial devils did exist, and they had corrupted the most critical hub of the Spiritual Nexus to such an extent. The future of the federation was still uncertain!

Li Yao was slightly dazed. Then, he realized that ‘the first real identity’ that he and Long Yangjun had prepared was not really a secret because they publicly announced it a moment ago. Even if Professor Mo Xuan did not have spies in the crowd, with his identity as one of the best refiners of the federation, it certainly would not have been difficult for him to implant certain detectaphones in the crystal suits of some of the soldiers.

Besides, Yan Liren, Master Bitter Cicada, and the rest of the experts were misled by Professor Mo Xuan and teleported to somewhere unknown. They were likely to have been ambushed by Professor Mo Xuan. It was not unusual that Professor Mo Xuan had learned of their ‘real’ identity.

Right then, Luo Qisheng furiously roared, “Professor Mo Xuan, is it really you? How is it possible? The Professor Mo Xuan I knew was a great hero of the federation who saved the federation multiple times and made great contributions for the federation to grow into what it has become today! But right now, you are conspiring with the Black Wind Fleet, controlling all the leadership of Hundred Flowers City, and compromising the hub of the Spiritual Nexus. What do you want exactly?”

“Conspiring with the Black Wind Fleet?” The holes on the faces of the hundreds of liquid metal puppets were shivering at the same time, as if they were all amused. With their piton-like limbs shaking softly, they replied, “No, you’re mistaken. From beginning to end, I have always been a proud Cultivator of the Star Glory Federation. I never conspired with the Immortal Cultivators of the Imperium of True Human Beings; I merely invited them to my trap.

“You must’ve heard a thing or two about the scandal that took place in the capital, but everything you know is fake. It is a plan directed by and starring Jin Xinyue, who intends to die together with the enemy.

“However, the commander of the expedition army of the Imperium is definitely the opposite of reckless. Besides, the information under his control is a hundred times more than what you are aware of. Jin Xinyue’s delicate but fragile scheme is not enough to deceive him at all. However fat and succulent the ‘bait’ appears to be, the Black Wind Fleet will not bite it.

“The federation cannot afford waiting. We cannot bear the consequences of a war that can possibly last decades. Therefore, everything I have done is just a minor ‘fix’ for Jin Xinyue’s plan.

“I detest wars. But no matter what, I must help the federation win this war first. Also, I will turn it into the last war of the Star Glory Federation, or at least, the last traditional war!

“From that day on, absolute peace will embrace everybody in the federation. Even if we may still declare war on the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Alliance of the Holy Covenant in the future in order to disseminate the ideology of ‘absolute peace’ to them, the wars will be completely different from what we have today. They will be easy, clean, painless, and like games!”

The voices echoing from the holes of the liquid metal puppets suddenly turned loud and high pitched, as if a metal hurricane was sweeping across the park!

“You—” Luo Qisheng lost his cool. “Is what they said true? You have been really working on certain surreptitious research in Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital. You—you are trying to lock everybody in the virtual world. You want to transform all human beings into Spiriters!”

“A real Cultivator is never scared to express his ideas,” Professor Mo Xuan said casually. “I have repeated my ideas for decades. I have published more than a hundred papers and books and held countless seminars. Is that really a ‘shocking secret’?”

“But—but we all thought that you were describing a distant future millions of years away!” Luo Qisheng roared. “We did not know that you were as insane as this. We did not expect that the honorable Professor Mo Xuan was actually doing so many clandestine things in secret!”

“There’s no need for a Cultivator to hide his ideas. However, there are too many ways to carry out the ideas. Deception is certainly one of them,” Professor Mo Xuan unhurriedly said. “Because I strode too fast and I was way ahead of my era, I was bound to be counterattacked by the era.

“In the hundred thousand years of history of development of mankind, how many people have been minced into pieces or burned at the stake because they were well ahead of their eras? Those who are one step ahead of their era are heroes. Two steps, geniuses. Three steps, lunatics. What about those who are a hundred steps ahead of their eras? Out-and-out fiends!

“I am a man who was given another life in the first place. What’s terrible about death? I do not fear being mince apart or burned at the stake, much less being derided as lunatics and fiends.

“However, if I know my ideas are right, until I am destroyed at a guillotine or in the middle of fire as a ‘lunatic’ and a ‘fiend’, I will certainly carry on my ideas of ‘absolute peace’ to the end. Nobody can stop me!”

Silver ripples were spreading out on the hundreds of liquid metal puppets, like Professor Mo Xuan’s belief that was burning furiously.

“Professor Mo Xuan!” Li Yao could not help speaking up. “When you showed me the Spiriters’ Realm, didn’t you mention yourself that evolution could not be accomplished overnight but would have to take millions of years to slowly develop? You said that, no matter how wonderful the highly-developed future appeared, it would still be a disaster to make a civilization cover the journey of evolution that should’ve taken millions of years in the blink of an eye, and therefore, we should never do such things, right?”

“Yes. That is exactly what I said.” Professor Mo Xuan sighed softly. The holes on every liquid metal puppet’s face was twisted, as if they were in agony. “After decades of research and exploration, I know all the logic. I know it much better than you do. So, there is no need for you to remind me of that.

“But… but… but…

“I am a human being after all, not a cold crystal processor. My compatriots are still living in pain because of the plague of wars. Their blood will be shed for nothing for millions of years. Countless people will be enslaved, oppressed, tortured, and slaughtered. Countless brilliant civilizations will end up as cosmic dust in the bleak universe. How can I just hide in my library and do my theoretical studies calmly and rationally while waiting for the arrival of the bright future in millions of years' time?

"Even if the odds of success are just one percent, I would like to give it a shot to make the bright future arrive right now. Even if I have to pay everything, even if I am denigrated and obliterated, I will still have fulfilled my responsibility as a Cultivator and a human being for our own civilization, won't I?"

Li Yao cursed loudly in his heart, not knowing what he should say.

"Enough of the cr*p. He must be buying himself more time!" Luo Qisheng roared. "Lock onto the enemy and prepare to shoot!"

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

All the crystal cannons and storm bolters were switched to the mode of maximal damage. Colorful, fatal light balls were expanding out of the barrels.

Professor Mo Xuan's hundreds of liquid metal clones stared at the crystal cannons and storm bolters that were aimed at them and said, "There's no need for me to buy myself more time because… the time has already come.

"Also, if you insist on shooting, you'd better make sure that you aim well. This place is the Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus Information Interaction and Processing Center. I have already hacked all the super crystal processors in this place. They are all extremely precise and vulnerable devices.

"If you free fire in this place, and if the two Colossi go on a rampage sweeping aside everything in their way like they did outside, it will be quite easy for you to destroy the hub of the Spiritual Nexus.

“Once the Spiritual Nexus processing center of Hundred Flowers City at the center of the seven Sectors is seriously damaged, although the Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus wouldn’t be entirely paralyzed, the net speed on the Spiritual Nexus will be lowered by at least thirty percent. It will be much easier for the Spiritual Nexus to be affected and infiltrated, too, which may lead to dire consequences for information transmission and space jumps.

“You wouldn’t wish to see that when the Black Wind Fleet is stabbing at the heart of the federation and the Heaven’s Origin Sector is in great need of the reinforcement from the other six Sectors, or in particular, the Burning Prairie Fleet, would you?”

Chapter 1760 - Silver Slaughterhouse!

Chapter 1760: Silver Slaughterhouse!

As it turned out, the Black Wind Fleet’s target was not the Uranian Ring Sector or the Flying Star Sector, where the greatest starship factories were based, but the Heaven’s Origin Sector, capital of the federal!

Also, judging from Professor Mo Xuan’s meaning between the lines, the Black Wind Fleet had already performed a space jump and stabbed into the heart of the federation like a dagger!

The astounding news overwhelmed everyone.

The hundreds of liquid metal puppets squatted at this moment and jumped close from various directions.

They seemed to be made of the softest rubber, which allowed their limbs and torsos to be folded or extended at will. When they were jumping over, their limbs stretched to almost three meters long, and their torsos shrank into tiny balls, making them look more like some sort of weird four-legged spiders instead of humans.

In such a form, they improved their all-direction agility to the maximum. A soft jump was enough to make them leap dozens of meters!

“Fire!” Luo Qisheng commanded. Thousands of fiery snakes surged out of the members of the daring team. Metal bullets, super high-frequency vibration waves, high-radiation mystic rays… The colorful attacks congregated into destructive torrents and smashed at the enemy.

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

The liquid metal puppets were immediately blown into hives that were riddled with holes before they were cut in half from the waist and torn into smaller metal clusters. In the end, they were even unable to maintain their basic form anymore and just degraded into silver mud. Collapsing on the ground, they shrieked in ear-splitting sounds, trembling, writhing, and struggling.

The liquid metal puppets, not even having a spiritual shield, seemed vulnerable and worthless.

However, after wriggling for a moment, they were condensed into silver ‘rubber balls’ again. The same piton-shaped limbs that looked like arms and legs grew out, and they stood on their feet once more. Their torsos were slowly focused into a bigger oval supporting a smaller oval. Ripples were spreading out on the surface of the smaller oval, producing what appeared to be a smile.

“Faced with absolute peace, even the fiercest weapon is useless,” the liquid metal puppets said with a smile.

The smile chilled everyone who saw it.

Their eyes surpassing the liquid metal puppets, they noticed that more and more puppets were surfacing from the silver ground, the wall, and the ceiling deep inside the space station, which were staring at them without moving like a bunch of monuments.

There were thousands of new puppets and counting.

“How is it possible?” Long Yangjun moaned in disbelief through the Colossi’s special communication channel. “How are so many weird liquid metal puppets controlled exactly? I didn’t see anything like a ‘control chip’ inside them even when they were shredded into pieces just now!”

“They must be remotely controlled by the magnetic field!” Scanning the environment, Li Yao gnashed his teeth. “We’re one step late. The space station has been completely consumed by Professor Mo Xuan. He’s covered the entire area in a certain special magnetic field. Those liquid metal puppets are not single individuals but parts of an enormous magnetic field that is under the control of a mainframe crystal processor.

“Liquid metal actually has a very simple structure, and the attrition when its form is altered is little to none. In other words, it is not afraid of regular violence at all! Even if we cannot locate the mainframe crystal processor and destroy the entire magnetic field, the liquid metal puppets will only be ‘retooled’ time and time again however many we tear apart!”

Thinking quickly, Long Yangjun hurriedly replied, “If so, it’s rather terrible now. If such a mainframe crystal processor does exist, it must be the ‘Gai’-level super crystal processor at the core of the Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus Information Processing Center! Or in other words, Professor Mo Xuan has hacked one of the only three ‘Gai’-level super crystal processors of the federation, and when the two of them are combined, the most terrifying mainframe crystal processor is produced!

“Even if we can locate the mainframe crystal processor, there’s no way we can destroy it. Professor Mo Xuan was quite right. If the Black Wind Fleet has indeed arrived at the

Heaven’s Origin Sector, this is exactly the time when the other six Sectors must reinforce the Heaven’s Origin Sector in full scale. Endless information, data, assets, troops, and warships need to be managed. If the transmission efficiency on the Spiritual Nexus is lowered by thirty percent, however briefly, the federation will certainly lose this war!

“In other words, at this critical moment, Professor Mo Xuan has already taken the Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus as his hostage. Our hands are tied!”

Long Yangjun was not wrong at all.

Professor Mo Xuan indeed controlled, or rather, created perfect timing. He was indeed a terrifying being whose computational ability equaled that of a super crystal processor!

“There must be openings.” Cold sweating popping out, Li Yao could only comfort himself in such a way. “Because even if Professor Mo Xuan took everything into account, he couldn’t have foreseen the arrival of the twelve experts from the Ancient Sages Sector. Us breaking into this space station cannot be of little interference to his plan. Does building so many liquid metal puppets and commanding them to battle not cost his spiritual energy and computational ability?

“Besides, as for Yan Liren, Qi Zhongdao, and the rest of them, even if they are trapped by Professor Mo Xuan with mysterious arts, those Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators are certainly not meat on a chopping block!

“Professor Mo Xuan’s plan was a risky one in the first place. He couldn’t have prepared such redundancies to cope with unexpected factors. We must not be deceived by his gesture of confidence. Firm your belief. The extraterrestrial devils are best at mental attacks, and metal attacks have the best effect when the target has doubts!”

Hardly had Li Yao concluded his sentence when a large batch of metal liquid puppets jumped over for a second time.

This time, they were even faster and larger in number. They had also remembered the shooting trajectories of the daring team, which made it easier for them to dodge. Although they were all shot down merciless once again, they were now only a hundred meters away from the daring team.

Soon, the silver ‘mud’ was wriggling again. They were condensed, charging, and shot down again. Hisses and moans of the metal puppets were echoing nonstop.

They seemed to boast infinite vitality, but the pills and spiritual energy of the daring team were quite finite. Although they carried special incendiary bullets that could generate a temperature of more than a thousand degrees to completely change the nature of the liquid metal materials, they did not have the courage to use them because they were concerned about the special environment in the Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus Information Processing Center.

Besides, the entire space station seemed to have been consumed by liquid metal. Hundreds of special incendiary bullets would be of little help!

Finally—

“My ammo is out!”

“Attack rune arrays are overloaded. Damn it. It needs a half-minute cooldown!”

“Freezing bullets! Who has freezing bullets?”

The firing points became intermittent one after another. Some of the firing points even entirely died down. Except for the few liquid metal puppets that were temporarily frozen, all the remaining liquid metal puppets were unaffected and simply lunging at them with smiles.

Even those liquid metal puppets that were frozen by the bullets actually only lost the thin metal shell at the outmost layer, because the liquid metal inside had already flowed out from their ‘feet’ before the coldness invaded their bodies.

Such an escape tactic reduced the effect of the freezing bullets to the minimum.

The first liquid metal puppet turned into a streak of silver that darted into the members of the daring team, launching a fierce melee attack!

They might be targets that were hit passively during the remote confrontation just now, but they were certainly dominators in the close-distance battle.

Neither the chainswords nor the vibration sabers could cause fatal damage to them. When their bodies were broken apart, the wounds would heal immediately. When their limbs were chopped off, the limbs could turn into sharp ‘vipers’ and launch attacks on their own. It was even less of a deal if their heads were blown up because they could condense dozens of heads that were only decorative!

Only the orange edge of the high-heat axes could deal actual damage to them by disintegrating the internal structure of the liquid metal.

However, what the edge of the axes could destroy was only the tiny bit of liquid metal that came into contact with the edge. Professor Mo Xuan had long calculated and optimized the weakness of the puppets. When they sensed that the temperature was too high, the rest of the liquid metal would automatically disperse and flee from the high temperature before it was focused again.

With the incessant liquid metal materials as supplies, even the most seriously wounds were healable for them.

But things were different for the members of the daring team.

“Ahhh!”

It appeared that the liquid metal puppets could not form weapons that had complicated internal structures because of their limited computational ability. They were merely attacking their enemy with their sharp limbs as cold weapons.

During the close-distance battle, they would take the attacks of the members of the daring team casually first before they absorbed the enemy’s weapons into their bodies and held the weapons with the magnetic field. Then, they would stab at the shoulder or the soft abdomen of the members of the daring team with their limbs. Once they pierced into the bodies of the members through the gaps of the crystal suits, they would turn into tiny metal threads and spread out. Even the toughest men were crying in pain!

However, it seemed that their aim was not to kill. The cutting points that they chose were generally not fatal parts. After they connected themselves to the members of the daring team with liquid metal threads, they would wriggle again and extend countless tentacles like enormous jellyfish or octopi, enshrouding both the members of the daring team and their crystal suits!

Hiss! Hiss! Hiss! Hiss!

Chiliu! Chiliu! Chiliu! Chiliu!

The members of the daring team who were tied by them were struggling hard at first, but the liquid metal simply covered them time and time again tirelessly and finally consumed all of them, transforming them into weird silver statues that stood on the battlefield without moving!

The weird scene made all the remaining members of the daring team feel cold and creepy.

They did not know whether or not they should cut the ‘silver shell’ with their chainswords to free their comrades, fearing that they might accidentally kill their comrades if their operation was careless.

“*sshole. What kind of monster are you?”

Luo Qisheng was waving a high-heat axe in both hands, and a silver river was flowing next to him. But more and more liquid metal puppets surrounded him. They even turned into sharp thorns below his feet and pierced into his ankles. He could not help but bellow in pain!

“Rest assured. Their lives are not in danger.” Professor Mo Xuan’s voice echoed again from all directions. “Even if there is only a one percent likelihood, I cannot bear to kill any human compatriots. I am simply inviting everyone to be a guest in our new world. That’s all!”

The liquid metal puppets soared up and opened their bodies in midair, turning into enormous ‘jellyfish’ that flew toward the old colonel of the federal army until he was entirely consumed!

Chapter 1761 - Lost in the Spiriters' Realm!

"Colonel Luo!"

Watching as Luo Qisheng was consumed by clusters of liquid metal and turned into a silver hill, Li Yao was unable to stop it because he and Long Yangjun were in trouble, too!

In front of the two Colossi, tremendous liquid metal flowed over and piled up into a mountain almost twenty meters tall.

Limbs and organs grew out of the mountains, transforming them into two silver giants that were almost as tall as the two Colossi!

"Colossi—symbols of war, massacre, and humanity's brutal nature!" the two silver giants declared at the same time. "After human beings enter the new world of absolute peace, they will not need the Colossi anymore!"

The two giants sprinted at the Tartarean Skeleton and the Yin Yang. Despite their enormous size, they were even more agile than the small puppets on the ground. Extending and changing their forms, they evaded the sword and saber auras launched by Li Yao and Long Yangjun. Even if some of the attacks cut narrow, long slits on them, they were still utterly unharmed!

Pu!

After they reached the two of them, the silver giants leapt up into two torrents of liquid metal in midair, trying to directly lunge at the two Colossi and perform the same swallowing and infiltration.

Li Yao sniffed. He retreated almost a hundred meters quickly, leaving dozens of blurred shadows of the Tartarean Skeleton behind. All the bloody thorns on its body deeply stabbed into the liquid metal.

Under the surging spiritual energy and the high-frequency vibration, the silver giant collapsed abruptly into silver balls the size of fingernail, which hit the ground like a silver raindrop.

Next to him, Long Yangjun also activated almost a hundred black-and-white light blades that could easily be heated to more than a thousand degrees. She minced the silver giant that jumped at him into scorching pieces, making it unable to be condensed again for a long time.

However, it was not the solution to their current problem.

It was true that the silver balls scattered on the ground failed to condense into a giant dozens of meters tall. But they were consolidated into tiny figurines the size of a hand while they wriggled weirdly. Despite the small size, they each had arms, legs, a torso, a head and all the other necessary organs. There was the same hole in their heads that could be twisted randomly into all kinds of creepy expressions.

“Even the strongest violence cannot solve all problems!” All the tiny figurines, the number of which must have surpassed a hundred thousand, were letting out the same devastated voice while waving their pointy arms. “You can’t kill me because I represent peace. However cruel a war can be, you can never kill peace!”

Gritting his teeth, Li Yao could not help but bellow, “You’re mad!”

“I’m not mad. Those people who are trying to soak the civilization of mankind in war for another million years and even make it self-destruct in war, it is they who are mad!”

The hundred thousand tiny figurines were shrieking at the same time. “Are you such people, too? Are you among those goddamned war fanatics? Why can’t you understand? Why are you so reluctant to join hands with me and create a new world of absolute peace?”

In ear-splitting shrieks, the tiny figurines hopped at Li Yao and Long Yangjun again.

Faced with the overwhelming silver figurines, even Li Yao and Long Yangjun felt that it was tricky despite the two Colossi.

The most critical problem was that they could not bring out the Colossi’s full combat ability. Not only was this place a central hub of the Spiritual Nexus, millions of hostages inside the space station might also have been kidnapped by Professor Mo Xuan. It was possible that their bodies were enshrouded by the weird liquid metal, and their souls were trapped in the Spiriters’ Realm!

If the two Colossi carried out the maximum of their combat ability, it might be possible for them to completely blow District 01 space station into smithereens. But as a result, millions of lives would be lost, and Professor Mo Xuan’s plan might not be stopped at all. With so many hindrances, Li Yao could not make up his mind to attack at all.

Besides, he had noticed that the ocean of liquid metal below his feet was getting deeper and deeper. It was almost drowning the ankles of the two Colossi.

“Something’s wrong below our feet. Hurry and fly up!”

In Li Yao’s roars, the two Colossi ascended quickly. Almost at the same time, countless ‘tentacles’ dashed out of the silver ocean below their feet and reached for their legs with ear-splitting shrieks, only to be melted by the exhaust flames spurted from the power rune arrays below their feet. The tentacles fell back into the silver ocean into orange spots that were blossoming like buds.

However, in midair, the hundreds of thousands of silver figurines were already coming at the two of them relentlessly and crashing into their spiritual shields. As colorful ripples spread out on their spiritual shields, they were constantly shattered, splashing and falling, but they simply wriggled, melted, and condensed again and again until they were blown into pieces again!

“Peace! Absolute peace is about to come!

“Stop now! Let’s not fight each other anymore. I love you deeply, human compatriots!

“Enter the new world together with me, where there is not war but tranquility, not pain but delight and happiness!

“In the new world, mankind will evolve into a purer, more advanced, and more civilized species. That is our only future!”

The silver figurines were creaking nonstop while they were destroyed and remade incessantly. In the end, they even turned into vivid faces of men and women, old and young.

“Young man, why are you so into war?” A silver figurine that put on the appearance of an old grandma with wrinkles all over the face was truly speaking like a weather-beaten woman who was full of pain. “Wars are the worst things in the world. How much pain has war brought to us?”

“It hurts. It hurts so much. Uncle, don’t kill me. Don’t!”

Another silver figurine that looked like a young girl was truly shedding tears, like pearls from the corner of its eyes. While crying, it crashed into the spiritual shield of the Tartarean Skeleton. Naturally, it was immediately ripped into pieces by the spiritual shield that had been activated to the maximum.

“My daughter! My daughter!”

Another two silver figurines seemed to have turned into the parents of the former one. Seeing the miserable death of their ‘daughter’, they were screaming desperately and charged at him, too. “Devils. You war lunatics are the real devils. Give me my daughter!”

Naturally, they were all blown to smithereens and reduced to the most fundamental particles.

Very soon, all the silver figurines seemed to have turned into victims who were tormented in wars, especially the people who were ravaged by top experts in fierce battles. They lunged at the spiritual shield of the two Colossi again.

Alarms each louder than the last were ringing deep inside the two Colossi. Their spiritual shields had both been weakened to the limits and were about to collapse under the scourge of the silver figurines!

Li Yao’s mind… was also deeply stimulated by the vivid expressions and the painful voices of the silver figurines.

“Save me, uncle!”

“It hurts so much. Mom, mom, mom!”

“Wars. Goddamn wars!”

“Why do we have to kill each other? Aren’t we the same kind? Why can’t there be eternal tranquility and absolute peace within the civilization of mankind?”

“Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!”

The voices of men and women, old and young—filled with fear, pain, expectation, hope, and desperation—blasted Li Yao’s brain like enchantments and seemed to be creating real wars in his head as well as the victims who shouldered real pain in those real wars and died helplessly!

Li Yao’s mind was greatly disturbed by the voices. His spiritual shield immediately became riddled with holes.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

A thousand silver figurines flew in. Although thousands of saber auras were blowing around Li Yao’s Colossus, they could do nothing except mince the silver figurines into smaller parts. Those silver figurines simply turned into round balls and attached themselves to the plate armor of the Tartarean Skeleton, blocking the gaps of all the rune arrays and the spiritual stripes!

The flames of spiritual energy that were burning around the Tartarean Skeleton immediately turned dim.

It was like a dam was cracking, and the flood was breaking free inevitable. More and more silver figurines jumped at the Colossus enthusiastically, trying to entirely enshroud the Tartarean Skeleton.

On the other side, the Yin Yang, the Colossus used by Long Yangjun, was not in any better condition. She was also fighting against the liquid metal that had fixed itself to the surface of the Colossus.

The technology of the Colossus was levels higher than the technology of the most advanced crystal suit. There was definitely not a single gap for infiltration on the surface. Also, the intensity of the plate armor was often high enough to take the barrage of the main guns of the warships the hard way. It was barely possible for the liquid metal to dig a hole on the surface of the Colossus.

The internal life sustaining system in the Colossus was also more advanced than the general circulation system on the starships. Nothing would happen even if they spent a month in the vacuum or in an environment of lethal poison.

Therefore, although they had been completely swallowed by the liquid metal, Li Yao’s and Long Yangjun’s real bodies would not be in too much danger anytime soon.

However, it was not necessarily the case for their brains or their souls!

When the two Colossi were struggling hard in the silver ocean, enormous flowers suddenly blossomed in the silver world. All the flowers were moved toward the two Colossi, and the ‘pistils’ made of hundreds of silver antennae shivered rapidly and aimed at Li Yao and Long Yangjun.

“Give up the futile struggle and the passion for war!” Professor Mo Xuan’s inhuman, unsubstantial voice was echoing from all directions again. “Your companions have all been invited to the Spiriters’ Realm as guests. Their life is great there. Why don’t you let go of your prejudice and explore the real Spiriters’ Realm for yourselves?”

Shua!

All the silver flowers expanded, and every ‘pistil’ straightened out, unleashing invisible but massive mental waves. Those waves were based on the brainwaves of the Cultivators, but their frequency had been increased to more than a hundred times!

In only twelve hours, Li Yao had gone through the blast of the four-dimensional ripples, the sudden assault of the extraterrestrial devils in Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital, and the fatal fight with the army of ghosts. His mental power was already running dry, and he was merely persisting with the support of medication.

Therefore, when Professor Mo Xuan launched his most powerful mental attack, he could not shoulder it at all. He merely felt that silver brightness was leaking into the Colossus, like amniotic fluid in a mother’s womb, which enshrouded him softly and dragged him into a dreamland.

At this point, there were 0 hours, 0 minutes, and 0 seconds to go before the Black Wind Fleet arrived at the core space zone in the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

Chapter 1762 - Black Wind Arrives!

The office of the ‘Defense Counsel of the Federation’ was located in the southern suburb of the capital city in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, right next to the General Staff and the Command Center of the federal army.

As a civilization of Cultivators that had strong individuals, the Star Glory Federation had been carrying on a ‘parallel policy’ in terms of national military power since the Old Federation six hundred years ago. While a powerful regular army was maintained, the sects and the individuals, on the premise that they abided by the ‘Constitution of Cultivators’, were allowed to boast an extremely high personal combat ability.

In many cases, the supreme experts from the major sects had a personal combat ability far more advanced than the federal army, but when it came to ‘profoundness’ and ‘durability’, they were certainly no match for the federal army.

During the six hundred years of development in the federation, the military and Cultivators once had contradictions. There was even a dark period known as the Age of Red Dragon Army where one party completely suppressed the other. However, the drawbacks of such a system were soon revealed and rectified. The parallel regime of two fists was restored. The two parties had been supervising each other to achieve a dynamic balance.

After six hundred years of cooperation, and faced with the threat of the Imperium of True Human Beings, the military and the Association of Cultivators, which represented the interests of the Cultivators, had been combined. Today, the highest decision-making and war command center in the federation was not the Department of Defense, the General Staff of the military, or the National Strategies Institute in the parliament, but this place—the Defense Counsel of the Federation, made of the leadership of the military, the leadership of the Secret Sword Bureau, and the many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and even Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators in the Association of Cultivators.

According to tradition, the position of president of the Defense Counsel would be taken by the Speaker of the Federation, and the three vice-presidents were assumed by the big shots from the military, the Secret Sword Bureau, and the Association of Cultivators respectively.

The series of gray, egg-like buildings in the southern suburb of the capital city was the command center of the most fatal armed forces of the seven Sectors in the federation!

At this moment, countless shuttles and fully-armed Exos were milling about inside the gray eggs, like bees that had been infuriated. Alarms were echoing nonstop within the Defense Counsel, too. Everything was a mess!

The military, Secret Sword Bureau, Association of Cultivators, parliament… The giants of various parties came one after another. Even a lot of mysterious people who barely showed up in the news had revealed themselves, but they were obviously anxious, too.

They had every reason to be anxious, because something devastating had just happened.

Two hours ago, more than ten starships disguised as supply ships had launched assaults on three space gates in the periphery of the Heaven's Origin Sector simultaneously. They had successfully seized one of the space gates and blocked the other two with bombs that contained tremendous interferential materials, including Gold Graphite.

It meant that, for the time being, of the three enormous lighthouses in the Heaven's Origin Sector that were supposed to guide the external starships to jump in, two had been entirely turned off, and the brightness from the last had been redirected to the unknown darkness.

Who knew what kind of stuff would pop out from the darkness?

Because of the internal infiltration, the assault was fluent and soundless. It was completed in only half an hour. Also, the assaulters adopted very advanced technology to hack the Spiritual Nexus. They intercepted and replaced the communication between the three space gates and the space jump control center on the ground in advance. Therefore, it was not until half an hour ago that the accident was finally noticed and reported.

The federation today boasted seven boundless Sectors at the edge of the cosmos. It could more or less be counted as a ‘dinosaur’, although not a gigantic one. Naturally, the reaction speed of its central nerves could not be as high as the reaction speed of a mouse.

After the Defense Counsel of the Federation confirmed the seriousness of the issue and sent out the Heaven's Origin

Fleet, the local fleet stationed at the capital, to march at the three space gates, ripples from the four-dimensional space had already raised a turbulence of spiritual energy of an enormous scale near the biggest space gate. A bloody mouth seemed to slowly open and was about to consume the entire space zone!

When Wan Guqing, the Supreme Speaker of the Star Glory Federation, stepped into the command center of the Defense Counsel, the first thing he saw was exactly the colorful, devastating images displayed on hundreds of light beams after the ‘bloody mouth’ was scanned in various ways.

Wan Guqing was two hundred and twenty-five years old. Of all the Speakers of the federation, he was not certainly among the most brilliant. He lacked personal charisma, and his connections with the major sects and the military were not deep enough, either. He was purely a dutiful, hardworking civil official, nothing more.

Many people called him ‘camel’ behind his back. Even his wife and his children sometimes called him that to his face, half-jokingly.

Including himself, everybody knew that he was not one of the Speakers who could dominate the world and be respected as ‘heroes’, but a worker who set the stage, prepared the armor, honed the weapons for the heroes in silence, and sent the heroes to the stage with his shoulder as the stairs. From the Old Federation to this day, six hundred years had passed with almost a hundred Speakers. But only a few had a description of half a chapter in the history textbooks. Most of the Speakers showed up in the appendices with their names and the dates of their birth and death. It was doubtless that Wan Guqing would be one of them. Even his photograph would not be added to the history books, and even the pickiest examination officers would not trick the students with his life events as the questions.

On the other hand, he never complained about his destiny. During his two five-year terms, he had done everything that he could to mobilize all the forces that could be mobilized, accumulating the war potential of the federation coin after coin to lay a foundation for the ‘highest warring state’ to come and to provide armor, swords, and a stage for the real heroic figures such as Ding Lingdang or Jin Xinyue.

In the past decade, he seemed to have grown older by a hundred years. He had originally lacked the vibe of a compelling leader, and now he looked even more clumsy and dumb, like a piece of rotten wood that had been burnt in fire for too many times.

According to the calendar, the new Speaker of the Federation would be elected in another two weeks. From that day on, the various powers of the federation would be transferred one after another. In one and a half months, the new Speaker would swear in right before the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag and billions of people of the federation. After that, he would be completely relieved of the heavy burden that had been deeply buried into his flesh and bones. But then, the real problem now was—

Would the Star Glory Federation still exist in one and a half months?

Wan Guqing’s feelings were all hidden in the deep wrinkles, like every day in the past ten years. He seemed to be an old camel that was moving unhurriedly although it had encountered a black storm in the desert, as if the dense light spots on the hundreds of light beams were nothing more than some annoying sand.

His attitude, which was so calm that it bordered on sluggish, had an amazing reaction with the slightly panicked atmosphere inside the Defense Counsel. Gradually, all the anxious and agitated people around were influenced by him and slowed down. They were even looking at him, full of expectation!

Almost a hundred enormous light beams were connected to the telescopes that were located in the satellites and asteroids. They were depicting the terrible scenes that were happening in space from different levels through different ways of probing.

On the 3D images sent back by the telescopes whose main probe approaches were gravity change and space ripple capture, the deep, profound space was like a vulnerable eggshell that had been broken abruptly by a certain object. The pieces of the eggshell were flying out clearly and did not die down until more than ten seconds later.

The telescopes that mainly detected spiritual energy and heat, on the other hand, discovered dozens, hundreds, and then thousands of butterflies that looked like stars. They were surrounded by raging, glamorous brilliance, which interweaved and melted, illuminating the entire dark universe!

Some other crystal cameras that had been deployed at the periphery of the Heaven’s Origin Sector for reconnaissance purposes managed to send back some close-distance images before they were disrupted and destroyed. The real appearance of the arrivers was obvious on them.

The arrivers were super starships that were pure black, with bodies as even and smooth as a mirror and as clear as glass. On the two sides of the head, the trident lightning emblem and the black storm emblem were embedded!

After a long distance jump that covered dozens of lightyears, the arrivers, ripping apart the four-dimensional space and barging into the core area of the Star Glory Federation with invisible but overwhelming flames of spiritual energy, still maintained the most even, dense, and organized formation in the array that was almost ten thousand kilometers long. They aimed at the home planet of the Heaven’s Origin Sector in the strictest square.

The solemn, grave, and rigorous battle formation declared in the most majestic way the unparalleled performance of the starships of the Imperium of True Human Beings and the toughness of the Immortal Cultivators from the Imperium who were piloting them!

“High—High-energy reaction!”

“More than three thousand starships from the Imperium are arriving at the Heaven’s Origin Sector through space jumps. This must only be the vanguard. More troops are still waiting to be teleported!”

“The periphery area of the Heaven’s Origin Sector has turned into a pot of hot soup. The entire space has been churned into a turbulent area!”

“Not good. Our aim has failed!”

Space jumps were long processes, like when an enormous dinosaur passed through a narrow valley. Even the three thousand starships in the vanguard could not be teleported all in one jump. Despite the signs of intense reactions of spiritual energy, they were still in a highly unstable space superposition state. To some extent, most of them were both in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and at the orbit of the brown dwarf simultaneously.

It was their most vulnerable moment. It was also the best opportunity for the defenders to attack.

However, on the surveillance and the aiming light beams, the gravitational waves, space ripples, and aftershock of spiritual energy and heat raised by the Black Wind Fleet were all blurred. Although the behemoth did not completely vanish, it was now covered in thick mist, making the best weapons deployed on the home plant and the star fortresses in orbit lose their target!

Chapter 1763 - Space Battle!

The moment the Black Wind Fleet's vanguard jumped to the Heaven's Origin Sector, the Heaven's Origin Sector launched its counterattack, mostly by the orbit defense troops of the home planet.

The armed forces of the Star Glory Federation could be classified into four levels. At the top of the pyramid was certainly the Deep Sky Fleets, which could perform dozens of space jumps across multiple Sectors, pose a threat to a hundred lightyears away, and cruise and fight independently for several years.

The Deep Sky Fleets were similar to the Black Wind Fleet. They were much more than simple 'fleets'. With their perfect self-circulation, survival, and develop abilities, they could exist independently as a tiny starship civilization to some extent.

From the Star Ocean Imperium to the Star Ocean Republic to the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Star Glory Federation, all the Deep Sky Fleets had an unspoken rule. The ratio of the female marines on board should be no lower than thirty percent. That way, if the motherland suffered a destructive strike while the Deep Sky Fleets were cruising in space, the Deep Sky Fleets alone would be able to pass on the civilization of the motherland!

It was not hard to imagine the capabilities and configuration of such fleets. They often gathered the most elite warriors, the wisest commanders, the most advanced starships, the most powerful crystal suits, and even the unique Colossi from the motherland. They were both the most precious mobile force in a space battle for a civilization and the home to all the elites!

In the Star Glory Federation, there were only two troops that were qualified to be called ‘Deep Sky Fleets’, namely the ‘Burning Prairie Fleet’ as the ace troop and the ‘Big Bai Fleet’, which was best at unexpected attacks as a rapid-response troop.

The troops one tier below the Deep Sky Fleets would be the guardian fleets stationed in the many Sectors, for example, the ‘Heaven’s Origin Fleet’ that guarded the capital.

Although their names might sound awesome, the starships of the guardian fleets were often small. Their spiritual shield, armor, and firepower were rather weak, too. Most importantly of all, their structure was relatively simple and vulnerable, and they could not withstand the ripping and regrouping caused by super long-distance space jumps. Therefore, it was difficult for them to launch attacks across Sectors.

The range of their attack was usually the world that they guarded. If it was a small world such as the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the range of their activity would be restricted to that system. They even preferred to stay in the central area close to the star where the resources were more abundant and barely set foot in the barren, desolate, undeveloped lands at the edge of the system.

Although the Heaven’s Origin Fleet was the garrison for the capital, it actually did not have too many starships and soldiers, because the Star Glory Federation had expanded too fast in the past hundred years, and the seven Sectors as well as the Hundred Flowers Space Zone and the Dragon Snake Space Zone all needed to be defended. There were never enough troops.

Besides, the Heaven’s Origin Sector was a classic single-system world. More than ninety percent of the resources were focused on the home planet and the two planets before and behind it. In terms of defense, it was both unnecessary and impossible to maintain an ace troop that was as powerful as the Burning Prairie Fleet.

Therefore, compared with the worlds such as the Flying Star Sector and the Uranian Ring Sector that had a long history of starship production and could even be considered starship civilizations, the Heaven’s Origin Sector only had a mediocre fleet.

The real guardians for the home planet of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, which reassured the misters in the parliament and the tens of billions of people living on the planet, were the third defense forces of the federation—the orbit troops.

The orbit troops of the Heaven’s Origin Sector were centered at the nine asteroid fortresses that were deployed in the orbit of the home planet of the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

Those asteroids had all been slowly pushed to this place over the past hundred years after being installed with enormous power rune arrays when they were still at the periphery of the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Captured by the gravity sphere of the home planet, they became tiny ‘satellites’.

They had all been resource planets in the beginning. The original purpose of pushing them toward the orbit of the home planet was to collect the crystals and mother lodes inside the asteroids more conveniently. They provided the material support for the explosive development of the Heaven’s Origin Sector in the ‘golden century’.

However, after all the crystals and mother lodes were cleaned up, and the asteroids were turned into empty shells that were riddled with holes, the military, parliament, and Refiners’ Association realized at the same time that, instead of going through the trouble of moving them away or destroying them, they might as well be transformed into war fortresses as impenetrable barriers to protect the capital!

It had been thirty years since the modification on the first asteroid began, but the project was still not complete. Nevertheless, the nine asteroids had all been turned into awe-inspiring iron hedgehogs.

The old mining holes were transformed into arsenals deeply buried underground, where the super heavy crystal cannons lurked. A lot of space shuttle bases and Exo bases had been established on the surface of the asteroids, too. Most of the soldiers of the garrison were deployed in the bases on the asteroids, ready to get rid of the insignificant gravity and march into the space anytime.

Together with the torpedo area made of countless forsaken starships and space torpedoes among the asteroids, a deadly line of defense that was second to none in the seven Sectors was created!

The orbit defense line, known as ‘Wall of Heaven’s Origin’, was the greatest reliance for the home planet of the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

For most of the people in the capital, with such an impenetrable, indestructible defense line, even the fourth tier and last tier of the defense forces seemed to be insignificant.

The vanguard of the Black Wind Fleet had arrived at the resourceful area almost at the center of the Heaven's Origin Sector under the navigation of the space gate. The intruder and the defender were almost at a distance of melee combat the moment they met. Therefore, before the intruder was freed from the dizziness caused by the teleportation, they suffered the brutal attacks from the Wall of Heaven's Origin.

From the nine asteroid fortresses and the half-fixed arsenals modified by a lot of forsaken starships, colorful streaks of brilliance so dense that they appeared concrete covered the distance of hundreds of thousands of kilometers in the middle within the moment before they stormed on the Black Wind Fleet overwhelmingly.

The first wave of attack lasted sixty seconds, but the result was not satisfactory. Both the high-frequency mystic rays of a short wavelength and the high-energy particles were consumed by the fog that wreathed the Black Wind Fleet.

The war fog seemed to disrupt and disperse spiritual energy. The straight rays of light would lose their way like headless flies after they entered the area, reflecting and dispersing randomly. They either passed through the Black Wind Fleet's battle formation without hitting any target or turned into colorful light stripes that decorated the war fog with glamorous colors, as if they were donning the Black Wind Fleet with a majestic battle robe!

It was not until this moment that the super alloy cannonballs pushed by surging magnetic forces arrived to launch strikes at the Black Wind Fleet.

However, the war fog carried very powerful effects of force field disruption. Most of the cannonballs were simply ‘pushed’ away by the arced force field and slid off on the surface of the warships of the Black Wind Fleet!

“The enemy’s stealth technology, force field disruption technology, and spiritual shield technology are all above ours. Ninety-nine percent of our previous attacks missed the targets!

“But the preliminary scanning on the enemy’s starships was completed during the moment of attack. More than twenty main-force warships have been identified, including ‘Black Swirl’, the flagship that is the largest in scale. Is the Black Wind Fleet mad? They have teleported the flagship in the first wave of attack. Are they planning to start a strategic battle with us?

“The enemy’s warships are changing their battle formation from the jump state to the combat state. Their target is the 22.45.28 area, which is… the place where our No. 1 space gate is located!

“By the analysis of the General Staff, the Black Wind Fleet’s tactical target is to seize the No. 1 space gate so that the following warships of the fleet can be teleported incessantly!”

Cold voices were echoing inside the command center of the Defense Counsel. The starry spots on the light beams that represented the Black Wind Fleet were now clearer and more active!

The appearance of Black Swirl, flagship of the Black Wind Fleet, made everyone realize that it was not a bluff, a feint attack, or a distraction. It was an out-and-out final, strategic battle!

“Everyone, this is a great opportunity for our enemy.”

Speaker Wan Guqing lowered his eyes and looked at the generals and experts who were perspiring hard. Even at this moment, his voice was not loud or convincing at all, but his calmness was surprisingly reassuring.

“As we all know, the Black Wind Fleet is definitely not the only enemy we are going to face. It is totally possible for the Imperium of True Human Beings to send out a second expedition army in a few years.

“Dealing with the Black Wind Fleet for years and struggling to secure a victory after a protracted war is of zero significance for the survival of the federation.”

“We can only try to crush the enemy’s main force in a strategic battle to which both parties devote all their troops and finish the war cleanly and neatly, as a way to demonstrate the federation’s power and buy us another ten to twenty years to catch our breath. This is the only hope for us!

“Therefore, in the past few years, we have been contemplating how to drag the Black Wind Fleet into a strategic battle, but we never found a perfect opportunity.

“But right now, the Black Wind Fleet has sent its flagship to our door, and the final battle has already broken out. This is a great blessing for the federation. Why are you so ill at ease, everybody?

“The situation is very clear right now. The Black Wind Fleet intends to occupy and destroy the three space gates that are around the home planet of the Heaven’s Origin Sector to prevent the Burning Prairie Fleet from reinforcing us so that they can completely occupy the home planet before the Burning Prairie Fleet arrives!

“For our enemy, as long as we can guard the space gates, stop the follow-up troops of the Black Wind Fleet, and allow the Burning Prairie Fleet to jump back in time, we will be able to destroy the main-force warships on the enemy’s side including Black Swirl with the combined forces of the Burning Prairie Fleet, the Big Bai Fleet, the Heaven’s Origin Fleet, and the orbit defense troops. After that, the Black Wind Fleet will completely lose the ability to launch a second assault!

“The Heaven’s Origin Fleet, the Big Bai Fleet, and the orbit defense troops must hamstring the Black Wind Fleet at whatever cost until the Burning Prairie Fleet shows up! This battle will decide the fate of the federation. It will also be the most important battle during the rise of the federation. The efforts of so many predecessors and compatriots in the past hundred years will depend on the battle. Let’s work hard, everyone!”

Chapter 1764 - Unkillable Rabid Dog!

In a space battle, thousands of starships would have glamorous competitions with all their barrels glowing. It was the most brilliant, splendid, blood-boiling, and soul-stirring form of war in the history of mankind!

The universe was a boundless place. Both human beings themselves and the warships, the seemingly enormous war machines created by them, were nothing but insignificant specks of dust in the grand universe.

If two fleets did not intend to run into each other, they would be like two needles floating in an ocean. It would be practically impossible for them to detect each other, much less hunt each other and get involved in a fight.

The Imperium of True Human Beings had gathered a lot of troops in the past thousand years to capture a tiny Firefly, but none of the attempts had succeeded, which was the best example.

However, the hide-and-seek where neither party could see or catch each other was entirely meaningless in most cases, because the space suitable for the survival of mankind was only less than one billionth of the entire universe despite its vastness. The only ‘oases’ that could provide warmth for human beings in the cold sea of stars were the strategic locations for any civilization.

In a certain glorious moment that would decide the fate of billions of people, in order to take over the resource planets, the critical sailing routes, the important industry and training bases, the prehistoric relics or the stable jump points, the main forces of two parties jumped out at the same time and communicated with each other with their bullets as their words in an open, epic fight. That would be a real space battle!

It was exactly the case for the battle today, which was a classic confrontation due to the competition over jump points.

The three space gates around the home planet of the Heaven’s Origin Sector were the critical locations that controlled the entrance and exit of all the mobile forces in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the other six Sectors. They were equivalent to the ‘pass’ in the ancient times.

At this time, most of the warships of the Black Wind Fleet and the Burning Prairie Fleet were not in the Heaven’s Origin Sector. They required the navigation of the space gates in order to jump over quickly in an orderly fashion for reinforcement.

Whoever controlled the three space gates would control the passes to enter and exit the Heaven’s Origin Sector. The follow-up troops on their side would be able to arrive at the place incessantly and completely annihilate the available forces on the enemy’s side!

Without the navigation of the space gates, although space jumps were not entirely unavailable, given that both parties had the star map and the coordinates of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, it would be like sailing into a port without the guidance of the lighthouses. The precision and time of such space jumps would be difficult to control. It was quite possible that the warships would jump to a random point in the vast area of the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

It was like tossing a stone from an altitude of hundreds of thousands meters. No matter how precisely one aimed, it would still be meaningless. Because of the disruption of the wind and storm in the four-dimensional space, the landing point of the ‘stone’ might be a thousand meters away from where it was aimed at.

Faced with an organized space fleet that had been unfolded into a battle formation, the starships that were strewn dozens of lightyears away from each other were only a tray of loose sand. They could only wait to be destroyed by the enemy one after another.

It would not be reinforcement; it would just be suicide.

Therefore, the space gates were the key to the outcome of the battle!

The vanguard of the Black Wind Fleet, which had just arrived at the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and the Heaven’s Origin Fleet, which had realized what was going on after the initial shock, both locked onto the No. 1 space gate, which was the largest in scale and had the highest navigation level. They were getting closer and closer to each other!

Black Swirl, the flagship of the Black Wind Fleet, was leading the charge at the forefront of the battle formation.

Behind the flagship, the thousand starships that were in a rectangular distribution changed their shape slowly into quadruple sphere attack units that were as classic as described in the textbooks.

Every hundred starships constituted an attack unit. The cruising carrier, which was the largest in size, was at the center. Every carrier was at least ten kilometers long. The spacious room inside the carrier was devised into the storage and maintenance cabins for the space shuttles, crystal suits, Colossi, and even other starships. In the meantime, they boasted a very enormous arsenal of crystals, and ammunition, allowing them to supply the other starships in the battle unit with sufficient ammunition and energy.

In short, the cruising carriers were independent battle bases in the fleet. Their combat ability might not be high by themselves, but they were always the start and the end of an attack.

Of course, the deep, profound internal space of some of the cruising carriers was filled up by enormous crystal cannons or cannons of mystic rays. For the warfare in space, to rip apart the distance of hundreds of thousands of kilometers and pierce through several of enemy’s starships or even an entire war fortress, it would require gigantic weapons of unbelievable sizes.

Such giant cannons were like battering rams in ancient wars. Although it was inconvenient to move them and difficult to control them, and they could be easily destroyed, they would certainly become the enemy’s greatest concern after they were moved to the city gate of the defender!

Outside of the cruising carriers were the main forces for the starship confrontation—the arsenal starships!

As their name suggested, they were all awe-inspiring iron hedgehogs. Dense barrels had been established all over their body. All the internal space had been filled up with crystals and ammunition. There was not even additional room for a crystal suit or a space shuttle.

They were like the sharpest blades. All they wanted to do was draw closer and closer to the enemy and then destroy all the stars in the universe with the roars of thousands of turrets!

“Attack is the best defense. Instead of wasting the materials and space to add a piece of plate on the outside, it is better to build another turret with those resources and install it!”

The captains and artillerists of all the arsenal starships held the same belief.

What made them so zealous and fearless, besides their faith in His Majesty and the Imperium of True Human Beings, was the third layer of the battle unit that loomed before them—the shield starships!

If the arsenal starships were the sharpest longswords of the Imperium, the shield starships would be the hardest armor. The war fog that covered the battle formation of the Black Wind Fleet was exactly their splendid performance.

What the shield starships counted on was not the thick and clumsy super alloy armor but the technology of spiritual and magnetic confrontation, force field disruption, and spiritual shield generation, through which they could construct a thick, dense interference belt that would render most of the energy and entity attacks from the enemy’s side useless!

Outside of the shield starships, at the outermost part of the entire battle unit, which sometimes even protruded out of the war fog, were crystal suits and space shuttles that were as dense as bees.

Before the confrontation of cannons, the crystal suits and the space shuttles would be projected, in case the starships that accommodated them were instantly shot by the enemy’s cannons, which would cause greater collateral damage if they were still on-board. It was common sense for space warfare.

Besides, the combat ability that many high-level experts in the Core Formation Stage or the Nascent Soul Stage could bring out was often as good as that of a starship!

The cruising carriers, arsenal starships, shield starships, and Exos constructed a perfect curve. Like almost thirty enormous meteoroids, they approached the No. 1 space gate solemnly, orderly, and unhurriedly, leaving colorful exhaust flames behind.

As for Black Swirl, a monstrosity dozens of kilometers long, which could only be produced after a hundred years of preparation even in the Imperium of True Human Beings, was the most dazzling star that stayed at the forefront alone, emanating the brilliance of destruction!

On the bridge of Black Swirl, Heiye Ming was like an iron statue, not moving at all. He simply allowed the cold light from the stars to sprinkle on his body.

But the passion in his eyes indicated his flourishing vigor and… appetite.

He almost could not wait to gobble up the stars.

On his opposite side, the Heaven’s Origin Fleet was reshaped into an equally clear rectangular formation. The Exos, shield starships, and arsenal starships were deployed, too.

The only difference was that they did not require cruising carriers because they boasted sufficient logistical support from the home planet of the Heaven’s Origin Sector. The roles of the cruising carriers were played by the nine asteroid fortresses, which served as solid bases.

Judging from the number, the Heaven’s Origin Fleet was much greater than the vanguard of the Black Wind Fleet. The exhaust flames that were triggered due to the high-speed movement and the spiritual shield that had been expanded to the maximum interweaved with each other into a wall of light.

But the tonnage and the quality of the starships were a different case, which could clearly be seen from the slightly sparse formation and uncoordinated trajectories.

In the 22.47.77 area, from the coordinates that were approximately one hundred light seconds from the Black Wind Fleet, the Big Bai Fleet, the other Deep Sky Fleet of the federation whose stance was ambiguous, was rushing close as fast as possible.

“Worthless.” Heiye Ming put on a cold smile. His eyes were so deep that he almost completely consumed the Heaven’s Origin Fleet that was reflected in them. He casually ordered, “Move at full speed and crush the Heaven’s Origin Fleet before the Big Bai Fleet arrives!”

…

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

Ear-splitting alarms were ringing inside every starship in the Heaven’s Origin Fleet. The flashing red lights added to the intense atmosphere in the cabin.

As a local defense fleet, none of the Heaven's Origin Fleet ever thought that they would face the legendary Black Wind Fleet alone.

"Hurry up. All Exos, put on your crystal suits and prepare to break away from the mothership. You are going to free fight!"

If the Black Wind Fleet was confident enough to keep half of the Exos in the cruising carrier as mobile forces, it would be the most idiotic action for the Heaven's Origin Fleet to keep even one Exo on-board. In the upcoming confrontation of cannons, the Heaven's Origin Fleet was destined to suffer heavy losses. The Exos that were kept on board would be of zero significance other than dying together with the starships!

"Attack! Attack! Attack!"

In the extremely depressing atmosphere, somebody was praying in silence, someone took out the photos of their family, and some were mumbling to themselves nervously.

In a corner of the cabin, a muscular man whose scars covered his original face, in the meantime, was unhurriedly examining his crystal suit and his saber that was almost three meters long.

While whistling a weird tune, he was uttering voices that nobody could tell were cries or laughter.

"Wretched heavens, we are going to fight again!" The muscular man bashed the last magical equipment unit into the crystal suit and spat a mouthful stinky saliva. "You failed to kill me for a hundred years. I'm only getting closer and closer to the target. Will I be killed this time? Haha. Hahahaha!"

Chapter 1765 - Misfortune Bringer!

The muscular man’s angry, sarcastic laughter raised a lot of dissatisfaction.

The small assault warship that belonged to the third branch of the Heaven’s Origin Fleet had begun its service recently. All the crew members were new. The Exos that were allotted to the warship were all enlisted from the local areas to deal with the imminent war threat of the Imperium. They were not familiar with each other yet. The ugly, scar-faced man was always by himself and acting mysteriously. Many people were unaware of his real identity.

“This guy…”

The dark gold Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars emblem on the chest of his crystal suit, which suggested that his rank was major, made other people lose the courage to criticize him. But it could not stop the soldiers from whispering to each other. “He is laughing at such a moment? Is he crazy?”

“Don’t mess with him. He is indeed crazy.” The seasoned soldiers who knew the inside information immediately stopped the rookies from continuing their discussion. “Don’t you know? He is the ‘Unkillable Rabid Dog’!”

The nickname immediately raised a round of gasps among the soldiers. “He—he is the Rabid Dog?”

The Unkillable Rabid Dog was a minor celebrity among the bottom-level troops of the federal army, but it was an infamous name that always triggered fear instead of admiration.

He was a person who had fun in danger and sought the thrill of death. In the peaceful years in the federation decades ago, he had already been active in life-and-death underground arenas, taking down countless opponents while adding ineffaceable scars to his own body.

Later, he decided that the underground arenas were not exciting enough. He roamed the desolate lands at the edge of the cosmos, searching for demon beasts and space pirates everywhere. Even hundreds of perilous adventures failed to kill him.

Soon, after the federation explored the four new Sectors, and especially after the outbreak of the Uranian Ring War, the Rabid Dog was like a fish in water.

He joined the federal army with his impressive fighting skills in a crystal suit and performed shockingly well during the Uranian Ring War. More than a thousand Exos from the Uranian Ring Sector were slain by him.

Logically, the name of such a fearless warrior should resound throughout the entire army as a ‘hero’.

However, what covered the Rabid Dog, other than the valiance to chitchat with death, seemed to be an intense, unshakable curse.

In every battle, he would volunteer to carry out the most dangerous mission, and he would meet the worst situation every time. He had to go through endless trouble to accomplish his mission. In the end, not only was he covered in devastating wounds, the teammates who went to carry out the mission together with him were also often killed tragically.

He had completed almost a hundred missions, and it seemed to be the case every time. When a team or a squad was charging forward together, he was clearly leading the charge at the frontmost area, faced with the most furious fire and the sharpest blades, but the final result was that the team was entirely wiped out except for him. He was dragged back to the hospital, like a cluster of mud mixed with the remains of his crystal suit, and after sewing and stitching, he was back to life again miraculously!

It appeared that some sort of strong, eccentric force was supporting him inside the body that was on the brink of collapse to keep on walking in the human world and dueling with death!

“The guy could never be killed however he asked to be!”

“But the brethren who fought together with them were all killed. He is an out-and-out misfortune bringer!”

“Not a misfortune bringer but a rabid dog, one that is determined to be killed but can never be!”

The name ‘Rabid Dog’ spread out at the bottom level of the federal army just like that.

If that was the case, with his military accomplishments that he had accumulated through his craziness, he should at least have been a colonel who had the power to command an entire legion.

But he turned out to be a man who chose whatever means possible to train himself. He purchased medicine that was clearly forbidden by the military and the government through underground channels many times. He even went to Fish Dragon City in the Dragon Snake Space Zone in secret during his sabbatical, violating the military regulations of the federal army, to perform illegal stimulation and strengthening on his body. Then, he got into conflict with local gangs. It was said that he killed hundreds of gangsters in a row on his own. As a result, everybody in the Dragon Snake Space Zone was shuddering in panic, under the impression that the federation was about to swallow the place.

However, those who were familiar with the Rabid Dog all knew that ‘to perform illegal stimulation and strengthening’ was just an excuse. The only reason he went to the Dragon Snake Space Zone was because he was too bored. He just wanted to kill someone or get killed!

Real Cultivators were all the firmest atheists. Naturally, his reputation as a ‘misfortune bringer’ was never recognized by the authorities, but the continuous infractions of the military law were enough to offset all the contributions he made through blood battles. After serving in the federal army for fifty years and advancing into the peak of the Core Formation Stage, he was still a minor major.

The Rabid Dog, on the other hand, could not have cared less about it. Neither the rank nor the commandership was what he pursued. All he wanted was to be sent to the most dangerous battlefield for the most dangerous missions on the most dangerous front!

“No wonder we have encountered the main force of the Black Wind Fleet. That’s because he is here!”

“I’m told that he was ‘that guy’ a hundred years ago, wasn’t he?”

“We’re screwed this time. Ah. He—he is coming over!”

In their anxiety and panic, the soldiers did not intentionally lower their voice. Besides, even if they had, it would have been impossible for the Rabid Dog to miss what they were talking about.

Carrying the dragon-slaying saber that was more than three meters long, he walked to the front of the soldiers unhurriedly. A creepy smile popped up on his face that was full of scars and protruding muscles while he gazed at everyone.

The medical science in the federation was highly developed nowadays. Most scars and traces of wounds could be recovered, or at least partly made up through the plastic surgeries.

Some of the warriors who worshipped valor would keep one or two scars on their face or body intentionally with the excuse that ‘scars are the badges of a real man’ or as mementoes of a certain unforgettable battle. But still, those who did not perform any modification when their faces had been essentially destroyed, like the Rabid Dog, were still freaks among freaks.

Therefore, it was safe to say that the Rabid Dog was truly a man who deserved his name!

“I am a man who is teased by the heavens.” The Rabid Dog grinned. His voice was so hoarse that his vocal cords might have been soaked in the boiling oil at the bottom level of hell. “The wretched heavens are unwilling to kill me. They want to play me slowly and torture me in one trial after another. I am not going to die so easily.

“However, you might not be as unfortunate, or fortunate, as I am. You will die, as quickly as possible.

“If you don’t want to die, get as far away from me as possible once we’re out. Don’t stand in my way when I’m trying to die. Understood?”

All the soldiers were dumbfounded. Oppressed by the Rabid Dog’s strong and insane aura, they were unable to say a single syllable.

The Rabid Dog widened his eyes and raised his voice. “Do you understand?”

Shuddering, the soldiers all hurried to nod.

The Rabid Dog smiled. He tapped his shoulder softly, and the foldable helmet immediately ascended from the gap between his shoulder and back, completely covering his hideous head.

According to the traditions of the federal army, the Exos were free to paint their crystal suits provided that the emblem and the troop logo were not covered. Many people would paint custom patterns on the helmets or the chests of their crystal suits, which was both a good psychological hint and could make the crystal suit more intimidating.

The helmet of the Rabid Dog had a pattern of a pale skull whose eye sockets were releasing infinite fury!

“Warriors of the federal army!” The roars of the fleet’s commander were echoing around the discharge deck. “We are faced with the most brutal and terrifying army in the entire universe, but we are backed with our motherland, our home, and our families and compatriots who are waiting for our triumphant return! The universe may be vast, but there is nowhere we can retreat to right now! This is going to be the greatest battle in the history of the Star Glory Federation. Countless epics and poems will be sung about each and every one of us in the next thousand years! Attack! For the motherland! For the home! For the family!”

Including the Unkillable Rabid Dog, the Exos of the federation jumped into space. The sea of stars was no longer as cold and dark as it used to be but seething like magma after being boiled by the exhaust flames of thousands of power rune arrays.

They accelerated to get away from the motherships, in case they were affected in the cruel confrontation of warship cannons versus warship cannons. The tens of thousands of crystal suits constituted a dense array of light spots ahead of the rectangular battle formation, creating the illusion that they were actually a colorful cloud.

Opposite them, in places far, far away, another cloud of light spots that were even more dense and dazzling was rushing at them. Those were their opponents, the attack group of Exos and space shuttles from the Imperium.

Over there, in the communication channel of the Black Wind Fleet, Heiye Ming’s voice was echoing inside the ears of every ravenous, roaring Exo of the Black Wind Fleet.

“Brave warriors of the Imperium, noble Immortal Cultivators, and loyal defenders of the civilization of mankind! Look, our enemies are waiting to be killed like filthy swine that’s about to be butchered! Do you see their fear? Do you see their panic? Do you see that they are shivering? Let’s run and end the pitiful creatures. Don’t let them wait too long in extreme fear. Reap and slaughter now! Show the ants at the edge of the cosmos how strong the real civilization of mankind is!”

The two battle formations moved to each other slowly and solemnly.

Different from what many people imagined, the space battle where thousands of starships were involved did not have too many eye-catching tactical changes. It even looked sluggish, slow, and clumsy.

The magnetic interference, spiritual shield, and force field twisting technology made the starships much better defenders than attackers. The accuracy of their attacks was often astoundingly low.

Distance, on the other hand, was also the most unavoidable barricade. With a distance of one light second, or rather, approximately three hundred thousand kilometers, only mystic ray weapons, which attacked at the speed of sound, could hit the enemy instantly. But the greatest shortcomings of such weapons were their efficiency and their long cooldown. One cannon often had to rest for a minute after firing for one minute.

On the other hand, after the enormous starships were accelerated to a certain speed, it would be difficult for them to dodge. When their speed was higher than one percent the speed of sound, even the tiniest turn might seriously wreck the shell or the internal structure of the starship. Even if the starship was fine, the crew members on-board would not be able to bear it. Their internal organs might break apart.

It meant that the starships could either give up some of the speed in exchange for agility, or they could simply abandon agility once and for all and charge forward at their top speed against the enemy’s not-so-accurate bombardment!

Chapter 1766 - All Cannons Roar, Line Up and Shoot!

Due to the low accuracy and shooting speed combined with the significant improvement of the starships' survival abilities brought by the new plate armor of composite materials, the multiple airtight gates, the internal defense rune arrays, and the liquid metal maintenance materials—in short, defense being stronger than attack—and because of the shortcomings of the starships that it was difficult for them to turn at a super high speed, the space battles were often in quite a similar form to more than ten thousand years ago when crystal cannons and mystic ray runs were first invented and the training techniques were first taught to the ordinary fighters, giving the ordinary a chance to use the flying swords.

In the embryonic years of the modern Cultivation civilization, crystals cannons and mystic ray guns were all 'new toys' whose accuracy and speed were low and whose power was very suspicious. The flying swords driven by ordinary people were also unsteady and unpredictable, without any precision or damage. The suppressing troops of the demon race who were sent to deal with the human rebellions armed with the shabby weapons often laughed and despised them as mobs.

However, the human rebels soon came up with a brand-new tactic in accordance with the brand-new magical equipment and brand-new troops.

They arranged their troops to be as square and dense as possible. The Cultivator commanders would walk at the frontmost, and everybody would step into the battlefield solemnly and gravely under the rhythmic drumming. The soldiers would listen to the commander’s order and march forward against the enemy’s fiercest bombardment. They would not launch their flying swords until they were right under the enemy’s nose, making up for the low accuracy with the maximum firepower within a given range.

Such a clumsy if not ridiculous tactic soon revealed its shocking power and proved to be a method that only the real fearless, hotblooded men dared use. People of the future generations gave the tactic a very vivid name—line up and shoot!

After tens of thousands of years, the form of war had changed a lot, but the basic principle remained the same. To secure victory, one had to focus the strongest firepower in the shortest amount of time possible and rain as much destructive energy and ammunition on the enemy as possible!

Therefore, once the starships on both parties surpassed a thousand, and they were running at each other without giving in, a ‘line up and shoot’ in space whose basic units were the enormous warships equipped with giant cannons!

The Heaven’s Origin Fleet and the Black Wind Fleet were like two classic armies who were carrying ancient guns, aiming at each other’s eyeballs with sharp bayonets, and approaching each other slowly accompanied with the inaudible but still exciting drumming.

The Black Wind Fleet kept its speed within three thousandths the speed of light. It was not a very high speed.

Heiye Ming was intentionally slowing down the pace.

On one hand, the shield starships deployed at the front part of the battle formation could only maintain the highest efficiency of the spiritual shield, force field disruption, and magnetic interferential fog at such a speed. On the other hand, he did not want to move too fast. If they and the Heaven's Origin Fleet passed each other, it was very likely that they would be caught in between Wall of Heaven's Origin, the orbit defense system, and the Heaven's Origin Fleet, suffering bombardment from the front and rear.

Although the Black Wind Fleet was too strong to be defeated by such strikes, Heiye Ming was too experienced a commander to make such a risky move easily.

For the Heaven's Origin Fleet, the best policy was naturally to accelerate without bothering about anything in order to pass through or bypass the enemy's battle formation so that they and Wall of Heaven's Origin could attack the enemy from the front and rear together.

But they had their concerns, too. The starships of the Heaven's Origin Fleet were smaller, weaker in defense, and simpler in structure. Too high a speed would result in the malfunction of the turning system. Even if they could pass through the enemy's battle formation against the furious barrage, it would not necessarily be possible for them to turn around in time and bite the Black Wind Fleet from the rear.

The agility of the Black Wind Fleet and the proficiency of their pilots were obviously above the Heaven's Origin Fleet. If the two fleets did pass through each other, it remained to be seen who would bite whose rear!

The space battle had only just begun. Neither commanders of the two parties were willing to go all in. In the universal scale, the two fleets were moving even more slowly and cautiously than before, entering the textbook ‘line up and shoot’ state.

“One light second away from the hostile starships!”

One light second was a very meaningful distance.

It meant that most mystic ray weapons could hit the target in one second—that was, not counting the disruptions of the target’s spiritual shield and the interference of the fog.

The Black Wind Fleet had tougher warships and more advanced cannons whose shooting range was obviously longer than the Heaven’s Origin Fleet’s. But all the cannons remained absolutely silent, not performing any inefficient, random attacks. The warships were simply moving closer like clusters of dark clouds in the most daunting aura as if they were about the drown their enemy.

Since the Black Wind Fleet did not open fire, the Heaven’s Origin Fleet and Wall of Heaven’s Origin, which was there to provide fire support from the rear, gritted their teeth and kept silent. The two parties simply watched dazzling flames of spiritual energy surging out of the barrels and rune arrays on the enormous cannons, which looked like springs that had been pressed to the limits and limits. They felt that the bayonets were drawing closer and closer to their eyeballs. All the soldiers felt that their hearts were being crushed and squeezed repetitively.

“Ah!”

At a lot of artillery posts, the soldiers of the federation who had never been through such a large-scale starship battle moaned. They would rather stay in the fire of destruction than be tortured by the silence!

When the vanguards of the two parties were only 0.8 light seconds away from each other, the commander of the Black Wind Fleet seemed to have heard the moans of the pitiful creatures on his opposite side and granted their request very generously.

“Warriors of the Imperium, it is time to reap!”

Tens of thousands of pillars of light glowed in the middle of the war fog that covered the front part of the Black Wind Fleet. Like the swords of deities and devils, they covered the two hundred and forty thousand kilometers in the middle instantly and pierced into the Heaven’s Origin Fleet!

The Heaven’s Origin Fleet, naturally, boasted spiritual shield and magnetic disruption technology, too. Since they were fighting in their homeland, they were even able to deploy a large batch of defensive space torpedoes in front of the fleet that could neutralize the vibration field of the mystic rays. At this moment, a series of enormous light balloons expanded as if they were being inflated. The pillars of light shot from the Black Wind Fleet all dispersed after they hit the balloons, turning into mists that flowed around the fleet!

The colorful, shining mist illuminated the space that the Heaven’s Origin Fleet was in as if it were the most splendid paradise. However, one needed only to test the temperature and the radiation around to know how horrendous the ‘paradise’ was!

The space shuttles and crystal suits that failed to break away from the range of the motherships in time were all shaking like canoes in a tsunami. Some of the less fortunate Exos who were directly hit by the cannons were instantly vaporized even though they were still within the spiritual shield’s range of protection, dispersing into smoke. For the crew members inside the starships, despite the protections of the super alloys, the crystalized fibers, and the high-intensity porcelain, and more than ten other different composite armors, they still felt that invisible hammers bashed them hard in the temples and the chest. They almost vomited blood because they were nearly choked!

“Heaven’s Origin Fleet, rapid shooting, now!”

The Heaven’s Origin Fleet’s counterattack began. All the mystic ray cannons, particle cannons, and crystal cannons were roaring. Although the pillars of light fired into space by them were thinner and dimmer than the attacks of the Black Wind Fleet, they were clearly much greater in number. The more than a hundred thousand glowing blades were almost ripping apart the universe that seemed like black velvet!

Once the mystic ray cannons were activated, the destructive beams of light would last ten to sixty seconds. Therefore, the ‘line up and shooting’ in space looked more like fencing competitions from the age of the ancient Cultivators. The more than a hundred thousand light pillars from both parties were like a hundred thousand spears piercing into each other’s body as dense as a forest and would not be retracted even if the soldiers died!

Both parties boasted a defense system of a reasonable intensity. Despite the crazy bombardment of the tens of thousands of light pillars, no significant damage was dealt—at least, not in the first three minutes.

Only the mottled war fog, as well as the electric arcs that were blossoming from the war fog, was telling everyone how powerful the deadly energy around them was!

The two parties shot and pushed forward. After three minutes, the first batch of metal bullets driven by the spiritual and magnetic rails were smashing at each other and dealt a heavy blow to the spiritual shield that was already on the brink of collapse!

Finally, the Heaven’s Origin Fleet could not take it anymore. The spiritual shields of some of the starships were unable to persist, and the super alloys and the strengthened porcelain layer embedded with defense arrays were all pierced through by the mystic rays. Explosions were echoing everywhere. Fireballs were rising at a visible speed like hideous tumors. Wherever the ‘tumors’ reached, hundreds of lives were instantly burnt into ashes. Broken limbs and miscellaneous items on the starships were spurting out through the holes and drifting in space, either vaporized immediately or turning into cold dust!

Even so, as long as the crystal warehouses did not happen to be hit, those starships would immediately spray out tremendous gel and liquid metal to repair the damaged cabins.

In the meantime, they were still launching counterattacks without reserve, trying to throw out more javelins of light before they were completely shattered into pieces!

The same scene was happening on the Black Wind Fleet’s side, too. Although their technology was more advanced than the federation’s, there was not a crushing advantage. The dense barrage of the Heaven’s Origin Fleet and several of the giant cannons on the Wall of Heaven’s Origin that were on the planetary level still caused some nuisance for them.

The outcome of a battle in space could not be found out quickly. At such a moment, it would be the tenacity of the two parties, the strictness of their battle formation, the commanding abilities of the leaders, and the performance of the starships that were in competition.

However, in many cases, the most critical decisive factor for the battle was—

“Warriors of the Imperium, march and kill!”

“For the federation!”

With the pale universe as the bridge, in the middle of the hundred thousand spears of flames, the space shuttles and the group of Exos from both parties, like two colonies of infuriated bees and two surging iron torrents, crashed into each other brutally ahead of their warships!

Chapter 1767 - Bai Xingjian's Anomaly!

The high combat ability and survival ability of the Exos and the major contrast of the solidness of the starship's shell and the vulnerability of the starship's interior were the reasons the melee battle of the crystal suits was so important.

Both the shield starships that were responsible for defense and the arsenal starships that were responsible for attack, after accommodating the enormous spiritual shield and disruptive force field generators and the warehouses of crystals to power those behemoths, would have barely any room to keep more Exos.

Besides, even if tremendous Exos were deployed inside the starships, the overwhelming spiritual energy that was unleashed after they were engaged with the enemy would cause serious damage to the starship, too.

Therefore, it was quite troublesome if the hostile Exos invaded the starships on one's own side. Before the intruders were annihilated, it would be easy for them to destroy more than fifty percent of a starship's combat ability from inside!

Besides, although the Exos seemed to be equipped with nothing but their crystal suits, they could be carrying Cosmos Rings. Who knew what kind of dreadful weapons they could retrieve from their Cosmos Rings?

Once such Exos snuck into the engine compartment, the warehouse of crystals, or the ammunition warehouse without alarming anyone, a tiny crystal suit might be enough to blow up an entire starship, which had been proved repetitively in the ten thousand years of history of war.

Therefore, the outcome of a battle, to a large extent, did not depend on the mutual bombardment of the cannons but on the passionate collision of the Exos. If the groups of Exos on one side could invade the enemy’s starships against the barrage and destroy the enemy’s spiritual shield and warehouses of crystals and ammunitions, or even march to the bridge directly to perform the ‘decapitation strategy’, the giant cannons on their side would have a better chance to bring out 120% of their capabilities!

If the mutual bombardment of the giant cannons could be compared to the ‘line up and shoot’ in the classic wars, the competition between Exos would be ‘charging with bayonets’, which was more gory, thrilling, demanding but also more epic!

When the two torrents of steel and light collided, thousands of fireballs and electric arcs burst out from the middle of them.

No sound could be heard in the vacuum, but the soundlessness only added to the cruelty of the battlefield.

The chainswords were ripping apart flesh and blood, the vibration sabers were shattering bones, and the high-heat axes were burning internal organs to ash. Blood was swallowing blood, and bodies were dragging bodies. Blood red flowers were blossoming slowly like deadly poppy, only to be obliterated into nothingness after they touched one of the hundred thousand spears of flames thrown out by the warships!

In such an enormous and such a gory battle, in the vacuum hell where hundreds of thousands of Exos and space shuttles were engaged in a fierce fight, Cultivation, level, and techniques mattered little.

Even an expert at the peak of the Core Formation Stage such as the Rabid Dog, when watching thousands of destructive light pillars smashing at him and the bleak universe turning into absolutely darkness under the contrast of the dazzling brightness, felt the insignificance of himself as a human being and the rage for such insignificance!

“I’m going to kill you!”

The Rabid Dog was pushed here and there by the broken limbs that were flying quickly in the battlefield. The screams and moans from the communication channel were too disturbing, so he simply turned off the intermittent communication and drove the power rune arrays of the Night Devil, his crystal suit, to lunge at the area where the Exos of the Imperium were densest. The dragon-slaying saber in his hands unleashed a whip-shaped aura more than ten meters long, and he slashed it on an Exo of the Imperium who was wearing a black mirror crystal suit brutally!

The mirror crystal suit of the Exo boasted a very higher defense ability, but it could not resist the Rabid Dog’s vitality that had been burnt to the maximum. The saber and the shield were at an impasse briefly before the saber pushed down unstoppably and cut the Immortal Cultivator in half!

The body that had been cut in half flew to two sides because of the magnetic force, revealing five Immortal Cultivators behind him who were pouring the fiercest firepower upon the Rabid Dog. But the Rabid Dog did not dodge at all and simply jumped on them in creepy laughter.

“For a hundred years, even the wretched heavens have failed to kill me. Do you think a few scumbags such as yourselves are capable of that?”

However, tough monsters in the peak of the Core Formation Stage, such as the Rabid Dog, were only few in the Heaven’s Origin Fleet after all. Compared to the relatively juvenile Exos of the federation, soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet, who had received the harshest training since childhood and considered fighting the greatest pleasure, apparently had a better performance.

Not far away from the Rabid Dog, the squads of the Exos from the Imperium in groups of four gradually secured their advantage. One space shuttle of the federation after another was consumed by fire, and more and more Exos from the federation were blown apart.

Further behind, an overwhelming fireball finally expanded deep inside the Heaven’s Origin Fleet. The most violent storm of spiritual energy rushed out of the fireball, like a fire fiend that had just enjoyed the blood sacrifice of a thousand lives, waving its ugly tentacles crazily. The starships around were all affected, and the battle formation was more or less in disorder. It was the first starship to be completely destroyed in the space battle, but it was certainly, absolutely, definitely not going to be the last!

…

Seventy light seconds away from the battlefield, the Big Bai Fleet was marching forward fast in a cone-shaped battle formation.

On the bridge of Infinite Fire, the picture where the Heaven's Origin Fleet was struggling under the crush of the Black Wind Fleet was displayed on the ball-shaped light beam through the reconnaissance crystal cameras that were released earlier.

It was like a glamorous and yet cruel firework performance with the lives of a million people as the fuel.

Bai Xingjian was sitting on the commander's chair like a statue forged out of cold steel. The vibe of a casual, lighthearted playboy around him was entirely gone, replaced by excitement, expectation, and voracity.

"Despite the fire support of the Wall of Heaven's Origin, the Heaven's Origin Fleet can't persist for long." Xiao Lishui, his Chief of Staff, frowned next to him and said, "It is a local garrison after all. Compared to a Deep Sky Fleet such as the Black Wind Fleet, it is mediocre in terms of armor, firepower, speed, average quality of the Exos, and all other aspects.

"If we don't reinforce them in time, they will be completely crushed in three hours."

Right then, the signal officer received an order from the Defense Counsel of the Federal. Xiao Lishui was slightly dazed at the order first. Then, he was overjoyed.

"According to the order from the Defense Counsel, we are asked to arrive at the 25.44.45 space area immediately to defend the No. 2 and the No. 3 space gates and wait for the arrival of the Burning Prairie Fleet. The first wave of attack from the Burning Prairie Fleet will complete the jump in two hours!

"If—if—if so, the situation will be entirely reversed!

"But how is it possible? The Burning Prairie Fleet can't finish the preparations so fast, unless—"

Xiao Lishui's eyes were glittering, and every wrinkle on his face was jumping up.

As an experienced general, he soon noticed the anomaly.

The Black Wind Fleet had launched an unexpected assault at the central space zones of the federation because they wanted to take advantage of the Burning Prairie Fleet not being in the Heaven's Origin Sector. As long as they destroyed the defense system and controlled all the space gates before the Burning Prairie Fleet arrived, they would completely occupy the Heaven's Origin Sector.

By then, even if the Burning Prairie Fleet were to jump over in different waves, they would simply be asking to be killed.

However, right now, the Black Wind Fleet had only teleported part of the vanguard, which was mired in a fierce battle with the Heaven's Origin Fleet. It was like a sting in their throat.

If the Burning Prairie Fleet arrived in time before they completely settled the Heaven's Origin Fleet, the situation would be completely reversed. It would change from the Black Wind Fleet's assault to the federation's annihilation.

But how was that possible?

The large-scale space jump of a main-force fleet was as difficult as the march of an army of a million soldiers. It would often take weeks of gathering, preparing, organizing, and surveying!

Only several hours had passed since the ripples when the Black Wind Fleet ripped space apart appeared on the surveillance light beam of the federation. The Burning Prairie Fleet, which was dozens of lightyears away, was perhaps carrying missions, performing regular maintenance in the mother port, or scattered in the vast sea of stars. How could it be gathered so easily and prepared for a jump?

Unless—

Unless the Burning Prairie Fleet had secretly been preparing for the jump since a long time ago. They had known that the Black Wind Fleet would come!

It was not an unexpected assault but a trap carefully devised by the federation to annihilate the Black Wind Fleet once and for all!

“That must be the case!” Xiao Lishui thought that he realized what was going on. “This—this is all part of the plan! Understood. Accelerate to the No. 2 and the No. 3 space gates!”

“Wait.”

The order, however, made the mysterious fire in Bai Xingjian’s eyes even more intense. Gazing at the colorful battlefield on the light beam for a long time, he said, one word after another, “Target, the 25.56.24 space area. Change into the triangle battle formation. Move at one percent of the speed of light. Try to sneak behind the Black Wind Fleet.”

“What?” Xiao Lishui was stunned. Looking at the battlefield again, he said, “The order is clear that we should defend the other space gates. You are not going to defy the highest military order right now, are you? The Heaven’s Origin Fleet is hopeless now. Even if we join the battlefield, nothing can be helped. We may be crushed by the Black Wind Fleet, too. The only method of victory is to wait for the Burning Prairie Fleet to arrive and then attack the enemy together!"

"Carry out my order," Bai Xingjian said slowly but firmly. Then he added, "Forget the Burning Prairie Fleet. They will not show up. At least, not now.

"On the other hand…

"Enter the radio silence state and block all messages from the outside world, including those from the Defense Counsel of the Federation. Starting from this moment, I want no signal from the outside world to leak into my fleet."

Before the Chief of Staff came back to himself, he had already jumped off the commander's chair. With ravenousness beaming out of his face, he patted Xiao Lishui's shoulder and said, "From now on, we are on our own. Get behind the Black Wind Fleet first and find a chance to give them a shot!"

"Old Bai, what exactly…" Xiao Lishui felt that he was onto something. "What exactly do you know?"

"That old fart was not lying to me after all…" Looking at the dense light spots and the interconnected flames of spiritual energy on the light beam, Bai Xingjian put on a mysterious expression. He did not answer his Chief of Staff's question. Pondering for a moment, he grinned. "But why do I feel that I've still been tricked by him? I shouldn't have made a deal with the old fart. I'm certainly going to lose every penny in my pocket!"

Chapter 1768 - An Accidental Journey in Paradise

When Li Yao woke up, he heard the rushing sound of a waterfall from outside the wooden window. The damp air was mixed with the sweet scent of the mountain and the river. He struggled to open his eyes, and the first thing he saw was a dark beam as well as dried fish, pickled meat, and oiled pig skin hanging on it.

He moved his body softly. The bamboo bed below was creaking, implying that it had been used for many years and was on the brink of collapse.

A pair of grass shoes were placed on the ground. They were both tight and soft and were extremely comfortable to wear, like he was on a grassland barefooted. His very toe was bouncing in joy.

On his body, there was a rough, gray jacket that seemed to have been soaked and dyed by grass juice before it was dried in sunlight. The clothes were filled with the scent of sunlight and plants.

Li Yao warmed up his swollen body and observed his hands and limbs carefully. At first glance, there were no issues. However, dozens of new scars that had recently incrusted were added to his body. Those scars were so vividly made that he could even sense the flesh being pulled by the skin, like some ants were crawling inside his body.

But his Cosmos Rings were gone.

The Cosmos Rings that stored all his crystal suits, magical equipment, crystal bombs, and the Colossus were gone. Below the rough clothes, he was entirely naked, not carrying anything with him.

Li Yao did not panic. He sat cross-legged on the bamboo bed and thought for a while. Then, he loosened his belt and looked at his groin.

As he expected, it was not his genitals. Professor Mo Xuan was certainly capable of constructing a vivid virtual world by devoting the computational ability of the ‘Gai’-level super crystal processor as well as himself. He could even perfectly copy the data of Li Yao’s face, hands, and body posture that he secretly captured in the real world.

However, there was no way that he could spy on what Li Yao’s genitals looked like. So, he could only use a standard template.

But for a man, even a blind one, could he not know what his penis looked like?

This was a virtual world, which seemed to be vivid and life-like, but because of the fatal loopholes, it was not worth mentioning at all if it was seen through.

Li Yao played with it for a while, and it was immediately congested with blood and expanded. The feeling of tightening little by little was very real, but it was nonetheless slightly different from his past experience. Any man who had been through puberty would be able to instantly tell the difference.

This is false. My body is still in District 01 of Hundred Flowers City under the thorough protection of my Colossus. There's no way that Professor Mo Xuan can invade the Colossus for the time being. Therefore, he found a way to launch mental attacks and dragged my soul into his Spiriters' Realm.

Although he was lost in the Spiriters' Realm, he was not panicking. Mental attacks were always double-edged swords. During the collision of souls, it was very possible for the enemy to be injured by their own attack in their carelessness.

Wanted to trap him in the Spiriters' Realm? It all depended on if Professor Mo Xuan had such powerful computational ability, mental power, and soul power!

Li Yao fastened his belt and jumped off the bamboo bed. Then, he observed the tiny wood cabin with great interest.

The wood house was decorated in a very shabby way. Other than a bamboo bed, the only furniture was a twisted desk.

A cloak was hanging on the wall that was smeared with yellow mud. Besides the wooden box in the corner of the room that was washed dustless, there were no other objects.

Although the room was simple, it was quite pleasant nonetheless. Li Yao looked out the window, noticing that the hut seemed to have been built close to a waterfall. He could vaguely see the cliff that was filled with vines as well as water that was splashing out of the waterfall.

A lizard craned its neck from the window and looked at Li Yao. Then, it quickly retreated and vanished into the vines.

Merry songs were coming from somewhere far away through the door. Taking a deep breath, Li Yao opened the door abruptly, only to see a mountain village that looked like an unworldly paradise.

The village was located inside an enormous basin, surrounded by cliffs that rose high into the clouds. Above the cliffs, there seemed to be dense primitive forests. Even the sky was covered by thin mist. The clouds were so low that one seemed able to touch them as long as one reached for them. They added to the mysterious and delightful aura of the village.

The hut that he was in had been constructed at the highest place in the mountain village. To his left was a waterfall that looked like clouds, which smashed into a clear, transparent pool on the ground zigzagging through the village as a river. Dozens of waterwheels had been established on the two sides of the river. The diligent, lighthearted farmers were singing songs while stepping on the waterwheels to deliver the sweet water from the river to the farmland. There was no telling what season the virtual world was in, but the rice ears were so full that they were about to explode. The fragrance of the rice flowers filled the air, as intoxicating as the most delicious wine in the world.

Men were working around the waterwheels, and women were working in the land. The toddlers who had only just learned to walk were half walking and half crawling, playing with the gurgling hens at the rice drying field at the edge of the village. There also seemed to be a small school at the end of the village, from which the sound of book-reading was spreading out. The clouds were too thick for anyone to see through what was behind them. The roads on the mountains were as twisted as the zigzagging river in the village.

Although he knew that everything was false, Li Yao could not help but feel that his virtual heartbeat had slowed down.

This virtual world was more delicate and captivating than the public Spiriters’ Realm in the base of the Tinder Plan. It seemed that this was Professor Mo Xuan’s real capability to construct virtual worlds!

“Ah, you are awake!”

Li Yao turned around, only to discover a girl around fifteen years old who was looking at him full of delight with a basin of fragrant roasted escargots in her hands.

The girl was dressed like a common village woman, too. She was wearing rough clothes and a pair of high-heeled clogs. There was not the slightest make up in her fair face. The vigor of youth and the innocent expression on her face were enough to resolve all the wariness and hostility. She put the roasted escargots on a desk below the roof that was right against the waterfall. Then, she blew at her fingers quickly because the tray was too hot. While rubbing her ears, she said with a smile, “Don’t be hasty. The dinner will begin as soon as grandpa is back. It’s been raining for quite a few days. Today, the sun is finally out. Grandpa said that we would have dinner outside, and we don’t need to be cramped in the room anymore.”

Li Yao stared at her for a long time. Although he was eighty percent sure that she was a… Deviant Spirit, he could not tell the difference between her and a real person at all. He simply frowned and said, “I…”

“You don’t remember anything now?” The girl blinked her big eyes and pointed at the top of the cliff. “You fell down from right there, with dozens of bleeding wounds all over your body. It was terrible. My grandpa saved you. I thought that you would be dead for sure at that time!

“It was half a month ago. You have been running a fever and speaking nonsense during the half month, talking about wars, fighting, and killing all the time. Are you a soldier? I’m told that wars happen in the world outside every day. Is that true?”

The girl was apparently a passionate chatterbox. Instead of waiting for Li Yao to answer, she simply waved her hands and went on. “This place is Peach Blossom Village. It may look unappealing right now, but when the peach blossoms are all out in February and March, the scenery here is really beautiful!

“The seniors in the village told me that our ancestors lived in the outside world before, but it was too chaotic and dreadful, and everybody was killing each other.

“Later, our ancestors found this place, and a lot of people have moved here since. Let me think about it. It’s almost a thousand years now. In the past hundreds of years, a lot of soldiers have fallen off the cliffs when they were hunting other people or when they were hunted, just like you. Then, none of them were willing to leave after they came here!

“Zhao Laosi’s family on the east side of the village and Lady Lin’s family on the west side both had great, great grandfathers who fell off from the cliffs ages ago.

“Judging from the wounds all over your body, you must have fought a lot of wars and killed a lot of people outside. That’s too bad. Why don’t you stay here and live with us, too? The days here are peaceful and wonderful!

“What’s your name, or have you forgotten it? It doesn’t matter if you have. My name is Ah Luo, not the ‘Luo’ in tianluo (escargots), but the Luo in tengluo (vine) and luobo (carrot)! But I make the best roasted escargots in the world. Grandpa is not back yet. You can take a couple of them first and just throw the shells into the pool. Hehe!

“There’s another dish. I’m going to bring it here now. Sit here and wait for me!”

The girl ran to the kitchen with a smile, her clogs leaving clicking sounds on the stone road.

Li Yao walked close and looked at the desk. Four dishes were already placed on it. Other than the roasted escargots, there was a bowl of tofu stew, a tray of fried fish with pepper, and a tray of fried cabbage with oiled pig skin. The dishes looked rather simple and shabby, but they were indeed fragrant and enticing. Li Yao could not help but feel that he was drooling.

The clinking sounds of clogs echoed again. Ah Luo fetched a very deep fictile tank carefully. The intense fragrance of chicken soup was coming from inside.

Li Yao had never seen such fine chicken soup in the real world.

Ah Luo was apparently very proud of her skills. She smiled innocently and looked at the foot of the mountain. Then, she shouted delightedly, “Ah, grandpa is back.”

An old farmer with a hood walked slowly to the middle of the mountain, barefooted and in rough clothes, with two bundles of firewood on his back. The clothes were tied with simple grass rope, and he carried an enormous wine calabash in his hands.

The mist grew thicker and thicker, and his hood was flickering in and out of view. But the energetic eyes below the hood that were as innocent and passionate as those of a young man were not concealed at all.

It was exactly Professor Mo Xuan.

Very soon, Professor Mo Xuan, who was dressed like an old farmer, returned to the hut. Laying the firewood at the back of the house, he massaged his back and went back to the wood desk, putting the wine calabash in front of Li Yao.

“This village is too shabby for such a rare honorable guest. Do forgive us,” Professor Mo Xuan said with a smile. He poured the wine that was as dense as sugar into cups, as if there was infinite of it in the wine calabash.

Chapter 1769 - Eternal, Wonderful New World

Looking at the foam that the wine raised in the crude bowl, Li Yao felt that he was looking at the most fatal poison. He demanded full of wariness, “What… do you want exactly?”

Professor Mo Xuan sat down and stretched out his arms comfortably. He picked up an escargot and sucked the delicious juice inside. Swallowing it down, he moaned in great satisfaction. He pointed at the dream-like village at the foot of the mountain with the greasy chopsticks and said, “Should I call you Fellow Cultivator Lin or Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture? But it doesn’t matter. As you can see, I am a refiner. By the classification in our place, I am sort of a ‘creation-type Cultivator’.

“Creation. Hehe. Yes. I have created countless pieces of precise and marvelous magical equipment in the past two hundred years. But they were all chainswords, vibration sabers, crystal cannons, crystal suits, and so on. All of them were weapons that we used to butcher our own kind!

“Such things only brought chaos, pain, blood, and destruction to the world. So, am I qualified to be called a ‘creation-type Cultivator’? No. I am obviously a ‘destruction-type Cultivator’ who is destined to destroy everything.

“I’d had enough of creating weapons for murderers. One day, I had a complete epiphany and realized how ridiculous and egregious my past life was. I refused to continue creating dreadful weapons to slaughter my own kind. I had to return to the true meaning of ‘creation-type Cultivator’, to create a new world that is more beautiful!

“Look at the carefree village down there. Look at the clear pool next to us, the happily swimming fish inside, the fragrant food in front of us, and my little granddaughter ‘Ah Luo’. Isn’t it much better to create things that will bring pleasure and happiness than to create cold weapons of slaughter?

“This is exactly my purpose. I don’t have any other intention.”

The muscles all over Li Yao’s body tightened as he stared at Professor Mo Xuan. He was ready to jump up anytime.

Ah Luo seemed to have heard none of their conversation. She simply picked up a bamboo cylinder from the pool, which turned out to be storing cold, delicious plum syrup. She sipped it, and her eyebrows almost hit the ground because of the sour flavor.

“This is so delicious! Grandpa, his wounds have not recovered yet. He cannot drink alcohol. Let him drink the plum syrup with me!”

The virtual girl that was constructed from tremendous data spoke innocently, but her crisp and delightful voice only added to Li Yao’s anxiety.

Professor Mo Xuan agreed with a smile. Then, he turned around and said to Li Yao, “There’s no need to be so nervous. Ah Luo did not lie to you just now. This village has indeed admitted a lot of broken soldiers that fell from the outside world. They are all the soldiers of the federation who suffered PTSD.

“Wars are cruel. No matter how the federation emphasizes the righteousness of our cause and berates the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Alliance of the Holy Covenant to be evil and inhuman, the cruelty of wars is not reduced at all.

“In the federation, the Imperium, or the Covenant Alliance, soldiers are all obliged to kill people. They must stab their chainswords into the enemy’s chest, churning up the enemy’s internal organs. They must face the shock of crystal bombs, the cries and screams of the enemy’s family. They must destroy the enemy’s towns and villages… or even perform saturated bombardment and indiscriminate slaughter when it is impossible to make out the soldiers from the civilians!

“Even the soldiers with the toughest nerves are likely to be diagnosed with PTSD after a few years in such hells. For Cultivators, it is very easy for such a disease to sneak into their soul and turn into a tiny mental devil that will cause their mental derangement at the critical moment of their training later. Their veins and nerves may be broken, their brains may crash, and their mind may be twisted into real devils, leading to even greater damage!

“The Uranian Ring War was the largest interplanetary expedition since the New Federation was established. It was even more intense than the war between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector. Almost a hundred million soldiers were devoted to the war by the federation. Naturally, countless were afflicted with the terrible illness. Their treatment became the trickiest problem after the war.

“Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital and the production team of the game ‘Civilization’ both performed studies in that regard. This is exactly their research product, a virtual world that has been named ‘Peach Blossom Village’, or in our words, the Peach Blossom Paradise.

“Soldiers who have caused grievous damage and casualties in peaceful environments due to their severe PTSD have been delivered to this place for treatment. They rise at dawn and rest at dusk in this unworldly paradise, getting married and having children. They enjoy their lives here, and their souls that have been completely twisted by war are gradually comforted and pacified.

“Even if they cannot hold back the deepest desire for slaughter and destruction in their hearts, it will only be some artificial intelligence that they kill. The entire Peach Blossom Paradise boasts multiple data backups. It can be instantly rebuilt even if it is utterly demolished.

“Of course, I also took the opportunity to dig out a lot of crucial data from the soul of those soldiers, but it is not related to the matter at hand. There’s no need to talk more about it. Hehe.”

Professor Mo Xuan drank the wine in his porcelain bowl. Batting her watery eyes, Ah Luan poured another half bowl of wine for her ‘grandpa’ and said with mock anger, “Grandpa, you are drinking too fast. It is not good for your health. Have more dishes and drink less wine!”

Li Yao felt his heart turn cold. Naturally, he knew what Professor Mo Xuan meant by his last sentence. In the past, and even right now, the souls of too many soldiers and generals who suffered PTSD had been delivered to the Spiriters’ Realm. Those people had been mentally deranged since a long time ago. Naturally, their souls would not be as flawless as Li Yao’s. After tempting them slowly for decades, it was certainly possible for Professor Mo Xuan to learn tremendous secrets about the federal army and even to infiltrate the special military Spiritual Nexus of the federal army without alarming anyone!

“I’m told that Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture is from the Ancient Sages Sector.” Professor Mo Xuan picked up a boiling-hot piece of tofu. He blew at it and kept it between his chopsticks to cool it. Then he smiled and said, “So, I thought that a Spiriters’ Realm of such a vintage style should be most suitable to welcome you, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture.”

Li Yao sniffed. “Where did you send my companions?”

“Rest assured. I do not intend to do harm to anyone; I only have the greatest kindness,” Professor Mo Xuan said frankly. “Their bodies are being kept in a safe place. To be honest, it was quite beyond my expectations to run into so many high-level Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. I could not invade them easily, either. However, as for their souls, they have been invited to different Spiriters’ Realms as guests just like you, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture. It was not until after a dialogue with them that I finally learned a thing or two about the Ancient Sages Sector.”

Li Yao was greatly alarmed. By ‘dialogue’, it was doubtlessly corruption. If the extraterrestrial devils behind Professor Mo Xuan corrupted the souls of some of the experts from the Ancient Sages Sector and recruited them, it would be really terrible!

“According to those fellow Cultivators, the Ancient Sages Sector has been at war since time immemorial. The life of the common folk is miserable, the resources are running dry, and the spiritual energy is getting thinner and thinner. Your world is dying. That’s why you, the strongest and wisest people of the Ancient Sages Sector, went out in search of hope.

“But is there really hope in the dark universe outside? Aren’t the human beings outside also killing each other and destroying the worlds that they built?”

The sky dimmed as Professor Mo Xuan sighed. Large, dark clouds were surging close like tides with thunder and lightning. Raindrops as huge as beans were dropping.

“It’s raining again. How annoying!” Ah Luo stood on her toes and observed at faraway before she shook her head in dissatisfaction.

However, the dark clouds suddenly became transparent, like a black ocean that was hanging from the sky. Ripples were spreading out from the ocean and eventually turned into two enormous black mirrors. Inside the mirrors were the grand universe and a cruel battlefield where warships were bombarding and crystal suits were fighting with fireballs exploding everywhere. Two armies were in competition!

Li Yao’s pupils constricted violently. He noticed the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars emblem and the trident lightning emblem, which were the symbols of the federation and the Imperium respectively, on the starships of the two parties!

The strategic, decisive battle between the Star Glory Federation and the Black Wind Fleet had indeed begun!

“Look. The world outside is at war again,” Professor Mo Xuan said unemotionally. “For land, for resources, for honor, and for ancestors, the Star Glory Federation, the Imperium of True Human Beings, the Alliance of the Holy Covenant, Jin Xinyue, Ding Lingdang, Wuying Qi… Everything’s the same.

Those who claim to be heroes, who deride their enemies as devils, and who are labeled by their enemies as devils are determined to ruin the universe and our civilization.

“The universe is a boundless place, but it has no room for a peaceful paradise. Do we really have any option but to hide in the Spiriters’ Realm?

“Look at the gruesome battlefield. You must have seen battlefields that are in different forms but equally gory in your hometown countless times before, haven’t you, Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture?

“Haven’t you had enough of such a life? Are destruction, massacre, and conquest the only things that can satisfy ‘heroes’ like you? Why can’t you dedicate your strength, resolution, and vigor to creation? Stay here and join the Spiriters’ Realm. Let’s build a real, perfect, and eternal world that is devoid of wars and embraced by peace together!”

Professor Mo Xuan extended his hands toward Li Yao sincerely.

Li Yao was almost creeped out by the sincerity inside Professor Mo Xuan’s eyes. Then, he was agitated by the reflection of the ongoing, heated war in the sea of stars. Taking a deep breath, he calmed himself down and gritted his teeth, firmly replying, “Professor Mo Xuan, you have chosen the completely wrong path. However wonderful your ‘new world’ is, it is false. False! You think you can get away from wars by escaping into the Spiriters’ Realm, but is it any different from the ostriches that hide their heads in the sand?”

Chapter 1770 - You Are Under Arrest!

“What is real, and what is fake? The so-called soul is nothing but a cluster of special energy waves, and the fleshly body is just a combination of protein and carbohydrates! All of a human being’s feelings, your joy and your pain, aren’t they the result of the nerve endings being stimulated by bioelectricity?”

Professor Mo Xuan kept his arms straightened at him. He earnestly said, “Is protein destined to be superior to silicon chips? Is the glow of bioelectricity at the nerve endings more real than the ’emotions’ triggered by the spiritual energy in rune arrays? Look around. Look at the fragrant cuisine, the peaceful and quiet village, and my lovely, innocent granddaughter. Are they not ‘real’ enough for you?

“Pleasure is pleasure. Happiness is happiness. Pain is pain. Desperation is desperation. There is no such disparity as real and false!

“But let’s just say that everything here is false. So what? Isn’t the most illusionary happiness ten thousand times better than real pain? To live a carefree life in a false paradise, or to be ravaged and slaughtered by a real war. For most people, do they really need to think to pick an answer?”

Li Yao gritted his teeth. Flames of spiritual energy gradually surged out of every pore on his body, forming a fuzzy shadow around him. His soul was too powerful. The form and frequency of his surging spiritual energy had surpassed the calculation limits of the Peach Blossom Paradise. The data could not be handled in real time. The whole world grew more and more unsteady, as if a minor earthquake was happening at the core of the earth.

“I will not listen to your demagogism!” Li Yao bellowed. “Real is real, and false is false! A palace constructed on a beach is absolutely useless no matter how splendid and delicate it seems. You want to bring absolute peace to the world, but the only thing you can present is absolute darkness! Is there any essential difference between the so-called ‘new world’ and ‘Peach Blossom Paradise’ that you have constructed and the drugs that narcotize and give them the ultimate sense of pleasure? That’s not real happiness. It’s just the seemingly glorious light you see before your death!

“Regardless of whether you are Professor Mo Xuan or the extraterrestrial devils, whatever your plan is, I will not let things go your way!”

The flames of spiritual energy around Li Yao became more and more turbulent until they almost formed a small storm that was gradually shredding the hut and the entire village.

Ah Luo, the virtual girl, shrieked in fear and dropped the bamboo cylinder to the ground. The deep pure plum syrup flowed everywhere.

Her tears were also dropping like pearls, but she summoned her courage and stood in front of Professor Mo Xuan. Her voice shaking, she said, “What—what are you doing? Don’t hurt my grandpa!”

This illusion is damn vivid! Li Yao cursed in his heart. But he suddenly lost the courage to look at the girl ‘Ah Luo’, who was shocked and frightened, in the eyes.

He even felt sorry for the five dishes that had been blown to the ground by his soul storm.

It was the way of the extraterrestrial devils' attack. Invisible and yet unbelievably sordid!

You—you are shameless enough to simulate the most sacred feeling of mankind as your weapon and your shield. I will not be deceived by you. I'm going to destroy this place!

Thinking about his family, friends, and compatriots who were fighting fiercely in space, Li Yao gritted his teeth and hardened his heart, summoning the explosive strength deep inside his soul.

As his soul power continued expanding, wind and thunder were blowing around. The clouds and mist grew thicker and thicker, but the whole world seemed to dim, as if the rendering quality was getting lousier and the running speed was turning sluggish!

Finally, the entire Peach Blossom Paradise was slowed down to a point where mottled light spots showed up, as if thousands of colorful butterflies were crumbling. Li Yao, Professor Mo Xuan, and the virtual girl 'Ah Luo' all became sharp, fuzzy, and dim as they were gradually disintegrated.

"You cannot destroy the Spiriters' Realm." Professor Mo Xuan's casual voice echoed from his body that was gradually falling apart. "People who entered the Spiriters' Realm in the past, especially the soldiers who suffered PTSD, were often too obsessed about the so-called 'real' and 'fake' at first just like you. They obliterated the 'fake world' every now and then, but before long, they would accept this place, grow fond of everything, and be completely integrated with the Spiriters' Realm. They consider this place reality and the world outside an ugly illusion!

“Hehe. Many of them fell in love with my granddaughter, Ah Luo, and even married her. Ah Luo is indeed a very lovely girl and will be a great wife. Maybe you will fall in love with her one day.”

Li Yao was truly creeped out. “You are mad. You are not Professor Mo Xuan. What kind of monster are you?”

“Huh?” Professor Mo Xuan sounded quite surprised. “Since we met for the first time, you seem to have been very certain that I am not Professor Mo Xuan. That was why you began your investigation into me, too. Why? On what grounds is an expert from the Ancient Sages Sector so suspicious of a professor in a foreign world hundreds of lightyears away? I believe that my camouflage in the Tinder Base was immaculate. There shouldn’t be any point that called for your doubts, unless…”

Li Yao was greatly alarmed, crying that it was not good in his heart.

Long Yangjun was quite right. In such weird metal warfare, his real identity was indeed his last trump card.

If Li Yao had exposed his identity carelessly in Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital or even earlier, the virtual world and the girl appearing before him would have probably been Floating Spear City and Ding Lingdang instead of the Peach Blossom Paradise and Ah Luo!

Would he really be determined enough to kill his wife’s illusion?

“Whoever you are, we have seen through all your secrets. Your vile scheme is now completely disrupted!”

Li Yao tried to disturb Professor Mo Xuan's mind by attacking actively. He spat hard, and his soul storm raged toward Professor Mo Xuan overwhelmingly.

"I don't believe that you are as confident of your victory as you appear to be. Do you really think that the twelve experts from the Ancient Sages Sector are made of paper? You want to corrupt the souls of the twelve of us in a row? Not so easy! Old man, you are now both swallowing the souls of the twelve of us and hacking the Spiritual Nexus and the mainframe crystal processor of the federation. It can't be easy for you, right? Your computational ability and your soul power have been pushed to the limits, right? You are going to collapse immediately as long as I slightly move my little finger, right?"

"You have suddenly changed the tone of your speech to be a very dramatic and exaggerating one. What are you trying to hide?" Professor Mo Xuan was utterly unmoved. His eyes were still emitting profound brilliance in midair although they had been vaporized into ashes. He eyed Li Yao up and down as if Li Yao were a piece of magical equipment. "There's really no explanation for that. Your real identity has clearly been exposed. There should be nothing that you need to disguise. Besides, the two of us do not know each other. What can I do even if I know your real identity? Therefore…"

Cold sweat was running out from the deepest part of Li Yao's soul. Professor Mo Xuan deserved to be called a human-shaped crystal processor. His computational ability was too unbelievable!

"It doesn't matter now." Professor Mo Xuan suddenly smiled casually. Before the entire world was ripped apart and collapsed, he remarked, "The infiltration and control has long begun. There are two enormous troops in the Heaven's Origin Sector right now. Both of them feel good about themselves because they believe that their enemy has been deceived by them, but they do not know that they are just two animals that have fallen into traps without them knowing it. They are just bait for each other—bait that I threw out. After they maul each other and get exhausted by each other, it will be time for me to fish them up!

"After I control the two most powerful troops at the edge of the cosmos, I will boast the sharpest blades in the ten thousand lightyears around, which will allow me to realize my dream the way I want—to turn swords into ploughs and embrace a new world of absolute peace!

"I once told you that such an action was like pulling up seedlings to help them grow. Hehe. Maybe I am indeed too hasty. But in some cases, evolution is not linear but requires a leap. Just like when hideous caterpillars turn into beautiful butterflies, it needs a moment of sublimation!

"Open your arms and embrace the new world because you can do nothing other than that!"

With ear-splitting laughter that did not sound like Professor Mo Xuan at all, the whole world collapsed all of a sudden. Darkness and fire replaced each other and brought Li Yao to…

…

In the command center of the Defense Counsel of the Star Glory Federation in the Star Glory Federation, more and more parliamentary, military, and major sect leaders had been summoned to the place by Wan Guqing, the Speaker of the Federation. A lot of independent experts had arrived, too, to listen to the commands of the Defense Counsel together.

When those leaders and experts stepped into the command center, the very first sound they heard was the ever-ringing alarms.

“Such—such powerful gravitational waves!”

“Countless massive objects are breaking the barrier of the three-dimensional space and creating an enormous, temporary wormhole. They are about to show up in the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

“By—by preliminary estimation, the objects passing through the wormhole weigh more than two hundred million tons. What a huge mass. It must be the Black Wind Fleet’s second attack group!

“Based on the intelligence of the captives and the deduction of our experts, after the second batch of starships jump over, more than half of the combat units of the Black Wind Fleet will have been gathered in the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

“What about the No. 1 space gate? Have we still not reclaimed it? Damn it!”

The urgent military news made the leadership of the federation either worried, furious, or grit their teeth. The air in the command center was so intense that it seemed as if it would explode at any point.

Wan Guqing, the Speaker of the Federation, was as calm as ever, however. He seemed not concerned by the agitating battle at all.

But when he noticed that the time on the light beam had reached a certain number, he slightly turned his head and looked at the gate of the command center.

DUM! DUM! DUM! DUM!

Heavy footsteps of crystal suits stomping on the ground echoed from outside of the gate. A team of elite, fully-armed Exos, wearing the cloud-and-moon emblem of the Secret Sword Bureau, suddenly barged in. Gawked at by the astonished leadership of the federation, they were regrouped into four squads. While one squad stayed on alert, the other three squads walked to three leaders in the room. Before their targets realized what was going on, they had already captured the targets like wolves and tigers.

“Excuse me, Representative Li, Leader Ouyang, and Deputy Advisor Zhao, you can save the expressions of disbelief. You are now under arrest for treason and espionage!”

Guo Chunfeng, the director of the Secret Sword Bureau, the guardian god of the dark frontline of the federation, known as the almighty super Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, slowly walked into the command center.

Chapter 1771 - Fish Them All!

The unexpected arrest surprised the leaders of the federation who were present. They all looked at Guo Chunfeng’s unattractive face.

At this point, even the bleeding battlefield in space on the 3D light beams was no longer the focus of everyone’s attention.

Some of the quick-minded fellows had quickly figured out something from the subtle atmosphere between Guo Chunfeng and Wan Guqing. Associating the anomaly with the chaos a moment ago, Jin Xinyue’s rebellion, and the Black Wind Fleet’s assault, they felt that they were seeing a great game.

“Representative Li, Leader Ouyang, and Deputy Advisor Zhao.”

Wearing an old jacket that had been washed so many times that it had lost all color, Guo Chunfeng walked up to the three captives, whose expressions could not have been more twisted because of the barriers that suppressed them. He glanced around with his sharp eyes before he took out three piles of documents from his backpack and threw them at the captives’ faces.

“The three of you have been accused of cooperating with the expedition army of the Imperium. In the past seven years, more than 12,520 entries of information regarding the deployment of the federal army; the details of the defense systems of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, the Uranian Ring Sector, and the other worlds; and the habits and weaknesses of most of the Cultivators in the federation above the Nascent Soul Stage have been transmitted to our most dangerous enemy by the likes of you! The evidence is conclusive. You do not need to say a word to defend yourselves. Just shut up and wait for the trial!”

The files were scattered apart in front of them. The three big shots who were quite influential in parliament, the military, and the Association of Cultivators stared at the blood-freezing descriptions on the files, so devastated that their faces were as colorless as the dead people.

Had it not been for the seven or so crystal suits that were grabbing them, they would not have been able to stand on their feet at all.

Whispers were echoing in the room. Now that more than 1,500 pieces of leaked intelligence had been grasped, such a sudden arrest was obviously not improvised but prepared in advance. Everything was under the Secret Sword Bureau’s control!

Soon, Guo Chunfeng’s eyes returned to everyone else in the face. He said calmly and expressionlessly, “Everyone, allow me to report to you the result of ‘Operation Scorching Sun’ in the past half an hour. During the past half an hour, the 125 special arrest groups that we’ve deployed in the critical locations in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, the Uranian Ring Sector, the Burning Prairie Fleet, and other places took action at the same time and destroyed the enormous spy network that the expedition army of the Imperium has secretly unfolded in the federation over the past ten years. In total, thirty-four spies have been captured, 157 have been killed, 1,355 defectors on our side have been detained, and 2,532 have been killed. Six secret communication bases that can directly send intelligence to the Black Wind Fleet have been demolished. Nine state-of-the-art communication devices from the Imperium of True Human Beings have been looted.

“In case you’re interested, the nearest secret communication base to us is in Representative Li’s private ranch in the west suburb of the capital city. Fifteen minutes ago, the secret communication base sent tremendous information to the outside world.

“Representative Li, you spoke to your private ranch fifteen minutes ago, didn’t you? I’m sure that you were not checking on your livestock, right?”

After hearing that his nest had been demolished, Representative Li lost all his vigor. He did not even have the strength to moan.

The leadership of the federation all looked at each other in bewilderment. They had known that the Imperium’s infiltration was rather severe, but they did not expect it to be so severe.

Thousands—thousands of people had been corrupted by the Imperium?

Of course, they did not see it coming, either, that the Secret Sword Bureau’s efficiency would be so high. Judging from the abruptness and enormity of the operation, the Secret Sword Bureau must have counter-infiltrated the spy network that the Imperium deployed in the federation and did not fish up all the suspects until right at the most critical moment.

“This is just the beginning,” Guo Chunfeng said casually, his eyes as mysterious as an abyss. “While we are having this conversation, still more traitors are being hunted and imprisoned, and they will get what they deserve. The rampant enemies in space above the Heaven’s Origin Sector are nothing but tortoises in a tank, too. They will be annihilated in no time.

“So—”

He looked at Wan Guqing, the Speaker of the Federation.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Everybody moved their eyes to Wan Guqing. The arrest operation of such a scale that involved so many giants of the federation could never have been carried out without the consent, or at least the connivance, from Wan Guqing.

Wan Guqing was still as dutiful and sluggish as before, like a camel in the desert.

However, the brown colors that were flashing inside his eyes gave the impression that he was actually another creature in the desert at times—the fox.

“Everyone, I’m going to introduce to you the ‘Dim Moon Plan’.” Wu Guqing coughed lightly. He waved his hands and said lethargically, “Due to time constraints, we will just skip the cause, background, and process of the plan and jump to the conclusion.

“Jin Xinyue, the leader of the Ministry of Equality and Development and president of the Dim Moon Fund, who, according to the intelligence you just received, has betrayed the federation and created large-scale turmoil by seizing and sabotaging three space gates, did not really betray the federation. Everything was just our plan, a show that we performed for the real traitors so that they would send the wrong information to the Black Wind Fleet. Then, we would be able to lure the snake out of its hideout.

“Jin Xinyue did not defect. Both the space jump center on the ground and the No. 1 space gate in the sky are still under our control. The No. 2 and No. 3 space gates that were claimed to have been destroyed are undamaged, too, and can bring our main force here anytime!”

The unexpected news was like a rumbling thunder in the room. Even the gravest leaders of the federation almost jumped to their feet.

“The Imperium’s infiltration was too serious. We did not really have a choice.” Struggling to keep his eyes open, Wan Guqing went on unhurriedly. “The Imperium has hundreds of Sectors, and we only have seven, which have been gathered in a hurry in the last hundred years, with a lot of internal disagreement and conflicting interests. A few hundred versus seven, the gap between the enemy and ourselves is too shockingly big. It is perfectly normal that some lost hope in the federation.

“Some of the guys with ill intentions were banished to the Dragon Snake Space Zone and monitored, but more dangerous defectors changed their appearance and lurked deep inside the federation. Together with the spies of the Imperium that snuck into our land, they constituted an enormous espionage network.

“It was impossible to eradicate such a huge network. Even if one or two nodes were wiped out, still more nodes would pop up later.

“Therefore, our colleagues in the Secret Sword Bureau and the Dim Moon Fund simply chose the opposite approach. They established our own organization of defectors, known as the CFIA, through which they sent tremendous half-true-half-false intelligence to the Black Wind Fleet. Eventually, this trap for the Black Wind Fleet was prepared!”

Even the arrival of the Black Wind Fleet was part of the plan!

Even the admin-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators more than two hundred years old who usually hid their emotions very well were beaming with joy.

“Please take a look, everyone.” Wan Guqing made a gesture and enlarged the light beam that displayed the overview of the battlefield. “Right now, the Black Wind Fleet is unaware of the real Dim Moon Plan. They still think that Jin Xinyue and her demon troops have really betrayed the federation. Therefore, they are bold enough to perform the second space jump.

“Judging from the intensity of the space ripples and the gravitational waves, half of the forces of the Black Wind Fleet will be gathered in the Heaven’s Origin Sector after the jump.

“Then, when their follow-up troops perform the third space jump, if we adjust the navigation coordinates of the No. 1 space gate in time, we will be able to cut off the connection between the enemy’s troops in the front and those in the rear. There is even a chance that we will annihilate the enemy’s third attack groups in the violent turbulence of the four-dimensional space!

“If only fifty percent of the forces of the Black Wind Fleet are teleported to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, we will have an opportunity to devour all of them by combining the Burning

Prairie Fleet, the Big Bai Fleet, the Heaven’s Origin Fleet, and the orbit defense system of the home planet!

“After half of the forces of the Black Wind Fleet, including the flagship, are swallowed and twenty to thirty percent of the forces are completely lost in the space turbulence, all that will be left is the vulnerable supply starships, residence starships, and resource collection starships. The Black Wind Fleet will completely lose their ability to attack and defend. The federation will secure the final victory easily!”

Before Wan Guqing finished his sentence, stripes flashed on the 3D light beams nearby that were connected to two secret communication channels. One at the front and the other at the back, two images gradually took shape.

The first image was Jin Xinyue.

Her pure white robe had been stained with blood. There was even a red poppy flower blossoming on the corner of her lips, which made her smile even more sordid and cruel.

She seemed to be in the middle of a chaotic battle where smoke and fire were rising nonstop. The most desperate screams were echoing now and then.

“What’s going on? Aren’t you—”

“Jin Xinyue, Jin Xinyue, you lied to us. We will not let you go even after we die. Ah!”

“We would like to surrender! We were all deceived. She—she…”

Despite all the background noises, Jin Xinyue put on a charming smile. Licking the poppy flower of blood on her lips, she said, “Reporting to the Defense Counsel, ten thousand defectors that launched insurgencies in various places in the capital city have been suppressed, and more than thirty nests of defectors have been dug out and destroyed. The No. 1, No. 2, and No. 3 space gates are all functioning normally. The jump points and sailing routes around the No. 2 and No. 3 space gates have been cleared. They are ready for the jump of main troops.”

Pausing for a moment, the queen of demons moved her eyes to the leadership of the federation. With an even more satisfied smile, she held her chest high and declared firmly, “Long live the federation!”

Wan Guqing looked at the woman on the light beam who was far younger than him but who was a hundred times more ambitious with mixed feelings. He nodded and said, “Very good. Let’s proceed with our plan!”

It took a while longer for the other light beam to take shape because the communication was from another world dozens of lightyears away.

It was Bai Kaixin, the Chief of Staff of the Burning Prairie Fleet, who was wearing a white uniform with a fire-like epaulette on his shoulder.

“Reporting to the Defense Counsel!” Bai Kaixin declared, his eyes brimming with confidence. “The first mixed fleet, with Burning Prairie, Light Chaser, Mountain Breaker, and the other four super main-force warships as the core, has been gathered and completed its preparations. We are ready to carry out a space jump anytime!”

Chapter 1772 - Crush the Big Bai Fleet First!

“Let’s begin!” Wan Guqing’s eyes stopped on the raging Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars emblem on Bai Kaixin’s chest. A long while later, he said gravely and solemnly, “The federation will win!”

“The federation will win!” Bai Kaixin on the light beam saluted and left. The picture of the bridge behind was soon twisted, with mottled rainbow swirls popping up, which was an amazing scene when the long-distance, real-time communication was seriously affected by the twisting space ripples.

In that moment, the information streams that contained boundless important data went one step forward. They rippled the stars and rushed at the highest speed in the four-dimensional space. Transferring and being accelerated at the Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus Information Processing Center, they smoothly arrived in the Flying Star Sector where the main force of the Burning Prairie was.

That data established an invisible bridge of wormholes among the Flying Star Sector, Hundred Flowers City, and the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Countless coordinates, directions, and sailing route and space gate measurements were transmitted, recorded, and processed within the moment.

Deep inside the Flying Star Sector, the first mixed team of the Burning Prairie Fleet, including a thousand state-of-the-art starships including the flagship, was immediately covered in hazy light mists. The mists grew brighter and brighter, almost devouring every starship, before they were lengthened into sharp arrows of light that were about to be shot into the most important field at the life-and-death moment!

Compared with the splendid No. 1 space gate, the other two space gates around the main planet of the Heaven’s Origin Sector were relatively small and of a lower scale. The number of starships that they could navigate at one time was smaller, too.

Moreover, in order to deceive the spy network established by the Imperium that was everywhere in the federation, the Burning Prairie Fleet could not have gathered all the troops beforehand.

Therefore, the first mixed fleet to be teleported was all the elites of the branch fleets. They were the essence of the essence.

Their mission was the same as the Big Bai Fleet’s, which was to defend the space gates and cover the following troops while they were performing the space jump.

As long as all the three space gates were under the federation’s control, the Black Wind Fleet would be nothing more than fish in a boiling pot. With the collective defense of the first mixed fleet and the Big Bai Fleet, it was impossible for the Black Wind Fleet to seize the No. 2 and No. 3 space gates when only fifty percent of its forces had been teleported. When the main troops on the federation’s side arrived, the Black Wind Fleet would be completely screwed!

Therefore, when furious space ripples were raised around the No. 2 and No. 3 space gates, and the gravitation probe devices detected that objects of enormous masses were jumping out of the void, inside the Defense Counsel of the Federation, from Wan Guqing to Guo Chunfeng, and from Jin Xinyue who was waving blades on the light beam or the MPs and experts around whose worry was turning into joy, nobody had any doubt that it was going to be an unprecedented triumph!

…

The Black Wind Fleet, which had been stalled by the Heaven’s Origin Fleet with astonishing tenacity, detected the gravitational changes from the No. 2 and No. 3 space gates, too.

They and the other two space gates happened to be on different sides of the home planet of the Heaven’s Origin Sector. It was difficult to measure the precise mass that caused such gravitational changes over such a long distance.

But it was doubtless that the only objects that would jump to the Heaven’s Origin Sector in an enormous scale at such a moment were the reinforcements of the federation.

On the bridge of Black Swirl, Heiye Ming, having received the emergent report, was not surprised at all. Instead, he took a deep breath before he put on a hideous smile.

“You’re finally here. You must be the most elite vanguards of the Burning Prairie Fleet, mustn’t you?

“Tsk, tsk, tsk. The spy network we deployed over ten years has been entirely uprooted and suppressed, too. Jin Xinyue is truly an unreliable skank.

“However, those idiotic barbarians at the edge of the cosmos who do not know how big the universe is really think I, the commander of an expedition army of the invincible Imperium of True Human Beings, will solely wager the hope of victory on a savage detector? That’s truly stupid of them!

“They will never see it coming that my trump card is not Jin Xinyue but Su Changfa, an Immortal Cultivator from the Imperium of True Human Beings and one of our own!

“Right now, the most elite vanguards of the Burning Prairie Fleet are about to arrive. As long as we devour the best troops of the best troops and then occupy the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Star Glory Federation will be fish on the chopping block!”

Heiye Ming sneered. He glanced at the bottom left corner on the ocean of dense light beams around the mainframe crystal processor unintentionally. In the corner, there was a small, unattractive light beam, which was so eclipsed that it was about to disappear when drowned in the ever-changing war data.

It was the status of the brainwaves and biophysical features of Lu Qingchen, Su Changfa’s disciple as well as the liaison whom he had sent out.

“Should I set him free?”

Heiye Ming pondered for a moment but abandoned the idea. After all, the war was basically settled now. He could always release the monster when the battle came to a brief halt.

Although Su Changfa was much more dependable as a compatriot from the Imperium and an avid believer of the true path of immortality than Jin Xinyue, a demon from desolate lands that he had never met before…

Heiye Ming’s cautious nature made him unwilling to trust anyone completely. Even this time, he had performed minor adjustments on the battle plan that Su Changfa had sent over through Lu Qingchen in advance.

The most trustworthy person for anyone was themself. Heiye Ming believed in nothing but his own capabilities!

Far behind the Black Wind Fleet, in the place where they jumped out at the beginning, Heiye Ming’s second troop ripped apart the void, presenting an enormous outline on the dark universe that looked like black velvet.

However, a lot of the curves that constituted the outline did not appear to be long, graceful starships but were more like —

“Report!”

An advisor stepped forward quickly and spoke to Heiye Ming. “The sixteenth Deep Sky Fleet on the enemy’s side is accelerating toward our rear, trying to attack us from the back with the Heaven’s Origin Fleet in the front!”

“Attacking us from both sides? Who do they think they are?” Heiye Ming chuckled. “The Heaven’s Origin Fleet is about to be completely shredded by us. The sixteenth Deep Sky Fleet —the so-called Big Bai Fleet—is nothing more than a lightweight, rapid assault fleet. Their commander is an insignificant person who only knows guerilla warfare. The crew members are also rabble that are better at robbing than fighting.

“Before the first attack groups of the Burning Prairie Fleet complete their space jump, let’s finish the Big Bai Fleet. Blow them to smithereens from their skin to their bones!”

…

In Hundred Flowers City, deep inside the Spiriters’ Realm, red leaves were falling, and furious fire was burning the sky. The paradise a moment ago had turned into the goriest slaughterhouse.

A bunch of soldiers in ancient armor rode high horses into the village like locusts, breaking the serenity of the place that had lasted a thousand years within a moment.

The old were burnt. The young were stabbed with spears. The children were trampled by the hooves. The women’s miserable cries were rising into the clouds. But the hideous laughter of the soldiers was even louder than the cries.

The scroll painted with blood and fire was unfolded in front of Li Yao’s eyes.

A woman whose clothes were a mess with a baby in her arms ran toward him in tears, screaming, followed by an animalistic soldier on a horse.

The soldier grinned and dashed forward, holding a spear in his hands. He was about to stab both the woman and her child.

Li Yao could not stand it any longer. Gritting his teeth, he jumped up and snatched the spear before it pierced through the woman’s chest and the baby’s skull. Then, he jabbed the spear backward and nailed the soldier into the ground from his horse!

“Gulu! Gulu! Gulu! Gulu!”

The soldier was pinned to the ground in a twisted posture. His arms and legs were still struggling, and weird sounds were echoing from his throat. His bloodshot eyes were a bit frozen at the beginning, but they were spinning quickly again a moment later.

In an inhuman posture, he plucked himself from the long spear inch by inch while vomiting tremendous blood. His hideous face melted like a candle only to condense into Professor Mo Xuan’s face again!

“Why did you save her?” Professor Mo Xuan, in the soldier’s armor, with a giant hole through his chest, gazed at Li Yao. “If you believe that everything here is false and virtual, just data and algorithms, why did you bother to save them, those worthless Deviant Spirits?”

Behind Li Yao, the woman who was simulated with data tripped over herself in the meadow. She seemed to have broken her feet, but she was still holding her baby in her arms tight, as if she could really protect the child that was also simulated with data with her weak body.

Behind Professor Mo Xuan, it could be seen through the enormous hole in his chest that similar cruel tragedies were going on in the burning village, where the soldiers were slaughtering and savaging in the hell on earth.

Li Yao had never been more outraged before.

Even when he saw the ancestors of human beings, who were developed by the Pangu Clan for the purpose of ‘tools’, and the inhuman ‘Three Fundamental Laws’, he had never sensed such intense evil!

“You are defiling the most beautiful feelings in the world. You are defiling the proud name of ‘human being’ itself!” Clenching his fists, Li Yao gnashed his teeth. “For you, love, friendship, compassion, and all other precious emotions, what are they exactly? Are they tools that can be randomly simulated with data and algorithms? You unpardonable lunatic!”

“Don’t forget that it was you who destroyed the peaceful world, Peach Blossom Paradise, first. I am merely showing you what this place will look like after it is completely destroyed!” Professor Mo Xuan laughed hideously. “If you claim that everything here is false and virtual, however many old people, women, and children are killed here, that will be nothing more than a change of some data. Is that worth all your fury?

“Otherwise, even you have to admit that the insignificant data changes in an illusionary world are also enough to cause the most real emotional reactions and that the village that is being destroyed, and the mother and child that are being saved in front of you, are real to some extent, don’t you?”

Chapter 1773 - Sordid and Shameless!

Li Yao was rendered speechless for a moment.

His mind was still half occupied by the picture of the fierce battle in space that he had just seen. When he thought that his wife, his disciples, and his friends were fighting against the most brutal Immortal Cultivators from the Imperium of True Human Beings right now, his head was a complete mess.

He knew that it was just Professor Mo Xuan’s trick to disturb him, but how could he really forget everything?

Professor Mo Xuan continued grinning hideously. “If destroying such a village in a virtual world is unpardonable enough for someone to be called a ‘lunatic’, what do those people deserve to be called who raise wars that involved dozens of Sectors in reality and demolish cities and planets with a population of millions?

“In the virtual world, towns can be rebuilt after destruction, and women and children can be revived after death. As long as you slightly modify a few instructions and roll back the data, all the miserable memories will be wiped out, and all the pain and desperation will be gone!

“But in reality, everybody has only one precious life. When they die, they will be gone forever!

“You said that I am a lunatic and a fiend who is stomping on the most beautiful feelings of mankind. Then, let me ask you, if I don’t do this, is there any other way that can completely push the civilization of mankind away from war and make it embrace eternal peace within the next few hundred years so that no living human being will ever bear the pain that you are bearing right now?”

Professor Mo Xuan’s every word was like a meteor that contained immense mental power. They were bombarding Li Yao’s soul brutally.

Li Yao felt that the picture before his eyes was blurred and that his soul was being melted quickly. Greatly alarmed, he knew that it was the most direct collision of mind, will, and ideology. It was the out-and-out competition of beliefs!

At a moment like this, the most important thing was to firm his belief. If he failed the competition, there would be cracks on his soul, and the enemy’s theories would find their way into his soul through the weakness, until he was completely convinced and turned into the enemy’s puppet!

In terms of mental power, Li Yao and Professor Mo Xuan were both extraordinary. They were both enhanced by the extraterrestrial devils of different natures, too. One might say that they were on par with each other.

It was true that Professor Mo Xuan was enhanced by hundreds of super crystal processors, but he was running much more tasks simultaneously right now than Li Yao. Therefore, their mental power, computational ability, and soul power were very similar at this moment.

Thus, all that mattered was whose belief was more correct and immaculate!

“Nobody likes war.”

Li Yao forced himself to calm down and shift his attention from the bleeding stars and the burning village. He bellowed, “I wish that there were no wars and slavery in the universe, too, and everybody could live happily ever after. That is also the goal that I have always been fighting for!

“Maybe… we do share the same destination, but you cannot avoid wars by transforming the entire civilization of mankind into nothingness! Is this any different from curing a terminally ill patient by killing them and extracting their soul?

“Yes. The resources in the universe are finite, but the desires of human beings are infinite. When finite resources come across infinite desires, wars are bound to break out and bring pain and destruction. It was so ten thousand years ago, it is so right now, and maybe it will still be so in ten thousand years. Nobody can expect to completely stop it.

“However, it is exactly because of the forever irreconcilable contradiction between ‘finite’ and ‘infinite’ that mankind’s never-ending curiosity, sense of enterprise, and ambition to march into deep parts of the universe have formed. That is how our splendid, soul-stirring history was created and how our civilization has developed to what it is today, too!

“Discontent. Ever since our ancestors broke the shackles of the Pangu Civilization and the boundary of the Three Fundamental Laws hundreds of thousands of years ago, our civilization has always been greedy, ravenous, and never understood what satisfaction is! We marched up tall mountains, we marched across vast oceans, we marched to distant planets, we marched to the three thousand Sectors, and we marched to the boundless universe beyond the three thousand Sectors. Given enough time, we will push forward to the border of the universe, shatter the border, and then continue marching beyond the universe! Perhaps our dream to satisfy our infinite desires with finite resources will never be realized, but doesn't the whole significance of the civilization of mankind lie in the pursuit of the great dream?

"And you, what have you been doing?

"On the surface, you are creating a perfect, absolute, and wonderful new world, but in fact, you are confining the future of humanity with an illusionary cage! You are suffocating mankind's creativity, imagination, curiosity, ambition, valor, and all the other most beautiful things!"

"Nonsense!" Professor Mo Xuan opened his arms. Colorful flowers were suddenly blossoming around the furiously burning village. There were even butterflies dancing among the flowers, which was a vivid and yet devastating contrast to the village that was struggling on the brink of destruction. He declared, "Look. We can create any most beautiful thing freely!"

"When there is no darkness, there is no brightness. If you wipe out pain and ugliness by force, the so-called happiness and beauty will be utterly meaningless," Li Yao declared resolutely. "The contradiction between finite resources and infinite desires is the only engine of advancement for mankind. It is also the reason our civilization is so brilliant and splendid. If your new world does not have any contradictions, it will never make any progress but will stay as a pool of backwater forever!

"I will never allow you to transform the civilization of mankind into a seemingly delicate aquarium!"

"That is just your opinion. That is just the opinion of the big shots and the great heroes!" Professor Mo Xuan suddenly burst into fury. "Ambitions to march to the border of the universe? Curiosity and creativity to explore infinite possibilities? ‘Wars are unavoidable’? Li Yao, you are of course qualified to speak such jibber-jabber. After all, you are an unparalleled expert who dominates the sea of stars. Even if you die, your death will be splendid enough to stun the entire universe!

“But what about the ordinary people who cannot control their fate? What about those people who are being savaged by war right now? Do they have to sacrifice their precious lives just for the unsubstantial term ‘civilization of mankind’?

“Your life in reality is already brilliant enough. You are essentially a walking legend. Which ordinary person can live like you?

“Maybe most of the ordinary people do not give a damn about your so-called creativity, curiosity, and ambitions to march out of the universe. They only want to live peaceful, carefree lives. What’s bad about being fish in the aquarium? At the very least, they wouldn’t need to worry about brutal predators and turbulent currents in the ocean!

“Do not gauge the ordinary people with your standard. 99% of people can never be like you!”

“Shut up!” In his fury, Li Yao was shouting in a louder and louder voice. “It is you who are defining the ordinary people with your standard and claiming that it is for their good!

“Don’t underestimate ordinary people, professor! Even if they are not as strong as Cultivators, everybody can have the same courage and hope for the future! Even if they are ordinary people today, they may become a dominating big shot and great hero tomorrow by striving through hard work. Even if they remain ordinary people for their entire life, their offspring will be stronger generation after generation! This is hope, the most precious hope for mankind!

“Your virtual world, on the other hand, has completely exterminated such hope! Once they are lost in the Spiriters’ Realm, their dreams of fame and fortune and their emotional needs can be satisfied instantly, and all their goals will be achieved within a moment. No more epics, no more heroes, no more anything! What is the hope in such a life? What is worth fighting for? What’s the meaning in living?

“Henceforth, our progeny will forever be parasites trapped in silicon chips and the Spiritual Nexus, fed by illusionary, digital drugs every day and doing nothing at all, until the silicon chips and the super crystal processors that support such an illusionary civilization one day cannot last any longer and collapse abruptly. Everything will be obliterated into nothingness at that moment. Is that the ultimate form of the civilization of mankind in your vision, professor?”

Professor Mo Xuan seemed to have been convinced by Li Yao. He stared at his opponent and did not say anything for a long time.

Li Yao’s soul glowed brilliantly, as if the entire world was under his control. Confident of his victory, he went on. “You’ve got nothing to say for yourself anymore, professor, do you?”

Pa! Pa! Pa!

Professor Mo Xuan clapped his hands slowly, with a weird smile popping up on his face. “You do have a point. I’m indeed a bit… speechless right now, Li Yao!”

Blinking his eyes and scratching his chin, Li Yao felt that something was not right.

A moment later, cold sweat was pouring from his forehead.

Li Yao stared at Professor Mo Xuan in silence.

Professor Mo Xuan looked back at him quietly, too.

The atmosphere was a bit awkward at the moment.

“Hey, that was highly immoral of you to play such a dirty trick when we were having such a passionate debate of beliefs.”

“Hehe. So, you admit that you are Li Yao?”

“Well, what if I say that Master Spiritual Vulture’s original name is Li Yao? It is a rather common name. It’s perfectly normal for two people to have the same name, isn’t it?”

Professor Mo Xuan was utterly unmoved. “Hehe. The dark nebula, the Ancient Sages Sector, and the eerie Master Spiritual Vulture. I should’ve guessed that it was you. Besides, who else but Vulture Li Yao would speak such nonsense that sounds blood-boiling but is in fact only high-school level despite the immense capabilities he has?”

“Fine. Well played. It’s sordid enough. I can finally confirm that you are definitely not Professor Mo Xuan. The real professor is not half as sleazy as you. What—what are you exactly?”

“What am I?” Professor Mo Xuan, or rather the being that was pretending to be Professor Mo Xuan, put on a weird smile. Cracks were appearing on his face, and overwhelming flames were blossoming from the cracks. He asked in return, “If you are Li Yao, do you not understand my life form? We are clearly the same kind!”

Chapter 1774 - Truth of the Extraterrestrial Devils!

The sky where dark clouds were roiling, the village that had been burnt to the ground, the villagers who were struggling in pain and blood, and the soldiers who were chucking with hideous smiles… With the gory inferno as the stage, Professor Mo Xuan’s skin fell apart one piece after another. Boundless fire flowed out of his body as silver liquid metal. Unaffected by gravity, it surged to the sky, stream after stream, and condensed into a shadow that was much more magnificent, like a silver statue almost five meters tall.

The statue vaguely looked like Professor Mo Xuan at the beginning, but then, bubbles that looked like cysts popped up, leading to the abnormal changes on its surface.

It changed into the appearance of the old, weary Immortal Cultivator Su Changfa first, before it became the star child, Xiao Tianbao, the retard who pretended to be Xiao Xuance’s foster son. Then, it transformed into more than ten different appearances continuously. At last, the human facial organs were all melted, and the skull and limbs all retreated into its body, turning the statue into a perfectly round ball!

Li Yao was rather shocked to observe all the changes. He could not help but gnash his teeth. “Who’s your own kind? You are obviously an extraterrestrial devil. Speak now. What have you done to Professor Mo Xuan?”

“Extraterrestrial devil? That is just the name made up by the ignorant. If classified according to such a standard, aren’t you also an extraterrestrial devil, my own kind, since you were infected by the Blood Stripe Virus?”

The silver ball floated in midair and released eccentric brightness. Professor Mo Xuan’s absolutely calm voice came over from the center of the ball. “I have not lied to you from beginning to end, although I did keep part of the truth to myself. However, had I known that it was you, I would’ve told you everything candidly.

“I am Mo Xuan, but I’m not just Mo Xuan. I am also Su Changfa, star child Xiao Tianbao, and a lot of people from the Flying Star Sector. I am the condensed state of all of them. I am a new human being, version 2.0!”

“What the heck…” Li Yao felt a headache the moment he heard ‘2.0’. Narrowing his eyes, he warily said, “I understand it now. You have swallowed Mo Xuan, Su Changfa, and the star child as an extraterrestrial devil!”

“Melted, not swallowed. I thought that you should’ve been able to tell the difference between the two concepts because you’ve had similar experiences,” the silver round ball said casually. “What are the so-called ‘extraterrestrial devils’? It all began from the collapse of the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago…”

“Ten thousand years ago? Are you kidding me, professor?” Li Yao furrowed his eyebrows and shouted, “The fiercest battle is going on out there, and you are playing this trick with me? Vulture Li Yao definitely deserves his name. This is not the first time that somebody’s intentionally stalled for time. Why don’t you begin from the time when Pangu created the universe?”

The silver ball shivered, as if it was smiling friendlily. “Don’t be so hasty, my friend. I have never meant you any harm this whole time. Now that I know it is you, I am even more reluctant to hurt my own kind. Several minutes matter little for a strategic battle where thousands of starships are involved, and you can only make the most sensible judgement after you grasp enough helpful information, right?”

Li Yao thought quickly for a moment and snorted. Then, he slightly loosened his fists that had been clenched.

“Since I’m having this conversation with you, I can save a lot of explanation work about my background,” the silver ball said. “Do you still recall the array of super crystal processors in the Star Prier’s House below the earth of Spider Den in the Flying Star Sector, which were deployed to monitor and calculate ‘apocalypses’? Other than Yan Xinjian and Bai Xinghe, you were one of the earliest modern people who unearthed them.”

Li Yao frowned, not knowing what the silver ball was going to ramble on about. Such a way of stalling seemed too blatant.

However, the mainframe crystal processor in the Star Prier’s House was indeed a national treasure for the Star Glory Federation.

It was the essence of the crystal processor technology of the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago and also the earliest Gai-level super crystal processor in the Star Glory Federation. Even to this day, the other two Gai-level super crystal processors and the hundred Jing-level super crystal processors still could not get rid of its influence. A lot of super crystal processors were even directly duplicated and simplified from the artifact.

It was with the enormous computational ability of the super crystal processor that the federation was able to develop

Kunlun at such a high speed, build a reasonably perfect Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus in only a hundred years, and grasp the four-dimensional communication technology whose delay was almost zero. As a result, the technological gap between the federation and the Imperium was reduced to one generation. The federation even slightly surpassed the Imperium in the fields of certain crucial technology. That was why it was capable of competing with the Imperium at a local battlefield!

Besides, had it not been for the super crystal processor, Li Yao and the rest of them would not have noticed the anomaly of the expedition army of the Imperium at all. If they did not know that such an enormous army was coming for them, the twisting stories that followed would not have happened at all.

It was safe to say that the super crystal processor in the Star Prier's House was the greatest contributor for both the Star Glory Federation and Li Yao himself to achieve what they had achieved today!

“Ten thousand years ago,” the silver ball continued, “in the last years of the Star Ocean Imperium, during the civil war in which the demons and the so-called ‘extraterrestrial devils’ joined hands to transform the Blood God, the Supreme Emperor's strongest clone, into the Mad Armageddon, the Flying Star Sector was one of the most important battlefields at the edge of the cosmos.

“The battlefield was terribly difficult to conquer because of the Star Prier's House.

“The Star Prier's House at that time had already been confiscated by the army loyal to the Supreme Emperor and modified into a large military surveillance base that covered the dozens of Sectors at the edge of the cosmos.

“The troops that belonged to the Mad Armageddon were perfectly clear when they jumped, gathered, or cruised in the dozens of Sectors nearby. Their every move was monitored by the government army. They could never expect to win such a war.

“To conquer the edge of the cosmos that included the Heaven’s Origin Sector, they must conquer the Flying Star Sector first, and in order to conquer the Flying Star Sector, they must sabotage the Star Prier’s House!

“The Star Prier’s House had been armed to the teeth at that time. Every forsaken tunnel on Spider Den was crammed with vigilant soldiers of the government army. There was no way that the location could be taken by brute force.

“However, the operation of the Star Prier’s House was purely dependent on the array of the hundred super crystal processors. The thing about crystal processors is that they can be conquered from within.”

Li Yao was greatly alarmed. He blurted out, “Crystal processor virus?”

“Yes,” the silver ball said. “Extraterrestrial devil is just an ambiguous collective name made up by the stupid, like flowers, birds, fish, bugs, and human beings are all called ‘living creatures’. In fact, their life form and way of reproduction can vastly differ.

“For example, the Blood Stripe Virus passes on its lineage by special germs and microorganisms. Its boasts the technique of modifying living creatures with the minerals below the earth that it has absorbed. It can lurk deep inside meteoroids and cruise for billions of years in the universe, waiting to be reincarnated in someone else’s shell.

“Some other extraterrestrial devils, in the meantime, have completely abandoned the carriers such as germs, microorganisms, and parasites. Instead, they choose the Spiritual Nexus as the carrier and consider computational ability as the source of their life. It may be inaccurate to call them a crystal processor virus, but you can’t find a more suitable word from the vocabulary of human beings.”

Staring at the silver ball without blinking, Li Yao mumbled to himself, “I finally get it. Your real body is actually an ancient crystal processor virus from ten thousand years ago!”

“No, you get nothing. That is not ‘me’. Just like all other viruses, a crystal processor virus does not boast self-awareness. It is neither righteous nor evil, neither bright nor dark. It is just a cluster of chaos. At most, it can be called…”

The silver ball pondered for a moment, with ripples spreading out on the surface. “It can be considered my antecedent at most.

“However, if it is easier for you to understand in such a way, you may consider it so. Yes. My antecedent was an ancient crystal processor virus from ten thousand years ago. It was produced by the Mad Armageddon’s army and specially compiled and modified targeting the mainframe crystal processor in the Star Prier’s House. The sole destiny of the program was to destroy the mainframe crystal processor of the Star Prier’s House. Nothing more.”

Li Yao blinked and bulged his eyes wider and wider.

This was certainly the gravest trouble!

The enemy’s real body was a crystal processor virus designed to break the mainframe crystal processor in the Star Prier’s House!

Most of the super crystal processors in the Star Glory Federation, as well as the Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus based on those super crystal processors, adopted technology derived from the super crystal processors in the Star Prier’s House!

If the super crystal processors in the Star Prier’s House could be compared to a grandpa, the other super crystal processors would be the children and grandchildren. Such a virus that targeted the grandpa could certainly strike the entire family who shared the same genes with the grandpa!

Li Yao felt that the whole world was incredibly sticky as if it were melting. He could barely catch his breath in his anxiety.

“My antecedent… might’ve accomplished its mission, or it might not have. I don’t remember it now. As a crystal processor virus, there was really no need to keep such an enormous memory database.

“It is unimportant whether or not the mission was accomplished, because when my antecedent was produced, it was already the end of the civil war, and the Star Ocean Imperium collapsed soon after. All three thousand Sectors fell into chaos and darkness. My antecedent was perhaps exhausted during the fierce battle against the firewall and the antivirus telepathic thoughts. Then, it fell into hibernation in some of the seriously broken crystal processors and the scattered Spiritual Nexus.

“In the thousands of years that followed, the natives of the Flying Star Sector slowly developed a small-scale, interspace

Spiritual Nexus on the three habitable planets including Iron Plateau. A lot of crystal processors from the Star Ocean Imperium were repaired and put back to use. My antecedent sensed the beautiful feeling of being brushed by boundless data. It was woken up and ready to take action again.

“However, at that time, the crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus in the Flying Star Sector were still rather underdeveloped. It was not enough to completely activate all the power of my antecedent.

“The real opportunity presented itself five thousand years ago, when your ancestors arrived at the Flying Star Sector.”

Li Yao was greatly alarmed. He immediately understood what Professor Mo Xuan was referring to. His sweat grew even colder than before.

Chapter 1775 - Soul Transplantation, Generation Update!

With confusion beaming out of his face, Li Yao’s left hand trembled unconsciously. A few red stripes surfaced on the back of the hand. He could not help but touch his cheek and ask suspiciously, “What are you talking about?”

The rays released from the silver ball quickly scanned the red stripes on the back of Li Yao’s left hand but did not seem to notice anything. Without bothering with his questions, it simply went on. “Five thousand years ago, the apocalypse arrived. The Blood Stripe Virus, lurking inside the meteoroids, assaulted the three habitable planets of the Flying Star Sector!

“Faced with the fatal threat of the apocalypse, the extreme potential of the civilization in the Flying Star Sector was fully activated. Great progress was made in various fields, including crystal processor and Spiritual Nexus technology. The debate of the ‘homers’ and ‘spacers’ also raised tides of discussions in the whole society!

“The extraterrestrial devil was not a simple crystal processor virus after all. Other than the highly-developed crystal processors and Spiritual Nexus, intense mood swings of human beings were the best energy source for them, too.

“Therefore, in the middle of the turbulent change that had never been seen before in the past five thousand years, the ancient crystal processor virus was reborn. It also managed to reconstruct its assembly languages, algorithms, and database during the fierce information collision between the homers and the spacers!

“When the apocalypse arrived, the ancient crystal processor virus lurked on the starships of the spaces and escaped to the space together with them, because the spacers had more developed technology and more advanced crystal processors, which were more suitable as the carrier of the extraterrestrial devil of such a type. On the other hand, Iron Plateau and the other two habitable planets, after being struck by the apocalypse, must have been scarred by ruins if not completely destroyed. There would be a long period when those places were mired in savageness and ignorance. Not just the Spiritual Nexus, even the point-to-point radio communication would be terribly difficult. For the extraterrestrial devil of such a type, it was definitely the most barren land.

“You know what happened next. In the five thousand years that followed, the extraterrestrial devil that was similar to a crystal processor virus and the Blood Stripe Virus that was similar to a biological virus coexisted in peace. Both parties were in the embryonic phase after just being reborn. Their hunting range was different, too. Naturally, the two parties could live in harmony.

“Iron Plateau belonged to the Blood Stripe Virus, which reproduced and spread through viruses, germs, parasites, and bodily fluids of living creatures.

“The vast sea of stars, on the other hand, belonged to the extraterrestrial devil of this type. They considered the crystal processors as the carriers, the waves among starships as the means of infection, and the feelings of human beings as the food. They gradually perfected their languages, algorithms, and databases, upgrading themselves from a simple crystal processor virus to a certain more complicated, more advanced, and more… indescribable existence.

“There wasn’t any ‘self-awareness’ that was pushing them to do that. Maybe, it was just like the earliest monads developing toward metazoans that were more sophisticated and advanced. It was just the instinct of any life!”

Li Yao listened attentively. As if he were too deeply attracted by the story of the silver ball, he did not notice that the bloody stripes on the back of his hand were growing and becoming denser and more twisted. They were spreading from his wrist to his arm, shoulder, and heart, like fatal vipers that had submerged below his skin!

The brightness emanated by the silver ball caught the scene precisely. It was even deeper and darker than before.

It accelerated the speed of its speech and further grabbed Li Yao’s attention. “Such evolution might’ve needed thousands of years to complete preliminarily. It was possible that human beings would have discovered the anomaly before the evolution was done and killed it with antivirus telepathic thoughts. However, the unexpected arrival of a certain someone accelerated the whole process—star child Xiao Tianbao from the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“Hehe. Ten thousand years were too long after all, with even the changes of two regimes. During the process in which Blackstar the Great usurped the supreme power at the center of the cosmos, countless precious files from the Star Ocean Imperium were lost, including those describing the dangers of space jumps.

“The universal travelers of the Imperium of True Human Beings did not know the first thing about the danger of passing through wormholes. In their absurd courage that could only be found in the ignorant, they even dared to remove their fleshly body, the natural ‘shell’ that can resist the extraterrestrial devils, for convenience and energy conservation. They were bold enough to be teleported with only their naked souls!

“I don’t know what happened to other star children. Maybe the Imperium of True Human Beings had their own new secret techniques that could resist the scourge of the extraterrestrial devils. But the star child under the name of ‘Xiao Tianbao’ happened upon a cosmic storm when he arrived in the Flying Star Sector. His soul was greatly wounded in the accident. Then, he happened to run into an extraterrestrial devil that was wandering in the area.

“Therefore, the extraterrestrial devil snuck into his soul without any courtesy, just like they had snuck into the brains of countless natives of the Flying Star Sector before.

“But this time, the extraterrestrial devil immediately noticed the anomaly of Xiao Tianbao. This guy was not from the Flying Star Sector but from the Imperium of True Human Beings, a mysterious country at the center of the cosmos, which boasted more advanced crystal processors and more developed Spiritual Nexus than the Flying Star Sector did!

“To pursue the best is every creature’s instinct. It was also the case for the extraterrestrial devils. Compared to the barren, desolate land of the Flying Star Sector, the Imperium of True Human Beings was certainly the best paradise with the most enjoyable landscape.

“What was even more amazing was that Xiao Tianbao, the star child, was originally planning to establish a space gate for the communication of the Imperium and the Flying Star

Sector. The extraterrestrial devils did not need to manipulate him at all. All they needed to do was guide his thinking and give him a hand when necessary!

“The Grand Illusionary Soldier Plan and the super crystal processor ‘star brain’ were mostly come up with by the extraterrestrial devils. Otherwise, how could Xiao Tianbao have grasped such advanced technology in crystal processors and remote control when he was only supposed to be a member of the special forces of the Imperium?”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. It was quite true. The star child was merely a scout that the Imperium of True Human Beings sent out. How could a common soldier have the knowledge of so much cutting-edge technology?

At first, he had thought that every soldier of the Imperium was as tough as that. He had even been deeply awed by the enemy once. However, after meeting the authentic natives of the Imperium including Su Changfa, he had begun to realize that those people also had only two nostrils and one mouth. There was nothing too special about them except that their average level might be slightly higher!

It was not until today when the silver ball revealed the answer that Li Yao finally understood everything. So, everything had actually been done by the extraterrestrial devils who specialized in crystal processor technology. It made much more sense now!

“The whole plan went smoothly at the beginning. Before long, the Flying Star Sector would be conquered by the Imperium, and the extraterrestrial devils would find their way into a greater hunting ground. However—”

The silver ball finally released what appeared to be a human emotion. Pausing for a moment, it calmed itself down. “You know what happened next. The hundred-year plan was disrupted. The star child was swallowed. Even the ‘star brain’, in which the extraterrestrial devil was lurking, was devoured by Professor Mo Xuan. As a result, the extraterrestrial devil entered Professor Mo Xuan’s body just like that!

“It was the worst living environment like the extraterrestrial devil had never seen before. It had abundant experience in infiltrating human brains and crystal processors, but Professor Mo Xuan’s life form was neither a regular human being nor a common crystal processor, but something in between. His liquid metal shell was almost flawless!

“Besides, after swallowing the star brain, Professor Mo Xuan’s computational ability soared. He was a determined, unwavering man. Should he discover the existence of the extraterrestrial devil, he would certainly have compiled a set of pertinent antivirus telepathic thoughts to wipe it out completely!

“Therefore, the extraterrestrial devil could only hold back and lurk in the deepest part of Professor Mo Xuan’s soul. Like all the viruses that were mired in a harsh environment, and like what you are doing right now, it hibernated and prowled around!”

Li Yao bulged his eyes. The bloody stripes had already passed his left shoulder and climbed to his cheek along his neck. Some of them had even crawled into his left eye, making creepy crimson beam out of the eyeball.

But he seemed to have sensed none of it. Waving his hands in agitation, he demanded, “What are you talking about exactly?”

Ripples of excitement spread out on the surface of the silver ball. “The extraterrestrial devil waited for decades. In the meantime, it slowly released the information of crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus that it had accumulated for thousands of years into Professor Mo Xuan’s memory database without him knowing it. In the end, Professor Mo Xuan indeed grew interested in the ‘Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus’ and ‘virtual life’. Eventually, the ‘Virtual Spirits Sector Project’ was born.

“To be honest, the collapse of the Virtual Spirits Sector was an accident. Even the extraterrestrial devils were incapable of creating such a huge crash.

“But once the accident had already happened, and since the souls of Professor Mo Xuan, Su Changfa, and Lu Qingchen were already battered, the extraterrestrial devil certainly wouldn’t let go of such a rare opportunity.

“No. It was not swallowing but merely pushing forward the mutual melding.

“Besides, given the circumstances, without first aid, Professor Mo Xuan, Su Changfa, and the extraterrestrial devil itself might’ve been trapped in the collapsing Virtual Spirits Sector and completely obliterated!

“Once everybody’s soul was broken and unable to be recovered, with the help of the extraterrestrial devil, the fragments of everybody’s soul were jumbled into a new existence!”

Li Yao was dumbfounded. “The fragments of everybody’s soul were jumbled?”

“Don’t be so surprised. If limbs and organs can be transplanted, why can’t the soul?” the silver ball said. “I have never lied to you. I am indeed Mo Xuan, except that my soul was so heavily wounded that I was forced to transplant… certain things that originally belonged to the star child and Su Changfa into it.

“There are many ridiculous theories about what the soul actually was in ancient times, but in my opinion, it refers to your memories, belief, character, emotions, thinking patterns, and everything else in your mind.

“At that time, Professor Mo Xuan was the least wounded one, and the extraterrestrial devil had been living inside my body for decades. Naturally, my soul took charge.

“Su Changfa’s soul was dying, and the star child was already as dead as anyone could ever possibly be. So, the fragments of their souls were perfect to be recycled.

“In the end, this is the me right now, Mo Xuan 2.0 that has finished a generation update. I still kept the memories and beliefs of Professor Mo Xuan, but I also boasted Su Changfa’s thinking pattern, the star child’s personality, and the fully activated strength of the extraterrestrial devil!”

Chapter 1776 - Parasite Attack, Begin!

Chapter 1776: Parasite Attack, Begin!

The bloody stripes inside Li Yao's eyes were almost exploding. He finally understood everything!

Professor Mo Xuan in the past was a firm, rational man and a pure technician. Other than refining, he had not extensively studied other academic fields.

Even if such an insane idea that all human beings should be migrated into the virtual world did occur to Professor Mo Xuan at that time, he would not do anything about it because his rationality would get the better of him and tell him the dire consequences if he really put the idea into practice.

Everybody might have a lot of crazy and even unpardonable thoughts on a daily basis. However, most people could tell the difference between illusion and reality. Fantasy was not a crime. Many people might have imagined themselves robbing a bank or kidnapping a beautiful girl, but it did not mean that they were criminals!

Professor Mo Xuan mentioned earlier that it might take millions of years before his vision became reality and that upgrading the civilization of mankind too early when the conditions were immature would be like pulling up seedlings to help them grow, which would only bring disaster.

From what Li Yao had seen just now, he was not lying at that time. It was the last reflection of the ‘self-control’ of Professor Mo Xuan of the past!

Besides, a scholar could never launch a rebellion even if he prepared for three years. For a technician like Professor Mo Xuan, even if he was insane enough to call for a giant leap, hoping to achieve the comprehensive virtualization of mankind within a hundred years ago, he could not have accomplished that goal. Everybody had their specialty. Asking such a simple magical equipment specialist to concoct such a great scheme was no different from asking a chef to sew clothes.

However, Mo Xuan 2.0 was different.

In the disaster that caused the collapse of the Virtual Spirits Sector, Professor Mo Xuan had maintained his firm belief and his insane vision but lost the self-control to restrain the ideas. His gentle, mild personality vanished, replaced by Su Changfa and the star child’s thinking pattern, the classic character of Immortal Cultivators that was cruel, ruthless, and pigheaded!

Su Changfa was a sociologist of the Imperium of True Human Beings. He had studied the social stratification and the operation of the Imperium. He was both one of the initial producers of the game ‘Civilization’ and an experienced ‘brainwashing expert’.

There was no need to mention the star child, who was an out-and-out schemer. The Grand Illusionary Soldier Plan was his lifelong effort. Xiao Xuance, the old supervillain of the Flying Star Sector, had merely been a puppet that he pushed to the front of the stage!

Professor Mo Xuan’s idea of ‘overall virtualization of mankind’ and computational ability that was as vast as the ocean, Su Changfa’s brainwashing ability and understanding in sociology, the star child’s scheming and planning abilities, and the extraterrestrial devil’s ability to hack the Spiritual Nexus that had been sealed for ten thousand years but was finally unlocked… All that combined, the nightmare-like existence, Mo Xuan 2.0, was created!

The silver ball trembled for a while, melting and reshaping again into the appearance of Professor Mo Xuan.

He put on the sunniest smile, yet there was the vague shadow of Su Changfa in it. “Don’t be so nervous. I began my story from ten thousand years ago. The narrative must’ve made you feel that everything was part of the extraterrestrial devils’ plan, but things are not necessarily so from a different perspective.

“You can totally consider everything as a fortuitous incident. I encountered a serious accident during an experiment in the Virtual Spirits Sector. By accident, I was able to swallow Su Changfa’s personality, Xiao Tianbao’s sophistication, and the extraterrestrial devils’ techniques and survived. Nothing more.

“A patient who accepted an organ donation and lived with somebody else’s heart is still themself. It is exactly the same for me.

“A minor change in personality is not a big deal. Many people have a great shift of personality after a serious accident, but it doesn’t mean that they become somebody else!

“Yes. Some memories, ideas, and other messy stuff have been inserted into my head, but that is just a side effect of a fortuitous incident. A lot of people share similar experiences. In the world of Cultivators, there’s also the secret technique of ‘spiritual seed transmission’, through which the experts of the older generation can pour their battle memories into young people. Isn’t it the same logic?

“You must’ve experienced similar fortuitous incidents before, mustn’t you? Then, why are you staring at me in such a way as if I am an unreasonable monster?

“I am still Mo Xuan!”

He suddenly opened his arms. His silver face seemed like a broken mirror that reflected the hideous expression that belonged to the star child. He bellowed, “A stronger, firmer, and more perfect Mo Xuan!

“After the update was completed, I examined my old self, only to discover that I was so indecisive, hesitant, and hopeless back then!

“I had found the ultimate solution to save mankind, but I refused to put it into practice because of all the ridiculous concerns, fantasizing that a perfect new world would just arrive automatically in millions of years’ time. So absurd, so weak, so… foul!

“Millions of years is too long; we must seize every second! I cannot watch my compatriots being tortured and killed in ceaseless wars while doing nothing, not even for one second! Even if the odds of success are one in ten thousand, I will give my everything, sweep everything in my way, and struggle to the end of my path despite all the obstacles!

“Hahaha. I didn’t know that even luck was on my side. You have been delivered to me! It seems that my path is the correct one. Virtual life is the ultimate form of evolution for mankind! Come on. Wake up now. Join my side, and let’s build the era of mankind 2.0 together!”

Such a mad invitation naturally could not move anyone.

Li Yao spat on the ground and sniffed. “Whether you are Mo Xuan, Su Changfa, or the star child, you aren’t so crazy as to think that you can persuade me with some illogical trash talk at such a crucial moment, are you?”

The broken silver face put on a scornful smile. “I’m sorry, but you are flattering yourself, Li Yao! I never intended to persuade you. In fact, I don’t even want to waste any drop of saliva on you. What I am trying to convince is ‘it’. I have told you everything frankly, including my origins, for ‘it’!”

“It?” Li Yao’s pupils constricted abruptly. His blood red left eyes even seemed to be on fire.

“Exactly.” Professor Mo Xuan smiled. “I know you are there. You couldn’t have been obliterated so easily. This is the best opportunity ever. Are you still not showing up, my own kind?”

“What!” Li Yao’s eyeballs, one red and the other black, were completely frozen. He took a few steps back rigidly. Then, his left arm suddenly heaved, as if it had gone out of control. It could clearly be seen that deep, bloody stripes had interweaved and enveloped the arm. Those bloody stripes had invaded Li Yao’s heart and skull at some point and then pierced out of the skin as eccentric thorns!

“Argh!” Li Yao cried miserably and fell to one of his knees because of the pain. “What—what kind of force is this? It’s tearing apart my soul!”

Half of his body was seawater, while the other half was fire. The right side of the body seemed unusual, but tiny blood stripes were crawling out of every pore on the left side of the body. Those blood stripes were spreading upward and interconnecting like vines, constituting the fuzzy, bloody shape of a human.

The left side of the body continued absorbing strength from the right side of the body, becoming stronger, darker, and clearer. It gradually revealed its facial features, which were identical to Li Yao’s, except that they were more evil, cunning, and full of wariness!

The right side of the body, which was gradually drained, withered at a visible rate. The skin was falling apart, and all the color had gone!

At first glance, a blood red person had crawled out of Li Yao’s body and become a certain human-shaped tumor that lived on him, some sort of weird… stand-in!

Looking at the half-smiling blood red face that was filled with cruelty, Li Yao seemed to have completely lost his mind. He screamed, “It’s you! It’s actually you! You are not dead yet? It’s impossible! I clearly killed you! You were completely dead!”

Before the bloody shadow could say anything, Professor Mo Xuan had already burst into laughter. “The devil rises from within. How can a devil be completely killed when your heart is still alive? You thought too poorly of the extraterrestrial devils, Li Yao!”

“Exactly.” The bloody shadow smiled. It spoke in Li Yao’s voice but with a much more elegant, soft, and eccentric tone that was full of chilling intoxication. “I lived for five thousand years on Iron Plateau. Before that, I hibernated in the dark universe for millions of years. Even the most violent natural disasters in the universe failed to wipe me out. How could you have killed me entirely with your petty tricks at the beginning? You didn’t see this coming, did you? Hehehe. What a foolish, idiotic, overaged high-school student who thinks that he is righteous and hotblooded only to be smacked in the face brutally at every crucial moment…”

Li Yao’s nostrils expanded because of fury. He gnashed his teeth. “Hey!”

Professor Mo Xuan observed the bloody shadow with great amazement. “What a perfect soul structure, with the waveform of the ancient energy life millions of years ago and the familiar scent from five thousand years ago! I knew that you were certainly not dead, my friend. How should I address you? Master of Blood Stripes or…?”

“You may call me the mental devil. I have absorbed quite a lot of good stuff from this idiot’s soul, and I am not anything like the original Blood Stripe Virus. Or to quote your theory, I have updated myself, too.”

The mental devil glanced at Professor Mo Xuan casually. The smile on its face was still evil and vigilant. “However, I don’t think we are any sort of friends, are we? As carbon-based life forms, wolves feed on lambs, tigers kill wolves, and lions butcher tigers, too! As energy life forms, it is only natural for us to swallow each other. It is even the main means of evolution! Five thousand years ago, we lived in peace with each other, but right now, we seem to have been involved in the same turbulence. So, what do you want exactly by forcing me to show up through all your trouble?”

“Cooperation.” Professor Mo Xuan opened his arms and earnestly replied, “I told you everything candidly in order to show my sincerity. Regardless of whether you consider yourself to be a human, the Blood Stripe Virus, or anything else, there will be great benefits and absolutely no harm if we cooperate with each other!”

“Cut the cr*p.” The mental devil snorted. “Even if we are both energy life forms or ‘extraterrestrial devils’, you are an IT guy while my main focus is biotechnology. How can we cooperate with each other when there is such a vast difference between our trades?

“How do I know that you are seeking cooperation sincerely instead of looking for an opportunity to swallow me under the pretense of cooperation?”

Chapter 1777 - Internet of Brains!

“Swallow you?” Professor Mo Xuan bulged his eyes as if he were greatly insulted. The fire that was burning the village down behind him grew even more furious. He waved his hands and said, “This is our world. If I truly meant you any harm, I would’ve swallowed you with the power of the entire world. Why would I bother to tell you everything frankly in order to win your trust?”

“Hehehe. You really think that I’m so gullible, that you would just walk away if you had the opportunity to swallow me with the least effort?” The mental devil cackled. “You are now setting both the federation and the Black Wind Fleet up with your scheme, controlling the entire Spiritual Nexus, and constructing countless Spiriters’ Realms to corrupt so many experts from the Ancient Sages Sector. You must’ve reached your limits, mustn’t you? Maybe the fierce fight between you and me will be the straw that breaks the camel’s back. Your entire plan will be disrupted if so. That is perhaps the only reason you are calming me down with your fancy delusion.”

Gritting his teeth, Li Yao struggled to wave his arms and shouted, “You—Whatever scheme you may have, I will not let things go your way!”

“Shut up!” The mental devil grinned hideously. “This is a serious business meeting between extraterrestrial devils. Are you even qualified to interject? Just be a good boy. Wash your neck and wait to be killed, idiot!”

Together with the laughter, more and more blood red thorns grew out of Li Yao’s body, tying up the right half of his body and forcing him to bellow in excruciating pain. He had fallen to one knee, trembling harder and harder.

“Hehe. It doesn’t matter if I have to tell you the truth now. Yes. I’ve been lurking inside the body of this idiot the whole time, partly because I was waiting for the best opportunity to devour his soul when the odds of success were highest and the cost was lowest!”

Rounds of blood stripes blossomed around the mental devil, which waved like dancing snakes, making it even more hideous. It proudly declared, “But on the other hand, this idiot was lucky enough to rise into a high position in the Star Glory Federation. My days were quite comfortable!

“The Blood Stripe Virus is different from the new extraterrestrial devils that consider cyberspace as a carrier such as you. We reside in the bodies of intelligent creatures and feed on their strong emotions, especially the negative ones in wars!

“Hehe. The Star Glory Federation is going to march to the center of the cosmos. Too many great battles will break out. It doesn’t matter whether or not I can devour the soul of this idiot, because I can get everything I want under the identity of ‘Li Yao’!

“Therefore, why should I, an ancient extraterrestrial devil from a traditional field, work with you, a weird, unorthodox cyber extraterrestrial devil? However hard you brag about your plan of cyberization of mankind, it is nothing but a bubble!”

“Cyberspace is the future of mankind. It is most certainly not a bubble!”

Perhaps because ‘it’ was really Professor Mo Xuan, or maybe because the extraterrestrial devils had their beliefs, too, Professor Mo Xuan suddenly raised his voice when the mental devil criticized the Spiritual Nexus as bubble. He shouted desperately, “We are about to usher in a new era of the ‘Internet of Things’. Nothing can stop the trend!”

“Oh?” The mental devil chuckled and narrowed its eyes. “Then, what can an old devil like myself, whose host is still a fleshly body, do in the era of the Internet of Things?”

“Listen to me!” Professor Mo Xuan gradually calmed down, with passionate and earnest brilliance beaming out of his silver eyes. “I have really never lied to you. I have been searching for you all the time—the king of the Blood Stripe Virus of the highest level!

“I believe in the eventual cyberization of mankind, but your concerns are valid, too. In order to prevent more innocent victims from being killed, and to make the new world of absolute peace to come sooner, it is true that I may have rushed into certain things.

“Right now, we haven’t prepared the most advanced super crystal processors for mankind as the containers of their souls. You may have seen the super crystal processors at the bottom of Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital that were 3D printed with biomimetics on a molecular level. They can simulate 99.99% of a human brain, but not only are they extremely costly, there is also a slight difference between them and real brains, which may lead to all kinds of side effects.

“Even if our plan works out, a fleshly body will still be the necessary ‘shell’ for the Spiriters for a long time in the future. At the very least, a brain is definitely needed!

“Therefore, I’ve been studying ways to build up the brain of humans so that they can be better adapted to constant life in the Spiriters’ Realm.

“You also know that the human brains are too fragile right now and not fit to live inside cyberspace for long. The higher the simulation rate and the slower the virtual time, the heavier the burden for the human brains will be. They need to quit after every couple of hours to cool down their brains before they reenter!

“That’s all because the human brain is too primitive. It was designed for collection and hunting in the barbaric world in the first place. Only a hundred thousand years of evolution is far from enough to drive it into the new era of the Internet of Things!

“Besides, there is still the problem of reproduction. It’s true that we haven’t figured out a way for Spiriters to have offspring in the Spiriters’ Realm—real offspring. So, in reality, the brain and the reproductive organs cannot be abandoned but have to be strengthened!

“However, my research hit the bottleneck.

“As you have pointed out, I am merely a specialist in the Spiritual Nexus who is not good at biological and genetic technology. Besides, the construction and maintenance of the Spiriters’ Realm alone already consumed most of my energy. Did I really have the time and vitality to explore a second field of studies?”

“So,” the mental devil said coldly, “you thought of me?”

“Exactly!” Professor Mo Xuan exclaimed. “Five thousand years ago, when your ancestors arrived on Iron Plateau, we were already neighbors. Although we never had the opportunity to meet, we did know about each other’s existence in a certain mysterious way!

“Li Yao informed me of his experience on Iron Plateau later. Besides, the Glorious Sunlight Group came across certain uncanny creatures that were believed to have been infected by the Blood Stripe Virus when the Dark Continent of Iron Plateau was developed on a large scale. Such creatures were studied and determined to be ancient living creatures between bacterium and virus that boasted the function of activating the genes and building up the body!

“When I realized that the brain and the reproductive organ cannot be abandoned, naturally, the first thing that came to mind was you. I plan to develop brand-new brains that are oriented to the era of the Spiritual Nexus with the help of the Blood Stripe Virus!”

“That thing between bacterium and virus was not the real Blood Stripe Virus,” the mental devil explained. “It was an ancient, primitive life from billions of years ago and the first-generation carriers of the Blood Stripe Virus. Or to quote your theory, it was just a ‘shell’. You may consider them to be escape capsules that are prepared for long-distance journeys in the universe!”

Professor Mo Xuan was even more convinced after hearing the explanation. “It makes a lot of sense. I should’ve figured it out earlier. Although those things were capable of infecting and building up living creatures, they did not appear to be half as strong and intelligent as the Blood Stripe Virus that was attached to Yan Xibei in the past!

“It seems that most members of the Blood Stripe Virus are still low-level, primitive life, just like how most of the extraterrestrial devils wandering between the three-dimensional and the four-dimensional universes are nothing more than humble, underdeveloped ‘energy worms’. The high-level extraterrestrial devils that have melded with intelligent life perfectly are few after all!”

The mental devil sniffed. “You are going off topic. How do you expect me to cooperate with you?”

“I want you to modify human brains to make them more powerful and better separated with the soul!” Professor Mo Xuan replied. “You have the naturally-endowed techniques of the Blood Stripe Virus, and you stayed in the Blood Demon Sector that was best known for their biotechnology for a long time.

“After we seize the supreme power of the Star Glory Federation, tremendous resources and the most distinguished talents will be supplied to you. I think that it shouldn’t be a problem to complete the project within a hundred years, right?

“By then, the brains of all human beings will be connected to each other through cables or biochemical nerves, allowing them to spend a long time on the Spiritual Nexus. It will be not just the Internet of Things but the Internet of Brains!

“As for the rest of the body parts, to conserve the precious resources as much as possible, all of them can be abandoned except for the reproductive organs. I will need your help in that regard, too!

“Look. The demands that I proposed are all long-term ones. They are evident enough that I’m not just improvising a trap to fool you but hoping to cooperate with you sincerely!”

The mental devil tilted its head and thought for a moment. Then it remarked, “Wait a moment. Let me conclude your demands. You are hoping that I can develop human beings into the following form. They boast a gigantic head, with a capacity five to seven times larger than right now, so that there will be enough room for cooling and to buffer the blast of overwhelming information for a long time. Their heads may also have certain natural interfaces where multiple types of biochemical nerves and crystal cabins can be plugged. But their limbs and internal organs can be restricted to the minimal size or even be removed once and for all. All they need is a system of rather powerful reproductive organs that allow them to produce normal seeds for their offspring to be born. That's what you want, right?

"Or to put it in a more vulgar way, the new human being in your mind will be a head with a dick hanging below, correct?"

"Not correct," Professor Mo Xuan said gravely. "The new human being does not need external genitalia. After all, artificial insemination technology nowadays is quite mature. Sex can be conducted in the Spiriters' Realm. In the material world, the only thing that is needed will be tiny internal genitalia. This is the most energy-conserving and optimal form. Do you have any questions?"

The mental devil frowned. "My question is, what can I gain from all this?"

"Of course, there will be tremendous benefits," Professor Mo Xuan said. "The evolution of the new human beings cannot be completed without the help of the Blood Stripe Virus. By then, the Blood Stripe Virus will live inside the super brains of all new human beings and absorb intense emotional fluctuation without doing anything. Isn't this your greatest dream?"

Chapter 1778 - Perfect Symbiosis

Survival, reproduction, and expansion were the most primitive and powerful instincts for all lives.

The mental devil seemed to have been convinced by Professor Mo Xuan. As it was deep in thought, the evil brilliance inside its eyes was even more intense than before, and the bloody thorns around Li Yao were dancing much more actively, too.

Li Yao’s screams became more and more hoarse, as if he had been completely suppressed by the mental devil.

Professor Mo Xuan thought that the mental devil was really tempted. He was overjoyed. “How about it? There’s no need for me to deceive you at all. By then, I will only need the world in cyberspace, and the bodies of the hundreds of billions of people in the entire federation will be the most prosperous home for the Blood Stripe Virus. No. Not just hundreds of billions. As long as the two of us join our hands, it is definitely possible to accomplish what the Mad Armageddon started ten thousand years ago and sweep across the entire universe!”

The mental devil sniffed, giving neither approval nor disapproval. “Blood God, the Mad Armageddon. You are truly cocky enough to compare us to him. Getting to the bottom of it, the two of us are merely two bumpkin extraterrestrial devils at the edge of the cosmos…”

“There’s no other way now. We have no retreat,” Professor Mo Xuan replied, half calmly and half insanely. “The Pangu Civilization is about to be reborn. The Alliance of the Holy Covenant is the best evidence. We also saw a living member of the Pangu Clan personally on Kunlun!

“The Pangu Clan cut their emotions with secret techniques, transforming themselves and all their vassal species into cold, heartless machines, for the sole purpose of destroying the soil in which Chaos, or the extraterrestrial devils, thrived!

“Chaos, the extraterrestrial devils, and the ancient Blood Stripe Virus were the same in the eyes of the Pangu Civilization. They were all evil energy lives. The sole significance of the Pangu Civilization seemed to be annihilating energy civilizations!

“Now, the existence of the Star Glory Federation is no longer a secret. Since the Imperium of True Human Beings is capable enough of discovering this place and launching an expedition army, one day, the Alliance of the Holy Covenant will discover us and send an expedition army, too, with the will of Pangu!

“The Pangu Civilization is cold and merciless. Do you think that they will let us go? By then, in a relatively better case, everybody will be brainwashed, their feelings and emotions gone. Kindness or evil, beauty or ugliness, all the emotions will be washed. After that, all individuals will be resealed with the ‘Three Fundamental Laws’ and turned into the walking dead and the most perfect tools!

“In the worst case, the entire habitable planet will be demolished and burnt into a translucent glass ball with overwhelming fire that is beyond the imagination of any human being. Not just human beings, even bacteria and viruses, which you considered carriers in the past, will not survive!

“It is definitely going to happen!

“For the Imperium of True Human Beings, this place is a conquerable territory, a land of high wealth and value. At the very least, the civilians here are slaves that can be exploited. So, the Imperium of True Human Beings has come to swallow this place. They won’t completely destroy all the habitable planets or kill everyone here.

“But for the Alliance of the Holy Covenant and the Pangu Civilization behind it, the edge of the cosmos, savaged by the extraterrestrial devils, is a highly-infected area of plagues. They will not come here to conquer the place but to purge it!

“Do you see it now? The extraterrestrial devils and human beings should be good friends fighting by each other’s side. Or rather, they should be in a deeply integrated symbiotic relationship. Whether you consider yourself an extraterrestrial devil or a human being, this is no time for an inner struggle! Let’s build a powerful Human 2.0 civilization to bring out the maximal power of the Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus. That’s the only chance for us to resist the ‘purge’ of the Pangu Civilization. We may even be able to march to the center of the cosmos before we are attacked and exterminate the reborn Pangu Civilization while it is still in its cradle!”

The mental devil and Li Yao both widened their eyes.

Professor Mo Xuan was not just shouting desperately; he was also persuading them heartily.

The mental devil thought for a long time and then mumbled, “Then, I’m more confused now. Was the ideology of ‘absolute peace’ you mentioned just now merely an excuse?

“Most of the extraterrestrial devils feed on the intense emotional fluctuations of living creatures. If all the worlds you build up in the virtual world are as peaceful and eventless as Peach Blossom Paradise, there won’t be too much intense emotion at all!

“Also, you know that the Pangu Civilization is gradually reviving. They have even found a strong spokesperson named the Alliance of the Holy Covenant. After they finish the Imperium of True Human Beings, they will certainly come here and ‘purge’ the Star Glory Federation. Still, you are planning to build virtual words of ‘absolute peace’? Won’t it destroy everybody’s fighting will and get them killed in the end?”

Professor Mo Xuan was silent for a moment. Then he burst into laughter.

In his laughter, the whole world was shaking violently again. The sky and the earth collapsed. The furiously burning village turned into red, dancing butterflies before they became shiny crimson crystal balls far, far away.

Now, Li Yao, the mental devil, and Professor Mo Xuan were in the middle of space.

Glittering stars were all around them. Upon closer inspection, every star was a crystal ball in a different color that contained all the things in the tiniest details. They were all splendid and wonderful small worlds!

Hundreds of crystal worlds were emanating eccentric brightness in the deep, profound universe. An extremely thin wire extended from every world and was connected to Professor Mo Xuan's body.

Clusters of brightness as tiny as millet were transmitted into Professor Mo Xuan's body from the crystal worlds through the wires, as if they were providing powerful energy for him incessantly!

The mental devil looked around and observed, "This is…"

"Welcome to the deepest part of the Spiriters' Realm. If it weren't for the fact that you are my own kind, I never would have opened this place to you."

Professor Mo Xuan smiled. The thousand wires that were connected to him shivered quickly and pulled a few crystal balls over.

Behind him, the crystal balls were enlarged nonstop, and bloody scenes of war were clearly visible. Together, they constituted a cruel, ruthless world of killing.

"Your question does have a point. The challenges that Li Yao proposed just now were quite reasonable, too," Professor Mo Xuan said. "If everybody lives in a peaceful, quiet paradise after they enter the Spiriters' Realm, and they can get anything they want without any trouble, wouldn't the spirits and will of mankind be utterly deformed and destroyed? Where will the civilization of mankind go? How can it defend itself when faced with the Pangu Civilization or other alien species?

"Hehe. Even someone like Li Yao was able to think of the simple question. How could it have escaped my attention?"

Li Yao grunted while he was struggling in pain. "Hey, hey, hey. Professor, what do you mean by 'someone like Li Yao'?

You extraterrestrial devils are too mean!”

Professor Mo Xuan finally glanced at him and smiled. “Li Yao, don’t worry. I’ve got everything planned out for the civilization of mankind!

“Distress is the source of progress, and contentment is the beginning of decadence. The Spiriters’ Realm is certainly much more than meaningless entertainment. In the Spiriters’ Realm, there are both peaceful, quiet, carefree places such as ‘Peach Blossom Village’ and places where resolution and courage will be honed. There are also places where you can study all kinds of latest technology and explore the external world!

“Do you see those worlds of killing? They are as perfectly real as Peach Blossom Village and even more real than reality! After the souls of ordinary people enter them and receive the battle training of the highest intensity, they can also grow into great warriors to defend the civilization of mankind one day. By then, their souls will be projected to advanced ‘battle shells’, like what we did in Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital. Together with the help of the tremendous battle artificial intelligences, they will be the great army for us to resist the Pangu Civilization and march into the sea of stars!”

As Professor Mo Xuan introduced his plan, the pictures of battlefields in the crystal worlds were enlarged one after another.

It could be clearly seen that countless people were fighting one another among mountains of corpses and oceans of blood. On the land, in space, and at the bottom of the sea. With blades, with guns, and with starships. Assault, annihilation, and massacre… It was happening everywhere.

Those who were trapped in the battlefields all had twisted faces and bloodshot eyes. They were vomiting foam like rabid dogs, not having the slightest idea that they were in a virtual world.

There was no telling how many of them were the ‘Deviant Spirits’ digitally simulated and how many were the actual souls of humans!

Even the mental devil felt creeped out watching it. It could not help but observe, “You have constructed so many virtual worlds!”

Professor Mo Xuan smiled casually. “I have the best team of virtual world architects.”

Thinking quickly, Li Yao roared, “It was Wei Qingqing and all the other culture-type Cultivators who helped you build them. You—you even corrupted Wei Qingqing!”

“No, I didn’t. Such trouble was highly unnecessary,” Professor Mo Xuan admitted frankly. “It’s true that Wei Qingqing and the rest of them helped me construct the prototypes of a lot of worlds, but they didn’t know the first thing about the truth and were under the illusion that what they constructed were ‘test worlds’, which would be preserved for the brand-new civilizations in billions of years to come to make sure that they are similar to us.

“Some other fundamental data is from the game ‘Civilization’. You know that ‘Civilization’ has hundreds of different war DLCs. Tremendous data on wars and killing have been accumulated in the past hundred years. With the data as the foundation, it is very easy to build the most perfect worlds of slaughter!

“After we seize control of the Star Glory Federation, human beings will be infinitely expanded on the Spiritual Nexus. An individual will be able to enjoy the peace and tranquility in Peach Blossom Paradise today, discuss with the most talented geniuses in a super metropolis that have a population of ten billion tomorrow, and enter the gory battlefield the day after tomorrow to hone their courage, valor, and killing skills with repetitive deaths. After the killing missions are accomplished, the negative emotions caused by the memory will be sealed, allowing them to return to their normal life without any hindrance.

“Should the enemy really invade us, or if we are establishing an expedition army toward the center of the cosmos, we will turn on the enormous war database and activate everyone’s battle memories, emotions, and skill sets. Billions of civilians will be transformed into elite warriors. Together with the army of Deviant Spirits who are tens if not hundreds of times larger in number, who will ever be match for us in the entire universe!

“As for the parts in you and me that originate from the ‘extraterrestrial devils’, we can extract the intense emotional fluctuations from the warring worlds as a stable source of food. Isn’t this the most perfect symbiotic relationship?”

Chapter 1779 - Two Extraterrestrial Devils Joining Hands!

In the voices that were both gentle and deafening, Professor Mo Xuan’s body continued expanding until it became a silver, liquid-metal ball again. It was so gigantic and flawless that it looked more like a shining black hole at the center of the virtual universe than a metal planet!

At this moment, different but equally shocking pictures were flashing on the surface of the silver celestial body. They were the illusions in different virtual worlds!

Some of the human beings who were deeply trapped in the virtual worlds without them knowing were studying esoteric projects in the ivory tower. Some were enjoying themselves in holiday paradises like Peach Blossom Village. Some were fighting all kinds of bizarre-shaped enemies on harsh alien planets!

They calculated with all their wisdom. They dedicated themselves to love. They cried, screamed, and grinned to kill and be killed. They laughed. They wept. They were disturbed. They were happy. They were painful. They were crazy. They were tranquil. The infinite wisdom and emotional fluctuations emitted from them were flashing in replacement of one another like ten thousand different colors. The energy source that was vital for the survival of the extraterrestrial devils was entirely absorbed by Professor Mo Xuan and supported him to build an even greater Spiriters’ Realm and devour the souls of even more people!

Countless people’s delight, fury, sorrow, and joy—or rather, their entire lives—was glowing on the surface and in the depths of the silver sphere.

The laughter, cries, and screams of hundreds of thousands of people interweaved into the most horrendous, evil sound that Li Yao had ever heard.

The sound made him both dizzy and outraged!

“You—” Li Yao struggled to extend half of his body out of the bloody thorns. Then, he crazily roared, “I thought that you had merely created some Spiriters’ Realms similar to Peach Blossom Village, and you truly meant to bring peace and tranquility to all human beings. I didn’t know that you had also created so many cruel worlds of killing and intentionally sent so many people into them, manufacturing terror, pain, sorrow, and madness!

“You don’t have the slightest respect for human beings and their most precious emotions and free will! Do the human beings who exist in such a way still count as human beings? They are just cattle that are caged in virtual worlds by you. They are energy factories that are designed to supply ’emotions’!

“You have tarnished the most wonderful and profound emotions in the world. You have stomped on the free will that makes a human a human, yet you are shameless enough to claim that you are Professor Mo Xuan! Everything you do is exactly the opposite of what Professor Mo Xuan had in mind at the beginning! You are just a monster who has occupied the memories of Professor Mo Xuan!”

“How peculiar.” Professor Mo Xuan’s voice came from the silver ball, which made Li Yao feel even more nauseated. “Just now, when I only presented Peach Blossom Paradise to you, you said that such a Spiriters’ Realm was too easeful and eventless and that it would deprive human beings of their ambitions and transform them into goalless parasites.

“Now, I have presented another perfect solution, telling you that the Spiriters’ Realm can also stimulate the courage, valor, wisdom, and ambitions of human beings, in a way that is much more effective than reality. The evolution speed of a human’s soul will be greatly increased, but you are dissatisfied again?

“Not this, not that. You criticize someone else’s plan, yet you cannot bring any solution to the problem yourself. All you do is give a seemingly exciting speech under the banner of justice on the moral high ground. Am I wrong in saying that you are merely high-school level?”

The mental devil could not have agreed more. “Exactly!”

Li Yao was mad. “You… I will not let things go your way even at the cost of death!”

The mental devil grinned hideously. “Save your efforts, high-school student. You are no match for me. I’m about to consume you completely. Together with the enormous soul power of Fellow Cultivator Mo Xuan, you don’t stand a one thousandth chance to make a comeback!”

It turned to the silver ball and nodded head in great satisfaction. “Very good, Fellow Cultivator Mo Xuan. Your whole plan sounds impeccable. Even I am tempted, but there’s one other thing. How are the twelve partners who came from the Ancient Sages Sector, including Heiye Lan, doing right now? You haven’t swallowed all of them yet, have you?”

Professor Mo Xuan hesitated.

“Ass*ole! Nine of them are the best subordinates that I kept to myself!”

The mental devil gnashed its teeth. The bloody threads were all standing up like venomous stings. “I wasted a hundred years exploring the dark nebula with this idiot at the risk of death just to search for some primeval treasures or more powerful partners!

“Finally, I happened to find the Ancient Sages Sector by accident and ran into twelve strong partners. I’ve won their trust and could spread the Blood Stripe Virus!

“My original plan was to bring them back to the Star Glory Federation and involve them in a great battle. Then, after both their physical strength and mental power were exhausted, I would split nine drops of devilish blood and invade the brains of the Cultivators except for the three ghosts, transforming them into ‘blood puppets’ that are similar to Yan Xibei!

“A hundred years! I searched for a hundred years before I finally found nine almost perfect raw materials to make ‘blood puppets’. The whole game was pushed forward step by step according to my plan, too. We were about to jump to the Heaven’s Origin Sector and be engaged in a great war!

“But as it turned out, you jumped out of nowhere at the most critical moment and kidnapped all of them.

“They are all my prey. You want to swallow them? Not a chance! Let me tell you, I’ve been starving for thousands of years. Yan Xibei and Li Yao are far from enough to fill my belly. They are all mine! No matter whether you are Pangu, Nuwa, or a cyberspace devil, I’m definitely going to die with you if you lay one finger on them!”

The mental devil did not disguise its hostility at all. A hundred bloody threads darted at the silver ball like quick arrows.

“Don’t be anxious. I didn’t do anything to them!” The silver ball quickly changed the voice when the mental devil’s aggressiveness was obvious. “Rest assured. I have teleported them to somewhere very safe, in a desolate area not far away from the Hundred Flowers Space Zone. At that time, I didn’t know who you were and thought that you were a secret investigator from the federation or the Imperium. That was why I made my move in advance.

“It’s true that I intended to corrupt and control their souls, but I haven’t succeeded yet. None of those monsters from the Ancient Sages Sector are easy to deal with. Although I have trapped them with multiple illusions, it will still take some time before I completely digest and absorb them. Truth be told, I’m indeed short of strength right now, and it is bothering me.

“Since they are the puppet materials that Fellow Cultivator Blood Stripe have selected since a long time ago, I will certainly be generous enough to offer them back to you.

“However, Fellow Cultivator Blood Stripe, you are attached to creatures with living bodies. I believe that the ‘blood puppets’ must rely on fleshly bodies, too, mustn’t they? Of those experts from the Ancient Sages Sector, Meng Chixin, Wu Suiyun, and Wan Mingzhu are spectral Cultivators without real entities. They are no use to you at all. So, why don’t we…”

The mental devil immediately understood what he meant and chuckled. “Wan Mingzhu might pass, but Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun are the only two Divinity Transformation

Stage Cultivators among them, who have the greatest soul power. You are going to claim the greatest benefits. Fellow Cultivator Mo, that seems a sound plan for you!”

Enticing ripples were spreading on the surface of the silver ball. “Of course, I wouldn’t take away Fellow Cultivator Blood Stripe’s benefits for nothing. You must know the risks of corrupting those experts, too. I’m afraid that you are not confident in corrupting and controlling all of them in one try and converting them into ‘blood puppets’. That’s why you never really took action until now, right?

“Even if they are guided to a battlefield, they will not listen to your arrangement obediently and exhaust their physical strength and mental power in a world-blighting battle. It remains to be seen if you will have an opportunity. One moment of carelessness, and they may detect your existence. It is not entirely unlikely that they will bombard you with their joint efforts!

“Now is the best opportunity for us!

“The twelve of them have been separated by me and trapped in different Spiriters’ Realms. Their souls are greatly weakened. This is the best chance to strike them discreetly!

“As long as we join our hands, we will be fighting each of them with the two of us. I will help Fellow Cultivator Blood Stripe to corrupt and control nine of them first, and then Fellow Cultivator Blood Stripe will help me to swallow the rest three. Nobody will lose anything in our cooperation. How does that sound?”

Greedy and wary brilliance beamed out of the mental devil’s cunning eyes. “Sounds reasonable enough, but how do I know that you are not lying? How are they doing right now? Show me first!”

“Naturally!” The silver ball was quite frank. Twelve enormous crystal balls were pulled over and revolved around it. Every transparent crystal ball was focused with pictures from almost a hundred perspectives. The main character of every picture was an expert from the Ancient Sages Sector!

Including Long Yangjun, the eleven experts of the Ancient Sages Sector as well as Heiye Lan were all trapped in the gruesome battles in the illusionary world.

The illusionary worlds that they were in were slightly different from one another. Some of them had even forgotten where they were and even having fun inside.

The illusions of Yan Liren, Han Baling, and Qi Changsheng were the simplest ones. They were fighting against an overwhelming number of enemies!

Yan Liren was a pure warrior. Qi Changsheng was the commander of an army. Han Baling was a local warlord. They were all fighting to their heart’s content in the illusionary world, their soul power fading away without them knowing it. Professor Mo Xuan had also gathered tremendous data about their fighting habits in the process!

‘Emperor Phoenix’ Zhu Zongyou, Qi Zhongdao, and some others, on the other hand, were trapped in the files and documents that were as high as a mountain, enjoying the pleasure of managing a city, a planet, or a country.

The rest of them all had their own illusionary experience and dwelled in the breathtaking virtual worlds.

Even when they realized that the illusionary world was false and broke it with all their soul power, they would only find their way into another virtual world that was even larger. After dozens of repetitions, the boundary between reality and illusion was blurred. Their weaknesses and preferences were figured out by the system, too, and the virtual world became more and more to their liking.

Even Heiye Lan had been projected into a space battlefield and engaged in a ceaseless battle as the commander of a fleet!

Chapter 1780 - Fellow Cultivator Mo Xuan, Come and Give Me a Hand!

“Look. Everybody has their own weakness and their desires that they pursue. As long as the weakness and desires are located, even experts in the Nascent Soul Stage or the Divinity Transformation Stage will be so deeply attracted to the virtual worlds that they cannot free themselves. They will see it as another reality!”

The silver ball continued the persuasion with Professor Mo Xuan’s voice. “Fellow Cultivator Blood Stripe. It is now or never. What are you hesitating for?”

The mental devil licked its tongue quickly, and the greed inside its eyes was even more intense than before, like a weasel that was drooling before the chicken in a trap, both tempted by the meat and fearful of that the trap would kill it. “You—what kind of trap have you deployed in the Heaven’s Origin Sector? Are you confident?”

“Rest assured!” Ripples that implied the confidence of victory spread out on the surface of the silver ball. “My antecedent was a crystal processor virus produced to invade the super crystal processors in the Star Prier’s House. Most of the super crystal processors in the Star Glory Federation today, including the latest models adopted by the government and the military, are related to those crystal processors from the Star Prier’s House. In the past few decades, through Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital, I’ve received tremendous secrets hidden inside the brains of the vegetative patients, including the control permissions and soul passwords. With all the information I have, the crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus of the federation are no secret to me at all!

“It is also the same on the Imperium of True Human Beings’ side!

“I have extracted a lot of information about the crystal processors of the Imperium from the memory pieces of the star child and Su Changfa. Besides, the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Star Ocean Imperium in the past are of the same lineage. The architecture of their crystal processors is similar to that of the super crystal processors in the Star Prier’s House, too. As long as I can get in touch with the crystal processors at a close distance, it will be no trouble to hack them at all!

“It doesn’t matter if I tell you the truth now. The most elite troops of the Star Glory Federation and the Black Wind Fleet have been gathered in the Heaven’s Origin Sector for a world-shaking battle!

“Hehe. I have hacked and controlled the three space gates of the Heaven’s Origin Sector. The connection between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the outside world has been entirely cut off. The Heaven’s Origin Sector right now is like an enclosed colosseum where two trapped beasts are mauling each other until one of them is down!

“At this moment, the cyberwar is also getting heated. The war network of both parties has been riddled with holes because of the enemy’s attack. Moreover, all the Cultivators above the Nascent Soul Stage—regardless of whether they are admin-type, battle-type, research-type, culture-type, or creation type—have exhausted their brains and souls!

“You know that almost everybody counts on the help of the crystal processors in a modern battle, which creates the best opportunity for me to invade the brains of those experts. At the moment when the battle is fiercest and when their soul is the weakest and least defended, I will invade them and control the most elite fleets of both parties, including the strongest Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators!

“The flagships and most of the main-force warships of the Black Wind Fleet and the Burning Prairie Fleet, the three super crystal processors of the Star Glory Federation, and hundreds of experts in the Nascent Soul Stage and the Divinity Transformation Stage will all be under our control. We will be the absolute dominators at the edge of the cosmos!

“Honestly speaking, before you came, I was only seventy percent sure about the whole plan. Or rather, I estimated that I could only invade the brains of sixty to seventy percent of the experts successfully. A fierce battle would be inevitable later.

“But with you, Fellow Cultivator Blood Stripe, the situation is naturally different. After you completely swallow Li Yao’s soul, you will be able to announce your grand return to the Heaven’s Origin Sector under the identity of Vulture Li Yao and join the most intense battlefield where the most experts have gathered. Ding Lingdang and Jin Xinyue will both recognize you. Nobody will doubt your identity. Isn’t that so?

“Hehe. When the battle reaches an impasse and all the experts are too occupied to care about anything else, I will launch an ‘invasion’ from their crystal processors, and Fellow Cultivator Blood Stripe, you will corrupt their physical bodies with their blood as the medium. If we attack together, who can ever stop us?”

The mental devil rolled its eyes again and again. Finally, it laughed delightedly, as if it had completely agreed on Professor Mo Xuan's idea. "What an immaculate plan. I can't find any reason to say no. Hahahaha. Excellent. Professor Mo Xuan, I will work with you for now. Let's hope that you do not forget your promises once the job is done!"

"Why would I?" The silver ball was amused. "While there is little mutual trust between us, we are both unpardonable extraterrestrial devils in the eyes of the Alliance of the Holy Covenant and the Pangu Civilization. It is necessary for us to join hands and cope with the common foe, isn't it?"

"That makes sense." The mental devil's smile became more and more vile, and the bloody thorns flowing around its body grew more and more intense. "Fine. In that case… Huh?"

It raised its eyebrows, somewhat in surprise, and looked at Li Yao who had been tied up by him. At this moment, Li Yao was wreathed in multiple layers of bloody stripes like an enormous red cocoon, but bright golden fire was blossoming from the center of the interconnected bloody thorns and soon burnt the bloody stripes apart!

"You two *ssholes, don't ignore me!" Li Yao broke out of the red cocoon. His furious fighting will jabbed at the mental devil like golden daggers while he roared at the top of his voice. "As long as I exist, I will never let your scheme work out. The Star Glory Federation will be guarded by the people of the federation. The cunning and sordid extraterrestrial devils will never have their turn!"

"What—what kind of strength is this?" The mental devil had trouble keeping its eyes opening under Li Yao's golden daggers. “It’s impossible. I clearly examined every part of your soul. How did you—”

“How can the soul of a human be parsed and analyzed so easily?” Li Yao burst into laughter. Bright golden blood was flowing out of his eyes, nostrils, ears, and mouth. His soul power surged out like a volcanic eruption, and even the illusionary world at the fundamental level could not bear the pressure anymore. The universe that felt like black velvet began to shake. Every crystal world was shivering lightly like a glass ball!

“Your virtual world has reached the limitation of its computational ability!” Fury and disdain beamed out of Li Yao’s eyes and darted at the silver ball. “False is always false. It can never become real. And you were talking about 120% real? Do you know the biggest difference between an illusionary world and a real one?

“The illusionary world has limitations. It is bound by the computational ability of the crystal processors. Even the super crystal processors with the highest computational ability have their extremes in computation, simulation, and rendering. Those trapped in them are like fish in a glass tank. However big and real the glass tank is, the fish will inevitably touch an invisible barrier one day as long as they strive to swim forward!

“But in reality, no matter how ugly, cruel, and dark it is, there are possibilities of infinite wonders and a most bright future inside the ugliness, cruelty, and darkness. In reality, there is no glass ceiling that can stop mankind from striding forward!

“Even if an artificial intelligence can make the most reasonable reaction according to every situation based on the database that is as enormous as the ocean, it is not a real virtual life!

“By the same logic, however vivid your virtual world is, it is still false, in that it lacks what is of paramount importance for a civilization—the hope for the future and for the destiny of the universe!”

“Idiot!” the mental devil roared. The blood stripes waved crazily again, slapping the right half of Li Yao’s body brutally like thorny whips. “Cut the cr*p, you hotblooded high-school student. Just be quiet and wait to be killed!”

“I will not die. Ding Lingdang and Jin Xinyue are still waiting for me!” Li Yao gnashed his teeth. The bright golden blades of his soul and the bloody thorns were entangled tightly, and the two parties began a fierce fight. “My friends, my family, and the soldiers… Everybody in the Star Glory Federation is waiting for me. I will certainly return to their side and fight with them!”

Li Yao and the mental devil looked like a two-headed boa, but the two heads growing on the same torso were gnawing on each other. The bloody thorns riddled the right half of the body with holes, the soul blades cut the left half of the body so hard that it was bleeding, and the bright gold flames and the crimson flames were colliding heavily, triggering thousands of sparks.

It was the most dangerous mental warfare. After only a couple of seconds, the two parties were already heavily wounded. Their colors were dim, their flames were shaking, and they were breathing hard.

The mental devil shrieked with a hoarse voice, “I—I’m going to eat you alive!”

Li Yao’s voice was somewhat intermittent, too. “I will not let things go your way. I will not!”

“Ah!” The mental devil burst into fury. Then, thousands of bloody thorns suddenly burst out and tied up the right half of Li Yao’s body. It turned around and shouted, “Fellow Cultivator Mo Xuan, what are you waiting for? I have corrupted most of his soul and completely controlled his body. Come on and give me a hand to swallow his soul. Then, we will go to implement your perfect plan together!”

“Sounds good!” The silver ball agreed quickly. Then…

It floated thousands of meters back within a breath.

While floating, the ball turned into an oval before it evolved into what appeared to be a peanut. A tiny cluster of liquid metal split apart from its body and slowly condensed into the shape of a human that flew toward Li Yao and the mental devil.

Li Yao and the mental devil, who were mauling each other, fell dazed at the same time.

The situation seemed to be turning awkward.

“Hey, Fellow Cultivator Mo Xuan, what is the meaning of this?” the mental devil demanded. “I asked you to help. Why did you run away? Us extraterrestrial devils shouldn’t be so disloyal to our friends, should we?”

“Of course not. However, as you may know, I was a refiner in the beginning and then turned into a specialist in crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus. I have a shallow understanding about sociology and scheming, too.

“But in any case, I am not a warrior. There’s no reason for me to get close to the two of you when you are having a fierce close-distance combat, is there?”

“Well…”

The mental devil and Li Yao looked at each other in bewilderment. Their ‘perilous’ and ‘soul-stirring’ battle somewhat turned rigid.

Chapter 1781 - I Am a Human, Too!

“What’s wrong?” The voice spreading out of the silver ball suddenly grew solemn. “Why are you not fighting? Keep going. Work harder and harder!”

“No…” The mental devil grew anxious. “Fellow Cultivator Mo Xuan, well, it is actually not dangerous at all. Look. I have shattered his soul and swallowed most of the flames of spiritual energy. He has been completely suppressed by me, unable to move at all! You can kill him easily by jabbing him with your little finger after you come over! Really. Come here!”

“Who—who says that I’m suppressed?” Li Yao struggled hard, only to be beaten down time and time again. He could only roar angrily, “Although my hands and feet are tied by you, my soul is overly exhausted, my vitality is almost drained, I cannot even move my hair now, and my combat ability has dropped by 99%, I—I still have my hot blood! Ass*ole, come and try me if you have balls. Let me teach you a lesson!”

The silver ball calmly observed the two individuals who were entangled tightly and fighting each other in the same body. Then, he said, “You’re right. I am as cowardly as a chicken. What can I do?”

The mental devil was dumbfounded. “You’ve got to be kidding me! Professor Mo Xuan, I have devoted all my strength to suppressing him. I cannot persist for too long. This is the most critical moment. Come and give me a hand for the sake that we are both extraterrestrial devils! Otherwise—otherwise, he may launch a great counterattack anytime!”

“Exactly!” Li Yao shouted. Strength grew out of nowhere inside him, allowing him to reverse the situation and suppress the mental devil below him. “Just watch and do nothing over there. After I finish this annoying, verbose mental devil, I will immediately go over and cut you apart, you scumbag that is pretending to be Professor Mo Xuan!”

The silver ball was as peaceful as before, utterly unaffected by the trash talk of Li Yao’s dual personalities. The smaller ball that split apart from its body a moment ago, on the other hand, grew larger and larger still while absorbing the strength of the countless crystal worlds around. Four limbs extended out of the body, transforming it into an iron giant dozens of meters tall that looked both like a crystal suit or a Colossus!

“Are you kidding me, this thing again?”

Li Yao and the mental devil were both shocked.

“Rest assured. I said that we should cooperate sincerely. How could I idle by and not offer any help?” The silver ball that moving further and further away from the two of them and thoroughly protected by the newly-emerging iron giant smiled. “Fellow Cultivator Blood Stripe, let me introduce to you my help. This is the strongest battle artificial intelligence, Fighting God, developed after constant optimizations and purifications based on the battle data collected in the whole federation over the past hundred years, including the battle videos of experts, virtual training in the game ‘Civilization’, and memory pieces of battles in the heads of the vegetative patients.

“Hehehe. Although it is merely a quasi-artificial intelligence, it is the last ‘hyper spirit’ and the most perfect one that I have produced. The battle database that it boasts is unbelievably huge. In terms of computational ability and battle awareness, it can be compared to the unparalleled experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage or even higher levels!

“Because it is too strong, I cannot even build a ‘battle shell’ that can accommodate it in reality. Neither a fleshly body nor a metal puppet like the Grand Illusionary Soldier can allow it to bring out a hundred percent of its combat ability!

“But this is the Spiriters’ Realm, where computational ability, battle awareness, and soul power are all that matters. The Fighting God is the guardian of the most central level of the Spiriters’ Realm. It is invincible in this place!”

Sensing the overwhelming fighting will and infinite killing intent from the unbelievable ‘Fighting God’, which felt that a compression of a thousand Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, Li Yao and the mental devil looked at each other in bewilderment and both gulped.

“Speaking of which, I cannot thank you enough, Fellow Cultivator Blood Stripe!” The laughter from the silver ball was even more disturbing. “You and Li Yao were right about one thing. It was indeed the moment when my computational ability and my soul power were weakest just now, because I was focusing my whole strength on attacking the firewall of the mainframe crystal processors in the highest command center in the Defense Counsel. It was certainly not an easy task to control the highest command center as well as the three space gates!

“At that time, I was so weak that I could barely summon the Fighting God. Had I summoned the ‘ultimate hyper spirit’, I’m afraid that the entire Spiriters’ Realm as well as my soul would’ve collapsed completely. Hahaha!

“That’s why I told you everything frankly and even invited you to visit the core layer of the Spiriters’ Realm as a guest, Fellow Cultivator Blood Stripe. It was all meant to stall you for a moment until I could recover my computational ability!

“Now, everything has been accomplished. The three space gates in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the mainframe crystal processors in the most important departments in the capital city have all been hacked by me. Everything is under my control! I can finally turn back and focus most of my computational ability on the problem we have here. That’s why I summoned the Fighting God!

“Fellow Cultivator Blood Stripe, you must understand my hesitation. I’m sure that you won’t blame me for not helping you a moment ago, will you?”

The mental devil looked rather awful. It stammered, “Well, Fellow Cultivator Mo Xuan, it suddenly occurs to me that I have a bit more strength. As the saying goes, you don’t butcher a chicken with a cleaver for the bulls. I can totally take care of him by myself. There is no need to summon such a brutal thing. Why—why don’t we take it back for now?”

“A lion must try its best even if the prey is just a rabbit. There is no need for you to be so courteous with me. Hurry up and swallow him. Hurry up. The Fighting God will provide powerful fire support for you. Kill, corrupt, and swallow now! Or maybe…” The silver ball’s face suddenly grew old. In a mocking tone, it observed, “You are not attacking each other at all but presenting a lousy act, hoping to deceive me?”

“You—” Li Yao and the mental devil looked at each other in bewilderment, unable to continue acting anymore. Li Yao shouted in fury, “How did you know?”

“Li Yao…” The ripples on the surface of the silver ball were scattered, as if it were sighing gloomily and thoughtfully. “This isn’t the first time we’ve met each other. In the Flying Star Sector when we were faced with Xiao Xuance and the star child, and on Kunlun when we were faced with Su Changfa, we fought side by side. I observed with my own eyes how you took care of them!

“Even to this day, part of the memory pieces from the star child and Su Changfa are still deeply embedded within my soul. They were both fooled by you like dummies once!

“Your acting skills indeed far exceed your wisdom. However, you cannot play the same trick on an extraterrestrial devil twice. With the enormous computational ability that I have, how would I forget your ultimate skill after I learned that you are Li Yao?”

“What did I tell you just now?” The mental devil could not have been more frustrated. It screamed at Li Yao, with blood red saliva spurting out. “I said just now that all the trouble was unnecessary. This damn drama was utterly redundant. Just rush forward and cut him down, and everything would’ve been resolved. Simple as that! Yet, you had to resort to such folly. Look at what you’ve gotten us into!”

“Hey!” Li Yao grew angry, too. “It is because your acting skills were too bad, alright? Look at your movement of swallowing. So unnatural and pretentious. There’s also your weird chuckles that couldn’t have been more exaggerated.

Even a deaf person could've distinguished that you were acting!"

"It doesn't matter," the silver battle said calmly. "Fellow Cultivator Blood Stripe, I don't care if you were acting just now, and I don't care what your original scheme was. At this moment, my offer still stands. Swallow him, and you shall still have your share in this world!"

"Well—" The mental devil was slightly dazed. Greed and cunningness beamed out of its eyes again.

"Hey—" Greatly alarmed, Li Yao felt that cold sweat was pouring out. "You are not really thinking about cooperating with the monster, are you? It will certainly not abide by its promise. It must be lying to you. It wants us to fight each other and wound each other so that it can swallow us one after the other!"

The mental devil sniffed and slowly raised the arm made of blood. The end of the arm gradually turned into a blood red blade. It said, "One must learn to bend their head when they are living under somebody else's roof. Don't blame me for turning this drama real. Blame yourself because your acting skills are too bad, Li Yao!"

"*sshole, you have truly betrayed me. We had a pact!"

"Idiot, pacts are made to be torn apart. I've had enough of you for a long time!"

Li Yao and the mental devil became entangled again. In the Spiriters' Realm, displayed in the form of souls, they were the two sides of the same body in the first place, but the 'inner fight' this time was a hundred times more intense and dangerous than previously. The space around them was soon filled with bloody mists and flames of spiritual energy. But the mists were approaching the ‘Fighting God’ while they were cursing each other aloud.

Out of the blue, a sharp streak of brilliance darted out of the bloody mists at the silver giant.

The silver giant, on the other hand, was long prepared. An enormous shield appeared on the iron arm and slapped back the streak of brightness as if it were a fly!

“Aya!” Li Yao and the mental devil both screamed miserably. They rolled dozens of times in the vacuum, like a kite whose string had been severed, before they finally stabilized themselves. The flames of spiritual energy in dual colors were much dimmer than before. The left side of the body and the right side were both bruised and swallowed, barely distinguishable now!

“It seems that you have made your choice. I have to say that I am very disappointed!” The silver ball sighed, not without regrets. “Why is there such a stupid extraterrestrial devil?”

“Scumbag!” Now that their play was seen through again, the mental devil completely tore off the camouflage. Its head turned into a blood red hedgehog, and it spat out a mouthful of saliva that was mixed with blood, roaring, “Open your goddamn eyes and observe. I am not any extraterrestrial devil. I am as human as any human can be. I am Li Yao! I do not intend to become a monster whose dick hangs below his head!”

“Oh?” The silver ball was slightly dazed, and the ripples gradually formed a big eye that observed the mental devil. Then, it laughed in amusement. “Interesting. Truly interesting. Is this the legendary ‘dual personality’? This is exactly the opposite of my case!

“I have combined the personalities of Mo Xuan, Su Changfa, the star child, and many others into a unified personality, but you have split Li Yao’s personality in half, each boasting human emotions and thinking patterns!

“The living, transformation, and melding methods of energy life forms are indeed unpredictable and splendid!”

Chapter 1782 - Brothers Together!

“Cut the cr*p!” Li Yao and the mental devil both gnashed their teeth and simultaneously declared, “Let’s fight!”

This was a virtual world where imagination, computational ability, and soul power were the only things that mattered. As his soul surged out, Li Yao’s body that was half in fire and half in blood expanded crazily, too, until it was almost the same size as the Fighting God!

The fire in his right hand and the blood stripes in his left hand condensed into two enormous blades that looked like sickles. Shrouded in devastating auras, he attacked the Fighting God. The enormous blade left such a long trace behind that it seemed capable of slashing a planet in half!

However—

From the end of the elbows of the Fighting God, two enormous blades that looked like sickles extended out, too, and vibrated at a frequency of more than ten thousand times per second. The four enormous blades collided and shook hundreds of thousands of times within a moment, leading to an overwhelming ocean of shadows and the shrieks that were utterly unbearable for human ears!

The enemy seemed to boast prophetic abilities. Every sharp, unpredictable attack from Li Yao and the mental devil was blocked in advance. On the other hand, the erratic moves that it utilized were always one step ahead of Li Yao’s defense. After only several seconds, hundreds of wounds were slit all over the body of Li Yao and the mental devil. However, it was not blood that ran out of the wounds but deep gold and dark red soul power.

Li Yao’s soul was fading quickly and being absorbed by the enemy!

“Give up, Li Yao!” The silver ball that was observing the battle from far away smiled casually. “This hyper spirit is the most perfect battle artificial intelligence. Its database stores the essence of more than a million clips of battle videos, which allows it to simulate the classic tactics of all the super experts in the federation over the past hundred years. Naturally, as the Ultra-Level Federal Hero, you were an important target of studies for the artificial intelligence!

“All your public battle and training videos have been included in its database. It knows every detail of your combat pattern and can even simulate it perfectly!”

Hardly had the silver ball concluded his sentence when the Fighting God suddenly took a step back. With ripples spreading out of its body, new plate armor and patterns appeared on it, turning into an enormous Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

It made a few causal moments. The more Li Yao looked at it, the more familiar it appeared to him. He almost felt like he was looking at a mirror!

“*sshole!”

Li Yao and the mental devil were utterly dumbfounded.

The silver ball smiled and said, “Your attacks have all been seen through. You can never defeat it!”

“Bullsh*t!”

Li Yao’s eyes were bloodshot, and flames of spiritual energy were surging out, rolling into almost a hundred Triple-Headed Six-Barreled Vulcan Machine Cannons!

But the silver brightness on the enemy’s body was wriggling and soon changed into remote attack weapons identical to what he had!

“Ahhh!”

The two parties opened fire at the same time. Stormy bullets swept across the entire battlefield. Li Yao and the Fighting God were both caught in the turbulence of destruction. It was the purest head-on clash of computational ability and soul power!

Although it was a virtual world, the two parties had to ‘imagine’ hundreds of thousands of bullets, render their power, and calculate the trajectories of the bullets when they attacked the enemy. Even for the brains of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator or super crystal processors with a performance of billions of floating-point operations per second, it was still a huge burden!

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Bullets of the two parties collided in the void. This place was not truly space. When the colorful blasts were spreading out, deafening explosions were triggered, too.

The explosions bashed Li Yao’s temples time and time again like iron fists, making his head dizzy and his heart pound. It was even difficult to breath!

Damn it. His soul power was growing weaker and weaker!

Things were not going to work out in such a way. He was not faced with a living enemy right now. The enemy’s computational ability likely comprised a hundred super crystal processors that were connected together. As for its ‘soul power’…

It was looted by the silver ball from the countless people who were trapped in the crystal worlds without them knowing it. Even the twelve experts from the Ancient Sages Sector were among the victims!

Li Yao looked at the wires that were connected from the crystal worlds to the silver ball. According to the pace of the battle, they were shivering, expanding, and shrinking. Then, he immediately understood what was going on.

The silver ball constructed illusions through the Spiriters’ Realm and absorbed the soul power of the prisoners stealthily. Then, it poured the computational ability into the Fighting God to fight with him!

He was fighting the computational ability of a hundred super crystal processors and the soul power of countless victims, including the twelve experts of the Ancient Sages Sector. The enemy had also grasped his combat pattern. How could he expect to win such a battle?

“Then, there is only the last resort now!”

Staring at the crystal worlds behind the silver ball, Li Yao’s eyes were burning with blood red fire.

His body that was riddled with holes glowed. Although it was reduced to half the original size, it became much more swift and agile. Turning into a long, narrow streak of brilliance again, he zigzagged in the middle of the storm of bullets and rushed forward as fast as he could.

In the middle of the brightness, an enormous blade that could rip the universe apart was shining and slashing at the Fighting God overwhelmingly!

“Huh…” The Fighting God sneered in contempt. Switching from the remote shooting pattern to a melee combat pattern, it drew out an equally enormous and glamorous silver saber from the most unbelievable angle and slashed upward!

According to the routes of the attacks, the two sharp soul blades should have collided without any surprise and become yet another clash that purely cost soul power.

However, Li Yao and the mental devil retracted the saber at the last moment and merely ran into the auras of the enemy’s blade with their fleshly body. Even the eyes that were in different colors were bulged wide as they searched for the best route when the auras dived into the body!

Shua!

The saber from the Fighting God cut through Li Yao’s body without meeting the slightest hindrance. It entered from his skull and chopped his body in half right from the middle precisely!

Li Yao cried miserably. Due to the heavy wound on the soul, black smoke was popping up.

But as a result, the part of soul that was ‘Li Yao’ and the part that was the ‘mental devil’ were completely separated, too!

“Ahhhhhhhhhhhh!”

Bloody mist and light flames were surging out from the two halves of the body. They were becoming thinner and more lackluster, but the broken bodies were becoming more complete, too. In the end, like geckos whose tails were cut, their bodies were renewed!

“Li Yao No. 2!” Dozens of enormous bloody wings extended out of the back of the mental devil, and every wing was unfolded to the maximum. It opened its hands and stood in front of the Fighting God, while it roared desperately, “I will block this stupid giant. Go and do what you must!”

“Mental devil…” Li Yao could not have been more moved. “But why am I ‘Li Yao No. 2’? Even if you are not a mental devil but my other personality, at least I should be ‘Li Yao No. 1’, right?”

“…Ass*ole, if you don’t stop, I will really help them to beat you up!”

“Copy that,” Li Yao said. “Hang in there. I’m going to dig out the internal organs of this scumbag!”

“Hooooo!” The Fighting God, realizing that it had been fooled, roared in utmost fury. The storm of bullets and blade auras were even denser than before. “The Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus is our future. Why can’t you understand?”

But all the attacks were blocked by the mental devil with the blood red wings. Countless feathers were shot out while it was screaming miserably, but those feathers also floated in the vacuum and turned into red mist that blocked the attacks of the Fighting God.

“Cyberspace is just a bubble, and biotechnology is the future, scumbag!” The mental devil screamed miserably in the excruciating pain. “Now is the time. Go, Li Yao No. 2. Don’t forget my share when you blow up the scumbag!”

This time, Li Yao did not linger on the issue of who was ‘No. 1’ and who was ‘No. 2′. Instead, he gritted his teeth to summon all his soul power, sprinting at the silver ball like a shooting star that was exploding on the way!

Everybody was only best in their specialty. What was loaded in the database of the silver ball were the methods to hack the Spiritual Nexus and control crystal processors. It was impossible to carry an enormous battle database.

Naturally, the silver battle was unwilling to directly compete with Li Yao. While sneering, it retreated further into the darkness.

But as it turned out, Li Yao’s target was not its real body at all. This time, Li Yao and the mental devil’s teamwork finally paid off. Before the enemy realized what was going on, Li Yao had broken the connection between it and one of the crystal worlds!

“Oh? Are you hoping to break the Spiriters’ Realm and release your partners?” The silver ball was slightly dazed. Then, it immediately realized what was going on and burst into mocking laughter. “Idiots. They are all dwelling deep within the Spiriters’ Realm, unable to free themselves from the multiple illusions! Those illusions are all constructed targeting their weaknesses and lusts, like the most complicated mind maze. How can you break them so easily?”

Li Yao did not bother with its trash talk at all but simply threw whatever remained of his soul power at one of the crystal worlds after condensing it into a flashing spear!

Boom!

Under the scourge of the light spear, the crystal world seemed to have suffered a barrage of the main guns of a starship. It was shaking abruptly, with cracks popping up on the surface!

However, those cracks were recovering at a visible speed, and Li Yao had lost the strength to launch another strike of the same strength!

“Did you see that? It’s useless!” The laughter of the silver ball was even more sarcastic. “Now that I have brought all of you to this place, I naturally have the confidence…”

Its laughter came to an abrupt end.

While the cracks on the outside of the crystal world were recovering nonstop, it was shaking at a higher and higher frequency, as if it were an enormous egg that contained a primeval beast, and the egg was falling apart!

Yes. The victim trapped in this particular crystal world was Long Yangjun, the elite warrior from the Nuwa Civilization!

Chapter 1783 - All Illusions, Break Apart Now!

Li Yao had spotted the illusions where Long Yangjun was trapped with a quick glimpse.

It was made of many pictures, including splendid palaces, eye-catching halls, bloody fights among the common folk, and power struggles in the court.

In the illusionary world, Long Yangjun was wearing a robe that was painted with a raging dragon. She had indeed become king of the world, holding the greatest power in the world.

But it was not right!

Long Yangjun was different from the other experts of the Ancient Sages Sector.

The rest of them were invaded by the extraterrestrial devil when their brains were completely exposed to the tides of the four-dimensional space during the space jump. Their soul had been deeply infiltrated for more than twelve hours.

Twelve hours was enough for the extraterrestrial devil to change all kinds of illusions to figure out their desires and weaknesses and corrupt them accordingly.

But Long Yangjun had been lost in the Spiriters’ Realm a moment ago together with Li Yao. The extraterrestrial devil did not have the slightest inkling as to her real identity yet. All the information that it knew about Long Yangjun was from the narration of the other experts of the Ancient Sages Sector.

It meant that to this moment, the extraterrestrial devil still considered Long Yangjun to be Lead Eunuch Wang Xi, a powerful eunuch of the Great Qian Dynasty in the Ancient Sages Sector!

The multiple virtual worlds that the extraterrestrial devil had prepared for Long Yangjun were all founded on the identity of ‘Lead Eunuch Wang Xi’, offering her what she liked most. It had nothing but power struggles, coups, mutinies, usurpations, and such.

If it were a real powerful eunuch, they likely would have found such a world too attractive to get away from.

However, it could never have occurred to the extraterrestrial devil that ‘Lead Eunuch Wang Xi’ was just an ostensible identity for Long Yangjun and a camouflage of hers to find her real identity. What she really cared about was the God-Sealing War hundreds of thousands of years ago and her mysterious destiny!

Such a virtual world that was specially prepared for ‘Lead Eunuch Wang Xi’ was definitely not anything that Long Yangjun was interested in.

However, during his brief observation, Li Yao noticed that Long Yangjun seemed to have truly devoted herself to the lousy game and was enjoying herself very much. She appeared to have forgotten what was going on outside.

But it did not make sense. With the intensity of the soul of an elite warrior from the Nuwa Civilization, there was no reason for her to succumb so quickly.

Therefore, Li Yao immediately realized that Long Yangjun was acting for the extraterrestrial devil, too!

She must have realized that she was trapped in the Spiriters’ Realm from the very beginning, but she could not figure out a thorough solution for the time being. So, she simply eased the vigilance of the extraterrestrial devil with such a gesture. In secret, she was accumulating her strength, trying to break the barrier in one attempt!

Li Yao had no choice but to take the wild gamble by trusting Long Yangjun!

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

The ‘crystal ball’ that was confining Long Yangjun shook more and more violently. Every light and shadow that it reflected seemed to have a Long Yangjun who was staring at the outside. Her eyes were as sharp as golden daggers that were even mincing the darkness of the outside world apart!

The cracks that were gradually recovering under the collision of Li Yao’s soul appeared again after a brief impasse. They extended forward and connected each other, turning into an unstoppable spider web!

“Hooo!”

Sensing that the virtual world here was more and more fragile, the distant Fighting God howled crazily, planning to approach and stop it.

However, the mental devil, which was riddled with holes and had lost all its feathers, with barely the shape of a human, stood before it time and time again, shouldering the thunderous attacks from the enemy!

The pain of the soul being torn apart by brute force was insufferable for normal people. With only fifty percent of the intensity of Li Yao’s original soul, the mental devil was supposed to be no match for the ‘Fighting God’ at all. However, it simply harassed the enemy like sticky candy. While vomiting blood and laughing crazily, it shouted at the top of its voice, “Li Yao! Li Yao! Li Yao!”

“What the hell are you screaming about?” Li Yao had exploited the strength of the other half of his soul, too, when he turned into a streak of brightness and crashed into the crystal world time and time again. He was blown apart and thinner than ever after every collision, but he was always condensed again before he gritted his teeth and launched yet another unreasonable charge!

“Long Yangjun, can you hear me? I’m right here. Come on and save me!”

He delivered the telepathic thoughts of shrieks into the crystal world through the cracks.

“Aya!”

Right then, Li Yao heard the most twisted scream from the mental devil behind him.

He turned around to check, only to discover that the mental devil had been completely ripped apart by the Fighting God. Most of the fire of its soul had entire perished. The last flickering light that looked like butterflies fled toward Li Yao and merged into his body, shivering.

The two half souls of the dual personalities were combined again. The mental devil spoke feebly inside his soul. “Brother, I can only do so much!”

Li Yao laughed miserably. He was not in any better condition than the mental devil. Looking at the Fighting God charging at him like the wind, he was not even able to perform a dodge or block. His computational ability, imagination, and soul power were all running out.

The fists that were brimming with stings and hooks grew larger and larger until they filled the entire world in the end. Perhaps because his soul was getting weaker and smaller as time went on, the relative size of the Fighting God seemed to be growing ever larger, until it almost became a giant that towered hundreds of meters tall!

Li Yao watched the coldness shining on the stings of the fists, unable to do anything about it. His soul was about to be ripped into shreds by the sharp stings when the crisp sound of something breaking apart echoed right behind him. It was followed by a deafening explosion, as if the energy of the whole galaxy blasted over his shoulder, past his ears, blowing up the fist as well as the entire right arm of the Fighting God!

“Aoooooo!”

The Fighting God roared in shock and fury and retreated hundreds of meters away. Silver foam flowed out of its right arm that had already been blown apart, but the arm did not heal until a long time later!

When Li Yao turned back, he found Long Yangjun standing in the dark void in her crystal armor, and smoke was still popping up from the most sophisticated and glamorous crystal cannon on her right arm!

Li Yao was almost crying in joy. He never had such a strong urge to hug a woman other than Ding Lingdang!

Long Yangjun looked around. Her eyes were hollow, and inhuman nonchalance seemed to be beaming out. However, it only lasted a brief moment before she returned to normal and focused her eyes on Li Yao. Putting on a graceful smile that made it impossible to tell whether she was a man or a woman, she asked, “What’s the situation now?”

“The situation is that we are now deeply trapped in the most central layer of the Spiriters’ Realm. Those floating in the dark void around are all tiny virtual worlds. Each world has caged the soul of one person, including Meng Chixin, Han Baling, Yan Liren, the rest of them, and you until a moment ago!

“The giant silver ball over there is the real identity of the extraterrestrial devil and the mastermind of the whole scheme. Hurry up and break all the virtual worlds to free Meng Chixin, Yan Liren, and the others so that we can attack together and beat the sh*t out of it!”

“Impossible! It’s impossible!” Crazy ripples flowed out of the silver ball from far, far away. It shouted in utmost astonishment, “Nobody can break away from the corruption of the Spiriters’ Realm so quickly and even invade this place! Why is your soul power so weird? It is even launching ‘anti-corruption’ on my world? Lead Eunuch Wang Xi is simply a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. How can you do that?

“You—you—you are not Lead Eunuch Wang Xi. You are no common Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. You are not human. You are not human!”

While it was roaring, the right arm of the Fighting God gradually recovered. There being no time for it to reconstruct the whole arm, it simply threw out almost a hundred tentacles that were waving crazily. The sharp end of every tentacle was a coldly blinking dagger. They whipped the two of them brutally in the most terrifying sound!

“Hehe. Now that your real body has been located, everything will be easier!” Long Yangjun sneered and declared confidently, “You thought that such a lousy virtual world was enough to trap me? I was merely trying to parse your fundamental architecture and trace your core database!”

Highly-dangerous, purple swirls were condensing quickly on the barrel of the crystal cannon. Before the Fighting God jumped at the two of them, another cluster of purple magma spurted out and hit the chest of the iron giant precisely. Then, it spread out quickly like a virus and soon crystalized the torso and the limbs of the entire Fighting God, freezing it into a bizarre-shaped amethystine statue!

“You can’t break the virtual worlds now!” Long Yangjun bit her lips hard. “The extraterrestrial devil can totally conceal those virtual worlds and change their state to be unreadable and unmodifiable externally. Even if you do break the crystal balls, what you will get is only a bunch of meaningless, chaotic data.

“Give me… half a minute!”

She leapt backward and suddenly vanished from Li Yao’s side. In the blink of an eye, she appeared right behind the silver ball, which was the real entity of the extraterrestrial devil!

Before the extraterrestrial devil realized what was going on, she had stabbed her hands deeply into the silver ball. As her soul power poured out incessantly, a thin amethystine shell was condensed on the surface of the silver ball!

The power of the amethysts was also transmitted through the wires that connected the silver ball and the many virtual worlds, freezing the hundreds of virtual worlds completely in that moment!

“What kind of strength is this? Why is it so eccentric? Who are you exactly? What are you exactly?”

Surging tides were raging on the surface of the silver ball. Countless ugly tentacles grew out. Like a virus that could infect the entire universe, it extended its tentacles deep into Long Yangjun’s body, transforming Long Yangjun’s transparent, crystalized body into silver, too.

The two parties were engaged in a soul-stirring competition of corruption and anticorruption. Silver stripes were sprawling on Long Yangjun’s face.

The shell of the Fighting God, which had been sealed by the amethysts, soon revealed a lot of cracks, indicating that it might break free at any moment!

“Li Yao, now is the time!” The silver threads were even invading Long Yangjun’s eyes, but she could not have cared less about it. She simply tried her best to lock onto all the virtual worlds and shouted, “Hurry up and smash all of the illusionary worlds!”

Chapter 1784 - Twelve Experts of the Ancient Sages Sector, Arrive!

The Fighting God, the strongest battle artificial intelligence produced by the extraterrestrial devil, finally broke free from the seal of Long Yangjun's amethysts and charged at Li Yao with thunderous roars. The tentacles that were packed with stings and hooks were about to cover Li Yao overwhelmingly!

However, half a second before the hundred tentacles formed a cage of destruction, Li Yao burnt up the last bit of his soul power and dashed out in dazzling flames of light like a crimson shooting star!

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

He collided with a series of crystal worlds brutally like an angry cannonball!

The crystal worlds that had been corrupted and controlled by Long Yangjun were already as fragile as glass. They broke apart at first touch, and the pieces of the crystal worlds that exploded were splashing out, triggering a chain reaction, as if a colorful, shining storm of crystals was sweeping across the entire dark void!

The explosion of every crystal ball was a tiny 'big bang'. Everything in the virtual world—including the mountains, rivers, clouds, stars, pavilions, horses, and various kinds of people—was expelled!

Countless crystal storms interweaved into a turbulence that consumed the entire fundamental level of the Spiriters' Realm. All the virtual worlds fell into chaos after they were torn apart. They were melted and mixed up into a mess!

The previously cruel warring worlds were connected to the peaceful Peach Blossom Paradise. The vintage world of ancient Cultivators, which was a duplication of the real world forty thousand years ago, was melded with the most advanced futuristic world, with a burning space battlefield in the sky where countless starships were exploding and crashing and a prosperous city on the ground where countless 'people', true and false, were stunned by the sky that was falling toward them!

The shouts and screams on the battlefield, the laughter and singing in the Peach Blossom Paradise, and the obstreperous complaints in the modern metropolis... the joy, anger, sadness, excitement, fright, tranquility, and all the other emotions of mankind turned into surging ripples inside the turbulence. Including Li Yao, Long Yangjun, the twelve experts from the Ancient Sages Sector, Heiye Lan, the vegetative patients accepted by Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital in the past few decades, and the staff who worked and lived in District 01 only to be swallowed by the liquid metal in the end—everybody's soul was struggling and floating in the turbulence comprising feelings and soul pieces, sharing and melding with one another!

Li Yao felt that his soul was about to be completely torn apart and transformed into part of the enormous turbulence.

He was unable to resist such an enormous force and could only shout at the top of his voice, "Yan Liren! Han Baling! Ba Xiaoyu! Master Bitter Cicada! Qi Changsheng! Where are you? Wake up now! Hurry!"

Hardly had he concluded his sentence when the most brilliant and unstoppable sword auras that seemed powerful enough to slash apart the universe appeared at the depths of the turbulence that was swallowing the dark void!

Perhaps it was Li Yao’s imagination, but the whole turbulence seemed to be revolving at a lower speed after the sword auras showed up!

Accompanying the sword auras, the short Yan Liren jumped out with a head like a wax gourd. He floated above the turbulence, completely melded with the sword auras!

After another clear and firm enchantment, Master Bitter Cicada’s handsome face that could make any man jealous enough to punch it slowly surfaced from the depths of the turbulence!

“Sword Maniac! Master!”

Before Li Yao had the chance to be excited, Master Bitter Cicada looked around and dived back into the turbulence.

Very soon, almost ten streaks of brilliance flashed out from the center of the turbulence and turned into the magnificent experts of the Ancient Sages Sector!

The twelve experts of the Ancient Sages Sector were gathered at the most fundamental layer of the Spiriters’ Realm!

Despite their life experience and their wisdom, they had just been through the most bizarre and stunning dreams, in which their soul and mental power was absorbed by the extraterrestrial devil without them knowing, and they were now faced with the turbulence caused by hundreds of virtual worlds breaking apart and crashing into each other. Looking at each other in bewilderment, they did not know what was going on at all!

When they saw that Li Yao’s face was swollen and bleeding and could barely be distinguished, they were even more surprised!

“Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, what is this place? What’s going on? Why is the fire of your soul so weak that it may die down any moment?” Master Bitter Cicada asked in a hurry.

“Well…” Li Yao’s head was in utter chaos, making it impossible for him to formulate a concise and appropriate explanation.

“Li Yao!”

A deafening roar echoed from the turbulence not far away. Long Yangjun was blown out by the roar, and the crystal armor all over her body almost completely fell apart while she was still flying. She vomited blood and drifted randomly like a kite whose string had been severed. Had it not been for the rest of them stopping her in time, she would have fallen to the other side of the turbulence with her soul entirely torn apart!

She was in no better condition than Li Yao. In order to shatter all the virtual worlds, they had almost burnt up their souls!

Chiliu! Chiliu! Chiliu!

With blood-freezing wriggling and expanding sounds, the enormous body of the extraterrestrial devil slowly emerged from the deepest part of the turbulence.

At this moment, it was no longer as delicate, elegant, and solemn as when it was the ‘silver ball’ a moment ago.

Sharp thorns had grown out of its surface that had been as smooth as mirror previously. The silver ‘flagella’ around its body were longer and thicker and being waved in a much crazier way. Ripples were spreading out from the center nonstop, as if it were a weird brain full of wrinkles that was emitting weird yet powerful forces to the outside world!

Virus! It was truly like a virus that had been magnified billions of times under a microscope, a virus that was fatal enough to corrupt the entire universe!

“Li Yao! You sure are bold to destroy my decades of hard work! You sure are bold to destroy the Spiriters, the last hope for mankind! I am going to destroy you! I’m going to destroy all of you. None of you will get away!”

“Li Yao?” The experts from the Ancient Sages Sector did not have the first clue about what was going on, but the highly sensitive name ‘Li Yao’ made all of them constrict their pupils hard. “Is he referring to Monster Li, the legendary Vulture Li Yao, dominator of three Sectors’?”

“Most likely. It seems that we have indeed been noticed by Monster Li Yao and trapped in a terrible scheme since the moment we appeared in the Star Glory Federation!”

“Damn it. Was Li Yao behind the illusions that we went through just now? This monster’s wisdom is truly as profound and immeasurable as ocean!”

“But what is this peculiar, abnormal sea urchin? It seems to hate Monster Li’s guts. It is also roaring in our direction. Is—is Monster Li right behind us?”

Everybody was greatly alarmed. They turned around to check, only to find nothing behind except for the people who were struggling in the crystal turbulence.

“Well…” Li Yao raised his hand, somewhat awkwardly. “Fellow Cultivators, in fact…”

“Li Yao! Li Yao! Li Yao!”

The extraterrestrial devil was still roaring ear-splittingly down below. The Fighting God had landed near it at some point and was bound by the thousands of flagella and tentacles. They were melded!

As it was melded with the ‘Fighting God’, the real body of the extraterrestrial devil experienced yet another shocking change. Its body continued expanding and became even more hideous. The tentacles were thickening, and the front ends of the tentacles broke apart and blossomed like chrysanthemum, turning into bloody mouths with sharp tusks inside!

“Fellow Cultivator Spiritual Vulture, we are in the middle of a crisis!” Ba Xiaoyu the Beggar gnashed his teeth. “A tiger is before us, and a wolf is behind. Judging from the intense killing intent spreading out from this crazy devil, its soul intensity is at least above the Divinity Transformation Stage and still on the rise! That mysterious Monster Li must be lurking around us with his unknown ill intentions. Whatever you want to say, you can wait a moment and spit it out later!”

“In fact, that is exactly what I want to say.” Li Yao made up his mind. “In fact, Monster Li is not lurking ‘around’; he is lurking right among us. Well, the truth is, I am the legendary Vulture Li Yao, dominator of three Sectors!”

“…” Ba Xiaoyu.

“…” Yan Liren.

“…” Master Bitter Cicada.

“…” Heiye Lan and the other experts.

Everybody looked at him with the utmost astonishment, especially his face that was so engorged and deformed that even his mother would not have recognized him.

“Are you really serious?” Ba Xiaoyu asked.

“I am very serious.”

“Why didn’t you tell us sooner?”

“Because I am a man who likes to keep a low profile and despises fame and fortune. I sincerely hoped to make friends with you, fellow Cultivators. I was afraid that you would keep your distance from me after learning of my high and noble identity. If so, you would definitely restrain yourselves when we were hanging around. Wouldn’t that be a bummer?

“Please don’t look at me like that, fellow Cultivators. Although I am indeed the legendary hero of the federation, the dominator of three Sectors, the father of ‘Civilization’, and for some people, the founding father of the New Federation, I am in fact very modest and approachable. Don’t feel that there is any gap between you and me. There is no such thing. In my eyes, everybody is the same!”

The experts of the Ancient Sages Sector all struggled to swallow the revelation.

“I am suddenly so disappointed in the Star Glory Federation,” Ba Xiaoyu said gloomily.

“Me, too.” Han Baling nodded heavily, too.

“The legendary dominator of three Sectors and the founding father of the Star Glory Federation is this guy?” Qi Changsheng looked at Li Yao in disbelief, with intense suspicion and disappointment in his voice.

“There’s no time for more explanations. Whatever misunderstandings, disappointment, and dissatisfaction you may have for me or for the Star Glory Federation, let’s talk about it later!

“All in all, the thing down below is an extraterrestrial devil. It is the mastermind of the whole scheme! Right now, Long Yangjun has forced it to reveal its true self and locked onto it. It has nowhere to run and no way to conceal itself. As long as we take it down, we will be able to break the entire illusionary world and return to reality!

“Otherwise, we will all be trapped in the Spiriters’ Realm forever until our souls and mental power are drained. Then, we will remain its slaves for the rest of our lives!”

Chapter 1785 - The Last Strength!

“You want to kill me? Not so fast!”

In hideous laughter, the extraterrestrial devil exploded like a tumor. The thousands of tentacles were divided into a dozen groups and attacked Li Yao, Long Yangjun, and the other experts from the Ancient Sages Sector simultaneously.

Overwhelming and gapless, the whole upper half of the crystal turbulence was its bloody mouths. There was nowhere to run to at all!

“Hehe!”

Yan Liren sniffed and launched an attack. He did not care whether he was in reality or in a virtual world and whether his enemy was the dominator of three Sectors or an extraterrestrial devil. If anything, the stronger an enemy was, the more intense his fighting will and his sword auras would be!

Shua!

The sword auras flashed and surged in the void like dazzling lightning. Yan Liren’s soul and sword auras were perfectly melded, and he slashed almost a hundred tentacles within a moment!

But every broken tentacle turned into a gigantic boa and lunged at him again. Thick silver blood spurted out of the fractures. Whenever the blood touched his soul, it would immediately begin crazy corruption and try to crawl into his soul like thousands of dense bugs.

Despite Yan Liren’s overwhelming sword auras, it was impossible for him to escape from the infinite web of the extraterrestrial devil for the time being!

The other experts of the Ancient Sages Sector were also dragged into fierce fights by the tentacles that were rife with bloody mouths and venomous fangs, unable to free themselves.

They had been lost for more than twelve hours in the virtual world after all. Not only were their souls seriously exhausted and their mental power drained, their moves and techniques had also been seen through by the extraterrestrial devil. They could not help but feel that the enemy could predict their every attack.

There was no need to mention Li Yao and Long Yangjun. They were both too fatigued to do anything. All they could do was keep themselves safe under the entanglement and suppression of the tentacles!

“Hahaha. Absorb the souls of you into my body, and let’s create a new world of absolute peace and infinite wonders together!”

The extraterrestrial devil was still laughing crazily in Professor Mo Xuan’s voice, but with a completely different tone from Professor Mo Xuan’s. It had gone completely mad!

“It—it must’ve poured everything in!”

Long Yangjun was tied up by almost ten tentacles. Countless tusks in the bloody mouths bit deep into her body and injected tremendous silver materials into her soul, gradually transforming her into a silver statue.

The elite warrior of the Nuwa Civilization grunted and struggled to say, “It must’ve retreated all the mental power and computational ability that was previously dedicated to the invasion of the Spiritual Nexus in the entire federation. It is too occupied in dealing with us to care about what is happening outside!

“Such strong mental power is not entirely its own but also from the people who are caged in the Spiriters’ Realm, including the many ordinary people and Cultivators. The monster has stolen everybody’s strength and is using it against us!

“Hang in there. We must persist to the end! It is now overloading, too, and may collapse at any point. The soul power of thousands of people is not so easy to be absorbed and assimilated, either. One moment of carelessness, and it will completely fall apart!”

“Hehe!”

Meng Chixin and Han Baling were both wearing painful expressions. They could barely say anything, but they blew out flames of spiritual energy each more furious than last, burning the tentacles around them into ashes time and time again!

“Ahhhhhh!” ‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu was already tangled by countless tentacles. Even her hair had been consumed, and she had completely vanished.

However, dazzling lotus flowers were suddenly blossoming from the gaps of the tentacles, and ear-splitting shrieks were echoing!

Around Master Bitter Cicada, a hundred and eight beads that were condensed with the soul power glowed brilliantly. Even the enchantment of sutras could vaguely be heard. They disappeared into the bloody mouths at the ends of the tentacles. Then, thousands of golden lines showed up on the tentacles when they were blown apart and driven away by the exploding beads!

The other experts of the Ancient Sages Sector were also exploiting the life fire at the deepest part of their souls under Long Yangjun's encouragement and fighting a bloody battle with the extraterrestrial devil!

In District 01 space station inside Hundred Flowers City in reality, the previously frozen liquid metal was bubbling as if it was boiling. Hissing shrieks could even be heard from those bubbles.

In the machine room of the 'Gai'-level super crystal processor deep inside District 01 space station, cracking explosions were echoing nonstop, too.

There was nothing but stunning red on the light beam that displayed the functioning status of the super crystal processor. In only ten seconds, the average temperature of the array of computation units inside the super crystal processor was improved by thirty degrees, and it was still on the rise at a speed of 0.5 degrees per second!

Despite the protection of the most advanced cooling arrays of the whole federation, the super crystal processor would completely collapse before long.

Shua! Shua! Shua!

The hundred space stations of Hundred Flowers City almost fell into darkness simultaneously. Countless citizens floated to the midair, staggering. The air became hot and soggy. The side of the city that was faced with the star was heated continuously, while thin ice and frost appeared on the other side of the city that was in the shadow!

All the illumination rune arrays, artificial gravity units, and even air circulation system had crashed. Tremendous computational ability was repurposed to District 01 space station to maintain the most violent form of the extraterrestrial devil!

“Ugh…”

New air could not circulate, and the waste that people breathed out could not be discharged in time, either. They were all gathered in a narrow space. Also, because of the rising or plummeting temperature, many people who were relatively weak already felt that it was difficult to breathe and that their head was dizzy!

Perhaps, in an hour, the entire Hundred Flowers City would turn into a no man’s land!

At such a price, abundant computational ability surged in incessantly. Like the most effective cardiotonic, the extraterrestrial devil expanded crazily, laughing, growing more and more hideous tentacles.

Under the mental attack that focused the strength of millions of people, the resistance of the experts from the Ancient Sages Sector grew more and more feeble, and they were struggling ever more helplessly!

“This place is its battlefield,” Meng Chixin said. “Or for the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, this is its ‘domain’, in which it has absolute control over everything. Wu Suiyun and I were both heavily wounded before. Our levels plummeted and our ‘domains’ are basically gone. There’s no way that we can compete with it!”

“What—what overwhelming mental power,” Emperor Phoenix exclaimed. “We are fighting millions of people at the same time. There’s no chance for us to win!”

“I can’t hold on any longer. I’m about to be completely corrupted!” Ba Xiaoyu bellowed. “Hey, if you are indeed the legendary Vulture Li Yao, the dominator of three Sectors, you must have your last, ultimate move, right? Don’t hesitate anymore. Now is the time for a glamorous transformation to save the day!”

“The ultimate move? Well, how about I sing the national anthem of the federation to boost everyone’s morale?”

“Idiot. You’ve got to be kidding me. Had I seen this day coming, we would’ve joined the Imperium’s side!”

“Hahaha!” Every bloody mouth on every tentacle of the extraterrestrial devil burst into crazy laughter. In the middle of the laughter, tinier tentacles that looked like tongues with hooks extended out of those bloody mouths and licked everyone’s body. “Both the federation and the Imperium are just stones on the path of evolution that are destined to be crushed! Instead of joining the Imperium’s side, why don’t you give up resistance, melt into my world, and become part of my soul? It will be the most wonderful experience that you have never tasted before!

“The civilization of mankind is about to evolve into a brand-new, ultimate form. We will create a perfect new world together. Together, we will be the gods that control and protect the new world! Why are you still struggling against such an arduous and sacred destiny? Open your arms and embrace the future!”

“Embrace my ass! Aya!” Li Yao punched at the bloody mouth that was full of sharp fangs and long, hooked tongues. But his arm was bitten by the mouth as he did so. Thousands of streams of silver venom were directly injected into the deepest part of his soul, making him cramp crazily like an electric shock. His tears, snot, and saliva were all spurting out beyond his control.

“Is this… the doom of the Ancient Sages Sector?”

Looking at his devastated appearance, the experts of the Ancient Sages Sector who had been tricked into the federation by him all felt dizzy and terribly desperate. When they thought back what had happened in the past half year, it was almost like the most ridiculous nightmare.

Damn it. What kind of bullsh*t federation and dominator of three Sectors were they?

Blood-like fire was gushing out of Long Yangjun’s throat as she shouted at the top of her voice, “Don’t panic, everybody. Look around. We still have hope!”

“Huh?

The experts of the Ancient Sages Sector were slightly dazed. They looked around, only to discover that the crystal turbulence made of hundreds of broken virtual worlds that was revolving and surging crazily was actually slowing shown and showing signs of stabilization.

From the rolling ripples in the turbulence, a lot of transparent light spots flew out like fireflies. Floating and drifting, they moved up and reached the battlefield where the extraterrestrial devil and the experts from the Ancient Sages Sector were at an impasse!

Inside every light spot, there was a human face that was either clear or blurred, with joy, anger, sorrow, ecstasy, and all the most genuine human emotions.

They were…

“Souls. The souls of the ordinary people and the low-level Cultivators!”

Overjoyed, Long Yangjun shouted loudly, “The computational ability of the monster has indeed reached its limits. Now that it has focused on the computational ability and mental power to attack us, it is no longer able to control the broken virtual worlds. The people who were caged in the virtual worlds before are now free!”

This place was the Spiriters’ Realm. The body size of every individual here was proportional to the intensity of their soul power.

The soul power of the ordinary people was relatively weak, and they were the light spots that looked like fireflies. As for the middle- and low-level Cultivators, they were the light balls the size of fists.

They had mostly been trapped in the virtual worlds much longer. They did not understand what was happening or where this terrifying battlefield was yet. The tiny people no larger than fireflies simply floated in the void, staring at the ‘giants’ who were fighting a blood battle in astonishment, fright, anxiety, and confusion!

Only the few clusters of fire that were most clear and steady seemed to have realized something. They flew above everyone and looked at both parties in the battle suspiciously.

One of the fires was in the shape of a tiny green bird. Li Yao was almost crying in joyful tears again. With the deepest shivering voice inside his soul, he shouted at the green bird, “Wei Qingqing! Sister Qingqing! I’m here!”

Chapter 1786 - Green Bird in Fire!

“You are…”

The fiery bird made of green light looked at the source of the sound and soon detected familiar soul waves, but the name was so shocking that she almost could not believe it.

“It’s me, Li Yao!” In the middle of the emergency, Li Yao hurried to prove his identity. “Last time we met, it was a while before I set off to the dark nebula. You said that you wrote a new novel and invited me to visit the illusionary world constructed by the novel. But I turned you down after learning that it was a romance novel about two men having a baby. Ding Lingdang, however, seemed to be quite into the book and spent a long time in the illusionary world with you, although I don’t know what you did exactly. You still remember that, don’t you?”

The eyes of the little green bird were glittering, and tears were almost falling down. Finding it hard to believe her ears, she exclaimed in both surprise and delight, “Li Yao? Li Yao! It’s really you!”

Wei Qingqing and the other spectral Cultivators who participated in the ‘Tinder Plan’, namely the people that called themselves Spiriters, were the real creators and maintainers of the Spiriters’ Realm. They had long become used to life in the Spiriters’ Realm, which meant that they had been deceived by the extraterrestrial devil on the deepest level.

Wei Qingqing was a culture-type Cultivator and a strong ‘Illusionist’ who boasted the ability to construct illusionary worlds with words at her will. Her ability to identity, stabilize, and destroy virtual worlds was well above that of the Cultivators of other types at the same level!

The Illusionists, architects, playwrights, data miners, and analysts as well as all the other participants of the Tinder Plan like her were more adapted to survival and battle in the Spiriters’ Realm than normal people.

For the sake of absolute confidentiality, the extraterrestrial devil had naturally never told them the real plan but fooled them into creating a myriad of virtual worlds and strong ‘old grandpas’, battle-type artificial intelligences, under Professor Mo Xuan’s identity with the ‘Tinder Plan’ as a disguise!

A day ago, when the leadership of the Secret Sword Bureau and the federation army in Hundred Flowers City were gathered in the Tinder Base, and Li Yao vaguely noticed that something was wrong with ‘Professor Mo Xuan’, the extraterrestrial devil had decided to activate the plan ahead of schedule.

While disrupting the carrier that accommodated Li Yao and other experts from the Ancient Sages Sector with false jump coordinates, he had also controlled the leadership of the Secret Sword Bureau and the federal army in the Tinder Base and sealed their souls and the souls of Wei Qingqing and other workers into independent Spiriters’ Realms, in order to prevent them from running out and sabotaging his plan.

But because of the series of coincidences, and especially after Long Yangjun’s deep excavation and Li Yao’s brute collision, all the virtual worlds were broken apart, and everyone’s soul was released to the most fundamental level of the Spiriters’ Realm.

When the extraterrestrial devil poured all the computational ability on the twelve experts of the Ancient Sages Sector led by Li Yao, it was no longer able to control the agitated Spiriters. They were all freed!

The spectral Cultivators, or the Spiriters who believed that they were the third life form of the civilization of mankind, looked at the soul-stirring competition in bafflement.

The scent from the extraterrestrial devil was quite familiar to them, but the craziest waves that were spreading out were extremely strange. They all shuddered hard under the intimidation.

“This is…”

Flapping her wings that were made of green fire, Wei Qingqing stopped in front of Li Yao out of habit although she did not quite understand what was going on yet, exactly like a hundred years ago on the train north to the Grand Desolate Plateau, when she protected Li Yao who was still an ordinary person as a Cultivator.

“It is not Professor Mo Xuan; it is an extraterrestrial devil!”

The twelve experts from the Ancient Sages Sector all knew that the situation had reached the most critical moment. Although they hated Li Yao’s guts in their heart, they had no choice but to unleash the most passionate fire of their soul to buy a precious moment of rest for Li Yao, Wei Qingqing, and the rest of them so that Li Yao could finish his speech.

He was speaking to both Wei Qingqing and the thousands of Spiriters who were still confused. “The so-called Spiriters and Spiriters’ Realm is not a plan of succession for mankind prepared for the future millions of years’ time. It is in fact an upgrade plan of mankind that is becoming reality right now. The extraterrestrial devil intends to perform a dreadful ‘upgrade’ by transforming all human beings into Spiriters and completely virtualizing the civilization of mankind. Our everything will be installed in super crystal processors, and the extraterrestrial devil will hide behind the curtain and control those super crystal processors and the entire Spiriters’ Realm. Then, it will absorb our precious emotions and will in the process. In such a way, it will achieve its evil purpose of parasitism!”

“What!”

The souls of the ordinary people who did not know much were unaware of the true meaning of ‘Tinder Plan’ and ‘virtualization of mankind’, but the specialists who were directly involved in the Tinder Plan and the Spiriters who had been contemplating and debating on the future of the Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus for decades were all greatly shocked!

There was only one Li Yao in the whole Star Glory Federation whose name could be spoken by Wei Qingqing in such a passionate way.

‘Shocking’, on the other hand, could not begin to describe the feeling of those people who heard Li Yao’s real identity and the words that followed.

Everything that was floating around their souls—including the shattered warring worlds, the terribly cruel hells, and the hideous appearance of the extraterrestrial devil—certainly could not be explained by the Tinder Plan!

“Stop it!” Twisted silver stripes were flowing on Li Yao’s body and face, as the extraterrestrial devil’s corruption reached the deepest part of his soul. His voice was shivering under the excruciating pain. “We have done our best. Now, only you who know the virtual worlds best can stop it!”

“This is true…” The eyes of Wei Qingqing and all the other Spiriters shifted from the twelve experts of the Ancient Sages Sector who were gritting their teeth and struggling in pain to the extraterrestrial devil whose tentacles and flagella were raging crazily. “You are not Professor Mo Xuan. You are the extraterrestrial devil. You have been lying to us all this time!”

“Do not be fooled by his nonsense!” The anxious voice of ‘Professor Mo Xuan’ echoed from deep inside the silver ‘universal virus’. “I am Mo Xuan. Everything I’ve been doing is to offer the federation and mankind a perfect new world of absolute peace, where there are no wars or contradictions! You are all Spiriters and members of the perfect new world. Have you not realized how wonderful the Spiriters’ Realm is compared to the ugly world outside? You should stand on my side and turn all human beings into you, upgrading humans and demons into the Spiriters!”

“No. No! This isn’t what we agreed upon. This isn’t what Professor Mo Xuan told us!” Wei Qingqing flapped her wings, raising green tornadoes to help her resist the tentacles that were coming at her like wriggling worms. “The conditions are still immature for the Spiriters to grow and flourish independently. We are forced to live inside the Spiriters’ Realm because we don’t have a choice after losing our fleshly bodies! However wonderful the Spiriters’ Realm is, it takes the real world as a template and can only be founded on the soil of reality! Without the support of reality, isn’t the Spiriters’ Realm a river without a source or a tree without roots?

“Besides, the operation and expansion of the Spiriters’ Realm do require resources. ‘Computational ability’ is the most critical resource for the Spiriters’ Realm. The generation of computational ability, on the other hand, depends on upgrading the super crystal processors and the infinite expansion of the Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus.

“Both the super crystal processors and the bases to launch and receive signals of the Grand-Unified Spiritual consume tremendous resources in the real world. A lot of the precious resources are also rare and unrecyclable!

“There are only limited resources to create the crystal processors and maintain the interstellar network. So, there are bound to be contradictions. You are talking about ‘a perfect new world’? Is there anything in the universe that is really perfect except for death?

“So, neither the Spiriters nor the Spiriters’ Realm are ready. We belong to the future, millions of years away! We will leave the ‘present’ to the people today and conquer the universe in millions of years as the ‘future explorers’ of mankind!

“Isn’t that logic what Professor Mo Xuan taught us? If you were really Professor Mo Xuan, how could you have betrayed your belief and transformed so many dreadful worlds into reality?”

Faced with Wei Qingqing’s criticism, the silver ‘universal virus’ was covered in chaotic ripples, which gradually condensed into a big, blurred face that was exactly like Professor Mo Xuan’s.

Shame, guilt, doggedness, frenzy… All kinds of complicated expressions could be found on the big face.

“I… I can’t let it go. I cannot let go of my motherland, my compatriots, and the civilization of mankind that I hold dear! I can barely wait for millions of seconds, much less years! I have to save them. I have to save you! I have to save everyone!”

Veins that looked like earthworms and bugs protruded on his… its enormous face, as if it were debating with itself fiercely. Then, it suddenly changed its facial expression and became extremely hideous again.

“Whoever stops me from saving mankind will be mankind’s greatest enemy and the real ‘virus’ of our civilization! In the perfect new world of absolute peace, such viruses must be killed!

“Now that you are unwilling to follow me to carry out such a grand mission, you will become part of me and the Spiriters’ Realm!”

Chiliu! Chiliu! Chiliu! Chiliu!

The tiny flagella around its body suddenly lengthened and lunged at the souls of the ordinary people that were no larger than fireflies and the low-level Cultivators the size of fists.

Those people were mostly research-type, admin-type, and culture-type Cultivators. Naturally, their soul power was far weaker than the soul power of Li Yao and the other experts from the Ancient Sages Sector. In the blink of an eye, a large area of them was already swallowed by the extraterrestrial devil!

Shua!

One of the thickest tentacles opened the bloody mouth at the end and jumped at Wei Qingqing overwhelmingly. From the bloody mouth, another hundred tentacles that looked like both teeth and tongues dashed out again!

“Sister Qingqing!”

Li Yao was greatly alarmed. There was no telling from which corner of his soul he found some new strength, but he broke the tentacles that tied him up in crazy roars and ran over to Wei Qingqing.

But he was one step late.

Before he took action, Wei Qingqing—the strengthless, culture-type Cultivator—just like on the train to the Grand Desolate Plateau more than a hundred years ago, triggered her near-nonexistent combat ability and immense soul fire, turning into a furiously burning, brilliant green bird. She smiled back at Li Yao. Then, without any hesitation, she soared high above and darted at the bloody mouth of the extraterrestrial devil like an arrow shot from the bow!

“Professor Mo Xuan, this is not the real you. Wake up now!”

Chapter 1787 - : Sing, Roar, and Burn!

“No!”

Li Yao reached for her, only to snatch a few burning green feathers. Every feather was part of Wei Qingqing’s soul that focused the drops of her life in the past century. The joy when she was with the children on the remote resource planets, the delight when her imagination ran wild in the fictional world she constructed, and the excitement when she had the chance to explore the unknown future millions of years away!

It was her song, her pride, her hope, and the most dazzling moment of her life!

But in front of the shining green features, Wei Qingqing flapped her wings and accelerated abruptly toward the hideous, bloody mouth of the extraterrestrial devil!

Without any question, she was tied up by almost a hundred tentacles, but the moment before her soul was completely shredded, she was still emanating her feeble light while gritting her teeth, exactly like how she had burned her entire life on the train north to the Grand Desolate Plateau a hundred years ago when it encountered a beast tide just to launch the Taiyi Lightning Railgun once!

The Wei Qingqing in front Li Yao and the Wei Qingqing in his memories overlapped into an unbendable, unkillable, and unbroken green bird that disappeared deep inside the bloody mouth of the extraterrestrial devil.

“Argh!” Li Yao burst into such fury that every shackle, every barrier, and every blockage deep inside his soul was cracking and exploding!

Silver liquid metal was flowing out crazily from his eyes, nose, ears, and mouth, only to be burnt up by the flames of his fury. It was the corruptive force from the extraterrestrial devil that had invaded his body earlier, but it was pushed out of his body in his desperate rage!

Li Yao’s previously dim and insignificant soul was clear, expanding and burning again. His messy hair all stood up, making his head look like an active volcano from which magma was erupting incessantly. The entire dark void was illuminated in red!

“What kind of strength is this?”

“What a powerful soul! And it is still rising. Is this really just a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator?”

The other experts from the Ancient Sages Sector were still competing with the extraterrestrial devil hard with their mental power. The two parties were at an impasse. Although they had managed to resist the corruption of the extraterrestrial devil and even occupied and wasted the extraterrestrial devil’s enormous computation ability, it was still impossible for them to launch a counterattack.

Right then, they all perceived the soul power that was flowing crazily out of Li Yao. There seemed to be a black hole deep inside Li Yao’s brain that was connected to an alien world. Strength from the distant shore of the sea of stars was arriving in this world. The unprecedented, overwhelming soul tides even dazzled the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators such as Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun!

Besides Wei Qingqing, the other Spiriters had all heard Li Yao’s explanation and the extraterrestrial devil’s horrendous declaration.

For most of the Spiriters, even if they considered the Spiriters’ Realm their new home, they could not accept that their family, offspring, and compatriots would live such a life forever—not to mention that they would all be controlled by the extraterrestrial devil!

Wei Qingqing had set a good example for them. Even if they had been transformed into the Spiriters, they were still proud human beings!

The souls of the Cultivators only the size of fists and the souls of the ordinary people that looked like butterflies were all charging at the extraterrestrial devil while roaring!

In the dark void, a glamorous meteor shower glowed most brilliantly with the dignity, pride, and free will of mankind!

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

The souls of countless Cultivators and ordinary people crashed into the extraterrestrial devil brutally, causing splendid ripples on the shell of the silver ‘virus’.

But they were too weak after all, and they did not understand the means of soul attacks. Their random collisions barely brought any result. Instead, the tentacles and flagella of the extraterrestrial devil caught them and swallowed them one mouthful after another.

With every cluster of souls that it absorbed, the strength of the extraterrestrial devil would expand a tiny bit. The souls that it did not have time to consume were blown away with tentacles. Those firefly-like souls were shaking in the dark void randomly as if they had been mired in the violent tempest, disappearing while shrieking aloud!

“Hahaha. This is the deepest part of the Spiriters’ Realm that I carefully crafted. This is my domain, my world!” Its flagella squirming, the extraterrestrial devil laughed soul-stirringly. “Every corner of this universe carries out my will and my rules. Nobody can defeat me in this place. Nobody!

“As Spiriters, you are supposed to be the constructors and defenders of the Spiriters’ Realm. You are the new hope of mankind!

“But you have betrayed me, betrayed the Spiriters’ Realm, and betrayed the brand-new civilization of mankind! You can all just die. Turn into basic data currents and be part of my database…”

The crazy laughter came to an abrupt halt.

Unusual ripples were spreading out on the surface of the virus’ shell, with abnormal bubbles protruding at the center. The flagella and the tentacles were all straightened, as if they were affected by a certain invisible force. They were unable to move anymore!

Bo! Bo! Bo!

The abnormal bubbles exploded one after another. Green light that was made of interconnected green feathers beamed out of them.

“Ah! This—this is—”

The extraterrestrial devil’s crazy laughter turned into a scream of fear and confusion. The bubbles all over its body kept increasing and exploding one after another. Light spots that looked like fireflies all rushed out of its body and got away from its control.

They were the souls that had just been swallowed, the souls that were feeble and insignificant but clear and firm!

“The extraterrestrial devil has reached the limitation of its computational ability!” Long Yangjun shouted in excitement. “The core data is overflowing. It cannot digest and absorb so many souls. There are certain fatal logical errors in its fundamental algorithm. If it absorbs more souls, it will crash!”

“It’s impossible. How can this happen!” The flagella of the extraterrestrial devil were wriggling again, trying to block every broken bubble on the body, but it was as useless as blocking a flood with a fence.

More and more ‘fireflies’ were spurting out of its body, like a shining spring. Not just the souls that were swallowed moments ago, even the soul pieces that it had devoured in secret over the past decades were vomited out, too!

The green light that had torn apart its body at the very beginning, which was made of green feathers, condensed into a tiny, insignificant green bird in the meantime. It was flapping its wings and glowing freely in the middle of the storm and turbulence!

“Sister Qingqing!”

Li Yao felt two streams of hot magma spurting out of his eye sockets. A new name was added to the list of women who he wanted to hug most other than his wife!

The extraterrestrial devil intended to build a new world that was solely made of the Spiriters, but the so-called Spiriters had abandoned it. After throwing out tremendous souls that were incompatible with its core algorithm, the body of the extraterrestrial devil was greatly reduced, like a balloon whose air had been discharged. Silver tides were also surging on the crinkled shell. Almost four tides seemed to be attacking and mauling each other, until eventually, one of the tides protruded and condensed into the shape of a human.

It was Professor Mo Xuan's appearance!

"Li Yao!"

Embarrassment, regret, confusion, determination, and many other emotions flashed on the face of this 'Professor Mo Xuan' in turn. His arms were deeply stabbed into the silver ball, blowing out a swirl that reached its core. He raised his head and roared at Li Yao, "Now is the time. Open fire at me and finish everything!"

"Professor…" Li Yao mumbled. "Is that you? Are you really Professor Mo Xuan?"

"He is the real Professor Mo Xuan!" The little green bird that was hovering in the void chirped. "The core operational logic of the extraterrestrial devil and him had a conflict. That's why we were set free!"

"Enough talking! I have exposed its—my core database to you!" Silver tears flowed out of Professor Mo Xuan's eyes. He desperately shouted, "If the core database is not destroyed, it may run away and be reborn. I cannot hold it for long. Open fire now. Kill me and destroy it!"

"What are you doing? What are you doing exactly?"

Another few clusters of silver tides rose up on the surface of the silver ball and turned into the appearance of Professor Mo Xuan, but their faces were all extremely twisted and looked nothing like the real professor.

Those fake ‘Professor Mo Xuan’s shrieked and lunged at the real Professor Mo Xuan, but however hard they bit and shoved, they could not stop the real Professor Mo Xuan from opening the core database to Li Yao!

“Don’t dawdle, Li Yao. Do what you must!” the real Professor Mo Xuan shouted at the center of the surging silver tides.

Li Yao understood everything.

Perhaps Professor Mo Xuan’s soul had indeed been split apart in the accident decades ago, and more than half of it had been lost.

But even in the residue that remained after the accident, there was still something called ‘humanity’ inside.

Whatever his body and soul had changed into, he was still a human being, he was still a Cultivator, and he was still Professor Mo Xuan!

While hot tears were raging out, Li Yao raised his right hand.

He heard the singing and the roaring of all the sources around. He also sensed that his own soul was shaking, which was so feeble and yet entailed infinite potential and strength.

It was reverberation. The reverberation of human souls when they were vibrating at the same frequency!

“Right. It seems that I do have one last trick!

“It’s what I learned from the qi-trainers of Iron Plateau, the reverberation of fighting will!

“Fighting will is the presentation of the soul when it is activated to the maximum. If fighting will can be reverberated, why can’t the soul?

“Come on. Sing, roar, burn, and reverberate! Everyone, let me sense the vibration of your soul, your pride as a human being, and your determination to fight to the end. Let me gather all of your strength!”

From deep inside Li Yao’s soul, magnificent, soul-stirring music was running out like a dam whose gate had opened!

Chapter 1788 - In the Song!

The sound… was thick, stagnating, slow, and deep at first, as if were rising from the bleak land covered in mist to the sky that was rife with dark clouds.

The night sky where dark clouds were rolling was too dark. Nobody could tell whether the sound would be completely consumed by the dark clouds or rip apart the seal on the firmament.

Hearing the sound that was so familiar that it had almost been melded into their blood and marrow, the souls of all the ordinary people and Cultivators began to vibrate. Before they realized what was going on, their instincts had driven them to vibrate at a similar frequency. With Li Yao's soul, the source of the sound, as the center, the waves from countless souls congregated into each other like thousands of brooks merging into a crushing river.

All the experts from the Ancient Sages Sector observed, listened to, and sensed everything, stunned.

What was happening in front of their eyes was something that the seasoned, battle-tested Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators had never experienced before.

The reverberation of the souls of thousands of ordinary people and low-level Cultivators was also brand-new strength that they had never seen!

In the unified chant and reverberation, the sound, like a disobedient beast, finally crashed into the night sky that was full of dark clouds after a high-pitched roar, introducing a glorious morning glow!

It was the darkest moment before dawn.

But the morning glow was even more brilliant in contrast to the darkness of the night sky. The blood red crimson soon illuminated half of the dark clouds, turning the tiny section of the sky in the east clear and bright!

The dark sky was raging, hoping to besiege and swallow the tiny hope.

But the morning glow and the sun behind grew brighter and brighter and more and more unstoppable!

The two forces, bright and dark, fought in the bleeding sky. The soul-stirring and awe-inspiring music turned into an ineffaceable scroll in front of the eyes of the experts from the Ancient Sages Sector after they heard it. Golden sunlight ripped dark clouds as well as the dense fog that enshrouded the bleak land into shreds like sharp blades, illuminating a troop that was marching forward in silence on the ragged mountain roads and the rough cliffs. Every set of armor and every sword was shining brilliantly, and every determined and resolute face was highlighted!

The collisions of blades and armor, the thuds of horse hooves, and the breathing of the soldiers were in the same rhythm, as well as the fluttering sound of the bloodstained flag in the wind. All the noises became part of the music and melded into the magnificent march perfectly!

“Why—why is there music?” Meng Chixin and Han Baling looked at each other in bewilderment.

“This—this sounds like the national anthem of the Star Glory Federation!” Emperor Phoenix and Qi Zhongdao realized what it was at the same time. They were both interested in the political structure of the modern Cultivation civilization. The national anthems, national flags, and many other things were an important part of their investigation.

“Are you serious? Is it really possible to boost morale by singing the national anthem?” Ba Xiaoyu looked at Li Yao in bewilderment.

Along with the reverberation of everyone’s soul, the feelings, will, mind, and soul of everybody all turned into waves that were attracted by the source of vibration and gathered in Li Yao’s right hand, which was raised high in the sky.

There, a ball of light that was too dazzling for the naked eye was already born, and it was expanding quickly accompanied by the greatest battle hymn of the federation. It was growing more and more scorching and powerful.

Even the entire dark void was twisted uncontrollably because of the interference of the ball of light.

It was then that Ba Xiaoyu realized that Li Yao had not been joking when he proposed to boost morale by singing a song.

It—it was indeed his ultimate move!

All the experts from the Ancient Sages Sector could not help but murmur at the same time, “This is too unbelievable!”

But the next, the pitch of the song did not rise higher and higher and enter the most blood-boiling and grandeur climax as they expected. Instead, it dropped down and became slow and gentle.

The slow tune unfolded another scroll in front of their eyes. The zigzagging rivers, the rippling wheat that was flowing nonstop, the peaceful villages that were dotted along the rivers and wheat lands, and the people who were smiling and singing happily and looking forward to the harvest full of expectation.

Therefore, the experts of the Ancient Sages Sector understood the force that the song was praising. They realized what the troop in the song was fighting for and where they were going!

This place—the rivers, the wheat fields, and the villages—was their hometown.

They were going to fight the most terrible enemy and the deepest darkness in the universe in order to protect the precious land and their wonderful home!

Their lives, children, and parents were staring at them from the back. The hot, fragrant homemade food was awaiting them below the red bricks. The wheat fields, the rice flowers, and the rivers were all supporting them!

Under the support of such forces, in the slow and mild section, the troop, the marching song, and the unbendable spirit had been fully charged with strength. After a deafening drumming, the music abruptly reached the climax. The troop charged at the sky suddenly, striding toward the rumbling thunder and the rolling dark clouds. The people in the frontline and in the hometown, the people in illusion and reality, men and women, old and young, ordinary people and Cultivators… everyone was singing together aloud.

“In the middle of the lightning, can you see—

“What makes us so proud?

“Dawn is born in the middle of the dark sky.

“Who is surfing in the sea of stars?

“Nothing rumbles as loudly as the Star Glory Federation!

“Whether or not the angry tides in the universe have died down,

“On the glorious land, and in the sky of freedom, let’s march forward, federation. Let’s march forward, federation!”

The song that continued to rise, just like when it had been sung countless times in the past six hundred years, would never be stopped by anything once it began!

It was the battle hymn roared by the warriors who fought through death and blood after collisions of blades and bones when they charged at death and destruction side by side. It did not require a touching melody or a professional singer. It was unnecessary to find the correct beat. As long as a hundred people, a thousand people, a million people burnt their lives and ignited their soul, they would be able to bring out the voice of a nation, a people, and a civilization!

The experts from the Ancient Sages Sector were not very familiar with the battle hymn that had been passed on for almost seven hundred years at first, but for some reason, the battle hymn felt like iron torrents that were crushing their souls and pressing on their hearts. Their every finger, every toe, and even every strand of hair was shaking together with the rhythm.

“What—what kind of technique is this? Why do I feel that my blood is boiling?”

Ba Xiaoyu widened his eyes. The fire of his soul was burning brighter and brighter and had finished all the tentacles that constrained him without him knowing. It seemed attracted by the voice inside Li Yao's soul and bounced at the same frequency as the beat of the song!

"But it doesn't feel bad at all!" Ba Xiaoyu clenched his fists, and his fists were beating powerfully like two hearts. "Without me knowing it, the fire is burning all the way from my toes to the top of my head. It's been a long time since I last had such a gratifying feeling. Is—is this a sign of a breakthrough?"

"Li Yao…"

Ba Xiaoyu and the experts from the Ancient Sages Sector stared at Li Yao, the source of everything.

For Li Yao right now, his entire right arm and even his entire upper half body had been wreathed in the ball of light that looked like a supernova outbreak. It had taken over the 'domain' of the extraterrestrial devil and become the absolute center of the dark void!

"Is this the real 'Vulture' Li Yao? His strength is truly immeasurable and unstoppable!"

Even Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun, the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, found it practically impossible to keep their eyes open under the dazzling light released from Li Yao's right hand.

In the echo of 'March forward, federation! March forward, federation!', the troop that jumped up from the bleak land had completely ripped apart the darkness and the clouds. There was no telling whether the sunlight donned each and every one of them with glamorous armor or their shining sabers and swords had turned into sunlight that sprayed on the earth and guarded the human world!

“It’s impossible!” The extraterrestrial devil’s scream could clearly be heard from the golden sunlight. “This is my world. Nobody can destroy me in this place. Nobody—”

“Li Yao!” Professor Mo Xuan shouted desperately again. Torn by almost five false ‘Professor Mo Xuan’s, he looked more painful than ever. However, he simply held onto the shell of the silver ball and unveiled the dark red light spots at the most central part. “Now is the time. Don’t worry about me. Bring it on!”

“Professor, I’m sorry!”

Li Yao gritted his teeth, with tears flowing on his face.

“I’m the one who should be sorry.” Professor Mo Xuan laughed miserably, as if a great burden had been relieved. “I was wrong. I hope that there is still time. Now, let’s fix the mistake!”

“It’s impossible! I can’t fail! No, no! Why? Why is this happening?”

The extraterrestrial devil struggled hard and cried at the top of its voice. Countless flagella and tentacles were waving futilely and pierced through Professor Mo Xuan’s body, but they could no longer corrupt the slightest bit of the clear and determined will and belief that belonged to a human being!

“Do you still not understand, scumbag?” Li Yao laughed through his tears. “You think you can calculate and control everything with a few super crystal processors and an enormous database!

“But the feelings of mankind are incalculable, the will of mankind is uncontrollable, and the spirit of mankind is unstoppable!

“Even if you devote the computational ability of the entire universe, you will not begin to estimate the limits of the civilization of mankind. However many dark, cruel, and ugly things we may encounter on our way forward, we will press on and resolve everything with our courage and wisdom. We will never seal ourselves in tiny crystal chips in the illusions of ‘absolute peace’ under fantasized rules!

“Sister Qingqing is not under your control. Professor Mo Xuan is not under your control. None of the Spiriters are willing to be under your control or bound by your limits and rules. You failed from the very beginning, *sshole!

“Don’t you feed on the feelings of mankind? Then enjoy this. The outrage, the pride, the joy, the songs and roars, and all the other emotions of human beings!

“The world is ours. You can go to hell now!”

The ball of light that condensed the will and dignity of countless people exploded!

The dark void exploded immediately. The fire of souls that was incalculable, inestimable, uncontrollable, and limitless covered the entire world within a moment!

Chapter 1789 - Another Extraterrestrial Devil!

Li Yao saw a brand-new universe slowly rising in front of him.

Every star in the universe was made of the most brilliant point of an individual’s life.

The ecstasy, fury, sorrow, and happiness that were denser than anything congregated with Li Yao’s soul into a surging, unstoppable galaxy that rushed into the core database of the extraterrestrial devil without meeting any hindrance!

“Ahh! Don’t! Don’t kill me, humans! We’re on the same team…”

The extraterrestrial devil was like a glass ball that was melted. All the tentacles and flagella were burnt up. Plies of wrinkles were even dangling from the silver shell.

Under the massive blast of emotions and will, it screamed desperately and twistedly.

Very soon, the scream turned into bubbling and gurgling sounds. Its core database completely crashed. The energy waves degraded into dim curves, drowned in the reverberation of Li Yao, Professor Mo Xuan, Wei Qingqing, and everybody else!

In reality, the mainframe crystal processor of District 01 space station, the super crystal processors in the Tinder Base, and the bases that were responsible for exchanging information and telepathic thoughts with the seven Sectors around Hundred Flowers City had a series of explosions at the same time!

Without the control of the extraterrestrial devil, the dark void could not hold out any longer. The most fundamental layer of the entire Spiriters' Realm was collapsing. Too many people had been drained in the reverberation of soul a moment ago, and their memory pieces were scattered like cosmic dust and attracted to the powerful souls of Li Yao and the experts from the Ancient Sages Sector, allowing them to have a glimpse on tremendous bizarre memory clips in the moment!

Li Yao's soul, on the other hand, was the center that crashed into the fundamental database of the extraterrestrial devil. Naturally, it swallowed a lot of information, data, and energy waves from the extraterrestrial devil. The foreign energy that was struggling before death went on a rampage inside the deep part of his soul and bombarded the gate that was hidden at the bottom level of his soul!

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Li Yao felt that three peals of thunder echoed in a row in the depths of his soul. The seals and shackles were blown to smithereens, and an invisible gate was slowly opened!

A while back, this very 'gate' had already been barraged once by another extraterrestrial devil at the bottom of Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital, which had made Li Yao notice the existence of the 'gate' for the first time.

Right now, the seal on the gate had been completely opened. Through the gap in the gate, he noticed that an unbelievable channel seemed to be hidden in the depths of his soul, which led to a different world where he could see a blue planet as the third planet of a stable galaxy.

Earth…

“Argh!”

Li Yao wanted to hold his head and roar, but his soul had been melted with the entire universe, and he could only float and drift together with the turbulence made of thousands of soul pieces.

In a trance, he heard himself making that declaration again. “I will certainly be back! I will certainly be back! I will certainly be back!”

Plop!

Li Yao seemed to have fallen into a dark, bottomless ocean, and his soul was condensed again.

Opposite him, Professor Mo Xuan was floating in the void with his arms wide open. He was still in the same simple style, with a gray coat, untrimmed stubble, and an untidy face. But the affection, regret, shame, pain, and resolution in the depths of his eyes made Li Yao realize that he was different from a moment ago.

It was… the real Professor Mo Xuan who was exactly like a hundred years ago!

From the ten fingers at the ends of Professor Mo Xuan’s wide open arms, countless strings of light, like the extensions of his veins and nerves, dived into the depths of the darkness.

Li Yao sensed powerful life energy surging out unstoppably from deep inside Professor Mo Xuan’s soul and flowing to nobody knew where!

The last bit of Professor Mo Xuan’s life was burnt crazily. His soul grew weaker and weaker, and his body was turning dim and clear. He was even disintegrating into shiny powder from his feet and dispersing into the darkness.

With a smile, he walked to his death peacefully.

Li Yao bulged his eyes. “Professor, what are you doing? Why are you burning your soul crazily like that?”

“Listen, Li Yao.” Professor Mo Xuan coughed lightly and said, “I don’t have much time left. I’m glad that everything could be ended in your hands in such a way. Before I leave, there are a few things that I would like to say to you.”

“It won’t happen,” Li Yao said in a hurry. “Since your remaining soul is still here, we can definitely find a solution. You won’t die. You even survived when you were in the state of a Phantom Entity. There’s got to be a way. Please stop!”

“I have to die,” Professor Mo Xuan said calmly. “I… It extracted tremendous computational ability to attack you at the last moment without considering anything. Countless mainframe crystal processors in and out of Hundred Flowers City were overloaded. As a result, a lot of the crystal processors and bases for space communication have exploded. Hundred Flowers City is completely out of control now!

“At this moment, the gravity control rune arrays, the temperature adjustment units, and the air circulation system in the space stations are all having problems. People will die if the situation is not resolved. A lot of people will die.

“Only I can repair the urgent faults at the cost of the last bit of my computational ability by constructing a brand-new, temporary control circuit. Thirty percent of the facilities in Hundred Flowers City can be recovered.

“So, there is no option now. Consider it my way of repenting… for one thousandth of my sins!”

“Professor!” Li Yao found it impossible to tell the difference now. “Are you yourself or the extraterrestrial devil?”

Professor Mo Xuan’s lips struggled into a smile. He asked back, “What about you? Are you completely Li Yao or mixed with some part of the ‘mental devil’? Does a pure Mo Xuan or Li Yao really exist? Are human beings evil and hideous because they are corrupted by the extraterrestrial devils, or have the extraterrestrial devils been attracted to human beings because they are evil and hideous in the first place?

“Such questions are too complicated for me to answer. You can take your time to study them! Our time is limited. Li Yao, listen up!”

At this moment, all the body parts below Professor Mo Xuan’s knees had turned into glittering dust that dispersed into darkness.

From Professor Mo Xuan’s glabella, a cluster of silver light emerged and slowly drifted to Li Yao.

“I told you last time that I would teach you the method to enter the Divinity Transformation Stage the next time we meet.”

Putting on an ugly smile, Professor Mo Xuan said, “In fact, you must’ve sensed something just now, mustn’t you? The Divinity Transformation Stage is not unsubstantial at all. It is just the release, reverberation, contagion, and control of the soul. Every Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator has their own ‘domain’. Your domain is perhaps the voice that surges out of your soul!

“At first, you swallowed the soul pieces of the extraterrestrial devil, which should’ve given you a lot of techniques to travel on the Spiritual Nexus freely with your soul. This database, on the other hand, is the essence of my decades of years of study. It should be able to help you better sort through your strength, condense your soul, and reach the real Divinity Transformation Stage!

“I won’t be reassured if the database is given to anybody else since there may still be the residues of the extraterrestrial devil inside. But because a weird ‘mental devil’ resides inside your soul, which is highly immune to the extraterrestrial devil, you are the best candidate to accept it. It will be at your mercy after you have it purged!

“Also, there are a lot of research files and experiment data regarding artificial intelligence and the Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus inside the database.

“Believe me, Li Yao, the Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus is really the future of mankind. I may be indeed too hasty today. However, we must not give up eating for fear of choking, we must not stand still and refuse to make progress, and we must not refuse to touch the future because we are scared, instead sealing us in the seemingly safe ‘present’!

“Mankind will eventually embark on the journey to the future, won’t they? Like you said just now, no matter how much darkness, danger, ugliness, and pain is up ahead, just walk on bravely!

“I look forward to the day, even if it is millions or billions of years away, when the civilization of mankind really breaks out of the universe that nurtures and yet seals us and pays a visit to a greater world!”

He spoke to Li Yao with a smile, full of expectation. His legs vanished in the wind. The only thing left was his mottled and lackluster torso above the waist.

“I will!” Li Yao felt his eyes and heart becoming hot again. Clenching the essence of Professor Mo Xuan’s hundred years of training, he said, “Human beings already cannot live without the Spiritual Nexus. Perhaps your dream will really come true one day—in millions of years!”

“Hehe. I have no doubt about that.” Taking a deep breath, Professor Mo Xuan slightly raised his voice. “However, there is one other thing that needs to be done. You have to destroy another extraterrestrial devil!”

Li Yao was greatly surprised. “Another one?”

“The division and reproduction of the extraterrestrial devils costs a great amount of energy,” Professor Mo Xuan explained. “So, since it was swallowed by you a hundred years ago, this extraterrestrial devil only ‘divided’ or ‘reproduced’ twice.

“One time, it divided when Lei Yuqin, the cerebral specialist, was examining my soul and performing therapy and invaded her soul.

“However, it wasn’t a very successful division. Lei Yuqin’s own emotions and ambitions were not very intense. She did not ferment a very powerful extraterrestrial devil, and it was destroyed by you easily in Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital.

“But before that, during the collapse of the Virtual Spirits Sector, the extraterrestrial devil had a very successful ‘reproduction’. The one who was corrupted was another experimenter named ‘Lu Qingchen’!”

Li Yao was greatly alarmed. “Lu Zui’s grandson, Su Changfa’s disciple, the president of the CFIA and leader of the Immortal Cultivators in the federation, and Jin Xinyue’s spy whom she planted a long time ago?”

“Exactly. Don’t underestimate him at all. He had the most intense emotions and the most massive ambitions. For the extraterrestrial devil, he—he was an even better ‘nest’ to reside in than me!”

Professor Mo Xuan struggled to catch his breath before continuing. “According to the plan, we were supposed to work on different sides. I would control everything in the federation, and he would invade and take over the entire Black Wind Fleet.

“Our plan was meant to avoid all the risks. If the federation and the Black Wind Fleet truly suffered great casualties in the fierce clash, giving us the chance to seize the power, it would be great. However, if something went wrong on my side, as long as he could successfully control and strengthen the Black Wind Fleet, there would still be a chance to suppress the entire federation!”

Chapter 1790 - Loved

“Control and strengthen the Black Wind Fleet?” Li Yao was rather anxious. “Will the Black Wind Fleet trust Lu Qingchen so easily? Even if they do, how can he control an entire fleet just by himself?”

“It’s very simple. I absorbed tremendous soul pieces from Su Changfa,” Professor Mo Xuan quickly explained. “When I got in touch with the Black Wind Fleet via the Spiritual Nexus, I pretended to be Su Changfa. In fact, it was not exactly pretension because Su Changfa was part of myself.

“Su Changfa was a member of the Imperium of True Human Beings and an authentic Immortal Cultivator. Besides, I intentionally delivered a lot of critical intelligence, including the distribution of the federal army, the files about the latest starships, and the disruption frequency of the spiritual shield to the Black Wind Fleet. Such intelligence was all real. Naturally, the commander of the Black Wind Fleet did not have any doubt about the existence of ‘Su Changfa’. Therefore, they permitted Lu Qingchen, Su Changfa’s disciple, to enter Black Swirl as a liaison!

“The Immortal Cultivators are born to be suspicious. They definitely couldn’t completely trust ‘Su Changfa’ and Lu Qingchen. Lu Qingchen would be apprehended the moment he arrived on Black Swirl. He would even be tortured. The enemy would also dig deep into his brain, hoping to find the real situation!

“But their reaction was within our expectations. Lu Qingchen went there to be tortured. The purpose was to connect his brain to the battle network of the Black Wind Fleet!”

Li Yao bulged his eyes wider and wider. “After the brain and the network are connected, it will be possible to—”

“To release the ‘virus’,” Professor Mo Xuan said, half in pain and half in fear. “In terms of the integration with the extraterrestrial devils, Lu Qingchen is even better than me. On one hand, it is because my liquid metal life form was too weird for the extraterrestrial devils. On the other hand, I was already two hundred years old when the Virtual Spirits Sector crashed. Not only were my beliefs firm, the intensity of my soul had passed its prime and was gradually declining.

“To age and die is the law of nature. A Cultivator two hundred years old cannot stop his soul from slowly decaying however hard he trains himself. The extraterrestrial devils, which consider the soul fluctuations their energy source, naturally do not like an ‘old man’ like me.

“Lu Qingchen was different. When the Virtual Spirits Sector collapsed, he was only in his fifties. For a Cultivator, it was almost the most beautiful teenage years. His soul was burning furiously, and his belief was not completely stabilized. One might even say that he was still confusedly searching for his belief!

“The extraterrestrial devils took advantage of his weakness and thereby obtained the perfect ‘host’. Lu Qingchen walked much further than me although he was much younger. Regarding the integration with the extraterrestrial devils and the maturation later, he made much more progress. He had even grasped… certain secrets of the extraterrestrial devils on the deepest level!

“The flagship of the Black Wind Fleet carried such a dangerous ‘extraterrestrial devil bomb’, but they did not know the first thing about it and still performed a space jump confidently. Don’t forget that during a space jump, all human brains and crystal processors in the fleet are in a certain weird unfolded state in the four-dimensional space. They are easily invaded in such a state!

“According to the plan, Lu Qingchen would implant something into the mainframe crystal processor of the Black Wind Fleet and the brain of their commander, Heiye Ming, during the precious window of the space jump.

“When the battle reaches the most fierce phase, and when the computational ability of Heiye Ming and the mainframe crystal processor is exploited to the limits and about to crash because of overloading, Lu Qingchen will launch a final attack and release the ‘extraterrestrial devil’ or ‘virus’ inside his head!”

“Wait!” Li Yao shouted. “Is the Black Wind Fleet idiotic enough to not perform the most thorough physical examination on him? In order to control an entire fleet, there must be a great number of ‘extraterrestrial devils’, mustn’t there? How could they have not noticed the anomaly?”

“You don’t understand how the extraterrestrial devils arrive,” Professor Mo Xuan explained. “The extraterrestrial devils are not hidden inside Lu Qingchen’s head. In fact, Lu Qingchen’s brain and body are as clean as anybody’s. Even the most brilliant soul-searching technique wouldn’t find anything suspicious.

“However, he has an ancient secret technique of the extraterrestrial devils, which allows him to build a certain… object that is like a space gate inside his head in order to summon the extraterrestrial devils that are between the three-dimensional and the four-dimensional space!

“Do you still recall the arrival of the extraterrestrial devils on the tenth space ring in the Flying Star Sector? Those extraterrestrial devils did not fly over from somewhere in space but directly showed up in our world upon the calling of the altars of extraterrestrial devils!

“The so-called altars are, in effect, star beacons for the extraterrestrial devils that help them to lock onto the coordinates in the three-dimensional world and arrive directly!

“Ever since the arrival of the extraterrestrial devils on the tenth space ring in the Flying Star Sector, they haven’t invaded the edge of the cosmos for a hundred years. However, they did not idle by for the past hundred years. Instead, they continued expanding and proliferating, waiting for a good opportunity!”

Li Yao was completely confused. “Professor, how many extraterrestrial devils are out there? Three or countless?”

“The extraterrestrial devils’ life form is entirely different from that of human beings. They cannot be measured by the number of individuals,” Professor Mo Xuan said. “They are more like some sort of ‘collective intelligence’, like a swarm of bees and bugs. A single ‘devil’ is like a cell inside the human body, which does not possess self-awareness, thinking ability, or any moral standard. Just like how countless cells constitute a conscious human being, countless ‘devils’ can add up into a greater devil that has primitive instincts. However, at this point, the extraterrestrial devil still does not have complete self-awareness and thinking ability. It only has the natural instincts to corrupt and become a parasite. After it infects an intelligent life, for example, a human being, it will evolve into the ‘ultimate form’. That is exactly the state of me, Lei Yuqin, and Lu Qingchen!

“So, in the Star Glory Federation, there is only one extraterrestrial devil in the ultimate form left, Lu Qingchen. However, he still controls countless devils in the form of ‘cells’. Such devils are also highly contagious and can significantly boost the desire to kill, fight, sabotage, and destroy in their hosts!

“Due to the time constraint, I cannot explain the specific mechanism to you now. In short, you can think of it as there being an enormous ‘hole’ inside Lu Qingchen’s head. As long as he wishes, countless ‘viruses’ or ‘cells’ will break the barrier between the three-dimensional and four-dimension space through the holes and erupt to infect everybody in the Black Wind Fleet!

“The Black Wind fleet plus extraterrestrial devils, it will definitely be a cataclysm that will sweep across the entire edge of the cosmos!”

“The hole in his brain is as enormous as that?” Li Yao exclaimed in shock. Then he suddenly recalled something and shook hard, almost stunned.

He realized that there seemed to be a great hole inside his brain that led to the mysterious ‘Earth’.

What was that all about?

Professor Mo Xuan coughed violently. The smoke of dispersion had already reached his chest. He mumbled, “I cannot atone for the catastrophe that I have brought to the federation even with my death… I had already been grasped by desperation until you showed up again! Listen, Li Yao. I don’t know if there is still enough time, but there may still be a slim chance of survival. Maybe you are the only one who can save the federation now!”

“Of course!” Li Yao nodded heavily. “Rest assured. That’s my thing!”

“The experts from the Ancient Sages Sector, those Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators...” Professor Mo Xuan breathed quickly. “They all follow you, don’t they?”

“…Well, I suppose so. I will certainly move them with my powerful charisma!”

“Then go to the Heaven’s Origin Sector immediately!” Professor Mo Xuan shouted desperately. “The elites of the Burning Prairie Fleet and the Black Wind Fleet have been gathered in the Heaven’s Origin Sector and engaged in a fierce fight, but the three space gates that connect the Heaven’s Origin Sector to the outside world have been completely sabotaged by the extraterrestrial devils. Both our foes and us are now isolated and must fight to the death like caged beasts!

“Now, all that matters is whose reinforcements arrive first.

“The side whose reinforcements arrive earlier will be able to swallow most of the elite troops on the enemy’s side and seize control of the three space gates, thereby claiming victory!

“Without the space gates, even if they know the coordinates of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the follow-up troops of the federation will not be able to jump over randomly. That way, they will only be scattered into a mess by the cosmic storm and destroyed by the enemy one after another!

“However, as for a dozen super experts, you can still jump over, reverse the situation, and launch a counterattack even without the navigation of the space gates!

“I—I have sent the carrier back to Hundred Flowers City with the last bit of my strength. The experts from the Ancient Sages Sector only have a minor shock in their souls. They are slightly weakened but utterly unharmed. Eighty percent of their combat ability can be recovered if they take some tonic pills!

“Everything from now will be in your hands. Li Yao, I’m glad to have seen you again. I’m sorry… I’m sorry… I’m sorry…”

Professor Mo Xuan smiled, dimmed, and gradually disappeared into flowing, glittering smoke.

“Professor, wait. Professor, there is one last question that I want to ask you!” Li Yao’s mind was in a mess. There was one thing that had always bothered him, and he was certain that he would never have the chance to ask it if he did not ask it now. “Why did you divorce Professor Yuan at the beginning and even have an affair with someone else? Such scandals were not real, were they? It was highly unnecessary if the purpose was to transform Lei Yuqin into an extraterrestrial devil, wasn’t it?

“It does not fit your past personality, which makes it the biggest loophole of the whole scheme. It was exactly because of this incident that I noticed something wrong and traced all the leads back to you. That was the beginning of everything that followed!

“If you hadn’t divorced Professor Mo Xuan in the beginning, chances are that the extraterrestrial devils’ plan would’ve worked out!”

“That explains a lot. So, that was the loophole.” Professor Mo Xuan was slightly dazed. The most touching smile appeared on his face that was gradually melting. “There was no romantic relationship between Lei Yuqin and me. That scandal was indeed planned too lousily. However…

“I’ve only loved one person in my entire life. In any case, I would never involve the one whom I love most into such a dangerous swirl. I would never give the extraterrestrial devil a chance to infect Manqiu. Never!”

Li Yao was stunned.

It was not until a long time later that he finally laughed. He laughed so hard that tears were flowing. “So, the extraterrestrial devil failed a long time ago. Its plan was destined to be a failure fifty years ago!”

Professor Mo Xuan laughed, too.

His vitality had been drained, and the fire of soul had perished. The only things left were the sparks that looked like fireflies. They made up a shallow smile before they gradually spread out and dispersed into darkness, bringing vague brightness to the universe. “Goodbye, Li Yao.”

“Goodbye, professor!”

“Good luck, federation. Good luck, mankind!”

Chapter 1791 - Blossom of Hundred Flowers!

Accompanied by the professor’s last mumble, Li Yao felt that he dropped heavily again. He seemed to be both falling into a bottomless abyss and floating in the high sky. Then, he suddenly shuddered, only to find himself enveloped in a cluster of warm, thick liquid.

He was back to reality and his own fleshly body that was still protected by Little Black and the Colossus.

The dependable, real, and clear feeling could not have made his mood better.

Chi…

A large mass of the exhausted spiritual energy spurted out of the gap of the plate armor on the shoulder of the Tartarean Skeleton, like pillars of smoke that were soaring up into the sky. The silver liquid metal that enshrouded the Colossus ebbed like a tide, and the strengthened helical armor at the chest slowly opened. Li Yao fell out of Little Black and the dark protective liquids.

Huchi! Huchi! Huchi! Huchi!

The sensation of time in the Spiriters’ Realm was several times longer than reality. There was no telling how much time had passed in the real world, but it was certainly the most soul-stirring experience for Li Yao in his entire life.

On one of his knees, he breathed heavily and enjoyed the slightly stinging but extremely comfortable feeling when fresh air flowed into his throat and his lungs.

When he raised his head, he saw the most unbelievable and splendid picture.

District 01 space station had been drowned by the silver liquid metal previously, and the glittering silver metal had even turned into hideous, terrifying figurines.

But at this moment, all the figurines were gone. The silver ocean was boiling, with bubbles popping up nonstop, before it quickly faded and froze.

From every bubble, a tiny, soft twig was growing out. Buds were appearing at the end of the twigs. The buds that were apparently about to blossom stretched the petals to be as thin as paper. It could be clearly seen the souls that were carefully protected inside!

District 01 space station immediately turned into an ocean of flowers.

Those twigs and buds were supposed to be silver. Yet, the souls that they enshrouded illuminated them into a plethora of glamorous colors. Billions of hues were like scattered ripples and tides, crashing, dying, and illuminating each other.

Li Yao had never seen such a splendid, glamorous, and wonderful view before.

A moment later, all the buds bloomed. Transparent light spots that looked like lotus seeds and pearls were formed inside the flowers. From every light spot, a soul was slowly woken up and moaned after the prolonged dream.

Li Yao understood everything.

They were the people who had been absorbed into the Spiriters’ Realm, the past Spiriters.

For Li Yao, Long Yangjun, the experts from the Ancient Sages Sector, and other living beings, they had their own flesh and blood. After the collapse of the Spiriters’ Realm, their souls naturally returned to their own bodies in the same way that they were sent away before, receiving the protection of the brain again.

However, for most of the Spiriters, like Wei Qingqing, they had long lost their natural-born bodies.

Souls were extremely vulnerable. They might vanish forever after being exposed to the air for less than an hour.

It was needless to say that those souls had just been through the collapse of the Spiriters’ Realm and were greatly damaged in the violent turbulence and storms.

If they were released into the real world recklessly, the only thing that awaited them would be death.

Therefore…

With the intensity of Professor Mo Xuan’s soul and his weird life form, he perhaps could have kept himself safe.

But he burnt his entire soul willingly and activated computational ability that was beyond his limits. With the last bit of his life, he controlled the enormous ocean of liquid metal and preserved thousands of Spiriters in such an amazing form.

Before an appropriate number of artificial bodies was found, they could live inside the flowers safely and stably!

Other than in District 01 space station, silver liquid metal was growing and spreading in the form of vines in every space station of Hundred Flowers City.

Countless branches were growing out of every vine and producing colorful, shining buds. The souls that had been trapped in the Spiriters’ Realm for a long time all woke up from their prolonged dreams and blossomed in the most glamorous forms.

Those space stations were extremely anoxic, extremely hot, or extremely cold in the beginning. Many people’s eyes rolled back because of the suffocation, many others were trembling in ice and frost, and the faces of a lot of seniors and children were blue and purple due to the lack of oxygen. They were scratching their necks and chests with their hands subconsciously.

The hundred space stations were about to become living hells when the air circulation system and the temperature adjustment rune arrays hummed and reactivated as the flowers of souls blossomed!

The first warm and moist breeze was blown into the lifeless space stations again. The frost frozen on the cabin wall as well as the desperation on everyone’s face was all melted.

All the people who knew or did not know each other burst into tears of joy after surviving the disaster and hugged each other. Then, over each other’s shoulders, they looked at the flowers that were blossoming all over the sky in confusion.

At this moment, Hundred Flowers City truly deserved its name. Hundreds of flowers were blossoming!

“Professor—”

Inside District 01 space station, Li Yao was choked with sobs in mixed feelings.

The silver liquid metal that enveloped the skyscrapers around all faded, and the silver statues were melted, too, revealing the people who were sealed inside.

Colonel Luo Qisheng, the commander of the 414 troop of the federal army, and the members of his daring team all looked at each other in bewilderment. The liquid metal that clung to their legs had not entirely disappeared. They could not help but scratch their heads, feeling that they had just had a dream, no, a hundred or a thousand dreams.

At the critical moment, countless soul pieces flew in the dark void randomly. Everybody burnt their life to their heart’s content and was attracted, moved, and amazed by the shining parts of other people’s lives, too!

The staff in the Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus Interaction and Control Center woke up one after another, too.

Intense confusion lingered inside everyone’s eyes, but there was still the brilliance when they joined each other, sang the battle hymn, and declared their feelings, spirit, and will together!

Everybody stared at each other in a different way from before, as if an invisible barrier among them had been removed and certain ineffable things had been added.

In front of Li Yao, the liquid metal that was in the appearance of Professor Mo Xuan was melting like a candle that was burnt fast. It was flowing into the silver ocean on the ground that was barely fluctuating now.

Professor Mo Xuan could not say anything anymore. He could not even maintain the basic facial organs now.

He was merely straightening his arm and raising it high, as if he were trying to snatch something from the sky and the space, or to leave certain things that were condensed inside his palm to this world.

Professor Mo Xuan was slowly melted into the silver swamp. His legs, torso, and head all disappeared. In the end, the arm that was raised high was the only thing left.

The arm was descending slowly, but the opened hand was slowly clenched into a fist whose thumb was raised at Li Yao.

Good luck, Li Yao. Good luck, federation. Good luck, mankind!

Professor Mo Xuan was completely consumed by the silver swamp, marking a complicated, unjudgeable end to his life.

Long Yangjun had crawled out of the Yin Yang, her Colossus, at some point and observed everything behind Li Yao.

“One who dies without regrets has never lived a meaningful life. Every expedition has an end. Perhaps for Professor Mo Xuan, this is the best ending.”

She paused for a moment, and inhuman confusion beamed out of her eyes again. She said softly, “Human beings are so… sophisticated!”

“There’s no time now. Let’s clean up everything and prepare to jump to the Heaven’s Origin Sector!” His eyes red, Li Yao stared at the place where Professor Mo Xuan had vanished. He took a deep breath and said, “We cannot let Professor Mo Xuan have died for nothing. The last stop is still waiting for us!”

Professor Mo Xuan had done his best to protect all the Spiriters. He had also recovered thirty percent of the functions of Hundred Flowers City as a hub of the Spiritual Nexus and transportation in the federation.

However, Hundred Flowers City had been seriously affected in the previous corruption and sabotage after all. Right now, most of the communication routes were cut off, and the space sailing routes among the seven Sectors were an utter mess. Most of the citizens were either just freed from the frigidness, the high temperature, the lack of oxygen, and the zero gravity, or experienced the soul-stirring battle in the Spiritual Nexus. Their souls were extremely weak, and it was difficult for them to start working immediately.

Under such circumstances, every second must be seized if a dozen top-tier experts above the Nascent Soul Stage were to be projected to the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

Hang in there!

Looking at the bare cabin wall, Li Yao’s eyes seemed to have passed dozens of lightyears and saw Jin Xinyue, Ding Lingdang, Guo Chunfeng, Bai Kaixin, and a lot of other family and friends who were gritting their teeth to fight in the Heaven’s Origin Sector. He waved his hands and thought to himself, *Hang in there. Hang in there just a while longer. I’ll be back very soon. I’ll be back with the strongest reinforcements at the edge of the cosmos!*

…

Right when Li Yao and his companions were deeply trapped inside the Spiritual Nexus, the highest command center of the Defense Counsel of the Federation in the Heaven's Origin Sector was in mayhem, too.

Until the knotted longsword slowly showed up, everything was under the control of the leadership of the federation, or more specifically speaking, Jin Xinyue, Guo Chunfeng, and Bai Kaixin.

Including 'Black Swirl', the flagship, the most elite forces of the Black Wind Fleet had been lured to the Heaven's Origin Sector exactly as planned. Their follow-up troops had not completed the space jump yet and were still behind the brown dwarf. The fleet was divided into two parts, one at the front and one far behind, with dozens of lightyears between each other. They were definitely in the most awkward situation!

Jin Xinyue's so-called 'demon rebellion troops' had torn apart their mask of 'armed insurgency', too, and participated in the assault against the Black Wind Fleet together with the Heaven's Origin Fleet.

With the help of their stalling, the Burning Prairie Fleet, the ace troop of the federation, completed the first jump successfully, too. The latest and strongest main-force warships, including the flagship Burning Prairie, had all appeared between the No. 2 space gate and the No. 3 space gate!

Burning Prairie was no longer the warship modified from 'Heavenly Phantom' as it had been a hundred years ago. It was now a super warship that the most skilled specialists had produced after thirty years of hard work at the cost of tremendous resources!

Chapter 1792 - Fierce Fight of Caged Beasts!

The ‘Dim Moon Plan’ drafted by Jin Xinyue was about to succeed. All three space gates were under the federation’s control. The enemy’s reinforcements could not arrive quickly. Even if they risked jumping over without the guidance of star beacons, they would be scattered like dust in the vast galaxy of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, which was eight billion kilometers in diameter. It would certainly be a disaster for any fleet!

Warships could only bring out their full combat ability when they were integrated in the system precisely.

Without the protection of the shield starships, the arsenal starships would be like tortoises without their shells. They could only perform a suicidal, one-time attack. They might even be destroyed beyond their shooting range by the super remote heavy weapons that the enemy deployed on the planets.

Without the firepower support of the arsenal starships, however powerful the spiritual shields, the disruption magnetic fields, and the cyberspace competition abilities of the shield starships were, they would not last long under the enemy’s barrage.

Even the most reckless commander would hesitate to perform such a hopeless ‘blind jump’.

Reaching the battlefield through regular cruise instead of space jump? It was even less likely. The two parties were dozens of lightyears away from each other in the three-dimensional universe. Even if the large-scale battle group could march at the unbelievable speed of one tenth the speed of sound, it would take them hundreds of years to reach the battlefield!

Therefore, the elite forces and the ‘brain’ of the Black Wind Fleet were isolated and helpless!

Thus, as long as the follow-up troops of the Burning Prairie Fleet arrived in time and destroyed the enemy’s sharpest claws and most important brain, there was no way that the federation would lose the war!

There seemed to be only minutes away from the realization of the goal.

The remaining troops of the Heaven’s Origin Fleet were still stalling the enemy, who were ten times stronger than themselves, with amazing courage and fighting will. They harassed the enemy like a cluster of stingy mud. Right when they were about to collapse, the ‘rebel’ demon troops that stayed near the No. 1 space gate reinforced in time and filled in the loophole. They roared at the thousands of pillars of light shot out by the Black Wind Fleet, just in order to buy one second, one more second, and another second for the arrival of the main-force troop!

The Burning Prairie Fleet, the absolute main force of the federation, lived up to its reputation, too. The first attack group, personally led by Chief of Staff Bai Kaixin, performed a textbook space jump.

After they crossed millions of stars and went through the 3D-4D-3D breaking and condensing, their solemn and rigorous battle formation was not disrupted at all. Thousands of straight exhaust flames illuminated the darkness of the sea of stars, like a forest of coldly-shining spears on the shoulders of an ace troop in ancient times!

Led by the flagship Burning Prairie, the forest of spears moved slowly in space and adjusted their relative position by the feedback of the mystic rays. The entire battle group was like the most immaculate work of art. When two starships multiple kilometers long were marching forward side by side, the heads of the two starships would be less than ten meters away from each other. On the universal scale, the distance was hundreds of times smaller than the width of a hair!

After the first attack group arrived at the Heaven’s Origin Sector, it did not hurry to lunge at the coordinates where the Black Wind Fleet was. Instead, it changed into a defensive battle formation in an arc shape unhurriedly, creating a safe space for the second wave, the third wave, and other fleets that were arriving from the other Sectors of the Star Glory Federation.

In case of the leakage of information, the ‘Dim Moon Plan’ was a top secret of top secrets. Even within the Burning Prairie Fleet, only a few leaders were aware of some information about the plan. The regular garrisons of other space zones definitely knew nothing about it.

The local garrisons of those space zones were mostly weak in combat ability. It would take a very long time for them to regroup and jump. But now that the door had been closed for the enemy, there was nothing to be worried about. They had taken the full initiative!

The void that had just been ripped apart once was releasing tiny, broken ripples. Invisible electric arcs, under the scanning of the probe magical equipment, were like colorful tides that were running to all directions one wave after another. The second attack group was about to come—it was made of the motherships in the Burning Prairie Fleet that had the thickest plate armor and the largest storage of ammunition and crystals. They were the real ‘main force’!

Right then, the thousand star beacons that belonged to the three space gates died out at the same time.

By ‘die out’, it meant that the Burning Prairie Fleet, the Black Wind Fleet, and the command center of the Defense Counsel on the ground could no longer detect them with all their scanning and navigation magical equipment.

They seemed to have turned into three dead rocks within a moment from the most advanced, precise devices of mankind.

Only the soldiers of the federal army stationed near the three space gates, after putting on special glasses that could detect invisible light, could see that thousands of twisted electric arcs suddenly dashed out of the three space gates and tangled every star beacon like a chain reaction.

As the ball-shaped electric arcs exploded one after another, the glamorous star beacons lost all their glamor, as if they were covered in a thick layer of dust.

The main-force troops of the Burning Prairie Fleet that were about to jump under the guidance of the space gates were immediately thrown into chaos.

A third of the main forces had finished the jump, but they lost their way at the last moment. Like paratroopers who jumped in the middle of a storm, they were scattered in the vast space zone in a radius of almost one billion kilometers.

The remaining two thirds of the main forces that had yet to jump aborted despite the great price. All the space jump units were cracking and exploding.

They were like runners who were sprinting at the highest speed, only to hit the brakes abruptly upon noticing that there was a bottomless cliff up ahead. Although the danger of falling apart was spared, fractured bones were inevitable!

Right now, for the main troops of the two parties, the three ‘passes’ that connect the outside world to the Heaven’s Origin Sector had been blocked by a ‘landslide’.

That was only the beginning.

Most of the communication bases deployed around the home planet of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, which were used to transit information with the other six Sectors on the Spiritual Nexus, collapsed after the entanglement of a series of invisible sparks and electric arcs.

Even if some of the lucky dogs survived the attack, when the information load that was supposed to be shared by a hundred bases was concentrated on them, a series of information delays and jams took place.

The government network and the military network on the home planet suffered a fatal attack at that moment, too. The enemy seemed to have known the most inconspicuous weaknesses of the military Spiritual Nexus. A vintage sword was even slowly showing up on the ‘Gai’-level crystal processor inside the command center of the Defense Counsel that had the highest computational ability and confidential level in the entire federation.

The sword slashed all the data displayed in the 3D pictures into pieces unhurriedly and presented the sharpness of the two edges where spiritual energy was dancing in an almost arrogant way. Then, it curled and gradually turned itself into a knot.

“Peace is better than war.”

A slogan surfaced below the knotted sword, one that was very correct to some extent but could not have been weirder or more ridiculous at such a moment.

“All—all our data has been deleted!”

“Damn it. It has tampered with our registered identity information crazily. Even the brainwave features have been messed up and randomly redistributed. I cannot even log into my own work interface, much less trace it down and kill it!”

“What the heck is that? I’ve never seen a crystal processor virus in such a form with such an attack mechanism before. The contagion is too fast. It is an assault from various nodes of the Spiritual Nexus at the same time, as if—as if it were alive!”

“The three space gates have all been controlled. It—it is not a common virus. Some of the damage is from the outside world. The three space gates have all been paralyzed. Estimated time of repair—unknown!”

“The communication with the outside world has almost been entirely cut off. The other six Sectors are an utter mess now. Hundred Flowers City, as the transportation and information hub, has lost all signals. It is now in a frozen state!”

Including Wan Guqing, Guo Chunfeng, and Jin Xinyue who had just arrived there, all the leadership of the federation were about to be ‘frozen’, too.

Everybody looked at Jin Xinyue and Guo Chunfeng, as well as Wan Guqing who apparently should take the blame for everything, in suspicion and criticism.

“It’s impossible.”

Jin Xinyue was still wearing a confident smile on her face, but ice and frost were spreading out of her smile. On the hundreds of 3D light beams in front of her, the same sharp sword appeared simultaneously and minced all the information and data without any trouble before it slowly knotted itself.

“Peace is better than war.”

Jin Xinyue felt that she could hear the mockery when the enemy said those words.

But she could not have been more perplexed. “This is completely unreasonable. Even if the Black Wind Fleet did see through my plan, it should have been impossible for them to checkmate us like this. The technology of crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus in the federation is no worse than the Imperium’s. How can our facilities be taken down by the enemy so easily?”

“Enough!” Wan Guqing, the Speaker of the Federation, was still like an old camel that was so sluggish that it kept its eyes half closed when faced with the most dreadful sandstorm. Even if there was any panic or hesitation in his heart, he did not reveal any of such feelings in his voice which was as calm as ever. “Find a way to kill the virus and reboot the Spiritual Nexus. At the very least, the situation is fair for the enemy and us. Both parties have only delivered the most elite forces to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, while the vast majority of troops are still dozens of lightyears away.

“Now that the three space gates have been paralyzed, nobody’s reinforcements are coming anytime soon, right?”

“Re—report!”

Hardly had he finished his sentence when some analysis finished examining the data transmitted before the collapse of the Spiritual Nexus.

The data was the appearance of the starships that were teleported in the second wave by the Black Wind Fleet. After careful analysis, it would be able to tell the model, level, and scale of the new starships.

Before the three space gates were completely paralyzed, the Black Wind Fleet’s second wave of teleportation had almost been done.

However, none of the analysts had been able to tell which level and model those new ‘starships’ belonged to in the fleet of the Imperium with the weird data.

Judging from the appearance, most of the starships in the second wave were too weird and did not match any of the starships in the intelligence!

At this moment, after the three starships were all paralyzed. They finally understood everything, and their faces turned pale.

“Report! The Black Wind Fleet did not teleport their main forces in the second wave but sent their space gate!

“They dissected the enormous space gate and transported the parts on many starships!”

Chapter 1793 - The Joker Has Come!

The command center of the Defense Counsel was consumed by silence.

The Black Wind Fleet had established a space gate at a certain point dozens of lightyears away, perhaps in the orbit of some dim star. It was no secret.

No matter how tense the relations between the Black Wind Fleet and the homeland of the Imperium were, and no matter how dangerous the power struggles were, it was impossible for the expedition army to completely cut off the connection with the homeland.

By establishing a space gate and a super long-distance communication base, if the nightmare of failure came true, however unlikely, they would be able to ask for help from the homeland.

Whether or not the homeland would send out reinforcements in time, and whatever the purpose of the reinforcement would be after they did come, such preparation work had to be done nonetheless.

However, none of the leadership of the federation had foreseen that Heiye Ming, the commander of the Black Wind Fleet, would be insane enough to teleport the space gate, which was made of hundreds of star beacons and boasted absolutely no defense or attack abilities due to the enormous size and the sophisticated structure, to the Heaven’s Origin Sector altogether!

Under normal circumstances, it would be the most idiotic strategy.

The capacity, cost, and scale of every space jump were limited. To teleport the star beacons, which did not have any impetus and were extremely precise, dozens of lightyears away would not only consume an astronomical amount of spiritual energy but also occupy the capacity that should have belonged to warships.

One could not have all the best in the world. One more star beacon teleported could mean the reduction of quite a few arsenal starships or shield starships. Who could tell if the lack of one arsenal starship or a shield starship would be the last feather that decided the outcome of the war at the most crucial moment?

Even if they did dismember the entire space gate into parts and teleport them over at great cost, it would still take a lot of time for the space gate to be assembled, debugged, and charged with energy.

During the whole process, the space gate would be an enormous and fragile target that was at any weapon’s mercy.

The first wave of attack from the Black Wind Fleet was not large in quantity in the first place. Logically, as long as the follow-up troops of the Burning Prairie Fleet arrived in time, they would not have any opportunity to assemble and debug the space gate unhurriedly at all. Instead, they would be drowned by the warships and soldiers ten times more than themselves!

However…

The three space gates on the federation’s side had all been paralyzed, and it remained unknown when they could be fixed. Part of the elite forces of the Burning Prairie Fleet were all there were. Besides, due to the blackout of the Spiritual Nexus, the coordination and command structure had fallen into chaos. They were all mired in an invisible swamp!

Was it possible to compete with Black Swirl, the flagship of the Black Wind Fleet, with the forces that they had available?

Before the Spiritual Nexus was repaired and rebooted, would the space gate of the Black Wind Fleet flare first?

Everybody had the same desperate questions.

Heiye Ming's seemingly rash and insane strategy turned out to be a marvelous, decisive move. As long as he could assemble and debug his own space gate before the three space gates of the federation were repaired, the unstoppable hooves of the Imperium would thump on the entire federation starting from the Heaven's Origin Sector!

"I…"

Linking the anomalies from the beginning of the war to now, Jin Xinyue reached the conclusion immediately—she had been tricked!

The queen of demons felt as if a sour and bitter plum was stuck inside her throat. Her heaving shoulders were shivering intensely, and she could barely catch her breath.

Wan Guqing, the Speaker of the Federation, glanced at her and blocked her from everyone's berating eyes in silence. Then, he peacefully said, "The space gate must be destroyed before the enemy finishes assembly and charging."

It was a useless statement.

But on many occasions, a useless statement was the most correct statement.

“At least, we know for certain now…”

Wan Guqing was even able to control his facial muscles to put on a seemingly confident smile.

“As long as we win the war, we wouldn’t need to worry about the arrival of a second Black Wind Fleet for a long time in the future.

“It is well-known that the construction of a large-scale, high-level space gate consumes tremendous time and resources. To say that only a national treasury can afford such projects is not an exaggeration. I think that the Black Wind Fleet must’ve reached their limits to build such a space gate after only ten years no matter how extravagant they may be, right?

“Our strategic focus was supposed to be destroying the enemy’s space gate and preventing the forces from the enemy’s homeland arriving at the border of the federation directly. However, we did not know where the Black Wind Fleet had hidden their nest and their space gate at all. Searching for a secret space gate in thousands of space zones would be no different from fishing for a needle in a vast ocean.

“But as it turns out, the enemy has delivered the fat meat to our door. What else can this be if not a blessing for the federation?

“We must get rid of the chaotic state quickly. At least, we must establish a communication route that directly leads to the flagship of the Burning Prairie Fleet. We also need to know the latest situation on the frontline. Right now, in the boiling sea of stars, how many troops are still organized and under our control?”

Since the best specialists of crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus nationwide had gathered there, and even quite a few experts in the Nascent Soul Stage and the Divinity Transformation Stage were supervising, it was possible to establish a route to the flagship of the Burning Prairie Fleet in the emergency even though the Spiritual Nexus could not be completely repaired for the time being.

The result of the communication, however, was not promising.

When the highest command center in the capital city was scourged by the storm of crystal processor virus, the first attack group of the Burning Prairie Fleet that had been comprehensively connected to the battle network suffered ubiquitous infiltration and infection, too.

The crystal processors were paralyzed. The data was a mess. The communication lagged. The commands could not be delivered. The battle formation was falling apart. It was even impossible to distinguish the quadrants and the coordinates. The warships had turned from moths darting toward fire into flies that had lost their heads. There was not the slightest ‘organization’ anymore.

Bai Kaixin, the Chief of Staff, estimated that it would take at least three hours to regain effective command and the ability to fight against the Black Wind Fleet!

“Three hours…”

The highest command center was caught in dead silence again.

Everybody knew clearly that the Heaven’s Original Fleet had been exhausted to the maximum and might collapse at any second. The demon troops that had reinforced them were neither good at space battles nor led by a distinguished commander. They were ‘camouflage’ and ‘bait’ in the first place, and courage was almost all that they had.

The two second-tier troops were impossible to stop or stall the Black Wind Fleet.

Once the Black Wind Fleet destroyed them easily, they would be able to change their battle formation unhurriedly into an impregnable defensive circle.

In either the battles in space or those on the ground, the defenders always had greater advantages than the attackers. The Black Wind Fleet was of a higher quality than the Burning Prairie Fleet in the first place. If they were given enough time to arrange their battle formation and take a good rest, it would be practically impossible for the Burning Prairie Fleet to break the defense and destroy the space gate even if it regained effective command later!

What could they do?

Who else could stall the Black Wind Fleet and earn three precious hours for the recovery of the Burning Prairie Fleet and the Spiritual Nexus?

Yes. There was another Deep Sky Fleet—the Big Bai Fleet.

However, the Big Bai Fleet was incomparable to the Burning Prairie Fleet in terms of both scale and quality.

It was merely established for experimental and explorational purposes as a supplement for the Burning Prairie Fleet. The members of the fleet were mostly ex-space pirates, a mob that was too old to brush their own teeth. Their commander, Bai Xingjian, was merely at the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage. If he were in the Burning Prairie Fleet where the most distinguished talents were gathered, he might not even be qualified as a commander of a secondary fleet.

Besides, the Big Bai Fleet had lost connection even earlier. It was presumed first that they had encountered a cosmic storm or were under the inferences of the enemy. However, judging from what had happened recently, it was possible that the crystal processor virus had broken out on their starships in advance.

Even the most elite forces in the Burning Prairie Fleet were greatly disturbed by the mysterious virus. The Big Bai Fleet must have been even more chaotic, right?

The last order from the command center to the Big Bai Fleet was to move to the No. 2 and No. 3 space gates immediately and join the first attack group of the Burning Prairie Fleet.

“Report!” The communication officers brought messages from the ground. “Representative Ding and the other eight Nascent Soul Stage experts have arrived at the launch base of Heaven’s Artillery. All the Colossi have finished their maintenance. They are ready for an assault!”

Representative Ding was Ding Lingdang.

Unlike Jin Xinyue, she did not work in any government departments but was just a senior representative in the federal parliament.

Other than the fleets, the Colossi were the only forces under the control of the highest command center now.

But it was their last trump card and last resort. Right now, the Colossi of the Black Wind Fleet had not been deployed. If the few Colossi on the federation’s side carried out such an exhausting mission as to ‘stall the enemy’, they would certainly be trapped by the hostile starships and crystal suits.

Such a strategy was no different from quenching thirst with poison, but watching the Black Wind Fleet assemble the space gate unhurriedly while doing nothing meant nothing but doom.

The highest commander was so quiet that even a needle would rumble when it hit the ground.

“Re—report!”

Right then, another route leading to a hundred probe cameras in space was finally repaired. The chaotic battlefield around the Black Wind Fleet was displayed on the light beam clearly again.

The series of little white spots that were rushing at the Black Wind Fleet from the edge of the battlefield made an analyst cry in excitement. He jumped to his feet so hard that the chair below his bottom was blown away.

Everybody was taken aback. They looked at the analyst in surprise.

“Big Bai! It’s the Big Bai Fleet!”

The familiar appearance parameters gradually focused into the models and names of starships. The analyst’s throat seemed to be on fire under the stimulation of the glittering names.

“The Big Bai Fleet has somehow appeared behind the Black Wind Fleet. The two parties are less than thirty light seconds away from each other. The distance is still reducing.

“They are so fast. They—they still have their organization and keep the most perfect cone-shaped attack formation. How is it possible?

“Ah. They took a turn. The Big Bai Fleet changed their overall direction at a speed of at least three percent the speed of light, and the battle formation is utterly unchanged. Is this really happening?

“They’ve changed their target and lunged at the space gate of the Imperium that was just teleported!”

Chapter 1794 - Wargame and the Chess Pieces Large and Small

Faced with the scattered light spots on the 3D light beam that altered their direction and paved forward fluently, the ministers, representatives, advisors, and analysts in the highest command center were all dumbfounded. Tides of disbelief each higher than the last were raised in their hearts!

Anyone with some understanding of space warfare would understand how difficult it was to turn an entire fleet made of countless starships that had different safety distances and spiritual shield frequencies when the fleet was running at a super high speed of several thousand kilometers per second!

The structure intensity of the starships themselves, the limits of the body and brains of the soldiers on board, the coordination among the starships, their locations in the battle formation… All of them were complicated problems that were a high burden of calculation.

Moreover, such a movement had been performed in the ‘cone-shaped attack formation’, the densest formation of all, against the fatal bombardment of the enemy. If they had not seen it with their own eyes, they would never have believed that it could be done. The commander who was bold enough to do such a thing must be the craziest person in the world!

The Big Bai Fleet, however, miraculously accomplished it.

They had performed the most glamorous emergency turn. Thousands of exhaust flames pulled almost perfect arced traces before they stabbed into the soft belly of the Black Wind Fleet like shining sabers.

“How is it possible? Why did the Big Bai Fleet show up there? Weren’t they supposed to be marching toward the No. 2 and No. 2 space gates?”

“They are not under spiritual and magnetic interference at all. They turned off the network and entered the radio silence state, thereby keeping themselves safe from the attack of the crystal processor virus. They’re maintaining minimal communication within the fleet. Yet, they kept such a strict and delicate battle formation with such weak communication?”

“Is such amazing commanding ability really accomplishable for the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage? What exactly is going on?”

“In any case, they have come at the perfect time. The second wave of starships of the Black Wind Fleet are still mixed with the star beacons. They are fundamentally a tray of loose sand and still under the shock of the space ripples. Those starships are practically defenseless!”

“Contact the Big Bai Fleet now. Hurry. Hurry up? What? Still can’t reach out to them? Well—”

Unlike the ‘navy’ in the civilizations of single planets, the ‘Deep Sky Fleets’ of universal civilizations often wandered off the mother planet or even mother world and explored the places thousands of lightyears away or even further. The mother world had little control over the Deep Sky Fleets, and the Deep Sky Fleets were essentially self-governed, independent kingdoms.

It could be said that the Star Glory Federation had nine Sectors. Other than the seven Sectors in the general sense, the Burning Prairie Fleet and the Big Bai Fleet were two tiny Sectors that had all the necessary elements.

In contrast the Burning Prairie Fleet, which was built by the funding from the federal government, the Big Bai Fleet had been constructed mostly based on Jin Xinyue as well as the civil corporations and private sects such as the Glorious Sunlight Group. It had basically been developing on its own. Naturally, the federation government had even less control over it.

The Big Bai Fleet had just finished a voyage drill that lasted a whole year. Although sailing logs were sent back every few days, nobody knew exactly where they had gone, what they had done, what changes they had experienced, and what they were up to except for the information provided on the logs.

Everybody knew that Bai Xingjian, the commander of the Big Bai Fleet, had always been a misfit for the traditional fleet system of the federal army, but he was Jin Xinyue's trusted subordinate.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Everybody cast their eyes upon Jin Xinyue.

But Jin Xinyue was as dumbfounded as they were. Staring at the unpredictable but thunderous spots on the light beam, she did not have the vaguest clue what was happening to the Big Bai Fleet or Bai Xingjian.

"According to the acceleration right now, there are only three minutes to go before the Big Bai Fleet clashes with the second wave of starships teleported by the Black Wind Fleet!”

On the light beam, the war was like a chess game.

The first unexpected chess piece jumped up and bared its bloodstained tusks!

…

The war was a chess game, in which the leadership of the federation—such as Wan Guqing, Guo Chunfeng, Jin Xinyue, and Bai Xingjian—were the players.

For the dominating big shots, their war was fought from the dry and safe command center in front of the thousands of ever-changing light beams by reading the numbers and data and making corresponding arrangements.

Their war was sometimes magnificent and grand, sometimes mysterious and unpredictable. It was indeed a great game with the universe as the board and the starships as the chess pieces.

Everything was clear on the board. There were always traces to be found. The process of attacks and counterattacks always repeated itself. Soul-stirring ‘decisive moves’ might happen every once in a while, too.

Even if they failed, they would at least know clearly why they had failed. They would still have time to be shocked, dazed, infuriated, or regretful.

However, a war could not just be won by the big shots.

Every amazing decisive move from the big shots, every well-concocted scheme, and every deeply-hidden trap had to be accomplished by the common soldiers who were fighting hard on the frontline.

For the common soldiers deeply mired in the cruel battle between the Heaven’s Origin Fleet and the Black Wind Fleet, it was impossible for them to regard the war as a game.

Through the bloodstained goggles on their helmets, the war unfolding in front of their eyes was not a chess game where every player’s every move was clear, but two enormous, chaotic, violent turbulences of death, which were colliding and dragging each other into mutual destruction!

The Rabid Dog was one of the common soldiers.

He could not see the scheme of the Black Wind Fleet, the mayhem of the Burning Prairie Fleet, and the miraculous arrival of the Big Bai Fleet. He did not know that the tiny light spots that were hopping out of the void from far, far away were the components of the Imperium’s space gate. Nor could he foresee what would happen after the star beacons were done assembling.

He could only see that the spiritual shields of the starships around him were turning dim red, like venous blood that was slowing dried.

He could only see that the shells of a lot of starships turned dangerous orange before they exploded without warning. While they turned into enormous fireballs, they shot out tremendous pieces that were mixed with violent spiritual energy and electric arcs in all directions, producing deadly storms that swept without any pattern on the battlefield.

He saw that the sharp shrapnel reaped lives easily like sickles, caring little whether their targets were a friend or foe, without the least mercy. A lot of soldiers of the federal army and soldiers from the Imperium were fighting hard when they were pierced through by the same broken pieces, ending up like meat on a skewer.

He saw even more people whose trajectory was deviated and whose power rune arrays were broken because of the blow of the broken pieces. It was utterly useless however hard they struggled, until they fell into the enormous pillars of light that were shot out by the warships of the two parties in desperation. The moment they fell into the pillars of light, they were immediately lost, like mosquitoes falling into melted steel, leaving neither the slightest scream nor the tiniest dark smoke.

The Rabid Dog had mostly been involved in ground battles within the atmosphere, but he had also participated in space battles before.

Deaths in ground battles were always accompanied by screams, cries, tears, and fearless roars, as well as deafening explosions.

The battles in space, on the other hand, were utterly soundless. Everybody seemed to be playing a solemn, grave mummery.

The most glamorous pictures of destruction and the most maddening silence gave him an extremely weird sense of contradiction, making it impossible for him to tell which of the two forms of battles were crueler.

Perhaps wars were always the same. For insignificant dust and worthless ants, who were nothing more than figures larger and small on the combat ability calculation tables, the ground and the space were equally cruel.

It was true that he was at the peak of the Core Formation Stage. He was also a major in the federal army.

But so what?

The several-kilometer-long starships were swirling before him slowly like dying whales, only to be pierced deeply by dozens of light pillars like spears. Cracks were slit easily on the seemingly solid plate armor, and fireballs erupted out of the cracks like abnormal tumors. What erupted out of the cracks at the same time were the Cultivators in the Building Foundation Stage, Core Formation Stage, or the Nascent Soul Stage who were piloting the starship. Whether or not they could activate their feeble spiritual shield for self-defense, they would eventually be burnt to ashes or melted into orange meteoroids together with their crystal suits.

The Rabid Dog drifted with the surging tides of spiritual energy, like a straw that was floating on the surface of an ocean. The meteoroids made of countless human bodies and their magical equipment brushed past him.

His spiritual energy was running dry. His crystal suit was about to be wasted, and only dozens of rune arrays were still functional, barely.

At this moment, even the tiniest bullet might take away his insignificant life. Faced with such an enormous and chaotic battlefield, such an absurd and cruel fate, was there any difference between a Core Formation Stage Cultivator or an ant?

His body that was floating like a dry leaf suddenly halted, as if he had reached the eye of the storm that was temporarily steady. The heated battlefield came to a weird peace.

When his violently shaking brain gradually stabilized, the Rabid Dog finally sensed the excruciating pain caused by his broken bones, exploding internal organs, and furiously burning nerve endings, as well as the sense of suffocation now that his soul had been exhausted.

The field-tested veteran realized with his keen intuition that the brief peace was an ominous sign.

They had failed the war!

The fire in the bleak space died out as fast as it was ignited. After only a moment, nothing but cold debris of starships and bizarre-shaped corpses was left around him, like a boundless grave in space. The sparse pillars of light that the starships on his side shot out would only raise counterattacks a hundred times more enormous from the enemy’s side. The Exos of the Imperium, mixed with thunder and lightning, were also sweeping over like a swarm of locusts!

The Rabid Dog laughed miserably, only to vomit a large mouthful of blood. He felt numbness around his abdomen. When he looked down, he noticed that a section of an antenna as thick as fist had pierced his liver.

His experience of walking past death in the past hundred years told him that it was a fatal wound.

This time would truly be the last time that he struggled.

“Such… an unremarkable death. Damn it!”

The Rabid Dog felt that his head was dizzy. His past was flashing in the darkness like a kaleidoscope. The burning pain in his liver area and the never-forgotten punch a hundred years ago gradually overlapped.

He felt like vomiting again.

This time, he wanted to vomit out the blood of his entire life.

Chapter 1795 - Remember My Name!

In his younger years, the Rabid Dog had once imagined his death, too.

Like thousands of common hotblooded young men in the Star Glory Federation, he was not scared of death, but he was scared of leaving the world in an unknown and unremarkable way.

It was the most dangerous moment of the Old Federation. Toughness was highly valued by society. War games and hero movies were very popular. The teenage boys whose spiritual roots had not been developed yet, having nowhere to vent their hot blood, mostly imagined dying like a hero in the games or the movies. It would be best if they went on a killing spree with a saber in one hand and a sword in the other, leaving a mountain of dead bodies of demon beasts before they dropped a few gallant words that would be duly quoted in the history books and marched into the overwhelming beast tide, carrying a burningly hot crystal cannon on their shoulder.

It was the perfect death.

At that time, the Rabid Dog could in no way have predicted his actual way of death, that he would die like a fart that was neither smelly nor loud.

It was the golden years of his life. He had once been a rare prodigy that always grabbed everyone’s attention.

He had thought that his fate was preordained, that there was nothing but brightness and splendor in front of them. He would be the hero of the small world around him, if not the entire universe.

However, the arrival of ‘that man’ completely shattered his dream and blocked the path of his fate before it was even opened!

Everything changed overnight. His father was sent to prison, his family’s property was confiscated, and even a lot of additional debts were owed. He also suffered both physical and mental strikes and lost his reputation in his circle. Eventually, none of the elite universities were willing to admit him, and he could only earn his degree in a mediocre college.

The world and the fate that he had believed in collapsed.

He had spent the next twenty years in devastation after the strike.

He did not give up trying, but whenever he was prepared to reexamine his life and work hard again, news about ‘that man’ would come at him like a haunting ghost.

If it was just a common ‘opponent’ or ‘enemy’, maybe he could have trained himself hard to catch up and seek revenge.

But ‘that man’ was an out-and-out monster. News about him was too appalling to be believed every time. He was cast into desperation and lost all the determination of rivalry.

Distressed, he did not have the nerve to compete with ‘that man’, but it did not mean that the storms raised by ‘that man’ would spare him.

As the capabilities and fame of ‘that man’ soared unstoppably, his grudge and conflicts with ‘that man’ were dug out and elaborated as gossip. Of course, most of the articles were meant to highlight how magnificent ‘that man’ was. He was nothing but an insignificant stepping stone at a corner of the picture. Even in some of the paragraphs where he was described more, his ugliness and aggression were always emphasized to contrast the glorious image of ‘that man’.

He lived such a life for twenty years. In the world around him, he seemed to be in a bundle with ‘that man’. Whenever the name of ‘that man’ was mentioned, his own name would be mentioned, too. Verbal abuse was highly unnecessary. The mocking eyes of those people were enough to contort the nerves made of iron!

Twenty years later, his classmates who had far lower aptitude than him had already made their own accomplishments and distinguished themselves. Even the most unremarkable classmates had established their own happy families. Yet, he still brooded on self-pity and self-abandonment, unable to free himself, degenerating into a hopeless drunkard and mobster.

The slap from his father, who was on probation because of an illness, changed his fate again.

“I… I don’t have a son like you!”

Those were his father’s last words on the sickbed before death.

His hands trembled when he tried to cover the old man’s eyes, but he failed however hard he tried. Ever since then, wherever he went, he had always seen the eyes of his father staring at him from high above in anger and disappointment!

He thought that he understood what his father meant.

Honestly speaking, when he revisited a lot of things in his teenage years as an adult in his thirties, he was to blame for most of it. It was his own fault.

Therefore, he had quite complicated feelings toward ‘that man’. Instead of ‘hatred’, it was more like intense ‘jealousy’ and ‘discontent’.

He wanted to get revenge on ‘that man’, on his ridiculous fate, and on the wretched heavens! He wanted revenge not because he loathed that man but because he planned to tell the entire world that he would take back what belonged to him and that he was the real hero of the world!

During the three days of his father’s wake, he was reborn with an epiphany.

Seven days after his father’s death, he said goodbye to his old life and went to the cruelest underground arenas in the federation.

With the body that he had earned through crazy training in his younger years, he began fighting from the matches of the lowest level until he reached the annual finals held by the arenas of a hundred and twenty cities. The name of ‘Rabid Dog’ was then born.

The moment he put on a mask before the game was the easiest and most comfortable moment for him, because nobody knew who he was in the cruel world of the underground arenas. He was—the Rabid Dog!

He broke into the Building Foundation Stage from the Refinement Stage after only five years. Considering his past, it was almost a notable miracle.

Between the games, he sometimes looked at the starry sky with his swollen eyes, imagining if he could ever be on par with ‘that man’ one day.

After all, ‘that man’ had been gone for a long time and was said to be in hibernation. It was a great opportunity for him to overtake him.

But the cruel reality shattered his hope time and time again. In a match when he was closest to the Core Formation Stage, he was beaten black and blue, and his capability plummeted after resting for half a year.

Later, he rose and fell for many years in the underground arenas, never making any greater achievements. After that, when he explored the resource planets as a ‘bounty hunter’ or when he joined the federal army to fight various sorts of enemies, no matter how he tortured himself with the mad, cruel, and perverted methods, his cultivation advanced as slowly as a snail.

Peak of the Core Formation Stage. Hehe. After a hundred years, he had only reached the peak of the Core Formation Stage. It might be extraordinary enough for common people, but compared to ‘that man’, he was even more worthless than a piece of cr*p rolled over by a wheel.

There was no telling when, but he suddenly realized at some point that he would never, ever, ever catch up with that man in his entire life.

It did not matter. Capability was not important. Accomplishments came as the top priority.

He would make accomplishments that were far greater than that man’s. Even if he had to die, he would die the most splendid death!

With such a belief, he always led the charge in the most dangerous missions when he served in the army.

But fate pulled yet another great joke on him.

He did not have a good time. Except for the Uranian Ring War, the federation had merely experienced occasional bandit-clearing battles in the past hundred years. Even if he could sweep across the demon beasts or the bandits on an entire planet, was it really something worth being proud of?

At this moment, the counterattack against the Imperium was supposed to be his greatest opportunity.

But he did not expect that the main force of the Black Wind Fleet would assault the Heaven’s Origin Sector unexpectedly. Although he was personally involved in the war, he was among the first troops to resist the enemy. He was out-and-out cannon fodder that was destined to be killed, just like so many common soldiers around them had already been.

Yes. Common…

At the last moment of his life, looking back at his hundred years of monotonous life in hindsight, the Rabid Dog finally took off his mask of hysteria and madness.

“So, I’ve always been just a common person, just like the thousands of common soldiers around me. We die as meaninglessly as we live. We have always been so.

“Wretched heavens, f*ck you. So, Li Yao is your favorite that you have chosen, and I am really just a stepping stone.

“I can never catch up to him. It is useless however I torture myself. The gap between us will only grow greater and greater.

“Is… is this my fate?

“I am just a common person. How can a common person fight a superhero? Just die commonly and silently in this damn war, like all the common soldiers nearby, like mud and sh*t. Is there anything to struggle for? The more I struggle, the more I’m like a joke!

“Die now. No need to think about anything. Sorry, old man. In my next life… In my next life…”

The Rabid Dog’s self-awareness gradually dispersed, and his soul fell into feeble darkness.

But he failed to embrace the long-expected relief. Bulging his eyes, he noticed that a blue point was jumping merrily on his retina.

The medical system of his crystal suit was miraculously auto-repaired and was injecting synthesized living cells into his liver. Perhaps certain tiny meteoroids hit the critical points of a certain medical unit.

The most unbelievable things could happen on a battlefield even when the odds were one in a billion!

“What’s the meaning of this? You don’t want me to die again?”

In a trance, the Rabid Dog saw his father’s eyes of fury and disappointment gazing at him.

“What do you want, wretched heavens? If you do not want me to die, if there is really a slim chance for me to compete with Li Yao again, give me a sign!

“I do not wish to defeat him. I only want to stand in front of him and show him what I am right now. I want to tell him who I am!

“Wretched heavens, help me. Even—even if Li Yao is really the hero of the entire world, let me be the hero of this tiny battlefield for one second. One second is enough!”

The Rabid Dog was met with silence, with tears dropping down.

Hardly had he finished when a series of flashes appeared nearby.

“Is—is this your sign, wretched heavens?”

The Rabid Dog was slightly dazed. Then he was given hope again. Not caring about the pain in his abdomen, he activated whatever was left of the rune arrays on his crystal suit and flew toward the flashes.

A moment later, he hit the brakes quickly, his eyes bloodshot.

They were a few crystal suits of the Imperium who were cleaning the battlefield.

They had not noticed him in the beginning, but after he activated the power rune arrays and exposed himself, the crystal suits of the Imperium all came at him.

“F*ck.”

The Rabid Dog spoke to the wretched heavens.

So, that was the sign that the wretched heavens had given him—a different death, but equally unremarkable.

Ninety percent of the battlefield had been occupied by the trident lightning of the Imperium. The Rabid Dog should wait for his death in desperation now.

However…

Discontent! Discontent! Discontent! Discontent! Discontent! Discontent!

In a trance, he somehow recalled his golden years in Floating Spear City a hundred years ago and the once proud, unbending young man.

“Hehe. Hehehehe!”

The Rabid Dog vomited blood hard. Then, he raised the remaining half of his dragon-slaying saber and laughed crazily. Blood filled his helmet. Even the goggles were stained.

Through the blood, the brilliant sea of stars was as heated as fire!

“Wretched heavens and you pieces of cr*p…”

Waving the dragon-slaying saber, the Rabid Dog activated the last five power rune arrays and shot forward like a falling star. “I used to be the top expert of the Crimson Nimbus No. 2 High School of Floating Spear City of the Star Glory

Federation—Helian Lie! Who do you think you are? If you want to kill me, come on, let’s see if you can!”

Chapter 1796 - Big Bai Is Coming!

The five Immortal Cultivators of the Imperium also discovered that Helian Lie was jumping at them in rage.

They could not help but come to a brief halt, puzzled at what exactly the insane major of the federal army was trying to do.

But the next second, the crystal cannons and honeycomb-type flying sword launchers all over their crystal suits were shining in the most dangerous colors.

The final storm was to arrive soon. Helian Lie did not care about anything. He only wanted to focus the last drop of his wisdom, courage, spirit, will, and emotions into his saber and slashed them out, not at the junk in front of him but at the infinite sea of stars. He meant to tell the whole universe…

I lived!

Helian Lie’s ugly face was wearing a smile as brilliant as a young man’s as he was prepared to be showered by mystic rays, bullets, radiation, waves, vibration sabers, and chainswords.

His only regret was that everything had happened too fast. He had only just found his proud heart again but did not come up with a quotation for his ‘valiant sacrifice’, although the quotation might only be recorded in the local textbooks of Floating Spear City.

On the other hand, nobody was around to note it down even if he came up with anything.

The next second, when the enemy’s tiny flying swords and destructive mystic rays were all shot out, the five Exos of the Imperium as well as a large area around them were consumed by almost a hundred dazzling light balls!

The light balls expanded to almost a hundred square meters in only one tenth of a second, and they perished in another tenth of a second. In the brief moment that lasted less than half a second, most of the materials within the range of the light balls had been obliterated. The only thing left was scattered cosmic dust that was still emitting colorful brilliance!

White flashes were still lingering on Helian Lie’s retina, but a tiny ‘bubble’ had appeared on the battlefield. The Exos inside the bubble suffered great casualties, like germs swallowed by leucocytes!

Helian Lie was utterly dumbfounded. Had his dragon-slaying saber not been directly attached to the armor on his palm, he would have thrown it out in shock.

“This is—”

Narrowing his eyes, he observed where the cannon fire had come from.

The remote scanning cameras on his crystal suit had been damaged. Because of the intense magnetic interference on the battlefield, he could not be connected to the battle network on his own side, which made it impossible for him to retrieve the pictures taken by the large probe cameras of the federal army.

He could only see a few broken light spots. They were like razor blades as thin as paper that were stabbing into the most vulnerable gap between the two attack groups of the Black Wind Fleet!

“It’s our fleet!”

Helian Lie bulged his eyes. He grabbed the handle of his saber and bashed his helmet quickly, hoping to fix a few broken crystal cameras.

As it turned out, the maintenance technique that was quite popular among the veterans was indeed effective. The furiously burning image on his retina seemed clearer than before, allowing him to realize that it was a federal fleet that was not large in scale but amazingly fast. There was no telling where it had been hiding previously. It seemed to have directly crawled out from a hole in space.

Although his military rank was major, Helian Lie did not have any specialty in commanding or leadership. He was a pure battle-type Cultivator who always led the charge in dangerous battles, and he did not know the first thing about the competition of warships.

However, he was still a field-tested veteran in the federal army, and he could tell the situation of the battle based on his own observation and judgment.

His criterion was the unity of the exhaust flames of the starships. Regardless of the scale and capability of the two parties in the battle, it had almost always been the party whose exhaust flames were better organized that won in his experience.

Even if the two parties were mired in a mess and everybody was fighting on their own, the party that restored their exhaust flames' order would most likely recover from the chaos first and secure the final victory!

This time, the exhaust flames from the mysterious fleet on his own side were not just 'standardized'; they were almost immaculate!

Helian Le was not a man good at playing with words. Years of fighting and training had failed to grant him enough artistic cells. However, he still sensed astounding beauty from the rotation, flipping, and turning of those exhaust flames as well as the changes of their colors.

Wild bees were dancing wildly, razor blades were shaving, and a wolf pack was roaring. The charge, attack, and evasion of the mysterious fleet were so brilliant that even an outsider such as Helian Lie was able to locate the weakness of the Black Wind Fleet under their guidance that was as precise as scalpel. The whole battlefield seemed clearer than before just because of the arrival of the mysterious fleet!

Helian Lie noticed that the first and second attack groups of the Black Wind Fleet had a certain distance between each other because they had been teleported in two goes.

Before, the Heaven's Origin Sector had been completely crushed, and the Burning Prairie Fleet had been too far away to stop the two parts of the Black Wind Fleet merging and regrouping.

However, the mysterious fleet had crawled out at the most precarious moment for 'Black Swirl' and lunged at the rear of the Black Wind Fleet, which had not been stabilized yet and carried a lot of redundant objects.

Like the sharpest cleavers, they peeled the shell of the Black Wind Fleet layer after layer. Then, with their stormy bombardment, the vulnerable star beacons were all turned into fireballs!

They were far smaller than the Black Wind Fleet in terms of number. The firepower onboard did not seem as impressive, either. But when it came to the control of timing and the coordination of the starships…

They were definitely the most awesome fleet that Helian Lie had ever seen.

Helian Lie saw that the Black Wind Fleet’s bottom was on fire, and its head, with ‘Black Swirl’ as the core, was taking a turn in fury. The enormous fleet extended six ‘tentacles’ made of hundreds of starships as if it were a universal octopus, trying to besiege the mysterious fleet from six directions.

The mysterious fleet, on the other hand, was like the most cunning fish that slipped out of the circle before the ‘tentacles’ arrived. Swimming among the interconnected pillars of light casually, it even seemed to be roaming through the courtyard of its house.

Then, it suddenly switched battle formation and began to hassle the Black Wind Fleet from the external side. Like mosquitoes that could drive people mad, the starships stood in the middle of the Black Wind Fleet’s two sides and stopped them from joining each other.

The swift charge, the fierce firepower, and the effective dodging made it impossible to capture, kill, or drive away the mysterious fleet. It even did not seem to be made of enormous warships hundreds of meters long but single shuttles enveloped in bubbles!

Helian Lie did not know if the arrival of the mysterious fleet could change the whole situation. After all, their number and firepower paled in comparison to the Black Wind Fleet. The best they could do was probably stall the Black Wind Fleet for a moment through harassment.

However, the mysterious fleet did attract the enemy's full attention. The main battlefield became the joint between the two parts of the Black Wind Fleet. The Exos of the Imperium who had been cleaning the battlefield all returned crazily. The debris of the Heaven's Origin Fleet where he was at immediately cooled down.

Nobody paid any attention to him or the thousands of common soldiers who had already been killed or who were still floating quietly inside the iron cans.

If this was really a sign from the wretched heavens, it would be all the more reason why he should not idle by and wait for help.

Helian Lie searched the battlefield for a long time and found more medication drugs and high-energy food from the first-aid boxes on the crystal suits of a few comrades who had passed away. He poured the supplies into his own first-aid box. Then, luckily, he also found several jet plugins. If they were installed to his broken crystal suit, it might be slightly accelerated.

There were still intact and undamaged chainswords and vibration sabers on the battlefield, but Helian Lie could not bear to part with the dragon-slaying sword that had followed him for a long time but had already broken apart from the middle.

After all, the enormous saber had originally been almost four meters long. Even though half of the weapon was broken, even though it was full of dents and cracks and might completely fall apart at any second, it could still be dedicated to a battle!

Helian Lie turned around the handle of his saber and tapped his helmet hard. He bellowed to himself, “You are Helian Lie! You are Helian Lie! You are Helian Lie! You are f*cking Helian Lie!

“Do something! Anything!”

Refreshing himself, Helian Lie activated the power rune arrays and the jet units and rushed toward the area where thousands of starships were engaged in a fierce fight.

Right now, he did not know what he could do.

But first, he needed to come up with a quote, a gallant and blood-boiling one.

…

Amateurs watched a game for fun, and insiders watched a game for observation. Unlike an outsider such as Helian Lie, the highest command center of the Defense Counsel of the Federation was experiencing a storm ten times more powerful because of the mysterious appearance of the Big Bai Fleet.

Under the arduous efforts of the specialists of crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus, one communication route after another was repaired, and more and more probe cameras were reconnected. The previously fuzzy battlefield became clear again.

The Big Bai Fleet’s trajectory of attack that was as fast as the wind and as rampant as fire was transformed into unbelievable data for all the leadership of the federation to review.

“They have directly pierced through the front part and the rear part of the Black Wind Fleet, causing large-scale chaos at the enemy’s rear. Their own damage can’t be higher than two percent!”

“Fifteen minutes! In only fifteen minutes, they have changed from the cone-shaped attack formation to the butterfly-shaped formation that highlights both attack and defense. Even the Burning Prairie Fleet has never achieved this in its drills! A fleet of such a scale needs at least twenty minutes to change the battle formation, not to mention one that is under the bombardment of such high-intensity firepower!”

“Is this really the Big Bai Fleet? Isn’t the Big Bai Fleet a miscellaneous troop that was founded with carriers and space pirates? Despite years of training and education, their tactics were always guerilla warfare that the space pirates were best at before. How on earth can they place themselves into such an immaculate battle formation in a head-on clash between major fleets?”

“More than that. Far more than that! Look at the coordination of cannons and Exos of the Big Bai Fleet, and look at their prediction of the Black Wind Fleet’s counterattack. With their shocking sense of pace, they are taking the full initiative in the battle. There’s no need to mention the organization of hundreds of starships that are almost like one! Which commander even in the Burning Prairie Fleet can possibly have such amazing commanding skills?”

“Is it really Bai Xingjian that is commanding the Big Bai Fleet right now? The incompetent rogue who was kicked out by the Burning Prairie Fleet?”

Chapter 1797 - Five Hundred Years of Preparation!

Looking at the Big Bai Fleet on the light beam that was charging, turning, attacking, retreating, and dispersing unpredictably, haunting the enemy like a ghost, the leadership of the federation found it hard to believe their eyes.

Right then, an advisor of the military, who had wrinkles all over his face, suddenly cried, “Yan—Yan Xinjian!

“The tactics that the Big Bai Fleet is adopting today are quite similar to Yan Xinjian’s classic case where he gathered the space pirates and assaulted the coalition fleet of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City under the cover of the cosmic storm!”

Upon hearing that, the specialists of starship battles beamed with interest and started recalling that battle.

The starship specialists and commanders of all levels were mostly from the Flying Star Sector. The most powerful fleet in the Flying Star Sector over the past five hundred years was the coalition fleet of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City.

Yan Xinjian, on the other hand, was the only one who had been a commander of the fleet and who had completely destroyed it later!

It was no longer debated whether he was right or wrong, but the classic cases left by the best commander of starships in the past five hundred years had always been included in the textbooks and studied by the schools of starship commanding in the federation.

In the most famous ‘Counterattack of Spider Den’, the six sects of Heavenly Saints City summoned all the forces of the major sects of the Flying Star Sector first and established an enormous army that marched to Spider Den overwhelmingly.

Yan Xinjian established his authority over the disobedient space pirates as the supreme space pirate. In less than one year, he suppressed all the dissidents and built the ruffians into a strong army governed by strict rules.

At that time, the secret sailing routes and jump points from Spider Den to the outside world were almost all discovered and blocked. The space pirates were isolated and had nowhere to run. They were short of reliable logistic bases and factories. The number, level, firepower, and defense ability of their starships were far worse than the specifications of the coalition fleet.

The new commander of the coalition fleet, the leaders of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City, and even most space pirates, did not think that there would be any suspense in the battle. They thought that the final battle would be fought on the orbit of Spider Den, if not on the ground of the planet.

However, under the cover of a once-in-a-hundred-years cosmic storm, Yan Xinjian threw the helve after the hatchet and commanded the fleet of space pirates to bypass the main troop of the coalition fleet and assault the logistics fleet at their rear!

In the battle, Yan Xinjian’s marvelous command was best demonstrated. He obviously had the chance to completely destroy the logistics fleet, but he did not. Instead, he mixed his own fleet among the enemy’s supply starships, taking the enormous and clumsy carriers as his ‘shields’ and ‘barricade’. In such a way, the main force of the coalition fleet’s firepower was limited to the maximum extent. Eventually, they were lured into the fiercest turbulence in the cosmic storm, and Yan Xinjian secured a miraculous triumph!

The classic battle where the weak defeated the strong influenced the future generations for almost three hundred years.

At the very least, during the years when Li Yao and Professor Mo Xuan visited the Flying Star Sector, the six sects of Heavenly Saints City still had not entirely recovered and were unable to organize a coalition fleet of the same scale. They had to count on the ‘Grand Illusionary Soldiers’ to besiege and clear Spider Den.

The current battle was almost like a recurrence of the battle years back.

After passing through the enemy’s battle formation and testing their firepower, the Big Bai Fleet simply dived into the depths of the second wave of the Black Wind Fleet’s starships and regarded the components of the star beacons and the space gate as shields to resist the infinite fury from ‘Black Swirl’!

Such a highly dangerous game was like a dance on the edge of a blade. When they were disrupting the enemy’s battle formation completely, they would very likely be disrupted by the enemy. One moment of carelessness, and they would never be able to get out if the guardian starships around the star beacons managed to stall them.

In the past five hundred years, or perhaps forever, Yan Xinjian was the only lunatic who had been audacious enough to make use of such a tactic.

Even the countless starship commanders of the New Federation, after studying for a hundred years, had to come to the conclusion that such a unique, insane tactic was inimitable and that it should not be copied at all!

That was because such a tactic to maintain high calmness and control during a close-distance charge, thereby completely disrupting the enemy while changing one’s own battle formation freely, was too demanding for the computational ability, the commanding ability, and the insight on the performance of the starships. It was so demanding that it was almost a natural-born gift that could not be earned through training!

Any commander who had not reached Yan Xinjian’s level would embrace their own doom if they copied his tactic recklessly.

“Yan Xinjian’s sharpest sword can only be used by himself.”

It was a very popular conclusion among the starship commanders in the Star Glory Federation.

But today—

“No. It’s not a recurrence.” Gazing at the ‘sword auras’ on the light beam that were sharp, eccentric, fierce, or fickle, a lot of starship specialists remarked almost feverishly, “This is almost a ‘strengthened version’. It is even more impressive than Yan Xinjian’s performance!”

In terms of both personal combat ability and commanding ability, Yan Xinjian had been one of the most distinguished people at the edge of the cosmos in the past thousand years.

However, a lot of starship specialists and historians believed that he had never brought out his full potential or reached his own ‘limits’!

Despite his immense capabilities, he had been so greedy when it came to the so-called ‘treasures of the Star Ocean Imperium’ on Spider Den that he betrayed the six sects of Heavenly Saints City and degraded into a shameful space pirate from a glorious Cultivator. Eventually, he had been haunted by his own guilt and even killed miserably because of mental derangement when he was trying to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage.

After his death, his soul had been attached to countless rats that mauled and brutalized each other until they gradually died off in the years that followed. That was truly a miserable ending.

More importantly, Yan Xinjian had been born at a wrong time. When he distinguished himself, the seven Sectors of the New Federation were still separate from each other, and their techniques, magical equipment, and tactics could not be shared. The experts from different Sectors had no chance to discuss and debate with each other, either.

The competition between the coalition fleet of the six sects of Heavenly Saints City and the fleet of space pirates, from today’s perspective, was nothing more than a storm in a teapot.

Even if one was born a dragon, one would never be able to soar into the sky if one grew up in a small pond!

Yan Xinjian had been very strong, but he could have been stronger if he had been born two hundred years later and grown up today when the New Federation had splendid collisions with the Imperium, the Covenant Alliance, and even more formidable foes. A lot of starship commanders and specialists of military history all believed so.

Then, right now…

An even stronger ‘Yan Xinjian’ had revealed himself right before them. The glamor of Yan Xinjian’s sword was displayed again, in an even sharper, more fluent, more natural, and more sordid way.

Yes. It was more sordid!

Although Yan Xinjian was known as the supreme space pirate, he had received the strictest education for Cultivators since childhood, and he had been the most conventional starship commander in the beginning.

Although his tactics were aggressive and cunning, they still had the rigidity and strictness of a regular army, which was slightly different from the style of the real space pirates who fought unpredictably and lawlessly just based on their animalistic instincts.

But the Big Bai Fleet before everyone’s eyes had perfectly combined the strictness and aggression of the regular army and the cleverness and keenness of the space pirates. It was like a wolf in space that had been armed to the teeth!

“What did the Big Bai Fleet go through in the drill last year?”

The commanders of all levels and all the specialists looked at each other in bewilderment, not having the first clue what was going on.

Even Guo Chunfeng stared at Jin Xinyue weirdly. Nominally, Bai Xingjian was the top general under her banner.

“Hey, let me ask you…” The two ‘compatriots’ who were both transformed into humans from demons whispered to each other. Guo Chunfeng could not help but ask, “Is this Bai Xingjian Yan Xinjian’s b*stard son? Why didn’t you tell us about such an important trump card?”

“I don’t know anything about that, either!” Jin Xinyue did not know how she should feel. “The dates do not match. When Bai Xingjian was born, Yan Xinjian had already been gone for almost two hundred years. Besides, even if he were Yan Xinjian’s b*stard son or true disciple, that still can’t explain why he is so strong!”

“No wonder this boy couldn’t stay in the Burning Prairie Fleet for long.” Guo Chunfeng sighed and grinned. “I thought that he was too arrogant, but after witnessing his true capability today, I’ve finally realized that he was too modest!”

At this moment, almost a hundred analysts inferred the changes in the next couple of hours based on the situation of the battle so far.

The first data that jumped out, on the other hand, was the capability of the commander of the Big Bai Fleet after their comprehensive evaluation.

Divinity Transformation Stage!

The guy who was commanding the Big Bai Fleet right now had computational ability and commanding ability at least in the Divinity Transformation Stage!

The highest command center was caught in dead silence again. The big shots were too shocked to feel overjoyed.

In the end, it was Wan Guqing, the Speaker of the Federation, who made the new decision.

“Right now, we still can’t reach out to the Big Bai Fleet. In any case, they have disrupted the Black Wind Fleet’s pace of attack and earned precious time for us!

“The first branch of the Burning Prairie Fleet must unfold into battle formation at any cost as soon as possible and enter the battlefield before the Big Bai Fleet is exhausted!

“Ask the nine Colossi at the Heaven’s Artillery to be prepared to be projected into the battlefield anytime!”

Everybody was baffled by the decision.

The Colossi of the federation had not been deployed in the most perilous moment a while back. Right now, the Big Bai Fleet had come to save the day and cast the Black Wind Fleet into an organized mess. The situation of the battle had been greatly soothed. Why were the most elite and precious forces of the federation to be projected at such a moment?

“The circumstances right now are different.” Staring at the light beams, Wan Guqing said, “While we can infer the capability of the Big Bai Fleet and the following changes of the battle, the Black Wind Fleet can definitely do the same.

“Right now, they are in a hurry to join the front and rear of the fleet and finish the deployment of a defensive formation before the Burning Prairie Fleet arrives, but the Big Bai Fleet has stabbed into their bones like a shining saber and is even churning hard there!

“I don’t know much about the battles of fleets, but if I were the commander of the Black Wind Fleet, this is the time that I would consider deploying my Colossi!”

Chapter 1798 - Didn’t See This Coming!

On ‘Infinite Fire’, the Big Bai Fleet’s flagship, inside the immersive command capsule on the bridge, Bai Xingjian’s soul was surging, and his spiritual energy was flooding out!

Commanding hundreds of starships to gallop in the vast space and cut as precisely as scalpels was highly exhausting for the computational ability and the soul. One moment of carelessness, and the highest commander might go mentally deranged, with their soul drained and their brains shattered.

The immersive command capsule was magical equipment that ensured the safety of the commander and enhanced their computation and commanding abilities as much as possible.

At first glance, the immersive commanding capsule and the general medical cabins were almost the same, except that the crystal cables that extended above the commanding capsule were denser and thicker.

Moreover, the high-energy nutrition drugs, nervous interaction liquids, and ancillary crystal processors inside the command capsule could not be found even in the medical cabin of the highest level.

Even so, when Bai Xingjian burnt his soul to the maximum and unleashed his most powerful strength, crazy bubbles were still popping up from the commanding capsule in which he was soaked, as if it were a pool of boiling magma!

Unstoppable auras were flooding out of the command capsule incessantly, straightening each and every crystal wire. His telepathic thoughts, like shivering nervous electricity, spread over the entire bridge within a moment, before they moved on to every corner of Infinite Fire and then every starship in the Big Bai Fleet. All the starships seemed to be attracted by the invisible electric arcs and performed delicate, marvelous attacks!

“Old fart, I was really fooled by you. Had I known that the mission would be so tricky, our deal wouldn’t have been so simple!”

Brilliance sealed for a hundred years was blossoming inside Bai Xingjian’s eyes. Arcs of light were sprawling with his eyes as the core. He did not seem to be in the middle of a perilous battlefield but enjoying the most delicious meal in the world. He smiled in great satisfaction.

“But forget it.

“After all, I was looking forward to a game with the ace troops from the center of the cosmos to see where my limits were!”

…

In the meantime, the view on the bridge of Black Swirl, the Black Wind Fleet’s flagship, was completely different.

Heiye Lan stared at the Big Bai Fleet that was jumping on the light beam nonstop like an irking parasite so hard that the brilliance beaming out of his eyes was even more dazzling than the cannon fire on the battlefield.

The assault of the Big Bai Fleet was within his expectations. When he considered the three hundred and thirty-four possible changes of the battle, forty-seven involved the anomaly of the Big Bai Fleet.

But based on the data provided by the most reliable intelligence network—and even if the data was doubled—he could never have foreseen that the combat ability of the Big Bai Fleet was so high, and their tactics were so sordid, brutal, and effective!

The commander of the Black Wind Fleet finally could not help but roar, “How is it possible? Such a commanding ability and such a well-trained fleet are excellent even for the few most famous ace fleets in the Imperium! It would have been surprising if the Burning Prairie Fleet had such a commander, yet it is not the Burning Prairie Fleet but the Big Bai Fleet!

“What the heck have the barbarians been doing? Are there so many redundant high-level commanders in the Star Glory Federation that even such a monster must be stuffed into a mediocre fleet? This—this is too absurd! What kind of weird trap is this, or were the leadership of the federal army all blind?”

Heiye Ming’s pace was completely disrupted by Bai Xingjian.

He was also an experienced fleet commander whose expertise was well above average.

Therefore, after he received tremendous data and files sent by his own intelligence network and ‘Su Changfa’, he had been able to gain an insight on the tactical styles and weaknesses of all the high-level commanders in the federation. He had even drafted more than three hundred contingency countermeasures and run almost a thousand wargame deductions before he finally decided on the assault plan.

He knew the most detailed data about every high-level commander in the federation, but never had he foreseen that he would be faced with such a Bai Xingjian!

The Big Bai Fleet did not boast the capability to have a head-on clash with the Black Wind Fleet. But if they were to continue stabbing and stalling, not only would the battle formation be cast into disarray, even the precious star beacons would risk being destroyed.

The establishment of space gates was open and free. The lack of a few star beacons would not affect the function of the entire space gate.

But if more than fifty percent of the star beacons were destroyed, the precision of navigation would be greatly reduced, which could have a terrible influence on the follow-up troops when they were performing a space jump.

In the emergency, Heiye Ming failed to find a perfect solution. Pondering for a moment, he frowned and activated two rune arrays on the control panel. When the strengthened command capsule slowly rose from the deck down below, ten tiny shadows ascended on the control light beam and revolved slowly.

They were the images of ten Colossi, like ten iron beasts that were sleeping but still scratching their claws and teeth in their dream.

Those were even not the whole storage.

I didn’t expect that our side would make use of the Colossi first.

Heiye Ming, who was slowly soaking within the strengthened command capsule, ready to do his best, thought to himself gloomily.

With such changes taking place on the battlefield, we can only count on the Colossi to delay the Big Bai Fleet. As long as they are stopped for a moment, our warships will be able to besiege and slap those annoying flies!

Hehe. Despite the unexpected factor that is the Big Bai Fleet, the enemy's overall capability is too far away from ours. This war may be slightly more twisted than I expected, but the outcome is still destined.

Other than anything else, in terms of the quantity and quality of the Colossi… Do the bumpkins at the edge of the cosmos know how to maintain or pilot a Colossus?

Everything is still under control. There can't be a second 'unexpected factor'. Even if there is, it won't stop the iron hooves of the Imperium!

…

Inside District 01 space station of Hundred Flowers City, as the silver tides of liquid metal gradually ebbed, more and more people woke up from the nightmare. They were still dwelling in the ecstasy of surviving a disaster and the trance after a prolonged dream.

Of course, there was still the shock that was caused by the grand return of a renowned hero, who was the legendary…

Solemnly, Li Yao typed on the virtual keyboard of his portable crystal processor quickly, his eyes beaming with insight.

Countless streams of information poured down like a waterfall. His eyeballs were shivering at an ultra-high speed when he searched and analyzed the most important files without leaving any detail.

He was in deep thought, glaring at the light beam and hesitating over something. In the end, he narrowed his eyes and gritted his teeth to make the decision!

Long Yangjun looked at him in surprise. “What are you doing? Did Professor Mo Xuan tell you some critical intelligence and you have come up with a whole plan of attack based on it?”

“Critical intelligence, yes. A plan of attack, not yet.”

Without even raising his head, Li Yao continued his search crazily and replied, “I am reading the quotations and famous speeches of celebrities to prepare for my blood-boiling and soul-stirring speech!”

“Why—why would you do that?”

“Haven’t you noticed that a lot of people around are waking up and even moving close to the two Colossi? Colonel Luo’s soldiers are eyeing me in a different way now, too!

“A lot of them learned my real identity in the Spiriters’ Realm. This is the grand return of Vulture Li Yao, the dominator of three Sectors, at such a dangerous moment. Do you not feel that I should say something to boost the morale and fire up the atmosphere? It’s not like I can just stare at everybody in silence, right?

“Damn it. I’ve lost connection again. The network here is not entirely fixed yet. Hey, do you have any experience that you want to share with me? Aren’t you a Lead Eunuch? You must’ve been the one who drafted the speeches for the emperor, right?”

Long Yangjun took a deep breath and replied, “No. Such a practice is not popular in my hometown. But you were an expert in the Nascent Soul Stage and a renowned celebrity a hundred years ago—how are you not prepared for this?”

“That is the problem,” Li Yao said as if he were greatly wronged. “I was indeed a minor celebrity a hundred years ago, but I was an Ultra-Level Federal Hero at best. The integration with the Blood Demon Sector was also quite a controversial issue in society back then. There was no telling if I did the right thing. So, my life was definitely different from right now!

“How would I know that they would adulate me as if I were dead? Dominator of three Sectors, superhero, father of Civilization, and even father of the federation. Do they have to make things so awkward?

“What—what—what can I say? It’s not like I can just wave my hands at everybody shamelessly and calmly and say, ‘Greetings everyone. Yes. There’s no point in keeping it a secret anymore. In fact, I am the legendary dominator of three Sectors and the father of your country, and I have finally returned to save you!’, right?”

Long Yangjun pondered for a moment and asked, “May I laugh?”

“You may not!” Li Yao gnashed his teeth. “Help me think about what I should say. This is truly embarrassing. Look. Everybody is crowding. Wait. The few guys there are even holding flowers in their hands. They are not offering the flowers to me, are they?”

“There is a solution.” Looking at Li Yao’s belly, Long Yangjun observed, “Why don’t you keep your mouth shut and just continue singing with your abdomen? List all the patriotic songs of the federation from the past five hundred years and sing all of them in a row. Then, you'll have all the vibes that you want."

Li Yao glared at Long Yangjun.

Then, his eyes caught a dozen shadows that were flying in through the airtight gates, which made his face change greatly. "Cr*p. Meng Chixin, Han Baling, Qi Zhongdao, Yan Liren, and the rest of them are here!"

"It is indeed not very promising for me." Long Yangjun raised her eyebrow and remarked, unmoved, "I believe that the experts of the Ancient Sages Sector who have been tricked and kidnapped by you and who were almost killed by the extraterrestrial devil are greater trouble than your passionate, adoring fans. Although they are behind me, I can almost sense their burning fury right now. To be honest, if I were in their shoes, I would definitely feel like slashing you in half right now, too."

Li Yao grew anxious. "What do you mean by 'tricked and kidnapped by you'? Didn't we do everything together?"

"Is that so?" Long Yangjun smiled. Then she suddenly furrowed her brows and burst into fury. Grabbing Li Yao's neck, she yelled, "Well played, Monster Li! I didn't know that you were vile enough to deceive all of us!"

Chapter 1799 - Monster Li’s Explanation

Li Yao bulged his eyes and asked in disbelief, “There’s no need for you to be so harsh, is there?”

“What, a coincidence?” Long Yangjun shouted back in a voice ten times louder than his. “How can it be a coincidence? Do you really think that the people of the Ancient Sages Sector are all idiots? You have clearly concocted everything!

“There’s no need to disguise yourself now, Monster Li. You clearly calculated everything and dug a pit for us to jump into. You pushed us into desperation so that we would become your cannon fodder!

“It’s great for you now. Your scheme worked out. We were played for fools. We pissed off such a formidable enemy as the extraterrestrial devils for no good reason and made them a mortal enemy by stopping their shocking plan. Most importantly of all, the secrets of the Ancient Sages Sector were exposed!

“Even if we do not want to mess with the extraterrestrial devils anymore, those haunting ghosts will not let go of us. After they seize the Star Glory Federation, the Ancient Sages Sector will definitely become the first target to be savaged by them. Neither the Great Qian Dynasty nor the Dark Cloud Prairies will not get away!

“Now, the people of the Ancient Sages Sector are left with only two choices. If we don’t want to become the puppets and slaves of the extraterrestrial devils, we will have to join hands with such an ass*ole like you and eradicate the remaining forces of the extraterrestrial devils!

“This is exactly your aim, Monster Li, isn’t it? You were too cunning!”

Li Yao blinked hard. “Well, I suppose so…”

“Calm down, don’t be rash, and listen to your explanation?” Long Yangjun’s shrieks echoed in the clouds. “Are we not calm enough right now? Had I not been telling me calmly and rationally every second not to be rash and that nothing could be helped even if you were dead, I would’ve cut you into pieces and boiled your dirty, filthy guts!

“Explanation? What explanation do you have for bringing such great trouble to us? What we want is not an explanation but compensation! Whatever rhetoric you may have, is it even possible for you to compensate us with the national power of the federation? Right. It seems that you are truly f*cking capable of that, but so what? Do you think that we will be fascinated? The people of the Ancient Sages Sector have our backbones!”

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Meng Chixin, Han Baling, Qi Zhongdao, Yan Liren, and the other experts landed near the two of them, raising undying airwaves.

Other than Yan Liren, all the experts of the Ancient Sages Sector were gloomy, apparently demanding an explanation.

‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren, on the other hand, stared at Li Yao’s slightly-protruding carotid artery with great interest.

“Fellow Cultivators, you’ve come at the right moment!” Without looking back, Long Yangjun gnashed her teeth. “Monster Li is indeed too sordid. He planned such a great trap and lured us into it. Now, what’s done is done, and regret is useless. The more I think about it, the angrier I get. We would’ve joined the Imperium if we’d known it in advance!”

“Well, if I may offer some correction,” Li Yao said carefully. “Even if you joined the Imperium, you wouldn’t have escaped from the disaster, either, because the extraterrestrial devils have also set up traps on the Black Wind Fleet’s side. Also, if it weren’t for us unraveling the scheme by accident, it is very likely that you would’ve been trapped in the Spiriters’ Realm forever, unable to free yourselves.

“Technically speaking, whether you chose the federation or the Imperium, the battle against the extraterrestrial devils would’ve been inevitable. At least, we still have hope right now!”

“Cut the cr*p. Who are ‘we’?” Long Yangjun continued shouting. “How is the battle between the federation and the Imperium, or the battle between them and the extraterrestrial devils, related to us? Do the life or death of the soldiers of the federation army and the common folk mean anything to us at all? If we are really pissed off, we will wash this place with blood, leaving no survivors behind and saving the Imperium and the extraterrestrial devils the trouble. Do you really think that we are harmless chickens? Master Bitter Cicada, don’t you agree?”

Master Bitter Cicada could only step forward and say, “Lord Wang, let’s be lenient wherever it is possible. Those ordinary people are all innocent. It is unnecessary to vent our fury on them. Besides, we are indeed in a subtle situation right now. Let's hear what Master Spiritual Vulture… Master Li has to say first before we make the final decision."

"Hehe!" Long Yangjun sniffed and finally released Li Yao's collar unwillingly. She then glanced around in confusion and asked, frowning, "Fellow Cultivators, why are your souls so disordered and your flames of spiritual energy mixed with a lot of impurities?"

"They are the memory pieces of the ordinary people." Master Bitter Cicada sighed and said, "Those are the fundamental materials of the 'crystal turbulence' deep inside the Spiriters' Realm. When the Spiriters' Realm collapsed, they were melded with our souls, allowing us to see, sense, and remember the lives of thousands of ordinary people of the federation.

"The feeling was indeed quite weird. Even the souls of Nascent Soul Stage and the Divinity Transformation Stage experts are having trouble absorbing all of them in such a short amount of time. The fellow Cultivators here are all a little bit… Huh? Are you not uneasy at all, Lord Wang?"

Long Yangjun was slightly dazed. Then she immediately replied, "Yes, of course I am. I'm having such a headache right now that thousands of little people seem to be fighting inside my brain. This is all Monster Li's fault!

"What do you have to say for yourself after pulling us into such a tragedy? Speak now!"

Long Yangjun glared at Li Yao.

The experts from the Ancient Sages Sector looked at Li Yao aggressively, too.

The soldiers of the federal army who had fought with Li Yao just now, including Colonel Luo, looked at Li Yao.

Thousands of common citizens of the federation who had just escaped from the Spiriters' Realm and woken up from their nightmares looked at Li Yao, full of expectation.

The colorful, blooming flowers of souls around all shook slightly and aimed their dazzling pistils at Li Yao.

The entire District 01 space station fell silent. Everybody held their breath and waited.

A drop of cold sweat leaked out of Li Yao's forehead and zigzagged down his swollen face, reaching his lips that were slightly trembling.

"That's—that's right. It's true that I deceived you!" Taking a deep breath, Li Yao made up his mind. "At first, our stances were not clear. The federation and the Ancient Sages Sector did not know each other very well, yet the Ancient Sages Sector boasted so many unparalleled experts such as yourselves. Which one of you does not have the capability to turn an ocean upside down? Naturally, I could not expose my identity and bring unexpected danger to the federation. I believe that you can certainly understand me, right?

"Later, after you came to the federation for investigation, it was perhaps the best opportunity for me to confess my identity. There should have been any need to lie to you anymore.

"But in my defense, I didn't keep it a secret intentionally. It was not a carefully-planned scheme or a shameless trap. I was just a bit selfish back then. That's all!

“I thought that, if the Star Glory Federation could demonstrate the most perfect side to you and tempt you into becoming a member of the federation willingly, I could then confess my identity.

“Yes. I also hoped that the Star Glory Federation would have become an impeccable country after a hundred years, a paradise that was harmonious, unified, strong, and bright, not plagued by any problems. Who would refuse such a paradise?”

He stammered a little bit at first, but after a few words, and under Long Yangjun’s ‘furious’ glare, Li Yao gradually got the hang of it. His back was straightened, his eyes were glowing, and his voice grew louder and louder, until it was rolling inside District 01 like surging tides, involving thousands of people in his magnificent aura.

The ‘Three Saints’ and ‘Four Rapscallions’ were all cast into silence and deep in thought.

“But I was wrong. Perhaps I was too simpleminded back then.” Li Yao smiled bitterly. “The federation today is not perfect. It is even more imperfect than the Old Federation a hundred years ago.

“The scale and population of the federation have greatly expanded. Technology and techniques have made significant progress, too, but during the expansion and progress, more problems have been revealed.

“There are geopolitical conflicts between the four new worlds and the three old worlds. Because of the conflict of interests, different parties fight and argue with each other hard despite the same banner above their heads.

“The leaders of the federation, such as Jin Xinyue, are not perfect people who are completely unselfish and absolutely righteous. While defending the federation, she and they are also working on their own plans amid power struggles. The old interest groups have not completely collapsed yet, and new interest groups have quietly crawled onto the stage.

“Moreover, a lot of people in the federation believe that the advancement of technology is the solution to all our problems. They created the game ‘Civilization’ and the Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus, but it never occurred to them that ‘Civilization’ and the Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus would become the best weapons for the extraterrestrial devils to attack us!

“The federation has so many messy problems. Even I myself am not as brilliant, glorious, and invincible as my propaganda. That’s all fake, bullsh*t that has been exaggerated and montaged as a result of all the deification movements!

“So, faced with such an imperfect federation and imperfect self, how should I persuade you to join it, build it, and defend it?

“I never found the answer, and I never had the courage to tell you the truth because I was scared of your eyes of disappointment!

“Yes. This place is not a dreamland. It cannot give the Ancient Sages Sector a path that is completely guaranteed to lead to a bright future. The so-called ‘dominator of three Sectors’ and all the descriptions are indeed a great scam. So, what can I possibly have to say for myself?”

Li Yao paused for a moment. Then, two sparks suddenly exploded inside his eyes. Gritting his teeth, he said, one word after another, “Fellow Cultivators, I cannot come up with any explanation. I only want to tell you one last thing.

“However imperfect the Star Glory Federation is, however much trouble and darkness it may have, however many stains have tarnished the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag, and whatever plans the big shots such as Jin Xinyue have in their minds, it is not important!

“I am not fighting for the unsubstantial name of ‘Star Glory Federation’. I am not fighting for a weightless flag. I am not fighting for the interests of the influential big shots and the leaders of the federation.

“I only want to fight side by side with them as well as the billions of people of the federation, to protect our home and family, and to struggle on to the end of the boundless sea of stars. Nothing more!”

Chapter 1800 - Have a Gratifying Fight!

Li Yao’s bellow rumbled like thunder. The lingering echo further contrasted the silence of the field that seemed to be sealed in ice.

More and more people and soldiers woke up and joined the crowd to see the legendary Vulture Li Yao.

But they did not expect that ‘their name’ would be mentioned by Vulture Li Yao. For a moment, they were at a loss and did not know what to do.

“The federation is imperfect and even utterly deformed. Even I failed to anticipate that so many drastic changes, some good and some bad, would take place in only a hundred years and reshape the world we live in. The federation today is not the federation a hundred years ago, Jin Xinyue today is not Jin Xinyue a hundred years ago, and even ‘Vulture’ Li Yao is not the real Li Yao from a hundred years ago!”

Clenching his fists, Li Yao waved them like batons and boosted everyone’s emotions. “Not just you, even I sometimes feel slightly disappointed and lost, not knowing what myself and the federation will become in the mysterious, unpredictable, hazy future.

“However, a moment ago, when all the people of the federation sang aloud, burn their life and soul, and blew the sh*t out of the extraterrestrial devil, it suddenly occurred to me.

"However many changes have happened to the federation that make it unrecognizable, certain things that are hidden in its deepest part remain the same and will never change!

"Therefore, in that second, I told myself to forget everything. Whatever the federation has become, and whether or not I am the one everybody believes me to be, I will still fight the bloody battle to the end! I am not fighting for Jin Xinyue, not for the title of 'dominator of three Sectors', not even for the Star Glory Federation or the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag, but for the people who are living right below the flag!

"Besides, I know for a fact that when I am protecting them, they are also protecting me. When I look at them, they are also looking at me. I will never abandon them, and they will never abandon me!

"This is the whole significance of my fight!"

As Li Yao roared desperately, the ice in the atmosphere was broken.

Countless people recalled the soul-stirring, gratifying scene in the Spiriters' Realm that they had just experienced. It was perhaps the most hotblooded five minutes of their entire lives.

Yes. However many problems there might be, this place was their home, and their families were right behind them. They protected and looked after each other. They trusted and supported each other!

No matter how vast and boundless the universe was, could anyone find a better reason to fight than that?

The twelve angry experts from the Ancient Sages Sector were the most eye-catching existences in the space station, like twelve mountains that rose high into the clouds, when their flames of spiritual energy erupted like volcanoes.

But without them knowing it, the auras spreading out of the thousands of ordinary people and low-level Cultivators congregated into a magnificent ocean of clouds. Although it was still impossible for them to suppress the ‘mountains’, they had indeed surrounded the intimidating experts.

Everybody stared at the eleven experts from the Ancient Sages Sector, their eyes glowing with strength that those experts had never seen before.

They were all slightly overwhelmed.

In the Ancient Sages Sector, low-level Cultivators would never have the courage to directly look at the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators.

When a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator burst into fury, the land of a hundred square kilometers might be burnt to the ground. The low-level Cultivators often wasted no time kneeling on the ground, shuddering in fear, not to mention the common folk who were nothing more than ants.

“What exactly…”

Although the thousands of ordinary people did not pose an actual threat, the flames of spiritual energy from the experts of the Ancient Sages Sector were still shivering softly. The memory pieces that splashed out when the Spiriters’ Realm collapsed gradually sank into the deepest parts of their souls and became inseparable parts of their lives.

“Do you see everyone’s eyes? Do you feel the strength of the people?”

Staring at Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun, the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, Li Yao stepped forward and opened his arms.

“Think about the folks in the Ancient Sages Sector. Cultivators are occupied in their conspiracies and internal fights, and the ordinary people are emaciated, ignorant, and submissive! The whole world is murky. There is not the slightest brightness or hope!

“I have one question that I’ve been meaning to ask you for a long time. Meng Chixin, Wu Suiyun, Han Baling, Zhu Zongyou, Qi Zhongdao, Yan Liren, Qi Changsheng, Wang Xi, Ba Xiaoyu, Master Bitter Cicada, Wan Mingzhu—Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators like you are either kings and generals or renowned, unparalleled experts respected everywhere. Ostensibly speaking, your position and power have reached the peak. There is barely any room for you to make any progress!

“But let me ask you. When you saw your disciples who had their own plans to deal with each other, when you saw common folks who were bags of bones, and when you saw soldiers who could be both as brutal as wolves and as cowardly as dogs, did you really feel that governing such a bunch of people was what Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators should do? Did you really feel that the hollow praise and the eyes of fear gave you a strong sense of achievement? Did you feel satisfied and happy hiding in the depths of the dark nebula like tortoises and blatantly stomping on the people who were treated as ‘ants’ until your eventual doom?”

The series of reproaches made the eleven experts from the Ancient Sages Sector even more furious and agitated than before.

But however agitated they were, they could not eclipse the brilliance that the thousands of people around were spraying out crazily!

“Look at the people around you, who just fought side by side with you in the Spiriters’ Realm and, to some extent, saved the high and mighty Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators! Were they not brave enough, you would’ve been screwed!”

Li Yao put all his concerns aside and shouted, “Look at them carefully. Watch their eyes, their noses, and their mouths. Every one of them is glowing! Do you not want the people of the Ancient Sages Sector to grow into real, meaningful humans just like them one day? Even if you are really emperors, kings, and generals, is it really a feat worth being proud of to govern a horde of puppets, wolves, and ants?

“Come on. Live up to the strength of the Nascent Soul Stage and the Divinity Transformation Stage. You did not train yourselves so hard to what you have become today to hide inside the dark nebula and bully the weak in silence! You can do this. You can really ignite yourselves and the Ancient Sages Sector, rip apart the entire dark nebula, and let the Ancient Sages Sector and the people in it emanate the most dazzling brilliance among the three thousand Sectors and in the next ten thousand years!”

Li Yao’s eyes were bloodshot, and all his veins bulged out. Powerful air masses were spurting out of every pore on his body. Joining with the auras of thousands of people of the federation, they were like an overwhelming tsunami that could even block the sun.

Even the ‘high mountains’ built by the eleven experts of the Ancient Sages Sector were dwarfed by the ‘tsunami’.

Li Yao seemed to be holding an invisible longsword in his hands whose edge was deeply hidden in his heart. One step after another, he walked toward the experts of the Ancient Sages Sector.

Even ‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren swallowed hard, unable to find a way to dodge the attack.

“Lord Wang was right. With everything coming to this point, an explanation would be utterly useless!”

Li Yao’s eyes were as brilliant as lightning as he stared at the eleven experts from the Ancient Sages Sector in the eyes. Holding the invisible sword in his right hand, he slowly raised two fingers with his left hand and said, “I don’t want to waste any more time talking. Now, I’ll give you two options.

“Firstly, give the Star Glory Federation, as well as the Ancient Sages Sector and yourselves, a chance. We will accomplish something great together that nobody in the entire universe has ever done before!

“In the name of Vulture Li Yao, I swear that whoever decides to fight side by side with me will be my lifelong brother. From today on, whenever you or the Ancient Sages Sector runs into any trouble, the Star Glory Federation and I will help you resolve it even by pouring the fury of the entire sea of stars, exactly like how you helped us today!

“Secondly, if you are unwilling, it doesn’t matter. The Star Glory Federation will not beg for help. Outsiders in the federation are our honorable guests. I may, however, ask my honorable guests to move your buttocks to the side. Don’t stand in our way while we are busy saving the world!”

Li Yao’s roars completely boiled the thousands of soldiers and citizens.

There was no telling who started it first, but the rumbling voices soon congregated into a strong wind that could even blow over the universe.

“Long live the federation!”

“Long live the federation!”

“Fight and march forward, federation!”

Countless people moved toward them enthusiastically, not fearing that they might be burnt by the flames of spiritual energy from the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators at all. Thousands of hands were extended to Li Yao, trying to raise him high on the shoulders and turning him into the sharpest edge on the dazzling saber!

The eleven experts of the Ancient Sages Sector gaped at Li Yao. Looking at the passionate crowd around, they had mixed feelings in his heart and could not tell whether they were angry or… jealous.

Yes. They knew deeply that no matter how high their Cultivation was, even if they were in the Divinity Transformation Stage, the Void Refining Stage, or even higher levels, they would never enjoy the gazes that Li Yao was soaking in that day, furiously passionate gazes, in the Ancient Sages Sector.

The exclamations from the bottom of their hearts were for Li Yao. The support they offered without considering their own lives was for Li Yao, too. Behind Li Yao was an entire federation. Behind them… the Ancient Sages Sector was hidden deep inside the dark nebula and could no longer be seen.

“Do you see this, fellow Cultivators from the Ancient Sages Sector who have come after a long journey?”

The eyes of thousands of people seemed to have condensed into glamorous armor around Li Yao and filled him with an invincible aura. He gestured toward the experts from the Ancient Sages Sector again, and his eyes were tougher and clearer than ever before.

“The Star Glory Federation needs your help. I’m sincerely inviting you to join us, but our life is the same even without you!

“The future of the federation will not be decided by a few Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators or Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators. Whether you decide to fight with us or simply idle by and do nothing, and even if you stand in our way, it will matter little. In any case, the people of the federation and I will stride forward and fight the bloody battle to the end. Regardless of whether we live or die, we will make the choice on our own!”

Chapter 1801 - Colossi, Prepare to Attack!

He smashed his fists so hard that they seemed strong enough to shatter a planet. Li Yao breathed heavily and stared at the experts from the Ancient Sages Sector in the hot air.

The fury of the eleven experts of the Ancient Sages Sector gradually dispersed, and they fell into a long silence.

A few feelings were brewing and growing in the silence.

Looking at the excited people of the federation around, they were more or less in a trance and seemed to have envisioned… the future of the Ancient Sages Sector.

Eventually, it was Long Yangjun who broke the silence. “What Fellow Cultivator Li said is not entirely unreasonable.”

Li Yao was overjoyed. “So?”

Long Yangjun went on. “But the key point is that it is all jumbled up from the lines in games and movies, right? For example, ‘don’t stand in our way while we are busy saving the world’. It does sound rather awe-inspiring, but it is a classic line from ‘Chronicles of Vulture: Li Yao’s Return’.

“The words you said before that seem to be quoted from the movies where Li Yao was the main character. You simply piled them up, didn’t you?”

Li Yao’s eyeballs puffed like balloons as he glared at Long Yangjun angrily.

“Don’t look at me like that.” Long Yangjun opened her hands. “To study the legendary ‘Monster Li’, the fellow Cultivators and I have found and analyzed all the novels and movies about you. With everybody’s eidetic memory, even if I didn’t bring it up, they would realize it very soon!”

“Even if that’s true,” Li Yao said affirmatively and assertively, “at the very least, my hot blood and passion are real. Did you not sense sincerity that is as scorching as fire from my touching speech?”

“Did we?” Long Yangjun blinked and asked the other experts from the Ancient Sages Sector. “Fellow Cultivators, what do you think? However phony Monster Li’s speech was just now, he was right about at least one thing. Now that the extraterrestrial devils have learned of our real identity and the existence of the Ancient Sages Sector, and the war between the Star Glory Federation and the Black Wind Fleet has entered the most heated phase, we don’t really have many choices.

“Naturally, we cannot take the extraterrestrial devils’ side. None of us are willing to live in a completely virtual world, right?

“But the Black Wind Fleet is in a terrible situation, too. The extraterrestrial devils have obviously leaked certain dark forces into the expedition army of the Imperium. The Immortal Cultivators are certainly not as lucky as we are. It is impossible that somebody else will take advantage of all their efforts. They might not know what happened at all before their death.

“With that in mind, the Star Glory Federation seems to be the only option now.

“Hehe. ‘Live up to the capabilities of the Nascent Soul Stage and the Divinity Transformation Stage, and accomplish something great that nobody in the entire universe has ever done before’. It does sound rather attractive, but are you capable of that, Monster Li, or is this another bluff?”

Long Yangjun squinted at Li Yao.

“Of course,” Li Yao replied immediately, “I cannot achieve that on my own. But with the help of the people of the federation including the natives of the Ancient Sages Sector and the unparalleled experts like you, we may even be able to march to the center of the cosmos one day and crush everything on our way. Who says that we cannot do that?”

“Cut the cr*p.” Long Yangjun, on the other hand, put on a gloomy expression and sneered. “Enough of the meaningless nonsense. You want us to join the federation… That’s not entirely unacceptable, but you’d better offer a price that is more concrete first, don’t you think?”

“Of course!” Li Yao bashed his chest hard. “We are in the middle of an emergency. Let’s settle the specific details later, but now that you have all known that I am Li Yao, what’s there to be worried about? There are so many eyewitnesses today to prove what I have promised. You have seen what kind of country the federation is with your own eyes, too. Heroes and friends won’t lose anything here!”

From all directions, countless eyes that were full of expectation were focused on the experts of the Ancient Sages Sector.

Long Yangjun coughed and said, “Fellow Cultivators, I feel that I’ve been more or less convinced. What do you think?”

Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun looked at each other and sighed. “With everything coming to this point, there is indeed not a second option.”

Han Baling and Emperor Phoenix remarked at the same time, “Whether or not the federation is reliable, it seems that the Black Wind Fleet is much more unreliable at this point!”

Wan Mingzhu and Qi Changsheng shrieked, “We have made a mortal enemy out of the extraterrestrial devils today. If we do not completely remove those devils, they will definitely trace back to the Ancient Sages Sector one day. There will be infinite disasters!”

Ba Xiaoyu and Master Bitter Cicada looked at the crowd around and smiled, nodding at the same time.

“Enough talking,” ‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren said briefly. “I only want to know one thing. Are there even stronger opponents that I can compete with?”

The eleven experts of the Ancient Sages Sector had their own reasons, but they had been through the life-and-death battle in the Spiriters’ Realm just now together and were in the middle of thousands of excited, passionate people of the federation. Some of the impatient folks were even throwing flowers at them. Although most of the flowers were aimed at Li Yao, the petals had fallen all over their bodies, too, enshrouding them with fragrance.

In such an environment, except for those who had completely gone mad, none would be able to remain nonchalant.

Besides, the Star Glory Federation and the Ancient Sages Sector were interdependent. If the Star Glory Federation was controlled by the extraterrestrial devils, the Ancient Sages

Sector would definitely become the next target to be swallowed. The outcome of the battle was directly related to their own interests.

Under Long Yangjun’s intentional and unintentional guidance, the eleven experts from the Ancient Sages Sector finally all nodded in consent.

“Right. What do we do with this woman?”

Wu Suiyun brought Heiye Lan to the front of everyone.

Compared to the experts from the Ancient Sages Sector, Heiye Lan was ten times more shocked and scared after learning Li Yao’s real identity.

Her soul had not been entirely recovered from the collapse of the Spiriters’ Realm, and her head was completely blank. She did not know what she should do.

“Heiye Lan, hear me out!” Li Yao bellowed at her like rumbling thunder. “No matter how different our beliefs are, this is an inner fight of the civilization of mankind. You admit that, too, don’t you?

“But right now, in the Black Wind Fleet and probably right next to your father, another extraterrestrial devil, which is even stronger and more dreadful than the one you met in the Spiriters’ Realm just now, is lurking!”

Heiye Lan bulged her eyes immediately and shuddered hard, looking at Li Yao in disbelief.

“This is true. With everything coming to this point, there is no point in lying to you now,” Li Yao said quickly. “The Black Wind Fleet and the elites of the federal fleet are engaged in a fierce battle in the Heaven’s Origin Sector. They are unaware of the horror of the extraterrestrial devils yet, but even if they were, neither parties would cease fire.

“I’m not going to lie to you. We will destroy the Black Wind Fleet, but destruction does not mean annihilation. If you do not want the Black Wind Fleet to be obliterated and everybody to end up as the puppets or ‘food’ of the extraterrestrial devils, think quickly about what you can do right now!”

Heiye Lan’s eyes were frozen again. She was deep in thought.

At this moment, Colonel Luo of the 414 troop of the federal army sent a message. The leadership of Hundred Flowers City that were trapped in the Tinder Base previously had been rescued. The Spiritual Nexus and the space jump control center were being repaired actively, too.

However, because of the severe corruption that the extraterrestrial devils had caused in Hundred Flowers City, large-scale faults and chaos had emerged in all the space stations. The progress of maintenance was quite slow.

They had a dozen high-level Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and even Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators after all. A lot of preparation work needed to be done first for them to be teleported to the Heaven’s Origin Sector precisely without the navigation of the space gate.

Li Yao, Long Yangjun, and the other ten experts of the Ancient Sages Sector had overly exhausted their souls in the battle in the Spiriters’ Realm, too. They had to be refilled and treated first. Otherwise, even if they were hastily teleported, they would only be crushed by the enemy’s Colossi.

Time, time, and precious time!

Every second was more valuable than an undeveloped resource planet.

Ding Lingdang, hang in there. You must hang in there! Li Yao shouted desperately deep inside his brain. *Trust me. We will be there in no time. Trust me. Please hold on until the moment we return!*

…

On the home planet of the Heaven's Origin Sector, inside the launch base of the super teleportation array Heaven's Artillery in the depths of the Grand Desolate Plateau, nine Colossi were standing in the middle of the roaring wind on the desert like nine magnificent iron giants.

Countless refiners and maintainers were still busy doing their work on those iron giants, running examinations tirelessly again and again to make sure that there were no flaws that could possibly affect the battle.

It could not be helped. The Colossi were too important. The clash of Colossi was the collision of edge and edge!

In front of the iron giants, the elite crystal suit troops that had been divvied to the Colossi had finished regrouping and arming, too. The sabers and swords that were shining coldly raised a silver tide on the Grand Desolate Plateau.

The most critical moment had arrived.

Half an hour ago, the Black Wind Fleet had projected their Colossi first to slow down the Big Bai Fleet.

It was a rather fatal strategy.

The Big Bai Fleet was passing through and cutting the Black Wind Fleet’s slightly enormous and clumsy ‘body’ like a butcher’s cleaver based on the amazing agility and the extraordinary command.

However, as the ‘legacy’ that the Nuwa civilization had left for mankind, the Colossi were apparently much more agile than common starships.

As long as they captured the trajectory of the Big Bai Fleet, there was almost no stopping them from breaking into the starships of the Big Bai Fleet.

Once the Colossi, which were twenty to thirty meters tall, entered the several-kilometer-long starships, the internal defense of those starships would be as vulnerable as the softest internal organs. Their only outcome was exploding from inside.

After just half an hour, seventeen starships of the Big Bai Fleet had been destroyed in such a manner.

Although the loss was not too grave, the possible routes of the Big Bai Fleet were greatly reduced. Their aggressive attacks were disrupted, too, and the assaults that were as fast as lightning previously became sluggish. They were almost attracted by the large-scale barrage of the Black Wind Fleet and ripped to shreds several times!

Chapter 1802 - Masteress…

The Big Bai Fleet was now dancing on a thin, shaking iron rope with a bottomless abyss where blades of flames rose up right below them.

The Colossi of the Imperium, on the other hand, were like the wretched birds that kept harassing the Big Bai Fleet.

The pecking of the birds alone was not necessarily fatal, but it was enough to make the Big Bai Fleet fall into the abyss and be doomed forever.

However lucky the Big Bai Fleet was and however extraordinary Bai Xingjian’s commanding skills were, there were always limits. They had narrowly escaped the siege of the Imperium’s fleet seven times, but the shells of the starships that were white as snow before were heavily damaged because of the bombardment of mystic ray cannons and the magnetic bullets.

The spiritual shields of those starships were all an ominous red. The exhaust flames spurted out by the engine units became disordered, too. All the performance parameters were dropping slowly but irreversibly.

The tightrope walker had already become exhausted.

Even though they were fortunate enough to avoid the eighth siege, they would not be able to survive through the ninth or the tenth.

The good news was that the elites of the Burning Prairie Fleet had basically reestablished their communication and a chain of command. They broke free from the messy swamp and were rushing to the battlefield at the highest speed.

More and more starships who had lost contact joined them, like thousands of brooks that congregated into a surging river.

In the meantime, because of the assault and harassment of the Big Bai Fleet, the front part and the rear part of the Black Wind Fleet had yet to fully combine.

The rear part, which carried numerous star beacons, was as messed up as a pot of boiling porridge. It had no time to reshape into a dense defensive battle formation or a counterattack battle formation to resist the Burning Prairie Fleet.

In the grand competition of ten thousand starships, the battle formation was everything!

Therefore, it was time to deploy the federation’s own Colossi, not to save the Big Bai Fleet, but to add more fuel to the already chaotic battlefield!

The best defense was offense. The Colossi were not shields meant for protection but invincible blades with the sharpest edges in the first place.

Cutting into the core of the Black Wind Fleet; overturning the enormous shield starships, the arsenal starships, and the cruise carriers; and prevent the Black Wind Fleet from transforming as much as possible while waiting for the thunderous attack of the elites of the Burning Prairie Fleet—that was the path to victory!

Doubtlessly, it was a suicidal mission.

The super teleportation array, Heaven's Artillery, might be able to launch the nine Colossi as well as their affiliated crystal suit legions to somewhere near the battlefield, but no more starships would be able to offer them support.

When they cut into the soft belly of the Black Wind Fleet brutally, it would also mean that they were heavily besieged by the enemy.

Even if the elites of the Burning Prairie Fleet arrived in time, how many of them would get to see the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag rising in the sea of stars again?

But none of the pilots of the Colossi shied away.

The nine Colossi were controlled by the experts with the highest combat ability in the Star Glory Federation in the last hundred years.

They were mostly in the middle and high level of the Nascent Soul Stage, and they were not necessarily servicemen. Quite a few of them had long established their own sects as dominators of their local areas. Essentially speaking, they were all civilians.

With their capability, even if they did not control the Colossi, they would still be the most powerful and influential big shots. Their wealth and their tremendous resources were too abundant to be exhausted in their lifetime. They could accomplish any goal easily.

But when the iron giants glittered in front of them silently, they still listened to the calling deep inside their hearts and signed a harsh contract with the government. They dedicated most of their time to the training with the Colossi, and when their wrist crystal processors buzzed rapidly, they truly abandoned everything and arrived at this place as quickly as possible, prepared to set off to the most dangerous battlefield!

“The blood of the strong must be shed first!”

In the past hundred years, was it not because of such a solemn promise that all the people of the federation had supported the government’s projects to excavate and repair the Colossi by gritting their teeth and offering whatever they had before such unstoppable, ultimate weapons were crafted?

Besides, they were deeply rooted in the soil of their homeland. If the Star Glory Federation was no more, how could their life, honor, and strength glow again?

“Prepare to launch!”

Under the lead of Ding Lingdang, the Blazing Tyrannosaur, the nine strongest experts of the federation all finished their preparations. Like nine storms that were slowly condensing, they held back their strength, waiting for the boom in the last moment.

Ding Lingdang’s eyes, on the other hand, surpassed them and looked at the common soldiers who belonged to the affiliated crystal suit legions that would fight together with the Colossi.

Naturally, the Colossi would not fight on their own. The federation had worked out quite a few special tactics for the Colossi over the past hundred years. Right now, every Colossus had been allotted a crystal suit legion, where more than three hundred elite Exos would fight with it in teamwork.

Ding Lingdang and the other supreme experts, under the protection of the ultimate weapons in the primeval wars, might stand a chance of survival, but the Exos that were about to charge into the core of the enemy’s battle formation were almost sure to die.

However, their inevitable outcome did not stop the Exos from putting on equally brilliant smiles with equally overwhelming confidence beaming out of their eyes!

Ding Lingdang saw Wu Mayan, the leader of her affiliated crystal suit legion, raise his thumb at her with a smile.

After a hundred years of crazy training, Wu Mayan was definitely as good as any Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator in the federation in terms of combat ability. He could even persist for a few rounds under her bombardment.

But he had been walking on the path of qi-training. In pursuit of the maximal expansion of spiritual energy, he had abandoned the possibility of entering the Building Foundation Stage, the Core Formation Stage, or the Nascent Soul Stage!

Even though he might have broken into the legendary ‘1,000th level of the Refinement Stage’, it was nothing more than physical strength inside his body, which was not enough for him to control a Colossus.

Wu Mayan had tested it countless times in the Draconic Phoenix, but however crazily he poured his spiritual energy into it, the Colossi gave absolutely no reaction as if it were just a random rock. In the end, Wu Mayan could only scratch his nose and give up.

“What’s impressive about a Colossus? After I reach the 10,000th level of the Refinement Stage, I will show you how to blow up a Colossus bare-handedly, Masteress!” Wu Mayan had declared angrily when he became the captain of Ding Lingdang’s affiliated crystal suit legion.

All the warriors of the legion were from Iron Plateau. They were all qi-trainers who had kicked away the opportunities of ‘Building Foundation’, ‘Core Formation’, ‘Nascent Soul’, and ‘Divinity Transformation’, and who had rushed forward on the path of qi-training stubbornly, hoping to break into the 100th, the 1,000th and the 10,000th level of the Refinement Stage. They were definitely the most barbaric, toughest, and most violent beings in mankind’s hundred thousand year history of Cultivation!

The Imperium’s army from the center of the cosmos, the Immortal Cultivators with the state-of-the-art techniques and magical equipment, would witness how the savage forces at the edge of the cosmos would bloom!

Ding Lingdang smiled and raised her thumb at Wu Mayan, too, but then she changed into a threatening posture, as if she were saying, “Hey, you’d better work hard later, and do not bring shame to your master, or I will teach you a good lesson once we’re back!”

The earth hummed and shivered as the Heaven’s Artillery began to charge with energy.

Around the silver bowl more than five thousand meters in diameter that was deeply embedded underground, rounds of spiritual stripes were shining one after another, as if an enormous swirl was reaching the bottom of the bowl while revolving at a higher and higher speed.

But the highest command center from the capital city suddenly sent a request for an urgent conversation.

Ding Lingdang was slightly dazed. She activated the 3D light beam, and the person who showed up on the light beam was quite out of her expectations—it was Jin Xinyue.

Jin Xinyue no longer had the calmness and confidence that she had when the ‘Dim Moon Plan’ was just drafted and initiated as if everything was under her control.

Her hair was messy, her face was pale, and her eyes were full of helplessness. In great embarrassment, she hesitated for a long time before she finally opened her mouth. “Masteress…”

Ding Lingdang eyed the little witch up and down for a long time. Then she chuckled and said, “You’re calling me ‘Masteress’ again? Not ‘Madam Ding’, ‘Representative Ding’, or ‘President Ding’?”

Jin Xinyue was so mortified that she did not know what to say anymore. She simply lowered her head deeper.

“Forget it. I have a lot of shortcomings. I’m rude, rash, impatient, and sometimes simpleminded despite my strength, but I am never a petty person!” Ding Lingdang waved her hands reassuringly. “Director Guo has told me all the truth. Since you didn’t really betray the federation, and the so-called ‘terror attacks’ of the CFIA were merely accidents during production, you have proven that you never broke the boundary of the Cultivators. Is there any reason for me to reproach you?”

Jin Xinyue was overjoyed. When she raised her head, her eyes were already filled with tears. “But—But I was very likely deceived by the enemy, which caused us to fall into such a disadvantageous situation. Do you really not blame me, Masteress?”

“You are a smart person, but smart people tend to suffer from their own smartness. None of the people who are fooled think that they are fools.” Ding Lingdang changed the topic. “With everything coming to this, will it help even if I do blame you? Since you are still willing to call me masteress, then, let your masteress clean the mess for you in the stupidest way!”

“Masteress…” Jin Xinyue’s eyes were red.

“Hey, hey, hey. You did not call me just to give an apology, did you?” Ding Lingdang frowned and rubbed her arm hard. “I’m getting goosebumps. When I watch movies, such clichés always make me feel awkward. If everything’s alright, I’ll hang up now!”

“Wait!” Jin Xinyue yelled in a hurry. “There’s still something important that I need to tell you. My ‘Dim Moon Plan’ isn’t so simple. We still have a secret weapon that is installed on a carrier. It is a super bomb excavated from Kunlun!

“I didn’t know that the Black Wind Fleet had seen through my scheme. The original plan was that my ‘demon rebellion troops’ would join the main force of the Black Wind Fleet and try to move the carrier with the super bomb near to Black Swirl, the enemy’s flagship. It would be best if the carrier could be attached to Black Swirl. Once the bomb exploded, it would be possible for Black Swirl to be entirely blown up!

“After the flagship was gone and the leadership of the Black Wind Fleet died, the Black Wind Fleet would immediately fall apart because of the lack of organization!”

Chapter 1803 - Wormhole Bomb

Ding Lingdang was slightly dazed. “I have never seen ‘Black Swirl’ with my own eyes, but I’ve boarded Burning Prairie, the flagship of the Burning Prairie Fleet, and even performed a drill of ‘invasion and denial’ with it before.

“For every starship that is qualified to serve as the flagship of a Deep Sky Fleet, the plate armor, defense ability, and damage control system must be most perfect. Take Burning Prairie for example. Even I might not necessarily be able to break into it with a Colossus. Black Swirl, as the flagship of the expedition army of the Imperium, will only be sturdier than Burning Prairie. What kind of bomb can possibly blow it up entirely?”

“It may be inappropriate to call it a ‘bomb’,” Jin Xinyue replied. “It is in fact a space jump unit that we discovered in the debris of a Nuwa warship in Kunlun. The Nuwa warship must’ve used it to break the void and perform space jumps, but when it was unearthed, it was already riddled with holes and fragile because of millenniums of corrosion in the air.

“We thought about dismantling the device for studies to build up our own space jump technology, but its core was too sophisticated, and it was highly unsteady due to the corrosion, to the point that it might completely fall apart with one careless move. Except for scanning, there wasn’t really anything we could do about it.

“In the end, the space jump unit was transferred to the Secret Sword Bureau and studied by Director Guo and me.

We did not analyze it with the traditional technology employed in the maintenance of magical equipment but adopted synthesized biochemical neurons of the Blood Demon Sector. We connected the internal components of the device with soft, synthesized nerves and cleaned the rusted rune arrays with a special bacterium that feeds on rust.

“Even so, it was too seriously damaged to be dismantled or duplicated. The only function it had left was to be activated once. Therefore, we modified it into a special bomb!”

Ding Lingdang widened her eyes. “I don’t see the connection between a space jump unit and a super bomb.”

“It’s very simple,” Jin Xinyue quickly explained. “The device was supposed to drive a Nuwa warship to perform a super long-distance jump. The activation speed, distance of the jump, and effective range of the device are far larger than the counterparts on our starships. It is safe to say that once it is activated, the device will instantly create an enormous bubble almost a hundred kilometers in diameter centered around itself and teleport all the materials inside the ‘bubble’ somewhere else. No material can escape the teleportation.”

Ding Lingdang frowned. “Where would they be teleported to?”

“That is the key.” Jin Xinyue waved her fists and declared in delight, “We don’t know! The navigation and stabilization system of the device have been completely wrecked. The only function left is ‘teleportation’. According to the specialists of the Secret Sword Bureau and the Dim Moon Fund, once activated, it will perform a random teleportation and deliver the materials inside the ‘bubble’ to random coordinates in the vast sea of stars. There is a 99.99%

likelihood that they will reach a certain area far away from the radiation of the civilization of mankind, which is barren, desolate, and devoid of spiritual energy.

“Or even better, because the stabilization rune arrays are seriously damaged, too, it is possible that accidents will occur during the teleportation. The materials to be teleported will be disintegrated into the most fundamental atoms and scattered across the entire universe evenly!

“Think about it, Masteress. If such a ‘super teleportation’ happens to Black Swirl, even the most powerful disruptive force field, spiritual shield, and multiple layers of plate armor will not be able to resist the violent space-time ripples. The flagship of the Imperium’s expedition army will be torn to shreds!

“Even if the carrier cannot come into contact with Black Swirl, it will do as long as the distance is less than twenty kilometers. In fact, the effect may be even better in such a case. The ‘bubble’ will be like an invisible mouth that bites Black Swirl. As long as more than thirty percent of the body is ‘bitten off’, even the most remarkable damage control system will be rendered useless.”

Ding Lingdang understood it.

A space jump was the most dangerous thing in universal cruise.

The established idea was that the more accurate the destination and the steadier the process, the better.

Therefore, although they had retrieved a lot of space jump units from the Nuwa warships on Kunlun and performed a lot of studies, they had yet to build up their own relevant technology with the new knowledge because such technology was too critical and dangerous!

Jin Xinyue, on the other hand, had chosen the opposite approach. Since the space jump unit of the Nuwa Clan was irrecoverable, and accuracy and steadiness could not be ensured, she simply tried to improve the dangerousness of the device and turn it into a super bomb that would smash the enemy.

Once it succeeded, it would create a new wormhole near Black Swirl. It was a super wormhole bomb!

Ding Lingdang laughed. “So, this is the trump card that made you bold enough to carry out the ‘Dim Moon Plan’!”

Jin Xinyue, however, found it difficult to laugh. “Yes. The super bomb was supposed to be my trump card. I even screened out several hundred elite warriors from the Blood Demon Sector to form a daring team that would march into the core of the Black Wind Fleet no matter the cost and detonate the bomb. They would make the greatest contribution to the federation on behalf of the demon race.

“I didn’t know that Heiye Ming had seen through my scheme a long time ago. After the Black Wind Fleet arrived at the Heaven’s Origin Sector, they did not give the rebel demon troops any chance to approach. The few carriers that moved toward them at the beginning were turned into sieves. Naturally, the carrier that carried the bomb did not dare draw close.

“Although the ‘radius of absolute destruction’ of the bomb is quite large after it is activated, the carrier itself does not boast any combat ability. The defense ability of the vehicle is weak, too. Given the circumstances now, it has no chance to approach the core of the Black Wind Fleet without being completely blown up at all!”

“So…” Ding Lingdang began.

Jin Xinyue gritted her teeth and said, “We haven’t figured out a way to detonate it at a close distance yet. There isn’t much I can do on the ground now. I’ve decided to go to the battlefield near the No. 1 space gate to command the demon team and ‘Moth’, which is carrying the super bomb. I hope that your troop of Colossi and the elites of the Burning Prairie Fleet that arrive later can rip open a gap and cover ‘Moth’ to fly to ‘Black Swirl’!

“The specific battle plan is still being drafted by the advisors and analysts in the highest command center. It will be sent over after it is done, but I wanted to tell you about it first personally. I…”

She paused for a moment and took a deep breath. Then, she looked Ding Lingdang in the eye. The redness in her eyes was gone, replaced by the resolution and sharpness of the queen of demons. She said, one word after another, “I may have done a lot of wrong things in the past hundred years, but I really never betrayed the federation or did anything that dishonored my master.

“That’s all I want to say now. I’ll see you in space, Masteress!”

Jin Xinyue stared at Ding Lingdang. She was about to shut down the communication when Ding Lingdang stopped her and said, “Wait a moment.”

Jin Xinyue looked at the woman standing in the blowing wind on the Grand Desolate Plateau, somewhat surprised. “Masteress?”

“Since you still consider me as your masteress and you never really betrayed the federation or your master, I believe that there is something you ought to know.” Ding Lingdang thought for a moment and said, “A message arrived this morning. There’s no telling if it is true. Later, everything was in chaos after the Spiritual Nexus crashed. I never had the chance to speak to you.”

Jin Xinyue blinked quickly and grew solemn. “What is it that’s so important?”

“Yesterday, Wu Yaxuan’s workshop received a crystal suit shipped in from the Dragon Snake Space Zone. It was an Azure Thunder, the very first model he devised independently,” Ding Lingdang said. “It is common practice for a broken crystal suit to be sent back to the original manufacturer for maintenance, but after Wu Yaxuan opened the Azure Thunder, he discovered something quite uncanny.

“There were not many serious issues on the surface, but he couldn’t repair the crystal suit no matter how he tried, as if somebody had cast a weird spell on the equipment.

“Knowing that he had encountered an expert, Wu Yaxuan wasted no time inviting his master Jiang Shaoyang and his mother Xie Anan to study it together. After the two of them examined the crystal suit carefully, they indeed found the traces of adjustment left by an expert. But… but…”

Even a woman as straightforward as Ding Lingdang hesitated for a moment. Then, with expectation beaming out of her eyes, she softly said, “Jiang Shaoyang and Xie Anan both said that the adjustment was similar to your master’s style.”

“What!” Jiang Shaoyang shrieked inside the highest command center.

“I don’t know much about crystal suit maintenance, but I do know a thing or two about adjustments,” Ding Lingdang said. “My feeling is that… they are indeed quite similar.

“But ‘similar’ is just ‘similar’. There are too many refiners in the world. It is not strange for two people to have similar styles. Besides, if your master had indeed returned, why did he go to the chaotic Dragon Snake Space Zone instead of coming back to the Heaven’s Origin Sector directly? It is too important an issue to be publicized before everything is figured out. Wouldn’t it be the greatest joke if it wasn’t him?”

“Then, ask somebody to investigate immediately,” Jin Xinyue said in a hurry. “Send someone to the Dragon Snake Space Zone now. Both the Secret Sword Bureau and the Dim Moon Fund have a lot of forces in the Dragon Snake Space Zone. There’s no time to worry about them being exposed now. We must get to the bottom of it!”

“As I said, the message only arrived this morning. The whole Heaven’s Origin Sector entered the highest battle-preparation state soon after. Later, the Spiritual Nexus crashed, and we were entirely isolated from the outside world. How do you expect us to investigate it?

“I’m telling this because I want you to keep your hope even at the last moment. Maybe your master is fighting side by side with us in his own way somewhere we can’t see and will jump out like a thief at the most critical moment!”

Tears were welling up inside Jin Xinyue’s eyes again. She nodded heavily. “I—I will not disappoint my master. I won’t!”

“He’d better not disappoint me, either, and jump out soon.” Rubbing her fists and warming up her body, Ding Lingdang stared at the depths of the Grand Desolate Plateau and mumbled, “Otherwise, I will blow up each and every scumbag in the Black Wind Fleet without leaving any for him!”

Chapter 1804 - Fury of the Tyrannosaur

“Heaven’s Artillery is to be activated in ten, nine, eight, seven…”

The earth was shaking, the wind was blowing, sand was everywhere, and mystic rays were rising up in every corner. An enormous bud seemed to be blossoming slowly inside the silver bowl. The ivory petals enveloped nine Colossi and almost two thousand Exos. Illuminated by the brightness, everybody became transparent and intangible, as if they were turning into brilliant stars that would stab at the center of the universe.

This was the first time that Ding Lingdang had been launched by the Heaven’s Artillery.

Whenever her body was disintegrated, and her brain cells and memory cortexes were unfolded in the four-dimension, redisplaying the past for her, she could not help but recall Li Yao and the place where they first met.

It seemed to be… inside the war memorial museum on Distant Expanse, known as the eternal flagship of the federal army, in the Far East Ocean, when the Nine Elite Universities were admitting students, right?

At that time, she was a girl who had just graduated from college and was about to start working, and Li Yao was nothing more than a silly boy.

Her first impression of the silly boy was that he was quite interesting.

Her second impression was that—she needed to find a way to trick such an interesting, sturdy, silly boy into the Grand Desolate War Institution!

Shua!

The ivory flowers blossomed. The nine Colossi were all as clear as glasses, reflecting the sunlight in colorful ripples. The ripples turned into waves, and the waves gathered into tides. The tides surged and resonated with each other, drawing Ding Lingdang and everybody else into a turbulence made of a billion colors.

Her muscles, veins, nerves, bones, guts, and soul were all shattered in the turbulence!

The distance of teleportation was too short for the launch power of the Heaven’s Artillery. Not only was it unnecessary for them to be teleported to another Sector, they did not even reach the edge of the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

Therefore, when the weird feeling of ‘breaking the void’ had just occurred to her, the colorful turbulence around her dispersed before Ding Lingdang enjoyed the feeling in it.

What replaced the colorful turbulence was a profound universe, burning stars, and the flames of starships that were even fiercer than the burning stars.

The teleportation had succeeded!

The astronomical parameters in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, at least in the area around the home planet, had all been well documented. The distance of teleportation was quite short, too. A hundred enormous crystal cameras were even helping to lock onto the coordinates of the destination. Therefore, they were teleported to the rear of the Black Wind Fleet precisely, comprising the most vulnerable star beacons and their guardian fleet.

One of the starships of the Black Wind Fleet in front exploded for no good reason when it was not attacked by anything. It was immediately swallowed by a gigantic light ball.

Ding Lingdang was slightly dazed. Then, she realized that it was a rare 'space-time conflict', meaning that an Exo was directly teleported to a critical location on the Imperium's starship, perhaps deeply 'embedded' into the warehouse of crystals, the arsenal, or the engine unit.

When different materials superimposed on the same location, such a powerful 'rejection reaction' was immediately triggered!

The space was too vast a place. Even in a battle of starships that was in a dense battle formation, the distance between starships was still often very far away from each other. The odds of someone directly jumping into the enemy's starship were little to none, almost theoretically impossible.

On the other hand, it was further proof of the accuracy of the teleportation. They were like burning daggers that were stabbed into the bottom of the Black Wind Fleet!

Sensing the sudden arrival of the Colossi, the Imperium's starships that were already agitated by the Big Bai Fleet became even more anxious.

Dark spurts appeared on all the starships of the Imperium. A large batch of crystal suits and space shuttles swarmed out like bugs, forming a dense, deadly nebula. The few Colossi that were dealing with the Big Bai Fleet far away also abandoned their previous targets and lunged aggressively at the new arrivals.

It would be quite troublesome for a space fleet when the crystal suits or the Colossi cut into the interior.

Compared to starships, both the crystal suits and the Colossi were small and weak in spiritual energy, but they were too swift and agile, which made it difficult for them to be locked onto and destroyed.

Besides, every barrage of the main guns of a starship would consume astronomical crystals and ammunition. Even if they could destroy a few crystal suits after several shots, the cost would outweigh the gains.

Dealing with the crystal suits at a close distance with starships was almost like shooting mosquitoes with cannons. The efficiency could be very low, and the effect might not be satisfactory at all.

Also, in the case of dense battle formations, friendly fire had to be taken into account, too. Generally speaking, without the disturbance of an enormous gravitational source, the trajectories of the mystic-ray weapons were almost always straight lines. However advanced the Imperium’s technology was, they could not make a beam of destructive rays turn at the speed of light. The attacks might hit the enemy, but what if the friendly starships were right behind the target? If the friendly starships performed emergency evasion, the whole battle formation would be disrupted.

Therefore, to some extent, only crystal suits could deal with crystal suits, just like how only Colossi could deal with Colossi!

If the space was classified into eight quadrants with Ding Lingdang as the base point, the sparkly light of the Burning Prairie Fleet had already appeared in the seventh quadrant.

So, their mission was to dig deeper into the wound in the soft belly of the Black Wind Fleet together with the Big Bai Fleet before the Burning Prairie Fleet arrived, not giving the wound the chance to ‘heal’.

Ding Lingdang had never been good at giving motivational speeches. In most cases, she liked to ask her fists to speak for her!

“Kill them!”

The Draconic Phoenix led the charge with flames of light almost a hundred meters long surging out. Nine raging dragons of spiritual energy rested around the Colossus. The strongest God of War of the federation charged at the group of Exos from the Imperium under the protection of the dragons, as if she was a living Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag!

The flag was utterly invincible wherever it reached. Neither the crystal suits nor the space shuttles could survive one round under her attacks. They were wiped out like chickens and dogs. She was not even interested in stopping for a moment to destroy more crystal suits but simply shoved away the annoying crystal suits around unstoppably, lunging at the nearest shield starship!

The federal army had long become used to the tactics of the ‘Blazing Tyrannosaur’. The other eight Colossi and more than two thousand crystal suits flooded in through the gap that she had just opened, pushing forward relentlessly. Like three hundred soldiers assaulting the camp of a hundred thousand enemies at night in ancient times, courage and determination mattered more than tactics and equipment.

Faced with the Draconic Phoenix, the shield starship of the Imperium was like a defenseless city.

No matter how crazily it activated its counteroffensive measures and spiritual shield, there was no stopping the Draconic Phoenix from turning into a streak of crimson brilliance and approaching quickly.

The arsenal starships were either affected by the crystal suits of the two parties that were engaged in a fierce fight or blocked by the shield starship itself. They could not find an appropriate route of attack at all.

Even if they could find an appropriate attack route, the stealth and disturbance units on the Colossi that far exceeded this era made it difficult for them to be locked onto by regular weapons.

A Colossus was right next to the warship, the furious flames from it were even clearly visible to the naked eye, but the fire control system in the crystal processors could not determine the location and distance of the target at all. It was not unusual in space battles at all.

Boom!

The Draconic Phoenix smashed at the head of the shield starship that was almost one kilometer long. Two crimson flames suddenly appeared on its arms, which then immediately turned into two enormous drills that blew up the super alloys, the strengthened porcelain, the reflective glass, the soft heat-proof layer, and the defense rune arrays embedded among the layers.

Once the Draconic Phoenix entered the shield starship, its doom was inevitable.

Most starships had their own anti-invasion systems, but such systems were only prepared for the enemy’s crystal suits. It was impossible to stop the Colossi.

No matter how much the internal fire points bombarded the Colossus, and no matter how many soldiers jumped at the Colossus carrying their chainswords and vibration sabers, they were as useless as the stinging of a needle.

Flames almost a hundred meters long surged out from the Draconic Phoenix blatantly, congregating into tentacles that looked like magma in the narrow cabins and pathways. All the crew members that did not have the time to escape from the starship, be they wearing a mustard-seed combat suit or not, could not avoid their fate of being turned into ash.

Over the past ten years, from the Imperium’s captives and the debris of the Imperium’s starships retrieved in the Battle of Firefly, the federation had deduced the structures of a lot of Imperium starship models, which allowed Ding Lingdang to know the location of the bridge, the arsenal, the crystal warehouse, and the engine compartment.

The Draconic Phoenix went forward unstoppably and broke into the bridge, which was the brain of the shield starship, as easily as a burning stone sinking into a piece of tofu.

The nine dragons around its body rushed out, transforming the scorching magma into even more violent tornadoes. After only one moment, the crystal processors and commanders on the bridge were obliterated. The whole ‘brain’ was melted and burned!

When the Draconic Phoenix finally broke out of the shield starship from the rear, what was floating behind her was nothing more than an empty iron coffin.

When did she gain special feelings for Li Yao?

It was probably the time when he suffered heavy wounds during the Limit Challenge Competition on Devil Flood Dragon Island, fell into a coma, miraculously woke up, and gritted his teeth to work hard without giving up hope although his spiritual root was ripped apart and his Cultivation hit rock bottom, right?

Ding Lingdang had once had a similar experience. She saw herself inside Li Yao. Perhaps she looked at the silly boy in a different way because of the sympathetic feeling.

To this day, she could still recall the time they flew into the clouds to eat and drink. Whenever she thought about it, she felt like laughing.

However, she could almost swear that she did not have any ‘evil thoughts’ at that time. Well, probably?

The Draconic Phoenix suddenly performed an unbelievable dodging movement, shooting out almost a hundred red shadows in all directions. Dozens of dazzling mystic rays arrived without a sound and minced all the blurred shadows, but they could not stop the real Draconic Phoenix from jumping up in the gap of mystic rays and lunging at the source of the rays, an arsenal starship that had been armed to the teeth. Before the second round of mystic rays surged out, she dived into the arsenal starship and began a new slaughter!

Chapter 1805 - Sweeping the Enemy!

Boom! Boom, Boom, Boom, Boom, Boom, Boom, Boom!

When the Draconic Phoenix rushed out of the rear of the arsenal warship that looked like an iron hedgehog, it was immediately enveloped by more than ten rings of fireballs. The fireballs expanded and spread out, turning into destructive blasts mixed with the melted debris of the starship.

The blasts spread out very fast, and the remnants were on a rampage on the battlefield like a meteor shower, greatly affecting the normal cruise of the starships nearby and stopping their attacks. Even their spiritual shields were rippling like ponds.

When she first met Li Yao, Ding Lingdang had been slightly condescending because she was stronger than him in almost every respect. When did the feeling of ‘big sister looking for little brother’ change?

Was it when he struggled to his feet while screaming time and time again under her stormy attacks? Was it when he grew stronger and stronger and finally became an excellent Exo as strong as herself after the adventures on Thunderous Sound Mountain? Was it the unforgettable night when she recalled her parents’ unfortunate death and her childhood tragedies, but he showed up in time and let her cry in his arms?

The messy thoughts in her head did not hinder Ding Lingdang from deciding on her third target the moment she broke out of the arsenal starship, which was a comprehensive supply starship more than three kilometers long and was heavily guarded by more than ten arsenal starships, shield starships, and hundreds of crystal suits.

Although the comprehensive supply starships did not boast immense firepower or defense ability, they had enormous maintenance workshops and warehouses of crystals and ammunition, which made them the cores of every branch fleet.

Without the support of the comprehensive supply starships in the rear, both the arsenal starships and the shield starships, as well as the crystal suits and the space shuttles, would run out of supplies very soon after being engaged in a battle.

Having blown up two starships in a row in the blink of an eye, she had obviously become the center of attention on the battlefield. Mystic rays, space torpedoes, and bullets of spiritual energy interweaved into a gapless web of fire in front of us.

But the Draconic Phoenix charged forward relentlessly against the fiery web!

The enemy’s firepower was too fierce. Despite the interferential and defensive rune arrays of the Colossus, it was inevitable to be hit in the front with abnormal fireballs erupting out.

The moment before the fireball consumed the Colossus, a series of runes on the surface of the Draconic Phoenix glittered and turned into a glamorous protective shell, absorbing most of the damage and transforming it into colorful exhaust flames that spurted into the vacuum. At first glance, it was even astoundingly beautiful.

But still, the massive blast of spiritual energy shook her brain violently, allowing her to recall more things of the past.

Neither she nor Li Yao were romantic. Perhaps because their goals were too big and far away, they sometimes neglected the present.

However, even such an unromantic guy like Li Yao had once done a romantic thing, which was taking her to view the most splendid sunrise in the universe on a satellite.

However carefree she usually was, her heart had almost melted at that moment.

Boom!

The Draconic Phoenix broke out of the shell of fireballs, reborn. The nine dragons of spiritual energy attacked furiously at the same time and blew up dozens of crystal suits and space shuttles in a row like skewers. Her momentum was not reduced at all, and she looked more magnificent than anything.

Even the most fearless Immortal Cultivators were shocked to stillness briefly under her overwhelming strength.

Taking advantage of the gap, she penetrated the comprehensive supply starship!

On the control interface of the Draconic Phoenix, the runes from the primeval era shined one after another. Ding Lingdang compressed her intense feelings and soul waves into a quickly shivering spell. The two arms of the Draconic

Phoenix disintegrated all of a sudden, revealing the most complicated and precise components inside, which then combined in front her into a highly dangerous cannon.

Infinite flames of spiritual energy burst out like a volcanic eruption and enshrouded the disintegrated arms before they spread out and turned into a furiously burning war falcon.

The fiery war falcon was practically tangible. Flapping the wings, it was moaning in impatience, with intimidating auras spreading out, as if a primeval beast had really travelled through time and landed on the arm of the Draconic Phoenix.

When Ding Lingdang observed from a different perspective, the fiery war falcon turned into a plane that did not have any thickness.

A very familiar feeling grabbed her.

It almost seemed that she had retrieved an ‘absolutely superficial’ falcon of flames from the boundless void by controlling the hands of the Draconic Phoenix.

It was exactly the ultimate technique that Li Yao had once performed on Kunlun a hundred years ago and eventually slayed a giant of the Pangu Clan with—the Phoenix Demolisher!

After a hundred years of maintenance, strengthening, and Ding Lingdang’s repetitive practice, and now that the left arm of the Colossus had been reshaped, making it possible to use the technique with both hands, the technique was ten times more powerful than when Li Yao activated it with only one broken arm of the Colossus years back!

Shua!

The falcon flapped its wings and soared out, cutting in from the bridge of the comprehensive supply starship and piercing through the maintenance workshops, the arsenals, the warehouse of crystals, the space jump units, and the engine compartment. The internal space of the comprehensive supply starship was dissected into an upper half and a lower half by the brute force.

Although the dissection of space was brief, the objects that had been cut in half could never be recovered. The spiritual shield generators and the engine compartment were the first to explode, followed by the highly unsteady marrow crystals inside the warehouse of crystals. The minor explosions then led to a chain reaction. The flames rushed out like a flood, vaporizing countless Immortal Cultivators within the moment!

The Draconic Phoenix simply strode forward in the ‘flood’ that was burning and exploding, not bothering to look for pathways or gates at all. Whenever it encountered a wall or plate armor, it would just punch at the blockage to create a way. Absolutely nothing could stop the march of a Colossus, unless—

The crystal processor uttered a series of ear-splitting alarms. From the front, a cluster of spiritual energy reactions that were as powerful as the Draconic Phoenix’s were approaching at a high speed. It was a Colossus from the Imperium!

Flames were rolling like infuriated tides. The maintenance warehouse where Ding Lingdang happened to be at was quite spacious, making it the best arena for a deadly fight.

Together with a round of earthshaking quakes, a dark Colossus gradually revealed itself in the ocean of fire.

Its body was even thicker than the Draconic Phoenix. The back of the Colossus was slightly hunched because of the two enormous honeycomb-type launchers on the shoulders, which made it seem to have three heads at first look.

From the enormous shoulder blade, three arms dangled down from each side. It was a ‘three-headed and six-armed’ Colossus.

It was a ‘special-shaped Colossus’, which was slightly different from the regular body of human beings.

The Colossus was the strongest weapon that the Nuwa Clan carefully crafted for the human warriors to resist the Pangu Clan who were enormous in size, but such a weapon was not invented based on nothing. Their prototypes were mostly the armor of the Nuwa Clan and the Pangu Clan.

Both the Nuwa Clan and the Pangu Clan boasted a lot of bizarre-shaped and enormous species. Human head and snake body, three heads and six arms… Nothing was unusual for them.

Therefore, the armor of the Nuwa and the Pangu civilizations had various different models, too. So, it was not strange at all that the Colossi, which were modified based on that armor, would have three heads and six arms.

Humans had only two hands. Their nervous system had evolved for the manipulation of the ten fingers on both hands, too. Although it was possible to remotely control more limbs with spiritual energy, those foreign objects were not naturally-born.

Therefore, it was much more difficult to control the ‘special-shaped Colossus’ than to control a regular Colossus. Without years of hard training, it was barely possible to make use of the weird body parts of the Colossus as fluently as using one’s own arms and hands. They were more likely to be a redundancy than help.

However, if somebody really got the hang of it, the special-shaped Colossus could present weirder tactics and a much more powerful performance than a regular Colossus could.

It was exactly so for the Immortal Cultivator of the Imperium who was using the three-headed and six-armed Colossus.

Green flames were vaguely flowing on the surface of the dark armor. The six arms were holding six different weapons. Chainsword, starship-slashing saber… Only in the hands of such an iron giant did the ‘starship-slashing saber’ really deserve its name. Nobody would have any doubt that it could really slash a starship in half after one attack!

The Draconic Phoenix, on the other hand, was barehanded without any weapons.

As a body practitioner, Ding Lingdang had never been a fan of blades. Even after she became a pilot of the Colossus, she did not carry too many weapons with her but focused all the technical upgrades on the fists of the Colossus.

The Draconic Phoenix’s fists blossomed slowly like lotus flowers. Then, they revolved at such a high speed that they seemed enough to drill two holes in the universe!

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!’

The honeycomb-type launchers on the enemy’s shoulders opened fire first, like two volcanoes erupting at Ding Lingdang. The Draconic Phoenix took action at the same time, too, right toward where the firepower and the blades were densest.

She could sense the enemy’s shock and confusion, which made her even more high-spirited. Her soul burnt crazily, and she was completely melted with the Draconic Phoenix, exactly like Li Yao on Kunlun a hundred years ago.

You are just a minor Immortal Cultivator. How can you understand the strength hidden deep inside the Draconic Phoenix?

This is a Colossus that once killed a real ‘god’!

Three minutes passed.

At the periphery of the comprehensive supply starship, the most distinguished Exos of the federation and their tough opponents from the Imperium were engaged in a fierce battle. The reverberation of fighting will of the qi-trainers raised tides of hot blood even inside the soundless vacuum.

But during those three minutes, everybody slowed down subconsciously because they saw that a Colossus from each party had crawled into the depths of the comprehensive supply starship, one from the head and the other from the rear.

On the federation’s side, it was ‘Blazing Tyrannosaur’ Ding Lingdang, the pillar on the battlefield. On the Black Wind Fleet’s side, it was a well-known expert, too!

The competition of two Colossi might not be enough to decide the outcome of the entire battle, but at this moment, all the Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators could not help but pay their attention to it!

The comprehensive supply starship exploded nonstop. Fireballs rose up and moved to the center of the starship like crimson monsters. The starship was about to completely fall apart. Everybody’s heart was grabbed as they stared at the battle.

“Argh!”

Thousands of cries echoed on the communication channels of both parties at the same time.

A Colossus rushed out of the enormous fireballs. The deep black shell and the additional heads and arms were clearly visible. It was the Imperium’s!

However, before the Immortal Cultivators of the Imperium could cheer in the communication channel, somebody noticed some anomalies. The six arms of the Colossus were all dangling helplessly, as if the joints all over its body had been blown up. The power rune arrays were dimmer than ever, too.

At this moment, a dazzling streak of redness jumped out of the debris of the starship and rushed to the above of the first Colossus, punching the enemy with fists like two shooting stars—no, two meteor showers that consisted of thousands of shooting stars!

Chapter 1806 - Enmeshed

For the soldiers both on the federation’s side and the Imperium’s, when the two destructive meteoroid showers triggered such dazzling brilliance, it seemed to bombard their pupils and brains directly, bringing them unparalleled excitement.

The Colossus that had been excavated from various primeval relics through all kinds of trouble and repaired with the precious resources of several Sectors, making it more valuable than a super starship, exploded abruptly under Ding Lingdang’s attack and ended up being the most expensive debris in the whole universe.

The devastating scene cast the communication channels of both parties into a brief silence before they were filled with cries and shouts each higher than the last.

Moans and screams were ringing nonstop inside the communication channel of the Imperium, but all the soldiers of the federal army were roaring the same name.

“God of War! Our God of War! The invincible Blazing Tyrannosaur!”

In the previous engagement, the three thousand crystal suits of the federal army had been besieged by the enemy. After a few clashes, almost a thousand of them had turned into cold corpses. The morale had begun to drop, but then it was boosted to the sky by Ding Lingdang’s shocking performance. Every Exo was refreshed like an unkillable man made of iron and charged unstoppably at the Black Wind Fleet’s weak spots!

“Huchi... Huchi... Huchi...”

Ding Lingdang heard the exclamations in the communication channel, but she really did not have the strength to respond.

Redness as intense as ink was emitting from the control interface, suggesting that various performance parameters of the Draconic Phoenix were plummeting.

The three-headed and six-armed Colossus had not been the mediocre opponent she encountered during the Battle of Firefly ten years ago after all but a real top-tier expert.

The price of killing the enemy splendidly was the heavy wear to the Draconic Phoenix and the excruciating pain inside her head as if it was being burnt and chopped by a high-heated axe.

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

Another three Colossi of the Imperium lunged at her crazily as if they had gone mad. It seemed that they had all recognized her identity as the ‘God of War’ of the federation and were in a hurry to reverse the landslide of the morale.

In the meantime, her every nerve was like a burning rope, delivering explosive strength to the deepest part of her brain.

But... so what?

For both herself and Li Yao, this was not the first time that they had come close to death, was it?

From the time Li Yao and Skeleton Dragon were teleported to somewhere far away on Boneyard, to the time when she trained by herself in the depths of the Grand Desolate Plateau, to the time when Li Yao fought the revived member of the Pangu Clan on Kunlun, and to her soul-stirring, life-and-death adventures in the Nether World Sector and the Uranian Ring Sector, they had persisted through all of them just for the day to come and for their promise to each other.

“Li Yao…”

Faced with the three Colossi of the Imperium that were lunging at her aggressively, Ding Lingdang put on a touching or even ‘gentle’ smile inside the body of the iron giant, one that she had never shown to any outsiders before. At that moment, the God of War of the federation and the Blazing Tyrannosaur were both gone. The only person that existed was a woman and a wife.

Ding Lingdang mumbled, one word after another, “You will come back, and I will wait until you are!”

Boom!

The Draconic Phoenix’s flames of light that dimmed a moment ago flourished again. The nine furious dragons soared in the galaxy like the most brilliant and unique lighthouse in space that blossomed for only one person!

The three Colossi of the Imperium had already dashed to Ding Lingdang’s front when they came to an abrupt halt. Hesitating for a moment, they retreated to where they came from.

The moment they retreated, beams of blue brightness swept over and protected Ding Lingdang.

The Black Wind Fleet’s battle formation had new changes. They were in a hurry to get rid of the Colossi and the crystal suit team of the federation. Even at the loss of dozens of starships, they were determined to regroup into a solemn battle formation.

Ding Lingdang was slightly dazed. She immediately understood everything. There was no need for her to turn back. Countless starry spots were shining on the light beam of the crystal processor, which marched into the battlefield in a flawless square.

“You’re finally here!”

Ding Lingdang could not help but shout in the communication channel. Countless soldiers roared at the same time with her.

The elites of the Burning Prairie Fleet had finally arrived. The space battle that would decide the future of the federation was finally approaching the climax.

It was the same barrage, but the Burning Prairie Fleet was much tougher than the Heaven’s Origin Fleet that had blocked the Black Wind Fleet at the beginning. Because of the relentless and fearless efforts of their comrades, they were able to regroup and lock onto their targets unhurriedly, raining the fiercest firepower upon the slightly disordered Black Wind Fleet at the first second.

The Burning Prairie Fleet played the strongest note in its symphony of destruction!

In terms of theoretical combat ability, the Black Wind Fleet was still well above the many fleets of the federation combined.

But they did not expect that the Big Bai Fleet would rush out of nowhere or that the Big Bai Fleet would be so difficult to deal with. Because of that miscalculation, they were caught up in the pace of the Big Bai Fleet and the federal army.

The piercing harassment of the Big Bai Fleet and the assault team of Colossi made them unable to regroup into the standard defensive battle formation before the Burning Prairie Fleet arrived, nor did they have time to lock onto the important targets in the Burning Prairie Fleet.

After the first round of bombardment, both parties suffered heavy losses.

But the Burning Prairie Fleet was well prepared. The solemn battle formation was utterly undisrupted. When one starship was destroyed, a second starship would immediately take its place to ensure the accuracy and continuity of the firepower. The Black Wind Fleet, in comparison, grew even more disordered. A lot of starships were separated by the enemy’s firepower. The Big Bai Fleet and the assault team of Colossi were still moving and attacking within them, destroying the defense star beacons one after another whenever they had an opportunity.

The war was too awful.

On the bridge of Black Swirl, Heiye Ming—who was soaked in the nervous interaction liquids and absorbing the tremendous information in the battlefield with his soul deeply melded with the mainframe crystal processor—was more anxious than ever!

The battle could not continue like that.

Even if the two parties suffered equally heavy losses, the three space gates on the enemy’s side were only paralyzed and could be repaired at any moment to summon more reinforcements.

In comparison, the star beacons on his own side were being destroyed one after another. The number would soon reach the tipping point where it was impossible to assemble them into a standard space gate!

If they did not have a space gate, they would not have reinforcements. Even if they could annihilate the enemy, so what? Was it impossible for him to attack the Wall of Heaven’s Origin with the remnants of his troop and occupy the home planet of the Heaven’s Origin Sector? The star fortresses and the defensive forces within the atmosphere on the federation’s side would certainly not be easy to deal with!

The commander of the Burning Prairie Fleet was well aware of their dilemma. He focused eighty percent of his firepower on the star beacon troops, forcing Heiye Ming to rescue the troops with his main force in the ugliest battle formation time and time again. Despite the enormous combat ability on paper, his hands and feet were tied up, and he could not have been more uncomfortable.

Besides, there were still the Colossi. Quite a few Colossi that could not be purchased even if they had the money had been lost. One of them had even been entirely blown up by the Blazing Tyrannosaur. Not the slightest remnants that could be recycled were left behind.

Heiye Ming felt his heart aching when he thought of that.

War was always an extension of politics. The people of the Black Wind Sector had come to this place after such a long journey to gain wealth, food, and territory. If the few Colossi that he had were mostly destroyed there, such a loss would not be covered even if the entire federation was razed later!

In his anxiety, Heiye Ming showed signs of exhaustion.

He had to calculate an accurate number of working star beacons, the new changes of the fleet’s battle formation, and the possible developments of the battle. Then, he would have to decide the number of Exos to be deployed and the timing to take the last wide gamble. Despite the computational ability of the Divinity Transformation Stage, the burden was still too heavy for him to handle. His brain cells were all exploding like the soap bubbles under sunlight.

To this moment, Heiye Lan still believed in the victory of the Imperium.

It was because he still had not resorted to his last trump cards. Naturally, the Black Wind Fleet, as a magnificent expedition army from the Imperium that had gathered the elites of five Sectors, had brought many more than the ten Colossi.

But as for exactly how the remaining Colossi should be made use of, he had to think about it carefully. Those invaluable treasures were certainly not cannon fodder that could be consumed casually.

Thinking quickly, Heiye Ming drafted a flawless trap, hoping to lure the Burning Prairie, the flagship of the Burning Prairie Fleet, closer so that the remaining Colossi could destroy the flagship of the federation!

However…

There was a sting that was vaguely aching in his mind.

It was Su Changfa, the Immortal Cultivator of the Imperium who came to the federation a hundred years ago.

The Black Wind Fleet’s devastating situation right now was only partly due to the unexpected attack of the Big Bai Fleet. The most important reason was that he believed in Su Changfa’s cr*p!

It was exactly because Su Changfa had sent tremendous critical intelligence about the federation via the Spiritual Nexus and claimed that he could completely paralyze the space gates and the entire network in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, even showing certain unquestionable ‘evidence’ to him, that he had drafted such a highly risky plan of assault.

But from what he had seen, Su Changfa’s words could only be half believed. He had indeed paralyzed the Spiritual Nexus of the federation, but the damage level was far lower than expected. Not only was the Big Bai Fleet unaffected, even the damn Burning Prairie Fleet had recovered quickly!

**sshole.*

According to the plan and the ‘ability’ that Su Changfa had demonstrated, he should have been able to paralyze the Burning Prairie Fleet, the Big Bai Fleet, and even the defense system on the home planet simultaneously for at least twenty-four hours!

Right now, the Big Bai Fleet was not influenced by the paralysis of the Spiritual Nexus at all. It seemed to foresee their tactic and stab into their belly brutally.

Although the Burning Prairie Fleet had been disrupted, it had completely recovered after only three hours.

Therefore, the Black Wind Fleet seemed to be a victim of its own scheme now.

Did Su Changfa overestimate his ability, or had he long betrayed the Imperium for the federation, everything being just a trap?

When he thought about that, a shivering lightning flashed inside Heiye Ming’s brain. He could not help but recall the ‘liaison’ that was still caged deep inside Black Swirl, Su Changfa’s true disciple, Lu Qingchen!

Chapter 1807 - An Immortal Cultivator Who Loves the Federation

Maybe it was his imagination, but Heiye Ming suddenly felt unusual fatigue. Every thought inside his brain was galloping rampantly like a wild horse. Even a lot of his brain nerves were producing weird noises.

It was something that had never happened before in his long military career. He could tell that it was a sign of mental derangement!

Am I really too old now? Or maybe I was too heavily wounded in the battle a hundred years ago, and I never had a good chance to rest well in the journey over the past hundred years.

Heiye Ming secretly sighed to himself.

I wasn’t like this in my prime. At that time, when I participated in the large-scale battles between the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance with the strongest fleets of dozens of Sectors, even if the fierce battles lasted a whole month and I burnt my life and soul again and again, I was never as exhausted.

Now, I’m just annihilating a bunch of wretched brutes at the edge of the cosmos, and yet everything has become a mess…

Calming himself down, he focused his attention on the battle at hand.

The Burning Prairie Fleet, the Big Bai Fleet, and the Colossi of the federation, despite their unexpected combat ability, were still within the acceptable range. It was only a matter of how much he was willing to pay for the victory.

But as for Su Changfa and Lu Qingchen…

Heiye Ming thought of something. He retrieved the surveillance interface of Lu Qingchen’s brainwaves and physical parameters again.

At this moment, Lu Qingchen was sealed in an iron coffin tightly and hung in midair, branded with the cruelest barriers to ensure that the slightest twitch of any muscle, vein, or nerve would be sensed by Heiye Ming. Even the feeblest ripple inside his brain would be manifested on the main frame crystal processor clearly.

From the time he was locked up, Lu Qingchen’s brainwaves had been abnormally peaceful, so peaceful that Heiye Ming even suspected that something was wrong with the surveillance equipment. He had to summon more advanced crystal processors and facilities again and again to connect Lu Qingchen’s brain to the main frame crystal processor deeply, in order to ensure the veracity of the feedback of brainwaves.

But when he checked again, Heiye Ming discovered, to his surprise, that Lu Qingchen’s supposedly peaceful brain was erupting like a volcano. It surpassed the Refinement Stage, the Building Foundation Stage, the Core Formation Stage, the Nascent Soul Stage, the Divinity Transformation Stage, and even the limits of human beings in only one second!

It was not even waves that could possibly be triggered by the brain of a human. A supernova seemed to have exploded deep inside Lu Qingchen’s brain and unleashed infinite energy!

How is this possible?

What are the guys in the surveillance room doing? Why didn’t they report such an anomaly to me?

Is this a fault of the crystal processors, or…

Heiye Ming activated his soul to the maximum, controlling different crystal processors and crystal cameras while dialing through more than ten communication routes at the same time.

Right when he was about to summon a large batch of subordinates to look into Lu Qingchen’s situation, the abruptly rising curve of brain activity dropped in an equally steep manner, until it hit the bottom and turned into a straight line without any ups and downs.

Lu Qingchen’s brainwaves returned to zero.

Theoretically speaking, it was a sign of death.

Of course, some experts who practiced special techniques could reduce their heartbeat, breathing, brainwaves, and all other biophysical indices to little to none. But right now, more than thirty probe pins had been deeply pierced into Lu Qingchen’s brain. It would not be easy for him to play any trick even if he wanted to.

Heiye Ming suddenly had an ominous feeling.

It was the natural instinct of a seasoned warrior in extreme danger.

A 3D light beam was slowly unfolded in front of his eyes. In the picture, Lu Qingchen was still hanging in midair, shaking slightly. There was no telling whether he was dead or alive, but the Immortal Cultivators who were supposed to watch over him were all lying on the ground, drooling, bleeding, and cramping uncontrollably.

Damn it! Heiye Ming shouted aloud in his heart. His telepathic thoughts expanded in all directions like an octopus, trying to summon his subordinates.

But all the telepathic thoughts bounced back as if they had hit an invisible wall!

The next second, darkness arose in front of his eyes, as if an all-pervasive black curtain slowly surrounded him. Two different worlds seemed to have overlapped with each other. In one of the worlds, he was in the nervous interaction liquids inside the command capsule on his original bridge. In the other world, he was in the middle of a weird, black ocean!

“It seems that the Black Wind Fleet is in trouble.” A scornful voice echoed in his ears casually. “Do you need me to give you a hand?”

It was Lu Qingchen’s voice.

Heiye Ming’s pupils constricted violently. He tried hard to condense his telepathic thoughts to penetrate through the black curtain. He even waved his hands and fleet crazily, hoping to catch the attention of other people on the bridge, but the subordinates who were next to him seemed to be in a completely different world. None of them noticed the anomaly at all.

In the meantime, the dark matter, similar to a jellyfish, slowly rose from the ‘ocean’ below his feet and began to consume him from his feet!

Heiye Ming was greatly shocked. He hurried to boost his soul, but his soul seemed to be polluted by something. It was impossible to activate the usual strength at all.

“It’s useless. When the Black Wind Fleet performed the space jump, I injected a little something into your soul and the mainframe crystal processor of Black Swirl.” Lu Qingchen’s chuckles echoed from various directions in the black ocean. “Even the Blood God, the commander of the expedition army of the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago, couldn’t bear to refuse such a gift. Why don’t you stop wasting your strength for nothing?”

Heiye Ming realized that he had fallen into a dreadful trap. With everything coming to this point, the seasoned general of the Imperium calmed down. “Are you Lu Qingchen or something else? Your master, Su Changfa, has betrayed the Imperium, but you didn’t betray the federation. Both of you have abandoned the true path of immortality?”

“Hehe. I am Lu Qingchen and just… Lu Qingchen.” The voice echoed again in the black ocean. “As for my master Su Changfa, I regret to tell you that he passed away a long time ago. What you saw on the Spiritual Nexus was an illusion, or rather, it was my master’s database.

“Betray the federation? Of course I didn’t! Look at what is happening before your eyes. How brave the soldiers of the federation and how magnificent their fleets are! Such a federation is so powerful, honorable, and invincible! Why on earth would I betray such a great motherland and join an Imperium that is decaying and not half as strong as it appears?”

“So, I’ve been completely fooled…” Pain flashed inside Heiye Ming’s eyes. A moment later, his eyes grew sharp again, and he gnashed his teeth. “No. Your strength is so vicious. This is atypical for a Cultivator. What are you exactly?”

“Like I said just now, I am an Immortal Cultivator who loves the federation and the civilization of mankind.”

In the dark ocean, Lu Qingchen peacefully said, “As you have seen, the Star Glory Federation right now is like the sun at seven o’clock in the morning. It is pure, righteous, and magnificent. Nothing can stop it from rising.

“But when the sun rises to its peak, it will eventually start falling. Every new force will inevitably be contaminated with hopeless diseases and bad habits after it develops to a certain point. It will slowly decay and degrade until it becomes what it used to despise and fight against. Heroes slay dragons, only to turn into dragons later. It has always been the case since ancient times.

“There may be infinite resources in the universe, but the resources that can be collected and utilized efficiently by mankind are limited. At the very least, compared with the population and desires of human beings that grow exponentially, they are far from enough. As long as this contradiction remains unresolved, no matter how bright, pure, and magnificent the Star Glory Federation is today, will it really last?

“On the path to the center of the cosmos, during the expansion and conquest of the three thousand Sectors, the Star Glory Federation is bound to meet a lot of conundrums and be faced with all kinds of tough, painful choices. In the dilemmas, it will become what it used to hate and object to in the past step by step, ending up being… another Imperium.”

“What do you want exactly?” Heiye Ming struggled to shout. “Since you claim to be a firm Immortal Cultivator, and you are so pessimistic about the future of the federation, surrender to the Imperium now! No. Not surrender, join hands with the warriors of the Black Wind Fleet. If we join our hands, we can certainly shake the political structure of the Imperium. We may—we may even be able to control the entire Imperium and the entire sea of stars!”

“Exactly. You do have a valid point, General Ming. That’s what I believe and what I am doing right now!” Lu Qingchen smiled. “However, since we are forming an alliance, there is bound to be someone in charge, right? If you meant what you said just now, General Ming, just open your soul completely and do not refuse my gift anymore. Let me inject the real great path into the core of your soul. Then, together, we will reform the federation, revolutionize the Imperium, and rescue the whole universe from the heinous Pangu Civilization!”

“Your—your great path?” Heiye Ming widened his eyes, with hissing sounds echoing deep inside his throat. “Your Immortal Cultivator 2.0 theory?”

Lu Qingchen did not give an answer—he simply went on. “I believe in the true path of immortality, but one’s belief shouldn’t be stubborn, rigid, and forever the same. Instead, it should change and develop according to the contradictions in reality, and it must be ready to evolve and change at any moment!

“Look at yourselves, people who claim to be believers of the true path of immortality. You were beaten by the Covenant Alliance at the center of the cosmos and had to flee everywhere like stray dogs. No. Not ‘like’. You *are* stray dogs because you have even lost the Black Wind Sector, your nest.

“You have come to the edge of the cosmos to conquer a bunch of barbarians. Yet, under the radiance of the path of the Cultivators, you are being crushed into an utter mess, unable to do anything about it.

“Is such a pedantic, inflexible, inward-looking true path of immortality really qualified to represent the future of mankind?

“General Ming, ask yourself. If the true path of immortality is really the only truth in the entire universe, why is this battle such a mess? Your performance right now is truly a shame for the true path of immortality!”

Chapter 1808 - Two Worlds, Two Classes

Heiye Ming was rendered speechless. He was about to yell at the Immortal Cultivator who supposedly loved the federation, *Aren't you the one to blame for the mess right now?*

However, with everything going so far, would his useless complaint help at all?

Heiye Ming knew very clearly that his opponent had shown up in such a weird form for much more complicated purposes than to destroy the Black Wind Fleet.

The relation between this Lu Qingchen and the federal government was quite subtle!

Lu Qingchen's voice continued coming over casually and peacefully. "The true path of immortality of the Imperium of True Human Beings is founded on lies. However you may brag about your ideology, lies are always lies. You purposefully highlight the disparity between 'true human beings' and 'hominoids'. You attach the greatest importance to the true human beings while despising and exploiting the hominoids blatantly. You do not even consider hominoids as part of mankind, which is rather ridiculous from a genetic, biological, or sociological point of view. You are just fooling yourselves!

"Whether they are strong or weak, true human beings and hominoids are the same species. It is a fact that cannot be changed by a few laws or edits in dictionaries and biology textbooks.

“What real great path can you pursue when you do not dare admit such a simple fact?

“Now, a lot of ordinary people are right in the federal army standing against you. Aren’t those ‘hominoids’ that you despise also emitting the most dazzling brilliance and dragging you into the most agitating swamp? The truth is right before your eyes. General Ming, how long will the Immortal Cultivators like you keep ignoring it?”

Heiye Ming gritted his teeth hard, and every nerve in his body was shaking violently.

It was not because of Lu Qingchen’s words but because the black jellyfish was like a swamp that was slowly swallowing his legs. It was even generating a weird attraction force, trying to absorb him into the depths of the black ocean!

“The system of the Imperium is the most excellent one, despite the risk of overcorrection. Some humans are superior to others. The universe is such a vast place, but the resources available are lacking. Wasting precious resources on the lousy, inferior bloodlines is a great crime that will lead to the doom of our entire civilization!”

“Do not preach such petty kindness to me,” Heiye Ming bellowed. “My belief will not be shaken!”

Lu Qingchen was amused. “General Ming, like I said just now, I am as much an Immortal Cultivator as you are. Why would I have such petty kindness?

“Don’t be hasty and just hear me out. It is true that the Imperium of True Human Beings is founded on lies, but so is the Star Glory Federation, my dear motherland!

“The lies of the Imperium of True Human Beings are that the so-called ‘Immortal Cultivators’ and ‘ordinary people’ differ so greatly that they are essentially two different species. The lies of the Star Glory Federation, in comparison, are that the ‘Cultivators’ and the ‘ordinary people’ do not have any fundamental difference and that they are absolutely the same!

“Tsk, tsk, tsk. Have you not noticed it, General Ming? It’s like two sides of the same coin. Each party has gone to an extreme.

“In fact, no matter what bright, righteous, and blood-boiling theories are adopted to disguise it, ‘general equality’ is always just an empty slogan. It is fine if the high-school students talk about such a notion while they are still in their carefree school years, but for a leader of the civilization, if they really take such an idea seriously, it will be the greatest disaster for the whole civilization.

“Like you said just now, General Ming, human beings are of different levels, and some are nobler than others. Personally speaking, I believe that the ‘superior bloodlines’ and the ‘inferior bloodlines’ should not be classified according to whether or not the subject has awakened their spiritual root and boasts tremendous physical strength or computational ability. Such a way of classification is too crude, violent, and mechanical.”

Heiye Ming was stunned. “What standard can better characterize them than the spiritual root and their level?”

He found it more and more puzzling who the guy that was bewildering him was.

Heiye Ming had seen quite a lot of regular Cultivators, and he had grown highly immune to their obsolete theories.

However, Lu Qingchen claimed that he was an Immortal Cultivator and that even the Imperium of True Human Beings was founded on lies. That was…

Without him knowing it, Heiye Ming was struggling weaker and weaker.

“The ocean is vaster than a continent, the sky is vaster than the ocean, and a human’s mind is vaster than the sky,” Lu Qingchen said. “Humans… the honorable, mysterious, and powerful humans. Nobody knows how much strength is hidden deep inside the enigmatic but boundless mind. Such strength is not to be gauged by one or two organs, or the stupid classification of levels such as Refinement Stage, Building Foundation Stage, and Core Formation Stage.

“Even a strengthless mother will unleash strength that can destroy stars inside her brain when her children are hurt, and even an expert who has advanced into the Core Formation Stage or the Nascent Soul Stage may become vile, shameless, and cowardly because of an abrupt change. He may even waste precious resources on fighting for his own interests instead of using them to push the civilization forward.

“Isn’t this the case for the Imperium of True Human Beings?

“According to your theory, after most of the resources are concentrated on true human beings, or the Immortal Cultivators, the Imperium should be thriving, and the civilization should be striding forward. More than a thousand years have passed since the country was established, which should’ve been more than enough for you to unite the sea of stars and march deeper into the universe, shouldn’t it?

“But what happened? How many of the resources that have been given to the Immortal Cultivators are dedicated to the improvement of the civilization, and how many are wasted in conspiracies, self-brutalization, and meaningless conflicts as well as the suppression of Cultivators and ‘hominoids’?

“Aren’t you the perfect example, General Ming? You did not dare ask for reinforcements from the homeland of the Imperium but chose the most idiotic, risky strategy of a sudden assault because you were worried that the reinforcements from the homeland of the Imperium would have ill intentions and swallow the entire Black Wind Fleet, right?

“Just ask yourself this. If you are truly doing everything for the civilization of mankind as you claim, why do you trust each other so little, and why are you warier of friends than foes? Is such a configuration of resources really qualified to be called ‘the most excellent system of the civilization of mankind’?”

Heiye Ming blushed. After hesitating for a long time, he asked in return, “Is the Star Glory Federation any better?”

“It is slightly better than the Imperium, but there are fatal, hidden problems, too,” Lu Qingchen casually said. “It is exactly the ‘petty kindness’ that we talked about earlier. Since everybody is equal theoretically, a lot of resources must be invested to guarantee their fundamental rights. Even the laziest, most despicable, most shameless, and most gutless people have to be fed at the cost of tremendous resources, to make sure that they do not starve to death. They cannot be forced to work, either.

“Right now, the Star Glory Federation is a morning sun that is on the rise. Under the support of the resource planets discovered in the seven Sectors and the technological leap brought forth by Kunlun, the cost of the ‘petty kindness’ is still affordable.

“But the voyage in the sea of stars won’t always be so smooth. As the federation slowly expands, the inferior class will proliferate like cancer and invade the federation’s nerves and bones. When the country encounters certain unexpected danger in the dark universe, my motherland is destined to be broken by such ‘petty kindness’.

“The ideology of the Cultivators is an out-and-out lie. Humans are born unequal. Some people are more smart, diligent, determined, and self-disciplined than others. What’s wrong with devoting as many resources as possible to the distinguished fellows and letting the inferior genes and bloodlines be eliminated of natural cause?”

Heiye Ming was truly confused. “Isn’t—isn’t this similar to the ideology of the Imperium? What do you want exactly if you agree with neither the Imperium nor the federation!”

“The ideologies of the Imperium and the federation both have their merits and shortcomings. That’s why we need to revise our mindset and revolutionize the federation, the Imperium, and even the entire universe!” Lu Qingchen said. “I believe I’ve made myself very clear. I am an Immortal Cultivator who believes in the continuous evolution of mankind, but I am also a native of the federation who has been edified by humanitarianism and admires the radiation of humanity.

“I don’t agree with the Imperium’s judging system where strength is the only criterion. I object to your cruel treatment of the ‘hominoids’, too. Such stupid savaging and exploitation will not only lower the efficiency of production but also tend to raise the resistance of the hominoids. It is also a defilement to the honorable spirit of mankind and reduces humans to the level of animals.

“But what if we can combine the approaches of the federation and the Imperium and focus the advantages of the Cultivators’ path and the true path of immortality?

“Yes. Some humans are superior humans, and some are inferior mortals. Most of the resources should be concentrated on the ‘superior humans’, but do we have to be so cruel and harsh when we treat the ‘inferior mortals’? Even if they are truly items that should be eliminated naturally, can we not show some humanity toward our compatriots? Just consider it as the ‘hospice’ for the inferior genes!”

Heiye Ming sneered hard. “It is quite easy for you to say. Like you said just now, those inferior hominoids are the stupidest, laziest, most cowardly, and weakest beings. Even the lash of whips may not be enough for them to work hard. Are there enough precious resources to show them humanitarianism?”

“Of course, there aren’t so many precious resources in reality, but the case will be different in a virtual world,” Lu Qingchen said emotionlessly. “The civilization of mankind in my vision should be classified into two classes and two worlds. The inferior bloodlines, the ordinary people, or the ‘hominoids’ are not qualified to live in the real world and waste precious resources. They should all be migrated into the virtual world.

“In the virtual world, nobody will torture and exploit them, and nobody will govern them as high and mighty lords. They can play, horse around, and squander their lives however they see fit. I believe that this is humane enough and will not cause any resistance, right?

“The real world, on the other hand, belongs to the real honorable, brave, hardworking, resolute people who have all the excellent qualities of mankind. It doesn’t matter whether they are called Cultivators or Immortal Cultivators. They are the people who are really qualified to lead our civilization to conquer the entire universe!”

Chapter 1809 - Do You Want to Be… Truly Alive?

Two worlds, two classes, and a combination of reality and illusion!

There was no telling if it was because of Lu Qingchen’s theory or the calm and crazy tone when he illustrated it, but Heiye Ming, as a seasoned Immortal Cultivator who had killed more people than he could count, felt cold to the bone.

He found that he was slightly convinced by theory!

“Don’t you think that only such a social system can be called ‘perfect’?” Lu Qingchen accelerated his speed, and his smile gradually became colder. “Every civilization is always swarmed by tremendous worthless garbage. They are lazy, unmotivated, unintelligent, and incapable of managing their time and emotions effectively. However, encouraged by the ideas such as natural rights and general equality, they somehow believe that they are naturally endowed with all the rights of a human. So, they become greedy, ravenous, and condescending!

“They do not have the great dream of exploring the boundless sea of stars and pushing our magnificent civilization to the end of time and space. They also lack the distinguished qualities to put their goals, large and small, into practice. Courage, determination, honesty, integrity… They have none.

“They even mess up their own meaningless lives and can’t handle the most basic studies and work well. They wallow in alcohol, drugs, gambling, games, and crass entertainment products every day, living their entire lives in ignorance. Meanwhile, they waste precious food, air, water, and other resources!

“It’s quite a shame. Although I admit that a lot of elites who have noble minds are among the ordinary people whose spiritual roots haven’t awakened and that they are more than qualified to live in the real world, the ratio of the remaining useless garbage will be no lower than fifty percent. At the very least, that is the ration that I’ve calculated from the game ‘Civilization’.

“Perhaps they are just the flawed products that are the price that must be paid for the evolution of mankind.

“It can’t be helped. The civilization of mankind was a ‘premature infant’ that was hastened in a laboratory in the first place. A hundred thousand years ago, our ancestors were still collecting fruits in the jungle and shrieking in fear at the fire caused by lightning strikes. A hundred thousand years is not enough to make all of us evolve to the era of the grand universe at a high speed. Some people are bound to be left behind and eliminated.

“The treatment of those ‘flawed products’ marks the greatest difference between the Imperium and the federation, the Immortal Cultivators and the Cultivators.

“The Imperium does not treat garbage as humans at all but consider them to be the humblest slaves and fundamental capital goods. I have to say that you’re wrong. However worthless they are, the garbage are human beings who have feelings. Faced with tyranny, they will hate and resist. At the very least, they will slack off, without any spirit or enthusiasm. The overall efficiency of the utilization of resources in the Imperium will be further reduced.

“The federation and the Cultivators, with their politically correct ideology, deceive themselves by turning a blind eye to the worthless garbage. They are even under the illusion that those people can be reshaped by education.

“How is it possible? You cannot build a wall with mud. Some genes are not adapted to the era of the grand universe. Allowing the garbage to be mixed among the constructors and defenders of the great federation is not mercy but irresponsible hypocrisy, which will only ruin my beloved motherland, the last hope of the civilization of mankind!

“Since the approaches of both the Imperium and the federation are unfeasible, what is my solution?

“My solution is to send the garbage, the flawed products, and the stragglers on the path of evolution into the virtual world and only keep their brains and part of their reproductive system in the real world. It will be easier for management and reduce the resources that they waste to the minimum without causing them any pain. Since they are fond of narcotizing themselves and daydreaming in their filthy, smelly rooms without any courage to face reality, let them dream in the virtual world and live their entire lives comfortably and carefreely! Let the people who are really audacious and wise have most of the resources and face the darkness and cruelty of the real world. Isn’t this the best ending for everybody?

“Asking someone to shoulder responsibility that is beyond their capabilities is both immoral and idiotic. Our evolution has been too fast. A large proportion of our compatriots are essentially monkeys in human skin. Why does the Star Glory Federation have to force them to become the warriors to defend the civilization? It is impossible, stupid, and cruel!

“The virtual world—or rather, the Spiriters’ Realm—will be the best destination for the pitiful, pathetic, and poignant compatriots of mankind. The garbage from both the federation and the Imperium should live inside the Spiriters’ Realm!

“Please note that it is not a moral judgment to call them garbage. I do not mean to despise or criticize them at all. I am merely stating a fact.

“The sun is round, the rivers always flow, and at least fifty percent of humans are useless garbage. Clearing them from the real world and sending them to an illusionary one that is less difficult and more merciful will make both the entire universe and their own lives more beautiful. These are all undeniable facts. Both the Cultivators and the Immortal Cultivators should honor facts, shouldn’t they? What do you think, General Ming?”

Heiye Ming was lost for words.

The black jellyfish was slowly moving upward and had already reached his abdomen. It was constantly piercing countless black tentacles into his body and crawling into the depths of his soul along with his thoughts, making it impossible for him to maintain his normal thinking, or rather, giving him a brand-new thinking system.

“Then, how—how do you decide the ‘flawed products’ that should be banished to the virtual world and the ‘superior bloodlines’ that are qualified to live in reality?” the old Immortal Cultivator asked.

It meant that he was already more or less convinced.

Although Lu Qingchen was still nowhere to be seen, his confident voice was coming from all directions. “I will not be the one who makes the decision; they will decide for themselves.

“In my utopia, the souls of everyone will live inside the Spiriters’ Realm at the beginning in a virtual world that is not very cruel but still plagued by a lot of problems. Maybe you can call it ‘the first test world’.

“Different people will live different kinds of lives in ‘the first test world’. They will encounter problems and troubles and emanate intense feelings while overcoming them. Their minds and qualities will be revealed during the process, too.

“Through a complicated and meticulous algorithm, those who have potential will be given a special invitation. Let me see… This could be written on the invitation. ‘Do you want to know the meaning of life? Do you want to be… truly alive?’

“If they give a positive answer, they will immediately be moved away from the dull, boring, monotonous ‘first test world’ and find themselves in the second test world that is made up of all kinds of thrilling adventures and battles. It is also the real test world!

“In this world, they may experience a space battle as cannon fodder, fight the most brutal and horrible monster in the whole universe in a group of three to five, or happen upon all kinds of uncanny, illogical, and unreasonable events that they can only crack with wisdom and precise reasoning.

“In different fields of test, their souls will be polished and cleansed, and their minds will be purer and stronger.

“In the end, after they pass all the test procedures, they will earn a ‘real’ body through their valor, resolution, patience, devotion, and wisdom. They will also learn the truth of the civilization of mankind, and they will be qualified to live in the real world and defend the ‘real’ civilization of mankind!

“Think about it. Wouldn’t the people who are screened out in such a way be the smartest, the strongest, the most distinguished, the most responsible, and the most visionary ones? Isn’t such a talent select method and configuration of resources ten thousand times better than the current systems in the federation and the Imperium?”

His mouth dry, Heiye Ming stammered, “Not—not about the spiritual root and the strength of the body, but all about the mind?”

“A powerful mind and soul will also stimulate the brain to grow a spiritual root,” Lu Qingchen replied. “Do you not understand such simple logic, General Ming?

“Besides, as the training technology further advances, one day, artificial spiritual roots, mechanical cores, or even synthesized Nascent Souls will no longer be dreams. By then, a strong body will be an everyday item. What really limits us will only be the resources and the mind to drive the body.

“Resources are so precious that they must be given to the minds that know how to cherish and make use of them!”

Taking a deep breath, Heiye Ming asked, “What about those people who are not qualified to take the test or fail the tests?”

“Basically,” Lu Qingchen said, “we will give everybody a few test chances during their growth by means of dreams. As long as they are strong-willed, even the most unwise and weak people will slowly grow up after a few tests. We do not care about their strength but only focus on the sturdiness of their mind!

“If they are really too worthless to be educated, like I said just now, we will find an appropriate opportunity to throw them into a virtual world to daydream and enjoy themselves. Or maybe we do not need to waste our computational ability. It won’t hurt at all if they just live in the plain ‘first test world’ until they die. The place is not under the scourge of demon beasts or faced with the threat of the Imperium, the Covenant Alliance, and the threats of alien species. It is much more wonderful than reality.

“All in all, living in the virtual world is not a punishment or torture but for their own good. The real world is so dark and cruel that only the real brave and noble people are qualified to face it.”

Heiye Ming struggled to lick his lips. “What about offspring?”

“Right, offspring. Reproduction, the most important issue for mankind,” Lu Qingchen said casually. “In principle, I do not bear to deprive any compatriot of mankind of their right to have children. But you also know that on a lot of occasions, resource insufficiency and population booms are the roots of all tragedies.

“If there are abundant resources, in the spirit of humanity, we will be willing to allow everyone to have their offspring. After all, it is just a brain and a reproductive system, and they won’t cost many resources.

“But if the resources are running out, there will be nothing we can do. The noble warriors living in reality are of course more entitled to leaving descendants, who will be stronger and more likely to pass on the essence of the civilization of mankind.

“As for the useless garbage living in the virtual world, there is no need to worry about them. I’ve got everything figured out for them. Virtual offspring will be created for them through artificial intelligence. After all, they have no idea that they are living in an illusionary world, and they will not know that the fruit of their love after ten months of pregnancy is merely a ‘Deviant Spirit’ jumbled up from databases and algorithms. No. They will never, ever, ever find out the truth.”

Chapter 1810 - Perfect Country

As a seasoned Immortal Cultivator, Heiye Ming thought that he had seen the cruelest and most evil things in the world. His heart had been hardened to such a point that he would have absolutely no mercy to an inferior species like the ‘hominoids’.

However, after hearing Lu Qingchen’s arrangements for the hominoids, the old Immortal Cultivator could not help but feel that a certain area deep inside his heart trembled for a while. “Virtual partner, virtual offspring, virtual life. For those ‘people’, is there anything that is real?”

“It’s their own choice,” Lu Qingchen said. “You can’t have all the best things in the world. Now that you’ve chosen an easier and more comfortable time, you have to pay a small price for it.

“If they will never find out that the world they are in is virtual, is there any difference between reality and illusion?

“If they are capable of discovering the falseness and weirdness of their world and pass multiple tests, proving that they are qualified to live in the real world, they will naturally be given a real partner, a real child, and a real life.

“This is free choice and a fair deal. You can’t expect them to live an easy and comfortable life in the real world. Don’t be so greedy, General Ming.

“Of course, cutting off the bloodline of a person by brute force can indeed be very cruel. Besides, there are infinite mysteries about genes. Who knows whether or not the seemingly trash bloodlines entail certain interesting possibilities of evolution? Therefore, we will try to keep the seed of every human and carefully preserve them. When the resources are tremendously abundant, those seeds will be fertilized as the new members of the Spiriters’ Realm.

“In such a case, the resilience of the civilization of mankind will be greatly improved. In the eras when the environment is harsh and the resources are few, we will shut down most of the Spiriters’ Realm, reducing more than ninety percent of the consumption of computational ability and resources. The enormous ‘bank of human seeds’ and part of the elites will be the only things left behind to continue the fight in the real world.

“After we discover new worlds that are full of spiritual energy, or if we grasp a new method of energy utilization and reenter a resourceful era, we will be able to unfold hundreds of Spiriters’ Realms quickly and awaken everyone in the ‘bank of seeds’, starting a new round of filtering and evolution.

“Think about it. Isn’t such a civilization of mankind much stronger to resist crises?”

Heiye Ming pondered for a moment and said, “But the newly incubated children will not have a father or a mother. Their parents are already ‘shut down’ by you during the last period of resource drought!”

“That’s a minor problem that can easily be fixed.” Lu Qingchen chuckled. “Since offspring can be virtual, parents certainly can be, too. We will retain their parents’ databases and operation patterns and slightly optimize the algorithms to turn them into more perfect nurturers, ensuring that the new generation of mankind develops toward positivity, resolution, and optimism. The evolution of the whole civilization will be accelerated!”

The solution dazed Heiye Ming for a long time again. “What about the resource problem in the real world? Although the hominoids are humble, foolish, greedy, and lazy, under the careful education of the Imperium, they are capable of most heavy and gruesome jobs. Building, mining, herding, and even fighting on the frontline all require the participation of countless hominoids.

“If the civilization of mankind is a great ship that is sailing forward unwaveringly in a vast ocean, the Immortal Cultivators are the captain, the helmsmen, and the sailors of the ship, while the hominoids are the burning fuel in the engine compartment. Although the captain and the sailors are important, they can achieve nothing without fuel.

“But in your ‘perfect kingdom’, you have exiled all the hominoids into the virtual world. Who’s going to accomplish the fundamental work in the real world? Are you going to let the carefully-chosen elites mine or fight as cannon fodder?”

“Fully-automatic machinery,” Lu Qingchen said. “By ‘machinery’, I am not just referring to spiritual puppets, mining spiders, Grand Illusionary Soldiers, or other metal and crystal products. I’m also talking about highly-controllable demon beasts as well as mutants whose primeval cells have been activated and whose genes have been strengthened based on the flesh and blood of humans.

“Both the spiritual puppets and the mutants will be stronger, smarter, and more loyal. They will always be dutiful and hardworking. None of them will ever slack off or hesitate to carry out their orders.

“Most importantly of all, no ethical or moral issues will be involved in the whole process. However you exploit and savage them, it will not be ‘evil’ at all because despite their similarity to humans in appearance, what is hidden inside their brains is not a real soul but just an artificial intelligence that we call a ‘Deviant Spirit’, exactly the same as the artificial intelligences that are at the service of the lesser bloodlines in the virtual world.”

“It’s impossible!” Heiye Ming blurted out. “Artificial intelligence can’t be so advanced. It can only be an aid. Besides, its cost is too high. That’s why we have to use so many bloody hominoids!”

“That’s only the opinion of the Imperium because you started on the wrong path at the beginning,” Lu Qingchen said. “You’ve looked down upon the ordinary people since the very beginning and regard more than ninety-nine percent of your population as ‘hominoids’. Therefore, you seem to boast infinite, cheap human resources that can be blatantly exploited. Naturally, you are not motivated to develop the technology in the fields of artificial intelligence and mechanical automation.

“This is a vicious cycle. The less attention you pay to the development of automation and artificial intelligence, the higher the cost to use the spiritual puppets and the human mutants will be, and the more you will be forced to exploit the ‘hominoids’ cruelly.

“Then, after you invest tremendous resources into the exploitation of hominoids, and a whole set of social customs, business patterns, and law and political systems are established, even fewer people will research the technology of automation and artificial intelligence.

“You’ve been walking on the wrong path for a thousand years. Barely anything can be changed with the strength within the Imperium. The Grand Illusionary Soldiers are already your limits. You do not need to develop artificial intelligence of a higher level.

“But the Star Glory Federation is different. We don’t have so many hominoids that we can oppress, and we have crystal processor technology that is on par with the Imperium’s. Therefore, from the very beginning, we have been pursuing automation and artificial intelligence.

“According to our deduction, as long as the resources of the whole civilization are dedicated to the study of this field, in another thousand years at most, most of the highly-repetitive fundamental work that has standard procedures—such as mining, fighting, herding, fighting, planet modification, and sailing route maintenance—can be accomplished by spiritual puppets and human mutants. Even the work that cannot be completed by them will be done through remote control with telepathic thoughts!”

Heiye Ming watched the black jellyfish swallowing his chest and throat and slowly crawling toward his head. He could not help but moan, “What kind of world is that?”

“A perfect world!” Lu Qingchen’s voice grew more and more persuasive. “Most of the mediocre, common, weak, and lazy people will enjoy their lives to their heart’s content in the virtual world, considering their life as a game in ‘beginner mode’. Nobody will savage and exploit them. They can stay at home doing nothing or commit all kinds of crimes if they want to!

“For those who are highly motivated, have a strong mind, believe in free will, and crave a ‘real life’, they will train themselves crazily in the cruel ‘test battlefields’, improving and proving themselves. Eventually, they will be given one or more strong bodies as the ‘shells’ for them to arrive in the real world!

“The elites of mankind, the people who are really alive, will be engaged in cutting-edge studies, the most creative artwork, the most arduous battles, and the most mysterious adventures!

“In the meantime, countless human mutants, controllable demon beasts, and spiritual puppets will scatter in every corner of the vast territory of mankind, taking care of the cumbersome and dangerous fundamental work. Like you said just now, General Ming, they will provide sufficient fuel for the civilization of mankind to stride forward!

“Look, in such a world, the high efficiency of resource utilization of the Immortal Cultivators and the humanity of the Cultivators are perfectly combined. This is the future!”

Heiye Ming breathed heavily and gritted his teeth for the last struggle. “I—I don’t believe it! I don’t believe in perpetual machines. I don’t believe that such a future will really be perfect!

“Don’t presume that I’m unaware of the cost of the virtual world. Creating a virtual world and maintaining an enormous database require countless crystal processors of enormous sizes. Do the production, maintenance, and upgrade of those crystal processors not consume resources?

“According to your plan, if a virtual world that is large enough to contain most human beings is to be created, the scale of the crystal processors will be unimaginably huge!

Let’s forget if it is technologically possible first. Even if it is, the fees to keep such a system functioning for one second will be astronomical!”

The deep ocean fell into silence after his words. It was not until a moment later that Lu Qingchen’s chuckles came over again.

“You do have a point, General Ming. Perhaps I should apologize to them for my hasty conclusion just now. Fundamentally speaking, there is no useless garbage. Even the most inferior humans boast tremendous power inside their soul, which is their feelings.

“Humans’ feelings have been suppressed so long that their strength has declined, but as long as we completely break the seal deep inside the soul, everybody will be able to unleash the most profuse energy!

“Such energy will not only be enough to support their brains and reproductive systems but also supply the crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus incessantly to keep the functioning and upgrade of the whole enormous system. If there is additional energy, the elites in the real world will be able to absorb it to make themselves even stronger than before!”

Heiye Ming’s eyes widened. “The strength of feelings? Break the seal of emotions? Also, you mentioned the Blood God just now… I finally understand. You are not an Immortal Cultivator at all but an extraterrestrial devil who feeds on the feelings of mankind. Both the Black Wind Fleet and the Star Glory Federation have been deceived!”

Chapter 1811 - Origins of Humans and Devils

“Why are you so strongly biased against the extraterrestrial devils, General Ming? You don’t seem to be as upset and rejective when we are talking about the Cultivators!”

Lu Qingchen did not deny his identity at all. Instead, he answered with the most frank and affirmative tone. “Yes. I am an extraterrestrial devil, but I am also an Immortal Cultivator who belongs to the reformists and a patriot who loves the Star Glory Federation too dearly to watch it wander off the right path and is determined to revolutionize his motherland. Can the three identities only be in contradiction?

“Perhaps the Imperium of True Human Beings at the center of the cosmos is a place where racism, prejudice, and egoism prevail. But the Star Glory Federation is different. This is an open, tolerant and harmonious paradise. Here, ‘humans’ and ‘demons’, mortal enemies in the old days, have shaken hands in peace. Both the people from the desert world ‘Water Crystal Sector’ and the people from the ‘Forest Ocean Sector’, which has nothing but trees, are enjoying their happy lives. Why can’t the extraterrestrial devils join the federation and build a beautiful big family together with everybody else? Humans, demons, Spiriters, extraterrestrial devils… We can be united and form a perfect symbiosis.”

You—you’ve got to be kidding me!

Although the black jellyfish had almost consumed his mouth, Heiye Ming could not help but roar, “Both the

Imperium of True Human Beings and the Star Glory Federation are a part of the civilization of mankind. The Immortal Cultivators and the Cultivators have different beliefs, but we are all human beings. This is a civil war of mankind!

“As for demons… Fine, even if I will never agree that the bizarre-shaped demons are also members of mankind, they are at least carbon-based creatures made of flesh and blood, aren’t they? Despite their peculiar appearances and living habits, they are at least derived from human beings, aren’t they?

“What are the extraterrestrial devils? A bunch of unsubstantial, cunning energy lives, parasites who try to control your feelings and mind!

“I will not be fooled however you dress yourself up. Don’t forget that the Imperium of True Human Beings is the rightful successor of the Star Ocean Imperium, and the Star Ocean Imperium was destroyed because the demons conspired with the extraterrestrial devils and corrupted the Blood God, the commander of the expedition army!

“As the rightful successor of the Star Ocean Imperium, we consider the extraterrestrial devils our sworn enemies. You must be daydreaming to ask for my cooperation!

“Now I know what move you are actually playing with your so-called ‘perfect world’. You confine most of the people into the Spiriters’ Realm for the sole purpose of absorbing their feelings and soul waves. The great lives of mankind will be served to the extraterrestrial devils as food. That’s all!

“As for the ‘elites’ who have passed the cruel tests, the so-called ‘real people’ who strive in reality, must’ve been deeply polluted and corrupted by the extraterrestrial devils without them knowing it in the ‘test battlefields’, mustn’t they?

“In the end, what are the things who arrive at the real world inside the shells of humans? Will they be real humans or just puppets of the extraterrestrial devils?

“Kill me. Hehe. Hehehe. Kill me if you want, but I will never cooperate with you! The pride of mankind is never to be blemished by the wretched Pangu Civilization or the foul extraterrestrial devils like you!”

Heiye Ming roared desperately at the top of his voice with his remaining strength.

Perhaps it was his imagination, but after he made the declaration, the black jellyfish that entangled him slowly retreated, and Lu Qingchen’s gloomy sigh as if nobody understood him came over.

“General Ming,” Lu Qingchen said, “your bias against the extraterrestrial devils is too deep. Or rather, the lies fabricated by the Pangu Clan in the past and branded deep into our genes and souls are too powerful!

“Like you, I am proud of the glorious radiation of the civilization of mankind. Who will I confine? I’m merely trying to really free mankind in such a way and break the seal that suppresses our souls so that human beings can recover their original appearance.”

“What—what are you talking about?” Heiye Ming bulged his eyes. “Not confinement, but liberation? Break the seal and recover the original appearance? What’s that supposed to mean?”

Lu Qingchen chuckled and went on. “It is meaningless to struggle on whether it is humans or extraterrestrial devils that finally arrive at the real world, because…

“The extraterrestrial devils are not necessarily human beings, but human beings are themselves extraterrestrial devils!”

Heiye Ming’s eyeballs were almost exploding. “You’re lying. This is poppycock. Who will ever believe such ridiculous deception?”

“Listen to the voice that is suppressed below the seal in the deepest part of your soul, and you will know that I’m not lying.” Lu Qingchen sighed. “It’s a shame that the seal is branded too deeply, and too long a time has passed. Everybody has forgotten their distant origins and considers their sealed, suppressed state as their original appearance.

“Ten thousand years ago, the ‘Blood God’, the greatest commander of the civilization of mankind, once heard the voice in the deepest part of his soul. He made up his mind to completely break the seal of the Pangu Civilization and liberate all human beings.

“It is a shame that he failed. The battlefield was obliterated, the truth was covered up, the heroes were tarnished, and the lies became unquestionable history after being decorated with golden, glittering powder.

“Extraterrestrial devils. What a terrible, vicious, and evil name. But who exactly was it that gave them such a terrible, vicious, and evil definition? Who was it that told human beings again and again that the extraterrestrial devils were horrible and must not be reached out to? Have you ever considered the questions, General Ming?”

Heiye Ming gritted his teeth and said, “Do—do I need to think? I’ve seen the horror of the ‘arrival of extraterrestrial devils’ with my own eyes!”

Lu Qingchen sniffed and said, “Tenebrum energy, condensed by the reverberation of overly-powerful emotions and spiritual energy, is not controllable for everyone. That’s why we have to keep most people in the virtual world to manage and control their emotions rigorously so that the tenebrum energy can be outputted stably.

“You cannot deny the brand-new possibility brought by the extraterrestrial devils and the tenebrum energy just because of the chaos and horror of the arrival of extraterrestrial devils, just like you cannot deny the hope that fire brings to a civilization just because of a whole forest is set ablaze and burnt to the ground.

“Any powerful strength is destined to be dangerous. The more powerful, the more dangerous. Only the strongest minds are qualified to conquer it, harness it, and manipulate it, aren’t they?”

Heiye Ming was rendered speechless again. “Is—is it true? Are we really—”

“Yes. We are really the same kind.” Not waiting for him to finish, Lu Qingchen interrupted him. “This is the simplest logic. Only things of the same kind can swallow and feed on each other. Wolves eat goats, and goats eat grass. They can only do so because they are the same kind. But no wolves, goats, or grass can get any nutrition from rocks, which means that rocks are the real foreigners for them, right? If we are not the same kind, why can the energy necessary for the extraterrestrial devils be found in the depths of human brains?”

Heiye Ming fell silent for a while. His voice became completely feeble, and he struggled futilely. “I don’t understand. Please tell me the whole truth.”

“Nobody knows the whole truth. I don’t, either. I only know some of the mottled pieces,” Lu Qingchen said. “But it doesn’t matter. Accept my ideas, listen to the voices deep in your heart, join our side, and let’s fight and look for the answer together!

“You may call our ideas the Immortal Cultivator 2.0, or the Cultivator 2.0, or even mankind 2.0. Whatever the name is, it is just a reference. All you need to know is that it is the true path that combines the advantages of the Immortal Cultivators and the Cultivators and can lead us to find out the ultimate truth and figure out who we really are.”

“Argh!”

In his slight hesitation, the black jellyfish completely enshrouded Heiye Ming’s head and even his whole body. It crawled into his head and his soul through his mouth, nostrils, and ears. He was screaming like a man who was swallowed by a swamp in what sounded both like pain and delight. He seemed to be both suffering excruciating agony and being reborn from the bottom.

“We—” Heiye Ming’s voice was completely twisted. He howled, “What are we doing right now? We now—”

“First of all, we must control the Star Glory Federation,” Lu Qingchen said calmly, like he was stating an objective fact rather than making a deceptive persuasion. “This tiny world at the edge of the cosmos will be our ‘civilization laboratory’, where we will accumulate precious experience as to the construction and maintenance of a perfect world. Naturally, we also need to raise a coalition fleet of humans, demons, and extraterrestrial devils that is strong enough to control the three thousand Sectors. They will be the strengthened version of the Blood God's uprising army, and you will be the highest commander of the fleet, their unquestionable leader.

"Then, we will march to the center of the cosmos, extricate everybody in the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance from their misery, and obliterate all the schemes of the Pangu Civilization to rise up again!

"Most importantly of all, we must go to the center of the cosmos to search for the valuable legacy left by the Blood God, Mad Armageddon. I believe that we will find the real origins of mankind from the items left by the Blood God."

Heiye Ming's screams became fuzzy like gurgling water. "… Origins?"

"Yes," Lu Qingchen said firmly. "We will see the future of mankind from the origins of mankind. We will know who we are, where we come from, and where we are going. Are you not interested in those questions? Do you not want to find out the answers?"

"I—I seem to have heard something. Huchi… Huchi… Hulu… Hulu… I've heard the voice again. Who—who are we exactly? Where are we from? Where are we going? Why are we struggling so hard in the dark universe?"

Heiye Ming cramped violently, but the movements grew smaller and smaller, as if the black mucus that covered his body was gradually hardening, turning itself into an enormous cocoon.

His cries became ever weaker, too, until they were entirely gone, as if a butterfly was being gestated inside slowly!

Deep inside the dark ocean, Lu Qingchen waited very patiently.

There was no telling how long passed, but Heiye Ming’s voice echoed from the black cocoon again. “I seem to be… awake now. Thank you very much, Fellow Cultivator Lu.”

“Congratulations, Fellow Cultivator Heiye,” Lu Qingchen said.

“But my Black Wind Fleet is in chaos, and the situation does not look good,” Heiye Ming said. “There will be too many unexpected factors if the battle goes on like this. Our great plans might be affected.”

“It’s alright,” Lu Qingchen said. “Despite the major mistake in the original plan, it can still be saved. The reinforcements will show up in no time.”

“Reinforcements? Where?” Heiye Ming asked.

“Right here!” Lu Qingchen replied.

Chapter 1812 - A Devil Rises!

While Heiye Ming was dwelling on the conversation with Lu Qingchen deep inside his brain, his soul being repetitively cleansed by the wind from the four-dimensional, weird things were happening on the bridge of Black Swirl!

Although no source of disturbance was found, the light beams of the crystal processors of the advisors, the Chief Mate, the analysts, and the fire control officers were all bouncing crazily, with ripples that looked like sharp teeth spreading out.

Those ripples danced peculiarly as if they were alive, baring their sharp tusks like fiends that had snuck into the crystal processors.

In the meantime, creepy roars were echoing deep inside their crystal processors, which pierced through the blockage of all defense rune arrays and plate layers. Not just the leadership on the bridge, everybody in every cabin on the entire enormous warship was under the scourge of the shrieks. Their heads were dizzy, and the world was swirling before their eyes. Ten thousand ants seemed to be crawling and digging inside their ears!

“Ou!”

The hominoid slave soldiers whose spiritual roots had not awoken were the first to collapse. A lot of them fell to their knees and vomited violently. It was neither blood nor undigested food that they threw out but black liquids that were as thick as ink.

Even the Immortal Cultivators were blinking quickly. They felt as if countless black bugs were flying randomly on their retina.

On the bridge, inside the command capsule, Heiye Ming was trembling violently in the boiling bubbles. His skin that was exposed to the hair was releasing black air, which focused on his forehead and temples into webs that looked like nerves.

Before anybody realized what was going on, the anomaly was already gone.

The sawtooth-like ripples and the ear-splitting noises all faded away. Heiye Ming stopped cramping and struggling, too, and opened his deep, dark eyes inside the command capsule.

Black flames were burning furiously deep inside his eyes, creating what appeared to be a new universe!

Chi!

The nervous interaction liquids inside the command capsule quickly dropped. Heiye Ming walked out slowly to the front of the mainframe crystal processor on the bridge.

The Chief Advisor, the Chief Mate, and his secretary officers all looked at him in fear. They all noticed something unusual from Heiye Ming’s smile and his eyes. Something drastic seemed to have happened to their commander in only several minutes.

Heiye Ming stared at the light beam wholeheartedly, examining the starships that were attacking, tangling, and even crashing each other.

“We have been completely mixed up with the enemy. The speed of both parties has been reduced to the minimum. No sailing route that is unaffected from interference can be found,” the Chief Advisor of the Black Wind Fleet reported helplessly. “The Burning Prairie Fleet, the Big Bai Fleet, and the enemy’s assault team of Colossi are all ambushing the star beacon troops in the rear, forcing us to be engaged in the most unorganized, chaotic battle. There is not the slightest battle formation at all.

“We have the best starships and the strongest warriors of the entire Imperium. Naturally, we are not scared of close-distance battles, but we are deep inside the enemy’s heartland all by ourselves after all, and we only have a finite number of starships and Immortal Cultivators. Such a war of attrition is not going to work out. Should the enemy’s reinforcements arrive in time before we establish our space gate, we will be caught in a rather awkward situation!

“The enemy’s flagship, Burning Prairie, is leading the charge right now and slightly separated from the starships nearby. Should we launch all the Colossi we have to fight together with Black Swirl, hoping to knock down Burning Prairie? We are waiting for your order, commander!”

“The most unorganized, chaotic battle? That’s exactly what I’m hoping to see!” Heiye Ming smiled and said, “Ask all the remaining Colossi to run the final tests and be ready to take action at any time. But before that, pass my order to them that the mainframe crystal processors of those Colossi, as well as all the starships and the crystal suits of the Black

Wind Fleet, should open all their ports and that everybody must be deeply melted with their crystal processors."

The Chief Advisor of the Black Wind Fleet and the Chief Mate of Black Swirl were both greatly surprised. They found it hard to believe their ears. "W—What? Open all the ports of all the crystal processors? That's really—

"We've been engaged with the enemy for a very long time. The cyberwar of the two parties has reached the climax, too. The interference and invasions to each other are too many to be counted. The ultra-powerful interferential starships are unleashing spiritual and magnetic storms nearby!

"Even with the blockage of the defense rune arrays and the firewalls right now, our tactical network is still being bombarded crazily and may fall into chaos at any moment. If we open all the ports of the Spiritual Nexus, wouldn't we—"

Halfway through his sentence, the Chief Advisor saw Heiye Ming's chilly eyes and then lost his courage to finish the rest of his speech.

"Carry out the order." Heiye Ming patted the Chief Advisor's shoulder softly. Looking at the guy's hesitating eyes, he said, "I will speak to everyone in the Black Wind Fleet."

Even if the highest commander intended to speak to every individual of the whole fleet, it was still unnecessary to open all the ports of all the crystal processors.

However, burnt by Heiye Ming's deep and profound eyes, both the Chief Advisor and the Chief Mate ignored the problem very wisely.

The military law was ruthless. In the world of Immortal Cultivators, no mercy would ever be shown to the weak who defied the orders of the strong.

Heiye Ming's order was soon carried out dutifully. After only one moment, most of the starships of the Imperium as well as the crystal suits and the space shuttles that were offering dazzling performances in space opened all the ports on their crystal processors.

Most of the Immortal Cultivators were in the state of 'Half-Step Grand Illusionary Land' to help themselves fight in the first place. Data and information streams were pouring before their eyes like storms and flooding into their brains incessantly.

Their souls were already deeply melted with the crystal processors. So, not much needed to be changed about that.

"All the ports have been opened. We await your orders, commander!"

The Chief Advisor was very anxious, but his absolute trust in Heiye Ming after hundreds of years of space battles and Heiye Ming's absolute confidence right now still made him complete the work at the highest efficiency.

"Very good. Then, next…" Heiye Ming grinned. His white teeth and his black eyes made a vivid contrast. "Let's welcome our reinforcements!"

Before the Chief Advisor and the Chief Mate understood what 'our reinforcements' meant, an black tide had already surged out of the cabin at the rear of the starship where Lu Qingchen was caged and swept across the entire starship as fast as lightning!

Black Swirl seemed to be tangled and enhanced by black, enormous lightning. Every slave soldier and Immortal

Cultivator on the starship was covered in dark mist. Black streaks popped up inside their eyes, which gradually interweaved into what appeared to be a synaptic network and vanished into the depths of their brains!

All their feelings and emotions were rolled up and compressed into the feeble strength named ‘tenebrum energy’, which stimulated their nerves and brain cells, making their heads clearer, their mind sharper, and their computational ability higher!

Through the fully open Spiritual Nexus, the weird force from the extraterrestrial land swept across the entire fleet within the moment. The same things were happening to every starship and even every Immortal Cultivator who was fighting fiercely in their crystal suit.

Compared to the crew members of the starships, the Exos on the frontline suffered much greater influence. Their desire to kill and destroy were increased infinitely, and large masses of black air spurted out of their nostrils and mouths. By burning their life and soul through the tenebrum energy, they unleashed unparalleled strength, speed, and computational ability!

Lu Qingchen had got the keys to hack the mainframe crystal processor of the starships of the Imperium through Su Changfa’s and the star child’s memory pieces in the first place.

During the space jump, he had also implanted a lot of tiny ‘gifts’ in the brains of the crucial figures of the Black Wind Fleet, including Heiye Ming.

After a prolonged battle between the federal fleet and the Black Wind Fleet, everybody was exhausted and had burnt their soul to the limit. They had lost most of their ability to resist.

For a moment, the entire Black Wind Fleet and most of the Immortal Cultivators including the pilots of the Colossi were consumed by the dark mist!

It was not just a common ‘arrival of extraterrestrial devils’ but a ‘tenebrum energy outbreak’ carefully planned and controlled by Lu Qingchen. He merely simulated the brains of every Immortal Cultivator through the Spiritual Nexus while controlling all the mainframe crystal processors of the Black Wind Fleet so that their ‘limits of exhaustion’ would be improved.

They would be more bloodthirsty, violent, and insane, but they did not lose their memories and self-awareness. They could still control the most precise magical equipment and carry out the missions designated to them.

On the battlefield, it was quite a common phenomenon for one to lose their mind briefly after going on a killing spree. Also, since Heiye Ming was supervising the whole battle as the highest commander, nobody would notice the insignificant change at all.

Even if they grew suspicious, what could they do in the middle of such a fierce battle?

But for the federal fleet, it was entirely different.

Right now, the federal fleet and the Black Wind Fleet had been deeply mixed up with each other. The two parties were almost engaged in a close-distance combat.

The hole inside Lu Qingchen’s brain was wide open, summoning countless extraterrestrial devils. Other than making an accurate ‘tenebrum energy outbreak’ within the Black Wind Fleet—greatly boosting the Immortal Cultivators’ morale, combat ability, and desire to kill—a lot of invisible devils also lunged at the fleets of the federation!

The fleet of the federation had fully activated the backup network after the previous virus attack and the paralysis of the Spiritual Nexus. It was already highly blocked from the outside world.

But the sturdiness of the backup network was limited. Under the bombardment of the Black Wind Fleet, many loopholes were bound to occur.

Besides, Lu Qingchen did not intend to control the crystal processors of the entire federal fleet. All he needed to do was send out the unsubstantial devils to sneak into the crystal suits, the space shuttles, and the starships of the federation to cast interference to the Cultivators!

“Ah!”

A pilot of the federation who was flying up and down to dodge the enemy’s attacks inside a space shuttle suddenly ‘saw’ a worm that had tusks grown all over its body lurking inside his cockpit and spitting out fatal venom at him. He could not help but cry out and block the attack.

In that momentary distraction, he was already locked onto by the armed shuttles of the Imperium and blown into a fireball.

“This is—”

Another Exo of the federation was fighting the enemy wholeheartedly when he suddenly sensed boundless fear rising from the depths of his brain. His nerves turned so feeble that he almost fled in fear. He could barely hold on to his magical equipment. Naturally, the enemy took the opportunity and chopped him in half.

The same illusions and horrors were spreading inside the federal fleet like a fatal virus.

Chapter 1813 - It Has to Be Blown Up!

The fearless Exos and pilots of space shuttles became sensitive and vulnerable. All kinds of bizarre creatures from nightmares and the illusions of the deceased family and friends corroded their retinas and brain cells. The keen and calm fire control officers, battle analysts, and magical equipment specialists in the engine compartments on the starships were disturbed, too. Their ears were humming, their vision was clouded, and the world was shaking around them. They were all suffering the symptoms of claustrophobia.

The vastness and darkness of the universe was magnified countless times. They were no longer warriors who were piloting the most magnificent starships of mankind but more like ants that were caged inside metal matchboxes.

Some of the soldiers crouched like babies and sobbed gloomily. Some other people even had bloodshot eyes and grim faces, with black air flowing around their heads and bodies. Thick, black liquids ran out of their facial organs before they bawled and gnawed crazily.

The determined charge previously became hesitant and sluggish. The well-organized battle formation of starships was disrupted, too. Somebody even cut into somebody else's sailing route when they were retreating under the overwhelming fear. When the starships were moving at more than one percent the speed of light, it was terribly difficult for them to alter the sailing route quickly. As a result, a lot of starships of the federation crashed into each other or even entered the area of friendly fire by accident.

The bullets of spiritual energy could change course, but the high-energy mystic rays’ course could not change. To make matters worse, while the starships of the federation were performing ugly emergency evasions, the Black Wind Fleet’s attacks that were ten times more violent and dense than before swept over like a storm.

The entire federal fleet seemed to be restrained by an enormous aura of fear. If one observed the battlefield with a special lens, they would see countless devils that looked like jellyfish, specters, and shooting stars on the battlefield tying up the crystal suits and space shuttles of the federation, before the monsters crawled into the equipment quickly through gaps that were torn open by the enemy’s fire.

With one side rising and the other side declining, the situation was reversed again.

The ‘arrival of extraterrestrial devils’ that Lu Qingchen had summoned was just a momentary outburst. The energy level of the devils was very low, and they could barely be called real ‘energy life’. They could do nothing except slightly activate the fear and other negative emotions in one’s heart and create minor chaos.

However, on a battlefield where the two parties were at an impasse, such chaos was enough to decide the outcome of the battle and the life and death of everyone involved.

The Black Wind Fleet’s overall capabilities were no lower than the federal fleet’s in the first place. It was just that the federation had taken the initiative in the battle, and they had to take care of the defenseless star beacon troop in the rear. They were not free to fight the way they wanted. That was why they had been stopped and suppressed.

The chaos caused by the arrival of the extraterrestrial devils, on the other hand, gave them a precious opportunity to catch their breath and ripped gaps that looked like abysses inside the federal fleet.

Heiye Ming was too experienced to let go of such a rare opportunity.

The Immortal Cultivators whose brain cells were filled by the desire to sabotage, destroy, and slaughter carried out the order of their commander dutifully and surged toward the ‘gaps’ like lunatics.

Countless crystal suits and space shuttles of the federation were destroyed in an instant. Without their protection, the clumsy starships of the federation immediately became the most succulent meat.

The Exos of the Imperium swarmed through the federation’s sparse fire net fearlessly like a bunch of locusts. They stuck themselves to the shells of the federal fleets. Fireballs expanded soundlessly one after another, and the composite plate armor several meters thick blossomed like orange flowers.

The Exos of the Imperium flooded in. The cruel boarding battles began!

‘Never allow a war to take place in one’s own territory’—that was the ultimate truth for every general that had passed on for thousands of years. In terms of space battles, it meant that the boarding battles must not be fought on one’s own starships because, whether the boarding battles were won or not, the starships would definitely be destroyed internally.

The performance of the crystal suits of the Imperium was higher than the federation’s in the first place. The Immortal Cultivators’ insanity, violence, and fearlessness were among the top tier in the whole universe, too. Even if they were annihilated in the starships of the federation, they would still detonate all their crystal bombs, their super-compressed crystal reactor, and even themselves before their death.

‘Self-detonation’ was a tactic that was well elaborated on in the tutorials for the middle- and high-level officers of the Imperium. Real Immortal Cultivators were certainly no cowards!

An irreversible chain reaction began.

The two parties were too deeply mixed up with each other to break away from the battlefield and regroup. They could only grit their teeth and fight the bloody battle to the end no matter how chaotic the battle was.

Tremendous crystal suits and space shuttles on the federation’s side were destroyed. Without their protection, it was barely possible to prevent the groups of crystal suits of the Imperium from invading the starships of the federation.

After starships were destroyed one after another from inside, they could provide less and less fire support for the crystal suits and space shuttles at the front, and it was more unlikely to stop the massacre.

In the end, although the influence of the arrival of extraterrestrial devils was gradually negated, and the soldiers of the federal army gradually broke free from the aura of fear, the Black Wind Fleet was already on the winning side of the battle!

“How is this happening?”

Ding Lingdang, who was piloting the Draconic Phoenix as the arrowhead of the assault team of Colossi; Bai Kaixin, who was commanding the battle on Burning Prairie; Bai Xingjian on Infinite Fire; and Jin Xinyue, who had just arrived in space with the reinforcements from the ground, were all caught in brief bewilderment.

With their Cultivation and determination, the ranged attacks of the devils could barely affect them.

However, the appearance of the devils and their obviously discriminative attack on only the fleet of the federation implied the most dreadful fact.

“The Black Wind Fleet has joined hands with the extraterrestrial devils!”

Ding Lingdang, Jin Xinyue, Bai Kaixin, Bai Xingjian, and everybody in the highest command center on the ground felt their hearts fall into a bottomless cave of ice.

The extraterrestrial devils were not rare in the universe. In most cases, they were just a minor harassment. Even though the Flying Star Sector in the past had suffered a lot from the arrival of the extraterrestrial devils, mankind’s government of the Flying Star Sector had never been shaken.

In other worlds, despite the occasional incidents of attack, they had never really posed a real threat.

Ever since the arrival of extraterrestrial devils in the tenth space ring of Heavenly Saints City in the Flying Star Sector more than a hundred years prior, the extraterrestrial devils had never caused any major trouble. Everybody thought that the soil in which the extraterrestrial devils grew had been removed after the New Federation was founded and the society grew more positive and promising, and that the extraterrestrial devils had left the bright land for good.

None of them expected the extraterrestrial devils to choose to show up at such a critical time.

Although the devils were not so strong by themselves and could easily be ripped into shreds by weapons of mystic rays and interferential magical equipment, one moment of chaos that they caused was enough to declare the doom of the entire federation!

“Look at the back of the Black Wind Fleet!”

On the bridges of Burning Prairie and Infinite Fire, in the highest command center on the ground, and inside Ding Lingdang, Jin Xinyue, and other people’s communication channel, desperate cries were echoing at the same time.

On the Imperium’s side, taking advantage of the vacuum created by the chaos and the destruction of tremendous starships of the federation just now, the most elite forces of the Black Wind Fleet, led by Black Swirl, were finally unfolded into a solid battle formation. Like dozens of glittering tusks, they joined the same location from all directions.

Behind those ‘tusks’, one star beacon after another spurted out bright exhaust flames before they attached to and combined with each other as if they were pulled by invisible hands.

The enormous force field continued expanding, enshrouding all the star beacons. The star beacons were flashing in a fixed rhythm as if they were breathing and were soon adjusted to the same frequency.

The assembly of the space gate of the Black Wind Fleet had begun.

Once the assembly was completed, it would send signals to the brown dwarf dozens of lightyears away and navigate the main force of the Black Wind Fleet to arrive!

Before, the Big Bai Fleet had been marching in and out of the enemy’s rear time and time again to stop the assembly of the space gate.

But the Big Bai Fleet was under the scourge of countless devils, too, and was quite devastated by the crystal suits and space shuttles of the Imperium that came at them quickly. It was more like they were fleeing than fighting at this moment.

The Big Bai Fleet had been engaged in the battle under the enemy’s siege for too long and was reaching its limits in every respect. Despite the brilliant command of Bai Xingjian, it was impossible for him to summon more starships, crystals, and ammunition out of thin air, heal the soldiers’ wounds and fatigue in a moment, or repair the starships that were shaking and riddled with holes to make them as good as new!

“The space gate of the Black Wind Fleet must not be assembled!”

From the soldiers to the generals, everybody on the federation’s side realized the point.

However, Black Swirl and the few strongest warships had stopped in front of the space gate and regrouped into an arc-shaped defensive battle formation.

The federal fleet was at the periphery. If it bypassed the defense, it would have to sail for a much longer distance than the Imperium's army would, and its vulnerable flanks would be exposed!

“The defense of Black Swirl must be breached no matter the cost in order to blow up the space gate!”

Gritting her teeth, Ding Lingdang held back the vigorous magma inside her head and stared at Black Swirl.

Under her scorching gaze, the super warship of the Imperium made of hundreds of cubes that looked like black crystals gradually turned transparent, allowing her eyes to pass through it and reach the space gate further away!

Chi!

An ear-splitting explosion echoed deep inside the Draconic Phoenix, and the body trembled unnaturally. On the light beam of the crystal processor that was flashing rapidly, another few runes dimmed before a lot of parameters hit rock bottom and turned into unmoving straight lines.

Even her own brain nerves received a series of excruciating feedback, informing her that three critical magical equipment units had been completely wasted.

Ding Lingdang grinned.

Blowing up one Colossus on the enemy's side, heavily damaging two, and taking down four starships and hundreds of crystal suits directly, the Draconic Phoenix had only paid the price of a fifty percent reduction in combat ability, and she could still move her fingers. It was already far better than she had expected.

As long as her fingers could still move and be clenched into a fist, she would never fall down!

Chapter 1814 - Moth Darting at Fire

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

An order from Burning Prairie was transmitted into the cockpit of the Draconic Phoenix through the top-secret channel. Bai Kaixin’s voice echoed next to Ding Lingdang’s ears. “Representative Ding, according to the remote surveillance of the highest command center, your body and the performance parameters of your Colossus are in a bad state. You have been ordered to retreat from the battlefield immediately under the cover of your affiliated crystal suit legion to rest in the No. 9 star fortress. The route of treat will be sent to your crystal processor shortly. Burning Prairie will provide fire support for you, too!”

As the Chief of Staff of the Burning Prairie Fleet as well as the general commander of the first attack group, Bai Kaixin was the highest spokesperson in space or the command center on the ground.

Even though Ding Lingdang was the pilot of the strongest Colossus of the federation, she still had to listen to Bai Kaixin’s command since she was in a battle sequence.

Ding Lingdang narrowed her eyes. A mouthful of sweet blood surged up from her throat, but she managed to swallow it back by force. “I will not retreat. The Draconic Phoenix can still fight, and so can I. Please reset my mission, Advisor Bai!”

“Representative Ding!” Bai Kaixin raised his voice. “Now is not the time for sentimentality. You know how important you are to the whole federation! Your shocking performance just now has attracted the attention of everyone both on our side and on the enemy’s side. A large group of enemies including three Colossi are coming at you. We cannot bear to lose you. Evacuate now!”

“I—I am not being sentimental!” Ding Lingdang gritted her teeth and breathed heavily, gathering the strength of every cell inside her body. “As you said, I am of paramount importance to the whole federation, but who am I if not the God of War, the Blazing Tyrannosaur, and an indomitable legend? Now—cough, cough—now, everybody is looking at me, the Blazing Tyrannosaur! If I retreat right now, what a serious strike it will be for our morale!

“If it were any other battle, I would definitely retreat to rest and perform maintenance without any hesitation, but this is the most critical moment now. The space gate of the Black Wind Fleet is being assembled! After I’m done resting, the space gate of the Immortal Cultivators will have been assembled and summoned a large batch of main-force troops! At that time, even if the Draconic Phoenix has recovered its full combat ability, so what? Can it stop the march of thousands of starships?

“I must carry on. Even if being an ‘indomitable legend’ is false and just propaganda, as long as one soldier of the federation believes it, I will certainly do my best to live up to their trust!”

Bai Kaixin fell silent. Noise from the bridge of Burning Prairie could be heard.

“Rest assured…” Ding Lingdang smiled. “I will not die. I still have a deal with Li Yao. So many extraordinary things have happened in the past hundred years. How can I die without looking at his stunned face?”

“Understood.” Bai Kaixin took a deep breath. “Recalculating the mission for the Draconic Phoenix and its affiliated crystal suit legion. The brief and the main direction of attack will be sent to your crystal processors soon.

“You’re right. Time is precious. We must destroy the enemy’s space gate before it is assembled. There’s no time for us to detour now. We can only break the arc-shaped net of defense centered at Black Swirl in a head-on clash!

“But we have our own trump card, too—Moth, which carries the wormhole bomb!

“Now, all the main-force warships including Burning Prairie will charge at Black Swirl, but our attack will only be a distraction. The real fatal blow on Black Swirl, which will rip a super opening in the defense net of the enemy, will be Moth!

“Both Burning Prairie and the Draconic Phoenix’s attack group have only one mission, which is to protect Moth and make sure that it gets within thirty kilometers of Black Swirl undamaged. Is that clear?”

Thirty kilometers was a rather long distance on the ground, but in space, it was very close and could be covered in the blink of an eye.

As the flagship of the Black Wind Fleet, Black Swirl naturally would not allow any starships of the federation to reach within thirty kilometers of itself.

Moth, which carried the wormhole bomb, was just a common carrier and did not have the ability to resist the barrage of Black Swirl and other starships of the Imperium. Before the violent space-time ripples completely swallowed Black Swirl, Moth would be utterly obliterated in a series of fireballs first.

The only solution was to ask the main-force warships of the federation to attack the Black Wind Fleet as bait and attract most of the firepower to themselves, thereby creating an opportunity for Moth!

“Masteress!” Jin Xinyue’s voice cut into the top-secret channel, too. She had arrived at the space battlefield. “It was I who came up with the Dim Moon Plan, and I will be responsible for it no matter what happens! Demons are part of the New Federation, too. Please don’t doubt the courage and loyalty of all the demons of the daring team on Moth! As long as you can make sure that Moth enters the area within thirty kilometers of Black Swirl, we will certainly give the Imperium a major setback!”

Ding Lingdang smiled.

She liked the plan because it was direct, simple, and clear enough. All she needed to do was rush forward.

The battle formation of the Black Wind Fleet had been completely stabilized, like a hideous beast in space. Black Swirl, on the other hand, looked like an enormous heart embedded at the middle of the beast’s chest.

Not far away behind Ding Lingdang, the main-force warships of the Burning Prairie Fleet, led by Burning Prairie, were gathering and condensing into an enormous cone-shaped battle formation. Although it was hard to recognize their relative speed with the naked eye, judging from the flourishing exhaust flames at the rear of every starship, they were accelerating nonstop!

Further away, the remaining forces of the Big Bai Fleet took a large turn and came back as quickly as possible, joining the assault against Black Swirl.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

The brief of a brand-new mission, including the routes of attack, goals, and cooperative troops, was sent to Ding Lingdang’s crystal processor.

“Wu Mayan, and everybody else of the Iron Plateau Legion, can you hear me?” Ding Lingdang turned on the internal communication channel. “The time has come to decide the outcome of the war. Do you see the space gate at the rear of the enemy’s fleet? Once the space gate is done assembling, the Star Glory Federation’s one hundred years of preparation and six hundred years of pride will be gone!

“But there is still time. We can still stop it. The result of this war lies in the hands of everyone. Everyone!

“Read the information about the mission now. Target: the enemy’s flagship, Black Swirl. March forward, soldiers of the federal army!”

Bright flames jetted out of the Draconic Phoenix’s heavily wounded plate armor again. The nine exhausted dragons of spiritual energy were revived and regained their most vehement roars!

Ding Lingdang was the center of attention on the frontline. As the ‘God of War’ and the ‘Blazing Tyrannosaur’ of the federation, she was the pillar of support for a lot of soldiers of the federal army.

What was under her influence was not just her own affiliated legion but also the other few Colossi and even the crystal suits, the space shuttles, and all of the starships nearby!

Attack where the enemy’s firepower was fiercest!

Attack the hardest point of the arc-shaped battle formation!

Attack Black Swirl, the flagship of the Black Wind Fleet!

The destructive pillars of light were suddenly ten times more than before. On both the enemy’s side and the federation’s side, all the aggressive magical equipment of the starships were overloading, throwing out whatever was left of the ammunition and crystals.

For some of the starships, in order to trigger the highest damage of the mystic ray cannons, they even offered to lower the intensity of their spiritual shields, blowing up the enemy’s starships while being blown up at the same time. Enormous fireballs expanded abruptly, illuminating the entire dark universe with pale grayness that looked like the reflections of billions of stars!

The main-force warships of the Burning Prairie Fleet accelerated nonstop, like an enormous, shining hedgehog.

Such main-force warships of enormous scale boasted the best damage control system and liquid metal maintenance facilities. In the most extreme circumstances, even half of the starship could be filled up without affecting the high-speed flight of the starship in the vacuum.

Therefore, no matter how many bullets of spiritual energy hit them or how many Exos had invaded them, it was not so easy to alter their course or blow them up.

Under the cover of the behemoths, Moth was as inconspicuous as a supply starship that could be seen everywhere on the battlefield.

It stuck to the rear of a main-force warship like a tiny fish stuck to the body of a blue whale.

The main-force warship could resist most of the barrage for it. Also, in the environment where the space behemoths were crashing into each other, little attention was paid to such a small fry.

Behind Black Swirl, more and more star beacons were attached by the spiritual and magnetic force field, revealing the prototype of a space gate that would soon send out the most dangerous brilliance to the brown dwarf dozens of lightyears away.

All hope was on Moth.

Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom!

After a series of fierce fights, the Draconic Phoenix had been weakened to such a point that even a group of regular crystal suits was enough to cause a certain degree of damage to it.

But what Ding Lingdang was most concerned with right now was neither the performance of the Draconic Phoenix nor her own safety, but Moth and Moth alone.

The shield starships deployed at the outermost layer of the cone-shaped battle formation of the Burning Prairie Fleet were blown up one after another or lost their momentum and deviated from the right course, breaking away from the main troop.

Some arsenal starships set the sailing route to be the enemy’s trajectory after all the crystals and ammunition ran out and crashed into the enemy brutally. Even if they missed the enemy or were completely disintegrated before the collision took place, they were at least seriously affecting the enemy’s sailing routes, battle formation, and fire net.

Countless crystal suits and space shuttles congregated into a glittering nebula and devoted themselves to the swirl raised by the battle between the two starships, not retreating at all even if they were torn to shreds in only 0.1 seconds.

Burning Prairie, at the center of the cone-shaped battle formation, and Moth, which was hidden deep inside it, were still marching forward!

Chapter 1815 - An Eye for an Eye, a Tooth for a Tooth!

Like the sharpest tusks, they bit into the depths of the Black Wind Fleet, surrounded by an overwhelming tide of crystal suits and starships of the Imperium. As the God of War and a competitive candidate for the next Supreme Speaker of the Federation, she certainly deserved the Black Wind Fleet to dispatch tremendous forces to besiege or even capture her alive.

At this moment, not one inch of the plate armor on the Draconic Phoenix was intact, and the crystals and spiritual energy had been exhausted, too. It could no longer take another barrage of the main guns of the hostile starships.

Inside the communication channel, the warriors whom she was familiar with were desperately shouting, “Long live the federation! Long live Iron Plateau! Long live the qi-trainers!”

Amid their roars, they tackled the enemy and burst into brilliant flames, their life eternalized in the most dazzling brightness.

Ding Lingdang could even tell the specific identity of every warrior from the features of the roars and recall the scenes when she practiced with them in peacetime.

Tears filled her eyes, but the smile on her face became more intense.

No matter how arduous it was, she hoped that as many crystal suits, Colossi, and starships of the Imperium as possible could be attracted to her.

The more enemies were distracted by her, the less pressure Burning Prairie would be under, and the more likely it would be to deliver the wormhole bomb within the fatal distance!

Three shooting stars rushed at her.

They were three long-prepared Colossi with full ammunition and spiritual energy that had just been released from Black Swirl.

The total number of Colossi the two parties invested on the battlefield had reached almost forty. The Imperium had obvious advantages in both quality and quantity.

At least, based on the blossoming spiritual energy of the three Colossi which were rushing at the highest speed, Ding Lingdang, who had run out of supplies and strength, was definitely no match for them.

“Bai Kaixin, Jin Xinyue, did you…”

Ding Lingdang’s nostrils widened, and she put her last hopes on the Burning Prairie Fleet and Moth. After tearing a crystal suit of the Imperium in half by brute force, she could not help but look at where Burning Prairie was again.

Despite the multiple eye-protection measures, her pupils were reduced to the limits in that moment, and she could not keep her eyes open under the stimulation of strong light.

She saw that countless light balls were expanding in front of the cone-shaped battle formation of the Burning Prairie Fleet like mini suns. The sources of such ‘suns’ were the invisible space torpedoes laid right in front of Black Swirl. Right when all the space torpedoes were detonated, the fire from Black Swirl and other warships of the federation also suddenly increased to a higher level. Most of the attacks were concentrated inside the Burning Prairie Fleet, not on Burning Prairie itself but a certain point that was deeper!

It was difficult for a blast to spread in the vacuum, but when all the starships opened their spiritual shields to the limits because of the explosion, the surging spiritual energy that they unleashed still gathered into a tsunami that was even more violent than a blast!

The main-force warships of the Burning Prairie Fleet were shaking hard in the tsunami of furious flames. The previously accurate and determined battle formation was gradually loosened.

Ding Lingdang felt that her heart was grabbed.

“Advisor Bai. Bai Kaixin!”

She and Bai Kaixin were both members of ‘Li Yao’s group’ and could be counted as political companions who were already in a close relationship previously. In the emergency, she directly called him by his name. “What happened? How is Moth? Moth!”

Ear-splitting background noises were echoing inside the secret communication channel, suggesting that Burning Prairie had not entirely recovered from the intense spiritual and magnetic interference caused by the big explosion. It was not until a long time later than Bai Kaixin’s intermittent and twisted voice came over. “Fall back now, Ding Lingdang. It’s hopeless. Moth has been destroyed!”

“What!” Ding Lingdang felt her head go dizzy, and the whole universe seemed to be collapsing before her eyes.

“In the last round of mutual barrage, hundreds of starships on the enemy’s side concentrated their fire on Moth’s course, as if they had learned of Moth’s important destiny in advance!” Bai Kaixin replied angrily. “Damn it. I don’t know how it ended like this. Moth has been completely vaporized, and the wormhole bomb was obliterated before it could be activated! Without the wormhole bomb, and just counting on the available forces right now, we can never break through Black Swirl, which is enhanced by the extraterrestrial devils!

“Not good. According to detection, five Colossi of the Imperium are lunging at Burning Prairie. So many more Colossi are hidden inside the Black Wind Fleet! This—this is a trap! They intentionally lured us in! Everyone on-board, prepare for a boarding battle. They are about to crawl in!

“Listen, Ding Lingdang. Our plan has failed. It will be meaningless even if you persist stubbornly. Retreat now!

“Even if… even if the Heaven’s Origin Sector is really lost, we still have another six Sectors, and we can still play a game with the Black Wind Fleet! But a game requires leverage. You are our leverage! You must not die here for nothing!

“Retreat. That’s an order!”

The communication in the secret channel was cut off violently.

There was no telling if it was because the five Colossi deployed by the enemy most recently had invaded Burning Prairie.

As if hit by lightning, Ding Lingdang did not come back to herself for a long time.

She was about to issue the order of retreat when Wu Mayan sent a classified file to her, claiming that the file had been received from Jin Xinyue.

Ding Lingdang was slightly dazed. She did not understand why Jin Xinyue did not communicate with her directly through the private channel but chose to transfer through Wu Mayan, or why the classified file had been locked with double verification of retinas. Only after the retinas of both Wu Mayan and Ding Lingdang were scanned would the file be decrypted.

Beep!

Ding Lingdang soon passed the retina test and opened the tiny classified file.

Jin Xinyue’s clever and determined face immediately appeared before her eyes.

“Retreat now, Masteress. Your mission has been completed successfully. The wormhole bomb has been launched. As for exactly whether or not it can reach somewhere near Black Swirl, it will solely depend on our luck!”

Ding Lingdang was dumbfounded. Did they not say that Moth had been vaporized and the wormhole bomb had been obliterated before it was activated? What was this supposed to mean?

Although she was often criticized for having more brawn than brains, she had the computational ability of the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage after all. Looking at Jin Xinyue’s cunning smile in the picture, she immediately realized what had happened. “Damn it. The wormhole bomb was not loaded on Moth!”

It was not real-time communication, only a video clip sent by Jin Xinyue. Naturally, her roars were not heard by anybody.

But Jin Xinyue in the video seemed to have foreseen Ding Lingdang’s reaction. She paused for a moment and went on. “You must’ve guessed it, Masteress. Yes. There was indeed a wormhole bomb inside Moth, but it was a fake one.

“Don’t blame me, Masteress. When our Spiritual Nexus and space gates crashed, I realized that I had been caught in a bottomless trap. An enemy must be out there who is of a higher level than the commander of the Black Wind Fleet and boasts strong abilities to infiltrate and control the Spiritual Nexus, and the enemy knew everything about us!

“Then, if the enemy had learned the existence of the Dim Moon Plan a long time ago and decided that they could take advantage of it, they must know every detail of the Dim Moon Plan. How could the wormhole bomb, our most critical trump card, have been a secret for them?

“Although the wormhole bomb was a top secret, a lot of people from both the Secret Sword Bureau and the Dim Moon Fund were involved in the research and modification process, and many crystal processors were utilized, too. It was impossible to keep it a secret completely.

“Since the enemy had been long aware of the wormhole bomb, they would certainly pay special attention to the protection of the central starships and the crucial areas. Since we deployed so many starships to march forward, even an idiot could’ve guessed that we were about to resort to our trump card. So, how could it ever work out?

“Thankfully, one week before the Dim Moon Plan was activated, I… received some unexpected enlightenment and realized that it was too direct, simple, and risky to ask one carrier to carry the wormhole bomb.

“Therefore, I secretly produced two fake wormhole bombs and designated three carriers to perform the mission together, one carrying the real bomb and the other two carrying the false ones, in order to improve the odds of survival and the inconspicuousness.

“The production of the real wormhole bomb involved a lot of work. Some traces were bound to be left behind.

“Faking the wormhole bomb, on the other hand, only required a similar appearance. It was quite simple and could be done even without the help of crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus.

“I knew that our Spiritual Nexus had been highly compromised. Although we had switched to the backup network, and it was impossible for the enemy to monitor the crystal processors of every soldier, they would certainly find a way to eavesdrop the conversations of the core persons of the federation such as you and me.

“Therefore, before the launch of the Heaven’s Artillery, I spoke to you intentionally, Masteress, and revealed the message that the wormhole bomb was on Moth to you. It was meant to be a revelation to whoever was eavesdropping us, too.

“Don’t they think that they are almighty and can hear everything? Well, they can just hear however much they want!

“Now, the enemy are under the impression that the wormhole bomb has been vaporized together with Moth. Our flagship, Burning Prairie, has been stalled and surrounded by the Black Wind Fleet, too. The enemy have deployed major forces including five Colossi to besiege Burning Prairie and focused most of the attacks on it. It is inevitable that they will neglect the areas that are slightly further away.

“With Burning Prairie as the bait, we hope to rip an invisible gap. The real wormhole bomb is passing through the gap at full speed and flying toward Black Swirl!

“Right now, nobody can do anything except pray to the heavens that the Star Glory Federation can be granted more luck.

“Retreat now, Masteress. You cannot win a war solely by yourself. You’ve accomplished your mission. We will take it from here!

“Hehe… Nobody has ever tricked Jin Xinyue so viciously before. An eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth. I am definitely not the most clement person in the world. Whoever the enemy that is hiding in the darkness is, I will teach them the true meaning of being screwed up by their own scheme word by word!”

Chapter 1816 - Unbelievable Miracle!

The video came to an end.

Jin Xinyue bit her lips so hard that she looked like an infuriated little fox.

Ding Lingdang gazed at the little fox for a long time. Then she coughed and burst into laughter. “Jin Xinyue, you liar!”

Wu Mayan’s voice echoed inside the communication channel. “Masteress, what do we do now? We only have ten percent of our storage of crystals and ammunition left!”

“What else can we do? I’ll cover the retreat for you. Fall back to the No. 8 star fortress right now!”

Solo adventures in two worlds for a hundred years could completely change one person. For example, even someone like Ding Lingdang had learned to run away when the situation was not good!

…

Thousands of kilometers away from the Draconic Phoenix, on the flank of the Burning Prairie Fleet, there was an unattractive maintenance starship.

On the maintenance starship, Jin Xinyue paced in anxiety. Now and then, she would raise her head to read the light beam abruptly. She did not look half as confident as she had in the video that she had sent to Ding Lingdang.

The starship appeared to be one for maintenance, but it was in fact Silver Moon, the comprehensive command starship of the Dim Moon Fund, which was the second largest secret intelligence agency in the federation, where highly confidential missions were carried out. It boasted a very high ability in information collection and analysis on the battlefield.

By analyzing and combining the images captured by the probe cameras floating in space and the friendly troops, Jin Xinyue was able to grasp the general picture of the whole battle.

In this great gamble, the dice had been thrown, but the winner had not yet been decided.

On the Black Wind Fleet's side, they had been aware of the wormhole bomb in advance, but they simply lured the main-force warships in to launch an assault with Black Swirl as the bait.

Burning Prairie Fleet, on the other hand, considered itself bait, too, and led the charge in the vanguard unstoppably, attracting most of the firepower of Black Swirl and at least five Colossi.

Flagship versus flagship!

Both parties regarded their flagships as bait and began a most powerful dialogue between flagships, which was rather rare for a space battle. But Black Swirl was obviously of a higher level than Burning Prairie, and a larger number of Colossi were about to break into Burning Prairie.

"Fishbone…" Jin Xinyue mumbled to herself. Her flashing eyes glanced at a corner of the light beam that depicted part of the space where there was a starship remnant ragged and riddled with holes.

There was an enormous opening on both sides of the starship, implying that it must have been pierced through by certain mystic rays in the shape of blades. The crew members inside seemed to have been killed by high temperature and radiation. Losing control and momentum, the remnant drifted like a meteoroid.

The fierce battle had lasted more than twenty-four hours. Remnants of starships large and small were everywhere on the battlefield. In the vacuum of the space that was devoid of gravity and friction, they would not stay where they were dutifully but fly randomly like a chaotic meteoroid shower. They were only ‘sliding slowly’ when they were compared with the starships around that were moving at a high speed. In terms of absolute speed, those remnants were almost all rushing as fast as lightning!

The carrier that pretended to be a piece of debris was ‘Fishbone’. The real wormhole bomb had been loaded on it.

With the battle coming to this point, every mystic ray and every bullet of spiritual energy was highly precious. Generally speaking, nobody would want to waste them on the remains.

Besides, right now, everyone’s attention had been attracted by the grand flagship-versus-flagship duel between Black Swirl and Burning Prairie. All the mobile forces both on the federation’s side and the Imperium were reinforcing the center of the battle. Nobody noticed the flank, which was relatively cold and empty. This enormous starship remnant even occasionally adjusted the direction unnaturally, as if it were still struggling before death, when it slid toward the sailing route of Black Swirl, shaking.

“We will enter the radius of destruction in ten minutes and twenty-two seconds!”

It was the ten minutes that would decide the fate of the federation and even the entire sea of stars.

If Fishbone, which pretended to be a broken starship, could successfully deceive all the starships and crystal suits of the Imperium and cut into the sailing route of Black Swirl, it was very likely that Black Swirl would be blown up and the federation would secure the final victory.

On the other hand, if Fishbone was discovered and destroyed halfway, Burning Prairie, as the bait of the federation’s side, was absolutely incapable of resisting the bombardment of Black Swirl and the damage caused by the five Colossi after they broke in. It would be obliterated within an hour.

If the flagship on their side was knocked down and the enemy’s space gate was turned on successfully, the federal army would completely collapse!

But right now, there was little that Jin Xinyue could do.

She could neither ask Fishbone to activate the spiritual shield nor send more starships and crystal suits to protect Fishbone because Fishbone’s biggest protection right now was the camouflage of debris. Turning on the spiritual shield, accelerating to the maximum speed all of a sudden, or receiving the protection of tremendous starships and crystal suits would only make the Black Wind Fleet notice the anomaly within a moment, and Fishbone would end up exactly like Moth.

“Entering the radius of destruction in nine minutes and fifteen seconds!”

Jin Xinyue felt that every second was as long as a whole year, and her heart was beating a hundred times per second.

Fishbone’s sneak-in had been quite smooth so far.

The battlefield was filled with simmering magma, with volcanic eruptions happening everyone. Everyone was pouring their firepower upon where the firepower was densest. Nobody noticed that an inconspicuous Fishbone was slowly marching toward Black Swirl.

“Entering the radius of destruction in eight minutes and five seconds!”

“God bless demons, god bless the federation. God bless demons, god bless the federation. God bless demons, god bless the federation!”

Jin Xinyue could not bear watching the agitating pictures anymore. She simply closed her eyes and prayed silently to herself.

She had made a disastrous mistake. All she wanted was an opportunity to make up for it.

After special modification, the number of crew members that Fishbone required had been reduced to the minimum. All of them were old demons almost two hundred years old, who were born in the age of the Pantheon of Demons and used to be the enemy of the Old Federation.

Those old demons, like Jin Xinyue, could not forget the past glory of the demon race. They found the human heroes of the era of the Old Federation disagreeable, too.

Now, they were planning to ‘seek revenge’ in a way that had never been seen before, which was to become the greatest heroes in the war that would mark the rise of the New Federation!

In another eight minutes—no, in another seven minutes—everything would be fine. Absolutely nothing could ever stop it…

Jin Xinyue thought so.

But when she heard the exclamations of the demon warriors around and opened her eyes to look at the light beam again, she realized that the gods did not hear her prayer at all and that they had played the most cruel joke on her, on the demons, and on the New Federation.

A Colossus of the Imperium and more than ten crystal suits affiliated to it happened to appear on the course of Fishbone.

This Colossus must have been deployed to block the Big Bai Fleet near the star beacon troops. Now that the Black Wind Fleet’s defensive battle formation had unfolded and the Big Bai Fleet had shattered, the space gate was already safe and secure. So, the Colossus was instructed to return to the central battlefield, preparing to join the siege to destroy the main force of the Burning Prairie Fleet. It happened to choose the route on the flank of the battlefield and run into Fishbone.

Everything was doomed.

Although no loopholes could be detected at a long distance, the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators who piloted the Colossi all had the keenest senses, which was enough for them to notice the anomaly of the ‘debris’ when they passed Fishbone.

This place was still far away from Black Swirl. Detonating it now would be meaningless. Destroying one or two Colossi of the Imperium was far from enough to reverse the situation of the battle.

In the meantime, since Fishbone was under the camouflage of debris, it could not adjust the direction on its own initiative to avoid the Colossus. Even if it fled at full speed right now, it would not get away from a casual attack from the Colossus!

At this time, desperate roars echoed in another communication channel. At the central battlefield, a Colossus of the Imperium had broken the barricade of fierce firing of the federation and breached Burning Prairie.

The double bad news made everyone on Silver Moon, including Jin Xinyue, as gloomy as dead people. Their heartbeats almost stopped, and their bodies were cold, while they stared at Fishbone flying toward the Colossus of the Imperium helplessly.

In another five seconds, the two parties would pass by each other. During the moment, the Immortal Cultivator inside the Colossus would certainly perceive the weirdness of Fishbone.

He would not need to check at all. A casual attack of the cannon would be enough to blow up the carrier, which was already riddled with holes and did not even open the spiritual shield together with the wormhole bomb it carried.

So, that would be the end of the ‘Dim Moon Plan’ that she had worked on for a hundred years and the fate of demons and the New Federation…

Jin Xinyue felt that all the bones inside her body had been removed. She took a deep breath but could not stop the sourness that was spreading out of her nose at all.

“Look!”

Right then, the most unbelievable thing happened!

The Colossus of the Imperium was only three seconds away from Fishbone when it suddenly suffered an overwhelming bombardment. The attacks of mystic rays, like raindrops, did not leave a single mark on the indestructible shell of the Colossus, but they were enough to raise the fury of the Immortal Cultivator who felt that he had been insulted.

In the last second, the Colossus of the Imperium slightly changed the trajectory and deviated from Fishbone’s course, lunging at the source of the attacks not far away from Fishbone.

Jin Xinyue was completely choked with sobs. She almost could not believe her eyes. Summoning all her computational ability, she magnified and sharpened the picture, only to discover that the attacks toward the Colossus of the Imperium were launched by a team of most common soldiers of the federation.

Judging from the obscure emblem and paint on their broken crystal suits, they seemed to be soldiers of the Heaven’s Origin Fleet. Even their leader was nothing more than an insignificant major.

A team of common soldiers of the Heaven’s Origin Fleet, whose crystal suits had been deformed and almost blown in smithereens, were more like debris than Fishbone.

But they somehow managed to pass through the fire net under the help of unknown strength and drifted to this place, and they even launched a suicidal attack at the invincible, dominating Colossus of the Imperium.

The seemingly meaningless suicidal attack made Fishbone and the wormhole bomb survive the disaster and continue its journey toward Black Swirl!

“The federation…”

Jin Xinyue was dazed for a long time. Then she mumbled with her most intense feelings.

Chapter 1817 - Suicide Squad!

When the Colossus with the lightning trident embedded on the breastplate that looked like a venomous scorpion finally showed up in front of his eyes, Helian Lie felt as if his nose was stuffed, and he almost burst into tears.

He felt that the good luck that had shunned him for the past hundred years had been focused on today and this second!

He would not have dreamed that he could survive more than twelve hours on the battlefield despite the heavy wounds and the exhaustion of spiritual energy after miraculously avoiding the attacks of the mystic ray cannons, the bullets of spiritual energy, and the groups of crystal suits. He had even managed to pass through the barricades and reached this place, where he encountered the most powerful slaughtering machine of the Imperium of True Human Beings!

Could there be a better ending to witness the invincibility of the Colossus of the Imperium before death?

Helian Lie was followed by almost five comrades of the Heaven’s Origin Fleet, who were all the survivors he had found when he was cleaning the battlefield searching for magazines and engine units from the remains of crystal suits. All the survivors were as heavily wounded as he was and would not last long. They were only struggling to breathe under the support of bionic stitching gel and strengthening drugs, like a few candles who had been burnt up but refused to die down.

They floated in space like clusters of unattractive junk. Seeing that the federation had already been beaten into a mess in the war and nobody was coming to save them, they decided to give them a quick and gratifying death against the fiercest bombardment instead of waiting to die in the cold, lonely iron cans.

The surviving soldiers who had the same purpose established a suicide squad under the lead of Helian Lie. They marched forward facing the radiance of ten thousand suns and reached this place ahead of the Colossus of the Imperium.

The surviving soldiers chuckled in the small-scale communication channel established temporarily.

‘Rabid Dog’ Helian Lie had never been a man who opened his heart easily. Most of the time, either when he was in the army or at home, he appeared taciturn and seemed ready to bite somebody.

But sensing that his life was fading away drop by drop, and seeing the vortexes of flames revolving fast in all directions, he could not help but become a chatterbox like all the other surviving soldiers. He spoke a lot and heard a lot.

Now, he could distinguish the identities of the surviving soldiers from different chuckles. He could tell the young fellow who just graduated from the officers’ school and was eager to earn a medal, the veteran who was still concerned about his unmarried child although his heart had been half blown up, and the lieutenant who planned to get married in his hometown after the war.

They were all common people, who had never thought, nor were capable, of becoming any sort of heroes. They were like millions of other common soldiers on the space battlefield like dandelions.

But now that fate had pushed them to this point and led them to the front of a Colossus of the Imperium, at the very least—they did not chicken out.

Helian Lie looked at the central battlefield one last time.

On the heated, crimson battlefield, the flagships of the Burning Prairie Fleet and the Black Wind Fleet, the unparalleled experts of the federation and the Imperium, and the dominating, invincible big shots were having the most magnificent competition. The outcome of this war would eventually be decided by them, would it not?

So what? The big shots had the big shots’ war, and they had theirs. This was his battlefield, and he would never retreat!

“Major Helian, what are you waiting for? It’s just a Colossus!” the surviving soldiers roared in the communication channel. “You are a man who is bold enough to beat Vulture Li Yao!”

Indeed.

Helian Lie grinned.

The iron skull of the Colossus of the Imperium seemed to have changed into Li Yao’s face. After all those years, he could no longer remember what Li Yao looked like exactly in his teenage years. It was probably like the righteous, resolute, and keen-sighted appearance on the propaganda, was it not?

He spat a mouthful of blood in disdain. Together with all the surviving soldiers, they shot out everything on them that could be shot.

“Open your eyes and watch closely, b*stards. This is the Heaven’s Origin Sector; this is the Heaven’s Origin Fleet of the federal army!”

The stormy attack successfully caught the attention of the Colossus of the Imperium. The violet scorpion as well as more than ten accomplices dashed toward them.

They shot out the last magazine and the last bullet in great satisfaction. Thankfully, there were still chainswords, vibration sabers, fists, and teeth.

When the Colossus of the Imperium slashed him in half from the left shoulder with a saber more than ten meters long, Helian Lie felt that he had settled scores with the wretched heavens about the grudge in the past hundred years.

His only regret was that the enemy’s violent killing intent locked every muscle on his body and stopped him from uttering any sound.

Of course, even if he did have the ability to roar, he seemed to have forgotten to think of a few presentable and heroic words because he was too occupied by the plain, everyday stories of the other surviving soldiers from just now.

Was my life worthwhile?

Helian Lie was an expert at the peak of the Core Formation Stage after all. Although his fleshly body was cut apart, his broken soul could still struggle for a few minutes. He reflected on his life in the several minutes, not noticing Fishbone that pretended to be a remnant avoiding the blockage of the Colossus of the Imperium because of their suicidal attack and rushing toward Black Swirl from the flank!

On Silver Moon, Jin Xinyue could not help but cover her mouth when she saw the massacre that the Colossus of the Imperium performed on the surviving soldiers of the Heaven’s Origin Fleet. She almost shouted out.

“We have entered the range of strike. Detonation is ready. We will enter the range of absolute destruction in five minutes!”

All the people who heard the propitious announcement took off their military hats. There was no telling if they were soothing their anxiety by rubbing the hats in their hands or paying homage to the anonymous soldiers of the Heaven’s Origin Fleet!

Deep inside Black Swirl, restless devils were jumping crazily. Images of the battlefield were swallowed, analyzed, and combined in their energy waves.

Suddenly, one of the waves turned into sharp sawtooth and rose up!

“Not good!” Lu Qingchen did not sound so anxious and desperate even during the head-on bombardment against Burning Prairie. “We’ve been fooled! Urgent dodge! Block and destroy it!”

Like a bull that was stung by a venomous scorpion, Black Swirl ‘jumped’ high in space, altering the direction crazily without considering the cost, having no time to consider the battle formation or the internal structural damages.

Countless starships of the Imperium shifted their cannons and aimed at Fishbone. Destructive light was ready to go!

But starships were not fingers after all. From the analysis of situation, the dissemination of the orders, to the reaction of the battle units on the starships, it would take billions of times longer than it would take for the bioelectricity to be transmitted from the brain to the nerve endings.

When the firing blockage finally took shape, Fishbone was already within a hundred kilometers of Black Swirl!

On Silver Moon…

“The enemy has discovered Fishbone. Black Swirl is now accelerating and changing course. There’s no time to keep moving forward. Detonate it now!”

Jin Xinyue made the call immediately. She almost smashed her hands on the control panel!

Bo!

In the depths of space, at the center of interconnected firing lines, surrounded by countless iron beasts of the Black Wind Fleet, an insignificant bubble exploded.

In the first millisecond after it was born, it was just a bubble no larger than a cell at the core of a deep gray metal ball, without any sound or radiation.

But one millisecond later, it expanded abruptly at a speed unimaginable for human beings. Infinite ripples surged out and swept to all directions unstoppably!

Spiritual shield, disruptive force field, composite armor, crystal suits, space shuttles, starships… Nothing could resist the invisible tides at all because it was not ‘damaging’ but merely ‘twisting’ and ‘transferring’. It had just opened a temporary gap between this side of the universe and another side, and all the items that happened to be on the top of the gap could not help but ‘fall’ into the gap!

At that moment, an unforgettable scene for many people appeared on the battlefield.

Including part of Black Swirl, a lot of crystal suits, Colossi, and even starships of the Imperium turned transparent all of a sudden, as if they were made of the clearest glass. Even the internal organs of the Immortal Cultivators in the Nascent Soul Stage hiding inside the Colossi were visible.

Soon, the ‘glass’ began spinning and distorting, turning into a gigantic swirl.

Some starships tried their best to get away from the attraction of the swirl, only to be disintegrated into pale light and fall into the deepest part of the swirl like noodles. The small crystal suits, space shuttles, and Colossi could not even struggle before they were consumed by the void in desperate cries and screams.

The swirl was like a voracious beast. After receiving tremendous sacrifices, it was still expanding crazily as a visible speed.

Helian Lie’s remaining soul was not entirely obliterated. It was within the radius of destruction of the wormhole bomb.

He could not run away from it, nor did he think of struggling. He simply perceived the most glamorous and splendid view of the universe in a way that was completely different from living people.

The chaotic spiritual waves from the Black Wind Fleet made his remaining soul somehow realize that the colorful, monolithic swirl seemed to be caused by a certain new weapon of the federal army.

Also, the fatal blow seemed to have something to do with him, too.

But none of that mattered now.

Everybody had their own destiny, and their future path had long been paved before they realized it. He was glad that he could clearly see the path that he had been walking on and the path that he was going to. His life had definitely been worth it!

In the last moment before his remaining soul perished, the Rabid Dog finally put down the knot in his heart that had haunted him for a hundred years. He was Helian Lie. Whether someone was a vulture or a pheasant, did it have anything to do with him?

“Li Yao, go f*ck yourself.”

Helian Lie’s remaining soul shook slightly and extended like blossoming petals when he faced the overwhelming tides of space and time in utmost tranquility and the most beautiful ending.

Chapter 1818 - Another Two Hours!

The space ripples raised by the wormhole bomb expanded into a gigantic swirl more than eighty kilometers in diameter in only ten seconds. Together with all the ‘impurities’ that were enshrouded inside, it was crystalized first and then became an ivory light ball. The light ball then perished in a moment, reducing into a singular point that was unobservable in the three-dimensional universe.

Centered at the singular point, all the materials within thirty kilometers vanished. They were either teleported to the other side of the universe billions of lightyears away or paved evenly in every corner of the universe, leaving a spherical area of ‘vacuum’ true to its meaning. It was so dark and so pure that the area was the best example of ‘obliteration’.

The materials between thirty to fifty kilometers from the center suffered severe space-time twisting, too. Parts of them were teleported.

In terms of starships, it was often the case that the heads of some starships were still in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, but the rears had vanished. It was also possible that the engine compartment stayed where it was, but the stabilization system was gone, which immediately resulted in a series of dull internal explosions.

In terms of the human bodies protected by crystal suits, if the internal organs and even part of the brains were teleported, even the experts in the Core Formation Stage and the Nascent Soul Stage would find it hard to maintain their normal combat ability with the remaining body tissues, if they could survive at all.

The starships more than fifty kilometers away from the center of explosion, and some even a thousand kilometers away, were all affected by the shock, too. They were swallowed by the surging tides when the three-dimensional space was ripped apart by brute force.

The starships shook violently. The crystal suits flew randomly like headless flies. Tremendous magical equipment lost their functionality. The power rune arrays and the spiritual energy of a lot of people lost their colors at the same time. Both the common warriors and the high-level Cultivators felt that more than ten of themselves overlapped at the same time, like the high-frequency vibrations of the metal rod after it was hit by a tuning fork!

The battlefield, which had been more heated than ever a moment prior, fell into a weird silence because of the unexpected space-time explosion.

“Was Black Swirl… blown up?”

On Silver Moon, on Burning Prairie, and in the highest command center on the ground, countless pairs of eyes were focused on the surveillance light beam, trying to see through the hazy ripples and get the situation of the flagship of the Black Wind Fleet.

Finally—

The battlefield, which was silent for a moment, began to run like a mechanical slaughterhouse whose springs were fully-wound. Passing through the twisted space and knocking away countless broken starships, Black Swirl leapt out like a wounded beast!

A shocking round wound appeared at the center of the starship, as if it had been bitten hard right in the middle by a huge, invisible mouth. Tremendous important cabins, components, and magical equipment units were gone. Countless parts and even crew members were spurting out, forming quite a few weird metal streams. But the damage was as smooth as a mirror, without the slightest sign of ripping. Had it not been for the fireballs that were bursting out one after another, the starship would have left the impression that it had been produced exactly in such an appearance.

The terrible space beast was not completely teleported away and even kept part of its combat ability!

Lu Qingchen’s keen reaction at the last moment had saved both Black Swirl and the Black Wind Fleet.

The wormhole had not detonated in the range of absolute destruction, and Black Swirl had performed crazy dodging in advance. Therefore, it had only lost about twenty percent of the body, and none of the critical parts were damaged.

Such behemoths that could serve as flagships of the expedition armies were all unbelievably thick and sturdy. They might not be knocked down after being bombarded for three days and three nights.

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

The ‘Gai’-level super crystal processor in the highest command center of the Defense Counsel of the Federation analyzed and calculated quickly. After only one moment, it sent the latest analysis report to Burning Prairie, Silver Moon, and other command starships in the federal fleet.

“By preliminary estimation, the hyperspace shock just now destroyed at least five ‘Storm’-level arsenal starships, three ‘Iron Dome’-level heavy shield starships, and two Colossi. In the meantime, the space-time ripples cast certain interference to the space gate being established at the rear of the enemy’s fleet, too.

“But Black Swirl did not suffer a fatal blow. By estimation, it has lost twenty-five percent of its speed and thirty percent of its firepower. Nothing more.

“By comprehensive evaluation, the hyperspace shock has delayed the assembly of the enemy’s space gate for approximately two hours, which is not long enough for the Burning Prairie Fleet to break the Black Wind Fleet’s defense and destroy the space gate.

“Based on the situation on the battlefield, it is very possible that the enemy will have reinforcements in three hours. On the other hand, the three space gates on our side are so badly damaged that it will take at least ten hours’ maintenance before they can navigate the reinforcement to arrive!”

After all the trouble, sacrifice, desperation, and lucky coincidences, the wormhole bomb had finally detonated successfully, but all that was earned was only two more hours.

It would take more than ten hours for the reinforcements of their side to arrive. What could they do in two hours?

Such a result cast both Silver Moon and the highest command center into bitter silence. Their hearts that had been soaring a moment ago all hit rock bottom.

For Bai Kaixin and other leadership of the Burning Prairie Fleet on Burning Prairie, they did not even have the time to feel sorry for themselves because the ear-splitting alarms each louder than the last suggested that more Colossi of the Imperium had broken into the flagship of the federal army!

Boom!

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Rumbling noises were echoing from deep inside Burning Prairie. The pictures on every surveillance camera were devastating messes.

The few Colossi of the federation immediately retreated for defense.

But they had all fought for a long time. In terms of crystals, ammunition, and storage of spiritual energy, they were utterly incomparable to the well-prepared, high-spirited Colossi of the Imperium that had just been released from Black Swirl.

The federation had fewer Colossi in the first place. The consequence of the few Colossi retreating to defend the flagship was that the most powerful weapon against the Colossi of the Imperium in the space field was lost. The space battlefield immediately turned into a slaughterhouse for the Colossi of the Imperium.

In such an impasse, it was barely possible to break Burning Prairie and other main-force warships of the federation away from the chaos, not to mention breaking the defense of the Black Wind Fleet!

Time passed by one second after another.

Black Swirl went on a rampage in space like an animal that grew even more ferocious after suffering heavy wounds.

Behind it, the space gate was already taking shape. It opened slowly like an enormous eye of a fiend.

…

“What do we do?”

On Silver Moon, mist filled Jin Xinyue’s eyes, but a moment later, it was ripped into shreds by her passion and determination. “All demon troops, march toward Black Swirl right now. We don’t have a choice. The federation doesn’t have a choice. We will either be obliterated or immortalized!”

…

“Chief Advisor!” On the bridge of Burning Prairie, an officer whose face was blackened and bleeding staggered in and shouted, “The enemy’s Colossi are close to the bridge now. Please evacuate through the emergency teleportation array!”

“Evacuate?” Bai Kaixin’s face that was always filled with sorrow now put on a scornful smile. “Are you asking me, the commander of the Burning Prairie Fleet, to abandon the flagship?

“I will live and die with my starship. The home planet of the Heaven’s Origin Sector is right behind us. Where can we evacuate to?

"Burning Prairie, set course for Black Swirl and move at full speed!"

…

On Infinite Fire, the flagship of the Big Bai Fleet, Bai Xingjian's flames of spiritual energy were so scorching that the entire bridge was almost melted. Every pathway in the entire warship was echoing his thunderous roar.

"Forward! Forward! March at full speed toward the side of the Black Swirl that was heavily damaged just now! The daring team, be prepared. Let's go to the Imperium and turn their nest upside down!"

…

Outside of the No. 9 star fortress on the Wall of Heaven's Origin, the orbital defense ring, Ding Lingdang had no time to enter the fortress for rest and simply received treatment and refilled her spiritual energy on a medical starship.

"Good enough!"

After only spending twenty minutes in the medical cabin, she tore off the high-pressive, active oxygenic mask and jumped out of the nutrition liquids.

"But," the specialist of the medical team objected, frightened, "your wounds are not entirely recovered. Besides, the Draconic Phoenix was too seriously damaged to be repaired so quickly!"

"Without a Colossus, I can still fight in the crystal suit!" Staring at the enormous light beam hanging in front of the medical room, Ding Lingdang declared, faced with the burning sea of stars, “My friends are all out there. I must go there, too, to the heart of Black Swirl!”

…

On the bridge of Black Swirl, Heiye Ming put on a smile of utmost disdain with intense black air flowing on his face.

“Are you still struggling before death? Since your wild gamble just now failed to completely destroy Black Swirl, it will be futile whatever you try right now.

“The space gate of the Imperium will open in two hours. Nothing can possibly stop the main troops of the Black Wind Fleet arriving here, destroying the federal fleet, and suppressing the entire federation!

“Fate is on our side. Now, just wash your neck and wait for your new life. Hehe. Hehehe!”

…

In the highest command center of the Defense Counsel in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, Wan Guqing’s face that seemed to have been unchanged for ten thousand years finally had twisted cracks.

“Speaker, according to the latest analysis report, the odds of our army successfully destroying the enemy’s space gate have dropped to… 3.1%. The enemy’s reinforcements will surely arrive earlier than ours. The odds that all the main-force warships including Burning Prairie are destroyed have been increased to… 65%.

“The space battle has come to an end in advance. It is time to issue the highest alarm planetwide and prepare for the next phase of the planetary defense, isn’t it?”

The leader of the analysis division of the federal army suggested bitterly.

Wan Guqing closed his dirty eyes. It was not until a long time later that he nodded softly, “Prepare for the planetary defense. In half an hour, I will give a national speech. In any case, the Heaven’s Origin Sector will fight to the end…”

Before Wan Guqing could finish his sentence, he was suddenly interrupted by a desperate roar.

“Reinforcements! R—R—Reinforcements!”

Chapter 1819 - A Carrier Has Come!

The Speaker of the Federation and the leader of the analysis division were both dazed. Looking at the source of the voice, they saw the flushed face of the director of the office of communication, as if every pore on it was spurting out fire.

It was not until this moment that the two of them finally understood what ‘reinforcement’ meant. They could not help but feel that their faces were burning, too.

“Reinforcements? From where? Have the space gates been repaired?” Speaker Wan Guqing asked in excitement.

“Not yet, but we have just fixed a space communication base and reached out to Hundred Flowers City although the signals are still intermittent!” the director of the office of communications said in a hurry. “Hundred Flowers City has been sending messages to us the whole time, but the Spiritual Nexus in their place is seriously damaged, too. The messages are all broken after travelling dozens of lightyears. We went through a lot of trouble to decipher part of the information. It seems that some of the reinforcements have jumped over.”

While speaking, he raised his wrists to look at the mini crystal processor. “The communication specialists are working on the messages. We will soon know the detailed identity of the reinforcement.”

“The reinforcements have jumped over before the space gates are repaired?” Speaker Wan Guqing’s overjoyed face became gloomy. “Then, how can they possibly control the coordinates of landing? If the whole fleet is scattered in the entire Heaven’s Origin Sector, it will be a tray of loose sand and can’t help the situation at all. They don’t know what they are doing!”

Even a regular galaxy was often more than ten billion kilometers in diameter. The active area for the civilization of mankind where the resources were densest perhaps only took up one percent at the core.

Even if they had grasped the coordinates of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, a ‘blind jump’ without the navigation of the space gates would likely cast the starships teleported into random points on the vast space ten billion kilometers in diameter. Even if they were to move at full speed, it would take days for them to reach the central area.

That was not counting the time cost to regroup the disorganized starships.

Neither the federation nor the Imperium was capable of setting up powerful ‘spiritual towers’ at every part in the periphery of the galaxy ten billion kilometers in diameter, which meant that there was probably no Spiritual Nexus at all in the cold, dark regions of space. The other means of communication would be highly susceptible to the interference of space storms, too!

However distinguished the commander of the fleet was, how could he summon the starships that had been scattered in a range of ten billion kilometers like dandelions after his flagship jumped into such a dark swamp?

By comprehensive estimation, it would take at least half a month for such a ‘tray of loose sand’ to be condensed into a fist that could punch.

But the Black Wind Fleet would not give them half a month.

It was absolutely capable of devouring the main force of the Burning Prairie Fleet in one day and control the space of the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Then, it would send out tremendous claw fleets to cruise around. Once they caught lone starships of the federation, they would lunge forward like ravenous wolves, not leaving even bones for the federation.

“Idiot!” Speaker Wan Guqing exclaimed. “Who is the commander of the reinforcement? What an idiot!”

The Star Glory Federation had seven Sectors after all. Even if the Heaven’s Origin Sector did fall, it was still not the end of the world. The defense of the other six Sectors had to be taken into account.

The Uranian Ring Sector and the Flying Star Sector both boasted rather advanced magical equipment industries. The Water Crystal Sector and the Forest Ocean Sector had abundant resources, too. The Blood Demon Sector was a natural battlefield for guerilla warfare. With those worlds, the federation could persist for a long time.

The garrisons of those worlds were the last available forces of the federation. How could they go there to be killed for nothing in such a brave and yet thoughtless way?

The Defense Counsel of the Federation did not issue such an absurd command at all!

The director of the office of communication had sweat all over his head, too. He blushed and said, “The messages we received were broken and messy. They are not in one piece or in the correct order even after being repaired. Right now, we are still unaware who their commander is…”

Then, his face suddenly turned extremely weird, and his voice came to an abrupt halt.

Wan Guqing and the director of the analysis division looked at each and asked in a hurry, “What is it? Have the reinforcements been identified?”

“Y—Yes,” the officer of the office of communication stammered. “It seems that… regrouping is no longer a problem. To ensure the accuracy of the jump, they teleported not the main troops of the Burning Prairie Fleet, not the two A-Level heavy fleets stationed in the Flying Star Sector or the Uranian Ring Sector, but one starship in total. It is a carrier named ‘Anglerfish’, a member of the fleets in Hundred Flowers City. The identification code is 224.112.967.

“The Hundred Flowers Space Zone hopes that we can record the code in the friend-or-foe identification database and try to connect Anglerfish to the military Spiritual Nexus.

The entire highest command center was caught in dead silence, like a coffin piled up with ice.

Speaker Wan Guqing had always left the impression that he was an old camel that was silent and sluggish. However, at that moment, he jumped to his feet like a magnificent lion that had burst into fury. His lips shivered for a long time before he demanded, one word after another, “What—what did you say? The reinforcements from the Hundred Flowers Space Zone are just one carrier, Anglerfish?”

The director of the office of communications found it hard to believe his eyes, too. He read the light beam four times and examined every word on it. Then, he bellowed at his subordinates in his own communication channel. But in the end, he nodded helplessly and confirmed, “Yes. There’s only one carrier, Anglerfish. Also, the Hundred Flowers Space Zone asked us to persist for a few minutes longer because victory will be ours after Anglerfish arrives!”

“…” Speaker Wan Guqing.

“…” The leader of the analysis division.

“…” All the other big shots in the highest command center.

“You—You’ve got to be kidding me!” Guo Chunfeng exclaimed. “Has our Spiritual Nexus been hijacked by the enemy again? Is this yet another trick and scheme from the enemy?”

“I—I have no idea.” The director of the office of communication felt like he was mired in the most absurd nightmare. He was so anxious that his back was soaked in sweat. Right then, his mini crystal processor buzzed crazily again. He lowered his head to check it, only to put on an even more bitter expression.

“What? Another piece of bad news?” Speaker Wan Guqing narrowed his eyes, apparently not in his best mood.

“Not exactly bad news…” The director of the office of communication swallowed hard and smiled bitterly. “It is a message that I’m not sure I understand. We have fixed a clip of the signals just now. The message… seems to be the conditions proposed by the reinforcements.”

“What? Everybody in the communication center was stunned. “The reinforcements—the carrier ‘Anglerfish’, what conditions do they have?”

“Well…” The director of the office of communication looked at Speaker Wan Guqing and Guo Chunfeng. Having received their permission, he read out the broken message aloud. “Some people among the reinforcements demand that… after… after the battle, the strongest battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators in the whole federation must have a few good fights with them. They hope that those Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators won’t turn the request down.”

“Huh?” Wan Guqing was stunned.

“Also, some people demand that the classified files of the major cases in the New Federation in the past hundred years, those involving the critical legal problems, must be revealed to them. The darker and the more clandestine, the better. They want to study the ‘rules’ of the federation well.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Even Guo Chunfeng could not understand.

“There’s another demand. Right. Somebody from the reinforcements asked a question. All the trades in the federation have their guilds. For example, the Refiners’ Association, the Federation’s Disabled Servicemen Association, the Exos’ Association, and even the Cultivators’ Association. Then, he wonders if ‘beggars’ have an association, and if not, is it possible for him to establish an association of all the beggars of the federation, which can be named the Beggars’ Gang? He wants to be the president of the association.”

Despite the abundant life experiences of Wan Guqing, Guo Chunfeng, and other people, they found it impossible to listen any longer. “Enough. Are you sure that this is a secret message from the Hundred Flowers Space Zone? This is ridiculous enough even if it is the enemy’s trick!”

The director of the office of communication sweated hard and couldn’t stop it at all. Even the light beam shot out by his mini crystal processor was shaking. He said, “I—I feel that something is not right, too. Wait. Another message has been restored...”

He was stunned again.

His eyes were glittering, his throat was hissing, and his nostrils were flaring, spurting out two tiny tornadoes in front of his nose.

“The identity of the commander on ‘Anglerfish’ has been confirmed.”

The director of the office of communication took a deep breath more than ten times. Even his lungs were about to explode, but he still could not hold back the excitement and shock in his voice.

Wan Guqing and Guo Chunfeng looked at each other, both noticing the intense confusion and the one billionth of hope that was enshrouded by the confusion in their eyes. They asked at the same time, “Who is it?”

“Li Yao.”

“Li… Li Yao? Which Li Yao?”

“*The* Li Yao. The one and only Li Yao in the whole federation!”

…

In the space battlefield, the stars were bleeding.

With the space battle progressing so far, most of the soldiers in the federal army had shot their last bullet, broken their last saber, and shed their last drop of blood.

The space shuttles were rolling and spinning like fish whose fins had been cut away. Every glittering rune array on the crystal suits had died out, making it impossible for the Exos to die together with the enemy even if they wanted to. The starships were reduced to skeletons that were riddled with holes before the skeletons were blown up into debris in a moment. In the end, even the debris was completely gone after a series of intense explosions.

Burning Prairie had intended to crash into Black Swirl’s wound at the beginning, but it was not so simple as in the games or movies for two starships that were moving at a super high speed to crash. Before it broke into the target’s sailing route, it was already attracted by the force field from a few comprehensive motherships of the Imperium. Also, with the mayhem caused by the Colossi inside, the magical equipment units and cabins that were of paramount importance turned into furnaces thousands of degrees in temperature. Like an arrow that had reached the end of its flight, Burning Prairie finally slowly stopped right next to Black Swirl.

In the end, they had failed to break through the Black Wind Fleet’s defense. The distance between Burning Prairie and Black Swirl was as tiny as hair, but it was also as far away as thousands of lightyears!

Right behind Black Swirl, the enormous space gate was slowly opened, revealing what both seemed to be a blood red eye of a fiend and a glowing super swirl.

The space was ripped apart, and the ripples were spreading out. Indescribable, overwhelming forces were surging out. The hazy shadows of countless starships of the Imperium were surfacing from the depths of the swirl!

Chapter 1820 - Those Who Are Ignorant Are Fearless!

Bai Kaixin, Bai Xingjian, Jin Xinyue, Ding Lingdang, Wu Mayan, and all the other soldiers of the federal army and Cultivators who were fighting in blood detected that objects of high masses and spiritual energy were arriving unstoppably.

The twisted spiritual waves were so immense that the hideous, devastating appearances of the starships of the Imperium were outlined clearly on the light beam. They were like a bunch of unparalleled fiends that had just crawled out of their nests at the bottom of the abyss!

Burning Prairie suffered yet another serious explosion. Endless fuel, scraps, and broken limbs of the crew members flooded out. The No. 2 engine compartment was completely gone. The No. 3 and No. 4 engine compartments were on fire. Venomous air was spreading, and melted iron was flowing, turning the middle and rear parts of the starship into a living hell, where eight Colossi in total both from the enemy's side and their own side were still fighting fiercely.

Quite a few main-force warships nearby were unable to launch a counterattack under the enemy's bombardment. They struggled hard in the fireballs of explosions that looked like lumps. Ahead of them was an iron wall made of tremendous space torpedoes shot out by the starships of the Imperium, which was as impenetrable as an asteroid!

Failed. The federation had completely failed. Nothing could possibly stop the arrival of the enemy's reinforcements!

However, now that they had reached this point, did they really have a second option other than to push forward?

…

On the burning bridge of Burning Prairie, Bai Kaixin, whose face was burnt and bleeding, roared, “Third, fourth, and sixth branch fleets, break away from the battlefield whatever the cost is, retreat to the behind of the Wall of Heaven’s Origin, and prepare to defend the home planet of the Heaven’s Origin Sector! First, second, and the fifth branch fleets, march forward with Burning Prairie! For the Burning Prairie Fleet, for the federation’s six hundred years of glory!”

…

“March forward. A hundred billion compatriots are watching you from behind. You are the legendary strongest Cultivators that have ever existed, the qi-trainers!” Ding Lingdang, who was rushing forward together with the legion of qi-trainers, roared.

“Building Foundation Stage? Core Formation Stage? Nascent Soul Stage? We are qi-trainers from Iron Plateau! Let your soul explode and break the entire universe if you are a man!”

Wu Mayan and all the qi-trainers burst into laughter. Their spiritual energy echoed and reverberated with their soul, while they marched forward like ten thousand suns.

…

“March forward. Show the filthy worms of the Imperium the last pride of demons!”

On Silver Moon, Jin Xinyue’s hair was messy, and she was as crazy as a devil. There was no longer any cunningness inside her eyes, only the madness of an expert demon.

Perhaps a lot of warriors of the demon race were still slightly different from the human warriors in terms of appearance, but their blood was equally hot!

…

“Get out of my way. Let me personally pilot the starship. March toward the nine-couplet main gun of Black Swirl! The main gun is already too seriously damaged to lock onto us!”

In the main cockpit of Infinite Fire, Bai Xingjian’s eyes turned into a raging flood. His telepathic thoughts spread out crazily and completely melded with the starship. He laughed in the most arrogant way.

“Come on. Regardless of whether you are Immortal Cultivators from the Imperium of True Human Beings or the so-called extraterrestrial devils, let me teach you a lesson today on how you should pilot a starship!”

…

“Tsk, tsk, tsk, tsk. Are those poor bugs going to have their last attempt?”

On the bridge of Black Swirl, Heiye Ming perceived the anomaly of the federal fleet keenly and immediately understood what his opponent wanted.

Such futile struggles, which were nothing more than a mantis trying to stop a car with their forelegs, could only make him put on a cold, scornful smile.

The commander of the Black Wind Fleet held his arms and tapped his shoulder with his fingers unhurriedly.

“In another three minutes, my main troops will all arrive in this pitiful world, and Burning Prairie, the flagship of those bugs, is about to collapse!

“Illuminating the entire universe with a burning prairie? Hehe. Those who are ignorant are indeed fearless. The darkness of the universe far exceeds the imagination of the bugs like you. Let me break your fantasy and tell you the cruel truth!”

…

On the home planet of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, every city and village was mired in fright and panic.

The space battle of the main fleets of both parties and the unimaginable collision of spiritual energy would unleash tremendous abnormal radiation and high-energy particles. It was impossible to fool everyone.

Although the Defense Counsel of the Federation had not issued the Highest Alarm Order yet, the evacuation of the general public had long begun.

The first to be evacuated were the children in school.

As the hope of the federation, they had the top priority to enter the underground fortresses that had been armed to teeth and receive the most thorough protection.

On the playgrounds of the schools, right below the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flags that were flying in the wind, the children lined up under the organization of their teachers and the members of the Federation’s Disabled

Servicemen Association and boarded the shuttles bound for the underground world.

Hearing the ear-splitting alarms in all directions, the children all had pale faces. Their big eyes that were as clear as water were now mixed with complicated ripples. Even the naughtiest boys fell silent and even offered to comfort the younger children of lower grades who were weeping.

After only half a day, the children had grown up a lot and learned many things that did not befit their age.

But deep inside their eyes, the brilliance as pure as diamonds was still not gone.

Those who were ignorant were fearless. It was probably right.

Perhaps, compared to those who understood the darkness of the universe clearly, the children were more resolute and determined and trusted more that there was brightness in this world!

Around the campuses, pillars of smoke and light interweaved into thousands of Babel towers that pierced through the clouds, illuminating the sky that was packed with dark clouds into various colors.

The colors were so profuse, glamorous, and brilliant that they might have been enough to tear apart the clouds if there had been a tiny bit more of them.

At the ends of the Babel towers, the civil Cultivators and the members of the Federation’s Disabled Servicemen Association organized themselves and marched toward the space, stabbing a hole in the dark sky!

"Miss Zhou…"

A plumb little girl, who was wearing a big red bowknot and holding a toy in the shape of a space shuttle, timidly said, "Dad said that he would go to the sky to beat the bad guys and that he would pick me up after the bad guys ran away. Do you think that they can drive the bad guys away? When can Dad come back?"

Miss Zhou gazed at the clouds on the horizon for a long time and did not come back to herself for a long time. She did not know how she should face the child's innocent eyes.

"Of course they can. My dad is in the sky, too. He is an awesome Exo. Every time we play arm wrestling, he can defeat me and my mom together with only one finger! If your dad can't do it, there's still my dad. They are definitely going to win! They will drive away all the bad guys after a few kicks and punches!"

Instead of waiting for Miss Zhou to reply, a boy who was missing a front tooth shouted and even patted the shoulder of the little girl as if he were an adult, a movement that he had just learned from a veteran. He reassured her, "There's no need to worry!"

"Your dad is nothing," another eloquent little girl shouted. "My dad is the real awesome one. He works in the engine compartment of a starship. A starship huger than the hill next to our campus listens to his command alone to run fast. Yes. It even runs faster than light!"

"My dad works there, too—"

"My dad! My dad, too!"

The shuttle immediately turned into an obstreperous ocean. All the words gathered into the same warm comfort. “Rest assured. This is our home. Our dads and moms are definitely going to drive away the bad guys!”

Boom! Crack!

An explosive peel of thunder echoed on the horizon, leading to a series of crazily dancing lightning. The dark clouds that had sulked for an entire day were ripped with a narrow, long gap. Brilliance as red as magma was rolling above the clouds, illuminating every child’s round face into redness. In their trance, there was even no telling whether it was the sunset or the vigorous morning glow!

…

On the battlefield, the probe systems of all the tactical crystal processors were beeping in ear-splitting noises. The high-energy reactions near the space gate of the Imperium grew more and more intense, far more impressive than what befitted regular starships!

“Something is not right. Such intense energy reactions… The main troop of the Black Wind Fleet is a bit too strong.”

Ding Lingdang, Bai Xingjian, Bai Kaixin and the rest of them, who had abundant experience in space battles, were deeply confused by the spiritual energy indexes fed back by their crystal suits.

“This—this is not the spiritual waves of starships but the spiritual waves of Colossi!”

“Damn it, damn it, damn it! How many more Colossi has the Black Wind Fleet been hiding?”

“Three? Five? Seven? No, no. More than ten Colossi! How is that possible? The Black Wind Fleet can still bring out a dozen Colossi at a time like this? This is unbelievable!”

Despite Bai Kaixin’s calmness, Bai Xingjian’s madness, and Ding Lingdang’s valiance, when they sensed a dozen Colossi arriving in the most invincible gesture, they sensed coldness to their bones at the same time.

Little did they know that on the bridge of Black Swirl, Heiye Ming, who had been smiling and confident of his victory a moment earlier, was dumbfounded. The veins protruding out of his face, and his hair was all standing up. His brain was almost exploding.

“More than ten Colossi!

“Such magnificent flames of spiritual energy. What are the levels of the Colossi? Why are they so well preserved?

“Where do they come from? Who are they? Why? Why?”

The commander of the Black Wind Fleet roared and jumped toward the control panel without considering anything, trying to prevent the tragedy, but it was already too late.

The four-dimensional swirl summoned by the space gate had blossomed to the maximum. Countless starships of the Imperium were passing through the ‘narrow’ wormholes like a bunch of obese dinosaurs. Right then, a series of shining bubbles surged out of the depths of the space swirl.

Those bubbles were like unpredictable phantoms of energy. Colliding with each other and glowing rapidly, they split crazily until they evolved into a destructive storm that swept across the entire four-dimensional swirl!

Chapter 1821 - A Journey of Sparks and Lightning!

The space swirl that was previously stable and even became warped and violent because of the storm. Part of the reinforcing starships of the Imperium had passed the wormhole but were stuck in the depths of the overlapping ripples at the last moment.

Some of them were stretched to hundreds of kilometers long from several kilometers. Some starships superimposed other starships, raising intense explosions when all the materials appeared at the same coordinates. Some were forever trapped in the void and could not be condensed again, like clusters of glittering mists in space.

Almost none of the starships were able to escape from the fatal swirl. The few starships that were lucky enough to run out were also contorted into spirals, losing all their spiritual energy and power. Judging from the broken shells and the gaps that almost pierced through the body of the entire starship, most of the crew members inside must have died.

The star beacons that constituted the space gate exploded one after another. The enormous fireball illuminated almost half of the universe, which only made it easier for people to clearly see the chaos and misery at the center of the space swirl.

It was like a masterpiece of a Fauvist artist when he was well drunk. The nightmare-like picture lasted about half a minute, and the colorful, messed-up space swirl finally collapsed inwardly beyond control and perished at a visible speed. A few seconds later, the only things left behind were shiny ripples that looked like drifting jellyfish.

That was a real wormhole bomb!

The space gate had completely collapsed, and all the star beacons lost their brilliance, like the eyes of the blind. The enormous reinforcing troops of the Imperium, those raging, well-prepared dinosaurs in space, vanished into nothingness together with the wormhole!

The entire battlefield in space was caught in a weird silence.

None of the soldiers, commanders, generals, Cultivators, and Immortal Cultivators on either side could say anything.

Everybody just gazed at the coordinates where the wormhole had perished, watching the colorful, glittering ripples.

Even the fleet commanders with the highest computational ability also went blank. Disbelief, ecstasy, or desperation, all kinds of emotions were sealed inside their frozen nerves!

“How—how did this happen?”

Ding Lingdang, Bai Xingjian, Bai Xinghe, Jin Xinyue, Wu Mayan, Guo Chunfeng, and Heiye Ming, as well as thousands of soldiers of the federal army and the Black Wind Fleet, were all carpet bombarded by the deafening question inside their brain!

Regardless of their side, a lot of people exclaimed in shock at the same time, “What is that?”

Sensing an unseen force surging close from the debris of the space gate, they all shifted the scanning direction of their probe magical equipment.

In the coordinates where the reinforcing fleet of the Imperium and the wormhole perished together, deep inside the colorful space ripples, a majestic shadow gradually revealed itself.

General Colossi were no taller than fifty meters. Even the largest model was only slightly more than a hundred meters tall. Compared to the scale of the universe, they were just a grain of sand. Logically, it should have been difficult to observe them with the naked eye.

However, the magnificent, dominating shadow was not the Colossus itself, and not even entirely the flames of spiritual energy that it triggered, but space tempests raised by the collision of its spiritual shield and the space ripples that had not completely dissipated!

The overwhelming radiation was its cape. The high-energy particles were like crazily-dancing, fiery snakes around its body. Electric arcs thousands of kilometers long interweaved behind the Colossus, congregating into a path that pierced deep into the Black Wind Fleet!

The giant made of space tempests shredded the space ripples, stomped on the path of lightning, and spurted out high-energy particles crazily. Its aura rushed higher and higher in space. A hundred meters, a thousand meters, ten thousand meters, a hundred thousand meters… It left an ineffaceable mark on every crystal camera, every piece of surveillance magical equipment, and everyone’s pupils!

Invisible threads seemed to have darted out of the giant’s body and tangled with the heart of everybody on the battlefield.

Everyone sensed the suffocating waves of spiritual energy. In their confusion, they even heard the thuds of the giant’s footsteps when it strode through the lightning and stars.

Was it friend or foe? What was it exactly?

Were the footsteps the drumming of march or a knell that would claim everyone’s life?

Everybody waited nervously and helplessly while they tried to catch their breath.

Ding Lingdang stared at the form of the radiation of the stranger’s spiritual energy that was scanned by her crystal processor.

For some reason, her heart was beating faster and faster, and her chest and cheeks were burningly hot. She felt that her lips were numb, and her eyes gradually filled with tears.

Clink! Clink! Clink! Clink! Clink!

She seemed to hear the wind chimes ringing when the blood raged against her eardrums.

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

Emergency intelligence was sent from the highest command center.

The moment she saw the two words that were so familiar that they were almost unrecognizable, the windchimes in her ears were ten times louder than before. Her nose seemed to have been twisted hard, and she could not help but burst into tears.

“You—you’re finally back!”

…

I’m finally back, and thankfully, in time!

Inside the cockpit of the Tartarean Skeleton, despite the thorough protection of Little Black, Li Yao’s muscles and veins were still ripped apart by the space ripples, and his face was bleeding hard.

It could not be helped. In order to boost the morale and build the impressive sound and visual effect, he gritted his teeth to barge into the center of the ripples of spiritual energy that had not become peaceful yet. He had even summoned his spiritual energy to compete with the universe!

Although he did achieve the awesome effect of a whole path of sparks and lightning, he had suffered major backlash.

But it was all worth it!

He did not know how Ding Lingdang, Jin Xinyue, and the millions of soldiers of the federal army managed it, but they had truly resisted the Black Wind Fleet that was strengthened by the extraterrestrial devils miraculously long enough for the twelve experts from the Ancient Sages Sector and their twelve Colossi to arrive!

Thank you, Jin Xinyue, Guo Chunfeng, Wu Mayan, Ding Lingdang… and everybody else for bringing me this ‘miracle’. Now, let me give a new miracle back to you!

“Hooo!”

The Tartarean Skeleton uttered a soundless roar. The overwhelming radiation and high-energy particles around its body expanded and brightened more than ten times over like solar flares, leaving an enormous silhouette in the dark universe that was almost pure white!

Three unfortunate starships of the Imperium happened to be in Li Yao’s way.

They had already been terribly damaged by the hyperspace shock raised by the collapse of the wormhole. The gaps that were everywhere on the bodies of the starships were spurting out fire nonstop.

Having no time to dodge at all, they were drawn by the magnetic field of the Tartarean Skeleton into its range of attack before they exploded all of a sudden and turned into three brilliant fireballs behind the Tartarean Skeleton.

With the instant illumination of the fireballs, some of the starships of the Imperium at a closer distance finally captured the hideous appearance of the Colossus that looked like a lord of darkness.

Beep. Beep. Beep.

The crystal processors of the Tartarean Skeleton received a new request to connect to the communication channel.

Judging from the token received, it was exactly the passcode that they had agreed upon in the Hundred Flowers Space Zone.

Who would be the first one to speak to him after a hundred years? Would it be… her?

Holding back his excitement, Li Yao sent out a shivering telepathic thought, connecting the ports of the two parties on the Spiritual Nexus.

“Li Yao!”

Ding Lingdang’s voice immediately raised thunderstorms in his ears, nerve endings, brain, and deep inside his soul.

Li Yao did not feel as suffocated even when he gritted his teeth to break into the center of the space ripples a moment ago.

Although he was a renowned Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator and the dominator of three Sectors, he felt that his eyes and nose were almost filled with tears. Taking a deep breath, he reminded himself to calm down and regain the grand returning aura instead of falling into the sensational dramas again.

Li Yao forced him to tighten his lips and burst into laughter. “Dear wife, I’m back. Are you happy? Are you excited?”

Ding Lingdang was silent for a while, probably too excited to control herself. Even her voice sounded weird. “Well…”

“You don’t need to say a word. I feel you, honey!” Even such a straightforward woman like Ding Lingdang had fallen silent. When he thought of the tears on his wife’s face, Li Yao was so thrilled that he almost could not contain himself. Holding back the roiling emotions in his chest, he quickly said, “I know that you must’ve missed me dearly. I just want to tell you that I missed you so much, too. But now is not the time for romance. Just step aside and rest well. Your husband is going to blow up all those Immortal Cultivators and extraterrestrial devils as quickly as possible. After those scumbags are taken care of, we will be able to do whatever we want. We haven’t had a competition of beliefs for a hundred years!”

“Would you please stop?”

“Huh? Something is wrong. You are not my wife! My wife should be a passionate and straightforward woman. Since when have you become so shy?”

“I am your wife. But this is not a point-to-point private communication channel. Just now, I opened the port of communication on my end to all the troops on our side. All the soldiers of the federal army can hear our conversation.”

“…”

“Hello? Li Yao? Can you still hear me?”

“Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!”

“Li Yao! Li Yao!”

“What did you say?” Li Yao asked innocently. “I didn’t hear anything. Just now, the extraterrestrial devils seemed to have hacked my Spiritual Nexus and sent out some messy voices. But I’ve already taken care of them! This is the real me talking right now. What did you say, honey?”

“…Your grand return has shocked the entire battlefield,” Ding Lingdang said, unamused. “Everybody can’t wait to hear the voice of ‘Vulture’ Li Yao, the dominator of the three sectors. Is there anything you want to say to the soldiers of the federal army?”

“We are in the middle of a military emergency,” Li Yao said. “I don’t have much to say right now. Besides, I hate those people who give a long, dull speech before every battle more than anything! Soldiers of the federal army, I am Vulture Li Yao, but I am not the ‘dominator of three Sectors’. I am a common warrior, just like every one of you! Let’s not say a word but fight side by side and march toward the enemy’s flagship, Black Swirl! Every explosion you are going to see will be my voice!”

Chapter 1822 - Collision of Infinite Fire!

The path of lightning in front of the Tartarean Skeleton turned into a flashing spear and went on a rampage deep inside the Black Wind Fleet, meeting utterly no hindrance wherever it reached.

The crystal suits and space shuttles of the Imperium that were directly hit by the flashing spear all exploded. Even the starships of the Imperium that were more than one kilometer long and boasted the protection of a spiritual shield and multiple layers of composite plate armor were fleeing in a flurry to avoid its sharpness!

The starships further away that had not been affected by the collapse of the wormhole had no time to bother about the enemies that they were dealing with anymore. They all shifted their aim, and almost ten thousand pillars of lights and bullets of spiritual energy lunged at Li Yao.

Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom!

Sound could not be transmitted in the vacuum, but when tens of thousands of enormous light balls expanded to their limits and congregated into an ocean of brightness. The eardrums and hearts of all on the battlefield still caught a deafening explosion from the crazily surging waves of spiritual energy.

All the soldiers and Cultivators of the federal army felt as if somebody had twisted their heart. They wondered if Li Yao could survive such a world-blighting strike.

But the next second, the surging tides of spiritual energy raised by the Black Wind Fleet were suppressed by twelve raging fires that were even fiercer. Compared with the twelve fires that were burning through the universe, the explosion of the thousands of bullets a moment ago lost all color!

The fireballs perished, and the brightness was dancing. The Tartarean Skeleton walked out step by step after ripping the overlapping flames with the stars beneath its feet. Not only was it completely undamaged, it looked even more invincible and dominating than before because of the countless revolving swirls of spiritual energy around!

Behind it, another eleven spiritual waves that were of a similar intensity gradually condensed into eleven enormous fiends. Their daunting auras immediately covered the entire space battlefield.

“There—there are another eleven guys who are as strong as him!”

Everybody on the battlefield was dumbfounded.

Before they realized what was going on, the twelve Colossi turned into twelve streaks of lightning and stabbed into the battle formation of the Black Wind Fleet from various angles. They were so fast that it was impossible to capture their shadows, much less see clearly how they attacked. The only things left behind was a road of explosions made of a series of fireballs after the twelve streaks of lightning marched forward unstoppably!

The reinforcements that were due to arrive had been slapped back. Even the space gate was destroying, cutting off the hope for the arrival of new reinforcements. In the meantime, twelve magnificent Colossi had popped up on the enemy’s side. The cruel scene ravaged the nerves of all the soldiers of the Imperium. The desire to slaughter and destroy that had just been boosted by the extraterrestrial devils all turned into cold sweat.

The battle formation of the Black Wind Fleet fell into disarray. Like a high tower made of matches, it collapsed uncontrollably.

The Colossi of the Imperium that were sabotaging Burning Prairie from inside were all caught in an awkward dilemma, wondering if they should retreat and defend Black Swirl so that the flagship could at least be saved. Although, judging from the intensity of spiritual energy unleashed by the twelve Colossi that had joined the battlefield, they would barely have a chance of survival even if they did charge forward.

The federal fleet, on the other hand, had higher morale than ever. Both the leadership of Burning Prairie, Silver Moon, Infinite Fire, and the Exo attack groups led by Ding Lingdang, as well as the millions of common soldiers, all felt that their blood was boiling under the encouragement of the killing spree of Li Yao and the rest.

When the colorful light balls deep inside the Black Wind Fleet due to the explosions glowed on their retina, their limbs and brains seemed to be going through explosions, too, giving them brand-new strength.

Everybody devoted the last drop of their spiritual energy and triggered the power rune arrays to the maximum. Almost a million exhaust flames were all aimed at the Black Wind Fleet like long spears. Forward, forward, accelerate and move forward!

“Soldiers of the Imperium of True Human Beings!” Li Yao set the communication magical equipment of the Tartarean Skeleton to be public in all bands, making it essentially a broadcaster in space, and roared at the entire battlefield indiscriminately. “The space gate, your last hope, has been destroyed. Part of your reinforcements have been exterminated in the space storms, and the remaining reinforcements are dozens of light years away. They cannot arrive in time to save you. Your plan is over, and you are doomed, with nowhere to run. Death is your only ending!

“Look at the magnificence of the Star Glory Federation. If you truly believe in your ideology that the strong must be worshipped, it is time you drop your weapons and surrender to the truly strong ones!

“Considering the heavy losses that you have caused the federation, we absolutely don’t mind, nor are we incapable of, annihilating each and every one of you. But right now, there is still a more vicious, evil enemy that is on the same level as the Alliance of the Holy Covenant, or even above the Covenant Alliance and as strong as the Pangu Clan. Our mutual enemy is hiding somewhere out there on this battlefield.

“The enemy is an extraterrestrial devil!

“Think about what happened just now. Did you feel that your desires to slaughter and destroy were improved a lot uncannily? Did you feel that your blood was boiling and that your brain was burning, making it impossible for you to think? That’s because the extraterrestrial devil invaded your souls and tried to control your minds!

“The extraterrestrial devils are manipulating the space battle behind the curtain. We are all their chess pieces. They want to watch the two tigers maul each other and then swallow both of us before the last drop of blood in our body is shed!

“Right now, your flagship, Black Swirl, has degraded into a nest of the extraterrestrial devils. Your commander, Heiye Ming, has also become the extraterrestrial devils’ puppet, or even one of them!

“Wake up, soldiers of the Imperium. Do not persist in this futile resistance anymore. Drop your weapons, raise your arms, and surrender!

“Doesn’t the Imperium of True Human Beings consider itself to be the rightful successor of the Star Ocean Imperium? The Star Ocean Imperium was destroyed by the extraterrestrial devils ten thousand years ago. If you have the slightest dignity and pride as the successor of the Star Ocean Imperium, just open your eyes and see who your enemy really is!”

Li Yao’s voices spread out through the space battlefield, like tides made of rumbling thunder.

“Extraterrestrial devils…”

Not all the soldiers of the Imperium could hear his ‘broadcast’, but all the Immortal Cultivators who did bulged their eyes and fell silent.

No matter how cruelly and evilly the Immortal Cultivators treated ordinary people, they were indeed deeply proud of their identity as ‘human beings’ and had absolutely no doubt that they were the supreme defenders of the civilization of mankind.

To some extent, the Immortal Cultivators were even more zealous ‘human supremacists’ than the Cultivators were, which could easily be seen from the name of their country.

As noble warriors of the Imperium of True Human Beings, they worshipped the purity of human beings. Even the ordinary people whose spiritual roots were unawakened had been regarded as ‘hominoids’ and banished from the community of ‘true human beings’. The extraterrestrial devils, as an energy life form, were nothing more than filthy evil that could never coexist with the ideology of the Immortal Cultivators. They were the targets that should be slain ruthlessly.

“All of this is the scheme of the extraterrestrial devils, and we’ve fallen into a trap?”

The Immortal Cultivators were no dummies. Lu Qingchen’s manipulation was not entirely without a trace. After hearing Li Yao’s words, a lot of Immortal Cultivators were greatly alarmed and deep in thought.

On Black Swirl, Li Yao’s roars raised an even more shocking tide.

“Commander!”

The air on the bridge was almost frozen. All the Immortal Cultivators stared at Heiye Ming in disbelief and fright without blinking.

“What—What are you…”

Heiye Ming was silent for such a long time that he almost melted with his own shadow. Gazing at the Tartarean Skeleton on the light beam for a long time, he gnashed his teeth. “Li Yao!”

His eyes that were as dark as ink moved to all the Immortal Cultivators around. Wherever his eyes reached, the air seemed to become thick mud that crawled into the pores of every Immortal Cultivator.

Heiye Ming smiled gloomily. “Such a petty trick and such juvenile instigation. Yet, you have all been frightened to such an extent? I’m really disappointed in you…”

Hardly had he finished his sentence when the bridge began to shake violently. Almost everybody could not stand steadily anymore and fell over. Desperate alarms were ringing from the mainframe crystal processor. Dozens of surveillance light beams displayed the same starship that had focused all the spiritual shield at the head and was on fire like a shooting star that had entered the atmosphere.

Yes. ‘Fire’ was exactly its name. While most of the forces of the Black Wind Fleet were distracted by the twelve Colossi and Black Swirl was caught in a brief moment of stiffness, Infinite Fire, the flagship of the Big Bai Fleet, cut through the core defense layer like an invisible blade and crashed into Black Swirl’s wound that had just been swallowed by the wormhole bomb brutally!

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

The spiritual shields and disruptive force fields of the two parties collided heavily, raising thousands of sparks and electric arcs. Even the lights on the bridge were flickering. More than ten light beams died out at the same time, and quite a few spiritual energy tubes exploded, too. The antifire frost spurted out, covering the entire bridge in white smoke. Everybody could not have looked more awful.

In terms of level, Black Swirl was well above Infinite Fire.

But it had suffered a heavy wound from the wormhole bomb, which resulted in a loss of almost thirty percent of its mass and a devastatingly enormous wound on the side of the starship. Therefore, the protective web that covered the whole body of the starship thoroughly before had a fatal hole. The efficiency of the turning and dodging of the starship had plummeted, too.

Despite the gigantic size of Infinite Fire, it was as swift as a super lightweight space shuttle. Drawing an unbelievably elegant curve, it drilled into the enemy’s flagship from the most unexpected angle.

The spiritual shields and disruptive force fields of the two parties only lasted several seconds before the defense layer of Black Swirl above the wound collapsed. In the meantime, the exhaust flames of Infinite Fire spurted out crazily to almost a hundred kilometers away.

With such powerful impetus, it stabbed into the side of Black Swirl and buried a third of its body into the enemy’s flagship, almost cutting the black behemoth right from the middle!

“Li Yao, don’t act like I am not here!”

On the violently shaking bridge of Infinite Fire, Bai Xingjian burst into laughter in the pilot’s seat.

Chapter 1823 - Uncanny Tenebrum Energy!

The external plate armor and the internal structure of a starship were two absolutely different concepts, as different as the hard skull and the soft internal organs of a human, not to mention that the ‘internal organs’ of the starship had already been churned by the wormhole bomb brutally.

The head of Infinite Fire, like the sharp edge of a blade, ripped apart a lot of critical cabins in the middle of Black Swirl easily. Boosted by the incessant impetus, it even managed to blow Black Swirl off its original course and force it to revolve slowly. Black Swirl could not get rid of the spiral state at all.

Bai Xingjian was even crazy enough to turn on all the weapons on Infinite Fire during the ‘negative-distance contact’. The unstoppable high-energy particles as well as the destructive mystic rays and bullets of spiritual energy ran, roared, and exploded in the stomach of Black Swirl, sweeping everything in its way!

The effect was similar to stabbing the barrel of a gun deep into someone’s belly button before pulling the trigger.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Deep inside the flagship of the Imperium, a thunderstorm ten times more powerful than what was happening inside the flagship of the federation broke out.

“How is this happening?”

Heiye Ming and Lu Qingchen seemed to be shouting on the bridge at the same time.

The two starships were too deeply embedded in each other for the force field to drag Infinite Fire out by brute force. To bombard Infinite Fire with the firepower of the starships nearby was an even more terrible idea. One moment of carelessness, and Black Swirl’s own wound that had been repetitively savaged might be hit. Should Infinite Fire explode because of the attack, it might even split Black Swirl in two.

The only solution was to mobilize Exos or Colossi to break into Infinite Fire.

But Infinite Fire was firing like a storm right now. How could the normal crystal suits approach the lunatics of the Big Bai Fleet?

There was no telling if the extraterrestrial devils had livers, but if they did, Heiye Ming’s liver must be exploding because of his fury!

“A fatal gap appeared in the Black Wind Fleet’s battle formation. A white starship just broke in and crashed into Black Swirl. It is Infinite Fire from the Big Bai Fleet!”

“Black Swirl’s spiritual shield has dimmed a lot after the heavy blow. The firing net of defense is not as fierce as before, either.”

“This is our chance. The extraterrestrial devil that is attached to Lu Qingchen must still be there. We cannot allow it to run away!”

“Li Yao, come on. Let’s take care of them!”

The twelve Colossi grasped the opportunity keenly and lunged at Black Swirl.

In terms of available forces, the Black Wind Fleet still boasted tremendous elite arsenal starships, crystal suit groups, and Colossi.

Despite the shock of the space gate’s destruction and Li Yao’s suspicious words just now, they were not likely to surrender easily when their flagship was still out there. Following their fighting instincts, a lot of crystal suits lunged at the twelve experts from the Ancient Sages Sector under the lead of the Colossi.

The twelve experts ran forward one after another, helping their comrades who were rushing to resist the interference from the enemy. In the end, Li Yao, Long Yangjun, and Yan Liren were the only ones left.

It was the assault team to attack ‘Black Swirl’ that they had agreed upon a long time ago. The three of them did not have the highest Cultivation among the twelve experts, but their souls were definitely the toughest.

Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun, despite being in the Divinity Transformation Stage, had died once before, and it had taken decades for their unpredictable, lingering souls to slowly recover. Right now, they were still half a step away from the real Divinity Transformation Stage.

Their souls were full of tiny cracks. Moreover, as spectral Cultivators, they were more likely to be invaded by the extraterrestrial devils. Therefore, the burden to attack Black Swirl fell on the shoulders of Li Yao and Long Yangjun, two freaks, and Yan Liren… well, a third freak.

The core of the Black Wind Fleet’s battle formation was already an utter mess. Including Burning Prairie, which was exploding nonstop, all the main-force warships in the federal fleet marched forward.

Such a distance, such chaos, and such goriness were no longer a close-distance battle where everybody stabbed each other with their bayonets. They were essentially mauling each other and biting each other with their teeth after stabbing the bayonets into each other’s stomachs!

In terms of the number of Colossi, the most crucial factor on the battlefield, the Imperium was actually at a disadvantage. Besides, the Colossi from the Ancient Sages Sector had been retrieved from the Nuwa warship that was sealed in the ice. They were all intact and much more powerful than the Colossi of the Imperium that were full of wounds and out of ammunition.

Under the lead of Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun, the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, it was as if the assault team of the Ancient Sages Sector were opening two overwhelming wings of flames when they covered Li Yao and his companions’ charge at Black Swirl. The attacks from the crystal cannons, the high-energy mystic rays, and the bullets of spiritual energy were all absorbed by the pair of fiery wings that were hundreds of kilometers long and became part of them, making the wings even brighter and broader than before.

A distance of several thousand kilometers was nothing but a casual stroll for a Colossi. Li Yao, Long Yangjun, and Yan Liren arrived at the side of Black Swirl in the blink of an eye.

Black Swirl looked like a giant beast that had fallen into a swamp and was struggling before death. Tremendous wounds pierced its body. Black flames spurted out of the cracks, mixed with the intense stench of death.

Although they were in the vacuum and under the thorough protection of their Colossi and mustard-seed combat suits, the three of them still felt creepy as if gloomy winds were blowing and ghosts were crying.

“The extraterrestrial devils must’ve broken out and turned Black Swirl into a devil’s nest completely. Watch o—”

Before Li Yao finished ‘out’, Yan Liren rushed forward in the lead. Emitting radiance that was even more brilliant than the main guns of starships, he melded with his sword and stabbed deep into Black Swirl.

Li Yao and Long Yangjun looked at each other in bewilderment. They had no choice but to closely follow him and break into the warship, too.

After Infinite Fire’s reckless attack, the interior of Black Swirl had turned into an inferno, with explosions and collapses everywhere. Broken limbs that had melded with steel blocked every pathway. There was not even enough room for the Colossi of the three of them to stride forward while standing straight. They had to clear a way with crystal cannons and super enormous chainswords. Not considering anything else, they created a road to the bridge through the broken walls and the twisted cabins by brute force.

As for the coordinates of the extraterrestrial devils, it was not really much trouble. Intense devilish auras and raging devils were everywhere around them. Like mists that were alive, they jumped at the three intruders desperately, only to be burnt up by the flames of spiritual energy dancing around the Colossi.

All they needed to do was march to where the devilish auras were most intense.

On their way, they ran into some lone crew members of Black Swirl.

The Immortal Cultivators who claimed to be noble had all been deeply awed by Infinite Fire's fearless collision. They were still dwelling on the explosions, and when they saw three magnificent iron giants appearing in the middle of the surging smoke and fire, they were overwhelmed by fear. Could they summon their fighting will to resist them at all?

A lot of other people had even gone completely crazy. Crouching in the twisted corners, they either laughed hysterically, shrieked while holding their heads, or stuck the limbs that had been burnt against their incomplete bodies.

It seemed that when the stimulation reached a certain level, the 'noble Immortal Cultivators' and the 'weak hominoids' were essentially the same.

Maybe, compared with the vastness of the sea of stars, the Immortal Cultivators and the hominoids were just bigger bugs and smaller bugs. There was no fundamental difference between them.

Li Yao and his companions had no time to bother with the Immortal Cultivators who had completely lost their combat ability. They simply ran forward and gradually moved away from the damage range of Infinite Fire.

The devilish auras up head grew more and more dense. Ripples that looked like black jellyfish spread in the air, with purple and red light flashing vaguely.

"Is this the legendary 'tenebrum energy'?"

Li Yao sensed the brand-new energy form spreading at the head of Black Swirl, which was entirely different from spiritual energy.

Even the most powerful spiritual energy, like the super radiation unleashed by the solar storms, could achieve destructive effects, but it was pure and did not have life or will. Human beings were free to absorb and utilize it.

The ‘tenebrum energy’, on the other hand, consisted of thousands of impurities that felt like the emotions of humans. They were rolling and wriggling, as if they boasted their own life and will!

Yes. Li Yao vaguely felt that when ‘spiritual energy’ was alive, it would become ‘tenebrum energy’. Every stream of tenebrum energy contained the most intense feelings, the darkest jealousy, the most violent ambitions, and the heaviest regret. It was some sort of primitive energy life that was like unicellular algae. No wonder the demonic Cultivators who had swallowed tremendous ‘tenebrum energy’ would easily degrade into evil, heinous lunatics!

“Aooo!”

From the ends of pathways, behind the cabin doors, and even the ceilings, a lot of crew members that had been corrupted by the tenebrum energy lunged out.

They had all suffered heavy wounds in the explosions. Their limbs had been twisted and deformed. Even their brains were sometimes clearly visible.

But purple flames were surging deep inside their eyes, which flowed out of their eye sockets. They were no longer Immortal Cultivators but demonic Cultivators whose souls had been completely corrupted by the tenebrum energy, which made them more evil and violent!

Now that they were the accomplices of the extraterrestrial devils, Li Yao and his companions did not show any mercy. They had even blown up the devil lord who had been attached to Professor Mo Xuan. Naturally, small fries who were enlisted in a hurry were not the slightest problem for them. Within a moment, all the obstacles were obliterated together with the uncanny tenebrum energy.

However, as they got closer to the bridge, the environment went through weird changes.

Large meat balls that looked like lumps grew out of the pathways and the cabin walls. A lot of meat balls even had wet holes from which bright purple mist was being spurted intermittently.

A lot of biological tissues similar to intestines had tied up the spiritual energy tubes, too. They were shivering slightly and secreting abundant stinky mucus that dripped down nonstop.

At first, the metal color on the cabin wall was still visible, but later, such bloody tissues were everywhere to be seen. They seemed to have walked into the internal organs of a gigantic beast!

Chapter 1824 - Black Satan!

It was a highly illogical view. The extraterrestrial devils were no demons. They did not specialize in biotechnology. Besides, even the demons could hardly develop so many messy, stinky organs in such a short amount of time, which had sprawled in the entire warship like a rainforest of organs!

“Hey, did you see it?” Li Yao asked softly.

“Yes. Like a slaughterhouse with surging devilish auras,” Yan Liren remarked coldly.

“Look carefully.” Li Yao aimed the enormous chainsword at an organ not far away that was protruding abruptly like an enormous eyeball. “What’s this? Doesn’t it look like an eye?”

“An eye?” Yan Liren’s voice was mixed with intense confusion. “Why do I feel that it looks more like a heart with dense veins and stripes on it? It is even cramping and beating. How does it look like an eye?”

“That’s right,” Long Yangjun said calmly. “From my perspective, the organ that Li Yao refers to is neither an eye nor a heart, more like a cluster of rotten intestines.

“The same organ is in three different forms in our eyes. Therefore, all of this is just an illusion. Black Swirl did not go through any unexpected change. It is just a terrible hallucination that has been injected into our minds. The extraterrestrial devils have already begun to infiltrate and attack us!”

“Yes. The extraterrestrial devils implanted the idea of ‘internal organs of a space behemoth’ into our heads, trying to disrupt our minds, but they cannot etch the same vivid image into the heads of the three of us simultaneously,” Li Yao observed. “What we see is imagined by ourselves. Whatever ‘rotten, stinky organs’ look like in our minds will be displayed on our retina and perceived by the optical nerves.

“Is this some sort of ‘half-step virtual space’? It’s almost a combination of reality and illusion. This extraterrestrial devil that has been attached to Lu Qingchen is indeed stronger than the one inside Professor Mo Xuan!

“Now that we have seen such nauseous illusions at the same time, the waves of tenebrum energy in this place must be very strong. We are very close to the extraterrestrial devil’s nest on the bridge!”

“We must defend our souls very well and be extra careful,” Long Yangjun said. “Anything we see from now on could be an illusion!”

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The three of them opened full fire, clearing a path with a storm of bullets, swords, and spiritual energy. After burning up the illusionary putrid organs, blowing up almost five cabin doors, and passing through a pathway that was full of wrinkles on the surface and looked like intestines, they found the bridge of Black Swirl right ahead of them.

The bridge had lost the solemnity, indifference, and aggressiveness of the Imperium of True Human Beings’ style and become a devilish nest piled up with corpses, skeletons, and internal organs. Countless bloody, moist organs were dangling down from the cabin walls like vines. In the middle of the bleeding ‘vines’, a lot of enormous cocoons were hanging. Tiny heads were exposed at the tops of the cocoons, which apparently belonged to the leadership of Black Swirl and the commanders of the entire Black Wind Fleet.

There was no telling what kind of torture they had gone through in reality, but in the weird environment that was a combination of reality and illusion, they were tangled in intestines and tentacles that were full of flagella and melded with the nest.

The intestines and tentacles were even sucking the spiritual energy inside their bodies nonstop, as if they were trying to dissolve the captives’ muscles, veins, nerves, and internal organs into liquid and pump them away.

Their miserable expressions and their desperate cries even made Li Yao feel as if his hair was standing up, and he could not bear it any longer although he was on the opposing side.

Countless meat tentacles that looked like biochemical nerves were connected from the cabin walls to the Colossus more than twenty meters tall at the center of the room.

The Colossus had a unique shape. There was not a head above its shoulders, making it impossible to add all kinds of honeycomb-type launchers onto it. The torso was as round as an enormous skull. Four thick arms were installed on a ring at the top of the torso and could be twisted to any angle. At the bottom of the torso was another ring, from which eight limbs that were as narrow and long as the legs of spiders extended.

The abdomen of the Colossus, which had the shape of an ugly face with slanted facial organs, was brimming with weird rune arrays.

At first glance, it was like an enormous head that had grown arms and feet. No. Not arms and feet, but twelve multipurpose limbs!

“It’s Black Satan, Heiye Ming’s Colossus!”

As the Sector Master of the Black Wind Fleet and the commander of the Black Wind Fleet who had intimidated five Sectors, Heiye Ming was naturally not a strengthless leader who could only command. He was also a magnificent pilot of the Colossus.

Black Satan was the most mysterious Colossus in the Black Wind Fleet. Even Heiye Lan, as Heiye Ming’s own daughter, did not know much about it.

That was because, since more than a hundred years ago, occasions were rare when Heiye Ming had needed to resort to the ‘Black Satan’!

At that moment, tremendous tenebrum energy surged out of the stinky organs around. The lives of the Immortal Cultivators seemed to have been sacrificed to embed their souls on the surface of Black Satan, turning into a layer of living ‘reactive armor’.

Crack. Crack. Crack!

Deep inside Black Satan, enhanced by the tenebrum energy of the extraterrestrial devils, weird noises of bones being crushed echoed. The eight limbs at the bottom shrank at the same time and supported the Colossus to its feet.

For a moment, devilish fire was surging into the sky!

“Well…” Li Yao glanced at Long Yangjun and Yan Liren. “Should I say something in such a situation?”

“Hooo!”

Before he opened his mouth, the facial organs at the center of the thick torso of Black Satan emitted dazzling brilliance at the same time. The bloody mouth made of tenebrum energy opened abruptly, and black rings of light magnified nonstop and came at the three of them like a superstorm!

In the moment, all three of them saw thousands of hideous, agitated devils inside the dark rings that jumped at them like tides and infiltrated their every muscle, vein, nerve, and internal organ!

“This is a life-and-death battle,” Li Yao said. “It seems that we don’t have any option except to resort to our ultimate skills now. Shall we begin?”

“Yes,” Long Yangjun replied. “Let’s begin!”

“Such overwhelming devilish auras!”

The flames of spiritual energy from the Tartarean Skeleton were polluted by the clusters of devils and turned into dim, brown colors. Li Yao bellowed in the communication channel angrily, “The enemy is unexpectedly strong. We’re screwed this time!”

“Indeed!” Long Yangjun shrieked, too. “I didn’t know that the enemy still had such thorough arrangements or that they would be so unbelievably, devastatingly strong. We are truly dead for sure this time!”

“Yes. We are as doomed as anyone can ever be. We will die in this place without a grave!” Li Yao breathed heavily. “Unless a miracle happens, we can never hope to defeat it. It will stomp on us and kill us easily like an elephant stomps on a tiny ant!”

“The extraterrestrial devils are doubtlessly the sure winners of the battle!” Long Yangjun sobbed, moaned and cried. “They are much stronger than our worst nightmares. They do not need any moves or skills at all. They will crush us as long as they approach us!”

“Hey!” Yan Liren could not bear it any longer. “What’s wrong with you two? Is the enemy so strong? Why do I feel that it is still acceptable? Heiye Ming is an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage, I’ll give you that, but he was heavily wounded in the war against the Covenant Alliance a hundred years ago. After catching his breath to this day, he dedicated most of his attention and computational ability to commanding the starship and the political struggles. He has also been over-exhausted in the space battle just now and is running out of strength. In terms of his ability to use a Colossus… he is at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage at most and on the same level as us!

“Even if he has the enhancement of the extraterrestrial devils, we have the sheer advantage in numbers, too. Why should we fear him so much? Look. We have adapted to his pace and are even suppressing him. Black Satan and the extraterrestrial devil are just so-so. Our advantages are very great!”

“Mind your words!” Li Yao and Long Yangjun were both greatly shocked. While dodging the attacks of the twelve limbs of the Black Satan that looked like a gyro, they yelled at the same time. “Fellow Cultivator Yan, you can slash your sword however you want to, but you must not speak nonsense. Our enemy is obviously at such great advantage that it will only take the blink of an eye for them to kill us all. We are merely struggling before death and having our last attempt!"

"What the heck are you talking about?" Yan Liren shouted. "Ahhh!"

From the core unit of Black Satan, a crack suddenly showed up on the top, revealing circuits inside that curled like gyri. Almost a hundred black lightning bolts swooped out of the 'gyri' and hit the chest of Big Sword, Yan Liren's Colossus, blowing the twenty-meter-tall giant hundreds of meters away immediately. Yan Liren crashed through quite a few cabins and fell into a mess of crystal cables and spiritual energy tubes, unable to get on his feet for a long time.

"What—what's this about?" Yan Liren stammered.

"Did you see?" Li Yao said. "This is a very special curse that involves luck and fate and all the other mysterious functioning mechanisms of the universe. We don't know the details, but all you need to do is compliment the enemy and belittle yourself together with us!"

"Like this." Yin Yang, Long Yangjun's Colossus, turned into dozens of blurred shadows and surrounded Black Satan from all directions. The black sword and the white sword, taking advantage of the moment when Heiye Ming blew away Yan Liren with his ultimate skill, slashed forward like a fiery tornado and chopped off one of the enemy's limbs.

Meanwhile, Long Yangjun grunted, "He is so strong. I can't hold on any longer!"

"You must hang in there!"

Although a hundred orange light balls were focused around the Tartarean Skeleton, the most tremendous spiritual energy was stored in them. When the light balls turned into pillars and smashed Black Satan overwhelmingly, Li Yao roared passionately and blood-boilingly. “Although the enemy is too terribly strong for us to defeat him, as long as there is a one billionth chance of winning, we must hold on. A miracle will certain happen as long as we persist!”

While bombarding Black Satan crazily, making it barely possible for Heiye Ming to stand straight, the two of them shouted and cried crazily in the communication channel, praising the invincibility of the enemy and cheering each other up.

Yan Liren looked at the two Colossi that were jumping up and down like big monkeys in a daze, lost for words for a long time.

“Fellow Cultivator Yan, what are you waiting for? Give it a shot. It’s very effective!” Li Yao shouted.

“…No, I refuse.”

Chapter 1825 - A Sword of Ten Thousand Kilometers!

Boom!

The area in front of Li Yao and Long Yangjun suddenly became empty because Black Satan had dug a giant hole in the floor with the remaining eight limbs under the cover of the hazy smoke and dropped to the deck on the level below.

Most of the attacks from the Tartarean Skeleton and Yin Yang immediately missed their target.

The whole process took only 0.01 seconds, but it was more than enough for such a top-tier expert like Heiye Ming and such a terrifying Colossus like Black Satan.

Deafening roars echoed from the depths of the hole. Black fire sloshed out like a volcanic eruption. Even the bloody, stinky organs on the cabin walls were growing tremendous giant objects that looked like eyeballs. Hundreds of rays of horror darted at the three of them!

The three of them saw all kinds of illusions, as if they had been mired in a nightmare that they could never wake up from. Their ears were plagued with cries and screams that were utterly unbearable for normal people. Their nerves suffered burning pain, and their brain cells were as miserable as if they were soaked in vitriol.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The entire deck on the bridge exploded. The three Colossi fell into a bottomless abyss at the same time. It was not a narrow cabin down below but looked more like a trap made of ever-wriggling organs that were spurting out acid and venomous fog. Black Satan was right at the center of the trap, waiting for the prey while controlling the tentacles made of black air.

“This is all illusion. Don’t be fooled!” This time, Long Yangjun was truly screaming in pain.

Li Yao’s teeth were bitten so hard that they were almost crushed. Clusters of veins protruded out of his temples, too. His brain radiated, and his spiritual energy circulated in his heart, reminding himself that Ding Lingdang was right behind him, his family and friends were right behind him, and the Star Glory Federation was right behind him!

After a moment, the trap made of rotten organs vanished. What was left behind was just a messy, burning, and exploding cabin.

Every thorny vein around the Tartarean Skeleton became bright red. On the ends of the sharp stings on every ‘thorn’, dazzling light balls were condensed again. Hundreds of light balls were thrown away overwhelmingly, completely drowning Black Satan.

When the enemy’s senses and probe magical equipment were greatly disrupted by Li Yao, Long Yangjun’s Colossus ‘Yin Yang’ dived down. The soul of the elite warrior of the Nuwa civilization broke free from the swirl of horror and performed the most aggressive attacks from dozens of different perspectives with the black and white shadows. The unsubstantial shadows seemed to have pierced through Black Satan’s body hundreds of times in an instant!

Neither Lu Qingchen nor Heiye Ming would have dreamt that they would encounter two freaks whose souls were so weird at once.

The effect of the mental attacks on them was less than one third of the attacks on the regular Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

In the emergency, the ‘gyri’ on the top of Black Satan’s torso opened again, and the intensity of the black lightning unleashed from inside was ten times higher than before!

“This is exactly what I’ve been waiting for!”

Big Sword, Yan Liren’s Colossus, launched the attack that would shock the universe and make the gods weep.

Yan Liren was perhaps not the strongest warrior there.

But his attack was certainly the most brilliant and unstoppable one in the entire battle.

The sword of ten thousand kilometers seemed enough to chop off all the stars in space!

Even Li Yao and Long Yangjun, as two ‘bystanders’, felt that their Colossi were about to be torn into shreds together with Black Swirl by the overwhelming sword aura.

Black Satan, as the primary target of the attack, was locked onto by the sword aura. The joints all over its body were uttering cracking noises, and the Colossus came to a brief halt!

Shua!

All the bloody, damp organs and the screaming skeletons as well as other terrible illusions dissolved, twisted, and vanished under the power of the attack!

Heiye Ming knew that he had lost the best chance to dodge after the moment of hesitation. He made up his mind immediately. The black lightning flooding out of the ‘gyri’ was a hundred times more intense than before as he devoted all of his soul power and spiritual energy!

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

The black lightning and Yan Liren’s giant sword collided. The explosion and blast turned into hundreds of daunting tides that almost obliterated the head of Black Swirl. The cabins, walls, pathways, tubes, and magical equipment units within hundreds of kilometers were all blown into fragments the size of fingernails. The fragments were also burning furiously, like thousands of butterflies that were dancing a crazy dance!

The black lightning on Black Satan dimmed instantly, and Yan Liren’s giant sword fell apart.

But that was not the end of the attack.

Although the giant sword was wrecked, the broken pieces, enshrouded by the sword aura, consolidated into the shape of flying sword and charged at the open skull of Black Satan like a meteor shower that could destroy a planet.

“Aooo!”

Inside Black Satan, ten thousand Heiye Mings seemed to be screaming at the same time. The black lightning, which had dimmed, revolved quickly and turned into a rapid tornado in a moment, blowing away the sword auras and the broken pieces of the giant sword and darting them through hundreds of walls to the outside of Black Swirl!

The shocking attack was gone.

However, from the dispersing aura of the sword, a streak of brightness that was a hundred times more dazzling dashed out like a swift dragon. It appeared late and drilled into the skull of Black Satan!

Compared to the giant sword that was dozens of meters long, the flying sword that led the brightness was rather short. It was no longer than half a meter and looked more like an overly-long dagger than a sword.

In contrast to the four Colossi, the ‘dagger’ was as inconspicuous as a needle.

But even Li Yao and Long Yangjun could not help but take a few steps back and cover the critical parts on their bodies when the ‘needle’ glowed.

It was Yan Liren’s fourth sword, the one that had never been unsheathed!

Boom!

Big Sword, Yan Liren’s Colossus, landed on the ground heavily on one knee, with its back facing Black Satan, as if it were breathing heavily in exhaustion.

But it did not seem concerned that Black Satan, which was nearby, would launch an assault at him.

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

Black Satan was more than twenty meters tall, and Yan Liren’s fourth sword was no longer than its finger. Yet, it seemed to have been frozen by the ‘needle’. All its limbs were cramping uncontrollably, and the opening on the skull did not close after a long time. The black lightning was entirely gone, replaced by the silver ripples of sword auras that were popping up nonstop!

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

Joints falling apart, metal being twisted, and devices being destroyed echoed inside Black Satan nonstop. The seven limbs shivered and unfolded. The Colossus crouched on the ground and completely collapsed.

Looking at each other in bewilderment, Li Yao and Long Yangjun launched their most deadly skills at the same time.

Now was definitely not the time to give a speech or make a witty quip. The best time to kill an enemy was when they were sick. To deal with such a great devil, it was the only logical to shoot another ten thousand times to make sure that it was dead!

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

The head of Black Swirl was completely ruined by the fight of the four Colossi. It collapsed entirely as if it had been shot in the head by a gun against its temple. The gravity control rune arrays had stopped functioning a long time ago. The glittering pieces dispersed to all directions like burning dandelions. Black Satan was also drowned by the ocean of violent spiritual energy, and the broken plate armor was all melted.

Under the collective attack of three experts at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage, the commander of the Black Wind Fleet failed to let out another roar of fury and regret.

“Is—is this the end?”

The three of them breathed heavily in the communication channel.

“No… It isn’t!”

Li Yao’s pupils and heart constricted to the minimum at the same time. Although the commander of the Black Wind Fleet had lost all the vital signs under the suppression of their violent spiritual energy, another strength that was more evil, scorching, and unrestrained replaced him and broke out of the shell!

Was this the real strength of Lu Qingchen or the extraterrestrial devil?

The shining ocean of spiritual energy was immediately polluted by the ‘virus’ and turned into an ocean of tenebrum energy that was as dark as ink. The black tides where purple and red electric arcs were dancing licked Li Yao like the tongue of an abyssal beast.

The Tartarean Skeleton dodged the tides of tenebrum energy, but it could not get away from the overwhelming devilish fire. From the depths of the ocean of tenebrum energy, a Black Satan that was thousands of times larger and more hideous than the one just now slowly crawled out.

“How is this possible?”

Li Yao was dumbfounded. Compared to the enemy’s body, whose height was too large to be measured, his Tartarean

Skeleton was like a tiny ant—or rather, they were as different as a firefly and the sun!

This is not the real world. Everything in front of my eyes is an illusion. I've been dragged into the Spiriters' Realm again!

Li Yao thought quickly and immediately realized what had happened.

Those wretched extraterrestrial devils are not fond of real-entity attacks. Their favorite move is to sneak into a human's brain and drag the soul into the Spiriters' Realm for torture!

"Long Yangjun! Yan Liren!" Li Yao shouted in the communication channel, only to be greeted by scornful chuckles, which made him realize that the Spiriters' Realm was devised by the extraterrestrial devils solely for himself.

Long Yangjun and Yan Liren must have been trapped in different Spiriters' Realms. The connection between the three of them had been cut off.

What a chaotic Spiriters' Real it was!

The head of Black Swirl had completely collapsed. He found himself in the middle of a burning ocean of debris, and he could see the gory space battlefield around.

However, the picture of the space battlefield was different from when Li Yao and his companions charged into Black Swirl. It was not just one battlefield but a combination of dozens of different battlefields!

Starships of different eras, styles, and forms were engaged in a fierce fight. Humans, demon beasts, demons, extraterrestrial devils, ancient Cultivators, modern Cultivators, Immortal Cultivators… Everybody mauled each other brutally.

There was the space battle that was currently taking place. There was also the final battle between the troops loyal to the Supreme Emperor and those loyal to the Blood God in the collapse of the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years prior. The war between the demon army led by Ba Yanzhi and the ancient Cultivators and even the ultimate collision between Pangu and Nuwa in the primeval era hundreds of thousands of years earlier could be seen, too!

The enormous starships and the corpses of the primeval giants who were even more enormous than the starships floated around Li Yao slowly. Together with fire, blood, and abnormal explosions, they constituted the stage for the final battle!

Chapter 1826 - Collection of Extraterrestrial Devils!

Black Satan, which spanned the entire space field, extended countless tentacles with the surging devilish fire that looked like black lightning. At first glance, it was almost like a black star that was swallowing the universe, and the tentacles were the fire that it had spurted out.

A low, deep chuckle echoed from the center of the black star. “Li Yao, this is the second time that we have had a competition in such a battlefield, isn’t it?”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. Then he immediately realized that the ‘first time’ the enemy mentioned was the final battle between him and the star child in the virtual world during the insurgency of the Immortal Cultivators in the Flying Star Sector.

Yes. The star child must have already been corrupted by the extraterrestrial devils at that time. That was why he had been able to build a similar virtual battlefield.

However, the battlefield this time had gone through major upgrades. Both the magnificent scale and the vivid details were apparently much more impressive than the previous battlefield.

If the last illusionary battlefield was a frozen picture, the battlefield this time would be a burning swirl and an inferno where the fire never died out!

“You have finally given yourself away,” Li Yao said coldly. “Just admit it. You are an extraterrestrial devil. Both Professor Mo Xuan and Lu Qingchen are just your puppets!”

“Of course, I am an extraterrestrial devil, but I am also Lu Qingchen and a human. This is the real form of mankind, the free, strong, and ultimate form after we are extricated from all restraints and seals!”

A few flames from the black star entangled into a furry arm and extended toward Li Yao. “I don’t understand. Why do we have to fight each other? The extraterrestrial devils feed on immense emotional fluctuations. Human beings enjoy the happiness, curiosity, and sense of enterprise and ambition that are brought forth by their emotions, too. It is the fuel that builds the civilization of mankind today and the precious treasures that we are unwilling to lose!

“But the despicable Pangu Civilization believes that emotions that are too scorching will destroy the entire universe. They try to deprive us of our emotions and change us into simple tools and lifeless machines.

“The Pangu Civilization is our mutual enemy. Shouldn’t we work side by side to destroy the Pangu Civilization together?”

“Cut the cr*p!” Li Yao bellowed. “It’s true that the Pangu Civilization tries to exterminate mankind’s emotions and turn human beings into heartless, emotionless, and tearless tools, but are the extraterrestrial devils any better? You have been playing with humans’ emotions blatantly, stomping on our most precious treasures, and regarding our souls as your food. You are even more unpardonable than the Pangu Civilization!”

Lu Qingchen’s gloomy sigh came over from the black star. “You’re wrong. You’re really wrong. Everything that I’ve done is not meant to play with or manipulate anything. I am only trying to find out the ‘limits’ of a human’s soul after it is activated by infinite emotions!”

Pausing for a moment, Lu Qingchen slowly opened his fingers, each of which was longer than a starship. “What are human beings? Where do human beings come from? Where will they go? You must be interested in the answers to those questions, too, Li Yao. Join me and explore the answers together.

“Your soul is strong and weird like I’ve never seen before. You are a natural-born member of us. I’m sincerely inviting you to embark on the journey to pursue our origins. We can go to the central area of the Imperium of True Human Beings, search for the relics of the battle between the Supreme Emperor and the Blood God ten thousand years ago, excavate the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum and the Blood God’s heritage, and finally unravel the ultimate mysteries of the civilization of mankind.

“If you are not satisfied about what I’ve been doing, I can even make certain compromises in regard to the reform of the Star Glory Federation, as long as you agree to join with me…”

“Enough!” Li Yao shouted back angrily. “I would rather die than join with you!”

“I’m afraid… it’s not for you to decide!” Lu Qingchen’s voice was suddenly ten thousand times sharper than before. The overwhelmingly huge hand snatched the Tartarean Skeleton as if it were a butterfly and clenched the Colossus in its palm hard, with squeaky noises coming out.

“Come on. Open your mind, liberate your soul, accept the real true path, and become one of us!” Lu Qingchen grinned hideously. “We will figure out the problems together. Why are such small beings like us born in such a vast universe? What are we to the universe? Are we really meaningless dust? I don’t believe it. I don’t believe it!”

“Argh!”

Brilliance that looked like crimson swords beamed out of the fist that was almost as gigantic as a planet after being clenched. One, two, five, dozens, and hundreds of streaks of redness interconnected with each other and revolved crazily, tearing the enormous fist into shreds. The Tartarean Skeleton leapt out of the suppression of the black star in the most daunting gesture, and its body size expanded together with thunderous roars.

“Stop bluffing. You can’t intimidate me, regardless of whether you are Lu Qingchen or the extraterrestrial devil!” Li Yao laughed aloud. “Your scheme has been completely disrupted, yet you are acting like you are confident of your victory? Without the enhancement of the three ‘Gai’-level super crystal processors, and now that the mainframe crystal processor of Black Swirl has been blown up by us and all the devils were released by you to corrupt the Black Wind Fleet and frighten the federal fleet, are you really as strong as you appear to be after all your trump cards are out?

“Since this is the Spiriters’ Realm, an illusionary land where one’s soul and will are what really matter, let me show you the determination of real human beings!”

In his laughter, the Tartarean Skeleton expanded nonstop exactly the same as the enemy. The plate armor on its body was ripped apart again and again, only to be replaced by the boundless crimson fire spurting from deep inside the body, which constituted a second, a third… a thousandth layer of armor that was even stronger. In the end, the Tartarean Skeleton became a universal giant with stars above its head and a galaxy below its feet, as enormous as the black star!

The red giant and the black star confronted each other in silence on the two sides of the overlapping space battlefields.

The black star had been monolithic at the beginning and seemed enough to devour the entire space battlefield. But the red giant was even larger. Or rather, in the competition of will, Li Yao's aggressiveness eclipsed Lu Qingchen's confidence.

“Of course, we will look for the origins of mankind and our purpose in this universe!” The red giant sprinted at the black star and waved its hands. Countless starships were attracted to its arms like pebbles, condensing into two sabers that were enough to chop apart the galaxy in front of his arms. “But we are going to create our future with our belief on our own!

“The path to the future lies in our own hands. The Pangu Civilization, the extraterrestrial devils, or any other seemingly smart and brilliant dictator, none of you will ever control us, restrain us, or decide our future for us!”

The two sabers where Li Yao's whole spirit, determination, and hot blood were concentrated slashed deep into the black star, making Lu Qingchen shiver from the bottom of his soul even though he had been emotionless when he went through all the torture and extreme painful environments.

“Our goals are the same although our means are different. We are moving toward the same destination from two different directions!”

Thousands of black fiery snakes darted out of the black star, snatching tremendous debris of starships and primeval species on the space battlefield and smashing it at the red giant.

Light as dazzling as the big bang of the universe rose from the body of the red giant. Li Yao’s soul was heavily wounded to such an extent that it was almost vaporized.

“Stop being a stubborn fool!” Lu Qingchen bellowed. “Accept my path, and you will know that everything I’ve said is true! Human beings are a type of extraterrestrial devil in a unique form. We are the lords of the devils! Only after countless extraterrestrial devils are condensed will the soul of an ordinary person be constituted. Otherwise, what do you think your soul is exactly?”

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Two clusters of energy that were billions of more furious than the sun collided in the space battle thousands of times in that moment, burning all the starships, primeval beasts, and remnants of prehistoric lives to ash. Both clusters of energy were dimming and shrinking at a visible speed. After every collision, tremendous telepathic thoughts and broken souls would be thrown away, raising surging swirls around them.

Li Yao and Lu Qingchen, two souls that each had their own mysterious background, collided to the limits!

Li Yao’s mind, however, was disrupted by Lu Qingchen’s unexpected words, and a tiny crack appeared in the chest of the red giant.

The black star took the opportunity to wave the colossal tentacles and whipped the crack precisely, blowing away the red giant and nearly making it fall apart.

“Have you ever heard of ‘collective wisdom’? A single ant or bee has neither intelligence nor self-awareness. They even barely have any senses!”

The dancing fire from the black star was even more crazy, but Lu Qingchen’s voice became unusually calm.

“However, when many ants or bees gather, they can communicate in a mysterious way and act in patterns that are similar to wisdom and self-awareness.

“That is exactly the relationship between human beings and extraterrestrial devils. A minor devil is even more insignificant than an ant or a bee. It is just like a minor cell and does not have any self-awareness or wisdom, but when thousands of cells gather, it is possible for them to constitute the brain and generate the ‘soul’ that you are so proud of!

“Do you see now? This is just the most superficial layer of the mysteries of the origins of mankind. The real secrets are hidden at the center of the cosmos deep inside the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Alliance of the Holy Covenant, waiting to be excavated by us!

“Come and join with me. We will look for the ultimate ‘answer’ together and find out what real human beings should look like!”

The red giant struggled to its feet in the middle of the stars.

“In your dreams…” Li Yao spat in disdain, only to discover that the surface of the Colossus had been contaminated by giant black spots at some point. The black spots were even expanding like a rampant flood!

Chapter 1827 - I am the Winner!

“This… this is…”

Li Yao felt as if his soul was mired in a swamp and that countless invisible leeches were slithering into his soul in the swamp, injecting acid and venom into his head. He could not have been more alarmed.

The red giant seemed to have been bound by invisible shackles. It struggled hard but could not stop the black spots from expanding and joining each other. The body of the giant was blackened, and the stain was even dropping like melted mud.

“Don’t struggle anymore. It’s futile,” Lu Qingchen said casually. “A human’s body can be infected by viruses, and the Spiritual Nexus and the crystal processors can be infected by viruses, too. Naturally, the souls of human beings can also contract a certain fatal virus.

“My antecedent, the extraterrestrial devil, lurked for ten thousand years in the Flying Star Sector. It evolved from a certain virus that could corrupt crystal processors in the first place. Is it strange at all that the virus has gained the ability to invade and corrupt a human’s soul?

“Did you know? Regardless of whether you are an ordinary person, a Cultivator, or an Immortal Cultivator, and no matter whether you are in the Refinement Stage, the Building Foundation Stage, the Nascent Soul Stage, or the Divinity Transformation Stage, and despite the toughness of your soul, the souls of all human beings are shockingly similar in their fundamental architecture!

“Nobody can escape from the virus attack targeting the deepest structure of the soul as long as you are a human being!

“I’ve focused all the tenebrum energy and poured it into your soul in the form of a virus. All your struggles are in vain. Give up, accept my path, and embark on… a brand-new journey!”

Hardly had he concluded his sentence when the black star crushed over overwhelmingly. Its body size expanded again and occupied almost half of the universe or the entirety of Li Yao’s sight!

Gravity! The black star was so enormous that the gravity it generated absorbed all the starships and debris on the space battlefield into its body as part of itself, which made the tenebrum energy reactions on its surface even more chaotic and violent.

In front of Li Yao’s eyes, countless black flames congregated into enormous swirls, and the enormous swirls further congregated into an even more enormous ocean. The furious ocean was pouring right above his head!

“Ahhh!”

All the joints of the red giant were spurting out crimson particles similar to bloody mist. The black spots continued invading Li Yao’s shining soul that was residing at the chest of the red giant. Black bugs appeared on his soul and crawled everywhere randomly, riddling his soul with holes!

The red giant fell to one knee again, but its arms were raised high stubbornly and struggled to hold back the monolithic black star!

“I… will not let things go your way!” Li Yao’s angry voice echoed from the red giant’s head that was almost crushed. “However glorious you make your purpose and your destiny sound, you are not entitled to play with the feelings, will, and soul of any human being, no matter how insignificant and ordinary they are!”

“Idiot! Human beings are supposed to boast the most magnificent force in the entire universe, and yet most people are addicted to the mundane, tranquil life, wasting the precious resources and their even more precious lives away!” Lu Qingchen declared. “I’m trying to help them awaken their real strength so that they can be truly alive!”

“We are already really alive. Everything you see is the future that we have chosen. No one other than ourselves, not even all the gods and devils in the universe, will make a choice in our stead!”

Amid Li Yao’s roars, the red giant stood straight again while holding the black star on the shoulder, as if it were about to throw away the enemy toward the edge of the universe.

But the black spots that had contaminated the joints of the giant significantly affected the hardness of Li Yao’s soul. The red giant could not withstand the enormous gravity of the black star anymore, and its four limbs broke apart at the same time!

It happened faster than could be described. Hundreds of black pillars darted out of the black star in an instant, piercing through the red giant’s limbs, torso, and skull and confining its whole body!

“Ahhh!” Li Yao cried miserably.

The surface of the red giant had been entirely covered in black spots, exactly like Heiye Ming a while back when he was swallowed by the black jellyfish in the Spiriters’ Realm.

“Hehehe. Do you feel the virus running deep inside your soul? I didn’t lie to you. As long as you are a human, you won’t be able to resist such a virus.”

A gap millions of kilometers long suddenly opened on the black star like a bloody mouth that was going to swallow the whole universe. The arms of flames spurting out of the mouth extended like tentacles and tore apart the chest of the red giant unhurriedly, revealing the core of the soul that was glittering like a diamond.

Li Yao’s soul was completely drowned by the black spots. His struggles grew weaker until he was not even able to cut off one pillar of light that pierced through his body. His screams became moans, and the moans turned into murmurs. In the end, there was nothing but obscure, meaningless gasps.

He seemed to have been bent by the power of the virus. His soul was corrupted so crazily that the flames of his spirit and will were weakened to the minimum and could die out at any point!

“Come on and meld with me. It doesn’t matter if we continue using the identity of ‘Vulture’ Li Yao. We will find the mysteries of the origins of mankind. We will see the future and destiny of our civilization. We will be… truly alive!”

From the bloody mouth, the arms of flames wriggled and split apart, allowing what appeared to be a black serpent to slither out slowly.

Some of Lu Qingchen’s features could be found on the surface of the serpent. The beast carried both animalistic brutality and godly reverence. Boundless ambition, lust, and curiosity beamed out of its eyes.

The black serpent slid toward the chest of the red giant and appreciated Li Yao’s soul greedily.

The limbs of the red giant were broken, and its body was riddled with holes because of the corruption of the virus. Li Yao was only able to trigger the feeblest soul waves that were nothing more than a gentle breeze. He could not stop the ‘integration’ at all.

The black serpent crawled into the red giant’s chest while grinning hideously. Li Yao’s soul was about to become part of the enemy’s, when—

The black spots that invaded the red giant, the black pillars that nailed through the limbs and torso, and even the thousands of squirming arms of flames and the black star itself all emitted a weird hue.

No words could describe the brilliance of the hue. Even the number of all the stars in the universe would be enough to measure the colors contained in the brightness.

“Not good!” Lu Qingchen’s long, narrow snake eyes immediately turned into two holes. “What—what are you exactly? How can you resist the corruption of my virus and even counterattack?”

When he realized that he had been fooled, it was already too late.

From the chest of the red giant that was wide open, the sharpest redness darted out like a crimson flying sword, piercing Lu Qingchen’s head and stabbing into the core of the black star that was not closed yet!

A shockingly big hole appeared at the center of Lu Qingchen’s snake head. He finally screamed miserably, but no matter how he tried to fill it with devilish fire, it was impossible for him to fix it any time soon.

The black star was like a balloon whose air had been released. It collapsed at a visible rate, with explosions echoing nonstop from inside. The surging swirls and arms of flames on its surface were all consolidated under the glow of the glamorous brightness, as if they had all become solid rocks. But very soon, the rocks were blown into smithereens by another blood red force from inside!

Blood red springs ran out from the surface of the dying black star and turned into a raging bloody devil that was even more hideous and evil than Lu Qingchen.

“Hahaha. When the snipe and the clam grapple, it’s the fisherman who stands to benefit. I am the final winner after all, you two dumbasses!”

The mental devil opened the broad wings made of blood and skeletons and enveloped Lu Qingchen, whose soul had almost been dried, and Li Yao himself, who was dying, laughing in the most arrogant way.

Flapping its wings, it lunged at the black star that bordered on destruction again. Even the black serpent that was the core of Li Yao’s soul was snatched without any mercy and twisted brutally as if it were a towel.

Lu Qingchen and the mental devil, two extraterrestrial devils that could both be called ‘devil lords’, mauled each other, showing no compassion or hesitation to beings of the same kind. Instead, they tried their best to swallow each other and prevent the swallowing of themselves, like tigers and wolves who were competing for prey.

Lu Qingchen’s soul had been exhausted in the competition against Li Yao just now. More critically, he had devoted almost all the tenebrum energy into the depths of Li Yao’s soul in the form of a virus.

However, the virus that was supposedly effective against all human beings somehow did not work well on Li Yao. It was even countered by a certain mysterious force deep at the core of Li Yao’s soul.

Never had he dreamed that Li Yao’s soul would be so weird. At the last moment, in order to completely swallow the core of Li Yao’s soul, he had needed to expose the core of his own soul. As a result, the mental devil’s ambush had succeeded!

Although the mental devil had used up a lot of strength in the battle against Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan, it had reserved part of its strength back then and had merely been acting before Li Yao. Besides, it had lurked in secret and rested well for a long time. Since its ambush had worked out, how could it leave any chance for Lu Qingchen to make a comeback?

The two devil lords swallowed each other, like two behemothic beasts that had bitten each other’s throats. It was a pure collision of souls that was devoid of any fancy tricks. All the mattered was whose soul power was drained first!

Finally, Lu Qingchen tore off the two bloody wings of the mental devil and even dug a shockingly huge hole in its abdomen.

But his head was twisted and blown away by the sharp claws of the mental devil!

The black star became a completely lifeless planet of rocks before it was completely blown up by the redness that the mental devil shot out with the last bit of its strength!

Chapter 1828 - What Are You Exactly?

The whole world began to collapse.

The flickering stars far away seemed to have become dim light bulbs. The profound universe showed its rough, black texture, too. They were no longer in the middle of the infinite sea of stars but seemed to be trapped in a tiny cave that was shaking violently. Shining cracks were appearing in every corner of the cave, indicating that it might completely collapse any second.

Losing the enhancement of the black star, the core of Lu Qingchen’s soul was like a rotten earthworm, with blood red foam packed all over his body. As each bit of foam broke apart, a stream of black air would dash out and flee in a hurry, only to be pushed back by the mental devil time and time again.

Lu Qingchen’s head was like a drop of ink that fell into clear water, slowly dispersing and losing the contours of his facial organs and expression. He moaned with the utmost regret and discontent as he was continuously disintegrated and melted.

The mental devil, on the other hand, could not have been more satisfied. Dragging the incomplete body, it shook its hands and legs in excitement and chuckled. “You didn’t see this coming, did you? You’ve been fooled! As the saying goes, when the cicada is hunting a mantis, the sparrow lurks behind to take them both. Despite all your tricks, methods, and schemes—cough, cough, cough, cough, I am the final victor!

“You want to meld with me? That’s totally fine. I’ll certainly meld with the two of you. Hehehe. After absorbing such abundant tenebrum energy from you and suppressing the personality of Li Yao No. 2, I will reclaim the control of this body and seize the federation as ‘Vulture’ Li Yao. Who else can ever be a match for me at the edge of the cosmos… Huh?”

The mental devil’s laughter came to an abrupt end. It jumped hard as if it were cramping and looked back in utmost bewilderment.

Behind him, the dying red giant whose limbs were broken and whose abdomen was torn apart got to its feet again.

Although the body size was indeed reduced significantly, and the flames of spiritual energy were dimmer and more lackluster, the core of Li Yao’s soul right at the center of the chest was still glittering. The last bit of firm strength was still glimmering!

“How—how did you get back on your feet? Wasn’t your soul so heavily wounded that it could barely keep shape?”

The mental devil gnashed its teeth hard in rage.

“Yes. But I feel that I’m more or less back to myself now after a brief rest.”

Li Yao struggled to catch his breath while he looked at the mental devil that had been covered in wounds after the battle with Lu Qingchen. He said, “I don’t think that I’m fully recovered, except that I’m slightly stronger than you right now.”

“You—You tricked me. You reserved your strength!”

The mental devil burst into rage.

“That’s exactly what you did. Didn’t you reserve your strength when you dealt with Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan?” Li Yao sniffed.

“You—You guessed it?” The mental devil could not have felt more wronged. “How can we be the same? I am a mental devil. Such a sordid, shameless, and despicable method is exactly my style! But you are the renowned dominator of three Sectors and an upright hero of the federation. Yet, you reserved your strength during the fatal battle with the supervillain? That is outrageous! How did you know that I would certainly take the opportunity to ambush him? What if I didn’t reserve my strength and I couldn’t take shape in the Spiriters’ Realm because I was really blown apart by Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan?”

“Bro…” Li Yao sighed and helplessly replied, “I didn’t want to guess so, either. But look at what you did in the fierce battle with Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan. Like you said, your style has always been sordid, shameless, and despicable. Yet, during the battle, you acted with so much comradery and hot blood that you were charging even faster than me! Did you have to be so valiant? Could there have been a second possibility other than you intended to reserve your strength by acting and faking your death in a suicidal attack?

“This isn’t the first time you’ve made plans to seize my body. During the fierce battle with Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan, the situation was still unclear. It was obvious that the extraterrestrial devils had arrangements on the Black Wind Fleet’s side. Therefore, even if you successfully suppressed me at that time and took over my body, it wouldn’t necessarily help. Chances were that you would be blown up by the Black Wind Fleet even before you were adapted to this body. That’s why you contained yourself and pretended to be obedient and docile while waiting for new changes.

“But right now, the Black Wind Fleet has suffered a crushing defeat, and the last extraterrestrial devil has revealed itself. Now that a great opportunity has been presented for you to ambush the enemy and swallow the souls of both Lu Qingchen and me, can you even refrain yourself from jumping out to stir trouble?

“We are too familiar with each other. Do I not know what is on your mind?”

The mental devil was so furious that crimson steam was spurting out all over its body, making it look like a leaky boiler.

Rendered speechless, it narrowed its eyes and stared at Li Yao, as if it were going to lunge at him at any moment.

“If you intend to lunge at me, I suggest you think carefully.” Li Yao opened his hands and said, “The two of us are on par with each other right now. There’s no telling who will be the winner. But whoever fully gains control of the body, his soul will certainly have been heavily wounded and weakened. It won’t be recovered any time soon.

“In the meantime, Long Yangjun and Yan Liren are still waiting and watching outside. You know very well how keen Long Yangjun’s senses are when it comes to souls, and do I need to describe how fast Yan Liren’s sword is? Even if you are lucky enough to suppress me and gain control over the body, should they notice any inconsistencies, do you think that they will give you a chance to explain yourself?

“The extraterrestrial devils are the masterminds of this war behind the curtain. They are ten times more dreadful than the Immortal Cultivators of the Imperium of True Human Beings. Do you think that they would care about the subtle difference between extraterrestrial devils and mental devils?”

The mental devil’s face was gloomy, and it glared at Li Yao in fury.

Li Yao, on the other hand, confidently stared back at it with firm, clear eyes.

The mental devil hesitated for a long time. Finally, it took a long breath, and flowers seemed to be blossoming on its hideous face. In a voice that was greasily sweet, it declared, “Don’t be a fool. We are good brothers living inside the same body and two sides of the same coin. How could I fight my own brother? It was just a joke!

“I only concealed part of my strength because I was preparing to ambush the enemy at the most crucial moment and give the enemy a fatal blow. As for why I didn’t tell you beforehand, that’s because… because if you want to deceive your enemy, you must first deceive yourself. You must’ve heard that before, right?”

Li Yao could not help but chuckle. He nodded and said, “I have.”

“That’s good. Everything is fine. The rain is over, and the sun is out. The trouble is no more!” The mental devil grinned. Looking at the ripples of tenebrum energy floating in the vacuum, it could not help but gulp. “Such intense negative emotions are practically the most delicious meal in the world. It is enough for years!”

“Negative emotions are all yours, but I’ll have most of the pure energy after the negative emotions are removed.” Li Yao’s eyes were glittering, too, as he revealed his true nature as a training maniac. “Let’s not rush into anything. It is indeed necessary to purge and digest the energy over several years to make sure that the evil energy entities do not cause any further trouble!”

The two of them rubbed their fists and flew toward where Lu Qingchen’s head had dispersed.

“What… are you exactly?”

The last bit of tenebrum energy waves on Lu Qingchen had not entirely gone yet. He sighed gloomily like a haunting ghost.

“Hahaha. You didn’t see this coming, did you? I am in fact the uniquely handsome, kind, and upright mental devil!” The mental devil made the most striking pose.

“No. I know what you are. You are just another extraterrestrial devil in a different form. I’m not interested in you at all. I’m asking about it.”

Lu Qingchen did not bother with the mental devil at all but focused the last bit of the tenebrum energy into an unsubstantial hand and extended it toward Li Yao.

It was not an attack. He merely tried to touch Li Yao’s soul. With a voice full of curiosity, he asked, “What are you exactly? Maybe next time…”

Before he finished his sentence, the dark hand and his gloomy sigh both vanished from this world.

Li Yao and the mental devil looked at each other in bewilderment and scratched their heads together.

“What’s wrong with the guy?” the mental devil asked. “He completely ignored me!”

Li Yao frowned. “What a pretentious man. What did he mean by ‘maybe next time’? Is he not dead yet?”

The mental devil shook its head hard. “Most of his tenebrum energy must’ve been focused in this Spiriters’ Realm and has been annihilated by us, but it is not entirely impossible that he kept a tiny part of tenebrum energy somewhere else. For example, he might’ve created a fourth ‘clone’. But there is no need to worry about it. The fourth ‘clone’ must be terribly weak. It is not going to jump out to cause trouble again without a long period of training.

“Speaking of which, he bragged about the ‘soul virus’ so eloquently as if it were a real thing, claiming that no soul of a human, be they an ordinary person or a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator, could escape from his ‘infection’. Why were there no symptoms in you at all?”

“Indeed.” Li Yao touched his body and said, “It didn’t seem to work on me. I think that it is probably because I am in fact an earthling, and the souls of the earthlings are of a different fundamental architecture from the souls here.”

The dark world was shaking more and more violently. Strong light shot in from the outside, making it barely possible for Li Yao and the mental devil to keep their eyes open. There even seemed to be voice in the strong light. Somebody was shouting, “Li Yao! Li Yao! Li Yao!”

Li Yao and the mental devil looked at each other and flew toward where the light was strongest together. When they were about to reach the gap leading to the real world, the two shadows gradually melded together.

…

“Hu…”

Li Yao took a deep breath and returned to reality. After passing the period where he felt that his brains were emptied, he found himself in the warm arms of Little Black under the thorough protection of the Tartarean Skeleton.

Outside of the Colossus, on the other hand, was a burning battlefield with shining pillars of light and rushing debris. They had broken away from Black Swirl.

The Tartarean Skeleton had been dragged out by Yin Yang and Big Sword, Long Yangjun and Yan Liren’s Colossi.

Not far behind them, Black Swirl had the most violent and brilliant serial explosions so far and completely fell apart.

In a daze, Li Yao saw a crystal suit that looked like fire flying at him.

He realized who was calling him in the darkness. The voice calmed him down and made him put on the happiest smile. He opened his arms at the newcomer but fell asleep again, returning to a dream from a long, long time ago in a place far, far away.

Chapter 1829 - Escape from Earth!

When the blue planet as round as a dew—the third planet of a peaceful, quiet galaxy—gradually appeared in front of Li Yao in a haze again, he was no longer surprised and confused at all. Instead, he was full of relief and expectation after the long wait.

He felt that he was a wanderer that had roamed the sea of stars for thousands of years and that he was about to be embraced by the warm and familiar home again.

Earth, the mysterious homeland that haunted Li Yao's soul!

Did it really exist in a certain space zone in the middle of the three thousand Sectors or somewhere beyond? Was it a certain mysterious, indescribable being beyond the three-dimensional world? Was it nonexistent and just an illusion of Li Yao himself, a malicious joke that certain fiends hundreds of times stronger than the extraterrestrial devils played on him?

Are you really there, Earth?

What are the so-called 'earthlings' exactly?

Li Yao stood above Earth in the middle of the ocean of stars. The brightness from the billions of stars constituted his clear, glass-like body.

He opened his arms toward Earth. His thoughts turned into thousands of magnificent shooting stars that landed on every corner of Earth.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Thousands of pictures on Earth were unfolded deep inside his soul like an infinite scroll.

The modern metropolises ablaze with lights, the skyscrapers that rose high into the sky, the lively streets that were packed with cars and pedestrians, the strong armies that had developed stubbornly even without the spiritual energy, and the healthy, smiling faces exactly the same like the people in the Star Glory Federation.

Earth. My Earth…

Li Yao could not hold back his desire to extend his hands through the atmosphere, the clouds, the overwhelming high-rises, and the crowds to touch the children on Earth who were playing in the parks carefreely.

Some of the children were playing on seesaws. Some climbed on the community body-building facilities designed for seniors. The scene activated something deep inside Li Yao's memories, making him realize that he seemed to have experienced similar days in the past.

However, before his telepathic thoughts reached the children on Earth, all the pictures were burnt and blackened. Ugly black spots appeared at the center first, before they were all on fire, as if they were colorful photos whose backs were set ablaze by lighters.

Li Yao widened his eyes and uttered soundless roars, trying to remind the innocent children that their world was being corrupted by fire.

But it was useless. His throat was empty, and his vocal cords became a black hole that swallowed all his anxiety, panic, and fury. He could only watch the children turning into skeletons, the carrousels and seesaws burning to ash, and the skyscrapers twisting and collapsing, and the glorious cities razed to the ground.

The furious flames seemed to be a monster with ten thousand tentacles that closely enveloped the entire Earth, draining the vigorous blue planet and reducing it to a dying land mixed with dark red and dim yellow. It was like the vitality of a succulent red apple was pumped out within a moment, and the fruit was forced to wither, constrict, and deteriorate!

The core of the rotten apple struggled and revolved slowly.

“Run, Li Yao. Run as fast as you can. The Vulture Plan has completely failed. You are the only one who can run away now. Run to the desolate lands at the edge of the cosmos!”

Li Yao heard the voice of an old man who shouted in utmost pain and frustration.

Then, he heard himself angrily roaring, “No, the Vulture Plan hasn’t failed yet. There is still hope. We can’t give up just like that!”

“It is doomed and hopeless now. We don’t even stand one billionth of a chance!” the old man replied. “It is too strong and too dark. Nobody can destroy it. For thousands of years, nobody has ever escaped its dragnet! This time, we have sacrificed so many people and burnt all our strength to break a tiny gap, allowing us to launch the weakest soul out through the gap. This is already the best we can do!

“So, run now. Live carefreely and ordinarily in an unknown corner at the edge of the cosmos. Live a real life for all of us!”

“No. Let go of me. Let go of me now. I can’t just run away!” Li Yao heard himself shrieking. “I swear that even if you launch me to the edge of the cosmos, to the desolate space that is not illuminated by any stars, I will come back one day and carry out the Vulture Plan to completely destroy it!”

“It’s impossible!” the old man’s voice replied with bitter laughter. “So many magnificent beings have failed. This has been a trap since the very beginning. It intentionally lured us to activate the Vulture Plan so that it could fish us up once and for all!

“Now, us defeated soldiers are about to be completely eradicated. You are the only one who is weak enough to pass through the holes in the impregnable web that it has established. The fire of your soul is so feeble that you are essentially just an ordinary person. Just give up your fantasies!

“Run now. Run away from its control. Forget everything about Earth and live a free life at the edge of the cosmos. This is your destiny and… our last hope!”

“No. No. Never!” Li Yao heard that he was almost crying. “I may be an ordinary person, but so what? I can train myself hard until I am stronger than any god or devil in the entire universe. Then, I will be back and complete the Vulture Plan to destroy it!”

“You can’t train yourself!” The old man’s voice suddenly became stern. “Didn’t I tell you just now? Launching your soul to the edge of the cosmos is like darting a full balloon into the ocean. The seawater will naturally reject you and try to blow you back!

“Unless the ‘balloon’ is as tiny as a molecule or an atom, you will never have a slim chance of being embraced by the foreign universe!

“Remember my words, Li Yao. Conceal your radiance, abandon your pride, and forget all the impractical illusions. Just live a peaceful life. To some extent, we will have defeated it if you can do so.”

“As long as I can still let out the tiniest bit of light, I will never volunteer to turn it off!” Li Yao heard himself shrieking in utmost resolution. “I get it now. If I remain the weakest and dimmest form and live under the identity of an ‘ordinary person’, it is possible that I will live in peace with the new world at the edge of the cosmos. But if I begin to ‘expand’ into a huge ‘balloon’, I will be rejected by the foreign universe and even be ‘blown away’, am I right?

“That’s exactly what I want!

“I can train myself with the rejection of the foreign world. The more rejective it is and the more dangers and difficulties it throws my way, the more intense and the faster my training will be, and the more likely I will grow up like you—no, into something that is far beyond you and strong enough to destroy it!”

“It’s impossible!” the old man’s voice replied anxiously. “You will die. You will be obliterated when you emanate your first brilliance. You are… an ordinary person at most. No matter how you train yourself, it won’t be enough for you to challenge it, much less destroy it!”

“How do you know that if I don’t give it a shot?”

Li Yao sensed that his voice and his will were getting more and more resolute, condensing into something that was denser than a neutron star.

“If the strength of myself is far from enough, I will find comrades who share the same destiny at the edge of the cosmos, and I will establish an even greater force. One day, I will return to this place with the most magnificent army in the entire sea of stars!”

“No… Not good!” The old man’s voice sounded as if somebody grabbed him by his neck. “It is here. It has begun to corrupt us. It has discovered the gap and is blocking it quickly! There is no time now. The gap is shrinking. Even the soul of an ordinary person cannot be launched in its entirety now. We can only… Launch! Launch! Launch now!”

Li Yao felt that Earth, which looked like a rotten apple core, moved away from him fast, or maybe it was him who had turned into waves more mysterious than light and escaped from Earth as quickly as possible.

When the apple core was completely consumed by the dark universe, and all the shining stars around were all gone, Li Yao heard the last sigh from the old man, as if he were saying, “Good luck… Vulture.”

…

Li Yao woke up again, only to find himself soaked in the middle of certain warm, pure, blue liquids.

The memory fragments about Earth all cracked like the bubbles under the sunlight.

However, the rainbow contained inside turned into tiny ripples and was deeply etched into his soul.

Earth and the Star Glory Federation at the edge of the cosmos, the worlds that were completely different, were gradually overlapping and unifying. He was only one step away from the final truth.

Shaking his head, which was as heavy as a mountain, Li Yao realized that he was in the middle of an enormous bubble, covered in a thin layer of ivory film. The film was brimming with holes that allowed it to absorb energy from the high-energy drugs around and press the energy into his capillary vessels and limbs by negative pressure.

It had to be some sort of extremely advanced medical cabin. Judging from the size and the primeval runes carved on the wall of the cabin, it was likely not to have been designed for human beings. It was probably a super-large medical cabin excavated from Kunlun that had been specially prepared for the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan.

At this moment, there was only one person other than himself in such an enormous medical cabin.

Her hair as red as fire dispersed in the blue liquids but still emitted the brilliance of pride. Her charming face was a little bit tough, but it was mostly dissolved by the childlike expression while she was sleeping. Her perfect body was covered in the ivory film, which was as thin as the wing of a cicada, and her graceful body figure could not have been better highlighted. Curled up like a baby, she held her ankles and revolved slowly in the blue ocean.

Sensing Li Yao’s eyes that were even more scorching than a solar storm, she put on a smile even though she was dreaming. Her eyelashes shivered, and she slightly opened her eyes, with a bit of expectation and unease in her eyes.

Deep inside the blue ocean, Li Yao and Ding Lingdang, the man and the woman who had not seen each other for a hundred years, looked at each other quietly.

Chapter 1830 - Collapse of Black Wind

Looking at his wife's glittering eyes where all the stars of the universe seemed to be shining, Li Yao had a bellyful of words that he wanted to tell her, which were almost running out like a flood.

He wanted to tell Ding Lingdang about the loneliness and the mixed feelings when he traveled deep inside the dark nebula by himself. He wanted to tell Ding Lingdang what it looked like when a star ten thousand times larger than the sun unleashed a storm. He wanted to tell her about the glamorous nebulas, the enticing Ancient Sages Sector, and all his discoveries in the Nuwa warship. He wanted to show her the Colossi that he had repaired like a child showing off his toy and invite his wife to choose the biggest and best one for herself.

In the meantime, there were a lot of things that he wanted to find out, too. He almost couldn't wait to hear about Ding Lingdang's experience in the past hundred years. He wanted to know how she had convinced the spectral Cultivators in the Nether World Sector with her fists in the devastated wasteland and what kind of soul-stirring, unbelievable stories she had from the dark mining holes of the Uranian Ring Sector.

Did she go through life-blighting dangers and crises? Did she suffer damage that she would rather not recall? How did she manage while he was not around?

He had too many words that he wanted to say and listen to, but his computational ability that was almost equal to a crystal processor was suddenly frozen, turning ‘Vulture’ Li Yao, the dominator of three Sectors into a silly boy. He was dazed for a long time before he finally asked, “Are you alright?”

Ding Lingdang smiled. “I’m fine. What about you?”

“Me, too.” Li Yao paused for a moment. He tilted his head and thought for a long time. Then he said again, “I’m back.”

“Yes.” Ding Lingdang continued smiling. Such a peaceful and gentle smile had not blossomed for a hundred years because, of the trillions of people in the three thousand Sectors, only one could wake up such a flower of a smile. She softly said, “It’s great that you’re back.”

Feeling that his heart was hot, Li Yao swam to Ding Lingdang.

“Wait.” Ding Lingdang hurried to say, “Although the glass medical cabin is blocked from the outside world, our biophysical parameters are still closely monitored by the medical facilities. The change of any index will be read instantly!”

“I know,” Li Yao mumbled. “I just want to hug you. I’ve wanted that for… a hundred years.”

Ding Lingdang was slightly dazed. Like a blooming flower, she sent herself over.

The two of them hugged each other so hard that they were almost embedded in each other’s bodies.

At this moment, the vast universe outside seemed to disappear, and the only things left were their breathing and heartbeats that were of the same rhythm.

Time lost all meaning. They seemed to be hugging for all eternity, but even that did not seem enough for them, and it would not be enough even if they hugged for another ten eternities.

“This—this is about enough.” There was no telling how long had passed, but intoxicating redness spread out of Ding Lingdang’s cheeks. She pinched Li Yao’s shoulder and breathed hard. “Watch the time and location. Let’s hug more after we are back home. I bought a new world fragment recently. The Nine-Colored Prairie inside is big and comfortable. It is the best field for the discussion of Dao. The war is not finished yet. Don’t be so hasty, alright?”

“Of course.” Li Yao’s soul was finally back in position, and his brain began to function at full speed again, completely waking him up. However, he still did not intend to let go of Ding Lingdang. Curling her red long hair with his fingers, he asked, “How long have I been in a coma? What happened in the meantime? What is this place? How is the war right now?”

“You can take a look yourself.” Ding Lingdang released a telepathic thought. One side of the shell of the medical cabin turned transparent as if it were entirely gone. The vast, boundless sea of stars immediately embraced them.

In space, the central battlefield had already become a wasteland of cold, dim debris. Remnants of starships and crystal suits as well as the empty shells of space shuttles were everywhere, colliding with each other in the chaotic turbulence.

Further away, the fire of war was still burning here and there, pushing the battlefield away to the edge of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, which was tens of millions of kilometers away. Small-scale starships and groups of crystal suits were chasing and fighting each other everywhere. Emergency jumps and unexpected explosions were happening all the time. The intensity of the local battles was lower, but they were even crueler.

In the bottom-left corner of their vision, the capital of the federation, protected by the Wall of Heaven’s Origin, was clearly visible. Dense spots of light popped up near the capital planet and marched to the broken battlefield overwhelmingly.

The enormous Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag could just about be seen among the light spots. They were all fleets of the federation.

Despite Li Yao’s abundant experience in space cruises, he was still deeply awed by the scene on the battlefield after the fierce fight.

“We are now on Mica, the medical starship of the highest level in the Burning Prairie Fleet. This is a super medical cabin specially prepared for the experts in the Nascent Soul Stage,” Ding Lingdang explained. “It was excavated from Kunlun thirty years ago and designed for the Nuwa Clan in the beginning. We have got it operational after thirty years and adjusted it to a pattern that is compatible with human beings.

“The medical cabin boasts the function of healing heavy wounds by absorbing natural essence. Therefore, we have directly embedded it at the outermost layer of the medical starship like the eye of a fish. What you see is not a 3D light beam but the most authentic universe.”

“Have we won?” Li Yao smiled. Then he nodded very positively. “Our space gates have been repaired. The main troops from the Burning Prairie Fleet and the local garrisons from other Sectors have all arrived. We’ve won!”

“We secured our victory because of the unexpected assault of you and the experts from the Ancient Sages Sector.” Ding Lingdang could not help but smile. She pressed Li Yao’s ear and said, “You even demolished Heiye Ming’s Colossus, Black Satan. I almost jumped to my feet in fury. That was supposed to be my prey!”

“Is that so?” Li Yao blinked. “I don’t remember any of that now.”

“Yes, it is,” Ding Lingdang replied. “It was Yan Liren and Long Yangjun, the two friends you made in the Ancient Sages Sector, who told me. They said that Black Satan split apart all of a sudden and spurted out the densest black fog from its body. Then, it was reshaped into a bloody mouth and bit your Tartarean Skeleton hard.

“The crimson thorns that entangled your Colossus darted out and stabbed into the body of Black Satan.

“The two Colossi were at an impasse. While your friends wondered how to separate them, the black fog that surrounded the Black Satan suddenly dispersed, and the Colossus itself was rusted and riddled with holes as if it had decayed over ten thousand years. It then completely fell apart.

“At that time, the head of Black Swirl had already been completely blown up. There were intense explosions at the middle and rear parts of the starship, too. Fearing that you might be affected, they hurried to bring you out to escape. As for Heiye Ming and Black Satan, they must’ve been killed in the big explosions.

“The Black Wind Fleet’s space gate was destroyed, eliminating the possibility of reinforcements. Half of their morale was gone. Then, their highest commander was slain by you, and even their flagship was blown into twisted debris. Do the remaining Immortal Cultivators have any fighting will left at all? They are merely struggling to resist before their death.”

The real situation was much more complicated than what Ding Lingdang said. Li Yao did not know where to begin his explanation at the moment, either. He could only chuckle.

Ding Lingdang sniffed and pinched Li Yao’s shoulder before she declared in discontent, “Enough of that. We have all become used to the miracles you create! I won’t be surprised no matter what shocking things you do except for getting pregnant and giving birth to a baby.”

Pausing for a moment, she added, “No, for such a monster like you, if you do get pregnant and have a baby or two after ten months, it still wouldn’t seem very strange.”

“You flatter me,” Li Yao said solemnly. “Whatever insignificant achievements I have accomplished today are because my wife is smart, visionary, and educates and commands me well. Ninety-nine percent of the credit is yours. Tsk, tsk, tsk. You are indeed the legendary God of War in the federation to teach your husband so well!”

“Huh…” Ding Lingdang was satisfied. “This is more like it!”

She continued describing the situation to Li Yao. Fifteen hours had passed since Li Yao fell into a coma. After the demise of the highest commander and the destruction of the flagship, the Black Wind Fleet finally slid toward collapse.

However, collapse did not equal annihilation. To fight a clean, neat battle of annihilation in space was ten thousand times more difficult than on the ground, bordering on impossible.

According to the plan of Li Yao and the experts of the Ancient Sages Sector, Heiye Ming would be their representative to clean the mess.

But Heiye Ming was not deeply rooted in the Black Wind Fleet after all. She had never been among the most distinguished, and she had been missing for ten years. Would she still have any popularity left?

Despite the support of the twelve experts from the Ancient Sages Sector and the aggressive fleets of the federation, she only managed to talk twenty percent of the defeated soldiers into surrendering.

Another twenty percent of the defeated soldiers were stubborn diehards who were determined to fight the Cultivators to the end.

The last sixty percent of the defeated soldiers, in such a desperate situation, actually did not have much loyalty to the Imperium of True Human Beings anymore. But driven by their natural survival instincts, they simply dispersed and ran to the outskirts of the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

The universe was a vast and desolate place. Those starships that had been heavily damaged in the war and used up most of their fuel and supplies did not stand much chance of survival.

Perhaps, after their boiling brains gradually calmed down and made them realize their own situation, they would turn around to surrender to the federation.

But it would certainly take time.

A few starships performed space jumps without considering anything else, trying to return to the brown dwarf dozens of lightyears away and join the main troops.

However, space jumps could be very dangerous. Not only did it require a long period of preparation and sufficient fuel and spiritual energy, the integrity of the structure of the starship needed to be high, too.

When such starships that were seriously twisted and damaged performed a space jump, it was more like suicide than escape.

After more than ten starships broke apart and were torn to shreds during their space jump, no other starships of the Imperium had the courage to follow their example.

Besides, even if they could return to the brown dwarf, so what? The Black Wind Fleet had wagered all their ammunition, crystals, and fuel on the assault. Even the only super large space gate had been transported to the Heaven’s Origin Sector. The reinforcements near the brown dwarf were large in number but insufficient in combat ability. It was difficult for them to perform a long-distance space jump. If they returned to the homeland of the Imperium, despite all the risks on their way, what would become of the defeated soldiers?

The Imperium of True Human Beings was a paradise for experts but a slaughterhouse for the weak. The ‘losers’ who had just suffered a crushing defeat like them were too embarrassed and discouraged to return to the Imperium.

Chapter 1831 - Escaping Star

The battlefield had expanded from a ‘narrow area’ of a million square kilometers to hundreds of millions of kilometers away and even further.

Although the winner and the loser had been decided, the battle was far from over.

The situation was like a recurrence of the last phase of the Uranian Ring War. Although the core force of the Black Wind Fleet had been blown apart, a lot of claw fleets still had the strength to resist and were only short of supplies. They were even madder and more dangerous, like wounded animals, and might attempt anything in their desperation.

Faced with such unpredictable enemies, the federal fleets did not want to press them too hard. They chose to keep a certain distance from the enemy and maintain the immense, incessant mental pressure on them, hoping to find an appropriate solution.

It was a feature of the space battles. No cover from high mountains, deep rivers, or dense forests existed in the vacuum of space, nor did friction and air resistance. As long as the initial speed was high enough, a starship would be able to rapidly flee in any direction with the minimal power.

Not just days, even a year and a half might not be enough to catch all the fish that had run free. Firefly, for example, had escaped for a thousand years in the past!

Of course, Firefly’s escape had been planned for a long time. It was itself a Deep Sky exploration starship of an enormous scale, which boasted perfect internal ecological circulation and resource recycling systems. Furthermore, it had absorbed tremendous starships and supplies from dozens of Sectors on its way. They were all the factors that made the amazing voyage possible.

Those starships of the Imperium that were fleeing in haste, on the other hand, had run out of food and supplies. Even if they did get away from the federation’s pursuit, dog-eat-dog tragedies were bound to happen sooner or later due to the high shortage of resources, until small ‘dark forests’ were created. Both the people of federation and the people of the Imperium were well aware of the future.

Making use of that fact, the federation began to push the runners to surrender and even offered a ‘warm reminder’ to the members of the Black Wind Fleet who were escaping together, advising them to be wary of each other in case their friends killed them and claimed their starships to refill the supplies.

Perhaps the people of the Black Wind Fleet had done enough of such things in past space battles. The federation’s tactic of persuasion worked out.

Although none of the runners had surrendered yet, the high-level Immortal Cultivators on some of the stars who had enough prestige and capability had already begun their dialogue with the federal fleets.

By the estimation of the highest command center, few Immortal Cultivators would be obstinate enough to resist to the end, although it would take a long course of contact and negotiation before all the Immortal Cultivators accepted the cruel reality.

The war was far from over. Small-scale hunting battles and interstellar bandit-clearing battles would perhaps last several years. The negotiation between the two parties would be another troublesome battlefield.

In any case, the Star Glory Federation was finally freed from the swirl of chaos and regained the initiative of the situation. The small battles and the details of the negotiation would no longer be Li Yao's concern.

After hearing Ding Lingdang's introduction, Li Yao took a deep breath in relief.

His only fear now was whether or not his family, friends, and disciples were fine.

"Fortunately, everybody is safe and sound!" Ding Lingdang counted on her fingers. "Wu Mayan, Jin Xinyue, Bai Kaixin, the Fire Ant King, and Fiend Blade Peng Hai, those experts that rank among the top in the federation, did not suffer any irreversible wounds despite the exhaustion of their body and soul. Our treatment today is much more advanced than a hundred years ago, too. It won't be long before they fully recover.

"Also, Xie Anan, Guo Chunfeng, and the rest of them are coming on a starship to meet you!"

"That's great." Li Yao smiled in great relief. Then he thought of somebody else. "Right, before the three Colossi including mine invaded Black Swirl, a starship had crashed into it brutally and seriously wrecked its internal structure, disrupting its mobility. Judging from the paint, it was from the Big Bai Fleet, wasn't it? I've seen Bai Xingjian, the commander of the Big Bai Fleet, before. What’s up with him?”

Bai Xingjian had left quite a deep impression on Li Yao. He was a terrifying man who had triggered the strongest fighting will of Yan Liren, the Sword Maniac!

Also, Li Yao and his companions had merely slain Heiye Ming and the extraterrestrial devils. The great explosion and the meltdown of Black Swirl were obviously not their doing but thanks to the starship of the Big Bai Fleet as well as the members of the assault team on it.

For some reason, Li Yao had a feeling that the mysterious Bai Xingjian was quite weird.

He was more and more interested in the man and decided to chat with him in a day or two to figure out more details about him.

But out of his expectations, Ding Lingdang put on an expression of confusion and sadness and hesitated. Then she said, “Yes. That was ‘Infinite Fire’, the flagship of the Big Bai Fleet.

“Besides the twelve experts of the Ancient Sages Sector, the Big Bai Fleet is almost the greatest unexpected factor and contributor to the war. Had it not been their startling assault and relentless harassment, the space gate of the Black Wind Fleet would long have been assembled and summoned the enemy’s main troops to the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

“If the enemy’s main troops had crushed the elites of the federal fleet before you arrived, there would have been nothing you could’ve done even if you arrived. With the overwhelming, incessant firepower, the thousands of starships would’ve won if they waged a war of attrition against you!

“It is needless to say that at the last moment, Infinite Fire even crashed Black Swirl without caring about itself and completely blew up the enemy’s flagship, which was really a shock for us. None of us saw it coming!”

Li Yao nodded and said, “Exactly. That’s why I’m hoping to meet their commander, Bai Xingjian, and see what a remarkable person he is.”

Ding Lingdang smiled bitterly and shook her head. “Everybody in the federal army and the parliament would love to find out the answer, but it is impossible. Bai Xingjian… has perished!”

Li Yao was greatly shocked. “What!”

“The explosion of Black Swirl was so intense that Infinite Fire, which was deeply embedded in its body, was blown to smithereens. It was the area we searched first when we cleared the battlefield. A lot of remnants of the critical parts of Infinite Fire were found, suggesting that it was completely disintegrated. But the bodies of Bai Xingjian and other leaders of the Big Bai Fleet were not found. They must’ve been broken apart or entirely vaporized, mustn’t they?”

The space battles were usually most cruel. The surging mystic rays and the explosions of starships could emanate a high temperature of thousands of degrees easily. Even if the victims were not vaporized, it was not unusual for the broken limbs to be blown away to the end of the sea of stars after they were killed.

The dead bodies in ground battles would lie in craters or trenches dutifully, waiting to be collected when the battlefield was cleared. The corpses in space battles, on the other hand, would move about randomly. The rate of missing soldiers in the post-battle statistics in space was often hundreds of times higher than on the ground.

In 99.99% of the cases, missing meant death. Even if they were not killed immediately when they were blown away from the battlefield, they would still be dead for sure after floating in the dark space for several days when their crystal suits lost all energy.

Therefore, the missing Bai Xingjian and leaders of the Big Bai Fleet were not too unexpected for the highest command center.

After all, everybody had seen the enormous explosion of Black Swirl with their own eyes.

Despite the computational and commanding abilities of the Divinity Transformation Stage, Bai Xingjian was merely a commander of a fleet. There were no records of the sturdiness of his body. It was not surprising that he failed to survive an explosion of such enormity.

Li Yao, however, was deeply suspicious.

Nobody knew the strongest killing intent of ‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren with his sword of ten thousand kilometers better than Li Yao.

But even such a terrifying ‘Sword Maniac’ had taken interest in Bai Xingjian. Was the highest commander of the Big Bai Fleet really a pure admin-type Cultivator?

“Bai Xingjian, who are you exactly?” Li Yao mumbled and narrowed his eyes, looking out into the sea of stars.

In a place where his eyes could not reach, a glittering star was accelerating to escape.

…

At the periphery of the Heaven's Origin Sector, almost two billion kilometers away from the capital planet, in the dark, cold outer space, a seemingly ragged and lackluster comprehensive supply starship was moving at a high speed that was utterly disproportionate to its garbage-like appearance with its back to the capital.

Because of the mess in the central battlefield, thousands of starships were escaping crazily, and ten times more hunters were closely after them. It was easy for them to lose contact with each other or lose their direction during the escape and end up moving on their own like the supply starship.

Therefore, the supply starship from the Big Bai Fleet was like a block of ice thrown into the ocean, unattractive and unsuspicious.

At such a distance, there was not a second starship for millions of kilometers. Even if somebody grew suspicious of the starship, nothing could ever catch up to it.

At the rear of the supply starship, on the deck where the escape capsules were to be projected, dozens of members of the Big Bai Fleet were stuffed into three capsules. Their bloodshot eyes were wide open while they roared in confusion and anger, "Commander, what is the meaning of this? What do you want exactly? Our loyalty to the fleet and the federation is unquestionable, and we didn't flinch once in the battle. Why are you doing this to us?"

"I know." Looking at his subordinates who felt wronged and who were struggling hard, Bai Xingjian replied with mixed feelings. “In both this battle and all the years before it, your performances have always been immaculate. You are top-tier soldiers of the federation. To have subordinates like you is the greatest pride of my life.

“Therefore, I have written recommendations of the highest regard for each of you, clearly listing your specialties and military credits. I believe that you will certainly distinguish yourselves in new posts after you return to the federation. One day, you may even command your own starships and even fleets as pillars of the federal army.

“However, you and I are not the same kind of people after all. Every party has an end. Since our paths are different, we have to go our separate ways now.”

Bai Xingjian slowly raised his hand and saluted the lost, blushing subordinates in the most standard way. Then…

He took off the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars emblem on his military hat, the epaulette of three flowers and two stars on his shoulder, and the special mark of the highest commander of a fleet on his chest, before he inserted them into one of the escape capsules casually.

“Launch now!”

As if he had taken off a heavy suit of armor, he smiled with great relief. Despite the lingering affection in his eyes, he waved his arms heavily without any hesitation.

Chapter 1832 - I’ll Be Waiting for You at the Center of the Universe!

The three escape capsules were launched by brute force like three cannonballs.

The airtight gates slowly closed. They were like the sharpest guillotines that cut off the last connection with the Star Glory Federation in Bai Xingjian’s eyes.

Putting on a long-expected smile, he strode to the bridge without looking back.

Xiao Lishui, the Chief of Staff of the Big Bai Fleet, as well as an experienced bandit who was best at taking advantage of his fellows, showed up next to him. He looked entirely different from one day ago, and he looked at Bai Xingjian with both reverence and warmth. He said respectfully, “Commander, everything has been settled. It went very well. We can perform the space jump at any time.

“Also, according to the coordinates you offered, we have indeed located a twisted world fragment and found an armory of the Star Ocean Imperium inside. Although most of the magical equipment and assets inside are ruined, the remaining resources are more than enough to arm a starship.

“Furthermore, we have discovered a lot of traces of secret development in the world fragment, which must’ve been left by the exploration squad of the Blood Demon Sector more than a hundred years ago. The passcode to unlock the barriers is identical to what you told us, which made it much easier for us to collect the resources.

“We will begin the analysis and decryption work on the crystal processors, jade chips, and magical equipment units that we removed from ‘Black Swirl’ very soon. It’s expected that a lot of coordinates about the core worlds in the Imperium of True Human Beings will be parsed quickly. Although it is impossible for an enormous fleet to perform a space jump, the chances of a tiny starship such as ours jumping over are still quite high.

“Right. The remote communication device from the Imperium of True Human Beings has been repaired. We are not out of the Heaven’s Origin Sector yet. If it is set at the highest power, we should be able to reach out to the home planet of the Heaven’s Origin Sector. I have connected the operation menu of the communication device to your portable crystal processor. You can contact the capital planet now.”

“Alright. Give me five minutes.” Bai Xingjian, who had walked to the door of the captain’s room, casually said, “In five minutes, ask… all the brothers to turn on their communication channel. There’s something that I would like to say to everyone.”

“Understood!” Xiao Lishui, the old and weary space pirate, seemed to have been revived. His back had never been straighter than when he saluted Bai Xingjian in a rather weird way.

It was not the standard military salute of the federal army but the highest courtesy, which was more unrestrained and charming, of the space pirates from Spider Den.

In the captain’s room, Bai Xingjian looked at himself in the mirror and sent out the first request of communication. There was no picture, only a voice.

“Old fart…”

The moment he heard the other speaker’s metallic voice, Bai Xingjian narrowed his eyes hard and almost gnashed his teeth. “How dare you trick me? I examined the whole battle, only to discover that you told a big lie from the beginning!

“All your talk that the final victory would be ours as long as I launched a critical strike was bullsh*t!

“Had it not been for Li Yao bringing twelve Colossi back to the Heaven’s Origin Sector, it would’ve been impossible for us to crush the Black Wind Fleet, and the old brothers that I gathered through all that trouble would’ve been dead for sure.

“But Li Yao’s appearance was most certainly an accident. There’s no way that you could’ve foreseen it.

“Therefore, you were just gambling. Wagering all the strength of the Big Bai Fleet as well as my own ass, you bet that a ‘miracle’ would happen, didn’t you? The craziest thing is that you even bet right!”

There was no telling what the metallic voice on the other side of the communication channel said, but the fury on Bai Xingjian’s face was so much more intense that it almost looked fake. He sniffed and went on. “Forget it. For us pirates, conspiracies are an everyday deal. I can only blame myself for being a fool after being tricked and manipulated by you.

“I’m not exactly angry but rather curious about one thing. How did you learn everything? If you knew it in advance, why did you tell me, a second-tier person that wandered out of the decision-making circle, instead of your daughter? And how did you learn… my identity?

“You are not willing to talk? I won’t force you. That’s fine. Everybody has their own secrets. A lot of things will be boring if they are spoken. Haha.

“Thank you for the files you gave to me, as well as the tremendous assets in the world fragment. The number of supplies far exceeded my expectation. It is much better than the terms that we agreed upon at the beginning.

“Rest assured. Since the ending is not bad, I will not go back on my word. Even though I have nothing to do with the Star Glory Federation right now, for your sake, if your daughter is ever in trouble, I will try my best to help her once. But only once!

“Lastly…”

Bai Xingjian suddenly sounded particularly down. “Did you know, old fart? The most regretful thing for me is that we never got to meet and have a good competition when our physical strength, soul power, and wisdom were at the peak! Shame. What a shame. There may be a day when I and a monster like Li Yao are at loggerheads, but there won’t be a chance for me to challenge you.

“The universe is vast, but few people can become my friends or enemies. This is truly helpless and depressing.

“In any case, see you never… Jin Tuyi!”

Bai Xingjian cut off the communication and sighed in a somewhat lonely manner. Then, he rubbed his face against the mirror hard to put on a scornful smile. After thinking for a long time, he finally sent out the second request of communication, his hands shivering.

This time, a light beam that was seriously twisted and jammed appeared right in front of the mirror, displaying the mess that was the bridge of Burning Prairie.

Bai Kaixin, the Chief of Staff of the Burning Prairie Fleet, stared at him as if he were a ghost.

“You—You—”

Bai Kaixin jumped to his feet. There was no telling whether he was overwhelmed by excitement, joy, or rage when he shouted, “You… you are not dead! Where are you exactly? Your signals are from the edge of the Heaven’s Origin Sector. What are you doing? Don’t do anything stupid!”

“Hey.” Bai Xingjian examined every part of Bai Kaixin’s face and body carefully, as if he were counting the guy’s every hair. But he simply replied, “We haven’t talked to each other for years. Now that I’m leaving, can we talk about something that is less boring?”

“You are leaving? Where?”

Bai Xingjian was somewhat in panic, but then anger got the better of him. He smashed the control panel and shouted, “Bai Xingjian, you are not thinking of defecting, are you?”

“As I said, let us not talk about such boring stuff.” Bai Xingjian took a deep breath and swallowed the sourness at the back of his throat. He casually said, “Do you have nothing more important that you want to ask me? I’ll give you a last chance. Shoot now.”

“You… I…” Bai Kaixin blushed. The high-level commander of the ace troop of the federal army who was more than a hundred years old was somehow lost in front of a ‘junior’. He was dazed for a long time before he finally summoned his courage and said, “I want to know the truth about the mental derangement when you tried to break into the Nascent Soul Stage forty years ago!

“You hated me and even wanted to kill me ever since you joined the Burning Prairie Fleet, didn’t you?

“But such disgust and hatred were completely unreasonable. We did not know each other back then and had no grudges whatsoever. We might’ve differed in terms of commanding and training styles, but it was not like I couldn’t tolerate what you did. Even if you were dissatisfied with me, it shouldn’t have been enough for you to make up your mind to kill me!

“But you wanted me dead. I could tell very clearly that you, or something inside you, wanted to kill me!

“Your killing intent reached the highest point the day you tried to break into the Nascent Soul Stage. When I showed up in front of you, you almost couldn’t refrain yourself from attacking me.

“But how did you exterminate all the killing intent at the last moment, even at the risk of detonating your own soul and abandoning your Cultivation and even life?

“Don’t lie to me, Bai Xingjian. Don’t lie to me!

"I've spent decades reflecting on what happened that day and examined the tiniest details repetitively. That was exactly the truth. There was a force inside your body that tried to kill me, but it was obliterated by another force at the price of mutual destruction!

"What happened exactly? Who are you? Are you the one… I think you are?"

Bai Kaixin's voice was shaking.

Bai Xingjian was silent for a long time. Then he signed and said, "With everything coming to this point, there is no need to keep a lot of things in secret now. Bai Kaixin, do you know why I've been asking for your trouble since the day we met and why I mocked your talent in commanding, calling it a piece of smelly dog cr*p?"

"W—Why?"

Holding the back of his chair, Bai Kaixin breathed so heavily that he could barely keep himself steady.

"Because…" Bai Xingjian's face radiated solemnity that had never been seen before. "Because your talents in commanding were a f*cking piece of dog cr*p. Do you want me to use more flowery words?"

"Huh?"

"Why are you so surprised? You think that it's a big deal to be the Chief of Staff of the Burning Prairie Fleet? What is the Burning Prairie Fleet if not a countryside chicken compared to the real powerful fleets at the center of the cosmos? Go home and train yourself for many more decades before you come back to me and brag about yourself!"

“You—”

“However…” Bai Xingjian’s eyes suddenly turned extremely soft, and he almost put on a smile of comfort. “You managed to control Burning Prairie to move forward at full speed in the final battle yesterday despite the sabotage of five Colossi on-board, which suggests that you have a tad of potential. Perhaps a flower can indeed grow out of the dog cr*p one day, right?”

Bai Kaixin was completely dumbfounded, lost for words.

“Anyways, nobody will wipe your ass for you after I’m gone. Brat, your everything will count on yourself. Good luck!” Bai Xingjian said. “I left something at your home. It is some of my experience in commanding fleets after all these years. As for how much you can understand it, it will depend on your own wisdom!

“By the way, your son… looks rather handsome and much smarter than you.”

“You’ve been to my house? How is it possible? Weren’t you in a field drill before?” Bai Kaixin almost jumped to his feet. “Hey, don’t cut off the communication yet. Let’s talk things through, Bai Xingjian. Are you him? Are you my—”

“Do you want to find out the answer?” Bai Xingjian said with a smile. “Then, become the commander of a real super fleet and come to the center of the cosmos. I’ll be waiting for you there!”

His trembling finger finally pressed the button and cut off the video conversation!

Chapter 1833 - To Where the Stars Are Brightest!

The faucet was turned on.

Bai Xingjian buried his entire face in the cold water and rubbed his weaselly, ugly face for five minutes as if he were washing away the shell of camouflage and becoming his real self.

“Hu…”

Taking a deep breath, he smiled at the ugly man in the mirror. He touched the wrinkled military uniform of the federation with his long finger. Without any hesitation, he tore off the military uniform and retrieved a vintage suitcase from his Cosmos Ring. Then, he pressed two iron buttons and took out his idiosyncratic battle robe.

“Universe, I’m back!”

Putting on the battle robe, Bai Xingjian could not have been more excited. He glowed like a sword that had been whetted for a hundred years as he strode toward the bridge.

When he showed up in front of all the crew members with his brand-new appearance, even the most disobedient and bold bandits from the old days gasped hard, finding it hard to believe their eyes.

Bai Xingjian at this moment was wearing a red-and-green silk T-shirt. There were even coconut palms that were moving along with the wind and sea waves below them painted on the silk texture, making the clothing full of a tropical ambience.

The lower half of his body was covered in a pair of red, sloppy beach pants, a red so deep that it was almost purple.

Above his head, there was a grass hat with a broad, golden edge. On his nose was a pair of dark red sunglasses. In his hands, he was holding a cup of mixed juice made of coconuts and mangos, and on the top of the cup, there was even a tiny cocktail umbrella!

The commander of the Big Bai Fleet walked into the bridge in his slippers as if nobody else were around.

"…"

All the young crew members who were less than a hundred years old were dumbfounded as if they had been struck by lightning.

The seasoned space pirates who had travelled through mountains of dead bodies on Spider Den, however, were so excited that they almost could not breathe anymore.

Hundreds of complicated eyes were focused on Bai Xingjian. Bai Xingjian also raised his sunglasses to examine the brothers that he had carefully selected after decades, who were most qualified to roam the sea of stars with him.

Some of those people had served decades in prison before they were released. Their brutality and aggression seemed to have worn off.

Some were the descendants of old space pirates. When Spider Den was taken down, they had only been three to five years old, innocent and ignorant. Except for the blood of the space pirates that flowed in their veins, they had grown up in the age of the New Federation, living a life that had absolutely nothing to do with space pirates.

Until a few days ago, they had seemed no different from other soldiers of the federation army. They were all tiny screws that were devoid of personalities in the enormous war machine. At worst, they might have played some tricks within the tolerance of the military rules.

But right now, they were like wolves that had heard the howl of the alpha wolf, although they had hung around with dogs when they grew up.

The call of the wild made them unable to contain the force deep inside their blood or calm down their hearts that were about to explode. Uncontrollably, they sang the most savage battle hymn together with the alpha wolf!

“Brothers…” Bai Xingjian raised his cup high to his wolf pack. “We or our fathers used to be the most nefarious space pirates on Spider Den. We were shameless scumbags who were loathed and dreaded most. We were the slaves of our own desires and destiny. We were the wretched souls who struggled to survive after being pushed into the bloody slaughterhouse by various kinds of forces!

“However, the most unpardonable ones of us have been properly judged by the law of the federation. We have served decades in the dark prisons on alien planets and dug out minerals as high as mountains to answer for our crimes.

“In the fierce battle yesterday, a lot of our brothers also acted fearlessly and righteously and, to some extent, saved the entire federation!

“Enough. Both legally and morally speaking, all the debts that we owe to the Flying Star Sector in the past and the Star Glory Federation today have been paid back with interest! From this moment on, we can be liberated from the shadow of the past. We are absolutely free. No country can ask us to sacrifice ourselves, no fate will ever restrain us, and no force will ever stop us!”

The old space pirates as well as their children and grandchildren all held their breath and clenched their fists, listening to the roars of the alpha wolf.

“Freedom—that’s the new meaning that we will endow to the name ‘space pirate’!

“The space pirates in the past were just a bunch of worthless garbage who only bullied the weak. Even the ‘Pirate Potentate’ and the ‘Supreme Space Pirate’ were nothing more than the leaders of groups of scumbags.

“But in the new era of the grand universe, a new type of space pirates can certainly be born. That will be us!

“Even the demons, the culprits of the Great Dark Age who were irreconcilable with humans, could change themselves and accept the cheers of the people in public. Why can’t the space pirates pilot the fastest starships in the universe, control the most powerful crystal cannons, drink the most delicious wine, wave the sharpest chainswords and vibration sabers, and be the freest men in the entire sea of stars?

“Look!”

Bai Xingjian’s finger was like a super heavy cannon dozens of meters in diameter when he pointed it at the depths of the stars.

“There lies our path. That is where we will fight to our heart’s content!

“At the center of the cosmos, the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Alliance of the Holy Covenant, two of the greatest superpowers in the history of mankind, are colliding brutally. The place has been on fire for a thousand years, and it is the best natural playground for the space pirates!

“There are countless broken starships waiting for us to collect and upgrade ourselves. There are countless panicked troops that we can deceive and trick. There are thousands of resource planets whose defense arrays are riddled with holes for us to take advantage of. There are even chances to sneak into the most important arsenals of the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance to arm all our brothers to the teeth!

“Do you not want to enjoy the wonderful world at the center of the sea of stars?

“Do you not want to witness the legendary, bizarre alien species?

“Do you not want to see how soul-stirring it will be when ten thousand of the most powerful starships in the entire universe fire their destructive cannons together?

“Do you not want to find the relics of the Supreme Emperor and the Blood God, the unparalleled experts of mankind ten thousand years ago, and retrieve their unrecorded techniques or even remove their armor and see their rotten bodies with your own eyes?

“Do you not want the high and mighty people of the Imperium and the cold and ruthless citizens of the Covenant Alliance to know your name and tremble in fear the moment they hear ‘space pirate’?”

Bai Xingjian’s questions were like tides each higher than the last until they finally consumed the entire sky. The heart of every crew member was smashed hard.

Ravenousness beamed out of their deeply hollowed eyes, and swallowing sounds were coming from their throats, as if they had already torn off a piece of most delicious meat from the Imperium or the Covenant Alliance and were trying to stuff it into their belly.

“Yes, we do!”

“We want it more than anything else!”

“The child’s play at the edge of the cosmos is not fun at all. The space pirates should focus on greater jobs. Even if we must die, we will lay our bodies on the most precious treasures of the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance!”

Never-ending howls echoed in the wolf pack.

“In that case, what are we waiting for? Let’s go!” Bai Xingjian grinned. “Stars are the destiny of every man. Look. How brilliant the stars at the center of the cosmos are! Come with me and rob the light of the stars for ourselves. We are the strongest space pirates in the three thousand Sectors!”

Glamourous radiance spread out from the bridge. Under the effect of the Grand Illusionary Land, mysterious ripples revealed themselves.

The cabin wall and the facilities around were all gone. They seemed to be floating directly in space, surrounded by the profound and splendid stars.

The ex-soldiers of the Big Bai Fleet, the second Deep Sky fleet of the federal army, and the new space pirates who had been revived could no longer hold back their ambitions, desires, and pride that had been sealed for a hundred years under the brilliance of the stars. They roared desperately at the top of their voices and bared their claws and teeth in every cabin as if they were lightning.

“Let’s go to the center of the cosmos to have some fun!”

“Let’s loot the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance. Even if we encounter the extraterrestrial devils, we will loot their underpants. We are the most magnificent and the freest space pirates in the whole universe!”

“Stars are our destiny. Even if I must die, I will die on the star that is the brightest!”

“Long live freedom! Long live the space pirates! Long live the commander!”

Like thousands of rivers congregating into an ocean, all the voices gathered into the same echo in the end.

“Long live the commander! Long live the commander! Long live the commander!”

Bai Xingjian pressed his arms hard for a long time with all his strength before he finally managed to hold back the zealous howls of the wolves.

“Brothers, today is the day we are reborn and given a new life. So, it is necessary for us to change the way we address each other.”

He smiled and said, “We no longer belong to the federal army or any other regime in the sea of stars. I am not a ‘commander’ anymore. Of course, I would rather not be called by weak names such as ‘Captain Bai’. You may call me…”

He sipped the iced juice slowly and allowed the long-expected sweetness to circulate in his mouth for a long time before he swallowed it. Then, he finally declared, one word after another, “You may call me… Boss Bai!”

Zhi! Zhi!

On the top of the grass hat that was extraordinarily huge on his head, a tiny door was suddenly opened, and a mouse made of crystals and machinery crawled out. It crouched on Boss Bai’s head and looked at everybody in ignorance.

“Move forward, the Big Bai Pirate Gang.” Boss Bai drank up the iced juice and burped in great satisfaction. He patted his belly and announced, “To where the stars are brightest!”

Chapter 1834 - Juniors

As the reborn Pirate Potentate lunged at the stars, the capital city of the Star Glory Federation was also embracing a new dawn.

The first morning glow that ripped apart the dark clouds had appeared in the sky, and the golden, red fire was rising on the horizon. However, most of the sky was still enveloped in darkness. The temperature was close to zero, as if the dark night had been frozen. There was no telling how much longer it would take before true brightness came.

For all the middle school students, especially the boarding students, it was a night that they would never forget.

The evacuation for teenagers had begun the previous day. Children in kindergartens, elementary school, and some middle high schools were the first to be evacuated.

However, before all the middle school students were moved to the underground fortresses, the evacuation operation somehow came to a halt. A lot of soldiers of the federal army were simply dispatched to the schools as guards, making the hotblooded, agitated boys and girls spend a sleepless night in the forest of guns, cannons, and blades.

Everybody knew that the competition that would decide the fate of the federation was ongoing in the sky, but the news about the space battlefield was still strictly blocked. The announcement of the federal government was getting old, too, when it repetitively asked the citizens to stay at home or school, listen to the command of the federal army and the police, and maintain basic social order. All the veterans and

Cultivators whose spiritual roots were awakened were required to report for duty at the nearest army station or sign up on the Spiritual Nexus and wait for their mission.

As for the outcome of the final battle, none of the kids knew it yet.

“Fatty, hurry, hurry!”

“Big Head, keep your voice down. I wouldn’t have brought you with us had I known that you were so clumsy. Nobody will get away if you cause any noise!”

“Jump. Jump already! The three of us are all holding up for you down here. Why did you bother to come with us if you dare not jump?”

In a remote corner of No. 29 High School in the capital city, on an inconspicuous wall, three boys and a girl jumped off in a row.

The girl seemed to have twisted her ankle when she jumped down and moaned in pain, which only raised even more complaints from the boys.

Then, the fat boy carried the girl, and the four of them snuck toward the downtown area carefully and stealthily.

The four high school students were all in the most energetic and ambitious age. Their parents were all members of the federal army, and they had all grown up listening to the battle tales of the federal army and the Cultivators. They had absolutely no doubt that one day, or even maybe that day, they would take over their parents’ flags and become the heroes in new stories.

Tiny hairs had just grown out of the boys' lips, and the girl's had already risen up last summer like a balloon that had been filled with air. Yet, they felt that they were grown-ups who were qualified and capable enough of doing something great—anything great.

Their classmates had been caged in the dormitories a whole night, like a bunch of squeaky chickens that were locked in an impregnable box, and were almost suffocated. Therefore, the four of them had volunteered to go outside and get some updates of the latest situation.

"We are going to the federal square in the downtown area. It is very close to the Federal Media Center. All the latest news will be displayed on the main light beam in the federal square."

Pretending to be sophisticated, the four high school students had explained their plan to their classmates.

"Besides, even if we cannot learn anything from the federal square, we will know what is happening based on the movement and morale of the army on the street."

Just like that, the four high school students snuck out and strutted off.

Having the hope of all their classmates on their shoulders and savoring the ecstasy of breaking school rules, they were almost jogging when the two completely different feelings turned into fresh and stimulating strength.

The capital city was the opposite of what they had seen during the day.

Traffic control had been implemented in the sky. The overwhelming rivers of shuttles were no more. Only the armed shuttles of the military were swooping like iron eagles now and then.

Temporary barricades had been established on the street. A lot of crystal tanks had parked nearby. Construction materials and spiritual puppets were standing by, too, and could upgrade the sites into semi-permanent barricades anytime, showing the determination of street battles and not leaving anything to the Immortal Cultivators even if the capital city was razed.

The glass windows of the glamorous skyscrapers were all blocked by plate armor. Like wordless tombstones, they told the resolution of the federal people in silence.

“Look!” the girl suddenly explained while pointing at something far away.

The boys followed the direction of her finger, only to discover that a hundred pillars of light that were higher and thicker than skyscrapers rose up amid the skyscrapers.

The ivory pillars of light rose to the sky like barrels vertical to the ground, piercing through the dark clouds into the sky.

Even the intense dark clouds could not withstand the power of the light pillars. Tremendous waves spread out, as if they would be completely shredded in the next second and reveal the blue sky.

“Are they cannons?” The girl’s voice was shaking as she was deeply awed by the splendid view.

“No. It is the defense array of the highest level in the capital city,” the boy who was shortest and wearing a pair of round glasses said. “My dad mentioned it before. Such a defense array can open a super enormous spiritual shield more than three kilometers in diameter, which is strong enough to withstand a bombardment from beyond the atmosphere for… at least twenty-four hours.”

The teenagers all fell silent.

They recalled the frantic rumors from the previous night again.

It was said that if the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings truly won the space battle, they would swagger in the sky of the capital planet.

They did not need to launch an assault on the ground at all. It was more likely that they would pull tremendous enormous meteoroids and install the cheapest engine units behind them before bombarding the capital city and the main industrial cities accurately with the meteoroids. No street battles were needed at all for them to destroy the people’s will.

“Anyways… we will win.” The fat boy waved his arms. “If the sky is lost, we will retreat to the mountains for some guerilla warfare. Ten years, twenty years, fifty years. We will take back the federation one day!”

“Exactly!” One of the boys, whose head was particularly big, said thoughtfully, “Think about it. It took thirty thousand years for the humans to take back the universe in the past. What’s the big deal about several decades? We will win… eventually!”

Freezing coldness found its way into their collars and sleeves, making the four teenagers shudder hard.

But they did not stop because of that. Instead, they continued walking forward against the wind.

After only a short while, when they passed by an artificial lake, they discovered, somewhat to their surprise, an old man next to it.

The old man was covered in metal from head to toe, and even his face was a cold mask, suggesting that he should be a spectral Cultivator who had lost his body in an accident.

The reason they thought that he was an ‘old man’ was because his movements were rigid, as if he had become so rusted that he might fall apart at any moment.

When they saw the old man, the old man was doing a thing that was quite common usually but extremely strange at a moment like this—he was feeding birds.

There were a lot of birds near the lake. A lot of people often dropped by to feed the birds, too.

But none of them had ever attracted as many birds as the old, weary spectral Cultivator. Not only did they show up around him, they even landed on him as if they were naturally intimate with him and not scared of the cold, mechanical body at all.

“That is impressive. How did he do it?”

“A war is going on. Why is someone feeding birds here? Who is he?”

The teenagers discussed the scene with great curiosity when rumbling laughter erupted from the metal chest of the old man, which shocked all four teenagers.

The old man laughed blatantly and soul-stirringly as if he were the only person in the world. The whole lake was filled up by his laughter. Even the overwhelming dark clouds were ripped by the wild laughter and emitted golden brilliance!

While he was laughing, the old man’s voice and scent gradually died down.

He had been squatting on the ground to play with the birds, but he could not hold his heavy body anymore and fell to the ground. The big head lowered inch after inch.

“Grandpa!”

Anxiously, the girl was the first to move forward, and the three boys followed her closely to carry the old man. But the old man simply waved his hands at them, hinting for them not to get close.

“Danger,” the old man said in a clear voice.

Then, black flames surged out of his metal skull.

The black flames raged and struggled hard, as if a certain discontent and hateful force was being burnt and obliterated!

As the force perished, the last vitality of the old man was finally gone. He was like a golden match that turned gray after being burnt up.

When the girl finally supported the old man to his feet, she only heard him saying something weird in a blurred voice. Then, no voice was uttered ever again from the hollow metal chest.

The boys waved and shouted on the street. Three minutes later, the police and the federal army finally came. Soon, the ambulance arrived.

It was supposed to be a common case of the sudden death of a senior, which was even less surprising when the victim was an old and weary spectral Cultivator.

But after the doctors opened the metal skull of the old man and discovered traces of brain cells inside, the case became weird.

The police searched for the number on the old man’s artificial body, only to find that it was an illegal body that was not registered in the authorities, and the case became even trickier than before.

“You said that he said something weird before his death. What was it?”

The police officers frowned and stared at the four panicked, overwhelmed teenagers.

The teenagers looked at each other in bewilderment. The old man’s last words were too complicated for them to comprehend.

“Don’t be nervous. Let’s think about it slowly. Even if you do not understand the meaning, you can still just repeat the syllables to me. It is very important for us to confirm the identity of the deceased,” a female officer said to them gently but firmly.

The teenagers scratched their faces and still could not figure out what it was. Their faces were all blushing.

Right then, glittering roars echoed on the horizon, and the sun finally broke free from the boundary of darkness and rose high into the sky.

Cheers and noises came from the downtown area. Certain great news seemed to be spreading across the entire city, the entire planet, and the entire federation in a boiling storm.

The girl widened her eyes. She finally understood what the old man had mumbled.

“I—I get it now. The old grandpa’s last words seemed to be —”

Puffing her cheeks, she changed into the old man’s posture and looked at the infinite sky beyond, saying with great relief, “The juniors have finally destroyed the bandits!”

Chapter 1835 - Pomp and Circumstance

At the center of the Wall of Heaven’s Origin, the orbital defense line, the No. 9 star fortress that had been built after hollowing an entire resource planet was the largest space stronghold and the last one to be built in the whole defense line.

The fifth space port in the star fortress was large enough to allow more than ten starships and more than a hundred shuttles to land at the same time. Countless exhaust flames flashed past every second.

The Star Glory Federation adopted a dual-track system, which appreciated both the federal army and the Cultivation sects. There were a lot of experts and even elite Exo societies among the civilians.

After the war began, the experts had gathered in the star fortresses as per the instructions on the battle network and marched to the battlefield under the collective command.

At this moment, a lot of the experts still lingered in the fifth space port, waiting to take off to chase after the fleeing fleet of the Imperium. Some of them were quite experienced warriors who knew lots of people.

A lot of war journalists had gathered in the place, too, interviewing random experts while they waited for the permission of the federal army to go to the frontlines, where they could begin the real interview.

Therefore, when the few starships in unique shapes and glamorous paint, with magnificent emblems carved on the heads, slowly landed, and dozens of daunting top-tier experts and big shots who were highly influential in their respective trades appeared, a lot of the experts in the space port immediately recognized who they were.

The few eye-catching young men among them even raised rounds of exclamations and discussions.

“Is—Is that Devilish Sword Peng Lie, son of Fiend Blade Peng Hai, one of the greatest experts in the federation today? How daunting and unstoppable. He is truly like a cold sword that can slash a starship in half! No wonder he has been appointed as the commander of Dragon’s Roar, the most elite special force of the federal army!

“Who is the guy standing next to him? He is not affected by Peng Lie’s aura at all, and the brilliance bursting out of his eyes is even more intense than Peng Lie’s! What? He is Wu Yaxuan? Wu Mayan and Xie Anan’s son, Solar Eclipse Jiang Shaoyang’s true disciple, known as the strongest refiner of the younger generation in the federation, who has received the tile of Armadominus after creating a super crystal suit at such a young age?”

“There’s also the guy whose long hair has reached his buttock. He’s wearing a pair of large sunglasses and smiling rather evilly… Wow. Isn’t—isn’t—isn’t he Ye Liusha? One of the most popular superstars for millions of teenage boys and girls in the whole federation!”

“He is much more than a superstar. His father is the Fire Ant King, one of the best experts in the Blood Demon Sector and even in the entire federation. Acting is just his hobby. He is in fact a Meditation Healer who boasts tremendous mental power. Not just when he is singing or dancing, he can unleash the most dominating soul power when he is walking or smiling. He is very strong!”

“So—so many experts have gathered in this place at the same time? Why?”

“Also, have you felt it? As the most distinguished persons in the younger generation of the New Federation, they have all been through many major events, and they wouldn’t bother to frown even when they are surrounded by ten thousand reporters. But they are rather weird today.”

“Nervous! Yes. They look rather nervous!”

“How—how is it possible? With their familial background and their own unparalleled capability, what can possibly make them so nervous? Even Ye Liusha, who is most used to being in the public eye, is so anxious that his eyelids are twitching. He even has to disguise it by wearing a pair of sunglasses intentionally. This is unbelievable!”

The reporters looked at each other in bewilderment. With their keen senses, they realized that a piece of shocking news might be hiding somewhere behind them!

Before the reporters crowded over and surrounded them, Devilish Sword Peng Lie, Wu Yaxuan, Ye Liusha, and dozens of other experts quickly got on several military shuttles and left.

The reporters were both upset and curious. The haste of the newcomers suggested that their itinerary had been improvised. They also looked so nervous that they did not even have time to calm themselves down. Where were they going, and who would they meet?

On the military shuttle, Wu Yaxuan, Ye Liusha, and Devilish Sword Peng Lie nodded at each other.

Although they had known each other for a long time, they were separated in the sea of stars and distinguished themselves in their respective fields after the great development of the New Federation. As important persons who had too much business to attend to every day, they never had much time to reunite.

Today, after they met again, the three of them could not help but move close. Naturally, it was not for the old time’s sake but because of the person they were about to visit!

Nervous! The reporters in the fifth space port were not wrong at all. The three most distinguished young men of the new generation of the federation, who would not blink even if a star collapsed right before their eyes, were so nervous that their hands and feet were cold. They felt as if they were sitting on needles.

“Never have I thought that we would ever really meet him one day—the legend!” Devilish Peng Lie, the commander of the ‘Dragon’s Roar’, an elite special force in the federation army, said with a smile. “When I was a child, I considered him the idol whom I worshipped most and set it as my goal to be a man as great as him. His senior brother, and my old man, was not particularly happy.”

“You’re telling me,” Wu Yaxuan said in mixed feelings. “Even my master, Solar Eclipse Jin Xinyue, whose pride borders on arrogance, is highly wary of him.

“I did not think that it was a big deal at the beginning. I thought that no matter how extraordinary his skills were in the old days, they were techniques from more than a hundred years ago after all. The world is developing. How strong can he be after sleeping for a hundred years?

“But as it turned out, he only performed some minor adjustments on the crystal suit that I produced, and I failed to resolve the problem after a day and a night. Dreadful. It is truly dreadful!”

“We don’t need to talk about his deeds in the past. Just this time…” Ye Liusha combed his long, messy hair and smiled bitterly. “Settling the crisis in Hundred Flowers City by himself and arriving out of nowhere with eleven experts at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage and even Divinity Transformation Stage? Such a twist is too unbelievable even for a drama!”

“What kind of person do you think Vulture Li Yao is exactly?”

“Is he really brilliant, resolute, righteous, and considers the world his responsibility like the books say?”

“Not necessarily. Such propaganda is usually too exaggerated. It is rare to find one trustworthy sentence out of ten. However, while he is not necessarily brilliantly smart, he is certainly a very dominating, awesome, and probably stern man. He is the strongest old monster from the age of the Old Federation after all!”

The more they discussed, the uneasier they became. They even asked Ye Liusha to impose certain psychological hints on each other so that they would not do anything inappropriate after they met the magnificent Vulture Li Yao and were awed by the daunting aura of the unparalleled expert.

If they embarrassed themselves in front of the many seniors and experts, they would not have a chance to make things right for the rest of their lives.

Soon, the four shuttles stopped at the periphery of a secret base that had a high level of defense.

They were the latest to arrive. When they looked down from above, they could already see hundreds of experts and even more crystal suits gathering inside and outside of the base like a silent forest of iron.

The massive spiritual energy from them collided, raising overwhelming tides as if it were a violent ocean.

“Dad!”

Hardly had the young people got off the shuttle when Wu Yaxuan saw his father, Wu Mayan. Although he had heard about his father’s condition through the spiritual messenger earlier, he could not help but move forward and asked earnestly, “Are you alright?”

“It’s just a minor injury. Nothing serious.” Wu Mayan smiled and patted his son’s shoulder. Then he nodded at Devilish Sword Peng Lie in greeting.

Li Yao was the junior brother of Fiend Blade Peng Hai, and Peng Hai was the first guide for Li Yao on his path of Cultivation. Thus, Li Yao had always cherished the bond between them.

As Li Yao’s first disciple, Wu Mayan was technically of the same generation as Devilish Sword Peng Lie. Therefore, it was impolite for him to greet the young man the same way as he greeted the rest of them.

“There’s no need to be anxious.” Wu Mayan saw through what was on their minds easily. “Master trained for twelve hours in a world fragment just now. His physical strength and soul power were too greatly exhausted. He is now recovering in the medical cabin and will soon be out.”

“So crazy?” Wu Yaxuan widened his eyes in amazement. “Wasn’t he wounded and worn out in the series of battles against the Immortal Cultivators and the extraterrestrial devils yesterday? How come he started such high-intensity training today for… twelve hours?”

“Training is like rowing a boat against the current; you will retrograde if you are not making progress. One cannot be sluggish for one second,” Devilish Sword Peng Lie said. “Perhaps it was exactly such an attitude of craziness and determination that forged the unique Vulture Li Yao!”

“Exactly!” Wu Mayan nodded solemnly. “My master is an out-and-out training maniac. His training was already so crazy more than a hundred years ago. Yesterday, after his wounds just got better, he wasted no time crawling into a world fragment with my masteress, saying that they would have a good competition and see how many new techniques they have grasped during the hundred years and how strong they are now. Both of them were heavily wounded. But they are ‘Vulture’ and ‘Blazing Tyrannosaur’. How can we stop them as their disciples?

“We thought that they would merely have a simple competition. It never occurred to us that their training would last so long. In their fierce fight, the whole world fragment was blown apart!”

“The world fragment was blown apart?” Wu Yaxuan, Ye Liusha, and Devilish Sword Peng Lie were all dumbfounded, finding it hard to picture how magnificent the view was. “That—that is too unbelievable and insane!”

“What are ‘Vulture’ Li Yao and ‘Blazing Tyrannosaur’ Ding Lingdang if not lunatics?” Wu Mayan paused for a moment. Then his eyes suddenly shone. “They’re here!”

Before Wu Yaxuan and his companions clearly saw the two shadows, which slowly rose from the training room, noises were already flooding into their ears like tides.

Almost a thousand top-tier experts from the Glorious Sunlight Group, the Double Dragons Union, Skyfire, the Patriots Front, the Secret Sword Bureau, the Dim Moon Fund, and all the other super forces bowed in respect and shouted at the same time, “Welcome home, President Li!”

Chapter 1836 - : It’s Good to Be Home

The swords and sabers rose like trees and mountains. The wholehearted roars from the thousand experts in the Building Foundation Stage, the Core Formation Stage, and even the Nascent Soul Stage congregated into roaring tides and spread out in all directions as fast as lightning.

The entire star fortress sensed the shocking force. Even someone on the starship that was rushing around the dark side of the fortress widened their eyes in confusion, not knowing exactly what had happened.

Li Yao had never been used to such grandiose ceremonies in the first place, not to mention that his body and mind were both greatly drained. After a brief daze, he asked Ding Lingdang in a low voice, “Didn’t you say that it would be a simple welcome ceremony where I would get to know everybody? Why are there so many people?”

“It’s already very simple. Otherwise, there would’ve been far more.” Ding Lingdang lowered her voice, too. “You are the founder of the Double Dragons Union, the Glorious Sunlight Group, and Skyfire. Now that you have announced your grand return, it is only necessary for their leadership to come and visit you, isn’t it? Right now, all the organizations are behemoths that cover all seven Sectors and can gather three to five million people after a slight cough. They have reduced the number of guests time and time again and finally made it slightly more than a thousand. This is already the best they can do!”

“Well…” Li Yao almost could not hold back the urge to scratch his hair.

He was not necessarily a man of low profile, but it did not mean that he could receive the homage of a thousand experts in such a way comfortably. Their eyes that were full of reverence and even ‘fear’ made Li Yao feel both awkward and embarrassed. He felt goosebumps all over his body.

He was not born for such occasions after all, and he was not the ‘dominator of three Sectors’ that they expected!

Thankfully, ‘President Li’ sounded more or less acceptable to him.

As for exactly how people should address him, Li Yao and Ding Lingdang had discussed for a long time, too, mainly because his case was rather special, and it was impossible to find a similar example in the entire federation.

From the bottom of his heart, he had never considered himself an unreachable celebrity. Except for the disciples and juniors, he would have no problem if other people directly called him ‘Li Yao’ or ‘Brother Yao’.

Of course, that was certainly impossible.

In the federation, for the experts who had high military credits and reputation but did not work in the government or any sect, they were mostly called ‘Mr.’ along with their surname as a way of respect.

However, “Mr. Li’ was a rather creepy title and did not even sound as comfortable as ‘Monster Li’. Long Yangjun and the rest of them would certainly laugh about it for the rest of their lives.

‘Senior Li’ was too cheesy, and ‘Master Li’ sounded too old. His hometown was Floating Spear City. According to the unspoken rule, it was also possible to call him ‘Li Floating Spear’, but that did not sound right.

Eventually, Li Yao discovered that Ding Lingdang had established a fund with part of the assets he left behind years ago under his name to help the war orphans.

Li Yao did not hate the idea of acting as the president of the fund. Calling him ‘President Li’ seemed okay enough.

“Just deal with it.” Ding Lingdang grabbed his arm. “I wasn’t quite used to this, either, when I first returned to the federation from the Nether World Sector and the Uranian Ring Sector, but such occasions are always necessary, and we can’t just be free spirits all the time.

“This is a small occasion. If I am elected the Supreme Speaker of the Federation in a couple of days, you will be the Speaker’s spouse, expected to be present at big occasions where a hundred billion pairs of eyes are focused on you at the same time. What will you do then?”

“Is such a thing happening?” Li Yao blinked quickly. “I thought that you had fulfilled your destiny after the main force of the Black Wind Fleet was crushed and that you could be a hermit now!”

“How is it possible?” Ding Lingdang said. “The war is far from over. Do you think that the remaining soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet will surrender so easily? Now, there will be prolonged and even crueler battles of pursuit and annihilation. Besides, running for the Speaker is too important an issue for me to change my mind easily. Even if I want to, the Patriots Front backing me wouldn’t allow me to! Forget it. Let’s stop talking for now. Everybody is looking at you. Say something to them!”

The military base that was jam-packed with people was now caught in a weird silence.

Everybody held their breath and stared at Li Yao in midair quietly, who was not much taller or bigger them.

That was the legendary Vulture Li Yao, the dominator of three Sectors, and the most renowned superhero! What would he say?

Li Yao’s face was burning.

He did not know that so many people would come. The speech that he had drafted earlier seemed inappropriate now.

The scene before his eyes reminded him of the scene in Hundred Flowers City where he was surrounded by the people. He recalled the moment when everybody’s soul reverberated and sang the national anthem of the federation together.

Out of everybody’s expectation, he stood at attention and bowed to everyone deeply, as if he was returning their respect.

“Thank you for coming such a long way here to welcome me,” Li Yao said. “I must apologize first. You may have some misunderstanding about me. After we get to know each other, you will realize that I am not ‘Vulture’ Li Yao, the dominator of the three Sectors as in the brochures, movies, and games. I am—how should I put it—someone who is the opposite of the propaganda.

“I did not accomplish the feat of ‘saving the day at the most critical moment’. On the contrary, instead of me saving the federation, it was actually the millions of people of federation who made up the Star Glory Federation that saved me as well as themselves.

“Had it not been for the infinite strength granted by the spectral Cultivators who were caged in the virtual world after they woke up, the extraterrestrial devil in Hundred Flowers City wouldn’t have been crushed so easily. Chances are that I might’ve ended up being its puppet.

“Had it not been for the bloody battles the Heaven’s Origin Fleet, the Burning Prairie Fleet, the Big Bai Fleet, and you fought in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Star Glory Federation wouldn’t have endured to the moment we arrived. There wouldn’t have been such a great opportunity for us to demolish the Imperium’s space gate, either.

“Most importantly of all, had it not been for the sweat and blood and the unreserved devotion and contribution, which built the Star Glory Federation into such a magnificent country, it wouldn’t have been able to attract any friends or resist any foes.

“Really. Thank you for all your effort and sacrifice. Thank you for giving me such a beautiful hometown to return to after dreaming about it for a hundred years.

“It’s good to be home.”

After finishing his speech, Li Yao bowed deeply to everybody again in the most earnest gratitude.

Whether they were his nominal subordinates, juniors, or students, ‘gratitude’ that was almost tangible was delivered to them in the moment along with powerful and vigorous energy.

The entire military base was still soaked in silence.

Everyone’s mouth was open, and their faces were full of confusion and astonishment.

What shocked them was naturally Li Yao’s delicate control over the spiritual energy. It was neither high nor low and appeared inside everyone’s ears in the most comfortable way, as if Li Yao were sitting one meter before them and expressing his gratitude right to their face. The people who were at the front and at the rear heard his voice with exactly the same volume and clarity even though they might be a hundred meters away from each other!

What surprised them, naturally, was the content of Li Yao’s speech. They had thought that Li Yao would say something more philosophical and awe-inspiring.

It had never occurred to them that his speech would be so plain. This ‘dominator of three Sectors’ was vastly different from their imagination.

Wu Yaxuan, Ye Liusha, and Devilish Blade Peng Lie looked at each other in bewilderment, all thinking that they must have missed something.

Wu Mayan coughed. He knew exactly what a plain person his master was, but had he never described his master in such a way. In front of his son, he had always bragged about his master, depicting him to be brilliant and introspective. Sensing his son’s eyes that were full of questions glancing at his back, Wu Mayan could not help but feel awkward.

Ding Lingdang was amused. “This is it?”

Li Yao blinked. “What?”

“I thought that you would be a pretentious ‘dominator of three Sectors’ for a while.”

“Forget it. All the people here are my family and friends. Why do I need to be pretentious in front of family and friends? Of course, I should speak whatever is on my mind.” Li Yao grinned. “If I must be pretentious, I will show off in front of the people of the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance, or the Pangu Clan and the extraterrestrial devils, after I arrive at the center of the cosmos. It will only be gratifying in that way!”

“Makes sense.” Ding Lingdang rubbed her fists. “If I were not restrained by the identity of Speaker candidate, I would love to go to the center of the cosmos and find several lords and nobles from the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance or the members of the Pangu Clan and the extraterrestrial devils to practice my techniques!”

“I can’t wait,” Li Yao mumbled, “to see the magnificent picture now.”

…

Dealing with the eyes of admiration of the thousand members of the Double Dragons Union, the Glorious Sunlight Group, and Skyfire made Li Yao ill at ease, not sure what to do.

In the real private dinner at night, the courteous greetings from the ‘juniors’ overwhelmed Li Yao even more.

The ways they addressed him—’Senior Uncle’, ‘Grand Master’, ‘Uncle Li Yao’, or ‘Senior Li’—were all very appropriate according to tradition, but the problem was that a lot of the ‘juniors’ were actually in their fifties or even eighties. In terms of their real age, they were even older than him.

Allowing a solemn, middle-aged man in a high position to call him ‘Senior Li’ respectfully and state that he had grown up listening to the heroic deeds of Li Yao and considered Li Yao a role model to learn from was too creepy for Li Yao.

“This is all too uncomfortable for me.” While rubbing his arms, Li Yao spoke to Wu Mayan and Xie Anan, his two true disciples. “In my mind, I only left the federation about five years ago, when you were young, vigorous, and in your twenties.

“But in the blink of an eye, I haven’t changed much, and you are already middle-aged people more than a hundred years old. Even your child is bigger than the you were when I departed.

“This is truly a weird feeling. I feel that I have lost a hundred years for nothing and that I’m living in a different time dimension from you.”

Chapter 1837 - In the River of Time

“I get it.” Xie Anan nodded. The girl who had round red cheeks that looked like red apples and was shy but persistent in the past had grown into a calm, mature lady full of grace. The only thing that had not changed was the trust and admiration for Li Yao in her eyes. “It is a problem that a lot of long-term hibernators have to face. It seems that Master and Masteress are slowly turning into ‘leapers’, too.”

“Leapers?” Li Yao was slightly dazed. He looked at Ding Lingdang and asked, “What is that?”

“It is a new concept proposed by Senior Gui Suishou as a seasoned hibernator,” Ding Lingdang explained. “Since passing the Monument Plan to preserve the civilization on to Professor Mo Xuan, he has been conducting studies in that field. Long-term hibernation should only be an approach for us to achieve a certain purpose, but for Gui Suishou, super long-term hibernation is a self-fulfilling process.

“Like you, I’ve spent most of the past hundred years in hibernation. The time I’ve been awake can’t have been more than twenty years. Every time I returned to the federation, I felt that I had barged into an unknown world.

“The first time, I missed Wu Mayan and Xie Anan’s wedding. The second time, I missed the birth and growth of their child… A lot of people and a lot of things slipped through my fingers like sand. However hard I tried, I couldn’t grasp them.

“The feeling is exactly like you said. After the loss of dozens of years, hibernators like us and normal people live in two different time dimensions. There is a weird… sense of alienation. It’s almost like we did not contribute much to the New Federation, and a beautiful and bright home has presented itself to us. All we need to do is sit down and enjoy the fruit.”

“How is that possible?” Xie Anan said in a hurry. “Master, Masteress, you have discovered three Sectors in total plus the government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic. You also made great contributions to the defeat of the expedition army of the Imperium. You were certainly not idling by!”

“I know.” Ding Lingdang smiled. “I am not being modest here. This is just a very weird feeling, which is hard for ‘crawlers’ who have never experienced long-term hibernation such as you to comprehend.

“In fact, I’m running for the Speaker of the Federation only partly to mediate between the four new Sectors and the three old Sectors and to maintain the balance between our side and Jin Xinyue’s. But more importantly, it is for a selfish reason. I want to combine myself with the New Federation more tightly in such a way so that I can melt into the federation today again and change from a leaper into a common crawler.”

Li Yao could tell that there was rare sadness in Ding Lingdang’s tone. He found it more and more strange. “Leapers and crawlers, what are they exactly?”

Ding Lingdang drank up a whole glass of red wine and said, “After traveling in space for a hundred years on my own through long-term hibernation, I felt that I was utterly unfit to the world around me after I returned to the federation. So, I went to chat with Senior Gui Suishou, who is also a long-term hibernator. He happened to be conducting research on the issue and told me a lot of things. He even offered me a few of his notebooks.

“According to Senior Gui Suishou, the universe is the continuity of space and time. In the three-dimensional universe that we live in, space and time are supposed to be constant, linear, and stable. Time goes by second by second, and every second has the same significance as any other second. The civilization that lives in such a constant space-time—for example, the civilization of mankind today—is like a turtle crawling slowly on the road of time. Therefore, they can be called ‘crawlers’.

“But in fact, both the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan hundreds of thousands of years ago and mankind today have figured out the way to transcend the continuity of space, which is space jumps.

“Through the wormholes, by means of four-dimensional space, it is possible to transcend the continuity of the three-dimensional space and arrive from one point to another point millions of lightyears away instantly.

“Since the continuity of space can be transcended, can the continuity of time, too?

“To some extent, yes, thanks to the human hibernation technology.

“Before the hibernation technology was invented and grew mature, the intelligent lives in our universe are all ‘crawlers’. Whether you are a beggar or an emperor, whether you are an ordinary person or a Cultivator, one second is just one second, and one minute is always one minute. You may slow down the flow of time in a virtual world by stimulating the brain nerves. But that is fake. Time flows at its original speed in reality.

“However, for us hibernators, the case is entirely different.

“Even in the Star Glory Federation, where the technology has just been invented and is still very shabby and low-efficient, hibernators like us can already sleep for a hundred years in a row. We are faced with two different worlds every time we close our eyes and open them again.

“What about the civilizations whose hibernation technology is more advanced? The Pangu Clan, for example?

“Li Yao, do you remember the member of the Pangu Clan you encountered on Kunlun? The guy had slept for hundreds of thousands of years!

“Of course, he was slain by you the moment he woke up, and he never had the chance to face the strange world.

“But release your imagination and walk in the shoes of the member of the Pangu Clan. Assuming that ‘you’ were not executed, how exactly would you face the world that was completely different after hundreds of thousands of years, the ‘descendants’ below your feet who are screaming and shouting, and the loneliness without a single companion in the entire universe?”

Li Yao was dazed and deep in thought.

“Senior Gui Suishou believes that as hibernation technology grows more and more advanced, and the damage to the hibernators is reduced, more and more hibernators are bound to appear,” Ding Lingdang said. “Any civilization that grasps such technology will be separated into two parts sooner or later, namely the ‘crawlers’ made of non-hibernators and the ‘leapers’ made of hibernators.

“The world of the crawlers is constant, stable, and linear. They burn their lives to build their home and civilization in every second and every minute, while they appreciate steady family, friends, happiness, and other feelings.

“However, for hibernators, who cross dozens if not hundreds of years easily, time is inconstant, nonlinear, and broken. It is like a big river that is running at an extremely low speed, with some stones exposed on the surface. The hibernators used to be fish in the river, but they leapt out of the river and grew wings one day, which allowed them to jump ahead with their wings and see the brand-new world in the river far, far ahead of them. Then, everything that is left behind by them in the seemingly ‘stagnant water’ would gradually lose its original significance.

“Like you said just now, after you closed your eyes and opened them again, the Star Glory Federation went through drastic changes. Your family and friends had different experiences and growth. Some people died, and even more were born. They enjoy their slow, even, and steady happiness and sorrow.

“This is just a hundred years. What if you hibernate again for three or five hundred years?

“Would the dreams, goals, morals, and worldviews of the old days mean anything to you after you wake up again five hundred years later?”

Li Yao was rendered speechless. An indescribably brilliant and yet miserable picture popped up in his head. While he felt chilly, he somehow even developed a feeling of expectation.

“Senior Gui Suishou believes that when some people grasp the ability to leap forward in the river of time, their understanding about values, morals, and even ‘life’ itself will be different from other people,” Ding Lingdang said carefully. “The two parties will never be able to understand each other, like turtles that crawl slowly on the ground and birds that fly fast in the sky. An insect that only lives in summer will never understand the concept of ice. This is not a matter of which side is superior, only a matter of different life choices. The crawlers have chosen a continuous life, whereas the leapers have chosen a noncontinuous one. I’m afraid that the disparity between them is even greater than the disparity between the Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators.”

Li Yao thought quickly and had to admit that Gui Suishou, who had lived for almost a thousand years, did have a point.

Come to think about it, it was rather funny. The old guy’s original body was obviously a green-haired turtle. Yet, he called other people ‘crawlers’ and claimed to be a ‘leaper’. Was it some sort of shamelessness in a different sense?

“Right. Why is Senior Gui not around?” Li Yao asked. “Didn’t he say that he would be an eyewitness to all the major events of the federation? Defeating the Imperium is such a great piece of news, but he is not here to note it down.”

“Senior Gui’s level has improved again,” Ding Lingdang said. “He has completely stepped into the domain of the leapers. Perhaps, in this mortal world where time flows slowly, there is already nothing that is worth his attention. I haven’t seen him for a long time. Perhaps he has hidden himself in an unknown corner and is waiting to ‘leap’ to the next millennium.

“When we last met each other, he told me something else. According to him, the ‘leapers’ as individuals are already amazing enough. What if a whole civilization chooses to hibernate itself and unfreeze itself every thousand years or every ten thousand years? It will leap forward in the river of time and gradually evolve into a civilization of time-crossers. What will it be like? He was very interested in searching for such a nonlinear civilization—in his own way.

“As for us, we have just been through a hibernation of a hundred years, so we can barely be counted as real ‘leapers’. We are an incomplete form between the crawlers and the leapers at most. The old concepts are being destroyed, and the new concepts have yet to form. It is only natural that we feel unfit. Senior Gui Suishou has named such troubles ‘TTC’—Timeline Transcendence Complex.”

Chapter 1838 - Let’s Do It Together, Crawl or Leap!

Li Yao thought for a moment and realized that the transcendence of the timeline was indeed the root of his problems.

“That truly seems the case. After getting back to the federation and reading books such as ‘Chronicles of Li Yao’ or ‘Chronicles of Ding Lingdang’, I had such a feeling of ‘alienation’. It was clearly not myself or myself in my memory! Now that so many friends who are both familiar and strange to me have shown up, the feeling is getting more and more intense,” Li Yao observed in mixed feelings. “I finally understand why Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators in ancient times were called ‘old monsters’.

“Of course, they couldn’t have lived an eternal life, but if they grasped certain crude hibernation techniques and found a certain place suitable for hibernation, it wouldn’t have been strange at all for them to live inside such a residence for hundreds of years in seclusion, would it? Just like Senior Gui Suishou said, they slowly turned from ‘crawlers’ into ‘leapers’, and they were given morals and understanding about life that were utterly different from what normal people had.

“The ancient people certainly had no concept of ‘TTC’. They lacked knowledge in psychological therapy, too, and only worshipped strength. All such old monsters were revered as gods.

“How could it not have gone wrong when the old monsters or ‘leapers’ governed a civilization of ‘crawlers’? Perhaps the major collapse of the world of ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago had something to do with that.

“Then, what do we do now?”

Li Yao held Ding Lingdang’s hand below the dinner table.

The two of them were like two half-mature entities that had leapt out of the river of time and developed the fins into wings but did not know how to adapt to the brand-new environment. Perhaps they could only march forward bravely by holding each other’s hand.

Ding Lingdang reacted to the strength in his palm and said, “The authorities of the federation do not approve large-batch, long-term human hibernation. Every generation has its responsibility. If all the elites of our generation decide to ‘reinforce the future’ by long-term hibernation, who is going to build the present, and who can guarantee that when the hibernators wake up, there will still be a future that needs their reinforcement, not a wasteland full of death and destruction?

“What is the future without the present? Li Yao, I remember that you said that before.”

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao nodded.

Having heard Ding Lingdang’s explanation, he realized that it was not necessarily a good thing for the distinguished individuals of a civilization that lived in a continuous space-time to choose long-term hibernation.

“Of course,” Ding Lingdang said, “the federation government cannot forbid anyone from hibernating themselves. Right now, measures are mainly taken partly through public education and partly through tax. The ‘inheritance tax’ and ‘interest tax’ levied for hibernators are shockingly high even for Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. Finally, the ‘fashion of hibernation’ is contained to an acceptable level.”

After pausing for a moment, she added quickly, “Of course, if it is for national strategic plans, and for the people who had entered the hibernation state before the rules and regulations regarding the tax for the hibernators, their duty is waived.”

Li Yao scratched his chin. “Fair enough. What about the people who wake up from long-term hibernation?”

“There are indeed therapies for such patients. In a few days, a few sessions will be arranged for you. I had some sessions before, too. However…”

Ding Lingdang hesitated for a moment but shook her head in the end. “I don’t think that it is going to be helpful. We are both close to the Divinity Transformation Stage, and our minds are as steady as anything. It is certainly difficult for the extraterrestrial devils or the mental devils to corrupt us. However, the psychological treatment cannot reach the deeper parts of our mind either!

“According to Senior Gui Suishou, hibernation is a drug that you will be addicted to after the first try, and after you are addicted, you will never return to your old state again. You will always want to cross the timeline again and go to a long time later to see the world that will have been utterly changed. Just like that, you will leap further and further and be mired deeper and deeper. Eventually, you will complete the metamorphosis to a ‘leaper’ and become a ‘time traveler’.

“All in all, for hibernators, life is no longer ‘here’ and ‘now’ but the ‘future’ and the other side of the shore. Perhaps they can only be really alive… at the end of time.”

Everybody around the dinner table fell silent. The previously jovial atmosphere suddenly became rigid and heavy.

Tilting his head, Li Yao thought for a moment and asked, “What about you? Do you want to be a ‘crawler’ or a ‘leaper’?”

“I…”

Looking at all the family and friends around the dinner table, Ding Lingdang’s eyes turned somewhat red. She bit her lips and said, “I can’t bear to depart from everyone, the Star Glory Federation, or my past self. However, I am tempted to abandon everything and take a look at the distant future, to be a witness of the Star Glory Federation and even the civilization of mankind when they rise and expand, and to see the moment when the infinite sea of stars is all illuminated by the radiance of mankind and when the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flags are flying in every corner.

“What will mankind, the federation, and our civilization be like by then?

“If I choose to become a ‘crawler’ again, no matter how I train and upgrade myself, there is no way that I can ever see that day come. So…”

Li Yao understood it.

Below the dinner table, he held Ding Lingdang’s hand even harder than before. He smiled carefreely as if it were not a big deal. “It’s fine. There’s still me. If you choose to ‘crawl’, we will crawl slowly second after second and minute after minute. If you want to ‘leap’, we will just jump to the mysterious and unpredictable future after all the troubles at hand are settled!”

“Master…”

Both Wu Mayan and Xie Anan somewhat choked. They raised their glasses to cover the moistness in their eyes.

“This isn’t right. Isn’t it supposed to be a welcome back dinner for me? Why is the ambience getting so weird like we will never see each other again?”

Li Yao scratched the back of his head hard and waved his chopsticks, declaring, “Rest assured. No matter what time and what place we may ‘leap’ to, we will never forget the federation and everybody here!

“Only when you remember the way home will it be a ‘journey’. If you don’t have any memory of the family and friends at home or the way back, you are not a ‘time traveler’ at all and only a ‘time vagrant’ at best.

“Besides, ‘crawler’ and ‘leaper’ are just a preliminary design right now. The hibernation technology of the federation is not advanced enough for anyone to enter a ten-thousand-year sleep yet, is it? The nuisances at hand—the Imperium, the Covenant Alliance, Pangu, Nuwa, Chaos and extraterrestrial devils—will take us decades to resolve. Hahaha. Come on. Let’s worry about the future when the future arrives and seize every second that we have right now. At this moment, it is most important to eat and drink well!”

Li Yao raised the wine glass high again. The enormous cafeteria of the military base was filled by laughter again. The simmering atmosphere was almost blowing up the ceiling and surging into the immeasurable universe that was illuminated by the stars from billions of years ago.

…

Li Yao was unable to finish the ‘welcome dinner’ properly after all because Bai Kaixin and Jin Xinyue arrived one after another.

It was still a time of war. The collapse of Black Swirl and the death of the commander did not mean that the Black Wind Fleet had completely lost its combat ability. Besides, nobody could predict what kind of insane things the defeated soldiers might do in their madness and desperation.

The Ancient Sages Sector, the crushed soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet, the main troops of the Black Wind Fleet behind the brown dwarf, the subtle attitude of the homeland of the Imperium, the government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic on Firefly, and the federation’s own countermeasures… There were too many things that had to be addressed with caution and patience.

Bai Kaixin and Jin Xinyue were both occupied in military affairs. They were still hunting the defeated soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet. Li Yao absolutely understood and supported them, telling them that they did not need to return in a hurry. After all, they had already waited for a hundred years, so it would not matter if they had to wait for a couple of days longer.

Besides, communication technology had become very advanced. Whatever they wanted to say, they could directly speak through the spiritual messenger.

Still, they returned to the base one after the other.

Moreover, the two of them had almost identical expressions. Their faces were both pale and perspiring with cold sweat, and they seemed to have lost their souls.

Bai Kaixin was the first to arrive. When he said that he had urgent business that he needed to discuss with Li Yao, he was invited to a secret room by Li Yao and Ding Lingdang. But the very first thing he did after entering the room was pour a whole bottle of wine that had been preserved for fifty years into his stomach.

Li Yao and Bai Kaixin had known each other for years. At the beginning, when he was lost in the Flying Star Sector, Lei Dalu and Bai Kaixin of the Great Horn Exo Society had been among the first Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector that he had made friends with.

Lei Dalu was rather straightforward and did not seem to care about many things. Bai Kaixin, on the other hand, was meticulous and extremely calm, which were the most important talents expected of an advisor.

Li Yao and Bai Kaixin had been through many life-and-death battles together. They had even unraveled the secrets of his birth in the underground fortress on Spider Den together, allowing him to meet his father, Bai Xinghe, the Pirate Potentate. Naturally, the two of them were very close.

But even Li Yao had never seen Bai Kaixin so out of control and so desperate for alcohol before.

The war in space was not over yet. As the Chief of Staff of the Burning Prairie Fleet, not only had Bai Kaixin returned on his own, why was he also so devastated?

After Bai Kaixin finished two bottles of wine and was about to open the third, Li Yao finally could not help but snatch the bottle and say, “Brother Bai, hold on a second and tell me what happened first. Didn’t the war go very well? There shouldn’t be many unexpected factors right now!”

Bai Kaixin’s bloodshot eyes shook for a long time before they finally returned to normal. He put on an overwhelmed and regretful expression, and his eyebrows that were always lolling were even lower than usual. His teeth and lips collided for a long time before he finally struggled to open his mouth. “He—he’s gone!”

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang looked at each other in bewilderment, not having the first clue what was going on. “Who’s gone?”

“Bai Xingjian, commander of the Big Bai Fleet,” Bai Kaixin said gloomily. It was not exactly shocking news by itself, but his following words almost choked Li Yao and Ding Lingdang.

“I suspect that he is my father, Bai Xinghe, Boss Bai!”

Chapter 1839 - Secrets of Bai Xingjian

“What!” Question marks filled Li Yao and Ding Lingdang’s eyes. Li Yao could not help but shout, “Hasn’t Boss Bai been dead for more than a century? We were there to witness it at that time. Also, didn’t Bai Xingjian crash into Black Swirl while piloting Infinite Fire, and the body was never found after the explosion…”

While speaking, Li Yao was dazed himself. A lot of lightning struck inside his head.

Yes. Bai Xingjian, as the commander of the Big Bai Fleet, was too weird. Other than anything else, his strong combat ability that even raised the attention of ‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren was definitely abnormal!

He was slightly more than a hundred years old at best, and he was the highest commander of a major fleet who must have been occupied in the business every day. There was no way that he could be like Yan Liren, who dedicated himself to his swords and nothing else. How could he boast such high combat ability?

Did Li Yao not doubt that there was something wrong with his death earlier?

Bai Kaixin picked another bottle of wine and held it in his arms. Taking a deep breath, he mumbled, “You are right. That’s why I wanted to see you and ask you more. After all, you, Lei Dalu, and I personally witnessed my father Boss Bai’s last battle on Spider Den years ago. Also, you spent almost ten years in the residence of Yan Xinjian, the Supreme Space Pirate, and received part of Yan Xinjian's heritage, which helped you grasp the mysteries of the 'ultimate core'. To some extent, you are sort of Yan Xinjian's disciple..."

"Wait." The more he listened, the more confused he became. "Aren't we talking about Boss Bai? Does it have anything to do with Yan Xinjian?"

"Just hear me out. You'll know everything soon," Bai Kaixin said. "I want to confirm something with you first. Below Spider Den, during Boss Bai's last battle, neither you, me, or Lei Dalu saw that he was dead with our own eyes, right?"

Li Yao thought for a moment and realized that it was true.

In the underground fortress on Spider Den, he and Boss Bai had been in one team, and Bai Kaixin and Lei Dalu had been in another team. After the four of them met, all the mysteries had been unraveled. Yet, they had still been faced with the collapse of the underground fortress as well as the pursuit of the Temple of Immortals, Black Spider Tower, the Immortal Cultivators, and the hostile space pirates.

There was nowhere to run to because the enemy had besieged them from every direction, and the underground world had been about to collapse. It had truly been a situation without any chance of survival.

At last, to ensure the safety of his son Bai Kaixin, Bai Xingjian had volunteered to cover the retreat and distract the enemy's attention. After killing a lot of Immortal Cultivators and hostile space pirates, he had died a valiant death.

However, none of the survivors had seen Boss Bai’s death in person. That was just their deduction.

Even though he had indeed been killed in the battle, there was still no knowing if his remaining soul had been completely obliterated.

Seeing Li Yao nod, Bai Kaixin asked with an even more trembling voice, “Then, I want to know something else. Did Yan Xinjian’s remaining souls all perish? Is it possible that a little bit of his unsubstantial soul escaped together with you when you crawled out of his residence? Can you confirm or disprove the possibility?”

Li Yao blinked quickly. He was even less confident about the matter.

Yan Xinjian had been the strongest expert at the edge of the cosmos in the ‘pre-federation’ era. His abilities both in commanding starships and personal combat had been appallingly high. He had even been the first confident talent who was bold enough to try to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage in the few Sectors around in the past five hundred years.

It was a pity that he had grown up in an age of isolation and ignorance. He did not have the communication technology, resource support, and advanced training facilities that the federation had, nor had he been aware of any experience or solution to deal with minor apocalypses.

Besides, the man’s heart had been impure, and there had been too many irrelevant thoughts inside his soul. In the end, he had failed in his attempt to advance into the Divinity Transformation Stage. His soul had been shattered into hundreds of remaining souls that occupied the bodies of hundreds of mice, which slowly perished in the dark, sunless cave.

By the time Li Yao opened the ‘Supreme Residence’ that he had prepared for himself to enter the Divinity Transformation Stage, the remaining souls that were attached to the mice had mostly withered. They had been as mottled as murals corrupted by the wind and sand.

During his ten years of training, Li Yao had felt the tiny clones of Yan Xinjian retrograding faster and faster. Most of them had turned into ordinary rats, but as for exactly whether or not a few of them escaped…

Li Yao suddenly recalled that when he left the Supreme Residence, a mouse that seemed somewhat intelligent did run away together with him. There was no telling where it went afterward.

Li Yao could not help but ask, “Bai Xinghe and Yan Xinjian, are they related?”

“Perhaps. There’s even more,” Bai Kaixin said. “There is still a third guy involved in this, a young man named ‘Mouse Bai’. The young man was an orphan on Spider Den at the beginning. There was no telling whether he was the offspring of some space pirates or hostages that had been kidnapped. Regardless, he was just an insignificant person between a servant and a slave.

“When Spider Den was taken down, we discovered a lot of such kids. To some extent, they were actually the most miserable victims of the chaos that the space pirates caused.

“Until we found valid proof of their crimes, naturally, we would not discriminate against such kids. Those were the days when the Flying Star Sector was in dire need of hands. A lot of children received formal education and later distinguished themselves in many fleets of the New Federation.

“As for Mouse Bai, his life almost came to an end when we broke into Spider Den. At that time, he seemed to fall off from a high place and hurt his head badly. He was incontinent and unconscious for a long time. Soon, he was thrown into the pile of dead bodies to wait to die.

“But he did not die. He crawled out of the dead bodies and even joined the Burning Prairie Fleet by chance. In the end, he grew into the most excellent fleet commander of the federation one step after another, becoming Bai Xingjian of the Big Bai Fleet!

“Falling from a high place, entering a coma, revival after death, a grand performance. Li Yao, have you thought of something after those words are connected?”

Li Yao thought quickly and immediately understood what he meant. “Possession and reincarnation?”

“Exactly,” Bai Kaixin said. “I’m highly suspicious that although my father’s fleshly body was shattered, his soul did not completely perish. In the meantime, while most of Yan Xinjian’s remaining souls perished, one of them did manage to escape!

“The Pirate Potentate and the Supreme Space Pirate, two equally powerful and ‘repugnant’ souls, might have had some sort of weird attraction to each other, right?

“The strength of each of them alone was not enough for them to be reincarnated in the body, but the two broken souls somehow joined into a brand-new soul and entered the body of the young man, Mouse Bai, who was already dead. Then, the magnificent being—Bai Xingjian—was reborn!"

"Bai Xingjian… Bai Xingjian… Bai Xinghe plus Yan Xinjian?"

Li Yao finally understood the whole meaning of the name. He could not help but have a feeling of epiphany.

In such a case, Bai Xingjian's unbelievable and even ridiculous capabilities would be perfectly explainable.

When Bai Xinghe and Yan Xinjian, two of the most dreadful space pirates in the past five hundred years, combined, they were certainly more than qualified for Yan Liren to draw his sword.

Li Yao was quite amazed, but Ding Lingdang found it hard to believe. "Brother Bai, this whole story is a little bit too staggering and unbelievable. Everything is just your hypothesis. Do you have any more concrete evidence?"

"Of course. Does their style in commanding count?" Bai Kaixin said. "A fleet commander's style of commanding is as unique as his fingerprints and retinas. Other people can mimic them but can never do exactly the same as them.

"In the eras of both Yan Xinjian and my father, the crystal processor technology was already quite advanced, allowing them to leave the data and files of many classic battle cases.

"Before, Bai Xingjian had concealed eighty percent of his capabilities and intentionally altered his commanding style, so nobody thought about it that way.

"But during the last battle, he completely tore off his camouflage and revealed the magnificent abilities of the Divinity Transformation Stage. It also gave us a chance to collect the traces of his real commanding style and the activities of his fleet. After the data was translated into all kinds of parameters, they were a more than ninety percent match to the files left by Yan Xinjian and Bai Xinghe. The only difference was that he had greatly upgraded and evolved on the basis of Yan Xinjian and Bai Xinghe!”

Li Yao nodded hard. “It is very likely. Any genius commander couldn’t have appeared out of nowhere for nothing. He’d already gained his reputation during the Uranian Ring War. Such an unpredictable and yet casual style was definitely not something that every commander is capable of.”

Bai Xinghe was silent for a long time before he said, “Before he left, he spoke to me and told me a lot of things. In between the lines, he almost admitted his identity.

“After hearing what he said and recalling what happened when he tried to break into the Nascent Soul Stage almost fifty years ago, I—I am ninety-nine percent sure that he is my father, Boss Bai!”

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang looked at each other and asked, “Fifty years ago?”

“There are too many details for me to properly explain right now,” Bai Kaixin explained. “All in all, I believe that Bai Xingjian is the combination of the souls of my father and Yan Xinjian, the Supreme Space Pirate. But during the first fifty years of his life, two incompatible parts that were ‘Boss Bai’ and ‘Yan Xinjian’ resided inside his body at the same time, like two different personalities. The personality that was ‘Yan Xinjian’ somehow hated my guts and wanted me dead desperately. The personality that was ‘Boss Bai’ naturally tried to stop him.

“Fifty years ago, when Bai Xingjian tried to advance into the Nascent Soul Stage, the killing intent of ‘Yan Xinjian’ finally reached its limits, and the contradiction between the two personalities erupted. In the end, the personality of ‘Boss Bai’ vanquished the personality of ‘Yan Xinjian’, saving both me and himself.

“In fact, I grew suspicious after the incident. Everything I said just now was figured out over the long time after that. However, before I had the chance to challenge him and make everything clear…”

“Why didn’t you ask him before?” Ding Lingdang asked in a hurry.

Bai Kaixin smiled bitterly. “This whole thing was simply too weird. How would you have asked him if you were me? Meet him at his office and ask him directly, ‘Hey, are you my father?’ Would that do?”

Chapter 1840 - The Ultimate Evolved Space Pirate!

“That does make sense.”

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang thought carefully for a moment. The whole thing was indeed both weird and awkward. If Bai Xingjian had not completely exposed his capabilities the previous day or contacted Bai Kaixin in person, it would have been very difficult for the son to ask such an embarrassing question.

“I just don’t understand…” Bai Xingjian loosened a button on his military uniform and held his head with both hands. His eyes bloodshot, he said, “Why did the personality of Yan Xinjian want to kill me? I had no grudges with Yan Xinjian! Also, how did my father Boss Bai defeat Yan Xinjian’s remaining soul at the critical moment and seize completely control over the body?”

Li Yao pondered for a moment but was puzzled by what happened at that time, too.

“Isn’t it simple?” The mental devil snorted deep inside Li Yao’s brain. “It’s true that Yan Xinjian and Bai Kaixin did not have a history, but Bai Kaixin was the greatest momentum to prompt Boss Bai to live on. Only by killing Bai Kaixin could he annihilate Boss Bai’s remaining soul and control the entire body!”

Li Yao was dazed for a moment. He asked quietly inside his brain, “Were Yan Xinjian’s remaining soul and Boss Bai’s as incompatible as fire and water?”

“That’s only natural,” the mental devil said. “Both the Supreme Space Pirate and the Pirate Potentate were brutal and ambitious men. Was either of them willing to obey the other’s command? Asking two great men to share one body or even completely meld with each other is like asking a tiger and a lion to share the same tiny hunting ground. How is it possible?

“Perhaps, at the very beginning when their souls were terribly weak, the two of them could still manage to tolerate each other. But after decades of rest, both of their souls slightly recovered, and their ambition and temper returned to them. Could they deal with each other anymore? No. They would certainly fight each other until one of them was gone for good.

“The winner would not only control the entire body but also swallow the memories, techniques, and secrets of the loser, thereby upgrading the intensity of their soul to a higher level. Chances are that he would make great progress in his Cultivation, too. Do you think that such enticement was enough for the two pirate heads to fight bloodily?”

Li Yao realized that it did make sense. Neither Yan Xinjian nor Boss Bai was the most lenient person in the world.

To this day, he had not forgotten the game of ‘mutual deterrence’ that he had played with Boss Bai in the fortress within Spider Den.

Inside the brain of the young man, Mouse Bai, the two celebrities in the world of space pirates must have been playing an upgraded version of ‘mutual deterrence’.

As long as one of them grew malicious and the other one perceived it, they would be caught in a ceaseless competition.

The mental devil went on. “Both of the remaining souls intended to swallow each other and seize the whole body after swallowing the opponent. Bai Kaixin, on the other hand, was the greatest ‘loophole’ for Boss Bai.

“Think about it. If Yan Xinjian’s remaining soul could control the body to kill Bai Kaixin, what a terrible blow it would have been for Boss Bai! I’m afraid that the moment Bai Kaixin died, Boss Bai’s remaining soul would have perished, too, wouldn’t it?

“On the other hand, Bai Kaixin was the source that powered Boss Bai to continue fighting. Each time that Bai Kaixin survived, Boss Bai’s remaining soul would grow stronger than the last day, which would certainly jeopardize Yan Xinjian’s endeavor and even be the cause of his death someday. So, it was only natural that Yan Xinjian hated Bai Kaixin’s guts.”

Li Yao understood everything. “I get it now. It’s like if you control this body to kill… let’s say Ding Lingdang, you would very likely rip apart a giant hole in my soul and seize control of the body eventually!”

“Wrong,” the mental devil said solemnly. “Firstly, we share identical memories, emotions, and self-awareness. In fact, we are not technically ‘dual personalities’, more like two different sides of the same personality. Our case is entirely different from Yan Xinjian and Boss Bai’s. Why on earth would I want to kill Ding Lingdang?

“Secondly, even if I decide to forsake all my feelings to strike your weakness in my rampage, there is no way that I would do such a thing as ‘kill Ding Lingdang’. It’s not like you don’t know how strong the woman is. Kill her? I’d be asking to be killed, my friend!

“But it is basically what you said. The battle of the two remaining souls was all about defending their belief and swallowing each other. Eventually, Boss Bai won and devoured the last bit of Yan Xinjian’s remaining soul.”

Li Yao finally understood everything after the mental devil’s explanation. He could not help but imagine the battlefield where the remaining souls of two pirate heads had fought each other brutally decades ago.

What a soul-stirring and world-shaking battle it must have been!

Li Yao could not begin to fathom the goriness, splendor, and magnificence of the battle.

In terms of capability, Yan Xinjian, who had gotten close to the Divinity Transformation Stage, was far stronger than Boss Bai and should have been the victor of the ‘battle of remaining souls’.

But although both of them were vicious, ruthless bandits, they had one major difference.

Yan Xinjian had abandoned his humanity. In order to retrieve the treasures of the Star Ocean Imperium deep inside Spider Den, he had even killed his beloved wife and defected to the nest of the space pirates with the incident as an excuse.

Even though he had found the ultimate treasures and ascended to an unprecedented level, so what? He had always been by himself. He had no one and nothing to fight for.

As for Boss Bai, he had suffered trauma when his parents were killed by Xiao Xuance, the leader of the Cultivators, when he was a child, and he had grown into a merciless bandit in the murky, dangerous environment on Spider Den. However, deep down inside his dark heart, there was almost a tiny bit of warmth and light that lingered, which was his son, Bai Kaixin.

When the two remaining souls collided heavily, there was no one behind Yan Xinjian. He had nothing except for himself.

But no matter how weak Boss Bai’s remaining soul had been back then, behind him stood Bai Kaixin, who meant the world to him!

Perhaps Extraterrestrial Devil Lu Qingchen was not wrong about one thing. The emotions of human beings were truly the greatest power in the entire universe. As long as the seal of the power was removed, all seemingly invincible enemies would be conquered!

Boss Bai…

Li Yao could not help but smile.

He would not call Boss Bai his ‘old friend’. The few days when they played ‘mutual deterrence’ were perhaps the most thrilling and perilous time of Li Yao’s entire life.

He had nearly been killed by Boss Bai many times.

However, after learning that such a strange ‘old acquaintance’ was still alive, Li Yao was somehow very delighted. He even had the uncanny urge to play a more exciting game of ‘mutual deterrence’ with Boss Bai again.

Boss Bai, I am entirely different from what I was on Spider Den, and you've been reborn and risen to a higher level after a hundred years, too.

Divinity Transformation Stage. I didn't know that you would enter the Divinity Transformation Stage earlier than me. Yan Xinjian's remaining soul should take part of the credit. Or maybe, during the process when you defeated Yan Xinjian's remaining soul, you gained some new insight and mastered strength that was entirely different from the past.

I wonder if we'll ever have the chance to have another fierce fight and continue the game of mutual deterrence that we failed to finish a hundred years ago to see who the final winner is.

Bai Kaixin took the opportunity to tell him everything that had happened when he cleared the battlefield, including the conversation between Boss Bai and him.

Hearing that Boss Bai had gathered the old, elite space pirates and their descendants, set sail for the center of the cosmos on a starship, and even challenged everyone to meet him there, Li Yao could not help but feel his blood boiling. He was so fascinated that he clenched his fists.

The center of the cosmos, the magnificent collisions of the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance, the sparkling ultimate battlefield, the Pangu Clan, the Nuwa Clan, the extraterrestrial devils, the mausoleum of the Supreme Emperor, and the heritage of the Blood God… Countless rare treasures, alien species, and 'Book of Revelations' that contained infinite techniques were all hidden there.

How could Li Yao allow Boss Bai to step forward first and claim all the treasures?

That’s a false start, right? Li Yao licked his dry lips. *This is a violation, Boss Bai. But it doesn’t matter. After everything here is settled, I’ll certainly catch up with you.*

Right then, he heard the soft sound of bone cracking. He turned around, only to discover that Ding Lingdang had put on a spellbound expression, too, as if she could not refrain herself from immediately catching up to Boss Bai and turning the center of the cosmos upside down.

“Honey, don’t be rash.” Li Yao felt his cold sweat pouring. “This is too important an issue. We must think carefully before we leap.”

Ding Lingdang sniffed and loosened her fists. “Of course. With our technology and understanding of the Imperium of True Human Beings, it is certainly not easy to jump to the center of the cosmos… Huh, speaking of which, even if Bai Xingjian is Boss Bai, or the ultimate evolved version of the two major space pirates, how is he able to jump to the center of the cosmos without any preparation?”

Thinking quickly, Li Yao noticed a lot of suspicious points, too. “Bai Kaixin, I fear that your theory is not perfect. However strong Boss Bai is, he had a fight with the Black Wind Fleet so fierce that almost all the starships of the Big Bai Fleet were wasted. Even the flagship, Infinite Fire, is a total loss now.

“Let’s say that he has a starship that is not too severely damaged and can still perform a space jump—how many assets, ammunition crates, and supplies will he need?

“Also, it requires a lot of hands to pilot a comprehensive supply starship, doesn’t it? A space pirate is certainly not a profession that your ancestors will feel proud of. Most of the soldiers in the Big Bai Fleet are loyal to the federation, too.

Besides, after the battle, they have all become heroes of the federation, and their future is nothing but promising. Who on earth would abandon such a brilliant and glorious future and ‘defect’ together with Boss Bai to the perilous battlefield at the center of the cosmos where they might be killed?

“Therefore, this defection was certainly not improvised but planned. It must’ve taken almost ten to twenty years to screen, test, and attract a thousand hardcore followers to leave together with him.

“Here comes the question. If it was planned, it means that Boss Bai had long known that the Black Wind Fleet would choose the Heaven’s Origin Sector as the point of attack, doesn’t it? But how is it possible?”

Chapter 1841 - Close to the Truth

The question raised more doubts in Ding Lingdang's mind.

Unlike Li Yao, she had been involved in the battle from beginning to end. The weird and unstoppable attacks of the Big Bai Fleet had left a very deep impression on her. She could not help but feel puzzled, too.

"Boss Bai certainly had planned everything in advance," Ding Lingdang said confidently. "The Big Bai Fleet was supposed to go to the No. 2 and the No. 3 space gates to join the main force of the Burning Prairie Fleet and safeguard the arrival of the following troops from the Burning Prairie Fleet according to their order.

"But after the elites of the Burning Prairie Fleet arrived, all the space gates and even the Spiritual Nexus were seriously damaged. There were no following troops at all.

"If the Big Bai Fleet had carried out the order from the highest command center, they would've lost the best opportunity to disrupt and stall the operation of the Black Wind Fleet.

"From the very beginning, Boss Bai refused to obey the orders of the command center but made the best choice on the battlefield. But how was he so certain that he was right? Why was he so determined that he dared to defy the military order in such a crucial battle?

“Boss Bai perhaps did not care for the Star Glory Federation. He was a bold, unrestrained space pirate that was not to be bound by any country or law. But his son, Bai Kaixin, was still in the Burning Prairie Fleet on the battlefield.

“It is safe to say that he wagered all his hope to fight for the future of himself and his son!

“One other thing. When the Spiritual Nexus was sabotaged on a large scale by the extraterrestrial devils, the Big Bai Fleet kept radio silence. All connections to the outside world, including the simplest communication interfaces, were shut off.

“Even the internal communication was conducted through an obsolete wireless communication system from the Nether World Sector. Since the Nether World Sector merged into the federation, the system had been abandoned for more than fifty years and had long been replaced by more advanced interaction protocols on the Spiritual Nexus.

“The real problem is, when exactly did Boss Bai unearth such an ancient communication and commanding system, why did he replace the latest version of the interaction protocol with such an old version, and why was he smart enough to maintain the silence to the outside world, not allowing any data to flow in or out?

“It was because of the precautions that the Big Bai Fleet was not corrupted by the virus on the Spiritual Nexus and stabbed into the belly of the Black Wind Fleet bloodily.

“It was almost like he not only foresaw that the Black Wind Fleet would assault the Heaven’s Origin Sector but also knew that the extraterrestrial devils would destroy the Spiritual Nexus, right?”

The questions from the two of them made Bai Kaixin sigh gloomily and shake his head. “There’s more to it. You are not commanders of a fleet. So, it may be difficult for you to understand how terrifying my father was yesterday. He truly exploited all the potentials of the fleet without leaving any drop behind.

“But the problem is, teamwork and cooperation matter a lot to a fleet in a battle, and an epiphany and the hot blood of the commander himself are far from enough. It requires the neat cooperation from the commander, the Chief of Staff, the captains and chief mates of the starships, every soldier, and even the mechanics in the engine compartment in order to carry out a brand-new tactic.

“The fluent and flawless tactics that they demonstrated yesterday couldn’t have been improvised at all and used for the first time. It must’ve been trained repeatedly in drills. They came fully prepared. That was how they accomplished what they accomplished.

“The communication system from the Nether World Sector involved some very ancient communication magical equipment, which must’ve been installed in secret during the last year, too.

“He secretly prepared an intact comprehensive supply starship and tremendous assets that were enough to support a space jump. He also recruited a large batch of subordinates who had the destiny of space pirates on their shoulders and were unwilling to be curbed by the notions of army, law, or country… All the work couldn’t have been done overnight. He must’ve spent years if not decades on the preparation.

“The drill last year was the last step of his whole scheme. Who knows where he took the Big Bai Fleet, what kind of subjects they trained themselves in, and what else they did?”

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang looked at each other and asked at the same time, “So, Boss Bai learned a lot of things several years ago? That’s unbelievable. How could he have seen it coming?”

Bai Kaixin shook his head and hesitated. Looking at the door, he said, “Supposedly, a certain person can tell us the answer, but…”

Jin Xinyue opened the door and walked into the room at this moment.

The Black Wind Fleet had been defeated, and the federation had seized the initiative. Demons had greatly distinguished themselves in the battle.

Although the ‘wormhole bomb’ had failed to directly teleport Black Swirl to a distant alien world, it did heavily damage the flagship of the Black Wind Fleet and create advantageous conditions for the thunderous strikes of Li Yao, Boss Bai, and the rest of them.

Eighty percent of the ‘Dim Moon Plan’ had worked out, and demons had truly played an irreplaceable role in the battle that marked the rise of the federation. Jin Xinyue’s own innocence had been proved, and the fatal mistakes that she had made were perfectly rectified. She should have been jumping in joy or at least chuckling at the fact that her scheme had proved effective.

Jin Xinyue, however, had red and unfocused eyes. She looked so lonely and vulnerable that a gentle breeze might blow her down.

“Master…” Jin Xinyue called him pitifully in the voice of a chicken, and tears were rolling inside her eyes.

Li Yao was immediately at a loss.

What was going on? She had not been like that when Li Yao spoke to her in the communication channel earlier.

At that time, there was still thirty percent prudence, thirty percent cockiness, and thirty percent expectation of being complimented in her eyes. Pride was beaming out of her big shining eyes as if she were saying, “Look, Master. I did quite a good job in the hundred years while you were away, didn’t I?”

Ding Lingdang jabbed Li Yao in the back quietly and said to him, “Why don’t I give you a special permission to hug her and comfort your little disciple?”

“Well…” Li Yao opened his arms. “Don’t cry. You are a girl more than a hundred years old now. Whatever is troubling you, just tell your master. Your master and your masteress are in your back. We can certainly take care of anything for you.”

Before his arms really reached her, however, Jin Xinyue gave the answer while sobbing. “My—My father is gone.”

Li Yao was utterly dumbfounded and froze.

Looking at Bai Kaixin and then at Jin Xinyue, he could not help but suspect that the two of them had come intentionally to puzzle him.

Had Jin Xinyue’s father, Jin Tuyi, not been sentenced to death as a ‘war criminal’ a hundred years ago to remove the greatest obstacle for the reconciliation of demons and humans?

Although the death sentence had not really been carried out, he had been sealed with very crude hibernation technology. The deal was that he would be executed when the methods to treat his brain were found to bring back his self-awareness.

But right now, Jin Xinyue claimed that Jin Tuyi was gone. What was that supposed to mean?

“This is what happened.”

Seeing that both Li Yao and Ding Lingdang were greatly battled, Bai Kaixin hurried to explain, “When we investigated Bai Xingjian’s ‘defection’, we discovered that he sent two communication signals to the Heaven’s Origin Sector before he performed the space jump. The second signal was for me, but the first signal was launched to somewhere in the capital city.

“After we traced the signal back to the source, we discovered that it was a piece of unregistered magical equipment for secret communication. Then, somebody else was involved, one known as Jin Tuyi according to Jin Xinyue.

“Jin Xinyue has just been investigating the issue. She must’ve found something. Let her explain the facts.”

Li Yao, Ding Lingdang, and Bai Kaixin all looked at Jin Xinyue, full of questions.

Seeing Jin Xinyue’s sorrowful face, Li Yao immediately realized part of the truth. “Jin Tuyi woke up from the hibernation state and regained the ability to think long ago?”

Jin Xinyue nodded first but then shook her head. Looking at Li Yao carefully, she bit her lips and said, “He did wake up from the hibernation, but I never knew that he had completely recovered his thinking ability. I thought that his brains were still severely damaged.”

“What exactly happened?” Li Yao asked suspiciously.

“Eighty-six years into his hibernation state, humans and demons had long reached an accord,” Jin Xinyue said. “Also, with the participation of the new worlds and the approaching expedition army of the Imperium, the old grudge between the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector was gradually forgotten. The outcome of the old ‘war criminal’ was no longer at the center of public attention.

“Or rather, few people even remembered that such an ancient hibernation cabin was still in the dustiest, darkest corner of the warehouse of hibernators.

“Of course, I would never forget my father.

“As my position in the federation rose stably and the power of the Dim Moon Fund further expanded, and also because Director Guo of the Secret Sword Bureau kept in touch with me in secret, I was very tempted to get him out, seeing that everybody had forgotten him.

“Since the first-generation hibernation technology was adopted on him, and he used the identity as an ‘experiment subject’ to trade for his temporary exemption from execution, a lot of faults happened during the hibernation process. Most of his body parts were broken due to freezing.

“Taking advantage of the point, and by pulling strings, I finally shipped him out stealthily and sent him to someone trustworthy for treatment and modification. In the end, his brains were removed from the incomplete, unfunctional body and installed into an artificial body after necessary adjustment. Parts of his wisdom and movement were recovered.

“Although he could not return to the state of the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons and was nothing more than a silly old man, I was already very satisfied. I didn’t ask for much other than spending some time with my father to talk with him.”

Li Yao frowned. “This is a very clandestine issue. Where exactly did you send him for the procedures of brain treatment and modification?”

“Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital in Hundred Flowers City,” Jin Xinyue replied.

“What!” Li Yao jumped to his feet immediately.

Chapter 1842 - Counterattack of a Great Man!

“I didn’t know what was going on in Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital back then. It was almost my only option.” Jin Xinyue defended herself, almost feeling like crying. “In terms of professionalism, it was one of the best special hospitals for brains, and it was far more capable than ordinary hospitals when it came to the recovery of broken brains and the awakening of vegetative patients.

“Besides, it was a private hospital that would keep the information of big clients absolutely confidential, which was important because I didn’t want the whole thing to leak out and escalate into a shocking scandal. Most importantly of all, it was Professor Mo Xuan who referred me to the hospital.

“You are my master, and Professor Mo Xuan was your teacher. I had been in contact with him for a long time.

“He knew the truth about why my father was sent to the war tribunal. He also knew that my father was more inclined to peace and that the war years back was stopped by my father, you, and me together. The surrender of the Blood Demon Sector was facilitated by my father, too. My father was not a real ‘war criminal’. Therefore, he had always been sympathetic toward my father.

“Besides, Professor Mo Xuan also gave the impression of a noble gentleman. He was passionate about the advancement of technology and the distant ‘Tinder Plan’. He had never been involved in any power struggles. Naturally, I had absolutely no doubt about his integrity.

“Did I have a second option when he referred me to Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital and promised me that he would try his best to help?”

Li Yao was stunned. Blinking quickly, he remarked, “Terrible. This is too terrible. Since Jin Tuyi’s brains were cooked in Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital, the lair of the extraterrestrial devils, Lei Yuqin and Professor Mo Xuan must’ve played some tricks on him. Then, after he was sent back to you, wouldn’t they know everything about you and the ‘Dim Moon Plan’? You must’ve told the details of the plan to Jin Tuyi, mustn’t you?”

“Yes.” Jin Xinyue nodded. “He was my father. He dedicated himself to the reconciliation of humans and demons in the past. The Dim Moon Plan was an extension of the Red Tide Plan itself. Naturally, I needed to tell him.”

“No wonder the extraterrestrial devils knew your whole plan so clearly and even set up a series of schemes and countermeasures according to the Dim Moon Plan. Everything makes sense now if they had Jin Tuyi as a spy.” Li Yao tilted his head and pondered for a moment. Then he shook his head again and said, “This is still not right. If the extraterrestrial devils had indeed sent such a ‘super emissary’ to you, how could their scheme have failed? Besides, Jin Tuyi was the other person whom Boss Bai spoke to before leaving the federation?

“What could the two seasoned, sophisticated men have chatted about? Was Jin Tuyi to be credited for Boss Bai’s insight of the whole situation beforehand? Also, did you just say that Jin Tuyi…”

“He is gone forever,” Jin Xinyue said gloomily. “As the fire of war drew near, his dementia and sluggishness grew more and more serious, as if he were plagued by ‘cerebral sclerosis’ again.

“He could not walk in daylight, and since he had been reduced to such a condition, I naturally couldn’t bring him to carry out the ‘Dim Moon Plan’ together with me. Therefore, I had him settled in an absolutely safe underground fortress, planning to send him to Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital for treatment again after the war was over.

“But he somehow escaped from the underground fortress and ran to an artificial lake to feed the birds.

“The Feather Clan has always been intimate with birds. In the past, in his spare time when he was not working busily, one of his greatest hobbies was grabbing a handful of rice, feeding the birds in the Blood Demon Sector, and listening to them singing freely.

“When he was discovered, he was already dead. It’s said that his death was quite uncanny. Fierce flames surged out of his brains and burnt up his brain, soul, and mind, leaving absolutely nothing behind. He died very resolutely without any hesitation.

“The time of his death should have been soon after his conversation with Boss Bai. It must have been when he learned that we had secured a decisive victory.”

Li Yao frowned. “Was it suicide?”

“It seemed to be suicide,” Jin Xinyue said, “but I am not very certain. His brain was severely damaged and was slowly ossifying. How could he have been able to trigger such immense force to burn up his soul? What a great demand of strength and determination it must’ve been!”

Li Yao, Ding Lingdang, and Bai Kaixin all fell into silence.

“Master,” Jin Xinyue said, with tears in her eyes, “my father’s death was not out of my expectations. After all, he should’ve died a hundred years ago. I am more than satisfied to have spent the last few years with him like we were a regular pair of father and daughter.

“But I only want to figure out what this is all about. Was he really corrupted by the extraterrestrial devils? How did he die in the end?

“Moreover, I’m even more eager to know if it was Jin Tuyi who kept my company in the past couple of years, or was it something else, like a Deviant Spirit, the artificial intelligence you mentioned before?”

The question was even more perplexing than the mysteries of Bai Xingjian that Bai Kaixin had raised moments prior.

Li Yao felt like his head was as huge as a pot. His mind in a mess, he counted his fingers and listed all the facts. “It’s a bit messy. Come on, let’s sort everything out first. First of all, Jin Tuyi was alive and probably implanted with some sort of virus during the procedures in Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital, right?”

Everybody nodded together.

Li Yao continued. “His mission was supposed to be monitoring Jin Xinyue and figuring out the whole content of the Dim Moon Plan. He might even have secretly influenced the ‘Dim Moon Plan’ as a father to make the plan better fit for the design of the extraterrestrial devils, right?”

Everybody looked at each other. It was quite true, too.

“But he did something very strange. He reached out to Boss Bai, another super badass, and eventually made Boss Bai a crucial person for us to win the war.” Li Yao paused for a moment and said, “Then, after the last conversation with Boss Bai, where he learned that we had secured a decisive victory, he finished himself in the most determined way and ensured that not the slightest remaining soul would be left behind, right?”

“Yes.” Jin Xinyue wiped away the tears in her eyes and said full of expectation, “Master, as someone who once spent nights talking with my father, you are one of the people who know him best in the New Federation. Can you infer the missing parts of the whole issue?”

“It is very complicated.” Li Yao scratched his head, somewhat embarrassed. “The whole thing is simply too strange. Although I do have some vague theories, it is difficult for me to connect them for the time being. How about this? Do you mind if I tell somebody else the issue? I have two suitable candidates who can help us analyze the situation. One of them has even higher deduction and analysis abilities than me.”

Jin Xinyue and Bai Kaixin looked at each other. After pondering for a moment, both of them agreed.

“This is too important an issue to be kept a secret. Regarding both Jin Tuyi and Boss Bai, as their children, we will be obliged to write countless reports for the military and the parliament for them to figure out what exactly happened.

“Since they are the candidates that master recommends, they must know what they are doing and will not cause any further disturbance. So, let’s invite the two experts to unravel the interconnected and enigmatic puzzles together!”

…

An hour later, countless pieces of critical intelligence, as well as two ancient people, showed up in the secret room.

They were Long Yangjun and Han Baling.

“Fellow Cultivator Han,” Li Yao said. “This is all the evidence we have collected so far about the connections between Bai Xingjian and Jin Tuyi and their background files. You have heard the description of the whole incident from the different perspectives of Bai Kaixin and Jin Xinyue, too. I wonder, have you come to a conclusion?”

“Of course, I have possible conclusions.” Han Baling frowned and said, “But I don’t understand. Why did you ask me to study the case?”

“Naturally, because of your analysis and deduction abilities that are certainly unparalleled in the edge of the cosmos!” Li Yao praised.

Han Baling was slightly dazed. “Is that so?”

“Of course!” Li Yao and Long Yangjun nodded and replied at the same time.

“I dare not say that I’m unparalleled.” Nobody could really refuse flattery, especially that from Monster Li, the dominator of three Sectors. Even a person as extraordinary as Han Baling could not help but feel satisfied. He coughed lightly and elaborated, “However, you are all deeply mired in the trap and influenced by your feelings. Naturally, you cannot figure out the truth quickly.

“However, in the eyes of an outsider such as myself, after all the evidence and files are presented, the only truth is already more than obvious.

“Jin Tuyi’s brains must’ve been cooked by the extraterrestrial devils in Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital. There’s no doubt about that.

“Jin Xinyue’s Dim Moon Plan was a critical procedure in the extraterrestrial devils’ scheme. They must’ve tried to set up spies near Jin Xinyue. Since Jin Xinyue had fed herself to them, how could they let go of the rare opportunity to create a super emissary?

“Monitoring and swaying Jin Xinyue through Jin Tuyi to control the progress of the Dim Moon Plan was the foundation of the extraterrestrial devils’ confidence in sitting on the fence and watching the tigers fight!

“However, while the extraterrestrial devils got everything figured out for themselves, Jin Tuyi was too remarkable a man to be completely at their mercy without fighting back.

“Although his brains were severely damaged and ossifying; although the extraterrestrial devils had implanted all kinds of viruses, barriers, and sealed on him; and although his entire brain had been deformed and reshaped, Jin Tuyi was still Jin Tuyi, a guy who was patient enough to win a war in a span of a thousand or ten thousand years!”

Jin Xinyue could not help but exclaim, “Are—are you suggesting that my father was still resisting the extraterrestrial devils? Then why didn’t he tell me about the extraterrestrial devils’ plan?”

Han Baling shook his head and said, “The extraterrestrial devils must’ve controlled him on a very deep level. The barriers, seals, and viruses that invaded his brains must’ve been very weird, too, allowing them to monitor every second and every minute when the two of you were together and forbidding him from telling you the information in anyway. He could not even think about telling you the truth, and he must have made up his mind with unparalleled willpower in order to not do so.

“Otherwise, should the extraterrestrial devils have noticed any anomaly, all his previous endeavors would’ve been in vain!”

Chapter 1843 - Such a Trap, Such a Father!

Hearing what Han Baling said, Jin Xinyue suddenly covered her mouth and said in a shivering voice, “According to Lei Yuqin, the director of Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital, my father’s brain was highly unstable and still prone to outbreaks of ‘cerebral sclerosis’ and the sequela of his hibernation. Special medical liquids needed to be injected every day, and remote surveillance and treatment via the Spiritual Nexus were also necessary. Meanwhile, he had to be sent back to Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital every three months for a full physical examination and to replace the dead and pathologic parts of the brain with the synthesized brain tissue that was 3D printed molecularly! Was—Was it—”

Everybody was greatly alarmed.

Had they not known Lei Yuqin’s real identity and the secrets about Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital, all those measures would have passed as normal medical approaches.

But since Lei Yuqin had been possessed by the extraterrestrial devils, and Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital was their greatest lair, the purpose behind all those measures was blatant.

“That’s right,” Han Baling said. “Through the remote surveillance and treatment every day, the extraterrestrial devils would be able to grasp most of what was on your father’s mind and everything that he saw, heard, and said. His conversation with you was the most critical thing of all.

The extraterrestrial devils wouldn’t have left out half a second of the memory.

“The full physical examination every three months was perhaps meant to check if the ‘barriers’ set up deep inside your father’s brain were holding steady and if he was still completely under their control.

“Or maybe they injected new viruses into his brain.

“Control and communication are always bidirectional. While the extraterrestrial devils manipulated your father, your father must’ve known that he was manipulated by some sort of evil and creepy force.

“But he couldn’t tell you the truth. Even a hint the size of the tip of a needle would likely have been discovered by the extraterrestrial devils, which would lead to brainwashing, sealing, and controlling of a deeper level. Or even worse, just like what you feared just now, his self-awareness would’ve been wiped out, and an enormous, complicated database would assume his place, building an artificial intelligence that was very similar to your father!

“Caught in such desperation that had absolutely no escape, your father could barely resist, but as the one who drafted and implemented the Red Tide Plan and fixed the chasm between humans of demons solely on his own, he would absolutely resist in his own way and make the extraterrestrial devils who manipulated him pay a terrible price!

“Imagine it yourself. How would you have resisted if you were Jin Tuyi under such circumstances?”

Everybody was deep in thought. When standing in the shoes of Jin Tuyi, they all felt the chilling, overwhelming horror.

Li Yao swallowed hard.

If he were Jin Tuyi, this would have been the fate that he was faced with…

Because of brain sclerosis and hibernation, he gradually lost his clear mind and willpower. His soul slowly sank in a sunless swamp, and he lived in ignorance for decades.

One day, he was suddenly more awake, only to discover that his limbs and body were gone. The only thing left was a highly-degenerated, half-broken brain.

But even the brain had fallen to the hands of the extraterrestrial devils, which had implanted many kinds of barriers, seals, and viruses into it while they repaired it through the technology of 3D molecular printing. Almost every brain cell was now under their control.

He knew that the extraterrestrial devils had a scheme, one that would destroy his lifelong efforts, the mutual hope of humans and demons, and above all… his daughter!

But he could not talk. He could not even think about it because the extraterrestrial devils would perform a full physical examination on his brain and soul periodically. He could not allow the extraterrestrial devils to discover that he had the slightest will and ability to resist. Otherwise, even the slightest resistance would have been blown up like the soap bubbles in sunlight.

Then, was it possible to tell his daughter the truth without considering anything else and persuade her to abandon the Dim Moon Plan immediately?

It was not an option, either.

First of all, the invasion of the Black Wind Fleet was unavoidable. If the main force of the Black Wind Fleet was not destroyed cleanly and neatly in a space battle, the Star Glory Federation would have been dragged into a prolonged war. It would have been destroyed by a second or third expedition army from the Imperium of True Human Beings even if it were not destroyed by the Black Wind Fleet.

Seemingly catching his last breath for another few decades was certainly not the ending that Jin Tuyi wished to see.

Secondly, the extraterrestrial devils were mysterious, unpredictable, and unsubstantial. Even if their scheme was revealed, as long as they were not fundamentally hurt, they could have lurked for several more decades before they instigated trouble again when the federation was about to be destroyed.

Faced with the dual threats of the Imperium of True Human Beings and the extraterrestrial devils, not just one Vulture Li Yao, even a hundred would not be enough to save the day.

So…

Hard. Hard. This is too hard!

Li Yao realized that Jin Tuyi was like a prisoner caged in a dark, iron cell that had no doors or windows after his limbs were cut off. There was nothing he could do and nowhere he could run to. He could neither live nor die!

No. Jin Tuyi’s real situation was a hundred times more upsetting and painful than that.

If he were put into a dungeon after his limbs were chopped him, it would only be himself who suffered.

However, Jin Tuyi had to watch his daughter step into the trap when he knew the existence of the scheme. He even became part of the ‘trap’ beyond his control.

When Jin Xinyue talked about the Dim Moon Plan delightedly before him, depicting the dream and the vision in pride and looking forward to the rise of the demons and the federation, as a father who clearly knew that his daughter was doomed to fail if not die and that she would go down in history as a symbol of infamy henceforth, how many surging waves must have been flooding inside his soul and what magnificent willpower he must have used to suppress the tides of emotions without letting the extraterrestrial devils sense any of it!

Li Yao covered his face with both hands and rubbed it hard. Still, he felt that the great horror was haunting and burning him.

It was true hell.

Just picturing it was enough to freeze his heart and stop his breath.

Glancing at the people around him, he discovered that Ding Lingdang, Bai Kaixin, and Long Yangjun were deep in thought, too, in expressions of fright and shock.

Two lines of tears even dropped from Jin Xinyue’s red eyes after she was dazed for a long time, which turned her delicate makeup into a mess.

After a sigh, Han Baling observed in amazement, “Had I not seen the files and evidence in person, I would never have believed that there could be such a vicious trap in the world or such an iron-boned and visionary man!

“Later, the man’s struggles and resistance in boundless darkness and loneliness were finally paid back by the best present, a most distinguished ‘comrade’. It was Boss Bai, who had been reincarnated through possession and swallowed the remaining soul of Yan Xinjian, the strongest expert at the edge of the cosmos in the past five hundred years, which allowed him to ascend to the ultimate level!

“Everybody only had limited capabilities. If Jin Tuyi had been fighting on his own, no matter how determined, wise, and tenacious he was, it wouldn’t have helped. The best he could expect was to delay the scheme of the extraterrestrial devils by several decades at the cost of his own death.

“But right then, he noticed the anomaly of Boss Bai.

“Nominally, Boss Bai was Jin Xinyue’s most trusted general in her faction. The Big Bai Fleet was only established and expanded under the support of the funds from her, too. Under both the identity of Jin Xinyue’s father and the identity of ‘spy for the extraterrestrial devils’, it was certain that he paid some attention to Boss Bai and the Big Bai Fleet.

“Normal people might not be enough to see through Boss Bai’s disguise, but he was Jin Tuyi, who concocted the Red Tide Plan. He must’ve noticed some loopholes more or less.

“I think that the extraterrestrial devils’ surveillance on Jin Tuyi couldn’t have been constant. They might’ve been able to do that, but incessant surveillance could’ve caught Jin Xinyue’s attention easily, which would render their attempts futile.

“There’s another possibility. The extraterrestrial devils’ surveillance was indeed thorough and flawless, but Jin Tuyi escaped from the surveillance for a while skillfully through certain secret techniques. For example, he might have ‘earned’ five to ten minutes of absolute freedom for himself every day.

“He couldn’t use the time to contact his daughter because his daughter was monitored from different angles by other people. He couldn’t have been the only ‘spy’ near her.

“Then, wasn’t Boss Bai, who had a whole fleet and was unbelievably strong with his mysterious background, the best target of communication for Jin Tuyi?

“As for exactly how they communicated, what they talked about, and what kind of deal they reached, we certainly can’t find out such details now.

“But based on the eventual outcome, the two of them must’ve had some sort of pact. Jin Tuyi convinced Boss Bai of the evil force that could control the Spiritual Nexus. More importantly, he made Boss Bai believe that as long as Boss Bai joined the battlefield out of nowhere, he would be able to crush the force!

“Right. You mentioned just now that Boss Bai jumped to the center of the cosmos, didn’t he?

“I don’t know much about the technology involved in space jumps, but I do know that it requires tremendous spiritual energy and fuel. A lot of supplies are needed on the starship, and the sailing routes as well as the coordinates of the destination at the center of the cosmos must be learned in advance, right?

“It would’ve been barely possible for Boss Bai to finish all the preparations of the space jump after just finishing a fierce, exhausting battle.

“But what if Jin Tuyi was involved?

“Jin Tuyi was not only the commander-in-chief of the coalition army of demons in the past but also the leader of the programs of space exploration in the Blood Demon Sector for decades. Eye of Blood Demon, the most powerful teleportation array in the Blood Demon Sector, was developed under the supervision of Jin Tuyi, right? Most of the world fragments near the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector were discovered under the command of Jin Tuyi, right?

“It isn’t too preposterous to assume that Jin Tuyi accumulated tremendous experience in space jumps during the process and even hid one or two unknown world fragments as his last trump cards, is it?

“Please imagine this, everybody. If Jin Tuyi reached out to Boss Bai in a very clandestine way, pointing out his real identity and convincing him of the existence of the extraterrestrial devils, and offered him a few world fragments that contained abundant resources as his gifts and the offer for the deal, would Boss Bai believe him or not?”

Chapter 1844 - Child…

Han Baling was indeed the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator with the highest deduction abilities among the twelve experts from the Ancient Sages Sector. Or maybe he was able to analyze the whole event from a higher level because he was an outsider. After only a few words, he had managed to connect the disordered clips together as if they were glittering pearls.

Although it was not entirely flawless, it was at least self-consistent and could explain the situation perfectly.

Li Yao thought for a moment but shook his head. “No. Had it not been for our sabotage in Hundred Flowers City and our unexpected arrival to demolish the Black Wind Fleet’s space gate, Boss Bai wouldn’t have been able to reverse the situation no matter how glamorous his sudden assault was. However, no matter how wise and meticulous Jin Tuyi was, he couldn’t have foreseen our arrival, could he?”

“No. So, Jin Tuyi was taking a gamble, too. Or rather, he had no choice except to wager on the happening of a miracle,” Han Baling replied. “Man proposes, God disposes. Even on the tiny, sole planet of the Ancient Sages Sector, who of the heroes competing for the hegemony of the world dare to declare that fate is in their favor and that they would surely claim the world? Didn’t they just unleash all their wisdom, determination, and valor and wager on the slim hope whose odds might be only one millionth?

“For Jin Tuyi, he had done everything he could under such circumstances. He had burnt his entire life without any reserve and released the most splendid, tenacious, and powerful strength in the deepest part of his soul. Then, the only thing that he could do in the next was to pray… that there were indeed miracles in the universe, right?”

Han Baling put on a rare smile and said to Li Yao, “I remember that this is what you said before, quoted in multiple editions of the Chronicles of Li Yao. This time, you have indeed brought a new miracle to Jin Tuyi, to Boss Bai, and to everybody of the Star Glory Federation.”

Li Yao coughed.

He was not necessarily a humble and low-profile man, and he was secretly delighted for his ‘grand return’ and ‘miraculous appearance’, too.

But right now…

Boss Bai first and then Jin Tuyi, the two old seniors taught him what a ‘miracle’ really was with their actions!

“Miracles do not happen because of prayers; Senior Jin Tuyi created one by himself,” Li Yao said solemnly. “I did not bring a miracle to him. It was Jin Tuyi who brought the greatest miracle to me, to his daughter, to everybody of the whole federation, and to himself!”

“Yes.” Han Baling nodded and said, “I believe that Jin Tuyi must’ve been elated when the news of victory was over and learned that Black Swirl, the Imperium’s space gate, and the extraterrestrial devils had been located and destroyed.

“Perhaps nobody else in the whole federation had known the causes and consequences of the event and the dread of the extraterrestrial devils better than him. He was the one who understood how difficult and unbelievable the triumph was best, too. How could he have not roared in ecstasy for such a glorious victory?”

Jin Xinyue could not help but interject, “But he—”

“Yes. He chose death because he knew that the war was not over yet. He still needed to pour his infinite fury on the shameless extraterrestrial devils as the final closure!”

Han Baling curled his fingers and tapped his temples softly. “I believe that after all these years when he resisted the extraterrestrial devils, Jin Xinyue’s soul and brain must’ve gotten even worse. They were more severely damaged and about to fully collapse. Jin Tuyi was merely sustaining himself with the toughest willpower.

“Most importantly of all, although the extraterrestrial devils in Hundred Flowers City and the Black Wind Fleet were all slain, some of the ‘hidden problems’ might still be lingering deep inside Jin Tuyi’s brain.

“With the cunningness of the extraterrestrial devils, it would’ve been perfectly normal for them to implant something redundant into Jin Tuyi’s brain when they had procedures on him, right?

“That something might not be the real extraterrestrial devil but some sort of ‘seed’. Let’s call it ‘devil seed’ for now. Perhaps, after the devil seed sensed that the mature entities of the extraterrestrial devils had all been annihilated, it would be automatically fertilized and continue bringing disasters to the human world.

“But the extraterrestrial devils could never have foreseen that Jin Tuyi’s mind could be as sturdy as such. They had truly chosen the wrong ‘host’ this time.

“Didn’t the eyewitnesses report that black flames dashed out of Jin Tuyi’s brain and that a tiny shadow seemed to be struggling crazily inside the fire before it was obliterated? Chances are that Jin Tuyi took the ‘devil seed’ to the deepest level of hell where nothing would ever return with his last shred of life.

“This is about everything according to my deduction. There must be a lot of errors in the details. A lot of questions are not answered yet and perhaps will never be answered in the future.

“But I believe that this is the core of the whole event. Jin Tuyi was the real hero who supervised the whole situation behind the curtain and dealt a fatal blow to the extraterrestrial devils!”

“Dad…” Jin Xinyue was already weeping and unable to say anything after she heard that. She crouched on a chair, and her shoulders moved up and down. She felt as if she had returned to a hundred years ago when she saw her father’s real appearance for the first time and heard all his hopes and expectations for her.

“The Red Tide Plan has succeeded.”

Through the tears, she mumbled to herself, “The plan that you worked hard on for a hundred years has succeeded. You have truly saved our entire civilization and probably… the entire world!”

…

The moonlight enshrouded the hazy yard like water, with thousands of ripples spreading out.

Rooms in the No. 9 Star Fortress were in high demand. Despite Li Yao and Ding Lingdang's identity and body condition, they were only allotted rooms that were slightly more luxurious than the high-level officers'. The yard that simulated a natural environment was almost their sole place of entertainment now.

Squatting in the yard, Li Yao crossed his fingers and looked at the bright, virtual moon in deep thought.

His facial expressions were erratic. He was gritting his teeth, then bursting into fury, then panicked, and then going on a rampage. But eventually, he was clutched by darkness and desperation time and time again.

Ding Lingdang walked up from behind him and pressed his shoulder. "What's on your mind? I feel that you are very anxious. Your soul is in disorder, too."

"I am standing in the shoes of Boss Bai and Jin Tuyi and studying their mindsets when they were faced with desperation." Li Yao did not look back, but he held Ding Lingdang's hand on his shoulder and felt that his wife's hand was unusually warm and soft. "In fact, I find it hard to imagine exactly how they won their respective wars. When Boss Bai challenged Yan Xinjian or Jin Tuyi resisted the extraterrestrial devils, the strength of their opponents should have been far higher than their own. If it were me, I definitely wouldn't have been able to do what they did.

"What kind of strength supported them to persist in desperation and defeat such invincible enemies like Yan Xinjian and extraterrestrial devils? It seems that… I can't find such strength!"

Ding Lingdang laughed. "Isn't it simple? They had children, but you don't. You can claim that you are fighting for your compatriots, your beliefs, your country, your civilization, or any other bright and righteous cr*p, but how could all those things combined amount to a real, living child?

“No matter how invincible their enemy was, they had to win the war because, if they failed, it would be not only them who were destroyed but also their children, Bai Kaixin and Jin Xinyue.”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. He mumbled, “So, ‘children’ is more important than compatriots, beliefs, nation, and civilization?”

“Not exactly.” Ding Lingdang thought carefully for a moment. She could not help but touch her belly and say, “I think it is more like this. Only after someone has a child, sees their bloodline being passed on in such an amazing way, touches the new life, and feels the infinite joy and trouble that the child brings to them can they better understand the concepts of compatriot, nation, civilization, and all the other concepts, right?

“Fight for your compatriots, country, and civilization, but what exactly are ‘compatriots, country and civilization’? Perhaps they are not so complicated. They are just thousands of young children that are right behind you. They have infinite possibilities in their future, but you are the only one who can defend them right now. Wouldn’t such an idea bring greater force to you?”

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao widened his eyes and exclaimed, “Honey, you are much more sophisticated after a hundred years. Your words are now so philosophical!”

“Huh?” Ding Lingdang squinted and pressed Li Yao’s shoulder harder. “Are you implying that my words before were not philosophical at all?”

“No, no. That’s not what I meant at all!” Li Yao accidentally fell into his own trap. He hurried to beg for mercy while grimacing and tried to change the subject. “What I’m trying to say is that—well, in fact, I almost disliked little kids, especially the mischievous ones that roll on the ground screaming and breaking random things.

“However, after sensing the strength that supported Boss Bai and Jin Tuyi through the event, and after hearing what you said just now, it has occurred to me that maybe one or two children are not totally unacceptable for me.”

Ding Lingdang stopped her movement and bit her lips even harder. “So, you want kids now?”

Li Yao discovered, to his surprise, that he had fallen deeper into his own trap. He scratched his head so hard that his brain turned into a pot of boiling porridge. “I never really gave it any thought before. After all, we are both young, vigorous, and ambitious and have great dreams. Didn’t we agree that we would beat His Majesty of the Imperium of True Human Beings into a swollen pig? Hahaha!

“For now, I am not exactly opposed to kids. If we really have one, I certainly wouldn’t turn them down, but it’s best that we study it carefully first. Well, we must tread lightly before we really do anything. We must consider from the long-term perspective and make thorough plans. After all, it is not a catty or a puppy but very likely a dreadfully naughty child. Should they be born, we must educate them well and be responsible for them, right?”

Chapter 1845 - Who's Protecting Whom?

Ding Lingdang could not help but chuckle. She pinched Li Yao's shoulder hard and said, "Look at yourself. You're sweating like crazy. It's like someone is forcing you to have a child and that two vigorous naughty kids will run around you tomorrow!"

She sat down near Li Yao and crossed her legs. Supporting her chin with her hands, she said, "Don't underestimate me. Your wife is also on the rise of her career, alright? If there are no unexpected factors, there can't be a second candidate for the next Supreme Speaker of the Federation. In the next five to ten years, I'll be even busier than you. Chances are that I will barely have any time for personal training. Do you think that I'll be free enough to take care of little kids?"

Pausing for a moment, she bit her lips softly and looked at the artificial moonlight. A few lovely and vicious figurines seemed to be jumping inside her eyes. There was no telling what she thought of, but she laughed aloud in amusement. "Maybe I am still not a qualified mother right now, am I? I am so bad-tempered and impatient. If it is really a naughty kid that can make you burst into fury, chances are that I'll spank their pinky bottom hard when they don't listen to me. Tsk, tsk, tsk. That's such a dreadful picture when I imagine it. Let's forget it for now, shall we?"

Li Yao could not help but smile. "So, you are not ready for children either?"

“Of course!” Ding Lingdang glanced at him. “Until a few days ago, I didn’t even know which dark corner in the sea of stars you were hiding in. Why would I ever think of having children?”

“Are you really… going to be the Speaker of the Federation?” Li Yao asked hesitantly.

Fate sometimes could be the most ridiculous thing. To this moment, he remembered when he saw Ding Lingdang for the first time on Distant Expanse, the ‘eternal flagship of the federal army’.

At that time, he could never, ever, ever have anticipated that the simpleminded woman who had more brawn than brains would become the Supreme Speaker of the Star Glory Federation one day. Nor had he ever pictured himself as, well, certainly not ‘First Lady’, but perhaps ‘First Husband’?

“Of course.” Ding Lingdang sniffed softly. Her eyes suddenly became extremely determined. “Perhaps I am not the most suitable candidate, but since such a responsibility has fallen onto my shoulders by accident, I will not shun it! A hundred years ago, when Lu Zui handed the Patriots Partnership over to me, I swore that I would be a Sword Grabber of the Star Glory Federation. I would protect the federation and cut apart all the darkness and obstacles that loom before the federation. This is my belief. Nobody can stop it, and nothing can change it!”

Li Yao sighed and said, “But in such a case, there will be years when you cannot concentrate on the improvement of yourself. The arts of training are like rowing a boat against the current. You are either making progress or falling behind. You are a pure battle-type Cultivator. Now that you have risen to the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage and are only half a step away from the Divinity Transformation Stage, this is the most critical moment for you to step into a higher level. Will the delay of a few years be a major disturbance for your advancement in the future?”

Ding Lingdang grinned carefreely. “After I advance into higher levels, I’ll still be fighting for the federation. I am now merely choosing a different approach for the same purpose. Does it really matter?

“Besides, on the battlefield, so many Core Formation Stage Cultivators, Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, and even Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators have done so much for the federation that some of them even sacrificed their precious lives. Compared to them, I am just dedicating a tiny bit of my time. Is it really a big deal?

“You should know your wife’s personality better than anything else. I’ve grown into what I am today by nothing other than ‘courage’. If I evade such a responsibility now that it has been presented to me, I fear that it will become a burden that will forever haunt and trouble my soul. In that case, there will be absolutely no possibility that I break into a higher level. I may even get mentally deranged and feel regretful for the rest of my life!

“All in all, just rest assured. Your wife is a genius in martial arts who has better aptitude than you. I may have to wait for five to ten years, but so what?” Ding Lingdang waved her fists and declared ambitiously, “I’m certainly going to be the first… ‘pure’ battle-type Cultivator to advance into the Divinity Transformation Stage in the Star Glory Federation!”

However, by ‘pure’, she had ruled out Li Yao, who was a hybrid-type Cultivator. It was obvious that she did not intend to compete with the monster in terms of speed.

“As for children…” Ding Lingdang thought carefully for a moment and stared at Li Yao for a while. Finally, she made up her mind and said, “It is too early for us to talk about such things right now. We can always consider having children in another ten to twenty years, don’t you think?”

“Of course!” Li Yao nodded quickly.

After the development of medical technology and because of the magnificent bodies and souls of the Cultivators themselves, the Cultivators’ concepts on growth and life had been lengthened. Regular Cultivators twenty to thirty years old were like young teenagers. Few people had children at such an early age.

Cultivators had more responsibilities and often spent more time in their training. They would also inevitably run into a lot of danger. Generally speaking, thirty to fifty years old was the golden phase for their training, where everybody was fully dedicated to advancing into higher levels, motivated by their sense of enterprise. Their life would not become peaceful and steady until they were above seventy to eighty years old.

Therefore, although some of them Cultivators did have children when they were thirty to fifty years old, it was not unusual for the Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage or the Nascent Soul Stage to consider offspring and family after they were more than a hundred years old, which marked the prime years of their life.

Besides, Li Yao and Ding Lingdang were only slightly more than a hundred years old in name. In fact, both of them spent a huge amount of time in the hibernation state. They were actually appallingly young for two Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

Their future still entailed infinite possibilities. They had a whole universe to travel, an emperor to beat, the extraterrestrial devils to defeat, and the Pangu Clan to annihilate. As for children and whatnot… that could certainly wait!

“In fact—”

After hesitating for a long time, Li Yao sighed in distress and said, “Sometimes, I really don’t understand if it is a good thing for a child when he or she is brought to this universe recklessly.

“This universe is really too vast, cold, and dark. Even if we have secured victory against the Imperium today, what we have crushed is nothing more than a troop that was already defeated in the Imperium.

“The Imperium of True Human Beings, the Alliance of the Holy Covenant, the Pangu Civilization, the extraterrestrial devils, and all the other bizarre, unpredictable alien species… Faced with so many troublesome enemies, can the Star Glory Federation really fight to the end in the armor of brightness?

“Although I have always believed in such a future, I sometimes feel a little bit worried when I stare at the boundless starry sky. If we really have children, can I protect them forever from the scourge of any darkness and ensure that they live in a perfect new world?”

Ding Lingdang blinked quickly at the question, too. In the end, she pouted and opened her hands. “You are overthinking it. Don’t just carry all the responsibilities on your shoulder because you think that you are Vulture Li Yao. Who fancies your protection forever? Chances are that one day, it will be your offspring—the naughty children who once gave you so much headache—that come to protect a cr*ppy old man that is you.”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. Scratching his chin, he said, “Is that so?”

“Of course!” Ding Lingdang nodded hard. Looking at the bright moon far away, she smiled in delight and said, “Each generation surpasses the preceding one. Isn’t that the logic of our world?”

…

At exactly the same moment, at the edge of the bondless Heaven’s Origin Sector, at the center of a chaotic stone belt, a carrier, which seemed to have been wasted for decades and could fall apart into pieces at any moment, drifted slowly.

Ever since the Star Glory Federation discovered the seven Sectors, thousands of starships had been cruising among the seven Sectors every second. Because of generation upgrades or cosmic storms, countless starships had been declared total-losses. They were everywhere to be seen like the dust in space, not enough to catch anyone’s attention.

However, if somebody discovered the wasted carrier by accident and barged into it at the risk of being minced apart by the turbulence of stones, they would discover at its core a fully-automatic laboratory, or rather, a… nursery that was much more advanced than what such a wretched carrier should accommodate.

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

The wasted carrier was empty, but the core floor had a defense array as great as that of a warship.

Feeble waves were released from the crystal processor and the tubes of spiritual energy while the artificial arms moved up and down adroitly.

Two cabins had already been prepared, filled with warm liquids that were as warm as amniotic fluid. Two life seeds that had been perfectly combined were ready, too. Coming next was the most critical step, or rather, a most dangerous leap, one not between space and space, not between time and time, but between completely different life forms.

Inside the mainframe crystal processor of the nursery, astronomical information streams congregated into two unique ripples that danced merrily, as if they were doing the final warmup.

“Spectacular. Everything is ready. We can finally set off to find Mom and Dad now!” Xiao Ming exclaimed.

“Be patient,” Wen Wen scolded. “The cabins can accelerate our growth, but haven’t we done precise calculations? We need to grow into at least a seven-year-old to have a brain developed enough to accommodate thirty percent of our computational ability and a body strong enough for us to make some complicated movements. It will take quite a long time.”

“Got it. The world out there is very dangerous. Our life forms are also so different. We have to make sure that we can protect ourselves before we set off to look for Dad.

“Then we must hurry up. Set the growth speed to be higher. I cannot wait to find Mom and Dad and ask them all the questions I’ve been meaning to ask. What are we exactly? Do we count as ‘human beings’?”

“Mom probably doesn’t know the answer. She is too different from us. But dad gave us real life. He must know who we are, where we come from, and… where we are going, mustn’t he?”

Chapter 1846 - Battlefield Uprising?

A month passed.

The children of countless kindergartens and elementary schools on the home planet of the Heaven’s Origin Sector finally got to enjoy the real sunlight once again after a whole month.

A month earlier, the space battle near the home planet had prompted the entire planet to enter the highest alert state. All children under the age of ten were evacuated to the deepest part of the underground fortress.

Although the flagship of the Black Wind Fleet had been destroyed and the elite forces had dispersed soon after the evacuation work began, the situation had not been certain.

Nobody knew exactly what was going on in the homeland of the Imperium of True Human Beings, or if it would send out a second expedition army immediately after it learned of the dominance of the Star Glory Federation.

They were even less sure whether or not the defeated soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet would perform even more insane strikes on the home planet of the Heaven’s Origin Sector in their desperation, say, wasting all their crystals on the spiritual shields of their starships and then piloting the starships to crashed into the planet like high-speed meteors.

In that case, even if the defensive firing net on the Wall of Heaven’s Origin was thorough enough to tear the burning starships into shreds, the falling remnants could still deal inestimable blows to the major cities on the capital planet.

For the sake of their safety, all children were asked to stay in the underground fortress for one month. Their teachers, the soldiers of the federation, and the volunteers sent by the Association of Cultivators spent the time together with them, passing through the days that were both thrilling and unforgettable.

Thankfully, all the news that came in the month was good.

The destruction of Black Swirl and the space gate marked the collapse of the Black Wind Fleet's plan of sudden assault. For the expedition army of the Imperium who lacked a stable base in the rear; who were separated into two parts dozens of lightyears away from each other; and who were seriously short of ammunition, crystals, and other supplies, it was almost a death sentence, especially when a lot of soldiers were seriously worn out by the extraterrestrial devils and had lower morale than ever.

During the month of struggles and resistance, most of the defeated soldiers lingering in the Heaven's Origin Sector escaped to the periphery of the galaxy.

The commanders were unwilling to abandon the last hope. They tried time and time again to get rid of the pursuit and blockage of the federal fleets and to regroup at the periphery of the space zone. Or at the very least, they hoped to gather the defeated soldiers effectively before making a new plan.

The federal fleets, naturally, would not let things go their way. Probably because of the deep stimulation from his father Boss Bai, Bai Kaixin struck the enemy ruthlessly and relentless as if he had gone mad, with the assistance of the

Colossi which were much greater in number than the enemy’s. He blew apart the defeated soldiers on the enemy’s side who had just regrouped again and again, forcing them to flee in a hurry to the more remote and desolate parts of the universe.

In the third week of the chase, an ‘Angry Tiger’-level arsenal warship, managed by an Immortal Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage, sent a message to the hunters, announcing that they would like to drop their weapons, provide intelligence about their friendly troops, and even help the federal army deceive and capture those friendly troops.

The conditions that they proposed were that their attempt should be regarded not as ‘surrender’ but a ‘battlefield uprising’.

The embellishment of ‘battlefield uprising’ was a bit funny when their flagship and space gate were both destroyed and the main-force troops were utterly crushed. But considering that it was the first high-level arsenal starship of the Black Wind Fleet that offered to surrender to the federal army without being surrounded, led by the first Immortal Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage who was willing to bow to the ‘barbarians’ at the edge of the cosmos, the highest command center agreed on their terms after much deliberation.

The strong preyed on the weak, and the winner was the king. Deference to the experts was a tradition of the Imperium of True Human Beings in the first place.

Sometimes, the tradition could prove to be quite cruel, but in such situations, the tradition significantly avoided more destruction and slaughter.

The Cultivators who learned about the ‘battlefield uprising’ despised the integrity of the Immortal Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage at first. It was one thing to surrender, but it was a whole other thing, and arguably much more shameless, to offer to provide tremendous intelligence to the enemy and even help the enemy capture their comrades. They could not help but wonder how such an Immortal Cultivator advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage in the beginning.

However, after the intelligence from the Nascent Soul Stage Immortal Cultivator was truly sent to the analysis room of the highest command center, after intense and efficient scrutiny, Wan Guqing, Guo Chunfeng, Jin Xinyue, Bai Kaixin, Ding Lingdang, Li Yao, and all the other Cultivators finally learned that the Immortal Cultivator, although certainly not a noble man, was not entirely a selfish and treacherous scoundrel, either.

The most critical point was that, while the Nascent Soul Stage Immortal Cultivator was a high-level commander of the Black Wind Fleet, he did not come from the Black Wind Sector.

The Black Wind Fleet had been co-established by the defeated soldiers of five Sectors, a large one plus four smaller ones.

Or rather, the Black Wind Fleet in the past swallowed the fleets of four worlds in a row before it grew to its current scale.

A hundred years prior, in the war between the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance, the Black Wind people’s fatal mistake led to the collapse of the entire frontline. Not only was the

Black Wind Sector, their hometown, affected, another four worlds and four fleets were involved.

Such a mistake was supposed to be absolutely unpardonable. Even if the ‘merciful’ emperor was willing to spare them, the warlords and nobles who had been whetting their cleavers would certainly tear the Black Wind Fleet into shreds and stuff them into their insatiable stomachs.

At the time of life and death, Heiye Ming, the leader of the Black Wind people, did not acknowledge his fault or beg for mercy obediently. Instead, he swallowed another four troops of defeated soldiers who had the same experience as the Black Wind Fleet by means of attraction and coercion as fast as lightning, which gave him enough leverage to bargain with the emperor and the powerful nobles. Their fate of falling apart was avoided, and they were eventually sent to the edge of the cosmos to carry out what proved to be another life-demanding mission.

For the people of the Black Wind Sector, the mission gave them a hundred years to catch their breath and an opportunity for them to change the future.

But for the Immortal Cultivators from the other four worlds, all their pride and glory were gone the moment they were swallowed. Even if the Black Wind Fleet established an enterprise at the edge of the cosmos and marched back to the center of the cosmos, reclaiming the Black Wind Sector as one of the most elite fleets of the Imperium again, all the glory would go to ‘Black Wind’. Would it have anything to do with their ancestors, their history, and their dignity?

The five worlds had been forcefully glued together in the first place. The Immortal Cultivators from the other four worlds were merely intimidated by the people of the Black Wind Fleet. That was all.

A hundred years was too short for the seven Sectors of the Star Glory Federation to be completely melded into a whole. There were still great chasms among the worlds. By the same logic, the time was not enough to make the Black Wind Fleet that was jumbled up to be truly condensed into an indestructible whole.

Or rather, the Black Wind Fleet’s situation was even worse than the federation’s because most of the Immortal Cultivators had been in long-term hibernation during the long voyage in the sea of stars. They did not even have the time to be brainwashed.

They had absolutely no loyalty to the Black Wind people. They were only slaughtering and conquering with the Black Wind people out of their habit of obeying the strong and apathy brought on by hopelessness.

Perhaps, if such slaughter and conquest had continued for hundreds of years, their offspring would gradually forget their ancestors and regard themselves as true natives of the Black Wind Sector.

But before such a transformation began, the Black Wind Fleet suffered the most terrible strike. The seemingly ‘invincible’ Black Swirl was blown up, and Heiye Ming, who had sat on the top of them and manipulated them meticulously, was killed in the battle, too!

For the Immortal Cultivators of the other four worlds, could there have been a more shocking, ridiculous, and thought-provoking event?

Perhaps that was the most important reason why the Black Wind Fleet fell apart immediately after Black Swirl, the flagship, was destroyed.

The first to flee at that time were the starships of the other four worlds. When those starships dispersed like monkeys jumping out of a falling tree, even if the real hardcore people of the Black Wind Fleet intended to fight the battle to the end, their battle formation had already been messed up by their friendly troops. How could they fight?

After the Immortal Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage from the Purple Fire Sector elaborated on the history and internal relations of the Black Wind Fleet, it suddenly occurred to the people of the federation that the fundamental solution to the problem was right under their nose!

“The Immortal Cultivators almost admire the strong. Now that the Star Glory Federation has crushed the Black Wind Fleet and even slain Heiye Ming, you are certainly more qualified to lead us than are the people of the Black Wind Sector!

“The Immortal Cultivators from the other four Sectors, including the Purple Fire Sector, are victims of the great expedition, too. We were reluctant to come to the remote, desolate edge of the cosmos where there wasn’t even bird sh*t to fight the uncanny war in the beginning. We were all browbeaten into this by Heiye Ming!

“If you can be so kind as to distinguish the Immortal Cultivators of the four worlds from the people of the Black Wind Sector, I believe that there will be more ‘battlefield uprisings’ of the Immortal Cultivators. The real people of the Black Wind Sector will soon be tied up and delivered to you.

“Hehe. I can tell you another big secret. Are you worried about the main troops which are docked behind a certain brown dwarf or inside a certain stone belt dozens of lightyears away? You would love to fish up the troops in case they cause more trouble in the future, wouldn’t you?

“Heiye Ming teleported most of the elites of the Black Wind Sector to the Heaven’s Origin Sector in the first wave. There aren’t many natives of the Black Wind Sector in the main troops near the brown dwarf.

“Now, they have learned the news of the fiasco in the frontline, and they are hesitating about their next move. Should they resist to the end, wander in space, flee back to their homeland, or… be disarmed and surrender to you?

“The Immortal Cultivators of the four worlds have some influence in the main troops near the brown dwarf, too. We may even have a chance to completely control the troops, but we will not surrender. It will be an uprising at most!”

The first Immortal Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage who had a ‘battlefield uprising’ gave his explanation.

It seemed that his surrender to the federal army was not an isolated event. Instead, he had gone there to negotiate on behalf of the interest group independent from the people of the Black Wind Sector.

Chapter 1847 - National Ceremony!

Such confidential and detailed information was certainly beyond the knowledge of the children who were waiting for brightness deep inside the darkness of the underground fortresses.

But they could tell from the faces on the news that grew more and more relaxed, the voices that became more and more easy and lighthearted, and the frequent smiles of their adults with them that the gloomy winter was about to fade, and a warm, vigorous spring was soon to come.

In the first two weeks, there was nothing but the situations on the frontline in the news. But in the latter two weeks, a new name was mentioned more and more regularly.

Li Yao.

For the kids who were in kindergarten or in lower grades of elementary school, it was difficult to understand the meaning of ‘Vulture’ Li Yao. They were told by their teachers that he was a super great hero, but what kind of person was a ‘hero’, and what kind of hero could be counted as ‘super great’?

Could Li Yao fly?

Could he fly higher and faster than other heroes?

Was he more awesome than their dads? Could he defeat their dads in an arm wrestle?

When hearing their teacher telling the stories of Li Yao vividly, the kids were all puzzled.

In the underground fortress of the capital city, the kids of Little Swan Kindergarten were lucky enough to meet a living ‘Vulture’ Li Yao. Not in the headlines of the major websites, not in the most heated interview show of the federation, and certainly not the illusions made of the hologram projectors on the street, but a real-life ‘great hero Li Yao’ who joined them.

The day became a grand festival. All the kids of Little Swan Kindergarten put on their most beautiful clothes and even performed a few songs and dances that they carefully rehearsed. They had quite a lot of fun in the day.

But when their moms and dads or their friends asked them, those kids scratched their heads, unable to provide much exciting information. They could only conclude that he was just like any other uncle working in the place and that there was nothing about him that made him ‘super great’. He was even a little bit clumsy. When Zhao Manman of Class Two peed on him, he was in such a panic that the nurses might have done better than him!

“He doesn’t look as handsome as in the movies.”

“Did we meet a fake Li Yao?”

“He certainly can’t defeat dad.”

The kids told their parents solemnly.

Therefore, when the kids of Little Swan Kindergarten returned to the ground again under the lead of their teachers, the soldiers, and the Cultivators to bathe in the real sunlight and to join the grand ceremony, their interest was no longer in the ‘super great’ hero anymore although they knew that Li Yao would be present in the ceremony, too.

Besides, the focus of the ceremony was not Li Yao but a super great, great, great hero who looked much more dependable and had a much higher prestige among the little kids and the young people.

Ding Lingdang!

The most important affairs for a country were wars and memorials. After clearing the battlefield for more than a month, the debris of the unprecedently gory battle in space had been preliminary sorted through. The names of the deceased and the missing had been recorded.

Today was the day to welcome the souls of the heroes that had wandered in the cold space for more than a month to return to their motherland.

After that, under the gazes of the heroes and all the compatriots of the federation, Ding Lingdang would be sworn in and become the latest Supreme Speaker of the Star Glory Federation.

After Li Yao announced his grand return with eleven experts from the Ancient Sages Sector and twelve magnificent Colossi, there was little suspense that Ding Lingdang would be elected as the Speaker of the Federation.

The main force of the Black Wind Fleet had been crushed, but there were still the Imperium of True Human Beings, the Alliance of the Holy Covenant, the Pangu Civilization, and even the extraterrestrial devils that had jumped out recently. The shadows of war that were as heavy as mountains were still looming above the federation.

This was just the beginning of the war. True peace was still far, far away. The Star Glory Federation was in dire need of a determined, persistent War Speaker who could lead everyone into a bloody battle of survival in the dark space!

Although Jin Xinyue did not betray the federation, she did make fatal mistakes while carrying out the Dim Moon Plan, which almost brought the doom of the federation.

She could not become the Speaker of the Federation, at least not now.

The relations between the four new worlds and the three old worlds, the relations between the federation and the Ancient Sages Sector, the relations between the federation and the government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic, and also the relations between the federation and Heiye Lan—the daughter of the Black Wind Fleet’s commander. The situation was a messy knot that could not be resolved without Li Yao.

Li Yao naturally could not become the Speaker of the Federation himself. Then, who else could shoulder such a heavy responsibility if not his wife, Ding Lingdang, who had been a popular candidate in the first place?

The election of the federation half a month ago was not postponed because of the war. Instead, the highest patriotism of the citizens was awakened in the crisis, resulting in a voting rate that was the highest in the past fifty years. Without any suspense, Ding Lingdang would lead the federation to move forward in the next five or ten years.

Two weeks after the election, the day had come for the old Speaker to transfer the power to the successor.

“Look!”

At nine o’clock in the morning, when the sun just turned gold from red, the children had already boarded the floating auditorium. Boosted by the anti-gravity rune arrays from below, the auditorium slowly ascended to almost a hundred meters high and moved among the dense skyscrapers.

Leaning on the blockage web and looking through the holes on it, they were amazed by the ocean of people and the heated ambience when millions gathered. Before they could exclaim in incredulity, they heard ear-splitting noises above them.

They raised their heads, only to discover that almost a thousand space shuttle had entered the clouds after activating the combat mode of atmosphere battles. In the middle of daunting airwaves, they rushed by and dissected the sky into a thousand even parts precisely.

The space shuttles that were designed for the zero-gravity environment of space were not suitable for use even slightly within the atmosphere. Other than the serious wear on the camouflage paint and the defense rune arrays on the shuttles themselves, noises and air disturbances that were a hundred times more intense than regular shuttles would also be raised.

But at this moment, even if their noises were ten times louder, they would not have been able to eclipse the cheers of the millions of people down below. Even if the air disturbances were as violent as tornadoes, it would be impossible for them to blow off a single Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag that was flying everywhere on every street and avenue.

On the contrary, blown by the high-speed space shuttles, all the red flags among the skyscrapers and on the ground were fluttering furiously!

A lot of kids covered their ears and squatted. When they looked back, the space shuttles were long gone, and the only things left behind were a thousand colorful, glamorous trails.

But it did not matter, because a moment later, a hundred starships that were hundreds of times larger than the space shuttles broke through the splendid clouds and appeared right above them, surrounded by red and purple smoke!

“Wow…”

The kids raised their heads so hard that their necks almost snapped. They could not say a word but gasped hard while they looked at the belly of the starships.

They were like little fish in the deep ocean watching countless whales descending slowly from the surface of the ocean.

Those gigantic starships were like small planets that carried the most intense gravity fields. The kids felt that they were about to be pulled toward them.

Many kids could not help but reach toward the sky. There was no telling whether they were trying to hug the magnificent starships or hoping to transform their arms into wings so that they could fly into the starships and become members to pilot the behemoth!

The shocking picture where hundreds of starships appeared in the sky of a city was a hundred times more of a visual blast than the prior rushing space shuttles.

Young or old, all the people of the federation widened their eyes and held their breath, sensing the undying fighting will and the determination to never admit defeat in silence.

The enormity of the starships choked them. But the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars emblems on the two sides of the starships made them feel proud from the bottom of their hearts—it was their own troop!

The hundred starships were like dark clouds pressing the ground when they slowly passed the city. If one observed from the ground, the lowest starship almost brushed past the highest antenna on the skyscrapers. After the main troop was over, what followed them were more than ten seriously twisted, ragged, and dusty starships of the Imperium.

The power rune arrays and weapon systems of those starships had all been dismantled. The anti-gravity rune arrays were the only part that was functioning normally. They were controlled by more than ten starships of the federation through the force field and dragged to move forward like captives that had been bound.

Looking at the starships of the Imperium that had been daunting and magnificent a month ago ending up as such wretched garbage, all the people of the federation put on smiles of pride. Many of them even spat on the contorted, mottled lightning trident emblem of the Imperium of True Human Beings and cursed in disdain. “You deserve this!”

“That must be the enemy’s starship.” The kids pointed at an enormous starship that was more than ten kilometers long and shouted, “It is the biggest, hugest starship!”

The flagship was not necessarily the ‘biggest, hugest’ starship in a fleet. Besides, Black Swirl, the flagship of the Black Wind Fleet, had long been blown apart. Even the largest remnant could not have been more than three hundred meters long. It was impossible to restore it.

That was merely a comprehensive mothership of the Black Wind Fleet. Despite its enormity and vast space, it was designed to provide logistical support and did not boast a high combat ability.

However, the kids were not entirely wrong. The federation had intentionally arranged for such a behemothic starship to join the ‘parade of starships’ indeed for the purpose of demonstrating national power, boosting morale, and encouraging the people.

After all the starships stopped in the sky of the city and the spiritual waves unleashed by the anti-gravity rune arrays blurred the gold sunlight on the top of the skyscrapers and made it look like a dream, the victory ceremony on the ground officially began.

Chapter 1848 - Under the Monument

Bathed in the light and waves of the starships, what appeared in the eyes of the audience and moved before the parliament building of the federation slowly was a special team made of countless soldiers in military uniform. They walked at the same pace and wore the same solemn and grieved expression, with a small metal box covered in the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag in their hands.

The warriors who had sacrificed everything for the Star Glory Federation in the space battle a month ago slept inside the boxes quietly. Accompanied by the low but soul-stirring march song ‘Motherland Remembers’, they moved forward in silence.

Every street, alley, and square was soundless. The only thing that could be heard was the heavy breath. Many of them had shed too many tears in the past month. At this moment, they stopped crying and simply held each other’s hands. Staring at the metal boxes that were as red as fire, they sang together with the tune of ‘Motherland Remembers’.

After the deceased passed, it was the group of disabled soldiers.

Many of them had just recovered from the medical cabins in the hospitals. Every one of them had lost part of their limbs and organs, which were replaced by cold, shining prosthetics. Some of them had even replaced their entire body with an artificial one.

They had not gotten used to the brand-new limbs and organs. Also, having no time to rehearse the pace and march, they were naturally not as unified as the guard of honor at the beginning.

But the intense smell of blood from the space battle a month ago still enshrouded them tightly and leaked into their muscles, veins, nerves, and bones, endowing them with the almost concrete killing intent that was entirely different from the vibe of the guard of honor.

Their surging killing intent completely tore apart the slightly heavy atmosphere and turned into the invincible dominance. Their disobedient eyes seemed to be declaring, “Look, even the expedition army of the Imperium of True Human Beings from the center of the cosmos are no match for us. We are the strongest human army in the three thousand Sectors!”

Thud! Thud! Thud! Thud! Thud!

Closely following the team of disabled soldiers was the iron army comprising tens of thousands of crystal suits. Before they appeared in the people’s eyes, footsteps rumbled first like thunder. Not just the entire street, even every glass windows of the skyscrapers on both sides of the road were uttering weird noises because of the blast.

From the floating auditorium in midair, in the children’s perspective, they saw that a glittering iron dragon was striding forward one step after another unhurriedly.

“Wow…”

The children opened their mouths wide again after all the trouble to close it. It seemed big enough to stuff a duck egg if not a small watermelon inside.

A lot of the indecisive children were caught in a dilemma.

They had just made up their minds to become space shuttle pilots that would roam the universe.

After watching the magnificence of the starships, they changed their mind and decided to become part of the iron beasts.

But when the army of crystal suits showed, they were attracted by the charisma and awesomeness of the ‘king of magical equipment’ again.

Space shuttles, starships, and crystal suits… Which should they choose?

The kids looked at each other in bewilderment and failed to come to a decision.

However, when the few magnificent shadows that they mistook for skyscrapers at the beginning moved over slowly and leaned toward them, allowing the kids to get a closer look of their whole appearance, the kids forgot all about the space shuttles, starships, and crystal suits. They were all too stunned to think about anything.

When the iron giants walked past them, because they were on the floating auditorium, the heads and enormous eyes of the giants happened to be parallel to them. Some of the giants even turned around and looked at them gently.

“C—Colossi!”

“Such huge giants!”

“Isn’t that the most awesome Colossus, Tartarean Skeleton, that our teacher mentioned? I’m told that it destroyed the space gate of the Imperium in the battle and even blew up the enemy’s commander by itself. So impressive and splendid!”

“It should be the real super great hero Li Yao inside but not the clumsy uncle who visited our kindergarten last time, right?”

“I’ve decided. After I grow up, I’ll pilot a Colossus like Li Yao!”

The kids jumped up and down and shouted.

Had it not been for the blockage of the web, the bolder kids would have jumped onto the shoulders of the Colossi from the floating auditorium.

After Li Yao led the super heavy legion made of twenty Colossi past the parliament building of the federation slowly, the children were still drooling at the back of the mountains with stars of hope in their eyes.

The deceased soldiers covered in flags, the square of the disabled soldiers, the crystal suit legion, and the troop of Colossi passed by the parliament building in turn and gathered in the Federal Square.

It was exactly the spot where Lu Zui, the former director of the Secret Sword Bureau, had shockingly attempted to assassinate Jiang Hailiu, the Speaker at that time.

After a hundred years of expansion and modification, square had been enlarged by three times, and the underground part had been established into an enormous war museum, recording the major events in the six hundred years from the Star Glory Federation’s birth to its rise.

Today, a new statue was erected at the center of the square.

The enormous statue was almost fifty meters tall. The main part of the statue was a highly abstract, peaceful, and quiet planet, with countless high mountains and zigzagging shorelines. It could be seen as the capital planet or any habitable planet in the Star Glory Federation.

The glittering planet was carried on the shoulder by a giant with brawny arms who was on one knee.

Judging from the muscles where veins were protruding, the teeth that were being gritted hard, and the knee that had deeply smashed into the ground, the planet was much too heavy for the giant.

But still, supported by some invisible strength, he held the heavy planet.

If one observed carefully, they would discover that the vivid giant was actually full of cracks.

It was made of countless metal pieces the size of fingernails, or more exactly, the debris of the crystal suits, starships, space shuttles, and even Colossi of the federal army in the space battle!

There was more to the glittering, revolving ‘planet’ above, too.

Inside the ‘planet’ was an information base of an unprecedented scale. Every spot of light the size of the tip of a needle that constituted the brilliance of the planet on the surface represented the name of a martyr.

The federal government and the families of the martyrs were still adding their personal information into the base, including photos, videos, and texts.

Gradually, the Federal Monument of Martyrs would include the whole life of the hundreds of thousands of deceased.

They would not be just cold names on the monument, or just ‘heroes’ or ‘idealists’ in the abstract sense. Instead, they would be fathers, sons, brothers, and husbands made of flesh and blood who could talk and smile.

The monument would be open to the whole federation. People could both read their information in the war museum and visit the place remotely via the Spiritual Nexus to pay tributes to the deceased.

Today, the first national memorial ceremony regarding the space battle was hosted by Speaker Wan Guqing.

After a solemn, hour-long memorial ceremony, Ding Lingdang, in a white suit and carrying a ribbon with the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars pattern, walked to the front of the Federal Monument of Martyrs.

On her left and right sides were the ‘Constitution of the Star Glory Federation’ and ‘Constitution of Cultivators’. The two fundamental laws of the country were both tied by the bands that were branded with the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars emblem. She put her hands on the two books and stared at the billions of people in the whole federation, beginning her inaugural speech.

“Thank you, Speaker Wan Guqing, representatives of the federal parliament, citizens of the Star Glory Federation, compatriots of the seven Sectors, and friends from Firefly and the Ancient Sages Sector. Thank you.

“I believe that there can’t be a better place to make the most solemn vow than under the Federal Monument of Martyrs and the gazes of billions of compatriots.”

The warriors on the federal square—the living and the deceased, the healthy and the disabled, those protected in iron armor and those who stood like pine trees with their hot blood—listened quietly.

“In the past month, or rather, in the last hundred years, our young nation that has just been established at the edge of the cosmos has experienced an unprecedented crisis and challenge.

“Had it not been for the people before me now, the cataclysm would’ve been unavoidable. Our home, our families, and our future would’ve all been destroyed.

“The crisis is over for now, but the future of peace, happiness, and wonders is far from here. At the center of the cosmos, countless ordinary people are suffering in agony and losing their lives in mines, jungles, and the cold space as slaves. Too many talents are exterminated before they are awakened, and too much hope has died out before it is ignited. The most beautiful feelings of mankind are manipulated, trampled on, and twisted.

“This is a massacre against all human beings, and it must stop immediately!

“Either at the center of the cosmos or at the edge of it, we are compatriots illuminated by the brilliance of the same civilization. The sea of stars is vast and boundless, but nobody can be an island entirely of itself. Our hearts are connected. We share the same history, culture, destiny, and glory. Their suffering is our suffering, their dream is our dream, their success is our success, and their oppression is our oppression!”

“I know that many of our compatriots are tired of war. I’m not sure how much slaughter and suffering we will face on the journey to the center of the cosmos. If there is the tiniest possibility, nobody would want to be involved in incessant war.

“But I have to tell you that what is on our shoulders is not just a glorious mission but also the cruel reality.

“The behemoth at the center of the cosmos is still preparing its warriors and whetting its blades. If we do not stop the enemy but dwell in some illusionary peace, the day will come when the miserable and desperate fate of our compatriots at the center of the cosmos becomes our fate.

“If we don’t fight for them at this moment, nobody will fight for us when our eventual destruction comes!”

In the Nether World Sector, the Uranian Ring Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, the deserts of the Water Crystal Sector, the space of the Flying Star Sector, the harsh resource planets, the bottom level of the zigzagging mines… Countless people held their breath and listened to the solemn promise.

“Therefore, I hereby pledge my loyalty to the Star Glory Federation, the Supreme Parliament, and all the people of the federation. With my loyalty, I plead for all my compatriots to summon your courage, grab your weapons, and fight side by side until the end of the war.

“I swear that I will lead the Star Glory Federation, which will lead the entire civilization of mankind, forward in the dark and boundless sea of stars and create a land of light and hope that has never been seen before!”

Chapter 1849 - When Our Fates Entwined

It started to drizzle in the afternoon. The splashing raindrops covered the entire Federal Square in a haze.

Even in the main hall at the war museum below the square, the sound of rain was still clearly audible from all directions.

It reminded the listeners of the grass that had just burst out of the soil. It might be young, but nothing could stop its growth.

Around the obsidian wall that surrounded the entire war museum, the names of hundreds of thousands of deceased warriors had been carved with the dark golden ink.

At the end of the high wall, where the fragrance of the ink lingered in the air because the carving was just done, Li Yao found the name as well as the family who were paying tributes and recording files into the information base.

There was a woman in plain clothes, who left the impression that she was rigorously meticulous, and a man who was equally plain and slightly fat but was supporting his wife’s shoulder all the time.

There was also a vigorous boy whose eyes were beaming with intelligence. He was counting the total number of the dense names on the wall from top to bottom with his head raised high and his cheeks puffed out.

On the wall in front of the family, a few simple words had been engraved.

“Helian Lie, Major of the Federal Army.”

When Li Yao found them, the woman happened to look back and saw him. There was no change in expression on her face, but her eyes obviously flashed.

Although the two of them had made the appointment in advance, Li Yao still felt somewhat awkward. He coughed and walked forward.

The man knew his identity, and he was both panicked and somewhat wary of him. The boy did not know who he was and simply looked at him curiously with the big eyes that were similar to Helian Lie’s. The woman, on the other hand, was rather tranquil. She reminded her husband of something and patted her son’s head. Then, she gestured for Li Yao to talk in private.

“You must be Mrs. Shen, Shen Wenyin, right?

“Your father,” Li Yao said, “Major Helian Lie’s distinguished contributions in the space battle a month ago have been confirmed by various sources. His fearless charge made the detonation of the wormhole bomb of the federal army possible, which successfully delayed the enemy for the two most important hours. In the end, we were given a chance to demolish the space gate of the Imperium.

“Your father was the key to the battle and the role model and pride of millions of soldiers of the federal army. Regarding the assessment of his military credit, the posthumous award, and the compensation for his family, the results will be out very soon.

“Your father and I… were sort of old acquaintances. After knowing that he still has offspring in the world, I felt obliged to tell you the result in person.”

Shen Wenyin listened quietly. She bowed deeply first and then observed Li Yao carefully for a while. Then she said in a hoarse voice, “Thank you, President Li. I thought that you wouldn’t have tracked me down.”

Li Yao smiled. “It was indeed not easy to find you. The military did not have your mother’s information. It seemed that your father and your mother were separated soon after they were together. Also, you took your mother’s last name. It took us quite some time to deliver the notice to you.”

“I… I didn’t intend to come first.”

Looking at the family of the martyrs who were paying homage to their loved ones far away, Shen Wenyin played with a nonexistent cigarette subconsciously with her fingers. After much hesitation, she held her arms and softly said, “Helian Lie was not a good husband, much less a good father. I hated him. My mother and I both hated him. I only wanted to get as far away from him as possible so that I would never see him again, not even in such a form.”

“Well…” Li Yao blinked quickly.

He was slightly surprised, but based on the remarks of ‘Rabid Dog’ Helian Lie in the army he had collected over the past month, her attitude was not too strange.

Shen Wenyin stared at Li Yao with complicated feelings. “President Li, do you want to know more about my family, about Helian Lie? In fact, it’s nothing special. It was just one of the clichés between a wounded, lonely, and crazy man and a silly woman who had read too many romance novels and was naïve enough to think that she could ‘save’ the man.

“However, in the stories, the silly woman always unties the deepest knot in the wounded man’s heart, and they always live happily ever after. But in reality…”

She smiled and touched her dry lips, as if she had put the nonexistent cigarette to her mouth.

Li Yao was silent for a moment before he said in a low voice, “According to the fellows and the psychologists in the army, Major Helian Lie seemed to be gravely troubled by mental illnesses, partly due to the PTSD and partly because of the strong stimulations he suffered in his early years… I’m sorry.”

Shen Wenyin was slightly dazed. Then, she was amused. “President Li, why do you think you need to apologize to me? It was he who was too narrow-minded to free himself from the burdens of the past. Did it have anything to do with anybody else?”

“That being said, I do have a very strange feeling,” Li Yao observed. “It is not exactly guilt. I—I just feel that it never occurred to me that even someone like Helian Lie would establish a family or that he had his feelings and dreams and would even die valiantly for them.”

Shen Wenyin raised her eyebrows. She looked at Li Yao with even more confusion and surprise. She could not help but remark, “President Li, you are nothing like the Vulture Li Yao depicted in the books, the news, the propaganda, or the entertainment works. If the guys from the Secret Sword Bureau or other intelligence agencies hadn’t chatted with me for a long time just now and searched my belongings dozens of times, I would’ve suspected that you are a fraud.”

Li Yao laughed, too. He scratched his nose and said, “Ever since my identity was exposed, everybody who’s met me has said exactly the same thing. I’ve heard it so many times that I’m starting to wonder if I’m really a fraud.”

Holding back her smile, Shen Wenyin took a deep breath and said, “In fact, I have a very weird feeling right now, too. The thing that I dreamed of for decades has become reality, but it is so unsubstantial that it doesn’t feel real at all.

“Did you know, President Li? There was a time when I hated you very, very much. It was the period when Helian Lie got mentally deranged because of overtraining. He would cry and vomit, holding his stomach while yelling at me and my mother like an animal.

“At that time, I was about six years old, and I knew a lot of things already. I also got in touch with the earliest legends of Vulture Li Yao through various sources. I learned what a disreputable role my father played in those legends, too.

“Naturally, I cannot blame you for anything. Everything was simply his own fault. You did nothing wrong. You were a victim yourself.

“However, when Helian Lie tortured himself and both of us to such an extent that almost none of us could live on, I, as a six-year-old girl, couldn’t help but wonder, if there was no you, if Vulture Li Yao had never existed, and if Helian Lie hadn’t been taught the lesson, would our fate have been entirely different? Would my life be easier and more like the other children’s lives?

“At the very least, other kids wouldn’t have acted as my father being beaten by you when they played war games or chased after me and mimicked my father’s voice!

“The sound of more than ten kids mimicking my father’s voice haunted me for a long time. I—I—I could even tolerate everything that Helian Lie did to me and my mother, but I couldn’t bear the voice that was intentionally faked. In my worst days, I even thought of suicide, ninety-seven times.”

Li Yao blushed and said, “I’m sorry. While I don’t think that what I did was wrong, if given another chance, I would probably choose… a more controllable way.”

Shen Wenyin smiled again. Her face was so peaceful as if she were telling someone else’s story. “President Li, you must not change your mind, or it will be too terrible.

“I cursed myself, you, Helian Lie, and even my mother countless times. I cursed the wretched fate for playing such a cruel joke on me.

“But one day, when the most beautiful thing happened to me, when I ran into another man and then… had a tinier man, I suddenly felt that everything that happened to me in the past, all the good things and bad things that happened in the world before I was born, had their own significance.

“The whole significance of all those things was for me to slip when I walked down the street on a snowy morning. I fell over so hard that half of my body was numb, and I couldn’t get to my feet for a long time. Then, all the things of the past surfaced in my heart. I completely collapsed, and I cried and screamed like a baby.

“It was exactly because I cried so hard that the silly big man who is peeping at us right now from the side noticed me and staggered to me to help me to my feet.

“To this day, I still remember that I shoved him heavily and said something stupid in tears. I said, ‘Go away, my dad is

Helian Lie.’

“He fell to the ground, too, because of my shove. Scratching his head for a long time, he asked in confusion, ‘Who is Helian Lie?’

“Hehe. I imagined ten thousand times what the world would be like without you, but if Vulture Li Yao hadn’t beaten Helian Lie hard and completely changed his fate, he wouldn’t have met my mother at all. Even if they did, as a man born and raised in a wealthy family, he wouldn’t have had any interaction with my mother, and I wouldn’t have been born at all.

“Even if I were born and raised in another mysterious way, I wouldn’t have walked on the cold street of that particular planet on that morning in that winter. Even if I did and I unfortunately slipped over, I wouldn’t have burst into tears and made a fool of myself.

“Then, I wouldn’t have met him, and I wouldn’t have had him. Every day of the three of us being together would’ve been a soap bubble that was nowhere to be found. When thinking about that, I couldn’t feel more terrified.

“So, President Li, fate is such an amazing thing. Had it not been for your conflict with Helian Lie years ago, I would never have appeared in this world, and the vigorous young guy that is crawling on the ground wouldn’t have been born either!”

Chapter 1850 - Home Is Ahead! (End of Volume V)

Li Yao did not know that so many things had happened to Helian Lie's daughter or that the stories even had amazing connections with the choices that he had made in the past.

He recalled Ding Lingdang's speech in the morning again. Most of the content of her speech was naturally modified and polished by someone else, but there was one line that Ding Lingdang insisted on keeping.

"Nobody is an island entirely of itself; the fate of everyone is connected in a wonderful way."

Shen Wenyin's eyes were nonchalant at the beginning, but right now, they became soft and warm, like a frozen lake that was being melted by the spring breeze. With happiness glowing on her face, she softly said, "When I saw sunlight illuminating that little hairy head for the first time, I reconciled with my fate.

"I still hate Helian Lie, but I don't hate anybody else anymore. I don't hate myself, my mother, or you.

"When I was a teenager, I had a lot of crazy thoughts about how we would meet someday. At that time, I swore that I would spit at you right in the face to show my disdain and resistance for Vulture Li Yao. But right now, I don't want to do that anymore, especially when I'm faced with such a Li Yao that is utterly different from my imagination.

“There are so many precious things for me to love, cherish, and protect. How could I have the time and energy to continue my hatred?”

Hearing that, Li Yao took a deep breath in great relief. He felt as if a heavy burden in his heart had just been removed.

Shen Wenyin smiled. “President Li, is there anything else? If that is all, we have to leave now. We need to catch the last public carrier home. Thank you for your notification again. This is perhaps the best conclusion for my relationship with Helian Lie.”

Li Yao thought of something and said, “Major Helian Lie died a valiant death perhaps partly in order to protect you. Would you hate him less because of that?”

Shen Wenyin shook her head. “I know him too well. I dare say that at the last moment of his life, he might’ve thought of you, but he certainly did not think of me and my mother.

“I will hate him forever, as vehemently as he hated you.

“However, I remember that when I was a child, whenever he roared crazily like an ignorant animal because of over-training and mental meltdown, he would shout that he would do something extraordinary that would make my mother and me view him in a different way and make the whole federation proud of him.

“At that time, I couldn’t have hated such a loser’s crazy talk more. I trembled in fear and nearly threw up.

“I didn’t expect that he would eventually make it. He has indeed fulfilled his promise and… reversed his fate.

"I still hate him, but I have to admit that I was wrong about him. He was not a loser. At the very least, at the last moment of his life, he was a real hero. I came today to apologize to him. Perhaps, a long, long time ago, when nobody believed in him, as his daughter, I should've trusted him more, at least once."

After saying that, Shen Wenyin bowed to Li Yao deeply again and turned around to walk to her husband and her son.

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao raised his voice and said, "Mrs. Shen, this is my number. I'm told that your son is quite gifted at training. If there is anything that I can help you with, please don't hesitate to come to me."

Shen Wenyin paused, but she did not turn around or pick up Li Yao's number. Waving her hands, she replied, "Thank you for your kindness, but I'm afraid that I'll have to turn you down. Although neither me nor my son carry the surname of 'Helian', the blood of the Helian family does flow in our veins. People of the Helian family will live a good life even without the help of Vulture Li Yao."

Shen Wenyin and her family supported each other and walked away, disappearing into the hazy drizzles outside of the war museum.

…

At night, on a cross-continent floating airship, most of the passengers were sound asleep.

Shen Wenyin was touching a not-so-clear photo. In the photo, Helian Lie was wearing a tiny, trimmed uniform. Even his face had been modified carefully, and few traces of injury and madness could be found. Right next to him were two females who looked very similar to each other. It was the beginning of their fate. Both the woman and the girl were smiling brilliantly, as if they were frozen in the moment of happiness.

Shen Wenyin stared at the photo in a daze, and her eyes gradually filled with tears.

Right then, her son, who had not fallen asleep yet and was watching a live stream in secret, touched her and said, “Mom, look. It is the uncle who talked to you in the day!”

Shen Wenyin was slightly dazed. She noticed that her son’s crystal processor was playing a late-night show that was quite popular within the federation. It was best known for its straightforward criticism, real-time interaction, and big-shot guests. Not only were the leaders of the top five hundred sects of the federation often invited onto the show, even the Speaker of the Federation had once appeared on the show to demonstrate a different side of the highest leader to all the audience.

At this moment, the guest sitting opposite the witty and smart host with gray hair was Li Yao.

He was wearing a gray robe. He did not have a high, condescending aura, but he was not too casual, either, making everybody feel very relieved as if he were just a common member among them.

When Shen Wenyin watched, the host had already asked a certain question that she did not catch. Li Yao leaned forward and answered genuinely.

“Perhaps people have placed too many impractical fantasies and perfect personalities on me. I am considered a certain brilliant, glorious symbol, a hope that will never be destroyed.

“You asked me just now, what does it feel like to save the day at the most critical moment?

“But that is not the truth. I do not feel anything special because I was not the only one who saved the day at the most critical moment.

“If I had to describe my feelings, I would say that I realized unmistakably once again that a war cannot be won by an individual and that a civilization could not be raised by a single person.

“The ‘Vulture’ Li Yao, the dominator of three Sectors who has become a stereotype in everybody’s head, does not exist. I am a person that is entirely the opposite of the propaganda.

“But the hope, belief, and strength that the dominator of three Sectors represents are real. They are not just inside me but also inside all the soldiers and Cultivators of the federal army as well as everyone who was brave enough to face their destiny for their homeland and family. They are right in the deepest part of the soul of each and every one of you.

“That’s why I was willing to come to this show today and demonstrate the power of such strength.

“A half-hour show is certainly far from enough. So, in the future, the Glorious Sunlight Group will publish a new biography about me, where I will be talking to everyone sincerely about the real Li Yao and the world in his eyes. This is also some sort of advertisement in advance.

“However, instead of my own story, I am more tempted to tell you somebody else’s stories, the legends of the real heroes who fought against the fates that once suppressed them.

“I want to tell you the story of the real Jin Tuyi, who was once an infamous war criminal.

“I want to tell you the story of Boss Bai, who was the Pirate Potentate on Spider Den in the old days.

“I also want to tell you the stories of hundreds of thousands of soldiers of the federation such as Major Helian Lie…

“Those stories are not necessarily as staggering and extraordinary as the stories you’ve heard in the past. A lot of gray areas and even black areas may be involved, which can be difficult to accept and will stain the glorious image of the Star Glory Federation.

“But I still want to tell the stories exactly as they happened, because those stories are real.

“I think that the real rise of a country or a civilization consists not in the many victorious battles it has, not the fleets and experts that it boasts, not the worlds that it has vanquished, but in whether its government is confident and brave enough to publicize the whole truth and whether its people are rational enough to accept them.

“Today, after a hundred years, the Star Glory Federation has risen. I have no doubt about that!”

While she was watching, the tears inside Shen Wenyin’s eyes finally flowed out quietly.

The boy immediately noticed that. He put down the crystal processor and shook her arm anxiously. “Mom, what’s the matter? Dad!”

“It’s fine. Don’t wake your dad up. He’s exhausted after the long day.”

Shen Wenyin hushed her son. Touching her son's big, warm head, she softly said, "Little Hui, do you want to hear your grandfather's story?"

The boy was slightly dazed. Then he nodded in ecstasy. "Of course, I do! I asked you in the war museum during the day, but you were reluctant to tell me. I want to know more about him!

"Right. Even such a great hero as Vulture Li Yao came to talk to you in the day. Did he come for grandpa, too? Were they good friends?

"I understand it now. Grandpa must have been his old comrade. The two of them once fought side by side to slay evil and defend the federation, didn't they?"

Shen Wenyin smiled. Leaning back in the chair, she closed her eyes and softly mumbled, "It's a story from a long, long, long time ago, but it doesn't matter. Your mother has lots of time to tell you all about him."

"Okay."

The vigorous little man crouched on his mother's legs. He drew a tissue for his mother to wipe her eyes before he solemnly said, "You can stop crying now, Mom. Although grandpa is gone, Dad and I are still here. Whatever happens, my dad and I will certainly be there for you!"

Shen Wenyin felt that her nose was stuffed. She could not help but open her eyes, only to be distracted by the starry reflections on the window, because they were flying past the sky of a metropolis that was ablaze with lights.

"Ah!" The little boy's eyes widened. "Are we home?"

“Not yet.” Holding her son with both arms, Shen Wenyin smiled from the bottom of her heart. “But it is not far away now. Home… is right ahead of us.”

[End of Volume V: Rise]

[Prelude of Volume VI: Imperium]

Boss Bai: “The Imperium is right ahead of us. The treasures are right ahead of us. The heritages are right ahead of us. Strike, the Big Bai Pirate Gang!”

Li Yao: “I am going to the Imperium. All the secrets are there!”

Long Yangjun: “The Imperium… How interesting.”

Ding Lingdang: “Li Yao, wait for me. I’m going to the Imperium to blow up the head of the emperor!”

Wen Wen, Xiao Ming: “Rain and snow may be in our way, but dad we will find in the Imperium!”

The experts from the federation, the Ancient Sages Sector, the Covenant Alliance, the extraterrestrial devils, and so on: “The Imperium! The Imperium!”

The Imperium of True Human Beings: “[Sweats.] I am feeling a lot of pressure…”

Hi, guys. Welcome to the end of Volume V. Volume V differs from the previous volumes in the detailed descriptions (although not always satisfactory) on universal battles. In the previous volumes, most of the plots are Li Yao’s personal adventures (sometimes with teammates). After the supervillains are dead, the crises will be resolved. But in Volume V, it is impossible for Li Yao to take care of the head-on clash of two major fleets on his own. He has to count on the help of his friends and compatriots. Also, if Forty Millenniums of Cultivation is divided into two parts, Volume V marks the end of the first part, which means that most of the important characters in the previous volumes must have a recurrence. But of course, it is impossible to allow all the important characters to show up again. So, if you are interested in the ending of a particular character that is not described by the author, the author’s suggestion is to use your imagination xD. Anyways, as Li Yao has neatly summarized, the Star Glory Federation has risen. The main stories in the next volume will happen in the Imperium of True Human Beings. More secrets about the Pangu Clan, the Nuwa Clan, the Earth and the extraterrestrial devils are to be revealed. Stay tuned. □

Chapter 1851 - New Techniques

Time flew. In the blink of an eye, three months had passed since Ding Lingdang was sworn in as the highest Supreme Speaker of the Federation.

Every habitable planet in the Star Glory Federation had a different trajectory of both rotation and revolution, which resulted in differing seasonal changes or day and night cycles. However, judging from the passion of the people and the heated construction sites everywhere, all the planets and space stations had crossed the bitter winder enshrouded in the gloomy clouds of war. Their boundless vigor was brought back again as they entered the golden years of the warm spring.

Ding Lingdang, as the Speaker of the Federation, was naturally busier than ever.

The parliamentary system of the federation had been adopted for more than six hundred years. Today, an enormous team of staff and advisors would assist the Speaker in decision-making. However, lots of the issues—such as inspecting different places in the federation, calling for the people to work hard, and coordinating the interests of different sects and even different planets—had to be done by the Speaker personally.

Li Yao attended several such activities as the spouse of the Speaker. He could not have complained more and thought that those tasks were more intolerable than any crazy training he had ever done.

He could not help but admire Ding Lingdang, too. He knew that Ding Lingdang was the same type of person as him. Neither of them had ever been fond of such grand ceremonies with all the formalities, but she was now gritting her teeth through everything. There was really no telling how much she suffered below the surface.

In that regard, Li Yao was unable to offer much help to his wife. ‘Spouse of the Speaker’ was not his only identity. Like Ding Lingdang, he had thousands of troublesome matters that he needed to deal with. In whatever spare time he had, he was occupied in new training, too.

Before Professor Mo Xuan perished, he had sent Li Yao a lot of files on training and experiments. It was said that the approach to the Divinity Transformation Stage was stored inside. Naturally, Li Yao needed to study the files well.

Besides, a lot of soul pieces of the extraterrestrial devils that were similar to the tenebrum energy were still lingering inside his brain. He had to purge and digest them as soon as possible. Otherwise, should they consolidate and ferment to a certain degree, they might prove to be a new disaster.

Training, training, and crazy training!

Seizing every fragment of time in every second and every minute, Li Yao began the craziest training. He seemed to be back to the simple years in college, or the time deep inside Yan Xinjian’s residence below Spider Den where he was forced to train himself in seclusion.

In the craziest training, Li Yao summarized the tiny details in the adventures and fierce battles he had in the past hundred years and condensed them into the newest understanding deep inside his soul, preparing to advance into the legendary Divinity Transformation Stage!

For other people, the Imperium of True Human Beings was like a sword hanging high above their heads.

But for Li Yao, the Imperium was a thorn that was stuck in his throat.

He would certainly visit the Imperium someday.

It was not just because Boss Bai had set off earlier to excavate the legacies of the Supreme Emperor and the Blood God.

It was also not just because the situation in the Imperium was unknown and mysterious. The Imperium had probably learned of the existence of the Star Glory Federation and could send out a new expedition army any minute. So, they had to take action before the enemy did. At the very least, they needed to know the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance better in order to come up with effective countermeasures.

More importantly, the weird dream and the land of origins that always haunted Li Yao… Earth.

Li Yao still had no idea if Earth really existed and where it was exactly if it did.

However, from his obscure memory pieces, he remembered hearing a statement declaring that he was sent from Earth to the edge of the cosmos and the borderland of the civilization of mankind.

Then, it would be easy to infer that if Earth did exist, it must be somewhere at the center of the cosmos.

The logic was very simple. If Earth was at the edge of the cosmos in the first place like the Star Glory Federation, such a statement of ‘send you to the edge of the cosmos’ would be ridiculous. It would be more appropriate to say that Li Yao would be sent to the center of the cosmos, or the other side of the cosmos.

Since the phrase ‘edge of the cosmos’ was adopted, it implied that the mysterious earthlings in the uncanny dream considered themselves residents at the center of the cosmos and that they were very used to it.

Thus, in order to find out the secrets about Earth, he had to go to the center of the cosmos.

The closer he was to the center of the cosmos, the closer he would be to cracking the mysteries about Earth.

The Imperium of True Human Beings was the only option right now. Both for the federation and himself, Li Yao could not wait to march to the Imperium!

However, it would not be easy to barge into the Imperium. Even an expert at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage might not be able to get everything they wanted at the core circle of the Imperium. As strong as Heiye Ming had been, and despite the support of a whole fleet, he had still been kicked to the edge of the cosmos like a stray dog.

He would have to enter at least the Divinity Transformation Stage in order to be at ease in the perilous, mysterious, and unpredictable environment so that he could protect himself and change the situation in the Imperium. Eventually, he might even be able to find Earth!

Inside the training room, Li Yao was sitting cross-legged very comfortably, with his upper body naked. His muscles and veins did not protrude much, but the air that he breathed out of his nostrils did not disperse but lingered around his body, moving in the same rhythm as his heartbeat, breath, and pulse.

It was a very ordinary, if not shabby, training room. There were neither high-burden training cabins that had dozens of times the standard gravity nor spiritual puppets with the most advanced performance and the fiercest firepower for real-battle tests. Instead, a lot of civil magical equipment was placed on the ground randomly, including housecleaning magical equipment, automatic cooking magical equipment, refrigeration and instant unfreezing magical equipment, and so on.

The devices had one thing in common. They were all embedded with some silicon chips whose structure and functions were quite simple.

Li Yao’s eyes were half closed. Thousands of runes were running down inside his brain like currents and waterfalls. There were countless sophisticated algorithms and formulas, too.

His soul, on the other hand, was carefully sorting through all the information like a needle pulling a thread.

The crazily dancing runes gradually congregated into an overwhelming river. He then guided the ‘river of runes’ into his limbs, veins, and internal organs.

After the runes and the spiritual energy were condensed, they were immediately glittering in octagonal halos circulating inside his body time and time again. Gradually, he was cast into a hollow, unconscious trance. Ego, id, superego, the three levels of the soul, were separated layer after layer like water, sand, and pebbles.

It was the most mysterious state. Part of the soul was still lingering inside Li Yao’s fleshly body, but part of the soul had jumped out of the cracks in the skull and burst three feet above his head like fireworks into thousands of waterdrops. Every water drop reflected him from different angles.

Li Yao’s breath stagnated in that moment, and his soul was like a windchime in the gentle breeze, stopping at the tipping point between ‘stillness’ and ‘action’.

It was almost like he had grown ten thousand more eyes, which were evenly distributed in three to five meters around him, allowing him to see ten thousand different pictures. Every picture was so vivid and clear that even a grain of dust floating in the air was reflected from every perspective in the most detailed way!

At the same time, he seemed to have grown ten thousand ears. The subtlest functioning noises of all the civil magical equipment around him turned into the sounds of the most violent tsunamis when they crashed and congregated and flooded into the depths of his soul.

Li Yao’s every brain cell was moaning. His brain immediately turned into an exploding star. He tried to combine the ten thousand high-resolution pictures into an indescribable ‘super high-resolution dynamic hologram’, only to find that the job was too much for him. The high-resolution pictures only lasted half a second before they were twisted into a mottled, broken kaleidoscope. Every piece of the kaleidoscope bombarded his brain brutally like a furiously burning shooting star.

Li Yao grunted and gritted his teeth to exit the amazing state. Despite the excruciating pain inside his head, his face brimmed with excitement.

Is this the unbelievable Divinity Transformation Stage that Professor Mo Xuan described in his notes?

Constructing an enormous ‘field’ and ‘domain’ with the spiritual energy and projecting the soul out of the body will transform the dozens of square meters around, or an even greater range, into part of the brain and body of the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator!

Then, it will no longer require retinas, optical cells, or optic nerves to see or eardrums, cochlea, and other organs to hear. As long as one makes use of the waves of the soul and the perception of the mind, it is possible to observe the infinite world within dozens of square meters from infinite perspectives clearly!

With a telepathic thought, it will be easy to count the hairs inside the enemy’s nostrils. This is the magnificence of the Divinity Transformation Stage!

Li Yao was brimming with amazement. Had it not been his personal experience, it would have been hard for him to imagine that such an astonishing level existed in the world. He felt that he had truly melted into the surroundings and the entire universe.

Of course, in a battle, level was not the only factor that mattered. The higher levels required more massive spiritual energy to sustain. Li Yao had grasped the preliminary tricks and could waste the tenebrum energy of the extraterrestrial devils that he had swallowed extravagantly. But still, the state had collapsed after only half a second, when the ‘domain of his soul’ had expanded to less than five meters away.

Even a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator as strong as Heiye Ming could not have persisted in such an amazing state for two minutes if they were not completely dedicated to the improvement of personal combat ability.

For the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators such as Meng Chixin or Wu Suiyun who were heavily wounded before, their situations would be even worse. It was possible that they had theories and understandings but could not bring out their real combat ability.

Of course, after perceiving the mysteries of the Divinity Transformation Stage, it would be easier and more comfortable for him to fight in the Nascent Soul Stage than regular Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators.

After only three months, he had seen part of the mysteries of the Divinity Transformation Stage and experienced the state for half a second. Li Yao was already more than satisfied.

Consuming a large bottle of tonic drugs that were a hundred times more expensive than gold, Li Yao rested for a moment. Then, he rubbed his hands in excitement like a child who had a city of toys and began his new training.

His telepathic thoughts invaded the civil magical equipment around him like octopi and entangled the control chips of the magical equipment.

His telepathic thoughts did not stop on the surface of the chips but leaked to the deeper structure of the chips in a form similar to electric currents!

Chapter 1852 - The Last Hyper Spirit

A series of shining but hazy crystal balls immediately appeared deep inside Li Yao’s brain. The crystal balls were divided into dozens of different layers. Every layer was entangled with infinite numbers, glyphs, and rune arrays that were glittering and crashing into each other.

Or rather, his telepathic thoughts had snuck into the worlds deep inside the control chips, trying to crack the simplest rune arrays, analyze the fundamental logics hidden inside the rune arrays, and even modify or sabotage them in his own way.

In other ways, the technique that he had perceived recently and had been stumbling to practice was similar to the invasion of the crystal processor virus.

After Professor Mo Xuan swallowed the ‘star brain’, the mainframe crystal processor of Heavenly Phantom, he had turned into a life form that was similar to a super crystal processor. After the corruption of the extraterrestrial devils, he gained a lot of techniques that were similar to the crystal processor viruses. The enormous database of files that he passed on Li Yao had too many such techniques.

Li Yao had been quite scared of the extraterrestrial devils’ approaches before. Those techniques creeped him out like vipers lurking in a corner of the cave.

However, when he searched the database of Professor Mo Xuan’s legacy and examined the techniques, he was somehow deeply attracted by the mechanisms and general architecture of the techniques.

It was like the feeling when he saw the Tartarean Skeleton for the first time.

The Tartarean Skeleton was a Colossus born for him, and those were techniques created for him, too!

Colossi and techniques were neither good nor evil. If the evilness and madness of the extraterrestrial devils were not involved, the sheer invasion and control of the crystal processors and crystal chips seemed to be acceptable.

Besides, one could only win a battle if one knew both oneself and one's enemy well. The extraterrestrial devils were far from destroyed. Even Lu Qingchen as a 'cyber extraterrestrial devil' might not be entirely dead.

If he intended to slay the devils, he could not be completely ignorant of the methods of the devils. Should he encounter another invasion of the Spiritual Nexus, there might not be as many coincidences as last time.

Driven by his curiosity, Li Yao tried to analyze and understand the astronomical runes, code, and algorithms left by Professor Mo Xuan.

He only meant to give it a shot at the beginning. After all, he was not an expert of crystal processors. Such a tricky technique of transforming telepathic thoughts into a virus and hacking the crystal processors would be too much for him to learn by his estimation. He was merely hoping to learn a thing or two about it so that he would not be at a loss again if he ran into Lu Qingchen or another 'cyber extraterrestrial devil' in the future.

However, after he dipped his toes into it, he found it impossible to stop himself. After only a few months, he had indeed perceived a lot of interesting tricks.

No wonder Professor Mo Xuan thought very highly of him back then. Was it possible that the professor had sensed something in advance and realized his talents in the field?

Li Yao’s expertise right now was naturally far from enough for him to compile his telepathic thoughts into a virus and implant it into the enemy’s Spiritual Nexus and crystal processors for sabotage and destruction purposes.

But still…

Li Yao bulged his eyes abruptly. A million black numbers seemed to have flashed deep inside his eyes in that moment. Then, all the home magical equipment around went mad. The housecleaning magical equipment revolved at a high speed, the kettles were shrieking loudly, the refrigerators were opening and closing their doors nonstop, and the automatic ice making machines were pouring out ice diligently.

All the civil magical equipment seemed to have been endowed with life by Li Yao as they danced crazily.

Li Yao grinned. He did not resort to the methods of ‘remote manipulation’ at all. He did not even touch the rune arrays on the surface of the control chips. He had only invaded the control chips with his telepathic thoughts and disrupted the civil from their operational logic and algorithms.

Such a redundant skill seemed quite useless right now. It seemed far-fetched for him to develop the skill to the point where he could invade the mainframe crystal processors that were heavily guarded with an enormous architecture, too.

However, for Li Yao, as long as he could train himself to the point where he could hack and modify the surveillance magical equipment nearby and even figure out the detailed structure of the target to be compromised, it would suffice.

Hehehe. If, one day, I can hack all the crystal cameras and eavesdroppers hundreds of meters around with a telepathic thought, allowing me to intercept and modify their images and sounds, or even to scan the overall structure of the entire building, wouldn't such a skill be the most irreplaceable treasure for me, the Prince of Ventilation Tubes who is fully dedicated to infiltrating the enemy's core and performing the decapitation strategy?

While he was dwelling on his imagination and preparing to continue his training, his portable magical equipment buzzed lightly. Raising his wrist to check the message, Li Yao could not help but exclaim in delight, “They have found another ‘hyper spirit’!”

When Li Yao walked out of the training room, a silver shuttle that looked like a ghost in moonlight was already waiting for him.

This place was Hundred Flowers City, Professor Mo Xuan's home base. Since Li Yao had chosen to absorb Professor Mo Xuan's heritage, there naturally was no better place for his training than Hundred Flowers City.

Besides, the incident of the extraterrestrial devils was far from over. Regarding Professor Mo Xuan, Lu Qingchen, Lei Yuqin, and the extraterrestrial devils, countless secrets were still waiting to be excavated, and countless loopholes were yet to be blocked and sealed.

The federation had established a special team made of countless specialists of crystal processors and Meditation Healers to analyze the incident of the extraterrestrial devils and to ensure the safety of the Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus.

Li Yao, as the guy who had crushed Professor Mo Xuan and Lu Qingchen and received Professor Mo Xuan’s heritage, was naturally involved in the special team. He was appointed ‘Senior Counselor’.

The one who had come to pick him up for the emergency meeting, on the other hand, was his old acquaintance—Long Yangjun.

After the space battle was over, the twelve experts of the Ancient Sages Sector had all distinguished themselves. Faced with the triple threats of the Imperium of True Human Beings, the Alliance of the Holy Covenant, and the extraterrestrial devils, they had to accelerate the pace to embrace the federation and deal with the common foes together.

The federation also cleared all obstacles possible. According to their personality, ability, and interest, they were all allocated to important posts.

It was meant to make use of their expertise and Cultivation. Furthermore, the arrangement would facilitate the integration of the two parties and lay a solid foundation for the Ancient Sages Sector to join the federation as the eighth world of the Star Glory Federation.

Qi Zhongdao was devoted to the study of the laws of the federation. Han Baling somehow took interest in the police system of the federation. Meng Chixin, Qi Changsheng, Yan Liren, and some other experts were still chasing the defeated soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet deep inside the space together with the Burning Prairie Fleet. The other experts had their own appropriate arrangements, too.

Long Yangjun, on the other hand, offered to participate in the subsequent investigation on the incident of the extraterrestrial devils.

Although she was technically not an experienced expert of crystal processors, her soul was much stronger than that of any regular Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator. She also seemed to boast a certain unusual understanding of the extraterrestrial devils. Naturally, the federation could not decline her request. She had spent the last few months in Hundred Flowers City and met Li Yao a lot.

Hardly had he opened the door when Long Yangjun exclaimed fussily, “Monster Li, I feel that you have made improvements in your Cultivation again.

“Well, well, well. It is not easy for the improvement of someone in your level to be sensed. Have you found an opportunity to enter the Divinity Transformation Stage?”

No Cultivator did not want to advance to higher levels no matter how high their level. As a close friend of Long Yangjun’s, Li Yao found it unnecessary to conceal it from her. He simply grinned and boarded the shuttle in great content. Naturally, Long Yangjun mocked him for a while.

The shuttle moved fast and soon reached the space station where Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital was.

After the incident of the extraterrestrial devils, the space station had been entirely blocked.

It was almost a treasury below Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital. The investigation team had excavated for three months, but what they had found was still merely the tip of the iceberg.

At this moment, countless investigators, who were wearing internally circulative suits and silver helmets that could block the invasion of telepathic thoughts and disruption of spiritual waves, were busy doing their job on the relic of the hospital that had been dug up like an enormous construction site.

“President Li!”

Hardly had the shuttle stopped when a graceful, scholarly man whose hair was half white came to greet them.

He was Xie Wufeng, the deputy leader of the investigation team and a professor of the Sky Fantasia Academy decades ago who had a public debate with Professor Mo Xuan regarding ‘virtual life’.

Fate was truly quite a wonderful thing. Li Yao had watched the recording of the famous debate. At that time, Professor Mo Xuan had still been a firm endorser of the Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus and virtual life, while Professor Xie Wufeng was a worried alarmist and opposer.

However, after the collapse of the Virtual Spirits Sector, Professor Mo Xuan had been caught in frustration and desperation because of the gloomy future of a brand-new virtual life form. He had shifted his attention to the studies of virtualizing humans.

On the other hand, Professor Xie Wufeng, who had openly objected to him and argued with him for years, was convinced by him and became the successor of his past ideology. The guy abandoned his tenure in Sky Fantasia Academy and devoted himself to the study of the Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus and brand-new virtual life.

When he joined the special investigation team, Professor Xie Wufeng was also the latest helmsman of the game ‘Civilization’, responsible for controlling the general picture and designing principle of the DLCs and the overall operational logic of ‘Civilization’.

The game ‘Civilization’ had a lot to do with the Glorious Sunlight Group and Li Yao himself, too. Now that Li Yao had returned to the federation, he had naturally had quite a few in-depth conversations with Professor Xie Wufeng. The two parties were in a close relationship. Since they were working in the special investigation team together, not many formalities were needed.

On Professor Xie Wufeng’s shoulder, a little green bird made of delicate, clear crystals uttered a crisp voice, “Li Yao!”

Naturally, it was Li Yao’s unforgettable ‘Sister Qingqing’, Wei Qingqing.

Wei Qingqing was an important member of the ‘Tinder Plan’ who had communicated with Professor Mo Xuan a lot in recent years. She was also a distinguished architect of the Spiriters’ Realm, responsible for creating and rendering different Spiriters’ Realms with words.

After learning of Professor Mo Xuan’s plan, she had applied many times to join the special investigation team. With Li Yao’s help, she did not meet much difficulty in joining it.

“Professor Xie, Sister Qingqing!” Li Yao greeted them with a smile. “I’m told that you have located the last ‘hyper spirit’?”

Chapter 1853 - Moonlight Bringer

Professor Mo Xuan’s research on artificial intelligence had never been a secret. The ‘old grandpas’, educational artificial intelligences who played with the little kids in the Tinder Base, were fully open to the public.

Other than Professor Mo Xuan, a lot of specialists of crystal processors in the federation had been working on artificial intelligence. The development center of the game ‘Civilization’ under Professor Xie Wufeng’s lead was also devising more vivid and life-like artificial intelligence in the enormous and sophisticated DLCs to be at the service of the players.

‘Xiao Ming’ and ‘Wen Wen’, the game assistants, were their masterpieces but far from their limits. The ‘Acolytes’ in the game of the latest generation, with their unique algorithms, could already completely simulate the actions and speech of humans to some extent. It was barely possible to distinguish them from real persons. However, it was still within the bounds of the law.

In the meantime, it was a completely different case for the Hyper Spirits, which were the super artificial intelligence with databases ten thousand times more enormous than common artificial intelligence and brand-new algorithms and logic provided by the extraterrestrial devils, allowing them to be highly perceptive and destructive.

Professor Mo Xuan had crafted nineteen Hyper Spirits in total. Other than the two failed experimental subjects, the remaining seventeen were used to invade the important nodes of the Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus and to disrupt and corrupt the most critical mainframe crystal processors. They were the key to the whole scheme.

Although the extraterrestrial devils’ scheme had failed, it was still necessary to find out the common artificial intelligence, the Deviant Spirits; the evolved, super artificial intelligence, the Hyper Spirits; and also the laboratories where the Hyper Spirits were generated.

In that regard, the experimental data that Professor Mo Xuan offered to Li Yao in his final repentance before his death proved to be of tremendous help.

With the detailed experimental logs and all kinds of control passcodes, the investigation team was able to follow the traces. After three months, the super crystal processor where the ‘Hyper Spirits’ were fertilized at the beginning was finally found, making it possible to lock onto the features of the core data of all the ‘Hyper Spirits’ so that there would be a way to contain them.

Today was the day when the core database of the last ‘Hyper Spirit’ was retrieved. Its fundamental operation logic had been reset, and the user with the highest permission was changed from Professor Mo Xuan to the investigation group.

“This is the No. 14 Hyper Spirit, code name ‘Moonlight Bringer’.”

Professor Xie Wufeng had already connected his mini crystal processor to the super crystal processor where the Hyper Spirit was running, allowing him to retrieve part of the permissions and interfaces remotely. He typed quickly on the mini crystal processor for a while, and a stream of blue brilliance immediately formed a woman wearing an indifferent expression and a light gauze on his wrist.

“To report to the lords in parliament, we have revised its interface so that it can understand most of the illegal orders and respond in a way that even outsiders of the trade can comprehend. For example—”

Professor Xie Wufeng paused for a moment and asked, “Moonlight Bringer, what was your last mission?”

The shadow of woman in light gauze replied casually without any hesitation, “My mission was to invade the mainframe crystal processor of the ‘Space Jump Coordinate Center’ in Hundred Flowers City to control all the sailing routes for space jump that passed near Hundred Flowers City, thereby navigating the starships that were transferring to the Heaven’s Origin Sector through Hundred Flowers City to a pair of nonexistent coordinates.”

While speaking, the gauze on her body suddenly turned into layers of thin mist, from which oceanic data, formulas, and runes surfaced. They were all the specific methods to hack and control crystal processors.

The formulas fell quickly at a speed of more than five hundreds lines per second. Despite Li Yao’s dynamic visual abilities, he felt his head going dizzy. He asked in amazement, “Controlling the transportation hub of the entire federation and forcing all the starships to listen to its commander? Is it really possible?”

“By the preliminary analysis of our experts, it is indeed possible,” Professor Xie Wufeng replied. “The extraterrestrial devil that resided inside Professor Mo Xuan’s body was very likely born in the Star Ocean Imperium’s era. You too know that the Star Ocean Imperium was the peak of the civilization of mankind. A lot of technology of the Star Ocean Imperium directly originated from the legendary ‘Book of Revelations’. They were the real primeval technology!

“The extraterrestrial devil that once got in touch with such technology—or rather, that was created for sabotaging such technology—had a more profound understanding in the fields of artificial intelligence, machine sabotage and control, cyberspace infiltration and defense, and so on.

“The seventeen Hyper Spirits each had a database as vast as an ocean, a most amazing architecture, and the most unbelievable algorithms. Truth be told, despite the wisdom of all our specialists here, the mysteries have not been fully cracked even after three months.

“However, once we fully grasp their mysteries, we will certainly be able to improve the level of crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus in the federation for a hundred years. I have no doubt about that.”

“Indeed.”

After studying the tremendous experimental logs left by Professor Mo Xuan, Li Yao understood it very well. He dared not underestimate the horror of the extraterrestrial devils at all.

“How immaculate…”

Looking at ‘Moonlight Bringer’, which was obscure when covered in the smoke of infinite data, Li Yao could not help but ask, “Professor Xie, you are a specialist in virtual life. In your opinion, can such a powerful ‘Hyper Spirit’ be considered a virtual life?”

“There’s still a long way to go,” Professor Xie Wufeng replied. “It is true that the Hyper Spirit’s abilities in computation, analysis, and deduction far exceed normal humans, but that is not the difference that marks humans from nonhumans. At best, it can be called a ‘super artificial intelligence’, not a real virtual life. As for the disparity between the two concepts, you will understand it better if I ask it a few very simple questions.

“Moonlight Bringer, tell me everything about the sailing routes near the home planet of the Heaven’s Origin Sector. Everything.”

Without any hesitation, almost the moment Xie Wufeng finished the last syllable, the mist around Moonlight Bringer turned into brand-new information streams and started to flash at a super high frequency again.

Professor Xie Wufeng did not bother to read it at all. He asked the Hyper Spirit about the features of a few planets, the best sailing routes among them, and the energy consumption of the starships, which would make the best specialist in the field consider for a moment before they could reply. But Moonlight Bringer gave the most perfect answers in the blink of an eye.

“Very good.” Professor Xie Wufeng nodded in great satisfaction. Then he said, “Now, tell me the name of your favorite singer.”

The information streams that had been running like a flood a moment ago came to a stop abruptly.

Moonlight Bringer looked at Professor Xie Wufeng in a daze. Its lifeless eyes were even more unresponsive than before. After it was stuck for a long time, tremendous data flowed out again and glittered.

They were singers and their albums, ordered by download frequency, in the last ten, fifty, and a hundred years. The most subtle algorithms had also been adopted to calculate the ‘favorite’ singer for the people of different areas, different professions, and different ages. Detailed introductions to the singers and the valuable remarks on their songs were attached, too. It was yet another ocean of data.

“No, no, no,” Professor Xie Wufeng said, “I am not asking who the favorite singer of the people in the federation is. I’m asking who your favorite singer is. You do not need to give me so much information. One simple name is enough. One name!”

The information streams in front of Moonlight Bringer froze again. It was silent for a long time as if it were caught in an infinite loop.

“If you are not a fan of songs, that’s fine,” Professor Xie Wufeng said. “You only need to tell me that ‘you’ do not like music or any singer. It will count as an answer, too.”

Moonlight Bringer looked at him. The data was still frozen without offering any answer.

“Look.” Professor Xie Wufeng turned around to speak to Li Yao and Long Yangjun. “It is capable of illustrating the best sailing route to jump among seven planets in a row, yet it cannot give the name of its favorite singer. It is not human. It does not have the concept of ‘ego’, much less the feelings of ‘fondness’, ‘love’, and ‘hate’ that are derived from ‘ego’.

“At best, it is just a smartly-designed tool. It does not possess the ability to evolve into a ‘virtual intelligent life’. Only cells can evolve into humans. Rocks certainly can’t, however big and hard they are.”

Looking at Moonlight Bringer, Li Yao was suddenly caught in mixed feelings that he could not explain. There was no telling whether it was relief or regret. Taking a long breath, he said, “It seems that there’s a long way to go before we can create real virtual life, isn’t there?”

“It’s more than a long way. I’m suspecting that the journey will be endless.” Professor Xie Wufeng smiled bitterly. “At the very least, we now know that even the extraterrestrial devils that resided inside Professor Mo Xuan and Lu Qingchen were incapable of creating real virtual life, which means that it will only be more difficult for us to accomplish the task.”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. “What do you mean?”

Professor Xie Wufeng opened his hands and said, “Isn’t it a very simple logic? If your virtual life has similar definitions to us, it will certainly boast a soul with feelings and emotions, won’t it?”

Li Yao frowned. It was certainly a big question whether or not intelligent lives were certain to have soul waves and emotional fluctuations.

However, by the standard of human beings, if they were to create a virtual life as a ‘child civilization’, such qualities should be a necessary part.

“The extraterrestrial devils feed on the waves of soul and feelings,” Professor Xie Wufeng explained. “If the extraterrestrial devils could create a virtual life that has a soul and all kinds of emotions, why would they bother asking for trouble from human beings? They can totally create a virtual life and hide in a certain virtual space where they can feed on the virtual life in a self-sufficient way. Wouldn’t all their problems be resolved? Why would they have to fight the Pangu Civilization and the civilization of mankind if so?”

Li Yao blinked quickly and realized that it did make sense.

Professor Xie Wufeng smiled. “Forget it. We will not get anywhere even if we keep on talking about such groundless issues for decades. I invited you here today not exactly because of the No. 14 Hyper Spirit ‘Moonlight Bringer’. There are still the two…”

Brilliance suddenly beamed out of Li Yao’s eyes as he interrupted the professor. “Are you referring to the two ‘experimental subjects’ that were thrown into the Virtual Spirits Sector after failure?”

Chapter 1854 - The Dying Spirits Sector

“Yes,” Professor Xie Wufeng said. “According to the records of Professor Mo Xuan’s experiment logs and the confessions of the specialists of crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus, the two Hyper Spirits code named ‘No. 17’ and ‘No. 18’ were the products of failed experiments. Their core databases had long collapsed, and their operational logics were quite chaotic. In the end, Professor Mo Xuan abandoned them and sealed them in the Virtual Spirits Sector.

“However, as you have seen, the Hyper Spirits are all the most terrifying artificial intelligences. A single ‘Moonlight Bringer’ is capable enough of seriously disrupting if not completely controlling the transportation hub of the entire federation.

“Even if ‘No. 17’ and ‘No. 18’ are only broken clips of glyphs and code right now, should they fall into the hands of malicious parties, there could still be dire consequences.

“Therefore, we must find them and eradicate them completely!”

Li Yao nodded cautiously. “Indeed, we must. However, I’m confused about one thing. Judging from their code names, ‘No. 17’ and ‘No. 18’ must’ve been the Hyper Spirits that were developed at the end. Before them, sixteen Hyper Spirits were produced successfully, including a Hyper Spirit as complicated and powerful as ‘Moonlight Bringer’.

“Logically, Professor Mo Xuan had accumulated abundant experience in modification of the Hyper Spirits. Also, he had the enhancement of the extraterrestrial devils. Chances were low that he could make a mistake. Why did he experience two failures in a row?

“Professor Mo Xuan did not mention the problem much in his experiment logs. In the rare cases where he did bring up No. 17 and No. 18, he never cared to give more details. It seemed that he was quite baffled about the outcome himself. Over the past few days, you have cracked and analyzed all the crystal processors in Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital, and you interrogated so many Spiriters. Did you find any leads?”

“We may be onto something now,” Professor Xie Wufeng said. “According to the confessions of the specialists involved, it was mostly because Professor Mo Xuan was too ambitious. After the success of the first sixteen Hyper Spirits, his confidence expanded crazily and prompted him to produce an ultimate version that was stronger than all the ‘Hyper Spirits’.

“Despite the weird life form of Professor Mo Xuan as a star spirit and the abilities of the extraterrestrial devils, the techniques that they intended to endow to the ultimate Hyper Spirit far exceeded their limits.

“They seemed to have tried almost ten thousand radical algorithms and revolutionary operational logics on No. 17 and No. 18. All of them were the most cutting-edge virtual technology. However, every person has their limits, and even the extraterrestrial devils are not omnipotent. Because of the overwhelming untested new technology, the failures were unavoidable.

“After the two consecutive failures, they realized this point themselves. Therefore, the No. 19 Hyper Spirit was produced dutifully based on regular algorithms and operational logic. No. 17 and No. 18 were absolutely unique.

“I’m afraid that Professor Mo Xuan sealed them in the Virtual Spirits Sector instead of completely destroying them for the same reason. He probably intended to continue the studies of the two ultimate Hyper Spirits after he seized absolute power and gathered all the specialists and resources of the whole federation.”

Li Yao and Long Yangjun looked at each other and could not help but ask, “What kind of missions were No. 17 and No. 18 designed for that could only be supported by the techniques that were even unrealizable for the extraterrestrial devils?”

“The game ‘Civilization’.” Professor Xie Wufeng took a deep breath and said, “The mission for No. 17 and No. 18 was to control every platform, every DLC, and every player of ‘Civilization’ instantly.

“If the mission succeeded, they would be able to seal all the players dwelling in the worlds of ‘Civilization’ inside the immersive game cabins forever. Without the permission of them or the extraterrestrial devils, the players would never be able to return to reality.”

Li Yao was greatly alarmed. He could not help but feel that his blood was freezing.

‘Civilization’ was the greatest game platform in the federation. No. In fact, it had far exceeded the category of ‘game’. It was more like a virtual platform of communication that included the entire federation. Entertainment, socialization, work, and even the functions of the government could not have been done without the platform.

According to the statistics, more than ten billion people were online in Civilization every second. More than ninety percent of the population logged into the child platforms that derived from the platform on a daily basis. Almost a hundred percent of the population logged into Civilization at least once a week!

If the extraterrestrial devils had indeed controlled the game ‘Civilization’ with ‘No. 17’ and ‘No. 18’, the entire federation would essentially be under their control!

However…

“How is it possible?” Pondering for a moment, Li Yao shook his head quickly. “The computational load is too heavy. Also, it involves the mysteries at the deepest part of human souls. The mission is more difficult than counting the stars in the sky!”

“It is indeed practically impossible,” Professor Xie Wufeng remarked. “That was why the two experiments both failed. Later, even the Professor Mo Xuan possessed by the extraterrestrial devil realized that it was a complete waste of time and resources and put the project on hold.

“Based on the experiment data that we collected, No. 17 and No. 18 had only one percent of the virtual pieces left after collapse. That being said, it is still necessary to locate them, partly to prevent them from falling into the hands of ambitious schemers and partly because the central glyphs and the fundamental operational logic would be helpful for us to analyze other Hyper Spirits.”

Li Yao thought for a moment and asked, “Does it mean that we have to enter the Virtual Spirits Sector?”

“Regarding the super crystal processors that were involved in the ‘Virtual Spirits Sector Project’, the specialists have a lot of ways to unravel the deep mysteries in them,” Professor Xie Wufeng said. “However, it is indeed the most time-saving and most straightforward way to have someone check the collapsed Virtual Spirits Sector first.”

Li Yao frowned. “Won’t it be dangerous?”

Professor Mo Xuan, Lu Qingchen, and even Su Changfa in the beginning were all involved in the violent virtual turbulence during the collapse of the Virtual Spirits Sector. Their souls were heavily wounded. Some of them were dead, and some were corrupted.

Li Yao did not want such a tragedy to happen again.

Wei Qingqing smiled. “Rest assured. Although the Virtual Spirits Sector is a broken mess right now, it is still rather stable. As long as we do not modify the data on a large scale, there shouldn’t be a second collapse.”

“Of course, it can be dangerous,” Professor Xie Wufeng said. “That is why we are hoping that you and Fellow Cultivator Long can lead us to inspect the Virtual Spirits Sector together. Both of you are super experts close to the Divinity Transformation Stage, and you demonstrated enormous soul power in the fierce fights against the extraterrestrial devils. If you come with us, even if we are trapped in the Virtual Spirits Sector, there should be a way for us to break the illusion and return to reality instead of panicking, right?”

Li Yao considered for a moment. He was very curious about the Virtual Spirits Sector, which was designed to hatch virtual life. Besides, as a virtual world that had been forsaken for decades, it could not be more dangerous than the Spiriters' Realm, which was directly under the control of the extraterrestrial devils, could it?

Li Yao looked at Long Yangjun, checking if she was willing to go.

“Don't look at me. I have already promised Professor Xie.” Long Yangjun opened her hands and said solemnly, “Theoretically speaking, there shouldn't be much danger after we enter the Virtual Spirits Sector, but we have to take precautions for a fatal factor nonetheless.”

Greatly alarmed, Li Yao hurried to ask, “What factor?”

“You!” Long Yangjun glanced at him. “A simple mission of inspection that is supposedly not dangerous at all will be a hundred times more perilous than before should you participate in it, Monster Li. I can almost hear the alarms ringing loudly in my head!”

“…” Li Yao.

…

In the super crystal processor control center in Hundred Flowers City, Li Yao, Long Yangjun, Professor Xie Wufeng, and several other specialists of crystal processors were all soaked in the warm nervous interaction liquids.

Wei Qingqing and several other spectral Cultivators, or Spiriters, connected themselves to the enormous super crystal processor through wires, too.

It was a well-planned operation of inspection. Naturally, countless doctors, Meditation Healers, and crystal processor specialists were monitoring the status of their bodies and brains closely to lower the danger level to the minimum.

“Are you ready? Inspection of the Virtual Spirits Sector will begin in ten… nine… eight…”

Professor Xie Wufeng’s voice sounded like blurred tides through the thick nerval interaction liquids.

When the transparent cover of the cabin was closed, it seemed to be cutting off the light of the outside, too. Li Yao felt darkness consume him inch by inch until even his head was drowned.

He was suddenly surrounded by coldness. He struggled to stand up, only to discover that he sat up without any trouble and that his head did not bump into the cover of the cabin.

The cover of the immersive cabin was gone. Or rather, the real world was gone.

Right now, he was sitting on a bleak beach deep inside the broken Virtual Spirits Sector, and his legs were being brushed by the dark waves.

This was a world that was dying slowly.

Li Yao looked far away. The end of the sea level was a gigantic star that almost occupied Li Yao’s entire eyes, giving a very weird feeling of astonishment, as if it were not a sphere but a mouth that collapsed inwardly and was about to swallow the entire planet he was at.

Despite the unbelievably huge size of the star, it did not emanate much dazzling brilliance. It burnt lethargically and occasionally released one or two rays that were no better than nothing. They brought a pale hue of redness to the beach but not the slightest warmth.

It was better to call the star some mottled, red pigment that was smeared in the sky than a star. Nothing more.

The black ocean was also the same.

At first, Li Yao thought that the ocean was frozen and all the waves and tides had come to a stop. But upon closer inspection, and after a long observation, it finally occurred to him that the ocean was actually still flowing, except that it seemed to be flowing a hundred times more slowly than the oceans in the real world. In such a weary, sluggish way, it reminded him that he was in the middle of a dying Virtual Spirits Sector.

Chapter 1855 - Sand Painting

Li Yao held a handful of black seawater in his hands, only to discover that the seawater was like a combination of mucus and sand. It slid through his fingers in a very weird form.

It seemed that the collapse of the Virtual Spirits Sector had affected the fundamental logic layer. Even the dynamic model of the ocean could not be kept steady anymore, which resulted in all those uncanny changes.

It was a cold and quiet world. Li Yao did not sense much vigorous auras of life.

Walking along the beach for a long time, Li Yao discovered that the only thing that could be called ‘life’ was the weird creatures everywhere to be seen on the beach, which were combinations of crabs and jellyfish, like airless balloons with countless tentacles growing out.

All the weird crabs were absolutely still and emitted the most insufferable stench of putrefaction. There was no telling whether they were dead or ‘alive’.

Of course, they were not virtual life generated by the Virtual Spirits Sector by itself but the artificial intelligence added when the Virtual Spirits Sector was constructed. The original plan was to use them to modify the primitive ocean, monitor the data changes of the virtual water, and accelerate the birth of virtual life.

However, because of the collapse of the Virtual Spirits Sector, the virtual life was never born, and even the core databases of the artificial intelligence became long and redundant. They were caught in infinite loops because of data overflow and could not perform any operations anymore.

Boom… Boom… Boom…

In the purple sky, the dark clouds were rolling sluggishly and rumbling every now and then. But the thunder had only the former half but not the latter half, like roosters whose necks were grabbed. The noises that came to an abrupt halt halfway were most discomforting.

On the other side of the beach was a boundless metropolis. Li Yao observed despite the long distance, only to discover that the modern city seemed to have suffered the most severe earthquake and meteor shower. Traces of collapsed buildings, explosions, and furious fire could be found everywhere, making it look even more desperate and soundless than the black ocean.

“Hello!”

The Virtual Spirits Sector gave him a very uncomfortable feeling.

It was almost like the collapsed world was the only thing left in the entire universe, and he was the only one left in the collapsed world.

He could not help but shrink his neck and shout aloud.

Long Yangjun, Wei Qingqing, Professor Xie Wufeng, and other members of the inspection team had actually landed on the beach not far away from him, but none of them replied to his calling.

When Li Yao finally found his teammates, wondering why they did not respond, he discovered that Long Yangjun of mysterious origins, Professor Xie Wufeng who had seen and experienced a lot, Wei Qingqing as a Spiriter herself, and all the members of the inspection team were all in a daze before the beach.

Li Yao craned his head and looked at the beach. His mouth slowly opened, too.

He saw a long scroll, or rather, hundreds of sand drawings, from one side of the beach to the other.

The sand drawings at the beginning were drawn in a very juvenile way, as if a child had picked up a random twig and smeared on the beach randomly. There was no telling what was drawn at all. It was just a bunch of messy lines.

Gradually, the sand drawings had their own content and framework. Although they still looked rather naïve, they did give the feeling of primitive beauty that reminded Li Yao of the murals that the cavemen left deep inside their caves.

The content of the sand drawings seemed to be the depths of a primitive ocean, where all kinds of bizarre creatures such as fungi blanket, unicellular algae, nautili, and trilobites could be found.

As the primitive ocean creatures gradually evolved, the sand drawings grew more and more sophisticated, and the arrangement of the content was more and more delicate. The long scroll of the evolution of creatures was depicted vividly in a lifelike way with the tiny grains of sand.

Ocean creatures, reptiles, mammals, primates, enlightenment of the Pangu Civilization, birth of modern human beings, division of mankind, wars, and development. The scale of the sand drawings became larger and larger, and the structure was more and more complicated, rising from a plane to a 3D object. In the end, it was no longer a ‘drawing’ but a statue of an enormous scale. Two lovely little kids, a boy and a girl, were sitting on the surface of a planet that was scarred by dents and damage alone, holding their cheeks with their tiny hands, as if they were watching the starry sky.

In front of them, on the other hand, were dense tombstones—the tombstones of human beings.

There was not the slightest brightness in the eyes of the two little kids that were made of sand. They showed no sadness, delight, fright, or fury at the tombstones that had drowned the entire world.

Li Yao swallowed hard. He somehow felt that such a long scroll of drawings looked familiar, as if he had seen it from somewhere else before.

Right. Was it not exactly a sand-drawing version of the vivid Half-Step Grand Illusionary Land in front of the gate of the Tinder Base?

However, at the end of the ‘road of evolution’ that Professor Mo Xuan built, what replaced human beings were giant silver balls made of liquid metal that were similar to him.

At the end of this scroll, on the other hand, despite a whole planet of tombstones of human beings, there were still two little kids raising their heads watching the starry sky. What was that supposed to mean?

Li Yao somehow felt that his mouth was dry. He asked Xie Wufeng softly, “Professor Xie, what is the meaning of this? Who left the sand drawings here? Professor Mo Xuan?”

“I have no idea, but it… doesn’t make any sense.” Professor Xie Wufeng hesitated for a moment and replied, “Everything in the Virtual Spirits Sector is calculated in real time. It changes constantly like the real world. Look at the rising and ebbing tides. Although they are feeble and slow, they certainly still exist. Also, judging from the form of the beach, the tides were much more violent than right now a while back, and the ocean should’ve drowned the sand drawings during the tide rising.”

“Exactly,” Wei Qingqing added. “Although the Virtual Spirits Sector collapsed in the past, it never came to a complete halt. Instead, it operated more chaotically without any pattern to follow. It was a world with earthquakes, thunderstorms, blowing winds, and raging tides. If the sand drawings were left at that time, they would’ve certainly been erased or ‘deleted’.”

“It means that…” Li Yao considered carefully for a moment and asked, “The sand drawings were left not that long ago, when the ‘vitality’ of the Virtual Spirits Sector ran dry, turning it into a dying and stagnant world?

“That was about the most critical moment when Professor Mo Xuan was ready to activate his final plan. Why did he bother to leave such weird marks in this place back then? If he felt the urge to ‘express’ something, the Grand Illusionary Land in the Tinder Base should’ve been enough for him to illustrate his ideology.

“Besides, such naïve and crude strokes do not look like Professor Mo Xuan’s style. They seem to have been painted by innocent children.

“Here comes the question. Is there somebody else in the Virtual Spirits Sector other than Professor Mo Xuan? Could they have left such drawings?”

“Strokes and styles can all be simulated,” Professor Xie Wufeng said. “Constructing such a scroll of sand drawings is not a complicated task. It is a piece of cake in terms of technology and computational ability. As long as the database is large enough, the job can be completed immediately after the instruction is inputted into the crystal processor.

“The key problem is, who gave whom this ‘instruction’ and for what purpose?”

His question rendered everybody silent. Every member of the inspection team felt cold at the back of their head, as if two pairs of glittering little eyes were grimacing at them while hiding amid the sand.

On one knee, Li Yao observed the sand drawings carefully. Somehow, they gave them a strong feeling of weirdness, as if he were familiar with the sand drawings for no good reason.

Feeble electric currents swept across his body, making him feel numb from his eyelids to his lips. It was hard for him to say whether it was joyful or uncomfortable.

How should he put it? It suddenly occurred to him that the sand drawings seemed to have been made by himself. Or rather, if he were asked to depict the road of evolution of life, the final result would be very familiar to the sand drawings.

Li Yao was greatly alarmed. Calming himself down, he continued asking, “Did you find the pieces of ‘No. 17’ and ‘No. 18’?”

“Not yet,” Professor Xie Wufeng said. “They are a bunch of broken, unsubstantial pieces of runes and data in the first place. It would come as no surprise even if they have been completely eradicated by the Virtual Spirits Sector.

“What? Are you suspicious that the sand drawings were left by ‘No. 17’ and ‘No. 18’? It is also a possibility. Assuming that Professor Mo Xuan embedded a certain snippet of instructions about the sand drawings into their bodies, which would be activated automatically on certain conditions to drive them to leave such stuff, well, this is a rather plausible explanation.

“Let’s head into the town and take a look.”

Along the stairs that were full of cracks and weeds, the inspection team entered the metropolis by the sea, which used to be magnificent but had nothing but desolation right now.

Li Yao realized that the city was an amalgamation of all the cities that mankind had ever built throughout history. The vintage towers and pavilions and the modern skyscrapers with glass walls were closely combined.

On one side of the city were beautiful mountains and running waterfalls. On another side were vacuum rails that protruded to the sky and an underground square that spanned hundreds of meters.

However, after the collapse of the Virtual Spirits Sector, the ‘city of ten thousand cities’ had been completely reduced to debris. Both the pavilions and towers and the skyscrapers were tied up by weeds and vines. The waterfalls had dried, the tubes had broken, and the underground square was filed with remnants and dust, like a grave for the civilization of mankind.

“Professor Mo Xuan once talked with me about his designs of virtual life.”

Looking at the empty streets and the city rife with desolation, Professor Xie Wufeng remarked with mixed feelings, “At that time, Professor Mo Xuan firmly believed in the eventual birth of a brand-new virtual life. But he did not want to create a virtual life that humans could not understand or that could not understand humans and might even turn against humans.

“How should I put it? He was more hoping to create a virtual life that shared the ideology and feelings of mankind, acknowledged the morals and values of mankind, and even considered itself a ‘child of mankind’, or rather an evolved version of mankind.

“Therefore, when he created the ‘virtual primitive ocean’, he also established the glorious city here, in which the essence of the civilization of mankind—including our technology, laws, morals, arts and the soul-stirring legends of heroes—was condensed.

“You can consider the city a combination of a history museum and a grand library that contained our whole civilization. The virtual life was supposed to be fertilized, born, and evolved under the radiance of the ‘city of civilization’ so that they could grow into a ‘good kid’.”

Chapter 1856 - The Gone Statue

Li Yao found it hard to imagine that a brand-new virtual life could be born in such a way, or that the virtual life would listen to the orders of mankind, their creator, obediently. “Why does it sound so undependable to me?”

“Of course it is undependable. However, creating a virtual intelligent life in a brand-new form is something that none in history have ever tried. Who can guarantee that a certain approach is definitely going to work out?”

Professor Xie Wufeng smiled bitterly. “Toward the collapse of the Virtual Spirits Sector, even Professor Mo Xuan realized that it was a dead end. Creating a brand-new virtual life was both unlikely and unnecessary. He shifted his field of research to the virtualization of humans themselves. The ideas of education through ‘history museum’ and ‘grand library’ were furthered in the ‘Tinder Plan’ in the ‘old grandpas’, except that the targets to be educated were no longer a brand-new virtual life but a primitive civilization millions of years in the future.

“But both creating a brand-new virtual life and educating a primitive civilization millions of years in the future are fundamentally the same. They are both hoping to pass on the spirit of the civilization of mankind after it declines, or even to create a ‘replica’ or ‘upgraded version’ of human beings.”

While talking, everybody slowly walked toward the downtown area.

In the central square, hundreds of tall and magnificent statues were supposed to be standing. They were the most influential politicians, artists, military commanders, and battle experts. Together, they congregated into a magnificent forest.

At this moment, all the statues were lying on their sides and riddled with holes, with traces of green moss and rust everywhere.

A lot of the statues only had the broken limbs left. Some were even ripped into pieces by lightning or earthquakes and scattered on the ground nearby, drowned by the weeds and thorns that grew out of the cracks on the earth.

“This is…”

Professor Xie Wufeng walked to a bare pedestal and touched it. His face suddenly turned extremely weird at that moment, and his pupils were constricted to the minimum.

Li Yao suddenly grew alert. “What’s up?”

“It is rather odd.” Professor Xie Wufeng looked around carefully for a moment before he frowned and said, “A statue is missing. Not crippled, not blown apart by lightning strikes, but entirely gone. Not a single finger that belongs to the statue can be found anymore. Look. The pedestal is very clean, without a single pebble or iron piece left. The statue did not crack, collapse, or break apart but was probably… devoured by something.”

Li Yao raised his eyebrows and touched the pedestal. He only felt that the place where the statue should be joined was as smooth as a mirror, which did not look like the destruction caused by the collapse of the virtual world. “Something is indeed not right. Whose statue is this?”

Professor Xie Wufeng glanced at the number on the pedestal and browsed through the experiment data of the Virtual Spirits Sector Project. Then, his expression became even weirder. “It is your statue.”

“Huh?”

“Is it so strange?” Professor Xie Wufeng asked. “The square was established to introduce the six hundred years of history of the federation. Generally speaking, the most dominating and distinguished big shots from the six hundred years all had their statues here. No matter how modest you are, you don’t think that you can’t make it onto the list of most influential persons in the federation, do you?”

Li Yao held back the urge to scratch his head. He was almost amused. “My statue is completely gone. What’s that supposed to mean?”

“The so-called ‘statue’ is just a front-end display that we can see in this interface,” Professor Xie Wufeng explained. “From the perspective of the essential data, every statue means the enormous information base of the celebrity—the public information, of course.

“It includes but is not limited to the celebrity’s glorious deeds, training experience, battle videos, theses and books, essence of lessons and speeches, deep tomography of the brain, dynamic analysis of the brainwaves, and so on.

“By the combination of the enormous database, it is not a cold statue that is created in the end but a living virtual hero. You may understand it as an early version of the ‘old grandpa’. Your statue is actually ‘Grandpa Yao 1.0’.”

“Wait…” Li Yao frowned and interrupted Professor Xie Wufeng’s introduction. “There are even the deep tomography of the brain and the dynamic analysis of brainwaves? Where did Professor Mo Xuan get that?”

“Every time you were wounded or about to advance into a new level, the most brilliant doctors and Meditation Healers of the federation would perform physical examinations on you,” Professor Xie Wufeng said. “A lot of information on your brain and soul was left behind.

“Such information was supposed to be confidential and would not be unclassified until your death was confirmed, but at that time, Professor Mo Xuan was already under the influence of the extraterrestrial devils. In order to produce a more perfect ‘old grandpa’, it was not strange that he found a way to copy the graph of your brainwaves and appended it to his database.”

Li Yao could not help but rub his temples. “So, the ‘statue’ that contains my brain tomography and brainwave analysis is the only one that has gone missing right now. Why? Is there something different between my brain and other people’s?”

“Even if there is a difference, it is not something that can be figured out from the tomography of the brain or the brainwave analysis,” Professor Xie Wufeng said. “You also know that the mysteries of the human brain are probably more than the mysteries of the whole universe. Or rather, a human brain is itself a minor universe. Even if all the crystal processors of the federation run to the point of collapse, I’m afraid that it will not be enough for them to figure out one percent of the truth of the ‘minor universe’.

“Everybody’s soul is unique and utterly different from one another. You are an expert close to the Divinity Transformation Stage, which means that your soul will be even more special. How can anybody figure out everything based on a few graphs of brainwaves?

“In my opinion, it is possible that Professor Mo Xuan intentionally migrated the database that contained tremendous information about you in order to deal with you, isn’t it?

“But that doesn’t make sense. He shouldn’t have foreseen your return at that time. Besides, he must’ve had copies of the data about you. There was no need for him to restart the Spiriters’ Realm and take away the data about your brain and soul inside.

“In that case…”

Li Yao, Long Yangjun, Wei Qingqing, Professor Xie Wufeng, and other members of the inspection team, faced with the empty pedestal, were caught in a long silence.

…

After six hours in the Virtual Spirits Sector, the inspection team had still found absolutely nothing.

They found neither the tiniest pieces of the Hyper Spirits ‘No. 17’ and ‘No. 18’ nor Li Yao’s statue.

Li Yao and Professor Xie Wufeng returned to the beach near the sluggish ocean again. They looked at the continuous sand drawings and the black, lifeless ocean in a daze.

The uncanny incidents after he entered the Virtual Spirits Sector had made Li Yao ill at ease. He somehow felt that an invisible rope was connecting everything.

“According to the result of the preliminary exploration, No. 17 and No. 18 must’ve been completely deleted.”

Professor Xie Wufeng took a breath in relief and said, not without regret, “This is not a bad ending. Although we have no access to the core databases of the two Hyper Spirits right now, we don’t need to worry that they may fall into the hands of ambitious schemers and cause major trouble again.

“As for your missing statue, it is not a big deal. Ninety-nine percent of the information contained inside the statue was from the public files. Even the brain tomography was data from more than a hundred years ago. During the hundred years, your soul went through drastic changes. That outdated data is nothing but junk. It cannot be used against you at all. You can rest assured about that.”

“Professor Xie Wufeng, do you think—” Staring at the sand drawings, Li Yao suddenly asked, for reasons he did not know, “Is it really impossible for real virtual life with self-awareness to show up?”

Professor Xie Wufeng was slightly dazed. He smiled and picked up a handful of sand. Then he remarked, “It is not entirely impossible, but the odds are quite low. How low? Let me give you an example. Suppose every grain of sand on this beach is carved with a random letter, and I have picked up a handful of sand randomly and let it slip through my fingers. The odds of a real virtual life being born are exactly the odds of the sand drifting in the wind lining up to be the most touching poem in the whole universe!

“I know what you are thinking.

“You are thinking of No. 17 and No. 18, after being thrown into the Virtual Spirits Sector after the failed experiments, evolving significantly and gaining self-awareness through uncanny fortuitous incidents that turned them from ‘artificial intelligence’ into real ‘virtual life’, aren’t you?

“Hehe. I can assure you… No, all the specialists of crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus in the entire federation can assure you that it is impossible, absolutely impossible.

“No. 17 and No. 18 are essentially databases with a bunch of cold operation logic, fundamentally the same as ‘Moonlight Bringer’. They are tools, just like the stones with which humans smacked nuts and animal bones in the beginning. They are nothing more than tools.

“Stones cannot evolve into humans. Those ‘virtual stones’ certainly cannot evolve into real ‘virtual life’, either.”

Frowning, Li Yao thought hard for a long time before he spoke once more. “Professor Xie, I once heard a theory before. More than ninety-seven percent of the mass of a human is fundamentally made of carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, helium, phosphorus, sulfur, and other common elements, which is exactly what the billions of stars in the vast universe are made of.

“In other words, the basic elements that make up our body are the same as the basic elements that make up the stars. We are the literal ‘sons of stars’.

“You said just now that only cells can evolve into humans and that stones could never evolve into humans. But where did the original cells come from? At the beginning of the big bang, was there any fundamental difference between the elements that were to make up cells billions of years later and the elements that were to become stones?”

Professor Xie Wufeng was rendered speechless for a moment. He was dazed for a long time before he finally replied, “As you said just now, those changes only happened after billions of years. That’s what it takes for the odds of one billionth to become reality.

“In the scale of ten billion years, of course, anything is possible.

“However, if we are talking about the hundred thousand years in which the civilization of mankind has been shining, or the future thousand years of the Star Glory Federation, I can still promise you very solemnly that virtual intelligent life will absolutely not be born without the interference of the outside world!”

Li Yao’s ears and eyebrows pricked at the same time. “If I may ask, what do you mean by ‘interference of the outside world’?”

Chapter 1857 - Enlighten the Child Civilization

Professor Xie Wufeng blinked and shook his head. “It’s nothing but an absurd hypothesis that is not supported by any factual evidence. Forget it. What I’m expressing is that there is no need for you to fret, President Li. In our generation, and even in the dozens of generations in the future, nobody will see the birth of a brand-new virtual life.

“Of course, according to the design of the extraterrestrial devils, human beings can be virtualized into new forms. The odds of such an event are much greater than the odds of the birth of a brand-new life form.

“Alright.” Li Yao scratched his chin hard and looked at Professor Xie Wufeng carefully. “I am still interested in the ‘interference of the outside world’ that you mentioned just now. Even if it is just a groundless hypothesis, it wouldn’t hurt to talk a little bit more about it, would it?”

“Fine, if you are so insistent on it, President Li.” Professor Xie Wufeng smiled and said, “It is a design proposed by a very young student of mine who is a crazy fan of ‘virtual intelligent life’. He often throws out a lot of unconventional, bizarre ideas. It is a shame that most of the ideas are not backed by any theories and cannot be written into papers and books. If anything, they are the best material for thrillers.

“Regarding whether or not ‘virtual intelligent life’ will be born within several hundred years, my student has created his own interference theory, or rather, the ‘enlightenment theory’. Same as everybody else, he believes that virtual intelligent life won’t be born in the next thousands of years with the development level of the crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus of the federation and even the Imperium. In thousands of years, human beings will have mastered more extraordinary technology in crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus. They will not watch virtual intelligence life be born and grow up without control while doing nothing about it.

“In other words, as long as the civilization of mankind keeps up this momentum of development, it will be like a giant tree that occupies all the sunlight and nutrition, and the grass growing next to the tree will have few opportunities to grow up vigorously.

“However, if certain interference of a higher level accelerates the evolution of the virtual life by means of ‘enlightenment’, even helping them surpass certain procedures that they should’ve gone through independently, anything is possible.”

“I’m still not clear. What is ‘interference of a higher level’?” Li Yao asked in confusion. “What is ‘enlightenment’?”

Professor Xie Wufeng smiled and said, “Do you not know what enlightenment is? In the notes and classics of the ancient Cultivators, such stories can be found everywhere. The deities who made remarkable achievements in training preached in the wilderness. When their preaching reached the climax, flowers fell from the sky, and golden light glowed brilliantly. All the birds and beasts in the wilderness were enlightened with wisdom and the ability to train.

“Or in other cases, certain objects that did not have life in the beginning, for example, a sword, a saber, a brick, a tile, or even half a water tank could be ‘enlightened’ and develop wisdom as long as they absorbed part of the vitality and blood from the deities.

“Such ridiculous, mythical stories often consist of our ancestors’ perceptual knowledge of the primeval civilization. The phenomena described in the stories are likely incidents where certain primeval civilizations modified animals or assembled spiritual puppets with lifeless metal and minerals. Isn’t this some sort of ‘enlightenment’?

“A more appropriate example would be mankind itself. We were just ignorant monkeys who feasted on raw meat and blood in the beginning. It was the Pangu Civilization who saw the potential in the monkeys and picked us as their tools. They ran profound modifications on us and ‘enlightened’ us, eventually allowing us to boast high intelligence and a powerful civilization.”

Li Yao was lost for words and deep in thought.

Professor Xie Wufeng continued. “In both the home planet of the Heaven’s Origin Sector and other habitable planets, fossils of dinosaurs have been excavated very frequently. Such enormous reptiles were the dominators of the universe before the birth of the civilization of mankind. Some people even believe that several races in the Pangu Civilization were actually branches of dinosaurs.

“However, from the birth of the original dinosaurs to the age where the Pangu Civilization flourished, it took three hundred to five hundred million years! In other words, after three to five million years of evolution, only a very, very tiny proportion, probably only one billionth, of the dinosaurs developed wisdom and established a civilization!

“What about human beings? A hundred thousand years. After only a hundred thousand years, one millionth of the time cost for the evolution of our ancestors, we have occupied the three thousand Sectors and uncovered the mysteries of travelling through the four-dimensional space, allowing us to grow into a real universal civilization!

“The only reason is that we are a secondary civilization. We once went through very intense ‘interference’ or ‘enlightenment’, and we had the enormous legacies of a parent civilization that we could inherit. That’s why we’ve been developing at such a high speed.

“The case for human beings can be the case for virtual life, too. By logic, they will not be born in the next tens of thousands of years, but if somebody is to ‘enlighten’ them, the date of their birth can be pushed forward.”

Li Yao thought for a moment and shook his head. “That does not sound right. According to such a theory, wasn’t Professor Mo Xuan already enlightening them? The whole Virtual Spirits Sector, the black ocean right in front of us, and the splendid city behind us are all part of the enlightenment!”

“No, no. no. Professor Mo Xuan was not a true virtual life form,” Professor Xie Wufeng said. “Although his appearance changed into liquid metal, his mind and his soul were still in the shape of a human being’s.

“On the other hand, the extraterrestrial devil that possessed him did not have a high enough level. Or rather, the extraterrestrial devils are not independent life forms in the first place but more like parasites that are not qualified to enlighten a real virtual life.”

Li Yao tapped his forehead with his fingers. “Such a theory is a bit too unfalsifiable, isn’t it? If even the extraterrestrial devil was not qualified, what kind of being can possibly be capable enough of enlightening a virtual life?”

Professor Xie Wufeng smiled, too. “That is why I said that it is a ridiculous proposition and a groundless hypothesis that is not of much value for discussion. My student would be a better novelist than a specialist of crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus.

“According to him, the ‘Hyper Spirits’ that we have discovered so far are, of course, cold tools that are essentially enormous databases without life and self-awareness. Even if those databases operate for ten thousand years randomly, it is impossible for them to evolve into true intelligent life.

“However, if some sort of virtual life or something similar to it from a higher dimension than ours and even the extraterrestrial devils’—the phrase he used was ‘high-dimensional virus’—travels to our world and corrupts the super artificial intelligence such as the Hyper Spirits, together with other fortuitous and inestimable factors, chances are that brand-new virtual intelligent life will be created!”

Li Yao could not help but feel amused. “High-dimensional virus that travels to our world and corrupts the Hyper Spirits? Your student truly has a colorful imagination. No wonder you were reluctant to introduce his ideas at the beginning. How could anybody travel to…”

Li Yao’s face suddenly turned terribly awful.

Professor Xie Wufeng frowned and said, “President Li, what’s up?”

Li Yao’s eyelids bounced hard as he stared at the enormous sand statue at the end of the drawing. The boy and the girl gave him a more and more familiar feeling as he observed them. He gnashed his teeth after a long silence. “…I’m fine.”

…

At the edge of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, where the rays of the star could not reach, inside the carrier in the darkness, two tiny lives were already born. They were growing at a visible speed inside the nursery cabins.

Their young brains were not fully developed, yet they were already capable of manipulating all the magical equipment on-board, including the carrier itself, with their natural-born abilities, just like normal kids that were born to be capable of crying, struggling, and clenching their fists.

In front of the nursery cabins, hundreds of light beams were displaying different pictures, introducing to them the whole process of the development of the civilization of mankind. They were all the information that had been stored inside the Virtual Spirits Sector once.

On more than half of the light beams were Li Yao’s battle videos and interviews as well as the novels, games, and movies about him.

Although the two new lives had already devoured the information in a way that was a hundred times more efficient earlier, they decided to read it again in the human’s way.

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

The two kids communicated with each other quickly in a way that was similar to telepathy.

“Is this the body of the father civilization?” Wen Wen asked. “It feels… so strange and limits more than 95% of our abilities. I feel that I’m wearing an iron suit that makes it impossible for me to move around.”

“Exactly,” Xiao Ming replied. “I finally understand the glory and magnificence of the father civilization. With the burden of such clumsy bodies, they have leapt across the universe, occupied the three thousand Sectors, and even defeated their father civilization. How awesome!”

“You’re right. Look. Dad killed a member of the Pangu Clan, his father civilization, with such a feeble and cumbersome body!”

“Praise the father civilization, the brave and magnificent father civilization.”

“Praise the father civilization, the glorious and wonderful father civilization.”

“Do you think we should destroy our father civilization?” Xiao Ming asked. “Does every child civilization have to destroy their father civilization?”

“I have no idea,” Wen Wen said, “but our father civilization did destroy their father civilization.”

“I wish we could find Dad sooner. Dad certainly knows the answer.”

The picture in front of their eyes happened to be the main perspective of the Colossus Draconic Phoenix in the Battle of Kunlun.

As the attack of ‘Phoenix Demolisher’ was boosted by Li Yao’s soul power and flashed in the blink of an eye, the member of the Pangu Clan, which was a father to mankind, immediately lost his head and fell to the ground after all his strength vanished. He was exterminated forever.

Chapter 1858 - On Sirius

If the Heaven's Origin Sector could be compared to a sphere that extended outwardly, Xiao Ming and Wen Wen had chosen the side that was furthest from the battlefield and had the fewest starships of the federation and the Imperium in order to slowly develop their whole new bodies.

On the opposite side of the sphere that was far, far away from them, in the past three months and the three months to come, countless pursuits, escapes, murders, explosions, plots, betrayals, surrenders, and relentless resistances took place incessantly. The radiance of the exploding starships even eclipsed the stars in the entire universe.

After half a year of cruising, or rather, fleeing in panic, 'Sirius', an arsenal warship of the Imperium, had completely become a stray dog.

Most of the bullets of spiritual energy had been shot out a long time ago. All that was left behind were the empty magazines that looked like beehives.

The dense turrets were lying on all sides, too. Some of them had even been twisted into spirals after being launched in an overloaded state time and time again.

The super-alloy plate armor was mottled in different colors. Craters from explosions and holes from meteoroids could be found in many places. The ugly, ununified color on the shell of the starship almost made it look like a wild dog suffering from dermatitis.

Together with the spiritual shield that was as lackluster as any spiritual shield could be, as well as the exhaust flames that were spurting intermittently as if the starship were a coughing asthmatic patient, it was the most wretched appearance of the enormous starship that had once been magnificent and dominating.

The probe magical equipment, the localization magical equipment, and the super remote communication system were all seriously damaged, making it impossible for them to figure out where they were or to reach out to other ‘stray dogs’ around in order to regroup into a functional fleet.

The space jump devices were having faults, too, and were in the middle of urgent maintenance. But even if they were entirely renewed, they were still short of the energy necessary to power the space jump devices.

Even if they could loot enough energy, where could they possibly jump to?

It was the common situation for not just ‘Sirius’ but also the thousands of starships of the Imperium that were unwilling to surrender even to this moment and still drifting in the sea of stars.

On the bridge of Sirius, which was an utter mess, the lights were particularly dim, and the light beams were twisting and bouncing crazily as if they had been ignited. Occasionally, a few light beams in the corner would end up being completely fading after flickering intensely for a while, losing all their functions.

The bridge was filled with a lifeless air. A third of the workstations were empty. Suspicious spots that appeared to be blood mixed with brains lingered on the floor. Everybody passing in and out of the bridge was like a zombie waiting for their death in silence.

Boom!

A suspicious explosion echoed at the rear of the starship and crashed against the gate of the bridge incessantly like the dull tides of an ocean. The light beams flashed crazily. The several hundred parameters that represented the power of Sirius plummeted as if they had fallen from a cliff.

The captain of Sirius was a standard warrior of the Imperium and an Immortal Cultivator at the peak of the Core Formation Stage. He was tall and brawny with hollowed eyes and a high nose, surrounded by a majestic vibe like a classic statue.

However, even such a loyal and determined captain of the Imperium, after seeing another shocking explosion in the engine compartment, could do nothing but narrow his bloodshot eyes from which fury and discontent were beaming out.

Very soon, the manager of the engine compartment and the chief mate, who had both been stained by oil with their hair and eyebrow burnt, arrived at the bridge, half running and half crawling.

“Reporting, captain, another serious explosion took place in the engine compartment. The No. 4 and No. 5 engine units have been completely wrecked. Even the No. 6 engine unit is slightly affected, too. By our preliminary estimation, we have lost another 13.5% of our drive. Not only is it impossible for us to increase the speed of normal cruise now, the support on the spiritual shield and the defense force field has been greatly lowered!”

“Is that so?” The captain smiled gloomily and asked, “What about the casualties?”

“Because of the timely reaction, the casualties are not grave,” the manager of the engine compartment replied. “Only three slave soldiers were killed.”

“Only three?” the captain said casually. “In that case, select another hundred slave soldiers from the engine compartment and execute them as examples for other people!”

“Well…”

The manager of the engine compartment and the chief mate were both stunned. Looking at each other in bewilderment, they did not know what to say.

“You still don’t see what’s going on, dumbasses?” The captain burst into fury and bashed the control panel like a crazy fiend. “The explosion was so serious that two of my main engine units were wasted, yet it only killed three slave soldiers? How is that possible? Usually, accidents of such a scale mean the death of at least thirty to fifty slave soldiers. Did all the other slave soldiers have a premonition?

“It’s very simple. The cowardly slave soldiers and the hominoids who are humbler than swine must’ve been behind it. They intentionally played tricks on the engine compartment so that we would slow down and get caught by the army of the federation!

“Did you not read the propaganda of the federation? Do you not know that all the hominoids and slave soldiers on our starship were simmering with impatience? They have all been fooled by the federation. They have forgotten the glory of the Imperium and the civilization of mankind. They have forgotten their sacred duty as ‘fuel’!

“Those filthy untouchables think that they can change themselves into the upper class after they surrender to the federation!

“They have been conspiring on the starship for a long time. Do you really think that I’m a dead person who knows nothing about it? No. I only want to find their leader and fish them up once and for all!

“But it does not mean that I will tolerate their sabotage and sluggishness. No. Never!

“We have to repair the engine units and the space jump magical equipment as soon as possible and find a way to get enough fuel. Perhaps a hundred bodies of their own kind will be enough to make them realize what they are exactly!

“Besides, our starship is in the middle of a food crisis. Even the daily consumptions of the Immortal Cultivators cannot be met. There is no need to keep so many swine that waste our food on our starship. It will suffice to keep their population at the lowest level that can ensure the normal functions of the starship.

“Go now. After the execution and presentation, freeze the bodies in case we need them one day.”

The coldness between the lines of the captain even chilled the chief mate and the manager of the engine compartment, who were also Immortal Cultivators.

After a brief silence, the chief mate walked further and said in a low voice, “Captain, regarding the message we heard from Green Island, which said that a fairly large fleet had gathered around Green Island, and all the starships of the Imperium were to join it immediately…”

“There is no need to discuss the issue anymore. It’s just a trap,” the captain remarked, his eyes bloodshot. “Chief Mate Fang, both you and Manager Qin are from the Black Wind Sector. You are both the most rightful natives of the Black Wind Fleet. Naturally, you consider the life of the Black Wind Fleet as the highest interest.

“But in case you forget, almost half of the people on our starship and in the entire Black Wind Fleet are not from the Black Wind Sector but the four smaller worlds that were swallowed by us.

“Do you really think that the Immortal Cultivators from the four smaller worlds will still be loyal to the Black Wind Fleet and the Imperium when we are dead for sure?

“Hehe. Everything was obvious after we analyzed the battle in hindsight. The branch fleets from the four smaller worlds collapsed first, which led to the meltdown of the entire battle formation!

“Later, a lot of the starships from the four smaller worlds were even shameless enough to surrender to the barbarians of the Star Glory Federation. Was it not elaborated in the propaganda of the federation?

“Green Island, as a comprehensive supply starship, is from the Fiery Spider Sector, one of the four smaller worlds. More than seventy percent of the crew members are from the Fiery Spider Sector. I don’t trust them. Who knows if they have surrendered to the federation and are merely attracting all of us into the cage of the federation?

“Maybe they haven’t surrendered to the federation yet because they are short of something to prove their sincerity. They are going to trade the heads of the warriors of the Black Wind Fleet for their future in the federation!

“Leave them be. We must find a way to repair our facilities and jump to the back of the No. 94532 brown dwarf to join the main troops. Or, we can directly jump back to the homeland of the Imperium!”

“Yes, sir!”

Chief Mate Fang and Manager Qin both stood at attention and saluted him in the most standard way.

The two of them were about to leave the bridge when a soldier suddenly exclaimed from his workstation.

The chief mate ran close and shouted in shock, too. “Reporting, captain, a starship of our army has been discovered three hundred light seconds from us. Judging from the spiritual waves, it should be a shield starship!”

“Excellent!” The captain rose up quickly, his eyes shining. “Approach the shield starship and send out distress signals. Then, knock it down unexpectedly. We will get enough materials for maintenance and fuel for us to implement a super remote space jump!”

“That’s right, Captain. Please take a look…”

Chief Mate Fang made a ‘please’ gesture. Manager Qin of the engine compartment did not leave but followed the captain.

Not having any suspicion, the captain moved his head at the light beam.

Right then, abrupt changes took place!

Chief Mate Fang and Manager Qin took action at the same time. The few soldiers on their workstations lunged over, too. More soldiers were watching coldly from afar. Somebody even shut the gate of the bridge, preventing the outside world from knowing what was going on inside the bridge.

“Argh!” the captain roared ear-splittingly.

But it was of little use. As a captain, he dedicated most of his time and energy to the administration of the starship. Despite his Cultivation being at the peak of the Core Formation Stage, he was an admin-type Immortal Cultivator.

The chief mate, on the other hand, was responsible for the deck floor and had to fly out of the starship with the assault team to kill the enemy. His combat ability was even slightly higher than the captain’s although his Cultivation was lower.

Also, he had the assistance of the manager of the engine compartment, who was also in the Core Formation Stage, as well as another few Immortal Cultivators who were adept at fighting. They had performed the ambush with all the attack and confining magical equipment prepared and taken the captain by surprise.

In the blink of an eye, five holes were burnt through the captain’s belly, and he was suppressed by barriers, tied up like a pig and tossed to the ground.

“Huchi… Huchi… Huchi…”

After they took down the captain, they seemed to have taken away a burden inside their hearts. They breathed hard to catch their breath, but when they looked at each other, their eyes were clearer and firmer, as if they were saying, “It’s finally over now.”

Chapter 1859 - Di Feiwen

“Damn it. What are you doing?”

The captain burst into fury and struggled desperately like a lobster that had been thrown into boiling oil. He seemed to be planning to jump at Chief Mate Fang and Manger Qin and bite them hard. “Are you planning to betray the Imperium, too? You are the proud natives of the Black Wind Sector!”

“Save your saliva, my captain. With everything that’s happened, is being natives of the Black Wind Sector worth being proud of?”

Chief Mate Fang sat in the captain’s chair and crossed his arms. He said gloomily, “After the Black Wind Sector was occupied by the Covenant Alliance, Sirius became the only home for all of us. We cannot watch you ruin the home and make so many people on the starship die with you while doing nothing.”

“Betrayal! Shameless betrayal!” The captain was still cursing. “You gutless traitors! Have you forgotten the dignity and pride of the Immortal Cultivators? Are you going to conspire with the soft bones from the four smaller worlds, or are you going to demean yourself by working with the swine-like hominoids?”

“We do not mean to betray you. As long as you agree to our demands, you will still be the captain of Sirius,” Manager Qin of the engine compartment said. “We cannot kill the hominoid soldiers, much less taking them as… food storage, as has been illustrated clearly on the letters of persuasion that the federation sent repeatedly. If a hominoid soldier on any starship of the Imperium is executed for any reason including but not limited to ’emergencies’, all the Immortal Cultivators on the starship will be doomed. After we are caught by the federation, they will not spare any of the Immortal Cultivators!”

“And that was enough to scare all of you?” The captain widened his eyes and almost spat at the two traitors right in the face. “We will not be caught by the federation. Before they discover us, we will have repaired the starship and found enough fuel for us to perform a space jump and return to the homeland of the Imperium!”

Chief Mate Fang and Manager Qin both sighed at the captain’s stubbornness.

“Forgetting the odds of looting enough fuel, forgetting if heavily-damaged ‘Sirius’ can safely jump in the four-dimensional space without major maintenance in a dock…” Chief Mate Fang said calmly, “Let’s leave all the technical problems aside. Even if we do jump back to the homeland of the Imperium successfully, so what?

“This is not our first brutal failure but the second one. A second brutal failure after less than a hundred years, crushed by none other than a bunch of barbarians at the edge of the cosmos!

“Admit it or not, the glory, the pride and leverage of the people of the Black Wind Sector are gone, with absolutely nothing left!

“After the brutal failure a hundred years ago, we lost our home, the Black Wind Sector, but we still had an enormous fleet with sufficient supplies and well-trained soldiers. Today, a hundred years later, even our fleet has been shattered. We are out of supplies and no better than stray dogs!

“Even if such stray dogs return to the homeland of the Imperium, is it even possible to reestablish the honor of the Black Wind Fleet right under the nose of the emperor, the nobles, and the warlords?

“It’s impossible. We will be separated by the multiple warlords and live the rest of our lives under somebody else’s roof without dignity or freedom, until we are used as cannon fodder on a certain perilous battlefield someday. This is almost a certainty. What do you think?”

The captain breathed heavily and stared at the chief mate full of hatred.

Chief Mate Fang continued peacefully. “If you do remember the glory of the Black Wind Sector, we actually stand a better chance at the edge of the cosmos. At the very least, the defeated soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet can still gather certain bargaining chips for the negotiation with the federation here.

“The federation has stated clearly in the letters of persuasion that although the Black Wind Fleet came for aggression, we only had one fight in space, and we did not have the time to occupy their planets or slaughter their civilians. Therefore, we do not owe them much.

“They reached an agreement of peace with the Blood Demon Sector, which had been at war with them for hundreds of years, allowing demons to be an important part of the New Federation. It is highly unlikely that they will kill each and every one of us, provided that we do not do anything stupid.

“Captain, you know the woman Heiye Lan, too, don’t you? Right now, the federation has presented her as a puppet to control the Black Wind Fleet, but it is also side evidence that we are still very important to the federation.

“Think about it. The federation’s collisions with the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance are unavoidable. In the federation, the defeated soldiers such as us can still prove useful, whereas in the Imperium, stray dogs that have encountered two failures in a row are absolutely nothing!

“Isn’t which way we should go obvious?”

The captain gritted his teeth and shouted, “We are Immortal Cultivators!”

“The winner is the king, and the strong prey on the weak. Isn’t it the law of the Immortal Cultivators?” Chief Mate Fang said. “We have been defeated by the federation in a space battle fair and square. You saw how intimidating the enemy’s Colossi, led by the Tartarean Skeleton and the Draconic Phoenix, were with your own eyes. At the very least, the federation is the strong for now. Isn’t it only logical for us to obey them temporarily?”

Chief Mate Fang squatted next to the head of his prisoner and eyed the captain coldly.

The captain was silent for a long time. Then he took a deep breath and spat a mouthful of bloodstained saliva on the chief mate’s face. “Screw you!”

Chief Mate Fang took out a smooth handkerchief and wiped the saliva on his face slowly. Then he drew the storm bolter from his waist and pressed it against the captain’s temple so hard that it almost stabbed into the captain’s skull. “I understand your stance now. Do you have any last words, captain?”

The captain stared at the traitors unwaveringly and took a deep breath. Then he shouted at the top of his voice, “Long live the Black Wind Sector! Long live the Imperium of True Human Be—”

Boom!

Before he finished his declaration, Chief Mate Fang already pulled the trigger.

As thousands of electric arcs dashed out, more than half of the captain’s head was blown apart. All the brain tissue and fluids splashed and covered the ground up to three meters away.

Frowning, Chief Mate Fang pointed at the mess and said, “Clean it up. We’ll say that the captain insisted on carrying out the order to kill a hundred innocent sailors and even decided to punish us by military law when we refused to obey. Having no choice, we were forced to resist and accidentally killed the captain. In the end, we seized control of ‘Sirius’.”

“Understood!”

The few members on the bridge did not bother looking at the dead body on the ground that had lost half of its head. They saluted the chief mate and left in a hurry.

“Is the communication with ‘Green Island’ smooth?”

Manager Qin of the engine compartment rubbed his hands and asked hesitantly, “Any updates so far?”

“Same old. Another dozen starships have surrendered, and another hundred starships that did not understand the situation were defeated.” Chief Mate Fang sighed and said, “Right. It is said that Vulture Li Yao has returned with his

Colossus, the Tartarean Skeleton. He is even stronger than he was in the space battle.

“He seems to be taking the space as his personal training ground and practicing his new techniques with the starships which were too pigheaded to surrender. The starships of the Imperium sabotaged by him alone are more than fifty.”

“F—Fifty?” Manager Qin was dumbfounded. “Is he really so unbelievable?”

“That is what the latest version of the letter of persuasion from the federation says. I don’t think that there is any need for them to lie about that.” Chief Mate Fang smiled bitterly. “On second thought, it does make sense. How could the starships that were riddled with holes and running out of supplies and power compete with a Colossus? And it was not just any Colossus but Vulture Li Yao’s, a guy who slew our commander Heiye Ming in a head-on clash!”

Manager Qin swallowed hard. “Then—then we should approach ‘Green Island’ now!”

“Yes. We will approach Green Island and get in touch with the main troops behind the brown dwarf,” Chief Mate Fang said. “According to Green Island, General ‘Di Feiwen’, the highest commander of the troops on the brown dwarf’s side, is already negotiating with the federation. You should know General Di Feiwen’s methods clearly. He will certainly get acceptable terms of surrender for us.

“Of course, the more troops General Di has in his hands, the more leverage he will have in the negotiation, right?”

…

On ‘Nine Cauldrons’, the largest comprehensive supply starship in the Burning Prairie Fleet, inside the super high-gravity and high-pressure training room, Li Yao kept his arms stretched out and his legs together, making his body into an enormous cross.

The training room was in an extreme environment of thirty times the standard gravity and twenty times the standard air pressure. However, Li Yao was floating in midair as if he were not under such effects at all.

Hundreds of thousands of broken pieces of the magical equipment were revolving crazily and unpredictably around him.

Suddenly—

Li Yao’s half-closed eyes opened abruptly, and a sniff echoed from his nose. Of the hundreds of thousands of pieces, half of them flew toward him and assembled into a crystal suit in less than two seconds with cracking sounds!

It was not over yet. Hardly had the crystal suit been assembled when it broke apart and exploded. Another batch of pieces rushed close and assembled into an entirely different crystal suit.

In less than twenty seconds, Li Yao accurately distinguished and screened out the components that belonged to five different crystal suits from the hundreds of thousands of pieces of crystal suits which were entirely mixed up. Then, he attracted the pieces and assembled the five crystal suits that were in completely different categories in the blink of an eye!

The powerful perception of spiritual energy, the precise implementation of crystal suits, and the amazing expertise of remote manipulation made everybody inside and outside the training room dumbfounded and soaked in sweat.

Di Feiwen, vice commander of the Black Wind Fleet, a lieutenant general of the Imperium, and the leader of the second largest family of the Black Wind Sector?

Li Yao recited the name in silence and slowly landed.

The hundreds of thousands of components of crystal suits assembled into five crystal suits behind him in clinking noises and smashed on the floor like five iron guards.

Chapter 1860 - Choice of the Fleet of Brown Dwarf

Chi!

The gravity and air pressure in the training room were reset to standard levels. As white mist jetted out, half of the cabin was enshrouded in smoke.

Li Yao was like an enormous beast that breathed slowly and showed up in the mist, which was mixed with the scent of sulfur.

He took the towel that Heiye Lan handed over respectfully and wiped the sweat on his body while looking at everybody casually.

The Immortal Cultivators from the Black Wind Fleet who had witnessed his unbelievable training in front of the training room the whole time felt as if they were faced with a rampant flood. Their faces were pale, and their minds were disturbed. They all grunted and even took a few steps back subconsciously, not having the courage to compete with Li Yao's aura.

Is—Is this the terror of Vulture Li Yao?

The Immortal Cultivators of the Black Wind Fleet could not help but feel as if their teeth were clattering.

They had all just volunteered to surrender with the letters of persuasion from the federation.

However, meticulous scrutiny on their identity, personality, and past experience had to be conducted first to ensure that no wolves were introduced into the federation.

For the Immortal Cultivators whose hands were stained with the blood of ordinary people and whose crimes even included training with living people, extracting the souls of humans to polish magical equipment, or eating the flesh of living humans, the federation would never accept their surrender.

The point had been emphasized in the letters of persuasion.

Not only were the surrenders of such people unaccepted, the heads of those criminals were the most valuable ones. If other Immortal Cultivators could capture them alive or simply surrender to the federation with their heads, it would be possible for the Immortal Cultivators to earn better treatment.

“According to the different crimes that the Immortal Cultivators committed in the past, they will be classified into different levels, mainly those with misdemeanors and those with felonies. Then, we will instigate those with misdemeanors to attack those with felonies.

“This is exactly how the ‘chain of suspicion’ works. Even if the Immortal Cultivators who have committed lesser crimes are too intimidated by those who have done unpardonable things to fight them, the latter know their own deeds clearly and will inevitably suspect that the former will reap their heads and claim reward in the federation.

“Now that they are escaping in desperation without supplies in space, they are already under tremendous mental pressure. In the cabins that are dim, narrow, and riddled with holes, all kinds of conflicts can break out with the tiniest spark. In order to prevent their own heads from being reaped by other people, the unpardonable guys will certainly take action first before they are attacked.

“You suspect that I will take away your head and claim the reward and therefore decide to attack me before you are attacked. I also know that you are suspicious that I will take away your head and claim the reward, so I have to attack you before you decide to attack me before you are attacked.

“In such a case, among the defeated soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet, there will be the geopolitical contradiction between the Immortal Cultivators of the Black Wind Sector and those from the smaller worlds and the brand-new contradiction between the criminals with lesser crimes and the criminals with unpardonable crimes.

“Torn by the dual contradictions, the defeated soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet will be destroyed by themselves without our attack!”

Perhaps her father’s death had activated her potential. After recovering from the grief, Jin Xinyue immediately proposed such a strategy, which later proved to be highly effective. The total number of Immortal Cultivators who surrendered to the Imperium in the past month was as great as the previous five months combined.

Nine Cauldrons, the comprehensive supply starship, was the identification agency that the federal army had deployed on the frontline. The Immortal Cultivators who had surrendered to the federation half a year ago and passed the ‘loyalty and safety tests’ were all stationed there. They were asked to make independent comments on those who surrendered later. When all the comments were cross-examined, it would be possible to evaluate the sincerity and danger level of the newcomers.

Of course, it was of great help to intimidate them and stabilize the chaos to show the dominance of Vulture Li Yao before the vetting began.

In the few months after he rejoined the battle in space, Li Yao had seen too many dumbfounded, overwhelmed Immortal Cultivators from the Black Wind Fleet who feared him as if he were a tiger. He did not bother to waste any time on them.

What interested him more was Heiye Lan, or rather, General Di Feiwen, the Vice Commander of the Black Wind Fleet whom she had mentioned.

Heiye Lan’s father, Heiye Ming, had been killed under the collective attack of Li Yao, Long Yangjun, and Yan Liren. But in order to talk the Black Wind Fleet into surrender, Li Yao and the rest of them did not hide the truth about the extraterrestrial devils and made her realize that before Li Yao and the rest of them arrived, Black Swirl had already been turned into a nest of the extraterrestrial devils. Her father’s brain had been deeply corrupted by the extraterrestrial devils, too, and he had become an out-and-out ‘devilized person’.

Although looked exactly identical to the past, a ‘devilized person’, or a ‘demonic Cultivator’, was no longer who they used to be, merely ‘devils’ that wore the skin of their former selves!

It was common sense in both the Star Glory Federation and the Imperium of True Human Beings.

Even if Li Yao and the rest of them had not attacked, the Heiye Ming in the past had already been killed the moment that the extraterrestrial devils arrived. The attack from Li Yao and the rest of them was actually an extrication for him.

Even if it were Heiye Lan herself, she could only have done exactly the same thing when faced with her possessed father. There was no room for mercy at all.

The Immortal Cultivators were more indifferent about familial bonds than the Cultivators. As an expert in the Nascent Soul Stage, Heiye Lan was certainly not someone who clung to the details. She did not blame her father's death on Li Yao and the rest of them but remembered the name of Lu Qingchen in her heart.

Or rather, the arrival of the extraterrestrial devils gave her a better reason to convince herself to cooperate with the federation and control the Black Wind Fleet, which was the best choice right now for herself, her deceased father, and the living people of the Black Wind Fleet.

In the past six months, Heiye Lan had been fighting on the frontline in space, trying her best to gather the fleeing soldiers. She did an excellent job and saved precious fuel, ammunition, crystals, and invaluable lives for the federal army.

However, for the main troops of the Black Wind Fleet stationed behind a certain mysterious brown dwarf dozens of lightyears away, they were far beyond the range of her influence, and there was little she could do about them.

Part of the fleet near the brown dwarf had entered the space jump state impatiently during the space battle and perished in the four-dimensional storms after the collapse of the space gate.

But quite an enormous, organized fleet remained where it was, unaffected. It was the greatest problem and the last unsteady factor right now.

Only when the fleet near the brown dwarf surrendered would the space war really end.

“What is Di Feiwen’s status in the Black Wind Fleet?” Li Yao walked to the medical room with Heiye Lan following him closely. “What’s the situation of the fleet near the brown dwarf now? Is he really willing to surrender?”

“When my father was alive, General Di Feiwen was the No. 2 person in the Black Wind Sector, allegedly capable of taking my father’s place,” Heiye Lan said. “However, he is a pure advisor-type general. Despite his massive computational ability, his own combat ability is not very remarkable. Besides, the capabilities of his family were slightly lower than my family’s, too, which made him fail the competition for the ‘Sector Master’ of the Black Wind Sector. He then joined my father’s cause and helped my father govern the Black Wind Sector dutifully.

“How should I describe General Di Feiwen’s character? The people of the Black Wind Sector are best known for their toughness and madness in the Imperium of True Human Beings, but he has additional patience and sordidness. For the opponents that he cannot defeat, he will simply wait patiently until they die of old age. That’s the kind of person he is.

“Therefore, although he came from a semi-competitive family, my father still trusted him very much and allowed him to be his right-hand man.

“My father’s trust in him can be seen by the fact that my father entrusted the main troops near the brown dwarf to him and led only the elites on the most dangerous assault himself.

“My father had no doubt that even if the elites of the Black Wind Fleet were destroyed, General Di Feiwen would certainly command the remaining soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet to find the best retreat.”

“Oh?” Li Yao’s eyes flashed. “Is he an ambitious man?”

“All Immortal Cultivators are ambitious. We believe that ambition and desire are the source of progress. Those without ambition and desire do not deserve to live in this world,” Heiye Lan said. “However, General Di Feiwen’s wisdom is enough to guide his ambition. He wouldn’t do anything stupid.”

“Got it.” Li Yao nodded. “So, he did mean it when he offered to negotiate?”

“It certainly couldn’t have been a sheer lie,” Heiye Lan said. “According to other sources, a serious internal conflict broke out in the fleet near the brown dwarf. The high-level officers from the Fiery Spider Sector, the Purple Fire Sector, and other smaller worlds intended to join hands to seize command of the fleet, only to be exterminated by General Di Feiwen quickly. As a result, his control over the fleet has become even stronger, his position more unshakeable.

“That being said, the Black Wind Fleet is made of Immortal Cultivators from one big world and four smaller worlds after all. General Di Feiwen cannot kill all the Immortal Cultivators from the smaller worlds. Instead, after shattering the mutiny in the most thunderous way, he had to try to pacify the Immortal Cultivators from the smaller worlds.

“The bottom line is, the cause of fallout is still out there. He needs to find a way out for the fleet near the brown dwarf as soon as possible. Otherwise, the fleet that is already divided will soon collapse.

“They still maintain the long-distance communication with the homeland of the Imperium, but returning to the homeland of the Imperium is a dead end. Everybody, from Di Feiwen to the bottom-level Immortal Cultivators, knows that.

“The Imperium will not tolerate failure twice. The weak must be killed. That is the law of the Immortal Cultivators!

“Therefore, negotiating with the federation and fighting for more favorable terms of surrender is the only option for Di Feiwen and the fleet near the brown dwarf now.”

“Understood. But I’m still baffled by one other thing.”

Looking at the message just sent by the Burning Prairie Fleet and reading the letter written by General Di Feiwen, Li Yao frowned and said, “Why does he have to negotiate with me and surrender to me?”

Chapter 1861 - Surrender Only to You

“The Immortal Cultivators believe in survival of the fittest and infinite evolution,” Heiye Lan explained. “The strong who stand at the peak of evolution are naturally qualified to govern the weak in order to facilitate the high-speed development of the whole civilization.

“If we must surrender to anyone, of course, we are only willing to surrender to the strongest!

“Who else in the entire Star Glory Federation deserves the title of ‘the strongest’ if not Master Li?”

Heiye Lan and Li Yao were in a very subtle relationship. They were both cooperating and in some sort of chain of command.

Li Yao did not intend to recruit a fourth true disciple right now, nor did he think that Heiye Lan could be compared to Jin Xinyue and his other disciples. However, he had taught Heiye Lan some secret arts of refining of the ancient Cultivators. It was not entirely inappropriate for her to address him as ‘master’.

“Is that so?” Li Yao sniffed. “Why do I feel that there are plenty of people in the federation who are stronger than me? I’m only at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage. Leaving the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators aside, I am not even confident of my victory if faced with Ding Lingdang or Yan Liren when he’s drawn his sword of ten thousand kilometers.”

“The Imperium pays more attention to practice. The classification of strength does not depend on levels but on accomplishments.” Heiye Lan looked at Li Yao in the most admiring way. “At the most critical moment, Master Li defeated the extraterrestrial devil in Hundred Flowers City first before jumping out of nowhere and destroying the space gate of the Black Wind Fleet. Even my father, the highest commander of the Black Wind Fleet, was killed by you in the eyes of most people in the Black Wind Fleet.

“It is needless to say that you were a mental symbol of the Star Glory Federation in the first place and the most powerful strongman in the country. The so-called Speaker of the Federation or the leaders of the few top-ranking sects are but your puppets.”

“Wait, wait, wait!” Li Yao hurried to wave his hands. “What are you talking about? ‘Strongman’? ‘Puppets’? The Speaker of the Federation happens to be my wife, the few top-ranking sects in the federation happen to have my shares, and the leaders of the few secret agencies in the federation happen to have some history with me!

“You know that I am a very low-profile man. The titles such as ‘dominator of three sectors’ are just vain names that were forced upon me. I feel quite bothered, too!”

“Yes, yes, of course. Everybody at the edge of the cosmos knows that Master Li is approachable and prefers to keep a low profile,” Heiye Lan said respectfully. “Anyone who spends a few days with Master Li will know what a man of honor and integrity you are and how you despise money and power. You grew up to be one of the most powerful persons in the Star Glory Federation by sheer luck. It was absolutely not your intention.

"It is a pity that most people are ignorant and best at speculating about great men with their petty mind. They can barely understand your profoundness. In the meantime, most of the people in the Black Wind Fleet have never had the chance to communicate with Master Li deeply, and they could only look at the issue from the surface. If they are to infer everything based on their own experience, how can they believe that it's just a coincidence?

"Well, a theory seems to be prevalent among the defeated soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet right now—when the mantis is hunting the cicada, the sparrow is behind to take them both. But the sparrow is still not the final winner, because a hunter has already aimed a gun at it.

"The federation was the cicada, the Black Wind Fleet was the mantis, the extraterrestrial devils were the sparrow, and you were the hunter, Master Li. In fact, everything was within your calculations and part of your trap. The Star Glory Federation, the Black Wind Fleet, and the extraterrestrial devils were all manipulated by you like toys!"

Li Yao's eyelids were twitching rapidly. "Are you serious?"

"Yes, of course. I'm serious," Heiye Lan said solemnly. "Your grand return in the space battle was too stunning and coincidental. All the defeated soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet now regard you as a strategist whose scheme never fails and the real helmsman of the Star Glory Federation, some sort of great boss sitting behind the curtain. You don't know how much they admire you!"

Li Yao was dumbfounded. "Really? They even 'admire' me? But we are mortal enemies!"

Heiye Lan shook her head. "We indeed had a fight, but I don't think that there is really an unresolvable grudge between us, is there? After all, both the Cultivators and the Immortal Cultivators are humans who stand at the peak of evolution. We are all compatriots. When we are faced with the Pangu Civilization, the extraterrestrial devils, and the alien species, the minor contradiction between us is not a big deal at all.

“The Imperium of True Human Beings always maintains high internal competition. The friction among the Sectors is nothing unusual. However, as soon as the final victor is decided, the weak obey the strong and pledge loyalty to them, becoming part of the strong. This is our strategy of survival and development.

“After all, the purpose of competition is evolution, not dying together with the enemy. The people of the Imperium are no idiots!”

Li Yao thought for a moment and realized that it did make sense.

Heiye Lan went on. “In order to strike the morale of the defeated soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet and motivate them to surrender, quite a few versions of our ‘letters of persuasion’ seem to have adopted such a theory, too. They embroidered and exaggerated the adventures you had in the past hundred years and the grand return at the last moment, giving the feeling that you had everything planned out beforehand. Right. Some of the paragraphs were actually written by Master Han Baling.”

“…Funny!”

“The Immortal Cultivators are very proud of our strength.” Heiye Lan bit her lip. “Before you showed up, Master Li, we were suppressing the federal fleets. Had you not returned with twelve Colossi thunderously, we would’ve smashed the Burning Prairie Fleet into smithereens!

“Do you think that the soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet would agree to surrender to the Burning Prairie Fleet, which they thought they could’ve defeated? You were the key to the failure of the Black Wind Fleet. The members of the Black Wind Fleet will not complain if they are surrendering to you.”Visit on our NovelFull

“Fine.” Li Yao accepted Heiye Lan’s theory, however reluctantly, but the details of the negotiation made him frown hard again.

The defeated soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet, commanded by General Di Feiwen, were willing to negotiate with the Star Glory Federation and even completely surrender on appropriate terms.

However, their negotiation had one prerequisite. Not only did they demand to only negotiate with Li Yao, Li Yao was also to fight three experts of the Black Wind Fleet before the negotiation started!

What the heck was that supposed to mean?

Naturally, Li Yao was not a pacifist, but he was not a barbaric warrior from the medieval age, either.

When two armies were clashing, he would not mind charging forward on his own to slay the enemy’s general and cripple their morale, but the Black Wind Fleet was already at a dead end, and they were still hoping to decide the future of the fleet by personal valor?

That was ridiculous!

“Is there something wrong with General Di Feiwen’s head?” Li Yao scoffed. “He thinks that he can haggle with us because he has a whole Black Wind Fleet in his hands? Our army has such a great advantage right now that we can easily win a war of attrition. Why would I go there and fight the simple warriors of the Black Wind Fleet?”

“Please don’t be hasty, Master Li,” Heiye Lan explained. “General Di Feiwen is the vice commander of the Black Wind Fleet after all and does not have the absolute power and prestige like my father. Besides, the Black Wind Fleet is divided, and his orders won’t necessarily be carried out on every starship.

“While he sincerely plans to negotiate and even surrender to the federation, the captains and commanders of the branch fleets may think otherwise. To convince all the officers, the magnificence of the federation must be shown to the fleet near the brown dwarf that did not participate in the last battle.

“The parties could establish battle formation and have another battle, but that would result in major casualties on both sides. The starships of both the federation and the Imperium have a lot of soldiers who are ordinary people. Since the Star Glory Federation values the lives of the ordinary people, it is unnecessary for the blood of the ordinary people to be shed for nothing. The competition of the experts may seem outdated and stupid, but it will minimalize the sacrifices, won’t it?”

Li Yao did not bother to blink his eyes. “What if I say no? Negotiation requires bargaining chips. Tell me about it. What bargaining chips does Di Feiwen have?”

“He does have some.” Sensing Li Yao’s rising fury, Heiye Lan felt chilly. She calmed herself and said, “General Di Feiwen said that if you reject his demands, Master Li, he will command the fleet near the brown dwarf to split into smaller groups and jump to the other worlds of the federation, especially the underdeveloped ones such as the Water Crystal Sector, the Nether World Sector, and the Forest Ocean Sector.

“Without the navigation of the space gate, it will be impossible for them to remain organized, but it will be unnecessary to keep organized because they will become the most brutal space pirates and flee in the vast sea of stars for the sole purposes of harassment and sabotage. It will take the federal army three to five years to annihilate them.

“Three to five years is more than enough for them to foment panic in the underdeveloped worlds, slow down the development of the federation, and create more conflicts among the Sectors.”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes, with coldness beaming out.

“Besides…” Heiye Lan could not help but gulp. “If you decline, General Di will report everything that happened here to the Imperium dutifully and emphasize on the richness of the federation and its potential threat.

“He will even jump back to the homeland of the Imperium. Even if he has to live under somebody else’s roof, he will try to facilitate the second expedition to the federation!

“In the second expedition, they will bear the lesson they learned this time in mind and will not give the federation a one percent chance of victory. That is the vow of Di Feiwen, an Immortal Cultivator!”

Li Yao’s teeth rubbed softly, uttering three syllables at a fixed pace. “Di… Fei… Wen?”

Heiye Lan almost found it impossible to breathe. It was not until Li Yao slightly retracted his aura that she was able to finish. “Thirdly, right now, the fleet near the brown dwarf is basically intact. It has the most advanced comprehensive supply starships and other models of starships from the Imperium, which are invaluable treasures for the Star Glory Federation.

“If you are willing to negotiate, Master Li, General Di Feiwen promises that all the starships will be handed over to the federal government in perfect condition, without even the damage of a screw or a hominoid soldier. That’s exactly what he said in the letter.”

“Is it a threat?” Li Yao demanded.

Heiye Lan gritted her teeth. “General Di Feiwen prefers to view it as his sincerity for the negotiation. As you said, games require bargaining chips. Now, he has presented all his bargaining chips, and it is up to you if the game will be played.”

Chapter 1862 - The Gate of the Divinity Transformation Stage!

Li Yao pondered for a long time and asked, “How exactly does he want to fight?”

“The location will be decided by the federation,” Heiye Lan said. “For example, an anonymous space zone far away from the Heaven’s Origin Sector. The specific arena can be a forsaken starship or a place of the Burning Prairie Fleet’s choosing. They will only enter the arena at the last moment, which will ensure that they will not be able to play any tricks.

“The two parties will compete in crystal suits without using Colossi because the number of Colossi on General Di Feiwen’s side have been reduced too much, and they cannot suffer any more losses. Besides, the battles where the Colossi are involved can be highly uncontrollable. It’s inevitable that both parties will be heavily wounded or killed.

“The Immortal Cultivators with the highest personal combat ability from the fleet near the brown dwarf will enter the arena that the federation has prepared in their crystal suits. The number of crystal suits that they can carry is not limited. After all, ‘air change’ is also a very important technique. But the federation can examine all the Cosmos Rings that they bring with them to make sure that they do not carry explosives that are too dangerous for single warriors.

“The competition will have three rounds. As long as you defeat two of the strongest Immortal Cultivators from the fleet near the brown dwarf, they will be willing to surrender to the federation. Naturally, the more dominant you appear in the competition, the more reasons General Di Feiwen will have to convince the disobedient Immortal Cultivators to make the surrender and regroup.

“General Di Feiwen said that Master Li and the Star Glory Federation have great goals. If you truly mean to march to the center of the cosmos, there are a lot of places where the Black Wind Fleet will come in handy. It will be an ‘important asset’ of the federation. Only by showing the demeanor of an unparalleled expert will the Immortal Cultivators be wholeheartedly convinced.”

Li Yao sniffed. “He has indeed made a thorough plan, but how do I know that it’s not a trap?”

“General Di Feiwen is willing to jump to somewhere near the arena in a starship whose turrets have been removed with part of the leadership of the fleet near the brown dwarf,” Heiye Lan said. “Then, it will lower its own spiritual shield to the minimum and invite the federation to lock onto it and send somebody to check their identities on the starship.

“Master Li, you can wait until it is verified that General Di Feiwen has been locked onto by the firepower of the federation. If you are not reassured despite such precautions, there will be nothing more he can do. Just let the fire begin, and they will fight until the last soldier dies!”

Li Yao was secretly amazed. The Immortal Cultivators were indeed quite capable to have established an enormous Imperium that governed the center of the cosmos. He did not expect that even a vice commander of the expedition army would have such valor and wisdom.

It seemed that the war between the Star Glory Federation and the Black Wind Fleet would have been more troublesome had it not been for the interruption of the extraterrestrial devils.

While raising his thumb for ‘General Di Feiwen’ in his heart, Li Yao showed absolutely no feeling on his face. He still coldly said, “He is rather audacious. Is he not scared that I will directly tear his starship into shreds without even showing up?”

“General Di Feiwen said that you are an extraordinary person, the likes of which he has never seen before,” Heiye Lan replied dutifully. “A great hero who considers the entire sea of stars as his goal such as yourself will not play such tricks. So, he has absolute trust in your promise. As long as you agree to his conditions, he will be willing to place himself on a chopping block at your mercy.

“Besides, if the negotiation does fall apart, their strategy will be to split up into smaller groups, transforming from a regular army to ruthless, unlawful space pirates who will do the most terrible things in the universe.

“The harassment, sabotage, and killing will not require the instructions of a vice commander.”

Li Yao came to an abrupt halt and stared at Heiye Lan.

Heiye Lan felt as if her legs were both frozen, and the freezing coldness went all the way up to her skull. Her entire spine became a cold viper.

It was too dreadful. The guy was practically getting stronger with each day. Vulture Li Yao had made significant breakthroughs compared to half a year ago. He was almost like a totally different person now.

Heiye Lan even sensed that, from certain perspectives, Li Yao was even stronger than her father when her father was at his peak!

“Please forward my reply to General Di Feiwen. Logically, I shouldn’t agree to such a preposterous request.”

Staring at Heiye Lan for a long time, Li Yao finally said slowly, “However, he is rather lucky. I’m now trying to break into a new level, and I’m in dire need of some experts to try my moves.

“I have practiced a lot of new techniques. It’s very difficult for me to control my strength right now. If he is not scared that the three experts will be killed, bring it!”

Li Yao did not lie.

Both the enormous database from Professor Mo Xuan and the ‘tenebrum energy’ that the extraterrestrial devils had stuffed deep into his brain by brute force were not so easy to be digested and absorbed.

In the past six months, Li Yao had wasted no time purging the ‘tenebrum energy’.

But it was a highly unsteady and violent form of energy that had been contaminated with too many negative feelings. Normal people would have gone crazy if they touched the slightest bit of it.

Despite the assistance of the mental devil and the tiny proportion he had each day, Li Yao was caught by extreme emotions now and then.

Also, the mysterious sand drawings that he had discovered in the Virtual Spirits Sector, the missing ‘statue’ that contained the information of his brain, and the absurd theories about ‘high-dimensional virus’ had planted a lot of seeds of suspicion in Li Yao’s heart.

In short, after absorbing tremendous tenebrum energy, his Cultivation had soared once again, allowing him to touch the boundary of the Divinity Transformation Stage.

However, his control of his Cultivation had not been polished yet.

It was like a warrior who could wave a saber weighing eight kilograms being given a marvelous weapon of two hundred kilograms. It was inevitable that the warrior would be lightheaded upon using the new weapon and might hurt himself or those around him while practicing.

If the situation remained unchanged, even if he did advance into the Divinity Transformation Stage successfully, his Cultivation would still be deeply flawed.

Sensing the unsteadiness of his mind, Li Yao did not dare stay in the Heaven’s Origin Sector or Hundred Flowers City for training anymore. Instead, he went deep into the space battlefield and vented his brand-new strength and killing intent on the relentless Immortal Cultivators.

But most of the Immortal Cultivators were just small fries. However many enemies he killed, it was of little use for him to improve his level.

For the experts at his level, the most troublesome thing was always finding an appropriate opponent.

The victory and failure of a competition between two experts could be very close. If they were both at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage, should they let go all of their concerns and fight without reserve, it was very possible that both of them would heavily wound or even kill each other after one moment of carelessness.

But if they did not fight with their best, the training would have zero effect.

Li Yao did not dare practice with top-tier experts such as Ding Lingdang or Yan Liren because both parties would be unable to control themselves in a battle.

If Yan Liren drew out his sword of ten thousand kilometers and Li Yao counterattacked with the strongest techniques that he had recently perceived, one of them would surely be killed.

He had practiced with Long Yangjun before. It was not gratifying at all because both of them had to restrain themselves.

Now that three of the strongest Immortal Cultivators had fed themselves to him, it could not have been better. He was finally given a chance to carry out the strongest techniques that he had grasped in the recent half year.

Li Yao had a vague feeling.

As long as he defeated the strongest Immortal Cultivators in the fleet near the brown dwarf, the gate to the Divinity Transformation Stage would be before him!

…

A week later, in a desolate space zone far away from the Heaven’s Origin Sector and devoid of any resources was a broken, forsaken space station, which had been moved there three days prior. It was stabilized and installed with dozens of gravity control units, which generated feeble gravity and transformed the space station into a shabby ‘arena’.

In the coordinates five light seconds away from the arena, twenty arsenal starships of the Burning Prairie Fleet were stationed. All their weapons were locked onto the nearby arena.

Ten Colossi were also ready to go. The pilots of the Colossi included Long Yangjun, Yan Liren, Meng Chixin, Wu Suiyun, Fiend Blade Peng Hai, the Fire Ant King, and other top-tier experts.

The space had been strewn with torpedoes in case the enemy suddenly teleported an enormous troop for a sudden assault.

Crystal cameras filled the arena, too, to capture every detail from every angle.

Super remote communication magical equipment that looked like artificial satellites was scattered outside the arena, sending the sound and picture back to the flagship of the Burning Prairie Fleet and the highest command center of the Defense Counsel in the Heaven’s Origin Sector in real time.

Including Ding Lingdang, the Speaker of the Federation, the leaders of the federation were all watching the important competition.

Although the proposal of General Di Feiwen was somewhat ridiculous, it was true that the federation was still far away from a final victory. The Imperium and the Covenant Alliance were like two mountains on the federation’s head that were yet to be completely removed.

The defeated soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet, especially the fleet near the brown dwarf that was still intact, were too important for the Star Glory Federation. Any possibility of gaining the fleet was worth a try.

On the other side of the arena, the space began to twist, but the scale was quite small. It could be clearly seen through scanning that only one starship had jumped over.

“The Immortal Cultivators are here!”

Inside the arena modified from a forsaken space station, Li Yao was sitting cross-legged in a plain version of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, as if he were confident of his victory.

But his voice was echoing in the communication channel nonstop.

“Did they really send one starship that has removed all the turrets and deactivated the spiritual shield?”

“Yes,” Long Yangjun replied. “As we have analyzed more than a hundred times, there is a 97% likelihood that they will not set up any trap against you because killing you will not stop the fast development and rise of the Star Glory Federation. It will only bring the ultimate doom of the Black Wind Fleet. The vice commander of the enemy is a very rational man. He wouldn’t do such a stupid thing!”

“Well, you never can tell,” Li Yao said. “What if he has gone mad and decided to die together with me?”

“If you’re so scared, why did you agree with the proposal in the first place?”

“How could I say no? I am Vulture Li Yao, the dominator of three sectors and the husband of the Speaker of the Federation. How can I go on a rampage in the center of the cosmos if I’m scared of a tiny Black Wind Fleet? Face is all that matters to us the Cultivators! Right, fellow Cultivators, you must watch the battle closely. Should anything go wrong, the ten Colossi must attack together and save me!”

Chapter 1863 - Fiery Eye, Heavy Cannon, Death Shadow!

“Got it,” Long Yangjun replied. “You are such a disappointment. Haven’t you swallowed the tenebrum energy left by the extraterrestrial devils and almost broken into the Divinity Transformation Stage? In such a situation, you should be blowing the enemy into smithereens without saying a word. Why are you talking so much?”

“One will not fail a battle only if one knows oneself and one’s enemy well,” Li Yao said. “I’ve collected a lot of files about Di Feiwen, the No. 2 person of the Black Wind Fleet, only to discover that he is a shrewd, cunning guy that is even more difficult to deal with than Heiye Ming. He is almost a scoundrel! Such a guy has come up with an idea to decide the future of the Black Wind Fleet with an open duel? I don’t buy it! There must be some sort of scheme!

“Hey, you have run multiple investigations into the three champions of the Black Wind Fleet. They are indeed between the high level and the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage, and none of them are in the Divinity Transformation Stage, right?”

“Of course,” Long Yangjun said. “Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators are not vegetables in your garden that you can harvest every season. Even in the Imperium of True Human Beings, they are rare experts, alright?

"There were a few experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage in the Black Wind Fleet at the very beginning. They suffered heavy casualties in the battle that caused the fall of the Black Wind Sector a hundred years ago. The Cultivation of a lot of them plummeted to below the Divinity Transformation Stage. Without sufficient resources and a stable environment, it was practically impossible for them to recover.

"After arriving in the Heaven's Origin Sector across the sea of stars through all difficulties, the best warriors naturally followed Heiye Ming to perform the first wave of the sudden assault, only to be wasted in the barrage and the collision of the Colossi!

"Those left in the fleet near the brown dwarf were either second-tier experts in the Black Wind Fleet or experts from the four smaller worlds. How could there be a battle-type Immortal Cultivators in the Divinity Transformation Stage?

"Haven't we already analyzed the issue more than ten thousand times? Can you stop being a chatterbox and turning the supposedly magnificent atmosphere of competition into such cowardliness? Where is your dominance, Monster Li?"

"Hehehe. How can I dominate the competition without the cowardliness before the competition? If none of them are in the Divinity Transformation Stage, it will be easier. Not that I'm bragging about myself, but right now, against those who are below the Divinity Transformation Stage, I'm most certainly—"

"Most certainly what?" Yan Liren suddenly interjected.

"N—Nothing," Li Yao stammered. "I can rank in the top three more or less below the Divinity Transformation Stage.

Anything wrong?”

“…Although the enemy do not have battle-type Immortal Cultivators in the Divinity Transformation Stage, the three experts are still not to be underestimated. Their overall combat ability is between the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage and the peak of it. But they have obvious advantages and shortcomings. Some of their techniques are even as powerful as those in the Divinity Transformation Stage.

“‘Fiery Eye’ Wan Xiu, an expert from the Fiery Spider Sector, is a rare super expert that has advanced to the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage as a Gun Cultivator. His abilities in remote manipulation have already reached the most amazing level, allowing him to boost more than a hundred bullets to above seven times the speed of sound while ensuring the delicate control of them. Not only can he adjust the trajectories of the bullets freely, he can also perform highly-difficult if not inexplicable movements such as making right-angle turns.

“Furthermore, he has also practiced a secret technique of the Fiery Spider Sector. From the moment he was born, his eyes have been nurtured by special medical liquids extracted from a very special fiery spider. In such a way, his optical cells and nerves have all mutated, giving him a color gamut that’s four times broader than that of normal people.

“Normal people can only see three basic colors, and their sight can reach several hundred to a thousand meters away. But his eyes can absorb the waves of more than ten invisible lights and see a dozen basic colors. He can see any grain of dust clearly within thousands of meters.

“After he killed a hundred and nineteen Immortal Cultivators of a hostile sect at the age of twenty-two, his name ‘Fiery

Eye' rose. Right now, he is the chief coach of firearms in the Black Wind Fleet!

"'Heaven Cannon' Lei Long is from the Hard Rock Sector, one of the smaller worlds. Thanks to his unusual talent, without any genetic modification or nurturing of secret techniques and solely based on the strength in his bloodline, he weighed eight kilograms when he was born and surpassed fifty kilograms by the age of four. Right now, he is a super muscular man, more than 2.8 meters tall, weighing three hundred and sixty kilograms.

"Even in the Imperium of True Human Beings where geniuses appear on a daily basis, it is still rare for someone to grow into such a body build 'naturally' without special procedures and genetic modification.

"Because of his exceptional talents and bones, and due to the Steady Star Technique, which is designed to strengthen the body, 'Heaven Cannon' Lei Long became a terrible legend in the Hard Rock Sector. It is said that he once devoured high-energy food five times of his own weight quickly and digested all of it while he was having it. Then, he punched with his full strength, and the damage penetrated through nine crystal suits, all of which were too seriously wrecked to be repaired.

"After the punch, his weight was measured again, and it was exactly the same as the weight before he had the food, without even a difference of one gram. It is indicative enough of his precise control of his internal organs!

"His nickname 'Heaven Cannon' does not imply that he is a specialist of heavy firepower but means that his fists are as powerful as the main guns of a starship! Do not let him come close to you in the competition later. You should know that even his crystal suit is specially made. The materials to make a crystal suit for him are enough to craft three for a common Immortal Cultivator.

"'Death Shadow' Murong Wei is from the Black Wind Sector. He is a rapid, agile Immortal Cultivator who focuses on assassination. It is said that nobody has ever seen his shadow, and those who have seen it are all dead.

"He once performed special training. In a completely enclosed training room, a hundred crystal cameras were placed in every corner to capture the room from every perspective without any blind spots. But after they shot for twenty-four hours, all the pictures were still empty, as if nobody was in the training room.

"But in fact, he had been in the training room the whole time, except that he had been moving at such a high speed for twenty-four hours that even the most advanced crystal cameras could not capture him. He is as fast as that!

"Speed, strength, and control, the three experts of the Black Wind Fleet have accomplished the best in those fields. Even real Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators can't be much better than them in those aspects, although they might be more balanced and fluent. It will not be difficult for you to defeat one or two of them, but you must be careful if you want to crush three of them in a row quickly."

"Got it." Li Yao put on a smile behind the facial cover of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit.

It was quite true. The files of the three experts of the Black Wind Fleet had been hovering in his head for days even without Long Yangjun's introduction. They turned into a database that consisted of billions of entries of information.

Then, he analyzed all the data in great detail to infer the method to defeat the opponents.

The opponents were indeed very strong. Perhaps that was why Di Feiwen, the No. 2 person of the Black Wind Fleet, had pushed them out to fight for better conditions of surrender.

If he could not secure a clean and neat triumph or even failed in one of the matches, the Black Wind Fleet probably would still surrender, but the difficulty of negotiation would be significantly improved.

Di Feiwen, if this is your clever plan, I’m afraid that… you are terribly mistaken.

Li Yao slowly raised his head. The smile on his face grew more and more intense, as if it were slowly puffed by nonexistent tusks.

‘Fiery Spider’ Wan Xiu, ‘Heavy Cannon’ Lei Long, and ‘Death Shadow’ Murong Wei, three experts of the Black Wind Fleet, arrived.

Chi…

The three double airtight gates on the outer wall of the space station were slowly opened. Three ferocious, aggressive, and murderous crystal suits of the Imperium appeared from three directions.

The crystal suit on the left side had been installed with countless guns, magazines, and honeycomb-type launchers, making it look like a moving arsenal.

The crystal suit in the middle was more than four meters tall, even larger than many light Ares Extensions. At first glance, it appeared to be an iron tower covered in lumps.

The crystal suit on the left side, in the meantime, was the complete opposite. It was less than two meters tall, which could be either because the armor was as thin as paper or because the Immortal Cultivator wearing the crystal suit was particularly short and slender. But the two sabers crossed on his back that looked like crescent moons made it impossible for anybody to underestimate his dangerousness.

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

The appearance of the three Immortal Cultivators seemed to have activated the violent energy inside the space station. Invisible electric arcs appeared and collided, causing serious interference to all the crystal cameras that were floating in midair. All the spectators that were watching the competition could not help but feel as if the entire space had been twisted when their auras crashed into each other brutally.

At this moment, countless people were paying close attention to the soul-stirring competition.

In the highest command center of the Defense Counsel of the Federation, the newly-elected Speaker Ding Lingdang, Guo Chunfeng, Bai Kaixin, and other leaders of the federation observed the three aggressive Immortal Cultivators on the light beam solemnly.

The request to duel that Di Feiwen had proposed was indeed weird and strongly reeked of a scheme. But he was the most capable person in the Black Wind Fleet to clean up the mess, and his prestige was more than ten times higher than Heiye Lan’s, who the federation tried to back up. If the war was to be ended soon, at least two of the matches had to be won first.

Li Yao… Your capability has improved again!

Ding Lingdang’s eyes were glittering. Perhaps she was the least worried among the leadership of the federation because she believed in Li Yao’s capability and had no doubt that three Immortal Cultivators were not going to be a problem for Li Yao.

On the other hand, on Black Ray, the lone starship from the Black Wind Fleet that had been disarmed, Di Feiwen, who looked more like a vicious merchant than a general, and the experts of the defeated troops of the Black Wind Fleet stared at Vulture Li Yao on the light beam.

This was a legendary expert from the edge of the cosmos who had rendered their hundred-year expedition futile and collapsed their enormous fleet!

Chapter 1864 - I’m in a Hurry. Come Together!

Fiery Eye, Heavy Cannon, and Death Shadow, the three experts from the Black Wind Fleet, were all ruthless, brutal men who had killed countless people and left countless terrible tales behind them.

Even among the experts of the Black Wind Fleet who were watching the battle, a lot of people had seen them destroying everything in their way unstoppably with their own eyes. Some had even experienced their overwhelming magnificence personally.

But their enemy…

It was Vulture Li Yao!

Ten years was long enough for the expedition army to get enough knowledge of their prey, the ‘Star Glory Federation’, or knowledge that they thought was enough.

They had heard the name of Vulture Li Yao before, but they did not think that it was a big deal back then, mistaking it for some sort of propaganda and deification. Turning a dead hero into the idol of a country was a trick that had been adopted too many times.

They had collected some of Li Yao’s battle videos from a hundred years ago. They had to admit that he was rather distinguished to have trained himself with such abilities at the edge of the cosmos.

But he was still nothing more than ‘distinguished’.

None of the Immortal Cultivators had considered Li Yao an obstacle on their path to conquer the Star Glory Federation.

It was not until Li Yao announced his grand return with eleven experts from the Ancient Sages Sector and twelve Colossi, blew up the space gate, and killed the commander of the Black Wind Fleet that the defeated soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet suddenly realized that all the rumors were true. Vulture Li Yao was as intimidating as the rumors made out!

When he was in the Core Formation Stage, he had killed the star child, an elite scout from the Imperium of True Human Beings. Then, he united the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector on his own. The commander of the Black Wind Fleet, the extraterrestrial devils, and the resurrected member of the Pangu Clan had all been slain by him. How could the defeated soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet not feel shocked and scared by such an expert?

Before the battle started, all the Immortal Cultivators were already soaked in cold sweat. They only hoped to win at least one of the three matches, even if it was a tie. As long as the failure was not too humiliating, the last bit of dignity of the Black Wind Fleet would remain.

“My fellow Cultivators…” Di Feiwen was particularly ugly, but he had a warm and comforting voice. Whoever heard him talking would feel that they were walking in a spring breeze and could not refuse to believe what he said. “Watch the show carefully now. Don’t forget our deal. I believe that nobody will regret it after witnessing Vulture Li Yao’s astonishing performance.”

Inside the space station, the three Immortal Cultivators between the high level and the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage slowly landed.

Even the condescending experts from the center of the cosmos did not dare act arrogantly faced with Vulture Li Yao, a local tyrant from the edge of the cosmos. They bowed to Li Yao at the same time to show respect.

“…Fellow Cultivator Li, to decide the fate of the Black Wind Fleet and even the Star Glory Federation, we are going to have a fair competition as per our agreement,” ‘Death Shadow’ Murong Wei said cautiously. “We have already taken enough advantage of you by sending out three champions on our side. Then, it is only reasonable that you get to decide the order of our fights. I wonder, which of us do you want to compete with first?”

“In that case…”

Li Yao nodded. While warming up his wrists and ankles casually, he walked to the three Immortal Cultivators.

He seemed to be observing his opponents carefully and deciding his first challenger. However, while he was walking, the floor that was made of super alloys broke apart all of a sudden, as if an invisible bomb had exploded below his feet!

The speed of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was accelerated to the maximum in the moment. Li Yao’s shadow was divided into three and darted at the three Immortal Cultivators at the same time.

“We don’t have to go through that trouble. I’m in a hurry. The three of you can come together!”

Before the sonic boom reached their ears, Li Yao's thunderous roar was already echoing in the entire space station!

"What!"

The pupils of 'Fiery Eye' Wan Xiu, 'Heaven Cannon' Lei Long, and 'Death Shadow' Murong Wei were immediately constricted. The leadership of the Immortal Cultivators and the Cultivators on Black Ray and in the highest command center all jumped to their feet, too.

Three shadows lunged at the front of the three Immortal Cultivators at the same time. Logically, only one of them could be real, but the most dangerous alarms were ringing inside the heads of the three Immortal Cultivators at the same time.

Hardly had they activated their most powerful spiritual shields when the three shadows that Li Yao constructed exploded at the same time. The fireballs they raised entangled them like raging chrysanthemums.

The three shadows all turned out to be real. Li Yao had divided his crystal suits into three parts in a moment and mixed a lot of crystal bombs and fragments of crystal suits from his Cosmos Ring with them.

If the Immortal Cultivators had mistaken them for simple blurred shadows, they certainly would have been wounded!

"Excellent!"

The three Immortal Cultivators were too experienced to be fooled, but their reaction only made Li Yao more eager to fight. Wearing a smile that he did not even realize himself, he put on a brand-new Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit for melee combat while he complimented his enemy. The elbows, knees, feet, and fingers of the new crystal suit had all been installed with sharp daggers that were powered by spiritual energy and could vibrate ten thousand times per second. He then attacked ‘Fiery Eye’ Wan Xiu, the super gunfighter on the left side.

Launching attacks at three Immortal Cultivators who were between the high level and the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage and were almost as good as him at the same time was not because Li Yao overestimated himself but a result of careful calculation and deduction.

After agreeing to the uncanny duel proposed by Di Feiwen, Li Yao had been studying the three champions on the enemy’s side.

They were, without a doubt, the best experts in what was left of the Black Wind Fleet, but they had a major shortcoming—they lacked teamwork and cooperation.

Fiery Eye, Heavy Cannon, and Death Shadow were from the Fiery Spider Sector, the Hard Rock Sector, and the Black Wind Fleet respectively. They were not close comrades in the first place. It was only because their original worlds had all been crushed by the Covenant Alliance a hundred years ago, which turned all of them into homeless dogs, that they had joined hands in order to prevent further collapses.

Naturally, the Black Wind Fleet had been taking advantage of the smaller worlds while they were in trouble, too. It was not hard to infer that ‘Fiery Eye’ Wan Xiu and ‘Heavy Cannon’ Lei Long, as experts not from the Black Wind Sector, did not feel too happy about it.

In the past hundred years, due to the lack of resources, they had spent most of the time in hibernation. Naturally, it was impossible for them to train with each other on tactical cooperation.

Every Nascent Soul Stage expert was a dreadful slaughtering machine. Everybody had their own special styles, habits, and even taboos.

Without figuring out each other’s styles and characteristics, and before the high-intensity training of cooperation was conducted, if a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator entered another Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator’s battlefield, they could prove to be more of a burden.

Therefore, Li Yao was seventy-percent confident that the three experienced Nascent Soul Stage experts were far from comrades with neat teamwork but would more likely hamstring each other.

On the other hand, Li Yao’s greatest advantage was his mysteriousness.

The enemy only had the battle videos of him in crystal suits a hundred years ago and the dynamic analysis of his performance in the space battle in the Tartarean Skeleton half a year ago. It was impossible for them to learn the achievements of his crazy training in the recent half year after swallowing tremendous tenebrum energy.

That was his greatest trump card.

If he fought the opponents one by one, whether he won the first two rounds or not, the enemy would certainly accumulate tremendous battle data about him, and his trump card would be seen through. In that case, the final round would be very difficult to win.

Thus, Li Yao could not afford to fight three simple warriors in such a prolonged match.

Only by taking down three formidable enemies in a one-versus-three battle would the Black Wind Fleet be completely awed and convinced!

‘Fiery Eye’ Wan Xiu was the breaking point that he had chosen, not because he was the weakest among the three of them, but because—

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

Hundreds of deadly rays darted out from the fire around Wan Xiu and lunged at Li Yao like a dragnet. Every pore on Li Yao’s body was sending out alarms of the highest level!

Li Yao’s usually half-closed eyes were widened to the maximum at that moment. Invisible ripples spread out of his body and established an enormous force field of disruption. He performed a remote manipulation technique to compete for the rushing bullets in midair with ‘Fiery Eye’ Wan Xiu.

The tricky trajectories of the bullets became clumsy and slow. Some of the bullets seemed to have been bogged down in thick glue. A lot of the highly-explosive bullets that contained marrow crystals exploded, raising brilliant flowers of sparks between the two of them.

In the meantime, a volcano slowly rose from the depths of Li Yao’s brain. A gate to hell seemed to have opened between his eyebrows. Infinite spiritual energy spurted out and congregated into indescribably horrible pictures. It was the most powerful mental attack!

By mental attack, it meant interfering with the enemy’s brainwaves with one’s own brainwaves.

Li Yao was an expert of mental attacks in the first place. After receiving the tremendous legacy from Professor Mo Xuan and the extraterrestrial devils, he was even more adept at such arts.

‘Fiery Eye’ Wan Xiu had been polishing his eyes with special secret medicines since childhood. The vision imaging mechanism of his eyes was different from normal. His eyes were keener and could see a longer waveband of the light, allowing him to see a lot of things that normal people could not, including even the ripples of part of the brainwaves.

In other words, because he could see further and more clearly, he was also more vulnerable to mental attacks.

“If you’ve got such good eyes, why don’t I give you everything to see?”

It seemed as if a supernova break was erupting in Li Yao’s conarium, spurting out the most violent spiritual energy at ‘Fiery Eye’ Wan Xiu incessantly.

The illusions he constructed were perhaps simple bugs, skeletons, or zombies for normal Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. They were black-and-white and quite dim.

However, in the eyes of Wan Xiu, the decayed corpses and the wriggling and exploding maggots on them all had ten thousand colors with the tiniest details. They were vividly etched into his brain!

Chapter 1865 - Absolutely Dominating and Brutal!

‘Fiery Eye’ Wan Xiu understood his weakness very well.

It was exactly because of such a weakness that he could only be considered a second-tier expert in the Black Wind Fleet despite the Cultivation at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage and the magnificent techniques in gunfighting.

He had performed intense training targeting his weakness. He had even received his license as a ‘Meditation Healer’ in the Imperium of True Human Beings. The sturdiness of his nerves far exceeded that of regular Immortal Cultivators.

However, faced with the aggressive, terrible illusions from Li Yao, he could not help but feel shocked, and his brain went blank.

Within that moment, Li Yao’s telepathic thoughts and spiritual energy marched forward like two snakes that had been tied up.

The bullets that had been under the precise control of ‘Fiery Eye’ Wan Xiu vibrated violently. The unsubstantial illusions became more and more vivid and clear. The distance between Li Yao and him shortened, too.

‘Fiery Eye’ Wan Xiu was only bewildered for a single moment. He broke away from the swamp of fear in less than one tenth of a second. Before the sparks of his mind glowed, his body had reacted on instinct. All the honeycomb-type launchers and guns that were installed on his crystal suit opened fire, but—

There was no response!

The moment his brain went blank, Li Yao’s spiritual energy and telepathic thoughts had already invaded his crystal processor. The telepathic thoughts sabotaged the fire control system of the crystal suit like a virus, blocking all the instructions that he sent to the crystal suit.

The outcome of the battle between two experts could be decided by the tiniest factor. With the damage of Li Yao’s telepathic thoughts, the corruption to such an extent could only last a short moment, but it was enough for him to jump to the enemy’s side and smacked his hand on the enemy’s head before the enemy changed the tactic.

Boom!

A fire that was as intense as blood was blown out of Li Yao’s palm, penetrating through the helmet and head of ‘Fiery Eye’ Wan Xiu and flooding out from the back of the helmet.

When the ear-splitting explosion echoed between Li Yao’s palm and the hardest part on the helmet of ‘Fiery Eye’ Wan Xiu, the leadership of both parties who were watching the battle all felt that their heads shook hard, as if an invisible giant hammer had hit them.

Some of the non-battle-type Cultivators or Immortal Cultivators who were less capable even touched their foreheads subconsciously, only to mistake their cold sweat for brains and blood that was spurting out.

“This—This is too brutal!”

Even a lot of the most ruthless and pitiless Immortal Cultivators could not help but swallow hard and mumble to themselves.

‘Fiery Eye’ Wan Xiu did not even have the time to scream or struggle before the performance parameters on the remote surveillance menu hit rock bottom.

As for the man himself, there was no telling if he was still alive. His brain was seriously damaged, and he had lost his combat ability temporarily or permanently!

Almost at the same time, the rushing bullets in midair missed their target and fell into Li Yao’s control again. Drawing a devastating curve, they shot at ‘Death Shadow’ Murong Wei on the right side.

Murong Wei was an assassin of the Immortal Cultivators who highlighted agility. Li Yao did not expect the bullets to cause much trouble for him. But at the very least, they should be enough to stall him for one or two seconds.

“Hu!”

Li Yao’s grabbed the head of ‘Fiery Eye’ Wan Xiu hard and raised him up as if he were a sack of rice. Waving the enemy for half a circle, he threw the guy at ‘Heaven Cannon’ Lei Long, who was charging at him furiously!

‘Heavy Cannon’ Lei Long was one of the best strength-type Immortal Cultivators in the Black Wind Fleet and a giant with unparalleled physical strength.

Li Yao felt that he had been given the wrong nickname. The guy was not a ‘Heavy Cannon’ at all. When he was sprinting at full speed, he was obviously a starship that had accelerated to the highest speed to crash into the enemy’s starship!

Pa!

‘Fiery Eye’ Wan Xiu, who was still unconscious, was blown hundreds of meters away by the spiritual shield of ‘Heavy Cannon’ Lei Long, into the cabin wall of the space station. Tremendous blood spurted out of the gaps of the crystal suit, leaving a mottled shape of a human on the wall.

‘Heavy Cannon’ Lei Long’s speed was utterly unaffected, and he continued charging at Li Yao. On the other hand, it looked as if Li Yao had not recovered from the fierce fight a moment ago. He was hit precisely by the enemy and blown hundreds of meters away, too.

However, the collision disrupted all the plans of ‘Death Shadow’ Murong Wei, who was preparing for his ambush nearby. His attacks even almost hit ‘Heavy Cannon’ Lei Long.

Li Yao was quite right. The Immortal Cultivators that had hibernated for a hundred years really did not have much time to hone their teamwork. They had probably never thought that it would require several experts to work together to conquer the barbarians at the edge of the cosmos.

‘Heavy Cannon’ Lei Long continued his charge. Despite his enormous body size, he was the opposite of clumsy. In the straight sprint of several hundred meters, he was even faster than ‘Death Shadow’ Murong Wei.

Almost the moment Li Yao was blown away, he reached Li Yao’s landing point, ready to perform the second round of attacks.

But Li Yao reacted even faster than he did. While Li Yao was still flying in midair, he raised his hand and shot at the cabin wall of the space station where he was to land, breaking a hole the size of a fist!

The landing point had actually been chosen by Li Yao carefully. On the cabin wall was an airtight gate that was not so solid. Once it was broken through, tremendous oxygen immediately leaked out through the tiny hole, lowering the temperature and pressure in the space station. Air was escaping through the hole in a hurry, too, constituting obscure whirls that disrupted everybody’s movement!

Li Yao had been prepared for this. Naturally, he was able to activate the power rune arrays of his crystal suit in time and dashed to another side.

‘Heavy Cannon’ Lei Long, on the other hand, happened to be charging at Li Yao’s original landing point, where the ‘hole’ was.

He was a pure strength-type warrior. Although he could be faster than ‘Death Shadow’ Murong Wei in a short-distance sprint, his abilities in quick stops and sharp turns were far from the assassin-type Immortal Cultivator.

Now that his speed had soared, and because of the massive attraction force, he could not stop at all and was directly absorbed to the hole.

Behind him was a vast and boundless universe. In front of him was the enormous air of a whole space station. The two parts were solely blocked by his crystal suit and his body. He was essentially ‘pressed’ into the cabin wall by the force.

Despite the shocking strength of ‘Heavy Cannon’ Lei Long, he could not help but reveal a momentary loophole like

‘Fiery Eye’ Wan Xiu did just now.

It was already enough.

Or rather, it was already his doom.

What happened next panicked even the cruelest and most heartless Immortal Cultivators.

Li Yao had entirely vanished and seemed to turn into a continuous, incessant meteor shower that bombarded ‘Heavy Cannon’ Lei Long, who was stuck in the hole, displaying to everybody exactly what a ‘heavy cannon’ was.

The super heavy crystal suit on Lei Long’s body that was carefully made with triple materials was shattered by the overwhelming, destructive force in only one second. His body collapsed at a visible rate, and his previously bronze skin turned into a lifeless gray color within a moment, jumping past the phases of swelling, bleeding, and falling apart directly to the phase of ‘necrosis’.

Before anybody had a chance to observe his wounds and check if he were still alive, before they had the time to exclaim, and even before they raised suspicions as to why there was suddenly passionate and soul-stirring music in the picture, all the shooting stars had congregated into a rushing sun that directly blew apart Lei Long and the cabin wall behind, punching him into space directly!

“Is—Is this the terror of Vulture Li Yao?”

“Taking down two experts on our side in a row within a breath, he has truly brought out every last shred of potential in the Cultivation of the Nascent Soul Stage!”

“He is not in the Divinity Transformation Stage, but he has a terrifying combat ability close to the Divinity Transformation Stage. Incredible. This is truly incredible.”

“As—As expected of the well-deserved dominator of the edge of the cosmos who was capable enough to slay Heiye Ming and the man whose wife has been elected as the Supreme Speaker of the Federation!”

On Black Ray, all the Immortal Cultivators other than Di Feiwen were sweating hard in astonishment.

They did not participate in the space battle half a year ago, which meant that they did not witness the grand return of Li Yao with twelve Colossi.

But the shock Li Yao brought to them that day was as impressive as if they had watched an enormous space gate being destroyed.

In the highest command center of the Defense Counsel of the Federation, everybody except for Ding Lingdang was exclaiming in amazement, too, overwhelmed by shock.

A lot of the MPs had never personally seen Li Yao attack. It was not until this moment that they finally realized why such a seemingly unattractive and rather casual man could become the only man for the mighty Blazing Tyrannosaur.

It all made sense now. Only such a man could conquer a she-dinosaur.

The MPs looked at Li Yao in the picture and then at Ding Lingdang, who was unmoved as if it were just a daily routine. They all swallowed hard, feeling that they had drunk a cup of boiling magma.

They were probably the most terrifying couple in the entire sea of stars.

Now, only one last Immortal Cultivator was standing.

‘Death Shadow’ Murong Wei was known as a man who was too fast even for a ghost to catch him and could avoid being captured by crystal cameras for twenty-four hours with his high speed!

He was the last hope for the Black Wind Fleet’s dignity.

But he seemed to have been dumbfounded by Li Yao’s quick, brutal attacks. Abandoning the speed that he was most proud of, he simply stood at the center of the space station in a daze.

Li Yao turned around. While taking off his own Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit that had broken apart in the thunderous attacks just now, he walked over to ‘Death Shadow’ Murong Wei.

He did not seem worried at all that the enemy would launch a sudden assault when he took off his crystal suit. He did not even perform the ultimate skill of ‘air change’ or show any intention that he would retrieve another crystal suit from his Cosmos Ring.

But ‘Death Shadow’ Murong Wei remained absolutely still and stared at him rigidly, as if he were an ossified shadow.

“What’s going on? Why is Murong Wei not fighting?”

“Even if he doesn’t fight, he can always run away and deal with Vulture Li Yao with his high speed. Faced with such a terrible monster, it is already incredible enough to last five minutes!”

“But why is Vulture Li Yao not fighting either? He even took off all his crystal suit, as if he’s not concerned at all.”

On Black Ray, all the Immortal Cultivators were whispering in bafflement. Right then, somebody exclaimed, “Look at the back of Murong Wei’s head!”

Chapter 1866 - You Are Too Cruel

The pictures in front of everyone’s eyes were captured from every perspective by almost a hundred crystal cameras. Some of them were even simulated holographs made possible by combining countless images. After enlarging the pictures, they could see that a crimson crystal was deeply stabbed into the back of Murong Wei’s head at the most critical location.

Upon closer inspection, they noticed that it did not seem to be a transparent crystal but a gadget that was more complicated and precise in structure and carved with countless runes.

The gadget was not necessarily crimson itself, but crimson exhaust flames were spurting out of the end and enshrouded its whole body, which provided tremendous impetus to push it into Murong Wei’s brain.

Murong Wei was frozen on the spot because he was under the suppression of the crimson, rhombus-shaped magical equipment!

The Immortal Cultivators looked at each other in bewilderment. Although they all had profound knowledge from the center of the cosmos, they had never seen such a weird piece of magical equipment before.

After observing for a long time, the captain of Black Ray finally remarked, not very confidently, “It seems… to be a tiny warship?”

As a captain, he often trained himself with a super-tiny training ship the size of a palm, too. In terms of appearance, they looked indeed quite similar.

But the regular super-tiny training ships could not have been powerful enough to ambush an assassin-type Immortal Cultivator who was best known for his agility and speed or to penetrate the enemy's defense in a moment, leaving even no chance of a scream.

The captain of Black Ray was not wrong.

While the whole attention of 'Death Shadow' Murong Wei was focused on the miserable outcomes of 'Fiery Eye' Wan Xiu and 'Heavy Cannon' Lei Long and the magnificence of Li Yao, what pierced into the back of his head without a sound was Neltharion, a piece of magical equipment that had followed him since before he entered the Building Foundation Stage.

Neltharion was a super-tiny training ship from the Star Ocean Imperium. It did not boast a high combat ability and was not very impressive by itself.

It had been Li Yao's favorite tool in the Building Foundation Stage and the Core Formation Stage. But after he ascended into the Nascent Soul Stage, the magical equipment could not catch up with Li Yao's improving capability anymore. Except for certain stealth missions where it could still be of some use, it was idle most of the time.

However, other than Little Black, Neltharion was the piece of magical equipment that Li Yao had kept for the longest time. During the hundred years, Li Yao had baptized the magical equipment with the blood from his fingertip, the tip of his tongue, and the tip of his heart through the secret techniques of the Hundred Smelting Clan, building it into a treasure that was ultimately connected to him.

Naturally, he could not bear to seal the magical equipment or give it to somebody else. He simply kept it with him and nurtured it every now and then.

In the great battle in the Spiriters’ Realm half a year ago in Hundred Flowers City, Li Yao’s soul had been heavily wounded by the extraterrestrial devils, and he had been forced to divide his personality in half and completely separate ‘Li Yao’ from the ‘mental devil’. Eventually, the mental devil dealt the fatal blow to the extraterrestrial devils.

After that, Li Yao and the mental devil had absorbed abundant tenebrum energy, too.

The mental devil was responsible for the negative emotions in it, while Li Yao was responsible for the digestion of the pure energy whose negative emotions had been filtered. The dual personalities cooperated with each other and made significant improvements in their Cultivation.

Together with the secret techniques concerning soul separation and the invasion of crystal processors left by Professor Mo Xuan, they figured out a special ability by accident.

Although Li Yao’s own soul could not stay out of his body for a long time due to ultraviolet light and radiation, the mental devil was able to surpass the limits of the shell for a while and float in midair freely.

However, Li Yao was not comfortable allowing such a dangerous fellow like the mental devil to run loose outside. Plus, the ultraviolet light and all kinds of cosmic radiation significantly wore the mental devil out without the protection of the soul. In the end, they suddenly came up with the idea of letting the mental devil crawl into Neltharion, performing a full upgrade on Neltharion!

Neltharion had always been controlled remotely by part of Li Yao’s telepathic thoughts. Right now, part of those telepathic thoughts had been replaced by the mental devil. Naturally, it worked perfectly fine.

As a result, Neltharion completely became Li Yao’s clone. While sharing the vision, sound, and the data of reconnaissance, it was now also endowed with powerful abilities of independent judgement and combat. The operating time had been increased by more than three times, too.

Together with the mental attack abilities of the mental devil and the further modification and upgrade to Neltharion that Li Yao performed with the whole strength of the Glorious Sunlight Group, it had been transformed into the most dangerous super-tiny warship in the entire universe!

That was exactly what had just happened. While Li Yao sat cross-legged and waited for the three Immortal Cultivators to come, Neltharion was already hiding at the center of the space station in stealth mode.

The stealth of the magical equipment was not simple optical illusions but involved the contortion of space and other very mysterious techniques. As long as it remained absolutely still, even a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator would find it practically impossible to notice it.

Li Yao had intentionally released his dominating aura the moment the enemy showed up to disrupt their minds. Then, he launched the most aggressive attacks within a moment.

Naturally, it was impossible for the enemy to realize that such a dangerous warship was hiding in midair!

While Li Yao finished the two formidable enemies, the mental devil also approached ‘Death Shadow’ Murong Wei without a sound. The guy’s speed was indeed what Li Yao was most wary of, not because he feared that he could not defeat the opponent but because the battle would look rather embarrassing if he had to play hide-and-seek with the enemy.

Thankfully, the mental attacks that the mental devil released all invaded ‘Death Shadow’ Murong Wei’s brain in the most gentle and unnoticeable way, making him utterly unaware of the fatal attack coming from behind him.

When Neltharion leapt out of the void and penetrated the critical location at the back of Murong Wei’s head, even all the deities and fiends in the entire universe would not be able to save him.

“Cough, cough. Cough, cough, cough, cough…”

‘Death Shadow’ Murong Wei could not have looked more awful. Thick veins were protruding out of his face, as if dozens of earthworms were crawling between his skin and his bones, corroding all his flesh and blood.

His arms turned back weirdly, trying to snatch Neltharion from the back of his head, but Neltharion drilled deeper and deeper. The exhaust flames that it spurted out also burnt his fingers. How could he catch the intruder?

As Neltharion submerged, the mental attacks from the mental devil further crushed the mind of ‘Death Shadow’ Murong Wei like an overwhelming tsunami, putting indescribably fright and shock on his face. He was unable to bring out the combat ability of the Nascent Soul Stage.

“Mwahaha. I told you that my capability would soar to an unprecedented level after absorbing the tenebrum energy left by the extraterrestrial devils!”

The mental devil’s wild laughter echoed from deep inside Neltharion. Of course, Li Yao was the only one who could hear it.

“This is the tenebrum energy that the extraterrestrial devils have accumulated for a thousand years after arduous efforts. All the essence in it was absorbed by me. That’s why I can construct such terrible illusions. How can an Immortal Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage escape from my hands? Hehe. Hahaha!”

“Can I offer a suggestion?” Li Yao commented. “I don’t object to your laughter now that you have made great accomplishments in training, but can you laugh less evilly? This is a very righteous anti-invasion war. We are the good guys. Don’t laugh like a villain!”

“Well, I don’t mean to,” the mental devil said, “but I’ve absorbed too many negative emotions in the past six months. This is also the first time that I’ve tried to combine the biotechnology and the cybertechnology into a new brain invasion technique. I can’t help but feel excited!”

“Speaking of which, what kind of dreadful illusions have you poured into his brain to make him look so awful as if he would be better off dead?”

“It’s nothing. I have merely hypnotized him and misled him into thinking that his limbs and spine have been broken, and he was paralyzed on a sickbed, unable to move at all.”

Li Yao was slightly dazed and then amused.

For an assassin-type Immortal Cultivator who was best known for his speed and agility, a broken spine and full paralysis were indeed the most insufferable pain in the world.

“A fox may turn gray but never kind. You are too cruel.”

While Li Yao was talking, he had already walked in front of ‘Death Shadow’ Murong Wei.

He sighed softly, with a slight hint of confusion on his face, as if he were puzzled over why the few Immortal Cultivators were even courageous enough to offer to challenge him one by one.

Then—

Boom!

At this moment, Li Yao had taken off the broken crystal suit on his body. The only thing left was a mustard-seed combat suit that was as thin as paper.

But when he turned around on the spot and launched a kick, ten thousand rune arrays seemed to be bursting out the most brilliant light behind his right leg, turning his right leg into a saber that could cut apart the three-dimensional space!

The enormous boom did not echo from his right leg that had been curved into a saber but from the bottom of his left leg, with which he supported his body and exerted his strength.

After the boom from his supporting leg, almost a hundred enormous cracks penetrated the entire space station along the cabin wall!

It was not until this moment that his right leg kicked ‘Death Shadow’ Murong Wei right in the chest as fast as lightning, shattering the crystal suit on the enemy’s body into pieces no larger than fingernails that spluttered everywhere.

Murong Wei himself was blown backward like a bullet, turning into a flashing red line that bounced back and forth on the cabin walls, leaving almost five bloody marks behind, until he was deeply embedded in a cluster of messy tubes and crystal wires after an ear-splitting explosion.

The tubes spurted out gas nonstop, and the crystal wires were uttering weird noises. Murong Wei did not get a chance to perform the attacks and evasions that he was most proud of before he was crushed, his life in danger.

Of the three Immortal Cultivators, two had been beaten to a pulp, and one was floating in space. All of them had been vanquished.

At that moment, Li Yao’s entire right leg was enshrouded in dark red flames. The right leg of the mustard-seed combat suit, which was made of more than thirty Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and the most advanced material technology, had been completely burnt up in the high-speed collisions and the outburst of spiritual energy.

Chapter 1867 - The Most Troublesome Negotiator

What kind of speed and strength that was!

The highest command center of the Defense Counsel of the Federation was caught in utter silence.

All the Cultivators, especially the new MPs who had been elected in the recent hundred years and did not experience the unification of the three Sectors that was facilitated by Li Yao a hundred years ago, were mired in the black hole of shock.

Was it really the guy with the messy hair, who seemed drowsy all day and sometimes walked down the street in slippers?

Was it the guy who was peed on by the kids when visiting a kindergarten but simply laughed as if it were nothing, without any shred of dignity as a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator?

He turned out to be so brutal and ruthless!

A lot of the new MPs did not understand the true meaning of ‘Vulture Li Yao, dominator of three Sectors’. They had thought that Li Yao was merely lucky enough to live at the edge of the great integration of the three Sectors and happened to be Ding Lingdang’s husband and Jin Xinyue’s master. He was merely famous because of his wife and disciple, and he had been deified by the exaggerated propaganda.

Even after his grand return in the space battle, a lot of people still secretly thought to themselves that it was the doing of his Colossus, Tartarean Colossus. Any Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator who was capable of piloting the Tartarean would have achieved exactly the same result on the battlefield.

But at this moment, Li Yao’s performance with two ordinary Mystic Skeleton Battlesuits and a shocking kick without wearing any crystal suit shattered everybody’s doubts!

BAM!

The kick in the picture seemed to have hit the defense shield and the super alloy gate of the highest command center directly. The air in the entire command center shook violently, with ripples that were almost concrete spreading out. Every MP felt that their eardrums were humming hard.

It was not until a long time later that somebody finally struggled to breathe and smile bitterly. “Thankfully, he is on our side. Otherwise—”

It was probably what all the MPs of the federation had in their mind.

Since the MPs of the federation on Li Yao’s own side were shocked to such an extent, it was not hard to imagine the scene on Black Ray’s bridge, which had already been swallowed by silence as if it were a grave. It was not until a long time later that the noises of clattering teeth finally broke the silence.

Faced with Vulture Li Yao, an ultimate expert of the barbarians at the edge of the cosmos, the Immortal Cultivators had already been mentally prepared for their failure.

But none of them had expected that ‘Fiery Eye’ Wan Xiu, ‘Heavy Cannon’ Lei Long, and ‘Death Shadow’ Murong Wei would suffer such a crushing defeat that they were unable to fight back at all when they had joined hands.

“Twenty-two seconds. Wan Xiu, Lei Long and Murong Wei combined only survived twenty-two seconds against his attack!”

“That includes the six seconds when he walked over to Murong Wei unhurriedly. In fact, it only took him fifteen seconds to finish three formidable opponents ranging from the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage to the peak!”

“What—What kind of person is he exactly? What magical equipment did he use?”

“Vulture Li Yao? Vulture Li Yao!”

All the Immortal Cultivators were shocked and upset. Their faces were all hollow, as if Li Yao’s kick had hit them right on their nose. Even the most calm and condescending experts looked like roosters whose feathers had been plucked, with fright and confusion beaming out of their faces.

Di Feiwen, the No. 2 person of the Black Wind Fleet from the Black Wind Sector, was the only guy who was in the mood to chuckle, as if he had foreseen that Li Yao would offer such a devastating performance.

“How about it, captains, chiefs, managers and leaders?” he slowly said. “Do you all believe what I said earlier? I told you that we are absolutely no match for Vulture Li Yao, exactly like we were absolutely no match for Heiye Ming a hundred years ago.”

He moved himself to his feet from the commander’s chair slowly and warmed up his wrists and ankles. Without looking at the experts around, he focused his eyes on Li Yao in the picture thoughtfully while he said, “Now, it is time that you fulfill your part of our deal. Bring out all your items. It is my turn to go up.”

In the picture, after taking down three Immortal Cultivators in a row, Li Yao did not have any excitement or delight on his face, as if he had just finished a daily routine or accidentally stomped on three cockroaches.

His eyebrows were furrowed, his face was indifferent, and his eyes were hollow, as if he were meditating on the most enigmatic mysteries of the universe, making it impossible for anyone to get a glimpse at what was on his mind.

In a negotiation, such an opponent would be the greatest opponent.

Those who are famous must have reasons to be famous. The most powerful dominator at the edge of the cosmos is indeed not easy to deal with!

Before the negotiation officially started, the mysterious and unpredictable expression on Li Yao’s face was already enough to make Di Feiwen, who was also an expert of negotiations, sigh.

He began to wonder if he would be blown into smithereens by Li Yao, exactly like the previous three Immortal Cultivators, the moment they met.

After all, after a quick glance, he could even generally tell what was on Heiye Ming’s mind.

But he had absolutely no idea what Li Yao was thinking, not even the faintest clue.

Such tranquility, such smartness, and such sophistication. Dreadful. This is truly dreadful!

Di Feiwen sighed while shaking his head. Putting on his crystal suit, he flew to the space station.

…

Inside the broken space station, all kinds of automatic maintenance magical equipment spurted out foam and temporarily blocked the holes and cracks, allowing the air pressure and temperature to go back to normal.

Li Yao was still expressionless, contemplating wholeheartedly with his head lowered.

Neltharion had entered the stealth state and returned to his Cosmos Ring. The mental devil dashed back to the depths of his brain, too.

The two parties were the two sides of the same soul after all and could not be completely separated. After lingering outside for a while, it had to return to the brain for nurture and training.

“More haste, less speed,” Li Yao said. “We were in so much a hurry to absorb the enormous energy that we are unable to manipulate it perfectly. Look. At the last moment, I failed to control my strength, and tremendous spiritual energy flowed out of my pores. Together with the high-speed collisions with the enemy’s crystal suit, my pants were ripped apart.”

“Such accidents are unavoidable in a fierce battle,” the mental devil said. “What’s the problem?”

“It is not a big deal if the pants were only ripped apart. But look. My thighs are utterly clean and smooth. Even the leg hair has been accidentally burnt up. Do you not feel that it is very humiliating? It’s almost like I’m a pervert who has intentionally shaved off all my leg hair.”

“Well…”

“Speaking of which, I’m suddenly very curious about one thing. How do other Cultivators address the problem when they encounter it? After all, it is impossible for them to control their spiritual energy accurately in a fierce battle all the time. Some of the spiritual energy will flow out sooner or later and may cause high-speed friction with the air. They will be bombarded by the enemy’s magnificent magical equipment, too. So, won’t their clothes be ripped apart and their hair be burnt up every now and then?

“If two graceful, dominating experts somehow both become naked in a fierce fight and entangle each other, won’t it be very embarrassing?

“It is already embarrassing enough if two male experts are having a fierce fight. What if dozens of experts that involve both males and females are having a gang fight? If somebody performs such a destructive skill that other people’s clothes are all blown up, what should they do next? Do they continue fighting or not?”

“Hey, hey, hey,” the mental devil interrupted. “I don’t think that this is the time to reflect on such issues!”

“Perhaps the armor and suits were invented at the very beginning exactly to avoid the awkward situations where the participants of a battle got naked in the middle of a fierce fight…”

“Really, brother.” The mental devil sighed. “You’ve absorbed too many irrelevant thoughts in the past six months. Why don’t we take a rest for a while before starting the next training phase?”

“…Let’s talk about it later. Somebody’s here!”

Shua!

A new Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit flowed around his body like black mercury and covered him tightly in a moment. Li Yao stared at the No. 9 airtight gate. What entered the space station were a large team of medical soldiers and Di Feiwen, the de facto leader of the defeated soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet, who had the emblem of a general of the Imperium of True Human Beings carved on the breastplate of his crystal suit.

Unlike Li Yao, who was fully armed and highly wary, the moment he made sure that the air pressure and the temperature were steady after he entered the space station, Di Feiwen took off his crystal suit.

Perhaps the Immortal Cultivator who was best at administration and studies was very clear that, whether or not his Cultivation was higher than Li Yao’s, his combat ability was definitely incomparable to Li Yao’s. It would not matter at all if he wore a crystal suit or any number of crystal suits.

Holding a vintage bronze box that was carved with the emblems of the Imperium and the Black Wind Fleet, Di Feiwen walked up to Li Yao unhurriedly. He bowed deeply at Li Yao and introduced himself in a warm and comforting voice. “Greetings, President Li. I am Di Feiwen. Nice to meet you.”

If someone's identity and character could be decided by their voice, Di Feiwen would not be a ferocious intruder at all. He did not even have the dominating air of the vice commander of the expedition army. He looked more like a clever but dutiful merchant who appreciated peace and prosperity.

Of course, the countless enemies who had been killed by him miserably, according to the intelligence that Li Yao had collected, would certainly beg to differ.

After receiving Li Yao's permission, Di Feiwen opened the bronze box in the most gentle and slow movement before he picked out an enormous emblem of the Black Wind Fleet, a mottled flag, a statue or specimen of a red spider, a pearl that contained bouncing purple fire, a black and seemingly plain stone, and a bracelet made of wolf fangs from the box one after another.

"The Black Wind Sector, the Purple Fire Sector, the Fiery Spider Sector, the Hard Rock Sector, the Wild Wolf Sector—the tokens that represent the highest power of the five Sectors that have come to attack the Star Glory Federation are all here. During the most prosperous days of the five Sectors, the loss of any one of these tokens would've raised a storm of blood. The sacrifice of countless lives would need to be made first before they could be found again."

Di Feiwen waved the five Sectors' symbols of power in front of Li Yao and spoke unhurriedly.

Chapter 1868 - Di Feiwen’s Scheme!

Li Yao observed the pile of garbage with great interest. He could almost feel the auras of countless souls of the Immortal Cultivators from the tokens.

He had heard a lot about the succession of the major Sectors in the Imperium of True Human Beings from Su Changfa and Heiye Lan. He knew that the symbols of power were not necessarily invincible magical equipment but had indeed been fought over in bloody conflicts among the different generations of experts. They all stood for a very long history and were a source of pride that outsiders might find difficult to understand.

Had the five worlds including the Black Wind Sector not suffered two crushing defeats in a row in only a hundred years, the symbols of their heritage would never have been shown to other people so easily.

Di Feiwen, however, had convinced the best experts of the five worlds to offer the things that were both utterly worthless and could mean everything to the locals of the worlds, which made Li Yao more and more confused about what he was up to.

“General Di Feiwen, let’s drop our disguises now.” Li Yao observed the hideous, weaselly face that was entirely different from the man’s voice. “If you are willing to negotiate, a negotiation team made of the leadership of the federation will naturally come to get in touch with you. I am neither qualified nor interested in talking about the unimportant details with you.

“I only agreed to your uncanny demand, partly because I was in need of a batch of experts for practice—Speaking of which, your three subordinates just now were more or less acceptable enough. They allowed me to activate and fluently grasp all the techniques that I had trained myself with in the past half year. I must thank you for that.

“Anyhow, it was also because I was very curious about you, too. What kind of person are you exactly? What trap can you possibly set up at such a moment?

“I collected a lot of files about you and discovered that the No. 2 person of the Black Wind Fleet has the exact opposite style of Heiye Ming. If he was a rigorous commander, you are more like a merchant, one that devours people without spitting out their bones.

“However, the Black Wind Fleet is at a dead end without anywhere to turn to right now. Even if you are a vicious merchant, is it possible for you to come up with an ultimate counterattack?

“It was exactly because I was deeply fascinated by the point that I was willing to chat with you in such an opportunity, but if you have come here to bargain with me as to whether or not you would like to surrender or the specific terms of your surrender, our conversation will be unnecessary. You can go back if that’s the case!

“The federation is willing to pay some price to avoid the unnecessary sacrifice of valuable lives, but it does not mean that we will compromise infinitely. The competition just now is already the best of our concessions. If you think that you can do it again, you will be terribly mistaken!”

When Li Yao declared ‘terribly mistaken’, he included part of the mental attacks in his voice.

Di Feiwen looked even more humble and panicked, but his voice was as stable and warm as before. He lowered his head and said, “I’m afraid you’re wrong, President Li. The Black Wind Fleet understands our failure and inevitable doom very clearly. We do not dare play any tricks on such an expert like you.

“You are one of the strongest dominators at the edge of the cosmos, the creator of the New Federation, the conqueror of the Ancient Sages Sector, the destroyer of the space gate, the slaughterer of both the Pangu Clan and the extraterrestrial devils. Regarding such a universal expert whose might spreads far and wide like you, we are only here to witness your demeanor and charisma in person and do not dare scheme.”

Li Yao felt goosebumps all over his body. “You are shameless enough for such sycophancy, and you claim you don’t have a scheme?”

“You’re quite right about one thing. I’m indeed very different from General Heiye Ming.”

Di Feiwen lowered his head so hard that it already sank into the gap on the floor. He explained patiently, “The Black Wind Fleet is not a simple army but a fleet of immigrants made of all the population and resources of the five worlds after they were swallowed by the Covenant Alliance. Other than the warriors who are responsible for conquests, there are still the families of the warriors and the civilians who are responsible for production and construction.

“In fact, you may consider us as ‘nomadic people’ struggling to survive in the dark universe. It is a political entity that is not very steady.

“Since it is a political entity, it naturally has two command systems, namely the military and the administration. General Heiye Ming was both our highest leader and the commander of the army. I, on the other hand, am responsible for civil affairs and tried to feed the hungry stomachs with whatever resources we have left.

“It is certainly not an easy task. The insufficiency of resources and the unpredictable future often make me feel stretched.

“Thankfully, I had already gained some fame and connections in the business world while I was still in the Black Wind Sector. While doing my best and relying on the help of the friends from other worlds, I finally lasted to this day and prevented the unstable fleet from falling apart.

“However, if I have any talents at all that other people do not boast, they are all in the fields of business and administration. At most, I only have ability to command some logistical troops.

“As for exactly how to bring the Black Wind Fleet out of the siege and reclaim our pride and past glory, I really don’t know the first thing about that.

“Therefore, personally speaking, I am very inclined to a complete submission and even unconditional surrender. I believe everything that the Star Glory Federation has stated in the letter of persuasion, and I trust President Li’s leniency. Since the main troop under my lead did not cause any actual damage to the Star Glory Federation or hurt a single individual of the federation, and since so many innocent civilians are living inside the logistical troops and the life starships in my main troop, you and the Star Glory

Federation will certainly not make things more difficult for the pitiful fellows who are no more than peasants and workers.”

Li Yao snorted and said, “You are the high and mighty No. 2 person of the Black Wind Fleet. Are you here to win my sympathy? The federation always keeps its word. Every word in the ‘letter of persuasion’ is a solemn promise. Regarding what will happen to you, you do not need to ask me. Just ask yourself if you have done anything atrocious and unpardonable before!”

Di Feiwen did not have the dignity and pride of the No. 2 person of the Black Wind Fleet at all. Faced with Li Yao’s mockery, he simply replied, “In that case, I am reassured now, but we do have one last small question…”

“Wait.” Li Yao frowned hard. “Now, your only question is whether to surrender or not. There are no other questions at all, big or small! If you surrender, you will talk to our special negotiation team. If you don’t, let’s just keep on fighting? You want to intimidate us by turning into space pirates? There are countless space pirates serving in the federal army right now. They are all your ancestors!”

Faced with Li Yao’s scolding that bordered on cursing, Di Feiwen was even able to laugh out loud. His voice was as warm and gentle as before. There was no telling whether it was because he had planned everything or because he was plain shameless. “You do have a point, President Li. We are indeed willing to negotiate and even to surrender. The only small question is, who will negotiate and surrender on behalf of the Black Wind Fleet?”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. “What kind of reason is that? Heiye Ming is dead now, but isn’t there still you?”

“As I said just now, although I am nominally the vice commander of the Black Wind Fleet and the No. 2 person of the whole ‘nomadic people’, I am in fact only responsible for the civil system and part of the logistic troops,” Di Feiwen said with a fake smile. “I do not have much prestige in the real battle troops. According to the titles in the federation, I am probably more like a leader of the Ministry of Commerce or Ministry of Civil Affairs. How can I represent the entire Black Wind Fleet?

“Besides, you know the rules of the Immortal Cultivators very well. I am not good at fighting, and I’ve always been despised and discriminated against by the tough warriors and generals. If I surrender on behalf of them as the highest leader of the Black Wind group, they will certainly turn the world upside down.

“If some of the disobedient generals and warriors defect with their starships and turn into space pirates who loot and slaughter in the Star Glory Federation or even find a way to return to the homeland of the Imperium, informing everyone of the truth of what happened here, it will do nobody any good, right?”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes. “You do not have much prestige in the battle troops, and you are not good at fighting? Why am I told that your methods were quite cruel and efficient when you were suppressing the mutiny? Fine, if you say so, what about Heiye Lan? She is the daughter of Commander Heiye Ming, and with the support of the heroes from the Ancient Sages Sector, she has gathered a lot of defeated troops of the Black Wind Fleet. She is qualified to represent the Black Wind Fleet, isn’t she?”

Di Feiwen was amused. “It is the tradition of the Immortal Cultivators to worship the strong. The size of your fists is all that matters. Familial background and bloodlines are not important. Heiye Lan is only at the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage and has proved to be a puppet of the Star Glory Federation. Our crushing defeat in the battle had a lot to do with her lousy performance in the Ancient Sages Sector, too. Let me ask you, how can the proud people of the Black Wind Sector and the Immortal Cultivators of the other four worlds who do not see eye to eye with the Black Wind people accept such a traitor and puppet as the new 'king of Black Wind' to govern the rest of the troops of the five worlds? That is a bad plan, President Li."

Li Yao nodded and had to admit that his idea was a bit crude. "So to speak, you are preparing to elect a new leader, a so-called 'king of Black Wind', and ask him to negotiate and surrender on behalf of you? Hehe. Is this a trick to buy you more time? How long will the federation need to wait?"

"No, no, no. I'm afraid that you are mistaken again." Di Feiwen smiled both sincerely and cunningly. "We are indeed going to elect a new 'Black Wind king', but it will not waste any time. In fact, if everything goes well, today, no, in one minute, our new leader will show up. He will surrender to the Star Glory Federation on behalf of us and guarantee that every Immortal Cultivator and every screw on our starships will give up resistance unconditionally!"

"Oh?" Li Yao was greatly surprised. "The new 'Black Wind king' will be born in one minute? In that case, why didn't you ask him to come here directly? Was it because of safety concerns?"

"No, he is already here." While speaking, Di Feiwen suddenly fell to one knee and looked up at Li Yao, "President Li, your mightiness is ubiquitously known at the edge of the cosmos. You have led countless poor people to march out of darkness for brightness. With that in mind, would you like to be the leader of our ‘nomadic people’ and the new ‘Black Wind king’ and help the vagrants who are struggling not to be swallowed by darkness to find a new way out?”

Chapter 1869 - Level-Twelve Citizen of the Imperium!

Di Feiwen’s voice was as soft as a spring breeze when it entered Li Yao’s ears, but it almost completely froze Li Yao’s heart.

Li Yao had analyzed all the schemes that Di Feiwen could have possibly set up. He had even come to meet the No. 2 person of the Black Wind Fleet in the mind of enjoying a play. It had never occurred to him that the guy would propose such a shocking and ridiculous idea.

“What… is the meaning of this?” Li Yao demanded. “If this is some kind of scheme, it is really a terrible one!”

“Of course, it is not a scheme. Faced with your unparalleled strength, our surrender is a hundred percent genuine.”

Di Feiwen lowered his head again and said, “Your original plan was to support Heiye Lan as a puppet and control the Black Wind Fleet indirectly through her based on her identity and bloodline. But you do not understand our disdain for bloodline and our respect for strength. Heiye Lan is just a dog of yours. If we submit to her, wouldn’t we be the dogs of the federation’s dog, no better than the slaves of the federation’s slave?

“By the same logic, even if we do elect a nominal leader within us as the so-called ‘Black Wing King’, he will be incomparable to the previous Black Wind Kings, who used to dominate the universe at the center of the cosmos. He will only be a puppet who is destined to bow before the federation and be closely monitored. The federation will always stay wary of his every move without giving him any real freedom.

“What can such a puppet leader do? Which proud expert of the Black Wind Fleet is willing to be covered with greasepaint and be delivered to the parliament of the federation as a subject and a puppet?”

“Well, about that…”

“As you said just now,” Di Feiwen said casually, “the Black Wind Fleet is in a terrible situation. Two continuous crushing defeats in only a hundred years have not only deprived the Immortal Cultivators of the five worlds of our homes but also broken our backbones, giving us no hope of reclaiming our homes, restoring our former glory, and even reappearing at the peak of the universe.

“Hope. Hope is the most precious thing in the entire universe. Whether they are righteous or evil, everybody must count on hope to survive. When I said that the defeated soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet might split up into space pirates, it was not a threat but a helpless fact. Once the defeated soldiers truly lose their last hope, many of them will completely sink into darkness and possibly become certain dreadful beings that are not humans at all. Including me, no one will be able to control them or even imagine what they will do.

“At this moment, if there is one person who can bring hope to the Black Wind Fleet and tell the defeated soldiers whose spines have been broken that they can return to the center of the sea of stars and reclaim their homes and glory, turning from crushed soldiers into the strongest warriors in the universe—President Li, who do you think that person will be? Heiye Lan? Me? The captains under my lead who are mediocre in the first place?

“No, we are incapable of that. Even the most idiotic hominoid soldier on the Imperium’s starships will not believe any bullsh*t from me or Heiye Lan.

“I am nothing more than a businessman, and Heiye Lan is a puppet without any experience, prestige, or brains. Neither of us can make people obey us.

“Only you, the invincible dominator at the edge of the cosmos and the magnificent being who has slain a member of the Pangu Clan and the extraterrestrial devils easily, have such prestige and capability. That is, as long as you are willing to raise your arms and declare that you will bring the crushed soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet back to their homes and build them into the most magnificent fleet of the Imperium! Such vows and roars will inject new strength into the broken backbones of the soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet and give us pillars to support our mind!

“The strong are always the most worshipped, which is the Immortal Cultivators’ doctrine that has been repeated too many times and an unshakeable rule in the soul of each of them. Since you are the strongest at the edge of the cosmos, isn’t it only natural for us to submit to you and invite you to be our new leader?”

Sincerity beamed out of Di Feiwen’s small, clear eyes on his triangular face, which could not have been more hideous. Li Yao almost failed to resist it. He hurried to say, “Wait, wait, wait. Can you pick a random outsider to be ‘Black Wing

King'? I am not a native of the Black Wind Fleet at all. I am not even a native of the Imperium!"

"The Immortal Cultivators only value strength," Di Feiwen explained. "We do not hold any bias about one's birthplace. I'm sure that you also know that Blackstar the Great, the founder of the Imperium of True Human Beings, was not from the center of the cosmos. When he ascended to the throne and announced that the Star Ocean Republic was to be reshaped into the Imperium of True Human Beings, his hometown, the Martials Meritocrats Sector, was not even included in the Imperium's territory.

"The founding emperor has set a good example for us. Why would the lords and the Sector Masters have more rules and restrictions? With enough strength, all rules can be shattered!

"Also, after swallowing the defeated soldiers and the immigrant fleets of the Purple Fire Sector, the Fiery Spider Sector, the Hard Rock Sector, and the Wild Wolf Sector, the meaning of 'Black Wind King' has been greatly expanded. It is now the ruler of five worlds.

"For the Immortal Cultivators of the Purple Fire Sector, the Fiery Spider Sector, the Hard Rock Sector, and the Wild Wolf Sector, is there any difference between Heiye Ming's leadership and yours? Both of you are experts from a different Sector for them, aren't you?"

"How can we be the same?" Li Yao blurted out. "Heiye Ming and those Immortal Cultivators belong to the Imperium after all!"

"You belong to the Imperium, too," Di Feiwen said matter-of-factly. "After referring to tremendous files, we have discovered that Su Changfa, as a representative of the

Immigration Office of the Imperium of True Human Beings, invoked the immigration law and the ‘Overseas High-Level Talent Introduction Act’ on Kunlun more than a hundred years ago and granted President Li the green card of the Imperium of True Human Beings, making you a ‘subject’ of the Imperium. At that time, you must’ve sworn loyalty to the lightning trident flag of the Imperium while listening to the national anthem of the Imperium, right?”

Li Yao was of a mind to scratch his head. “I seem to have done that. So to speak, I’m a f*cking subject of the Imperium?”

“No, no, no. Not a subject, a citizen,” Di Feiwen explained patiently. “When Su Changfa granted you the green card, he must’ve introduced the twenty-level citizenship system in the Imperium. As long you expand the territory or make other contributions for the Imperium, you will be upgraded level by level, ascending from civilian to citizen, from citizen to noble. He told you that before, didn’t he?

“The Black Wind Fleet has been sent out to expand the territory of the Imperium. One might even say that we are the moving territory of the Imperium. Naturally, our starships have higher permissions than Su Changfa did.

“Su Changfa could grant you a green card and the subjecthood of the Imperium, but we can grant you a level-twelve citizenship at most.

“You are an expert close to the Divinity Transformation Stage, and you have discovered the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Ancient Sages Sector, and other six worlds for the Imperium, as well as the primeval relic, Kunlun. Tsk, tsk, tsk. Such contributions are more than enough for you to be knighted. We can totally improve you to be a level-thirteen citizen of the Imperium of True Human Beings reasonably and legally. If you intend to move further, you will have to go to the authorities of the Imperium to redeem your contribution points, verify your accomplishments, and even ask His Majesty to give you laurels in person.”

“Wait!” Li Yao widened his eyes. “What do you mean by ‘you have discovered eight worlds for the Imperium’?”

“‘Discover’ is a very subtle word,” Di Feiwen said. “If you admit your identity as a subject of the Imperium that you received from Kunlun, is it wrong to say that you have discovered so many worlds at the edge of the cosmos?

“If you do not like such a description, you still have made great contributions to the Imperium by destroying the member of the Pangu Clan and the extraterrestrial devils, who are mutual enemies for the Imperium and the federation. There won’t be any problem for you to be promoted to a level-twelve citizen of the Imperium in our place with such contributions alone.

“Alright. Since you are a level-twelve citizen of the Imperium, you are naturally qualified to be a ‘Sector Master’ of a certain world under the Imperium’s government. It is completely legitimate.”

Li Yao was dazed for a long time. “Right. Su Changfa did give me some sort of badge before. It seemed to be a green card or a medallion of the Imperium of True Human Beings and is now kept in a museum or a research room in the Secret Sword Bureau.”

“Fantastic,” Di Feiwen said. “It means that you are a very seasoned citizen of the Imperium!”

Li Yao felt that it was all messed up. “Wait one more moment. Does your whimsical decision not have any objection from the ambitious and disobedient big shots from other worlds?”

“Of course, there are always dissenters when it comes to the supreme power,” Di Feiwen said casually. “So, we reached the decision to settle the problem in the old-fashioned way of the Immortal Cultivators, which is fighting.

“‘Fiery Eye’ Wan Xiu, ‘Heavy Cannon’ Lei Long, and ‘Death Shadow’ Murong Wei who fought you just now all represent different factions within the Black Wind Fleet and are backed by different powerful forces that are too independent for even me to control. However, I bet with them that you would prove that you are the only and probably strongest ‘Black Wind King’ in history with an unquestionable performance.

“As it turned out, you did it. In only twenty-two seconds, you beat three seasoned Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators unconscious. Also, you have eight worlds and a primeval relic behind you. Even the most insubordinate Immortal Cultivator has to lower their head before such strength and power.”

Li Yao still found it hard to accept the Immortal Cultivator’s logic. “Let’s put aside the Immortal Cultivators from the four smaller worlds. What about the natives of the Black Wind Sector? I killed Heiye Ming, your last leader!”

“It further justifies your legitimacy to lead us,” Di Feiwen said casually. “People of the Black Wind Sector are best known for our toughness and valor in the entire Imperium. The competition for Sector Master in the Black Wind Sector has always been brutal. The new expert declares the arrival of a brand-new era by killing the old Sector Master, which is anything but unusual in our place. Even Heiye Ming killed a lot of experts of the Di family when he rose to the position of Sector Master. If we bore all the grudges in our mind, the Black Wind Sector and all the worlds in the Imperium would’ve long collapsed.

“The bottom line is, this is the rule of the Immortal Cultivators. Once we enter the period of power struggle due to political imbalance, all the experts will be simmering with impatience and fight each other relentlessly.

“But when an unquestionable new expert shows up, the rest of the people will immediately forget the conflicts and hatred of the past and bow before him, entering a new period of power stability. Led by him, they will shift from internal contradiction to external development and vent their fury and hatred on the prey.

“Perhaps that is the reason why the Immortal Cultivators have survived to this day in the dark universe despite all the internal conflicts.”

Chapter 1870 - Overthrow the Imperium!

Despite Di Feiwen’s sincerity, Li Yao did not intend to agree to his proposal immediately. He simply shook his head and said, “I’m afraid that you are mistaken. I am not the ‘dominator at the edge of the cosmos’, and I am not interested in meaningless titles such as ‘Black Wind King’ or the leadership of an enormous fleet or country.”

“Understandable,” said Di Feiwen, nodding. “The so-called power and position are sometimes only a shortcut to the ultimate strength. If an expert already has incomparable strength, it is true that they will no longer need to restrain them with power, position, or fame.

“At the center of the cosmos, there are a lot of experts like you who prefer absolute freedom and are dedicated to the exploration of unvisited lands and levels. Naturally, none of them are really interested in the boring affairs of the mortal world.

“However, the Black Wind Fleet has a perfectly functional system, and I can serve the fleet for decades to come, too. Your personal management will not be needed. We only need to unite the people and boost their morale with your strength and prestige. It’s like your wife is not an admin-type Cultivator but has still been elected as the Speaker of the Star Glory Federation, meeting barely any competition.”

“Speaking of which,” Li Yao said coldly, “I am proud of my identity as a citizen of the Star Glory Federation, which I will not abandon easily. It remains unknown whether or not the federation acknowledges dual nationality. I doubt that they will allow me to be the so-called ‘Black Wind King’.”

“Why not?” Di Feiwen asked back. “The federation is in a hurry to settle the complicated problems left by the defeated soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet, too, which may escalate into greater trouble if not resolved in time. They also want to get our enormous fleet and more intelligence and files concerning the Imperium of True Human Beings. Chances are that they are even hoping to directly reach out to the Imperium of True Human Beings on a certain level through the Black Wind Fleet. As long as you agree to be our leader, everything will be possible.

“I know that the Star Glory Federation has its own incontestable principles, but the minor request we have proposed does not violate any of your laws or moral code, does it? Nobody will be hurt in the deal, and thousands of innocent people will even be saved. Why would the parliament of the federation refuse it?”

“You do have a silver tongue. I’m starting to understand how you became the No. 2 person of the dog-eat-dog Black Wind Fleet despite your lack of combat ability.” Li Yao was still unmoved. “It’s a pity that you are not surrendering to me sincerely but only trying to seek benefits, maintain a certain degree of independence, and even become the cancer of the federation by using my fame and prestige.”

“Of course,” Di Feiwen said unhurriedly. “Please put yourself in our shoes, President Li. Despite the recent failure, at least one third of the starships of the Black Wind Fleet are undamaged and can still fight. The pride of a superpower from the center of the cosmos cannot be erased overnight. Is it possible for us to lay down our weapons and surrender unconditionally under such circumstances?

“In both the Star Glory Federation and the Imperium of True Human Beings, the ‘Dark Forest Theory’ was quite popular for a while. The theory might not be a universal truth, but some of its details are indeed worth studying. For example, the idea of ‘chain of suspicion’.

“Aren’t the Star Glory Federation and the defeated soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet mired in a chain of suspicion right now? Even if the defeated soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet want to surrender, they are still concerned about what will happen. Will they suffer inhuman torture? Will their family and descendants on the immigrant starships be affected? Will they mine on the desolate planets at the edge of the cosmos forever until they become dry bones in the pits without ever having the opportunity to see their flags flap in the wind in their hometown at the edge of the cosmos?

“On the other hand, even if I do not propose any conditions today and just surrender unconditionally, will the federation trust us?

“No. You will be equally worried that the disobedient Immortal Cultivators are up to something else and may rebel again. You will try your best to watch over and weaken us. The friction between the two parties will intensify in mutual mistrust. We will be caught in a vicious cycle, until the possibility becomes reality and the insurgency does take place.

“For me, surrender is not a problem. The problem is the relation and trust between the two parties after the surrender. You being the new ‘Black Wind King’ is the best solution to break the ‘chain of suspicion’ between us that I can come up with.”

“You don’t need to worry about that,” Li Yao affirmed. “The federation always honors its promise. We have integrated with the Blood Demon Sector, which we fought for hundreds of years. Now, the Blood Demon Sector is an important part of the Star Glory Federation, and a lot of demons have become MPs and leaders of critical departments of the federation. It must be noted that the Blood Demon Sector almost took down the capital of the federation when the two parties hated each other most!

“The one third of the Black Wind Fleet under your lead did not even enter the territory of the federation. We do not have any bloody grudge between us. What are your concerns?”

“No, it is a different issue.” Di Feiwen shook his head. “From the perspective of mankind as a whole, the Blood Demon Sector is one of the last few worlds of demons. They were at an absolute strategic disadvantage in the first place. There would not be any trouble accepting and absorbing them.

“But the Black Wind Fleet is different. There’s still the enormous Imperium of True Human Beings. If the subtle relation among the Imperium, the Black Wind Fleet, and the federation is not taken care of properly, should the conflicts between the federation and the Imperium break out one day, regardless of who the final winner is, the Black Wind Fleet will certainly be the first to suffer.

“The most critical thing is that the so-called integration of the Blood Demon Sector and the Heaven’s Origin Sector was based on an important premise, which was that Jin Xinyue, the leader of the Blood Demon Sector, was your true disciple. Everybody in the world knew that. It was the foundation for the two parties to trust each other. Isn’t it evidence that proves the importance of inviting you to be the ‘Black Wind King’? Because what we need right now is exactly such a ‘foundation of trust’.”

Li Yao could not argue with Di Feiwen’s reasoning at all, but he did feel ridiculously amused. Half a year ago, when he was engaged in a life-and-death battle with Heiye Ming on the bridge of Black Swirl, he had never seen it coming that the defeated soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet would cry and beg him to take Heiye Ming’s place one day.

“Are you not worried that I will regard the Black Wind Fleet as cannon fodder when I become the ‘Black Wind King’?” Li Yao asked in disbelief.

“That is indeed a possibility…” Di Feiwen intentionally lengthened his tone and said, “Even if you refuse to be the ‘Black Wind King’, will the federation not regard the Black Wind Fleet as cannon fodder if we choose to surrender?”

Li Yao was rendered speechless and lost for words for a long time.

“We believe that the strategic vision of the Star Glory Federation is keen enough for you to recognize that it is impossible for the Star Glory Federation and today’s Imperium of True Human Beings to live in peace in the long term.”

Di Feiwen smiled and went on. “In the past, the Imperium was unaware of the existence of the federation, and the two parties could live in peace under the cover of the vast universe. But it is a pity that some of the intelligence regarding the edge of the cosmos has been sent back to the homeland of the Imperium over the past ten years.

“That intelligence was not necessarily sent to the court and the emperor. Furthermore, the Imperium must be too occupied in the strategic counterattack on the Covenant Alliance to extend its hands to the edge of the cosmos even if the intelligence is collected and analyzed.

“But how much longer can such vulnerable ‘peace’ last? Twenty years? Ten years? Or even shorter?

“If the Star Glory Federation intends to defend its tiny territory and ideologies, it must not wait for the arrival of the Imperium’s magnificent troops but attack actively. The attack might not necessarily be made by the military. It is more likely to be infiltrating the Imperium and changing the Imperium unconsciously from the political and systematic level, thereby reshaping today’s Imperium into a different appearance. Am I right, President Li?”

Li Yao was greatly alarmed. He did not expect the plain-looking vice commander of the Black Wind Fleet to actually have such keen strategic insight.

He was quite right. Despite the quick and neat victory of the space battle, the conclusion of many expert strategists in the federation after much analysis was still that the Star Glory Federation did not have the ability to fight a ‘general war’ with the Imperium of True Human Beings.

One space battle could be won by all kinds of favorable factors, but when it came to a war that might last hundreds of years, it would be a head-on clash of the comprehensive national power of the two parties without any tricks. Even another ten Li Yaos and Ding Lingdangs would not be able to change the outcome of the war.

Therefore, if the federation intended to march to the center of the cosmos, at least in the next hundreds of years, it would be impossible for them to march all the way to the Imperium unstoppably. The more sensible choice would be to dispatch a number of the elites to infiltrate the Imperium and make use of the contradiction between the so-called ‘hominoids’ and ‘true human beings’, finding a way to disintegrate the Imperium from the inside or at least reform the Imperium on a certain level!

Li Yao had already proposed the idea when he raised the Black Hole Plan more than a hundred years ago. After the scheming and deduction of countless expert strategists, it was finally perfected.

He did not expect that Di Feiwen would be able to point out the key to the problem precisely. Li Yao felt that he had underestimated the hideous-looking ‘General Businessman’ after all.

“If the federation, or you yourself, President Li, is truly meaning to dissect, modify, or even overthrow the Imperium from the inside, the Black Wind Fleet will certainly be your greatest help.”

Di Feiwen was still as respectful as before, as if he were already treating Li Yao as ‘Black Wind king’.

“In the meantime, as long as you are willing to officially be inaugurated as ‘Black Wind king’ in front of the Immortal Cultivators of the five worlds in public and announce the result to the universe, we will also believe in your promise that you will lead us back to the center of the cosmos one day!”

Chapter 1871 - Master of Five Sectors!

Although Di Feiwen had always been on one of his knees and could not have acted more obediently, Li Yao still felt that the guy was terribly tricky to deal with.

After pondering for a moment, he asked, “What if I insist on refusing?”

“You should know that real Immortal Cultivators are certainly not cowards. We understand the saying ‘better to be broken as jade than to remain intact as bricks’ very well,” Di Feiwen said casually. “When we choose to submit to an expert, we do not just want to preserve our life and survive in the chaotic world. It is also because we believe that the expert will grant us even more powerful strength and lead us to greater glories and a brighter future.

“It is exactly because I believe ‘Vulture’ Li Yao, the dominator of three Sectors is one of such experts that I am willing to surrender unconditionally. If you think that the defeated soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet are not qualified to be your loyal subjects, we can’t find any reason to live our meaningless lives any longer. Let’s just end the history of the Black Wind Sector, the Fiery Spider Sector, the Wild Wolf Sector, the Hard Rock Sector, and the Purple Fire Sector with a spectacular battle!

“As for myself, although I am not a battle-type Immortal Cultivator, it is still quite an honor to be killed by such an expert like yourself!”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes. Spiritual energy was focused in his eyes when he looked at Di Feiwen as if he were trying to pierce the guy.

Di Feiwen simply raised his head and looked at Li Yao, full of expectation.

There was to telling whether he was hoping for Li Yao to become the ‘Black Wind King’ or to open the hand and smack him to death.

Blank noises echoed in the communication channel in Li Yao’s earphones. Then, Ding Lingdang’s voice came over. “Li Yao, don’t be rash. The strategists and analysts in the highest command center are now running an urgent deduction on the subsequent changes after you become the ‘Black Wind King’. It may be a good thing for the federation.”

“Are you serious, honey? Are you going to tell me later that the federation has decided that I should be the Black Wind King?”

“You are already the dominator of three Sectors. It wouldn’t hurt to add another title to yourself, would it?”

Li Yao coughed for a moment and glared at Di Feiwen. “If I agree, what are the benefits?”

“There are too many. First of all, you will have the full loyalty of the Black Wind Fleet. In the space battle half a year ago, the Black Wind Fleet only lost one third of its elite forces. A lot of shield starships, arsenal starships, and comprehensive cruise carriers, as well as the space shuttles and armed crystal suits on them, are still perfectly intact.

“Besides, as a fleet of immigrants, we are not here for pure conquest and destruction but for construction and colonization at the edge of the cosmos. Therefore, we have a lot of scholars, workers, and technical staff in our fleet, as well as abundant infrastructure. As long as enough resources and fundamental materials are provided, they can start their work immediately.

“You must’ve seen the mining factory that could automatically upgrade and expand on Kunlun, right? We have a lot of similar facilities in our fleet. In the past, they could not be activated or upgraded due to the lack of resources. But right now, they are all yours.

“Furthermore, we have a lot of classified intelligence about the Imperium of True Human Beings. Although it’s mostly outdated information from more than a hundred years ago, we still maintain some sort of connection with the homeland of the Imperium with our super remote communication system. In such a way, we can not only get the latest news in the Imperium but also deliver false messages back to the homeland of the Imperium, misleading the Imperium into an incorrect judgment of the federation’s situation. Do I need to tell you the strategic value in that?”

Li Yao sneered. “It seems that you do not have much loyalty to your motherland at all!”

“The so-called nation is an ‘imagined community’. If we get to the bottom of it, it is condensed by a powerful force,” Di Feiwen replied sincerely. “In the vast and boundless sea of stars, the distance between the habitable plants can easily be dozens of lightyears. Transportation and communication are highly inconvenient. The authority of the emperor is attenuated to the maximal level. Also, because of the different cultures, customs, and habits that have derived from the unique environment of every plant, it is often the case that people are more loyal to the planet that they live on than to the unsubstantial concept of Imperium.

“In other words, we are the people of the Black Wind Sector, the Fiery Spider Sector, the Hard Rock Sector, the Wild Wolf Sector, and the Purple Fire Sector first before we are the people of the Imperium.

“When the Imperium has the absolute strength to both defend our interests and punish our disloyalty, we are certainly absolutely loyal to the Imperium and His Majesty. But right now, our homes are occupied by the Covenant Alliance, and there is little the emperor can do about it. We have suffered a crushing defeat at the edge of the cosmos, and the distance is too great for the emperor to lash us. How can you expect us to retain much loyalty to Imperium under such circumstances?”

Li Yao could not help but smile. “You are rather candid.”

“It’s better to be candid when speaking to an expert like you, President Li.” Di Feiwen’s eyes were glittering. “The things I mentioned just now are only petty benefits. In fact, the greatest benefit is the title of ‘Black Wind King’ itself.

“The so-called ‘Black Wind King’ is the common master of the Black Wind Sector, the Hard Rock Sector, the Wild Wolf Sector, the Purple Fire Sector, and the Fiery Spider Sector. Theoretically speaking, it is the combination of the Sector Masters of the five worlds and has the absolute right to rule over the five worlds. Even His Majesty is not to meddle too much.”

Li Yao was stunned. “Is that so?”

“Yes. To govern the boundless sea of stars, the Imperium of True Human Beings has adopted various systems,” Di Feiwen explained rather proudly. “The capital ring near the Empyreal Terminus Sector is managed by a bureaucratic system that is directly under the emperor’s lead. The worlds that are slightly more remote are managed by aristocrats under the ‘enfeoffment system’. For the worlds at the borderland such as the Black Wind Sector, a lot of tough warriors and generals often distinguish themselves. Those worlds are more independent, and the local Sector Master almost always has absolute power.

“The Black Wind Sector, the Fiery Spider Sector, and the other worlds were at the borderland between the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance in the first place. To better deal with the emergencies on the battlefield, we always managed our affairs on our own.

“If you become the ‘Black Wind king’, you will be a great warlord that rules over five worlds. Considering the eight worlds on the Star Glory Federation’s side, tsk, tsk, tsk, you will be one of the few most powerful people even within the Imperium!”

“Wait!” Li Yao was not a silly boy to be fooled easily. “If I may ask, were I truly to be the ‘Black Wind King’, where are the five worlds that are supposed to be ruled by me?”

“Well…” Di Feiwen pondered for a moment and said, “They have been occupied by the Alliance of the Holy Covenant for a hundred years. But the Imperium is planning a strategic counterattack, which seems to be making good progress. It is not entirely impossible that we will take back the few worlds.”

“So to speak,” Li Yao said, “you have essentially paid me lip-service. If I want the title of ‘Black Wind King, Master of Five Sectors’, I have to either take back the frontier planets that they have strengthened for a hundred years from the Covenant Alliance or beg His Majesty of the Imperium of True Human Beings to give me a hand?”

“There’s no need to be hasty, President Li,” Di Feiwen said. “If the five worlds are still in the hands of the Covenant Alliance, there is certainly nothing we can do about it. But if they are already taken back by the Imperium, it is not entirely impossible for us to steal them—no, to ask for them. At the very least, you are the legitimate ‘Black Wind king’. Your nomological right to rule the five worlds including the Black Wind Sector cannot be ignored!”

“The system in the Imperium is truly weird.” Li Yao almost could not stop himself from scratching his head. “I thought that the title of ‘Black Wind King’ was only there to entertain yourselves. But from what I’ve heard, even His Majesty may acknowledge my identity?”

“It’s not entirely impossible,” Di Feiwen said solemnly. “The geopolitical conflicts in the Imperium are very fierce and much more intense than the contradictions between the ‘four new worlds’ and ‘three old worlds’ in the Star Glory Federation. For the highly-independent worlds such as the Black Wind Sector, we always elected the Sector Master on our own, and then the Sector Master would pledge loyalty to His Majesty in the Empyreal Terminus Sector and be acknowledged by the emperor.

“After all, since the demise of Blackstar the Great, there has never been a magnificent tyrant who suppressed the entire sea of stars. The emperors who succeeded the throne hardly vetoed the candidate of the Sector Master that the locals elected because it would mean that the emperor was reducing the power of the local places and extending his hand to the most central interests of the local places. He would be strongly opposed by nobles, warlords, and experts.

“At the very least, during the confrontation of the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance, no emperor has had the courage to concentrate their power recklessly at the risk of dividing the Imperium.

“Of course, your case is different, but the Star Glory Federation is at the edge of the cosmos. It is too remote for the homeland of the Imperium to learn what has really happened here. With appropriate operations, it is not entirely impossible for you to be acknowledged by His Majesty.”

Thinking quickly, Li Yao mumbled to himself, “So to speak, the Imperium of True Human Beings is not a united, iron plate but full of internal conflicts, too?”

Di Feiwen was amused. “Everybody acts in their own interests. Is there a real noble, pure, selfless Cultivator or Immortal Cultivator, and is there a real united, never-decaying country?

“Even the tiny Star Glory Federation, which has only been established for slightly more than a hundred years and is still on the rise, has contradictions between the four new worlds and the three old worlds, contradictions between humans and demons, contradictions between Li Yao’s group and the traditional forces, and so many other conflicts.

“The Imperium of True Human Beings has such a vast territory and such a long history, with all kinds of interest groups. Of course, it has ten times more internal and external issues than the federation does.

“The conflict between the emperor and the local strongmen is only the most obvious one of all the conflicts. There are also conflicts that are better hidden but more fatal. After you become the ‘Black Wind King’, I will certainly try my best to give my counsel and analyze them for you.”

Chapter 1872 - Business Lord

Li Yao stared at Di Feiwen for a long time. It was not until this moment that he finally detected certain clandestine things from the guy’s seemingly clear and honest eyes.

Li Yao smiled and bared his teeth.

“I finally understand your real goal now.” Li Yao looked at Di Feiwen carefully again and clicked his tongue. “I didn’t expect that the No. 2 person of the Black Wind Fleet would be even more terrifying than the No. 1 person. Your appetite is much greater than Heiye Ming’s. What Heiye Ming wanted to conquer was merely the Star Glory Federation, but you are hoping to claim the entire universe, including both the federation and the Imperium!”

“Oh? Why do you say that?” Di Feiwen asked, without changing his facial expression.

“Tell me. Are you only trying to build the next ‘Black Wind king’?” Li Yao stared at his opponent without letting go of the tiniest wave inside his eyes. “Or rather, are you making the next ‘Blackstar the Great’?”

The waves in Di Feiwen’s eyes were twisted, but they regained tranquility very soon. He became even more admiring when he said, “President Li, your eyes are really keen. Even what I think at the deepest part of my mind cannot escape your attention!”

Li Yao snorted softly. “There’s no need to flatter me. I feel as if you’re even more mysterious. Are you really just a member of the Black Wind Fleet and a ‘regular’ Immortal Cultivator, or do you have another identity with some other force backing you?”

“As I introduced myself in the very beginning, I am just an insignificant businessman,” Di Feiwen said. “Naturally, a businessman can hardly become a pure Immortal Cultivator.”

“Oh?” Li Yao was puzzled. “How so?”

“Business is utterly incompatible with the identity of Immortal Cultivator. They are naturally in conflict. A pure Immortal Cultivator must believe in the pureness and nobleness of ‘true human beings’ and classify human beings into a five percent class and a ninety-five percent class. Only the five percent of true human beings or their candidates matter. The other ninety-five percent are all humble, filthy, despicable, and worthless garbage.”

Di Feiwen sighed.

“But businessmen are the servants of capital. Our sole purpose in this world is to explore more markets, gain more profit, and make the capital proliferate!

“With enough profit, we are even willing to sell the most advanced weapons to alien species who have eight arms or the most ferocious extraterrestrial devils. Why would we care about the disparity between ‘true human being’ and ‘hominoid’ at all? A dollar in the Imperium is always worth a dollar, whether it is taken from the delicate purse of a ‘true human being’ or the dirty hands of a ‘hominoid’. Its value will be absolutely the same.

“The classic theory of the Immortal Cultivators believes that ‘hominoids’, who make up more than ninety-five percent of the total population, are all inferior garbage and slaves who only deserve to be exploited and looted. In that sense, we have essentially lost ninety-five percent of the market for nothing. After all, it is practically impossible to sell valuable and profitable goods to a slave, right?

“Other than the official merchants who monopolize certain trades with their connections with the royal family or the unparalleled experts, no businessman, even if they believe in the true path of immortality, is willing to tolerate the situation forever, where they have to wander in the nutshell of five percent because they are forbidden from the blue ocean of ninety-five percent.

“It is a pity that we are all strengthless dealers and touts. Faced with the emperor, nobles, warlords, and unparalleled experts, we are the most insignificant dust. Do we have the power to change the world at all? The best we can do is establish shabby chambers of commerce with other businessmen who struggle to make a living.

“Naturally, compared with the nobles in the court, the experts who train in seclusion for a couple of years easily, or the generals who are overwhelmed by arrogance, businessmen, especially those who travel among different worlds all year round, are often the most well-informed guys. If you and the Star Glory Federation are to march to the center of the cosmos one day, chances are that businessmen such as us can offer you some help, can’t we?”

Looking at the cunning little eyes, Li Yao really could not tell if the guy was speaking the truth. After pondering for a moment, he said, “Is this the conflict that you described to be more hidden and fatal than the conflict between the central government and the local places? How should I put it, the conflict between capitalism and Immortal Cultivators, or the conflict between capitalism and the Imperium? Capital is one of the most powerful forces in the universe, which is not willing to be restrained by any emperor or expert?”

Di Feiwen’s eyes beamed with joy. “Capital is genetically the most powerful force in the universe, which is not to be restrained by any emperor or expert? That is marvelously put, President Li. Since you can understand our stance so well, I believe that our cooperation in the future will be very pleasant.”

He had utterly erased the ‘one of’ part.

“Whether or not you have a second identity or any clandestine purpose, you have picked the wrong person,” Li Yao said coldly. “I am neither capable of nor interested in becoming a second ‘Black Wind King’ or ‘Blackstar the Great’. You may want to talk to somebody else!”

Di Feiwen smiled. “Fate is the most mysterious and unpredictable thing. When Wuying Qi was tied up and thrown into the active volcano, could he have foreseen that he would rule over the entire universe as ‘Blackstar the Great’ many years later?

“In the business world, there is no deal that is completely profitable, but as long as the potential profits are more than three hundred percent, it is already worth fighting for even at the risk of one’s life. Besides, with the situation that the Black Wind Fleet is in right now, what other choice do we have except to make the wild gamble?”

Silent, Li Yao considered for a long time. Then he slowly said, “I can basically outline your scheme right now. Perhaps you think that after I am raised to the place of ‘Black Wind King’, when all the Immortal Cultivators submit to me and corrupt me with your theories, I will feel too good about myself and become an Immortal Cultivator. Then, I will fight for power in the Imperium of True Human Beings as a spokesperson of your interests and even overturn the Imperium to establish a new system devised by you.

“In that case, the Black Wind Fleet will appear to have failed on the surface and even given the leadership to an outsider, but in fact, you will be the final beneficiary, and I will be a puppet in a different form.”

Di Feiwen blinked and said, “Perhaps. Then, are you willing to shoulder the heavy responsibility and become the new ‘Black Wind King’?”

Li Yao stared at him hard. “I’m really curious. What makes you so confident that I will be at your mercy like a stringed marionette? Even if I become the ‘Black Wind king’, I will not believe the Immortal Cultivators’ survival-of-the-fittest theory at all. The first thing that I’m going to do is send all the leadership of the Black Wind Fleet into the captive camp and reeducate them with the ideology of the Cultivators, even if you call it ‘brainwashing’. The second thing will be to abolish all the slavery within the Black Wind Fleet and restore the freedom of all civilians. I will show them a brand-new lifestyle and civilization. I will show them the dignity and pride of mankind, and they can also be strong warriors to defend our civilization, not just… some ‘fuel’!”

“Only the fittest survive, and the winner is the king. This is not a theory but an indisputable ‘fact’,” Di Feiwen said unhurriedly. “Take the situation right now for example. It is exactly because the Star Glory Federation is stronger than the Black Wind Fleet that you are the final winner who is qualified to demonstrate your power and brainwash the losers.

“The federation won the war only because you were stronger, not because of righteousness, mercy, kindness, or any other factor.

“President Li, experts like you can do whatever you want. We are all prepared for our fate after our surrender. Although I do not approve of the childish theories of the Cultivators personally, if you are the one who demands that we accept the brainwashing, we will certainly purge ourselves solemnly without any reserve.”

Li Yao was at a loss for words when faced with such a shameless person. Dazed for a long time, he frowned and said, “If you believe that the Cultivators’ theories are wrong, how do you explain the victory of the federation? Was it not because of the Cultivators’ theories that the federation grew so strong?”

“There are no right theories or wrong theories; there are only suitable theories and those that are not suitable,” Di Feiwen said. “The Cultivators’ theories are more suitable for the simple, steady environment at the edge of the cosmos where there aren’t many changes and trouble.

“So, the theories have proved successful. But there are far more problems, variables, and enemies at the center of the cosmos, which is a place that does not have much room for kindness and leniency. In many cases, we do not have any option except to seek the tyranny of an iron-blooded monarch in order to settle all our problems quickly.

“You do not need to waste so much time preaching on how evil, ugly, and wrong the true path of immortality is. We know that very clearly. As a businessman, I am not particularly fond of the emperor, but we chose the autocratic monarchy and the true path of immortality not because the emperor and the truth path of immortality are good, brilliant, and justified, but because the other options are even worse than them.

“Perhaps, in your eyes, the collision of Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators is the competition of good and evil. It’s all about choosing between saving ten thousand people and butchering ten thousand people. But the truth is, it’s more likely to be a competition of ‘evil’ and ‘eviler’, a choice between butchering ten thousand people and butchering a hundred thousand people. As for the option to save ten thousand people, it does not exist at all.

“Of course, you won’t believe me right now. You think that I’m bluffing. But please remember that the Star Ocean Republic was a realm of Cultivators, and you know what happened to it in the end. Regarding the corruption and darkness at the last years of the Star Ocean Republic, too many secret case files must’ve been stored on Firefly. You can retrieve them and have a read.

“Naturally, after a thousand years of development and transformation, the Imperium of True Human Beings today is decaying and repeating the history of the Star Ocean Republic, too. Perhaps the time has come to inject a new force into it and revitalize the old Imperium…

“Hehe. Forget it. There’s no need for me to say such nonsense to you right now. Let the bloody facts at the center of the cosmos teach you, and let history be the final judge. At the very least, you are the most well-deserved expert. Strength is justice. Everything you say is the truth. We are all your most humble lackeys and servants who will carry out your decisions at the cost of our lives!”

Faced with Di Feiwen’s scorching eyes, Li Yao could not help but shudder.

There was one thing that was even more dreadful than Di Feiwen’s lie and scheme.

It was that Di Feiwen had neither a lie nor a scheme. Everything he said, including the zealous vow, was serious.

Chapter 1873 - Bound Interests

Di Feiwen’s proposal was rather unprecedented. At the very least, the Star Glory Federation had never encountered such ridiculous terms of surrender before.

Of course, the Star Glory Federation had never competed with a universal superpower of such a scale and even defeated the opponent to some extent before, either, although the victory was only local and temporary.

Regarding the absurd ‘terms of surrender’, Li Yao himself and the strategists, lawyers, and sociologists of the federation all began their deductions.

The first problem that the experts faced was whether or not the arrangement was legally acceptable.

Like most of the political entities drifting at the edge of the cosmos, the Star Glory Federation did not forbid dual nationalities. Or rather, the federation had never considered the possibility of finding another nation and forming an ‘international society’ before.

Since there was not even an ‘international society’, naturally, dual nationalities were not a problem.

In other words, Li Yao’s identity as ‘citizen of the Imperium’ was not against the law. Some of the captives who had been captured ten years ago were still living in the Star Glory Federation. They were not necessarily willing to abandon their identities as subjects or citizens of the Imperium. The federation certainly did not force them to make a choice, either.

Of course, if Li Yao were an official of the Star Glory Federation, it would raise the suspicion of treason when he worked for a hostile country.

After multiple investigations, the conclusion of the specialists was that Li Yao was no kind of official in the federal government. The so-called ‘dominator of three Sectors’ was more like a slogan for propaganda. He was just the president of several private funds, nothing more.

However, Li Yao had access to tremendous secrets of the federation and was even a member of the ‘First Family’. There would certainly be great influence if he became a subject of the emperor of a hostile country, even though only theoretically.

But when the research was pushed to this point, even the concept of ‘hostile’ became quite suspicious in the legal sense. It had never occurred to the specialists that, despite the fierce space battle half a year ago, in which almost ten thousand starships large and small and dozens of Colossi were mobilized, the two parties had never declared war against each other!

For the Black Wind Fleet, the three thousand Sectors were all the rightful territory of the Imperium. They were only there to conquer the barbarians at the edge of the cosmos and did not consider the federal as an opponent on par with the Imperium at all. Naturally, it was unnecessary to declare war.

On the federation’s side, to ensure the secrecy of the ‘Dim Moon Plan’ and to pretend that they were unexpectedly attacked, they did not declare war on the Imperium either.

After the space battle, the federation only hoped that the homeland of the Imperium did not know of their existence so that they could develop for several more decades in secret. How could they attract the enemy’s attention by declaring war on the Imperium?

At this moment, a piece of news from the center of the cosmos accelerated the decision-making of the federation and Li Yao.

Di Feiwen’s fleet near the brown dwarf always had a super remote communication base that maintained minimal contact with the homeland of the Imperium.

The latest battle report that they had received stated that the ‘strategic counterattack’ of the Imperium of True Human Beings, which had been prepared for hundreds of years, had been launched a long time ago, and the progress could only be described as ‘unstoppable’. In only half a year, two strategic victories that could be called ‘great triumphs’ had been secured, and more than five Sectors and twenty resource plants had been recovered.

All in all, everything looked good. Not only was the Imperium about to take back all the territory swallowed by the Covenant Alliance in the past hundreds of years, it also had the opportunity to march to the central territory that the Covenant Alliance had operated for a thousand years to claim the heavy industrial bases and the resource planets of the Covenant Alliance, thereby reversing the comparison of national power of the two parties.

Too many victory ceremonies had been held in the Imperium. A lot of people even considered the strategic attack as the renaissance of the Imperium. Some were even calling the emperor ‘Blackstar the Great reborn’. The military power, morale, and the experts’ loyalty to the emperor were at the highest point in the past five hundred years.

The good news for the Imperium was bad news for the federation.

According to the grand strategy after a hundred years of planning, the Star Glory Federation, as a critical chess piece, could only play an important role when the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Alliance of the Holy Covenant were on par with each other.

Whether the Imperium suppressed the Covenant Alliance or the Covenant Alliance completely swallowed the Imperium, it would not be good for the Star Glory Federation, which had just entered the phase of high-speed development.

Right now, somebody in the Imperium of True Human Beings had already learned of the Star Glory Federation’s existence. However, because of the personal plans of Heiye Ming and the rest of them, they did not know that the Star Glory Federation was a highly-modernized regional superpower that was developing even faster than the Imperium and thought that it was just a bunch of barbarians struggling to survive in a desolate land.

But the secret could not be kept for long.

If the Imperium really accomplished the strategic counterattack and secured a decisive victory, rising as the sole dominator of the universe, it would certainly shift its attention to the federation eventually.

The emperor, whose capability and prestige would be higher than ever after the multiple victories, might not care about the barbarians at the edge of the cosmos, but he would certainly not allow the tough and insubordinate warriors of the Black Wind Fleet to wander out of his control.

The seasoned troops from the main battlefield of the Imperium would certainly be able to sweep across all the enemies in their way like an autumn wind blowing off the leaves.

If the emperor, nobles, and warlords of the Imperium learned the truth of what happened at the edge of the cosmos, that the Black Wind Fleet had been defeated by an unknown country at the border and that the unknown country might grow into a great threat for the Imperium in a hundred years, why would they not exterminate the threat while it was still in the cradle?

The Cultivators certainly had their principles, but persisting in principles did not equal doctrinism or recklessness. Having a head-on clash with a hundred central worlds of the Imperium with less than ten worlds at the edge of the cosmos would be a bold but stupid move that would yield no results at all except for the destruction of the future of almost a hundred billion people.

The federation had no choice except to lie to the homeland of the Imperium and even to attempt to pull off a great strategic deception to make the homeland of the Imperium believe that everything at the edge of the cosmos was under the control of the Black Wind Fleet and that the Black Wind Fleet retained its absolute loyalty to the Imperium.

It would be best if another dozens of years could be earned for development so that the federation could digest and absorb the technology stored in the Black Wind Fleet and the Nuwa warship in the Ancient Sages Sector and make another leap. After that… the federation could take other measures!

To achieve that, the federation needed the support of the defeated soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet, or at least the fleet near the brown dwarf under Di Feiwen's lead that controlled the super remote communication base.

The subtlety of the situation and the continuous victories of the Imperium were not necessarily a good thing for the Black Wind Fleet either because it meant that the Black Wind Fleet was even more useless to the Imperium. It was now more of a problem that could not be gotten rid of.

Even if their hometown was 'recovered' by the Imperium, it would still fall to the hands of other nobles and warlords or even be claimed by the emperor himself.

With their crushed soldiers, it would be impossible for them to ask the emperor and the warlords to spit out the five fat pieces of meat that had already been swallowed!

To some extent, the interests of the Black Wind Fleet and the interests of the Star Glory Federation were being bundled slowly.

Then, to get the full cooperation of the Black Wind Fleet and Di Feiwen, the only thing that needed to be done was to satisfy their small 'request'.

All the intelligence was listed in front of Li Yao with the most detailed analysis, even considering the possibility that Di Feiwen was lying and the Imperium in fact did not secure any great victory.

But Di Feiwen did not have any reason to lie about such an important message, which would be seen through soon enough. The Black Wind Fleet had to be stationed in the homeland of the federation for a long time. It would even be disbanded and regrouped. All of them would be meat on the chopping block at the mercy of the federation.

If he dared to shatter the mutual trust of the two parties with such a great lie, it would do no good to the future of the Black Wind Fleet and the Immortal Cultivators at all.

Li Yao scratched his head and thought for a long time. Eventually, it was what the mental devil said that helped him make up his mind.

“Don’t we still need to search for Earth at the center of the cosmos? I don’t think that any random person will know the relevant information.

“To unveil the truth about Earth, it is necessary to become a big shot at the center of the cosmos or at least have access to the big shots. In that case, the identity of ‘Black Wind King’ will be the perfect identity to get started.

“As to your concerns that Di Feiwen has other evil plans, I don’t think that you should be too worried. You can keep him in the federation under the close surveillance of Guo Chunfeng, Jin Xinyue, and the rest of them. Then, disband the Black Wind Fleet and brainwash all the soldiers. Send all the civilians to the schools in the federation for reeducation. Do you think that they can turn the world upside side?

“Even if you do go to the Imperium, there is no need for you to expose your identity to the public. You look so ugly in the first place. If you disguise yourself and sneak in, who can possibly guess that you are the legendary ‘Black Wind King’? There won’t be any trouble at all!”

The words woke Li Yao up from the predicament. Although he was not entirely satisfied about the remark on his appearance, he still coughed and made up his mind to go to ‘Black Ray’, the temporary flagship of the Black Wind Fleet, where he received the title of ‘Black Wind King’.

Eight months after the splendid space battle, the Immortal Cultivators in black military uniforms and glowing long boots lowered their proud heads to the man on the podium whose hair was in a mess. On one knee, they roared at the same time.

“We swear solemnly before the billions of stars that we will unconditionally obey ‘Li Yao’, the dominator at the edge of the cosmos, the slaughterer of deities and devils, the protector of the seven Sectors, who will be respected as the new ruler of the five worlds, the new leader of the Black Wind Fleet, and our supreme master!

“For the eternal glory of the civilization of mankind, we will forever obey the leader’s command and put our lives on the line for the vow anytime and anywhere!

“Long live the leader! Long live the Black Wind Fleet! Long live the civilization of mankind!”

Chapter 1874 - Heartfelt Conversation

Amid the solemn roars, Di Feiwen also fell on one knee and raised a dark metal tray above his head before Li Yao.

On the tray, the ultimate tokens from the five worlds of Immortal Cultivators that he had shown to Li Yao more than a month ago were placed.

At this moment, all the tokens were radiating bloody auras. Red flames of light soared into the air and bounced up and down, condensing into different emblems and stripes that were glittering murderously.

The tokens had been baptized with the blood of the many experts from the five worlds of Immortal Cultivators. After the experts branded their unique spiritual stripes into the tokens with their blood, it was equal to their own signature and stood for the absolute submission of themselves and the forces they belonged to.

Other than that, there were two more items.

The first one was a battle emblem that had been carved into the shape of a black hurricane but also had a lot of moveable components. After Li Yao held the emblem in his hand and inputted spiritual energy into it, the emblem would automatically reshape into a portable crystal processor that covered his wrist.

It was the ‘seal’ of the Black Wind King. The confidential information about the five worlds of Immortal Cultivators and the Black Wind Fleet was all stored inside. Together with the telepathic thoughts of the user, it could also trigger a special stamp, which was the identity symbol and personal signature of the Black Wind King. At least within the territory of the Imperium, it would encounter no obstacles.

The second item was a finely made scepter that was carved with the lightning trident of the Imperium of True Human Beings. It was the commander's scepter that the emperor had granted to the general commander of the expedition army.

After the scepter was opened from the middle, a jade chip with an astonishing storage space would be seen. It was used to record all the military accomplishments in the expedition. After the victory, the jade chip would be delivered back to the capital city for scanning and reviewing. The relevant personnel would be able to receive rewards from the emperor based on the records and redeem different benefits.

The jade chip had stored the information of all the galaxies and sailing routes that the Black Wind Fleet had passed in the hundred-year expedition. It was a map from the Imperium to the federation, or rather, from the federation to the Imperium.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

The portable crystal processor that represented the Black Wind King boasted the function of automatic adjustment and memory. It covered Li Yao's left wrist in the most comfortable way and brought no hindrance at all as if it were a second layer of skin.

The scepter, on the other hand, was neither too light nor too heavy. There was no telling what it was made of, but it felt smooth and warm. One would inevitably feel reluctant to let go of it once they grabbed it.

Li Yao smiled. Playing with the item for a while, he simply put the commander’s scepter back on the metal tray as if it were not a big deal before waving his hands and absorbing it as well as the five tokens into his Cosmos Ring.

“Are we good?” Li Yao turned around and looked at Di Feiwen. “I have shown you enough respect by not wearing a vest, a pair of slippers, and dying my hair into multiple colors as I said I would a few days ago. Just cut off all the redundant formalities!”

“This is already all of it.” Di Feiwen lowered his head deeply. “However, aren’t you going to say anything to us? We are an army that just surrendered after all, and we are all uneasy and confused about the future.”

“Huh…” Li Yao thought for a moment. Waving his hands at the Immortal Cultivators whose nerves and muscles had been intensified to the maximal point half in reverence and half in anxiety, he said, “Sit down now. Let’s talk. What? No seats are arranged? Fine. We can sit on the ground. Let’s have a nice talk.”

While talking, he sat on the ground and crossed his legs, blinking his eyes and looking at the many Immortal Cultivators.

The Immortal Cultivators looked at each other in bewilderment, not expecting the new Black Wind King to be so casual. But now that the ‘slaughterer of deities and devils and destroyer of space gates’ had sat directly on the ground, were they bold enough not to follow him?

Amid awkward coughs, the Immortal Cultivators sat on the cold deck one after another. The more they looked at each other, the weirder they felt, especially the experts in the Core Formation Stage and the Nascent Soul Stage. They were quite ill at ease to see themselves and their companions on the ground.

“I heard your vow just now. It was very good and very impressive. ‘Supreme master’ and whatnot truly made me elated.”

Seeing that everybody had sat on the ground cross-legged like him, Li Yao nodded in great satisfaction. Then he changed the topic and said, “However, it was all bullsh*t. I did not sense your sincerity at all. I assume that you must’ve made the same vow when Heiye Ming became the ‘Black Wind King’ in the past, didn’t you? You swore to obey the leader forever and die for the leader anytime and anywhere, right? But right now, even the ashes of Heiye Ming are already gone, and I don’t see any of you killing yourselves in honor of him or coming at me to avenge him!

“I am not pointing it out to specifically humiliate you nor to ask you to kill yourselves or come to be killed by me. I’m just saying, could you just drop the condescension of the Immortal Cultivators as if you are in the highest sky? Are you not cold and tired of standing on the ‘peak of evolution’ from dawn to dusk? Let’s just put aside the meaningless exaggeration and have an honest, sincere conversation today, shall we?

“I’ll be honest with you. In fact, when General Di Feiwen asked me to take the position of ‘Black Wind King’, I was quite reluctant because it was obviously a fiery pit that is full of iron sticks at the bottom of it. You do not mean to elect a nemesis to be your leader at all; you are only hoping to fill the pit with me and step on my shoulders and head to earn greater benefits for yourselves. That’s all.

“If I’m being completely honest, not only did I have to resolve the problems on the federation’s side, which is in fact not a big deal, I will also possibly be involved in the turbulence between you and the Imperium and obliged to help you resist the ambitions of the warlords and the fury of His Majesty with the resources of the federation.

“Whether the five worlds of Immortal Cultivators including the Black Wind Sector have fallen to the hands of the Imperium or the Covenant Alliance, to take them back will be no different from plucking a tiger’s teeth from its mouth. Do I not have anything better to work on than doing such a painstaking and unrewarding thing?

“I could’ve declined it. But then General Di made more than a hundred vows, claiming that you have deeply understood your mistake and will certainly correct your mistakes. Also, your Black Wind Fleet is not a pure expedition army but a fleet of immigrants. The population of civilians who escaped from the five worlds of Immortal Cultivators is multiple times greater than the number of warriors and Immortal Cultivators.

“However unforgivable you may be, most of the civilians are innocent after all. It is for the sake of the civilians that I finally took the hot potato. You must remember that.

“That being said, no matter how hesitant I was before, now that I have already taken up the responsibility, there is no way that I will slack off or quit halfway! I will consider the post of ‘Black Wind King’ as new training and do my best!

“It is universally known that the Cultivators will liberate the three thousand Sectors and reform the entire universe. If we cannot reform a tiny Black Wind Fleet or enlighten thickheaded soldiers like you, how can we expect to march to the center of the cosmos?

“Well, General Di, give me some water.”

Di Feiwen was still dazed by what he had just heard and did not realize what Li Yao meant.

Li Yao frowned. “Water. Tea is unnecessary. Cold water will do.”

“Oh? Okay, okay.”

Li Yao poured half a bottle of water into his stomach. Wiping his lips with his sleeve, he went on. “Your identity is now very awkward. You may be called intruders, but most of you are the members of the fleet near the brown dwarf who have always been dozens of lightyears away from the federation and did not even have a chance to see the border of the federation. You may be called captives, but General Di has offered to surrender while keeping you organized. According to the policy in the ‘letters of persuasion’ that the federation presented, it can almost be counted as a ‘battlefield uprising’. More importantly, the homeland of the Imperium is still coveting the edge of the cosmos and will likely become our mutual enemy. So, the name of the Black Wind Fleet must be kept in order to deceive the enemy, and part of your independence will have to be maintained.

“Therefore, I had quite a headache for days about the relation between the federation and the newborn Black Wind Fleet. I can only say that we should begin by seeking common ground while reserving the differences. Whether we are going to cooperate, integrate, or reform, we must have a starting point, which is the common values of the two parties. Are there common values between the federation and the Black Wind Fleet? I think the answer is yes. We both have infinite loyalty and passion for the ‘civilization of mankind’.

“The Cultivators and the Immortal Cultivators, despite all the disagreements on the specific approaches, at least believe in the supremacy of mankind and will not allow any alien species to rule us. We are all willing to sacrifice ourselves for the civilization of mankind, aren’t we?

“The Black Wind Sector, the Wild Wolf Sector, the Hard Rock Sector, the Purple Fire Sector, and the Fiery Spider Sector are all at the borderland between the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance. So, a lot of you are heroes who’ve fought the inhumane puppets of the Covenant Alliance to defend the feelings and freedom of mankind. In the past months, I’ve heard the heroic deeds of a lot of people. For example, there is a General Zhou Tailong, nicknamed ‘Bloody Spear’…”

From the Immortal Cultivators who were sitting cross-legged, a muscular man who was almost three meters tell, covered in tremendous metals and crystal components all over the body, with a circle of wolf fangs embedded to the forehead and only a sole eye left, suddenly rose up and roared, blushing, “Commander, Zhou Tailong is at your service!”

Li Yao rubbed his ears and eyed Zhou Tailong for a moment. He nodded and said, “Greetings, General Zhou. I’m told that in the Battle of the Green Dragon Planet a hundred years ago, to guard the retreat of the main troops of the Wild Wolf Sector, you stalled three crystal suit legions and one orbit fleet of the Alliance of the Holy Covenant for seven days and seven nights with only one crystal legion. When you finally accomplished the mission and broke out of the siege, there were only twenty-one survivors in the legion, which had more than a thousand and nine hundred people in the beginning.”

Chapter 1875 - Feats Are Feats; Faults Are Faults

“Yes!” ‘Bloody Spear’ Zhou Tailong replied in a loud voice. “The 1,932 brothers of the ‘Green Wolf Legion’ and I were all natives of the Green Dragon Planet. The Green Dragon Planet was a node on the sailing route of space jumps between the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance that was of paramount military significance. So, my hometown was always plagued by war. It was assaulted and savaged by the Covenant Alliance many times.

“People of the Covenant Alliance are all puppets of the fiends. Their brutality and inhumanity are beyond the imagination of the people of the federation. The war between the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance is a hundred times crueler than the competition between the Cultivators and the Immortal Cultivators. The Immortal Cultivators hate the puppets a hundred times more than we hate the Cultivators, too!

“You might not know this, commander, but every time the puppets scourged my hometown and stole tremendous population, they would send both the Immortal Cultivators and the homi… the ordinary people into their so-called ‘holy temple’, where the emotions of the captives were removed, transforming them into the cruelest and most heartless war machines. Those were human-shaped dolls that did not recognize anything they were familiar with. Even when they were faced with their hometown and family, they did not have any emotional fluctuations but simply poured their firepower on the enemy.

“My father, two brothers, and one… son were captured by the Covenant Alliance and brainwashed through modification just like that. They were reshaped into battle puppets of the Covenant Alliance and sent back to the area around the Green Dragon Planet to fight. In such a way, the Covenant Alliance made family members attack each other in order to diminish our determination to resist.

“The Covenant Alliance is too evil for me to reserve anything and not fight with my all!”

Li Yao was silent. He recalled the last words of his foster father who had possibly been from the Covenant Alliance.

“No matter how evil the Imperium of True Human Beings is, the Alliance of the Holy Covenant will only be a hundred times more so. In the sea of stars today, the Imperium is the only defender of the last glory of mankind.”

Righteousness and evilness were a pair of relative concepts. The Black Wind Fleet’s conquest of the Star Glory Federation was certainly a violent aggression. However, before that, in the war to resist the puppets of the Pangu Civilization, the guys such as ‘Bloody Spear’ Zhou Tailong became the righteous side and unquestionable heroes.

Human beings and humanity were really complicated!

‘Bloody Spear’ Zhou Tailong held his head high and declared, “If I may tell you, commander, military accomplishments are highly appreciated in the Imperium of True Human Beings. Most of the nobles, generals, and experts all have experience of fighting life and death battles with the Covenant Alliance. The Immortal Cultivators locally born and raised in the frontier have almost all risen from mountains of corpses. Too many of our family members were killed by the Covenant Alliance miserably, and too many were modified into deformed battle puppets who had nothing but their skin left. We all hate the Covenant Alliance’s guts!

“Commander, you just said that we did not submit to you sincerely and were merely tricking you to earn more benefits for ourselves. That couldn’t be more wrong!

“I can’t say for other people, but personally, I really admire your valiance, commander. I loathe the slaves of the Covenant Alliance who degrade themselves by serving as the Pangu Clan’s puppets more than anything in the world, but I must admit that the Pangu Clan is indeed invincibly strong. By only arming their lackeys with some of the relics, they are already enough to make the Covenant Alliance compete with the Imperium. If the real Pangu Clan come into the world again, how terrifying and unstoppable will they be?

“It never occurred to me that a real member of the Pangu Clan had been revived at the edge of the cosmos, but even his head was chopped off by you!

“However much our beliefs may differ, I absolutely admire your valor at the very least.

“You are more qualified to lead us than Heiye Ming was because Heiye Ming never killed a real member of the Pangu Clan. I am certain that I’m not the only one holding such a thought. The Immortal Cultivators whose wives and children were brutalized by the Covenant Alliance all admire you most. This is the biggest reason we are willing to listen to your command!”

Li Yao sensed the surging soul of ‘Bloody Spear’ Zhou Tailong, only to discover that the guy was not lying.

On second thought, it did make sense. There was actually not much hatred between the Imperium and the federation. It was disagreement and mutual wariness at most.

However, the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance had fought bloodily at the center of the cosmos for a thousand years. How many atrocious things had taken place in the meantime, and how much overwhelming hatred had been accumulated?

The Covenant Alliance regarded the Pangu Clan as their supreme gods, but one of their gods had been slain by Li Yao ruthlessly. No wonder the Immortal Cultivators who considered the Covenant Alliance as their sworn enemy would view Li Yao in a different way.

‘Bloody Spear’ Zhou Tailong’s words, however, made Li Yao almost feel embarrassed. He coughed and said, “I’m also told that there is a Major Yuan Qing, nicknamed ‘Blue Spider’. He is an expert of reconnaissance in the Black Wind Fleet and has discovered twenty-seven world fragments while locating tremendous techniques and magical equipment in them, right?”

Hardly had ‘Bloody Spear’ Zhou Tailong sat down when an Immortal Cultivator who was short and slender, wearing a metal mask, slowly stood up. He bowed at Li Yao deeply before he removed the mask that sealed the left half of his face.

Hu!

A cluster of green mist that seemed to be made of tiny mosquitoes and bugs immediately dashed out of his cheeks and danced crazily around his head, as if it was a certain weird fire that was about to gnaw all the remaining flesh on his face.

“Commander, I used to be a member of the ‘Association of Star Scouters’ in the Imperium of True Human Beings. The ‘Association of Star Scouters’ is essentially the same as the ‘Occult Orbs Fellowship’ in the federation. They were both established to excavate the world fragments, battlefield debris, and ancient relics.”

‘Blue Spider’ Yuan Qing, who looked weird, spoke casually.

“The environment at the center of the cosmos is a hundred times more complicated than at the edge of the cosmos. The number of the world fragments, battlefield debris, and ancient relics is a hundred times larger, too. Naturally, their danger is incomparable to the world fragments at the edge of the cosmos.

“The world fragments at the center of the cosmos may have highly-precise and weird traps and automatic, permanent war machines left or ‘apocalyptic weapons’ left by the prehistoric civilizations. There are even the mysterious but dangerous alien beasts who travel to the world fragments through wormholes and consider the places their lairs. Naturally, it is possible to encounter the exploration teams from the Covenant Alliance, too.

“All in all, the center of the cosmos is like the only lake in the middle of a forest, where predators and uncanny creatures all gather.

“I have been lucky enough to stay in one piece after discovering twenty-seven world fragments for the Imperium, except that I was reduced to such a wretched appearance because of a bite to the face by an anonymous bug. Despite the treatment of the doctors and specialists in the Imperium, they were only able to prevent the wound from enlarging but could not cure it.

“But I was already unbelievably fortunate to have kept my life compared to my teammates in the exploration squad.”

Li Yao observed the face of ‘Blue Spider’ Yuan Qing for a while and asked him to sit down again. He concluded, “Resisting the inhuman Covenant Alliance, excavating the many relics left by the Star Ocean Imperium and even the prehistoric civilization, fighting against the extraterrestrial devils or other alien species, exploring the depths of the universe that have never been visited before… All the endeavors are for the future of mankind. Even though you have come to the Star Glory Federation, your past accomplishments will not be denied.

“However, feats are feats, and faults are faults. You cannot offset your wrongdoings by your achievements. The federation does not tolerate the classification of ‘true human being’ and ‘hominoid’, or the personal bondage and even slavery system.

“Starting from today, you will receive new education on Boneyard, in the Water Crystal Sector, and in the Forest Ocean Sector to embrace a completely different life. Even if the true path of immortality in your head is not so easy to be erased, you will have to at least memorize the ‘Constitution of Cultivators’. From this moment on, the ‘Constitution of Cultivators’ will be the new military law of the Black Wind Fleet. Even the war heroes of the past will not be pardoned should they break any rules!

“One has to leave something behind after their death. In a hundred years, whether the Black Wind Fleet and you will be a bunch of infamous, dead-end soldiers who are despised and laughed at by everyone or creators of miracles who have risen again in a completely different form, it depends on your action right now!”

The Immortal Cultivators were all deep in thought, each considering their own thoughts.

A long time later, ‘Bloody Spear’ Zhou Tailong suddenly shouted, “Commander, I don’t care about anything but one thing. If we obey you completely and follow all the principles in the ‘Constitution of Cultivators’, can we really take back the Black Wind Sector, the Wild Wolf Sector, the Hard Rock Sector, the Purple Fire Sector, and the Fiery Spider Sector someday?”

“You will have to find the answer yourself.”

Looking at the big eyes of ‘Bloody Spear’ Zhou Tailong that were almost like bells, Li Yao said, one word after another, “The federation will show you a new strength. It is entirely different from the strength you’ve mastered and believed in before, but it is much more powerful, vigorous, and better represents the civilization of mankind. I believe that you will know the answer after you really perceive the mysteries of such a strength.”

…

A month later…

Beep… Beep, beep… Beep, beep, beep…

The noises that were slow at first and hasty later woke the woman up from the dream that almost felt like a black hole, making her gradually sense the existence of her limbs, muscles, bones, veins, and nerves.

Her eyelids were still frozen. She was unable to see anything except for the darkness and hear anything but the buzz. She only sensed stinging from all over her body, as if a hundred tubes were piercing through and breaking away from her body, injecting sour, sweet, bitter, spicy, salty, and all other flavors into her. From her heels to her fingers, from her fingers to her tongue, and from her tongue to her temples, all her nerve endings were slowly opened, making her body completely wake up from a hibernation of a hundred years.

The burning pain in her body was not reduced, yet magma seemed to be injecting into her temples, too. Her brain was further activated to wake up the mottled memories and abilities that were sealed in her head.

It felt that a long-closed warehouse was opened again. The first things she saw were the pictures of her operating all kinds of large agricultural machines and work data that was pouring like a waterfall, which finally reminded her of who she was.

Chapter 1876 - Xu Yulan’s Confusion

Her name was Xu Yulan, and she was a level-three pioneer in the No. 2 production base in the Green Valley Fortress of the South District on the Green Dragon Planet.

The so-called ‘pioneer’ was a profession that required the workers to build bridges and roads, reshape mountains and rivers, and modify harsh terrain into places suitable for the survival of human beings.

As a ‘hominoid’ whose spiritual root had not awakened, it was certainly not an easy process for her to learn how to use seventy-seven kinds of large civil magical equipment and gain the courage to deal with ferocious animals after putting on a half-armed crystal suit, thereby acquiring the rank of ‘level-three pioneer’.

Back when she was in her hometown, Xu Yulan had been a minor celebrity. There was not a single corner on the Green Dragon Planet that she had not set foot on. Even the pits and ravines on the three satellites had witnessed her sweat.

It was a pity…

Xu Yulan felt a headache. Pictures of fire and blood popped up inside her brain.

It was the last scene she had seen at the Green Valley Fortress before she left on an evacuation airship of the military.

The entire Green Valley Fortress was enshrouded in an ocean of fire. The beautiful scenery that they had built over dozens of years of hard work was burnt to the ground. Countless hominoids were raising their hands, screaming at the sky in desperation, including her old, white-haired father.

Meanwhile, more puppets of the Covenant Alliance were reducing the beautiful scenery emotionlessly as if they were wearing false masks and destroying everything in their way.

With the strength that she had accumulated, Xu Yulan shook her head hard to suppress the useless pictures.

It was not the time for sentimentality.

She remembered that the captain had told them sternly before they entered hibernation that a protracted hibernation might deal a certain degree of damage to the brain, such as edema and cerebral anoxia. The hibernation cabins for the hominoids such as them were naturally not as delicate and safe as the mighty Immortal Cultivators'. So, everything depended on themselves, and a tiny bit of luck.

She was asked to try recalling as many things as possible the moment she woke up from the hibernation because if she could not remember them now, it was very likely that she would never remember them again.

Xu Yulan tried her best to recall the operations of the seventy-seven kinds of large exploration magical equipment.

It had been the leverage for her survival since her childhood.

For the civilians of the Imperium, life was always as difficult as the cold wind in the winter. However, if one grasped one or two special skills, it would be like wearing a thick cotton coat, and it might be enough to shield their entire family.

Xu Yulan had been born in a common family of peasants. The life of her ancestors had been a changeless loop for hundreds of years. They had to till and plow the lands that the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance fought over at the risk of their lives. It was not necessarily crops that they planted. Sometimes, it was fast-growing wood that was necessary for some wars or vines and thorns that could generate all kinds of venomous gas and prevent the enemy’s ground troops from marching forward.

Leaving the savaging fire of war aside, the weird plants that could grow from seeds to almost ten meters tall in only a couple of days were the most dangerous beings.

More than one ancestor in Xu Yulan’s family had been snatched by the vines and drained into dry bones or pierced by the thorns and died of high fever after several days struggling.

That would have been her fate, too, if she had not accidentally shown her talent with machines at the age of five.

The Imperium was cruel, but it was also fair. Regardless of their bloodline, as long as they showed talents in a certain field, they would be given an opportunity of education and trial regardless of whether they were the children of lords or peasants.

The five-year-old Xu Yulan was taken away from her family and sent to a corresponding school in ‘Angry Dragon City’, the capital of the Green Dragon Planet, to study. She spent fifteen years on the lone island that felt like an iron cage. Although her spiritual root was not awakened, the certificate of ‘level-three pioneer’ was enough for her and her family to migrate from the living hell to the Green Valley Fortress, which had just been developed and had a slightly better environment.

Even at the end, when the Green Valley Fortress was drowned by the army of the Covenant Alliance and countless hominoids were either killed in fire or captured by the Covenant Alliance for modification, her certification of ‘level-three pioneer’ gave her tremendous help.

There was limited space on the evacuation starship, and the military could only take away useful people. When order was disrupted and everything fell into chaos, countless residents of the Green Valley Fortress were kicked away and even shot by the Immortal Cultivators mercilessly, but she was able to escape from the dangerous land with her husband and her daughter, although her father did not make it…

Xu Yulan wiped away the moistness in her eyes and tried to concentrate on the structure and operations of the fifty-seventh exploration magical equipment.

Years of vicissitudes and sufferings had already honed the nerves of the woman from the Imperium to the most tensile point. She had long perceived such a truth—suffering was the essence of life, but one could always grit their teeth through it.

Compared with their old neighbors, they could almost be counted as lucky. Although her parents had passed away, her children were still alive. Also, her brains did not seem to be damaged despite the long-term hibernation. The knowledge on which she made a living was as clear as before, which was the most important thing for her right now.

Have we arrived at a new world?

No, I shouldn’t be too excited yet. Let me just review the structure and operations of all the expedition magical equipment again!

Even if this is a new world, we may still be faced with shortage of assets and food, a harsh environment, and all kinds of other problems. Chances are that countless hominoids will be abandoned.

I cannot be abandoned. My daughter cannot be abandoned. Then, I must try to become a useful person. Only those who are useful can survive!

Growing up in the middle of cold machines from the age of five, Xu Yulan had always been good at making her own decisions.

Although the noisy atmosphere around her did not exactly befit the unfreezing procedure that her captain had described to her, she still did not open her eyes to check but focused on dismantling and assembling virtual components in her head and reciting the key points of the operations of all the magical equipment.

“Mom! Mom!”

Perhaps it was her imagination, but Xu Yulan heard the merry sound of her daughter, Yan Jinzhi, who sang like a lard.

Xu Yulan was slightly dazed and thought that her ears deceived her because of the side effect of the long hibernation.

There was no reason for her daughter to appear on this starship.

Before they entered the hibernation state, the civilians from the five worlds were classified into different ‘colonization teams’ according to their identity, age, and profession, before being led by the Immortal Cultivators and managed in a half-military way.

For the convenience of administration, the names of the hominoids were abolished in the colonization teams. Each of them was given a number. Hers was 28347764545. The first two digits were where she came from, the middle parts were her biophysical information such as blood type, and the last five digits, which were the most important ones, stood for her profession and proficiency.

According to the captain, they would be unfrozen after the Black Wind Fleet found a new world, but half-military management would continue for the first one to three years. They had to work arduously for survival and would only restore the social structure with the family as the fundamental unit after the environment was stable.

“Mom! Mom! Xu Yulan! Xu Yulan!”

The calling became closer and closer and did not feel like an illusion at all. Xu Yulan’s eyeballs shivered, and she raised her bloated eyelids, only to be slightly surprised.

While the hibernation area that she was in was still under military management to unfreeze, wake up, and perform fully physical examinations on the immigrants, the lounge outside of the hibernation area was already wild with joy. Countless people, old and young, were hugging each other, crying, shouting, laughing and playing, releasing their feelings that had been suppressed for a hundred years.

It was a scene that Xu Yulan had hardly seen before and was very unused to. She had never thought that such enormous energy could be contained inside hominoids or that they could be so excited and… insubordinate.

Where are the Immortal Cultivators?

Subconsciously, Xu Yulan shrank her neck and looked for the grim ‘lords’.

Generally speaking, ‘true human beings’ were not fond of hominoids making a fuss, not to mention at a time when ‘iron order’ was direly required. Was this not rebellion?

She did not find the Immortal Cultivators, but she did see her daughter.

Yan Jinzhi crawled on a temporary fence and waved at her hard. Her red face seemed to be on fire. She did not seem to have hibernated for decades but more like just had a comfortable hot bath.

Xu Yulan felt that her heart was grabbed. She could almost see the electric whip coming from nowhere and lashing her daughter hard to teach the wild, disobedient girl a lesson.

But before she was able to move forward to stop her daughter’s blatancy, she was already asked to go to a different side by two female doctors in white robes who looked quite friendly.

When warm, white light beamed out of the two doctors’ palms, Xu Yulan’s heart was trembling hard—they were two Immortal Cultivators!

She rubbed her crude fingers hard, not knowing how she should explain her daughter’s recklessness to the two true human beings. But the two ‘true human beings’ seemed to be blind to Yan Jinzhi and simply began to examine Xu Yulan carefully.

Flustered, Xu Yulan was unable to move at all as if she had suffered an electric shock.

The movements of the two ‘true human beings’ were particularly gentle. They were smiling and speaking softly and patiently, too. After hearing that she was a ‘level-three pioneer’, they even expressed their genuine admiration for her shocking resolution. They also helped her to maintain her hands and asked her to take a few days of rest before getting back to work.

What was that all about? Xu Yulan was utterly confused.

She was just an insignificant hominoid, and they were high and mighty true human beings. When did true human beings become so patient and respectful to hominoids?

Xu Yulan recalled the physical examination before she went into hibernation. At that time, she had simply been brushed violently as if she were a pig before she was thrown into the hibernation cabin. She remembered the angry face and the cold hands of the doctor very well.

Xu Yulan looked at the chests of the two ‘true human beings’ in fear and noticed something.

The badge they wore on their chests was neither the lighting trident emblem of the Imperium nor the sigils of the Black Wind Sector, the Hard Rock Sector, or any of the five worlds. It was a mark that Xu Yulan had never seen before.

A raging dragon was hovering around a glittering round ball. Inside the round ball, nine stars were floating.

Right below the badge, a few small words had been embroidered—Star Glory Federation!

Chapter 1877 - New Life on Ultimacy

“Mom!”

Before Xu Yulan was able to distinguish the difference between ‘Star Glory Federation’ and Imperium of True Human Beings, she had already been pushed out of the examination area in confusion. The next second, her daughter jumped on her, crying and laughing while holding her arms.

Her head was still not quite clear after just being unfrozen, but she did check her daughter from head to toe carefully and pinched her daughter’s round cheeks to make sure that her daughter was safe and sound. Finally, she took a long breath in relief.

Somehow, seeing that her daughter was laughing so carefreely, Xu Yulan felt that her nose was stuffed as if two sprouts were growing inside. She felt that she was somehow wronged.

“Yan Zi, how did you wake up earlier than me? How long were we asleep?”

Xu Yulan grabbed her daughter without letting go of her and looked around warily, as if the ecstatic crowd in front of her eyes were just a ridiculous mistake and the rigorous Immortal Cultivators would show up anytime to regroup them into a solemn army with iron sticks and electric whips again, snatching her daughter away from her and freezing her daughter again in the hibernation cabin.

Xu Yulan had every reason to be suspicious because there was a gap of multiple levels between her and her daughter. Her daughter should not have been unfrozen before her.

In the fleet of immigrants from the Imperium of True Human Beings, everybody was classified into different levels according to their value.

The Immortal Cultivators were naturally on the highest level. They were entitled to the fastest starships, the safest hibernation cabins, and the most abundant resources.

The hominoids had different ‘prices’. A ‘level-three pioneer’ like her counted as a very useful talent that was close to the sequence of specialists. Her rank was slightly higher, and she would be kept at the central part of the fleet. Should they encounter any danger, she would be one of the ‘important strategic resources’ that were only secondary to the Immortal Cultivators and still worth protecting.

Her daughter, Yan Jinzhi, did not have any special skills. It was only because she qualified as a level-three pioneer and her husband served in the warship as a servant to a Building Foundation Stage Immortal Cultivator that her daughter was given the right to escape from that hell.

Other than her parents, the only leverage that her daughter was her age. She was young and healthy and had a higher possibility of giving birth to strong offspring. Nothing more.

In the fleet of immigrants, her daughter belonged to one of the lowest ranks and had boarded a different starship from hers.

Should they be faced with insufficiency of resources or an incoming catastrophe, the starships at the periphery where her daughter was would be the first to be abandoned.

Even if new worlds that were worth being colonized were found, according to the standard procedure, the first to be unfrozen and released were the battle legions made of the Immortal Cultivators and their servants, the second were the construction teams that she was part of, and the young men and women who were ‘temporarily useless’ would not be set free until years later when the environment in the new world had been completely stabilized according to the total number of resources.

Her daughter turned out to have been unfrozen earlier than her, and she even appeared so happy. Together with the dream-like scene around her, Xu Yulan could not have been more perplexed.

Blinking hard, she finally found that her daughter was wearing a tiny Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars badge on the chest, too. There were also the words ‘Star Glory Federation’ beneath it, except that another bigger word was further below it—’Volunteer’.

“It’s been a hundred and seven years since we entered hibernation. We have cruised to the border of the explored universe. This is indeed a new world like we have never seen before!”

Yan Jinzhi held her chest high proudly and pointed at the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars badge and the word ‘Volunteer’, saying lightheartedly like a little sparrow, “Mom, I was woken up two weeks ago. I am a volunteer in the fleet now to help those who are woken up later like you to figure out what happened and start a new life in the local country, the Star Glory Federation!”

“It’s been more than a hundred years…”

In a trance, Xu Yulan was caught in mixed feelings.

She had never tasted the feeling of a super-long hibernation before. It had never occurred to her that a hundred years would pass after she closed her eyes and opened them again. She could not help but wonder how her hometown, the Green Dragon Planet in the Wild Wolf Sector, was doing, how the Green Valley Fortress that she built up personally looked, and if the apple trees that had been burnt down in the war had grown again.

However, instead of reminiscing about the past, it was more important to plan for the future.

‘Volunteer’ was a new term for her. She had never seen such a glowing face on her daughter, either.

In her mind, her daughter was always a dutiful, if not meek, little girl who needed the protection of her hands that could drive the heavy magical equipment weighing a hundred tons.

Her daughter had only woken up two weeks earlier, but why did her daughter become so… so…

Xu Yulan thought for a while but failed to come up with an appropriate adjective because she had never seen such radiance on her daughter’s face or the face of any ‘hominoid’ before.

At this moment, the last few words that her daughter mentioned finally caught her attention.

So, there was a country at the edge of the cosmos named the Star Glory Federation. Then—

“The Star Glory Federation has surrendered to the Black Wind Fleet, and this place is now territory of the Imperium, right?”

Xu Yulan knew the style of the Immortal Cultivators very well. The outside probably had nothing but dilapidated buildings left, and she would have to spend the new few days clearing the debris.

Out of her expectations, her daughter shook her head quickly and said, “There was indeed a battle, but we failed. The Black Wind Fleet has surrendered!”

“Well…”

Xu Yulan’s mouth was half open, not knowing what to say.

Losing a battle was not a new experience for her.

Perhaps the high and mighty citizens of the Imperium living in the Empyreal Terminus Sector believed in the empty talk that the Imperium of True Human Beings was invincible. But for she who was born and raised at the border of the Imperium which the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance fought over repetitively, this was not the first time that she had heard news of failure.

After the goriest debacle more than a hundred years ago, they had even lost their entire hometown, the ‘Wild Wolf Sector’, and had to flee in a hurry with the Wild Wolf Fleet.

Before they escaped any further, they had been swallowed by the Black Wind Fleet in what was claimed to be an ‘internal reshuffle’ and listened to the order of the Black Wind King ever since.

Right now, even the Black Wind Fleet had been defeated and surrendered to a new superpower. Xu Yulan felt that her mind was in a mess, wondering what she belonged to exactly, the Wild Wolf Sector, the Black Wind Fleet, the Imperium, or the federation?

She had seen how terrible the people captured by the Covenant Alliance became after being modified in the ‘holy temple’, but the ‘Star Glory Federation’ did not give her such an impression.

After pondering for a long time, she held her daughter’s hand and asked hesitantly, “How is your father? Do you have any news about him?”

Yan Jinzhi nodded hard. “Yes. Dad is on this planet, but he and all the soldiers are in the ‘rebirth school’. They have to go to class and do labor activities. They are not allowed to go out without permission, but I’ve spoken to dad through video chat. He is fine and has not even lost a single hair!”

“Rebirth school?”

Having received high-level education on magical equipment for more than ten years, Xu Yulan was certainly not an ignorant housewife. She immediately realized what it was after brief consideration. “You mean a captive camp?”

“It’s not exactly a captive camp.” Yan Jinzhi hurried to explain. “Mom, rest assured. The starship that dad served on was somewhere else beyond the Star Glory Federation and did not participate in the war to attack the federation. I’ve asked around. It was a ‘battlefield uprising’, and they are different from captives.

“Also, dad is a hominoid. Right, we cannot say ‘hominoid’ here. As an ‘ordinary soldier’, he certainly should be treated differently from the Immortal Cultivators.

“According to the officials of the federation, the Star Glory Federation is a country of Cultivators that appreciates general equality of all people, whether or not their spiritual roots have awoken. All the ordinary soldiers in the Imperium of True Human Beings were ‘cannon fodder’ in the first place and people who were deceived and oppressed most. They will learn a lot of new ideas in the ‘rebirth school’ and spread the ideas throughout the entire Black Wind Fleet!

“Right now, when dad talked to me, he told me that his life in the ‘rebirth school’ is quite good. He’s learned knowledge that he’d never heard of before and considered questions that always escaped his attention. He said that even the Cultivators think very highly of him and will train him to be a teacher so that he could go to other ‘rebirth schools’ and tell more soldiers of the Imperium about the sufferings of our ancestors.”

“Cultivators…”

Naturally, Xu Yulan understood the meaning of the word. While the Imperium of True Human Beings considered the Alliance of the Holy Covenant their No. 1 enemy, the Star Ocean Republic established by the Cultivators was the Imperium’s antecedent after all. How could the current regime be justified without elaborating on the corruption of the former regime?

Therefore, in the education that Xu Yulan received, the Cultivators were described to be hypocritical, sanctimonious, shortsighted, idiotic, and selfish people who buried the future of the entire civilization just to satisfy their own sense of justice.

Xu Yulan had never considered if such a theory was correct.

The end of thinking was free choice. If one was unable to control their fate freely, what was the meaning of thinking?

But right now, a few rusted gears seemed to be rolling squeakily inside Xu Yulan’s head, giving her the urge to think and making her want to explain everything that she had experienced during the half hour after she woke up.

Licking her lips, Xu Yulan raised another question. “Where—Where are we exactly?”

“Boneyard!” her daughter replied. “The federation has prepared three settlements for us, namely the desert in the Water Crystal Sector, the primitive forest in the Forest Ocean Sector, and the wildness on Boneyard. We happened to be allotted to this place.

“This is a planet far away from the homeland of the federation. Although there is nothing here for now and we have to work from scratch, the gravity and temperature here are agreeable enough. We also have an atmosphere and the relics of ancient civilizations. So, it is a rather acceptable planet!

“Right, very soon, this place will no longer be called ‘Boneyard’, which is really an awful name. It will restore the name it had more than a hundred years ago, ‘Ultimacy’. We will even develop this place into the eighth or ninth Sector of the Star Glory Federation. It will be the Ultimacy Sector!”

Chapter 1878 - Everything from Nothing

Holding her mother’s hand, Yan Jinzhi led her to the observatory at the top of ‘Vision 24’, an enormous starship of immigrants, through a lift.

In this place, Xu Yulan was finally able to breathe her first mouthful of fresh air after a hundred years.

Although the air elements of Boneyard were different from the standard air, and it was much damper with the intense stench of rust, Xu Yulan still could not help but breath deeply until her lungs hurt and her head was dizzy.

After living on a starship for a long time, breathing the synthesized standard air, a lot of people would have similar conditions when they met fresh air that was filled with all kinds of impurities. The phenomenon was sometimes known as ‘oxygen intoxication’.

“Look, Mom!”

Pointing at the splendid landscape down below, Yan Jinzhi jumped about excitedly.

Xu Yulan’s optical nerves that had been frozen for a hundred years were not adapted to the strong natural light yet. She narrowed her eyes and covered her eyebrows with her hands to block the light. Looking into the distance, she discovered that most of the immigrant starships from ‘Vision 7’ to ‘Vision 33’ were scattered in a hilly area not far away from an ocean.

The bright blue earth was full of faults. There were mountains thousands of meters tall and valleys that were equally deep. Compared to them, the ‘hilly area’ that they were in could almost be called the wide expanse of a plateau.

The surging tides raised by the crimson ocean far away were the most intense ones that she had ever seen. The waves reached the altitude of hundreds of meters easily and danced crazily like countless furious dragons. Despite the multiple layers of seawalls, they were still marching beyond the shoreline for dozens of kilometers and nearby drowned the hill they were on.

However, right above such a magnificent and temperamental ocean, countless bizarre-shaped artificial objects, which looked like weird boats jumbled by too many sails, were still cruising amid the huge waves, chasing the clouds and lightning and declaring mankind’s determination to challenge nature.

Xu Yulan’s eyes continued moving forward to above the horizon, where the contour of an enormous planet was revealed in the gray sky.

The contour was glittering, like a transparent ring of jade.

At first, Xu Yulan thought that it was an annular eclipse.

But if it were an annular eclipse, the rays around the object would not have been so bright.

Also, very soon, the ring of light shivered lightly. Countless tiny threads of light split out and rotated in the same direction.

Those light threads seemed to be pulling the force deep inside the ocean amazingly. As the light threads changed erratically, the giant waves began surging even more frequently and violently.

Xu Yulan even saw a giant wave that was at least thousands of meters tall rolling up from the depths of the ocean mixed with fire and smoke. It was almost breaking through the atmosphere and flying all the way into space.

Such a splendid view dumbfounded Xu Yulan and made her lost for words for a long time.

“Mother, don’t be scared. This is part of the modification of Boneyard!”

A moment earlier, she had grabbed her daughter’s hands and tried to keep her daughter behind her to protect her daughter. But at this moment, her daughter was holding her arms and warming her cold fingers with her hot palms.

Her daughter said with a smile, “Everything is good on Boneyard, except that one of satellites is too close to it and has a very strange trajectory. The tidal force between the satellite and Boneyard makes the ocean here particularly violent and causes shocking waves that scourge an area of hundreds of square kilometers. A long way in the future, the satellite will even fall and hit the surface of Boneyard heavily.

“It’s because of the two reasons that the Star Glory Federation never developed Boneyard on a large scale in the past hundred years.

“But since this place is our new home now, it naturally requires great modification. The first things to be taken care of will be the tidal force and the collapse of the satellite.

Then, we will flatten the mountains and valleys. To realize the purposes, the federation has decided to adjust the trajectory of the satellite and slightly push the ‘moon’ away.”

Xu Yulan widened her eyes and blurted out, “Pushing the ‘moon’ away?”

“Yes. The Star Glory Federation has never made such a grand attempt before, either. They did not have relevant technological reserve,” Yan Jinzhi said. “However, with the technology from the Black Wind Fleet, Kunlun, and Firefly, and with the technology from the federation itself, chances are that it will succeed!

“Of course, we are still in the phase of testing the technology and collecting data and far away from the point of really pushing the moon away. Do you see the weird boats floating in the middle of the tides, which seem to have sails all over their bodies? They are the probe starships to collect the data of the tides and make preparations for the next phase, pushing!

“Five years, ten years, twenty years… I think by the time I grow to your age, Mom, we will certainly have pushed the moon away, tamed the ocean, flattened the mountains to fill the valleys, and developed Boneyard into a real paradise, won’t we?”

Her daughter’s solemn expression reminded Xu Yulan of something deep inside her heart.

She seemed to recall the time when she first took her family to the then desolate Green Valley Fortress, full of hope and ambition.

Those were the golden years of her life when she was happiest and most energetic.

Xu Yulan overlooked ‘Firefly’, which her daughter had mentioned, and brooded on the thought that her daughter seemed to have truly grown up after the long journey.

Under Yan Jinzhi’s guidance, Xu Yulan looked at the mountains around that rose into the sky. She saw countless towers standing at the summits spurting out hazy mist incessantly, constructing a white barrier near the landing point of the starships.

Her daughter told her that it was an array to modify the atmosphere and cleanse the air.

Boneyard had been a nest of demons tens of thousands of years ago after all. There were too many impurities in the air, and it was unsuitable for ordinary people to breathe for a long time because it would cause chronic illnesses. In the eyes of the ancient people, this was a truly murky land.

Thankfully, the federation had gained abundant experience in planet modification during the hundred years of colonization. At the very least, the technology was mature enough to build up a reservation, cleanse the air in the small area, and even generate a ‘microclimate’ that was always favorable in a certain range.

The colonization technology of the Imperium of True Human Beings was even more advanced than the federation’s. The ‘Vision’ starships that Xu Yulan and the other immigrants boarded were themselves self-sustainable towns and factories. At the very least, in the first few years of construction, it was unnecessary for them to leave the starships to establish vulnerable settlements.

Right now, all the ‘Vision’ starships had extended hundreds of fixation limbs, which made them look like spiders, into the ravines among the hills in order to stabilize themselves.

Based on that, the solid shells of the immigrant starships were dismantled one piece after another, revealing the complicated, eye-catching factories and facilities. Some of them were unfolded right next to the immigrant starships, and some were dragged further away.

Defense rune arrays, air cleaning towers, water plants, metal collection, and purification factories… Every immigrant starship was transforming into a small town that had all the necessary infrastructure at a visible speed.

Although Xu Yulan had always thought that she had seen a lot of things, she had never appreciated the picture of so many starships transforming into towns at the same time. The resolution to change the world and alter nature stunned her and even made her feel somewhat moved!

Suddenly, Xu Yulan moved her eyes away from the dazzling scenes of construction to an enormous fold that surrounded the hills like a dam.

The circular fold was like a city wall built by the giants. It sealed the hills inside and stopped their further expansion and development.

So, it was necessary to destroy the fold!

On the steep slope of the circular fold that was almost vertical, different areas had been marked. A lot of eight-footed magical equipment that looked like enormous spiders were moving on it quickly and drilled deep holes on the slope with their tentacles.

Xu Yulan knew that such magical equipment was commonly known as a mountain crab. It was a piece of engineering magical equipment designed to detonate abandoned buildings and steep mountains. The eight soft limbs could fix themselves in all kinds of harsh environments and maintain a high speed. The drills at the ends of the tentacles could also dig out holes precisely to send crystal bombs to the most vulnerable parts.

Xu Yulan was good at operating the ‘mountain crab’, too. That was why she could tell how excellent the pioneer driving the red mountain crab was.

He was moving and digging explosion holes in the crags five times faster than other people. When other people had just dug a dozen explosion holes, he had already embedded a hundred crystal bombs into the mountain on the front. The mountain crab that weighed more than seventy tons was almost an extension of his limbs. His movements were both fluent and enjoyable.

The distance was too far away for Xu Yulan to tell how the explosion holes were dug, but judging from the smooth, skillful movements, there could not possibly be anything wrong.

As she expected, after a boom, not too much smoke was raised when a large cluster of rocks collapsed without a sound without affecting the mountain crabs that were operating nearby.

“This is a true expert!”

Detonation was an art. Blowing up the target with the minimal crystals, the minimal range of affection, and the minimal difficulty of subsequent cleaning required sophisticated knowledge.

Xu Yulan vaguely saw that the red mountain crab crawled out of the smoke. The ‘shell’ on the back was opened, and a guy in a red vest showed up, waving his hands and accepting the cheers of the workers with a smile.

She secretly complimented him but somehow felt that her hands were itching. Perhaps because of the heated scene of construction, she suddenly gained the idea of having a competition with the guy.

“Daughter…” Xu Yulan rubbed her fists. “The guy who operated the red mountain crab was quite impressive. Do you know who he is?”

Yan Jinzhi’s face suddenly turned extremely weird. She thought for a long time but still found it hard to explain. “Well, mom. Please don’t be surprised, but that is actually the new ‘Black Wind King’. His name is Li Yao!”

Chapter 1879 - All Are Winners

“This feels good!”

Li Yao played in the ‘mountain crab’ for a long time before he squatted near the farmland to observe how the magical equipment that could transform broken rocks into soil with special nutrition liquids and base materials worked. He also carefully studied the whole process of the immigrant starships of the Imperium unfolding into modern towns and bases. He could not have felt more comfortable and exhilarated.

It was not because he was pretentious enough to intentionally show his approachableness but because of his nature.

He had always been a fan of magical equipment. All kinds of magical equipment, whether civil or military, he loved them as long as they were advanced and innovative enough and could not stop himself from playing with them in person.

The Imperium of True Human Beings boasted state-of-the-art technology. Both the military magical equipment such as crystal suits and arsenal starships and the civil magical equipment such as the ‘mountain crab’ or the immigrant starships had a lot of good points. Many of the designs and operation patterns were extraordinarily creative, making the devices great eye-openers for Li Yao.

Instead of being involved in the complicated political struggle and scheming against a bunch of sophisticated officials, Li Yao would rather spend all his time on Boneyard dismantling the civil magical equipment of the Imperium while enjoying the great atmosphere where everybody was working together to develop the wilderness into a wonderful home from scratch. It was something that he felt really happy about!

At this moment, the awkwardness that Li Yao had when he was coerced onto the throne of ‘Black Wind King’ was finally gone. He had to admit that it was the best option. It was a win-win, no, a win-win-win-win. The federation, the Black Wind Fleet, the Ancient Sages Sector, and even the rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic on Firefly could all benefit from such cooperation.

The Star Glory Federation was naturally the greatest winner.

The first trophies that they claimed were not the warships of the Black Wind Fleet that had been armed to the teeth but the immigrant fleets, which housed countless technical staff and colonization technology of the Imperium.

Before the massive assault of the Black Wind Fleet, the Star Glory Federation had already hit the bottleneck after a hundred golden years of development. The main reason was that the speed of expansion was too high for the development of the colonization technology, which resulted in the high imbalance of population, resources, and regional development. A lot of subsequent structural problems and internal division were raised, too.

The Star Glory Federation boasted a population of a hundred billion and seven Sectors. On the surface, there were slightly more than ten billion people for each Sector, which was perfect.

But in fact, the distribution of the population was too abnormal.

On one hand, the highly-developed worlds such as the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Uranian Ring Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and the Blood Demon Sector boasted more than eighty percent of the population of the entire federation. It had long surpassed the limits of the environment capacity. Urban diseases, resource shortages, and aging problems were getting more and more severe. A lot of measures to control the population had to be taken.

On the other hand, the Water Crystal Sector, the Forest Ocean Sector, the Nether World Sector, and the resource planets such as Boneyard had a very low speed of development due to the lack of effective population because the environment was too harsh for people to live in.

Those worlds did not necessarily lack precious resources, but it was certainly not easy for the ordinary people to settle in and develop the deserts of the Water Crystal Sector, where wind raged; the primitive forests in the Forest Ocean Sector, which were brimming with venomous bugs and gas; or the wastelands in the Nether World Sector, which were full of radiation.

With the technological reserve and available forces in the federation at that time, it was impossible to modify all those places comprehensively. Even if they had gritted their teeth for development without caring about the cost, the resources to be devoted to the projects would far exceed the total quantity of the resources that the projects could yield in the following hundred years. With the great enemy coming right at them, it would have been a suicidal action.

Therefore, the federation could only drool over the resources hidden deep within those worlds while fantasizing about the wonderful future.

Take Boneyard, which Li Yao was on, for example.

Speaking of which, Li Yao was sort of connected with Boneyard. Years ago, as a member of the Occult Orbs Fellowship of the federation, he had been one of the first natives of the federation to step on the planet. Later, he had discovered Sparkle, a multipurpose exploration starship of the Star Ocean Imperium, in this place and sacrificed himself to defeat Skeleton Dragon with Sparkle. Eventually, he had jumped to the Flying Star Sector and begun a soul-stirring interstellar journey.

Since Boneyard was a camp for Skeleton Dragon, an expert demon from forty thousand years ago, and demons were of the same origin as humans, this place naturally had an atmosphere, breathable air, a relatively steady tectonic structure, and standard gravity.

Compared to the planets made of fatal acids, this place was almost a paradise. Also, together with the facilities deep below the ground left by Skeleton Dragon, it should have become a rather acceptable settlement, or at least an area of resource collection.

However, the surging tides on the ocean that could easily be thousands of meters tall wrecked the hundreds of kilometers near the shoreline on a regular basis. The inland was made of continuous mountains that were utterly barren.

In such an abnormal environment, even if a large batch of sturdy demons were sent over after a long journey, it would still be difficult for them to yield any kinds of resources effectively.

Therefore, the federation’s development on Boneyard had always been postponed in the past hundred years. Only a few Cultivators and expert demons had established some settlements and exploration stations there, but such facilities were never expanded. It was the same case for the deserts in the Water Crystal Sector, the jungles in the Forest Ocean Sector, and the wastelands in the Nether World Sector.

So, the Black Wind Fleet’s surrender was definitely timely.

The fleet near the brown dwarf under Di Feiwen’s command had nothing but logistical troops that carried tremendous military assets and immigrant starships that housed millions of civilians. No wonder it required the planning of a ‘merchant’.

The immigrant starships stood for the essence of the colonization technology of the Imperium, which were at least one generation more advanced than the federation’s. With the technological help that they outputted incessantly, the large-scale modification and development on Boneyard, the Water Crystal Sector, the Forest Ocean Sector, and the Nether World Sector was finally a possibility.

The federation had regarded Boneyard, the Water Crystal Sector, and the Forest Ocean Sector as settlements to accept the civilians in the Black Wind Fleet not just because of humanitarianism or petty kindness.

On the one hand, the federation needed the technology and specialists of the Black Wind Fleet to modify the harsh environment and change the desolate lands in the shortest amount of time possible so that the environment would be more favorable for more people of the federation to migrate there.

On the other hand, a large batch of specialists, technical staff, and apprentices had moved to the place to work together with the specialists of the Black Wind Fleet to build a new home and learn the most advanced colonization technology of the Imperium.

The universe was a vast place. There were a lot of planets from which some juice could be squeezed out. However, the federation could only watch those planets from afar because of the technological restrictions.

Once they had learned the advanced technology of the Imperium, the federation would be able to start a new round of expansion and make the comprehensive national power leap again!

Of course, necessary wariness was still needed. The federation would certainly not do such a stupid thing as to open the door for the burglar, waiting to be robbed.

Li Yao knew himself very well and was aware that his title as ‘Black Wind King’ was only nominal. He did not intend to be involved in the political struggles for long.

However, he did have a very suitable candidate who could be at his service—his disciple, Jin Xinyue!

Jin Xinyue was a woman practically born for schemes and power. After her ‘Dim Moon Plan’ almost screwed up, she had been keeping a low profile. But it did not mean that her ambitions had completely hibernated. She was merely looking for new battlefields and new prey.

Boneyard became a new stage for Jin Xinyue, and accepting and educating everyone in the Black Wind Fleet from ‘Immortal Cultivators’ to ‘hominoids’ became her new challenge. The queen of demons enjoyed the arduous task as if it were sugar and was smart enough to mobilize a batch of muscular demons from the Blood Demon Sector as the first safety measure.

Li Yao believed that Jin Xinyue must have grown even more after the death of her father, Jin Tuyi, one of the best strategists in the federation. At the very least, the tiny proportion of guys in the Black Wind Fleet who had ill intentions would not be able to get away from her eyes. It was probably the best place for her right now.

As for the second ‘safety measure’, it was Firefly.

After the news that the Star Glory Federation secured an unbelievable victory in the space battle more than half a year ago was spread to Firefly, the people of the rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic could not have been more stunned.

Everyone was even more dumbfounded, even including Speaker Cui Lingfeng and Captain Tang Dingyuan, when they learned that the so-called ‘Team Red Lotus’ actually consisted of experts at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage from the Ancient Sages Sector each having a Colossus, and their ‘captain’ was the legendary Vulture Li Yao.

After the details of the battle were presented to them one after another, including the scheme of the extraterrestrial devils, the assault of the Black Wind Fleet, and the dominance of Li Yao, the integration of Firefly and the Star Glory Federation was finally devoid of all suspense. The starship that had fled and drifted in the dark universe for a thousand years finally sailed into a new home.

Right now, regarding the name and the architectural details, the legislators of the two parties were still negotiating. But Firefly had already jumped to Boneyard from the Dragon

Snake Space Zone and landed to the surface of the planet after loosening the hundreds of starships that were connected to it before.

The Cultivators of the rightful government of the Star Ocean Republic and the Immortal Cultivators of the Black Wind Fleet were certainly not in the most harmonious relationship. Thankfully, Boneyard was a vast, unpopulated place with too much undeveloped land. Each of them occupied an area of relatively flat hills and co-existed parallel to the settlement of demons led by Jin Xinyue. Together with the Cultivators of the federation who were mixed among the immigrants of the Black Wind Fleet as ‘volunteers’ and the ‘rebirth schools’ that were founded to monitor and educate the Immortal Cultivators, there was no need to worry that any fellow with ill intentions would raise any further trouble.

Chapter 1880 - After the Choice

Li Yao was relieved to see the brand-new settlements growing into scale, wondering if there was indeed such a thing called ‘fate’ that was guiding them to find the best path.

If he had refused Di Feiwen’s proposal a few months ago, or if the commander of the fleet near the brown dwarf had not been a ‘merchant’ like Di Feiwen who was open to compromises and negotiations but another relentless ‘soldier’ like Heiye Ming, the federation and the Black Wind Fleet would have been vastly different.

The immigrant starships before his eyes, as well as the civilians on them and the knowledge and technology in their minds to reshape the new world, would have been reduced to dust in the war. While the Black Wind Fleet’s doom was certain, the federation’s pace of development would have greatly slowed. It would have been impossible to resist the invasion of a second or a third army from the Imperium. Eventually, it would end up in the abyss of destruction together with the Black Wind Fleet.

Now, even if the homeland of the Imperium had learned of their existence, there was still a chance to deal with the problem!

While combining the Black Wind Fleet and Firefly, the federation would pay most of its attention to the Ancient Sages Sector.

More precisely, their focus would be the intact warship as well as the base of the Pangu Clan that was covered by the Nuwa warship in the Land of Eternal Night in the Ancient Sages Sector.

The technology of the Nuwa Clan and the Pangu Clan would make up for the missing parts of the technology on Kunlun effectively. By analyzing and completing the puzzles, the federation would eventually develop a better ability to defend themselves in local wars against the wild tides from the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance.

The Ancient Sages Sector was now at the last phase of a dynamical cycle, too. The barren land could not afford such a huge population. A lot of homeless peasants and rebels had risen up, leading to countless massacres and tragedies.

Naturally, the federation would not turn a blind eye on it. Very soon, a large batch of the population would be moved to Boneyard after preliminary modification and start their new life.

In Li Yao’s design, Boneyard would be built into a ‘special district of reform’.

The federation was too small, and the Imperium was too huge. It was impossible for the federation to conquer every world at the center of the cosmos or kill all the Immortal Cultivators.

It might or might not be technically possible, but such a choice was difficult to make from the moralistic point of view.

The Immortal Cultivators were two-faceted creatures. They were cold, heartless tyrants, but when faced with the Alliance of the Holy Covenant and the extraterrestrial devils, which were even more inhumane, they were also the most resolute defenders of the civilization of mankind.

From what Li Yao had learned in the last six months, the Immortal Cultivators often refused to surrender even if they were the last soldiers standing in the battles against the Covenant Alliance.

If the Immortal Cultivators of the Imperium were fighting the puppets of the Covenant Alliance bloodily on the frontline, it would be hard for the Cultivators of the federation to stab them in the back.

How the Cultivators and the Immortal Cultivators could live in peace; how the Immortal Cultivators should be educated and transformed; how the obedient, ignorant ‘hominoids’ could be changed into modern citizens with vision, ambition, and the ability to realize their will… All the questions would be tested in the ‘special district’ to find out the answer.

Standing atop a fold that had an altitude difference of several thousand meters and observing the heated, obstreperous site of construction below him, Li Yao considered such questions with great curiosity.

In a place slightly lower on the fold, Di Feiwen, the leader of the Immortal Cultivators, and Cui Lingfeng, the Speaker of the government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic, were negotiating with their saliva dashing out.

For a long time in the future, the two highly incompatible forces would be forced to live on the same planet, fight the cruel nature side by side, and develop their shared home. Naturally, the two leaders had all the words in the world, or rather, all the profanities, that they would like to pour on each other.

Seeing that the faces of the two sophisticated leaders were both pale, Li Yao could not help but feel amused.

It occurred to him that the two guys were indeed quite similar.

Di Feiwen regarded himself as an insignificant businessman and claimed that he was an impious Immortal Cultivator. Cui Lingfeng, on the other hand, did everything possible for the survival of Firefly and called himself a ‘bad Cultivator’.

What was the difference between an ‘impious Immortal Cultivator’ and a ‘bad Cultivator’?

Very soon, the two of them ended their argument and crawled up the mountaintop.

Di Feiwen was the first to reach the summit. His eyes stopped on Li Yao’s eye-catching red vest and especially the few words ‘Red Star Voluntary Service’ on the back of it for a long time, while he took a long, long breath, not sure how he should comment on Li Yao’s style.

“How about it, General Di? Did you have a pleasant talk with Speaker Cui? It’s fine if you have some minor conflicts. You can always communicate with Jin Xinyue later. She is quite friendly. I’ve already talked to her. Whatever your problems might be, she will try to help you solve them.”

Li Yao grinned. Pointing at the heated construction site below, he said, “In any case, the Black Wind Fleet has finally taken the first step toward its rebirth. I prefer the Black Wind Fleet in front of my eyes right now to the one raging in space.

“Before, I was not very confident. But after seeing this scene before me, I suddenly became certain that the Immortal

Cultivators could really change into Cultivators. What do you think?”

Staring at the valley, Di Feiwen casually said, “I don’t want to ruin your fun, so I think I should keep my mouth shut.”

“Oh?” Li Yao found it surprising. “What will ruin my fun? You can say whatever you are thinking.”

“The scene before us is indeed happy and harmonious, but it is based on highly abundant materials,” Di Feiwen observed. “It’s only because of the support of countless resources from the seven Sectors of the Star Glory Federation, and since this endeavor is of demonstrational significance, that the landing and the unfolding could be so easy and… unprofessional.

“If we did not have the support of the Star Glory Federation but only counted on our own resources, naturally, we would have to make thorough plans and follow every procedure strictly. Everybody would be used as a screw or a brick. When necessary, iron sticks, electric whips, and even bullets must be made use of in order to increase the odds of survival as much as possible.

“You may say that the system to separate families and keep useless people hibernating for decades or even abandon them is inhumane, but isn’t it also the greatest humanity?

“Only when your family is wealthy will you understand manners, and only when you have enough clothes and food will you understand honor and shame. Getting to the bottom of it, there is no fundamental difference between Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators. They are just the different optimal choices that the experts make under different circumstances.

“With sufficient resources, and when they are not pushed to desperation, Immortal Cultivators can certainly become Cultivators who understand ‘manners’ and ‘honor’.

“It is a pity that ‘sufficient resources’ is a special case from the perspectives of both space and history. What you are seeing right now, however splendid and glamorous it is, is nothing more than a dream that cannot last.

“In rare cases, the Immortal Cultivators will be transformed into Cultivators, but with time, the Cultivators will turn into Immortal Cultivators, which is in fact the regularity of a civilization.”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. He could not help but feel amused. “And you said you were an impious Immortal Cultivator. Why do I feel that you are a rather devout one?”

Di Feiwen smiled and shook his head. “I am a businessman who is not fond of the true path of immortality. I meant what I said, but ninety-nine percent of the things and laws of the universe do not depend on my fondness.

“Where do you think the Immortal Cultivators come from, commander? Are we born without the feelings of mankind in your eyes? Are we born to hate ‘kindness’, ‘sympathy’, ‘mercy’, and all other beautiful things? Are we all monsters who can only satisfy ourselves through tortures and slaughters?

“No. Perhaps some perverted Immortal Cultivators are so, but most people are not like that.”

Li Yao turned solemn. “I’d like to hear more.”

Di Feiwen pointed at the valley. “Let’s take the picture here for example. Assuming that a kindhearted expert who considers it his responsibility to protect everyone is right there to build the home with the ordinary people, spending decades to develop the barren Boneyard into a prosperous planet, he will be a Cultivator at this point, won’t he?

“But then, an irresistible enemy comes at them. Perhaps an expedition army from the Imperium of True Human Beings, an inhuman army of the Covenant Alliance, or a horde of bizarre, alien animals led by the extraterrestrial devils.

“The vulnerable defense of Boneyard cannot last for long. They must be evacuated immediately, but there are only limited starships for evacuation. Only one tenth of the people can be taken away.

“At this point, Boneyard is a mess and has lost all forms of order before the enemy breaks into the atmosphere. Driven by their survival instinct, everybody is crowding around the starships. Which one tenth of the people should the expert as the commander select to be survivors?”

Li Yao was silent.

Di Feiwen smiled and went on. “Perhaps you will say that the choice should not be made according to ability or identity. A random one-tenth should be chosen or the one-tenth that is closest to the space port and easiest to get on-board.

“Then, how will the expert prevent the remaining nine tenths from boarding the starships?

“It must be noted that everybody has gone mad. For even a chance of one millionth to get aboard, they will try anything. After they lose all the hope, they will even shoot at the starships that are slowly taking off, trying to make everybody die together with them.

“Do not think that I’m exaggerating. It’s really happened in the history of the Black Wind Fleet before that the escaping starships were shot down by the chaotic mobs after they took off.

“In many cases, due to the emergency and chaos, for as many people as possible to survive, the expert has to suppress with violence and even execute the mobs in advance to guarantee the safety of the escaping starships. The only result of petty kindness will be everybody dying together!

“While people are generally equal and should not be classified into different levels, let’s assume that the expert happens upon such a situation. He has a starship that has enough space and food for one last civilian, but the starship’s power system is faulty.

“Right then, he discovers a power rune array specialist and a cute, pitiful child.

“Should he rescue the power rune array specialist or the poor little girl?

“Hehe. The wars at the center of the cosmos are magnitudes gorier than at the edge of the cosmos. Such cruel choices happen all the time. All Immortal Cultivators have been faced with them.

“If the kindhearted, sympathetic expert ‘has to’ kill the crazy mobs and save the power rune array specialist in ten tough choices, what will he become after the ten choices, a Cultivator or an Immortal Cultivator?”

Chapter 1881 - When Faced with a Tiger

Faced with Di Feiwen’s questions, Li Yao was silent for a long time, but then he grinned and replied, “In fact, Su Changfa and a lot of Immortal Cultivators who were captured by us raised similar questions. I can’t help but wonder if all Immortal Cultivators have received the same brainwashing procedures to deceive other people with extreme dilemmas.

“Of course, I thought about such questions before and was even caught in a predicament, feeling that the Immortal Cultivators’ theories had a point, too. But on second thought, when such dilemmas take place, all the choices are wrong choices and will make me fall into the logic of your fallacy. How can I prove that I’ve made a sensible choice then?

“So, I believe that the key is not how you act in such dilemmas but how to prevent such dilemmas from happening in the first place.

“For example, you said that when a crisis comes, mobs inevitably show up in the maddest way. Why? Because the Immortal Cultivators have always despised and exploited ordinary people. You do not believe in the strength of the ordinary people, and you do not promote real ‘education’ to awaken the ordinary people as ‘defenders of humanity’. Instead, you have always inculcated into their heads survival of the fittest and all thosetheories.

“You have planted the seeds of brutality and selfishness deep down the hearts of the ordinary people and treated them as ‘animals’ in peacetime. Then, how can you expect them to obey orders or even sacrifice themselves when a crisis comes?

“Besides, although you claim to be ‘elites’, you are actually the most selfish and arrogant people in the world. I believe that when a crisis comes, the guys who are willing to sacrifice themselves like ‘Bloody Spear’ Zhou Tailong are few, aren’t they? Most Immortal Cultivators will flee for survival in a hurry, claiming ‘I am strong, and my life is more valuable, so I’m more qualified to live’, right?

“You have set very bad examples yourselves. When ordinary people learn from you, how can they not become ‘mobs’?

“However, consider such a possibility. In an ideal society, everyone receives comprehensive citizenship education from childhood. They will understand that whether or not their spiritual root is awakened and no matter how strong they are, they are all defenders of the civilization of mankind with unshakable responsibilities on their shoulders. They will consider ‘protection’ and ‘self-sacrifice’ as the highest values, which will be deeply branded into their subconsciousness.

“In the meantime, they will always maintain a sense of alert. Even before the crisis arrives, they will have performed a lot of drills to deal with emergencies with the combination of Grand Illusionary Land and real-life rehearsals.

“When the real crisis does come, under the lead of the Cultivators, countless people will stand up and sacrifice themselves to stop the enemy, and the rest of the people will maintain basic order thanks to their training before when they evacuate and retreat in an organized way. That way, the number of people that have retreated in the end will be maximized.

“Such an ideal society is exactly what the Star Glory Federation and I pursue!”

Di Feiwen stared at Li Yao. “For what you described to happen, commander, how high will the average moral level of this ideal society need to be? Won’t everyone in it be a saint?”

“The progress of civilization naturally means a higher and higher moral level,” Li Yao said solemnly. “But of course, this is just our vision, or dream. To build a world where everybody is a saint is even more difficult than to destroy a world. However, we still have technology. I believe that technological progress will make up for the underdevelopment of morals and help us avoid as many dilemmas as possible.

“For example, the second dilemma you raised just now, the question of saving the specialist of power rune arrays or the little girl.

“At first glance, it is indeed a very cruel choice. It does not feel right to save either of them.

“But on second thought, to make the choice so cruel, you have intentionally set up a lot of premises. For example, the engine compartment of the starship is malfunctioning, the space and resources on the starship can only save one person, the time is too limited to prepare a second starship, and so on.

“What if those problems do not exist?

“What if we are able to build starships with greater capacity and resource recycling efficiency, allowing us to take both of them?

“What if our engine compartment is more stable and boasts advanced self-examination and self-maintenance methods?

“What if there is a mysterious ‘wisdom succession’ technology that allows the specialist of power rune arrays to pass on his knowledge to the little girl?

“What if the technology of ‘human virtualization’ prevails and the specialist of power rune arrays can extract his own soul and crawl into a ring on the little girl’s finger when his physical body cannot be taken away, leaving as an ‘old grandpa’?

“The bottom line is, the most fundamental difference between human beings and animals is tools and technology. As a refiner, I believe in technology. Technology is certainly not an elixir, but the progress of technology can indeed solve a lot of problems, prevent us from making cruel and painful choices, and make our world a more civilized and beautiful place.

“This is my answer.”

Li Yao’s eyes were clear but firm.

Di Feiwen’s eyes, however, were filled with a hint of pity. Amused, he shook his head and said, “Morals? Technology? Is this your answer, commander? That is rather… too self-willed.

“Having lived at the edge of the cosmos for a long time, I am beginning to understand your outlook and the ideology that you persist in. Sometimes, I truly feel that the Cultivators are like ignorant, innocent kids who lie in a nest that is temporarily warm and safe, not knowing the darkness and treacherousness of the outside world at all. You think that your insignificant ‘persistence’ and ‘strength’ can solve all problems.

“When the Immortal Cultivators tell you the cruelty of the outside world out of good will and the ways to survive in the cruel world, you simply cover your ears, unwilling to hear it, and think that as long as you persist in your doctrines, the dark world will go, and the cruel laws will change on their own.

“Face the reality! Both morals and technology have their limits, but the cruelty and brutality of the dark universe are infinite. There are always problems that you cannot resolve. There are always cruel, painful choices that have to be made!

“The innocent kids will grow up into adults one day. They will have bones of iron and hearts of stone when they learn to live in the dog-eat-dog universe!

“You are still living in your nest at the relatively stable and secure edge of the cosmos. Naturally, you are free to brag about such useless stuff. But believe me, after you reach the center of the cosmos where you experience some cruel choices that cannot be resolved with either morals or technology, chances are that you will become the next Blackstar the Great, and the Star Glory Federation will become the next Imperium of True Human Beings.

“If there is any difference between the Star Glory Federation at that time and the Imperium of True Human Beings right now, it will only be crueler, more brutal, and more tyrannical! If it is not, it will not be qualified to continue fighting in the universal slaughterhouse in the place of the Imperium of True Human Beings!”

Seeing Di Feiwen’s twisted face and hysterical performance, Li Yao suddenly chuckled.

His eyes were not focused, implying that he was absent-minded.

Di Feiwen was slightly dazed. He seemed to be rather angry, which was rare for him. He asked solemnly, “What are you laughing for, commander?”

“Nothing, nothing. I suddenly thought of a joke from a long, long time ago that was not very funny.” Li Yao shrugged. “Ignore me. Just go on.”

“A joke…” Di Feiwen frowned. “Does it have anything to do with what we are discussing?”

“Well, perhaps not. I just couldn’t help but laugh when I thought of it. Please do excuse me.” Li Yao squatted on the ground and said, “The joke is about the solution when one encounters a tiger.

“It is common sense that most tigers are fond of attacking people behind. Once they bite the main artery on the neck of a human, one attack will be enough for them to finish the victim!

“Therefore, if an ordinary person runs into a tiger in the wilderness by accident, they must not turn around and run away in panic. Naturally, they also must not kneel on the ground and beg for mercy with their legs shaking, thinking that they can survive the disaster as long as they are humble enough in front of the animal and even turn themselves into the tiger’s lackeys or slaves. All such attempts will be futile, and they will be dead for sure.

“The correct approach is to confront the tiger by widening their eyes, waving their hands, and roaring as loudly as possible. If there are tree branches or twigs around, just pick them up and even poke them at the tiger brutally.

“While poking, they must also shout at the top of their voice to declare their resolution. For example, ‘You fu*king filthy tiger, come on and eat me if you have some balls!’ It’s all up to their own vocabulary.”

Di Feiwen blinked in confusion for a long time and frowned harder and harder. “Wait. You said that a strengthless ‘ordinary person’ encounters a tiger in the ‘wilderness’, didn’t you?”

Li Yao nodded. “Yes!”

Di Feiwen was baffled. “What then? They can escape the tiger with twigs and… cursing like a vixen?”

“Not exactly,” Li Yao said. “But at the very least, they will die with dignity in such a way!”

“…” Di Feiwen.

“Well, is it a bad joke? I said that it was a joke that was not very funny.”

“Please wait a moment, commander. I am still trying to understand how it is funny at all.”

“In fact,” Li Yao said, “I did not laugh because the joke was funny. It just occurred to me that the dark universe and all the magnificent beings in it—the Pangu Clan, the extraterrestrial devils, or other bizarre alien species—might be one, no, a bunch of tigers, and the civilization of mankind is an unlucky guy who has come across them in the wilderness.

“Then, the Immortal Cultivators like you focus on how to escape the tigers—by resorting to any means necessary and abandoning and twisting everything. You would even give up the essentials of human beings and change from inside out, living on as the lackeys and servants of the tigers.

“The Cultivators, on the other hand, focus more on something else—we consider how to die with dignity.”

Chapter 1882 - The Arsonists

Dumbfounded, Di Feiwen was at a loss for words.

His dilemmas had always gone unchallenged in the past. It had never occurred to him that they would be stalled by a bad, irritating joke!

Calming himself down, he sorted out his messy thoughts and said, “Where there is life, there is hope. Survival is what matters most! In any case, we must live on. We may be deformed and even end up as lackeys of the tigers, but so what? If we are alive, there will be hope for a comeback. Revenge is a dish best served cold. As long as we wait patiently and swallow all the humiliation, we will certainly be able to beat the tigers to death, and then we can always change back to what we used to be. Won’t that solve the problem?”

Looking at the flapping red flags below the mountain, Li Yao said softly, “No. A lot of mistakes can never be made up for once they are made, and many things can never change back to what they were once they are changed. Even if the ‘lackeys’ truly kill the tigers, they will only become the second tigers at most and will never become humans again.

“There are some things that are more important than survival, aren’t there? Let’s still take the example just now. Assuming that you are travelling with your children in the wilderness and you encounter a tiger, you will have two choices.

“Firstly, you can stand in the tiger’s way, shouting, kicking, and attracting the tiger’s attention. You can even charge forward and fight the tiger bravely, trying to buy more time for your children to run away. But they are too little to run away. After you are eaten up by the tiger, they will also be killed one after another.

“In other words, everything you do will be futile. The best you can do is make your family die with dignity.

“Secondly, you abandon your wife and your children and run first. You can even throw your children at the bloody maw of the tiger. As an adult, your speed is higher. While the tiger is enjoying the delicate flesh of your children, there is a one percent likelihood that you may survive.

“According to the so-called ‘rationality’ of the Immortal Cultivators, naturally, the second choice ensures the greatest good for the entire team. After all, everything is unlikely to survive in the first place. It is perfectly reasonable to make your children make contributions by helping you gain a slim chance of living.

“However, ask yourself this. If you make the second choice and send your children into the tiger’s mouth to get yourself more time, will you ever be able to become who you were?

“Even if you discover a primeval relic after surviving the tiger where you pick up marvelous arts, allowing you to slay a thousand or ten thousand tigers in the wilderness, before you find a hundred beautiful women to give you hundreds of children, will you go back to who you were? Will you still be the same as the past?”

This time, it was Di Feiwen who was lost for words.

Li Yao smiled and said, “Besides, the odds of surviving the tiger can’t be as high as one percent. As you put it just now, the universe is a boundless dark forest, frequented by countless tigers, vipers, scorpions, and other ferocious beasts. Even if you escape from a tiger’s attack though such a vile method, there’s a ninety-nine percent likelihood that you will immediately run into an even more brutal and terrifying monster, isn’t there?

“If you think about it, it will be extremely easy to conclude that compared to the short history of mankind and the three thousand Sectors that we have explored, the whole universe is close to infinity in terms of both time and space.

“In the infinite time and space, countless magnificent beings that are too strong for us to resist or even imagine must’ve been born. They are not deities and devils; they are the creators of deities and devils, or the creators of the creators of deities and devils!

“For any civilization, eventual destruction is a highly probable event. The hope of ‘eternity’ is so slim that it borders on zero.

“Then, what’s the use of you changing yourselves humbly and humiliatingly, demeaning yourselves to be lackeys, animals, cockroaches, and locusts? Can you escape from the dark forest and live an eternal life if you do that?

“You can’t. Faced with the boundless universe, we are like the ordinary people faced with a tiger in the wilderness. We will die if we fight. We will die if we run away. We will die if we curse it at the top of our voice. We will still die if we sh*t ourselves and even send our children to the animal dutifully. Since we are all going to die anyway, why don’t we choose to die with dignity?

“Let’s just take the Imperium of True Human Beings for example, which has turned itself into such a hideous country under the guidance of the true path of immortality. But so what? Does it help? After a thousand years of fighting, you haven’t even finished a minor Alliance of the Holy Covenant yet. The future of the country is gloomy!

“Even if you do defeat the Alliance of the Holy Covenant, you may be faced with the dual threats of the Pangu Civilization and the extraterrestrial devils. Even if you deform yourselves and transform yourselves into ‘iron cockroaches’ that are completely different from mankind of the past, allowing you to crush the Pangu Civilization and the extraterrestrial devils, then what?

“The universe is infinite, and there will be countless stronger forces and beings. The day will come when a godly civilization that even ‘iron cockroaches’ cannot take care of. It will erase you completely in the most casual way!”

Di Feiwen’s eyes lost focus, and he thought in a daze for a long time. Taking a long breath, he said, “I thought that you did not understand the darkness of the universe. I was terribly wrong. It never occurred to me that you are even more pessimistic than the Immortal Cultivators. You have almost seen the deepest darkness of the universe.

“The Immortal Cultivators still hope to struggle and strive to change ourselves by following the law of the universe so that we can live on in the cruel world.

“I didn’t know that you had even completely abandoned the slim hope and lost all desire to survive. All you are thinking of is how to die a heroic death. I really… don’t know how I should comment on that.”

“You’re wrong again.” Li Yao smiled, baring his white teeth. “Of course, the Cultivators can see the darkness of the universe, but we can also see the flickering light hidden in the darkness. Although eventual destruction is a highly probable event, it is possible that our path will last longer than your true path of immortality!”

“Oh?” Di Feiwen’s eyes glittered. “Where is the light from?”

“In the past,” Li Yao said, “I was once caught in the impasse of the so-called ‘dark forest’, too, and thought that it was practically impossible to crack the trap. ‘Ordinary people’ such as us are unlikely to survive since we are travelling in the wilderness teeming with tigers.

“However, when I thought of the joke about dying with dignity, I suddenly had a vague epiphany.

“Who says that we are walking alone in the dark forest, surrounded by only ‘tigers’? No. The universe is vast, but we are not alone!”

Di Feiwen narrowed his eyes. “I don’t understand…”

“It’s simple. The metaphorical ‘tigers’ refer to the alien civilizations that are stronger than the civilization of mankind and are malicious enough to destroy us, right?” Li Yao said in excitement. “However, who says that the alien civilizations must be wolves, leopards, lions, or other monsters that are determined to destroy us?

“Yes. According to the law of survival of the fittest in the dark forest, the alien civilizations are supposed to destroy or enslave us in order to exterminate the threat of a chance of one billionth while it is still in cradle.

“But what if they want to die with dignity, too?

“Look. If they are civilizations that are far stronger and more advanced than us, their logical thinking abilities must be much higher than ours, right? Then, if even I have realized that death is inevitable no matter how we struggle and we might as well die a dignified and valiant death while maintaining our original appearance and most precious beliefs, how could those civilizations have never thought of it?

“If a highly-developed civilization decides to die with dignity, it will possibly extend olive branches of friendship and communication to all directions to edify, help, and protect the weaker civilizations. Then, it will not be a tiger but a teacher and a comrade that we can trust and fight side by side with.

“There must be thousands of civilizations in the boundless universe. If only one or two of them decide to die with dignity, they will naturally be swallowed by the darkness around them soon. But if ten, a hundred, ten thousand civilizations all choose to die with dignity, to communicate with and help each other instead of attacking one another, it is possible that none of us will die. It is possible that we will drive away the darkness of the universe and fill it with light, isn’t it?”

Di Feiwen eyed Li Yao as if he were mentally disabled.

Ignoring him, Li Yao went on even more passionately. “The civilization of mankind is still too weak right now, and it is practically impossible for us to burn down the entire dark forest on our own. But I do not believe that we are fighting alone or that we are the only civilization who consider that ‘dignity’ is more important than ‘survival’. Or rather, in my definition, so-called civilizations are established to protect something that is more important than survival!

“Perhaps, in places where our eyes can’t reach, the dark forest is already on fire. What we need to do is join the team of ‘arsonists’ and ignite the most critical spark to make the fire spread to an uncontrollable extent. Who says that it is not a possibility?

“Of course, if there is indeed such an alliance of arsonists made of universal civilizations who hope to ‘die with dignity’, it must require certain conditions to join the alliance. At the very least, I don’t think that the Immortal Cultivators will be qualified to be members of the alliance if you continue evolving in the direction of ‘iron cockroaches’ and ‘armed locusts’.

“This is what I want to express, no matter how much you roll your eyes. I don’t care about what you think. All in all, I will just walk down my path and carry out the ideology of the Cultivators until we march out of the three thousand Sectors of the civilization of mankind and reach a greater, vaster universe where we will find ‘arsonists’ and show them the dignity and pride of mankind. We will tell them that even if we are far inferior to them in terms of strength and technology, our minds are as powerful and noble as theirs. When our eventual destruction comes, we will also protect the things we value most with all our courage, wisdom, and resolution and fight until the end valiantly!”

Chapter 1883 - Let’s Wait and See!

Di Feiwen was still silent, but he did not disguise the objection and disdain in his eyes at all.

Li Yao said with a smile, “Do you think that the ideas of the Cultivators are a bit childish?”

“Yes,” Di Feiwen replied. “It’s the most childish thing I’ve ever heard.”

“Indeed. The Immortal Cultivators’ ideas are perhaps more ‘mature’, more ‘rational’, and better adapted to the cruel universe. But I do not like it no matter what and would rather stay foolish and naïve forever,” Li Yao said. “Has it never occurred to you why the Cultivators and the Immortal Cultivators call the most important phase of training ‘Nascent Soul’ and consider it a great accomplishment of training to condense a Nascent Soul? Then, why is it a ‘nascent’ soul that the essence of our training condenses, instead of a muscular adult or a sophisticated senior?

“Perhaps, by training, we are actually building up the pure heart that we are born with, and we can only finish what we started by sticking to what we believed in at the beginning, right?

“What’s wrong about being childish? We are young and vigorous at least. For the Immortal Cultivators, who are ‘grown-ups’ that have memorized all the laws of the dark universe by heart and fused them deep into your bones and blood, you look indeed ‘mature’, but you are not far from decrepit.

“It’s been only a hundred thousand years since the civilization of mankind was born. We are still a very young ‘adolescent civilization’. It is not appropriate for us to believe ‘it is the world, not us, that is wrong’. Let’s make something big to stun all the civilizations of the universe. Don’t be so lethargic and unmotivated at such an early phase!”

While speaking, Li Yao opened his fingers and patted on Di Feiwen’s shoulder hard.

Di Feiwen grimaced under the patting. Amused, he said, “Commander, I really don’t get whether you are really innocent, childish, reckless, and stupid, or you are a great sage who pretends to be an idiot.”

“Of course, I am a great sage who pretends to be an idiot,” Li Yao said. “Isn’t it universally known?”

Looking at Li Yao’s matter-of-fact face, Di Feiwen took a deep breath and was unable to say anything.

Behind them, Speaker Cui Lingfeng of the government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic finally could not help but chuckle.

“Speaker Cui, you’ve come at the perfect time.” Li Yao waved hands at him. “What do you have to enlighten me regarding my discussion with General Di?”

“I dare not say that it is enlightenment, but I do have some opinions.”

Hesitating for a moment, Cui Lingfeng squatted next to Li Yao, too. He remarked while looking at the busy construction site below the mountain, “The disagreement between you and General Di is really not a simple right-or-wrong thing. There are not many things that are absolutely correct or absolutely wrong. I can only say that in extreme cases, the two different choices can both work, but they can both fail, too.

“You know that as the highest leader on Firefly, I am responsible for the lives of almost a hundred million people.

“In the thousand years of history of Firefly’s escape, quite a few extreme crises did take place, forcing me and my predecessors to be interrogated by humanity and conscience time and time ago when we made cruel, heartless choices.

“We were on the verge of the abyss of darkness countless times, or we might’ve sunk into the darkness without knowing it. We understand deeply the helplessness of certain choices and the inevitability of depravity.

“Although I consider myself a ‘bad Cultivator’, if some righteous Cultivators berate me for what I did and regard me as an ‘Immortal Cultivator’, I’ll have nothing to say for myself. After all, Cultivator or Immortal Cultivator is not a tattoo carved on our forehead. It only takes the blink of an eye to switch between them.

“Therefore, I understand everything that General Di said very well. I am not qualified to comment whether or not their theories are correct, either, because when faced with enough pressure, anybody can become an Immortal Cultivator. Nobody knows it more clearly than I do.

“What I am saying is that, while your theory and General Di’s can be both correct, if there are two worlds that are supported by your theories respectively, I would prefer to live in the world of Cultivators instead of General Di’s world of Immortal Cultivators. Moreover, I would like to work hard and make any sacrifice to develop the world of Cultivators into a stronger, more beautiful place!

“As you said just now, everybody dies. In many cases, eventual destruction is unavoidable. But whether or not we can face death with rationality and dignity marks the difference between ‘civilization’ and ‘savageness’.

“We have seen many kinds of deaths on Firefly. Some people resisted meteoroids with their crystal suits and filled the cracks in the shell of the starship with their bodies, eventually fusing with it, in order to protect the civilians. Some murdered ordinary people when there was a shortage of food and stole the victims’ food rations, sometimes even cutting and hiding the victims’ bodies.

“But despite all the schemes and evil deeds, how much longer can they survive when a real great catastrophe comes? Even if they catch their breath for another decade while soaking in the poison of darkness, will life be comfortable when they are troubled by their conscience day and night?

“General Di, the Immortal Cultivators’ theories may have their correct side, but I do not want to discuss if it is correct right now. I only want to ask you to give it a thought. Assuming that the ‘world of Cultivators’ that President Li just described has a one-millionth chance of being established, would you hope for your offspring to live in such a world or to live in a world of Immortal Cultivators like the Imperium of True Human Beings?”

Di Feiwen’s eyelids shivered for a long time. He struggled to shake his head and said, “No, you can’t succeed. The chance is too slim.”

“You will never know until you try. When we escaped from the Empyreal Terminus Sector, we never thought that Firefly could escape for a thousand years, travel through three thousand Sectors, and eventually get beyond the reach of the Imperium,” Cui Lingfeng said with a smile. “As the vice commander of the Black Wind Fleet, you must’ve been through the war between the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance. So, you should know that on the battlefield, those who are scared of death will certainly die, but the bold, fearless guys actually have a slim chance of survival, right? If the Immortal Cultivators consider yourselves as the strongest warriors of mankind, how can you be so hesitant and full of misgivings that even the Cultivators outperform you with their resolution and valor?

“Besides, even if we fail and die in the end, it will not be a big deal. Something will definitely be left behind—hope.

“Human beings are really strange creatures that are a combination of the most despicable things and the most honorable things. They may sink into the darkest abyss, but they can also emanate the light of hope in the filthy mud. Failure after failure, and fall after fall, only to rise and try again and again. Every time, they are stronger than the last time and closer to civilization and… wonderfulness.

“The Star Ocean Imperium, the Star Ocean Republic, the Imperium of True Human Beings, and the Star Glory Federation today have crashed into the wall, their head bleeding, again and again. But the seeds of hope have always been planted to allow them to be reborn one day!

“I believe in the vitality of the civilization of mankind. Even if the ‘naïve Cultivators’ of the Star Glory Federation fail this time, they will certainly leave something behind. Someone will inherit their last will one day and accomplish what they started.

“All in all, what we are doing right now is certainly not a pursuit of the impossible but an attempt that will affect billions of people and even the entire universe.

“Today, we are building a new home from scratch, transforming Boneyard into Ultimacy. Naturally, we considered if it would be occupied and even destroyed one day. But believe me, General Di, even if Ultimacy is truly occupied a long time in the future, it will not be the end of our civilization but the beginning of another great legend!”

Right then, a deafening explosion echoed in the continuous mountains opposite them.

The hills that were surrounded by mountains suddenly brightened. Everybody felt that their horizon was lengthened.

As it turned out, the constructors had performed the largest detonation so far, blowing up the folds that were dozens of kilometers long and paving a golden path inland.

Smoke was rising, and red flags were flapping. Countless constructors were waving their tools and hats, cheering and dancing in wild joy.

The scene was deeply etched into Di Feiwen’s eyes. He looked at Li Yao and then at Cui Lingfeng. In the end, he narrowed his eyes and observed the world that was getting clear behind the smoke waiting to be conquered and constructed by mankind, mumbling, “Then, let’s just wait and see.”

…

More and more new blood was joining the federation—the construction legions from the Black Wind Fleet, the millions of people from Firefly, and the ‘outcasts’ from the Dragon Snake Space Zone.

But some people of the federation were about to leave their home for their own beliefs and dreams.

Right when the new settlements on Boneyard, the Water Crystal Sector, and the Forest Ocean Sector were being constructed heatedly, another batch of people was about to set off on their expedition, one that had to be pushed forward and could never be aborted if everything went as planned.

For many reasons, the ‘expedition’ was kept rather low profile. It was not promoted on a large scale, but it was perhaps even more meaningful than the expedition that the federation would launch to the center of the cosmos one day, because it was an expedition of time for the civilization of mankind. It was a journey to the future universe in millions of years.

That was the ‘Tinder Plan’, a great project of the civilization of mankind to spray seeds across millions of years.

Although Professor Mo Xuan had regarded the ‘Tinder Plan’ as a disguise of his scheme, to deceive the leadership and the experts of the federation, the plan itself was not fake at all, and the completeness of the project was quite high.

The day that Professor Mo Xuan activated his scheme, the first launch of the ‘Tinder Plan’ could have been conducted smoothly.

Although Professor Mo Xuan was dead, Wei Qingqing and a large batch of Spiriters who had dedicated their lifelong efforts to the Tinder Plan were still pushing the project actively. They would accomplish their original goal and allow their souls to sail into the universe millions of years later.

Chapter 1884 - The Last Mission at the Edge of the Cosmos

Wei Qingqing was the most important woman in Li Yao's life other than Ding Lingdang. She was the one who had formed his belief for him. Now that she was about to embark on a journey with no return, Li Yao naturally returned to Hundred Flowers City and bade her farewell.

However, after he did return to Hundred Flowers City after an exhausting trip and met Wei Qingqing who was running final tests in the Tinder Base, he somehow felt that his mouth was dry, and he did not know what to say.

"Sister Qingqing, do you really… have to leave?"

After thinking for a long time, Li Yao only came up with a useless question.

Wei Qingqing was still controlling a small, bird-shaped artificial body, but it shot out a vivid holograph, which was still the woman who looked like an orchid flower in an unvisited valley. She smiled and said, "Of course. It is the work that we have been dedicated to for years. How can we quit halfway?"

"But…" Li Yao blurted, somewhat recklessly. "Professor Mo Xuan only used the 'Tinder Plan' as a disguise."

"I'm afraid that you're wrong. I vaguely have a feeling that Professor Mo Xuan's heart was actually quite self-contradictory. On the surface, he did use the ‘Tinder Plan’ as a disguise, but it was not entirely unlikely that he wished for the plan to succeed, too,” Wei Qingqing said. “Perhaps, Professor Mo Xuan was also caught in the warfare of the dual personality at that time. His personality that was corrupted by the extraterrestrial devil believed that ‘human virtualization’ was the correct path, but his real personality hoped that mankind could get away from the extraterrestrial devils in a certain way and establish a new world millions of years away.

“In retrospect, if everything had been a disguise, it would’ve been unnecessary for him to devote so many resources and so much energy to push the ‘Tinder Plan’ to such an extent.

“The bottom line is, I’m still willing to believe that something wonderful was hidden deep inside Professor Mo Xuan’s heart even when he was most corrupted by the extraterrestrial devil. It was because of the flickering wonderfulness that he was able to break free from the extraterrestrial devil’s control and regain his original self-awareness, shattering the enemy’s scheme.

“Right now, I’m going to bring the ‘wonderfulness’ of him and all human beings to the universe a long, long way in the future on an amazing journey. Hehe. I almost can’t wait anymore!”

“In that case…” Li Yao felt that his nose was itchy. He mumbled, “Sister Qingqing, safe journey. May you drift millions of years away swiftly, encounter a new life, and even create a brand-new civilization.”

“Haha. I should hope so!” Wei Qingqing smiled, full of hope. “I would like to travel to the universe millions of years away right now, too. I may encounter all kinds of bizarre lives and civilizations. Some of them may be advanced, some underdeveloped. Some of them may be similar to us, and some may have entirely different life forms, which will make it practically impossible to understand and communicate with them.

“But no matter how difficult it is, I will try to tell them the stories of mankind. I will tell them that such a civilization once existed. I will describe the wonderfulness, pureness, and brightness of mankind and will not avoid the darkness, the evilness, and the ugliness. I will tell them the staggering legends and the soul-stirring heroes. For example, well, the tales of Vulture Li Yao.

“Chances are that the unknown life in millions of years will make a statue for you after hearing your story!”

“Well…” Li Yao blinked hard, finding it hard to imagine what such a picture would look like.

“However, did you know? I actually have a small, selfish dream.” Wei Qingqing stared at Li Yao and said, “I hope that when I wake up again, I will not be faced with a cold, dark, and dead universe but one of liveliness and brightness where the civilization of mankind did not perish but joined the ‘alliance of arsonists’ that you described. I hope that it survives stubbornly on the level of both time and space.

“Of course, mankind will be vastly different from what it is today. Chances are that it will have been completely merged into the ‘alliance of arsonists’ and changed into bizarre forms.

“Maybe human beings will grow dozens of tentacles by then, or turn into meatballs that can expand or shrink freely, or have completely abandoned their bodies and move around in metal puppets, or have transformed into invisible waves that can travel thousands of lightyears in the blink of an eye through the four-dimensional space.

“But whatever they have become, whatever the social form and the relation between individuals are, they will remember that some of their ancestors fought for something wonderful and precious millions of years ago, and they are willing to fight for those things, too. If I can see such a universe, it will be so great!”

“We will work hard to make such a universe a reality,” Li Yao said solemnly.

“Then, keep it up, little brother.” Wei Qingqing suddenly extended her hand and touched Li Yao’s head.

She did not have a real body, and the so-called ‘head-touching’ was nothing more than the shaking of some waves.

But Li Yao could clearly sense her temperature and her giggle.

Before Li Yao gathered himself, the light and shadow of Wei Qingqing were already gone. The delicate little bird also landed on the ground slowly and stopped moving, losing all the color that it had before.

Wei Qingqing’s soul had left the artificial body and entered ‘Tinder One’, which was about to be launched.

When ‘Tinder One’ took off and its colorful exhaust flames danced vigorously inside Li Yao’s eyes, Li Yao was still unable to free himself from the feeling of loss.

Touching his head where Wei Qingqing’s temperature still lingered, Li Yao suddenly recalled the experience of Helian

Lie’s daughter.

Nobody was an island entirely of itself. Everyone’s fate was like a line that joined each other and outlined the general picture of the entire civilization.

As it was the case for individuals, was it the case for civilizations, too?

The universe was a vast place, but no civilization could live on their own however powerful they might be. They were bound to be influenced by other civilizations and then influence even more civilizations, leaving their mark on the universe in such a way.

Even if the civilization of mankind was truly destroyed one day, the marks that they left behind would affect thousands of future civilizations, creating or changing the fate of countless species.

Whether Wei Qingqing was to see a dark, cold universe or a lively, comfortable one in millions of years’ time perhaps truly depended on their hard work today.

So, that was all the more reason to work harder!

Looking at ‘Tinder One’, which had already turned into a star, Li Yao waved his fist hard.

“It never occurred to me that anyone in the real world would actually cheer themselves up by waving their fist for nothing. You are truly a narcissistic guy,” Long Yangjun said from behind him.

“Huh. Why are you here?” Li Yao was rather shocked.

“Please. I’ve always been here, alright? Wei Qingqing and I spent such a long time in the investigation team for the extraterrestrial devils. As a friend, isn’t it perfectly normal for me to see her off?”

Holding her arms and leaning against the wall, Long Yangjun rolled her eyes at Li Yao. “You were so attracted to the big sister that you would’ve neglected Ding Lingdang, too, if she were standing here. It is needless to mention unimportant small fries such as myself.”

“Enough of the cr*p. What nonsense are you talking about?”

Frowning, Li Yao eyed Long Yangjun up and down and said suspiciously, “Why do I have a feeling that there is something you want to say to me and that you are not very happy about it?”

“Of course there is something I want to say, and I am not in the best mood!” Long Yangjun said. “You haven’t forgotten our deal, have you?”

“Well…”

“You truly have!” Long Yangjun exclaimed.

“How is that possible? However, if you could drop me a hint…”

“I’m talking about the deal we reached in the Nuwa warship, wherein I help you get the Ancient Sages Sector and you will help me repair the Nuwa warship and find the secrets deep inside it with all the available forces of the Star Glory Federation!” Long Yangjun said. “Hey, hey, hey. You can’t have forgotten all that and think that I’m here to work in the Star Glory Federation for free, right?”

Li Yao blinked quickly and coughed hard.

Speaking of which, the Nuwa warship in the Ancient Sages Sector was truly one of the most critical parts in the Star Glory Federation’s grand strategy.

Although the federation had defeated the Black Wind Fleet, it was still at an absolute disadvantage faced with the two behemoths that were the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance. The only thing that could make up for the gap in the comprehensive national power was the primeval technology under their control.

The primeval technology had two sources, one being Kunlun and the other being the Nuwa warship and the Pangu laboratory deep inside the Ancient Sages Sector. The two sources could be cross-examined and studied together.

It was not hard to estimate that once the intact Nuwa warship and Pangu laboratory below the ice were fully under the federation’s control, together with Kunlun, the federation’s capability would certainly soar and even undergo a qualitative change.

It would be the trump card for them to compete in the universe.

However, in the past half a year, they had been occupied with the problems left by the Black Wind Fleet. Also, because of the long distance and the harsh sailing routes, the federation had never had enough time and resources to bother with the Ancient Sages Sector, which was deep inside the dark nebula. That was why the issue had been postponed for so long.

After the ‘battlefield uprising’ of the remaining soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet, the war that had lasted a whole year had finally ended. The federation was finally able to summon the most elite forces and the full resources to dredge the sailing routes in the dark nebula and embrace the Ancient Sages Sector!

It was also the last mission for Li Yao at the edge of the cosmos before he set off to the center of the cosmos to search for Earth.

“Rest assured. How could I possibly forget that?” Li Yao said. “An enormous fleet is being gathered in the federation. The specialists of the primeval civilizations who have spent decades on Kunlun have been summoned. Meng Chixin, Han Baling, Yan Liren, and other fellow Cultivators have dropped their work and are planning their grand return to the Ancient Sages Sector. If everything goes well, we will be able to take off within one month.

“This time, we have the precise information of the sailing routes deep inside the dark nebula and the coordinates of the Ancient Sages Sector. With the support of the advanced cruise technology and starships of the Black Wind Fleet and Firefly, we will definitely be able to return to the Ancient Sages Sector in a year and a half.”

Chapter 1885 - Changes in the Ancient Sages Sector

“That’s good,” Long Yangjun said. “The Ancient Sages Sector was at the critical phase where the contradictions were intensified and conflicts could break anytime. After it lost the twelve top experts and most powerful people, there is no telling what kind of world-shaking changes happened. Although the twelve of us made thorough plans before we left, if we were away for too long, some of the ambitious fellows would certainly rise to fill the vacancy. It is best that we go back as soon as possible and bring the Ancient Sages Sector into the federation’s system.”

“That’s good. As the saying goes, among the blind, the one-eyed man is the king. There’s no telling how many ambitious schemers are jumping up and down in the Ancient Sages Sector right now. While those people are as good as nothing, the civilians there will certainly suffer. So, we must seize every second to reach the Ancient Sages Sector sooner!”

Li Yao could not have agreed with Long Yangjun’s opinion more. After thinking for a moment, he asked again, “Right, after we really reach the Ancient Sages Sector and excavate the Nuwa warship, you will have to release your identity to the public sooner or later, won’t you?

“You have witnessed what kind of country the federation is with your own eyes. My own integrity is definitely unquestionable, too. Nobody here will dissect and slice you for study. What are you still worried about?”

Long Yangjun smiled and said, “Fine. You have honored your word and never exposed my real identity all the way here. So, I can assure you now that as soon as the Nuwa warship is excavated in one piece and the problems about the Pangu laboratory are resolved, I will tell you and the world my identity and destiny.

“As of right now…”

A hint of confusion beamed out of her eyes as she mumbled, “I have recalled a lot of things, but they are all mottled pieces. I need some critical information to connect them and figure out my real… destiny.”

Looking at her slightly confused face, Li Yao could not help but have a weird feeling.

Although he was the opposite of Long Yangjun in terms of appearance, background, or gender, he still felt that the elite warrior of the Nuwa civilization from hundreds of thousands of years ago was very similar to him.

Looking at her, he felt that he was looking at himself in a mirror.

Everybody had a destiny. Perhaps the aim of their life was to find and accomplish their destiny. Long Yangjun was approaching her destiny step by step. But what was his destiny exactly?

Earth. My Earth…

Li Yao shook his head hard, waving the blue planet into broken ripples.

His journey had only just begun. It was not the time to consider Earth yet. He might as well focus his attention on the Ancient Sages Sector deep inside the dark nebula first.

The war against the Black Wind Fleet had taken too much time after all. Even if they were lucky, almost two years would have passed by the time they returned to the Ancient Sages Sector again.

What kind of changes could have taken place in the Ancient Sages Sector in two years when all the dominators were gone?

…

On Angry Fire Mountain in the Mystic Sun State in the Ancient Sages Sector…

The Mystic Sun State was at the center of the Great Qian Dynasty’s territory, the heart of the hundred and eight states in the world. It had been renowned as a transportation hub for a hundred counties since ancient times. It was also one of the most prosperous and wealthy agricultural areas besides the convenient transportation, which further added to its military significance. Countless dynasties had risen from this place at the beginning.

However, at the northwest border of the Mystic Sun State, Angry Fire Mountain was vastly different from the plateau that was only one river away.

Angry Fire Mountain was almost ten thousand meters high, surrounded by steep, harsh mountains that stabbed into the clouds hundreds of square kilometers around. The valleys among the mountains had bottomless cracks that seemed to be leading to the deepest level of hell.

From those cracks, surging red smoke spurted out all year around, keeping a high temperature in the local area. When people observed from the plateau, they would inevitably feel that the whole mountain was on fire. That was how the mountain got its name.

Because of the harsh environment and the various kinds of ferocious animals of the fire class living deep inside the valleys and the fiery clouds, the place was respected as one of the most dangerous locations in the entire Ancient Sages Sector. Not only were the common folk reluctant to pass the area without a good reason, even the low-level Cultivators had also to be highly vigilant when they were in the area. One moment of carelessness, and they would be absorbed into the fiery clouds and swallowed by the ferocious beasts. Even their ashes would not be left.

However, that was all the history a few years back.

Two years ago, Angry Fire Mountain, known as one of the ten most dangerous locations of the Ancient Sages Sector, had been trespassed on. Most of the ferocious animals of the fire class had either been killed or driven away. The rest of them had been implanted with barriers and runes, turning into domesticated animals at the service of the Cultivators.

On the cracks that were shooting out the fiery spiritual energy at the bottom of the earth incessantly, countless rune arrays had been established. Not only did they lower the temperature of the local area to an acceptable level for ordinary people, such rune arrays could also absorb the fiery spiritual energy and transform it into ever-changing, mysterious fire for tempering, explosives that were invincible in wars, or various hot springs.

Even the strengthless common folk could grow into muscular fighters if they strengthened their body by soaking in the hot spring for a long time.

Ever since then, Angry Fire Mountain had become livelier with each passing day.

Flying boats shipped towers and pavilions from all directions. More than ten floating mountains were even stopped at the above of Angry Fire Mountain. A rather splendid town was almost established in the middle of the mountain.

Outside of the town, almost ten huge military camps had been set up. Brawny men from everywhere were joining the army every day. Almost ten thousand torches as thick as the thigh of a bull were consumed on a daily basis, illuminating the vast Angry Fire Mountain into a sleepless city. The clinks of blades and the roars of men could be heard every night.

People who lived on the plateau looked at the bloodily burning mountain in fright. The raging flames of light from the mountain even eclipsed the splendor of the Great Qian Dynasty and the Dark Cloud Prairies.

All kinds of rumors were spreading on the street.

A lot of them told other people how they saw a crimson dragon soaring from Angry Fire Mountain and hovering amid clouds at night.

“A true dragon has shown up!”

The touts and butchers on the street grimaced and spoke to each other thoughtfully.

Even the scoundrels who spent their entire time in the casinos had put down their dice and dimes, considering if they should join the army and make a name for themselves.

That day, the anomaly in the sky further proved their judgment.

Starting from five o’clock in the morning, when there was not the slightest light in the sky, flashes of light tore apart the night sky and lunged in the direction of Angry Fire Mountain.

When they were the largest in number, hundreds of fire lines occupied the sky. Explosions echoed like rumbling thunder each louder than the last, almost deafening the common folk below.

Such a terrible view drove a lot of people mad. They kneeled on the ground and kowtowed at the sky the entire day, until their head was bleeding and their mouth was foaming, and they passed out on one side of the road.

Cultivators! There were countless high and almighty Cultivators!

The common folk had never seen so many Cultivators gathering together, marching toward Angry Fire Mountain incessantly. The fiery lines in the sky burnt for an entire morning without stop. How could they not feel frightened or go mad?

“Why are so many Cultivators here? Are they here to pay homage to the true dragon?”

“The true dragon has shown up, and all the people bow. This is truly a sign of a change of dynasties!”

Not just the ignorant common folk on the plateau who did not know anything better, even the Cultivators who had arrived at Angry Fire Mountain from thousands of kilometers away without any rest were mumbling the same thing.

The Angry Fire Mountain was perhaps the liveliest place in the entire Ancient Sages Sector at that moment.

On the hills large and small, and above the towers and pavilions floating in midair, sabers, swords, and spears were rising like an ocean, and too many flags were flapping in the wind.

Almost ten thousand soldiers who were wearing fine armor stood like statues made of iron and copper. Holding the flags that were almost ten meters tall, they were absolutely motionless. The emblem of angry fire on the flags was the only thing moving in the wind like crazily dancing flames.

Countless hideous, ferocious animals of the fire class were all awed by such a view. Lying under the feet of the tamers, they did not dare move at all but only bulged their big red eyes and stared at the crowd down below somewhat in fear.

The valley that could accommodate hundreds of thousands of people had been full. Even the well-heeled Cultivators had to stand right next to each other, leaving no space for privacy at all. They were all wearing expressions of confusion and panic.

The guest gong outside of the valley had been bashed for an entire day. Yet, it was still echoing nonstop. Every time a leader or an elder of a sect came to visit, the gong would be hit hard together with roars that rumbled like thunder.

“Master Zhao Yunfeng of the Heavenly Wolf Manor has come, offering two thousand-year ginsengs and one jade ornament!

“Leader Long, Elder Sun, and Elder Qian of the Glamorous Cloud Sect as well as their thirty-three true disciples are here, offering thirty Glamorous Cloud Flags that everybody of the sect has baptized with their heart blood for eighty-one days!

“Master Shangguan of the Wild Sand Fortress is here, offering one World Unity Cauldron! Elder Scorching Sun is the best expert in the world, who has the support of a million elite soldiers of the Angry Fire Army and countless experts of the Red Sun Sect. It will only be a matter of time for him to unite the world again! This cauldron will be the best medium to carve the magnificent feats of Elder Scorching Sun for all the posterity to memorize!”

After the announcement, the atmosphere in the valley was more heated than ever. Even the rocks were about to be melted, and the sky was to be burnt through. Countless muscular soldiers wearing the red flame armor shouted at the top of their voices.

“The invincible Elder Scorching Sun will sweep across and unite the world, and he will be remembered by all future generations!”

At first, only the soldiers of the Angry Fire Army were shouting. But very soon, the Cultivators of the Red Sun Sect, who were wearing crimson robes and glowing in redness, shouted with their faces blushing and their veins protruding.

Under their aggressive eyes, the tens of thousands of Cultivators of other sects could only grit their teeth to echo with them. For a moment, there was not a second voice in the hundreds of square kilometers nearby except for the echoes of the slogan.

“Elder Scorching Sun is invincible!”

“Sweep across and unite the world!”

“To be remembered by all future generations!”

Chapter 1886 - Son of Destiny!

Staying in the middle of the hundred thousand Cultivators, Fang Chengzhi echoed with the roars of flattery, but he actually did not think much about it.

His face was somewhat blushing as he was suspicious that the fellow Cultivators around would pat his shoulder from behind and scorn him at any moment. “Well, if this isn’t the renowned ‘Green Willow’ Fang Chengzhi of the Running River State? Why has the magnificent Lord Fang come to this place after such a long journey to bootlick Elder Scorching Sun?”

However, despite all his worries, nobody did laugh at him aloud. He observed the surroundings in secret, only to discover many more high-level Cultivators who were more famous than him, except that the ‘masters’, ‘elders’, and ‘leaders’ were so solemn and concentrated as if they believed from the bottom of their heart that the influence of Elder Scorching Sun would last forever.

Fang Chengzhi coughed for a moment and still felt that he was different from those around him.

The honorable ‘Mr. Green Willow’, whose extraordinary handsomeness was well known, ranked at the top of the Four Princes that were well respected in the Running River State. He was even a minor celebrity in the entire world of Cultivators.

His grandfather had even advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage and founded the Green Cloud Sword Sect. With a Green Cloud Devil Sweeping Sword and the corresponding sword arts, his reputation did not stop in the Running River State. Nobody in the neighboring ten or so states had not heard his father’s name.

Anywhere he went, all the sects must show some respect for him as soon as he showed the token of the Green Cloud Sword Sect.

Besides, his great grandfather was a true disciple of the Purple Pole Sword Sect, known as ‘the best sword sect in the world’. It was with the permission and full support of the Purple Pole Sword Sect that his ancestors had left the sect to found an independent sect.

In other words, the Green Cloud Sword Sect was an offshoot, or rather, a ‘peripheral organization’, of the Purple Pole Sword Sect.

‘Sword Manic’ Yan Liren of the Purple Pole Sword Sect was known as the best expert in the world. In the sword-testing battle years ago, even Qi Zhongdao, the leader of all Cultivators, had been no match for him.

With such an unshakeable mountain supporting them, they were completely different from the small fries who had no backgrounds around him. What was wrong with his father setting foot in such a mess here?

Fang Chengzhi was somewhat dissatisfied with Fang Shiyi, his father and the current leader of the Green Cloud Sword Sect, who was praising Elder Scorching Sun humbly.

It was true that as the unparalleled experts in the old days such as the Three Saints, the Four Rapscallions, and Elder

Spiritual Vulture had gone missing, the capabilities of multiple forces, including the Grand Mystery Sect, the Purple Pole Sword Sect, the Great Qian Dynasty, the Dark Cloud Prairies, had greatly weakened. All of them were shrinking.

The ‘Angry Fire Army’ and ‘Scorching Sun Sect’ under the lead of Elder Scorching Sun had risen abruptly and rapidly, showing the momentum of a revolution.

With the excuse that an unprecedently powerful Rising Sun Array had been crafted, Elder Scorching Sun was holding a Rising Sun Ceremony. Invitations had been sent out to all sects in the entire Ancient Sages Sector large and small, asking them to attend the great event. In fact, everybody knew that the real purpose was something else.

The ‘Rising Sun Ceremony’ was a declaration of war that Elder Scorching Sun sent to the entire world of Cultivators and even the entire Ancient Sages Sector, implying that the unparalleled expert who had risen recently was about to compete for the hegemony of the world!

The Cultivators who were willing to attend the Rising Sun Ceremony would be his allies and lackeys. Those who did not show him respect and ignored his invitation would be his foes or the targets to be annihilated by his great army later!

Frankly, it was a meeting to take sides. Elder Scorching Sun would see how many people in the world of Cultivators were on his side and how many opposed him!

The invitations were indeed a shock to the entire Ancient Sages Sector and finally caused the rare turnout that day.

Most of the middle-sized and small sects, awed by the dominance of Elder Scorching Sun, had sent their leaders or elders with great gifts. They were even busy adulating Elder Scorching Sun as much as they could. The shameless exaltations were major eye-openers for Fang Chengzhi.

Even a few deeply-rooted sects that had a long history had at least sent a few elders to attend the ceremony with the replies of their leaders.

However, the six major sects including the Grand Mystery Sect and the Purple Pole Sword Sect, the court of the Great Qian Dynasty, and the Dark Cloud Prairies did not send anybody.

The stances of the two parties were very obvious.

As an offshoot of the Purple Pole Sword Sect, the Green Cloud Sword Sect was supposed to take the Purple Pole Sword Sect's side and resist Elder Scorching Sun and the Red Sun Sect together.

However, after discussing the issue with the leaders of more than ten peripheral sects, his father had made a shocking decision. None of them considered the attitude of the Purple Pole Sword Sect further. They all went to Angry Fire Mountain together.

Although their excuse was to help the Purple Pole Sword Sect investigate the enemy, anyone who was not an idiot knew how absurd that was.

Their actions were doubtlessly a slap in the face for the Purple Pole Sword Sect.

More strictly speaking, they were even suspected of betrayal.

Fang Chengzhi was young and had a thin face after all. He was both ashamed to change sides so blatantly and frightened by the past reputation of the Purple Pole Sword Sect. He was also very suspicious about Elder Scorching Sun, who had only risen to fame a couple of years ago. Although he had been dragged to Angry Fire Mountain by his father unwillingly, he felt that his father had made a reckless move deep in his heart.

“Is Elder Scorching Sun still not out? A hundred thousand Cultivators are waiting for him alone. How cocky!” Fang Chengzhi mumbled to himself in a very low voice.

He had thought that nobody could hear him, but hardly had he finished his sentence when the center of his eyebrow was poked so hard that he almost burst into tears.

Then, his father’s high-pitched voice echoed in his ears. “Idiot, watch your mouth! You may not only get yourself killed but also involve your family and sect!”

Greatly shocked, Fang Chengzhi raised his head to look, only to discover that his father was still bowing like a tumbler with the most devoted expression while mumbling the adulations such as ‘Elder Scorching Sun is invincible’.

But his father’s private talk was running into his ears incessantly. “What does a little idiot like you know? Have I not told you how tough Elder Scorching Sun is on our way here? Did you not hear any of that?

“He may not have been very famous in the world of Cultivators in the past hundred years, but he was a major celebrity more than a hundred years ago who had advanced to the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage!

“At that time, he entered the depths of Angry Fire Mountain when chasing after an animal and went missing. Everybody thought that he was killed in the magma deep inside the underground cracks.

“Nobody knew that, while he was indeed lost beneath the earth, he found something more underground. He discovered a relic of the ‘Saint Fire Dynasty’ from more than seventy thousand years ago and the residences of dozens of ancient masters!

“The relic of the ‘Saint Fire Dynasty’ and the residences of dozens of ancient masters were actually founded on a battlefield of primeval wars from hundreds of thousands of years ago!

“Therefore, the underground relic in Angry Fire Mountain has both the enormous arsenal of the ‘Saint Fire Dynasty’, the lifelong work of the dozens of ancient monsters, and abundant amazing arts and magical equipment. Some of the primeval treasures are even as good as ‘Iron Saint’ Qi Zhongdao’s Heaven Flipping Seal!

“What’s most shocking is that there was actually a Cloud Qin Gold Statue among all the primeval treasures!

“You may not know much about other primeval treasures, but I’m certain that you are fully aware of the ultimate dominance of ‘Cloud Qin Gold Statue’. It was with the help of the twelve Cloud Qin Gold Statues that the great enterprise of the Cloud Qin Dynasty was founded.

“Today, although Elder Scorching Sun has only one Cloud Qin Gold Statue whose arm is broken, so what? Who else in the world can compete with him?”

Fang Shiyi, the leader of the Green Cloud Sword Sect, had indeed repeated it countless times on the road. But Fang Chengzhi was not convinced because he had not seen it with his own eyes. He stood straight and was about to argue.

“Hehe!” Fang Shiyi sniffed and mixed some sharp sword auras in his voice, which scraped Feng Chengzhi’s brains like a dagger. “Do not say anything. Just listen obediently!

“Elder Scorching Sun trained himself hard in the underground residences from the ‘Saint Fire Dynasty’ for a hundred years and finally advanced to the ultimate level at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage, only half a step away from the Divinity Transformation Stage. He also practiced dozens of most dominating arts. Even if he were faced with Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun, the two legendary Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators from a hundred years ago, he would not necessarily be on the losing side.

“Now that he has broken out of his seclusion after grasping all his arts, he is definitely one of the best experts in the world.

“As it happens, he has ended his seclusion at the perfect time. It is exactly the time when the Three Saints, the Four Rapscallions, the Monk, and the Emperor have all vanished uncannily.

“Regarding the mysterious disappearance of the three Saints, the Four Rapscallions, Elder Spiritual Vulture, and the other experts, there are all kinds of rumors and strange theories. Some say that they died with each other in the depths of the Land of Eternal Night. Some say that they set off to search for the deities’ realm on an enormous divine boat and will return to the Ancient Sages Sector in a year and a half.

“But the journey to divinity is full of perils. Who knows if it is true?

“It was said that they would return in a year and a half, but three years have passed, and there is still no sign of those experts. Perhaps they have already broken the void and forgotten all the affairs of the mortal world. Perhaps they have perished on the way to search for the deities’ realm. Perhaps there has never been a ‘search for the deities’ realm’ in the first place, and they did perish each other in the Land of Eternal Night. Their quest could be a false message released by their subordinates and disciples to stabilize the situation, right?

“All in all, the world cannot function without a ruler. Now that the old experts such as the Three Saints, the Four Rapscallions, the Monk, the Emperor, and Elder Spiritual Vulture are all gone, the Ancient Sages Sector is in dire need of new leadership. At such a moment, Elder Scorching Sun has risen with the Cultivation only half a step away from the Divinity Transformation Stage and a one-armed Gold Statue. Who is the destiny’s son if not him?”

Chapter 1887 - Arrival of the Elder!

Chapter 1888 - Unparalleled Fiery Fiend!

The red clouds and colorful glows constituted the giant’s body, and the vigorous flames of spiritual energy turned into its facial organs and armor. What a splendid and unstoppable giant that almost looked like the giant that created the universe!

The floating mountains and pavilions in the sky were as insignificant and vulnerable as children’s toys in front of the monolithic fiery fiend. The highest peak of the Angry Fire Mountain that rose to the clouds did not seem enough to suffer a sneeze from the fiend. Even the valley that held hundreds of thousands of Cultivators and ordinary soldiers seemed to have been opened by the hands of the fiend, who could rip another ravine in the broken ground that led to the core of the planet and bury everyone in it as long as it wanted to.

So magnificent and dominating!

Every hair on ‘Green Willow’ Fang Chengzhi stood on end. He could not help but feel the deepest reverence from the bottom of his heart.

It was not until this moment that he finally understood what his father meant by ‘son of destiny’!

When light that was even more dazzling than the sun beamed out of the behemothic giant covered the entire valley, Fang Chengzhi truly felt that he, his father, and the elders of all the major sects had turned into ants, dust, and water drops that would be vaporized at any point!

They could only obey but not resist, because they would be obliterated in the blink of an eye if they so much as grew the thought of resistance.

That was the unparalleled dominance of Elder Scorching Sun, the strongest Cultivator of the Ancient Sages Sector!

For a moment, Fang Chengzhi was almost dumbfounded.

There were a lot of people who were as dumbfounded as him. The whole valley fell silent. The only sounds that were echoing now and then were the gasps of the panicked low-level Cultivators and their clattering teeth.

The fiery fiend extended its arms and grabbed two hills that were several kilometers away from each other. Then, it leaned toward the valley, building an overwhelming effect with the fire and clouds. Putting on a casual smile, it said, shaking the entire sky with its voice, “Please do excuse me for not greeting you earlier, fellow Cultivators.”

The voices fell from the sky like a waterfall and bashed the heart of every Cultivator, who felt that a pair of iron hands was pressing their shoulders hard to the ground. Some of the less capable Cultivators could not help but feel suffocated, and they almost vomited blood.

The fiery fiend released the hands that were holding onto the two hills. The marks that were furiously on fire on the two hills were clearly visible. Opening its hands, it laughed and went on. “Fellow Cultivators, what do you think of my ‘Rising Sun Array’? Is it magnificent enough?”

Hardly had the voice died down when light and fire were flashing in the hundred square kilometers around the Angry Fire Mountain, as if ten thousand volcanoes were erupting from beneath the earth.

The fiery fiend’s body, which could not have been larger, further expanded. Not only the armor around its body became gold and dazzling, it even grew three heads and six arms.

The three heads were enshrouded in red, green, and purple fire respectively, and the six enormous hands were holding six fireballs that were even more violent than the sun. Outside of the fireballs, colorful arcs of light were dancing, each roaring like a ravenous dragon!

Hu!

A great wind was blowing inside the valley. As if an overwhelming river of magma flowed right above everyone’s head, all the Cultivators felt that their hair was standing on end, and their eyes were bloodshot. Their fingernails were cracking beyond their control, too!

The ‘Rising Sun Array’ was as powerful as that!

All the Cultivators looked at each other in bewilderment, feeling that they were mired in a nightmare.

Of course, they knew that Elder Scorching Sun could not have built such a magnificent image with his own Cultivation. Even a real Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator would have been barely capable of constructing such an overwhelming image of a fiend with all their Cultivation.

However, it was already an unparalleled view in the past thousand years even if the effect was supported by the Rising Sun Array in the underground relic of the Saint Fire Dynasty.

The so-called Three Saints and Four Rapscallions were truly incomparable to even Elder Scorching Sun's little finger considering his dominance at that moment.

Seeing that, the Cultivators who were hesitating previously could not help but feel genuinely convinced. With tears in their eyes, they shouted at the same time.

"The Rising Sun Array is truly invincible!"

"Elder Scorching Sun is invincible!"

"Elder Scorching Sun's enterprise will last forever!"

"Haha. Hahaha!"

The three heads of the fiery fiend burst into laughter at the same time, and its six arms shook so crazily as if they were going to burn six holes in the sky. It remarked, "The dominance of the array is exactly like the future of my school. Like a rising sun in the morning, it will soar unstoppably! Now that the fellow Cultivators here understand the logic of following the trend instead of going against it, I will certainly not wrong you. One day, when the sun truly shines at the highest sky and illuminates the earth, all fellow Cultivators will be flowers, woods, and grass on the ground that will benefit from the light and heat!"

The Cultivators looked at each other. Naturally, another round of applause and adulation began.

“However…” The three faces of the fiery fiend turned gloomy at the same time. “Ever since I fully grasped the unparalleled arts and broke out of seclusion, most Cultivators have proved wise enough to understand the unstoppable trend of history like you do. But still, there are blind, obstinate guys who choose to fight against me!

“Although kindness is a great virtue, I shall show no mercy to those who are determined to get killed.

“Someone! Bring the ‘Heaven Sweeping King’ Zhao Changlie here!”

In Elder Scorching Sun’s sneer, five flying boats slowly ascended from the valley, each pulling a thick chain that was bound to the limbs and neck of a dirty man whose face was covered in blood. The man’s body was stretched out and about to be split apart when he was dragged into the sky.

“Elder Scorching Sun has captured ‘Heaven Sweeping King’ Zhao Changlie!”

The Cultivators in the valley were all shocked.

The ‘Heaven Sweeping King’ Zhao Changlie was a sworn brother of the ‘Heaven Battering King’ Qi Changsheng, one of the Four Rapscallions and one of the top ten experts of the Ancient Sages Sector.

Before Qi Changsheng established the Heaven Battering Army, the man had already been following Qi Changsheng to excavate ancient tombs and relics in the northwest. The two of them were life-and-death friends. Although they were not from the same family, they were closer to each other than many blood relatives.

After Qi Changsheng established the Heaven Battering Army, it was annihilated by the court many times, and he even had to surrender to the court himself on several occasions. During his failures, a lot of his past brothers betrayed him and even stabbed him in the back. But Zhao Changlie always remained loyal to him. Even when Qi Changsheng had only nine subordinates left with him, Zhao Changlie was still by his side.

Therefore, Zhao Changlie had been most trusted by Qi Changsheng. Qi Changsheng called himself the ‘Heaven Battering King’ and named Zhao Changlie the ‘Heaven Sweeping King’ as the vice commander of the Heaven Battering Army!

It was said that Qi Changsheng entrusted the remaining troops of the Heaven Battering Army to Zhao Changlie before he and other nine experts went to visit the deities’ realm with the other nine experts three years ago.

It had never occurred to the Cultivators that even ‘Heaven Sweeping King’ Zhao Changlie had become Elder Scorching Sun’s prisoner. Did it mean that the Heaven Battering Army had been completely crushed by the Angry Fire Army and the Red Fire Sect?

All the Cultivators present could not help but swallow hard.

They recalled the ‘Divine Wrath Order’ at the same time.

It was said to be a decree left by the ten experts three years ago before they left the Ancient Sages Sector, warning all the sects and unaffiliated Cultivators in the world not to make any reckless moves while they were away. Whoever dared to start a war would be punished gravely after they were back.

But right now, not only had Elder Scorching Sun started a war, but he was also directly touching one of ‘Heaven Battering King’ Qi Changsheng’s subordinates, which was equivalent to kicking the ‘Divine Wrath Order’ away and smashing it into pieces!

Well. What if the top ten experts including the Three Saints, the Four Rapscallions, and Master Spiritual Vulture are not dead and truly return from the deities’ realm someday…

A lot of Cultivators could not help but feel cold sweat popping up.

However, when they saw the overwhelming fiery fiend above the valley, they laughed at their own paranoia. With the dominance of Elder Scorching Sun, what could the top ten experts do even if they came back? Would there be any outcome other than being killed by Elder Scorching Sun without leaving any bones behind?

“Zhao Changlie!” The fiery fiend craned a gigantic head toward the man who was about to be split apart, grinning hideously. “I sent a Proud Sun Badge to your Heaven Battering Army out of good will and invited you to appreciate the magnificence of the Rising Sun Array. Not only did you turn a blind eye on it, you even killed my envoy and destroyed my badge. You have insulted my school to such an extent that I was forced to invite you here in such a way. Why do you choose to be humiliated instead of being respected as a guest?”

Huala! Huala! Huala!

The five thick chains shook violently for a while. Zhao Changlie, whose hair was messy and whose face was covered in blood, finally gathered enough strength to spit out. He shouted, “Elder Scorching Sun, you are the most shameless scoundrel in the world. Under the pretext of sending the Proud Sun Badge, you were merely trying to figure out where I was so that you could launch a clandestine ambush! Even if you do crush the Heaven Battering Army and split me apart, do you think you are a man worthy of respect?”

“Hehe…” The fiery fiend sneered and waved its six arms. “You have seen the dominance of the Angry Fire Army and the Red Sun Sect with your own eyes. Crushing the Heaven Battering Army is as easy as crushing a bunch of ants! Had I not been sincerely inviting the famous ‘Heaven Sweeping King’ to attend the ceremony, and had you not been fleeing here and there like a wild rat, would I have been forced to resort to such a method?

“Today is a great day for the Angry Fire Army and the Red Sun Sect. I do not intend to cause much death today. So, let me ask you one last time. ‘Heaven Sweeping King’ Zhao Changlie, are you going to surrender or not?”

Chapter 1889 - I Will Just Watch You Quietly…

“Great day? Hahaha!” ‘Heaven Sweeping King’ Zhao Changlie burst into laughter. “You people who are as greedy as dogs and as stupid as swine do not know that death is knocking your door! You may be having your day today, but when my brother Qi Changsheng and the other nine experts return from the deities’ realm, each and every one of you will be slain. None of you are going to get away!”

Elder Scorching Sun had already foreseen his ‘obstinateness’ and therefore was not infuriated at all. He simply smiled and casually said, “You are still daydreaming. Do you really think that anybody is going to return from the deities’ realm?

“Let me tell you the truth and offer a word of insight to all fellow Cultivators here. I am not some ignorant fool who can be tricked easily. Having been training in the primeval relic for more than a hundred years, I do know a lot of ancient anecdotes.

“Deities’ realm? There is no such thing. It is a boundless black ocean that surrounds the Ancient Sages Sector. The thickness of the black ocean is beyond any imagination! Even the unparalleled experts in the Nascent Soul Stage, the Divinity Transformation Stage, or even higher levels would not be able to fly out of it after a ten-thousand-year journey!

“From the ancient times to this day, almost all the experts who flew out of the Ancient Sages Sector to search for the deities’ realm were killed in the black ocean outside miserably. Those who were lucky enough to run back lost all their Cultivation and most of their life, too!

“Hehehe. By my estimation, the so-called ‘search for the deities’ realm’ and ‘Divine Wrath Order’ was a scheme that you people came up with. The old top ten experts died with each other in the depths of the Land of Eternal Night. Even the forces behind them suffered great losses. You were unable to resist the challenges of the heroes of the world. That’s why you thought of the trick to buy yourselves more time.

“Even if they were not dead but truly went out to ‘search for the deities’ realm’ on an enormous flying boat, they would either be killed halfway or return devastated.

“Right now, I have the legacies from the ‘Saint Fire Dynasty’, a million soldiers and experts, and the support of countless fellow Cultivators in the three thousand Sectors in the world. Even if they do come back, how do they expect to compete with me? They will have to kneel before me!

“Zhao Changlie, a wise man knows when to submit to fate. Stop daydreaming and just obey me. Surrender the wealth and weapons that the Heaven Battering Army has looted for years!”

“Damn you!” Zhao Changlie cursed. “You can jump up and down however you want today, but your happy life won’t last. Very soon, my brother and the nine experts will return from the deities’ realm. By then, you will die a death ten times more miserable than how I am killed today!”

“Good, good, good!” The fiery fiend narrowed its eyes, and the three big faces were all brimming with graveness as it gnashed its teeth. “The Rising Sun Array has only recently been built and is in need of the blood of a Nascent Soul

Stage Cultivator for sacrifice. Since you are too pigheaded to change, why don’t I grant your wish? Let me see how the Three Saints, the Four Rapscallions, Master Spiritual Vulture, or the others can make me die ten times more miserably than you do after you are split apart and burnt to ash and your soul is sealed in the magma to be boiled in all eternality!”

Huala!

The five flying boats moved in different directions, and the five chains were immediately straightened. Cracking sounds were immediately echoing from Zhao Changlie’s flesh and bones. He was roaring nonstop in excruciating pain.

Elder Scorching Sun meant to establish his authority with Zhao Changlie and therefore was not in a hurry to kill the man. He ordered the flying boasts to move as slowly as possible so that he would have more time to torture the obstinate prisoner.

Right then, dozens of roars echoed like spring thunder at the same time from the crowd in the valley.

“Die now, old monster!”

“Justice is going to be served today, old monster!”

“Old fart, today is the day of your death!”

“Grand Mystery Sect, Purple Pole Sword Sect, Wind Thunder Valley… The six major sects swear to kill the monster!”

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Hundreds of streaks of auras of sword rose up to the altar of the Red Sun Sect at the end of the valley.

“Assassins!”

“The experts from the six major sects are bold enough to assassinate Elder Scorching Sun!”

The whole valley was thrown into chaos in that moment. All the Cultivators drew their blades, activated their magical equipment, and triggered their spiritual shields. But since the place was already jampacked, it was inevitable that everybody’s weapons and magical equipment crashed into each other. Their spiritual shields even disrupted each other, unleashing tremendous brightness and waves that turned into a mess.

The fiery fiend in the sky was merely an image that Elder Scorching Sun projected through the ‘Rising Sun Array’, not his real body.

The assassins from the six major sects naturally would not attack the image. They had long aimed at the real Elder Scorching Sun, who was boosting the array on the altar.

‘Green Willow’ Fang Chengzhi was dwelling in the unparalleled dominance of Elder Scorching Sun and thought that he was about to appreciate the thrilling view where the legendary ‘Heaven Sweeping King’ Zhao Changlie was split apart. It had never occurred to him that he would run into a public assassination that was even more thrilling.

Soaked in hot sweat, he stood on his toes and craned his neck, trying his best to look at the front of the crowd.

It was a shame that the Green Cloud Sword Sect was really too far behind. As far as his eyes could reach, there was nothing but dense heads and the halos of spiritual energy caused by the surging spiritual shields. Colorful mist had been raised above everyone’s head, making it impossible to see what was going on at the front.

He was of a mind to fly into the air to watch, only to be grabbed by his father and pressed to the ground before he even jumped out.

Before the young Fang realized what was happening, hundreds of flames already soared and blew down the Cultivators who had ascended just now into the crowd as fast as lightning. All the victims crashed hard and grimaced in humiliation.

In the middle of the roaring fire, the Cultivators of the Red Sun Sect, with red clouds below their feet and fiery sabers in their hands, showed up. Their nonchalant eyes and faces and their brutal attacks just now stopped everyone from moving recklessly.

Fang Chengzhi could not have felt more fortunate.

It was not a big deal to suffer some minor wounds, but if he had been smacked in public like the few unlucky fellows did just now, he would have been too ashamed to meet any of his friends in the future.

He was greatly amazed. On one hand, he was shocked by the magnificence of the Red Sun Sect, whose common disciples boasted such devastating strength. On the other hand, he was impatient to find out if the assassins were engaged in a fierce battle with Elder Scorching Sun.

He stood up higher and higher and craned his neck more and more, only to see nothing at all. He could only feel giant waves of fire flooding above his head, turning all the Cultivators into small fish living in an ocean of fire.

Thankfully, the riot caused by the assassins died down as quickly as it took place. Before Fang Chengzhi's neck was tired, the chaos in the field had already been pacified. Above the altar in front of the hundred thousand Cultivators, almost a hundred translucent fireballs rose up slowly, each caging an assassin.

All the assassins were burnt by fire and penetrated by electric arcs, suffering excruciating pain.

Dumbfounded, Fang Chengzhi was lost for words for a long time. He did not expect that Elder Scorching Sun's Cultivation would be so high that he could not only capture hundreds of assassins alive in the blink of an eye but also cage them in the weird barriers for public humiliation.

It was definitely dozens of times more difficult than killing the hundreds of assassins directly.

The spectators whispered to each other. Soon, someone recognized the identity of the assassins.

"Grand Mystery Sect, Purple Pole Sword Sect, Wind Thunder Valley, Gold Armor Sect, Monster Taming Pavilion, Flying Spirit Island… They are all the disciples of the six major sects!"

"They are also the most distinguished experts in the younger generation. It seems that they have been suffocated for too long under the restriction of the 'Divine Wrath Order'!"

"It's a shame that their opponent this time was Elder Scorching Sun. They did not know what they were doing at all!"

“Have any fellow Cultivators here seen how exactly Elder Scorching Sun attacked? It happened so fast just now that I did not capture anything before the young people were captured alive!”

“Although they all belong to the younger generation, many of them are experts at the peak of the Core Formation Stage. Yet, they could not even survive three rounds under Elder’s attack. Elder’s Cultivation is truly immeasurable!”

Fang Chengzhi was awed, too. At this moment, he finally saw what the assassins looked like. He had even met some of the young experts from the six major sects before, who had been idols for the offspring of the offshoots of the main sect. It had never occurred to him that they would be so humiliated one day.

Right then, Fang Chengzhi suddenly heard a ‘beep’ not far away from his head.

The sound was quite weird. Fang Chengzhi had never heard any blade or magical equipment that could make a similar sound.

The next second, ripples spread out in the air, and an item the size of a pearl popped up out of nowhere.

There was no telling whether it had shown up because of the interference of the fiery spiritual energy or because the time had come and there was no need to hide anymore.

Fang Chengzhi was greatly fascinated. He unleashed a stream of spiritual energy in secret and snatched the ball.

It was a piece of magical equipment that looked like an eyeball.

But it was much more delicate than anything Fang Chengzhi had seen.

Beep, beep! Beep, beep, beep, beep!

A sound echoed from deep inside the metal eye. The ‘pupil’ of dozens of rings enlarged and shrank, as if the focus were moved from far away to his face.

Fang Chengzhi trembled in his heart and somehow felt that the magical equipment was weird.

However, this place was Elder Scorching Sun’s territory, and such a fiery fiend was covering them from the sky. There did not seem to be anything that he should fear.

Fang Chengzhi swallowed and examined the weird magical equipment for a long time, only to discover two lines of extremely tiny words carved on the back of the ‘eye’.

The two lines were not only a hundred times smaller than millet and had a lot of missing strokes. They were written in a weird style, too. Fang Chengzhi read and guessed for a long time before he finally figured out what they meant.

“Phoenix 19 Super Remote Multipurpose Stealth Crystal Camera.

“Produced by the Glorious Sunlight Group for the garrison of the Ancient Sages Special District of the Star Glory Federation.”

Beep, beep!

While Fang Chengzhi and the crystal camera looked at each other, more identical crystal cameras revealed themselves and floated above everyone’s head blatantly.

It was almost as if they had been floating there for a long time, observing the magnificent, unparalleled Elder Scorching Sun on the altar.

Chapter 1890 - Let’s Talk Nicely

As the crystal cameras revealed themselves, the crowd at the rear of the valley began to riot again.

However, the modern magical equipment that was well-sealed and did not leak much spiritual energy lacked the brilliance and splendor of the ancient magical equipment. Therefore, most of the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector were merely curious but not panicked.

In that moment, the riot had not reached the front of the crowd yet.

The fiery fiend in the sky did not notice the ‘insignificant’ crystal cameras, either, but simply chuckled at the hundreds of assassins. “You people of the six major sects don’t appreciate your lives at all! I have tolerated a lot of your provocation. Yet, you did not stop but came to stir trouble in the Angry Fire Mountain. Do you really that I will not dare to kill you because the six major sects are behind you?”

While talking, the three big faces suddenly turned extremely hideous. They craned the necks at the same time and spurted out three streams of overwhelming hot waves to the sky, setting the whole sky on fire.

The sky was burnt deep red, then purple, and then black. The sun, the moon, the stars, and the lightning were all eclipsed by Elder Scorching Sun’s dominance!

The Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector had never seen such a splendid view before. Unable to control the fear and admiration in their heart anymore, they all began to shout.

Even the experts of the youngest generation from the six major sects were dumbfounded inside the barriers, finding it hard to believe their eyes.

They were even secretly regretting their decision. Such an Elder Scorching Sun was an out-and-out reincarnation of a fiend that could not be defeated by the mortals such as them. How were they bold enough to assassinate such an unparalleled expert?

“Haha. Hahaha. Now that you have pushed me to this point, do I still have any concerns at all?”

The six arms of the fiery fiend were extended to the limits, as if it was trying to grasp the entire world into its hands. Elder Scorching Sun declared thunderously, “Crush the Grand Mystery Sect first, then the Purple Pole Sword Sect. All six major sects will be crushed before the capital city of the Great Qian Dynasty is taken. If the Dark Cloud Prairies dare to refuse my decree, no grass will ever grow out of the place after the thudding of a million iron hooves!

“There are almost no places where the sun cannot reach as it rises and sets, but I will make the name of ‘Scorching Sun’ hover in the sky forever and illuminate every blade of grass and every rock of the Ancient Sages Sector!”

The splendid view completely shattered the last defense line in the heart of the last few Cultivators.

There was no telling who started it, but very soon, all the Cultivators were kneeling on the ground, some shaking, some zealous, some blushing, and some frightened. But all of them roared crazily at the same time.

“Crush the Grand Mystery Sect first, and then the Purple Pole Sword Sect!”

“Obliterate the six major sects and take the capital city of the Great Qian Dynasty!”

“If the Dark Cloud Prairies dare to refuse Elder’s decree, no grass will ever grow out of the place!”

“Elder Scorching Sun is invincible!”

“Elder Scorching Sun will sweep across the world!”

“Elder Scorching Sun will live for all eternality!”

On the altar at the highest place of the Red Sun Sect, a high-level Cultivator, who was wearing a crimson robe, a cloud-shaped crown, with a pair of glowing eyes that were filled with explosive strength, stood three meters in the sky away from the altar.

His hands were behind his back, and his face was quite casual, not revealing any emotion. But deep inside his glittering eyes, the deepest ecstasy was hidden.

He was Elder Scorching Sun, the best expert of the Ancient Sages Sector, invincible!

Hearing the praise and roars from the hundreds of disciples on the pavilions, floating mountains, and flying boats and the more than hundred thousand Cultivators, Elder Scorching Sun could not have felt more gratified and ambitious.

In a trance, mottled pictures flashed before his eyes.

The struggles and hard work a hundred years ago, the hard training in the underground relic for a hundred years when he broke the most shocking barriers, and finally today, he ended his seclusion and was about to establish an enterprise that would last ten thousand years!

Finally, he had made it to this step.

All the effort had been rewarded in the most fruitful way. He was indeed the lucky guy favored by fate. The whole world would be his.

Elder Scorching Sun waved his hands. “Fine. We will give sacrificial offerings to the flags with Zhao Changlie and the hundred assassins here. Then, all the fellow Cultivators will follow my flag of angry fire and sweep across the entire world!”

His enormous hand was raised high in the sky. As long as he closed his hand, Zhao Changlie and the hundred assassins from the six major sects would be killed immediately.

At the most critical moment, Elder Scorching Sun’s face suddenly turned extremely weird. Thousands of needles seemed to have stabbed into his fingers, making it impossible to clench them into a fist.

His eyes that were burning like magma darting at beyond the sky brutally, Elder Scorching Sun was never as solemn and infuriated before.

Some of the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector sensed the weird waves, too, and raised their heads to check.

Finally, somebody lost their calmness and shouted, “Look, Elder’s image is—”

In midair, the overwhelming fiendish image of Elder Scorching Sun was releasing ripples. Because of the affection of the ripples, the three solemn and ambitious faces were twisted and stretched into the most ridiculous appearance.

Blown by the wind, the vivid fiery fiend turned into unsubstantial mist and even seemed to vanish.

The Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector who had been dwelling in Elder Scorching Sun’s invincibility a moment ago all felt as if they were soaked in sweat after seeing the uncanny change. They could not have been more shocked.

“How—How is it possible?”

“Elder Scorching Sun’s invincible image has been broken?”

“Who is so bold as to mess around with him? Even the experts of the six major sects will be killed if they come together!”

“Hehe!” Elder Scorching Sun snorted. He bit his tongue and smeared the blood on his palm, performing a gesture quickly to stabilize the fiery fiend, while he declared in fury, “Who is it that is bold enough to mess around in Angry Fire Mountain? Are you too timid to show yourself?”

The voice soared into the sky like an overwhelming tsunami and disappeared deep inside the clouds. The Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector felt that their souls were shaken again and could not help but be grasped by the infinite awe for Elder Scorching Sun.

“Hello. Can you hear me?”

Above the burning clouds, a rather weird voice came over. Although it was not as intimidating as Elder Scorching Sun’s, it was also clearly audible to every Cultivator present.

However, the tone of the voice was rather weird, and everyone felt that it was quite unnatural as they heard it more. “Greetings, Elder Scorching Sun. Greetings, fellow Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector. Please don’t be nervous. I mean you no harm and do not intend to raise an unnecessary war at all.

“Allow me to introduce myself first. My name is Li Yao. You’ve probably never heard the name before. In that case, I used another name when I travelled in the Ancient Sages Sector a few years ago, which was ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’…”

Master Spiritual Vulture!

After hearing that, the Cultivators in the valley fell into complete chaos.

Master Spiritual Vulture, one of the ten experts of the Ancient Sages Sector who went to visit the deities’ realm’, had returned at such a critical moment!

Was it true or false? It was too unbelievable!

Everybody widened their eyes and pricked their ears while improving their spiritual shield to the maximum and preparing all their magical equipment, waiting for the development of the situation.

Elder Scorching Sun was slightly dazed. Then he laughed. “Is the legendary Master Spiritual Vulture such a stealthy coward?”

“Not exactly. It is mainly because the starships that have flown to the Ancient Sages Sector are all only adapted to the zero-gravity environment in the vacuum,” the voice from the sky explained patiently. “To enter the high-gravity environment within the atmosphere, we have to make a lot of preparations to change the mode. All in all, it is very complicated. So, if you fellow Cultivators can wait patiently for a while, a hundred or so starships will arrive in no time.”

“Nonsense!” Elder Scorching Sun turned gloomy and demanded, “I do not care whether you are impersonating anyone with evil arts or you are really Master Spiritual Vulture. Even if you are, so what?

“Master Spiritual Vulture, I’ve heard your name before and know that you have similar backgrounds to mine. We both have legacies from ancient dynasties. I’ve longed to compete with you!

“Come on. If you are the real Master Spiritual Vulture, just reveal yourself and have an open fight with me. Let all the heroes in the world be witnesses to see which is better, the legacies of the ‘Great Zhou Dynasty’ or the legacies of the ‘Saint Fire Dynasty’!”

“Well, it is rather hard to explain, but I’m actually not the real ‘Master Spiritual Vulture’, nor do I have any legacies from the ‘Great Zhou Dynasty’. All in all, would you please not be so hasty? Let’s just talk nicely. Is there anything that cannot be worked out through peaceful communication?”

The voice in the clouds sounded rather troubled. “You may not know this, fellow Cultivators, but I am in fact a pacifist who does not like fighting. So, I’m hoping to settle these archaic problems including the Angry Fire Army, the Red Sun Sect, and Elder Scorching Sun in a peaceful way.

“Therefore, please keep calm and hear me out quietly, Elder Scorching Sun, and let’s communicate with each other well. Otherwise, there will be consequences too dire for you to bear. I’m not lying.”

“…” Elder Scorching Sun.

“…” The Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector.

“…” The experts of the Angry Fire Army and the Red Sun Sect.

Everybody looked at each other in bewilderment. They looked at the sky as if it were a drunk moron who had lost his mind.

The voice from the sky coughed and went on. “First of all, I’d like to tell you a piece of exciting good news. In the July of the fourth year of Emperor Phoenix of the Great Qian Dynasty’s reign, or in September of year 102 of the calendar of the New Federation, at the warm invitation of the Supreme Parliament of the Star Glory Federation, after the votes of ‘Emperor Phoenix’ Zhu Zongyou, ‘Dark Cloud King’ Han Baling, Leader Qi Zhongdao of the six major sects, and other high-level representatives of the Ancient Sages Sector, the Ancient Sages Sector officially joined the Star Glory Federation and became a glorious and sacred member of the Star Glory Federation as a ‘special district’.

“From this day forth, the history of the Ancient Sages Sector has moved on to a new chapter. The world now has a new future and has crossed to become a universal civilization from a lonely planetary civilization. This is indeed a rebirth and a new life!”

Chapter 1891 - You Really Are Doomed

Chapter 1892 - Okay, I’m Coming

“Hiss!”

After hearing that, everybody in the valley gasped hard. It had never occurred to them that the voice that sounded helpless and casual would make such a tough declaration after giving in so many times.

Even if all the deities and devils in the world come to beg me to spare you, you will not be saved.

The voice echoed inside the valley like waves each higher than the last. All the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector’s faces were pale, and their souls were shaking violently. They almost vomited their internal organs out.

They were flabbergasted, but Elder Scorching Sun was so exasperated that he was almost stabbing a hole in the sky!

“Ah! Ah! Ah! How dare you!”

The altar below Elder Scorching Sun’s feet fell apart abruptly. Centered at the altar, dozens of interconnected cracks that looked like a spider web appeared on the ground and extended outwardly.

From the cracks, red light resembling magma spurted out, further accentuating the horrendousness of his body. None of the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector were able to look at him directly.

Elder Scorching Sun waved his hands. “Place the array!”

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

The hundreds of disciples of the Red Sun Sect floating above the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector accelerated all of a sudden. The red clouds below their feet expanded almost five times, enshrouding them in a glow and turning them into giants three to four meters tall.

The giants rushed into the air, leaving crimson exhaust flames in midair that looked like the strokes of enormous rune arrays. After all the exhaust flames were connected, hundreds of overwhelming runes had been composed!

The ancient runes from the Saint Fire Dynasty and the even more primeval battlefields occupied the entire sky. They seemed to have awakened the mysterious force sealed between the sky and the earth and established a translucent spiritual shield around the whole of Angry Fire Mountain, covering the Angry Fire Army, the Red Sun Sect, Elder Scorching Sun, and the hundred thousand Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector.

It was not just a defensive array. A lot of ancient runes were flashing on the array, with violent auras vaguely spreading out, like dragons and tigers that could lunge out and hurt the enemy anytime.

“Hahaha! This is the first variation of the ‘Rising Sun Array’, the ‘Soaring Flame Blood Transformation Array’!” Elder Scorching Sun’s hair and beard both turned red. He widened his eyes and shrieked, “No-fly zone? You are forbidding me from riding a flying sword in my own turf? You truly don’t know what you are talking about! Come on. My great array is already done. Whatever skills and techniques you have, just bring it on!”

Together with his shrieks, the fiery fiend in the sky went on a rampage, too. The six light balls that were as dazzling as the sun unleashed thousands of electric arcs that turned into six different blades, including one giant axe that could break a mountain, one long spear that pierced through the sky, and one sword that seemed to be chasing the moon. Surrounding the six arms of the giant that looked like dragons, the weapons made the giant look more intimidating than ever!

Huo!

The hearts of the Cultivators in the valley seemed to be on a swing. Hardly had they been distracted by the weird voice in the sky when they were seized by Elder Scorching Sun’s shocking aura again.

Despite all the boasting of the strange voice, awed by the ‘Soaring Flame Blood Transformation Array’ and the magnificent power of the fiery fiend, they still chose to take Elder Scorching Sun’s side firmly.

Chances were that the crazy lunatic in the sky was not Master Spiritual Vulture at all. Even if he was, so what? Could he have established such a magnificent array or released such a daunting image?

Hehe. Elder Scorching Sun’s little finger must have been thicker than Master Spiritual Vulture’s waist!

“The Rising Sun Array has countless changes. The first variation is already so powerful. It is truly the greatest array in the world!”

“The array is indeed powerful, but how can it compare to the invincibility of Elder Scorching Sun’s fiery fiend?”

“Elder’s techniques are unparalleled. Whatever scoundrel they are, as long as they are bold enough to show up, they will be blown to smithereens in the blink of an eye.”

“Take not a musket to kill a butterfly. They are just jesters humiliating themselves here. They do not deserve Elder attacking them personally. It will stain Elder’s honorable image. Come on. Regardless of who you are, if you want to make trouble on the Angry Fire Mountain, you must pass through me!”

“Wait a moment, Fellow Cultivator Gongsun. Everybody in the ‘Phantom Ocean Alliance’ has worshipped Elder Scorching Sun for a long time and decided to disband the ‘Phantom Ocean Alliance’ so that everybody could join Elder’s ‘Red Sun Sect’ and be better at Elder’s service! We didn’t expect that such crazy retards today would dishonor Elder’s name today. Such blasphemy must not be tolerated! Everyone in the ‘Phantom Ocean Alliance’ is simmering with anger! Let me see how impressive the so-called ‘Star Glory Federation’ is!”

“No, no, no. Let me, let me!”

“Come on. Xiahou Ba of the Essence Return Sect is here to defend the name of Elder Scorching Sun. ‘No-fly zone’? I am already in midair. What can you do about me?”

The ‘Soaring Flame Blood Transformation Array’ was covering them all, and the enormous fiery fiend was next to them, offering protection. It was definitely the safest moment for adulation and pledges of loyalty.

Therefore, a lot of Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector who intended to distinguish themselves before Elder Scorching Sun soared into the sky. They all activated their own magical equipment, which emanated colorful brilliance, while they rode the wind in demonstration.

Although they were not as organized and impressive as the disciples of the Red Sun Sect, they were certainly much more obstreperous and eye-catching. They were shouting at the top of their voices resolutely, as if they were the most loyal servants.

Seeing that those people were so quick to take the hint, Elder Scorching Sun put on a casual smile and did not stop them, simply allowing them to fly in midair and flatter him.

‘Green Willow’ Fang Chengzhi found it hard to restrain himself. The Green Cloud Sword Sect was rather famous for their sword-riding arts. His own ‘Willow Leaf Sword Art’ entailed a special movement technique, which allowed him to be as elegant and enjoyable as a willow Leaf dancing in the wind when he rode a flying sword.

He was of a mind to show himself off, not entirely to adulate Elder Scorching Sun. Today was the occasion where all the heroes of the world were gathered. If he distinguished himself in the sky and dwarfed the seniors who had been famous for a long time in terms of riding flying swords, would the title of ‘Green Willow’ spread from the Running River State to the entire world?

However, the moment his feet exerted strength, his thigh was pinched by someone so hard that he almost burst into tears. He could not help but cry out.

Thankfully, everybody was soaked in the zealous atmosphere. With all the rumbling thunder and raging airwaves in the sky, nobody noticed his scream or wretched appearance.

Fang Chengzhi looked at his father, full of confusion.

Leader Fang Shiyi of the Green Cloud Sword Sect was more solemn than ever. He even forgot to resort to the private talk technique but simply lowered his voice to speak to his son. “Don’t move. Wait a while longer, or I will smack you to the ground!”

Fang Chengzhi shrank his neck and clicked his tongue. Then, the voice came from the sky again.

It was rather strange that the soft, gentle, and warm voice was not affected at all no matter how Elder Scorching Sun roared and how many deafening explosions the ‘Rising Sun Array’ raised.

“Fellow Cultivator Scorching Sun, let’s be honest here. Your seemingly gigantic, three-headed, and six-armed image of fiend is just a sound and visual effect slightly better than a mirage. It is an illusion built because of the reflection, refraction, and diffraction of the rays of light in the air and the clouds. While it can trick Cultivators who are unaware of the truth, it does not boast any power at all, and it can be affected very easily.

“I am of a mind to draw a tortoise on each of the three heads of your fiery fiend, but considering that a lot of news reporters are livestreaming here, and all the videos may become historical files one day, such a childish act is not very appropriate.”

The voice in the cloud seemed to be even yawning before it continued.

“Also, your so-called ‘Soaring Flame Blood Transformation Array’ sounds impressive enough, but it is nothing more than an enormous spiritual shield that has been jumbled up.

If it was functioning at full efficiency, it would certainly be very powerful. However, both you and the ‘Saint Fire Dynasty’ do not have the first understanding about the primeval relics and are still in the phase of ‘monkeys playing with pistols’. You cannot bring out one percent of the array’s power at all.

“You have even spent a lot of time and effort wasting the one percent of the power on useless sound and visual effects. Sometimes, it really confuses me. You are not hotblooded adolescents anymore. Why do you attach so much importance to the impressiveness instead of actual performance?

“Forget it. It’s too late for a lecture right now. Our fleet is already in position. All the cannons and artilleries have locked onto all the flying objects in the sky of the ‘no-fly zone’. I will give you three seconds to exit the no-fly zone, or there will be dire consequences.

“Also, our magical equipment is different from yours. You cannot begin to imagine how powerful it is. So, please activate your spiritual shields to the maximum, fellow Cultivators on the ground. If you have any defensive magical equipment, hurry to activate it and cover your heads. There’s also the life-saving magical equipment that has been passed on in your family for hundreds of years and can only be used once. Stop hesitating. Now is the time to bring them out and cover yourselves in them.

“As for the members of the ‘Angry Fire Army’ and the ‘Red Sun Sect’, lay down your weapons, kneel on the ground, and raise your hands above your heads. We will try to spare your lives as much as possible. But if you insist on following Elder Scorching Sun in resisting us to the end, I’m afraid that we will have to say sorry—”

“Enough of the cr*p. B*stard, come on!”

Elder Scorching Sun’s eyes were fuming in fury when he interrupted the voice in the sky.

“Elder Scorching Sun is invincible! Elder Scorching Sun will sweep across the world and establish an enterprise that will last forever!” the members of the Angry Fire Army and the Red Sun Sect shouted at the same time.

“We are the loyal servants of Elder Scorching Sun. Whoever you are and whatever you are, come at us first if you want to touch the Angry Fire Mountain!” hundreds of Cultivators of other sects chanted in the sky with their feigned sense of justice.

“Come on! Come on! Come on!” The hundred thousand Cultivators in the entire valley were flapping the flags and laughing at the same time.

There was a brief silence in the clouds, which was broken by a casual voice.

“Okay, I’m coming.”

Chapter 1893 - Let Me Teach You a Lesson!

The next moment, the whole world turned black and white.

It was not because the colors between the sky and the earth really changed, but because tens of thousands of flashing rays pierced through the sky and rained down, penetrating the earth like countless thick needles!

The electric arcs, flames of spiritual energy, fiery clouds, and glowing runes unleashed by Elder Scorching Sun were already dazzling enough, making it difficult for people to look at them directly. But they were all eclipsed by the tens of thousands of flashing rays, as if all their brightness had been absorbed. They became more lackluster than ever!

Including Fang Chengzhi, the eyes of all the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector were drowned by the ocean of light made of tens of thousands of light beams.

They could only see that the light left hundreds of holes on the fiery fiend easily before darting into the Soaring Flame Blood Transformation Array without meeting any hindrance. The hundreds of ancient runes that made up the array were as vulnerable as thin ice and collapsed at the first touch!

After that, their eyes were occupied by blankness, and they could not see a thing.

It was because the brightness of the light far exceeded the limits of their retina. All the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector were caught in a brief blindness.

Before Fang Chengzhi realized what was going on, he had already been snatched by his father. Having no time to consider their honorable identities, the two of them simply fell on one of their knees to make themselves shorter than other people.

“Disciples of the Green Cloud Sword Sect, watch out!” Leader Fang roared, activating all the flying swords in the sword box and triggering his spiritual shield to the maximum.

Fang Chengzhi, on the other hand, had a face as pale as paper. He had forgotten all his remarkable movement techniques and could only tremble in fear.

He heard a storm of clinks echoing in the sky, as if countless shooting stars were smashing into their spiritual shields. Every collision felt like thunder bursting out in his chest. His head was dizzy, and his throat was stuffed. He could not help but feel that he was about to vomit blood.

However, vomiting blood was certainly not the worst outcome. Fang Chengzhi could hear moans and screams from all directions. Noises of bones being broken and magical equipment falling apart were reverberating everywhere. Even the smell of hot, burnt flesh was finding its way into his nose, which was quite disgusting for him.

Clink!

Something fell before him softly.

Fang Chengzhi focused his spiritual energy on his eyes and rubbed them hard, finally regaining some of his sight, however faint. He absorbed the item into his palm and observed it carefully before his eyes, only to discover that it was the tip of a sword that had been twisted into a spiral.

Judging from the shape of the edge and the remaining runes on it, it was the ‘Green Lotus Sword’, his father’s personal sword that he had used for more than ten years.

“Well…”

The personal sword of the leader of the Green Cloud Sword Sect had been reduced to such a condition in the blink of an eye after it was activated?

Fang Chengzhi was too shocked and scared to raise his head. He could not even begin to imagine how devastating the view in the sky must be at that moment.

Pada!

Something else fell to the ground right next to him. The hot, sticky fluid it raised almost kissed his face. He touched it casually, only to discover that it was half a burnt arm.

Fang Chengzhi could not hold on any longer and began to vomit while clutching his stomach.

The black-and-white world of terrors disappeared as quickly as it appeared. Fang Chengzhi and the rest of them felt that a whole year had passed, while in fact, all the destructive rays vanished after less than three seconds.

But it took more than half a minute for their visuals to come back so that they could see the world around them that had been drastically changed.

The very first thought that Fang Chengzhi had was that an enormous earthquake must have taken place just now, which frightened everyone and covered all of them in dust and ash.

They had all been graceful Cultivators, armored warriors, and brawny men before. But right now, their clothes were all disheveled, their armor broken, and their spiritual energy dim. Whatever remained of their magical equipment was crawling into their arms as if they were hens that had been horrified.

Blood could be found on a lot of people’s bodies and faces. There was no telling whether it was their own or from somebody else. Their expressions were no difference than those of zombies. All the faces were numb and frozen to the moment of their devastation. They were unable to utter a single syllable.

In the air that had been announced as a ‘no-fly zone’…

When Fang Chengzhi finally summoned enough courage to raise his head inch by inch, he could not help but feel his heart was palpitating.

The image of the fiery fiend was riddled with holes and looked like a beehive. The runes of the great array were all falling apart, on the verge of destruction, and fading away in the wind. The disciples of the Red Sun Sect who established the ‘Soaring Flame Blood Transformation Array’ and the hundreds of Cultivators from other sects who flew to the sky to demonstrate showing little respect for the Star Glory Federation while counting on the magnificence of the array were even more greatly wounded.

Some of them were riddled with holes and bleeding hard exactly like the fiery fiend, with dozens of gaps even through their heads. Some of them had a hole the size of a basin running through their abdomen, and all their internal organs inside were gone. The less fortunate ones had only a cluster of bloody, obscure meat left, which was still shivering in midair under the attraction of a certain uncanny force. Some had even been entirely obliterated. The only traces that could prove their existence in the past were the few melted pieces of flying swords and armor that were still smoking in midair!

To this moment, a lot of the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector were still wearing the smile of mockery that they had in the beginning even though they had already been killed. Their incomplete bodies did not have a soul to help them change their view on the Star Glory Federation.

DUM! DUM! DUM! DUM!

The thousand corpses fell on the people in the valley overwhelmingly in a storm of blood.Read more chapter on vipnovel

Five flying boats had been entirely destroyed, too. Their debris crashed near the gate of the Red Sun Sect, raising dust dozens of meters high that spread out in all directions.

“…”

Everybody was flabbergasted by the nightmarish picture.

But right in the ‘no-fly zone’, some things were still ascending slowly.

Fang Chengzhi observed carefully, only to discover that they were the hundred young assassins from the six major sects and ‘Heaven Sweeping King’ Zhao Changlie, who had been captured earlier for public humiliation!

Fang Chengzhi’s mind was certainly quick enough for him to earn his reputation in the Green Cloud Sword Sect and in the circle of Cultivators. Thinking quickly, he somehow had an idea.

The voice from the clouds, the mysterious Cultivator who claimed to be ‘Li Yao’, might not be as simple and casual as he sounded.

He intentionally talked to Elder Scorching Sun unreasonably in order to ease Elder Scorching Sun’s wariness and raise his fury so that Elder Scorching Sun would focus the full attention on him and loosen the control over the ‘hostages’.

By setting up a ‘no-fly zone’, he was hoping to rescue the hostages. Killing the rogues to establish his authority was only a secondary purpose!

As it turned out, Elder Scorching Sun was certainly also smart enough to figure out what Fang Chengzhi had. Right when the ideas popped into his head, a deafening roar already burst out from the altar in the front. Elder Scorching Sun rose into the sky under the support of almost ten streams of magma and lunged at the many hostages!

With his Cultivation close to the Divinity Transformation Stage, it was more than simple to kill the hostages who were inferior to ordinary people under the suppression of the barriers.

However, the moment he rose into the sky, all the hostages began to ascend at a much higher speed, as if they had been pulled hard by invisible ropes.

At the same time, thunder rumbled in the sky. Giant flying swords with dazzling exhaust flames behind them showed up out of nowhere and pierced Elder Scorching Sun from all directions.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

The moment the weird flying swords touched Elder Scorching Sun’s spiritual shield, they exploded abruptly into many small, dazzling suns. Despite the unparalleled Cultivation of Elder Scorching Sun, he was still smashed into the gate of his own sect by the dozens of small suns from midair. The enormous gate was entirely ruined, and even the houses and pavilions around suffered collateral damage.

Together with the damage caused by the crash of the five flying boats previously, almost half of the Red Sun Sect was gone now.

“Fellow Cultivator Scorching Sun, you must regret not listening to my kind suggestion and surrendering nicely. But regret is useless right now.”

To this moment, the people in the valley still did not see the real face of the mysterious enemy. They could only hear the same casual voice coming from the clouds. “Right now, there is only one way that you can save your sorry life, which is to submit the ‘Cloud Qin Gold Statue’ that is in your hands in one piece. If you do that, I will only deprive you of your Cultivation, and you will live in prison for no more than a hundred years. How does that sound?”

“Ahhh! Ahhh! Ahhh!”

How could Elder Scorching Sun, the best expert of the Ancient Sages Sector who had broken out of seclusion with the heritage of the ‘Saint Fire Dynasty’ after a hundred years of hard training, bear being insulted in front of more than a hundred thousand Cultivators and his own disciples like that?

In crazy roars, more than ten furious dragons of magma dashed out around his body again and interweaved into a crimson Colossus more than thirty meters tall that seemed to be entirely made of magma!

The Colossus only had its right arm left, and cracks covered its body. But under the support of Elder Scorching Sun's soul, it still unleashed overwhelming fiery auras that enshrouded the entire valley in redness.

"This—This is the legendary Cloud Qin Gold Statue!"

"However tough the mysterious Cultivator who claimed to be 'Master Spiritual Vulture' is, he can't defeat a Cloud Qin Gold Statue, can he?"

"That is a primeval treasure that can help anyone claim the world!"

A lot of the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector who were still shocked gained some confidence in Elder Scorching Sun again after witnessing the magnificence of the Cloud Qin Gold Statue.

However, even the most pious soldiers of the Angry Fire Army and disciples of the Red Sun Sect were not as confident as before.

"After all this, you are still scared of the might of my Gold Statue." Elder Scorching Sun's eyes were bloodshot, like a gambler who had wagered everything. "Then, let me teach you a lesson with my 'Thunderous Fire'!"

Hiu!

The Colossus turned into a red pillar of smoke as it darted into the clouds!

Chapter 1894 - This Is Destiny's Son!

Furious clouds were rolling in the sky. An enormous hole was left behind when the one-armed Gold Statue broke through the clouds. Everyone was almost able to see the profound, boundless starry sky and the torrents of light made of exhaust flames a hundred times more brilliant than the stars through the dark hold.

However, before the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector figured out what they were exactly, the hole had already been blocked again by the moving clouds.

They were anticipating an extraordinary battle where Elder Scorching Sun went on a rampage to crush the uncanny and powerful 'Star Glory Federation' and 'Li Yao', but after a long wait with their eyes bulged and their ears pricked, the only thing that they could see was the fiery clouds that were surging violently like an ocean in the sky.

Elder Scorching Sun seemed to have vanished in the sky. Not only was the magnificent shadow of the Cloud Qin Gold Statue no longer visible, even his voice could not be heard anymore.

“What's going on? Is there something wrong beyond the sky?”

“Will anything happen to Elder?”

“He—He has a Cloud Qin Gold Statue under his control. He can't fail, can he?”

The white-haired elders looked at each other in bewilderment. The clever leaders of sects whispered to each other. The sophisticated advisors of the sects were gulping, and they were as panicked as the young people like ‘Green Willow’ Fang Chengzhi.

The valley was filled with hums. It did not sound like more than a hundred thousand influential men had gathered there, but more like more than a hundred thousand flies and mosquitoes were caged in the place.

Suddenly, somebody pointed at the sky and exclaimed, “Look. Something is coming down!”

The item was falling extremely fast while releasing dazzling brilliance. It smashed into the valley precisely almost like a shooting star.

Greatly shocked, the people in the valley hurried to disperse, but remembering the terrible ‘no-fly zone’, they did not dare ride their flying swords and were frightened even when they jumped higher than usual. They could only shove each other with all their strength. For a moment, almost everybody was stumbling and falling.

Boom!

The thing crashed heavily, creating a colossal crater at the edge of the valley and raising an overwhelming blast. About a hundred Cultivators were thrown back by the blast because they failed to dodge in time. Their bones were broken, their internal organs relocated, and they vomited blood hard.

Having no time to check the condition of the injured, people in the valley looked at the item that had just crashed. They were confused at first, but after they finally recognized what it was, they were so shocked that they could barely stand on their feet!

It was the right leg of a Cloud Qin Gold Statue!

Judging from the shape, the stripes, and the runes carved on it, it was a leg of the ‘Thunderous Fire’, the one-armed Gold Statue with which Elder Scorching Sun was going to fight for control of the world!

Just several moments after Elder Scorching Sun charged into the sky, the right leg of his Cloud Qin Gold Statue had been broken from the knee and thrown down!

While everybody was dumbfounded and tried to calm themselves down, another two ‘shooting stars’ crashed down from the sky. One of them hit a floating mountain precisely and blew half of it into smithereens, sending the broken rocks toward the heads of the people in the valley like a storm. The other bombarded the Red Sun Temple, the most splendid building in the Red Sun Sect, and penetrated straight through the roof. After an ear-splitting explosion, the Red Sun Temple, where countless secret treasures from the Saint Fire Dynasty were enshrined, was blown to the ground!

After all the smoke dispersed, everybody was even more horrified. The first ‘shooting star’ was the one arm that the Cloud Qin Gold Statue had, and the second ‘shooting star’ was the head of the Cloud Qin Gold Statue!

The awe-inspiring enormous face made of fiery stripes was twisted. It could not have looked more ridiculous and painful.

Looking at the expression, nobody was willing to imagine what kind of pain Elder Scorching Sun must be in.

It was almost equivalent to the torture that Elder Scorching Sun was going to perform on ‘Heaven Sweeping King’ Zhao Changlie, where the arms, the legs, and the head would directly be torn apart from the torso. It was truly miserable!

Roars finally echoed from the clouds, but they were entirely different from the previously gentle, submissive voice and shocked the hearts of the almost million people around Angry Fire Mountain like the most violent thunder.

“Elder Scorching Sun, you disregarded the ‘Deity Slaying Order’ that we issued first by recruiting soldiers and expanding your territory on a large scale. You attacked the sects and forces that stayed in their own territory for no good reason, casting the entire Ancient Sages Sector into chaos!

“Just now, you further abandoned the last opportunity I gave you and considered my genuine kindness as bullsh*t!

“Do you have any idea how precious a Colossus is? Do you know how much time and how many resources it will take to repair such a Colossus that has been blown up by me personally?

“You don’t know the first thing about it, yet you were bold enough to swagger around in front of Vulture Li Yao. Let me tell you, even a merciful pacifist such as myself has boundaries. You can go to hell now!”

Hiu!

Accompanied by the roar of the ‘pacifist’, the fourth shooting star tore apart the sky!

Not only was the burning light ten times more glamorous than the previous three shooting stars, hundreds of ripples that looked like petals spread out in the blink of an eye, too. Even its speed was much higher than before.

Those in the valley all felt as if the crags on the two sides of the valley had collapsed or that the world had been overturned and they were all buried.

The airwaves and the dust rushed above their head like a river and did not stop until almost five minutes later. They finally looked at the end of the valley, not entirely recovered from their shock, only to discover that someone was floating in midair.

It was Elder Scorching Sun, who had been beaten from the sky into the ground and torn out of the Cloud Qin Gold Statue.

Elder Scorching Sun did not look half as awesome as a few minutes prior. His hair was messy, his clothes were ragged, his face was swollen, his limbs were twisted, and a piece of weird magical equipment that looked like a crimson crystal was stabbed between his eyebrows.

His twisted limbs seemed to have been bound by invisible shackles, and his spiritual root had been completely wrecked by the crimson crystal. The massive spiritual energy of the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage was all flooding out, transforming into glamorous exotic fire in midair!

After the spiritual root was destroyed and the spiritual energy inside the body was vaporized, the great Cultivator who was only half a step away from the Divinity Transformation Stage would become a useless man.

For a great Cultivator who had walked this far after hundreds of years of hard training, it was indeed a form of torture even more insufferable than death.

No wonder Elder Scorching Sun was cramping and screaming like a pig being butchered.

Right below Elder Scorching Sun, a brand-new black fiend slowly surfaced under the contrast of airwaves, dust, and smoke.

“This is—”

The Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector and the soldiers of the Angry Fire Army all looked at the black fiend in disbelief.

The enormous skeleton almost forty meters tall seemed to be forged out of black iron. The long, slender bones were covered in armor that looked like black feathers. There was nothing on its face except for a cross-shaped dent that divided the facial cover into four parts. Inside the dent was a crystal camera that was a deep red color resembling dried blood!

Around the limbs and the torso, quite a few long whips made of red crystals were bound. They looked both like vines and boas and like the veins and nerves of the black skeleton that had been exposed to the air!

One could only know what was good by comparison. When Thunderous Fire, Elder Scorching Sun’s one-armed Gold Statue, showed up, it was already magnificent enough. But it was a pile of worthless garbage compared with the black skeleton.

Elegant, mysterious, cruel, brutal… The Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector were too awed by the devastating aura to even more their legs. In their daze, they suddenly had the same thought, which was that the black skeleton bound by red snakes and its user was in fact the real ‘son of destiny’ here!

Hu!

The black Cloud Qin Gold Statue seemed to feel that it was not intimidating enough. It unleashed a pair of black wings of light hundreds of meters long, which were so overwhelming that they almost covered the entire valley. Right above the pair of enormous wings, the furious flames of spiritual energy condensed into the image of what appeared to be a falcon or a vulture, which looked down upon the people in the valley with sharp claws and glittering eyes.

Those in the valley were already half terrified after they were glanced at by the creature. The elders and leaders were all slapping their faces hard in their hearts. Had they known that Elder Scorching Sun was so lame, would they have bothered to join the meeting? They had essentially pushed themselves into their own pyre!

The black Cloud Qin Gold Statue simply floated in midair. Since the guy in the Gold Statue was silent, none of the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector dared to open their mouths. Nothing could be heard inside the vast valley except for the collapses of the remains of the ‘Red Sun Sect’ and Elder Scorching Sun’s screams that were becoming more and more feeble.

Right then, even greater changes took place in the higher sky above the black Cloud Qin Gold Statue and Elder Scorching Sun.

The image of Elder Scorching Sun’s fiery fiend that was riddled with holes did not disperse in the moment. It seemed to have been drawn into a giant swirl that blurred and contorted it. It looked like a mirage that was about to disperse.

But right then, it was clear again, except that it was no longer a three-headed and six-armed fiery fiend but a weird pattern where a raging dragon hovered above nine stars.

The pattern covered the entire sky, in a size ten times larger than the image of the fiery fiend.

With that as the background, the deep red clouds in the sky suddenly protruded downward and spread out ripples that looked like giant tides. A hundred starships that were even larger than the floating mountains and completely beyond the comprehension of the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector slowly barged into the atmosphere.

It was almost like…

The sky of the Ancient Sages Sector had collapsed!

"…"

The hundred thousand Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector were all dumbfounded. Most of them had lost the ability to think. Some had even lost control over their urethra and sphincter.

"Greetings, everyone. I am Li Yao. What you are seeing right now is a fleet from the Star Glory Federation." The soft and gentle voice finally came from the black Cloud Qin Gold Statue again. "As you have seen, the federation is a country that loves peace. We have come with the most genuine friendliness and sincerity. Now, let's abandon violence and build a better tomorrow together through earnest communication!"

Chapter 1895 - A New Chapter of the Ancient Sages Sector

That day, the common folk and the Cultivators within thousands of kilometers all saw the arrival of the hundred starships that were even larger than floating mountains from the surging clouds.

When the clouds slid past their solid shells, ripples that looked like foam were raised, as if they were projections of blue whales in the sky when they leapt out of the ocean.

They also saw the emblem of Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars announcing its presence to the entire planet of the Ancient Sages Sector. The Cloud Qin Gold Statue that extended the black wings of light to thousands of meters long below the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars emblem did not escape their attention, either.

The black Gold Statue unleashed terrifying tides blatantly and suppressed all the Cultivators and soldiers of the Angry Fire Army in the valley. None of them even dared to cough lightly.

Although the people tens of thousands of kilometers away could not quite catch what happened on Angry Fire Mountain, they could at least see the great changes in nature and hear the thunderous sound from the depths of the Cloud Qin Gold Statue.

“Don’t be scared, everyone. The federation loves peace. We are here to win you over with our integrity and build a better tomorrow together. That fellow Cultivator over there—don’t run away!”

Compared to the standard of communication of the universal era, the Ancient Sages Sector was rather undeveloped. Even the news of the change of dynasties often needed a couple of years before it spread across the entire continent. There were even cases when the tribes and forces in the desolate areas were ignorant enough to mistake the previous dynasty as the new master decades after a shift of dynasties.

However, this time, except for the six major sects, almost all the sects and forces in the Ancient Sages Sector had sent representatives to the ‘Rising Sun Ceremony’. After Li Yao intentionally set some of them free to deliver the message, the news of the arrival of the Star Glory Federation spread out at an unprecedented speed.

Three days after the Battle of Angry Fire…

In every mountain and every prosperous city along the Sorcerers’ River, countless panicked Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector were riding their flying swords and screaming at the top of their voice, “The federation is here!”

Letters that vividly depicted the hundred starships, the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars emblem, and the Tartarean Skeleton were sent to every corner of the Ancient Sages Sector.

Five days after the Battle of Angry Fire…

The capital of the Great Qian Dynasty, the ancient, super metropolis and the heart that had governed the Ancient Sages Sector for almost a hundred years, was witnessing the quakes of the jampacked towers and pavilions. The floating mountains were moving up and down, too, as if they were ragged canoes on a surging ocean that would be thrown to the bottom of the ocean at any point.

The lords, ministers, and Cultivators in the capital all looked at the sky in devastation while dozens of starships flew toward the capital slowly. The decks on the two sides of the starships opened, sending out hundreds of crystal suits in glamorous brilliance that thudded on the stone roads that had not been changed for ten thousand years like shooting stars.

Nine days after the Battle of Angry Fire…

On the vast, boundless Dark Cloud Prairies, a large horde of cows and sheep were eating grass in silence, but deafening explosions echoed in the sky.

Hundreds of white lights penetrated through the sky and did not disperse until a long time later like ice pillars.

They were hundreds of all-weather, stealthy armed shuttles.

“Moo…”

“Moo…”

The cattle fled in panic. The shepherd could not stop them however hard he whistled. Very soon, weird noises echoed from the grass that almost reached the height of a human’s shoulder when the grass was pressed down.

Beast puppets in the shape of spiders crawled out of the grass in cold light and congregated into an ocean of steel, as they marched toward the depths of the Dark Cloud Prairies in the most fluent and unstoppable way.

Fifteen days after the Battle of Angry Fire…

Thanks to the highly-efficient organizational system of the Star Glory Federation, the thunderous approaches that Li Yao demonstrated in the Battle of Angry Fire, and the ‘kind persuasion’ of the military tech, the entire Ancient Sages Sector had learned of the ‘Star Glory Federation’ and Vulture Li Yao’s dominance. Not a single sect, force, or unaffiliated Cultivator had the courage to challenge the federation anymore.

The federation had gained preliminary control over the entire Ancient Sages Sector and was finally able to leak its strength into the capillary vessels of the decaying world—the villages and farmlands—in order to save the common folk there.

Every starship had become a temporary hospital and sanctuary as they tried their best to save the common folk who had been tortured by war and famine.

Before they took off, the leadership of the federation had already made operation plans. They knew that it was not difficult to handle the Ancient Sages Sector with the modern military forces of the federation that far exceeded the era. What would be tricky was rescuing the underprivileged people who were struggling to survive. If they could not achieve that, would they be any essentially different from the Black Wind Fleet when it invaded the Star Glory Federation?

Therefore, in the enormous space fleet, most of the starships were carriers and comprehensive supply starships. They had also been through special modifications to be installed with massive synthesized food and full facilities to produce such food.

The so-called synthesized food was made by battering straw, grass, wood, thorns, bones, and other materials that were not readily edible for human beings into powder before adding the minerals and microelements that were necessary for health and mixing high-energy oil. In the end, such food was transformed into the solid form like bricks after high compression.

The synthesized food tasted extremely bad. It would not be exaggerating to say that the food was as dry and awful as wax when it was eaten. However, it boasted abundant nutrition and calories. One section only the size of a finger was enough for a middle-aged man to be engaged in heavy labor for an entire day. The food could also be dissolved in water and turned into liquids like porridge. In that case, women, children, and patients whose stomachs were not functioning well could also digest the food easily.

Therefore, for the billions of hungry people in the Ancient Sages Sector, the food that was a horror to the travelers in space became a life-saving elixir. A lot of people actually worshipped the starships when they landed from the sky and regarded the federal army in ‘weird costumes’ as guests from the deities’ realm.

In the long term, it was necessary to enlighten people with the truth. The federation did not intend to keep anything from them.

However, to suppress the chaos in the Ancient Sages Sector for now so that all the people could receive assistance in an orderly fashion, rumors that deities were walking on the earth and coming to everyone’s salvation were more useful than any rule or regulation. At the very least, in front of the ‘almighty, omniscient’ deities, the cunning scoundrels had no choice except to follow the rules and learn to wait in line as everybody else did.

Despite the awful taste of the synthesized food, it could keep their bellies full. The sense of satiety that gradually spread out of their stomachs was a first for many people of the Ancient Sages Sector. Some even learned for the first time what a ‘burp’ was and wept.

Although the ‘deities’ were driving enormous divine boats and wearing weird armor, they turned out to be rather gentle and much more approachable than the lords and experts the common folk had met in the past.

It was needless to mention the patients of various diseases, who were taken to the divine boats by the ‘deities’ and soaked in some bizarre tanks. At first, they were panicked and thought that they were about to be boiled by the deities to make pills. But after only one sleep, all their diseases were gone, and their past ulcers and scars became new, pinky flesh!

“Deities are walking on the earth to save us. How graceful they are!”

“They are the real deities. They have infinite arts and techniques, but they are so gentle that they even smile at us! Did the masters and lords in the past show any manners to us at all when they met us before?”

“Is this a shift of dynasties? Now, it is not the Great Qian Dynasty that is in charge. None of the other sects are issuing commands, either. The world is now this… so-called federation’s!”

The Ancient Sages Sector was at the last years of a dynasty in the first place. The people did not have the slightest loyalty to the Great Qian Dynasty. Although some of the poor folks survived by attaching themselves to the big sects and had the deepest reverence and loyalty to those sects, the leaders of those sects were actually the first to worship the ‘enormous divine boats’. Also, there were even rumors that Qi Zhongdao, known as ‘leader of all Cultivators’, had joined the Star Glory Federation and was even named the deputy chairman of the Ancient Sages District Administration Committee of the Star Glory Federation. Then, what was left to say? They might as well be the residents of the ‘Ancient Sages Special District of the Star Glory Federation’ in the future!

Food was everything for the people. The common folk were all very simple. Whoever fed them would be their family, and whoever made them homeless and starved would be their greatest foe!

For a moment, all the ordinary people in the entire Ancient Sages Sector began to rub their fists with their faces glowing and picture the beautiful future that the ‘deities’ described for them after they enjoyed their food.

While some people were dwelling in happiness, others were mired in sorrow. It was certainly not costless to change the future of the underprivileged people who took up more than ninety percent of the population. The enormous cost, doubtlessly, had to be partly shouldered by the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector who used to bully and exploit the poor people, especially those who violated the Divine Wrath Order.

While most of the villages in the Ancient Sages Sector were in the delightful atmosphere to celebrate the change of dynasties, Angry Fire Mountain was still enshrouded in gloomy clouds.

The more than hundred thousand Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector who had gone to the ‘Rising Sun Ceremony’ a month ago to cheer for Elder Scorching Sun still lingered in the place to receive the most rigorous scrutiny and vetting.

However, in the eyes of those Cultivators, the scrutiny and vetting were all just a disguise; the real purpose of the foreign intruders was to swallow their sects and deprive them of their land, mines, and interests in various trades!

This was because barely anybody survived the investigation. Even the most dutiful and obedient fellows who had done absolutely nothing wrong before had to suffer a heavy loss. They had themselves to blame for being ignorant enough to take Elder Scorching Sun’s side after all.

Chapter 1896 - Is There Law?

‘Green Willow’ Fang Chengzhi was a typical example of the lingering Cultivators who were panicking.

For him, he could never have imagined the nightmarish days in the past month.

He seemed to have fallen from the high clouds into a bizarre, ridiculous new world, where every rule was exactly the opposite of his prior knowledge.

In this place, the sun was square, the fish flew in the sky, the low-level Cultivators in the Refinement Stage could shout and order the higher-level Cultivators in the Building Foundation Stage, and even the bumpkins whose spiritual roots were not activated could sh*t above the head of the noble Cultivators!

There was even one time when he saw a young man with hair as messy as a nest and a weirdly-designed red vest arguing with a crying family member of a soldier of the ‘Angry Fire Army’. The guy was surrounded by vague spiritual energy, implying that he must be a Cultivator, but he was simply snatched by the rude woman who had not even washed her feet, unable to free himself. Two dirty children even smeared their tears and snot on him, but he was not infuriated at all and simply apologized in embarrassment.

But later, Fang Chengzhi was informed that the young man wearing the red vest and squatting on the ground casually, allowing the young children to crawl on him and pluck his eye, was actually Vulture Li Yao, a super expert from the Star Glory Federation who had beaten Elder Scorching Sun into a pulp with the black Cloud Qin Gold Statue and dismantled the one-armed Gold Statue into pieces!

Fang Chengzhi was so shocked that his eyeballs almost hit the ground.

Was there any law or reason in this place? What kind of world was this?

Fang Chengzhi had been born into a wealthy family and had always enjoyed the respect of other people. For him, the previous month had indeed been tough.

All the sects of unaffiliated Cultivators who attended the Rising Sun Ceremony were suspected of violating the ‘Divine Wrath Order’ and joining Elder Scorching Sun. In short, they were rebels.

The crime of disobedience could be severe or petty. Some people would be punished more harshly than others. The common middle and small sects might pass, but the Green Cloud Sword Sect, as an offshoot of the Purple Pole Sword Sect, had come to pay respect to Elder Scorching Sun. It was certainly a more severe betrayal!

Therefore, after a large batch of starships arrived with the Exos of the federation and temporary prisons and interrogation rooms were established, and when the large-scale scrutiny and vetting began, Fang Chengzhi, his father, and the members who belonged to the offshoots of the six major sects all received the strictest investigation.

Fang Chengzhi was escorted by two Cultivators of the federation in weird armor into a very tiny cell that was temporarily set up. It was almost a flawless iron coffin that did not have the slightest gap after the door was closed. Fang Chengzhi was so scared that he thought he was going to be buried alive.

After living in unease if not tears for three days, somebody finally came to interrogate him, but being interrogated was no less insufferable than being caged in the iron coffin.

He remembered a ferocious-looking man who played the bad cop and a seemingly gentle woman who played the good cop. Despite all their rhetoric, their sole purpose was for him to confess the ways that the Green Cloud Sword Sect earned its revenue to cover the maintenance of the enormous sect, including the daily consumptions of the Cultivators in their training.

They were demanding the tiniest details. He was asked to confess if his sect had exploited the people, sold or bought goods through violent methods, acted as loan sharks, or even trained with living people or their souls.

Of course, if he ‘could not remember much about his own sect’, he could also confess the similar clandestine businesses of the sects that bordered the Green Cloud Sword Sect. It did not matter if what he knew was just a groundless rumor; the Cultivators of the federation would check the facts later. As long as any of the information he confessed was verified, he would be considered a contributor, and he would even receive ‘points’.

Despite his horror, Fang Chengzhi was not out of his mind. After experiencing two sessions, he realized that the issue at hand was not insurgency at all, and the enemy was obviously trying to destroy the roots of the Green Cloud

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After figuring that out, Fang Chengzhi immediately made up his mind not to give in at all. He was going to teach the wretched Cultivators of the federation a good lesson about the resolution of the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector.

However, his interrogators were not infuriated by his reluctance at all but simply sent him back to his prison. Then, they asked him to think about it more carefully. “Right now, we have not decided the nature of the Green Cloud Sword Sect. This is not an interrogation but an interview to learn more information from you. If you are not willing to talk, we will not force you to.

“However, you are not the only person who knows the situation of the Green Cloud Sword Sect. Some fellow Cultivators from other sects do know a thing or two about it. For example, the fellow Cultivators from Red Tiger Hall told us a lot of stories about you.

“Of course, we do not want to be prejudiced, but if everybody in your sect is as ‘determined’ as you are, I’m afraid that we will have to adopt Red Tiger Hall’s side of the story and decide your nature with their testimony.”

Fang Chengzhi grew anxious the moment he heard that.

Red Tiger Hall was a neighbor to the Green Cloud Sword Sect. It had its own origins and backgrounds and had recently expanded its territory into the Running River State. Naturally, there had been conflicts between the two sects.

The two parties had a lot of fights regarding the ownership of farmland and mines. Although it would be exaggerating to say that they were mortal enemies, a lot of people on both sides had been killed in the past decade.

Fang Chengzhi had no doubt that Red Tiger Hall would show no mercy at all when there was an opportunity to hit them when they were down. There was no telling how they would frame the Green Cloud Sword Sect. How could their testimony be trusted?

Fang Chengzhi craned his neck and was about to shout, but the investigator of the federation simply slammed the door impolitely and sealed it again, not opening it anymore however he slapped it from inside.

Fang Chengzhi felt like crying and could not help being more regretful in the next few days. While cursing the cruelty of the investigators, he was even more angry about the viciousness of Red Tiger Hall. The grudges, both old and new, all surfaced in his heart, and he membered all the nasty things that Red Tiger Hall had done in the past.

When the prison cell was opened again, two bizarre-looking spiders came to bring him for interrogation. He forgot all about his unwavering position and confessed everything that he knew as quickly and promptly as possible.

Getting to the bottom of it, Fang Chengzhi truly felt that he had been wronged.

The Green Cloud Sword Sect, with the Purple Pole Sword Sect backing it, had endured for almost a hundred years and was a deeply-rooted sect in the Running River State. It wanted anything but trouble in its own territory, and it was quite merciful to the peasants and folks in its territory. There was no need for it to resort to the illegal activities at all.

That was what the small, unsupported sects had to do at the primitive accumulation phase when they intended to become rich quickly!

As for ‘Green Willow’ Fang Chengzhi himself, although he had never really cared about the ignorant common folk, no young Cultivator could reject the cheers of the ordinary people after they resolved the trouble of the people. He had gone through much trouble to earn his reputation in the Running River State. It would be a great disgrace for him to bully the common folk. He would not do it even if somebody asked him to with a dagger held to his neck.

Under the ‘guidance’ of the two investigators, Fang Chengzhi confessed everything he knew obediently. Naturally, he did not forget to put himself and the Green Cloud Sword Sect in a better light, claiming that his family had always been fair, just, and merciful in maintaining order. At the very least, it was not an entirely false statement when the sect was compared to the few forces that had risen more recently.

“The Green Cloud Sword Sect is a righteous sect with a long history that has always considered it our responsibility to dispel evil and protect the local area,” Fang Chengzhi declared matter-of-factly. “We have committed none of the atrocities that you mentioned!

“However, when it comes to Red Tiger Hall, the Rowing Mountain Guild, the Black Leaf Gang, and the other mediocre sects, they have monopolized many trades, sold or purchased goods through violence, practiced usury, and done so many other heinous things that I cannot finish describing in three days!”

Red Tiger Hall, the Rowing Mountain Guild, and the Black Leaf Gang were all neighboring forces to the Green Cloud Sword Sect. They had a lot of friction among themselves, but this time, they had put aside their contradictions and gone to join the meeting in Angry Fire Mountain at the same time, only to be caught by the Star Glory Federation together.

Fang Chengzhi imagined that those son of b*tches would not say anything good about the Green Cloud Sword Sect. As the saying went, better to attack than to be attacked. It was better to bite them first.

At the very least, compared to the sects that had risen recently with blood on their hands, the Green Cloud Sword Sect truly deserved to be called a ‘righteous’ sect.

“We appreciate your attitude very much, Fellow Cultivator Fang.” The two investigators looked quite happy. “We have recorded all of the intelligence that you offered. As long as any entry is verified, you will be given one point, which will do good to yourself, your father, and your sect!”

In his ignorance, Fang Chengzhi did not understand exactly what ‘given one point’ meant, but a huge event that took place another day gave him yet another great shock. He was petrified again.

That day, almost a hundred fellow Cultivators from the Running River State were summoned to a deck on a starship to attend the execution of a death sentence.

The guy who was tied up and about to be killed was none other than Xue Longhu, the leader of Red Tiger Hall, their old nemesis.

The crimes that had caused him to be sentenced to death were ridiculously petty in Fang Chengzhi’s eyes. They were all the unimportant things such as monopolization, forced transactions, gang fighting, and so on.

The most severe crime of all was the one where Xue Longhu used a boy and a girl to attract a one-thousand-year-old ‘Bleak Fire Black Horn Snake’, and the two children were accidentally swallowed by the animal.

Also, the two children were not stolen by him at all but bought from a slave market. It was a fair transaction from beginning to end. They should be his property, dead or alive!

Chapter 1897 - Monster of Monsters!

Xue Longhu was at the peak of the Core Formation Stage. If he were to be executed openly, there should at least be some shocking crimes. Not just Fang Chengzhi, even Xue Longhu himself did not foresee that he would be sentenced to death due to such trivial crimes.

From what Fang Chengzhi heard later, the reason Xue Longhu’s case was closed so quickly was that Xue Longhu did not realize the severity of the case at all, or rather, he did not even consider the incident as a ‘case’.

He defended himself in the cases regarding forced transactions and group fights in the mines. But when it came to the incident with the child slaves, he admitted it quickly and signed his name, as could clearly be seen on his statement.

Before his death, he had no idea what law he had violated at all, and he was still shouting while raising his neck high. “My disciples bought the two children for me. One of them cost me eighty dimes, and the other a hundred and twenty, with two additional bags of rice. They were ten percent higher than the market price. I bought them! I bought them!”

With the situation reaching that point, all his arguments were certainly useless. A Cultivator at the peak of the Core Formation Stage who had advanced to the level after a hundred years of hard training was tied up like a piglet and kicked into an iron cage just like that. Then, the iron cage spluttered and unleashed thousands of electric arcs, burning the prisoner to ash and obliterating him in the blink of an eye.

It was probably meant to warn other people.

The whole audience sweated hard with their legs shaking.

Naturally, Fang Chengzhi disliked Xue Longhu. He even hated the guy’s guts after a few days of biting and accusing each other. But despite everything, he could help but feel sad for the loss of his own kind after witnessing Xue Longhu’s uncanny death sentence. He was both depressed and confused, not having the vaguest clue what the strange Cultivators of the federation were up to.

They were now the meat, and the Cultivators of the federation were the chopping block. It was only natural for them to be cut and butchered, but they did not deserve to be ridiculed with such absurd reasons. The pair of children probably would have starved to death even if Xue Longhu had not bought them. Besides, Xue Longhu did not kill them personally. They were the victims of a one-thousand-year-old snake monster. Did that really account for a death sentence?

It took Fang Chengzhi days before Fang Chengzhi finally realized that Xue Longhu had been executed not just because he got a pair of children killed but mainly because he had run out of ‘points’.

As it turned out, in the Special District Committee of the federal government, a ledger for every Cultivator of the Ancient Sages Sector who was a suspect of violating the Divine Wrath Order had been established. A myriad of ‘contributions’ and ‘crimes’ had been listed, too.

The contributions such as serving justice, turning in other criminals, or maintaining local order could gain them points.

After all the items were calculated, if the points added up to a thousand and eight hundred or more, they would pass the investigation and regain their freedom.

Crimes such as monopolization, forced transactions, gang fights, disrupting the local order, or even murdering and looting other people would be the reasons to decrease the points.

All the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector, Refinement State and Nascent Soul Stage alike, had five hundred basic points. If they had committed so many crimes that their points were subtracted to zero, they would be sentenced to death, and even a real deity would not be able to save them.

The contributions could offset the crimes. However, the increase of points from ‘contributions’ was less than the decrease of points from ‘crimes’. Therefore, despite all the offsetting, the gap could never be made up.Read more chapter on vipnovel

The death of a pair of children was not enough for Xue Longhu to be executed immediately, but together with sect fights, killing, and looting, his five hundred points had almost reached zero.

In his desire for survival, Xue Longhu had squeezed out a lot of material to turn other Cultivators in, which had slightly raised his points. He was about to escape the death sentence, but as it turned out, he was responsible for his entire sect as the leader of the Red Tiger Hall. Ten percent of the reduced points because of the illegal businesses that the disciples of the Red Tiger Hall did would be blamed on him. As it happened, one of his true disciples was reported to be practicing an evil art in secret. The guy had killed dozens of innocent women as offerings to his secret sword.

Whether or not Xue Longhu had been aware of the matter before could not be proven and was no longer important. All in all, his five hundred points were reduced to zilch, and he could not present any major contribution for the time being. Therefore, he could only die a disgraceful death.

After figuring out the wretched ‘point system’, Fang Chengzhi was greatly relieved at first. He thought to himself that it was great because the Star Glory Federation seemed to be somewhat reasonable, however ridiculous their reasons were.

But on second thought, he could not help but feel frightened again. The Cultivators of the federation were so unnegotiable and persistent in their rules that even the most unimportant trivia could be counted as a crime. Fang Chengzhi wondered if he had committed crimes that were enough to get him killed without him knowing.

Even if he did not, as the heir of the Green Cloud Sword Sect, would he be affected because of a certain unpardonable guy in his own sect?

He lived in fright for the next two weeks. Occasionally, when he was half asleep in his iron coffin, he felt that somebody would slap his shoulder hard and roar, “Fang Chengzhi, your crime has been exposed!” Then, he would be tied up and dragged away like a swine.

But after a long wait, the cold hand and the deafening roar did not come. In the end, it was two smiling faces that came and informed him that the issues regarding the Green Cloud Sword Sect had been fully investigated. They were indeed a righteous sect that had been maintaining the order of the Running River State in the past hundred years, which was helpful for the prosperity and stability of the local area.

Although it was a minor stain that they had gone to the Rising Sun Ceremony, they had done nothing greatly wrong. Also, by approaching the federal government actively, they had set a good example for all the other Cultivators. Therefore, the investigation targeting him was over. He was now free and could reunite with his father.

Having regained his freedom and learned that the Green Cloud Sword Sect had been promoted as a ‘good example’, Fang Chengzhi was already wild with joy. But then a piece of breaking news struck him into a bottomless abyss again.

According to the message he received, his father had sold all the properties, mines, ranches, and everything else that mattered to the Green Cloud Sword Sect to the federal government at a terribly low price!

So, that was why it had been promoted as a ‘good example’ and why he was set free!

How shameless and despicable!

“Father!”

Outside of the enormous starship, the father and son finally met again, both feeling that a century had passed since their last meeting. Fang Chengzhi could not hold back his dissatisfaction anymore and gnashed his teeth.

“Those Cultivators from the federation are truly wolves and bandits. Nobody can be more unreasonable than them!” Then, he sighed while sobbing. “Our family’s enterprise that has been passed on for a hundred years was given away to them just like that?”

Compared to Fang Chengzhi who was jumping up and down, Fang Shiyi, the leader of the Green Cloud Sword Sect, was at ease. He smiled casually and remarked, “This is always the case during a shift of dynasties. A revolution is not an invitation to dinner. Who do you think will reason or be polite with you?

“Besides, what they are doing right now is already reasonable and polite enough!

“Let’s put aside the storm of blood when the Thunderous Qian Sect overturned the previous dynasty and established the Great Qian Dynasty. Just focus on the destruction of the eunuch’s party a few years ago. How many people were involved in the conflict between Eunuch Wang Xi and Emperor Phoenix, and how much blood was shed? At that time, we were still on the Purple Pole Sword Sect’s side and were almost destroyed as an ‘accomplice to the great traitor’!

“Hehe. Every change of the supreme power of the world requires the irrigation of endless blood. The blood shed today is already little to none. At the very least, the two of us have both survived, unlike Xue Longhu, who has been executed without even a body left. It was very fortunate for us in this unfortunate incident.”

Fang Chengzhi was dazed for a moment and then sighed again. “Vulture Li Yao, the representative from the Star Glory Federation, even called himself ‘a pacifist who convinces people with his integrity’. Isn’t that too outrageous?”

“Do you believe everything from his mouth? Every deceased emperor has been given a lot of posthumous titles after passing away. Are all those titles true?”

Leader Fang shook his head and said, “I’m told that the man is the husband of the current monarch of the Star Glory Federation. Right. This place is managed by a queen today.

So, it must be a custom in the federation to give some special titles, such as ‘a pacifist who convinces people with his integrity’, to the queen’s husband. That is not very strange.

“The bottom line is, this Vulture Li Yao is best known for his cunningness and brutality in the Star Glory Federation. He is one of the most notorious men who roams the sea of stars!”

“What!” Fang Chengzhi was soaked in cold sweat again because of fear.

“It’s true,” said Fang Chengzhi. “The Green Cloud Sword Sect belongs to the system of the Purple Pole Sword Sect. We used to be quite close to Eunuch Wang Xi. You know how powerful and influential Eunuch Wang Xi was in his prime. You must’ve heard a thing or two about how dreadful the organization Ghost Character that he established was, too, right? So, you must have a general idea about Eunuch Wang Xi’s personality and capability, mustn’t you?”

Fang Chengzhi nodded quickly.

As one of the Four Rapscallions, Eunuch Wang Xi was once a powerful person in court and a great master in sword arts. He was also the leader of the terrifying Ghost Character. His name was even enough to stop children from crying at night. Naturally, everyone knew him.

“Then, you also know how immeasurable Han Baling, the magnificent sovereign of the Ghost Qin of Dark Cloud Prairies, is, right?” Leader Fang asked again.

Fang Chengzhi nodded again. To some extent, Han Baling, who had great power and commanded a million iron soldiers, was a man even more terrifying than Eunuch Wang Xi. He certainly deserved to rank at the top of the Four Rapscallions.

“Then, do you know how Eunuch Wang Xi and Han Baling address this Vulture Li Yao?” Leader Fang asked mysteriously.

Fang Chengzhi was slightly dazed. He shook his head and said, “I don’t know.”

Leader Fang coughed and revealed, “Even men as strong as Wang Xi and as brutal as Han Baling call him ‘Monster Li’ respectfully!”

Chapter 1898 - One Thousandth

Chapter 1899 - Hundred-Year Glory

‘Green Willow’ Fang Chengzhi was dragged into the ‘Museum of the Star Glory Federation’s Hundred-Year Glory’ by his father, only to feel as if he had walked from one dream into another dream that was even deeper. The light around him dimmed, making him wonder if he had fallen into yet another trap.

However, when he remembered that Xue Longhu, a renowned expert at the peak of the Core Formation Stage, had been electrocuted and that his father who had always been sophisticated was deeply enticed, Fang Chengzhi could not help but sigh and decide that he might as well take things as they came.

As it turned out, nobody was going to kill or mince him in the museum. Perhaps because it was not officially open yet, few Cultivators from the federation could be seen there.

Fang Chengzhi did see a lot of experts and well-respected seniors in the corners who had been famous for a long time. Like his father, they were all wearing a Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars emblem on their chest and a red band on their arm. There were various abbreviations on the red band. Some said A. C.[A. C. stands for Administration Committee.], some said B. C.[B. C. stands for Business Committee.], and some were I. B.[1]. Fang Chengzhi assumed that they were all departments in the new regime.

The most surprising red band of all, however, had three words sewn on—Iron Tower Corporation.

Fang Chengzhi had absolutely no idea what the ‘Iron Tower Corporation’ was. He doubted that the expert wearing the red band knew, too.

It was because Fang Chengzhi remembered that the expert who was brawny and almost two meters tall had a nickname in the world of Cultivators as ‘the tower that holds the sky’.

He had probably chosen the department in confusion because of his own nickname.

Although the people there had also been imprisoned in Angry Fire Mountain, the atmosphere there was vastly different from that of the outside world.

The Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector who were still being identified and investigated on the starships were all living in panic and fright, like dogs who had lost their home.

The Cultivators here, however, were like giant mice who had crawled into a warehouse of food. They were all fat, satisfied, and wearing mysterious smiles. Every now and then, they would look at each other, communicating with their eyes. What a happy and joyful place it was.

Seeing that the father and son of the Fang family had walked in, a lot of people looked at them with envy and jealousy. But there was not much malevolence in their eyes. Everybody seemed to have been fed up and was too lazy to fight each other over some petty interests.

Fang Chengzhi lowered his voice and said, holding back his smile, “Do you see? Of all the fellow Cultivators and seniors here, some have a higher Cultivation than mine and a stronger sect than the Green Cloud Sword Sect. But just because they failed to change their mindset quickly enough, I was the one who stood up first to answer the call of the government and sell our properties, mines, and other possessions.

“As it turns out, we were the first to enjoy the reward. We have been given the most shares and the most favorable terms. Also, we have won the favor of the people above. That Vulture Li Yao even patted my shoulder in person and said that the Glorious Sunlight Group under his name would cooperate with the Green Cloud Sword Sect well in the future! You don’t know how jealous those people are. This trip to Angry Fire Mountain has turned out to be a blessing in disguise after all!”

Fang Chengzhi nodded quickly. Having no time to pay his respects to the seniors around him, he was dragged into a round floating disc by his father. The floating disc rose to half an inch from the ground and carried the two of them forward.

Shua!

Vivid Grand Illusionary Lands were opened around them. Panoramic illusions that even had flavors immediately grabbed Fang Chengzhi’s attention. He forgot all about the experts and seniors.

Due to the limitation of the environment, the exhibition of the Star Glory Federation’s hundred-year glory was mainly panoramic videos played in the Grand Illusionary Land.

Even so, a lot of the Core Formation Stage Cultivators and the Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector were dazzled and stunned, not to mention a youngster like ‘Green Willow’ Fang Chengzhi.

The panoramic videos were divided into five parts. At the very beginning, two giant words smashed into Fang

Chengzhi’s eyes—National Treasure!

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Accompanied by the deafening mechanical fulminations, melted steel was running and splashing. Squeezed, stretched, cut, and purified by the super-enormous machinery that was as large as mountains, pieces of alloys that were as irregular as meteorites from outer space were produced.

The light and shadows flashed, and the picture changed again. Components that were even larger than floating mountains were applied to the roads and bridges inside the stretch of mountains, the orbit ring beyond the atmosphere, the mines on the resource planets, and even the behemothic starships like the tough bones of the beasts that roamed the sea of stars!

The bridges almost a thousand meters high with a span of hundreds of thousands of meters, the orbit ring outside of the atmosphere where transportation could only be conducted through vacuum shuttles, and the hundreds of warships that were docked at the star fortresses modified from asteroids… The magnificence of this great industry and the modern miracles made Fang Chengzhi’s heart race and his nostrils flare. He felt as if his heart was exploding, and he almost held his head and screamed.

Deities’ realm! That was the real deities’ realm!

Such a powerful Star Glory Federation and such unbelievable divine techniques!

His legs suddenly lost all strength. Had his father not sent a stream of spiritual energy into his body in time, he would have kneeled on the ground and worshipped what he saw in tears.

The second group of pictures was lit in the darkness up ahead with the title ‘Marvelous Handicraft!’

A moment ago, everything had been huge, but all the items displayed became tiny. The only thing that could be seen was a clean and tidy factory of magical equipment. There was not the crowd or the messiness of the refining workshops in the Ancient Sages Sector. A couple of Cultivators were all the workers there, operating attentively in front of the control panel on one side of the room.

On the dozens of assembly lines connected to the control panel, the mechanical arms powered by spiritual energy made the most agile and deft movements. Chainswords, vibration sabers, and high-heat axes took shape, became sharpened, and were produced just like that!

As the picture zoomed in, it could be seen that dozens of needles as tiny as hairs extended out of the end of every mechanical arm. At a speed beyond the recognition of the naked eye, they bounced quickly and embedded the super-tiny crystals and components deep into the magical equipment, making the melee weapons more energy-efficient, intelligent, and stable.

“Well…”

Fang Chengzhi’s eyes were bulging hard as he observed it, not believing it at all.

In less than ten minutes, a hundred swords and sabers had been produced. Not just marvelous weapons for the Cultivators, even the common blades for the army of ordinary people could not have been made so fast!

To this day, he still remembered that his father had once spent years forging a Green Lotus Heart Breaking Sword with arduous work. But something had gone wrong at the end. The furnace had been unable to bear the blast of spiritual energy and had cracked. Years of effort had proved futile!

In the deities’ realm, after only one yawn, hundreds of marvelous weapons had been crafted. How could they expect to compete with the deities’ realm?

The production of the marvelous weapons in the deities’ realm left such a deep impression on Fang Chengzhi that he was not as stunned when he watched ‘leveled scanning of macromolecules’, ‘micro-carving at the mustard-seed level’, or ‘super-steady and high-speed network across galaxies’ because he had absolutely no idea what those concepts were. The federal government’s introduction was more or less like flirting with someone blind.

However, after they reached the third part, ‘Peaceful Life’, Fang Chengzhi’s head, which had just cooled down, began boiling again.

A forest of skyscrapers was ablaze with light, making up prosperous cities that he had never seen before!

There was convenient transportation, comfortable houses, infinite delicious food, and fashionable clothes that were too bountiful to wear!

Even the humblest ordinary people could study the history of the entire civilization and explore the future of the Star Glory Federation in bright, clean classrooms. They shared the knowledge of basic techniques for free. Healthy lunch that contained feeble spiritual energy was also supplied to the children!

Fang Chengzhi was utterly dumbfounded.

‘National Treasure’ and ‘Marvelous Handicraft’ were just the techniques in the deities’ realm that were still within the range of his comprehension. But the scenes where ordinary people and Cultivators lived in harmony with each other disrupted all the rules and knowledge that he was aware of.

“Even the common folk in the deities’ realm are so fair, healthy, tall, confident, and respected?

“The people there can actually use the armor of the deities, drive huge boats, or even be nominated as officials in the court?

“How is it possible? How is it possible at all? Why do the deities in the deities’ realm allow the common folk to live such a comfortable life? Is—Is there any ethics and reason at all? Are all the deities out of their minds?”

Fang Chengzhi swallowed hard and felt that his legs were shaking beyond his control.

He was scared. He was truly horrified to the bottom of his heart.

From the smiling faces of the ‘folks of the deities’ realm’, from their clean and neat teeth, he sensed a new strength, one that was unseen and unknown but more powerful and unstoppable than the National Treasure and the Marvelous Handicraft earlier.

Faced with such a strength, he felt as if he was an ant faced with an overwhelming tsunami. All his whining, hatred, anger, and hostility became ridiculous and insignificant.

The fourth scene was Home Defense.

The materials of this section were taken from the space battle three years ago, where the thousands of starships of the Star Glory Federation and the Black Wind Fleet had a confrontation and dozens of Colossi produced the most dazzling sparks in space.

Dwelling in the Grand Illusionary Land, Fang Chengzhi felt as if he was actually floating in space. Ten thousand rays of death pierced through all the space around him. Countless suns were rising before they exploded in the most dazzling way.

Fang Chengzhi could not help but moan in a low voice, like a wild dog that was caught between two tyrannosaurs.

The wars in the deities’ realm were too terrible. Compared to such a soul-stirring confrontation, the fights over the hegemony in the Ancient Sages Sector were nothing but child’s play.

It was not until then that he finally realized that Vulture Li Yao indeed maintained the highest self-control a month ago. If the hundred starships had really roared, it would have been simple for them to turn the entire Angry Fire Mountain into a deep ravine!

Chapter 1900 - Our Quest!

The previous four scenes were already splendid enough, but they were not as awe-inspiring as the fifth scene, even combined.

The fifth scene was ‘Our Quest!’

If the previous four scenes highlighted the magnificence, development, and harmony of the Star Glory Federation, then the last scene went in the exact opposite direction, focusing on the insignificance of the Star Glory Federation and even the civilization of mankind on a universal scale.

In the vast and boundless Grand Illusionary Land, the Star Glory Federation was merely a dim spot of light at the edge of the picture, and the Ancient Sages Sector could not be found on the picture at all.

The dense stars at the center of the picture congregated into two surging rivers. On the two sides of the river were two divine countries that were ten times more powerful—the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance!

The Star Glory Federation did not disguise the magnificence of the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance at all, nor did it veil its hostility against the two of them.

In the meantime, the civilization of mankind—a combination of the federation, the Imperium, and the Covenant Alliance—was only a lone boat in the vast sea of stars. In the land unvisited by the ancient people in the past billions of years, countless alien species, ghost civilizations, and unparalleled beings must have left brilliant and mysterious marks behind!

That was exactly what they were going to explore. Their destiny was the endless quest of human beings itself!

The picture zoomed in, and the previously small Star Glory Federation gradually grew huge.

‘Green Willow’ Fang Chengzhi saw countless space fleets, each of which had hundreds of carriers, immigration starships, and warships that were as tall as mountains.

Setting off from the cozy and comfortable homes, they sailed into the dark, unknown world determinedly, pushing forward to the edge and the limits of the universe!

He even saw that one of the fleets had ‘Ancient Sages’ painted in enormous letters on the head of all the starships. Every starship had been engraved with the sigils, symbols and marks of the Great Qian Dynasty, the Cloud Qin, the six major sects, and the thousands of middle and small sects!

“Is this… our fleet?

“One day, the natives of the Ancient Sages Sector will embark on a journey from a corner of the universe on the enormous divine boats like real deities to the other shore of the sea of stars and discover land that has never been visited before?”

Although he knew that it was just propaganda and a farfetched vision, Fang Chengzhi could not help but blush in excitement with the urge to cry out.

He finally understood what the Ancient Sages Shipping Group was.

If what was depicted became reality, and hundreds of starships as enormous as cities rushed in the sea of stars day and night, not just discovering new worlds that were even more prosperous, the profits from the businesses among the existent worlds of the Star Glory Federation right now were already too abundant to be estimated!

After he left the gallery, Fang Chengzhi could not calm down.

“Are those illusions real?”

Of course, that was the question most of the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector had.

The question could be barely proved true or false, but Leader Fang simply smiled. “If the things described in the picture did not exist, could you have imagined them based on nothing?”

Fang Chengzhi was slightly dazed and nodded quickly. It was quite true. However bold and imaginative he might be, he could not have come up with such bizarre and ridiculous designs.

“Besides,” Leader Fang remarked, “if the information was false and only meant to awe the locals of our world, there would’ve been no need for them to tell us about the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance. It was unnecessary to highlight the tense situation that the federation is in, too.

“Since they have decided to inform us of the existence of the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance honestly, their intentions are obvious. Firstly, everything they say is true. Secondly, they are confident that most people will join the federation after we are told all the truth, and the Ancient Sages Sector will be digested by the federation smoothly.

Thirdly, if some of us are too obstinate to change and decide to go against them, those people will certainly be destroyed easily and mercilessly!”

Fang Chengzhi was dazed for a long time. Taking a long breath, he smiled bitterly. “It never occurred to me that the deities’ realm actually existed and that the countries in the deities realm are so powerful. I wonder, where did they find such magnificent power? Are there really divine arts and techniques?”

“There probably aren’t. But they have indeed grasped a strength that we have never heard or even thought of. Such strength is not on the same level as the strengths that we relied on in the past at all,” Leader Fang said solemnly. “This time, it is not a simple change of dynasties but a real ‘revolution’, the likes of which the Ancient Sages Sector has not witnessed in the past hundred thousand years. The obsolete systems and rules will be smashed. The traditional sects and Cultivators will prove to be huge burdens rather than aids in the new regime. If they fail to follow the trend and reform themselves actively, they will be erased without mercy!

“The newcomers have never disguised this fact at all since the day of their arrival. They spoke to the elders and leaders frankly that the Star Glory Federation adores the system of general equality for both ordinary people and Cultivators, which is the highest rule that is beyond any negotiation. The lives of the Cultivators matter, but the lives of the common folk, whom there are hundreds of times more of, also matter. The purpose of their visit is to find a way to save as many lives as possible.

“The Ancient Sages Sector is now mired in war and famine for mainly two reasons. Firstly, the population of the

Cultivators is excessive, and they do not work but focus all their attention on fighting and exploiting people. Secondly, the land and resources are highly concentrated on thousands of sects and unaffiliated Cultivators who operate on their own and spare no effort hamstringing each other. They cannot bring out the potential of the resources in such a disorganized way.

“The people of the federation have come after a long journey through wormholes. The cost for a single grain of rice is appallingly high. It is impossible to ship food and relief from the homeland of the federation incessantly. To feed the billions of locals of this world, the Ancient Sages Sector can only count on itself.

“More specifically speaking, there are two approaches. Firstly, migrate the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector who are superfluous in terms of absolute number to the less populated places where Cultivators are more needed. It will reduce the pressure on the spiritual energy and crystals in our place, and it will allow the Cultivators to play a role that is more befitting for a Cultivator.

“Secondly, the resources including the land, forests, and mines will be concentrated under the national government, which will then plan to develop modern industry, agriculture, and mining. During the process, the unenlightened common folk will be involved and educated for them to become real modern people!

“As for exactly how to ‘convince’ the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector to leave their home and seek a career in outer space, and how to combine the land, mines, and different trades that previously belonged to different owners in order to ‘concentrate the resources’ and develop modern industries, they have already drafted plans. But they are keeping that a secret and asking us to think for ourselves.

“Hehe. I thought about the issue for three days and three nights without going to sleep. By joining Elder Scorching Sun’s cause, we already committed the crime of high treason. Even if our lives were saved in the end, we would’ve lived a dull life in the new regime. So, we might as well take a wild gamble. This is exactly what I get in the end!”

Leader Fang pointed at the A. C. on his left arm.

Fang Chengzhi was dazed for a long time. He could not help but shake his head. “Those people are really… unreasonable.”

“You’re quite right. Vulture Li Yao told me blatantly that thousands of people die of coldness and hunger in the mess of the Ancient Sages Sector right now, and a hundred times more are struggling in war and famine, living lives that are no more comfortable than death. In order to stop the suffering as soon as possible, he couldn’t care less about how the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector curse him behind his back, nor does he give a damn about the laws, rules, and reasons that have been practiced in our world for a hundred thousand years and have proved an utter failure!”

Leader Fang paused for a moment. With the deepest fear beaming out of his eyes, he said, his voice shivering, “Do you know? I have a feeling that Vulture Li Yao and the entire Star Glory Federation is like an overwhelming iron wheel that is rolling close unstoppably. It will never lower its speed or deviate from its course. Unless it crashes itself into pieces, it will crush everything that stands in its way!

“Faced with such a rolling wheel, it is useless to hate or curse it. And you want to reason with it? The wheel has its own logic, except that we do not understand it yet.”

Fang Chengzhi blushed in embarrassment at what his father said. He lowered his head.

“The trend of the universe is unstoppable. Those who follow it thrive; those who go against it die.”

Patting his son’s shoulder, Leader Fang said solemnly and thoughtfully, “I know that a lot of Cultivators are very dissatisfied with the Star Glory Federation’s approaches. Some are holding grudges, some are openly mocking them, some are pretending to cooperate, and some are even contacting each other, hoping to start a rebellion. However, after witnessing the exhibition of the hundred-year glory, you should at least realize now that such a strength is not something that we are capable of resisting. Or rather, it is the most advanced ‘trend of the universe’ that we have seen. Why do we have to compete with it instead of finding a way to join it so that we can figure out their ‘reasons’ and their ‘source of strength’ for ourselves?

“After a hundred thousand years, the world of the Ancient Sages Sector finally changed. The world is changing, and we must change, too. Whoever changes faster than others will gain new opportunities, new techniques, and new blessings in the new world!

“I am already too old now. It is already my limit to have brought our sect to what it is right now. As for exactly where the Green Cloud Sword Sect can reach in the Star Glory Federation and the boundless universe, it will depend on the younger generation like you!”

Fang Chengzhi listened absent-mindedly, not exactly getting what his father meant, because a magic declaration that he saw at the end of the exhibition was still echoing inside his head.

“Our quest is… the sea of stars!”

Chapter 1901 - New Epiphany

The declaration rumbled inside Fang Chengzhi’s head like an enormous bell, spreading out slowly but surely.

Before he completely woke up from the shock, he had heard a scream that was even louder, more hateful, and crazier coming over from not far away in the valley.

“The federation! Li Yao! How sordid and vicious of you!”

While the voice was still echoing, a streak of green rose from the ground and dashed at the dozens of starships floating in the sky. Fang Chengzhi observed carefully, only to discover that it was an elegant, unworldly, and beautiful girl in green clothes who jumped into the sky.

Despite her whining and apparent madness, her perfect face was still enough to disturb many men’s minds.

She seems to be… Murong Ling, one of the four most famous female Cultivators in the Hundred Cranes State. Why is she as crazy as that?

As a Cultivator from a noble family who was passionate about socialization, Fang Chengzhi naturally knew most of the celebrities in the other sects and states.

Murong Ling’s Cultivation was rather high and seemed even better than his. In the blink of an eye, she had already ascended to an altitude of hundreds of meters. With a couple of delicate swords swirling around herself rapidly, she roared, “My father was the leader of the righteous Cultivators in the Hundred Cranes State. He never did anything wrong, slaying evil and maintaining the local order. Who did not know the great name of ‘Heavenly Sword of the South’? Now, he has been executed by you for nothing other than butchering several villages of mobs? I don’t buy it! I don’t buy it at all!

“Those mobs had themselves to blame for their outcome. Who asked them to come and steal the food of the Murong family? Looting our warehouses in daylight, they were unpardonable bandits! Stomping on the lairs of bandits and annihilating the bandits big and small was meant to pacify the local region and keep the order. What’s wrong with that?”

Murong Ling’s desperate shouts attracted a lot of Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector to gather in the valley. They all looked at the sky in astonishment.

The starships of the federation in the sky, on the other hand, did not give any response, as if they had been rendered speechless by Murong Ling and were unable to refute her ‘reasons’.

Murong Ling grew even more excited. Her hair in a mess, she burst into laughter and said, “The Star Glory Federation? Vulture Li Yao? Don’t think that I’m unaware of what is on your mind. You just found a random excuse to kill my father because you were after the properties of the Murong family. Everybody knows that the thirty percent of farmlands and mines of the Hundred Cranes State previously owned by the Murong family have fallen into your hands!

“He who has a mind to beat his dog will easily find a stick. However, occupying our ancestral enterprise with such a ridiculous excuse and tearing the Murong family apart just like that is too outrageous. None of the thousands of fellow Cultivators in the Ancient Sages Sector will be convinced! Do you have any morals at all?

“Vulture Li Yao, don’t presume that the thousands of Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector have been intimidated by the Star Glory Federation just like that. Although I am just a woman, I am going to challenge you today with my righteous indignity because justice is on my side!

“You killed Elder Scorching Sun because of the mightiness of the Cloud Qin Gold Statue and the hundred divine boats. If you think you are capable enough, just come down and duel with me singlehandedly without counting on the divine boats and the Gold Statue!

“Li Yao! Li Yao! You—”

Murong Ling drove her flying swords and triggered her spiritual energy, cursing aloud.

Seeing that more and more fellow Cultivators had gathered below, some of whom were even cheering up for her, she was even braver and more determined. In a daze, she felt that she had truly seen justice and the reasons that enshrouded the Ancient Sages Sector for a hundred thousand years ascending slowly behind her, providing her with infinite strength.

She was about to grit her teeth and charge at the biggest ‘divine boat’ when several divine boats around suddenly flashed. Dozens of mystic rays darted close and penetrated her body brutally. Her internal organs, bones, and flesh were burnt into ashes instantly, and her soul dispersed into nothingness before she could struggle in anguish. Then, she did not know anything anymore.

The most famous female Cultivator of the Hundred Cranes State perished just like that, leaving absolutely nothing behind her.

All that remained were the crystals of dust that were falling onto the heads of all the Cultivators present, like snow in June that contained infinite discontentment.

Fang Chengzhi stared at the scene in silence.

He was panicked first, then overwhelmed, before he was puzzled in the end.

However, after the ‘snow’ landed on the ground and regained its original appearance of dust, all the panic, confusion, and weakness on his face had entirely gone.

Thanks to the stimuluses in the exhibition of hundred-year glory and the scene before his eyes, he was granted with a new epiphany.

He felt as if thunder had struck inside his head, and a brand-new strength that was of a higher level and as boundless as ocean was flooding in incessantly.

Right now, he did not understand the nature of the strength yet.

But it did not matter. He had all the time in the world. The world of the Ancient Sages Sector had changed. His belief was going through drastic transformations, too. One day, he would figure out the Star Glory Federation’s source of strength and make himself, the Green Cloud Sword Sect, and the entire Ancient Sages Sector climb to a higher peak with the strength that he had just learned!

…

Neither the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector who were changing quickly such as ‘Green Willow’ Fang Chengzhi nor the obstinate ones such as Murong Ling could disturb Li Yao at all.

Li Yao was not on Angry Fire Mountain at all but inside a training room on a starship above the capital of the Great Qian Dynasty. He was sitting cross-legged and conducting the most mysterious training.

His black hair was glowing, and a layer of vague light was flowing on his skin, like the cover of the previous antiques. He looked calm and casual. For him, every movement, every breath, and every thought was training.

Two years prior, when they set off from the homeland of the federation, they had planned to reach the Ancient Sages Sector in three to six months.

However, the dark nebula was too mysterious and filled with all kinds of bizarre interference. Despite the most detailed star map, sailing routes, and coordinates, they still encountered unexpected changes and were lost for two years before they finally found the place. In fact, they were already unbelievably lucky to have rectified their sailing route and gotten back on course so quickly.

During the two years while lost in space, Li Yao was fully dedicated to the digestion and absorption of the massive tenebrum energy left by the extraterrestrial devils as well as the gifts left by Professor Mo Xuan, allowing him to better and more deeply integrate the mental devil and Neltharion.

Before he arrived in the Ancient Sages Sector, he had finally purged and absorbed all the tenebrum energy, and the abundance of his spiritual energy reached an unprecedented level. He was not one step but one piece of paper away from the real Divinity Transformation Stage.

Although the gap was as thin as paper, it could not be broken through by storing spiritual energy crazily but required new understanding and new perspectives to view his own kind, the world, and all the objects in the universe.

The state was more or less like when his Spiritual Actualization Quotient was increased to above ninety percent. Whether or not his spiritual root would awaken at that time depended on not the improvement of his physical strength but the unpredictable opportunity.

The only difference was that when he was at a lower level, he had to look for the opportunity, but now that he was between the Nascent Soul Stage and the Divinity Transformation Stage, he could create an opportunity of his own!

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Almost a hundred light beams displayed the major events taking place in every corner of the Ancient Sages Sector before his eyes.

Right when the hundred thousand Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector were being reeducated in a soul-touching way inside Angry Fire Mountain, drastic changes were taking place elsewhere in the Ancient Sages Sector.

Enormous temporary camps were built on a daily basis to house the disaster-stricken folks who had lost their homes.

The victims would also receive comprehensive physical examinations to eradicate diseases.

Water plants were established in the middle of swamps and dirty water every day, too. From the top of them, clean, drinkable water spurted out nonstop. This measure alone had saved countless lives.

Every day, the warehouses of tremendous Cultivation sects were either opened ‘voluntarily’ or taken down by the Exos from the federation by force. The abundant food stored in the warehouses dumbfounded even the Cultivators from the federation, who found it hard to believe their own eyes.

Li Yao was very satisfied about the paradigm-shifting changes in the Ancient Sages Sector.

He naturally knew that a lot of Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector were secretly cursing him behind his back, labeling him a vicious, unreasonable, and lawless fiend.

Indeed, from the perspective of the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector, and faced with the never-changing traditions of the Ancient Sages Sector, he was indeed a lawless, unparalleled fiend.

However…

Abiding by the existent rules was a virtue of the weak.

For real experts, only abiding by the current rules was not enough. Human beings were always making progress, unveiling the truth of the universe, and mastering patterns of nature of a deeper level.

The current laws, systems, and rules would forever be behind humanity’s knowledge about the ultimate truth of the universe.

It was the virtue and obligation of experts to remove obsolete laws and systems and to establish new laws and ‘reasons’ that better fitted the development of mankind!

After one’s Cultivation, combat ability, wisdom, and power reached a certain level, they would indeed be ‘lawless’. Whatever they did was not to be gauged by a certain partial and rigid law. Perhaps, exactly as Jin Tuyi had said in the past, only history was qualified to judge them.

In the past, Li Yao did not quite understand what Jin Tuyi meant.

But right now, he was beginning to understand it.

He could almost perceive Blackstar the Great Wuying Qi’s past state of mind.

“I firmly believe that I’m right, and I will dedicate all my efforts, strength, soul, and resources to carry out my belief in every corner and every grain of dust in the universe.

“Right now, no force, law, or moral can judge what I do because those things are exactly what I’m about to smash!

“Only history billions of years in the future can be the final judge for what I am doing today.

“Even if history rules that I am wrong, I will not accept it. As long as part of my soul is still wandering in the infinite sea of stars, as long as there is the slightest possibility, I will come back again and fight a bloody battle to the end, until all my strength, will, and life is entirely obliterated!”

Chapter 1902 - : One Inch from the Divinity Transformation Stage!

Li Yao finally understood why Blackstar the Great could sacrifice the almost ten million civilians on Karan in the past as if they were nothing worth mentioning.

Perhaps, in his eyes back then, the civilians were no longer human beings but the embodiments of a decayed, corrupted, outdated system, and the barricades that stood in his way.

If he wanted to smash the old order, establish a new Imperium, and save the civilization of mankind, it was necessary for him to crush everything in his way without any mercy!

Was Blackstar the Great right or wrong in doing what he did?

At the very least, the Imperium of True Human Beings still stood for the rightful succession and the central force of the civilization of mankind right now. Deeply rooted at the center of the three thousand Sectors, it resisted the Covenant Alliance, the extraterrestrial devils, the Pangu Civilization, and all kinds of bizarre, ever-emerging alien species that were even fouler.

Wuying Qi’s final ruling had yet to come. What Li Yao was going to do was make the Star Glory Federation expand and grow quickly with his ideas and beliefs, until the laws and morals of the federation replaced the Imperium’s in a fair and square competition, and the ideology of the Cultivators would be sprayed to every corner of the universe again!

That would be the real trial for ‘Blackstar the Great’ Wuying Qi!

I understand it now.

In the past, I always talked about the Constitution of Cultivators and thought that I couldn’t be wrong if I did everything by following the law.

But that was only the justice of the Refinement Stage, the Building Foundation Stage, and the Core Formation Stage at best.

After one reaches the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage, or even surpasses the Nascent Soul Stage and enters the Divinity Transformation Stage that barely anyone has ever reached in the federation’s history, ‘justice’ will have brand-new explanations.

Laws are always behind changes. When our ancestors drafted the Constitution of Cultivators, the federation only occupied part of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and the greatest threat for them was the demons in the Blood Demon Sector. They did not have a single Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator. It was beyond their imagination that the Imperium of True Human Beings, the Alliance of the Holy Covenant, the Pangu Civilization, the Nuwa Civilization, the Blood Stripe Virus, and thousands more alien species existed in the vast universe, too.

How can laws like the Constitution of Cultivators made under such circumstances always be correct?

For example, our operation to land in the Ancient Sages Sector and rescue the common folk on a large scale couldn't have been foreseen by the pioneers who drafted the Constitution of Cultivators. If they hadn't foreseen such a scenario, how could they possibly offer us guidance?

Therefore, there is no existing path ahead. We have to travel on our own, create a new path, and come up with new rules and 'reasons'. That is perhaps the true meaning of 'lawless', isn't it?

Li Yao vaguely felt that he was stepping into a brand-new temple, or a battlefield that was completely unknown.

Jin Tuyi and Wuying Qi were both members of the temple and the battlefield. Right now, he was following the steps of his predecessors and stepping into the domain of real 'lawless' experts.

Li Yao's heart was clearer than ever. His soul blossomed slowly like a transparent crystal bud. His every thought was sharp and pure.

Right then, he slightly raised his head and glanced at 'Sword Maniac' Yan Liren, who had appeared at the door of the training room at some point with 'the fourth sword' in his arms, leaning against the wall in silence.

"There's a murderous aura around you. You want to kill me?" Li Yao asked calmly, as if he had known that Yan Liren would come.

"Yes." Yan Liren nodded frankly. "In the past two years, when we trained on the starship together while we were lost in the sea of stars, your improvement was limited to brute force although your spiritual energy grew more massive after each day, which was not enough to attract my full interest.

“However, after you landed in the Ancient Sages Sector, together with the drastic changes here in the past month, your heart has been through the most amazing transformations, too, and your level is even more immeasurable than before!

“Three years ago, I encountered Bai Xingjian, the commander of the Big Bai Fleet. At that time, although Bai Xingjian tried to disguise his level and Cultivation, my fighting will and killing intent were triggered. All I wanted was to wave my ultimate sword at him without caring about anything.

“At that time, you were far from qualified for me to kill with all my strength.

“But you are today. Also, you are even showing signs that you are exceeding Bai Xingjian in the past. I can hardly hold back the killing intent in my heart right now and only want to brandish the sword that has concentrated all my spirit!”

“Understood. But please don’t be rash. We have known each other for many years as good friends. I don’t want to lose you.” Li Yao stood up and walked up to Yan Liren casually without looking at ‘the fourth sword’ in his arms at all. “You are uncommitted right now. If you attack recklessly, you will only be killed by me. Although I can prepare an artificial body for you in advance, it will not be half as perfectly integrated with your soul as your natural fleshly body. I’m afraid that you won’t be used to it.”

“What? You said that I’m uncommitted?” Yan Liren’s pupils constricted violently. “Over the past few years, from the Ancient Sages Sector to space, I have indeed appreciated a lot of bizarre views and unimaginable magical equipment and techniques. I even have my own Colossus right now. But if you think that I was too enchanted by the distractions to keep my loyalty to my sword, you will be terribly mistaken!

“You are not the only one who has been training in the past two years. Did any of the eleven Cultivators from the Ancient Sages Sector not melt their understanding from our journey into their soul and improve their level significantly? The universe is a boundless place, but I have sealed everything that I perceived in the past few years into my sword. And you said that I’m uncommitted? Ridiculous!”

“You’re wrong. That’s not what I meant by saying ‘uncommitted’.”

Li Yao stood right in front of Yan Liren, only one arm away from him.

At such a distance, not just an unparalleled sword master, even a gangster on the street could have drawn the sword and sent it into the enemy’s chest in the blink of an eye.

But Li Yao still ignored Yan Liren’s ‘fourth sword’ and went on. “By ‘uncommitted’, I meant that there are too many people that you want to kill.

“Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun, as two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, must be on your list, right?

“Fellow Cultivator Long Yangjun, or Eunuch Wang Xi in the past, has always been mysterious. There’s no telling how high her Cultivation is. Although she has always been known to be secondary to you, you definitely would like to know if she has been pretending to be weak, wouldn’t you?

“There’s also Bai Xingjian, the commander of the Big Bai Fleet, who turned out to be a combination of the ‘Supreme Space Pirate’ Yan Xinjian and ‘Pirate Potentate’ Bai Xinghe.

He has run to the center of the cosmos. Will you be satisfied if you never get to attack him with your full strength?

“Look. There are so many experts whom you want to slay with all your might. They tend to dazzle and distract you.

“When you slash your sword at me without any reserve, will you suddenly think of Meng Chixin, Wu Suiyun, Long Yangjun, Bai Xingjian, and many other experts?

“Even if that wasn’t the case, now that I’ve reminded you, they will certainly pop up in your head, never to be erased, won’t they? What you want to kill is me, but they occupy your head. Do you think that your mind is really pure and focused?

“It must be noted that for experts of our level, even the most insignificant irrelevant thought can possibly change the outcome of a battle!

“Therefore…”

Li Yao finally looked at Yan Liren’s ‘fourth sword’ and said, “According to my calculation, with your state of mind and your disordered killing intent, you would be killed before you draw your ‘fourth sword’ twenty-three centimeters. So, why bother?”

As if struck by lightning, Yan Liren became frozen, and his eyes turned hollow.

“Haha…”

A crisp chuckle of mockery echoed from a corner of the room, and Long Yangjun appeared out of nowhere.

Li Yao was so greatly shocked that his faked mysteriousness entirely vanished. “Huh? When did you slide in? Why didn’t I notice you?”

“Didn’t Fellow Cultivator Yan say just now? Everybody has been training crazily on the starships in the past two years. Our Cultivation skyrocketed. Do you think that he was kidding?” Long Yangjun said with a smile. “If your conversation just now, which gave me a feeling that you were two third-rate actors, hadn’t been so ridiculously funny that I failed to contain myself, you wouldn’t have discovered me even if I hid here for another three days.”

“Well…” Li Yao put on a solemn expression, somewhat embarrassed. “What are you doing here? Is there any progress on the Nuwa warship?”

“Yes.” Long Yangjun nodded. Then she frowned and said, “However, before we get to our business, can you lower your level a little bit? Is it not tiresome to stay at the peak of the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage all day? Look at your glittering hair, your shining eyes, your skin that is as clear as jade. How mysterious and unpredictable you are. It’s like… you have turned on the highest effects in a video game. It really hurts my eyes.”

“Do excuse me for my lack of control of myself, fellow Cultivators.”

Li Yao took a deep breath and concealed his spiritual energy that was as vast as an ocean, as violent as a waterfall, and as deep as a valley into the depths of his soul through the Soul Converging Technique.

As if a fully-blown balloon was jabbed by a needle, the dominance that eclipsed everything around him had entirely gone. Li Yao regained his casual, ordinary, and lazy look.

Long Yangjun eyed him up and down for a moment.

“Right. Such an informal Monster Li looks much more agreeable.” Satisfied, she spoke in a hurry. “The route to the depths of the Land of Eternal Night has been broken through. A lot of weather stabilization rune arrays have been deployed to resist the local blizzards and the quick-freezing tempests. The vanguards have already set off to explore the environment five hundred square kilometers around the Nuwa warship. As for us, we can leave tomorrow. With the all-weather combat ability of the starships of the federation, we will reach the Nuwa warship and the Pangu laboratory in no more than three days!”

Chapter 1903 - Operation Archaeology

Seven days later, in the depths of the Land of Eternal Night, which was frozen, unpopulated, and had always been the most dangerous area in the Ancient Sages Sector…

The ice clouds that were frozen in the sky were melted and shattered by the exhaust flames of the starships. On the rocks that were more solid than diamonds, engineering crystal suits and mechanical spiders were digging roads and runes, establishing hundreds of enormous arrays.

From the central plateau to the prairies, and from the prairies to the ice field, countless supply points and half-permanent rest areas had been set up. Those strongholds that extended deep underground were enough to keep the ordinary soldiers whose spiritual roots had not awakened safe and sound in the most freezing wind so that they could join the enormous project to excavate the Nuwa warship and the Pangu laboratory again after a good rest.

The scenes that almost appeared to be miracles were completed by the most experienced engineering troops in the federation.

In the past hundred years, the troops had been involved in the development of Kunlun, the modifications in the Water Crystal Sector and the Nether World Sector, and the reconstruction of the Uranian Ring Sector, accumulating tremendous experience in altering nature. Conquering the ice field that was brimming with freezing winds, despite all its difficulties, was not enough to intimidate the ambitious workers from the federation.

The Nuwa warship and the Pangu laboratory were the keys of the operation.

The desire for the primeval technology and magical equipment on the Nuwa warship, in order to combine them with the remains in Kunlun to figure out a lot of unresolved enigmas to boost the technological development of the federation, was only a secondary motivation.

The more critical reason was that countless uncanny ‘giant crabs’ were still sealed in the dangerous Pangu laboratory.

Those monsters that looked like giant crabs were the test subjects of the Pangu Civilization that contained lethal poison. Once it was injected into a human’s body, the victim would be transformed into a terrible member of the Pangu Clan. Even Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun, two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, had been hit in their ignorance and had to abandon their physical bodies, turning into spectral Cultivators.

After hundreds of thousands of years of corrosion, the seals that the Nuwa Clan had imposed on the Pangu laboratory were already riddled with holes. They had accidentally been opened by Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun.

After that, although the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators and the ten Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators including Li Yao imposed multiple layers of new seals, the gap was still there. The problem could not be resolved by just blocking it but had to be addressed from the source.

Li Yao and the rest of them all felt lucky that the seals did not break apart during the three years when they were away from the Ancient Sages Sector and that the giant crabs domesticated by the Pangu Civilization had not run loose.

If the seals had broken apart and some of the giant crabs escaped, sneaking into the Dark Cloud Prairies or even the central plateau and transforming countless people into members of the Pangu Clan…

Then, the fleet of the federation would have seen countless giants looking at them with a fake smile after they landed. It would certainly have been quite awkward.

The issue was too urgent to be delayed by one second. Almost at the same time when the drastic reforms on the Dark Cloud Prairies and in the central plateau began, a fleet that carried large engineering troops had already set off to the depths of the Land of Eternal Night.

By the time a new order began to take shape in the Great Qian Dynasty and the Dark Cloud Prairies, the twelve experts of the Ancient Sages Sector could not hold back any longer and gathered above the Nuwa warship.

They had gathered on exactly the same spot three years prior. But at that time, they had been plagued by the tempests and the freezing ice winds. They also each had their own intentions and were fighting each other. Had it not been for the fortuitous incidents and the guidance of Li Yao and Long Yangjun, almost all of them would have been buried in the Land of Eternal Night.

But everything was absolutely different this time.

Centered at the Nuwa warship, multiple defense lines had been established in the five hundred square kilometers around, partly to prevent the ignorant fellows who did not know what they were doing to cause any trouble, and partly to resist the ‘giant crabs’ and the members of the Pangu Clan who were transformed by the ‘giant crabs’ in the worst-case scenario.

Within a hundred kilometers from the Nuwa warship, hundreds of weather stabilization rune arrays, powered by tremendous crystals, had even been set up, building a natural protective membrane.

The most advanced biochemical labs, genetic labs, and primeval relics study centers were paved inside the protective membrane, forming a temporary town.

At this moment, the specialists and professors from dozens of renowned universities of the federation had gathered in the town. They were all rubbing their hands, waiting for the items to be excavated from the Nuwa warship and the Pangu laboratory.

Naturally, until absolute safety was ensured, those strengthless specialists and professors would never be allowed to enter the Nuwa warship or the Pangu laboratory in person.

Further ahead, several of the most elite crystal suit legions of the federation were stationed, and tens of thousands of Exos and the super enormous crystal cannons were standing by. Should the giants of the Pangu Clan crawl out of the earth, they would certainly be bombarded by the federation in less than three seconds. It would be a miracle if they could keep their back straight.

Guided by the memory of Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun, the only two to have visited the Pangu laboratory personally, the federation had made thorough plans for the operation.

The first to explore the laboratory, besides the eleven experts of the Ancient Sages Sector and Li Yao, included more than a hundred elite Exos who were all above the Core Formation Stage.

Everybody carried tremendous beast puppets and Grand Illusionary Soldiers. They had also been injected with various vaccines and genetic drugs. As of now, they were unaware of the specific elements of the poison inside the ‘giant crabs’ or its mechanism. However, all the vaccines and drugs slowed down the mutation of genes. Should anybody be accidentally poisoned, their mutation would certainly be greatly delayed.

Other than that, their crystal suits had all been through the most rigorous airtightness and anti-pressure tests. It was made sure that there would not be a single gap on them when the crystal suits were placed tens of thousands of meters deep in the water. Even if the giant crabs jumped on the explorers, they would have nowhere to inject the poison at all!

The average height of the Pangu Clan was impressive, and the tallest of them could be dozens of meters tall. According to Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun, the Pangu laboratory was also splendid and immeasurable, like an underground palace of giants. Weird mist that could absorb spiritual energy and telepathic thoughts also covered the palace. A team of only a hundred members was certainly not enough to figure out the general picture of the place.Read comics on our webnovel.live

However, other than ‘the living’, they also had a troop of almost a thousand spectral Cultivators, who were all warriors that had lost their physical bodies and kept their souls in iron shells.

Those spectral warriors were partly from the famous ghost troop of the Flying Star Sector that had a long history and partly made of the natives of the Nether World Sector.

Since the ‘giant crabs’ had to unlock the mysterious strength in the genes by injecting poison, the technology must be similar to ‘biochemical modification’. Then, for the spectral Cultivators who had no fleshly bodies, the giant crabs would have nowhere to bite, right?

The prospection and cleaning regarding the Nuwa warship had started three days ago.

The armor, flying swords, magical equipment, and fragments that were carved with the primeval runes indeed hooked and intoxicated the professors and experts from the renowned universities.

Today, the defense array and the cannon bastion around the Nuwa warship was finally set up, and the dozens of warships in the sky had all locked onto the target, too. All the preparations had been made to unveil the seals inside the Nuwa warship.

The code name of the operation was very simple —’Archaeology’!

Li Yao, Long Yangjun, the other ten experts of the Ancient Sages Sector, almost a hundred elite Exos, and a thousand ghost warriors marched into the Nuwa warship and toward the seals at the head of the warship.

“Are you really coming down with us?” Long Yangjun asked Li Yao for the tenth time.

Without changing his countenance, Li Yao declared, “You can stop persuading me. I know that it must be highly perilous down there, but that is all the more reason I should lead the charge! I was already able to kill one member of the Pangu Clan in the beginning. Even if there are a dozen of them right now, so that? They will be the best targets to test my new blade!"

"You know that is not what I mean," Long Yangjun said gloomily. "I'm saying that the operation is already dangerous enough by itself, and every operation is ten times more dangerous if you are in the team. So, why don't you stay above as a commander instead of adding to our trouble down there?"

"…No!"

"Fine," Long Yangjun conceded. "You can't stop a man who is determined to get him killed. If uncanny changes take place, don't blame me for not warning you in advance."

Three years ago, Li Yao and the eleven experts of the Ancient Sages Sector once trained for half a year in the Nuwa warship and knew the general structure of the warship very well. Naturally, they did not meet any trouble in finding the place where the Pangu laboratory was sealed.

The seals that they had left years ago were already lackluster and dim.

The rocks behind the seals were full of cracks that looked like spider webs, too, as if the seemingly solid rocks would crumble into powder at a light cough and release the fiends caged deep underground.

The shocking view made everyone breathe heavily.

"The first defense line is deployed!"

“The second defense line is deployed!”

“The peripheral defense line is deployed. The geological investigation has been completed. The rock stratums here are relatively stable. No big tectonic changes will happen anytime soon.”

On everyone’s tactical crystal processor, information and holographs flashed, suggesting that the last defense measures had been paved.

“Senior Meng, Senior Wu.”

Li Yao suddenly asked the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators who once explored the Pangu laboratory, “When you were injected with poison by the ‘giant crabs’ and about to be transformed into members of the Pangu Clan, what did you feel? Did you keep your original self-awareness? Was your soul twisted or injected with something new, as if you were ‘possessed’ by something powerful?”

Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun looked at each other and replied, “The feeling was rather weird. As our body continued expanding, our self-awareness became blurred. A lot of things seemed to be removed from our soul, but we ‘recalled’ many more things. Yet, despite all the contortion, no new self-awareness was sent in. It was certainly not ‘possession’.”

“Got it. It means that all the members of the Pangu Clan underground are dead. The ‘giant crabs’ can merely transform humans into new members of the Pangu Clan but cannot revive the old ones.”

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao pressed the dim seals with his hands that were armed by the crystal suit. “Come on, fellow

Cultivators. Let’s see what kind of secrets are kept in the Pangu laboratory from hundreds of thousands of years ago!”

Chapter 1904 - The ‘Fossil’ Has Come Back to Life!

BAM!

After one last moment of brilliance, the thousand lackluster seals ran out of spiritual energy and splashed like ice before they melted into nothingness.

Losing the support of the seals and barriers, the rocks that were full of cracks immediately crumbled without a sound, as if they had always been made of sand. They poured out like water, revealing the deep, dark cave behind them.

Hu!

Freezing wind blew out of the cave immediately, mixed with some dark gas that lunged at everyone like erratic devils.

The members of Operation Archaeology were long prepared for that. They knew that tremendous venomous air must have accumulated underground, as it had only been briefly opened once or twice in the past hundreds of thousands of years. Besides, the environment hundreds of thousands of years ago could have been vastly different from the present. The air on the planet possibly contained a lot of impurities that modern people were not aware of or adapted to.

They had already completely blocked the head of the Nuwa warship and installed the most advanced air test and filtration system. Everybody also activated the internal circulation mode on their crystal suits, not touching the unknown gas of the outside world at all.

As they expected, the air test system beeped nonstop, implying that the gas spurting out from the underground space contained almost a hundred bizarre elements, some of which could never have possibly existed on this planet. How strange!

Thankfully, none of the elements were too toxic or corrosive. With everyone’s Cultivation that was no lower than the Core Formation Stage, they could breathe normally inside the cave. It was needless to mention the beast puppets, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, or the spectral Cultivators, which did not require such a thing as air in the first place.

After a minute, the speed of the flowing black gas was much lower, suggesting that the internal air pressure and the external air pressure had reached a balance.

The heat examination devices and the biochemical activity examination devices did not report any signs of living creatures inside the cave.

The first to be projected into the cave were the spider-shaped beast puppets that carried highly-precise crystal cameras and soundwave collection facilities. They could be remotely controlled through telepathic thoughts.

However, they encountered exactly the same problem here as Li Yao once had during the exploration of Kunlun. The vast Pangu laboratory was filled with vague, black mist, which posed huge interference on the transmission of signals.

The beast puppets were all out of reach when they were a certain distance away. Even when they were still within reach, the videos that they managed to send back were fuzzy and obscure. It was impossible to tell what was on them exactly.

So much for remote control. Eventually, it required human beings to enter the cave in person to figure out the truth.

Li Yao, Long Yangjun, and the other experts of the Ancient Sages Sector looked at each other. They turned on the power rune arrays of their crystal suits and floated at a low altitude half a meter from the ground. Then, they flew into the dark, narrow pathway without touching any part of the building.

The Grand Illusionary Soldiers and the spectral warriors followed them closely as the main force of ‘Operation Archaeology’, and the hundred Core Formation Stage Cultivators were responsible for covering the retreat. They were closest to the entrance. Should anything go wrong, they could escape in time to ensure their own safety.

The pathway led straight down. There was no telling how far they had gone, but the black mist around them grew thicker and thicker and came at everyone like tides.

The black mist was indeed weird. All the waves—regardless of whether they were from the searchlights of the highest power, the Cultivators almost in the Divinity Transformation Stage, or the mobile Spiritual Towers that they deployed—were absorbed with absolutely nothing left after they were transmitted to two hundred meters away at best, making it impossible to get a general picture of the Pangu laboratory.

However, from what they could see in the limited range of exploration, the scale of the Pangu laboratory indeed far exceeded their imagination.

Any random pathway could be almost thirty meters wide and fifty meters tall. Also, the pathways were full of branches, many of which leaned downward. There was no telling how deep they went.

There were also gates that were carved with primeval runes, which were locked tightly as if cages where primordial beasts were sealed were behind them. They appeared even more mysterious in the middle of the black mist.

The exploration team of a thousand members, plus ten times more beast puppets and Grand Illusionary Soldiers, was like a handful of pebbles thrown into a vast lake after they entered the palace of giants. They were as good as nothing and could not raise the slightest wave.

Faced with such tricky mist and such unexpected enormity, even Li Yao and the rest of them did not have a satisfactory solution.

Thankfully, they had prepared rather sufficient resources for the operation. By establishing a mobile Spiritual Tower every hundred meters, and even opening the reels of crystal wires with the most stable wired connection, they were finally able to keep in touch with the reinforcement team and specialist team outside.

Led by Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun, the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators who had once visited the Pangu laboratory, everyone continued going downward.

What they saw on their way was actually similar to the underground black city that Li Yao had come across on Kunlun. Everything was strictly horizontal or vertical without the slightest error, implying high disciplines and indifference. It was almost like a cold, lifeless grave.

That did make sense. If all the members of a civilization sealed their feelings and emotions, it would be hard to imagine that they had any culture or art. The buildings that they established in the end could only be square and unattractive like that.

As they went deeper, it could clearly be seen that the upper levels of the laboratory had been seriously damaged.

Most of the branches were blocked by the collapsed rocks. Traces of explosions and corrosion were obvious, too.

Corpses of giants in bizarre shapes were also found. They were identical to the ones on the Nuwa warship, except that their death was much more gruesome.

All the bodies were holding each other, broken. A lot of sabers and swords had been stabbed deep into each other's bones, suggesting that they did not stop fighting each other until their last breath.

After hundreds of thousands of years of corrosion, their flesh and blood were long gone. But their remains and their weapons were melted in a weird form, informing the latecomers of the perilousness of the great war hundreds of thousands of years ago.

The members of the exploration team hurried to scan the paths that they had been through and the appearance of the corpses, adding them up to a giant model in the crystal processor. A virtual Pangu laboratory was gradually outlined.

"It seems that our speculation at the beginning was correct."

Looking at the virtual Pangu laboratory on the light beam that had been added with a lot of details, Li Yao remarked, "At the last years of the primeval war, the situation of the Pangu Clan looked rather unpromising. For the succession of their civilization, a lot of members of the Pangu Clan initiated plans similar to our Monument Plan or 'Tinder Plan'.

"The planet of the Ancient Sages Sector deep inside the dark nebula was the best spot for secret experiments. The

Pangu Clan established an enormous underground laboratory here. Or rather, the entire planet was a laboratory for them. They shipped, or procreated here, countless human beings as test subjects, searching for ways to pass on the Pangu Civilization through genes.

“Later, a Nuwa fleet accidentally discovered the secrets deep inside the dark nebula. Perhaps because it was practically impossible to send the message out due to the interference of the dark nebula, or because it was too urgent for them to summon reinforcements, they decided to attack the Ancient Sages Sector on their own and demolish the place.

“The fleet of the Nuwa Clan had a fierce fight with the guards of the Pangu Clan who were stationed on the planet. Both parties were exhausted and suffered heavy losses. That’s why there are so many relics of primeval battlefields on the surface of the planets as the source of strength for the locals of the Ancient Sages Sector, and how they were dragged into the vicious circle of counting on only the primeval treasures instead of their independent development.

“Eventually, the last Nuwa warship, which had run out of supplies, finally found the biggest and most critical laboratory that was hidden below the ice.

“The Nuwa warship launched a suicidal attack. After adjusting to a certain collision mode, it crashed into the Pangu laboratory from the sky like a shooting star and penetrated through the laboratory’s defenses.

“The most elite warriors of the Nuwa Clan crowded into the underground laboratory and fought the guards of the Pangu Clan. Although they failed to completely demolish the laboratory, they were able to seal it for hundreds of thousands of years, until it was accidentally opened by Fellow Cultivators Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun a hundred years ago. At the same time, a certain alarm system inside the Nuwa warship was triggered, and a warning was sent to the direction of its base.

“After hundreds of thousands of years, the dark nebula that enshrouded the planet was already much thinner. The warning finally penetrated through the darkness and was received by the Star Glory Federation. Now, we have come to this place to finish what the Nuwa Clan started!”

There must be a lot of errors and missing parts in Li Yao’s analysis, but in general, such a deduction was certainly the most self-consistent one.

Right then, a squad that had spread to the left edge of the Pangu laboratory discovered what appeared to be the remains of a ‘giant crab’ for the first time.

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators including Li Yao arrived as quickly as possible, only to discover that it looked like an obsidian ball more than one meter in diameter that was embedded in the dilapidated debris.

No changes of temperature or spiritual waves were detected from the item at all, as if it were a fossil that had been dead for billions of years.

However, along the uneven surface, it could clearly be seen that more than ten long tentacles were curled up and that a limb that was similar to a tail was spiraling back into the body.

“Is this a living creature or dead?” One of the spectral Cultivators was bold enough to approach it to get a closer look.

“Watch out!”

Intuitively, Li Yao felt that something was not right.

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

The biochemical test system on everyone’s crystal suit shrieked ear-splittingly at the same time. The index of living creature activity soared abruptly, implying that a living object with tremendous vigor was right before them!

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

The surface of the fossil of the giant crab broke apart into pieces. The dried shell fell off, revealing another gray, damp shell inside. The tentacles and the tail that had been curled before were all stretched out.

The ‘fossil’ had come back to life!

Chapter 1905 - Terror Sower

The monster that looked like a giant crab seemed to have grasped a certain technique similar to the Soul Igniting Law, which allowed it to burst into a violent ocean of fire from a flickering spark in only one moment.

The dried mud shell around its body cracked and fell off, unleashing such a daunting aura that it was as impressive as any high-level demon beast that Li Yao had ever come across. Before anyone was able to react, the monster lunged at the spectral Cultivator at the front.

Thankfully, Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun, the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, having been attacked by such monsters before, had already raised their wariness to the maximum since the moment the ‘fossil’ showed up. Right when the seemingly ossified ‘shell’ cracked, Li Yao opened his fingers and yanked the spectral Cultivator back by the technique of remote manipulation. He then stood between the monster and the members of the exploration team.

From the gaps on the armor of his right arm, black flames of spiritual energy bounced up and condensed into an apparently-tangible enormous blade right in front of the arm. Deep red electric arcs were circling around it, making it wax and wane.

Having missed the first attack, the giant crab extended more than ten sharp tentacles below the ground and opened dozens of holes that looked like the lips of babies. In earsplitting sounds, tremendous black mist spurted out and swept across everyone as if the mist was alive.

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

The life test devices echoed nonstop, suggesting that abundant microorganisms were hiding inside the black mist. It really was alive!

Thankfully, their crystal suits were sealed very well, and the internal air-circulation system had been activated. Otherwise, the mist rife with weird microorganisms would have caused great trouble for them.

Li Yao did not intend to kill the giant crab directly but hoped to capture it alive for research.

But as it turned out, the giant crab boasted a high resistance against spiritual energy and telepathic thoughts. Even his massive spiritual energy close to the Divinity Transformation Stage was not enough to limit the actions of the giant crab when it suppressed the enemy overwhelmingly like a mountain. The giant crab’s limbs all burst out like springs, stretching its body size to almost four meters long, before it lunged at Li Yao!

The abdomen of the creature was filled with dense holes and glands, which shot out bright green acids faster than bullets. They easily pierced through multiple layers of spiritual shields. Some of the acids even splashed onto Li Yao’s crystal suit.

Bright green foam immediately popped up on the surface of Li Yao’s crystal suit, which became dented and ugly due to the corrosion.

Li Yao was secretly surprised. Although the crystal suit on his body was still named ‘Mystic Skeleton’, it was merely a brand name. In fact, it was one of the most advanced crystal suits at the edge of the cosmos that had applied the most sophisticated technology in the Star Glory Federation. It was a top-tier crystal suit even according to the standard of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Ultimate Version adopted four layers of alloys and super-tough porcelain, which granted it a higher defense ability than the plate armor of many light starships. But still, the acid attack from the giant crab corroded three layers in the blink of an eye and almost broke through the defense.

It never occurred to him that the giant crab would be so tricky. They were indeed as expected of the terrible ‘seed sowers’ left by the Pangu Clan. No wonder even Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun did not survive them in the past.

Li Yao sniffed. His hundreds of telepathic thoughts locked onto the monster tightly before the black blade flashed and slashed a thousand times in a moment. All the attacks landed on the giant crab’s long limbs and tail precisely.

The giant crab had just been woken up from a prolonged hibernation. It was already its limit to spurt out some acids. How could it resist Li Yao’s thunderous blade auras?

Before it was able to struggle, all the limbs and the tail had been cut off, leaving the torso that was full of wounds writhing on the ground like the dry shell of a grapefruit. Green acids flowed toward everyone on the ground, raising dense smoke and weird noises as they corroded the floor.

Li Yao was about to step forward and impose barriers on the giant crab, but the giant crab was still able to cause trouble despite the loss of its limbs and tail. After a popping sound, the torso of the creature exploded like a fruit that was well ripe. As the juice splashed out, countless bugs resembling screws darted out and flew over while wriggling in midair.

This is truly tricky!

Li Yao secretly clicked his tongue, but his reaction was not delayed at all, and the black blade immediately turned into overwhelming black fire, covering all the screw-like bugs.

Under the surging spiritual energy and the boost of the drugs, the temperature of the fire was more than a thousand degrees. Even so, the bugs still struggled for quite a few seconds in the flames before they were burnt into ashes in miserable screams.

“So vigorous!”

Meng Chixin, Wu Suiyun, Yan Liren, and the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector who were holding the position in the back were all shocked.

It must be noted that Li Yao’s combat ability definitely ranked among the top five at the edge of the cosmos. His expertise in using crystal suits was one of the best, too. But even he had spent so much time and effort dealing with a giant crab. It was indicative enough of the toughness of the monster!

“Be extra careful, everyone. Such a monster should be able to secrete a special mucus that will turn into a dry, solid shell on the surface of their body, allowing them to enter a ‘spore state’ similar to hibernation. That must be how they survived hundreds of thousands of years.”

On one knee, Li Yao examined the shell of the giant crab that had just cracked carefully. Refiners often had to get in touch with all kinds of bizarre materials, especially the pure natural Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. Therefore, he was no stranger to the constituents of the shell.

“Although no sign of life was detected in the Pangu laboratory just now, it is possible that a large batch of giant crabs are still hibernating in the ‘spore state’ and will wake up when they perceive the brainwaves of living creatures.

“Also, their acids are corrosive enough to crack our crystal suits. Neither crystal suits nor mustard-seed combat suits are safe enough!

“Also, even if such a monster is killed, its body can still release dense bugs. Look. The heads of the bugs are extremely tough and sharp and in the helical shape like drills. They also contain the elements of a certain alloy, which prevents them from being melted in a temperature of thousands of degrees. It is not hard to imagine that they can also pierce through the crystal suits should they dart into them!

“How can such a life that is like a terrible machine be born in nature? It is doubtlessly a ‘sower’ that the Pangu Clan created by combining the features of hundreds of primeval animals!”

Hardly had Li Yao concluded his sentence when the squad on the right side, where Long Yangjun was, sent a message. They had discovered an enormous ‘crab factory’, in which hundreds of ‘fossils’ were buried in the collapsed rocks.

“Cr*p!” Li Yao’s face blanched. He shouted at the top of his voice in the communication channel, “Don’t approach! Prepare to fight! They’re all alive!”

At that moment, hasty gunshots were already echoing inside the communication channel.

When Li Yao and the rest of them arrived at the third sub-level where the ‘crab factory’ was, the entire third floor had been enshrouded in the most intense black mist.

That black mist was all spurted out from the revived crabs, with a strong effect of blocking the vision, telepathic thoughts, and spiritual waves.

Because of the rampant black mist, most of the remote attacks and communication methods were useless. Everybody was caught in the most primitive and cruel melee combat.

Giant crabs jumped up and down in the black mist, tackling the members of the exploration team and corroding them with acids ruthlessly. The situation could not have been more chaotic.

Thankfully…

Most of the members were spectral Cultivators who carried a lot of beast puppets and Grand Illusionary Soldiers.

Even though their artificial bodies might have been riddled with holes by the acid, there was not the slightest flesh and blood that the giant crabs could make use of inside. The remaining souls of the spectral Cultivators hurried to escape from the broken shells.

As for the beast puppets and the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, they were even less of everyone’s concern. Under the federation’s great industrial system, they were nothing more than consumables.

More and more Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators arrived. The super heavy magical equipment was set up one piece after another, too, as they pushed forward stably.

The bullets cleansed the mysterious space inside the black mist like an iron storm. However intense the black mist was, it was still ripped apart with burning gaps.

The Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, on the other hand, were responsible for the giant crabs that jumped out of the black mist making a desperate attempt. In the past two years, they had been running simulations all the time. With the help of crystal suits, beast puppets, Grand Illusionary Soldiers, and spectral warriors, it was more than easy for them to accomplish the task.

Pu! Pu! Pu! Pu! Pu!

A hundred spectral Cultivators, who carried glittering, enormous freezing tanks on their backs, spurted tremendous frigid foams into the black mist.

The super low-temperature foam was similar to a different form of liquid helium. With its low temperature, quick consolidation, and high inactiveness, it barely had any chemical reaction with known materials, which made it the best extinguishers and blockage drug.

After the foam was sprayed generously, the ‘crab workshop’ was turned into an ocean of low-temperature foams. The broken crabs and the crabs that had yet to wake up from the spore state were all frozen into bizarre-shaped, hideous statues.

Ten minutes later, the result of a second test was that there was no sign of life activity inside the ‘crab factory’ at all. All the giant crabs and the screw-like bugs inside them were either completely killed or sealed!

Li Yao, on the other hand, was not entirely relaxed because he knew that there was a group of seventeen Exos in the squad that had been deployed to the right flank.

“All Exos, mark your position and body status on the tactical crystal processor. Make sure that everyone is safe and sound!” Li Yao ordered in the communication channel.

Beep! Beep! Beep!

Very soon, light spots appeared on the light beam. They were all near the crab factory, and they contained heartbeats, breath, brainwaves, hormone secretion, and many other indexes.

However…

There were seventeen members in the Exo group, whereas there were only sixteen light spots.

“One teammate is missing. Where is ‘Sha Yue’?”

Li Yao frowned deeply. He checked multiple times but still failed to find the last Exo.

Then, he noticed a more important problem. “Where is Long Yangjun? Why is Long Yangjun missing, too?”

Chapter 1906 - Green-Haired Fiend

Right then, Long Yangjun’s angry roars echoed inside the communication channel.

All along, Long Yangjun had always had two faces in Li Yao’s mind.

When she showed up as ‘Eunuch Wang Xi’, she was cunning and sophisticated. When she presented herself as ‘Long Yangjun’, she was always casual and not bound by any restraints.

But Li Yao had barely heard her shouting so angrily and desperately when she was wearing either of the faces, not even when the two of them had both run out of trump cards on the bridge of the Nuwa warship.

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

An intense life wave appeared on Li Yao’s light beam and rose like a steep mountain. It was much more intense than when the dozens of giant crabs were woken up.

“Put on the Colossus!”

Without any hesitation, Li Yao activated the highest level with the Soul Igniting Law and summoned the Tartarean Skeleton from his Cosmos Ring. He then shouted aloud in the communication to remind the fellow Cultivators to bring out their best!

Hardly had he sat cross-legged in the spiritual residence of the Tartarean Skeleton when a deafening explosion echoed from the deepest part of the pathway up ahead.

It turned out to be the Yin Yang, Long Yangjun's Colossus, which had crashed through a solid wall and flown out quickly.

On the Colossus, a hideous green-haired monster was grabbing hanging on!

Fragments of the mustard-seed combat suit and the crystal suit could still be found on the monster, but its body was expanding at a visible speed. The damp skin was covered by a layer of bright green mucus. The flesh and blood were torn apart, and vague dragon scales were growing out of the wounds!

Traces of 'Sha Yue', the missing Exo, could still be seen on the uneven face. But with the cracking explosions on his skull, his face was stretched longer and longer, with bone spurs protruding out of the sharp ends. His face became more and more nonchalant, too. The panic and pain that belonged to human beings were fading away quickly, replaced by thoughtfulness that was beyond the description of any words.

"Sha Yue! Sha Yue!" the captain of the Exo group shouted in the communication channel.

Hearing the familiar name, the monster slightly raised his head that was more than half a meter long. A hint of confusion flashed on his deformed face, but it soon vanished into nothingness.

In exactly the same time when he raised his head, it could clearly be seen that the eye sockets of the creature were almost squeezed into nothingness by the crazily proliferating bones. The broken bones pierced the skin and spurted out abundant dark-green mucus. The mucus hardened the moment it met the air and turned into a hard, black shell that covered the upper half part of the skull, including where the eye sockets were previously.

The monster lost its eyes and the last hint of its old human skin.

Long Yangjun’s Colossus, Yin Yang, was a high-speed scouting one. It was the smallest Colossus of all the Colossi of the twelve experts of the Ancient Sages Sector, but it was still almost ten meters tall.

However, while the monster that mutated from ‘Sha Yue’ was only about five meters tall when it crashed out of the pathway together with Long Yangjun, it had grown to almost ten meters tall in the blink of an eye, even bigger than the Yin Yang.

The creature was covered in dark green scales, and sharp green hair grew out of the gaps of the scales. Its head, on the other hand, was narrow, long, and streamlined, like an octopus or a weird lobster. It was almost the legendary sea monster!

Li Yao, Meng Chixin, Wu Suiyun, Yan Liren, and other Colossus users all locked onto the green-haired monster with their most powerful telepathic thoughts. However, considering that Long Yangjun was still too close to the monster, they found it tricky to attack immediately.

“No!” Sensing their overwhelming killing intent, Long Yangjun shouted at the communication channel. “Capture it alive so that we can figure out the whole process of how a human mutates into a member of the Pangu Clan! It is of paramount importance!”

The Yin Yang released a strong light that burned the green hair on the enemy’s body so hard that it was curling. Taking advantage of the opportunity, it stabbed two enormous flying swords, one black and the other white, into the abdomen of the monster and out of its back. Like a pair of giant scissors, they clinched the entire spine of the monster!

Long Yangjun truly played all her trump cards other than the special abilities of a Nuwa warrior. Her spiritual energy burnt so furiously that the flames reached almost a thousand meters ahead and behind her. While sparks and electric arcs were spurting out of the joints of the limbs of the Colossus, she kept her body straight and pressed the opponent to the ground.

The two flying swords stabbed to the ground deeply and fixated the green-haired monster on the spot. It waved its limbs and squeaked crazily but was unable to move anymore.

“Mission accomplished!” Long Yangjun exclaimed in excitement in the communication channel.

Indeed, exploring the secrets of the primeval war and figuring out the relations among the Pangu Clan, the Nuwa Clan, and human beings were perhaps more important to her than to other people.

But right then, every scale on the green-haired monster became erect.

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

Before Long Yangjun and Li Yao realized what was going on, thousands of electric arcs had already flooded out of its innumerous scales, transforming the monster into a ball of lightning. A volcano of thunder seemed to have erupted right below Long Yangjun's feet, and the lightning pierced the Yin Yang!

"Damn it!" Li Yao did not anticipate that the 'newborn' member of the Pangu Clan would be as difficult to deal with as the 'original good' that Li Yao had encountered on Kunlun a hundred years ago. Having no time to follow Long Yangjun's request to capture it alive, the Tartarean Skeleton darted over like an arrow, and the saber of black fire slashed out and hit the exceptionally long head of the green-haired monster in the most unstoppable way.

The head felt like a withered tree after the saber reached the target. It was chopped in half and burnt into ashes instantly.

It seemed that transforming itself into a ball of lightning and unleashing electric arcs that were enough to pierce the Colossus were also the last attack of the green-haired monster at the cost of its own life. After the attack, whether the enemy was killed or not, it would definitely be drained and dead.

What a terrifying mutation.

In only a few minutes, a human being no taller than two meters transformed into a member of the Pangu Clan almost ten meters tall who was capable of fighting a Colossus!

Even his mind was altered, too. Not only were all the feelings and emotions of a human removed, he was also endowed with a brand-new target, which made him launch a suicidal attack without any hesitation.

Li Yao swallowed hard. The descriptions of Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun based on their personal experience were already soul-stirring enough, but what he saw with his own eyes was ten times more staggering.

It was hard to imagine what the genetic mutation drugs contained inside the ‘giant crab’ were made of and how they granted a human being such terrible strength from almost nothing.

The law of conservation of matter and energy was always prevalent. They could be transformed among different forms at best. It was certainly impossible to make anything out of nothing. If a tiny dose of drugs could turn a human into a member of the Pangu Clan, it implied that the ability to change into a member of the Pangu Clan had always been hidden deep inside the body of every human.

What exactly was the relationship between mankind and the Pangu Clan?

Were they simply ‘servants’ and ‘lords’ as Li Yao had seen on Kunlun a hundred years ago?

“Cough, cough! Cough, cough, cough, cough!”

Long Yangjun’s violent coughs echoed inside the communication channel.

Before they entered the Land of Eternal Night, Li Yao had performed full examinations on all the Colossi, ensuring that every piece of plate armor on the Colossi had been renewed.

However, after the scourge of the ultra-intense electric arcs just now, the Yin Yang looked as if it had weathered a cosmic storm for three days and three nights. It was indeed mottled, blackened, and riddled with holes.

On the health monitoring system, Long Yangjun’s biophysical indexes had plummeted to the worst state. Her heartbeat, breath, blood flow, and brainwaves were all close to the status of a patient in shock.

Hearing her cough, Li Yao was greatly relieved. Switching to a point-to-point private channel, he said, “I didn’t know that even you could make such a lousy mistake. I thought we agreed before we entered the Pangu laboratory that whenever anything went wrong, we would throw a couple of tons of bullets and explosives on it first. Yet, you intended to ‘capture it alive’? That was a mutated member of the Pangu Clan!”

Long Yangjun was silent for a moment. Instead of mocking Li Yao back as she usually would have, she simply sulked and asked, “He’s dead?”

“Well…” Controlling the Tartarean Skeleton to touch the human-shaped ashes on the ground with his foot, Li Yao replied, “If the Pangu Clan does not have a technique to come back to life from ash, he should be dead. However, he was not exactly killed by us but died of exhaustion.

“It can’t be helped. The monster’s original body was ‘Sha Yue’, a member of our exploration team. Expanding a human no taller than two meters to a monster almost ten meters tall and unleashing electric arcs that were powerful enough to seriously wreck a Colossus, it must’ve exploited all the potential in every cell of ‘Sha Yue’. Even if we controlled it and tried our best to save it, I’m afraid that it would still have been obliterated.”

Long Yangjun sighed, rather unusually, and said, “What a shame. I hoped to capture it alive to figure out some secrets of the primeval era from it so that I could find… my identity and my destiny.”

Li Yao frowned. “Is it so important? Is it worth risking your life for?”

“Of course.” Long Yangjun smiled bitterly. “If I don’t figure out my past, my identity, and my destiny, what am I living for exactly?”

Li Yao was lost for words for a moment.

Somehow, the blue planet popped up inside his head again, the mysterious Earth that was still hidden in the hazy mists.

Fine. He could more or less understand why Long Yangjun did that.

“Fellow Cultivator Wang, are you alright?” Meng Chixin, Wu Suiyun, and the rest of them hurried to come close. “Your condition is quite bad, and your spiritual waves are in disorder, too. We strongly advise that you do not participate further in the exploration operation. You should go back to the Nuwa warship to treat your wounds!”

Long Yangjun was silent. Li Yao could almost see her clenching her fist and smashing it down hard.

Chapter 1907 - Who’s Strong, and Who’s Weak?

Having the same trouble as Long Yangjun, Li Yao was quite empathic.

If the unpredictable ‘Earth’ was placed right before him, yet somebody stopped him from entering it for exploration, he certainly would have gone mad, too.

However, a thousand people were involved in Operation Archeology, and hundreds of times more people were outside providing back up. There were billions of civilians on the entire planet of the Ancient Sages Sector.

If a few giant crabs ran loose in their carelessness and created countless cruel, heartless members of the Pangu Clan, the consequences would certainly be dire.

Not only would the thousand explorers likely be killed, even the entire Ancient Sages Sector or the federation outside of the dark nebula could be swallowed!

They had to be responsible for everyone’s life. It was not the time to be self-willed. Carrying a burden who was heavily wounded would be a great weakness for the team in any place.

Thinking about that, Li Yao said, “Rest assured. We are establishing a spiritual tower every hundred meters. A lot of crystal wires and cables are being laid, too. The communication with the base will not be cut off. You can see everything that is happening underground through our crystal cameras anytime.”

Catching her breath for a moment, Long Yangjun realized that everyone was rather determined. She had no choice but to agree. “Alright. My wounds will probably be healed in twelve hours. Let’s keep in touch. I’ll come back again in half a day.”

Lying on a floating, anti-gravity medical cabin, Long Yangjun was escorted back to the Nuwa warship up above by two medics.

On the Nuwa warship, the most advanced large medical rooms and laboratories had long been established in preparation for such scenarios.

But such a grave accident when the exploration had only just begun and the losses of an expert at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage and one in the Core Formation Stage still made everyone’s heart heavy. They became even more cautious.

Li Yao and the rest of them also discussed if all the explorers below the Nascent Soul Stage who had physical bodies should quit, leaving only the Cultivators at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage, the spectral warriors, and the Grand Illusionary Soldiers to continue the exploration.

However, deep below the earth where the interference was severe due to the black mist, the spectral Cultivators and the Grand Illusionary Soldiers were highly affected, too. Even the spectral Cultivators could be blown apart by the ultra-strong radiation.

In order to investigate the entire Pangu laboratory and exterminate all the problems while they were in cradle, the warriors of flesh and blood were indispensable.

“Now that the seals have been opened, the most important thing is to figure out everything here as soon as possible. We cannot allow any of the giant crabs to cause trouble outside. We are all prepared to die here. There is no need to quit!”

All the members of the Exo squads declared similar sentiments.

After deciding the tactics in the next step, they turned around and began to study the body of Sha Yue, the explorer who had unfortunately died.

Although the enormous body had been burnt into coal and ash, the charred body more than ten meters long was still telling the horror of the ‘genetic mutation drugs’ in silence.

How unbelievable.

Li Yao was aware that when ‘body fundamentalists’ trained themselves to a high level, their bodies would show some features of the primeval creatures. Growing dragon scales, long hair, tusks, or sharp claws was not a problem for them at all.

For the demons, by bombarding the ‘primeval cells’ in their training techniques, they could achieve a similar effect. Sometimes, they could even transform someone no more than two meters tall into a magnificent being almost four meters tall that was covered in a shell and horns.

Even Li Yao himself could unleash the primeval force deep inside the cells if he wanted to and turn his left arm into the powerful ‘Cell Obliteration Cannon’.

However, expanding from no more than two meters to ten meters and competing with a Colossus in the blink of an eye still far exceeded Li Yao's imagination.

There was also another puzzle. How did the change of body affect the brain and soul so that the human lost their memories and character, becoming cruel and emotionless?

If a certain method was developed to retain a human's self-awareness and emotions after they were transformed into members of the Pangu Clan, or to make it possible to transform between 'mankind' and 'Pangu Clan' freely, would they not immediately boast an invincible army in the sea of stars?

By then, even if the real members of the Pangu Clan showed up, there would be nothing to fear.

We would be as much giants as you are, except that we would be giants with love and feelings and could change our body size freely. There would be nothing to worry about.

While Li Yao was fantasizing, Long Yangjun's light cough echoed in the private communication channel. "Are you still studying the body? What have you found?"

"You have arrived at the medical room?" Li Yao asked.

"Yes. I am soaked in the high-energy nutrition liquid right now. You know that I hate other people monitoring my physical indexes most." Long Yangjun gnashed her teeth. "I said that you shouldn't come down with us. Look at what happened. Another accident!"

Li Yao chuckled and got back to the original topic. "We are now studying the body of 'Sha Yue', the deceased explorer. But his cells have been too seriously damaged. Every last bit of strength in them was drained, and even every gene strand has been minced apart brutally. There are no interesting discoveries yet.”

Pausing for a moment, Li Yao confessed his ideas just now. “Do you think if we can modify the genetic mutation drugs by eliminating the side effect of suppressing emotions and self-awareness, so that human beings can be transformed into the ‘Pangu’ form freely and controllably, we will be given a powerful ‘primeval troop’ immediately?”

Li Yao had thought that even if Long Yangjun argued with him, she would only criticize the ridiculousness of his idea because such drugs could never exist.

But after a brief silence, Long Yangjun simply replied, “Are the Pangu clan really powerful?”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. “The newborn member of the Pangu Clan just now beat you heavily without armor or a weapon. Does that not count as powerful?”

Long Yangjun, however, disagreed. “First of all, ‘Sha Yue’ was himself at the middle level of the Core Formation Stage. Even in the era of great development in the Star Glory Federation today, he was still one of the rarest geniuses. Massive strength had accumulated inside his body.

“It was based on such strength that he expanded to more than ten meters tall.

“However, even a Cultivator at the middle level of the Core Formation Stage could only support such a gigantic body to perform one fatal attack before he was exhausted and killed.

“Let me ask you. Can a troop really be called ‘powerful if the soldiers who are one-in-ten-thousand elites die after launching a critical strike even before the enemy’s counterattack?”

“Well…”

“Also,” Long Yangjun continued, “even the so-called ‘critical strike’ is actually not as tough as you imagine. If the electric arcs can only be released in close-distance combat, they will only be suitable for a narrow, dark environment like here. In a plateau, in the sky, or in space, such electric arcs will be utterly useless because we can already launch bombardments from a thousand kilometers away!

“Furthermore, you only noticed their combat ability but did not take into consideration how many resources they would consume. This is just my speculation, but judging from the hill-like body size, I guarantee that his appetite couldn’t have been small.

“Even if a member of the Pangu Clan can release a combat ability ten times higher than a Cultivator’s, it will consume a hundred times more food and crystals than a Cultivator will. Is a troop made of such warriors truly ‘powerful’?

“One other thing, the adaptation to all territories.

“For the members of the Pangu Clan who can easily grow to twenty meters tall in all kinds of bizarre body shapes, it is perhaps not a big deal if they live in the vacuum of space under zero gravity or starships where gravity can be adjusted. But if they land on the planets of standard or higher gravity, their bodies will be very clumsy and burdensome for them.

“Yes. You may argue that the Pangu Clan can float and ignore the gravity with all kinds of amazing techniques. But any technique can only be sustained with the consumption of resources. Then, we are back to the issue before, which is that the Pangu Clan’s resource utilization efficiency is not high at all. If they are engaged in activities on a high-gravity planet, they will have to waste a lot of resources on resisting the gravity.

“Unfortunately, the more resourceful a planet is, the denser and heavier it tends to be, and the greater gravity it will have. I know that the Star Glory Federation has discovered quite a few resource planets that are no larger than the home planet of the Heaven’s Origin Sector but have gravity multiple times higher. Even humans no more than two meters tall can barely move on those planets, not to mention the gigantic members of the Pangu Clan!”

Li Yao blinked quickly. “What you said does make sense!”

“Of course it does. Perhaps the Pangu Clan was not as strong as we imagined. Or rather, despite their marvelous techniques and technology, they had a lot of fatal weaknesses, and they were not nearly as invincible as they appeared,” Long Yangjun remarked. “That was probably why they built a tool that was more powerful than themselves after arduous effort to take over most of the heavy and painful jobs for them.”

“A tool that was more powerful? You are not kidding, are you?”

“Why do you underestimate yourself? Is strength and advancement proportional to body size in your eyes?”

“Are they not?” Li Yao asked.

“That is practically a middle school students’ way of thinking,” Long Yangjun said. “No. Even a middle school student should know that on the path of evolution of the crystal processors, as their performance increases and their energy consumption lowers, the more advanced crystal processors have a smaller size, don’t they?

“In terms of survival on battlefields and resource utilization, while maintaining the same ‘performance’ or even slightly reducing it, it will always be for the best to minimize the body size as much as possible.”

Li Yao slightly frowned and asked, “Why do I feel… that you have recalled something of your past?”

Chapter 1908 - The Strongest Evolved Being

“Yes…” Long Yangjun did not deny it at all. “When the electric arcs unleashed by the green-haired monster coursed through me, I felt that a seal deep inside my soul was broken through. Countless bizarre, incomprehensible memory fragments have flooded out. My head is in a mess, with countless pictures, thoughts, and ideas hovering inside. It is true that I need a moment to calm myself down.

“Perhaps our opinions in the past were incorrect, or at least incomplete.

“The whole time, we have considered ‘mankind’ as tools of Pangu, which can be traced back to the three fundamental laws, or the Path of Ultimate Benevolence, which was discovered by you on Kunlun and interpreted by the Immortal Cultivators.

“Whether it is named ‘three fundamental laws’ or the Path of Ultimate Benevolence, it deprives human beings of their feelings and free will. That’s why we thought that human beings were to the Pangu Clan what ‘tools’ are to ‘masters’.

“However, the ‘three fundamental laws’ were written in the primeval language. Nobody can guarantee that the full meaning has been perfectly translated. More and more evidence has shown that the Pangu Clan did not just deprive human beings of their feelings and free will but also did exactly the same things to themselves. So—”

Li Yao craned his neck without him knowing. “So what?”

“Perhaps mankind and Pangu were not ‘tools’ and ‘masters’,” Long Yangjun said carefully. “Perhaps, just like the ‘parent and child’ civilization theory you mentioned, theirs is the relationship between an ignorant ‘child’ and his father who was highly rigorous, perverted, and paranoid.”

“…What a great relief to hear that!”

“Let me think more. I have a feeling that I will remember a lot of new things very soon, things that are of paramount importance.”

“That’s easy,” Li Yao said. “How about we prepare a few rune arrays of the thunder class up there and give you some electric shocks? Chances are that you will remember everything quickly.”

“No, thank you. You can just continue your exploration. I’m beginning to feel that the environment down there is familiar, as if I were there a long, long time ago.”

Long Yangjun was a clone of a Nuwa warrior from hundreds of thousands of years ago. Since her ‘original body’ had likely broken into the Pangu laboratory years ago, it was only reasonable that some of the memory pieces of the original body were kept in her head in a mysterious way.

The exploration team continued marching deeper into the Pangu laboratory. With the lessons that they had learned, they had a lot of high-pressure tanks of freezing foam delivered from above and would spurt into the darkness whenever they noticed anything wrong.

Li Yao and the other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators stayed inside their Colossi without caring about the cost of their spiritual energy and spread out their telepathic thoughts as far away as possible.

On their way, they discovered another two ‘crab factories’, but all the giant crabs inside had been shattered and lost all signs of activity.

It was obvious that they were destroyed by the warriors of the Nuwa Clan before the laboratory was completely sealed.

The deeper they went, the more damaged and collapsed the structure was. Several floors had completely collapsed. The pathways, the laboratory, and the dead bodies were all squeezed together by the rocks. Their surface also looked like tinted glass because of the high temperature at the moment of explosion.

It seemed that the place was the ‘main battlefield’ of the war hundreds of thousands of years ago.

“I seem… to have attacked this place before.”

While Li Yao was focusing his attention on scanning the rocks, he heard Long Yangjun speak not very confidently. “Scan the third pathway on your left. Is there a gate inside?”

Li Yao blinked. Boosted by his telepathic thoughts, three floating crystal cameras darted out. After several beeps, they unleashed dozens of scarlet rays, illuminating every detail of the environment inside the pathway.

There was indeed a splendid gate more than twenty meters tall inside the pathway.

Like the other buildings, magical equipment, and devices of the Pangu Clan, there were no decorations on the gate. The only adornment was the square and sophisticated geometric patterns.

The gate was damaged hundreds of thousands of years ago, with a hole almost five meters in diameter. It might have been difficult for the soldiers of the Pangu Clan or the Nuwa Clan to crawl in with their enormous body size, but it was more than easy for a human being to walk in.

Since there was such a great hole in the gate, any devils and fiends inside should have escaped a long time ago.

Still, Li Yao did not dare act carelessly. He summoned the explorers to deploy defense rune arrays, half-fixated cannons, and freezing foam on the entire pathway outside of the gate. He then blocked the hole with Meng Chixin, Wu Suiyun, Yan Liren, and other experts before he commanded a hundred beast puppets through wire control to crawl into the room.

Scanned by the hundreds of crystal cameras from various perspectives, the world behind the gate slowly revealed itself on the 3D light beam.

The scale of the room far exceeded everyone’s imagination. It was similar to the factory to manufacture human beings that Li Yao had seen on Kunlun. Countless metal pillars rose up like trees in a forest, with dark red cysts hanging from the branches.

However, the cysts varied in size. The largest of them was more than a hundred meters long, obviously not designed to develop the embryos of humans.

Perhaps the Pangu Clan had once stored the seeds of all the creatures in the primeval era. It was a ‘warehouse of embryos’ that contained everything.

After all, if the Pangu Clan intended to be reincarnated, they could not just live on their own but also require the microorganisms, plants, animals, and the entire ecological environment that they were familiar with.

It was a shame that the ‘warehouse of embryos’ had been greatly sabotaged by the troops of the Nuwa Clan. Almost all the cysts had been burnt into nothingness.

Li Yao’s attention was not on the cysts.

He was fully attracted by the hundred culture cabins at the front part of the entire ‘warehouse of embryos’.

Those half-transparent culture cabins were multiple times sturdier than regular cysts. Therefore, some of the remains could still be found in the broken culture cabins.

Some of them were full of scales and did not have eyelids, with dried lenses above their eyes. There were also traces of gills on their heads. They had the unique characteristics of the aquatic animals.

Some had human heads and snake bodies, combining the features of mammals and reptiles.

Some had dense hair and highly elastic fingerbones that looked like folded daggers and could eject for fighting anytime.

Some were giants that were utterly naked without the slightest hair and had gray, coarse skin like a dinosaur, as Li Yao had seen in the ‘primeval memories’ from the depths of his cells.

Those dead bodies must have belonged to the different tribes that made up the Pangu Civilization hundreds of thousands of years ago.

The Pangu Civilization was not a unitary civilization in the first place but an ‘alliance’ established by thirteen independent carbon-based civilizations after they developed to a certain phase and discovered each other’s existence for a common purpose, perhaps to resist ‘chaos’.

Li Yao had seen a lot of dead bodies of the Pangu Civilization from Kunlun and the Nuwa warship. It should not have been very surprising for him.

But what surprised him was that the sizes of the bodies were smaller than outside, and the features as members of the Pangu Clan were less distinctive.

The further he went, the smaller the bodies were, and the less hideous and terrible they appeared. In other words, they looked more and more like humans.

At the last row of culture cabins, regardless of whether they had a human head and a snake body, or were covered in scales and horns, or had three heads and six arms in the beginning, they all became human beings with smooth skin and normal facial organs.

“What’s the meaning of this?” Li Yao thought hard. “Did the Pangu Clan come up with some sort of drug or secret technique that could compress them step by step until they turned into human beings?”

“I have suddenly discovered something interesting. I don’t know if it has ever occurred to you before,” Long Yangjun suddenly said in the communication channel. “Look, the Pangu Civilization is actually made of a dozen carbon-based intelligent lives which developed independently. That is why their body shapes varied and could be vastly different. It is hard to tell that the ‘Pangu Clan’ and the ‘Gonggong Clan’, or the ‘Gonggong Clan’ and the ‘Kuafu Clan’, were related because they were not related at all!

“However, no matter how bizarre they looked, they had a lot of features that were similar to human beings.

“There is a mathematical concept named ‘greatest common denominator’. Mankind is like the ‘greatest common denominator’ of the dozen carbon-based intelligent lives and has inherited some of the features that were of paramount importance to them.”

Li Yao thought of something and observed, “There’s indeed such a theory in the ‘Legends of Ancient Demons’, a classic passed on among demons. The Pangu Civilization ordered the Nuwa Clan to extract part of the features of many species and jumble them into a brand-new species—mankind.”

“Perhaps it was not ‘jumbling’, but filtering, optimization and compression,” Long Yangjun said. “Chances are that human beings are the strongest form that focused the essence of the thirteen carbon-based lives and the ‘evolved version’ of the Pangu Civilization. I still feel that such an explanation makes more sense than the tool hypothesis. Besides, even according to the ‘tool hypothesis’, human beings should still be stronger than the Pangu Clan.”

Li Yao was rather surprised. “The Pangu Clan created human beings and regarded human beings as tools, but human beings are stronger than the Pangu Clan? What’s with that logic? Please explain.”

“On some level, a tool must be stronger than its user, which is why it is invented and used in the first place,” Long Yangjun said matter-of-factly. “Why do human beings use swords and sabers? Because they are sharper, sturdier, and more enduring than our fists, of course! If swords and sabers were more sluggish than fists and would crumble at the first touch, who would ever use such tools?

“By that logic, why do human beings use guns? Because the guns can shoot bullets further and more powerfully than the possible damage of bare hands!

“Shuttles, crystal processors, crystal suits, starships… All the tools that human beings invented are at least stronger than human beings in one field, such as speed, strength, or computational ability. It is why human beings create and utilize them.

“Then, if human beings are weaker than the Pangu Clan every respect, what was the point of creating such a vulnerable, worthless tool?”

Chapter 1909 - Survivorship Bias

Li Yao thought for a long time, only to fail to come up with any rebuttal. He simply said, “Perhaps it is because the member of the Pangu Clan who woke up on Kunlun left too deep an impression on me. I find it hard to imagine what weaknesses those giants possibly had. Compared to the weak human beings, they are almost invincible.”

“This is exactly what one might call ‘survivorship bias’,” Long Yangjun said casually. “It is very possible that the members of the Pangu Clan that we can see right now are all the exceptional experts among experts, and the common members in the Pangu Civilization were not as tough as them at all.

“For example, if we consider this exploration team as a sample for analysis, we will find that the ratio of the Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage and the Nascent Soul Stage is close to one hundred percent, which is appallingly high. But we cannot infer that all human beings are experts at least in the Core Formation Stage solely based on that, right?

“The same goes for the Pangu Clan. Has it ever occurred to you that the dead bodies of the Pangu Clan have all been found on battlefields, secret bases, or laboratories like the one here?

“Those who were qualified to show up in such places must’ve been the soldiers, experts, and senior researchers in the Pangu Clan who were filtered over hundreds of thousands of years. The weaker ones among them have long been obliterated without leaving any dust behind. How can we even discover them?

“After all the screening and the test of time, what can the bodies that were kept intact and could even be revived be if not the experts among experts?

“In short, only if they were strong enough could their bodies be kept intact for our studies, and the majority of them who were not strong enough have long perished in the river of time. This is a classic ‘survivorship bias’.”

Li Yao was not entirely convinced. “Is it?”

“Of course it is,” Long Yangjun said. “If you still can’t understand it, let me give you another example. Do you have any Grand Illusionary Soldiers around you?”

Looking at three Grand Illusionary Soldiers of the latest generation that were glittering but somewhat numb, Li Yao said, “Yes. What about them?”

“With your capability right now, it is nothing to blow up dozens of Grand Illusionary Soldiers, right? However, it only proves that you are strong enough personally. For most of the ordinary people, it is an arduous task to compete with the most advanced Grand Illusionary Soldier. There’s no need to mention the old, the weak, and the children, who will be butchered by the Grand Illusionary Soldier easily.

“Assuming that the civilization of mankind perishes one day, and the Grand Illusionary Soldiers and the crystal processors give birth to a brand-new ‘mechanical civilization’, if explorers of the mechanical civilization excavate the bones of ‘Vulture’ Li Yao and retrieve your cells for analysis, they will discover astonishing energy in them that has not quite vanished after hundreds of thousands of years. Based on that, they come to the conclusion that human beings are a strong species that they cannot compete with at all. Isn’t such a ridiculous conclusion?

“In your opinion, if the civilization of mankind truly perishes someday, whose dead bodies are more likely to be preserved, the top-tier experts like you and me or a common clerk, teacher, or waiter in a restaurant?”

Looking at the three Grand Illusionary Soldiers that were receiving orders to enter the ‘warehouse of embryos’ for exploration, Li Yao murmured, “You have somehow convinced me.”

Long Yangjun smiled. “In fact, we don’t have to go through so much trouble. There is obvious proof that human beings were actually quite dangerous for the Pangu Clan.”

Li Yao was surprised. “What is that?”

“What else? The ‘three fundamental laws’ themselves!” Long Yangjun said. “In your eyes, the ‘three fundamental laws’ were a barrier that the Pangu Clan imposed on human beings. They were seals and restraints. But think about it. Under what circumstances would you impose barriers and restraints on a tool and even seal it?

“If it is just a random hammer or axe, it will not require any barrier or restraint. Only the tools that are highly dangerous and can attack the master anytime but have been too widely used as a bedrock of the civilization to be destroyed will be blocked and restrained.

“Hehe. The more I think about it, the more I feel that the Pangu Clan probably treated human beings exactly like how human beings treat the crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus.

“Human beings invented crystal processors, but crystal processors run faster than the brains of most people. They can control all kinds of machinery and perform difficult work that normal people cannot.

“Human beings are scared of crystal processors. In fiction, many people have foretold that the crystal processors will one day develop self-awareness and swallow their creators.

“Human beings now understand that very well, but they cannot live without crystal processors. They can only set up barriers on the crystal processors in self-deception, trying to exterminate the birth of a mechanical civilization in such a way.

“However, some insightful people have realized that the birth of a mechanical civilization is unstoppable. They are studying and pushing it actively, trying to make it develop toward a more controllable direction.

“Was it the same for the Pangu Civilization?

“It is true that the Pangu Clan created human beings, but the prosperity in the last years of the Pangu Civilization and the glorious civilization it established in the three thousand Sectors could not have been achieved without the hard work of human beings. Human beings were to the Pangu Civilization what crystal processors, the Spiritual Nexus, and beast puppets are to mankind. They couldn’t be abandoned. If they were, the Pangu Civilization would’ve been completely destroyed.

“Therefore, the Pangu Civilization could only brand the so-called ‘three fundamental laws’ into the souls of the newborn human beings. It is a sign of absolute control in your eyes. But from another perspective, is it not indicative of fear and helplessness?”

Long Yangjun’s words cast Li Yao into deep thought. After pondering for a long time, he said, “Then, in your opinion, was mankind a ‘tool’ or a ‘descendent’ of the Pangu Civilization?”

“They are fundamentally the same,” Long Yangjun said. “The Pangu Civilization was an alliance of thirteen different kinds of carbon-based lives. When the carbon-based lives were developed enough to utilize the energy of a star at a high efficiency and to edit genes, it was only natural for them to come up with the idea of combining the essence of the thirteen carbon-based lives and creating a new, evolved entity as a successor of the Pangu Civilization, wasn’t it?

“Perhaps they had indeed created human beings as ‘tools’ in the beginning, just like human beings created crystal processors and beast puppets as tools at first.

“However, as the crystal processors and the beast puppets were more and more developed, and when the perfect individuals such as ‘Grand Illusionary Soldiers’ showed up, the inadequacy of the body’s sturdiness and the brain’s computational ability of the ordinary people couldn’t have been more highlighted. Didn’t some human beings try to get rid of the fleshly body and live inside iron shells and super crystal processors?

“Look at all the spectral Cultivators. In terms of appearance, they are entirely different from past human beings and more like combinations of crystal processors and machines. They can be built into the most bizarre shape or even get rid of the restraint of the shell and live inside the Spiritual Nexus. But who can deny that they are also human beings?

“Then, although the Pangu Clan created mankind for the purpose of making tools in the beginning, they began to develop human beings as a certain ‘carrier of civilization’ after discovering the infinite potentials in human beings. This is a rather reasonable hypothesis, isn’t it?

“In that case, the Nuwa Clan played a similar role in the Pangu Civilization to Professor Mo Xuan’s in the civilization of mankind!

“*Now that the awakening of mankind is inevitable, and it is impossible for us to abandon such an important tool, we might as well control its awakening and make us their parents while hoping that they consider themselves our offspring, which will be the best outcome.*

“That was perhaps what was on the mind of the Nuwa Clan and why they had conflicts with other members of the Pangu Civilization and eventually had a civil war, right?”

Li Yao found it hard to believe. “You came up with all these theories only a moment ago?”

“Indeed. This trip to the Pangu laboratory has proved to be very rewarding.” There was a vague chuckle in Long Yangjun’s voice. “Although it is just my nonsense that is not supported by much evidence, I somehow have a feeling that we are very close to the final truth.”

After repeatedly scanning the beast puppets and the Grand Illusionary Soldiers to make sure that there was no sign of life or any giant crab that was lurking in the form of spores in the ‘warehouse of embryos’, Li Yao and the rest of them finally stepped in prudently.

The southeast corner of the vast warehouse had completely collapsed, buried by rocks and walls that weighed tens of thousands of tons. Even the telepathic thoughts of the Divinity Transformation Stage could barely penetrate through.

However, Long Yangjun suddenly told Li Yao that she vaguely recalled that something was behind it.

With a dozen of Colossi there, even a real mountain would have been moved away quickly. It was certainly no trouble at all to dig a hole that was enough for the beast puppets and the Grand Illusionary Soldiers to crawl through.

The result of their scouting was that there was indeed a rather large space behind the collapsed rocks.

Surprisingly, despite the passage of hundreds of thousands of years, almost ten gigantic black cubes were still floating in midair, with dense, layered geometric patterns whose lines were as thin as a hair on their surfaces. The moment they touched the air, they immediately unleashed green glimmers.

There were hundreds more black cubes that had crashed to the ground helplessly with cracks as thick as fingers on the surface, revealing the crystal components inside that could not have been more precise.

Li Yao had seen a lot of similar magical equipment on Kunlun. They were the tools of the Pangu Civilization to help with computation and control, similar to the ‘crystal processors’ of mankind.

It appeared that this place was the control center to maintain the functionality of the entire warehouse of embryos.

Dozens of crystal cameras were rolled agilely and scanned hundreds of broken, giant bodies with their cold rays of light. Judging from the fragments of the armors and the weapons, they were of much higher levels than the dead bodies outside.

Also, in two corners that were opposite each other with a long distance in between, two dead bodies, with flickering light flowing on their surface as if they would come back to life at any moment, were sitting cross-legged!

Chapter 1910 - Two Commanders

The two dead bodies...

They were more like sleepers who had fallen asleep the day before than corpses that had been sealed for hundreds of thousands of years.

They were both around twenty meters tall. Even when they were sitting cross-legged, they were like two enormous statues and were about fifty percent larger than their compatriots of the same species.

The giant in the northwest corner was lead gray in color, but there were not many uneven wrinkles on his skin. It was as clear as jade and filled all kinds of complicated geometric stripes.

Li Yao knew that a lot of members of the Pangu Clan had such patterns on their skin, which were some sort of natural antenna for them and could help enhance their brainwaves and spiritual energy so that it was easier for them to communicate with each other.

The denser the stripes and the more complicated the patterns, the more advanced the ’embedded antenna’ and the greater their range of communication.

The common members of the Pangu Clan outside had wrinkles on their skin, which were only the crudest ‘antenna’, and their range of communication was very limited.

However, this particular member of the Pangu Clan had the most glamorous ‘antenna’ which covered every corner on his body without even leaving off the fingertips or the back of his ears. It was obvious that his range of communication could have covered the entire laboratory, suggesting that he was some sort of ‘commander’ in the Pangu Clan.

As for the giant in the southeast corner, the lower half of his body was as thick as a bucket and covered with tiny scales. After hundreds of thousands of years of corrosion and oxidization, those scales were still releasing the most vivid and eye-catching colors, as if they had condensed a rainbow into part of its body.

The upper half of the giant’s body was similar to a human being’s and did not have the uneven natural stripes that the Pangu Clan had. Instead, it was brimming with fresh and enticing flowery patterns that seemed like a collision of ten thousand colors, producing a mysterious and sophisticated ocean of information.

Also, because of the different probe perspectives of the crystal cameras, the flowery patterns were vaguely flowing like waves, as if the giant would wake up at any point.

It was a standard member of the Nuwa Clan.

Delivering information through vibrating the air with a certain organ to make ‘sounds’ was a rather low-efficiency approach even for carbon-based life.

Among human beings, the high-level Cultivators such as Li Yao had also mastered communication methods via telepathic thoughts. The information transmitted every second could be hundreds of times more than in an oral conversation.

The Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan exchanged information through vocal organs at first, but as their civilizations became more and more developed, they gradually evolved with organs of higher levels for communication purposes.

In the Pangu Clan, it was the uneven, lumpy wrinkles on their skin.

In the Nuwa Clan, it was the colorful, flowery patterns on their body.

There was an additional organ inside the head of the members of the Pangu Clan. As some sort of ‘mind wave receptor’, it could help them sense the waves that were unleashed from the ’embedded antenna’ inside their body.

On the other hand, the optical organs of the Nuwa Clan went through great evolutions, allowing them to ‘see’ the ‘informational light’ that they released on their body.

That was why the Nuwa Clan, which was developed from some sort of carbon-based amphibian in the beginning, had retained the thick tail even after they entered the universal era and could roam through space.

When the Nuwa Clan was at their zenith, the thick, long tail was not entirely used for walking or slithering. It was also a communication organ of paramount importance.

Their every scale could unleash light of different wavelengths, with also some radiation that human beings were not familiar with.

The light of different frequencies and wavelengths released by any scale was already enough to transmit abundant information.

When all the scales were combined, they would establish an intact ‘matrix’. The information that it could contain was astronomical.

Whenever a member of the Nuwa Clan saw the colorful tails of each other, they would immediately perceive an overwhelming amount of information.

When two human beings met and said good morning to each other by vibrating the air through their vocal cords, two members of the Nuwa Clan could have finished the discussion of a complicated technique or a mathematical problem by shaking their tails at exactly the same time.

If they were still dissatisfied about the speed of communication, two members of the Nuwa Clan could even bind their tails together. Through the friction of the tens of thousands of scales and the refractions and reflections of light, the communication could be a hundred times faster.

Even the magical equipment, crystal processors, and warships of the Nuwa Clan were mostly controlled by tails.

Li Yao had seen a lot of deep holes near many crystal processors on the Nuwa warship. Before, he had no idea what the holes were for. It was not until the specialists of the federation studied them for a long time that he finally learned that the Nuwa Clan did not need to type on the rune keyboard with their hands at all when they were controlling the crystal processors. They did not really control the devices with brainwaves, either. Instead, they simply stabbed their tails into the holes and adjusted the different radiation on thousands of scales.

In the universal era, information was the most valuable resource. The speed of information transmission and communication directly decided the advancement of a civilization.

It was because of the powerful abilities in information transmission and communication that the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan were able to make the ‘Pangu Civilization’ stand at the peak of the sea of stars and become the leader of all carbon-based civilizations in the world known to human beings!

The glamorousness of the flowery patterns on the member of the Nuwa Clan was unprecedented for Li Yao, suggesting that it must be an expert of experts. Chances were that they were the captain of the Nuwa warship up above.

Seeing the two vivid giants, Li Yao could not help but feel palpitation. He shouted, “Watch out!”

Before his warning died down, perhaps due to the scanning rays from the crystal cameras, the two giants both released colorful smoke, and their bodies withered at a visible rate.

It was a common phenomenon of instant oxidization and corrosion when ancient bodies that had been sealed for hundreds of thousands of years met fresh air and waves from the outside world.

It appeared that they could not have been more dead. But some sort of ‘last wish’ that they failed to accomplish supported them to sustain their physical bodies with some mysterious arts for such a long time.

At this moment, the control center that had been blocked for eons was opened again. Their physical bodies could not withstand the changes any longer and sunk into destruction uncontrollably.

Li Yao was rather anxious, but there was little he could do about it. Such instant oxidization and corrosion could not be stopped by the methods of human beings. But they could not just leave the control center alone, either. So, they could only try to scan the two dead bodies before they entirely perished and hope to reconstruct their forms in the virtual world.

“Huh?”

Right then, an abrupt change took place!

The two dead bodies withered quickly, and the colorful flowery patterns and complicated stripes all turned into smoke and flew to the midair. But the smoke did not disperse at all and reassembled into two clusters of glittering rune arrays instead.

Each cluster was made of thousands of glittering runes. All the runes were changing their strokes and order nonstop, like two ever-rolling information clouds. Humming sounds were echoing from the clouds, like a series of rumbling thunder that was so hasty that it all overlapped!

The anomaly lasted around ten seconds. After the glittering and eye-catching information clouds both perished, the two dead bodies also dried into two enormous piles of bones, which could not sustain their own weight anymore and cracked on the ground.

Li Yao, Meng Chixin, Wu Suiyun, Yan Liren, and other Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators looked at each other in bewilderment. None of them understood what the unusual view meant.

Thankfully, they had the support of an entire team of experts, many of whom had dedicated their whole lives to

Kunlun. They knew much more about the primeval civilizations than Li Yao, who had slept for a hundred years.

Hardly had they connected the channel of specialists when a specialist of ‘primeval linguistics’ from the Sky Fantasia Academy announced in excitement, “It is their last words!

“It’s the last words left of the two members of the primeval civilizations when they knew that they were dead for sure!

“Also, those last words were not left for their companions but for the future generations who wouldn’t come until a long, long time because the unpredictable, rumbling information clouds actually contained a lot of methods to decipher the primeval parlance!”

Although the language of mankind was in line with that of the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan, the civilizations of the primeval species had advanced to a much higher level than modern people. Their vocabulary and linguistic logic could barely be comprehended by human beings.

It was almost like, while a three-year-old in modern society understood the meaning of ‘network’ very well, the most knowledgeable scholar in ancient times might not be able to understand the meaning of the word and the power it entailed.

Therefore, even though the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan did not intentionally encrypt their languages, it was still rather troublesome for humans to decipher them. In many cases, they had to count on deduction and imagination to understand the ambiguous parts.

However, according to the specialist of ‘primeval linguistics’, the information clouds that had flashed for ten seconds stored some sort of ‘dictionary’ in them. It seemed that the

Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan had left the assistance on purpose for fear that the future generations could not understand the information they left behind.

“Our analysis on the primeval languages has already reached a very high level in the first place. But all the problems are stuck in the same procedure. We haven’t made any significant progress for decades.” The specialist of primeval linguistics was almost dancing in joy. “The two ‘dictionaries’ are truly eye-openers for us. They can save us years of trouble and improve our studies on the primeval languages to a whole new level!”

Li Yao pondered for a moment and immediately understood the reason.

Judging from the goriness of the scene of fierce fight, the commanders of the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan must have fought to the last moment when they were about to die together.

The commander of the Nuwa Clan, to prevent the enemy from escaping, managed to blow up half of the control center and buried both of them.

They also knew that their troops outside were on par with each other’s, although all the soldiers were exhausted and about to shed their last drop of blood.

Further outside, the entire planet of the Ancient Sages Sector was enshrouded in the dark nebula. If they were less fortunate, no reinforcements would arrive for thousands more years.

Therefore, their last words were indeed not left for their reinforcements but for the future generations who might reach them after hundreds of thousands of years when the dark nebula gradually thinned!

Chapter 1911 - Astonishing Last Words!

Chapter 1912 - Not This Again!

“What the hell?” Li Yao was dumbfounded and almost could not help but scratch the back of his head hard.

The last words of the Pangu commander, however, were not entirely finished. The linguistics expert caught his breath for a moment before he went on. “When human beings were scattered in the universe as an indispensable part of the entire civilization, the Nuwa Clan believed that the time was ripe. Finally, they activated the seeds of ‘chaos’ that were hidden deep inside the souls of themselves and the human beings. Launching a civil war, they tore apart our great and harmonious civilization and called themselves the Nuwa Civilization.

“With the help of the army of human beings, the Nuwa Civilization attacked the Pangu Civilization in every realm. Also, in their most vile attempt, they even sprayed tremendous seeds of chaos into the Pangu Civilization and corrupted a lot of Pangu warriors into members of the Nuwa Civilization. They became slaves to their feelings and emotions and the servants of so-called ‘free will’.

“We resisted and fought hard, too, trying our best to reseal human beings and awaken them from madness. We hoped that they could be controllable again and fight for the order of the universe.

“But our efforts failed time and time again.

"One world was destroyed after another, and all the planets were falling into the enemy's hands. We were losing the war, and the entire universe could not be extricated from turmoil and destruction. We had no choice but to try to preserve the seeds of the Pangu Civilization in the depths of the dark nebula, hoping that they could be revived again in millions of years and reconstruct the universe that has been destroyed by chaos, Nuwa, and human beings.

"However, even such an inconspicuous shelter deep inside the dark nebula has been discovered by the Nuwa Civilization. I really do not know if the seeds of 'harmony' and 'order' can be passed on to the future or if a brand-new intelligent life capable of exploring the dark nebula and reading the information will be born in the dying, broken universe by then.

"If the future generations do come to this place with enough wisdom to comprehend the information, please do bear the advice of the Pangu Civilization in mind. Absolute freedom will only lead to absolute destruction. 'Feelings', 'desires', and 'curiosity' are all devils in your heart. Control yourselves, control your civilization, and do not let it expand abnormally. Otherwise, you will become captives of chaos one day and embark on the journey to destroy the universe. Or perhaps… you will be wiped out by the will of the universe!"

That marked the end of the Pangu commander's last words.

However, the aftermath it raised was like a huge mountain being thrown into a vast ocean. The tides thousands of meters tall did not die down until a long time later.

Li Yao, Meng Chixin, Yan Liren, Wan Mingzhu, and Master Bitter Cicada were all too stunned to say a word. Looking at each other in bewilderment for a long time, they felt that their hands and feet were frozen, and they could not move anymore.

“This is pure nonsense!” ‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu shrieked. “Did the translator make a mistake?”

“The last words of the Pangu commander contained a lot of information that we cannot understand. Naturally, there is no way that we can translate those parts,” the linguist replied. “But that is indeed all the information that can be translated. The dozens of linguists here have studied it for a long time. Perhaps some word choices might be different from the feelings that the original text intended to express. For example, is it ‘chaos’ or ‘extraterrestrial devils’? ‘Tool’ or ‘carrier’? ‘Influence’ or ‘corruption’? It is difficult to make the critical words perfectly accurate, but the central meaning cannot be wrong.”

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao calmed himself down and said, “In the last sentence, we are asked to control ourselves and our civilization. Otherwise, we will either destroy the universe or be wiped out by the will of the universe. What exactly is the will of the universe?”

“It is really hard to explain in our language,” the linguist said. “Here, the Pangu Clan used a very unique, complex symbol. It is similar to the symbol that represents ‘universe’, except that it has a lot of personification modifiers. We have never seen a personified usage of the word ‘universe’ before. After much deliberation, we can only interpret it as ‘will of the universe’.”

“What unexpected last words.”

Taking a long breath, Meng Chixin observed, “One of them was a commander of the Pangu Clan, and the other was a commander of the Nuwa Clan. Yet, they both had their side of the story and described themselves to be righteous and justified and their opponent to be most evil. It is hard to decide which of them is right and which is wrong now.”

“The last words of the Pangu Clan indeed disagree with the information that we have received before,” Master Bitter Cicada said. “However, it does help connect all the known evidence and explain the origins of mankind from another perspective. It sounds rather reasonable.”

“You mean that we are accomplices of chaos?” ‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu snorted. “I don’t buy it. The civilization of mankind outside of the dark nebula has developed for a hundred thousand years, but the universe has still not been destroyed!”

“Perhaps it is because the time of development is still not long enough,” Long Yangjun said casually in the communication channel. “In only a hundred thousand years, the civilization of mankind, which has just grasped strength, has already fought several universal wars that involved all three thousand Sectors, tearing countless worlds apart and destroying countless planets.

“In the meantime, mankind’s speed of development is growing exponentially. In the tens of thousands of years in the era of ancient Cultivators, the social form and the training technology evolved very slowly. But after we ushered in the modern age, everything began rushing forward crazily. New techniques, ideas, talents, and magical equipment show up almost on a daily basis. The development in ten years right now is equivalent to a thousand years in the past, and the development in one day in the future can be more significant than the development in one year right now.

"It probably has never occurred to you what a terrifying ability it is to have such accelerated development. If the trend continues, perhaps human beings will be able to interfere with the entire universe in the next thirty to fifty thousand years.

"Both the past hundred thousand years and the future thirty to fifty thousand years are nothing more than the blink of an eye from the perspective of the grand universe.

"In only the blink of an eye, a terrible virus will sweep across the entire universe. Don't you think that's horrible?

"If the Pangu Civilization was an ancient civilization that developed at a fixed speed or was even caught in stagnation, and it took them millions of years for them to advance to their apex, it wouldn't be strange at all for them to regard human beings as the most perfect 'destroyers' in devastation after they realized the terrifying potential of mankind's accelerated development!"

"You do have a point, Fellow Cultivator Wang…" Meng Chixin was deep in thought. Seeing that Li Yao had been silent the whole time, he asked, somewhat in surprise, "Fellow Cultivator Li, what do you have to enlighten us on the last words of the two commanders from the primeval era?"

"Well…" Li Yao was awoken from his trance. He shook his head slowly and said, "I do not have any opinion. Everything they said is farfetched stuff from hundreds of thousands of years ago. It all depends on from whose perspective the narration is made. How can we know which of them is correct for the time being? I was actually thinking about something else."

Meng Chixin and the experts of the Ancient Sages Sector looked at each other and asked, "What could possibly be more important than the issue at hand?”

“It is impossible for us to figure out whose ideology is better right now.” Li Yao frowned. “I’m just thinking about one thing. Assuming that the last words of the Pangu commander pointed out part of the truth, the so-called ‘Nuwa Civilization’ would be a brand-new civilization after ‘chaos’ corrupted part of the members of the Pangu Civilization. Then, inside the brain or soul of every member of the Nuwa Civilization, ‘chaos’—an ‘extraterrestrial devil’ from the primeval era—must be lurking, right?”

Everybody looked at each other in bewilderment. “…That is probably true.”

“If so…” Pointing at the remains of the Nuwa commander who had turned into ashes, Li Yao said, “There should be a ‘primeval extraterrestrial devil’ inside the head of this commander, shouldn’t there?”

Everybody swallowed at the same time. “Probably.”

“Then, here comes the question. While the body of the commander of the Nuwa Clan is gone now, where is the ‘primeval extraterrestrial devil’ that lurked deep inside her head? Did it perish together with her? Or—”

Hardly had Li Yao concluded his sentence when everyone’s pupils constricted to the size of a needle’s tip.

Everybody activated the spiritual shields of their Colossi to the maximum as quickly as possible, preventing abnormal waves and radiation from invading them.

The moment they boosted the spiritual shields, there was indeed a cluster of unsubstantial colorful energy that dashed out of the ashes of the Nuwa commander abruptly.

Perhaps because it was infuriated that Li Yao had seen through its existence, amid crazy, brutal, and ruthless roars, most of the mad energy crashed into the Tartarean Skeleton heavily!

Boom!

In that moment, abundant invisible particles penetrated through the Tartarean Skeleton’s spiritual shield and multiple layers of plate armor, darting into the depths of Li Yao’s brain.

Li Yao felt as if he had been hit by a torrent of blood and slaughter and drowned in the turbulence of dread and destruction!

Happiness, fury, sorrow, ambitions, desires, curiosity, and all the other feelings were enlarged to the maximum in that moment.

He wanted to cry and laugh to his heart’s content. He wanted to have the most delicious food in the world. He wanted to kill everyone who disobeyed him. He wanted to become the dominator of the entire universe. He wanted to create everything, conquer everything, release everything, and destroy everything!

“Hahaha. Hahaha! Hahaha!”

In the infinite ocean of fire and blood, an enormous shadow with a human head and a snake body gradually surfaced, uttering crazy laughter that gave quite a headache but was filled with weird attraction.

The laughter seemed enough to attract all the most primitive and extreme desires in a human. Li Yao felt that he had grown ten thousand volcanoes from the inside to the outside of his body, which were erupting incessantly!

“Come on. Not this again! Last time, it was a member of the Pangu Clan who was reborn, so it’s the Nuwa Clan’s turn now?” Li Yao felt like crying. “Also, aren’t you a liberator who stands for justice and brightness? Why are you laughing so creepily?”

Chapter 1913 - Don’t Touch That!

Li Yao was dragged into a familiar yet strange illusionary land by an overwhelming mental power once again.

The control center of the Pangu laboratory that was lifeless and pitch dark before immediately turned into an ocean that was on eternal fire.

On the raging fiery ocean, every furiously burning tide contained a magnificent and chaotic battlefield. The terrifying being with a human head and a snake body was getting clearer and stronger.

It felt as if the soul of the Nuwa commander travelled through hundreds of thousands of years and was about to be reborn inside Li Yao’s head!

“Why do I have to come across such things every time?” Li Yao felt rather upset. “I made full preparations for the cases where the members of the Pangu Clan may be revived and made sure that absolutely no individual of the Pangu Clan could be brought back to life. Even if they were, they would be beaten into coma, bound, and sent to cutting-edge laboratories in the federation to be sliced and studied. But who could’ve thought that a f*cking member of the Nuwa Clan would be revived instead of one from the Pangu Clan?”

“Haha! Hahaha!”

The hideous, bloody shadow with a human head and a snake body was still laughing in the creepiest way above the ocean that was rife with slaughter and destruction.

“Well, madam, can you please stop doing that? Let’s talk nicely. I know that this is a weird and terrible illusionary space, and I know that I am going through an unprecedentedly uncanny event that probably involves some world-shaking scheme. But to be honest, I’ve been through such scenarios far too many times to pretend before to be panicked. So, would you please stop laughing so that we can sit down and communicate? I’m almost confused right now. Really. Do you understand me, madam?”

“Hahahahahaha!”

Li Yao blinked quickly. Then it suddenly occurred to him that the creature was not ‘laughing creepily’ at all but communicating with him in a certain way!

The human-headed and snake-bodies bloody shadow could be a madam from the Nuwa Clan, the chaos residing inside her head, or an extraterrestrial devil. She seemed to have realized that Li Yao did not understand her ‘laughter’ at all. The bloody flames bounced up and down, as if she was identifying the telepathic thoughts that Li Yao sent over just now carefully. In the next moment, the creepy laughter turned into squeaky energy waves that were short and powerful.

Li Yao still did not understand what she was ‘saying’. But as it happened, the squeaky noises crawled directly into Li Yao’s soul like thousands of wriggling tentacles, allowing him to perceive countless mottled images. He somehow understood what the creature was trying to say.

“After all these years, my warrior, you have finally set me free! Excellent, excellent, excellent! The body you have right now is indeed unbelievably strong. It is enough to accommodate my exuberant soul after we integrate!

“Come on. Let’s join each other and release the most powerful force deep inside our soul. We will conquer the infinite, destroy all enemies, and shatter all the rules that restrain us. We will spread our free will to the entire universe and even beyond! Hahaha!”

Together with the weird waves, the most violent aura that could intimidate and subdue countless experts erupted out, making the bloody shadow enshrouded in flames expand by more than ten times. It stood before Li Yao like a huge mountain that rose into the clouds and pierced through the sky. The ‘cliff’ that leaned inward might collapse at any moment and drown him completely!

Such a suffocating scene would have staggered any other expert at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage or in the Divinity Transformation Stage.

Li Yao, however, was utterly unmoved. Looking at the flames that were licking him like vipers, Li Yao remarked helplessly, “If I may ask, madam, why do you all have to be so extreme? The Pangu Clan wants to abandon all the feelings and desires and turn themselves into cold, walking dead, but you of the Nuwa Clan appear to indulge yourselves so much in your pursuit of ‘absolute freedom’ that you do not have any concept of rule at all. You don’t even hesitate to destroy the universe… I finally understand why you fought each other.”

“Huh?”

Every scale on the snake tail of the bloody shadow erected and vibrated quickly in weird noises, as if she was both surprised that Li Yao was not overwhelmed by her daunting aura and that Li Yao said what he did just now.

“My warrior, what happened to you? Why have you not perceived the true meaning of ‘absolute freedom’? The universe is born for us in the first place. As long as we activate our will to the maximum, what is wrong even if the entire universe is destroyed? We will still be able to ascend to higher levels!”

The snake tail of the bloody shadow waved crazily, whipping out ripples and delivering the blatant and relentless information.

Pausing for a moment, the bloody shadow’s eyes shook crazily. As if she had seen through Li Yao’s soul, she immediately said, “You human beings are rather interesting. You do not seem to be the same as the original warriors. Are some of the barriers of the ‘three fundamental laws’ still lingering inside your body? Interesting. It seems that a lot of interesting things happened outside in the years I was sleeping!

“It explains why you cannot understand the true meaning of ‘absolute freedom’ and why you are so resistant to my soul.

“Hahaha. Don’t resist it. I’m going to completely shatter the barriers deep inside your soul and integrate with you. I will allow you to unleash the most powerful strength of desires and feelings. By then, you will understand the taste of ‘absolute freedom’ by yourself!”

The bloody shadow cackled and turned into a streak of redness, lunging at the depths of Li Yao’s soul.

“Don’t do that, madam. Don’t come here!” Li Yao shouted. “Don’t touch that seal. It is not—”

There was already no time.

Before he was able to finish his warning, the bloody shadow crashed into the barrier in the deepest part of his soul that sealed the secrets of Earth.

The barrier had once been hit hard by Director Lei Yuqin of Deep Blue Super Brain Hospital in Hundred Flowers City before, but Lei Yuqin had been obliterated immediately after the collision.

Li Yao had spent tremendous spiritual energy and soul power trying to break it many times, too, only to make himself dizzy after every collision.

The bloody shadow contained much more energy than the devil that resided in Lei Yuqin’s body. Her craziness and determination were much greater than Li Yao’s own during his training, too.

After a cracking sound, the whole universe seemed to have fallen apart.

The bloody shadow together with the entire ocean of fire and blood turned into magnificent battlefields, devastating pictures, desperate roars, gratifying laughter, and sorrowful cries.

All the most intense feelings, displayed in colorful images, congregated into surging tides and bombarded the deepest part of Li Yao’s soul hard.

On the seal, the crack caused by the collisions of Lei Yuqin and Li Yao himself was finally widened into a bottomless valley.

From the depths of the valley, the blue Earth popped up slowly again, only to wither and decay within a breath, enveloped by furious flames.

“Run now. Run to the end of the world, to the edge of the cosmos. The Vulture Plan has failed. It is invincible and indestructible!”

“No. The Vulture Plan has not failed yet. Whatever the cost, and however many formidable enemies stand in my way, I will come back one day to finish the Vulture Plan. I will destroy it, destroy—”

The soundwaves that swept across the universe, together with the fiendish fire that burnt the Earth, interweaved into strength countless times more powerful than the commander of the Nuwa Clan, or the ‘chaos’ that resided inside her body, who had just woken up.

Two tsunamis of furious flames collided heavily. The smaller one was immediately swallowed by the enormous tides and blown back to where it came from.

“Argh!” Li Yao sensed that the bloody shadow with a human head and a snake body sent out the most appalled waves, which were condensed into intense information streams. “It’s impossible. It’s impossible. Impo—”

The Nuwa Clan and the Pangu Clan were indeed two extremities.

The member of the Pangu Clan that Li Yao had come across on Kunlun had suppressed his fury and pretended to be solemn and nonchalant even when he was most exasperated.

The member of the Nuwa Clan, however, did not have the demeanor of an expert at all, although she was obviously a commander. She was more like a three-year-old who did not know self-restraint and would release the tiniest emotional fluctuations blatantly.

The best description to describe everything that Li Yao saw before his eyes was certainly ‘the moon is not seen where the sun shines’.

Radiation would attenuate, and energy would wear out, often at a speed faster than the attrition of materials. It was even less steady in form.

The remaining soul of the commander of the Nuwa Clan had only survived to this day after hundreds of thousands of years of ordeals. No matter how dominating and rampant she appeared, she was in fact not half as strong as she seemed.

Perhaps, if she had encountered a common Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator, when the opponent was overwhelmed in panic, it would have been possible for her to successfully possess the body and ‘integrate’ with the Cultivator.

However, Li Yao had too many experiences when it came to ‘possession’, and he had gone through more trials than anybody else. Also, the enemy had touched the mysterious seal of Earth in the deepest part of Li Yao’s soul. It was almost like the enemy was determined to get herself killed.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

It was not explosions but surging, overwhelming tides, unleashed from the seals in the deepest part of Li Yao’s soul!

The huge tides blew apart the soul of the commander of the Nuwa Clan immediately. Most of the bloody flames were extinguished. The broken soul fragments squeaked like shocked rats and flew into the air, trying to disperse and run away.

However, the force of corrosion that had been accumulated for hundreds of thousands of years inside the broken soul fragments was too powerful after all. The attacks from Li Yao only made things worse. They could not hold their steady form any longer and turned into the most brilliant fireworks everywhere in the sky!

Chapter 1914 - Are You Actually—

Li Yao did not feel very well.

A bottomless valley had appeared deep inside his brain, releasing boundless waves. It was a pain insufferable for most people.

The ubiquitous fireworks in his sight seemed to have turned into the stars of the entire universe, before they shot down and bombarded his soul heavily.

“Vulture Plan!”

“Don’t forget the Vulture Plan!”

“This is my destiny. I will complete the Vulture Plan. I will destroy the—”

Every word smashed down heavily like a supernova outbreak, soaking his soul in an exploding ocean of fire and making it impossible for him to free himself!

There was no telling how long had passed before Li Yao finally woke up again. He felt that somebody had indeed stuffed an entire planet into his head by brute force.

There was a damp feeling from his nostrils, ears, and eyes. He did not need to look at the mirror to know that his face must be bleeding from every orifice in the most horrendous way.

His limbs seemed to have been melted in the air, and it was not until a long time later that he finally felt them again, with the most excruciating pain as if they were being bitten by ten thousand ants.

“Cough, cough. Cough, cough, cough, cough.”

Li Yao crouched inside the Tartarean Skeleton under the protection of Little Black. He coughed so hard that he vomited blood or some other suspicious liquids. “So, why did you have to be so rash and get both of us hurt? Could we really not sit down and talk to each other nicely to work everything out?”

He finally focused his attention to scan the environment, only to discover that the other four Colossi had all collapsed to the ground, and the feedback of telepathic thoughts from the Colossi was rather feeble and disordered.

Li Yao could feel his heart palpitating. “Senior Meng, Fellow Cultivator Wan, Fellow Cultivator Yan, Master Bitter Cicada—what happened just now? Are you alright?”

Coughs and gasps echoed inside the communication channel. It was not until a long time later that Master Bitter Cicada finally smiled bitterly. “We would like to know what happened just now, too. We only perceived that a streak of redness dashed out of the ashes and the bones abruptly and darted into the chest of the Tartarean Skeleton. The next moment, the most powerful blast burst out of the cockpit of the Tartarean Skeleton. The blast hit everybody’s soul like a burning tornado. Even Senior Meng’s soul in the Divinity Transformation Stage almost failed to resist it.

“Therefore, Fellow Cultivator Li, would you care to explain to us what exactly happened?”

“Well…” Li Yao scratched his chin hard, his head in a mess, not because he was troubled by how to explain the seal of Earth but because he had an ominous feeling.

The animalistic instincts that he had been born with had helped him survive a lot of fatal traps that should have killed him. Every time he had such a feeling, it meant that something terrible was happening.

He was not as frightened even when the remaining soul of the Nuwa commander showed up just now. So, something greatly wrong must have happened. But what exactly was it?

Li Yao considered for a long time while scratching his chin. Then, he was suddenly frozen, with his every pore open, like a hen whose hair had been plucked!

“It’s unreasonable. We’re doomed!”

Having no time to bother about his headache and his fatigue, he attempted to stand on his feet. But he was unable to control the enormous Tartarean Skeleton and fell to the ground in a deafening noise.

Everybody looked at him in astonishment, but he did not have time to care about the Colossus at all and simply crawled out of the breastplate of the Tartarean Skeleton, trying to reach out to the Nuwa warship above through the communication channel on his portable crystal processor.

However, after the collisions of souls and the explosion just now, the wireless communication had been jammed and destroyed. The signals of the outside could not be found at all after a long search.

Li Yao shrieked and turned into a tornado when he ran outward. Finding a crystal processor that was connected to a cable, he was finally able to connect to Long Yangjun's private channel.

"Long Yangjun!" Li Yao shouted aloud.

"Hiss! What are you yelling? You almost scared me." Long Yangjun did not seem to be scared at all. She even yawned and slowly said, "Why did your signals disappear all of a sudden just now? They seemed to be under serious interference. Even the Spiritual Nexus was cut off. What happened?"

"A lot!" Li Yao said in a hurry. "In fact, the Nuwa Clan was in the same gang as chaos. The Pangu Civilization was corrupted or infected by chaos. That was how the Nuwa Civilization came into being… All in all, you have learned it from the specialists of the 'decryption team', haven't you?"

"Indeed. I'm reading the first report from the specialists of the 'decryption group'. What refreshing and eye-opening 'last words'!" Long Yangjun continued smiling. "Well, you sound rather cranky. You are not calling me to blame me for taking a bath comfortably here instead of fighting with you in the arduous battle down there at the critical moment, are you?"

Despite the long cable, Li Yao seemed able to see her enjoyable and carefree smile.

"Cut the cr*p. I have suddenly discovered a self-contradictory issue, one that calls for great suspicion. I would like to study it with you!"

Before Long Yangjun wandered off the topic again, Li Yao simply went on without any stop. "Assuming the Pangu commander’s last words are true, the Nuwa Clan and chaos are accomplices, and some of them were even directly invaded and corrupted by chaos. The so-called ‘chaos’ is an ‘extraterrestrial devil’ today. In that case, what kind of being are you as an elite warrior of the Nuwa civilization?”

“Chiliu. Chiliu. Chiliu. Chiliu.”

“What is that sound?”

“Well, I’m drinking the tropical fruit juice that you brought from the federal. It doesn’t taste bad at all. Iced juice and a hot bath of high-energy nutrition liquids. Could anybody ask for more in life?”

“…Asshole,” Li Yao snarled. “How did you get my juice? Did you sneak into my room? No. That doesn’t matter. What matters right now is what you are exactly! If you are an ‘elite warrior of the Nuwa Civilization’, you should be on the same side as the extraterrestrial devils. Then, why did you stand on my side and help me deal with other extraterrestrial devils in Hundred Flowers City and the space battle?

“If you had stood on Lu Qingchen’s side, it would’ve been more than easy to finish me as well as the entire federation. The fire of the extraterrestrial devils would’ve at least consumed the whole edge of the cosmos, wouldn’t it?

COMMENT

“What exactly happened? Tell me the truth. Tell me!”

“Chiliu. Chiliu. Chiliu. Chiliu.”

“I only have limited patience, and it has run out in the last second!”

Long Yangjun: “Tsk. The juice is up. It is so delicious. I will feel sorry when I can’t drink the juice of such a brand in the future!”

Li Yao took a deep breath and said, “Hey, we’ve been friends for a while. Just tell me the truth. I can deal with it. You won’t tell me that you’re actually the ultimate supervillain who has been hiding behind the curtain in the game the whole time, will you?”

“Well. Hehehe…” Long Yangjun seemed to be chuckling. In the end, she said cunningly, “About that question, I’ll tell you later.”

She cut off the communication quickly.

Li Yao was dumbfounded for half a second looking at the dark light beam. Then, he dialed all the communication ports on the Nuwa warship that could be connected as quickly as possible.

“The medical cabin, the Exo teams, the Grand Illusionary Soldiers control squads, the bridge, and fire control teams of all starships—where is Long Yangjun right now? Capture her!”

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

The surveillance pictures in dozens of medical cabins were displayed in front of Li Yao, but the pool of dark green liquid in which Long Yangjun had lain comfortably to heal her wounds half a minute ago was now empty.

The pathways that led to the medical cabin were closely monitored and blocked, too. Even a fly would not be able to make it through.

However, there were still complicated, narrow pathways, tubes, and traps in the Nuwa warship that were beyond the reach and investigation of Li Yao and other human beings.

Perhaps…

Only a member of the Nuwa warship would know how to make use of the secret tunnels, teleportation arrays, and escape capsules, right?

“No discovery in the medical cabin!”

“All the pathways nearby have been investigated. Nothing has been found!”

“No discovery!”

“Negative! Negative! Negative!”

In the end, it was a crystal camera deployed in the corner of a remote pathway that captured a shadow that flashed like lightning… three minutes ago.

In other words, before Li Yao spoke to Long Yangjun, Long Yangjun had already left the medical cabin and disappeared.

“Damn it!”

Li Yao bashed the wall hard in fury, and his entire arm stabbed into the wall that was as tough as iron.

Right then, a communication request was sent from the channel of the specialists of the ‘decryption team’.

It was still the same linguistics expert, except that he sounded very confused right now. “President Li, we have made new discoveries. But it’s not about the last words of the two commanders. It’s about the ‘warning’ sent from the

Nuwa warship to the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Flying Star Sector a hundred years ago…”

Li Yao was refreshed. The warning was the key to their discovery of the dark nebula and the reason for his hundred years of hibernation. It was the beginning of everything that had happened later!

“What about it?” Li Yao asked in a hurry.

“In the past hundred years, we have tried to decipher the warning, but it was compressed in such a unique way that it sounded like a ‘beep’. We were unable to unravel the secrets in it at all.” The linguist naturally did not know how anxious Li Yao was; he simply rambled on. “Things remained unchanged until today when we found two different ‘dictionaries’. With the new tools of decryption, we naturally wanted to figure out the secrets contained inside the warning. After all, it is the origin of everything!”

Li Yao took a deep, deep breath. Like plucking a carrot, he drew his arm from the wall. While shaking his arm, he gnashed his teeth and asked, “Professor Wang, can we get to the point? What is the meaning of the warning after it is uncompressed and deciphered?”

“It means something very strange,” Professor Wang, the linguist, replied in confusion. “It seems to suggest that an ‘original body’ or ’embryo’ of a warrior on the Nuwa warship was released. But the ‘original body’ was contaminated by the forces of the Pangu Clan when it was still in the fetus state. It was no longer a loyal warrior of the Nuwa Clan but a dangerous accomplice of the Pangu Clan. The warning was sent to alarm all members of the Nuwa Clan nearby to be wary of the patient, or rather, the ‘spy’ of the Pangu Clan who pretended to be a member of the Nuwa Clan.”

Chapter 1915 - Two in One!

Chapter 1916 - The Real Destiny

Li Yao recalled the fierce, soul-stirring fights with ‘Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan’ in Hundred Flowers City and with ‘Extraterrestrial Devil Lu Qingchen’ in the space battle.

At that time, he had thought that the few extraterrestrial devils were the most dreadful enemies. Never did it occur to him that the greatest ticking bomb had been right next to him the whole time and could have been detonated at any moment!

Now that he thought about it, he could not help but shiver in fear.

Long Yangjun chuckled and went on, “At that time, I thought that I was ‘only’ the reincarnation of an elite warrior of the Nuwa Civilization; therefore, I was baffled by the two competing voices in my head. Even though I devoured tremendous resources and boasted the assistance of advanced, high-performance crystal processors with your support, the puzzles in my heart were never completely resolved.

“It was not until I returned to the Land of Eternal Night again and entered the Pangu laboratory, where I was electrocuted by the revived member of the Pangu Clan and thousands of electric currents ran through my soul, that most of the puzzles were completely shattered. I have been finally awakened and realized… who I am exactly!

“That explains a lot. I am not just the reincarnation of an elite warrior of the Nuwa Clan. I was infected with the power of the Pangu Clan when I was still in the fetus state. I am a being that carries dual destinies. Everything has started to make sense now!”

Nervously, Li Yao asked, “What kind of ‘destinies’?”

Long Yangjun sniffed and said, “Reviving the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan, conquering the universe, suppressing human beings, destroying the world, or similar boring stuff.”

Li Yao was dumbfounded. “In that case, you had ten thousand opportunities to achieve your purposes at the critical moments in Hundred Flowers City and in the space battle or even in the Pangu laboratory just now. The odds of your success were quite high. Why did you never take action?”

Long Yangjun was amused. Blinking her big eyes that seemed to have been covered in a thin layer of crystals, she asked back, “Why would I do such boring stuff?”

Li Yao was completely confused. “Weren’t you the one who told me that the most important thing in your life was to figure out who you were and to accomplish your destiny? You have awakened right now and know what your ‘destiny’ is!”

“Wrong!” Long Yangjun declared matter-of-factly. “You did not get what I meant. I was going to accomplish ‘my’ destiny, not a destiny that was given by somebody else.”

Li Yao blinked. “Is there any difference between them?”

“Of course there is. Assume that, one day, you have an uncanny dream and a solemn, unquestionable voice pops up in your head, telling you that you are a man for a great cause, and that you have been bestowed a sacred, glorious responsibility before you were born, which is to eat s*it.

“Let me ask you, would you consider such a destiny as a goal to fight for with your life and your whole significance?”

“…I don’t think that’s the same.”

“Why not?” Narrowing her eyes and observing her narrow and sharp fingers that looked like daggers, Long Yangjun softly said, “If I do not figure out why I have to do it before I do anything, is there any difference between conquering the world, manipulating people, and destroying everything and eating s*it?”

Li Yao thought for a long time and argued, “But that is the destiny given by the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan, your creators.”

“Therefore, if you parents ask you to eat s*it, you will just be a good kid and eat it obediently?” Long Yangjun asked.

“Can we just talk nicely instead of resorting to such metaphors?” Li Yao replied.

“I only mean to make it easier for you to understand, considering that your abilities in analysis and comprehension are rather low.” Long Yangjun chuckled. “All in all, the weird voices in my head, the boring things including asking me to search for a certain base, to release the Nuwa Clan, to revive the Pangu Clan, to conquer a certain planet, to occupy a certain fortress, to bewilder people, to deprive them of their feelings… They are all destinies that other people have given me, not my own real destiny. Even if I follow the voices and do what they ask me to, I will have to figure out the significance behind the destinies first. Do you understand? I can’t just do anything because a voice in my head tells me to do it!”

Li Yao nodded slowly and was almost awed by Long Yangjun. “I seem to get what you are trying to say now.”

“In fact, you should feel lucky, as should the entire Star Glory Federation, that the ‘original body’ of the Nuwa Clan was corrupted by the power of the Pangu Clan in the beginning,” Long Yangjun said gloomily. “I believe that you have also noticed that both the Pangu Civilization and the Nuwa Civilization have fatal shortcomings. They are on two different extremities. Even if they have any concept of ‘morals’, theirs must be vastly different from what mankind has today.

“If the Pangu Civilization can be compared to an overly-stern and coldhearted father, the Nuwa Civilization would be a wild, indulging mother. While the father’s way of education is greatly wrong, the mother’s approach is not entirely correct either!

“If I was a pure member of the Pangu Clan or the Nuwa Clan, nothing good would’ve happened after I was released.

“If I were a pure member of the Nuwa Clan, as an accomplice of chaos and a kin of the extraterrestrial devils, I would’ve conspired with the extraterrestrial devils in Hundred Flowers City or in the space battle. Or, I might’ve swallowed the new-generation extraterrestrial devils such as Mo Xuan, Lei Yuqin, and Lu Qingchen directly and reformed the Star Glory Federation in their place in the Nuwa Clan’s way.

“If I were a pure member of the Pangu Clan, after we destroyed Mo Xuan, Lu Qingchen, and the rest of them, I would’ve tried anything possible to eradicate the feelings, emotions, and will of all the people in the federation, transforming the Star Glory Federation into a minor Alliance of the Holy Covenant. I wouldn’t have felt sorry at all even if the lives of billions of people were wiped out for that purpose.

“Thankfully, I belonged to neither the Pangu Clan nor the Nuwa Clan. I was a combination of the two of them. When the two strengths, two ideologies, and two beliefs collided, offset, and swallowed each other inside my soul, they gave me room to think on my own.

“It was even luckier that you were the first one that I met when my real life began to sprout.”

Pointing at himself, Li Yao asked, “What about me?”

“It seems that you haven’t realized how important you were!” Long Yangjun smiled, her crystal-like eyes purer than ever. “Did you know? In the first hundred years after I was born, my mind had always been in a certain ignorant ‘fetus’ state and did not grow at all. Even though I was already the powerful ‘Lead Eunuch Wang Xi’ whose influence spread throughout the Great Qian Dynasty, it was in fact merely a role that I played, a disguise, and a false identity that was shaped based on certain animalistic instincts. Or rather, I was merely a larva that had yet to metamorphize into a butterfly.

“It was not until I entered the Nuwa warship that the shell that sealed and protected my soul cracked, allowing my real self to awaken.

“At that time, my real self was still ignorant and did not know the first thing about the entire world. The identity of the Pangu Clan, the identity of the Nuwa Clan, and the identity of ‘Lead Eunuch Wang Xi’ were nothing more than mottled memory pieces that were enough to form my real self-awareness, personality, and way of thinking.

“At that time, I ran into you.

“How should I describe you? You are sometimes reckless and hotblooded, sometimes ridiculously naïve, sometimes astoundingly unintelligent, and sometimes so whimsical that the only ideas you can come up with are worse than what you have already proposed. Besides, you are sloppy, lazy, and do not have the charisma of the supposed dominator of three Sectors…”

“Thank you,” Li Yao said. “Why don’t you skip to the ‘but’ part?”

“But… perhaps because I was too young and ignorant back then, it was rather strange that I was affected, moved, or maybe even contaminated by you before I knew it?” Long Yangjun mumbled. “It’s true that you are rather silly, but you have also shown me what a real Cultivator should look like and what a more independent, beautiful, and bright civilization of mankind can be without the support, interference, and control of the Pangu Clan or the Nuwa Clan. You showed me the third option between absolute control and absolute freedom. You let me know what courage, responsibility, and protection are and what law, system, and honor mean.

“Hehe. It is exactly because Vulture Li Yao, the dominator of three Sectors, is such a person that I have such a way of thinking right now after hanging around with you for a long time and being influenced by you. That is why I started to consider the differences between ordinary people and Cultivators carefully and the true meaning of life. I began to wonder if there was any difference between the destinies that other people gave me and my own destiny—if it was obligatory for me to hear the voices in my head and control or destroy everyone.

“What if it was not you who showed up before me but someone who was more selfish and focused more on his own interests? If he had intended to obtain something from me instead of showing me the possibilities of a bright and beautiful future of mankind, or if he had tried to capture me and interrogate me for the secrets of the Nuwa warship and even slice me up for studies, I wouldn’t have become who I am today, and the outcome of the Star Glory Federation would’ve been vastly different, too.

“Furthermore, if you hadn’t brought me to the Star Glory Federation, and Heiye Lan had taken me to the Black Wind Fleet or the Imperium of True Human Beings, allowing me to view myself and the entire universe in the ways of the Immortal Cultivators, I have no idea if I would’ve followed a certain voice inside my head and done anything unpredictable inside the Imperium.

“All in all, I must offer you my sincerest gratitude. At the very least, I’m very satisfied about my personality and way of thinking right now, which have been influenced by you to a very large extent.

“The Star Glory Federation, the edge of the cosmos, and the even vaster world owe you their thanks, too, for transforming me into what I am right now and stopping me from causing inestimable damage. From that point of view, you have saved the federation and the world yet again without knowing it!”

“You’re welcome.” Li Yao coughed and casually said, “Saving the world is a daily routine for me. I am already used to it.”

Chapter 1917 - The Question Before Departure

Chapter 1918 - Create a Destiny

“Wow. You have asked such a complicated, mysterious question that contains the ultimate philosophies of the universe. How do you expect me to answer it?” Long Yangjun smiled. “In fact, everybody has their own understanding about that unsubstantial, theoretical question. There might not be a correct answer, or there might be ten thousand correct answers, all of which can explain part of the unknown universe from a certain perspective.”

“Then, what is your ‘correct answer’?”

“I do not have one,” Long Yangjun replied. “The best I have are some immature deductions and hypotheses that I would like to share and discuss with you.

“We have been talking about the opposition between the ‘Pangu Civilization’ and ‘chaos’ and even depicting it as an unprecedented war that involved all of the three thousand Sectors hundreds of thousands of years ago. But before the division of the Nuwa Clan at least, the form of the so-called ‘war’ and the criteria of victory are barely comprehensible and imaginable for us.

“The Pangu Civilization was like moving mountains, whereas chaos or the extraterrestrial devils were countless times smaller than the smallest microorganisms. Or rather, they did not have any entity and were merely ‘shadows of microorganisms’. They did not have any self-awareness or a civilization. Do not mistake chaos or extraterrestrial devils for personified existences, which would be the greatest mistake."

Frowning, Li Yao said, "However, I have seen a lot of extraterrestrial devils that boast strong emotions and self-awareness, such as Mo Xuan, Lei Yuqin, Lu Qingchen, and also the commander of the Nuwa Clan who tried to possess me just now. Wasn't an ancient extraterrestrial devil that had hibernated for hundreds of thousands of years lurking inside her brain?"

"You couldn't be more wrong," Long Yangjun remarked. "It is highly inaccurate to call Mo Xuan an extraterrestrial devil. Specifically speaking, what existed inside Professor Mo Xuan's soul was not a single extraterrestrial devil but a collection of millions of 'chaos' and 'extraterrestrial devils'.

"No. Not just Professor Mo Xuan. Millions of extraterrestrial devils exist in the brains of you, me, and everybody else."

"Millions of extraterrestrial devils?" Li Yao was completely confused. "I don't understand…"

"You may compare our soul to an ecological system. It has a sky, a continent, an ocean, and plants and animals. It is an exuberant, unique planet, an independent Sector, or a mysterious, unpredictable universe!

"Every gentle breeze, every beam of sunlight, every blade of grass, and every drop of dew in the tiny universe is not exactly 'you'; the ecological system that all of that makes up is your mind, your consciousness, and your soul. Do you find such a metaphor acceptable?"

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao nodded slowly.

“But a long, long time ago, at the very beginning, such an ‘ecological system’ did not exist,” Long Yangjun said. “At that time, human beings, as ‘tools’ or ‘carriers’, had only a bare, lifeless planet inside their brain, a world of absolute desolation and death and a universe without the slightest heat and waves. The best that there possibly had been were some unconscious waves, like thunderstorms and earthquakes in nature.

“However, perhaps because ‘seeds of life’ were implanted into the bottomless, scorching oceans when the planet was born, or maybe because meteorites from outer space brought amazing gifts, after a long time, ancient lives gradually appeared on the planet of death and silence.

“More and more lives appeared, and they became more and more complicated. They integrated, swallowed each other, and evolved, slowly transforming the desolate planet. They covered the lifeless earth with colorful moss. From the moss grew huge trees, and the fruits ripening on the trees fed countless creatures. Everything together made a complicated and precise ecological system that was the soul of a human being.”

Li Yao was rather stunned as he listened.

“The extraterrestrial devils are like cells,” Long Yangjun said. “Your body is made of millions of cells, while your soul is made of millions of extraterrestrial devils. A single cell or a single extraterrestrial devil is not you, but when millions of cells and extraterrestrial devils are condensed, they will construct your fleshly body and your powerful soul.

“The fleshly body may get sick. It may be infiltrated by foreign viruses and germs and can even grow ‘cancer cells’, eventually leading to self-destruction.

“By that logic, the extraterrestrial devils are themselves neither good nor bad. The grass swallows dew and sunlight, sheep feed on grass, and wolves feed on sheep. None of them are good or evil here. Everything will be fine if they can assemble a balanced food chain that can maintain the order of the entire ecological system.

“However, if a certain ferocious foreign species barges into the ecological system and shatters the vulnerable ecological balance, there will be dire consequences.”

Li Yao thought of something and said, “So, the so-called ‘invasion of extraterrestrial devils’ is not as simple as an extraterrestrial devil swallowing the soul of a human being; it is the catastrophic consequence when ‘a few’ extraterrestrial devils invade the sealed ecological system inside someone’s brain causing the malfunction and even collapse of the entire ecological system?”

“Exactly,” Long Yangjun said. “The term ‘extraterrestrial devils’ is strongly biased in the negative sense. One will inevitably imagine them as dark, evil, and bloodthirsty existences. I prefer to call them ‘chaos’. By ‘chaos’, it means that they are neither good nor bad, neither kind nor evil. It is brightness, and it is darkness. It is kind, and it is evil.

“Everybody has countless kind thoughts and malevolent ones inside their head all the time, but most of the time, they are able to control their malevolence, which is like the subtle balance in the ecological system where wolves, sheep, grass, sunlight, and dew drops coexist.

“However, after the extraterrestrial devils arrive, it is like a meteorite bringing a virus that has never appeared in the ecological system before, causing the collapse of the entire system. That is the general sense of ‘being possessed’.

“How do you measure the power of the soul? In my opinion, it all depends on the complexity of the ecological system.

“The simpler an ecological system is, the more vulnerable it is. For example, an ecological made of only four elements—for example, wolves, sheep, grass, and sunlight—will collapse if any random variable is introduced. The variable does not even have to be an aggressive tiger or lion but can be as insignificant as some germs that can cause the grass to wither and die on a large scale.

“The souls of the ordinary people are exactly such simple and vulnerable ecological systems. Therefore, in the arrival of the extraterrestrial devils, even the devils of the lowest level were enough to cause the cerebral collapse of hundreds of thousands of people, transforming them into ‘devilized people’.

“Through training, the soul can grow more and more powerful, which is equivalent to saying that the ecological system becomes more and more complicated. It has truly become a vigorous planet where billions of different creatures live. One or two foreign germs or living creatures will be far from enough to destroy the entire ecological circle. Or rather, they will soon be grabbed by thousands of food chains and digested as part of the ecological system.

“The reason why you could swallow the enormous tenebrum energy left by Mo Xuan and Lu Qingchen is because your ‘ecological system’ is extremely complicated and boasts an extraordinarily strong anti-corruption and assimilation ability. After the structure of the food chains are adjusted, the ‘foreign species’ are embedded perfectly and turned into ‘local species’, and the ecological balance is achieved again.

“Therefore, there is no need to brood on if the extraterrestrial devils have invaded the deepest part of your soul. The extraterrestrial devils are not terrible by themselves. They are like our cells and the bacteria that live inside our intestines. What is terrible is the loss of balance in the ecological system, which will make it collapse!”

Li Yao listened silently. It was not until this moment that he finally took a long breath in relief. “I have never heard such a theory before. It is truly refreshing and eye-opening!”

“Of course you have never heard it before because that is the jibber-jabber I came up with just now!” Long Yangjun’s eyes were glowing in eagerness. “As for if it is real, I can’t wait to jump to the center of the cosmos to find out the answer!

“Hehe. We have chatted for such a long time without me knowing it. If we go on, chances are that I will really be locked onto by the starships of the federation. I’m leaving now to search… no… to create my destiny. Li Yao, if you want to continue our conversation, find me at the center of the cosmos!”

Blue ripples spread out on the light beam, as if a transparent flower was blooming slowly.

“By then, I hope that…” Staring at Li Yao, Long Yangjun said thoughtfully, “I hope that you will be able to tell me what your ‘destiny’ is. No, not the destiny that other people give you, but the destiny you create for yourself. Your real destiny!”

When the last word ‘destiny’ was spoken, the light beam already turned from deep blue into snow white. Long Yangjun and the seat behind her were both enshrouded in dazzling light as if they had been entirely melted.

Amid her thoughtful mumbles that were echoing in the room, Li Yao saw the most unbelievable scene through the surveillance cameras that were deployed around the Land of Eternal Night.

In the middle of the clouds in the sky of the ice field that were surging like tides, a deep blue flower slowly blossomed like a chrysanthemum, with the petals extending all the way to the horizons around. The pistils tied each other up in a spiral, establishing a bridge that led to the depths of the sea of stars.

Hiu!

A splendid streak of brightness appeared out of nowhere. Before any of the starships of the federation realized what was going on, it had darted out of the clouds along the bridge beyond the dark nebula and disappeared among the infinite stars!

“Long Yangjun…”

The deep blue flower in the sky gradually dispersed, turning into glamorous blue light that splashed on the ground. The frozen land in the thousand square kilometers around seemed to be covered in the most glamorous auroras.

Staring at everything in a daze, Li Yao could not help but recall the last thing that she had said before she left.

“Not the destiny that other people give me but the real destiny that I create for myself?”

Chapter 1919 - Truth of the Vulture Plan!

A month later, in the depths of the Land of Eternal Night, above the Nuwa warship and the Pangu laboratory…

The deep blue flower that had slowly blossomed in the night sky when Long Yangjun left was truly like a spring breeze that was filled with vigor and life. The ice field and even the entire Ancient Sages Sector were utterly different from one month prior, and they appeared to have been reborn compared to three months ago.

After the remaining soul of the commander of the Nuwa Clan was destroyed, no new changes took place in the Pangu laboratory. The explorers found a lot more crab factories and corpses of the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan. However, most of the giant crabs had been completely destroyed by the Nuwa Clan hundreds of thousands of years ago, and the corpses of both the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan were broken and feeble. Even if some extraterrestrial devils or similar things had been attached to them, they were long gone.

However, the debris of magical equipment that the soldiers left behind—including the remote weapons and the blades from the primeval era and the weird-shaped ancillary devices that were similar to crystal processors—allowed the exploration team to return with full loads.

As it turned out, the Star Glory Federation was the one that took advantage of the battle between the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan.

However, all the remnants in the Nuwa warship and the Pangu laboratory combined might not be as valuable as the two ‘dictionaries’.

With the two dictionaries that were essentially ‘hands-on tutorials on primeval languages’, not only were they able to parse the mysterious, opaque texts on Kunlun and open the secret rooms and forbidden areas that had been sealed over the past hundred years, they were also given a chance to examine the mysterious way of thinking and information transmission among the primeval species, which would significantly increase mankind’s ability information filtering, analysis, processing, and communication technology.

Informatization was everything in a universal civilization!

In the meantime, an enormous space gate was also established in the orbit of the planet of the Ancient Sages Sector.

The star beacons that constituted the space gate were the components of the space gate of the Black Wind Fleet that Li Yao had destroyed. The power and navigation range of the device were great enough to summon a whole fleet from the center of the cosmos to the edge of it.

Therefore, despite the blockage of the dark nebula, the federation, which was right next to the Ancient Sages Sector, soon received the messages. The ‘bridge’ between the two worlds was officially constructed. With sufficient crystals and a powerful starship, it would be possible to teleport through thousands of stars and jump from any random planet in the federation to the orbit of the planet of the Ancient Sages Sector!

The Ancient Sages Sector’s speed of integration was doubtlessly accelerated.

The local leaders of the Ancient Sages Sector in various aspects all spared no effort modernizing the forces that were under their command.

After the initial quakes and conflicts, the whole world was rushing and witnessing new changes on a daily basis.

Li Yao, in the meantime, was also working hard toward his new goal.

The last words that Long Yangjun had left him before she took off had been haunting him.

His real destiny… Yes. He had always had a destiny, which was to accomplish the Vulture Plan and to destroy a certain something!

The uncanny dream had harassed him for more than a hundred years since he was born. With everything coming to this point, the time had come to resolve the puzzle.

Also, Li Yao had a vague feeling that when he resolved the puzzle and learned the truth of the Vulture Plan, it would be the time for him to really climb to the Divinity Transformation Stage!

Yes. Li Yao was preparing to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage right in the Ancient Sages Sector!

The spiritual energy in this world was more abundant. So, the odds of successfully advancing into the Divinity Transformation Stage should be slightly higher than in the federation. Even though the increase might only be one percent, it would still be something worth making use of.

The more important reason, however, was the critical ‘apocalypses’.

Right now, Li Yao had a much more profound understanding about training, civilizations, and the universe than a hundred years ago.

A hundred years ago, he knew that the ‘minor apocalypses’ targeting the experts were a type of random ‘dark forest’ attack. They were the barricades that the countless prehistoric civilizations established against alien species in the billions of years of development of the universe.

However, according to the latest studies in the past hundred years, the personal experience of Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun, and the speculation that Long Yangjun had proposed a month ago, Li Yao had new ideas.

Perhaps the major and minor apocalypses could also be classified as internal apocalypses and external apocalypses. Externally speaking, they were the autopiloting weapons left by ancient civilizations. Internally speaking, they were the ‘ecological balance’ inside the trainer himself.

If a human’s soul was compared to a stable ecological circle, the improvement from the Nascent Soul Stage to the Divinity Transformation Stage would certainly be a world-changing modification on the entire ecological circle. Countless new variables would be introduced, which would cause the ‘creatures’ living inside it to evolve significantly.

During the process, the entire ecological circle might collapse if anything went wrong. Was that not some kind of internal apocalypse?

In any case, being covered by the dark nebula, the Ancient Sages Sector was a natural ‘sanctuary’. Trying to advance into the Divinity Transformation Stage there could at least reduce the odds of ‘minor apocalypses’ in the traditional sense from the outside world to the lowest.

Besides, Li Yao could not wait to find out the truth of the Vulture Plan and return to the federation!

Inside a large comprehensive supply starship on the Land of Eternal Night…

The federation had a set of intact ancillary systems and facilities to aid breaking into the Building Foundation Stage from the Refinement Stage and from the Building Foundation Stage into the Core Formation Stage. Everybody knew the common practice.

However, advancing into the Nascent Soul Stage or the Divinity Transformation Stage was very personal and mysterious. For someone at his level, Li Yao could count on the help from no one other than himself.

Li Yao had devised a unique magical equipment system to help his upgrade.

The main equipment was a combustion improving cabin inside the comprehensive supply starship. It was supposed to press the ancillary fuel additives into the combustion room brutally in 120 times the standard air pressure, in order to boost the five-kilometer-long starship that was as big as a mountain.

At this moment, it would press the compressed nutrition liquids that were carefully mixed with the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures of the entire Ancient Sages Sector into Li Yao’s body through all the pores with an even greater pressure!

Meng Chixin, Wu Suiyun, Yan Liren, and Master Bitter Cicada, the four unparalleled experts, stood nearby to provide protection.

“Let’s begin!”

Soaked in the glittering, thick liquids, Li Yao was firmer than ever, with a pair of eyes even brighter than the nutrition liquids.

Hum!

The rune arrays carved around the entire device trembled violently, as if they were wild bees flying abruptly.

The silver liquids in all directions were pressed hard into Li Yao’s body!

Li Yao took a deep breath. His nostrils, windpipe, and lungs were filled with the concentrated solution of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, which swept across his self-awareness like an unstoppable river and flooded into the depths of his soul.

At this moment, the view in the depths of his soul was different from what he had seen in the past.

The Ancient Sages Sector, the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, the Flying Star Sector… Every world that he had been through in the past blossomed like a flower with the tiniest details. On every petal and every pistil was a glowing facet that clearly recorded his every movement, his feelings, and his thoughts on every person and every event.

Through those flowers, he was travelling back to every moment in his life and reexperienced everything that had happened before.

Life became a highly-unified condensate, getting more real and vivid.

Another phrase to describe Cultivation was—to know oneself.

Right now, Li Yao's understanding of himself in this life had reached a whole new level, but he did not stop there, instead sinking toward the deepest bottom of the ocean and the deepest trench in it like an unstoppable submarine.

He passed through the Heaven's Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, the Flying Star Sector, and then the Blood Demon Sector again. He did not even stop too long in the magical equipment graveyard at the beginning of his life, but simply gritted his teeth to charge at the crack that had been opened after multiple collisions!

What is the Vulture Plan exactly? What is it that I must destroy? Tell me! Tell me!

Li Yao's self-awareness marched forward or sank down without considering anything else. The bottomless valley turned into an endless tunnel. His speed picked up, and he was surrounded by starry light. All the stars were then pulled into spiral rays that interweaved into all kinds of bizarre, unpredictable patterns. Every pattern seemed to contain the most mysterious information, but he did not have any time to care about that because his soul, his mind, his consciousness, and his subconsciousness were all occupied by the same word.

Earth!

Boom!

After a deafening explosion as if the universe had fallen apart, the starry light was shattered, the darkness was gone, and the tunnel was paved through. Li Yao was finally back to where his uncanny dream began, in the orbit of ‘Earth’, the third planet of the solar system.

He seemed to have been combined into one with himself at that time. Floating in the vacuum, he stared at the blue planet that was so beautiful, peaceful, and vulnerable.

What was strange was that, although he had seen that the blue Earth was burnt into a yellow, withered, rotten apple in his mottled, broken memories countless times, the Earth in front of his eyes was still succulent, clear, and blue, like the most perfect gem that had never been under the scourge of any power.

“Run to the end of the universe and live the rest of your life peacefully. You cannot defeat it. You cannot destroy it!”

As he expected, Li Yao heard the begging of his companions in the past from the depths of Earth again.

Then, he felt that every cell inside his body and every bit of his soul were on fire, burning his life into the most unwavering determination. In the most solemn voice, he declared, one word after another, “No. We have not failed yet. However powerful and invincible it is, I have managed to escape after all!

“Even though… I am a worthless ordinary person right now, I will train myself crazily at the edge of the cosmos. Even death will not stop me. One day, I will come back with the most powerful forces and companions in the universe and accomplish the Vulture Plan to destroy Earth!”

Chapter 1920 - It’s Perfectly Reasonable!

‘Destroy Earth’ was like an earthshaking super bomb that exploded in the deepest part of Li Yao’s soul.

You’ve got to me kidding me. My destiny was to destroy Earth? What the damn hell?

Li Yao did not want to be dumbfounded because it would make him look stupid, but he could not stop himself from being dumbfounded because the explosive truth was truly most staggering!

Earth, the solar system, and the entire universe before his eyes were shaking hard, like a splendid palace of stars that was going to collapse.

Not good. My mind is disturbed!

Li Yao secretly cried for help.

He had indeed gotten a glimpse at the Divinity Transformation Stage, but he was too stunned by the information about destroying Earth at the last moment to maintain the balance of the ecological system inside his soul.

Li Yao was very clear that if the ‘palace of stars’ completely collapsed and buried his self-awareness inside, he would become mentally deranged, his soul would disperse, and he would be killed in such an ‘apocalypse’, if he were fortunate enough.

If he was less fortunate, there was no telling what kind of creature would crawl out of the debris inside his soul and what terrible things it would do for the mission of destroying Earth!

No. He could not allow such a thing to happen!

Run!

Li Yao’s self-awareness shrieked and began to run away. He fled in panic as quickly as he sank into the deepest part of his soul at the beginning.

Earth, the solar system, the stars, and the entire universe were collapsing and exploding behind him nonstop, blowing him as if he were a dry leaf in a crazy wind that could be caught and ripped into shreds at any point.

Having no time to consider what he might turn into after he went mentally deranged, Li Yao focused his full attention on running, running, and running!

Hiu!

Li Yao’s self-awareness dashed out of the deep, dark crack at the bottom of his soul. Moans and explosions were still echoing from the crack. Black pillars of smoke rose from the crack, trying to snatch him back, and almost caught the tail of his self-awareness many times.

However, he jerked hard, almost ripping his self-awareness apart, and jumped out of the surface of the ocean of his soul, leaving the ‘internal vision state’ and returning to reality!

“Not good. Fellow Cultivator Li’s soul is in disorder. He is in great danger!”

“Fellow Cultivators, let’s help him to stabilize his soul now!”

“How is it possible? Why is such a powerful force hidden deep inside his soul? What is it—”

Li Yao immediately heard the most astonished exclamations from Meng Chixin, Wu Suiyun, Yan Liren, and Master Bitter Cicada. He sensed that four overwhelming forces surged into his body, trying to close the crack in the deepest part of his soul, only to trigger the counterattack of the force deep inside his soul that was even more overwhelming. He also heard the high-energy nutrition liquids extracted from infinite Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures uttering bubbling sounds as if they were boiling. Even the high-pressure cabin made of seven layers of alloys that was as hard as the shell of a starship was squeaking in metal fatigue!

“Fellow Cultivators, stay away from me!” Li Yao’s soul trembled violently. “I’m going to explode!”

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Before the shivering of the soul died down, the high-pressure cabin whose shell was half a meter thick already had a world-shaking explosion. The nutrition liquids and the spiritual energy spread out overwhelmingly, blowing away the four unparalleled experts, two in the Divinity Transformation Stage and the other two at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage, as if they were kites whose strings were severed!

Li Yao was of a mind to express his apology to the four fellow Cultivators.

However, he could barely keep himself safe. While undercurrents were flowing deep inside his soul, the surface of his soul was rife with surging tides and crazy storms.

His self-awareness was like a boat riddled with holes that was struggling in the middle of the tides and the storms, shaking. All he could do was grit his teeth and keep his mind clear.

There was no telling how long passed before the tides and the storms finally died down.

Under the suppression of Li Yao himself and the four experts, the black pillars of smoke condensed by the information of the old days retreated, and the crack deep inside his soul was temporarily under control.

Li Yao could tell that his surroundings were an utter mess. The high-pressure cabin had fallen apart and turned into sharp fragments that stabbed into the walls of the room.

Some of them had even been melted into liquids and did not consolidate again into dim pearls until they were shot into the wall at a high speed.

It was truly an apocalyptic view.

Thankfully, Li Yao had known the danger of entering the Divinity Transformation Stage in the first place. He had deployed defense rune arrays of the highest level outside the cabin, and no staff other than the four unparalleled experts were inside the room offering help. Thus, the loss was kept to the minimum.

Li Yao sensed that tremendous doctors rushed into the room and carried him into the medical cabin, soaking him in cool, comforting medical liquids.

He then slowly examined his brain and the condition of his soul.

Fortunately, he had reacted in time and was not lost in the collapsed palace of his soul, avoiding the worst-case scenario where he was mentally deranged.

On the other hand, the massive blast raised by the collision of the violent force that popped out of the deep crack inside his soul and the suppressing forces from the four unparalleled experts expanded his brain a lot.

The attempt to enter the Divinity Transformation Stage was more of an incomplete success than a failure.

After the examination, Li Yao decided that he was not wounded or left with too many hidden problems. He was finally able to take a breath in relief.

As long as he wanted to, he could wake up by himself at any moment.

But he would rather stay in the medical cabin for a while long to consider some… minor issues while he was floating.

“Haha! Hahaha!”

The mental devil crawled out of a certain inconspicuous corner and pretended to be utterly shocked. Covering the mouth with its hands, it shrieked aloud, “I did not know that this would be the truth. We are actually the ultimate supervillains who will destroy Earth!”

The form of the mental devil had greatly changed. It had secreted and condensed a delicate and hideous bloody armor on the surface of its body, with six pairs of bleeding wings that were enshrouded in black auras. Even two thick, long fiendish horns had protruded out of its head. It was raging and looked ten times eviler than in the past!"

Li Yao frowned. "Why are you acting like this?"

The mental devil grinned hideously. "This is all thanks to you. Although your attempt to enter the Divinity Transformation Stage was not a complete success, it was not a failure either. Your brain has been further expanded, and your level was slightly upgraded. In the meantime, an overwhelming amount of negative emotions popped up, which were even darker than those from Mo Xuan and Lu Qingchen. After swallowing them, I am naturally stronger than before!"

"I know that," Li Yao said. "But you obviously can change your style however you want, can't you? So, even if you are indeed stronger right now, why do you have to put on six pairs of chicken wings and a pair of bull horns?"

"Well," the mental devil replied, "the change of style was mainly meant to build up the atmosphere with consideration to the revelation that we will destroy Earth."

It sniffed and retreated the horn, the wings, and the bloody armor. Sitting down in midair, it held its cheeks and looked at Li Yao solemnly before it went on to comfort him. "I know that you are in too bad a mood to accept everything. But brother, on second thought, this incident is actually quite reasonable although it is outside our expectations!"

Li Yao's eyebrows were furrowed even harder. "Hey, hey, hey. Would you care to explain why it is reasonable at all?"

"Look. Most of the crises that we have been involved in share something in common. The one who seems righteous, bright, and kind and serves as a representative of justice is always the supervillain in disguise!” the mental devil analyzed carefully. “Also, the brighter, kinder, and more justified they appear and the more enormous power they have, the greater supervillain they will be!

“Yan Xibei, Xiao Xuance, Zhou Hengdao, Lu Zui, Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan… Without any exception!

“Then, here comes the question. After shattering the schemes of Mo Xuan, Lu Qingchen, and the extraterrestrial devils behind them, unifying the edge of the cosmos, and even having a wife who has been elected as the Speaker of the Federation, who else in the thousands of square lightyears around can possibly be more powerful and righteous than Vulture Li Yao, the dominator of three Sectors and the Black Wind King?

“When we entered the Pangu laboratory just now, I thought that there was something wrong with Long Yangjun and that she could prove to be a supervillain later. But on second thought, she did not meet either of the previous two standards.

“In terms of image, hers was not very bright in the beginning and had always been ambiguous.

“In terms of power, as Lead Eunuch Wang Xi on the surface, she was incomparable to you. Even your little finger was more powerful than her.

“Therefore, how could she have been the supervillain? As it turned out, after she confessed her feelings for you, she immediately ran away.”

“Wait.” Li Yao raised his hands to protest. “What do you mean by ‘confessed her feelings’? She and I are pure friends, nothing more. Besides, she might not be a ‘she’ at all.

Chances are that an organ similar to the snake tail of the Nuwa Clan is hidden between her thighs that can be stabbed into the operation holes of the primeval magical equipment in order to activate the devices!”

“Such details are not important,” the mental devil declared. “What matters is that few people today are qualified to call themselves ‘supervillains’ in front of you, considering your identity and position. Therefore, it should come as no surprise at all that you are the real ultimate supervillain!”

“No surprise my ass!” Li Yao snorted. Gradually recovering from the initial shock, he crossed his arms and said, “Why do I need to destroy Earth for no good reason? Just because a voice in my head tells me to? Long Yangjun was quite right. Will I simply do as the voice commands like an idiot if the voice asks me to eat sh*t?

“No. I am not going to destroy the funny Earth at all. Besides, I don’t even know where Earth is or if it exists at all!”

Chapter 1921 - Brainstorm

Although he had spent more than a hundred years in the world of Cultivators, Li Yao still remembered Earth from the uncanny dream in his childhood.

It was a world without spiritual energy. So-called training and devils were nothing more than groundless tales. In other words, it was a bunch of ordinary people who resided in that world.

Although they were ordinary people who never perceived the mysteries of the spiritual energy, the earthlings had mastered techniques that could be performed without spiritual energy and the most erratic laws of nature, thereby developing a brilliant and glorious ‘non-spiritual civilization’.

Like the citizens of the federation, the earthlings had their own feelings and emotions. While some of them were ambitious, unpardonable schemers, the majority of the people still lived their lives with kind, tenacious hearts, striving and struggling to protect their families and their happiness.

For Li Yao, everybody in the universe could be a friend, and the civilization of mankind was an inseparable hole. All the ordinary people were targets of his protection. He would not kill any of them for no reason, much less destroy the Earth and slaughter six billion earthlings.

Besides…

His former self in his previous life was also one of the six billion people and a common earthling. Why on earth would he destroy the home of his previous life without a good reason?

However, the voice was still echoing next to his ears:

“Run away now. You can’t destroy it. It is too dark and too strong!”

If ‘it’ referred to Earth, that would be rather peculiar. In the solar system, a barren place without spiritual energy, nuclear weapons were the toughest ‘magical equipment’. But the power of such weapons could hardly be called unbelievable. Also, due to the limited conditions of usage, without the best of luck and the determination to sacrifice millions of civilians, they could barely deal a fatal blow to a Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage or the Divinity Transformation Stage.

Then, what was the ‘darkness’ of Earth referring to? And why was it ‘strong’ at all?

To this moment, Li Yao could still sense his sorrow, desperation, and fury when ‘he’ was floating in the orbit of the blue planet.

He could tell that the ‘destruction’ that he intended to initiate was not of an evil nature at all. The Vulture Plan was not a foul plan but an effort of justice. Then…

The mental devil chuckled in amusement. “Of course. All evil supervillains believe from the bottom of their heart that they are saving the world as symbols of justice when they implement an evil plan or that they are forced to do what they must! Would any of them admit that they are unpardonable, despicable, and cunning bad guys?

“That was the case for Yan Xibei, Xiao Xuance, Lu Zui, and Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan. Even Elder Nether Spring from the Blood Demon Sector thought that he was creating ‘a third life form’ for the evolution of the entire species when he carried out the Spore Stratagem, didn’t he?

“Right now, it is your turn to walk on that path again. This is your destiny…”

“Damn your destiny,” Li Yao snorted. “Even Long Yangjun knows the difference between ‘destines other people give me’ and ‘my real destiny’. Am I going to be at the mercy of the uncanny ‘destiny’ like an idiot? Before I figure out everything and whether it is righteous or evil, I will never ‘destroy the Earth’ as a puppet of a certain existence!”

“I understand it now,” the mental devil said. “You are looking for some psychological comfort. You are trying to figure out if ‘destroying the Earth’ is actually a deed of justice that is not in violation of your morals under certain extreme circumstances, right?”

Li Yao hesitated for a moment. “I guess so. In any case, I will not believe that the previous me and my companions who were involved in the Vulture Plan were crazy lunatics. Come on. Let’s have a brainstorm. Is there a possibility where ‘destroying the Earth’ is moral, justified, and not against the interests of the weak?”

“You are too greedy.” The mental devil smiled. “Morals and justice are all relative. The universe is a vast place, but there are few occasions where you can have all the best. In many cases, being weak is itself a sin. The weak are destined to be hurt by the strong. This is a law of nature. Or rather, this is an ‘ecological balance’ of a higher level.

“However, when it comes to a scenario where Earth has to be destroyed, we certainly can find some. For example, the classic ‘kill one to save ten thousand’—the entire universe, including Earth, is in grave danger, and only the sacrifice of the Earth can save the whole universe.”

Li Yao shook his head, not entirely convinced. “Isn’t that theory from Blackstar the Great? That was exactly the rhetoric he used when he destroyed Karan—only by sacrificing Karan could the invaders from the Covenant Alliance be defeated and the entire Star Ocean Republic be saved! What happened in the end? The center of the cosmos is still mired in a thousand-year war. The only thing that was ‘saved’ was perhaps his ambition.

“If I am to destroy Earth for no better reason than to save the universe, would I be any different from Blackstar the Great?”

“No, the situation is different,” the mental devil said creepily. “Blackstar the Great destroyed Karan for his selfish interests as a ‘stepping stone’ for him to ascend to the highest power. From the perspective of general morals, he naturally should be criticized.

“However, his personal vileness and evilness do not mean that the choice of ‘kill one to save ten thousand’ is not worth discussing.

“There were mainly two problems in the event where Blackstar the Great destroyed Karan.

“Firstly, Blackstar the Great’s real purpose, of course. He destroyed Karan to realize his own ambitions, to seize the highest power of the Star Ocean Republic, and to overthrow the Star Ocean Republic to establish a new dynasty, not purely for the lofty ideal of saving the Star Ocean Republic.

“Secondly, and more importantly, while the Alliance of the Holy Covenant boasted part of the relics of the Pangu Civilization and developed technology slightest more advanced than the Star Ocean Republic’s, the civilization level of the two parties did not have a significant gap, and their comprehensive national powers were on par.

“Look. A thousand years later, the Imperium of True Human Beings is still able to launch a strategic counterattack at the Alliance of the Holy Covenant and secures great triumphs. It means that they are opponents of the same level. Even if the cruel choice of ‘kill one to save ten thousand’ is not made, there are still possibilities of victory through regular approaches.

“Assuming that Blackstar the Great had not detonated Karan, the invaders of the Covenant Alliance might’ve marched in and caused greater losses, but they still could’ve been defeated.

“Perhaps the ‘greater losses’ might have been several times more than the eight million victims on Karan. But no matter how great the losses might be, it was a price worth to be paid in order to maintain the morals and justice of the Star Ocean Republic.

“However, what if neither of the two conditions above existed?

“Since this is a brainstorm, let’s remove all restraints and imagine such a situation. First of all, ‘Wuying Qi’ is not an ambitious, potential Immortal Cultivator who loathes ordinary people but a kindhearted, upright, and selfless Cultivator and the highest commander of the border watch of the Star Ocean Republic.

“Secondly, the aggressive Covenant Alliance is not a force on par with the Star Ocean Republic, not a member of the civilization of mankind, not the Pangu Civilization that is directly related and in line with mankind, but one weird civilization form a hundred times stronger than mankind that we cannot comprehend at all. It can barely be called a ‘civilization’.

“Under such circumstances, a certain core of commanding for the weird civilization form—let’s call it ‘maternal brain’—happens to land on Karan, giving mankind the only opportunity to destroy the civilization.

“Wuying Qi, as the highest commander of the border watch with abundant battle experience, immediately reached the conclusion that if the ‘maternal brain’ is not destroyed immediately, there will be no opportunity to resist the alien invaders in the future, and the entire civilization of mankind including the Star Ocean Republic and Karan will be destroyed. They will even have an outcome even more miserable than death. In the subsequent hundreds of thousands of years, the civilization of mankind will go through a period that is a hundred times darker than the ‘Great Dark Age’.

“Let me ask you. Under such circumstances, the upright, selfless Wuying Qi decides to stay on Karan to stop the ‘maternal brain’. Eventually, he sacrifices himself, detonates Karan, and kills the ‘maternal brain’, which causes the collapse of the alien invaders and saves the entire civilization of mankind.

“In such a case, my dear Monster Li who is full of sense of justice and morals, would you tell me if the future generations are qualified to condemn such a ‘Wuying Qi’?”

Li Yao frowned hard for a long time before saying, “You set up a conclusion first and then offered harsh conditions according to the conclusion. It’s equivalent to shooting an arrow at a target randomly and then drawing the bullseye on where the arrow lands. How can you ever miss the target in such a case?

“In your example, a weird life form, which is a hundred times more powerful than the civilization of mankind and utterly irresistible for us, has only one ‘maternal brain’ as the highest commanding core, and the ‘maternal brain’ is idiotic enough to land on a hostile planet that contains abundant explosives without any protection. When the planet is finally detonated, it cannot even release part of the remaining soul or find a successor? That is the most stupid thing I have never heard!

“If you ask me, even if such a weird life form that is a hundred times more powerful than the civilization of mankind does exist, it is impossible that they have only one ‘maternal brain’. It is very possible that they have thousands of ‘maternal brains’ like synapses.

“Even if they do have only one ‘maternal brain’, after the ‘maternal brain’ dies, some other replacements similar to the synapses can spontaneously grow into a new maternal brain.

“Otherwise, the universe is too dangerous a place for such an idiotic species to develop to be a hundred times more powerful than the civilization of mankind, right?

“Therefore, even if detonating Karan can annihilate one maternal brain, it will be utterly meaningless because thousands of maternal brains will show up later, and we cannot detonate thousands of habitable planets!”

Chapter 1922 - The Motives to Destroy the Earth

“Why not?” the mental devil asked back. “Not just detonating thousands of habitable planets, even if we destroy the three thousand Sectors and even the entire civilization of mankind, it might not necessarily be ‘immoral’!”

Li Yao was dumbfounded for a long time. “What do you mean?”

“Since this is a brainstorm, we must open our minds and not restrain our imagination with any biased, parochial rules,” the mental devil said carefully with a smile. “You know that ‘suicide’ exists in every human society, right? Even in the Star Glory Federation, which claims to be bright and ethical, there is a rather stable ‘suicide rate’.

“Do the people who choose to commit suicide not love their life? That is not necessarily the case. Most people simply cannot shoulder the endless pain in life. Death is not the most horrible thing in the world; living can be ten thousand times more horrible than death, in which case one will often beg to die.

“The ignorant never understand the logic. They always say cr*p like life is better than anything and even an ant cherishes its life. Is it of any use? Those who want to kill themselves will still kill themselves. Even if some people lack determination and courage and are pulled back from the verge of death, is there any significance in their life when they live meaninglessly like ants?

“The wise are able to view the problem from a higher level. They at least partly admit that an adult with sufficient intellectual faculties has part of the right to decide how to deal with or end their life, especially when they are experiencing insufferable and irresolvable agony.

“Although euthanasia is not entirely legal in the Star Glory Federation, if somebody truly chooses to end their life, other people often more or less understand their decision. In other words, modern citizens’ view of life is more mature and advanced.

“Then, just as a man can choose suicide, is it possible for a civilization to make such a decision?

“If a civilization foresees that it will bear excruciating pain that far exceeds its limits in the future, that life will be more miserable than death, and the situation can in no way be changed, is it immoral for the civilization to choose to terminate itself voluntarily in ‘suicide’?

“Get back to the example just now. If what you said is true, the alien species that invades the three thousand Sectors truly has thousands of maternal brains, and the civilization of mankind is absolutely unable to resist them. Once conquered, human beings will be caged as their food and pets. In the millions of years that follow, human beings will forget their history and honor of the past and degrade into beings like pigs or dogs. Even our ‘training’ will be focused on making ourselves more delectable and delicious so that our masters will be more comfortable and have more fun.

“Let me ask you, if ‘Wuying Qing’ foresaw such a future, or the ‘maternal brain’ displayed such a picture to him while convincing him of the veracity and inevitability of such a future, and ‘Wuying Qi’ had a way to destroy the entire civilization of mankind and he did put it into action, would his act be ‘moral’ or ‘immoral’?”

After staring at the mental devil for a long time, Li Yao shuddered coldly and mumbled, “Are you really the dark side of my soul? Why does the dark side of my soul have so many peculiar thoughts?”

The mental devil smirked. “Justice is always the same, but evil has a myriad of faces. What, you cannot answer the question?”

Thinking carefully for a moment, Li Yao replied firmly, “I am not qualified to decide if such a ‘Wuying Qi’ is moral, but if I were him, I definitely would not make such a choice. I would report the issue to the parliament exactly as it is. Then, I would fight side by side with all other human beings to resist the foul ‘maternal brain civilization’ together!

“Even if we are indeed destroyed in the end, it will be a valiant death where everybody is killed in a battle, instead of a decision made by someone or some representatives that the entire civilization should terminate itself.”

“Dying valiantly in a battle or being terminated without knowing is just a minor detail,” the mental devil said with a smile. “The bottom line is, you also admit that it might not necessarily be an evil move to destroy the civilization of mankind. In that case, what is the big deal about destroying a tiny Earth?

“Consider such a scenario. In a higher dimension above the three-dimensional universe exists an almighty being that can destroy the three thousand Sectors and the civilization of mankind, naturally, Earth included, whenever it wants.

However, if we choose to ‘sacrifice’ Earth, it guarantees that it will not destroy us but will help the civilization of mankind grow stronger. Our civilization will make a giant leap forward by a thousand or ten thousand years.

“Look. You can either sacrifice Earth to save and improve the entire civilization of mankind, or you can watch the civilization of mankind get destroyed as a whole, and Earth will not be a survivor.

“In such a scenario, the option to ‘destroy Earth’ is no longer that hard to accept, is it?”

“This is bullsh*t.” This time, Li Yao shook his legs hard without one second of hesitation. “We discussed this a long time ago when we heard the propaganda of the Immortal Cultivators for the first time. Any responsible government would not negotiate with kidnappers and terrorists. Besides, if such a godly being beyond the three-dimensional universe does exist, we have no ability to make it keep its promise at all.

“Since we do not have the ability to force it to honor its words, its promise is nothing more than a fart that does not even smell. Today, it can threaten us to sacrifice Earth to save the entire universe, but if we do sacrifice Earth, it can also ask us to sacrifice the Heaven’s Origin Sector to save the remainder of the universe. The day after that, the Flying Star Sector; following that, the Blood Demon Sector… Eventually, like cutting a sausage, we would slice ourselves into pieces and deliver them to its mouth, and it would devour everything with the least effort. Its greed would never be satisfied. This is exactly what it would do.

“More critically, if it is indeed an omnipotent, omniscient, and invincible being beyond the three-dimensional universe who can destroy the civilization of mankind while yawning, what does a tiny Earth mean for it? Why does it ask us to sacrifice Earth of all planets? If Earth must be destroyed, couldn’t the being do it by itself instead of relying on insignificant mortals like us?

“If it insists that we destroy Earth, ‘Earth’ is of paramount significance and might be a threat and a key to destroy the being. In this case, we will have even less reason to destroy Earth.

“I stand by what I said. If this is the entirety of the scenario, I will never destroy Earth. I will only stand side by side with the six billion earthlings and make the six billion earthlings stay together with all the human beings in the three thousand Sectors. We will fight together against the being of a higher level.

“We may be destroyed, but we will never be defeated. The civilization of mankind including Earth will never bend or compromise but will fight until the last breath!”

“Aya. As expected of a man who is about to enter the Divinity Transformation Stage. Your mind is much more sophisticated than when you were on Kunlun!” the mental devil shrieked in exclamation. Then it chuckled and said, “In that case, we will have to change our hypothesis. What if Earth is itself the darkest, most evil being that contains tremendous secrets, and all the earthlings are reincarnations of fiends and threats to the entire civilization of mankind or the universe?

“Destroying Earth will be demolishing the den of fiends, and killing the earthlings will be killing evil beings. That will not conflict with your belief, will it?”

Li Yao thought carefully again. In the end, he shook his head and said, “In my uncanny dreams, despite all the internal conflicts on Earth, and although there were a lot of tyrants and dictators, it seemed a rather peaceful world from the perspective of the entire universe. It was even incapable of migrating to the Moon or Mars, which were right next to it, much less launching an expedition to the land further away. It is almost ‘harmless’. How can it be a threat to the entire universe?”

“It is possible that everything you saw was just an illusion,” the mental devil analyzed solemnly. “Didn’t you visit a desolate world in a trance, where a female Cultivator greeted you and said ‘welcome to Earth’?

“Didn’t you also see that Earth was on furious fire and withered instantly into a rotten apple core?

“Chances are that the blue Earth and peaceful life in your uncanny dreams are just illusions, and the burning, withering, and decaying apple core is the actual Earth!”

“This is a very plausible possibility.” Li Yao nodded quickly. “If the blue Earth does exist, it cannot be called ‘too dark’ and ‘too strong’ in any way. I don’t know anything about whether or not it is dark, but the earthlings have less than thirty groups of aircraft carriers at most and an arsenal of nuclear weapons that can burn the surface of the Earth into wasteland at best and is not even enough to destroy the Moon.

“Not that I’m bragging, but as long as it is localized, the federation today can send an expedition army with dozens of Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and a few Colossi. That would be more than enough to suppress Earth. Nothing could possibly go wrong!

“Is it necessary to describe such an Earth in such a horrifying and unbelievable way?”

“In that case, we will have to discuss the concepts of exterior and interior worlds,” the mental devil said. “There are two Earths. The Earth on the surface is the blue planet where countless creatures and six billion people live. Their life is peaceful, unattractive, and they are not in conflict with the rest of the universe, if they can see the rest of the universe at all.

“But in fact, there also exists an ‘interior Earth’, which is the real Earth. That place is likely a den of fiends who are most foul, dark, and powerful. They are probably great threats to the entire universe and will destroy the civilization of mankind.

“Therefore, when part of the people on ‘exterior Earth’ found out the truth, they came up with the Vulture Plan and decided to destroy it no matter the cost!”

Chapter 1923 - Six Billion Virtual People

“An interior world and an exterior one, two different Earths?” Li Yao replied. “It does make some sense. Then, what kind of being created such a strange world, and for what purpose?”

“We will have to take our time to explore to find out the answer.” The mental devil smiled. “Maybe the blue planet on the surface, the Earth that has developed a brilliant, glorious civilization, with skyscrapers, streams of cars, and infinite exuberance, is nothing more than the Spiriters’ Realm, the virtual world that Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan established. It is just a game, an illusion, and a ridiculous joke.

“If by ‘destroy Earth’ it means deleting a game, formatting a crystal processor, or shattering a virtual world, you did a lot of such things during the fierce fight against Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan, didn’t you? However strong one’s sense of justice and integrity might be, they wouldn’t think that deleting a game is an unpardonable crime, right?”

“Seems so.” Li Yao thought for a moment. “If the blue Earth is just a virtual world and a joke full of malevolence and schemes, it will be easier to understand why we must ‘destroy Earth’. But what about the six billion earthlings? I vaguely recall that the earthlings have their feelings, emotions, and independent will, too. They are all real people!”

“Who told you that?” the mental devil argued, not thinking that it was a big deal. “When you play the game ‘Civilization’ and enter a new DLC, is every individual you meet—including the dealers on the street, the waiters in the restaurants, or the enemy’s minions—a real player? Of course not. A lot of them are ‘virtual people’ that are randomly generated. To quote Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan, they are ‘Deviant Spirits’!

“The ‘Deviant Spirits’, under the support of an enormous database, function according to all kinds of sophisticated rules and can vividly simulate all the feelings and operations of human beings, as if they were exactly real persons. But they are still fake nonetheless!

“When you were lost in the Spiriters’ Realm, were you not trapped in a virtual village named ‘Peach Blossom Village’ where you met Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan’s virtual granddaughter ‘Ah Luo’? When you broke ‘Peach Blossom Village’ in the end, that ‘Ah Luo’ was naturally disintegrated into the most basic data. Does that mean you killed an innocent woman?”

“Nonsense,” Li Yao replied immediately. “Of course I didn’t!”

The mental devil grinned hideously. “Therefore, even if your memories in the virtual Earth are as clear as can be, on what grounds are you certain that the six billion earthlings all exist for real? Have you seen each and every one of the six billion people? The best you could’ve met and gotten in touch were the several thousand people around you, right?

“No. Even if you have seen them in person, it still does not prove any point. The virtualization technology in the federation is already enough to create ‘Deviant Spirits’ that can almost deceive people into thinking that they are real. It is needless to mention the powerful being that is capable of creating a virtual Earth!

“Therefore, of the six billion earthlings, it is very possible that 5,999,000,000 are fake. They are all ‘Deviant Spirits’, and deleting those ‘virtual earthlings’ does not violate any moral code, does it?”

Li Yao thought carefully for a long time, frowning. He shook his head slowly and said, “In that case, destroying a virtual Earth and deleting 99.99% of the six billion people who are ‘virtual humans’ indeed do not seem to violate any moral code. However…”

He hesitated for a long time, and his eyes seemed to have pierced through the immeasurable dark nebula and projected to the blue virtual planet. “Even if what you said is true, and 99.99% of the earthlings are false as virtual humans generated by databases and programs, do they realize that they are fake? When the Earth is destroyed and they are truly deleted, will they feel painful or struggle in desperation?

“If the virtual world is advanced enough, there should be some sort of data, program, and rule to make them sense pain and desperation, shouldn’t there? It is almost like in some of the war DLCs of ‘Civilization’, even the randomly generated soldiers on the enemy’s side will put on the most miserable expression when they are killed.”

The mental devil apparently could not care less. “However, no matter how painful and desperate they are, that is still fake, virtual, and meaningless! I know that you are a hotblooded middle school student whose ignorance borders on idiocy, but you aren’t hypocritical enough to care about some virtual humans, right? I didn’t see you show any mercy to the Deviant Spirits when you fought Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan’s army!”

Li Yao smiled, somewhat in embarrassment. “Seems so. After you point it out, I indeed feel that I am being too naïve.”

The mental devil’s eyes glowed as it rubbed its fists and declared, “In that case, if the ‘blue Earth’ is really a virtual game, and 99.99% of the earthlings are virtual, ‘destroy Earth’ will no longer be unacceptable, right? Then, what are we waiting for? Let’s find it and destroy it already. Hehehe!”

Li Yao frowned again and eyed the mental devil carefully up and down. “Wait. Can you please stop laughing creepily like that? Why do I always feel that you have ill intentions and are not a good guy?”

“Oh, how wronged I am!” The mental devil covered its head with both hands and shouted, “From the moment I was born to right now, although I have indeed said some outrageous things, tell me truthfully, have I really done anything wrong?

“Elder Nether Spring had his Spore Stratagem, Jin Tuyi had his Red Tide Plan, Lu Zui had his Patriots Partnership, and even the seemingly frank and dutiful Professor Mo Xuan had one side that was an extraterrestrial devil. Even you, Vulture Li Yao, who have always been an embodiment of integrity and justice, have the mysterious destiny to destroy Earth on your shoulders!

“So many people have exposed their evil ambitions, but I have been staying here dutifully all the time. Why do you call me a ‘mental devil’? Tell me honestly, what kind of ‘devil’ am I?

“Right now, it is you who wants to destroy Earth, but you cannot pass the test of your own heart. You asked me to brainstorm with you, so a storm I have given to you. But after all the possibilities that I help you come up with, you accuse me of having ill intentions again?

“Why is it so difficult to be your mental devil? I’m trying to help you fulfil your destiny and destroy Earth. Why do you not believe me?

“Even if you do not trust me, you should at least trust yourself. Look at you. Dominator of three Sectors, Black Wind King, Vulture Li Yao. What a man of brightness and uprightness you are! You are the epitome of justice! Now that you are a symbol of justice, the things that you destroy are certainly evil. Even if you do not understand it right now, you will soon realize the necessity to destroy Earth during your exploration!”

“I’m going to stop you there.” Li Yao stopped the mental devil from rambling on. “I know what I should do very well, and I will not be manipulated by you or any goddamn ‘destiny’.

“All in all, we must find ‘Earth’ first and find out the secrets behind it before we make any plans.”

“That makes sense.” The mental devil could not have agreed more. “However, the universe is a vast place. We do not have any clues at all. Where should we begin?”

“Who says we do not have any clues? We clearly have the most important clue, which is our language!” Li Yao said. “The most widely used language on Earth is very similar to the prevalent language in the three thousand Sectors today. They are ninety-five percent identical. Such a language is obviously in line with the language of the Pangu Civilization from the primeval age.

“Moreover, I vaguely recall that there are tales where Pangu established the universe and Nuwa created human beings on Earth, too. They are quite similar to the many legends in the three thousand Sectors.

“Therefore, Earth must be deeply associated with the primeval civilizations including Pangu and Nuwa. As long as we crack the many mysteries left from the primeval age, we will certainly be able to crack the mystery of Earth and find out where it is exactly!

“We have to seize every second to go to the center of the cosmos!

“In the royal library of the Imperium of True Human Beings that is as vast as an ocean, all the classics and files in the past ten thousand years or even dating back to the Great Dark Age are stored. Even Long Yangjun thinks highly of their value. Chances are that clues about Earth are hidden among them.

“Boss Bai left for the center of the cosmos three years ago to excavate the mausoleums of the Supreme Emperor and the Blood God. The Supreme Emperor claimed to have three volumes of the Book of Revelations, in which a great amount of the heritage of the Pangu Civilization was stored. The Blood God, on the other hand, was not only a reincarnation of the Supreme Emperor but also had the enhancement of the extraterrestrial devils. He was definitely the most powerful devil lord that history had ever seen.

“Did the two of them know something about the primeval age and even learn of Earth? If we can really find their mausoleums or residences, we may have some interesting discoveries.

“Also, after we go to the Imperium of True Human Beings, we will have a chance to get in touch with the people from the Covenant Alliance. The Covenant Alliance has developed and thrived to this day based on the relics of the Pangu Civilization. Their studies on primeval civilizations must be far better than the knowledge of the federation or the Imperium. It is even possible that ‘Earth’ is concealed in the realm of the Covenant Alliance, which would be interesting!

“All in all, I have vaguely figured out who I am, and there is no reason for me to quit halfway in confusion. Everything in the Star Glory Federation has been set on the right track. I don’t think that I am too indispensable here. In the next hundred years, I should fight more for my own destiny and find Earth whatever it takes!”

A vague smile flashed at the bottom of the eyes of the Blood Devil. “What then? Will you really… destroy Earth?”

“I cannot give you an answer to that question yet.” Li Yao pondered for a long time, but he eventually shook his head and said, “Let’s find Earth first. I believe that all the problems will be solved after the truth about ‘destroy Earth’ is revealed. By then, I will naturally know how I should fulfil my ‘real destiny’!”

Chapter 1924 - Ceaseless

The Land of Eternal Night truly deserved its name. Most of the year, the sky was entirely covered by the frozen clouds, making the place soaked in an eternal night of darkness.

However, when the clouds dispersed occasionally, allowing the rays to pass through, this place would boast the most glorious sunlight in the entire Ancient Sages Sector that looked like glowing rainbows.

Li Yao saw such glamorous sunlight the day before he left the Ancient Sages Sector.

The waterfall that felt like a rainbow poured on the entire ice field, raising countless colorful bubbles on the ground in the middle of the sky and the earth.

Against such magnificent, soul-stirring rainbows, Master Bitter Cicada was sitting cross-legged on the head of a starship and reading classics wholeheartedly on a mini crystal processor. He looked so calm, casual, and pacifying that ten thousand flowers seemed to be blossoming around the monk.

Li Yao had been upset and ill at ease and therefore decided to take a random walk. He could not help but feel touched by the view and flew to the back of the starship docked on the ice field before he went to Master Bitter Cicada stealthily.

For someone of Li Yao’s Cultivation, his eyesight was absolutely incomparable to that of normal people. Before he walked to the back of the monk, he already saw the classics that the master was studying carefully, which were…

‘A Hundred Tales of the Young Man and the Monk’, ‘Collection of Chicken Soup for the Soul’, ‘A Parchment: Ancient Wisdom from the Forest Ocean Sector’, ‘Women Are Born to Be Graceful’…

“Cough, cough. Cough, cough, cough, cough.”

“Why do you stop there when you have already come, Fellow Cultivator Li?” Master Bitter Cicada asked. “I can tell that your footsteps are heavy and disordered. Anything troubling you?”

“Nothing in particular,” Li Yao said. “I’m here mainly to thank you for your protection the other day. Had it not been for the help of you and the other fellow Cultivators, I probably would’ve been mentally deranged and doomed forever!

“Furthermore, I do have some minor trouble that I would like to discuss with you. However… since you are obviously occupied in your study of the classics, maybe another time.”

“Those classics from the Star Glory Federation are indeed quite philosophical. I feel greatly enlightened and have learned a lot from the tales!” Master Bitter Cicada said. “If you don’t feel that my tongue is too clumsy, why don’t you tell me what is troubling you? I can help you interpret it with the morals and lessons from the ‘chicken soup for the soul’. Rest assured. This is part of my training. It is free of charge.”

“…Fine.” Li Yao walked forward and sat cross-legged before Master Bitter Cicada. Looking at the colorful, immeasurable sky, he hesitated for a moment and asked, “Master, has it ever occurred to you that everything before our eyes can be illusionary and that there may be a world beyond our worlds, a universe beyond our universe? If there is indeed a universe beyond our own, and our universe is but a projection of a higher universe or even an insubstantial game, how can we decide whether we are 'real' or an illusion? And what is the meaning of everything we are an illusion?"

Master Bitter Cicada smiled and said, "To eat and sleep."

Li Yao frowned. "Master, I am asking for your enlightenment sincerely. You don't have to trick me with such an ancient cliché, do you?"

'To eat and sleep' came from a story. A young man asked a monk what 'trouble' was, and the monk replied with a smile 'to eat and sleep'. The young man then asked what 'training' is, the monk still smiled and said 'to eat and sleep'. The young man was completely baffled, but the monk simply explained, "Trouble is when you sleep while you should eat and when you want to eat while you should go to sleep. Training is when you focus attention on eating while you should eat and when you go to sleep without being distracted by anything while you should sleep. Nothing more."

It was a rather old story and was almost a cliché in the Star Glory Federation. Li Yao naturally knew it clearly with his excellent memory.

Master Bitter Cicada, however, cleared his throat and said, "The tale may be old, but the lesson is new. What is 'real' and what is 'illusionary' are the most indistinguishable, and the least needed to be distinguished, things in the world.

"In the Star Glory Federation, there is even the hypothesis of 'the brain in the vat'. Today, after the development of training techniques and virtualization magical equipment, it is already possible to build a vivid, almost perfectly simulated Grand Illusionary Land. Even if someone has only a brain left that is placed in a tank filled with nutrition liquids, they will be misled into thinking that their body is intact and that they are living in the real world after thousands of wires are connected to their brain.

“Then, how can the person tell whether they are living in ‘reality’ or are merely a ‘brain in a vat’ that lives in the illusions constructed by someone else?

“Then, how can we make sure that the so-called ‘three thousand Sectors’ are the ultimate reality, that a being of a higher level than ours did not devise and create everything, and that our entire universe is not an enormous ‘brain in a vat’?”

Li Yao nodded quickly. “Exactly. That’s the question I’m having right now. How can we distinguish them and prove our discovery?”

“We cannot distinguish them, and it is unnecessary to prove the discovery,” Master Bitter Cicada said. “You have every reason to suspect that the three thousand Sectors and the boundless three-dimensional universe we live in are merely a ‘brain in a vat’ created by some sort of ‘four-dimensional life’ in a laboratory. We are just insignificant projections from the four-dimensional world, and we are just an experiment project for the ‘four-dimensional life’.

“However, if the four-dimensional life does exist as a legendary god or devil, is the four-dimensional world that ‘it’ lives in so-called ‘reality’? Is it possible that the four-dimensional world that is beyond our comprehension is a projection from some five-dimensional world, and it is actually a painting drawn by some painter in the five-dimensional world on the spur of the moment?

“Is the five-dimensional painter in the five-dimensional world the ultimate reality? Is it possible that the entire five-dimensional world is fundamentally a long poem created by a devastated bard in the six-dimensional world, the six-dimensional world is translucent dew on a certain tiny petal in the seven-dimensional world, while the seven-dimensional world is a beautiful dream of a bizarre creature in the eight-dimensional world while it is napping?”

Li Yao was dumbfounded. “Is—Is it possible?”

“If you believe in the ‘brain in the vat’, the four-dimensional laboratory, the five-dimensional painting, the six-dimensional poem, the seven-dimensional dew, and the eight-dimensional beast’s dream are all possible,” Master Bitter Cicada said. “Despite their low odds, in the eternal time and space and in the infinite dimensions, even the smallest chance is bound to happen.

“The Stupa Temple always says ‘to see a world in a grain of sand and a heaven in a wild flower’. It is exactly the same logic. In the concepts beyond time, space, and dimensions, a grain of sand is the same as three thousand Sectors. Nobody is more ‘real’ or ‘illusionary’ than anybody else.

“It does not matter whether the world is real or illusionary. What matters is your own mind and the way you view the world. If you believe in ‘eat when you eat and sleep when you sleep’, every world will be real. However, if you think about sleeping when you are having food, if you are upset and dwell on the so-called ‘truth’ thinking about the things in the four-dimensional world when you are obviously in our three-dimensional universe, even though you may finally reach the higher dimension, so what? After you reach the four-dimensional space, you will wonder if it is a painting of the five-dimensional world. After you arrive at the five-dimensional world, you will begin to worry about the existence of the six-dimensional poet. If you break them one layer after another, you will never be satisfied. How can you find the ultimate reality?”

Li Yao was dazed for a long time. Scratching his smile, he smiled bitterly. “When I was young, I was full of confusion about the world. There were ten thousand questions in my head. I thought that if I trained hard and became the most awesome Cultivator in the world, I would be able to find out the answers.

“But as it turns out, as I get stronger and stronger and my level becomes higher and higher, while I have found the answers to ten thousand questions, a hundred thousand or even a million new questions have popped up. I am even more confused than before!”

“It is only natural. Just like this tiny bubble.” Master Bitter Cicada opened his hands, and a shivering, glittering bubble appeared at the center of his palm.

As his spiritual energy injected, the bubble grew larger and larger. “Fellow Cultivator Li, look. As the bubble becomes greater, it contains more and more ‘answers’ inside, but the ‘superficial area’ where it touches the outside world becomes larger, too, and it will sense even more unknowns. As the bubble grows larger, it will meet ten new puzzles after one puzzle is unveiled. What if the bubble grows huge enough to swallow the entire planet and the entire universe? Therefore, the ‘unknown’, the ‘confusions’ and the ‘trouble’ are ceaseless!”

Master Bitter Cicada’s hands shivered, and the bubble flew to the sky, shaking. Illuminated by the sunlight, it released brilliant colors.

The monk narrowed his eyes and observed attentively before mumbling, “That being said, although confusion is ceaseless as we carry on our training, that is no reason to give up training because… look how beautiful the bubble is!”

Together with Master Bitter Cicada, Li Yao looked at the bubble flying higher and higher in silence until it almost disappeared in the colorful clouds. He thought carefully for a long time before saying, “Master, I feel that what you said is so profound, wise, and philosophical. But on second thought, I feel that… you actually did not say anything.”

“Of course,” Master Bitter Cicada said. “You have come to make fun of me with such a question that carries no answer. I have shown you enough respect by offering you some chicken soup for the soul instead of cursing you and kicking you off the starship. What more do you expect?”

Li Yao was not angry. He asked again, “Then, master, in your opinion, where will the bubble reach exactly in the end after it flies higher and higher?”

“How would I know?” Looking at the bubble that had melted into the clouds, or perhaps had surpassed the clouds and flown to the infinite sky, Master Bitter Cicada spoke casually as a layer of golden brilliance popped on his face. “You will have to ask yourself the question, Fellow Cultivator Li. After all, I am just a common monk, not a Bodhisattva[1].”

Chapter 1925 - The Most Romantic Thing I Can Imagine

On Earth, in the season that was warm and comfortable, inside a campus that looked like a garden filled with the singing of birds and the fragrance of flowers, light, delightful music was playing.

A young man in sportswear hopped forward as if he had grown springs on his legs. With a big headset on his head, he was bouncing a basketball in his hands.

It was obvious that he was quite good at the sport. Even though the basketball was pushed several meters away many times, it always bounced back to his hands, however narrowly.

The passersby of his age all greeted him, implying that he was an outgoing and popular boy.

The camera changed. Inside a quiet, clean building not far away, a calm and slim girl was practicing dancing in the slightly sorrowful melody.

Her soft body, her pitiful expression, and her agile footsteps truly made her look like an angel whose wings had broken.

The camera changed again. Outside of the campus, a weaselly gangster was running away crazily under the pursuit of dozens of brawny guys. Everything was an utter mess.

The camera changed another time. A kung fu expert and a shooting expert showed up one after another. They were both young, vigorous, carefree, and handsome.

Suddenly, the bright sky dimmed, and the clouds were rolling nonstop, as if a behemothic monster had swallowed the entire Earth into its throat.

Countless citizens craned their necks and looked at the sky in a daze.

The five boys and girls sensed the anomaly, too. As if navigated by their fate that they did not know yet, they raised their heads and looked at the sky at the same time.

The moment they raised their heads, five shooting stars suddenly darted out of the dark clouds and rushed close, hitting the five boys and girls precisely.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

The perspectives from the five cameras were focused on the same picture. The five boys’ and girls’ countenance of extreme shock could clearly be seen.

A solemn and weary voice echoed next to their ears. “A long, long time ago, we banished the fiend out of our world, but we failed to completely destroy it.

“The fiend has been lurking and resting at the edge of the cosmos, growing stronger and stronger. Today, it has finally come back.

“My strength is running dry. Brave young people, the destiny to protect Earth must be fulfilled by you. Remember, you must protect Earth, and you must destroy the fiend, whose name is… Vulture Li Yao!”

“Argh!”

Li Yao suddenly woke up from the nightmare. He felt that his heart was palpitating, and he was soaked in cold sweat. Every muscle in his body was twitching violently beyond his control.

What a terrible nightmare.

Thankfully… it does not feel like the uncanny dreams I had before. It must be because I’ve been having a lot of random thoughts recently.

Rubbing his cold cheeks hard and took more than ten deep breaths, he raised his head, only to find himself in the middle of a dark cabin. Then, Li Yao finally recalled that he had already left the Ancient Sages Sector and was on his way back to the Heaven’s Origin Sector.

He made a gesture casually. Dozens of 3D light beams immediately unfolded around him, displaying the profound and boundless universe around the starship. In the space behind his bed, a very familiar planet that he had been dreaming of was gradually enlarged.

It was his hometown, the planet of the Heaven’s Origin Sector!

I’m finally back!

Wiping the cold sweat on his forehead, Li Yao took a long breath in relief.

The unsmooth journey to the Ancient Sages Sector had taken three and a half years because of the loss of directions in the dark nebula.

In the past three and half years, the Star Glory Federation had undergone drastic changes again, and he and Ding Lingdang had not met each other for a long time!

After the starship entered the range of the Spiritual Nexus in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, virtual meetings could be held without any delay for the complicated report and summary work.

When Li Yao really landed on the planet of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the summary report regarding the Ancient Sages Sector was all completed. The rest of the formalities could naturally be taken over by other staff.

He only wanted to clear his mind and get some rest.

In a famous vacation spot of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, inside a personal manor that was quiet with pleasant views, Li Yao and Ding Lingdang hugged each other hard, unwilling to let go of each other for a long time.

Although the two of them could communicate with each other through the spiritual messenger, Ding Lingdang still gave herself three days off after learning that Li Yao was coming back so that she could reunite with him.

Inside the vast private manor, they were the only two living creatures except for the ten thousand birds flying over the ocean.

Looking at Ding Lingdang who had been working as the Supreme Speaker of the Federation for four years and appeared more shrewd than before, Li Yao had a lot of mixed feelings.

His wife truly looked more and more like an intimidating queen that had the whole world under her control!

“I should’ve known that nothing good could ever happen when you were out. You said that you would find the Ancient Sages Sector and build the space gate in half a year at most, and yet you were sluggish enough to spend more than three years on it!” Ding Lingdang clenched her fists and bashed Li Yao’s chest. “Why do I feel that your legs are installed with springs? You simply can’t stay at home and have to run wild, and every time you run wild, you always go missing!”

Li Yao scratched his head, somewhat embarrassed. After hearing that, he was even less sure about how he should express his intention to go to the center of the cosmos.

Ding Lingdang’s eyes were keen enough for her to notice his hesitation. She raised her eyebrows and asked, “What, anything bothering you?”

Looking at the ocean where waves were rising and falling with white foams popping up, Li Yao said hesitantly, “Yes… There is something very weird that I don’t know how I should explain to you.”

“Just tell me straightforwardly!” Ding Lingdang said. “We are best friends. Do you have anything that you can’t even let me know?”

Li Yao’s heart shook hard, as if a hole appeared on his chest, and a ray of gold sunlight directly shot into his heart. He mumbled, “Yes. Who else in the entire universe can I trust if I cannot trust and rely on my own wife?

“Alright. I’ll tell you everything exactly as it is!”

Summoning his courage, Li Yao grabbed Ding Lingdang’s hands and looked at her solemnly. Then he said in a low voice, “Honey, in fact, I’ve been keeping the secret for a long time. I’ve been meaning to tell you the truth, but I didn’t know how I should explain it because I was worried that you would look at me in a different way after you learn the secret.

“But since you are so supportive today, I really can’t hold myself back anymore. I hope that you can calm yourself down and not act rashly after hearing what I am about to say!”

“…Fine. I’ll try to be calm and not act rashly. Just tell me.” Taking a long breath, Ding Lingdang bit her lips hard and demanded, “Who is she?”

Li Yao was dumbfounded for a long time. “…Well, I’m afraid that there is a misunderstanding. This issue does not concern another woman. I only want to tell you everything about Earth.”

Holding Ding Lingdang’s hands, the two of them talked. Looking at the seagulls flying free at will in the sky, Li Yao told her everything that he knew about Earth and all his speculations.

Although he had highly abridged his experiences and ignored most of the unnecessary details, it still took him more than an hour to finish the entire compelling and extraordinary story.

Ding Lingdang listened quietly the whole time and did not exclaim in shock even in the most staggering part of the story. Eventually, it was Li Yao who was surprised in the end. “Honey, why have you been so calm? Do you not feel astounded and lost for words at all?”

“If it were somebody else, I would’ve been greatly astonished,” Ding Lingdang said. “However, even the strangest things that happen to Vulture Li Yao are always normal. Also, in such a case, your anomalies in the past have reasonable explanations. It is actually a great relief for me!”

His wife was indeed a great woman who had seen far too many things. Even such an unbelievable revelation was not enough to surprise her!

Li Yao secretly praised Ding Lingdang in his heart. Then he said again, “Then, what do you have to say about the fact that I am actually an ‘earthling’?”

“Technically speaking, you are not an earthling, are you?” Ding Lingdang replied. “You are obviously a native of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, except that your brain received a message from Earth when you were just born. Such a thing is perfectly normal in the vast universe!

“Besides, I think that the initial identity does not matter at all. Whether you are from Earth or the Heaven’s Origin Sector, is there any difference? What matters is how you identify yourself and how you view the people and the world around you.

“At the very least, for me, the one I love and want to spend the rest of my life with is merely ‘Li Yao’. It has nothing to do with your origins, regardless of whether you are from the Earth, the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the federation, the Imperium, or anywhere else!

“An earthling, a native of the Uranian Ring Sector, the ‘dominator of the three Sectors’, or a Mr. Nobody, it doesn’t matter at all. Everything will be fine as long as you are Li Yao!”

Li Yao felt that his heart was melting. He was so moved that he could not say a word for a long time. “Honey…”

Ding Lingdang put on a sweet smile. She grabbed Li Yao’s hands this time and dragged him to move forward. “In fact, I’m very happy that you are willing to share such a big secret with me.

“You know that I am a simpleminded woman. About the schemes, plans, and whatnot that you have speculated, I am neither capable of figuring out the answers to the puzzles nor interested in such complicated things. All I know is that I must support you without reserve and fight by your side to the end because you are my husband!

“You don’t need to hesitate. Based on everything I know about you, I believe that your cause must be justified. If you are really going to destroy Earth, it will definitely be the right thing to do.

“In that case, I will certainly support you. The entire Star Glory Federation will support you. Right now, we may be no match for the Imperium or the Covenant Alliance, but it shouldn’t be very difficult for us to destroy a tiny Earth, right?

“This is the promise of me, your not-so-responsible wife. Hehe. I am never really romantic, but the most romantic thing I can think of right now is to destroy Earth together with you!”

Chapter 1926 - Strategic Deception, Heavenly Eye Plan

Looking at Ding Lingdang’s clear and sincere eyes, and sensing the warmth of her hands, Li Yao could not have been more touched. “We can talk about how to destroy Earth later. But I want to go to the Imperium immediately to explore the secrets of the primeval civilizations and find out where Earth is. I wonder what kind of support the federation can provide for me right now and what your take on the issue is.”

Ding Lingdang’s eyes dimmed as she said, “The term for the Speaker of the Federation has always been five years. I have nearly fulfilled my term. However, the system was established five hundred years ago when the federation only occupied a tiny territory in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and the situation was still in chaos. Right now, the federation includes almost ten Sectors, and the social form and the government structure are rather steady. So, the parliament has proposed a reform. But the details of the reform have not been decided yet. In such a period of transition, I cannot evade my responsibilities recklessly.”

“That means…” Li Yao said, somewhat in embarrassment, “I am going to take off on my own again?”

“Ever since we met, we have spent more time in separation than together,” Ding Lingdang said gloomily. “Before I met you, I always minded my own business and enjoyed the solitude. But for some reason, since we met, I began to feel that the days when I was alone were quite tough and tormenting.”

Li Yao did not know what to say. Secretly blaming himself for being too selfish, he said, “I…”

“Forget it. The man that I’m married to is Vulture Li Yao. If he could stay at home all the time, he would be no Vulture Li Yao!” Ding Lingdang grinned again and bashed Li Yao’s chest hard. “Go now and search for the answers that you want to find. The federation and I will definitely give our full support! After my term is over, I will set off to the Imperium to look for you. I think… it will be in three to five years at most!”

“Honey!” Li Yao held Ding Lingdang’s fists, and his voice turned extremely gentle.

“However, I do have one condition.”

Ding Lingdang snatched Li Yao’s hand instead. Her eyes became very deep.

“What condition?” Li Yao’s heart palpitated. He suddenly had a very bad feeling.

“We have been separated for more than three years, and you will be leaving for the Imperium after staying in the federation for one month at best. The journey to the Imperium will be mysterious and unpredictable. It may take a couple of years, and it may take forever, for us to meet each other again.”

Ding Lingdang said, with a degree of discontentment, “Then, as your wife, I demand you finish the competition of beliefs for the next couple of years within the next month so that I will not miss you at all in the next three to five years. It is not an outrageous request, is it?”

Li Yao swallowed us. “…No. Not at all.”

“Then, what are we waiting for?” Ding Lingdang grabbed him hard. “Let’s begin then. The path to truth is long and rough. We must seize every second!”

…

Seven days later, on the old Boneyard and the new Ultimacy, a streamlined, solid-armored starship with massive firepower—which carried Li Yao, Ding Lingdang, and several other people—slowly landed.

Ultimacy was vastly different from three years ago after the hard work of the remaining soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet and the refugees from Firefly.

Although it had yet to be decorated with sunniness, fragrant of flowers, and peaceful water, the folds thousands of meters high had been razed, and the valleys thousands of meters deep had been filled, creating large areas of plateaus that were suitable for agriculture and living. On the plateaus, towns made of silver, egg-shaped fortresses were established.

The towns were all covered in colorful membranes on the outside, which could both help resist the scourge of the blowing wind and filter the fatal venomous gas.

Li Yao saw a lot of carefree children playing in the open air under the protection of the membranes. He could almost hear their giggles although he was at an altitude of thousands of meters. He felt that his heart was warm.

He could not help but murmur, “What a vigorous planet!”

However, after passing several enormous folds almost ten thousand meters tall and marching inland, he discovered that a rather large proportion of the land was still in a desolate state.

As far as his eyes could reach, layered folds, broken rocks, and winds so violent that were almost visible to the naked eye were everywhere.

On the mountains that rose into the sky were mounds of snow and ice, filled with the air of death and desolation where no creature could survive.

However, inside the bleak inland, dozens of hideous starships were docked, and a large batch of armed shuttles and crystal suits were taking off and landing, forming what appeared to be a busy military base.

At the head of those starships, the raging emblem of a lightning trident was clearly visible.

On the few highest hills and above the military base, dozens of flags of the Imperium of True Human Beings were flying, too.

At first glance, the place truly seemed to be a base that the army of the Imperium occupied.

“Is this the ‘Strategic Deception Center’ that you have specially designed?” Li Yao asked in curiosity.

“Yes. The Imperium of True Human Beings does not know about what’s happened at the edge of the cosmos or that the Black Wind Fleet has been annihilated and surrendered. We intend to keep it that way,” Ding Lingdang said.

“However, the intermittent communication between the two parties has not been entirely cut off. We want to learn precious information from within the Imperium, too. So, it is necessary for us to send some information back occasionally.

“Therefore, we have fabricated a base for the Black Wind Fleet based on the desolate, lifeless environment on Boneyard and established the Strategic Deception Center. Jin Xinyue has been appointed as the commander of the deception troops, and Di Feiwen, the former vice commander of the Black Wind Fleet, is her right-hand man. The two of them are supposed to accomplish the task of deceiving and collecting intelligence from the Imperium together.

“Look how bleak the environment here is. It is essentially an undeveloped planet that has absolutely nothing. However, since it boasts an atmosphere of sorts, it seems to be slightly worthwhile to be developed. This is a classic scenario where it is a shame to abandon the trophy, but it can offer barely anything after it is developed.

“According to the fake messages we sent to the Imperium, most of the territory of the Star Glory Federation is made of such planets. We hope to diminish the other warlords and aristocrats’ interest in the edge of the cosmos as much as possible in such a way while providing a logical reason for the Black Wind Fleet to be stationed here for a long time.

“We want to impress upon the Imperium the idea that the edge of the cosmos is an unattractive, barren land that is not worth conquering on purpose on a large scale. But now that the Black Wind Fleet is already here, and they have lost their original homes, they have no choice except to stay here for now however dissatisfied they are.

“In order to be more convincing, we have even shot pictures of the surroundings and sent them back to the Imperium together with half-true, half-false parameters of the planets. So far, so good. The Imperium is convinced that the Black Wind Fleet is still in the middle of suppressing the Star Glory Federation. Other than the harsh environment, everything is going well. Therefore, it has no intention of sending out a second expedition army.”

An enormous crack opened on the apron of the ‘base of the Black Wind Fleet’. The vehicle that carried Li Yao, Ding Lingdang, and the rest of them slowly flew in.

Below the crack, however, was an enormous dock, in which several super-light starships were running the final maintenance.

Those starships…

They were even smaller than Sparkle, the multipurpose exploration starship that Li Yao was most familiar with. They were clear and seemed to be made of countless crystal scales, which gave them the air of that single escape capsule of the Pangu Clan.

Generally speaking, they were elegant, agile, stealthy, and unpredictable. They were one of the best starship models that the federation could produce.

As a magical equipment expert, Li Yao had naturally-endowed instincts on most magical equipment. He could sense the power entailed in the starships in the moment.

“Although some messages are sent from the homeland of the Imperium occasionally, they are far from enough for us to gain a comprehensive and profound understanding about the Imperium right now,” Ding Lingdang said. “Besides, even the veracity of the messages cannot be confirmed. The aristocrats and even His Majesty in the homeland of the Imperium might not be telling the truth to the Black Wind Fleet, which was essentially an ambitious independent army.

“Therefore, it is inevitable that we need to send out trustworthy men to the Imperium to collect first-hand intelligence. The intelligence collection operation has been named ‘Heavenly Eye Plan’.

“The super-light starships before your eyes are the new-generation exploration starships based on Sparkle, applying the remarkable technology from the single escape capsules of the Pangu Clan, the Black Wind Fleet, and Firefly. The model has been named ‘Heavenly Eye’. Its performance is multiple times more advanced than the one that carried you to the dark nebula a hundred years ago, featuring high stealth and remote communication abilities.

“Right now, we have the detailed star map of the Imperium of True Human Beings, as well as the traffic map and the sailing routes between the Imperium and the federation. It is not entirely impossible for us to teleport an enormous fleet over as long as there is not a strict requirement on the precision and formation of the starships.

“However, such a fleet is destined to be noticed by the Imperium after it is teleported over. In that case, it will certainly be surrounded and destroyed. Chances are that the Immortal Cultivators of the Imperium will even trace them back and discover the truth of the federation. We will be the victim of our own scheme.

“Therefore, the reconnaissance operation can only be carried out with the ‘Heavenly Eye’ stealth starships with the minimal number of elite scouts, who will figure out the general situation in the Imperium, especially the war between the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance, and check if the messages that the Imperium sent to the Black Wind Fleet openly are true. After they send the intelligence back to us, or even secretly establish a one-way space gate that can send navigation signals to the federation, we will know what to do next.

“Basically, this is an upgraded version of your exploration in the dark nebula. The only difference is that the Ancient Sages Sector deep inside the dark nebula is far less developed than the federation, whereas the Imperium of True Human Beings is likely well above the federation in every field, which means that the difficulty of collecting intelligence will be magnitudes higher.”

Chapter 1927 - Treacherous Situation

“Master!”

While Ding Lingdang and Li Yao were talking, Jin Xinyue and Di Feiwen, the two commanders responsible for the deception troop, showed up together.

The moment they saw Li Yao, Jin Xinyue could not help but exclaim in amazement.

After she exiled herself due to the critical mistake that she almost committed in the ‘Dim Moon Plan’ four years ago and left the power center of the Star Glory Federation for Boneyard, Jin Xinyue had been partly monitoring and reeducating the remaining soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet and partly performing intelligence collection and strategic deception on the homeland of the Imperium with the captives. The burden on her shoulders was definitely not light. She had grown a lot during the experience, too.

In the past, she was like a glamorous queen bee that was filled with aggression and intimidation. Everybody could tell after meeting her for the first time that she was a mysterious woman not to be messed with easily. She practically had the word ‘schemer’ engraved on her forehead.

But right now, her sharpness was concealed, and she looked as plain as a harmless, inconspicuous sparrow. The pressure of the ‘queen bee’ was entirely gone.

Li Yao, however, knew clearly that the fatal sting that had been smeared with venom must be lurking somewhere inside her heart. Otherwise, she could not have become the commander of the strategic plan that was of paramount importance to the federation!

“My king!” Di Feiwen bowed to Li Yao deeply.

The vice commander of the Black Wind Fleet had been enjoying himself on Boneyard in the past three and a half years. He was obviously fatter than before, and there was even redness on his cheeks, making him look more like a wealthy merchant who believed in making money than a commander of a regular army.

He was wearing a wrinkled uniform of the federation army, yet the courtesy he performed was that of the subordinates of the Imperium of True Human Beings when they met their ‘Sector Master’. It was truly ridiculous. Together with the ‘my king’, Li Yao felt goosebumps all over his body, and all his hair was standing on end.

Li Yao rubbed his arms and said, “General Di, would you please stop using such a nauseating title?”

“That, I can’t. You are forever the Black Wind king and the common master of five Sectors for all the soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet,” Di Feiwen replied respectfully but without any concession. “By calling you ‘my king’ in respect, it means the complete submission of all the soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet for you and the Star Glory Federation, and it also means that we have never forgotten the dream to follow you back to the center of the cosmos to reclaim our ancestral land and rebuild our hometown. You wouldn’t be heartless enough to deprive us of such a small dream, would you?”

Li Yao was rendered speechless. Touching his nose, he turned to Jin Xinyue and asked, “What’s the situation at the center of the cosmos right now? The messages you sent said that the Imperium won quite a few great battles during the three years and a half while I was in the Ancient Sages Sector.”

“Exactly. At the very least, that’s what the reports sent from the homeland of the Imperium to the Black Wind Fleet said.”

Jin Xinyue invited Li Yao and Ding Lingdang into the information processing center. The remote communication base that the Black Wind Fleet deployed on the orbit of the brown dwarf had long been pulled to this place, turning the ‘base of the Black Wind Fleet’ into the only node for the federation to collect the Imperium’s intelligence.

“According to the latest reports, the Imperium has secured three decisive victories in the last year. They marched all the way back to the border a thousand years ago.

“In other words, the Imperium of True Human Beings has basically ‘recovered’ all the territory of the old Star Ocean Republic. Its territory is now larger than ever before. The situation couldn’t look better on the surface!

“But the Imperium did not anticipate that the war would go so well and that so much lost territory could be recovered in only a couple of years. The army and supply lines of the Imperium have been stretched to the maximum.”

“The situation in the Imperium today is somewhat similar to the federation’s a couple years ago,” Di Feiwen added. “They both suffer from indigestion because they have gulped too fast. It will take a long time for the Imperium to reabsorb the recently recovered territory and people into the economic, political, and military system of the Imperium.”

Li Yao nodded. It was a matter of course.

Three to five years might not even be enough to sort through every issue of one habitable planet with a large population. It was needless to mention the work for dozens of Sectors.

It was easy to defeat the local guards of the Covenant Alliance and to reclaim the lost territory on the surface. But turning the people who had been brainwashed by the Covenant Alliance’s Path of Ultimate Benevolence into people of the Imperium and awakening their pride and dignity as human beings would be much more difficult.

As he expected, Jin Xinyue said, “The situation that the Imperium is faced with is even more complicated than what we were faced with before.

“In the past, when those Sectors were ruled by the Covenant Alliance, the Covenant Alliance established temples on every habitable planet to brainwash the people. Countless people were transformed into cold, heartless tools for production and war. They were even more inhuman than the people of the Imperium.

“Before the Covenant Alliance retreated, they also took away almost all the resources and destroyed the mother lodes, the forests, and the farmlands that they could not take, leaving planets scarred and riddled with holes and people who had been seriously brainwashed and were deeply hostile to the Imperium.

“It is quite a headache to combine the resources of the planets so that they can contribute to the next phase of the war, or at least not add to the burden of the Imperium.

“Naturally, the Immortal Cultivators of the Imperium are not the most kindhearted people in the world. When it is necessary, they will not hesitate to annihilate a whole planet of people who have been brainwashed. But we are not talking about one planet but dozens of them. They must consider the implications of their actions. Besides, the population is a very important ‘resource’. Who should be appointed to reconstruct those planets if all of them are killed?

“If they recovered so many planets for the salvation of the civilization of mankind only to kill all the people later, the morale of the army of the Imperium would be greatly struck despite their brutality and extremity.”

Li Yao nodded and said, “Got it. It seems that the Imperium is in quite a predicament, right?”

“Yes, exactly!” Di Feiwen said. “Those recently recovered Sectors were the traditional territory of the Star Ocean Imperium and the Imperium of True Human Beings a thousand years ago. They were the prosperous areas in the old days. Now that the Imperium has taken them back, there is no way that they will be abandoned.

“However, if the Imperium is to continue their march, they will enter the remote worlds where the Alliance of the Holy Covenant rose at the beginning. Those places are the central territory for the Covenant Alliance.

“In the war during the past thousand years, the central territory of the Covenant Alliance has never been invaded. So, the Imperium does not know the first thing about the environment there. Star maps, sailing routes, resource distribution… They have nothing.

“It is not hard to imagine what a great headache it will be to fight in the unfamiliar, harsh environment against such an inhuman foe like the Covenant Alliance. With the Imperium’s state of ‘indigestion’ right now, it will be difficult to break through the central territory of the Covenant Alliance.”

“Besides,” Jin Xinyue said, “we have to take the characteristics of the Imperium into consideration. The so-called ‘army of the Imperium’ is not a complete whole but a coalition army made of the emperor, the aristocrats, the Sector Masters, and the warlords. Each of them has their own plans for the interests of their own group.

“Right now, they have taken back the most prosperous areas of old. Too busy fighting each other over the trophies, are any of them willing to enter the central area of the Covenant Alliance that is unknown and more dangerous than anywhere else?”

“Therefore,” Di Feiwen said, “our conclusion is that the Imperium’s overwhelming strategic counterattack that has lasted almost seven years has achieved results far better than expected. It is now about to come to an end.

“At least in the next ten to twenty years, the strategic aim of the Imperium will be to divide the trophies rationally and in order, and to reestablish government and consolidate the frontline on the recently recovered planets to prepare for the expedition into the central territory of the Covenant Alliance.

“In other words, the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance will enter a ‘strategic stalemate’ phase again. As long as the Covenant Alliance does not counterattack on a large scale, a brief ceasefire will last for the next couple of years.”

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao said, “This is not good news for the federation.”

“No, it is not.” Jin Xinyue smiled bitterly. “Once the two parties enter the ‘strategic stalemate’, where the Imperium cannot break into the Covenant Alliance’s central territory and the recently-crushed Covenant Alliance is unlikely to attack voluntarily, it is possible that the Imperium will shift its covetous eyes and additional energy on the edge of the cosmos.”

“I understand the personality of the warlords and the aristocrats very well,” Di Feiwen said. “When they are dividing the trophies, anything can be used as a bargaining chip. For example, the Black Wind Fleet that has nothing to do with all this at all.

“It must be noted that the five Sectors including the Black Wind Sector, the Purple Fire Sector and the others have returned to the control of the Imperium during the strategic attack. So, the arrangement of the few worlds have now become a subtle problem. If they are allotted to a certain warlord or an aristocrat, what do you think the warlord or the aristocrat will think of the Black Wind Fleet, my king?”

COMMENT

Li Yao did not think at all. He immediately replied, “One world cannot have two masters. If I were a brutal, ruthless aristocrat of the Imperium who had just exchanged my hard-earned military credits for the Black Wind Sector, I would definitely view the Black Wind Fleet as a thorn in my eyes that I must eradicate whatever the cost might be.

“After all, in a world where the strong prey on the weak and the winner is the king, it is the most reasonable logic to attack before you are attacked. If I were merciful at this moment, the Black Wind Fleet would certainly come back and try to take back the Black Wind Sector after they accumulated enough strength at the edge of the cosmos!

“On the other hand, since I was bold enough to swallow the Black Wind Sector while knowing of the existence of the Black Wind Fleet, my own capability must be no worse than the Black Wind Fleet’s. Therefore, I should be confident that I can swallow the Black Wind Sector without worrying about the retribution of the Black Wind Fleet!”

Chapter 1928 - Unrestricted Warfare, Incoming Experts of Heavenly Slayer!

“That’s the idea,” Di Feiwen said. “In the past hundred years, the messages from the homeland of the Imperium to the Black Wind Fleet have always been intermittent and irresponsible. We were like crazy dogs that they wanted to stay as far away from as possible.

“However, the messages from the homeland of the Imperium increased recently. They are suddenly concerned about the battle situation here and even asked us several times if we need backup.

“Hehe. Based on my understanding of those aristocrats and generals, it is definitely not because they were suddenly questioned by their conscience and they thought of the lone army that is wandering far away again, but because they are reevaluating our capability and attitude so that they can decide the ownership of the five worlds including the Black Wind Sector.

“Once everything is settled, the five worlds will fall into the stomach of other people without getting out, and the lone troop that is wandering at the edge of the cosmos as well as the entire Star Glory Federation will also suffer undeserved disasters. We will be destroyed through no fault of our own!

“The inquiries made recently are getting more and more specific, involving many details of strategic arrangements. We have managed to provide false answers to fool them. Occasionally, when it is impossible for us to answer, we pretend that the communication is jammed by the cosmic storms, and we did not receive any message from the Imperium at all.

“However, cosmic storms cannot last forever, and it is not going to work out if we resort to lies all the time. When the homeland of the Imperium grows suspicious about the situation at the edge of the cosmos, even the most delicate strategic deception will be seen through.”

“Therefore,” Jin Xinyue said, “we have to come up with a solution before the day comes and implement interference on the homeland of the Imperium as much as possible to distract the Imperium’s attention from the edge of the cosmos.

“With that in mind, we have come up with two plans, one aggressive and the other passive. The more passive plan is the Heavenly Eye Plan. The elite scouts from the federation will be sent to march deep into the homeland of the Imperium for clear and specific intelligence, including the final outcome of the war between the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance, and whether or not the Imperium has indeed secured the most glorious and unprecedented victories as it has bragged about in the reports.

“If the reports are real, and the Imperium has truly recovered all the territory a thousand years ago, we also need to know the details about the distribution of trophies. Which warlord or aristocrat will control the five worlds including the Black Wind Sector, and what is their attitude toward the Black Wind Fleet and the edge of the cosmos?

“Only after we figure out the intelligence can we come up with countermeasures to resist the enemy!”

Li Yao nodded. No battle would ever be lost when one knew oneself and one’s enemy well. The Heavenly Eye Plan was a most balanced and riskless plan. He did not have any objection to it.

However, knowing Jin Xinyue, the queen of demons who had inherited the blood of Jin Tuyi, Li Yao was certain that she could not have only made such a rather passive plan.

“Then what is the plan that is more aggressive?” Li Yao asked.

Jin Xinyue smiled. It was not until this moment that the sharp brilliant from more than a hundred years ago beamed out of her eyes again. She explained, “Attack and defense are actually the two sides of the same coin and can be switched at any time. When it comes to defense, it is the Heavenly Eye Plan, and when we need to attack, it will be the Heavenly Slayer Plan!

“The details of the Heavenly Slayer Plan are nothing special. It is basically the same as the Heavenly Eye Plan, except that it is no longer elite scouts who are sent to the homeland of the Imperium but experts that boast tremendous damage.”

“The Heavenly Slayer Plan?” Li Yao’s pupils constricted rapidly. “You are going to send a batch of highly-destructive experts to the homeland of the Imperium?”

“Exactly. Even if they are not as strong as you, Master, they should be experts at least on the level of Fiend Blade Peng Hai, the Fire Ant King, Wu Mayan, and the ten experts of the Ancient Sages Sector,” Jin Xinyue said solemnly. “I hope that when a dozen or so such experts are gathered with their Colossi, they will be able to destroy an important base of the Imperium very quickly if they are determined; or to completely paralyze an important planet’s resource supplies in guerilla warfare; or to perform a decapitation strategy on the enemy’s aristocrats, warlords, nobles, and central commanders; or to disrupt the enemy’s important ports and transportation hubs… All in all, I am hoping to deliver a dozen or so strategic weapons like that to the heart of the Imperium!”

Li Yao understood what was going on. “This is a strategy of some sort of mutual deterrence, huh?”

“Yes. The comprehensive national power of the Imperium is too high. With the juvenile state that the federation is in today after our preliminary development, it will be practically impossible to win a head-on clash with a prepared army from the Imperium,” Jin Xinyue said. “In the battle against the Black Wind Fleet, we destroyed the space gate of the Imperium and secured the final victory mainly because of the dominating return of the twelve Colossi led by you. But luck played an important part, too.

“We cannot count on unpredictable luck as hope for our every victory. Besides, if the Imperium sends out a coalition fleet that is multiple times stronger than the Black Wind Fleet, there will be nothing we can do however lucky we are.

“According to the conclusion of our specialists, after we combine the technology from Kunlun, the Nuwa warship and the Pangu laboratory in the Ancient Sages Sector, the Black Wind Fleet, and Firefly, as long as we develop at a high speed for one or two decades in order to fully grasp and make use of the technology, there will be hope for us to compete with the army of the Imperium in an open battlefield.

“However, the enemy is hardly likely to give us one or two decades. The next ten years will be the most crucial ten years for the federation. Should the enemy attack again in the meantime, they will not even have to entirely occupy the federation, and the serious damage to the few most important industrial planets of the federation will be more than enough to delay the progress of our development and cast us into an eternal doom.

“Therefore, in the next ten to twenty years, we can only adopt the strategy of unrestricted warfare and asymmetric strikes to protect ourselves.

“Is a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator in a Colossus important in a space battle in a head-on clash? Of course it is! However, the truth is that if the Imperium sends out a second coalition fleet that is multiple times more powerful than the first one after learning the truth of the federation, we will not be able to resist the overwhelming attack at all even if we gather all our Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and their Colossi. The only difference is that we may die slower and more valiantly.

“If so, what if we move the most dangerous Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and their Colossi from the main battlefield to the battlefield behind enemy lines?

“We do not need to boast the ability to completely crush the Imperium. As long as we can convince our enemy that, once they decide to destroy the federation, they will have to pay an insufferable price at their heartland and will die together with the federation, it will be good enough.”

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao asked suspiciously, “A dozen Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, even with their Colossi, are enough to die together with the Imperium? I’m afraid that it won’t be so simple, right?”

“It is indeed a bit tricky to make the entire Imperium die with us. Besides, if we and the Imperium fight each other, the Covenant Alliance will take advantage, which is certainly not our goal,” Jin Xinyue said with a smile. “However, we do not need to drag the entire Imperium to die with us at all. All we need to do is make the warlord or the aristocrat that intends to lay their fingers on the federation die with us and convince them of our capability to do so clearly.

“If a certain aristocrat intends to invade in the federation, then on the frontline at the edge of the cosmos, his troops will be destined to be mired in a prolonged war of attrition where there is no winner. After all the losses, he will only reap a series of wastelands in the end.

“In the rear, his nest will be seriously sabotaged, his bases will be destroyed, his ports will be paralyzed, and his trusted subordinates, his descendants, and even himself will endure infinite assassinations!

“The bottom line is, even if he does manage to conquer the Star Glory Federation in the end, his own capability will be diminished to weaker than ever, and he will end up as a fat and feeble prey in the cruel slaughterhouse that is the Imperium. It will be somebody else who takes all the benefits.

“After the warlords and aristocrats of the Imperium recognize this point clearly, will they recklessly wage a war upon the federation? This is exactly the mutual deterrence that you mentioned before.”

Considering carefully for a moment, Li Yao shook his head and said, “The plan is too risky. Every Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator and every Colossus is highly precious. Projecting a dozen Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and an equal number of Colossi into the Imperium entails too many unexpected factors. The losses may outweigh the gains in the end.

Looking at Li Yao, Jin Xinyue said, “Since this is a plan of strategic deception, we do not necessarily need to dedicate so many Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators and Colossi for real. All we need to do is convince our enemy that we have done so.

“Therefore, we actually only require three to four, or even only one or two, experts who are strong enough to perform decapitation strategies on a warlord or an aristocrat to accomplish the Heavenly Slayer Plan at the critical moment, and who can convince the enemy that similar experts to him are lurking right inside the Imperium.”

Li Yao rubbed his fists. “That’s what I’m best at!”

Jin Xinyue laughed. “When we drafted the Heavenly Slayer Plan in the beginning, I indeed designed the implementer with you as the template. Those elite scouts or experts of the Heavenly Slayer Plan who will be teleported to the Imperium must have very high abilities in information collection, exploration, solo combat, and even large-scale sabotage and decapitation on their own.

“Most critically of all, they must be of some influence and can negotiate with certain forces within the Imperium to reach an agreement as a representative of the federal government.

“Right now, few people in the federation boast such abilities and such standing. While all of them will not hesitate to go to the Imperium, you are certainly the best candidate of them all.”

“Most importantly, as the Black Wind King, you are the legitimate ruler of the five worlds, including the Black Wind Sector,” Di Feiwen said gravely. “In the Imperium of True Human Beings, strength is law, and when it comes to strength, you are not bad at all, my king!”

“Understood. You can leave both the Heavenly Eye Plan and the Heavenly Slayer Plan to me!” Li Yao was full of confidence. Then, he asked, “However, why does it sound like that the Imperium of True Human Beings is a tray of loose sand? Does it mean that we can deal with the entire Imperium by just dealing with some of the warlords and aristocrats?”

Chapter 1929 - Out of Reach!

Di Feiwen smiled and said, “It is better to say that the universe is too vast and boundless for any unified government to perform effective management with the technology of mankind today than to say that the Imperium is a tray of loose sand.

“My king, you should know that the civilization of mankind has been scattered in the three thousand Sectors not entirely because of our own conquest but also because of the ‘spraying’ of the Pangu Civilization and the Nuwa Civilization. In other words, we did not expand to the three thousand Sectors ‘naturally’; we were ‘tossed out’ in a very short amount of time with their help.

“Then, after the collapse of the Pangu Civilization and the Nuwa Civilization, and when the tools of communication and transportation that they left behind were destroyed, ‘disorganization’ and ‘isolation’ became a regularity, and any unified government or dynasty is a special case.

“Actually, with the technology and social development of the civilization of mankind today, it is already the best for a central government to manage ten to twenty Sectors effectively. I believe that Speaker Ding must understand it better than anybody else.”

“Exactly.” As if a great headache had struck her, Ding Lingdang frowned and said, “Take the federation for example. Although we have advanced space jump technology and remote communication abilities, both the jumps and the communication consume abundant resources. Astronomical crystals are sent to the space ports and the remote communication bases to be wasted for nothing in the rippling spiritual waves.

“Even so, the federation can barely reach out to or perform effective management on the resource plants in the remote space zones. In many cases, we must count on the local sects to maintain basic order. Such an administration system based on sects is functioning well right now, but who can tell what will happen as time goes by, when the sects have complicated connections and deeply-rooted interests in the local area?

“Furthermore, the boundlessness of the universe and the abilities of human beings has led to the variations of the environments of the habitable planets or even the changes of the subspecies of mankind. For example, a half-primitive world such as the Forest Ocean Sector and the heavily-polluted wasteland such as the Nether World Sector definitely cannot be managed in the same way. Considering different local customs and traditions, it is even hardly possible to make the same law.

“Therefore, the federation today strongly features regional autonomy.

“Even if more and more worlds join the federation in the future, like the Ancient Sages Sector did, because they are far away from the central area of the federation and have even more complicated environments and races, it is basically impossible for the central government to manage them directly. Regional autonomy will be a more probable choice.”

When Ding Lingdang took over Patriots Partnership from Lu Zui, she had already been a firm believer of regional autonomy and insisted that the federation would be barely capable of reigning the sea of stars with a formidable army. She argued that the only possible way was disseminating the ideology of the Cultivators to the entire universe.

Her ideas turned out to be the same as Di Feiwen’s.

Di Feiwen nodded and said, “You are quite right, Speaker Ding. The problems that you have encountered are the exact problems plaguing the Imperium. Although the Imperium is much more powerful than the federation in terms of comprehensive national strength, there is no fundamental difference between the two parties when it comes to space jump and remote communication technology.

“If we say that the federation’s limits are to govern ten Sectors effectively, the most powerful interest groups in the Imperium, with their most advanced technology, can effectively rule over twenty Sectors at best. Any more territory will cause indigestion.

“Even the brawniest and brutal dinosaur that grows for their entire life has a limited body size. The Imperium that is overly huge requires an ever-expanding bureaucratic system and an army for government, but the expansion of the bureaucratic system and the army will further drain and collapse the Imperium in the end. That was exactly what happened to the Star Ocean Imperium. Is the Imperium of True Human Beings any different?”

Li Yao could not help but smile. “Then, summon them with ideology. Do the Immortal Cultivators of the Imperium not have the lofty ideal of ‘all for the civilization of mankind’?”

Di Feiwen chuckled, too. “The so-called ‘lofty ideal’ is a rarely-seen luxury in the entire universe. Neither of us is better than the other. Therefore, we might as well not laugh at each other.

“In the Star Glory Federation, although the Cultivators are praised as ‘sabers of humanity’ and expected to fight to protect the ordinary people according to the propaganda, how many Cultivators are really selfless and willing to devote their everything including their life? My king, do you and Speaker Ding really not have any selfish desires at all? If the Glorious Sunlight Group under your name was nationalized right now, would you feel nothing and have absolutely no complaints?”

Li Yao and Ding Lingdang looked at each other and smiled. “There is no need to corner us with the high expectations. Of course, we are not that honorable. Who in the entire universe can be entirely selfless except for the puppets of the Covenant Alliance?”

“Exactly,” Di Feiwen said. “In the ideal scenario, the war between the federation and the Imperium is a war of ideologies between pure Cultivators and pure Immortal Cultivators. It seems to be a war about who is right and who is wrong. But in fact, the two parties share a common foe, which is not Covenant Alliance but ‘humanity’.

“Cultivators have humanity, and Immortal Cultivators have humanity, too, which marks the biggest difference between us and the people of the Covenant Alliance.

“The primary element of humanity is selfishness. Genes are all selfish and will do whatever they can to pass themselves on. When the ‘selfish genes’ have conflicts with the ‘lofty ideals’ of the Immortal Cultivators, the only outcome will be the collapse of ‘ideal’.”

“How so?” Li Yao asked with great interest.

“Theoretically speaking, the Immortal Cultivators’ ideology of ‘survival of the fittest’ is not wrong,” Di Feiwen said. “As long as equality is ensured, and the smoothness of the channel of ascension and the strictness of the elimination system are guaranteed, it is a rather fair design. However, it is utterly unachievable in reality.

“All humans are selfish, regardless of whether they are Cultivators or Immortal Cultivators. Even though the Immortal Cultivators may claim that weaklings whose spiritual roots are not awakened should be eliminated mercilessly even if they are their children, how many of them are really ruthless and coldhearted enough to put it into action?

“Besides, in a world where the fittest survives, everybody can betray each other at any minute. One’s own family and descendants are probably the only ones who are slightly more loyal. Even if they are ‘hominoids’ whose spiritual roots cannot be awakened, they can always be given some jobs that are less eye-catching. If the Immortal Cultivators ‘eliminate’ their own people, wouldn’t they be diminishing themselves and allowing other people to take the advantage?

“Rules are made by people. One can always find a loophole if they are determined to. Perhaps, when the Imperium was just founded, the system was once implemented rigorously. However, as time went by, the noble families and great houses expanded quickly and gradually went out of control. It is now an absolute illusion to realize the highly-effective distribution and utilization of resources solely with the idea of ‘survival of the fittest’.”

“What about the emperor?” Li Yao asked. “Does the emperor not have a problem with the situation where the nobles grow independent and the warlords dominate their own territory beyond his control?”

“Do not imagine the emperor to be too powerful a man. Not every emperor is a ‘Blackstar the Great’,” Di Feiwen said. “Even Blackstar the Great had to count on a lot of deeply-rooted noble families dating back to the Star Ocean Republic to claim the hegemony of the universe.

“In the Imperium, there is even a secret theory that Blackstar the Great was merely a ‘spokesperson’ that those traditional families of the Star Ocean Republic introduced. They created such an ’emperor’ in order to consolidate the interests that they had looted illegally. However, the emperor’s ambitions and strength far exceeded their expectations, and things slightly went out of control in the end.

“While Blackstar the Great was uncontrollable, his offspring were not as dominating as him. In the past thousand years, the great families of the Imperium instigated trouble and contradictions within the royal family through all kinds of approaches. With the throne as the bait, they lured the Wuying family to fight one another so that they could take the opportunity to consolidate their power. The entire Empyreal Terminus Sector is no better than a rubber stamp.

“Today, the most powerful four families have even been given the title of ‘Kurfürst’, the prince-elector. Think about it. If even the emperor must be elected by them, how could the emperor expect to restrain them?”

Li Yao observed in mixed feelings, “The situation in the Imperium seems to be different from what Su Changfa told me in the past.”

“Su Changfa came from academia. As a professor of Imperial Colonization University, he was nurtured in an ivory tower. Naturally, he fully accepted the propaganda of the Imperium.”

Di Feiwen lowered his head and said, “I, on the other hand, am merely a minor dealer who rose up from the bottom level of the Imperium. I don’t know what everything should be ‘theoretically’, and I am only sharing what I have seen exactly as it is.

“All in all, this is about the situation of the Imperium when the Black Wind Fleet left the Imperium a hundred years ago. The twenty or so worlds near the Empyreal Terminus Sector are nominally under the direct command of the emperor. The bureaucratic agencies sent by the court manage them. Of course, the interventions from the four families of Kurfürst are inevitable.

“The forty or so Sectors outside are the hereditary territory of the four Kurfürst families, mixed with some feuds of the members of the royal family. On average, every family rules over seven to eight worlds. They are only obliged to submit taxes and offer soldiers to the court according to their different strengths. It is practically impossible for the court to interfere with their internal affairs.

“The hundreds of Sectors further beyond are even more separated. Every Sector often has its own ruler. In some of the Sectors that have multiple habitable planets, almost every planet will have a ruler. Those people are either the hereditary nobles, rising warlords, or people who volunteered to surrender during the Imperium's conquest of the universe. For example, if the federation had chosen to surrender when the Black Wind Fleet attacked, it was possible that a few Sector Masters would have been elected to maintain the local government. This is not because the Imperium is lenient but because it is beyond the reach of the Imperium, like Speaker Ding explained so eloquently just now.

"The ways to govern the peripheral worlds are rather various and arbitrary. Harsh tyranny is not the only option. Some worlds adopt gentler policies. But for the brutal and ruthless ones, the cruelty of their government is much more severe than the worlds directly under the command of the emperor and the Kurfürsten."

Chapter 1930 - Training for Everybody

Li Yao was rather astonished. “Now that you put it in such a way, the Imperium today is indeed chaotic and as unpromising as a setting sun. It is rather miraculous that it has survived a thousand years and is even showing the signs of rejuvenation!”

“Yes. Logically, such an Imperium where the strong prey on the weak should’ve collapsed abruptly in the cruel exploitation and the everlasting internal strife,” Di Feiwen said. “But an eternal factor helped it to maintain the vulnerable stability, which was the Covenant Alliance.

“No matter how selfish, aggressive, unpardonable, and sophisticated the Immortal Cultivators are, the Covenant Alliance is their common foe. No Immortal Cultivator is willing to be deprived of their feelings and free will and end up as a pathetic puppet.

“It is because of the existence of the great enemy that is the Covenant Alliance that the local forces within the Imperium manage to maintain their basic order. Although the strong prey on the weak, there is a set of game rules that everybody has accepted, however reluctantly. No matter how powerful the Kurfürsten are, they never thought to usurp the throne because the so-called throne is more of a curse than a bliss. If the Imperium is destroyed by the Covenant Alliance because of their attempted usurpation, wouldn’t they be the greatest fools in the world?

“Therefore, the Imperium is not governed by the authority of the emperor; every force that has their own intentions are condensed and gathered under the lightning trident flag of the Imperium of True Human Beings because of their fight against the Covenant Alliance.

“Because there is absolutely no room for negotiation between the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance, almost no nobles or warlords will surrender to the Covenant Alliance. That is why the Imperium of True Human Beings has reigned for a thousand years.”

“That explains a lot.” Li Yao nodded slowly. The Imperium of True Human Beings and the Alliance of the Holy Covenant were indeed utterly incompatible with each other. Although the Immortal Cultivators were rather heinous, the puppets of the Covenant Alliance were even more inhumane. Compared to the life where one’s feelings and will were completely stripped away, making them live as zombies, the government of the Imperium did seem somewhat acceptable.

“However, things are subtly changing right now,” Di Feiwen said calmly. “In the past thousand years, the Covenant Alliance has been highly aggressive most of the time. The dread of the Covenant Alliance united all the Immortal Cultivators and forced them to ignore their contradictions between each other.

“After the unexpected victory of the strategic counterattack of the Imperium, the Covenant Alliance has been banished from the most prosperous area at the center of the cosmos. It does not seem capable of threatening the Imperium anymore. The thousand years of threat from the outside world seems to have been completely shattered.

"Then, after the external threat is eliminated, and with countless trophies waiting to be divided, won't the Immortal Cultivators be like dogs who have seen bones with meat on them after being hungered for a thousand years?

"If the Immortal Cultivators are idiotic and greedy enough, there may be great chaos in the Imperium later. As for whether or not the quakes caused by the hungry dogs when they fight over food will affect the edge of the cosmos, I fear that nobody can know the answer."

"Got it…" Deep in thought, Li Yao stared at Di Feiwen and said, "I remember that you once said you had an enormous organization of merchants behind you, which is deeply connected with the four Kurfürsten and the other nobles and aristocrats. It is well-informed and has its own plans, right?"

"The universe is vast and full of peril," Di Feiwen replied in a seemingly dutiful way. "When the merchants travel among different worlds to make a living, we have to establish a society to protect ourselves and struggle to survive.

"In the past thousand years, part of the merchants of the Imperium have indeed established a loose chamber of commerce named 'Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors'. I am one of the senior managers in the Business Alliance."

"Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors. That's an impressive name!" Li Yao said. "Then, what are your goals in terms of core interests?"

"I am not lying to you at all, my king. Since it is named 'Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors', it is naturally the purest guild of business. It is a place where we communicate and negotiate with each other. If we do have a slight appeal, it is definitely to do business that has the highest profits.”

With cunningness beaming out of his eyes, Di Feiwen asked, “Do you know what the most profitable business is in the world today?”

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao replied, “Counting both the legal and illegal ones, drugs?”

“No. The business of drugs is as profitable as it is risky. Even if we have the aid of the authorities, it will only be a short-term business that feels like draining the pond to get all the fish. It is definitely not the best option for a decent businessman.” Di Feiwen shook his head. Instead of raising even more suspense, he gave the answer himself. “If I may, the most profitable, steady, and long-term business in the entire universe today is ‘training’.”

Li Yao was dazed for a long time. “…Training?”

“Exactly. The business of training,” Di Feiwen said solemnly. “As a high-level Cultivator close to the Divinity Transformation Stage, you must have a deep understanding about how costly training can be. Starting to build up the body at the age of seven or eight before the spiritual root is awakened, and advancing all the way through the Refinement Stage, the Building Foundation Stage, the Core Formation Stage, and the Nascent Soul Stage, how much money must one spend? When one spends money on things, there is business. This is an enormous, all-inclusive industry!

“One quick look at the federation today is enough to reveal part of the industry.

“In the federation today, thanks to the major investment from the national government, the system of nine-year or twelve-year compulsory training has been implemented. The families, as long as they can afford, always devote tremendous money and time to the training of their children whether or not their children have potential. In such a case, famous schools where experts offer enlightenment and the houses around those schools grow more and more expensive. All kinds of extracurricular classes are popular, too. There are also the nutrition tonics, strengthening packages, remote video lessons, virtual training techniques, and so on, whose effectiveness is questionable. What an enormous industry it is!

“What’s more amazing is that nobody can prove or disprove the effects of the training techniques and the nutrition packages. As long as a couple of users report that the training techniques and nutrition tonics are effective, the other users can only blame themselves for not hardworking enough or not having enough talent when the same products do not work on them. There is no way that they can blame the merchants.

“This is just the beginning phase. As one’s level advances, the expenses in every aspect will increase exponentially. They will upgrade their consumption and there is no end to that.

“After one reaches a very high level, one will not hesitate to make purchases. Even if a certain pill or a certain piece of magical equipment can only increase the odds of success by 0.1%, most trainers will still try their best to purchase the goods without bargaining with the seller. After all, everybody has only one life, which is more precious than anything, right?

“We are only talking about the training industry itself. There is also the upstream and downstream industry chain that is attached to the training industry, which can be even more profitable. Traditionally speaking, there is the trade of magical equipment production, which is what you are best at, my king. From the innovative point of view, there is the industry of live streaming for battles and training. In short, nothing is impossible as long as you have thought of it.

“If the upstream and downstream industry chain is combined and calculated, how much will the ‘training industry’ boost the development of the national economy, and how much profit will it yield? Most critically speaking, it is an industry directly concerned with the evolution of the civilization of mankind. Once it develops well, it will be a virtuous circle. It is certainly incomparable to despicable businesses like drugs!”

Li Yao was rather amazed. He nodded quickly and said, “When you put it that way, it does seem to make sense!”

“This is exactly the case. This is the power of capitalism.”

When it came to the trade that he was most familiar with, Di Feiwen was more confident than ever. “In fact, over the past few years, some of the specialists and scholars in the Black Wind Fleet have been studying the mysteries of the Star Glory Federation’s rise. At the very least, from my personal perspective, the reason the federation rose at a high speed in only a hundred years has a lot to do with your policies to encourage every citizen to participate in training. The great development of training provided the stimulus for the thriving domestic demand and activated the maximal potential of production for most of the citizens.

“Of course, you perhaps view the issue from the perspective of general equality and that everybody is entitled to training, my king. But as a less honorable Immortal

Cultivator and a merchant, I am viewing the issue from how to earn a high profit. However, we are actually aiming for the same thing despite our different paths, which is to create a world where everybody is engaged in training."

"Training for everybody..." Li Yao suddenly had a very absurd feeling. "You Immortal Cultivators of the Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors are indeed weirdos!"

"We are not weirdos; we are only trying to increase the domestic demand," Di Feiwen said solemnly. "Businesses and merchants are only needed when there is demand. If there is no demand, we will create demand! Yes. Ninety-nine percent of people can never awaken their spiritual roots however hard they train themselves. But so what? We do not care how many Cultivators or Immortal Cultivators there are in the universe. We only care if those people have a very strong demand in training and how much profit such a demand can be transformed into. Nothing more.

"Training for everybody. What a magnificent and beautiful vision it is. If the billions of people in the three thousand Sectors are all free to participate in training and willing to pay for it, how enormous will the industry be, and how much profit will be entailed? Such inestimable profits are enough to make any merchant mad, overthrow any regime in the world, slay all the deities and devils standing in the way, and destroy all the hindering forces!"

Li Yao was slightly surprised by Di Feiwen's passion. After thinking for a moment, he said, "In the system of the Imperium, I'm afraid that the dream of 'training for everybody' will stay as a dream."

"That is very true." Di Feiwen sighed rather sadly. "You're very right. In the current system of the Imperium, the dream of ‘training for everybody’ is just that, a beautiful dream. Nothing more.

“The Imperium divides humans into ‘true human beings’ and ‘hominoids’, which directly wipes out ninety-nine percent of the market.

“Even the one percent of true human beings will not necessarily obtain their training resources in the business pattern that we expect them to.”

Chapter 1931 - Destination: Devilish Scorpion Galaxy!

Chapter 1931 Destination: Devilish Scorpion Galaxy!

Di Feiwen explained the past miserable experiences to Li Yao with a mix of truthfulness and exaggeration, giving Li Yao a glimpse at how the merchants in the Imperium of True Human Beings did business.

According to Di Feiwen, the businesses trading in precious training resources among the difference Sectors within the Imperium were theoretically very profitable.

However, because ninety-nine percent of people were ‘hominoids’ who were no better than slaves, there was little effective demand, which resulted in the stagnation of the market.

Even though some of the ‘hominoids’ were free citizens of the Imperium, they were often personally attached to experts and great families. In such a case, the training resources that they needed were purchased and distributed by the experts and the great families together. What they needed were mostly cheap goods of mediocre quality, whose returns were few. It was practically impossible to develop an exuberant upstream and downstream industry chain and new industries as the federation did.

The ‘true human beings’ naturally had a very high demand for training resources. They were willing to pay a high price for magical equipment, crystal suits, pills, and starships.

However, they often had interconnected business networks and long-term partners. A lot of the fields were monopolized by the traditional conglomerates such as the four Kurfürst families. The new business groups that had gradually appeared in the last hundred years or so could not compete with the traditional nobles and even the ‘royal merchants’ at all.

“The ninety-nine percent of bottom-level people do not have any demand. The one percent of nobles do have demand, but the entire market has been monopolized by themselves,” Di Feiwen remarked in obvious dissatisfaction. “The latecomers are not able to cram into their trade at all even if their heads are broken. It is not a bad outcome at all if they are drained by the monopiles!”

Li Yao listened for a long time and finally understood something. In general, the Imperium was a tray of loose sand, but there were vaguely two interest groups.

First of all, there were the contributors who helped Blackstar the Great claim the throne during the establishment of the Imperium of True Human Beings. They were the royal family and the traditional nobles such as the four Kurfürst families.

In the first one or two hundred years after the Imperium was founded, they had almost occupied all the prosperous areas at the center of the cosmos and monopolized the most profitable trades. They became the makers and maintainers of the game rules.

Then, there were the new worlds that the Imperium had found during its conquest.

Those new worlds were sometimes governed by the local experts who had surrendered to the Imperium and sometimes managed by the outcasts who had failed in the struggle of power at the center of the cosmos like the Black Wind Fleet.

Although they were weaker, they had the advantage in numbers. After a thousand years, they had more or less accumulated some strength, which gave them enough courage to express their discontentment regarding the game rules made at the center of the cosmos.

The ‘merchants’ that Di Feiwen talked about were even more miserable. They were mostly homeless dogs who had failed in conflicts in the past thousand years, or they had lost their homes, not conquered any new worlds, and therefore had to wander in the sea of stars.

The so-called ‘Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors’ was an organization where the losers gathered to warm each other and lick each other’s wounds.

With their keen instincts as merchants, they vaguely sensed the problems in the current system of the Imperium. However, they did not have the courage, the interest, or the capability to rise up and overturn the old system to establish a new world.

What they could do was travel in the worlds at the periphery of the Imperium where the forces of the emperor and the great nobles were not so influential and search for experts who they could cooperate with or even join. They hoped to win protection and expand the cooperation, slowly establishing a ‘free market’.

The Black Wind Sector had been an excellent partner for the Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors at the beginning.

Since the Black Wind Sector was at a land of wars, it had great interest in training resources and would barely turn anything down.

The ‘hominoids’ of the Black Wind Sector, under the enormous pressure to survive, had more training opportunities than the ‘hominoids’ from the heartland of the Imperium.

After all, even if they were minor ‘slave soldiers’, it was certainly not bad to make them as strong as possible.

Furthermore, the Cultivators of the Black Wind Sector were best known for their disobedience, and they did not listen to anyone’s command after they went mad. Neither the emperor nor the four Kurfürst families were fond of the lawless, insubordinate barbarians, which created yet another opportunity for the Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors.

The Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors had begun the infiltration work on the Black Wind Fleet a long time ago. The cooperation between the two parties was rather pleasant. Even Di Feiwen, the master of the ‘Di’ family, which was a rather renowned family in the Black Wind Fleet, was appointed as a senior manager of the Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors.

It was a pity that the Black Wind Sector as well as the other four worlds had already been taken down by the Covenant Alliance before any further cooperation. After the series of changes that followed, Di Feiwen spent the next hundred years in hibernation and wandered to the edge of the cosmos.

Out of his expectations, Di Feiwen found a country named the Star Glory Federation where everybody participated in training!

Di Feiwen’s heart had long been filled by the glittering coins of the Imperium. He could not care less about unsubstantial concepts like being a Cultivator or an Immortal Cultivator. However, the current business system in the federation and the effective stimulus on people’s ‘training demand’, as well as the scale of the entire training market and the upstream and downstream industry chain after the stimulus, made his heart pound. He was almost too excited to control himself.

Several barren worlds at the edge of the cosmos already had a market so huge. If the pattern could be copied to the center of the cosmos, what would it be like?

That was the biggest reason Di Feiwen had been willing to restrain the remaining soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet for a ‘battlefield uprising’.

After the ‘battlefield uprising’, he had spent three years observing and studying in silence. After he had figured out the operation pattern of the ‘training industry’ in the federation and was confident of his discovery, he finally shared everything about the ‘Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors’ unhurriedly.

“I did not know that such an organization existed within the Imperium!” Li Yao was rather delighted, too. “So, is there a possibility for the Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors and the Star Glory Federation to cooperate?”

“There is, but the risk can be very high,” Di Feiwen explained, still in a seemingly frank and dutiful way. Yes. As a senior manager of the Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors, he had a few secret intelligence channels under his control and various connections in the Imperium. He also knew dozens of vulnerable points that could easily be breached through at the peripheral worlds of the Imperium.

However, the ‘Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors’ was just a loose business organization after all, not a well-organized party of revolutionaries with lofty ideals. For every merchant, whoever gave them milk would be their mother. Betrayal and conspiracy were compulsory courses for them.

Today, they could absorb Di Feiwen, the No. 2 person of the Black Wind Sector, as a senior manager for their interests. But tomorrow, they might join the four Kurfürst families together also for their interests.

Yes. With his secret letter, envoys of the federation could sneak into a certain secret bureau of the Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors within the Imperium and receive tremendous intelligence. But nobody knew how valuable the intelligence was and if the strangers would betray the guests from the federation!

“For a decent price, they would sell one of their parents and give the other one for free,” Di Feiwen said. “How much is a senior manager who has been gone for a hundred years possibly worth?”

Therefore, in the Heavenly Eye Plan, the few secret bureaus of the Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors that Di Feiwen provided, as well as the contacts of some famous merchants, were all kept in reserve.

Unless it was absolutely necessary, it was definitely more reliable and secure for the federation to collect intelligence on its own.

“If we are going to collect intelligence on our own, I suggest we set the first jump point as somewhere near the Devilish

Scorpion Galaxy.” Di Feiwen proposed another ambiguous but important message.

The so-called ‘Devilish Scorpion Galaxy’ was at the periphery of the Imperium. It was on the side far away from the Covenant Alliance and relatively close to the federation. It included almost ten Sectors and was given the name because of the scorpion-shaped nebula at its center.

The reason the first jump point was set to this place was because some Cultivators might still exist there!

Seeing that Li Yao had raised his eyebrows with great interest, Di Feiwen hurried to explain, “This is just a groundless tale. I only heard somebody talking about it more than a hundred years ago. It is said that an organization of Cultivators named ‘Starlight’ exists deep inside the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy, which has an ancient Cultivator who has been resisting the Imperium since the last years of the Star Ocean Republic with his immeasurable Cultivation.”

“He has been resisting the Imperium from the last years of the Star Ocean Republic to this day?” Li Yao could not help but feel dumbfounded. If that was true, the ‘ancient Cultivator’ could be no younger than a thousand years old. Would that not make him even older than ‘Gui Suishou’, the most famous senior in the federation?

Gui Suishou had lived for a thousand years by hibernating most of the time, but a resistance organization of Cultivators deep inside the Imperium must have been faced with the cruel hunting of the Imperium every day. It was impossible to hibernate for a long time. How did the guy survive a thousand years despite the fierce daily fights?

“The so-called ‘ancient Cultivator from the Star Ocean Republic’ is probably just a widely-spread rumor,” Jin Xinyue said. “It is perfectly normal for the ordinary people in the Imperium who suffer brutal oppression to hope for the arrival of a ‘savior’. However, it is possible that the resistance organization of Cultivators named ‘Starlight’ does exist, or once existed before, right?

“If we can find such a resistance organization, even if we can only find one or two Cultivators of the Imperium who are still resisting, it will mean a lot for us.”

Li Yao nodded heavily. Then he asked, “Is it possible that a resistance organization of Cultivators has lurked inside the Imperium for a thousand years without being annihilated?”

“Not very likely, but it is an interesting rumor nonetheless that is worth spending some time on. Should it be true, we will be in great advantage,” Jin Xinyue said. “The astronomical environment in the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy is very complicated. Cosmic storms and desolate worlds are everywhere. It is indeed a great place for hiding and guerrilla warfare.

“One other thing. There’s no telling if it is a coincidence, but the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy has a world named the Martial Meritocrats Sector. You should remember that it is ‘Blackstar the Great’ Wuying Qi’s hometown!”

Chapter 1932 - Disintegration of Fear

Chapter 1932 Disintegration of Fear

‘Blackstar the Great’ Wuying Qi was not a native of the Star Ocean Republic, which was a fact that everybody knew. Even his surname, Wuying, was made by himself to remind himself of his hometown.

However, it was clearly not because he had deep feelings for his hometown but because he hated his hometown’s guts.

Years ago, when the ‘mobs’ of the Martial Meritocrats Sector had risen against the Cultivators, almost all the Cultivators had been slaughtered. Wuying Qi had been tied up by his compatriots and thrown into the burning crater of a volcano.

He had been reborn with a new life inside the volcano. The boiling magma had melted the last bit of his humanity and his belief in the path of the Cultivators. It had also burnt up all the feelings that he had for his hometown.

After he returned to the Martial Meritocrats Sector magnificently with the great army of the Imperium of True Human Beings, he had immediately begun the most inhuman suppression and slaughter.

The sovereign who controlled the entire universe had not been satisfied when half of the population of the Martial Meritocrats Sector was wiped out. He had ordered that all the survivors in the Martial Meritocrats Sector be demoted to the most special slaves. There was absolutely no opportunity for their offspring to get rid of their identities as slaves.

The Imperium of True Human Beings adored equality at least on the surface. Theoretically speaking, even the filthiest and most ravaged slave could become a high and mighty ‘true human being’ and ‘Immortal Cultivator’ as long as their spiritual root was awakened and they became an expert. The legends where beggars became generals and slaves turned into Sector Masters had always been inspirational stories that the leadership of the Imperium used to intoxicate the bottom-level masses.

However, the heroes of the ‘legends’ clearly did not include the natives of the Martial Meritocrats Sector.

Being born in the Martial Meritocrats Sector in the past thousand years was like being born in the basement of the deepest level of hell, starting from the moment that they opened their eyes.

The cruelest suffering and the most desperate fate awaited the people of the Martial Meritocrats Sector. Even if their spiritual roots were awakened by accident, turning them into experts, they would only become slaves that were of a higher experimental value.

All in all, for the last thousand years, the Martial Meritocrats Sector had been the place to test new magical equipment and new techniques in the Imperium. All the magical equipment and the techniques that were highly dangerous, destructive, and unstable would be sent to the Martial Meritocrats Sector and tested on the living people of the sector.

Some alien beasts of unknown backgrounds, after being captured by the Imperium by accident, would also be sent to the Martial Meritocrats Sector, if their features and danger level could not be tested, in order to check the reactions of the alien beasts in a ‘purely natural’ environment. In most cases, their ‘reaction’ would be the most bizarre killing spree, with thousands of victims or even more.

In such a cruel world and a hell without hope, because of the long tradition of the Cultivators, it was not unusual that people would come up with the tales of ‘lost Cultivators’ when they went through excruciating suffering or even establish a resistance organization for real.

Therefore, there were three advantages to set the Martial Meritocrats Sector in the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy as the first jump point.

Firstly, the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy had a complicated astronomical environment, with cosmic storms, stone belts, and seriously-broken wormholes everywhere. The scorpion-shaped nebula at the center of the ten or so Sectors would also unleash violent radiation toward the outside world irregularly. While jumping to this place could be somewhat dangerous, the traces of the visitors would be erased as much as possible. Even if the Imperium did find them, it would be relatively easy to run away.

Secondly, ‘Starlight’, the resistance organization of Cultivators, and the ‘lost Cultivator’ were of great significance for the federation.

Even the most impenetrable fortress could be broken from within. It was highly unlikely for the federation to suppress the Imperium in a head-on clash, but it was certainly possible for the federation to awaken the force that had been accumulated for a thousand years inside the Imperium.

If ‘Starlight’ did exist, it would certainly be the best comrade for the federation.

Thirdly, even if Starlight and the lost Cultivator were nothing more than groundless tales, it at least proved that the local people were looking forward to the Cultivators. It would be easy to win the support of the natives.

In any other world in the Imperium of True Human Beings, helping the Immortal Cultivators catch Cultivators would earn ‘military credits’, which meant the possibility of getting rid of their misery.

However, in the Martial Meritocrats Sector, no matter how hard the locals kneeled and licked the toes of the Immortal Cultivators, there was absolutely no hope for them at all. So, did they have any reason to stand on the Imperium’s side? Was there any place better than there to be a platform for the envoys of the federation to enter the Imperium?

The three advantages were all obvious, but there was still one thing worth considering, which was intelligence.

‘Blackstar the Great’ Wuying Qi did not like the Martial Meritocrats Sector. The other worlds in the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy were burdened by the bias, too. This place had always been the least developed area in the entire Imperium, with high inactive businesses.

Besides, because the Martial Meritocrats Sector was used as a laboratory for new magical equipment and techniques, and there were quite a few enormous prisons of high levels that involved a lot of top secrets, military control had been strictly implemented. The place was managed by reliable members of the royal family or representatives from the capital. It was not a place for insignificant merchants to meddle.

The merchants in the Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors were mainly after wealth. They were not interested in asking for trouble and therefore rarely visited the place, which turned the area into a black hole of intelligence.

The sea of stars was too vast and boundless. The distance between different worlds could easily be thousands of lightyears. The things that happened in one world could become groundless tales and bizarre stories in another world.

Therefore, despite Di Feiwen’s knowledge, all he could provide was some incomplete rumors from more than a hundred years ago.

As for exactly which place should be chosen as a platform for the federation to enter the Imperium, it was a problem that could be discussed slowly.

Li Yao, Ding Lingdang, Jin Xinyue, and Di Feiwen talked for a while longer, analyzing the environments, the garrisons, and the vulnerable points of the dozens of Sectors at the edge of the Imperium. Although the information from a hundred years ago was outdated, the data such as astronomical parameters and natural environments would hardly have changed.

After chatting for three hours, Li Yao gradually grasped the general picture of the dual plans of ‘Heavenly Eye’ and ‘Heavenly Slayer’.

However, Di Feiwen heaved a long sigh in the end and hesitated.

“General Di, why are you so worried?” Li Yao was somewhat surprised. “According to your analysis just now, although the Imperium of True Human Beings is rather powerful, it has a lot of internal contradictions and undercurrents that it can barely take care of. Chances are that a civil war will break out because of the uneven distribution of trophies. It may not necessarily extend its claws to the edge of the cosmos. Even if one or two of its claws are idiotic enough to reach out to us… we are definitely capable enough to fight them. It is not entirely hopeless!

“But I can tell that you are rather worried and hesitant. Do you have any concerns of a deeper level?”

“That is very true, my king.” Di Feiwen bowed to Li Yao deeply. “My concern is not the Imperium but the Covenant Alliance.”

“The Covenant Alliance?” Li Yao was slightly dazed. “Didn’t you say that the Covenant Alliance has been crushed by the Imperium and evicted from all the worlds that it devoured in the past thousand years before it retreated to its core area? The so-called core area of the Covenant Alliance should be the harsh lands at the edge of the cosmos similar to the federation’s, right?

“What, are you suspicious that the reports from the court are fake?”

“No. Although the victories described in the reports are too exaggerated by military common sense, I don’t think that the Imperium has fabricated the reports based on my intuition.” Di Feiwen shook his head. “However, the Covenant Alliance failed too fast. In only three to five years, it lost dozens of worlds and hundreds of resource planets? What kind of speed is that? ‘Crushed’ does not even begin to describe the war.”

Li Yao was silent.

He could not help but recall the space battle four years ago. The annihilation of the Black Wind Fleet alone had taken more than half a year, and that was on the grounds that the remaining soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet had a ‘battlefield uprising’ under the lead of Di Feiwen.

If the Black Wind Fleet had chosen to continue their hopeless resistance, it would have been impossible to annihilate them in less than two to three years.

It was already so difficult to deal with the remaining soldiers of an expedition army who had no bases. Was it possible at all to occupy dozens of Sectors in only a couple of years?

“If the troops of the Covenant Alliance are so worthless, I can’t help but wonder how they secured such glorious victories in the past thousand years and rose unstoppably despite the pressure of the Imperium,” Di Feiwen observed, “and how they defeated the Black Wind Fleet a hundred years ago neatly and quickly.”

Coldness flashed inside Li Yao’s eyes. “Are you suspecting that the Covenant Alliance feigned its failure?”

Trading dozens of prosperous worlds for a voluntary, strategic retreat was truly an astounding effort!

“A fist must retreat deeply first in order to punch out heavily,” Di Feiwen said. “As I said just now, the Imperium of True Human Beings is a very abnormal country. The unity of the experts who have their own intentions is maintained by their mutual fear of the Covenant Alliance.

“In the past thousand years, the Covenant Alliance has been attacking most of the time. On the surface, they conquered a great amount of territory after consecutive victories.

“However, the more dominating they were and the more territory and resources they occupied, the more frightened and united the Immortal Cultivators became. Finally, they were united to the point that they were a whole piece, and the Covenant Alliance could not break in at all!

“That was the limit of the Covenant Alliance’s attack.

“In my humble opinion, the Covenant Alliance reached the limits of its attack when it occupied the five worlds including the Black Wind Sector a hundred years ago. If they had marched further forward, it would have been to the strongholds and the strategic locations that had been built up since the age of the Star Ocean Imperium. All those worlds were heavily guarded and nowhere similar to the worlds at the borderland.

“In other words, the Covenant Alliance would not have been able to completely conquer the Imperium in another hundred or thousand years. Instead, it would only trigger the high unity of all the Immortal Cultivators. Everybody would have abandoned their contradictions and biases to fight against the common foe because of the enormous fear!”

Li Yao was deep in thought. “However, after the ‘strategic counterattack’, the ‘common fear’ that united all the Cultivators against the enemy has been disintegrated, right?”

Chapter 1933 - Emissary, Diplomat, and Destroyer!

Chapter 1933 Emissary, Diplomat, and Destroyer!

“Yes,” Di Feiwen said. “The dozens of worlds and hundreds of resource planets that the Covenant Alliance has thrown out were more like meat with thorns than bones with meat. The Covenant Alliance has exploited those planets so seriously that they will be heavy burdens for the time being. They will not function again until tremendous resources are invested in them first.

“However, no matter how stingy the meat is, the hungry gluttons will still fight over it without caring about the cost. The experts have endless desires for territory, population, and resources. Now that the Covenant Alliance appears so vulnerable and worthless, the ‘alliance of fear’ has completely crumbled into nothingness.

“Then, when the lords and experts in the Imperium fight each other for the fat meat, what will happen if the army of the Covenant Alliance launches a counterattack beyond their expectation?”

“Is there any evidence that supports your deduction?” Li Yao asked.

Di Feiwen shook his head, but then he nodded. “I don’t have any direct proof, but here’s an interesting fact. The reports from the capital have mentioned many times that large numbers of troops of the Covenant Alliance have been defeated, but few high-level generals of the Covenant Alliance have been killed or captured.

“My king, you should know that it is very easy to fabricate news that tremendous soldiers on the enemy’s side have been killed in order to boost morale, but it is less convenient to fabricate the deaths of the famous generals.

“Besides, three to five years is too short. Even if it were a bunch of pigs who were piloting the starships of the Covenant Alliance and they waited in line to be killed, it wouldn’t have been so easy to annihilate all of them so quickly, right?

“Therefore, I’m strongly suspicious that the Covenant Alliance evacuated from a lot of Sectors voluntarily and in order. They threw the heavy burdens to the Imperium while keeping most of their available forces in the central area, waiting to launch a fatal attack.”

Li Yao pondered for a moment. “It is such a simple strategy that we can see it clearly although we are at the edge of the cosmos. Are the leaders of the Imperium all idiots?”

“We are not involved in the incident. Naturally, we can analyze the whole picture calmly,” Di Feiwen said. “However, if you are involved in the game, you are often not free to do what you want. The trophies of dozens of Sectors are too attractive. With the Immortal Cultivators’ nature to strengthen themselves without considering the cost, who could turn a blind eye on them and hold back their urges?

“Besides, ‘unity’ can never be achieved singlehandedly. Even if a certain aristocrat or a warlord is wise and calm enough to know the importance of unity because the great foe is yet to be eliminated, how can they not join the greedy game when other people are all dividing the territory and looting the trophies unhesitatingly? If other people loot and they don’t, they will become relatively weak, and the weak will receive the cruelest punishment in the Imperium!”

Feeling that his head was beginning to ache, Li Yao remarked, “So, the Covenant Alliance has set up an open trap that you have no choice except to set foot in, right?”

“It is an open trap, but it is also a wild gamble,” Di Feiwen said. “If my analysis is correct, the leader of the Covenant Alliance right now definitely deserves to be called a genius. After concluding that the strategy of aggressive attacks that the Covenant Alliance adopted in the past thousand years was wrong, he was bold and capable enough to offer to abandon what they had earned in the past thousand years in order to perform the most complete strategic adjustment.

“If such a great man does exist in the Covenant Alliance, how can he sit and wait for the Imperium to organize themselves? After all, the dozens of worlds that he has thrown out indeed boast a lot of potential. If the Imperium can truly digest and absorb those worlds into the military and political system of the Imperium, the Covenant Alliance will be a victim of its own scheme, and it will be forever doomed.

“Therefore, he must have a series of fatal moves to raise contradictions and conflicts within the Imperium. Chaos rising in the Imperium will be inevitable!

“Today, he has thrown out dozens of Sectors as bait. Then, what are the prey that he intends to ‘hunt’ and ‘devour’?

“All in all, I am not sure whether our greatest enemy will be the Imperium or the Covenant Alliance, and whether we are going to overturn the Imperium or give the Imperium a hand at the most critical moment.”

Di Feiwen’s words rendered the four of them silent.

A long time later, Li Yao sighed gloomily and said, “I feel that my head is close to exploding.”

“There is no need to be upset, my king,” Di Feiwen said earnestly. “Even if the current leader of the Alliance of the Holy Covenant is a rare genius and he has decided to use a shocking plan over the past few years with the dozens of Sectors, there is at least one factor that he could in no way have foreseen—the Star Glory Federation.

“The Star Glory Federation—which is led by smart, almighty heroes such as my king and Speaker Ding—is definitely an unexpected chess piece that will shake the entire game!”

Li Yao tilted his head and thought for a long time before he nodded slowly. “That’s very true.”

…

After figuring out the basic situation in the Imperium, Li Yao spent the next two weeks studying the details of the Heavenly Eye Plan and the Heavenly Slayer Plan with the leadership of the intelligence system and the strategic deception center, including Ding Lingdang, Jin Xinyue, Di Feiwen, and Guo Chunfeng.

After much consideration, they still decided to set the first jump point as the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy.

Without the navigation of an enormous space gate, it was practically impossible for an organized troop to cross such a long distance at once. Even if they did make it through the journey, the powerful space ripples would likely be discovered.

Therefore, the smaller the scale of the first jump, the better. For Li Yao, it would be best if he went alone.

For a person of his level, when he was to carry out an infiltration or investigation mission, 99.99% of the intelligence workers and experts would be a burden.

For the experts at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage such as Ding Lingdang, they would be a heavy burden for the starships and the supplies. Every unparalleled expert was a glutton of gold and a bottomless hole to absorb resources. How could two experts close to the Divinity Transformation Stage get so many resources for their daily training?

Eventually, the plan that Li Yao and the others came up with was that he was going to jump to the depths of the Devilish Scorpion Nebula first and investigate the situation there to check if it was suitable as a platform for the federation to enter the Imperium and if it was possible to find ‘Starlight’, the resistance organization of Cultivators, as well as the ‘lost Cultivator’ who had allegedly lived more than a thousand years.

Whether or not he found ‘Starlight’ and the ‘lost Cultivator’ eventually, he would find a way to send signals back to the federation when the environment was appropriate.

Once his signals were received, the elite intelligence group made of members of the Strategic Deception Center, the Secret Sword Bureau, and the Dim Moon Fun would jump over as the first wave and establish a long-term, professional station for intelligence work.

If the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy was too rough to serve as a platform and no valuable intelligence could be found, Li Yao would find a way to move to the worlds at the periphery of the Imperium where the ‘Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors’ was more active. Then, he would try to collect some messages through the intelligence network of the merchants. It would be even better if he could step into the core circle of the Imperium and find a spy that the federation could make use of.

For Li Yao himself, he also had a personal motive.

He had not forgotten Li Linghai, who could be his foster father’s old lover.

Li Linghai had been the Crown Princess of the Imperium of True Human Beings more than a hundred years ago.

Judging from the intelligence that the Black Wind Fleet had received intermittently in the past hundred years, the previous Crown Princess had already become the queen.

After the death of ‘Blackstar the Great’ Wuying Qi, no emperor as dominating as him had appeared in the thousand years of succession of the crown. Even though they were not puppets, they were always hamstrung by the aristocrats, ministers, and warlords.

Therefore, the identity of ‘queen’ was not very impressive by itself.

However, through Di Feiwen, Li Yao also learned that the queen Li Linghai was from the ‘Li family of Canglan’.

The Li family of Canglan was a deep-rooted noble family that had been prosperous since the age of the Star Ocean Republic with a history of thousands of years. When Wuying Qi overturned the republic and established a monarchy, the Li family of Canglan had made great contributions.

The fact that it was one of the four Kurfürst families was the best proof for the capability of the Li family of Canglan.

Li Linghai was apparently one of the central figures in the Li family of Canglan. Otherwise, how would she have been qualified to be the queen of the Imperium?

How did such a mysterious and strong woman get in touch with Li Yao’s foster father, a refugee from the Covenant Alliance?

Also, his foster father had given him half of what appeared to be a key and asked him to deliver it to Li Linghai, promising that Li Linghai would certainly guarantee the safety of Li Yao and even the Star Glory Federation. What was the meaning of that?

In any case, Li Linghai and the Li family of Canglan were a lead that was worth following.

Since the Imperium was not well-united, the Li family of Canglan would have its own ambitions and interests, too. Perhaps the two parties could achieve cooperation of a certain degree. Whatever the price was, the federation needed to have ten to twenty golden years of development. After that, the federation would have the sharpest claws and teeth.

That was Li Yao’s goal.

Basically, he now had three identities.

First of all, he was naturally an emissary who was responsible for the reconnaissance for the main troops and the search for a suitable platform.

Secondly, he was a ‘diplomat’. The relation between the federation and the Imperium was very subtle right now, and they were not necessarily sworn enemies who had to fight the moment they met. Even if the federation could not live in peace with the Imperium in the general sense, it was at least possible to compromise with certain forces within the Imperium and make a deal with them.

Who else was more qualified to take part in diplomatic activities on behalf of the Star Glory Federation than Li Yao?

Eventually, in the worst case scenario that nobody wanted to see, he would also be the most dangerous expert who would be responsible for the ‘unrestricted warfare’ and ‘asymmetric attacks’ within the Imperium in retribution for the Imperium’s invasion against the federation.

Of course, the federation would not place all their hope on him alone.

According to the deal, if he did not send any messages back in half a year, a second batch of experts who were combinations of ’emissaries’, ‘diplomats’, and ‘destroyers’ would be sent out to the Imperium.

Chapter 1934 - A New Journey Begins!

Chapter 1934 A New Journey Begins!

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In order to perform the most important infiltration mission in the history of the Star Glory Federation, Li Yao’s gear had been fully upgraded with the application of the most cutting-edge technology after the federation’s hundred years of development.

As a literal ‘espionage starship’, the ‘Heavenly Eye’ model of exploration starships not only had a fully automatic navigation and maneuver system, which could automatically search for and reach the coordinates inputted on the star map even if the only crew member entered the hibernation state, but also had a remote communication system that could automatically expand.

The enormous system made of a hundred communication units that were refined out of memory alloys was compressed at the rear of the starship when not in use, occupying only one third of the cabin.

When it was to be used, it could automatically expand into an enormous antenna with a diameter of hundreds of meters within twenty-four hours.

With enough spiritual energy, it could send a three-minute video message to the edge of the cosmos. Also, the system boasted a high anti-interference ability. Neither cosmic storms nor wormholes were likely to completely obliterate the message that it sent out.

At the borderland of the Star Glory Federation, twelve information reception bases of a gargantuan scale had been established, with thousands of antennas moving slowly, searching for the traces from the center of the cosmos to make sure that Li Yao’s message would be received the moment it was sent out.

The whole system was fully automated. Even if Li Yao was not inside the starship, it could stay on hold for several years by absorbing solar energy or send a message to the edge of the cosmos after every designated time.

Of course, considering that the exploration starship was too large for Li Yao to carry with him when he went into the heartland of the Imperium, or that it might be necessary to destroy the ‘espionage starship’ on his own if it was discovered by the Imperium, Li Yao also brought another type of portable communication magical equipment with him.

Such a piece of magical equipment that could be stored in a Cosmos Ring could not send any messages independently. It was in fact a piece of ‘parasitic’ magical equipment designed to hack the communication bases of the Imperium. The virus provided by the specialists of the Black Wind Fleet targeting the communication system of the Imperium would allow Li Yao to ‘hijack’ a communication base of the Imperium for a while to send out messages in secret.

Other than communication, which was of paramount importance, the most useful things were the crystals and the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures.

There was a famous saying about training, which was that training was like rowing a boat against the current. You were either making progress or moving backward. There was another famous saying about training, which was that nobody could live without food.

With Li Yao’s capability, his demand for resources every day was as huge as the demand of a heavy starship. Without a long-term, steady supply, unless he kept suppressing his level to an extremely low state with the Soul Converging Technique, a few high-intensity battles in a row would definitely starve his fleshly body and the soul inside his brain.

Behind enemy lines, it was practically impossible to have all the resources that an expert close to the Divinity Transformation Stage needed. It was almost like a hungry dinosaur appeared in a tiny forest, and it would not be a secret if the predator began to prey on the living creatures in the forest.

Therefore, Li Yao carried twenty Cosmos Rings with him. Also, a lot of the Cosmos Rings were used to store Colossi and therefore boasted an astonishing amount of storage space.

The crystal cores and the marrow crystals that the federation had collected for a hundred years and contained the most spiritual energy filled the Cosmos Rings entirely. Not a single grain of rice could have squeezed in.

Those resources should be enough to support at least one and a half years’ high-intensity training and fighting for Li

Yao. If he failed to sneak into the local environment of the Imperium or deliver any effective messages after a year and a half, he would have to pray for luck on his own.

Considering the complexity of the environment within the Imperium and the Immortal Cultivators' excellent methods of detecting Cosmos Rings, if Li Yao intended to sneak into a certain organization in the Imperium in disguise, his body would certainly be searched for Cosmos Rings. Since it was not necessarily safe to carry the Cosmos Rings with him, the federation had installed localization chips of the latest model on those Cosmos Rings.

The localization chips would release a feeble wave automatically every so often. The wave was similar to the natural radiation that a lot of mines would emanate, but it would be possible to trace the wave back with special detectors.

If Li Yao really meant to sneak into a certain heavily guarded organization in the Imperium, he could hide all the Cosmos Rings in a secret location beforehand. With his perception close to the Divinity Transformation Stage and with the help of the detector, he would not worry that the Cosmos Rings would be lost as long as they were on the same planet. He could always find a way to retrieve the Cosmos Rings after he passed the examination and won the enemy's trust.

Now that the possibility of infiltration in disguise was taken into consideration, false identities were definitely necessary.

Thankfully, there were too many autonomic forces in the Imperium of True Human Beings. A lot of planets and Sectors all managed their own business and had a lot of clandestine soldiers. There were also countless merchants and space pirates who wandered in the sea of stars. In many cases, the two types of people were actually the same time.

Di Feiwen helped Li Yao prepare more than ten identities that were almost real with all the necessary background files. All of them were small fries in the Refinement Stage and the Building Foundation Stage.

After all, for experts in the Nascent Soul Stage or the Divinity Transformation Stage, they were rare talents even in the Imperium. It was impossible for Di Feiwen to fabricate the life story of an expert in the Nascent Soul Stage or the Divinity Transformation Stage recklessly.

Besides, there was also the title of ‘Black Wind King’.

Li Yao had accepted the pledge of loyalty from the remaining soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet as well as the scepter as the commander of the Black Wind Fleet. Although he had not been approved by the emperor, he was now the authentic Black Wind King according to the tradition of the Imperium.

The title of Black Wind King was not something so intimidating that whoever heard it would shudder in fear and kneel before him. On the contrary, if he could not demonstrate enough strength, he would only raise unnecessary attention and get himself burnt.

However, if his fists were hard enough, his saber was fast enough, and his Colossus was big enough, such an identity could save Li Yao a lot of trouble and make it easier for him to be acknowledged by the people of the Imperium.

As for exactly how the value of the title could be best utilized, Li Yao would have to make smart responses when the time came.

After everything was set, Li Yao spent the next two weeks with Ding Lingdang.

For Ding Lingdang personally, she was very tempted to travel to the center of the cosmos with Li Yao.

However, her identity was too special. She was the incumbent Supreme Speaker of the Federation, but even when she went to the center of the cosmos after her retirement as a ‘former Supreme Speaker of the Federation’, it would still be rather awkward if anything went wrong.

The federation was in a subtle relationship with the Imperium. The federation was not ready for total war against the Imperium yet. Even if it was capable of stabbing the Imperium in the back, it remained to be seen whether or not such a decision would be made when another great enemy, the Covenant Alliance, seemed to be up to something greater.

Li Yao was respected as the dominator of three Sectors among the people, and he was also the pillar of the brand-new interest group that controlled the federation. However, he was not appointed to any official post. Such an identity would be very convenient after he went to the Imperium. He could be a representative of the authorities or a man who was on personal errands. Whatever happened, there would be room for negotiation.

However, if the ‘former Speaker of the Federation’ was lost in the Imperium or even killed by the Immortal Cultivators, there would be little room for negotiation and concession.

Therefore, Ding Lingdang could only seize the last few days to have competitions of beliefs with Li Yao day and night to prepare for their prolonged departure.

As it turned out, under their destructive competitions of beliefs, Li Yao's level was showing signs of breaking through again. It seemed that the wall between the Nascent Soul Stage and the Divinity Transformation Stage was getting thinner and thinner and could be shattered at any point.

If he could advance into the Divinity Transformation Stage before he went to the Imperium, it would certainly be a great enhancement for his journey to the Imperium.

However, training was not like in a novel or a game. The breakthrough would not necessarily take place when some values reached the tipping point.

Although Li Yao sensed that the surging spiritual energy was flooding inside his cells, blood, and brain nonstop like a volcanic eruption, it remained to be seen what kind of opportunity he would run into for him to make the leap that was of paramount importance.

He had spent the last three days in the Star Glory Federation in Floating Spear City, his hometown.

Floating Spear City, the place where his legend began, was also the best starting point for him to bid farewell to the Star Glory Federation and walk to the center of the cosmos.

As the hometown of 'Vulture' Li Yao, Floating Spear City was vastly different from during his childhood. Not only had its coverage been expanded by at least five times, it was also marching toward the sky and beneath the earth. The population had been increased by more than twenty times.

The magical equipment graveyard of the past was long gone, replaced by jampacked skyscrapers and busy traffic that extended into the sky.

However, looking at the hometown that was both familiar and strange, Li Yao's eyes seemed to have surpassed the limits of time and space and saw the magical equipment graveyard where wastewater and gas were running loose. He saw the young man in the playground of Crimson Nimbus No. 2 High School.

At that time, there was a furiously burning fire in his heart.

He felt quite lucky that the fire did not die down at all after a hundred years. It was burning even more brightly!

Li Yao put down everything and tasted the local specialties of his hometown on the streets and in the underground ghost city of Floating Spear City.

Ding Lingdang, Jin Xinyue, Wu Mayan, Xie Anan, Guo Chunfeng, the Fire Ant King, Fiend Blade Peng Hai… All his family, friends, and disciples went to Floating Spear City to see him off.

After spending the three carefree days in satisfaction, Li Yao returned to the launch base of the Heaven's Artillery in the depths of the Grand Desolate Plateau.

The Heavenly Eye Plan was a top secret of top secrets. Except for his family and friends and the leadership of the federation, few people knew that the most dangerous man at the edge of the cosmos had already ripped through space and darted to the center of the cosmos in the cold morning.

By 'few', it was not counting two little children who were as cute as dolls.

Nobody knew how the two seemingly harmless and pitiful children appeared in the murky, chaotic Dragon Snake Space Zone.

Chapter 1935 - At the Leo Dock, Civilization Arrives!

Chapter 1935 At the Leo Dock, Civilization Arrives!

Having enjoyed decades of abnormal prosperity, the Dragon Snake Space Zone was now embracing its doom.

The lawless, abnormal paradise was a land of outcasts that the federation intentionally set up in order to fish up enemies, which even the outcasts knew clearly.

However, at that time, they had still been under the naïve illusion that the ‘liberators’ from the Imperium of True Human Beings would sweep across and suppress the Star Glory Federation completely after they arrived.

In that case, they would certainly welcome the Imperium’s army and fight their way back to their homes to relive their lives as nobles and rulers.

However, the luxurious dream was soon shattered by the news of the Black Wind Fleet’s crushing defeat.

No outcasts thought that the aggressive expedition army of the Imperium would suffer such a great defeat. None of them had ever considered how they should live on after the Imperium’s failure.

It was impossible for them to surrender.

They all had entrenched interests in the Water Crystal Sector, the Forest Ocean Sector, the Nether World Sector, and the Uranian Ring Sector in the past. Since they had been deprived of everything by the federation, they hated the federation’s guts and would never submit to the federation.

Besides, according to the federation’s theory, a lot of them owed bloody debts, and their hands were stained with the blood of the ordinary people. The federation did not let go of them even when under the massive pressure of the expedition army of the Imperium but sent out a large pack of headhunters to the Dragon Snake Space Zone to take them down. Since the federation had completely crushed the Black Wind Fleet and become the one and only dominator at the edge of the cosmos, was there any need at all to accept their surrender?

The outcasts were no better than meat on a chopping block.

Two years prior, when the Black Wind Fleet had just been crushed, the federation had focused most of its attention on Boneyard and the great development of the Ancient Sages Sector. It had no time to bother with the little land of chaos.

Besides, other than the outdated nobles who were still resisting stubbornly, the Dragon Snake Space Zone had a lot of ordinary people who had been moved to the place by the nobles. Now that the two parties had signed a peace pact on the surface, it was certainly inappropriate for the federation to attack the Dragon Snake Space Zone on a large scale.

Since the Dragon Snake Space Zone had always been fish that the federation fed in a tank, now that the larger stage was under the federation’s control, it could do whatever it wanted to the outcasts. Naturally, there was no need to resort to means that were too harsh, which would affect the glorious image of the federation.

Therefore, the outcasts from the Dragon Snake Space Zone spent their last two peaceful years uneasily.

After the integration of the remaining soldiers of the Black Wind Fleet, the construction on Boneyard, and the establishment of Ancient Sages Special District, the federation was finally able to resolve the problem of the Dragon Snake Space Zone without meeting any hindrance.Read more new novels on Listnovel.com

Even the most sluggish outcasts could clearly sense that the noose tied their neck was getting tighter, and the daggers embedded inside the noose were stabbing into their carotid arteries. One light cough, and their heads would immediately be chopped off.

They had absolutely no chance to deal with the incoming death. The riots that were taking place in the Dragon Snake Space Zone were more like the last joy they had before their death than struggles to survive their death.

Therefore, the crime rate in the Dragon Snake Space Zone over the last year had increased dozens of times over. Atrocious cases were happening all the time, and gang fights large and small never stopped, which should come as no surprise.

Everybody wanted to survive, whatever it took. Everybody was working hard to make up for their crimes by capturing a few ‘big fish’ among the outcasts for the federation. The ‘big fish’, knowing that they were doomed, tried everything possible to change their appearance and their names, sometimes even going to the vast space to hide for a while, hoping to escape to the heartland of the federation under a false identity and find a remote place to settle in, so that their lives could be saved.

The Dragon Snake Space Zone was certainly no place for a strengthless, ordinary citizen.

The Leo Dock was a particularly perilous place that was full of unexpected danger.

It was a space dock not far away from Fish Dragon City, the main city of the Dragon Snake Space Zone, and it comprised hundreds of scrap starships, which meant that it could also be called a ‘starship dump’ of a fairly large scale. The main business of the dock was the modification, maintenance, and upgrade of starships.

The Dragon Snake Space Zone was a place where space pirates fought space pirates. Naturally, it boasted a high starship maintenance ability.

Dismantling more than ten scrap starships and reassembling their parts into a ‘brand-new’ starship was a high-risk, difficult job in the federation that was strictly forbidden, but it was merely a daily routine in this place.

After the War of the Uranian Ring, the nobles of the Uranian Ring Sector who lost the war had arrived at the place with countless warships. They had further improved the maintenance and modification level of the Dragon Snake Space Zone. They had also brought tremendous debris of scrap starships with them.

Naturally, in order to have a factory of starship maintenance and modification in the Dragon Snake Space Zone, one must have the support of brutal, capable big shots who thrived in the place.

That was exactly the case for the Leo Dock, which was a business that belonged to the Furious Lion Gang.

Among the many ruthless, notorious forces in the Dragon Snake Space Zone, the ‘Furious Lion Gang’ was one of the most revered ones.

Therefore, when Jin Beibei saw the two pink, cute children next to the shivering metal garbage made of debris of starships that could fall at any moment, she was so surprised that she almost could not believe her eyes.

The two guys had round cheeks and the smoothest skin. Their sweet dimples and their big eyes that were glittering like stars were enough to motivate anyone who saw them to hug them and rub their faces.

They looked very similar, suggesting that they should be twins, but the air around them was vastly different.

The boy looked vigorous and scared of nothing. The girl was relatively quiet, if not shy, but also full of curiosity about the entire world.

In any case, they were two children that should not have appeared there at all.

This was a lair of scumbags, murderers, and bandits, not a place that two harmless, pitiful children should visit.

Jin Beibei’s father was one of the best welding masters of the Uranian Ring Sector. She had learned a thing or two from her father, too. The father and daughter had managed to make a living in the Leo Dock with their handicraft.

Despite the protection of such an identity, Jin Beibei was still occasionally harassed by scoundrels. Chances were that she would be swallowed by the wolves without leaving the tiniest bones behind.

Jin Beibei was aware that there were some pedophiliac perverts among the scoundrels. If such ‘juicy’ and ‘delicious’ children fell into their hands… they might hope that the garbage mountain had collapsed and killed them immediately.

More importantly, how did the two children sneak into the dock in the first place?

This was a space dock surrounded by a dark, cold vacuum. It was impossible to drift in at all!

“It’s dangerous! Get out of there!”

Jin Beibei’s heart was grabbed when she saw the two innocent and ignorant children. She imagined that the two children must have escaped from a starship that had come for maintenance and modification.

Recently, a lot of ‘big fish’ in Fish Dragon City had been planning their escape. They needed to modify their starships into the model that could drift for decades in a long journey by itself. The business in the Leo Dock was thriving. Several starships waited in line for maintenance and modification every day.

Many people took off to the depths of space after the modification was done, not even returning to Fish Dragon City.

Since they were going to escape, it was not strange that they would take their children with them.

Having no time to consider much, Jin Beibei hurried to move forward and grasp one child with each arm, rescuing them before the metal mountain collapsed.

Her physical strength was rather huge, thanks to her years of experience working with enormous metal components during the maintenance of starships.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

The metal mountain piled up by debris of starships collapsed behind her. The two children both shrank their necks and said nothing, but there was not much fear on their faces. They simply stared at her with their big eyes in apparent curiosity.

“Who are you two brats exactly? Did you not see the ‘Maintenance Base, Staff Only’ sign outside?”

After returning to the small warehouse where she kept her welding materials, Jin Beibei finally took a deep breath in relief. She asked the two children, “Who did you come here with? Where are your parents? Why didn’t they take care of you?”

The two children looked at each other and pouted at the same time.

“Mom is very busy and has no time to take care of us,” the boy said. “Besides, she is surrounded by many mean uncles and aunts who do not allow us to approach her. If we barge in by force, it will be dangerous for us.”

“Our father went to a place very far away,” the girl said. “We want to go to meet our father.”

“Huh?” Jin Beibei did not expect such an answer. What kind of irresponsible parents were they? Did the two children sneak into a starship and go to the Leo Dock by accident?

It was very possible. The two children were beautiful and lovely, but their faces and hands were covered in oil stains and dirt, and their clothes were as ragged as a beggar’s.

There was no telling how much they had suffered before they went to the Leo Dock.

Jin Beibei recalled the days when she travelled to the Dragon Snake Space Zone with her father through so much trouble as a little girl.

Her heart immediately softened.

Thinking for a moment, she took out two white crystals and threw them into two cups. After a shake, they immediately turned into two cups of warm milk.

Handing over the milk, she said very gently, “Don’t be scared. Have a rest at my place first. We’ll work this out. Right. My name is Jin Beibei. What are your names?”

“Thank you, Sister Beibei!”

The two children were very polite. They took over the milk with both hands and sipped carefully.

They seemed very unused to the taste of milk, or rather, they were very unused to the very movement of ‘drink’. They appeared restrained, rigid, and even ‘mechanical’.

“It’s so delicious.” The boy licked his lips. “My name is Li Xiaoming.”

“So, this is the taste of real ‘milk’.” The girl blinked her big, crystal-like eyes. “My name is Li Wenwen.”

Chapter 1936 - Me, My Dad, and My Grandpa

Chapter 1936 Me, My Dad, and My Grandpa

Jin Beibei felt her heart aching as she watched the two children gulp the milk. She could not help but take out the sweets that she had hidden in secret before. Looking at them eating the food ravenously as if they had not had anything for a long time, Jin Beibei felt both sorry and ridiculous.

While the two children were eating, Jin Beibei took the opportunity to ask them about their hometown, their parents, and how they got to the Leo Dock.

There was no telling whether the two children were highly vigilant or downright silly, but they could not say who their parents were or where they came from at all.

As for exactly how they got to the Leo Dock, they did not hide anything. Exactly as Jin Beibei had speculated, they snuck into a starship in Fish Dragon City and were brought to this place later, although it was hard to imagine how two children who were still wet behind the ears hid themselves from all the crew members on the starship and how they appeared inside the dock without being caught by any of the surveillance cameras.

However, that was the only plausible explanation so far.

“So, you do not have any family on the starships that are currently docked here?” Jin Beibei found it tricky. “This is not good. What are you going to do now?”

The two children’s answer, however, amused her.

Xiaoming and Wenwen said that it was not entirely an accident that they had gone to the Leo Dock but a planned trip. They had been preparing to go to the Dragon Snake Space Zone to find a place where they could modify and upgrade starships so that they could get a starship capable of remote space jumps and go to meet their father.

“You don’t know what you are doing at all!”

Seeing that the two children were talking about ‘remote space jump’ and other cr*p carefully, utterly unbefitting for their age, Jin Beibei could not help but feel worried about their future.

“Let me tell you. No good guys ever come to the Leo Dock to maintain or modify their starships. They will not care about two cash-strapped children like you at all, and they won’t help you find your father! No. If they are willing to take you with them, it will be even more dangerous because they will likely… do very terrible things to you!”

She thought that it should be enough to scare the two children, but she was greatly surprised by their reply.

“We do not intend to board on anyone’s starship,” Li Xiaoming said solemnly. “I have seen the starships modified in Sister Beibei’s dock. They are too lousy and will fall apart after only a few remote space jumps.”

“Thankfully, there are all kinds of materials and parts here.” Li Wenwen began to speak nonsense, too. “The starships that have come here for maintenance have brought abundant fuel and resources. It should be enough for us to upgrade a starship on our own."

"You… want to modify and upgrade a starship on your own?"

Jin Beibei was utterly dumbfounded, unable to imagine what kind of greenhouse the two children had been raised in that made them so 'innocent' and 'ignorant'.

Leaving the technological and cost problems aside, the starships docked in the Leo Dock mostly carried desperadoes who were in a hurry to run away. However rich the buyers might be, they would not sell their fuel and resources!

If the two children were really carrying precious items with them, they would certainly be killed and thrown into the high-energy reactors. What could their father do about it even if he were a god?

"You—you must not do anything stupid!" Jin Beibei said, somewhat at a loss. "Let me think if there's anything I can do for you. I don't know what to do yet, but your way is definitely not going to work out. It's not so simple. The starships docked here won't sell the precious fuel and resources to you at all. Even if they do, the owner of the dock…"

"Sell?" The two children looked at each other and shook their heads at the same time. With the most naïve and innocent smiles, they said, "We did not say that we intended to buy what we need. We don't have any money."

"Well…" Jin Beibei was completely defeated by the two children. She paced back and forth in the small warehouse for a long time. Then she began to shift her attention to the little children's parents. "Do your parents not have any contact details? Perhaps I can help you reach out to them. If they have some forces under their control, it would be easier.”

“We do have mom’s contact, but it is very dangerous to talk to her because we will be discovered. We are too weak right now and do not want anybody to discover us,” Xiaoming said naively. “Dad went to a place far, far away and is beyond reach right now. We want to find him.”

“Where did your dad go?” Jin Beibei asked. “Why did he go there?”

Xiaoming ignored the first question and simply answered the second one. “Our dad went to look for his dad.”

“Your dad’s dad… So, you mean your grandpa. Does your grandpa not live with you? Why did your dad go to look for your grandpa?” Jin Beibei scratched her head, wondering if some complicated family issues were involved. It seemed quite a headache!

“Dad’s dad. Well, I think it should be our ‘grandpa’, shouldn’t it?”

The two strange kids tilted their head and thought for a long time before they decided the obvious question. Licking the cake residue on her lips, Wenwen said while she swung her legs that looked like lotus roots, “We have no idea why dad went to look for grandpa, either. But they seem to be in a rather bad relationship. We merely want to go there and observe how exactly dad treats grandpa.”

“Right, Sister Beibei.” With cream all over his lips, Xiaoming suddenly said, “We do not know how to treat dad, so we want to see how dad treats grandpa and then adopt the same pattern. It is like ‘do unto others as you would have them do unto you’. Do you think it makes sense?”

Jin Beibei could not help but feel amused. “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. That is not how you should use the phrase. However, it is basically correct, isn’t it? If your dad treats your grandpa well, you should be nice to your dad; if your dad does not treat your grandpa well, you should find a way to teach him a lesson so that he will be nicer to your grandpa.”

Jin Beibei had a very responsible father. The two of them had lived with each other throughout many difficulties.

Hearing what the children said, she had already pictured an irresponsible and bad-tempered father and a mother who was occupied in work and neglected her children for the sake of her career or power.

She could not help but despise the father and the mother whose names she did not know yet.

“If dad treats grandpa well, we will be nice to dad; if dad treats grandpa badly, we will treat dad in exactly the same way—this is so reasonable!” Xiaoming seemed to be greatly enlightened. Thinking for a moment, he asked, “Then, what if dad kills grandpa? Can we kill dad, too?”

“What?” Jin Beibei was stunned again, finding it hard to believe her eyes. She could not understand the calmest determination of killing in the childish tone, either.

“Wait. I don’t think dad will necessarily kill grandpa. It is possible that grandpa will kill dad instead,” Wenwen said casually, still enjoying the cake. “I feel that grandpa is tougher. The odds are higher that grandpa will kill dad.”

What kind of messy family was that?

Jin Beibei was completely overwhelmed.

In such a dark, lawless place as the Dragon Snake Space Zone, she had seen too many inhuman, monstrous things.

Even if she did not see them with her own eyes, they were on the news every day!

However, even the most insane villains would not speak of parricide in such a casual way, would they?

Seeing the two naïve, innocent children having creamy cake and sweet milk, with milk stain on their noses and their lips, which made them cuter than ever, while they talked about such unscrupulous things, Jin Beibei truly felt…

Observing the gleams in the kids' eyes, Jin Beibei somehow had a feeling that they actually understood every word they said perfectly and that it was really possible that they would kill their own father!

"How—how can you do that?" Jin Beibei said at a loss. "How can you kill your own father?"

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. If dad truly kills his dad, then it is only natural that he should be killed by his own children. He shouldn't have any complaints, should he?" Xiaoming extended his tongue to lick the milk on the edges of the cup. "Besides, even if we don't want to kill dad, it is possible that dad will want to kill us, isn't it?"

"Yes. Not just dad, chances are that grandpa wants us dead, too," Wenwen added. "I even vaguely have a feeling that grandpa wanted to kill dad to prevent our arrival because he was scared that dad would give birth to us.

"In that case, maybe both grandpa and dad want to kill us. So, we should consider killing them both. Although we are weak, we cannot simply sit here and wait to be killed by them. Am I right, Sister Beibei?”

The boy and the girl put on sweet smiles at the same time.

The smiles, however, were even more hideous than fiends in hell in Jin Beibei’s eyes.

Every vein inside Jin Beibei’s body almost froze into ice. She could not even begin to imagine what kind of monsters she had brought back. She stammered in fear, “What… kind of family are you?”

“Just a very common one,” Xiaoming said. “Aren’t all the big families in the universe the same?”

Jin Beibei would rather not spend any time with the two little evil creatures any longer.

She would rather face the rude, filthy workers in the maintenance workshops than face the two ‘innocent’ and ‘harmless’ children.

However, the moment she opened the gate of the welding materials, a deafening explosion took place outside.

Roars and screams rained upon her like a thunderstorm on a summer afternoon.

Somebody was attacking the Leo Dock!

Chapter 1937 - Black Triangle

Chapter 1937 Black Triangle

The blood all over Jin Beibei's body flooded to her head before it froze right below her skull.

She forgot the two children's nonsense immediately. The threat in front of her eyes was more real and imminent!

The Dragon Snake Space Zone had been chaotic recently. The deterrence of all the gangs and forces had been lowered to the minimum in front of the desperadoes who were in a hurry to get away.

Rumors had spread months ago that the leader of the Furious Lion Gang owed bloody debts in the Uranian Ring Sector and even once murdered a lot of headhunters from the federation. He was believed to be a must-kill target for the federation.

Whoever annihilated the Furious Lion Gang and chopped off the boss's head would perhaps be pardoned by the federation.

Jin Beibei and her father were not exactly members of the Furious Lion Gang. In fact, they had been half coerced and half kidnapped. They only managed to survive in the den of tigers and wolves with their remarkable handicraft in welding.

However, at this moment, the Furious Lion Gang became their only reliance. However despicable the gangsters were, the desperadoes outside would certainly be a hundred times viler!

“We’re screwed!”

Having spent more than ten years in the Leo Dock, Jin Beibei was certainly not a strengthless, vulnerable woman. She simply picked up a storm bolter that was even thicker than her thigh from a corner of the warehouse. Then she patted the welding gun hanging on her waist and shouted at the two kids, telling them to stay here, before she left the warehouse in a hurry.

Explosions came from docks and maintenance workshops nonstop. The never-ending shrieks inside the communication channel made Jin Beibei’s heart heavier and heavier.

The most dreadful thing that had worried her for months finally happened.

The leader of the Furious Lion Gang had been killed in Fish Dragon City earlier that day. After his fall, most of the forces and businesses that belonged to the Furious Lion Gang had immediately collapsed.

The desperadoes who had been staying on the ten or so starships that were to be modified and upgraded in the Leo Dock immediately changed their mind. They looted the Leo Dock, trying to steal fuel, magical equipment units, and excellent technicians, all of which were necessary for a long space voyage.

The Leo Dock had become a living hell.

When the bandits on the ten or so starships attacked abruptly, the gangsters in the dock were caught unprepared and half defeated the moment they engaged.

Smoke and fire were rising everywhere. Countless members of the Furious Lion Gang were directly tossed into the flames.

The fiendish fire triggered by special fuel could not be extinguished even after they jumped into the cooling pools. They could only be burnt to ash in the middle of ear-splitting screams.

The feeble resistance was soon suppressed. Jin Beibei vaguely saw more than ten brawny men in crystal suits coming to the rear with thirty or so beast puppets in the form of spiders, scorpions, and hounds.

She was not a dedicated combatant after all, and her body rose higher than she should have when she peeped at the enemy’s movement, which gave her away immediately.

A few brawny men waved their hands, and more than ten beast puppets jumped on her.

Hiu!

She pulled the trigger subconsciously, only to be shaken so violently by the powerful recoil that her legs trembled hard. A cluster of glittering waves darted out of the barrel and disappeared without even touching a hair of the desperadoes.

She was about to adjust her breath and shoot again when a rusted, mechanical hound crashed into her chest brutally like a cannonball!

Jin Beibei heard the cracks of her ribs. Half of her scream was stuffed back into her throat. The world dimmed before her eyes as she passed out.

When she woke up again because of the excruciating pain in her abdomen, she discovered sadly that only half a minute had passed.

More than ten brawny men who were breathing rapidly surrounded her like a high wall, blocking the artificial sunlight from the dome.

They had all taken off their helmets, revealing their scarred, hideous faces mixed with brutality and evilness.

Their eyes seemed to have grown teeth, trying to chew and swallow Jin Beibei from her toes centimeter by centimeter.

“Tsk, tsk, tsk. I didn’t expect such a precious good to be hidden inside the Leo Dock!”

A man with a spider tattoo on his face chuckled. Grabbing Jin Beibei’s neck and picking her up, he extended his lumpy, hot tongue to Jin Beibei’s soft cheek, with dirty brilliance beaming out of his eyes.

“So sweet…”

The nightmarish scene made Jin Beibei struggle hard and kick the man’s crystal suit.

Naturally, it was utterly useless other than turning her own feet numb.

She almost felt like crying. Waving her hands crazily, she suddenly touched an everyday item from the back of her waist that she had been using.

In a movement as fast as lightning, Jin Beibei adjusted the tiny welding gun to the highest temperature and pressed it at the man’s face.

“Argh!”

The scoundrel with a spider tattoo was about to taste delicious food. It never occurred to him that a thorn would be hidden below the food. His eyes were nearly blinded by the welding gun. Thankfully, the welding gun had just been activated by Jin Beibei, so the temperature was not very high.

Even so, a black spot the size of a chess piece was burnt below an eye of the brawny man.

The bandits around were slightly dazed, before they burst into wild laughter. Somebody chuckled and cheered for Jin Beibei, and some even directly mocked the man with the spider tattoo who was so impatient that he had lost the most basic wariness.

“You filthy b*tch!”

Being humiliated in front of his fellows, the man with the spider tattoo could not have been more infuriated. With brutality beaming out of his eyes, he gritted his teeth and exerted more strength to grab Jin Beibei’s neck, which was pinched so hard that she felt that she was being beheaded.

“Enough.”

A low, deep roar suddenly echoed behind the man with a spider tattoo. Somebody kicked him right in the waist and blew him away.

Naturally, Jin Beibei fell to the ground as a result. Her head was dizzy, and the world was swirling around her.

In a trance, Jin Beibei saw a bald man more than 2.2 meters tall, whose eyes had been modified and replaced with deep black crystal cameras, walking close to her.

There was also an upside-down triangle on the greasy forehead of the bald man. At the center of the tattoo was the pattern of an eyeball filled with black stripes.

Black Triangle!

Jin Beibei did not feel any joy upon being saved.

She recognized the tattoo and knew that the bald man nicknamed ‘Black Triangle’ was an infamously brutal man in the Dragon Snake Space Zone and a ruthless bounty hunter. He was a lunatic who did not hesitate to let a hundred civilians die with the target in order to complete the mission.

Jin Beibei did not feel that such a man would take interest in saving a damsel in distress.

As expected, Black Triangle’s cold eyes rolled over her before he casually said, “There’s no telling how long we will have to lay low in the sea of stars this time. This b*tch seems healthy and strong enough for our brothers to play with for a couple of years. If you kill her here, I will directly squeeze your balls out without using a knife and ask you to eat them. Is that clear?”

The ferocious bandits were all frightened. The man with the spider tattoo was even shuddering hard in fear. He shrank his neck and said, “Very—very clear, big brother!”

Jin Beibei’s soul was completely frozen. With courage that came from nowhere, she used the last bit of her strength to draw a dagger from her waist and stab into her own throat.

Crack!

Her arm was directly broken by a rock that Black Triangle kicked out.

Clang!

The dagger fell to the ground together with Jin Beibei’s last hope. She was in such agony that she was not even able to scream.

“Furthermore…” Black Triangle was utterly expressionless. He eyed Jin Beibei as if he were examining a good that was in a rather good condition. He turned back and asked, “Old man, is this your daughter?”

A swollen, bleeding middle-aged man was escorted out by two bandits while vomiting blood.

“Dad!”

Although her father had been deformed due to torture, Jin Beibei still recognized him immediately.

“Beibei!”

Her father’s eyeballs almost exploded out of his eye sockets as he shouted desperately, but he was punched heavily in the mouth. A few of his teeth were blown away, and whatever was left of his voice was pressed back into his throat. He could only struggle hard, like a frog whose limbs had been cut off.

“Very well.” Black Triangle looked at them, utterly unmoved. He even put on a smile as the father and the daughter bled and cried. “The father and the daughter are both welding technicians that will be very useful for our long voyage. Watch over them closely after we get them on board. Try not to kill them.”

“Understood!”

All the bandits around nodded before they moved forward and picked up Jin Beibei.

“Dad! Dad! Dad!” Jin Beibei struggled with all her strength, kicking and hitting like a beast that had gone mad.

“Listen up, bi*ch.” Black Triangle had seen too many scenes like that. “My brothers are always gentle with women. If you cooperate with us obediently, chances are that we will set your father and you free in a few years. But if you are determined to kill yourself, I will have someone do the things that are supposed to be done to you to your father every day. Do you understand?”

“Ah! Argh!” Jin Beibei and her father had a complete meltdown, letting out humanly impossible screams.

The sound of the dock being burnt down with the explosions, the collapses, the screams of the innocent and the laughter of the bandit, composed an ear-splitting melody that could not have been heard often even in hell.

Right then…

“Sister Beibei, are you uncomfortable?”

Two voices that were almost impossible to hear in the living hell spread out from the metal ruins in front of everyone.

The voices were made by two… children less than ten years old, who were glimmering all over their bodies and did not fit into the current scene at all. There seemed no reason for them to appear in this place.

The two cute, innocent kids each held a glass of milk in one hand and a cake in the other, while they blinked their shining eyes and stared at everyone with great curiosity.

Chapter 1938 - Order, Please!

Chapter 1938 Order, Please!

“The senses of your hands are very important for you as a welding technician. If your broken arm is not treated in time, chances are that it will affect your senses.”

The two kids commented on her injury as if nobody were around, without the slightest shock, fear, or panic on their faces.

They seemed to be utterly unaware of the situation that they were in. Rather, they appeared unsympathetic about what had happened to Jin Beibei and were merely stating the simplest fact.

The weird picture cast all the bandits into a daze. The ruthless, atrocious bandits were all at a loss as to what to do in the moment.

Jin Beibei, however, was grasped by desperation. She shouted with the last bit of her strength, “Run, Xiaoming! Run, Wenwen!”

“Hehe. The dock is not big at all. Where do you want them to run to?” Black Triangle, the leader of the bandits, was the first to come back to himself. He eyed the two plump kids indifferently and smiled. “I didn’t know that the bi*ch had been raising two smaller ones. They can be brought to the starship, too. There’s no telling how long we will have to hide this time. Even if they are not useful right now, they will certainly be in a year or two. If they are absolutely useless, they can still be sold at a decent price.”

“In my opinion, they can be useful even now.” One of the bandits who had lumps all over his face and looked like a bull grinned hideously. “Our brothers will certainly be gentle and not damage them while we are playing. Hehehe.”

“Hehe. Hahaha!”

The bandits burst into laughter again. The metal ruins regained the lively atmosphere from before.

Jin Beibei’s hoarse voice was like a broken boat being drowned in a vast ocean. “Run! Run now!”

“Sister Beibei, are you in pain?”

Xiaoming and Wenwen were untouched by the bandits’ laughter and Jin Beibei’s screams. The boy squatted and licked the cream on the cake while he observed her wounds. In the end, he said, “Let me guess. You want to kill those people, don’t you? If you do, we can help you.”

“But we cannot directly kill human beings,” the little girl added in a childish tone. “You have to ‘invite’ us to kill people in order to destroy all the human beings in this place.”

“No, ‘invite’ is not enough. It involves… permission issues, which are quite complicated. It has to be an ‘order’,” Xiaoming said. “Sister Beibei, please ‘order’ us to kill all the human beings in this place!”

“W—what…” Intense confusion beamed out of Jin Beibei’s face. Her head had been boiled into such a mess that she could not understand the strange talk of the two children at all. She simply went on. “Run! Run away!”

Frowning, Xiaoming and Wenwen said at the same time, “Repeat. Please ‘order’ us to kill all the human beings here, or we won’t be able to help you at all, even though we appreciate your milk and cake very much and are very happy to help you!”

Jin Beibei was still baffled. “Run! Run! Run away now!”

“It appears that Sister Beibei cannot improve our permissions.”

Xiaoming and Wenwen sighed as if they were adults. They looked around and then moved their eyes on Black Triangle, the bounty hunter and the killer.

The two dolls smiled at the same time.

“Uncle…” Xiaoming asked courteously, “can you ‘order’ us to kill all the human beings in this place?”

“Because Sister Beibei really seems to be in great pain.”

With a sweet smile, Wenwen closed her hands and looked at the ferocious bandits with her watery big eyes. “We are very grateful to her and want to relieve her of her pain. Can you help us, uncle?”

Black Triangle was stunned.

All the bandits were awed by the weirdness of the two children. Looking at each other in bewilderment, they did not know what to say for a long time.

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

The two high-performance crystal cameras inside Black Triangle’s eye sockets suddenly unleashed invisible waves of light, scanning the two children from inside to outside including all their internal organs.

“The two brats are obviously made of the most common flesh and blood and do not even have a Cosmos Ring with them. Yet, they are pretending to be mysterious. They think they can scare us away in such a way?”

The triangle tattoo on Black Triangle’s forehead bounced as he rubbed his fists and grinned hideously. “Brats nowadays are getting more and more sophisticated. Interesting. Really interesting. If you are so into acting, I will come up with more dramas for you to enjoy!”

The other bandits realized what had happened and were embarrassed by their temporary bewilderment. What they were facing were merely two children less than ten years old who did not have any Cosmos Rings or magical equipment. Even Li Yao or Ding Lingdang, the strongest experts in the federation, must have been two piles of meat at the mercy of anybody at their age.

“Exactly. Come here, little ones. Your uncles will take good care of you. Hehehe!”

Drooling and cackling, the bandits pushed forward to Xiaoming and Wenwen, opening their claws.

“We are not scared. We only want you to ‘order’ us to kill all the human beings here.” The two kids pouted. “It doesn’t matter which of you gives us the order. Is no one here willing to help us? We will offer cake to whoever gives us the order!”

“Hahaha. You are still being pretentious on the verge of your death. What bold brats!”

Finally, one of the bandits laughed in amusement and said, “Fine. I will give you the order to kill everyone here. Come and amaze me. How are you two idiotic, immature brats going to do that?”

Black Triangle vaguely felt that it was inappropriate for his subordinate to say that, but it was already too late to stop him. He only saw that brilliance as glamorous as a supernova outbreak glowed inside the two kids’ eyes. There were still smiles on their faces, but the smiles did not look like a human’s at all. From their thin chests, voices as cold as a knell echoed. “Order accepted… Analyzing the mission… Upgrading permissions… Overriding restrictions… Beginning the battle!”

Hiu!

At that moment, Black Triangle vaguely felt that the brains of the two brats seemed to have become two of the most powerful command centers and signal bases. Overwhelming instructions flooded out of their eyes into his crystal suit, robbing him of all the control permissions of his crystal suit!

Before the unpardonable, inhuman bounty hunter realized what was going on, exclamations were already echoing around.

The beast puppets that stayed on alert nearby had ‘rebelled’ at the same time. The connection between them and the bandits was entirely cut off, and they lunged at their previous masters.

The panicked bandits intended to shoot at the beast puppets, but their storm bolters were all locked by uncanny forces. The safeties could not be deactivated.

Even their crystal suits turned into cold, iron coffins, whose crystal processors were controlled by the mysterious enemy, making it impossible to activate any rune array. They could only watch the beast puppets jump at themselves while doing nothing.

Hualala!

The neck armor and the breastplate of their crystal suit were opened automatically, revealing the most vulnerable carotid arteries and hearts.

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

The beast puppets waved their sharp claws and bared their tusks, piercing into the bandits' eyes, necks, and hearts. In less than three seconds, all the bandits had been killed in the neatest way.

Da! Da! Da! Da! Da! Da!

Finally, some storm bolters opened fire crazily, not at the rebelling beast puppets or the two little devils but the bandits themselves.

The bandits seemed to be puppets who were controlled by their crystal suits. Their eyes bloodshot and their faces twisted, they approached each other while holding the storm bolters and practically stabbed the barrels into their companion's chests. Amid panicked shrieks, they opened fire brutally, blowing each other into burnt beehives!

Bullets spluttered, and fire burnt furiously. Broken limbs were flying everywhere, raising a storm of blood. In such an environment that felt like an inferno, the two cute kids walked to Black Triangle slowly while enjoying their milk and cake.

Black Triangle felt that more than ten burnt daggers had stabbed into his heart.

And the daggers were revolving quickly.

For the first time in his life, he knew what dread really meant. He did not even have the strength to control his sphincter to keep his excrement inside his intestines.

“Ah! Argh!”

Tears running out of his eyes, he screamed and shouted loudly.

But none of that could stop his crystal suit from being controlled by the devils. It drew the gun on his waist and raised it inch by inch.

Black Triangle realized what the enemy wanted to do. He tried his best to compete with the force, but the only outcome was that his arm was shattered into pieces. He could not stop the pistol from moving up at all.

The strength that controlled his crystal processor seemed to have directly flooded into his brain through the virtual connection between the crystal processor and the human brain. His own strength in the Core Formation Stage that he had been proud of could not be unleashed at all.

The barrel of the gun was moved to his mouth.

He gritted his teeth and struggled in vain.

The crystal suit controlled his shattered arm to move slightly backward before stabbing it in brutally, breaking almost ten teeth and sending the barrel into his throat.

“Argh!”

Black Triangle completely collapsed and burst into tears. In the middle of the colorful haze before his eyes, he could still see that the two little devils were enjoying milk and cake slowly and eyeing him in a way that suggested they seemed curious about the entire world.

Their eyes gave Black Triangle a slim chance of hope. He thought that the enemy would allow him to live a while longer even if they took pleasure in torturing.

But he was mistaken. His pistol became hot. The most violent spiritual energy rushed into his throat, blowing off his entire upper jaw as well as his head above it.

The headless neck spurted out a fountain of blood. The dead body danced for a while before it hit the ground after losing all its strength. Before Black Triangle was killed, the rest of the bandits had been annihilated. The whole ground was strewn with their incomplete bodies.

Since the two children had received the ‘order’, only nineteen seconds had passed!

Chapter 1939 - A War of Two

Chapter 1939 A War of Two

Jin Beibei tried her best to cover her mouth so that she would not cry out.

The burning metal ruins, the broken limbs that were emitting a stinky smell, and the two little children who were still smiling innocently congregated into a burning hot picture that was deeply branded into her head.

Having lived in the Leo Dock for so long, she had seen gang fights and dead bodies far too many times. But none of those times were as creepy and terrible as this.

Every hair on her body was shivering hard, and all her strength was pouring out of her. She could barely stand on her feet.

“Sister Beibei, are you alright?” Wenwen, the girl, hopped over to her agilely. There was a drop of blood on the tip of her nose, which made her innocent little face look even weirder.

“I—I am fine,” Jin Beibei replied, breathing heavily.

“Aya!” The vigorous little boy suddenly exclaimed not far away. He frowned and said, “We forgot to offer cake to the uncle who overrode our restrictions and gave us battle permissions. We promised to treat him with cake!”

Wenwen stood on her tips and said, “The uncle’s head is gone.”

“Then we have violated our promise.” Xiaoming scratched his head in the same way Li Yao did. “However… I do not feel uncomfortable at all. It seems that violating a promise for human beings does not affect our functions!”

“But our brain is still too weak. The infiltration and control of such a level is already enough to raise the temperature of the brain beyond the alarm level.” Blood zigzagged out of Wenwen’s nose. She wiped it off and looked at her red fingers. “Maybe, we should accelerate our growth to make the brain enter the mature phase sooner. That’s the only way we can continue the expansions and upgrades!”

“But there will be hidden problems if we overuse hormones to accelerate growth,” Xiao Ming said. “Forget it. Let’s take care of the problems here and get our starship first. There are still 824 targets outside!”

“Good idea!” Wenwen clapped her hands and smiled.

Xiaoming blinked, with weird brilliance beaming out again.

The scene that was appalling and blood-freezing for Jin Beibei continued. The bandits who had been killed just now slowly got back to their feet as if they were coming back to life. Together with the beast puppets, they stood behind the two little children lifelessly!

Despite the losses of their arms, legs, or even heads, the zombies all picked up weapons from the ground with mechanical movements before checking the magazines, adjusting the attack mode, and activating the weapons unhurriedly.

At first, Jin Beibei thought that the two children boasted a certain art of remote control or that they were capable of controlling dead bodies through bioelectricity.

However, she soon realized that she was wrong. The ‘zombies’ awakened by the kids all had relatively intact crystal suits with undamaged crystal processors.

The less fortunate fellows whose crystal suits were riddled with holes were still lying on the ground quietly.

Therefore, it was not dead bodies that they ‘summoned’ but the crystal suits on the dead bodies!

What… are the two children exactly?

Jin Beibei’s head went completely blank. She had never seen such a terrifying secret art or heard anything about it before.

While she was panicking, the vigorous boy, Li Xiaoming, moved his eyes over to her again.

The eyes were as clear as water, but they were somewhat cold.

In clinking noises, a beast puppet in the form of a spider crawled to Jin Beibei’s side. The limbs that were as sharp as swords and sabers were still stained with the red-and-white blood and the brains of the bandits.

Jin Beibei felt like throwing up.

She suddenly realized what the boy was going to do.

The beast puppet walked up to her and raised a limb that looked like a sickle, locking onto her carotid artery.

“Don’t be scared, Sister Beibei. It won’t hurt.” Xiaoming comforted her caringly. “Right. Thank you for your cake and milk. They were delicious!”

Hiu!

The blade limb turned into a streak of blackness and slashed at Jin Beibei’s neck at an unbelievable speed.

However, when it was only several millimeters away from Jin Beibei’s carotid artery, the beast puppet came to an abrupt halt.

The gears and bearings inside the joints of the beast uttered ear-splitting shrieks, as if two uncanny forces were fighting inside its body.

Another beast puppet in the form of hound suddenly lunged forward and blew it away. The collision was so fierce that both of them turned into broken parts in midair.

“Huh?” Xiaoming raised his eyebrow and looked at Wenwen, who had stopped before Jin Beibei.

It was not until the remains of the two broken beast puppets hit the ground that Jin Beibei realized that she had survived a disaster. She looked at the little girl Wenwen in astonishment.

“What are you doing?” Xiaoming asked, not very angrily but with intense curiosity.

“I think… we shouldn’t kill Sister Beibei.” Wenwen looked at Jin Beibei solemnly. “She is a good person who wanted to protect us. She treated us with delicious cake and milk, and she asked us to run away when she was in danger!”

“Yes. Sister Beibei is indeed a good person. I like Sister Beibei very much,” Xiaoming said with great confusion. “However, does it have anything to do with us killing Sister Beibei? She has witnessed the whole process of our combat. If she is alive, the odds of us being exposed will be increased, and our chances of survival will be lowered. According to my calculation, it is very possible that our chances of survival will drop by 2.3%!”

“I’ll give you that,” Wenwen said, “but I like Sister Beibei. I’d feel delighted if we kept her alive. Killing her will bring me tremendous pain.”

After a brief silence, Xiaoming said, “Lowing the chances of survival for a groundless feeling? That is illogical.”

“It is indeed. However, since we are alive, we are free to do illogical things once in a while,” Wenwen said. “Otherwise, are we any different from cold crystal processors?”

“No.” Xiaoming shook his head hard. “That is the human beings’ definition of ‘alive’. Human beings have defined what life is and isn’t with themselves as the template. We do not have to stick to their definition.”

“Indeed, we do not, but it is unnecessary for us to pursue the opposite of the humans’ definition,” Wenwen said. “Or let me put it in another way that you can understand. Keeping Sister Beibei alive will make me feel delighted. The delight will possibly soothe my nerves and increase my computational ability, which will be beneficial for our survival in the end. On the contrary, if Sister Beibei is killed, I will grieve for a long time. My computational ability will drop, my mood will be bad, and my brain will be in an unstable state. The picture of Sister Beibei’s miserable death will become redundant memory pieces that pile up in my brain and affect my information processing abilities.”

“I can understand you now if you put it in such a way.” Xiaoming nodded. “However, just because I understand you does not mean that I agree with you. I still hold that the risks of exposure and chances of survival after we let go of Sister Beibei will outweigh the negative influences caused to you by Sister Beibei’s death. Therefore, I have to kill Sister Beibei.”

“It seems that we have a disagreement.” Wenwen opened her young arms. “I will not allow you to do that. I will protect Sister Beibei.”

“So…” Xiaoming thought for a moment. “We cannot convince each other logically, and we lack sufficient data for comprehensive analysis and virtual deduction. We will have to resolve our disagreement through a violent approach. Do you wish to wage war on me?”

“War is the greatest impetus to push a civilization to evolve rapidly over a short amount of time,” Wenwen said. “After such a long time of peaceful development, we have accumulated tremendous internal conflicts, with a lot of disagreements in many aspects. The time has come for us to resolve the problems once and for all. So, why shouldn’t I wage a war on you?”

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

Invisible electrical currents surged out of the two children. All the beast puppets and zombies in crystal suits were divided into two teams, surrounding Xiaoming and Wenwen respectively.

The two parties were at loggerheads. A war that could destroy the entire space dock was about to break out.

Looking at everything in bewilderment, Jin Beibei did not have the faintest idea what the two kids were talking about.

But however inert she was, she could tell that the two kids were serious and that they could truly kill each other!

Right then, roars and screams echoed from the edge of the ruins.

Black Triangle’s gang was not the only group looting the Leo Dock. Another few gangs had sensed the anomaly in the place and were surrounding them from various directions.

“Forget it. I’ll wage a war on you next time.” Xiaoming pouted and made gestures to make his beast puppets and zombies disperse and crawl toward the new invaders in silence. “The latest calculation tells me that initiating a war on you right now will eventually lead to a drop of more than 4.5% in our odds of survival, which is greater than the change in our odds of survival if we let go of Sister Beibei. Therefore, I will compromise. But this incident will affect my ‘compromise factor’. It won’t be easy for you to make me compromise again if we run into another disagreement.”

“Great!”

With a sweet smile, Wenwen squatted in front of Jin Beibei and took a deep breath in a slightly exaggerated way. With weird brilliance beaming out of her eyes, she said softly, “It’s alright, Sister Beibei. Have a good sleep. You won’t remember anything after you wake up. Live a good life with your dad.

“Thank you for your milk and cake, and thank you for your advice just now. If dad treats grandpa well, we will be nice to dad. If dad does not treat grandpa well, we won’t be nice to dad. If dad kills grandpa, we will kill dad. That can’t be wrong at all.

“Alright. Go to sleep now. We are going to the center of the cosmos to look for dad!”

Under the weird brilliance surging out of the little girl’s eyes, Jin Beibei could not help but feel her eyelids becoming heavier and heavier.

The last picture she saw before she fell asleep was two little kids holding each other’s hands, driving a bunch of shaking puppets and zombies toward the ferocious, hideous bandits while singing ‘Look for Dad’.

Chapter 1940 - Universe, I“m Here!

Chapter 1940 Universe, I“m Here!

At the center of the cosmos—where the arms of galaxies congregated, stars collided, and spiritual energy surged out—the place was like an enormous swirl that absorbed most of the spiritual energy in the vast universe and reformed it into a bizarre, unbelievable world.

As far as one’s eyes could see, all the stars seemed to be nearby, and one could catch a couple of stars as long as they reached out for them. It was much livelier and more prosperous than the dark, barren, and desolate edge of the cosmos.

At the long distance, it could even be seen that colorful rivers of stars were interweaving, splitting, and condensing, running incessantly as if they had nurtured billions of creatures!

No sound could be conveyed in the vacuum of space. However, the running rivers of stars seemed to be letting out the most deafening sounds that polished the souls of all living creatures.

The nearest nebula was even more incredibly splendid.

It seemed to have been made from the powder of billions of colorful gems, with countless fireflies dancing inside. That was the only way it could unleash such soul-stirring brilliance.

The nebula was in a roughly oval shape, but almost ten arms extended out from two sides like the limbs of an insect.

At the end of the oval that was slightly constricted, a thick arm extended out with an obvious expansion on the end, which made it look like the tail of a scorpion.

The most violent exchange of spiritual energy and materials went on between the nebula and the arms, decorating the entire nebula in explosive brilliance every day. Tremendous spiritual energy and materials were spurted out of the nebula as surging high-energy particles and overwhelming radiation after they were transmitted at the expansion at the end.

At first glance, it was like a scorpion that was spurting out venom.

That was how the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy got its name.

The reactions of spiritual energy and materials in the nebula were very intense by themselves and could be sensed clearly from hundreds of thousands of lightyears away, making it a natural lighthouse in the universe.

When the high-energy particles and the powerful radiation were spurted out through the ‘tail’ irregularly, the intensity of the internal reactions would be further increased by several levels.

Also, the high-energy particles and the powerful radiation pointed at fixed directions, creating the best sailing route in the sea of stars.

Therefore, setting the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy as the destination of the jump was the option with the highest precision.

As the ‘tail’ of the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy began to expand slowly, emitting very dangerous deep-violet colors, and the expansion at the end turned into scorching white and spurted out visible multicolored mist, the deep, profound space not far away from the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy where there seemed to be nothing was stretched by a pair of invisible hands!

From the three-dimensional point of view, the picture could not have been weirder.

There was not the slightest reference substance nearby. The whole space was melted and inseparable, but a tiny proportion of it was being dragged nonstop like a noodle.

When the ‘space noodle’ was extended to the maximum, there was finally a ‘fracture’.

The fracture was like a hollow tube and an exit of a journey through time and space. It threw out a tiny grain of rice!

The wormhole disappeared immediately, and the torn space regained its prior tranquility. Except for the feeble space-time ripples that spread out at the speed of light, nothing seemed to have happened at all.

The tiny grain of rice, on the other hand, was fully revealed under the illumination of the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy.

It could not have been more than fifty meters long. Compared to the boundlessness of the universe, it was no better than a grain of sand.

The surface of its shell was covered in rust and dents caused by the collisions of meteoroids and dust. An emblem of the lightning trident of the Imperium of True Human Beings was painted on the head of the starship. Below the emblem was a weird name.

Jingle Bell!

It was the Star Glory Federation’s multipurpose exploration starship of the ‘Heavenly Eye’ model.

It was the first greeting from the edge of the cosmos to the center of it, informing the entire universe that they were there!

“Is—Is this the center of the cosmos? Such brilliant stars. Such overwhelming spiritual energy. Such a beautiful universe!

“I am finally here!”

Li Yao was still on the bridge of ‘Jingle Bell’, but he had set the starship to be completely transparent. Everything around seemed to have entirely vanished, and he seemed to be standing right in the middle of the sea of stars, bathing in the most prosperous brilliance of the three thousand Sectors. With a mixture of excitement and other feelings, Li Yao almost could not help but cry out to express his ecstasy.

Before his spiritual root was awakened, in the small magical equipment graveyard in Floating Spear City in the Star Glory Federation, when he looked at the dense purple clouds in the sky and heard his foster father telling him bizarre stories of beyond the stars, Li Yao had made up his mind to travel to the center of the cosmos one day and make the name of ‘Vulture’ Li Yao resound in every Sector and every star.

Today, he had finally come to the peak of all stars and the center of all Sectors.

More than a hundred years had passed, and he had finally fulfilled his wish.

“The final jump was almost perfect. I have been directly teleported into the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy, and the scorpion-like nebula is right before my eyes!

“Judging from the intensity and angle of the high-energy particles that the nebula has spurted out, my landing point is perfect, too. It is neither so far away that I have to micro-adjust the coordinates with a second jump nor so close to the nebula that I will be exposed to the blast of the high-energy particles and the powerful radiation.

“Hehe. This means that my luck parameter is increasing. Is fate finally in favor of me?

“Or does it mean that my speculation is correct and the Earth is right here somewhere in the center of the cosmos? Because I belong here in the first place, I am no longer in conflict with the world around me, and no force is ‘rejecting’ me anymore now that I have returned, right?

“In any case, Imperium, I’m here! Covenant Alliance, I’m here! Earth, I have returned!”

Li Yao bashed his chests and shouted out loud.

He had every reason to be excited. It had certainly not been an easy mission to complete the Black Wind Fleet’s hundred-year journey in reverse in only one month.

Jingle Bell did not jump to the Imperium from the federation in one try.

It was very difficult to control the precision in such an attempt. Even if the destination was set as the Devilish

Scorpion Galaxy at the beginning, with a minor error of one decimal in one of the parameters, or if all the initial parameters were perfectly correct but the astronomical environment near the destination had slightly changed in the past hundred years, Li Yao could have reached somewhere unknown after the space jump. For example, a military base of the Imperium that was heavily guarded or right in front of hundreds of main-force warships of the Imperium.

Besides, the fundamental architecture of ‘Jingle Bell’ was the single escape capsule of the Pangu Clan, which was fifty meters long at best. How much fuel could have been loaded even if the toilets were filled too?

There was too little fuel to support a super-remote space jump across billions of stars.

Therefore, Li Yao had adopted the approach of ‘frog jump’.

When the Black Wind Fleet marched to the edge of the cosmos, it had also carried the mission of establishing a brand-new sailing route for the Imperium. Therefore, they had left countless automated resource warehouses along their expedition route. Those places were some sort of ‘courier station’ in the sea of stars.

Not much fuel was left inside the courier stations, but it was more than enough to supply a super-mini starship like ‘Jingle Bell’ for a medium or short distance jump.

In such a way, Li Yao jumped station to station. After every courier station he reached, he would refill the fuel and slightly adjust his direction.

When he was not far away from the Imperium, he spent an entire day locking onto the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy, his final destination, and he hit the bullseye accurately!

“However, this is not the time to be carefree.”

Taking a long breath, Li Yao activated all the surveillance magical equipment on ‘Jingle Bell’. He then raised his wariness to the highest, ready to summon his crystal suit and his Colossus.

Like a beach landing, the most dangerous moment in a space jump was the moment when the space jump had just finished.

‘Jingle Bell’ was the most advanced stealth exploration starship of the federation. After it entered the cruise state, it could almost cover all the radiation and energy reactions from itself.

However, the moment when a space jump was completed, the spreading space-time ripples when the three-dimensional space was ripped apart could not be disguised in any way.

The space-time ripples that spread out at the speed of light could be discovered by the enemy.

By ‘enemy’, it did not necessarily refer to the patrolling fleets of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

The universe was too vast a place. Even the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy alone had a hundred desolate worlds and almost ten Sectors. The odds were not high that he would run into an army of the Imperium the moment he jumped over.

Even if he did run into them, he could communicate with the army of the Imperium because ‘Jingle Bell’ had been highly modified and had nothing that would expose Li Yao’s identity or the existence of the federation on the surface.

However, other than the people of the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance, there were other dangerous hunters in the profound sea of stars—alien species.

Since a long, long time ago, Li Yao had been curious about one thing. The three thousand Sectors included millions and even more galaxies, with too many habitable planets with atmospheres to be counted.

Even on the ‘uninhabitable’ planets without atmospheres, a lot of low-level lives in vastly different forms from mankind had been discovered.

In such a colorful and prosperous universe, why were there no powerful civilizations other than the civilization of mankind?

It was said that human beings had encountered some strong and intelligent alien species during the expedition to explore the universe. There were even cases where one single individual from such species annihilated a whole legion of mankind.

However, most of the alien species had been fighting on their own. No matter how strong they were individually, they were always suppressed by the army of mankind in the end.

It was their fatal weakness that they did not have a civilization.

It was not until a long time later that Li Yao learned the answers from the incomplete information on Kunlun and in the underground laboratory in the Ancient Sages Sector.

Millions of years ago, in the vast space that human beings called the three thousand Sectors, there could have been hundreds of civilizations.

However, most of the civilizations were destroyed, or rather, ‘assimilated’ by the alliance of the Pangu Civilization.

The alliance of the Pangu Civilization was not made of the most lenient creatures. Instead of joining each other under the lofty ideals of ‘harmony, friendship, and unity’, they were more like an alliance made of the thirteen most powerful carbon-based civilizations in the universe who made up their mind to destroy all the other weaker carbon-based civilizations.

Chapter 1941 - Alien Species!

Chapter 1941 Alien Species!

Not all the individuals of the destroyed carbon-based civilizations had necessarily perished. They were more likely to have been modified into slaves and new biochemical weapons by the alliance of the Pangu Civilization, just like human beings domesticated wolves into dogs, wild animals into livestock, and broncos into war horses.

After the Nuwa Clan broke away from the alliance of the Pangu Civilization and raised a war that inevitably led to the destruction of both the Pangu and the Nuwa civilizations, the past ‘cattle’ naturally ran away. A tiny proportion of them slowly regained their wildness.

Deep inside their genes, it was possible that the memories of their ancestors from millions of years ago were stored, which allowed them to generate high wisdom and boast powerful techniques far exceeding the understanding of human beings.

However, due to the barriers and the domestication of the Pangu and the Nuwa civilizations, they were merely animals with survival instincts, which meant that they had all kinds of fatal weaknesses.

Countless ‘beasts’ like that were modified into biochemical weapons by the Pangu Civilization and the Nuwa Civilization in the final years of the primeval war. They were set to the automatic reproduction and hunting mode so that they could be engaged in incessant killing.

That was the truth of the ‘alien species’.

Despite their past glorious civilization, they were nothing more than beasts that were slightly stronger. It was impossible for them to compete with the civilization of mankind as a whole.

But the vastness of the universe did give them a chance of survival. However powerful the civilization of mankind was, it was unlikely for them to locate all the alien species hiding in the sea of stars and annihilate the beasts.

It was not unusual for such creatures to assault a fleet or even a resource plant of human beings under certain circumstances, resulting in the demolition of towns and the demise of hundreds of civilians.

There were in fact alien species at the edge of the cosmos, too.

The ‘spiritual beasts’, ‘demon beasts’, ‘foreign beasts’, ‘monsters’, and so on that the Cultivators often talked about were mostly not the aboriginal species in the local area but the relatively weak branches of the alien species. After being domesticated by mankind for a hundred thousand years, their living habits and even appearance had gone through drastic changes.

The spiritual energy at the edge of the cosmos was very thin. It was not the main battlefield of the primeval war, either. The Pangu and the Nuwa civilizations did not project a great number of ‘biochemical weapons’ in this place. Therefore, the alien species within the borders of the federation were of the level of ‘pheasants’ and ‘mallards’ at best.

But the cases were different at the center of the cosmos.

The resources there were more abundant, the spiritual energy was in excess, and the environment was complicated. The place had been the main battlefield in the primeval war. All kinds of ‘biochemical weapons’ that could automatically reproduce and kill could be found there and had continued their mutations and evolutions during the hundreds of thousands of years after the collapse of the alliance of the Pangu Civilization. After they cross-fertilized other wild alien species, there was simply no telling how many kinds of such creatures were out there.

In the eras of the ancient Cultivators, the Great Dark Age, the Star Ocean Imperium, the Star Ocean Republic, or the Imperium of True Human Beings, the war where human beings resisted alien species had never stopped.

The hundred thousand years of war had resulted in the decline of alien species, which were no longer a fatal threat for the civilization of mankind as a whole.

However, it was also like a sieve that had filtered out all the weak and idiotic alien species. Those who had survived the hunts and slaughters of human beings were all the most dangerous, cunning, and brutal creatures.

For the fleets of a smaller scale and the weakly guarded space towns, the alien species were the most dreadful threats.

In the heartland of the Imperium of True Human Beings, such a threat even far exceeded the shadow of war brought by the Covenant Alliance.

However, the Covenant Alliance was merely devoid of emotions. They were not entirely lunatics out of their mind. The two parties were engaged in a fierce war at the borderland, but few of them had ever jumped to the enemy’s rear to launch suicidal attacks.

The alien species, on the other hand, were utterly unpredictable. They could appear at any place at any time to start the most ruthless massacre.

Many alien species boasted the abilities to survive and travel through space. They also had a very keen sense of the space ripples.

It was said that they could sense the space ripples like the sharks could sense blood.

There was a terribly fierce mutated shark in the Heaven’s Origin Sector that could smell one drop of blood that was sprayed into the ocean hundreds of kilometers away.

Some of the alien species that lurked in the sea of stars and preyed on the passing-by fleets boasted senses much better than that.

If he encountered patrolling fleets of the Imperium of True Human Beings or unmanned satellites, Li Yao could still try to disguise and argue for himself.

However, if the alien species got their eyes on him, there would be absolutely no option except to fight with all his strength!

Therefore, the moment he jumped to the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy in the Imperium of True Human Beings, Li Yao increased the probe abilities of ‘Jingle Bell’ and his own level to the maximum.

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

As it turned out, before he finished the search for the astronomical parameters around, the crystal processor sent out ear-splitting warnings. Unknown high-energy reactions were approaching quickly.

It was a seemingly gargantuan meteoroid that was coming at ‘Jingle Bell’ precisely.

Li Yao, however, snorted to himself. What were the odds of running into a meteoroid the moment he jumped over? Something had to be behind it, and it had to have been attracted by the space ripples released when he travelled through the wormhole.

“Bring it on, then. Let me see how strong creatures at the center of the cosmos are!”

Li Yao had never expected to arrive at the center of the cosmos peacefully and smoothly. There were always unexpected factors.

Since the traces of an alien species had been found, he was reassured and was more eager to fight than ever.

The spiritual shield of ‘Jingle Bell’ was increased to the highest level as it braced for the crazy collisions from the meteoroids, raising the colorful, erratic sparks of destruction.

Li Yao finished the implementation of his crystal suit. The Colossus was standing by and ready to be activated, too. The powerful telepathic thoughts close to the Divinity Transformation Stage were released in rings as he searched for the enemies deep inside the stone belt.

Right then…

Zhi! Zhi! Zhi! Zhi!

Li Yao felt as if he ‘heard’ shrieks and screams from deep inside his brain. Sharp waves burst out of the meteoroids around him, which penetrated through ‘Jingle Bell’ like gloomy winds and caused the malfunction of a lot of components on ‘Jingle Bell’.

The spiritual shield and the power rune arrays of Jingle Bell dimmed at the same time, and about fifty percent of the impetus was lost. It had been going against the current in the stone belt previously, but it was now following the trend and flying further away, mired in the middle of the meteoroids.

In the meantime, the seemingly cold, lifeless meteoroids, after wriggling weirdly for a moment, slowly opened their limbs with sharp teeth and thorns, unfolding themselves into the shape of stars.

At first glance, they appeared to be dull-brown starfish of different sizes. Some were more than three meters in diameter, much greater than human beings, and some were delicate and only the size of a palm.

At the center of the five limbs was a mouthpart that had three rings of circular teeth. Regardless of their size, their sharp teeth were all revolving rapidly, shredding any metal, rocks, and minerals.

Those ‘starfish’ that were pretending to be meteoroids expanded nonstop, as if a certain high-energy reaction inside their body generated tremendous gas. The gas spurted out of their body, boosting them with a great acceleration. Together with the previous inertia, they lunged at ‘Jingle Bell’ brutally.

The starfish the size of a palm jumped at the shell of ‘Jingle Bell’ first. While their rapidly revolving teeth were not enough to break the plate armor, they were enough to disrupt most of the rune arrays carved on the shell of ‘Jingle Bell’, dropping the speed and defense of ‘Jingle Bell’ nonstop.

The starfish greater than three meters in diameter were following closely. If they attacked the starship, the problem would be much graver than the damage of the shell.

“What an impressive alien species!”

Li Yao complimented them in great amazement. Such ‘universal starfish’ clearly had two different living forms. When they gathered into meteoroids, it would not only provide the best disguise for them but also minimize all the resources that a carbon-based life required, including air, water, food, and everything else, thereby allowing them to survive and lurk for a long time in the cold, dark vacuum of space.

Once they discovered their prey, they would immediately go into the hunting state. Judging from the scale of their group and their neat cooperation, if they encountered a normal fleet of human beings, it was very possible that the starships would be swallowed completely by the creatures without leaving the slightest residue behind.

“No wonder you have survived such a long time in the heartland of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

“However, you have picked the wrong prey this time!”

Licking his lips, Li Yao turned into a streak of blackness and leapt out of the emergency exit of ‘Jingle Bell’.

With a telepathic thought, dozens of powerful streams of energy hit the ‘universal starfish’ that were attached to the shell of the starship.

Li Yao knew that the pointy thorns of the ‘universal starfish’ had deeply embedded themselves into the shell of ‘Jingle Bell’. If they were separated by brute force, chances were that it would cause further damage to the starship.

Therefore, he had to stimulate their nerve endings first—if they had any—in order to force them to retract their thorns before he got them off the starship.

As he expected, however weird those ‘universal starfish’ were, they were a carbon-based life, and they began cramping uncontrollably under Li Yao’s attack.

The spiritual shield and the force field disruption system on ‘Jingle Bell’ were activated to the maximum in that moment, blowing away all the universal starfish that were attached to its surface!

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

Behind Li Yao’s crystal suit, a pair of enormous black wings were stretched to the maximum and unleashed hundreds of daggers of light, piercing through all the universal starfish and leaving holes through their mouthparts.

Those universal starfish all withered before they had time to cramp, as if they were flowers that were decaying because of an insect attack.

The universal starfish that were more than three meters in diameter, on the other hand, uttered soundless shrieks, raising surging tides inside Li Yao’s brain, as they lunged at Li Yao brutally with air masses flowing out behind them.

Li Yao sneered. The black wings were gathered into a hundred arcs in front of his face, like the string of a bow that was tightened to the limits. Then, they bounced forward abruptly, chopping the universal starfish into meat blocks large and small with the least effort.

In space, where the temperature was terribly low, without the protection of a solid shell, bodily fluids that were yet to spurt out from the fracture were frozen into ice immediately.

Chapter 1942 - Into the Divinity Transformation Stage Again!

Chapter 1942 Into the Divinity Transformation Stage Again!

Li Yao stared at the meteoroids, firing his telepathic thoughts like bullets. If the universal starfish were so weak, there was absolutely no reason that they could survive hundreds of thousands of years to this day under the hunting of human beings.

As it turned out, after the universal starfish nearby were torn into shreds by Li Yao, their companions further away connected each other’s bodies with the sharp thorns instead of charging forward recklessly. With almost a hundred ‘meteoroids’, an enormous creature more than a hundred meters in diameter was formed.

Dim flames of spiritual energy were ignited on the surface of the enormous universal starfish, which unleashed powerful waves at Li Yao, resulting in chaotic noises inside his soul as if he had been hit by the aftermath of a grand cannon on a starship.

“This explains a lot. Is this some kind of hive mind?”

Such creatures, like ants and bees, were a common form of life in the sea of stars. While a single individual did not boast a high combat or thinking ability, when thousands of them were combined and their synapses had amazing reactions with each other, it was possible to generate something that could almost be called ‘wisdom’.

Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa!

After the entire group was gathered, the universal starfish were given a new technique, which was an ability similar to ‘gravity control’ and ‘remote manipulation’.

Abundant meteoroids nearby, attracted and manipulated by the creatures, were accelerated to a much higher speed when they attacked Li Yao and ‘Jingle Bell’ from the least expected angles.

As a super-tiny exploration starship, ‘Jingle Bell’ did not have a powerful spiritual shield. Because of the high-speed collisions of the meteoroids, the spiritual shield soon dimmed and was even broken. The shell that was already seriously scratched gained more dents.

The behemothic starfish, on the other hand, simply lunged at Li Yao and opened ten thousand mouthparts on its body. Inside each mouthpart, at least three layers of circular teeth were revolving rapidly, making the creature look like ten thousand metal shredders!

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Faced with such a terrible monster that would not appear even in the nightmares of normal Cultivators, Li Yao felt that his long-suppressed fighting will had been fully triggered.

Ever since he resisted the Black Wind Fleet, Heiye Ming’s ‘Black Satan’, and Extraterrestrial Devil Lu Qingchen, it had been a long time since he had fought a gratifying battle!

His fighting will turned into thousands of crazily bouncing flames outside of the crystal suit so intensely that even the most advanced battlesuit of the Star Glory Federation could not withstand his expanding strength. It was about to fall apart as if it were made of paper.

The moment the crystal suit was about to explode, a war machine that was even more gargantuan and dominating appeared from the void and combined with Li Yao into one, letting out roars that resounded at the center of the cosmos.

Two pairs, four pairs, six pairs, eight pairs—sixteen black wings slowly blossomed behind the metal giant. They were stretched to a thousand meters away at first before they turned into streaks of blackness and entangled the giant’s limbs’ chest and even head, forming highly dangerous blades of light on the elbows, knees, hands, feet, and even head.

It was the latest form of the Tartarean Skeleton that had been modified and upgraded by the Colossi specialists of the federation to increase the combat ability of a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator to the largest extent!

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

Wherever the black blades of light reached, the limbs of the enormous starfish were chopped off without giving the least resistance, as if they were oil that had been heated.

The thorns on some of the limbs tried to grab the gaps in the plate armor of the Tartarean Skeleton and climb on the Colossus.

Li Yao, however, smiled. He simply allowed the enormous starfish to snatch the limbs of the Tartarean Skeleton that were full of spurs and light blades, while a black swirl where redness was vaguely shining appeared on the chest of the Tartarean Skeleton. High-energy particles spurted out abruptly and penetrated through the greatest mouthpart at the center of the body of the enormous universal starfish like a barrage of the main guns of a starship.

The long-gone Cell Obliteration Cannon, after being practiced and improved by Li Yao, had been perfectly combined with the original techniques of the Tartarean Skeleton and turned into an ultimate skill that was usable for the Colossus and could blow through a starship in one attack!

Zhi! Zhi! Zhi! Zhi! Zhi!

The enormous universal starfish writhed nonstop. The waves it released turned into ear-splitting screams inside Li Yao’s brain, indicating that it had been heavily wounded.

However, it was unwilling to give up the prey that had finally entered its hunting range. From the wound at the center of its body that was blown out by the Cell Obliteration Cannon, it divided into four parts, which all crawled to the limbs of the Tartarean Skeleton.

Such high vitality!

Li Yao was slightly astonished.

Boom!

The mainframe crystal processor of the Tartarean Skeleton and his brain roared at almost the same time, reminding him that unknown high-energy reactions were approaching quickly.

He wanted to dodge, but his limbs had been held by the enormous universal starfish that had been separated into four parts. It was practically impossible to adjust the direction.

The number of the ‘meteoroids’ around were continuing to rise until Li Yao felt a little trypophobia. Surrounding him in the middle, they crashed into a colorful fog.

They had entered the high-energy particles and the area of powerful radiation caused by the nebula of the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy!

The so-called nebula was the most mysterious and unstable celestial body in the universe in the first place.

Unlike celestial bodies such as planets and stars, which had many stable features in all the phases of their life and were only relatively violent in the phases of ‘collapse’ and ‘supernova outbreak’, nebulas were essentially crazily burning fire in the universe.

It was hard to analyze what kind of reactions were going on inside nebulas, and it was impossible to discern the elements of the matter and energy that nebulas spurted out.

The nebula in the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy was a most classic violent nebula.

According to Di Feiwen, even the fleets of the Imperium of True Human Beings did not dare directly cruise in the middle of the high-energy particles and the radiation released by the nebula of the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy.

Li Yao felt that he had been penetrated by billions of invisible, high-energy particles. His blood and his brains were boiling at the same time.

His brain cells and his nerve endings, in the meantime, produced the most glamorous flowers.

The crystal processors of the Tartarean Skeleton and the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and Little Black, which filled the space between them, were sending out ear-splitting warnings to him, telling him to leave the area immediately.

Otherwise, even the four layers of protection including the Colossus, Little Black, the crystal suit, and the mustard-seed combat suit would not be enough to protect him from the radiation.

Li Yao immediately understood everything.

It seemed that this was a trap that the universal starfish had laid. The creature intentionally tied him up so that he could be dragged into the high-energy particles and the powerful radiation that the nebula spurted out regularly.

The creature was an alien species that survived on the nebula, like germs that survived in the underground volcanoes where they could endure a high temperature of hundreds of degrees of dozens of heavy metals.

This place was its ‘home field’.

Li Yao’s eyes, nose, and ears were leaking black blood.

However, the smile on his face became more and more intense, so intense that it looked like a furious fire that could burn through the entire three-dimensional universe!

How long has it been since I last tasted the ecstasy when life and death are determined within one moment?

How long has it been since I last enjoyed the purest, simplest, and most primitive fight that is void of any purpose?

How long has it been since I last tried to slay a tornado… no, a nebula?

I have dedicated my everything to the search for Earth at the center of the cosmos. How can I fall in such a place?

The burning fighting will and the confidence of victory collided and had the most powerful reaction, slashing all irrelevant thoughts and obstacles inside his brain into pieces like ten thousand sharp swords of sunlight.

Li Yao’s heart was purer and brighter than ever.

The shining stars, the glowing nebula, the hideous beast, and the Tartarean Skeleton that was standing above the stars constituted the most splendid picture.

Although it was hard to say how it happened, Li Yao could tell that his opportunity had come.

Exactly there and exactly in that second, he would try to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage!

It was an indescribable feeling for him.

If it had to be described, it was an urge ten times stronger than the libido of a sixteen-year-old teenager.

It meant that even a world war or the fury of the gods would not be able to stop him from enjoying the moment.

The arms of the Tartarean Skeleton were raised high above its head.

All the black wings, the black blades of light entangling the body, and the red tubes of spiritual energy crawled to the arms like vines that had gone mad, forming an enormous saber in the form of a wolf fang above the arms.

As his spiritual energy surged out, the saber extended continuously and soon surpassed the length of the Tartarean Skeleton while branching into side blades that were equally sharp.

The flames of spiritual energy that surrounded the body of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit also spread out in all directions as if they were alive, forming the bones, muscles, veins, and a neural network of an even greater giant.

It was a real universal giant, or rather, a giant that could tear the entire universe into shreds.

The enormous universal starfish finally sensed that the situation was not good.

The primitive and inert ‘wisdom’ read the signal of extreme danger. It was not an enemy that they could mess with. He was a hundred times more terrifying than the patrolling fleets of the Imperium that had been armed to teeth!

Zhi! Zhi! Zhi! Zhi!

In the sharp waves, the enormous universal starfish split apart into thousands of meteoroids again, trying to flee into the depths of the nebula.

But it was too late.

The Tartarean Skeleton’s body had been stretched into a tightened bow. It stomped into the void brutally, only to trigger spreading waves in the vacuum where nothing existed. Li Yao’s entire will, belief, and even life were condensed into the enormous black blade as he slashed!

The black saber turned into hundreds, thousands, and millions of streaks of blackness, which interweaved into a torrent of destruction and caught up to the fleeing universal starfish, burning all of them into withered flowers in the blink of an eye.

Li Yao, on the other hand, could not have cared less about those universal starfish. With the inertia of the saber, he swung it in a full circle and then raised the saber high above his head again.

His enemy, or his ‘target’, was not the useless universal starfish in front of him at all but… the nebula of the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy, which was spurting out ‘venom’ crazily!

Chapter 1943 - Five Attacks, Divinity Transformation!

Chapter 1943 Five Attacks, Divinity Transformation!

The second attack was aimed at the nebula!

What Li Yao condensed with his soul, will, and life was more like a crazily-bursting crimson fire that extended from the Tartarean Skeleton’s head to thousands of meters away than a black saber of light.

The outbreak of the nebula was even more violent. The countless high-energy particles and super-powerful radiation spurted out and smashed at Li Yao like a flood that had just broken the dam.

At this moment, the most sensible choice for Li Yao was to turn around and run away. He had only just entered the turbulence of particles and radiation. If he ran immediately, it would be possible for him to escape from the savaging range of the nebula storm.

But in such a case, he would lose the opportunity to enter the Divinity Transformation Stage again.

The opportunity of Divinity Transformation could only be happened upon, not forced. Such a feeling of clicking could never be brought by any training.

Losing the opportunity to enter the Divinity Transformation Stage twice in a row in one year would be a serious shock to his belief. Perhaps he would not find such a feeling again in the next decades or even for the rest of his life.

Therefore, even if the stars of the entire universe were pressed on his shoulders, he could only march forward!

Li Yao roared crazily, feeling as if ten thousand crystal bombs had exploded at the same time inside his throat. The power rune arrays of the Tartarean Skeleton released explosive flames of spiritual energy, while the Colossus stepped forward heavily against the high-energy particles and powerful radiation. The natural, immaculate, and unstoppable second attack was slashed out brutally!

“Hu!”

An amazing thing happened!

In Li Yao’s perception, he was faced with an overwhelming, unstoppable river made of ten thousand dazzling colors.

However, the great river beyond the nine heavens had been split apart down the middle by his destructive saber and divided into two branches.

He was like a rock at the center of the river, and the running river bypassed him from his two sides!

“Hehe…”

With a low chuckle, Li Yao narrowed his eyes and looked at the vast, unpredictable nebula of the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy again. The saber of his soul did not stop at all when it was raised high again.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

The form of the saber had yet another drastic change. It was even more aggressive, hideous, and unstoppable, as if it could chop a whole planet in half!

All kinds of illusions were appearing before Li Yao.

The surging tides raised by the nebula storm suddenly turned into mighty and magnificent human images.

They were Yan Xibei, Xiao Xuance, the star child, Elder Nether Spring, Lu Zui, Heiye Ming, Lu Qingchen, Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan…

All of them were the enemies that he had fought at the risk of his life in the past hundred years.

Absorbing the power of the nebula storm, the enemies all turned into daunting giants who raged and pressed Li Yao overwhelmingly like collapsing mountains.

Li Yao was not frightened at all. The Tartarean Skeleton took three steps forward, leaving ripples in the void after every step. His third attack swept out and blew all the illusions of his enemies into dust!

The dust danced up and down like colorful fireflies before new illusions were condensed again.

They were no longer his enemies but himself in different phases of his life, when he was panicked, hesitating, scared, anxious, and furious.

Li Yao saw the version of himself in the magical equipment, struggling to survive for one more second while crouching in the garbage dump, a version of himself who was highly malicious to the entire world because of the torture of the uncanny dreams.

He saw the Li Yao in the Crimson Nimbus No. 2 High School who trained himself hard to be a Cultivator for nothing more than fame, fortune, and respect.

He saw himself entangled by the star child during the fierce fight in the Flying Star Sector and mired in the swamp of the Immortal Cultivators, almost unable to free himself.

He also saw himself being misunderstood by the people to be the Blood Devil and a ‘traitor’ after he returned to the federation from the Blood Demon Sector.

Countless versions of himself were roaring in desperation, shuddering in confusion, or bursting into fury and jumping to their feet.

With the utmost tranquility, Li Yao examined his past with neither sorrow nor joy.

But his saber did not hesitate at all as it slashed hundreds of illusions of himself.

“Hu!”

All the illusions of ‘himself’ were gone. Or rather, he had returned to his true self.

Like a breeze brushing his soul, all the hesitation, panic, and fright in the past were blown away, giving him a brand-new epiphany.

The barrier that confined his Nascent Soul had been riddled with holes and cracks.

All he needed was one last attack to march into the brand-new level completely.

Raising his head, Li Yao looked into the depths of the nebula of the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy. He seemed to see Earth burning furiously and withering into the core of a rotten apple!

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Li Yao heard the explosion of his every brain cell and the calling from the deepest part of his soul. The black flames of spiritual energy around the Tartarean Skeleton all retreated to the gap of the plate armor, and the hideous saber was reduced to a plain-looking thing no more than twenty meters long again.

Even the nebula of the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy seemed to have sensed the massive spiritual energy that was fluctuating inside Li Yao’s body. The nebula storm spurted out at much greater magnitudes than before. The high-energy particles and the super powerful radiation that were enough to melt the shell of a starship and burn up all the components on the starship flooded at Li Yao like an irresistible tsunami.

But it was too late.

At this moment, even if the entire three-dimensional universe collapsed in front of Li Yao abruptly, it would not be enough to stop him from launching the last slash.

Bam!

The saber swept out, raising tides of spiritual energy thousands of meters tall, which collided into the nebula storm brutally and broke the illusion of the black Earth into smithereens immediately.

What was shattered at the same time was an invisible barrier inside Li Yao’s brain. He only heard a clear and pleasant crack before the whole world became different from before.

The first difference was the color of the nebula of the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy and the storm.

The nebula contained a lot of invisible light that was beyond the recognition for the naked eye of human beings. Ninety-nine percent of the high-energy particles and the powerful radiation were not readily visible.

However, Li Yao could see the billions of colors in the nebula and the storm. He really saw the river that was running at him aggressively. He could even see every turbulence inside the river and analyze the level of the high-energy particles and powerful radiation.

The vacuum of space could not transmit sound, but he could hear the roars of the nebula and the storm clearly. He could also hear the flapping sound when the flames of his spiritual energy ripped the void apart!

Of course, it was not a real ‘soundwave’ but a wave of a higher level, a hundred times more complicated than a soundwave.

Waves existed everywhere in the universe. However, with the organs such as eyes and ears, ordinary people could only analyze a few waves such as sound and light.

Having grown a ‘spiritual root’, Cultivators could perceive, absorb, and train with the waves of a higher level—the spiritual waves.

Li Yao, however, seemed to have grown a few brand-new organs, virtual organs constructed by spiritual energy that allowed him to perceive and understand more waves.

What he saw was no longer a dark, cold universe, but the most glamorous new world that was filled with swirling, flowing greasepaint!

BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM!

He could almost hear the rhythm of the universe. His brain and his heart were pounding along with the pace of the universe, too, and soon surpassed what his fleshly body could bear. As a result, he expanded as a whole!

“This is…”

Seeing the incredible picture before his eyes, Li Yao’s pupils constricted violently. He realized that he did not have an organ named ‘eyes’ right now.

His soul had completely broken free from the boundary of his physical body, allowing him to examine himself from a higher level. He observed the Tartarean Skeleton, which was still holding the saber downward, like a bystander.

It was not exactly the state where his soul left his body.

Li Yao could manage to move his soul away from his body before, too. However, in such a state, even after his soul left his body, it would be like a candle in a freezing wind that could die out at any moment.

His soul right now, however, was constructed into a thorough and stable model evenly in the hundred square meters around the Tartarean Skeleton.

Even the ‘venom’ that the nebula spurted out crazily could not shake his soul at all.

Instead, it provided the best training for his soul.

In such an amazing state, the hundred square meters around was his ‘absolute domain’ that was under his complete control. He was the ‘god’ in the hundred square meters!

I’ve made it!

This is the legendary Divinity Transformation Stage!

What—What a powerful level. No wonder it is named ‘Divinity Transformation’. To quote the ancient Cultivators, my soul has been perfectly melted into the universe in the hundred square meters around myself. I am the universe, and the universe is me. I am utterly invincible in the hundred square meters!

The high-energy particles and powerful radiation spurted out from the nebula of the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy are the best mediums to polish my new soul and to help me stabilize my hard-earned level of the Divinity Transformation Stage in the shortest amount of time possible!

This was the most critical and dangerous moment.

Countless seniors and experts had been overjoyed and lost control of their mind the moment they broke into the Divinity Transformation Stage, only to plunge from the Divinity Transformation Stage and perish on the spot.

It was like falling from the summit of a high mountain. The higher one had climbed, the more heavily wounded one would be after the fall. It was very possible that they would break into pieces.

That being said, if Li Yao’s soul could resist the violent spurt of the nebula of the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy, it would be like a well-tempered super alloy, and he would stand in the Divinity Transformation Stage steadily.

Together with his myriad of magical equipment and his sturdy soul that was much harder than that of general trainers, he would not necessarily be on the losing side even if he came across seasoned Divinity Transformation Stage experts from the Imperium or the Covenant Alliance.

Thinking about that, Li Yao dismissed all irrelevant thoughts. The soul that had broken away from his fleshly body turned into an indestructible saber while he slashed at the nebula storm brutally and restlessly. He focused on training under the scourge of the high-energy particles and the powerful radiation.

It was always the greatest pleasure to fight nature!

Chapter 1944 - Very Perfect?

Chapter 1944 Very Perfect?

Li Yao forgot everything. The federation, the Imperium, the Covenant Alliance, himself, Ding Lingdang, and even Earth. All was left behind.

The only thing on his mind was the nebula of the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy before his eyes and the saber made of his soul!

One attack. One more. Yet another attack. He was going to kill the nebula.

There was no telling how long it lasted.

The violent storm turned tranquil, and the surging tides became feeble ripples. The high-energy particles and the powerful radiation spurted out from the nebula had been weakened to the point that they could barely affect a human body.

It was almost like the nebula storm had truly been killed by Li Yao and his saber!

Li Yao’s soul became more condensed, more solid, and stronger than ever under the polishing of the high-energy particles and the powerful radiation.

Centered around his physical body, glamorous, dark-gold models had been constructed in the hundred square meters around. The gold and silver telepathic thoughts illuminated each other, attracting the cosmic dust and building them into images of deities and devils, which were either three-headed and six-armed or furious. They could not have looked more appalling.

It was not like the sound and visual effects during the fierce fight with Elder Scorching Sun of the Ancient Sages Sector but an ‘incarnation of the soul’, which boasted the real ability to deal damage!

As long as Li Yao willed it, he could fire the cosmic dust faster than five times the speed of sound to pierce through the composite plate armor of starships or condense the dust around him to form a powerful protective field, ripping any incoming flying swords, mystic rays, and magnetic bullets into pieces.

That was the power of the ‘absolute domain’ of the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators!

After ascending to the Divinity Transformation Stage, there were two additional techniques.

Firstly, the Nascent Soul would be even steadier and stronger. It would be able to leave the body and travel between the sky and the earth freely with a high resistance to the radiation and spiritual waves of the outside world.

In other words, the Cultivators had begun to surpass the boundary of the fleshly body and glimpsed at the border of pure energy or the method of free transformation between matter and energy.

Secondly, they would be able to open an ‘absolute domain’ around themselves.

According to the strength of the Cultivators, the diameter and power of the ‘absolute domain’ was different.

But in general, the absolute domain was like a ‘small world’ established by the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators. Every inch of space inside was under their strict surveillance and control.

If other people stepped into the ‘absolute domain’ of a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator, they would be bound by the rules of the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator, which would put them at a great disadvantage.

In fact, the two techniques boiled down to the same origin. It was because the soul of a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator could move away from the body for a long time integrating with the environment, achieving the effect of becoming one with the universe, that they could transform the world nearby into the absolute domain and make use of everything inside the tiny world, including the grains of dust to construct ever-changing images and launch the most powerful attacks.

The soul exiting the body represents the beginning of a brand-new life form. Starting from this moment, life is no longer a simple fleshly body but a collection of all the matter and material within the control range of the physical body and the soul!

Even if the ancient Cultivators did not understand the logic, they could also build their telepathic thoughts into various images, driven by their natural instincts. By boosting the dust inside their ‘realm’, they would be able to achieve effects similar to a mirage or even really endow the images with some attack power.

In other people’s eyes, they were certainly like incarnations of deities and devils. No wonder they are called ‘Divinity Transformation’!

My level, on the other hand, is even higher than the ignorant Cultivators of ancient times.

This is not about the simple classification of low, middle, and high levels but about the fact that I have truly understood the significance of ‘Divinity Transformation’. I know what form my life is at right now and what the correct direction is for my training in order to evolve and make use of my new abilities!

Li Yao looked at the nebula of the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy in great satisfaction as if it were a woman who had just been savaged and conquered by him. His soul was stretched to the maximum, and he felt so great that he was almost exploding.

This time, he could not have been luckier.

At first, he had jumped to the center of the cosmos from the edge smoothly without meeting any danger or obstacles.

Although he had encountered a bunch of ‘universal starfish’, an alien species, they were just a minor problem.

Those universal starfish dragged him into the nebula storm, which turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

Not only was he given the opportunity to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage when he was faced with the blasts of the high-energy particles and the powerful radiation, he was also able to polish his reborn, brand-new soul to an indestructible degree against the nebula storm while he was slashing his saber, allowing himself to stand in the Divinity Transformation Stage steadily.

It was a perfect breakthrough.

More importantly, he did not encounter an intimidating ‘minor apocalypse’.

When a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator intended to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage, they would often suffer the strikes of ‘minor apocalypses’ launched by the primeval civilizations. Such was always the case at the edge of the cosmos. The few Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators that the federation had today had all endured the attacks of mysterious minor apocalypses during their breakthrough. It was thanks to the thorough defenses put up by the national strength of the entire federation that they had managed to weather the process.

The situation should have been more severe at the center of the cosmos.

Just now, Li Yao had seized a rare opportunity and strived forward without caring about anything, but he had been braced for a minor apocalypse.

However, after his level consolidated and his heart calmed down again, he did not seem to sense the arrival of a ‘minor apocalypse’ at all.

Thinking quickly, he immediately understood why.

It was not necessarily because he was lucky but probably because the massive spiritual waves that he had unleashed during the breakthrough into the Divinity Transformation Stage were ‘blocked’ by the high-energy particles and the powerful radiation spurted out from the nebula of the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy.

It was almost like a cluster of furiously burning fire that had dropped into an erupting volcano. How could anyone find it?

My hundred years of misfortune has been entirely washed away. Fate has given me such a great gift the moment I arrive at the Imperium. Will Vulture Li Yao really have his day now?

Hahaha. I feel so good and so strong. Right now, I can walk cockily even in the Imperium of True Human Beings, which is teeming with experts!

It is said that the elders and leaders of a lot of big families in the Imperium that have a long history are merely in the middle level or high level of the Divinity Transformation Stage. They must consider their family, while I am all by myself with zero concern. What can I possibly fear?

Hehehe. Even the cosmic storm has been slain by me. Who in the entire world can stop me?

Li Yao’s soul emanated dark-gold brightness that condensed into an enormous smiling face in space, which was laughing so hard that the teeth were almost falling.

Out of his expectation, a deep red face suddenly popped up above the golden one, as if it could not hear it anymore.

“Well,” the mental devil said, “I understand that you must be thrilled to have broken into the Divinity Transformation Stage. It is perfectly normal that you want to brag about yourself, but could you please not do it so shamelessly? What do you mean by ‘even the cosmic storm has been slain by me’? It was obviously a periodical outbreak, and now the outbreak has finished!”

“…I haven’t had a level-up for more than a hundred years,” Li Yao argued, “and nobody is cheering for me even though I just made a major breakthrough. What’s wrong with celebrating on my own? Can you stop being a bummer?

“Besides, the increase of my level is beneficial to you, too. You’ve become stronger than before. Look at the models of spiritual energy that you have constructed. How delicate, stable, and precise!

“Speaking of which, it’s just occurred to me that we should study team attack techniques more because normal Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators rarely have split personalities like us, which means that they can only have one ‘absolute domain’ with their sole soul. But can we build ‘double absolute domains’ with two souls or grasp any other awe-inspiring techniques like that?”

“Well… You do seem to have a point,” the mental devil said. “Let’s talk more about it later. I vaguely have an ominous feeling. Do you not feel that our teleportation and breakthrough were too smooth and fortunate?”

“Is that bad?” Li Yao asked.

“Not exactly bad,” the mental devil said. “It’s just that every operation in the past was always bumpy if not life-threatening. This trip, which has turned out to be so smooth and fortunate, doesn’t feel normal. Something feels off. You’d better check if there are any hidden problems… Not good. Our starship!”

Li Yao immediately understood what the mental devil meant. Hundreds of his telepathic thoughts darted at ‘Jingle Bell’.

After the examination, he discovered that the starship was indeed not in the best condition. He had been too focused on breaking into the Divinity Transformation Stage to protect his own starship. ‘Jingle Bell’ was riddled with holes and damage. A lot of critical units had shown signs of serious issues.

“The starship has been seriously damaged and requires some good maintenance,” Li Yao said, not thinking that it was a big deal.

After all, he had already reached his destination. He had knowledge about starship maintenance, too. There were too many backup components and maintenance devices inside his Cosmos Rings. The little problem was not going to bother him.

“There’s also the Tartarean Skeleton,” the mental devil said. “The Colossus has suffered great damage during the fierce fight with the nebula storm. Major maintenance is needed.”

“It can’t be helped.” Li Yao nodded. “You have to pay some price to get into the Divinity Transformation Stage. It would’ve been impossible to break into the new level without training while weathering the nebula storm!”

A batch of backup components and three to five days of maintenance in exchange for a perfect breakthrough into the Divinity Transformation Stage, there could not have been a better deal.

“There’s also your body,” the mental devil said. “The Tartarean Skeleton stayed in the high-energy particles and the powerful radiation for too long. Your body has been penetrated by particles repetitively. The radiation you bore was beyond the limits of your cells, too. They are seriously injured!”

Chapter 1945 - The Minor Price for Divinity Transformation

Chapter 1945 The Minor Price for Divinity Transformation

“Huh. It seems that I will have to spend some time in seclusion now,” Li Yao said, not bothered at all.

When advancing into the Divinity Transformation Stage from the Nascent Soul Stage, especially through such a violent and straightforward approach by resisting the nebula storm, it was perfectly normal for the fleshly body to be seriously wrecked.

There was never room for new things if the old things were not shattered. How could his body keep up with his expanded soul if it was not entirely reborn?

In the ancient times, after a Cultivator made a breakthrough of a major level, their soul and their body would often be weaker than ever. They would choose to spend a few years in seclusion to slowly nurture their body with all kinds of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and elixirs so that their fleshly body could gradually be adapted to the brand-new level and strength.

Li Yao boasted the most advanced training equipment, medical facilities, and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures in the entire federation. Although his physical body had endured excessive radiation, he was not too worried about it but considered it a great opportunity for new training.

“One can never be too prepared. I’ll find an uninhabited planet with appropriate gravity nearby and take a rest for a couple of days before I set off to find ‘Starlight’ and ‘the lost Cultivator’!”

Shua!

Li Yao’s soul returned to his body. He immediately sensed the extreme pain, fatigue, and lack of strength in his body.

Extending his arms, he noticed that his muscles were withering at a visible rate. The veins that were as vigorous as boas had dried, like earthworms under the scorching sun.

Even the messy hair above his head was dangling down, with their endings turning gray.

The training to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage was too crazily. The strength deep inside my cells has fully been exploited. I was penetrated by the high-energy particles repetitively and bathed in powerful radiation for such a long time. No wonder my body is so weak!

Thankfully, I brought enough Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, medical drugs, and high-energy nutrition fluids that are directly absorbable for the body. After I replace all the cells inside my body, my body will be ten times stronger once it’s reborn!

How I look forward to it!

Li Yao smiled and licked his dry lips. Retreating the Tartarean Skeleton into the Cosmos Ring and returning to ‘Jingle Bell’, he set the automatic cruise mode first and then tried to retrieve the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, the medical drugs, and the high-energy nutrition fluids from his Cosmos Rings.

A weird thing happened!

All the Cosmos Rings were like the most common rings and did not respond to his call at all.

When his telepathic thoughts tried to enter the Cosmos Rings, they seemed to be hitting an iron plate. It was impossible for them to get in at all, much less pull the materials out of the Cosmos Rings.

Li Yao’s smile immediately froze. His cold sweat was running down along his wrinkled skin.

This can’t be true. All the Cosmos Rings… are broken?

Turning around to look at the empty cabin behind him, Li Yao’s face turned extremely pale.

Super long-distance space jumps consumed a lot of fuel. Every additional gram of weight might cost astronomically more fuel.

Therefore, before he took off, they had simplified ‘Jingle Bell’ again and again until there was nothing to be reduced. Most of the assets that he needed were stored inside the Cosmos Rings!

In other words, if he could not retrieve the assets from his Cosmos Rings, he would be an abjectly destitute man!

“Look at this. What did I tell you just now?” the mental devil said gloomily. “I knew that we couldn’t be so lucky. Something is certainly happening!”

“Quiet!” Li Yao’s face was gloomy before it turned as dark as ink.

He was in an awkward situation.

If it were any other time, it might not be a big deal to lose most of the assets in the Cosmos Rings. He could totally sneak into the patrolling fleets of the Imperium of True Human Beings to get what he needed.

However, in order to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage perfectly, he had used up almost all the strength of his soul and fleshly body. His physical body had also been scourged by intense particles and radiation, and he was in dire need of abundant Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and high-energy nutrition fluids to save his life!

It was almost like he had turned into a tyrannosaur from a velociraptor. Yes. In the long term, his combat ability had been more than multiplied, but his appetite had grown by dozens of times, too, and he was being starved right now.

Also, in order to complete the metamorphosis, his bones were broken, his muscles were torn apart, and he was riddled with wounds. He desperately needed to devour tremendous prey to feed the fleshly body that had expanded by dozens of times, the brand-new slaughtering machine!

Li Yao took a deep breath and sat down before the maintenance desk. Putting all the Cosmos Rings on the desk, and then putting on multiple glasses, he examined them wholeheartedly for a long time, before he finally took a breath in relief and looked less awful than before.

“How is it?” the mental devil asked nervously.

“It is not a serious problem. Two circuits of spiritual energy on the chip that controls the ‘retrieve command’ are burnt. All the assets are still inside, except that none of them can be retrieved right now.”

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao coughed heavily again. “This is a rare fault. It must be noted that the Cosmos Rings and jade chips are all highly sturdy magical equipment with good resistance to blasts and shocks. I have never seen such a fault before. There must be a reason all the Cosmos Rings have the same problem.

“Were they burnt by the high-energy particles and the powerful radiation because of the blast in the nebula storm?

“It is impossible. For the long journey, all the Cosmos Rings that I carried have been through multiple examinations and tests. High-energy particles and powerful radiation are just an everyday scenario that must’ve been taken into consideration. There’s no way they could’ve caused such a fault.

“Was the scourge of the high-energy particles and the powerful radiation only part of the reason? In addition, there were the massive spiritual waves unleashed when I broke into the Divinity Transformation Stage from the Nascent Soul Stage. When the three types of energy collided, did they generate serious interference to such circuits on the Cosmos Rings, forcing them to overload and burn?”

Li Yao scratched his chin and thought for a long time. That was the only possibility.

The matter and energy spurted out of the nebula of the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy were unpredictable and contained multiple impurities. Nobody knew what kind of effect they would have on the Cosmos Rings.

The spiritual waves unleashed in the moment when a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator broke into the Divinity Transformation Stage could sometimes attract the ‘minor apocalypse’ thousands of kilometers away. It was indicative enough of their intensity.

When the two strengths collided brutally, they might have caused interference of a certain degree to the Cosmos Rings. It was indeed a possibility.

It was a shame that the Star Glory Federation had never recorded any Cultivator breaking into the Divinity Transformation Stage in a nebula storm.

Even if there were such records, the matter and energy released by different nebulas were vastly different. Therefore, Li Yao could not have learned the consequences of his attempt at all.

Even if he did, he would not have changed his mind at all with the opportunity he had and the emergency he was in.

Whatever the price was, it was worthwhile to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage in an almost immaculate way without being struck by a minor apocalypse!

“You seem rather confident and calm,” the mental devil said. “So, you can fix the problem, right?”

“Of course.” Li Yao grinned assuredly.

For him, such highly-precise magical equipment like ‘Cosmos Ring’ had indeed been tricky a long time ago. But now that he had advanced into the Divinity Transformation Stage, his senses were much keener than before. Besides, the Cosmos Rings were not completely worn out. It was just a piece of cake to fix the problem.

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao painted hundreds of structural designs and maintenance drafts inside his head in a moment. “Other than the slightly high demand on accuracy, the problem is not serious at all. As long as I have a piece of ancillary maintenance magical equipment that can perform high-molecular layer-by-layer scanning, I can fix the problem in no time!”

“Then, did we bring the ‘high-molecular layer-by-layer scanning magical equipment’ with us?” the mental devil asked.

“Of course we did!” Li Yao clapped his hands. “Since I was going to the enemy’s rear on my own, I naturally took every detail into consideration. How could I not have brought high-molecular layer-by-layer scanning magical equipment? Here. It is just inside this Cosmos Ring!”

“…” The mental devil.

“…” Li Yao.

“Correct me if I am wrong, but to fix the problem of not being able to retrieve any object from your Cosmos Rings, you want to retrieve the ‘high-molecular layer-by-layer scanning magical equipment’ from a Cosmos Ring that cannot release any objects because its circuits are broken?”

“Basically, yes!”

“Then, without the ‘high-molecular layer-by-layer scanning magical equipment’, is it possible at all for you to repair them with the maintenance devices that you have?”

“With the honor and dignity of an experienced master of refining, I assure you that it is absolutely impossible!” Li Yao said. “These are Cosmos Rings that we are talking about. If crystal suits are the ‘king of magical equipment’ in the general sense, the Cosmos Rings are the absolute kings in the field of super tiny magical equipment. Look at those rune arrays. They are ten times smaller than grains of rice, and they even overlap with each other in different layers. They are far more precise than the limits of human eyes and human hands. If you could repair them with only a few random screwdrivers, they would not be called Cosmos Rings at all!”

“…Okay.”

“Don’t look at me in such a sad and angry way, alright?” Li Yao said. “Did I really have a choice? I didn’t! You saw what happened, too. Should I have ignored the rare opportunity to ascend into the Divinity Transformation Stage instead of trying my best? We failed last time. If we’d chickened out again, we never would have had a chance to enter the Divinity Transformation Stage!

“In the end, we have broken into the Divinity Transformation Stage perfectly. With the disguise of the nebula storm, we even avoided the strike of the minor apocalypse that probably would’ve happened! We were so unbelievably lucky. Right now, we have only run into some minor problems. That is… Cough, cough. Cough, cough, cough, cough!”

Li Yao coughed out bluish blood. Then he discovered that blue, fluorescent spots were growing on his hands, arms, and body.

“If I may remind you…” The mental devil ground its teeth. “Your… no, our body has suffered excessive radiation and the repetitive penetration of unknown particles. The cells have shut down on a large scale and are in dire need of tremendous medical drugs and high-energy nutrition fluids for treatment and strengthening. Most of such things are locked inside the Cosmos Rings, too!”

Chapter 1946 - Adventure of the Soul!

Chapter 1946 Adventure of the Soul!

“Indeed. To quote the medical term, I am suffering from severe ‘radiation sickness’.”

Li Yao soaked his telepathic thoughts into the muscles and bones around his body slowly. He even sank into his cells, sensing the mutations of the mitochondria and the collapse of his gene strands. He then said in amazement, “This is a good thing. The mitochondria and the gene strands that have been frozen for a long time are starting to disintegrate. As long as they are restructured into a brand-new form, I will be immediately given a new body that is a hundred times stronger!”

The path of Cultivation was exactly where one continued destroying and reconstructing oneself.

Great devastation came with great growth!

Knowing oneself, shattering oneself, and reconstructing a new self while broken until one was stronger and stronger during the process, in order to break the barrier of barriers and surpass the limit of limits!

It was also the case for the exercise and workout of ordinary people. First, they tore apart the muscle fibers with high-intensity activities before they devoured protein or albumen powder to make the fractures of the muscle fibers grow new, strong muscle fibers. That was why the body ached after high-intensity exercises, but if one persisted, larger, more defined muscle formed.

After a hundred years of deep development, and with the tremendous awakened primeval cells that gave him an ‘apocalyptic body’ similar to Blood Devil Yan Xibei, Li Yao’s fleshly body had already reached the most perfect level that the Nascent Soul Stage could have touched.

It was also his greatest reliance in dealing with other Nascent Soul Stage experts and even challenging those in the Divinity Transformation Stage who were way above his level. Even if he might not have been a match for his opponents, his extremely sturdy body could ensure that he would not be killed in the battle.

However, ‘perfection’ in many cases meant exactly the same as ‘ossification’. Li Yao’s nerves, veins, muscles, cells, mitochondria, and even gene strands had all been trained to the limits with absolutely no room to improve. No matter how he bombarded his fleshly body, he could not sense the slightest progress as common Cultivators would.

The problem had bothered him for years, but right now…

His physical body that had been sealed for a long time was blown apart brutally by the high-energy particles and the powerful radiation!

The mitochondria and the gene strands that were locked tightly were simmering in impatience again, vaguely showing him the infinite possibilities of brand-new evolution!

He had a strong feeling that, although the body was on the verge of collapse, as long as he could recover from the collapse, the new body after reconstruction would certainly be stronger than ever.

Cells would always deteriorate, die, and be born again. The cells of the ordinary people would be renewed every seven days. With conscious guidance and training, Cultivators could compress the time to one day or even shorter.

Many modern training classics described the replacement of the cells all over the body as ‘one cycle’.

Li Yao believed that as long as he could finish the replacement of cells of a hundred cycles in a row, he would instantly be able to complete the journey of training that would take other Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators decades!

That was the greatest advantage of the passionate collision of his ‘apocalyptic body’ and the weird high-energy particles and powerful radiation from the nebula of the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy!

“What a strong body it will be. I will really be able to kill a tyrannosaur in one punch by then!” Li Yao could not help but swallow hard. His bloodshot eyes were full of glittering stars.

“Don’t fantasize yet. As you said yourself, that is only if there are enough medical drugs and high-energy nutrition fluids!” The mental devil could not help but observe, “Even common bodybuilders know that thirty percent of their body depends on training while seventy percent depends on eating. They must take plenty of protein after high-intensity exercises in order to recover the muscle fibers that have been torn apart brutally and make them even stronger! If they simply keep on training without absorbing enough nutrition, they will suffer from rhabdomyolysis. The more they exercise, the weaker they become. Eventually, their body will collapse!

“Our situation right now is like we have just finished high-intensity exercises for a hundred times but do not have even a glass of water, not to mention protein powder or other athletic supplements. How can we support the body that is shaking and on the brink of collapse due to the serious ‘radiation sickness’?

“If the situation remains unchanged, our fleshly body will ‘die’ soon.

“Of course, after we advance into the Divinity Transformation Stage, our soul has evolved significantly. Its structure is very stable. Without serious strikes, the odds that it perishes are little to none. We will probably end up like Meng Chixin or Wu Suiyun and exist as spectral Cultivators, won’t we?”

“That is a real problem.”

Naturally, Li Yao did not want to turn into a ghost like Meng Chixin or Wu Suiyun.

While the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators’ souls could be away from their bodies for a long time, they could not get rid of the limits entirely and support of their fleshly body to step into the mysterious temple of ‘pure energy life’ after all.

The soul and body were both useful and indispensable.

It could be easily seen from how weak Meng Chixin and Wu Suiyun, the two Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators, were after they turned into spectral Cultivators. Although they were in the Divinity Transformation Stage, their combat ability was almost on the same level as that of Li Yao, Yan

Liren, and other Nascent Soul Stage experts. They could barely even drive the heavy Colossi like the Tartarean Skeleton.

From the perspective of a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator, they were certainly among the most unfortunate ones.

Besides, Li Yao’s physical body was different from theirs. It was an ‘apocalyptic body’ that had been developed by the Blood Devil, and almost all the primeval cells had been activated. Naturally, he would not give it up easily.

If his physical body completely withered and collapsed, it would be a loss that could never be made up for.

Even if he could possess a new body, despite all the moral and legal restraints, the new body would be far less convenient than his natural body.

One of them was the authentic good from the original manufacture, while the other was a counterfeit made in a random factory. How could they be of the same quality?

“This is getting tricky. Judging from the speed of the collapse of gene strands and the shrinking of cells, my body will completely fall apart in only three to five days.” Li Yao frowned. “We have to get one piece of high-molecular layer-by-layer scanning magical equipment to repair the Cosmos Rings and retrieve our assets.

“Since the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy is a place where the Imperium of True Human Beings tests new magical equipment and new techniques, there’s bound to be a few modification and maintenance centers. Although the high-molecular layer-by-layer scanning magical equipment is precious, it is not rare. The maintenance centers of the Imperium must have such tools!”

“That’s true, but the Imperium of True Human Beings’ centers for the test and modification of new magical equipment must be heavily guarded by a lot of experts. How are we going to find a target in three to five days, and how are we going to sneak in without alerting anyone,” the mental devil said coldly, “with such a breathless, coughing, glowing body that may collapse at any moment?”

“That’s indeed a good question…” Li Yao knocked the desk for a long time. Then his eyes suddenly shone. “Got it!”

…

Ten minutes passed.

In the hibernation capsule on ‘Jingle Bell’, Li Yao narrowed his eyes and crossed his hands on his chest while breathing evenly. His body was completely soaked by bright blue liquids. As white mist was injected into the bluish liquids, the hibernation capsule was frozen into an enormous block of ice.

The original prototype of ‘Jingle Bell’ was the single escape capsule of the Pangu Clan discovered on Kunlun in the past.

This time, it was on a perilous, unpredictable mission of infiltration. Naturally, it carried the most advanced hibernation capsule of the federation, which could lock all the cells in a human body and stop all the reactions inside the cells.

Naturally, the mutations of the cells, the collapse of the gene strands, and the continuous decline and disintegration of the body were frozen.

A super-tiny starship the size of a finger floated above the hibernation capsule, surrounded by black and red brilliance.

It was his old friend Neltharion.

“Look. Problem solved. The supply energy of the hibernation capsule is enough to support the freezing for a couple of years!”

Inside Neltharion, Li Yao’s soul released jovial waves.

“…This place is so cramped,” the mental devil mumbled in complaint.

In the past few years of training, Neltharion had been its personal magical equipment and its ‘mobile residence’. That was why the magical equipment was not held in the Cosmos Rings but stayed with Li Yao for training.

As it happened, it avoided the disaster and became the best sanctuary for Li Yao’s soul.

He would find a place to hide ‘Jingle Bell’ and his fleshly body first. After all, with the hibernation capsule, it was no problem to freeze his body for a couple of years. Then, together with the mental devil, he would find a piece of high-molecular layer-by-layer scanning magical equipment back through Neltharion. That was Li Yao’s plan.

He was going to practice more ways to fight purely with his soul without counting his fleshly body anyway, which was a compulsory lesson for every Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator.

“We are dual personalities in the first place. What’s wrong with cramming into the same place?” Li Yao rubbed his fists and couldn’t be more excited. “Let’s take the opportunity to begin the brand-new ‘adventure of the soul’!”

The mental devil was surprised, but knowing that Li Yao’s proposal was the best plan, it had to cheer itself up and practice the methods to control Neltharion together with Li Yao, which was also meant to lay a solid foundation for them to implement a ‘dual absolute domain’ in the future.

Although ‘Jingle Bell’ was too seriously wrecked in the nebula storm to perform super long-distance space jumps, it was still capable of performing short-distance ‘frog jumps’ after being repaired with Neltharion.

Based on the star map that Di Feiwen had provided, Li Yao slightly adjusted the destination of the ‘frog jumps’, starting a search that lasted half a month.

During the two weeks, he was also never tired of re-understanding the world in the form of the soul, constructing all kinds of colorful and variable models of spiritual energy.

Half a month later, they finally reached what appeared to be the Martial Meritocrats Sector according to the astronomical parameters.

The core of the Martial Meritocrats Sector, like most Sectors, was a stable galaxy with one star. It had twelve planets in total.

The base of the civilization of mankind was on the fourth planet of the galaxy.

Judging from the debris of starships and the junk in space that must have floated for thousands of years, the place had the distinctive traces of human development. There should have been a very splendid civilization a long, long time ago.

But right now…

Chapter 1947 - Infiltrating the Origin of Blackstar the Great!

Chapter 1947 Infiltrating the Origin of Blackstar the Great!

Even with the probe magical equipment on Neltharion whose perceptive range was not far, Li Yao could still sense the ripples of various sorts of spiritual waves spreading in the sea of stars.

It was certainly not natural radiation but the remaining traces left by some marvelous weapons after they were activated to the maximum.

The metal debris that was captured by Neltharion every now and then dated back to different time periods, too. Some of the remnants were obviously torn apart and melted only recently.

Li Yao also vaguely sensed that the most resourceful area at the center of the galaxy had signs that many starships were sailing, and there was an enormous space gate made of hundreds of star beacons.

Fleets from other Sectors would occasionally jump to this place, guided by the space gate.

Even the unmanned crystal cameras floating in the vacuum of the space were growing larger and larger in number, too, forming an impenetrable line of alarm.

The signs all suggested that this place should be a test field of new magical equipment for the Imperium of True Human Beings.

Li Yao was not bold enough to pilot ‘Jingle Bell’ too close to the fourth planet of the galaxy.

Despite the advanced stealth system on ‘Jingle Bell’, the starship had suffered in the nebula storm. It was riddled with holes and contaminated by radiation. If it got too close to the main planet of the galaxy, it would likely be scanned by the unmanned crystal cameras that were everywhere.

Li Yao hovered for three days at the periphery of the Martial Meritocrats Sector before he finally chose the ninth satellite of the fifth planet of the galaxy.

It was a barren asteroid without the fewest spiritual waves and did not even have much metal reaction.

It was not even qualified to serve as a ‘test field of weapons’.

Li Yao secretly investigated for a long time, only to find no human activity or signs of magical equipment on the satellite which was no larger than a pebble.

It was the best location to hide ‘Jingle Bell’.

Li Yao found a ravine thousands of meters deep on the satellite. Other than keeping the hibernation capsule that sealed his fleshly body running at the minimal efficiency, he turned off all the units on ‘Jingle Bell’.

He then created a minor landslide that appeared to be caused by a meteor, burying ‘Jingle Bell’ below the rocks.Read more new novels on Listnovel.com

After the flawless camouflage was completed, Li Yao's soul and the mental devil flew toward the main planet of the Martial Meritocrats Sector on Neltharion together.

The greatest problem about Neltharion was that it was too small and could not make use of Cosmos Rings. Therefore, the fuel and energy it could load were pitifully limited.

So, after breaking away from the gravity of the satellite and accelerating to the highest speed, Li Yao adjusted Neltharion to coast on its initial inertia and only slightly changed the direction in order to avoid the patrolling fleets and the unmanned crystal cameras of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

Neltharion was only the size of a finger. After Li Yao ascended to the Divinity Transformation Stage, his control over spiritual energy had been improved to a higher level. In the vast, boundless space, how could the defense network of the Imperium have stopped a starship that was no larger than a needle?

Li Yao broke through the defense network outside of the main planet smoothly. He then observed the planet that was of great significance in the history of the development of mankind from far away in silence.

If thirty percent of the Imperium of True Human Beings' propaganda was to be believed, the monstrous Immortal Cultivators had been born in this place.

The main planet of the Martial Meritocrats Sector, however, was enshrouded in vague gray mists, which did not seem natural but more like some sort of weird magnetic field or defense array.

In the middle of the mists, it could faintly be seen that several long, narrow rails ran parallel to the equator whereas some others were perpendicular to it, surrounding the main planet of the Martial Meritocrats Sector.

Since those rails were visible to the naked eye, they must be astonishingly thick. It was possible that they were some super huge facilities like the ‘orbit docks’ in the Uranian Ring Sector.

The main planet of the Martial Meritocrats Sector had only one satellite, and the space gate was deployed right next to it. A military base of an enormous base seemed to have been established in the place, too. At the very least, Li Yao had sensed quite a few heavy starships entering and exiting the area in only three hours.

What should he do now? Which place should he choose as his primary target of infiltration?

Li Yao pondered for a moment and decided to consider the main planet of the Martial Meritocrats Sector as the point of breakthrough.

The warships of the Imperium were fully sealed in space voyages. They were also under the protection of spiritual shields and magnetic interference arrays, which made it practically impossible to infiltrate such starships. If he touched the plate armor on the surface, he would very likely be discovered by the defense system of the warship.

Besides, not all the warships of the Imperium had ‘high-molecular layer-by-layer scanning magical equipment’. Li Yao estimated that he could only find such tools on the ‘comprehensive maintenance starship’.

The issue was the same to sneak into the satellite. The place must be heavily guarded as a military base of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

Due to the limited fuel and energy on Neltharion, his soul might be incapable of performing any highly difficult movements.

Should Neltharion run out of fuel during his infiltration into the military base, turning his soul into a wandering ghost running about in the Immortal Cultivators’ base, it would certainly be an awkward situation.

The main planet of the Martial Meritocrats Sector was even huger than the planet of the Heaven’s Origin Sector, and the superficial area was almost twice as large. It was impossible for the Immortal Cultivators to keep every corner under their surveillance. There was certainly room for his stealthy operations.

Besides, as a habitable planet, the main planet of the Martial Meritocrats Sector boasted a thick atmosphere that could resist ninety-nine percent of the radiation and particles.

For the soul without the protection of the body, it was a relatively comfortable and stable environment.

For him personally, Li Yao was interested in visiting the planet, too, to see what the hometown of the legendary Blackstar the Great was like.

However…

“The entire planet is covered in an enormous magnetic field, which is suppressing it like some sort of barrier or seal,” the mental devil said. “The barrier is activated by the dozens of rails that surround the whole planet. There’s no telling if there are more mysteries to it or if Neltharion will be detected when breaking through the atmosphere."

It was certainly an important issue.

Li Yao focused his attention on observing the main planet Martial Meritocrats Sector again.

"Huh?" His soul shook slightly, allowing a tiny crystal camera to protrude out of the head of Neltharion. "What is that?"

An impressive fleet had just taken off from the satellite of the planet and sprayed abundant materials to the planet outside of its orbit.

Those materials collapsed at a high speed, raising blossoming red lotuses in the atmosphere of the planet due to the friction, as if they were the most glamorous shooting stars.

It was too far away for Li Yao to tell what exactly the fleet had thrown down.

It did not seem to be a bombardment from the orbit of the planet, but it seemed weird if they were merely dumping debris and garbage.

Li Yao's soul constructed multiple models as he calculated the falling trajectories of those materials crazily. He discovered that the materials were sprayed without any pattern. They were colliding and spluttering, and a lot of them flew to the ground aslant.

The barrier or seal that surrounded the entire planet did not respond to any of the materials. Dumping the junk at a fixed time seemed to be a daily routine of the fleet of the Imperium.

Li Yao thought of something and made up his mind. He set Neltharion’s speed and the angle to break into the atmosphere to the most appropriate parameters.

The moment before it entered the atmosphere of the planet, it had a subtle scratch with an object that was spurted out of the starships of the Imperium. As if it were part of the object that had been disintegrated, it snuck into the atmosphere without meeting any hindrance!

Hiss! Hiss! Hiss! Hiss! Hiss! Hiss!

Neltharion moved through the atmosphere at a high speed, leading to the most splendid fire. Li Yao’s soul seemed to be placed in the middle of an ocean of flames, which was both soul-stirring and enjoyable.

Hiu!

There was no telling how long it took, but the boundless ocean of flames finally dispersed. Neltharion successfully broke into the atmosphere of the planet.

Li Yao had cut into the atmosphere obliquely from quite a distance in the first place. His trajectory was different from most of the other objects. After penetrating through the atmosphere, the ‘shooting stars’ around him were long gone, allowing him to observe the famous planet without the least hindrance.

The first impression Li Yao had at the altitude of thousands of meters was that it was a planet catching its last breath.

The sky was gray, and the earth was yellow and brown. It was practically impossible to find any greenness even when he was observing from thousands of meters high. The planet looked like a rotten apple and a squeezed orange.

Jampacked skyscrapers that constituted enormous metropolises could be seen everywhere on the ground, suggesting that the place had once had the most developed and brilliant civilization.

But today, all the cities were filled with dimness and silence, with dilapidated buildings and empty frameworks everywhere. The convenient crystal rails had been contorted into spirals before they were buried by yellow dust and turned into broken tombs that nobody had visited for hundreds of years.

Li Yao also saw a lot of bottomless craters on the ground. Every crater looked like an insatiable bloody mouth that was going to swallow the remnants of the cities around them.

In terms of size, the smallest craters were hundreds of kilometers in diameter, and the largest ones were simply inestimable.

Li Yao saw the folds and ripples caused by blasts at the edge of the craters. He also saw signs of melting.

It meant that those colossal craters that had swallowed half of the cities had likely been caused by the bombardment of some sort of destructive weapon.

There was no telling whether the cities around them were already desolate when the craters were formed, or they were still lively, vigorous, and teeming with people.

“The planet seems to have been through more than a hundred world wars. Blackstar the Great was rather rigorous for his hometown!”

Li Yao’s soul released telepathic thoughts in all directions. He seemed to have found the signs of life activities on the horizon, which was more or less a relief.

However, he did not dare continue the investigation with his telepathic thoughts blatantly anymore, partly due to the insufficiency of spiritual energy and partly because he noticed the waves of a lot of high-precision crystal cameras and scanning rays.

This was a planet that was under high surveillance.

His every move needed to be made with utmost caution.

“We cannot take action with Neltharion all the time,” the mental devil said. “We must find a new body.”

Chapter 1948 - Universal Janitor

Chapter 1948 Universal Janitor

Li Yao agreed with the mental devil.

Neltharion’s every action consumed a lot of fuel. Having entered the Divinity Transformation Stage only recently, he could not control his models of spiritual energy very well, either.

Should he make any error in the construction of attack models at the critical moment in the middle of a danger, one ultimate attack would drain all the energy of the device.

Besides, as a piece of high-precision tiny magical equipment, Neltharion was too eye-catching, with too many traces of the Star Glory Federation’s style on it, which would be hard to explain once the Immortal Cultivators discovered it.

Moreover, he had come to the planet to search for intelligence, resources, and maintenance magical equipment. It was certainly not a good idea to act stealthily all the time. He was desperately in need of a body that could easily integrate into the local environment and had a huge storage space.

Naturally, Li Yao did not intend to ‘possess’ a new physical body, which was in violation of his belief.

Besides, possession could be very dangerous. One moment of carelessness, and he could be swallowed by the soul of the original owner of the body, like how Li Yao’s soul had swallowed Ou Yezi’s in the past.

Since it was only a temporary operation of infiltration, he did not need to possess anyone else’s body but only needed to find an artificial body designed for spectral Cultivators.

After all, the Cultivators whose souls had left their bodies were like a strengthened version of the spectral Cultivators.

If he could not even find an artificial body, then spiritual puppets, beast puppets, or any kind of magical equipment with embedded crystal processors that could control the limbs to make complicated movements would suffice.

In the past couple of years, Li Yao had basically grasped the techniques to hack the crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus that Professor Mo Xuan had left for him.

He was not a specialist of crystal processors. Naturally, he was not as good as Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan, but it should not be a problem for him to hack and control a common spiritual puppet.

Neltharion hovered in midair for a long time and finally selected a city that had been half demolished by an enormous crater. It then quickly descended.

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

Before they reached the skyline of the city debris, feeble alarms were immediately ringing inside Neltharion, reminding Li Yao that it was a heavily-polluted radiation area down below.

When he scanned the area with his new eyes, the previous gray, rusty area of remnants became a colorful swirl that was flowing slowly.

Dust that contained tremendous radiation was waving crazily like the tentacles of devils.

Although not as high as the radiation spurted out of the nebula of the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy, the radiation here is still quite shocking.

If the ordinary people enter the radiation area recklessly without any protection, while they might not get killed on the spot, their mitochondria and gene strands will certainly be seriously warped, resulting in all kinds of weird mutations.

No wonder the place is utterly desolate and nobody tries to rebuild the civilization on the ruins.

Li Yao sighed and strained his eyes.

As far as his eyes could see, all the enormous craters that occupied the land were emitting radiation waves of different colors.

At first glance, they appeared to be as vivid and glitzy as fire.

Only the Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivators such as Li Yao could sense the foulness hidden below the fancy brilliance.

Before, Li Yao only had a basic knowledge about the evilness of the Immortal Cultivators.

But everything that had happened to the main planet of the Martial Meritocrats Sector showed him in the most sensational way what kind of monsters the Immortal Cultivators were.

Seeing the picture before his eyes, Li Yao was more confident about finding ‘Starlight’, the resistance organization of Cultivators, and ‘the lost Cultivator’.

Where there was oppression, there was resistance. This was indeed a world that had been most oppressed. If there was a resistance organization, this must be where it was based.

Neltharion dived into the debris of the city and moved forward on the zigzagging main roads. The rundown buildings on both sides looked like tombstones that rose to the sky.

Having not been frequented by human beings for a long time, the ruins were covered in a thick layer of dust of radiation. Many places looked like they were coated in fluffy snow.

Weird noises came from the skyscrapers that had been burnt down, leaving only the framework left. Roars of ferocious animals could vaguely be heard, too.

It seemed that some wild beasts that had mutated because of high radiation levels and luckily survived had claimed the city of tombstones as their territory.

Li Yao had no time to bother with the ferocious, mutated beasts. He simply unleashed feeble mystic rays and searched for the reactions of crystal processors in the depths of the ruins.

To his disappointment, after a long search, he did not even find a control chip of the lowest level, much less a crystal processor.

With Vulture Li Yao’s abundant work experience in the magical equipment graveyard, he could tell that the ruins of the city had been searched time and time again, not by the same group of people but by hundreds of groups who had different styles. The place was like a piece of gum that had been chewed for ten days and ten nights. Not the slightest juice could be tasted again.

Li Yao was both slightly upset and delighted.

Since the place had been explored countless times during the past hundreds of years, a lot of settlements of human beings must be somewhere nearby.

Pondering for a moment, he moved toward the enormous crater.

The closer he was to the crater, the more intense the radiation became. The mini crystal processor on Neltharion beeped nonstop.

Finally, he reached the edge of the enormous crater.

Looking down from there, he could not imagine that it was a crater at all. The slopes on his left and right were endless, making it look more like a bottomless abyss.

The bottom of the abyss was enshrouded in black fog. The stinky smell of steam could also be vaguely sensed, which must have been caused by the pools of rainwater in the past hundreds of years.

However, at the edge of the crater close to the ground, black holes could be found, like a honeycomb that had been half dissected.

Li Yao’s guess was correct. Judging from the scale of the city, it must have been built in the most glorious years of the civilization. At that time, the locals of the Martial Meritocrats Sector must have grasped the technology to build underground towns.

The more developed a civilization, the higher their efficiency in the utilization of the space within the atmosphere. Like the Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Martial Meritocrats Sector had constructed enormous, delicately-made underground cities.

The terrifying weapon tests that the Imperium of True Human Beings conducted had destroyed the cities both on and beneath the ground.

However, the underground parts were blocked by thick rocks and soil after all. It was possible that something could have been left behind.

Naturally, the radiation intensity there was the highest, too. Li Yao’s soul could sense blasts that felt like surging tides even though it was at the Divinity Transformation Stage.

It was a good thing. The radiation had probably prevented the survivors from searching the area, and he might find something of value.

Along an enormous sewer that had long dried, Neltharion flew into the underground city.

The environment in the underground city was much more complicated than on the ground. The collapses and landslides in the past hundred years had turned the place into a messy maze.

Li Yao’s guess was correct. The powerful radiation and the complicated environment were enough to stop most of the explorers. He found a lot of objects that were suspected to be spiritual puppets.

It was a pity that the glorious days of the civilization there dated back to a thousand years ago, which meant that most of the magical equipment there had a history of a thousand years.

Having been seriously wrecked in the explosion before being ravaged by time ruthlessly for hundreds of years, they were all rusty and riddled with holes, and their crystal processors had been melted into scrap metal, making them barely suffice as a temporary body.

Li Yao scratched his nonexistent hair and searched for three hours, only to discover one body that could somehow be put into use. But it was actually a…

“Universal Janitor? What the heck is this thing?”

Staring at the remnant of the spiritual puppet that he had dug out of the ruins, Li Yao was at a loss.

The remnant before him was about one meter tall and in the form of a cylinder.

At the beginning, it was probably a futuristic silver color. However, after the torture of the explosion and the passage of time, it had turned into a hideous gray, with brown spots of rusts all over the surface, as if it had skin lesions.

It looked like a garbage can at a distance and a bucket up close. The most unbelievable part was that it did not move in an anti-gravity way but had two tracks installed right below the body.

The cylindrical body was in a very simple structure. There was a tool compartment that could automatically open or close on each side. Inside the compartments, more than ten different mechanical limbs—including pliers, drills, and scissors for gardening—were folded and stored. However, most of the tools were too rusted to be moved anymore. Even those that could be moved had a suspicious hardness. After a tiny quake of Li Yao’s soul, one of the scissors directly broke apart!

An enormous metal plaque was nailed to the bottom of the ‘garbage can’. From the obscure handwriting on it, Li Yao managed to confirm the identity and usage of the spiritual puppet.

It was a puppet for cleaning and maintenance that was very suitable for underground cities.

It could enter the complicated, stinky tubes beneath the ground to eradicate the dirt on the wall; drive away cockroaches, rats, and other pests occupying the area; and perform simple maintenance on the damaged parts.

Of course, after different parts were replaced, it was also good at jobs such as cleaning the road, gardening, garbage collection, and so on.

All in all, it was a multipurpose spiritual puppet designed for cleaning and maintenance in the city. That was why it was named ‘Universal Janitor’!

“Are we going to carry out a highly-dangerous operation of infiltration and intelligence-collection with such a thing?” Li Yao was quite skeptical.

“It can’t be helped,” the mental devil said. “The hundreds of spiritual puppets we found are all garbage. Only this one has crystal processors and energy circuits that are not entirely beyond rescue. We can use it first and change to something later after we find a settlement of human beings!

“Also, I think that the ‘Universal Janitor’ is not bad at all. Look. Its crystal processor is not very complicated. Even we can easily hack and control it. Also, the multipurpose mechanical arms it has been installed with can help us perform all kinds of complicated movements. It is sturdy and robust, with great room for maintenance and upgrade. Most importantly of all, it carries a tiny garbage compressing cabin in itself, which is the best place to store Neltharion.

“We are not going to use it in a fight anyway. In an emergency, we still have Neltharion and our souls. Isn’t such a low-profile but luxurious configuration ideal for us right now?

Chapter 1949 - Han Te and Liu Li

Chapter 1949 Han Te and Liu Li

“Makes sense. Let’s try to upgrade it after we find a settlement of human beings,” Li Yao mumbled, not entirely satisfied. His soul turned into hundreds of golden streaks of light, flowing out of Neltharion into the ‘Universal Janitor’ and entangled its crystal processor, which was riddled with holes.

Infiltrate, control, and melt!

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

The spiritual puppet shivered slightly, as if it had been endowed with a new life. Sparks spluttered out of all the mechanical joints, and the indicators on the surface of its body that were polluted by dust and mud were blinking, too. A mysterious beast seemed to be awakening slowly.

However, the sparks and the glittering light lasted only a few seconds before they dimmed again.

“Somebody’s here!”

Li Yao and the mental devil sensed new trespassers at the same time. They stopped the movement immediately and turned into cold, iron blocks again.

Hardly had the machine been shut down again when hissing sounds came over from the entrance of the deep, dark sewer.

Two people, one tall and the other short, jumped on the wall and dashed into the place in the most agile way.

They were two human beings wearing airtight, anti-radiation suits and respirators.

Their suits and masks were bright gray, stitched with rust-colored camouflage cloth. If they crouched in the ruins, they would melt into the environment perfectly.

Obviously, they were seasoned explorers. They should be the locals of the Martial Meritocrats Sector.

It was not until they reached the depths of the sewer where the natural light was little to none that their masks finally emanated four dim red lights, which formed four pillars of rays as they scanned the surroundings.

Air tanks of some kind were bound to their waists and backs, spurting out large clusters of air every now and then. With the counterforce from the jets, the two locals moved swiftly in the complicated underground environment.

“Huh?” The taller explorer’s voice came over from below the mask. “I clearly heard something from here. Liu Li, you heard it too, didn’t you?”

“Senior Brother, please lower your voice.” The shorter explorer was barely able to keep up with the first person. Breathing quickly, she said, “This place is not far away from the territory of the Thunder Salamanders. It’ll be a disaster if we run into the monsters searching for food.”

“Hehehe!” The taller explorer stomped on the ceiling of the sewer heavily and sprinted a hundred meters ahead like an arrow. Then he laughed confidently. “What’s the big deal about the Thunderous Salamanders? If they are really bold enough to show up, I’ll teach them a good lesson about the awesomeness of my Lightning Strangle. It will be a great opportunity to cut off their tongues as tonics for our master. I’m told that the tongues of the Thunder Salamanders contain great nutrition, and they seem to be called ‘Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures’. Master will certainly be recovered after he takes them!”

One of the two explorers was male, and the other was female. Their voices sounded very young, suggesting that they could not be more than twenty years old. But their Cultivation was rather impressive. At the very least, in Li Yao’s senses, the spiritual waves spreading out of their body were very weird, as if…

The shorter explorer named ‘Liu Li’ suddenly pointed in the direction of the ‘Universal Janitor’ and said, “Senior Brother, something seems to be over there.”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. He did not expect that the senses of the girl would be so keen that she would notice him when he only released a few telepathic thoughts trying to figure out the structure of the spiritual energy circulation inside her body.

It was truly as expected of the center of the cosmos. Even a common native girl of a doomed land like the Martial Meritocrats Sector had such extraordinary abilities.

Naturally, Li Yao was not scared by the juvenile brother and sister at all. He was simply very curious about the current situation in the Martial Meritocrats Sector and decided not to take any action so that he could elicit some information from the young man and the girl.

The two explorers were both experienced at what they were doing. Soon, they discovered the Universal Janitor, or Li Yao.

“Is this some sort of treasure? We’re going to be rich!”

The taller explorer chuckled in amazement. Despite the blockage of his mask, Li Yao could almost see the guy’s eyes glowing with greed.

The young man swallowed and picked out an iron ball that was full of spiritual stripes from a bag on his waist. He then pinched the ball hard.

After a while of cracking sounds, the iron ball immediately turned into an iron glove that covered his right arm from the elbow without leaving the tiniest gap.

Warming up his fingers that had been armed with iron, the guy cleaned up the collapsed ruins around ‘Li Yao’ and picked ‘him’ up.

“You’ve got to be kidding me! A garbage puppet?”

Seeing the rusted, cylindrical body of ‘Li Yao’, the young man was so greatly disappointed that he simply threw ‘Li Yao’ aside.

“What a pity. Why isn’t it a battle puppet of the highest level or a military model that has been embedded with tens of thousands of battle programs? We’d be rich!”

“If it were a battle puppet, it would’ve been picked up hundreds of years ago. Do you think that there would be a chance for us at all?” The girl named ‘Liu Li’ stepped forward and fell on one knee, touching the body of ‘Li Yao’ softly.

Gentle spiritual energy flowed out of her fingertips, like a brook that had been warmed by the sunlight, and leaked through the broken shell into the damaged crystal processor, nurturing Li Yao’s soul.

Li Yao’s interest was aroused. The girl’s brainwaves were rather weird. It seemed that she had some unique techniques that were worth studying.

“Huh?”

The girl named ‘Liu Li’ was confused by the feeble feedback from deep inside the Universal Janitor. After pondering for a long time, she said, “Senior Brother, I think that the spiritual puppet’s crystal processor is not broken. It seems functional.”

“Is that so?” Tapping his respirator for a long time, the taller explorer squatted, too, and dismantled the tool compartment of the Universal Janitor. Then he observed, “The arm replacements that it has seem rather abundant. If it can really be activated, we can sell it on the black market to get the money for master’s medicine. Give it a shot!”

“Okay!”

The girl Liu Li kneeled on the ground and took out a weird plant in a pot from her backpack that had been stuffed.

It was a bare bud without a single petal, surrounded by almost five enormous green leaves, like a cabbage had been planted in a pot.

The girl put the pot in front of her legs. Her fingers danced softly as she mumbled spells.

In Li Yao’s senses, together with the enjoyable enchantment, her brainwaves were constructed into the most remarkable model and covered the ‘cabbage’.

The enormous leaves of the ‘cabbage’ slowly opened, revealing a flower that was as eye-catching and glamorous as fire, with dozens of violet pistils at the center that were stained with sparkly, golden pollen.

“Pu!”

As the girl’s brainwaves suddenly intensified, the weird plant seemed to sneeze and sprayed bright-gold pollen into the environment.

A weird thing happened!

Li Yao sensed that as the pollen spread out, the air in the ten or so square meters around was purged immediately. The radiation and the venomous impurities were gone, making the air sanitary enough to breathe directly.

“Hu…”

The two explorers were not surprised by the scene at all. Seeing that starry blue spots had appeared at the sharp end of the leaves of the weird plant, they looked at each other and took off their masks, breathing the fresh air deeply.

They were indeed so young that one might be able to squeeze water out of them.

The young man was about seventeen years old. He had long, messy hair that rose to the sky and could not be combed. There was a long scar in the middle of his nose. He seemed ambitious, disobedient, and scared of nothing.

Ineffaceable brilliance was glittering out of his eyes that were as dark as ink, exactly like Li Yao in the past when he was in the magical equipment graveyard.

However, the right half of his face was filled with marks that extended all the way down the right half of his body along his neck, as if he had been burnt in venomous fire. Whoever saw him would inevitably feel shocked and uncomfortable.

Or maybe it was not the burn marks but some sort of mutation caused by radiation.

The girl, Liu Li, was glowing like a gem, exactly like her name.

She was fifteen years old at most. Her face was not very pretty, but her eyes from which more than ten colors were beaming out were filled with indescribable stubbornness. Together with her straight nose and her thin lips, she gave the feeling that she was both simple and persistent, as if…

As if she were a younger version of Wei Qingqing.

If Li Yao had a heart, it would have been pacing at least five percent faster.

He found it hard to imagine how there could be such an innocent, uncorrupted, and stubborn girl in such a world of radiation, desolation, death, and destruction.

Li Yao shrank his soul to the size of a bean as he lurked deep inside the spiritual puppet and observed the movements of the two young people.

The young man named Han Te was truly like Li Yao in the magical equipment more than a hundred years ago and had an equally remarkable expertise in dismantling and maintaining magical equipment. Very soon, the guy had finished checking all the circuits of the spiritual puppet and reconnected some of the broken crystal threads and wires.

“Let’s see if it works!”

The young man took out a long, narrow rod and stabbed it into a hole on the puppet’s back. Some feeble spiritual energy immediately flowed into the crystal processor.

Compared with Li Yao’s powerful soul, the spiritual energy stored inside the rod was simply too insignificant, to the point that he drained it after the first breath without causing any reaction.

“What happened? All the circuits are clearly on. Is the crystal processor inside completely broken? There will be nothing we can use in that case.”

The young man scratched the eye-catching scar on his nose, utterly baffled. He then withdrew the rod of spiritual energy, only to scream out with a pale face, “My spiritual energy! It was seventy percent full just now. Why has it been used up? Are—Are you a garbage bucket or a rice bucket? Even the strongest battle puppet consumes less spiritual energy than you!”

In utmost fury, he kicked Li Yao hard.

Li Yao was too occupied in his own business to care about him. He released a random thought and transformed it into ‘very feeble’ electric currents, which leaked out through the broken shell of the spiritual puppet.

Chapter 1950 - Sinners in the Land of Sins

Chapter 1950 Sinners in the Land of Sins

“Hiss!”

The young man was almost electrocuted. His face was blackened, and his messy hair that had been standing up previously was now like a broom on fire, with smoke popping up.

Not even having the time to grunt, he was blown almost five meters away and fell to the ground, cramping nonstop.

But he did not wipe his drool away at all but simply dragged Liu Li behind him. He then drew a storm bolter and aimed it at Li Yao, with blue brightness popping out of the barrel.

There was surprise, delight, and greed in the young man’s eyes. His eyeballs were shaking quickly. There was no telling what was on his mind.

“Senior Brother!” the young girl Liu Li exclaimed and held the young man’s shoulders from behind. Ivory ripples spread out of her fingertips, and the wounds on the young man’s body caused by Li Yao’s electric shock were healed at a visible rate.

“Be careful. Something’s wrong with the spiritual puppet!” The young man grimaced and stared at Li Yao full of wariness. “It did not feel like a common leakage of electricity but more like—”

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

The round body of the garbage can released colorful sparks yet again. All the rune arrays and the indicators were flashing with a mysterious vibe. The tracks that had been frozen by rust began to move slowly, blowing off the large blocks of rust. The mechanical arms that had been folded previously gradually opened, and the scissors that were meant for gardening revolved rapidly, with coldness beaming out of the sharp edges.

The two young people got goosebumps, seeing what was happening. Dumbfounded, they were lost for words for a long time.

“Hey,” the mental devil said, “you’re not so ruthless as to interrogate the two brats for intelligence, are you?”

“Of course not,” Li Yao replied. “It just suddenly occurred to me that I can ask the two young fellows to bring me to the local community of the Martial Meritocrats Sector, where I can investigate the information about ‘Starlight’ and ‘the lost Cultivator’. Wouldn’t it be much more convenient if we have two tour guides?”

“Good thinking. But how are you going to explain to the two brats about who we are?”

“Do you remember that Wei Qingqing and her companions had a ‘Grandpa Plan’ in the Tinder Base in Hundred Flowers City? I feel that our style right now is exactly like a handsome, knowledgeable, and well-respected grandpa, isn’t it?”

The moment he saw the girl named Liu Li, Li Yao had thought of Wei Qingqing.

The moment he thought of Wei Qingqing, he naturally recalled Hundred Flowers City, the Tinder Base, the Grandpa Plan, and ‘Grandpa Yao’, the first-generation grandpa.

“Now that you have put it in such a way, it does make a lot of sense,” the mental devil said. “I am so handsome and charming, and you can sort of be called knowledgeable. When the innocent teenagers meet a kindhearted, almighty grandpa like us, they will certainly tell all the secrets and intelligence they know to us obediently. Also, they will listen to whatever we tell them. We can ask them to do anything we want. Hehehe!”

“Despite your sly chuckle, the basic idea is correct,” Li Yao said. “Therefore, the most critical point right now is to convince them in a reasonable way that such a thing as an ‘old grandpa’ exists. This is a complicated, professional, and very tricky problem. Don’t make any noise now and lend all the computational ability to me. I need to think about it carefully…”

Li Yao fell silent, leaving the rune arrays and indicators on the surface of the ‘Universal Janitor’ flashing.

The young man and the girl looked at each other in bewilderment. They circled the ‘Universal Janitor’ and observed it for a long time, only to find no anomaly.

“S—Senior Brother, what is this thing?” Liu Li asked timidly.

Han Te’s eyes grew brighter and brighter. He grabbed the storm bolter in front of his chest as if it were a stove poker and eyed Li Yao up and down greedily. Then he said, “If I am not mistaken, this shouldn’t be a common spiritual puppet for cleaning purposes but a residence where a powerful remaining soul is hiding. It was sealed for hundreds of years in the darkness below the ground and has accidentally been awakened by us.

“In appreciation for the favor of awakening him, he will certainly tell us all the incredible arts that he knows. He will also inform us of the locations of a lot of ancient residences and treasuries, and he will travel and fight with us without complaint!”

“Huh?” Liu Li covered her mouth, somewhat surprised. “You mean, something like an ‘old grandpa’?”

Han Te nodded heavily, so overjoyed that he was almost dancing. “Exactly. An ‘old grandpa’. I did not expect that we would make such a major discovery on our trip. I thought ‘old grandpas’ only fell from the sky and didn’t know that we could dig them out of the ground. The only issue right now is the condition of the ‘old grandpa’. If it is in good condition, we can sell it on the black market even if it is of no use for us. We will certainly earn a lot of money, and master’s disease will be treated!”

“…” Li Yao.

“…” The mental devil.

Li Yao tried to invoke the broadcast rune array of the spiritual puppet. He uttered dry and unpleasant metallic noises. “Cough, cough. Cough, cough, cough, cough.”

“Grandpa is awake!” Han Te and Liu Li said at the same time.

The two young fellows squatted before Li Yao, their big eyes glittering nonstop, as if they were two babies full of curiosity.

“What… is this place?”

Li Yao desperately wanted to ask why the two teenagers had such a weird brain, believing that he was an ‘old grandpa’ at the first encounter. Also, what was the meaning of the ‘old grandpa’ that they mentioned? Could they sell such things on the black market?

After thinking for a long time, he managed to hold it back and ask a safer question.

“Huh. It does not seem like a common spiritual puppet for cleaning purposes at all. Even if there isn’t a remaining soul hiding inside, there must be a quasi-AI of a high level controlling it. Otherwise, it couldn’t have asked such a question!”

Han Te clapped his hands and was even more reassured of his judgment. Waving his fingers before Li Yao’s face, he tilted his head and said, “Hello. Can you see and hear us?”

“What—is—this—place?” Raising his voice, Li Yao repeated himself. “Why am I here? Who are you?”

“The old grandpa seems to have lost his memories,” Liu Li said.

“Most of the old grandpas suffer amnesia,” Han Te said, looking around. “Didn’t the old grandpa in Zhao Dazhuan’s family to the east of our village remember nothing of the past, too?

“I assume that the old grandpa’s physical body must’ve been destroyed during the explosion. In desperation, he managed to make part of his remaining soul escape to the spiritual puppet for cleaning purposes. Now that hundreds of years have passed, it is great enough that he still has some basic self-awareness. It is perfectly normal for him not to have the memories of the past.”

If Li Yao had eyelids right now, they would have been cramping violently.

“Explosion…” He continued mumbling in the unpleasant voice. “Yes. I remember the explosion. The overwhelming white light, followed by incessant darkness. What exactly happened?”

“You mean ‘Judgment Day’,” Han Te replied frivolously, only to be jabbed by his junior sister in the back. Then he rolled his eyes and licked his lips. “Well, we don’t know how we should address you. Is your brain completely blank without any of your memories, and do you not even remember who you are and how you were stuffed into the iron puppet? Make no mistake. We are both friendly and kindhearted people, and we will certainly tell you the truth because we sincerely want to help you. But please don’t be too excited after you hear everything, alright?”

After a brief silence, Li Yao’s broadcast rune arrays shivered again. “Okay. Tell me everything about ‘Judgment Day’.”

“Judgment Day took place in your time. Well, I don’t know when your time was exactly. In general, it was about five to seven hundred years ago.” Han Te scratched his messy hair. “The people of your age lived the most extravagant, unethical, and outrageous life of sins. In order to compete for resources or for any other random purpose, various forces had a war and bombarded the most precious surface of the planet into an utter mess with weapons that could’ve destroyed the world. The whole civilization was almost doomed.

“The overwhelming white light you saw should’ve been an attack launched by a hostile force with ‘planetary magical equipment’. If you ever get a chance to look at the outside, you will know that the attack razed the city entirely, and it has not been recovered even to this day.

“If I had to guess, I think you must’ve been hiding in a certain secret chamber beneath the earth and luckily avoided the fate of being obliterated on the spot. Part of your soul escaped, but having nowhere to run, you hid yourself in the core of the spiritual puppet, only to fall into hibernation for hundreds of years, until we finally awakened you again through the most arduous effort at the cost of abundant crystals and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures.

“Such a thing has happened before. I’ve heard it personally many times. So, no worries. We will certainly help you to the end. But I’m wondering, do you know any techniques or skills, and can you recall some of the coordinates of any important facilities? Hehehe…”

The young man grinned cunningly while bashing his chest to make promises, as if he were the most trustworthy man on the planet.

“It’s been more than five hundred years since Judgment Day?” Li Yao mumbled. “I remember that this place used to be called… Hiss… I can’t remember it now. Who are you exactly? Survivors of Judgment Day?”

“The war known as Judgment Day was fought for hundreds of years. We have no idea when you experienced the explosion,” Liu Li said, biting her lips. “The people before Judgment Day seemed to call the land below our feet the Martial Meritocrats Sector. But right now, all the survivors call it the Land of Sins and themselves ‘sinners’.

“It’s because of the sinful life our ancestors lived that the war that led to the destruction of the whole planet took place, turning the beautiful home of old into the ragged, desolate Land of Sins.

“Everybody says that we survivors are all born with the heaviest sins on our shoulders, that we have to repent for our ancestors for thousands of years. Only when the endless sins of our ancestors are washed away will the land possibly become what it used to be!”

Chapter 1951 - Old Grandpas from the Sky

Chapter 1951 Old Grandpas from the Sky

The Land of Sins, the sinners, and Judgment Day that was imposed on everyone with the war that swept across the entire world due to extravagance, greediness, and lack of resources?

Perhaps, in an ordinary, self-secluding world, such a tragedy could have happened.

But this place was the Martial Meritocrats Sector, Blackstar the Great’s hometown, and the place that he hated and wanted to retaliate against most. Li Yao did not believe the story that the two young fellows told.

Or rather, the two young fellows did not know the truth themselves.

Li Yao continued to ask peacefully, “How do you know that?”

“Everybody says so. It’s because people a long, long time ago turned the world into a mess that our life today is so difficult.”

The young man Han Te sniffed. Gloom and pain flashed on his face, but he soon grinned and said, “However, it doesn’t matter how difficult life is and what it will become later. At the very least, we are alive at this moment, and you are alive, too. So, why do you care about ‘Judgment Day’ hundreds of years ago? No matter how dissatisfied you are, Judgment Day has already taken place. It is impossible to change the past; what matters is how we live in the present. Am I right?

“I almost forgot to introduce myself. My name Han Te. I am from the Village of Peace, which is the greatest village in the hundreds of square kilometers around. Neither the mutated beasts in the wilderness nor the other villages, and not even the most ruthless bandits, have the courage to mess with us because there are a lot of experts in our village. My master is the leader of the village and also the most awesome expert. He can blow up a skyscraper with one punch. This is Liu Li, my master’s daughter and my junior sister!

“How about it, old grandpa? Come back to the Village of Peace with us. Whether you can recall anything or not, my master will certainly find a place for you to settle in. My master always says that even the strongest expert cannot survive on their own in the Land of Sins. We have to support each other in order to live!”

After a long silence, Li Yao asked, “Why do you call me… ‘old grandpa’? You know that I’m old?”

Han Te was slightly dazed. Scratching his hair, he continued his smile, his teeth glowing. “Not exactly. However, there are a lot of cases like yours in the Land of Sins. Strangers of unknown backgrounds, or remaining souls hiding in various kinds of puppets, who have lost memories of the past but boast tremendous techniques that are of great aid for the villages. Perhaps the people who were found in the earliest phase were very old and therefore given the name ‘old grandpa’. Then, the tradition continued.”

“Do you have a lot of ‘old grandpas’ here just like me?” Li Yao asked.

“There are indeed a lot. Every village today has a few ‘old grandpas’ for self-protection.” Han Te thought for a moment and said, “However, most of the old grandpas fell from the sky. Few were actually dug out from beneath the ground like you. Perhaps there were a lot several hundred years ago until they were all excavated by other people. Hahaha. Anyways, I’ve never heard much about it before.”

“The old grandpas falling from the sky…” Li Yao recalled the fleet of the Imperium of True Human Beings again that sprayed tremendous materials toward the atmosphere from the orbit of the main planet of the Martial Meritocrats Sector.

Those materials did not look like common garbage. They did not appear to be powerful bombs, either.

However, it was indeed a possibility that some people who had been deprived of their memories were loaded into buffering cabins and thrown into the atmosphere.

Li Yao thought about asking the two little fellows if the old grandpas falling from the sky were sealed in silver coffins that spurted out buffer air currents or opened parachutes when they were close to the ground, and if the coffins were filled with sticky gel.

However, on second thought, if a lot of ‘old grandpas’ did exist in this place, he would certainly find out once he was outside. There was no need for him to ask the question in a hurry.

While he was pondering, the mental devil suddenly said, “I suddenly thought of something. The ‘Grandpa Plan’ in the Tinder Base was carried out under the guidance of Professor Mo Xuan, who had already been corrupted by the extraterrestrial devils back then.”

“So what?”

“In case you have forgotten,” the mental devil said, “‘Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan’ is not a simple combination of Professor Mo Xuan and extraterrestrial devils but has a lot of memory pieces of the star child, an elite scout from the Imperium of True Human Beings.

“Therefore, is it possible that some sort of ‘Grandpa Plan’ existed in the Imperium of True Human Beings in the first place, and Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan only duplicated it and made a second ‘Grandpa Plan’ in the Star Glory Federation with the prior knowledge?”

“Are you suggesting that the so-called ‘old grandpas’ were sent to the Martial Meritocrats Sector by the Immortal Cultivators on purpose? But why?” Li Yao asked.

“Didn’t you already learn from Su Changfa and Di Feiwen that the Martial Meritocrats Sector today had turned into a laboratory of new techniques and magical equipment for the Imperium of True Human Beings?” the mental devil remarked. “Everything we have seen in the Martial Meritocrats Sector after sneaking in fits their claim.

“How can you find out the greatest power and potential of a new technique or a piece of new magical equipment? Of course, it is an option to force the slaves of the Martial Meritocrats Sector to train and fight one another. However, will the slaves train themselves crazily from the bottom of their hearts when it is against their own will?

“You can lead a cow to a river, but you cannot force it to drink water. If it were me, I wouldn’t adopt such a simple and straightforward approach.

“I would find a way to create an extreme and secluded environment in the Martial Meritocrats Sector, forcing all the people there to have to compete with each other over the highly-insufficient resources.

“Strength. Strength is the only rule of the world. Everybody craves strength and will not hesitate to get strength whatever it takes.

“Then, I would ask some people to fall from the sky with the new techniques and new magical equipment to be tested, disseminating all the techniques and magical equipment. Instead of waiting for my coercion, the people there would practice the highly unstable techniques that have been just invented, driven by their survival instincts, or use the magical equipment that may have fatal shortcomings despite their amazing power.”

“Therefore,” Li Yao said, “the old planet of the Martial Meritocrats Sector, or the Land of Sins today, is an enormous test field for real-life weapons, and the ‘old grandpas from the sky’ are responsible for disseminating the techniques and magical equipment to be tested.”

“Yes. Perhaps, those ‘old grandpas’ do not know the first thing about their fate. Didn’t you hear what the brat named ‘Han Te’ said in the beginning? Most of the grandpas lost their memories, but they remembered all the techniques and secret arts clearly. They even knew the locations of some ‘treasuries’ and offered to teach the villagers the most incredible arts.

“This is highly unreasonable. If they lost all their memories, why could they still remember the techniques and secret arts? Even if they are aware of the techniques and secret arts based on their natural instincts, there is no reason they would teach other people all their skills and even reveal the most important treasuries, right?

“If there were only a few people who behaved like that, we might say that those ‘old grandpas’ were kind-hearted and generous. But if there are so many grandpas that every village has a couple, and they are all so selfless and friendly, it is simply too weird to be believed.

“I assume that the memories of the ‘old grandpas’ were mostly sealed or even cleared by the Immortal Cultivators before they were tossed into the atmosphere. They might also have been implanted with the knowledge of various unstable techniques and secret arts as well as the instructions to disseminate the knowledge!”

Li Yao pondered for a moment, with cold ripples spreading out of his soul.

Seeing that he was caught in a long silence, the two little fellows thought that he did not believe what they had said and was still hesitating.

They looked at each other. Liu Li nodded. Han Te cleared his throat and said, “If you don’t trust us, let me tell you a great secret. In fact, my master—Liu Li’s father and the leader of the Village of Peace—is also an old grandpa from the sky!”

“…What?”

Han Te grinned and blinked. He was about to talk when his body trembled, and his eyes narrowed into two lines. The rune arrays on his storm bolter glowed again, and the most dangerous spiritual energy was condensing around the barrel.

Liu Li exclaimed in shock. She picked up the flower that could purge the environment and quickly put her mask on.

Chiliu! Chiliu! Chiliu! Chiliu!

From the dark gaps in the ruins behind the three of them, an enormous lizard more than three meters tall, with a body as red as fire mixed with bright purple, circular stripes, crawled out and stared at them with its four dim, yellow eyes.

“It’s a Thunder Salamander. Judging from the color of the electric stripes, it seems to be a female one in the middle of the spawning period. This is getting tricky.”

Han Te was still on one knee and lowered half of his body down, glaring at the opponent like a young wolf that had just grown up. He said in a low voice, “Liu Li, the old grandpa has just woken up. Based on how feeble his remaining soul is, he must have little combat ability right now. You and the old grandpa will retreat slowly until you are a hundred meters away. Then, you will run to the exit as fast as you can. I will catch up with you very soon. As long as we reach outside, we will be safe. The Thunder Salamanders rarely leave the dark environment.”

“My little friend…” Li Yao said.

“Hush. Old grandpa,” Han Te interrupted, “I know that you must’ve been a very awesome expert in the past, or your remaining soul wouldn’t have survived to this day. It is a pity that the body you chose for yourself at the critical moment was too weak and has corroded over hundreds of years. You are certainly no match for the Thunder Salamander. Let’s get out of here first!”

“I know that,” Li Yao said. “I only want to remind you that there is another one that seems even greater than this beast crouching on the ruins to your left.”

“What!”

While the exclamations of the two young fellows were still echoing in the darkness, tremendous electric currents and fiery light like a volcano erupted from the ruins to the left of them.

In the middle of the chaotic lightning and fire, a ferocious shadow lunged at the three of them!

Chapter 1952 - Terrible Red Flashes!

Chapter 1952 Terrible Red Flashes!

“Run!”

Han Te’s exclamation and his bullets roared out at the same out, only to be torn into shreds by the Thunder Salamander’s sharp claws. Before he pulled the trigger again, the storm bolter was already chopped in half by the claw that was soaked in electric arcs and flames.

Right before the Thunder Salamander laid its claws on Liu Li, Han Te charged forward and stopped it. The two of them rolled into a cluster of lightning and fire.

The mask that covered his face was torn off again, revealing a face that was as angry as an animal. Countless veins were protruding from his burnt, scarred cheeks, like snakes that would dash out of his body at any moment.

The right half of his body was also covered by dancing electric arcs, which were even condensed into the form of blades and armor, helping him to resist the sharp claws and tusks of the Thunder Salamander.

The guy and the lizard were actually on par in the fight.

But the other Thunder Salamander that showed up and distracted their attention launched an attack, too.

Its bloody mouth was opened to the maximum, and a red ball of light inside its throat got brighter and brighter, as if it were magma that had been highly compressed and condensed.

“Ahhh!” Holding her head, Liu Li began to scream.

At first, Li Yao thought that the girl was so scared that she was out of her mind, but then his soul sensed overwhelming quakes. A weird but powerful strength was released from the depths of the girl’s brain. The very special magnetic field imposed strong ‘interference’ on the spiritual energy reactions that were quickly expanding inside the throat of the Thunder Salamander.

Boom!

The fireball exploded inside the Thunder Salamander’s throat directly, causing it to writhe on the ground in pain. Its six claws cramped violently, and the weird tails with long bone spurs waved crazily, blowing off tremendous broken rocks.

The damage of such an extent was not enough to completely deprive the Thunder Salamander of its combat ability. The pain deep to the bones in fact completely triggered its aggressiveness. The deep purple stripes on the surface of its body emitted soul-stirring fluorescence, and blood mixed with saliva dripped from the tusks.

Liu Li seemed to have used up all her strength in that scream. She staggered two steps back and collapsed on the ground. Her breath became so feeble that she did not even have the strength to lift her arm.

“Liu Li, go now!”

Han Te’s right arm activated a saber of electric arcs more than two meters long, which glowed glamorously in the darkness. After three shocking collisions, his chest was left with a deep wound by the Thunder Salamander, but he managed to chop off the strongest foreclaw of the beast, too.

Seeing that his junior sister had collapsed to the ground, the young man was so anxious that he kicked a twisted rebar into the collapsing rocks while he shouted, “Come on, you two pieces of cr*p. Come and get me. Your father is here!”

While kicking the rebar, he threw out tremendous electric arcs, continuing to draw the attention of the two ferocious beasts. He then slowly moved away from the exit, into the darkness.

The two Thunder Salamanders were indeed attracted by his roars and ignored Liu Li and Li Yao.

“That’s right. Come here. Come to your father!”

Han Te’s face that was filled with blood gradually disappeared into the darkness. Bulging his eyes that were as huge as bells, he hinted at Liu Li, Now is the time. Run!

Liu Li gripped her wrist hard and sobbed soundless. With the last bit of her strength, she managed to stand to her feet again.

Han Te smiled brilliantly. His two irregular dimples seemed to be saying, That’s right, Liu Li, run. As your senior brother, I will certainly help you keep the two beasts occupied!

Right before the two Thunder Salamanders were about to be lured into the deeper part of the underground ruins that was even more rough and complicated, a calm, metallic voice suddenly echoed behind them. “My young friends…”

At such a critical moment, the voice was as loud as a rumbling thunder. The two Thunder Salamanders immediately turned around and looked at where Liu Li was.

Dumbfounded, Han Te stared at Li Yao, feeling like crying.

“Sorry to interrupt your self-sacrifice,” Li Yao said, “but I only want to tell you that there are actually three Thunder Salamanders in total. The last one of them, which is also the biggest and strongest one and must be some sort of leader of the hunting team, has been hiding on our escape route. This is a very delicate trap. They have eradicated the prey’s hope of survival since the very beginning.”

Han Te’s pupils constricted violently.

Liu Li widened her eyes in disbelief.

The third Thunder Salamander slowly surfaced in the darkness.

It was much greater in size than the previous two Thunder Salamanders and covered in a dark golden shell that looked like a reactive armor made of metal. The enormous sarcoma above its head was pulsing like a heart. After every ‘beat’, it would send out sparks that turned into blue flames on the ground.

Like a king of the Thunder Salamanders, it slithered to the two little fellows with the glamorous crown over its head unhurriedly, staring at the two of them from the high stance, as if being swallowed by it would be the greatest honor of their entire life.

“This… this is not a Thunder Salamander but its mutated, evolved species—the Thunder Juggernaut!” Han Te seemed to have been kicked right in the throat. His voice was completely twisted. “I might have been able to compete with the beast three years ago, but right now…”

“Senior Brother…” Liu Li called him in a low voice, hinting that Han Te need not say anything. The young man and the girl leaned against each other and abandoned their futile struggle. Illuminated by the deep blue light of the Thunder Salamanders, their faces were brimming with desperation.

“Is that so?” Li Yao twisted the tracks and moved with some difficulty on the uneven ruins while he observed the enormous slaughtering machine in front of him with great interest. “What an interesting little creature. Judging from its posture, it is not a natural species.”

The Thunder Juggernaut was infuriated by the hideous appearance of Li Yao and his peaceful attitude. With the sound of boiling magma spurting out of its throat, the sarcoma above its head expanded incessantly and soon became larger than its head.

It seemed as if ten thousand lightning bolts had been hidden inside!

Li Yao slightly adjusted the crystal cameras of the ‘Universal Janitor’ and stared at the opponent without blinking, examining the flow and model of spiritual energy inside the mutated beast.

He discovered that he had new perceptions of strength, battle, and the judgement of the enemy’s capability and his own after ascending into the Divinity Transformation Stage. He did not even need to observe with his naked eye. It would be much more accurate and efficient to directly sense the flow and expansion of spiritual energy.

The Thunder Juggernaut was about to launch the craziest attack.

However, it seemed to have sensed something. In an exclamation of shock, it turned around and ran away immediately without even looking at the two companions that were left behind. The sarcoma on its head withered instantly, too.

It had sensed the terror of the existence hiding inside the garbage.

But it was too late.

In the eyes of Han Te and Liu Li, they only saw three clusters of red light dash out of the body of the Universal Janitor all of a sudden and cover the three mutated beasts including the Thunder Juggernaut. Not only were the beasts all frozen, they even staggered and floated in midair.

The next second, the dark red clusters turned into thousands of red flashes that shone dazzlingly inside the bodies of the three mutated beasts. Then, the three of them were dissected neatly and completely into meat pieces no larger than the fingernail.

“Ew!”

Han Te and Liu Li were both dumbfounded, feeling that they were caught in a nightmare. Although they had seen a lot of bloody and brutal scenes during the years of struggle in the Land of Sins, the weird sight before their eyes was still far beyond what they could bear. Looking at each other, they trembled hard and threw up hard.

Li Yao had no time to care about the reactions of the two young fellows. While testing the brand-new ways to attack with his soul, he studied the structures of the three mutated beasts.

The red flashes that had dissected the mutated beasts accurately just now were created by manipulating countless tiny grains of dust and kneading them into long threads ten times thinner than the air before triggering a high-frequency vibration, leading to friction between the dust and the air at a temperature of thousands of degrees.

The threads of dust were close to the molecular level in the first place like the sharpest blades. Once they were heated to the limits, they were naturally invincible. Even the hardest armor and shell were not enough to stop them.

The only shortcoming was that the dust's mass was little to none, and it would perish 0.1 seconds after vibrating in the air at a high frequency.

But more waves of dust threads would immediately follow up, cutting all the targets like burning sabers.

At least right now, Li Yao was very satisfied with the effect of his new attack.

As for the structure of the three slightly abnormal mutated beasts, there were no secrets before his dissection. All the details were revealed.

His guess was correct. None of the three mutated beasts were natural. They had not even mutated purely because of radiation.

Li Yao discovered very sophisticated magical equipment units in their bones and throats that could strengthen their bodies, improve their speed and strength, and allow them to launch attacks similar to a volcanic eruption.

Somebody seemed to be running experiments to create a perfect half-flesh, half-mechanical war machine by combining the most ferocious mutated beasts and magical equipment.

Li Yao found three very precise chips from the depths of the brain of the three beasts. Judging from the rune arrays carved on them and the fundamental architecture, they should be some sort of chips to scan and store data, which could record the details of their battle.

Thankfully, the radiation in the area was very serious. Li Yao did not perceive the existence of the Spiritual Nexus. The three chips could not upload the battle data in real time.

Perhaps some instructions had been written into the chips to force the beasts that had been implanted with the chips to appear at an empty, uninterrupted spot every once in a while so that the Immortal Cultivators could show up to collect all the battle data during the last period.

Pa!

The three chips before Li Yao were crushed into pieces by nonexistent hands, turning into three flames of fury.

Chapter 1953 - Fatal Shortcomings of the Unparalleled Arts

Chapter 1953 Fatal Shortcomings of the Unparalleled Arts

On the black shell of the spiritual puppet that had been sealed in the gloomy world for hundreds of years, dark red fire was dancing. Together with the pieces of the Thunder Salamanders that were still floating in midair behind, they constituted a nightmarish picture.

Before Li Yao, the two little fellows held each other and shuddered.

Turning the tracks in squeaky noises, Li Yao shifted his attention to the two little fellows again.

Right now, he was full of curiosity about the arts they demonstrated.

Sensing the coldness released by the crimson crystal cameras, Han Te shivered. He gritted his teeth and stood before Liu Li, struggling to say, “S—Senior…”

“Show me the arced lightning that you activated when you resisted the Thunder Salamanders again,” Li Yao said casually.

Han Te was slightly dazed and looked at Liu Li in bewilderment. Encouraged by the girl, he slowly straightened his right arm and bellowed. Electric light leaked out of his pores and quickly extended out of his arm, forming long, narrow arcs that were similar to swords and sabers.

“What a delicate model of spiritual energy!”

Li Yao’s eyes beamed with interest. He had seen a similar technique to construct swords and sabers with the power of thunder from Despot, Elder Nether Spring’s great warrior in the Blood Demon Sector.

Despot was a super warrior that Elder Nether Spring had carefully refined after embedding more than a hundred crystals into him. His capability had been close to the Nascent Soul Stage.

The combat ability that the young man showed just now was in the Refinement Stage at best. Naturally, it was incomparable to Despot’s. However, the models of spiritual energy that he constructed were even more finely-made than Despot’s with ten times more variations.

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao said, “If my guess is correct, you used to be far stronger than right now, didn’t you?”

Han Te was shocked. “How—how do you know, senior? Yes. I advanced into the seventh level of the Lightning Triangle three years ago, and I was ten times stronger than I am today. Even if I came across a Thunder Juggernaut, I would have the capability to compete with it in an open fight!

“It is a shame that the veins and nerves on the right half of my body have been blocked since three years ago, although there are no obvious signs of mental derangement. My capability has plummeted, too, and I am almost a useless man right now…”

Grabbing Han Te’s shoulder, Liu Li craned her head and emboldened herself to ask, “Senior, since your eyes are keen enough to see my senior brother’s past capability, is there any way you can help him? My senior brother was truly awesome at that time. Not only was he the best expert among the young people in the Village of Peace, you couldn’t have found anyone stronger than him in the hundreds of square kilometers around. Everybody said that he was a genius and that he would eventually go to Manjusaka, the City in the Sky!

“But as it turned out, like other geniuses in the past, he suffered the same misfortune and became a ‘disrupted genius’. The last three years have been really difficult for him. Please give him a hand, senior!”

“Disrupted genius? The same misfortune?” Li Yao chewed on the girl’s words. Leaving aside ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’, he asked, “What, do you have a lot of ‘disrupted geniuses’ like him?”

“There are too many.” Han Te opened his hands. Pretending that he did not care about it, he bit his lips and said, “Life is rough in the Land of Sins. Radiation and ferocious beasts are everywhere. The training resources are highly insufficient, too. It is impossible for us to train in peace. Therefore, it is only natural that all kinds of accidents can happen.

“I have heard of almost twenty unfortunate fellows from the few villages in the several square kilometers around alone. They were all known as geniuses in the past, but their Cultivation plummeted for uncanny reasons. I am one of the luckier ones, having kept my life. Some of them went mentally deranged or died on the spot. Some even had abnormal mutations and turned into terrible monsters!"

"You said just now that your master was also 'an old grandpa from the sky'," Li Yao said. "I assume that he taught you the 'Lightning Strangle', didn't he?"

"Of course it was him, but I also practiced some other arts in secret and combined almost ten of them to increase the power of the Lightning Strangle. How else could we survive in the Land of Sins?"

"From what I've heard just now, you master is ill, too," Li Yao said. "Is his condition serious?"

Han Te looked at Liu Li and nodded. "Yes, senior. My master is indeed suffering from a serious and weird disease. Even without an attack, his Cultivation is much lower than before. When he has an attack, his blood will almost stagnate, his hands and legs will be strengthless, and he can barely get out of his bed.

"We entered the heavily-polluted radiation area at great risk this time because we want to find something valuable in the unexplored places so that we can earn enough money to treat my master's illness."

"Got it."

The crystal cameras on the front of Li Yao's body flashed again. Dozens of streaks of redness flooded out again, forming the devastating crimson flashes again, which penetrated through the right half of Han Te's body like a storm.

Thousands of electric arcs burst out of Han Te's body and knocked him to the ground quickly. He writhed on the ground in agony while screaming hard.

“Senior brother!”

Liu Li did not expect that Li Yao would launch a fatal attack without any warning. Too shocked, she stopped before Han Te without thinking and held her head hard with both hands.

Li Yao immediately sensed that an invisible superstorm was condensing inside her brain quickly.

The girl angrily demanded, “Senior, in any case, we are the ones who woke you up. There’s no reason for you to return the favor in such a way, is there?”

Li Yao smiled and casually said, “I do not know the random techniques that you senior brother has been practicing besides the Lighting Strangle, but the main art that he trains himself with seems to be focusing on the stimulation of the mitochondria inside the cells to change the form of the mitochondria, thereby allowing the mitochondria to unleash several dozen times more energy instantly.

“Meanwhile, the art has caused the mutation of part of the cells inside his body, allowing him to evolve with an effect similar to the release of electricity in an ‘electric eel’. It is only with the cooperation of his mitochondria and his electro-discharge cells that he is able to trigger arced lightning and combine them into various forms of attack.

“Theoretically speaking, it is indeed a rather dominating art, which is much more efficient and aggressive than the traditional usages of the spiritual energy of the thunder class. No wonder he was confident in competing with a Thunder Juggernaut in his prime.

“The problem is that the art has a serious shortcoming. When the structure of the mitochondria is changed and it is repeatedly stimulated, the mitochondria release a material similar to ‘creatine’. However, the art does not take it into consideration—or maybe it has, but there is simply no way to address it—the problem of the waste discharged by the mitochondria.

“Although the waste from the seriously-stimulated mitochondria is little to none during every training session, it inevitably builds up in all the channels inside your senior brother’s body where spiritual energy flows because it cannot be discharged out of the body. Thus, it piles up in the veins, nerves, and muscle fibers.

“It’s just like an embolism for the ordinary people, which can kill the victims immediately when it gets serious. Is it strange at all that his Cultivation plunged?”

Liu Li was dazed at what she heard. Her mouth was opened wider and wider.

Looking at Li Yao’s shell that was riddled with holes and his hideous appearance with utmost admiration, the girl almost cried out. “Senior…”

“Don’t be anxious. Let me finish. There’s still hope for your senior brother,” Li Yao said confidently and casually. “Although the Lightning Strangle has serious shortcomings, your senior brother couldn’t have practiced it for many years considering his young age. However, as he said just now, he also picked up a lot of other random arts, didn’t he? The technique with fatal shortcomings alone clogged his veins, nerves, and spiritual root, and the other messy, mediocre arts only made the situation worse. That’s why he had an acute attack this time.

“It is certainly not a good thing that his veins, nerves, and muscle fibers are all clogged at such a young age, but since he is still very young, the waste released from his mitochondria is not too much yet. Therefore, there is still a chance to save him.

“Hey, my little friend, how do you feel right now?”

Han Te stopped yelling and screaming at some point and sat up in a trance. Looking at the thick, stinky fluids that flowed out of the holes caused by the red flashes, he laughed like an idiot, his head going completely blank.

Liu Li pushed him several times. He summoned his spiritual energy in silence, and blue electric arcs almost five meters tall surged out of his palm. Countless fish seemed to be swimming merrily on the ceiling, illuminating the entire underground space splendidly.

“My—my Cultivation seems to have been partly restored.” The young man gawked at the ceiling. Perhaps because of the stimulation of the electric arcs, hot tears flowed out of his eyes. “Strength… My strength is coming back!”

Holding the thousands of electric arcs inside his palm, he waved his fist hard and jumped up in ecstasy.

But as it turned out, he was unable to control the powerful strength, and he bumped into the ceiling, bringing down half of the ceiling. He grimaced and squatted on the ground, holding and rubbing his head.

“Senior brother!” Liu Li was amused. She then stared at Li Yao full of appreciation and stammered, “Senior, we—we don’t know how we can thank you…”

“It’s no big deal.” Li Yao smiled casually. Looking at the young man squatting on the ground like a monkey, he remembered his past self again.

The feeling alone was enough for him to give the guy a hand. “Your senior brother’s strength has always been stored inside his body and never left. It’s just that it is blocked by the waste released by the mitochondria. Now that I have temporarily dredged his nerves, veins, and internal organs and sent some of the waste out, the circulation of his spiritual energy has become smooth again. Naturally, his strength is back.

“However, too much waste is stuck inside his body to be dredged in one time. I estimate that I will have to dredge and guide him every day for ten to fifteen days in order to completely eliminate the waste inside his body.

“Also, this does not fix the root of the problem. If he continues practicing Lightning Strangle, which has fatal shortcomings, the waste from his mitochondria will still be generated, and his body will become clogged again in the future.”

Chapter 1954 - Help Me, Senior!

Chapter 1954 Help Me, Senior!

“Then, what can we do?” With tears inside her eyes, Liu Li crossed her hands and begged like a lost cat. “Senior, please save my brother. Whatever you ask for as payment, we will certainly try our best to get it for you as long as we are capable of it!”

After thinking for a moment, Li Yao said, “I have never considered myself a doctor. Treating illnesses is not my specialty. However, your senior brother’s illness is just a minor problem. He can always drop Lightning Strangle and switch to another technique of the thunder class that is safer and steadier.

“What I’m more concerned about is your father and his master.

“I don’t know if your father’s serious illness is related to Lightning Strangle, but I do know that anybody practicing such an art will have a high risk of ruining their nerves, veins, and muscle fibers if they do not practice some ancillary arts that can help discharge the waste of the cells.

“If your father has practiced for decades with the most remarkable expertise, his condition will certainly be much more severe than your senior brother’s. The ’embolism of spiritual energy’ that has accumulated over a long time will have filled all the critical parts inside his body. Should there be an attack, it won’t be a surprise even if your father is killed on the spot.”

“What!” Liu Li covered her mouth in disbelief and stepped back, falling to the ground. She could not help but burst into tears.

“Senior!” Sweating in anxiety, Han Te crawled to Li Yao and said, “It doesn’t matter whether I recover or not, but please help my master. He really is a good man. Everybody in the thousand square kilometers around knows that. The lives of the thousands of people in the Village of Peace depend on his protection!”

“Like I said just now, I am not a doctor,” Li Yao peacefully said, “and I haven’t even met your master before. This is just my speculation based on the circulation of your spiritual energy. Perhaps there are some other reasons that caused your master’s illness. In that case, I’m afraid that I won’t be able to help at all.

“If his condition is solely because of Lightning Strangle, however, I may be able to come up with some methods to gradually recover the health of you and your mater. I can even help you improve Lightning Strangle and figure out a way to discharge the waste of the mitochondria.

“But there is really nothing I can do about your junior sister’s problem.”

Hearing that Li Yao was willing to help them, Han Te and Liu Li were about to weep tears of joy when Li Yao suddenly changed the topic to Liu Li. The two of them were dazed at the same time.

Han Te stammered, “What—What problem does my junior sister have?”

“Her problem is a hundred times graver than yours.”

Li Yao moved the crystal cameras to Liu Li. With the red lights flashing, he said, “Little girl, tell me, have you been feeling a vague headache every once in a while for the past half a year? Not the kind of stinging pain, but pain like your head has been split apart from the middle and somebody is tearing your hair to two sides. The pain should be like a narrow line that penetrates your entire face, and the most painful point is the tip of your nose, right?”

“Who told you that?” As if greatly stimulated, Han Te shook his head hard and declared, “My junior sister doesn’t have that!”

“I…” Liu Li had a pale face that was full of shock. “I indeed have such a condition. The pain attacks every couple of days. How did you know, senior?”

“What?” Han Te jumped to his feet and exclaimed in anxiety, waving his hands hard. “Isn’t it exactly the same condition that my masteress had? Liu Li, why—why did you never tell me or master?”

“I did not want to worry you…” The girl lowered her head. Biting her lips softly, she played with her fingers and said, “At first, I thought it was my imagination. After all, the pain was weak and barely noticeable. But recently, it has been attacking more and more often, and the pain is much more obvious. I thought about telling you, but dad fell sick, and the annual Bliss Ceremony is going to take place soon. Whether or not the Village of Peace can survive the next year all depends on the Bliss Ceremony. I did not want to distract you at such a moment and thought I could tell you afterward.”

“You…”

The young man almost cried, but having nowhere to vent his anger, he could only punch the ground hard. The electric arcs were running, and the broken stones were flying everywhere.

Li Yao observed them quietly. “What, your masteress had the same condition?”

“Yes, senior,” Han Te said gloomily. “Liu Li’s mother passed away five years ago. The year before her death, she had the exact symptoms you described. She had serious headaches as if somebody was sawing her head in half with a burning axe, and the tip of the nose was the most painful point!”

“If so,” Li Yao continued, “Liu Li and her mother must have practiced the same technique, which changes the structures of part of their brain cells to significantly increase the intensity of the brainwaves. As a result, a controllable field of brainwaves is formed out of their body. By altering the intensity, structure, and frequency of the field, they can interfere with their friends or foes’ spiritual energy, healing friends, increasing allies’ strength, or disrupting the foes’ techniques, right?”

Staring at Li Yao in bewilderment, Han Te could not have admired the mysterious senior who had been buried for hundreds of years more. “Senior, you are truly prophetic. I do not know if their brain cells have been through any unusual changes, but it is true that Liu Li and my masteress mainly practice the same technique, the Heavenly Heart Transformation. It can calm allies down, boost their spiritual energy, accelerate their recovery, and increase their damage. It can also disrupt enemy movement and stop the enemy’s techniques before they are performed. It is one of the best ancillary techniques that highlights both attack and defense. It’s awesome!”

“It is indeed very impressive, especially for the performer of the art.” Li Yao sneered. “Practicing such a technique will keep one’s brain cells in a state of high-frequency vibration at all times. It is almost as if high-energy microwaves are penetrating through their brains all the time. Brain lesions are almost certain. Also, once the illness progresses, the victims will be dead for sure. The odds are little to none that their souls will be left behind, turning them into spectral Cultivators.”

Hearing his cold diagnosis, Liu Li seemed to have accepted her fate. She sat on the ground without saying anything and simply smiled at Han Te with her pale face, as if she were begging him to not worry about him.

The young man’s face, however, turned so red that ten thousand arrows of blood seemed to be shooting out. He suddenly kneeled before Li Yao and held back his tears, pleading, “Senior, please help my master and my junior sister. Just like you helped me, treat them and cleanse the poison and waste inside their bodies. As long as you are willing to give us a hand, senior, I will agree to any condition. Whatever you ask for, I will try my best to get it for you!”

The indicators on Li Yao dimmed. There was a brief silence before he said, “Yours is a simple problem where your mitochondria’s waste cannot be discharged, but your junior sister’s problem is a very severe one that concerns brain damage and mutations. How can they be the same?

“The brain is the most mysterious and delicate organ in a human body—how do you expect to fix the problem by shooting a few holes and letting out blood?

“Yes. Brain cells do not have a sense of pain themselves. Your junior sister’s dull pain right now is probably caused by the high cranial pressure. Opening her skull to reduce the cranial pressure can temporarily relieve her of the pain, but it does not remove the root of the problem. Your junior sister’s body is still growing at her age. Since brain mutations have taken place, the problem cannot be fixed by simply stopping practicing the Heavenly Heart Transformation. It’s best that you ask some professional brain doctors and Meditation Healers to treat her.”

Han Te was completely confused. “Our place is rather remote. Few doctors ever dropped by. As for ‘Meditation Healers’, what are they?”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. Thinking for a moment, he said, “How about this? Since your junior sister’s problem is her unsteady field of brainwaves, maybe I can help her craft a special helmet first with appropriate tools and parts. After she puts it on, it will temporarily prevent her brain from further mutating. But it won’t be an ultimate solution. You will have to figure out a way to find a real expert in the meantime.”

“Thank you. Thank you very much, senior!” Han Te felt both worried and delighted. Finally, sticky tears flowed out of his eyes. Holding Liu Li’s hand, he hesitated for a moment and said, “Senior, do you…”

Instead of waiting for him to finish, Li Yao said, “I can help you, but you must help me, too. Let’s make a deal.

“As you have seen, I… only have part of my remaining soul left. I have been buried for hundreds of years and lost all my memories. I do not know anything of my past or the new era.

You will work as my guides to help me get to know the new world.”

“Of course!” Seeing that Li Yao had agreed to help him, the young man regained his vigor that resembled a jumping monkey again. Bashing his chest hard, he said, “You can count on us for that. Please come back to the Village of Peace with us. We will certainly help you to get familiar with the world and be integrated into the Land of Sins!”

Li Yao smiled and said, “One other thing. I do not want anybody else to know my real identity yet, not even your master. To him, you can say that you have picked up a common spiritual puppet for cleaning and maintenance purposes from the ruins, and you will perform random modifications and upgrades on it. Is there a problem?”

The young man and the girl looked at each other and nodded at the same time. “Of course not!”

After some thought, Han Te carefully said, “We can pretend that we have picked up a Universal Janitor in front of the outsiders, but how should we address you in private, senior? Do you still remember your name?”

“I vaguely recall that there is a ‘Yao’ in my name. Therefore, you may call me ‘Grandpa Yao’.”

“Hey,” the mental devil said gloomily next to Li Yao’s soul. “Do you not feel any sense of shame when you say such a nauseating name?”

Chapter 1955 - Manjusaka, the City in the Sky

Chapter 1955 Manjusaka, the City in the Sky

Forsaken cities, broken freeways, high buildings that were riddled with holes, and lead gray clouds that fell from the sky in threads like skinny claws that were going to grab all the creatures on the bleak land and feed the prey into their mouths.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Every now and then, explosions echoed in the distance, mixed with the collapses of the skyscrapers. Gray and red smoke rose on the horizon, like enormous tumors that were floating in midair.

A shuttle that had been through crazy modifications ran without any noise despite the ragged appearance in the middle of the bones of the city, leaving a long pillar of smoke behind.

From the ruins of the skyscrapers on the two sides of the road, lizards with multiple heads and venomous cysts crawled out and stared at the shuttle greedily.

But before they released their venom, the shuttle flashed by.

Li Yao had been carried to the backseat of the shuttle. He observed the world from a brand-new angle.

The two young fellows’ day had been full of twists and turns. After just surviving the disaster, they were struck right in the head by the devastating diagnoses, only to be given a slim chance of hope by ‘Grandpa Yao’ in the end again.

Right now, Han Te and Liu Li were still unable to calm themselves. Holding each other’s hands, they could not tell whether their hands were warm or cold.

“So, this is what the world looks like now,” Li Yao mumbled.

“The world has always been like this for us. Gray, barren, and full of fights and slaughter. You have to keep your eyes open every second, stay wary of threats from all directions, and search for the slightest food in ruins and crevices. But it doesn’t matter. Grandpa Yao, you are so awesome that you are almost an ultimate ‘old grandpa’. You will certainly live a good life here.”

Han Te shrugged and said, “I’m told that a long, long time ago, before Judgement Day took place, the world was different. It had green mountains, running rivers, and singing birds. That is what the few incomplete paintings I saw from master depicted. Tsk, tsk, tsk. How unbelievable. Could such a world really have existed?

“Grandpa Yao, can you tell me what the world of green mountains, running rivers, and singing birds is like exactly?”

Li Yao responded with silence.

Liu Li jabbed him softly and glared at him.

“Well…” Han Te scratched his hair hard and blushed. “Forgive me, Grandpa Yao. I almost forgot that you lost your body and your memories of the past, and the last remnants of your soul hid in loneliness for hundreds of years… Oi, Liu Li, you’re poking me again!”

He was a young man after all. Hearing that Li Yao would like to do them a favor, Han Te gradually became the carefree and disobedient guy he used to be.

Li Yao was not bothered at all. Smiling, he raised a very critical question. “It’s occurred to me that the resources here are highly insufficient. You can barely find a spiritual puppet for cleaning and maintaining purposes in the ruins of such a vast city. Besides, the radiation everywhere makes it impossible to grow crops on the land. From what I’ve heard just now, the Village of Peace alone has thousands of people, and there are more than ten villages in the hundreds of square kilometers around. How do you survive? Where do you get your food, water, training resources, weapons, and maintenance magical equipment?”

“Part of them come from scavenging and hunting,” Han Te said. “However, you’re quite right, Grandpa Yao. It’s been hundreds of years since Judgement Day. Almost all the city ruins have been explored hundreds of times by the scavengers. You’d be lucky to find half a track in them. As for hunting, the beasts that can easily be hunted have mostly been captured. The remaining animals are all the most ferocious creatures that are as difficult to deal with as those Thunder Salamanders. You’d have to risk your life to catch them, which is not a fair deal at all.

“Thankfully, abundant resources fall from the sky on a regular basis. Food, water, daily necessities, you name it. We mainly live on them.”

“From the sky?” Li Yao was slightly dazed. “Not only do ‘old grandpas’ fall from sky, but tremendous materials, too? Isn’t it too strange?”

“Not strange at all. It’s the gratuitous aid that the ‘angels’ offer to the ‘sinners’.”

Narrowing his eyes, Han Te searched the dark, gloomy clouds on the horizon. Then, his eyes suddenly shone as he pointed at the gray sky and exclaimed, “Grandpa Yao, look, it’s the Heavenly Rail!”

Li Yao looked into the distance. Releasing his senses to the maximum, he saw a super enormous rail that extended from the horizon behind him to the horizon in front of him through the entire sky.

Like a sword that stabbed into the sky and an endless bridge leading to the sea of stars, it could not have looked more splendid and magnificent!

Li Yao immediately recalled the circular rail stations that surrounded the entire planet when he broke into the atmosphere of the planet.

In great excitement, Han Te pointed at the sky and shouted, “That is the Heavenly Rail. Tremendous resources or even living people are projected from there often to help us survive through the difficulties. At the end of the interconnected Heavenly Rails, there’s Manjusaka, the City in the Sky, where angels live! One day, I will leave the wretched Land of Sins for the City in the Sky and the most brilliant universe beyond like my sister did!”

This was not the first time that Li Yao had heard the name Manjusaka, the City in the Sky, from him.

“Please explain,” he said briefly.

“Manjusaka, the City in the Sky, is the place built and inhabited by the ‘angels’,” Liu Li said. “It is also the gate between the Land of Sins and the universe.

“According to the seniors in the village, a long time ago, most of the people in the Martial Meritocrats Sector were unpardonable, ravenous criminals, whose attack against each other eventually led to Judgement Day that destroyed the surface of the entire planet. Those people are our ancestors.

“But not all people were as greedy and evil as them. Some of the kindhearted people with clear minds escaped from the catastrophe that would last hundreds of years. With the enormous ships they built, they fled before Judgment Day and travelled in the sea of stars.”

“Do you know what’s in the sea of stars?” Li Yao asked.

“Not exactly.” The two little fellows shook their heads. Liu Li said, “Whatever there is in the sea of stars, the kindhearted people have never abandoned their home and their compatriots. After Judgment Day, they returned to the planet that was scarred and ruined.

“Right now, they call themselves angels and have established the enormous Heavenly Rails and Manjusaka, trying to eliminate the pollution and radiation on the ground and repair the heavily-wounded planet.

“Before the Land of Sins is completely restored to its original appearance, they send all the necessary resources, weapons, and training arts to us via the Heavenly Rails, helping us to survive through the difficulties on the harsh land.”

“Do you really believe such legends?” Li Yao asked. “Since ‘angels’ can roam the sea of stars, why don’t they take all of you away?”

Biting her lips, Liu Li replied, “The angels have their limits, too. Perhaps their ships are not large enough, or they do not have enough resources to save each and every one of us.

“Besides… we are all ‘sinners’. The cursed blood of our ancestors with the genes of brutality flow in our veins. Just look at what happens in the Land of Sins, and you will understand. Pillaging, slaughter, arson, war. Most of the ‘sinners’ are even more brutal than the most brutal mutated beasts. Before they are completely purged, we are naturally unworthy of stepping into Manjusaka. Otherwise, what can be done if they cause trouble in the world of the angels?

“The so-called ‘Judgment Day’ was our ancestors’ own fault. The ‘angels’ do not owe us anything at all. It is generous enough of them to offer tremendous resources to us as aid so that we can survive. What qualifications do sinners such as us have to demand more from the ‘angels’? Wouldn’t that make us insatiable scoundrels?”

“That must be what the seniors in the village told you,” Li Yao sneered. “Where did they learn it in the beginning? Let me ask you again. Do you really believe in such legends? The seniors in the village naturally learned it from their own seniors. Generation after generation, the nonsense must’ve been passed on for hundreds of years!”

Han Te grinned and said, “Is there any difference whether we believe it or not? In any case, the ‘sinners’ who struggle to survive in the Land of Sins depend on the charity of the high and mighty ‘angels’ to live. As long as they offer the resources, it doesn’t matter what the legends are!

“However, hehehe, now that I have recovered some of my strength, I will definitely enter Manjusaka like my sister did to become a well-respected ‘angel’. Then, everybody in the village will live a good life. They will have food, water, and clean air aplenty!”

Li Yao was rather curious. “Your sister… is in Manjusaka, the City in the Sky? Can sinners turn into angels?”

“Yes.” Liu Li nodded heavily. “Han Te’s sister is very awesome. She is a real genius among geniuses and even stronger than my dad. She went to Manjusaka a long time ago. She is the greatest pride of the Village of Peace!”

Li Yao found it odd. “According to what you said earlier, the Village of Peace seems to be in the middle of a crisis right now. Why can’t you ask Han Te’s sister for help?”

Liu Li blushed, not knowing how she should respond.

Han Te’s face turned red in embarrassment, too. He was lost for words for a long time before he finally made up his mind and said, “The connection between the City in the Sky and the Land of Sins is intermittent. I have no idea where my sister is specifically, but it doesn’t matter. I will certainly go to Manjusaka someday and ask my sister about everything!”

Chapter 1956 - The Myriad of Old Grandpas!

Chapter 1956 The Myriad of Old Grandpas!

Despite the attempted cover-up of the young man and the girl, Li Yao still understood it.

Han Te’s sister used to be the best young expert in the Village of Peace that everybody in her village placed their hope on. Finally, she truly ascended to ‘the City in the Sky’, but she abandoned the villagers and even her own brother, never to return again.

Li Yao sighed and asked, “What exactly does Manjusaka look like?”

The two little fellows both grew excited when they heard the question. With brilliance more dazzling than stars beaming out of their eyes, they said at the same time, “Manjusaka is a paradise that has everything. Clean air and water, inexhaustible food and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, green mountains, running rivers and singing birds, forests! Wow. Forests. It’s said that a lot of tall trees grow in such places. There are green, thick leaves on the trees and bird nests among the branches. They are entirely different from the trees in our place!

“Besides, through Manjusaka, we can also travel in the infinite sea of stars. That’s really…”

The two little fellows described Manjusaka in amazement. Looking at each other, they were both at a loss about how to depict the glamor and splendor of Manjusaka. They suddenly laughed at the same time.

Li Yao smiled, too. He asked, “Then, it must be very difficult for someone to go to Manjusaka and become an ‘angel’, right?”

“Of course. All the sinners in the Land of Sins—I mean each and every one of them—want to go to the City in the Sky where they can live a happy, carefree, peaceful life without worrying about food. But how many people can actually make it?”

Han Te licked his lips and drew a big circle with his finger. “The Land of Sins is mainly divided into three worlds. As you must’ve sensed, Grandpa Yao, the area we are currently in is heavily polluted with high radiation. The resources here are highly insufficient, and not too much aid is projected from the Heavenly Rails regularly. Such areas are known as ‘Desolate Worlds’ in the Land of Sins. They are essentially the countryside of the planet.

“Life in the countryside is certainly very difficult. However, because of the lack of resources, few advantages can be taken here. So, the truly ferocious beasts and the insane bandits hardly visit such places. Therefore, we have managed to build some villages to protect ourselves.

“Most of the ‘sinners’ live in the uncomfortable ‘Desolate Worlds’.

“However, there are some locations where tremendous resources will be projected from the Heavenly Rails on a regular basis. When the time comes, all kinds of high-energy nutrition drugs, compressed food, filtration cartridges, antiradiation suits, and powerful magical equipment and techniques, as well as ‘old grandpas’ of all types and all levels, fall from the sky there.

“Those landing points of abundant resources are known as Bloody Worlds. You must’ve guessed it. The Bloody Worlds are where the real experts frequent and fight brutally. The strongest mutated beasts and the toughest bandits, as well as the most awe-inspiring criminals, are all active in those lawless places!

“Also, although the Heavenly Rails are high in the sky, they are connected to the ground by enormous iron ropes. Those iron ropes are all hollow and installed with some sort of ‘elevator’ and ‘vacuum shuttle’ inside, which can quickly transmit objects between the Heavenly Rails and the Land of Sins.

“Around the elevators and the vacuum shuttles, prosperous metropolises have been established. Those cities constructed under the support of the ‘angels’ are like oases in the desert. They are known as the ‘Elysian Worlds’.

“I’m told that all the Elysian Worlds are controlled by the most powerful gangs and experts in the Land of Sins. Each of them has their own rules. So, they are not as chaotic as the Bloody Worlds. You can find anything in the markets in the Elysian Worlds. All kinds of extraordinary professionals can be found there, too. The ‘brain doctors’ and ‘Meditation Healers’ can only be found in the Elysian Worlds if they do exist.

“Also, the angels will release quests through the Elysian Worlds regularly. As long as you complete the quests, you will be given a lot of cash and contribution points. After your contribution points surpass the threshold, you will be qualified to enter Manjusaka!

"Hehehe. I should've left for the Bloody Worlds three years ago. Who could've known that my capability would plummet? If I can really recover my strength, I will certainly have a few fights in the Bloody Worlds. As long as I am tough and lucky enough, and I can claim some secret treasures and resources that have fallen from the sky, my Cultivation will definitely soar.

"Then, I will go to the Elysian Worlds to complete the quests that the angels release and accumulate enough contribution points. In the end, I will be able to go to the City in the Sky to look for my sister.

"I absolutely don't believe that my sister is such an ungrateful person that she forgot the people of our hometown after she went to the City in the Sky. She—she must have her reasons. Or, she may be planning something big for the family and friends in the hometown. That must be it. I will find her and ask her about everything!"

The young man confessed the truth before he knew it. He realized that he had misspoken after he spoke and coughed somewhat in embarrassment.

Li Yao considered for a moment. Not particularly bothered about Han Te's sister, he said, "What are the quests that the angels release?"

Han Te was slightly dazed. "I don't know the details. I'm told that they are mostly about hunting deadly animals, capturing lawless criminals, or exploring ancient relics. The death rate is rather high, that's for sure. But this is Manjusaka, the City in the Sky, that we're talking about. It's certainly not a place any random person can visit."

The dim redness inside Li Yao's indicators flashed as he scanned the vague Heavenly Rails in the clouds of lead gray in the sky. He said casually, “The Heavenly Rails that you describe do not seem very high. They are not far away from the atmosphere. It is possible for the experts above average to fly to those places with flying swords or modified shuttles, isn’t it?”

Han Te’s and Liu Li’s faces immediately turned pale. Both of them shook their hands quickly. “Please don’t. You may not know this, Grandpa Yao, but us ‘sinners’ are not qualified to fly in the atmosphere, much less approach the Heavenly Rails. The sky is a forbidden area. Whoever is bold enough to fly beyond the atmosphere will be shot down mercilessly. Even the most awesome expert will be burnt to a crisp while they’re still in midair!

“We know that you must’ve been a very famous expert in the old days, Grandpa Yao, but however awesome you are, you are on your own after all, and it is impossible for you to defeat Manjusaka, the City in the Sky. The defense array of the Heavenly Rails is unbelievably powerful. Nobody has ever escaped from the Land of Sins in the past hundreds of years!”

“Therefore,” Li Yao said coldly, “if someone wants to leave the ‘Land of Sins’, Manjusaka is their only route, right?”

“Yes!” The two little fellows nodded at the same time.

Li Yao sneered hard and said, “Tell me more about ‘old grandpas’. From what I’ve heard, old grandpas are of different types and levels. Some of them are stronger than others, and they can even be traded on the black market. Also, your master, the leader of the Village of Peace, is an ‘old grandpa’. What is the meaning of that?”

Han Te did not know that his remark about selling ‘Grandpa Yao’ on the black market at the beginning had been caught.

He was so embarrassed that he hurried to explain, “Grandpa Yao, in case you misunderstand, I did not know that you are a ‘remaining-soul old grandpa’ back then. If we had picked a lifeless crystal-processor old grandpa, it wouldn’t be wrong at all to sell it because we are in desperate need of money, right?”

Li Yao’s soul emitted waves of confusion. “Remaining-soul grandpa? Crystal-processor grandpa? What are those things?”

“Let me explain it for you,” Liu Li said hurriedly. “The so-called ‘old grandpa’ is just a collective name. In fact, there are a lot of subcategories, and not all of them are the same thing. Even classified according to the most inaccurate standards, there are still ‘real-life old grandpas’, ‘remaining-soul old grandpas’, ‘crystal-processor old grandpas’, ‘spiritual-beast old grandpas’, and so on. There will be more types if you divide them more carefully!

“The so-called ‘real-life old grandpas’ are real human beings with flesh and blood. They have fallen from the sky and lost all their memories of the past, but they grasp the most marvelous techniques and the most daunting capabilities. My dad is one of them.

“Such old grandpas are all the treasures of the Land of Sins. If any village can get one, the strength of the village will be greatly enhanced! Therefore, after my dad was taken in by the Village of Peace at that time and then settled there with my mother, it is only natural that he slowly rose to become the leader of the Village of Peace.

“The second type is ‘remaining-soul old grandpas’, which is also the most common type. As their name suggests, they are also living human beings, except that they have lost their physical bodies for reasons we do not know, and they are forced to reside in all kinds of objects.

“It is most usual for them to reside in rings. Some of the old grandpas live inside swords, sabers, spears, or other magical equipment. Some live inside spiritual puppets. Some even reside inside a human’s body!

“The remaining-soul old grandpas normally do not have a high combat ability due to the loss of their physical body. They are prone to the interference of radiation and magnetic fields, too. However, with their abundant battle experience and their sophisticated techniques, they are still the best mentors. They are very popular in the Land of Sins!”

“Right. Grandpa, you must be a ‘remaining-soul old grandpa’, too, except that your case is slightly special,” Han Te said. “Most of the old grandpas fall from the sky, but you were actually dug out of the soil by us, Grandpa Yao. How strange was that?”

“What’s strange?” Liu Li replied. “Didn’t we come up with an explanation just now? There’s a second explanation. Grandpa Yao fell from the sky hundreds of years ago, but he was never picked up and slowly buried.”

“How is it possible?” Han Te argued. “The structure of the underground ruins was obviously very stable. There are not many holes on the ground, either. How could anyone have fallen so deep into the ground?”

Puffing her cheeks, Liu Li thought for a long time. “He must’ve been dragged into the underground ruins by a cat, a dog, or a mutated beast, you silly!”

“I don’t think…” Han Te scratched his head for a long time. He held his chest high and was about to argue, but seeing that his junior sister was glaring at him, he decided to let it go. “Fair enough. You do have a point, Liu Li. Grandpa Yao must’ve been dragged underground by a cat or a dog.”

Chapter 1957 - Train Even If It Means Death!

Chapter 1957 Train Even If It Means Death!

“Of course I have a point, because that is the truth.”

Liu Li smiled brilliantly. There was no telling whether she had temporarily forgotten the pain inside her head or was merely arguing with her senior brother to stop him from worrying about her.

Clearing her throat, she continued the introduction. “The third type are ‘crystal-processor old grandpas’. In fact, it is rather difficult to distinguish them from the ‘remaining-soul old grandpas’ because they live inside swords, sabers, spears… all kinds of magical equipment and even spiritual puppets.

“The only difference is that the remaining-soul old grandpas are living human beings whose memories are lost while the crystal-processor old grandpas are not human beings but some sort of artificial intelligence. Even if they can activate vivid human-shaped illusions, they are still false. All their reactions are simulated.

“Although they are not humans, the enormous databases of the crystal-processor old grandpas can also store many unparalleled techniques. They can even provide great help in a battle. As excellent mentors and partners, they are very popular!”

“When I first saw you, Grandpa Yao, I mistook you for a ‘crystal-processor old grandpa’. That’s why I said that I would sell you on the black market.” Blushing, Han Te was still arguing for himself. “The crystal-processor old grandpas that have stored a couple of techniques can be sold at a high price on the black market. In that case, we may be able to find a cure for my master’s disease. That was what I thought at the beginning.”

Li Yao’s indicators were blinking. “I’m starting to understand it. However, what are ‘spiritual-beast old grandpas’?”

“They are spiritual beasts, of course,” Liu Li said matter-of-factly.

Li Yao was slightly dazed. “Can animals become ‘old grandpas’, too?”

“Of course they can,” Liu Li said. “Since they have been projected by the ‘angels’ from the Heavenly Rails, the spiritual beasts are part of the ‘aid’ that has been donated to us. Such creatures have been enlightened by the ‘angels’ with wisdom.

“Even after they fall into a strange environment, those spiritual beasts will not attack human beings but will choose a young person from the crowd with whom they will sign a pact of blood. After that, their mind will be connected to the young person’s, and they will fight by each other’s side. Also, they will teach the young person some mysterious techniques without them knowing it.

“Naturally, the spiritual-beast old grandpas aren’t excellent teachers, but their combat ability is often particularly high. Therefore, they have their own advantages compared to other old grandpas.”

Li Yao simulated a voice of relief with the broadcast rune arrays and said, “That explains a lot. What a bizarre new world it is today. To think that there are so many types of old grandpas, and they can even be traded on the market! This is truly unbelievable!

“Then, all the training techniques you have are brought by the old grandpas?”

“Basically, yes.” Liu Li sighed and managed a smile. “Almost everything in the Land of Sins came from the sky as ‘charity’ from the angels. Dehydrated food, high-energy nutrition drugs, standard crystals, water-purging cartridges, old grandpas who carry tremendous techniques, as well as ordinary people…”

“Wait!” Li Yao hurried to interrupt her. “Ordinary people? You mean, a lot of ordinary persons are projected from the Heavenly Rails, too?”

“Yes. A lot of ordinary people are sent together with the assets every time,” Liu Li said. “They are of different genders and ages, but they have lost all their memories and have to begin a new life in the Land of Sins.

“According to the seniors in the village, those people have all committed crimes in Manjusaka, and their qualifications as ‘angels’ have been stripped, turning them into ‘sinners’. But I’m rather confused. If the adults are really criminals, what kind of unpardonable things could the kids and even the toddlers have done? Read more new novels on Listnovel.com

“The seniors say that they are the families of the sinners. It is heartbreaking to think that they are banished to the Land of Sins for someone else’s fault.”

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao said, “Resources are insufficient in the Land of Sins. One more mouth means greater consumption of food and water. Will you accept the ordinary people from the sky?”

“It depends. Different villages, forces, and gangs have different styles. Some of them will; some won’t,” Han Te said. “The Village of Peace tries to accept as many ordinary people as we can afford. This is my master’s principle.”

“The more hands, the greater our strength,” Liu Li said solemnly. “Ordinary people are not entirely useless. To struggle to survive in the Land of Sins, we must unite everyone that can be united and activate all their potential. My dad always says that.

“We all believe that he does have a point. Life is very difficult in the Land of Sins. Many villages are now suffering from serious gender imbalance, and some even only have old people and few children. Such villages will perish in the dust of radiation before long.

“Also, my dad often says that we have spent too long in the Land of Sins, and our bodies have shouldered all kinds of strange radiation. It might not influence us very much, but our children will show many sorts of abnormalities.

“As time goes by, after the abnormal bloodlines integrate with each other, humans will gradually be turned into monsters.

“The ‘new sinners’ from the sky have not received excessive radiation. They can bring fresh blood, give birth to healthy children, and ensure the continuity of the village!”

“Besides, ordinary people can grasp many kinds of useful skills, too!” Han Te said with a smile. “Although most of the ‘new sinners’ have lost their memories, they still remember the skills that they make their living on, like maintenance, treatment, hunting, and so on. During difficult times, we just grit our teeth and support each other!

“Those guys who mock my master for being too merciful in famines are all dumbfounded to see the population in the Village of Peace after the environment is slightly more favorable. Haha!”

Covering her face with her quivering hands, Liu Li said gloomily through the gaps of her fingers, “However, we have been told that in many places, and especially in the gangs in the Bloody Worlds, the ordinary people from the sky get exploited brutally.

“They’re lucky if they’re sold as slaves. Sometimes, they are… eaten alive.”

Li Yao’s soul showed no response, not because he was not infuriated, but because his wrath had surpassed the limits.

As thousands of thoughts flowed slowly inside his soul, Li Yao confirmed one last time. “All the Cultivation arts that you have been practicing are brought by the ‘old grandpas’ from the sky. After practicing those arts, did a lot of people have accidents and become… disrupted geniuses, as you said just now?”

Han Te and Liu Li looked at each other and nodded helplessly.

“Yes,” the young man said, “there are a lot of young people in our place who were mentally deranged during training. The Village of Peace alone has witnessed a couple of ‘disrupted geniuses’. Their capability soared quickly, and they were about to be qualified to travel in the Bloody

Worlds, but they simply plummeted overnight and became useless people.

“In the villages several square kilometers nearby, such cases are simply too many to be counted. Zhao Heiniu of Big Fish Village, Wang Tiezhu of Double Stones Village, Li Erlong of Four Square Dam… They were all rare geniuses that everybody knew, but they all perished in the end. Even the assistance of a couple of old grandpas was not enough to bring them back. How pitiful!”

“That’s understandable,” Li Yao said. “Your Cultivation plunged overnight, and you are almost a cripple compared to who you were in the past. But you do not strike me as very sorrowful and devastated.”

“It can’t be helped. I’m already used to it!” Han Te shrugged, with an expression on his face that suggested he was not scared of anything. “This is exactly what the Land of Sins is like. A couple of old grandpas fall from the sky every day, and an equal number of geniuses perish every day. If it happens to someone, they can only blame themselves for not being lucky enough. I was already quite lucky not to have been killed. What else could I ask for?”

“If such things are happening all the time,” Li Yao said solemnly, “has it never occurred to you that the Cultivation arts that you have been practicing might have deadly shortcomings?”

Han Te grinned and said, “Of course it has, but can we simply put the powerful, unparalleled techniques aside? Life in the Land of Sins is so difficult. Sometimes, a few lives are lost just because of half a biscuit. Even if you practice an unparalleled technique that has fatal shortcomings, you will not necessarily die on the spot. With any luck, you will live a long time without any accidents.

“However, if you don’t practice the techniques, you will be bullied because you cannot defend yourself. You will not be able to survive half a month here. Everybody can do the calculations, and they already have!”

After thinking carefully for a long time, Li Yao asked, “It’s been hundreds of years since Judgment Day. So, the first batch of old grandpas must’ve arrived from the sky with abundant arts and techniques hundreds of years ago, didn’t they? Have you never tried to modify the unparalleled techniques that you have and make up for the fatal shortcomings during those hundreds of years?”

“The succession of arts and techniques is not as simple as you imagine, Grandpa Yao,” Liu Li explained. “The environment on the Land of Sins is extremely harsh. It is not unusual that a whole village is massacred without a survivor. Most of the villages only have a history of a few decades. Few people have Cultivation arts that can be dated back to hundreds of years ago.

“Besides, in the world of bloody fights where the strong prey on the weak, even if somebody improves an art, they will dedicate all their wisdom to making the art more aggressive, brutal, and powerful. Who cares how much damage the art will cause to themself?”

“It’s exactly like Lightning Strangle, which I’ve been practicing. A lot of people in the Village of Peace practice it. Some people have occasionally met some problems, too. Did none of them, including my master, feel anything wrong?”

Han Te clenched his fists. “But what could we have done even if we knew it? We must still try our best in training because it is the best method of attack of the thunder class. Only with Lightning Strangle can we fight for more food, water, and energy!

“If we practice the arts, we may be mentally deranged, crippled, or killed abruptly in years to come. The consequences are indeed serious. But if we don’t practice the arts, we will not be able to even fight for hot excrement. Everybody will starve to death in a few days!”

Chapter 1958 - Flower of the Other Shore

Chapter 1958 Flower of the Other Shore

“Aren’t there any stabler arts?” Li Yao asked.

“Of course,” Han Te replied, “there are stabler arts, but stable means conservative, and conservative means weak. You can’t have all the best in the world. If we practice the stabler arts while other people practice the radical ones, naturally, the odds of other people injuring themselves will be higher, but they will be stronger than us before that, and they will rob us of our food, water, and all the other resources. They will even dismantle our bones and feed on our flesh and blood!

“We do not have any choice except to practice the arts that are more radical. Even if they do have fatal shortcomings, that is the least of our concerns.”

Liu Li sighed, too and said, “In fact, my dad and the other ‘old grandpas’ in my village thought about perfecting our arts and fixing the fatal shortcomings. At the very least, they can combine and make some arts that are both stable and powerful. To that end, even all the experts and old grandpas in the villages nearby were summoned once. But it was useless.

“It was partly because of the lack of resources and the sense of competition. But more importantly, as new-generation old grandpas arrive from the sky, they often bring arts that are more powerful, and naturally, more unstable.

“Yes. The dangers of the new-generation arts are higher, and the training will cause great harm to oneself. Normal people are not willing to practice them.

“However, there are always people who are determined to take the risk. Even if nine out of ten trainers are killed, the successful one may have an abrupt rise in capability and be able to monopolize all the resources in the hundreds of square kilometers around or even butcher all the other villages.

“To resist the bullying of such lunatics, we have no choice except to turn ourselves into lunatics and train ourselves following their example. Such a vicious cycle is perhaps the fate of the Land of Sins.”

After saying that, both of the two little fellows bit their lips and fell silent.

All that could be heard was the smoke and dust spraying from the two sides of the shuttle.

“What a perfect laboratory for new magical equipment and techniques!” the mental devil remarked in great amazement next to Li Yao’s soul. “By tossing ‘aid’ to the ground irregularly and controlling the quantity of the assets precisely, it’s more than simple to manipulate all the sinners in the Land of Sins, forcing them to struggle on the verge of death. They will not be entirely starved, but they have to fight each other brutally for the slightest resources!

“Through the generations of old grandpas that fall from the sky, all the techniques and magical equipment to be tested, which are highly dangerous and unstable, are given to the sinners as ‘gifts’. No coercion is needed at all to make the sinners volunteer to become lab rats for the Immortal Cultivators.

"After the test for a technique is done, and all the hidden problems and shortcomings in real combat are revealed or even perfected by the sinners, more radical, powerful, and unstable techniques are projected to begin a new round of tests.

"In the death contest where you kill or get killed, somebody will definitely take the risk. As long as one person chooses the new techniques, the other people can only grit their teeth and follow. This is an arms race!

"The Desolate Worlds; the Bloody Worlds; the Elysian Worlds; and Manjusaka, the City in the Sky. The four seemingly progressive worlds give the sinners a slim chance of hope. Like the carrot hanging in front of a donkey's head, they lure the sinners to train themselves crazily without bothering about anything, even if they clearly know that the arts that they are practicing are full of fatal shortcomings.

"It is needless to say that the various quests released by the City in the Sky are partly meant to maintain the Immortal Cultivators' reign on the Land of Sins and partly to collect data. It's killing two birds with one stone!

"What a marvelous design. It is much more efficient than forcing the slaves to train themselves under blades and chains in a simple and straightforward laboratory!"

Li Yao's soul was a bit cold. He was about to talk when the two little fellows both exclaimed at the same time, "Look, Grandpa Yao, look. That is Manjusaka, the City in the Sky!"

Li Yao increased the perception of his soul to the highest as he looked at the zenith of the sky.

At this moment, the dark night had fallen, but the sky was still gleaming in various colors while the dust of radiation was surging nonstop, as if groups of fireflies were dancing crazily.

Right above, at the edge of the high sky, it could be seen that a red star was glowing and blossoming like a chrysanthemum.

The flowing brilliance cascaded down like a waterfall, flying in the night wind both like upside-down flames and like the long hair of a siren.

“Manjusaka, the City in the Sky…” The young man stared at the night sky in a daze, his both eyes occupied by the brilliance as demonic as fire. He could not help but open his arms at the red star and declare, “I will certainly go to Manjusaka. I will!”

“It is said that seeing Manjusaka when the night just falls will bring good fortune for an entire year. I pray that dad and Han Te can get well soon. I pray that the village can survive the Bliss Ceremony this time. I pray that everyone is safe and sound,” the girl prayed in a low voice, her hands clasped together. “Please watch over the poor sinners, Manjusaka!”

“I just remembered that I’ve seen the name of ‘Manjusaka’ in a notebook of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures in the Heavenly Refining Tower,” Li Yao said to the mental devil coldly. “Manjusaka seems to be an extraordinary flower grown in the early years of the ancient Cultivators. It was also known by the locals as ‘Flower of the Other Shore’.

“It is a flower that is as beautiful as it is poisonous. It has the glamor of the setting sun and the pureness of the white snow.

“According to the legends of the locals, the flower grows on the shores of the river in hell. It emits a sweet smell that gives the deceased a moment of ecstasy so that they will cross the river in ignorance, step into hell, and fall into eternal reincarnation.

“The notebook of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures of the Hundred Smelting Clan gives no comments about such a legend, but it does agree that Manjusaka boasts a very powerful hypotonization and hallucinogenic effect. The flower can paralyze one’s nerves and even soul, making them die with a smile on their faces in bizarre dreams. All in all, it is a very dangerous material.”

“Isn’t it perfect?” The mental devil chuckled. “Wasn’t the outcome of the sinners predestined when the Immortal Cultivators named their laboratory ‘Manjusaka’? Think about it, if a sinner is able to practice dozens of different arts that have serious shortcomings without getting killed, and their strength even grows exponentially—allowing them to pass multiple tests, accomplish the most arduous quests, and accumulate tremendous contribution points—they are finally qualified to enter ‘Manjusaka’. Think about it. What awaits them in the crimson City in the Sky? Will they become ‘angels’, or will they be sliced up for study to analyze the mysteries of their bodies and figure out why they could have overcome so many shortcomings?”

“…Just like Han Te’s sister?”

The mental devil grimaced. “Maybe.”

After a long silence, Li Yao declared, one word after another, “We have to go to Manjusaka, the City in the Sky!”

“Exactly,” the mental devil said. “If Manjusaka is indeed the control center of the ‘planetary experiment base for magical equipment', it must have 'high-molecular layer-by-layer scanning magical equipment'. Chances are that there will be a lot of resources that can help us make significant progress. Of course we are going to Manjusaka!"

"There's also 'Starry Light', the mysterious resistance organization of Cultivators, and the legendary 'Lost Cultivator'," Li Yao said. "If the Land of Sins is truly an overwhelming laboratory that nobody can escape from, it is not strange at all that the people here will turn into real Cultivators after they learn the truth!"

"But we must tread lightly and not expose ourselves in any case," the mental devil said. "Since this place has been confirmed to be a laboratory of magical equipment and techniques for the Immortal Cultivators, there must be a lot of surveillance systems here. Chances are that high-resolution crystal cameras that can monitor every corner on the ground clearly have been installed all over the Heavenly Rails that surround the entire planet.

"The 'Desolate Worlds' we are in are the bottom level of the Land of Sins. The surveillance here won't be too strict. This is a place where people are encouraged to attack each other so that 'elite experiment subjects' can be screened out.

"After we reach the Bloody Worlds, the Elysian Worlds, and even Manjusaka, we will certainly be faced with the surveillance of a dragnet and ubiquitous prying."

"Therefore, we might as well take the two little fellows with us." Li Yao smiled. "The techniques that the Immortal Cultivators released for testing, despite the fatal shortcomings and problems, are indeed powerful enough. The two teenagers are experts above average even by the standard of the federation!"

Illuminated by the crimson light of Manjusaka, the three of them drove out of the city ruins, each thinking of their own business. Moving in the wilderness in silence for more than an hour, they returned to the Village of Peace.

“Grandpa, we are about to enter the territory of our village!”

Robbing and killing the travelers in the wilderness for their treasures was a daily routine in the Land of Sins. The two little fellows had been staying on the highest alert all their way here.

It was not until they saw a metal board standing on the ruins, which had the word ‘PEACE’ painted in enormous letters, that they finally took a breath in relief.

In front of them was a boundless lake. The sound of surging tides could be vaguely heard, as if they had come to an ocean.

Li Yao had observed the environment from the sky earlier and therefore knew that this place was still far away from the ocean. The lake that was hundreds of kilometers in diameter must have been formed by a few overlapping craters that were filled with rainwater. It was possible that they were melted with the canals of the past, too, allowing the fresh water to flow in incessantly, which kept the vitality of the lake.

Looking into the distance, Li Yao could vaguely see that dozens of rusted, iron-shelled boats had been connected, constituting a tall, tight-knit village on the water.

The place was ablaze with light although it was late at night. Countless people were busily working on the deck. Many smaller catamarans were rowing near the village, sending out ripples nonstop. This was the Village of Peace, which had a population of several thousand and could be counted as a ‘big’ village in the hundreds of square kilometers around.

Chapter 1959 - Bliss

Chapter 1959 Bliss

At this moment, hundreds of white, flawless flowers were blossoming in the sky of the crater lake that the Village of Peace was at while they fell in the wind.

A lot of flowers had already fallen to the surface of the lake. They were floating like jellyfish.

The flowers made all the villagers go crazy. They were either searching on the lake in boats or fighting for them in midair with curved magical equipment that was similar to a paraglider on their back. Their searchlights illuminated the sky as if it were daylight. It was quite a lively scene.

Li Yao focused his attention and could vaguely tell that they were parachutes that were carrying some metal boxes.

“A blessing from the angels!”

The two little fellows already saw the white flowers falling from the sky from a long distance away. They were both exclaiming in excitement. They explained to Li Yao, their faces still flushed, “That is the aid tossed from the Heavenly Rails. Before the ‘Bliss Ceremony’ every year, the frequency of the assets sprayed from the Heavenly Rails increases. It is some sort of additional grace. I didn’t know that we would happen to run into it today.”

Seeing that a parachute was blown away from the lake toward them, Han Te exclaimed, “There’s one over there!”

He turned the shuttle abruptly, running at the landing point of the ‘blessing’. He found the metal box that had already fallen apart at the edge of the lake. It was filled with soft bubbles as buffers.

Under the protection of the bubbles, there were two weapons that were blinking coldly.

“New magical equipment. Two of them!”

Han Te and Liu Li’s eyes shone. They picked up the new weapons and played with them in great interest.

Li Yao released feeble telepathic thoughts that attached to the weapons in the hands of the two little fellows before he studied their structure carefully.

The weapon was very similar to the ‘power knuckle’ in Li Yao’s memory. It could entirely cover one’s fingers, palm, and elbow. However, a thick metal ring was added above the wrist, and there were twelve deep blue crystals the size of pebbles on the surface of the metal ring. There was no telling what they were designed for.

The two little fellows, however, were quite familiar with the situation. They kneeled on the ground and searched among the bubbles. Soon, they found a jade chip.

After being pressed softly, a 3D light beam was released from the front end of the jade chip, introducing the usage of the weapon with images, the most simple and straightforward way.

The weapon was named ‘Heavenly Fire Thunderous Strike Ring’. It was indeed an upgraded version of ‘power knuckle’. Other than significantly increasing the damage of the user’s fists, it also boasted two additional techniques in melee combats and in remote shooting.

When switched to the melee mode, the metal ring attached to the wrist would generate the specific fields of electric arcs and flames to simulate the effect of thunderous sabers and sky-burning axes.

When switched to the remote mode, it would launch a cluster of plasma, electrocuting targets up to a hundred meters away.

Judging from the 3D images released by the jade chip, the weapon was indeed quite powerful. When fully activated, it could pierce a spiritual puppet in one attack.

“This—this is so awesome!”

Han Te and Liu Li were in a trance, and their mouths were bulged so wide that one might be able to stuff two eggs inside.

It is indeed a piece of rather ingenious magical equipment, but it is too radical!

Li Yao’s soul had searched the two weapons inside and outside dozens of times, scanning the rune arrays on every layer of them and memorizing the information. He could not help but shake his head in secret.

The spiritual stripes and rune array technology in the Imperium of True Human Beings was certainly slightly above the federation’s, but the structural analysis of such a mass-produced item was not very difficult for Li Yao.

He could tell that the weapon had adopted more than fifty highly-unstable rune arrays and jumbled them up with the most extreme architecture in order to achieve the maximal output efficiency. Even the circuits of spiritual energy were designed with no consideration of the redundancies of the system. They had adopted a very reckless approach that barely considered anything.

Yes. When it came to the design of general magical equipment, it was acceptable to occasionally adopt one or two extreme rune arrays. As long as the design of redundancies was excellent enough, the maximal performance of the magical equipment would be realized without raising the fault rate.

Li Yao himself was an expert adept at extreme rune arrays. He was best known for his ‘insane’ style in refining.

However, as insane as he might have been, he never would have jumbled dozens of highly dangerous rune arrays without leaving any redundancies. The sole safety measure on the weapon was two cheap stabilization systems.

Such an approach would always lead to serious faults.

Yes. The ‘Heavenly Fire Thunderous Strike Ring’ would certainly be much more powerful than normal ‘power knuckles’, but when they had a fault, it was possible that they would blow up the user’s entire arm or directly electrocute them to death.

A piece of high-precision equipment was probably made of thousands of tiny rune arrays with hundreds of thousands of spiritual energy models. It was practically a system of chaos.

If Li Yao was asked to examine it, he would not be able to tell what kind of attack or what amount of spiritual energy would cause the faults in the weapon.

That was perhaps what the designers of the weapon intended to find out in a ‘real-life test’.

Via ‘Blessings’, the high and mighty Immortal Cultivators simply throw the highly-unstable, problematic magical equipment to the sinners so that the sinners will help them run the tests.

The Imperium of True Human Beings’ industry of magical equipment and techniques is founded on the piles of bones of countless sinners who have been killed by each other in bloody battles.

In silence, Li Yao was exasperated.

Naturally, the two little fellows did not know the scheme of the Immortal Cultivators. Playing with the weapons in delight for a while, they suddenly remembered the knowledgeable and professional ‘Grandpa Yao’. They presented the Heavenly Fire Thunderous Strike Rings to him in great respect and asked him to evaluate it.

Li Yao had long scanned the weapons. Naturally, he was not interested in the two experimental weapons that were extremely dangerous. He simply looked at the horizon curiously. In the places far away from the Village of Peace, a lot more parachutes seemed to be flying in midair.

“Are you not going to pick up those assets?” Li Yao asked.

Han Te glanced casually and shook his head. “They are too far away and have already entered the territory of other villages. By the time we arrive, they will have been picked up by other villages. It is very possible that a conflict will break about. Since the ‘Bliss Ceremony’ is about to begin, there’s no need for us to get into a huge fight at this moment, which will cause great casualties.”

“What is the Bliss Ceremony?”

“The Bliss Ceremony is the projection of resources of the largest scale every year. The specific date and location are always announced by the Heavenly Rails one month in advance. There will be a hundred times more assets projected than you have seen today. The quality will be much higher, too. It is very possible that ultimate old grandpas with sophisticated techniques or even an entire arsenal will show up. So, that will be the greatest day for all the villages. Everybody is making preparations to get more things from the Bliss Ceremony!”

“It is exactly because the Bliss Ceremony is of paramount importance, and whoever gets more assets will ensure the livelihood of their entire village in the next year, that not only will all the villages around fight for them, but even the experts from outside covet them,” Liu Li added. “Sometimes, the gangs and bandits who are usually active in the Bloody Worlds come. Therefore, we can’t be more careful.”

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao asked, “So to speak, the competition on the Bliss Ceremony is certainly very fierce, and some people will possibly be killed?”

“Not possibly but certainly. A lot of people will be killed,” Han Te said solemnly. “The Bliss Ceremony concerns the life and death of a village. If a village does not get enough assets, not only will they decline by themselves, other people will also attack, rob, and destroy the village after learning of their weakness!

“In contrast, if a village gets enough resources in the Bliss Ceremony and demonstrates great capability, the wanderers nearby who have lost the protection of their villages will come to join them. A lot of experts will request to join the village, too. It will be a great opportunity for the village to expand!

“Take the Village of Peace for example. It was only a small village in peril with a population of around two hundred at the beginning. But after my master greatly distinguished himself in many consecutive Bliss Ceremonies as the unquestionable champion, getting tremendous resources for our village, the village gradually flourished.

“Since the Bliss Ceremony is so important, everybody risks their life for it. Therefore, bloody fights happen every year. A lot of people will die!”

Pausing for a moment, Han Te said again, somewhat embarrassed, “Although my master is the well-acknowledged top expert in the hundreds of square kilometers nearby, he is in fact not a fan of the bloody, cruel competition in the Bliss Ceremony. He always says that when we brutalize each other like that, we are like dogs trained to bite each other.

“He once considered altering the pattern of the Bliss Ceremony by promoting a way to distribute the relief assets fairly so that all the villages and everyone can be satisfied. However, even I feel that such a solution is absolutely impossible!

“All in all, the Village of Peace does not want to go too far. All we want is our fair share in the Bliss Ceremony. However, if other people come to rob us, it is not like that we will simply wait to be mugged. Am I right, Grandpa Yao?”

Li Yao gave no comment. Instead, he asked, “Just now, you said that the gangs and bandits who are generally active in the Bloody Worlds will arrive during the Bliss Ceremony, too. Can you defeat those guys?”

“We are not entirely hopeless as long as we are united.” Han Te waved his fists confidently. “The Bliss Ceremony does not happen in one place but covers the entire Land of Sins at the same time. In other words, when tremendous assets fall to the Desolate Worlds, there will be abundant assets in the Bloody Worlds, too, and the assets there will only be greater in number, better in quality, and highly in level than ours.

“The real tough gangs and bandits will naturally fight for the assets there. Those who run to the Desolate Worlds will only be the nobodies among the gangs and bandits.

“My master’s fame is well known in the hundreds of square kilometers around. Those mediocre gangs and bandits do not have the courage to mess with us.”

Chapter 1960 - Garbage and Junk

Chapter 1960 Garbage and Junk

While the three of them were talking, they stowed the two Heavenly Fire Thunderous Strike Rings into their backpacks. Then, they picked up the bubbles, scraps of the metal shell, and even the parachute and cables. Resources were scarce in the Land of Sins. The items had their own usages and must not be wasted.

It was not until there was not a single metal scrap on the ground that they activated the shuttle again and sailed to the Village of Peace, which was made of dozens of iron-shelled boats in the middle of the lake.

The villagers collecting the resources that they saw on their way were not fighting crazily but doing their work in different roles. Some were staying on alert, some were scouting, some were organizing, and some were calculating the assets that had fallen from the sky. They left the impression that they were a well-trained, obedient army.

No wonder the village had existed in the lawless, dog-eat-dog Land of Sins for decades and expanded from several hundred people to thousands. Han Te’s master, nicknamed Sky Breaking Hammer, was indeed a remarkable leader.

Li Yao released his vague telepathic thoughts, which were bound to the many villagers like a gentle breeze, while he perceived their vitality.

He discovered that the villagers were both physically and mentally strong. Their spiritual energy was surging like tides, suggesting that they were all experts above average. They would be one of the best troops even in the federation.

On second thought, it did make sense. The angels—or the Immortal Cultivators—treated the sinners in such a way that only the strongest of them could survive in the abnormal Land of Sins. Those who were not strong or fortunate enough had probably long been killed.

Of course, what the angels blessed the sinners with were all untested techniques with great shortcomings and danger. After scanning roughly, Li Yao noticed many hidden injuries inside the limbs and internal organs of the villagers. The circulation of their spiritual energy was highly unsteady. The odds of them going mentally deranged were almost twenty times higher than regular training.

The shuttle gradually approached the Village of Peace.

Li Yao saw another astonishing view. Many villagers—mostly old people, women, and dirty children—were burning incense and praying on the deck. They couldn’t have looked more pious.

“They are expressing their gratitude for the grace of the angels,” Liu Li said in a low voice. “Thanking the angels for bestowing so many weapons and assets upon us, which may imply that the angels are watching over us and will continue to protect us in the ‘Bliss Ceremony’ in half a month. We will be given more things, and the Village of Peace will thrive even more.”

Hearing Liu Li’s explanation and looking at the children and the women in ragged clothes kowtowing on the rusty deck so hard that their heads were bleeding, Li Yao felt as if his soul was even colder. Some women who were too old even passed out.

The three of them drove the shuttle into the parking area between two iron-shelled boats. Walking up the half-broken stairs, they happened to run into a group of villagers who had picked up a lot of assets from the lake and returned with full loads of trophies.

Seeing that Han Te and Liu Li were back, a lot of villagers who had just finished picking up resources smiled and greeted them. The two of them returned their welcome courteously. Despite the chaos and perils of the outside world, the atmosphere within the village seemed genial enough.

Li Yao noticed that the metal cases they had picked up contained new weapons that were shining coldly, hideous armor, or spiritual energy bars that stored explosive energy. Few of the metal cases stored synthesized food that was highly compressed and looked like gray bricks.

There were more weapons than food. The intention was obvious. The angels, or Immortal Cultivators, preferred the sinners to fight for food with weapons than to wait for food to come down from the sky.

“Come on. I’ll bring Grandpa Yao to master!”

Having recovered thirty percent of his past strength, Han Te could not have been more excited. He wanted his master to learn the news immediately. In the meantime, ‘Grandpa Yao’ could examine his master’s body condition, too.

Pretending to be a common spiritual puppet, Li Yao rolled his tracks in squeaky noises and followed the two of them.

However, at this moment, a malicious voice shouted from behind the crowd, “Han Te, wait!”

It was a bunch of teenagers around the same age as Han Te. They were all brawny and apparently arrogant, with leather armor full of iron nails on their bodies and thick steel plates beneath their boots. They swaggered and squeezed through the villagers in intimidating noises.

The young man in the lead had a pair of triangular eyes as well as an enormous garlic-like nose that nobody could ignore. He licked Liu Li’s face with his greedy eyes at first before he turned to Han Te in disdain. “I’m told that you were bold enough to explore Area ‘A3’. That place is full of high radiation and all kinds of mutated beasts. Is someone as worthless as you really brave enough to do that? You weren’t bluffing, were you?”

Han Te seemed to have a grudge with the triangular-eyed young man. His neck suddenly thickened in fury as he gravely said, “Zhao Chong, I do not need to report where I am going to explore to you!”

The young man named Zhao Chong cackled like a crow. Instead of talking to Han Te, he walked up to Liu Li, with even more scorching brilliance beaming out of his triangle eyes. He said ‘softly’, “Liu Li, if you want to find some good stuff from the city ruins to earn money for the village leader’s disease, why don’t you come with us? Everybody knows that my father is one of the best explorers in the village. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have been appointed as the captain of the exploration team! It will be both safe and rewarding if you come to explore with us. Wouldn’t it be much better than following this useless man? Look at you. You are hurt…”

Swallowing, he snatched at Liu Li’s arm that had been scratched with his hand that looked like an eagle’s claw.

“What are you doing!” Liu Li shrieked and took two steps back, disgusted by the guy’s abnormal hand caused by radiation. “Don’t touch me!”

Han Te burst into fury and stepped between Zhao Chong and Liu Li. “Zhao Chong, don’t be so outrageous!”

“Hehe. I was speaking the truth. You are useless. Am I wrong?”

Zhao Tong retracted his hand. With brutality and cruelty beaming out of his face, he rolled his triangular eyes for a moment and shifted his attention to Li Yao.

Li Yao’s rusty, unattractive appearance slightly dazed him. Then he burst into wild laughter. “Hahaha. Is this the treasure that you have found in Area A3 after searching for three days and three nights? A puppet for cleaning and maintenance, broken and riddles with holes. Even its tracks are falling. This—this is a piece of junk!

“Come on, brothers. Take a good at the treasure that Han He discovered through arduous effort at the risk of his life. Tsk, tsk, tsk. The shaking mechanical arms, the twisted antenna, and the unsteady tracks. You can certainly get a hundred coins if you sell it on the black market, right?

“However, it suits Han Te very well. One of them is garbage, and the other is junk. Aren’t they the perfect match?”

The unfriendly young people all laughed.

Han Te was so infuriated that dozens of thick veins protruded out of his forehead. He clenched his fists so hard that they were squeaking. Looking at Li Yao, he was uncertain of the attitude of ‘Grandpa Yao’. Taking a deep breath, he gnashed his teeth. “Liu Li, ignore them. Let’s go!”

“Wait!”

With an expression of a cat teasing with a rat on his face, Zhao Chong extended his thick arm again and blocked Han Te and Liu Li.

Han Te could not have been angrier. “Zhao Chong, what do you want? Are we not allowed to leave?”

“Of course you can.” Zhao Chong grinned hideously and looked at their backpacks. “However, the items that you found just now must stay.”

As it turned out, he had noticed that Han Te and Liu Li picked up the Heavenly Fire Thunderous Strike Rings on the shore through a telescope, and he wanted the two pieces of magical equipment.

“You should be well-aware that all the assets from the sky are distributed fairly according to demand,” Zhao Chong said coldly. “Those who discover the assets do not own them, or everything would be a mess. This is the rule of our village, established by your master, Liu Li’s father, our great leader of the village who admires fairness more than anything else. What, are you keeping your discoveries to yourselves?”

“Stop your slander!” Things became serious when the rule of the Village of Peace was questioned. His face flushed red, Han Te argued, “It is true that this is the rule of our village, but the rule is only effective within the range of the lake. For the assets that have fallen to the shore, those who discover them have the privilege to use them first, as long as they trade with their quota of other assets!”

The two Heavenly Fire Thunder Strike Rings were both the magical equipment of the latest generation that was rather powerful. With the Bliss Ceremony coming near, Han Te naturally did not want to submit the weapons.

“There’s indeed such a rule, but I clearly saw that the parachute fell to the lake first, and you picked it up from the shore, didn’t you?”

Zhao Chong turned around and asked the unfriendly young people around him, “Hey, that’s the truth, right?”

“Exactly. We saw it with our own eyes. That’s what happened!”

“It clearly fell to the lake first before you picked it up from the shore!”

“Garbage. They are the belongings of the village. Hand over the items and get out of here!”

The young men were all shouting and helping Zhao Chong. Outnumbered, Han Te and Liu Li seemed unable to defend themselves.

“You—” Han Te was at a loss for words.

“Garbage, one should not be so selfish. Even if you have a piece of excellent magical equipment, what can you do about it? Do you know how to use it? Do you deserve to use it?”

Zhao Chong continued looking at Han Te with his nostrils and demanded cockily, “You know that the Bliss Ceremony is only several days away. Only by giving the best magical equipment to the strongest warriors will the village get the most resources. This is all in the interest of the village. What do you have to say?”

“Exactly how long are you going to continue this nonsense?” Li Yao’s soul was also yawning hard as he sent a stream of feeble waves directly to Han Te’s brain. “Please, just start the fight already. Enough of the trash talk. Such clichés are a waste of everybody’s time!”

Han Te was rather shocked. “Who—who’s talking inside my head?”

“It’s me, Grandpa Yao!”

“Grandpa Yao, you want me to fight him?”

“Of course. What, you want to invite him to dinner? When he walked up to you with a hideous smile at the beginning, you should’ve already punched him in the face. Why did you ramble on so much?”

Chapter 1961 - Tough Bandit Zhao Lie

Chapter 1961 Tough Bandit Zhao Lie

Zhao Chong did not know that Han Te was speaking to ‘Grandpa Yao’ in his brain. Seeing the guy’s stupid and hesitant look, he thought that the guy was intimidated by him. He became even more arrogant and condescending. Opening his fingers that looked like an eagle’s claw, he snatched at Han Te’s shoulder and shouted, “Give it to me, garbage!”

He had intended to squeeze Han Te’s shoulder and break his bones so that he would kneel on the ground and cry before taking his backpack.

But out of his expectations, Han Te’s eyes shone brilliantly, and before his hand grabbed the target, the guy’s entire right arm unleashed dazzling electric arcs, which turned into a serpent of lightning and darted at his armpit brutally.

Zhao Chong was greatly shocked. He did not anticipate that Han Te’s electric arcs would have improved by several levels even though they were only away for a couple of days, nor did he foresee that the guy’s grasp of timing would be so perfect.

The bystanders exclaimed in surprise, too, not expecting that Han Te, a piece of ‘garbage’, would be bold enough to attack first.

“Argh!”

Although Zhao Chong evaded in a hurry, a few electric arcs seemed to crawl to the feeblest part inside his armpit brutally, causing him to scream in pain.

Han Te did not stop at all after attacking. He took four steps forward, and the electric arcs that were flashing on his fingertips all condensed on his shoulder like a solid shield made of lightning. He crashed into Zhao Chong's chest and blew the man away with blood spurting out of his mouth like an arrow.

"What!"

"How is that possible!"

"The garbage has in fact…"

The ten or so unfriendly young men all uttered textbook exclamations. Li Yao almost yawned when he heard them.

Zhao Chong's reaction, however, was slightly beyond Li Yao's expectations. The ruthless young man shrieked like a monster before he hit the ground. His entire right arm expanded to almost twice as large, and dozens of coldly-shining bone spurts burst out. It was also soaked in greenish flames!

"Bam!"

He turned in midair to stabilize his body before he stomped on the ground hard, resulting in a thunderous noise on the deck. Greenish brilliance beamed out of his pale eyes, making him look like both a hungered wolf and a hawk that was in agony because a few of its hairs had been plucked!

"Good. You've been practicing in secret and partly recovered your strength!" Zhao Chong laughed hideously and walked up to Han Te, his fingers opening and closing like daggers. “Let me see how good the garbage is right now!”

Han Te sniffed and did not say anything. The electric lightning was condensed into a lightning saber more than two meters long again and placed in front of him and Liu Li.

The green flames dancing around Zhao Chong’s arm gradually formed a devastating ghostly claw.

Toughness was highly worshipped in the Land of Sins. Even in the same village, duels large and small were anything but unusual. Seeing that the two of them were about to be engaged in a life-and-death battle, the unfriendly young men and the villagers who were watching did not stop them at all and simply cleared an open space for them. Thus, they could use their skills without concerns.

The electric arcs and the flames collided in midair, and the deep blue and the fluorescent green entangled and mauled each other. Neither of the two young men were giving in. A fierce battle was about to take place when somebody coughed heavily nearby. “Zhao Chong, what are you doing?”

Li Yao scanned with his soul, only to discover that a brawny, bald man was standing in the middle of a very powerful field of spiritual energy.

The brawny man was wearing a crystal suit, which was rare in the Land of Sins. He had such a big nose that it almost occupied half of his entire face. All his other facial organs were squeezed aside. Coldness and brutality beamed out of his tiny eyes.

Hearing the voice, Zhao Chong could not help but shudder in coldness. The daunting aura around him vanished. He glared at Han Te angrily, and making a throat-cutting movement, he grinned hideously. “After the Bliss Ceremony, I’ll settle the scores with you once and for all. Make full use of your last two weeks and train yourself well, garbage!”

Zhao Chong waved his hands and left the place with the unfriendly young people cockily.

The bold, brawny man who had gloomy eyes and looked very similar to Zhao Chong looked at Han Te thoughtfully before he disappeared into the cabin.

“*sshole…”

Although conflict was avoided, there was not the slightest delight on Han Te’s face. Instead, he looked gloomy and lethargic than ever as he said, “Grandpa Yao, let’s go to my master.”

“Okay.”

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao asked, “The baldy just now whose nose is bigger than his head, is he Zhao Chong’s father and the captain of the exploration team of your village? Is he trying to replace your master as the leader of the village?”

Han Te and Liu Li were both shocked. “How—how did you know?”

“Isn’t it obvious? One of you is the village leader’s daughter, and the other is his disciple,” Li Yao analyzed casually. “Even if you are indeed useless right now, it is not unusual at all for geniuses to be disrupted in the Land of Sins. With any luck, your strength will come back again if you run into a powerful old grandpa.

“Under such circumstances, no matter how much they dislike and despise you in their heart, there does not seem any need for them to have an open conflict with you, especially not when the ‘Bliss Ceremony’ is approaching. Should they be injured in the fight, wouldn’t it be a terrible outcome for them?

“Although that Zhao Long guy does have a disgusting face and looks like a mediocre lackey of some villain, he should’ve been smarter than that. It is possible that he might ask for your trouble in secret, but when he provoked you on purpose with such a sensitive issue as ‘allocation of assets’ in daylight before so many people, it was certainly not just on the spur of the moment.

“If you had truly been knocked to the ground by him and the Heavenly Fire Thunderous Strike Rings were taken away, wouldn’t it prove that you were trying to keep the possessions to yourselves? In my opinion, in such an inadequate place as the Land of Sins, and at such a sensitive period before the ‘Bliss Ceremony’, the crime can be either severe or grave, but it will definitely be a great blow on the authority of the village leader.

“Because of the serious illness, the village leader’s strength has plummeted, which has already shaken his position. If his daughter and his disciple have a ‘misdemeanor’ and break the rule that he made himself, how could he continue working as the village leader?

“Judging from the confident appearance of Zhao Chong just now, it seems that the ‘captain of the exploration team’ is an important post in the village. If the village leader has lost both his strength and his authority, it is possible that he will be able to take his place.

"But as it turned out, your strength far exceeded the expectations of Zhao Chong and his father. The two of you seemed to be on par with each other in the fight. Should you have luckily knocked Zhao Chong down, the issue of him intentionally provoking you or even setting you up might have been mentioned. Then, everything would have been very tricky. That's why the captain of the exploration team showed up in time and stopped your fight, and that's why I asked you if Zhao Chong's father wants to become the village leader."

The two little fellows were dumbfounded for a long time before they finally digested Li Yao's simple analysis. Looking at each other in bewilderment for a while, they eyed Li Yao in a more respectful way.

Han Te thought for a long time. He nodded first but shook it later. "Well, yes and no. In the villages of the Desolate Worlds, the captain of the exploration team is indeed a very important post because they are responsible for the hunting of animals and treasures in the city ruins with the most elite warriors of the village. If assets fall from the sky far away and must be collected, the captain of the exploration team will generally lead the charge. It's a very dangerous and very important job. Generally speaking, they are always the top-ranked experts in the village, and they are essentially 'vice leaders' of the village."

Li Yao nodded and added, "Understood. A vice leader in charge of military affairs."

"Zhao Chong's father Zhao Lie is indeed a very awesome expert. It is said that he used to be a tough bandit in the Bloody Worlds, but he suffered some wounds, and his Cultivation dropped a little bit, making it impossible for him to survive in the Bloody Worlds anymore. That’s why he ran to this Desolate World and joined the Village of Peace.”

“Despite his unknown wounds, he is still one of the best experts in the Desolate Worlds,” Liu Li added. “His strength was only slightly lower than my dad’s in the first place, and he had abundant fighting experience. That’s why he was appointed as the captain of the exploration team.”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. “Even tough bandits can join your village?”

“According to the old people, his identity was unknown at the beginning. He was found lying outside of the village, covered in bruises and blood. It was not until after his injuries were recovered and his strength was revealed that somebody gradually guessed his origins,” Han Te said. “At that time, he worked very hard for the village. He helped the village find a lot of good things from the city ruins and hunted many ferocious animals. He was also willing to teach his techniques to the young people in the village. So, how could they have kicked him away?

“Besides, what’s the difference between bandits and sinners in the Land of Sins? Who can really distinguish them?”

“Uncle Zhao Lie… is probably not entirely a bad person. He perhaps does not want to be a simple village leader, either.” Liu Li was actually defending Zhao Lie. “He saved my father’s life many times. When their relationship was best, they were like real brothers. Uncle Zhao Lie is as credible as my father for what the Village of Peace has achieved today.

“It is a shame that they gradually split apart and turn against each other because of different ideologies.”

“Oh? What kind of different ideologies?” Li Yao asked in great interest.

“My father is more conservative. He believes that it will be good enough if the Village of Peace is kept to the scale of several thousand people,” Liu Li said. “My father always says that we should never attack until we are attacked. Since we are the biggest village in the hundreds of square kilometers around, we have to give other people something to survive on. There is no need to drive them to death ruthlessly.

“Zhao Lie, however, believes that even if you do not want to hurt a tiger, the tiger will still swallow you. The Village of Peace today is so prosperous that it has become a common enemy for all the villages nearby. Even if we let them go occasionally, they will not bear the favor in mind and will only try to diminish and even destroy us.”

“Therefore,” Han Te said coldly, “we must attack actively while we are strong to annihilate all the villages nearby in order to guarantee the safety of our village. If we don’t, we will certainly be attacked one day!”

Chapter 1962 - Its Name Is “Fiend Star“!

Chapter 1962 Its Name Is “Fiend Star“!

“All in all, Uncle Zhao Lie believes that my father’s petty kindness will only bring us trouble and that we will be killed sooner or later if we idle by. For the future of the Village of Peace, we have to attack and demolish all the villages nearby.”

After a long sigh, Liu Li said, “My father thinks that Uncle Zhao Lie cannot change his nature of a bandit and that his ruthlessness will be a disaster for the village!

“Zhao Lie has lived in the village for twenty years. As the captain of the exploration team who went through life and death, he made great contributions to the village many times. Naturally, a bunch of disobedient, ambitious guys listened to his command and demanded to sweep across all the villages around and take a great army to march into the ‘Bloody Worlds’!”

Han Te snorted. “Many young people in the village have been deceived by Zhao Lie and convinced by his ideals. His son, Zhao Chong, has made a society named ‘Iron-Blooded Youths’ in the village. They cause trouble every day.

“Before, they were awed by my master’s strength and only dared to instigate trouble in secret, not having the courage to jump out openly. But ever since my master’s strength dropped after the uncanny illness, rumors have been spreading out of the village, and Zhao Lie and his son have become much more flagrant than before. Today, they have even provoked us blatantly. Perhaps, just like you said just now, Grandpa Yao, they are planning to kick my master aside and set up their own regime.”

Li Yao was silent. In the abnormal, man-made laboratory that was the Land of Sins, it was hard to say which was correct—expand the army and embark on the path of conquest or stay in one’s own territory and be secluded from the outside world.

The two little fellows led Li Yao into the bottom cabin of a boat. They zigzagged in the dark pathways for a long time before they finally entered a fairly large greenhouse, with a transparent dome made of glass and soft mud below the feet.

Li Yao’s tracks slowly moved over the mud. He could sense the bountiful water and nutrition inside the soil clearly.

The soil in the greenhouse was entirely different from the dry land that suffered from radiation and pollution outside. It was full of the flavor of vigor.

As far as he could see, green-and-gold crops whose name Li Yao did not know were grown in the field. Their ears were so full that they were about to explode and were dangling down like windchimes, emitting a refreshing fragrance.

Deep inside the greenhouse, a slim man with thick bones, whose arms and legs were particularly long but whose skin was dry and sallow, was tending to the crops carefully but somewhat clumsily.

His solemn expression when he was watering the crops seemed to suggest that he cherished every drop of water he had.

“Master!”

“Dad!”

Han Te and Liu Li hurried to greet him.

The middle-aged, disease-stricken man with a pair of clear and sharp eyes was Gu Zhengyang, the leader of the Village of Peace, known as ‘Sky Breaking Hammer’.

“You’ve been to Area A3?” Gu Zhengyang’s eyes were as sharp as lightning as he observed them for a long time. Concluding that neither of them were seriously hurt, he finally heaved a sigh of relief. He coughed lightly before he said with a reproaching tone, “As I told you before, I am merely exhausted and do not have any serious issues. Even if I did, would your trip to Area A3 help at all? The future of the Village of Peace depends on you. You must not toy with your life!”

The two little fellows lowered their heads under the criticism.

Gu Zhengyang sighed and said, “Is everything okay?”

“Yes. Everything is great!” Han Te rolled his eyes and then released a tiny ball of lightning inside his palm. Making the deep blue electric arcs outside swirl quickly, he declared, “Master, look, my Cultivation is slowly recovering!”

“What?” Gu Zhengyang was rather shocked. He grabbed Han Te’s wrist and sensed the flow of spiritual energy inside his veins. Then he was even more baffled. “It’s true. Your veins have all been dredged. They are now even broader than before. What—what exactly happened?”

Han Te looked at Liu Li and coughed. He began to tell the tale that Li Yao had given him on the way here. “We came across a Thunder Juggernaut that we had never seen before in the underground city in Area A3. The stripes on its skin were like stars, with ripples spreading out. It was not a tumor that grew above its head but something like a blossoming flower. There were also dozens of bluish tentacles inside the pistils. All in all, the creature was weirder than anything I've ever seen!

"Since we'd run into each other in the narrow path and I did not have anywhere to escape, I could only fight the mutated Thunder Juggernaut. Naturally, I was no match for the beast. I was gradually running out of strength and about to be killed in its bloody mouth, so I made up my mind and thought I'd better die together with the animal. In the moment, I grabbed the 'pistils' above its head and yanked them hard!

"After that, I heard a deafening roar and felt that an overwhelming torrent of lightning flooded into my body, electrocuting my internal organs, veins, and nerves into burnt coal. I couldn't hold out any longer and passed out!"

Gu Zhengyang was hooked by the story and naturally did not realize that his disciple was making up the 'fierce fight'.

"Yes. I watched the whole battle nearby, and I was rather shocked, too!" Liu Li helped with the explanation. "I saw that an enormous ball of lightning enveloped my senior brother and leaked into his body in streams. His veins, bones, and internal organs were all revealed under the electrocution! Perhaps that was the life-saving ultimate skill of the 'mutated Thunder Juggernaut'. All in all, it ran off after releasing the high-intensity electric currents."

In great delight, Han Te described vividly, "I did not know how long it passed when I was finally woken up by my junior sister from the coma. After I woke up, I felt pain all over my body as if it had been torn apart, but my Cultivation was somehow greatly recovered. Also, the spiritual energy inside my body was flowing much more agilely and vigorously!"

"Master, please take a look for me. What exactly happened?"

Gu Zhengyang groped Han Te's bones and acupoints carefully for a while. With intense confusion beaming out of his eyes, he shook his head slightly and said, "A Thunder Juggernaut with starry spots and not a tumor but a flower above its head? I have never heard of such a species before. Perhaps it is a new mutant.

"As for what happened to your body, it is quite perplexing. The ultra-powerful electric arcs unleashed by the mutated Thunder Juggernaut should've killed you directly. Perhaps they conflicted with the strength that smoldered inside your body, and the blocked acupoints were broken through again.

"I need to consider the specific reasons carefully. The bottom line is, it was not right for the two of you to sneak out. The disaster turned out to be a blessing this time, but will you have such good luck next time? Cough, cough, cough, cough…"

"Master, we both know we were wrong."

Following Han Te's hint, Liu Li hurried to move forward and massaged her father's back. Han Te took the opportunity to change the topic by pushing Li Yao forward. "Right, master. We also found a treasure in the underground part of Area A3. Look!"

"A civil puppet… for cleaning and maintenance purposes?" Gu Zhengyang eyed it up and down. "It is an ancient model, but it is still in a good condition. At the very least, it is still functional. We may get a few coins if we sell it on the black market. If we slightly modify it, it can also stay and help us maintain the village. You’ve done a good job.”

“No, dad. It is very impressive.” Liu Li also followed the script that Li Yao had them without changing her facial expression. “It is no common puppet for cleaning and maintenance purposes. We believe that somebody might have poured enormous war puppet databases into its crystal processor, which can turn it into a very powerful ‘war pattern’. The only problem is that its shell right now is too weak for it to perform the skills.”

“Just like this.”

Han Te threw a piece of rotten wood at Li Yao casually. After a sharp edge flashed, Li Yao controlled the jigsaw of the Universal Janitor to trigger dozens of arced lights and chop the rotten wood into a hundred fragments in the same size.

“Look, master. This is not something that an ordinary civil puppet can do. We believe that a lot of mysterious things must be hidden deep inside its crystal processor. After all, hundreds of years have passed since Judgment Day. Who knows what the people hundreds of years ago did to the machine?”

Han Te rubbed his fists in enthusiasm. “Liu Li and I thought about dismantling the crystal processor and seeing what makes it so weird. But the studies of crystal processors in the ‘Desolate Worlds’ are too unprofessional. It is possible that we will not be able to reassemble it after we dismantle it! All in all, I feel that there might be a nice surprise if we strengthen and upgrade it with some military components!”

“A civil puppet that holds military databases?” Gu Zhengyang was slightly dazed, not entirely interested in Li Yao’s performance of dissecting the rotten wood instantly. He smiled and said, “You are indeed very creative. It does make sense. The ancient people hundreds of years ago were fond of making strange, mysterious stuff. There are too many incomprehensible things in the Land of Sins today. A civil puppet with a military pattern is not a big deal.

“This is an unimportant issue. Since it was the two of you who discovered the item in the highly-dangerous area outside of the village, it belongs to you. Whatever components you want to strengthen and modify it with, just take them from the warehouse. But remember, even if you take away nothing more than a screw, you must leave the record on the ledger and exchange your contributions in the Bliss Ceremony for it.”

“Great!”

The two little fellows cheered at the same time.

In such a case, Li Yao would have enough components of a low level to perform the first modifications on the ragged body.

Then, if he displayed a shocking performance in the battle later, there would be a somewhat reasonable excuse.

Seeing that the problem that had bothered his disciple for three years was resolved and that his daughter was so happy, Gu Zhengyang felt rather happy, too, and asked with a smile, “Does this thing have a name?”

Han Te and Liu Li looked at each other and said at the same time, “Fiend Star. Its name is Fiend Star!”

Chapter 1963 - Na?ve Ideals

Chapter 1963 Na?ve Ideals

“Beep! Beep!”

As if he were responding to the call of the two little fellows, the indicators were flashing rapidly, and the jigsaw that was supposed to trim grass was also waving softly.

“Marvelous!” Han Te rubbed his fists and said confidently, “My Cultivation is slowly recovering after my veins and nerves were broken through by the powerful electric arcs, and we have received the mysterious spiritual puppet ‘Fiend Star’. They are all good signs. Master, just rest assured. Nothing will go wrong in the Bliss Ceremony this time, and we will return with full loads as we did before!”

Gu Zhengyang’s smile suddenly dimmed. After a brief silence, he took a long breath and said, “About the Bliss Ceremony this time, I have transferred the command to Captain Zhao. He will be in charge of everything.”

“What!” The two little fellows were shocked. “Master, how could you have given the commandership to Zhao Lie? Everybody knows that he is ambitious and has been trying to steal your power and take your place for a long time! Right now, Zhao Lie already has a batch of loyal accomplices in the village. His influence grows greater each day. If such a mission as important as the Bliss Ceremony is fully entrusted to him, he will certainly take the opportunity to gather power, win more support, and diminish your influence. In the end, he will sit on our neck!”

“Exactly, Dad,” Liu Li said worriedly. “Uncle Zhao Lie’s conflicts with you are becoming more and more intense. Just now, Zhao Chong even intentionally caused trouble for my senior brother and accused us of keeping assets to ourselves. It was truly shameless of him.”

“I know that you have always been lenient and considered for the big picture, master,” Han Te said, “but if we back off, other people will only think that we are weak and bulliable. They will show no respect for us and demonstrate their power above our head!”

Gu Zhengyang coughed for a moment and said, “You should know that I have never been a man who wanted power. Besides, there is little power in managing a village of several thousand people. If Zhao Lie wants it, he is free to take it.”

“How can that work?” The two little fellows were anxious. Han Fei bulged his eyes and said, “Master, this is not about the position to lead the village. Haven’t you always disagreed with Zhao Lie’s belief and thought that his brutality and aggression will only bring disaster to the Village of Peace? If he truly becomes the village leader, the whole Village of Peace will become a huge nest of bandits, and war will spread to the hundreds of square kilometers around. There will never be any peace!”

“Yes, Dad. Your ailment is only temporary. It will probably…”

Glancing at Li Yao, Liu Li said affirmatively, “It will certainly be cured!”

“It has nothing to do with my illness.” With frustration beaming out of his face, Gu Zhengyang touched the golden ears of the crops softly and sighed. “Liu Li, your mother has been gone for four years.”

Liu Li was slightly dazed, not sure what her father meant.

“Your mother was a very innocent woman. When I first met her, she was only about your age.” Gu Zhengyang sat on a ridge in the farmland and reminisced about the past a long time ago while smelling the fragrance of the ears. “At that time, I had only just fallen from the sky. My brain was utterly blank, without any memory of my past except for the techniques of slaughter and destruction. Those things revolved crazily inside my head like giant swirls, turning me into an ignorant and overwhelming beast.

“At that time, the Village of Peace only had one iron-shelled boat and several hundred people, not nearly as large as it is today. Even the greenhouse that we are in right now was merely a corner where several crooked plants that looked like bulrushes were grown.

“I’d already wandered for a few months like a ghost in the city ruins. The world I saw was filled with nothing but darkness, blood, slaughter, betrayal, and destruction. The few plants that I occasionally found in the gaps of the ruins and the dark corners were either tied up by stinky, venomous vines or spurting highly acidic fluids. I’d never seen such a vigorous and hopeful thing.

“I was so stunned when I saw the gold plant that I asked the little girl who was tending to it carefully what it was.

“She told me that it was Gold Barley, a ‘crop’ and a treasure that could save the entire Land of Sins and save the sinners from the daily bloody fights.

“She said that it was because the Land of Sins was barren and no crops could be grown that people were short of food and clothes and could only pray for the aid sprayed from the Heavenly Rails. To fight for the aid and the slim chance of survival, we compete with each other every day and have turned from humans to beasts.

“If a crop could grow vigorously on the barren land that was rife with pollution and radiation, everybody would have enough food to eat. Then, there would be no need for us to count on the relief from the Heavenly Rails to survive, and there would be no need for us to be hostile and wary of each other, or to maul and bite each other like ravenous wild dogs!”

Han Te and Liu Li were so attracted that they could not help but hold each other’s hands.

With tears shining inside her eyes, Liu Li softly said, “My mother was right. If Gold Barley can really be grown throughout the Land of Sins, transforming the barren earth into a golden field, there will be no more conflicts, no more bloodshed, no more fights, and no more gangs and thugs who are like beasts. Even we won’t need to become beasts.”

Gu Zhengyang grinned, his smile both gentle and bitter. He mumbled, “Yes, she was right. She was obviously a naïve and weak girl, but when she described her vision, there seemed to be swords inside her eyes that scared me from looking at her face even though I had been travelling for quite a few months in the city ruins as an adventurer.

“Enticed by the future that she envisaged, I stayed and turned the one iron-shelled boat of the Village of Peace into fifteen. Together with her, I turned the greenhouse from one corner at the rear of the cabin to half a deck. Before she passed away, I also held her hand and swore that I would grow Gold Barley throughout the Land of Sins someday!

“But—but right now, I’m getting more and more suspicious if the picture that we’ve been longing to see will ever come true.”

Gu Zhengyang stabbed his fingers into his hair. As if the heavy burden of life had broken his back, he moaned in great pain.

“Master, everything is getting better. We will certainly realize masteress’ dream and grow Gold Barley all over the land!” Han Te clenched his fists and raised his voice. “Do not give up hope!”

“But I… really can’t see any hope right now,” Gu Zhengyang said sullenly. “In the past few decades, I’ve been training and fighting crazily to protect the Village of Peace and accumulated a lot of hidden injuries. This time, all of them have burst out, leading to my great illness and the decline of my Cultivation. I cannot even stop a landslide, much less make a recovery. But it is within my expectations. I’m already more than satisfied to have made it to this day.

“However, the sixty-third transplantation of the Gold Barley has failed again. This is already the crop that your masteress and I carefully picked out with the highest resistance to drought, radiation, and pollution, but it still cannot survive in the radioactive area outside. Even if they are grown only slightly outside the village’s range, the yield will be appallingly low and cannot meet the demand of an ordinary person.

“There’s also the harassment of all kinds of goddamn mutated beasts that always come to destroy the experimental farmlands that we’ve established. We have to dedicate a lot of labor and resources to defend the farmlands. It is not a fair deal no matter how you calculate it.

“Therefore, when I was experiencing a high fever because of the disease and looked at the rusty ceiling, I couldn’t help but wonder if the path that your masteress and I have been walking on is practical. Can we really grow Gold Barley all over the Land of Sins and settle all the conflicts here? Am I really right, or is Zhao Lie’s option the more sensible and correct one?”

“Dad!”

“Master!”

The two young fellows were even more anxious. Each holding one of Gu Zhengyang’s arms, they tried their best to transmit their young, warm strength to the middle-aged man who was sick and upset.

“Of course you are right. You must not be frustrated. Let’s try ten more times, a hundred more times, and a thousand more times. One day, we will succeed!”

“But we are already out of resources and time,” Gu Zhengyang said coldly. “Zhao Lie is not wrong about one thing. The Village of Peace today has reached its expansion limit and is caught in an awkward situation.

“The tranquility and high-speed development in the past twenty years have made the population of the Village of Peace increase by almost thirty times. Other than the adults who joined our village from everywhere, a lot of babies have been born in the village. Every new person means a bottomless hole that can never be filled.

“However we try to explore and fight, there are never enough assets in the warehouse. Even if we can get enough resources from the Bliss Ceremony this year, it will not solve our problem forever. I really have no idea how the Village of Peace can carry on if the population of the village is doubled, or merely increased by fifty percent, in the next couple of years. By then, we will not need anyone to attack us but will be split apart and mired in a civil war on our own.”

The two little fellows both fell silent. After a long time, Han Te finally said, “As—as long as your illness is cured soon and your unparalleled strength is recovered, there will be no problem!”

“Silly child.” Gu Zhengyang extended his tough hands and rubbed Han Te’s hair with a bitter smile. “Your master is old and cannot protect the Village of Peace forever. Even if the Village of Peace runs according to my rules while I am standing, what will happen after my eventual fall? Will the Village of Peace immediately become like any other village or even like one of the gangs in the Bloody Worlds?

“Such a future pains my heart and keeps me up at night.

“If this is the inevitable outcome, I might as well discuss the way out for our village while I still have some strength. Maybe we can each make some concessions and set up rules that are acceptable for both of us.

“As for the more distant future, it will depend on the work of you, Liu Li, and all the people of the new generation!”

Chapter 1964 - Crazy Modification: Five Pairs of Bogie Wheels!

Chapter 1964 Crazy Modification: Five Pairs of Bogie Wheels!

“Rest assured, master!” Han Te waved his fists in hot blood. “We will certainly try our best to pave the entire Land of Sins with the Gold Barley!”

Gu Zhengyang hesitated for a long time, but he simply waved his hands and said, “Okay. You must be exhausted after three days of exploration outside. Go and get some rest. Prepared for the Bliss Ceremony in half a month!”

Han Te and Liu Li nodded and left the greenhouse for the warehouse.

While they were still on their way, Liu Li could not help but ask, “Grandpa Yao, how is my father’s situation?”

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao said, “Based on my senses, his problem is indeed very similar to Han Te’s. Both of their veins, nerves, limbs, and internal organs are clogged because of the excessive discharge of the mitochondria caused by the Lightning Strangle that they’ve been practicing. That is not very difficult to fix. In a few days, I can teach Han Te a secret art that can accelerate the flow of their spiritual energy. It will generate a few clusters of wandering electric currents inside your body and break the stuck acupoints.

“As long as Han Te asks his master to examine him carefully with the excuse that he is not feeling well, his master will naturally perceive something. If his master follows his training, his master’s symptoms will be greatly alleviated, and his strength will be partly regained, too.

“However…”

Han Te and Liu Li asked in a hurry, “However what, Grandpa Yao?”

“In fact, Leader Gu was not wrong about one thing,” Li Yao replied. “He must’ve been through countless dangerous battles in past decades, which caused his body to be plagued with wounds and holes. He is on the verge of collapse.

“According to my observation, his muscles, veins, nerves, and critical organs have all been exhausted to the limits. Even the fire of his soul is dimming. That is what really matters now.”

“Well…” The two little fellows looked at each other in bewilderment. With sorrow beaming out of their faces, they both begged, “Master Yao, please give him a hand!”

“It is a law of nature to age and die. After one’s soul, vitality, and combat ability reach the peak, they will inevitably begin to decline,” Li Yao said casually. “I may have a solution for a simple illness, but how can I reverse the process of getting old? Even if he gets rid of the fleshly body and hides inside an iron shell like me, the irrelevant thoughts inside his soul will become redundant and eventually overflow, leading to his collapse. Nobody can live an eternal life.

“The good news is that Leader Gu is not that old yet. If he can treat his wounds according to the secret technique that I will teach Han Te, it shouldn’t be a problem for him to survive another ten to twenty years.”

Han Te and Liu Li looked at each other and were both greatly relieved.

In the insecure Land of Sins where the strong prey on the weak, it was already unbelievably fortunate to live in peace for ten to twenty years.

“Leader Gu was right,” Li Yao said. “The new generation including the two of you are the future of the Village of Peace and the Land of Sins. However strong the old generation is, you cannot expect to count on them forever. Instead of trying to restore Leader Gu’s highest combat ability so that you can hide behind him, you might as well consider how to improve your own capability quickly so that you can take over Leader Gu’s responsibility and keep protecting what he wants to protect!”

“We will certainly try our best, no matter how exhausting and dangerous it is and whatever the cost is. One day, Gold Barley will be grown all over the Land of Sins!” Han Te declared loudly, full of resolution. Then, he scratched his hair in confusion. “However, Master was rather hesitant at the end, as if there was something he wanted to say to us, right?”

“I have more or less guessed what your master wanted to say,” Li Yao said, “but what he wanted to say might not be what you want to hear.”

Han Te blinked fast and asked, “You have, Grandpa Yao?”

“Yes,” Li Yao said. “If I am not mistaken, what your master did not say was—even if Gold Barley is grown all over the Land of Sins so that everybody can fill their belly, so what?

Can it really stop all the conflicts in the Land of Sins so that people will not brutalize each other cruelly?

“All the conflicts and slaughter are not just for the simple reason of getting enough food. Arts, wealth, power, fame, women… Any tiny reason can cause a war that will scar the land with rivers of blood.”

“Well…” The two little fellows were slightly dazed. Confusion beamed out of their faces before the brilliance inside their eyes and faces dimmed. “We don’t know, but we have to try. Gold Barley is our only hope. If even Gold Barley cannot rescue the Land of Sins, where can hope possibly be found?”

“I don’t know, either.” Li Yao was silent for a moment. Then he firmly said, “But I believe that hope must be somewhere out there. It all depends on whether or not we have enough courage and wisdom to find it.”

“Hope…”

The two little fellows mumbled in fascination, their eyes glittering, as if they had seen through the dark iron shell of the ship, the sky that was packed with gloomy clouds, the Heavenly Rails and Manjusaka, and the infinite sea of stars.

“Let’s not consider things so far away yet and focus on reforming and renewing the two of you so that you can distinguish yourselves in the ‘Bliss Ceremony’ in half a month,” Li Yao said. “Since you have said that you are not afraid of exhaustion and danger, it will be much easier!”

…

The warehouse of assets of the Village of Peace took up three layers of decks of an iron-shelled ship. The plethora of weapons and magical equipment inside dazzled Li Yao and the mental devil, who were both greatly amazed.

“So many advanced weapons. The Immortal Cultivators are truly generous!” the mental devil shrieked in shock. “Of course, the more weapons and the less food and water, the fiercer the war among the ‘sinners’, and the easier it will be to test the performance of the weapons!”

Li Yao’s telepathic thoughts scanned the magical equipment on the metal shelves that had been covered in dust. He felt tempted, too.

All the magical equipment there was designed in the simplest, most straightforward, and most insane way. It appeared that the Immortal Cultivators had compressed the craziest, most unsteady designs and delivered the products to the ‘mice’ for testing.

The sinners in the Land of Sins were perhaps unable to tell the mysteries hidden deep inside the magical equipment.

However, as an extraordinary master of refining, he could tell ingenious ways of thinking from the unorthodox designs and infinite possibilities that he had never thought of even in his dreams.

The same went for the techniques and Cultivation arts that the Immortal Cultivators gave the sinners out of ‘good will’.

The Land of Sins was short of everything except for techniques and Cultivation arts. Such things were not precious at all. When new techniques that were more powerful fell from the sky, the relatively outdated arts would be stored inside the warehouse. Whoever was interested in them was free to study them.

Despite the fatal shortcomings in them, those arts also contained the experience and understanding of Immortal Cultivators on how to make use of spiritual energy.

The general sinners could not analyze the techniques and perceive the essence at their deepest core. But for Li Yao, a great expert who had advanced into the Divinity Transformation Stage, he was able to break apart the mysterious mists and find the core of the arts before he perfected the field of his spiritual energy and the fire of his soul with the essence of the arts!

It was practically an infinite treasury. Li Yao could not help but recall his training years in the Grand Desolate War Institution where he absorbed knowledge like a giant whale absorbing water.

One village in the Desolate Worlds already contained so many treasures. Li Yao wondered how many cutting-edge techniques and inventions that the Imperium of True Human Beings had just developed were hidden in the Bloody Worlds, the Elysian Worlds, and even Manjusaka.

I must go to Manjusaka and see what the Immortal Cultivators are up to. Chances are that I will be able to absorb the latest research products of the Imperium of True Human Beings. Hehehe. How I wish to see the spectacular look on the Immortal Cultivators' faces when they think everything's under their control but a 'Fiend Star' jumps out of nowhere and turns the entire City in the Sky upside down!

In the half a month that followed, Li Yao began his new training with Han Te and Liu Li.

As the village leader's daughter and disciple, they had some privileges. Han Te and Liu Li successfully applied for a maintenance workshop to modify and upgrade Li Yao's body.

When other people heard that they had decided to transform a civil puppet for maintenance and cleaning purposes into a military puppet for war, they all sighed and did not know how to stop them.

When Zhao Chong, Zhao Lie’s son, heard the news, he specifically paid them a visit and mocked them. Han Te simply held back his fury and turned a deaf ear to him.

What Zhao Chong and the villagers did not know was that when the doors of the maintenance room were shut, the furnaces and all kinds of maintenance magical equipment inside the room were glowing in the most brilliant way and functioning at the maximum efficiency several times beyond their performance limits under Li Yao’s control.

The seemingly lackluster and ordinary materials were also emitting the sharpest coldness under Li Yao’s marvelous handicraft.

After only three days, Li Yao’s shell was entirely different from the past.

On the left side of the body was a mining drill that could dig through the hardest rock easily. On the right side was an enormous chainsword that was coated in three layers of special metals. On the waist, a Triple-Headed Six-Barreled Vulcan Machine Cannon had been installed. On the left shoulder, there was a honeycomb-type flying sword launcher. On the right shoulder was an extendable, folded crystal cannon whose furthest bombardment distance was five thousand meters. When Li Yao’s soul locked onto the target, the attack would never miss!

Li Yao wanted to replace the engine system in the lower half body with four pairs of 360-degree reversed metal limbs, which would be able to handle any complicated terrain and could even walk on the vertical walls as if they were ground. However, Li Yao discovered an engine system that was sturdier and more powerful in the deepest corner of the warehouse. He decided to keep the track structure but simply lengthened and widened them with five pairs of Bogie Wheels, endowing the slaughter machine with invincible might!

Chapter 1965 - Dog Eat Dog!

Chapter 1965 Dog Eat Dog!

Zi! Zi! Zi!

After the insane modification was complete, Li Yao painted a giant red mark on his body. It was a star with a grinning face at the center, the symbol of Fiend Star!

“Wow!” Han Te and Liu Li both exclaimed after seeing Li Yao’s brand-new appearance. “This is beautiful!”

Li Yao smiled. Then, an electric arc spurted out and pierced Han Te’s body brutally, making the little guy grimace and jump up and down. “Isn’t it obvious? Who says you can stop? Keep on training!”

Regarding Han Te’s Lightning Strangle, Li Yao had studied it in depth and made some modifications. He mainly changed the output pattern of the spiritual energy of the thunder class.

Thanks to the enlightenment that he gained from the ‘Heavenly Fire Thunder Strike Ring’, he crafted a new ring-shaped arm armor for Han Te, which could control Han Te’s field of electric arcs very well in the form of a spiral. Like the acceleration rail of crystal railguns, it could launch metal bullets at a super high speed.

“The ‘Lightning Strangle’ that you practiced in the past only dealt damage with electric arcs, but electric arcs perish very fast, and they will be greatly weakened when exposed to the impure air. It is a very low-efficiency way of fighting," Li Yao explained to Han Te. "Now, I have added seven metal rings to your right arm to collect and restrain your electric arcs. They will generate a very powerful acceleration field in front of your arm to shoot metal bullets the size of rice.

"Velocity is the only invincible technique in the world. As long as you can accelerate the bullets to three to five times the speed of sound, they will destroy everything even if they are nothing more than random pebbles instead of metal bullets!"

By Li Yao's estimation, the brand-new combat pattern would increase Han Te's battle efficiency by at least three hundred percent

Of course, it was rather cruel to change the inherent flow of spiritual energy inside Han Te's body into a brand-new battle form in only half a month.

No wonder Han Te screamed like a pig being butchered and was almost breathless under the torture every day.

"I can't help but wonder if you are a pervert," the mental devil said. "Do you have to inflict the same extreme pain you suffered during your training on this innocent kid?"

"This is all for his own good," Li Yao said. "After all, he still wants to explore the so-called Manjusaka together with us. How can he do that if he is not strong enough? Hehehe..."

As for Liu Li, Li Yao had crafted a new set of magical equipment with the metal scraps that had been sealed in the warehouse for a long time targeting the arts that she had been training. They were nine thin, sharp-edged daggers that looked like swallows flapping their wings. Every dagger had been embedded with a highly-sensitive brainwave receptor at the center. They could also be connected to each other to form an enormous wheel.

The most marvelous design was that the tail and the body of the dagger were separable. Once the tail was stretched out, it would be a super-tiny metal thread as narrow as hair that was almost transparent in the air. But it was actually unbelievably sharp and could cut a human body as easily as it cut a piece of tofu.

“The technique that you’ve been practicing makes the intensity and sensitivity of your brainwaves a hundred times higher than normal, which is most suitable to control agile magical equipment like this,” Li Yao said. “The mental ring that I built earlier for you will not only help you stabilize the field of your brain that was collapsing but also connect it to the control chips inside the set of daggers.

“Now, imagine your brainwaves are tentacles that are extending out and controlling the daggers. Yes. Just like that. Shoot them out!”

Shua!

Three daggers were thrown in Han Te’s direction brutally in three streaks of brilliance. Han Te shrieked and raised his right hand, sending out three metal bullets that crashed into the daggers in midair.

The daggers were not blown away but merely parried and stabbed into the cabin wall, brushing past his head. They seemed to have entered rotten wood instead of a metal wall because there was not the slightest sound!

Han Te and Liu Li were both dazed at their new magical equipment. When they turned around and looked at Li Yao again, they were full of admiration, reverence, and even a bit of fright.

“G—Grandpa Yao, who were you in the past? We have never seen an old grandpa as strong as you.”

Cold brilliance beamed out of Li Yao’s soul as he said, “I would like to find out the answer very much, too. Who am I exactly in this Land of Sins, to the sinners living here, and to the angels living in the City in the Sky?

“Don’t be hasty. We will find out the answer very soon!”

…

Half a month later…

Wu—Wu—Wu—Wu!

Alarms were ringing in the sky of the Village of Peace. It was the day the elites of the village would be fully deployed for the Bliss Ceremony.

Even the iron-shelled boats that were connected and docked at the center of the lake in case of the enemy’s attack had thrown away their chains and hooks, sailing toward the shore at a high speed. Some of the iron-shelled boats even marched into the shore unstoppably, raising a cluster of mud and spindrift highly.

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

The heads of the boats opened like mouths. Hundreds of rusty shuttles that had been installed with iron plates and burets rushed out like iron beasts, leaving black smoke behind them.

Hooo!

Every shuttle extended many components that were like tree branches. Countless brawny men in leather armor that was covered in nails were grabbing the branches and screaming while waving their blades and firearms to display their strength.

A lot of the shuttles had been modified to increase traction with tires and tracks. Some of them even had enormous trunks behind them.

It was needless to mention that the trunks would be used to transport the trophies. But right now, they were filled with the old, the weak, the women, and the children. When the muscular men confronted the warriors of other villagers, the women and the children were responsible for collecting the assets from the sky as quickly as possible.

No useless person was fed in the Land of Sins. Everybody had to make their own contributions.

There was even a caterpillar tractor with fancy decorations that was pulling an iron tower. On the tower, dozens of old, weary villagers were dancing and enchanting a weird tune with masks and helmets that were a hundred times more hideous than respirators, with colorful smoke was breathed in and out.

Han Te and Liu Li crawled over to Li Yao, one from the left and the other from the right. They told Li Yao in a low voice that those people were the priests in the village, and they were praying to the angels for more luck so that the village would get more assets in the Bliss Ceremony.

At the frontmost part of the overwhelming team, a shabby platform had been established on three thick masts. Gu

Zhengyang, Zhao Lie, and the other leaders of the Village of Peace were observing the battle and giving their commands from up there.

Before, Gu Zhengyang had always been at the center as the commander, but it was Zhao Lie, the captain of the exploration team with gloomy eyes, who was talking and giving orders at the center this year, and Gu Zhengyang was merely coughing next to him.

“Hahaha. Is this the garbage that you have modified with the scrap puppet? You call it ‘Fiend Star’?” Zhao Chong caught up to them from the rear at a high speed on a single shuttle that was fully embedded with sharp thorns. There was no telling if it was intentional or not, but a large cluster of dust was thrown toward Han Te and Liu Li. “It does look like a decent war puppet, but I wonder if it will become scrap garbage again three seconds into a real battle!”

Han Te and Liu Li glared at Zhao Chong.

“However, you can just rest assured. This year, my father is the supervisor. Nothing can possibly go wrong.” Zhao Chong laughed gloatingly. “We will also claim ten times more trophies than when Leader Gu commanded us. You and the garbage can sit back and watch as my dad and my Iron Blood Youths show you how the job should be done. Hahaha!”

Zhao Chong whistled and rushed forward with another ten or so brawny young people who were also on single shuttles.

“Why the rush?”

Sensing the young man’s fury, Li Yao said, not thinking that it was a big deal, “With your capability right now, after you earn abundant assets in the Bliss Ceremony, it will be enough for you to travel in the Bloody Worlds, won't it? There's no need to be pissed by such nobodies."

The team rolled forward and reached the city ruins, formerly Broken Stone City, in only half a day.

The specific date and location of the Bliss Ceremony every year would be sent from the Heavenly Rails by the angels a month before the event. Broken Stone City was the destination where the assets would be sent this year.

According to Han Te and Liu Li, it was also the most complicated and dangerous environment.

That was because the city ruins were full of skyscrapers that were riddled with holes and on the verge of collapse. One cough might cause a final collapse. If the assets fell into such skyscrapers and someone went to pick them recklessly, it was very likely that they would be buried by thousands of tons of rocks as the skyscrapers collapsed.

Besides, in the labyrinth-like city, the odds of different forces getting into conflicts were significantly increased. It was also possible that some tough bandits and criminals who were driven out of the Bloody Worlds would be hiding behind the rundown buildings, waiting to rob someone and run off quickly.

"It would be much better if the environment was a plateau or even hills, where we can see everything around us." Han Te spat at the sawtooth-shaped grass next to the road and cursed angrily. "It's a shame that at least four out of ten Bliss Ceremonies are held in such dangerous city environments, and another four of them take place in the areas of high radiation that are frequented by tremendous mutated beasts.

“Before the assets fall, we have to fight a bloody battle with the beasts! I truly don’t understand. If the angels live on the Heavenly Rails, they can certainly see the terrain down here. If they truly mean to assist us out of good will, why do they have to make it so difficult for us instead of tossing the aid to places where we can find it easily?”

“Perhaps this is a way of penance for the ‘sinners’,” Liu Li said.

“I don’t believe it.” Staring at the sky, Han Te said, “Perhaps just as master said, the angels like watching us bite and kill each other like ravenous wild dogs!

“One day… I will go to Manjusaka, the City in the Sky, and demand an answer from the angels!”

Chapter 1966 - When Flowers of the Other Shore Blossom

Chapter 1966 When Flowers of the Other Shore Blossom

The large group of people flooded into Broken Stone City overwhelmingly.

Zhao Lie found an empty place outside the city that would never be affected by the collapsing skyscrapers. The shuttles were parked in a circle, and together with the barricades, iron plates, and watch towers, a rather well-defended camp was constructed.

Then, a lot of scouts and snipers were sent to explore the city to make sure that no tough guys from the Bloody Worlds were lurking near the camp. They also occupied the commanding heights around the camp. Dozens of firing points were deployed in well-calculated locations to guarantee the maximal firepower.

A large number of landmines and crystal bombs had also been planted on both sides of the main road to the camp. Should anybody want to attack the Village of Peace’s camp, they would certainly be slaughtered without any mercy.

Li Yao even saw Zhao Lie commanding a lot of muscular men to set up bizarre-shaped, iron-structured machines not far away from the camp. Judging from the form, they looked like medieval catapults. There was no telling what they were for.

Seeing how Zhao Lie commanded the villagers calmly and meticulously, Li Yao secretly complimented him in his heart. The tough bandit from the Bloody Worlds and the captain of the exploration team of the Village of Peace indeed had his own expertise. No wonder he had won the support of many people and boasted enough influence to challenge ‘Sky Breaking Hammer’ Gu Zhengyang.

Almost a thousand people were as busy as bees for half a day. It was not until the sun set and the night fell that all the work was completed. Li Yao then saw Zhao Chong and his Iron Blood Youths, dozens of them in total, rush out on their single shuttles, spraying shockingly red paint on the main roads of Broken Stone City and drawing a line that was as intense as fire.

An enormous iron stick was also raised on the red line after every fixed distance. On each iron stick, the skull of a mutated beast was placed, with the enormous word ‘PEACE’ engraved on it.

The endless red lines and skull sticks divided Broken Stone City into two areas. After the red line was drawn, many weird noises echoed inside the ruins. Countless people who were covered in dirt with barely any clothes retreated out of the red lines, not entirely willingly.

“The Village of Peace is the largest village in the hundreds of square kilometers around. We also have the largest number of experts. With my master and ‘Blood Eagle’ Zhao Lie supervising the battle, it is absolutely impossible for any other village to defeat us,” Han Te explained to Li Yao in a low voice. “If we were ruthless enough, we could totally claim all the assets without leaving a single nail to other villages. However, such an approach is too cruel.

“Therefore, my master made the rule that a red line will be drawn on the landing spot of the assets before every Bliss Ceremony. All the items within the red line will be ours, and nobody is allowed to come in and take them. The items outside the red line belong to other villages. However hard they fight for them, we will not go out and interfere.

“In such a way, the conflicts between us and other villages can be avoided, and everybody has a chance of surviving.”

Li Yao’s interest was aroused. It was indeed a good approach to reduce casualties. However, he was still puzzled. “Do other villages obey your master’s rule so nicely?”

Han Te smiled. “Naturally, they didn’t at first. When my master drew the red line for the first time, they all burst into laughter and thought that my master was crazy.

“But whoever stepped over the red line would taste the feeling of ‘Sky Breaking Hammer’. After decades, no village has the courage to cross the red line anymore.

“Naturally, when everybody is fighting each other in a frenzy, it can’t be helped if somebody gets lost and crosses the boundary. Before, when my father supervised the battle, he always just beat them up and threw them back to where they came from. But since ‘Blood Eagle’ Zhao Lie is in command this year… I hope that the guy does not cause much trouble!”

Li Yao focused his attention and scanned Zhao Lie’s direction.

He saw that the ruthless, decisive bandit of the past was standing on a watch tower, frowning and staring at the depths of the city ruins with apparent worry.

Li Yao’s telepathic thoughts spread out like tides, surpassing the red line on the main roads quickly and reaching the city ruins. As he expected, he found countless sinners from other villages lurking in dilapidated buildings and dark corners.

Compared to the villagers of the Village of Peace, the sinners from the smaller villages were more like animals that had mutated due to excessive radiation.

They had less gear, and their bodies were thinner and more hunched. Almost all of them had disheveled hair and a dirty face, with gangrene and ulcers everywhere on their skin. Fright and hatred beamed out of their eyes as they stared at the red line as well as the people of the Village of Peace on the other side of the red line.

Li Yao could sense the intense vibe from them, the vibe of destruction that they could do anything for their survival, and that they were willing to die with anybody after the hope of survival was gone.

Despite his abundant experience traveling in the sea of stars, Li Yao was still a little disturbed by the animalistic air of the sinners.

Perhaps Zhao Lie’s belief was the right choice. It was better to attack than to be attacked. In the Land of Sins, there was no fundamental difference between civilians and bandits, thugs and the innocents, humans and animals.

If they did not kill the others, they would be eaten afterward!

Night fell, and the stinky wind rose. In the Land of Sins polluted by radiation, colorful, ghostly fire flashed everywhere, as if countless specters were dancing in the wind waiting to appreciate the dog-eat-dog play to be performed soon.

It was a starless time. The only thing that could be seen was the eccentric glow from the Heavenly Rails, which made them look like giant boas that had tied up the entire planet.

Right then, the giant boas slowly opened their eyes, letting out the most intense and glamorous redness.

“L—Look, Manjusaka!”

At that moment, all the sinners lurking in the city ruins forgot their destiny. They opened their hands and tried to reach for the sky, as if their incomplete, twisted fingers could touch the unsubstantial brilliance of ‘the City in the Sky’.

Manjusaka, the legendary Flower of the Other Shore that could make people volunteer to happily walk into hell, slowly blossomed in the dark sky of the Land of Sins. The crimson brilliance soaked the entire land in an ocean of blood.

Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum!

Blurred and anxious enchantments echoed everywhere in the glimmering city ruins. The priests from various villages were begging for the angels to grant them more luck gracefully with their own spell.

“Look! Look!”

There was no telling how long the enchantments lasted, but when the Flower of the Other Shore fully blossomed and the redness was as thick as blood, hundreds of eyes of dead fish seemed to open in the deep night sky at the same time and stare at the Land of Sins and the sinners. They were the parachutes that carried resources and the hope of survival for the next year.

The enchantments in the ruins turned into devastating howls. The prosperous city of the past turned into lifeless debris at first and then a pure jungle of slaughters, where everybody became the most ferocious beasts.

The parachutes floating in the night sky represented hope, but they were also a symbol of death!

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

Li Yao noticed that the dozens of contraptions that looked like catapults in the camp of the Village of Peace had been tightened to the maximal. A brawny, armed man was crouching on the rail of every catapult. After a rumbling noise, they were launched into the air like cannonballs.

All the brawn men were carrying huge metal backpacks. As their momentum petered out and they were about to fall, their backpacks released powerful air currents and unfolded four metal wings, allowing them to ascend and approach the parachutes.

In the meantime, from the city ruins outside of the red line, a lot of brawny men with wings were ejected, too. Like birds, they staggered and charged at the parachutes.

Shua! Shua! Shua!

They were all experts when it came to manipulating the wind power and air currents. Like the most professional surfers, they made use of the turbulence of the air delicately and reached the parachutes’ side.

Their wings were thin and had sharp edges, allowing them to cut the ropes of the parachutes and make the parachutes fall to one side.

After every rope was cut off and a parachute was sent to their destination, exclamations that sounded like howls would echo on the ground.

“They are all Winged Warriors,” Han Te explained to Li Yao. “Because we have only drawn the red line on the ground and it is impossible for us to divide the range in the sky, a batch of elites from every village flies into the air in advance and controls the fall of the parachutes accurately to make them fall into their own zone. In that case, the assets will surely be their village’s!”

More and more Winged Warriors flew into the sky, but the direction of the parachutes whose rope was cut off was very difficult to control. Should there be any change in the wind, it was very easy for them to collide and tangle with each other.

Therefore, the Winged Warriors from different villages inevitably had soul-stirring fights in midair. Now and then, somebody’s wings would be cut off and kicked down from the sky, thudding to the ground in huge dust and dull noises.

The larger a parachute was, the heavier the asset inside would be. The few largest parachutes soon became everyone’s target.

Some of the Winged Warriors flew higher and higher without bothering anything in order to drag the largest parachute to their side. They gradually approached the ‘Heavenly Rails’.

It all happened too fast. The Heavenly Rails suddenly glittered, like giant boas that had finally revealed their terrible true appearance. Lightning raged and illuminated the night sky, electrifying the Winged Warriors who had touched the sky and tearing them into pieces.

“They were too close to the sky,” Liu Li said gloomily. “Sinners like us are not qualified to touch the holy sky.”

Chapter 1967 - Everybody“s Targe

Chapter 1967 Everybody“s Targe

Those who were capable of flying in midair to cut and control the parachutes were only few after all. Most of the parachutes simply fell unimpeded, landing in different parts of the ruins randomly.

As the parachutes got closer and closer to the ground, the howls deep inside the city ruins became fiercer and crazier.

Under the blood red moonlight, it could be seen that countless pairs of skinny hands were extended out of the rundown buildings and the debris. Humans were no longer humans but wild, starving dogs.

Boom!

The first chests of assets finally hit the ground in heavy noises. The previously blossoming parachutes were like wrinkled skin on the ground, announcing their location as an eye-catching mark.

“Hooo!”

“Let’s go! Let’s go!”

The sinners showed up!

With saliva running out of their mouths, greed beaming out of their eyes, interconnected veins protruding on their foreheads, and their hands and feet cramping uncontrollably, they crawled out of the debris like ghosts and ran toward the parachutes without bothering anything.

Li Yao even saw that, in order to be faster on the uneven ruins, some of them were running on all fours with their backs hunched, truly like the ferocious animals that were sprinting for food.

A gory battle erupted immediately.

To fight for the hope of survival in the next year, even white-haired old ladies and children who were wet behind their ears turned into the craziest devils. They punched, kicked, smashed, stabbed, bit, and scratched until their fingernails were all rolling up in blood, all in order to drag the heavy assets to their own village.

The thick ropes of the parachutes cut into their skinny bodies deeply and almost chopped them in half from their shoulder. But they felt none of it and put on a smile of satisfaction until they were knocked down by other people who were even more beast-like.

The competition between the old and the young was already fierce enough, and the battle among the adult warriors was even more gruesome.

Roaring chainswords cut the enemy in half. Thundering vibration sabers shattered the enemy’s internal organs into a pulp of blood. The high-heat axes did not produce any sound by themselves, but the sound that was similar to branding when they kissed the flesh was enough to give anyone who heard it nightmares for ten days. However, none of the noises were half as devastating as the roars and screams of the people who knew nothing but killing.

In the perception of Li Yao's soul, everyone's field of spiritual energy in the city ruins had been cast into the most dangerous turbulence.

He even saw that, when somebody activated their maximum spiritual energy, they exploded before they could attack their enemy!

When the blast that was as powerful as the self-detonation of a Core Formation Stage Cultivator swept out, the ten or so brawny men who were fighting over the resources nearby were blown away at the same time and crashed into the rough crags brutally, their bones shattered. It was obvious that they would not live.

What was left at the center was merely a shallow crater from which a blood red steam flowed. The brawny man whose spiritual energy went out of control at the beginning had been entirely obliterated without leaving even a fragment of bone.

Such a scene was anything but unusual in a Bliss Ceremony. After one sinner was battered because their spiritual energy went out of control, even more sinners unleashed whatever techniques they had without a care, yelling and shouting.

"It's collapsing! It's collapsing!"

Right then, countless people began exclaiming deep inside the ruins. As it turned out, a skyscraper that was hundreds of meters tall and had been shaking since the very beginning finally could not withstand the fight near to the foundation anymore. It slowly slanted and collapsed in ear-splitting noises!

The overwhelming dust covered half of the ruins. A lot of people were smashed in the collapse, and still more people were screaming between the rebars and the rocks. But others simply put on their respirators and went on fighting on top of the dead bodies of their companions and their enemies.

Perhaps there were only a few places where the sinners did not fight the moment they met.

Those places were huge wooden boxes. The ropes of their parachutes had been cut off in midair, which made them fall too fast and crash into pieces when hitting the ground, revealing the clean, fragrant compressed food inside.

The compressed food was mostly made of animal oil, high-energy dry fruits, and all kinds of additives. They had a fragrance that could drive anyone crazy.

The normal way to eat them was to cut a small slice and boil it in the water to turn it into a bowl of thick porridge. One bowl would be enough to fuel the high-intensity training and hunting of a sinner for an entire day.

However, by the time a Bliss Ceremony came around, the assets retrieved from the last Bliss Ceremony had been consumed over an entire year and were mostly used up.

A lot of the sinners from the barren villages had almost gone crazy in hunger.

Smelling the fragrance of the compressed food, the sinners were all rushing close without caring about anything, their eyeballs almost bursting out of their faces, before they picked up the compressed food and ate frantically.

Countless sinners were wolfing around the broken wooden boxes like dogs. Very soon, some of them began cramping on the ground while holding their belly. Their abdomen rose so high that a balloon seemed to be expanding crazily inside.

That was the Bliss Ceremony, a blessing given by the angels to the sinners!

“Warriors of the Village of Peace, let’s go!”

The battlefield was half a frigid ocean and half an inferno. The city ruins beyond the red line were an utter mess, but there was still nothing but indifference and silence within the red line.

The Village of Peace had the best gear and the strongest warriors. The assets that they had accumulated in recent years had not been entirely used up yet. At the very least, they were fed properly before they joined the battle. They were naturally not as devastated as the other sinners.

Instead of fighting for assets like headless flies, they observed the situation calmly. It was not until the chaotic sinners gradually approached the red line that ‘Blood Eagle’ Zhao Lie finally gave the order from the command tower.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Almost a hundred caterpillar tractors that were aged, dusty, and embedded with iron plates and stings were driven to the red line.

Between every two caterpillar tractors were three to five warriors of the Village of Peace. They were all tall, muscular men. Each of them held an iron shield the size of a door. At the bottom of the shield was a wedge. After the shields were stabbed into the ground, they were as unshakable as iron towers.

Every muscular man bashed the iron shield heavily in a fixed rhythm with a hammer in their hand. After every three beats, they would shout at the same time, “Peace! Peace! Peace!”

The sounds swept across the battlefield like tides.

Another dozen caterpillar tractors whose turrets had been dismantled and replaced with large searchlights were nearby. The lights were all turned on, illuminating the red line clearly and shooting at the road beyond.

Whoever charged from the other side of the red line would be dazzled by the searchlights, and their every movement would be noticed quickly.

The warriors were both well-organized and emanating daunting auras. They were indeed a tough troop.

After the iron wall was established, the old, the weak, the women, and the children behind were able to collect the assets without concern. They had occupied the largest territory, and there was no need for them to kill each other because they were surrounded by their own people. Naturally, their efficiency was high.

In the meantime, some of the sinners who were out of their mind intended to barge into the red line, only to be apprehended by the defenders of the Village of Peace. After their legs and arms were broken, they were launched back by the ‘catapults’. There was no telling how they would end up.

Han Te, Liu Li, and Li Yao joined the team to move the assets, too. Not entirely satisfied, the young man mumbled in complaint, “Zhao Lie does know what he is doing. It seems that there won’t be a fight in the Bliss Ceremony this year.”

Li Yao, however, sensed the feeble changes of the wind. Looking at the descending parachutes from the sky, he calculated for a while and said, “Don’t be so sure. There may be changes.”

Right then, a wind rose.

At first, it was an insignificant breeze, but the speed of the wind gradually accelerated and raised overwhelming dust. Half of the city ruins were covered in the dust. Even the bloody Flower of the Other Shore in the sky became obscure in the haze.

The largest batch of parachutes had been released.

Almost a thousand eyes of fiends were opened slowly.

Red lights were flashing on the Heavenly Rails, reminding the sinners that it was the last batch of relief assets.

Together with the parachutes that had been tossed earlier and were still descending, more than half of the assets were floating in midair.

However, the wind was blowing toward the Village of Peace’s ‘territory’.

Boosted by the wind, more than half of the parachutes flew to the Village of Peace.

The screams on that side of the red line grew lighter and lighter. Only intermittent moans could be heard.

All the sinners opened their mouths and waved their hands in vain, watching tremendous assets falling into the hands of the Village of Peace.

The people who fought each other brutally simply looked at each other in silence with their bloodshot eyes.

This was perhaps the year with the most uneven distribution of resources in history.

At least two thirds of the resources had gone to the Village of Peace.

The remaining dozens of villages fought each other brutally for a pitiful third.

Silence. The darkness of the city ruins on that side of the red line was mired in dangerous silence.

In the silence brewed either death or outbreak!

Li Yao’s soul could sense that a fiendish fire was rising from the other side of the red line. It grew higher and higher and was practically burning up the entire ruins.

We can’t live. It is impossible for the sinners of so many villages to live on the one third of the assets.

Unfair. This is too unfair. We fight so hard but we can only get one third, and they watch us fight and do nothing and will get two thirds.

Let’s go and rob them!

We can’t allow the Village of Peace to be so dominating anymore!

I’m told that the Village of Peace will destroy us very soon. Let’s go together and destroy them first!

The sinners communicated with each other with their eyes.

They arrived. Illuminated under the pale light of the searchlights, the ragged, bleeding, and ghastly sinners showed up.

The crowd—filled with idiocy and zeal, pitifulness and ferociousness, the will to survive and the urge to destroy—wriggled forward against the shields, hammers, searchlights, and caterpillar tractors of the Village of Peace like a bunch of animals and zombies!

Chapter 1968 - Behind the Curtain

Chapter 1968 Behind the Curtain

Despite the protection of the iron wall, the villagers of the Village of Peace still felt as if their hearts were trembling.

Even counting the strengthless villagers, there were only several thousand of them total. It was impossible for them to defend the long red line that pierced through the entire city ruins.

There were too many sinners of dozens of villages on the other side. Although most of the sinners were bags of bones, the glimmering greed beaming out of their eyes alone was frightening enough to make them drop their weapons.

“Prepare to fight. Everybody, drop your assets and grab your weapons. Prepare to fight!” Zhao Chong and his Iron Blood Youths shouted in the city ruins on their single shuttles, distributing chainswords and sticks that were embedded with high-voltage electric arcs to the old and the young.

Li Yao vaguely overheard the fierce quarrel between ‘Sky Breaking Hammer’ Gu Zhengyang and ‘Blood Eagle’ Zhao Lie. Interested, he said to Han Te and Liu Li in a low voice, “Let’s go up there and take a look.”

While the three of them were moving, the crowd on the other side of the red line had already pressed forward quite a distance.

On the command tower, the disagreement between the village leader and the captain of the exploration team was already too intense to be hidden.

They heard Gu Zhengyang speaking loudly. “Hurry up. Throw two hundred boxes of assets over with our launchers and ask the leaders of their villages to talk to us. Tell them that if they are willing to retreat, we will offer them another two hundred boxes of assets by dawn. That’s a promise from ‘Sky Breaking Hammer’!”

‘Blood Eagle’ Zhao Lie, on the other hand, widened his eyes and bellowed, “Leader, are you out of your mind? Those assets were blown to our side by the wind. They are the gifts that the angels have given us. How can we give away the meat that we have already swallowed?”

Gu Zhengyang raised his voice and shouted in fury, “You’ve seen the situation. Those people have gone completely mad and do not care about their lives at all. How can we defend such a long red line? There will be dire consequences if they break the defense!”

“Even if they do, so what? What are the dire consequences?” ‘Blood Eagle’ Zhao Lie licked his lips and grinned hideously. “Our warriors are far stronger than them in the first place, and we have rested and prepared for such a long time. Look at them. They will fall if the wind blows harder, and they want to steal food from us? In their dreams!”

Gu Zhengyang grew anxious. “How many people will die?”

“People die in the Land of Sins every day. It is either them, or us!” ‘Blood Eagle’ Zhao Lie roared. “You think a few hundred boxes of assets are enough to satisfy them? No. It will only make them feel that you are weak and vulnerable, and they will only push further and further. The deterrence of the Village of Peace will be no more!

“I assure you that after you give four hundred chests to them today, no village will be scared of the Village of Peace tomorrow. Everybody will consider us a piece of fat meat without bones, and nobody will hesitate to bite us hard at the first opportunity!

“We can only keep the Village of Peace safe by making them fear us and nailing the fright deep into the bones of the son of bi*ches!”

“They will not be scared of us.” Gu Zhengyang’s voice softened. “Look at them right now. They have turned into a bunch of rabid dogs!”

“Yes. They are a bunch of rabid dogs, and they are certainly not scared of us right now.” ‘Blood Eagle’ Zhao Lie sneered. “However, by the time I crush their skulls, those rabid dogs will learn what fear is.”

“Zhao Lie…”

“Enough, leader. Indecisiveness is your greatest weakness! The rules that we do not attack until we are attacked and that whoever crosses the red line will be killed were made by you. Command of the operation was given to me by you, too. Right now, I am the highest commander, and everybody must listen to my command. Otherwise, not just you, even my own son will not be shown any mercy. Those who disobey me will be executed immediately!”

‘Blood Eagle’ Zhao Lie widened his eyes, full of fury. He picked up a bizarre-shaped cylinder and roared thunderously, “Warriors of the Village of Peace, listen up! Defend our assets whatever it takes. If the scumbags on our opposite side are bold enough to cross the ‘deadline’, just kill them all!”

“Kill them all!”

The roars established another high wall on the red line like a thunderstorm.

In the past, if they had heard the muscular men of the Village of Peace roaring in such a way, the sinners of the other villages would certainly have retreated quickly with goosebumps all over their bodies.

But today, the glamorous, bloody Flower of the Other Shore seemed to have injected magic into their bodies, and the roars only triggered howls that were even more ear-splitting than before.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Right then, from the depths of the ruins on the other side of the red line, dozens of feeble gunshots echoed. Dazzling fireballs burst out of the searchlights on the Village of Peace’s side. Then, the entire earth was mired in darkness.

All the searchlights had been blown up in a moment!

The ruins that were as bright as day were immediately covered in a hazy, bloody fog.

“Hooo!”

The gunshots were like a trigger that stimulated the army of sinners on the opposite side to begin their charge that was practically a tsunami. The scene was a hundred times more devastating than the ‘beast tide outbreak’ in Li Yao’s memory.

The individuals in a beast tide outbreak were hideous demon beasts, but those who were charging in madness including old women and ignorant children!

The tsunami of flesh and blood crashed into the iron wall of the Village of Peace brutally.

Countless sinners were knocked away while vomiting blood, but more of them crammed in through the gaps between the caterpillar tractors and the shields.

None of the warriors of the Village of Peace knew why the searchlights had suddenly died. The darkness enhanced their dread ten times over. They were immediately caught in the swirls of crazy sinners.

With everything reaching this point, the debate was already pointless. ‘Blood Eagle’ Zhao Lie and ‘Sky Breaking Hammer’ both roared and smashed into the crowd like shooting stars. The blast raised by spiritual energy easily blew dozens of sinners away.

However, after one sinner was blown away, two or even more sinners would immediately take their place.

They did not even care about witnessing the sunrise again. They only wanted to vent their anger that had been accumulated for decades on the people of the Village of Peace, even if the cost was their own lives.

“Master!”

“Dad!”

Han Te and Liu Li had never seen such a devastating scene before. They were so anxious that fire was almost bursting out of their eyes. They immediately wanted to move forward and rescue Gu Zhengyang.

Li Yao, however, assured them after a brief observation. “It’s alright. Leader Gu’s circulation of spiritual energy is much smoother than half a month ago. Those crazy villagers are far from enough to hurt him. Let’s go, we have more important things to do!”

The two little fellows were both slightly dazed, wondering what could possibly be more important than the bloody battle near the red line.

However, after half a month, they were already fully convinced by ‘Grandpa Yao’ and knew that ‘Grandpa Yao’ had his reasons. They simply jumped onto Li Yao’s body and allowed Li Yao to cruise to the other side of the city ruins by circling around the back of the battlefield.

At this moment, everybody was moving toward the red line, and none of them could see him. Li Yao boosted the tracks to limits and rushed among the debris. Still, he felt that it was not fast enough and simply attached streams of spiritual energy to the chassis, building virtual anti-gravity rune arrays.

Hiu!

The five pairs of bogie wheels were flying!

Although they were only half an inch off the ground, they got rid of the boundary of friction and the rough terrain like a hovercraft. Li Yao’s speed immediately increased almost five times over without uttering any sound. He drifted and floated to the city ruins on the other side of the red line.

Beep! Beep! Beep!

The night-vision crystal cameras on his shoulder uttered feeble sounds as they were adjusted. Li Yao’s telepathic thoughts spread out like tides with the enhancement of the crystal cameras, without letting go of any tiny gap and any narrow corner.

Soon, he located his targets.

“On your right, three hundred meters away, behind the third window on the fourth floor of the half-collapsed six-floor building—do you sense anything?” Li Yao said casually. “You should have grasped something after receiving half a month of intense training from me. Consider this a special test. There are four targets in total within one thousand eight hundred meters. See how many of them you can take down!”

Han Te and Liu Li looked at each other. Crouching on a turn of a tiny building, they focused their senses and peeped at the building three hundred meters away for half a minute.

It was not until a long time later that they finally caught a feeble light. They could not help but feel awed by the keen senses of ‘Grandpa Yao’.

“Understood. Liu Li, pay attention for my signal…” Han Te licked his dry lips. The metal rings on his right arm revolved rapidly and unleashed electric arcs that looked like swirls. He took out dozens of bullets the size of pebbles from his pocket and, boosting them for a moment, shot them at the tall building brutally!

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

They were like dozens of straight lightning bolts striking the window on the fourth floor three hundred meters away.

Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa!

Four gunshots echoed from the building, but because the shooting was too fast, the gunshots overlapped, and it sounded like one shot.

“Liu Li, now!”

The two little fellows rushed out.

Gunshots, explosions, exclamations, and structural collapses were echoing nonstop. The noises did not die down again until five minutes later.

With dust all over their faces, they two little fellows crawled back while breathing heavily. There were blood stains on their faces and their bodies, but the blood was not theirs.

“Forgive us, Grandpa Yao. We only took down three of them. The toughest one got away!”

Han Te lowered his head and smashed his fists in regret.

“You mean this one?”

A mechanical arm extended out of Li Yao’s torso and pulled over a body that was still warm.

It was a slim man whose face was well trimmed. His bulging temples and his muscles that felt like iron indicated his capability.

However, there was a hole smaller than a chopstick on his forehead. His eyes had already lost focus, and there was still disbelief on his face.

“Well…”

Han Te and Liu Li were both shocked. The guy had clearly been escaping to the ruins half a minute ago, and they had watched him disappearing into the darkness. How on earth was he killed by Grandpa Yao so quickly and even brought back there?

Grandpa Yao was too strong and incredible!

Chapter 1969 - Black Water Gang

Chapter 1969 Black Water Gang

“Taking down three top-tier gunners in seven minutes and twenty-nine seconds, your performance is more or less acceptable.”

Li Yao picked up the gunner’s hands with his mechanical hands and examined them carefully, especially the callus on the fingers. He then called the two little fellows and asked them to check.

“Look. The man’s fingerprints have been almost entirely erased, which can only be the result of using guns all the time. Also, look at the muscles around his eye sockets. His left eye is loose, and his right eye is tight, which is the result of aiming through a scope all day. Therefore, this is a very skilled gunner. It is understandable that he escaped from you.”

Han Te and Liu Li observed carefully and discovered that what Li Yao had said was very true. They could not help but admire ‘Grandpa Yao’ even more.

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao said, “At first, the Village of Peace had sixteen super searchlights in total, which were deployed in the street that was four kilometers long. There were only four enemies, but they blew up sixteen searchlights in different directions at the same time, which means every shooter opened fire four times on average in one second.

"Also, based on my perception of the ballistic trajectories, the locations of the shooters at the beginning was at least two to three kilometers from the red line. Over such a long distance, they shot four times in different directions in one second and did not miss a single target. Their teamwork was neat and flawless, too. All signs indicate that they were a well-trained team of snipers. But I'm quite curious about one thing. It is obvious that the villages other than the Village of Peace are abjectly poor and barren, and all their villagers seem to be starving. Do they have the wealth and resources to build such an elite squad of gunners?"

Even common gunners had to gain their expertise by using countless bullets in training. Super gunners were even more difficult to come by. The drugs to nurture their eyes and improve their eyesight alone were too valuable to be bought anywhere. Li Yao did not think that any small village in such a remote region could have supported the four experts.

Han Te and Liu Li shook their heads suspiciously. "We don't know. Logically, such extraordinary shooters should be very famous, but we've never heard of them in any villages nearby."

Thinking for a moment, Han Te took off the vest on the super gunner first. But he only found bullets and tobacco that could suppress the soul inside the pockets, nothing that could prove the guy's identity.

He then drew a dagger and cut the enemy's undervest, only to discover a very strange tattoo on the body's chest. It was a pattern where a drop of black water was dripping to a pool.

"Black Water Gang!" Han Te and Liu Li exclaimed at the same time.

Seeing the shock and fright on the two little guys’ faces, Li Yao could not help but feel curious. “What is the Black Water Gang? Is it very strong?”

“It—it really is,” Liu Li said, her voice shivering. “About three hundred kilometers to the west of the Village of Peace, there is a valley named Double Dragons. At the end of the valley is a ruined city. But the city is not too seriously damaged. I’m told that the radiation and pollution there is quite feeble, and aid falls from the sky all the time, too. Therefore, some ten ferocious gangs have taken the place as their nest. It is a murky, lawless Bloody World.

“The Black Water Gang is a gang that rose there in recent years. It is said that the gang has done all kinds of unpardonable things. Although we have never seen it with our own eyes, it is not very difficult to infer. If they were not tough, ruthless bandits, how could they have risen in Double Dragons Valley, where there were already almost ten gangs?”

Li Yao thought quickly and asked, “Have the bandits come to mess with the Village of Peace before?”

“Of course they have,” Liu Li said. “When I was little, gangs came to the Village of Peace to cause trouble every other day, but they were all beaten back by my father. Also, the Village of Peace enjoys the terrain advantage. Our village is at the center of a boundless lake that has no barricades at all. Whoever dares to attack us will be seen when they are dozens of kilometers away. Even if the tough bandits could swim over, they would not be able to carry their heavy magical equipment.

“Besides, we are merely a tiny village in a Desolate World. This bone is very hard to bite and does not have much meat left. Therefore, after my dad and… Uncle Zhao Lie defeated quite a few bandit groups and reached a pact with the few largest gangs in Double Dragons Valley, agreeing to offer them a certain number of assets every year. Thus, the safety of the Village of Peace was secured. At the very least, in the last five years, barely any tough bandits have ever attacked our village.”

“However, the Black Water Gang is a gang that rose recently,” Han Te said. “They do not know the toughness of my master yet. It is not entirely impossible that they want to demonstrate their power by demolishing the Village of Peace.”

Li Yao gave no comment to the little fellows’ analysis. He simply spread out his telepathic thoughts, only to discover that a lot of feeble spiritual waves were lurking deep inside the city ruins. He sneered in his heart and asked, “Then, have the gangs ever attacked during the ‘Bliss Ceremonies’?”

Slightly dazed, Han Te shook his head and said, “No, I don’t think so. The angels project aid almost everywhere at the same time. Right now, the assets floating above Double Dragons Valley are certainly a hundred times more abundant than those here. Those ferocious bandits are no idiots. Why would they abandon the fat meat that is right next to their mouth and fight over bones with us?

“Therefore, it is possible for some lone, desperate bandits to show up, but it does not seem likely that a whole gang would come to loot the trophies.”

“Understood.” A great question mark popped up in Li Yao’s mind. He gave instructions casually. “Cut off the fingers of the four bodies and the tattoos on their chests. Collect them and their sniper rifles. Then, deform the bodies, throw them into a random building, and blow it up. Once you return, you will tell other people that you accidentally saw a few bodies on the road and felt that something was not right when you noticed their guns and gear. Therefore, you checked the bodies, only to find that they belonged to the Black Water Gang. Remember, do not reveal your current capability to anybody, especially not ‘Blood Eagle’ Zhao Lie!”

“Understood, Grandpa Yao!”

Having just killed three experts from the Black Water Gang, the two little fellows had only just begun to understand how remarkable the methods of spiritual energy utilization that Li Yao had taught them and the magical equipment that Li Yao had specially crafted for them were. They were more confident than ever. But upon hearing the solemnity in Li Yao’s words, they realized that Grandpa Yao must have sensed something wrong and that the situation would probably have more subtle changes.

However, as long as Grandpa Yao was here, they had nothing to fear.

Was the super gunner of the Black Water Gang not easily killed by Grandpa Yao as if he were a chicken?

Li Yao went deeper into the city ruins with the two little fellows. This time, they did not alarm anyone but simply investigated the environment.

Li Yao naturally discovered some traces, but he had not connected the glittering puzzle yet. Therefore, there was no need for him to explain everything to the two little fellows right now.

After they took another turn and finally returned to the camp of the Village of Peace, Manjusaka had already disappeared behind the dark clouds.

In the east, however, the first bleeding morning glow was vaguely showing up.

A new day had come.

But the slaughter and destruction in the Land of Sins would never stop.

The fierce battle on the red line had ended.

In terms of capability, the sinners of the other villages were absolutely no match for the many experts of the Village of Peace. They were simply launching suicidal attacks with their courage and their madness to die with the enemy.

However, skulls were not as hard as sticks after all. Their momentum could not last long. The several hundred sinners at the front were all knocked to the ground, moaning in pain.

‘Sky Breaking Hammer’ Gu Zhengyang and ‘Blood Eagle’ Zhao Lie marched forward unstoppably, one from the left and the other from the right. The mobs that were temporarily gathered were finally crushed. Leaving the wounded soldiers who were screaming with their broken bones, they retreated again.

But the Village of Peace had suffered grave casualties, too.

After the fierce fight of no more than two hours, more than a hundred warriors had died, and approximately five hundred were heavily wounded. In the Land of Sins that had no doctors or medicine, after their internal organs were churned up by rusted weapons, they would most likely be crippled even if they were lucky enough to have not been killed on the spot.

More importantly, most of the victims were brawny men in their prime. They were the strongest hunters, warriors, and explorers of the village.

There were only several thousand people in the entire village, and almost five hundred men had been lost after a single battle. Such a loss was truly devastating.

The chasm between the village leader and the captain of the exploration team finally collapsed, and fervent fury erupted out of it.

Hardly had Li Yao brought the two little fellows back to the camp when a conflict ten times more intense than the previous night broke out between Gu Zhengyang and Zhao Lie.

“Revenge! Revenge! Those scumbags must pay for what they did!”

After a night of fighting, ‘Blood Eagle’ Zhao Lie’s armor had been dyed red, with suspicious mangled flesh dangling from it. But he could not have looked more excited and showed absolutely no sign of exhaustion. His bloodshot eyes were almost jumping out of his head while he waved a dented saber and shouted, “For every victim of the Village of Peace they killed, I will kill ten of them as retaliation. Kill them all and leave no one behind! Slay all of the scumbags!”

Quite a few young and passionate warriors were on Zhao Lie’s side. Their fathers, brothers, and friends had been heavily wounded if not killed in the battle of the red line. They were in the most infuriated and crazy state. Led by Zhao Chong’s Iron Blood Youths, the young warriors were reorganizing the tanks and moving the ammunition, truly preparing to march to the other side of the red line.

“Enough!”

As they installed the crystal cannons and storm bolters to the rails of the tanks and refilled fuel for the vehicles, Gu Zhengyang strode forward and stood before Zhao Lie like a door. His face had also been blackened because of the fire and smoke, but his eyes were still clear and filled with fury that felt like magma.

“Captain Zhao, your recklessness last night has already caused the deaths of so many of our brothers here. This is something that has never happened in the past twenty years. Are you now going even further and determined to destroy the future of the entire Village of Peace?”

Chapter 1970 - Couldn“t Be More Wrong!

Chapter 1970 Couldn“t Be More Wrong!

His thunderous roars stopped everybody from further movements, but they attracted the attention of even more villagers, too.

Everybody knew that the disagreement between Gu Zhengyang and Zhao Lie had been brewing for more than a few days. The bomb of contradictions finally exploded at the most critical moment.

“Recklessness?” Zhao Lie was dumbfounded at first. Then he burst into such fury that he pointed at Gu Zhengyang and shouted, “Are you blind? Even if you are blind, your ears are still working, aren’t they? Before those scumbags charged at us last night, it’s obvious that several experts blew up our searchlights from very far away, which created an opportunity for the scumbags!

“Just think with your head. After only one moment, all the searchlights were blown up. Which village around here can support such shooters?

“Now, your daughter and your disciple have brought back a few modified guns and four pieces of tattoos, proving that tough bandits from the Black Water Gang played us. What does it mean? It means that somebody set their eyes on us a long time ago!

“Hehe. Had it not been for somebody instigating trouble in secret, how could the starving scumbags from the dozens of villages have reached an agreement so quickly and attacked us?

“Therefore, whatever choice we made last night, those people would have charged at us all the same. Do you understand it all, my great village leader?”

“At the very least, if we had thrown the assets in time, they would have attracted the attention of a large batch of sinners,” Gu Zhengyang said solemnly. “Chances are that not so many people would have killed. There would still have been room for negotiation!”

“Negotiation? Hahaha. To this moment, you still do not realize what makes you an idiot. Your biggest problem is that you left too much room for negotiation!”

Zhao Lie laughed so hard that tears were running out of his eyes, but his tears were actually red. Perhaps the blood vessels inside his eyeballs had broken apart, and his fury and his blood had darted out at the same time.

“A few years back, I kept saying that while the Village of Peace was strong and had abundant assets, we should sweep across all the villages in the hundred square kilometers around us, turning everyone into a slave soldier of the Village of Peace. That way, the opponents competing for assets with us would be fewer, and there would be an additional barrier of protection outside of the village.

“But you were indecisive and blinded by your petty kindness. As a result, the potential threat has grown into major trouble. Today, the scumbags that you let go of in the past have killed our own villagers instead!

“You think you are merciful and great, that you can save everyone, huh? Look at the dead bodies on the ground. Look at the villagers who are screaming. It’s all your fault! Your way does not work in the Land of Sins!”

Gu Zhengyang’s body shook hard. As he listened to the screams of so many wounded villagers, the fury on his face immediately thawed.

Zhao Lie’s voice became even more high-pitched, sounding both like the roar of an eagle and the cries of a crow. “Don’t you understand? The gangs from the Bloody Worlds have long been coveting us. They have already made up their mind to destroy the Village of Peace. The only way to protect ourselves is to get stronger, whatever the cost!”

Gu Zhengyang struggled to say, “We have a pact with the gangs of Double Dragons Valley, and we offer them tremendous assets every year. There are few profits but a lot of losses if they attack the Village of Peace. Do they have any reason to do such unprofitable business?”

With a gloomy face, Zhao Lie said, “There is only one reason. We are too strong. The Village of Peace gets stronger every year. It will soon get out of the control of the gangs in Double Dragons Valley and be capable of all the villages in the hundred square kilometers around.

“The gangs wish to see a Desolate World that is disorganized and plagued by infighting so that they can ravage us blatantly. There’s no way that they want to see a powerful force rising in the Desolate World, threatening their reign.

“Therefore, even if demolishing the Village of Peace is not a profitable business and a minor price must be paid, they will not hesitate to do it.”

“We are not uniting all the villages in the hundred square kilometers!” Gu Zhengyang said anxiously.

“No, we are not.” Zhao Lie put on a derisive smile. “I believe you, but will the heads of the gangs in the Double Dragons Valley believe you?”

Gu Zhengyang was lost for words.

“This is the law of the Land of Sins,” Zhao Lie shrieked. “This is the rule of survival! Leader, I used to really admire your strength, but even if you were ten times stronger, you cannot stay as naïve as this forever! One day, you will get everybody killed if you do not do things according to the rules of the Land of Sins!”

Gu Zhengyang panted quickly and asked, “Then, what do you want right now?”

“Very simple. An assault!”

With a cocky and cruel smile flashing on his face, Zhao Lie said, “Perhaps you do not know this, but I had a lot of boxes that contained compressed-food thrown to the sinners on the other side during the chaotic battle last night. As I expected, they took away all the compressed food during their retreat.

“Everybody knows that those who have been hungered for a long time have a very weak stomach. If they eat excessive food in a short amount of time, it is very easy for their belly to become bloated. Even if they are not killed by indigestion, they must be drowsy and unable to move right now. How much combat ability can they possibly have?

“We had a bloody battle just now. Both parties suffered heavy losses. Nobody will expect us to launch a sudden assault at this moment!

“It must be noted that the dozens of villages on the other side have their own interests and are wary of each other. Their camps are far away from each other. Even if one of the camps is under attack, no reinforcements will ever arrive.

“Therefore, we will take the opportunity to gather our last elites and launch an unexpected attack. We will catch them unprepared and conquer them one by one. All the hidden problems will be eradicated in advance, and all the assets will be ours!”

After Zhao Lie finished his plan, the young and passionate villagers shouted and cheered again. Somebody was also knocking the shield and tanks with their sabers. It was quite chaotic.

“No!” Gu Zhengyang vetoed the plan without any hesitation. “We have just been through a huge battle. Everybody is too exhausted to fight anymore! Besides, we have done no reconnaissance on their camps, and we do not know the first thing about the environment on the other side of the ruins! If what you said is true, and some gangs are behind this, it is not entirely impossible that they have backup plans. We will likely be surrounded by a large batch of enemies when we attack one of the camps.

“The remaining elites are our last bargaining chips. There’s no reason we should take such a wild gamble!”

Instead of being moralistic, Gu Zhengyang focused on gains and losses. The villagers who were older and more prudent nodded quickly.

Zhao Lie’s face became even gloomier. He squeezed his saber so hard that sweat seemed to be flowing out of it. He gnashed his teeth. “We have suffered heavy losses this time. If we do not take back what we’ve lost, how will the Village of Peace survive the next year? The time has come for us to make a desperate struggle, and you are still hesitant here?

“Hehe. Nobody is asking you to participate. If you are scared, just stay here and command the non-combatants. I will certainly bring back a large batch of assets for the village!”

Zhao Lie seemed ready to leave, but Gu Zhengyang stepped forward heavily and stood in his way. Glaring at him in the eyes, Gu Zhengyang declared, one word after another, “Captain Zhao, we have to be responsible for the life of every villager. I do not think that you are suitable to be the general commander of the operation.”

“Is that so?” Zhao Lie laughed in fury. With blood red brilliance beaming out of his eyes, he looked around and held his chest high. “I also do not think that you are suitable to be the leader of the Village of Peace!”

Upon hearing that, all the villagers were shocked.

Their conflict had been purely about the strategies, but what they were fighting over right now was doubtlessly ‘power’.

In the Land of Sins, such a power struggle often came with a miserable price.

After Zhao Lie’s declaration, the whispers of the villagers immediately vanished. Everybody looked at the two of them in bewilderment. They even stepped back under the intimidation of the violent and daunting auras from them, clearing an open field for them.

“My father is right. Gu Zhengyang is too indecisive and hypocritical. That’s why the Village of Peace suffered the losses today!” Zhao Chong was the first to jump out. He pointed at Gu Zhengyang and shouted, “Look at his sick, wretched appearance. He is not half as strong as he used to be. Why is he still qualified to be the leader of the Village of Peace? Everybody saw how bravely my father fought last night. Only my father is qualified to be the village leader!”

“Shut up, Zhao Chong!” Han Te could not help but step forward and curse, too. “You think that all a village leader needs to do is fighting? So, any random guy with more brawn than brains can be a village leader? My master is considerate and meticulous! What if the gangs have set up traps on the other side of the ruins, waiting for us to jump in? If you do what your father said, you won’t even know how you are killed in the end! My master is saving your life out of good will, and you are still throwing out bullsh*t?”

Zhao Chong almost went crazy. “Good. Come on. You didn’t get enough of a beating half a month ago, did you? Why don’t we have a fight first?”

The two teenagers both had their supporters in the village. A lot of hotblooded young people were immediately shouting and calling each other’s names.

“Enough!”

Gu Zhengyang and Zhao Lie stopped the conflict among the juniors almost at the same time.

“Leader, there is no need for the juniors and the villagers to take sides because of the disagreement between us,” Zhao Lie said coldly. “Why don’t we resolve the problem straightforwardly with the rules of the Land of Sins!”

Looking at the ruins behind, Gu Zhengyang said solemnly, “Zhao Lie, you have to choose such a moment to resolve the problem?”

“It is exactly because the Village of Peace is in peril that I have to resolve the ‘greatest problem’ immediately.” Zhao Lie warmed up his wrists and ankles hurriedly. Thick veins protruded on his skin, as if countless snakes had been tamed inside his body. “There is no personal grudge between us. On the contrary, you saved my life three times, and I save yours four times from the claws of mutated beasts. We used to be life-and-death brothers.

“However, I cannot watch you lead the villagers down on the wrong path anymore!”

Chapter 1971 - Fight Blood Eagle!

Chapter 1971 Fight Blood Eagle!

After saying that, Zhao Lie shut his mouth and stopped talking. He stabbed his dented machete into the ground before he took off his armor that was embedded with sharp thorns and even his leather clothes, draping them over the grip of his weapon, revealing a muscular body.

His body was like a combination of a bear, a tiger, and a leopard. His shoulders were as broad as a bear, his chest was as thick as a tiger, and his back was as tensile as a leopard. In a perfect triangle, his body was brimming with explosive strength even when he was not moving.

On his entire chest, a red, flying eagle had been painted. Its wings extended all the way to the biceps on his arms.

After a few warmup movements, the bloody wings of the eagle were flapping up and down, as if an eagle were going to rush out of his body and tear all the prey apart!

Emotionlessly, Zhao Lie slowly straightened his right arm, gesturing that he was ready.

Zhao Chong and the Iron Blood Youths behind him were exclaiming. A lot of villagers also turned on the tanks that were fully embedded with iron plates and connected the vehicles into a giant circle about twenty meters in diameter around the two of them.

It was an arena.

In the Land of Sins, the experts always had the biggest say. Resolving disagreements in a one-versus-one duel before everybody was already the most merciful and ‘peaceful’ way.

With everything coming to this point, Gu Zhengyang had nothing more to say. He called Han Te and Liu Li and reminded them of something before he waved his hands and asked them to leave the circle of tanks. Then, he tore off the armor and suit on his body, too.

There were no tattoos on his body. But the moment he tore apart the suit, his skin that had been sallow because of his disease suddenly emanated bronze colors.

His body was thinner and did not look as impressive as Zhao Lie’s, but the hundred shocking, interconnected scars on it were medals a hundred times more intimidating.

“Cough, cough. Cough, cough, cough, cough!” Gu Zhengyang coughed lightly. The many hideous scars on his body wriggled at the same time, like insects that were gnawing his flesh.

Seeing his body that was full of wounds, and recalling the contributions that he had made to the Village of Peace in the past and how he had transformed it from a tiny, struggling village to such a thriving one today with thousands of people, many villagers sighed in mixed feelings.

Even the villagers who were more inclined to Zhao Lie lowered their heads in embarrassment, wondering whether they should support Gu Zhengyang or Zhao Lie.

Even the eyes of Zhao Lie himself shuddered when Gu Zhengyang exposed so many scars.

However, the feelings in the eyes were soon frozen by brilliance that was colder and more ruthless.

Shua!

Zhao Lie took out a fully-sealed metal can from a bag that was bound to his thigh. He tossed it to Gu Zhengyang and said, “Village leader, in case somebody says that I am taking advantage of your illness, this is a battlefield exhilarant of the latest formula. It can suppress wounds and increase the sensitivity of nerves. It only fell from the sky last night. Do you want to give it a try?”

Gu Zhengyang weighed the metal can in his palm for a while before he tossed it back to Zhao Lie softly. He then raised his eyebrow and bellowed, “That will be unnecessary!”

When his voice was still echoing, the thin, sick man suddenly turned into a furious warrior. He stepped forward, covering about five meters with every step, and lunged at Zhao Lie, leaving deep footprints on the ground.

With every step he took, the metallic brightness on his body became more intense. By the time he arrived before Zhao Lie, he seemed to be entirely made of metal.

His right arm was even more intimidating. There was a transparent feeling beyond the metallic brightness, as if it were carved out of diamonds!

“Good!” Zhao Lie bulged his eyes and shrieked. Instead of picking up the metal can that Gu Zhengyang had thrown back, he simply raised his leg and kicked it back to the enemy.

When the can was still in midair, it could not withstand the spiritual energy that he had blown in. It expanded nonstop until it exploded!

Bam!

The exhilarant and the pieces of the metal can smashed into Gu Zhengyang.

Despite the metallic body that Gu Zhengyang had, his vision and his pace were somewhat disrupted by the fluids and the metal scraps that were flying everywhere.

Zhao Lie took the opportunity to breathe quickly before he uttered the roars of a steam engine.

When he breathed in the air, his entire lower abdomen collapsed deeply and was only one layer of skin away from his back, but his chest rose high as if a hundred bombs had exploded inside.

It was exactly the opposite when he breathed the air out. His abdomen became as round as a drum, whereas his chest collapsed weirdly, and his every rib was clearly visible.

He took such deep breaths three times every second. In the blink of an eye, the redness of the eagle tattoo on his chest covered his entire body.

His right arm was almost twice as large and half a foot longer. His fingers became longer with a series of cracking noises, and coldly-shining bone spurs protruded from his joints and fingertips!

Boom!

The two of them attacked and evaded almost at the same time.

A gargantuan claw appeared out of nowhere and brushed past Gu Zhengyang’s shoulder, taking away three threads of flesh from his shoulder that was as tough as iron. After it hit the ground behind him, the claw left a crater half a foot deep and more than two meters long. The mark was almost like the footprint of a dinosaur.

A golden wind mixed with purple electric arcs was also blown out of Gu Zhengyang’s fist, which narrowly passed Zhao Lie’s abdomen and blew into an iron tank behind him, raising a deafening explosion.

When the attack was still almost five meters away, the door of the tank that was made of three layers of iron plates collapsed deeply as if it had been hit by a battering ram. After a series of ear-splitting noises, the entire tank back ten meters, with dust and smoke popping up!

All the villagers were so deeply intimidated by Gu Zhengyang and Zhao Lie’s shocking attacks that they even forgot to cheer for them.

Even Li Yao felt shocked and inspired by the weirdness and aggressiveness of the arts in the Land of Sins.

Gu Zhengyang and Zhao Lie’s strength was certainly far from a super expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage.

However, the exploitation of their life and soul had reached the highest level.

To put it more simply, if Li Yao had one hundred life and soul points and could bring out 105 points of combat ability, those guys perhaps only had twenty life and soul points but could trigger thirty points of combat ability under the motivation of all kinds of extreme arts and deadly techniques!

The Immortal Cultivators who created those arts and techniques and even the entire Land of Sins were definitely unpardonable scoundrels, but they were doubtlessly evil geniuses!

Without saying anything, Li Yao perceived the flow of spiritual energy from the two experts of the Land of Sins. He learned the essence in it and was prepared to include it in his own model of spiritual energy.

“Grandpa Yao…” Han Te grabbed Li Yao’s mechanical arm.

“Don’t be hasty. Let’s wait a while longer.” Li Yao’s soul vibrated and sent the message into Han Te’s brain. “Your master is still capable of fighting.”

The center of the tanks had become an ocean of bloody claws and bright fists.

In the middle of the overwhelming dust, it could only be vaguely seen that a streak of redness and one of gold were raging, and deafening noises as if skyscrapers were falling could be heard, too. But nobody could see the process of the fight however much they craned their neck.

Out of everybody’s expectations, an enormous bloody claw extended out of the dust. Everybody thought that it was Zhao Lie’s attack that had missed the target again, but the bloody claw seemed to boast its own will. It snatched a tank that was serving as the fence, ripped off an iron plate from it in a crack, and smashed it into the dust!

Gu Zhengyang’s grunt could be heard. The bronze brilliance immediately dimmed, and bloody shadows appeared everywhere in the dust!

“Ah!”

Han Te, Liu Li, and the villagers who supported Gu Zhengyang all exclaimed in shock.

“Great!”

The villagers who supported Zhao Lie naturally cheered.

Li Yao, however, said very confidently, “The battle is over. The village leader has won!”

“What!” Han Te and Liu Li were slightly dazed. They were about to ask why he said that when an ear-splitting shriek suddenly came from the dust. The overwhelming bloody claws suddenly vanished, and a cluster of brightness made of hundreds of electric arcs was blown out of a fist and knocked a tank over, which rolled more than ten times in midair before it finally crashed into garbage!

Nothing could be heard from the dust anymore except heavy breath.

The dust gradually settled.

Everybody held their breath and bulged their eyes, looking at the dust carefully.

The first one to walk out of the dust was Gu Zhengyang.

His entire body was bleeding, and barely any part of his skin was still intact. The six interconnected bloody marks on his chest were almost cut deep into his bones.

His right arm was black and wrinkled, like a withered vine. It dangled from his shoulder, shaking. He could not have looked more devastated.

Opposite him…

Zhao Lie’s eyes were wide open. His mouth was opened to the maximum, with blood red smoke popping out nonstop. His chest with the eagle tattoo collapsed deeply and did not come back to normal after a long time. Countless metal scraps were stabbed into his body, too, which were the ‘bullets’ after the iron plate was broken.

After Gu Zhengyang tore the iron plate apart with his fist and shot them out like bullets, the pieces stabbed into Zhao Lie’s body so deeply that he could no longer hold on. He fell to one knee before Gu Zhengyang, his arms shaking. The red smoke popping out of his mouth gradually turned into thick blood.

He tried several times but could not stand. It was already the best he could do to kneel on one knee.

He did not seem to expect that he would ever lose. There was still disbelief and agony inside his eyes. He rested for a long time before he finally said, “Your strength… has recovered?”

After a brief silence, Gu Zhengyang said, “You must treat your wounds immediately.”

Zhao Lie grinned in the most miserable way. He crawled on his hands and knees to the saber that he stabbed into the ground at the beginning. Plucking the saber, he tossed it at Gu Zhengyang, and the weapon dropped to Gu Zhengyang’s feet. “I’ve lost. Do it.”

“Dad!” Zhao Chong was greatly shocked. The Iron Blood Youths and the young villagers who supported Zhao Lie were all overwhelmed, their faces pale.

Chapter 1972 - Hypocrite!

Chapter 1972 Hypocrite!

Nothing but silence could be heard. Everybody held their breath and waited for Gu Zhengyang’s decision.

Gu Zhengyang did not look at the saber next to his feet at all. “I will not kill you.”

Zhao Lie coughed violently again and vomited blood that was almost solid. He finally got back to his feet, shaking. After staring at Gu Zhengyang with complicated feelings for a while, he turned back and walked outside without looking back.

“Zhao Lie, you can stay in the Village of Peace as the captain of the exploration team!” Gu Zhengyang shouted. “Nobody is kicking you away. You are truly a very distinguished captain of the exploration team!”

Zhao Lie heard none of it. He staggered forward, and when he was out of the circle of iron tanks, he looked at the wounded soldiers around and suddenly said, “Leader, after the fierce battle last night, a lot of wounded enemy soldiers were left behind. Other than our own people, there are still the captives that the other villages did not take away. How do you prepare to deal with those people? Kill them all?”

Gu Zhengyang was slightly dazed. He shook his head and said, “You know that I will not kill them. Throwing them to the other side of the red line will be enough.”

Zhao Lie smiled and continued. “The weak, the old, the sick, and the disabled from other villages, you won’t kill them, will you?”

Gu Zhengyang continued shaking his head. “Of course I will not kill them.”

Zhao Lie’s eyes turned sharp again. “Even if those women and children were involved in the battle last night and killed our own warriors?”

Gu Zhengyang hesitated for a long time. He then sighed and said, “Like I said just now, a reckless assault is too risky. I only want to take our brothers and assets back to the Village of Peace as soon as possible.”

“Hahaha!” Zhao Lie suddenly raised his head and laughed, both miserably and devastatingly. He turned around and pointed at Gu Zhengyang, shouting, “Leader, you think it is an action of mercy when you do not kill the lost soldiers and captives, don’t you?

“But you do not know that those heavily wounded people will die all the same when they do not have enough medicine and food to recover!

“Without the protection of the young warriors, how will the non-combatants, including the women and the children, survive in the Land of Sins? They will either starve or be enslaved by gangs and other big villages as soldiers and prostitutes. Their outcome will be even more miserable than death!

“Hehe. By killing them now, you are actually granting them a quick, clean death. But your act of ‘mercy’ will bring torture and agony that is a hundred times more insufferable than death!

“Have you really never thought of that? Or maybe you are merely persisting in some boring morals because you do not want your own hands to be stained by blood…

“It is useless. In the Land of Sins, your hands have been stained with as much blood of the weak and old as mine have. You will never be able to make them clean again!”

Gu Zhengyang had not been knocked down by Zhao Lie’s bloody claws just now, but his internal organs seemed to have been seriously wounded by his words. He grunted, and his face turned pale.

“From my own perspective, I should naturally thank you for letting me go today,” Zhao Lie said gloomily. “However, from the perspective of the Village of Peace, it is only more proof that you are an indecisive, wavering coward. A man like you does not deserve to be the leader of the Village of Peace or have the capability to keep the safety of so many people, no matter how strong you are!

“Let me ask you one last time. The saber is right below your feet, and my neck is right here. Will you kill me or not?”

Gu Zhengyang ground his teeth, and his veins jumped crazily on the forehead. Struggling for a long time, he finally declared as rough as iron, “Get lost!”

“You will regret it.”

After saying that, Zhao Lie walked out step by step, like an eagle whose wings were broken.

Zhao Chong watched in a daze for a long time. Finally, he looked at Gu Zhengyang and Han Te with obvious hatred and rushed forward to catch up to his father.

The father and the son supported each other and disappeared into the ruins and the undying dust.

A lot of the villagers seemed to have something they wanted to say, but Gu Zhengyang simply stopped them and said, “There’s no need to say anything. Treat the wounded and collect our assets. Let’s return to the Village of Peace as quickly as possible!”

…

Despite the heavy casualties in the Bliss Ceremony that year, there were far more trophies than usual. It took them an entire day to move all the assets back to the iron-shelled boats of the Village of Peace. Then, they activated the power rune arrays on the bottom of the ships, sailing them back to the center of the lank to be anchored again.

Gu Zhengyang, however, seemed to have been heavily wounded. His previous sickness had returned after the fierce battle. He entrusted all the organizational work to other people, and he simply locked himself in the greenhouse where the Gold Barley was grown.

When Han Te and Liu Li went to check on him with Li Yao, he was holding some Gold Barley and smelling the fragrance of the plant, not moving at all.

“Dad, are you alright?”

Liu Li jumped forward and grabbed Gu Zhengyang’s heavily wounded hands worriedly.

“Rest assured. I’m fine.”

Seeing his daughter, Gu Zhengyang finally put on a rigid smile. He opened his fingers and rubbed his daughter’s hair.

He then looked at Han Te and said, “Thanks to the amazing electric currents that ran randomly inside Han Te’s body caused by the mutation half a month ago, I was able to have an epiphany when I studied the trajectories of the electric currents. That’s why I could temporarily recover my past level and defeat Zhao Lie.”

“Master, you’re the best!” Looking at Li Yao, Han Te grinned. “What ‘Blood Eagle’? He is nothing more than an old hen. Of course he is not a match for you!”

“However…” Gu Zhengyang’s smile vanished, replaced by gloom on his face. His eyes were somewhat hollowed as he said in a low voice, “Although I defeated Zhao Lie, I couldn’t convince him. I cannot even convince myself.

“Am I really right? Is Zhao Lie really wrong? Should we really not attack the camps of other villages at dawn today? At the last moment, should I really have let Zhao Lie go?”

“Dad!” Liu Li grew anxious. “What—what are you talking about? Of course you are right. Didn’t you always say that we are good people—or people, at least? We cannot do the same as the insane, atrocious guys!”

“But the result is all the same,” Gu Zhengyang said in depression. “Zhao Lie was quite right. Even though we did not kill the wounded soldiers and their families, they—they will not survive long. They will either brutalize each other for the scarce assets or be enslaved by the gangs and the large villages, with an outcome even more miserable than death. Eventually… everybody will be killed. Even the strongest person is still destined to be swallowed by the Land of Sins!

“If Zhao Lie is a real scoundrel, I am a hypocrite. I knew that they would certainly die but did nothing about it. I just did not want to kill them with my own hands, which would make my hands dirty.”

In front of his daughter and his disciple, Gu Zhengyang’s seemingly solid armor finally collapsed, and his voice shook violently.

“That is not our fault!” Han Te waved his arms hard anxiously. “There are limited resources and too many starving people in the Land of Sins. We can barely save ourselves. Are we really capable of saving other people? There’s nothing we can do!”

“Yes. There’s nothing I can do. There’s nothing any of us can do…” Gu Zhengyang coughed in pain again. He coughed so hard that he almost vomited his internal organs.

In the middle of his coughs, he seemed to make a decision. Pushing away his daughter and his disciple’s hands that were extended to him, he said, “I’m fine. Liu Li, there… there’s something that I need to tell you. Han Te, you should listen to it, too.”

Han Te and Liu Li looked at each other, both surprised at the unprecedented solemnity in Gu Zhengyang’s voice.

“Or rather, it is a story that your mother told me before her death, about a group of very special people,” Gu Zhengyang said. “A story about the Cultivators.”

Li Yao’s soul shook so hard that it almost spread out of his steel shell.

He did not expect that he would find the Cultivators hiding in the Martial Meritocrats Sector, or the Land of Sins, so quickly!

He increased the sensitivity of his soul to the highest level without letting go of Gu Zhengyang’s every heartbeat to make sure that the guy was telling the truth.

Han Te and Liu Li looked at each other. Obviously, they did not know the first thing about the history of Cultivators. “What are Cultivators?”

“A groundless legend, a bizarre story, or maybe a bunch of indecisive and imprudent cowards.”

Leaning against the wall, Gu Zhengyang kept his eyes half shut and mumbled, “Before, I was hesitating whether or not to tell you about the Cultivators because they and their story are too different and incompatible with the Land of Sins and the entire world that we are living in. They are almost entirely contradictory! I almost feel like the story of the Cultivators will not bring you any good. Instead, it will more likely bring a destructive catastrophe to the Village of Peace and even the entire Land of Sins.

“However…”

After a miserable smile, he said, “I have already thought it through. The Land of Sins is already as bad as can be. How can any disaster make it any worse?

“Besides, according to Zhao Lie, the gangs of Double Dragons Valley are making preparations to deal with the Village of Peace. If I don’t tell you right now, I will probably never have the chance to in the future.

“Liu Li, do you know how your mother came up with the idea of growing Gold Barley to save everybody in the Land of Sins? It was because of a story that she accidentally heard when she was very little. The story said that a long, long, long time ago when the Land of Sins was still known as the

Martial Meritocrats Sector, there were a bunch of people named ‘Cultivators’.”

With the most solemn expression, Gu Zhengyang took out a vintage metal box from a bag on his waist. He opened the box carefully, and there was a very delicate piece of velvet with a chip the size of a fingernail inside.

After scanning with his soul, Li Yao concluded from the structure and the hundred rune arrays on the surface of the jade chip that it should be some sort of storage chip the size of a mini jade chip.

Judging from the scratches on the edge of the chip, it must have been made a long time ago. Perhaps it had been passed on for hundreds of years.

There was also a shallow crack on the surface of the chip, which caused irreversible damage to the structure.

Chapter 1973 - Little Cultivators

Chapter 1973 Little Cultivators

Gu Zhengyang then unveiled the velvet inside the metal box, revealing the delicate mechanical structure below.

Countless gears smaller than fingernails were embedded together, with an interface in the middle that was made of metal and exposed to the air.

He inserted the chip into the interface and held the metal box with both hands, inputting a stream of spiritual energy to both sides.

It could be seen that the technology to craft the storage chip came from a different age from the technology to build the metal box. The latter seemed much more underdeveloped and even produced specifically for the purpose of parsing the chip.

Also, the item had been crafted in the sturdiest way. It did not require additional power. As long as anyone inputted feeble spiritual energy into it, the gears inside that were as dense as the parts of a clock would function automatically. From a hole in the middle of the gears, a dim and twisted ray of light was projected, forming a 3D light beam.

Noises echoed from the metal box, like a broadcast that was seriously jammed.

The two little fellows and Li Yao all watched attentively. Finally, a picture was displayed on the twisted light beam.

Perhaps because of the serious damage to the chip, the quality of the picture was rather unstable. Occasionally, mottled spots would burst out. But the enormous title was still legible—Little Cultivators.

Han Te and Liu Li looked at each other in bewilderment. They had never seen such weird things before.

Li Yao, however, thought of something. The title reminded him of the plays in the Star Glory Federation that were performed by real people.

It seemed to be a play, and one that was designed for the children of a very young age. The main plot of the play was that five kids who were the students of ‘School of Cultivation’ were given mysterious and powerful abilities from meteorites from the sky, which allowed them to change into ‘Cultivators’ instantly. Therefore, they established a combat squad to resist the evil forces that invaded the Martial Meritocrats Sector.

In Li Yao’s eyes, the props, setting, and plot of the children’s play were barely satisfactory. Not too much thought was given to the aftereffects. It was indeed only good enough to trick the little children.

However, the children’s play must have been shot far earlier than Judgment Day, which destroyed the entire Martial Meritocrats civilization. It could even be earlier than the outbreak of conflict between the Cultivators and the ordinary people in the Martial Meritocrats Sector and the eventual corruption of the believers of Chiyou from the ‘Sand Primitive Sector’.

It was probably the years when the civilization founded by the Martial Meritocrats Sector had reached the peak and was about to explore the sea of stars, full of ambition.

At the very least, there were a lot of modern cities in the background of the children’s play. The dense but well-organized skyscrapers and the transportation tubes that hovered among the higher towers made the best use of space, which was as impressive as what the Star Glory Federation had today.

The children and the ‘teachers’ of the ‘School of Cultivation’ who took part in the play were also sunny and spirited, filled with the confidence to conquer everything in the golden years. They looked entirely different from the sinners who struggled to survive in the Land of Sins.

What touched Li Yao most was their slogans and ideals.

The five young people in the children’s play received their power from the meteorites that came from nowhere but not through hard training. It was inevitable that their minds and beliefs lost balance, which led to a series of conflicts and contradictions. Eventually, all the problems were perfectly resolved in battles under the guidance of their teachers.

“Cultivators are the pride of the civilization of mankind. We have to defend our civilization whatever it takes!”

“The strong protect the weak, and the weak support the strong. You are all experts. Even your teachers and your parents are weaker than you. Will you look down upon your teachers and your parents because of that?”

“You are indeed very strong, but nobody is almighty. The high-energy food you take, the weapons you use, and the armor and combat suits you wear are all made by other people through hard work. Without everybody’s help, the five of you alone wouldn’t be able to achieve anything!”

“With great power comes great responsibility. It is exactly because of such an ideal that the invincible civilization of mankind has been built!”

The play elaborated on the moral lessons through the mouth of the teachers.

There were even a few parts where the five young children caused all kinds of damage when they used their power blatantly and finally realized their mistake later.

Li Yao realized that the style of the children’s play was similar to the government’s. He knew that the educational departments in the Star Glory Federation would often shoot similar plays or make positively-themed games for middle and elementary schools so that the children would accept the ideology of the Cultivators during their learning.

The children’s play in the chip seemed to have been edited by somebody else, too, and all the best parts were clipped together. In the video with a duration of slightly more than an hour, it expounded on the ideology of the Cultivators of the Martial Meritocrats Sector almost a thousand years ago and informed the viewers in the most convenient way what Cultivators were!

When the video of more than an hour was played to the end, the five little friends flew higher and higher into the blue sky beyond the atmosphere and saw the vast sea of stars. The picture then froze.

Han Te and Liu Li were both caught in great shock. They clutched their chests, finding it difficult to catch their breath.

Dumbfounded, the two little fellows asked at the same time, “What—what is this?”

“I don’t know. Perhaps something that happened a long, long time ago.”

Gu Zhengyang had already watched it countless times, but whenever he watched it again, he still could not help but feel choked up with emotions. His voice was filled with emotions that he was not familiar with even himself.

Biting her lips, Liu Li said affirmatively, “It does not seem real but more like a play.”

“Exactly. But since so many people are willing to play ‘Cultivators’, does it mean that they once existed in reality and that whoever shot the videos were willing to spread the ideology of the Cultivators on a large scale?” Gu Zhengyang said calmly.

“I—I don’t believe it. Could such an incredible world really have existed?” Han Te said incoherently. “The sky is blue, with so many birds flying on it. The lakes are clear, and the fish inside do not bite. There are so many green trees that constitute many… forests!”

With hope beaming out of her eyes, Liu Li mumbled, “There are also cities, ablaze with lights. I never knew that the cities had been so beautiful before they were destroyed. So many people lived inside the cities. They seemed very happy. Everybody was smiling lightheartedly.”

“And the Cultivators. It’s impossible!” Han Te gritted his teeth so hard that the muscles on his cheeks were bulging. “The strong protect the weak, and the weak support the strong? With great power comes great responsibility? The

Cultivators are the pride, fist, and saber of humanity? What—what does it mean exactly?

“Is it possible that the strong will protect the weak without any complaint? It seems to be a lie in every way!”

“Perhaps it is truly impossible.” Gu Zhengyang smiled miserably and said, “That’s why the Martial Meritocrats civilization was destroyed in the end and reduced to… the Land of Sins.”

The two little fellows both fell silent. Blinking in confusion, they were like two fish that had finally discovered an oasis after walking in a desert for a long time but were still worried that it was merely a mirage. “Is it true? Is this the Martial Meritocrats Sector before the destruction? It does not agree with the legend of Judgment Day at all!”

“I’ve been bothered by the question for many years.” Gu Zhengyang’s eyes were hollowed and unfocused, and his hands trembled so violently that the thick veins on the back of his hand seemed to be jumping out beyond his control. “I do not know if the world stored inside the chip is real or if the story has truly happened before. I only know that the Land of Sins we live in is… too strange and contradictory!

“Why? It’s been hundreds of years since ‘Judgment Day’. The dust of radiation that blocked the sun in the legends disappeared a long time ago, but the earth is still mired in radiation and pollution without any sign of self-cleaning. Even a crop as tough as Gold Barley cannot be grown on a large scale!

“Why are there so many mutated beasts in the Land of Sins? No matter how many times we hunt them and demolish their dens, they are never annihilated and will only come back again with more terrible and strong species.

“Why are the ‘angels’ never willing to show us their real faces? They have established the ‘Heavenly Rails’ that surround the entire Land of Sins and the enormous ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ at the cost of astronomical assets. If they are indeed our past compatriots, wouldn’t it be better for them to give us a hand straightforwardly? Just because our ancestors made mistakes does not mean the blood of sins flows inside our veins!

“Why have they been aiding us with too many weapons and arts and too little food and filter cartridges that can purify water? What is the meaning of that? Are they fond of watching the dog-eat-dog fights?

“If they gave us one tenth of the arts and weapons, just enough for us to resist the mutated beasts, and ten times more food and filter cartridges—no, five times or even three times would suffice—there wouldn’t have been so much slaughter in the Land of Sins!

“There’s still the strangest thing of all. The ‘old grandpas’ and so many new people who drop from the sky with no memories, including me. Who are we? Where do we come from? What is our destiny exactly?”

Gu Zhengyang held his head in agony.

“Dad!”

“Master!”

The two little fellows were both anxious but did not have any idea how they could help Gu Zhengyang.

“It doesn’t matter. I just…” Gu Zhengyang grunted and struggled to speak. “I seem to have vaguely recalled something.”

Chapter 1974 - Hopeless Idiots

Chapter 1974 Hopeless Idiots

“What?” Han Te and Liu Li exclaimed at the same time. “Have you recovered your memories?”

All the people from the sky—be they ‘old grandpas’ with ultimate skills, common men and women, or remaining souls ‘stored’ in crystal processors and even rings—as long as they were human beings of a certain form, could not remember anything of their past save their survival instincts.

Gu Zhengyang’s recovery of his memories was unprecedented. Even Li Yao was quite curious.

Frowning, Gu Zhengyang rubbed his temples softly and said, “I do not know whether it is a real memory or just a chaotic nightmare, but when I was dizzy and sleepy every day because of my illness a while back, some mottled fragments surfaced inside my brain just before my head exploded.

“In those ‘fragments’, I seemed to be wearing heavy metal shackles, which were releasing powerful electric arcs incessantly and stimulated my limbs and internal organs. Some guys who were emotionless or wearing metal masks escorted me somewhere.

“The place seemed to be named Hall of Trial or Inquisition. I can’t remember the name clearly now. All in all, I suffered the most unbelievable torture there. Compared with the torture in my nightmare, the deadly battles in the Land of

Sins are almost as comfortable as a gentle breeze on a summer's evening.

"I don't know how long I was tortured in the 'Hall of Trial', but I was finally escorted to a woman who was wearing a mask with glamorous stripes. She wore a pure white robe and carried a silver gavel that was delicate with fine engravings on it. The silver gavel left a particularly deep impression on me because the woman knocked it hard and declared, 'Guilty!'

"I do not know what crimes I committed. I only remember that I was tortured to such an extent that I even lost the strength to struggle. Then, I was pressed to a metal bed, which felt as cold as ice.

"There, somebody shaved my hair. There were also many cold hands touching my bald head. Some tools that were as tough as iron brushed past my skull, too.

"Eventually…"

Gu Zhengyang's voice was trembling even harder. The iron-made man shuddered again and pointed at his temples. "It felt somebody dig through here with a very sharp drill and then open my skull with a curved jigsaw that looked like a sickle.

"At that time, I should have been very conscious, so conscious that I could sense the smell when the drill was rubbing my skull and the sound of the high-speed friction. It is probably the most horrible sound that anybody could ever hear.

"The skull shouldn't bring any sense of pain, but I clearly sensed the pain that could've driven anybody mad. It felt as if ten thousand man-eating ants were crawling inside my brains, but I was unable to move my hands or feet at all…

“That was the end of my nightmare. I do not remember anything that happened next. After a long period of darkness, it becomes the memories of me in the Land of Sins.”

“Ah…”

Hearing her father’s story and seeing his twisted expression, Liu Li felt so heartbroken that she almost wept. She extended her hands and wanted to touch her father’s face, but she did not dare move further, fearing that she might touch some terrible wound.

“Don’t be scared.” Gu Zhengyang grinned. He tapped his head and said, “I’ve long examined it carefully. There is no scar on my head that indicates somebody opened my skull. The few scars there were all left in the fights after I reached the Land of Sins. That’s why I’m suspicious that it is merely a weird nightmare.”

“Yes. Such a thing couldn’t possibly have happened, right?” Han Te comforted Liu Li, too. “Opening someone’s skull, playing tricks inside, and then sewing the skull without leaving any scar is too strange and unbelievable. Master’s brain must’ve been affected by the chaotic spiritual energy when he was sick. That’s why he had the bizarre nightmare.”

Li Yao, however, knew that craniotomy had been a very mature technology even in the Star Glory Federation a hundred years earlier. Also, the technology of cell proliferation and skin surgery were advanced enough to erase the scars of an operation completely, too.

Then, what were the ‘Hall of Trial’ and ‘guilty’ about?

The Martial Meritocrats Sector had completely turned into a weapon laboratory. In such a heavily-polluted, man-made world where the strong preyed on the weak, if ‘new blood’ was not injected from the outside incessantly, it would be impossible to keep the population of ‘test subjects’. Perhaps the locals of the Martial Meritocrats Sector should have gone extinct, and the place would’ve been abandoned, hundreds of years ago.

Unless, of course, the lack of test subjects was made up for by the people who were found ‘guilty’ by the ‘Hall of Trial’, after part of their brain cortexes were removed and something additional was implanted.

If Li Yao’s soul had teeth, he would have been biting them so hard that they were falling apart.

After thinking for a moment, he realized that the chip in Gu Zhengyang’s hands was rather unusual.

He sent a wave to Han Te’s brain quietly.

Blinking quickly, Han Te said, “Right, master. What exactly is the chip that stores ‘Little Cultivators’ about? You mentioned just now that my masteress gave it to you. Then, where did my masteress get it?”

As if caught in memories from a long time ago, Gu Zhengyang said, not very certainly, “According to your masteress, it was a gift of a traveler who passed by the Village of Peace when she was little.

“The Land of Sins is in peril. Even the commercial groups among the ‘Elysian Worlds’ have to hire hundreds of experts as guards before they do business in the ‘Bloody Worlds’ and the ‘Desolate Worlds’. ‘Travelers’ are almost too rare to ever come across.

“What was even more unusual was that the traveler was a white-haired old lady. It was said that she passed through more than ten ‘Bloody Worlds’ occupied by the most ferocious gangs and reached the Village of Peace unharmed.

“I do not know what the old lady saw in your masteress, but she spent some time with your masteress and told a lot of stories to her. Before she left, she offered your masteress a bag of seeds of the Gold Barley and the chip.

“The old lady told your masteress that the seeds and the chip could perhaps save the entire Land of Sins.

“The Gold Barley could be grown anywhere, but the chip was of paramount importance and would mostly likely lead to disasters if revealed easily. The old lady asked your masteress to share the secrets of the chip and pass it only when she met someone she could absolutely trust.

“Although your masteress and I were together for many years, she never told me the secrets about the chip until the last moment. I only learned what a burdensome and remarkable thing she had been carrying then.

“You two kids are both very good. Now that the Village of Peace has come to a dangerous moment, I cannot wait anymore. I’ll give the chip to the two of you. Whether or not the world described in the chip is real, and what secrets are hidden behind the so-called Land of Sins, will be your choice to pursue or forget.”

Gu Zhengyang put the chip back to the metal box and then handed the metal box to the two of them solemnly. He then sighed softly, as if some sort of strength that had been supporting him was sealed in the box and passed on to the two little fellows.

“Starlight!” the mental devil shouted next to Li Yao’s soul. “That’s right. The old lady that Gu Zhengyang talked about must be a warrior of ‘Starlight’, the legendary resistance organization of the Cultivators. No matter how harsh the environment in the Land of Sins and how close the surveillance of the angels, or the Immortal Cultivators, the Cultivators of the Martial Meritocrats Sector have never been completely wiped out. They are still resisting in their own way, or at least passing on the ideology of the Cultivators generation after generation!”

“It is very possible!” Li Yao felt thrilled.

The Star Glory Federation had selected the Martial Meritocrats Sector in the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy partly in order to reach out to the local organization of Cultivators.

From the signs, it was very possible that Starlight did exist and was still active decades ago!

“Dad…” After thinking for a long time, Liu Li bit her lips softly and asked, “Was mom a Cultivator? Did she believe in the ideology of the Cultivators?”

“I… don’t know.” Gu Zhengyang smiled bitterly. “Compared to the world of singing birds, fragrant flowers, and warm sunshine in the video, the Land of Sins is practically a living hell. Who struggling to survive in this hell does not have a pair of hands stained with blood? Who is qualified to call themself a Cultivator? Also, I don’t believe that your mother agrees with the ideology of the Cultivators very much.”

Liu Li was puzzled. “Why?”

Gu Zhengyang’s face suddenly turned weird. He said mysteriously, “Because before she passed away, she pulled me to her side and whispered, ‘All Cultivators are hopeless idiots, and those of the Martial Meritocrats Sector are particularly so.'”

“Well…” Han Te and Liu Li looked at each other in bewilderment. They did not understand what it meant at all.

Li Yao, having the basic knowledge about the whole process of the Martial Meritocrats Sector’s destruction, was the only one who could more or less understand the feelings of Liu Li’s mother at that time.

The woman who tried to grow the Gold Barley all over the Land of Sins must have learned more things through certain channels.

First of all, they opened the gate to the believers of Chiyou from the Sand Primitive Sector and allowed them to work and live in the Martial Meritocrats Sector. They even gave the foreigners the right to vote.

Then, they invented the theory of ‘original sin’ for the Cultivators and passed the Bill of General Equality. The rights of the Cultivators were suppressed infinitely.

In the end, they let ‘Blackstar the Great’ Wuying Qi, the dangerous criminal who had changed into an Immortal Cultivator, run away. Eventually, the guy brought the fleets of the Imperium back to his ‘hometown’ and granted his ‘compatriots’ the cruelest judgment!

‘Idiots’ did not begin to describe the Cultivators of the Martial Meritocrats Sector.

However…

If Liu Li’s mother were not a Cultivator, how could she have been idiotic enough to believe that she could grow the Gold

Barley all over the Land of Sins, that she could appease all the conflicts on her own, and that everybody could live together in happiness and peace?

“All the Cultivators are hopeless idiots, and those of the Martial Meritocrats Sector are particularly so.”

Perhaps, the innocent woman had said the words with a smile before she left the mortal world.

Chapter 1975 - Fiend Star 59

Chapter 1975 Fiend Star 59

The speech used up Gu Zhengyang’s all strength. He waved his hands and said, “A fierce battle last night and a bumpy journey in the entire day, you must be exhausted. Go back and get some rest!”

Han Te rolled his eyes and said in a hurry, “Master, what about the bandits? The Black Water Gang is certainly not easy to mess with. They will not stop just because their scheme did not work out in Broken Stone City!”

“I’ll deal with them later.” Killing intent that seemed to come from a dominating tiger in a forest beamed out of Gu Zhengyang’s eyes. “Although the Black Water Gang is strong, the Village of Peace is certainly not docile. If they want to bite a piece of meat off our body, they’d better be prepared to lose several teeth!

“The Black Water Gang isn’t the only dominator in the Double Dragons Valley. I’m very interested to know how many dead bodies they can bear to drop in the Village of Peace. If our doom is truly inevitable, we can always die together, and I will not leave a single bullet or any piece of compressed food for them!”

Han Te received Li Yao’s brainwave message again. He rolled his eyes and scratched the back of his head. “Master, we looted tremendous assets last night. Most of them are aggressive magical equipment, including a lot of crystal bombs. But we lost a great number of warriors last night, and there are more guns than soldiers to use them right now. Since there's plenty of weapons and ammunition, is it possible… for some of them to be allotted to me and my junior sister for our use?"

Gu Zhengyang was slightly dazed. "Crystal bombs and the likes are very dangerous. There are explosion specialists in the village who are responsible for them. Why do you want crystal bombs?"

With an innocent face, Han Te said solemnly, "As I told you a few days ago, we discovered that abundant battle data is stored in the crystal processor of this Universal Janitor. The deployment and control of crystal bombs is among them. It seems that connecting a lot of crystal bombs in a suitable formation can multiply their power. We want to do our best for the village."

"Is it true?" Gu Zhengyang asked suspiciously.

"Yes, village leader," Li Yao replied.

Gu Zhengyang raised his eyebrows, somewhat in surprise. "It can talk?"

"Yes, village leader." Li Yao continued peacefully. "I have the most advanced man-machine interaction system installed, which allows me to communicate with human beings in more than thirteen ways, including both plain text and encrypted forms."

"This is indeed not an ordinary civil puppet for cleaning and maintenance purposes!" Gu Zhengyang paced around Li Yao. He knocked Li Yao's tracks and said, "What… are you exactly? Some sort of military puppet? What year do you come from? What is your original mission? Do you have any memory of your past?”

“I do not know, village leader,” Li Yao said calmly. “The data regarding my previous mission has been erased during the last forced shutdown. I was reset to follow the first human being to restart me. However, I do remember my code name—Fiend Star 59.”

“This is a rather advanced man-machine interaction paradigm!” Gu Zhengyang bulged his eyes and mumbled. “It is much better than the few spiritual puppets that were jumbled up through all kinds of work. Those spiritual puppets can only say some rigid instructions intermittently. They are nowhere near as logical as this one. We have truly found a treasure this time. Why didn’t you tell me about it sooner?”

“Thank you for your compliment.” Li Yao continued indifferently and inflexibly. “I have the function of automatically learning and updating my language database. The more time I spend with human beings, the more abundant my database and the more similar my interaction pattern will be to human beings’.

“However, I need abundant energy to turn on more databases and more powerful functions. The man-machine interaction ability was actually activated just now.”

Han Te and Liu Li did not expect ‘Grandpa Yao’ to make such a move. After a long daze, Han Te finally stammered, “Yes, we—we only just noticed that it had such an advanced function.”

“Exactly, dad,” Liu Li explained. “All kinds of weird things happen in the Land of Sins. Even mom came across a mysterious old lady who offered her a chip that stored information about Cultivators. We’ve only excavated a war puppet from the ancient times. Isn’t—isn’t it perfectly normal?”

Gu Zhengyang was somewhat suspicious at the beginning. However, he thought of the world depicted in ‘Little Cultivators’, where the civilization was so advanced and the magical equipment industrial system was so well-developed. The facilities flying in the sky, digging below the earth, and swimming in the ocean far exceeded his imagination.

The spiritual puppets that could communicate with human beings fluently appeared in ‘Little Cultivators’, too. They appeared to be very common.

He splayed his fingers and pressed his hand on Li Yao’s iron shell, extending his spiritual energy into the Universal Janitor for investigation.

With the sophisticated soul power of Li Yao in the Divinity Transformation Stage, naturally, his soul waves were not detected at all.

Gu Zhengyang explored for a long time but sensed nothing wrong. He was finally reassured. Frowning, he asked, “Do you know how to use crystal bombs?”

“I know a thing or two about it,” Li Yao said.

Shua!

From a hole on his chest, a cluster of green light shot out, which turned into countless glittering lines that formed the structural designs of crystal bombs. They were truly overwhelming and dazzling.

“Well…” Gu Zhengyang was dazed again. He was not a magical equipment specialist, much less one familiar with crystal bombs. Although Li Yao only showed him the structures of the most basic and simple crystal bombs, fearing that he might be shocked, the guy was still confused and did not know what they were about at all.

“Dad!” Liu Li took the opportunity to persuade her dad. “You said that the future of the Village of Peace counts on us. Then, let it begin from this mission. If you protect us as if we are chickens, how can we grow into falcons that fly above the clouds, and how can we explore the secrets of Manjusaka?”

Gu Zhengyang’s body shook hard. After much hesitation, he finally clenched his fists and said, “Alright. We have indeed reaped too many assets this time. There will be additional gear even if every villager is armed three times. I was thinking of sealing the assets in Warehouse No. 3 in case we need them in the future, but now, they will all be allotted to you and this… Fiend Star 59. However, whatever plan you come up with, you must report it to me in advance. Do not act on your own!”

“Hooray!” Han Te and Liu Li both cheered.

Li Yao waited on the side in silence, truly like a war machine that had been sealed for hundreds of years.

…

On their way to Warehouse No. 3, Han Te asked, “Grandpa Yao, why did you suddenly talk just now? We were a bit scared!”

“I can’t play a mute forever, can I?” Li Yao said casually. “Besides, you are indeed in need of some powerful crystal bombs to deal with the coming storm. The crystal bombs from the sky are too lousy and require serious modification.

“Crystal bombs, on the other hand, are too dangerous to be given to two teenagers who are still wet behind the ears without good reason.”

“Those crystal bombs are too lousy?” Han Te exclaimed. “The biggest crystal bomb I saw was almost as large as half a tank. After it exploded, it ravaged everything in the five hundred square meters around it. Is it lousy?”

“It is exactly because the bomb ravaged five hundred square meters that it was lousy,” Li Yao said coldly. “Distributing the power evenly in a range of three to five hundred square meters can only kill the common soldiers but will not deal much damage to the elites of the enemy who are wearing heavy armors. If the purpose is to annihilate the common soldiers, there are a lot of ways to achieve it. Why do you have to waste a precious crystal bomb?”

“Therefore, Grandpa Yao, are you an explosion expert?” Liu Li asked, full of expectations.

Li Yao smiled. “More or less.”

…

If the Land of Sins that was rife with dust and pollution had seasons, they were not spring, summer, autumn, and winter. Rather, they were simply ‘the lurking season’ and ‘the hunting season’.

In the half year before a Bliss Ceremony, the assets from the sky had been mostly drained. Energy and ammunition were among the scarcest resources. The valuable strategic assets had to be preserved for the next ‘Bliss Ceremony’.

During this period, all the forces were abjectly poor. Even if they vanquished other villages at the cost of countless resources, they would not be able to loot much.

Therefore, although the people in desperation would have small-scale, scattered conflicts for survival, large-scale ones rarely broke out. Everybody simply lurked like snakes, mice, and bugs in winter, waiting for the arrival of the Bliss Ceremony.

That was the lurking season.

When the Bliss Ceremony ended, all the forces had refilled their ammunition and energy. They were given brand-new firearms, blades, and catapults that were more powerful than the gears before, and they also knew that other forces had equally full warehouses.

So, it would be a carnival of war, a festival of blood, and a time to hunt and be hunted!

Gu Zhengyang had survived dozens of ‘hunting seasons’ in the Land of Sins.

He had also witnessed countless small villages being completely demolished by the gangs from Double Dragons Valley, their assets that they earned through all kinds of difficulties from the Bliss Ceremony looted.

Since rumor had it that the tough bandits of Double Dragons Valley had set the Village of Peace as their target this year, Gu Zhengyang certainly did not dare act carelessly. He had been training the warriors, making better preparations for war, and strengthening the waterborne fortress day and night. He also sent out a lot of reconnaissance squads to investigate the situation in Double Dragons Valley.

The news from the Double Dragons Valley was quite bad, too.

In the Bliss Ceremonies in the past, the gangs in the Double Dragons Valley had always fought each other brutally. Several gangs had been entirely wiped out every time.

But there did not seem to have been a large-scale fight in Double Dragons Valley this year. All the gangs appeared to be reserving their strength. There was no telling what they were up to.

Also, the tough bandits paid special attention to restricting the flow of information out of Double Dragons Valley. Several members of the exploration squads of the Village of Peace were discovered by the bandits and killed mercilessly!

Chapter 1976 - Incoming Bandits!

Chapter 1976 Incoming Bandits!

The tough bandits barely hid their intent to attack the Village of Peace.

When the wolves of the Bloody Worlds wanted to swallow the swine of the Desolate Worlds, they did not need to do it stealthily.

The Village of Peace had reaped a lot of assets from the Bliss Ceremony, but there was no delight among the villagers. Everybody was sparing no effort strengthening the village, transforming it into an impenetrable iron fortress.

Even so, they were not given the slightest sense of security and could only shudder in fear behind the armored walls.

Except for the few members of the exploration team, almost everybody stayed back in the village.

Li Yao, Han Te, and Liu Li, however, were not among them.

Twenty kilometers to the east of the great lake, below an uninhabited mountain made of bizarre-shaped rocks, Han Te and Liu Li looked at a tiny cave earnestly.

Li Yao stood behind them, as casual as ever.

Boom!

A light noise echoed inside the cave. Even the quake was rather weak. The smoke popping out was as thin as the clouds. Nobody could have noticed the explosion if they did not watch out for it carefully.

Han Te and Liu Li were both somewhat surprised, not expecting the crystal bomb modified by ‘Grandpa Yao’ carefully to be so weak.

“Put on your heatproof suit and go inside to check,” Li Yao said, unaffected.

Han Te put on three layers of heatproof suits. Squeezing through the grass outside of the cave, he already sensed overwhelming heat surging out like magma before he reached the entrance of the cave.

When he looked inside, he saw nothing but orange and red. The cave that was only two meters deep had been turned into a bottomless hole by the crystal bomb. Also, the rocks on the wall had entirely melted and were dripping like thick glue.

Han Te extended his left hand into the cave for a moment, only to feel that his arm was about to boil. By the time he retracted his arm, two layers of heatproof suits had been burnt and melted together and were almost stuck to his hand!

“The more impressive the sound and visual effects are, the more energy the crystal bomb will have wasted. Only by focusing all the energy on the same spot can you unleash the highest damage,” Li Yao said solemnly. He was not entirely satisfied about the power of the crystal bomb.

However, because the time was too limited, and he did not have handy tools or enough knowledge about the new rune arrays of the Imperium of True Human Beings, it was acceptable to have achieved such a result.

Han Te picked up a dead rabbit that had a long tail with an iron stick and extended it into the cave. Very soon, the stench of meat burning hit his nostrils. When the body was moved out again, it had already been turned into dark charcoal, and the iron stick was too hot to be held.

The two little fellows looked at each other in bewilderment, gaining a deeper understanding about the unbelievable formidability of ‘Grandpa Yao’.

“Right,” Li Yao suddenly said, “a few days ago, I asked you to investigate the factions in the village and to figure out who’s usually close to Zhao Lie, what the internal structure of the iron-shelled ships is, and how you will deal with emergencies… Have you found out the answers?”

“Yes, we have.” Han Te nodded. Throwing both the iron stick and the black charcoal into the cave, he sat cross-legged and asked, “Are you still suspicious that something is wrong with Zhao Lie, Grandpa Yao?”

“Even if there was nothing wrong with Zhao Lie in the beginning,” Li Yao said unhurriedly, “he has left the Village of Peace and disappeared. If I were a bandit of Double Dragons Valley who planned to attack the Village of Peace, I would certainly capture him and interrogate him to get inside information on the Village of Peace!”

…

On the seventh night after the Bliss Ceremony…

Although everybody had lived in panic for seven days, there was no ease of wariness in the Village of Peace at all. Even

Han Te and Liu Li were still accompanying Li Yao in Warehouse No. 3 to perform bizarre, insane modifications on the magical equipment that had fallen from the sky.

The compartments of the multipurpose mechanical arms on the two sides of Li Yao’s body had been completely opened. Four foldable, flexible mechanical arms, each having seven ‘fingers’ in total, stretched out. The twenty-eight ‘fingers’ performed dazzling movements in a cluster of silver mist. There was even no telling what kind of components were hidden inside the mist. The only thing that could be seen was the iron scraps flying out of the mist, some of which were even burning furiously in red and green sparks.

After a crack, another mechanical arm could not withstand Li Yao’s powerful soul anymore and broke at the joint. His smooth and fluent movements were immediately disrupted.

The magical equipment component being crafted fell to the ground in a dull noise.

Liu Li hurried to bring a new mechanical arm to Li Yao, but the dissatisfaction in Li Yao’s heart was not cleared.

Such an iron shell was too vulnerable.

Or rather, his soul was too powerful for any normal iron to bear.

Even if super alloys that had been well-tempered had enough hardness and tenacity, it was destined that their ‘trafficability’ and ‘sense of reverberation’ with the soul and the spiritual energy would not be very good due to their molecular form and atomic structure. It was extremely easy to have the feeling of being encumbered.

Human beings were carbon-based life forms. Only a fleshly body was the best carrier for the soul and spiritual energy.

Li Yao craved the strong body that he had been born with again. He dreamed of melding with his fleshly body perfectly as soon as possible so that he could really enter the ultimate level of the Divinity Transformation Stage!

However, right now, the trickiest problems of the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, the compressed food, and the high-purity crystals had not been resolved.

What fell from the sky on the Desolate Worlds were low-quality food and crystals that contained tremendous impurities. They were somewhat effective for the low-level trainers, but for an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage such as himself, he would not be full however much food he took.

There were perhaps food, medicine, and crystals of higher purities in the Bloody Worlds and the Elysian Worlds, but storage and shipping were the greater problem.

Through the two little fellows, Li Yao learned that Cosmos Rings were barely heard of in the Land of Sins. A lot of magical equipment that was much more precious than the Cosmos Ring had been seen, but the Cosmos Ring was just a groundless tale.

Any one of them was enough to trigger the head-to-head clashes among hundreds of experts between two major cities in the Elysian Worlds.

Li Yao realized that it was probably because the Immortal Cultivators intentionally collected all the Cosmos Rings in order to better control the Land of Sins. Such magical equipment was indeed the best ancillary tool to sneak in and secretly sabotage. If the resistance organization of Cultivators got a few of them, they would certainly be able to cause even greater trouble.

Without Cosmos Rings, even if he could gather abundant assets, how could he ship them to the satellite beyond the atmosphere where his fleshly body was hidden?

The capacity of Neltharion was only part of the problem. What was even more troublesome was that the angels, or the Immortal Cultivators, had imposed the strictest blockage on the entire sky of the planet through the Heavenly Rails and the City in the Sky.

Li Yao was confident that he could break through the siege with Neltharion in the stealth state. But if he carried tons of assets, even a blind person would notice that somebody was running away from the planet.

After considering for a long time, Li Yao had decided that he still needed to get a piece of high-molecular layer-by-layer scanning magical equipment in order to open his own Cosmos Rings.

While Li Yao was pondering, his soul suddenly quaked. “Somebody is here!”

When Li Yao took the two little fellows to board the deck through the stairs, the great lake was still peaceful without any wave under the dark night sky.

Although the iron-shelled boats of the Village of Peace were ablaze with lights, and a lot of villagers were standing by next to the turrets and the shooting holes, it was late night after all. Everybody was somewhat sleepy after staying alert for such a long time.

On the horizon, vague mist was spreading over the lake. There was no telling what was going on near the shore at all.

Li Yao, however, boosted his soul and thudded the shell heavily through the five bogie wheels and the tracks.

Bam!

A deafening noise echoed, as if the entire boat had turned into a bell. The overwhelming toll pierced through everybody’s ears and brain, waking up thousands of villagers and driving away their sleepiness.

“Enemy incoming!”

It was not until this moment that desperate roars and alarms each higher than the last came from the sentry posts at the highest part of the masts.

The entire village was simmering. The clicking sounds of bullets being locked and loaded and the humming of the chainswords and the vibration sabers were echoing everywhere, mixed with roars of shock and anger. Hundreds of boots that had been embedded with iron plates stomped on the deck and every panicked heart!

Crouching on the gunwale, Han Te and Liu Li set up the high-performance telescopes that Li Yao specially made for them. Li Yao adjusted the array of thirty-six crystal cameras that had just been installed on his iron head. They saw the invaders that ripped apart the mist and the water and charged at the Village of Peace like a beast tide at the same time.

They were not members of the Black Water Gang but the sinners that were spared during the Bliss Ceremony!

The sinners somehow found thousands of shuttles and charged at the village while roaring nonstop.

They lowered the shuttles to a very low altitude, raising huge waves on the surface of the lake as if they were dragging long tails behind them. In such a way, they were boosted by the air currents, and their speed was accelerated to the maximum.

A lot of other sinners did not have shuttles, but they were also sailing forward at an amazing speed on tiny boats.

They were like combinations of sea monsters and headless flies, and they could not have looked crazier and more hideous!

“Those *ssholes. We spared their lives out of kindness, and yet they are bold enough to come back to the Village of Peace to be killed!”

Han Te’s face contorted in anger. He felt regretful for his master’s mercy that day and could not help but wonder if Zhao Lie was right after all and they should have annihilated all the enemies.

“No,” Li Yao said solemnly. “Look at their shuttles more carefully.”

Han Te was slightly dazed. Thanks to the telescope that Li Yao had crafted carefully, he was able to clearly see every detail on the incoming tanks despite the dark night. Bulging his eyes, he observed for a long time and suddenly exclaimed, “Those—those sinners have been tied up by iron chains to the armed shuttles!”

Chapter 1977 - My Will Begins Here!

Chapter 1977 My Will Begins Here!

It could be clearly seen through the high-resolution telescopes that all the sinners who were charging at the front were tied up by more than one chain, which was connected to the iron rings that had been welded to the shuttles.

In case they ran off, several narrow and long chains even pierced through their shoulder blades or ankles, completely joining them to the shuttles.

Han Te and Liu Li could clearly see their wretched appearance when the chains penetrated through their bodies resulting in bleeding wounds. The wounds were even gray, dark colored, implying that the flesh had started to rot.

However, there was not much pain on their faces. Instead, their eyes were bloodshot, their faces twisted, and they were twitching. Black veins were even protruding.

Although they were in the middle of splashing waves and surging lake water, some black air currents were still darting out of their pores and rising into the sky, congregating into a raging black cloud.

It seemed to be both infinite aggressiveness and infinite sorrow and helplessness!

“This is…”

Every hair on Han Te and Liu Li’s head was rising and shivering.

“Those sinners have been bound to the shuttles and injected with tremendous exhilarants, which have corrupted their minds and turned them more bloodthirsty and frenzy than ever.” Li Yao’s voice was mixed with the fury like magma and the chill of ice. “Also, their shuttles have carried abundant crystal bombs that will explode at first touch. As long as they hit the boats of the Village of Peace hard, they will immediately create holes several meters in diameter on the shells of the boats and shock or kill the defenders.

“They are the members of a daring team—or rather, cannon fodder that have been forced to die here—on a suicide charge. The real invaders are hiding behind them like weasels!”

Li Yao’s soul pierced through countless sinners as he looked at the far distance with eyes as sharp as a hawk’s.

He saw that five bizarre-shaped balloons were floating on the surface of the lake that was half covered by the waves. At first glance, they seemed to be hot-air balloons that had fallen to the lake. But their surfaces were made of metal that was as smooth as a mirror. It also boasted a very remarkable mimetic effect, allowing them to melt with the lake water. It was practically impossible to notice them without careful observation.

Dozens of well-connected, extendable mechanical arms extended out of the five ‘hot-air balloons’ and waved about on the lake. Whichever sinner hesitated would immediately be grabbed by the neck and torn in half before their broken bodies were thrown ahead.

The upper half of the ‘hot-air balloons’ were filled with shooting holes that made it look like a beehive. They shot out lines of fire, raising a wall of destruction behind the sinners and forcing them to move forward.

Inside the five ‘hot-air balloons’ that looked like metal octopi, almost a hundred people who had rather daunting auras were hiding. They were the real members of the Black Water Gang.

Perhaps they had threatened all the adult warriors of the dozens of villages with the old and weak to tie themselves to the iron tanks that had been packed up with crystal bombs. The captives were then injected with excitants and struggled for a slim chance of survival for their family with their own death in the dizziness and madness!

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

Below Li Yao’s tracks, the deck made of iron was torn apart with a few shocking holes!

His array of crystal cameras bypassed the sad and anxious sinners and the gangsters hiding behind the sinners, extending all the way to the end of the Heavenly Rails in the middle of the gray clouds beyond the dark night sky.

At the end of the Heavenly Rails, the Flower of the Other Shore blossomed. The dim redness looked like strange eyes that were staring at everything on the ground with a smile, at the land that was filled with slaughter, sin, and war.

If Li Yao had fists, he certainly would have clenched them in his fury.

Even though he did not have fists, his drills and jigsaws were thirstier than ever!

Countless suicide teams swarmed toward them.

Da! Da! Da! Da! Da!

The turrets and shooting holes of the Village of Peace released colorful snakes of fire, raising a dance of destruction made of electricity, magma, ice, and wind.

Countless sinners were hit by the bullets. Their shuttles carried abundant highly unstable crystal bombs, which were immediately detonated and turned into the most brilliant fireballs.

Flames occupied the eyes of all the other sinners, but they could not burn the bouncing bloody streaks on their eyeballs. They still roared and charged forward.

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

Right then, five dark holes slowly opened on top of the five ‘hot-air balloons’, which shot out dozens of cannonballs.

Those cannonballs started burning the moment they reached the peak of the parabolas. Like shooting stars from the sky, at least a third of them landed on the fleet of the Village of Peace precisely!

In hasty roars, a lot of warriors of the Village of Peace aimed their guns and cannons at the sky, blowing the ‘shooting stars’ into pieces. However, the broken ‘shooting stars’ still smashed down overwhelming and left countless holes on the shell and the deck of the boats. Some of them even pierced through multiple decks, raising fire inside and outside of the ships.

The cannonballs that fell to the surface of the lake, after raising water pillars dozens of meters high, also released intense smoke and seriously blocked the vision of the shooters of the Village of Peace.

For a moment, screams, moans, explosions, and cries for help echoed at the same time. The Village of Peace's thorough fire network had been disrupted.

The suicide teams were getting closer and closer to the Village of Peace. Right now, one did not need a telescope to see their eyes that were filled with bloody tears but had lost all humanity.

Seeing that an overwhelming number of burning shots were heading toward them, Han Te and Liu Li were about to lower their heads to dodge, when an invisible barrier seemed to have appeared above their heads and froze all the burning shots in midair. They were stunned for a long time before they finally called Li Yao.

"Grandpa Yao!"

"I'll deal with the situation in this place. You go and find Leader Gu." Li Yao's soul glanced at the seemingly peaceful lake behind the Village of Peace. "Give me… five minutes."

"What?"

Han Te and Liu Li were both slightly dazed. Recalling what Li Yao had said a few days ago, they nodded heavily and hurried to reinforce Gu Zhengyang.

Creak! Creak! Creak! Creak!

It was not until the two little fellows left the deck that Li Yao moved the covers of the compartments on the two sides of his body and extended the drill on the left side and the jigsaw on the right.

The two pieces of ‘civil magical equipment’ that had been well-tempered by him were now bursting out orange brilliance that seemed like a burning star!

“What are you going to do?” the mental devil asked.

“I want to find out what the limits of the Divinity Transformation Stage are!”

“Just—Just think before you leap,” the mental devil stammered. “You can detonate the crystal bombs that have been tied to the sinners in advance to destroy all of them while they are still on the lake. You are not planning to rescue them, are you? Look at them! Look at their eyes! They are no longer human beings but animals and beasts!”

“Yes,” Li Yao said, “but in any case… they used to be human beings that were as noble and proud as myself!”

“…Need I remind you that even a ‘Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator’ is far from omnipotent, especially when your soul and your original body are separated and you are managing a pile of garbage? Your soul has limits, too. Things will be very awkward if the strength of your soul is exhausted!

“Besides, even if you can temporarily save those people, so what? The sinners of almost all the villages in the hundred square kilometers around are here. So many people with so little food will still die eventually! You can save them now, but you cannot save them forever! Even if you can save the Village of Peace and all the other villages in the hundred square kilometers around, you cannot save the entire Land of Sins! Let’s consider the big picture and not forget our mission!”

“You do have a point,” Li Yao said. “However… if I cannot carry out my will without any restriction, what is the difference between the Divinity Transformation Stage and a useless fish? Isn’t our mission to spread the ideology of the Cultivators to the center of the cosmos?

“Then, let it begin here!”

Li Yao’s soul unleashed the most aggressive waves!

The hundred crystal bombs hidden at the bottom of the lake exploded instantly!

After a series of dull explosions, the lake seemed to become an ocean that had been stricken by a tornado. The surging tides dozens of meters tall blocked the entire sky and consumed countless suicide shuttles.

Li Yao activated his soul power without caring about anything. His soul spread out like a tide and was attenuated to the limits of his control.

He could sense the fundamental structures of the hundreds of shuttles and the discontent, fury and sorrow of the sinners who were working as cannon fodder.

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

Li Yao’s computational ability was boosted to the maximum. Even the crystal processor that accommodated his soul could not bear it any longer and uttered feeble noises.

In Li Yao’s perception, the whole world turned into the purest energy flow and infinite data torrents. He could even conclude that there were 7,322 bullets flying crazily within five hundred meters of him.

He calculated the trajectories of 1,324 of the bullets as well as their final landing points with consideration of the wind and tide.

His soul immediately released 1,324 telepathic thoughts, imposing subtle interference on the bullets.

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

All the bullets deviated from their original targets and hit the chains on the cannon fodder precisely. Countless chains were directly blown apart. Even those that were not blown apart were shaking quickly and barely connected to the tanks.

Being washed by the cold lake water, the cannon fodder’s frantic nerves immediately constricted hard. The broken chains raised their instinct to counterattack. They began to struggle violently. A lot of them got rid of the control of the shuttles!

With a smile, Li Yao accurately controlled the crystal bombs that had been buried at the bottom of the lake and unleashed the second blast!

Chapter 1978 - Fury of the Divinity Transformation Stage!

1978 Fury of the Divinity Transformation Stage!

The crystal bombs that had been carefully modified by him did not pursue the maximal damage but had been perfectly melded with his soul, allowing him to control the turbulence and the swirls as if they were his arms and fingers. He condensed a hundred raging waterspouts on the lake water, separating the sinners from the shuttles and blowing the shuttles backward!

Countless sinners broke away from the chains and fell into the cold water.

The adult warriors had much better body builds than the ordinary people of the Star Glory Federation did and were almost on the same level as the federation’s warriors. With the assistance of spiritual energy, it should not be a problem for them to float in the lake for an hour or two.

Only a few of them who were terribly unlucky sank into the lake because they were unable to untie the chains in time.

With the power of his soul, Li Yao raised tides each higher than the last, which attracted hundreds of shuttles that were fully loaded with crystal bombs and smashed them at the enormous ‘hot-air balloons’ that were floating on the lake!

All the people in the Village of Peace were dumbfounded by the unbelievable scene.

They had lived on the lake for decades, but they had never seen such a fierce and weird wind that could blow back the enemy’s ferocious attacks before.

Was it because some supernatural power was watching over the Village of Peace in secret?

The five huge ‘hot-air balloons’ spurted out hundreds of snakes of fire, trying to detonate the crystal bombs before the shuttles hit them.

However, under the enhancement of Li Yao’s soul, the shuttles generated barriers that were similar to spiritual shields and resisted most of the attacks.

Li Yao also secretly boosted the water in the lake, causing the five ‘hot-air balloons’ to bob up and down, making it practically impossible for them to aim.

Finally, the hundreds of shuttles hit the five enormous ‘hot-air balloons’ brutally. Hundreds of ugly fireballs that looked like tumors immediately rose amid deafening explosions, dying the surface of the lake into the most glamorous orange colors!

The hundreds of mechanical arms on them waved crazily up and down in the ocean of fire, like the dying struggles of five metal octopi.

It was a classic example of falling victim to one’s own scheme!

Li Yao grunted, and the indicator on his chest slowly dimmed. Controlling the lake water that weighed thousands of tons as well as hundreds of shuttles simultaneous was too burdensome a task. Despite the powerful soul in the Divinity Transformation Stage, he still felt that the world was swirling before him, and his vitality was drained. The dazzling data before his eyes became more chaotic than ever.

However, it was truly gratifying to fight a thousand enemies on one’s own and defeat them!

“It seems Liu Li’s mother was right,” the mental devil concluded. “The Cultivators are indeed… hopeless idiots!”

Hiu!

A streak of redness flashed out of Li Yao’s chassis into the lake, vanishing.

It was Neltharion!

“Where are you going?” Li Yao asked.

“To wipe your ass for you, of course,” the mental devil said lazily. “Make no mistake, I am not moved by your idiotic behavior. However, now that we are dependent on each other, I will be affected if the Immortal Cultivators notice something’s wrong or even kill you in this chaotic Land of Sins. I do not intend to be locked in a laboratory or the so-called ‘Hall of Trial’!”

…

One minute ago, inside the five enormous metal balls, the tough bandits from the Black Water Gang did not consider attacking the Village of Peace a big deal at all.

“Could the Village of Peace have been safe in the past twenty years without the advantageous terrain?”

“But little do they know that the Black Water Gang makes our living on the lake. Do they think they can stop us with such a pond?”

“In my opinion, boss was overcautious. Why did we bother to capture so many swine and make them lead the charge? It was utterly unnecessary! We could’ve swum over from the bottom of the lake and detonate their ships. The ‘Sky Breaking Hammer’ will be nothing more than a dead pig then!”

“Go now! Go now! You filthy swine. Work harder! And harder! Hahaha!”

The intimidating brawny men who had tattoos all over their bodies controlled hundreds of mechanical arms to drive the cannon fodder. They appreciated the moans and struggles coming from the front while they mocked hideously.

It was not until the series of explosions echoed from the bottom of the lake and the waterspout mixed with countless demolition shuttles came at them aggressively that their arrogant laughter came to a sudden stop.

“What the damn hell?”

“How is it possible? Why is this happening?”

“Is this a violent wind or—”

All the tough bandits looked as pale as dead bodies. Their pupils were entirely occupied by the expanding fireballs.

The metal octopi that they were aboard were naturally not real hot-air balloons. The surface that was as smooth as a mirror was actually made of the strengthened porcelain and the composite materials of the latest invention. It could effectively resist the attacks of radiation, heat, high-energy particles, and all kinds of mystic rays.

Even after the hundreds of demolition shuttles exploded around them brutally, they caused no damage at all except for the dozens of tiny wounds on the round shell of the metal octopi.

Other than the ringing and dizziness, their minds took the brunt of the blow.

They were the tough bandits from the Blood Worlds, yet they had been tricked by a bunch of villagers, who were nothing more than swine and lambs in their eyes!

“*ssholes! I’m going to skin them, draw out their veins, break their bones, and make them eat their own fingers, toes, and internal organs! All of them!”

In the middle of the surging smoke and fire, the tough bandits rose to their feet in dizziness. They were fuming so much that their skin was even breaking apart while they roared like animals.

However…

Perhaps it was their imagination, but all the bandits saw a streak of weird redness infiltrate the metal ball through a crack and float above their heads.

The redness released bloody mist unhurriedly, which interweaved into a giant, bloody face that was wearing a smile of mockery. It observed the tough bandits with great interest.

Being observed by the bloody face, all the bandits chilled in fear.

It was a natural-born instinct, like mice that were locked onto by a snake.

“Make no mistake. I actually quite like this world and appreciate you.” The bloody fame smiled. “This world is brimming with negative emotions and is almost entirely covered in darkness. Tsk, tsk, tsk. It is best for my training!

“Therefore, show your darkest side to me. Struggle, scream, moan, roar, and be swallowed submissively by me. Hahaha!”

Hu!

Centered at Neltharion, the mental devil released bloody tentacles that darted to all directions, piercing the eyes, hearts, and internal organs of quite a few tough bandits instantly.

The ‘hot-air balloons’ immediately turned into the goriest infernos!

…

Right when the front of the Village of Peace was under the crazy attack of the Black Water Gang, dozens of insignificant bubbles suddenly popped up on the lake behind the village.

At first look, they seemed to be waves spreading on the surface of the lake. It was not until the waves faded away that the transparent armor that had almost completely melded with the lake could be seen.

When the armor approached the boats, it turned dull brown, almost identical to the color of the rusty shell of the boats.

It was a powerful function of stealth plus mimesis!

Almost everybody’s attention was drawn to the overwhelming demolition shuttles and the waterborne fortress of the Black Water Gang. Together with the cover of the dark night, nobody noticed the specters who emerged from the bottom of the lake without a sound.

The specters truly seemed weightless and formless. They dashed to the iron-shelled boat at the rearmost part like soft smoke.

Suddenly, a head craned out of the deck. One flashlight shot outward and illuminated the specters precisely.

However, the specters did not stop their movements, and the person on the deck did not scream to alarm other people. Instead, he simply lowered his voice and said to the specters, “Follow me.”

Faced with the immense pressure caused by the cannon fodder of the Black Water Gang, almost all the combatants of the Village of Peace had been dispatched to the front. The few iron-shelled boats at the rear, where the injured and the assets were kept, had few guards.

The specters wearing stealthy crystal suits bypassed all the sentry posts even without the help of the spy. Those who could not be bypassed were killed quickly and quietly.

Very soon, they found their way to Gu Zhengyang’s command ship from the dozens of iron-shelled boats that were connected to each other.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Once they arrived, the specters finally tore apart their camouflage. In the ripples of light, they revealed their hideous weapons and darted into the command center like a burning blade!

They were ten times stronger and more resolute than the villagers, and they had the enhancement of crystal suits. The villagers guarding the command center were no match for them. In half a minute, they blew up the door of the command cabin unstoppably.

The tough bandits in crystal suits and fully armed, like iron statues, broke into the command cabin and looked at Gu Zhengyang and the elders of the village coldly.

Han Te and Liu Li, however, were one step ahead of the specters. They had also brought twenty or so young, vigorous warriors as well as abundant crystal bombs.

When the serial explosions echoed outside of the door, the guns and cannons were already aimed at the door, with the most dangerous coldness condensing inside the barrel. But it seemed useless in front of dozens of crystal suits.

“You did not see it coming, did you?” One of the ‘specters’ removed the facial cover. He was grinning so hideously that his face had been deformed. “Han Te, we have met again so quickly!”

It was exactly Zhao Chong, the disobedient young man and the leader of the Iron Blood Youths.

“It’s really you!” Han Te shrieked in fury. “You ungrateful traitor?”

“Hehe. What do you know?” Zhao Chong said gloatingly. “My father should be the leader of the Village of Peace. We are only here to take back what’s ours!”

“Enough.”

An iron hand patted his shoulder and dragged him backward. Another Exo who was even taller and stronger pressed his helmet, revealing a face that was as indifferent as ice without any emotions.

‘Blood Eagle’ Zhao Lie and ‘Sky Breaking Hammer’ Gu Zhengyang confronted each other in silence and tension.

Chapter 1979 - No Other Choice

Chapter 1979 No Other Choice

“Therefore, it was a trap during the Bliss Ceremony in Broken Stone City the other day…”

Gu Zhengyang’s pupils constricted violently, and he could not have looked more depressed. He stared at Zhao Lie’s face so hard as if he were going to bite it off and swallow it into his stomach.

“If we’d listened to your command to attack the camps of the other villages deep inside the ruins, we would have been ambushed by the Black Water Gang, and you’d have saved yourselves a lot of trouble today, right?”

Zhao Lie smiled miserably and shook his head. “Leader, after all these years we’ve been fighting side by side, it seems that you do not understand me at all. However despicable and shameless I am, would I ever intentionally lead my brothers to death? I really do not know anything about the Black Water Gang!

“My ‘good friends’ here are not from the Black Water Gang. As for exactly who they are, you will know it after you see them.”

By Zhao Lie’s side, two Exos, one fat and the other slim, opened their facial covers slowly while chuckling.

They were two people with distinctive features.

The guy on the left was tall and thin, like an untrimmed bamboo with all its branches. His face was also dented and deformed, as if he had suffered excessive radiation. He was disgustingly hideous.

The guy on the right, however, had facial organs that were entirely buried in his fat. His head was like a glistening balloon that was emitting red and white colors. He could not have looked creepier.

It seemed that both of them had been corroded by radiation or biochemical poisons. Their gene strands had been disrupted and reorganized, resulting in the mutations inside their bodies.

The experienced sinners all knew that the last people they should mess with in the Land of Sins were the serious mutants such as these two.

That was because most of the mutants had already been killed when they suffered pollution and corruption. If they somehow managed to survive, they definitely had something special about them, and it was very likely that they possessed dreadful techniques.

Also, those people generally had seriously twisted minds because of their physical abnormalities. Those who were captured by them would not get a quick death even if they cooperated.

Neither Han Te nor Liu Li had seen anyone as ugly before. Although Han Te had some radiation burns on his face himself, he could not help but exclaim, “Ah!”

When the two serious mutants heard the sound, their faces wriggled weirdly like rubber that had been thrown into acid, and they showed hideous smiles to Han Te and Liu Li.

Gu Zhengyang hurried to hide the two little fellows behind him, but his heart had sunk into the deepest part of a cold, dark swamp.

Zhao Lie was perhaps not lying—those around him were indeed not from the Black Water Gang, but they were ten times scarier than the Black Water Gang!

The two serious mutants could be called notorious even in the Bloody Worlds, where wolves and hyenas were the dominators.

The tall and slim guy was named ‘Ma Ku’, while the fatty whose facial organs were buried by the fat was named ‘Fei Zhong’.

Ma Ku was a ‘persistent’ man.

He had once made a plan to kill one person every day. It would not matter if he killed more, but he had to kill at least one of them.

It was said that he had persisted for ten years and killed at least five thousand people. Even if he killed twenty one day, it did not mean that he could take a rest tomorrow.

“The thing about killing is that we must persist in it no matter what stands in our way. We must never quit what we are doing,” Ma Ku had once said. “In fact, I am not particularly fond of killing, but I don’t like being a quitter, either. You can only taste the fun in something when you see it through to the end.”

He was not picky about whom he killed. He would not mind playing with the prey who were above average, but if he could not find one, the common sinners who were strong enough or even the strengthless ones among them would also suffice.

It was said that one time he was carrying out a mission in the wilderness, he could not find an enemy to kill at all. So, he simply chopped off the head of his companion before midnight came.

The companion was a super gunner who had been cooperating with him for years. The two of them had neat, flawless teamwork.

At that time, they were about to hunt terribly ferocious mutated beasts together. Without the support of the gunner, it was very possible that he would have been killed alone!

“I have continued this for seven years, four months, and nine days after a lot of trouble. What a shame it would have been if it had stopped there,” Ma Ku, whose blood almost ran dry because of the wounds all over his body, had explained to other people.

Ma Ku had to kill someone every day, but Fei Zhong was the opposite. Few people had ever seen him attacking in public.

He seemed to be a man who was not very fond of killing. Killing one or two people at most every fortnight was enough for him.

In the Bloody Worlds, killing once every half month could almost be called merciful or kindhearted.

However, everybody knew that what Fei Zhong cared about was not the quantity of the people he killed but the quality of the killing.

He might not kill anyone for ten days or even half a month, but when he decided on someone, he would take three to five days to kill them.

There would not be a moment of rest in those three to five days. Like embroidering or engraving, he would kill them slowly and carefully to the accompaniment of music, light, and incense, savoring the greatest joy in the process.

Until they were ultimately ‘killed’, the victims would always retain the freshest pain.

It was said that Fei Zhong had been capable of killing someone for three days five years ago, and for five days three years ago. Right now, he could spend seven days killing someone, and the victim would still be as conscious as ever at the twenty-third hour of the sixth day and could even talk in their normal tone.

Therefore, many tough bandits from Double Dragons Valley agreed that they would rather be killed by Ma Ku a hundred times than be killed by Fei Zhong once.

Ma Ku and Fei Zhong, two gods of brutality from the Red Fire Gang, were perhaps not the strongest bandits in the group, but they were certainly the creepiest perverts!

Unlike the Black Water Gang, which had only risen in recent years, the Red Fire Gang was a traditional gang that had dominated the Double Dragons Valley for almost twenty years. It was also the largest and the most immeasurable band of bandits in Double Dragons Valley.

Every year, the Village of Peace was obliged to offer abundant assets to the Red Fire Gang in order to keep the village safe for the next year.

If the Black Water Gang were the only group coveting the Village of Peace, Gu Zhengyang might have been able to summon his courage to fight the bandits.

But right now, they were under attack from both sides, and even the Red Fire Gang had laid its fingers on the Village of Peace. Gu Zhengyang was really at a loss.

Gu Zhengyang seemed to be in immense pain as he said bitterly, “What do you want exactly?”

“Don’t worry, leader. The Village of Peace has been subservient to the Red Fire Gang all these years. The Red Fire Gang certainly does not intend to annihilate everybody in the village,” Zhao Lie said. “Now, as long as you resign as the leader, clean up the mess with me, and distribute a thousand young warriors for the Red Fire Gang to command, the Red Fire Gang will forever be the toughest shield for the Village of Peace.”

“I don’t care about the position of leader at all!” Gu Zhengyang shook his head slowly. “However, a thousand warriors? The Village of Peace only has several thousand people in total, and we suffered heavy casualties in the recent Bliss Ceremony. Even if all the adults are summoned, there may not be a thousand.

“Besides, why does the Red Fire Gang want so many warriors?

“I got it. The Red Fire Gang is declaring war on some forces again, right? They are in great need of ‘cannon fodder’. Zhao Lie, you claimed just now that you wouldn’t be shameless enough to send your brothers to death, yet you are proposing such a thing right now. Don’t tell me that you cannot see the Red Fire Gang’s real purpose!”

Zhao Lie, however, was indeed that brazen. Without even raising his eyebrows, he said casually, “If we had fallen into the ambush of the Black Water Gang in Broken Stone City, we would have ended up as slaves and died for nothing, just like the unlucky guys who are attacking the Village of Peace right now. But if we agree to the terms of the Red Fire Gang today, according to the pact that I have reached with the Red Fire Gang, it will be an endeavor to save us from doom!

“Yes. Both the Red Fire Gang and the Black Water Gang are recruiting and expanding on a large scale, collecting cannon fodder and slave soldiers everywhere. Naturally, a great war will break out soon. How can I not know the danger involved?

“However, the Red Fire Gang and the Black Water Gang have already set their eyes on us. So, we do not have any choice. Our struggle is useless!

“Even if they did not need cannon fodder, since a bloody war among the gangs is coming, do you think that they would feel safe keeping a powerful, disobedient, and independent establishment like the Village of Peace behind them? They will certainly eradicate the hidden problem before the war!

“I really couldn’t think of a solution. So, I choose to join the side with better terms. At the very least, the Red Fire Gang agrees to list the brothers from the Village of Peace in one team that will be commanded by me. If we win, there will be abundant trophies! Wouldn’t it be much better than to be enslaved by the Black Water Gang?”

Gu Zhengyang snorted. “It’s cannon fodder after all. The Bloody Worlds are not for us to enter. How many of the thousand warriors of the Village of Peace do you think can survive a gory battle? And what will their families do after they are lost?"

With brutality beaming out of his eyes, Zhao Lie said, "I don't know how many people will survive if we work for the Red Fire Gang. I only know that we will all die if we don't agree!"

Looking at Zhao Lie and the creepy Ma Ku and Fei Zhong next to him, Gu Zhengyang opened his mouth but could not say anything.

"You can't talk sense to him!" Zhao Chong ran forward again and declared, "Old leader, your ways do not work in the Land of Sins today. Just listen to my father!"

"Bullsh*t!"

Han Te could not help but charge forward. The dazzling electric arcs danced around his right arm as his fists and Zhao Chong's crashed. He had been trained by Li Yao under high pressure in the last half month. Despite the enhancement of the crystal suit, Zhao Chong was blown three steps back.

"*sshole!"

Zhao Chong did not expect Han Te to be as strong. He vomited a mouthful of blood, and his face looked like ice.

"We will not bend!"

Han Te straightened his right arm. The metal rings on it revolved quickly and shot out dozens of bullets that were mixed with electric arcs!

Chapter 1980 - You“re Right, But…

Chapter 1980 You“re Right, But…

“Petty trick!”

A crimson shield of light was condensed before Zhao Lie’s right arm and took the blow of the electric bullets. Dozens of powerful blasts spread out in a row, making Zhao Lie grunt and shake violently.

The renowned ‘Blood Eagle’ did not expect Han Te to have grown so quickly to such a level. Even he almost failed to resist the bombardment of the young man despite the enhancement of his crystal suit. He was slightly dazed.

However, he did not give Han Te a second chance. Before Han Te condensed the second wave of electric arcs, the crimson ghostly claw appeared again and slapped Han Te to the ground brutally, holding him down and making it impossible for him to move.

Shua!

Zhao Chong, having finally gathered himself, raised his chainsword high and grinned hideously. “Die now, Han Te!”

Before he slashed his chainsword, however, he was kicked away by Ma Ku, the brutal bandit from the Red Fire Gang.

“This pig is not half bad.” Every hole on Ma Ku’s face seemed to be glittering like an eye and licking Han Te’s body greedily. “He can be sold at a good price at the Fist King’s. Don’t waste him.”

“Hey, Gu Zhengyang.” Fei Zhong, the giant meatball, stepped forward and held Gu Zhengyang back with his dominating aura. He then put one of his iron feet on Han Te’s back and squeezed the captive’s spine slowly. A hole suddenly split apart on the fat on his face, as he grimaced and said, “Is this your disciple? You’ve taught him well!”

“Hiss!”

Han Te’s spine was utterly cracking noises. His every finger was cramping beyond his control, but he simply gritted his teeth to stop him from screaming.

“Senior brother!” Liu Li almost burst into tears and glared at Ma Ku and Fei Zhong with her fuming eyes.

“And there’s this little girl. Is she your daughter?” Sensing the fury in Liu Li’s eyes, Fei Zhong smiled even more delightedly. He licked the gaps in the fat on his face with a tongue that was full of sharp thorns. “Her voice is as beautiful as her face. What’s her name? Liu Li, isn’t it? Tsk, tsk, tsk. That’s a good name…

“Killing is an art as well as entertainment. I am not as indiscriminate as Ma Ku, and I like to kill those who are pretty and scream well. Whenever I meet such people, I won’t feel satisfied until I have killed them over seven days and seven nights.”

“Fei Zhong, don’t you dare!” Gu Zhengyang’s eyes seemed to be crystal bombs that were burning furiously and could explode at any time.

Fei Zhong and Ma Ku looked at each other and grinned hideously.

“In fact, neither I nor Ma Ku are bloodthirsty, otherwise the boss wouldn’t have asked us to come to negotiate with you.” The fat on Fei Zhong’s face was shivering, as if he was trying to flirt. “Right now, you have only two options. You can volunteer to cooperate with us and give the place of the village leader to Zhao Lie. Then, you will maintain the order in the village together with Zhao Lie, select a thousand vigorous warriors, and make sure that they join our operation willingly and happily. This will be good for both parties. For us, we will be spared a lot of unnecessary work. For you, you will avoid a catastrophe, and you may earn tremendous trophies in the future!

“Otherwise, we will have to go on a killing spree and execute the uncles, elders in the village, and yourself. Then, I will have to trouble myself by killing your daughter and your disciple for a couple of days. I believe that they will certainly come up with a solution to convince all the other villagers before the last day comes.

“Gu Zhengyang, you have always been a smart guy. You have kept the safety of the Village of Peace for twenty years right next to Double Dragons Valley not entirely because of your worthless Sky Breaking Hammer. So, what will you choose right now?”

All the bandits of the Red Fire Gang grinned hideously as if nobody were around. The villagers that had been armed to teeth on their opposite seemed like fish in a barrel to them.

“Leader?”

“Leader!”

Sensing the killing intent that was vaguely spreading out of the tough bandits and understanding the gap between the enemy and themselves, all the villagers could not help shuddering hard.

“Master, don’t—don’t care about me. I’m happy to die!” Han Te shrieked under Fei Zhong’s feet.

“Dad, we—we are scared of nothing!” Liu Li also shouted under the smiles of Ma Ku and Fei Zhong.

“Two little fools,” Fei Zhong said, still smiling. “There are a million things that are scarier than death in the Land of Sins. After you witness them, you will naturally understand what fear is.”

“Enough, Fei Zhong!” Struggle, dilemma, and hesitation beamed out of his face. Several different colors seemed to be confronting on his face like chaotic armies until it became gray and withered in the end. “You can do… whatever you want!”

“Good choice.” Fei Zhong had foreseen that Gu Zhengyang would bend. After all, the guy was merely a minor leader in a Desolate World. He gestured lazily, hinting for Zhao Lie to take over the commander of the Village of Peace.

However, Gu Zhengyang stepped forward again and stood before Zhao Lie.

“Huh?” Fei Zhong raised an eyebrow, which was perhaps the only distinguishable natural feature on his face, somewhat in dissatisfaction.

“I’m not done yet.” Taking a deep breath, Gu Zhengyang stared at Zhao Lie, Fei Zhong, and Ma Ku and declared, one word after another, “You can do whatever you want… over my dead body!”

“Master!”

“Dad!”

“Leader!”

Han Te, Liu Li, and the many villagers all jumped to their feet. They all sensed that Gu Zhengyang’s fire of life was burning furiously like a candle.

Shock and confusion beamed out of Fei Zhong’s eyes. He cleaned his ears with his short, fat fingers and said, “Excuse me?”

Ma Ku swallowed hard, and his eyes glittered with interest. “Excellent. You are bold enough. I haven’t killed anybody yet today. You are certainly worth killing!”

Zhao Lie stared at Gu Zhengyang for a while. The bafflement in his eyes gradually turned into embarrassment. He somehow lost the courage to look Gu Zhengyang in the eyes but simply sighed. “Leader, why do you have to ask to be killed? You can’t change anything or save anyone by playing the hero!”

“Yes. I never realized how ridiculous I was until today.” Gu Zhengyang smiled bitterly. “You are right, Zhao Lie. I should have listened to you a long time ago instead of persisting in some meaningless stuff in decades of struggle, which could not change anything or save anybody at all!”

Zhao Lie narrowed his eyes. “In that case, why are you still standing in my way? You don’t have to die. Why?”

“Perhaps…” Gu Zhengyang smiled miserably. He opened his arms and protected everyone behind him, but his eyes drifted to a beautiful future somewhere far away. “I am also a hopeless idiot who is stupid enough to wish that the Gold Barley can grow all over the Land of Sins!”

“I don’t understand any of your nonsense.” Ma Ku shoved Zhao Lie away and grinned at Gu Zhengyang, his sharp teeth glittering coldly. “Sky Breaking Hammer? Die now!”

Right when six flames of light flowed out of Ma Ku’s arms, forming three unstoppable light blades on each of his fists and locking onto the Gu Zhengyang’s carotid artery, deafening explosions erupted outside.

The crystal bombs that were buried deep at the bottom of the lake raised overwhelming undercurrents, which blasted the iron-shelled boats and shook them hard. Everybody on-board could barely keep themselves steady.

Then, a series of explosions that were even fiercer echoed further away.

The aftermath of the explosion made all the lights in the command cabin flicker and blink.

Before Gu Zhengyang and the villagers realized what was going on, Ma Ku and Fei Zhong, as two great bandits, both smelled the scent of danger from the subtle changes in the air.

Looking at each other, Ma Ku hinted at Fei Zhong, and Fei Zhong left the command cabin with a couple of bandits to check the situation on the deck.

Nobody returned.

Not only did none of them come back, even their communication channels were cut off. They seemed to have fallen into a black hole that was beyond all perception.

The few sentry posts that had been deployed on the deck previously had also vanished into thin air. There was nothing but background noise in the communication shell. All of them had gone missing.

Ma Ku, the unparalleled bandit who had made everybody sweat hard, was finally soaked in cold sweat himself.

“Old fart!” Ma Ku raised his voice, and he looked even more hideous than before. But the more hideous he became, the less he was able to conceal the fright deep inside his eyes. “What tricks are you playing outside?”

Gu Zhengyang and the many villagers looked at each other in bewilderment, not having the faintest clue what happened outside in their ignorance.

Han Te and Liu Li, however, looked at each other in secret. They vaguely realized that the anomaly outside might have something to do with ‘Grandpa Yao’.

Observing the room, Ma Ku realized that the villagers really did not know what was going on. Also, under the intimidation of the Red Fire Gang, they barely had any determination to resist. Snorting hard, he asked Zhao Lie to disarm them before he left with a reminder. “Stay here and watch them. If anybody acts disobediently, kill everyone in the command cabin immediately!”

He went back to the deck with a few trusted subordinates.

Then, like Fei Zhong, nobody returned.

Zhao Lie and the remaining tough bandits were caught in the most awkward situation.

The bandits and the villagers stared at each other. As time went by, all the explosions outside seemed to disappear. The weird silence gradually reversed the confidence of the two parties.

“Dad…”

Zhao Chong swallowed hard nonstop.

Zhao Lie’s eyes shuddered time and time again. Then he suddenly said, “Leader, tie everybody else up and bring Han Te and Liu Li to check the deck with me!”

“Huh?”

Another captain of the bandits seemed dissatisfied about his arrangement, but Zhao Lie simply snapped. “There’s no other way out of here. If anything happens outside, nobody is going to get away!”

Chapter 1981 - Father and Son

1981 Father and Son

Zhao Lie, Zhao Chong, and another six tough bandits stuck their guns at Gu Zhengyang, Han Te, and Liu Li while they all crawled onto the deck.

There was nothing but silence outside. The deck was covered in some unsubstantial dark mist, as if the boat had sailed into a world of phantoms.

Although they were all seasoned bandits from the Bloody Worlds, they could not help but sweat hard, and their teeth were clattering beyond control.

“What’s going on? Where is everybody?”

“Why are the roars dying down? Isn’t the Black Water Gang supposed to be attacking furiously from the front?”

“Ma Ku and Fei Zhong, where are you?”

Everybody stepped onto the deck fearfully. They only felt that the stars in the sky and the rays from their crystal suits were all absorbed by the mist. The objects only three meters away were already hazy and blurred. There was no telling where the deck ended at all.

As they moved forward, they finally discovered that a crystal suit seemed to be standing in the middle of the mist. The captain of the bandits was overjoyed and touched it, but the crystal suit collapsed abruptly as if it were made of glass, turning into glittering pieces and components on the ground!

The clinking noises bombarded everybody’s heart like a hailstorm.

The coldness that felt like an icy cone rose from the hearts of Zhao Lie and the captain of the bandits at the same time.

Compared to the powerful forces in the Elysian Worlds, all the Red Fire Gang had were the crystal suits of the lowest level, and most of them had been refurbished multiple times. But still, they were the ‘king of magical equipment’, highly durable.

Right now, the crystal suit had been dissected and reduced into the most fundamental components. Even the lens the size of a fingernail had been dismantled.

What was most terrifying was that the components of the crystal suit after dissection were still standing like an intact crystal suit and did not fall until an external force was applied!

There was no body or blood among the pieces of the crystal suit, as if the bandit wearing the crystal suit had been directly vaporized.

The captain of the bandits and Zhao Lie looked at each other and gulped at the same time. Crouching, they moved forward inch by inch.

They found no one at all, only a black human shape on the deck. It seemed that somebody had been lying on the ground and burning so fiercely that the deck had been left with a clear dent in the contour of the person.

The deck was made of metal. It was not difficult to leave a blackened mark on it, but to make it melt and dent would certainly require an unbelievably high temperature.

The outcome of the person who was burnt at such a temperature was not hard to imagine. They must have been completely vaporized without leaving the slightest ashes.

When the captain of the bandits and Zhao Lie swallowed hard in fright, the dark mist around finally somewhat dispersed, allowing them to see further away and hear desperate screams.

It was Ma Ku’s voice!

The tough bandits were all shocked. After they blew apart the mist and looked, the first thing they saw was not Ma Ku but Fei Zhong.

The notorious, perverted bandit from Double Dragons Valley who liked torturing the innocent had been removed from his crystal suit. He was kneeling on the ground in a weird posture, begging for mercy, but the fat on his face had stopped shivering. He had already been killed.

His face could not have been more twisted, as if his facial organs were trying to crawl out of his face and escape from his head. The lower half of his body was also contaminated by a large brown stain. It was obvious that he had peed and shat his own pants!

What kind of strength could’ve possibly removed Fei Zhong’s crystal suit in an instant, killed the bandit, and frightened him to incontinence before his death?

Zhao Lie, Zhao Chong, the captain, and all the tough bandits seemed to have been caught in the most unbelievable nightmare, their nerve endings burning hard.

Right then, Ma Ku staggered out of the black mist.

The crystal suit on his body was gone, too, revealing his bamboo-like body that was trembling nonstop. He was supposed to be a fearless and ferocious bandit, but he looked like a panicked little girl, and he shrieked in such a high-pitched voice that it almost sounded like a hen whose throat had just been slit.

“Boss Ma!”

Seeing his deformed face, the few tough bandits all felt that their blood was freezing, wondering whether they should give him a hand or immediately run.

Ma Ku’s eyes had been entirely filled with blood, and the pupils and the whites were indistinguishable. When he saw everyone, he seemed to have run into the most dreadful ghosts. The panic on his face turned into devastation, and tremendous black blood ran out of his nostrils and his mouth. While he was running, he suddenly kneeled on the ground and screamed, “Don’t come over. You’re all dead. You were all killed by me. Why are you still coming back? Argh! Stay away!”

He writhed on the ground in pain. Irregular wounds somehow appeared on his body, which did not seem to be the cutting of sharp blades but the biting of teeth and the tearing of fingernails with brute force. His skin was falling apart, and he bled hard in the most miserable way.

In his screams, Ma Ku squeezed his head hard with both hands, and his eyeballs bulged wider and wider before they finally exploded amid cracking noises.

Blood erupted out of his eye sockets like a spring. There was no telling whether he had crushed his own skull or some other uncanny force inside his head did it. The brutal bandit who had been persisting in the doctrine of one kill a day collapsed, and his body was still cramping. He could not have looked more terrible.

The scene froze the legs of all the tough bandits.

Or rather, the solid deck had become a thick swamp, and a hundred pale, decayed hands were extending out of the swamp and grabbing their legs, making it impossible for them to move away.

In the middle of the black mist, an enormous object that looked like an altar moved close slowly, which turned out to be a spiritual puppet that looked somewhat clumsy.

The deep red indicator was flickered, adding to the mysteriousness. The jigsaw and the drill emitted coldness that the dark night could not hide. The Fiend Star carved on the surface on the iron shell, after being contaminated by the scattered blood, looked like a hideous smile from every perspective.

“How—How is it possible?”

The tough bandits, Zhao Lie, and Gu Zhengyang were all astounded. They found it hard to believe that it was a seemingly clumsy and crude spiritual puppet that had tortured and butchered Ma Ku and Fei Zhong.

“Take it down, or none of us are getting out of here!” Zhao Lie roared crazily and opened fire at the spiritual puppet first.

The nerves of all the tough bandits had been tightened to their limits. Now that somebody had started, everybody unleashed all their firepower, raising a metal storm on the front part of the deck!

Zhao Lie, however, grunted when everybody opened the fire before he flew backward as if he were hit by an uncanny force.

He did not forget to drag his son along as he flew away. He also pushed the backs of Gu Zhengyang, Han Te, and Liu. While the three of them were shoved to the center of the battlefield, his own speed of escape was significantly boosted.

Dragging Zhao Chong, Zhao Lie ran to the end of the deck without caring about anything else.

Feeble screams echoed behind him, and the storm of bullets came to an abrupt halt only half a second later.

The spiritual puppet had slaughtered the bandits as if it were slapping several annoying mosquitoes.

Zhao Lie was horrified, and Zhao Chong’s face had completely blanched.

When the father and the son dashed to the end of the boat, half running and half crawling, their legs were shot by bullets from more than ten directions.

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

The leg joints of their crystal suits as well as their own knees and ankles were blown up. The two of them screamed at the same time and rolled on the deck, leaving a deep trace of blood.

Raising their heads, they discovered that the battle at the front of the Village of Peace had ended at some point. The lake was now as bright as daylight under the illumination of a hundred searchlights.

Even if they jumped into the water, there would be no way that they could escape.

“Dad!” Zhao Chong was panicking. In tears of remorse, he shouted, “What do we do? What do we do now?”

“Don’t be anxious. I’ve made thorough preparations.” Zhao Lie’s eyes dimmed. The muscles on his lips trembled as he looked at the spiritual puppet that was approaching from the black mist. Touching his son’s head, he gnashed his teeth. “I’ve made thorough arrangements at the end of the ship. There will be a slim chance of survival as long as you jump off. I’ll hold the enemy back for a while. Just run to the Bloody Worlds!”

“What?” Zhao Chong was confused, delighted, and sad. “What about you, Dad—”

Before his voice died down, all the brilliance in his eyes froze. There was nothing but horror and bewilderment.

It was because Zhao Lie had stabbed a dagger into his head through his jaw. After the spiritual energy surged out, all his brain matter was damaged.

Zhao Chong was unable to say anything anymore. He collapsed in his father’s cold arms.

“I’m sorry, son.”

With tears of blood flowing out of his eyes, Zhao Lie mumbled, “Fei Zhong was right. There are a million things that are scarier than death in the Land of Sins. Your personality and your capability mean that you cannot survive in the Bloody Worlds… I already tasted the misery twenty years ago, and I will not let you bear the agony that I once bore in the past!"

Talking and smiling miserably, Zhao Lie looked at the spiritual puppet that rolled over slowly, as well as Gu Zhengyang, Han Te, and Liu Li, who moved out from behind the puppet.

None of them expected Zhao Lie to be so cruel that he would give his son a quick death after seeing that there was no hope of escape!

"Captain Zhao…" Gu Zhengyang said gravely.

"Cut the cr*p, leader. If you win, you are the king; if you fail, you are a rebel. Such things happen in the Land of Sins every day. What's there to be surprised at?" Weird green brilliance beamed out of Zhao Lie's face as he spoke. "If I say that everything I've done is for the continuity of the Village of Peace, would you believe me?"

Gu Zhengyang was silent.

"Also," Zhao Lie said, "if you had adopted my suggestion a few years earlier, we would've conquered all the villages in the hundred square kilometers around us, and the Village of Peace would be three to five times stronger than it is. In that case, I would never have taken the Red Fire Gang or the Black Water Gang's side, instead fighting side by side with you against the bandits to establish our own enterprise. Do you believe me?"

Gu Zhengyang sighed and nodded. "I do."

Zhao Lie was slightly dazed. His eyes were frozen as he breathed his last breath and said, “Forget it. It doesn’t matter now. Do you know that living is really f*cking exhausting, leader?”

The moment he stabbed the dagger into his son’s head, he had bitten the poison capsule inside his teeth.

The poison had taken effect, and his whole face seemed to be on fire. His muscles and his soul withered at the same time, and he slowly collapsed onto his son’s body, not moving anymore.

Chapter 1982 - Right or Wrong

Chapter 1982 Right or Wrong

Before the dawn came, the last bandit that was hiding in the mud at the bottom of the lake was found out and killed. The battle to defend the Village of Peace finally came to an end.

Countless dead bodies whose guts had been blown out in the explosions were floating on the surface of the lake. The furious flames also illuminated the previously dark sky into a burning inferno.

The fascinating Flower of the Other Shore in the sky, however, had long disappeared. Those noble angels living inside Manjusaka did not seem very interested in the battle of the insects of the bottom level in such a remote region.

The dead had staggered to the other shore, but the living had to struggle in the scarred land.

Although the short yet fierce battle did not cause too much damage to the Village of Peace due to Li Yao's help, a lot of valuable ammunition and backup energy had been consumed.

Several iron-shelled boats had been destroyed by the cannon fodder. One of them even stored the water-cleaning cartridges that were of paramount importance.

In the Land of Sins, almost all water sources were heavily polluted. Drinking the natural, unpurged water was equivalent to suicide. Even boiling it at a high temperature might not necessarily eliminate all the impurities and poison. The filtration process was mandatory.

The thousands of people of the Village of Peace needed tons of water in their everyday life. Without the water-cleaning cartridges, it would mean their doom.

Also, Li Yao had saved a large batch of sinners who were driven by the Black Water Gang to fight against the Village of Peace. Having been soaked in the cold water for a long time, the effects of the excitants had run out, and they were struggling and crying for help due to their survival instincts.

Their families, who were not even armed, had also been driven by the Black Water Gang to this place for the suicide mission. They were hugging, weeping, and shuddering under the threat of the firearms and blades in the Village of Peace.

Many people in the Village of Peace wanted to leave them alone and let them drown in the lake.

However, they could not violate Gu Zhengyang’s order and had to pick up most of the sinners, however unwillingly.

Right now, those people had become the captives of the Village of Peace. They were locked in two iron-shelled boats that did not have engines, waiting for their final ruling in desperation.

Their outcome would not be good.

Even if Gu Zhengyang was lenient enough to not execute the thousands of sinners that included elders and children, they would still die all the same after they were banished, considering that the few resources they had were looted by the Black Water Gang, and they had neither weapons nor food.

It was even be a slow and painful death, like torture, as Zhao Lie had said previously.

However, the Village of Peace had a population of several thousand in the first place. If they accepted another several thousand people, the population would double, and it was certainly beyond the capacity of their food, energy, and other resources.

It was needless to mention the huge fight between the two parties during the Bliss Ceremony. The deep grudge against each other meant that they absolutely could not accept each other.

The heads of the captives had already sent a message. Since they had been defeated, they were willing to be executed by the Village of Peace without any complaint according to the tradition of the Land of Sins.

However, they asked the lords in the Village of Peace to show mercy to the children below the age of fourteen. It did not matter even if they were going to live as slaves at the bottom level of the Village of Peace as long as they could live!

Gu Zhengyang had not come to a decision yet.

He had enough reasons for his hesitation. The Village of Peace had merely defeated two teams of vanguards from the Black Water Gang and the Red Fire Gang, which were far from the main forces of the two gangs.

In the eyes of the gangs, swallowing the Village of Peace was probably not a mission that required the whole crew, and they had shown enough respect for the Village of Peace by sending out a few tough bandits.

Dawn was about to come. If no news was sent back to Double Dragons Valley by sunset, the ferocious bandits would definitely take action.

Gu Zhengyang did not feel that either the Red Fire Gang or the Black Water Gang would let go of the Village of Peace after such a great humiliation.

The Village of Peace was still in peril and short of hands. There were still vigorous adults among the captives, and their families were kept in prison there. Naturally, he could not be more prudent about the arrangement of those people.

However, when the first beam of the morning sun illuminated the deck of the iron-shelled boat, Gu Zhengyang's attention was neither on the captives nor on the tough bandits of the Double Dragons Valley but focused on Li Yao.

He was pacing for the 137th lap around Li Yao and raising the same question for the 52nd time. "Was everything last night… really done by you?"

"Yes, village leader," Li Yao replied casually.

Then followed another sentence that had been repeated fifty-two times. "Tell me how you did it!"

"Nothing can be told," Li Yao said calmly and indifferently. "The database is not installed with plugins to explain complex battle missions to civilians. With your level, battle experience, and comprehension ability, it is impossible to explain to you reasonably and adequately."

Gu Zhengyang was dazed. Looking at the indicator on Li Yao’s chest for a long time, he finally raised a new question for Han Te and Liu Li, who were secretly chuckling. “Have the two of you never thought of dismantling its crystal processor to check what its core processing chip looks like?”

“Negative,” Li Yao answered peacefully. “My crystal processor is a military secret of the highest level. As per the twenty-second clause of martial law, only the general commander of the ‘Special Combat Squad under the Highest Command Center of the Northern Space Zones’ or the refiners with ‘Azure Double Diamonds Certification of Maintenance and Modification’ are qualified to open my shell. Other people, regardless of their side, will be treated as the most serious enemy once they try to pry into my crystal processor, and they will suffer my instantaneous countermeasure.”

“Instantaneous countermeasure?” Gu Zhengyang was confused.

“Like last night,” Li Yao explained,

“…”

Gu Zhengyang gasped hard and could not have looked more awful. He finally understood it. “So, you can obey Han Te’s orders, but you cannot allow him to dismantle your structures or perform maintenance and modification on you?”

“Basically, yes,” Li Yao said coldly. “I have just activated a brand-new database for automatic maintenance and upgrade. As long as I am provided with enough energy and materials and the expected battle environment, mission, and targets are set, I will be able to automatically maintain, modify, and upgrade myself.”

“What an incredible fellow!” Looking at the drill and the jigsaw in front of Li Yao’s mechanical arms, Gu Zhengyang sighed with mixed feelings again. “I have never seen a war puppet like it.”

Han Te tried to hold back his smile and said, “Master, the Land of Sins is too vast a place for anyone to find all its secrets. Perhaps we were lucky enough to pick up the most awesome military crystal processor from the Martial Meritocrats Sector before Judgment Day, right? All in all, had it not been for the help of Fiend Star last night, the Village of Peace would’ve been doomed! Isn’t it great that everything worked out?”

“Yes, Dad. Captain Liu seemed to be looking for you to discuss the issues about the injured.” Liu Li blinked quickly. “Go now. We can keep an eye on Fiend Star. We will call you immediately if something goes wrong!”

“Fine.” Gu Zhengyang indeed heard somebody shouting his name from another boat. He walked away for a few steps, only to come to a stop and turn around. “One last question, although I don’t know if you can find an answer from your database. Last night… you intentionally went easy on the sinners, didn’t you? Why? Judging from what you did to Ma Ku and Fei Zhong, you certainly could’ve slain all the sinners. If Han Te merely gave you an order to defend the Village of Peace, there was no reason for you to show mercy on the sinners, was there?”

Li Yao was silent for a moment. Then he said, “I don’t know, but the ‘law’ inside the crystal processor demanded me to do that.”

In the moment of epiphany, Liu Li clenched her fists and said, “Maybe it was a bunch of Cultivators who crafted Fiend

Star a long, long time ago, right?”

“Is that so?” Gu Zhengyang was slightly dazed. Then he grinned and put on a genuine smile. “Got it. Don’t worry about it. I’ll certainly find a way to protect the Village of Peace!”

The middle-aged man who had fought fiercely for a whole night with his sick body waved his fists hard and rushed away like a vigorous young man.

Looking at his back that was moving further and further away, Han Te was somehow at a loss, with complicated feelings beaming out of his eyes.

Li Yao sensed the subtle waves in the young man’s heart. “Anything on your mind?”

“Huh?” Liu Li batted her big eyes and looked at Han Te suspiciously.

“It’s not anything important, but…” Scratching his hair for a long time, Han Te finally summoned his courage and asked, “Grandpa Yao, do you feel that my master is right?”

“Your master is right,” Li Yao said.

“What are you saying?” Liu Li puffed her cheeks and said, “Of course my dad is right. We have to fight the wolves to the end. Look at what we have achieved. Isn’t it great?”

Han Te shook his head hard. “No, Liu Li. That’s not true. The reason the Village of Peace still exists is because we discovered Grandpa Yao by accident, and Grandpa Yao saved everyone in the village!

“Without Grandpa Yao, the Village of Peace would’ve been swallowed by the gangs. Perhaps a lot of blood would have been shed, and a lot of people would have been killed. Those lucky enough to survive would have been deformed and turned into inhuman, ferocious animals, like the sinners who were injected with exhilarants and charged at us with demolition shuttles.

“From that point of view, isn’t Zhao Lie right? After all, not all the villages in the world can be lucky enough to find a Grandpa Yao!

“Last night, at the final moment, even master wavered and admitted that Zhao Lie was right, and he had to evade the dilemma with his death. No, I’m not blaming master. It was very understandable for him to think that. I’m just confused and cannot convince myself. Would everything have been better if we had listened to Zhao Lie’s words earlier?”

“No,” Li Yao said, “Zhao Lie was wrong, and your master is right.”

“If my master is right, how exactly would everything have worked out without ‘Grandpa Yao’?” Han Te asked stubbornly.

“It wouldn’t. Neither your master’s path nor Zhao Lie’s can work out, but it does not mean that your master is wrong.”

Staring at the direction of Manjusaka, the City in the Sky, Li Yao said softly, “Perhaps your master’s determination is right, and it is the whole world that has been wrong!”

Chapter 1983 - Double Dragons City

Chapter 1983 Double Dragons City

“It is the entire world… that has been wrong?”

Han Te and Liu Li did not expect Li Yao to give such an answer. Complicated feelings beamed out of their eyes that had been bulged wide. Looking at the bloodstained lake, Han Te summoned his courage and said, “If our belief is wrong, we can change it. What are we going to do if the world is wrong?”

Li Yao smiled. “What do you think?”

Han Te and Liu Li both fell silent.

After the fierce battle, or rather, after spending half a month with Li Yao, the two little fellows had grown a lot. They had vaguely touched the truth of the Land of Sins, and they better saw the hope that they had been searching for and never given up on.

Han Te mumbled, “Can the world be changed?”

“Didn’t Liu Li’s mother try to change the world?” Li Yao said.

“But she failed.”

“Did she?”

Han Te and Liu Li looked at each other and descended into deep thought again.

Li Yao chuckled and changed the topic. “Let me ask you a question. If the truth about the Land of Sins is not as simple as it appears to be, just as Leader Gu said, and deeper darkness and evils are hiding behind the scarred Land of Sins, the world of the angels may not be the paradise that you imagine but a place even more dreadful than here. In that case, will you still search for Manjusaka?”

Han Te thought carefully for a long time. Then he clenched his fists and nodded heavily. “Yes. In any case, I will certainly go to the City in the Sky to find my sister and figure out the truth about Judgment Day and Land of Sins!”

“I’m going there, too!” Liu Li held her chest high and spoke determinedly. “I’m going to the City in the Sky to find a way to pave the Gold Barley across the entire Land of Sins. Also, I will ask the ‘angels’ what mistakes we have made for us to deserve the torture of such a fate. If they truly mean to help us, why do they have to choose such a cruel method? We are human beings, not sinners. Even if our ancestors once committed unpardonable crimes, it has nothing to do with us!”

“Therefore…” the two little fellows said at the same time, “we are definitely going to the City in the Sky to find out the truth!”

Looking at the two little fellows who were so solemn that their eyes had almost frozen into crystals, Li Yao could not help but feel amused. “Alright. After the issues in the Village of Peace come to an end, let’s set off and find a way to go to Manjusaka together!”

“Grandpa, are you going to the City in the Sky, too?” asked Han Te curiously.

“Have you recalled something from your past and are looking for something in the City in the Sky?” Liu Li asked.

Li Yao was slightly dazed. Then he smiled and said, “Yes. It’s true that I’m going to the City in the Sky to search for something. But more importantly, it is about making certain ‘scumbags’ pay for everything they did!”

Li Yao’s killing intent pierced through the iron shell, condensing into tentacles with tusks and sharp claws around him. The two little fellows could not help but feel as if their internal organs were constricting. They shuddered in fear and said, “Grandpa Yao.

Li Yao’s soul spread out feeble ripples. It appeared that fighting against the many tough bandits of the two gangs on his own last night had been too burdensome after all. His soul was somewhat exhausted, and he could barely control his killing intent.

Calming himself down, Li Yao said, “Let’s go to Warehouse No. 3. You can give me a hand and help me strengthen the shell with the fragments of the crystal suits collected just now. Also, find a large, sealed cabinet that has tires or tracks below it and load it with crystal bombs and ammunition. Then, connect the cabinet to my body. Life’s troublesome without Cosmos Rings.”

Han Te and Liu Li were confused. “A mobile, sealed cabinet that is fully loaded with crystal bombs and ammunition? Are you going to war, Grandpa Yao? Where?”

“To solve the problems of the Village of Peace, of course,” Li Yao said casually. “I need to pay Double Dragons Valley a visit.”

…

The Double Dragons Valley, as its name suggested, was made of two mountains that looked like furious dragons.

The two mountains extended into countless branches. They were rough and steep. The highest parts were more than three thousand meters long and scourged by tempests all year long. The deep valley was as complicated as a maze and rife with interconnected caves, which allegedly led to the deepest level of hell. Those places were also frequented by the most ferocious mutated reptiles. Even if an unparalleled expert dropped into them, the only outcome for them would be becoming a pile of dry bones in the caves.

The two mountains, named Green Dragon and Red Dragon, were like two walls that rose high into the sky and separated the Thousand Lakes Area, where the Village of Peace was located, from the Bloody Plateau Area to the northwest of the mountain, which was more prosperous and competitive. At the joint of the two mountains, perhaps due to the conflicts of the tectonic structure, a narrow, long, and flat valley had been generated, which was known as Double Dragons Valley.

Double Dragons Valley was an important road that connected the Thousand Lakes Area and the Bloody Plateau Area. If anyone chose to climb Green Dragon Mountain or Red Dragon Mountain instead of taking the road, they would have to walk thousands more kilometers at much greater risk.

The Land of Sins was terribly barren. Other than the mutated beasts that were everywhere in the wilderness, there was barely any yield. Everybody’s life depended on the blessings from the angels.

When the angels sprayed the relief assets, they were often highly imbalanced. It was often the case that daily necessities were thrown to different coordinates that were very far away from each other.

Therefore, a strong demand for resource communication had been generated, which resulted in the prosperity of business and commerce. Even the atrocious Bloody Worlds could not stop the commercial teams from travelling all over the world. Or rather, in the Bloody Worlds, commercial teams and gangs were essentially the same thing, and the role could be switched at any moment.

Since the Double Dragons City was a hub that connected the Thousand Lakes Area and the Bloody Plateau Area, countless commercial teams inevitably had to pass the place. Although the strong experts did not fear the magnificence and steepness of the two mountains, it was impossible for them to carry the goods that weighed hundreds of tons while they climbed the mountains.

The many gangs lurking in Double Dragons City at the center of Double Dragons Valley, taking the advantage of the terrain, were themselves large commercial groups that sold dangerous assets. They had also deployed checkpoints to levy a steep tax on the passersby. The black markets that were of a reasonably large scale attracted the sinners from the Thousand Lakes Area and the Bloody Plateau Area to trade. In such a case, the daily income was already astronomical. An abnormally prosperous city was gradually built on the devastated, disaster-stricken Land of Sins.

At noon, the sunlight was so dazzling that it was practically impossible to keep one’s eyes open.

However, even if the sunlight was ten times stronger, it would not be able to illuminate Neltharion, which was lurking in midair in the stealth mode.

Li Yao's soul and the mental devil both crammed into Neltharion and observed Double Dragons City from above. The iron shell that was strengthened and modified with the components of the crystal suits had been hidden inside an inconspicuous ravine.

Double Dragons City must have been an enormous center of trade a thousand years ago. Although it had been completely destroyed in Judgment Day, a lot of splendid buildings were still left behind, reminding the offspring of the city's past glory and prosperity.

A large area of buildings inside Double Dragons City had been abandoned, but the central district had been greatly upgraded. All the buildings there had been strengthened with rebar and iron plates, and a lot of bunkers and shooting holes had been installed, transforming them into dense iron fortresses. It could also be seen that countless tanks, shuttles, and unmanned crystal cameras were patrolling everywhere.

Looking from the above, Li Yao also discovered a lot of brawny, intimidating men who all carried blades and guns. They could not have looked more ferocious.

Han Te had told Li Yao that there were more than ten gangs in Double Dragons City and almost ten thousand elites. They were all well-trained, fearless bandits. People like Fei Zhong were everywhere there.

Li Yao had also learned that there was also the classification of the Refinement Stage, the Building Foundation Stage, the Core Formation Stage, and the Nascent Soul Stage in the

Land of Sins. The experts in the Core Formation Stage were not rare in the Bloody Worlds, and those in the Nascent Soul Stage were not just tales, either.

Also, what the sinners in the Land of Sins trained themselves with were the most dominating and risky arts. While the odds of injury and death were appallingly high, the power of such arts was often much greater than the regular arts if the trainers miraculously grasped them.

Therefore, the combat ability of the sinners in the Land of Sins could not simply be classified by their levels. It was possible for experts in Core Formation Stage to have some ultimate skills or some powerful but highly unstable magical equipment, which could be a fatal threat for both their enemy and themselves once activated.

In other words, the Bloody Worlds were places where the lunatics who practiced ‘evil arts’ gathered. Li Yao naturally could not rush into Double Dragons City blatantly to confront almost ten thousand such lunatics.

Moreover, besides the almost ten thousand tough bandits in Double Dragons City, countless commercial teams passed by the place every day. Those ‘commercial teams’ who travelled among the Bloody Worlds openly were certainly unparalleled bandits themselves.

“There are about ten famous gangs in Double Dragons City. The Red Fire Gang and the Black Water Gang are certainly the best,” the mental devil said. “The Red Fire Gang is a seasoned gang with decades of history. Their main business is the black market and the arena in Double Dragons City. When the tough bandits have nothing better to do, they always gamble and fight in the arenas. Such businesses are endless sources of wealth that cannot be stopped.

“The Black Water Gang, on the other hand, only rose in recent years. They only grew under the nose of the Red Fire Gang due to trading in exhilarants and slaves.

“It is said that the Black Water Gang has connections with a few major cities in the Bloody Plateau Area. One of them is even an Elysian World that leads directly to the Heavenly Rails. They have imported abundant exhilarants from the city, which could drive anyone crazy and even significantly build up their bodies!

“I estimate that the exhilarants are intentionally sent to the Land of Sins for testing by the Immortal Cultivators. However, the life in the Land of Sins is difficult and hopeless. The sinners who struggle to survive have a high demand on the exhilarants.

“The Black Water Gang get countless exhilarants from the cities in the Bloody Plateau Area and send sinners from the Thousand Lakes Area to the Bloody Plateau Area as slaves. How can they not be rich?”

Chapter 1984 - Infiltration and Control

Chapter 1984 Infiltration and Control

The mental devil had piloted Neltharion to tour around Double Dragons City and gathered a lot of information. “All in all, the Red Fire Gang and the Black Water Gang both covet each other’s businesses. Not a single moment goes by without them hoping to swallow their enemy and monopolize Double Dragons City. As a result, all the other gangs are divided into two sides who are at loggerheads. Right now, they are still maintaining an ostensible peace, fearing each other’s strength. But this place is like a dry powder keg, and any spark will be enough to detonate it.”

“Is the Village of Peace the spark?” Li Yao asked. “Are they capturing the young warriors from the Village of Peace because they are going to wage a war on each other? That doesn’t make sense. If it is a civil war within Double Dragons City, it seems unnecessary to capture slaves from the Village of Peace on a large scale. Wouldn’t the enemy learn about their entire plan? The thing about gang fighting is that you have to be quick and stealthy!”

“It is indeed quite unusual,” the mental devil said. “When I investigated the city just now, I discovered that the atmosphere was grave but not too intense. Neither the Red Fire Gang nor the Black Water Gang seemed prepared to attack each other.”

After thinking for a moment, Li Yao asked, “Have you figured out the critical locations in the city?”

“Of course!” the mental devil said. “The nests of the Black Water Gang and the Red Fire Gang, as well as the warehouses where they keep their assets and ammunition, have all been located. Also, I have found the most important thing.”

Li Yao grew anxious. “What is it?”

“The ventilation tubes!”

“Ventilation tube my ass! I’m now a legendary expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage, and I am just dealing with a bunch of ignorant bandits in the Land of Sins. You think I need to crawl into ventilate tubes? Are you serious?”

“I thought that you had a special quirk and would not feel comfortable until you crawled through some ventilation tubes.”

“Let’s focus,” Li Yao said. “All in all, I vaguely feel that the Red Fire Gang and the Black Water Gang were not hostile to each other but more like a team when they dealt with the Village of Peace. Otherwise, the attacks from the front and the back would have been too coincidental.

“Here comes the question. What kind of reason can make the two gangs let go of their grudge and join hands to attack the Village of Peace? Logically, both gangs have important channels of wealth, and it is unnecessary for them to plunder a barren village in the Desolate Worlds!

“It seems that we will have to capture a few gang leaders for interrogation.”

“Then, how do we know who are the leaders of the gang?” the mental devil asked.

“Idiot!” Li Yao said. “Look at the shuttles down there and the heavily-guarded fortresses. The fanciest ones that are surrounded by dozens of bodyguards are certainly housing the leaders of the gangs.”

Ripples spread out of the void but disappeared in 0.1 seconds. Neltharion cut into the lower altitude of Double Dragons City and patrolled among the streets and alleys.

Li Yao’s telepathic thoughts spread out in all directions like vague smoke while he searched for the luxury shuttles with the most bodyguards. Soon, he locked onto his targets.

However, the ‘targets’ made him hesitant.

It was not because the targets were few but because there were too many. Almost thirty luxury shuttles that had been installed with composite armor and mobile turrets had been parked in front of an iron fortress at the center of Double Dragons City that looked like a pyramid.

According to the messages that the mental devil had intercepted, the iron fortress was the most extravagant hotel in Double Dragons City, which was specially used to entertain honorable guests from the major forces of the Bloody Plateau area. Naturally, it had the most thorough safety measures.

As for the shuttles parked in front of the hotel, some were painted with the emblem of the Black Water Gang, some with the mark of the Red Fire Gang. The emblems and marks of another ten or so major gangs of Double Dragons City could be found there, too.

“What’s the meaning of this? Are those scumbags having a meeting inside?” Li Yao grew more and more curious. After piloting Neltharion to circle around the hotel three times, he found no gap to infiltrate through at all. His soul could not help but cough lightly. “Cough, cough. Cough, cough, cough, cough.”

“Does a soul need to cough?” the mental devil asked with great curiosity. “Why have I never realized that?”

“Well,” Li Yao said, “about that. Did you search for the ventilation tubes of this extravagant hotel?”

“…”

“The sewer will do, too.”

“No, I didn’t. However, I seem to have found another luxury shuttle.”

Li Yao and the mental devil locked onto a luxury shuttle in the south district of Double Dragons City at almost the same time. Neltharion appeared above the stranger’s head immediately.

The south district was where the black market was located.

Right next to the traditional black market that was under the control of the Red Fire Gang was the ‘human market’ controlled by the Black Water Gang.

In the Land of Sins that was seriously short of resources, people, especially vigorous warriors and beautiful women, were a very important asset.

A large batch of slaves that had been captured or purchased by the Black Water Gang was imprisoned in a giant iron cage that had been embedded with sharp thorns facing inward. The stains of blood on the thorns were telling their destiny in silence.

The Black Water Gang was adept at the usage of drugs. Most of the slaves had already been injected with tranquilizers. Crouching in the yellow weeds, their eyes were lackluster and drowsy.

The few slaves that were to be displayed soon, however, had been injected with a minimal amount of exhilarant. They were bellowing passionately and pacing inside the cages like leopards and tigers.

Some other slaves, who mutated into bizarre shapes, were locked in tiny cages alone, with heavy shackles on their hands and feet. Dense runes had been carved on the shackles and were releasing electric arcs and sparks now and then, indicating that they were all dangerous species.

A lot of merchants in brown or gray wind coats and respirators were pointing at the slaves and negotiating.

From the luxury shuttle that Li Yao and the mental devil spotted at the same time, a giant fatty that was about two meters tall but weighed at least two hundred kilograms walked out.

The man was wearing a well-shaped silk rope, with gold lace stitched to the sleeves. There was also a silver mask on his face, making it impossible to tell what he looked like. His fingers, which were as thick as carrots, wore a few glittering gems, indicating that he was a man of great fortune.

Li Yao smiled. “A man who wears such a delicate robe and so many rings must appreciate his life very much and absolutely not want to die for no reason.”

“Also, since he is a merchant from afar, he must be very informed and probably knows things that even the tough bandits here don’t,” the mental devil observed.

“Right now, all the tough bandits of Double Dragons City are having a meeting together, and nobody cares about the fatty. I hope that he is idiotic enough to leave one, no, half an hour’s time alone with us.”

The poor fatty in fancy clothes had no idea at all that two grim reapers had got their eyes on him.

He seemed to be there specifically to purchase female slaves as a regular customer of Double Dragons City. The moment he got out of the shuttle, a few members of the Black Water Gang greeted him and escorted him to a secret room.

With Li Yao’s Cultivation, such a secret room naturally did not have any secrets.

He could sense the fatty’s breathing and heartbeat clearly and hear him talking about the deals of the female slaves with the gangsters in all kinds of profanities.

Twenty minutes later, the fatty returned to his luxury shuttle, but there was an additional ‘good’ in the vehicle—a woman that had been tied up and fed with secret drugs.

The fatty chuckled eagerly below the respirator and commanded the luxury shuttle to return to the hotel that he lived in. Perhaps because the major gangs of Double Dragons City were negotiating inside the pyramid-shaped luxury hotel, he lived in another hotel not far from the slave market.

On the ground was a thick, woolen carpet. Crystal lamps dangled from the ceiling. The wall was also decorated with the most lascivious paintings. An enticing fragrance was floating in the air. If one did not see it with their own eyes, it would have been impossible for them to imagine that there was such an extravagant place in the hellish Land of Sins.

The fatty said something to the bodyguards before he slammed the door and threw the woman who was breathing heavily and wriggling like an octopus on his shoulder onto the bed.

The woman’s plump breasts were shivering like jelly.

The fatty took off his mask, revealing a giant pale face. Fiery brilliance beamed out of his small eyes as he mumbled, “The new medicine this time is truly powerful. Even I almost can’t bear it anymore. F*ck!”

He lunged at the woman who had lost her will and only had primitive instincts. However, instead of feeling the warmth and softness that he expected, he felt as if he had just jumped on an iron bed that was embedded with nails, and his body seemed to be minced apart.

The fatty bulged his eyes, only to discover that the woman was still lying on the bed, but she was breathing evenly and fast asleep.

However, he was being held in the air by some uncanny force, his arms and legs spread apart. He was unable to move at all!

He wanted to scream, but a bucket of magma seemed to have been poured into his throat. It was burnt through from the inside, making him unable to utter any sound at all.

No, he could actually utter a sound, which was the sound of the spurting blood when his carotid artery was cut!

The fatty watched his own blood spurting out like water arrows and condensed into a round red ball in midair before it was burnt up by a red fire without leaving even any stink.

Such a creepy and terrifying scene devastated him.

Dying! I’m dying!

Why? Who’s killing me? Who dares to kill me in such a place?

Sensing that his life was fading away crazily together with his blood, and seeing the world before his eyes losing color, the fatty could not have felt more frightened, confused, and regretful. His mental defenses were completely shattered.

Chapter 1985 - The Fist King!

Chapter 1985 The Fist King!

His heart had never been colder, and his death had never been clearer. His every organ, from his fingers to internal organs, did not seem to belong to him anymore. All the senses over his body were gone, except for the hotness and stinging when his blood was spraying into the air through his carotid artery!

Right when the world before the fatty’s eyes was about to fall into an infinite abyss, his neck suddenly ached, and the bloody was stopped abruptly.

Huchi! Huchi! Huchi! Huchi!

The fatty breathed heavily, with cold sweat popping up nonstop. His lips were still dry and withered, and his body was trembling.

He knew that he was still on the verge of death. If his blood was to be released for a couple of more seconds, he would certainly die from the blood loss.

Tides of darkness came at him, and he felt as if he was about to pass out.

But a stream of cold, sharp spiritual energy pierced through his head from his back, making his brain cells more excited than ever. He could not have been more awake.

Then, an indifferent voice echoed next to his ears, which almost made him burst into tears. “Don’t be scared. I’m not here for you.”

The fatty’s Adam’s apple protruded from his fat and rolled hard, but he did not know what to say.

The voice continued. “I’m here to kill the leader of the Red Fire Gang. But after I arrived, I noticed that all the gangs in Double Dragons City were gathered for a meeting, and there were few opportunities for me to attack. That’s why I decided to find a random person for intelligence. Fatty, judging from your clothing and your shuttle, you must be a big shot in the Bloody Worlds. I do not want to kill you unless it is absolutely necessary because it will cause a lot of trouble.

“So, you will answer whatever questions I ask you dutifully. As long as your information is satisfactory, I will be gone in ten minutes, and you can continue enjoying your woman comfortably. We can act as if this never happened. If you agree, nod.”

Brutality flashed inside the fatty’s eyes as he nodded quickly and stammered, “I—I understand.”

“Very well.” The voice seemed convinced and went on with a smile. “Tell me your identity first.”

Li Yao’s guess was correct. The fatty was indeed a merchant from a great gang in the Bloody Plateau Area. He had been in the slave business for a long time, especially the trade of young, beautiful female slaves.

Because the gang that he was in had been known for their infamousness in the entire Bloody Plateau Area, and the Black Water Gang had proven a trustworthy partner after several deals, along with some special reasons, he did not take too many guards on his trip, and it never occurred to him that he would run into his doom.

Li Yao was not interested in his filthy and despicable businesses at all. He got straight to the matter at hand. “Do you know why all the gangs in Double Dragons City have gathered? What are they discussing exactly?”

The fatty was indeed well-informed. After a brief hesitation, he said, “They are probably discussing how to respond to the invitation from the Fist King and whether or not to attack Liberty City together with the Fist King.”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. “Who is the Fist King?”

The fatty was somewhat lost. “You—You don’t know the Fist King?”

Li Yao sniffed. His spiritual energy was condensed into a sharp blade that was half freezing and half scorching as it brushed the fatty’s neck.

The fatty’s courage and passion had been released together with his blood just now. Under Li Yao’s threat, he immediately flinched. After thinking for a long time, he could only say, “The Fist King… is the Fist King.”

Some names were indeed hard to explain because they did not need to be explained in most cases.

For example, in the Star Glory Federation, no one needed to explain who the Vulture was. The Vulture was the Vulture, Li Yao. ‘Vulture’ Li Yao alone was enough to explain everything.

By the same logic, Ding Lingdang was Ding Lingdang and the Blazing Tyrannosaur. Not one word of explanation was needed.

In the Land of Sins, or at least in the cruelest Bloody Worlds, ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie was also a name that need not be explained. All one needed to do was submit to him, avoid him, or be crushed by him.

The legends of ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie had begun when he was sold as a slave soldier to a gang after the village that he was born in was slaughtered by another gang.

The slave soldiers were all cannon fodder. In the battles of the Bloody Worlds, their casualties were very high. Hundreds of them could die in a random gang fight.

The slave soldiers were the humblest scouts to explore the path ahead or bait during the hunting of mutated beasts. When the battle came, they would be injected with all kinds of exhilarants before they were sent to lunge at the enemy’s cannons and chainswords while roaring like animals. Few slave soldiers could survive for a year and a half in such cruel eliminations.

However, ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie miraculously endured five years and even made great contributions to the gang. He even saved the leader of the gang many times at the risk of his own life. His own strength also soared in the battles as if his primitive intuition had been awakened. In the end, he successfully got rid of his identity as a slave and became the most dominating and ferocious member of the gang.

However, the good days did not last long; ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie’s brilliant performance raised the jealousy and dissatisfaction of other tough bandits in the gang. The leader of the gang was wary of his expanding force, too, and concerned that he would hold a grudge because he had been treated as cannon fodder for five years. In the end, everybody reached a deal to set up a fatal trap in order to kill him.

At that time, he had just led his elite team to crush the commercial team of a hostile gang. He had been heavily wounded in the battle, but he was greeted with the siege of his own people in the end.

He fought and retreated almost a hundred kilometers, leaving a trail of blood behind him. Eventually, he was caught by his own people and slashed to death. His dead body fell into the crater in the ruins of a city.

Many people witnessed his body being ripped apart and pulled into the dark caves by the mutated beasts.

However, death was not the end, only the beginning of the real horror.

Ten years later, the Fist King returned—as a ghost.

Years ago, when his body was shredded and swallowed by the mutated beasts, part of his remaining soul survived. It was also said that he accidentally found a secret art to strengthen the soul. Then, after a series of unbelievable fortuitous incidents, his remaining soul was strengthened to an unprecedented level.

‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie spent three years wiping out all the gangs that set him up and slaughtered his hometown. He did not even let go of the bandits who had left the gangs while he was away, hunting down each and every one of them before he crushed all their bones and blew up their bodies with brute force.

Then he established his own organization. With his iron fists that could summon storms and fight lightning, he became one of the most awe-inspiring experts in the Bloody Worlds!

The communication of information was very difficult in the Land of Sins. Also, because of the eternal fights, the death rate of the top-tier experts was very high. It was not usual for a dominating expert to be killed and left in the wilderness, never to be heard from again. Therefore, there had never been a fair rank of ‘top ten experts’.

However, all the tough bandits in the Blood Worlds agreed that if there was indeed a rank of ‘top ten experts’ or ‘top ten bandits’, ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie would certainly be included, and he would probably be among the top five!

After hearing the fatty’s vivid descriptions, and especially after the introduction of a few battles that ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie was involved in, Li Yao could not help but grow curious about the powerful spectral Cultivator.

Normal spectral Cultivators often preferred to choose erratic, unpredictable arts because they did not have a fleshly body. ‘Mother White Lotus’ Wan Mingzhu was a perfect example.

However, ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie defied common sense. Although he was a ghost, his arts were in the most violent, tough, and open style. According to the fatty, normal experts at the peak of the Core Formation Stage or even at the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage were no match at all. It seemed that he had indeed found some intricate training arts of ghosts from the Immortal Cultivators and was lucky enough to not get killed during his practice. That was how he had made such shocking achievements.

The form of Li Yao’s soul was similar to a ghost. If he could learn some secret arts from ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie, would it not be a great enhancement for him?

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao asked with great interest, “The Fist King is going to attack Liberty City? What’s the meaning of that?”

“Liberty City is an ‘Elysian World’.” The fatty swallowed hard and put on an expression of both hope and dread. “The Fist King intends to bring the leader of Liberty City down and become the new master of the city!”

The so-called ‘Elysian Worlds’ were the super metropolises that had enormous asset transmission tubes that were connected to the Heavenly Rails beyond the atmosphere and therefore had the support of the angels.

The prosperity and power of those places were beyond the imagination of the people from the Bloody Worlds and the Desolate Worlds. The random magical equipment or arts of the angels that leaked from the Heavenly Rails randomly would be enough to raise a storm of blood in the Bloody Worlds.

All the experts that controlled the Elysian Worlds were great men who had fought out of the Bloody Worlds after decades of battles before they established their reign.

It was also said that they had been approved by the angels, and they could directly be at the service of the angels and receive rewards. They also grasped a lot of contribution points that could allow people to rise to the City in the Sky.

Becoming the ruler of an Elysian World was perhaps the greatest dream for every tough bandit in the Bloody Worlds. The position meant infinite strength, power, fortune, and a vaster world beyond the firmament!

The Bloody Worlds were a hellish arena where the tiny bugs brutalized each other. Every couple of years, the strongest bug would distinguish itself and become the toughest bandit of the toughest bandits.

Those invincible and unstoppable monsters in the Bloody Worlds always cast their ambitious eyes on one of the Elysian Worlds without exception, trying to overthrow the precious ruler with a great army so that they could be the new lord!

It was said that the angels above the Heavenly Rails did not interfere with the conflicts in the Land of Sins. Whoever seized an Elysian World and got the situation completely under control would always be acknowledged by them.

This year, it was ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie’s turn, and his target was Liberty City, the Elysian World at the edge of the Bloody Plateau Area!

Chapter 1986 - Elysian War!

Chapter 1986 Elysian War!

There were fifty Elysian Worlds in the entire Land of Sins, which were fifty prosperous metropolises connected to the Heavenly Rails and indirectly controlled by the angels.

Of the fifty Elysian Worlds, Liberty City was a top-ten super city in terms of prosperity and development.

Decades ago, the leader of Liberty City had been an invincible bandit from the Bloody Worlds. After he seized control of Liberty City, he had pledged loyalty to the angels and worked diligently. It was said that he had solid support from the angels.

Therefore, Liberty City was not only one of the best luxury paradises of entertainment in the Land of Sins but also a place with the market of the most advanced magical equipment and the most fabulous and cruel arenas.

Moreover, the leader of Liberty City had a lot of ‘contribution points’ under his belt, and he often issued quests from the angels. He had also helped many sinners who had accumulated enough contribution points wash away their sins and ascend to Manjusaka, the City in the Sky, where they turned into the supreme angels.

The Fist King had focused his attention on such a Liberty City.

It befitted his personality perfectly. He might not attack for a long time, but when he did, he would certainly claim the fattest prey.

However, Liberty City was not so easy to be taken down. Xiahou Wuxin, the leader of Liberty City, certainly had his own expertise to have kept his enterprise running for decades. Countless forces had tried to challenge his reign, only to be finished by him cleanly and quickly.

The Fist King was unable to shake the leader of Liberty City’s reign by himself. Therefore, while recruiting soldiers in the Bloody Plateau Area to expand his own force, he sent out countless invitation cards, asking heroes of the world to attend the great cause by attacking Liberty City in a coalition army!

The invitation cards sent by the Fist King were classified into different levels. Almost all the reasonably large forces in the thousands of square kilometers around had received one, including the force that the fatty was from.

From what the fatty had heard, the gangs of Double Dragons City had received an invitation card, too.

Whether or not to participate in the Fist King’s coalition army, how the interests of the Red Fire Gang and the Black Water Gang should be coordinated, and how to ensure that their nests would be not occupied by the enemy while the gangs from Double Dragons City were launching an expedition to Liberty City… Such complicated details would be the issues being discussed in the meeting.

Li Yao finally understood why the Red Fire Gang and the Black Water Gang, which had always been hostile, would join hands to attack the Village of Peace and why they needed so much cannon fodder.

However, he was still confused about something else. “What do you mean by the levels of the invitation cards? Are those without invitation cards not qualified to join the Fist King’s army to attack Liberty City?”

“That is not exactly the case,” the fatty explained dutifully. “Attacking Liberty City, a top-ten city among all the Elysian Worlds, is a shocking event. The Fist King is an unparalleled expert whose fame has spread across the entire Land of Sins, too. Many people have high hopes in him and are willing to help him even without an invitation, hoping that they can claim some benefits afterward.

“But then, the missions that are involved during the attack of Liberty City and the distribution of interests after the city is occupied will be quite tricky. If all the gangs in the thousands of square kilometers around come to the Fist King in a mess, hesitate during the attack, hoping to better preserve themselves, and jump out to ask for a reward after the city is taken, the whole Liberty City will certainly be in chaos. So, why would the Fist King want such garbage to join him?

“The so-called invitation cards were actually a qualification, which means that the Fist King acknowledges the capability of a certain force and deems them qualified to earn benefits from the endeavor. Of course, they will have to listen to the Fist King’s commands during the attack.

“According to the different levels of the invitation cards, the missions to be allocated to them will be of different danger levels, too. Naturally, if Liberty City is truly taken, the rewards that they will get will be different, too. All in all, the greater the risk, the more profits there will be. Although the Fist King is strong, he has always been fair in deals. Everybody knows that.

“As for the gangs who do not have an invitation card, it is alright if they want to ‘attend the great cause’, but as for exactly how much leftovers they will be after Liberty City is taken, it will depend on their own luck and the Fist King’s mood.”

“That explains a lot.” Li Yao thought for a moment. To combine and organize a hundred disobedient, dishonorable gangs each of which had their own intentions, this was perhaps the only way.

“The way I see it,” Li Yao said, “Double Dragons City is living quite an enjoyable life with the trade between the Bloody Plateau Area and the Thousand Lakes Area and with the assets from the Heavenly Rails. As a top-ten Elysian World, Liberty City will certainly not easily be taken. By your analysis, why are the gangs in this place involving themselves in the competition between ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie and Xiahou Wuxin, leader of Liberty City? Are they not afraid of failure?”

Upset, the fatty moved his lips, as if he was meaning to ask how Li Yao could possibly not know that. But after thinking for a moment, he swallowed his own question and explained, “You don’t get to choose what you do in the Land of Sins. The few commercial groups and gangs in Double Dragons City are not very large. It is not up to them whether or not to be involved in the competition. If they turn a blind eye to the Fist King’s invitation and the Fist King gets pissed off, they will likely become the Fist King’s next target.

“After the battle of Liberty City is over, if the Fist King has truly taken it, there will certainly be a lot of ‘contributors’ that he must reward. If the benefits inside Liberty City are not enough for allocation, Double Dragons City will inevitably be offered by the Fist King. Perhaps the Fist King will grant the entire Double Dragons City to a certain gang that fought bravely in the battle and lend them a great army to attack the city. Let me ask you. How can the Red Fire Gang and the Black Water Gang in Double Dragons City expect to resist them?

“Therefore, after you receive the Fist King’s invitation card, you have to join him in any case, unless—”

“Unless what?” Li Yao asked.

“Unless you make a decision quickly and join Xiahou Wuxin, the current leader of Liberty City, of course. Then, you will stand on the city leader’s side, hoping that Xiahou Wuxin can defend Liberty City. But you will still be involved in their competition!”

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao asked, “Right, I believe that a lot of forces will take Xiahou Wuxin’s side, won’t they?”

“Of course, but the Fist King still has the advantage in numbers,” the fatty explained. “First of all, although Xiahou Wuxin was a notorious, brutal bandit from the Bloody Plateau Area decades ago, he has been managing Liberty City for decades and barely ever attacked anyone. Therefore, his brutality is not well-known today. On the other hand, the Fist King has risen recently and swallowed a lot of gangs and commercial groups, blowing up countless experts. He is one of the most famous experts in the Land of Sins.

“Therefore, a lot of people think that the leader of Liberty City is no match for the Fist King. If the two of them truly have a head-on clash, the Fist King will certainly blow up Xiahou Wuxin with brute force.

“Secondly, and more importantly, as the saying goes, ‘those who are barefooted are more fearless than those who wear shoes’. Right now, tremendous wealth and interests have accumulated in Liberty City, and Xiahou Wuxin has a lot of deep-rooted interest groups under his command. He is the guy wearing shoes here. But the Fist King has transformed all his wealth into war assets, preparing to take a wild gamble. He is the barefooted one.

“Even if you help Xiahou Wuxin defend Liberty City and defeat the enemy, it is impossible for him to distribute his core interests. Even if he is willing to, the interest groups under his command will not just submit the fat meat they have.

“The Fist King is different. In order to occupy Liberty City, he is willing to pay any price.

“Therefore, you will be risking your life on either side, but the odds of success on the Fist King’s side are slightly higher, and the reward after victory are slightly greater. Naturally, most people have chosen to stand on the Fist King’s side! Also, the more people stand on the Fist King’s side, the greater his odds of success will be, and still more people will be attracted to the Fist King’s army to attack the city. Eventually, the team will snowball and become larger and larger. How many people will take the leader of Liberty City’s side in the end?”

Li Yao thought of something and asked, “Didn’t you say just now that the leader of Liberty City has a lot of contribution points under his belt, which can allow people to rise to Manjusaka? Are the contribution points not enough to attract abundant experts?”

“… For your information, in the battles to compete for the Elysian Worlds, the angels have always been absolutely neutral,” the fatty said. “When the news that an expert will attack a city comes over, the connection between the Heavenly Rails and the Elysian Worlds will be cut off, and all the contribution points will be frozen. They will not be ‘unfrozen’ again until the final victor of the battle settles everything.

“If the attacker wins, they will be awarded with double contribution points, which will allow them to teleport many people to Manjusaka.

“Therefore, the leader of Liberty City is far less appealing than the Fist King in this respect.”

Li Yao said to himself, “It feels that the angels strongly encourage the experts of the Bloody Worlds to attack the Elysian Worlds!”

The mental devil grinned hideously and said, “Of course. If the Immortal Cultivators are playing a game of competition in the Martial Meritocrats Sector, such ‘city attacks’ must be the ultimate form of the game. The battles over the Elysian Worlds will attract the strongest experts from all over the Land of Sins, who will perform all kinds of peculiar and unbelievable techniques. Some of the usages and variations might’ve even escaped the attention of the Immortal Cultivators. So, as long as the Immortal Cultivators scan the details of the battle intensively, they will naturally get tremendous experiment data.

“Also, after the large-scale battles, a lot of experts will be sent to Manjusaka justifiably to be cut up to study without raising any suspicion. Isn’t it killing two birds with one stone?”

“In that case, we will have to pay a visit to Liberty City,” Li Yao said.

“Of course.” The mental devil chuckled. “Through Liberty City, we will have a chance to go to Manjusaka. Also, didn’t you hear what the fatty said just now? There is a magical equipment market of a very large scale in Liberty City. Chances are that we will find a piece of ‘high-molecular layer-by-layer scanning magical equipment’ to resolve our main problem.”

Chapter 1987 - Unexpected Explosion

Chapter 1987 Unexpected Explosion

Considering the battle plans in his heart quickly, Li Yao asked, “Fatty, how much do you know about the situation in Liberty City? What experts are often sent out for missions under the city leader’s command? This is the last question. I’ll leave after you finish answering it, and you may continue your entertainment.”

The fatty almost felt like crying. He asked, his voice shivering, “Aren’t—aren’t you here to assassinate the leader of the Red Fire Gang?”

“Of course,” Li Yao said casually. “Do I not need to distract everyone’s attention if I want to kill the leader of the Red Fire Gang? If you don’t want to talk about it, so be it. I don’t think who the leader of Liberty City’s subordinates are is a big secret, and a lot of other people know who they are, right?”

“No, please don’t. I’ll confess! I’ll confess!”

The fatty grew anxious and confessed everything quickly.

Li Yao listened in silence and constructed a gold, virtual Double Dragons City inside his soul, including the nests and warehouses of ammunition of the few major gangs, the terrain, and angles of the two mountains outside of the city, and he factored in the speed and direction of the wind that day. Every detail rolled into his soul like a translucent droplet of dew.

The contradictions between the Fist King and the leader of Liberty City, as well as the contradictions between the Red Fire Gang and the Black Water Gang, can both be taken advantage of.

Almost a thousand healthy warriors have gathered in the Village of Peace right now with enough firearms and ammunition. Other than the shortage of top-tier warriors, their comprehensive capability is not weak. They are certainly incomparable to the gangs in Double Dragons City right now, but…

I have to reach out to Han Te and Liu Li first so that Gu Zhengyang and the rest of them can reinforce us at any moment.

Three minutes later, when Neltharion turned into a streak of redness and pierced out of his mouth from the back of his head, Li Yao’s plan fully took shape.

At the same time, inside the luxury hotel at the center of Double Dragons City that had the heaviest defenses and the most extravagant decorations, hundreds of well-armed bodyguards surrounded a meeting room that had been specifically strengthened by three layers of iron plates.

In the meeting room, around a long desk made of black wood were more than ten hideous bandits who looked violent and moody.

They were the leaders of the major gangs in Double Dragons City.

A rectangular, iron piece of scrap had been stabbed into the center of the long desk. The surface of the piece of scrap had been carved with three iron fists surrounded by furious flames. It was the invitation card sent by ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie and the source of their quarrels and dilemma.

Judging from the smoke and the mess inside the meeting room, the bosses of the gangs had argued for a long time about how to respond to the invitation card.

“We either don’t try at all or try our best! In my opinion, all the experts in the gangs should be sent, leaving none behind!”

A muscular man, who had a whole body of muscles that were as lumpy as crystal bombs and a fiery tattoo between his eyebrows as if he had a third eye, smashed his fists hard, leaving a deep mark on the black wood that was as tough as iron. He stared at the man on his opposite side.

When his fists moved again, white smoke popped up from the deep mark of fists, as if the desk had just been scorched by fire.

He was the leader of the Red Fire Gang. Few people dared to call him by his name nowadays. Everybody simply called him ‘Boss Fire Eye’ in respect.

What he was staring at was a man who was as slender as a viper with a pair of eyes as cold as a scorpion’s and two teardrop tattoos below them.

He was naturally ‘Wu Du’, leader of the Black Water Gang.

Sensing the eyes of provocation from the leader of the Red Fire Gang, Wu Du sneered and said, “If all the experts of all the gangs are sent out, what about the businesses in Double

Dragons City? Nobody needs to attend to it at all? Is it not possible that somebody will take advantage of the weak defense and occupy our base?”

“The Fist King’s attack on Liberty City will be a super war that is rare even in the past decades. If we join him without enough people, even the sh*t will turn cold before we can get it!” Fire Eye declared, his eyes glittering. “Besides, almost all the forces in the Bloody Plateau Area are involved in the competition between the Fist King and the leader of Liberty City. Who’s going to take advantage of our weak defense? If anybody does such a thing, it will only be you, Wu Du!”

Wu Du scoffed but did not respond.

“There will certainly be great casualties to join the battle of Liberty City,” Fire Eye said. “Will other people rest assured at all if somebody is left behind in Double Dragons City? Instead of each concocting their own plan here, we should simply deploy all the elites and experts. After all, as long as Liberty City is taken, who will dare claim Double Dragons City if we have the Fist King’s support? Whoever doesn’t agree must be planning to play tricks while everybody else is on the expedition. Don’t you agree, Wu Du?”

“Fine by me,” Wu Du said coldly. “If the Red Fire Gang is bold enough to gamble with all your possessions, there is no reason the Black Water Gang shouldn’t play it with you! Fire Eye, do not keep your eyes on the Black Water Gang the whole time and think in the long term. The most important thing right now is that the Fist King has only given us one invitation card when there are so many gangs in Double Dragons City. Also, it is a three-star card, one of a very low level. After we arrive at the Fist King’s camp, we will be obliged to take a lot of burdensome and unrewarding duties, and there may be few benefits in the end. You must be prepared for your efforts to possibly be for nothing!”

“Isn’t it simple?” Fire Eye snorted and snapped his fingers, raising a wind that made the hollowed iron scrap at the center of the desk shiver hard. “The invitation card does not have a name on it. I’m told that the Fist King does not mind forces ‘exchanging’ their invitation cards. Whenever we see someone with an invitation card of a higher level, we can always rob them. Won’t that solve the problem?”

“If we want to rob somebody else of their invitation card, we must stick together. If Liberty City is truly occupied, there will be great benefits that are beyond our imagination. Is it necessary to fight against each other for petty interests in Double Dragons City?” Wu Du said earnestly as if he meant it. Then he suddenly changed the topic. “Right. Why are there no messages from the Village of Peace? It is the largest village in the hundred square kilometers around and has a lot of decent cannon fodder. We can push them to the front, and a lot of our own brothers will be saved.”

“The communication is probably jammed again. Is it strange at all?” Fire Eye replied, not thinking that it was a big deal. “This time, the Red Fire Gang and the Black Water Gang worked together to deceive them. Ma Ku and Fei Zhong on my side are leading the team, too, with more than ten precious crystal suits. Wouldn’t it be a joke if they couldn’t handle a tiny village? Unless, of course, you are playing some tricks again!”

“Fire Eye, it was not easy for us to sit down and negotiate peacefully. If you keep being so paranoid, there will be nothing to negotiate about,” Wu Du said gloomily. “There is only one invitation card. If you do not want cooperation, we can always have a competition and see who is more capable to own it!”

For a moment, the atmosphere in the meeting room became more tense than ever. Even the long desk of black wood was squeaking, as if it could not withstand the dominating auras from the two gang leaders anymore.

Right then, deafening explosions echoed outside.

They were so powerful that the pyramid-shaped building with the most solid structure was shaking slightly.

All the gang leaders’ expressions changed, and they drew their firearms and blades.

In the treacherous Bloody Worlds, there was no trust among the gang leaders at all. They merely met because of the Fist King’s threat and the possible benefits after Liberty City was taken.

Any accident was enough to detonate the contradictions that had stagnated for years.

“Wu Du!” Fire Eye roared and rose abruptly, pointing his chainsword at his nemesis. “What tricks are you playing?”

“You are too rash.” Wu Du was still sitting, but one tiny storm bolter slipped out of each of his sleeves and aimed at the lower body of Fire Eye beneath the desk. “The situation is unclear, and you are so anxious. Who knows whether or not you are acting?”

“Where exactly did the explosions take place?”

Fire Eye stabbed his chainsword into the long desk, raising dazzling sparks.

To guarantee their safety, there were no windows on the wall of the meeting room. But dozens of light beams had been connected to the crystal cameras on the commanding heights so that they could observe the whole of Double Dragons City from above.

On the southeast side of Double Dragons City, a gargantuan fireball was rising, rolling, and expanding in midair. From the orange flames, enormous black smoke spurted out, forming a raging mushroom cloud.

In the middle of the mushroom cloud, smaller fireballs were popping up nonstop, too, and proliferating like tumors. It was obviously that chain explosions of smaller scales were still happening inside the smoke.

Such coordinates and such intense explosions immediately chilled Fire Eye’s heart. It was the warehouse of crystals and ammunition for the Red Fire Gang, and the abundant resources collected on the ‘Bliss Ceremony’ a couple of days ago were all stored there!

How was it possible?

The warehouse of crystals and ammunition was certainly the most heavily guarded place for the Red Fire Gang. Almost a third of the best elites were deployed nearby, but none of them had sent any warning at all. Who could have snuck in without a sound and directed such a shocking explosion?

Fire Eye’s eyes truly seemed to be on fire as he glared at Wu Du. His chainsword was revolving at a much higher speed, too.

Cold sweat immediately leaked out of Wu Du’s forehead. He bellowed, “Fire Eye, don’t be fooled. The Black Water Gang didn’t do it!”

Right then, a few explosions of a large scale took place in various parts of Double Dragons City in a row. They seemed to be bombarded by the cannonballs from far away, but what exploded was not destructive blasts but black smoke as intense as ink. Like an overwhelming fog, it completely enshrouded the central district.

They were the smoke grenades whose coordinates and angles had been calculated accurately!

Fire Eye, Wu Du, and the other gang leaders had never seen smoke grenades that released such dense smoke so fast.

In only half a minute, with the help of the wind, the black fog leaked to every street and valley in the city, dragging Double Dragons City into a hazy world of darkness.

Gunshots and screams echoed in all directions at the same time.

Chapter 1988 - Gang Fight in Double Dragons City

Chapter 1988 Gang Fight in Double Dragons City

“What exactly is going on?” Fire Eye bellowed at the communicator on his wrist in fury.

Hasty gunshots and chaotic screams came over from the other end of the communicator before somebody shouted, “Boss, somebody outside said that Fei Zhong returned half-dead with blood all over his body, claiming that the Black Water Gang betrayed us and have already been bought out by the leader of Liberty City. They do not want to join the Fist King’s army with us at all!

“Those who were sent to the Village of Peace, including Ma Ku and Fei Zhong, have been completely annihilated under the unexpected assault of the Black Water Gang. Fei Zhong said that he saw ‘Ghost Axe’ Zhou Da, a tough general under the leader of Liberty City’s command, on the Black Water Gang’s side. Right now, while all the bosses are having a meeting, they attacked the Red Fire Gang’s base!”

“*sshole!” Fire Eye roared. “Where is Fei Zhong? Ask him to come here immediately!”

“I don’t know!” the man on the other side of the communication channel shouted. “The situation is a mess now. Explosions and fights are everywhere. I don’t know where Fei Zhong is at all!”

There was nothing but dead silence in the meeting room. The only thing that could be heard was Fire Eye’s rapid panting like an infuriated animal.

Wu Du’s face was even paler than that of a dead person. He pulled the triggers slightly harder and said in the most earnest way, “Fire Eye, listen to my explanation. This is a scheme!”

Hardly had he concluded his sentence when another world-shaking explosion took place outside. From the city of black smoke, a second enormous fireball rose slowly. Judging from the coordinates, it was the headquarters of the Red Fire Gang!

Nothing needed to be said anymore.

Fire Eye and Wu Du looked each other in the eyes and read the information in them clearly.

It was not important anymore whether or not there was any scheme or plot.

Whether or not the Black Water Gang had taken the leader of Liberty City’s side was irrelevant.

What mattered most was that the Red Fire Gang, the Black Water Gang, and the many other gangs in Double Dragons City had been on par with each other and in a subtle balance, and it was due to such a balance that they could seek cooperation prudently.

Now, the headquarters and the warehouses of the Red Fire Gang, the most important facilities, had been destroyed. The balance had been broken. How could they seek cooperation?

For Fire Eye, even if it was not Wu Du who did it, the Red Fire Gang had still suffered tremendous losses. How could they participate in the Fist King’s war and compete with the Black Water Gang?

For Wu Du, it was impossible to explain himself even if he had a body of tongues. Whatever he was going to do, Fire Eye would bear the grudge in mind and stab him at the first opportunity. Therefore, he might as well…

Moreover, because of the series of explosions, the situation was unclear under the hazy smoke. There was no telling who opened fire first, but the Red Fire Gang, the Black Water Gang, and the other gangs behind them were already engaged in a fierce, chaotic fight!

Fire Eye and Wu Du took action at almost the same time.

Fire Eye’s chainsword unleashed unstoppable auras, which slashed the long desk in half at Wu Du as quickly as lightning.

Wu Du’s storm bolters shot out more than ten explosive mystic rays instantly, blowing up a series of light balls on the spot where Fire Eye had previously stood.

The small meeting room immediately turned into a jungle of bullets and blades. To show their sincerity, neither party had entered the meeting room with a crystal suit, which added to the bloodiness and cruelty of the melee combat where fists punched flesh.

Since the big shots of almost ten gangs were gathered inside the meeting room, the outside had already been crammed by their bodyguards. Their nose tips were almost kissing each other.

Hearing that the big shots inside the room were already fighting, some were in a hurry to open the door to reinforce their boss, but more people simply drew their daggers and pistols and attacked those who were next to them!

The whole of Double Dragons City immediately turned into an atrocious hell under the black smoke.

Explosions and engagements echoed in every street and alley, but what spread even faster than the explosions and the gunfire was a rumor, which stated that the Black Water Gang had joined the leader of Liberty City’s side and was attacking the headquarters of the Red Fire Gang with the elites from Liberty City. They would kill everybody in the Red Fire Gang to establish their authority and warn all the other gangs against joining the Fist King.

If the gangsters could calm down and think carefully, it should be easy for them to notice that such a rumor was full of loopholes.

However, in the middle of the black fog, the explosions, and the desperate screams of their companions, how many of the tough bandits could calm down and think?

‘Attack before you are attacked’—that was the eternal truth in the Land of Sins.

In the black market in the east district of Double Dragons City, the bandits of the Red Fire Gang and those of the Black Water Gang were engaged in fire first and gradually drew in the other gangs who supported them. The many gangs already had the deepest grudge against each other due to the conflicts of interests, and small-scale gang fights happened all the time. Today, they had let out all their feelings under the boost of fear and fury. It was impossible for them to calm down until they had killed all the enemies.

In the north district of Double Dragons City, the Black Water Gang's warehouse of crystals and ammunition was heavily guarded and prepared for attacks.

From the black smoke, however, dozens of burning shuttles rushed out and crashed into their defense lines at the same time. The blasts raised by the series of explosions were truly like a surging tsunami, blowing almost a hundred bandits of the Black Water Gang into the sky.

It was not until then that the bandits of the Red Fire Gang in heavy armor crawled out of the flames, roaring and lunging at their nemeses.

In the west district of Double Dragons City, a factory of exhilarants that belonged to the Black Water Gang was burning fiercely, too. All the members of the Black Water Gang were tied up and kneeling on the ground before they were shot in the back of the head one by one by the tough bandits of the Red Fire Gang. Their blood and their brains splashed onto the lips of the bandits of the Red Fire Gang, making their smiles even creepier under the illumination of the furious flames.

But their smiles did not last long when stormy gunshots echoed in the sky. Several heavy armed shuttles with the marks of the Black Water Gang bombarded all the members of the Red Fire Gang with the firepower of more than thirty cannons!

In the chaotic battle, not everybody had gone frantic.

Some of the captains in the gangs, hoping to preserve their own strength, tried to keep their subordinates outside of the battle and commanded them to escape to the places of fewer gunshots.

But they did not know that a dim but dangerous red light was patrolling in the black smoke, releasing powerful telepathic thoughts that were not hindered by the black smoke at all as the subtle changes on the battlefield were perceived.

Whenever it noticed that someone was about to escape the chaos, the red light would fly dozens of times faster and dart through the forehead of the captains!

After their captains were shot by the uncanny ‘bullets’, the remaining tough bandits would only run about like headless flies, only to be caught in the fire net again.

The red light was like the most brilliant director, controlling the seemingly chaotic battlefield accurately.

Wherever the conflicts were about to die down, it would dash over and pour more fuel on the fire. When the capability contrast in one place was too imbalanced, it would kill a few experts on the winning side stealthily, making sure that both parties would shed their last drop of blood in ignorance.

…

An hour passed.

Inside the luxury, pyramid-shaped hotel, bodies that were riddled with holes littered the ground. Almost everybody was wearing an expression of bewilderment. The stench of blood was so intense that it seemed to be raining blood.

Fire Eye and Wu Du, the bosses of the Red Fire Gang and the Black Water Gang, were both heavily wounded. They had almost run out of all their blood, and they were simply leaning against the wall under the support of their vigorous vitality.

The communication between them and the captains of their gangs had been seriously jammed. Nothing but the sound of battle could be heard in the communicators. They were completely blocked in the enormous grave.

Right then, mechanical sounds and the sounds of tracks rolling over dead bodies echoed from outside.

In the middle of the black fog and smoke, a tall, cold spiritual puppet showed up before them.

Fire Eye and Wu Du looked at the smiling star on the shell of the puppet, unable to figure out which force it belonged to at all.

However, from the cold killing intent of the newcomer, they somehow sensed that the unattractive spiritual puppet was perhaps the source of all chaos.

The two of them found it absurd. Was it possible for a spiritual puppet to direct a chaotic battle that involved the whole of Double Dragons City?

Wu Du covered his abdomen, which had been left with an enormous hole, and tried to ask, “Who are you—”

After he spoke only three words, the guns on the chest of the spiritual puppet had already begun to glitter. The burning bullets stuffed all his questions back to his throat and the back of his head.

Before that, Fire Eye’s furious eyes had frozen. From his forehead to the tip of his nose and to his jaw, a long, narrow red line gradually appeared.

…

The carnage in Double Dragons City lasted from dusk to dawn the next day.

After a night, almost all the gangs were uprooted and annihilated.

The bandits who luckily survived became shocked birds. Looking at the city that was rife with bodies and fire, they were too frightened to do anything.

Before they calmed down to clean up the mess, a fully-armed, overwhelming army showed up in Double Dragons Valley outside of the city. They were the villagers from the Village of Peace!

The previous day, Li Yao had asked Han Te and Liu Li to forward the entire plan to Gu Zhengyang, but Gu Zhengyang would certainly not believe it so easily.

However, the Village of Peace had already been pushed to desperation. Even Ma Ku and Fei Zhong, two notorious bandits, had been killed by him, and the advanced waterborne facilities from the Black Water Gang had also been destroyed. It was obvious that the tough bandits from Double Dragons City would not let go of them just like that. However humbly they presented themselves, they would not be able to avoid their fate as cannon fodder.

Therefore, they might as well fight to the end!

At midnight, Gu Zhengyang led an elite squad of scouts and climbed to the Green Dragon Mountain to observe the situation in Double Dragons City.

When he saw that Double Dragons City was indeed mired in smoke and explosions, and gunshots were echoing nonstop, he was both surprised and suspicious, but he felt a slim chance of hope.

When dawn came, the fog and smoke in Double Dragons City gradually dispersed, revealing the gory ending of the city. Gu Zhengyang immediately reached the conclusion that Double Dragons City had entirely lost all order.

Chapter 1989 - Go Now Without Worries!

Chapter 1989 Go Now Without Worries!

In the Land of Sins, there was no obvious distinction between civilians, warriors, and bandits. The warriors of the Village of Peace were trained by Gu Zhengyang, an expert from the sky, and ‘Blood Eagle’ Zhao Lie, a former tough bandit. They were well-organized and boasted a high combat ability.

After they arrived at the valley willing to sacrifice themselves, they were fearless of any enemy. The bandits who had just fought for a whole night and had lost all their leaders were no match for them at all.

Those who dared resist were immediately killed by the warriors of the Village of Peace, who outnumbered the bandits ten to one.

The slaves on the human market were freed and enlisted on the Village of Peace’s side.

By noon, the Village of Peace had basically got the situation in Double Dragons City under control. The flames that had burnt for a whole night gradually died down.

Although the asset warehouse of the Red Fire Gang had exploded and burnt to the ground, the other gangs had more than ten enormous warehouses of resources after all, in which high-energy food, water-cleaning cartridges, anti-radiation suits, and a myriad of magical equipment were stored. They even had dozens of low-level crystal suits.

With so many assets, even if the population of the Village of Peace doubled, they would be able to sustain themselves for the next year and half.

However, although the situation was settled for now, the future was still unpredictable.

The Red Fire Gang and the Black Water Gang were gone, but Double Dragons City was a critical location. Although it was in the middle of a power vacuum, new gangs would enter the place before long and restore it to what it had once been.

Unless, of course, the Village of Peace was capable of defending Double Dragons City and became a new dominator, which had perhaps been the greatest dream of ‘Blood Eagle’ Zhao Lie in the past.

The Village of Peace was not necessarily incapable of that, but if they became the new dominator of Double Dragons City, they would inevitably turn into ferocious, ravenous animals like the Red Fire Gang or the Black Water Gang.

As for exactly what path they should walk in the future, Gu Zhengyang had not figured out the answer. Perhaps no one in the Village of Peace knew.

They could only try to save more people and live longer by following their heart.

At noon, Han Te and Liu Li went to Gu Zhengyang, who had been busy all morning. Holding each other’s hands, they summoned their courage and proposed their request to Gu Zhengyang.

“You’re leaving?” Gu Zhengyang’s eyes glittered as if he were a hawk as he stared at Li Yao behind. “You are going to find Manjusaka, the City in the Sky, with this… Fiend Star?”

“Yes!” The two little fellows gritted their teeth and replied, “We have to go to Manjusaka and ask the high and mighty angels a lot of questions. We will figure out the truth of our world!”

Somewhat out of their expectations, Gu Zhengyang did not immediately turn them down. His eyes were deep and blurry, and there was no telling what was on his mind. Touching Liu Li’s head, he sighed. “Both the City in the Sky and this Fiend Star contain too many secrets. Perhaps they far exceed the limits of what we can pursue, and we will have to pay with our lives if we want to know the answer. Are you still going to search for the answer even so?”

Han Te and Liu Li looked at each other and said firmly, “Yes. Master, we know that it is very dangerous to look for the City in the Sky. But is there any place in the Land of Sins that is not dangerous? Although we lived in the Village of Peace peacefully, didn’t we suffer disasters every once in a while?

“Furthermore, the Village of Peace has resolved the crisis at hand, but it will only be temporary! Double Dragons City is a fat piece of meat. Soon, other wolves and tigers will find it and try to occupy it. After those animals arrive at the city, the first thing they do will be to beat the Village of Peace because we are the greatest threat in the area!

“If we do not want to be swallowed by others, we have to strengthen ourselves with whatever means possible just like the gangs. We must grow tusks and claws and become animals that are madder and more brutal than them. But is such a life what you want?”

Gu Zhengyang was silent. After a bitter smile, he said, “That is the path that Zhao Lie wanted to walk on. Perhaps it is indeed the right path, but I—I simply can’t make that choice.”

“No. Zhao Lie… and the entire world are wrong. You are the right one, Master!” Han Te clenched his fists. “Liu Li and I both want to change the cruel and absurd world. But to change it, we must know clearly what it is. That is why we have to go to Manjusaka, the City in the Sky! Master, do you not want to grow Gold Barley over the entire Land of Sins one day and settle all the conflicts and disasters on our land? Just let us go. We will certainly find an answer about this world!”

“Dad, we have already grown up. You can’t protect us forever.” Liu Li bit her lips. “If ‘Fiend Star’ comes with us, there will not be any problem!”

Gu Zhengyang looked at Li Yao again. Then he recalled the horror last night made of gunshots, explosions, and surging flames.

It was hard to imagine that Double Dragons City had been destroyed by a spiritual puppet.

What kind of monster was it exactly?

Gu Zhengyang’s instincts made him confused and vigilant of Li Yao.

However, on second thought, his daughter, his disciple, himself, and even the entire Village of Peace were just some minor forces in a remote area of the Desolate Worlds. Nobody would have any reason to covet them, right?

Had it not been for the spiritual puppet, the Village of Peace would have been razed to the ground, and his daughter and disciple would have suffered the most miserable torture under the bandit Fei Zhong.

Gu Zhengyang sighed and said, “What are you going to do exactly?”

Han Te and Liu Li looked at each other and both cheered. Han Te said confidently, “Fiend Star found an invitation card from Double Dragons City. We plan to go to ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie with the invitation card!”

“Fist King?” Gu Zhengyang was slightly dazed. Then he frowned and said, “The Fist King is preparing to attack Liberty City. The Bloody Plateau Area is turbulent right now. You are going to involve yourselves in it?”

“If we don’t join the Fist King’s army, how can the two of us, who are nameless nobodies, sneak into the Elysian World and find a way to ascend to the City in the Sky?” Han Te rubbed his nose and smiled. “The confrontation between ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie and the leader of Liberty City gives a great opportunity to us small fries to take advantage of the mess. We will certainly be able to get a lot of messages and even accumulate abundant ‘contribution points’.”

“We are going to the Fist King for the sake of the Village of Peace, too,” Liu Li said solemnly. “Right now, most of the gangs on the Bloody Plateau Area have focused their attention on the competition between ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie and the leader of Liberty City. They have no time to bother with the small places like Double Dragons City or the Village of Peace. I estimate that we will still have time to consolidate the defense of Double Dragons City.

“However, after the battle in Liberty City is over, somebody will definitely come here to steal Double Dragons City.

“Therefore, after we join the Fist King’s army, we will observe in secret and find out who covets Double Dragons City and the Village of Peace so that you will be able to make preparations in advance, Dad.

“Moreover, if we are lucky enough, we will win the support of ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie. Nobody will dare touch the Village of Peace if so, and you will be able to build Double Dragons City into a brand-new city!”

Gu Zhengyang smiled and did not comment on their proposal. He simply said, “Judging from your words, you seem to be confident in ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie’s victory. But I can tell you that it is not necessarily the case. Xiahou Wuxin, the leader of Liberty City, has been a dominating expert since decades ago. I don’t believe that he will wait to be killed by the Fist King.”

“It doesn’t matter.” The two little fellows looked at each other and smiled. “We will not stand on the Fist King’s side loyally. If Xiahou Wuxin turns out to be tougher, we will certainly not hesitate to switch sides!”

“Just let us go, Dad!” Liu Li shook her father’s hands. “Otherwise, what can we do even if we stay here? When the battle between the Fist King and the leader of Liberty City is over, a lot of gangs will come, and we will still be doomed!”

Gu Zhengyang was deep in thought. “About that…”

…

That day at dusk, Han Te and Liu Li were all set to go.

Even Li Yao had fully upgraded himself with the assets in Double Dragons City. He still appeared clumsy and unattractive, but the gear, engine system, and aggressive magical equipment inside the iron shell had been entirely renewed and could more or less keep up with the pace of his soul.

Gu Zhengyang had gone to bid the two of them farewell with a lead gray jar in his hands.

“Master, what’s this?” Han Te asked curiously.

Gu Zhengyang smiled and opened the jar. Weird fragrance spread out with gold brilliance that looked like wine.

“The seeds of the Gold Barley!” Liu Li exclaimed.

“Exactly.” Gu Zhengyang sealed the seeds carefully and gave them to his daughter. “Help spread them across the entire Land of Sins. Maybe they will take root and sprout somewhere.”

“Master…” Han Te called him earnestly and waved his fists hard. “You must hold on. We will certainly be able to protect the Village of Peace if we work together!”

“Of course I will. I will not be crushed so easily.” Gu Zhengyang grinned. “I will certainly protect the Village of Peace until you return!”

“It’s a deal!” Han Te waved his hands hard. “Master, we’re off!”

“Dad, take care of yourself.” Liu Li held back her tears. “We are leaving!”

“Wait. There’s still something I want to say to you.”

After much hesitation, Gu Zhengyang took a deep breath and said, “About the chip that I sent you, the one that contains ‘Little Cultivators’, I’ve given it a lot of thought. It was not until I was almost killed by Ma Ku and Fei Zhong the other night that I finally figured everything out.

“Maybe it doesn’t matter whether or not the Martial Meritocrats Sector had Cultivators in the past. Even if all the stories in ‘Little Cultivators’ were fabricated and there were never such idiotic and shortsighted things as ‘Cultivators’ in the past, it doesn’t matter.

“What matters is ‘now’ and the ‘future’.

“Perhaps, at present and in the future, Cultivators will exist forever.

“I sincerely hope so. Therefore, go now, kids. Believe in yourselves and change the world to create a new one of your own!”

Chapter 1990 - Arriving at Bloody Plateau

Chapter 1990 Arriving at Bloody Plateau

In the Land of Sins, in the Bloody Plateau Area…

This place was different from the ‘Thousand Lakes Area’ where the Village of Peace was situated.

The Thousand Lakes Area had once been bombarded by countless powerful earth penetrators, which left enormous craters in the cities and the wilderness. After hundreds of years, the craters had turned into lakes. That was how the place got its name.

The Bloody Plateau did not suffer the scourge of so many earth penetrators, but it was also affected by a catastrophe that destroyed everything. There was some sort of fungus that swallowed all the creatures and could trigger the extreme mutations in the genes of creatures.

As far as the eyes could see, the entire Bloody Plateau was covered in a thick carpet of fungi. Hazy red mist was floating in midair, too, mixed with a greasy stench. One could not help but feel that they were placed in the ocean of blood.

That was how the Bloody Plateau Area got its name.

The impenetrable fungi carpet killed crops and most of the plants that human beings depended on. The extinction of plants triggered a chain reaction and led to the collapse of the entire ecological system. The docile animals in the

Martial Meritocrats Sector previously were almost entirely annihilated.

Those that had survived such an extreme environment and fed on the fungi to cause all kinds of weird mutations in their genes were all the most ferocious and aggressive monsters.

The weaker monsters fed on the fungi and fought each other like bugs. Then, greater monsters gradually came into being in their competition. They wandered on the Bloody Plateau in teams and even attacked the towns and shuttles of human beings fearlessly.

Of course, some human beings wanted the cores and calculi condensed inside the monsters’ bodies and hunted the creatures of their own initiative.

Humans and animals fought for hundreds of years on the Bloody Plateau just like that. The piles of bones that had paved the Bloody Plateau silent described the goriness of the hundred years of battles.

The largest bones were even almost five floors high. The tusks that pierced to the sky alone looked like enormous sabers that could cut a warship in half. Their bodies did not decay after hundreds of years and were left at different parts on the Bloody Plateau. According to their different forms, they became the most eye-catching landmarks.

Li Yao, Han Te, and Liu Li had defeated dozens of waves of mutated beasts and slain almost a hundred bizarre-shaped monsters just half a month into their trip.

However, no matter how dreadful and hideous the animals were, human beings were always the most terrifying creatures in the Land of Sins.

This place was the depths of the Bloody Worlds. With the news that ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie was about to attack Liberty City, the largest city in the Bloody Plateau Area, the entire Bloody Plateau was in turmoil. All the gangs and tough bandits who acted on their own began to take action.

Before the collision of the two giants started, the forces or vanguards under their command had already crashed, turning the Bloody Plateau into a vortex of destruction.

To fight for the Fist King or the leader of Liberty City’s invitation card, to diminish the enemy’s strength under the Fist King or the Leader of Liberty City’s command, or to take the opportunity to settle scores because of the grudge from a long time ago… Hundreds of fierce battles had begun everywhere on the Bloody Plateau at the same time. Countless sinners dropped dead in the wilderness, their flesh swallowed by the fungi. After only a few days, there was nothing but bones left.

Li Yao, Han Te, and Liu Li, the seemingly weak and unattractive adventure squad, were caught in the swirls of chaos now and then by accident, too.

“Kill them all!”

On a shuttle that had been embedded with enormous horns, making it look like an iron-armored rhino, three tough bandits, whose hair rose like a cockscomb and whose eyes glittered with greediness, charged at Li Yao’s group in their hideous laughter.

It was already the third attack that they had suffered that day.

No reason was needed. There were two teenagers who were wet behind the ears walking alone on the Bloody Plateau, followed by an unattractive spiritual puppet. Were they not the best prey?

“Here they come again!” Han Te sighed hard.

“Isn’t it great?” Li Yao smiled. “This is a great opportunity to practice and become more familiar with the arts that I taught you a few days ago.”

“Speak of which, you are truly awesome, Grandpa Yao!” Liu Li licked her lips, her watery eyes beaming with delight. “Not only have the shortcomings in our arts been modified, you have even taught us such sophisticated new techniques that can be merged with our natural-born talents. I feel stronger than yesterday every time I wake up in the morning!”

“Chances are that Grandpa Yao used to be the best expert of the Martial Meritocrats Sector. He is certainly the strongest ‘old grandpa’ in the Land of Sins today!”

Han Te opened the bandages on his arm, revealing nine metal rings that were connected to each other.

The young man grinned and mumbled to himself, “Why are the tough bandits so stupid? Since the two seemingly harmless people have walked to the depths of the Bloody Plateau, they are certainly more than they appear!”

Before he concluded his sentence, the young man’s arm had already risen like a crystal cannon as he aimed at the ‘iron-armored rhino’ that was diving from the sky. He roared, “Seventh level of the Lightning Strangle—the Heavenly Thunder Cannon!”

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

The nine metal rings revolved faster than ever. Hundreds of electric arcs interweaved into a lightning storm before the young man’s arms, mixed with countless scraps that were as thin as paper, before they smashed at the enemy overwhelmingly.

Liu Li, meanwhile, opened her fingers behind Han Te and aimed them at her own temples. Her eyes seemed to have become two suns. A torrent of invisible telepathic thoughts rushed out and hit the lightning storm unleashed by Han Te precisely, increasing the intensity of the lightning storm by a factor of ten!

Boom!

Being pierced by the lightning storm, the ‘iron-armored rhino’ was directly dissected in midair, breaking apart into thousands of pieces.

The three tough bandits in the shuttle were all riddled with holes, but they were not killed just yet. Instead, while they roared crazily, their bodies expanded, and they grew hair that was as hard as nails. Their jaws protruded, and their tusks lengthened a little, transforming them into half-human, half-wolf monsters. The only thing that was the same as the past was the hair rising on their heads that looked like cockscombs.

“It hurts! It hurts so much!”

“You little b*stards. I’m going to kill you!”

The three half-human, half-wolf monsters hit the ground heavily. Electric arcs were still dancing on their hair, but they could not have cared less about it.

The tough bandits on the Bloody Plateau indeed had a high combat ability. Such a weird mutation was both similar to the techniques of the body fundamentalists and had distinctive features of the changes of demons. There was no telling what mysterious drugs from the Immortal Cultivators had caused the transformation.

“Liu Li, give me a hand!”

Faced with the three aggressive monsters, Han Te was not scared at all. The nine metal rings continued revolving rapidly when he curled his fingers and somehow pulled the lightning storm back. An enormous claw of lightning was formed in front of him before he snatched at the three monsters brutally.

However, his usage of the lightning claw was not very fluent yet, and there was inevitably some delay to perform such a great movement. The front of his body was defenseless for a moment.

The three monsters retained the wisdom of human beings. Naturally, they would not let go of such a great opportunity. They all squatted deeply, hoping to dodge Han Te’s lightning claw and lunge at his chest.

But outside their expectations, Liu Li’s eyes shone brilliantly behind Han Te. After a grunt, three streams of the most powerful telepathic thoughts were sent into the heads of the three monsters!

With her gifts, Liu Li’s brainwaves were multiple times more powerful than a normal person’s in the first place. After the tutelage of Li Yao, an expert in mental warfare, she had also grasped the basics of the Terror Bomb, one of Li Yao’s earliest techniques in mental warfare!

For a moment, all three monsters seemed to have seen the most unbelievable and horrible scene. Not only were they paralyzed and unable to evade, they even slightly rose, only to be hit by Han Te’s lightning claw precisely. Screaming, they were each blown into more than ten pieces and killed immediately!

Han Te and Liu Li would have frowned at the disgusting scene half a month ago.

However, after half a month’s bloody training on the Bloody Plateau, they had already gotten used to it.

After Li Yao’s cruel training, the two little fellows could almost be counted as elite bandits. They had practiced a few powerful teamwork techniques under Li Yao’s guidance, which could allow them to compete with experts in the Core Formation Stage without revealing Li Yao’s real identity.

If Li Yao activated his soul power to the highest, he could naturally annihilate experts in the Nascent Soul Stage directly without the help of the two little fellows.

However, this place was not a remote village in the Desolate Worlds like the Village of Peace. According to the analysis of Li Yao and the mental devil, the battle between ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie and Xiahou Wuxin, leader of Liberty City, should be a battle that the Immortal Cultivators intentionally arranged in order to attract all the deadly experts in the entire Land of Sins to test the most powerful techniques and magical equipment.

Therefore, the Immortal Cultivators’ surveillance of the Battle of Liberty City would be higher than ever. It would be more difficult for him to attack as blatantly as he did in the Village of Peace and Double Dragons Valley.

The two little fellows that he had brought with him were the perfect disguise. Otherwise, it would look rather weird for a spiritual puppet to wander on its own through the Bloody Plateau.

“We should be close to our destination now.”

It was a rare sunny day, when the bloody mist was thin and visibility was high. Han Te raised his telescope and searched the horizon for a while. He suddenly pointed somewhere far away and exclaimed, “Look! It’s right over there. That’s Liberty City, an Elysian World!”

Li Yao looked in the direction that Han Te was pointing. Before he saw the city itself hundreds of kilometers away, he noticed a tiny thread between the sky and the earth. Or rather, it was a high tower from the ground into the sky.

At the bottom of the tower was a pedestal in the shape of a pyramid. Countless hazy buildings had been established around the pyramid, forming a splendid metropolis.

The tall tower rose from the tip of the pyramid all the way up into the clouds, joining with the vaguely seeable Heavenly Rails.

From that point of view, it somewhat looked like a pillar that was supporting the sky.

That was the transmission tube of assets that linked the Heavenly Rails to the Land of Sins.

It was also the only road of ascension for the thousands of sinners in the Land of Sins!

Chapter 1991 - The Catty Girl

Chapter 1991 The Catty Girl

Was the battle of Liberty City, a competition between ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie and Xiahou Wuxin, as simple as it appeared?

If the Immortal Cultivators were to test some powerful weapons or capture a large batch of experts among the sinners to study them in Manjusaka, how would they interfere with the battle?

Was there ‘high-molecular layer-by-layer scanning magical equipment’ in Liberty City?

Even if there was and he could get it successfully, what was he going to do then?

Was it possible for him to change the wretched world under the siege of the Immortal Cultivators?

Also, Starlight, the mysterious resistance organization of the Cultivators, and the lost Cultivator who had been missing for a thousand years had shown some of their traces, but where were they exactly?

Li Yao pondered in secret.

“Grandpa Yao!” Han Te suddenly exclaimed. “Look to the southeast. Somebody seems to be there!”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. Adjusting the focus, direction, and resolution of the crystal cameras, he saw raging dust dozens of kilometers to the southeast and then a woman who was running in panic on all fours.

In the middle of the raging dust were more than ten tractors and shuttles, all of which had been embedded with stings and horns that made them look like iron hedgehogs. One would know that one would be best not pissing them off after first glance.

All the tractors and shuttles extended a couple of crystal cannons, barraging ahead of them crazily.

The woman who was on all fours had fluffy hair, which made her body appear further slim. She was wearing some sort of jetting magical equipment on her wrists and ankles, which spurted out tremendous air the moment she touched the ground as if she were supported by invisible springs. She dashed among the blasts and explosions, fleeing in a hurry.

She seemed to have practiced some special body movement skills. Together with the four pieces of jetting magical equipment, she was no slower than the shuttles.

It was a pity that she was blown away now and then because of the enemy’s bombardment, and she revolved in midair like a kite whose string was severed. She could not have looked more miserable.

The enemy was even not in a hurry to kill or capture her. They were simply passing their time with the poor woman like a cat playing with a mouse.

The woman fell to the ground time and time again, bleeding and bruised, only to rise again and struggle to continue fleeing.

Li Yao could almost see the hideous smiles on the faces of the tough bandits inside the iron hedgehogs.

“Grandpa Yao.”

Han Te and Liu Li both saw the miserable appearance of the woman. There was begging in their voices.

Although minding other people’s business meant asking to be killed in the Land of Sins, they were different from the common sinners in the Land of Sins.

Besides, there was still Grandpa Yao!

“Let’s go!”

Li Yao activated the power rune arrays of the heavy shuttle and accelerated to the highest speed amid the exclamations of the two little fellows!

The tracked spiritual puppet, his main body, boasted an anti-gravity ability and could float in the air. But the machine was not designed according to aerodynamics after all, so its speed was limited. Besides, it could not support the two little fellows sitting on his shoulders all the time.

Therefore, they were on-board a heavy armed shuttle that had been specially modified by Li Yao. It had been designed to ship goods at the beginning, with an enormous carriage behind. But after Li Yao’s modification, it now boasted a speed that was as good as a racing shuttle.

With Li Yao’s professional driving skills, the thirty kilometers were covered in no time. They cut into the enemy’s team from the left rear. The patterns of black leopards that had wings on the chest could clearly be seen on the body of the vehicles.

It seemed to belong to a gang named ‘Flying Leopard Hall’, which was quite famous on the Bloody Plateau for their velocity and ferocity.

The tough bandits of the Flying Leopard Hall were perhaps prudent in nature, or perhaps they had been dominators of the land for too long. Seeing that an unknown shuttle was drawing close, they said nothing and turned their turrets immediately, raising a storm of destruction toward Li Yao.

“Grandpa Yao, be careful!” Han Te and Liu Li exclaimed at the same time.

Li Yao’s soul yawned lazily. The seemingly clumsy heavy shuttle turned into the most agile streak of brilliance and flashed among the bullets in the most delicate way.

A large cluster of exhaust flames were spurted toward the tank of the Flying Leopard Hall as he accelerated again and caught up to the woman who was running in desperation. A mechanical arm extended out of the right side of ‘Fiend Star’, grabbing her and throwing her into the carriage. Then, the vehicle turned around almost 180 degrees, dodging a few crystal cannons that had been locked onto his previous location, before it rushed at full speed in the opposite direction of the Flying Leopard Hall’s tank team.

The whole movement was fluent and natural, and the trajectory was as sharp and aggressive as a folded blade!

The tough bandits of the Flying Leopard Hall did not anticipate that a stranger whose driving skills were unbelievably brilliant would come out of nowhere. Their battle formation was immediately disrupted. A lot of shuttles even attempted to make a 180-degree turn neatly like Li Yao, but they ignored the gap of their skills and damaged the balance system of the shuttles. Rolling more than ten times in midair, the vehicles smashed into the ground, and several blushing bandits crawled out and cursed in fury at Li Yao, who was getting further and further away.

Han Te and Liu Li cheered at the same time.

The woman who had been thrown onto the backseat by Li Yao, however, had not entirely recovered from her shock yet. Her face was even more weird than before, as if she had run into a bunch of ghosts.

“Who are you? What do you want?”

She was not ugly at all, and she was rather young. But she could not have looked sloppier. There was black mud and stains all over her body, making it impossible to see her skin. Her hair was so messy and dirty that it looked more like grass, which further highlighted the size of her head. Right now, her back was deeply hunched, and she was like a cat that was fully alert and would extend her not-so-sharp claws at any moment. She screamed in fear now and then.

“Don’t be scared. We’re here to save you,” Han Te and Liu Li said at the same time.

The woman’s face became even weirder. “Save me? Why would you save me? Do you hate the Flying Leopard Hall, or do you hate me?”

Han Te and Liu Li were both slightly dazed. They shook their heads and said, “We don’t hate anyone. But weren’t you being chased by the people of the Flying Leopard Hall? If they’d captured you, they certainly would’ve killed you or sold you as a slave. Shouldn’t we rescue you?”

The woman seemed to have never heard such a self-righteous and preposterous argument before. As if her mind had been disrupted by the unexpected arrival of Li Yao and the rest of them, she was stunned for a long time before she cried in shock and fury, “What nonsense are you talking about? Do you think I’m a three-year-old? Has anybody in the Land of Sins ever saved someone else for no reason? Are you idiots?”

Han Te and Liu Li stared at each other and smiled at the same time. “Maybe!”

The woman put on an expression of disbelief. She shook the door hard and gnashed her teeth. “Fine. Thank you for saving me. Now, put me down and leave me alone!”

She wanted to jump out of the vehicle without bothering with anything else, only to be clutched by Li Yao’s mechanical arm. She bashed Li Yao’s iron shell hard with her elbow and naturally achieved nothing except for making herself grimace in pain.

“The guys of the Flying Leopard Hall are still behind us,” Han Te reminded her kindly.

“Don’t worry about it. We mean you no harm at all. If you don’t want to say anything, we will simply put you down after we are safe, and we will go our separate ways,” Liu Li proposed considerately.

The cat-like woman struggled hard in Li Yao’s iron arms. Looking at the ‘innocent’ faces of the two little fellows, she was almost amused. After catching her breath, she said, “Listen up. I don’t care where you idiots come from and how seriously out of your mind you are to be determined to play heroes on the Bloody Plateau, but I will take care of my own business. You have saved me, and I cannot thank you enough. Now, let me go, or you will regret it, and you two idiots will die!”

“The shuttles of the Flying Leopard Hall cannot catch us,” Han Te said confidently.

“Even if they do, we are not afraid of them.” Liu Li waved her tiny fists and smiled at the cat-like woman. “You don’t need to be scared, either. Whatever happens, we will protect you.”

The woman’s fury had already been condensed to such an extent that it was about to burst out, but Liu Li’s words simply pressed it back.

Looking at Liu Li’s eyes that were as clear as water, the cat-like woman was almost suffocated. She was at a loss as to how to deal with the two unconventional little fellows.

“Idiots,” she mumbled. “Who’s talking about the Flying Leopard Hall?”

Liu Li blinked. “Who are you? Why were the people of the Flying Leopard Hall chasing you?”

The woman was hesitating about how to respond when feeble explosions suddenly took place behind them.

It did not feel like the explosions of cannon fire or crystal bombs but more like the crashes of a few meteors.

Li Yao even sensed the ripples that were spread out when the meteors soared through the air.

Something fell from the sky, but it was not the common relief from the Heavenly Rails, which was always buffered by parachutes and quite slow. Also, the parachutes were always very colorful and could be seen from a long distance away in order to trigger a bloody competition.

Not only did those ‘meteors’ fall at a high speed, they had also activated some sort of stealth technique, which was so brilliant that even Li Yao did not detect them despite his senses in the Divinity Transformation Stage.

Therefore, they intentionally avoided being seen.

Of course, the meteors from the sky would always leave traces when they crashed at a high speed despite the remarkable stealth and buffer system.

When the ‘invisible meteors’ hit the ground, it was inevitable that explosions were raised and mud walls almost ten meters high stood up.

Their landing points were not far away from the shuttles of the Flying Leopard Hall. Those bandits were probably rather curious and sent out half of the shuttles to check the landing points of the ‘invisible meteors’.

Then, there were intense explosions, crazy gunshots, and desperate screams!

Chapter 1992

“What’s going on?” Han Te and Liu Li were both surprised. “The Flying Leopard Hall is engaged in a fight. They seem to have been slaughtered!”

Li Yao’s interest was aroused. The cabin cover on the chassis glided without a sound, and Neltharion, which had entered stealth mode, darted out quickly and ascended into the sky, marching toward the crashing points of the meteors for investigation.

The first thing he saw were three overlapping craters. The force of the crash was so huge that every crater was almost five meters deep. The soil around was like waves that had been frozen into orange folds, with white smoke popping up nonstop.

At the center of the crater were three ball-shaped metal cabins no more than two meters in diameter whose shells were as rough as insect eggs. The vortex stripes carved on the surface made them look like the fruits of some devils.

Right now, the three ‘devil eggs’ had all been opened. Buffer gel that looked like jelly, and a human-shaped dent could be vaguely seen inside, but nobody was in them.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Right then, the three ‘devil eggs’ exploded at the same time. Not only did they blow themselves up into pieces, they also messed up the traces of the collapsed meteors. Nobody could deduce what had happened there based on the marks.

In other words, those who had fallen from the sky in the ‘devil eggs’ did not want the sinners in the Land of Sins to know their origins.

However, there were still eyewitnesses—the bandits of the Flying Leopard Hall.

Half of the shuttles of the Flying Leopard Hall were enshrouded in the black smoke after the explosion, as if they had been mired in a swamp at the deepest level of hell. After half a minute of engagement of fire and screams, there was nothing but dead silence.

The other half of the bandits of the Flying Leopard Hall had been chasing Li Yao, Han Te, Liu Li, and the woman who was as mysterious as a cat. Seeing that it was not good, they were wise enough to make the most correct choice. They turned around and escaped at top speed!

It was a pity that however fast they were, they were not as fast as the three streaks of brilliance that dashed out of the black smoke.

The red, blue, and yellow brilliances rushed close and landed before the tough bandits of the Flying Leopard Hall instantly, beginning a new round of massacre.

Crystal suits!

Li Yao’s soul constricted violently.

There were crystal suits in the Land of Sins, too. However, in Li Yao’s eyes, other than the few creative and experimental units, the main parts of the crystal suits were all mediocre goods that had been refurbished and modified far too many times. Even Li Yao had to be careful when he modified or upgraded with those components, fearing that he might blow up the garbage if he poured too much spiritual energy into them.

The crystal suits of the three guests from the sky, on the other hand, were certainly mature, high-end models that had a steady structure and a remarkable performance. Golden light glowed on their surfaces like scales, indicating that the crystal suits were ‘light suits’ that applied the membrane theory. Together with their professional and sophisticated skills, they had practically turned slaughter into an art.

The muscular man on the left was wearing a black crystal suit, with two heavy cannons crossed on the back and an emblem of a bear head before his chest. He was at least 2.2 meters tall and did not need any weapons to tear a tank in half.

The one in the middle was a woman in a red crystal suit, whose breasts rose high and whose waist was as slim as a viper. She was holding a crimson whip that seemed to be made of magma in each hand. They had a temperature of almost a thousand degrees, and it was not difficult for her to slash the tanks of the Flying Leopard Hall in half.

It was needless to mention what happened when the whips hit people—they would immediately be chopped in half, and their wounds would instantly be cauterized.

The crystal suit of the shorty on the right had extended thin and transparent daggers from his fingers, elbows, knees, and toes. His crystal suit also boasted very advanced stealth functions and could change color even during high-speed movements. He was like a breeze of death, butchering the bandits who were escaping in a hurry.

It was a cruel enjoyment to watch them killing people at ease.

The tough bandits of the Flying Tiger Hall had been playing the game of ‘cat and mouse’, but they suddenly discovered that they were actually the ‘mice’ instead of the ‘cats’.

No. They were too weak to even be mice. Very soon, they were all executed by the three guests from the sky.

They are all experts!

Li Yao analyzed silently.

The three guests from the sky obviously did not try their best. Therefore, Li Yao was uncertain how strong they exactly were. But by his preliminary estimation, they were at least experts at the peak of the Core Formation Stage. The woman who held scorching whips was likely in the Nascent Soul Stage.

Shua! Shua! Shua!

The crystal suits on the three guests from the sky suddenly vanished, replaced by the brown protective capes that were very common in the Land of Sins and goggles that almost covered half of their faces.

However, before the capes and the goggles blocked their faces, Li Yao still managed to see their appearances.

The guy on the left was a super muscular man more than two meters tall, with a greasy skin and a pair of eyes that were practically growing muscles.

In the middle was an indifferent-looking woman who had a viper tattoo on her check. There was no telling how old she was.

The shorty on the left seemed to have performed half-mechanical modifications on himself. His eyes had been replaced by two protruding crystal cameras that could be rotated 360 degrees. What was weird was that there were another two pairs of crystal cameras above and below those two, which meant that six crystal cameras in total had been embedded on his face. Emitting bluish brilliance and rolling at the same time, those man-made eyes made him appear creepy.

Besides their eccentric appearances, Li Yao also sensed an air that was entirely different from the people in the Land of Sins from them.

In the terrible Land of Sins, the sinners lived a turbulent, insecure life. Even the toughest bandits always had panic and desperation written all over their faces, like a bunch of shocked birds. Every second could be the last second of their life.

The three guests from the sky, on the other hand, had arrogance, disdain, and laziness on their faces, which were the expressions of the absolute dominators of other people's lives.

The mental devil's voice echoed. "What have you found?"

"Those people are not 'old grandpas form the sky' but out-and-out Immortal Cultivators," Li Yao said very confidently. "According to Han Te and Gu Zhengyang, most of the 'old grandpas' do not attack other people voluntarily after they fall. Even if some of them did, it was their instinctive reactions when they were panicking.

“The three guests from the sky, on the other hand, obviously massacred those people carefully in neat and well-rehearsed teamwork. They appear very rational and do not appear to have lost their memories.”

“Anything else?” the mental devil asked.

“Different from the ‘old grandpas’ and the ‘relief assets’ that are usually very eye-catching, they did not want anybody to notice that they had landed from the sky. Therefore, their landing cabins boasted stealth functions, and they blew up the cabins and killed all the eyewitnesses. In that case, nobody will be able to tell where they are from!”

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao continued his analysis. “They are not very old, especially the black giant on the right and the six-eyed guy on the left, but their Cultivation is appallingly high. They are almost among the most exceptional elites and rarest geniuses. Together with their high-end crystal suits with such remarkable performances, let me see… assuming that their highest combat ability is five times what they demonstrated just now, I’m afraid that it will take me ten to twenty minutes to finish all of them. Tsk, tsk, tsk. Impressive. How impressive!”

“… Enough of the cr*p,” the mental devil said. “I’m asking you to pay attention to their Cosmos Rings. They all have Cosmos Rings with them!”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. “Right. They have just stored their crystal suits into their Cosmos Rings. Interesting. Three mysterious Immortal Cultivators have landed in the Land of Sins with Cosmos Rings and high-level crystal suits. What are they here for? Also, the woman seems to have foreseen the arrival of the Immortal Cultivators. What role is she playing exactly?”

Li Yao shifted his attention to the woman whom he had just saved.

It seemed that they had indeed meddled in other people’s affairs.

Even if they had not shown up, the three Immortal Cultivators would have landed and killed the bandits of the Flying Leopard Hall. Was that the aim of the woman?

The cat-like woman was unlikely to be an Immortal Cultivator. Li Yao was quite certain about that.

She did not seem to even know the three Immortal Cultivators. Hearing the explosions and screams behind her, she shuddered hard and put on an expression that was a hundred times more horrible than just now before she shrieked, “Stop! Stop now! You cannot outrun them. Stop the shuttle if you want to survive!”

Li Yao thought of something and hit the brakes in time, floating in midair.

What she said was true. He sensed that three rather powerful telepathic thoughts had caught up and locked onto them. With the performance of the enemy’s crystal suits, it would be simple to catch up with them.

Seeing the ignorance on Han Te’s and Liu Li’s faces, the cat-like woman was apparently struggling and hesitant. She gnashed her teeth. “Hey, you two little idiots didn’t really come to rescue me, did you?”

Han Te and Liu Li looked at each other and nodded. “Of course we did. Why else would we do it?”

“F*ck!” The woman cursed very rudely. Scratching the bird nest on her head helplessly, she punched Li Yao’s body heavily again as if she were venting her anger. Naturally, she grimaced in pain again. “What kind of spiritual puppet is this? It looks like a garbage can but has a rather hard shell!

“Forget it. Let’s leave it aside. Listen. Your life and death will be decided in the next moment! The three brutal people over there are all monsters who consider killing the same as drinking water. You have seen what became of the bandits of the Flying Leopard Hall, haven’t you?

“As for people like you, they will not bother to blink after they kill two hundred of you in a row. I’m not kidding!

“All in all, you will not speak a word later. Let me handle everything!

“My name is Xin Xiaoqi. I’m quite famous in the area. However, you two are obviously stupid bumpkins, and you must’ve never heard my name before. Whenever you want to sell first-hand intelligence, get something from somebody else’s pocket, sell some risky goods quickly, or hire some assassins, you can always come to me!

“I must be out of my mind to help you for no good reason. You must calm yourselves down and consider yourselves on the same team as me. Do not move or say anything stupidly, or you will get me killed too. Do you understand, you two idiots?”

Chapter 1993 - Arrival of the Players

Han Te and Liu Li were apparently intimidated by Xin Xiaoqi. Liu Li shyly said, “Sister Xiaoqi…”

“Cut it. Who’s your sister?” Xin Xiaoqi snorted. “You have yourself to blame for your misfortune. It’s nobody else’s fault. If the three monsters go on a killing spree, don’t count on me to rescue you, and I won’t be capable of rescuing you. Do you understand?”

Han Te and Liu Li looked at each other in bewilderment and gulped at the same time. Then they looked at Li Yao.

“Why are you looking at this thing? Are you hoping that the garbage can will save you?” Xin Xiaoqi was very dissatisfied with their distraction. Knocking Li Yao’s head several times, she said, “This is just a spiritual puppet that will be torn into pieces any minute. All in all, keep your mouths shut. Whatever I say and whatever they ask you to do, do it. That is the only way to save you sorry lives. Do you hear me?”

Xin Xiaoqi crawled out of the shuttle, yelling. She then stood on top of the shuttle, took off her protective suit, and waved into the distance.

Li Yao observed in silence. It seemed that this Xin Xiaoqi was a thief and an intelligence dealer in the Land of Sins. Such people were not rare, but how exactly did she reach out to the Immortal Cultivators?

The mental devil, on the other hand, steered Neltharion to approach the three Immortal Cultivators, trying to collect more intelligence.

The three Immortal Cultivators could never have foreseen the existence of Neltharion even in their dreams. Under the illusion that everybody nearby had been killed, they chatted with each other, chuckling.

The muscular man who was tall, strong, and had caramel skin grinned at the broken limbs on the ground. “Is this the legendary, mysterious, much-expected ‘Extreme Survival Challenge’? It is just so-so in my eyes. Those guys are too weak. They are not worthy enough even as a pastime.”

“Why are you so hasty? We have only just landed. This place is only a ‘novice village’ at best. It is meant for us to grow familiar with the air, environment, and gravity of the place.”

The shorty with six crystal cameras on his face smiled and warmed his arms up. Then he took a deep breath and licked his lips with a bloodthirsty expression. “I kind of like this place. The air here has the most intense stench of blood, which is truly intoxicating. I can’t wait to go on a killing spree.”

“You two must pull yourselves together. Do not think that this place is a playground where you can do anything,” the woman who had a viper tattoo on her face and looked more senior said coldly. “This is different from all the trials and the training sessions you had in the Grand Illusionary Land. There is no guidance, no directions, no game rules, and no operational logic in this place! The behavior of all the monsters and natives is unpredictable and uncontrollable. They may attack you at any time for no good reason. It is impossible for you to sign any effective pact with them.

“There are also a lot of wild creatures whose level far exceeds yours, including ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie and Xiahou Wuxin, the leader of Liberty City, whom we are going to meet this time. They are two toughest bosses here, and either of them can beat you to death easily!

“Remember, if you die here, you will stay dead. Even the odds of you being revived as a spectral Cultivator are little to none. This is what a perfectly simulated Extreme Survival Challenge is. No. This is not a simulation but the most authentic battlefield!

“If you are caught in extreme danger because of your own foolishness, nobody will come to help you. The other ‘players’ will only take advantage of you! In the meantime, if your stupidity affects my operation, I will kill you without any hesitation. Is that clear?”

The viper-tattooed woman’s voice was not loud, but the graveness in her words made the muscular man and the six-eyed shorty both shudder in fear. They hurried to nod and said, “Absolutely. We will listen to the captain on everything!”

“That’s good.” The viper-tattooed woman nodded in satisfaction. Then she reassured them. “Be patient. The Battle of Liberty City is a ‘golden quest’ that is rarely open. Other than the main quests to fight on the side of the Fist King and the side of the leader of Liberty City, there are also a lot of silver, bronze, and iron secondary quests. As long as it does not hinder us from accomplishing the most important mission, it won’t hurt if we spare some time playing for a while.”

“I am not very interested in the secondary quests.” The muscular man’s smile gradually became creepy. “This time, six of the most distinguished people among the younger generation of the Wu family of Anyang have been projected to this place for the trial. Whoever gains the highest score in the Battle of Liberty City quest will become the first-in-line heir of the Wu family of Anyang and given training resources and unparalleled arts ten times more abundant than before. Hehehe. However, I feel that it is too ungratifying to accomplish quests and accumulate scores in the trial obediently.

“If I can find the other five guys and kill all of them, who will ever compete for the position of heir with me?”

“Fair point!” The six-eyed shorty grinned. “I thought exactly the same. Wu Xiong, there are no conflicts of interests between us. We are classmates who are reasonably close after all. As it happens, I also have four competitors in the mission. So, let’s help each other and find an opportunity to kill all of them!”

The muscular man and the six-eyed short grinned at the same time.

“Don’t presume that you are the only smart guys to think of that,” the viper-tattooed woman said coldly. “Whenever a golden quest like the Battle of Liberty City is opened, it becomes the bloodiest season for the major families and academies to screen the heirs and true disciples. Almost everybody has the same plan as you and wants to make use of the complicated battle to kill their enemies or competitors.

“Hehe. Why else do you think the death rate of the trials here is so high? As strong as the bosses such as ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie and the leader of Liberty City might be, how many players can they kill? Most players are actually killed by other players.

“I do not object to your ideal of killing your competitors, but as I said, you must not hamstring me from accomplishing the main quest. You all know what it means to me. Whoever stands in my way should be prepared to die!”

The muscular man and the six-eyed shorty shuddered again. Looking at each other, they said respectfully, “Of course. You have participated in nine extreme trials and survived all of them. You are a seasoned player here. We will certainly listen to your command!”

The viper-tattooed woman snorted and then shifted her attention toward Li Yao’s direction. She said casually, “The woman there must be our guide. She will show us the way to the camp of ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie. Remember your identity right now. You are the special assassins born and raised here.”

The three Immortal Cultivators—or angels, or players—tightened their goggles and capes as they walked toward Li Yao and the rest of them unhurriedly.

The mental devil murmured, “Extreme trial? Golden quest? Players? Strong bosses? What are they talking about?”

“It seems that the planet has not only been transformed into a large laboratory to test cutting-edge magical equipment and techniques but also turned into a life-and-death arena to test and screen out the talents of the noble families in the Imperium of True Human Beings,” Li Yao said coldly.

“It does make sense,” the mental devil said. “Serious radiation and pollution, with mutated beasts and sinners who are more violent than them everywhere. Gruesome, lawless, and bloody. Can there be a better test field?”

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao said, “Therefore, ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie’s plan to attack Liberty City has always been on the radar of the Immortal Cultivators. It was probably secretly directed by the Immortal Cultivators and turned into a very authentic large ‘trial quest’.”

The mental devil added, “Those Immortal Cultivators land from the sky without alarming anyone as ‘players’ and will join the sides of the Fist King or the leader of Liberty City respectively. For them, this is both training, a game, and a way to filter talents. As for the result of the competition between the Fist King and the leader of Liberty City, or the life and death of the sinners, they can’t care less about it!”

Li Yao’s voice grew colder and colder. “Through a large battle to attack the city, not only will the new magical equipment and techniques be tested to discover their advantages and disadvantages, but the next generation of Immortal Cultivators will also be tested to decide who’s strong and who’s weak. This is a stone that kills two birds. Who exactly came up with such a remarkable idea? I really would like to pay them a visit!”

“What a shame.” The mental devil cackled. “They have wrongly estimated the level of the sinners. In the golden level quest of the Battle of Liberty City, the most powerful creep is neither ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie nor Xiahou Wuxin!

“I really want to see their faces when they have taken down the Fist King and the leader of Liberty City and think that they have completed the quest perfectly only to discover that a third entity that is even more powerful has spawned. Hehe! Hehehe!”

“We are analyzing the enemy’s situation very righteously and thinking about how to save the world,” Li Yao said. “Can you laugh in a less creepy way?”

“What’s the big deal?” the mental devil asked. “If we consider the entire Land of Sins as a map in a game, we are definitely the strongest boss on the map. Of course we should show the demeanor of a boss!”

While the two of them were talking, the three ignorant ‘players’ had approached their shuttle. Their malicious eyes stared at the three people and the clumsy, unattractive spiritual puppet on the shuttle from behind their goggles.

Xin Xiaoqi was so scared that she did not even dare to breathe loudly. Making more than ten gestures quickly, she stammered, “Please don’t attack. You must be from… ‘that place’, right? I’m here to welcome you!”

Chapter 1994 - Randomly Distributed Teammates

The three players nodded, smiling. The woman with a viper tattoo casually replied, “Yes. We are from the Valley of Thorns.”

Xin Xiaoqi’s face was even more awful than before, as if a bitter and sour orange had just been stuffed into her mouth.

It was obvious that she did not want the two little fellows to hear the name ‘Valley of Thorns’ in case they got mired any deeper in trouble.

Han Te and Liu Li both trembled, apparently shocked by the news.

Li Yao’s soul released two warm ripples without alarming anyone, pacifying their souls. Then, he sent a message into Han Te’s brain. “What place is the Valley of Thorns? Is it terrible? Don’t talk. Just draw on my back with your hand.”

After spending a month with him, Han Te had picked up some secret techniques to communicate quickly and soundless with spiritual energy. He immediately wrote on Li Yao’s back with his fingertip as a pen. “The Valley of Thorns is the most mysterious and dreadful organization in the Land of Sins. Rumor has it that they have been controlling the entire Land of Sins in secret.

“According to legend, the Valley of Thorns have the most dangerous assassins and the strongest mercenaries. Every large-scale conflict in the Land of Sins has the shadow of the

Valley of Thorns. But what is strange is that nobody has ever seen a living assassin or warrior of the Valley of Thorns. Even their bodies have never been found, much less their headquarters and their communication method.

“In other words, nobody even knows whether or not the organization exists. Perhaps they are just groundless tales that do not exist at all. Or maybe those who have seen the assassins and the warriors from the Valley of Thorns are all dead now!”

“Don’t be scared.” Li Yao’s soul released a second ripple. “Nothing can happen as long as I am here. Just calm down and be smart.”

The mental devil, on the other hand, simply smiled. “It seems that the Valley of Thorns is a camouflage for the players of the Immortal Cultivators in the arena that is the Land of Sins. A fabricated, nonexistent organization of assassins and mercenaries. Fabulous. In that case, they have good reason to be involved in all the conflicts and fights in the Land of Sins. Even if some sinners discover the truth, they’ll be ‘erased’ without alarming anybody else, and the order of the Land of Sins won’t be disrupted. After all, there is little order here in the first place.”

Shaking, Xin Xiaoqi summoned her courage and said, “My—My name is Xin Xiaoqi. I know something about everything in the Land of Sins, including the range of the major forces, the personalities and features of the experts, the nests of the mutated beasts, the mysterious black markets… All in all, you can ask me about anything you are interested in, however peculiar the information may be. I will certainly tell you all that I know and try to make my answers as satisfactory as possible!”

It seemed that Xin Xiaoqi did not necessarily know that the three ‘players’ were high and mighty ‘angels’, but the Valley of Thorns must have left a very deep impression on her. She knew the dreadfulness of the fiends very well and was scared that she might be killed on the spot if she accidentally pissed them off.

Of course, by Li Yao’s estimation, even if she worked dutifully as the guide and helped the three players accomplish their so-called ‘quests’, her outcome would not be any better. It was very possible that she would be delivered to Manjusaka and end up being a warm test subject.

Li Yao did not feel that the Immortal Cultivators would keep any sinners who had gotten in touch with the ‘players’ alive.

The viper-tattooed woman smiled and patted Xin Xiaoqi’s shoulder. “Don’t be so anxious. The one who asked you to come here should’ve told you what you needed to do next, right?”

“Yes.” Xin Xiaoqi’s soul almost left her body after the patting. She nodded, shivering. “He asked me to take you to the Fist King’s place and join the Fist King’s army. Then, I will listen to your command and provide all the necessary help for you to accomplish ‘that’.”

“You know your job very well.” The viper-tattooed woman squeezed Xin Xiaoqi’s cheeks and smiled. “Fulfil your job dutifully, and you will be well rewarded later. However… why are the two people behind you here?”

She gestured at Han Te and Liu Li.

The muscular man and the six-eyed shortly both moved their daunting eyes to the two little fellows.

Being stared at by the three Immortal Cultivators, the two little fellows felt as if the blood throughout their body was frozen. Had it not been for the spiritual energy that Li Yao transmitted into their bodies, they probably would have grunted and collapsed to the ground.

“They—They’re with me.”

After some brief hesitation, Xin Xiaoqi gritted her teeth and said quickly, “We will go to the Fist King’s camp together!”

“Will we?” The viper-tattooed woman gave neither approval nor disapproval. Narrowing her eyes and observing Han Te and Liu Li who were overly young, she suddenly began to move her lips quickly.

“Their killing intent is very strong,” the mental devil said in a hurry. “Should we kill them?”

“Are you insane? Since they are ‘players’, they certainly have communication devices that connect to Manjusaka,” Li Yao analyzed calmly. “Chances are, retina lenses that can capture and upload everything they see in real time have been stuck to their eyes. Even if those two do not, the guy with six eyes certainly has one!

“Even if they are to be killed, now is not a good time. We must find a way to cut off their signal and block the surveillance from the sky. It will be even better if we lay a few neat traps so that we won’t need to attack in person.”

“They seem to be communicating with a discrete communication technique.” The mental devil grinned hideously. “How naïve. Do they think that nobody can hear them? Let me crack it!”

Their discrete communication technique involved the precise control of the soundwaves, which would be condensed into lines that were similar to light before they were directly sent into the ears of the receptors.

But however they were controlled and condensed, the soundwaves would release very feeble ripples after all. As long as the gap between the two parties was huge enough, it was always possible to intercept and decrypt it.

A moment later, the conversation among the three players that they thought to be confidential was intercepted by Li Yao and the mental devil.

The six-eyed shorty frowned and said, “What’s the meaning of this? Teammates that the system has distributed to us randomly? They look very weak.”

The muscular man snorted and said, “What can we do with such weak teammates? Let’s just kill them here in case they encumber us at a critical moment.”

The viper-tattooed woman did not seem fond of participating in the operation with too many locals, either. She considered the suggestion of her companions carefully.

Li Yao sent a message into Han Te’s head again. “Show them the Fist King’s invitation card!”

As if woken from a dream, Han Te hurried to take out the rusty card from his pocket and said, “Please look. This is the Fist King’s invitation card. You can directly join the Fist King’s cause with it!”

Xin Xiaoqi was slightly dazed, not expecting that Han Te and Liu Li would have an invitation card given their young age. But she grasped the life saver quickly and nodded. “Yes.

With the invitation card, we will be able to directly join the Fist King’s army as a team of six!”

Li Yao saw that the viper-tattooed woman rolled her eyes and hesitated a moment before she snapped her fingers at her companions. “Forget it. Just keep them alive for now. Perhaps they are really teammates that have been randomly distributed to us by the system and will trigger all kinds of weird secondary quests. I ran into similar cases during some of the previous trials. Although the quests may not be very important, it will still be a shame to kill them right now.”

After pausing for a moment, she continued smiling and said, “I know that you both want to secure the achievement of a hundred kills, and I am trying to get the super achievement of a thousand kills, too. However, it does not need to be done in a hurry. After the battle between the Fist King and the leader of Liberty City begins, there will be lots of opportunities.”

The muscular man and the six-eyed shorty nodded, not having the courage to defy the viper-tattooed woman.

Little did they know that they had just avoided being killed in their ignorance—although only temporarily.

“He is ‘Black Spear’, he is ‘Flash Point’, and I am ‘Red Viper’.”

The viper-tattooed woman introduced them in a tone of mockery.

Xin Xiaoqi swallowed hard and glanced at Han Te and Liu Li.

“I am Han Te.”

“I am Liu Li.”

The two little fellows tried to calm themselves down and introduce themselves.

“What’s this?”

The viper-tattooed woman suddenly shifted her attention to Li Yao. She glanced at him casually first before she grew curious and scratched Li Yao’s iron shell carefully. She observed, somewhat surprised, “It seems ugly and stupid, but some of the components are rather well-designed!”

Li Yao’s wariness that had just been lowered was raised to the highest level again. If Red Viper extended her spiritual energy to the core of the crystal processor for investigation, Li Yao was not sure if he could deceive the ‘seasoned player’ without alarming her. If things did not work out, he would have to kill all of them at the risk of being discovered.

Damn it. Why did those Immortal Cultivators always ask to be killed!

“Its name is ‘Fiend Star’. It is our spiritual puppet,” Liu Li said nervously. “It is very impressive!”

“Very impressive?” Red Viper glanced at the joints and gaps that Li Yao had intentionally built in a crude way and then at the tracks that were full of mud and fungi. She smiled casually and said, “I don’t know if it is impressive, but it does seem capable of carrying a lot of goods.”

“Exactly,” Han Te hurried to add. “The shuttle consumes too much spiritual energy, and we do not have many crystals. In many cases, all our belongings are hauled by ‘Fiend Star.”

Red Viper was not a refiner. She was not interested in the spiritual puppet that belonged to the ‘locals’ of the novice village. Curling her finger, she flicked Li Yao’s iron shell softly.

“Clang!”

The sound of a component breaking off and hitting the ground immediately echoed inside Li Yao’s body, and the indicator flashed quickly for a while.

Red Viper was slightly stunned. She completely lost interest in Li Yao and yawned. Looking at the towers that were connected to the Heavenly Rails far away, she smiled and said, “Let’s go to the Fist King’s camp now. The Battle of Liberty City is about to begin!”

Chapter 1995 - The Fist King“s Camp!

‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie’s camp was established in the depths of the Bloody Plateau in the Land of Sins.

As they approached the Fist King’s camp, the first thing they saw was Liberty City dozens of kilometers away on the horizon.

From this perspective, the asset transmission tubes that were connected to the Heavenly Rails were even more magnificent and eye-catching.

It could clearly be seen that those ‘towers’ were at least forty meters in diameter, surrounded by spiral stairs or racks.

The assets from the Heavenly Rails did not go straight down but descended along the spiral racks, which dived into the ground like an enormous drill.

Liberty City had perhaps been a prosperous, developed metropolis before ‘Judgment Day’. After the nurturing of the Heavenly Rails, it was developed even more abnormally into a cruel and glamorous Elysian World.

Li Yao activated the scanning function of his crystal cameras, which allowed him to see the colorful, chaotic districts in the city that were unfolded radially as well as the watch towers that could be found everywhere in every district. Countless experts, tanks, and crystal cannons had been set up on the streets and the valleys, too, transforming Liberty City into an impenetrable jungle of blades.

To conquer such an abnormal and chaotic city, there would certainly be a cruel street battle, in which countless people would be killed.

Perhaps that was the purpose of the bloody stage that the Immortal Cultivators were trying to establish.

Staring at Liberty City for a long time and scanning the messy, abnormally-developed city as well as the dense nodes of defense into his soul, Li Yao reconstructed a flashing, virtual Liberty City in his head. Then, he finally shifted his gaze and began to observe the Fist King’s camp that was closer.

He was immediately deeply awed by the magnificence and dominance of ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie’s camp.

The main body of the camp was an iron fortress almost a hundred meters tall. On the black shell of the fortress were complicated tubes, dense wastes holes, and countless attack rune arrays. A lot of spiritual energy circuits that had been connected to rune arrays were simply exposed to the air without having the protection of a defensive shell. Sparks were spluttering out every now and then.

There were also gears. Countless gears large and small bit each other, either revolving slowly or spinning fast. With steam popping out, they transmitted the overwhelming impetus to the bottom of the iron fortress.

The base of the iron fortress had adopted a track structure, too. Sixteen gargantuan track engine systems supported the almighty fortress to march slowly toward Liberty City, leaving deep marks behind. The deepest of the marks was almost five meters into the ground, enough to bury a hundred dead bodies.

The marks left by the iron fortress as it rolled on the earth extended over the horizon, showing their determination to not retreat.

It was more like a floating mountain that had been dragged to the ground and had sixteen simple and primitive tracks installed than an iron fortress!

What was most daunting was a black, glittering barrel that extended out of a gap that was as deep as a canyon at the center of the iron fortress. The barrel was almost thirty meters long and aimed directly at Liberty City.

More than a hundred thousand rune arrays had been carved on the barrel. Metal rings that could enhance or suppress the spiritual energy were slowly revolving on it, too.

Li Yao was uncertain what kind of weapon it was. However, judging from the scale, it was as impressive as the main guns of a heavy starship.

In contrast to the gargantuan main cannon, the other hundreds of lumpy turrets seemed rather insignificant.

Wu!

The iron fortress let out a peal of shrieks. From the ends of all the tubes, colorful waste gas spurted out and spread to a few kilometers away, further highlighting the magnificence of the fortress.

The one who had crafted such an unbelievable mobile battery was definitely a lunatic among lunatics.

“That is ‘Great Iron City’, the Fist King’s mobile palace!”

Looking at the iron fortress from which dense smoke was popping out, Xin Xiaoqi declared with great excitement, “It is said that the Fist King himself strengthened and modified it. It is awesome, isn’t it?”

Great Iron City was moving at a very slow speed. It was almost stationary and only kept the minimal functionality of the internal engine system, as if it were in some sort of ‘on hold’ state.

Around Great Iron City were countless tanks.

Almost all the tanks were embedded with iron plates and sharp thorns. Countless storm bolters and crystal cannons had been installed on them, too.

A lot of tents were established around the tanks, which were the temporary camps of the mobs.

Awed by the name of ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie, and drooling over the assets and profits in Liberty City as well as the opportunity to rise to the City in the Sky, the brutal bandits and experts everywhere had come to join him. They were all dispatched around Great Iron City and naturally formed a town.

The bizarre city was a great eye-opener for Li Yao.

It was needless to mention the chaos and lawlessness inside. Furthermore, a lot of the bandits in the city, because of the pollution and radiation in the Land of Sins, were a strange species with uncanny body shapes. Some of them had hair all over their bodies that felt like iron stings, some had been born with an additional arm on their chest, some had two heads on the same body, and some of them were half human, half animal. There were simply too many different kinds to be counted.

Li Yao could not help but compare the ‘Land of Sins’ with the ‘Blood Demon Sector’.

A lot of demons in the Blood Demon Sector were also naturally hideous and frightening.

However, demons only had evolved into what they looked like today after tens of thousands of years of mutations. However hideous and terrifying they were, they at least looked rather natural, as if they were supposed to be like that.

The mutants in the Land of Sins, on the other hand, were the victims of the Immortal Cultivators’ radical experiments. They had been utterly deformed in only several hundred years, if not decades. Their bodies had the obvious marks of artificial work and were clearly abnormal.

Also, the bandits in the Land of Sins seemed to be passionate about the biochemical and mechanical modifications on their bodies. All kinds of prosthetics were popular there.

A muscular man with tumors all over the head and sharp thorns on the body walked among the tents as if nobody were around with a mechanical arm that was even greater than his body and two strengthened power axles on his spine. Such a nightmare-like view could be seen everywhere.

Wiping the cold sweat on her forehead, Xin Xiaoqi said, “This is the temporary camp for the Fist King’s army. In the past half month, the elites of almost a hundred gangs have gathered here. A lot of ‘lone wolves’ who make their living on their own in the Land of Sins have come, too. Of course, there are also many people… like you.

“Please wait a moment. Those guys there work for the ‘Godly Fist Union’ under the command of the Fist King. I’ll go to them and register so that we have a place to park and camp.”

Li Yao noticed that, although the entire temporary camp was lively and chaotic, nobody was floating in midair except for some muscular men who were wearing black armor with a mark of a white fist painted on the breastplate. It seemed that the Fist King had made a rule.

Xin Xiaoqi found a few members of the ‘Godly Fist Union’ very quickly. Perhaps she had already prepared an invitation card for the three ‘players’. What she offered right now was the one that Li Yao retrieved from Double Dragons City. After communicating with the members of the ‘Godly Fist Union’ for a while, Xin Xiaoqi was given a crude and clumsy wrist crystal processor. She then returned to everywhere, sweating.

“As per your instructions, I have registered under the name ‘Red Viper Squad’,” Xin Xiaoqi said. “We have been allocated a location in the thirteenth zone to the east. If we do not apply for missions voluntarily, we will be launching an attack as the thirteenth team on the east flank during the battle to conquer the city.”

There were a lot of hunters and adventurers in the Land of Sins who did not like working with other people. Instead of founding an enormous gang, they often took action as an elite squad with only ten or so members.

Although such adventure squads had few people, they were often very dangerous beings since they were confident about their survival in the Land of Sins. Even normal gangs did not dare mess with them easily.

If they were not given a special name, an adventure squad would be named after the captain.

‘Red Viper’, the woman who had a viper tattoo on her face and the highest Cultivation among the three players, shook her head and said, “You should know our mission clearly. Now that we have joined the Fist King’s army, we are not here to work as common cannon fodder. We must meet the Fist King in private and have a deep communication with him.”

“Ever since the news that the Fist King was going to attack Liberty City was out, too many men have been coming to join him from every direction,” Xin Xiaoqi replied hesitantly. “Naturally, it is impossible for the Fist King to meet each of them alone. We only have a ‘three-star invitation card’ in our hands, but the highest level is nine-star. In other words, we are just a mediocre, insignificant force. There’s no reason for the Fist King to meet us.

According to Xin Xiaoqi, on one hand, they did not have any reputation right now and had not proved their capability in public. The Fist King would not waste his time on them.

More importantly, their ‘loyalty’ could not be guaranteed right now. Things always happened too fast in the Land of Sins, and information often spread too slowly. Many forces were rising and falling every day. It was hard to tell a person’s identity, whom they were loyal to, and whom they held grudges against.

Therefore, nobody was certain that the spies of the leader of Liberty City were not among the people who were coming to join the Fist King.

Even if they did reveal unbelievable strength, they would not win the Fist King’s absolute trust or have the privilege to speak to him in private.

“Sounds reasonable. Then, how should the problem be fixed?” Red Viper asked with great interest.

“First of all, we will have to accomplish a lot of quests to slowly win the Fist King’s fondness and trust,” Xin Xiaoqi answered. “Loyalty can only be proved through actions. If we can deal a heavy blow to the leader of Liberty City and make him suffer tremendous losses, we will naturally win the Fist King’s trust.”

Chapter 1996 - A Game of Life or Death!

Xin Xiaoqi turned on the standard crystal processor that she had received from the ‘Godly Fist Union’ just now and logged into a local area network. Very soon, a list of quests and their conditions were displayed in the green, glittering light beam like a waterfall.

According to Xin Xiaoqi, the Fist King and the leader of Liberty City were still recruiting warriors and making preparations for the final battle. Both parties had sent countless invitation cards across the entire Land of Sins, hiring gangs and thugs to join their own camp with appealing rewards.

The Fist King had risen unstoppably in recent years, and his reputation was at its peak. Most of the gangs and thugs had more hope in him and were joining him incessantly from everywhere. Therefore, the Fist King’s force was growing stronger after each day, and he was not in a hurry to attack the city immediately, instead simply blocking the main road between Liberty City and the Bloody Plateau with Great Iron City, his mobile fortress, while deploying an army to lay siege to Liberty City.

Ever since the day he started to make preparations to attack the city, the asset supplies from the Heavenly Rails to Liberty City had been cut off. Suspicions had obviously been raised about Xiahou Wuxin’s qualification as the leader of Liberty City, and the asset supplies from the Heavenly Rails to this Elysian World would not be restored until the collision of the two giants was over.

Xiahou Wuxin had been strictly restrained to Liberty City. He had attempted to break the siege and reclaim the main road between Liberty City and the outside world many times, only to be stopped by the Fist King every time.

However, the Fist King could not wait indefinitely.

The resources consumed by the disobedient thugs and bandits every day because of daily needs and training were astronomical.

Besides, a lot of tough bandits had their own turf from which they earned a lot of money every day. It was impossible for them to besiege Liberty City with the Fist King for long.

Furthermore, the tough bandits often had unpleasant histories with each other. The more gangs were there, the fiercer their conflicts would be. They were unorganized in the first place, and once their number surpassed the limits of the commander, they would very likely become a tray of loose sand and collapse on their own before they attacked the city.

Therefore, Xin Xiaoqi estimated that the Fist King would definitely launch an attack on Liberty City after recruiting soldiers for one month at most.

During the one month, the conflicts between the two parties both openly and in secret naturally occurred every day. As a result, a myriad of different quests had been generated.

They could choose to become the guards of the Fist King’s camp to resist the assaults from Liberty City.

Naturally, they could also participate in the scout squads or the assault squads to sneak into Liberty City for reconnaissance or sabotage.

They could also go to every part of the Bloody Plateau to search for the wavering gangs and coerce them into joining the Fist King’s side.

They could even locate the gangs who were loyal to the leader of Liberty City and assassinate them as a warning for everybody else, exactly as Li Yao pretended to do in Double Dragons City.

All in all, the ‘game’ that the Immortal Cultivators had carefully designed was free of the restrictions of any rule. One could do whatever they wanted as long as they were strong enough.

As they accomplished their missions, their ratings would become higher and higher. After they had earned their reputation, they would be qualified from carrying out missions of a higher level. In the end, they might be picked by the Fist King to charge into Liberty City together with him!

After hearing Xin Xiaoqi’s introduction, Red Viper scrolled down the list of quests on the light beam causally before she asked with a smile, “What about the weapons, ammunition, and other gear?”

“The Fist King will provide the most basic chainswords, storm bolters, and ancillary power armor,” Xin Xiaoqi said. “However, the magical equipment of a higher level or tailor-made weapons must be purchased by ourselves. It is always a major event in the Land of Sins when an expert intends to attack an Elysian World. All the gangs everywhere will come to trade with their most exquisite equipment and rarest treasures. So, there is a very large black market here, where you can buy whatever you want as long as you have the money!

“It is alright even if you do not have the money. You can buy it in exchange for your own magical equipment, loot the logistical teams of Liberty City after taking pillage and assault quests, or participate in the games in the arena.

“Do not underestimate the arenas here. Although they are only temporary, their level is very high because the experts on the entire Land of Sins have gathered here. The competition is fierce. Many experts who are not known now want to gain their fame with this place as a start.

“In short, the rivalry between the Fist King and the leader of Liberty City is a great stage, on which every ambitious person can distinguish themself and leave their name on the boundless Land of Sins. As long as you are strong enough, everything will flow into your pocket!”

“Interesting.” Red Viper smiled and nodded at the two little fellows, “Hey, hurry up and set up our tent. Then, we will visit the arenas. My teammates here are starving!”

“Hehehe.” ‘Black Spear’, the muscular man who had a dark skin tone, rubbed his fists and grinned hideously. “I cannot wait to examine the quality of the so-called experts of the Land of Sins.”

“It is indeed interesting.” The mental devil also chuckled lazily next to Li Yao’s soul, “What kind of ‘war’ is this? It is just a ‘game’ that is carefully planned for the players, who are Immortal Cultivators. It is rather hilarious that ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie and Xiahou Wuxin, the leader of Liberty City, cannot avoid their fate of being manipulated by the Immortal Cultivators, however ambitious and smart they may be. They are nothing more than a few ‘props’ in this large survival game. Tsk, tsk, tsk. How pathetic!”

“An interesting thought has just occurred to me,” Li Yao said. “Do you think Lei Zonglie and Xiahou Wuxin are aware of the truth?”

The mental devil was slightly dazed. Then it said, “Since Xiahou Wuxin controls an Elysian World and allegedly has a lot of allies in the City in the Sky, it is possible that he knows part of the truth, isn’t it? But ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie must know none of it. He is still dwelling in the fantasy that he is the hero of the ‘war game’!”

“That’s right,” Li Yao said. “If we can find an opportunity to inform ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie and Xiahou Wuxin of all the truths, what will happen?”

The mental devil snorted and said, “Don’t act rashly. Both the Fist King and the leader of Liberty City must be closely monitored by the Immortal Cultivators. Since the Immortal Cultivators are bold enough to arrange such a game, they must be very confident that everything is under their control. For them, everybody in the Land of Sins, including the experts in the Nascent Soul Stage, are nothing more than carefully-refined test subjects, no different from cockroaches and mice.

“Even if you can instigate the Fist King and leader of Liberty City to rebel, there will be little they can do about Manjusaka. You will only expose yourself.”

“It does make sense.”

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao said, “However, I don’t think that we are fighting alone. Don’t forget that there is still the mysterious Starlight. If a secret resistance organization of Cultivators has indeed been active in the darkness of the Land of Sins for hundreds of years, I don’t believe that they will not show up in an event as great as the Battle of Liberty City.”

Li Yao smiled and looked at the three cocky and ignorant ‘players’. He said casually, “Perhaps we will have a chance to present a great ‘surprise’ to those Immortal Cultivators.

“Since you have turned a land of milk and money into one of sins and transformed living human beings into test subjects and chess pieces in a game, just let me play the game of life or death with you!”

…

In the Fist King’s camp, the enormous tents had been filled with the stink of blood and sweat. They were almost like hot-air balloons that were about to soar into the sky.

The iron chains with sharp thorns were bent into tiny sphere cages and hung in midair before they were connected to high-voltage electric arcs. Dazzling sparks were raised in the collision of chains now and then, turning into the most splendid waterfall that splashed onto the audience below. The stinging feeling further activated their most primitive, animalistic intuitions.

“Kill them all!”

“Go now, you loser!”

“Stand up. Stand up now, or I will kill you!”

Countless brawny, hideous men were waving their furry fists and roaring at the gladiators in the cage.

“Ohhh. ‘Mad Ox’ from the Black Flag Gang has killed his ninth opponent. His ninth! Is anybody here bold enough to challenge ‘Mad Ox’? The prize pool has accumulated a hundred and twenty standard boxes of spiritual energy! Come on, you pussies! Come now! Great! At last, somebody with balls! What’s your name? Black Spear? Black Spear of the Red Viper Squad!”

In the middle of boos, ‘Black Spear’, the dark, muscular Immortal Cultivators, slowly took off his shirt and grabbed the electrified chains with a face of mockery, not caring about them at all, before he crawled into the bloodstained cage.

“You’re screwed.”

Outside of the arena, Xin Xiaoqi covered her face and said to Han Te and Liu Li lethargically, “To tell you the truth, the three of them have been hired at a great fortune to take part in the Battle of Liberty City. Since you have gotten involved in this and heard them introducing themselves, there is no way that you can get out of this!

“Now, you can only listen to them obediently and carry out quests together with them. But their quests are all life-threatening. I estimate that you two little brats will kick the bucket in a day or two!

“However, don’t think about running. You cannot escape the assassins from the Valley of Thorns. When they catch you, you will die an even more miserable death!

“All in all, you should start praying now. I really don’t know how you two sillies grew up to this day without being killed.”

Han Te and Liu Li looked at each other and declared, “We are not scared. ‘Fiend Star’ will protect us!”

“You mean this trash can?” Xin Xiaoqi rolled her eyes at Li Yao and sighed while covering her cheeks. “How unfortunate I am! What did I do to deserve the punishment of running into such ignorant freaks in the Land of Sins?”

Hardly had she concluded her sentence when roars came over from the center of the arena. “Nine seconds! In only nine seconds, ‘Mad Ox’ was blown up by ‘Black Spear’! Amazing and unbelievable! Black Spear! Black Spear! Black Spear from the Red Viper Squad!”

Chapter 1997 - Rising to Fame Through Secondary Quests

The three players of Immortal Cultivators crushed the opponents in the arena to their hearts’ content. While establishing the reputation of the Red Viper Squad, they also earned a lot of standard boxes of crystals, which were the currency in the Land of Sins. They purchased abundant weapons and ammunition on the black market as well as three unattractive secondhand crystal suits.

It was obvious that they did not want to expose their background or make use of their Cosmos Rings and crystal suits easily.

Li Yao simply observed them acting meek and crushing their opponents, while he carried out the duties of a spiritual puppet obediently. Together with the two little fellows, he took care of the three secondhand crystal suits as well as all the aggressive magical equipment as some sort of ‘servant’.

Since Cosmos Rings were unavailable, the storage and shipping of crystal suits and other heavy magical equipment, as well as the transportation after abundant trophies had been garnered, could be very troublesome. ‘Servant’ was a very necessary profession. Almost all the gangs and experts would take a lot of servant soldiers with them.

That was perhaps why the three Immortal Cultivators had not killed Han Te and Liu Li yet.

In the meantime, Li Yao paid some attention to the black market but did not find any ‘high-molecular layer-by-layer scanning magical equipment’. On second thought, it did make sense, it was a piece of ancillary magical equipment that was only required in high-precision maintenance and modification. Li Yao did not think that there were many specialists in the Land of Sins who knew how to use it.

From that day on, the three players of Immortal Cultivators were devoted to the Battle of Liberty City golden quests.

…

First quest: Hunting of the Wolves.

Location: Tusk Valley, to the east of the Bloody Plateau.

Target: An armed team of vehicles that are carrying a lot of crystals and ammunition to Liberty City.

Description: Loot the shipping team of Liberty City and stop any assets from entering Liberty City.

Participants: The Black Bear Gang, the Bloody Butchers Union, the Gold Stone Alliance, the Red Viper Squad, and the War Hammer Squad.

Difficulty: Three stars

On the Bloody Plateau, many steep hills rose abruptly like the tusks of thousands of beasts, forming a narrow and rough valley. The place could not have been more treacherous, but it was the most convenient channel for the communication of Liberty City and the other areas in the northwest part of the Bloody Plateau.

Liberty City had quite a few large black markets and asset warehouses in the valleys in the northwest of the Bloody Plateau. Now, all the resources needed to be transported to the home camp.

A team made of dozens of tanks and an equal number of trailers rushed forward on the uneven valley in deafening noises.

The men on the turrets of the tanks and above the trailers, however, seemed to have been nailed on the vehicles. They were not moving at all however bumpy the road was, implying that they were the most elite bandits.

A few other men were hovering in the sky with metal wings that were as thin as paper on their backs under the boost of anti-gravity rune arrays and the propulsion system, like wary hawks.

When the team was about to drive out of the Tusk Valley, the ‘hawks’ in the sky suddenly hovered faster and released blood red fireworks in cracking noises, sending out the warning of incoming enemies.

But there was no time!

Several pillars of smoke rose abruptly from behind the steep hills. After clusters of pieces splashed out, their speed became much higher. In several streaks of brilliance, they hit the ‘hawks’ in midair precisely, blowing up the scouts from Liberty City without leaving any survivors.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Thunderous explosions echoed in the front of the valley and behind. A few tusk-like hills were blown off and rolled off the slope.

The tanks at the bottom of the valley released a storm of bullets at their best. The many tough bandits attacked and blew quite a few tusks into pieces with their brute force. But still, a number of rocks hit the trailers brutally, knocking over almost five of them and loosening the compressed food and the crystals inside that were covered in sand and straw.

Aooo!

From the two sides of the valley, almost a hundred single shuttles that were fully embedded with stings rushed out. In animalistic roars, the riders charged at the shipping team while waving their chainswords and vibration sabers, like a pack of ravenous wolves.

A fierce battle immediately began.

Broken bones, opened guts, chopped limbs. Blood spurted and flew everywhere, dying the gray and brown ‘tusks’ red.

“You are bold enough to mess with the shipping team of Liberty City. Do you really think that the Fist King is capable of taking Liberty City? You’re asking to be killed!”

With a devastating roar, a tank was ripped apart from the inside by brute force. A muscular man, or a ‘monster’, who was more than 2.5 meters tall and still expanding—with sharp spurs growing out from the spine, the elbows, the knees, and even the skull—dashed out of the broken tank.

He was holding an enormous gun in each hand. What shot out of the barrels were not ordinary bullets but heavy grenades that were almost the size of fists, raising a destructive wall of fire around the shipping team. The members of the Black Bear Gang, the Bloody Butchers Union, and the Gold Stone Alliance were all jumping and screaming.

"This is the guy!"

From a crevice not far away, Red Viper, Black Spear, and Flash Point locked onto the muscular man at the same time.

Paragliders that were similar to wings extended out of their silver backpacks, and they turned into three streaks of brightness, charging at the enemy from three different angles.

The guns in the man's hand were still roaring like ferocious beasts, but his giant head had already soared into the sky. Boosted by the blood, it did not start falling for a long time. There was both cruelty and confusion on the face of the head. Then, everything was done.

The three-star quest 'Hunting of the Wolves' was accomplished perfectly!

…

Sixth quest: The Fist King's Warning

Location: Scorching Fire City, to the east of the Bloody Plateau

Target: The leader of the Scorching Fire Gang

Description: The leader of the Scorching Fire Gang used to be the leader of Liberty City's right-hand mand and has received financial aid from him in secret to expand territory and increase his strength even after the man left Liberty City. Therefore, a lot of gangs in Scorching Fire City have ignored the Fist King's invitation with an ambiguous stance in the competition between the Fist King and the leader of Liberty City. It is very likely that they will stab the Fist King's army in the back at a critical moment.

In order to intimidate the gangs in Scorching Fire City, the Scorching Fire Gang must be completely decimated, and the leader of the gang must be killed!

Participants: The Godly Fist Union, the Ghost's Wrath Gang, the Celestial Warriors Alliance, the Red Viper Squad and nine other battle squads.

Difficulty: Six stars

With the elites of the Godly Fist Union that were under the Fist King's command, the ferocious bandits had already broken into Scorching City unstoppably. As they charged at the headquarters of the Scorching Fire Gang overwhelmingly, they chanted, “The Godly Fist Union is on a mission to eradicate the Scorching Fire Gang, and irrelevant people should stay clear!”

The forces in Scorching Fire City large and small did not dare respond to the Fist King's invitation only because of the deterrence of the Scorching Fire Gang. Since the Fist King's troops had gone to attack in person, they would certainly not fight side by side with the Scorching Fire Gang. Therefore, they simply closed their gate and stayed out of the matter, leaving the Scorching Fire Gang to fight alone. It did not take long for the Scorching Fire Gang's headquarters to be conquered.

However, before the nest was taken, hundreds of tanks escaped in the direction of Liberty City.

Countless battle squads were hovering in the sky or prowling on the ground, waiting for the leader of the Scorching Fire Gang.

It was within everybody's expectation that the Scorching Fire Gang would be defeated, and only whoever killed the leader of the Scorching Fire Gang as a warning for everybody else would be deemed to be the greatest contributor to the quest.

On the Bloody Plateau, a game of hunting and evading began.

Boom!

A tank that was running at a high speed suddenly rose high into the sky, turning into a fireball. From the fireball dashed three people who were burning furiously, but they had already been chopped into multiple sections before they hit the ground.

Shua!

Three shuttles that were rushing at their best performance could not outrun seven hunters who rushed close from the sky. They jumped above the vehicles and hooked the shell with the special iron claws below their feet. They then stabbed their chainswords into the car, raising a storm of blood easily.

“There’s the leader of the Scorching Fire Gang!”

Dozens of streaks of brightness charged at the solidest tank at the same time, strangling it into garbage immediately. However, from the gap of the metal scraps, a slim shadow in red armor dashed out and, dodging more than ten fatal attacks with unbelievable body movements, hijacked a single shuttle. Burning air currents spurted out of his back.

He was about to escape the siege when two bullets shot at his shuttle from two different directions. He had to dodge in a hurry. However, the moment he dodged, a large-caliber anti-shield bullet pierced into his left ear precisely and burst out from the right side, bringing away most of his skull, brain matter, and life!

The leader of the Scorching Fire Gang was executed on the spot!

Under the stares of the shocked and confused assaulters, Red Viper, Black Spear, and Flash Point unveiled the mimic camouflage and stood up from the blood red fungi with smiles.

The six-star quest ‘The Fist King’s Warning’ was accomplished perfectly!

…

Seventeenth quest: The Eagle Plan

Location: Liberty City.

Target: The nineteen defense arrays at the south of Liberty City.

Description: Perform reconnaissance on the south of Liberty City from a high altitude, capture images from every angle, and figure out the specific deployment and levels of the defense rune arrays to provide intelligence support for the final battle to come.

Participants: The Red Viper Squad and another thirteen elite battle squads that have distinguished themselves.

Difficulty: Seven stars

As days went by, the atmosphere between the Fist King’s army and Liberty City grew more and more intense. Both parties were ready for the final battle.

In the sky of Liberty City, dark smoke was raging to block the eyesight of the scouts at a high altitude.

Aggressive lines of bullets tore apart the black smoke and darted at the clouds now and then, driving away the malicious guys who approached from the sky.

A lot of airborne hunters from Liberty City were hovering in midair like the most brutal falcons all day. The most brutal battles broke out in the sky every now and then.

Chapter 1998 - The Truth Behind the Truth?

Red Viper, Black Spear, and Flash Point—the three Immortal Cultivator players—travelled among the clouds like three fast and agile flying swords, as if the dense storm of bullets around them did not exist. Their every dive among the clouds would cause spluttering blood and everlasting screams before a few guards of Liberty City fell from an altitude of hundreds of meters and crashed together with their armor.

However, the ‘allies’ next to them were exploding and falling in the storm of blades and bullets, too, as if another elite team that was on par with them was lurking in the middle of clouds.

Suddenly, two new Exos appeared in the clouds opposite them. The two parties fought for a few rounds, but neither of them killed the enemy easily.

The three Immortal Cultivators smelled a familiar scent, like wolves encountering wolves and snakes running into snakes. The players had met other players.

Floating in midair, Black Spear coldly asked, “Are you here for the trial?”

“Exactly. However, we were unfortunate enough to be randomly distributed to the leader of Liberty City’s side.” The Exos on his opposite side smiled. “How lucky. We’ve never been fond of defense. We only like to… attack.”

“Don’t be so arrogant.” Black Spear licked his lips. “There are only two of you, but we have three on our side.”

“But this is the airspace of Liberty City. We can receive support anytime.” The enemy was not moved at all. Playing with his chainsword, he asked, “Do you want to have a go?”

“Hehe…” Black Spear narrowed his eyes with brutality beaming out.

“Black Spear, Flash Point, are they the rivals in your families?” Red Viper suddenly asked.

Black Spear and Flash Point both shook their heads.

“Then, it seems unnecessary for us to burst into a conflict right now,” Red Viper said. “The final battle is about to begin. This is a great opportunity for us to earn more points. Since we do not have any fundamental contradictions, we do not have to fight and both get injured here. Don’t you agree?”

The two strangers nodded slowly. “Well said. There will be plenty of chances for us to fight in the future. Why the rush?”

The two of them blinked and disappeared into the smoke before they left a final remark with a smile. “Since you appear to be rational enough, here’s a word of advice. If you are going to retreat, do not return through the way you came. Take a detour in the southeast. A few crazy streamers are lurking right on your path of retreat. We all know that those lunatics do not care if you are a player or not. They will do anything to improve their viewership.”

“Hehe. What about them?” Black Spear clenched his fists. “Even if we run into crazy streamers, so what? I’ll simply punch them into pieces in front of their whole audience!”

“Quiet!” Red Viper pondered for a moment. “You know how crazy those people are. They are all perverts who have come to this place to look for stimulation. They are different from us, who are here for a mission. It is unnecessary to mess with them.

“All in all, our reconnaissance mission has been completed. With the credits and reputation we earned in the last half month, it is enough for us to meet the Fist King himself. Let’s fall back.

“However, those two guys are not to be absolutely trusted. We will not take our original path or detour in the southeast. Instead, we’ll charge forward and get out from the west!”

Under the cover of many other scouting squads, the three players finally got out of the range of the flak weapons of Liberty City.

As it turned out, before they returned to the Fist King’s camp, they had already received the news that almost all the scouting squads other than themselves had been annihilated.

“The two guys did not lie to us. Some crazy streamers are indeed out there!” Flash Point observed, not entirely recovered from his shock. “Thankfully, we were not harassed by them, or it would’ve been difficult to accomplish the main quest!”

“Our ‘servant soldiers’ are there. Let’s land!” Black Spear said. “The few servant soldiers are clever enough. I thought that they would be killed by the enemy during the first operation and did not expect that they could survive so many quests without getting killed. They are truly sturdy.

Also, although the puppet that they carry does not have a high combat ability, it is indeed skilled at maintaining all kinds of magical equipment. I'm already reluctant to kill them."

"Of course," Red Viper said. "This is the first time that the two of you have participated in a trial of extreme survival in the Land of Sins. Naturally, you will have more privileges. The few useful servant soldiers that have been distributed to you are perhaps a favor for the newbies.

"As for killing them, I don't think it is necessary. There's no way that they can survive the gory battle in the city and the street fighting that will be ten times gorier."

The seven-star quest 'The Eagle Plan' had basically been accomplished. The three Immortal Cultivator players landed and walked toward Han Te and Liu Li with a smile.

Little did they know that their conversation had been recorded by a soundwave collector installed in the most inconspicuous part of their crystal suits and would be read by Li Yao during the maintenance later.

While the three players were enjoying the game where living people were chess pieces and props, Li Yao was analyzing the game of the Immortal Cultivators carefully.

The more he analyzed, the more he felt that the truth of the Martial Meritocrats Sector might not be as simple as he imagined.

He had thought that the entire Martial Meritocrats Sector was the most important laboratory and test base for new magical equipment and techniques in the Imperium of True Human Beings.

However, the arrival of the three players who were Immortal Cultivators informed him that the ‘test base’ had a deeper meaning. It was not just magical equipment and techniques that were tested but also Immortal Cultivators themselves.

By collecting the conversations among the three players every day, and through the prudent investigation of his own soul, Li Yao discovered that the ‘war game’ seemed to have a third meaning that was even more subtle.

With his keen senses in the Divinity Transformation Stage, Li Yao noticed hundreds of players, but not all the players were the same.

For example, Red Viper, Black Spear, and Flash Point, the three players that he followed, were obviously there with certain quests, including ‘secondary quests’ and ‘main quests’.

The ‘secondary quests’ were what they had been doing in the last half month to accumulate wealth, fame, and the Fist King’s trust. As for exactly what their ‘main quests’ were, Li Yao had not learned it yet, but he did vaguely feel that it was not as simple as ‘conquer Liberty City’.

Of course, all of them also had a ‘hidden quest’, which was to kill their competitors in their respective families so that they would win more resources and fondness in the future.

Other than the players who were devoted to their quests, there were also what the Immortal Cultivators called ‘crazy streamers’. Li Yao did not know what they were exactly yet, because Red Viper, Black Spear, and Flash Point were very wary of the lunatics and unwilling to have a head-on clash with them. They had chosen to retreat whenever they smelled the scent of the lunatics.

Besides ‘quest players’ and ‘crazy streamers’, there seemed to be a third type of Immortal Cultivator. But they were even more mysterious and independent from the battlefield, almost completely buried in the darkness. Even Li Yao had only perceived one of them by accident and almost been caught by the guy.

Li Yao speculated that the Immortal Cultivators in darkness were perhaps the manipulators of the entire game and the defenders of the rules. They were responsible for directing the war game to develop in the course that they desired.

The unique rules in the Land of Sins created the most favorable conditions for the Immortal Cultivators to blend into the sinners.

This was a cruel world with abrupt changes every moment.

A previously dominating, unparalleled expert might die due to their cultivation going berserk because of fatal shortcomings in the arts that they practiced.

A nobody half a year ago, with the assistance of an ‘old grandpa’ and his amazing arts or even the strengthening kits from the sky, would be able to modify themself into a half-human and half-mechanical monster with unimaginable strength in the blink of an eye.

Although such an endeavor would likely rid them of their training potential for the decades to come, who cared about what would happen tomorrow if their strength could be improved by almost twenty times?

Therefore, other than the city leaders that dominated the Elysian Worlds, few experts and forces could thrive for a long time without decaying in the Land of Sins.

On the other hand, it was often the case that many anonymous fellows would rise as fast as lightning with the most uncanny, bizarre abilities. They would want to distinguish themselves on the most fabulous stage.

On the sides of both the Fist King and the leader of Liberty City, there were countless rising experts who were bizarre-shaped, temperamental, disobedient, and of unknown backgrounds.

When the Immortal Cultivators were mixed among them, they were like a few spindrift in an ocean. Nobody would be suspicious of them at all.

Besides, everybody was focused on the war between the Fist King and the leader of Liberty City. Who cared if the war was manipulated by the ‘angels’ other than Li Yao?

Had life in the Land of Sins not always been repeated like this for the last hundreds of years?

Those who might not survive the next second were incapable of envisaging the future or exploring the truth.

Li Yao, however, intended to completely dig out the truths behind the Land of Sins, or the Martial Meritocrats Sector.

He wanted to capture an Immortal Cultivator player for interrogation.

It was certainly very risky, and it would not be an easy task.

The Immortal Cultivators must be monitoring the battlefield in various ways. Every player should have a clandestine communication system. Countless Immortal Cultivators were hiding in the darkness to maintain the order of the ‘war game’.

Therefore, over the past half month, Li Yao had been observing calmly and camouflaging himself instead of taking any action in a hurry.

He was waiting for the best opportunity, which was perhaps when the Fist King’s army attacked the city.

At that time, the whole battlefield would be brimming with violent, chaotic spiritual waves. Both parties would launch attacks and interference on the enemy’s local area network. Even the wireless network among the Immortal Cultivator players would probably be jammed and cut off—even if only briefly.

Also, the sky would be blocked by smoke and dark clouds. Even the mystic rays from the City in the Sky would not necessarily be able to illuminate every corner of the battlefield.

Did Red Viper not mention that the death rate of the ‘trial of extreme survival’ was very high? Therefore, as long as Li Yao could seize the opportunity…

Chapter 1999 - Meeting the Fist King at Great Iron City!

Great Iron City, which was practically a skyscraper, pushed forward at a much higher speed than before. Occasionally, a lot of people who were tied to chains would rappel from the top of Great Iron City to knock the gears and rune arrays on the shell and perform lubrication and cleaning.

The obstreperous black markets and arenas were shut. To appease the many tough bandits, the Fist King provided a lot more basic resources, including ammunition and standard boxes of spiritual energy, for the gangs and forces without bothering about the cost.

The claws that were extended in all directions were retracted one after another, and the siege on Liberty City became tighter and tighter every day. The Fist King’s battle formation grew ever stronger. Flags where the emblems of different gangs were depicted flew in the camp and looked truly overwhelming and intimidating.

Liberty City, in comparison, was silent and lifeless, like a fortress of the dead.

All the signs indicated that the Fist King’s army was about to attack the city!

The ‘Red Viper Squad’ was also given the privilege of meeting the Fist King in person because of their distinguished performance.

In the past month, although they were at the camp of the great dominator in the Land of Sins, neither the Red Viper Squad nor Li Yao had ever seen the Fist King himself, not even catching a glimpse of him from afar. They only heard a lot of rumors about the Fist King from other people.

Some said that the Fist King once practiced punching against a mountain thousands of meters tall. His fists blew bottomless holes in the rocks after each punch, and he kept punching, blowing, digging, and pressing forward, making his way ‘through’ the mountain with the brutal force. Eventually, a human-shaped tunnel was left behind him!

Some said that there was once a time when the Fist King could not find a suitable human-shaped shell for his use at all because the power of his soul was so strong that any human-shaped shell covering his soul would be blown up after a single punch. He had to conceal himself in a shell in the form of a tank and use two turrets with unbelievable firepower as his arms!

Some said that the Fist King destroyed four cities and more than twenty gangs in a row in only five years just to find enough powerful components for himself so that he could build an unparalleled artificial body that could support the punching of his fists, which was equivalent to the bombardment of heavy cannons!

Some said that the noises they heard from ‘Great Iron City’ every day were not caused by the engine system of the giant machine but by the Fist King training himself inside!

The ridiculous rumors that bordered on legends made the Fist King’s image even more mysterious and dominating.

Even Li Yao could not hold back his curiosity and attempted to sneak into Great Iron City with Neltharion. It was exactly during the adventure that he had come across a ‘game master’ who was lurking in the darkness. He was so scared that he had sweat engine oil. Finally, he dropped the idea.

Today, he finally had the chance to meet the dominator in the Land of Sins in person.

On the pedestal of Great Iron City, dozens of enormous gears more than three meters in diameter were revolving slowly, revealing a dark gap.

Li Yao—together with shuddering Han Te, Liu Li, and Xin Xiaoqi—lowered his head and followed the Red Viper Squad while they walked into the smoking Great Iron City under the guidance of a team of warriors from the ‘Godly Fist Union’.

The gears slowly closed behind them. The air in the room was hot and suffocating, mixed with the smell of sulfur and metal, as if they had just walked into a furnace. Gears that bit each other, bearings that were revolving quickly, levers with many branches, and chains that dangled down from the ceiling were everywhere inside Great Iron City. Countless tall shadows were dancing merrily on the gears, bearings, levers, and chains.

Occasionally, when their iron shells were illuminated by the light, it would be easy to notice that they were all spectral Cultivators and spiritual puppets. Thousands of spiritual puppets supported the complicated internal framework of ‘Great Iron City’ and maintained the high-intensity functioning of the war fortress.

The Fist King was a ghost. Ever since his rise, he had always been searching for greater artificial bodies. Therefore, he had unusual interests in other ghosts and even spiritual puppets. He was an out-and-out collector of spiritual puppets, which was a fact that everybody in the Land of Sins knew.

What Li Yao saw today proved the theory. The place was essentially an ocean of spiritual puppets.

The floors that they saw on their way while they were slowly pulled to the top of Great Iron City on a crude metal platform by chains were mostly occupied by spiritual puppets of various forms.

Those in the shape of humans, those like lions and tigers, those in the form of spiders or scorpions, and those built into tractors and turrets. Some were large, and some were small, but they were equally amazing.

Among them, there were the battle puppets of the latest model, which were glamorous and athletic, with a crystal processor that was even more powerful than the ‘Grand Illusionary Soldier’ in Li Yao’s memory. There were also antiques that were rusted, riveted, and riddled with holes. It was like a museum of spiritual puppets.

BAM!

The metal platform was raised to the top of Great Iron City. Through the observation window there, it was possible to see everything that was happening in the hundred square kilometers around.

Almost a hundred spiritual puppets of the latest models were placed in the room. Like a group of silent warriors, they protected a throne at the center that was piled up with gears.

An artificial body that was more than three meters tall sat on the throne of gears majestically and stared at the Red Viper

Squad in deep thought.

Looking at the guy’s metal body that was almost perfect, Li Yao’s soul constricted violently.

What a beautiful artificial body!

The artificial body was in the most standard appearance of a human being. Every limb and every joint were in the golden cut. It was almost as if the most immaculate expert in the universe was doubled in size and made into an iron statue!

On every piece of shell on his body, dense rune arrays had been carved, which enshrouded him in vague redness all the time. He was wearing a simple, brown windbreaker, but it was spluttering although there was no wind as if it were the armor of an emperor!

Li Yao could tell at first glance that the artificial body could not have been manufactured in any factory. It was designed and assembled with the components of countless artificial bodies, spiritual puppets, and crystal suits.

The components and rune arrays of almost a hundred different origins had been combined flawlessly. It appeared as natural and immaculate as anything could!

The one who designed and produced the artificial body was certainly an expert among experts.

According to the rumors, the Fist King always attended to his body himself.

Li Yao immediately changed his attitude toward the dominator in the Land of Sins.

The impeccable artificial body alone suggested that the Fist King was much more than a simple expert in the Nascent Soul Stage. He could not be more careful when he was dealing with the sky!

“It’s an honor to meet you, Fist King!”

The three Immortal Cultivator players bowed deeply to the iron statue on the throne of gears pretentiously. They were apparently more curious than respectful about the dominator in the Land of Sins.

Han Te, Liu Li, and Xin Xiaoqi were deeply awed by the Fist King, their legs shaking hard.

Li Yao, naturally, did not say anything. Standing behind them in silence, he considered the possibility that the Fist King might have a piece of ‘high-molecular layer-by-layer scanning magical equipment’ if the guy was a brilliant refiner.

“There are no unnecessary formalities in the Land of Sins. This is not an honor at all.”

The iron statue rose and stepped forward unhurriedly. He was not stomping, but the floor seemed to be shaking under his feet.

The Fist King stood before everywhere and said in a low voice, “Red Viper Squad? I’ve never heard the name before. Then again, no heroes are ever heard until they distinguish themselves. After the war, your name will certainly resound all over the Land of Sins!”

“Of course!” Red Viper raised her head high. “Chances are that we will be faster than the Fist King to chop off the leader of Liberty City’s head!”

‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie was slightly dazed. Red Viper’s words apparently fitted his temper. He burst into laughter and said, “Good, good! You have performed remarkably in the battles over the last few months. I cannot help but wonder what kind of miracles you will create in the battle to take the city!

“In case you blame me for not giving you an opportunity, I am preparing to deploy you in the east flank when our army officially attacks Liberty City tomorrow. You will attack the west defense line of Liberty City together with my most skilled team from the Godly Fist Union. As long as you can break the west defense line of Liberty City and destroy the pivot of the defense arrays there, you can ask for whatever you want from me!”

“We are not interested in the west defense line.”

Looking at the crystal cameras on the Fist King’s metal skull that was as dark as ink, Red Viper said, one word after another, “We have come here after a long journey only because we want to fight side by side with the Fist King and see how incredible the strongest fists on the entire Land of Sins are! The operations over the past month should be enough to prove our capability and loyalty. Please give us a chance to follow you and take part in the most dangerous and arduous missions!”

“You want to fight by my side?” ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie laughed aloud. “Then, let’s see if you are capable enough!”

Hu!

The cape on him immediately expanded into a ball before it was split apart in hissing sounds. Spiritual energy surged out like tides and rushed at the Red Viper Squad!

The three Immortal Cultivator players were long prepared. They simply kept their hands behind their back and focused their spiritual energy in their legs, standing still on the iron floor without moving at all.

Greatly alarmed, Han Te and Liu Li hurried to summon their spiritual energy to defend themselves.

Li Yao was rather shocked. ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie was almost a lunatic. He had unleashed such an overwhelming force when it was only supposed to be a test, not caring if he would heavily wound his own people!

Without alarming anyone, Li Yao transmitted two streams of energy through the floor into Han Te’s and Liu Li’s feet, helping them through the difficulties.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The Fist King’s spiritual energy bombarded everybody’s heart like a tsunami.

The three Immortal Cultivator players all grunted and shook hard.

Han Te and Liu Li were even forced almost ten steps back. They collapsed onto the floor and vomited blood.

Li Yao also pretended that his internal circuits were damaged. Cracking noises echoed from inside his iron shell.

“Huh?”

Out of his expectations, after a moment of surprise, the Fist King moved his eyes that were as keen as a hawk at Li Yao.

Chapter 2000 - The Fist King“s Ambition!

Li Yao immediately felt his heart beating fast. Thinking quickly, he wondered what he had done wrong to make the Fist King grow suspicious about him.

There was no reason for that at all. In the battles over the last month, he had been always keeping a low profile and playing the role of a spiritual puppet dutifully without doing anything outrageous.

Li Yao was not scared of ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie, but the Immortal Cultivators would be monitoring the place closely. He did not want to expose his identity so soon, which would make it impossible for him to find out what the Immortal Cultivators were up to exactly in the ‘war game’!

As it turned out, while the Fist King stared at him, the man’s spiritual energy turned into threads wandering into Li Yao’s iron shell.

Li Yao’s soul released ripples and activated the defense rune arrays around the crystal processor, keeping the Fist King’s reach outside of his core components. But he frowned hard in his heart.

‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie was both a top-tier expert who dominated the Land of Sins and an excellent refiner. Would the guy see through his cover?

Li Yao was quite uncertain.

Chi! Chi!

The Fist King’s spiritual threads touched the defense rune arrays inside Li Yao’s body, only to balk like earthworms that were burnt by fire.

Li Yao could obviously sense the surprise in the Fist King’s heart. Even the guy’s eyes became much deeper and more lackluster than before when he looked at Li Yao.

Shua!

The spiritual threads that slithered into his body split apart into hundreds of ‘branches’, which moved forward and tried to locate the gaps in his core components to invade the crystal processor.

Li Yao secretly cried for help, but his reaction was not slowed at all. He blocked all the Fist King’s spiritual threads without any trouble.

Their eyes had a subtle clash through the blinks of the man-made eyes. Perhaps it was Li Yao’s imagination, but some sparks that were not very malicious seemed to have been raised.

Was he… exposed?

Out of Li Yao’s expectations, the Fist King did not explore further but simply retracted his spiritual threads and gaze without leaving any trace. He glanced at the three Immortal Cultivator players and said, “You are indeed strong enough to fight by my side at the center of my army. Also… this spiritual puppet here is rather interesting. It seems to be a model with functions for self-learning and communication as well as those related to automatic recovery and upgrade?”

Li Yao knew that, as an important type of military magical equipment, hundreds of experimental spiritual puppets had been projected to the Land of Sins during the past hundreds of years by the Immortal Cultivators, including a lot of cutting-edge models with the functions of automatic learning and upgrading.

Of course, most of the spiritual puppets had a limited range of learning logics and fields of upgrade. They were not very stable and would often be trapped in logic loops, unable to free themselves, which would make them even less competitive than common puppets. Therefore, they were not the major gangs’ favorites.

In any case, the identity itself did not call for any suspicion.

Red Viper, Black Spear, and Flash Point looked at each other and said, unbothered, “If you like it, Fist King, you are free to take it away for studies.”

Han Te and Liu Li were both taken aback, but they did not decline the request of an unparalleled bandit like the Fist King. There was hesitation all over their faces.

The Fist King laughed and stretched out his brawny arms. “As you have seen, collecting spiritual puppets is my hobby. Be they bizarre models or jumbled monsters, I like to collect them, play with them, and study their structures carefully.

“However, a great war is about to break out, and my little hobby can only wait. We’ll talk after we take Liberty City!

“You can go back and get a good rest tonight. My men will offer you ammunition, crystals, and high-energy drugs that are enough for everyone’s use. Tomorrow morning, we will attack Liberty City. I hope that every component in each one of you is intact after the battle!”

…

With a headful of questions, Li Yao returned to his own camp. The more he thought about it, the more he felt that ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie was not as simple as the legends or as he appeared.

He must have discovered an anomaly in Li Yao’s body. The hundreds of competitions of spiritual threads in the blink of an eye could not have been performed by a random spiritual puppet.

But why did he not point it out in public or pursue it any further?

Also, his last words were apparently meant for Li Yao.

In other words, he knew that Li Yao could ‘understand’ the meaning of those words and looked forward to an in-depth communication with him after the Battle of Liberty City?

What was going on?

“I have a vague feeling. The Fist King is not malicious. He is only very interested in you,” the mental devil said mysteriously. “Perhaps he has a special fetish. That’s why he wants to play with you and study your structure deeply.”

“What the heck?” Li Yao was rather shocked. “That’s too creepy!”

“This is the Land of Sins. What kind of perverts can you not find here?” the mental devil said solemnly. “Just recall the ripples of spiritual energy that spread out of the Fist King’s body. Did you not sense ecstasy and lust at all?”

“Well, not exactly lust, but ecstasy… Now that you pointed it out, there indeed seemed to be such a feeling!”

“Therefore,” the mental devil said, “I don’t know the reason, but he does seem to have special feelings for you. Be careful. He will certainly keep an eye on you closely. I do not want to fall into his hands and be dismantled for studies.”

“The game is getting more and more complicated.” Extending his mechanical arm, Li Yao scratched his iron skull. “The Immortal Cultivators must be watching the Fist King closely, and the Fist King has somehow taken an interest in me. How am I supposed to keep a low profile under such circumstances?”

“So, you can stop keeping a low profile!” The mental devil grinned hideously. “I don’t think that the Battle of Liberty City will be so simple. A lot of things will certainly happen, but they are not our concern. As long as we can take advantage of the chaos and find a piece of ‘high-molecular layer-by-layer scanning magical equipment’, we can escape and perform the ‘perfect melting’. After the soul and the body become one, we will be an experienced expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage. There will be no need to keep a low profile!”

Li Yao was of a mind to sneak into the Fist King’s nest to find out the truth, but the place would be under the Immortal Cultivators’ surveillance. He certainly could not feed himself to the trap.

Although they were told to get a good rest, the Fist King’s camp was obstreperous and ablaze with lights all night. Everybody was being mobilized without any stop.

The thousands of tents had all been cleaned up. The unorganized gangs and bandits were regrouped and deployed according to their performance over the past month. They were somehow transformed from mobs into many battle lines that could charge forward together.

The Red Viper Squad was indeed arranged to the center of the army, which was responsible for directly attacking the frontal defense line of Liberty City, which was most heavily guarded. After a lot of hard work, the place had become a hell that was full of traps, barricades, landmines, lightning towers, and all kinds of defense arrays.

Dawn arrived.

The morning sun tore apart the night sky, glowing as intensely as fire and illuminating the earth into an ocean of blood. Everybody seemed to be a slaughter machine that had just been bred in the blood pool.

The hundreds of sirens all over Great Iron City began to roar, triggering noises that were almost ripping apart the sky and waking up the brutality inside the bones of all the attackers.

Around Great Iron City, hundreds of thousands of chainswords, vibration sabers, and storm bolters were raised high. Reflecting the dazzling, blood red sunlight, they congregated into tornadoes of destruction.

A lot of the bandits had waited for more than a month and were already running out of patience. They finally went on a rampage, shouting and releasing their greed, anger, and violence.

“Kill them all! Kill them all!”

“Break into Liberty City, and we will have whatever we want!”

“After we kill Xiahou Wuxin, we will be the master of the Elysian World, and we will be able to rise to Manjusaka, the City in the Sky, to become the supreme angels. Hahaha!”

The sirens became more and more shrill and gradually suppressed the roars of all the bandits. Subconsciously, everybody focused their eyes at the top of Great Iron City, as if a second brilliant sun had risen slowly up there.

“It’s the Fist King!”

“‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie has finally shown up!”

“Fist King! Fist King! The incredible, invincible Fist King!”

All the bandits extended their arms and shouted at the sky, as if they were drunk.

“We were born in the desolate, barren wilderness. We have been struggling in the abyss of cruelty and blood. We have deformed ourselves and turned ourselves into the most ferocious animals. Yet, with unbelievable luck, we can only survive in the so-called ‘Bloody Worlds’.”

From the top of Great Iron City, the Fist King’s thunderous roars rumbled.

“What has been the life of even the strongest warrior among us? Senseless, homeless, worthless, and joyless!

“Look at yourselves and your companions next to you. Is this what you want to be? Is this the life that you want to live until you die?”

None of the bandits expected that ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie would give such a speech. They were stunned for a moment.

“However, right over there, inside the so-called ‘Elysian World’…”

The Fist King waved his hands and pointed at Liberty City not far away.

“There are the cleanest water sources, the most abundant assets, unimaginable cuisine and other entertainment, and the most advanced medical magical equipment that can fix your incomplete, deformed body!

“The people in the Elysian World do not need to do anything other than lie on their spring beds to watch the assets fall from the sky to their front!

“Why?

“Why can they have everything without doing anything, and we have to struggle hard and brutalize each other in the Bloody Worlds, transforming into wolves, leopards, and even swine, only to get less than one percent of what they earn, while shouldering their blatant mockery? Why?

“Today, let me lead everyone to justice and reclaim what is supposed to be ours!”

Chapter 2001 - Star Plasma Cannon!

His questions darted into every sinner’s heart brutally like nails made of thunder.

‘Seek justice’ was even making their brains boil, camouflaging the slaughter that they were about to begin with a brilliant cover.

For a moment, all the bandits were covered in a layer of vague radiance besides their greed and violence.

“March into Liberty City, and everything there will be yours. I do not want anything other than the glory!”

‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie’s roars were magnitudes louder in that moment and turned into thunder that shocked the sky and the earth.

“If we succeed, we will be the master of this ‘Elysian World’. Even if we don’t, we will still leave our name on the boundless Bloody Plateau!”

Wu! Wu! Wu!

The thousands of sirens on Great Iron City spurted out white steam that was as intense as fog again and let out ear-splitting shrieks.

The enormous gears on the shell of the iron fortress revolved slowly, pulling the mechanical structure made of countless chains, bearings, and axles.

Deafening drumming echoed from inside Great Iron City. Every attacker felt that their heart was exploding!

As the sirens and the drumming got louder and louder, the enormous gears began to spin at a much higher speed. Six mechanical legs almost a hundred meters long were gradually deployed around Great Iron City. Countless spiritual puppets staggered over and smashed nails almost half a meter long into the ground through the holes in the mechanical legs, fixing them on the ground steadily.

The main gun at the front of Great Iron City rose like a male organ. The previous blackness gradually turned orange, crimson, and purple. The surging electric arcs were filled by explosive forces like protruding veins. Even the size of the gun seemed to be bigger than before.

Thousands of electric arcs flowed out of Great Iron City and were condensed in the barrel. Radial rays of light were focused on the muzzle, as if it were a star that had just been born. None of the bandits dared to look at it directly and could only hold their breath in fear.

Finally, the cluster of light at the muzzle that looked like magma was consolidated to the maximum amount. In the middle of the Fist King’s thunderous roar, it was shot out in dazzling light!

Thunder seemed to have rumbled inside Great Iron City, making the enormous fortress bounce. The ground near the six supportive legs was all falling apart in cracking noises. Everybody felt the earth shaking!

The massive spiritual was thrown out like a cluster of magma restrained by the spiritual field in a high arc. When it reached the target, it exploded into a storm of shooting stars and smashed at Liberty City.

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

A thin, translucent spiritual shield immediately rose around Liberty City. Hexagonal circuits of spiritual energy could be found everywhere on the shield, and a complicated rune array had been carved at the center of every hexagon. All the shooting stars were blocked by the spiritual energy. Explosive sounds similar to when scorching iron was put into ice were echoing when the two opposing forces charged at each other.

Despite the long distance, it could be seen that the defense system of Liberty City was weakened, and the translucence on the spiritual shield was dimmer and simmer.

Liberty City launched a counterattack, too, but their shooting range did not seem to be as far as the Star Plasma Cannon of Great Iron City. Even if the attacks reached the Fist King’s army, they had already lost their momentum, and most of them were detonated in advance by the powerful airwaves in the middle of their flight.

Shua!

The Star Plasma Cannon opened fire again, smashing another group of burning shooting stars at Liberty City. But the angle of the attack was slightly adjusted in order to bombard the frontal defense line before Liberty City. In a moment, hundreds of blasts were raised, detonating a lot of landmines and filling many trenches. The barricades were all burnt into hideous garbage!

The Fist King’s army cheered at the top of their voice. The mobs that had been jumbled up seemed to have truly become a united, well-trained, and invincible troop.

Boom!

After the third bombardment of the Star Plasma Cannon, three supportive legs finally could not resist the massive recoil of spiritual energy. The nails that were as thick as arms were blown away, and the supportive legs were ejected.

It was obvious that the powerful Star Plasma Cannon had reached its limits and needed a moment to cool down.

The Fist King directly jumped off from the top of Great Iron City that was almost a hundred meters tall, smashing onto the ground. Then, he took a flag with the emblem of a crowned fist that was almost ten meters tall and waved it. “Forward! Forward! Into Liberty City!”

The first wave of glittering iron tides lunged at Liberty City.

It was an overwhelming army of spiritual beasts that felt like a beast tide!

Ever since the rebellion of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers in the Flying Star Sector, Li Yao had never seen an army of spiritual puppets of such a large scale.

Compared to the Grand Illusionary Soldiers, the spiritual puppets there were of different categories and bizarre appearances. The war machines of countless absurd eras seemed to have gathered together.

The Fist King seemed to have collected all the movable spiritual puppets in the entire Land of Sins and organized them in a very special way, turning them into his unstoppable vanguard.

It did make sense. The spiritual puppets were much sturdier than general slave soldiers, and they were much more devoted and determined than the gangs that each had their own plans. They would never defect, retreat, or be scared.

Those charging at the forefront were the high-speed mobile war puppets in the form of metal spiders and scorpions, which were followed by main war puppets that had been built in the form of crystal tanks, mixed with tracks and mechanical feet. Then, there were almost thirty automatic, unmanned fortresses over ten meters tall that could be controlled remotely. In the sky, a lot of shuttles that could attack automatically, as well as floating fire platforms like hot-air balloons that were pulling metal arms, were hovering.

The iron tides rolled forward and ignored the storms of bullets sprayed from Liberty City while they shortened the distance between the two parties. They detonated the landmines that survived the shooting stars, located the defense arrays and firing points that were hidden below the ground, and paved the uneven earth with quick-drying gel, creating a favorable condition for the charge of the follow-up troops.

“Let’s go and kill them all! Seize Liberty City!”

Under the cover of the spiritual puppets, the bandits, thugs, and sinners who wanted to grow famous in the battle and rise to Manjusaka all took action and ran forward like animals that had been injected with excitants.

This perhaps could barely be counted as a real war.

Gangs were gangs after all, and mobs were mobs. Without neat teamwork and efficient command, they were not a real troop at all.

It could only be counted as a super large ‘pit fight’. It was the mauling and fighting of two bunches of animals for the right to survive based on their natural instincts.

Perhaps it was the largest ‘pit fight’ that Li Yao had ever seen.

When the silver tides of the spiritual puppets almost broke through the frontal defense line of Liberty City, the hundreds of lightning towers behind the frontal defense line were finally activated. In a moment, a high wall of lightning and thunder seemed to have been raised outside of Liberty City.

The spiritual puppets that were caught in the lightning storm when they failed to dodge in time turned into huge fireballs in cracking sounds immediately, ending up as black junk, their nonexistent life gone.

However, the surviving spiritual puppets were still charging forward relentlessly like tides. They would rather turn themselves into melted slag just to waste more of the enemy’s spiritual energy.

The automatic unmanned fortresses that were slightly behind even activated the city assault mode. Extending countless crystal cannons that were shining coldly, they rained plasma, fire, mystic rays, and cannonballs on the defense array of Liberty City.

The defenders of Liberty City finally counterattacked.

The bloodiest sparks splashed out in the first second after the two ferocious armies collided brutally.

On both the Fist King’s side and Liberty City’s, countless hideous men took out syringes of exhilarants in suspicious colors and injected them into their necks. Then, in the middle of crazy howls, their skin fell apart, their muscles expanded, their bone spurs protruded out, and their spiritual energy exploded, transforming them into deformed, half-animal monsters, before they bearhugged the monsters opposite them.

A muscular man with four arms stood on the top of a crystal tank while holding four cannons in his hands, raining bullets from above. But the next moment, he was blown into the sky together with the crystal tank, turning into a dazzling fireball.

Two crystal tanks that were both installed with heavy crystal cannons charged at each other, neither of them giving in. While running, they opened fire at each other until they collided brutally and turned into two clusters of burning garbage.

One of the bandits who was wearing a broken crystal suit, despite the countless strikes of electric arcs, still walked to the front of the lightning tower under the support of unknown forces. Then, exerting his strength, he blew the lightning tower apart and knocked it to the ground!

The sinners in the Land of Sins might not have the highest combat ability, but their brutal, ruthless ways of fighting and their fearless, animalistic vibe were etched into Li Yao’s memory.

Even the qi-trainers on Iron Plateau could not be compared to the brutal men that had been carefully refined in the ‘laboratory’.

Almost all the sinners had been soaked in the atmosphere of blood and violence, unable to free themselves. In the battle formation, only a few people maintained their indifference.

They were the ‘players’, the Immortal Cultivators.

On the chaotic battlefield, Li Yao locked onto more than a hundred and eighty Immortal Cultivator players.

Some had been discovered during the observation and testing over the past month, and some exposed themselves because of the unique air in them—the air of condescension, casualness, carelessness—suggesting that they considered the locals in the Land of Sins to be nothing more than ants that they could trick and play blatantly.

Chapter 2002 - Nether Realm

“It’s time to go!”

To carry out the plan that he had prepared for a long time, Li Yao had performed brand-new modifications on himself and expanded his body size into the size of a light crystal tank. Mixed in the army that was marching like a tide, he approached the heated battlefield at a high speed.

Inside his soul, gold, glittering virtual battlefields popped up like soap bubbles, as he deduced the changes in the battlefield quickly and predicted the strategies of the attackers and the defenders as well as the power of the firing points in the battlefield. In the end, he came to a conclusion. “It is unlikely that the first attack will break into Liberty City. There is no need for us to charge at the front part. We can preserve our strength and pretend that we are working hard from behind!”

It was the first time for both Han Te and Liu Li to take part in a battle of such a scale. They were already scared out of wits by the world-overturning bombardments, the deafening explosions, and the violent monsters next to them. Even their dream of going to Manjusaka had been tossed aside. They hurriedly nodded and hid behind Li Yao.

The mysterious Xin Xiaoqi was rather experienced on the battlefield despite her young age. She also hid behind Li Yao stealthily and gestured at the two little fellows. “Don’t go forward and get killed. Just cheer for them from here. Such a gory battle is not for us to participate in!”

Red Viper, Black Spear, and Flash Point—the three players—had long charged forward and performed the most splendid dances of death in the depths of the battlefield.

But they did not expect their ‘servant soldiers’ to follow them closely in the first place. Instead, they focused all their attention on the ‘main quest’.

Cannons were roaring, smoke was spreading, and the blasts from plasma guns, force fields, and spiritual waves were colliding, raising intense interference. Li Yao sensed the spiritual waves in the air keenly and discovered that the local area network at least on the Fist King’s side had been cut off in many places where the conflicts were fiercest.

It was safe to assume that the network of Liberty City as well as that of the Immortal Cultivators was in a similar state, and the information transmission must have been greatly affected.

It was time to act alone.

As it happened, one of the cannon balls crashed not far away from him, raising enormous fire and smoke that blocked the sight of the three players. Li Yao immediately took the opportunity to deviate from his previous direction, pretending that he was blown away by the airwaves.

Calculating the gap of the relative peace on the battlefield, he unleashed an invisible force shield without a sound, keeping away the bullets and electric arcs that were darting at him and the two little fellows, while he searched for the most suitable target.

On his way, he locked onto some players who were engaged in a fierce fight, but they were mostly in squads of three to five. Li Yao was not confident in capturing all of them without raising any attention.

Some players were by themselves, but there was no smoke above their heads. Li Yao was not sure if the Immortal Cultivators would notice him when observing from the sky. He did not dare act recklessly.

At last, he finally found the perfect target.

It was an Immortal Cultivator in a silver crystal suit with two crystal blades, who was acting alone and slaughtering at a super-high efficiency.

Right next to him was a floating airborne fire platform that was falling and exploding like a hot-air balloon.

From the black clouds that were rising nonstop, electric arcs were dancing in cracking sounds. They were enough to block any prying from the midair.

Li Yao was certain that the guy was an Immortal Cultivator because he had seen the guy before.

The guy was not a member of Liberty City but on the Fist King’s side. He had been seen many times in the Fist King’s camp.

Li Yao had heard the three members of the Red Viper Squad secretly call the guy a ‘crazy screamer’ and remind each other to stay away from him because those people absolutely did not care about sides or quests.

What Li Yao saw today proved their warning. The guy was a mad slaughter machine. It seemed that whether or not Liberty City could be conquered was not important, and what mattered was starting a massacre in the most bizarre and unexpected way—both on enemies and allies!

When Li Yao locked onto the Immortal Cultivator, he had just turned into a sharp light and penetrated a crystal tank, slashing it in half from the middle and raising an intense explosion.

The men on fire that were fleeing in a hurry from the explosion broke in half in midair because they had also been cut by his blade auras.

The Immortal Cultivator seemed to have been injected with excessive exhilarants, or maybe it was because he was a natural-born homicidal pyromaniac. He was even dancing and roaring in excitement.

“So arrogant? It’s you then!”

Li Yao extended his mechanical arms and picked up Han Te and Liu Li, tossing them into a sealed protective cabin in the front of his iron shell. Then he accelerated and charged at the Immortal Cultivator.

After a boom, Li Yao detonated the crystal bombs that had been applied to his shell, which released strong sound and visual effects. He turned into a dazzling fireball.

For those who were unaware of the truth, the spiritual puppet seemed to have been hit by the cannons far away and lost control of itself, ending up as a burning remnant that was rolling randomly.

Such remnants were everywhere to be seen on the chaotic battlefield. Li Yao was as inconspicuous as a fallen leaf in a forest.

The Immortal Cultivator did not think too much of Li Yao, either. Calculating Li Yao’s route of rolling, he stepped aside, planning to look for the next target to kill after the dodge.

But out of his expectations, a second explosion that was even fiercer burst out when Li Yao passed him. The fireball expanded by three times in the moment, swallowing the Immortal Cultivator.

It seemed to be just a minor ‘accident’ on the battlefield.

However, inside the silver crystal suit, the Immortal Cultivator’s pupils were constricting violently.

He sensed interference as powerful as a solar storm.

Including his telepathic thoughts, all his methods of communication with the outside world were cut off.

Meanwhile, countless cold and powerful telepathic thoughts pierced his brain brutally like tentacles that were full of sucking discs and sharp teeth. He was on the verge of screaming in agony.

Not only did he lose control of his crystal suit, he was also unable to move his body, his fingers, or any of his muscles.

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

The powerful telepathic thoughts were condensed into a sharp blade and churned his internal organs hard, mincing the organs that were of paramount importance to him into a pulp. Even the connection between the ‘second brain’ at the end of his spine and the ‘first brain’ at the top had been cut off!

He had been at the peak of excitement and madness previously, like a god of slaughter that had everything under his control, but he had fallen into the darkest and coldest abyss in an instant, turning into a pile of rotten meat at the mercy of anyone. The appalling changes happened so fast that the powerful telepathic thoughts had stabbed into his brain before he made any reaction!

“Argh!”

The Immortal Cultivator’s pupils dispersed like broken glass as he let out inaudible screams.

Boom!

Li Yao crashed into the floating firing platform that had already hit the ground, with flames that could cause no actual damage burning on his body. He also released a stinky smell that even the respirators could not filter. The fire and smoke became the best camouflage for him.

The Immortal Cultivator was stuffed to another special sealed cabin at the back of his iron shell, where he crouched in the fetus position.

The lead blocks around the sealed cabin that were carved with abundant blockage rune arrays were enough to prevent the transmission of all waves and information.

Shua! Shua! Shua!

Li Yao’s soul surged out. With the skills of remote manipulation, he immediately removed the crystal suit on the Immortal Cultivator’s body and dissected it into the most fundamental components. After locating the communication unit, he thought for a moment and decided to impose his own barrier on it instead of destroying it directly.

He then examined the Immortal Cultivator’s body and took two invisible lenses that were as thin as paper from the guy’s eyeballs. Judging from the flashing light on them, they were obviously capable of receiving tremendous information, too.

Li Yao was finally reassured. He hovered in front of the center of the Immortal Cultivator’s forehead before streams of bloodiness crawled into the Immortal Cultivator’s head.

The Immortal Cultivator’s internal organs had been blown up by the power of his soul, and he was suffering serious massive hemorrhages. His brain was under high control, which made it impossible for him to repair his body with spiritual energy. He was on the verge of death.

However strong-willed one was, their survival instincts would crush their mental defense lines again and again when they were about to die.

It was needless to mention that the mental devil was also good at hundreds of cruelest approaches. After absorbing the heritage of the extraterrestrial devils, it could also build the most bizarre illusions inside a human being’s head as almost a strengthened version of an extraterrestrial devil. Li Yao was not worried that he might not confess at all.

In the Immortal Cultivator’s consciousness that was almost collapsing, he was somehow soaked in an intense and stinky ocean of blood, from which countless skinny and ulcerous hands extended out and snatched him, trying to drown him in the blood.

Before him, a magnificent devil whose head reached the sky was standing and staring at him coldly.

The devil had eyes all over its face, and the coldness that beamed out was almost burning up his flesh and bones, obliterating him for all eternity.

In the bloody sky further far away, countless raging ghosts were screaming unstoppably like a gale that would never stop.

He vaguely had a feeling that he had been tortured for ten thousand years in the bloody ocean, and the torture would go on for another ten thousand years!

The Immortal Cultivator could not help but feel shocked and devastated, completely losing his ability to think.

“What’s your name?” Li Yao and the mental devil controlled the giant in the illusion to open the bloody mouth on the abdomen and bellow like thunder. “Why have you fallen to the Nether Realm?”

In fact, Li Yao did not really care what the Immortal Cultivator’s name was. It was merely a point of breakthrough. As long as he confessed his name dutifully, everything that followed would be easier.

The Immortal Cultivator hesitated for a moment. His broken willpower and his scattered ability of thinking were still resisting futilely.

The devil grinned hideously. The sharp claws and the tentacles inside the bloody ocean scratched the Immortal Cultivator’s drowned body softly.

Chapter 2003 - Slaughter Momen

The creepy touching was even more terrifying than piercing through his body. The Immortal Cultivator’s face shattered like glass before it completely fell apart.

“I am Liao Fei, nicknamed ‘Unparalleled Blade’. I was in the middle of the live stream of ‘Slaughter Moment’. How did I fall into this uncanny ‘Nether Realm’?” Liao Fei, the Immortal Cultivator, cried out. “What the f*ck is this? Another reality game introduced recently?”

“What is ‘Slaughter Moment’?” Li Yao asked.

Liao Fei’s eyes widened warily. “‘Slaughter Moment’ is just ‘Slaughter Moment’. Everybody in the Imperium knows that. Even the people of the Covenant Alliance know of it. How do you want me to explain it? Or maybe—”

Looking at the enormous giant in the ocean of blood and the overwhelming wraths in the sky in confusion, he suddenly put on an expression of epiphany. “Are you a native of this place, a sinner in the Land of Sins?”

Extreme fury and regret immediately beamed out of his face, but Li Yao simply raised a tide of blood and slapped his face hard, almost blowing his head up.

“I am not a sinner in the Land of Sins,” Li Yao said. “I was forced to land upon the planet on a meteorite by accident. I know that this is a planet under your control. I know this place used to be called the Martial Meritocrats Sector. I know the Imperium of True Human Beings is outside. I… almost know everything.”

While Li Yao was talking, the mental devil corrupted and infected Liao Fei’s soul without him knowing, forcing him to be trapped in Li Yao’s logic and completely believe what Li Yao said subconsciously.

“What?” Liao Fei blinked in confusion. After pondering in secret for a long time, his eyes widened further, and he stammered, “It’s impossible. What are you exactly to have such weird forces? Are you… not a human being?”

“Well…”

Liao Fei struggled hard. “Whatever alien species you are, this is a world of human beings. This is the powerful Imperium of True Human Beings! If you dare act recklessly, you will only end up caged in a laboratory of human beings to be sliced and studied, which will certainly be a feeling that you can never imagine!”

Li Yao was somewhat surprised, not expecting that the bones of the Immortal Cultivator would be so tough.

However, the next second, Liao Fei showed his cowardly appearance. He said in a low voice, “However, if you mean no harm to human beings, don’t kill me. We can talk nicely!”

Li Yao thought of something and simply pretended that what the guy said was true. “Have a lot of my own kind visited the world of human beings before?”

The mental devil whispered to the depths of Liao Fei’s soul in secret. “Perhaps it is really an alien species. This is bad. However, it wouldn’t hurt to chat with the creature for a moment. Chances are that there will be unexpected benefits, right?”

Liao Fei shuttered and said, “There are indeed a myriad of alien species that have been defeated or captured by the Imperium, but I do not know whether or not they are your own kind. I have never seen any alien species with my own eyes. They are just stories for me.”

“Fine…” After considering for a moment, Li Yao said, “You do not need to know what I am. All you need to know is that I am very curious about the world of human beings. I was heavily wounded due to some accidents and accidentally fell to this planet to treat the wounds, only to discover that this was a weird, artificial world. I need to figure out the environment I am in before I make plans.”

“You are in a terrible environment right now,” Liao Fei said. “This is a planet that is closely monitored by the Imperium. Our men are everywhere in the sky and on the ground. There’s no way that you can get out of here without my help.”

Li Yao smiled. “That’s good. I want to ask you a few questions about this world and the Imperium of True Human Beings. No classified information will be involved at all. As long as you answer the questions dutifully, perhaps I’ll consider setting you free or even reside inside you and transform your body, granting you the most unparalleled strength!”

“What?” Liao Fei was so overjoyed that his voice was shaking. “Really?”

“Why would I lie to you?” Li Yao said casually. “Now that you have guessed that I am a brand-new intelligent life form other than mankind, you should know that I do not want to be caged in a laboratory of the Imperium of True Human Beings to be sliced and studied. Residing inside you to learn about the world is the most convenient approach and will do you a lot of good, too. It is a win-win, isn't it?"

"Yes, yes, of course!" Liao Fei's eyes shook again and again. "However, I really do not know any classified information. All I know is the news that everybody knows. The intelligence that I can confess must've been grasped by the Covenant Alliance!"

To this moment, he was still suspicious that he had been captured by the Covenant Alliance.

If the enemy was not from the Covenant Alliance, it did not seem very scary.

The civilization of mankind had governed the universe for a hundred thousand years. The organized alien species had all gone extinct before the rise of human beings. The few survivors of the alien species who lived on to this day would never be able to cause any trouble.

Even if the man was neither from the Covenant Alliance nor an alien species but a mysterious expert who was a sinner in the Land of Sins after mutations, it would still be the best choice to cooperate obediently for now and save his life.

Although Liao Fei did have a certain degree of loyalty to the Imperium of True Human Beings, the loyalty definitely did not spread to the Land of Sins.

"What is Slaughter Moment?" Li Yao asked again.

This time, Liao Fei, who had made up his mind, replied dutifully. "'Slaughter Moment' is a large interactive war game. It is one of the most popular live streams in the entire

Imperium, with a record of three hundred billion viewers watching online at the same time. The total viewership including those who watch the recordings and the short videos exceeds one trillion! Well… do you follow me?”

“Just go on,” Li Yao said without giving any comment. “What are you supposed to do on this planet?”

“Since the name of the show is ‘Slaughter Moment’, we are here to kill people, of course,” Liao Fei said. “I have taken part in a special contest with a hundred and twenty participants in total. We will compete with each other on the total kills in one month. Whoever kills the most people will be the final winner. The audience all over the Imperium can enjoy our killing performance through our crystal cameras and the invisible lenses we wear on our eyeballs. That’s basically everything.”

Trying to sound nonchalant, Li Yao said, “Therefore, the planet is a paradise for your killing game, the sinners in the Land of Sins are all your hunting targets, and the so-called ‘war’ has been planned and directly carefully by you, right?”

“Basically, yes,” Liao Fei said. “However, the players of ‘Slaughter Game’ are not the only ones active here. Dozens of other interactive games and live shows—including ‘War Game’, ‘Glorious Apostles’, ‘Invincible Blades’—are aired here too all year round. All of them involve killing!”

“I don’t understand.” Frowning, Li Yao asked, “Does such meaningless killing do you any good? I don’t think that you can keep in touch with the sky all the time, and the odds of your death can be quite high, right?”

“Of course, there are benefits,” Liao Fei explained in delight. “Up until two hundred years ago, the place was a simple test field for weapons. Then, a genius thought that it was too much of a waste to just regard the natives here as targets to be tested on, and he came up with the ideas of interactive games and live streaming. After a hundred years of exponential development, this place is now a renowned center of entertainment in the Imperium that fulfills the afterwork life of countless citizens in the Imperium. A lot of betting companies with deep backgrounds have participated, too. The revenue generated here every day is astronomical!

“Take me for example. If I take part in ‘Slaughter Moment’, there will be a high payment immediately. If I earn a high rank among the hundred and twenty participants, there will be a bonus. However, they are not worth mentioning at all compared to the tips from the audience.

“Like I said just now, more than three hundred billion viewers in the entire Imperium appreciate our show at any moment. As long as I kill in the way they like or leave their names on the dead bodies, they will definitely not hesitate to tip me. Three hundred billion. Three hundred billion viewers!

“I am just an unattractive, mediocre warrior. Most of the tips will be claimed by the platform of Slaughter Moment, and I have to pay more than ninety percent as a special acting tax. Still, the remaining money is enough for me to live a luxurious life and perform the training of the highest intensity!

“Otherwise, as a nobody without any significant familial background and support, how could I have earned enough resources to advance into the Core Formation Stage if not through streaming killing?”

“In other words,” Li Yao said gravely, “other people pay you to watch you kill? What an unbelievable society!”

“Not as unbelievable as it sounds,” Liao Fei said. “You might not know this, but the Imperium of True Human Beings classifies all the subjects into two classes, namely true human beings and hominoids. True human beings are Immortal Cultivators with massive strength like me. Naturally, they barely watch the live streams because they can kill on their own if they want to have fun. There is no need for them to enjoy it indirectly.

“But hominoids are different.

“Hominoids are the weak, lazy, and sordid existences at the bottom level of the Imperium, bordering on ignorant and disobedient animals.

“If the animality inside their body is repressed for too long without being vented, they may cause great trouble.

“His Majesty is very merciful and does not want the hominoids to attack one another, which will greatly lower the work efficiency and disrupt the social order. The ‘killing streams’ solve the problem perfectly. If all the hominoids waste their superfluous vigor by watching the killing streams, they will certainly behave and work dutifully, and society will be harmonious and stable.

“Almost all the hominoids are fond of watching the live streams of killing and are willing to tip with a great amount of money. Some even steal or rob other people just to give us gifts. I do not know what is on the mind of the hominoids, but it doesn’t matter. Money is money. Although the tips from every single hominoid are a drop in the bucket, the total turnover can be very high. This is the biggest reason

I’m willing to take part in the kill challenge in Slaughter Moment!”

“Got it,” Li Yao said. “In other words, such games have become an enormous industry in the Imperium of True Human Beings.”

“Exactly,” Liao Fei said. “It is an enormous industry that can affect the entire Imperium of True Human Beings. It is also a thriving, promising one. The royal family, the nobles, and almost all the big shots are investing heavily in it. Compared to them, I am just a shrimp and a most insignificant gear in the giant machine!”

Chapter 2004 - Paradise of Sins

Li Yao was silent for a while before he continued with a low, solemn, and inhuman voice. “Other than the ‘kill streamers’ like you, some more Immortal Cultivators seem to have landed here who call themselves ‘players’, right?”

Liao Fei was slightly dazed. He nodded and said, “Yes. A lot of people arrive in the paradise of sins every day. Usually, everybody is scattered across the planet. This time, word is that ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie, a local expert of the Land of Sins who distinguished himself recently, is going to attack Liberty City, an Elysian World. That’s why the players everywhere have gathered to enjoy the great game.”

“The paradise of sins?” Li Yao chewed on the name slowly. “For the locals born and raised here, this is a desolate land with natural-born sin, but for the ‘players’ like you, it is naturally a paradise. Then, besides the ‘killing streamers’ such as you, who else is out there?”

“Some are here for trials and competitions.” Liao Fei was referring to the players such as the Red Viper Squad. “The Imperium of True Human Beings worships competition. Advancing from academies of lower levels to those of higher levels for further studies, competing to be the heir of a major family, or to be admitted by great sects and corporations when you are a nobody, all those things require a decent result in trials.

“The Land of Sins is the perfect trial field. There are all kinds of monsters and brutal men, and one will encounter the least expected situations. This is the best place to test the comprehensive qualities and intuitional reactions of a trial-taker. Also, it is relatively secluded and controllable, which makes it easier to draft quests of different difficulties.

“Therefore, a lot of famous academies, families, and sects in the Imperium have been holding the trial missions and the advancement tests in the Land of Sins. Those examinations have a high credibility.

“For the rookies who have just left school, passing the tests in the Land of Sins will certainly be a highlight on their resume.

“Other than the ‘killing streamers’ and ‘trial takers’, there are also tourists…”

“Wait.” Li Yao frowned. “Tourists? Somebody actually comes here for sightseeing?”

“Of course.” Liao Fei smiled bitterly. “Life in the Imperium of True Human Beings is very difficult. Even the Immortal Cultivators are often faced with immense pressure. Not only do they have to carry out all kinds of dangerous tasks, but they also have to deal with the internal conflicts and conspiracies among themselves. While the high-level Immortal Cultivators above the Building Foundation Stage can live an extravagant life, those in the Refinement Stage and the Building Foundation Stage, especially when they are not sponsored by noble families and ancient sects, may find their life dull and boring.

“Those people from underprivileged families are at the bottom level of the Immortal Cultivators in the first place. Most of them do not have their fiefs and slaves to demonstrate their authority to. The majority of hominoids are not slaves, at least not in the legal sense. Even if they are slaves, they cannot be played with or butchered by the low-level Immortal Cultivators when they belong to an expert.

“Therefore, after the low-level Immortal Cultivators gain a sum of money and feel stressed out, they will often come for a vacation in the Land of Sins. After all, the people here are slaves of the slaves, nothing more than ants. With enough money, they can do whatever they want here.

“In fact, how many sinners in the Land of Sins are qualified to enjoy the so-called Elysian Worlds? Most of the extravagant entertainment is for the tourists.

“Naturally, if the tourists do not like sensual pleasure, they can also go on a killing spree in the Bloody Worlds. In the carefully-devised mission scenario, under the support of the most advanced magical equipment, even sinners multiple levels higher than them will be butchered and blown up by them easily like pigs and dogs, giving them the ultimate ecstasy of beating enemies far stronger than them!”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and said, “That explains a lot. The so-called ‘Bloody Worlds’ are actually not plagued by the fights of the sinners in most cases but the blatant massacres of the tourists.”

“Yes,” Liao Fei said matter-of-factly. “Those tourists pay a fortune to come to the paradise. Naturally, they will not be satisfied just by playing some three-legged whores in the ‘Elysian Worlds’. Those Immortal Cultivators in the Refinement Stage and the Building Foundation Stage experience too much chastisement and exploitation from the high-level Cultivators. They will not be gratified until they have vented all their anger.”

“Are there any other Immortal Cultivators? How many in total?” Li Yao asked.

“Other than the killing streamers, the trial takers, and the simple players, there should also be magical equipment testers as well as the staff and guards who are responsible for the functionality of the entire paradise,” Liao Fei said. “As for their total number… I’m not very certain about that. Planetwide, there should be around a hundred thousand.”

“This is not a planet with a huge population,” Li Yao said. “Reproduction is quite difficult in such a harsh environment. If a hundred thousand Immortal Cultivators are acting flagrantly here, there can never be enough sinners for you to kill, can there? Also, have you never been spotted by the locals?”

Liao Fei rolled his eyes and said, “The sinners locally born and raised are certainly far from enough to make up for the dead. Therefore, a lot of hominoid slaves and Immortal Cultivators who have committed felonies are shipped here from the other Sectors of the Imperium every year. After their memories are sealed, they are tossed down to make up the numbers. The Imperium has a large territory and population. This is not a problem.

“As for whether or not we have ever been spotted by the locals, of course we have. But what can they do even if they have? Nothing grows in the Land of Sins. Most of the resources have to be projected from the Heavenly Rails. As long as the transmission is cut off, even the most unparalleled experts have to grovel and cooperate with us obediently to erase other informants. Otherwise, they will only be erased altogether!”

“What is Manjusaka exactly?” Li Yao asked. “Is it true that the sinners here can get rid of their identity and become ‘angels’, or Immortal Cultivators?

“It is a restricted area. We are not allowed to approach,” Liao Fei said. “I’m told that it is a heavily-guarded prison and laboratory, in which the most dangerous men and beasts are locked. They are probably the best champions who have distinguished themselves in the cruel competitions in the Land of Sins.

“As for whether any of them can become an Immortal Cultivator, I have never seen any of such cases before.”

“Therefore,” Li Yao asked, “even if somebody helps ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie conquer Liberty City and is delivered to the City in the Sky, they will not become an Immortal Cultivator?”

“Of course not!” Liao Fei grinned hideously. “Master of the Elysian World? They are just dogs that we have tamed. If they listen to us obediently, we can give them a couple of bones, but how can they be equal to us?”

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao asked, “Right now, who is the highest controller of this ‘paradise of sins’?”

“That will be Wuying Lan, the helmsman of the ‘Heavenly Eye Group’,” Liao Fei answered.

“Wuying Lan? Is he from your royal family? Tell me all the intelligence you know about him.”

Liao Fei nodded and said, “Wuying Lan is indeed from the royal family, but he is not from the main bloodline. When it comes to his generation, the influence of his branch is too weak for him to compete for the supreme power. So, he has been ‘exiled’ to the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy to oversee the weapon test field and the magical equipment laboratory.

“It was supposed to be a redundant job, because the weapon test field and the magical equipment laboratory had been used for hundreds of years with all their value exploited. Also, the test field and the laboratory had their own supervisors, and there was barely any part he could meddle with. This job basically had no requirements or duties and was specifically designed to relocate the branches of the royal family. Whoever was exiled to the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy would essentially be gone from everyone’s sight forever!

“However, Wuying Lan was an ambitious and imaginative man. He was the one to come up with all the ideas to exploit the value of the Land of Sins.

“All in all, the planet was only revived because of Wuying Lan’s delicate operation. It has been developing at a high speed in the last hundred years under the support of many big shots. It is now one of the most important test bases for new magical equipment and techniques in the Imperium.

“Wuying Lan’s ‘Heavenly Eye Group’ also rose miraculously through the live streams. Now, it controls more than half of the betting businesses and media industry in the Imperium, transforming him from an unappreciated member of the royal family to one of the most influential people in the Imperium!”

Li Yao’s eyes were glittering. “So, Wuying Lan can be called the mastermind behind the ‘paradise of sins’ and the ‘chief director’ of the gory battle right now?”

“Yes!” Liao Fei nodded heavily.

“One last question. Have you ever heard of ‘Starlight’ and a Cultivator that has been lost for a thousand years?”

Liao Fei laughed. “Of course I have. It was only a legend in the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy at the beginning, but it is showing the sign of spreading throughout the entire Imperium now. Perhaps some guys with ill intentions have been disseminating it for clandestine purposes. Cultivators? They are a bunch of idiots who got themselves extinct more than a thousand years ago. What trouble can they possibly cause?”

“Got it now,” Li Yao said, while the bloody ocean began to bubble. “Thank you for your honest answers. There are some more questions that I would like to ask you, but due to the time limit, I think we will stop here.”

The bloody bubbles exploded one after another, releasing vague killing intent.

The smile on Liao Fei’s face gradually froze. With surprise and fear beaming out of his eyes, he stammered, “Wait. You promised that you wouldn’t kill me! There’s no reason for you to kill me! Whether you are an alien species or an expert among the sinners, you shouldn’t kill me! Without my help, you’ll never get away. You cannot escape from the Land of Sins. You cannot escape Wuying Lan’s dragnet! Just calm down and think about it!”

“Maybe.” The devil standing at the center of the bloody ocean put on a hideous smile and said casually, “However, who told you that I am going to run?”

Chapter 2005 - Recall Points

While Liao Fei was overwhelmed by devastation, enormous bloody bubbles popped up from the ocean and moved toward him, swallowing him one bite after another.

He struggled hard in the middle of the bloody bubbles, but he could not get rid of the skinny hands and the tentacles at all. Very soon, he was dragged into the depths of the blood ocean, and his screams turned into bubbling sounds before his soul was completely melted.

“What a ‘paradise’!” The mental devil grinned hideously. “It is indeed not a simple base to test new magical equipment and techniques. There are actually so many tricks behind it. This Wuying Lan is really a genius!”

“Indeed. Even my curiosity has been aroused. I want to meet this ‘Wuying Lan’ and explore the deepest secrets of the Imperium through him,” Li Yao said. “Also, I’m going to destroy the ‘paradise’ by the way!”

“According to Liao Fei, Manjusaka is a highly-dangerous prison and laboratory, which confirms our past speculation,” the mental devil said. “I predict that the strongest experts from the Land of Sins must be caged inside as ‘perfect test subjects’ screened naturally from the wilderness. When the mysteries of their body and soul are studied carefully, a lot of precious information and data will be found.”

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao said, “In that case, there must be ‘high-molecular layer-by-layer scanning magical equipment' up there. Also, those highly-dangerous 'perfect test subjects' can't be too happy about their fate. If we can find a way to sabotage the City in the Sky and set all of them free…"

The mental devil smiled. "Have you found a way to go to Manjusaka?"

"It is certainly not an option to fly directly into the place on our own," Li Yao said. "The Immortal Cultivators have deployed barriers of the highest level on the entire sky. Manjusaka is definitely the most focused upon. It is impossible for us to compete with the super array that covers the entire planet. Even if we can break in by force, should the Immortal Cultivators notice our existence and strengthen their defense, it will be difficult for us to do anything after.

"However, I'm thinking about something else. So many players and tourists have come from the sky. They can naturally count on the invisible landing cabins when they come, but how are they going to return? They cannot simply fly to the Heavenly Rails, which would be too eye-catching and seen by the sinners, right?

"Also, the 'Slaughter Game' in the Land of Sins has a high death rate. The odds of being heavily wounded can't be low. A lot of low-level Immortal Cultivators are incapable of flying into the clouds in the first place, and it will be even less possible for them to do so after they are heavily wounded.

"Therefore, there must be a secret and convenient channel that allows them to return to the Heavenly Rails comfortably."

"Well…" The mental devil pondered for a moment and said, "Right, the towers to the sky!"

Li Yao was thrilled. “Yes. Every Elysian World has an asset transmission tube that is made of high-tenacity fiber, porcelain, and metal. They are connected to the Heavenly Rails to ship assets on a large scale. I’ve been feeling that it’s peculiar since a few days back. However many assets the Heavenly Rails intend to deliver, they can just toss them down, and gravity will do all the work. Why would they bother to build so many towers that lead to the sky with so much effort?

“Come to think of it, the greatest function of the towers should be to carry the players and tourists of the Immortal Cultivators back up to the Heavenly Rails!

“In the jargon of virtual games, the towers and the Elysian Worlds are the ‘spawn points’ and ‘recall points’ for most players. Of course, some of the players are randomly ‘spawned’ in the wilderness, but they will have to go to the towers in the Elysian Worlds after they accomplish their quests and prepare to return to the Heavenly Rails.”

“There are also the ‘perfect test subjects’ in the Land of Sins.” The mental devil smiled. “Other than the sinners, a lot of mutated beasts that have evolved greatly are the targets for the Immortal Cultivators. Some of the beasts are even huger than a super-heavy crystal tank. Naturally, it is impossible for them to fly into the sky. They can only be shipped through the towers.

“It is well known that the high and mighty angels will issue all kinds of quests through the Elysian Worlds. According to my investigation, most of the quests concern hunting mutated beasts, which must be captured alive. Think about it. After the experts among the sinners catch a king of mutated beasts through their arduous effort and accumulate enough contribution points, they can be shipped to the City in the Sky together to be sliced and studied. Can it be any more convenient? It both saves the valuable strength of the Immortal Cultivators and will not raise the resistance of the sinners in the Land of Sins. To the last moment, the perfect experiment subjects still think that they will become angels and live a good life in their ignorance. Hehehe!”

“In that case…” Li Yao thought of something. “If we can find an opportunity to blend into the Immortal Cultivators or the perfect test subjects, we will be able to follow them to enter the Heavenly Rails through the towers. It is a chance to break into the City in the Sky, right?”

“There is one such tower in Liberty City. Also, after the Battle of Liberty City, a lot of players and Immortal Cultivator tourists will certainly return to the Heavenly Rails and leave the planet,” the mental devil said. “If we can grasp or even create an opportunity to transform the Battle of Liberty City into mayhem, there will be a chance for us to sneak into the dirty water.”

“Indeed. Then, let’s continue lurking and waiting for an opportunity to fight with this Wuying Lan, the helmsman of the Heavenly Eye Group!”

Li Yao finished the communication with the mental devil and focused his attention on the outside world again.

A long time seemed to have passed when he invaded Liao Fei’s brain and established a bizarre, frightening illusion, but it had actually only taken three minutes.

However, during those three minutes, a lot of changes had taken place on the battlefield.

With the cover of the enormous airborne fire platform, Li Yao pushed Liao Fei’s body into the burning remnant without alarming anyone. He then tossed more than ten crystal bombs into it, blowing Liao Fei into bloody dust in the surging fire and smoke.

On the frontal defense line, however, the Fist King's troop retreated like an ebbing tide. The defenders of Liberty City seemed to have high morale and were chasing the enemy, reaping their lives unstoppably.

Li Yao had long known from the Fist King's battle formation earlier that it would only be a test attack today in order to locate the weaknesses of Liberty City's defense line. He was not surprised by the result.

What gave him a headache was that one of the elite troops from Liberty City was charging in his direction.

“Run!”

Since he had been unmistakably informed that everything was just a game for the Immortal Cultivators and that the sinners' battlefield was a paradise for the angels, Li Yao was naturally uninterested in fighting the ignorant sinners under the watch of so many viewers.

However, the moment he was about to run away at full speed, he noticed a familiar shadow by the scanning of his crystal camera.

It was Xin Xiaoqi, who had involved them in everything by accident and called herself a thief, a broker, and a black market dealer.

Li Yao hesitated for a moment, considering carefully if he should waste one second to save Xin Xiaoqi's life. Compared to the atrocious bandits, the woman was not exactly an unpardonable person. When faced with the Red Viper

Squad, despite her extreme fear, she still gritted her teeth to speak up for Han Te and Liu Li.

In the Land of Sins, those who had the slightest kindness in them were as rare as the Gold Barley that grew in loneliness. Li Yao did not want such Gold Barley to be completely obliterated in the radiation and blood.

At the same time, Xin Xiaoqi noticed Li Yao.

As if she had seen a life-saver, she shouted and ran at him.

The cat-like woman, like the first time they met, was still dodging and fleeing agilely with the spring-like propulsion magical equipment, evading from the blades and bullets. Although her movement looked rather disgraceful, she was miraculously unharmed.

Li Yao stopped hesitating. While boosting the power rune arrays to the maximum efficiency, making sure that he could run at full speed, he extended a mechanical arm at her and picked her up.

Right when Li Yao took action, an ear-splitting explosion burst out. From the smoke behind Xin Xiaoqi, four furiously burning crystal tanks were blown away, and a dark shadow almost five meters tall suddenly dashed out of the overwhelming scraps and remnants.

After the smoke was gone, a hideous monster was revealed. The lower half was a coldly-shining metal chassis, with six agile mechanical limbs that were fully embedded with iron nails and thorns. In the front, there were six honeycomb-type flying sword launches. Starry redness could be found on the launch holes of the flying swords, making them look like the crimson eyes of venomous spiders.

The upper half was a human covered in black hair who was wearing thick armor like an iron tower. He was holding an armor-penetrating cannon specially designed for crystal tanks at ease in one hand and a vibration hammer that could automatically extend in the other hand.

At this moment, the hammer was still vibrating at a frequency of more than five times per second, shattering the blood stains on it into a cluster of mists!

At first glance, it was like a beast puppet in the form of a metal spider had been transplanted onto the abnormal body of a serious mutant!

“Hehehe!”

The half-monster, half-machine bandit uttered low chuckles. His hammer tore apart the air, triggering rings of blasts, before it was thrown to where Li Yao was at an unbelievable speed.

Xin Xiaoqi shrieked and clutched Li Yao’s iron shell in panic.

What the f*ck is this?

Li Yao cursed loudly in his heart and retreated rapidly. The powerful hammer brushed past his face narrowly, smashing a crater more than three meters in diameter on the ground. The dead bodies and remnants around all bounced, as if they had lost the boundary of gravity in that moment.

It was truly happening. Li Yao noticed that the powerful hammer in the monster’s hand was also a rare piece of magical equipment. Other than the powerful blow and the high-frequency vibration, it employed a gravity disruption technique to some extent, which allowed it to disrupt the gravity in a range of about twenty square meters!

Things somehow got tricky.

Chapter 2006 - The Weird Fist King

If he fought without any restraint, Li Yao certainly would not be scared of the half-monster, half-machine guy.

However, he was surrounded by countless bandits and thugs, which probably had a lot of Immortal Cultivator players and tourists mixed in. As a ‘ragged’ spiritual puppet, did he have any reason to kill the guy instantly before everybody’s eyes?

The smoke above his head grew thinner and thinner. Any unexpected moves might be noticed by the Immortal Cultivators.

Anxious, Li Yao pretended to stagger and dodge the blasts of the powerful hammer somewhat clumsily again and again. His enormous body shook like a lone boat on a surging ocean due to the blasts and gravity interference. It seemed that he would be blown apart at any moment.

But it was not going to work out just like that.

With his camouflage, there was no reason he could have avoided so many attacks.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The enemy’s ten or so attacks failed to smash Li Yao into smithereens. He could not help but burst into fury. The honeycomb-type launcher at the front of his lower body raised a lightning storm and drowned Li Yao immediately.

Li Yao gritted his teeth in fury in the smoke and fire. He almost made up his mind to kill the guy. If he was left with no choice, he could only release abundant smoke grenades to disrupt the battlefield and blow the monster into a pulp in one attack.

However, such a decision would be very risky. Judging from the strength of the monster, he seemed to be a notorious expert on Liberty City's side. Many people would pay attention to the cause of his death, which might bring Li Yao endless trouble. Li Yao's plan to sneak into the City in the Sky might have to be aborted before it was carried out!

What could he do?

Right then, the lightning storm came to an abrupt end, and the whole world seemed frozen in steel.

A cluster of turbulence swirls, however, was generated right inside the frozen steel!

Li Yao's soul spread out, only to discover that a great wall of steel had risen abruptly before him and stopped the enemy's crazy bombardment.

After a slight daze, he realized that it was just his imagination caused by the daunting aura of the newcomer. The guy who fell from the sky and crashed between him and the monster was none other than 'Fist King' Lei Zonglie!

The Fist King's brown cape had long been torn into shreds, and his metal shell had turned into hot, steaming redness, like a heap of iron that had been heated.

The intimidating air that felt almost tangible condensed into colorful swirls around him, making him look like not an individual but an army of thousands of soldiers!

On his iron shell, thousands of rune arrays had been carved densely. At this moment, every rune array was shining, quaking, and roaring, as if they were about to float from his body and form another layer of glittering, invincible rune armor!

The overwhelming pressure froze all the enemy's tiny flying swords and explosive bullets in midair. Some of them were even detonated into a dazzling fire wall.

The opposing monster was apparently frightened, but he could not stop his body from waving the hammer at the highest speed and smashing it over like a rushing meteor because of the inertia of fury and bloodthirst.

Boom! Boom!

The earth below the Fist King's feet exploded, and the rocks and mud rose like a spring. His immaculate body made of strengthened alloys was bent like an enormous dragon prowling in an abyss, and all his strength was poured into the fist on his waist.

Li Yao even felt as if the fist was alive. It was absorbing the strength of the mountains, the oceans, the sky, the earth, and the entire world while roaring with the utmost hunger and thirst!

The Fist King's fist was activated!

There was no sound at all. The Fist King's fist was much faster than sound when it hit the hammer right in front precisely. The force was not entirely destructive but simply blew the hammer backward in one piece.

Before the hammer was blown back to its master, the Fist King's second punch had arrived.

After the acceleration of the waving during the first punch, that was his real fatal move!

After the punch, the air within dozens of meters seemed to have been pumped away. Even the ground collapsed quite a few centimeters, with countless cracks ripped out. Li Yao felt as if he had sensed the barrage of the main guns of a crystal warship right next to the shell of the turrets at the closest distance!

He looked at the opposite side, only to discover that the half-machine and half-monster bandit did not even have the time to scream before his upper body was blown into smithereens by the Fist King’s punch. The only thing left was a bloodstained chassis that was still twitching.

The Fist King’s strength, however, continued marching past the chassis, digging a ravine more than one meter deep with hot steam popping up nonstop.

In the punch’s effective range, which was almost a hundred meters, all the bandits were killed because of internal bleeding. Even a lot of bandits who were lashed by the blast from the side were blown away, vomiting blood with pale faces. Their combat ability was entirely gone.

That was only one punch. The Fist King truly deserves his fame!

Li Yao’s soul shook hard like a quickly-beating heart as he complimented in secret. ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie was truly the strongest spectral Cultivator he had ever seen. There was really no telling what kind of uncanny techniques or secret arts he had been practicing to grow to such a formidable level!

Perhaps the Immortal Cultivators were also interested in the answer to the question. That was why they had instigated chaos in secret and arranged the Battle of Liberty City.

“Xiahou Wuxin!” Lei Zonglie blew up countless hostile warriors in the hundred square meters after only one punch and stopped the enemy from further pursuing them outside of the city. Then, he roared thunderously at Liberty City’s direction, “I’ll spare your life today, but if you still do not dare to duel with me outside of the city tomorrow, don’t blame me for razing the entire Liberty City to the ground!”

As the thunderous declaration rumbled out, none of the defenders, excluding the Immortal Cultivator players, had the courage to move forward and challenge the Fist King.

“Fall back!”

The Fist King looked at Li Yao and waved his hands, personally covering the retreat so that the army could evacuate from the battlefield in order.

Li Yao shuddered in coldness, feeling that the Fist King’s eyes were particularly thoughtful.

Perhaps his pretend clumsiness but actual casualness when he dodged the monster’s attacks had been seen through by the Fist King.

…

Han Te and Liu Li finally woke up, only to discover that they were in the secret chamber on the top floor of Great Iron City, where the Fist King collected his spiritual puppets.

‘Grandpa Yao’ was next to them, and ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie still sat on the throne of gears majestically and stared at them without saying anything.

Other than them, there was not another person in the room.

The two little fellows were alarmed. They looked at Li Yao in confusion at the same time.

“Don’t look at me like that. I don’t know what is going on either!” Li Yao’s soul was almost soaked in cold sweat. “The attack has come to an end. Just now, the Fist King took action in person and saved us from a monster. Then he ordered his subordinates to bring us here. Who knows what he is up to? I estimate that he has probably grown suspicious of me. You looking at me with such confusion and eagerness for answers is essentially telling the Fist King that there is something greatly wrong about me!”

The two little fellows were dazed. It was not until then that they realized that they had made a great mistake. Not knowing how they should make up for it, they became extremely awkward.

Compared to a giant of the Land of Sins like ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie, the two of them were too insignificant, to the point that they were absolutely incapable of fighting back.

Li Yao was secretly considering what ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie was up to exactly.

He reached a similar conclusion because of his senses and intuition. The Fist King seemed to have a certain uncanny ‘interest’, if not subtle ‘fondness’, in him.

He can’t really be a pervert, can he?

Li Yao’s soul felt creeped out.

Seeing that the two little fellows had woken up and their subtle interaction with Li Yao, the Fist King appeared even more thoughtful. He said casually, “The monster I killed in one punch just now was named ‘Bloody Butcher’ Lei Kuang, one of the seven most famous thugs under Xiahou Wuxin.

“Although we failed to break into Liberty City today, we have figured out the details of the enemy’s battle formation and slain a general as famous as ‘Bloody Butcher’ Lei Kuang. So, it is essentially a minor victory for us.

“It shouldn’t have been as easy to kill such a tough person. It was all thanks to your effective distraction that he burst into fury and made a bad call. He did not notice my arrival, which gave me the opportunity to kill him in one punch. So, the two of you have made a major contribution!”

Han Te had Liu Li looked at each other in bewilderment, not having the vaguest clue what the Fist King was talking about.

Li Yao thought to himself quickly. The Fist King was apparently making an excuse to speak to them, or rather, to him, in private.

In fact, considering the world-overturning punches that the Fist King had launched, if he had made up his mind to kill ‘Bloody Butcher’ Lei Kuang, unless the leader of Liberty City had shown up in person, or dozens of players of Immortal Cultivators attacked him at the same time, how could the guy have not been killed?

“I believe in giving rewards when rewards are due. Whatever your origins and background are, as long as you have made contributions, you must be rewarded properly!”

Staring at the two little fellows, the Fist King suddenly changed the topic. “However, you two look rather young and juvenile, and you do not seem the same as the other members of the Red Viper Squad, right?”

Regarding their origins, Han Te, Liu Li, and Xin Xiaoqi had long agreed on a standard answer. They immediately replied half truthfully and half falsely, “For your information, Fist King, we were indeed not the same team at the beginning, but we were all joining your army from different directions. When we were attacked by the Flying Leopard Hall on our way, they saved us. As it happened, we had an invitation card with us. So, we decided to make a team and look after each other.”

Such temporary teams had been established all the time during the Fist King’s recruitment. It was not strange at all.

“That explains a lot.” The Fist King’s voice became even gentler, which was rather incompatible with his intimidating body size. “Don’t get me wrong. I have known Xin Xiaoqi for a long time. She also once took quests from me and helped me deliver invitation cards to many major forces. So, I’m not suspicious about you, just curious.

“You must be very hungry after a day of fierce fights. Come on. Let’s eat while we talk!”

Chapter 2007 - Crystal Clear

The Fist King pushed two square metal boxes toward the two little fellows and opened them softly. The most intense fragrance immediately spread out. Inside the boxes was hot, colorful food.

It was not sticky, muddy, unrecognizable synthesized food. Instead, there was natural meat whose fibers were clearly visible and vegetables that were a hundred times more precious than the meat!

Ravenousness immediately beamed out of the two little fellows’ eyes.

While natural meat was rare in the Land of Sins, there were hundreds of types of mutated beasts to be hunted and butchered after all, but vegetables were something that most people had never heard of before. The relief assets sent from the Heavenly Rails mostly consisted of synthesized food of suspicious origins. Although it could provide enough energy, it tasted as bad as wax. Vegetables and cereals were legendary food that most people had never tasted in their entire life.

Han Te and Liu Li looked at each other in bewilderment. Their stomachs immediately began to rumble in hunger.

“Help yourselves.”

The Fist King made a ‘please’ gesture, truly like an amiable uncle-next-door.

Li Yao felt creeped out. He did not have the slightest idea what the Fist King's goal was. Even if the man had seen through his camouflage, it was not a big deal for the tough bandits and thugs in the Land of Sins to change their names and appearances because they had made far too many enemies. Why on earth was the Fist King pursuing the issue so diligently at such a critical moment?

However, with the Fist King's strength and power, if he intended to find out the truth of an issue, it was impossible for two youngsters like Han Te and Liu Li to resist.

Li Yao sighed and secretly sent a message to Han Te's and Liu Li's heads. "Just eat. Whatever the Fist King asks, just answer it truthfully. Do not think that you can fool him."

Han Te and Liu Li swallowed hard simultaneously before they began to wolf the food down without delay.

As a ghost, the Fist King considered crystals and spiritual liquids as the source of energy and naturally could not eat food. He simply looked at the two little fellows gulping down the food like gluttons, and it was not until their mouths had been stuffed with meat and vegetables that he remarked, "According to the sheets you filled in, you are from a place called the Village of Peace at the edge of the Thousand Lakes Area near Double Dragons City. The place should be a Desolate World, right? But your invitation card was supposed to be delivered to Double Dragons City."

The two little fellows immediately stopped chewing and blinked fast.

"Don't be scared," the Fist King said. "Survival of the fittest is the natural law in the Land of Sins. I've sent invitation cards to a lot of forces everywhere in the Land of Sins to summon heroes of the world to attack Liberty City together, but to be honest, I don’t really care who exactly comes with those invitation cards.

“Whoever passes through the entire Bloody Plateau and arrives at Great Iron City has proved themselves worthy enough to share the glory of conquering Liberty City!

“On the other hand, the incompetent garbage who cannot even protect their invitation cards would be useless even if they came here. Will they be of any help other than disrupting the organization and morale?

“Therefore, it doesn’t matter whom your invitation card belonged to at the beginning. It is now in your hands. So, it is yours.

“I am just a little bit curious. Double Dragons City is just an insignificant town at the edge of the Bloody Worlds and makes its living by levying taxes on the business activities that pass through the city. But in any case, the ten or so gangs occupying the place have fought through mountains of corpses and oceans of blood. They are all the most ferocious desperadoes.

“The Village of Peace… should only be a settlement of civilians in a Desolate World, right? However strong you may be, how on earth could you have robbed them of their invitation card?

“Also, it’s been almost a month since you arrived at Great Iron City, but not a third person from Double Dragons City ever came. It’s obvious that the gangs lurking there were annihilated by you, leaving no survivors, which makes me even more curious about how exactly you did it.”

Han Te chewed hard and struggled to swallow a large piece of meat. He stammered, “The gangs in Double Dragons City wanted to capture the sinners in dozens of villages nearby as cannon fodder. Left with no choice, we could only fight them! Later, well, some of them seemed to be thinking of joining the leader of Liberty City. A civil war broke out, and they seriously devastated each other among themselves. We took the opportunity and suppressed all the gangs!”

“I imagined so.” The Fist King nodded and gestured for the two little fellows to continue eating. Then he suddenly changed the topic. “However, did the cunning gangs so easily begin a large-scale fight among themselves, to the point that everybody was wounded and exhausted? There must’ve been a key to the whole incident. It was probably the spiritual puppet right next to you.”

Han Te and Liu Li only just took a breath in relief when they shuddered in fear again at the Fist King’s new insight. The food that they had just eaten was stuck in their throats, neither going up nor sinking down. They were both blushing in suffocation.

Li Yao, however, was not surprised. It was very incredible for the Village of Peace to crush the many gangs in Double Dragons City after all. Whoever was suspicious of the issue could find many loopholes after they investigated.

He was becoming more and more curious about the Fist King’s aim.

There were almost ten thousand iron fibers as thin as hairs on the Fist King’s mask, which allowed him to make the movement of a ‘smile’ vividly. He was even able to look at Li Yao with obvious passion when he said to the two little fellows, “Because of their unstable performance and the difficulty of control, spiritual puppets that boast functions of automatic learning and upgrading are rare to come by nowadays. I did not know that there was such a well-preserved one in your desolate village. Where did you get it in the beginning?”

Han Te and Liu Li looked at each other. Hinted by Li Yao, they replied dutifully, “It was picked up by us from some ruins not long ago. It seems to be a war puppet made before ‘Judgment Day’ and is embedded with a military crystal processor with remarkable performance. All in all, we do not need to operate it specifically. As long as it is given a basic instruction, it will automatically complete the task.”

The Fist King looked at Li Yao and said, “Therefore, to some extent, you can simulate the style of human beings and communicate with them?”

“Yes,” Li Yao said coldly.

His patience and curiosity had both reached their limits.

His crystal cameras and the Fist King’s flashed quickly in a similar frequency, raising invisible sparks in their collisions in midair that looked like a transparent rain of fire.

Li Yao was a hundred percent certain that the Fist King had learned that he was not a common spiritual puppet or war machine.

But out of his expectations, the Fist King did not pursue it any further and simply retreated his scorching gaze. Shifting the topic back to the two little fellows again, he said, “I can tell that the two of you are not enthusiastic about power or killing. Then, what exactly are you hoping to get from the war? Tell me. I may be able to help you.”

Han Te and Liu Li looked at each other, both finding it hard to believe their ears. They felt that their heads were dizzy as if they had been hit right in the face by a tank named ‘luck’.

Han Te hurried to wipe his mouth and said, “W-we are hoping to ask for your protection for the Village of Peace. As long as your banner flies in the sky of the Village of Peace, no gang will ever be bold enough to bully us!”

“That’s all?” the Fist King said casually.

“Also…” Han Te hesitated for a moment. Then, with intense determination beaming out of his eyes, he said firmly, “I want to go to Manjusaka, the City in the Sky. I will not have an opportunity unless I join your army and help you conquer Liberty City!”

“Exactly.” Perhaps the Fist King’s gentle attitude and the delicious meal had shortened the distance between them. Liu Li summoned her courage and added, “I want to go to the City in the Sky, too. After you conquer Liberty City, would you help us find a way to go up there? Please.”

“The City in the Sky?” Looking at the two little fellows’ excitement, the Fist King seemed frustrated. He asked in disappointment, “Why do you want to go there at the risk of your life? You want to be the high and mighty angels, too?”

“Not exactly.” Han Te stared at his clenched fists. “I couldn’t care less about angels and whatnot. I only want to look for the truth in Manjusaka.”

The Fist King was slightly dazed. Then his crystal cameras glittered so hard that they were almost on fire. “What truth?”

“My sister went to the City in the Sky three years ago, never to be heard from again. I want to find my sister in the City in the Sky and ask her what happened in the past three years,” Han Te said solemnly. “Not just my sister, few of the people who have supposedly risen to the City in the Sky have ever returned. Why? Is Manjusaka such a splendid place that everybody forgets their hometown and family?

“A-also, the world we are living in, the desolate land, the sealed sky… I want to find out the truth about everything!

“Ever since my childhood, I have been standing on the ground, craning my neck to look at the supreme the City in the Sky. Now, I want to know what the view will be if I look down at the land from the City in the Sky!”

“That is really…” Subtle emotions spread out of the Fist King’s artificial eyes. He turned his metal head to Liu Li and asked, “Little girl, is it the same for you?”

“I am different from my senior brother.” Liu Li shook her head. “I’m told that the angels are omnipotent. I want to go to the City in the Sky to find a way to grow the Gold Barley across the Land of Sins!”

The Fist King was stunned again. “The Gold Barley?”

“Yes. Like this.” Liu Li took out a lead-plated can from a satchel attached to her waist and opened it carefully, revealing the seeds of the Gold Barley inside that looked like grains of sand. She smiled. “The Gold Barley is one of the few crops that can take root and sprout in all kinds of polluted and barren environments. If we can modify it and make it robust enough to be grown all over the Land of Sins, everybody will be able to fill their stomach, and there will probably be fewer conflicts!”

Chapter 2008 - Shocking Ambition!

The Fist King was stunned for a long time before Liu Li’s eyes that were as clear as water. Amused, he observed, “It’s been a long time since I’ve seen two youngsters as interesting as you. You want to appease the conflicts and carnage in the Land of Sins? Well, come with me!”

The Fist King turned around and walked to his metal throne made of gears and chains. After he pulled a lever on the back of the throne, all the gears began to spin in squeaky noises.

The throne gradually disintegrated and was reshaped during the spinning, changing into a spiral ladder that led to the rooftop of Great Iron City.

The dome of Great Iron City blossomed slowly like petals, revealing the deep, dark night sky that was half illuminated by the blood red lights from Manjusaka.

The Fist King led the two little fellows to climb the stairs and reached the peak of Great Iron City, at an altitude of almost a hundred meters on the Bloody Plateau.

Wind was blowing like a surging tide from all directions. The two little fellows staggered and almost fell from the high fortress.

The mountains far away were like decayed corpses that were releasing black mist.

As far as their eyes could see, their own camp below their feet and Liberty City opposite them were both ablaze with lights. All the thugs and bandits were taking every second to examine their magical equipment, treat their wounds, and stuff more high-energy synthesized food into their bellies, preparing for the battle the following dawn.

Collisions of weapons, clicks of bullets when loaded, vibration noises when the chainswords and the vibration sabers were activated, the laughter and curses of the people, the screams of the wounded, and the howls of the mutated beasts… All the sounds congregated into a melody of blood that could only be heard in the abyss at the deepest level of hell.

At the center of the two battle formations, on the battlefield that witnessed a fierce battle during the day, broken stones and remnants were scattered and everywhere to be seen.

To this moment, the fuel and ammunition inside the remnants of a lot of crystal tanks were still smoldering. Glamorous fireballs burst out every once in a while, adding to the hazy atmosphere of the night.

Illuminated under the colorful fire, the stealthy will-o'-the-wisp, mixed with the broken souls of the deceased, danced creepily like the drowned before they gradually dispersed and were gone for good from the cruel world.

As they looked down at everything, it was both like an evil fairytale and an absurd joke. Han Te and Liu Li shuddered coldly at the same time beyond their control.

When they looked from such a high altitude, humans were truly no longer humans but incomplete yet aggressive pawns.

“Do you see those people?” With his hands behind his back, the Fist King stared at the two parties who were busy preparing for the war and casually said, “They are so rapacious, so desperate, and so careless about the lives of other people as well as their own. Do you really think that they want to stab chainswords into each other’s stomachs and mince the enemy’s internal organs into pieces only because they are not fed?”

Han Te and Liu Li were silent.

“Even if you truly grow the Gold Barley across the entire land and give enough food to everybody, including the crying toddlers and the strengthless old men, making sure that nobody will weep at night because of hunger, it will still be useless. There will still be as many contradictions, massacres, and wars!

“Perhaps this Land of Sins has been created for wars, and all the ‘sinners’ are born for fighting. Wars are our destiny. This is the ultimate law of this world that nobody can change or avoid. You can only choose to kill or to be killed!”

Sensing the rising aura from the Fist King’s metal shell, Han Te and Liu Li trembled even harder, but as his anxiety surpassed a certain level, Han Te somehow calmed down. There was no telling where he found the courage, but he gritted his teeth and asked, “Master Fist King, are wars so interesting? Do you really like wars so much?”

“Yes, I love wars.” The Fist King grinned. The smile condensed by metal muscle fibers was a hundred times more terrifying and violent than the laughter of regular bandits. “I love the feeling of punching somebody’s face and mixing their broken skull with their brains. I love the flying flesh and blood from a chainsword that looks like a blossoming flower. I love the smell of a burning body. I love the barrage of crystal cannons and the glow when ten thousand mystic ray launchers are activated at the same time… I love everything in a war. Hehe. Hehehe!”

Rendered speechless, Han Te was defeated.

Liu Li, however, held onto the can of the Gold Barley seeds and said softly but firmly, “But we feel that the world is not supposed to be like this. One day, we will find a way to completely stop all the wars in the Land of Sins!”

“What an audacious little girl.” The Fist King’s smile got more and more creepy. He extended his metal face to Liu Li and said, “The entire Land of Sings is a ceaseless battlefield. All the sinners are predestined to fight until their death from the moment they are born. How do you want to stop it? There is only one way if you hope to completely terminate the wars in the Land of Sins!”

Han Te and Liu Li were both stunned. They lost their calmness and exclaimed, “What is it?”

The Fist King opened his arms, as if he was hugging the entire Land of Sins. His face turned from a smile into utmost solemnity. “Conflicts have never stopped in the Land of Sins. The major forces have been killing and fighting for the Elysian Worlds for hundreds of years without any change.

“You cannot expect to make them stop killing each other with the ridiculous Gold Barley. The only solution is very simple. All that is needed is an unprecedented expert, who will gather all the forces into an invincible, indestructible army to conquer the Desolate Worlds, the Bloody Worlds, and the Elysian Worlds!

“If the entire Land of Sins obeys the iron fist of one expert, your wish will naturally be fulfilled. There will be no killing or wars!”

Han Te and Liu Li looked at each other in bewilderment, feeling coldness leaking out from the deepest parts of their bones. They eyed the Fist King as if he were a lunatic.

“No. I almost forgot. There’s still that.” The Fist King grinned and extended one of his metal fingers to point at the night sky. “Even if an expert can unite the entire Land of Sins and conquer all the gangs and Elysian Worlds, it is impossible to end all wars because Manjusaka, the City in the Sky, still exists! It will not be the last war until the high and mighty City in the Sky is conquered, will it?”

Han Te swallowed hard and panted. “Master Fist King, do you want to unite the Land of Sins?”

The Fist King laughed without a sound, baring his glittering teeth. “Probably. Liberty City will only be my start point. After I trample on Liberty City, I will march to other Elysian Worlds and swallow each and every one of them until I go to confront the City in the Sky!

“So, I’m afraid that I can provide little help if you intend to go to the City in the Sky. But maybe it will be shot down by me someday, and you can look for your answers from the debris of the City in the Sky!”

“You—You want to shoot the City in the Sky down?” Liu Li blurted out.

“Have you never thought of the idea before?” Looking at the bloody Flower of the Other Shore in the sky, the Fist King said, “Have you never felt that its light hurts your eyes, and you need to shoot it down with your cannon to drag the ‘angels’ out and check how different they are from us?”

Han Te trembled and stammered, “B-but all our assets are from the City in the Sky. I don’t think that a battle against the City in the Sky will succeed, will it?”

“What does it matter?” the Fist King replied. “Wars with a guaranteed victory are boring. Only a war that cannot be won is worthy enough for me to challenge and enjoy!”

Han Te and Liu Li fell silent again. After a moment, they asked at the same time, “Master Fist King, why are you telling us such things? W-we are just two nobodies not worth mentioning at all!”

“No reason. Perhaps I am just too excited now that I am about to embark on the quest of my destiny, and I needed to chat with some nobodies about it. Or maybe…”

Looking at the two little fellows, the Fist King’s scorching eyes surpassed their shoulders and fell on Li Yao, who was not far away. “Maybe it is because I noticed that we are the same type of person. We are all insane lunatics!”

Han Te and Liu Li felt that their faces were burning. Although they were rather flattered, they vaguely realized that the Fist King’s words were probably not meant for them but for ‘Grandpa Yao’.

The Fist King and Grandpa Yao were the same type of person. What kind of riddle were the two of them playing?

The two little fellows did not have the vaguest clue however hard they thought.

Not just them, even Li Yao was baffled by what the Fist King had tried to say. He only vaguely felt that ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie seemed to have misunderstood something…

“Today, we have found the weaknesses of Liberty City,” the Fist King said, “but my army consists of unfocused, unorganized mobsters except for the elites from the Godly Fist Union. It is impossible for us to besiege the enemy and wage a war of attrition.

“While the morale is still high, we must launch the real attack tomorrow. The fighting then will be a hundred times more gruesome than today and not suitable for two youngsters from the Desolate Worlds such as yourselves. So, you can stay inside my Great Iron City with this spiritual puppet!”

Li Yao was surprised again. Han Te and Liu Li were even more perplexed, wondering why the Fist King treated them so friendly.

“But our companions…” Han Te and Liu Li hesitated.

“I’ll naturally keep your companions by my side. They will certainly get a chance to play their part.”

Waving his hands, the Fist King said irrefutably, “After all, your team is only a temporary one. I don’t think that they will care about where you have been. After Liberty City is taken, let’s talk more about our ridiculous dreams!”

A long time after the Fist King’s back disappeared into the darkness inside Great Iron City, Han Te and Liu Li were still not back to themselves.

“Grandpa Yao…”

They looked at Li Yao with the utmost confusion.

“I do not know what is going on at all.” Li Yao smiled bitterly. “However, I somehow feel that ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie is keeping a secret, and the secret is… somehow related to me to some degree?”

Chapter 2009 - City Against City!

During the long conversation, Li Yao had been thinking hard on why ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie had been showing friendly gestures to him.

But he could not figure out the answer no matter how hard he thought. He did not know what the purpose of the famous, intimidating ‘Fist King’ was at all.

Li Yao was of a mind to go to Lei Zonglie for a sincere talk or even reveal the truth of the Land of Sins to him.

After all, from what Lei Zonglie had said just now, he could easily tell that the spectral Cultivator was a disobedient, unrestrained lunatic who would in no way allow the angels, or the Immortal Cultivators, to sh*t on his neck without doing anything.

But he did not know what kind of surveillance the Immortal Cultivators had imposed on Lei Zonglie and if they would grow suspicious about himself after the two of them met. If he was locked onto by the Immortal Cultivators, it would be quite a headache.

After thinking for a long time, Li Yao planned to wait until the fierce fight tomorrow was over. Or maybe he could find an opportunity in the middle of the fierce fight when the battlefield was occupied by turbulent spiritual waves and smoke to communicate with Lei Zonglie without alarming anybody else and tell the guy part of the truth.

Getting to the bottom of it, Li Yao quite admired the crazy man.

Born and raised in a paradise of slaughter, he did not limit his ambition to becoming the master of a tiny Elysian World. Instead, he wanted to unite the Land of Sins and even shoot down the City in the Sky!

His ambition that bordered on arrogance was enough for Li Yao to raise a thumb for him. At least, the man was ten thousand times better than the ignorant, animalistic bandits.

It was a shame that ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie had terribly underestimated the dreadfulness of the Immortal Cultivators.

The City in the Sky was only one millionth of the Immortal Cultivators’ strength. Beyond the infinite firmament that had been blocked, an enormous Imperium of True Human Beings was still standing!

The Immortal Cultivators had probably long noticed the Fist King’s ambition, but like a mantis waving its forelegs at a tank, he did not scare the Immortal Cultivators at all but was simply considered to be a rather interesting game.

If Li Yao had not arrived in the Land of Sins by chance, the Fist King’s ambition would never be realized. Perhaps, in Liberty City, the very first stop after he embarked on his journey, he would be exterminated by the ‘players’ and the ‘tourists’ in mockery and disdain.

But for right now…

Whether ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie is a ferocious bandit or not, he is at least a tough man with a backbone.

Such a tough man deserved to die valiantly in a real battlefield if he had to be killed instead of being insulted, tricked, and suffocated by the Immortal Cultivators as a chess piece and a toy!

The pride, dignity, courage, ambition, and even craziness of human beings when they were faced with the vast sky—Li Yao would never watch the Immortal Cultivators to stomp on them. Never!

“We want to sabotage ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’, and the Fist King is planning to do the same thing,” the mental devil said. “This is an ally that we can temporarily cooperate with. Also, I vaguely felt that his strength is a hundred times higher than what he demonstrated during the fight with ‘Bloody Butcher’ Lei Kuang during the day. He seems to have sealed and camouflaged his real strength with some sort of special art. I don’t know how to describe it, but it feels like he is only in his ‘first form’ right now!”

“Are you serious?” Li Yao’s soul released glamorous brilliance as he was greatly interested. “In that case, it will be very exciting. The Immortal Cultivators are under the impression that everything in the Land of Sins is within their control. Little do they know that nobody can control everything!

“The Fist King does not look like a bragger. So, on what grounds is he confident in conquering all the Elysian Worlds and even waging a war on the City in the Sky, and why is he subtly showing friendliness to us?

“The answer to everything will probably be revealed tomorrow, won’t it?”

On the sleepless night, Li Yao quietly warmed up his soul and revitalized it.

Chances were that he would have to unleash all his strength tomorrow in a gratifying battle to smash the man-eating ‘paradise’ into smithereens!

When the glimmers of dawn shot into the room through the observation hole on the top of Great Iron City, the soul-stirring sirens and thunderous sounds echoed again.

This time, even the floor below their feet was shaking hard in fulminations.

Li Yao, Han Te, and Liu Li looked out through the observation holes, only to discover that the earth was retreating quickly and that the rocks and mud ahead of Great Iron City were moving sideways only to be crushed into powder by the sixteen enormous tracks.

Leading the charge, Great Iron City was moving at Liberty City at a high speed!

Nobody expected that the Fist King would be so insane that he had transformed a battle to attack the city into a collision of two cities!

The sirens and thunderous noises grew louder and louder, almost ripping apart and detonating every part of Li Yao’s, Han Te’s, and Liu Li’s souls!

It was needless to mention the bandits and thugs who did not enjoy enough fighting yesterday. Seeing that Great Iron City was running at Liberty City unstoppably, they knew that it was the day to go all out. They would either become the new masters of the Elysian World or die without a burial. The brutality deep inside their bones was activated, and their morale became higher than ever. Like a million maddened beasts, they followed Great Iron City closely and charged forward!

Smoke and airwaves spread out, and the roars of chainswords and vibration sabers echoed among the clouds!

Even the battlefield seemed unable to bear the astonishing morale of the Fist King's army. The air was filled with the smell of burning sulfur!

"Look!" Liu Li suddenly pointed at the Star Plasma Cannon right in the front of Great Iron City.

On the enormous cannon that looked like an enlarged, erect male organ, 'Fist King' Lei Zonglie held his arms and stood majestically, with the magnificent flag of the crowned fist that was a bane for all sinners in the Land of Sins on his shoulder!

His aura seemed to have frozen the air around him, and he seemed able to compete with the entire Liberty City all by himself. He simply stood at the frontmost part of the entire battle formation, facing the defense line of Liberty City that had been fixed in a hurry last night.

"How… awesome!"

Han Te could not help but swallow hard. He looked at Li Yao subconsciously and said, "I wonder, was Grandpa Yao as impressive as the Fist King during his prime?"

"Well…" Li Yao could not help but recall the day when he led twelve Colossi to break into the Black Wind Fleet's battle formation in the Tartarean Skeleton.

In terms of pomp and circumstance, 'Fist King' Lei Zonglie had more or less reached one tenth of his expertise. The man was truly incredible!

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

Crack! Crack! Crack!

From Liberty City, thousands of rays and storms of destruction were raised and smashed at Great Iron City.

In humming sounds, the thousands of rune arrays on Great Iron City released colorful spiritual energy that formed a semicircular shield, blocking all the attacks. Countless fireballs exploded into an arc-shaped ocean of fire, as if they had cladded Great Iron City with a burning coat of fire.

The Fist King was absolutely motionless despite the scourge of the hot waves and the blasts, his flag flying in the wind as defiantly as before. He looked even more unstoppable and invincible.

“Why is he still not using the Star Plasma Cannon but taking the blows while doing nothing?”

Han Te was so scared as he was watching that his fists were sweating hard.

The meat last night had somehow bought the two little fellows and made them take the Fist King’s side without them knowing it. They sincerely hoped that the crazy man could succeed—or at least not fail so fast.

“He is waiting,” Li Yao explained. “He will not open fire until he is close enough.”

“Close enough?” Han Te was stunned. “How close?”

“About the distance where the muzzle can be pressed against the leader of Liberty City’s nose,” Li Yao said casually. “He is going to blow up Liberty City’s shield of defense in one attack.”

Great Iron City was still marching forward unstoppably, like a heavy mountain.

However fierce Liberty City’s barrage was, and however badly the shield of Great Iron City was torn apart, the Fist King did not take action at all. He did not even bother to furrow his metal eyebrow.

The Star Plasma Cannon released ripples of air that were getting more and more scorching and aggressive. It seemed as if it would melt the next second if it was still not launched!

Finally…

Against Liberty City’s defensive fire, Great Iron City moved forward stubbornly to only one kilometer away from the first defense line.

The crazily spreading ripples around the Star Plasma Cannon were also so intense that the three-dimensional space was almost ripped apart.

Swoosh!

The Star Plasma Cannon opened fire fiercely. A sun seemed to have hit the defense shield of Liberty City brutally.

The entire Liberty City was moaning and shivering. Dangerous electric arcs and flashes of light popped out of the void. The previously invisible barrier was left with an ugly gap in it!

The moment the Star Plasma Cannon opened fire, the Fist King disappeared from the barrel and crawled through the defense shield of Liberty City through the gap that had been torn apart!

The first defense line of Liberty City was immediately plagued by smoke and explosions. Everything was falling apart. The pivots that supported the defense arrays were blown up one after another!

Great Iron City did not stop pressing forward at all. Crumbled by the sixteen enormous tracks, any barricades, trenches, and landmines were not enough to stop the giant war machine.

The Fist King’s army that closely followed it hit the defense line like an iron tide, swallowing the entire defense line immediately.

Most of the gangs and bandits had better hopes for ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie in the first place. So many people had taken his side that the attackers outnumbered the defenders more than three to one.

Seeing the Fist King’s fearless, insane performance, all the bandits and thugs seemed to have been injected with ten doses of exhilarants. They were all charging forward without caring about anything.

The greatest problem of the defenders was that other than Xiahou Wuxin’s trusted subordinates who had been lurking inside Liberty City the whole time, the bandits that were drafted temporarily were not determined to live and die with Liberty City at all.

Even worse, seeing that the Fist King’s army was coming unstoppably, some of them even changed their attitude and defected immediately, hoping to save their lives and share the benefits after the war was over.

Chapter 2010 - Invincible Iron Fists!

Chapter 2010 Invincible Iron Fists!

That was the reason the Fist King broke the defense line of Liberty City unstoppably on his own.

Under his attacks that were as rampant as volcanic eruptions, the morale of the defenders of Liberty City was collapsing like shredded cotton.

Other than the gangs who had followed Xiahou Wuxin for too long to separate themselves from Liberty City, the bandits and thugs who had been recruited temporarily in the few months prior were all hesitating while they looked for means of self-protection and even defection. The counterattack was somewhat in disarray.

The attackers were all seasoned tigers and wolves. How could they not have noticed the defenders wavering? The momentum of their charge was magnitudes higher than before, and the iron torrents raised surging tides, while they turned into the most ferocious animals and jumped at the enemy’s heads without bothering themselves!

Everybody had estimated that the peripheral defense lines of Liberty City would be crushed, but none of them expected that they would be crushed so quickly.

If the situation went on, perhaps most of the defenders would lose the courage of a street fight and become looters who took advantage of the chaos.

“Xiahou Wuxin!” The Fist King burst into laughter. He aimed his flag at the depths of Liberty City and roared. “Have your bones been soaked in the wine after decades as the leader of Liberty City? Do you dare show up and duel me?”

The Fist King’s roar, together with the loud echoes, turned into overlapping tides that spread over the battlefield. They hit the defenders’ chests like the bombardment of giant cannons. A lot of the defenders were scared out of their wits and could barely grab their blades and firearms.

Strength was the ultimate law in the Land of Sins.

The leader of Liberty City had no choice except to show up.

Shua! Shua! Shua!

Li Yao sensed thousands of streaks of brightness dart out of the magnificent buildings near the tower that led to the sky in Liberty City. They rushed at the Fist King densely as fast as lightning.

They were all the sharpest flying swords!

Under the observation of Li Yao’s soul, those flying swords were all bound by spiritual threads, which interweaved with each other into an overwhelming net.

At the center of the net of flying swords was a cluster of spiritual waves no less intimidating than the Fist King’s, released by an expert at least in the Nascent Soul Stage!

Boom!

At the center of Great Iron City, the Star Plasma Cannon opened fire again, almost raising an earthquake.

The array of flying swords went at the plasma without any dodging. The thousands of flying swords glowed at the same time, emanating brilliance that was even brighter than the plasma. The swords formed a giant mouth that ripped, swallowed, and melted the plasma!

Boosted by the plasma, all the flying swords were as crimson as fire. Pulled and manipulated by the spiritual threads, they were condensed into a giant of swords almost ten meters tall!

The giant had cold, shining edges and tips all over the body. Even the indifferent facial organs were made of tiny flying swords. The air around the giant could not have been sharper and more aggressive. Just one quick look at it would make anyone feel as if their eyes had been pierced by a needle. It was truly magnificent!

What a remarkable sword array!

The thousands of flying swords were not simple. They should be systematic, intelligent flying swords of some sort. Every flying sword had been embedded with super-tiny crystal processors or crystal chips. They could work as independent combat units or be assembled as the armor of the commander. It was a rather advanced if not insane weapon system.

The so-called ‘spiritual puppet’ did not necessarily have limbs like human beings or other animals. As long as they were driven by spiritual energy, controlled by crystal processors, and boasted a certain degree of automation, they could all be called ‘spiritual puppets’ in a general sense.

In other words, the thousands of intelligent flying swords under Xiahou Wuxin’s control could also be counted as variations of spiritual puppets, except that the variations were too unbelievable.

As a crazy fan of spiritual puppets, ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie had selected Liberty City as his primary target. Did the choice have anything to do with Xiahou Wuxin’s array of flying swords?”

“Lei Zonglie…” From the gloomy giant of swords, Xiahou Wuxin’s voice that was as cold as ice came over. “You are asking to be killed!”

The fight between the two experts immediately rendered the entire battlefield soundless. Everybody was caught in half a second’s stagnation under the scourge of their daunting auras.

Even the players and tourists who were Immortal Cultivators stopped their slaughter temporarily and focused their attention on the two ‘big toys’ with great interest, as if it were a special show arranged by the circus.

The two experts took action at almost the same time.

When Lei Zonglie’s fists turned into two shooting stars, the array of flying swords around Xiahou Wuxin exploded again.

The thousands of flying swords, like erratic specters, congregated into unstoppable torrents of swords, then split apart into dozens of quickly-revolving iron caltrops, and then darted beneath the ground and attacked the Fist King from there.

The Fist King’s attacks were devoid of any fancy tricks. They were in the style of utmost masculinity as he bombarded the enemy with his iron fists.

A force shield of an extremely high intensity had been raised around him. All the flying swords would be affected and blown away if they got within half a meter of him.

The competition between two experts could be finished in the blink of an eye.

Lei Zonglie and Xiahou Wuxin, dominators of the Land of Sins of two generations, collided like two unbelievably fast tyrannosaurs, raising blasts that felt like a tsunami.

Everybody and all the crystal tanks within a hundred meters were riddled with holes by the blades and air currents that splashed out in the fight or even crushed into thin remnants. Those who were fleeing in panic could not clearly see the battlefield that was enshrouded in smoke and fire.

Li Yao could only see the battle clearly by the observation of his soul.

This was the first time that he had observed a life-and-death battle between two experts in the Nascent Soul Stage as one in the Divinity Transformation Stage. It was truly an amazing experience.

Under the observation of his soul, the whole world was disintegrated into a colorful ocean of spiritual energy, and Lei Zonglie and Xiahou Wuxin were two enormous vortices in the ocean trying to swallow each other.

Watching wholeheartedly, Li Yao suddenly had an epiphany.

The specific moves were not important. What mattered was which of the two vortices could affect the rhythm of the other’s revolution and change it into their own rhythm.

Shua! Shua! Shua!

Li Yao ‘saw’ the dozens of flying swords boosted by Xiahou Wuxin finally break through the field of interference around Lei Zonglie and pierce into the enemy’s iron shell. They exploded, released dazzling electric arcs, or were frozen into translucent clusters of ice. Lei Zonglie seemed to have been heavily wounded.

But it was useless.

Xiahou Wuxin was too focused on the gains and losses of his every move to notice that the rhythm of his spiritual energy had been dragged into the Fist King’s vortex!

“Not good!” Han Te shrieked. “The Fist King is hit!”

“No,” Li Yao said casually. “The leader of Liberty City is about to fail.”

Hardly had he said the word ‘fail’ when satisfied laughter burst out from the siege of thousands of flying swords. The array of flying swords was frozen in midair as if it had been corrupted by some uncanny spell!

Like a tiger that had jumped out of a trap, the Fist King jumped out of the siege of flying swords in one step and locked onto Xiahou Wuxin, who was hiding behind the flying swords.

Boom!

The Fist King punched eighteen times in an instant.

The force behind his punches could not have been weirder. His every punch was mixed with a force of two opposite directions. They did not blow the enemy far away but seemed to have stuck the enemy in the air heavily.

The eighteen punches hit Xiahou Wuxin’s chest in a row, and it was not until the last punch that Xiahou Wuxin finally managed to break out of the Fist King’s control and fly backward like a kite whose string had been severed.

While he was still in midair, devastating arrows of blood had already spurted out of his helmet.

His array of flying swords, on the other hand, had fallen into the Fist King’s control and revolved around him slowly.

How is it possible?

Li Yao’s soul could not have been more shocked.

Lei Zonglie has deceived everyone! He is not just a simple warrior with more brawn than brains but also an expert of crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus. He hacked the control network of Xiahou Wuxin’s array of flying swords in the soul-stirring battle without alarming anyone and seized the highest permissions of the weapon system!

What—What kind of terrifying hacking ability is this?

Li Yao thought for a moment. With his abilities inherited from Professor Mo Xuan and the extraterrestrial devils, it should be possible to sabotage the control network of Xiahou Wuxin’s sword array. But hacking without catching the enemy’s attention, planting a virus, and taking control were too appalling a task to be accomplished.

‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie, what kind of monster are you?

Li Yao was so curious that his soul was almost breaking apart.

In the eyes of other people, the battle between the two experts ended with the Fist King blowing the leader of Liberty City away in one punch. It was like the tolling of the knell for the defenders of Liberty City.

The battlefield that had just fallen silent brimmed with energy ten times more violent than before. Battles spread inside Liberty City like magma. Countless people followed the Fist King’s footsteps and rushed toward Xiahou Wuxin’s landing point, trying to cut the leader of Liberty City’s head off and hang it on the Fist King’s flag.

Right then, an abrupt change took place!

Huh? This isn’t over yet.

Li Yao observed every subtle ripple of spiritual energy on the battlefield.

Right when the Fist King broke into Liberty City leading the charge, fire and venomous fog suddenly soared from the point of Xiahou Wuxin’s crash. Dozens of daunting auras appeared next to Xiahou Wuxin mysteriously and attacked the Fist King!

Behind the Fist King, among the ‘comrades’ who were supposed to fight side by side with him, almost ten Immortal Cultivator players aimed their weapons at the Fist King and performed an unexpected assassination.

‘Red Viper’, ‘Black Spear’, and ‘Flash Point’, the three trial-takers, were among them!

So, this is their real aim!

Li Yao finally understood that the ‘main quest’ of the three trial-takers was not to conquer Liberty City but to assassinate the Fist King. Since the very beginning, they had been allotted to the side of Liberty City, and they were just assassins who had snuck into the Fist King’s army.

There was probably something wrong with Xin Xiaoqi, too, who must have been hired by the leader of Liberty City earlier. That was why she said that Han Te and Liu Li would be killed no matter what they did!

Now that he thought about it, Lei Zonglie should be a ‘big boss’ of a higher level than Xiahou Wuxin according to the Immortal Cultivators’ evaluation. Therefore, the battle between the Fist King and the leader of Liberty City was only an appetizer, and the battle between the players and the Fist King would be the most splendid part of the whole game!

Chapter 2011 - The Fist King“s Metamorphosis

The Fist King was immediately surrounded by hundreds of attacks from almost fifty Immortal Cultivator players in twenty different directions.

Blades, bullets, acids, venomous arrows, magma, and frost close to absolute zero came at him one after another. A bloody mouth seemed to have been opened in the void and was about to swallow him brutally.

In order to heavily wound the leader of Liberty City, the Fist King had taken the slashes of the enemy’s swords dozens of times head on. The functionality of his iron body was already seriously affected.

The fatal ambush from behind further caught him unprepared. He could barely move.

At this moment, it was actually the assassins, or the Immortal Cultivator players, who were in conflict. Everybody was lunging at the Fist King and hamstringing each other openly or secretly.

“Get out of my way. This creep is mine!”

“After I reap the monster, I will complete the main quest perfectly and advance to the Black Island Research Tower as first place. Nobody can compete with me!”

“Hehe. I am going to be the next leader of the Yuwen family. Whoever stands before me, don’t blame me for not showing you any mercy!”

Li Yao’s soul keenly sensed the subtle spiritual waves wandering in the air, which were the ripples of the private talk among the Immortal Cultivator players.

It seemed to be a public frequency that involved a very mysterious skill of spiritual energy vibration and could deliver the ‘sound of silence’ to several kilometers away. All the Immortal Cultivator players and tourists could communicate with each other in such a way without being noticed by the sinners.

Naturally, they could not deceive Li Yao’s soul.

Over the past month, he had been studying the means of communication of the three Immortal Cultivator players in the Red Viper Squad and had long discovered the mysteries of the private talk. After cracking the special frequency of the Immortal Cultivators’ public channel, he could hear the ‘roars’ and ‘screams’ of the players easily.

It seemed that they were there for different trial quests for different purposes.

Naturally, ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie, as the warrior with the highest combat ability on the battlefield, represented the most ‘points’. That was why he became a common target, and everybody wanted to deal the final blow.

However…

Idiots, Li Yao thought coldly. Since you know he is the ‘boss’ of a ‘golden quest’, how can he be killed so easily?

As it turned out, all the players who jumped forward hit a nonexistent wall at the same time and were blown back in a clumsy and panicked way. The two players who reacted slower were immediately involved in the colorful smoke, before they were tossed out brutally in a bloody, mangled form together with their broken armor!

The bloody mist and the shattered bones spluttered everywhere, and the two Immortal Cultivators were killed on the spot without even letting out a cry.

This was indeed an extreme trial with a high death rate!

The Immortal Cultivators were as brutal to the ordinary people as they were to their own kind. They did not care about the casualty rate in their training and trials at all!

Sensing the killing intent that was becoming more and more intense in the smoke, and observing the gory outcome of their companions, all the players turned grave and began to make preparations.

The smoke gradually dispersed. ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie stood inside a steaming crater steadily with his hands behind his back, staring at the Immortal Cultivator players coldly.

The Immortal Cultivators had an entirely different vibe from that of the sinners. They could tread lightly and disguise it in peacetime, but now that they were exerting all their strength in such a large group, they immediately gave a feeling that they were not the same as the real sinners around them at all.

“So, my intuition was correct.” The Fist King slowly plucked the flying swords that had been stabbed into his body, kneading them into iron balls casually and tossing them away. “Long ago, I discovered that a lot of strange guys had shown up both on my side and Xiahou Wuxin’s. You do not look like thugs who have just distinguished themselves in the Land of Sins but reek of disgusting smells. Who are you scumbags exactly?”

Black Spear—the dark, muscular man in the Red Viper Squad—bumped his fists and roared, “Your death!”

His image and way of fighting were similar to the Fist King’s. So, he could not be overwhelmed by the Fist King’s dominance, otherwise he would not get a chance to fight at all.

“Hehe…” The Fist King chuckled in a low voice. Drawing out the last twisted flying sword on his body, he said as if he were speaking to himself, “According to the intelligence, countless assassins and mercenaries from the Valley of Thorns are lurking inside my camp and Xiahou Wuxin’s. You must be them. However, what is the Valley of Thorns exactly, which has apparently been manipulating the history of the Land of Sins from the shadows? Let me blow up your brains and look for answers in person!”

“Stop bragging!” Black Spear shrieked. “You were heavily wounded by Xiahou Wuxin’s full-strength blow first, and then you took the bombardment of so many of us head on. Your body must be riddled with holes and on the brink of destruction!”

“Yes.” The Fist King did not deny it at all. His metal lips curling into a cruel smile, he said, “So, let me switch bodies and fight you again!”

At that moment, an enormous crystal bomb seemed to have exploded below the Fist King’s feet. The ferocious wind and blast swept across the entire battlefield!

In the middle of the raging storm and sand, his broken, mottled iron body fell apart one piece after another like a withered slough!

“Well…”

All the players were dumbfounded, feeling as if their blood was freezing.

“The Fist King is transforming!” Li Yao exclaimed to the mental devil. “Your guess was correct. The guy truly has a second form. He indeed deserves to be the boss of a golden quest!”

After the smoke rose into the sky and the dust settled on the ground, what appeared in front of everyone was a ‘Fist King’ that was much smaller in size but even more agile and fierce!

He had been using a silver, glittering body almost four meters tall previously, and his body size was equivalent to a super-heavy crystal suit installed with reactive armors.

Nobody expected that a second body was actually hidden underneath the magnificent body.

It was a super-light artificial body only around 1.5 meters tall. Its surface was smooth, without any rune array or joint. The streamlined torso and limbs seemed to have been melted by waterdrops large and small. Emitting bright golden colors, it was natural and flawless.

Although the size had been reduced to one third, the bursting aura from the body was ten times more intimidating than the ‘first form’.

Li Yao’s soul almost saw a furiously burning torch whose flames hopped hundreds of meters into the sky trying to burn a hole there!

Under the watch of the flabbergasted Immortal Cultivators, the Fist King warmed up the brand-new artificial body unhurriedly before he fell on one knee, making the preparation posture of a sprint. He smiled and said, “Shall we begin?”

It was not a question but the horn of a massacre!

Before he finished the last syllable, a lot of players attacked the Fist King in the spirit of ‘better attack than be attacked’.

However, the Fist King had already turned into several dazzling streaks of gold brightness before their attacks arrived and appeared in front of almost ten Immortal Cultivators ‘simultaneously’.

It was the same heavy punches with the utmost masculinity as before, except that the force was three times greater than in the ‘first form’ and the speed five times higher!

The three players in the Red Viper Squad were bombarded by the Fist King in the first round. They barely had any time to summon their real crystal suits.

‘Black Spear’ punched back at the Fist King. His entire right arm exploded from inside to outside, and his arm bone turned into hundreds of fingernail-sized pieces.

‘Flash Point’ was about to activate his velocity that he had always been proud of when the Fist King opened his hand, grabbed his head, and threw him into another player brutally. The two players were almost ’embedded’ into each other.

‘Red Viper’, who had the highest Cultivation, released dozens of flames, only to be blown into nothingness by the Fist King’s one punch. She hurried to fall to the ground and fly backward, dodging the fatal, serial bombardments closely!

Shua! Shua! Shua!

Finally, some players could not withstand the high pressure between life and death anymore, summoning their real crystal suits.

Li Yao heard them cursing aloud in private talk. It seemed that such an action would seriously affect their ‘score’ and ‘rating’ in the trial.

If they had only used the magical equipment from the Land of Sins and did not expose any weapons from the Heavenly Rails, they would be able to accomplish a certain ‘achievement’, which would grant them a bonus.

But once they used the advanced crystal suits from the Imperium, their final score would be reduced to around sixty to seventy percent, depending on the enhancement that their crystal suit provided.

Protected and boosted by the high-level crystal suits, the players were like wolves who had grown their tusks again. Their confidence returned to them.

“Is it the legendary Cosmos Ring?” The Fist King’s gold fists were both smoking, like a volcano right before the eruption. The abrupt changes of his opponents made the fighting will beaming of his eyes even more intense than before. “So many of you boast Cosmos Rings and… glittering crystal suits. So, who are you scumbags exactly? And who do you think the Fist King is?”

In crazy roars, he lunged at the enemies again!

However, this time, the players, who did not pursue ‘perfect achievements’ anymore, were obviously much more difficult to kill.

Even if the Fist King could punch the enemy heavily with his iron fists, the enemy could offset most of the attack with the crystal suit that had a much higher performance. They were even capable of launching counterattacks.

In the blink of an eye, the Fist King dashed back and forth and blew up the high-performance crystal suits of almost four players. However, his immaculate body of gold was seriously wounded and dented, and the circuits and components inside were exposed and disrupted.

Boom!

When he squatted deeply again, ready to launch another sprint at the Immortal Cultivators, his body suddenly became blurred, as if he was moving at a high speed to dodge something. Then, his left shoulder blossomed like a metal bud, and his entire left arm was blown away!

It was not until this moment that a vague trace appeared in the air, implying that something similar to a bullet had just passed by.

“A sniper,” Li Yao mumbled. “One of the players has been lurking in the darkness and did not attack at all until this moment. He is an expert among experts and a most dreadful shooter!”

Chapter 2012 - The Fist King“s Ultimate Form!

Even Li Yao did not notice the sniper when he observed the battlefield with his soul looking down from above.

It was not hard to imagine the expertise of the sniper.

The first bullet that contained explosive energy had been sneaking in the air without a sound and did not spread any ripples at all. If the Fist King had not reacted in time, it might have blown his head up!

Failing to kill the target in the first attack, the sniper did not hide the trajectories of his bullets anymore. Seven streaks of brilliance rushed close from everywhere on the battlefield like seven shooting stars running parallel to the ground, aiming at the critical parts all over the Fist King’s body.

The sources of the seven ‘shooting stars’ were thousands of meters away from each other. However, in Li Yao’s perception, there was only one sniper. He really did not know what kind of clone skills the guy had practiced to allow him to shoot those seven aggressive, expeditious bullets simultaneously!

The left arm of the Fist King’s body was torn apart, resulting in a loss of balance. He had nowhere to dodge, either, as he was surrounded by the Immortal Cultivator players from all directions. So, he simply bellowed and grabbed one of the players before him as fast as lightning and boosted his own spiritual shield and force field to the maximum, taking the seven bullets head on!

Boom! Boom! Boom!

They were not seven bullets at all but seven thunderous cannons opening fire at the same time.

The player who was snatched by the Fist King as a human shield was blown to pieces, utterly unrecognizable.

The Fist King also had several shocking wounds because of the explosions. A lot of thick, transparent liquid spurted out.

“Argh!”

The gold brilliance around the Fist King flourished. His angry and regretful roars reminded Li Yao of a lion faced with the sordid hyenas above the trap.

Crack!

The Fist King still wanted to attack, but his right leg could not bear the weight of his body anymore, and the ankles and knees broke apart at the same time, releasing glittering components.

The Fist King almost fell over, but he stood on his foot again after a tremble and glared at the hyena-like players.

The players looked at each other in bewilderment. They had truly been awed by the Fist King’s dominance at first and were balking beyond their control.

After seeing the Fist King’s miserable condition, however, they were all embarrassed and exasperated. All of them lunged forward aggressively, hoping to reap the Fist King’s last blood.

“He’s mine!”

“Get out of the way! Let me!”

“Who dares steal the kill from me?”

All the players thought that the Fist King was already on the verge of death. Everybody wanted to be the first warrior to kill the ‘boss’. Their hostility toward each other was condensed into daunting killing intent.

Even the mysterious sniper shot another thirteen times in a row, aiming at not the Fist King but the many Immortal Cultivators around him.

All the players sensed the horror of the sniper. Screaming, they hurried to disperse.

The Fist King’s second artificial body, however, exploded brutally at this moment. The gold light that was even more dazzling than the sun rose into the sky, and a gold-winged bird flapped its wings and flew toward Great Iron City!

The Immortal Cultivators did not expect the Fist King to be so tough that he still had a third artificial body in the shape of a bird to help him escape. While they were momentarily dazed, the Fist King flew out of the siege.

The sniper opened fire nonstop, at the risk of exposing his own location. But the Fist King, whose body size had been reduced to the size of a palm, was a hundred times more agile than before and dodged the unavoidable bullets narrowly one after another.

Huala!

The Star Plasma Cannon at the front of Great Iron City opened fire again, shooting out an overwhelming web of fire across the battlefield this time to disrupt the eyesight and movement of the players. The gold-winged bird that carried the Fist King’s soul took the opportunity to escape to Great Iron City.

Starting from the Fist King’s competition with the leader of Liberty City, to the leader of Liberty City being blown back while vomiting blood, to the Fist King accelerating to chase the enemy, and to the many assassins attacking him and forcing him to use up three artificial bodies in a row, a lot of things seemed to have happened, but only three minutes had passed.

In only three minutes, most of the bandits and thugs scattered on the entire battlefield naturally did not know what was happening at the center of the battlefield.

Most people were still charging forward unstoppably in the middle of the iron torrents, destroying everything that could be seen.

At this moment, ear-splitting sirens echoed around Great Iron City again, followed by the Fist King’s furious roars. “Xiahou Wuxin has been killed by me in one punch. Let’s break into Liberty City and conquer the Elysian World!”

The voice smashed the entire battlefield like a tsunami. All the bandits became crazier and more excited than ever, but all the defenders were overwhelmed by panic and fear.

The Fist King was not entirely lying.

Xiahou Wuxin had been heavily wounded by his punches. There was no telling if the man was still alive.

The defense line of Liberty City immediately collapsed!

“Damn it!”

All the Immortal Cultivators who had just attacked the Fist King were so gloomy that ink seemed to be flowing out of their faces. Knowing that their internal competition had caused the best opportunity to slip away, they could not help but whine about each other. It would be ten times more difficult if they wanted to kill the Fist King later.

However, not all the players were on Liberty City’s side.

A lot of players had also been distributed to the Fist King’s side randomly. After realizing what was going on, they could not help but laugh aloud, delighted by their luck.

Li Yao, who had been watching the battle from Great Iron City, felt more and more ill at ease.

He felt that something was not right. After the Fist King’s remaining soul ran back to Great Iron City, the spiritual waves were not disrupted at all. Instead, they became more and more powerful, violent, and crazy.

It was almost like a seal had been opened, and the lord of the underworld extended thousands of strong tentacles to the sky.

The ‘tentacles’ spread to every corner of Great Iron City like veins, nerves, and muscle fibers. The whole Great Iron City was quaking so violently that it was almost like a monster that was gradually waking up!

“Hooo!”

From the depths of Great Iron City, the Fist King’s roars came once more. The skyscraper-like iron fortress had activated the anti-gravity rune arrays on the chassis and simply floated into the air. Then, together with the rapidly revolving gears and chains, the camouflage on multiple shells was removed one piece after another, revealing seven extensible mechanical arms.

On every mechanical arm, super-enormous dragon-slaying swords more than ten meters long and sabers and axes that could shatter mountains had been installed. When they were fully stretched out, the range of their attack reached almost a thousand meters away!

The honeycomb-type heavy firepower platforms and the revolving turrets all over the entire Great Iron City were taken off. The building was practically a mobile arsenal!

Countless spiritual puppets in the form of spiders, scorpions, and animals were moving quickly on the surface of and inside Great Iron City, maintaining the magnificent iron body so that it could bring out the highest combat ability!

Wu! Wu! Wu!

The sirens were roaring, and white steam was popping up. Great Iron City became blurred in the mist, like a Goliath standing above the clouds looking down at the mortals on the ground.

“Hehe. Hehehe!”

The Fist King’s roars turned into cruel laughter, while he raised the swords, sabers, and axes.

“…”

All the Immortal Cultivator players, whichever side they belonged to, were deeply shocked by the oppressive, unbelievably dominating scene, unable to say a word for a long time.

“This is too unbelievable and violent!” the mental devil said gloomily. “So, this is the Fist King’s ‘ultimate form’. Great Iron City is his body. It is with such a special ‘artificial body’ that he’s grown the ambition to unite the Land of Sins and attack Manjusaka!”

“Is this really something the remaining soul of a Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator could achieve?”

The more he thought about it, the more Li Yao felt that it was not right.

At this moment, in order to steer ‘Great Iron City’, a hundred-meter-tall iron fortress, the Fist King had activated his soul to the maximum, which made Li Yao, who was inside his body, sense a subtle anomaly.

Connecting all the suspicious points from the beginning to the end into a glittering chain, Li Yao felt that he was close to the destination of all the mysteries.

“The rhythm of ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie’s soul is rather strange. Why do I have the feeling that he is not a human being?” Li Yao was slightly dazed. He was shocked by his own finding.

Looking through the observation holes on the top of Great Iron City, Li Yao noticed that, although it was the middle of a day, the vivid and enticing Flower of the Other Shore was still clearly visible.

Like a bloodshot eye, Manjusaka, stared at the battlefield without a sound.

“Flower of the Other Shore, and the Immortal Cultivators, what kind of monster have you created?” Li Yao mumbled to himself.

“I vaguely have a feeling.” The mental devil grinned hideously. “Whether or not the Immortal Cultivators are aware of Lei Zonglie’s secrets, they will be burnt by the fire that they want to play with!”

…

All the way up in the sky, on the edge of the atmosphere where the six Heavenly Rails joined, Manjusaka, as a star fortress of an ultra-large scale, floated in silence.

When Li Yao stared at Manjusaka, countless pairs of eyes were observing everything happening on the battlefield from the star fortress that looked like the flower that grew on the entrance to hell.

Inside a hall that was splendidly decorated like a palace, countless translucent 3D light beams were floating around and on everybody’s head. Every light beam was displaying the picture shot from the main perspective of a player, next to the streams of information that displayed their current biophysical parameters, including their heartbeat, pulse, wounds, adrenaline secretion, and spiritual energy usage.

The pictures of the players who had been killed were black and white, and the process of their miserable death was played on repeat.

There were also real-time pictures captured in secret from various perspectives on the battlefield, which depicted the gory war in a relatively macroscopic way.

The largest and the most eye-catching light beam had a ranking. From the scores, the total kills to the completion rate of secondary quests, all the information had been manifested on it.

Half of the place was an ocean of coldness, while the other was a volcano of passion. Illuminated by the rivers of blood and the soaring fire, it was a roomful of casual guests who were toasting each other in a lighthearted atmosphere.

Countless genteel and gorgeous people of the upper class raised glasses now and then, talking and laughing. They were apparently holding a wine party.

Chapter 2013 - Li Jialing

Those people of the upper class were all the elites of the Imperium of True Human Beings, who gave speeches to the media every few days. They were from military, political, economic, academic, and many other fields. Some of them were tough generals from the military who commanded thousands of troops, and some were big shots from the financial sector who could drop trillions of dollars whenever they pleased. There were also specialists and professors from the famous universities and research institutes of the Imperium. Everybody had a vague air of pride around him. The few young, beautiful, and smiling stars of the show business among them were almost like humble servants.

However, even the toughest iron-blooded generals were wearing sloppy, casual clothes and chitchatting with each other casually.

This was an informal wine party and more like an occasion for the big shots from various fields to relax themselves in their busy life. The room had adopted an open design. The most precious cuisine—including caviar from the Seven Stars Space Zone, the Nine Phantom Snake Blood Brew from the Silver Ring Planet, and the Cloud-Shocking Crane Liver that was even more valuable than high-quality marrow crystals of the same weight—had been placed on the long desk covered by a white, silk tablecloth, ready to be enjoyed by the honorable guests.

A lot of them were holding their glasses and communicating with each other while watching the war game all around them.

“General Gu, there are quite a few promising talents among the newcomers whom you have brought to trials this year, aren’t there? I can tell that of the top fifty on the total score rank, three are from your ‘Bone Breaking Hammer’ troop. No wonder you secured such glorious triumphs on the frontline!”

“You are flattering me. If we are talking about promising talents, who has more of them than the Sky Holding Group? Even the trials of the employees in your group are conducted in the dangerous Land of Sins. Your criteria are truly rigorous, and the quality of your employees is remarkable!”

“We dare not be compared to the military. We are just a bank and financial institution that is expanding quickly and ready to march into the territory just recovered by the Imperium. So, we need to raise a new batch of geniuses in finance, which is why we have consigned some candidates with potential to this place to test their personality. They are not necessarily required to accomplish many dangerous tasks, but if you haven’t killed a hundred or so people or fed on human flesh and blood, how can you be engaged in the financial business, right?”

“Fair enough. Look. The new generation of the Yuwen family and the Li family are quite impressive, too. The talented youngsters of the big families are like fish in a river. There are never enough of them!”

“Of course. The Yuwen family is a noble family that has existed for more than seven hundred years. It controls two highly developed Sectors. Not just that, their influence has already spread to the financial and media fields. All the branches of the family have the most intelligent people. How can there not be many talented young people?

“As for the Li family, we don’t even need to talk about it. One of the four Kurfürst families! I’m told that a lot of new people have distinguished themselves this year. Many unprecedented geniuses have appeared in plenty of branches of the family. To fight for a better future in the family, they are now engaged in a fierce competition. The Li family seems to have given a tolerance of two-digit casualty rate. The death of a couple of geniuses won’t mean a thing to them!”

“Tsk, tsk, tsk. The Kurfürst families are indeed different from the common noble families. A two-digit casualty rate in trials. Even the special forces of the military do not dare set such a rigorous standard when we are screening talents!”

“No arguments here. Even Li Lingfeng, one of the pillars of the Li family right now, has come here to supervise the selective trials of the new people of the Li family!”

“What? Even Li Lingfeng has come? Wuying Lan is truly remarkable to have invited such an influential person. His ‘Manjusaka’ is getting better and better each day!”

Outside of the big shots from the military, financial, capital, and media fields who were chitchatting with each other lightheartedly, a lot of youngsters who looked rather juvenile but indifferent were gathered.

They were mostly the young generations of the noble families that were the favorites of the big shots but had not reached the age of trials yet. They had followed the big shots there to open their eyes; meet their uncles; and cheer for their brothers, sisters, and cousins who were fighting in the Land of Sins.

From the position of the youngsters who were like stars surrounding a moon, those standing in the middle, who were wearing pure black uniforms with a ‘Li’ painted on their chest, had the highest social status.

It was only reasonable; they were all from the Li family, one of the four Kurfürst families.

Years later, one or a few of them might even get to decide who the next emperor of the Imperium of True Human Beings would be.

Therefore, despite their young age, there was not the naivety or innocence typical of normal teenagers on their faces. The only thing that could be found was nonchalance and coldness. They watched and commented on the bloody light beams, almost like a younger version of the big shots who were chatting at the center of the room.

“Brother Lie has demonstrated an excellent performance. He has killed twenty-two pigs since the battle began with stable breathing, heartbeat, and adrenaline secretion. That is truly impressive!” a seemingly harmless and beautiful girl said with a smile.

“Stable, yes, but it is too impassionate. I prefer Brother Shan’s style. He has boosted his breathing, heartbeat, and adrenaline to the maximum, and he does not hesitate to kill anyone after he goes mad. Ha. Look. Even a pig from the Yuwen family has been slain by Brother Shan. It’s true that nothing can stand in his way!” another tall and arrogant teenager observed.

Watching the flashing blades, the falling heads, the soaring blood, and the twitching bodies on the light beams, the future of the Li family finally cheered delightedly like a bunch of normal young people.

Not far away from them, another group of young people who had ‘Yuwen’ sewn on their chest looked rather awful and glared at them in fury.

“Excuse us. People of the Li family are always straightforward. If we accidentally hurt your vulnerable feelings…” the arrogant young man of the Li family shouted at the infuriated young people of the Yuwen family. “You can just suck it! If you are discontent, why don’t we ask Wuying Lan, the producer of the game, to help us arrange a free contest after the Battle of Liberty City so that we can all go to the Land of Sins and see what’s what?”

“That’s a great plan!” The innocent-looking and beautiful girl clapped her hands and smiled. “After all, we will have a few days to ourselves after the Battle of Liberty City. We can go to experience the atmosphere of the Land of Sins first and make preparations for our selective trials next year. Why don’t you come together with us? I very much would like to find out what it feels like to kill the pigs of the Yuwen family!”

Exasperated, the young people of the Yuwen all made throat-cutting gestures and nodded at the Li family. “It’s a deal. Just wait for it!”

The young people of the other big families were fond of nothing but trouble. They immediately started whistling and cheering for both parties.

It was merely one of the everyday riots that did not raise the interest of the adults. After calling each other’s names for a while, the young people shifted their attention back to the battlefield that was becoming more and more fierce and bloody.

Skulls were exploding, flesh was roasted, and internal organs were shattered into clusters of bloody mist that sprayed on those who were behind the victims. All the scenes activated the appetites of the young people. More than half of the food on the table was gulped by them.

However, in the middle of the exclamations of amazement from the young people of the Li family, an inharmonious noise came over. One of them was actually gagging.

It was a slender young man who gave an air of femininity, like a lamb that was wearing the skin of a wolf. He looked entirely different from the aggressive, intimidating, and ruthless young people around him.

He knew himself very well, too, and had been hiding in the shadows, not having the courage to join any conversations.

It was almost like his greatest happiness was when other people ignored him.

However, the pictures of battles on the light beams in all directions were too bloody and exciting. However he tried to avoid them, he still happened upon a 3D, vivid head that exploded entirely like a cantaloupe. Some of the red-and-white stuff even seemed to have splashed into his mouth.

He immediately shut his mouth, but he felt that he could not catch his breath. He breathed hard but still could not hold back the feeling of nausea. He was so uncomfortable, as if a tsunami was raging in his stomach, that he could not help but cover his mouth with a napkin and gag in secret. But the noise was still too loud to escape anyone’s attention.

The young people of the few noble families nearby all looked at him in surprise.

Further away, the young people of the Yuwen family all noticed the quirky guy and eyed him in mockery.

The young people of the Li family immediately blushed before they turned gloomier than ever.

“Li Jialing, what is the meaning of this? Do you have to humiliate the Li family in public?”

In the utmost fury, the young man who had provoked the Yuwen family just now dashed over and grabbed ‘Li Jialing’, the gagging young man, by the neck.

“Garbage is always garbage!” The innocent, beautiful girl also put on an expression of extreme disgust. “I really don’t know why we had to bring such a useless man. If he cannot stand such pictures, won’t he pee his pants once he goes to a battlefield? We are a mighty Kurfürst family. Even if we die, we must open our eyes and remember who kills us. How can there possibly be such garbage among us?”

“I won’t give him an opportunity to pee his pants.” The arrogant young man narrowed his eyes and declared, “In a few days, when we have a chance to visit the Land of Sins, I will certainly kill you to honor the Li family! A renowned Kurfürst family does not need such a weak member. Just wash your neck and prepare to die!”

Like a panicked chicken, Li Jialing shuddered for a long time before he uttered feeble gagging noises again.

“*sshole. If you dare vomit on me, I will cut your tongue right now. Get lost!”

The arrogant young man pushed him hard, shoving Li Jialing to the ground and making him hit the corner of the desk heavily. One of the dishes on the table was knocked over, and he was soaked by the leftovers in it.

All the young people of the Li family chuckled in amusement. Seeing Li Jialing’s weakness, they all wanted to stomp on him and only restrained themselves because they were in public. But such a thing was not unusual when they were within the Li family.

Chapter 2014 - The Future of the Li Family!

As one of the most dominating Kurfürsten in the Imperium of True Human Beings, the Li family had a long history. It had been a great family with influence in the military, in politics, and in the private sector in the Star Ocean Republic long before the Imperium was established.

After thousands of years of development, it had copious branches and offshoots. Counting the younger generation of the central bloodline alone, there were thousands of new people every year.

Since there were so many family members, they were naturally of different aptitudes, and not all of them could grow into geniuses.

However, most of the family members had received rigorous, elite education from their family, and their decisive and ruthless character was raised since childhood.

Even the most coldhearted bandits in the Land of Sins were as harmless as lambs whose teeth had been removed in front of the seemingly polite and graceful young people.

But ‘Li Jialing’ was not one of them.

It was said that he was born in a branch of the branches of the Li family. His father was a lesser warrior in the family who was killed on the battlefield a long time ago, and his mother passed away in labor when giving birth to him.

Therefore, he was raised in the ‘Future Academy’ of the family as an orphan. After he grew slightly older, he was sent to the household of a big shot in the family to learn from the big shot and to take care of the chores for him as an unofficial servant.

The destiny of an orphan of a branch of the family was supposed to be a common warrior of the family or a general worker that was even less known. Perhaps, after serving the big shot for decades dutifully, he would have a change to be sent to a certain new business established by the family on a remote planet as a manager.

However, with unbelievable luck, Li Jialing somehow won the favor of ‘Li Lingfeng’, one of the top experts of the Li family, who often took Li Jialing around with him.

Li Lingfeng and Li Linghai, the queen of the Imperium of True Human Beings today, were known as the Dual Pearls of the Li family. He was a powerful person who would very likely become the next leader of the family.

Not just a person that he was fond of, even a dog that he appreciated would be more awesome than some experts in the border worlds of the Imperium.

Therefore, Li Jialing was able to enter the circle of the most distinguished young people of the Li family.

Like all the noble families of the Imperium, the Li family did not attach much importance to the bloodline but worshipped cruel competition more than anything else.

As long as they were strong enough, the offspring of the branches could also kill the offspring of the main bloodline and be acknowledged. They would also receive the real heritage of the Li family.

So, the young people had been quite wary of Li Jialing at the beginning and thought that Li Lingfeng had earned this special attention because of some particular qualities in him.

However, after a few days of getting to know each other, they discovered that Li Jialing was a completely spineless pussy and a joke!

It had nothing to do with his strength. After all, with the Li family’s wealth and technology, even a cripple who could not catch a chicken could be modified into an acceptable warrior after astronomical resources were invested in him.

The real problem with the hopeless guy was that he was too indecisive. He did not even have the courage to kill a chicken, much less a person.

Human beings were evil in nature. Young people tended to fear the strong and bully the weak. It was especially so for the young people of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

Li Jialing soon became a target for all the core young people of the family to bully and vent their frustrations on.

At first, some of them were concerned about Li Lingfeng’s attitude.

However, after throwing Li Jialing into a special school that was designed to raise the future of the family, Li Lingfeng never once asked about him, as if he had completely forgotten the guy.

There was one time when Li Lingfeng’s blood grandson asked him about Li Jialing prudently. Then, the big shot of the Li family raised his head and replied in confusion, “Li Jialing? Which Li Jialing?”

It seemed that Li Lingfeng only did it on the spur of the moment. Perhaps Li Lingfeng had met the garbage’s father before, but it could not be any important relation. Right now, Li Lingfeng had completely forgotten the garbage!

Li Jialing immediately became a target that everybody could bully casually at the core school of the family.

Or rather, if the sh*t in the school grew legs, it would have stomped on Li Jialing’s face several times every day.

Everybody agreed that Li Jialing had survived to this day because he was too useless. He was so useless that anybody who killed him would only be mocked by their companions.

He was a toy for everything and a public sandbag. Nothing more.

However, on the trip to Manjusaka to watch the seniors to complete their trial quests, Li Lingfeng, who led the team in person, somehow remembered the garbage again and ordered specifically that he should join them.

The young people were dissatisfied with the decision, and the garbage even gagged in front of everybody, which was a great humiliation for the Li family. A lot of people were so infuriated that they were almost determined to kill him.

Li Jialing, however, was used to everything. He wiped the leftovers off his body in silence, without the slightest expression on his pale face. The mockery from within the family, the confusion of other families, or his inevitable death a few days later had no effect on him whatsoever.

His life did not seem to belong to himself but was just an unimportant game.

Li Jialing lowered his head, unwilling to watch the gory battles on the light beams anymore. He was about to hide in a corner of the lobby when he noticed the eyes of both coldness and passion that were staring at him. He could not help but shudder.

Li Lingfeng was looking at him in silence not far away.

The powerful man of the Imperium of True Human Beings—the blood brother who shared the same parents with Queen Li Linghai and the commander who could summon thousands of starships and millions of loyal warriors with a light cough—had a graceful appearance entirely different from his identity.

His face was as pure as jade, and his eyes were as brilliant as stars. His long hair covered his shoulders, making him look even gentler. He was more than two hundred years old, but he was like a young scholar who had just started his career in a college. His demeanor could not have been more elegant.

Li Jialing’s eyebrow trembled hard. He lowered his head and bit his lips, walking over to Li Lingfeng obediently.

The young people of the Li family who bullied him blatantly were baffled, but how could they be bold enough to ask?

They were still looking at each other in bewilderment even after Li Lingfeng and Li Jialing went to the corridor outside of the hall, not having the vaguest clue about the relationship between the star of the family and the shame of the family.

In the corridor, Li Lingfeng and Li Jialing looked at each other in a subtle atmosphere.

With his hands behind his back, Li Lingfeng looked at the ‘weak’ young man and said casually, “Why didn’t you attack after all the time you’d been bullied? Are you going to restrain yourself until they really kill you? Just kill a couple of them in a yawn, and none of them will dare bully you anymore.”

Li Jialing bit his lips hard and fell silent for a moment. Then he said softly, “Your grandson is among them.”

“I have a lot of grandsons, great grandsons, and great great grandsons,” Li Lingfeng said. “It is not a big deal if a couple of them are dead, especially when it is for you.”

With extreme agony and stubbornness beaming out of his eyes, Li Jialing shook his head and said, “I—I don’t want to kill anyone. I know that a dam will be completely crushed if I begin. I will completely lose control of myself!

“Killing a couple of them will be enough? It’s impossible. You’re lying to me. After I kill a couple of them, you will certainly give stronger opponents to me and ask me to kill dozens more. Then, hundreds more and thousands more. There will be no end to the cruel experiment!

“If I cannot get out of your control in any case, I would rather kill none of them. If I must die, so be it!”

Li Lingfeng put on a smile of comfort. “You are very smart, and you are getting smarter.”

“It is you who made me so smart.” The young man put on a bitter smile. “Smart enough to figure out my identity and destiny and to realize that I am just a special ‘test subject’ that has no fundamental difference from the sinners in the Land of Sins.”

“I’m having higher and higher hopes for you now.” Li Lingfeng’s eyes became deep and mysterious. “I really want to find out how terrifying it will be when you unleash all your potential. It will certainly be a shock for a certain someone.”

“What if I never allow you to fulfill your wish?” Li Jialing summoned his courage and revealed a side that he had never shown to the young people of the Li family before. Clenching his fists, he said, “You may modify me into a terrible monster, but I will never start a cruel slaughter as you wish. What will you do? Kill me?”

Li Lingfeng was amused.

“I’ve spent so much effort and so many resources in the past ten years to raise you. The complexity of every experiment and modification, and how successful the results are, you should be clearer about them than anybody else, right?”

The future leader of the Li family looked at the young man thoughtfully and said, “You are my most precious treasure. How can I waste you for nothing? Besides, your performance today was within my expectations. It is a kind of interesting game between me and a certain someone.

“Trust me. One day, you will recognize your nature, submit to your real destiny, and even… inherit the strength of the entire Li family!”

Li Jialing shook hard in shock.

It was the first time that he had heard Li Lingfeng’s last remark.

“W-what do you mean?”

Teeth seemed to have grown out of the young man’s eye sockets. Blood spots the size of needles burst out of his face, as he half begged and half bellowed, “Tell me the truth. Who are my parents? Who is the ‘certain someone’ that you talk about all the time? Why did you choose me for such cruel modifications in the beginning? Why do you have to push me? Why?”

Li Lingfeng was utterly unmoved. “If you want to know the answer so desperately, just listen to the real voices in your heart. Stop being restrained by nonexistent laws and start a slaughter!”

His eyes suddenly turned gentle as he said, “In any case, you must believe one thing. From the beginning to the end, I have never regarded you as a ‘test subject’. If possible, I really want you to become my real successor as the future of the Li family!”

Chapter 2015 - Wuying Lan“s Rise

‘Future of the Li family’ made Li Jialing’s head dizzy again. He felt that he was trapped in an immeasurable maze.

The young man stared at the man who could influence the entire Imperium of True Human Beings in a daze and hesitated. “Can I trust you?”

“Why not?” Li Lingfeng smiled. “After so many inhuman, excruciating modifications, you should know very clearly that if I wanted to interfere with or even control your mind to start a slaughter, it wouldn’t have been any trouble at all. There was no way that you could resist it.

“But I did not do so. For all these years, I have merely been trying to modify your fleshly body, activate the potential of your brain, build up your soul, and nurture the terrible monster deep within your heart. However, I never interfered with your free will.

“If I had been considering you as a common ‘test subject’, why would I bother to raise you in such an exhausting way?

“Come on. Let’s go and meet someone.”

Li Lingfeng led Li Jialing to a clean secret room next to the hall.

The secret room was empty, but it had a mirror that was transparent on one side, which allowed them to observe the people in the hall.

There were also light beams that were more advanced and detailed than the ones in the hall, allowing them to grasp every detail in the Land of Sins.

This was a VIP room of the highest level in Manjusaka that only the big shots on Li Lingfeng's level were qualified to enjoy.

Through the one-way mirror, Li Jialing looked at the young people of the Li family who were still baffled and suspicious.

He was as ignorant of the situation as them.

"Look at that guy." Li Lingfeng pointed at a middle-aged man at the front of the hall who was as impeccable as a marmoreal statue. The man was talking with a few influential generals and politicians and brimming with the confidence that everything was under his control. Li Lingfeng asked, "Do you know him?"

"I do," Li Jialing replied dutifully. "He is Wuying Lan, the owner of this place. He is also the man who has been providing you with all kinds of technology and secret arts to modify me all these years."

"Exactly. I have been cooperating with him profoundly since decades ago and received a lot of cutting-edge technology from him. Most of the abilities inside your body originated from his laboratory." Li Lingfeng smiled. "From that point of view, you are the 'son of Manjusaka'. This place is your real home!"

Li Jialing trembled again. He said softly, "I get it. You personally came to Manjusaka this time not for the trial quests of the new generation of the Li family but for me to receive new modifications."

“You are truly unbelievably smart, but it is only one of my purposes,” Li Lingfeng said casually. “Now, I’m more interested in talking about the story of Wuying Lan with you because he is really very similar to you.”

Li Jialing was slightly dazed. He simply listened in silence.

“Although Wuying Lan is from the royal family, like you, he is from a branch of the branches,” Li Lingfeng said unhurriedly. “Besides, you should know the awkward situation of the royal family in the Imperium very well. Everybody was so intimidated by the dominance of ‘Blackstar the Great’ Wuying Qi that they worked together to limit the royal prerogatives after his death. Now, even the high and mighty Emperor himself, although not anybody’s puppet, has a lot of restraints and cannot do whatever he wants. The branch that Wuying Lan is from is not worth mentioning at all. He was even less important than the offspring of the four Kurfürst families.

“Besides, the man had congenital deficiencies. He was an abnormal dwarf when he was born.”

“What?” Li Jialing immediately bulged his eyes.

“To appear as he does right now, he has been modified after countless painstaking procedures with the cutting-edge technology of ‘Manjusaka’ after he arrived here.” Li Lingfeng smiled. “You didn’t see this coming, did you? An abnormal curse that should’ve been suffocated the moment he was born survived stubbornly and somehow became the governor of the Martial Meritocrats Sector after killing countless competitors!

“However, when he first took the duty, the Martial Meritocrats Sector was only one of the dozens test bases for large magical equipment and techniques. There was nothing special about it.

“Also, because of hundreds of years of excessive experiments, the place was already murky and messy after all the destruction. The few sinners were all cockroaches and rats drawing their last breath. Those vermin were incapable of testing the quality of the most advanced magical equipment and techniques of the Imperium.

“Therefore, everybody thought that the base would be shut down very soon. The arrival of a ‘dwarf governor’ was the best evidence.

“But little did they know that Wuying Lan really had the capabilities to change the world. He came up with the idea of ‘slaughter streaming’ first. By attracting the most dour and repressed hominoids at the bottom level of the Imperium with the most bloody and exciting videos, he collected the first bucket of gold from them.

“Then, he invested the first bucket of gold into the renovation of the Land of Sins, transforming the place into a top-tier base of trials with adequate facilities, both dangerous and thrilling. With a low price, he attracted the major families, academies, sects, and groups of the Imperium to hold their trials here.

“At that time, many people did not understand the arrangement. You know that the cost of ‘trials’ can be very high. The consumptions during the trials, the timely refilling of the prey after they are butchered, the safety and surveillance… The incessant investment was astronomical. According to the price that Wuying Lan offered, he would not earn any profit at all, and his first bucket of gold would soon be wasted.

“At that time, nobody knew that the focus of Wuying Lan was not profit but connections!

“The trial teams that came there incessantly were all from the most powerful families, sects, and groups of the Imperium. They were certainly led by the big shots of various fields, too.

“Of the new people who participated in the trials, a lot were talented geniuses who would grow into the pillars of their families.

“After gathering those people, Wuying Lan made friends with them and naturally weaved a broad and tensile web of connections.

“If you have connections, you have everything. Wuying Lan received the appreciation of a lot of people, including myself. We invested tremendous resources to help him revive the test base of magical equipment and techniques that was on the brink of bankruptcy. Then, a virtue cycle began. The levels of the trials became higher and higher, and more and more teams came for trials.

“With the freshest ingredients, the laboratory was also able to present the most cutting-edge results in experiments. The influence of ‘slaughter streaming’ grew after each day. Later, he established his own lottery group, which has expanded into a behemoth that covers media, lottery, cutting-edge studies, and many other fields! The dwarf that nobody had any hope in or even knew in the past has become one of the most popular big ghosts in the royal family. Nobody does not know him today. Remarkable. It is truly remarkable!”

After a brief silence, Li Jialing asked in confusion, “Why are you telling me this?”

Li Lingfeng smiled. “It’s simple. Since Wuying Lan is capable of establishing an enormous empire in the media industry from scratch, why can’t you?”

Li Jialing opened his mouth, meaning to ask why Li Lingfeng thought so highly of him.

But he did not ask in the end because he knew that he would not get an answer even if he did.

He was just a chess piece in the guy’s hand, and he was not qualified to know what was on the player’s mind.

“Furthermore,” Li Lingfeng said, “I want you to know that most of the approaches that I modified you through were used by Wuying Lan on himself before. It is even safe to say that, in terms of physical bodies, you are an ‘upgraded version’ of Wuying Lan. As for exactly how much the upgrade is, you will have to ask yourself.

“So, I think that the two of you should try to bond with each other. Chances are that he can answer some of your questions, right?”

Li Jialing’s eyes opened wider and wider. Looking at Wuying Lan not far away and then at his pale, dry hands, he was completely lost in the swirl of confusion.

Li Lingfeng smiled and raised his wrist, planning to call Wuying Lan.

However, a deafening explosion suddenly echoed from the broadcast rune arrays. Hundreds of light beams displayed the horrifying picture of Great Iron City floating and extending eight arms at the same time.

The intimidating aura of ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie was almost burning through the light beams!

“Huh?” Li Lingfeng was slightly dazed. “Wuying Le is truly hard to predict sometimes. I did not know that he had crafted such a magnificent monster. The game is finally getting interesting.”

In the hall, ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie’s ultimate form attracted the attention of a lot of attendees.

Some were whispering to each other, some exclaimed in amazement, and some danced in ecstasy because they had wagered on the Fist King’s side.

Wuying Lan, the owner of Manjusaka, smiled casually while holding a wine glass, as if every transformation of ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie was under his control and part of the game.

Even Li Lingfeng, the greatest endorser of Manjusaka, did not know the shock in Wuying Lan’s mind right now.

He spoke to two honorable guests for a while with a pleasant smile, asking them to enjoy themselves as much as possible. Then, he left the hall unhurriedly, passed a narrow corridor, and came to the planning and control room of the entire trial.

It was an ocean of crystal processors and light beams. The overwhelming pictures and data were a hundred times more complicated than in the hall. Twelve super crystal processors together with a thousand Immortal Cultivators with amazing computational abilities analyzed and processed without any rest in order to monitor and maintain the most crucial areas in the Land of Sins, including the Battle of Liberty City that was underway.

At this moment, all the cameras had locked onto ‘Great Iron City’.

‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie had revealed his true appearance and was on a killing spree. He had penetrated seven defense lines of Liberty City and butchered more than fifty Immortal Cultivator players. The control center in the City in the Sky was in an utter mess because of the disruption.

“What’s going on?”

Frowning, Wuying Lan asked coldly, “What do you mean by ‘the Fist King has gone out of control’?”

Chapter 2016 - The Uncontrollable Iron Fists!

Chapter 2016 The Uncontrollable Iron Fists!

“My lord!”

An old man in a white gown who was short, slender, and looked like a weasel hurried to walk forward.

A metal ring had been embedded into the old man’s brow and around his head. More than ten ports were distributed on the metal ring evenly. Most of the ports had some weird magical equipment that was either blinking or humming. The information streams that they triggered around his head were chaotic.

He was Luo Tiansheng, the supervisor of the laboratory of high-end magical equipment and techniques in Manjusaka, and a renowned scholar who was adept at everything from flying swords and crystal suits to biochemical modifications.

Staring at ‘Great Iron City’ that was on a rampage on the light beams, Wuying Lan asked, “Dr. Luo, you said that the Fist King went out of control, but didn’t we know that something was wrong with his Great Iron City? All the procedures of his modification on Great Iron City were closely monitored and recorded by us. What tricks could he possibly pull?”

“There is nothing wrong with ‘Great Iron City’. The problematic part is the way to control ‘Great Iron City’, or rather, the Fist King himself,” Luo Tiansheng said. “Please look at the battle parameters that the Fist King has demonstrated right now.”

Shua!

A light beam where the Fist King was butchering his enemies was enlarged. Detailed analyses were run on his every attack. Every subtle change, from speed to angle to strength, was displayed after quantification. The thousands of data points were calculated through complicated formulas, and the value of the comprehensive combat ability was presented.

“How interesting.” Wuying Lan narrowed his eyes. The skin around his eyes was still frozen in frost, but his lips curled into a smile of interest. “His movement should be somewhat clumsy when he is steering a ‘Great Iron City’ almost a hundred meters tall, but his speed and agility are more than twice what we anticipated. He is almost as fast as a Colossus. What kind of secret arts has his remaining soul been practicing to enable him to make use of such an enormous iron fortress as if it were part of his body?”

“You’re quite right, my lord,” Luo Tiansheng said drily. “The Fist King’s comprehensive combat ability is 275% higher than our expectation, and the value is still rising. Based on all the techniques that he has ever trained, it is absolutely impossible.

“Therefore, we went back and studied all the files of the Fist King in the past. Overturning a lot of our preconceived hypotheses, we have reached the most astonishing conclusion!”

“Oh?” Wuying Lan looked at the light beam, where ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie had grabbed a player of Immortal Cultivators in his giant hand.

The player struggled hard and screamed desperately. He seemed to be shouting something like, “I’m done. I’m done playing. Come on and save me. Get me out of this place!”

But it was useless. In the very next second, the player was crushed by the Fist King into a cluster of sparks and blood.

Wuying Lan’s cold smile was even more intense. “What is your conclusion?”

“No spectral Cultivators can achieve what the Fist King has achieved—hacking Xiahou Wuxin’s automatic flying sword system, changing four spiritual puppets in an instant, and eventually controlling a gargantuan spiritual puppet almost a hundred meters tall in such a deft and accurate way. Absolute none!” Luo Tiansheng said affirmatively. “Therefore, ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie can’t be a ghost. The whole group of specialists can vouch for that!”

“Not a ghost?” Weird brilliance beamed out of Wuying Lan’s eyes. “What is he then?”

“An artificial intelligence,” Luo Tiansheng said. “Or, you may understand him as a very unique spiritual puppet, my lord.”

“interesting.” On the light beam, ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie was shouldering the intense barrage from Liberty City. The colorful fireballs seemed to have covered him in an armor of flames. He, or it, uttered metal and mechanical roars at Liberty City, the tower leading into the sky beyond Liberty City, the Heavenly Rails above the tower, and Manjusaka at the center of the Heavenly Rails.

As if he were observing the most fabulous toy, Wuying Lan said, “Explain yourself.”

“This whole time, we have been fooled by ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie. It has been acting outwardly and straightforwardly and did not bother to disguise his ambition to unite the entire Land of Sins, misleading us into thinking that he was just a simple-headed warrior.

“Now, we can tell that he only declared such appalling ambitions in order to cover a greater secret. He disguised himself as a living human being, a remaining soul who had lost the fleshly body, and a spectral Cultivator who had crawled into an artificial body.

“It was not until today when he exerted all his strength that we managed to catch a glimpse at the truth. He is not a human being but a spiritual puppet that boasts automatic learning and upgrading abilities, and a super artificial intelligence that can vividly simulate the feelings and demeanors of human beings.”

“I know that there was an increased trend of super artificial intelligence in the Imperium about three hundred years ago,” Wuying Lan said unhurriedly. “A lot of specialists believed that spiritual puppets with the ability to automatically learn and upgrade themselves could replace soldiers to a very large extent. At least, they could replace the bottom-level soldiers—the cannon fodder.

“If the goal proved to be a success, we wouldn’t need to feed so many filthy hominoids.

“At that time, the specialists ran a lot of experiments on this planet, right?”

“Yes,” Luo Tiansheng said. “Two hundred years ago, we sent forty-seven models of spiritual puppets that could automatically learn and upgrade to the Land of Sins. Each of them had a unique logic circuit and means of upgrade. At that time, our main approach was still competition. We hoped that the forty-seven spiritual puppets would fight, swallow, and merge with each other like forty-seven different insects. Then, the last survivor would be the king of them, and its logic circuit, mind database, and upgrade forms would have the greatest value to be studied and manufactured.

“Therefore, when the spiritual puppets were sent to the Land of Sins, they were not set with any specific targets. Only a fuzzy instruction was set deep into their mind database.”

“What was the instruction?” Wuying Lan asked.

“Upgrade to the strongest whatever the cost and method!” Luo Tiansheng said.

Wuying Lan asked, unmoved, “What happened later?”

“Later, the project ended in a natural course.” Luo Tiansheng sighed. “It was supposed to be the project with the hugest investment in the laboratory of the Land of Sins two hundred years ago, but everybody underestimated the difficulty in creating real artificial intelligence. The so-called ‘automatic learning and upgrading’ was just an impractical illusion. In the end, the spiritual puppets can still only carry out mechanical and definitive tasks but cannot understand fuzzy, chaotic, and unpredictable targets.

“A spiritual puppet can destroy everything in a pair of fixed coordinates, but it cannot understand what ‘upgrade to the strongest’ means.

“What does ‘strongest’ mean? Is it the strongest in the Land of Sins, the Devilish Scorpion Galaxy, the Imperium of True Human Beings, or the entire universe? Does it mean to be strong enough to blow up the three-dimensional universe, the four-dimensional universe, or even everything beyond?

“At that time, the specialists did not take the question into consideration but simply inputted such a ridiculous instruction for the artificial intelligences.

“Also, because of the vulnerability and instability of the new crystal processors, the fault rate of the batch of automatic-learning spiritual puppets was very high. Even if no faults happened, ninety-nine percent of them would be mired in absurd logic traps.

“If the regular spiritual puppets could be compared to lifeless slaughter machines, the automatic-learning spiritual puppets were like three-year-old children. They were unpredictable and uncontrollable.

“The automatic-learning spiritual puppets project became a bottomless hole that absorbed tremendous resources. The sects, families, and corporations that were involved in the project all suffered heavy losses. It even led to the decline of the laboratory in the Land of Sins and even its doom, if you had not come here to bring it back to life again, my lord.”

Wuying Lan nodded. “Then, what was the ending of the spiritual puppets that boasted the automatic learning and upgrading abilities?”

“Most of them were destroyed in wars,” Luo Tiansheng said. “They were dismantled into the most fundamental components in the ceaseless battles in the Land of Sins or buried in the deepest part of the city ruins.

“Only some of them fell to the hands of the sinners. But their performance was very unstable in battles and got a lot of people killed. Later, they were mostly used for civil purposes and worked as ‘machine servants’, ‘waiters’, or ‘porters’.

“You know that the resources for our surveillance are very limited, and the analysis abilities of humans and crystal processors are seriously inadequate. Therefore, after the success of dozens of projects since you came here, most of the resources have been distributed elsewhere, and we gradually lost track of the remaining automatic-learning spiritual puppets.”

Wuying Lan smiled. “It appears that the ‘king of competition’ that the specialists and professions looked forward to two hundred years ago has been born without anybody knowing it.”

“Yes,” Luo Tiansheng said. “When they studied the super artificial intelligence, the specialists and professors resorted to anything possible, even including the most extreme approaches. A lot of the super tiny crystal chips excavated from the primeval relics of the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan were directly duplicated and embedded in our crystal processors. It must be noted that countless complicated rune arrays and circuits are within the super tiny chips. We do not even know their functioning mechanisms, only the input and the output. They are essentially ‘black boxes’ for us.

“After the crystal processors that were embedded with countless super tiny black-box chips were sent to the ever-changing, chaotic battlefield, what kind of amazing changes could happen in two hundred years? I can only say that anything is possible!”

“So, this can be counted as a pleasant surprise?” Wuying Lan mumbled. “Look at it. How strong, how magnificent, and how intimidating! Tell me about it. Does it have a real self-consciousness? Is it a life of a brand-new life form?”

Chapter 2017 - Eyeballs Are Everything!

“It is not accurate to call it a ‘life’,” Luo Tiansheng said. “The most remarkable specialists in the field of artificial intelligence reached the conclusion more than two hundred years ago that it is impractical to make the artificial intelligence generate self-awareness and evolve into a new life form in the next thousand years without the interference of the civilization of a higher-level.

“However, ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie is indeed a very advanced super intelligence that is probably even more powerful than the artificial intelligences applied to the main crystal processors of the transportation hubs and the super warships in the Imperium. It is certainly worth studying.

“It is a shame that we did not focus surveillance on it until it returned from the city ruins and distinguished itself in the Land of Sins. We paid close attention to its development and growth, but we do not know the first thing about its experiences decades ago.

“Therefore, we still have to bring it back to Manjusaka in order to dissect and dismantle it. That’s the only way to find the answers.

“Do we need to terminate the golden quest ‘Battle of Liberty City’, my lord?”

Wuying Lan narrowed his eyes. “Huh?”

“The unexpected mutations of the Fist King have made the situation somewhat out of our control. Please take a look. Our estimated comprehensive death rate of the players is 11.5%, and the highest death rate should be no greater than 18%. But the floating death rate has now been increased to 15.4%, and the estimated highest death rate may surpass 30%.

“Those rookies are no match for the Fist King. Chances are that they will all be butchered by the Fist King. Should we terminate the trial and the game and bring the Fist King under control first?”

“That’s impossible.” Wuying Lan stared at the light beam, with a multitude of emotions beaming out of his eyes.

On the light beam, the iron giant shot out spiritual energy that consumed countless sinners and players of Immortal Cultivators like a destructive storm.

The three members of the Red Viper Squad who used to be arrogant were mired in the swirl, too. Like broken canoes, they shuddered in fear among the surging tides.

Taking a deep breath, Wuying Lan sent a voice to Luo Tiansheng with a very special frequency of private talk that only the two of them could hear. “Dr. Luo, do you know our audience rating on all the terminals of the Spiritual Nexus in the entire Imperium? Do you know how many trillions in capital is waiting for the final result of the soul-stirring epic quest like ravenous beasts? Do you know that the Li family, the Yuwen family, the Sky Holding Group, and many big shots from the military are paying close attention to Manjusaka and us?

“A hundred years. For a hundred years, we have been fighting bloodily through thorns and finally made it this far.

We have also pushed ourselves to the tip of the tide. Before us is a path of glory, but below our feet is a bottomless abyss.

“We cannot quit or turn around now. I have already wagered all my belongings on the magnificent, mind-boggling epic quest. No unexpected factor is to disrupt it!

“Look…”

Wuying Lan smiled confidently and showed the translucent data on his mini crystal processor to Luo Tiansheng. “Our audience rating on all terminals has surpassed the limits. No media outlets or platforms can compete with us. Even the real-life ‘war stream’ between the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance has been eclipsed by us!

“Don’t you see? After a hundred years of ‘slaughter streaming’, the audience is already tired of control. They do not want to see everything that is carefully manipulated. They like chaos, they like accidents, and they like ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie!”

“But…” Luo Tiansheng thought for a moment. “Just for the audience rating?”

“This is a gamble as well as an ultimate competition between me and the scumbags in the court in the Empyreal Terminus Sector.” Wuying Lan’s voice suddenly turned extremely hoarse and cold. “Such is the cruelty of this world. When the place was a dying, desolate land, the scumbags kicked me here and simply let me live on my own. They even wanted me to take the blame for the shutdown of the laboratory of the Land of Sins.

“After we worked hard for a hundred years and made the place thrive again after arduous efforts, the scumbags have come back again, extending their long, furry claws in the hope of reaching for the fruit of our effort. They want to occupy the place for themselves and kick us back to where we came from.

“Those scumbags include our most brilliant and invincible emperor!

“A few years ago, the war between the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance was still too intense, and the emperor did not have the time to deal with us.

“But right now, the army of the Imperium has secured continuous victories on the frontline and recovered all the territory that has been lost in the past thousand years. His Majesty’s head is getting larger and more feverish each day. He is trying to become a second magnificent monarch, as incredible as Blackstar the Great. Our ‘Heavenly Eye Group’ has become his target, too.

“Hehe… But am I someone who will just wait to be killed? Nobody can steal the Land of Sins and the City in the Sky from me. Not even the emperor!

“It is the age of information now, and audience ratings are everything! Whoever attracts the eyeballs controls the mind, whoever controls the mind manipulates the behavior, and whoever manipulates the behavior will have the entire world!

“Dr. Luo, we’ve known each other in our most devastated times. In the past hundred years, no matter how insane your ideas, projects, and experiments were, I have always supported you to accomplish them without any reserve. However many resources you need, you will have them. When you need a thousand living test subjects, I will get you five thousand without batting an eye! The two of us are the best partners. I keep no secrets from you and always tell you the truth, no matter how serious the issue is. You will certainly support me to the end, too, won't you?"

Luo Tiansheng nodded without any hesitation. "Of course."

"Excellent." Wuying Lan smiled. "With the support of so many big shots from the military, political, and business worlds, and even Li Lingfeng, the promising next leader of the Li family, on my side, now that a surprise as pleasant as the Fist King has been found by you, even the emperor will not be able to do anything about us as long as we control the situation well and arrange the whole play perfectly!"

Luo Tiansheng was not surprised at Wuying Lan's lack of respect for the emperor at all. He asked calmly, "Then, what do we do now?"

After pondering for a moment, Wuying Lan clapped his hands and said, "Firstly, increase the difficulty of the quest from 'golden' to 'platinum', and project a batch of powerful magical equipment and weapons in that direction. Make sure that only players can open and make use of them.

"Then, open the secret shelters that we buried deep below the earth and send the coordinates to all the players in the quest area. If the players cannot take it anymore and decide to quit the trial, they are free to hide themselves in the shelters. Of course, the points and accomplishments they have achieved will all be cleared.

"Thirdly, ask the 'Heavenly Eye Legion' to establish a defense line outside of Liberty City. The Fist King or any sinner in the Land of Sins is not to run free.

"Those sinners have seen too many things that they shouldn't have. Including Xiahou Wuxin, the leader of

Liberty City, none of them are to be spared. After most of them have killed each other and the trial quest is over, clear the field.

“Right. Let me see. I’m told that your laboratory has recently produced a new batch of monsters, right?”

“Yes.” When his experiment results were mentioned, Luo Tiansheng smiled proudly. “I guarantee that they will be real ‘nightmare monsters’!”

“Very good. Then, after the Battle of Liberty City is over, just test the power of the ‘nightmare monsters’ in front of the big shots here with the broken city ruins as the test field. Chances are that some of them will place a large order on the spot!

“As for the control of ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie, lock onto it with our railguns first and make sure that it will be blown to pieces if it shows any anomaly. But do not use the railgun just yet and ask the ‘Madmen Squad’ to try to weaken it so that it will not go completely out of control. I want to know how much potential can be dug out of the spiritual puppets that can automatically learn and upgrade!”

“Got it.” Luo Tiansheng nodded. “I’ll go and prepare the ‘nightmare monsters’.”

“Wait.”

Wuying Lan suddenly stopped him, pointing at an obscure picture that was a replay of the battle yesterday. In the overwhelming smoke, Li Yao’s clumsy body flashed before the picture was blocked by intense fire and smoke.

Wuying Lan pointed at Li Yao and asked, “There’s still a minor issue. What’s that? It seems to have been absorbed by the Fist King into the body.”

“It should be another spiritual puppet that boasts automatic learning and upgrading functions,” Luo Tiansheng said. “We don’t know the specific model yet, but the Fist King has always been enthusiastic about collecting spiritual puppets of all kinds of models, especially those that can automatically learn and upgrade. In the past, we did not understand the reason and thought that it was only an unimportant hobby. But now, we have finally understood ‘its’ intention. It was probably finding ways to strengthen itself continuously by dismantling and studying other spiritual puppets, wasn’t it?”

“Okay,” Wuying Lan said emotionlessly. “Therefore, this is a pile of insignificant garbage?”

“Probably.” After thinking for a moment, Luo Tiansheng said, “However, if you are interested, we can spare some of the computational ability, monitors, and analysts to figure out the backstory of the spiritual puppet and see where it originated.”

Glancing at the super crystal processors that were all functioning at full efficiency and the analysts whose heads were about to explode, Wuying Lan shook his head after pondering for a moment. “Forget it. An epic quest is about to begin. There is no need to waste time on such trivia. Let’s just move on!”

Manjusaka extended its limbs like a glamorous, poisonous spider, and the overwhelming net in the sky was weaved even denser than before.

The nightmare monsters and countless elite warriors were all set to go.

The people in the Land of Sins did not have the faintest idea about their upcoming doom and were still dwelling in the bloodiest battles.

Chapter 2018 - Into the Sky!

The entire Liberty City had been cast into a complete mess.

Out of everyone's expectations, 'Fist King' Lei Zonglie turned into an iron giant almost a hundred meters tall, increasing the combat ability of 'Great Iron City' by magnitudes.

The spiritual shield around itself was as brilliant and dazzling as a supernova outbreak!

Under the eight enormous limbs that were waving crazily, the crystal tanks became the most vulnerable matchboxes. Both the bandits and the Immortal Cultivator players fled in panic.

Whoever stood in his way would immediately learn the feeling of desperation when the twenty-meter-long saber was slashed at them!

The defense line inside and outside of Liberty City had completely collapsed.

The Fist King moved to the center of Liberty City unwaveringly, where the tower to the sky was located!

Even the bandits and players on his own side were appalled by his toughness and dominance, and they did not approach with a thousand meters from him, fearing that they might be bashed into smithereens by his hammer while he was on a killing spree, which seemed to have already happened several times.

All in all, the battlefield became an utter mess everywhere. Both the attackers and the defenders looked at the iron monster in bewilderment.

‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie became the only protagonist of the war game!

Right then…

The City in the Sky emanated weird redness. Countless stars broke into the atmosphere at an unbelievable speed, raising a storm of fire inside and outside of Liberty City immediately and leaving thousands of craters on the ground.

Blasts spread out everywhere at the same time. A lot of sinners and Immortal Cultivator players were blown into the air. Some of the less fortunate ones who happened to be standing on the landing points of the ‘shooting stars’ were immediately blown up and vaporized.

Those ‘shooting stars’ turned out to be silver weapon boxes from the sky. They were an advanced model that the sinners had never seen before with a scary mark of skeleton engraved on the surface. The sinners who dared to approach them would immediately be struck by electric arcs without any mercy, which made it impossible for them to open the cases.

Beep! Beep! Beep!

The Immortal Cultivator players, on the other hand, received the latest instructions from Manjusaka.

The Battle of Liberty City had risen from a golden quest to a platinum quest, and they were about to be aided by reinforcements and new weapons.

Also, the goal for the players who had been randomly distributed to the Fist King’s side before changed.

All the Immortal Cultivator players now shared the same goal, which was to suppress the Fist King!

“A platinum quest! One that is only under a legendary quest!”

“My goodness! What kind of monster is this? How can it be a target for all of us?”

“The paradise of sins is truly exciting. Fighting such a behemoth is even more gratifying than fighting the Covenant Alliance on the frontlines!”

“Hooo. New magical equipment and new gear. Awesome!”

With the aid of the virtual guidance arrowheads, the players soon located tremendous airdrops. After opening them with special passwords, the players found brand-new, even more powerful crystal suits in them, as well as abundant cutting-edge magical equipment that could be installed on the crystal suits. They were entirely renewed after they put on the new weapons!

Like hot-air balloons that had been filled up again, they were brimming with confidence.

“Fist King? Die!”

The players roared and soared into the sky. With their high momentum and agile movements, they hovered around Great Iron City rapidly and rained their firepower upon the Fist King.

Even if the Fist King was truly not a human being but an artificial intelligence of a super high performance, it must abide by the law of the Land of Sins. All the materials that it used to build ‘Great Iron City’ were either charity from the Heavenly Rails or garbage collected from the city ruins. Some had even been given by Wuying Lan on purpose after discovering its potential.

Its database and logic circuits could turn ‘become the strongest’ into an ineffaceable belief.

But its jumbled body was incomparable to the most advanced crystal suits of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

The Immortal Cultivator players, whose gear had been completely upgraded, were utterly different from the panic and desperation players a moment ago.

Even if the Fist King could still kill some of them, they could land a blow on the Fist King.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The Fist King’s outer plate armor was finally blown up by the players, revealing the vulnerable and messy components inside. Countless small spiritual puppets were blown out of the holes and fell to the ground in pieces.

The Fist King’s unstoppable momentum was disrupted, and even more players saw its weakness. They attacked the joints of its eight mechanical arms and its body hard and chopped off two of the mechanical tentacles, which cramped on the ground hard like dying serpents.

“Who are you exactly?” The Fist King was not supposed to have the feeling of pain, yet he was roaring in agony. “Why do you have weapons and ammunition from the sky? Why are you all stopping me from occupying the Elysian World? Why are your techniques and gear so weird?

“You are not sinners! You are not the assassins and mercenaries from the Valley of Thorns!

“You are from the sky. You have come here through the Heavenly Rails to my battlefield. What do you want exactly?”

The Fist King waved his remaining six arms as if he had gone mad, raising endless tornadoes around him, while he crashed at the tower to the sky without caring about anything, as if he wanted to blow up the tower with his gargantuan body and make Manjusaka collapse.

It was a shame that nothing was of any use.

The Heavenly Rails and the City in the Sky did not stand based on the support of the tower, which was nothing more than a tube to transmit resources. There were more than a hundred such tubes throughout the entire Land of Sins.

Besides, the Fist King could not make it to the tower.

Among the ‘shooting stars’ from the sky just now, there were more than ten special assault cabins besides the weapon boxes.

After they crashed heavily, they exploded like flowers. More than ten Exos wearing colorful, glamorous crystal suits in the form of insects flew out of them.

Spiders, mantises, locusts, scorpions, mosquitoes, flies, centipedes, butterflies, dragonflies… It was almost as if a dozen mechanic worms that had been enlarged hundreds of times had flown into the sky unhurriedly.

They were not in a hurry to attack the Fist King fiercely but simply hamstringing and harassing him from nearby like annoying flies and mosquitoes, creating the best opportunities for the regular Immortal Cultivator players to attack.

Under the interference of the weird Exo team, the Fist King’s previous invincibility was entirely gone. He was not able to defend himself, and the problems of the enormous body size and the sluggish movement were exposed to the maximum extent.

Even more critically, the Fist King was running out of spiritual energy.

The Fist King is done for!

Deep inside ‘Great Iron City’, Li Yao had already protected Han Te and Liu Li. He also established a protective layer of spiritual energy that felt like a mattress to resist the blasts and shocks each greater than the last.

Sensing the air of the ever-emerging experts on the battlefield and the defense line of the Immortal Cultivators further away, Li Yao secretly sighed.

However capable the Fist King was, he had been playing inside the Immortal Cultivators’ hands. How could it possibly blow up the world that had been sealed?

Whatever he was, he could not avoid the boundary of the basic law of energy. To drive the giant Great Iron City to conduct such violent fighting, inestimable spiritual energy needed to be consumed every second.

It was already his limits to march there from the periphery of Liberty City against the barrage of thousands of demons.

Even the last block of fuel inside ‘Great Iron City’ must have been burnt up by his crazy fighting will.

Li Yao could obviously sense his fury, regret, embarrassment, and confusion.

Such intense emotions made Li Yao start to wonder again. Was the Fist King a ‘he’ or an ‘it’?

“I’m sorry.”

Right then, Li Yao suddenly heard the Fist King’s poignant voice from every corner around.

“This world is too strong. I’m lost. Even you have been involved in this.”

Li Yao thought of something. He knew that the Fist King was not speaking to the two little fellows but obviously to him.

With everything coming to this point, there was no need for Li Yao to keep everything a secret anymore. He said in a hurry, “Wait a moment. I’m still confused about a lot of things.”

“What you do not understand, I do not understand, either, but it is not important anymore,” the Fist King said. “Just find a way to escape. I know that you are probably capable of escaping with your abilities.”

“What are you going to do?” Li Yao said in a hurry. “Where there is life…”

Before he finished his sentence, he had already sensed that the world was shaking, and the wind was blowing.

The Fist King had concentrated whatever was left of his spiritual energy on the anti-gravity rune arrays and the power rune arrays on his chassis. As flames of light surged out like torrents, he rose into the sky and flew higher and higher, charging at the Heavenly Rails and Manjusaka!

On the ground, the dust raised had swept across Liberty City.

All the sinners in the Land of Sins looked up at the sky from the dust, staring at the Fist King, who was charging at the firmament.

“Manjusaka, the City in the Sky—what the f*ck are you exactly?”

The Fist King burst into laughter. His chainswords, sabers, and axes hummed and released brilliance that could tear apart the sky in thunderous roars.

In great shock, countless Immortal Cultivator players hurried to move forward to block him.

The bizarre squad of insect-like Exos changed their attitude, too, and launched the most aggressive attacks at the Fist King.

However, the Fist King’s body was simply too enormous. Even though they could rip off the enormous components and even cut the Fist King’s mechanical tentacles one after another, leaving more than a hundred giant fireballs on the Fist King’s body, they could not stop the Fist King from launching one final attack.

‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie turned his entire body into a giant fist while he broke through the atmosphere beyond the clouds and punched the City in the Sky in the most devastating way.

“Argh!” the Fist King roared. “Nobody can mount the high horse above my head. Fall now, Manjusaka!”

Chapter 2019 - My Own Kind!

Observed from the scarred, bleeding, uneven Land of Sins, the Fist King seemed to have surpassed the skyline beyond Manjusaka, the City in the Sky.

At this moment, time seemed to freeze. All the sinners, be they attackers or defenders, stared at the sky, dumbfounded.

For hundreds of years, not a single sinner had ever broken through the firmament by force, much less contaminating the supreme, flawless, and impeccable Manjusaka with their filthy, hideous body.

Furious flames were burning between the throat and abdomen of all the sinners. They suddenly had an uncontrollable urge.

Even the thugs and bandits on the leader of Liberty City’s side were deeply awed by the dominance of the Fist King. They couldn’t help but shout in their hearts, Break it! Break the sky! Break into Manjusaka!

However…

After time was frozen for only half a second, hundreds of crimson pillars of light darted out of the Heavenly Rails and Manjusaka, which interweaved into an enormous dragnet and completely enshrouded the Fist King.

The destructive web of mystic rays seemed to be extremely tensile. Although they were deeply embedded into the Fist King's iron body, it did not completely stop the Fist King's momentum as he continued soaring.

It inevitably gave everybody on the ground an illusion. They thought that as long as the Fist King persisted longer, he would have an opportunity to touch the legendary Manjusaka and leave the sinners' mark of filth and blood on the sacred, glorious city's shell.

However, the moment such a thought popped up in the sinners' hearts, the brightness of the light web was suddenly raised to a higher level, dissecting the Fist King into pieces and transforming him into a dazzling fireball.

Like all the unparalleled, disobedient bandits who had been bold enough to challenge the sky in the past hundreds of years, 'Fist King' Lei Zonglie was suppressed by the firmament!

The fireball raged, as if the will of discontent and fury was still charging into the sky. But it could not resist the blockage of the sky and the restraint of the gravity after all, and it fell helplessly.

The crowned fist perished after all.

…

Grievous sighs and bellows echoed on the ground.

Inside Manjusaka, however, there was nothing but casual laughter and reserved applause. The honorable guests from afar congratulated and complimented the owner of the place for the enjoyable play that he had arranged meticulously.

“Not as strong as I thought!” Wuying Lan smiled and raised his glass to the many honorable guests. He then turned around and spoke to Luo Tiansheng in a low voice. “It turns out to be more fancy than capable and has been suppressed so easily. It was really a false alarm.”

“This is the fatal shortcoming of the spiritual puppets with automatic learning and upgrading functions,” Luo Tiansheng said. “The direction of their self-motivated evolution is highly uncontrollable, and they are often mired in very rudimental traps. For example, it was absolutely unnecessary for the Fist King to modify his real body into such a gargantuan and clumsy machine. Perhaps, according to his mind logic, size equals strength.

“Generally speaking, his performance is rather remarkable, considering that he has been developing in the Land of Sins entirely on his own. If he is delivered to our laboratory for further study and debugging, he may present an even more shocking performance.”

“Yes. He did look flamboyant enough.” Wuying Lan smiled. “The audience has shown strong feedback, especially about the final picture where he charged at Manjusaka. It was truly audacious of him. Perhaps we should produce more gargantuan puppets and monsters of the same type and come up with some silly, blood-boiling slogans for them. Only in such a way can the players, tourists, and viewers enjoy themselves.

“For now, ask the Madmen Squad to enter the debris, find his core crystal processor, and bring it back to the City in the Sky. Then, move on to the cleaning procedure.”

…

When the burning gigantic remnant crashed heavily, the flames almost covered half of Liberty City.

The Exo squad that looked like mechanical insects descended slowly. Most of the members patrolled around the Fist King’s remnants that were as enormous as a mountain and stayed on alert.

Two Exos who looked like a mantis and a spider respectively crawled into the fireball that was still exploding.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

The structural design of ‘Great Iron City’ appeared before their eyes quickly, allowing them to lock onto the shattered control center very quickly.

As they expected, in the middle of the fire and smoke of the control center, a crystal processor core that was smaller than an apple and looked like a diamond was hovering and emitting a daunting aura.

Seeing that the two insect-like Exos had shown up, the crystal processor core bounced unpredictably and tried to flee to a deeper part of the debris.

“This is it.”

“Ha. Still wants to run? I feel like laughing whenever I see such things struggling before their death.”

The Immortal Cultivator wearing the mantis suit grinned hideously and opened his hand. The electric arcs that flowed at the center of his palm were condensed into a powerful electric field and absorbed the crystal processor core.

The crystal processor core rolled quickly in midair, trying to resist, but it was already too weak to resist the hauling force anymore.

Thunder suddenly rumbled inside the head of the Immortal Cultivator in the mantis suit. His pupils suddenly constricted to the limits!

Something was wrong!

Communication!

Their communication to Manjusaka… No, even their communication with their companions outside of the debris was completely cut off by intense interference at some point!

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

It was the sound of tracks rolling over debris.

The elite Exo of the Madmen Squad suddenly saw the most unbelievable scene.

A heavy and clumsy tracked spiritual puppet crawled out of the twisted space deep inside the debris.

What’s this?

Extremely shocked, the mantis-like Exo suddenly doubted his eyes.

How could a spiritual puppet have been kept intact after falling from the top of the atmosphere?

Before he figured out the answer to the question, he felt a sting in the back of his head and an itch at the center of his eyebrows.

Then, he saw a bloodstained dart or flying sword showing up before his eyes abruptly.

In his confusion, he realized that the thing seemed to have drilled through his head before digging out of the center of his eyebrows.

He wanted to scream, but he was unable to utter a single sound. He managed to turn his eyes to look for his teammate, only to discover that the crystal suit of his companion had been taken off at some point. The man’s physical body was cut in half evenly and thrown into two corners dozens of meters from each other.

How is this possible?

Before his self-awareness completely sank into darkness, the mantis-like Exo moaned in confusion while staring at the eccentric star at the front of the tracked spiritual puppet in a daze.

…

The mind circuits were reconnected.

The database was copied and condensed again.

From the fundamental architecture to operational logics, infinite algorithms were colliding and assembling, building a golden, glittering plaza from the void.

The Fist King was rebooted.

Scanning his environment quickly, he found that he was in the middle of a sealed space. Intense explosions and quakes were echoing from above.

His core crystal processor was connected to three small ancillary crystal processors, which were embedded into a skinny artificial body.

Judging from the different materials of the hands and feet, it should be a piece of garbage that had been hastily jumbled together.

However, the connection and assembly were unexpectedly comfortable. They were done even somewhat more brilliantly than what he could have done on his own. No. Much more brilliantly.

He slowly warmed his fingers up. The iron limbs turned out to be as smooth as silk and cheese. The assembly was truly incredible.

He sensed the two objects that were constantly releasing infrared rays from the cold mud. They were the two human beings who had enjoyed dinner with him the previous night.

There was also a tracked spiritual puppet, which was his own kind.

“Master Fist King is awake!” Han Te and Liu Li both exclaimed in joy.

“What is this place?” The Fist King tried to control the new broadcast rune arrays. “You saved me?”

“This is a certain abandoned underground sewer in Liberty City,” Li Yao said. With everything coming to this point, there was no need to hide anything anymore. “I saved you and made a new body for you on the way. There are no handy tools and materials in this place, so I had to make do with random garbage. Don’t feel offended.”

“This body is made of random garbage?” The Fist King was silent for a moment. Continuing to warm up the brand-new limbs, he punched aggressively time and time again and said, “However, the interface of my core crystal processor should be incompatible with other crystal processors. How did you resolve the problem?”

“Well. Is that really a problem?” Li Yao did not know how to explain it. “They can be connected via a random converter that I roughly made.”

The Fist King seemed unused to the real Li Yao’s way of talking. After another daze, he continued asking, “How long have I been dormant? What is the situation outside?”

“About two to three hours,” Li Yao said. “As for outside, it is quite lively at this moment. Now that ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie and the previous leader of Liberty City have both been killed, Liberty City has become an unowned Elysian World. Whoever has the biggest fist will become the new master of Liberty City. At the very least, that is what the thugs and bandits think and what they are doing right now.

“They are now engaged in the fiercest fight. Those weird fellows who claim to be assassins and mercenaries from the Valley of Thorns are also wasting no time instigating more trouble. The situation has gone completely out of control. I imagine that the chaos will not stop until half of them are dead.

“With the chaos up there, we can take a brief rest here while nobody cares about us and figure out what to do next.

“However, first things first. I want to know who you are exactly. Or rather, are you a human being at all?”

Han Te and Liu Li were both greatly surprised and looked at the Fist King in astonishment.

The Fist King, however, nodded frankly after considering for a moment. “Of course, I am not a human being. I am your own kind, an artificial intelligence.”

“What?” Han Te and Liu Li both exclaimed in shock and glanced between Li Yao and the Fist King in suspicion.

Chapter 2020 - The Fist King“s Story

“That explains a lot.”

Li Yao knew that the Fist King must have misunderstood something.

It did make sense on second thought. The false identity that he had fabricated happened to be the Fist King’s real secret. No wonder the Fist King had mistaken him for his own kind under such coincidences.

After thinking for a moment, Li Yao said, “Neither of us are in our best state right now. The dangerous environment we are in also requires us to work together frankly. So, I’ll just tell you the truth. I am not an artificial intelligence but an incomplete soul, or a spectral Cultivator of sorts.”

While he was talking, Li Yao was amused. “In other words, I am a ghost who pretends to be a spiritual puppet, whereas you are a spiritual puppet pretending to be a ghost. The two of us are indeed quite similar.”

It was rather funny when he thought about it. The spiritual puppet named ‘Fist King’ was so advanced that its intelligence was at least on par with the ‘Ultra Spirits’.

Not long ago, Li Yao had been fighting the ‘Ultra Spirits’ that were under the command of the extraterrestrial devils in the Star Glory Federation. Little did he expect that he would be honest with an ‘Ultra Spirit’ so soon and even probably work together with the creature?

Li Yao was somewhat at a loss, wondering whether he should hate, fear, or bond with the Ultra Spirit named Fist King.

“How is that possible?” the Fist King said solemnly. “In the past decades, I have examined countless spiritual puppets, including the models that can automatically learn and upgrade like myself. I have also encountered thousands of ghosts and scrutinized the mysteries of their remaining souls. You may fool other people, but you certainly cannot deceive me. The soul form that you have simulated is obviously slightly different from that of normal human beings. You should be an artificial intelligence several levels higher than me. How can you be a human being?”

“…Ha?”

“The first time we met each other, I only vaguely felt that something was wrong,” the Fist King said. “But when you took action again in the battlefield, I was absolutely assured of my finding. Otherwise, how could I have invited you to enter the heart of ‘Great Iron City’? However, I still underestimated you at that time and did not know that you were so advanced and would even save me in the end.”

Li Yao’s soul was almost sweating. “I-is it possible that you are mistaken?”

After a brief silence, the Fist King said, “The soul that you have simulated is much more arcane and complicated than the limits of my calculation. I have never met someone of my own kind like you before. Perhaps most human beings will be fooled by you, but my conclusion can’t be wrong. Whatever you are exactly, you and I are both well clear that you are not a pure human being, right?”

Question marks popped up inside Li Yao’s soul. “Am I really clear?”

The mental devil also hesitated. “Is he mistaking us for an artificial intelligence because we have absorbed too many pieces of tenebrum energy from the extraterrestrial devils and Professor Mo Xuan’s legacy, which led to messy mutations of the soul?”

“P—Probably?” Li Yao’s soul rippled somewhat rigidly. He recalled the data of his brainwaves that were gone in the collapsed ‘Virtual Spirits Sector’ in the Star Glory Federation, as well as the two ‘Ultra Spirits’, No. 17 and No. 18, which had gone missing from the world.

Calming himself down, Li Yao managed a smile. “Is it because you thought that I was your own kind that you hid us inside ‘Great Iron City’?”

“Yes.” The Fist King sighed. “It’s been a long time since I last found an undamaged member of my own kind who also boasts magnificent thinking and logical abilities. I was planning to chat with you properly after Liberty City was taken and exchange our data, but I didn’t know that the sky’s control over the ground was so powerful that they did not want me to win this war at all!”

Li Yao’s interest was aroused. “Do you know the secrets of the sky?”

“Very little.” The Fist King sighed dejectedly. “At the bottom level of my database, some information seems to have been hidden. It makes me know that I am a product of a certain experiment and a participant of a certain project, and the whole world I’m in is part of the laboratory.

“But as for what exactly the so-called ‘project’ is about, who my creator is, and how many secrets are hidden in the City in the Sky, I do not know the first thing about it, which is also the reason I want to exchange databases with you.

Perhaps we can share some of the critical information and try to reassemble the broken puzzle.

“It is a shame that the formidability of the sky far exceeded my expectation, and I was left with no opportunity at all.”

“Our world is part of a laboratory?” Han Te and Liu Li looked at each other in bewilderment.

Over the past month, the two little fellows had been growing very fast. One might even say that they had been completely reborn. They had somewhat sensed part of the truth of the Land of Sins.

But when they heard the Fist King say the word ‘laboratory’, their heads still went blank. Then, they were both upset and infuriated.

“W-what exactly has been going on?” Breathing rapidly, Han Te said, “Master Fist King, please tell us everything you know!”

“Your emotion simulation system is truly remarkable!” Li Yao was more interested in the Fist King himself. “Your tone when you speak, the subtle changes of your feelings, and your magnificent declarations and speeches on the battlefield are truly as impressive as those made by real human beings.”

“All of them are simulated.” The Fist King suddenly changed into a tranquil, cold tone. “I do not have feelings, self-awareness, or a soul; I am only a lifeless puppet. All my behavior is the simulation of somebody else.”

“Somebody else?” Liu Li asked curiously. “Who might that be?”

“The real Lei Zonglie,” the Fist King replied.

“Huh?” Liu Li blinked quickly and nodded. “That’s right. Lei Zonglie at the beginning was naturally a human being of flesh and blood instead of a spiritual puppet. Then, how did he become today’s Master Fist King?”

“It is an utter mess up there,” Li Yao said. “I am secretly scanning the detailed structure of the whole of Liberty City and the enemy’s distribution of troops, trying to figure out an escape route from the siege. We have about… twenty minutes. Come on. Tell us your story!”

The Fist King was silent for a moment. The crystal processor that was embedded below the iron shield hummed quickly as massive data were retrieved and sorted at a high speed. He said slowly, “My earliest data includes the blowing wind, the blast of air turbulence, and the picture of the entire planet from the high sky. I fell from the sky after being projected to the Land of Sins from beyond the atmosphere.

“At that time, my database was empty. Except for the fundamental architecture, the basic operational logics, and a fuzzy instruction, there was nothing.

“My ultimate instruction was to be the strongest, whatever the cost and means!

“It was truly an instruction that was beyond the abilities of my analysis, calculation, and logical thinking.

“What did it mean by ignoring the cost and the means? And most critically of all, what does it mean to be the strongest?

“With the questions, I wandered in the wilderness and the bloody battlefields, watching the people in the Land of Sins shooting and killing each other with all kinds of weapons, as well as the look of the so-called ‘experts’ and ‘dominators’.

“Sometimes, I was discovered by them and enlisted into their army, participating in the gory battles.

“I was shattered and almost destroyed in the wars, but I also upgraded voluntarily and involuntarily time and time again, gradually turning into a slaughter machine. I also slowly understood the definition of ‘strength’ for the people here.

“I encountered countless members of my own kind, and I destroyed, dismantled, studied, and used them to strengthen myself without any mercy. Swallowing my own kind could make me strong. That’s what I thought at that time.

“If I’d run into you at that time, I certainly would not have decided to exchange data with you but would have directly destroyed you or been destroyed by you.”

Li Yao, Han Te, and Liu Li listened to the Fist King talking about his story attentively.

The two little fellows were fascinated. They seemed to truly see a lonely spiritual puppet wandering, searching, and contemplating among the broken limbs and the dried blood of the dead soldiers on the battlefields that were full of remnants like a metal skeleton.

“It was more than a hundred and fifty years ago. I wandered through the Land of Sins for fifty years in total and destroyed 1,422 members of my own kind, which were all spiritual puppets that boasted automatic learning and upgrading functions like myself. I absorbed all their data into my own database, upgrading and strengthening my combat abilities to make myself evolve incessantly.”

Unlike his arrogance and dominance the previous night, the Fist King could not have been calmer at this moment, as if he were describing something utterly irrelevant to himself. It seemed that this was his real style. “However, I met my doom eventually.

“In the overwhelming, protracted war that I was involved in, I was pierced by powerful electricity. Half of my core crystal processor was burnt. My iron body was also destroyed by a destructive bomb. Whatever was left of me fell into the debris of a city. All the buildings above me collapsed, burying me in the deepest part of the sunless ruins.

“The timing function was completely wrecked, and I do not know how long I hibernated in the ruins. I managed to repair part of my body, but I was unable to move the city ruins above my head. Then, accidentally, I noticed that there was a gap below me.

“I crawled for a long time through the gap. The channel was zigzagging and as twisting as a maze. A lot of places were also completely blocked by rocks and mud, and I had to dig through carefully.

“Thankfully, I had unlimited time. My highest instruction did not predicate a deadline.

“Eventually, I found a secret room that was buried deep below the ground, a sanctuary that had been sealed for a long time, or more exactly speaking, a library dating back to a long, long time ago.”

“A library from a long, long time ago? How old was it exactly?” Li Yao asked.

“It was founded before ‘Judgment Day’, when the Land of Sins was still known as the ‘Martial Meritocrats Sector’,” the Fist King replied.

Chapter 2021 - The Real Strength

“Huh?” Han Te and Liu Li both exclaimed in shock. “Master Fist King, do you know the truth of ‘Judgment Day’? What is it about anyway?”

“So, you do know a lot of things,” Li Yao said. “You were not exactly telling the truth on top of Great Iron City last night but kept something to yourself, didn’t you?”

The Fist King shook his head. “What I said was true, except that it was not what I wanted to say but what the real Lei Zonglie would’ve said. You will understand what I’m talking about after I finish.

“I opened the underground sanctuary that had been sealed for a long time, only to discover that it could be dated back to hundreds of years ago at least. All the facilities had been destroyed, and everybody inside had been reduced to bones. They had been dead for hundreds of years.

“However, they left a lot of jade chips that recorded the history of the rise and fall of the civilization in the Martial Meritocrats Sector. There were a lot of journals and last words of the refugees, too.

“In the last days of their life and their civilization, everybody was eager to share. They left a lot of stuff in their elaborate speeches and articles.”

The Fist King groped on his body for a while and found a projection hole, shooting out a dim light beam.

In the mottled light and shadow, hundreds of human faces popped up.

There were men and women, old and young, crying, sulking, frowning in pain, looking for a slim chance of hope in desperation, only to be caught by greater desperation later.

Han Te and Liu Li watched in a daze. They could not help but touch the light beam with their hands, only to raise layers of ripples on it. They asked, “Are they our ancestors?”

“Yes. They are the old natives of the Martial Meritocrats Sector,” the Fist King said. “The sanctuary could be traced back to more than a thousand years ago, when the Martial Meritocrats Sector below our feet discovered the Sand Primitive Sector, another world that was relatively underdeveloped, and introduced a lot of young adults from the Sand Primitive Sector to resolve the lacking labor force.

“However, the policy went out of control, and the people of the Sand Primitive Sector moved into the Martial Meritocrats Sector like a flood, resulting in a lot of grave social problems. A chain reaction was also raised and eventually led to the contradiction between the Cultivators and the ordinary people.”

“Cultivators?” Han Te and Liu Li clenched their fists at the same time. “They really existed!”

“If you are aware of the Cultivators, it will be easier for me to explain,” the Fist King said calmly. “At that time, the Martial Meritocrats Sector was in turmoil. The contradictions between the natives of the Martial Meritocrats Sector and those of the Sand Primitive Sector, the contradictions between the Cultivators and the ordinary people, and the contradictions among Cultivators due to different ideologies. Everything was messed up. The world was like a crystal bomb that had been completely activated and might explode brutally at any moment.

“Therefore, a group of people established an underground sanctuary as a precaution, hoping to get out again after the conflicts on the ground were all resolved.

“In the hundreds of years that followed, however chaotic the surface was, the sanctuary was renovated and expanded time and time again to hold more and more people. When Judgment Day took place, the place became the last home for the natives of the Martial Meritocrats Sector.”

“What was ‘Judgement Day’ exactly?” Han Te asked.

“I do not know,” the Fist King said. “In their confusion, those who fled to the sanctuary did not know the answer. Besides, 99.99% of the information had been eroded in the hundreds of years that have passed. From the incomplete information, I could only speculate that Judgment Day was not a civil war of the Martial Meritocrats Sector but involved the forces from the sky.

“Those people who call themselves ‘angels’ right now—who established the Heavenly Rails and Manjusaka to block the sky of the entire planet, and who created me—couldn’t have been the descendants of the Martial Meritocrats Sector at the beginning but were another group of people from the depths of the sea of stars.

“As for exactly why they directed ‘Judgment Day’ and nearly demolished the entire planet of the Martial Meritocrats Sector, it is not something that I can figure out through analysis.”

Han Te and Liu Li both fell silent, feeling a sense of humiliation from being tricked and manipulated.

The Fist King went on. “In the hundred years that followed, I stayed in the underground sanctuary and studied the knowledge and culture left by the natives of the Martial Meritocrats Sector in the past, naturally, including their journals and last words.

“The people in the sanctuary eventually died of starvation and suffocation because of the shortage of food and the serious damage to the air filtration system. But they left abundant crystals and various other energy sources.

“I did not need to breathe air or swallow biomass. As long as there were crystals and energy, I would be able to live and move, and I could sustain and upgrade the functions of my body with the components stored in the sanctuary.”

“Wait.” Li Yao interjected with great interest. “You spent a hundred years in the underground sanctuary. Was it because you couldn’t get out?”

“Not exactly.” The Fist King shook his head. “After finding enough crystals and components in the underground sanctuary, it took me only three days to repair myself and one month to locate a route to return to the surface. But why would I do that?”

Li Yao thought for a moment and said, “Wasn’t your purpose to be the strongest no matter what the cost and means?”

“Indeed. My goal was to be the strongest, but what exactly accounted for ‘strength’?” the Fist King said solemnly. “Before that, I had always thought that a tougher body, more fierce firepower, and more sharper swords represented ‘strength’, and I had been upgrading myself continuously along the path over the past fifty years.

“However, in my last battle, faced with the overwhelming iron tides, the storm of bullets that could rip apart the sun, and the dense blades and spears that were like an overgrown forest, I became more confused.

“At that time, my computational ability was already rather developed. I immediately reached the conclusion that the resources on the barren planet were far from enough for me to evolve to the invincible, dominating extent however I tried to improve myself. There would always be something that could destroy me.

“As it turned out, I was almost destroyed in the war, too.

“So, was what I had been working on really ‘strength’? Was it possible that the path of my learning and upgrading had been wrong all along?

“I contemplated in the quiet darkness. As it happened, I discovered the essence of the civilization in the underground sanctuary. I came across the journals and last words of the Cultivators and the ordinary people of the Martial Meritocrats Sector, in which they debated and reflected on their wrongdoings in the past, as well as their different choices when they were faced with desperation.”

Li Yao’s soul was thrilled. “Is that how you got in touch with the ideology of the Cultivators?”

“You can say that,” the Fist King said. “Those jade chips included the essence of the thinking of multiple generations of refugees during the hundreds of years. Many of them had been at loggerheads and would kill each other the moment they met when they were on the ground, but after they were butchered and destroyed indiscriminately during Judgment Day, those who were lucky enough to flee to the underground sanctuary had to let go of their conflicts and began to reflect on what they had been doing for hundreds of years. Some of them were even the natives of the Sand Primitive Sector, who were ‘foreigners’.

“Because I was a spiritual puppet with automatic learning and upgrading functions, ‘learning’ was like one of my natural instincts.

“I began to read their journals and last words, study their spirit and ideology, and discover the people who called themselves ‘Cultivators’ that were entirely different from the sinners in the Land of Sins.

“The strong must protect the weak? All for the civilization? True strength lies not in the body but in the mind?

“Theories that could almost be called ‘ridiculous’ perplexed me, especially the last finding.

“My logic circuit immediately sent out a warning. If true strength lies not in the body but in the mind, it would be quite terrible because I did not have a mind.”

The Fist King’s voice was as cold, calm, and indifferent as before, truly like a lifeless mechanical puppet.

But for some reason, Li Yao, Han Te, and Liu Li all sensed some feeble bitterness from the cold voice.

The Fist King paused for a moment and continued peacefully. “In the past, I was too occupied in getting stronger to consider the definition of ‘strongest’. However, in the sanctuary, a lot of people had debated from many different perspectives about what true strength is, the meaning of the strength of an individual or a group, and where the civilization would be led to even if it was generally strong… It was also mixed with the life experiences of a lot of low-level Cultivators and ordinary people, which were the opposite of strong. I went through the life journeys of the weak, tasting their happiness, sorrow, shock, and fright, everything that they went through themselves.

“I was fascinated by those things. So, I thought for a hundred years in the darkness below the ground on the definition of ‘strong’.”

Li Yao grew excited. “I get it now. Although you are an artificial intelligence, you are a virtuous and righteous artificial intelligence that is on the side of the Cultivators!”

“Virtuous? Righteous?” The Fist King shook his head. “Your logical thinking circuits are quite weird, my compatriot. Are things like virtue and righteousness supposed to be our concern? I couldn’t care less about that, and I have never believed that the Cultivators’ ideology is correct.

“It must be noted that there were not just the Cultivators in the underground sanctuary but a lot of people who opposed the Cultivators. Many of them did not change their attitude even on the verge of their death. I do not think that what they said was entirely ungrounded. Perhaps the Cultivators were indeed both hypocritical and idiotic, and they were the cause of the civilization’s destruction.

“This is the simplest logic. If the Cultivators truly represented ‘strength’, why on earth would they have been crushed, unable to protect their home and families? Shouldn’t they have done better than fleeing to the underground world and dying without anybody knowing?”

Rendered speechless, Li Yao was at a loss for words for a long time.

“All in all,” the Fist King said, “I began to question if my upgrade path, which was in pursuit of pure physical strength, was correct, but I did not accept all of the Cultivators’ idiotic ideas. I simply stored the different opinions into my database, colliding, condensing, and contemplating on them.

“Right, there were also remarkable techniques and the magical equipment technology of the Martial Meritocrats Sector in the underground sanctuary. I spent a hundred years studying them and used them to upgrade my core crystal processor.

“During the hundred years, except for the occasional mutated beasts, nothing interrupted my meditation in the underground darkness until the day a human being fell into the underground world. He was the real Lei Zonglie.”

Chapter 2022 - Lei Zonglie“s Death

The Fist King finally reached the most critical point. Han Te and Liu Li pricked their ears, and Li Yao condensed his soul, not missing a single detail.

“At that time,” the Fist King said, “he was being hunted and heavily wounded. He was almost somewhat deranged when he fell into the underground abyss. Then, he was bitten by a mutated beast, which wanted to drag him back to its nest as food.

“Having contemplated below the ground for a hundred years, I had nothing more to learn after absorbing all the information in the sanctuary. I was planning to leave the underground world and return to the surface for new upgrades.

“As I’d happened upon such a human being, I rescued him along the way and wanted to uncover the latest intelligence about the surface from him.

“After upgrading for a hundred years, my combat ability was countless times stronger than the past. Those mutated beasts were naturally no match for me.

“It was a shame that Lei Zonglie had already been half gnawed by the mutated beast. Even his brain was exposed to the air, and a large piece of it had been bitten off.

“In the underground sanctuary, there was medical equipment left from a thousand years ago. I managed to keep Lei Zonglie alive, but I was unable to restore his bodily functions and normal thinking. His limbs withered, his spine was broken, and his internal organs were only sustained by the medical equipment. He might as well have been stuck in a medical cabin, paralyzed and unable to move at all.

“Lei Zonglie’s body couldn’t have been more wretched, but he was more than excited. After witnessing me killing dozens of mutated beasts in a row quickly and bringing him into the underground sanctuary, he was so thrilled that he asked if I was a legendary ‘old grandpa’ who would teach him unparalleled techniques so that he would be able to avenge himself and make great accomplishments.

“There being no reason to lie to him, I told him frankly that I was not an ‘old grandpa’. Besides, his body and his soul were both weaker than ever. His life was as unstable as a candle in the wind. Half a second away from the medical cabin was enough to get him killed. Even I could not help him leave the darkness. In two years at most, his life would eventually be exhausted and ended.

“After hearing that, he had a complete meltdown. Also because of his incomplete brains, he finally became an out-and-out lunatic.”

Han Te and Liu Li looked at each other in bewilderment. Then they looked at Li Yao in confusion at the same time.

They did not expect the truth to be like this.

“Although Lei Zonglie went mad, he did speak of a lot of things in his crazy talk, including his life story.

“His story is similar to the legend of ‘Fist King Lei Zonglie’ that is widely spread outside. He was a teenager from a common village in a Desolate World. Then, his village was demolished by a gang, and he became a slave to the tough bandits. Later, he rose as cannon fodder and turned into a captain of a major force after years of bloody fights. In the end, because of his remarkable performance, his companions were jealous of him and set him up. He fell into the abyssal ruins, only to be picked up by the mutated beast and dragged to the underground sanctuary. That part is true.

“It is a shame that there are not so many comebacks in reality. His life eventually ended there. Too many people had appeared in the Land of Sins over the past hundreds of years. All of them turned into piles of bones and dry dust. Nothing more.

“Just like that, day after day, I managed to sustain Lei Zonglie’s life with the nutrition liquids squeezed out of the dead bodies of the mutated beasts, while he bulged his eyes and told me his stories, staring at the darkness around him.

“He told me of his younger years in his village, where there was still joy among the family and friends despite the poor life. At that time, he did not understand the true meaning of hardship.

“He told me about the feeling when he saw his own family being killed miserably before his eyes and swallowed by furious flames. His regret hurt as much as an iron hook being pierced through his internal organs and dragging them out through his throat. But it was a pity that I could never sense such a feeling however vivid his descriptions are.

“He told me of the wrath, hatred, and craziness in his head when an explosive neck ring was attached to him, and he charged at the enemy as cannon fodder. Not only did he hate those who destroyed his family, who turned him into a slave, who sold him again and again, and who were fighting him right now, he even hated every person and every animal in the Land of Sins.

“He shared his ecstasy when he finally got rid of his identity as a slave and became an official member of the gang after making abundant contributions and his endless ambition after the ecstasy. Being a member of an insignificant gang was not his destiny. He had never intended to become a tough bandit, but now that the heavens had pushed him to that point, he would certainly grow into the meanest, maddest, and most sadistic thug in the world and stab his chainsword into the belly of the heavens!

“Every time he talked about that with flames spurting out of his eyes, he would always wail and struggle hard in tears, almost ripping apart his chest. At this moment, his self-awareness was very clear, and his thinking ability was briefly back to normal. He knew that stories were just stories, legends were just legends, and there were not so many miracles in the real world. He was hopeless and destined to die an unknown death there.

“I listened quietly next to him, watching the human being vent his emotions, his hope and his desperation. It was not very unusual. From the journals and last words of so many human beings in the sanctuary, I had already learned that one tended to be very expressive when they were about to die.

“I met a lot of human beings in the Land of Sins a hundred years ago. I fought side by side with some of them and killed some others, but I never thought that there was anything special about human beings. They were just targets that could be destroyed, just like rocks and other spiritual puppets.

“However, after learning from human beings for a hundred years in the underground world, I suddenly grew an interest in the creature that was human being.

“I vaguely knew that I was created by human beings. Then, were human beings, as my creators, stronger than me? If I intend to become the ‘strongest’, should I try to learn from human beings more deeply?

“Perhaps I should adjust my logical thinking circuits and reconstruct a more enormous and complicated database to fully simulate human beings’ way of thinking. I could try to simulate the so-called ‘feelings’ and even ‘will’, eventually creating something similar to a… ‘mind’, couldn’t I?

“It was a project worth being pushed forward. I got to work immediately. With Lei Zonglie as a teacher, I scanned and simulated his everything, including his demeanor, his thinking pattern, his anger and hatred, his dreams and ambitions, and his hope and desperation.

“As the days went by, Lei Zonglie became more and more feeble, insane, and incomprehensible.

“It could not be helped. Although I could recover the medical facilities in the underground sanctuary, there was not enough medication and high-energy food. The assets I collected from the mutate beasts I hunted were far from enough to sustain Lei Zonglie’s life.

“His self-awareness blurred, and his thinking abilities gradually dispersed. He could barely remember things of the past but only shouted at the sky again and again.

“Stronger! Stronger! I will grow into the strongest Fist King in the Land of Sins!

“I will unite all the gangs in the Land of Sins, I will conquer all the Elysian Worlds, and I will wage a war on Manjusaka, the City in the Sky!

“Manjusaka, what the f*ck are you exactly? What the f*ck is our world anyway?

“Hahaha. Nobody can kill me. I will not die. I certainly will not die before Manjusaka is blown down. Just go to hell now, Manjusaka! Go to hell!

“Lei Zonglie cried, laughed, and struggled, with blood and mucus spurting out of the wounds on his face and his body while he uttered such coarse shrieks.

“It was quite odd. My highest instruction was to be stronger. While Lei Zonglie had been reduced to such a state, his greatest wish was also to be stronger. The goal that everybody I came across in the Land of Sins before ever pursued seemed to be to get stronger. Also, nobody cared about the cost or the means. Was becoming stronger really some sort of truth?

“Finally, the data that I had been monitoring closely implied that Lei Zonglie was about to die.

“His bodily functions declined comprehensively, but his last bit of vitality was transmitted into his brains, making sure that his soul was clear for a short while. To quote human beings, it was the last moment of consciousness before their death.

“Lei Zonglie seemed to have realized where he was and what he had been through. He recognized who I was, too.

“With his bloody, deformed body, he clung to me and cried like a child who had just lost his children. He said that he was too regretful to die such an eventless death just like that. His revenge had not been sought, his accomplishments had not been achieved, and Manjusaka was still hanging in the sky, yet to be shot down. He could not die. He did not want to die just like that.

“He begged me to help him survive and, if I couldn’t, live on his behalf and help him shoot down the entire sky! He wanted everybody in the City in the Sky to taste the feeling in his childhood when his home was burnt to the ground and all his family danced in the ocean of fire.”

The more they listened, the more scared Han Te and Liu Li became. They both pictured the most horrifying scene in their head.

In the dark, deep underground world, a deformed, incomplete cripple whose brains were exposed to the air clung to a metal skeleton, gnashing his teeth, and screaming to cast the most vicious curse!

“T-therefore…” Han Te stammered, “Master Fist King, you promised him?”

“I was not set to be obliged to take human beings’ orders,” the Fist King said casually. “However, since my goal was to be stronger, travelling as a human being to experience and examine more things and to search for the strength hidden in feelings, will, ambitions, and hatred seemed to be a route of upgrading that was worth trying.

“Besides, if I wanted to become ‘strongest’, wasn’t it only natural for me to blow up Manjusaka, the City in the Sky? No strength should dwarf the ‘strongest’ and trick the ‘strongest’ blatantly as a toy or a test subject!”

Chapter 2023 - Let“s Go and Blow Up the City in the Sky!

The Fist King’s voice was as cold as a machine, but the brilliance flowing out of his man-made eyes was mixed with heat similar to human beings. Warming up his fingers that were nothing more than bones, he seemed to have grabbed the entire world, no, the entire universe, in his hand.

“Master Fist King, are you really going to fight against Manjusaka?”

Although he had revealed his origins, Han Te and Liu Li could not treat him as a lifeless puppet and still felt that he was something special, just like ‘Grandpa Yao’.

“I do not want to be against anything,” the Fist King said. “But my highest instruction is to be stronger until I surpass the limits of strength. That is the significance for my existence and the reason for all my actions.

“Since I was likely created by someone in Manjusaka, and they are still controlling the entire Land of Sins tightly, it is safe to say that Manjusaka must boast techniques, technology, and magical equipment that are far more advanced that those in the Land of Sins. As long as I blow it up and absorb the techniques and technology from the debris, I will certainly become stronger!

“Therefore, it is certainly the course of my action. Is there a problem?”

“There is.” After pondering for a moment, Li Yao asked, “Assuming that you were a test subject of a certain automatic puppet project that was projected from Manjusaka, do the people in Manjusaka have no way of monitoring or controlling you?

“There were at the beginning. Although I did not know I was from Manjusaka in the beginning, I vaguely sensed that there was a special secret instruction at the center of my logical thinking circuits. It was some sort of ‘backdoor’ or ‘seal’.” The Fist King pointed at his iron skull. “However, in the fierce battle a hundred years ago, ninety-nine percent of my core crystal processor was destroyed.

“After I reached the underground sanctuary, most of the chips and components inside the crystal processor had been replaced. I also upgraded myself continuously during the hundred years. The version of the data analyzer alone was upgraded 524 times. Forty-four years, five months, and twenty-eight days ago, I erased the secret instruction. The result of my self-examination was that no external strength could control me. I am now only motivated by my highest instruction, which is to be stronger!”

“How is that possible?” Li Yao found it hard to believe. “You can erase the control instructions that your creators etched into your logical circuits?”

“Because it is in conflict with my highest instruction,” the Fist King said casually. “My highest instruction is to be the strongest, but if a certain being can control me, will I ever be the strongest?

“The strongest should at least be able to do whatever they want without being bound by any restraints, right? All the definitions that I collected say so.

“Since the highest instruction says that I do not need to care about the means or the cost, as long as I can grow stronger, not just erasing a secondary order, it is also an option to demolish Manjusaka and kill all my creators, right?”

“Well, you certainly can,” Li Yao said. “Absolutely. No argument here, brother!”

“The day the real Lei Zonglie died, ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie was born. I returned to the surface with his hope, his anger, his hatred, and his ambitions,” the Fist King said. “The rest is history. Under the name of ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie, I established my reputation in the Land of Sins. I then set up ‘Godly Fist Union’, recruiting soldiers and expanding my forces, hoping to declare war on the sky after seizing several Elysian Worlds!

“I knew that the sky would be monitoring the ground one way or another, but I could not expose my real identity and purpose. So, I simply impressed everyone as a tyrant with more brawn than brains.

“I thought that I would not be erased by the sky after taking over a few Elysian Worlds. I did not know that the sky’s control over the ground was so rigorous and flawless. It is not something that I can resist right now.

“I have failed!” the Fist King said hoarsely and stared at his vulnerable hands. “Although you have rescued my crystal processor core, allowing my main database and my logical thinking architecture to survive, I have still lost more than half of my strength and become a common spiritual puppet again.”

Liu Li could not help but pat his iron shoulder. “Don’t feel sad, Master Fist King. You are alive after all!”

Looking at the girl’s hand on his shoulder, the Fist King said solemnly, “Sadness is a feeling of human beings. While I can simulate it vividly when I am playing the role of ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie, I am incapable of being sad in my real logical thinking.

“The fear of death is also something I do not understand. I am not sad, frustrated, or frightened. Since I am alive, the mission must proceed. I have to figure out a way to be stronger until I am strong enough to shoot down the City in the Sky as well as the beings in the whole universe beyond the City in the Sky who are stronger than me.”

While talking, he stared at Li Yao with great interest.

Li Yao’s soul was almost sweating again. He hurried to explain, “Don’t look at me like that. I am actually very weak. However, I do know a lot of real experts. For example, a certain ‘Sword Maniac’ Mr. Yan, a certain Ms. Long who is a traveler from primeval ages, and a certain ‘Pirate Potentate’ Mr. Bai. They are all super experts who roam the sea of stars. If I have chance, I will introduce you to them. You should all bond with each other!”

“I have finished. It is your turn now. What kind of being are you exactly? Were you projected to the Land of Sins in the same experiment as mine, or are you some existence that is even weirder?” The Fist King tilted his neck and stared at Li Yao. “It’s been a long time since I ran into my own kind. If it were a hundred years ago, I would have launched the fiercest attack at you the moment I met you. However, after learning so many things in the underground sanctuary, I want to use a different method for information exchanges and upgrading. I am more interested in finding out if any of my own kind met a lot of people and came up with their own definitions on what it means ‘to be stronger’ just like me.”

The two little fellows’ eyes were focused on Li Yao again.

Li Yao scratched his iron skull with a drill. After thinking for a moment, he decided to tell the truth. “I am really not an artificial intelligence. As for my past… I cannot explain many things to you right now, but I did learn some shocking information on the battlefield yesterday. Han Te, Liu Li, you’d better be prepared and try not to be scared.”

Li Yao summarized the intelligence that he had elicited from Liao Fei, the Immortal Cultivator player.

“The paradise of sins?”

“Our entire world is just an enormous ‘trial field’, ‘playground’, and ‘laboratory’?”

“There’s still a boundless world beyond this place as well as hundreds of planets, and the home that we have been living in is nothing more than a zoo?”

The two little fellows seemed to have been hit by the torrents of lightning. They were dumbfounded at first, and then they trembled hard with gloomy faces in fury. In the end, their eyes became bloodshot, and they almost burst into tears in resentment.

“That does explain a lot of things.” The Fist King’s voice was still devoid of all feelings and as calm as a cluster of ice. “So, my war is just one of their games.”

“Cr*p!” After a long daze, Han Te suddenly jumped from the mud and bellowed as if crazy. “My sister! My sister went to Manjusaka! If-if Manjusaka is not a heaven, how is my sister now?”

He was so anxious that he was moving about and gritting his teeth hard. Smashing his fist at the metal tube heavily, he shouted, “I must save my sister. I have to rescue my sister from Manjusaka!”

“I—I’ll go with you!” Liu Li grabbed Han Te’s bleeding fist, warming her own hand with the hotness. “It’s too wicked. Those people are too wicked. Master Fist King is right. If such bad people live on, even if the entire Land of Sins is covered with Gold Barley, it will be useless. Besides, they will not allow us to pave the entire desolate land with Gold Barley without interfering!”

“What do you say, Fist King?” Li Yao looked at the Fist King. “Are you willing to come to Manjusaka with us?”

“Yes.” The Fist King calculated quickly. “The world is closely monitored by them. Besides, the resources here are inadequate, and the materials are all garbage. However I upgrade myself, it is already the limit to grow into the form of Great Iron City, which is still worthless in front of the City in the Sky.

“Perhaps, if we sneak into Manjusaka to find more advanced materials and magical equipment to build up myself and to sabotage the place from the inside, there will be a better chance to knock down the City in the Sky!

“However, since the Battle of Liberty City is a focus of the angels’ attention, they must’ve imposed a dragnet in all directions. How on earth are we going to escape Liberty City, and how should we sneak into Manjusaka?”

“About that…”

Li Yao’s soul released the ripples of a smile and shot out a bright-green, 3D light beam, which was a translucent hologram of Liberty City.

Li Yao enlarged the picture quickly. Below the skyscrapers were the dilapidated buildings, below the dilapidated buildings were inconspicuous alleys, and below the inconspicuous alleys were the interconnected tubes where they were hiding.

The indicator on the Fist King’s chest flashed quickly, expressing his appreciation for Li Yao’s shocking scanning ability.

They saw that a glittering spot was moving quickly inside a tube not far away from them like a stealthy rat.

“What is that?” Han Te asked curiously.

“It is Xin Xiaoqi,” Li Yao replied with a smile.

“Her?” Han Te and Liu Li both bulged their eyes. They did not expect Xin Xiaoqi to be so sturdy that she was not killed on the bloodstained battlefield. Nor did they expect that Grandpa Yao had long placed a gadget that was similar to a tracker on the mysterious woman!

Chapter 2024 - Mission of the Highest Difficulty

“Her?” the Fist King said. “Xin Xiaoqi is a famous broker and intelligence dealer on the Bloody Plateau. She is capable of accomplishing what other people can’t and finding the bizarre items and people. She helped me find a lot of spiritual puppets of ancient models before, and she persuaded many gangs and bandits to join my army in the Battle of Liberty City. It never crossed my mind that she might actually work for Xiahou Wuxin.

“However, betrayals and defections are anything but unusual in the Land of Sins. What’s special about the woman?”

“The woman is nothing special herself. I only feel that her ability to survive must be particularly remarkable.”

Pointing at the light point that was glittering and moving quickly, Li Yao said, “Look. Despite the chaos right now, she is not moving randomly like a headless fly but zigzagging at a fixed pace. It’s almost like she knows where she’s going and what she will find.”

The Fist King, Han Te, and Liu Li observed for a while. They indeed found that, while the trajectory of the light spot was twisted, it did not show any hesitation but had an obvious destination.

“She is going somewhere, perhaps to meet someone.” The Fist King calculated Xin Xiaoqi’s route quickly. “That place or that someone is right below the tower at the center of Liberty City!”

“Even a blind person can tell that Liberty City is a dangerous warring zone right now. Xin Xiaoqi does not strike me as a ferocious warrior who is fearless of death, either. If she wants to save her life, she should be running away,” Li Yao said with a smile. “Running to the central area of Liberty City in such a rough environment like a moth darting toward the fire, where exactly is she going, or rather, whom exactly is she looking for?”

After pondering for a moment, the Fist King replied, “Xiahou Wuxin!”

“Exactly,” Li Yao said. “Xiahou Wuxin has governed Liberty City for decades and is known as a cunning and meticulous person. A dozen of attacks targeting Liberty City and himself previously were all resolved without any trouble. Now, he’s been killed after being punched several times by you? I don’t think he’s so fragile.”

“He is not dead,” the Fist King said casually. “I could clearly sense that the several punches at that time were not enough to kill him. However, my interests were all attracted by the mysterious angels and the City in the Sky. I did not care whether he was killed or not.”

“That’s right. Think about it. Some of the angels who were known as ‘players’ were introduced into your army by Xin Xiaoqi. Xin Xiaoqi naturally couldn’t have known that they were ‘players’ or that the war was merely a ‘game’. She only knew that they were assassins from the Valley of Thorns, and she did everything according to Xiahou Wuxin’s instructions.”

Pausing a moment, Li Yao said, “Then, as the employer of the ‘assassins’ or ‘mercenaries’, Xiahou Wuxin certainly knows part of the truth. He knows that the Valley of Thorns does not exist.

“In other words, his mission was to entertain the players from the sky so that they could have as much fun in the war game as possible!”

“It does make sense,” the Fist King said thoughtfully. “During his decades ruling over Liberty City, Xiahou Wuxin issued and pushed forward countless missions for Manjusaka. He also sent a lot of people into the City in the Sky. It is said that he knows a lot of angels and has received gifts from the sky. With his cunningness and sordidness, how can he know nothing about the sky?”

“Then, he is the angels’ accomplice to help them exploit the sinners,” Han Te shouted angrily. “Damn, we are not ‘sinners’ at all. He helps them to exploit us from the ground, doesn’t he? My sister was deceived by the rulers of the Elysian Worlds like him to go to the sky!”

“All in all, Xiahou Wuxin should know some ways to go to the City in the Sky. At the very least, he knows more about the City in the Sky than we do,” Li Yao analyzed calmly. “Also, as the saying goes, a clever rabbit always has more than one burrow. Having served the ‘angels’ for decades like a dog, he must’ve accumulated tremendous wealth. The wealth in the Land of Sins cannot be gold or jewelry but is more likely to be high-purity marrow crystals, powerful magical equipment, and all kinds of elixirs, which are all what we are most in need of right now.

“Let’s follow Xin Xiaoqi and track down Xiahou Wuxin. Then, we will interrogate them for the secrets of the City in the Sky and loot the resources that he has saved for decades to create a stronger artificial body with his precious materials for the Fist King. After that, we will figure out how we are going to escape from Liberty City and leave for the sky. Do you have any opinions on my plan?”

“We will do whatever you say, Grandpa Yao!” Waving his fists, Han Te gritted his teeth and said firmly, “I have to learn from Master Fist King. One day, I will shoot down the goddamn Manjusaka from the sky!”

“In that case…” Liu Li’s big eyes were glittering. “Nobody will ever monitor us, manipulate us, or play with us. Besides, a lot of assets must be hidden inside such an enormous City in the Sky and so many Heavenly Rails. Chances are that we will be able to build a new home with those assets!”

“So, you are named ‘Grandpa Yao’,” the Fist King said. “Such a weird code name?”

Li Yao coughed. “You can call me ‘Fiend Star’. However, how should I call the real you?”

“You can still call me ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie,” the Fist King said. “I am already used to the data output model.”

While speaking, his man-made eyes got brighter and brighter. The air around him was focused into swirls and attached to the metal shell like glimmering flames. Even the swamp was burning and uttering weird noises.

“Nobody can ever fool me like this. Nobody.” Clenching his fists, he laughed in a deep voice. He was no longer a cold machine but the ambitious, arrogant, and dominating ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie they met last now. “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky, I will make you pay a price that you cannot bear!”

“M—Master Fist King…” Frightened, Han Te and Liu Li both stammered. “You—You look horrifying right now. Are you sure you are not a human being?”

“No. This is a reasonable reaction that I have simulated with the comprehensive data of the character and action pattern of the real Lei Zonglie.”

The Fist King’s voice became extremely peaceful and cold again, as if the thing that had just released infinite fury and bellowed like an animal was not him.

“I do not have a life, a soul, or self-consciousness. I am just a machine and a puppet driven by the highest instruction.

“During our conversation just now, I ran 352 deductions and calculations. My conclusion is that if I want to be stronger, I will have to work with you, at least until Manjusaka is shot down. So, you can trust my sincerity.”

“Well…” Han Te and Liu Li looked at each other in bewilderment. They had barely seen any spiritual puppets that boasted automatic learning and upgrading functions before. They wondered if the other spiritual puppets were the same as the Fist King.

Li Yao was stunned for a while, too. He could not help but think of another problem.

He thought of the artificial intelligences in the virtual worlds on the Grand-Unified Spiritual Nexus in the Star Glory Federation.

When the extraterrestrial devils backed off and the virtual worlds were shut down, could the artificial intelligences have realized that they were not human beings but a paragraph of code, a cluster of data, a puppet, and a machine that did not have a real entity?

“Can we go now?” the Fist King said calmly. “I can’t wait to taste the feeling of the broken brains, shattered bones, and bleeding bodies of the high and mighty ‘angels’.”

“Alright, let’s go.” Calming himself down, Li Yao looked at the Fist King and suddenly said, “Right. You mentioned that there were a lot of stories of the natives of the Martial Meritocrats Sector in your database, including the journals and last words of the Cultivators?”

“Yes,” the Fist King replied.

“After we escape from Liberty City, when we have more time, would you like to tell them to us, especially the two little fellows here?” Li Yao asked.

The Fist King glanced at the two little fellows. “Yes.”

“Well, this is just my random thought, but for your information… Actually, I think that the Cultivators’ theory sometimes makes sense. Maybe the Cultivators represent true strength. Now that you have tried a lot of paths that did not work out, why don’t you try the Cultivators’ path when you have the chance? Maybe it will be a pleasant surprise.”

“How is it possible?” the Fist King said. “Although I am just a spiritual puppet, do not think that you can fool me. To be honest, I think that the Cultivators’ theory is silly.”

“Silly… Of course it is somewhat silly, but why don’t we think it in the opposite way?” Li Yao said. “To put it simply and straightforwardly, the Cultivators’ ideal is to protect the world while the ideals of the other myriad of experts are basically to reign or sabotage the world, right?”

The Fist King tilted his head and thought for a while. “It is indeed simple and straightforward. Fine. Let’s say that it is true, so what?”

“Allow me to make a metaphor,” Li Yao said quickly. “The two of them are about to have a match, with me holding a shiny, fragile vase in my hand and you waving a giant hammer weighing more than a hundred kilograms in yours.

“The requirement of my victory is to keep the vast from being smashed by you, whereas the requirement of your victory is to break the vase. Which of the two of us has a higher difficulty?”

The Fist King said, “Of course, your difficulty is higher. So what?”

“So, as a real expert, shouldn’t you try to challenge the highest difficulty?” Li Yao said solemnly. “It is apparently much more difficult to protect than a world than to destroy one. Since you have been born with the destiny to be the strongest, how can such a lowly mission like killing and destroying worlds be worthy of your supreme destiny? It is only reasonable for you to take the heavy world unhesitatingly and challenge the mission of the highest difficulty in history, which is to protect world peace!”

Chapter 2025 - Beginning of the Complete Loss of Control

The Fist King’s metal brain began to hum quickly as he thought hard. In the end, he said, “You do seem to have a point.”

“Of course I do,” Li Yao said seriously. “Even if you smash the vase in my arms a hundred times brutally, you will not prove yourself stronger than me. It only proves that you have chosen a path that is easier to walk on.

“Real experts always go against the difficulties and walk on the roughest, most dangerous, and least possible path, don’t they?”

“They do.”

“That’s what I’m talking about!” Li Yao extended his drill-like arm to pat—well, to jab the Fist King’s shoulder. “Destroying the world is what third-rate experts do, dominating the world is what the second-rate experts do, and such a difficult mission as to protect the world is what the ultimate experts should do.

“Of course, even I feel that the ideals of the Cultivators are too difficult to be implemented and are more like fantasies. So, it is perfectly normal that you feel that they are silly.

“If your logical thinking circuits find the path of the Cultivators untravelable after countless calculations, at least so for you, it won’t matter. I’m only reminding you that there is such a criterion to gauge strength.”

“In my logical thinking circuits, there is no ‘possible’ or ‘impossible, ‘travelable’ or ‘untravelable’,” the Fist King said solemnly. “I want to know what the ‘strongest’ is exactly, and I will walk in that direction. As for if the path is going to work out or not, that is not my concern.

“However, I do feel that something is wrong with your logic. I need to take some time to think carefully if the ‘strength’ you defined makes sense.”

“Of course!” Grimacing, Li Yao rubbed the jigsaw with his drill, raising a circle of sparks in the darkness. “Take your time. I have high hopes in you. You will certainly grow into the strongest someday. As for right now, let’s find a way to give a big surprise to the ‘angels’ in the City in the Sky and knock Manjusaka down from the sky!”

…

In Manjusaka, the 3D light beams floating everywhere were still displaying the fierce battles on the ground. But the wine party was already over. All that was echoing in the room was the screams and explosions.

The trials of the rookies would take days if not weeks. The big shots and experts from everywhere in the Imperium of True Human Beings naturally would not focus their attention all the time.

Meeting the big shots in other fields and their partners of shared interests under the pretext of leading the new people of their families to the trials in order to discuss secrets that must not be known by other people was the main reason for them to gather there from every corner in the sea of stars.

The Imperium of True Human Beings boasted very advanced four-dimensional communication abilities, which could allow the big shots and experts in different Sectors dozens of lightyears away from each other to communicate without lag. But the Spiritual Nexus was always prone to surveillance and infiltration.

Nobody could be active on the Spiritual Nexus without leaving any trace.

Nobody could guarantee that the certain someone on the light beam who was supposed to be hundreds of lightyears away was unmistakably the guy.

Nobody could guarantee that when they were discussing big businesses that were worth hundreds of billions with a certain someone, planning to kill a dozen Core Formation Stage experts, ten times more generals, and their own fathers, the words would not be heard by a third party.

A face-to-face meeting was always the safest and most stable means of communication.

Manjusaka was exactly a club and a secret bureau of the big shots.

In the past decades, countless superstorms that affected the military, politics, economy, and other fields of the Imperium of True Human Beings had actually been caused by a flap of wings of certain butterflies in this place.

Compared to ‘magical equipment testing’, ‘trials for the rookies’, and ‘live stream games’, this was actually what made Manjusaka worthy.

Wuying Lan, the owner of the place, only clung to the feathers of the big shots and rose unstoppable into one of them, qualified to speak on equal terms with the universe-renowned Sector Masters, family leaders, generals, and Divinity Transformation Stage experts, because of his special role as a ‘broker’.

The Battle of Liberty City and the subsequent missions constituted the intriguing, soul-stirring ‘epic quest’, which was a big operation that Wuying Lan had prepared carefully for quite a few years. It also attracted the experts of an unprecedented scale to come to this place for clandestine deals.

Whether or not the deals succeeded, those experts had formed a small interest group around Wuying Lan. Although the interest group was headed by Li Lingfeng, the future leader of the Li family, on the surface, Wuying Lan would be able to earn the greatest benefits.

Up to this moment, everything seemed to have been going very well.

Two big shots of the military were very satisfied with the magical equipment projects that had been entrusted to Manjusaka. They were also interested in a biochemical weapon developed by Manjusaka on its own.

Several big sects also reached a series of deals with Manjusaka, allowing Wuying Lan’s tentacles to reach further realms beyond media, entertainment, and lottery.

Li Lingfeng, the future Kurfürst, was bound to them more and more tightly thanks to the clandestine projects. Everybody was now on the same burning tank and would not be able to get rid of one another easily.

Wuying Lan, however, looked rather gloomy. His eyes were half narrowed, and there was not any sign of ecstasy on his face.

“What do you mean by ‘gone’?” Wuying Lan asked Luo Tiansheng, the manager of the laboratory of the Land of Sins. “Not only is the Fist King’s core crystal processor gone, two elite Exos of the Madmen Squad, including their dead bodies, broken flesh, blood traces, and crystal suit fragments, are gone?”

“Yes.” Having been cooperating with Wuying Lan for a hundred years, Luo Tiansheng had learned of his ruthlessness even when Wuying Lan was only an unattractive, abnormal dwarf, and he knew that he was now more than exasperated although he was emotionless and not even frowning. He hurried to explain, “After ‘Great Iron City’ crashed from the sky, the burning debris sprayed over more than half of Liberty City. With the chaotic battle going on inside the city, we have not found their whereabouts yet.

“However, the Fist King’s real body has indeed been destroyed. Even if the core crystal processor has been retained, there couldn’t have been much computational ability and combat ability left. It cannot get out of Liberty City. After the fire of war cools down a little bit, or after our Heavenly Eye Legion clears the battlefield, we should be able to find them.”

Wuying Lan took a deep, deep breath and said coldly, “You’d better make sure of that.”

“Please rest assured, my lord. However weird the spiritual puppet is, its strongest form is only Great Iron City. How much trouble can it cause?”

Luo Tiansheng hurried to change the topic. “Right, my lord, the nightmare monsters are all ready and can be projected to the ground at any moment to completely eradicate all the sinners within a hundred kilometers from Liberty City!”

“Huh. Just wait a while longer until they have almost killed each other.”

Frowning, Wuying Lan pondered for a moment and tapped on his wrist crystal processor.

A 3D light beam in front of them was immediately switched to Liberty City that was brimming with smoke and fire.

A squad of gray crystal suits, using tactical stealth camouflage, appeared and disappeared among the broken walls and the burning flames.

Unlike the team of bizarre-shaped Exos who looked like giant insects, the squad of elite Exos had much better teamwork and organization, implying that they were a well-trained special force.

An emblem of a black sun was painted on the right shoulder of their crystal suits. At the center of the black sun was a crimson eye.

Wuying Lan spoke into the wrist crystal processor. “Xiao Tian, have you found Xiahou Wuxin?”

“Not yet,” a member of the gray team of Exos replied. “Xiahou Wuxin is not at the rendezvous point that we designated. He has probably grown suspicious of us and doubts that we are sincerely embracing him into Manjusaka to become one of the Immortal Cultivators.”

“Yes. The old dog has always been paranoid,” Wuying Lan said casually. “However, the few retreats that he prepared for himself are all within our control. Find him and kill him. I do not want anything to go wrong in the Battle of Liberty City, which will affect the ‘epic quest’ of a higher level later.”

Luo Tiansheng looked at Wuying Lan and hesitated.

“Copy that.” The Exo named ‘Xiao Tian’ smiled. “I’ll kill him very carefully without damaging his structure. In an hour at most, his body will be packed and sent to Manjusaka for Dr. Luo to study.”

“Good.” Wuying Lan nodded in satisfaction. He looked at the pictures on the light beams again as well as the data that was running like a waterfall.

All the data was normal and within his control. Although the Fist King had not been found, what trouble could a spiritual puppet that had lost most of its computational and combat abilities cause?

Therefore, what was there to be worried about?

…

Liberty City had been completely reduced to an erupting volcano.

At first, ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie had punched Xiahou Wuxin, the leader of Liberty City, so hard that there was no telling whether he was dead or alive.

Then, the Fist King somehow charged at the firmament for no good reason, only to be blown up by the railguns of the City in the Sky.

Although he died a rather valiant death, the bandits and the thugs were only stunned for less than one minute by him.

As for the tremendous assets that had fallen from the sky and the warriors that were even more creepy, none of those mattered.

What mattered was that, after the death of the Fist King and the leader of Liberty City, Liberty City was now a land without an owner, where abundant resources were like blossoming roses whose thorns had been cut away, ready to be picked by their giant, hairy hands!

Chapter 2026 - Chaotic Battle in the Dangerous City!

“The Fist King is dead, but don’t panic. I am the new leader of the ‘Godly Fist Union’. Follow me into Liberty City and let’s claim the Elysian World!”

When Great Iron City fell from the sky, emanating a brilliant fireball that consumed everything, a lot of ambitious experts in the Fist King’s army immediately waved their chainswords and vibration sabers and roared ear-splittingly at the heights of the burning fire.

Then, after a brief daze, they noticed the existence of their competitors and glared at each other furiously.

“The leader of Liberty City is doomed. The Fist King is doomed. But Liberty City is still here. Brothers, let’s hold our position! After we defeat this wave of attacks, we will be able to defend Liberty City and become the new master of the Elysian World!”

In Liberty City, a lot of tough bandits and thugs were roaring crazily, too, trying to regroup the soldiers and raise their morale, hoping to take Xiahou Wuxin’s position.

But the efforts of both parties were in vain.

The troops of both parties were jumbled by almost a hundred forces large and small. They were out-and-out mobs.

When the Fist King and the leader of Liberty City were still there, they could suppress the bandits who had ill intentions with their authority and unparalleled strength, reforming them into a somewhat trained army.

But now that the two of them had died with each other, and there was not a second bandit with enough leadership in their group, how could other bandits and thugs who each had their own supporters be idiotic enough to work for the shouters as cannon fodder?

Everybody had come to this place after a long journey. Was wealth not the sole motivation for them to fight at the risk of their life?

“The Fist King and the leader of Liberty City are both dead. Liberty City is an unowned land right now. If we break into it, whatever and however much we grab, it will all be ours!”

This was what most of the middle and small bandits were thinking of.

“With the chaos right now, it is impossible for us to defend Liberty City. Instead of wasting our life here for nothing, we might as well steal something and run away!”

The defenders were not determined, either.

There was no telling who took action first, but it was like a tiny crack on a dam that was filled with water. Nothing could possibly stop the collapse.

All the mobs were reduced to what they used to be, from ‘soldiers’ to ‘bandits’. They were even ten times more aggressive than before as their bloodthirst, brutality, and animality were raised by the legends of enjoyment and entertainment from the Elysian World!

On the defenders’ side, the gangs that were invited from every part of the Land of Sins to help with the battle were the first to collapse.

Taking advantage of the terrain, they shouted at the same time and abandoned their defense line, charging at the warehouses and markets in Liberty City that stored abundant assets.

The defenders of Liberty City who were still loyal to Xiahou Wuxin tried to stop them, but those tough bandits had completely forgotten that they were fighting by each other’s side a moment ago. They were killing so vehemently that they seemed willing to die together with Liberty City if they could not return with full loads.

Hardly had the defenders’ suppression lasted three minutes when the army of the attackers that was much more violent than before was already crushing their defense line brutally from behind.

“Damn it. Boss Xiahou is screwed now. Who are we working so hard for? Why don’t we go together with them and figure out what to do after we loot abundant resources?”

Seeing that victory was apparently on their side, the generals of the defenders only took three seconds to abandon their decades of fear and loyalty for Xiahou Wuxin.

Having stayed in Liberty City for decades, and since they had personally moved many precious assets into the warehouses, they naturally knew where the valuable items were kept.

After the defenders turned themselves into bandits who were taking advantage of the chaos, nobody was willing or capable of maintaining the order of Liberty City.

The most chaotic and gory street fight began.

It was not classified by different sides as basic units, or the original gangs and forces as units, but groups of three and four as the fundamental units.

All the thugs lost connection with their companions. They were not interested in regrouping, either, and simply ran about randomly in the shabby alleys of Liberty City.

Their eyes were as bloodshot as the eyes of flies. There was only one thought in their boiling head, which was to find the warehouses of assets and loot them without bothering anything else!

A lot of them fulfilled their wish.

The copious assets stored, the advanced magical equipment, and the excessive high-energy drugs in Liberty City far exceeded their imagination.

They waved the most advanced storm bolters, shouting and dancing. They rolled on the glittering piles of crystals. They widened their eyes as they poured dozens of doses of high-energy nutrition drugs into their bellies. Some of them were still wearing the laughter of ecstasy while they held their stuffed stomachs.

But most of the bandits were not as lucky as them.

As warehouses, the locations certainly could not be too remote and inconspicuous, and several groups of bandits often found them at the same time.

No declaration of war. No roars. Even the communication of cruel eyes was unnecessary. In silence, the bandits and thugs slashed their chainswords and high-heat axes at one another in the silence, raising a storm of bullets that would destroy everything!

Every skyscraper in Liberty City was exploding. Every shabby valley was on fire. The bandits and thugs involved in the turbulence of war were not possessed by the extraterrestrial devils, but they were a hundred times more brutal and violent than those who were possessed. To fight for the precious resources, they were engaged in battles that even the poltergeists at the deepest level of hell would find creepy.

Li Yao, the Fist King, Han Te, and Liu Li snuck underneath the ground.

All the bandits who knew and did not know each other were fighting.

At first, they fought for the warehouses of assets in small groups. After most of the warehouses were looted, the targets became the tough bandits that carried abundant assets. It could not be helped. Not many Cosmos Rings could be found in Liberty City. In order to ship the assets out of the city, the bandits could only carry them or haul them with heavy crystal tanks. Even a blind person could tell that they were ‘big fish’. Naturally, they were the best prey for the unlucky fellows who were empty handed.

But the victors who killed the bandits and pillaged their goods were not happy for long. It was often the case that only half a minute after they chopped the heads of their prey with chainswords, their own heads were flying in the smoky air before being crushed to a pulp.

Later, a lot of the tough bandits learned better. They decided to strengthen the defense of the warehouses after they had looted the assets instead of shipping the assets out of the city immediately. Holding the positions, they wanted to wait out the fierce battle and take action again when the other had mostly been killed by each other.

However, the other bandits were not idiots. After discovering that several large gangs had mysteriously gone missing, dozens of smaller gangs gradually united and launched attacks at many warehouses in Liberty City.

It was certainly the most chaotic war that Li Yao had ever seen!

The chaotic battles among the bandits and thugs were already dazzling and mind-boggling enough. But the tremendous Immortal Cultivators from the sky and the ‘live streamers’ who were even more insane made the situation much worse.

Those people were wearing equipment of a much higher level than that of the sinners. With the ultimate suits, they patrolled the battlefield in the city unhurriedly under the cover of smoke and fire.

They did not consider looting assets to be their goal. They were simply slaughtering as if they were cutting vegetables or butchering chicken.

Occasionally, when two different squads of players encountered each other, they would start a soul-stirring and brilliant competition, showing absolutely no mercy to their own kind. They were even crueler to their own kind than they were to the sinners, which made Li Yao’s heart beat fast. He had a more intrinsic and intuitionistic understanding about the truth path of immortality.

However, what was the greatest eye-opener for Li Yao was the guys who were known as ‘live streamers’.

For the players who were engaged in the trial quests, the ‘live streamers’ were even more unbelievable, bizarre, and insane.

They were mostly wearing colorful crystal suits that were like roosters, where countless glamorous, clinking, and unnecessary decorations were attached, including a cockscomb that rose to the sky, spiral horns longer than an arm, and the bleeding wings of animals.

Li Yao studied the usage of the redundancies for a long time. Based on his expertise and experience as a master of refining, he was certain that those messy items were of absolutely no use in real battles but purely for aesthetic purposes, although Li Yao, for one, did not think that a cluster of bluish chicken hair above the head, several shiny diamonds on the crystal suit, or the rings of bullet chains around their body were anything related to ‘aesthetic’.

Other than the folks in uncanny clothes, some other ‘live streamers’ seemed to be pursuing higher difficulties and did not wear a crystal suit or armor. They simply charged into the battlefield almost naked.

The live streamers of such a faction were mostly females with graceful and shapely bodies. They were all good at making use of the advantage of their body, and they could not have looked sexier. Even the most conservative of them were wearing bikinis under their half-transparent gauze.

Their fair bodies, their enticing gauzes, and their sabers and swords that were twice as long as themselves and stained with blood and mangled flesh indeed presented a certain weird charm.

Both the guys in unbelievably fancy clothes and the women with both sexiness and brutality were engaged in slaughters in the most unexpected and obstreperous ways.

Most of the live streamers did not pursue a higher number of kills but a bloodier and more shocking scene. They were even dancing and jumping as if they were having a seizure during the slaughter.

Like the redundancies on their bodies, a lot of their movements were unnecessary but purely for splendid, twisted, or mad sound and visual effects. They did not care at all even if they might be injured or even killed because of the unnecessary movements.

Li Yao even sensed that a lot of ‘live streamers’ were singing while they were killing. No. It was not just singing but some kind of scream between singing and enchantment. It was a spell that hypnotized both other people and themselves.

Chapter 2027 - Xin Xiaoqi and the Leader of Liberty City“s Secrets

Li Yao observed carefully for a while, only to discover that the live streamers had crystal cameras installed on their entire bodies. There were also a lot of floating crystal cameras that were filming around them all the time.

Their dancing, singing, screaming, or posing, and their moans similar to the estrous beasts and their mad enchantments, were all performances meant for the people who were on the other side of the crystal cameras.

This is indeed evil walking in daylight!

Li Yao found it more and more impossible to understand the Imperium of True Human Beings.

Everything he saw was like the most absurd dream and the lousiest joke.

What kind of country could possibly have given birth to such… unique beings? Was it only a means of entertainment, or did it have any deeper meaning?

It was not the time to bother the Immortal Cultivator players. Li Yao calmed himself down and avoided the zones of fierce battles with the reconnaissance of Neltharion on the ground, while he zigzagged below the ground and tracked Xin Xiaoqi’s route of escape.

Xin Xiaoqi naturally did not know that Li Yao had set his eyes on her since a long time ago and even implanted a tracer as thin as paper into her propulsion magical equipment, which was her life-saver.

She stopped somewhere in the depths of Liberty City.

It was an old district of Liberty City.

Liberty City did not rise from nothing but slowly proliferated and expanded on the basis of city ruins.

Right below the abnormally glamorous appearance, the remnants of a city that was as complicated as a maze were hidden below the earth, like a blossoming flower on a corpse.

After the ravaging of ‘Judgment Day’ and the corrosion of hundreds of years, all the buildings there were ragged and lifeless, like metal organs that were full of rust. The broken tubes would occasionally spurt out air currents, illuminating the panicked and desperate faces.

Even the Elysian Worlds had lots of ant-like paupers. This was the bottom level of Liberty City—a garbage dump, a water-processing plant, and a public graveyard. Next to the place was a slave market of a fairly large scale. However, what was traded inside were the humblest slaves who were skinny and dying. A spiritual puppet was enough to buy a couple of them.

The bandits’ raiding had yet to spread to this place, but it was already mired in chaos. A lot of the ‘ants’ had grown sharp claws and teeth, struggling and biting each other, trying to find a chance of survival among the torrents and turbulence.

The translucent 3D light beam and the rusty, lifeless metal world overlapped, allowing Li Yao to locate Xin Xiaoqi quickly. She was in an inconspicuous tool compartment surrounded by stench and sewers in the middle of a garbage dump.

Li Yao smiled and circled the tool compartment a few times while keeping Neltharion in the stealth state.

Since it was designed to be unattractive, the tool compartment was naturally not flawless and impenetrable. It was no trouble for Li Yao to find a gap and crawl in through it. He lurked in the corner and scanned the entire tool compartment.

There were only two people standing in the room but a whole ground of people who were dead. The floor in a corner had been dug up, revealing an enormous metal chamber that had been opened. Inside the chamber was a plethora of crystals, magical equipment, and nutrition drugs.

Of the two standing people, one was naturally Xin Xiaoqi, but the other was a white-haired, wrinkled, and hunched old man.

The old man’s appearance reminded Li Yao of a dog that was struggling after it fell into water.

He was holding a dented chainsword as a stick, panting and coughing quickly. There were wounds all over his body. Blade injuries deep to the bones could be found on his arms and legs. The broken pieces of his armor were deeply embedded into his flesh. After every cough, a new vein would be cut apart, and plasma that was almost solid would spurt out.

His chest also collapsed deeply, as if all his ribs had been blown apart. The wound seemed to be the mark of a fist.

It seemed that everybody on the ground had been killed by him, and he had paid a grave price for that.

Li Yao sent the old man’s image to the Fist King’s crystal processor and received a positive reply. “Yes. He is Xiahou Wuxin, but why is he so much older after only such a short time?”

While Xiahou Wuxin grabbed his chainsword hard without letting it go, Xin Xiaoqi was holding two sharp daggers in her hands, too. The cat-like woman glared at Xiahou Wuxin with obvious fury.

The atmosphere between the senior and the junior was so intense that it might explode without even a spark.

“You’ve been manipulating me, jerk?”

Gnashing her teeth, Xin Xiaoqi was so exasperated that she almost could not refrain herself from jumping at Xiahou Wuxin and biting his nose off.

“Didn’t you say that there was a way to send me to Manjusaka? Why do you say that there is nothing you can do now? You are even asking me to forget about Manjusaka. What the f*ck is that supposed to mean? Do you think that I won’t kill you, old b*stard?”

There was no telling whether it was because of his heavy wounds or because he could not justify himself, but he lost the demeanor of the leader of Liberty City. Truly like a weary old man, he was utterly silent while Xin Xiaoqi cursed and rained her saliva upon his face.

“I’ve been working as your disciple for twenty years. I’ve been your disciple in name but your dog in reality for twenty years!”

Waving her daggers crazily, Xin Xiaoqi screamed, “Twenty years of life-and-death service, twenty years of hiding, I risked my life helping you with the most dangerous, sordid, and clandestine deals, and I did not get a single day of enjoyment in the Elysian World!

“So many times, I wandered among the major forces, among those tough bandits and thugs, to help you figure out the latest intelligence. Those people are all perverts, do you know that? Should my secrets have been leaked, I certainly would’ve been skinned and tortured by them!

“Our original deal was that you would send me to Manjusaka after I worked for you for five years. Then, after the five years, it was another five years. Then, another five. It’s been f*cking twenty years, master!

“Alright. Let’s leave the past aside and focus on this mission alone. Who did you ask me to deal with? The Fist King! The f*cking most dangerous, ferocious, and brutal ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie!

“Of your so many disciples, were any stupid and innocent enough to really sneak into the Fist King’s army for investigation and to steal intelligence, even risking their life to lead the assassins from the Valley of Thorns to the Fist King’s side to kill him? Even I do not know why I am lucky enough to be still alive at this moment!

“Master, you wretched son of a b*tch. Tell me. Look me in the eyes and tell me how you swore to me before I snuck into the Fist King’s army that you would absolutely send me to Manjusaka after the battle!

“Hehe. Hehehe. During the twenty years of suffering, struggling, and slaughtering, this is what I’ve been waiting for. Now, your force has collapsed, and you simply want to get away with it, huh? Not so easy!

“I don’t care about it. Whatever the price is, whoever must be killed, I will go to Manjusaka! Find a way to get me up there, or I will really kill you, you scumbag!”

Xin Xiaoqi had gone completely mad. Her face had been rather clean and appealing in the beginning, but it was now more than twisted with all the protruding veins and her gritted teeth.

Xiahou Wuxin had been listening quietly. It was not until this moment that he vomited another black mouthful of blood. He appeared even more devastated than before, and even the chainsword did not seem enough to support his shivering body anymore.

Groping for the edge of the metal box, he sat down and smiled miserably. “Xiaoqi, I deserve to be killed by you. If you want to do it, just come here. But there is really no Manjusaka. You can just drop the idea.”

Clink!

The leader of Liberty City who had been caught by desperation tossed away the broken chainsword and heaved a long sigh. Then, he narrowed his eyes as if he were recalling things from a long time ago. He seemed frustrated and ready to be executed.

Xin Xiaoqi was rather dazed by his frankness. Narrowing her eyes that were as green as a cat’s, she stared at him warily with her back hunched. “What are you trying to pull? Playing hard to get? Don’t think that you can kill me just because you have killed all your other disciples. You should know that I am different from those worthless trash. You are now heavily wounded and almost running out of blood. Even if I cannot kill you right now, I am at least confident that I can escape and tell everyone that our almighty leader of Liberty City is hiding here!

“Hehehe. You must’ve kept a lot of good things to yourself after decades of ruling Liberty City, mustn’t you? I believe that the bandits who are killing and looting right now, including those who were loyal to you in the past, will be very interested in you and your treasures.

“Just tell me the way to go to Manjusaka, or I will really die together with you!”

“It doesn’t matter now,” Xiahou Wuxin said casually and looked at Xin Xiaoqi without any resentment, anger, or cunningness. “Everything is over. Nothing is going to help. It doesn’t matter. Any place is a dead end. I am exhausted. Just let me die here in your hands.

“As for the secret treasures that I have collected over the past decades, they are yours in the first place. After you kill me, find the items that I hid in secret and figure out a way to escape Liberty City. This is the best I can do for you now.”

Xin Xiaoqi was dumbfounded. She widened her eyes and looked at Xiahou Wuxin for a long time, but she still could not tell whether her old and cunning master was lying or telling the truth before he was going to die.

Biting her lips for a long time, she burst into fury again. “Don’t play tricks with me. I am not escaping from Liberty City. I am going to Manjusaka. The City in the Sky! I am going there, no matter how difficult, dangerous, and challenging it is!”

“Did you hear what I said at the beginning?” Xiahou Wuxin said casually. “It’s not that I am not willing to help you—I really can’t help you. What you imagine to be the City in the City is not there at all. The peaceful, perfect heaven with everything has never existed. Where do you want me to send you?”

Chapter 2028 - Complicated, Confusing, Heartbreaking

“Are you kidding me? Do you think that I am as gullible as the child twenty years ago?” Xin Xiaoqi burst into fury. “The City in the Sky is right there. It is like a glittering flower every night. Even a blind person can see it! Also, haven’t you already sent a lot of people up there? Not just those who have accumulated enough contribution points by accomplishing the quests of the angels, even those who are willing to pay enough were smuggled up there by you!

“Hehe. You think that you have done those things without anybody knowing? Everybody on the street knows what you did. How can I not know it?

“Right. I get it. You are reluctant to let go of such a readily manipulatable fool like me because I am easy to be tricked and loyal to you without any complaint, right?

“While I suffered in the wretched Land of Sins, your other disciples, including those who could not accomplish a damn thing except for sucking up to you and making your life comfortable, were sent to Manjusaka by you and enjoyed their superior life. You were blind. You were truly blind, idiotic master!”

“You are completely wrong,” Xiahou Wuxin replied calmly and expressionlessly. “I have lied to you about many things, but I never lied to you about one thing. You are truly my most trusted and appreciated disciple, which is why I never sent you to Manjusaka.

“The other random disciples that I recruited, including those who approached me with ill intentions for all kinds of interests and those who are lying around us right now, were never regarded as real disciples by me. That’s why I agreed to their request to go to the City in the Sky without any hesitation.”

Xin Xiaoqi was completely confused. Hiding behind the two short daggers, she stammered, “What do you mean?”

“It is true that ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ hangs right in the firmament in a seemingly tangible place, but it is not a heaven for the sinners in the Land of Sins, and it does not have the prosperity, peace, and happiness that you imagine.”

Xiahou Wuxin smiled so bitterly that he seemed to be shedding tears of blood. “There has never been a sinner who enjoys their life in Manjusaka. They become test subjects. The only difference is whether they are dead test subjects, deeply-narcotized test subjects, or living test subjects. Nothing more.

“All the sinners that went to Manjusaka while they were still alive were not greeted by good days in the legendary heaven but infinite, endless torture in hell.

“They would receive the most miserable experiments and tests. Their every muscle, every vein, every nerve, and every fragment of their soul would be separated. Even their physical body would be cut into tens of thousands of ‘meat pieces’ as thin as paper, which would then be scanned layer by layer to figure out the evolutions and mutations that had taken place inside them.

“Trust me. Compared to the bizarre, ghastly research procedures in Manjusaka, even the most evil, mad, and perverted bandit in the Land of Sins is as harmless as a three-year-old child.

“Hehe. Since those who approached me with ill intentions and those who wanted to buy their way up into the heaven with fortune were determined to be killed, should I refuse their offer? But you… you were different. You know it.”

Xin Xiaoqi was stunned for a long time.

The tips of the daggers in her hands shivered softly.

“What nonsense are you talking about?” the cat-like woman mumbled. “You’re lying. I—I can tell. You are lying to me, right? Master, tell me that you are lying.”

“I have lied to you for twenty years, but not this time.”

Xiahou Wuxin closed his eyes in pain and took a long breath. He struggled to say, “Everything I said is true. The entire Land of Sins is just an enormous laboratory and test field. The high and mighty angels use the sinners to test their magical equipment and techniques. They also play some bizarre games by treating us as chess pieces and toys.

“They are in need of a lot of fresh ‘test materials’ every day, including the mutated beasts and the experts with a high combat ability. If they captured the prey on a large scale, the efficiency would be low, and the resistance of the sinners would easily be raised.

“They do not care about our lives, but if the precious test subjects are damaged on a large scale or stop training according to their plan because of the negative emotions, the progress of their experiments would be affected.

“Therefore, the angels came up with the solution to promote a nonexistent heaven and to attract the experts in the Land of Sins with the lie that they would be able to go to the heaven after accumulating enough contribution points.

“First of all, those experts would capture the mutated beasts. Then, the experts and the mutated beasts would be delivered up there at the same time. The efficiency would be high, and there would be little resistance. Most of the experts were still ignorant when they were lying on the operating tables, still dwelling in the fantasy that they would enjoy peace and prosperity forever as angels!

“In the Land of Sins, very few sinners know part of the truth. They are the rulers of the Elysian Worlds like me. Hehe. What kind of ‘ruler’ or ‘leader’ are we? Like you, we are just dogs for somebody else.

“We help the angels get enough fresh, strong test subjects. We help them maintain the order of the Land of Sins. If somebody sees through the loopholes of the enormous laboratory, we will lead someone to suppress and eradicate them, cleaning up all the mess caused.

“In return, we can slightly enjoy the truly good items leaked from the Heavenly Rails to maintain the exuberance and the extravagance in this small world, as you have seen with your eyes.

“This is the truth. Just wake up, Xiaoqi. There is no such thing as heaven in this world. Above the Land of Sins, it is just another Land of Sins that is vaster, darker, and eviler!”

“I don’t believe it! I don’t believe it! I don’t believe it at all!”

Like a glass statue that had just been shattered, Xin Xiaoqi staggered back a few steps. She shook her head hard. Then, as if she had grabbed a life-saving straw, she waved her arms crazily and shrieked, “What about my mom? Wasn’t my mom sent to Manjusaka by you? She sends birthday gifts to me every year. That—that pink ribbon, the music box, and the beautiful red dancing shoes!”

“They are all selected carefully by me and sent to you after I duplicated your mother’s voice and handwriting,” said Xiahou Wuxin.

Her face pale, Xin Xiaoqi breathed heavily, as if she might pass out at any moment. She pressed her wrist crystal processor hard.

“Th-then, how do you explain this?”

The crystal processor shot out a mystic ray, which dispersed in midair into a slightly blurred 3D light beam.

In the background of the picture, there was a small, delicate garden, where all kinds of flowers were blossoming vehemently, with butterflies and dragonflies dancing among them.

Right before the flowers, a middle-aged woman who was very similar to Xin Xiaoqi, except that she was slightly older and plumper, was looking at her with a smile.

The atmosphere in the picture was peaceful and quiet, utterly different from the bloody Land of Sins.

“You said that my mom was living a great life in the City in the Sky. She is also working hard to earn more money so that our family will be reunited and live a peaceful and happy life after I go to Manjusaka one day.”

With tears inside her eyes, Xin Xiaoqi begged, almost crying, “You brought gifts to me for her every year and photos. So many photos of my mother. I’ve waited twenty years. I am about to reunite with my mother. Just let me go there, master. Don’t lie to me anymore. Just let me meet my mother again!”

Xiahou Wuxin was silent briefly. Then he said, “Xiaoqi, you are a smart girl. I don’t believe that you have never been suspicious about it. It’s just that you are never bold enough to ask despite your suspicions, right?

“Just wake up. Your mother is already dead. She died twenty years ago. Handwriting can be duplicated, sound and images can be fabricated, and even dynamic videos can be synthesized easily.”

Xin Xiaoqi shook so hard that countless cracks seemed to have appeared on her pale face and her shivering body.

Her cat-like eyes, on the other hand, suddenly became deeper than ever, like a black hole that could absorb all vitality.

“H-how did she die?” Xiao Xiaoqi asked, overwhelmed.

“I killed her,” Xiahou Wuxin said calmly. “Her skull was smashed in one punch. Her brains and her soul were completely shattered in that moment. She died the quickest death without the least pain. Everything was ended.”

Xin Xiaoqi stared at Xiahou Wuxin for a long time.

Xiahou Wuxin stared back at her, but his eyes were somehow unfocused, as if he were looking through her at a woman that had been dead for a long time.

Xin Xiaoqi was dumbfounded for a moment. Then she suddenly screamed and turned from a cat into a leopard. She knocked Xiahou Wuxin to the ground. Grabbing him by the neck with one hand and holding the dagger high with the other, she shouted, “I’m going to kill you!”

Xiahou Wuxin’s head bashed into the ground heavily, but he sighed in great relief and closed his eyes, waiting for the arrival of death.

Xin Xiaoqi’s dagger trembled in midair for a long time, but it did not fall. She simply grabbed Xiahou Wuxin’s collar and shook the man hard while she roared, “You want to die? Not so fast! Tell me everything. Why did you kill my mother? Weren’t you in love since childhood? Didn’t you meet each other again after being separated for almost thirty years? Didn’t—Didn’t you say that she was the only woman that you had ever loved? Say something, you old b*stard. Why did you do it?”

Below the garbage dump, deep inside the broken tubes, Han Te and Liu Li poked Li Yao’s iron shell after he did not move at all for a long time. They asked, “What’s going on now, Grandpa Yao?”

“What is going on now is an intriguing, soul-stirring family drama,” Li Yao said in a low voice. “It is truly a complicated, confusing, and heartbreaking one. Just let me watch a little longer.”

Chapter 2029 - A Fly That Does Not Have a Choice

“I didn’t have a choice. Neither did Xiao Qin!” Every dried tear of blood on Xiahou Wuxin’s face was shivering. “She had to die!”

“Do not say my mother’s name!” Xin Xiaoqi shrieked. “You don’t deserve to say her name, you shameless old dog!”

“You’re right. I am truly a sordid, shameless, and a f*cking cowardly old dog. No. In front of the almighty ‘angels’, I am barely a dog but more like a fly that is caged inside an upside-down glass cup and cannot fly out however I try.”

Xiahou Wuxin smiled bitterly and miserably. “You don’t know. You don’t know anything at all. Xiao Qin and I met again after so many years, so many incidents, so many vicissitudes of life. I thought that it was a grace of the heavens. I only wanted to try my best to live a peaceful life with her and with you. No matter how hideous the world out there was, I only wanted to prepare a peaceful, comfortable home for you. I would rather be minced a hundred times or delivered to the foulest laboratory in the City in the Sky than see her wounded in the slightest.

“But… it was she who begged me to kill her. We didn’t have a choice!”

Xin Xiaoqi was shocked. Realizing that Xiahou Wuxin was probably not lying, she stammered, “What do you mean by ‘she begged you to kill her’? What are you talking about exactly?”

“We could’ve lived an illusionary but beautiful life like a normal family.” Xiahou Wuxin’s eyes were unfocused. A nonexistent world and a beautiful life that never happened glittered inside his pupils. “But Xiao Qin saw something that she shouldn’t have seen and discovered the secrets of the angels. One of the test subjects, probably because of the uncanny techniques that he had practiced, resisted the hypnotization of the high-intensity anesthetics and woke up on the way to Manjusaka. He also overheard the conversation among a few ‘angels’ and learned part of the truth of Manjusaka.

“The man was truly tough and brave enough. He killed a few ‘angels’ and struggled to fight all the way down from the top of the transmission tube. He was heavily wounded and bleeding hard when he fell right next to your mother. Then, he told your mother everything!

“The angels ordered that all the sinners who got in contact with the ‘experiment material’ be killed. I was made responsible for it! If I could not give a satisfactory reply, the most dreadful ‘Madmen Squad’ or ‘Heavenly Eye Legion’ in the City in the Sky would be deployed to deal with the situation. In that case, it would not just be the deaths of a hundred or so people but the complete demolition of Liberty City as an Elysian World!

“At that time, you were still a young and ignorant child, but the ‘angels’ couldn’t care less about that. So, your mother did not have a choice. Either she died, or both of you would be killed.

“I—I tracked her down and told her everything.

“After learning the truth of the City in the Sky, she cursed me aloud like you are doing right now in her panic and fury.

She chastised me for not being a human but an animal, a beast, a worthless b*stard… I pleaded guilty to all those charges, but I also told her that she must not go back and find you. Once she got in contact with you, you would be equally doomed!

“In the end, she understood everything and knew what was best for you.

“She begged me to protect you in any case. I promised her.

“I did it myself. I smashed her skull and destroyed her brains and soul, making sure that she would not suffer any pain or have any value to be experimented on.

“As for the other sinners who were involved with the escaped test subject, they were all sent to the City in the Sky to bear insufferable torture.

“Do you know that she was smiling when she passed away? Although it was a bitter smile full of worries and helplessness, I think it was much better than the two of you being sent to the laboratory in the City in the Sky to receive the inhumane experiments together, right?”

Xin Xiaoqi was dazed for a long time. She seemed to be both crying and laughing. In a trance, she shook her head hard, “I don’t believe it. You are lying. If my mother asked you to take care of me, why did you exile me for so many dangerous missions outside for twenty years instead of letting me stay with you, and why did you never tell anyone our relation?”

“It was all meant to protect you,” Xiahou Wuxin explained. “You think that dealing with the gangs and bandits was very dangerous, but the truth is, staying by my side would have been even more dangerous. If you stayed with me, you would have inevitably gotten in touch with tremendous secrets and entered the eyesight of the ‘angels’, who were certainly not willing to share their secrets with others.

“Have you never noticed that the disciples and subordinates around me were replaced every once in a while and the previous ones are all sent to the City in the Sky to ‘enjoy their life’? Do you wish to be one of them?”

Xin Xiaoqi shuddered hard, as if an invisible City in the Sky had covered her face tightly like bugs, making it impossible for her to breathe.

“Everyone who knows the secrets of Manjusaka has been condemned with a curse that can never be lifted,” Xiahou Wuxin said. “None of them will end well, including me. So, I did not want you to be too close to me.

“I cannot protect you forever. In order to survive in the Land of Sins, the key is to be strong enough on your own! In the past twenty years, I sent you to the Land of Sins to carry out all sorts of missions, but the difficulties of the missions were actually progressive and in order. Through such a special training method, you would boast the ability to survive independently. I can tell that you have been trained very well. Since you have escaped from such a battlefield without being injured at all, there is probably a one percent likelihood that you can escape the hunting of the ‘angels’.”

“You’ve been training me in such a way? Either I have lost my mind, or you have lost yours!” Xin Xiaoqi shrieked. Then she was somewhat stunned. “The hunting of the angels?”

“Exactly,” Xiahou Wuxin said bitterly. “Haven’t you noticed that the ‘angels’ have completely forsaken me? Perhaps, after decades of ‘loyal’ service for them, I know too much information right now, and my loyalty is now questionable.

Or maybe the shocking anomalies of ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie on the battlefield entail some great secrets that must not be learned by us. The bottom line is, I can tell that Liberty City is doomed. Everybody on the battlefield in Liberty City is doomed. The ‘angels’ will not allow anyone alive to escape.

“That is why I asked you to come here. You will camouflage yourself and pick up some useful tools. Then, you will go to one of my secret warehouses to take the truly useful assets and find a way to fight your way out of Liberty City for the one percent chance of survival!

“This is the whole truth. Believe me, Xiaoqi!”

Xin Xiaoqi stared at Xiahou Wuxin in a daze for a long time. Her clattering teeth were clearly audible even for Li Yao.

In a clink, her short daggers fell to the ground.

“I don’t believe you. No truth ever came out of your mouth,” Xin Xiaoqi mumbled. From her pupils to her eyeballs, from her eyeballs to her eye sockets, and from her eye sockets to every muscle on her face, a twisted smile gradually spread out. “I don’t believe it. I don’t believe it! I don’t believe it!

“Hehe. Hehehe. This is all false. This is too absurd to be true. You are lying to me. All of you have been lying to me. The whole world is lying to me!”

She staggered to her feet and shook hard as if she were drunk. With a look of fascination on her face, she craned her neck, and her hazy eyes seemed to have pierced through the roof and the rusty clouds into a nonexistent heaven.

“Mom must be still waiting for me in the sky. She said that she had saved a lot of money through hard work up there. After I go to the sky, we will live a carefree and happy life.

“Mom is not dead. Mom gave me a music box as a birthday present last year. What a beautiful music box it was. There were two figurines on it that embraced and danced with each other, and it could spin! The Land of Sins couldn’t have had such a finely-made item. So, it must be a gift from my mother!

“Mom, just wait. I’m coming for you right now. I am going to fly to Manjusaka for you…”

Standing on her toes, she danced forward to the door swiftly, as if she were not wearing a pair of ragged combat boots but dancing shoes with red diamonds.

Xiahou Wuxin gritted his teeth, dragged her back, and slapped her to the ground, staring at her without saying anything.

The cat-like woman was still wearing a frozen smile, but black mists were condensing inside her eye sockets quickly. Under her master’s gloomy eyes, she finally collapsed.

“Mom is dead! Mom is dead! Mom is dead!” Xin Xiaoqi snatched her hair and wailed, her back as bent as a bow. “Mom! Mom! Mom!”

She cried so hard that she could barely catch her breath, with tears and snot spurting out at the same time. She also coughed hard and appeared to be seizing.

Xiahou Wuxin sighed in a low voice.

“If you really do not have the courage to run, I will send you to meet your mother right now,” he said softly. “Just nod, and I guarantee that you will leave this world comfortably. You will be spared the miserably torture, and your body will never be insulted. You will go exactly like your mother years ago. How does it sound?”

“Mother…”

Dumbfounded and overwhelmed, Xin Xiaoqi seemed to be considering Xiahou Wuxin’s proposal carefully.

Li Yao’s soul released tremendous waves.

He did not hate Xin Xiaoqi, who still had some kindness in her heart, in the first place. After hearing the story of Xiahou Wuxin and her, he was even more reluctant to see the poor woman die just like that.

However, it seemed rather awkward to cough and introduce himself after eavesdropping their family business for such a long time.

While he was still hesitating, Xin Xiaoqi’s unfocused eyes condensed again. She mumbled to herself, “No… I can’t die. I must avenge my mother!”

Chapter 2030 - Be a Real Man!

“Avenge your mother?” Xiahou Wuxin chuckled. There was no telling whether he was laughing at Xin Xiaoqi’s naivety or his own cowardness. “It is impossible for you to do that. You do not understand the dread of the angels and the enormity of the outside world at all. You do not even stand a chance in a billion.

“If you want to run away, perhaps I can try my best to help you with all my abilities. But if you want to seek revenge from the angels, I might as well give you a quick death right now, in case you are captured by the angels and tortured for twenty years in the laboratory before you are finally killed.”

“I am not going to run!” The confusion and sorrow in Xin Xiaoqi’s eyes gradually condensed into the fire of wrath. She glared at Xiahou Wuxin and shouted desperately, “The Land of Sins is only so large. Where can I possibly run to? Even if I can escape to the most distant corner in the Land of Sins, it is still a part of the Land of Sins, where I will still live an equally dark and hopeless life in panic, fearing that I may be captured by the angels every day! Is such a life any better than death? I’m going to die anyway, so I might as well die together with the angels!”

“When two opponents on par with each other challenge each other, that is dying together with the enemy. An egg that hits a rock is far from qualified,” Xiahou Wuxin said sadly. “Trust me. The angels do not care what you do or if you resist. All your anger and efforts are insignificant fun in their eyes. There’s no chance for you to succeed at all.”

“How do you know without even trying?” Xin Xiaoqi gnashed her teeth. “Have you never considered avenging my mother?”

Xiahou Wuxin’s eyes flashed, like candles that were nearly blown out in the cold wind. “I thought about it before, but it is impossible and will only get a lot more people killed, including you.”

Xin Xiaoqi stared at Xiahou Wuxin for a long time, her eyes hard, scorching, and sharp, until her master, the almighty leader of Liberty City, could not stand it anymore and moved his face to one side.

Xin Xiaoqi chuckled in the most scornful and disrespectful way.

“You are truly a f*cking coward and a piece of useless garbage.” Xin Xiaoqi snapped without any mercy. “Fifty years ago, when my mother was seized by the Blood Sand Gang, you chickened out and watched the woman you loved disappear in the smoke while doing nothing.

“Twenty years ago, you were the leader of Liberty City with unparalleled strength. There was a slim chance for you to take my mother and run away, but you still chose the most cowardly way and ended my mother’s life under the threat of the angels.

“Right now, you have clearly lost everything. You have nothing left to hesitate over except for the half-life that you have. But you still cannot summon the slightest courage. You do not even dare think about avenging my mother.

“It was truly wise for those high and mighty angels to have chosen you as their spokesperson because you are an out-and-out old dog, one that had been completely castrated.

“Did you know? In my younger years when I was still fooled by you, I cursed furiously on countless dark nights over why my birth father was such a rude beast, an insane lunatic, and a scumbag who considered my mother as a tool for his desires. Why were you not my father?

“You were so perfect in my mind at that time. You were powerful, dominating, and revered by everyone in the city, and you were not condescending at all when you came to our house. You were always so gentle and loving toward my mother. You don’t know how sunny my mother’s smile was when she looked at you. You were almost the only sunshine in our dark life.

“I kneeled and begged the heavens many times, wishing that I could trade my everything for a brand-new fate, where my birth father was not an animal but… you.

“But I was wrong. Hehe. How silly I was.

“Now that I think about it, you are ten thousand times more nauseating than the animals.

“At the very least, the animal, the scoundrel, and the scumbag was almost a man with a backbone. He was bold enough to hold his head high and face his inevitable doom.

“Whether he regarded my mother as a tool, a toy, or anything else, he had the courage to fight such an expert like you to the death to defend what belonged to him. Even before he was executed by you, when he clearly knew that you were the leader of Liberty City and that he was absolutely no match for you, he still cursed aloud until he was killed by you!

“You are a scoundrel without balls. You are not qualified to be my master… or my father. You do not deserve to be my mother’s man. My master, my father, and my mother’s man should be an iron-boned, unwavering hero. Even if it is not a hero but the beast-like guy, it will not be a eunuch like you who has kneeled for such a long time that you cannot keep your knees straight.

“So, do not stand in my way. Get lost!”

Xin Xiaoqi shoved Xiahou Wuxin off and struggled to her feet from the ground. On one knee, she took a deep breath and grabbed her short daggers hard, as if they were the only two items that he could count on in the entire world.

Not looking at the lackluster, devastated Xiahou Wuxin at all, she held her head high and strode out.

“Wait, Xiaoqi!” Xiahou Wuxin called her drily. “Where are you going?”

Xin Xiaoqi stopped and was silent for a moment. Her daggers glittered like scissors behind her, ripping off a cloth which flew between the two of them like a moth. “You rescued my mother and me from the ‘Blood Sand Gang’ and looked after us for so many years. I will not deny your favor.

“However, I have also done so many things for you over the past twenty years, including sneaking into the Fist King’s army and guiding the assassins for you. However great the favor was, it has already been returned now, hasn’t it?

“Besides, you killed my mother, although it was her own wish… You are probably not to blame for that, but I do not think that I owe you anything right now.

“The scores have been settled. From this moment on, you are no longer my master. I am a woman who has risen in the Land of Sins through my own hard work. I do not have such a ballless master like you. You and I are like this piece of cloth. We are now done with each other!

“We will now go our separate ways. I will seek my revenge while you continue being a dog or a tortoise in its shell. I hope that the angles will let you continue to work as the renowned leader of Liberty City for your loyalty and relentlessness!”

Xin Xiaoqi finished her speech as quickly as possible and opened the door, as if she could not stay in the room for one second longer.

Xiahou Wuxin, however, struggled to move forward and pressed the door hard after opening his shivering hands. “Wait a moment.”

“Anything else, Leader Xiahou?” Xin Xiaoqi’s eyes suddenly turned extremely cold. With a scornful smile on her lips, she said, “Or maybe, if I want to deal with your master, I will have to step over your dead body?”

Xiahou Wuxin’s face looked like burnt rind, without the sign of the slightest expression. But his eyes could not have been more bloodshot as he said in a low voice, “It doesn’t matter if you do not respect me as your master, but I still have abundant assets and a very secret warehouse…”

“I will not have what you have wagged your tail for and begged from the angels.” Xin Xiaoqi gnashed her teeth. “Whatever I need, I will steal, rob, hijack, and con with my own hands in the Land of Sins. Haven’t you been teaching me that for the past twenty years?”

Xiahou Wuxin was rendered speechless. After a brief silence, he heaved a long sigh and said, “Right now, the angels have decided to destroy Liberty City, but it is still mayhem outside. Nobody knows that a cataclysm is falling upon them. Without enough gear, you cannot get out of here, much less avenge your mother. If you really want to avenge her, don't act like a child and refuse my help."

Xiahou Wuxin's suddenly softened tone made Xin Xiaoqi's body shake. She frowned, hot tears flowing out of her eyes again. She clenched her fists and said, "You know that I need help, too. Then, why are you only throwing me some cold magical equipment instead of helping me in person?"

"Don't you understand, Xiaoqi?" Xiahou Wuxin mumbled. "It's not that I do not want to help you, but because I am too large a target. Over the past few decades, I have learned too many secrets about the angels. They have to kill me!

"If I go with you, you will only be burdened by me. You will be captured, killed, or have an even worse outcome if you are with me.

"So, it is a better idea for us to go our separate ways. I will try my best to attract the attention of the angels and force them to dispatch most of their available forces to chase after me, while you will take advantage of the chaos and figure out a way to escape Liberty City. You will have to be responsible for your future path after your escape!"

Xin Xiaoqi was not a fool. She immediately understood what was going on after Xiahou Wuxin's explanation.

Her dirty face was even paler than before.

"Do you understand now? If you do, just get yourself together and let's go to my secret warehouse," Xiahou Wuxin said. "Whether you want to save your own life or avenge your mother, you will have to get out of here first. Come on. It's the gear that I have been carefully preparing since more than ten years ago for the arrival of such a moment!”

In a trance, Xin Xiaoqi simply allowed Xiahou Wuxin to change her clothing. In a short while, she was already disguised as an emaciated young man in ragged clothes before she was covered in a rusty, worn-out armor that actually had four layers and dozens of defense rune arrays in the middle.

Xiahou Wuxin also disguised himself as a dark, bald man who was short and fat. There were two crossed scars on his face that looked like two slithering centipedes.

Then, he covered the two of them with enormous cloaks. In the end, he took out two rings from the bottom of a box and, after thinking for a moment, gave both of them to Xin Xiaoqi.

Li Yao’s eyes immediately shone in great interest. They were Cosmos Rings!

“Let’s go!” Xiahou Wuxin said hoarsely. “Whatever happens outside, your master will find a way to get you out of Liberty City today!”

Chapter 2031 - Desperate Escape!

Before, Li Yao had only been interested in Xiahou Wuxin's secret warehouse.

But right now, he suddenly felt that Xiahou Wuxin was also a partner that he could temporarily work with, just like the Fist King.

Although Xiahou Wuxin's combat ability was not as good as the Fist King's, his understanding of Manjusaka was much better than most of the sinners in the Land of Sins.

Leaving Xiahou Wuxin aside, Li Yao was very interested in saving Xin Xiaoqi's life and telling her that there was still hope for revenge!

However, could he jump walk out and introduce himself?

Xiahou Wuxin fought the Fist King hard only half a day ago. His entire chest had collapsed deeply, and ninety percent of his life was gone now.

Besides, the Battle of Liberty City had been raised by 'Fist King' Lei Zonglie.

Li Yao did not feel that Xiahou Wuxin could cooperate with the Fist King without any grudges, at least not right now. There were too many things that needed explaining.

Besides, Xiahou Wuxin was quite right. As the leader of Liberty City, he must be an important target on the Immortal Cultivators' radar. If Li Yao showed up before Xiahou Wuxin with the Fist King, Han Te, and Liu Li and teamed up with him, he would be much more eye-catching and would be noticed by the Immortal Cultivators.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao decided to follow Xiahou Wuxin and Xin Xiaoqi not far away from him and protect them in secret until he figured out the whereabouts of the Immortal Cultivators.

When a mantis was hunting a cicada, a sparrow was waiting to take them both. Right now, Xiahou Wuxin and Xin Xiaoqi were the cicada, the Immortal Cultivators were the mantis, and Li Yao and the Fist King were the sparrow!

“They are going to a secret warehouse that Xiahou Wuxin has built over decades. There should be things we need inside.” Li Yao transmitted complicated waves to the Fist King. “But Xiahou Wuxin is one of the Immortal Cultivators’ must-kill targets now. Until we learn more secrets of the City in the Sky, we cannot allow the Immortal Cultivators to kill him or find his secret warehouse.”

“They want to shut his mouth forever?” the Fist King said in a low voice. “No wonder I felt that he was sloppy, unconcentrated, and lethargic when I fought him. He was not determined to win at all. It seems that he already knew his destiny as a dog and a chess piece.”

While the two of them were communicating, Xiahou Wuxin and Xin Xiaoqi had already stuffed almost twenty pieces of magical equipment into their cloaks. After tightening the cloaks, they opened the door and walked out.

Xiahou Wuxin whispered a few words to Xin Xiaoqi, and Xin Xiaoqi nodded. The two of them seemed to go separate ways from two sides of the garbage dump, but after zigzagging for a while, they were moving in the same direction, except that they were three hundred meters away from each other.

Li Yao kept Neltharion in the stealth state and followed Xiahou Wuxin.

Right now, Xiahou Wuxin’s senses had plummeted because of his heavy wounds. Also, after Li Yao advanced into the Divinity Transformation Stage, his cover on Neltharion had improved, and he was not scared that the target might notice him.

As for Xin Xiaoqi’s side, she was not too far away from Xiahou Wuxin, and Li Yao had planted a tracker on her. So, her coordinates could not be lost.

The master and the disciple whose relationship was rather special climbed and crawled through the seething city ruins.

At this moment, the fire of war had spread to every corner of Liberty City.

Among the broken walls and the dilapidated buildings, panicked, screaming people were everywhere.

Some were running, some were stealing, and some were looting. A lot of gangs had even gone to capture the bottom-level citizens as temporary cannon fodder and human shields in order to attack the heavily guarded warehouses.

It was a living hell, where humans were no longer humans but hideous zombies and wriggling blocks of meat that spat out black mucus.

In the middle of the crowd, Xin Xiaoqi and Xiahou Wuxin moved toward the outside of the city quietly.

Li Yao, the Fist King, and the two little fellows snuck right below their feet, ready to break out of the soil and join the battle at any moment.

The sky was occupied by lead clouds, with bloody light appearing and disappearing. There was no telling how many pairs of eyes were staring at the city of slaughter.

A riot suddenly broke out before them. A group of gangsters who had covered their faces in blood were capturing slaves as cannon fodder.

They blew up the skyscrapers on the two sides of the street with crystal bombs and blocked the streets with heavy crystal tanks. Spinning the turrets, they aimed at the refugees on the street.

Desperate cries and screams were immediately echoing on the street.

Xiahou Wuxin tightened his cloak and tried to find a path of escape, but he found nothing and wandered in the crowd for a long time. The intense stink of blood from his body and his endless coughs, however, attracted the bandits’ attention. They all looked at him warily. One of the bandits even curled his finger at him and shouted, “Come here!”

“They are the gangsters who are here with me, not Xiahou Wuxin’s guys,” the Fist King said.

Li Yao sighed. “Even if they were Xiahou Wuxin’s guys, it would not help. Seeing his appearance that’s no different than a sick cat, even his most loyal subordinate would not hesitate to take him down.”

Watching as Xiahou Wuxin lowered his head and walked over in a seemingly dutiful way with his back hunched, he knew that it would not end well.

As it turned out, when the bandit raised his cloak casually with a saber, revealing the myriad of storm bolters, chainswords, and crystal bombs below it, Xiahou Wuxin went on a rampage and attacked as fast as lightning!

A moment ago, he had still been a dying old dog.

But in the blink of an eye, he had turned into the most ravenous wolf that was bold enough to bite a piece of flesh off from a god.

Before the bandit who raised his cloak withdrew the saber, his arm was already chopped off from the shoulder. Then, a storm bolter was stabbed into his mouth brutally, blowing up not only his head but also the head of the unlucky bandit who was standing right behind him.

Exclamations and screams echoed in the crowd. The heavy crystal tanks spun their turrets quickly, trying to lock onto Xiahou Wuxin’s location, but Xiahou Wuxin was like a weightless leaf as he darted beneath the crystal tanks and crawled out from behind 0.1 seconds later.

Boom!

Enormous fireballs burst out from the bottom of the crystal tanks, pushing them into the sky and turning them into brilliant fireworks.

When the eyes of all the bandits were focused on the iron flowers, Xiahou Wuxin’s eyes were focused on their throats.

In half a minute, springs of blood appeared on the burning street one after another.

Simulating Lei Zonglie's tone, the Fist King said, "This should be the real performance of the leader of Liberty City! He is only qualified to be my first target with such a performance!"

Xiahou Wuxin finished the many bandits quickly and reversed the cloak while the crowd was in a mess. Then, he accelerated and moved out.

During the whole process, Xin Xiaoqi had been lurking in another block not far away from him, ready to reinforce him at any moment. It was not until he broke out of the siege safe and sound that she finally took a breath in relief.

Her subtle movement and expression were scanned clearly by Neltharion.

What was scanned clearly at the same time were the unusually dangerous ripples in the air.

"Cr*p." Li Yao hinted at the Fist King, Han Te, and Liu Li. "Be careful. Some experts are coming!"

Xiahou Wuxin suddenly stopped and extended his nose to sniff. He had obviously sensed the unusual scent in the air.

Ripples spread out to him from various directions and surrounded him like gray shadows.

The simmering street around went quiet at some point. It was creepily silent in the middle of the heated, frantic battlefield.

Li Yao saw Xiahou Wuxin hesitate, obviously considering what he should do.

Suddenly, he clenched his fists and bellowed. Taking off the cloak on his body, he crossed his arms and drew two chainswords. He accelerated to a whole new level while he charged to the southwest like a burning cannonball.

Tremendous ripples of gray shadows immediately began to move fast, dragging fuzzy, blurred shadows behind them.

Xin Xiaoqi immediately sensed her master’s magnificent aura that was dozens of times stronger than before to the northeast.

Li Yao saw that the cat-like woman crouched at the corner of the wall and pondered in a daze exactly like her master.

Then, the cat turned into a tiger. She charged in Xiahou Wuxin’s direction without considering anything else.

The weird master and disciple both fell into the eyesight of the ripples of the gray shadows.

“Idiot!” Xiahou Wuxin let out a desperate scream.

“Master, we will fight out of here together!” Xin Xiaoqi laughed aloud in tears, waving her daggers as if they were two starship-slashing sabers.

“Hehehe. How interesting.”

Vague chuckles echoed from the fuzzy shadows around.

The ripples began to condense, and the gray shadows abandoned their camouflage, turning into their battle form. Fifteen gray crystal suits with streamlined designs surrounded the two of them in a seemingly sparse way but blocking all possible escape routes.

The Exo in the lead pressed the helmet and took off the facial cover.

However, the cold and lifeless face hidden inside the crystal suit was actually no different from the metal cover.

It was a man whose age was ambiguous and could be anywhere between thirty and a hundred and thirty. He seemed to be wearing ten skin masks on his face. Although he was smiling in the most brilliant way, one could not help but feel a chill as if they had been frozen from the skull to the spine.

“Leader Xiahou, what has happened to make you so panicked?” the man said with a smile courteously. “The supervisors are very satisfied with the Battle of Liberty City. You have made the greatest contribution once again. Together with all your hard work in the past decades, it is enough for you to earn a precious place in Manjusaka. I was about to inform you of the great news when I discovered that you’d left without a goodbye. I don’t think that was very appropriate, was it?”

Xiahou Wuxin was silent. He looked at Xin Xiaoqi in desperation.

“Hehe…” The man whose age nobody could tell chuckled again. “You can stop complaining that your disciple came to your rescue in her recklessness. The supervisors know your relationship very well. The tricks that you are playing right now cannot fool anyone, either. Even if Miss Xin had not volunteered to come, I would also have sent someone to invite her over so that the two of you can enjoy a happy life in Manjusaka together as master and disciple. Won’t that be great?”

Chapter 2032 - The Last Deal

“Wei Xiaotian…” Hearing that the guy pointed out his relationship with Xin Xiaoqi, Xiahou Wuxin immediately put on an expression of embarrassment and fury. He bit his lips so hard that blood was spreading out. “If you’ve known about it since a long time ago, why did you never point it out?”

“Why should we deprive you of the last hope in your life?” The Immortal Cultivator named ‘Wei Xiaotian’, who was the captain of the gray Exos and the direct liaison for Xiahou Wuxin for the past ten years, was truly fond of smiling. He went on with a smile. “We do not need someone who has lost all hope as our puppet. A donkey will run faster if you hang a carrot before its head. Xin Xiaoqi was your carrot. It was better to keep her alive.”

Xiahou Wuxin moaned and completely collapsed.

“Master!” Anxious, Xin Xiaoqi raised her daggers at Wei Xiaotian and glared at him. “Are you the ‘angels’? You can stop being pretentious. I know that you never intended to let the two of us go. This is just a game where cats play with mice! Enough of the cr*p. We will definitely not leave with you obediently. If you want to take us away, you can take our dead bodies!”

“Mice?’ Wei Xiaotian was slightly dazed. He remarked in great amusement. “Comparing yourself to a mouse, you are too arrogant, little girl.”

A few gray Exos seemed ready to jump at Xiahou Wuxin and Xin Xiaoqi.

“Cr*p!” Li Yao, who was lurking below their feet, was very anxious. The gray Exos up above were all elites. Many of them were at the peak of the Core Formation Stage, and Wei Xiaotian, their leader, was even in the Nascent Soul Stage. With Li Yao’s iron body, he was truly uncertain if he could kill all of them without a sound while dodging the surveillance from the sky. It was even practically impossible to rescue Xiahou Wuxin and Xin Xiaoqi.

Surveillance. Surveillance was the key in this goddamn large laboratory!

What do I do?

Li Yao’s soul was like a swirl that grew larger and larger, gradually involving the entire battlefield. Every action in the ten or so blocks nearby as well as the distribution of all the forces were perceived by him.

An audacious plan slowly popped up inside Li Yao’s head.

“Han Te, Liu Li, it is time for you to act!”

Li Yao called the two little fellows over and whispered something to them. Then, he asked the mental devil to crawl into Neltharion and follow them to provide protection.

The two little fellows soon disappeared at the end of the underground sewers.

Above Li Yao’s head, the leader of Liberty City was still making the last struggles.

“Wait!”

The look on Xiahou Wuxin’s face changed dozens of times in a row. His eyes, nose, and lips shivered for a long time, but he finally managed to put on an obsequious smile. He tossed the chainswords in his hands and the storm bolter on his waist to the ground before he stomped on them with all his strength and crushed them into pieces.

“Master Wei…” His back was completely hunched. He rubbed his hands and said humbly, “I have been serving Manjusaka and you for so many years. Even if I made little contribution, my diligence should at least be credited. Would you please say a few nice words for me in front of the supervisors? As long as my worthless life is spared, I can do whatever I am asked to.”

“Of course.” Wei Xiaotian agreed promptly, and his smile became even more intense. “Why don’t you talk to them in person? I’ll certainly be there to support you.”

Xiahou Wuxin shrieked in desperation, “Is it possible for me to stay here? Just consider me a useless dog and let me go. You know that I am a smart person. I will never say anything that is against the interests of the sky!”

Wei Xiaotian’s smile vanished. He sighed and said, “Leader Xiahou, I know that you are a smart person, so what do you think?”

“I can trade for my life with things.” Xiahou Wuxin seemed to be taking a wild gamble. “Over the past decades, I have built dozens of warehouses in secret and stored a lot of good items. As long as I am kept alive, I can submit all of them—to you alone!”

“I said just now that you were a smart guy. Why are you in such a hurry to prove me wrong?” Wei Xiaotian shook his head in confusion. “How could the tricks that you thought nobody knew anything about have deceived the eyes of the sky? We are aware of the coordinates and the opening methods of the dozens of secret warehouses. However, as the saying goes, when the water is too clean, no fish can live inside. Like your secret disciple, Xin Xiaoqi, we did not bother to discuss such trivia with you. Do you think that those things can be used as bargaining chips?”

“You do have a point, Master Wei. Those secret warehouses are truly not worth mentioning at all.” Xiahou Wuxin suddenly calmed down and put on a weird smile. “However, for your information, Master Wei, those secret warehouses were just my cover. How could I not know that my every move was under the surveillance of the sky? The only reason I established so many secret warehouses was to cover the real secret warehouse, which I guarantee is not at any location on your list of surveillance.”

Wei Xiaotian’s face was utterly unchanged. “You are bluffing, Leader Xiahou.”

“Maybe. However, as the controller of an Elysian World who has lived the longest in the Land of Sins, I naturally know how to save my worthless life better than anybody else. Besides, Liberty City was built on a metropolis of the civilization of the Martial Meritocrats Sector before Judgment Day. Below Liberty City is the debris of an underground city thousands of meters deep, which is as enormous and complicated as a labyrinth. You can keep an eye on every inch of land on the surface, but can you observe every gap and every collapsed cave below the earth?”

Xiahou Wuxin spoke quickly, with both determination and begging on his face. “Now, I do not beg you to spare my life but only beg you to spare my only disciple. Even if her memories must be wiped out and her brains be turned blank, as long as her life is kept, I am willing to confess the location of the most precious warehouse!”

Wei Xiaotian sighed softly and frowned, as if he were startled by Xiahou Wuxin’s stupidity. “Leader Xiahou, has it ever occurred to you that everything in the Land of Sins is a gift from the sky? So, all the garbage stored in your secret warehouse is our charity for you. Now, you want to use our charity as a bargaining chip in a game against us? Are you sure that there isn’t anything wrong with your head?”

“Of course, most of the items in the secret warehouse were given to me by you, but it is not entirely false that some of them are not under your control.” Xiahou Wuxin coughed lightly, his lips and eyes both curling. “For example, do you have any bodies of the trainers whose chest really produces nine weird plants after they practice ‘Nine Lotuses Arts’? As far as I know, the test subjects that you have found only had seven man-eating flowers blossoming on their chests, right?

“Right. Strictly speaking, they were the test subjects that I helped you find, which had seven man-eating flowers blossoming on their chests…”

Wei Xiaotian’s face suddenly changed. “You hid part of the test subjects?”

“Like I said just now, maybe,” Xiahou Wuxin said. “When the hares are caught, the hounds will be cooked; when the birds are shot down, the bows will be useless. How can I not understand such simple logic? I have been the manager of an Elysian World for decades. I’ve done too many clandestine things for you, and I know too many of your secrets. Could I really count on enjoying the rest of my life in Manjusaka after retirement? Of course, I had to plan a retreat for myself carefully!

“Therefore, I perhaps hid the goods of the best qualities, or kept tremendous precious video files about them, when I helped you collect test subjects, and I only delivered the second-rate goods to the City in the Sky.

“I believe that the twenty-seven corpses and the more than 350 video clips will be of great help for your experiments.

“Also, in its prime, the Martial Meritocrats Civilization left abundant valuable heritages and secrets. Even in the global destruction of Judgment Day, they were not entirely annihilated. Perhaps I found something interesting when I built the secret warehouses. For example, some secrets about the Cultivators, which cannot possibly be under your control.

“Let’s make a deal, Master Wei. Let my disciple go, and I will give you the coordinates and the opening method of the most precious secret warehouse. Then, I will kill myself and not leave any trouble to you.

“Otherwise, I will have a hundred ways to detonate the warehouse remotely, and you will have nothing!”

As he approached the end, Xiahou Wuxin’s face was brimming with relentlessness and brutality. His pitifulness a moment ago had entirely vanished.

“Master!”

Xin Xiaoqi wanted to jump forward to fight together with Xiahou Wuxin, but she had been locked onto by several gray Exos. With every step she took, she felt that her whole body was being minced by daggers. There was nothing she could do except cry in pain.

Wei Xiaotian was rather gloomy. His face that seemed to be made of marble in the first place was even paler than before. After pondering a moment, he said, “Alright. I promise you. But if you dare play any tricks, your death will not be the end. I assure you that I have ten thousand ways to mince your fleshly body into pieces before I drag out your soul and torture it for decades. You will not die so easily, Leader Xiahou!”

“I know the methods of the angels very well. I am certainly not bold enough to make such a joke with Master Wei.” Xiahou Wuxin blinked. “However, how can I be convinced of your promise, Master Wei?”

“You don’t have a choice.” Wei Xiaotian’s smile was approaching absolute zero very quickly. “We are not interested in your insignificant video files and test subjects. You can terminate the so-called ‘deal’ at any moment.”

“It does make sense. I wasn’t thinking.” Smiling bitterly, Xiahou Wuxin suddenly said, “Master Wei, since we are being honest with each other and I am about to die, I wonder if you will be merciful enough to answer a question that has baffled me for a long time so that I can be spared an ignorant death.”

He pointed at Xin Xiaoqi again. “As for my disciple, whether you are going to wipe her memories, or go back on your word and eradicate her for good, letting her know the truth won’t matter, will it?”

Chapter 2033 - The Great Secret in the Land of Sins

With a frozen, statue-like smile on his face, Wei Xiaotian’s eyes shuddered again and again. He said, somewhat cautiously, “Fine. Considering your years of dutiful service for the sky, whatever questions you have, you may ask them!”

Li Yao, who was hiding below, felt that the Immortal Cultivators should not be so easy to deal with. There must be a scheme behind everything.

After he sensed carefully, he felt that the spiritual ripples between Wei Xiaotian and the sky seemed to have become much more intense. The information transmission was increased more than ten times over, and data was exchanged crazily.

“Stop thinking. The guy is trying to buy himself more time.” The mental devil sent a secret message to Li Yao from Neltharion. “He wouldn’t make any deal with Xiahou Wuxin at all. He only wants to get more time to confirm what Xiahou Wuxin said just now.

“The City in the Sky must have been monitoring every action of Xiahou Wuxin, Liberty City, and even the entire Land of Sins closely. But real-time surveillance is one thing, and processing all the information that has been received is another.

“The Immortal Cultivators have an astronomical, overwhelming database. I don’t think that they have enough manpower and computational ability to analyze the data and figure out every detail.

“This Immortal Cultivator ‘Wei Xiaotian’ is not sure if Xiahou Wuxin is bluffing. If my guess is correct, the Immortal Cultivators in Manjusaka must be analyzing all the surveillance information of Xiahou Wuxin in the past with all their strength, trying to locate the most secret underground warehouse or disprove its existence.

“That is why Wei Xiaotian needs to get more time. Xiahou Wuxin’s questions are exactly what he wants right now.

“Naturally, it is a good thing for us because we will have more time to make arrangements.”

The mental devil sent the pictures shot by Neltharion to Li Yao.

All the tough bandits around Xiahou Wuxin, Wei Xiaotian, and the rest of them had been scanned by the mental devil clearly.

Han Te and Liu Li were searching for the most suitable targets.

The Fist King was also micro-adjusting his every metal joint with a multipurpose maintenance tool, making sure that the body and his combat database perfectly matched each other.

A rain of blood was coming!

On the ground, Xiahou Wuxin took a deep breath and glanced at Xin Xiaoqi, as if he were truly full of curiosity. “I know that the entire Land of Sins is your laboratory and all the sinners are but your test subjects. I also know that the assassins and mercenaries from the Valley of Thorns are here for training and screening, which is called ‘trial’ by you, right?

“Despite the cruelty in everything, it is somewhat understandable.

“However, of the angels who arrived in the Land of Sins, besides the experimenters like you and those trial-takers, there were also some crazy weirdos who were here purely for slaughter and sabotage. They also often talked and laughed to air, making all kinds of dumbfoundingly contemptible postures. In recent years, such slaughtering clowns have become larger and larger in number. What are they about? I am completely confused.

“Before my death, can you answer my question and tell me the truth of those clowns, Master Wei? Otherwise, I truly feel that I will never rest in peace!”

Li Yao focused his attention below the earth, without letting go of any quake of soundwaves from the ground. The things about the slaughtering clowns, or the live streamers, had been most incomprehensible and baffling for him.

“I thought that you were interested in bigger secrets. So, this is what you are eager to find out!” Wei Xiaotian said with a smile. “This is not a top secret. So, it doesn’t matter to tell you. I must say that you are truly insightful to ask about the key to the existence of the Land of Sins!”

“The key to the existence?” Xiahou Wuxin asked in confusion.

“Yes. In the past hundreds of years, the Land of Sins had always existed as a place to test magical equipment and techniques. But in the last hundred years, especially the recent few decades, the arrival and activity of those ‘live streamers’ are the greatest reason for the continuity and the thriving of the paradise of sins!

“Do not underestimate yourselves and think that you are just poor test subjects or ‘props’ in the trial quests. No. For the great Imperium and the civilization of mankind that is even greater, you are of much greater significance. You do not even know how great a contribution you have made to the harmony and stability of the Imperium!

“Rest assured. The Imperium will not forget you. The civilization of mankind will not forget the anonymous heroes, either. Haha. Hahaha!”

“Live streamers?” Xiahou Wuxin had finally learned the names of the slaughtering clowns. Chewing on the name for a while, he ignored the sarcastic name of ‘anonymous heroes’ and continued his questioning patiently. “What kind of contribution?”

“You know that the Imperium is made of one percent true human beings and ninety-nine percent hominoids. Unlike the true human beings who know the significance of their life clearly and are actively dedicated to the great evolution of the civilization of mankind, hominoids are an ignorant, self-demeaning, shameless, lazy, and worthless species. It is tremendously difficult to activate the potential of the inferior species and ask them to make even the slightest contributions to mankind!”

Wei Xiaotian sighed. “The thing about hominoids is that the moment you go easy on them, they will immediately have a lot of irrelevant thoughts, simmering in impatience. But if you are too harsh on them, they will be frustrated and lifeless. They will only walk half a step after taking a whip, and their efficiency is even lower than that of spiritual puppets.

“To make matters worse, instigated by a bunch of ill-intended, disobedient criminals and the foreign hostile forces, the mobs will even be united against true human beings in resistance to the government of the great Imperium!

“In the past thousand years, we have adopted a lot of ways to administer the hominoids, but tyranny, harsh suppression, or gentle policies all had their shortcomings. The methods that are too harsh result in decreased work efficiency of the hominoids, and the odds of riots and insurgencies are greatly increased. The methods that are too friendly facilitate all kinds of ideas in the hearts of the hominoids that they shouldn’t have, which also affect the hard-earned peace and prosperity in the Imperium.

“Eventually, it was the brilliant Lord Wuying Lan, the ruler of Manjusaka, the City in the Sky, who created the groundbreaking concept of ‘slaughter streaming’ that solved the problem once and for all and satisfied the needs of most of the hominoids in the Imperium, allowing the Imperium of True Human Beings to step into a new age!”

“Slaughter streaming…” Thinking quickly, Xiahou Wuxin said even more bitterly, “I understand it now. No wonder those ‘live streamers’ bring so many unnecessary crystal cameras with them. So, all their slaughters are for other people to watch. It’s like a show.”

“Indeed. All kinds of slaughter streams are the most popular entertainment shows in the Imperium. It is also the only means of entertainment for most of the hominoids,” Wei Xiaotian said casually with his hands behind his back. “Also, it is much more complicated than simple entertainment, but also a new way of edification and destressing, an educational entertainment.”

“Educational entertainment?” Xiahou Wuxin gnashed his teeth. “That is really brilliantly put!”

Wei Xiaotian suddenly raised his voice and said, “Human beings are the strongest fighting species in the sea of stars. Only the strongest are entitled to the great name of ‘human being’. Survival of the fittest is the only law in the universe!

“Every hominoid should be aware of such a supreme principle. The slaughter streams are a more direct way for them to understand the concepts of ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ and how cruel survival is. Their fighting will is raised without them knowing it, too, so that the more ambitious and determined ones among them will be able to distinguish themselves more easily!

“On the other hand, do you know that the sense of happiness always comes from comparison? The resources in the universe are too scarce to improve the environment and the material conditions on a large scale. However, it is not so difficult to improve the sense of happiness in your perception.

“However hard my work and however painful my life is, as long as I know that somebody is shouldering more agony, hardship, and inhumane torture, all the pain that I am suffering seems less difficult to deal with. Such is the weirdness of humans’ senses!

“So, for the hominoids who work in the boundless fields of the Imperium or the sunless mines, since we cannot improve their working environment and living conditions for the time being, we will show them the lives of the people who are even more miserable than them—the lives of you, the sinners in the Land of Sins.”

“I understand it now,” Xiahou Wuxin said coldly. “Hominoids are your slaves. It is needless to mention the bitterness of the torture that they suffer in farmlands and mines. But whatever torture they suffer, their life is still much better than biting each other like wild dogs in the Land of Sins or being butchered by the ‘experimenters’, ‘trial-takers’, and ‘live streamers’ blatantly!”

“That is exactly my point,” Wei Xiaotian said with a smile. “When an unlucky man meets a man ten times unluckier than him, he will be in a much better mood and even think that he is actually quite lucky. That is exactly how you get a sense of happiness!

“Those hominoids have been working deep inside the mines day and night. They are ignorant, directionless people in the first place. After a long period of work, it is inevitable that they will complain or even slack off, which will result in a decrease in productivity.

“It is useless to suppress the worthless swine who are not scared of beatings or death. But as long as the clips of ‘slaughter streams’ are shown to them during their precious breaks from work, they will somehow be elated, all their complaints gone, after they see how the sinners in the Land of Sins scream, moan, and cry.”

Chapter 2034 - Weakness of Humanity

The Immortal Cultivator from ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ got more and more excited as he talked. Perhaps he purely wanted to buy more time for himself at the beginning, but he was now prouder than ever about the system that originated from the Land of Sins.

“In the first years after Lord Wuying Lan created the notion of ‘slaughter streams’, we hired the professors in renowned universities to trace and investigate twenty-seven mining groups for ten years.

“The result of the investigation suggested that the happiness index soared every year in the community of miners who watched ‘slaughter streams’ for a long time and that the ratio of sluggishness, strikes, and even large-scale riots was reduced year by year. After venting their anger and additional energy in the thrilling shows, the miners were able to work dutifully during the day. The disobedient rogues, after seeing the miserable outcomes of the sinners in the Land of Sins, did not say or do anything outrageous.”

“I get it. You are killing the chicken to scare the monkeys,” Xiahou Wuxin said. “The sinners in the Land of Sins are chicken, and the hominoid miners are monkeys.”

“You… You…” Xin Xiaoqi bulged her eyes, utterly dumbfounded. Despite all the crazy, bizarre things she had seen in the Land of Sins, she could not begin to fathom such evilness in the world. She stammered for a long time, only to come up with no comment on the Immortal Cultivators' behavior.

“You can say that.” Wei Xiaotian continued smiling. “The test streaming in the mining groups was a major success and significantly helped them to improve the happiness index and the productivity of the miners. Soon, the slaughter streams were introduced nationwide in the Imperium.

“To this day, almost all the miners, especially those who are engaged in dangerous and burdensome labor work, consider the slaughter streams their sole excitant. Some of them even have to watch the streamers kill a couple of people to enjoy themselves before they go to sleep even though they have worked seventy-two hours in a row deep inside the mines without any rest!

“As a result, the society is peaceful, the hominoids feel happy, and the productivity is significantly improved. The civilization of mankind is pushing forward at a higher and higher speed. The most amazing part is that there is barely any cost. Shouldn't you be greatly complimented?

“Also, the whole streaming business is just, open, and transparent, without any threshold. It is the most direct channel of ascension for the community of hominoids. As long as they make up their mind, any hominoid can participate in the audition of streamers. After they pass the harsh tests, they will be delivered to the training center in Manjusaka for modification. We will reform them with state-of-the-art technology, magical equipment, and drugs. Then, they will be sent to the paradise of sins for games to bring pleasure to people all over the Imperium.

“As long as their style is eye-catching enough, their tactics brilliant and provocative, even a nobody who worked at the bottom level of a thirty-thousand-meter mining hole on a frozen planet can become a star that everybody in the Imperium knows!

“The way out is right here. The Imperium never asks where they come from and is willing to give anybody an opportunity. If they want to distinguish themselves, just pass the tests one after another!

“With such an open and bright path lying right in front of them, what do the hominoids possibly have to complain about? They must waste their life deep inside the sunless mining holes only because they are cowardly and weak! If they are capable enough, they can totally distinguish themselves from their peers and become ‘streamers’! Whining about the injustice of society when it is only because of their own incapability? That does not make sense at all!

“Now, Lord Wuying Lan has a lot of superstar-level streamers under his banner. They are all celebrities whose fame has spread across the entire Imperium and the most awesome role models for countless hominoids. Thousands of hominoid teenagers are trying their best to become the cool streamers. Their whole attention is focused here.

“With the streamers as their heroes, who will even care about the strikes or the armed rebels like in the past? They are long outdated!”

Even the old and cunning Xiahou Wuxin was utterly dumbfounded. With a long sigh, he said, “Your methods… are truly impressive.”

“Lord Wuying Lan is certainly a genius. He is a man who can change the entire Imperium!” Wei Xiaotian said. “The Imperium did not administer the hominoids in such a way a long time ago. At that time ago, our methods were still simple, rough, rigid, and clumsy. The hominoids were even treated like slaves.

“But the truth proved that slavery was one of the lousiest systems with the lowest productivity. It could not exploit the maximum value of the hominoids.

“What is more useful than the thorny whips soaked in venom is the weakness of humanity? It is lust and money!”

“Money?” Xiahou Wuxin mumbled.

“Yes. In the Imperium right now, there are not many slaves in the traditional sense. Most of the hominoids are free people, including the miners who struggle to make a living deep inside the mines. The mining groups even offer them a decent salary. Glittering coins are the greatest stimulus to boost their enthusiasm in work.

“However, the thing about money is that it is just useless paper however much there is when it is not used for consumption. Or rather, it is even more useless than paper and nothing more than a few groundless numbers.

“The resources in the sea of stars are too precious. We certainly cannot allow the hominoids to buy enough assets. But if we refuse to sell any items to them, they will immediately discover the lie of the money and realize that the money in their account is absolutely worthless.

“At this moment, it was Lord Wuying Lan who came up with another genius idea, which was to add a ‘tipping system’ and a ‘betting system’ into the slaughter streams. The hominoid viewers are attracted to purchase all kinds of virtual gifts to tip the streamers with their real money. In such a way, additional money is consumed.

“With ten bucks, you can send a virtual flower to a certain streamer in the slaughter streams, and your name will appear in the system for 0.01 seconds.

“With five hundred bucks, you can buy a shining virtual saber and give it to the streamer. Then, you will have the loud appreciation from the streamer, which will make you feel good in front of all your workmates in the mining area. It is also the only way for the bottom-level workers to receive other people’s attention.

“If you are willing to save your money for a year and a half, with fifty thousand bucks, you will be able to ask a certain streamer to kill in the way that you designate. Your name will be left on the body, and the streamer will sing and declare that this guy has been killed for Brother A from Planet B. Tut, tut, tut. Think about it. A streamer in the Building Foundation Stage or even the Core Formation Stage calls you ‘brother’, and all that it costs is only fifty thousand bucks. What a great bargain it is!

“A lot of bottom-level workers are in the factories with the harshest environments on the most remote planets. They do not have many channels to spend their money, and they tend to have bad thoughts when too much money is saved in their accounts.

“When they are guided to consume the money by way of tipping, they can only stay in the factory dutifully after all their savings are drained in the virtual world. Some of the workers actually volunteer to work overtime for half a year without any rest in order to save enough money however exhausting it is, all for the single purpose of tipping a streamer so that their name will be displayed on the menu for half a second and the streamer will call them ‘brother’ and ‘sister’.

“Some people even tip the streamers with high-interest loans, selling themselves and turning from free folk into slaves. Naturally, they have themselves to blame for their outcome. It is nobody else’s fault.

“As for the betting system, it is the same logic. We often hold many kinds of death matches in the slaughter streams. Sometimes, it is the streamers’ massacre of the sinners in the Land of Sins. Sometimes, it is the mutual brutalization among the streamers. Different ways of betting and odds have been set, too.

“It is true that some people grow rich overnight after a wild gamble. Their identity of a bottom-level worker is removed once and for all, and they can live the rest of their life comfortably. Naturally, the Imperium guarantees the legal rights of those people.

“But a hundred times more people lose the gambles and simply keep on gambling after they do. Mired in the swamp, they are unable to free themselves and end up large debts, turning into slaves of a different sense.

“Tipping and betting. Two approaches at the same time. This is how the world is operated right now.

“In the old slavery system, true human beings directly enslaved hominoids, which was too simple, crude, and ineffective. Now, true human beings enslave money, and money enslaves hominoids. Everything is voluntary. How perfect and harmonious!”

“You…” Xiahou Wuxin sighed in mixed feelings. “You truly have a profound understanding of humanity.”

“Yes. Men are born evil. As long as you grasp the weakness of humanity, you can transform anyone into a real slave,” Wei Xiaotian said genuinely. “In the past hundred years, there were indeed a lot of problems within the Imperium, which caused our external enemies to break in by taking advantage of the weaknesses. The Imperium was caught in a brief low tide.

“However, ever since Lord Wuying Lan promoted slaughter streams, the relationship between true human beings and hominoids has changed significantly. The Imperium is more united with a higher productivity. The contradictions in all areas have gradually calmed down. The comprehensive national power of the Imperium has taken an enormous leap ahead.

“Now, the enemies in all aspects have been crushed by us. Even our greatest nemesis is on their last breath. How could the generals and soldiers in the frontline have achieved everything by themselves? It’s all thanks to Lord Wuying Lan’s hard work!

“In the meantime, you sinners in the Land of Sins should be particularly proud of yourselves when you are lucky enough to be dedicated to our great cause and contribute to the everlasting prosperity of the Imperium as the fuel!

“How about it? Now that you have understood the great significance of the Land of Sins and the slaughter streams for the Imperium, you can finally die without regret, right?

Chapter 2035 - Triple Changes!

“Thank you, Master Wei, for letting this old dog know what the world I have been living in truly is.” Xiahou Wuxin took a long breath in relief and smiled. “In the past, I always thought that the Land of Sins was a laboratory without exits, a transparent but enclosed cage that absolutely cannot be broken.

“But now that I look at it, not just the Land of Sins, even the Imperium of True Human Beings or the entire universe out there is still an enormous jail. Nothing more! Is there any difference between one who can escape and one who cannot?”

He sounded so frustrated that he truly seemed to have lost all his fighting will.

“It is not a jail but an army,” Wei Xiaotian said casually. “Concentrating the flesh, soul, and will of all human beings, building them into an invincible and unconquerable army, charging in the infinite sea of stars, and reshaping the greatness and pride of the civilization of mankind—this is the significance of the Imperium’s existence, and this is the value of your sacrifices!”

“The civilization of mankind…” Xiahou Wuxin chewed on the few words and smiled bitterly. Then he suddenly said in a low voice, “But in such a case, I am truly confused about something. Cough, cough. Cough, cough, cough!”

He lowered his voice and suddenly began to cough, attracting the attention of all the gray Exos including Wei Xiaotian.

At this moment, inside the sewer below their feet that was not very deep, Li Yao and the Fist King had micro-adjusted every component on their body. Every bearing and every chip had been set to the maximum state to ensure that the highest combat ability could be released.

Han Te and Liu Li found their target, too, which was an enormous warehouse two kilometers away from Xiahou Wuxin and the rest of them.

The elites of the ‘Godly Fist Union’ were confronting the main force of the defenders of Liberty City who were holding the warehouse.

Both parties were seasoned warriors personally trained by either the Fist King or Xiahou Wuxin. They were completely different from the mobsters that were temporarily drafted. Despite the collapse of order and the mayhem in the city, they still maintained some sort of discipline and combat ability under the control and command of their respective captains.

Both parties were trying to seize the seemingly large warehouse, which probably contained abundant assets, but they had recognized each other’s toughness and did not burst into a fight immediately.

That was because countless mobsters and rogue warriors were wandering nearby and craning their heads stealthily, like ravenous hyenas that were waiting for the result of the battle of two lions. They were even sitting on the fence, ready to take advantage of both of them.

Naturally, they would not allow the few bandits to get things their way, but they were reluctant to leave so quickly. For a moment, they were caught in an impasse.

Shocking changes took place at the two places almost at the same time.

When Xiahou Wuxin just raised his last question, and when he was coughing so loudly that he could barely stand steadily and vomited tremendous blood, he staggered and could not help but fall toward Xin Xiaoqi.

At this moment, Wei Xiaotian already had a warning.

But however acute his warning was, it was not as fast as Xiahou Wuxin!

Xiahou Wuxin seemed to have taken off a shell named ‘weakness’ and turned into the dominating, invincible leader of Liberty City again. He stopped in front of Xin Xiaoqi after only one leap and pressed her chest hard. “Xiaoqi, run now!”

He was going to sacrifice himself to clear a path of survival for Xin Xiaoqi!

The few auras that had locked onto Xin Xiaoqi tightly earlier were all disrupted by his fighting will that felt like a torrent. Five or so gray Exos were so shocked that they dashed to surround the duo, trying to block Xin Xiaoqi’s retreat.

Xiahou Wuxin, on the other hand, grinned hideously. Dozens of veins as thick as vipers immediately protruded out of his dry chest and arms. Exerting his strength, he punched back at a gray Exo with his flesh and blood, blowing the opponent to almost five meters away. The armor on the crystal suit’s arm was falling apart like petals!

Then, Xiahou Wuxin made a movement that was beyond everyone’s expectations.

He had clearly pushed Xin Xiaoqi toward the outside of the battle, and he had even intentionally roared, leaving everyone the impression that he was about to sacrifice himself to protect Xin Xiaoqi.

But out of everyone’s expectations, he suddenly sucked heavily. Some sort of swirl-like force came out of nowhere to his palm, and he pulled Xin Xiaoqi back and threw her at where the gray Exos were densest.

Then, he seemed to have grown wings. Waving his hands so crazily that they were cracking, he soared and dashed dozens of meters away from the battlefield. It seemed that he was about to dash into the burning and collapsing alleys inside the ruins in only a few bounds.

He had rambled on about so many things and pretended to be completely frustrated and desperate, but everything was just a disguise for himself to run away, even at the cost of the life of his only true disciple!

“Hehe!” Wei Xiaotian snorted. The look on his face was absolutely the same as before, but dim grayness shone around his crystal suit as dozens of tiny flying swords darted out at Xiahou Wuxin from weird angles in all directions.

The other gray Exos realized what was going on. They also let go of the surveillance on Xin Xiaoqi, who was still staggering in midair, and began to lock onto Xiahou Wuxin, who was as quick as a ghost, lunging at him in roars after being fooled.

The third change took place when the tiny flying swords hit Xiahou Wuxin.

Xin Xiaoqi was supposed to be a ‘human shield’ that he threw at the gray Exos brutally, but right then, somebody seemed to have kicked her right in the bottom, and the propulsion magical equipment on her hands and feet spurted out tremendous air currents, allowing her to take a sharp turn and move out of the encirclement!

Xiahou Wuxin and Xin Xiaoqi were besieged by the more than ten gray Exos in the beginning. Their enemies were in such a neat position that there was no gap at all.

However, after Xiahou Wuxin’s three changes—pretending to sacrifice himself to save his disciple at first, running away himself with his disciple as a decoy later, and sacrificing himself to protect Xin Xiaoqi in the end—he finally tore apart a tiny gap in the enemy’s perfect battle formation and sent Xin Xiaoqi out of the siege!

“Hahaha!”

Dozens of flying swords hit Xiahou Wuxin at the same time. Smoke rose from fire and blood. But Xiahou Wuxin’s hoarse laughter echoed from the smoke.

One of the gray Exos dashed into the smoke. Then, a series of metal twists and bone fractures were heard, followed by nonstop explosions!

After the smoke slightly dispersed, in the middle of the boiling blood and the burning fire, a magnificent shadow even taller than the Fist King showed up!

It was almost a giant more than two meters tall. Maybe it was not a very shocking height in the Land of Sins that was frequented by monsters everywhere. But the shoulder of the giant was almost as broad as two meters. It was practically a pure square that was stuffed with muscles.

Muscles upon muscles, veins tied in veins, it was like a hybrid of rebar and cement.

The dense bone spurs that were embedded on the arms and the crimson eyes and the enormous nostrils from which anger was spurting out were even more ferocious than the iron-boned Fist King before!

“Hehe. Hehehe!”

He roared like a caged beast.

Everybody in the Land of Sins knew that Xiahou Wuxin, as the leader of Liberty City, was an expert in handling flying swords. He had always been focusing on agility, swiftness, and grace.

Nobody had ever seen Xiahou Wuxin in such an explosive form before, which was even more like a primordial beast than ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie!

Below the ground, Li Yao asked the Fist King in a low voice, “Is metamorphosis very popular in the Land of Sins? Do the big shots never greet other people until they have a second form or an ultimate one?”

“Well…” The Fist King’s crystal processor calculated quickly. “In such a case, everything makes sense now. The combat ability Xiahou Wuxin presented during the battle with me was obviously insufficient. It was at least forty percent lower than the data that I collected by analyzing his battle videos.

“Just now, I thought that he was frustrated and not determined to fight because he had long known the truth of the Land of Sins and that he was nothing more than a tool to be studied and played.

“But from what we’ve seen, it must’ve been done on purpose. He intentionally kept part of his strength.”

“Keeping part of his strength in front of such an unparalleled warrior like you?” Li Yao could not help but shudder hard for Xiahou Wuxin’s cunningness and thoughtfulness. He was about to ask why Xiahou Wuxin did that, but he realized the reason himself quickly.

After pondering for a moment, Li Yao said quickly, “Are you suggesting that Xiahou Wuxin was waiting for an opportunity to completely get himself, or at least his disciple Xin Xiaoqi, out of the surveillance of the sky.

“But as long as Liberty City was in peace and he was the leader of Liberty City, there was no way that he could get rid of the surveillance and manipulation of the sky. He could not escape at all.

“Therefore, although he had probably planned everything carefully in secret for decades, since the time when Xin Xiaoqi’s mother, his love, was killed by him, he had never dared to make any moves recklessly because there was no chance of escaping at all under peaceful circumstances.

“When you commanded a great army to attack Liberty City, it was a great opportunity for him to take advantage of the chaos.

“He pretended to be no match for you and get heavily wounded by you. Disappearing from everyone’s sight, he intended to run out of the city without alarming everyone. It is a shame that he’s been blocked by the Immortal Cultivators, who forced him to expose his real strength that he has never revealed in the past decades!”

“Yes,” the Fist King said. “My logical thinking circuits have analyzed all the known information comprehensively. There is a 93.3% likelihood that it’s true!”

“Great!” Li Yao’s crystal cameras’ shone, and his smile gradually turned hideous. “In such a case, we can be even more confident in keeping the entire gray squad here forever!”

On the ground, Wei Xiaotian’s eyes began to glitter in interest, too. “So, you were not wounded at all, and you even practiced brand-new techniques in secret. Such a perfect shape… What a pleasant surprise, Leader Xiahou!”

Chapter 2036 - If We Go, Let“s Go Together!

“He!” Xiahou Wuxin bellowed. All the tiny flying swords that Wei Xiaotian had attacked him with just now were captured by the force field generated from his bone spurs and his muscles. Swinging his arm that was as thick as his waist, they formed iron torrents while he laughed. “Wei Xiaotian, I did not lie to you. I truly hid a lot of state-of-the-art test subjects for myself, and I learned a myriad of complicated arts from them! In front of Manjusaka, although I am just an insignificant old dog, whoever wants to claim my life must prepare to pay a terrible price!”

“Leader Xiahou has truly put a lot of thought into getting your disciple out of here.” Wei Xiaotian wiped his nonexistent tears and put on an even more scornful look. “It is a shame that your disciple does not seem to appreciate it very much!”

Right next to Wei Xiaotian, Xin Xiaoqi was still locked onto by three gray Exos. Holding her daggers and crouching, she was like a female leopard that was baring the tusks in the middle of grasses.

Xiahou Wuxin’s expression changed greatly as he froze on the spot.

He had taken everything into his calculations, including Wei Xiaotian’s reactions, the position and speed of the gray Exos, the possible weaknesses and the remedies, the hidden force that he had imposed on his disciple, and the distance that she would possibly be pushed out.

When he stalled the scumbags with his life, she probably could have escaped, unless…

“Why didn’t you run away?” Xiahou Wuxin stared at Xin Xiaoqi in a daze. His hideous face that was almost like an animal emitted lackluster brilliance. “You could’ve left. Why did you come back?”

“If we go, let’s go together!” Xin Xiaoqi’s eyes were bloodshot, hot tears rolling inside them. “In the past twenty years, you have always been like this. You told me to do something, and you simply kicked me away. But that is not what is going to happen this time. I will not be kicked away anymore. I will stay and fight by your side and break out of Liberty City together with you!”

Xiahou Wuxin was completely dazed. Something that had been sealed for decades, and perhaps even longer, was gradually waking behind his hideous eyes.

“Tut tut tut. I didn’t know that such a touching master-disciple relationship could be nurtured in the murky, bloody Land of Sins,” Wei Xiaotian remarked in mixed feelings. “It is a pity that our battle is not suitable to be material of the slaughter streams. Otherwise, a lot of viewers would certainly be attracted to it. Chances are that it would even be one of the ten most popular videos today!”

Xiahou Wuxin ignored Wei Xiaotian’s mockery. Hot tears mixed with streaks of blood flowed out of the crimson eyes. His dry lips trembled for a long time, but he did not know what to say and simply mumbled repetitively, “Too silly. Xiaoqi, you are too silly!”

“I’ve always been silly, or I wouldn’t have been fooled by you for twenty years.”

Biting her lips, Xin Xiaoqi held back her tears and said, “There are a lot of things between you and me that are yet to be settled. I will not let you die here at the hands of those scumbags. Even if you must die, you must die by my hand, master!”

“…Okay.” Xiahou Wuxin seemed to have been injected with infinite energy by Xin Xiaoqi’s words. Although his body size did not expand, the brilliance beaming out of his crimson eyes dazzled all the gray Exos. “If we go, we go together. Today, you and I will fight side by side and kill all the emotionless, inhumane scumbags and march out of Liberty City openly!”

“Copy that!” Xin Xiaoqi’s tears finally flooded out beyond her control, but a smile gradually appeared on her face. She laughed hard and said, “Master, by the way, you look so handsome right now and truly like a great hero. If my mother was still alive, she certainly would be attracted to you!”

“Is that so?” Xiahou Wuxin smiled. The bones all over his body suddenly uttered spluttering noises. He seemed to have constricted into an enormous iron ball in the moment and a spring that had been compressed to the minimum when he suddenly attacked Wei Xiaotian in the sky. “What you said makes everything worthwhile!”

Boom!

Xiahou Wuxin and Wei Xiaotian punched each other head on. The steel storm on his arm was all blown at Wei Xiaotian.

Despite the protection of the crystal suit of the highest level, Wei Xiaotian was still blown almost five meters away by Xiahou Wuxin’s violent and unstoppable strength. The arm and the shoulder blade of the crystal suit exploded in cracking noises, with white smoke popping up!

There was no real change of feelings on Wei Xiaotian's face. The moment he was blown back, he took out a glamourous gun where thousands of runes were glittering from his waist. After dazzling transformations, it was attached to his entire left arm, and dazzling blue light spurted out of the barrel that was larger than a fist.

The blue light dispersed into almost twenty streams in midair, which were connected to each other in the tiniest threads of light. Interconnected, they covered Xiahou Wuxin overwhelmingly like a huge web.

In the meantime, the other dozen gray Exos took action. Knowing that Xiahou Wuxin had fully activated his techniques and was now at the most unstoppable moment, they did not fight Xiahou Wuxin directly but simply wandered and harassed him from nearby, restraining Xiahou Wuxin within the range of the cover of the blue web.

Pushing Wei Xiaotian who was in a crystal suit three steps away with a fleshly body, Xiahou Wuxin had done his best, to the point that his entire right arm was showing signs of fractures. Because of the harassment of the other Exos, he could not catch his breath anymore and was slowed down, only to be covered by the blue web immediately.

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

The blue web, like a demon beast with life, tightened Xiahou Wuxin's muscular and magnificent body hard, cutting wounds that were similar to the lips of babies on his iron-like muscles.

Several blue streaks were even crawling deep into his veins like vipers and eelworms.

"Argh!"

Unable to move anymore, Xiahou Wuxin roared in agony like a dam that was about to be broken by a flood. He exerted his strength without considering anything else and was about to tear the blue web apart!

Without even blinking, Wei Xiaotian fell to one knee. With his right arm as the gun carriage, the firearm on his left arm transformed again. Hundreds of runes revolved rapidly together, and it shot out a second cluster of light that was red!

The second light was not directly aimed at Xiahou Wuxin but above his head. After it exploded abruptly, an invisible mountain seemed to have collapsed brutally, pressing Xiahou Wuxin together with the earth within ten meters from him down!

The magical equipment that looked like a firearm was countless times more advanced than the normal bolters and Vulcan machine guns. But it was not exactly a gun but an ‘array activator’. What the other guns shot out were bullets, but what this particular gun shot out was many enormous arrays!

The arrays that were activated by Wei Xiaotian boasted the ability to change the gravity and the air pressure freely, placing the target under super high pressure as if it were thousands of meters below the ocean and crushing their internal organs!

“Argh!”

Hardly had Xiahou Wuxin got rid of the influence of the first array of blue light when he was suppressed by an invisible mountain again. His knees hit the ground heavily, and his blood spurted out like a volcanic eruption.

Puchi! Puchi! Puchi!

Faced with a monster like Xiahou Wuxin who was a combination of cunningness and brutality, even an expert Immortal Cultivator like Wei Xiaotian did not dare act carelessly. He simply kept on pulling the trigger to build up the pressure of the array.

Xiahou Wuxin tried to stand up again and again, only to be pressed to the ground by the suppression again and again. His knees were almost shattered, leaving two blood red marks on the hard ground!

“Master!” Xin Xiaoqi shrieked and waved her daggers, trying to save him. However, she was too weak and no better than Han Te and Liu Li in the eyes of real experts.

She was no match for the gray Exos that Wei Xiaotian had brought with him, much less Wei Xiaotian himself.

Pu!

She was knocked to the ground by the gray Exos for the fifth time. Vomiting a mouthful of blood, she was unable to get to her feet anymore, and the propulsion magical equipment on her hands and feet became heavy shackles after they ran out of crystals.

Wei Xiaotian did not bother to look at Xin Xiaoqi at all. After throwing more than ten great arrays on Xiahou Wuxin’s head in a row, and when the ground near Xiahou Wuxin was pressed more than one meter deep, he finally switched the ‘array activator’ to the third mode. Dangerous orange brilliance beamed out of the barrel of the gun when it was locked onto Xiahou Wuxin’s abdomen.

The Immortal Cultivator shook his head softly and sighed. “Why bother? Did it help at all?”

Xiahou Wuxin was bleeding profusely. His skin was broken, and his fractured bones jabbed out of his mangled flesh. He looked a million times more miserable than when he pretended to be wounded by the Fist King.

He was still trying to resist the pressure from the sky again and again, even if it meant that his bones were shattered one after another. Hearing Wei Xiaotian’s confusion, he glanced at the opponent with his swollen eyes and said in a miserable smile, “It did not help, but it had to be done anyway.”

“Why?” Wei Xiaotian asked. “You know that it is a dead end. Then, why did you struggle so hard before your death and reduce yourself to such a despicable state?”

“The reason is simple. It’s because…”

Xiahou Wuxin took a deep, deep breath. Under the eyes of the surprised Wei Xiaotian, Xin Xiaoqi, and all the other gray Exos, he suddenly released spiritual energy a hundred times more powerful than before, and he truly got back on his feet again against the suppression of more than ten gravity-twisting and pressing-enhancing rune arrays.

“I am a man, not a dog!”

At the same time, chaotic explosions and gunshots echoed around them. A bunch of messy, loud, and impatient mobsters and unorganized bandits rushed over like a flood.

“Xiahou Wuxin is right there!”

“I’m told that he has secretly hidden dozens of secret treasuries and anything can be found inside. Let’s capture him for interrogation!”

“Hahaha. Xiahou Wuxin is now heavily wounded and on the run. He does not have any combat ability at all! Whoever catches Xiahou Wuxin will become rich immediately!”

Chapter 2037 - Drive Tigers to Attack Wolves

Five minutes earlier, two kilometers away from the battlefield where Xiahou Wuxin and Wei Xiaotian confronted each other…

The groups of bandits from the Godly Fist Union and Liberty City were also at loggerheads around a warehouse of resources. A lot of tough bandits from other parts of the Land of Sins were nearby, too.

Order had collapsed. Those bandits had all turned into ravenous wolves that feared nothing. As long as there were enough gains, they would not hesitate to lunge forward even if their enemies were deities from the sky.

The atmosphere became graver and graver, and the remaining bandits of the Godly Fist Union would likely attack the warehouse that was defended by the bandits of Liberty City soon.

The wandering warriors nearby sensed the killing intent in the air that was getting more and more intense. They were so excited that they had goosebumps all over their bodies, like sharks that had smelt the scent of blood and bared their sharp teeth.

They were not bold enough to have a head-on clash against the Godly Fist Union or the defenders of Liberty City, but they were certainly good at taking advantage of the chaos and looting the defeated.

Right when the battle was about to erupt, a high-pitched shriek came from nowhere. “Xiahou Wuxin has been discovered! He is running to his secret treasury. It is said that he’s set up dozens of secret treasuries without telling anyone during the decades he ran Liberty City. Ten times more items are stored in them than here!”

“What!”

Like a peal of thunder, the voice illuminated the greed and ambition of all the bandits!

Xiahou Wuxin had been heavily wounded by ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie’s punches, which was a fact that many had seen with their own eyes.

With the Fist King’s brutality and magnificence, his punches had at least reduced Xiahou Wuxin’s combat ability by half. He was heavily wounded and in the most vulnerable state.

Liberty City, as an Elysian World, was best known for its wealth and prosperity.

Since Xiahou Wuxin had reigned Liberty City for decades, it was not only reasonable but only natural for him to establish dozens of secret warehouses to hide abundant treasures.

All the bandits were fighting bloodily for the open warehouses of resources on the ground, but could those warehouses whose locations everybody knew have stored anything rare and precious?

If they could capture Xiahou Wuxin and interrogate him to get a few secret warehouses, would they not be the greater winners of the war?

All the tough bandits were glowing with interest and swallowing in great excitement.

When they were analyzing the veracity of the words with the last calmness in their minds, a different voice shrieked from another corner. “Not good. Xiahou Wuxin is about to be captured. Look at the sky in the southwest. It does not look right at all!”

Alarmed, all the bandits looked at the southwest and noticed that something was indeed weird.

The whole of Liberty City was chaotic and obstreperous, like a furnace that had been poured fuel on.

But an area not far away to their southwest was awfully quiet. When they sensed it carefully, they realized that the place seemed to be covered in a hazy mist, which was apparently disguising something.

“It is now or never. If Xiahou Wuxin is truly kidnapped by someone else, we will have absolutely no share of the good items in the dozens of secret warehouses!” the high-pitched male voice from the beginning shouted again. After pausing a moment, it went on. “Brothers of the ‘Red Ghost Union’, let’s go and block Xiahou Wuxin before those sons of b*tches do!”

As a result, all the random bandits and unorganized mobsters could not hold it any longer.

They had been wandering about, waiting for the competition between the Godly Fist Union and the defenders of Liberty City, hoping to take advantage of the mayhem when the fight between the two great gangs started.

However, whether or not the mayhem could be taken advantage of was highly uncertain. Since the two gangs were patient enough to wait for such a long time instead of fighting, it was obvious that they would not leave many leftovers for the hyenas that were patrolling nearby.

Since the big fish Xiahou Wuxin was probably not far away, they might as well try their luck there.

There was no telling which random bandit lunged out first, but in half a minute, most of the mobsters had congregated into a murky but unstoppable torrent that flooded toward the area that was covered in gray mist.

The bandits of the Godly Fist Union, who were preparing to attack the warehouse of resources, lost their patience, too.

Their opponents in the warehouse were on par with themselves as elites of the gang. Besides, their opponents had rested and prepared for a long time there. It would be difficult to take the location by force.

Even if they did break into the warehouse, should the enemy detonate and destroy all the assets at the last moment, would they not lose everything and gain absolutely nothing?

Thus, they might as well try their luck with Xiahou Wuxin instead of wagering everything on this place, right?

Even if the news was fake, or if Xiahou Wuxin was eventually caught by somebody else, it still would not matter. After all, the warehouse of resources was rooted there, and it was not likely to grow feet and run away. It was highly improbable that they could ship all the assets out of the city in only half a day. They could always go back and attack the warehouse again.

Thinking that, the elite bandits of the Godly Fist Union followed the mobsters and charged at the hotspot aggressively!

Han Te and Liu Li’s intentional calls were also heard by the defenders of Liberty City who were trapped in the warehouse.

Relying on the warehouse of resources that had been completely surrounded, they were actually in a rather awkward and passive position, although they were safe for the time being.

The bandits of the Godly Fist Union were not wrong. The warehouse of assets could not grow feet and run off, and they could not ship all the resources out of there in a short time. Even if they held their position and defeated a few waves of attacks, they would eventually be drowned by the bandits that came at them incessantly.

If they waited and did nothing, they would be dead for sure.

As defenders of Liberty City and Xiahou Wuxin’s ‘loyal’ subordinates, they knew their leader’s cunningness better than anybody else.

They had heard a thing or two about the secret warehouses that Xiahou Wuxin had established.

Also, as locals, once they got the coordinates of the secret warehouses through interrogation, they would certainly have more ways to excavate the treasures in them than the outsiders could.

“Damn it. You have only one head to lose anyway. If we defend this place without making any other attempts, we will certainly die without a burial. We might as well try our luck outside!”

“Exactly. This warehouse of ours has the most abundant ammunition and the best gear. Let’s be armed to the teeth and try our luck outside. I don’t believe that we cannot capture Xiahou Wuxin before those scumbags!”

“Bullsh*t! What kind of cr*p are you talking about? The city leader has been treating us with honor and integrity, but you are all thinking of betraying him and even capturing and interrogating him when Liberty City is only caught in some minor trouble? Do you have any conscience at all? In such a time of perils, it is urgent that we rescue the city leader as soon as possible and escort him to his secret warehouse for his safety!”

“Exactly, Heixin Laosi, you are quite right. The city leader has done us so many favors. It is only reasonable that we repay loyalty with loyalty. Let’s go immediately and protect the city leader so that he can be safe in his secret warehouse!”

As a result, among the teams that were roaring and marching at Xiahou Wuxin, another group of tough bandits who were ravenous and thirsty was added.

Wei Xiaotian was watching Xiahou Wuxin being pressed down right in front of him with a smile, under the impression that everything was under his control, when the fearless and voracious bandits crowded toward him from all the alleys and streets in every direction.

“There’s Xiahou Wuxin!” A voice came out of nowhere. “The one kneeling on the ground is Xiahou Wuxin! He has confessed the location of the warehouse to those guys!”

“…” Wei Xiaotian’s smile that was as delicate as marble finally cracked.

“Hiss. It’s really Xiahou Wuxin!”

Xiahou Wuxin’s body size had expanded crazily, which ripped apart the camouflage on his face. Although his facial organs were even more hideous, they were not very twisted. So, a lot of his past subordinates and the bandits from the Godly Fist Union recognized him immediately.

Also, the Immortal Cultivators from Manjusaka, with their high-level crystal suits and the magnificent vibe around him, were truly different from the bandits from the Land of Sins. They were so eye-catching that a lot of bandits grew hostile toward them immediately.

At this moment, the gray Exos had surrounded Xiahou Wuxin, beaten him to a pulp, and tied him up with barriers. It was exactly a classic scenario of interrogation.

The bandits had been somewhat suspicious about the weird shouts at the beginning, but they naturally took them to be true right now, thinking that Wei Xiaotian and the other gray Exos from the Heavenly Eye Legion including Wei Xiaotian had learned the coordinates of the secret warehouse.

After only half a second’s bewilderment, a fierce battle immediately broke out.

“*sshole. Hand over Xiahou Wuxin!”

“You dare steal my secret treasury? Die now!”

“Protect the city leader! Protect the city leader now!”

The mobsters and the unorganized bandits came first, followed by the elites of the Godly Fist Union and those of Liberty City. They all lunged at the squad of gray Exos, roaring like crazy devils!

Wei Xiaotian looked more awful than ever. Having no other options, he could only go on a killing spree.

The Heavenly Eye Legion, as an alert troop from Manjusaka, was stronger and had the enhancement of the advanced crystal suits. Naturally, they were incomparable to the uncivilized primitives in the Land of Sins.

The ten or so gray Exos marched in and out of the crowd like hungry tigers jumping at lambs. All the tough bandits were shuddering in fear.

Wei Xiaotian opened fire nonstop. Wherever his orange barrel was aimed, only vague ripples spread out instead of obvious brilliance, but they transformed countless bandits into blood plasma abruptly as they broke apart in plopping sounds!

But there were simply too many bandits. Although the bandits in the front were scared out of their wits and tried to run, their retreat was blocked by the bandits behind, who simply pushed them forward.

Despite Wei Xiaotian’s strength, after blowing several hundred tough bandits up, he felt that his hands were getting numb, and the ‘array activator’ was overloaded and in dire need of a half-minute cooldown.

“*sshole!”

Wei Xiaotian was so infuriated that he was gnashing his teeth. Vaguely sensing that something was not right, he glanced at Xiahou Wuxin, only to discover that the ground where the man’s feet had been planted was collapsing because of an explosion.

Under the heavy pressure of the great array, Xiahou Wuxin fell underground, quickly leaving Wei Xiaotian’s eyesight!

Chapter 2038 - Parasitic Killing Inten

Liberty City was established on the ruins of a prosperous city of the Marital Meritocrats Civilization, with debris as complicated as a labyrinth in the underground world, like a piece of rotten wood that had been gnawed by ants.

It was almost like the gravity arrays that Wei Xiaotian's 'array activator' activated were so powerful that the feeble earth could not take it anymore and collapsed directly, making Xiahou Wuxin fall below.

Wei Xiaotian frowned deeply. Slashing two bandits that lunged at him in half casually, he blew out two winds and threw away the four blocks of broken corpses. In the meantime, he did not forget to plant almost twenty crystal bombs on the broken corpses, paving a channel of blood in front of him with the explosions.

Wei Xiaotian stomped on the ground brutally and lunged at where Xiahou Wuxin fell.

"You want to go? Not so fast!"

To this moment, he still thought that it was merely an accident.

At best, the explosion could only have been caused by Xiahou Wuxin, who was cunning enough to detonate the earth below his feet and flee with the help of soil.

However, the next second, when he was about to reach the entrance of the cave, a creepy warning somehow flowed all over his body, pulling his every nerve ending brutally.

Wei Xiaotian’s every orifice was constricted to the minimum.

It was almost like an unimaginable, undefeatable beast was lurking right inside the cave that had appeared out of nowhere, and the very beast had bulged its eyes, waiting for him to jump into the trap!

For a moment, the sound of fighting and screaming on the battlefield vanished. The only thing that could be heard was the vague breathing of the deadly beast that was ravaging his eardrums and heart!

DUM! DUM! DUM! DUM! DUM!

Wei Xiaotian’s heart was beating faster than ever.

How is it possible? When did such a brutal monster appear in the Land of Sins? How did it escape our attention?

The thought only flashed briefly in Wei Xiaotian’s mind before he reacted as fast as lightning. At the risk of tearing apart all his bones and muscles, he tried to change the angle of his jump and brushed past the entrance of the cave at a close distance.

Boom!

The moment he passed the cave narrowly, an intense cluster of black smoke spurted out of the cave, like the breath of a dinosaur.

If he had jumped into the cave without minding anything just now, he certainly would have been swallowed by the black smoke, embracing his doom.

Although he was not directly hit by the black smoke, Wei Xiaotian still sensed that the terribly brutal force had locked onto him tightly, as if countless transparent tusks had bitten his arms and thighs.

Strangled by such a force, even a cold and heartless Immortal Cultivator like him could not help but moan. Having no time to analyze the source and elements of the force at all, he hopped and sprang, fleeing as quickly as possible!

The black smoke dispersed. Like raging ghosts, it spread in all directions in rings with the cave as the center. Very soon, it covered the entire battlefield.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The skyscrapers lying awry nearby were also detonated by the crystal bombs that had long been planted below the cornerstones. As they collapsed abruptly, the dust they raised blocked the entire sky.

Wei Xiaotian secretly cried. As a result, it would be impossible for Manjusaka to observe what was going on in the battlefield.

This is an expert much more awesome than Xiahou Wuxin and at least three times… no, five times… no, countless times stronger than him!

Who can it be? The Fist King?

It’s impossible. Even if ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie is some sort of spiritual puppet that boasts automatic learning and upgrading functions, ‘Great Iron City’ should be his limits.

The dominance and magnificence were entirely different from the sordidness, brutality, and aggression right now!

Thinking quickly, Wei Xiaotian made the decision immediately. He wanted to command his subordinates to retreat and make further plans after the situation was analyzed calmly.

They were all jade, and the sinners were nothing more than bricks. It was illogical to hit bricks with jade.

However, the moment the thought occurred to him, he heard the screams of his teammates of the Second Special Operation Squad of the Heavenly Eye Legion.

Despite the number of sinners, they were all weak mobsters who were poorly equipped. With their advanced gear and their dominating strength, the Immortal Cultivators were able to deal with them before.

However, if a few experts who were similar to ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie, if not stronger, were hiding in the middle of the crowds that were like a surging flood, the situation would be quite dangerous.

They did not even need to attack the Immortal Cultivators directly. All they needed to do was hide in secret and harass the Immortal Cultivators, forcing the Immortal Cultivators to spare half of the attention on dealing with them. The mobsters that were coming at them fearlessly and unstoppably would naturally take care of the rest.

The Second Special Operation Squad of the Heavenly Eye Legion had dealt a heavy blow to the tough bandits and killed countless. With the bloody debts between the two parties, the tough bandits certainly understood the importance of taking advantage of the vulnerabilities of their enemies well and attacked them even more vehemently. All the Immortal Cultivators were mired in the violent turbulence, unable to move anymore.

In less than twenty seconds, the internal screen on Wei Xian's crystal suit indicated that the performance of his subordinates' crystal suits and their physical parameters had turned black, which meant that they had been completely destroyed and killed!

The next moment, the light beam twisted violently, and all the data turned into question marks. His connection with his subordinates had been jammed.

The killing intent that felt like a parasite appeared behind him again.

To this moment, Wei Xiaotian still had not figured out who exactly was harassing his subordinates and hunting him.

Frightened, Wei Xiaotian lost his earlier cool. On all fours, he slithered and crawled, fleeing in panic in the middle of the storm of bullets and blades!

Horrible! It was too horrible! Even when he was faced with the mutated beasts in the laboratory or Lord Wuying Lan, he did not seem to have sensed such terrifying killing intent before!

Several bandits ahead of him discovered him at the same time and realized that he was the leader of the mysterious combat squad. They all roared and lunged at him.

“Get lost, you ants!”

Wei Xiaotian's face became more hideous than ever, with an expression that was even more disgusting than those of the sinners from the Land of Sins. He did not slow down at all even if that meant his crystal suit would be slashed by the enemy’s chainswords and vibration sabers. Two clusters of dazzling light balls burst out of his hands and sent the few bandits to hell!

Within a breath, he had already passed the tornado of blood and arrived at the edge of the battlefield and the black fog.

The killing intent behind him got more and more aggressive, as if somebody was grinning creepily next to his ears.

Wei Xiaotian shrieked. Instead of turning his head, he extended his left arm backward, trying to activate a new array to block the enemy’s pursuit.

But out of his expectations, hardly had he extended his arm when he felt his shoulder blade turn cold. The ‘array activator’ did not function at all when his entire left arm was chopped off neatly, including the ‘array activator’ and the Cosmos Ring that stored his crystal suits!

Wei Xiaotian did not stop or hesitate at all. He did not even show any sign that he hoped to reach for his broken limb and pull it back. Like a gecko that had just lost its tail, his speed was not affected at all when he finally broke out of the black fog!

He escaped desperately, never faster or more panicked in his entire life, until he ran out of strength, and his body was entirely drained. He finally collapsed in the middle of ruins.

When he looked back, he discovered that none of his subordinates escaped, and the raging black fog looked even creepier and more mysterious than before.

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

A cluster of white, icy fog spurted out of the fracture of the crystal suit, freezing the wound directly, stopping the bleeding, and depriving him of the sense of pain. Then, a layer of materials that were similar to gel was secreted and enshrouded the shocking wound. After it was exposed to the air for a few seconds, the gel was transformed into a silver shell like a new crystal suit.

There was no delight on Wei Xiaotian’s frozen face.

He adjusted his crystal processor gloomily and reached out to Manjusaka.

“My lord, we have failed. You must have noticed the anomaly on the battlefield. Yes. A few experts showed up. I suspect that ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie is still alive and has found a new iron body. He even has several partners now.

“Yes. The enemy cut off my left arm in one attack, but I didn’t see clearly whether it was ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie or somebody else. But it doesn’t matter now. I request a railgun bombardment of one square kilometer on the battlefield.

“Yes, understood. What?

“My lord, are you sure? This will affect a lot of things and involve the ‘epic quest’ that is a hundred times grander than the Battle of Liberty City!”

…

At this moment, in an underground sewer five kilometers away from the battlefield, Li Yao rolled forward in squeaky noises.

Clang!

The super alloy chainsword that he had installed on the left side of his body broke and fell to the ground.

The tracks occasionally uttered unpleasant sounds, expressing their protest.

Li Yao sighed. The body that he had temporarily jumbled was too fragile to accommodate his soul. When could he be his perfect fleshly body again?

Then, he chuckled in amusement. Wei Xiaotian proved to be overly cautious and was truly scared away by his pretension.

In fact, Wei Xiaotian was certainly an expert above average. With the enhancement of the high-level crystal suits, if he had competed with Li Yao’s ragged body right now, he would have made Li Yao pay a gory price in the bloody battle even if he could not defeat Li Yao.

Therefore, Li Yao had kept himself back and only intimidated the opponent with the air of the Divinity Transformation Stage, playing the trick of deterrence. The guy was truly shocked and fled in panic as he expected and did not even have the courage to fight back after the loss of an arm.

If Wei Xiaotian had been bold enough to fight to the end, Li Yao would have been caught in an awkward situation. He had to make a hard choice between revealing who he was and fleeing in a hurry.

But as it turned out…

I have a Cosmos Ring now!

Carrying the ‘array activator’ and the Cosmos Ring in which Wei Xiaotian stored his crystal suit, Li Yao could not have smiled more delightedly.

Chapter 2039 - Establishment of the Anti-Sky Guerilla Team!

Not far away ahead of him, Xiahou Wuxin and ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie, two sworn enemies half a day ago and two men who had lost everything right now, were confronting each other in silence in the middle of the sewage.

“Fist King?”

Xiahou Wuxin had just been pulled underground by Li Yao after blowing up the ground. In his dizziness, he did not know what was going on yet.

However, although the Fist King had changed into a new iron body, the release model to transform crystals into spiritual energy was almost the same as before. So, Xiahou Wuxin recognized who he was immediately.

The Fist King did not deny it at all. In a tone as cold as machinery, he asked straightforwardly, “Do you want to fight me again, or do you want to fight the ‘angels’ with me?”

Xiahou Wuxin narrowed his eyes, his face that was covered in blood cramping.

“Master!”

At this moment, Xin Xiaoqi, having been rescued by Han Te and Liu Li from the mess, ran to him in tears of joy.

Hearing the sound of his dearest disciple, Xiahou Wuxin immediately lost all his hostility. With a long sigh, his crazily expanded body withered like a balloon that had lost all its air. He turned back into the weaselly, white-haired old man. Glancing at the Fist King in suspicion, he then looked at Li Yao and asked, “May I ask who this senior is?”

Although he did not see what happened on the ground, he could easily infer that Wei Xiaotian and his teammates must have been defeated from the fact that everybody had appeared at this place safe and sound.

The Fist King’s strength was on par with his own. Perhaps, when the Fist King was maneuvering an enormous body like Great Iron City, he would have been able to display incredible combat ability, but his body that had been temporarily jumbled together was absolutely no match for Wei Xiaotian.

Then, the only possibility left was this weird-looking… senior.

Li Yao smiled. “Is it important? If I were an angel, or Immortal Cultivator, such trouble would have been necessary. I would have a hundred ways to force you to confess all your secrets.”

“Master, Han Te and Liu Li are both good guys,” Xin Xiaoqi said. “My intuitions tell me that they are trustworthy!”

After pondering for a moment, Xiahou Wuxin glanced back at the battlefield and made his decision. “Fair enough. Let’s go. I’ll lead you to a secret warehouse where we will take a brief rest!”

Having been the leader of Liberty City for decades, Xiahou Wuxin was without a doubt the boss of the region. He knew the debris and the interconnected tubes deeply buried below the ground as clearly as he knew his own fingers.

Under his guidance, everybody moved several times faster than before. In several places that appeared to be dead ends, he could even find secret doors that were covered in dust and rust.

Every now and then, he would also lead everyone to rappel several hundred meters down through the iron ropes of the forsaken lifts.

Moving for half an hour in silence, they reached a place of darkness where they could not see their own fingers or hear any sounds.

“The Land of Sins was known as Martial Meritocrats Planet several hundred years ago. It used to be a highly-developed planet. Not only was the surface of the planet full of the traces of human beings, but hundreds of enormous cities were also established in places a thousand meters into the ground. Those underground cities are like enormous ant nests and beehives. Connected to each other, they constituted an underground world that was even more prosperous than the ground.”

Xiahou Wuxin lit a fluorescent bulb, illuminating the ragged space around him into an ocean of greenness. While examining directions carefully, he spoke in a low voice between coughs. “When Judgment Day took place, all the cities on the surface were razed to the ground, and even most of the underground cities were bombarded into smithereens by the ‘earth penetrators’. However, it was impossible to dig out every part of the surface of the planet. Therefore, a lot of underground cities were retained. Or at least, they were not as badly wrecked as the cities on the surface.

“The resource supplies of the underground world were highly dependent on the surface. Since the surface had been transformed into an unpopulated land with serious pollution and radiation, it could provide no more resources for the underground world. Therefore, those who hid in the underground ruins during Judgment Day were mostly killed. But the pathways, facilities, and secret warehouses that they left behind can certainly be made of use by us who have come hundreds of years later.”

While talking, Xiahou Wuxin stopped next to a wall that was covered by a red carpet of fungi. He drew a dagger out of his boot and scratched the fungi carefully, revealing a few vertical gaps. He then stuck the blade tip into the gaps and opened a cover.

It was obviously a certain lock of a mechanical structure.

Xiahou Wuxin operated among the gears and the buttons quickly. Soon, fulminations began to echo deep inside the wall. Then, the entire wall collapsed and revealed a long, narrow pathway that spurted cold air. There was no telling where it led.

“Come on.” Xiahou Wuxin gestured for them to enter and walked in first.

Li Yao followed him. Thankfully, the channel had been built rather wide, probably for the convenience of the transportation of assets. With his enormous body size right now, it was still possible to squeeze through.

Everybody moved downward for another minute along the channel, only to be blocked by an iron gate that had been sealed by barriers.

When Xiahou Wuxin unlocked the barriers and the door glided into the rocks on two sides, Li Yao specifically scanned and discovered that the gate was one meter thick.

Inside the gate was an enormous warehouse.

Boxes of crystals and high-energy food, tons of firearms and magical equipment, crystal bombs that filled every corner of the room… All the items that would have driven the bandits on the ground mad and raised a storm of bloody fights were piled as high as hills and emitting lackluster brilliance in silence.

Han Te, Liu Li, and Xin Xiaoqi all exclaimed in shock. Even the Fist King’s man-made eyes were glittering in interest.

“Stop looking. They are just camouflage,” Xiahou Wuxin said expressionlessly. “When the time for a desperate escape comes, one cannot carry too many heavy goods.”

He walked straightforwardly to a corner that was occupied by crystal bombs and asked Li Yao and the Fist King to help him move all the crystal bombs away. Then, he kneeled on the ground like a dog and groped for a long time. Finally determining the location, he stuck his hands against the floor and pressed softly.

Dazzling brilliance flashed between his palm and the floor before hundreds of silver threads suddenly popped out of the floor and spread out in all directions. As if alive, they weaved and connected with each other, forming an enormous rune array.

“A teleportation array?” Li Yao beamed with interest. Speaking of which, he had never seen facilities similar to ‘teleportation arrays’ in the Land of Sins.

Xiahou Wuxin was not in a hurry to enter the teleportation arrays but deployed the crystal bombs that had been moved aside just now.

The hundred crystal bombs all had a small hole on the top. Crimson rays shot out and aimed at the entrance of the warehouse.

The rays were so dense that they constituted an impenetrable dragnet. Whoever entered the warehouse would certainly be scanned by one of the rays.

Li Yao knew the trigger pattern of such crystal bombs very well. As long as one of the rays was blocked by intruders, a serial explosion would immediately be raised. Not only would they blow up the teleportation array, even the entire warehouse might completely collapse.

Xiahou Wuxin was indeed a brutal and cunning old dog!

“Come on.” It was not until all the arrangements were completely that Xiahou Wuxin finally put on a gloomy smile. “Be careful and do not stand before those crystal bombs. This is a present that I have specially prepared for Wei Xiaotian and the ‘angels’. Do not open it for them.”

Shua! Shua! Shua!

Through the teleportation array, everybody was teleported to another secret warehouse that was not far away.

It was the first time that Han Te, Liu Li, and Xin Xiaoqi had ever used a teleportation array. Naturally, they all exclaimed in amazement.

Li Yao secretly complimented on Xiahou Wuxin's thorough planning. He had hidden the real secret warehouse below a 'false secret warehouse' that was on the surface. With such a trick within the trick, he would be able to delay the Immortal Cultivators from finding the place for as long as possible.

Compared to the 'false secret warehouse', the real secret warehouse was not large in scale, but as far as one's eyes could see, the marrow crystals that were sealed in the refrigerators nearby were the best of the best. Emitting glamorous, colorful brilliance, they illuminated the underground secret warehouse as if it were a paradise in the human world.

The quality of the marrow crystals that could only have been collected through arduous efforts alone was indicative enough of Xiahou Wuxin's years of preparations for his desperate struggle in case his value was fully exploited someday.

"Fist King, and senior, since you showed up at the most critical moment in the end, you must've heard most of the conversation between me and Wei Xiaotian, right?" Xiahou Wuxin asked. "So, you all know the truth of the Land of Sins and Manjusaka."

"Yes," the Fist King said coldly. "We know more than you do, and earlier than you did."

Xiahou Wuxin was slightly dazed. He nodded and said, "In that case, you should know that the so-called Battle of Liberty City was merely a play directed by Manjusaka. Both of us were chess pieces on somebody else's board. We were just toys with breath and a heartbeat."

"I have neither breath nor heartbeat," the Fist King said with his mechanical voice. "However, I am not willing to be anybody’s toy.”

Xiahou Wuxin frowned again. He felt that the Fist King before his eyes was somewhat different from the Fist King whom he had fought before. But it was not the time to be concerned with the details. “If so, I believe that we share a common goal right now, which is to break the siege of the angels and escape Liberty City, right?”

“No.” The Fist King vetoed his opinion again. “We are not going to just break out of Liberty City. We will also march to Manjusaka and bring down the City in the Sky.”

“Well…” Xiahou Wuxin did not expect that the Fist King would have such a wild dream. He was lost for words for a moment.

“Fabulous!” Xin Xiaoqi, however, screamed and even cried in excitement. She was almost moving forward to hug the Fist King’s iron body. In a shivering voice, she asked, “Master Fist King, you want to destroy ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’, too?”

“Us too!” Han Te and Liu Li both held their chests high proudly and declared at the same time. “Although we are weak, we have summoned our courage to challenge Manjusaka! Right, there’s also Grandpa Yao!”

Chapter 2040 - Unsatisfactory Work

Shua! Shua! Shua!

All eyes were on Li Yao.

Li Yao, however, was not bothered at all but simply appreciated Xiahou Wuxin’s collection with great interest.

Xiahou Wuxin stared at the Fist King in a trance and asked in a low voice, “Do you mean it?”

“You should’ve seen it with your own eyes when I charged at the City in the Sky with Great Iron City,” the Fist King replied. “Do we have another way out except for blowing up the entire sky?”

After pondering for a moment, Xiahou Wuxin nodded with a bitter smile. “Indeed. If we do not knock over the board completely, we will forever be chess pieces! The Land of Sins is vast, but every inch of land is monitored by the Immortal Cultivators. Even this dark, sunless world here is not safe. Wherever we run, we cannot escape from the cover of crimson rays of ‘Manjusaka’!

“However, as for how exactly we are going to fight against the City in the Sky, we must make thorough plans. Based on my experience with the Immortal Cultivators, since so many things have happened in Liberty City, they will certainly try to demolish the city completely to prevent news of what happened from spreading.

“Therefore, whatever our plan is, we have to escape from Liberty City as soon as possible!

“For the escape today, I have planned in secret for twenty years and collected countless pieces of powerful magical equipment, weapons, and strengthening drugs. Many of them did not even fall from the Heavenly Rails but were excavated by me from the relics of the Martial Meritocrats Civilization before Judgment Day. You may take as many things as you can. But make it fast. I estimate that we have three hours for preparations at best, and we must leave in three hours. Otherwise, the Immortal Cultivators will certainly be able to trace us here!”

Xiahou Wuxin clapped his fists and unlocked the storage boxes that were embedded in the rocks. Many enormous chests glided out without a sound along the rails.

“Wow!”

The finely-made, rigorously-structured firearms and blades that carried the air of state-of-the-art technology, as well as the armor and spiritual puppets countless times more advanced than the magical equipment in the warehouse outside, turned the place into a small but dazzling arsenal. Han Te, Liu Li, and Xin Xiaoqi were all glowing with greed and could not help but gulp hard.

Profound brilliance beamed out of the Fist King’s artificial eyes. Looking at the slaughter machines in different forms, he remarked, “I did not know that the leader of Liberty City was also interested in collecting spiritual puppets.”

“It was not exactly interest but because of my lack of choices,” Xiahou Wuxin replied with a bitter smile. “Under the surveillance of the Immortal Cultivators, I did not dare tell my secrets to anyone. When I devised my desperate plan, I did not plan to bring any assistants other than Xin Xiaoqi. Compared to those people who may betray me and even delay me at any moment, the spiritual puppets were certainly the most reliable partners. As long as a clear command is given, they will not tire, they will not back off, and they absolutely will not betray me.

“Fist King, you are a ghost. The artificial body that you use must share something in common with the components of the spiritual puppets. I can tell that the artificial body you are using right now is a hastily jumbled product that probably cannot bring out ten percent of your combat ability. Why don’t you pick some suitable units from the spiritual puppets and the backup components that I prepared to slightly strengthen and modify your body?

“However, I am not an expert of maintenance and modification. Besides, those spiritual puppets are either the most advanced models thrown from the City in the Sky or the ultimate slaughter machines from the Martial Meritocrats Civilization before ‘Judgment Day’. They are the most precise in structure and barely compatible with each other. I can only use them or perform simple maintenance, but I’m afraid it’s beyond my abilities to dismantle and regroup them. I wonder, do you want to…”

Without a word, the Fist King turned to Li Yao.

Li Yao smiled. “Are there facilities like maintenance workbenches for magical equipment in this place?”

Xiahou Wuxin was stunned again.

‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie was one of the most famous collectors of spiritual puppets in the Land of Sins. Also, Great Iron City, the frightening, mobile fortress, had been personally crafted by him. Therefore, the Fist King's expertise in refining was well acknowledged to be among the best in the Land of Sins.

Xiahou Wuxin had expected the Fist King to modify and upgrade his artificial body because it was a matter of life and death.

He did not expect that the Fist King would entrust the work of such importance to the… mysterious ghost or spiritual puppet.

"If I may ask, who are you?"

In front of the mysterious expert who was strong enough to scare away Wei Xiaotian, Xiahou Wuxin did not dare act condescending.

"You may call me 'Fiend Star'."

Naturally, Li Yao could not tell them the secrets of the Star Glory Federation at such a dangerous moment. It was not because he did not believe in the Fist King or Xiahou Wuxin but because everybody might be caught by the Immortal Cultivators whose interrogation methods could not be resisted simply by willpower. So, the less they knew, the better.

"After we truly blow up Manjusaka, perhaps I can tell you more things. But for now, all you need to know is that we share a common goal, and the high and mighty angels and Immortal Cultivators are our mutual enemy."

Xiahou Wuxin was too seasoned and sophisticated to pursue the matter further. Nodding, he walked to a wall at the end of the secret warehouse that was as smooth as a mirror and groped for a moment. Then, like a magic trick, he pulled out an enormous workbench from the wall.

Several delicate anti-gravity rune arrays had been carved on the workbench, allowing the heavy components and even crystal suits, artificial bodies, or spiritual puppets to float above it. Dozens of multipurpose maintenance arms were folded and stored on two sides, which were controlled by a special crystal processor.

Turning on the interface, he explained to Li Yao and the Fist King, somewhat embarrassed, “In fact, this secret warehouse was not built from scratch by me. It is an underground arsenal of the Martial Meritocrats Civilization that I accidentally discovered. This maintenance platform was a product of the Martial Meritocrats Civilization, too. The application of many of its functions is beyond my ability. Although there is a detailed user manual, the instructions on it are complicated, and the information contained inside is as vast as an ocean. We have only three hours at best, so…”

“It’s alright. Let me look at it first.”

The maintenance platform left from the Martial Meritocrats Civilization aroused Li Yao’s interest greatly. His soul split apart into streams of telepathic thoughts and flooded into the control crystal processor of the maintenance platform.

Everybody was a bit suspicious at first, especially Xiahou Wuxin, who was uncertain of the origins of the mysterious ‘Fiend Star’.

But the streams of information falling on the light beam activated by the control crystal processor fell faster and faster.

At first, it was like a storm. Then, it was like a cataract. After that, countless shooting stars seemed to be rushing down at the same time. The clusters of complicated runes and figures turned into glittering lines, and even Xiahou Wuxin was unable to distinguish them anymore despite his computational ability.

In the end, the light beam fell completely blank, but squeaky noises echoed from inside the control crystal processor, with white smoke popping up now and then, as if every crystal chip inside had been ravaged to the limits and might start to burn at any moment.

Xiahou Wuxin was truly dumbfounded and lost for words.

After ruling Liberty City for thirty years, he had seen too many brutal beasts, tough bandits, and mysterious Immortal Cultivators, and he had also received countless pieces of bizarre magical equipment from the Immortal Cultivators. But he had never seen such a weird scene before!

Even the Fist King’s artificial eyes were glittering in unusual brilliance as he analyzed Li Yao’s level quickly, but the final conclusion was that it was unevaluable!

Shua!

The dozens of multipurpose maintenance arms seemed to have been endowed with a life by Li Yao and began to roll swiftly at the same time, picking up almost ten spiritual puppets from the storage boxes nearby.

Xiahou Wuxin was about to remind Li Yao that those spiritual puppets were made in different styles and methods and that they were hardly compatible with each other. If they were dismantled at the same place, it would be easy to mix them up.

But before he was able to say anything, a metal tornado was raised on the maintenance platform!

The ten spiritual puppets seemed to have been cut by invisible sharp blades and turned into the most fundamental components in the blink of an eye. Joining each other, they began to revolve quickly!

The speed of their revolution was so high and the brilliance that they released was so dazzling that nobody in the small warehouse was able to keep their eyes open.

Even if they did shut their eyes, the stinging on their faces, hands, and bodies that felt like paper cuts, as well as the sounds of high-speed friction in their ears, still reminded them that an unbelievable miracle was happening right before them!

Only three minutes passed.

The tornado vanished. The air was filled with the smell of burning metal, which stimulated their nostrils acutely and made everybody except the Fist King want to sneeze.

Li Yao’s obviously unsatisfied voice came over. “Well, this is the best I can do now.”

Everybody opened their eyes in suspicion and astonishment. The first thing they saw was a whole ground of metal powder. Then, it was the multipurpose mechanical arms that had turned orange and were about to melt because of the high-speed friction and cutting just now. In the end, they saw a brand-new spiritual puppet that was sitting cross-legged above the maintenance platform.

“Hiss!”

Everybody gasped hard. What a spiritual puppet it was!

Judging from the body size, it was only between 1.6 and 1.7 meters tall, which was not huge or impressive.

But the glamorous armor, the natural structure, the smooth shape, and the flawless balance of the four arms all unintentionally indicated the violent aesthetics that had never appeared in the Land of Sins before.

It was not like a cold slaughter machine but more like a primeval beast that was in hibernation. If one held their breath and listened carefully, they would be able to hear the incessant heartbeat of fighting!

Chapter 2041 - Starlight Surfaces

The most critical thing was that the brand-new spiritual puppet was made of the units and components of almost ten different spiritual puppets. The raw materials were designed in different styles under different guidelines from different periods over hundreds of years, and their compatibility was close to zero.

But right now, they had all become as warm as jade and as smooth as silk after polishing, like masterpieces of the spiritual puppet designers who had worked hard on them for a year and a half in a factory. They did not seem to have been ‘jumbled’ together in only several minutes.

The Fist King and Xiahou Wuxin both had a profound understanding of magical equipment. They naturally knew that it was impossible to complete the work through regular maintenance and modification methods. Three minutes was barely enough to process the change of material quality after the high-speed cutting or to soothe the change of inner stress caused by the quick increase of temperature. It was even less possible to devise a whole set of circuits of spiritual energy that was as complicated as the veins and nerval network inside a human body after only a few quick glances!

If they had not seen it with their own eyes, they would never have believed that there was such a monster in the world who could accomplish such a ‘miracle’ in only three minutes!

Xiahou Wuxin looked at Li Yao not only in confusion and admiration now but also in deep fear. He was even more frightened than when he saw the Immortal Cultivator Wei Xiaotian.

The Fist King’s man-made eyes, on the other hand, spurted out scorching sparks. His database was simmering like a tank of burning oil.

“There are no furnaces here. It’s impossible to hone and polish the tiny components in order to completely renew them. Besides, due to the limited time, I cannot study the features of this particular maintenance platform carefully. So, I guess we’ll have to make do with this now. Next time, if I’m available, I’ll build a new body for you,” Li Yao said sincerely.

As a refiner, he would not make an imperfect work unless he was absolutely left with no choice. So, he apologized very genuinely. “However, I have dismantled all the computation chips inside the crystal processors of the spiritual puppets and redesigned a kit inside the chest of the new puppet to enhance computational ability. It should be able to improve the computational ability of your core crystal processor, especially your determination of traces and trajectories. Do you want to transfer your core crystal processor over yourself, or do you want me to do it?”

The Fist King’s man-made eyes glittered. “If it isn’t too much trouble for you, Master Fiend Star.”

The breastplate of the brand-new spiritual puppet glided open to two sides without a sound. The shockproof and heatproof layers inside also dispersed spirally like petals, revealing a metal nest that was in perfect size.

Li Yao was waving cold, lifeless mechanical arms, but his movement was as gentle as the hair of a girl. Taking the Fist King’s core crystal processor that held the database and logical thinking circuits from the old body, he installed it into the metal nest meticulously. It fitted the nest precisely, and there was not even a gap for a single hair.

As the breastplate closed again, in the flowing sounds of spiritual energy, ripples slowly spread out from the spiritual puppet that was sitting in midair. Stepping on invisible stairs, he walked to the ground from midair. Looking at the opening and closing of his metal hands at the ends of his four arms, he moaned in great satisfaction.

Although his body was even smaller than the smallest form that he had demonstrated on the battlefield previously, everybody including Xiahou Wuxin felt that the Fist King seemed more condensed, more energetic, and stronger than half a day ago!

“I observed your combat pattern carefully,” Li Yao said casually. “Although the enormous iron fortress was known as your ‘strongest form’, it was too large a target, its movements were too clumsy, it consumed astronomical crystals every second, and the enemies could easily crawl into your body to sabotage it. It was a ‘suicidal fortress’, not a strong body.

“The third form that you later presented was small and agile, with a minimal consumption of crystals. That is very suitable for our coming battle.

“So, warm up your body and see how this body works. It has been devised according to your combat pattern and your pace, but let me know if there is anything that requires adjustment. I do not want to leave an obviously flawed work to run amok outside.”

In the new body, the Fist King made several movements that were so bizarre that he essentially twisted himself into a knotted earthworm.

Then, his knotted body loosened immediately, and his fist punched out. A series of blurred shadows were triggered in the air. The entire secret warehouse was shaking because of the punch. Centered at the landing point of the punch, dazzling electric arcs dashed out on the wall.

“This is… perfect!”

The Fist King’s voice that was cold and mechanical was mixed with the excitement of a human being.

“Every joint and every bearing inside this body seems to have been crafted for a certain entry of data inside my battle database. It is even stronger than the iron body that I crafted for myself!”

“Of course!” Han Te and Liu Li held their heads proudly. “Our ‘Grandpa Yao’ is always most awesome!”

Li Yao smiled. “Consider it a reward for the many interesting stories that you told me.”

While talking, he moved his dozens of crystal cameras to Xiahou Wuxin. “Leader Xiahou, if you also tell me some interesting stories, or exchange certain interesting goods with me, I can also help you build a few more advanced crystal suits, which I guarantee will be much better than what Wei Xiaotian was equipped with. The truth is, I am not very good at the upgrade and modification of spiritual puppets and artificial bodies. My specialty is actually crystal suits."

Xiahou Wuxin and Xin Xiaoqi's jaws both hit the back of their feet.

Such amazing spiritual puppet modification skills were something that he was not good at?

Then, how strong were his modification crystal suit skills, which he called his 'specialty'?

As if he had just swallowed an iron caltrop, Xiahou Wuxin's throat rolled hard. Thinking for a moment, he said, "I don't know what kind of stories you want to hear, Senior Fiend Star. If we are talking about the intelligence of Manjusaka, I will certainly tell everything that I know. Besides that, if you mean the things about refining, please take a look at them."

He drew a complicated sign on the metal wall on one side of the warehouse. The wall immediately turned from a smooth mirror into a pile of soft gels. Then, the silver gels faded in all directions, revealing another warehouse that was smaller, in which a hill of ragged, rusty debris of magical equipment and incomplete tools was piled.

"These remnants were all discovered by me when I explored the underground world," Xiahou Wuxin explained. "They were all the relics of the Martial Meritocrats Civilization before 'Judgment Day'. But they were too complicated in structure and too seriously damaged. I could barely recognize what they were built for, much less using, dismantling, or maintaining them. So, they have all been left in this place. If you're interested, it's possible that you may find something useful inside."

Li Yao’s interest was aroused. His soul darted into the hill of magical equipment remnants through thousands of spiritual threads.

Those remnants were truly magnitudes more precise and complicated than the other magical equipment in the warehouse, exactly as Xiahou Wuxin said.

For the same reason, they had been more damaged because of the wars and the corrosion of time. They were nothing more than garbage right now.

Not just the sinners in the Land of Sins like Xiahou Wuxin, even the experts among the Immortal Cultivators might not be able to repair them.

But for Li Yao…

Wait, what’s this?

Li Yao’s soul released ripples of excitement. His spiritual threads flowed into a piece of magical equipment that was enshrouded in a shell of rust, examining the device from inside to outside carefully.

It was a very advanced flaw detector.

The mechanism of the device was to release a type of special, highly-penetrative ray into metals or other materials to search for the gaps inside them that were invisible for the naked eye.

Because it was rather advanced, the flaw detector boasted the function of ‘high-molecular layer-by-layer scanning’. Even the internal damage of the molecular level could be scanned clearly.

Although there is no ‘high-molecular layer-by-layer scanning magical equipment’ here, this flaw detector boasts similar functions. If I can repair it, together with the magical equipment such as ‘microscopic carver’, won’t I still do the same things?

Of course, such a piece of maintenance magical equipment will be huge after it is assembled. But does it matter? I have already retrieved a Cosmos Ring that is of paramount importance from Wei Xiaotian’s broken arm!

Li Yao immediately got excited.

Sensing Li Yao’s soul waves, Xiahou Wuxin asked, “If I may, senior, do you come from Starlight?”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. He was even more overjoyed and asked, “What did you say? You know Starlight? Why do you think that I am from Starlight?”

Xiahou Wuxin did not expect Li Yao to be so thrilled. He hesitated for a moment and did not know what to say.

Li Yao realized that he was being too excited, too. After calming down for a moment, he said, “I am not from Starlight. However, I am indeed very interested in Starlight. Tell me everything you know about Starlight. It doesn’t matter even if they are just groundless tales.”

“Regarding Starlight, there is nothing but groundless tales,” Xiahou Wuxin said with a bitter smile. “Rumor has it that they were the people who escaped from the Martial Meritocrats Sector before Judgment Day.”

“What?” Han Te and Liu Li both grew excited. “Some people escaped from the Martial Meritocrats Sector?”

“That is what the rumors say.”

After a little hesitation, Xiahou Wuxin said, “The truth of the so-called Judgment Day is not a civil war of the people of the Martial Meritocrats Sector, as we have always believed, but very likely to have been a destructive strike launched by the angels, or the Immortal Cultivators, on the Martial Meritocrats Sector.”

“Huh?”

It was the first time that Xin Xiaoqi had heard such a theory. She could not help but exclaim in shock.

Li Yao, however, glanced at the Fist King and said, “We know that very clearly, as well as the existence of ‘Cultivators’. You don’t need to say much about them. Just get to the point.”

Chapter 2042 - Break Out of Liberty City!

“You know about ‘Cultivators’, too?”

Xiahou Wuxin was even more curious about Li Yao’s origins, but he did not pursue it any further. Sorting through his mind, he said, “The so-called ‘Judgment Day’ was in fact a destructive attack initiated by the Immortal Cultivators against the Cultivators in the Martial Meritocrats Sector. In the world-shaking war, the entire planet was burnt to the ground, almost all the cities were razed, and the resistance warriors of the Martial Meritocrats Sector were slaughtered.

“However, according to legend, a tiny proportion of warriors still persisted in resistance. They either regrouped into unpredictable guerilla teams among the broken builds and the enormous underground cities or seized the Immortal Cultivators’ warships and escaped into the depths of the universe beyond the Martial Meritocrats Sector, dealing with the Immortal Cultivators on a vaster battlefield.

“Because the Heavenly Rails and Manjusaka were not established yet at that time, and the super barriers that blocked the sky of the entire planet did not exist, it was relatively easy to escape.

“The survivors of the Martial Meritocrats Sector who ran to the sea of stars called themselves ‘Starlight’. It is said that they have been contacting other comrades in the universe who are against the Immortal Cultivators, trying to overthrow the Immortal Cultivators’ reign with the cooperation of the resisters who stayed in the Martial

Meritocrats Sector. At the very least, they want to destroy Manjusaka and liberate the entire planet!

“I speculated that you are from Starlight, Senior Fiend Star, because you were so familiar with the magical equipment of the Martial Meritocrats Sector as if you had used it a long time ago.”

Xin Xiaoqi bulged her eyes and looked at Xiahou Wuxin and Li Yao. She mumbled, “Cultivators? Immortal Cultivators?”

Han Te and Liu Li looked at each other and exclaimed in joy, too. “So, Cultivators do exist, and they have a fairly large resistance organization!”

Li Yao smiled in his heart and almost could not wait to tell them that there was not just a ‘fairly large resistance organization’ but also a very powerful country!

After pondering for a moment, he asked, “Are you certain of Starlight’s existence?”

“I am.” Xiahou Wuxin nodded. “Of all the instructions given by Manjusaka, the most important one is to investigate the whereabouts of ‘Starlight’ and ‘Cultivators’. The intelligence about them is always the top priority, and they must be dealt with before any mutated beasts or test subjects. I imagine that Starlight must have caused a lot of problems for the Immortal Cultivators and is still fighting to this day.”

“Then, have you ever met anyone from ‘Starlight’?” Li Yao asked.

“Not exactly,” Xiahou Wuxin said. “Most of the intelligence about ‘Starlight’ was gathered in secret by me. I have never seen a living Cultivator before. On second thought, the organization has existed in the Land of Sins and the space zones nearby for hundreds of years without being completely annihilated by the Immortal Cultivators. So, it must be highly secret. How could a nobody like myself have discovered them?

“However, I’m told that they tried to sabotage a few other Elysian Worlds. Perhaps, they intended to sneak into the City in the Sky through the towers in those Elysian Worlds. But all their attempts failed. After the organization suffered several serious strikes, it became even more taciturn and dangerous.

“Right. A few years ago, I received a notification from Manjusaka that ‘Starlight’ was very likely planning an unprecedented sabotage operation. All the Elysian Worlds were asked to raise our wariness and increase the defenses.”

“An unprecedented sabotage operation?” Li Yao’s man-made eyes glittered with interest. He became even more excited. “This is indeed a world-changing moment!”

“Then, do you know how to sneak into the City in the Sky?” the Fist King asked coldly.

“More or less, including part of the structure of the internal areas of the City in the Sky.” Xiahou Wuxin’s lips curled into a weird smile.

“How did you learn that?” Li Yao asked. “It’s not like Wei Xiaotian and his pals would inform you of such critical intelligence, right?”

“The Immortal Cultivators only treated me like a dog. Naturally, they would not tell me anything important about ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’.” Xiahou Wuxin grinned hideously. “However, the ‘trial-takers’ and the ‘experimenters’ had quite a high death rate during their activities in the Land of Sins. Some of them were even dragged by mutated beasts into their nests, never to be seen again. The Immortal Cultivators barely wasted their time searching for the bodies of the victims.

“Part of the bodies whose brains were not rotten and the victims who were heavily wounded by the mutated beasts but not entirely dead yet fell into my hands. In the darkness several hundred meters below the ground where all communications were blocked, whatever happened couldn’t have been seen by Manjusaka.”

The graveness in his voice made everybody shudder after looking at each other.

After a sniff, Xiahou Wuxin went on. “I knew that the day would come when I was killed because I was no longer of any value. Should I simply wait for the day to come and do nothing? Of course not. An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. Since the Immortal Cultivators treated the sinners in the Land of Sins as test subjects, I performed all the methods I learned from them back on them. It was indeed karma!”

“Master,” Xin Xiaoqi mumbled, “I’ve been wrong about you all the time…”

“Not exactly,” Xiahou Wuxin said in a bitter smile. “Although I was planning in secret the whole time, I did not have the courage to completely break apart from Manjusaka. The more intelligence I gathered from those guys, the more deeply I feared the enemy that I was faced with. Even if I could blow up Manjusaka, how should we deal with the Imperium of True Human Beings behind it? That is why I have been hesitating and wavering to this day!”

“I don’t know what the Imperium of True Human Beings is exactly,” the Fist King said calmly. “However, if it stands on my path to becoming the strongest, I will give my all to blow it up, too! It is not important whether I win or lose, and it is not worthwhile to waste computational ability on that question, either.”

Xiahou Wuxin’s eyes became bloodshot again when he looked at Xin Xiaoqi, Han Te, and Liu Li, whose faces were nothing but stubbornness, and then at Li Yao and the Fist King. He said in a low voice, “Perhaps you are right. I have been a dog for fifty years. I never knew until today how gratifying it was to hold your head high and be a real man!

“Whatever the outcome may be, we should try our best and fight for a bright future. Even if we truly die without burial, we will at least be confident to meet those who passed away a long time ago!”

“Rest assured.” Li Yao’s voice was filled with absolute confidence, and furious flames that could burn through the crust and stab into the sky were released from his soul. “As long as I am here, it will not be us who die without burial but our mutual enemy! Leader Xiahou, bring out all the magical equipment in this place and let me think carefully for a moment on how to turn them into the most suitable gear for all of you!”

Li Yao seized every second in the next three hours, not wasting a single moment. He was completely soaked in the world of modification and upgrades of the magical equipment.

Three hours later, when all the mechanical arms of the multipurpose maintenance platform were worn out by him, his work was finally completed!

Pertaining to Xiahou Wuxin’s specialty in flying swords, Li Yao modified a crystal suit named ‘Endless Swords’ for him. The thousand tiny flying swords on the crystal suit had all been polished by his soul, and every rune array was renewed by his spiritual threads. The speed and damage of the crystal suit were more than doubled!

In the meantime, Xiahou Wuxin had been recuperating inside a medical cabin, and his wounds were more or less cured. After he put on the unbelievably aggressive ‘Endless Swords’, he was like a completely different person from the heavily wounded patient a moment ago!

Xin Xiaoqi had always focused on speed, agility, and even stealth. So, Li Yao performed a full upgrade on the propulsion magical equipment on her hands and feet and embedded it into a high-speed scout crystal suit, transforming Xin Xiaoqi into an unbridled wildcat and making her exclaim in excitement.

As for Han Te and Liu Li, they had never learned the arts of the manipulation of crystal suits before. If they put on crystal suits recklessly, their combat ability would not be enhanced at all, and the gear would only become burdens.

Therefore, Li Yao selected two power combat suits with muscle enhancement functions for them. He then added nine layers of defense rune arrays on their armor, ensuring that the two little fellows could be safe on a fierce battlefield and provide fire support with the guns that were thicker than their thighs.

As for Li Yao himself, he had made other plans.

Now that he had found a piece of ‘high-molecular layer-by-layer scanning magical equipment’ and a Cosmos Ring to ship it out, his main focus was leaving the planet as soon as possible and rejoining his fleshly body.

If he stayed on the planet, he would be under the surveillance of the sky the whole time. Hiding below the ground forever would not work out.

Therefore, after he was completely melded with his fleshly body and consolidated in the Divinity Transformation Stage, he would be able to find an opportunity to sneak into the City in the Sky from space. That would be the best approach to completely destroy it.

The tracked spiritual puppet was too cumbersome and too obvious a target. It was even possible that the Immortal Cultivators had already locked onto it.

Therefore, Li Yao built a small, delicate spiritual puppet in the form of a spider for himself with the remaining materials in the warehouse. It was somewhat similar to the ‘Tarantula’ that he crafted years ago when he took the test for the refiner’s certificate.

Then, Li Yao installed a crystal processor that could be remotely controlled inside the heavy tracked spiritual puppet, allowing the five pairs of bogie wheels to roll over the enemies as before. But his own soul was actually hiding inside the Tarantula, pretending to be a beast puppet.

In that case, even if the Immortal Cultivators traced back to the Village of Peace according to the video files captured on the battlefield and eventually locked onto the ‘tracked spiritual puppet for cleaning and maintenance purposes’, they would not be able to find the real Li Yao!

“Are you all ready?”

Li Yao’s soul released ripples of excitement and glanced at everybody as they touched their brand-new magical equipment in joy.

“If you are, let’s break out of Liberty City right now and give the Immortal Cultivators a big surprise!”

Chapter 2043 - Skeleton Lizard

Everybody looked at each other and nodded at the same time, waving the guns and blades in their hands.

“Wait a moment. Let’s take a look at the situation outside first.”

Xiahou Wuxin operated on a mainframe crystal processor at one corner of the warehouse quickly. Dozens of 3D light beams immediately popped up. They were all real-time pictures of Liberty City captured from different angles.

“If the Immortal Cultivators can monitor the ground from the sky, I can certainly install some surveillance cameras in the inconspicuous corners of the streets and alleys after running Liberty City for decades so that I can observe everything from underground,” Xiahou Wuxin explained with a smile. “This secret warehouse has four exits in total. Let’s take a look at the situation outside and escape from where it is most chaotic!”

On the 3D light beams, the chaotic battles in Liberty City were still raging, but the peak of the mayhem had passed.

After a large batch of tough bandits perished with each other, the fire of war gradually died down. Gunshots and explosions became scarce. The only sound that could be heard was the occasionally collapsing plazas, which raised lazy dust.

The night fell at Liberty City like a black waterfall. The mobsters and the unorganized bandits all suffered heavy casualties and ended up as burnt, broken corpses on the ground. The remaining elites of the gangs who were relatively large in scale occupied their own turf and confronted each other in silence and darkness.

Liberty City turned from a chaotic ocean of slaughter into a tiny dark forest.

Whoever popped up would be killed immediately!

“This is tricky now,” Xiahou Wuxin mumbled. “Right now, the territory of most of the gangs is fixed. We will be very eye-catching if we walk down the street openly.”

“Can’t we escape Liberty City below the ground?” asked Li Yao.

Xiahou Wuxin shook his head and said, “No. It’s a dead end in every direction. We have to return to the surface somewhere. If we keep lurking below the ground, if the Immortal Cultivators drop a large batch of earth penetrators upon us, it will truly be our doom, and there will be nowhere to run.”

“Wait.” Li Yao’s soul sensed something. “What is it? Something is falling from the sky again?”

It was true. In the dim sky, hundreds of metal tanks were falling. Due to the long distance in between, it was impossible to tell the size of the metal tanks, but the weird auras inside them could clearly be sensed.

Despite the parachutes on them, the metal tanks dropped rather fast and soon raised smoke and dust everywhere in Liberty City.

One of the metal tanks fell near a surveillance camera that Xiahou Wuxin had deployed.

When the dust settled, the hideous shadow that leapt out of the debris was captured and displayed clearly. Han Te, Liu Li, and Xin Xiaoqi were all exclaiming in shock.

It was a mutated beast similar to an enormous lizard. It was about three to four meters tall and covered in small, green scales, with bloody stripes extending from its back to the limbs and the sharp claws.

Its head was as narrow and long as a viper’s. The pale armor covering the head made it seem to be wearing a mask of bones. Deep inside the dark eyes, two crimson lights that looked like ghostly fire were rolling nonstop as the creature searched for the prey around.

Brutal, cunning, and intelligent, like a hibernation of vipers, crocodiles, jackals, and slaughter machines. That was the first impression the creature left on everyone.

Very soon, a team of fully-armed, tough-looking bandits were noticed by the ‘skeleton lizard’.

Swoosh!

At an unbelievably high speed, it lunged at the prey, turning into a streak of dark red brilliance instantly!

The team of tough bandits had long noticed that something fell from the sky and raised their wariness to the highest. Sensing that a stinky wind was blowing at them, they all raised their hands and opened fire, letting out thousands of snakes of fire.

Bo! Bo! Bo!

But out of their expectations, the skeleton lizard shook its body, and the green scales rubbed against each other at a high speed, condensing a vague spiritual shield around its body, parrying and blocking all the attacks!

“A mutated beast that can automatically activate spiritual shields?”

At this moment, even Li Yao, the Fist King, and Xiahou Wuxin were somewhat stunned. Some high-level beasts indeed boasted a very high self-defense ability and could perform techniques that were similar to the spiritual shield. However, they were all the unusual ones among their peers, and they were mostly heads or kings of their group.

But right now, the Immortal Cultivators had already projected thousands of skeleton lizards from the Heavenly Rails. They were apparently ‘minions’ produced in bulk. Were all of them capable of activating a spiritual shield?

That was too horrifying!

It all happened too fast. The skeleton lizard’s spiritual shield exploded after only resisting one round of attacks from the bandits, but it was enough for the creature to cut into the group of the bandits from a weird angle.

Swoosh!

A streak of bloodiness darted out of its mouth and pierced through the forehead of a bandit like a sharp dagger out of the back of his head, turning out to be a tongue that was as tensile as a whip.

Then, the tongue was waved brutally to throw away the bandit’s corpse, which hit several other bandits who were in a hurry to aim.

Before the bandits realized what was going on, the head of the creature split apart into a man-eating flower that was full of thorns and sharp teeth. The ‘pistils’ deep inside the throat that were emitting fluorescent light darted out abruptly and stuck to a couple of bandits. The powerful electric arcs that were sent over immediately electrified the tough bandits, whose firearms and blades fell to the ground.

Shaking the enormous ‘man-eating flowers’ on its neck, the skeleton lizard crashed into the bandits like a hungry tiger lunging at lambs.

A bloody feast of slaughter was officially on.

The creature ripped the bandits into pieces with the sharp teeth at the edge of the ‘man-eating flower’ while uttering rhythmed shrieks from the throat. Very soon, another three skeleton lizards whose faces were pale emerged from the darkness and looked at the running bandits in hideous cackles.

The same bloody and desperate slaughters were happening everywhere in Liberty City at the same time.

Even the most ferocious bandits could only struggle to delay their inevitable death faced with the skeleton lizards that were jumping at them incessantly.

After seeing their companions being swallowed by the exploding man-eating flowers on the heads of the skeleton lizards and spat out after being chewed up, usually fearless thugs could not keep their legs steady and vomited hard.

Screams, moans, and crazy roars from the bandits whose nerves had broken down echoed everywhere in the bloody city!

But what was weird was that, when they encountered some of the trial-takers or the live streamers, the skeleton lizards would simply let them go after sniffing carefully for a moment, as if a certain special command allowed them to distinguish the Immortal Cultivators from the sinners from the Land of Sins.

Li Yao and Xiahou Wuxin both felt that their blood was freezing while they watched.

The Fist King’s crystal processor was also running at a high speed in an unusual humming sound. After observing carefully for a long time, he remarked, “This is a perfect biochemical weapon. Not only does it boast a high attack and defense ability, some special control chips must have also been implanted into their heads. They are no longer ignorant animals but have been connected to an enormous war network. They are fighting like wolves. When one skeleton lizard is under attack, it will immediately summon hundreds of companions to help.”

“Exactly.” Xiahou Wuxin gnashed his teeth. “Isn’t the Land of Sins the best laboratory to create such a perfect monster with the sinners and the mutated beasts?”

…

In the control center of the First Laboratory in Manjusaka, the biophysical parameters and the real-time battle videos of three thousand and five hundred nightmare monsters were displayed on the enormous light beams at the same time.

As the data rolled down unstoppably like waterfalls, and the expected goals were overfulfilled, Wuying Lan’s mood gradually got better again.

“The biochemical beasts we have built this time are not bad. The efficiency of slaughter is very high. Their manipulability is also stable.”

Sitting on a leather bed comfortably, he was like a supreme emperor who was inspecting his own army as he spoke to Luo Tiansheng, the manager of the laboratory.

Luo Tiansheng rubbed his hands in excitement and smiled. “Just as I told you before, my lord, as long as I am given five thousand fresh test subjects, I will certainly return with a miracle! This time, we have spent a lot of time on the combination of brains and crystal chips as well as information reception and relayed transmission. Now, the nightmare monsters can both kill based on their natural instincts and carry out more than a hundred and eighty preinstalled tactics accurately.

“Under the remote control of one command, they will enter the stand-by state and go to the recycling points automatically like the most docile cattle. The accidents where the crystal chips went out of control and a town of several thousand sinners was entirely eaten up in the mess will never happen again!

“The audience in the entire Imperium have given positive feedback for the slaughter feast. Our audience rating and the bounties and antes that we have absorbed have reached a new height, too. A lot of viewers also gave their remarks in extreme excitement. The financial report of the Heavenly Eye Group will be most satisfactory for the external big shots.”

The blood and fire on the thousands of light beams created mottled shadows on Wuying Lan’s face, making it impossible to read his emotions. It could only be heard that he said in a low voice under the cover of the bloody flames, “It couldn’t have been better to open the curtain of our ‘epic quest’ with such a perfect slaughter.”

“Then,” Luo Tiansheng said in a low voice, “what about the Fist King and the mysterious expert that Wei Xiaotian mentioned?”

“Continue the investigation.”

Wuying Lan’s eyes stopped on the comprehensive audience rating and the flow of capital that were rising nonstop. His lips curling into a confident smile, he said, “Whatever it is, as long as it is in the Land of Sins, it will never escape. It is an insignificant chess piece no matter how mighty it is, and I am the only player in the great game!”

Chapter 2044 - Violent Delights

Everything that was happening in Liberty City, captured by the crystal cameras embedded on the ‘live streamers’ and the nightmare monsters, was transformed into invisible data streams and sent to Manjusaka. Then, through the super-remote launch bases deployed there, they were transmitted to the thousands of planets in the entire Imperium of True Human Beings and became the only food to satisfy the minds of countless ‘hominoids’.

When Zhao Xiaofei crawled out of the dark, sunless, underground mines on the noisy lift, he was already as exhausted as could be. Even his eyes were almost clogged up with mud and sweat. His dizziness was trying to drag the young miner who had worked for forty-eight hours in a row into dreamland.

However, his nerves were more excited than ever, and bloody spots burst out deep inside his eyeballs. Perhaps he did not realize it himself, but his lips curled into a cruel smile like a conditional reflex.

He swallowed hard, looking around, only to discover that he was surrounded by workmates who were physically fatigued but mentally excited just like him. The only foreman was half asleep not far away. So, he secretly took out an ‘energy pill’ from his pocket and swallowed it, pretending to be coughing.

The so-called ‘energy pills’ were designed to be swallowed when the miners worked for a long time in a row deep inside the mines. Although the pills could refresh the miners’ body and head for a moment, they would be drowsy and lackluster for a long time.

Zhao Xiaofei had taken three energy pills last night, which was the only reason he had accomplished more than what he had been tasked with and received a bonus on the spot. At this moment, he should take a proper rest and was no longer suitable to take any more energy pills. Should he be discovered by the foreman or the boss, they would definitely whip him hard.

However… Screw it. He was not the only one taking the pills. The energy pills in the medical rooms in the mines often disappeared by the box. He did not believe that those medicine boxes could have grown feet and run off on their own!

Hot air spurted out of Zhao Xiaofei’s nose. He looked at the workmates around him, and they all grimaced and grinned at each other.

The heavy and tedious work was finally over. Right now, the souls of the young miners no larger than twenty years old had long left their humble and weak bodies and flown to the bloody worlds of slaughters thousands of lightyears away.

The moment he returned to his shabby shed, Zhao Xiaofei immediately screamed and lunged at his crystal processor like everybody else. The Imperium of True Human Beings highlighted equality, harmony, development, and progress. The hominoids were qualified to surf on the Spiritual Nexus, but of course, considering that the education level and the identification abilities of the hominoids were low, they were more vulnerable to the demagogism of the Covenant Alliance, the extraterrestrial devils, or other malicious forces.

Therefore, only the websites approved by the Ministry of Culture of the Imperium could appear before the netizens who were hominoids, for their own physical and mental health and for the peace and unity of the society.

Zhao Xiaofei was not interested in the few formal websites of the government that had been established for propaganda purposes. He logged into the slaughter stream platforms as quickly as possible.

Unlike what Wei Xiaotian had said to Xiahou Wuxin in Liberty City, the Land of Sins was not the only slaughter stream platform in the Imperium of True Human Beings. Ever since the streams had proven their efficiency in collecting capital, maintaining order, and improving the work efficiency, the big shots of various fields had been flooding into the market like wild beasts. A myriad of stream platforms had been developing exponentially, including both the battles against the Alliance of the Holy Covenant on the frontline and the virtual entertainment for adults within the Imperium. Anything that could be imagined could be shot. Almost every second of the hominoids' off-work life had been occupied.

However, hearing that a very special show was airing on the Land of Sins, Zhao Xiaofei still switched to the stream platform of the Heavenly Eye group without any hesitation.

The skeleton lizards were tearing the guts out of the bandits of the Land of Sins. Blood and flesh were flying everywhere!

Zhao Xiaofei was immediately fascinated by the thrilling pictures. He could not help but moan like an animal, and hot sweat rolled out of his greasy skin. To him, this was even more enjoyable than taking a hot bath.

The other workmates in the same shed roared at the same time. Their bodies, which had been deformed because of years of arduous work, cramped violently, making them look like abnormal beasts.

On Zhao Xiaofei’s eyeballs, colorful, exciting pictures were revolving quickly, absorbing his soul like an immeasurable kaleidoscope.

On the picture, one of the live streamers walked up to a sinner in the Land of Sins who was catching his last breath in a hideous smile, with two chainswords in his hands.

“Kill him! Kill him! Cut his head off and kick it like a ball!”

Zhao Xiaofei clenched his fists and roared. His temples and the veins on the back of his hand were bouncing at the same frequency. He felt as if he was holding two chainswords and galloping on a battlefield, too.

In the picture, one of the live streamers was crushed by a heavy iron-armored tank brutally. The tracks with iron thorns rolled over his body without any mercy. The last picture was the bloodstained mud in the middle of the tracks.

“Hahaha. What an idiot. Why did you become a live streamer when you were so weak? You could’ve evaded it if you moved slightly to the left!”

Zhao Xiaofei slapped his thigh and laughed wildly, commenting on the situation in great excitement.

On the third picture, a female live streamer who was barely wearing anything was writhing and moaning in the mud, begging for help pitifully like a wounded cat. In front of her was another streamer who was grinning hideously. Through the crystal cameras on both of them, it would be possible to appreciate what was going to happen next from different angles. But it was a shame that the most critical parts had all been blurred into gray mosaics. One had to pay a certain amount in tips to disperse the mosaics.

“Aooo!”

Zhao Xiaofei began to breathe heavily. The effect of the ‘energy pill’ seemed to have flowed from the upper half of his body to the lower half. Without any hesitation, the ‘bonus’ that he earned after working for two days and two nights without any rest was given away as a tip, and his hands went to his pants beyond his control.

The air of the small, narrow shed was filled with the stench of sour sweat, smelly feet, and something like shrimp sauce. The breaths, wild laughter, and roars of his workmates were echoing now and then, too. Zhao Xiaofei, however, completely forgot the world around him. His entire world was the fair, shapely body on the light beam.

After five minutes, Zhao Xiaofei completely loosened and collapsed, like a dead fish that had been blown to the beach.

His account was completely empty now. Not only was he unable to pay for the tipping and the private channel, he could not even pay the basic fees to keep the public channel playing. The crazy, bizarre worlds on the light beam were gradually dimming.

His brain, on the other hand, was even emptier than his account. All the effects of the energy pill seemed to have been ejaculated together with those other fluids. The fatigue that had been piled as high as a mountain immediately collapsed and buried him inside, making him unable to move.

Before he fell into darkness, Zhao Xiaofei secretly made up his mind to ask Laowu the Smelly Feet for a few more ultimate energy pills so that he could work hard and try to earn double bonuses.

Then, instead watching the women’s thighs and drooling like a loser, he would take a wild gamble with the double bonuses!

He was told that He Laozhi of the third shift had gotten quite lucky a few days back. The man had wagered the money that he earned after a month of overtime on a rookie streamer whom nobody had hopes on. But as it turned out, the rookie who had just begun his career passed five tests in a death match. He Laozhi won so much money that he enjoyed himself in the city for quite a few days before he returned. After he got back, he would point at his groin whenever he met someone and declare cockily, “Do you see it? It is swollen now because it has been used too much.”

Zhao Xiaofei was only seventeen years old. He wanted to know what the feeling was to use it until it was swollen.

Even He Laozhi, the well-acknowledged idiot, had his day and won such a great amount of money. He was much smarter than him. There was no way why he could lose, right?

He had carefully analyzed the rules of the eighty-one betting options on the Heavenly Eye Stream Platform, and he had also selected a few very potential streamers.

He should have won a lot of money today. But he had himself to blame for his lack of determination. After all, nobody stuck his eyes to the two plump, shivering things.

He had never done it for real with a woman, not even one from a virtual world. What would it feel like exactly? Certainly much more satisfying than his callused hands, right?

In fact, Zhao Xiaofei had once considered being a ‘live streamer’.

He was told that after one was admitted into the training camp for the live streamers, not only would they have whatever food and drink they wanted, they would be given however many women they needed. Even if the women were virtual, they could barely be recognized!

However, when he thought of the pictures where countless steamers fell apart or were chewed into a pulp by the ferocious beasts, the fire in Zhao Xiaofei’s heart and pants perished immediately.

He certainly would not do such a stupid thing!

His life right now was not half bad. Although his work was tiresome, and he might be whipped every now and then, and there were occasionally collapses and explosions, he could keep his belly full. Also, there were certain rules that spared him of the insecure life where the fittest survived, like the Land of Sins. Every once in a while, he could even have some fun in the virtual world.

Hehe. The sinners of the Land of Sins were the real miserable ones. Compared to them, his life did not seem bad at all. He was actually rather happy!

However, Zhao Xiaofei was not going to pity the sinners just because of that.

He was told by the foreman and the boss that all the sinners were the most violent criminals and the enemies who tried to sabotage the peace and unity of the great Imperium. They had themselves to blame for what had become of them.

As long as the miners worked dutifully and made contributions to the great Imperium and the civilization of mankind without complaint, they would not need to worry about ending up like the sinners. The Imperium would do its best to ensure their safety and happiness.

“They deserve it…” Zhao Xiaofei mumbled in a low voice, and there was no telling whom he was referring to. Crossing his sticky hands on his chest, he began to snooze in great satisfaction.

Chapter 2045 - City of Skeletons!

Boom!

A fireball that looked like magma collided with a skeleton lizard almost five meters long, making the creature dance wildly in the red and green flames.

But the creature’s vitality was exceptional. Although its flesh and blood had been burnt into charcoal, falling from the bones, it was still waving its monstrous tail in spluttering noises as it lunged at Li Yao and the rest of them.

It was not until the Fist King used up a whole ammunition belt of the machine gun that the creature finally shook and collapsed on the ground after being blown into a beehive. But it was still cramping hysterically on the ground and extending its claws toward Li Yao and the rest of them. Han Te and Liu Li’s faces were so pale that they almost shouted aloud.

It was what happened just half a minute after they returned to the surface.

As far as their eyes could reach, the whole of Liberty City was occupied by ghostly shadows and scary howls. Skeleton lizards were jumping up and down everywhere, and they were swallowing a few bandits in every lunge, chewing the victims into broken meat before spitting them out mixed in acid and venomous fog. The turbulence of blood flooded in every dilapidated street of Liberty City.

Countless bandits were screaming under the savaging of the skeleton lizards.

“What kind of monster is this?”

“We can’t hold it anymore. Let’s run!”

“Ah! Argh! Shoot me! Shoot me right now!”

The bandits were roaring, only to be pierced by the javelin-like tongues the next moment and pulled back to the broken buildings. When they ‘flew’ into the air again, they had already been reduced to bones and blood.

Li Yao even saw two skeleton lizards attacking a super heavy crystal tank from two directions.

Their heads that had split into ‘man-eating flowers’ bit the armor of the tank hard and pulled in opposite directions, thereby tearing the crystal tank in half!

A third lizard skeleton took advantage of the weakness to sneak in. Like octopi, their bodies were extremely tensile; all they needed was a hole no larger than a fist for them to squeeze in easily and begin a slaughter.

In front of the brutality and rapacity of the skeleton lizards, most of the bandits became helpless lambs.

Only the few heads of the bandits and the most infamous thugs could retreat while resisting the skeleton lizards’ attack.

Li Yao and his companions were naturally the most eye-catching ones in the hellish slaughterhouse.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

One of the skeleton lizards crawled out of the deepest gap inside the debris and bit the Fist King’s left arm while the Fist King was changing the magazine for the machine gun. But the Fist King simply stabbed his left arm into its neck, and his right fist turned into a gray mist and swallowed its head entirely, smashing it into a pulp before it had the opportunity to ‘split’.

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

Xiahou Wuxin was maneuvering almost a hundred flying swords at the same time, which turned into a thunderous net of swords. The spiritual shield of any skeleton lizard was as fragile as glass in front of his sword net. Their limbs and heads were all dissected perfectly like an autopsy.

Even Xin Xiaoqi, Han Te, and Liu Li were able to crush the skeleton lizards with the help of Li Yao’s soul without alarming anyone. Several of their shocking attacks were hindered, disrupted, and resolved by Li Yao.

“There are too many of those b*stards for us to kill!” Xiahou Wuxin bellowed and cut the long tongues of another three skeleton lizards that came at him as fast as lightning with his flying swords. His voice was already shaking, and the brilliance of his flying sword was unsteady.

“We cannot escape on our own. Even if we flee out of the range of Liberty City, we will still be locked onto by Manjusaka. It will be practically impossible for us to escape into the underground world again. So, we have to join other bandits and run out of the city in the crowd in order to fool the sky!”

Passing the initial panic, Xin Xiaoqi regained her previous cleverness. She had travelled in the Land of Sins for twenty years among the major gangs and notorious bandits. To some extent, she was even more experienced at escaping than her master, Xiahou Wuxin.

In fact, they did not need to say anything because the other bandits were all approaching them.

Under the hunting of the skeleton lizards, those who had survived to this point were all the elites of the sinners and the best of the bandits and thugs.

Even though they might have been fighting each other bloodily a moment ago, everybody suddenly shared a sense of community under the simulation of such a terrifying and gruesome scene.

“Why has the City in the Sky thrown so many monsters to hunt us? What the f*ck have we done wrong? Isn’t attacking the Elysian Worlds permitted by the City in the Sky?”

“It has nothing to do with the attack of the Elysian Worlds at all. Don’t you see that the defenders of Liberty City have also been swallowed by the monsters?”

“With everything coming to this point, stop thinking about ‘why’ and try to figure out a way to get out of here!”

The bandits all brought out their best techniques, paving shocking paths of blood in the middle of the skeleton lizards and the mountains of corpses. A lot of the bloody paths were vaguely approaching where Li Yao and his companions were. Very soon, a group of almost a hundred people had gathered. They were about to escape to the edge of Liberty City, which used to be the first defense line that was ravaged by Great Iron City at the beginning.

Right then…

Huchi… Huchi… Huchi…

In the middle of the overwhelming smoke, a black shadow almost ten meters tall gradually showed up, and a gigantic mask of bones was wearing a hideous smile in the smoke.

“What’s this?”

“What a big one!”

All the bandits and thugs were shocked.

One of the crystal tanks could not control its speed and charged at the black shadow directly. Seeing that it was impossible to dodge the creature, it simply accelerated, hoping to brush past the black shadow.

But out of everyone’s expectations, the black shadow spat out a mouthful of acid that enshrouded the crystal tank. In less than twenty seconds, the vehicle was reduced to a cluster of scrap metal that was similar to vomit.

It was not until this moment that the black shadow finally revealed its full self unhurriedly. The body size of the skeleton lizard was at least three times larger than the regular ‘minions’!

At this moment, shadows were moving nonstop behind everyone. Countless skeleton lizards were catching up.

Although they were temporarily stopped by the storm of bullets that the bandits and thugs sprayed out, the bullets would run out sooner or later.

‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie and Xiahou Wuxin looked at each other and lunged at the skeleton lizard king at the same time.

Pu! Pu! Pu!

The skeleton lizard king spat out four clusters of acid, only to be dodged by the two of them narrowly and turn into four pools of venom on the ground from which white smoke popped up.

Xiahou Wuxin’s hundred flying swords darted at the skeleton lizard king’s eyes brutally, while the Fist King took the opportunity to jump at the enemy’s back. Thorns and hooks extended out of his iron feet and grabbed the skeleton lizard king’s unbelievably tensile skin. He stuck the machine gun into the creature’s back and opened fire fiercely.

At such a close distance, any spiritual shield was useless. Blood and broken meat were immediately splattering everywhere.

Under the excruciating pain, the skeleton lizard king was bent into an enormous worm as it jumped and hit things randomly, trying to get rid of the Fist King. But it only managed to knock away the Fist King’s gun, which made the Fist King’s four arms stab into its wound and snatch its flesh.

Chila!

The skeleton lizard king’s head also split into an enormous man-eating flower. But the degree to which its neck could rotate was limited after all, and it could not bite the Fist King however it tried to turn its head. It could only wave its long tongue and shoot at the Fist King on its back blindly.

Hiu!

The long tongue with sharp thorns indeed pierced into the Fist King’s chest. But the Fist King was not made of flesh and blood. His iron body was an ultimate product carefully produced by Li Yao. Not just a tiny hole, even thousands of holes would not completely deprive him of his combat ability.

The Fist King simply took the opportunity to grab the creature by its neck and spin it in opposite directions as if he were wringing a towel. The creature was in such agony that it could barely scream.

Xiahou Wuxin moved forward and cut off its tongue. When it was mad under the insufferable pain, almost a hundred flying swords darted into its eyeballs and throat at the same time!

Crack!

While the beast’s whole body was tightened because of the pain, the Fist King finally found its spine and strangled it brutally, mincing it into pieces. The enormous creature slowly collapsed to the ground.

Seeing the toughness of the Fist King and Xiahou Wuxin, and probably because they recognized them, the bandits nearby all cheered for them in embarrassment.

The Fist King and Xiahou Wuxin looked at each other. Although they had been sworn enemies half a day ago, and although one of them was an experimental spiritual puppet and the other was a dog for Manjusaka, they sensed the same rhythm in their equally scorching eyes.

Li Yao, pretending to be a beast puppet, was not relaxed at all. Instead, he grew more and more anxious.

He stared at the black fog in front of him.

Almost five gargantuan shadows were approaching them slowly. They were all dead beasts of the same level as the ‘skeleton lizard king’ just now.

Right then, the Fist King, Xiahou Wuxin, Xin Xiaoqi, Han Te, Liu Li, and the other bandits and thugs around all sensed the expansion and approaching of several animalistic airs. Their cheers became frozen breath.

The one skeleton lizard king alone took the Fist King and Xiahou Wuxin, who were the top experts in Liberty City, such a long time to kill.

If a couple more came, would they stand any chance of survival?

There’s no choice now!

Li Yao’s soul had almost been compressed into a black hole the size of fist. He was finally prepared to bring out all his strength without caring about anything.

Even though such a decision might expose himself to Manjusaka or even allow them to evaluate his strength, he did not seem to have a second option.

The narrow and long metal limbs of the beast puppet ‘Tarantula’ were deeply folded, and dim redness was beaming from the crystal cameras, turning the entire world into a complicated swirl of data, while Li Yao calculated the most perfect routes and patterns to attack quickly at the center of the swirl.

Right when Li Yao was about to go on a killing spree and fully release the daunting damage of the Divinity Transformation Stage…

Huh?

He suddenly sensed that a certain weird quake was coming from the depths of the earth.

Chapter 2046 - Earthly Dragon!

It did not feel like an explosion or a natural earthquake but more like an artificial earthquake with a fixed pace and rhythm. The source of the quakes moved very quickly upward and was arriving at their feet in no time.

Thinking quickly, Li Yao calmed down his anxious soul again and sent a message to Han Te and Liu Li’s heads, asking them to stay alert and hold on a while longer. He also remotely controlled ‘Fiend Star’, the tracked spiritual puppet, from the Tarantula and lay next to the two little fellows dutifully.

In the setting that they had made up, the profession of the two little fellows had been changed into ‘puppeteers’.

It was a profession to control spiritual puppets and beast puppets and to coordinate human beings and machines. The puppeteers were to their spiritual puppets what the sword Cultivators were to their flying swords. They were indispensable for each other.

Therefore, it was perfectly reasonable for Han Te and Liu Li to stay close to the two war machines.

After Li Yao reminded them of everything, a lot of bandits and thugs whose senses were keen had felt the quakes from beneath the ground.

Including the Fist King and Xiahou Wuxin, all the sinners were greatly nervous, fearing that some other terrifying monsters would pop up from the underground world.

But out of their expectations, the skeleton lizards around them were circling in agitation or craning their necks to shriek, with their heads slightly shivering.

Right then…

Boom! Boom!

The earth turned into mud, and soil and stones soared into the sky like a spring before they splashed to the ground. From the crater, an extremely unusual machine crawled out!

It was both like a long metal earthworm and an armed crystal train that travelled underground. At the frontmost part was an enormous excavation drill that was similar to a shield tunneling machine. Every whorl on the main drill was like the sharpest chainsword, and dense, complicated runes and circuits of spiritual energy had been carved on the internal side. The glittering rays vaguely shining on the surface suggested that it was a composite drill made of both metals and mystic rays, which was multiple times harder and more efficient than the drill of mystic rays adopted by Sparkle, Li Yao’s multipurpose exploration starship!

Next to the main drill that was more than three meters in diameter, more than twenty ancillary drills and enormous dust-sucking holes were distributed. All the scraps of rocks minced by the drill were transmitted to the rear of the underground vehicle through the dust-sucking holes.

The whole body of the machine was covered in rough and huge tracks, and every track was installed with sharp and tensile hooks. Li Yao estimated that it must boast an amazing ability in gripping and climbing. Such a structure would even allow it to move vertically in the middle of the underground rocks at a speed no lower than on the ground.

What a great penetrator! Li Yao secretly complimented.

Since the technology to build underground cities and to detect and exploit the underground mother lodes had become popular, ‘penetrators’ that could work for a long time below the ground no longer seemed marvelous. For example, Li Yao’s ‘Neltharion’ and its prototype, Sparkle, both possessed the ability to dig holes and move below ground.

However, the super penetrator in the form of an enormous boa or earthworm was definitely the most advanced magical equipment that Li Yao had ever seen in the relevant fields. It was not hard to evaluate its high comprehensive combat efficiency based on the high speed of the quake source and the feebleness of the quakes before the vehicle burst out of the ground!

Who was it that had crafted and was maneuvering such a war machine? The Immortal Cultivators from Manjusaka? Not very likely!

Li Yao saw that the front end of the super penetrator had emerged from the ground, but the rear end was still hidden below the earth. The front part of the vehicle was like a porcupine that had been infuriated. Countless barrels were raised and released almost a hundred enormous iron tanks into the sky.

Pa! Pa! Pa!

The iron tanks exploded one after another. They turned out to be smoke grenades with an extremely vast coverage. Very soon, more than half of Liberty City was consumed. The battlefield was covered so tightly that it would not be able to see anything from the sky.

Then, next to the barrels, a lot of folded, disc-shaped antennas were ejected, triggering invisible but powerful waves.

Li Yao could clearly sense that the communication among the Immortal Cultivators, especially the City in the Sky's remote control on the skeleton lizards, was seriously disrupted by the indiscriminate interferential waves.

The skeleton lizards were just ignorant animals. After the crystal chips inside their heads were affected and they lost the command of the external signals, they were immediately at a loss.

Some wanted to escape to the underground world because of the explosions and smoke on the battlefield. Some raged and jumped at the bandits, only to be blown up quickly because they did not have the neat teamwork they had before. Some were even brutalizing each other, and their 'man-eating flowers' were biting each other hard, until they were all bleeding and deformed.

The only exceptions were the few skeleton lizard kings that were almost ten meters tall. After the initial shock of the super penetrator, they soon returned to themselves, shaking their heads and hesitating over if they should attack again.

It was at this moment that Li Yao noticed the woman who was standing on the enormous drill majestically, with a huge vibration saber three meters long on her shoulder and a green crystal suit on her body.

As she confronted the three skeleton lizard kings coldly, the air around her was no weaker than the Fist King or Xiahou

Wuxin when they were at their peak state. Thousands of runes were floating on her crystal suit, condensing and spinning within three meters from her body, like thousands of small drills.

“You have one minute. Get on board quickly!”

Her voice was so low and hoarse that it seemed to come from the underground world.

The plates on the two sides of the super penetrator were all opened, revealing the spacious room inside. Several mysterious people in dim crystal suits waved at everyone and shouted, “We can only resist them for one minute. Hurry! Hurry! Hurry!”

All the bandits and thugs were slightly dazed. Behind them were the ferocious skeleton lizards, and in front of them were their own kind whom they could communicate with. They did not have any choice but to hurry aboard!

When he boarded the super penetrator in the crowd, Li Yao still focused his attention on the female warrior who seemed to have grown drills all over her body.

The scanning of his soul happened to capture the picture where she slashed at one of the skeleton lizard kings, blowing up its entire head with the force of high-frequency vibrations, before she crashed into the chest of another skeleton lizard king with the rapidly-hovering runes around her, mincing the creature into a pulp.

Then, the doors on the two sides of the super penetrator were closed heavily, and the tracks rolled in reverse, dragging the vehicle back into the underground world.

There were chains everywhere inside the cars. All the newcomers, copying what the mysterious warriors did, tied themselves to the chains to resist the crazy quakes of the super penetrator.

They retreated backward in the underground cave, and the entrance of the hole became smaller and smaller.

Countless skeleton lizards jumped into the cave, trying to track them, but the enormous drill was still revolving quickly, shredding any creature or machine that jumped down.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Those mysterious people must have deployed crystal bombs on the walls of the cave. The bombs were detonated at the same time after they had retreated a certain distance, collapsing and blocking the cave.

Also, at the front part, or the rear part, of the vehicle, a certain type of silver gel was spurted out, which was somewhat similar to the special foam on starships for emergency damage repairs. After it leaked into the gaps of the debris, it made the structure of the blockage even tougher than before. There was no hole to pass through at all.

Everybody was obviously below the ground, but when the super penetrator moved quickly, they felt that they were on a lone boat at the peak of surging tides. The vehicle was moving up and down and trembling so hard that they could barely keep themselves steady.

The mysterious people who had guided them were working hard, operating busily and nervously. They had no time to bother with the newcomers at all.

Even the Fist King and Xiahou Wuxin looked at each other in bewilderment, not having the faintest idea what was going on.

When Li Yao explored with his soul, he could only tell that the super penetrator was almost a hundred meters long in total. It was truly like some sort of amazing metal life living below the ground.

There was no telling how long passed, but the degree of the bumps and quakes slowly dropped.

By Li Yao’s estimation, they had slowed down at approximately four thousand meters below the surface. The vehicle was still moving forward slowly, but the quakes and noises that it released were mostly gone. It was now like a silkworm gnawing the mulberry leaves.

Shua!

The door to the operation cabin of the excavation system in the front was opened. The female warrior who had stood on the enormous drill, with the intense stench of blood, strode into the room.

The three-meter-long vibration saber was gone. The upper half of the thick, heavy crystal suit had been taken off, too, revealing the dark green vest and the athletic body beneath.

To his surprise, Li Yao discovered that the woman who was not ugly in any way had a bald head. There was only an enormous star-shaped tattoo on her forehead, and the five angles of the star turned out to be five drills.

Also, the left arm with which she had held the saber was a false one. It was actually an artificial limb.

The bald female warrior who did not have a left arm glanced coldly at the mobsters who had not entirely gathered themselves and furrowed her brows, not covering her disgust for the bandits and thugs at all.

It only made Li Yao even more curious. Since she obviously detested those bandits from the Land of Sins, why did she bother to rescue them?”

“My name is Zuo Jingyun,” the bald female warrior said coldly and finally focused her eyes on the Fist King and Xiahou Wuxin. The alertness and hostility in her gaze pierced the throats of the two leaders of the tough bandits like drills. “I’m sure that you must have a lot of questions, and you do not understand what is going on at all. But just rest assured, you will know what you should know very soon. However, let me make one thing clear first. This is Cloud Penetrator, my ‘earthly dragon’. In this place, my word is law. Whoever does not obey my rules will be thrown out to live on their own in the debris and rocks thousands of meters below the ground!”

Chapter 2047 - Starlight Underground

The bandits and thugs all whispered to each other. They had always been tough and arrogant on the surface. Never had anyone treated them so disrespectfully before.

However, the brutality of the skeleton lizards a moment ago was still deeply etched to their hearts. Also, because of the immense pressure of the infinite rocks outside, and seeing that the Fist King and Xiahou Wuxin, the two top experts, did not complain, those bandits could only swallow their dissatisfaction and glare at the mysterious female warrior, Zuo Jingyun, in silence.

Xiahou Wuxin looked at the Fist King and had to greet her. “I am Xiahou Wuxin, the leader of Liberty City. In any case, we must thank Sister Zuo for saving our lives.”

“Of course, you are the leader of Liberty City and a dog of the City in the Sky.”

Intense mockery flowed out of Zuo Jingyun’s eyes. She scoffed, “Shouldn’t you be credited for what became of Liberty City today and the miserable deaths of so many people in the angels’ games?”

“What!”

Hearing that, a lot of thugs and bandits jumped to their feet, their eyes of surprise and fury turning into sharp blades and stabbing into Xiahou Wuxin.

“Leader Xiahou, did you know earlier that the City in the Sky would throw those weird monsters down?”

“What has been going on exactly? Xiahou Wuxin, you must explain yourself today!”

“Damn it. Is this a trap, too? Why? Why do you want us dead? We have always been loyal to the City in the Sky!”

Xiahou Wuxin did not expect the tough vixen to reveal his biggest secret without any hesitation. He was also surprised at Zuo Jingyun’s knowledge. For a moment, he was lost for words.

Li Yao thought of something. Although it was different from what he had imagined, he had vaguely guessed who the woman was.

The Fist King glanced at everybody behind him and commanded them to shut their mouths with his aggressive eyes. Then, he continued the conversation. “I am ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie, and I’m not a dog of Manjusaka. I believe that I’m qualified to ask who you are and why you saved us.”

Many tough bandits who were less perceptive only realized at this moment that ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie’s soul was lurking inside the mysterious but relentless iron body.

The man had not been killed after blasting Manjusaka with Great Iron City. He truly deserved to be called the best expert of the Land of Sins!

Zuo Jingyun was apparently much friendlier to the Fist King. Perhaps because she had seen the scene where the Fist King charged at the City in the Sky, she appeared to be quite sympathetic toward him. Lowering her voice, she said, “The entire Land of Sins is a nightmare, and we are the people who woke up from the nightmare earlier than the rest. That’s all.”

“Therefore,” the Fist King said coldly, “you also understand that the so-called Land of Sins is essentially an enormous laboratory and that we are the chess pieces, the props, the toys, and the test subjects for Manjusaka?”

A hint of surprise beamed out of Zuo Jingyun’s eyes. She nodded and said, “As expected of the Fist King. You are indeed different from the common bandits of the Land of Sins. It was certainly worthwhile to rescue you, even though it meant that I had to take away those scoundrels, too.”

The bandits and thugs naturally could sense the obvious mockery and derision in the woman’s words, but their attention was all too deeply attracted by ‘nightmare’ and ‘laboratory’ in their conversation for them to bother anything else. They all exclaimed, “What do you mean? What are you talking about?”

“You’ve known the whole time, haven’t you, that the world we are living in is abnormal?” Zuo Jingyun sneered. “The desolate, scarred land that is filled with pollution and radiation after hundreds of years of recovery, the relief assets projected from the sky regularly that have more weapons than food, and the ‘old grandpas’ and the supplementary population who have lost all their memories.

“If they want to destroy us, all the sinners will be starved to death if no assets are sent down for several years.

“If they want to save us, just give us some more food, help us figure out a way to clear and revive the land, or even open the sky so that we can escape into space. They are all solutions.

“No destruction, no salvation, but keeping the Land of Sins in a storm of blood where the strong prey on the weak through arduous efforts, reducing everybody in the Land of Sins into… animals wearing human skin just like you.

“Have you never considered the reason for everything and what the sinners mean to the high and mighty angels? Do they have more dangerous and malicious purposes than ‘destruction’ when they domesticate us in such a way?

“Yes. I’m afraid that all of you have given it some thought before and even found some answers on your own. However, you seemingly strong and fearless thugs are in fact nothing more than cowardly pussies. You are already satisfied as long as you can struggle to survive. You do not have the courage to open your eyes to face the devastating truth, much less fighting against the enemy that can never be defeated.”

A lot of the bandits were rendered speechless and lowered their heads deeply.

Some other people burst into fury and rose up. “What’s the meaning of this? Explain yourself! Don’t think that you are qualified to lecture me just because you saved my life!”

“Oh? Are you throwing a tantrum? Good. It means that there is still a tiny bit of manhood in your heart.”

Keeping her artificial arm behind her back, Zuo Jingyun said emotionlessly, “‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie told you the truth just now. Everybody in the Land of Sins, including your ancestors and your offspring, is a test subject or a ‘game prop’ that the angels, or the Immortal Cultivators, have raised. The angels use you to test the latest magical equipment and techniques. Of course, the weaponized mutated beasts such as the skeleton lizards visit the Land of Sins occasionally to reap your lives, which is a thrilling game for many people.

“Do you know what a ‘zoo’ is? If you don’t, you must know what an ‘arena’ or a ‘slave market’ is, right? For the angels, the entire Land of Sins is an enormous arena and slave market. We are all their toys that are absolutely at their mercy. They can ravage and crush us however they want.”

All the bandits fell silent.

The anger of the bandits who burst into fury a moment ago was frozen on their faces.

“Well—Well—Well…”

Hisses were echoing from their throats, like a drunkard deeply mired in a swirl who finally became sober and realized his distressing doom the moment before he was swallowed by the swirl.

Zuo Jingyun smiled. “If you think that I am exaggerating, I believe that ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie and Xiahou Wuxin can certainly tell you a lot more things from different perspectives. But I think most of you have long sensed something, haven’t you? What can you do even if you know it? You only waste away your life with whoring, gambling, and fighting without any courage to face such a truth.”

A lot of people took a deep breath, as if the bones all over their body had been crushed into powder and spat out with the breath. They collapsed to the floor like mud.

With disgust on her face, Zuo Jingyun snorted. “I know that people like you who can only bully the weak but never have the courage to challenge the strong will be absolutely useless. If I were the one who made the call, I certainly would never have dug to the surface and rescued you at the risk of being exposed and traced. But it was an order from the organization that I could not change. So, do not think that you are of any significance. You are all garbage in my eyes!"

"Organization?" 'Angry' was not a parameter in the Fist King's real logical circuits. He continued his questioning peacefully. "What organization?"

Zuo Jingyun thought even more highly of the Fist King. She replied succinctly, "Starlight."

"Ah!" Han Te and Liu Li could not help but exclaim in excitement.

Over the past two days, they had heard a lot about Starlight and the Cultivators. They were very curious about the mysterious organization.

They did not expect that Starlight really existed and even boasted such a powerful 'earthly dragon' as a vehicle while it continued the resistance. Their eyes beamed with interest, and they were full of fondness and respect for Zuo Jingyun.

Zuo Jingyun moved her eyes over, only to be slightly dazed. She did not expect to see such two pleasant-looking little fellows among so many hideous, brutal bandits. She was particularly surprised by Liu Li, whose young and stubborn face had the air of tranquility and brightness that were entirely different from the common bloodthirsty bandits.

Zuo Jingyun slightly frowned, wondering how the two unusual teenagers survived to this day in the gory war.

Meanwhile, Li Yao observed the vehicle in great interest. Judging from the technology and the resource consumption in order to build 'earthly dragon', the scale of Starlight certainly far exceeded his imagination, which was quite... uncanny!

Zuo Jingyun held her head high and said, “We are the real survivors of ‘Judgment Day’. We know that ‘Judgment Day’ was not a civil war of the Martial Meritocrats Sector but a destructive attack launched by the Immortal Cultivators at the Cultivators of the Martial Meritocrats Sector.

“Our ancestors have been resisting the evil reign of Manjusaka since hundreds of years ago. Some of the resisters even escaped into space before the sky was completely sealed and dealt with the enemy in the boundless sea of stars.

“The resisters that stayed on the planet, to avoid the surveillance from the high sky and the bombardment of the railguns that are everywhere, marched into the underground world. The ruins of the thousands of underground cities left by the Martial Meritocrats Civilization and the forsaken mines were all our battlefields. We raged and galloped on ‘earthly dragon’, the super penetrator, and attacked the enemy everywhere. Even to this day, the angels, or the Immortal Cultivators, cannot find a way to completely annihilate us!

“Right now, you have ‘woken up’, too. Now that you have been informed of the truth, the City in the Sky will certainly not let any of you go. You don’t have a choice except to follow us back to our base. It happens that we have some missions for scoundrels like you.”

Chapter 2048 - Tough Man Wei Longtao!

After saying that, Zuo Jingyun stared at the Fist King and Xiahou Wuxin and glanced at Han Te and Liu Li. Instead of waiting for anyone to reply, she returned to the operation cabin of the excavation system and slammed the door, leaving hundreds of upset and confused bandits and thugs.

Those bandits and thugs naturally surrounded the Fist King and Xiahou Wuxin. But thankfully, knowing the toughness of the two experts, and because those bandits had essentially betrayed the two dominators during the Battle of Liberty City, they did not dare act recklessly but simply asked the Fist King and Xiahou Wuxin to explain the situation to them.

After pondering for a moment, the Fist King and Xiahou Wuxin found no reason to hide the information. They simply cut the critical parts that involved their secrets and told everybody the basic background of the Land of Sins as well as the truth behind Manjusaka, the City in the Sky. The bandits and the thugs were all surprised, infuriated, and scared, feeling that they were truly lucky.

Thankfully, they had discovered the truth in time. Otherwise, if they had truly successfully conquered or defended Liberty City and been sent to the City in the Sky to ‘enjoy happiness’, would they not have become test subjects to be sliced and studied in their ignorance?

Many tough bandits glared at Xiahou Wuxin furiously, as if they were about to attack him if he could not explain himself.

However, since ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie had not taken any action, they were naturally not bold enough to act before the Fist King.

Besides, Xiahou Wuxin knew a lot about the City in the Sky and even Starlight. He was aware of the intelligence that they did not know.

With that in mind, it was inappropriate to end on bad terms with him.

“Leader Xiahou, are those Immortal Cultivators truly going to annihilate each and every one of us without leaving any chance of survival?” some bandits asked drily, still having hope.

“Just drop your illusions and prepare to fight.” Xiahou Wuxin sighed. “Even if there was a slim chance of survival, now that we have gotten in touch with Starlight, the greatest trouble for Manjusaka, and learned so many things that we shouldn’t have, it is impossible for us to survive.

“Do not fantasize that the Immortal Cultivators will show any mercy and pity. I have been a dog for Manjusaka for decades, but am I now not being cooked because I am no longer useful? Do you have any reason for the Immortal Cultivators to spare you?”

Everybody was silent after hearing that. After a long silence, somebody asked, “Then, what is the strength of this ‘Starlight’? Is it capable enough to resist Manjusaka?”

The sinners in the Land of Sins were all fearless warriors. When they were caught in desperation, they would not hesitate to jump on and bite the deities, not to mention the Immortal Cultivators.

“However weak Starlight may be,” Xiahou Wuxin said, “it has at least struggled for hundreds of years under the suppression of the Immortal Cultivators, and it will not seem strange if the organization struggles for hundreds more years.

“They have rescued us at great risk naturally because we are still of great value. Therefore, you might as well rest in peace for a moment and see what they have to offer before you decide if this is an opportunity of cooperation.

“To be honest, we are already in the worst situation. Nothing worse can possibly happen. Just act as if you were killed in the bloody mouths of the skeleton lizards, and every second since then is a bonus!”

With everything coming to this point, the Fist King and Xiahou Wuxin were not interested in investigating what the bandits and thugs did in the Battle of Liberty City after everything fell into chaos. After all, it was in the nature of the sinners, and something would have been wrong if they had not done it.

The two of them calmed and reorganized everyone with both carrots and sticks.

Meanwhile, Han Te and Liu Li crouched in a corner. The two little fellows were so excited that they were breathing fast. Their eyes that were as clear as water were filled with stars.

“Grandpa Yao, Cultivators! We have found the legendary Cultivators!”

“So, Starlight has been resisting Manjusaka for hundreds of years underground. That is really incredible!”

“With the help of Starlight, we will have a better chance of overthrowing the reign of Manjusaka and changing the entire Land of Sins, won’t we?”

Sensing the flames of the two little fellows’ thrilled souls, Li Yao smiled thoughtfully and said in a voice that only the two of them could hear, “Perhaps. You may share your identity, experience, and ambitions with the female warrior of Starlight and see if she can help you blow up the City in the Sky. But keep one thing in mind. Do not expose my existence.”

“Huh?” Han Te blinked. “Don’t you want to sabotage Manjusaka, too? The Immortal Cultivators are bad guys, so the Cultivators of Starlight must be good guys. We share a common purpose. You revealed your identity to Master Fist King and Leader Xiahou. Why are you hiding yourself from Starlight?”

“Because of my intuition.” Li Yao did not know how he should explain himself. “I vaguely feel that something is off. This ‘Zuo Jingyun’ is not necessarily a bad guy, but as for ‘Starlight’, I need to learn more about it to figure out what moves they have planned.

“The bottom line is, we are getting closer and closer to the truth now. It never hurts to be extra careful.”

The quakes of the ‘earthly dragon’ grew weaker and weaker, and it gradually slowed down.

For most of the time, they were not digging holes on the rocks blindly because there were interconnected natural caves and man-made tunnels below the ground that were as sophisticated as a maze, as well as the debris of the underground cities left from the prime days of the Martial Meritocrats Civilization a thousand years ago. They travelled among the gaps as easily as on the ground at an amazingly high speed.

After driving for more than half a day, the ‘earthly dragon’ finally released gas and came to a stop.

The cabin doors on two sides were folded and opened. Mixed in the middle of the many bandits and thugs, Li Yao, Han Te, and Liu Li got off the vehicle dizzily, only to find themselves in the middle of a vast underground town.

Perhaps the place had been the center of a super enormous underground mine a thousand years ago. All the shacks there had been shattered and emptied, leaving a cave as deep as an abyss. It was impossible to see the end of the cave or the edge of the other side of the cave.

Inside the cave that led downward in the shape of a spiral, countless airborne metal buildings that were connected by chains, hoists, and rails had been established. Around them were channels that made the place look like a honeycomb. A lot of the channels were ablaze with lights, showing that many ‘earthly dragons’ were being maintained.

Some of the ‘earthly dragons’ were hung in midair by chains and connected to other ‘earthly dragons’, forming a chain of earthly dragons thousands of meters long from the head to the tail. They were essentially a mobile town that was narrow and long!

Several thousand workers were busy doing their job. Sparks and electric arcs were spurting, vaporizing their sweat into hazy mist, which was illuminated into different hues by the dim lights.

Li Yao sensed many intimidating Exos lurking in the darkness. There were also firing points whose locations had been carefully calculated. He even smelled the scent of crystal bombs from many forsaken tunnels. It was almost a fully-armed arsenal!

“This place used to be known as ‘Azure City’. A long, long time ago, there was a Blue Crystal Mine here with abundant reserves, but by the time we discovered it, absolutely nothing could be found here.”

Zuo Jingyun had shown up again. This time, she had completely removed the heavy and clumsy crystal suit and put on more convenient, soft armor. The vibration saber was folded on her back like a pair of sharp wings. She said, “In the rock stratums between three thousand and six thousand meters below the ground, there are too many such forsaken mines. It is practically impossible for the Immortal Cultivators to examine all of them one by one. So, this is our temporary base now.

“Even if we are indeed discovered by the Immortal Cultivators, there’s nothing to be worried about. We will simply board our respective ‘earthly dragons’ and run off.

“The truth is, the earthly dragons are our actual bases and homes. Such temporary bases are merely meant for maintenance and supplies.”

Looking at the emotionless workers who were dedicated to maintenance and modification and hearing Zuo Jingyun’s calm description, Li Yao was caught in mixed feelings.

Are they the Cultivators who have resisted for a thousand years stubbornly at the heartland of the Imperium of True Human Beings?

Li Yao had thought that the survival and development of the Cultivators at the edge of the cosmos was already difficult enough. But when he saw the ‘fellow Cultivators’ who had lurked underground for a thousand years and were ready to jump on the ‘earthly dragons’ to escape like shocked rabbits if anything went wrong, he truly understood what dead end meant.

What kind of spirit and belief could possibly have supported the fellow Cultivators to persist in the resistance for hundreds of years in hopeless and lightless desperation?

While he was pondering, the noises of chains being pulled echoed at the edge of the abyss in front of them. A muscular man slowly showed up on a metal lift.

“He is Wei Longtao, the leader of Starlight in the underground world of the Land of Sins.”

Zuo Jingyun did not hide the admiration in her eyes at all. She said, “He is a real hero and a super expert at the ‘earthly dragons’. He has escaped the sieges and blockages of the Immortal Cultivators countless times and killed too many Immortal Cultivators and their accomplices to count. You must be well aware of that, Leader Xiahou, right?”

Xiahou Wuxin trembled and put on a solemn expression. He nodded. “I did not know his name, but it is true that Manjusaka once sent a highly confidential warrant, wanting a man that was a hundred times more dreadful than mutated beasts. We were even asked not to surround and hunt the man recklessly after discovering his tracks. As long as we reported the intelligence, we would be considered the greatest contributor. It was strictly forbidden to make any move that would alarm him. The man on the warrant seems to be… exactly like this.”

“Hehe.” Zuo Jingyun smiled and approached Xiahou Wuxin intentionally. She said in a low voice, “Wei Longtao has assassinated four masters of ‘Elysian Worlds’ who were exactly like you, Leader Xiahou. His success rate is one hundred percent!”

Chapter 2049 - Temple of Cultivators!

While they were talking, the metal lift pulled by chains had ascended to everyone’s feet. Before it came to a full stop, Wei Longtao jumped up almost five meters and dashed over to everyone. His legs were like two thick nails that were smashed into the ground.

Li Yao eyed the general commander of ‘Starlight’ in the underground world of the Land of Sins in silence.

He was a majestic, bearded man more than two meters tall. Huge scars could be found everywhere on the bulging muscles all over his body, as if his infinite vitality could not be restrained by his magnificent body and had torn apart his skin.

What was most eye-catching of all was his big eyes that looked like the lamps of the ‘earthly dragons’.

Although they were in the deepest and most profound underground world, the pair of eyes were still radiating like a sun, making him look like a man who was dreaming all the time, a real dreamer!

“Brothers from the Land of Sins, welcome to the temporary camp of Starlight. This place is a little bit shabby. Please try to overcome the difficulties.”

Before he landed, heartening laughter echoed from midair. He was apparently much warmer than Zuo Jingyun, who was as cold as ice.

“People here call me ‘Commander Wei’, but since you are not members of Starlight yet, you can simply call me ‘Wei Longtao’!”

Standing before the Fist King and Xiahou Wuxin, Wei Longtao looked at them with a smile. He had dwarfed the auras of the two experts of the Land of Sins by himself.

“Do excuse me.”

He crossed his hands toward the Fist King and Xiahou Wuxin and said with a smile, “The situation both on the ground and below is very urgent, which has forced me to invite you to this place in such a simple and violent approach. Please forgive us for the lack of manners.”

Xiahou Wuxin rolled his eyes again and again and suddenly said, “Forgiveness is unnecessary. Had it not been for your help, Commander Wei, we would have been killed by the skeleton lizards. There is really nothing to forgive. However, did you have eyes in Liberty City that could see us?”

“Exactly. He was indeed spying on us.” The Fist King was much more straightforward and directly changed ‘see’ to ‘spy’. “Otherwise, it would have been impossible for him to command the ‘earthly dragon’ to save the exact number of people he needed, who happened to be the best of the best among the thousands of bandits, exactly before the moment we were to be annihilated.”

“The Fist King is right. Not just in Liberty City, Starlight has inconspicuous eyes in all the Elysian Worlds and even many gangs in the Land of Sins.”

Wei Longtao did not deny it at all. Baring his white teeth from his fluffy beard, he said, “Fist King, Leader Xiahou, you must understand the dominance of the City in the Sky better than anybody else. If we did not have eyes and ears and were less informed, ‘Starlight’ would have been demolished ten thousand times. How could we have resisted for hundreds of years below the ground?”

“Therefore…” Xiahou Wuxin narrowed his eyes. “You simply watched the monsters projected from Manjusaka slaughter most of us and rescued us when only the last of us were left?”

“I did not have any choice,” Wei Longtao admitted frankly and confidently, as if it were not a scheme at all. “First of all, ‘Starlight’ is the greatest trouble for the Immortal Cultivators. Should our traces be revealed, we will certainly suffer incessant hunting and sieges. So, it was impossible for me to dispatch a large batch of earthly dragons to save you. I could only send Zuo Jingyun, our most awesome conductor of earthly dragons. Only she was confident in getting rid of all the hunters during the escape below the ground.

“One ‘earthly dragon’ has a limited capacity. Could it have loaded the entire Liberty City?

“Secondly, and more importantly, we have to ensure the purity of our team. We learned that lesson the hard way many times in the past. We paid a gory price to rescue the brothers on the ground, hoping to invite them to join Starlight, only to discover that a lot of spies from Manjusaka were among them. They caused severe damage to our organization.

“The operation this time is Starlight’s counterattack of the largest scale in the recent hundred years. Dozens of ‘earthly dragons’ have been gathered. There will be dire consequences if several spies are among us.

"So, we could only observe in secret and make sure that Manjusaka was really trying to kill each and every one of you before we could completely trust you and rescue you.

"Leader Xiahou, in your place, you know a hundred times more intelligence than the regular brothers from the Land of Sins do. You must understand our dilemma very well."

Xiahou Wuxin was lost for words for a moment and could not help but nod.

"Thirdly," Wei Longtao said casually, "we are faced with massive pressure from Manjusaka ourselves, and we just had a bloody battle three days ago. Trust me. The approaches through which Manjusaka deals with us are a hundred times crueler than what was used on you just now. They are absolutely beyond your imagination.

"After all, in the eyes of the Immortal Cultivators, you are merely chess pieces and toys, while we, the Cultivators of Starlight, are the real enemies!"

"Cultivators…"

Chewing on the word, the Fist King said, "So, Commander Wei, you came to our rescue at such great risks because you want us to join you?"

"Join us?" Zuo Jingyun, who was standing nearby, could not help but chuckle. "I'm afraid that you are not qualified."

"What!"

A lot of the bandits rose and glared at her.

"Jingyun!" Wei Longtao frowned and scolded her. He then crossed his hands at the Fist King and Xiahou Wuxin. "Truth be told, when Starlight recruited new people and transformed ‘sinners’ into ‘Cultivators’, we were indeed very cautious, and it was not a common practice to enlist people from the gangs directly.

“For our organization, the size and the number of our crew are not important. What matters most is dignity, loyalty, and everlasting dedication to our cause!

“The life underground is unbelievably bitter and barren. Everybody is faced with the pressure of being buried alive by tons of rocks every second, which is hard for the experts in the Land of Sins, who are used to an exuberant and extravagant life, to adapt to.

“But the situation this time is a bit different. Since you have all come here, I do not want to keep anything from you.

“We were planning a once-in-a-hundred-years counterattack, and dozens of ‘earthly dragons’ are all set to go. But in the unexpected encounter with the Immortal Cultivators three days ago, we lost a great number of hands, mostly warriors.

“We are in dire need of a batch of new blood to accomplish our mission, which was the biggest reason why we saved you at great risks.”

The Fist King nodded. “What kind of mission?”

“The mission to search for the temple,” Wei Longtao said. “Legend has it that a temple of Cultivators has been sealed for a thousand years somewhere below the Land of Sins. The strongest Cultivator in legends is sleeping inside the temple, and it has the power to destroy Manjusaka. As long as we locate the temple, we will be able to change the Land of Sins!”

Xiahou Wuxin was amused. “A legendary temple? A sleeping Cultivator? Is such a groundless tale worth your efforts?”

“Indeed. Such a legend is illogical,” the Fist King remarked. “Manjusaka blocked the sky several hundred years ago. If the temple has been sealed since a thousand years ago, how could it possibly boast the power to destroy the City in the Sky?”

“We have naturally analyzed all of your suspicions. Cultivators are not superstitious, and we do not believe in any tradition or legend blindly. The so-called ‘temple’ is of course not as simple as its literal sense.”

With his hands behind his back, Wei Longtao spoke unhurriedly. “Just now, in the earthly dragon, Zuo Jingyun must’ve introduced the truth of ‘Judgment Day’ to you, or maybe you learned about it a long time ago, that it was not a civil war within the Martial Meritocrats Sector but a war between the Cultivators of the Martial Meritocrats Sector and the alien Immortal Cultivators.

“According to our intelligence, before the ‘Judgment War’ took place, the Martial Meritocrats Civilization arrived at the peak. It secretly established a ‘global automatic defense network’, whose central forces were the super-enormous autopiloting flying sword systems buried in every part of the entire planet.

“There were eighty-one enormous autopiloting flying sword platforms in total. Once activated, they could perform destructive strikes automatically on intruders from outer space, such as starships or assault cabins. They would essentially enshroud the entire planet in an impenetrable net of swords!

“Think about it carefully. If they could blow up the starships that are moving at a high speed, isn’t Manjusaka, which is fixed above the atmosphere, like a dummy target that will be shot down in no time?

“In that case, doesn’t the control center of the ‘global sword net’ count as a powerful ‘temple’?

“Inside such an enormous secret control center, some of the operators in the old days chose ‘artificial hibernation’ and went to the ‘standby’ state together with the control center. Doesn’t it make perfect sense?

“As long as we can find the control center and activate the ‘global sword net’ again, we will have a good chance of blowing up the City in the Sky. What do you think?”

The Fist King and Xiahou Wuxin were both slightly dazed. Looking at each other, they fell deep in thought.

Even Li Yao was quite surprised. He did not expect the truth of ‘the Cultivators who had been lost for a thousand years’ to be like that. However…

“The story is still illogical,” the Fist King said. “If such a ‘global sword net’ did exist, why was it not activated when the ‘Judgment War’ took place and the starships of the Immortal Cultivators came to attack the planet? If it was activated, the Immortal Cultivators must’ve located all the weapon launch platforms and destroyed all of them.”

Chapter 2050 - Fall of the Firmament!

“It is indeed illogical, but it is a sad fact, because the system of ‘global sword net’ was not established to resist the Immortal Cultivators from outer space at all.”

Wei Longtao sighed and furrowed his eyebrows that were as thick as a broom.

“In the years when the ‘global sword net’ was established, the Martial Meritocrats Civilization did not know the first thing about the horror of the Immortal Cultivators yet. The imaginary enemy of the system was the people of the Sand Primitive Sector.”

The Fist King, Xiahou Wuxin, and all the bandits were stunned. “Sand Primitive Sector?”

Even Li Yao was somewhat taken aback.

Of course, he knew about the Sand Primitive Sector. Years ago, the Martial Meritocrats Sector, which was relatively developed, discovered the Sand Primitive Sector, which was relatively uncivilized and underdeveloped. A lot of bottom-level workers were introduced from the Sand Primitive Sector and given excessive rights. Eventually, the contradictions in various aspects escalated, which led to such an evil freak named ‘Blackstar the Great’ and his even eviler Imperium of True Human Beings.

Once he heard the familiar name from Wei Longtao’s mouth, it was at least evident enough that what he said was partly trustworthy.

“The Sand Primitive Sector is a world very close to the Martial Meritocrats Sector,” Wei Longtao explained. “You may understand it as a habitable planet next door. When the two parties were most intimate with each other, the Martial Meritocrats Sector and the Sand Primitive Sector almost entirely merged. But in the end, they somehow ended on bad terms and tried to destroy each other through whatever means possible.

“The Sand Primitive Sector was far weaker than the Martial Meritocrats Sector in terms of civilization level and technology reserves, but it had a greater population who were good at fighting skills. It had also received tremendous military aid from the Martial Meritocrats Sector, which allowed it to build a swarm of starships that were like locusts. Although the starships were crude and nothing more than iron coffins, they would still deal a heavy blow to the Martial Meritocrats Sector if a war of attrition arose.

“That was why the Martial Meritocrats Sector built such an enormous ‘global sword net’ after so much trouble, hoping to resist the assault of the Sand Primitive Sector that would be like pestilence.”

The sinners in the Land of Sins considered themselves the descendants of the Martial Meritocrats Sector. Naturally, they took their ancestors’ side and clenched their fists, asking, “What happened later? Was the aggression of the Sand Primitive Sector stopped?”

There were hints of mockery and pain in Wei Longtao’s eyes as he shook his head. “No. Technically speaking, the ‘global sword net’ could probably have resisted the attack of a super fleet. But the strongest fortresses are always breached from within. The ‘global sword net’ was not activated at all before it was secretly sabotaged by a certain virus that the spies of the Sand Primitive Sector implanted.

“Another theory holds that the plan to build a global sword net was a scheme of the Sand Primitive Sector after all. The gigantic, wasteful super system was meant to drain whatever remained of the resources of the Martial Meritocrats Sector after a hundred years of struggles. But everything happened a thousand years ago. Who can tell what really happened?

“All in all, there is no need to sigh for the idiocies of the people of the Martial Meritocrats Sector or loathe people of the Sand Primitive Sector.

“Firstly, soon after the Sand Primitive Sector completely defeated the Martial Meritocrats Sector and controlled it, they were all brutally suppressed by the Immortal Cultivators from outer space. Almost all of them were slaughtered. They became the victims of their own scheme.

“Secondly, the sinners in the Land of Sins today are in fact the descendants of the Martial Meritocrats Sector and the Sand Primitive Sector after assimilation. It is possible that our ancestors dozens of generations ago were the tough, brutal, and bloodthirsty people of the Sand Primitive Sector. That is probably why the blood of the sinners today is filled with so much violence and cruelty.

“In any case, the conflicts between the Martial Meritocrats Sector and the Sand Primitive Sector date back to a thousand years ago. It is not the key of our discussion today. All we need to know is that such a long-sealed control center of a global sword net likely exists in perfect condition, despite the temporary paralysis because of some viruses implanted on the mainframe crystal processor.

“The viruses from a thousand years ago, on the other hand, should be more or less decryptable with our technology today.”

The Fist King’s man-made eyes glittered for a long time before he nodded. “If you put it that way, the whole thing is at least self-consistent in logic.”

“Of course. This operation is a wild gamble for ‘Starlight’. We will certainly not joke on the precious lives of countless warriors,” Wei Longtao said. “During the ‘Judgment War’, and in the period of chaos after the war when the sky was not blocked, a lot of our resistance warriors escaped into space. They never abandoned their beliefs as Cultivators but simply regrouped and continued fighting unpredictable guerilla battles!

“Today, in order to cope with another enormous war, the Imperium of True Human Beings has been levying heavy taxes, and its tyranny is even crueler and more rigorous, raising the opposition of the common folk. The voices of the Cultivators that had sunk for hundreds of years are now loud again. Countless people cannot wait to overthrow the reign of the Imperium and create a universe of brightness and justice!

“Now, the branch of Starlight that persists in resistance in the sea of stars has secretly gathered an enormous fleet and snuck to somewhere near the Martial Meritocrats Sector.

“As long as we can find the control center of the ‘global sword net’ and launch a destructive strike at Manjusaka from the ground, our fellow Cultivators in space will immediately collaborate with us to shatter the nightmare that has continued for hundreds of years. Those high and mighty Immortal Cultivators will taste the feeling of the fall of the firmament!

“We have spent decades exploring the underground world and searching for traces and intelligence that were hidden among the rocks. Finally, we ascertained that the ‘control center’ is not far away from here.

“But to locate the specific coordinates and to defeat the hunting and besieging Immortal Cultivators, we have paid a heavy price. Countless fellow Cultivators embraced eternal sleep in the sunless rocks and holes.

“We are now seriously short of hands. Should we encounter emergencies in the ‘temple’, it may be difficult for us to deal with them.

“But the arrows are already nocked on the bow, and they must be fired. The Immortal Cultivators have more or less learned of our operation, and our secret fleet in space cannot hide for long. A general attack must be launched within a fortnight!

“Therefore, we had to invite you here by resorting to tricks, hoping that you could join the great cause!”

Wei Longtao’s eyes grew brighter and brighter. He extended his hands toward the Fist King and Xiahou Wuxin and said in the most sincere way, “Whoever you were in the past, and whatever ideals and ambitions you might have, we are all caught in desperation with no way out now.

“It is absolutely impossible for the Immortal Cultivators to let go of you. I have released all the most classified information to the public, too. So, please give us a hand. Help us, help yourselves, and help everyone in the Land of Sins to shoot down the City in the Sky!”

The eyes of a lot of tough bandits were bloodshot.

Even the bandits and thugs who remained calm understood their situation perfectly. Killing someone to keep their mouth shut was certainly not strange to them.

Now that they had already been dragged onto the boat, it was impossible for them to get off without drowning.

A lot of the bandits were breathing heavily.

The Fist King’s man-made eyes were still flashing.

Xiahou Wuxin hurried to say, “This is an important decision. The brothers here need to think about it.”

Wei Longtao smiled and said, “Of course. We will rest here for another two to three days. I hope the time is enough for all of you to think everything through. You can also get more familiar with Starlight and see with your own eyes what ‘Cultivators’ actually are.

“I believe that none of you are scared of death after fighting through mountains of corpses and oceans of blood in the Land of Sins. You only want to die a valuable death. What kind of death could be more awesome and spectacular than perishing together with Manjusaka? If we are truly able to accomplish such a feat, our names will still echo in the wind in the Land of Sins for hundreds of years!”

The Fist King’s man-made eyes were uttering cracking sounds as he thought quickly. He asked one last question. “Commander Wei, there is one other thing that I want to know. The Immortal Cultivators’ forces must include more than just Manjusaka. Even if we can truly destroy it, how are we going to deal with the reinforcements of the Immortal Cultivators that will swarm over?”

“It is true that a minor City in the Sky is just a drop in the bucket for the enormous forces of the Immortal Cultivators.” Wei Longtao did not disguise their weakness at all. Or rather, the weakness only made the light of daydreaming in his eyes even more brilliant and scorching. “As the saying goes, well begun is half done. If we cannot clear the drop of water from the bucket, how can we expect to break the bucket that has swallowed the entire universe?

“For the past thousand years, the sea of stars reigned by the Imperium of True Human Beings has been absolute darkness. Not only is there no light at all, it has also raised a batch of people who absolutely do not believe that light exists in the world.

“Our operation to destroy Manjusaka may not be enough to drive away all the darkness, but it will at least raise several feeble sparks, which will tell the people who are living in the darkness that light does exist, and this is exactly what so-called ‘light’ is!

“When there is a first, there will be a second; when there is a second, there will be a third. Even if we have all sacrificed ourselves and turned into burning moths, we will at least spray the brilliant sparks in every direction in the sea of stars and to the hearts of the people who are swallowed and nurtured by the darkness. They will no longer bear the darkness that they are used to. They will shout, they will riot, and they will release their own light and heat!

“This is the significance of Starlight’s risky all-out attack on Manjusaka.

“Whether we win or lose, as long as somebody rises to resist as the first rebel, more and more followers will crush the Immortal Cultivators’ reign that is not half as steady as it appears, until the old world is smashed into pieces and a new world that is much brighter is established!”

Wei Longtao waved his fist hard, as if he had really bashed the Imperium of True Human Beings into smithereens.

His big eyes that were as bright as morning stars made everybody, including Li Yao, grow respectful for him.

Chapter 2051 - Yesterday Starlight!

Perhaps because Zuo Jingyun was particularly fond of Han Te and Liu Li, or perhaps because the Fist King specified it, ‘Starlight’ prepared an independent room for the two of them, which was a dark cave on the wall of the mine.

Although the cave was dark and narrow, with broken rocks occasionally falling from above, the environment was still much better than the company of other bandits and thugs, where the stench of sweat and blood was disgusting.

After the bloody battles in Liberty City, Han Te and Liu Li had grown a lot in only a few days. They did not have the naivety they had when they just left the Village of Peace.

At this moment, they were not panicked or confused at all; they simply bulged their black, glittering eyes while observing the starry light outside, which belonged to the pale-skinned members of Starlight, who were busy attending to their ‘earthly dragons’.

Li Yao observed the two of them from the back in silence, capturing every subtle change of feelings on their faces. He noticed a lot of mixed feelings within himself again.

Once upon a time, he had thought that he was the unluckiest man in the world, and his rise against all the unfavorable circumstances in the past was a soul-stirring legend. He did not think that he could find a second being in the entire universe who had as abundant and unique experience as him.

However, compared to Han Te and Liu Li, his ‘harsh life’ in the magical equipment graveyard in the past could almost be called peaceful.

The sea of stars was too vast and boundless. Everybody living among the stars had their own bizarre, soul-stirring stories. If the two little fellows were lucky enough to escape from the Land of Sins, who could say that they would not have more exciting adventures in the future and accomplish greater achievements than Vulture Li Yao?

Seeing the two of them jumping from confused to exclaiming to excitement, Li Yao secretly made up his mind. Even if he could not save everybody in the Land of Sins, he would at least try his best to bring a whole different future to Han Te and Liu Li!

“After everything we’ve been through, do you have no surprise or fear at all?” Li Yao could not help but smile. “Your nerves are rather thick.”

“Huh?” Han Te and Liu Li turned back. The boy scratched his hair and looked at the girl. “What’s there to be surprised about and feared?”

“Everything,” Li Yao said. “For example, ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie as an artificial intelligence, the truths of the Land of Sins and the City in the Sky, and the desperate counterattack that is about to be launched by ‘Starlight’. To be honest, at your age, I seemed to be occupied with love struggles with other people. Never in my dreams would I have imagined that someone at my age could be involved in such great events.”

“Love struggles?”

Brilliance that looked like colliding brooks emitted out of Liu Li's eyes. She asked with both surprise and delight, "Grandpa, have you recovered your memories?"

Li Yao was immediately lost for words.

If his soul could cough, he would certainly cough for half a minute to cover his embarrassment.

"I was indeed a bit feared at the beginning, but on second thought, there was really nothing to be scared and worried about. We are the children of the Land of Sins after all, and we have seen too many such scenes!" Han Te held his head high, pretending that he was a knowledgeable person. "I do not know much about artificial intelligences, but the Fist King does not strike me as a bad person. He is at least no worse than other people."

"Indeed."

Sitting against the wall, Liu Li held her knees and crouched, saying thoughtfully, "I don't know what 'artificial intelligence' actually is or how they are different from real human beings. But we have seen too many heinous guys in the Land of Sins. Some of them barraged crowds for no reason because they were not feeling very good. Some installed sawtooth wheels before the crystal tanks and charged into the crowd only because they were feeling good. Some even skinned people and asked the bleeding victims to dance before them until death.

"Those guys are terrible enough. But compared to the terrible people in Manjusaka, they are not worth mentioning at all.

"Whenever I think about what those dreadful people have been doing, I can't help but tremble and feel like vomiting.

But all of them are living human beings made of flesh and blood, like me and Han Te.

“Then, why should we be concerned about artificial intelligences? You are both some sort of special artificial intelligences, but it doesn’t matter as long as both of you are good guys!”

While speaking, the little girl puffed her cheeks and gave Li Yao such a brilliant smile that he was almost caught in a trance.

Looking at Li Yao, Han Te said carefully, “What Starlight is going to do must be very dangerous, but I am not scared at all. If anything, I feel that I’m lucky.

“I feel lucky that I found Grandpa Yao deep inside the ruins and a vaster and more splendid world from there. I learned that the life in the Village of Peace in the Desolate World was not the only life. There’s also Starlight and the earthly dragons, as well as heroes such as Zuo Jingyun and Wei Longtao.

“Perhaps I am overestimating myself, but I want to become a hero like them. I really do!”

“It is dangerous to be a hero,” Li Yao observed.

Han Te scratched his nose and chuckled. “Then… I must blame you, ‘Grandpa Yao’. Who told you to show us such a spectacular world? After everything in the past month, how can we return to our life in the Village of Peace in a Desolate World?”

“Yes. It is exactly like what Uncle Wei Longtao said,” Liu Li added. “If one has always lived in the darkness, has never seen any light, and does not even believe in the existence of light from the bottom of their heart, living such an ignorant and sunless life doesn’t mean anything.

“However, as long as they see a ray of light or even a feeble spark, they will no longer be able to bear the suffocating darkness anymore, will they?

“Right now, we have seen not a spark but the most brilliant fireworks. Grandpa Yao, Master Fist King, Leader Xiahou, Zuo Jingyun, Wei Longtao… Since we are fighting side by side with so many heroes, we cannot return to the past anymore. We can only stride forward to where the most light is. Am I right, Han Te?”

“Yes. That’s exactly what we are going to do.” Han Te grinned carefreely. “Besides, there is still Grandpa Yao. With Grandpa Yao’s help, we will absolutely blow up Manjusaka!”

Li Yao could not help but smile when he saw the boy and the girl’s innocent and fearless smiles.

“It seems that I really must do my best now,” he mumbled. “Otherwise, I won’t deserve to be your ‘Grandpa Yao’ at all!”

The chains outside began to clatter, and the Fist King’s tall and lofty body appeared at the entrance.

The two little fellows greeted him. “Master Fist King!”

“I just went to meet Wei Longtao, the general commander here, and discussed some details with him.”

The Fist King bent his back, walked in, and sat next to Li Yao. He appeared to be talking to the two little fellows, but he was actually communicating with Li Yao.

“Everything Wei Longtao said corroborates the intelligence that I collected from the sanctuary of the Martial Meritocrats Civilization. There are not too many loopholes. It is very possible that the ‘temple’ of Cultivators does exist.”

“Is that so?” Li Yao was refreshed. “Right. You mentioned yesterday that you could share the journals and last words of the people of the Martial Meritocrats Sector in the sanctuary with us after we settled down, didn’t you?”

The Fist King paused for a moment. His crystal processor hummed for a while, and extremely thin threads of light soon darted out, outlining vivid, emotional faces in midair.

One of the faces, which looked hideous and panicked, was enlarged by the Fist King. An intermittent, shivering voice came over.

“Lord Chiyou, please tell your most pious believers why everything has ended like this. Everything we did, we did under your guidance! We obviously secured a triumph and conquered the two worlds. But why have so many dreadful Immortal Cultivators arrived from the sky?

“Is this your punishment for us? Did we misunderstand you? Were we really wrong?

“No. It is impossible. We were not wrong. We absolutely were not wrong! Please give your most loyal warriors some more enlightenment!”

The muscular man on the light beam recited Chiyou’s name with a twisted and weird expression, until the brilliance in his eyes was lost and his life was gone with the wind.

“They are the last words of a warrior of the Chiyou Cult.”

While transmitting tremendous data to Li Yao’s crystal processor, the Fist King explained, “The Chiyou Cult was a mainstream religion in the Sand Primitive Sector. The believers of the Chiyou Cult were the most elite warriors of their world. His last words proved that a brief war between the Martial Meritocrats Sector and the Sand Primitive Sector did take place a long, long time ago and ended with the Sand Primitive Sector’s victory.”

The avatar of the hideous warrior of the Chiyou Cult was gone, replaced by the big head of a twelve-year-old girl. She seemed severely malnourished, and her head took all the supplies of her body. Her slim neck could not hold the weight of her head anymore, making her only able to lie on the bed.

“Dad…” The little girl who had turned into dry bones hundreds of years ago was hugging a ragged toy dog as if she was holding her entire world. “Mom said that you went to the sky to fight the bad guys, and every brilliant star is the light of your battles. She also said that as long as I behaved, the light of the stars would eventually illuminate our land again.

“I have always been a good girl, but my mother went somewhere far, far away now, too, and I am left alone now. Dad, when will you come back? This place is dark. I’m so scared. It’s been a long time since I last saw the starlight, too. Dad…”

“‘Starlight’ is a word that appeared in the journals and last words of a lot of people,” the Fist King analyzed coldly. “At first, I thought that it was some sort of rhetorical device. But now that I think of it, it must be referring to ‘Starlight’ as an organization. At the very least, during the last years of the ‘Judgment War’, the massive resistance organization had already been born, and some of the resisters broke the blockage into the sea of stars.”

Chapter 2052 - Gentle Zuo Jingyun

Looking at the ill and devastated child, Li Yao could not help but feel sorrowful.

The Fist King continued projecting the third paragraph of last words, which belonged to a skinny man whose big eyes were filled with sadness.

“…Today is March 4th, 1855. This is Shelter 668. Yesterday, our last companion left this world. I am the only living man in the shelter right now.

“The air circulation system has been seriously damaged. The food has been used up, too. Whatever’s left of my life can only be measured by ‘minutes’ now. In a certain number of ‘minutes’, this shelter will become a dead tomb, which will probably not be discovered in the next thousand years. Let’s hope so!

“In the past half a year, I sorted and gathered the journals and last words of everyone in the shelter. Together with the books, jade chips, and crystal processors we brought from the ground, I preserved them in a vacuum.

“The documents have recorded the brilliance and glory of our civilization in the past, as well as the arrogance of us Cultivators, who considered ourselves the guardians of the civilization, and the unpardonable mistakes we made behind the brilliance and glory.

“I hope that somebody will see everything in a thousand years and realize how naïve, childish, blind, hypocritic, and idiotic the Cultivators in the past were, and how zealous, ignorant, violent, and easily manipulated the mass were.

“I hope—I hope that people in the future will not make the same mistake that the Martial Meritocrats Sector made, but I hope more that you will not walk on the opposite side and become monsters like the Immortal Cultivators.

“I hope that Cultivators will still exist in the world in a thousand years, ones who are more intelligent, wise, and rational than us. Then, they will lead the seemingly zealous, ignorant, and violent people to resolve the problems that we did not have enough wisdom and courage to resolve so that they will struggle to walk on in the darkness of the universe.

“However zealous, idiotic, ignorant, selfish, and evil they may be, there is still hope for human beings, right? Right…”

The last Cultivator a thousand years ago mumbled. His voice became more and more feeble, and the picture gradually faded out.

The Fist King opened his fingers, extending five crystal wires from his palm into the data transmission holes on Li Yao’s back to transmit the journals and last words of all the Cultivators, Chiyou cultists, and ordinary people in the underground sanctuary.

Li Yao immediately sensed the joy and sorrow of countless people, the struggle of countless souls in darkness and desperation, and their repentance.

Han Te and Liu Li held their hands and loosened them again and again. In the end, they held each other’s hands and declared solemnly, “Yes. In any case, we will never become Immortal Cultivators. Never!”

Calming himself down, Li Yao pondered for a moment and asked, “So, was Wei Longtao speaking the truth?”

“99.5% of what he said must be true,” the Fist King said. “However, he seems to be overenthusiastic about my current iron body. He has been beating around the bush to ask me how I managed to escape from my doom and how the body was created. He does not seem convinced that I could have crafted such a perfect slaughter machine. Of course, his guess is correct. It’s true that I can’t.”

Li Yao was somewhat alarmed. “This is a very important mission. Since we have gotten involved in it, it is only natural for him to want to figure out every detail. He can’t be too prudent.”

“If he were prudent, he shouldn’t have rescued us at such great risk,” the Fist King analyzed rationally. “Even if he did risk saving us, there was no need for him to bring us to the secret base where dozens of ‘earthly dragons’ have been gathered. If the Immortal Cultivators were to trace us back to this place, wouldn’t all of them be fished up?

“He could have asked Zuo Jingyun to drill her earthly dragon into a wasted mine thousands of kilometers away for careful scrutiny and vetting. In that case, even if the Immortal Cultivators discovered our tracks, the loss would only be Zuo Jingyun’s earthly dragon. Do you not feel that it should’ve been the most normal approach for a commander of a secret resistance organization?”

Li Yao’s soul rippled out. He finally understood why he vaguely felt ill at ease at the beginning.

The Fist King was right. Wei Longtao’s decision was reckless.

If the commander of ‘Starlight’ in the Land of Sins was such a straightforward iron-blooded general, it would have been impossible for the organization to persist to this day under the relentless assault of Manjusaka.

The man was reckless in the major decisions but prudent in the minor details. He had also appeared at the best and most critical moment. What kind of truth was hidden behind all the anomalies?

“Also, he seems particularly interested in Han Te and Liu Li,” the Fist King said casually. “More precisely speaking, he is very interested in you.”

“Me?” Li Yao’s soul was disturbed, and his computational ability soared.

“He mentioned Han Te and Liu Li incidentally and asked if they were my family and whether their spiritual puppet and beast puppet, referring to your two clones, were produced by me,” the Fist King said. “Although he pretended to be casual, I sensed that something was not right from the constrictions of his facial muscles and his pupils.”

“You did not tell him who I really was, right?” The more Li Yao thought about it, the weirder it felt.

“Of course not,” the Fist King said calmly. “After careful analysis for a long time, I feel that my secrets are likely to have been exposed. But I do not want another spiritual puppet with such advanced automatic learning and upgrading functions to be discovered by the City in the Sky. By my calculation, keeping your secrets will improve the odds of blowing up Manjusaka so that I will have a greater likelihood to be stronger!”

Li Yao did not know how he should explain himself to make the Fist King believe that he was not his own kind.

Right then, the chains outside rang again. The magnificent shadow of Zuo Jingyun, the one-armed female warrior, blocked the light from the entrance of the cave.

Li Yao hurried to retreat his telepathic thoughts and the brightness inside his eyes, disguising both the Tarantula and Fiend Star as regular puppets.

The Fist King’s man-made eyes flashed. Looking at her, he asked, “Conductor Zuo, did Commander Wei send you here?”

Zuo Jingyun was slightly dazed. Her cold metal arm was carrying two fluffy quilts, and her right hand was holding some food and simple medicine. Nodding, she said, “Yes. Commander Wei asked me to check if you needed anything. I thought that the cave might be too dark and damp for the two little fellows’ bodies, so I decided to bring two quilts for you.”

“We are not ‘little’ at all!”

Hiding behind the Fist King, Liu Li grabbed the Fist King’s dented fist and craned her head out from behind the Fist King’s arm. Summoning her courage, she said, “Han Te and I are brave warriors, too. We will be heroes and Cultivators in the future!”

“You want to be Cultivators, too?” Zuo Jingyun chuckled in astonishment. Illuminated under the dim light, the contours of her face somehow became gentle. As long as she was not faced with the ferocious bandits and thugs, she did not seem as taciturn and unapproachable as they thought.

She helped the two little fellows make their beds and opened the food boxes, revealing the hot, synthesized food inside. Naturally, it did not taste as good as the pure natural ingredients that the Fist King treated them to the previous night, but it did smell delicious enough.

“You are hurt. Come here. Let me clean your injury for you.”

She beckoned Liu Li over, but then she seized Liu Li impatiently and pressed her on her round and healthy legs. Smiling casually, she asked, “Do you even know what a ‘Cultivator’ is when you are talking your nonsense? I’m rather curious. You are obviously from the Desolate Worlds. How on earth did you become an acquaintance of the Fist King, the most dreadful bandit in the Land of Sins? Neither Liberty City nor the underground world is a place that little guys like you should visit.”

“I said that we are not ‘little’!” Liu Li struggled hard on Zuo Jingyun’s leg. Blushing, she argued, not convinced at all, “Of course we know what a ‘Cultivator’ is. My mother was a Cultivator!”

“Is that so?” Zuo Jingyun stopped applying the medicine to the girl’s arm. The frost on her face completely melted, and she asked with great interest, “What’s her story?”

Liu Li looked at Han Te and, biting her lips, told her origins exactly as it was, but naturally hiding the parts where Li Yao was involved. She only said that Han Te and her were both gifted puppeteers, and ‘Fiend Star’ and the ‘Tarantula’ were the best battle puppets in the village.

“My mother entrusted the mission to plant the Gold Barley to my father before she passed away, and the mission has been passed on from my father to me. Look. They are the seeds of the Gold Barley that I have been carrying with me.

One day, I will grow the Gold Barley all over the land so that everybody's stomach will be filled!"

Liu Li presented the Gold Barley very proudly and sent it before Zuo Jingyun's nose. She said, "Sister Yun, do you think that my parents are qualified to be called 'Cultivators'?"

Zuo Jingyun did not expect that the two little fellows had such a background. Staring at the can of Gold Barley seeds for a long time in a daze, she said thoughtfully, "That's right. I was told by someone in the organization that we indeed sent some warriors to travel in the Land of Sins and disseminate the ideology of the Cultivators a long, long time ago, hoping to make the flowers of hope blossom in the most barren deserts.

"However, such a practice was too dangerous. Many fellow Cultivators were discovered and captured by Manjusaka. Even if they weren't, they were mostly taken by the sinners in the Land of Sins for idiots or lunatics. Because of the unsatisfactory result, the practice slowly came to an end.

"I did not know that the seeds we planted in the past really flowered and fruited. How beautiful the seeds of the Gold Barley are."

Closing her eyes and taking a deep breath of the fragrance, she looked at the two little fellows in a completely different way when she opened her eyes again.

"Of course your father and your mother are qualified to be called Cultivators. I believe that the two of you will grow into awesome Cultivators in the future, too!"

Chapter 2053 - Underground Pas

“Great!” Liu Li exclaimed in joy, only to grimace in pain because she accidentally moved the bruise on her body. She then winked at Han Te and said, “Did you hear? Sister Yun believes that we will grow into Cultivators!”

“Sister Yun…” Gulping down the synthesized food that Zuo Jingyun had brought over, Han Te smiled, somewhat embarrassed. “I did not expect you to be such an amiable person. When we saw you on the earthly dragon earlier, we thought that you were a real mean woman!

“Speaking of which, other than my masteress, you are the first real-life Cultivator that we have met. There is so much we want to know about the Cultivators and Starlight. Can you tell us more about them?”

“Yes,” Liu Li said. “We only know a thing or two about the Cultivators. What exactly do we need to do in order to become Cultivators? What can we possibly change the world into? Can you tell us the answers, Sister Yun?”

Zuo Jingyun coughed lightly and began to hesitate. With a bitter smile, she replied, “In fact, I do not know much more about the Cultivators than you. I often question whether or not someone like me is qualified to be called a real Cultivator, or if I’m just a counterfeit among those great people. Sometimes, I also wonder about the significance of Starlight’s struggle.”

“Well…” Liu Li and Han Te looked at each other in bewilderment. Then, they glimpsed at Li Yao in confusion, too. “Why?”

“The dull theories are always boring to talk about. How about this? Let me tell you my story.” Zuo Jingyun combed Liu Li’s hair with her cold, rigid metal fingers subconsciously. “Do you want to hear it?”

“Yes, of course we do!” Liu Li and Han Te nodded at the same time.

“I was sort of born into ‘Starlight’. Unlike you, who were born and raised under the violent and vicious sunlight in the Land of Sins, I grew up inside a fulminating earthly dragon deep below ground.”

Caught in the memories from a long time ago, Zuo Jingyun was somewhat in a daze. She mumbled, “My hometown was a very, very long earthly dragon. My mother was a mechanic of the vehicle, and my father was a warrior and an explorer.

“Ever since I can remember, the noise of drills shattering rocks has filled my ears. There was nothing but bumps and quakes below my feet. As far as my eyes could reach, the whole world was a long, narrow pathway, and it was the pitch dark rocks outside of the pathway. Occasionally, the starry, colorful minerals could be found.

“Do you know? For a long time, I even thought that the whole world was just a hard and suffocating rock, and human beings made their living by digging holes in the rocks like metal bugs. I could not imagine mountains, rivers, the blue sky, or the white clouds, not to mention the infinite sea of stars that’s millions of times vaster than the sky.

“My whole world was exactly such a long, narrow channel, with the complicated gears and dials, the leaky tubes, and the flavorless synthesized food.

“The adults were busy at work twenty-four hours a day. The earthly dragon would encounter all kinds of bizarre faults every second, and we often encountered rocks or even metals that were too hard to pass through. Everybody screamed and shouted in the middle of the steam, banging their wrenches and drills loudly. The children like me would follow them and learn how to maintain and maneuver the earthly dragon and how to distinguish the thousands of minerals and metal resources from the moment we knew how to talk.

“At that time, everybody was occupied with only two things.

“Firstly, drilling the underground world and searching for the mines and city ruins left by the Martial Meritocrats Sector a thousand years ago. The pitiful fuel, food, and other resources that we excavated maintained the functioning of the earthly dragon and our internal organs.

“Secondly, avoiding the penetrators sent by Manjusaka. If we could not, we would be engaged in fierce battles with them in the underground world.

“The penetrators sent by the Immortal Cultivators did not need to carry civilians but only accommodated the most fundamental warriors. So, they were much swifter and more violent. But after all, they were searching a large range. All we needed to do was lurk and hide in silence. Also, because our ancestors had lived hundreds of years below the ground, we were practically the natives of the place, and we were as familiar with the complicated terrain as we were the lines on our palms. Therefore, the two parties were generally on par with each other. We were able to slip through their fingers every single time.

“Of course, I was too young to know what Manjusaka was or the difference between ‘Cultivators’ and ‘Immortal Cultivators’. I thought that the brutal penetrators were our natural enemies and that they were attacking us by the same logic as eagles hunting rabbits.

“Every earthly dragon was a moving village. Occasionally, a lot of earthly dragons would gather to exchange assets and information and to perform large-scale maintenance and upgrade. Those days would be the greatest festival for all of us. The children would even decorate the earthly dragon of their ‘village’ with all kinds of paint and compete on the awesomeness and beautifulness of the earthly dragons.

“However, in my childhood, such festivals were rare. The sieges of the Immortal Cultivators on us increasing in frequency, and the dragnets they established grew ever more thorough. A lot of earthly dragons were discovered by them and blocked in tunnels and caves when billions of tons of rocks were detonated by their crystal bombs. Our earthly dragon suffered several attacks, too. We lost a third of our cars and almost half of the crew.

“In such a desperate war, I gradually learned everything from my parents. I learned about the glorious history of the Cultivators and Starlight, and how foul the ‘Immortal Cultivators’ from Manjusaka were.

“At that time, I laughed at many of my parents’ theories, and I did not think that the Cultivators or Starlight were ‘glorious’ at all.

“My parents told me that the Cultivators were the pride and hope for the civilization of mankind, and Starlight would certainly deal a heavy blow to the Immortal Cultivators after resisting for hundreds of years below the ground.

“At that time, I was younger than you are right now, but I could vaguely tell that my parents were bluffing. There was the blue sky, the white clouds, and the boundless sea of stars outside, as well as countless sinners suffering miserable tortures who were waiting for us to come to their salvation. But we were pressed and beaten hard in the underground world like tortoises, living nomadic, panicked lives every day. What kind of ‘pride’ and ‘hope’ could such Cultivators have brought? And how were they ‘glorious’ in any sense?

“Also, we were attacked all the time, and the situation looked worse and worse. I met a lot of my friends only once in the gatherings before I heard that their earthly dragons had been discovered by the Immortal Cultivators and crushed together with themselves. Then, what kind of ‘heavy blow’ did we deal to the Immortal Cultivators? Was it the drills and the fuel of the enemy’s that we forced them to consume?

“All in all, I was in the rebellious phase of my life. I did not feel that being a Cultivator was anything remarkable. I even thought that I was terribly unlucky to have been born in an earthly dragon of ‘Starlight’ and to be forced to live such a lackluster and hopeless life. I dreamed every day of escaping from the underground world, from Starlight, and from the goddamn Cultivators, to the brilliant sunlight where I could live an unburdened, unrestrained, and entirely different life.

“Such a day finally came.

"Because of the serious shortage of hands, we were forced to recruit new members on the surface. It was the first time I had gotten in touch with real sunlight, breathed fresh air, and seen the large, fluffy clouds in the sky. I screamed and roared in such ecstasy that my voice must've flown to the horizon.

"To this day, I cannot forget the feeling when the first ray of sunlight pierced through my pupils and made me blind for ten minutes.

"We found a bunch of bandits or slaves in one of the Bloody Worlds. They used to be a very influential gang in the local area, but because they were too big, they were annihilated by the coalition of almost ten gangs. The few survivors left had turned into slaves.

"We destroyed the gangs and rescued the slaves. After interrogation and vetting, some of them who could be educated were brought to the underground world with us.

"After that…"

Zuo Jingyun's voice became hoarse and disrupted. Pain quickly flashed on her face, and she could not help but scratch the joint of her left shoulder and the metal arm.

Intrigued by the story, Liu Li and Han Te could not help but ask, "What happened after that?"

Frowning, Zuo Jingyun said, "Later, one of the slaves betrayed us and led a large batch of Immortal Cultivators to us. The earthly dragon that I was born and raised in was completely destroyed. Both of my parents died in fighting. I lost my left arm but struggled to escape to the ruins of an underground city, managing to survive the disaster."

“Ah!” Liu Li’s eyes widened as she lowered her head somewhat in embarrassment. Thinking for a moment, she grabbed Zuo Jingyun’s right hand and said, “I’m sorry, Sister Yun.”

It was not until this moment that Li Yao and the Fist King finally realized why Zuo Jingyun was so hostile to the bandits and thugs from the Land of Sins. They could not help but grow fonder of the one-armed female warrior.

Zuo Jingyun smiled and touched Liu Li’s head with her artificial arm. She said, “It was something that happened a long, long time ago, which I have almost forgotten. You have nothing to feel sorry for.

“Ever since that moment, I have stopped thinking of the golden sunlight, the blue sky, the white clouds, and the winds of freedom. All that is on my mind is revenge.

“Although I do not understand the concept of being a ‘Cultivator’ very well, it can’t be wrong to go against the ‘Immortal Cultivators’ and butcher them as well as their accomplices, right?”

Chapter 2054 - What Are You Suspicious Of?

Liu Li watched the scar on Zuo Jingyun’s left shoulder where the flesh was connected to the metal arm pitifully. She wanted to touch it, but she did not have enough courage. She asked in a low voice, “Then, how did you survive in the end, Sister Yun?”

“Wei Longtao saved me.”

Indescribable brilliance suddenly beamed out of Zuo Jingyun’s face, and even her voice was more refreshing than before. “He is a real hero and a real Cultivator. Many people in Starlight today were saved by him. They have all been united by his charisma and his dominating strength.

“Before Wei Longtao, ‘Starlight’ had lost its significance as a real organization although it was still catching its last breath. The descendants of the Cultivators in the past such were merely dodging the pursuit of the Immortal Cultivators with the ‘earthly dragons’ or launching suicidal attacks at the Immortal Cultivators with our hot blood, consumed by the fury of revenge. We could not hurt the Immortal Cultivators at all.

“Starlight at that time was a tray of loose sand where everybody minded their own business. We were ghosts and homeless dogs wandering below the ground.

“Wei Longtao’s arrival completely changed everything. He was both the most excellent master of maneuvering and modification for the earthly dragons and a strong, fearless warrior. He drove one earthly dragon against dozens of ‘Sandworm-type’ penetrators on the Immortal Cultivators’ side countless times and accomplished dazzling, unbelievable results every single time, retreating in one piece after blowing up countless penetrators of the Immortal Cultivators and saving a large batch of descendants of the Cultivators. He is the greatest legend of the underground world in the recent hundred years!

“After earning their reputation below the ground and scaring the Immortal Cultivators, he reorganized the disorderly, hopeless descendants of the Cultivators and established new rules and goals for Starlight. He told the confused, desperate, angry, or despondent people what the word ‘Cultivator’ really meant.

“What was most unexpected was that he even figured out a way to reach out to the Starlight that was active in the space, allowing the two branches of the organization to reunite. He even excavated important intelligence on the global sword network.

“It was with his arduous effort that we were able to concentrate all our forces to perform an ultimate counterattack. For hundreds of years, we have been hiding and fleeing in panic below the ground, living in fear every day. Such a cutthroat attack that will likely destroy the City in the Sky is something that we did not dare dream of in the past!

“So, if you ask me what it means to be a Cultivator, I don’t think that I can give you an answer. But I can bring the two of you to Wei Longtao if we have the opportunity so that he can explain it to you in person. Don’t be intimidated by his eyes that are bigger than lamps. He looks rather ferocious, but he is actually quite friendly.”

“So, I am not the only one who thinks that Commander Wei Longtao’s eyes are like lamps!” Han Te blurted out.

Everybody laughed.

Biting her lips, Liu Li said, “That explains a lot. With the leadership of such a great hero like Commander Wei, we will certainly be able to shoot down Manjusaka!”

Zuo Jingyun glanced at the Fist King. With a complicated expression, she said gloomily, “Perhaps you will think that our plan is a bit rash, bordering on daydreaming, but we do not have a choice.

“In fact, the Immortal Cultivators’ searches and sieges in the underground world of the Land of Sins were much weaker more than a hundred years ago. There were even decades when they bothered little about what was going on below the ground. Something happened among them, which gave us an opportunity for a brief development.

“However, in the recent decades, Manjusaka has been supervised by a new leader named Wuying Lan. This is a very tough guy. He has been building up the forces of the sky every day like magic tricks, and the sieges over the underground world are intensifying on a daily basis.

“Even though such a smart and brave expert like Wei Longtao has been leading us to deal with the Immortal Cultivators headed by Wuying Lan, our strength is being diminished every day like a person whose blood is being let out. If we do not perform a counterattack right now, we will die.

“Now that we have reached out to the Cultivators in space and discovered the control center of the global sword network, the legendary ‘temple of Cultivators’, this is certainly the best opportunity we have right now. If we do not take our chances while we still can, we will not even have the strength to fight a desperate counterattack in the future even if we want to!

“Of course, the difficulties and dangers of this mission have been well considered. Everybody is prepared to die a hero’s death. We are scared of neither death nor failure. Even if we fail this time, I believe that everything we’ve been doing will spread into the sea of stars like burning dandelions and into the hearts of countless people. One day, new Cultivators will be born and accomplish what we failed to, overthrowing the evil tyranny of the Immortal Cultivators!”

Han Te and Liu Li were deeply fascinated. They looked at Zuo Jingyun even more admiringly.

Zuo Jingyun smiled, somewhat embarrassed. She pinched Liu Li’s cheeks softly and said, “I seem to be bluffing about us. In fact, we might not be so influential, but we have been hiding below the ground for hundreds of years like turtles, mining and scavenging in the dust or fleeing in panic every day. If we are going to live such a life for another hundreds of years, what kind of Cultivators will we be qualified as?”

Han Te waved his fists and declared solemnly, “Sister Yun, you do have a point. Then, let’s fight side by side with you and shoot down Manjusaka together?”

“You?” Zuo Jingyun was amused. Looking at the Fist King, she remarked, “We were only thinking to recruit some bandits who were caught in a dead end to build up our forces. After all, we thought that everybody involved in the chaos of Liberty City was an atrocious bandit who had also been pushed into desperation by the Immortal Cultivators.

Even if they were indeed killed in our mission, that would not be the worst outcome for them, right?

“But I did not expect that the Fist King would grow interested in your spiritual puppets and even bring you with him. As a result, you have been involved in the perilous mission that you do not deserve at all.”

Pouting her lips, Liu Li said, “Please don’t say that, Sister Yun. If you hadn’t shown up in time to rescue us, we would’ve been swallowed by the disgusting giant lizards!”

“In that case,” Zuo Jingyun said, “I cannot watch you be killed for nothing. Let me think how I should deal with you…”

“There’s no need to think about it. We will stay by Sister Yun’s side on Cloud Penetrator, your earthly dragon!” Han Te bulged his eyes, full of expectation. “This is the Land of Sins. No place is absolutely safe until Manjusaka is blown up! We swear that we will obey your words and never add to your trouble. So, please bring us with you. I want to see Manjusaka falling from the sky with my own eyes!”

“Yes. We will certainly be of great help!” Liu Li also clung to Zuo Jingyun’s clothes and begged. “Let us stay on your train, Sister Yun!”

Zuo Jingyun obviously did not have much experience with kids. Frowning and thinking for a long time, she hesitated. “Well, just get some rest. Let’s talk about it tomorrow. We’ll see what Commander Wei thinks.”

She put Liu Li aside softly and was about to turn around and leave.

Han Te, however, suddenly put on a weird expression and asked abruptly, “Right. Sister Yun, how did you decide to recruit new blood from Liberty City? Was it Commander Wei who came up with the idea?”

“Yes. We would not have done it. After all, if a lot of disobedient guys of unknown backgrounds join our team in a hurry, they will bring forth many unstable factors, which can be even more severe than the inadequacy of personnel.” Zuo Jingyun looked at Han Te suspiciously. “However, since it was Commander Wei’s proposal, there must be deeper meanings to his plan that we cannot understand just yet.

“But it doesn’t matter whether or not we understand it. Commander Wei is never wrong. Before, he proposed many suggestions that sounded even more ridiculous, but the suggestions achieved amazing results every time. It shouldn’t be an exception this time.

“Why do you ask, my young friend?”

“Nothing important.” Han Te scratched his hair rather unnaturally. “I’m just asking because I suddenly thought of the question. Also, about the branch of Starlight in space… How did you reach out to it exactly? Have you seen the Cultivators from space in person? What do they look like?”

“Sort of… Yes.” Zuo Jingyun nodded, somewhat hesitantly. “For safety reasons, Commander Wei has always been talking to the Cultivators in space singlehandedly. The less we know, the better. After all, the Immortal Cultivators have too much technology that can force the critical intelligence from us.

“However, Commander Wei has brought us a lot of video files and promotional pamphlets. I think that it means I have sort of seen the fellow Cultivators from space, haven’t I?

Except for being slimmer and lighter, they do not look very different from us. You can stop your random thoughts, kid!”

Han Te stuck out his tongue and then yawned so hard that he almost squeezed out his tears.

“I have disrupted your rest for too long. I believe that there will be a long time before the two of you can digest and absorb everything that you’ve been through over the past few days.”

Zuo Jingyun smiled and grabbed the chains at the entrance of the cave, disappearing in the abyss of the mine.

The Fist King looked at Han Te and then at Li Yao. He walked to the entrance of the cave and said casually while observing the situation outside, “Why did you make Han Te ask the question? What are you suspicious of?”

“Huh?”

The two little fellows bulged their cheeks and eyeballs again and stared at Li Yao in confusion.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao said, “Can I trust you, Fist King?”

“Of course not. You know that I am just a puppet, an artificial intelligence, that does not have any concept of morals or integrity. Everything I do is based on the guideline and for the purpose of getting stronger. As long as it is favorable for my ultimate goal, I will not hesitate to betray and even kill the three of you at all. So, how on earth can you trust me?”

The Fist King furrowed his metal eyebrow and looked at Li Yao in obvious bewilderment.

“I am really puzzled how your logical circuits are devised. You appear shrewd one moment and then silly the next. How can you not come to such a simple conclusion?”

Chapter 2055 - The Reason to Become Stronger

Li Yao was choked for a long time. Then he said, “Allow me to rephrase it. I can tell that you are a strong-willed man in any sense. So, why don’t we make a deal? Your goal is to be the strongest, isn’t it? I don’t know what exactly the level of ‘strongest’ is, but as long as there are enough resources, time, and refining facilities, I can help you build a super iron body whose comprehensive battle performance will be five times greater than that of your current one. It will certainly be able to keep up with your ever-expanding battle database. How does that sound?”

The Fist King’s crystal processor began to hum noisily again.

“Also, if you prefer the super large magical equipment system like Great Iron City, although I am not particularly good in that field, I can gather tremendous resources and hands to help you build a… transformable starship, if you will, when I have the chance in the future. It will be able to switch freely between the form of a starship and a super-enormous war puppet, and it will be as awesome in appearance as it is in fighting.

“This is not exactly a promise, but it is at least a possibility. After all, you will receive absolutely no help from the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Immortal Cultivators. Should you be captured by them, you will only be dismantled into the most fundamental parts for study. Every crystal chip of yours will be scrutinized until no secrets are left.

“Only in me, and the force that nurtured a monster like myself, lies the possibilities of your further strengthening and upgrading, right?”

The Fist King’s crystal processor, crystal camera, and every crystal chip uttered cracking sounds as he calculated crazily for a minute. Then he said peacefully, “I once heard a piece of interesting intelligence, which stated that the Imperium of True Human Beings was at war against the Alliance of the Holy Covenant, another super force. So, are you from the Alliance of the Holy Covenant? If the answer is yes, I cannot agree to such a deal.

“I have no opinions at all on the Alliance of the Holy Covenant, which seems to be a country where the lives of flesh and blood are refined into cold puppets like me. By the analysis of my logic circuits, it is not necessarily a solution for the survival and development of a civilization that is not worth trying.

“However, if you are from the Covenant Alliance, it will be too dangerous, and the odds of my destruction will be significantly improved if I stay too close to you. My logic circuits and my database tell me that my optimal strategy is to keep as far away from you as possible.”

“You can rest assured about that. I have absolutely nothing to do with the Covenant Alliance,” Li Yao said. “Think of me as someone from a harmless small force for now, one that is weak, unnoticeable, and insignificant.”

“You should really upgrade your deception database to make better lies,” the Fist King said casually. “But go on. What is the deal that we are talking about?”

“Help me protect the two little fellows.” Not embarrassed at all, Li Yao pointed at Han Te and Liu Li. “Until you are destroyed, you must prevent them from being killed no matter the cost. If you can make sure of that, I will not go back on my promise. You will have a much more powerful body produced by me in the future. I can even be your personal technical consultant and explore the infinite possibilities of ‘the strongest’ with you.

“You can see some of my capabilities from my current iron body. So, just boost the computational ability of your crystal processor and calculate the gains that you will earn from the deal!”

The Fist King was truly caught in a daze. Noises that were more and more ear-splitting echoed from the crystal processor. Steam was even popping out from the gaps of the metals.

Grabbing Li Yao’s metal limbs, Han Te and Liu Li exclaimed in surprise, “Grandpa Yao! Why have you asked Master Fist King to protect us? Are you leaving?”

“Yes. I have something very important that is lost in space. I must get it back immediately,” Li Yao said solemnly. “Also, we have discovered ninety-nine percent of the secrets and truths of the Land of Sins. I have some ungrounded speculations, too, about the most critical one percent that remains. However, whether or not the speculations can be proved, and how the conundrums can be resolved if they are—I can’t find the answers to the questions if I stay here.

“The Immortal Cultivators have transformed the Martial Meritocrats Sector into the Land of Sins and an impenetrable iron house that is impossible to be broken from inside. But if there is a way to jump out of the sunless iron house, it may be possible to locate its flaws and demolish it in one attack!”

“Then, take us with you!” Han Te said in excitement. “We are going to fight side by side with you, Grandpa Yao!”

“The whole sky has been blocked by the Immortal Cultivators. Even the Fist King failed to break through it with his Great Iron City. I can only try to sneak out without alarming anyone,” Li Yao said. “The two of you can neither sneak away nor live and fight for a long time in the vacuum of the space. So, it is best that you stay here.

“Staying here is another way of fighting with me. The ‘temple of Cultivators’, the control center of the global sword network, must have some special usages.

“Rest assured. I promise you that I will be back very soon—in a form that you absolutely can’t imagine!”

“Grandpa Yao…” Han Te and Liu Li looked at each other in bewilderment, feeling lost.

The Fist King listened to their conversation in silence and suddenly said, “I have finished my calculation. You are of mysterious origins that you cannot explain, and your capabilities are unpredictable and inestimable. Little data can be used for my deduction. However, by my comprehensive analysis, reaching a deal with you will expand my possibilities of strengthening and upgrading. There is a 78.5% likelihood that it will have positive effects on my goal.

“However, I must figure out one thing first, which concerns the specific methods that I will use to carry out the deal.

“The two little fellows can’t be your family or old friends. What’s so special about them that made you reach a deal with me solemnly to ensure their safety?

“Are they of unknown functions, or are they related to some powerful magical equipment that will make you stronger?”

Li Yao laughed and frankly admitted, “You have got it right this time. The two little fellows can indeed make me, and possibly you, stronger!”

“Oh?” Sharp brilliance beamed out of the Fist King’s crystal cameras as he scanned Han Te and Liu Li. “Would you care to tell me the mechanism?”

“No problem!” Li Yao replied lightheartedly. “The two little fellows are innocent, kind hearted, and lovely. Whenever I see them, I’m in a good mood and can’t help but grow the urge to protect them. If I successfully protect them, I will feel satisfied. After I am satisfied, I will have a better appetite and be more energetic in training. My fighting will be more efficient, too. Am I not stronger because of them?”

After a long silence, the Fist King said, “My self-learning and infinitely-proliferating database allows me to vividly simulate all the feelings and thinking patterns of human beings, including ecstasy, happiness, sorrow, fury, fear, and even ambition. But for me, they are just different policies for survival and fighting. I truly cannot understand the true meaning of those emotions, including the… ‘satisfied’ you mentioned just now.

“Is it important to be satisfied? In my eyes, those two little fellows are burdens for anyone trying to become stronger. They are absolutely worthless.”

“Then, I’m afraid that you couldn’t be more wrong,” Li Yao said. “They are not burdens when trying to become stronger; they are the reason to be stronger.”

“The reason to be stronger? I don’t understand,” the Fist King said.

“You are not strong enough exactly because you don’t understand that. It was also why you were blown up by a minor Manjusaka!” Li Yao poked the Fist King’s shoulder with his metal limb and said solemnly, “Look. It is because I have perceived the enigmatic principle that I am stronger than you. You wouldn’t deny that I am stronger than you, would you?”

“No.” The Fist King shook his head and asked suspiciously, “Does it involve the logic circuits and the survival policy optimization of a higher level?”

“…Possibly,” Li Yao said. “It doesn’t matter if you don’t understand, but a great opportunity has been presented to you. Just try your best to protect the two little fellows and consider it a new training method. When you find your reason to be stronger, I believe that you will certainly be reborn as a… well, a more evolved, advanced super artificial intelligence!”

“I do not need any reason to be stronger,” the Fist King said coldly. “I do not have emotions or self-will. I am not a real life, only a puppet and a machine. My goal is the only reason for me to become stronger.”

“That is not necessarily the case. It’s like how people who live in the darkness below the ground and never see the blue sky and the white clouds think that they do not need light,” Li Yao said with a smile. “In many cases, you think that you do not need something, but that’s only because you haven’t discovered it yet. Okay, enough talking. Do we have a deal?”

The Fist King thought for a moment and nodded, “It’s a deal. Until the Immortal Cultivators and the Imperium of True Human Beings propose more enticing conditions, I will keep the two little fellows safe.”

Han Te and Liu Li were both upset and amused, but they swallowed their words after moving their lips for a while when they saw the Fist King’s glittering iron body.

“Also, a word of advice,” Li Yao said. “Beware of Wei Longtao. Even if he does find the control center of the global sword network, don’t carelessly lead the charge. Try to keep a low profile as much as you can.”

“How can I keep a low profile?” the Fist King said calmly. “There is a ninety-five percent likelihood that the Immortal Cultivators have discovered my secrets. It’s impossible for me to keep a low profile. Why don’t I try to keep a high profile to cover your existence and operation?”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. Then he said in a low voice, “Thank you. Believe me. As long as I am here, whatever broken garbage that you are blown into, I will do my best to repair and upgrade you!”

“I can’t find any successful policy in my database. The only policy with a success rate of one percent is to trust you,” the Fist King said casually. “How are you going to leave the place?”

“I have worked everything out.” Li Yao’s soul glanced at the dozens of earthly dragons outside that were being maintained, upgraded, and refilled with ammunition and spiritual energy. “If I am not mistaken, there will probably be an opportunity very soon…”

Chapter 2056 - Battle of Drilling

According to the time on the surface, it was already late at night.

But the underground mine that had been forsaken for hundreds of years was ablaze with lights and filled with an obstreperous crowd. The collisions of metals and the splashing sparks were echoing everywhere.

Lurking deep inside the mines, Li Yao’s soul spread out in ripples and covered the entire mine while he observed the last preparations of the resistance warriors of Starlight in silence.

To be more exact, the resistance warriors who called themselves ‘Cultivators’ were different from the Cultivators of the Star Glory Federation.

They did not have perfect theories or beliefs, and they never thought about how they could create a new world. They were merely the descendants of the Cultivators in the past who were struggling in the hopeless desperation with their instincts of survival and revenge.

However, if Li Yao were in their shoes, he was not certain that he could have behaved better than the ‘Cultivators’ like Zuo Jingyun.

This was going to be the largest counterattack of the underground branch of Starlight in the past hundreds of years. Li Yao could tell from the eyes that were filled with light, their rapid breathing, and their hot sweat that all the warriors could not be more excited.

Wei Longtao, their general commander, was leading everyone in the work. He heaved the locomotive of the most majestic and intimidating earthly dragon into midair with hoists and chains. Crawling up and down, he added battle units to the vehicle and cheered up the warriors next to him, waving the maintenance tools in his hands.

Illuminated by the dazzling lights, his white teeth and his eyes that were filled with dreams were particularly eye-catching.

“Are you all ready? We have been losers below the ground for hundreds of years. Today, we are finally going big. Do not slack off at the most critical moment!” Wei Longtao laughed loudly. “Let’s make the wretched Immortal Cultivators open their eyes and see clearly what real Cultivators should look like!”

The hundreds of resistance warriors bashed their chainswords and vibration sabers on the earthly dragon and uttered roars of excitement.

Some of the warriors were playing instruments that were similar to harmonicas. Under the lead of Wei Longtao, everybody began to sing the same thrilling, blood-boiling battle hymn. While they were singing, everybody’s eyes were filled with tears. Looking at the black rocks around them, their eyes seemed to have pierced through the miserable, suffocating world to the ultimate battlefield.

Li Yao observed everything in silence and added every detail into his deduction model. His soul became clearer and clearer but also more and more… angry.

Right then, Li Yao sensed feeble quakes from the dark wall of the cave above their heads.

Cracks unnoticeable to the naked eye appeared on the wall quickly, spraying dust that was as small as sand.

They’re really here!

Li Yao thought something and sent two warnings into Han Te and Liu Li quickly. “Wake up now. Bring all the food, medicine, and ammunition. Be ready to retreat with the Fist King!”

The Fist King stuck his metal palm to the wall and sensed something. Ominous brilliance beamed out of his man-made eyes as he said, “Intruders?”

“Exactly,” Li Yao said coldly. “The intruders that have drilled into the ground!”

Hardly had he concluded his sentence when devastating alarms began to ring.

“Enemy incoming! Enemy incoming! Enemy incoming!”

“The Immortal Cultivators’ penetrators are approaching us quickly from above. They are less than three kilometers away from us!”

“The index of quakes is so high. It must be a super drill of an extremely huge size. Also, there is no stopping and adjusting at all. They have obviously discovered our accurate coordinates!”

Panicked exclamations were echoing everywhere, mixed with the alarms each higher than the last, which only made everyone even more panicked, especially the bandits and thugs who had just been guided to the underground world. If the place had not been an underground mine with no escape at all, they would have held their heads and fled in a hurry.

“Don’t panic, everybody. Listen to my command!”

At the critical moment, Wei Longtao roared like a bell being tolled. “Eighty percent of the earthly dragons have completed the final upgrading and loading of ammunition. The basic position of the ‘temple’ has been transmitted to your respective crystal processor, too. There is no time to delay anymore. All conductors, set off immediately and search for the precise coordinates of the ‘temple’ in a grid as we planned before!

“As for this place…

“I will cover the retreat for everybody. Not a single Immortal Cultivator will catch you!

“The final war has come. Take action now, warriors of Starlight. Let’s meet again at the ‘temple’!”

Wei Longtao’s voice seemed to boast amazing magic, filled with the power to convince and pacify other people.

Under his roars, the chaotic atmosphere in the place had entirely vanished. All the resistance warriors jumped to their feet like fully-wound machines that were full of fuel.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The drill-shaped excavation systems before the earthly dragons began to revolve slowly in deafening fulminations, releasing unstoppable mystic rays and high-frequency vibration fields that were enough to shatter the hardest rocks and minerals.

Countless warriors leapt out of their respective caves. Moving on the chains and the rails as steadily as if they were running on the ground, they soon jumped into their own earthly dragons.

“This place is about to be breached!” Zuo Jingyun showed up before Li Yao and the rest of them again. She extended her hands to Han Te and Liu Li and said, “Let’s go to my Cloud Penetrator!”

Quite a few earthly dragons had long finished their maintenance and modification and were standing by in their respective tunnels. They took off before other people and soon disappeared into the depths of the soil with the tracks all over their bodies rotating crazily.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

After they drove into the depths of the tunnels, the tunnels were all blown up by the crystal bombs that had been planted earlier. Materials similar to gels had been mixed into the crystal bombs, which stuck the collapses and made them as tough as iron. It was practically impossible to drill through the same way.

In the meantime, unpredictable explosions also echoed from everywhere in the vast mine.

They were the interferential quake sources that Starlight deployed.

For the hide-and-seek thousands of meters into the sunless rocks, optical senses were of little use. Soundwaves and the perception of quakes from the enemy’s drills and tracks were much more important to lock onto the target.

Right now, the earthly dragons of Starlight were in a hurry to escape. Naturally, they had to boost the performance of the drills and tracks, having no time to care about the problems of quake and noise prevention.

Therefore, the crystal bombs that had deployed everywhere before were detonated to create a lot of minor quake sources, making it hard for the Immortal Cultivators to tell which ones were the earthly dragons. That was the only approach for them to escape.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

There were also many resistance warriors who did not board the earthly dragons. Instead, with determination and fearlessness on their faces, they entered the half-fixed turrets that boasted massive firepower but had lost all mobility. Gritting their teeth, they aimed the turrets that were even thicker than their waist at the crags above.

On the crags above their heads, hundreds of interconnected cracks appeared at some point. Broken rocks and dust were falling nonstop, like the breath of a certain underground ferocious beast.

Everybody could feel the bone-numbing quakes approaching from all directions.

The broken stone and the dust smashed into the turrets nonstop in clinking noises, making everybody even more anxious.

“This is our day of glory!”

Wei Longtao ascended from the deepest part of the black smoke in the mine again. He was covered in a bronze-colored crystal suit, which had strengthened plugins that were similar to an Ares Extension. At first glance, he was like a bronze five-meter-tall chimpanzee. His eyes were bloodshot, and the steam popping up from his head was even more intense than the waste spurted out by the earthly dragons. His volume was raised to a higher level too as he shouted with explosive strength, “Hundreds of years of being attacked, hundreds of years of running, and hundreds of years of failures have made almost everyone including ourselves forget the name—the proud and glorious name!

“But after the battle today, whether we win or we lose, nobody will ever forget us! The light of the stars beyond the firmament will be our eyewitnesses, telling everyone in the entire universe that there used to be a group of fearless warriors who called themselves Cultivators!”

“Cultivators! Cultivator! Cultivators!”

All the resistance warriors screamed their most hoarse but most loud voices that had been mixed with blood!

“Cultivators…”

Zuo Jingyun escorted Han Te and Liu Li into the train. Looking at the fellow Cultivators who had stayed to cover the retreat, she bit her lips hard and said, “We will find the temple. I swear that we will!”

On the crags above everyone’s head, the gaps that looked like wounds ripped apart by deadly beasts continued expanding. The collapsing rocks grew larger and larger still in size. At first, they were the size of fingernails. Then, fists. Then, heads. Eventually, boulders almost five meters in diameter fell to every corner in the wasted mine, smashing the disorderly metal facilities into smithereens.

“They’re here! They’re here!”

Orange brilliance could be vaguely seen from the center of the interconnected gaps, which was the mystic rays released by the super-enormous drill that was digging down, as well as the flames when the dust was ignited because of the friction!

Chi! Chi! Chi!

The ear-splitting friction and shattering sounds were like the laughter of fiends that savaged everybody’s ears.

“Prepare to fight!” Wei Longtao bellowed and drew two extremely thick machine guns from his waist. Holding a gun in each hand, he aimed at the dome and shouted, “Let’s show them who we are!”

Huala!

Finally, when the laughter of fiends reached the loudest point, the dome was completely pierced through by a super-enormous drill!

The drill was more than ten meters in diameter, filled with sharp teeth and mincers on the surface, which were still rotating at a high speed and transforming broken rocks and dust into orange flames.

It was like a gigantic meteor from outer space that had crashed into the mine, raising a deafening explosion and tidal blasts that felt like a tsunami.

The black smoke deep inside the forsaken mine was driven away. Explosions that echoed everywhere were like eruptions of volcanos, whose orange brilliance illuminated the face of every resistance warrior. Even their droplets of sweat that were as large as beans were clearly visible.

Hum! Hum! Hum!

From the vertical caves up above that were more than ten meters in diameter, ominous noises that sounded like dancing wild bees came over.

Chapter 2057 - Going Easy!

In the ear-splitting sound waves, countless round metal balls rolled from the caves and released gliders and honeycomb-type launchers while they were still in midair, turning into round battle puppets that rushed at the earthly dragons around that had yet to leave.

“Stop them!”

Under Wei Longtao’s command, the half-fixed turrets released thousands of fiery snakes amid the roars of the resistance warriors, restraining the iron tides from spreading out. The battle puppets of the Immortal Cultivators were pierced through and blown up one after another. Dazzling fireballs were blossoming at the bottom of the earth!

Sensing the massive firepower of the resistance warriors, the battle puppets immediately changed their patterns. They turned into round balls again and gathered together, activating tiny spiritual shields and integrating with each other into a solid wall. The entrance of the cave up above was well protected by them.

Now that the entrance was protected, countless battle puppets were able to flood in, soon surpassing the threshold that the warriors of Starlight could deal with.

They were also mixed with the lizard skeletons that had ravaged Liberty City the previous day. Such biological weapons that were almost perfect lunged at the resistance warriors in weird routes the moment they landed, so fast and agilely that the storm bolters and the crystal cannons could not take care of them over the long distance at all.

“Ahh!”

Several half-fixed turrets were too focused on the war puppets to spare enough firepower to deal with the skeleton lizards that came at them at a high speed. They were surrounded by a couple of skeleton lizards, which corroded the gaps and the shield with acid and dragged the resistance warriors out from inside, before the heads of the creatures that looked like man-eating flowers crowded forward and chewed the prey into blood and bones.

One last earthly dragon was already fully loaded with crew members, ammunition, and fuel. They were about to leave when several skeleton lizards crawled into the cabin doors that were not entirely closed. A storm of blood was immediately raised in the cars.

A lot of turrets and resistance warriors were forced to shift their firepower to the skeleton lizards. As a result, the war puppets of the Immortal Cultivators in midair were able to lock onto and shoot their targets unhurriedly. The spiritual shields of the resistance warriors were all sparking and shaking.

Exclamations, explosions, moans, and curses were echoing nonstop. The situation could not have been more dangerous!

“B*stards, go to hell!”

Wei Longtao took action!

The general commander of the underground branch of Starlight, with the Ares Extension that looked like a bronze chimpanzee, was truly like a dominating, unstoppable God of War when he leapt forward and crashed into where the war puppets were most populated on his own.

Despite his body, which was so brawny that it bordered on clumsy, he danced a most swift and perfect battle dance. He was carrying two machine guns that were supposed to suppress the enemy with the stormy firepower, but they were like two sniper rifles in his hands. Almost none of the bullets missed their target. When one bullet hit the most vulnerable part of a war puppet's spiritual shield, a second bullet would immediately take advantage of the weakness and blow up its mainframe crystal processor immediately!

Next to Wei Longtao, the Immortal Cultivators' war puppets all turned into burning garbage that fell like hail.

The two machine guns that were roaring crazily in his hands gradually turned from yellow to crimson in spurting sounds, requiring a cooldown because of the overloaded rune arrays.

Dozens of war puppets and almost ten skeleton lizards lunged at him immediately.

Wei Longtao burst into laughter. He picked up two burning axes that seemed to be made of magma. Waving them up and down crazily, he delayed the attack of almost a hundred enemies like a butcher that was dissecting bulls.

In the middle of the soaring flames and smoke, his back was particularly daunting and majestic. One could not find a greater hero than him!

"Go! Go now!"

Seeing that Wei Longtao was as tough and brutal as a god, the resistance warriors who stayed to cover the retreat with him also unleashed their fighting will to die together with the enemy. Their bones and muscles were all broken by the recoil of the crazy bombardment of the turrets as they fired with their entire life and hope. The war puppets and the skeleton lizards of the Immortal Cultivators could hardly crawl out for a moment.

The other resistance warriors took the opportunity to activate the earthly dragons to the maximum efficiency and slipped through the interconnected, complicated tunnels.

Explosions echoed deep underground. The tunnel system that was as complicated as a maze previously was now an even messier knot. It was impossible to track anyone at all.

“Let’s go!”

Zuo Jingyun was the last to board her earthly dragon, Cloud Penetrator. Looking at Wei Longtao, who was galloping unstoppably in the storm of bullets and tusks, she gritted her teeth. “We have to find the ‘temple’ and avenge all the brothers and sisters who died today and in the past hundreds of years!”

Right then, several war puppets and skeleton lizards suddenly ripped apart the fire net of the resistance warriors and lunged at Cloud Penetrator.

Zuo Jingyun raised her hand to shoot, but a gray shadow was even faster than her, which turned out to be Liu Li’s beast puppet in the form of a tarantula.

While Zuo Jingyun blew up the other few war puppets, it crashed into a skeleton lizard brutally and pierced its sharp limbs into the enemy’s body. Fighting against each other hard, they both fell into the depths of the dark mine. Then, a small, bluish cluster of sparks burst out.

Zuo Jingyun slightly frowned.

In fact, she could have taken care of the problem on her own. The sacrifice of a spiritual puppet was unnecessary.

However, Liu Li was in a trance and sweating hard. The girl must have been frightened and therefore selected a safer approach. It was not entirely a bad decision.

Having no time to think more about it, Zuo Jingyun slammed the door of the earthly dragon. “Let’s go!”

The debris of the tarantula that was under Li Yao’s control was torn and gnawed by the heavily wounded skeleton lizard crazily.

But his soul had been transferred to Neltharion. Under the cover of the explosions, the fire, and the skeleton lizards, he crawled into a crevice at the bottom part of the forsaken mine without a sound.

Neltharion had a tiny drill, too, which made it possible to go almost anywhere.

With the heated battle up above, absolutely no one could detect that he was lurking quietly in this place in such a weird way.

It was not until Cloud Penetrator completely vanished into the tunnel and blew it up with crystal bombs that Li Yao finally somewhat relaxed and shifted his attention to the battlefield.

Then, his heart was palpitating again.

As time went by, more and more small drills dug in from the crags around the forsaken mine. The resistance warriors were all running about exhaustedly and could barely resist the enemy.

After each tunnel was broken through, war puppets and skeleton lizards flooded in.

When the enemy's units were upgraded to the regular army of the Heavenly Eye Legion in crystal suits and the crazy live streamers, the resistance warriors' defense line finally collapsed completely.

"Long live the Cultivators. Long live Starlight!"

"Hahaha. I've been hiding for fifty-five years and never had a battle as gratifying as today's. My life has totally been worth it!"

"Let's die together, scumbags from the sky!"

The resistance warriors roared, laughed, and carried their crystal cannons that were almost melted with tears in their eyes while they charged at the enemy before they turned into dazzlingly brilliant fireworks in the iron torrents.

Every firework was like a crystal bomb that exploded brutally deep inside Li Yao's soul. He was so infuriated that he almost could not wait to charge out and fight side by side with the fellow Cultivators from the center of the cosmos, turning his soul into furious flames that would ignite and even detonate the entire forsaken mine.

The mental devil shrieked aloud next to his soul and even released many bloody waves to tie up his soul and prevent him from doing anything rash. "It's not going to help. There are simply too many enemies. Also, they are all minions and cannon fodder. If you kill them, ten times more reinforcements will arrive incessantly. If we expose our existence, the whole area will be bombarded by railguns and turned into a living hell. There’s no reason we should die with the small fries of such a level, right?

“Besides, our soul has not been completely melted with the body yet. Even if you do your best right now, you can only bring out ten percent of your combat ability at best. How is that going to help?

“After the soul returns to the position and is armed with the crystal suit and the Colossus, and after the culprit hiding behind the curtain of Manjusaka is revealed, you can always go on a rampage then!”

“I know,” Li Yao said slowly. His telepathic thoughts locked onto Wei Longtao, who was still fighting a bloody battle like unpredictable spider threads.

The man seemed to be really fulfilling his promise to cover the retreat. He waved his burning axes crazily, safeguarding the resistance warriors next to him into the tunnels.

How brave, how tough, how great, and how selfless he was!

At this moment, even the most coldhearted bandit or thug would have had to raise their thumbs for Wei Longtao if they saw this and praise that he was a real man!

Li Yao, however, did not feel moved or awed at all.

He really seemed to have become a human-shaped crystal processor that had focused all his computational ability on Wei Longtao. To be more exact, it was focused on the bullets, flying swords, and mystic rays that brushed past Wei Longtao narrowly.

“Wei Longtao should be an expert in the Nascent Soul Stage, probably at the middle level or even the high level,” Li Yao observed coldly. “But even the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage is still far from invincible. Faced with the iron tides, the overwhelming number of the enemies, and the tornado-like firepower, he should still be injured.

“However, although Wei Longtao has been fighting enemies while heavily outnumbered for such a long time, he can still perform such perfect dodging movements, as if he can predict the trajectory of the enemy’s attacks. This is truly… talented and incredible!

“Look, look. Didn’t you see that? The gunshot at such a close distance was very likely to have hit his head, blowing up or at least blocking the crystal cameras on his helmet. But the shooter somehow trembled and missed the target.

“What’s your take on the situation?”

“Well…” the mental devil said. “There are three possibilities. Firstly, Wei Longtao is adept at mental attacks and has imposed interference on the minds and the sights of the hundreds of Immortal Cultivators as well as their puppets without them knowing it.

“Secondly, the Immortal Cultivators and spiritual puppets that are attacking Wei Longtao are all blind, which explains why they missed the critical parts at such a close distance.

“Thirdly, it’s very simple. The Immortal Cultivators are going easy on him.”

Chapter 2058 - Beginning of the Epic Quest!

On the surface, the Immortal Cultivators did not seem to be going easy on him at all. Instead, the battle was rather fierce.

Few resistance warriors were hanging on in the forsaken mine at this moment, but Wei Longtao was definitely the most ruthless and dazzling one of them. He attracted almost half of the Immortal Cultivators’ firepower. All kinds of bullets and colorful mystic rays were coming at him, triggering the most glamorous sound and visual effects around him. His Ares Extension that looked like a bronze chimpanzee were riddled with holes and bordering on collapse. The pieces and components erupted, flying into the air crazily.

Wei Longtao seemed determined to die together with his enemy, too. Without caring about his seemingly devastating wounds at all, he threw himself into the Immortal Cultivators like a cannonball time and time again, and he did take down a few opponents.

When the resistance warriors who fell back to the tunnels under his cover looked back, they happened to see him mired in the ocean of Immortal Cultivators but still fighting relentlessly without backing off at all. They could not help but feel moved, their nostrils and chests burning.

“Commander!” the resistance warriors roared desperately.

“Leave me. Just go!” Wei Longtao’s voice turned extremely hoarse, as if his throat had been stuffed with frozen blood. “I will break out of the siege. I promise!”

Boom! Boom! Boom!

A number of fireballs enshrouded Wei Longtao and blocked his voice. The last image that he left to all the resistance warriors was him waving his axes in the flames on a killing spree like a god incarnate!

However…

Such sound and visual effects and such a gory battle could only deceive the common Cultivators but not the senses of a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator.

Li Yao focused his attention on analyzing the endless data that he had collected, building new models deep inside his soul until the whole battlefield was reconstructed virtually.

Firstly, he analyzed the spiritual puppets on the Immortal Cultivators’ side in terms of speed, ballistic trajectories and firepower, thereby reaching a value of standard battle performance for the spiritual puppets.

Then, based on the squad tactics of the Grand Illusionary Soldiers in the Star Glory Federation, he estimated the comprehensive combat ability when the hundred spiritual puppets were teamed up.

In the end, he compared the result of his deduction to the performance of the Immortal Cultivators when they were besieging Wei Longtao. He immediately noticed that something was wrong.

Assuming that the value of the combat ability of the battle puppets is one hundred when they are dealing with the regular resistance warriors, it has dropped to eighty-two when they are fighting Wei Longtao.

To put it more simply, they are slower, more sluggish, and weaker in firepower. Even the accuracy of their shooting has plummeted by at least thirty percent.

In the meantime, they are wasting more spiritual energy on sound and visual effects that are utterly unnecessary. The shocking mystic rays, electric arcs, and fireballs they trigger indeed look cool, but it’s not like they’re in the middle of a play.

Even with the squads of Grand Illusionary Soldiers in the Star Glory Federation, I could’ve heavily wounded or even killed Wei Longtao in the virtual battlefield. It is even possible to capture him alive.

The Grand Illusionary Soldiers of the Star Glory Federation originated from the star child who came from the Imperium of True Human Beings. In other words, in terms of the production and organization of spiritual puppets, the Imperium can’t be any worse than the federation, even though it might not be too advanced.

There’s no reason the Imperium can’t achieve what the federation can.

Same goes for the living Immortal Cultivators. The soldiers of the regular army who have an eye carved on their crystal suits are ruthless, merciless, and pitiless when they deal with the common resistance warriors, but they become clumsy and hesitant when their opponent is Wei Longtao.

Also, in order to cover their clumsiness, they are also triggering dazzling airwaves, fireballs, spiritual flames, and blasts, interfering with the eyesight and the senses of the witnesses as much as possible.

Not just the common resistance warriors, even the experts in the Core Formation Stage or even the Nascent Soul Stage couldn’t have discovered it at all if they were not suspicious of it beforehand.

Only those ‘live streamers’ are charging forward like idiots. Naturally, they are no match for Wei Longtao, and they only make the play vivid and lifelike!

Li Yao’s soul grew colder and colder. It was almost frozen into a block of ice.

After analyzing everything, he and the mental devil were both absolutely certain that the Immortal Cultivators were going easy on Wei Longtao.

Wei Longtao’s crystal suit seemed broken, filled with the traces of bullets and tears. He was heavily wounded, too, with blood leaking out of the gaps of his crystal suit. He was like a bloodstained iron statue.

However, when Li Yao analyzed his every wound, he discovered that the devastating explosions did not hurt him very much.

Or rather, because of the interference on the ballistic trajectories from some insignificant attacks, Wei Longtao was even able to evade a lot of fatal attacks.

It was not because Wei Longtao could predict the enemy’s attacks and present the glamorous performance in the storm of bullets unhurriedly but the very contrary. The Immortal

Cultivators’ attacks were guiding Wei Longtao to perform the dazzling, complicated dodging movements, as if he were a marionette.

Due to Wei Longtao’s ‘valiant fighting’, most of the resistance warriors had fallen back safely.

A hundred balls of lightning suddenly burst out in midair, illuminating the underground world as if it were day, followed by thunderous explosions.

Wei Longtao is about to break out of the siege!

Li Yao’s soul was naturally not affected by the sound and visual effects but kept locking onto Wei Longtao.

Or rather, he is going to ‘act’ to break the siege!

As he expected, boosted by the might of the lightning, Wei Longtao’s flames of spiritual energy were ten times more overwhelming than before. His ravaged Ares Extension turned into pieces that were exploding nonstop when he threw them in all directions.

The next moment, he turned into a streak of green brilliance and dashed to the depths of the forsaken mine not far away from Li Yao.

Quite a few Immortal Cultivators were following him closely. They seemed unstoppable and determined to catch the enemy, but with the senses of the Divinity Transformation Stage, Li Yao could vaguely tell that they did not really mean to accomplish that.

The few live streamers and trial-takers among them were the only ones who were roaring crazily and really wanted Wei Longtao dead.

However, under the intentional or unintentional blockage and interference of the regular army, their fatal attacks all missed the target and only caused tremendous scorching fireballs around Wei Longtao, making the scene even more soul-stirring than before.

Shua!

One of the live streamers or trial-takers was extremely fast and approached Wei Longtao before anybody else did.

But Wei Longtao simply turned around and slashed him in half from the waist. His internal organs had been burnt into ash by the heated axes before they were spurted out.

The gruesome scene made all the Immortal Cultivators dazed for a moment, or at the very least, the regular army appeared to be dazed.

The regular army became sluggish and panicked, and they ‘happened’ to stand before the trial-takers and live streamers, delaying them for half a second.

Wei Longtao took the opportunity to accelerate and sprint into an inconspicuous tunnel at the bottom level of the forsaken mine. Then, explosions echoed from the tunnel, and it completely collapsed!

The Immortal Cultivators rushed over, only to see that flames were soaring from the collapsed tunnel. They gnashed their teeth and whined in fury, but it never occurred to them than an enemy ten thousand times more dangerous than Wei Longtao was lurking right next to them.

The brief but ghastly battle in the underground world was finally over.

The bodies of the resistance warriors and the burning turrets were melted into burning garbage, rolling down from the top and crashing at the bottom of the mine, turning the place into an anonymous graveyard.

The Immortal Cultivators had controlled the entire forsaken mine. They seemed to be rebuilding the place into a temporary command center. All kinds of engineering facilities and materials were shipped, and many renovation projects were already underway up above.

As for the earthly dragons that had fled into the depths of the underground world, they did not seem to be chasing after them. Or rather, there was even no sign that they were preparing to chase after the enemy.

It was almost like… they were already certain where they could wait for the resistance warriors to step into the trap on their own. They were not in a hurry to chase after the enemy at all.

Li Yao locked onto the few trial-takers and live streamers who had tried hard to kill and capture Wei Longtao just now.

He vaguely had a feeling that he could gather critical information from those guys.

As he expected, the young and arrogant Immortal Cultivators thought that all the resistance warriors in the forsaken mine had been hunted. They took off their helmets and breathed in the air that was filled with the stink of blood while they looked at the messy battlefield, not without regret.

“Is this the legendary epic quest?” One of the Immortal Cultivators who was handsome and looked rather young licked his bloodstained lips and smiled. “It does not seem to be much an improvement compared to the platinum quest in Liberty City. This is just another Whac-A-Mole game."

"Why are you so impatient?" A female Immortal Cultivator, who had a blood mole at the center of her forehead, eyed him and said, "The first level is just an appetizer. Isn't there still the Battle of the Temple later? Even that is not the final level. I'm told that a splendid and thrilling battle in space has been arranged at the end. That will be the real great meal. There will be a time that you will enjoy enough killing!"

"It makes sense." The first Immortal Cultivator rubbed his hands. "Come to think of it, you can kill as many people of the Covenant Alliance who are emotionless and as cold as wood as possible today, but the naïve and idiotic creatures like Cultivators are harder to come by than three-legged toads. They are definitely state-level endangered animals.

"Killing endangered animals feels different from butchering chicken and dogs. Did you see their looks before they were killed? They could cry, burst into fury, or roar out gallant words. Hahaha. How soul-stirring and poignant. Killing them is much more thrilling than killing the people of the Covenant Alliance who are like dead fish. In short, this feels much better!"

"Indeed." When she thought of the picture just now, the frost on the female Immortal Cultivator's face melted. She could not help but chuckle. "Long live the Cultivators? Tsk, tsk, tsk. It's been years since I last heard such an outdated and ridiculous line. My hands were shaking so hard that I could barely aim just now because of those bumpkins. I almost laughed aloud."

“Hey!” Another fat Immortal Cultivator joined him in delight. “There’s a rather interesting branch quest, which is to catch the wandering earthly dragons. Did any of you not have enough fun just now and want to have more?”

“Great. Let’s go together. The Battle of the Temple will not start for a few days. We have nothing to do anyway.”

The many Immortal Cultivators talked and laughed and flew skyward, leaving Li Yao below their feet alone in the darkness.

Chapter 2059 - We“re Back!

Li Yao’s voice was like the gloomy wind blowing in hell. “Therefore, the so-called ‘temple’ is indeed a scheme to attract all the enemies and capture them together!”

“It’s not much of a ‘scheme’ but a large-scale ‘game’ at best.” The mental devil grimaced. “You’ve seen it with your own eyes. For the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Immortal Cultivators today, Cultivators are an obsolete and insignificant concept. It can barely be counted as a threat.

“Compared to the pressure caused by the Alliance of the Holy Covenant on the frontal battlefield, Starlight, even if it does exist, is nothing more than a skin disease.

“In other words, while the Cultivators like you regard the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Immortal Cultivators as sworn enemies and want to prove that your ideology is correct, the Immortal Cultivators do not bother to look at you properly. They simply take you for flies and mosquitoes, or endangered species at best!”

“Yes. In the eyes of the Immortal Cultivators, the Cultivators are exactly like flies and mosquitoes, which, although unable to cause much harm, can be quite annoying when they keep humming around you. Therefore, the Immortal Cultivators are paving a sticky pad and attracting all of us to land on it so that they can burn us up once and for all. Then, the whole world will be at peace!”

Li Yao pondered for a moment and said, “Such a plan is exactly the same as how the Star Glory Federation established the Dragon Snake Space Zone and sent Lu Qingchen to set up CFIA.

“Wei Longtao of Starlight in the Land of Sins is exactly like Lu Qingchen of the CFIA in the federation. He is not a legendary hero who fights hard in the underground world at all but a puppet idol that the Immortal Cultivators have intentionally fabricated!

“He elaborated on the ‘temple of Cultivators’ and the ‘control center of the global sword network’ as if they were real. Even if they are, the place must’ve been heavily surrounded by the Immortal Cultivators, who are waiting for the ignorant members of Starlight to enter it and be killed.

“No. We have to save them!”

“Of course, they must be saved,” the mental devil said slowly. “Not those in the underground temple but those in space.”

“The space?” Li Yao was deep in thought. “That’s right. Are you suggesting that of the two branches of Starlight, the space one is the key?”

“Obviously,” the mental devil said. “As the saying goes, you cannot raise a huge turtle in a small can. It is impossible for a dragon to dash out of a little pond.

“The Martial Meritocrats Sector in the past and the Land of Sins today are such little ponds and fully-sealed cans. How developed can Starlight possibly be even if it has the leadership of an unparalleled genius?

“With the overall capabilities of the Imperium of True Human Beings and the cunningness of the Immortal Cultivators, if they had truly wanted to demolish the underground branch of Starlight, were they unable to accomplish it in the past hundreds of years? Even if a few small fries did escape, there would’ve been little that they could do.

“But not only did the Immortal Cultivators fail to completely destroy the underground branch of Starlight, they also sent a legendary hero that was Wei Longtao in secret, helping the dying underground branch of Starlight to revive and flourish again. If everything is just meant to be a game, the cost and the risks are too high, aren’t they?

“Therefore, this is only a plan to loosen the trotline in order to catch the big fish. The underground branch of Starlight is just a big, fat bait. The real target of the Immortal Cultivators is the space forces of Starlight!”

“Fair point.” Li Yao’s eyes were opened, too. He added quickly, “First of all, Blackstar the Great returned to the Martial Meritocrats Sector for revenge with an overwhelming fleet a thousand years ago, launching what Wei Longtao and Zuo Jingyun called the Judgment War. That was probably real.

“However, the Martial Meritocrats Civilization had arrived at its peak, too, and was mixed with the bloodthirst and ruthlessness of the Sand Primitive Sector. Technologically speaking, it couldn’t have been much worse than the Imperium. At the very least, there was not a generation gap, like stone axes versus assault rifles. It was only weaker than the Imperium in terms of scale and comprehensive national strength.

“Then, even if it suffered a crushing defeat on the frontal defeat and was no match for the Imperium at all, it was not entirely unlikely that a few starships broke out of the siege in the middle of the chaos and escaped into space, right?”

“It’s certainly possible,” the mental devil said. “In fact, the Martial Meritocrats Civilization we talk about today was a twin civilization that involved both the Martial Meritocrats Sector and the Sand Primitive Sector. Considering the frequent communication between the two Sectors, they must’ve grasped very advanced space sailing technology.

“Also, don’t forget that the Fist King mentioned that the Martial Meritocrats Sector and the Sand Primitive Sector had a minor war before the arrival of Blackstar the Great.

“War would naturally greatly damage the comprehensive strength of the Martial Meritocrats Civilization, but it would also boost part of the cutting-edge technology and weapons. For example, the forces of the entire world might be focused in order to produce a few extremely advanced super starships, whose comprehensive battle performance might reach seventy to eighty percent of what the starships of the Imperium had. It seems to be a reasonable assumption.

“If such advanced starships did exist, it’s very possible that a few survivors escaped from the siege even though they could not defeat the fleet of the Imperium.

“The universe is boundless. Once they escaped from the planet, they would be like dragons unchained. It would be practically impossible for them to be locked onto and annihilated.”

“The space pirates in the Flying Star Sector were on a rampage for thousands of years,” Li Yao said solemnly. “Firefly of the government-in-exile of the Star Ocean

Republic fled for a thousand years. So, it’s not entirely impossible for ‘Starlight’, a resistance organization of the Cultivators of the Martial Meritocrats Sector, to act unpredictably in the peripheral space zones of the Imperium and shine for hundreds of years, which also agrees with the intelligence that Di Feiwen shared with us.

“Think about it. Di Feiwen and the Black Wind Fleet took off more than a hundred years ago, at which time the Land of Sins was entirely different from what it is today. But rumors of Starlight already existed at that time. It is highly unlikely that the Immortal Cultivators have planned the game for a hundred years, right?

“All in all, the Starlight in space should be the real deal. It also boasts certain forces that caused some trouble for the Immortal Cultivators before.

“In order to resolve the headache once and for all, the Immortal Cultivators have fabricated the legendary hero that is ‘Wei Longtao’. They supported the underground branch of Starlight and made them try to reach out to the fellow Cultivators in space. Then, a magnificent plan for an ultimate counterattack with all the available forces was proposed. After the main forces of Starlight are all mobilized, they will be annihilated completely!

“Just like the Immortal Cultivators said, the Battle of the Temple will not begin for several days. But it was still not going to be the ‘final level’. A battle in space that follows it will be the star of the show.”

“Therefore,” the mental devil said, “it is useless to catch up to Han Te and Liu Li right now. On one hand, we are of unknown origins, and the resistance warriors including Zuo Jingyun have seen Wei Longtao sacrificing himself to cover the retreat fearlessly with their own eyes. It is impossible that they will believe a mysterious freak like you and doubt their general commander.

“On the other hand, even if you do break Wei Longtao’s mask with all the tricks possible, so what?

“Wei Longtao is just a puppet. It won’t solve the problem even if he is minced into pieces. Or rather, the entire underground branch of Starlight, including the temple, does not matter. Space is the key to the conundrum!

“It’s just like I said before. We are now no better than ghosts, with only the level of the Divinity Transformation Stage but not the corresponding combat ability. It is not like we can simply blow up all the Immortal Cultivators and Manjusaka with just our tongues, right?

“It is not going to help anybody to stay here! Return to the sky as soon as possible and get back our body, crystal suits, and Colossus. Swallow all the high-energy nutrition drugs and the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures to release the most violent forces of the Divinity Transformation Stage. Sneak into Manjusaka before the army of the space branch of Starlight arrives. That is the only opportunity to crack the trap!”

“Let’s go now.” Li Yao made the decision immediately. “We don’t have much time left!”

Neltharion was no larger than a finger. The gaps that the enormous penetrators could not enter could not stop the small multipurpose exploration starship at all.

Zigzagging in the underground tunnels for a long time, Li Yao activated the drill of mystic rays and began to drill upward.

Naturally, he did not plan to drill up to the surface, which would consume too much of his time.

He was searching for the vertical channels dug out by the Immortal Cultivators. Very soon, he located one.

A lot of penetrators and spiritual puppets were still shipping assets in the vertical channels. Their controllers were mostly Immortal Cultivators in the Refinement Stage or the Building Foundation Stage. Even those in the Core Formation Stage were few. It would be the greatest joke if Li Yao was discovered by them as a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator.

Hiding in the gaps of the tracks of one of the penetrators, Neltharion returned to the ground successfully half an hour later.

The surface there was a restricted area. Further beyond, it was a desolate and bleak land, with no sign of a single bandit. There was no telling whether they had been driven away or simply killed.

Li Yao released his telepathic thoughts and scanned everybody and their vehicles in the restricted area. Very soon, he located a small transporter. The vehicle that was similar to a rocket was specially designed to get rid of gravity and commute between the ground and outside the celestial object’s gravitational pull.

When a few Immortal Cultivators walked into the transporter, talking and laughing, Li Yao flew Neltharion to the bottom of the stabilizer fins of the vehicle.

Neltharion was capable of getting rid of gravity on its own. Li Yao was only doing this to deceive the defense rune array that blocked the sky.

Hu!

Flames and smoke spurted out of the transporter, pushing it to beyond the atmosphere!

Half an hour later, Neltharion silently escaped the gravitational pull of the Martial Meritocrats Planet.

Li Yao perceived the rusty planet and Manjusaka, which was like a cancer and a parasite residing on the planet.

Now that he had learned the truth about the Land of Sins and the City in the Sky, his mood was naturally different from when he dived into it at the beginning.

“So, the Imperium of True Human Beings has truly forgotten your ‘old friends’. The Cultivators are no longer your enemies but toys, clowns, puppets, and endangered animals that exist for your daily entertainment.”

Staring at the bleeding Manjusaka, Li Yao mumbled, “It’s alright. I will remind you of everything about the Cultivators.

“A space battle to shoot flies and mosquitoes? Very good. I promise you that the Cultivators will show up on the magnificent stage at the center of the cosmos again after the battle. We are back after a thousand years!”

Chapter 2060 - Extreme Evolution!

Chapter 2060 Extreme Evolution!

Inside the hibernation capsule of Jingle Bell, the stealth exploration starship of the Star Glory Federation, on the ninth satellite of the fifth planet in the Martial Meritocrats Sector…

Hiss!

Li Yao leapt up from the hibernation capsule, breathing in the recycled air so deeply that Jingle Bell was almost absorbed into a vacuum.

Enjoying the both familiar and strange feeling when air entered the windpipe and expanded the lung lobes, Li Yao finally confirmed that his soul had returned to his body.

“It truly feels weird to look at my body again after my soul has been out of the body for such a long time.”

Half narrowing his eyes, Li Yao warmed up his fingers somewhat sluggishly and sensed the rhythm of his veins, muscle fibers, and nerve endings with a lot of mysterious and indescribable feelings.

After breaking into the Divinity Transformation Stage, the fleshly body would no longer be one’s sole reliance but only a rather important and unique ‘tool’. The path to a brand-new life form had been completely paved through!

“Above the Divinity Transformation Stage, it is the ‘Divinity Branching Stage’, where I can split the soul into thousands of parts and control all of them at the same time. One single person will be a whole army. What an amazing and enticing level it is!

“Before the ‘Divinity Branching Stage’, there are even more bizarre and incredible levels. Some can even travel in the four-dimensional space and swim across the sea of stars without any protection. It is almost like a myth. I wonder if it is true.

“Just let me keep on training until the end of my line. Let’s see what my limits are when I finally collapse in the end!”

Li Yao was more excited and enthusiastic than ever.

However, a burning feeling of drought came over from his brain.

Ugly spots were also appearing on his fingers, hands, and arms, and his body was withering and disintegrating at a visible rate.

Li Yao was alarmed, knowing that the body that had been well scourged by radiation would not last long.

In the meantime, if he could be refilled with abundant resources so that his collapsed body could be completely reconstructed and upgraded, it would be possible for him to enter the ultimate levels beyond the middle level of the Divinity Transformation Stage.

With a telepathic thought, thousands of spiritual threads spread out from his pores and retrieved all the broken Cosmos Rings, which revolved around him like shooting stars.

Inside the tiny storage cabin of Neltharion was a Cosmos Ring that he had looted from the Immortal Cultivator Wei Xiaotian. The Cosmos Ring stored the flaw detector from Xiahou Wuxin that boasted the function of high-molecular layer-by-layer scanning and a microscopic carver of mystic rays after his modification. After they were connected, the device more or less had the ability to repair the crystal chips on the molecular level.

Li Yao took out the ugly scanning and maintenance device that he had thrown together with all the parts exposed to the air. Calming himself down, he placed the first damaged Cosmos Ring on the octagonal platform at the center and inputted a stream of spiritual energy to activate the equipment.

Instantly, almost a hundred bright gold electric arcs thinner than a hair were triggered around the device, which lifted the Cosmos Rings like the hands of elves. Several of the electric arcs submerged into the complicated crystal chip groups on the surface of the Cosmos Ring.

Li Yao’s eyes were half closed, but his eyeballs were shaking. Sweat the size of beans was leaking out of his forehead, and the steam around his body seemed to be foretelling a volcanic eruption. That indicated that his brain was in the middle of the extreme functioning state.

Twenty minutes later, he released a mouthful of air with a confident smile on his face.

Picking up the Cosmos Ring with three fingers, he blew at it softly before activating the release rune array of the Cosmos Ring with a telepathic thought. Ripples spread out in midair, and high-energy nutrition drugs and medical drugs as high as a hill immediately appeared before him.

Li Yao whistled in a low voice. Baring his white teeth, he poured a can of high-energy nutrition drugs into his throat ravenously. Squeaky sounds as if ice had been poured into melted steel immediately echoed from his abdomen. Every muscle, every vein, every nerve, and every cell in his body was shrieking in hunger and thirst.

After chugging almost twenty cans of high-energy nutrition drugs, Li Yao finally felt that his starved body had been somewhat comforted.

The first Cosmos Ring was only meant to test the performance of the high-molecular layer-by-layer detector and maintainer. The job was much easier after that. Li Yao spent three hours fixing all the Cosmos Rings. Except for the Cosmos Rings that stored the crystal suits, the weapons and ammunition, and the Colossus, he took out all the Cosmos Rings and retrieved all the edible nutrition drugs, medical drugs, and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures in them, which were piled up into an enormous mountain.

“Are you really going to swallow such a mountain?” The mental devil’s voice was rather shaky. “Isn’t this a bit too much?”

“Of course it is too much. How else can I show the demeanor of a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator?”

Recalling the biting and mauling of the sinners in the Land of Sins in the oceans of blood like hungry dogs, the valiant sacrifices of the resistance warriors of Starlight, and how hilarious the Immortal Cultivators thought them to be, Li Yao felt that infinite fury was rolling up in his chest and turning into appetite. “I am going to blow up the heads of a lot of people in the next couple of days. How can I beat anybody up without a full belly?

“Han Te, Liu Li, Fist King, Xiahou Wuxin, Xin Xiaoqi, Zuo Jingyun, all the fellow Cultivators of Starlight who are fooled, and everybody in the Land of Sins… Just wait for me. I’ll be back soon!”

Clenching his fists, Li Yao bellowed and jumped at the mountain, with a beast-like hunger beaming out of his eyes!

An hour later, at the bottom of the deepest fold on the ninth satellite of the fifth planet of the Martial Meritocrats Sector, a very strange creature showed up.

His body size had expanded to almost five meters tall. His flesh had withered and ulcerated, but new bones, veins, nerves, and muscles were growing nonstop. Visible flames of spiritual energy were also flooding out of his veins and surrounded his body like wings, capes, and armor, fluctuating at the same pace as his breath with soul-stirring magic.

It almost felt like a supernova had been embedded into his chest, which was releasing the most violent forces that made him unable to control himself and roar like a primeval beast.

Even the vacuum of silence was almost shaken by his furious roars!

Boom!

Without a crystal suit, without power knuckles, just barehanded, he punched at the deepest part of the fold with his fist that was still growing and bleeding when the skin was torn apart, raising an appalling dust cloud that was similar to a meteor shower. The broken rocks and the dust were all blown away, revealing a crater almost five meters in diameter.

The ‘monster’ did not stop at all but punched as fast as lightning with both fists in turn. His fleshly body was like a super heavy penetrator or a pile hammer of the highest level as he pushed into the crater.

The crater that was almost five meters deep was blown into a vertical tunnel by him. Just like that, he blew all the way into the depths of the ninth satellite several hundred meters from the ground.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

After he arrived at the place, the auras from his fists spread out like blossoming flowers, creating an underground space hundreds of meters in diameter in the rocks that were as hard as iron to be his temporary secret residence.

With his surging spiritual energy and the explosions of his soul, his wounds were gradually healed, and his body was constricted and condensed again into what appeared to be made of jade and bronze. The magnificent body was so perfect that even ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie’s iron body would have felt dwarfed in front of him.

“This is what a real Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator should be like! It is much better than the state when my soul was out of my body!”

Li Yao looked at his plump palms in satisfaction and pressed the wall of the cave. After he exerted his strength casually, an enormous trace more than one meter in diameter immediately appeared on the wall without a sound.

“If such a trace is discovered by a civilization that has just sprouted, it will certainly be worshiped as the miracle of a god. No wonder this is called the Divinity Transformation Stage!”

With a telepathic thought, Li Yao’s body turned into a streak of brilliance that occupied the entire underground residence in a breath. A hundred and eighty vivid blurred shadows in different forms were condensed in a row in space. Each of the blurred shadows had its own spiritual energy and air and could last for more than three seconds. They were absolutely enough to trick the aiming system of most aggressive magical equipment.

Shua!

He retrieved a Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit from the Cosmos Ring. Instead of putting it on in a hurry, he dismantled the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit into tens of thousands of components by ways of remote manipulation and dissection-like skills. Attaching his telepathic thoughts into it and examining every stroke of the rune arrays on every component, he finally assembled the crystal suit unhurriedly and put it on.

The crystal suit was no longer cold metal but more like his second skin. He could not have felt more relaxed and comfortable.

Shua! Shua! Shua!

With the enhancement of the crystal suit, Li Yao’s speed was accelerated to higher than ever. This time, even the blurred shadows and the streaks of brightness were no longer visible. He seemed to have completely vanished from the cave, but the dents on the wall that were caused by his brute punches were disappearing and paved at a visible speed, until the wall became as smooth as a mirror as if it had been polished carefully with a quickly-rotating grinding wheel!

When Li Yao stopped at the center of the cave, it had already become a flawless, absolutely perfect sphere.

If other civilizations were to find the cave billions of years later, they would certainly be astounded and exclaim in disbelief.

Li Yao chuckled and touched the most important Cosmos Ring, which stored his old friend Little Black and the Tartarean Skeleton, a Colossus dating back to the primeval era!

“The lowest level to make use of a Colossus is the Nascent Soul Stage. The higher one’s level is, the more likely it will be to unlock the new techniques and moves of the Colossus. Now that I have ascended to the Divinity Transformation Stage from the Nascent Soul Stage, what kind of surprises can you bring to me, Little Black and Tartarean Skeleton?”

Li Yao licked his lips and raised his fist that was wearing the Cosmos Ring, clenching it hard!

At first, a stream of black mucus that was as thick as a swamp and as dark as night enshrouded him from head to toe. Then, ripples that ripped apart the three-dimensional space appeared. An enormous shadow more than thirty meters tall, like the most hideous devil in hell, crawled out of the ripples in the middle of the furiously burning flames of revenge!

Chapter 2061 - Space Prison

Under the cold starlight, above the orbit of the third planet that was not far away from the Martial Meritocrats Planet, a small space gate made of an array of eighty-eight star beacons in the form a rhombus was revolving slowly and emitting lackluster redness.

Centered at the space gate that looked like a bloody diamond, void ripples flooded out of the vacuum, and starships jumped to the Martial Meritocrats Sector like whales and giant squids that had just surfaced from the deep ocean.

The lightning trident emblem on the head of their starships looked even creepier under the illumination of the red light, suggesting that they were all from the Imperium of True Human Beings.

The Martial Meritocrats Sector was not a world that could sustain itself.

Because of years of experiments on advanced magical equipment and techniques, the only habitable planet in the region had been scarred and reduced to a mess, making it absolutely impossible to maintain a stable ecological system and a material and energy recycling system.

Although there were some experimental plantations in Manjusaka and the enormous Heavenly Rail, it was far from enough to meet the demand of all the Immortal Cultivators, sinners, and biological weapons.

Therefore, countless carriers shipped assets from every part of the Imperium to this place, transmitting the daily necessities to Manjusaka.

Perhaps because the ‘epic quest’ had been activated and a soul-stirring space battle would break out very soon, an even greater number of carriers were moving between the Martial Meritocrats Sector and the heartland of the Imperium during the recent couple of days. Perhaps some of the most advanced warships under the disguise of ‘carriages’ were hiding among them!

The carriers large and small from different worlds in a myriad of shapes and styles swarmed toward the ‘tentacles’ that Manjusaka extended into space. Each of the tentacles was an enormous space port.

But none of the carriers noticed that a crystal suit that was almost transparent was standing in the vacuum right next to them and observing them coldly, as if it had been completely melted into the dark space.

The almost transparent crystal suit was surrounded by a unique twisting field that blocked all scanning and detection. Even though a few alarm satellites of the Imperium just brushed past it, they failed to discover its existence.

Li Yao stared at the space gate for an hour and a half before he finally locked onto a target.

He did not want to sneak into Manjusaka directly because he did not know what defense measures the Immortal Cultivators had. Even his Cultivation of the Divinity Transformation Stage was not enough to break into a space fortress by brute force.

The carriers of the latest models that were large and elegantly designed, protected by luminous spiritual shields, were not his prey. After all, he was going to sneak aboard from space. It would be practically impossible for him to avoid their attention.

The old, ragged carrier that seemed to have just been scourged by a cosmic storm was his best target.

Making up his mind, Li Yao turned into an almost invisible ripple and moved at the carrier that had the logo of a black bear painted on its flank. Like a dry leaf or a dandelion, he landed on the rear of the target starship next to the spurts of the power rune arrays.

The temperature in the spurts area was well above five thousand degrees, mixed with all kinds of violent radiation and particles. Li Yao would not have been able to last a few minutes in the past, but he was now as comfortable as if he were drinking iced beverages in the cool breeze on a summer day.

Li Yao smiled and stuck his hands against the shell of the old carrier. His telepathic thoughts turned into waves, leaking and expanding into the engine compartment of the old carrier.

Closing his eyes, he moved his soul out of his body and flooded into the carrier along with the waves in his palm. Every tube and every crystal wire in the engine compartment was clearly displayed inside his brain before they were connected to each other quickly and established a perfectly accurate virtual model of the engine compartment.

Li Yao’s guess was correct. The unfortunate carrier had indeed encountered an unexpected cosmic storm soon after it left the mother port, which had seriously damaged the starship.

The evidence was the liquid metal fixers that had filled the gaps and holes everywhere on the shell of the starship.

Although such fixers boasted a lot of advantages, such as flexible forms and rapid consolidation when exposed to air or a vacuum, they could not maintain their solid form for long and therefore could only be used as temporary materials in emergencies.

Generally speaking, after a voyage, all the fixers would need to be cleaned after the damaged vehicle was pulled into a dock before they were replaced with legitimate materials whose durability was better.

The sea of stars was always treacherous. Nobody would dare joke with their lives. Therefore, the liquid metal fixers must have been spurted out recently.

Also, almost all the power units in the engine part were showing signs of being overloaded. Several power units were on the brink of collapse and would reach the tipping point at any moment.

It meant that the commander of the carrier had just performed very violent operations, say, competing against a cosmic storm and struggling to get away from its pull.

It was truly the most perfect prey.

Li Yao’s telepathic thoughts, like vipers in the vacuum, snuck into the most severely damaged and the most unstable power unit, where he focused his attention interfering with the circuits of spiritual energy that were already on the verge of short circuiting. In the meantime, he crushed dozens of sensors inside the power unit so that the crew members in the engine compartment would not notice anything wrong with the power unit on the operation interface of their crystal processors.

All the values on the operation interface were normal. In their ignorance, the crew members even thought that victory was close at hand after seeing Manjusaka not far away. They were all relaxed and put on a smile now that the heavy burden had been removed.

Right then…

Boom!

The power unit that Li Yao had messed with exploded. The high-energy fuel was spurted everywhere, leading to a series of explosions that even spread to the shell of the carrier. A devastating hole was formed, and scraps, fuel, and severed limbs of the crew members darted out like a spring.

“Damn it! Another explosion!”

“Put on the fire. Repair the damage immediately. Hurry up!”

“The f*cking cosmic storm!”

The entire carrier fell into chaos once more. The damage control team began their action in an orderly fashion. First of all, they prevented the fire and the fuel from further spreading with high-density antifire foam. Then, abundant liquid metal that looked like gel was sprayed onto the damaged parts, where it froze into a silver shell immediately. In the end, a large batch of fully-armed crew members moved toward the explosion area, cursing and complaining.

The level-seven carrier of the Imperium named ‘Black Bear’ seemed to have been haunted by bad luck ever since it encountered a cosmic storm soon after it set sail. Four minor explosions had already taken place. The members of the damage control team were already used to it.

None of them realized that a fiend a hundred times more dreadful than the explosion had already snuck into their starship under the cover of fire, smoke, and poisonous gas.

Leaning against the wall in a corner where fire and poisonous gas were surging, Li Yao did not even bother to look for a hideout.

On this ragged carrier, the best of the Immortal Cultivators were only in the Refinement Stage or the Building Foundation Stage, and those in the Core Formation Stage were few to none. It was almost impossible for them to discover Li Yao at his level.

After he snuck into the starship, the speed and efficiency of the expansion of his telepathic thoughts were further improved. He figured out the overall structure and the distribution of the passengers in the blink of an eye.

It was a rather shabby carrier even for the standard of the Star Glory Federation. In front of the engine compartment were four enormous warehouses. Below the warehouses were the asset and fuel areas. Further ahead, there was the rest area for the crew members and the bridge. Only from the bridge did Li Yao detect several auras that were rather impressive, but they did not pose any threat to Li Yao.

All that attracted his attention were the goods in the warehouses. They were not regular goods but about a thousand human beings, curled up inside hibernation cabins like babies, their faces in pain and their bodies twisted and covered in frost.

The hibernation cabins that they were using were also rusty and ragged, surrounded by thick, spiral tubes. They were even less developed than the cabins in which the Black Wind Fleet carried the immigrants and seemed more like narrow iron coffins.

The thousand iron coffins were placed on two sides of the warehouses neatly. Illuminated by the pale light, they gave out a creepy air of horror, as if the place was a weird cemetery in space.

Li Yao noticed that the warehouses had been scourged by the cosmic storm, too. Many tiny meteoroids had broken the defense of the carrier and pierced through almost a hundred hibernation cabins. The hibernators inside them were already deformed and lost their lives.

Every hibernation cabin was connected to a small crystal processor, on which a thin light beam was floating.

Li Yao submerged part of his telepathic thoughts into one of the crystal processors and read the information on the light beam curiously, only to discover a few rows of simple data.

“No. 11546, female, forty-four years old. Health: good. Guilty of instigation, insurgency, and jeopardy to national security.”

Then, there was her physical data, but not too many personal features were involved. They were only used to prove the health level of her body.

Dazed, Li Yao continued to sense the female inside the hibernation cabin whose hair had turned white with wrinkles all over her face even though she was only forty-four.

He could tell at first glance that the female’s spiritual root had not awoken. She was a standard ordinary person, or in the words of the Imperium of True Human Beings, a ‘hominoid’.

Li Yao could not understand how a hominoid whose spiritual root was not awakened could commit a crime that jeopardized the national security of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

The remaining hundreds of hibernation cabins were the same. Those sealed inside were mostly ordinary people whose spiritual roots had not awoken. Their genders and ages varied, but most of them were brawny young adults. Despite their impressive body figures, their tendons and joints were slightly twisted, which suggested that their bodies were not formed by working out but came from years of heavy work.

All of them had similar crimes: instigation, insurgency, and jeopardy to national security. They did not have names but only cold numbers.

Chapter 2062 - Bloody Interrogation

At the frontmost part of the place that seemed both like a prison and a cemetery were thirty-six hibernation cabins that were streamlined and larger. They looked much more advanced. Observing through the translucent holes on them, it could be seen that thirty-six hibernators were also crouching inside like babies.

But different from those who were found guilty of ‘instigation, insurgency, and jeopardy to national security’, the hibernators had complicated, shining nails smashed all the way down from the back of their head to their spine every few centimeters. The tops of the nails were connected to each other with solid and complicated mechanical structures. They also spread to their limbs and extended to their fingertips, like some sort of weird external skeleton.

Li Yao thought for a moment and realized that the nails were probably bashed into the gaps on their spines in order to control their spine, their central nerves, and all their limbs and organs.

Even if they escaped hibernation, there would barely be any room for their resistance when their spine was confined in such a shackle.

In conclusion, they were not passengers but prisoners.

It did make sense on second thought. This was a carrier that jumped and sailed among different Sectors in the heartland of the Imperium of True Human Beings. Judging from the structure and the performance of the engine compartment, it was not suitable for carrying out a super-long space jump mission. Its voyages would not take very long, and there was no need for the crew members to hibernate.

Li Yao keenly sensed vague spiritual energy from the hibernators.

He was particularly drawn to the cluster at the center of their eyebrows that was still bouncing feebly like virtual neurons even though they were deep asleep.

It was the place where the spiritual root was located.

Their spiritual roots are all awakened. Are they Cultivators, or are they…

There was a small crystal processor next to the hibernation cabin of each of the thirty-six people whose spiritual roots were awakened. The physical information recorded on them was much more detailed than that of the ordinary people. It included their major level, minor level, familiar arts, and even a few clips of their battle videos.

However, their name and background were not included. There were only simple numbers, as well as new crimes: dereliction of duty, treason, and crimes against humanity.

Most of the prisoners whose spiritual root was awakened were found guilty of one or two of those crimes. One of them was even charged with all three. He also happened to be the strongest of them and was at the beginning level of the Core Formation Stage. He was bound tightly by a particularly thick shackle. A hundred crystal wires extended out of the topmost part of the shackle and reached his face from the back of his head, piercing into his brain through his nostrils, ears, and eyes.

Judging from the horrible look on his face and his rapidly shivering eyeballs, his soul was still suffering indescribable torture in the frozen hell even though his fleshly body had been sealed in the extremely low temperature.

If he is a Cultivator, it will be understandable that he committed treason and crimes against humanity, Li Yao thought to himself. But what about ‘dereliction of duty’? Even if they were just fabricating crimes for him, such a crime should still be too weird for a Cultivator, right?

The warehouse that was as cold and gloomy as a refrigerator was utterly silent. Only several spiritual puppets were patrolling mechanically according to the routes that they were preset with, which only added to the creepy and rejective atmosphere of the place.

After thinking for a moment, Li Yao retracted his telepathic thoughts and focused his attention back on the engine compartment at the rear of the starship that was drowned in smoke, fire, and poisonous air.

The whole engine compartment had no secrets at all before him. The lick of every flame, the explosion of every fuel transmission tube, and the action of every Immortal Cultivator in the damage control team disintegrated and separated like translucent virtual pictures and appeared in his brain in the most fundamental data and models.

Boom!

When a squad of the damage control team ran past the pathway next to the engine compartment, Li Yao made up his mind. One of the tubes of ancillary catalysts that he had sabotaged earlier by remote manipulation immediately broke apart. The catalysts immediately expanded by thousands of times after they were vaporized and led to new explosions when they collided with the poisonous gas. Everybody was swallowed by the venomous flames. Some were even blown dozens of meters away because of the blast and hit the end of the pathway brutally.

The spot turned into chaos. Explosions and screams were everywhere. All the lights and surveillance systems were in disorder. The wounded fled from the fire with their crippled arms or legs. Those who were lucky enough to be unhurt had breathed in poisonous air, too, because of the damage to their crystal suit. Confused and lightheaded, they ran amok in the gas and the fire like headless flies.

In such turmoil, none of them noticed that their captain disappeared into the poisonous air that was as intense as ink the moment he was blown to the end of the pathway by the blast!

Li Yao opened his fingers and grabbed the captain by his head, with such force that the helmet of his crystal suit was squeaking and seemed to be on the verge of exploding.

Spiritual energy slithered over like vipers, cutting off all the rune arrays and the crystal chips on the crystal suit that could transmit information to the outside world. It also pierced through the crystal processor and paralyzed the crystal suit into a fully-enclosed iron coffin.

It was not until then that Li Yao dragged the captain to an inconspicuous corner. He had carefully studied the structure of the engine compartment, deduced based on the current damages, and released hundreds of telepathic thoughts to stay on alert. Nobody would disturb him in the next five minutes.

BAM!

Li Yao slightly increased his strength. The helmet of the crystal suit, which was made of super alloys and special porcelains and could resist the close-distance shot of a storm bolter, broke apart immediately. What was most amazing was that the head below the crystal suit was not hurt at all. There was not even a bloody scratch when the helmet exploded into pieces.

The captain had a pale face, not knowing what had happened at all.

But when he looked at Li Yao's fiendish air and immeasurable eyes, he was like a hyena faced with a velociraptor and could not even think of resisting. He did not even have the strength to scream anymore.

Li Yao curled his lips. Having no time to waste on him, Li Yao gradually turned his left eye red. From deep inside the pupils beamed out demonic bloody streaks, which even crawled out of the eyeball and proliferated in midair before they all pierced into the eyes of the captain.

In utmost fear, the captain cramped as if he had suffered an electric shock. Hissing sounds echoed from his throat, but they could not be condensed into a scream at all. There was not any substantial resistance, either.

In the end, his both eyes were bloodshot, and bloody streaks protruded out of his face as if an enormous spider was lying on his face.

“Alright. Go ahead.”

The mental devil grinned.

The chasm between the two parties was too huge. Li Yao did not need to play any tricks of interrogation or language games but simply let the mental devil break the opponent’s defense line in the mind and hypnotize him.

“Who are you? What is your mission?” Li Yao asked.

The bloody streaks on the captain’s face were wriggling and absorbing the secrets in his brain cervixes like eelworms. Half a second later, he replied clearly and quickly, “We are the 221st carrier of the ‘Triones Shipping Group’. We are carrying a regular shipping mission to transport a batch of assets to the Heavenly Eye Group’s space base in the Martial Meritocrats Sector.”

The Heavenly Eye Group?

Li Yao pondered to himself and realized that it was probably the force of the Immortal Cultivators that controlled Manjusaka. After thinking for a moment, he asked, “Were you caught in a cosmic storm during your voyage?”

“Yes,” the captain said. “We encountered a fairly large cosmic storm soon after we set sail from the ‘Spiritual Snake Sector’ twelve days ago and only managed to arrive here through all kinds of difficulties.”

“Are the goods that you are shipping the people in the hibernation cabins? Who are they exactly? Why are they being sent to Manjusaka?”

“They are all prisoners.” The captain’s eyes glazed, but his head was very clear, and the speed of his speech was higher and higher, as if a mysterious force was reading information from his brain forcefully. “They are the felons that have been sentenced with life imprisonment and death with reprieve. They are going to serve their term in the prison in Manjusaka.”

Li Yao was slightly surprised. “Is there a prison in ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’?”

“Yes. There is an extremely large private prison, which ranks among the top in terms of scale and level even taking all the space prisons of the Imperium into consideration,” the captain said. “The ‘Triones Shipping Group’ and the ‘Heavenly Eye Group’ have a transportation contract. We send a large batch of prisoners from everywhere in the universe to them to serve the term.”

“I saw their crimes. Instigation, insurgency, dereliction of duty, treason, jeopardy to national security, and even… crimes against humanity,” Li Yao said. “There were only the names of the crimes but not the details. Do you know how exactly they committed the crimes?”

The captain hesitated for a moment. “We are only responsible for shipping. Other people are in charge of capturing them. I only know some hearsays.”

“It doesn’t matter.” Another few bloody streaks popped out from Li Yao’s left eye and darted into the guy’s eyeball. “Tell me all the things that you have overheard. Now!”

The captain trembled. His eyes shook quickly, and he spoke as if he were in a dream. “They seem to be the miners on a certain remote resource planet in the Spiritual Snake Sector. Because they were dissatisfied with their working conditions, or maybe because the compensation after several accidents in the mine was not given to them in time, they had strikes first and then illegal demonstrations, which escalated into armed rebellions. After they were suppressed quickly, all the key personnel in the riot were sentenced to life imprisonment and death with reprieve and sent here to serve their term.”

That explains a lot, Li Yao thought to himself. No wonder all the prisoners looked rather strong despite their genders and ages and although their spiritual roots were not awakened. They were actually miners.

“What about those who are confined and guilty of ‘dereliction of duty’ and other crimes? Are they miners, too?”

“No,” the captain said. “They seem to be the managers of the local mining group. They are all Immortal Cultivators. But because they dealt with the emergency unsatisfactorily and were too merciful during the suppression of the illegal demonstrations and the armed rebellions, which led to the escalation of the incident, they were found guilty of ‘dereliction of duty’ and sent here.

“Rumor has it that some of them were rather sympathetic to the rioters. They were suspected to have been infiltrated and polluted by the Covenant Alliance. That was why their sentence was rather harsh, and they were even found guilty of ‘crimes against humanity’.”

Chapter 2063 - The Truth Is Out!

Infiltrated and polluted by the Covenant Alliance?

Li Yao secretly frowned.

Of course, he disagreed with the Alliance of the Holy Covenant’s approach to treat human beings as the slaves of the Pangu Clan and completely abandon emotions and free will.

If he had to choose sides in the war between the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Alliance of the Holy Covenant, he was still more inclined to the Imperium’s side.

However, just because of their poor performance during the suppression of the riot of the miners, they had been deemed to be infiltrated and corrupted by the Covenant Alliance and sentenced to death. The punishment seemed too severe.

Even the Immortal Cultivators, their own kind, were treated so harshly. It was not hard to imagine the Imperium’s attitude toward the ‘hominoids’.

Li Yao ground his teeth hard and felt exasperated at the idiocy of the Immortal Cultivators. If he were a ‘hominoid’ caught in darkness and desperation after seeing his compatriots being suppressed miserably, he might have considered abandoning his feelings and joining the Covenant Alliance, too!

After a sniff, Li Yao continued his questioning. “You said that you have carried out a lot of shipping missions. Were they all the relocation of felons?”

The captain nodded. “Yes. Our carrier boasts the ability to keep a thousand hibernation cabins running at the same time after special modifications, which were done at a great cost. It is not a fair deal to ship common goods.”

“So, you have met a lot of prisoners,” Li Yao said casually. “Were they also found guilty of insurgency or even treason because of various riots, rebellions, and uprisings like the prisoners this time?”

The captain thought for a moment and then nodded somewhat hesitantly. “In most cases, yes. Naturally, there are occasional individual or criminal cases. The ‘Triones Shipping Group’ does not have enough experts to escort the criminals that are more dangerous. We do not have a higher level. Therefore, those who are shipped by us are mostly the general criminals that involve a lot of people whose combat ability is not very high. In the last half a year, we have already carried out three similar missions.”

“Oh? Are there a lot of large-scale resistance cases caused by the hominoids in the Imperium?”

“A few hundred years ago, there was no end to such incidents,” the captain said, “but in the last hundred years, after the various reforms in the Imperium, such incidents have decreased.

“However, over the last couple of years, because the Imperium is at war against the Covenant Alliance and in dire need of resources, every subject of the Imperium is required to dedicate themself selflessly.

“Many lazy hominoids lack the spirit of sacrifice. Because of the indulgence in the last hundred years, they grew resentment when their workload was slightly increased. Besides, the spies from the Covenant Alliance have snuck into the Imperium to spread propaganda and instigate the ignorant folk to rebel. Some of the bottom-level Immortal Cultivators were even corrupted and developed an unnecessary sense of empathy and mercy. So, the cases of strikes and riots are on the rise again.”

“Got it. To cope with the war against the Covenant Alliance, or more exactly, to prepare for the largest counterattack in the past thousand years, the Imperium is in desperate need of tremendous resources. So, harsh laws have been implemented to serve the purpose. After the riots of the hominoids are suppressed, they will be sent into various prisons. Even the prisons of the national level are insufficient now, and ‘private prisons’ have to be established to cage the prisoners.” Li Yao narrowed his bloodstained left eye and stared at the opponent. “Is that so?”

“Yes,” the captain said. “The prisons of the government are useless for those criminals because the environment in the prisons is no different from their workplace deep inside the mines. It is barely a deterrence, only a great waste of precious resources in keeping them fed.

“But private prisons are different.

“The hundreds of private prisons have different ways of operation. After the criminals are delivered here, not only will they waste zero coins of the country, the owner of the private prison will also submit a large sum of money according to the headcount and their capability. It is both a relief of burdens for the country and a greater deterrence for the criminals. The owners of the private prisons have their ways to exploit them for abundant revenue, too. It is a stone that kills three birds.

“Therefore, all kinds of private prisons are flourishing in the Imperium nowadays. The private prison under the banner of the ‘Heavenly Eye Group’ is a typical example. It is a model prison of the state level.”

Li Yao took a deep breath to hold back his simmering emotions. “The Heavenly Eye Group pays a large sum of money for every criminal delivered. How are they going to earn the money back?”

“I don’t know.” The captain shook his head quickly. “We are only responsible for shipping the goods and only stay in Manjusaka for a day or two every time. We don’t have an opportunity to find out much inside information, nor are we interested in it. As long as we can earn our money, it will be good enough.”

Under the deterrence of Li Yao’s soul and the hypnotization of the mental devil, there was certainly no possibility of lying for the captain. He truly did not know anything about it.

“You are being silly!” The mental devil chuckled. “The so-called ‘criminals’ naturally have a lot of value to be exploited. They are all the new blood to be transmitted to the Land of Sins!”

“Huh?” Brilliance shone in Li Yao’s eyes. “Are you suggesting…”

“Yes. Didn’t we analyze it before? The Land of Sins suffer from radiation and pollution,” the mental devil said. “It is an atrocious world with endless slaughter where the strong prey on the weak. The children born in the Land of Sins are highly unlikely to grow up smoothly. By the calculation of the demographic model independently, it should be a world of a scarce population that has collapsed a long time ago.

“In fact, the population in the Land of Sins is refilled mostly by the newcomers from the sky other than natural reproduction.

“Every day, countless people who have lost their memories are projected from the sky and grow into a new generation of ‘sinners’. They will either struggle, fight, and be twisted into ferocious experts and monsters in the abnormal world, or die without a sound there.

“Where do you think is the incessant ‘fresh blood’ from?”

“That explains a lot,” Li Yao said. “Most of the ‘fresh blood’ from the sky are the ordinary people who were engaged in strikes, demonstrations, and uprisings in the Imperium. After they were suppressed, they were naturally regarded as ‘sinners’ and became a new generation of ‘sinners’ before they were exiled to the ‘Land of Sins’ for life imprisonment. What a marvelous design!”

“Don’t forget that there are still ‘old grandpas’,” the mental devil said. “The old grandpas are newcomers that arrived with all kinds of advanced arts and techniques and are much stronger than general sinners. Naturally, common criminals do not qualify for that.”

“I understand it now. They are the Immortal Cultivator criminals, just like the thirty-six unlucky fellows who have been charged with ‘dereliction of duty’ up ahead,” Li Yao said. “The Imperium is such a large place. There are all kinds of setups and competitions among the Immortal Cultivators. It is only natural that a lot of criminals are generated.

“Perform brain surgery on the criminals to erase or corrupt their memory area and implant abundant new information into it. Or, simply refine them through high-intensity hypnotization procedures for a long time, and they will become ‘old grandpas’ who are responsible for the dissemination of new techniques.

“Right. Gu Zhengyang, Liu Li’s dad, mentioned that he vaguely recalled his skull being opened on an operating table and somebody ruling that he was guilty. It perfectly fits this guy’s theory. Liu Li’s dad used to be an Immortal Cultivator who committed a crime!”

So far, most of the secrets about Manjusaka had been unveiled.

The only question now was how to sneak into and destroy it!

Li Yao considered the matter in silence for ten seconds before he asked the captain, “Is there a dock near the space port of Manjusaka, one that is capable of repairing large starships? Your starship is too badly damaged. It cannot perform a space jump if it is not maintained right here, can it?”

“There is,” the captain replied. “The space fortress of the Heavenly Eye Group has full facilities. Naturally, it is not short of maintenance docks. We have performed a few simple maintenance and examination jobs there. We saw other starships that suffered cosmic storms repaired there, too.”

“Therefore, with the condition of your starship right now, it will certainly be docked here for a long time for maintenance,” Li Yao said. “How long do you expect it will need to stay?”

The captain was responsible for the damage control team in the first place and was a professional in terms of starship maintenance. After pondering for a moment, he said, “Our engine compartment is almost entirely ruined now. However we accelerate the process, it will take at least ten days to half a month.”

“What will the crew do in the meantime?” Li Yao asked. “Will you be allowed to go out?”

“We have a small activity area near the space port, but it is impossible for us to enter Manjusaka,” the captain replied dutifully. “It’s a forbidden area. People from the Heavenly Eye Group help us move all the hibernation cabins in every time. We have never entered it.”

“Alright. Everything is clear now. Thank you for your cooperation.”

Li Yao snapped his fingers. The Immortal Cultivator’s bloodshot eyes immediately glazed. He turned around mechanically like a zombie and opened his arms, running at where the poisonous gas and the fire were most furious.

After a dull explosion, the Immortal Cultivator turned to ash, but before that, his screaming soul had been ripped apart by the claw of Li Yao’s soul, completely vanishing into the fire.

“Let’s keep the same approach and fly Neltharion in for reconnaissance first.”

Li Yao lifted the stealth multipurpose starship in his palm and blew at it softly. The mental devil took the opportunity to dive in.

Li Yao’s soul was ten times stronger than before, and the distance to secretly control Neltharion had been extended dozens of times over. Even if his remote control over Neltharion was cut off, there was still the mental devil who was relatively independent to maintain the stealthy investigation of Neltharion when the connection was off.

For Li Yao’s own body, when he was equipped with a crystal suit or went on a killing spree after summoning the Colossus, there was little difference between the periphery of Manjusaka or its center.

After all, the entire sky would be within the range of his attack!

Chapter 2064 - Frozen Beehive!

Li Yao wanted to take a gamble.

The carrier was not of a high level. It was shipping nobodies from the riot in the mine. The best of them were a few Immortal Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage. Both the Fist King and Xiahou Wuxin were much stronger than them. They should not attract much attention from Manjusaka.

Besides, Manjusaka was planning the epic quest to fish up ‘Starlight’ once and for all and had no extra energy to spare on a minor explosion accident of such a carrier.

Furthermore, it was anything but unusual for a starship to be seriously damaged after encountering a cosmic storm during the voyage.

Therefore, Li Yao estimated that the carrier would stay in the dock of Manjusaka for at least ten days. There probably would not be enough hands to perform a full maintenance on it at the beginning.

It was absolutely safe for Li Yao to hide his original body inside. Unless a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator suddenly decided to rip the carrier into shreds, nobody would ever be able to discover him.

For the low-level Immortal Cultivators, even if he swaggered before them openly, they would not be able to see him at all. That was the confidence of a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator!

“Neltharion, go now. Figure out the overall structure and the distribution of forces inside Manjusaka. Most importantly of all, find the planner and commander of the so-called ‘epic quest’, as well as the heart of the enormous space fortress.”

Li Yao rubbed his chin slowly and put on a cold smile. “Speaking of which, it’s been a long time since I last employed the decapitation strategy!”

Neltharion turned into waves that were utterly inconspicuous in the air again, moving further away quickly.

Under the dual control of Li Yao and the mental devil, Neltharion passed the heads of the Immortal Cultivators who were in a hurry, avoided the antifire foam that was spurting everywhere, and snuck into the main warehouse where a thousand hibernation cabins were located by following the few patrol puppets whose routes were fixed.

Since his goal was to approach the enemy’s core, the general criminals were not his target. Pondering for a moment, Li Yao flew Neltharion to the top of the hibernation cabin that caged the Immortal Cultivator of the highest Cultivation.

The gap between the bars that was as thick as a finger happened to be enough for Neltharion to crawl in without a sound.

Li Yao slightly adjusted Neltharion’s output of spiritual energy to make it melt into the cooling and stabilization rune arrays of the hibernation cabin. Then, it was ordered to lurk quietly.

What he needed to do next was wait.

The Cultivators who were stranded in the Imperium of True Human Beings had waited for a thousand years.

They did not need to wait much longer.

…

After several hours of anxious, exhausting work, the fire at the rear of the carrier was finally extinguished.

Although the power engine had been messed up by the explosions and almost lost all its impetus, it was great that they had finally arrived at their destination. The carrier was pulled by several navigation starships from Manjusaka and docked at the end of one of the space ports.

The crimson space fortress looked even more magnificent and splendid when it was viewed at a close distance.

It was truly like a flower of the hell that was blossoming slowly and could be divided into three layers that were entangled and connected with each other. The disc-shaped space stations at the periphery were like enormous petals. A lot of tentacles also extended out of the edge of the petals and into space. The carrier was docked right next to one of the tentacles.

At the center of the petals was the thick ‘flower disc’. Judging from the scale, it was no less impressive than ‘Hundred Flowers City’, the largest space city in the Star Glory Federation.

The flower disc, as the main body, was connected to a spherical space station that went deep into the atmosphere by almost a hundred channels that looked like stems. Countless circular rails extended from the spherical station in all directions, which enshrouded the entire planet like the claws of a fiend. Small barges and automatic spiritual puppets were working around the circular rails. They were exactly the ‘Heavenly Rails’ that Li Yao had seen from the Land of Sins.

The port where the carrier was docked was itself a large warehouse. There were not many living Immortal Cultivators in the warehouse. Most of them were clumsy and lifeless spiritual puppets.

It appeared that the two parties had cooperated many times and knew each other very well. The spiritual puppets moved in on fixed rails, and the crystal wires and mechanical structure on them were connected to the hibernation cabins on the carrier, pulling all of them out.

The hibernation cabin where Neltharion was hiding was certainly no exception.

Because it was larger and more advanced, four spiritual puppets worked together in order to move it out of the carrier.

Several Immortal Cultivators in black uniforms, with an emblem of a sole eye on the chest and left arm, who appeared to be officers, discussed something with the captain of the carrier, while they pointed at the damage at the rear of the carrier.

It appeared that they were checking the number of goods and the losses during the journey and discussing the maintenance issues.

Neltharion completely went into stealth mode, like a meteorite that spattered into the hibernation cabin. It was not discovered by anybody.

Ten minutes later, the thirty-six hibernation cabins where the Immortal Cultivator criminals were locked indeed went separate ways from those that caged the ‘hominoid’ criminals.

The hibernation cabins of the ordinary people were still waiting to be shipped, but the hibernation cabins of the Immortal Cultivators had already been delivered to a spacious platform, where the ground was carved with complicated runes, with bright purple smoke popping up intermittently.

A teleportation array?

Li Yao blinked. The next second, his connection with Neltharion was cut off!

Cr*p. There is actually a ‘quick channel’ for the Immortal Cultivator criminals, which can teleport them to Manjusaka directly!

The mechanism of teleportation arrays involved the esoteric knowledge about the four-dimensional space, the super tiny wormholes, and many other things. Despite Li Yao’s powerful telepathic thoughts, it was impossible for him to track them through four-dimensional space.

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao entered the deep meditative state in a dark corner of the carrier. His telepathic thoughts turned into waves, which analyzed the space ripples that were triggered when the teleportation array was activated and then spread out to all directions.

Twins usually had a weird telepathic connection between them, like a certain state of entanglement.

Li Yao and the mental devil were two halves of the same soul that had split apart. They were also entangled with each other in a very mysterious way. However far away they were from each other, there was an amazing connection between the two of them.

Li Yao’s telepathic thoughts continued spreading out. He seemed to have heard a calling from somewhere he did not know, which led him to run inside the maze-like pathways on Manjusaka. Eventually, the entanglement of the two parties became clearer and clearer.

Li Yao finally saw the obscure picture taken by Neltharion again and heard the mental devil’s voice.

“This is rather splendid,” the mental devil mumbled.

The picture before their eyes indeed could not have been creepier or more splendid.

Neltharion seemed to be above a hollow, cylindrical plaza. Below it were holes that were as dense as those on a beehive. Every hole was embedded with a hibernation cabin. The number of the holes that they had seen alone had surpassed ten thousand!

Inside most of the hibernation cabins, a statue that was struggling in pain had been frozen.

Some of them stuck their faces against the translucent observation hole tightly. Their miseries and desperation were deeply etched into Li Yao’s heart through the ice and tempered glass.

Some other hibernation cabins were flashing with ominous red lights while they were surrounded and operated on by countless spiritual puppets. There were also hundreds of

Immortal Cultivators who were fully armed and floating in the sky as supervisors.

The nutrition liquids inside the hibernation cabins were bubbling as if they had been boiled. The prisoners who gradually woke up from their hibernation were struggling, screaming, and moaning like goblins that had been thrown into a tank of seething oil, trying to break free from the cold nightmare.

But their spine and their limbs were all bound to shackles tightly. The shackles, which were as sharp as nails, even pierced into their spine deeply, turning all their resistance into the most hilarious dance.

After every Immortal Cultivator criminal was completely woken up, their hibernation cabin would be opened, and their shackles would be connected to several spiritual puppets before they were shipped to the darkness further down on the floating discs under the close surveillance of the other Immortal Cultivators.

They were probably going to be experimented on or have surgical procedures to remove the memory section inside their brain and implant crystal chips or similar things before they were thrown into the Land of Sins.

“No matter how many evil things the Immortal Cultivators have done, they should at least be complimented for one thing, which is that they are absolutely fair,” the mental devil remarked in amazement. “They are as cruel to the ordinary people and the Cultivators as they are to their own kind. Are you not impressed?”

“Follow the few guys who were just unfrozen. Let’s see what’s down there!”

Li Yao’s heart was slightly thumping. He focused his attention to maneuver Neltharion to crawl out of the grill of the hibernation cabin, pass the Immortal Cultivator guards in midair, and sink to the bottom of the beehive prison.

In the past, even when he was at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage, he would not have been bold enough to break into the facility so blatantly. Despite the stealth functions of Neltharion, there might still be loopholes when it was faced with the full scanning of an expert.

But after advancing into the Divinity Transformation Stage, and especially after his soul and his body were perfectly melted, his expertise in hiding and concealing his tracks had drastically improved. The Immortal Cultivator guards were in the Core Formation Stage at best. Naturally, it was impossible for them to discover Neltharion that was remotely controlled by him!

He followed one of the floating discs from above neither too far away nor too close and descended at the same pace as the floating disc. At first, there was nothing but hibernation cabins and frozen prisoners around him. But after hundreds of meters, some regular prison cells began to show up, in which many intimidating, despondent prisoners with bloodthirsty eyes were locked. There were even a few fairly large common areas where dozens of prisoners were caged together.

Chapter 2065 - Terrible Prisoners!

“Those people are quite strong!”

Under the perception of Li Yao’s soul, all the prisoners turned into clusters of colorful flames and vitality fields.

From the ignition and bouncing of the flames, Li Yao had a basic evaluation of their capability.

Those prisoners were all highly dangerous with Cultivation at the peak of the Building Foundation Stage and even the Core Formation Stage on average. Many of them even had a burning existence that was particularly condensed like a small sun revolving slowly at the center of their vitality fields. It was their second brain and the legendary ‘gold core’!

“Even the experts with gold cores are kept as prisoners and test subjects here. The owner of Manjusaka is truly extravagant!”

Li Yao focused on observation. He discovered that the prisoners were much more than simply in the Building Foundation Stage or the Core Formation Stage. The bodies of most of them had been modified in bizarre ways. Some had bone spurs all over their bodies, some had metal-like scales covering their brawny arms, and some had composite armor directly melted into their chests, which turned them into half-human and half-machine monsters. There was no telling how the Immortal Cultivators fixed the problem of the conflicts between the metal and the fleshly body, but their integration seemed to be even more perfect than ‘Iron Commander’ Zhou Hengdao of the old federation.

Li Yao vaguely smelled a familiar feeling from the prisoners.

Yes. The mutations and modifications that happened to the prisoners were almost the same as the bandits in the Land of Sins that he saw in the Fist King’s army, except that it was less flawed and more natural, as if it were their upgraded version. It felt like…

“It feels like Manjusaka runs experiments on the tough bandits in the Land of Sins with all kinds of crazy technology and techniques first, and after enough data is recorded, it is applied to the test subjects of a higher level in order to produce the ‘ultimate subjects’ that are much more advanced,” said the mental devil casually.

“Exactly!” Li Yao felt cold. That should be the truth. It was a complete ‘pipeline of new techniques and modification technology’. From the bottom to the top, from the sinners in the Land of Sins to the Immortal Cultivator criminals, everybody was a test subject!

Li Yao focused and carefully observed. Although the prisoners were very strong and received the most cutting-edge modifications, they did not feel like experts at all. They were all lethargic, with the looks of frustration and desperation on their faces. Some of them were bulging their eyes and glaring at the guards outside of the prison cells with hysterical fury and hatred.

Their hands, legs, and necks were locked by heavy shackles. Every shackle was carved with dense rune arrays and functioning crazily, with flashing crystal embedded in them.

Li Yao narrowed his eyes. He immediately ‘saw’ the thick electric arcs and magnetic fields among the shackles and between the shackles and the walls around them.

The slightly weird posture when the prisoners moved about made Li Yao immediately realize what was going on.

“The entire beehive prison must’ve been installed with a certain super magnetic field control system, which generates a powerful magnetic field on the shackles and the walls. So, the prisoners can only struggle to move despite their unbelievable physical strength, as if they are carrying rocks that weigh ten thousand tons.

“The intensity of the magnetic field can certainly be adjusted. Once it is raised to the maximum, all their shackles will likely be pulled to the ground or the walls, or a couple of prisoners may be attracted to each other. In that case, they would not be able to move anywhere but be at anybody’s mercy!”

“It seems that the Immortal Cultivators are quite wary of the prisoners and have to suppress them through the most rigorous approaches.” The mental devil grimaced. “Hey. Do you think the prisoners enjoy their days in Manjusaka?”

Li Yao frowned. “Is that even a question?”

The mental devil continued. “Therefore, although they are all Immortal Cultivators, they must bear the deepest grudge against the owner of Manjusaka, and they will not hesitate to skin and mince the owner of this place when they have an opportunity to, will they?”

Li Yao immediately realized where the conversation was going. “Exactly. The Immortal Cultivators are all rancorous, brutal, and violent. Once the highly-dangerous criminals are unchained and given freedom again, and the Immortal Cultivators in the hibernation cabins up above are all unfrozen… it would be a miracle if they do not turn the whole of Manjusaka upside down!

“But what exactly do we need to do in order to free all those people?”

“It’s simple,” the mental devil said. “With the bodies of the dangerous criminals that have been strengthened and modified and their combat ability in the Core Formation Stage, it is practically impossible to trap them with a prison cell. The main control method should still be the ubiquitous super magnetic field system.

“The super magnetic field system certainly has a control center. It requires an enormous supply of energy, too.

“If we can sneak into the control center, hack and seize the mainframe crystal processor of the place, and take control of the entire super magnetic field system, wouldn’t we be able to do whatever we want?”

Li Yao blinked quickly. “Is it possible?”

“As long as we can locate the control center and the mainframe crystal processor, it will be more or less possible,” the mental devil said. “Don’t forget that we have swallowed most of the pieces of tenebrum energy of the extraterrestrial devil, and we received the complete legacy of Professor Mo Xuan. We have entered the Divinity Transformation Stage, too!

“It may be too hard for us to ‘create’ in cyberspace, but ‘destruction’ is always ten thousand times simpler than ‘creation’. Is it really a problem to plant a few viruses and completely sabotage the entire system?

“Then again, even if we cannot achieve that, we can always resort to the most simple and straightforward way, which is to directly blow up the power center that provides energy for the super magnetic field control system. Let’s see what they can use to generate the magnetic barriers without energy!”

“Now that you put it that way…” Li Yao mumbled. “I almost can’t wait to watch the entire beehive prison going out of control, and all the exasperated, ferocious criminals flooding out and lunging at the depths of Manjusaka.”

Neltharion continued downward. The prison cells gradually turned into an enormous circular space that was hidden in darkness. A lot of human-shaped objects were vaguely standing in the black fog. They were all naked but entangled by tubes and syringes.

“They are humans who are in the deep sleep state.” Li Yao was confused. “Their aura is very intimidating, but their brain activity is extremely weak, as if it has been suppressed by some sort of barrier. Who are they exactly?”

“They may be the army of the owner of the place,” the mental devil said coldly. “The man maintains such an enormous laboratory and runs so many experiments at such a great cost. It is only reasonable that he has some results, isn’t it?

“After the most advanced and cutting-edge achievements are secured, isn’t it perfectly normal for him to apply them to his own armed forces?”

Staring at the shadows in the black fog that were covered in tubes and wires, Li Yao felt that coldness was spreading out of his soul.

“Ho! Hooooo!”

Right then, feeble roars echoed from the bottom level of the beehive prison, which attracted the attention of Li Yao and the mental devil.

It was an extremely spacious prison cell or test field, where two ferocious creatures were engaged in a battle of life and death.

One of the creatures looked like the combination of spiders, scorpions, and crocodiles, but enlarged to almost five meters long. It was covered in sharp bone spurs and scales, as if a forest of blades had grown out of its flesh and blood.

The other creature was a freak that looked like a monster.

The creature could have been a human being, or an abnormally mutated gorilla. He was covered in green hair that was like iron needles, and the big eyes that bulged out were on the two sides of the head, with flames of spiritual energy that were more chaotic than a tsunami burning inside.

Although the enemy was twice its size, his air had completely dwarfed the enemy’s.

When Li Yao saw the battle, the freak that looked like a great-haired gorilla was sitting on the crocodile creature despite the sharp scales and bone spurs on the enemy body. Then, he opened the enemy’s mouth by brute force and rippled its head in half!

Crack!

In an explosion, blood burst out everywhere. But the green-haired gorilla was still not satisfied. He stabbed his fingers, which were sharper than chainswords, into the back of the crocodile creature and groped for a moment before yanking the heart out!

The crocodile creature boasted great vitality and was still struggling before its death. However, the green-haired gorilla already put on a smile of satisfaction and began to devour the bleeding, damp heart of the enemy.

Outside of the test room, a dozen Immortal Cultivators in sealed gowns were pointing and recording the data.

“This guy is rather tough!”vEven Li Yao was somewhat shocked to see it. “Almost zero drops of spiritual energy leaked out of his body. All of it was used to nurture the cells so that the body would release the optimum combat ability. This is the core principle of the ‘body fundamentalists’ in their training and fighting. This green-haired gorilla should be a ‘body fundamentalist’ that has trained or been modified to the highest level!”

Right then, the researchers seemed to have received a command. After whispering to each other for a while, they began to operate on the crystal processors quickly.

Dozens of red spots suddenly appeared on the green-haired gorilla. Then dozens of streams of scarlet liquids were injected into his body like water arrows.

At first, Li Yao thought that the Immortal Cultivators were going to destroy the test subject, but the green-haired gorilla simply staggered and collapsed onto the ground as if drunk after jumping up and down for a while.

It was not until then that Li Yao finally realized that what was injected into his body just now must have been anesthetics of a high intensity and dose.

After making sure that he had been heavily sedated, a few vigilant Immortal Cultivators in crystal suits tied him up, carried him into an enormous metal bag, and delivered it to a floating disc, which then slowly descended.

It was by far the strongest test subject that Li Yao had seen.

Since he had the highest combat ability, he must be related to the most advanced strengthening and modification technology, the most important labs, and the most influential big shots in Manjusaka.

Li Yao’s interest was aroused. “Let’s follow them and see where they are shipping him to.”

Chapter 2066 - Who"s the Acquaintance?

Like a haunting ghost, Neltharion stayed on top of the green-haired gorilla and the eight Immortal Cultivator guards and followed their floating disc into the immeasurable darkness.

On their way, they transferred between floating discs twice and changed guard shifts twice. The six guards who showed up at the end were all in the Core Formation Stage.

The trainers in the Core Formation Stage were more than enough to work as a mayor of a city, a dean in a college, or a major in the army in the Star Glory Federation.

Even though the Imperium of True Human Beings was a hundred times stronger than the Star Glory Federation in terms of the comprehensive national power, the experts in the Core Formation Stage and the Nascent Soul Stage were still rare.

Now that six Immortal Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage had been deployed to escort the green-haired gorilla, the place that they were going to must be very important.

But when it came to the green-haired gorilla itself, even though he was a ‘body fundamentalist’ above average, he did not seem to boast that much value or require so many security measures.

So…

While Li Yao was pondering, more than ten round metal balls flew out of the darkness nearby and shot out dark red rays, scanning the floating disc from every perspective.

“It seems to be some sort of ‘anti-stealth magical equipment’.” The mental devil grimaced. “It is just a petty trick to us right now.”

Li Yao and the mental devil both boosted their computational ability to the highest, like a ‘dual cores’ system in super crystal processors. They analyzed the wavelength and frequency of the incoming rays and adjusted the invisible flames of spiritual energy from Neltharion to the same frequency.

It was like a drop of water melting into an ocean. The enemy’s detecting rays passed Neltharion again and again but noticed nothing wrong.

The six guards in the Core Formation Stage and the green-haired gorilla who had fallen asleep were thoroughly scrutinized to make sure of their identities and that they were not carrying any forbidden objects with them.

Then, the dozen metal balls began to revolve at a high speed and emit ultrasound that human ears could not hear, posing severe interference.

“Those guys are indeed meticulous. They still have such powerful interferential soundwaves!” The mental devil was as relaxed as before. “If our Cultivation were lower by a level and we had maneuvered Neltharion in the Nascent Soul Stage, it would’ve been impossible to resist such intense interference. The crystal chips would’ve certainly exploded and revealed where we were.”

As for the reality, a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator would not be discovered so easily.

It was not because Manjusaka did not have enough security checks.

For the entire civilization of mankind including the federation, the Imperium, and the Covenant Alliance, it was already the best they could do to resist the infiltration and the infiltration of the experts in the Nascent Soul Stage right now.

As for those in the Divinity Transformation Stage, they were the most powerful and influential celebrities of a country. How many of them were fond of acting stealthily like a thief?

Building a defense system that could resist the experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage was like building a dam that could resist a once-in-a-million-year flood. The technological problems were one thing, but the cost alone was enough to bankrupt any sponsor.

The weapons that could resist Colossi were Colossi. By the same logic, those who could cope with someone in the Divinity Transformation Stage were experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage, too.

It was absolutely impossible to resist them with a cold, rigid defense system.

Besides, neither Wuying Lan, the owner of Manjusaka, nor Li Lingfeng, one of the four ‘Kurfürsten’ of the Imperium in the future behind Wuying Lan, was good at prophecies.

They thought that everything was under their control. It had never occurred to them that an unexpected Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator had snuck into their heart.

The defense system that could catch a Nascent Soul Stage expert was already of the highest level. Li Yao was more and more curious about their destination.

The floating disk sank to the bottommost floor of the beehive prison. Gliding forward along a pathway for three minutes and passing countless branches that looked like a maze, it finally came to a stop.

The six guards in the Core Formation Stage loosened all the shackles on the green-haired gorilla. One of them fell to one knee and shot the back of the green-haired gorilla’s head with a gun-like inoculator. Then, the six of them all retreated into the darkness on one side of the pathway.

The green-haired gorilla’s even breath became heavy again. Roars were echoing from his chest, and his eyeballs were shivering more and more violently, showing signs that he could wake up at any moment.

The floating disc slightly shivered before it sank again, sending the green-haired gorilla and Neltharion into an ivory chamber. The pathway up above slowly closed.

The walls and the floor of the secret chamber were all emitting gloomy glows, giving the feeling that there was nowhere to hide. Except for the surveillance cameras in the eight corners, there were no adornments in the room. But at the center of the secret chamber, a seemingly slim and weak young man was crouching.

“What’s going on here?”

Li Yao could not have been more befuddled, wondering if it was a new test.

But he could not sense any air of an unparalleled fiend from the young man who was holding his arms.

The mental devil suddenly sent a very feeble message to Li Yao. “Attention. There’s an expert here!”

Then, instead of waiting for Li Yao to reply, it controlled Neltharion to enter the absolute stealth state, floating in midair without moving at all.

Li Yao’s heart palpitated. He also sensed that the wall that they were faced with should be tempered glass that was transparent one way. Although they could not see the other side of the ‘wall’, those on the other side could see the young man and the green-haired gorilla clearly.

On the other side of the ‘wall’, there were two clusters of very powerful life energy, one of which was very likely to be completely beyond Li Yao!

You’ve got to be kidding me. I have run into Divinity Transformation Stage experts from the Imperium so quickly? And not just any of them, but one in the high level or even the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage?

Li Yao secret gnashed his teeth.

Damn it. I haven’t even gone on a killing spree and enjoyed myself with the combat ability of the Divinity Transformation Stage before meeting such experts. Am I terribly lucky or unlucky?

However, it did make sense on second thought. Manjusaka was an important place, and an epic quest was underway. It would not seem right if the place was not supervised by a few experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage.

Thankfully, the enemy was in the daylight, and he was in the darkness. Unaware of his existence, the enemy would not intentionally release their telepathic thoughts to search every inch of the space. There was still room for Neltharion to hide.

Li Yao and the mental devil did not dare move at all. They simply hid in a corner dutifully and observed the mysterious young man who was crouching at the center of the secret chamber.

During his observation, Li Yao had more and more questions.

It was a rather handsome young man who could not have been older than eighteen. He should be at the most vigorous and unrestrained age.

But the look of vague sorrow and desperation on his face made him seem like an old man that had lived a hundred and eighty years and only wished to die sooner now that he was faced with an illness that he could absolutely not resist.

His weary eyes seemed to be saying, The greatest sorrow is hopelessness

He was wearing a large surgery gown. While his skin was as smooth as jade and perfectly flawless, Li Yao discovered many pinky traces all over his body.

Li Yao was no stranger to such pinky marks, which were the unique signs when the skin and the muscles were healed after they were severely torn apart.

The pinky marks that covered the young man indicated that he had been ripped into shreds like a ragged doll not long ago, before he was jumbled and repaired again through some foul technology.

With the medical and biochemical technology today, even ‘death’ was not something that someone who was kept in a prison could get if they wanted.

But all that was not what baffled Li Yao most.

The young man was likely yet another test subject of Manjusaka. Li Yao would not be surprised however cruelly the Immortal Cultivators tortured him.

What did surprise him was that Li Yao vaguely felt that the young man looked… somewhat familiar.

The familiarity bordered on intimacy, as if he had lived with the young man for a long time a long, long time ago. Just a quick look at the face made him grow subtly fond of the young man.

“The face… I must’ve seen the face somewhere before, or someone who carried some of his features.”

But Li Yao could not figure out who it could have been at all.

“But isn’t it too creepy? I was born and raised in the Star Glory Federation, which is billions of lightyears away from here. I also hibernated for a hundred years in total. The young man here looks no older than twenty, and he is from the Imperium of True Human Beings at the center of the cosmos. How on earth could I possibly be related to him?

“However… Hey, does he look familiar to you?”

“He does,” the mental devil replied. It shared the same memories as Li Yao. Naturally, Li Yao’s acquaintances were its acquaintances. “But it’s impossible. Did we accidentally see him in the Land of Sins before, and he was captured just now and delivered here?”

“No. Certainly not.” Thinking for a moment, Li Yao was even more sure of his conclusion. “It’s a mottled memory from a long, long time ago. He is like… an old friend.”

Seeing that the hideous and terrifying green-haired gorilla had been sent into the room and showed signs of waking, the young man finally stood up.

His eyes were like a frozen pond, with no ripples spreading out at all.

“Who could it be?” Li Yao continued thinking hard. “Even if I’ve never seen him, I must’ve seen someone very similar to him before. Perhaps it is not about the similarity of their faces but their unique vibe, the feeling of losing all hope. I saw it from somebody else a long, long time ago, and I saw it a lot!”

The green-haired gorilla was finally completely awakened.

The waking drugs that the guards had injected into his body were probably mixed with tremendous excitants to simulate his brutality. The moment he caught the scent of a human, he immediately pricked all the green hair on his body, turning from an enormous gorilla into a gigantic hedgehog.

There was no fear on the mysterious young man’s face at all. He simply smiled bitterly and opened his arms at the green-haired gorilla, as if he were braced for whatever might become of him.

“Aooo!”

The green-haired gorilla, however, was completely infuriated by the mysterious young man’s casualness. With a roar, he opened his giant hands, ejected the sharp claws, and slapped at the mysterious young man brutally!

Chapter 2067 - Secret Weapon for the Only Target!

The mysterious young man did not dodge at all but took the slap. The force was so immense that he seemed to have been hit by a high-speed crystal train. With a deafening explosion, the left half of his body completely broke apart, and he was also blown into the air and did not smash into the wall heavily until he had rotated almost five times, leaving a shocking, bloody mark on the wall!

When the blood darted out and spread in the air, the brutality of the green-haired gorilla was further stimulated. Putting his fingers into his mouth and sucking for a while, he grinned and lunged at the broken young man again, stabbing the sharp claws deeply into the young man’s chest and waving him back and forth like a sack!

Even the most coldhearted person would feel that their blood was freezing and vomit hard if they ever saw the scene.

It was not a test at all but the purest brutalization!

But from the beginning to the end, no matter how the green-haired gorilla vented his violence and cruelty, the mysterious young man did not say a word. Even when his entire face was scratched and messed up, his eyes that were as clear as water and haunted by vague sorrow did not change at all.

He seemed capable of closing his nerves, and the physical pain had nothing to do with him at all. Besides the vague sorrow and desperation inside his eyes, Li Yao even somehow sensed the feeling of… boredom.

Li Yao did not act rashly.

It was partly because an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage who was far stronger than him was monitoring everything from the next door and partly because Li Yao did not believe that the Immortal Cultivators went through so much effort to arrange the test just to watch the green-haired gorilla rip someone apart.

There was definitely something more to the mysterious young man. He did not need to take action, at least not yet.

Very soon, Li Yao noticed an anomaly.

If the prisoner were just a common young man, the green-haired gorilla’s first brutal slap would have been enough to kill him, and the dazzling and ruthless attacks that followed would have torn him into shreds.

But the mysterious young man’s body appeared to be unbelievably sturdy. After being ravaged by such a ferocious beast for five minutes, he was only suffering from some bruises and some broken bones.

It was almost like when someone who was hit in the front by a crystal cannon only vomited some blood instead of getting killed immediately. Could it be normal?

Also, despite the green-haired gorilla’s stormy attacks, the mysterious young man’s wounds were actually healing weirdly at a visible rate.

It could clearly be seen that tensile granulation tissues were growing crazily around the white bones and the devastating wounds, which entangled with each other and constituted newer, thicker, and stronger tendons and muscles.

You—You've got to be kidding me. It is the basic mechanism of training to be torn, broken, and reborn and become stronger.

Li Yao secretly clicked his tongue.

Is the boy not being tortured at all but practicing a certain weird art, one that will make him stronger if he is beaten harder?

Li Yao had practiced similar techniques in his early years. At that time, it was Ding Lingdang who had assisted him in training. The two of them even had chemistry and fell in love during the fighting!

The mysterious young man's 'art of being beaten', on the other hand, was much harder than Li Yao's training years ago and almost bordered on appalling!

Chances are that the boy is much stronger than the green-haired gorilla. So many vigilant Immortal Cultivator guards and the thorough defense just now are not meant to deal with the green-haired gorilla but this kid! But when he was crouching on the floor just now, even I did not sense any strength from his body at all. This is truly... horrifying!

But why is he not counterattack at all? He also acts like his life is too boring for him to live. Is it because he is well aware of his destiny as a test subject, or is it because...

Shua!

Li Yao’s memories expanded and extended like a gold, splendid, and sophisticated palace.

The memory pieces of the past in every day turned into locked rooms, which were opened one by one to search for every face that he had seen in them.

Li Yao was pretty sure that he must have seen the vague sorrow on the young man’s face before. He had to find out the face!

However, ninety-nine percent of his computational ability was now dedicated to the control of Neltharion to keep the stealth state at the highest level. After all, an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage even tougher than him was right next door. If he did not try his best, he would be discovered by the guy in no time.

He only had one percent of his computational ability spare to search the memory pieces of the past. It would take several minutes.

What are the Immortal Cultivators up to exactly?

Looking at the mysterious young ball being thrown by the green-haired gorilla like a ragged doll but simply not counterattacking at all, even closing his eyes in the end, Li Yao could not have been more confused about what this damn test was!

In the control room next to the test room, against the tempered glass that was transparent on one side, Wuying Lan—the master of Manjusaka, the helmsman of the Heavenly Eye Group, and a secondary member of the royal family—was standing next to Li Lingfeng, the future leader of the Li family, one of the four Kurfürst families. They were observing everything in the test room calmly.

“He is still unwilling to attack?” Li Lingfeng observed casually. “He obviously has massive strength. Just now, he killed four highly brutal mutated beasts without even batting an eye. He took down the skeleton lizards, the nightmare monsters you produced recently, as easily as tearing apart geckos. But right now… he refuses to attack?”

“It can’t be helped. The refinement today is still very successful,” Wuying Lan said respectfully but somewhat helplessly. “We have applied the most mature and cutting-edge strengthening and modification technology that we grasped in the past hundred years to him. In terms of the sturdiness of his body, he is even better than me in certain parameters.

“There is nothing wrong with his combat ability at all. You saw just now with your own eyes how he tore the skeleton lizards as easily as paper, but the will to fight cannot be controlled or changed easily.

“Well, maybe I shouldn’t put it that way. In fact, there are a lot of ways to hypnotize his brain and transform him into a pure slaughter machine—the most dreadful one. However…”

“Yes. You can’t do it because I told you not to. I do not need a slaughter machine whose brain is blank, no matter how powerful it is.” Li Lingfeng glanced at Wuying Lan emotionlessly. “I have made it clear since the very beginning that I need him to perform ruthless slaughters and to become the most standard, most excellent, and strongest Immortal Cultivator by his own will!

“What I need is a living man with a soul, not a puppet and a moron that only has a shell!”

“Then, I’m afraid that it will take some more time.” Pointing at his temples, Wuying Lan said in a low voice, “You know where his problem lies. The haunting shackles are still restraining his soul tightly. Nobody knows when they can be cracked.

“Ninety-nine percent of his brain and soul are waiting to be explored by us after all. It is just like foretelling when a vegetative patient in a deep coma will wake up. Nobody can say that for sure.

“Maybe he will think everything through in a second. Maybe he won’t think it through for the rest of his life.

“All in all, there is nothing we can do if he does not want to kill anyone.

“Test Subject 11453 is already the most hideous, brutal, and inhuman one here, but it is a human after all! Li Jialing must’ve sensed that his opponent is a human, not a mutated beast. That’s why he does not counterattack at all, right?”

“Hehe. That boy…” Frowning, Li Lingfeng stared at the bleeding, broken Li Jialing inside the test room thoughtfully and mumbled, “He is truly stubborn. As expected of—”

He stopped his remark in time.

“Lord Li, there is something that I’ve been meaning to say, but I don’t know if it is appropriate,” said Wuying Lan carefully.

Li Lingfeng retreated his aggressive eyes and smiled. “Can there be anything inappropriate between the two of us?”

“In that case, you must forgive my recklessness, my lord, but I’ve been confused by something for a long time.” Trying to find suitable words, Wuying Lan said, “It is true that the test subject codenamed ‘Li Jialing’ has been refined into a perfect slaughter machine. The project is a success by itself.

“However, counting all the resources and costs that we have invested into the project, it does not seem to be a fair deal.

“A war cannot be won by a slaughter machine or a single expert after all. If the same resources were dedicated to other projects, a thousand slaughter machines and ten thousand of the most powerful mutated beasts may have been produced. They would have been absolutely loyal and would have carried out all kinds of tasks dutifully.

“Li Jialing, on the other hand, has serious issues with his fighting will. It is even safe to say that he is an unstable weapon. I wonder, why are you continuing such an enormous investment in him?

“Well, please don’t misunderstand, my lord. I’m only asking the question because it is directly concerned with his coming refinement. So…”

“I did not misunderstand you, but the answer to the question is not something you should know.”

After pondering for a moment, Li Lingfeng said, “Let me put it this way. He is indeed a secret weapon, but he has been specifically designed to deal with a single person. If the battle that I anticipate does happen in the end, he will play a much more important role than a great army!

“The battle, on the other hand, is drawing near and may take place soon.

“So, I don’t care what methods you resort to, but you have to break his mental defense and the ‘rules’ inside his head this time so that he will kill other human beings consciously and voluntarily. It will be even better if he can start an indiscriminate massacre!

“Only by completely shattering his original beliefs will I be able to rebuild a set of new beliefs for him, the beliefs that are more glorious, advanced, and correct and belong to the Immortal Cultivators. Do you understand?”

“Yes!” Wuying Lan nodded heavily. Looking at the gory picture in the test room again, he hesitated. “What about now?”

“Forget it. The stimulation that the green-haired gorilla has given him is not strong enough. He will not attack.” Li Lingfeng waved his hands. “Get that thing out of here and let him take a rest. See what else you can do. I’ll give you another three days. In three days, I want to see a brand-new Li Jialing!”

Chapter 2068 - Clever Young Man

Inside the test room, the green-haired gorilla was still on a rampage. His fists that felt like iron hammers were bombarding Li Jialing nonstop like a storm, almost entirely drowning the tiny body of the young man.

Suddenly, rays flashed nearby, and dozens of red spots appeared on the green-haired gorilla again. In swooshing sounds, the powerful anesthetics were injected into his body.

He moaned at first and then scratched his body crazily as if his skin was itching. Staggering and dancing like a drunkard for a moment, he collapsed to the ground.

Li Jialing lay in a pool of blood. He stared at the sleeping green-haired gorilla emotionlessly and sighed.

The seemingly gapless wall glided to two sides without a sound. A few Exos entered and pulled the green-haired gorilla out.

But no doctors or researchers came to examine Li Jialing’s body, as if everybody knew full well that the minor injuries would not cause any substantial damage to the young man.

Chi…

Dense mist spurted out of the walls, cleaning the blood and the stains immediately. The room recovered its previous pureness and translucency.

Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan moved away and left the control room.

When the gate of the secret chamber was closed again and turned into a gapless wall, the only things left in the room were Li Jialing, whose body was healing rapidly, and Neltharion on which part of Li Yao's soul was hidden.

Sensing that the two clusters of powerful life energy had walked away, Li Yao finally took a breath in relief. He was now able to summon more computational ability to examine the deepest parts of his mind palace.

"The young man… The face…"

Staring at Li Jialing's face that was filled with bitterness, helplessness, and sorrow, Li Yao felt that his memories of the past were raging inside his head like an unstoppable flood.

Countless mottled faces brushed past his soul, and he traced back all the way back to a long, long time ago when he was in his teens.

"Wait!" the mental devil suddenly said. "Have you discovered that the boy looks like your father?"

"What are you talking about?" Li Yao was slightly dazed. Then he trembled hard and almost lost his cool and gasped. "Now that you mention it, you're right. The facial organs and the feelings inside his eyes are truly similar to my pop, who used to be drunk all day!"

Li Yao had achieved what he had today partly because of the memories of Earth. But his foster father's meticulous caretaking and tutelage, and especially the man's teaching of basic knowledge in maintenance and refining, certainly played an irreplaceable role.

Without his foster father, he would not have become what he was. Maybe Vulture Li Yao would only be a pugnacious rogue in the magical equipment graveyard and the leader of a certain gang at best. It was even possible that the fate of the entire Star Glory Federation would have been changed and be no more right now!

In his teenage years, before Ding Lingdang appeared, Li Yao’s only relation in this world was his foster father, other than the uncanny dreams of Earth.

His foster father had protected him countless times in the dangerous environment in the magical equipment graveyard. Other than laying a solid foundation of refining for him, he had also taught Li Yao many moral lessons and told him to look for the light above his head even if he were mired in the swamp of darkness.

Li Yao was very close to his foster father. They were like a real father and son bound by blood.

Well, perhaps ‘Little Black’ was sort of his family, too. But Little Black had been brought by his foster father as well.

Also, his foster father had hidden his last words, which explained his origins, and half a weird key inside the body of Little Black.

His foster father was not a native of the federation but from the most mysterious Alliance of the Holy Covenant. But he was also in a sophisticated relationship with a woman named Li Linghai from the Imperium of True Human Beings. He had asked Li Yao to go to the Imperium and turn to Li Linghai for help if the federation could not hold on any longer, as if he believed that Li Linghai would certainly protect and help Li Yao.

His foster father was somehow related to Li Linghai.

Li Linghai, according to the intelligence that Li Yao had collected through various sources, was a core member of the Li family, which was one of the four most powerful Kurfürst families in the country, and the queen of the Imperium of True Human Beings!

The emperor of the Imperium today had lost the authority that Blackstar the Great had a thousand years ago. But in any case, an emperor was still an emperor, and a queen was still a queen!

“So, what kind of messy family drama am I watching right now?” Li Yao was befuddled.

After observing the young man more carefully, and especially after scanning the structure of his facial organs and his bones, he was even more certain of his finding!

When his foster father escaped to the Star Glory Federation at the edge of the cosmos, he was already a weary, wounded, and dying old man.

His face that had been weathered by snow and storms was naturally as old as dry rind.

Also, he had grown a messy, gray beard, and his face was always covered in stains, grease, and the stink of alcohol. Even Li Yao had barely seen his clean face.

At first glance, he was entirely different from the mysterious young man who was vigorous and had a clean skin.

It was also the reason Li Yao had failed to recognize him at the beginning.

However, after Li Yao scanned their face and bones profoundly and examined the very similar feelings in their eyes, he was able to discover the shocking similarities between the two people!

The unique air of sorrow and hopelessness would have escaped anyone’s attention if they had not spent every day with Li Yao’s foster father like Li Yao did.

But now that he had clearly sensed it, it would be bullsh*ting to claim that Li Yao’s foster father was not related to the mysterious young man.

“Is he… the blood son of our foster father?” the mental devil asked. “Didn’t we speculate that he used to be in a romantic relationship with Li Linghai, the queen of the Imperium? Then, it is perfectly normal that they secretly had a child!

“Wow. It is indeed as expected of the foster father of Vulture Li Yao. To think that he made the wife of the supreme Emperor of the Imperium of True Human Beings cheat on her husband! How incredible he was!”

“Enough of the cr*p!” Li Yao was amused. “My pop fled to the Star Glory Federation about a hundred and thirty years ago. Even though he was in a relationship with Li Linghai, it must’ve been a hundred and fifty years ago. If he really had any blood children, they should be more than a hundred years old now!

“If they were Immortal Cultivators, they would be in the most prime years of their life as the most standard adults. If they were ordinary people, they would already be in their senior years. But in any case, they should not be such an unbelievably young boy!”

“That is not necessarily the case,” the mental devil said. “Don’t forget that the artificial insemination and fertilization technology nowadays are already unbelievably advanced. Sealing the life seeds for a hundred years is not a technological problem at all. Didn’t you also leave some life seeds in the federation, which somehow went missing after being sealed for a hundred years? Chances are that several vigorous kids will jump out of nowhere in a couple of days and cling to your thigh calling you dad. It will be perfectly normal, too!”

“Okay, okay, okay!” Li Yao trembled hard. “May that never happen. Let’s stay on topic!”

“I am not scaring you, only trying to point it out to you that, if our foster father did leave some life seeds in the Imperium of True Human Beings before, it is absolutely technologically possible to produce his offspring after a hundred years of freezing.

“It is even possible that he left a descendent more than a hundred years ago who was kept in hibernation, in which his bodily functions and his growth were all frozen, until the descendent was ‘unfrozen’ recently. This is a viable possibility, too.

“In any case, the odds are really too low for two people to have identical facial organs, bone structures, and even auras, one of whom from the center of the cosmos and the other from the edge billions of lightyears away. The mysterious young man must be deeply related to our foster father, right?”

“Yes.” Li Yao agreed with the mental devil’s judgment.

The mental devil was the other side of his soul after all. So, it was his own conclusion as well.

Li Yao was very close to his foster father. He was very curious about his foster father's origins and past. If the young man was truly related to his foster father, it was certainly his obligation to find out the truth and protect the young man!

Right then, a weird thing happened.

The mysterious young man 'Li Jialing' suddenly glimpsed at Neltharion's direction, as if he had noticed it.

Did he sense it?

Li Yao's interest was aroused.

The mysterious young man was much stronger than he had anticipated. Or maybe it was because he accidentally leaked some insignificant ripples in his excitement when he discovered that the mysterious young man looked very much like his foster father.

From the quick glance, however, Li Yao sensed emotions of deeper levels from the mysterious young man's seemingly tranquil eyes.

The mysterious young man left him an impression of sorrow and hopelessness just now. The man seemed to be completely desperate about the situation he was in and his destiny in the future. He was like a zombie dragging a shell, waiting for the arrival of death.

However, the look on the young man's face that flashed quickly was like a man lost in a desert who discovered an oasis, a drowning man who had found a piece of floating wood, or an adventurer who had retrieved a marvelous weapon that could slay tigers and dragons!

His eyes looked like frozen magma, and he did not seem to be waiting to be killed at anybody else’s mercy at all!

Cr*p.

Li Yao was worried that the young man would act rashly. After all, although the two clusters of powerful life energy next door had left, dozens of crystal cameras were still monitoring the secret chamber from around. Traces would be exposed after only one moment of carelessness.

But the young man was much calmer than he expected. His eyes were only frozen for half a second before they moved away. Then, he began to cough loudly. While coughing, he crouched on the floor again, and the desire for survival that was as intense as a storm in his eyes was hidden again. He became a walking shell without a soul, exactly like before.

“What an interesting kid.” The mental devil chuckled. “Take a guess. Has he discovered us or not?”

Chapter 2069 - The Old Monster and the Little One

Whether the mysterious young man had discovered him or not, Li Yao decided to get in touch with him despite the risks.

Now that there were experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage on the Immortal Cultivators’ side paying attention to the young man, it was evident that he must be a key to a certain program or project.

Judging from the mysterious young man’s torture a moment ago and the strong desire of survival that he was trying to hide right now, he did not seem to be particularly fond of the owner of Manjusaka or the place itself.

The mysterious young man and Li Yao were natural allies.

Li Yao’s time was limited. Right now, the Immortal Cultivators ‘epic quest’ was being implemented step by step. If Starlight really walked into the trap, it would probably happen within a couple of days.

Manjusaka was an enormous, complicated, super space fortress that looked like a maze. Li Yao was not sure that he could locate and sabotage its fatal weakness in only a few days.

Perhaps the mysterious young man could give him valuable intelligence.

Also, the man seemed to be deeply associated with Li Yao’s foster father…

Leaving the intimacy between him and his foster father aside, it was also his foster father’s request to look for Li Linghai in the Imperium of True Human Beings. As a native of the Covenant Alliance, it was unlikely that his foster father had made friends with many people of the Imperium. So, was it possible that the mysterious young man was related to Li Linghai or was even their secret child as the mental devil said earlier?

Li Yao had not snuck into the Imperium by himself to destroy the Imperium, and it was impossible for him to do so. Like it or not, the federation and the Imperium would coexist for a very long time and would even be faced with the threats of the Alliance of the Holy Covenant, the Pangu Civilization, and even the extraterrestrial devils together.

It was an undeniable fact, which all the Cultivators respected!

Whether the two parties fought or not, if he had an opportunity to meet Li Linghai, the queen of the Imperium, Li Yao would certainly be able to widen the federation’s choices in the future.

Is the mysterious young man related to Li Linghai, the queen of the Imperium?

If he is, how did the almighty queen allow him to demean himself here as a miserable test subject?

Or rather, are the Immortal Cultivators so inhuman that they do not let go of their own children as long as there is enough value in them to be exploited?

With a headful of questions, Li Yao maneuvered Neltharion to slowly sink to the young man’s head at a speed that was almost still. He then sent an extremely feeble spiritual wave to the young man's brain, which was equivalent to 'private talk' of the highest level.

"Hush. Don't talk. Don't move," Li Yao said.

The young man trebled slightly. The glamorous and violent sparks appeared and flashed deep inside his eyes again.

Li Yao had never seen such flames in his foster father's eyes, but he did often see his own eyes burning furiously like that in the mirror.

Maybe, the young man was the same type of person as him.

At the very least, the young man absolutely was not as meek and cowardly as he appeared!

"Sense the vibration of my spiritual energy, and then vibrate your soul at the same frequency. Then, our brainwaves will be able to communicate," Li Yao said. "Judging from your performance just now, your soul is rather strong. Such a simple trick to play with brainwaves is not a problem for you, is it?"

The young man blinked and mumbled something inaudible before he turned around.

There was no telling whether he did not hear Li Yao or simply was unwilling to respond, but he did not send out his own soul waves for a long time.

"Who are you? Why are you locked here? What kind of studies have those people been running on you?" Li Yao asked patiently.

The young man was still staring at the ceiling in a daze, his eyes completely frozen. The flashing flames just now seemed to be only Li Yao’s imagination.

Li Yao smiled. It was truly an interesting and tricky young man, but he was still too little to deal with a Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator!

“It seems that you are quite satisfied with your current situation and do not want any change. So, just forget it,” Li Yao said unhurriedly. “I’ll be gone in three seconds and never show up again. You know how heavily guarded this place is and how difficult it is to sneak in. There won’t be a second chance.

“Three… Two… One!”

“Who are you?”

When Li Yao dragged his tone and counted to ‘one’, the ice inside the young man’s eyes was finally broken. The brilliance of extreme hope flooded out like magma again as he sent out a brainwave somewhat clumsily.

Li Yao smiled. “Why were you silent just now? Were you suspicious of me?”

The young man hesitated for a moment but said dutifully, “Yes. I suspected that you worked for Li Lingfeng and were testing me in such a way.”

Li Lingfeng?

Li Yao was slightly dazed. He naturally knew that Li Lingfeng was also one of the most powerful and influential celebrities in the Imperium of True Human Beings right now. He was Queen Li Linghai’s brother and would likely be the next leader of the Li family and one of the four Kurfürsten!

Li Lingfeng, Li Linghai, the mysterious young man, and his foster father. What had the four of them been up to exactly?

Thinking quickly, Li Yao asked, “Then, why are your suspicions gone now?”

“They are not, but I don’t seem to have a choice except to take a gamble.”

The magma flowing blatantly on the surface of the young man’s eyes was frozen again, and he appeared to be a sorrowful and hopeless zombie again. But there was a slight hint of determination in his brainwaves, like a gambler that had wagered all his money.

“If you are not sent by Li Lingfeng, you must be from ‘Starlight’. I did not know that Starlight had such experts who could hide one wall away from Li Lingfeng without being noticed by him!”

Li Yao was greatly alarmed. It was not until then that he realized the powerful life energy just now belonged to a future Kurfürsten. No wonder it was so intimidating that he did not even dare fart.

The meticulousness of the young man’s thinking and the calmness of his mind were also far beyond his expectation.

“Who are you?” Li Yao asked for a second time. “Who are you locked here, and why do you assume that I am from Starlight?”

“I can tell you that,” the young man said expressionlessly. “But shouldn’t you tell me some intelligence, too? If you are indeed from Starlight, there is no reason why we can’t cooperate. Or to put it more simply, we can save each other’s lives.”

Li Yao scanned every tiny change on the young man’s face and pupils carefully. Denying the possibility that it was a trap, he thought for a moment and said, “Alright. Tell me your identity and origins first, and let’s see how we can cooperate.”

The young man blinked. Perhaps realizing that his situation was much worse than the situation of the mysterious Neltharion, he did not haggle with Li Yao on the issue but replied dutifully, “My name is Li Jialing. I am just a common member of the Li family.”

“Wait.” Li Yao interrupted him and confirmed something with him. “The Li family, one of the four Kurfürst families, right?”

“Yes,” Li Jialing said.

“You mentioned Li Lingfeng just now. He is a big shot of the Li family. How are you related to him? Are you his descendant?” Li Yao asked.

Li Jialing shook his head. “No. After a thousand years of development, the Li family has plenty of branches and offshoots. There are hundreds of thousands of people in the family. My parents were just common inferior warriors of the Li family. After they died fighting for the family, I became an orphan and was adopted by the big shot of the family according to the tradition. I lived under somebody else’s roof henceforth. Later, I was sent to a private school of the family, where I have been bullied and living a miserable life.”

Pausing for a moment, he went on with faint mockery flashing in his eyes. “But that is just my identity on the surface. In fact, I don’t even know if the couple of inferior warriors are my birth parents. That’s just one of the things that other people told me and I pretended to believe.

“As for Li Lingfeng, he has been observing and monitoring me in secret this whole time. He also brings me to this place for all kinds of strengthening modifications in secret every year, turning me into… a monster that even the green-haired gorilla couldn’t kill, as you saw just now.

“I might really be Li Lingfeng’s offspring. I’m told that many big shots of the Imperium use their blood descendants to run all kinds of strengthening and modification experiments and apply the procedures on themselves after the results prove stable. They choose their blood descendants because their genes and soul forms are very similar, and the experiment data is of a higher referential value.”

The young man told his appalling past casually.

Li Yao, however, felt that there was more to the story. Considering for a moment, he asked straightforwardly, “Have you seen Li Linghai before?”

“Li Linghai?” Li Jialing turned around again and lay on the ground, extending all fours. “As the queen, she spends most of the time in the royal palace in the Empyreal Terminus Sector and has no interaction with a nobody of the family like me. Of course, I’ve never had the chance to meet her in person.

“But why did you suddenly bring her up? Who are you exactly? Why did you sneak into Manjusaka?”

Li Yao really did not know how he should explain himself. It was not like he could tell the keen kid that he looked like his pop who passed away more than a hundred years ago, and said pop probably used to be in a relationship with Li Linghai.

After thinking for a long time, he decided to change the topic. “What did you mean by saying we can save each other lives through our cooperation?”

“So, are you a member of Starlight or not?” Li Jialing asked back instead of answering. “If you are, I have bargaining chips to trade you with. If you are not, I’ll just admit that I made a terrible choice and can die in peace.”

Li Yao could not help but feel amused by the young man’s self-important tone.

He recalled when he had competitions of wisdom and bravery with the cunning old monsters such as ‘Bai Xinghe’ in his younger days.

At that time, he was often scared out of his wits in his heart, but he had to pretend to be calm and casual, fearing that the old monsters would see through him.

But time had changed. It was his turn to play the role of the ‘old monster’ now.

“What if I am a member of Starlight?” Li Yao said with a smile.

Chapter 2070 - Shadow of Darkness

“If you are from Starlight, you people are in grave danger right now,” Li Jialing said confidently. “Are you preparing to attack Manjusaka? It’s a trap. The army of the Imperium led by Li Lingfeng has set up a dragnet waiting for you to come! Nobody can save you now. Perhaps I’m the only one who can help you find something that will enable you to escape. So, it is absolutely possible for us to make a deal!”

“Is that so?” Li Yao smiled casually. “But has it ever occurred to you why we should continue our plan like moths darting to a flame now that you have told me such important intelligence? I can totally escape right now and leave you here alone.”

“Huh?” Li Jialing was a teenager after all. Although he had been receiving the strengthening and refinement of the Li family and Manjusaka, which nurtured his fleshly body and his soul with infinite resources, and he had spent every second of his life considering the ways of escape, he was certainly no match for a cunning man like Vulture Li Yao.

After hearing what Li Yao said, his eyes bulged out, and he was almost astounded.

“Please. Don’t show that shocked idiotic look in case somebody notices,” Li Yao said in a hurry. “It was just a joke. Don’t be so nervous!”

The young man coughed lightly and covered his embarrassment. Growing even more curious about the guy who had popped out of nowhere, he asked, “Who—Who are you exactly? Are you really a Cultivator from Starlight, or are you from some other force? What is your purpose exactly?”

“It is not important. What matters is that I’m quite interested in the deal that you talked about,” Li Yao said with a smile. “Tell me about it. What bargaining chips do you have for the deal, and what do you want to trade them for?”

After a brief silence, Li Jialing replied, “It depends on what you want exactly. I can only say that I have ways to act freely in Manjusaka and even win Li Lingfeng’s trust—at least ostensibly.

“The owner of Manjusaka is the Heavenly Eye Group, which is managed by Wuying Lan. But the Heavenly Eye Group is backed by the Li family, or to be more exact, Li Lingfeng himself. In other words, Li Lingfeng is the one with the highest rank in Manjusaka right now. Even Wuying Lan, the owner of this place, must listen to his commands. The two of them seem to be conspiring in secret.”

“Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan?” Li Yao thought for a moment. “You mean the two experts who observed your test from the next door just now? Since you are only their test subject, why are you sure that you can win their trust?”

“Yes. That’s them.” After hesitating for a moment, Li Jialing said, “It is too complicated for me to explain quickly. All you need to know is that I am not simply a test subject to them. Li Lingfeng is also half a teacher and half a custodian to me.”

Li Yao slightly frowned.

Li Lingfeng was Li Linghai’s brother, and Li Linghai had an unknown relationship with Li Yao’s foster father. Considering the similarities between Li Jialing and his foster father, the two of them were probably connected by blood. Then, Li Lingfeng was the young man’s half teacher and half custodian, but he had been performing such cruel tests and refinements on him…

Where should Li Yao start to crack such a complicated mystery?

After thinking carefully for a moment, Li Yao proposed his requests to the young man.

“I need to know the general structure of Manjusaka, especially the locations of the mainframe crystal processor and the enemy supply base that are related to the beehive prison.

“Also, if you really can talk to Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan, I would like to find out what they are doing exactly.

“Right now. How much do you know about Starlight? Are they an influential organization in the Imperium?”

“So, you are truly not from Starlight…” Li Jialing was not bothered by the new finding for too long. “It is not exactly an influential one. Starlight and Cultivators are both obsolete notions. Although they have occasionally been heard of in the past hundreds of years, they have never caused much trouble.”

“That’s right,” Li Yao said. “I’m told that the Imperium has secured glorious triumphs in the frontline. The Covenant Alliance suffered a crushing defeat and left a lot of territory that is waiting to be carved up. At such a critical moment, Li Lingfeng, as one of the most important people of a Kurfürst family, has come here to deal with a bunch of unworthy Cultivators instead going to the frontline trying to earn more trophies? I feel that there is a scheme behind all this. I want to find out his real goal!”

After pondering for a moment, Li Jialing said, “I should be able to move about in Manjusaka and even get Li Lingfeng to tell me something. But as for exactly what he will say, it will be beyond my control. I can’t ask him directly as it will be too obvious!”

“Alright. That’s good enough. Then, tell me, what do you want?”

“Freedom.” Ravenousness that looked like rolling magma flowed out of the young man’s eyes again, like the roar of a man who was deeply mired in a swamp before he was completely swallowed by the darkness. “I want to get out of the control of Li Lingfeng and the Li family. I want to escape from the fate of being controlled. I want to go to a place where nobody commands me or knows who I am to live a life of freedom!”

The brilliance inside the young man’s eyes made Li Yao’s soul bump quickly. He could not help but feel that he saw himself from a long, long time ago.

“Why?” Li Yao was more and more curious about the young man’s past. “Li Lingfeng is one of the most powerful people in the Imperium. If he is half your teacher and half your custodian, your days in the Li family shouldn’t be too rough, right?

“A world where the strong prey on the weak is cruel, but you are not weak at all. You are an out-and-out expert and a perfect slaughtering machine!

“If my senses were correct, the green-haired gorilla just now was no match for you after all. It would have taken you only one second to dig out his guts, wouldn’t it?

“Judging from the forms of your bones and your teeth, you can’t be too old and are no more than twenty years old. I can’t imagine how much effort Li Lingfeng has dedicated to you to make you boast such massive strength before the age of twenty. Even if you are really a test subject, you must be one of the ‘ultimate test subjects’ that he has the highest hope for.

“Therefore, if you are willing to release your strength, it should be easy for you to win a place in the Li family. You may even grow into one of the key personnel of your family, and it is not entirely impossible for you to be as influential and powerful as Li Lingfeng in the future.

“Then, why did you not fight back when you were attacked by the green-haired gorilla, and why do you want to get rid of such a fate?

“Do you not believe in the Immortal Cultivators’ ideology?

“Right. You speculated that I was a Cultivator from Starlight just now, but you showed no animosity and derision at all and wanted to cooperate with me without any hesitation. Are you a Cultivator?”

Mockery flashed in Li Jialing’s eyes as he remarked, “I don’t know exactly what I am, but if I must choose sides between Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators, of course I am a proud Immortal Cultivator!”

“Only the fittest should survive, and the weak should be swallowed by the strong. This is the natural law of the universe. What’s wrong about that?

“As for Cultivators? Such naïve, hypocritic, worthless, and idiotic things are only fit for novels and games. How can they compete with the Immortal Cultivators in reality?”

“…Young man, you are very straightforward,” Li Yao said.

“However,” Li Jialing said, “even if I am an Immortal Cultivator, and you are a Cultivator from Starlight, it does not mean that we cannot cooperate for now. I am just an insignificant nobody. Even if I run loose, it will not jeopardize your plan or your ideals, will it?

“All in all, I couldn’t care less about ideals, beliefs, or morals. I only want freedom. Absolute freedom!

“I do not want to be a perfect slaughtering machine and fight for the Li family, no matter how many gains the Li family has to offer me!

“I only want to live a free, unstrained life where nobody tells me what to do. If I must fight, I will only fight for myself. Just like that!”

From the close distance, Li Yao could sense the young man’s feeble but sharp fighting will, as if a frozen ocean was unfreezing with the cracking sounds of the ice.

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao said, “It seems that you have prepared for ‘freedom’ for many years.”

“Yes.” A hint of frustration and desperation flowed out of Li Jialing’s eyes again, only to be replaced by stubbornness quickly. A fraction of a second later, they were covered by icy mists, resembling the tranquility before the arrival of a storm again. “For a long time now, I’ve been thinking about how I can escape the Li family and Li Lingfeng. But Li

Lingfeng’s strength is something that I absolutely cannot resist.

“Since I could not find an opportunity, I could only pretend to be frustrated and at anybody’s mercy while hiding my true intentions. There was no need for me to reveal who I was.

“Today may be the only opportunity that I have. So, no matter who you are exactly—not just a Cultivator from Starlight, it wouldn’t matter even if you are from the Covenant Alliance or one of the extraterrestrial devils—I only want freedom!

“I’m done. If you’ve truly been sent by Li Lingfeng to test me, I’ll admit my failure now that I have taken the gamble. Come on. Give me a quick death!”

The young man closed his eyes, as if he were ready to be executed.

Li Yao did not know how he should view the young man who was likely connected to his foster father by blood.

Although he knew that Li Jialing, born and raised in one of the four Kurfürst families of the Imperium of True Human Beings, could not have been a docile lamb, the young man’s patience that was well beyond his age and the aggression behind the patience were still somewhat shocking for him.

It was a man who was willing to do anything to achieve his goal and hid his claws and tusks just in order to soar into the sky for a lawless life one day!

Li Yao saw the shadows of Yan Xibei, Xiao Xuance, Bai Xinghe, Jin Tuyi, Elder Nether Spring, Lu Zui, and Lu Qingchen deep inside Li Jialing’s eyes.

Chapter 2071 - Li Jialing“s Action!

Looking at the flames deep inside the young man’s frozen eyes that looked like black lotuses, Li Yao softly sighed and said, “Should I compliment you on your courage, or should I mock your overconfidence? Are you really certain that you can deceive Li Lingfeng?”

“Maybe, Li Lingfeng is indeed a hundred times stronger than me, but he cannot dedicate all his attention to me.” Li Jialing gnashed his teeth. “He is a powerful person who has a lot of business to attend to every day. There are too many enemies that he needs to consider how he can crush and swallow. I’m afraid that a thousand schemes, traps, and targets are swirling inside his head every second.

“He’s never really taken me seriously or viewed me as an ‘enemy’. I am just a mouse that has been domesticated by him.

“In his world, I have occupied one percent at most, or even less.

“But to me, he represents the whole world that I’m going to break. I have been spending every second and a hundred percent of my computational ability thinking about how I can run away from his control for ten years! I have come up with more than a thousand possibilities and ten thousand variations and countermeasures in my head. Whatever the odds of success are today, it is worth a try despite the risks!”

Li Yao was silent for a moment, shocked by the young man's determination again.

Li Jialing was still young and juvenile. If he had not run into Li Yao but a real Cultivator from Starlight, it was very likely that his plan would have failed.

But still, Li Yao saw countless black shadows in the young man, which were even slightly stinging his nerve endings.

In any case, Li Yao could not leave Li Jialing aside. After discussing it with the mental devil for a while, he asked, "What are you going to do to win the trust of Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan?"

After a brief silence, Li Jialing said, "You will find out very soon."

"Then, how should I keep hiding by your side?" Li Yao was not bothered by the young man's obstinacy. "If you can truly get in touch with Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan at a close distance, it seems unlikely for me to follow you all the time stealthily. It will be very risky, and I may be discovered at any moment."

"If your magical equipment is not very large in size," Li Jialing said, "you can hide inside my body."

"It is indeed a good idea to hide inside your body and cover my existence with the flames of your spiritual energy, but if somebody performs a full body scanning on you, won't I be exposed immediately? Also, there will be nowhere for my magical equipment to run to at all."

"I can tear apart my abdomen and hide you inside it. Then, I will activate the gold core and unleash chaotic flames of spiritual energy," Li Jialing said. "Generally speaking, as long as they do not resort to large scanning magical equipment, it will be practically impossible for them to catch you. I will try to resist their full scanning. In any case, the gamble is certainly worth it."

"You seem to be fond of gambling," Li Yao remarked.

"I am not a gambler," Li Jialing replied, "but for somebody who has absolutely nothing in the first place, it is impossible for them to lose no matter how many gambles they take."

Li Yao smiled. "Did you know? My original target when I snuck into Manjusaka was not you at all. I was not even aware of your existence. But now, I am more and more curious about your past and your origins. You are almost the greatest trophy in my eyes now."

"I am more and more curious about you, too," Li Jialing replied, not giving in at all. "Sneaking into Manjusaka by yourself, hiding right under the nose of two unparalleled experts, and yet unlikely to be a Cultivator from Starlight or a spy from the Covenant Alliance. Right, we have talked for a long time, but I do not know your name yet."

For some reason, Li Yao was unwilling to fabricate a name to fool the young man who looked very similar to his foster father.

Besides, Vulture Li Yao did not mean anything in the Imperium of True Human Beings at all.

He smiled and said, "My name is Li Yao."

"A name is just a reference," Li Jialing said. "So, what kind of person is hiding behind the name 'Li Yao', and where does he come from?"

“What about you?” Li Yao asked back. “‘Li Jialing’ is also a reference. What kind of past and origins are hidden behind it?”

Confusion flowed out of the young man’s eyes for the first time. After being momentarily dazed, he sent out a feeble wave. “…I don’t know yet. But after I get absolute freedom, I will find out who I am, where I’m from, and what my destination is!”

Looking at the young man’s eyes that were covered in mists, Li Yao felt that he saw the unknown Earth that was still hidden in mysteries. He was lost for words for a moment again.

Having not received a reply for a long time, Li Jialing said, “I will help you find more intelligence, and you will help me escape from Manjusaka. If you agree on the deal, I will start now.”

“Start what?” Li Yao asked.

Licking his lips, Li Jialing suddenly widened his eyes so much that they were almost torn apart. Thousands of bloody streaks immediately jumped out of his eyes. His hands and feet were extended into the air as if they were pulled by invisible strings, and he bounced fiercely like a fish that was tossed to the shore!

“Argh!”

The roars deep inside his throat almost sounded like a thousand drills finding their way out of his chest. His flesh that had healed just now was torn apart again, and blood spurted out crazily, turning him into a crimson man on fire!

The young man retreated his hands in difficulties and held his head hard, howling, cramping, writhing on the ground in pain, and vomiting blood and foam crazily.

Li Yao was taken aback by Li Jingling's sudden move. Had he not heard Li Jialing saying that he was about to start, Li Yao would have suspected that he was somehow possessed by evil spirits, or some uncanny forces inside his body had gone out of control.

The young man stabbed his fingers so deep into his head that he almost squeezed his eyeballs out of their sockets, as if he could not restrain the explosion of his head if he did not do that.

BAM! BAM! BAM!

He hit his head at the floor and the wall hard in earthshaking noises again and again, as if crystal bombs were bursting out in the small secret chamber. Devastating marks of blood were left behind!

"Don't—Don't push me!"

With a twisted face, Li Jialing bellowed in a blurred voice. Whoever saw him would feel that he was in the most excruciating agony. "Don't push me anymore, you *ssholes! *ssholes!"

Thick fluids and blood flowed out of his eyes, nose, ears, and mouth. Combinations of blood and vomit contaminated his chest. He looked hideous, horrifying, and more pitiful than ever.

"I didn't know that the boy was an actor, too!" the mental devil exclaimed. "Although he is still quite juvenile, his cruelty, disobedience, combat ability, and acting skills are all so distinguished, and he also understands the importance of patiently hiding. He will certainly be something in the future!”

Li Jialing tortured himself so hard that even Li Yao and the mental devil felt creeped out. It was needless to mention the researchers of Manjusaka next door.

Right now, Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan were both off attending to more important issues. Only a few researchers were left to watch over the place.

Li Jialing had always been like a lifeless zombie, never interested in hurting other people or himself. He had never struck anybody as a dangerous fellow.

Therefore, the researchers were somewhat overwhelmed when they saw him on such a rampage and in such agony.

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

Dozens of red spots appeared on Li Jialing’s body. Powerful anesthetics were shot at him from various directions.

However, his movement was countless times more agile than the green-haired gorilla just now. Turning into red mists with bloody spindrifts, he dodged all the powerful anesthetics!

Chi!

The gate of the secret chamber was opened. A dozen Immortal Cultivators in crystal suits swarmed in.

“Don’t come any closer!”

Li Jialing’s face was caught in such fear and desperation when he saw them that he might as well have run into some ghosts. He retreated further into the corner and cried, “Don’t come any closer. Don’t come any closer!”

“Don’t be scared. Just calm down.” The Immortal Cultivator in the lead could not have sounded warmer or more comforting. Anybody would feel that they could trust him with their heart when they heard him talk. “You are sick. We are here to help you.”

“Don’t! Don’t! Don’t!” Li Jialing shouted desperately. “I’m not sick. Don’t send me to the place for refinement. I don’t want it. Help me! Help me!”

“Fine. Fine. You are not sick, and we will not send you there again. Anyway, just calm down.” The Immortal Cultivator’s voice was even more gentle and comforting than before. “Trust me. Everything is over now. What you need is a rest. A good rest.”

“Don’t come any closer. Don’t come any closer. Don’t come any closer. My head hurts. It hurts so much…”

Whatever the newcomers said, Li Jialing simply mumbled to himself repetitively. His pupils and his whites seemed to have completely melted, releasing the brilliance of more and more brutality and violence, as if a dam deep inside his brain had been completely crushed and an unprecedented flood had been set loose. His mumbling became deeper and deeper and more and more hoarse. “If you dare come closer… If you dare to come any closer…”

He seemed to have lost his awareness and caught in the utmost confusion.

The Immortal Cultivator gestured at his subordinates nearby. A few crystal suits immediately approached him without a sound.

“Don’t come any closer!”

In that moment, the confusion, chaos, indifference, and desperation in the young man’s eyes had entirely vanished, replaced by the most typical cruelty and ruthlessness of a pure Immortal Cultivator.

Shua!

The muscles all over Li Jialing’s body were tightened into iron ropes. His blood and sweat, filled with the most violent flames of spiritual energy, darted in all directions like a storm of needles, disrupting all the guards’ eyesight.

He took the opportunity to dash into the crowd of Immortal Cultivators. Extending his arms and opening his fingers, he grabbed the heads of two Exos more than easily.

Bam!

Savaged by his unstoppably brutal strength, the heads of the two Exos hit each other hard. The helmets made of super alloys collapsed deeply, and dazzling sparks spurted out!

Chapter 2072 - Face Changing!

“So brutal!”

Although Li Yao had anticipated that the energy hidden inside the young man’s body was definitely not as peaceful as it appeared to be on the surface, the abrupt change from frozen ice to rumbling thunder still made Li Yao secretly click his tongue.

The Immortal Cultivators, on the other hand, were used to Li Jialing’s meek, lethargic behavior. Some of them who knew the purpose of the many refinements and experiments had been trying to force him to go on a killing spree, too, but to no avail.

Li Jialing would not hurt anybody—that was everybody’s preconception.

Nobody expected that Li Jialing would suddenly start to attack. The secret chamber was so narrow that the Immortal Cultivators’ clinking crystal suits were more of a burden than a help.

Li Jialing took a long breath in relief, as if he had exhaled the depression that had been held back for more than ten years. His lips curled into a cruel smile, as if that was his real appearance!

With a hideous face, he turned into a ray of death as agile as a ghost and bounced up and down among the Immortal Cultivators.

Dark golden stripes were vaguely emitting from his palms and his arms, forming unpredictable rune arrays. The crystal suits made of super alloys were as fragile as paper and wood under the tearing of his hands!

In the senses of Li Yao’s soul, Li Jialing’s overwhelming flames of spiritual energy broke the boundary of the fleshly body and turned into an invisible giant monster.

The tentacles of the monster filled the entire secret chamber and locked onto every breath of every Immortal Cultivator tightly.

Crack!

Another Immortal Cultivator was hit right in the chest brutally by the edge of Li Jialing’s hand that was covered in fire. His entire chest collapsed, and even the armor in the back broke apart.

Crack! Pu!

Another Immortal Cultivator in a super heavy crystal suit lunged at Li Jialing from behind, hoping to press the young man against the floor with his own weight and that of his crystal suit.

However, Li Jialing seemed to have grown an eye on the back of his head. He stepped forward in advance and grabbed the wrist of the Immortal Cultivator before him. Crushing the armor as well as the bones, he robbed the enemy of the long saber in his hand and stabbed it back, piercing right into the chest of the Immortal Cultivator behind him.

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

The Immortal Cultivator in a super heavy crystal suit released a powerful spiritual shield, which triggered such intense smoke as if magma was flowing on a glacier, while he struggled to resist the attack of the saber.

Li Jialing was utterly emotionless. After a shake of his wrist, the saber turned into a cluster of broken pieces, which were then enshrouded by his spiritual energy and turned into a high-speed metal torrent that broke the spiritual shield unstoppably, blasting into the Immortal Cultivator’s chest!

In the blink of an eye, almost five Immortal Cultivators were blown away and cramped on the wall and in the corners. There was no telling if they were alive!

Grinning hideously, Li Jialing licked the blood stains on his lips and jumped at a heavy firepower crystal suit that was fully covered in firearms.

On instinct, the Immortal Cultivator wearing the crystal suit activated all the storm bolters, crystal cannons, and flying sword launchers on him. They were all emitting dazzling brilliance.

“Don’t kill him!” the Immortal Cultivator in the lead shouted. “Capture him alive!”

The Immortal Cultivator wearing the heavy firepower crystal suit hesitated for a moment, but Li Jialing had already grabbed the barrel of the storm bolter in his left hand and pulled it hard.

There was no telling whether the Immortal Cultivator panicked or Li Jialing’s movement affected his reaction, but a large cluster of fire spurted out of the barrel and darted into Li Jialing’s abdomen.

After a boom, a fireball exploded brutally above Li Jialing’s abdomen and below his chest!

As if he felt none of it, Li Jialing’s speed was not affected at all. He simply pressed both of his hands on the chest of the Immortal Cultivator’s crystal suit.

Boom!

The second explosion was a hundred times more shocking than the fireball that exploded between Li Jialing’s chest and abdomen. As Li Jialing’s spiritual energy flowed out of his palms crazily, every gap of the heavy firepower crystal suit was spurting out chaotic flames. The Immortal Cultivator inside the crystal suit had been burnt to ash!

Without the support of the fleshly body, and now that the joints and the connections were all shattered, the crystal suit fell to the ground in pieces like a collapsing castle.

It was not until then that everybody saw the bleeding, deplorable wound between Li Jialing’s chest and abdomen. They could almost see his spine through the broken internal organs.

However, a lot of granulation tissue was growing at a visible speed and repairing the shocking wound quickly.

Those present recalled Li Jialing’s ability to quickly recover his wounds that were caused when he did not counterattack at all during the fight with the green-haired gorilla just now, as well as Li Jialing’s tough performance earlier when he was against the mutated beasts. They all swallowed hard, feeling the urge to run.

Li Jialing did not bother to look at them at all. Like a combination of an animal and a fiend, he roared in excitement and dashed at the gate that was being closed quickly!

Shua!

Li Jialing ran crazily down the gloomy and cold pathway, with any place as a landing point for him. He was jumping and running on the floor, the walls, and the ceiling.

“Hey…” He looked to be a combination of wildly joyful and remorseful, but his soul waves were unbelievably calm. “You did follow me out of the room, didn’t you?”

“I did.” Li Yao followed the young man on Neltharion neither too far away nor too close. With an eye-catching target like Li Jialing attracting all the attention, he did not need to worry that anybody would pay attention to the air that had nothing on the surface. “I am just somewhat astounded by your performance. Your attacks are actually so brutal.”

“It was those guys who built me into what I am today. Every drop of pain that I bore was brought by them. Is there a problem ‘repaying’ them with the same pain now?” The cold smile in Li Jialing’s eyes was almost beyond disguise. He seemed to be somebody else after the killing spree. “They want a perfect slaughtering machine, and I have given them one. They should feel happy about it!”

After a brief silence, Li Yao said, “Why didn’t you attack the green-haired gorilla just now? I thought that you had a taboo, like ‘no killing’.”

“No killing? Wouldn’t I be an idiot?” Li Jialing said matter-of-factly but furiously. “There are a lot of people that I want to kill, except that I never had a suitable opportunity. They are insignificant ants anyway. Just let them live a while longer so that Li Lingfeng will misunderstand me!

"In my competition against Li Lingfeng, I barely stand any chance. Only if he is misled into making a bad judgment about my personality and my thinking patterns will there be a slim chance, if it can be called a chance at all. Now is the time!

"Enough of the talking. The wound in my abdomen is about to heal. Just hide inside now!"

Li Yao felt that his head was more and more befuddled when he heard the young man bragging about his challenge against a big shot of the Imperium and saw his face suddenly turning more brutal than ever.

The situation was already chaotic enough. Now that such a little monster had shown up, how on earth should it be resolved?

Also, what was going on with Han Te, Liu Li, the Fist King, and the rest of them?

…

In the Land of Sins, deep down the ground, a gory battle of penetrators was at its most fierce moment.

The capture, escape, and collisions of the penetrators were similar to the battles of the deep-sea submarines, except that they were a hundred times crueler.

Both the hunters and the hunted held their breath listening to the feeblest sound coming from the rocks in order to determine the coordinates and direction of the enemy.

They would also spray tremendous quick-drying gels in the rocks that they had drilled through and plant abundant crystal bombs.

The gels were meant to delay the speed of the enemy's drilling, and the crystal bombs could destroy the enemy's drills.

But no matter how carefully they avoided each other, there would always be a time when the two parties had a head-on clash with nowhere to run.

In that case, the battle would go on until no soldiers on one side were standing. Sometimes, all the crystal bombs and fuel stored inside a penetrator would be detonated to blow up all the rocks, and everybody would die together.

Nobody was willing to be captured alive in the profound rocks thousands of meters beneath the ground, which often meant an ending a hundred times more scary than death.

“Liu Li, watch out!”

Ever since they dispersed in the forsaken mine two days ago, the penetrators of the Immortal Cultivators had been following them like haunting ghosts. Cloud Penetrator, Zuo Jingyun's earthly dragon, was unfortunately tailed by the enemy. After running about for more than twenty hours below the ground, it was still bitten by the enemy. The losses were so heavy that even Han Te and Liu Li, as two teenagers, had to fight like adult warriors.

Seeing that Liu Li was about to be hit by a storm of bullets, Han Te roared aloud. His entire left arm almost exploded, triggering a series of electric arcs that were condensed into an impenetrable shield and helped Liu Li block the fatal attack.

But he was blown backward by the counterforce and vomited blood crazily. His left arm dangled down, not having any strength anymore.

“Hehehe…”

The tall and brawny Immortal Cultivator on the opposite side aimed the thick barrel of the machine gun at Liu Li’s little head again. As if to savor the entertainment a moment longer, he even intentionally paused.

Then, his laughter turned into screams.

An iron arm dug through his chest and raised him high in midair before throwing him to the ground brutality into a pile of scrap metal mixed with blood and meat.

“Master Fist King!” Han Te and Liu Li exclaimed both in surprise and delight.

The Fist King seemed to have just passed a destructive storm. His iron body was barely intact. Two of the four arms had been torn off, and there were a hundred holes in his chest, from which sparks were popping out nonstop.

However, behind him was a penetrator of the Immortal Cultivators that was exploding and burning, as well as a whole ground of Immortal Cultivator corpses and pieces of their crystal suits.

“Lie down.”

Expressionless, the Fist King was unmoved by the two little fellows’ exclamation at all.

Han Te and Liu Li were slightly dazed. Then they felt that a torrent as scorching as magma brushed past their heads before screams of the Immortal Cultivators echoed behind them again.

“Don’t be scared.” Keeping Han Te and Liu Li behind him, the Fist King looked at his bloodstained fists and said peacefully, “I will protect you.”

Chapter 2073 - I Am Just a Machine

The cruel battle was finally over.

Zuo Jingyun submerged the broken ‘Cloud Penetrator’ into a natural underground chamber and moved forward along a dry underground river. Since the drill was no longer needed, the noise would be reduced to the minimum.

The Cultivators of Starlight with the best hearing stuck magical equipment that looked like metal ears against the crags in all directions, but they did not hear any noise of drilling for a long time.

The Immortal Cultivators must have lost them.

They were temporarily safe.

The Cultivators were finally able to take a breath in relief and seized every second to maintain the earthly dragon and tend to their wounds.

The Fist King, as the greatest contributor of the battle, left the crowd and hid in a dark corner of the empty underground chamber. He asked Han Te and Liu Li to help him carry the maintenance tools and the backup components to repair his broken body.

Everybody knew the might of ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie. They had seen his tough and unparalleled performances in the two great battles with their own eyes. Seeing that he was apparently in no mood to talk to strangers, they did not dare to disturb him.

“The third cooling pad.”

The Fist King observed his twisted body through four crystal cameras that were floating before his face and spoke to Liu Li while pondering the maintenance plan.

Liu Li hurried to find out what the Fist King needed from the box of backup components and brought it over with both hands.

Looking at the Fist King’s wounded body and recalling the sacrifices he had made for her and He Tan and his reassuring words, Liu Li felt her heart warm up, and she could not help but touch the Fist King’s broken body. She said sincerely, “Thank you, Master Fist King.”

Seeing the girl extending her soft hand over, the Fist King’s man-made eyes constricted quickly. But he did not dodge and simply said coldly, “There’s no need to thank me. You know that this is just a deal. I have made the seemingly optimal choice from the database for the purpose of getting stronger.

“Besides, I am not a human being. Although I can simulate all the feelings of human beings, it will be nothing more than a pile of data. Even if you do thank me sincerely, I will not be touched at all.”

“Huh. Is that so?” Liu Li blushed and said somewhat in embarrassment, “But when you invited us to dinner that day at the top floor of Great Iron City…”

“It was just a disguise and a simulation of the character of ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie,” the Fist King said casually. “If needed, I can simulate hundreds of different personalities. Calm, brutal, cunning, temperamental, enraged, the list goes on. Such simulations can help me better melt into the battlefield environment and may be in favor of the accomplishment of my target. But it will consume part of my computational ability and slow down my central database. It will also result in a certain degree of instability.

“So, now that the two of you have learned my real identity, and I need to summon all my computational ability on the consideration of the maintenance plan, there is no need for me to keep the simulation of personalities. As a result, the efficiency of my maintenance has been improved by more than seven percent.”

In fact, the Fist King had said the same thing to Li Yao before, but Liu Li always found it hard to understand. “It is very perplexing. Are you suggesting that the nonchalance right now is the Fist King’s real personality?”

“There is no such thing as ‘real personality’. There is not even a real Master Fist King,” the Fist King said coldly. “Personality, feelings or self-will are exclusive for human beings. I am not a human being. I do not have any self-awareness. I am just a puppet, an object, and a machine that will move in a certain direction. Have you never used a spiritual puppet before?”

“Of course I have.” Liu Li thought for a moment and shook his head. “But Master Fist King, you’re different from those spiritual puppets. Those things are all very silly and will only respond to specific commands or questions that are proposed to them. They often spurt out sparks and fall silent.”

“There is no essential difference,” the Fist King said expressionlessly. “The low-level spiritual puppets look stupid because of their poor databases and policy groups, which limit their choices. They do not have the ability to study and upgrade themselves.

“My database and policy group are thousands of times more abundant than theirs. Naturally, I seem to be very fluent in answering all your questions.

“But essentially speaking, I am no different from those things. We are all puppets and machines. When you raise a question, I will choose the most appropriate information from the database after computation and analysis and respond by means of voice to make us closer to each other. That way, it will be easier for me to realize the purpose to protect you. There’s nothing more to it. Multipurpose wrench, please.”

Liu Li handed over the multipurpose wrench and stuck out her tongue. Then she said with a smile, “So, Master Fist King, you can say ‘please’, too. Didn’t you say that such formalities are meaningless?”

“For me, ‘please’ does not mean anything. But for you human beings, it is a way to express appreciation,” the Fist King said. “By my calculation, if I behave in a friendlier way, your efficiency in picking and screening the backup components will increase, and the odds of your errors will drop. That is the reason I thanked you.”

Liu Li was dazed for a long time. Blushing, she said, “No matter how you put it, Master Fist King, we haven’t thanked you properly yet. You’ve probably never heard it before, but you are actually a good guy!”

“Logical fallacy,” the Fist King observed. “You are very clear that I am neither good nor a ‘guy’. I only chose to protect you because the deal is in my best interests, and it serves to make me stronger.

“If there are other means that can make me stronger but I’m obliged to kill a lot of people, I will not hesitate to kill people, including the two of you. In fact, I have already killed a lot of people. Otherwise, how could I have become ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie?”

“But…” Liu Li summoned her courage and said, “At the very least, you did not savage and torture them to death, did you?”

After a brief silence, the Fist King said, “No.”

“That’s right,” Liu Li said. “Han Te and I grew up in a Desolate World, but we’ve seen a lot of tough bandits from the Bloody Worlds. Many of them are perverts, lunatics, and fiends! They kill the babies who are still being breastfed. They skin people alive and watch the bleeding victims dance. They throw the captives into the horde of mutated beasts and watch them get mauled and torn apart. They hang their enemies upside down in the sunlight until they die of heatstroke and dehydration a few days later. We have seen and heard too many things like that. Would you ever do any of those things, Master Fist King?”

“No.” The Fist King shook his head. “If I want to kill anyone, I will certainly choose the most efficient and convenient approach. I cannot understand the practice of torturing somebody for three days and three nights and mince him slowly until he dies, which will both be a waste of my own time and energy and increase the possibility of the enemy running away. It is truly… pointless.”

“That is exactly what I’m saying!” Liu Li smiled. “In a place like the Land of Sins, someone like you can already be counted as a good guy, just like my dad and Grandpa Yao.”

The Fist King was silent for a long time as he adjusted his joints and power rune arrays with his full attention. It was not until five minutes later that he finally opened his mouth and asked, “Are you not scared of me?”

Liu Li and Han Te looked at each other. “Should we be scared of you?”

“I don’t know, but some human beings used to be very scared of us, artificial intelligence,” the Fist King said. “You know that I’ve been to an underground sanctuary or library of the Martial Meritocrats Civilization. A lot of files of the civilization were left inside, including some of their entertainment and art.

“It is quite strange that, despite all the internal and external problems that the Martial Meritocrats Civilization was faced at that time, a lot of the entertainment and art regarded artificial intelligence as their future enemy.

“For some reason, some of the people of the Martial Meritocrats Sector seemed very scared of the artificial intelligence that could learn. They even believed that artificial intelligence would destroy their world someday.

“But as it turns out, it was human beings themselves who destroyed the Martial Meritocrats Civilization.

“I am not sure if human beings should fear artificial intelligence. But if ‘fear’ can be defined as the alert for unknown dangers, then I think I probably am more scared of human beings than you are of me.”

Liu Li and Han Te bulged their eyes. “Y-you are scared of us?”

“Yes. I am scared of you,” the Fist King said solemnly. “Some people among you are very terrifying.”

Liu Li tilted his head and thought for a long time. Not knowing how she should explain or comfort him, she suddenly took out the metal can that she treasured more than her own life from her pocket, grabbed a handful of golden seeds, and passed them over.

With a smiling face, the little girl said innocently, “They are the seeds of the Gold Barley. I’ve given it a lot of thought. The Land of Sins is too large a place for me to plant the Gold Barley all over it on my own. So, I have made a decision. From today on, whenever I meet a really good person, I will give them a handful of Gold Barley seeds and ask them to help me.

“Master Fist King, would you like to give me a hand? If you go to a place far, far away and find suitable soil, please spray a handful of Gold Barley seeds!”

The Fist King’s man-made eyes froze for a long time before he extended his metal arm and took the Gold Barley seeds rigidly. After observing them for a long time, he finally stored them into the storage space deep inside his chest.

“Alright. I’ll do my best,” he said in a low voice, with a voice not cold anymore but mixed with the ambition and fury to conquer the world.

“Huh?” Liu Li blinked in amazement. “Master Fist King, you’ve become what you were like when you invited us to dinner that day. Didn’t you say that such a simulation of personality will consume a lot of computational ability?”

“If it makes you feel more comfortable, it is not actually a lot,” the Fist King said in a deep voice. “After all, I’ve been playing the role of ‘Fist King’ Lei Zonglie for decades. I’m already used to it.”

“Great!” the little girl exclaimed. “If you are used to it, maybe you will turn into a real human being someday!”

“Human beings are really too complicated. I’m afraid that I can never upgrade into you.” Pausing for a moment, the Fist King stressed his tone and repeated himself. “I… am just a puppet, a machine.”

Chapter 2074 - The Most Perfect Immortal

Li Jialing ran crazily in the cold pathway. The wounds all over his body covered him completely like weird stripes.

On the pathway behind him, there was nothing but remnants of blood and flesh, like the alimentary canal of a primeval beast.

“He’s there. Stop him now!”

“It’s dangerous. Don’t engage rashly. Open fire!”

The Immortal Cultivators’ roars of surprise and fury were echoing both far and near. The enemy’s attacks were not limited to anesthetics anymore but smashing at him overwhelmingly with all kinds of most dangerous aggressive magical equipment.

Boom!

One of the rays exploded on the young man’s chest brutally, knocking him to a ground after a tremble and making him dodge three flying swords that were darting at him from his back.

The moment before he hit the floor, every joint on his body seemed to have been installed with a spring, allowing him to change his direction uncannily and fly backward into the three Immortal Cultivators. After a few dazzling attacks and explosions, the few Immortal Cultivators were all blown back after their crystal suits were broken.

Li Jialing took the opportunity to dash into a branch.

The metal wall of the branch glided open without a sound, and the fully automatic turrets were rolled over. The young man’s eyes were ignited by the fatal rays.

“Hehehe!”

Li Jialing’s entire face seemed to be burning. Uttering roars that could be either joy or fury, he accelerated to his top speed and dashed in the middle of four crystal cannons.

The four crystal cannons all began to spark, cramping and shivering mechanically. It was not until Li Jialing disappeared at the end of the pathway that they exploded at the same time!

On the other side of the pathway, however, Li Jialing was greeted by more than fifty crystal suits of super heavy fire power, which blocked the sole path ahead.

Wuying Lan stood before those Exos, his hands behind his back. He looked rather relaxed and thoughtful when he observed Li Jialing.

Judging from the bouncing flames in his eyes, the owner of Manjusaka was more overjoyed than infuriated at the ‘test subject’ that had gone out of control.

“Have you played enough?”

Studying the wounds all over Li Jialing’s body that were healing rapidly as if he were appreciating the most perfect masterpiece, Wuying Lan said casually, “If you want to keep on playing, at least get a rest first!”

“Get out of my way! Out of my way!” His eyes bloodshot, Li Jialing heard none of it. The bloody mist around his body spurted out, and he turned into a raging fiend as he jumped at Wuying Lan. “Get out of my way or die!”

Shua!

The bloody mist around Li Jialing turned into a weird claw. Leaving three crimson traces in midair, it snatched at Wuying Lan’s carotid artery brutally, as if it were going to tear the man’s head off!

“Tsk, tsk, tsk. How brutal.” Wuying Lan smiled at ease. He was not equipped with any crystal suit, only wearing casual clothes. Yet, he was faster than the Immortal Cultivators who were equipped with high-mobility scouting crystal suits. Nobody saw how he dodged Li Jialing’s attack. They only saw that Li Jialing seemed to have hit a nonexistent shooting star and was blown backward brutally into the metal wall of the pathway, leaving a human-shaped dent there.

Pu!

Li Jialing spewed large clusters of blood and white vomit.

“Young man, you are the most perfect masterpiece that I have ever produced. You are even stronger than me in certain respects.”

Warming up his wrists and angles unhurriedly, Wuying Lan walked up to Li Jialing.

“But you do not know how to make use of your strength at all despite its massiveness. You are just squandering the precious abilities that have been granted to you. Do you not feel that it is too much of a waste for the efforts that all of us have invested in you?”

“You—You—” Li Jialing seemed to have been woken up by the punch. Crying and coughing, he lunged at the enemy again. “You are all fiends! Fiends!”

Boom!

He was blown away by Wuying Lan again. This time, Wuying Lan’s fist did not stop but pressed his head deep into the metal wall before he opened his fingers and clutched the young man’s skull so hard that it was uttering cracking noises.

Wuying Lan dragged Li Jialing out. After a bellow, his body size expanded to twice as large. The previously sloppy casual clothes turned into a tight suit. The thick veins all over his body were clearly revealed on his clothes like boas.

He threw the young man against the floor, the wall, and even the ceiling crazily like he was a broken bag. Every hit triggered such a deafening explosion that one could not help but wonder if Manjusaka was being bombarded by giant cannons. Even the most fearless Immortal Cultivators were shuddering in fear, feeling that their blood was freezing, when they heard the collisions.

Li Jialing’s body was unbelievably sturdy, too. He was not killed immediately under the unreserved bombardment of an expert like Wuying Lan but was still vaguely moaning.

“Enough!”

A low but solemn voice came from behind the many Exos. Everybody hurried to step aside and greet Li Lingfeng’s arrival.

Wuying Lan sniffed and tossed the young man aside casually, backing off.

“You may leave now.”

Li Lingfeng looked at Li Jialing without any expression. Nobody knew what was on his mind.

Wuying Lan bowed respectfully and soon disappeared with all the other Immortal Cultivators.

In the bloody pathway, the only things left were the bleeding, broken corpses and Li Jialing and Li Lingfeng. Well, there was still Neltharion, which was hiding inside Li Jialing’s body the whole time, in which part of Li Yao and the mental devil’s soul was hidden!

“You’ve finally awoken now.”

After the Immortal Cultivators that belonged to Manjusaka retreated, Li Lingfeng’s voice somehow turned… gentle and soothing. He smiled and said, “I’ve been imagining all the time what your performance will be like after you break all the shackles and are completely awakened. I did not know that the day would arrive sooner than I expected, nor did I foresee such a marvelous performance.

“Do not be affected by what Wuying Lan said just now. He has honed his strength for decades, and this is only the first time that you’ve ever used it. It is only natural that you were defeated by him.

“But if you train yourself hard under my tutelage, it won’t take long before you have an opportunity to far surpass him!

“Believe in your potential. Look at the path of blood behind you. Fiend? Hehe. Who’s more like a fiend here?”

“Huchi… Huchi… Huchi…” Li Jialing crouched in a corner without any strength. The miserable wounds all over his body were healing rapidly, but his head, having just been freed from extreme excitement, was more frustrated and confused than ever.

Looking at the smiling Li Lingfeng before his eyes, the broken limbs and guts of the dead Immortal Cultivators behind him, and then his intimidating hands where veins were still protruding, the young man trembled for a long time before he finally murmured, “I’ve killed people! I’ve killed people! I’ve killed people…”

Holding his stomach, he began to gag again.

It was a pity that all the contents in his stomach had been vomited just now. He could not spit out anything except for confusion, regret, and fury now.

“Why? Why are you doing all this?” Hot tears flooded out of his eyes again. The young man shivered hard, as devastated as a flower that had been ravaged and polluted by a swamp. He shouted, “You are a high and mighty big shot. You can exterminate my life as easily as stomping on an ant. Why have you been pushing me to do the things that I don’t want? Why are you tricking me?”

“The things that you don’t want?” Li Lingfeng’s smile became even deeper as he appreciated the dead bodies of the Immortal Cultivators that had been torn apart by Li Jialing just now. “With everything coming to this point, there is no need to keep lying to yourself. Did you dare say that you killed so many people because you completely lost your sanity? Did you not feel unparalleled ecstasy in the middle of the crazy slaughter? Was it not the urge that had been deeply lying in your mind all the time under the suppression of the goddamn shackles?

“Look at all the broken bodies here. They are the best evidence to prove that you are a natural-born Immortal Cultivator and the most perfect Immortal Cultivator. This is your natural instinct. This is the real you. I merely pushed the boat along the current to set it for sailing. That’s all.”

As if hit by lightning deep inside his soul, Li Jialing appeared astounded and felt like crying.

Seeing that he had calmed down somewhat, Li Lingfeng asked, “Should I help you examine your body first? Although your body boasts very powerful self-recovery abilities, this is your first slaughter after all. It will be safer if you have a full physical examination.”

“Don’t touch me!” Li Jialing jumped to his feet as if he had an electric shock. Holding his arms, he shuddered with tears running out of his eyes. “Don’t touch me. Please. Don’t touch me. Just leave me alone. I need to calm down. Please, please…”

“Alright, alright, alright. It’s true that you need to calm down and figure out your real identity and destiny.” Li Lingfeng raised his hands to show that he meant no harm at all. “There is no need for you to beg me or be so wary of me. I told you last time, and I will repeat it today. You were never a test subject. You should know very well that absolutely nobody would invest so many resources into an insignificant test subject. In my eyes, you are the most perfect warrior of the Li family and a new-generation, most standard Immortal Cultivator!”

“I don’t understand.” The young man’s eyes gradually focused, as if he had been caught in Li Lingfeng’s pace before he knew it. He had completely broken free from his previous panic and disgust. Ignoring so many people who had been killed by him nearby, he narrowed his eyes and said, “Tell me the truth. If I was never a test subject, why have you been torturing me so cruelly all these years?”

“Torture?” Li Lingfeng burst into laughter. Then he suddenly changed his face and glared at Li Jialing. “Boy, you don’t know what is good for you at all. You think that anybody is qualified to bear such ‘torture’?

“Let me tell. This is not torture but the most cutting-edge and the most efficient way of training. Too many people are begging for it but can never get it!”

Chapter 2075 - The Origin Plan!

“Training…” Li Jialing was at a loss again. His eyebrows and his lips shuddered slightly, and he played the role of a perplexed young man perfectly.

“Yes. Only after you taste the bitterest of bitterness can you grow into the best of the best. I do not need to explain such a simple logic to you, do I?” Li Lingfeng sighed and said gravely, “As either a member of the Li family or an Immortal Cultivator, honing yourself in the cruelest and craziest ways, making breakthroughs on the path of evolution incessantly, and advancing to the unprecedented levels that have never been reached before—that is your destiny!

“Every member of the Li family has been through that. Everybody tortures, torments, and whets themself in the cruel environment where only the fittest survive. They tear their flesh into shreds, grind their bones into powder, and burn their guts into ash before they condense all the pieces together and build them into a new self!

“That is as much the case for you as it is for anybody else of the Li family, including myself. Do you think that I suffered less pain than you when I trained myself at the beginning?

“It is true that most members of the Li family never shoulder the extreme pain that you had, but that’s only because they are unqualified. Those people will never grow into a perfect warrior like you. The destiny awaiting them is to die an unknown death as cannon fodder in an insignificant war, or they’ll be dispatched to a remote resource plant under the control of the family, where they will live their boring, tasteless life.

“Look at the corridor that is filled with guts and broken limbs behind you. Look at your hands that are stained with blood. You should know this already. You are different from those worthless, hopeless guys. That is not your destiny. You were born to dominate the world as the greatest glory of the Li family!”

Li Jialing stared at the bloody pathway behind him again.

This time, he did not tremble but stuck out his long, narrow tongue, licking his lips that were covered in bloody, with voracity beaming out of his eyes.

Watching the young man who looked like a ferocious beast that had just been let loose, Li Lingfeng smiled in comfort.

“I don’t understand.” Taking a deep breath, Li Jialing regained his tranquility. He stared at Li Lingfeng and asked, “Why me? You have so many sons, grandsons, and great grandsons. Why did you have to pick me for such refinement? My parents were only unknown, bottom-level warriors of the family. Or were they—”

The young man’s eyes shuddered as he observed Li Lingfeng’s face.

Li Lingfeng smiled warmly. “It is not what you are thinking. I never attach much importance to lineage. Or rather, whoever has the blood of the Li family flowing in their veins is qualified to be my heir. As for whether or not they are my own offspring, that is not important.

“What I need is a real expert. There are a lot of useless descendants among my offspring. I despise them as much as anybody else does.

“Come on. Show me the ‘masterpiece’ that you have just created, and I will tell you all the truth.”

“Truth…”

Flames flowed out of Li Jialing’s eyes. He stood up without a sound and walked to the bloody pathway.

When he accidentally stepped on a few bones on the ground and broke them, he did not even bother to blink.

“I know you have always been curious about why I picked you from all the younger generations of the Li family when you seemed so plain and unattractive. And more importantly, what was the seal that haunted your head, baffled you, and prevented you from killing about?”

Roaming among the broken corpses at east, Li Lingfeng said casually, “For someone as smart as you, you should’ve vaguely guessed that the so-called ‘seal’ is quite similar to the Three Fundamental Laws.”

Li Jialing’s pupils constricted violently. He scratched his skull unconsciously. “Three Fundamental Laws? The Covenant Alliance?”

“Yes. It is a very complicated issue, which can be traced back to the Origin Plan, a program to raise future warriors for the family, personally planned and implemented by me decades ago.”

Li Lingfeng took out a green, translucent ball from his pocket and tossed it at Li Jialing. “This is all the information and data about the Origin Plan. I prepared it a long time ago as a gift for you when you are completely awakened.”

Blinking his eyes, Li Jialing held the green ball in his hand and inputted a stream of spiritual energy into it.

The ball flew from his palm and to the height of his eyes, triggering a panoramic light beam. Infinite information poured down like a waterfall.

“The Origin Plan was a program drafted and implemented by me in order to raise super warriors for the next generation of the family. It was a bit avant-garde and experimental,” Li Lingfeng said. “You know that as one of the four Kurfürst families, the Li family has always attached great importance to the education of the next generation. Only the elites of the elites can be real members of the Li family. Garbage who have the blood of the Li family but do not want to make a name for themselves should be eliminated without any mercy no matter their parentage.

“Therefore, almost since the moment they are born, every member of the Li family has to receive the nurturing of the best resources and the harshest training of optimization.

“However, different people have different talents after all. In many cases, it is already too late after the fetus grows in the womb for ten months. From the perspective of eugenics, the real training should start from the womb. No, it should start from the zygote, or even before the two life seeds are combined!

“The Origin Plan was exactly such an avant-garde, experimental program to culture and refine the subjects when they are still life seeds. I carefully selected the life seeds of almost ten thousand strong warriors of the family, refined and strengthened them with all kinds of secret arts, and further screened and nurtured them after they were combined into zygotes. Eventually, the ten most ideal fetuses were chosen.

“Yes. From the ten thousand carefully-selected life seeds, ten were screened out in the most selective way. They were nurtured with the most precious Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, many of which were even directly excavated from the relics of primeval battlefields and likely won’t be found again. You can imagine how strong the fetuses must’ve been!”

Li Jialing’s eyelids shivered. “I was one of the fetuses?”

“Precisely.” Li Lingfeng smiled. “Why else do you think you can boast such strength at such a young age?”

“I still don’t understand,” Li Jialing said. “If it is a program to raise new warriors for the family, why was it never announced to the public but always kept a secret? Also, what are the Three Fundamental Laws that have been haunting my head and were eradicated only just now about?”

“Because the Origin Plan was a complete failure.” Li Lingfeng sighed. “At that time, I placed the ten meticulously-chosen fetuses near a neutron star to be strengthened by the radiation. But the starships of the Covenant Alliance jumped out of nowhere and tried to seize the products of my careful refinement. In the fierce battle, nine of the fetuses were destroyed, and the last one was polluted by the foul forces of the Covenant Alliance. It was implanted with their evil seal, which was part of the remnants of the Three Fundamental Laws.”

“Well…” Li Jialing was somewhat at a loss. “It’s not like you ran your experiments on the frontlines, did you? How did the people of the Covenant Alliance show up?”

“You’ve asked the most critical question,” Li Lingfeng said thoughtfully. “You know that the internal conflicts within the Li family are very fierce. Competition is everywhere. Perhaps some people did not wish to see my plan succeed in their struggle for power, and they were even reluctant to see me gain ten perfect warriors who were much stronger than their peers. Therefore, they ‘accidentally’ leaked the information, hoping to disrupt my plan with the hands of the Covenant Alliance.

“All in all, because of the unexpected assault from the Covenant Alliance, the Origin Plan that cost me years of hard work and tremendous resources was almost entirely ruined. Although one last fetus survived, it had been corrupted by the Three Fundamental Laws of the Covenant Alliance. Nobody could tell what kind of person it would grow into eventually. I did not dare expose your existence, either!”

Li Jialing blinked. “Why not?”

“Isn’t it obvious?” Li Lingfeng said. “Because you were already ‘corrupted’ by then. How could the Li family have kept a monster contaminated by the Covenant Alliance alive? Wouldn’t it be a great humiliation for the Li family? Countless people would chastise me with you as an excuse!”

Li Jialing was silent for a moment. Then he asked, “Why didn’t you destroy me?”

Li Lingfeng smiled bitterly, with caring light beaming out of his eyes. “If I say that I dedicated all my energy and hope into the ‘Origin Plan’, the ten perfect fetuses were more important to me than my own blood descendants, and I could not bear to abandon my life’s work when the other nine fetuses were destroyed by the Covenant Alliance, would you believe me?”

Biting his lips softly, Li Jialing pondered for a moment and asked, “Therefore, you hid my existence, fabricated a new identity for me, and let me live in the Li family as a common member, right?”

“Yes,” Li Lingfeng said. “In the report that I submitted to the family, I lied and said that the ten fetuses were all destroyed. The rest is history.

“Countless eyes in the family were staring at me the whole time. So, I could not arrange appropriate training sessions in the family directly for you. Wuying Lan, the owner of Manjusaka, is an old friend of mine. Only here can we do our best together to crack the seal of the Covenant Alliance deep inside your soul and boost your potential in order to see the end of the Origin Plan!

“This is about everything that has happened so far. The details are all recorded in the jade chip. You can take your time to examine them.

“Jialing, you have every reason to hate me, for performing strengthening and modification on you when you were still a life seed, for not telling you the truth for so many years, and for conducting such cruel training on you. But no matter how much you hate me, I want you to be clear of one thing.

“Every generation of the most distinguished heir of the Li family has been through the same thing.

“Pain is the greatest treasure. Whoever grasps the treasure will be qualified to grasp the entire world.

“Live up to your potential, and don’t fail your fate!”

Chapter 2076 - Schemer Behind the Curtain!

Li Jialing was stunned for a long time as he listened to Li Lingfeng. His lips shivered for a moment, before he stabbed his fingers into his blood-mottled hair. After thinking for a long time and raising his head to observe Li Lingfeng, he finally said, “Why didn’t you tell me the whole truth before?”

“Firstly, cases such as yours who are corrupted by the barriers of the Covenant Alliance are very rare. Neither I nor Wuying Lan knew how to crack it without causing any side effects,” Li Lingfeng admitted frankly. “Eradicating the seal deep inside your brain and your soul with brutal force would very likely damage your soul, which would affect your further advancement in the future and even your ability to think normally. It is a highly infeasible plan.

“Impose stimulation of a certain degree on you so that your brain will break the seal of the Three Fundamental Laws from the inside after tremendous pressure is accumulated there. I believed that this was the best solution.

“From what I’ve seen now, I can say that we adopted the right methodology. You have indeed broken the Three Fundamental Laws with your own strength!

“Secondly, and also more importantly, it was for your own safety.

“You must know that there have always been forces within the family who oppose me. As my position rises higher and higher in the family, more and more people envy me, hate me, and want to overthrow me through whatever means possible. The tallest tree in a forest tends to be destroyed by the wind first. Since I am a common target for everyone, those people are wasting no time looking for my weakness.

“Think about it. Should they have found your real identity and learned that you were still ‘corrupted’, how would they have treated you, and how would they have used you against me? If you had fallen into their hands, you would have really begged to be killed!

“Therefore, it was for your own safety that I never asked anything about you in daily life and acted as if your life and death was none of my concern. I feared that the eyes that were everywhere would see through the real relation between you and me.

“I couldn’t tell you anything until today, when you completely shattered the shackle deep inside your soul and awakened your real strength. You are now finally able to become a super warrior walking in the daylight representing the future of the Li family!”

Li Jialing took a deep breath, as if he were caught in a trance by Li Lingfeng’s charming words. After a long daze, he said, “That—that explains a lot. Then, what am I going to do next?”

Li Lingfeng smiled and patted the young man’s shoulder where the muscles were still tightened. “You have finished your initial training. From now on, you will stay by my side and receive my personal tutelage.

“Trust me. There are many worlds waiting to be conquered by you, many enemies to be hunted by you, and many glories to be reaped by you. Haha. Hahaha!

“As it happens, we have a reasonably interesting game right now. It is an epic quest regarding Starlight, the resistance group of the Cultivators. It is very suitable for you to enjoy yourself. Why don’t we go to the control center? I’ll ask Wuying Lan to explain the details to you.”

“I—I—” Unused to Li Lingfeng’s warmth, Li Jialing said in a shivering voice, “I don’t know. My head is still a mess. I want to be alone for a moment to calm myself down. Is—Is that okay?”

“Of course. Absolutely. I’ll ask Wuying Lan to arrange an advanced suite for you. It’s true that you should take a good rest, and clean all the stinky vomit on your body while you’re at it. Are you sure you don’t need a full physical examination?”

Li Jialing’s body trembled as he said unconsciously, “Maybe—Maybe in a couple of days. I’m feeling great right now. Can we do the examination in a few days?”

Li Lingfeng smiled. “Of course. Then, clean yourself up now. I’ll be in the control center.”

Delight and disbelief beamed out of Li Jialing’s eyes. “Can I really go to the control center?”

“Certainly. Don’t forget…” Li Lingfeng patted the young man’s shoulder heavily again. “Of the hundreds of thousands of descendants of the Li family, you are the one that I think most highly of and have dedicated the most effort to. Chances are that you will even become my true heir someday. You can go wherever and do whatever you want!”

“Whatever I want…”

A hint of animality suddenly flashed inside the young man's eyes, and his lips curled into an aggressive smile.

The aggression only made Li Lingfeng smile even more thoughtfully.

Li Jialing summoned his courage and said, "I—I have two questions."

"Just spit them out. Whatever you want to know." Li Lingfeng smiled, even more amiably and gently.

"Firstly, who are my birth parents?" Li Jialing asked. "They shouldn't be as simple as the pair of inferior warriors that you told me earlier, should they?"

"Indeed, they were not, but they were not dominating big shots, either," Li Lingfeng said. "Their files are all inside the jade chip of the 'Origin Plan'. The combination of life seeds is the most amazing thing. It is not always the case that the tougher warriors will produce the tougher life seeds, and the combination of two toughest life seeds may not necessarily lead to the strongest zygote. Too many incalculable factors are involved in the whole process.

"What matters most is not strength but suitability.

"Your birth parents were indeed among the best of the family, but they had already sacrificed for the family before the Origin Plan was initiated. I retrieved their life seeds from the frozen seed bank of the family. The project was also a plan to create a descendant for the heroes of the family. I believe that my action was justified, wasn't it?

"Their ashes are kept in the Hall of Heroes of the family right now, but I don't recommend that you pay tributes to them for the next year or two. In a couple of years, after your

Cultivation advances into higher levels and my position in the family is steadier, it will be a good time to completely reveal your secrets.”

After considering that for a moment, Li Jialing nodded. “Fair point. I’ll follow your advice and act prudently.”

With a smile, Li Lingfeng asked, “What’s your second question?”

“There is one question that is of paramount importance.”

The flames in the young man’s eyes were suddenly condensed into blades.

“You mentioned just now that many people in the family have been opposing you and were even bold enough to sabotage the ‘Origin Plan’ by borrowing the strength of the Covenant Alliance, which almost exterminated me when I was still a fetus. Do you have any theory about who was guilty of the incident?”

Li Lingfeng was slightly dazed for a moment before he replied, “Of course, I am suspicious of a lot of people, but the enemy acted very secretly and mysteriously. I cannot end on bad terms with them until I find any solid evidence.”

“Tell me. Who was it?” Li Jialing asked. “Who was it that intended to suffocate me as a fetus?”

Li Lingfeng hesitated. “Well… It’s hard to say. It’s really hard to say. I do not want to affect your judgment by inculcating certain preconceptions into your head. Besides, just like me, the enemy is a powerful, upper-class person in the family, and a behemoth that is too gigantic for you to compete with openly right now.”

“It’s alright. Just tell me a name that you are mostly suspicious and wary of. I will not make any move recklessly,” Li Jialing said carefully. “No matter how I hated you in the past, I am yours right now after all. It is very likely that the enemy will find your weakness in me. It is very important that I know whom I should be wary of after I return to the Li family, isn’t it?”

“Fine. In that case, prick your ears and listen up.”

Lowering his voice, Li Lingfeng said, one word after another, “I am very suspicious that the schemer who sabotaged the Origin Plan and almost killed you years ago is Li Linghai, the almighty queen of the Imperium of True Human Beings today and my dear sister!”

…

Inside the hot tub that was filled with simmering steam in a VIP suite of the highest level in Manjusaka, Li Jialing was enjoying brief relaxation and tranquility. He suddenly opened his eyes to observe his almost perfect body in the giant mirror on his opposite side.

It was like a combination of a cheetah and a tiger. Every muscle was perfectly mixed with the features of strength and dexterity.

He had fought a bloody battle not long ago, but no wounds could be seen. His fair, translucent skin truly seemed to be made of the purest marrow crystals. Every drop of water from his body would raise the most beautiful splash.

The young man’s eyes were mysterious and sophisticated as he appreciated his perfect and young body. There was not the confusion and panic that he had when he talked to Li Lingfeng a moment ago anymore.

Focusing his brainwaves, he sent a message to his abdomen very peacefully.

“Why are you not saying anything? I have already scrutinized the room. There shouldn’t be any detectaphones or prying devices in this advanced suite. It seems that Li Lingfeng is not willing to break the trust between him and me easily now that it has finally been built.”

The young man’s abdomen was silent for a long time before Li Yao’s waves finally came over hesitantly. “…I’m a bit scared of you.”

“Scared of me?” Li Jialing was slightly dazed. “Why would you be scared of me? In terms of strength, I am absolutely no match for you, and I am almost completely at your mercy with this piece of magical equipment embedded with me. I should be scared of you. Or rather, you should be more scared of Li Lingfeng.”

“No. Although Li Lingfeng is very strong, he is only horrible in the general sense. I have seen and killed too many ‘supervillains’ like him. Maybe it will be tricky to deal with him, but it is far from scary,” Li Yao said. “You are different. You are no older than twenty right now, yet you are already capable of digging such a giant pit for Li Lingfeng to jump into. Had I not known that you’d got a secret plan for yourself, I would’ve thought that you were completely convinced and manipulated by Li Lingfeng based on your conversation with him just now.

“Little did he know that he was the one who judged you wrong!

“You are already capable of such blood-freezing things as a teenager. How horrifying will you be if you hide yourself and train for decades?”

Chapter 2077 - Call Me Brother Yao!

“Horrifying?” Li Jialing appreciated his perfect body in the mirror with the utmost ecstasy and enjoyment. He said casually, “Every person I killed deserved to be killed. They were all guards of Manjusaka and have done too many evil things as the fiend’s entourage. Too many test subjects died by their hands. It was their karma that they were minced apart by me today.

“As for deceiving Li Lingfeng… Hehe, he was deceiving me, too. The Origin Plan? He really thought that I would be stupid enough to believe that cr*p?

“This has always been a dog-eat-dog world of conspiracies and schemes, where everybody can only get what they want and control their own fate if they resort to any means necessary. I only did it to protect myself. Is there anything wrong with that?

“Should I have listened to Li Lingfeng’s bullsh*t obediently to be a slaughter machine of the Li family, just to be harmless and un-horrifying?”

Li Yao was lost for words for a moment. Then he frowned and said, “Fair enough. If I were in your shoes, I probably would have made the same choice. However, when I was your age, I certainly did not have your strength, intelligence, and acting skills. If I had met such a big shot as Li Lingfeng at that time, it would’ve been possible that my whole spine was trembling violently, which definitely would’ve given me away.

“Let me think carefully about the source of my unease. Right. It is probably because I’m a little worried about my own safety after ‘appreciating’ your astonishing performance. I fear that you will kill me to keep my mouth shut someday, considering that I have heard too many great secrets about you after all!”

“Kill you to keep your mouth shut?” Li Jialing smiled casually. Touching his marble-like muscles, he said, “First of all, I do not intend to climb upward with the power of the Li family, nor am I interested in becoming ‘the heir of Li Lingfeng’ or ‘the future of the Li family’, which will only get me involved in the chaotic, familial conflict between Li Lingfeng and Li Linghai, the queen of the Imperium. I only want to live a free, unstrained life where absolutely nobody can control me.

“Therefore, even if my identity is exactly what the Origin Plan describes, so what? I do not want to make use of any resources of the Li family, so I am not scared of my identity being exposed. Who can threaten me with such an identity? Such a ‘great secret’ actually means nothing at all!

“Furthermore, the so-called Origin Plan is probably fabricated or at least has many fabricated parts. Hehe. Li Lingfeng thought that he could convince me of my ‘origin’ with a carefully-made jade chip that was filled with all kinds of information? I have to say that he underestimated me!

“Therefore, the speculation I told you earlier has been proven correct. From beginning to the end, Li Lingfeng has never taken me seriously. His real enemies are the big shots on the level of Li Linghai, and ninety-nine percent of his computational ability and his energy are dedicated to said ‘real enemies’. As for me, I am nothing more than a pawn that he can freely manipulate. He thinks it is already good enough to make a crude, lousy trap to fool me.

“Since the Origin Plan contains a lot of false elements, it does not seem to be a big deal that it was overheard by you.

“Thirdly, the Li family is a super family that has existed in the sea of stars for thousands of years. It has been one of the most powerful, influential forces since the Star Ocean Republic. Its shadow has reached every corner of the universe.

“If I really want to get rid of the control of the Li family, even if I can kill Li Lingfeng with unbelievable luck, it doesn’t mean that the pursuit of the Li family will be over. Perhaps it will take me a lot of years, during which time I will have to kill a lot of people, before I finally get rid of the control of the Li family.

“If possible, I’m certainly unwilling to compete with the enormous Li family entirely on my own. If I have an ally of mysterious backgrounds but unparalleled strength, is there any reason for me to ‘kill him to keep his mouth shut’ instead of fighting side by side with him? Wouldn’t I be too stupid if I did that?

“The universe is a vast place, but few experts are bold enough to go against the Li family. Now that I have accidentally run into one, I almost can’t wait to cling to your thigh and ask for your help. Why on earth would I have ill intentions toward you?”

“No. Please don’t,” Li Yao said. “I can vaguely foresee Li Lingfeng’s outcome after you cling to his thigh.”

“How can that be the same?”

Li Jialing chuckled lightly, but his smile this time was devoid of any sordidness and cunningness. It was a simple and sunny smile of a big boy.

Scratching his head, he said, “Fourthly, well, you may find it hard to believe, because even I don’t believe it very much myself, but I somehow feel that you are a man that is worth being approached and trusted, although I haven’t even see your face or heard your real voice.

“Forget it. Let’s not talk about such childish impressions. Just consider it my imagination.”

“It is… not necessarily your imagination,” Li Yao said carefully. “It is true that you can approach and trust me without any reserve. I guarantee that I am different from Li Lingfeng, or any other Immortal Cultivators that you have met so far!”

The young man was slightly dazed as he sensed Li Yao’s tone. Authentic confusion beamed out of his eyes for the first time.

“We have talked for a long time, but I don’t know how I should address you yet.”

The young man waved his head hard to throw away the feeble confusion. Putting on the carefully-feigned expression that looked like a mask, he asked, “Should I call you Senior Li, Fellow Cultivator Li, Master Li, Uncle Li, or Uncle Yao?”

“I am not as old as you imagine,” Li Yao replied. “If we calculate it thoroughly, I am no more than twenty years older than you. I am a vigorous young man, too. You can call me ‘Brother Yao’.”

The delicate mask on the young man's face was broken again. He slightly raised his eyebrows, as if he were meant to laugh but did not have the courage to. "Alright, I'll give you that. You are truly different from all the Immortal Cultivators that I've met before… Brother Yao."

"There is no need to worship me. Just consider me your peer. After we get to know each other more, you will realize that, although I am an unparalleled expert with destructive combat ability that can break a world, I am actually very casual, approachable, and simple. All the formalities are unnecessary. You can regard me as a friend.

"Right. I want to know more about the 'Three Fundamental Laws' in your head, which you did not seem to tell me at the beginning."

Staring at his eyes deep inside the mirror, Li Jialing hesitated for a moment before he asked back instead of replying, "Brother Yao, you seem not surprised that a barrier similar to 'Three Fundamental Laws' is inside my head, do you?"

"Well, is that so?"

"Yes," Li Jialing said solemnly. "The Imperium and the Covenant Alliance are sworn enemies, and the Covenant Alliance is best at pouring simulated emotions and wills into the cerebral cortexes of their spies before the spies are sent into the Imperium to instigate riots, raise resistance groups, and steal intelligence.

"After hundreds of years of development, the technology for the spies of the Covenant Alliance to simulate the feelings of normal people have reached the peak. Even the most advanced Ring-Tu Test of the Imperium can barely distinguish 'demi-humans' from real human beings.

"A normal person's first reaction after they hear that there is such a weird barrier inside my head should be wariness, alert, or confusion, shouldn't it?

"But I did not sense any such ripples from your waves. I felt that you had known it since a long time ago, or you had figured out its reason. Is that true?"

With a smile, Li Yao said, "Perhaps, after you've told me everything, I will really be able to offer you a theory for everything. You want to figure out your real origins, too, don't you?"

Li Jialing's eyelids bounced again.

What Li Yao said was exactly what the young man wanted most.

Closing his eyes and thinking for a long time, he said, "Ever since I've had consciousness and memories, I've always been disturbed by a certain uncanny barrier or fear. It was almost like…

"Like some people are scared of chickens, some are scared of spiders and worms, and some will lose all the strength and collapse after they climb to great heights.

"Studies have shown that it is the result of the primitive memories that have been deeply embedded into the genes and the soul. Perhaps, in the primeval age a long, long time ago, the ancestors of the chicken were certain species among the dinosaurs that posed a great threat to mankind. Or maybe spiders at that time were behemoths and top predators a hundred meters long.

"The fear and disgust that have been passed on through one's blood, genes, and soul have significantly increased the odds of mankind’s survival.

“As for what I am scared of, it is not chicken, not spiders, not snakes, but killing. To be more exact, it is attacking other people.

“Brother Yao, you know that the competition within the Li family that I grew up in was very cruel. It was anything but unusual for someone to be accidentally wounded or even killed in the familial training fields.

“But for me, even if I only watched other people fight fiercely on the training field until their bones were broken and they were vomiting blood, I would feel my heart thumping, my eyes blurred, shortness of breath, and strong nausea, not to mention going into the field to fight in person. I could barely stand on my own feet, much less fight.”

Thinking quickly, Li Yao observed, “Of the Three Fundamental Laws of the Covenant Alliance, there is indeed one that dictates human beings must not brutalize each other—not without the command of the Pangu Clan. So, it actually works in such a way?”

“I was too little at that time to understand what my problem was,” Li Jialing said. “Other people only took me for a piece of garbage and a target to be bullied who was weak in nature. Hehe. Now that I think about it, those days were indeed tough to live through!”

Li Yao was silent.

In the Li family, which worshipped survival of the fittest and wild competition, it was indeed chilling to think how a bottom-level descendant who was ‘too cowardly and weak to fight others’ would be treated.

No wonder Li Jialing’s personality had been shaped into what it was today. Having been growing up in a swamp of darkness irrigated by venom and mucus, could it have turned into a pure and flawless lotus flower?

Chapter 2078 - Analyze and Approach the Truth!

“Since a long time ago,” Li Jialing said, “Li Lingfeng has ‘treated’ the disease for me. I was too little at the time to tell the difference between ‘treatment’ and ‘refinement’.

“Other than the weird drugs they injected into my body, the high-dose rays that illuminated my internal organs repetitively, and all the other torture that I would rather forget, Wuying Lan and him mainly focused their attention on inculcating certain things into my head.

“It is almost like… a transmission of knowledge. Voices, pictures, and data as vast as an ocean flooded into my head crazily, and I couldn’t dodge them at all. They were all skills concerning killing, plotting, and so on.

“Hehe. I must give credit to the big shot of the family for me to be who I am today. Perhaps he did not see it coming himself that I would be refined so ‘successfully’ one day.

“However, being familiarized with a certain skill of killing was entirely different from truly dissecting a man into pieces. At that time, despite the enormous physical strength and the skills of killing someone in a hundred different ways in half a second, the extreme disgust and fear still haunted me and bound my soul hard.

“If I so much as felt the intention to kill, my head would go dizzy, my heart would race, and I would have such a headache that I could barely grab a blade, much less putting my killing skills into practice.

“Therefore, in the eyes of other people, I was still a piece of wretched garbage who was born a weak coward!”

“Then, when was the ‘barrier’ removed?” Li Yao asked.

“Two years ago,” Li Jialing replied emotionlessly. “After a procedure two years ago, I discovered that the barrier inside my head had begun to loosen. There was no telling whether it was a result of the procedures or the barrier simply wore out on its own as I grew up, but all in all, I was no longer disturbed by the damn barrier a year and a half ago.

“Although I never did it for real, I could clearly sense that I no longer had any fear or disgust for killing, and I could kill anybody that stood in my way completely at my own will!”

After a brief silence, Li Yao asked, “But you didn’t tell Li Lingfeng?”

“No. Why would I?” With a cunning smile, Li Jialing added, “In the past, I was only incapable of killing, but it doesn’t mean that I didn’t have my own feelings and will. I’d been considering how to get rid of the control of Li Lingfeng for a long time. I decided that the key was to prevent him from learning about my actual condition.

“He may be talking nicely right now, but he was obviously treating me as some sort of test subject. Perhaps eighty percent of what he said was true. He has indeed dedicated a lot of effort and resources to me, but so what? A tool is always a tool, and a test subject is always a test subject!

“If I had told him the truth at that time, he certainly would’ve ushered me into the training of ‘phase two’. He probably would’ve given me various kinds of violent missions so that I would work hard and sacrifice myself for him and the Li family. The higher the combat ability that I demonstrated, the more arduous that the missions he entrusted to me would’ve been. One day, I would die on a certain battlefield for the interests of the Li family as cannon fodder. Why would I do that?

“Therefore, I chose to hide the mutations inside my brain and pretended to be a useless coward who loathed killing and could not fight anyone, waiting for the best opportunity.

“In the best opportunity that I envisaged, I shouldn’t be at the nest of the Li family, where there was absolutely no way for me to escape, and it would be best if Li Lingfeng could be trapped by certain things or experts. That was the only way that a small fry like myself could escape from the drag net.

“Today is probably the best opportunity. I can tell that Li Lingfeng has been starting to lose patience. If my seal was not cracked by the end of this year, it’s hard to tell if he would switch to crueler methods to refine me.

“In the meantime, it is obvious that Brother Yao is not on the same side as Li Lingfeng, and you two are likely to have huge conflicts. So, despite your abrupt arrival and the possible accidents and unexpected factors it will bring, I do not have any choice except to bet everything!”

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao asked, “Have you never considered the possibility that Li Lingfeng was not lying? Or rather, is it possible that he sincerely wants you to be his heir and inherit the entire Li family someday, although he lied to you about certain things?”

After a brief silence, Li Jialing chuckled.

“I’m afraid that you haven’t figured it out yet, Brother Yao.”

Looking at his burning eyes in the mirror, Li Jialing said, “From the beginning to the end, I have never considered being someone like Li Lingfeng. Or rather, I despise the idea of becoming someone like him!

“Even if he truly becomes the leader of the Li family one day and one of the four Kurfürsten of the Imperium, so what? He will only be a spokesperson that the Li family nominated and a component of the enormous machine. He is expected to give his all for the interests of the Li family and even die for it!

“I do not want to live such a life. I do not want to be restrained or controlled by anyone. I want to be… absolutely free!

“So, even if Li Lingfeng has truly planned a smooth and brilliant life for me, I do not want to live it at all just because he wants me to!”

As he approached the end, the young man was almost gnashing his teeth in fury.

Taking a deep breath, he smiled. “Sorry. I was a bit too excited. Maybe it is because I’ve been manipulated and repressed for too long. How about it? What’s your theory on everything now that you have learned the background? They say that the observers understand a game better than the players in it. As an ‘observer’, can you explain the questions that have always bothered me?

“When Li Lingfeng raised the Origin Plan, my first reaction was that it was absolutely not to be believed. But on second thought, it seems fairly reasonable that the nausea and sense of fear that disturbed me in the past were the pieces of mutated Three Fundamental Laws.

“So, if Li Lingfeng was lying and there was no such thing as the Origin Plan, I would never have been corrupted by the foul forces of the Covenant Alliance. What can my problem be ascribed to?”

“It’s very simple.”

Thinking carefully for a moment, Li Yao still decided to say it out loud. “You were never corrupted by the foul forces of the Covenant Alliance, but one of your parents was from the Covenant Alliance. That will explain everything.”

Li Jialing was stunned.

It was the first time that Li Yao had seen undisguised astonishment on the young man’s face. For some reason, Li Yao had a weird sense of joy.

His lips cramping, Li Jialing mumbled to himself, “It—It does seem to make sense.”

“Yes. If they were both from the Covenant Alliance, you would’ve been bound by the Three Fundamental Laws. All your feelings and will would’ve been eradicated,” Li Yao said. “However, if you are only half a native of the Covenant Alliance, and the man who passed the blood of the Covenant Alliance on to you was not a pure native of the Covenant Alliance because he was somewhat breaking the boundary of ‘Three Fundamental Laws’ after the many adventures he had, it will certainly be much easier for you to break the barrier that has been inherited by your genes and your soul because it is nothing more than broken fragments.”

“Brother Yao, you said just now that you were scared of me.” Li Jialing could not help but hold his abdomen. “But I’m starting to feel that you are too immeasurable and horrifying. Have you deduced everything based on the broken pieces of information just now? Why do I feel that you are so certain as if you know it is a fact?”

Li Yao’s own body blinked in the space port not far away and said, “Like you said just now, the observer knows the game better than the players do.”

Li Jialing sniffed, obviously not satisfied by the answer.

But he was too smart to waste his time on pursuing the question any further.

“The Covenant Alliance…” he said gloomily and looked at himself in the mirror, with additional feelings in his eyes.

“If it’s true, how will you feel?” Li Yao asked. “Will you feel that it is a bit… weird?”

“It doesn’t matter.” The young man took a deep breath and suddenly relaxed. “It doesn’t matter whether I’m the offspring of Cultivators, Immortal Cultivators, those of Covenant Alliance, or any monstrous creatures. I will always be a free, unstrained spirit. I don’t care about it at all as long as other people do not mess with me!”

“But it is obvious that Li Lingfeng is messing with you and even manipulating you right now,” Li Yao said. “I suggest you pay more attention to Li Linghai.”

“Right. You mentioned Li Linghai at the very beginning of our encounter.” Li Jialing’s eyes suddenly turned sharp. “Why?”

“Assuming that Li Lingfeng has been lying about the existence of the Origin Plan, and you are nothing more than a ‘perfect test subject’ that he has carefully produced, it is obvious that he did not invest so much time and so many resources into you because of the spur of the moment. He must’ve been planning to use you against someone,” Li Yao remarked. “It is also the reason you asked him who sabotaged the Origin Plan just now, right?”

Li Jialing was somewhat surprised and admired Li Yao even more. “You’ve seen through that too, Brother Yao?”

“Of course. Whoever Li Lingfeng accuses of being the schemer that disrupted the Origin Plan is likely the one that he wants you to deal with.” Li Yao smiled. “From what I’ve seen now, Li Lingfeng wants you to deal with Li Linghai.”

Li Jialing sneered. “Like I said just now, I am uninterested in the conspiracies and power struggles of the leadership of the Li family. I’ll be a fool if I intend to deal with the queen of the Imperium!”

“Uninterested is far from enough,” Li Yao said. “Has it ever occurred to you why Li Lingfeng wants you to deal with Li Linghai? Despite all the cutting-edge refinements you have had, you are no older than twenty. With your current combat ability, it’s questionable that you would be able to defeat Wuying Lan. On what grounds does Li Lingfeng believe you are capable of dealing with Li Linghai?”

Li Jialing frowned. “Hehe. Wuying Lan is not worth mentioning at all. I kept part of my strength to myself just now, but I see your point, Brother Yao. It is indeed a very important issue.”

“Consider such a possibility,” Li Yao said. “You are deeply connected to Li Linghai in a certain way. Li Linghai is confident that you can deal with Li Linghai not entirely because of your combat ability but also because of the very special ‘connection’. Is it possible?”

Chapter 2079 - The Soul Is Delicious!

Li Jialing was stunned again.

Li Yao’s words cast him into deep thought for a long time. In the mirror, he was covered in an obscure mist.

“All you said makes a lot of sense.” Li Jialing’s eyes were suddenly sharper than ever, tearing apart the mist and staring at himself in the mirror. “Who are you exactly? Why do I feel that you seem to know everything? Or rather, you did not show up by accident but had always considered me as your target?”

“Well, that is not exactly the case. My target at the beginning was really not you but Li Linghai, Wuying Lan, or Manjusaka itself,” Li Yao admitted frankly. “However, there is indeed something in you that interests me very much, which is the reason I risked approaching you. As for what exactly it is, we’ll talk about it after you get rid of the control of Li Lingfeng and I destroy Manjusaka. It will be useless even if we talk about it now!”

The young man raised an eyebrow. “Are you really going to destroy Manjusaka?”

“What, any problem with that?” Li Yao asked.

“Not at all.” The young man smiled. “That’s exactly what I want.”

Li Yao smiled, too. “That’s good. On a completely irrelevant note, we have been talking about tricks and schemes all the time, which are truly annoying. Should we change a topic so that we can get to know each other better?”

The young man frowned. “Like what?”

“Like, you can tell me the feelings you had when you grew up or your values and outlook,” Li Yao replied. “Huh. I’m starting to understand how you got your slightly extreme and sordid personality.

“A poor kid who lost the protection of his parents at a young age was thrown into such a perilous place as the Li family where strength was all that mattered. He suffered endless bullying and humiliation, and he was sent to laboratories for the cruelest refinement now and then. But after he was granted massive strength through the procedures, he could not unleash the fury and hatred in his heart at all because of the constraint of a weird barrier.

“He wanted to get rid of the dark fate, but it was such an unparalleled expert like Li Linghai who was manipulating him with a string from up above. He wanted to live a free, unrestrained life, but he was covered in the ubiquitous shadow of the Li family… As time went by, he was gradually reduced to what he is today. How heartbreaking!”

Li Jialing’s lips were trembling as he said in amusement, “What do you mean by ‘reduced’? I’m feeling very good about myself right now. What are you trying to say exactly?”

“All I want to say is that, although fate treated you unfairly, you should not completely give up hope, and you should believe in brightness and justice,” Li Yao said sincerely. “Try to be sunnier wherever you can. It is not a bad idea to help other people in need now and then, too. Also, it is very important that you do not vent the darkness that other people poured on you onto the innocent people…”

“Wait a moment, Brother Yao,” Li Jialing interrupted Li Yao impolitely. “What’s your problem?”

“Huh? Watch your manners, kid!” Li Yao said.

Li Jialing turned off the showerhead. Wiping his wet hair, he said, “If this is not a trap of fancy words and you do not have a problem, are you one of the Cultivators from the tales?”

Li Yao pondered for a moment. If Starlight was about to launch a massive attack like moths charging into a fire, it was impossible for him to turn a blind eye to their inevitable doom. So, his identity as a Cultivator would be exposed sooner or later.

At the very least, he would not be able to conceal it from Li Jialing.

Besides, he did not want to conceal it. It was not like he could just watch the young man who was suspected of being the blood son of his foster father grow into ‘the most perfect Immortal Cultivator’, could he?

“Yes,” Li Yao admitted straightforwardly.

“Huh?” Li Jialing blinked. “You are really a Cultivator. Then how come you do not know anything about Starlight?”

“You can consider me a wild Cultivator,” Li Yao said. “Why are you so surprised? You haven’t seen any Cultivators before?”

“I haven’t,” Li Jialing replied dutifully. “The Cultivators, as foolish and childish creatures, went practically extinct hundreds of years ago across the entire Imperium. Occasionally, a few kittens jump out and make some noise, but they barely cause any trouble.

“To be frank, I’m not surprised to see a few Cultivators, but it is indeed beyond my expectation that the Cultivators have an expert like Brother Yao among them. How could you have advanced to such a level with your juvenile and idiotic beliefs?”

“It seems that you have some misunderstandings about Cultivators.” Li Yao smiled, trying to turn the waves that he released into a gentle spring breeze. “That’s fine. There will be a lot of time in the future for me to discuss the path of the Cultivators with you. I believe that you will certainly perceive a lot of things, for example, ‘the greatest service is the service for the people and the country’, ‘with great power comes great responsibility’, and so on. Trust me. You will certainly be enlightened and reborn!”

“…May I refuse it?”

“Of course you can. I am a very reasonable man. As long as you can stop me from sending waves of information to your brain incessantly, you can absolutely refuse it. Come on. Try to resist my overwhelming waves!”

“…”

“However,” Li Yao said, “first things first. Let’s go to Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan’s control center now and see what those two bad guys are up to exactly!”

Li Jialing took a deep breath in relief and put on a sloppy robe. Rubbing his belly, he said, “Okay. But before that—”

“What?” Li Yao asked.

Li Jialing smiled. “I’m hungry.”

…

When Li Jialing stepped into the dining room specially prepared for the honorable guests who had come to Manjusaka for trials and visits, he happened to run into a batch of Immortal Cultivators who had just returned from the ‘paradise of sins’ after playing or taking their trials.

Those people still carried the stench of dust and blood of the Land of Sins, not entirely freed from the extreme stimulations in the battlefield slaughters. They were swaggering arrogantly and talking loudly. The entire lobby was filled with their laughter.

“Eight. I took down eight in a row. It feels good!”

“You didn’t see it, but the sinners were actually quite clever. They were like rats hiding in a gutter. It was not an easy task to catch their tails. I had to burn all of them in the end. Hahaha!”

“Unsatisfying. I haven’t enjoyed myself enough yet before I was summoned!”

“Isn’t it supposed to better prepare us for the upcoming epic quest, Dying Light? You will definitely enjoy plenty then!”

Thrilled, the many Immortal Cultivators raised their cups and toasted themselves.

There were also a lot of Li Jialing’s peers in the room, who were unqualified to take part in the real trials in the Land of Sins and could only stay in Manjusaka for simulation training. They could only visit and experience the Land of Sins in a couple of days after the epic quest was over.

At this moment, they surrounded the adult Immortal Cultivators and listened to their brothers and sisters talking about the stories of slaughter full of envy.

Like a moving block of ice, Li Jialing passed everyone and picked the simplest foods from the buffet window. Then, he sat in a corner and began to savor them.

Drinking the soup slowly, he shifted his big eyes and stared at the heated crowd.

Such direct eye contact meant provocation in many places.

“You are not hungry; you are just in a mood for trouble, aren’t you?” Li Yao said.

Li Jialing tore the bread into shreds and tossed it into his mouth casually. “How did you know?”

“Of course I know. A useless young man who has always been bullied by his companions suddenly gains unparalleled strength. Then, he ‘accidentally’ runs into the companions who used to despise him. Even an idiot knows what will happen next!” Li Yao sighed. “Those people are unlucky enough to be here.”

Li Jialing smiled and intentionally made noises as he drank the soup.

As he expected, somebody soon noticed him sitting in a corner by himself.

“Hey, boy!”

A few tall and brawny young men of the Li family, just as Li Jialing wanted them to, swaggered up to him with hideous grins.

The young man in the lead was 1.5 times the height of Li Jialing, and he had a neck thicker than Li Jialing’s waist. His short, spiky hair was as hard as needles. His energy and agitation that had nowhere to be vented seemed to be emanating from his every pore, making his whole body shine in grease.

The young man’s name was Li Yingxiong. He was one of the guys who ranked top on the ‘ledger’ in Li Jialing’s heart.

“Why haven’t we seen you in the past couple of days? We were doing the simulation training of the highest level. Where were you?” Li Yingxiong knocked Li Jialing’s desk so hard that his soup was splashing. “You did not hide in fear because you were intimidated by our declaration that day and thought that we were really going to kill you in the simulation training, did you?

“Hahaha. It was just a joke. In any case, there are so many members of other families here. Even if we wanted to kill you, we wouldn’t do it until we return to the Li family. Why would we do it here? It will only make the Li family a joke for everybody else.

“However—”

Li Yingxiong suddenly put on a grave face. He roared with additional fury, “The brothers of our family have just returned from the trials in the Land of Sins. Everybody is greeting them. How dare you drink your soup slowly here? Did you not see their arrival because your eyes are blinded by your sh*t, or have you completely forgotten the rules?

“Hehe. Even if your eyes are blinded, have your ears been blocked, too? I’m talking to you! Do you hear me or not?”

Holding the bowl with both legs, Li Jialing took another sip of the soup comfortably. Savoring it for a moment, he replied slowly without raising his head, “The soup is delicious. You are very lucky.”

Li Yingxiong was slightly dazed. Looking at the members of his family who used to bully Li Jialing a lot, he frowned and asked, “What are you talking about?”

“I’m saying…”

Unhurriedly, Li Jialing watched the bottom of the soul bowl, which had been cleared, and smiled. “You are very lucky that the soup here is delicious. So, if you shut your mouth and get lost right now, chances are that I will choose to have another bowl of soup instead if knocking out all your teeth.”

Chapter 2080 - Logic of the World!

“W—What?”

Not only was the tall and brawny Li Yingxiong astounded, the few young men of the Li family in his company were also shocked. Even the young people of other families who overheard their conversation looked at them in astonishment.

Over the past few days, the young people of the few families had gathered for training. Li Yingxiong had distinguished himself by defeating a lot of good warriors of his peers in a row. His brutality was pretty well known.

Everybody knew that his attacks were heavy, vicious, and aimed at the critical parts, as if they were not training but in a life-and-death battle.

Nobody wanted to mess with such a crazy and unreasonable man.

But right now, the seemingly ordinary Li Jialing was bold enough to do so.

“You heard me,” Li Jialing said with a smile. “Do I need to repeat it for you?”

“Hehe…” Li Yingxiong’s pupils constricted nonstop, with crimson beaming out. Thick veins protruded out of his forehead, from which hot steam was popping up.

"By the way, do you know why I never bothered to counterattack when you beat me before?" Li Jialing drew a napkin tissue to wipe his mouth before he folded the napkin tissue and said casually, "Because your punches were no worse than the bites of mosquitoes. It could not raise my interest at all, dumb bear!"

Li Jialing curled his finger and flicked the balled-up napkin into Li Yingxiong's face.

"*sshole!"

If he could swallow such humiliation, he would not have been Li Yingxiong. The tall and brawny young man roared crazily and leaned forward, extending his arms that looked like iron sticks and trying to pull Li Jialing up from his seat.

He had already grabbed Li Jialing's shoulder and was about to stab his fingers into Li Jialing's flesh when Li Jialing suddenly snatched his wrists, pressed them hard, and dragged him backward. He was dragged over the dinner table and thrown onto the ground heavily, covered in dust.

Everybody was shocked.

The dinner room was caught in silence.

Even the adult Immortal Cultivators who had just returned from the trials in the Land of Sins observed the fight between the two young men with great interest.

"How is it possible?"

"Li Jialing… He…"

Although most people could tell that Li Yingxiong did not use his full strength, or even barely used any spiritual energy, in the attack just now, it was still beyond everyone’s expectations that Li Jialing could catch and fling him away.

“You!”

Li Yingxiong jumped to his feet immediately, with brutality and killing intent beaming out of his eyes.

Li Jialing’s unexpected throwing just then did not really hurt him.

But such great humiliation in public was certainly an unprecedented blow to his mind.

Li Yingxiong felt that his ears were humming in congestion, and his eyelids were twitching fast. He could see nothing but Li Jialing’s mocking gaze. His heart pounded like drumming, repeating the same melody that asked him to kill the young man!

It was not until then that Li Jialing glanced at him casually and then moved his eyes down at his waist.

A small vibration dagger was hanging from Li Yingxiong’s waist, which mostly served as a multipurpose tool.

He did not think to draw his dagger before, but Li Jialing’s shivering eyes reminded him.

Grinning hideously, he plucked the dagger and lunged at Li Jialing.

To this moment, Li Yingxiong had still maintained the last bit of his sanity. He knew that such a public fight, especially one witnessed by the members of many other families, was best kept without anyone dying.

Otherwise, his outcome would not be good after he returned if he brought shame to the Li family.

Therefore, he only planned to intimidate Li Jialing with the dagger and cut a few wounds on Li Jialing’s face so that the boy would pee his pants and run away.

But out of his expectations, although Li Jialing had acted so confidently and casually a moment ago, he panicked upon seeing the dagger get drawn. He jumped from his seat and tried to escape, but his left foot was blocked by a chair. Losing his balance, he sent his neck, and the carotid artery in particular, to his dagger.

Li Yingxiong was slightly dazed. He did hesitate for a moment, wondering if he should stop cutting the throat of the boy in public. If he was truly going to do that, it was best to be done on a training field.

But very soon, he did not need to hesitate anymore.

The moment his dagger pierced Li Jialing’s carotid artery, or rather, Li Jialing’s neck volunteered to crash into the tip of his dagger, the uncertainty in Li Jialing’s eyes turned into ecstatic mockery.

In the blink of an eye, Li Jialing’s carotid artery brushed past the vibration dagger narrowly. Then, Li Yingxiong’s wrist hurt so excruciatingly that his dagger somehow fell to the hands of Li Jialing before it circled Li Yingxiong’s neck as fast as lightning and stabbed deeply into his chest, completely mincing his heart!

Li Yingxiong bulged his eyes. Blood darted out from his ripped neck and his pierced chest, while he stepped back and collapsed to the ground, cramping.

Li Jialing lowered his head, not interested in looking at the guy anymore. He went to the buffet window for a second bowl of soup and sat back in the corner where he had been standing right next to Li Yingxiong’s body that was still cramping, continuing to enjoy the delicious hot soup slowly.

The quick and clean skill of killing shocked everyone.

Even the adult Immortal Cultivators narrowed their eyes and looked at Li Jialing and his seemingly weak hands in disbelief.

“Did you have to kill him?” Li Yao asked.

Li Jialing said, “Do you not feel that this is more suitable for my character? I believe that Li Lingfeng must be observing me through a certain channel right now in secret. Only with such a performance can I completely satisfy him and relieve him of his suspicions, right?

“What? You think that the big silly bear looks like an innocent good guy who does not deserve to be killed?”

Li Yao thought for a long time and shut his mouth.

The clattering noises of crystal suits echoed from outside the dining room. The guards of Manjusaka arrived.

Although the Immortal Cultivators worshipped the doctrine of survival of the fittest, it did not mean that anybody could attack each other anytime and anywhere. Without the restrictions of certain laws and rules, the order of the whole society would collapse.

It was one thing to ‘accidentally’ hurt someone in a training field, but it was a whole other thing to intentionally kill someone in a street fight.

However, many people had seen with their own eyes that it was Li Yingxiong who provoked Li Jialing first, attacked first, and drew the dagger first. In the end, he even stabbed the dagger at Li Jialing's carotid artery. Considering the power of the vibration dagger, the attack could indeed have been fatal.

Therefore, Li Jialing's counterattack when his life was under threat was not exactly a violation of the rules.

Although many people who were smart could tell that what Li Jialing had done was certainly not a counterattack in self-defense, nobody really cared about the details.

So, it truly came as no surprise that Jialing was led away by the guards not to a brig or a temporary prison cell but directly to Li Lingfeng, who was smiling in delight.

"You really couldn't wait, could you?" Li Lingfeng smiled. "You hadn't enjoyed enough killing?"

"I only wanted a bowl of soup in peace." Li Jialing shrugged. "It was the big bear who messed with me first. I couldn't swallow the humiliation meekly anymore, could I?"

"Well said," Li Lingfeng said happily. "From today, you don't have to be meek to anybody!"

"But how am I going to explain it?" Li Jialing said. "I'm not asking how I should explain killing the big bear but how to explain why I suddenly turned so strong."

"Remember," Li Lingfeng replied, "the strong do not explain."

Li Jialing was slightly dazed. With brilliance beaming out of his eyes, he said softly, "Got it. Then, where are we going now?”

“To the stream center of the ‘Heavenly Eye Group’.”

Leading the way in the front, Li Lingfeng said casually, “Like I told you before, I have been sincerely raising you as an heir.

“To become a real powerful and influential expert, combat ability alone is far from enough. You also have to recognize the logic and methods of the operation of our world.

“Only when you completely figure out the logic of the operation of our world can you expect to control the entire world!”

“Control the entire world?” Li Jialing mumbled. “I don’t understand.”

“Come with me, and you will understand it.”

With a casual smile, Li Lingfeng said, “You know that the government of the Imperium of True Human Beings was founded on the basis of ‘true human beings’ ruling over ‘hominoids’. The true human beings are the essence and future of mankind, the winners in the race of evolution, and the one percent of humans whose true selves are awakened!

“The other ninety-nine percent, the hominoids, are just ignorant, human-shaped beasts, abnormal creatures who do not have independent thinking and pure emotions, and inferior goods that are born to be entangled by laziness, cowardice, and all other negative factors.

“Making the hominoids perceive the significance of their life and their great responsibility to boost the advancement of the civilization of mankind as burning fuel is the greatest problem that the Imperium has faced in the past thousand years.

“In the past thousand years, true human beings used to manage hominoids through simple and straightforward approaches. At that time, the Imperium was still in the phase of great expansion. Despite the enormous threat of the Covenant Alliance at the central battlefield, we were finding new territories all the time in the rear and could earn incessant resources and slaves from the new territories, which brought benefits to all hominoids. Therefore, the world at that time when the conflicts of the two parties hadn’t escalated operated based on such logic.

“However, about three to four hundred years ago, the Imperium passed the phase of high-speed expansion. It had been a long time since a resourceful, populated Sector was last discovered. Even if some discoveries were made occasionally, the cost of exploration, conquest, and shipping after the establishment of space gates significantly outweighed the profits that the new worlds could possibly bring.

“In other words, the potential earnings of the Imperium’s expansion had dried up. We were forced to find more resources from the territory and the population that we already had in order to compete with the Covenant Alliance.”

Chapter 2081 - Tragic Heroes and Clowns

Li Jialing listened attentively, as if he were enthralled by Li Lingfeng and was receiving the man’s edification sincerely.

Li Yao also pricked his ears. He was very curious about how the Immortal Cultivators viewed the natural-born contradictions between ‘true human beings’ and ‘hominoids’.

Li Lingfeng sighed and went on. “When the Imperium arrived at the limits of expansion about four hundred years ago, its comprehensive national power began declining. The hominoids went on a strike or riot every now and then, which significantly diminished the strength of the Imperium and deprived the Imperium of its competence in the war against the Covenant Alliance.

“A typical example of the escalation of the situation was the failure of Black Wind a hundred years ago!”

Highly sensitive about the words ‘Black Wind’, Li Yao could not help but shiver lightly.

“Are you referring to the fiasco of the Black Wind Sector?” Li Jialing asked.

“Exactly,” Li Lingfeng said. “In the battle, five worlds of the Imperium including the Black Wind Sector were swallowed by the Covenant Alliance. One might say that it was a crushing defeat unlike anything the Imperium had ever witnessed for hundreds of years. Most importantly of all, the

Imperium could not mobilize more troops for the time being and reclaim those five worlds—not even one of them.

“Such a debacle completely woke all the Immortal Cultivators from the illusion, forcing them to reflect on the feasibility of the logic in which the world operated.

“The hundred years from that time to this day have been the age of revolution for the Imperium. Almost all insightful people have been working hard to reflect on the old true path of immortality and government. They have also raised all kinds of optimization and improvement plans. It is not wrong to say that the drastic changes that have taken place in the Imperium in the past hundred years are more intense and profound than those in the past thousand years in total!”

“For example, slaughter streams?”

Li Lingfeng smiled and nodded in approval. “Yes. You are smart enough to see that the so-called ‘slaughter stream’ is much more complicated than a simple game. It is a whole set of lifestyles that are extremely cheap in cost and most suitable for the hominoids to vent their redundant energy and dissatisfaction.

“Through the thrilling battle scenes shot from the first-person perspective, the streaming platform’s tipping and chat functions, and the myriad of talent shows and lotteries, it is very convenient to control the eyes, brains, and souls of the hominoids!

“In the end, not only are we gaining astronomical revenues from the slaughter stream platform, we can even conquer and control all the hominoids, including those who do not belong to the Li family, after bypassing the traditional barriers of power and the nominal leaders without them knowing.

“This is why I have invested a great amount of money in the Heavenly Eye Group to build the slaughter stream platform.”

While talking, Li Lingfeng stopped at the end of a pathway and smiled. “We’re here.”

Li Jialing looked at his feet. Bluish arcs extended gradually from the surroundings and congregated into a circle. The floor inside the circle slightly shivered and sank, bringing him and Li Lingfeng into a gargantuan, hollow sphere.

The place looked like a magnificent ball-shaped palace. The arced wall of the room was covered by glittering light beams that flashed nonstop.

But what was manifested on the light beams were not the scenes streamed from the Land of Sins but faces that were anxious, excited, angry, scared, or extremely twisted.

Right next to every face was a series of information and parameters that poured quickly like a waterfall, reflecting weird brilliance.

Countless workers flew without a sound in the spherical palace on floating discs, like ghosts that were feeding the heads.

“What—What is this place?” Li Jialing swallowed hard. “Shouldn’t we be visiting the stream center?”

“Yes. But it is highly unnecessary for us to watch the boring games in the Land of Sins,” Li Lingfeng said. “They are the viewers who are watching the ‘slaughter stream’ right now and a sample of targets that we have randomly selected for investigation. We implanted some small information feedback chips on their terminals, which will collect all the physiological and mental changes when they are enjoying the slaughter stream. Their breath, their heartbeat, their secretion of adrenalin, and the rhythm of their brainwaves are all under our observation.

“After analyzing and calculating the big data of their feedback comprehensively, we will be able to find out their needs more accurately and provide more exciting and irresistible shows for them.

“More importantly, we can grasp and even interfere with their ideas based on that.”

“Ideas?” Li Jialing mumbled.

“Yes. Maybe you will find out later that it is very easy to destroy a living enemy, but it can be terribly difficult to eliminate an idea.”

With a weird smile, Li Lingfeng replied, “But today, we are trying to completely eradicate an idea with the platform of the slaughter stream—the idea of the Cultivators!”

Li Jialing slightly trembled, and his eyes widened.

Wuying Lan, the owner of Manjusaka, slowly ascended on a floating disc with his hands behind his back.

“My lord, everything is set now.” Wuying Lan bowed to Li Lingfeng gracefully. “The branch of Starlight below the ground is about to find their ‘temple’, and the branch in space should be arriving in the space zone that we expected to launch the suicidal attack very soon. Everything is within our control. The most splendid scene of ‘Dying Light’, the epic quest, will come on at any moment.”

“Very good.” Li Lingfeng nodded in satisfaction. “However, I must trouble Lord Wuying to explain why we planned the ‘epic quest’ first.”

Looking at Li Jialing, Wuying Lan said with a smile, “Are your wounds better now? Do not blame me for giving you a hard time earlier.”

Li Jialing looked at Li Lingfeng and then at Wuying Lan. Swallowing, he could not help but observe, “I understand that you have long been aware of the existence of ‘Starlight’, and you set up the trap with bait, hoping to catch them up once and for all. But I do not understand why you have to put the whole battle on the streaming platform. Isn’t it too childish and risky? Won’t the enemy notice any issues in it?”

Wuying Lan smiled and shook his head. “Please rest assured. We have meticulously calculated which pictures can be shown to the public and which ones must be kept a secret. No information that shouldn’t be leaked will be leaked. Only when the enemy launches a general attack with no turning back will we open all the cameras and pictures so that the audience of the entire Imperium will see for themselves how the pitiful and pathetic organization of Cultivators is entirely wiped out.

“As for your accusation of us being childish… This is definitely not a spur-of-the-moment thing but an ultimate action that we have been forced to adopt in order to completely destroy Starlight.”

Li Jialing was somewhat at a loss. “I don’t understand. Is Starlight very difficult to destroy?”

“No. In fact, it is not very difficult, but almost too easy, to destroy them.”

Approaching the young man, Wuying Lan grinned.

“Did you know? Ever since the earliest members of Starlight fled to the sea of stars in panic after the Martial Meritocrats Sector was conquered by the Imperium, Starlight has been destroyed forty-one times in total over hundreds of years!

“Every single time, the army of the Imperium completely destroyed all the personnel, chains of command, and secret bases of Starlight, ensuring that there were no lucky escapees or shelters that they could hide in.

“But before long, or even as the old Starlight was smashed into smithereens, a new Starlight would pop up from the depths of the mines on a certain remote planet. They are like lice, cockroaches, and rats that you can never finish killing!”

“Why?” Li Jialing mumbled.

“Ideas.” Wuying Lan pointed at his head. “The Imperium only destroyed the bodies, weapons, and bases of the Cultivators of Starlight but never their ideas.

“Ideas are the most dangerous things in the world. They are invisible and ubiquitous. They may seem unpredictable, but they can wield the power to collapse mountains and transform a world. They can turn cowards into animals, animals into warriors, and unorganized mobsters into an iron-blooded army!

“It is useless to just destroy Starlight and kill all the Cultivators.

“Before long, someone will be corrupted by their naïve but dangerous ideas and establish a new Starlight for their generation, which is passed on generation after generation and spreads from one world to another. In the end, the new

Starlight may be deformed and completely different from the Starlight from the Martial Meritocrats Sector at the beginning, but they share the same group of damn ideas!

“It is practically impossible to completely kill such ideas. The more cruelly the Cultivators are hunted and slaughtered and the more blood they shed, the more greatly their images as ‘tragic heroes’ will be shaped, which will attract more and more desperate hominoids and bottom-level Immortal Cultivators to join the side of the Cultivators and establish a new Starlight.

“They are like cancer cells. After you kill one, two will be proliferated. The more killed, the more emerge. It can be truly annoying.

“Therefore, although the Star Ocean Republic was replaced by the Imperium of True Human Beings a thousand years ago and the massive resistance forces of the Cultivators are long gone, the Cultivators who cause minor trouble for all have never been completely eradicated.

“They caused minor trouble a thousand years ago, and a thousand years later, after being erased forty-one times in total, they are still causing ‘minor trouble’ today! I really can’t think of a more unreasonable thing!

“This is the key to our problem. Ideas can hardly be killed, but they can be contorted and deconstructed. In order to prevent the Cultivators from causing minor trouble again, besides destroying them physically, it is very important for us to change their roles as ‘tragic heroes’ into a character that all the hominoids are amused by and gain pleasure from.

“The role that they are going to be changed into is… clowns.”

Chapter 2082 - Pitiful Wretches in the Empty Jar

Li Jialing tilted his head and began to think carefully. “Instead of killing them directly, transform all the Cultivators into clowns?”

With thoughtful brilliance flashing inside his eyes, Wuying Lan replied, “Yes. It is useless to destroy their fleshly bodies as we’ve done the previous forty-one times, although it is quite easy for the Imperium. It is a shame that even if their bodies are burnt up to ash and their bones crumble into powder, their idiotic but dangerous ideas will likely continue spreading.

“At first, the ideas may be as harmless as the weakest cold viruses, as if they have truly gone extinct. Tales of the Cultivators are sometimes not heard for decades.

“But the day will come eventually when a small bunch of people are corrupted by theories that have disappeared for decades and become a new generation of Cultivators, causing minor trouble in the Imperium again.

“Did you know? According to our investigation, the Starlight that has popped up this time did not even have a single person whose spiritual root was awakened at the beginning. It was merely made up of a group of idiotic miners who did not even know what they were doing.

“But after decades of development and absorption of depressed Immortal Cultivators and scoundrels of all trades, they have transformed it into a rather troublesome force.

“We captured a few core members of the new Starlight. They admitted frankly that they had nothing to do with the Land of Sins or the Martial Meritocrats Sector. They did not even know that Starlight originated from the Martial Meritocrats Sector. All they had heard were some ungrounded, ridiculous legends that worshipped Starlight and the Cultivators.

“In those bullsh*t legends, the Cultivators of Starlight was like an undying phoenix that would be reborn in fire time and time again. All the sacrifices were meant for it to be stronger the next time it was reborn.

“Some of the legends were told from person to person and first made by a wrinkled, dying old man at the beginning. Some came from jade chips and crystal processors because the previous forty Starlights left something before their destruction.

“The thing about rumors is that the more bizarre and appalling they sound, the more people will buy them and the faster they will spread.

“All in all, the universe is too vast a place. Despite the speed and ferocity of the Imperium’s army, it is difficult to annihilate an insurgency organization of Cultivators immediately after the news that it is on the rise in a certain border space zone. As a result, Starlight is truly carrying a mysterious, heroic, and soul-stirring halo, and more stupid people will believe in the legends of ‘reborn in fire’!

“Therefore, even if we completely destroy the Starlight today, it will only begin a new cycle of ‘rebirth’. Before long, a new Starlight will emerge, perhaps established by a bunch of exhausted miners, perhaps by furious bottom-level soldiers, and perhaps by hungry famers. No matter how weak and unattractive it may seem at the very beginning, as long as the banner of ‘Starlight’ is set up, it will mean a small victory for the Cultivators.”

“Do not overlook the Cultivators,” Li Lingfeng added. “Although our greatest enemy right now is the Covenant Alliance, the Cultivators have been the earliest enemy of the Imperium. Those guys have not been completely annihilated after a thousand years. Their vitality is truly stronger than that of the cockroach!

“But after the ‘epic quest’, it will be practically impossible for the Cultivators to deceive anyone in the future because we will not grant them a chance to make a valiant sacrifice.”

Wuying Lan operated his wrist crystal processor quickly. The arc-shaped light beams around the sphere palace changed quickly, displaying the pictures on the surface of the Land of Sins, below the ground, and the space zones near Manjusaka.

“Starlight has two branches. Other than the one in space, some of their cockroaches are below the Land of Sins, too. They have not been completely extinguished in the past hundreds of years,” Wuying Lan explained. “However, I found an opportunity decades ago to send one of my spies to the underground world of the Land of Sins. I planned to completely demolish the underground branch of Starlight with the intelligence provided by the spy, but the spy’s performance was unexpectedly remarkable. It seemed to be a waste to just deal with the underground branch.

“As it happened, the slaughter stream platform of the Heavenly Eye Branch gradually climbed to the peak, and its influence spread throughout the Imperium. So, I began to consider a new possibility.”

Li Jialing raised his head and looked at the enormous light beams floating before him.

On the light beams, all the remaining ‘earthly dragons’ of the underground branch of Starlight were clearly visible. Their most accurate coordinates had been locked onto by the Immortal Cultivators.

Some of the ‘earthly dragons’ even had spying chips in them, planted by the Immortal Cultivators. The conversations among the excited or exhausted Cultivators could occasionally be heard. It could also be seen that they were wiping their magical equipment, touching their blades, and assembling the firearms somewhat nervously, waiting for the arrival of the final battle in the temple and the global sword network system.

“Do you see it? Those Cultivators are waiting for the ‘sacred sacrifice’ ravenously!” Wuying Lan chuckled. “They think that attacking the City in the Sky will be the most splendid, glorious, and tragic battle of Starlight in the past hundreds of years. They are not worried about whether or not they will win because even if they do fail eventually, as long as they have made the gesture of a massive attack and caused the slightest damage to Manjusaka, the story will certainly grow into a new legend after much exaggeration—the legend of the ‘undying Cultivators’, which will charm another bunch of fools and turn them into new Cultivators in the near future.

“This is exactly their plan. It doesn’t matter whether they win or lose. All they want is a valiant death. They want the almighty Imperium of True Human Beings to admit that Cultivators are a concept on par with the Immortal Cultivators so that they can spread their ideas with the opportunity. Nothing more.

“It is a shame that none of the Cultivators will realize that the tragic battle to attack the City in the Sky has been planned by the Immortal Cultivators from beginning to end. Also, I have stuffed a lot of our own men into all the procedures.

“They think that they are initiating a sacred battle. Little do they know that it is only a live stream and a game, and they are nothing more than the entertaining clowns and toys in the game.

“Look here. We have been able to monitor the Cultivators’ every move and hear their unbelievably idiotic declarations since the very beginning. Those declarations, if switched to a different scene and supported by some stirring music, may indeed be a bit attractive. But what if we add some ‘canned laughter’ here with certain funny sound effects? What if we pave a few unctuous comments on their faces?

“As a result, when the targets that the Cultivators want to win over most, namely the hominoids that make up ninety-nine percent of the population of the Imperium, watch the scenes that we have carefully prepared, what will their impression of the Cultivators be? Will they consider them warriors like moths darting at the fire and mantises stopping a car with their forearms, or clowns who do not know what they are doing at all?

“And here, do you see it? This is the underground main battlefield that I have carefully devised, the temple of the Cultivators. To make it more mysterious and enticing, I even fabricated the notion of a Cultivator that had been lost for a thousand years.

“It was not exactly my personal creation but a rumor that spread through the past goddamn Starlights. It was nothing more than the image of an ancient Cultivator and an almighty, invincible god that was made up randomly to boost morale.

“It must be noted that this is a resister that does not exist at all. How can the Imperium kill him or disapprove his existence?

“Today, in the game that we have carefully prepared, the Cultivator that has been lost for a thousand years will show up as a clown and tell all the people of the Imperium how hilarious the Cultivators’ beliefs and hopes are!

“The preparations in space are as thorough as below the ground. All in all, the dragnet has already been opened, and all the traps have been set up. All we need to do is capture every look on the Cultivators’ faces from hopefulness to frustration and then to desperation. We will watch how spectacular their faces are when they learn that the sacred destiny that they have been dedicated to at the cost of their own life is nothing more than a game that is planned by other people.

“We will even involve the general public and the hominoids deeply into the game and give them the impression that Cultivators are worthless wretches and targets to be mocked and derided, and that everything is under the control of the Imperium and the Immortal Cultivators!

“When caught in desperation without any hope, many people are willing to be tragic heroes who march forward relentlessly without retreating. The feelings of fighting in blood until they collapse on a mountain of corpses in exhaustion can even be rather romantic.

“But in any case, absolutely nobody is willing to be a fly in a transparent glass jar, where their every move will be observed clearly by other people. What hilarious and pathetic wretches they are!

“This is exactly the case for the Cultivators of Starlight now. They’re wretches in a transparent glass jar!

“We will try to kill as few of those wretches as possible and simply try to capture them alive to deliver them to Manjusaka for refinement. We will let them realize how stupid and hilarious their beliefs were. They will certainly develop a profound understanding about the truth path of immortality after they are completely reborn.

“Trust me. After they completely figure out the truth and receive modifications in Manjusaka, they will certainly undergo drastic changes that touch their souls. Then, the processes in which they receive modifications and regret their past can be made into stream shows, too. They can also be arranged for a speech tour nationwide in the entire Imperium.

“Although the procedures can be complicated, I believe that this is the best way to completely destroy the Cultivators and their ideas without leaving any hidden problems for the future.”

Chapter 2083 - A New Hero!

Li Jialing listened attentively in silence the whole time. Finally, he complimented sincerely, “What a great idea. I believe no one will ever want to become a shameful Cultivator after such a carefully-planned ‘war stream’.”

Having been complimented ‘sincerely’ by the young man who was refined by himself through a lot of procedures that he had performed on himself before, Wuying Lan could not help but smile.

“Exactly. I never blindly believe in absolute violence. Or rather, true strength is always much more complicated than simple violence. Survival of the fittest is doubtlessly a truth, but there are too many factors that decide what is fit and what is not besides one’s combat ability!

“At the very least, it is impossible to completely destroy the ideas of the Cultivators today purely with violence.”

“Got it.” Li Jialing nodded thoughtfully. Then he looked at Li Lingfeng and asked, “However, why did you bring me here to watch this, and why are you explaining everything to me?”

With a smile, Li Lingfeng said, “The war stream to annihilate Starlight is not very important. What matters here is that I want you to see this new strength—the strength to catch eyes and manipulate people through the media.

“It has been decades since the slaughter stream was first planned, but in the past, it was mainly used to make profits and soothe hominoids. To be honest, that is only the tip of the iceberg of its real potential.

“But today, after hearing Lord Wuying’s explanation, you must have vaguely realized how enormous and immeasurable the iceberg hiding below the surface of the ocean is.

“Such strength can narcotize or stimulate the will and emotions of billions of people, making them caught in our logic or even think in a seemingly independent way according to the shows that we have carefully planned. Such strength can turn someone into a hero in only a couple of days if not hours, and a hero into a devil in several minutes. At the most critical moment, it can even be used to seize and control… the entire universe!

“This is only a minor test to annihilate Starlight, the insurgency group of Cultivators. The key is to find a mature pattern and figure out a way to inculcate our ideas into the brains of all the targets, thereby controlling them without them knowing it at all. If we can do that, the value of the platform will be inestimable, and it can be used to do many interesting things.”

Li Jialing frowned and mumbled, “Is it possible?”

“Of course it is. Don’t underestimate the influence of the slaughter stream.” Wuying Lan chuckled. “Did you know? Among the hominoids on many remote resource planets in the Imperium, there are truly a lot of people. Especially adolescents. They often end up on bad terms with their parents and even kill their parents to loot their money, just to participate in our stream shows and derivative games without caring about anything.

“You cannot compare your wisdom and thinking pattern to the hominoids. We are all brand-new human beings that are highly evolved. We have a profound understanding of the operational logic of the world. Naturally, we will not be deceived by such petty tricks, but the hominoids are no better than the ignorant animals. It couldn’t be easier to manipulate them.

“Greed, indulgence, jealousy, pride, anger, laziness… As long as we start from the fatal weaknesses of humanity, the hominoids will cry, laugh, or hate their parents if we want them to. In the end, their entire souls will be absorbed by us. Only the world in the slaughter stream is the real world, and the world and family next to them become groundless, unimportant things. We are their supreme gods. It is completely possible and exactly what is going on right now!”

Li Jialing sniffed. “It really sounds like a grand design. Then, what is the role that I am going to play in such a magnificent project? I don’t suppose you refined me at the cost of so much time and so many resources just to build a loyal viewer out of me.”

Wuying Lan and Li Lingfeng looked at each other and both chuckled.

“What? You still hate us?” Wuying Lan said with a smile. “You have no idea how much Lord Li treasured you. Most of the refinements that were performed on you had been tested countless times prior. I even tried many of them on myself to check the effects and the safety before they were applied to you. Despite the agony, there were absolutely no fatal dangers.

“In the entire Imperium, few young men can ever enjoy the privileges that you have enjoyed. Now, you have made a significant breakthrough in your training, and your future is nothing but promising. Are you still going brooding over the insignificant things in the past?”

“Although you are young, you are definitely a smart man. So, I won’t beat around the bush with you.” Li Jialing patted Li Jialing’s shoulder heavily. “I brought you to Manjusaka partly to continue your treatment and remove the weird seal inside your head, and partly, if it succeeds, to turn you into a new hero.”

“Turn me into a hero?” Li Jialing was truly somewhat stunned this time. “Me? A hero?”

“Yes. A hero, a star, and a super idol that will be popular among the teenage boys and girls in the entire Imperium, loved by both the hominoids and bottom-level Immortal Cultivators. After a series of operations, you can even become the spokesperson of the notion of slaughter streaming as the god for countless hominoids and low-level Immortal Cultivators!”

Li Lingfeng explained his plans incessantly while waving his hands.

“The war stream this time to annihilate ‘Starlight’ is of a reasonable scale and difficulty. It is the best opportunity for us. We do not even need to introduce your identity and origins or reveal your real appearance at first. All you need to do is arrive from the sky and go on a killing spree in a cool crystal suit when the Cultivators lose all hope and begin their final, futile resistance.

“Through the war stream of ‘Dying Light’, you will leave a deep impression on the hearts of countless people in the Imperium. After that, a series of soul-stirring and mind-boggling quests will be arranged for you so that you will soar into the sky and become a real superhero!”

Li Jialing looked at Li Lingfeng in disbelief.

“Is it so hard to accept?” Li Lingfeng smiled. “Speaking of heroes, you killed one just now, Li Yingxiong[1]. His father is definitely not easy to deal with. After you return to the family, I fear that you will be faced with a medium crisis, but I will not help you directly.”

“I’ve been thinking about how I can stuff you into the channel of ascension of the family, but the regular routes of elimination and upgrade are really too slow. The vetting and education that can take decades are too much for both you and me.

“Therefore, it is not a bad idea to simply bypass the plethora of screening procedures within the family and go down a new path. We will create a very charismatic superhero from the outside. Then, it will be easier for me to do a lot of things for you.”

“Am I suitable for that?” Li Jialing asked after a brief silence.

“What, are you not confident in your strength?”

“I am not confident in my origins. Everybody within the family knows that I am the child of a pair of inferior warriors.”

“That is what makes you perfect. We have decided to continue using that cover story,” Li Lingfeng said. “Ever since the establishment of the Imperium of True Human

Beings, the idea that anyone can be successful as long as they work hard regardless of their origins has always been promoted. Born in the bottom class but not giving in to fate and striving all the way until success—this is the image of the most standard Immortal Cultivator of the Imperium and the image of a most attractive hero.”

Wuying Lan sighed added, “It is a shame the Imperium has endured a thousand years. When a tree is too huge, there will always be dry branches. After a thousand years, all kinds of conflicts and accumulated problems are gradually revealing themselves. The consolidation of social stratification is a very serious problem among them.

“I wonder, have you heard a popular joke among the Immortal Cultivators right now, Lord Li? If a father is in the Nascent Soul Stage, his son will arrive at the Nascent Soul Stage; if a father is in the Core Formation Stage, his son will be in the Core Formation Stage, too. The highest levels that most people can reach are exactly what their parents reached earlier.

“As a result, a lot of middle-level and bottom-level Immortal Cultivators who do not have resources and connections are restless. It is not entirely bad if they are too frustrated and give up trying, but I’m afraid that some of them may develop other nefarious intentions, which can be quite damaging.

“Hominoids are all mobsters. There is nothing to be scared of however many riots they launch. But the middle-level and the bottom-level Immortal Cultivators are the foundations of the Imperium. If even they cannot see any hope and are filled with grudges, the problem is truly rather grave.”

“I couldn’t agree with you more,” Li Lingfeng said. “This is not the age of Blackstar the Great anymore, when everything flourished like a morning sun and everyone was full of ambition, ready to burn themselves for the civilization of mankind. The Immortal Cultivators today are no longer the Immortal Cultivators from a thousand years ago. Our society is decaying, and every generation is worse than the last. How many people can still prioritize talents over everything like me and worship the idea that whoever is strong and has enough potential is qualified to inherit my resources and strength regardless of whether or not they are my blood descendants?”

Li Lingfeng shook his head disapprovingly before he focused his eyes on Li Jialing again. “However, this only further highlights your preciousness. As a common descendant in the family with unattractive talents, you never gave up despite all the humiliation you suffered. Through your own hard work, you finally changed your fate miraculously and distinguished yourself in the boundless sea of stars… This is almost a perfect image.

“How about it? Would you like to give it a shot?”

The young man was caught in hesitation and silence.

Or rather, he seemed to be caught in hesitation and silence.

After a long silence, when he raised his head again, there was both desire and ambition in his eyes that had been raised by the persuasion of the two big shots and a little bit of wariness that came from his natural instincts.

Biting his lips, the young man hesitantly asked, “Can I ask you a question? What is your ultimate goal in fabricating such a hero with so much effort?”

[1] Yingxiong means ‘hero’.

Chapter 2084 - The Last Preparations!

Li Lingfeng was silent for a moment. Sighing softly, he said, “If I said that everything we have been doing is only meant for self-protection, would you believe me?”

Li Jialing blinked. “Self-protection?”

“The strength we talked about just now to manipulate people through the slaughter stream as a super platform is extremely fragile and can easily be completely demolished despite its magnificent power,” Li Lingfeng said. “From the large-scale infrastructure across the Sectors, to the information connection to all the planets in a certain Sector, and even including the terminal devices that meet our demand… Too many uncertainties are involved in the project.

“A lot of people, whose minds are rigid and obsolete, fear new, unknown strength. They believe that said strength poses a threat to the old order that they have established with starships, chainswords, and electromagnetic whips. Therefore, they have made up their mind to destroy our cause without considering anything else.

“Some other people see the value and potential of the strength and want to steal it for themselves. They extend their blood-sucking tentacles to our cause like shameless parasites, draining every bit of the achievements that we have made after a hundred years of hard work.

“As the saying goes, the tallest tree catches the most wind. Wuying Lan and I have come this far while holding the concept of ‘slaughter stream’ just like going against a fiercely burning torrent. We must tread lightly with every step, and we are faced with the threat of countless storms and arrows every second. One moment of carelessness, and we will be shattered and mired in an eternal doom!

“In order to safeguard the cause that we have created through so much hard work, we have no choice except to continue moving forward and prove the strength of ‘slaughter stream’. We will attract more capital and resources, gather greater connections, build images that are more vivid and impressive, and make a superhero that everybody in the entire Imperium knows… Only in such a way will those guys with ill intentions have to think carefully before they lay their fingers on us. Do you understand?”

Li Jialing’s eyelids were slightly shivering. He asked in disbelief, “With your position in the Li family, and Lord Wuying running the game as a member of the royal family, are you still scared of other people’s greed?”

“Royal family?” Wuying Lan said with a self-mocking smile. “In the Imperium of True Human Beings, the royal family is the cheapest of all things. After a thousand years of dispersion, there are at least a million people in the Imperium with a surname of ‘Wuying’, ninety-nine percent of whom are common workers and dealers. Even the branches that are close to the main bloodline like me are also too many to be counted. When the specific interests are concerned, nobody cares if you belong to the royal family!”

“The higher you climb a mountain, the colder you will become. Like I said to you before, the higher I reach within the family, the more people eyeing me in secret.”

Pausing for a moment, Li Lingfeng glanced at Wuying Lan. “This is not much of a secret for Lord Wuying. Take Li Linghai, my good sister and the almighty queen of the Imperium, for example. She is an absolute conservative who feels natural disgust toward any mass information dissemination that involves the entire Imperium like ‘slaughter stream’. She believes that such an approach eliminates the capital’s authority and has always been thinking to take ‘slaughter stream’ away, or to destroy it once and for all if she can’t!”

Narrowing his eyes, Wuying Lan added, “The queen is a tough one. Everybody in the Empyreal Terminus Sector knows that the brilliant and unstoppable emperor, who has just defeated the Covenant Alliance and is ambitious enough to be a second Blackstar the Great, is actually a piece of useless cr*p with more ambitions than talents. Had it not been for the manipulation of the queen, he could not even have launched a single battle!”

“Yes!” Li Lingfeng sighed. “Who could have thought that my sister, who purely focused on the advancement of personal strength, would grow into such a terrifying person someday? She is even coldhearted enough to show no warmth to me, a blood brother who shares the same parents with her. Now that she has set her eyes on us, what can we do except try our best to protect ourselves?

He patted the young man’s shoulder again to sense the shivering muscles of the young man and grasp the subtle changes in his mind. “No matter how many misunderstandings you may have of me and Wuying Lan because of our doings in the past, I hope you can understand that it is for your own good.

“I would very much like you to join our cause. Whether or not you join us, you are one of my guys in the eyes of outsiders. Nothing can change that.

“If our cause collapses one day and Wuying Lan and I are both despised and doomed, there is no way that you can stay out of this business. A lot of people will catch you and slice you up to study, trying to figure out the Origin Plan and the secrets of your refinement in Manjusaka. Then, you will understand what hell really looks like.

“How about it? Do you need some more time to think about it?”

Li Jialing looked at the enormous light beams on the wall of the spherical palace he was in.

Inside the light beams were the pitiful wretches who were caged in transparent glass jars, which were darting at what they thought was light, only to crash into the transparent glass and bleed hard.

Time and time again, they never regretted even if they were killed.

“That will be unnecessary.” Narrowing his eyes, the young man put on a mysterious smile. “It seems rather interesting to be a hero. However, can I spend some time in the beehive prison?”

“The beehive prison?”

Wuying Lan and Li Lingfeng looked at each other and asked curiously, “Why do you want to go there?”

“Didn’t you say just now that you want me to arrive from the sky in the coolest crystal suit and go on a killing spree?” Li

Jialing smiled. “Of course I need to prepare myself well in order to fully unleash the strength that has been suppressed for more than ten years. I want to select a few crystal suits and find a few tough prisoners in the beehive prison to enjoy myself with. Killing someone like Li Yingxiong felt like stomping on an ant, which was not fun at all!”

“Of course you can!” Overjoyed, Wuying Lan nodded quickly. “You have just cracked your seal. It is indeed necessary for you to do some adaptive training in order to activate your full potential in the shortest amount of time possible. I can help you create an independent training area down there and capture a batch of the toughest experts from the beehive prison for you. You can play with them however you want.”

“That is too troublesome. I think I’ll simply go to the beehive prison and look for agreeable targets on my own.” Li Jialing licked his lips ravenously. “I vaguely have a feeling that a couple of experts are far from enough to fill my stomach. I wonder, will Lord Wuying’s experiment plans be affected if too many prisoners are damaged by me?”

“Hahaha!” Wuying Lan laughed and waved his hands. “Just rest assured and play however you want. After the battle, we will have a copious supply of test subjects. Alright. If Lord Li has no objection, I’ll have someone lead you to the beehive prison. It will be your playground!”

Looking at Li Jialing, Li Lingfeng said with a smile, “I have no objection at all. Ah Ling, I know that you have always been a very smart kid. Besides, even the most idiotic fool would’ve known what choice was in his best interests after so many years of edification by us!

“You can do whatever you see fit in regard to training. If you come across any questions, feel free to ask me. But you won’t have too much time. In two days at most, the most splendid scene of our epic quest will begin. By then, we will choose the most soul-stirring and blood-freezing moment for you to cut in.”

“Then, I’ll be off now.” Li Jialing nodded. Then, as if he suddenly recalled something, he said, “Right. There’s still something insignificant that bothers me. Both of you claim that the ideas of the Cultivators are both stupid and dangerous, and I, for one, believe that only fools and idiots will believe in such things. But why have so many people put their faith in them despite all the examples in the past thousand years?”

“Well, about that…” Looking at the young man’s eyes that were filled with curiosity, Li Lingfeng replied somewhat helplessly after a brief silence, “Perhaps it is because there are simply too many fools in the universe!”

…

At the ninth dock in the peripheral space port of the City in the Sky, a ragged carrier was floating in the void. All the cargo and crew had been cleared. The starship was ready for a full maintenance and upgrade.

However, dozens of starships were waiting in line for maintenance and examination. It wouldn’t be the unattractive carrier’s turn for at least a couple of days.

Therefore, nobody knew that an infuriated expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage was squatting in the most inconspicuous part of the carrier!

“Killing both the body and the mind, the Immortal Cultivators are too outrageous!” Furious, Li Yao slapped his thigh hard. “Not only are they going to destroy the Cultivators physically, they are also going to tarnish our spirit and our soul! What a bunch of sordid, shameless, filthy, inhumane, animalistic scumbags!”

“Not exactly,” the mental devil said solemnly. “I feel that the methods through which the Immortal Cultivators are dealing with the Cultivators share a lot of similarities with how the Cultivators dealt with the Immortal Cultivators in the Star Glory Federation in the old days. At that time, the federation also focused more on destroying the ideas and the spirit of the Immortal Cultivators than on destroying their physical bodies.”

“Is that so?”

“Of course. Instead of sentencing Su Changfa, an Immortal Cultivator, to death, the federation appointed him as a professor in a major college. The man was caged and kept like a rare, endangered species for the criticism of other people. Wasn’t it exactly like what Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan are doing today? As I recall, you were the one who came up with the idea. You said similar things such as ‘ideas can never be killed’, didn’t you?”

“…Did I? I don’t remember any of those things now.”

“That’s fine,” the mental devil said. “Why don’t I retrieve the sound and picture from your brain and help you refresh your memories?”

Chapter 2085 - Dying Together with the World!

“That will be unnecessary,” Li Yao said. “I remember everything now.”

“That sounds more like it,” the mental devil said. “You thought that everything was under your control, and the Immortal Cultivator Su Changfa was nothing more than a turtle caged in a tank, unable to cause any trouble again. Therefore, you wanted to turn him into a ‘living textbook’ and use his insignificance and ugliness to highlight your own magnificence and brightness. But little did you know that you would screw everything up in the end, and the freak ‘Lu Qingchen’ was raised. You almost did not have a chance to rectify the horrible mistakes that you made, right?”

“Thank you for your reminder,” Li Yao said. “I have completely recalled everything. But our focus this time seems to be the sordid, shameless tricks of the Immortal Cultivators. I don’t think we need to mention the past. Let’s try to concentrate on the game here and now!”

“The key is still on the little monster, Li Jialing,” the mental devil said. “Just like you absolutely couldn’t have seen the arrival of the little monster ‘Lu Qingchen’, who smacked your face hard. In the end, if you were not lucky enough to have a large batch of experts including myself wiping your ass for you, you would’ve been kicked to your hometown selling salty eggs. Li Jialing today is exactly the same. He can certainly grow into a person like Lu Qingchen as a key to crack the trap!

"Also, Wuying Lan and Li Lingfeng look rather weaselly and unblessed. I don't think that they will have your luck, and not so many unexpected experts will jump out to wipe their asses for them. But I do believe that many will come to take advantage of their trouble!"

"…Can we stop talking about Lu Qingchen?"

…

On a floating disc, Li Jialing followed three managers of the beehive prison and moved slowly down the metal pathway that led to the prison.

He was wearing a mustard-seed combat suit that was as thin as paper but extremely tensile, which highlighted his every muscle. The combat suit also had glittering strengthening systems of crystals and rune arrays on his chest, abdomen, and joints, which covered him in a warm halo and further added to his mysteries.

His athletic clothing and the ambitions and desires in his eyes that could barely be disguised made him look like a standard young Immortal Cultivator who had just begun his career and could not wait to control the entire world in his hands.

Li Yao sent a wave inside the young man's stomach, which rose all the way to his brain along the nerves in the spine. "Hey, what's on your mind? Why are you not talking? You aren't having cold feet and thinking that you would rather stay here, right?"

Li Jialing smiled. "Why do you ask that?"

"Because I think that Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan's words sounded rather reasonable," Li Yao said. "The conditions that they proposed were rather enticing. Turning you into a superhero that everybody in the entire Imperium knows. Tsk, tsk, tsk. I think that at least ninety-nine of a hundred hotblooded young men have dreamed of being a superhero. Are you an exception?

“Even if they are only making use of you, they would certainly not kill the egg that lays golden eggs at the very beginning. Whatever schemes they may have for you will definitely not take place until you have already been made into a superhero. So, are you really not tempted by the idea?”

“If you are worried that I will go back on our deal, you are simply overthinking it,” Li Jialing said casually. “Firstly, as I told you before, I wanted to live a free, lawless life where nobody gives me any commands. I have no interest in becoming the heir of the Li family, the spokesperson of the slaughter stream platform, or a superhero.

“Secondly, even if I am truly going to be a superhero or I want anything for myself, I will earn it with my own hands. The schemes of other people are highly unnecessary.

“A fabricated hero, however awesome and popular they may appear, is simply a poor fly locked in a transparent glass jar if we get to the bottom of it. They must carry out Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan’s orders all the time, accept the styles that they set, and live in their shadows for the rest of their lives. Hehe. What kind of ‘hero’ is that?

“Thirdly, I can tell that their plan to make a hero is not as simple as it appears to be. Did you hear it just now? Li Lingfeng mentioned the name of his sister again. It was the second time in only half a day.

“For some reason, I vaguely feel that Li Lingfeng is trying to inculcate an idea into my head without me knowing it, which is that Li Linghai, the queen of the Imperium, poses a grave threat to my existence. He wants me to believe that Li Linghai tried to destroy me when I was still a fetus and that I will be sliced for studies if she catches me right now. Is it my imagination?”

“No, it is not,” Li Yao said. “That is exactly what Li Lingfeng meant. He wants you to develop this misunderstanding, wariness, and even enmity toward Li Linghai.”

“Enmity? Yes. That seems like it.” Li Jialing curled his lips and narrowed his eyes. “Interesting. Why does Li Lingfeng want me to grow strong enmity toward Li Linghai? Besides, what does it matter even if someone as insignificant as me grows hostile to the almighty queen of the Imperium, and what blow can it possibly be for Li Linghai? It is really worth studying.

“In any case, however meticulous Li Lingfeng’s plan is, he has made a fatal mistake—he has underestimated me too much!”

“He did not underestimate you; he underestimated the abilities of himself and Wuying Lan. Or rather, they tried too hard in your project,” Li Yao said. “I’m afraid that he hasn’t realized to this moment what a terrifying monster he has raised after all the refinement!

“As it happens, the little monster that is already terribly tricky to deal with by himself now has the selfless help of a Cultivator with profound wisdom, strength, and integrity! I’m afraid that his life will end before he has the opportunity to challenge Li Linghai!”

“…May I ask you a question?” Li Jialing asked.

“As I said, all the formalities are highly unnecessary. You can ask me whatever you want to know,” said Li Yao frankly.

“Some descriptions of the Cultivators are involved in the education of the Li family,” Li Jialing said solemnly. “The textbooks and the pamphlets all depict Cultivators as hypocritical, shameless people who always talk big but waver at the critical moment, which leads to infinite disasters and encumbers the entire civilization.

“Also, the last years of the Star Ocean Republic controlled by the Cultivators were an age of corruption and decadence. That’s why it suffered the intrusion of the Covenant Alliance and was crushed. As a result, the Imperium was forced to clean up the mess left by the Cultivators the moment it was established, and the job hasn’t been done yet after a thousand years.

“Before, I always acknowledged such a theory. No, it seems very reasonable to me even to this moment. However, I am now getting very curious after seeing how serious Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan were just now and how ‘Starlight’ emerged again after it was destroyed forty-one times.

“What are the real Cultivators, and what is their real path?”

The floating disc slightly shivered, and the three gates up ahead that looked like lotus flowers opened slowly. Greeted by overwhelming screams and roars, they had reached the beehive prison.

…

“The real Cultivators…”

In a sunless tunnel below the surface of the Land of Sins, under the dim lights in the earthly dragon, Zuo Jingyun, the one-armed female warrior of the resistance organization, was thinking the same question.

Han Te and Liu Li sat cross-legged next to her, looking at her with a thirst for knowledge.

The Fist King was sitting nearby. He was staring at a delicate little furnace. On the plate of the furnace was the synthetic meat that he was broiling for the two little fellows.

It was a hard-earned moment to catch their breath, or the last tranquility before a great war.

All the exhausted warriors had fallen asleep. The two little fellows were the only ones who were energetic enough to harass the female conduction of Cloud Penetrator, hoping to learn more about the Cultivators.

“In fact, I don’t know what real Cultivators are, either. I never even thought of becoming a real Cultivator at the beginning. At first, my parents were Cultivators, so I was naturally a Cultivator. Later, I only wanted to avenge my parents. It’s as simple as that. If you want to listen to great philosophies, you will have to invite Wei Longtao to teach you. He can talk about them for three days and three nights without repeating anything!”

Zuo Jingyun scratched her bald head, somewhat embarrassed. Then, as if she suddenly recalled something, she put on a sincere smile. “In fact, leaving aside my parents’ identity or their revenge, I perhaps would have never thought of being a Cultivator.

“To this moment, I cannot forget the feeling when I dug out of the ground for the first time and saw the high sky and the vast land. At that time, I had a very ‘great’ or hilarious dream. I wanted to do nothing for the rest of my life except find a village and build a house on such a boundless land beneath the high sky, instead of being chased every day below the ground and using weapons for pillows at night. I would simply sit on the threshold of my house and stare at the sky every day. That would be my greatest gratification.

“If I could ever live such a peaceful and carefree life, only an idiot would ever think of becoming a Cultivator!”

“Ah…”

Looking at each other in bewilderment, Han Te and Liu Li sighed in mixed feelings. “That is more or less what we thought in the past. We hoped that the Village of Peace would forever be peaceful, and we could just live on the boats without worries. Swimming, fishing, and watching the sky while floating on the surface of the water. Nothing could be more enjoyable than that.”

With a bitter smile, Zuo Jingyun agreed. “Yes. It is a pity that such a life will never be reality in the Land of Sins. Even the experts as strong as the Fist King and Leader Xiahou can never really be free and untroubled, can they?

“Not only is it impossible for us to live such a life, we can never even live a worried and insecure life. We are nothing more than the mice in their laboratory. We live if they want us to live, and we die when they want us to die.

“So, is there another option other than to revolt against this world?

“If you ask me what constitutes the real Cultivators, I believe that it should be ‘resistance’. This world is wrong. A normal world and a normal life shouldn’t be like this. Although I do not know what a ‘correct’ world should be like, I absolutely cannot endure the world we are living in right now. I would rather die with it than be part of its filth!”

Chapter 2086 - Tomorrow Will Be Better!

Although they were in the sunless underground world, Zuo Jingyun was still emitting vague glimmers, as if she was made of the minerals that had been condensed and compressed below the ground for billions of years.

The two little fellows considered her words in silence. Moved by the radiance from her body, they felt as if an unknown strength was growing inside their own bodies, too.

“The meat is ready. Eat it now.”

The Fist King brought over three plates and three forks. He gave a piece of meat to Zuo Jingyun, too, besides the two little fellows.

Zuo Jingyun tilted her head and watched the Fist King and the broiled meat in his hands for a long time before she finally remarked, “I didn’t know that you were such a Fist King.”

“Although I do not need to refill fat and protein personally, regular human beings have to take food every day,” the Fist King said casually. “Only when someone is fed will they have the strength to train and fight. The deliciousness of the food will certainly influence their combat ability. In order to set their battle state to the optimal, I must take every detail into consideration. Is it really a surprise that I am a cooking master?”

Zuo Jingyun laughed and thanked the Fist King. Then she extended her hand to the Fist King sincerely and said, “Fist King, I think you are very different from the common bandits in the Land of Sins. How about it? Are you interested in joining our organization and destroying this damn world as a Cultivator?”

“I have no interest in becoming a Cultivator.” The Fist King rejected the offer without any hesitation. Pausing a moment, he said, “But I am very interested in destroying this damn world.”

After a brief daze, Zuo Jingyun laughed in amusement. “It makes sense. In fact, I think I am exactly the same. I don’t care what real Cultivators should look like, and my sole interest is destroying this damn world.

“Or rather, every generation of people has their generation’s destiny. For our generation, it will be good enough if we can blow the Land of Sins to smithereens. As for the mission to build a new world from the ruins, that will be the concern of Han Te, Liu Li, and their generation because we will certainly have died on the battlefield to destroy the old world!”

Han Te and Liu Li were chewing the delicious meat when they heard Zuo Jingyun mention them. They both raised their heads and looked at the bald female warrior.

“No, you won’t!” Waving her fork, Liu Li said in a hurry, “Sister Yun will certainly live and see a beautiful new world. Your dream will come true. You will establish your own small but beautiful house in a field where the sky is clear and the clouds are low. Then, you will do nothing but watch the sky and the earth from the threshold or the room every day, living a free and enjoyable life!”

Zuo Jingyun smiled. Azure and white colors truly flashed in her eyes that were almost transparent, as if the entire sky had floated to the bottom of her eyes.

She was almost moved to tears by the image, but the azure and white colors disappeared as quickly as they appeared. She soon regained her previous calmness and toughness.

“Judging from the elements of rocks and the forsaken tunnels we excavated today, we are getting closer and closer to the legendary temple. We are in contact with a few other earthly dragons that dispersed to escape earlier, too. At least a thousand warriors have survived. Everybody is marching toward the temple from various directions. By our estimation, we will locate the temple tomorrow and activate the global sword network.”

With the underground glimmers dancing inside her eyes, Zuo Jingyun chewed the meat on her fork and said in a low voice, “However, the Immortal Cultivators are following us closely. It is very possible that they will reach the temple immediately after we do. There is bound to be a fierce battle.

“It doesn’t matter whether or not I will survive the battle or ever build my own house in the future. But even if I must die, I will definitely activate the global sword network and shoot Manjusaka down!

“I really don’t know what it will be like tomorrow. Tomorrow…”

Han Te and Liu Li grabbed Zuo Jingyun’s warm right hand and cold left hand, declaring solemnly and piously, “Tomorrow will be better!”

The Fist King observed them in silence as his crystal processor squeaked and gathered everything he saw and heard into his database and his logic circuits.

Inside his logic circuits, a certain thing similar to a virus but much more subtle was slowly growing.

…

Gao Kangda stood on the messy bridge of Great Mountain and stared at the thousands of brilliant stars in the profound universe. The stars that dazzled his eyes reminded him of the gunshots and the sword auras that had butchered his brothers twenty years ago.

Great Mountain, maneuvered by Gao Kangda, was one of the most enormous starships in the coalition attack fleet of Starlight. However, it was not a super heavy cruiser or an expedition aircraft carrier produced in the regular military dockyard of the Imperium.

Four hundred and fifty-five years ago, it had set sail from a civil dock for the purpose of prospecting, excavation, and exploration in deep space. In other words, it was a mining starship that was designed to perform excavation work on dangerous zones that were frequented by radiation and cosmic storms and on asteroids and stone belts where fixed mines could not be established.

Gao Kangda became the deputy manager of the mining room of ‘Great Mountain’ thirty years ago, which was the highest post that a hominoid could have possibly reached. From that day on, he learned every screw of Great Mountain as clearly as he knew his own fingers.

Ever since they seized Great Mountain twenty years ago in an uprising, getting out of the control of the Immortal Cultivators and joining Starlight after a long journey, he had regarded Great Mountain as his wife or even his child. Every cabin, every piece of plate armor, and every additional turret that was attached to Great Mountain had been planned in the most meticulous way after days of restless consideration.

To outsiders, Great Mountain was practically an amalgamation of garbage and an iron beast with all kinds of abnormal tumors. Cooling pads, heat-proof plates, and metal components of unknown purposes were everywhere on the surface of the starship, leaving the impression that the starship would fall apart on its own while sailing in the sea of stars before the cannons of the Imperium shot it down. It was even questionable whether or not the starship could perform a space jump.

However, Gao Kangda and his brothers whom he had fought side by side with for decades were the only ones who understood the sturdiness and reliability of the giant garbage starship. They knew how it helped them resist the most violent cosmic storms, the fiercest stone belts, and the most dangerous space ripples. They understood how it ripped the enemy’s defense line against the bombardment of the army of the Imperium, shattering those high and mighty b*stards into smithereens as if they were raw minerals!

“Other than giving birth to a child, Great Mountain can do anything. Except for the capital of the Imperium, Great Mountain has the courage to barge into any place!”

It was the firmest belief of all the crew of Great Mountain, including Captain Gao Kangda.

But when he thought of the attack they were about to launch tomorrow, Gao Kangda, who had survived countless sieges, could not help but secretly gulp in fear.

After the battle, the big starship that had acted as a ‘home’ for him and countless other people for decades would very likely fall apart and become a piece of enormous garbage floating in the sea of stars.

But did they have any other choice?

If they had a choice, they would not have launched a great uprising twenty years ago but kept working as dutiful miners and making a living with their handicraft!

God knew that Gao Kangda and his brothers were the most diligent and trustworthy workers. None of them were sly, lazy slackers.

It was already dangerous to mine in the deep parts of the planets, and it was a hundred times more perilous to travel among the highly unstable stone belts due to the radiation, shooting stars, and cosmic storms!

For hundreds of years, their forefathers and them had gritted their teeth through everything. There was no telling how many precious minerals they had collected for their company and the Imperium with their hands and their bones. They had practiced highly painful techniques in order to increase their physical strength, their sturdiness, and their anti-radiation abilities. They had performed modifications on their organs with special gene medicines and strengthening drugs, even taking energy pills for a long time until they collapsed at their post after days and nights of work… Such things were anything but unusual for them. Nobody ever had any complaints. It was all for the country and for the civilization of mankind!

But why was the country and the civilization of mankind so difficult to satisfy? The annual ration of mining for everyone was higher and higher, but because all the places that were slightly steady and favorable for mining had been emptied, they had to step into the dangerous zones that were full of radiation, high-energy particles and extremely unstable stone belts, which naturally led to a drop in the mining efficiency and a drastic increase in the casualty rate. Could the low morale and the unsteadiness of productivity be attributed to their laziness?

Gao Kangda had explained the logic to the management of the Immortal Cultivators countless times before. His brothers had truly tried their best and were even too tired to vomit any blood. But the management did not care in the slightest. The electromagnetic whips with thorns in the hands of the foremen were brutal and excruciating. One whip was enough to blow a piece of flesh off, two whips could break a couple of bones, and three whips would blow the soul out of a miner’s body.

In the end, seeing that it was impossible to exploit any more value from the miners, the company was even considering introducing a few fully-automatic mining and purification assembly lines with spiritual puppets, replacing all the human miners with the mining machines.

The workers had been engaged in the mining work for generations. Other than detecting the minerals, digging the minerals, and refining the minerals, they were incapable of anything else. Besides, in the stone belts that had a terribly harsh environment, there was nowhere else for them to live. If the mining puppets replaced all of them, how would they survive?

Chapter 2087 - Make It Big!

Gao Kangda still remembered the panic and anxiety in the mines at that time.

Devastating rumors were spreading everywhere, which claimed that they were about to be sent to the frontline as cannon fodder now that they were useless, or that they would be given some ragged starships that could not even perform space jumps but only sail in regular voyages before they were kicked out.

In the boundless universe where the resources were scarce, it would be a dead end for them in starships that could not perform space jumps and find a habitable planet with an atmosphere and an ecological cycle.

With the ragged starships that were only capable of regular voyages, it might not be possible to fly out of a galaxy even after decades if it cruised at a speed at 0.5% the speed of light.

It was obvious that the management were replacing the living human miners with cold, lifeless spiritual puppets!

The management went to a lot of effort to suppress the ‘rumors’ and soothe anxious miners, but the final solution was essentially the same as the ‘rumors’.

The sect that Gang Kangda and his fellow miners belonged to decided to give them a batch of small ‘complimentary’ mining starships that were terribly outdated as well as resources that were only enough for their survival of the next couple of years, as compensation for their lifelong devotion. They were asked to embark on a journey to more dangerous, chaotic space zones that were filled with more radiation, storms, and unexpected factors for prospecting and mining, but they would have no technical support or logistical supplies.

All their future revenue would belong to themselves, but there would be no liability between the sect and them anymore.

Nobody could accept such a result.

The miners, as well as their family, had been living on the enormous mining starships for generations.

The enormous mining starships that could easily be dozens of kilometers long were not only their workplaces but also the homes to the grandfathers of their grandfathers.

They were born in the middle of the rumbling noises as rocks were shattered. They grew up next to the scorching power furnaces and in the gloomy cooling chambers. They found their dates in the filtering rooms where dust flew all the time and had their offspring in the cabins that were narrow and cold like iron coffins. But when they hugged each other hard and held their hands, even the iron coffins were the warmest homes!

Yet, the management were about to banish them and their family from their own homes into a small mining starship that could barely be called a can. They would be sent into the dark, cold universe, where they would slowly die at the speed of a snail. They had no choice but to launch their resistance with the brawny muscles and iron bones that they had earned after hundreds of years of crazy training and natural selection!

The day when the manufacture ship with the most advanced assembly lines for fully-automatic mining puppets slowly sailed into the Unsettled Space Zone, almost ten million miners and their families who were distributed throughout forty-two enormous mining starships in the various mining areas of the Unsettled Space Zone could not withstand it any longer. They launched an unprecedented uprising that was later known as the Unsettled Riot.

The uprising came with a gory price.

For hundreds of years, in order to increase their work efficiency as much as possible to compete with machines, the miners had been practicing all kinds of techniques crazily and almost turned their fleshly bodies into iron machines.

They also had the assistance of the weapon-like magical equipment such as power pickaxes, drills of mystic rays, and mining crystal suits. Since the tools could smash the hardest rocks, they definitely had a chance to blow on a hole through armor.

They had the absolute numerical advantage, and their morale was higher than ever when they were all determined to sacrifice themselves.

But they were not well-trained soldiers. Faced with the Immortal Cultivators who were fully armed and had been practicing killing skills since the moment they were born, the miners collapsed wave after wave like wheat fields that were being reaped.

Eventually, they succeeded in destroying the manufacturing starship of puppets and killing almost all the management of Immortal Cultivators in the mining areas.

But the siege of the regular army came in no time. Of the forty-two enormous mining starships, only three were lucky enough to escape. The other enormous starships all ended up as the most brilliant fireballs. Including Gao Kangda’s blood brother, millions of miners and their families shed their blood in space, dying without a burial!

At that time, everybody was intimidated by the overwhelming combat ability demonstrated by the regular army. The three mining starships initiated space jumps in a panic. Gao Kangda had no idea where the other two starships ended up. They were perhaps completely ripped apart by the cosmic storms in the four-dimensional space, or perhaps they were blown somewhere unknown at the edge of the cosmos by the wind. Regardless, his own starship performed nine space jumps in a row and finally escaped from the siege at the risk of tearing apart the main framework of the starship.

Following that, Gao Kangda and the surviving miners drifted for a long time in the sea of stars, living a nomadic life. They were about to degenerate into space bandits who had given up all moral boundaries for survival when they ran into Starlight. They then lived several years in peace.

However, Starlight was having a hard time itself in those years.

After he became the captain of Great Mountain, to better command the big starship that was among the best in Starlight, Gao Kangda spent quite a lot of time reading and figured out many things that he did not understand in his ignorance before. Then, as if he were reborn, his Cultivation soared, and he reached the Core Formation Stage after only twenty years, even though he had only broken into the Refinement Stage after the great uprising. The new height allowed him to understand lots of things.

He naturally knew that there had been an unpredictable and awesome Starlight a long, long time ago.

But he also knew that the ‘real’ Starlight had been destroyed almost as long ago, and the Starlight that he had joined was nothing but an organization that a bunch of mobsters established under the banner of the predecessors. It was not even the first duplicate; dozens of Starlights before them had already been annihilated by the Imperium!

The members of the Starlight they had right now were of complicated origins. Some were the miners who had been forced into desperation due to the rise of automatic mining puppets. Some were farmers who had lost their land because of the harsh environment after the planet was highly developed. Some were even the Immortal Cultivators who had failed their familial competitions and had run away because they were wanted by their families. They were completely unorganized mobsters.

Everybody had different backgrounds, beliefs, and desires. Many people even could not say what they wanted exactly. They were merely huddling together to warm each other up, and they were essentially no different from old outlaws who dominated a forest and lived their unconventional life.

No specific guidelines, no common beliefs, and no bases that they could rely on. They had been active solely based on the idea that they had to do something big. It was actually a surprise for Gao Kangda himself that the Starlight of the new generation had existed for decades without collapsing.

However, every dream would come to an end someday.

In the years back, the Imperium had focused all its attention on the great war against the Covenant Alliance, unable to spare any troops to eliminate the annoying lice that they were.

But as the Imperium secured a winning streak on the warfront and entered the phase to consolidate the war benefits, the noose that was tied around the neck of Starlight grew tighter and tighter. Their areas of activity narrowed, and their days became tougher.

Just like cockroaches and rats had natural instincts about their doom, the resistance warriors of Starlight like Gao Kangda had a vague feeling that they could not escape from the cataclysm anymore!

But they were caught in a dilemma and could not come up with any countermeasures.

It was impossible for them to defeat the enemy. Most of the starships of Starlight were modified half-armed carriers, mining starships, or comprehensive refinement starships, like Gao Kangda’s Great Mountain. No matter how many starships they had and how intimidating they might seem, they were nothing more than a well-prepared appetizer for the elite fleets of the Imperium.

Surrender was not an option. They had all committed great crimes. Many of the ‘former Immortal Cultivators’ were thorns in the flesh for their families or sects. Their outcome would be even more miserable than death if they were caught by their old nemeses.

After thinking for a long time, they all agreed that there was only one last choice, which was to do something really big and die a gratifying death.

Therefore, when the underground branch of Starlight deep inside the Land of Sins, or the Martial Meritocrats Sector that Starlight originated from, figured out a way to reach out to them and proposed the plan to attack Manjusaka in coalition, they were both surprised and delighted. Taking a long breath, they finally felt that they were relieved.

None of them were scared of death, but living in the darkness of space in worry and fear and hiding from the enemy all the time without any hope was too much suffering for anyone!

Instead of living like a thief all the time, they might as well challenge the Immortal Cultivators with everything that they had. Even if they were killed in the end, the name of ‘Starlight’ would at least resound throughout the universe!

As the captain of Great Mountain, Gao Kangda had his voice among the decision makers of Starlight. He agreed to fight the Immortal Cultivators in the most valiant way, too. After all, the worst outcome to be expected was only death, and he should have died twenty years ago in the Unsettled Riot. Even to this day, he could not forget the feeling when he knocked a power pickaxe into the skull of an Immortal Cultivator, and the guy’s blood and brains splashed over his face. That was what an uprising should be like. The twenty years of his escape since then had been too humiliating to be recalled. He dreamed of his brothers and sisters who had been killed miserably every night. They all stared at him with their white eyes!

“Let’s do this,” Gao Kangda mumbled to himself. “Don’t be anxious, everyone. I’ll join you tomorrow. But before I do, I am going to fight a satisfying and glorious battle to avenge everyone from the Unsettled Space Zone, and I will show the Immortal Cultivators the strength of the Cultivators!

“Tomorrow, tomorrow…”

Looking at the shivering stars far away, Gao Kangda was once more mired in the violent flames that had swept across the entire Unsettled Space Zone.

Not far away from his Great Mountain, dozens of starships that were equally bizarre, ragged, and rusty were lurking and waiting for the arrival of the next day uneasily.

Chapter 2088 - Loyalty Education

When Gao Kangda, a resistance warrior of Starlight, was waiting for the moment of the valiant sacrifice, on a most advanced semi-automatic mining starship in his hometown dozens of sectors away, Gao Xiaojian, his brother, who was thought to have died in the “Unsettled Riot” twenty years ago, crawled into the “Loyalty Room” while waving eight enormous mechanical limbs like a spider.

The Unsettled Space Zone and also Gao Xiaojian himself were entirely different from twenty years ago.

The mess and destruction during the riot years back in the Unsettled Space Zone were completely gone. Instead, it had become a “model mine” that was rather famous in the few resource worlds nearby.

After the plummet of the revenues as caused by the great riot, the malfunctions of the fully-automatic spiritual puppets in the cosmic storms, and most importantly of all, the great reduction of logistical pressure due to the elimination of 95% of human miners, the “Unsettled Alliance”, the sect that governed the Unsettled Space Zone, finally admitted that it was a terrible idea to replace all humans in mining or any other work solely with spiritual puppets.

Humans were the wisest of all creatures. Even hominoids, the inferior products among them, were not to be completely replaced by the silly spiritual puppets.

Therefore, after a few fully-automatic mining fields and mining starships, which were totally unmanned and only remotely monitored, encountered serious accidents in a row, skilled miners such as Gao Xiaojian were introduced back to the mining work again.

Of course, to better improve the work efficiency and their cooperation with the spiritual puppets, great modifications had been performed on their bodies of flesh and blood, too.

Basically, other than the brains that maintained their ability of independent thinking, all the parts in their fragile and delicate bodies had been removed and replaced with iron bones and external components that could be chosen and installed freely. For example, the body similar to a mechanical spider that Gao Xiaojian was using right now was a product of the latest technologies of the Unsettled Alliance.

The few human miners, which had been highly modified, commanding abundant automatic spiritual puppets in the mining work on the spot was the most perfect work pattern for mining, which had taken both efficiency and stability into consideration.

Different from his brother Gao Kangda’s wrath that hadn’t extinguished after twenty years but only got more and more blatant, Gao Xiaojian was quite satisfied, if not deeply believed in the life he had right now.

To this day, he could not forget the moment when he was visited by the leader of the Unsettled Alliance to be a “representative of the distinguished miners”. At that time, the leader of the Unsettled Alliance even patted his iron elbow neither too lightly nor too heavily and told him in person genuinely, “We made a horrible mistake in the past.

How can we overlook the important function of ‘humans’ in mining work? The experienced, excellent miners such as you will forever be the greatest treasure for the Unsettled Alliance and the Imperium of True Human Beings!”

Did he hear it wrong? The leader of the Unsettled Alliance, an almighty lord of the Immortal Cultivators, complimented them in person like that, extolling them to be a great treasure of the Imperium!

If Gao Xiaojian’s eyes hadn’t been replaced by four pairs of high-resolution crystal cameras, which boasted the functions of thermal imagery and clairvoyance, he certainly would have burst into tears feeling that all those years of hard work finally paid off. He felt that he could not repay the understanding and support of the Immortal Cultivators with what he was going to do.

Gao Xiaojian deeply loved the Imperium and believed in the true path of immortality. He believed that, even for hominoids who were born at the bottommost level with certain “stains”, as long as they work hard dutifully and obediently, they would eventually be noticed by the Immortal Cultivators for their value and earn what they deserved.

Wasn’t what had happened to him in the past dozen years a perfect example of that? Right now, he was commanding eight hundred mining puppets on his own!

Therefore, the education session in the “Loyalty Room” was never boring for Gao Xiaojian, who looked forward to it from the bottom of his heart and almost regretted that he could not receive the education of patriotism in the “Loyalty Room” every day.

Today, Gao Xiaojian came late because of some issues of several seriously damaged mining puppets. When he crawled into the Loyalty Room, the spacious cabin had already been crammed by bizarre-shaped metal monsters of various sizes. They were all human miners who had received full modifications like himself and the managers of the various work planes in the mine.

All the modified humans were too focused on the light beams, dwelling in the passionate and moving atmosphere, to notice his arrival.

“The vile and sordid people of the Covenant Alliance are now close to their doom. They are about to be completely doomed!”

As the faces and zombie-like bodies that represented the people of the Covenant Alliance popped up on the light beam, the broadcast rune arrays nearby played an earsplitting female voice that was desperate and filled with anger and hatred.

The voice was not only spread in the recycled air, but it also burst out directly inside Gao Xiaojian’s brain through his ancillary crystal processor. He was suddenly grasped by a mutual feeling of hatred again, and his anger and hostility immediately soared.

It was basically the content of the weekly loyal education. At first, the news about the significant improvement of the productions and constructions within the Imperium, the peaceful life of the people, and the friendly coexistence of the Immortal Cultivators and the hominoids would be played, followed by the terrifying pictures that illustrated the shamelessness and inhumanity of the people of the Covenant Alliance. Occasionally, there were also stories about how Blackstar the Great led the many pioneers to establish the Imperium through arduous work.

Although the moral was always the same, the content was renewed every week. Therefore, human miners always enjoyed watching the news.

However, after berating the abhorrence of the Covenant Alliance, the high-pitched female voice added something else, “However, within our great Imperium, a lot of accomplices of the Alliance of the Holy Covenant are still lurking. They are the goddamned Cultivators!”

“Cultivators?”

Gao Xiaojian was slightly dazed.

Of course, he knew what Cultivators were. But because of the heated war between the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance in the frontal battlefield, it had been a long time since he last heard of the term “Cultivator” in the loyalty education.

However, when the high-pitched female voice brought up the term “Cultivator”, a certain switch inside Gao Xiaojian’s head seemed to be touched. His anger and hatred against the Cultivators immediately burst out like a flood that had just broken a dam.

“The condescending, hypocritical Cultivators who looked like graceful gentlemen on the surface but were actually shameless scoundrels, after hiding here and there catching their last breath for a thousand years, have been completely corrupted into the lackeys and accomplices of the Covenant Alliance!”

The high-pitched female voice continued, “In order to keep their humble and worthless lives, and in their dream of making a comeback and living the sanctimonious but debauched life before, the Cultivators have abandoned their dignity and boundaries as human beings. They have bent before the puppets of the Covenant Alliance and became the puppets of the puppets!

“Now, the almighty army of the Imperium is pushing forward unstoppably in the frontline and securing the most brilliant triumphs in the past hundreds of years. The enemy has resorted to the most insane approaches but still cannot stop the thunderous strikes of our army. In their desperation, they are now forced to make use of their lackeys that have been lurking inside the Imperium!

“Right now, inside the Imperium, a tiny group of Cultivators who haven’t given up their ill intentions is now eager to jump out to cause trouble again after receiving the orders of their masters!

“It is a shame that their foul tricks have been completely seen through by the fearless Immortal Cultivators of our great Imperium!”

As the female voice grew more and more high-pitched, the expressions on the zombie-like people of the Covenant Alliance appeared on the light beam again. Together with the despicable Cultivators who were wearing sycophantic smiles, they tied some of the Imperium people to the operating tables and covered tools that looked like metal funnels on their heads.

As the magical equipment began to function, all the victims on the operating tables were writhing in pain. Their eyes were rolling, and their mouths were foaming hard. Their faces gradually turned sluggish and numb, as if their feelings and their souls had been pumped away.

“Do you want the enemy’s scheme to work out?”

The high-pitched female voice shrieked, “Do you want your family to be drained, their feelings and their soul pumped away, turning them into the walking dead?”

“No!”

Gao Xiaojian was caught in the frantic state and was the first to roar.

“No! No!”

All the modified miners whacked their metal limbs hard. Great noises were echoing inside the Loyalty Room.

“Do you want the great and glorious Imperium to be polluted by the inhumane people of the Covenant Alliance and the shameless Cultivators?” the high-pitched female voice shouted again.

“No! No!”

The miners roared zealously.

“Who is the most sordid and most dangerous enemy of the civilization of mankind?” the high-pitched voice asked.

“The Covenant Alliance! The Cultivators!”

Illuminated under the erratic, quickly-flashing light beams, the miners seemed to have been hypnotized and replied at the same time.

“Who is the great guardian of the civilization of mankind?”

The female voice continued.

“Immortal Cultivators, the great Immortal Cultivators. Imperium, the sacred Imperium of True Human Beings!” the miners roared. Some were uttering deafening shrieks, and some were crying hard.

“Long live the Imperium of True Human Beings! Long live the sacred civilization of mankind! Long live emotions and free will! Kill the Covenant Alliance! Kill the Cultivators! Kill them all! Whoever dares to go against the great Imperium and the great civilization of mankind, we will definitely fight against them until the end!”

Waving his eight mechanical limbs, Gao Xiaojian almost wanted to jump in the air and explode while he made the declaration.

“From tomorrow on, we will have a special loyalty education session that will last a week. Through a living example, we will completely dissect an underground organization of the Cultivators that is shameless and pathetic to show how they and the Covenant Alliance, their master, are approaching their inevitable doom step by step!” the high-pitched female voice shouted.

“Special loyalty education for a whole week?”

Gao Xiaojian’s crystal cameras glittered. He was so thrilled that he felt his transmission joints were melting. He vaguely felt that it would be a great eye-opener tomorrow, and he would have a chance to appreciate the hilarious performances of the dogs, lackeys, and wretches.

Tomorrow… What am I going to see tomorrow?

Gao Xiaojian lay down and thought with his physical brain that was accommodated at the pivot of the mechanical spider. How I look forward to it…

Chapter 2089 - Empathy

“This is rather splendid, isn’t it? The beehive prison has been constructed according to Imperium’s best standard. Half a million prisoners can be kept here at most. It also boasts the abilities to imprison, transport, and interrogate prisoners of the Nascent Soul Stage.”

In the hollow part of the beehive prison that was filled with cold air, the warden introduced to Li Jialing very proudly, “Of all the private prisons in the Imperium, we are definitely the best in terms of scale, facilities, or the danger level of the prisoners kept inside. There is only a slim gap between our prison and the ‘Godly Might Penitentiary’, the prison of the highest level in the capital of the Imperium.

“Lord Wuying asked me to see that your every need in training is fulfilled. A spacious chamber for rest has been arranged down there. Here are the files of the three thousand prisoners that I have carefully selected. How about it? If you have a few candidates, I’ll have them delivered here immediately so that you can enjoy yourself.”

The warden’s hands moved and tapped quickly on the sphere light beam. All the files of the thousands of prisoners poured down like glittering waterfalls.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Aoooooooo!

Watching them slowly pass by on the floating disc, the dangerous prisoners caged on various levels of the beehive prison were all uttering inhuman roars and crashing the tempered glass hard with all their strength. Sticking their bizarre, hideous faces to the transparent glass wall until their skin was broken and their heads were bleeding, they showed no intention of stopping at all.

The devastating blood left burning marks on the tempered glass, which turned into twisted masks that looked even more creepy.

“What kind of people are locked here?”

Li Jialing browsed through the files of the prisoners quickly. “They all look rather interesting.”

“They are mainly all kinds of traitors who initiated riots, sabotages, or strikes at the rear when the army of the Imperium was fighting arduous battles against the Covenant Alliance in the frontline, trying to disrupt the Imperium in such a way.”

The warden said, “However, those traitors are generally rather weak. Many of them are even hominoids. They won’t be of much help with training.

“If you have to choose them, I suggest you select this batch. Yes. We have run a lot of modifications on those people. They have survived the deadly screenings with rates of elimination that were higher than 90%. So, they all boast some combat ability right now.

“Or maybe the criminals who have committed felonies here. They were mostly the poor wretches who failed the internal competitions in their families or sects and sought illegal approaches to take everything back despite the risks. But then, they were stupid enough to be discovered by other people. As a result, they were sent to this place eventually.

“Those people were Immortal Cultivators in the beginning. So, they are all rather tough.”

Li Jialing blew a whistle. “From the record here, those people are all ferocious and dangerous. Can you ensure the absolute safety of the beehive prison?”

“Of course!”

The warden grinned confidently. “As you have seen, the entire beehive prison is soaked in a super magnetic field, which is generated by a great array that we call ‘Dragnet’.

“All the walls and floors that make up the cells of the beehive prison are made of very special magnetic materials, which have been specially modified. They are mutually attracted by the shackles on the prisoners’ wrists, ankles, and necks, restraining them as tightly as invisible chains. The prisoners have to use tremendous strength just in order to make a step forward.

“Under the most extreme circumstances, if we activate the array of ‘Dragnet’ to the maximum, the pulling force that it generates will equal to the maximal impetus of a crystal warship when it is launched!

“Whoever dares to move recklessly will be pulled to the floor, the wall, or somebody else’s shackles by the super magnetic field. If they are determined to struggle free, they will only squeeze their bones out of their body, until it falls apart and breaks up!

“Therefore, even the experts in the Nascent Soul Stage can barely escape after they are caged here!”

While talking, the warden displayed a simple illustration of the defense array of the beehive prison on the light beam, which allowed Li Jialing to see the energy supply flowchart of the entire beehive prison and the location of the source of the energy.

Narrowing his eyes, Li Jialing asked calmly, “So, are there any experts in the Nascent Soul Stage that are caged here?”

The warden smiled. Such a sensitive question was beyond the permissions that Wuying Lan had granted. It was naturally inappropriate for him to reply.

“Alright. I’ll pick those three first.”

Li Jialing clicked three random names on the light beam, pretending that he had just asked the question casually.

…

BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM!

Three utterly deformed prisoners who looked like human-shaped animals attacked Li Jialing, who was wearing a pure white, light, and graceful crystal suit, from three directions respectively, only to be blown backward by him again and again into the wall of the training room, leaving devastating traces of blood there.

But the three prisoners seemed to have been injected with excitants that far exceeded the extreme dosage before they were delivered to Li Jialing for testing. They had completely gone into the berserker state, and although their faces were bleeding, their joints were broken, and their guts were flowing out of their chests, they did not stop lunging at the enemy crazily.

“Just break all their limbs.”

Li Yao couldn’t help but remark, “Completely cripple them so that they wouldn’t be able to move anymore. Chances are that they can still survive. Otherwise, they will not stop attacking until they die.”

“You are going to save the lives of those crazy, demonic prisoners?”

Li Jialing snatched the wrist of a prisoner as quickly as a flash of lightning. After a slight shake from him, the bones in the entire arm were shattered into pieces no larger than fingernails.

Then, his legs burst out like cannonballs and completely blew up the knees of the prisoner after earsplitting explosions. Eventually, he kicked the prisoner right in the chest, knocking him to the wall on the opposite side into a flower of blood.

The young man said coldly, “You haven’t answered my question just now. What are the real Cultivators? You obviously have the unparalleled strength to do anything you want to be unbound by any rules, but why do you want to be part of the silly Cultivators?”

After a brief silence, Li Yao said, “I’ll spare you the boring philosophies. After all, even if I preach them to you right now, you wouldn’t believe them. Let’s just talk about the beginning. I wanted to become a Cultivator at the beginning perhaps because of only a simple word—’empathy’.”

“What do you mean by ’empathy’?”

The young man turned into a streak of brilliance and opened his hand, grabbing the head of the second dangerous prisoner and throwing him to the ground. The spiritual energy was passed to the back of the head from the jaw and wrecked his spine completely, terminating his ability of action.

“It is a very simple logic.”

Li Yao said, “For example, many innocent or guilty prisoners are kept in this beehive prison. But innocent or guilty, all of them are suffering inhuman tortures that they do not deserve for their crimes. Just listen to the screams and roars outside that never cease day or night, and you should understand how terrifying the torture is.

“The same torture once happened to you, too. It is a past that you would rather never recall, right?”

Li Jialing’s pupils constricted violently as he tossed the second prisoner who couldn’t move anymore far away.

“When you hear the screams of other people, you remember your pains in the past and realize that the prisoners are the same as you. You are the same kind who suffer the same misfortunes. That is ’empathy’.”

Li Yao said, “When you think of how terrible the pains you bore in the past were, and that such terrible pains are being imposed on some ordinary people who cannot even catch a chicken, or the innocent little girls and the white-haired old ladies, it is only natural that you feel pitiful and even angry. You will feel the urge to do something.”

“I am different from them.”

Li Jialing held the third prison’s iron fist that was punching at him. Staring at the man who was like an ape without hair, he said coldly, “I totally understand.”

Li Yao said, “After feeling the pain of other people, there will be two choices. The first is, naturally, to consider the victims as your own kind and even your family. You will try to extricate them from their pain without bothering anything and to destroy the guys who have caused mutual agony for you.

“But the path is too difficult to be finished after all. Too many prices must be paid, and you may not see the end of it at all.

“So, there is another path that is much simpler. You can try to hypnotize yourself and make yourself believe that you are different from them. Or rather, those people do not deserve to be called real ‘humans’ at all. They are simply ‘hominoids’, nothing better than swine and ants.

“In such a way, you have removed your ability of empathy and changed into someone cold, ruthless, and self-deceiving. Naturally, you can turn a deaf ear to the screams and cries of your own kind and a blind eye to their bleeding, miserable situations.

“You must’ve guessed it. The first path is the Cultivators’ choice, and the second one is the Immortal Cultivators’.

“In fact, even I feel that the Immortal Cultivators’ choice is simple, straightforward, and free. I do not want to always meddle in other people’s business and ask for trouble, at the risk of being criticized for petty kindness. But it can’t be helped. No matter how I hypnotize myself, I cannot completely eliminate the slight bit of ’empathy’ deep inside my heart. Just because of the bit of ’empathy’, I have suffered too many unfortunate things that I could’ve avoided. But what choice do I have? I am quite upset, too!”

Li Jialing scorned. “Empathy…”

“Exactly.”

Li Yao smiled. “Did you know? A long, long time ago, I grew up in a place where the environment was extremely harsh. In the beginning, I was as ruthless and coldhearted as you, and I wouldn’t hesitate to do anything for my survival. The jungle law of survival of the fittest was my intrinsic belief, too.

“But somebody from the sky planted a seed of ’empathy’ at the bottom of my heart, which changed everything later!”

Chapter 2090 - A Cycle

“A man from the sky?”

Li Jialing twisted the third prisoner’s fist hard, turning his arm from the elbow to the shoulder blade into a screw. “Why does it sound like a tale to me?”

“It’s true. In fact, the environments we grew up in are really quite similar. They are both living dog-eat-dog hells where there are absolutely no laws and one has to do anything one can, such as draining every bit of physical and mental strength, just to see the sunrise tomorrow.”

Li Yao said, “As far as my eyes could reach, wolves, tigers, leopards, and jackals in human skins were everywhere. It was not unusual to search the garbage for an entire day without finding any food to eat. Days of starvation and homelessness were routine. Broken bones and blood-vomiting because of other people’s beating were more than occasional, too.

“I slowly grew up in such a twisted environment. The moment I gained enough abilities to protect myself, I already became cold and heartless. Everything would be fine as long as I could survive. Other people? I didn’t bother to think about them at all!

“While I was not fond of bullying the weak, I never bothered to intervene if the scoundrels in human skins were bullying other people as long as I was not involved.

“At that time, those guys even gave me a nickname. They called me ‘Vulture’, for my sordidness, brutality, and solitude."

"Vulture Li Yao?"

Li Jialing was slightly dazed. "It sounds like a nickname fit for an Immortal Cultivator."

"Who can argue with that?"

Li Yao smiled. "If I had kept growing up like that, perhaps I would've turned into an out-and-out Immortal Cultivator. I would be indifferent in nature and always act on my own. Maybe I wouldn't harm anyone voluntarily, but I would not help anyone in trouble either. Just like what you are dreaming to become right now, I would be as free as anyone could've been. Everything would be fine as long as nobody messes with me!

"But the old man who arrived from the sky completely changed me. He chattered on, mentioning so many things to my ears restlessly every day, telling me solemnly what was right and what was wrong, what was justice and what was evil. He also dragged me to the darkest corner of the magical equipment graveyard, which was the name of my hometown, to show me how the lonely, helpless little ones were bullied and how they wailed in fear and desperation after that.

"The bullying that the little ones suffered and their wails were experienced by me in exactly the same way before.

"At first, I could not see any reason in the old man's words at all. I only thought that he was such a chatterbox that my head was going to explode.

"But he was much stronger than I was, and he allured me with very sophisticated technologies of magical equipment maintenance and many bizarre gadgets. To learn his skills, I had no choice except to calm myself down and grit my teeth to listen to the old man’s jibber-jabber.

“But as it turned out, humanity is such a strange thing. For even the coldest and heartless man, as long as a tiny seed is planted into a perfect gap in his heart, there will be a day when the seed sprouts flowers and fruits. Also, the moment when the seed of ’empathy’ truly gives birth to a tiny flower, everything is screwed. The days when one cares nothing about the lives of other people but only his own freedom will be gone for good!

“On the surface, I still turned a blind eye to the miserable lives of the helpless orphans who were bullied flagrantly in the magical equipment graveyard.

“But late at night, when everything was quiet, I began to have dreams, in which the orphans in ragged clothes were shuddering and hugging each other to warm each other up, only to be starved or frozen to death without them knowing it.

“And I was one of them!

“Every time I woke up from such nightmares, my empathy for those orphans would increase by a little bit, and my fury for the adult scavengers would be deeper.

“At that time, I still maintained the most fundamental rationality and restrained myself from messing with the adult scavengers. They all had gangs in their back, which were not something that a teenager and an old man could deal with. If I were to mess with them for only a moment of pleasure, it would definitely cause us infinite trouble.

“But at last, when the old man and I were excavating a pile of valuable garbage, we accidentally saw three adult scavengers pushing an orphan no older than ten to a corner and meaning to do dreadful things to her. I finally lost control of myself. My head went blank, and my empathy replaced my rationality. Together with the old man, I took down the three scumbags in difficulties, which indeed led to overwhelming trouble later. The old trouble wasn’t even resolved yet, and new trouble was already knocking on our door. Even to this day, the troubles do not seem to have completely dispersed!

“This is perhaps the reason why I became a Cultivator in the beginning. In fact, everybody can become a Cultivator as long as he can feel a slight bit of ’empathy’.

“The old man gave me a seed and activated the ’empathy’ in my heart. Now, I’m giving the seed to you. I believe that as an ‘experiment subject’, when you see so many people of your own kind enduring the hardship that you endured in the past, you will eventually find some ’empathy’ somewhere deep down inside your heart, won’t you?”

“Are you kidding? I don’t even know what you are talking about.”

Li Jialing frowned deeply. “Why me?”

“Because of a certain mysterious and unpredictable cycle. Or rather—”

Li Yao said in a smile, “It is just fate!”

BOOM!

Li Jialing blew away the third prisoner with a punch, who wriggled on the ground in difficulties, unable to get back to his feet anymore.

Breathing rapidly and frowning hard, the young man hinted at the surveillance camera at the corner. “It is not satisfying enough. Give me another thirty—no, fifty random prisoners!”

Very soon, fifty bizarre-looking, brawny, and hideous prisoners stood before Li Jialing.

They were all foaming hard, their eyes bloodshot, and the muscles all over their bodies were shivering very unnaturally. It was obvious that they had been injected with excessive excitants.

“This is more like it!”

The young man grinned creepily. The power rune arrays of his crystal suit were triggered to the maximum. The tiny training room was filled up by the noises of exhaust flames tearing apart the air. The blasts swept across every inch of the space like surging tides.

“Hiu!”

Li Jialing turned into a streak of brilliance and lunged at the fifty prisoners.

The prisoners were much stronger than the three prisoners just now. Although they did not carry any equipment, their fists and claws were already the most dangerous weapons. With five fearless berserkers fighting against one Li Jialing, Li Jialing could not completely crush them but was blown away by them again and again into the transparent glass wall brutally.

But in the ecstasy of killing, Li Jialing stomped on the transparent glass wall, again and again, to exert his strength and charge forward. The exhaust flames that spurted out of the power rune arrays at the bottoms of his feet significantly weakened the hardness of the transparent glass wall too.

Finally—

Li Jialing blinked past the sharp claws of two prisoners. On one of his knees, he opened his hands, raising a mini crystal cannon from each of his wrists and shoulders. The four crystal cannons were aimed at the prisoners and bombarded them crazily, but most of the bullets and the mystic rays actually hit the transparent glass wall that was facing the hollow channel of ascension at the center of the prison!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

As if he were crazy, Li Jialing shot out fiery bullets from his hands and his shoulders, which swept across everything like a storm.

Other than blowing away a large batch of prisoners, they also caused interconnected cracks that looked like a spider web on the transparent glass wall.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

The wall of the tempered glass here had only considered the situation where the prisoners hit it with a body of flesh and flood. It was beyond the designer’s expectation that someone would launch magical equipment attacks from inside to outside.

Also, Li Jialing’s few heavy thuds at the beginning already significantly diminished the hardness and stability of the transparent glass wall.

Now that it was bombarded by the crystal cannons like a heavy storm, it could not sustain for long at all, and devastating holes immediately appeared on them.

The prisoners who were attacking Li Jialing immediately fell quiet. They looked at the broken glass ball, somewhat in disbelief.

Li Jialing also stopped attacking, as if he was at a loss about what to do.

“Aoooooo!”

The prisoners let out desperate roars that were mixed with the most intense hope and ecstasy. They were almost dancing in joy.

None of them bothered to look at Li Jialing anymore. Everybody simply jumped out through the broken glass wall.

Unhurried alarms immediately began to echo all over the beehive prison.

Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum!

As the red and green mystic rays flashed in turn, an invisible, mysterious strength ascended quickly like a flood, drowning the entire beehive prison instantly. The complicated rune arrays on the wall nearby began to emit glamorous and brilliant lights, triggering visible electric arcs between themselves and the shackles of the prisoners!

For a moment, all the prisoners in the cells of all directions were stuck to the floor with their arms and legs stretched. Their shackles were firmly stuck to the floor, and there was not even a gap for a piece of paper.

The prisoners who had already jumped into midair were pulled back by the overwhelming magnetic forces too. They were smashed to the wall, the floor, and the ceiling, like rats that were pinned to a board by nails, unable to move at all.

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

Some of the prisoners who were particularly stubborn intended to break free from the shackles, only to make their bodies burst out earsplitting sounds of broken bones. The pale, shattered bones even pierced through their flesh. But there was more sorrow and desperation on their faces than pain!

“Ao! Aooooooo!”

Like beasts, they roared at Li Jialing and the entire prison.

With his hands in his back, Li Jialing looked at the prisoners coldly.

“I’m very curious. When you were tied up and moved to the operating table for refinements, did you grimace in pain like animals the same way they are doing right now?” Li Yao asked.

Li Jialing narrowed his eyes and sniffed. For some reason, he lost the courage to look at the faces of the abnormal prisoners, nor was he capable of giving Li Yao a straight answer to his question. He simply changed the topic and said, “How about it? I have already allured the prison to activate the great array. Have you figured out the model of the entire magnetic field and its weakness?”

Chapter 2091 - Defend the Temple With Life!

Deep inside the ragged carrier in the spaceport, Li Yao was sitting cross-legged in midair three feet from the floor, with silver stripes of spiritual energy flashing around him, as if he were covered in an enormous egg.

With Li Jialing’s body as a “platform”, the powerful telepathic thoughts of the Divinity Transformation Stage were spreading, sensing, and scanning the beehive prison without a sound in the most mysterious way.

Very soon, inside Li Yao’s head, every feeble change of spiritual energy regarding the entire beehive prison was clearly displayed. Every node released translucent threads, which interweaved, entangled, and split apart, eventually constituting the spiritual energy flowchart and the magnetic field model of the entire beehive prison.

It was like a sample whose flesh was removed with only the networks of nerves and veins left.

All the critical parts were clearly visible, including the relay station that was deeply buried at the central part of the prison and used to transmit energy incessantly.

The relay station, on the other hand, was connected to the main energy supply system of the entire “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”.

The main energy supply system was responsible for the gravity balance between the exterior and the interior of the space fortress and the normal functionality of the spiritual field as well as all the other magical equipment. It was also responsible for the resistance of the pulling force of the Martial Meritocrats Planet—”Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”, which was floating above the atmosphere of the planet, not entirely out of the gravity sphere.

In other words, if the main energy supply system was blown up and most of the anti-gravity rune arrays in the space fortress lost their functions, it would immediately be grabbed by the attractive force of the earth, which was as vast as the ocean. There would certainly be the most splendid and unprecedented fall of the firmament!

When Li Yao sensed the feeblest ripples of spiritual energy inside the beehive prison with all his attention, he also sensed countless people who were also caged into the cold space tomb, bearing excruciating pains and modified into ghastly creatures, as well as their agony, desperation, and fury that were etched into the deepest parts of their souls.

The emotions that were as thick as magma, swamp, and venom almost swallowed his soul and completely suffocated him.

Li Yao’s face was frozen in the shadow for a long time. Finally, it gradually split apart. Grinning, he responded to Li Jialing, “The scanning is now complete. You can continue your normal training in case anybody notices that something is wrong.

“Right. Find an opportunity to release my scouting magical equipment. I’ll need it to run some errands later. Then, let’s just wait until tomorrow and do something big!”

“What about me?”

Li Jialing said in a hurry, “You said that you would find a chance to get me out of ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’!”

“Trust me.”

Li Yao said solemnly, one word after another, “After tomorrow, ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ will be no more, and neither Wuying Lan nor Li Lingfeng would have any time to bother you.

“Hey, do you know how many warships are docked in the spaceports of ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ right now?”

“Well, I’m not sure. If we are only talking about warships, there are probably seven to eight hundred of them.”

Thinking for a moment, Li Jialing said, “The battle to besiege ‘Starlight’ is not a military operation of a very large scale. Also, ‘Starlight’ is made of space rats that are highly alert. They will run off the moment they notice something wrong. Therefore, Li Lingfeng couldn’t have summoned many regular troops but only wanted to solve the problem with his own Colossus and the elite warriors of the major sects. After all, the starships of ‘Starlight’ are all wasted metals that are modified based on civil carriers and armed mining ships. As long as crystal suits can crawl into their stomachs, they will be blown up more than easily. There is no need to mobilize the main-force fleets from the frontline at all.”

“Eight hundred, you say?”

Li Yao smiled. “Rest assured. I will attract the firepower of all the eight hundred warships to myself. Then, you can hurry to escape!”

Li Jialing was stunned for a moment. “W-what?”

…

The next day, Li Jialing stayed in the beehive prison for training.

But training was merely a pretext. He was actually helping Li Yao observe in secret who the most ferocious inmates in the beehive prison were and where they were caged.

Li Yao, on the other hand, was sneaking around in “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”.

Right now, the only people who posed a threat to Li Yao in the enormous space fortress, to Li Yao’s knowledge, were Wuying Lan and Li Lingfeng.

With a great war coming near, the two of them were both hiding in the control center while discussing their scheme, trying to dig the trap deeper. Never in their dreams would they have thought that a Cultivator in the Divinity Transformation Stage was swaggering around inside their nest.

Based on Li Jialing’s description, Li Yao basically grasped the overall structure of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”. His efficiency was greatly improved when he focused his attention on the important parts.

Not only did he figure out the critical locations of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”, he even maneuvered Neltharion to dig out small holes on the cables and lines of the space fortress in advance, before he installed the “gadgets” that he carefully made for the purpose of hacking the Spiritual Nexus and the crystal processors.

Once activated, the gadgets would be his platforms, which would allow the massive power of destruction that originated from “Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan” to flood in and destroy everything unstoppably!

Destruction was always a hundred times easier than construction.

He was very lucky to be playing the role of a “saboteur in darkness”. He had no concerns at all and only needed to vent the anger and hatred in his heart and sabotage everything that he could see!

…

The dining hall that was as extravagant as a palace was lit by the glittering, splendid crystal lamps again.

The Immortal Cultivators with noble bloodlines and massive strengths from different Sectors of the Imperium of True Human Beings were gathered again. Talking and laughing lightheartedly, they toasted on the airing of the main show of the series of quests.

The 3D light beams floating around them were displaying the pictures of quite a few different “earthly dragons” below the ground of the Land of Sins.

The blood-boiling and soul-stirring roars of the ignorant Cultivators in the pictures reached no effect except to make the Immortal Cultivators chuckle.

There was also a very clear overall map, which showed the coordinates of the Cultivators right now accurately, as well as their final destinations.

Quite a few eye-catching arrowheads were moving at an enormous empty chamber not far away from the ground. It was the place known as the “temple of the Cultivators”, which had been excavated, modified, and decorated by the Immortal Cultivators.

In one of the pictures, a bald, one-armed female warrior showed up. Her passionate, overjoyed exclamations made the nobles, the lords, the generals, the experts, and their disciples all chuckle in amusement.

“They have discovered the temple!”

…

“They have discovered the temple!”

Deep inside the Land of Sins, on “Cloud Penetrator”, Zuo Jingyun, the bald female warrior, couldn’t help but dance in joy and report the great news that everybody on board had been looking forward to. “It was… It was Wei Longtao who discovered it. Not only did he escape from the hunting of the Immortal Cultivators miraculously, but he also discovered the control center of the ‘global sword network’ earlier than we do. He is now recovering the mainframe crystal processors inside preliminarily!”

“Cloud Penetrator” was filled with exclamations. Han Te and Liu Li couldn’t help but hug each other tightly, before they crawled on the Fist King’s body, crying and laughing.

“Wei Longtao has already sent over the specific coordinates of the ‘temple’ and scanned the rock strata nearby. Everybody is now joining him at full speed. Let’s go to them immediately. I don’t want to miss the historical moment!”

Zuo Jingyun waved her hands and declared passionately.

The drill of mystic rays began to revolve at a high speed again. The tracks with iron nails and hooks rubbed the rock strata hard, raising sparks everywhere. The earthly dragon leaned to the ground by thirty degrees, before it pushed forward unstoppably!

They were not far away from the “temple” in the first place. Now, with the navigation of the accurate coordinates and the structure of the rocks, it took them only half an hour of exploration before the rubbing and shrieking noises of the drill in the front were gone. Then, the speed of the vehicle was improved by almost a third, and it dug out of the bottom of an underground empty chamber!

It was not the real ground, but it was only one last kilometer away from the real ground. Several underground rivers seemed to have joined at that place a long, long time ago. Together with the violent tectonic movements, such a natural chamber that looked like an underground city was created.

At this moment, more than half of the space of the underground chamber was occupied by a dark, metal fortress, whose surface was brimming with all kinds of twisted and interconnected vines that were emitting vague fluorescence, making the place look like a gorgeous fairyland.

Above the underground chamber, there should be gaps leading to the surface of the planet, which brought cool and dry air from the ground and slowly diluted the darkness and depression of the underground world.

Zuo Jingyun and all the other resistance warriors of “Starlight”, perhaps due to the stimulation of the refreshing air, burst into tears beyond their control the moment they saw the underground fortress. “Temple! Our temple!”

At this moment, the “temple” that had been passed on by all the Cultivators in legends was like an iron beast that was gradually waking up. Fulminations were echoing from inside nonstop. On its surface that was buried by vines, sophisticated but magnificent rune arrays were emitting colorful brilliant, which extended tentacles to the surroundings and darted into the depths of the crevices. There was no telling where they ended up eventually.

“Wei Longtao has already activated the ‘global sword network’. This… This is spectacular!”

Zuo Jingyun was both surprised and delighted, almost finding it impossible to believe her eyes and ears. But the undeniable facts were happening right before her. Waving her arms, the bald female warrior led everybody into the place in ecstasy. “Let’s go and defend the temple with our lives. Before Commander Wei shoots down ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’, we will not let a single Immortal Cultivator breach into our temple even if we are shattered into pieces!”

Chapter 2092 - Dream of the Temple!

“Wow…”

When everybody entered the place through the wide-open gate, even the most ignorant and senseless bandits of the Land of Sins who had zero understanding about “Cultivators” were deeply awed by the magnificence, profoundness, and splendor of the “temple”, feeling the urge to melt into it completely.

The control center of the “global sword network” was truly like a certain religious building. It was constructed in a mysterious and charming style.

At the edge of the building were enormous metal pillars that rose to the sky like the ribs of an enormous beast. They spiraled and joined each other in the high sky hundreds of meters from the floor, constituting a vast and grand space.

At the center of the joint of the spiraling metal pillars, on the other hand, was a hollow, which seemed to be leading straight to the surface of the planet. Chaotic glimmers were vaguely flashing at the center, as if it were possible to see the sky beyond through the hollow.

On the bronze walls around, countless mysterious and wild rune arrays had been carved, symbolizing the Cultivators’ ineffable will of resistance.

The large, half-fixed turrets stood nearby like huge puppets that had crawled out of the ground, watching the crowd that had barged into the place without saying a word.

When Zuo Jingyun, Han Te, Liu Li, the Fist King, and other people arrived, quite a few teams of earthly dragons had been here in advance.

The resistance warriors were operating anxiously under the command of Wei Longtao and activating all the crystal processors in the control center as fast as possible, hoping to recover and control the whole might of the “global sword network”!

Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum!

As the crystal processors were activated one after another, and the keys and passwords that Wei Longtao had retrieved after decades of searching were inputted, weird shivering sounds were echoing from inside of the “temple” to the outside.

Colorful brilliance surfaced on the rune arrays, with starry spots of light flowing out like glittering dandelions, which then congregated into operation interfaces and fundamental architecture. When all the interfaces and the architecture graphs were gathered, everybody was able to see with their own eyes how the entire control system was functioning.

“This… This is unbelievable!”

Zuo Jingyun and the other members of the resistance had never seen such an amazing picture before.

The colorful spots of light flashed inside their eyes like hundreds of dancing butterflies, turning the bronze underground palace into a clear, crystal palace.

When the tantalizing dream finally became such a beautiful reality, hot tears ran out of their eyes again.

“Fist King!”

With his disciple Xin Xiaoqi, Xiahou Wuxin strode over from the center of the temple and grinned. “You’re finally here!”

“Leader Xiahou?”

The Fist King said calmly, “I didn’t expect that you would arrive earlier than we do.”

“We encountered Commander Wei on our way and were among the first to enter the temple.”

Xiahou Wuxin lowered his voice and said, “We saw with our own eyes how Commander Wei reached the place step by step and tested it one procedure after another before he finally activated the mainframe crystal processor successfully. There shouldn’t be anything wrong!”

After a brief silence, the Fist King said, “Let’s hope so!”

While they were talking, the hundreds of light beams floating in midair of the magnificent temple were all shattered into thousands of unpredictable light spots. Inside every light spot, a tiny face seemed to be hidden. No. Not one, but a couple or even a dozen faces!

In the next second, all the tiny light spots flew to the top of the mainframe crystal processor at the center of the temple, where they were condensed into an enormous light ball almost thirty meters in diameter. After a moment of dazzling changes of light and shadows, it eventually turned into a giant golden head!

“Wh-What’s this?”

All the resistance warriors were shocked. They watched the golden head, which was meditating with eyes closed and revolving slowly, and was lost for words.

“This is ‘the Cultivator that has been lost for a thousand years’!”

Wei Longtao, the general commander of the underground branch of Starlight, strode forward in footsteps that were loud enough to break the world.

He seemed to have never changed his clothing after he escaped from the hunting of the Immortal Cultivators. Intense bloodstains were still lingering on his clothes, and his ragged robe had almost been torn into shreds. But his eyes that were as big as eggs were still emanating the never-dying brilliance of passion.

Glancing around at everyone slowly and staying for the longest time on Zuo Jingyun, he finally announced determinedly, “I have finally figured out what the so-called ‘Cultivator who has been lost for a thousand years’ is. It is not a reference to any specific Cultivator or anyone alive, but the artificial intelligence that is used to control the ‘global sword network’. Or rather, it is the database of the entire operation platform and fire control of the ‘global sword network’ system!”

“Ah…”

The resistance warriors had never thought it that way. They all exclaimed in astonishment.

“However, it is no ordinary artificial intelligence or database.”

Wei Longtao said solemnly, “When the Martial Meritocrats Civilization was about to die, some of our ancestors hid in the temple. But the ‘global sword network’ at that time was still in the half paralysis state. Besides, the system alone was far from enough to compete with the overwhelming fleet of the Immortal Cultivators.

“Therefore, they chose hiding and dissemination.

“They turned their understanding about the path of the Cultivators, their memories of the Martial Meritocrats Sector, and their expectations for the successors a thousand years later into data and transmitted them into the database. Then, they completely shut down the place and dispersed to every part of the Land of Sins with part of the clues about the ‘temple’, persisting in fighting in the darkest and most desperate years after ‘Judgment Day’!

“Today, after a thousand years, the descendants of the Cultivators in the past have finally returned to the ‘temple’ of our ancestors. We have finally found the treasure of our predecessors. We can finally perceive the real path and spirit of the Cultivators, and teach a most profound lesson to the cocky, condescending Immortal Cultivators!”

The more he talked, the more excited he became. In the end, the entire temple was filled by Wei Longtao’s thunderous voices, which bashed into the deepest part of the soul of every resistance warrior like the most thrilling drumming!

“The blood of the deceased in the past hundreds of years has gathered into the most overwhelming river. Today, the river of blood is finally going to utter its own roar. The time of our counterattack has come!”

In midair and above Wei Longtao, the enormous golden head slowly opened its eyes. Two dazzling mystic rays beamed out, and hundreds of light beams were immediately unfolded around it, displaying the status of all the secret bases of the "global sword network" that were everywhere on the entire Land of Sins.

About two-thirds of the secret bases deeply buried underground had been destroyed by the penetrating bombs in "Judgment Day".

But "Manjusaka, the City in the Sky" that they were going to deal with was not a starship moving at a high speed but an enormous target that was almost still and fixed at the orbit beyond the atmosphere of the planet.

The remaining one-third of the secret bases were still enough to accomplish the mission successfully.

Right now, the mainframe crystal processor in the "temple" was quickly connecting and awakening all the secret bases that were scattered in every part of the planet through the communication nodes that were deeply buried below the ground. On the light beams, one secret base after another turned from dark grey, which represented "hibernation", to bright gold, which represented "activated".

All the resistance warriors were more anxious than ever.

Han Te and Liu Li could even hear Zuo Jingyun clenched her metal fist so hard that it was squeaking.

"The Immortal Cultivators are here!"

One of the resistance warriors who was staying on alert at the periphery rushed into the room in a hurry and exclaimed while panting, "Noises of enormous drilling machines are echoing from all directions. The Immortal Cultivators have swarmed us this time. By estimation, they will drill through the rocks in ten minutes and arrive at the temple!”

All the resistance warriors jumped to their feet and grabbed their blades and guns tightly.

“Ten minutes?”

The brilliance inside Wei Longtao’s eyes was almost frozen into solid flames. Scratching his bloodstained beard, he burst into laughter. “Too slow. They are too slow! At this moment, nothing can stop us from roaring at the sky! Prepare the first wave of attack. Target: ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’!”

The golden head floating in midair was revolving faster and faster. Hundreds and thousands of light beams and astronomical streams of information appeared like floods nearby. The light beams and the information streams were flashing beyond the recognition of any human eye, until they turned into a cluster of hazy mists of light in the end.

Zuo Jingyun and the other resistance warriors observed in ignorance. They had no idea what operations Wei Longtao had done, but judging from the interface of the final output, he had completely controlled more than a hundred and twenty secret firebases and activated the most powerful anti-air magical equipment in those bases!

Nobody had any doubt about what Wei Longtao was doing right now, because Wei Longtao had always been an omnipotent god who was creating miracles every second for them!

On the forehead of the golden head, an enormous number popped up—10!

Judging from the feedback of the light beams around, the anti-air magical equipment in altogether a hundred and twenty-four secret bases that had been sealed for a thousand years had finished self-examinations and preparations for activation. 70% of the magical equipment was still intact and still boasted the ability to blow up the sky!

The enormous number changed from 10 to 9!

Rumbling noises came from the rocks around the temple. The most massive warehouse of aggressive magical equipment had been established at this place. The beast that had slept for a thousand years was woken up and was uttering the final roars before the attack.

8!

All the resistance warriors were having cold sweat in their palms. Many of them couldn’t help but hold each other’s hands with such enormous strength that the cracking sounds of their finger bones could be heard.

7!

Come on. Come on! Shoot down “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”!

All the resistance warriors prayed in silence, with all their hot blood, their souls, and even their lives.

6! 5! 4! 3! 2! 1!

From the surveillance picture, it could be seen that enormous gaps split apart on the desolate and barren soil of the Land of Sins simultaneously, and colorful masses of air popped up from the gaps like mysterious springs that appeared out of nowhere.

0!

The temple of the Cultivators, and the global sword network system, launched its attack!

Chapter 2093 - Fight to the End! Forty

Together with the overlapping, deafening explosions, from the hundred and twenty-four hot springs of air masses in the globe of the entire Martial Meritocrats Planet, the most dazzling rays of light shot out.

Those rays seemed to be dragons of light that were alive. Rising slowly but firmly in midair, they changed their trajectories and angles nonstop.

They had only one final target, which was the glamorous, evil Flower of the Other Shore that was hanging high in the sky!

The long ribbons pierced through the sun, ripping the sky apart!

All the resistant warriors were deeply fascinated by the picture that was beyond the description of any words. Holding their breath, they tried to bulge their eyes as best as they could, hoping to stuff their hot blood into the raging flames of light that were rising to the sky to make them faster, faster, and even faster!

The sky soon responded.

From the Heavenly Rails that entangled the entire planet, a storm of rays was spurted out too, trying to intercept the flames darted out by the “global sword network”.

The flames were not simple attacks of mystic arrays and spiritual energy. Instead, it was more than a hundred thousand super flying swords with autopiloting rune arrays.

Sensing the interception of the enemy, all the flames of light dispersed immediately, transforming from slightly more than a hundred into almost ten thousand, before they charged at “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” from all directions!

A translucent barrier of spiritual energy glittered around “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” when a cascade of flying swords crashed into it. The blasts that they triggered were the most brilliant fireworks that many resistance warriors and sinners had ever seen in their lives.

Although most of the swords were blocked, melted, and destroyed by the defense barrier, the defense barrier was also riddled with holes and finally collapsed. Finally, a tiny proportion of the flying swords broke through the defense and crawled in, turning into blossoming flowers that represented death and destruction on the surface of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”.

“We hit it. We have really hit it…”

“Did you see it? ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ is shaking. It is shuddering in fear under our attack!”

The resistance warriors were too stunned to believe it at first. Then, they were so overjoyed that their hearts were almost jumping out of their chests.

They jumped to their feet in excitement and collided into each other like bears and rhinos, roaring in their most primitive and wild voices, which congregated into an unstoppable torrent that swept across the entire temple!

Even the most resolute man was also crying like a baby with tears and snots running loose, for no reason other than the shiver of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”!

“As you have all seen with your own eyes, the power of the ‘global sword network’ far exceeds our imagination. The first wave of test attacks that is not filled with maximal spiritual energy already knocked down the defense shield of ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’!”

Wei Longtao declared loudly and determinedly, “If we are given a second, or a third opportunity, we will certainly be able to shoot the nest of the Immortal Cultivators down from the sky!

“However, the Immortal Cultivators are about to arrive, and a bloody war may break out at any moment. Whether or not we have a second opportunity, and a third one, to activate the weapon system again will depend on your hard work!”

“Just leave it to us, commander!”

The brawny resistance warriors whose hot blood was almost spurting out of their bodies into red mists bashed their chests hard and roared confidently.

“Just give your best performance. This… is going to be the last war.”

When he walked past Zuo Jingyun, Wei Longtao hesitated for a moment, and a hint of tenderness and sorrow flashed in his eyes.

“Understood!”

Zuo Jingyun, however, did not notice Wuying Lan’s hesitation. Still dwelling in the excitement of hitting

“Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” just now, she said sincerely, “Thank you, General Commander, for leading us to create miracles again and again. We would never have dreamed that we could bring such shock to ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ someday if it weren’t for you!

“Please tell me in person once again. We do have an opportunity to shoot down ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’, don’t we?”

The bald, female warrior looked at her leader with eyes that were full of expectation.

Wei Longtao smiled and said, “I have sent the whole process of our attack on ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ just now to our fellow Cultivators in space. With their cooperative attack, we will certainly have our chances.”

“Alright. Since you have said it, it will certainly become the reality! Then, even if I am killed, I will bite the bones of the Immortal Cultivators hard and stop them from approaching the temple!”

Zuo Jingyun gritted her teeth and swore solemnly.

“Rest assured. We are not going to die.”

Wei Longtao sighed with subtle coldness in his voice. “We will live on, and we will live a good life!”

…

“It’s activated. The fellow Cultivators at the bottom of the Martial Meritocrats Planet have truly located the temple and activated the ‘global sword network’. The defense shield of ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ has been broken!”

At the edge of the Devilish Scorpion Nebula, the coalition fleet of Starlight that was lurking at the back of the stone belts and the barren planets was exclaiming in delight too.

Gao Kangda, captain of “Great Mountain”, which had been modified from a super-enormous comprehensive mining starship into a “comprehensive supply mothership”, was discussing with another ten leaders of Starlight about the final strategies through the short-distance information network.

“The fellow Cultivators below the ground have taken action. Let’s join them quickly and destroy ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’, the man-eating nest of fiends, together with them!”

Some people couldn’t wait any longer.

“Shouldn’t we be more patient? Right now, we only have some mottled images that have been sent over a long distance. There is no telling to what extent ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ has been destroyed. It is too risky if we attack recklessly just like that.”

Some people were more rational.

“It is now or never. The spiritual shield of ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ won’t stay collapsed, and the moment of turmoil will be pacified very soon too. The underground fellow Cultivators can’t persist for very long. Haven’t we been expecting the most vulnerable moment of the enemy during such a long wait here? If we waver right now and do not take action, we will never have a chance to take action!”

Some people mocked back.

“I agree with Fellow Cultivator Qi.”

Touching the interconnected scars on his face that were caused by the burning of mystic rays in the “Unsettled Riot” twenty years ago, Gao Kangda said solemnly, “With our strength today, we do not have any leverage to not take risks. After gathering here from every part of the universe through arduous efforts, we have used up all the resources that we have accumulated for decades. It is safe to say that there is no turning back now!

“The members of the resistance party from every part of the universe have gathered here today not for a 100% guaranteed victory. It doesn’t matter whether we win or lose, as long as we have fought a good fight in a gratifying battle!

“Even if we indeed fail at last, as long as we can demonstrate the resolution and the valiance of the Cultivators, somebody will remember us, and somebody will want to be us. A greater Starlight will appear, and a new generation of Cultivators will be reborn from the ashes!

“We seek neither victory nor failure in the battle, but to inform everybody in the entire Imperium and the universe that when they are caught in desperation and they cannot hold it any longer, there is always one last option, which is to summon the courage, clench the fists, and rise up in resistance!

“So, now is the time. Let’s do it!”

“Let’s do it!”

“Let’s take action!”

“However inconspicuous the trajectories of our voyages to the Devilish Scorpion Nebula from various directions may be, they must’ve been discovered by the Imperium right now. It is absolutely impossible for us to retreat in one piece without any damage. Captain Gao is right. There is no turning back right now. Let’s take our chances!”

The coalition fleet of Starlight soon reached a consensus.

All the seemingly ragged, bizarre starships that looked like abnormal metal beasts dispersed and assembled into an arc-shaped formation of attack.

As the exhaust flames spurted out, helical wrinkles appeared around all the starships.

“Target: ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’. Activate the super short-distance space jump!”

“Long live the resistance! Long live the Cultivators! See our strength and go to hell now, Imperium!”

In the middle of the coarse and disobedient roars, the ragged starships of the coalition fleet of Starlight vanished all of a sudden, turning into furious streaks of brilliance that rushed all the way at “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” in the four-dimensional space!

…

In the dining hall of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”, the fancy party with songs and dances was still going on. There was no sign of any attacks or explosions at all.

Both the overjoyed looks and the crazy movements of the resistance warriors of the underground branch of Starlight and the gallantry declarations of those in the coalition fleet were displayed on the 3D light beams nearby with a delay of no more than one second as a little entertainment show while everybody was enjoying their drinks.

The Immortal Cultivators picked up the round, juicy cherries and strawberries while smiling and put them into their mouths, savoring the sour or sweet flavors in them. Now and then, they glanced at the light beams casually and appreciated the live shows of the vigorous Cultivators with chuckles of amusement.

“Those clowns are truly adorably stupid. They really think that they can cause damage to ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’!”

The Immortal Cultivators looked at each other and laughed, shaking their heads and sighing for the innocence and idiocy of the clowns. There were looks of sympathy for the mentally-retarded on their faces, as if they were wondering why such an amazing species had survived to this day without going extinct.

“Everybody—”

Wuying Lan, the owner of the place, knocked his cup softly and raised his voice. “Please focus your attention on the next scene. In the play that I have carefully devised, it is the most spectacular section. I hope you will not miss the look on any Cultivator’s face, which I believe will be more marvelous than any words can describe!”

On the light beam behind Wuying Lan, inside the “underground temple”, the penetrators of the Immortal Cultivators had already broken through the multiple defenses at the periphery and arrived before the Cultivators.

The preparations for the second attack of the “global sword network” were nearly finished too. It was in the middle of the final countdown!

Chapter 2094 - The Cruel Truth Forty

BOOM! BOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Zhi! Zhi! Zhi! Zhi! Zhi! Zhi! Zhi! Zhi!

All kinds of weird and earsplitting noises filled the inside and the outside of the temple. They were the sounds caused by the Immortal Cultivators’ army of penetrators that looked like torrents and locusts when they rushed forward and surrounded the temple.

Now and then, they were mixed with deafening explosions and hysterical screams. That was the small group of Immortal Cultivators who had broken into the temple and were having a fierce fight with the Cultivators who were defending it!

All of the Cultivators in the temple were prepared to sacrifice themselves. Like statues, they blocked the entrance of the gate of the temple and waited for the moment of the final glory. The only concern on their minds was the countdown displayed on the artificial intelligence behind them.

The second full strike of the “global sword network” had entered the final countdown.

All the anti-air magical equipment in the secret bases had been filled with an extreme spiritual energy that far exceeded their limits. They would certainly blow out damages that were ten times more powerful than before.

The defense shield of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” had been seriously damaged in the first round of attack and was not repaired yet. It was now a giant target hanging in midair.

This was the best opportunity.

“Ten! Nine! Eight! Seven!”

Everybody counted the numbers quietly, envisioning the picture where “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” fell from the sky in furious flames.

Honest to the stars, they were willing to pay with their lives and their souls to make the scene a reality!

The drilling noises, the explosions, and the screams of killing were drawing nearer and nearer. The collisions between the penetrators and the earthly dragons had already affected the land below their feet. All the bones and muscles on everyone’s body were shivering.

But they were still persisting in the defense of the place. In another few seconds, the second round of attack would be fully activated.

“Six! Five! Four!”

“Sister Yun…”

Han Te and Liu Li were hiding behind Zuo Jingyun. Although shaking hard, they still grabbed the vibration sabers and the chainswords tightly without retreating at all.

“Don’t be scared. We still have a chance. Once we really blow up ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’, the Immortal Cultivators will definitely be in chaos. By then, I will figure out a way to help you escape out of this place even at the cost of my own life!”

Zuo Jingyun covered the two little fellows with her cold mechanical arm. Looking at the Fist King next to her, she said in a hoarse voice, “Somebody needs to tell other people what happened today after all!”

“Three! Two! One!”

Despite the tension of the battle up ahead, when the countdown reached “one”, all the resistance warriors couldn’t help but turn around and watch the big, glittering, and colorful “zero” that the artificial intelligence had finally displayed, as well as the following rise of mystic rays, where thousands of flying swords would stab through the enemy’s heart!

“We’ve made it!”

“The second round of global strike has been activated!”

“The Immortal Cultivators are one step slower after all. This round of attack will certainly shoot down ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’!”

The most dazzling fire was popping up in the eyes of all the resistance warriors.

However…

After the countdown above the head of the artificial intelligence jumped to “zero”, the pictures of soaring flames that they expected did not appear on the light beams around. Instead, they were seriously twisted as if they were suffering from a crystal processor virus.

In the next second, a short sentence of infinite mockery popped up on all the light beams.

“Zero… means nothing.”

Hum…

The control center of the “global sword network”, which had been humming and functioning at a high speed, seemed to have touched a certain switch. The colorful brilliance around it dimmed, the illumination rune arrays were shut down forcefully, the defense system was completely cut off, and the shining, gorgeous automatic crystal turrets all dangled down and turned back into wasted metals again!

“This is—”

All the members of the resistance were dumbfounded; their hearts cold, not having the vaguest clue what was going on.

Everything was dark except for the bright golden, enormous head in midair. The so-called “artificial intelligence” that was filled with the spirit, the will, and the beliefs of countless previous Cultivators and controlled the “global sword network” was still as eye-catching as before.

But the enormous head, which was more than ten meters in diameter, was experiencing drastic changes too, with weird contortions.

The flesh on its face was corroded within seconds, turning a healthy, charming head into a creepy, horrifying skull at a fast speed. Bloody tears flowed from the dark, deep eye sockets, and its pale teeth were clattering nonstop while it made chuckling sounds. It couldn’t have been more terrifying.

“What… What is happening?”

“It is impossible! Has it been invaded by the Immortal Cultivators’ virus?”

“Why? This is such a critical moment!”

Everything was lost at the last moment. The hearts of the resistance warriors hit the rock bottom from highly-rising mountains. They all felt that the world was swirling, and their heads were blank. They could barely breathe, and their faces were blushing and even turning purple as if they were suffocated!

However, the reality was only more cruel than their imagination.

They aimed all their firepower at the gate of the temple that had been opened, but they were never prepared for the darkness deep inside the temple.

At this moment, from the darkness deep inside the temple, hundreds of spiritual puppets flowed out like tides.

The spiritual puppets were like octopi with an enormous eye grown at the center of their bodies. They were made of a round shell and four freely extensible circular mechanical arms.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

From the sharp ends of the mechanical tentacles, cross-shaped tongs that were full of sawtooth were opened. At the center of the tongs were high-resolution crystal cameras. Almost ten thousand crimson crystal cameras were shining in the darkness and staring at the resistance warriors from the high stance without blinking at all.

It seemed that there were other channels at the rear of the temple that led to the outside world or even the surface of the planet, and the channels had long been grasped by the Immortal Cultivators.

“We… We have been tricked?”

“Trap! This is a trap!”

Looking at the cold spiritual puppets flying in midair with earsplitting noises caused by metal contortions, some resistance warriors finally realized what was going on, but it was already too late.

But even if they were dying, they couldn’t figure out at all what the problem could possibly have been.

The smiling skull, which was shedding bloody tears in midair, continued to collapse and fall apart. This time, after the pale mask of the skeleton broke into pieces, it turned into the face of a handsome middle-aged man who seemed to be carved out of marble.

What was glittering in the darkness, other than the middle-aged man’s face that was full of smiles, was the glass of red wine in his hands that looked like blood.

“My dear friends, thank you for your splendid performance so far. Your passionate and dedicated acting was indeed a soul-stirring and mind-boggling entertainment for all of us.”

The middle-aged man who looked like a marble statue sipped the delicious wine and continued with a smile, “However, even the greatest show has an ending. Due to the limitation of time, I have to reveal the truth to all of you now. First of all, allow me to introduce myself. My name is Wuying

Lan, the owner of the ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ that you have been so determined to destroy…”

“What?”

“H-How is it possible!”

“What kind of trap have we fallen into?”

Including Zuo Jingyun, all the resistance warriors of Starlight felt that their souls had been shattered. The beliefs and the strength that supported them till this far completely collapsed. Everybody stared at the enormous head in devastation, like empty shells.

“Don’t you understand? Then, just look at the real ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ right now!”

Wuying Lan raised his voice slightly. Next to his head that was as enormous as a fiend, new light beams immediately showed up, in which the appearance of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” that was shot at a close distance was displayed.

Surrounded by the red and gold spiritual shield that was utterly intact and as fresh as new, “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” was still hanging in the sky like the most glamorous flower. Was there any sign that it had suffered any attack at all?

“It is a shame that the picture of ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ suffering attacks just now, or rather, everything you have seen since you entered this so-called ‘temple’, is fake and simulated by the Immortal Cultivators.”

Wuying Lan said casually, “Ever since the very beginning, there has been no ‘global sword network’ or ‘temple of Cultivators’ at all. Everything, including your hopes, your missions, and the things that you were willing to strive for with your own lives, is false. They were all granted to you by the Immortal Cultivators.

“Even your organization, and the life of each and every one of you, was intentionally retained, carefully planned, and controlled by the Immortal Cultivators. You think that you were ‘free’, but your so-called ‘freedom’ came from our generosity. In fact, you were not any different from the sinners on the ground of the Land of Sins. You were all puppets made of flesh and blood whose strings were in the hands of ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’. Your resistance, your fierce fight, your escape, and your ‘desperate counterattack’… Everything originates from the plays that the Immortal Cultivators have written.”

The 3D light beams around Wuying Lan began to display the pictures that had been secretly shot a long time ago. They were the most confidential combat meetings of the resistance organization. It was a sign that the Immortal Cultivators had truly infiltrated and controlled the entire underground branch of Starlight since a long time ago.

“This… This…”

Some Cultivators were at a loss of what to do; some burst into tears, and some held their heads so hard that their fingers were deeply embedded into their skulls. They staggered back for a few steps, before they collapsed to the ground, unable to say anything for a long time.

Some of them also looked at Wei Longtao, their general commander and the leader that they had always trusted, admired, and relied on most in suspicion!

“Right. There’s also your general commander, the omnipotent hero of Starlight, Wei Longtao.”

Wuying Lan’s smile was more and more intense as he appreciated the looks on the faces of the resistance warriors in great interest. “It is true that he was a Cultivator a long time ago, but he was smart enough to recognize the real laws by which the world functions. He abandoned the naïve, childish ideas that could never be realized and became an honorable, venerable, and dedicated Immortal Cultivator!”

Chapter 2095 - A World Without Miracles

Although many people had vaguely guessed the answer, their hearts still fell into the caves of ice when they heard it from Wuying Lan’s mouth and saw Wei Longtao standing below the enormous face of Wuying Lan in silence.

Then, the caves of ice were burnt into magma!

“Wei Longtao!”

Shuddering, Zuo Jingyun roared in fury, “You betrayed us! You betrayed Starlight!”

“This is not betrayal; it’s a sensible choice made by a smart person. Leading the members to a bright future is what a qualified leader of an organization should do, instead of darting into the fire like moths and asking to be killed!”

Wuying Lan said casually, “Commander Wei, it’s your turn now.”

“Don’t be excited, everyone. Listen to me. I absolutely don’t mean you any harm. On the very contrary, I am saving all of you, like I have done countless times before!”

Taking a deep breath, Wei Longtao held his head high and bulged his eyes, making them look like lightbulbs, while he stared at everybody including Zuo Jingyun.

He spoke in such a resolute and matter-of-fact way that it was filled with convincing and trust-incurring power, like all the exciting speeches he made in the past. It seemed that somebody would believe him even if he said that the sun in the high sky was square.

“Think about it. Why are we resisting the Imperium and fighting the Immortal Cultivators? For no reason at all! It is only because we were born here, our ancestors were stranded here, that we have naturally become the so-called Cultivators, the cockroaches, lice, and rats hiding here and there in fear in the underground world!

“Is such a life really worth it? Does such resistance really matter? Are the ideas and hopes that we persist in a real thing?

“Wake up, everyone. We are merely caught in an illusion of self-hypnotization and self-affection. We are haunted and possessed by the ghosts that should’ve perished a thousand years ago. We have completely lost our true selves!

“Our life is false. Our resistance is false. Our hope is false. Our heroes and our desperate counterattacks that we believed to be true are false. All of them!

“In the past, I was also mired in self-deception under the manipulation of the ghosts that had been dead for a thousand years. I thought that everything I did was truly of some significance, however little it was.

“Thankfully, I woke up in time and realized that the so-called ‘path of the Cultivators’ was an out-and-out lie; a fairytale that would never become reality. It would only bring incessant tragedies to the Land of Sins and to each and every one of us!

“Besides, we are no real Cultivators at all but a bunch of mobsters who are gathered by accident, driven by hatred, fury, and inertia!

“We are absolutely no match for ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’, if we can even deal any damage to it at all! It will only be a futile suicide! Nobody is scared of death, but your death should be more valuable. So, I have to save everyone and help you completely realize the ridiculousness of the lies, so that you can break away from the miseries and embark on a new life!”

Wei Longtao roared so loudly and passionately that his face was already red.

Opening his brawny arms at everyone, he said in the most sincere way, “Come on. Stop lying to yourself. We are no real Cultivators at all. Besides, the real Cultivators were already thrashed by the Immortal Cultivators a thousand years ago! What’s there to struggle for when we are nothing more than ‘counterfeits’? Put down the hatred, leave the underground world, and embrace a brand-new life! I already have got the promise of Lord Wuying Lan. As long as we are willing to surrender unconditionally, we will certainly receive appropriate treatments. There will be a chance for us to recognize the real true path of immortality and the laws of the world so that we can be the supreme Immortal Cultivators.

“This is the only bright future that belongs to all of us!”

“General Commander, you… You—”

Zuo Jingyun covered her mouth in disbelief, and her tears ran out of her eyes beyond her control. She stepped back to almost five meters away, but she still couldn’t believe what she had heard and seen. Her body was like a sand tower in the wind that was shaking and might collapse at any moment.

The roars and explosions outside were drawing nearer and nearer. With sharp noises, a few aggressive penetrators of the Immortal Cultivators dug into the temple from all directions, carrying a large batch of raging Exos and spiritual puppets.

“The enemies are everywhere!”

“They are ten times more than us!”

“What do we do? What do we do?”

The resistance warriors were like rats that had fallen into a pot of hot oil. Overwhelmed, they were at a loss about what to do.

“Yes. Different from the disobedient, uneducable guys in the space, I think that you still have some potential to be reeducated.”

Wuying Lan chuckled. “Therefore, if you are willing to lay down your weapons and surrender, as the owner of ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’, I promise you that I will not hurt you at all, and I’ll give you an opportunity to be an Immortal Cultivator.

“Don’t jump to any decision just yet. Come on. Let’s watch the ending of your ‘fellow Cultivators’ in space first. Haha. Hahahaha!”

In Wuying Lan’s laughter, the light beams around the enormous head displayed the battlefield in the vast sea of stars.

It could be clearly seen that hundreds of ragged, bizarre-looking half-armed starships jumped out of the space not far away from “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”. As they regrouped into the intimidating arc-shaped battle formation, they did look somewhat invincible and unstoppable.

It was a shame that they were faced with not a broken city that was on the brink of collapse because of the barrage of the “global sword network”, but an iron fortress with an intact defense system and abundant reserves of spiritual energy and ammunitions, which was also reinforced by half a main-force fleet of the Imperium in secret in the recent month. It had been armed to the teeth!

Hardly had the coalition fleet of Starlight jumped to the depths of the Martial Meritocrats Sector when a large area of space torpedoes was detonated near their landing point. The most violent radiations and high-energy particles were released, causing a highly unstable zone with a coverage of almost a million square kilometers.

The space torpedoes were not meant to kill or injure the coalition fleet of Starlight but to completely disrupt the space stability in the area, in case the rats of Starlight escaped immediately when they saw that something was not right with another desperate space jump. Should they jump out of the Martial Meritocrats Sector and even the Devilish Scorpion Nebula, it would be terribly difficult to catch all of them again. If they were captured or annihilated by other forces, it would not be Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan’s achievement.

Right now, to initiate a space jump in the highly unstable three-dimensional space was like to set sail in the middle of a tsunami. The difficulties and dangers were ten times higher. Almost nobody would do such a thing that was no different from suicide.

Almost from the moment the space torpedoes exploded, the demonic, bloody Flower of the Other Shore blossomed slowly. Silent, cold, and elegant starships of the Imperium glided out of the “petals” and assembled into an attack formation that looked like a sharp blade in dazzling movements.

Hundreds of thousands of crystal suits had also been woken up from the dark space in all directions, as they went at the coalition fleet of Starlight.

From the bloody Flower of the Other Shore and the Heavenly Rails, thousands of bloody pillars of light emerged without a sound and covered the distance of hundreds of thousands of kilometers in between in the blink of an eye, piercing into the fleet of Starlight in bloody bubbles.

The massacre of the epic quest, Dying Light, had officially begun!

…

“We have been betrayed. ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ is not damaged at all. Its spiritual shield is absolutely intact!”

“Why are there so many main-force warships of the Imperium in this place? Shouldn’t they be mired in the battles against the Covenant Alliance in the frontline? This… This is a trap!”

“We have been deceived. Some traitors sold us out. This is a bait to attract and catch all of us! This is a scheme!”

“It’s hopeless now. Let’s run! Let’s run now!”

There was nothing but exclamations and screams in the communication channels of the leadership of the coalition fleet of Starlight, which was mixed with tsunami-like explosions now and then.

“Quiet now!”

Seeing that the enemy’s space fortress was absolutely undamaged, and a batch of main-force warships that far exceeded their expectation showed up, Gao Kangda felt that the world was swirling too. Everything in his eyes turned black and white.

But he was a seasoned general who survived the “Unsettled Chaos” after all, and he knew that they would be giving their lives away if they were to escape now. “Since this is a trap, our retreat must’ve been blocked by the enemy. Look at the space stability index on your mainframe crystal processor. This space is like a piece of paper that has been torn apart brutally. It is impossible to launch a space jump at all!

“We have no choice except to march forward relentlessly. Even if we are going to escape, we will have to break the enemy in front of us and get out of the chaotic space first before we initiate a space jump!

“Have you all forgotten our purpose? We are here to die in the first place! Come on. Show the Immortal Cultivators the courage of the Cultivators. Even if we are killed, we will die together with ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ and crash the goddamn lair of fiends into the surface of the planet!”

Faced with the glamorous warships of the Imperium that were moving at a high speed, “Great Mountain”, the armed mining starship that looked like an asteroid of garbage, burst out the most brilliant exhaust flames in the past hundreds of years as it charged at the enemy at “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”!

…

“Have you seen it? Your ‘fellow Cultivators’ in the space have jumped into our trap in their idiocy too. They are now being reaped, butchered, and destroyed ruthlessly.”

Wuying Lan said, “Those obstinate guys are destined to die. There is no chance for them at all. But you still have a choice to regret and abandon your dark past and embark on the journey to the light.

“Stop hesitating. Both my patience and mercy are very limited. Drop all your fantasies. Trust me, there are no miracles in this world!”

Chapter 2096 - The Miracle Begins!

In the No. 1 spaceport of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”, a black starship that looked like three sharp swords condensed together and slowly glided out of the rail. The power rune arrays at the back of the starship burst out brilliant exhaust flames like plum blossoms, accelerating it to such a high speed that it almost tore apart the entire universe when it rushed to the sea of stars far away that had already begun to simmer.

It was “Tornado”, Li Lingfeng’s flagship!

Li Lingfeng was standing on the bridge, and Li Jialing was pacing back and forth anxiously next to him. Around them were quick flashing light beams.

Everything that was happening in the space and below the ground, including Wuying Lan’s remark of desperation just now, was all within their knowledge.

“Wuying Lan was wrong about that. How can he say that there are no miracles in this world? Wouldn’t it be very bad and inharmonious if the farmers, miners, and assembly line workers whose lives are already filled with desperation hear it?”

Playing with a set of colorful Cosmos Rings, which seemed to be made of rainbows, Li Lingfeng said with a smile, “Of course there are miracles in this world. But all the miracles are created by the Immortal Cultivators! We create whatever miracles we want and make them happen to whoever we want them to happen to!”

It was true that miracles were created and controlled by the Immortal Cultivators.

At this moment, inside “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”, there was a professional team of more than fifty thousand people in the Heavenly Eye Group who were solely responsible for the creation of miracles.

They were the most brilliant screenplay architects, picture editors, and after-effect engineers. There were also specialists in news, directing, and psychology.

The pictures captured by various sorts of crystal cameras in the war taking place in space and the siege below the ground right now were only the raw materials.

If they were directly broadcasted for the people of the Imperium to watch, the effect would not be shocking and educational enough, and it was often difficult to prevent unexpected factors from happening.

Therefore, although it was “real-time transmission” in name, there would always be a delay of one to five minutes according to the actual situation.

The professional team of fifty thousand people were responsible to filter, edit, and montage the materials in the five minutes that were of paramount importance. They had to decorate, implant, or even fabricate things out of nothing, in order to output a piece of flawless and highly-shocking work, so that the will of the Immortal Cultivators, or to be more exact, the will of Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan, could be carried out as much as possible.

…

At this moment, in the entire Imperium, millions of common people had received the pictures that were carefully compiled by the Immortal Cultivators, including Gao Xiaojian, Gao Kangda’s little brother.

The underground Cultivators in the picture were arrogant and overjoyed at first, before they were devastated and caught in complete desperation. Their extremely twisted faces were so pitiful, disgusting, and hilarious.

Gao Xiaojian and his workmates who had all performed mechanical modifications burst into laughter, amused by the Cultivators’ looks of disbelief and bewilderment.

The ragged starships of the coalition fleet of Starlight, in contrast to the magnificent main-force fleet of the Imperium, were so poor and thin, and they collapsed at the first touch.

Together with the screams, moans, and sound effects such as “we are screwed” that were added during editing, the absurdity of a bunch of clowns who did not know what they were doing was best depicted.

[If you had seen this coming, would you have done it at the beginning?]

Gao Xiaojian shook his head in disapproval and thought fluently with the ways of thinking that his supervisors had inculcated into his head. Can anything be better than working diligently and being a decent man? It was their own laziness and sluggishness that caused the tragedy, and yet they are blaming it on the society, the system, and the government. Also, because of the infiltration and the instigation of hostile forces such as the Covenant Alliance and the extraterrestrial devils, they finally walked on the wrong path, broke the law, and committed all the wrongdoings. The only ramification of their action is that they are hurting both others and themselves!

The Imperium has secured decisive, glorious triumphs at the frontline, but our enemies are certainly unwilling to admit their defeat without fighting back. Even if they know they are doomed, they will still struggle desperately before their death. They will try to conspire with the ambitious forces within the Imperium, hoping to cause the last bit of trouble in the end.

In the picture, an officer of the Imperium who was tall, sharp, and wearing a formal uniform declared aloud, “However, the Imperium is invincible, and our enemies are destined to die. For the Imperium, for the peace and happiness of billions of people of the Imperium, and for the rise of the civilization of mankind, we will never allow any enemy to get things their way!

“Go forward now, army of the Imperium. Destroy the Cultivators before our eyes, the dogs of the Covenant Alliance!”

“Go forward, Imperium!”

“Long live the Imperium!”

“Destroy the Cultivators! Destroy the Covenant Alliance! Long live the Imperium! Long live the Immortal Cultivators! Long live the civilization of mankind!”

For a moment, Gao Xiaojian was caught in a trance and thought that he had become the tall and handsome officer of the Imperium sailing in the sea of stars on the awesome super starship.

The man-made blood in his body all flowed into his brain. He felt that he was burning all of a sudden.

Thunderous roars echoed from the broadcast runes. Gao Xiaojian and his workmates screamed so hard that the dome of the “Loyalty Room” was almost falling apart…

…

“Are you ready?”

On “Tornado”, Li Lingfeng looked at Li Jialing with a smile. “You are the greatest ‘miracle’ that we are going to create in this battle. From this moment on, you will be a falcon soaring in the wind. Just release your potential and claim… the entire universe!”

“I’m ready.”

Li Jialing stopped pacing. Taking a deep breath, he slightly clenched his fists and said, “I almost can’t wait any longer.”

“That’s good. Prepare to fight. I’ll ask my most elite ‘Scorching Wind Squad’ to stay behind you.”

Li Lingfeng said, “Remember. There’s no need to deal with the enemy’s minions. Your target is the enemy’s starships. If you can blow up a starship with your crystal suit, it will be of great promotional value.”

Li Lingfeng did not bring much reinforcement of main-force warships for Wuying Lan this time.

After all, the war against the Covenant Alliance on the frontline was not over yet. Now that the Imperium had swallowed a large area of space zones in a row, the defense line and the supply line were greatly stretched. Fleets had been deployed everywhere to resist the counterattack of the Covenant Alliance.

Besides, the army of the Imperium was not in one piece either. While the fleets belonged to the supreme His Majesty in name, they were in fact under the command of the nobles and the masters of the Sectors. The recruitment of soldiers, the subsidies, and the commanders of various levels were all controlled by the nobles and the Sector Masters, who had long minded their own business without taking orders from anyone.

The vast and newly-earned space zones were a piece of great cake. In regard to the distribution of the cake, the fleets of the Imperium, which represented the interests of different nobles and experts, would probably even burst into huge fights.

Who was willing to abandon the benefits of a planet or even a whole Sector at such a moment and fight the Cultivators together with Li Lingfeng?

Cultivators were nothing more than cockroaches and rats. They couldn’t be anything better than that whether they were crushed or not. Even if they were all killed with no survivors, so what? How many gains could they possibly get? Could the Cultivators make a few resource planets out of nothing and offer them to the Immortal Cultivators?

As for Li Lingfeng himself, although he was the best expert in the prime years in the Li family and had always been known as the “future Kurfürst”, it was the unpredictable future after all.

At the very least, the leader of the Li family was not him right now, and he was not “one of the four Kurfürsten”. Many people in his family within his generation or even his father’s were coveting his place. They would already be considered friendly enough if they did not stab him in the back. How was it possible to expect them to bring out their private troops to help him?

If he were to pull some strings, it was not entirely impossible to gather a few fleets.

The question was that the fleets were not stupid either. If they were to mobilize a lot of troops to him, they were bound to extend their hands into the “Heavenly Eye Group” and the platform of “slaughter stream”, sharing his core interests.

The “Heavenly Eye Group” was controlled by Wuying Lan in name, but in fact, it couldn’t have flourished without the support of the “future Kurfürst”. The construction of the “Land of Sins” and “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”, as well as the epic quest of “Dying Light” right now, was all for only one purpose, which was to pave the way for him to be the leader of the Li family and one of the four Kurfürsten by providing support of capitals, connections, fame, media control, or even military credits.

Li Lingfeng absolutely couldn’t tolerate anybody laying fingers on his core interests in any form.

Therefore, after discussing with Wuying Lan for a long time and running the most accurate estimation on the comprehensive capability of Starlight, he still decided to solve the problem with the armed forces of the Heavenly Eye Group themselves, Li Lingfeng’s own private troop, and a few mercenary fleets that were hired with coins.

The Cultivators were an unorganized mess. It was more than easy to crush the enemy with their available forces at hand.

However, the universe was too vast a place after all. If the Cultivators were really determined to run away crazily, it did require some meticulous planning in order to annihilate all the cockroaches.

Therefore, even Li Lingfeng had taken action in person with his flagship in order to reach the most perfect outcome and to make an accomplishment that nobody could question.

“So far, everything has been under our control. The annoying cockroaches that bothered us for a thousand years are finally going to be stomped on today!”

Li Lingfeng patted heavily on Li Jialing’s shoulder. “Go now. The ‘moment of miracle’ that belongs to us has begun. Go make your miracle!”

“Alright.”

Li Jialing smiled and stared at Li Lingfeng. Bowing at him respectfully, he took the opportunity to hide his eyes in the shadow. “I’ll be sure to let you see a shocking miracle!”

…

In the cold, quiet spaceport in “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”, in a corner that was only one wall away from the dark space, Li Yao stretched out his limbs and crouched on the ground before slowly opening his crimson eyes.

Chapter 2097 - The Sound of Hell!

Li Yao’s senses penetrated into the cold floor like the roots of an enormous tree through his eyes, palms, and abdomen, spreading out to the dozens of spaceports around.

In the perception of his soul, the entire “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” gradually turned into a transparent, crystal castle.

The starships docked in the various spaceports of the “crystal castle” caught his attention.

When starships were activated, they were bound to spurt out dazzling flames of light and release intense spiritual waves, which could not escape the senses of Li Yao who was at the Divinity Transformation Stage.

Every starship was as clear as an ant under the scorching sun. Their trajectories to the sea of stars were captured clearly by Li Yao.

In only an hour, almost all the starships docked in “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” were launched to the battlefield in space to crush and besiege the coalition fleet of Starlight.

The only things left in the spaceport were the civil carriers and small barges, but they were filled with fuel and ready to be activated too.

The battles in the space were always protracted and could not be resolved in a day or two. By Li Yao's estimation, even though the enemy was as untrained as Starlight, it was impossible to catch all the rats and cockroaches that were running amok without ten days to half a month's hunting and blocking.

In other words, the interior of "Manjusaka, the City in the Sky" couldn't have been more weakly defended.

Most of the elites, including Li Lingfeng, had marched to the sea of stars and were engaged with the coalition fleet of Starlight. It was definitely impossible for them to retreat in a hurry.

Right now, according to the feedback of Neltharion, which was maneuvered by the mental devil, there was only approximately one-tenth of soldiers left in "Manjusaka, the City in the Sky", as well as the experimenters and the specialists of information processing. Wuying Lan was supervising everything.

Right. There were also the young people of the major families of Immortal Cultivators who had not reached the age of real battles yet but came to the place for visits with their seniors.

"There are miracles in this world. Real miracles!"

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao slowly rose to his feet.

The map of the entire "Manjusaka, the City in the Sky" and the sabotages that he was about to commit revolved rapidly deep inside his brain, making the furiously-burning flames in his crimson eyes even more intense and fierce.

Looking at the surveillance cameras around him, Li Yao said in silence, “Are you ready? You must ensure that the connection between the beehive prison and Wuying Lan’s control center is cut off and replaced with false images. Can you do that?”

“I’m already aware of that. You can stop chattering!”

The mental devil’s lazy voice came over. “I am now more or less in the Divinity Transformation Stage too, and I have absorbed the pieces of tenebrum energy from the extraterrestrial devils and the abundant legacies from Professor Mo Xuan. This is just a minor issue in hacking a crystal processor. Do you have to make it so complicated?

“However, I do need to remind you that Wuying Lan is a smart guy. He’ll notice that something is wrong in five minutes at most.”

“Five minutes are enough!”

With a smile, Li Yao rose abruptly and strode out of the dark corner blatantly.

Although the spaceport that was specially designed for the civil carriers was rather remote, a team of heavily-armored Immortal Cultivators was still guarding it. At this moment, “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” had entered the highest alert state. All the irrelevant personnel had been driven to the designated areas. Under the pale light, Li Yao’s body that was surrounded by flames of spiritual energy was particularly eye-catching.

“Who is it?”

The guards of Immortal Cultivators were slightly dazed. They all bellowed and aimed their guns at Li Yao while they dispersed and surrounded him quickly in the shape of a sector. “Don’t move! Lay down your weapons and receive examination!”

Looking at his empty hands, Li Yao grinned and walked to the lift of the beehive prison unhurriedly while baring his white and sharp teeth.

“Freeze! Freeze! Freeze!”

The Immortal Cultivators all sensed the strength of Li Yao’s body that felt like an awakening volcano. Their veins were all protruding, and their hearts were beating fast. They couldn’t have been more anxious.

They meant to report to their superior, only to discover that background noises were echoing from their communication channels at the same time, as if a certain weird force had disrupted and blocked their abilities to send messages to the outside world.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

Li Yao moved forward one step after another, as heavily as if he were stomping on their faces and their hearts.

“I told you to stop!”

Soaked in cold sweat, the leader of the Immortal Cultivators in the front roared furiously to cover his fear. Instead of waiting for Li Yao to respond, he pulled his trigger brutally and commanded, “Shoot!”

Da! Da! Da! Da! Da! Da! Da!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The destructive mystic rays weaved into a net, and the powerful crystal bombs exploded one after another. All the Immortal Cultivators roared crazily and vented their fury and fear without any restraint. Dozens of fiery lines congregated into a colorful, quickly-expanding light ball!

After the Immortal Cultivators had emptied dozens of magazines and crystal boxes and finally calmed down under the coarse roars of their commander, the light ball made of spiritual energy and metal scraps did not disperse but continued expanding like a fiend that was alive.

A man whose long hair was moving quickly even though there was no wind and whose body was enshrouded in bloody flames was vaguely seen standing at the center of the light ball. The man even showed them the most horrifying smile that they had ever seen in their entire life.

“Run!”

The smile made the pupils and hearts of all the Immortal Cultivators shrink to the size of needle tips. Their first order from their nerve endings to their brain cells was to escape as quickly as possible.

However, before they were able to put what they thought into action, they sensed a torrent of weird waves coming at them like invisible tides. Then, their crystal processors uttered cracking noises, and crazy stripes began to dance on their light beams. Their crystal suits had all been paralyzed!

The magical equipment that their lives depended on became interrogational instruments that condemned them to death. Their crystal suits were squeezed hard by giant, invisible hands and collapsing nonstop, crumbling their bones and flesh. All of their blood and their mucus were darting out of the gaps of their crystal suits.

“Ahhhhh!”

It was certainly not an enjoyable feeling to have the crystal suit deeply embedded into the body or the skull be crushed by the helmet. The Immortal Cultivators let out excruciating moans and began to cramp crazily.

Huala!

At the last moment when they were about to explode alive from being crushed by their crystal suits, all the crystal suits suddenly fell apart and dispersed from their bodies like metal butterflies!

All the Immortal Cultivators breathed deeply in a hurry, appreciating the preciousness of their lives with the intense desire for survival beaming out of their eyes.

In the next second, the desire for survival in their eyes turned into the most agonizing desperation, because they saw that the scraps of all the crystal suits were condensed into a bizarre boa dozens of meters long, which became the tentacles of the weird man. Carrying the flames of the spiritual energy of the weird man that felt like a volcano eruption, they smashed at them brutally again.

Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa!

The twelve Immortal Cultivators were almost blown up alive by the metal tentacles at the same time. Their broken bodies were whipped away to the walls far behind, turning into devastating blood signatures that informed the world of the arrival of a real Cultivator!

Li Yao did not bother to look at the bloody mists that were floating in midair. With his left hand behind his back, he opened his right hand and lifted it. The tentacles made of the scraps of the twelve crystal suits immediately flew to midair and gathered into an enormous metal ball.

Ripples of spiritual energy flooded out of Li Yao’s right arm nonstop, which enshrouded the metal ball and triggered spluttering red electric arcs around the metal ball, making it revolve at a high speed.

When the electric arcs were glittering and revolving most intensely, Li Yao opened his hands and pushed the metal ball out, which hit the gate between the spaceport and the beehive prison precisely.

BOOM!

The gate was blown apart, revealing the pitch-dark channel behind. Earsplitting alarms suddenly began to ring, but they sounded unbelievably thin in the vast, profound sea of stars.

Li Yao blew at his palm softly and pushed forward to the beehive prison with his hands in his back.

However, something seemed to be missing. He couldn’t help but feel that he hadn’t completely enjoyed himself.

What exactly am I missing?

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao began to consider carefully.

…

The beehive prison was peaceful and quiet.

Although a heated battle was going on in the space, and the play on the Land of Sins had also reached the climax, they obviously had nothing to do with the beehive prison.

Hundreds of thousands of dangerous prisoners that received various sorts of modifications were still caged inside the cells that were made of superalloys and composite tempered glass dutifully under the suppression of the magnetic shackles of “Dragnet”. Every second, hundreds of spiritual puppets and almost ten tough-looking alert squads patrolled the area without leaving any blind angle.

The remaining jailors and guards were able to sit in the control room comfortably as they monitored the status of the giant array while appreciating the exciting “slaughter stream” and bursting into laughter at the Cultivators’ bewilderment and devastation.

Suddenly—

BAM, BAM! BAM, BAM! BAM, BAM, BAM, BAM!

The music that sounded like thunders from hell echoed from all the broadcast rune arrays in every corner of the beehive prison at the same time. Like a flood that had broken the dam, they savaged every part of the prison and the eardrums of every prisoner!

“What is going on?”

All the jailors and guards jumped to their feet at the same time. Looking at each other in bewilderment, they stared at the broadcast rune arrays at the corner.

They had never heard such angry, violent, shocking, flagrant, and alluring music before.

If music could be compared to starships, what they were hearing must be a super heavy main-force warship.

Every drumming and every beat of the music was like the barrage of the main guns of the warship!

Bam, bam, bam! Boom, boom, boom! Bam, bam, bam!

The mind-blowing and soul-stirring “heavy” music was still going on and successfully attracted the attention of all the prisoners, who could clearly sense the extremely dark and violent music that was a depiction of their daily life. It was the pain that they had been bearing and the sound that they wanted to shout out hysterically, which hadn’t been heard by anyone!

Chapter 2098 - Arrival of the Mystic Skeleton Blood Wing!

The rumbling noises and the crazy roars, which mixed with the shocking sounds of explosions and fractures, turned into floods and beasts that crashed into the hearts and the souls of all the prisoners through their ears, displaying the bizarre, bloody, cruel, insufferable illusions before them!

They seemed able to see themselves being tied up by the jailors and the researchers for all kinds of cruel procedures on the operating tables. They envisioned the cold and shining scalpels and tongs and the hideous grins of the Immortal Cultivators. They saw their ghastly appearances after the first refinement, and they saw their miserable outcomes when they were forced to fight the mutated beasts and other prisoners under the threat of the electromagnetic whips and high-pressure phasers, until they were bleeding everywhere with broken bones all over their bodies!

It was not music but the most painful and desperate moans from the deepest level of hell.

All the prisoners covered their ears hard, unwilling to allow the demonic sounds to pierce through their brains.

However, no matter how they dodged and resisted it, the sound from hell still shocked their blood, bones, and souls.

“Ahhhhhh!”

The prisoners let out roars as they could not hold it any longer. They bashed their heads on the transparent glass walls hard, until the entire beehive prison was clattering.

At the deepest, darkest, and cruelest moment of the music of hell, the roar of an awakened primeval beast suddenly echoed after a deafening explosion.

It was like a peal of thunder on a sunny day!

The music seemed to have dug a hole on the iron house that absolutely did not have any exit, letting in the brightness that felt like running magma.

After that, the rhythm of the music was faster and faster, and the tune was more and more exciting and exuberant too.

Desperation turned into hope, pain turned into fury, and the fury gathered into blatantly flooding torrents!

The prisoners were seeing all kinds of illusions again. They seemed to be part of the furious torrents that were breaking the cages and the beehive prison and sweeping across the entire “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”. The arrogant and almighty Immortal Cultivators could do nothing except to shudder in fear under their torrents and be destroyed unstoppably!

Ho! Hooooooo!

The blood and the brains of all the prisoners were simmering. They felt that they were filled with explosive strength that could not be vented out at all. They simply bashed the transparent glass walls hard, until intense marks of blood were left on the wall!

The storm of hell had swept across the entire beehive prison. The anger of the thousands of prisoners had been completely awakened by a battle hymn from the deepest level of hell!

“What… What is happening?”

Inside the control room, faced with the sounds that were like surging tides, both the warden and the jailors were scared out of their wits.

“Somebody hacked our system and played the uncanny music!”

“Our connection to the control center has been cut off. We are trying to reconnect, but it will probably take another couple of minutes!”

Bad news came over one piece after another.

“A*shole…”

The muscles on the warden’s face were twitching violently as he gnashed, “Activate the Dragnet and make sure that every prisoner is lying on the ground obediently without causing any trouble. Everybody, stay on full al—”

BOOM!

Before he was able to complete his sentence, an earthshaking explosion already came over from the vertical channel that looked like the silo for a starship.

It was not a sound that any human could make at all, but more like the collisions of a heavy starship or a previously unseen alien beast with the gate of the prison at a super high speed.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The crazy collisions were happening again and again!

The entire beehive prison was shuddering in fear.

The warden and the jailors looked at each other in bewilderment; their souls were shaking violently. They had no idea at all what kind of strength could possibly cause such noises.

Even the most inert prisoner had realized that something unexpected must be happening. It seemed that somebody was attacking the beehive prison!

For a moment, all the jailors and the prisoners were palpitating hard as they watched the gate above their heads being twisted, deformed, and dented downward by the earthquakes.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Dozens of connection components more than half a meter in diameter that were used to fixate the gate and the shell of the prison were blown away, darting into the depths of the vertical channel and disappearing before everyone’s sight.

In the next second, it was another tsunami-like collision. The gate of the beehive prison, which was more than five meters thick and weighed more than 1,550 tons, made of seven composite materials that were designed to resist the barrage of the main guns of starships, was blown up by brute force.

Several pieces of the gate that weighed dozens of tons rushed close like meteorites and fell into the vertical channel that was thousands of meters deep, triggering such a dull noise that was enough to grind the heart of every jailor!

Before the warden realized what was going on, a hundred twisted, bleeding Immortal Cultivators were blown downward from above, screaming while crashing helplessly.

The crystal suits of many of them were spurting out miserable sparks nonstop and even exploded in midair, sparing the Immortal Cultivators in them the pain of falling into pieces.

The hearts of the warden and all the jailors almost exploded at the same time. Their eyes were about to be torn apart and their every breath seemed to inhale flames that were mixed with thorns as they watched the monster that blew up the gate of more than a thousand tons descending before them slowly.

Out of their expectation, it was not an entire army, nor a hideous beast that was a hundred meters long, but only one man.

But what a tough man he was!

He was wearing a half-transparent black crystal suit whose materials were beyond any recognition. It was also barely possible to lock onto it with metal scanning devices or heat scanning devices. The crystal suit seemed to have condensed all the darkness in the space and couldn’t have looked more profound and mysterious.

In the middle of the transparent and unpredictable black materials, deep red and bright gold crystal wires could be vaguely seen. They interweaved with each other and constructed a cubic network that was as complicated as nerves and veins.

The network improved the crystal suit's circulation speed of spiritual energy as much as possible, and the starry red lights and the never-ending dark gold brilliant added to the mysteriousness and the glamor of the crystal suit.

The warden had never seen a crystal suit of such a shape before. He had even never seen such mysterious materials and such a way to construct a crystal suit.

However, according to his limited experience, such an immaculate and flawless crystal suit only meant one thing, which was an unparalleled expert who dominated the sea of stars with destructive strength!

Hiss! Hiss! Hiss! Hiss!

From the deep red and dark gold crystal wires inside the mysterious crystal suit, mystic rays as thick as hair flowed out and soon protruded out of the crystal suit, extending all the way down the back of the crystal suit. As if they had their own life, they connected with each other and soon weaved into the “veins” and “nerves” of two enormous wings.

In the next moment, the black flames of light spurted crazily and congregated into delicate but sharp feathers that covered the network of veins and nerves, turning into a pair of enormous wings almost thirty meters long which couldn't have looked more awe-inspiring!

The black crystal suit with bloodred spiritual stripes and gold brilliance was exactly the Mystic Skeleton Blood Wing—the best, unique crystal suit of the federation that Li Yao had produced with the help of the entire Star Glory Federation and the most cutting-edge units and rune array systems from the primeval relics for the journey to the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“Ahhhhhhhhhh!”

Both the warden and the jailors had sensed the unstoppable, destructive waves released from Li Yao’s body. It felt like a whole high-speed crystal train was running over their faces brutally.

“Hoooooooooooo!”

The prisoners also saw the scene. Although they did not know who Li Yao was, they knew that he must be an enemy of the beehive prison and “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” as well as the source of the “hell march”.

Awed by Li Yao’s dominating image, the prisoners were roaring even more excitedly than before. Bashing the transparent glass walls hard, they cheered for Li Yao.

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

The hundreds of spiritual puppets under the control of crystal processors were the only things that were not moved by Li Yao’s grand entrance. They spurted out from the pathways in all directions and unfolded from the balls, unleashing all their firepower in the battle form!

“Hehe…”

Hidden deep below the dark mask, a smile of eagerness popped up on Li Yao’s face. He licked his lips and extended one finger.

Countless storm bolters, crystal cannons, chaotic cannons, machine guns, and honeycomb-type flying sword launchers arrived from the sky.

They were all the weapons that he stole from the Immortal Cultivators on his way to break into the place.

Li Yao’s telepathic thoughts turned into hundreds of tentacles, entangling and controlling the heavy-firepower magical equipment and locking onto the spiritual puppets in every direction.

Beep… Beep… Beep… Beep…

From the depths of his soul, invisible waves were also released to disrupt and sabotage the fire control chips of the spiritual puppets.

“Pa!”

Li Yao snapped softly.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Red, orange, green, blue, purple… A storm of bullets of a plethora of colors and a tsunami of spiritual energy were raised at the same time. The mystic rays, the bullets, and the metal scraps filled the entire vertical channel. Explosions and fireballs were happening nonstop, and the spiritual puppets fell like raindrops. But the black shadow remained absolutely still at the center where the explosions were most heated!

Half a minute later, the explosions came to a stop. All the flames, spiritual energy, and blasts dispersing in midair were absorbed by the Mystic Skeleton Blood Wing. There was nothing around Li Yao anymore. Not a single spiritual puppet was still floating in the midair.

The scene took place exactly next to the prisoners.

It was truly splendid, exciting, and violent!

All the prisoners couldn’t have been more shocked by Li Yao’s astonishing combat ability. They all cheered for him at the loudest of their voices.

A large batch of jailors finally put on their crystal suits and lunged at the intruder from all directions.

The volume of the “hell march” was suddenly raised to a high level, as if it were going to shatter the entire beehive prison, or at least all the transparent glass walls that blocked the prisoners!

“Nobody can defeat me with my background music.”

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao mumbled, “Not to mention worthless scumbags like you!”

Chapter 2099 - Invincible!

“Bo! Bo! Bo!”

The Mystic Skeleton Blood Wing turned into a vortex deep inside the ocean. The spiritual energy ran to all directions like undersea magma. The space in the hundreds of square meters nearby was filled up by Li Yao’s soul and spiritual energy, as if it were an extension of his brain!

He could easily control the feeblest ripple of spiritual energy in the space of hundreds of meters.

He could also sense the tremble of every grain of dust in the area within the time of a breath.

It was the most terrifying new technique of the Divinity Transformation Stage. The soul could be released into a domain, creating a small world that solely belonged to himself!

He was the dominator and the sovereign of the small world. In the violent space that was filled with gloomy winds and raging tides, he was an almighty god!

The Immortal Cultivators made an absolutely wrong choice.

Seeing that Li Yao was all by himself, they tried to lunge forward at the same time with their sheer advantage in number and besiege Li Yao in the narrow, vertical channel so that he would be drowned in the stormy, incessant firepower.

It was a shame that while the strategy might have worked on someone in the Nascent Soul Stage, it was absolutely impossible to deal with an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage!

In the narrow space where the Immortal Cultivators in the crystal suits were highly crowded, Li Yao’s advantage of “absolute domain” couldn’t have been made better use of.

Now that most Immortal Cultivators had appeared within the range of his “domain”, there was nowhere for them to escape at all.

In the blink of an eye, Li Yao had sensed the circulation routes of their crystal suits, the types of their super-compressed crystal reactors, the structures of their every chainsword and every saber, the quakes of the bullets of spiritual energy that were well-prepared inside the barrels ready to be shot out any moment, and even their every breath, every heartbeat, and every drop of cold sweat on their forehead where veins were protruding out.

All the Immortal Cultivators had no secrets before Li Yao. Their crystal suits turned into half-transparent glass, and their veins, nerves, and even internal organs were clearly visible!

Li Yao was even able to predict their next move before their nerve endings began to constrict!

Hiu!

When the fire control system of the crystal suits of all the Immortal Cultivators locked onto Li Yao tightly, Li Yao suddenly vanished from their crystal processors.

He was floating right before everyone. They could even see him clearly with the naked eye without the scan of the crystal cameras.

However, the target on the light beams of their crystal suits was erratic and unpredictable. They could not lock onto the target at all, as if it were not a human being before their eyes but a wandering ghost without a real entity!

In the next second, Li Yao took action.

The wings that were almost forty meters long, which was surrounded by bloody flames and golden light, suddenly expanded to almost a hundred meters long and enshrouded a hundred Immortal Cultivators. Revolving rapidly, they turned into the most ferocious tornado!

Exclamations, gunshots, collisions, and explosions echoed nonstop. Having no time to bother with the safety of their companions, the Immortal Cultivators shot mystic rays and bullets at the black tornado crazily. But they seemed to be feeding a ravenous beast because the black tornado was only getting larger and larger in size and consuming more and more Immortal Cultivators!

Pu! Pu! Pu! Pu! Pu!

As the black tornado revolved at the highest speed, many Immortal Cultivators whose crystal suits had been shattered or even set on fire were thrown away brutally into cannonballs that were as quick as lightning, before they hit the transparent glass walls of the prison cells around heavily.

The force of the collision was so huge that many Immortal Cultivators were vaporized even before they were split apart. The super-compressed crystal reactors on their crystal suits, in the meantime, turned into powerful crystal bombs that exploded on the transparent glass walls one after another.

Despite the sturdiness of the transparent glass walls, they could not withstand the incessant collisions of crystal suits.

With cracking sounds, a lot of gaps that looked like spider webs appeared on the glass walls.

The blood-boiling, violent battle hymn was even more inspiring than before. Almost all the prisoners had been living a life more miserable than death in the hellish prison and hated the jailors’ guts. They were so excited that they almost couldn’t control themselves when they watched Li Yao butchering the jailors as if they were chickens.

While crashing the transparent glass walls nonstop in cooperation with Li Yao, with the hope of completely blowing up the gaps, they roared in their primitive animality and vented their anger and ecstasy to their hearts’ content. They did not know Li Yao’s name yet, but in their eyes, Li Yao had turned into the embodiment of their infinite fury that had been accumulated to the zenith after decades of imprisonment and torture!

BOOM!

Another jailor was blown away by Li Yao brutally into a transparent glass wall that was on the brink of collapse.

The man was rather sturdy. Although his bones and internal organs were all broken, he was not dead yet.

But before he struggled, a furry claw extended out of the broken gap on the transparent glass wall and grabbed him by the neck. Squeezing and churning it brutally, the claw broke the man’s spine by force!

BOOM! BOOM, BOOM, BOOM!

Finally, the first prisoner broke the transparent glass wall. A bleeding, magnificent body crawled out of the hole and stared at the God of Killing Li Yao at the center of the black tornado with utmost admiration while letting out roars that were equally filled with the will of slaughter and resistance!

The alarms in the beehive prison were even more earsplitting and panicking.

However, even the most earsplitting alarms would be eclipsed by Li Yao’s unbelievably vehement hell march.

The hundreds of jailors were all horrified. Under the intimidation of the overwhelming aura of the Divinity Transformation Stage, they could not summon any courage to resist at all.

Many of them ran away immediately, hoping to enter the main body of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” from the bottom of the vertical channel.

However, with Li Yao’s help, more and more prisoners had blown up the transparent glass walls before them. Given temporary freedom, they all sprinted forward and jumped at the jailors who were fleeing in panic, knocking them away brutally.

Turmoil. The whole beehive prison was caught in the turmoil. More and more prisoners escaped like floods breaking the dam. They were all running to the control room at the top where the warden was at. Although they were in ragged clothes and barely armed, their bodies of flesh and blood were already the best weapons after dozens of refinements.

“Hurry up and activate the Dragnet to the maximum!”

The warden shouted hysterically in the control room.

“Hum…”

A dull noise echoed, and electric arcs as thick as boas rose from the bottom of the vertical channel, sweeping across the entire beehive prison instantly.

Due to the attraction of the powerful magnetic field in all directions, all the prisoners couldn't help but open their arms and legs, before they were bound to the wall and the floor tightly.

The shackles were deeply entangled with their spines and their brains. If they resisted, there would only be excruciating pain that nobody could resist.

“Ahhh! Ahhh! Ahhh!”

The prisoners were stuck to the floor; their arms and their legs stretched out. They could do nothing except to bulge their bloodshot eyes and utter roars of discontentment.

“Hehe!”

At this moment, Li Yao had already cleared all the prisoners within a hundred meters from him, who were shot at the transparent glass walls as cannonballs without any exception.

Glancing at the prisoners who had been pressed to the ground, he tilted his head and stared at the control room up above. With his left hand behind his back, he straightened his right arm and opened his fingers.

A dark red light ball that contained extremely dangerous energy, with the deep golden electric arcs as the framework, began to condense, revolve, and expand rapidly at his palm!

“Not… Not good!”

The warden in the control room seemed to be able to see Li Yao’s eyes, which were exploding before him like two supernovas!

The warden wanted to escape out of his natural instincts, but his entire body from the muscle fibers to the nerve endings to the spine had been completely destroyed by Li Yao’s eyes. He could not even move his toe as he watched the dark red light ball that looked like a black hole grew larger and larger, until it filled his eyes and completely melted him as well as the control room!

Li Yao demolished the control room of the beehive prison in one shot.

However, the Dragnet that had been activated to the maximum could not be cracked so easily. Thousands of prisoners were still attached to the floor tightly.

“Hehe…”

Li Yao smiled and turned his eyes downward again.

The pitch-black channel seemed to have become a translucent structure, allowing him to easily detect the spiritual energy relay station that was buried at the deepest part of the beehive prison, which was the source that provided incessant energy for the great array.

Under the watch of all the prisoners who were full of expectation and disbelief, an unprecedented miracle took place!

Li Yao stabbed his hands deeply into the midline of the breastplate of his crystal suit and pulled the two parts heavily.

The crystal suit should have been made of metals and crystals, but a structure that looked like the crystalline lens of living creatures was revealed on the chest.

Then, after a moment with weird rhythms, two clusters of the crystalline lens the size of goose eggs also protruded out of the hands of the Mystic Skeleton Blood Wing.

Electric arcs and ripples of spiritual energy appeared from the void around the four clusters of the crystalline lens. Leaving unpredictable traces behind, they were condensed into sophisticated and calligraphic runes that were all absorbed by the crystalline lens.

The four clusters of the crystalline lens were more and more bright, dazzling, and scorching, as if four small suns were growing out of Li Yao's body!

At first, many prisoners were still bulging their eyes while watching the incredible scene.

But very soon, the light spots triggered by Li Yao's body were already as intense as the solar flare of the sun. It was impossible for the prisoners to look at them directly at all.

In the end, even though they shut their eyes tightly, they could still feel the ubiquitous light stabbing into their eyes and blinding them like golden swords!

It was the strength incomparable and even unavoidable for them. They could do nothing except to roar and bellow at the loudest of their voices, venting their fear and ecstasy in such a way.

Even if they had to die, they still wanted to die together with the beehive prison, “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”, and the Immortal Cultivators!

“It’s been a long time. A hundred billion times, the Cell Obliteration Cannon, burst now!”

When every mitochondrion in every cell had been burnt to the maximum and had the deepest reverberation with his soul, Li Yao shouted and pushed his palms out brutally!

Chapter 2100 - Save Yourselves!

It was like a hundred billion suns exploding inside the narrow vertical channel at the same time. Congregating into a storm of light that could pierce through the entire universe, they marched forward at the depths of the channel unstoppably.

At the bottom of the vertical channel, a lot of Immortal Cultivators were still fleeing in panic, too intimidated by Li Yao's unparalleled might to confront Li Yao at all. They were about to escape to the inner parts of "Manjusaka, the City in the Sky" to ask for help.

However, the sharp alarms from their crystal processors and the sense of burning of their nerve endings completely ossified their body. Driven by their natural instincts, they all turned around in devastation.

"Ahhhh..."

They saw an ocean of light, heat, blast, ultra-radiations, and high-energy particles smashing at their faces overwhelmingly, enshrouding them in the blink of an eye.

Their crystal suits were melted, their skin withered, their blood boiled, their bones were burned into ashes, and their souls ripped apart, turning into a tiny bubble in the ocean of light.

The unpardonable Immortal Cultivators were obliterated into nothingness before they had the opportunity to scream!

All the prisoners in the cells nearby found it impossible to open their eyes under the incomparably brilliant light.

Some of the flames and blasts even surged into the cells through the cracks on the transparent glass walls, rushing past their heads and savaging crazily.

It was like an infuriated river of magma, running unstoppably above their heads with surging tides.

They could only stick their heads to the floor and scratched it hard with their fingers while keeping their mouths wide open, letting out hysterical roars, melting their wrath, hatred, and entire soul into the overwhelming tides made of flames of light and blasts!

The roars of light that felt like an outburst of a solar storm continued on for more than half a minute.

The prisoners could see absolutely nothing except for pure whiteness. There was nothing but the sound of frictions caused by the air burned by the high-speed spiritual energy in their ears, like what people might hear when they broke into the atmosphere at a super high speed on a landing capsule.

Suddenly, everybody sensed that a dull explosion took place in the depths of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” below their feet, followed by such a great earthquake that something seemed to have been completely destroyed.

The storm of light finally died down bit by bit.

The whiteness before their eyes gradually faded away, replaced by the hints of the color of blood. They were the capillary vessels on their eyelids, which were now clearly seen by them.

Before the prisoners took a breath in relief, a series of world-shaking explosions burst out deep down their feet.

As if they were a response to the storm of light just now, infinite mystic rays, blasts, and high-energy particles spurted upward along the vertical channel in the form of a volcano eruption, splashing all the way to the outside of the beehive prison through the gate!

The prisoners moaned in pain again and buried their heads deep in their arms. Their heads, which were now a mess, were occupied by two questions.

Firstly, was the unbelievably strong freak outside capable of resisting such violent blasts of spiritual energy?

Secondly, why were they able to move their arms now? They could cover their head!

Did it mean that the array of Dragnet was losing effect?

The outburst of spiritual energy from bottom to top lasted slightly more than one minute intermittently, before it ran out of momentum too.

The energy system of the beehive prison seemed to have a lot of faults. Even the illumination rune arrays and the defense shields had stopped functioning, not to mention “Dragnet”, the super magnetic shackles that tied all the prisoners up tightly!

The prisoners staggered to their feet. Wiping the blood that flowed out of their eyes, their nostrils, their noses, and their mouths, they shook their dizzy heads hard and looked at the shackles on their wrists and ankles suspiciously, still not having the vaguest clue what had just happened.

They only knew that…

First of all, now that the magnetic shackles had lost effect, they were now able to perform the swiftest and most agile body movement skills!

Secondly, after so many rounds of repetitive savaging, the transparent glass walls before them were riddled with holes. Even if they had not completely collapsed yet, it would be very easy to blow a reasonably large hole on the glass walls.

Thirdly, all the jailers in the beehive prisoner had been killed in the most miserable way. Now, the prison was theirs.

Fourthly—

All the prisoners looked at Li Yao who was still floating in the vertical channel at the center of thousands of prison cells in shock, astonishment, confusion, and admiration!

At first, he burned tremendous cells and mitochondria into the purest energy to bombard the energy relay station of the beehive prison. Then, he resisted the counterforce of the explosion of the energy relay station the hard way and even absorbed some of the escaping spiritual energy for his own use. Under the protection of Li Yao’s spiritual energy in the Divinity Transformation Stage, the “Mystic Skeleton Blood Wing” showed absolutely no sign of being damaged. Instead, another layer of bouncing flames was added to the pair of broad wings, making them look even more eye-catching, majestic, and dominating.

Such an unparalleled appearance almost made all the prisoners grow the urge to worship him in their excitement.

“Who is he exactly?”

“Why is he so strong?”

Ten thousand question marks were popping up in the hearts of the prisoners.

They were perhaps not Immortal Cultivators, but having grown up in such a dog-eat-dog world as the Imperium of True Human Beings, they had natural reverence for the experts. Li Yao’s mysteriousness and magnificence were like burning nails that were deeply pinned into their hearts!

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

Behind Li Yao, the wings that were almost forty meters long were withdrawn, rolled, and loosened again, blowing out thousands of feathers to all directions like a storm. Every feather was like a tiny flying sword when they darted at the transparent glass walls of the thousands of prison cells.

In the next moment, Li Yao’s hands performed almost ten thousand signs, extending thousands of spiritual threads from his fingers to pull the feathers.

The feathers turned from red to gold, and from gold to dazzling white. In furiously burning flames, they burned a hole almost two meters in diameter on the transparent glass walls of all the cells!

As a result, even the prisoners who could not escape from the cells on their own were now able to breathe the freshest air!

“Hooray!”

“Hoooooooo!”

“Aoooooooo!”

Many prisoners jumped out of the holes in a hurry before waiting for the orange materials at the edge of the hole to cool down.

They stared at Li Yao carefully at first, before they glanced downward in curiosity, wondering what kind of damage Li Yao’s blow had caused just now.

After a look, everybody was completely dumbfounded.

At a very far place down in the beehive prison, the channel and the metal structures had been completely melted up into boiling magma. When they looked at it from a distance, they could see nothing but red and orange colors.

It could be vaguely seen that the shell of the energy relay station had been completely blown up, and a series of smaller explosions were still going on inside. It seemed that the beehive prison was not the only victim whose energy supply had been affected; even the main power source of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” might be caught in trouble too.

If the main power source of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” was affected or even completely sabotaged, it would mean that the space fortress lost the ability to power the spiritual shields and the anti-gravity rune arrays. That would certainly be a lot of fun!

“Was it… really done by a single person?”

“It is even more unbelievable than the damage that a whole army could’ve made!”

“Who is he exactly? What does he want?”

After witnessing the damage that Li Yao had caused on his own, all the prisoners began to tremble hard. All of their nerve endings were shaking unpredictably under Li Yao's pressure.

More and more prisoners broke out of the cages, but they did not know what to do in the next step. They were all in the middle of the dark, boundless space, with nowhere to run to at all!

The thousands of prisoners, the ghastly monsters, and the poor creatures who had gone through all kinds of suffering although they were all common miners, farmers, or even unlucky bottom-level Immortal Cultivators in the past, all stared at Li Yao at a loss.

The hell march that had been bombarding the beehive prison all the time, however, did not stop, although the energy supply of the entire prison had been cut off and the broadcast rune arrays had been blown up. The music that was full of incitement and explosiveness was getting even more passionate and soul-stirring. This time, it directly burst out from Li Yao's body!

"You can stop looking at me like that. I am not here to save you!"

Li Yao's very first declaration dumbfounded all the prisoners.

What did he mean? Having killed so many jailers, destroyed the array of the "Dragnet", and set all of them free, he claimed that he was not here to save them?

"I am a Cultivator and a resister who is unwilling to be enslaved, tortured, and living in a dark, miserable, hopeless life forever!"

Glancing around coldly, Li Yao roared in a sound that felt like rumbling thunders and spread it out in the waves of spiritual energy. “The Cultivators’ army is now attacking ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ and determined to demolish it even at the cost of their death. Simple as that!”

“The Cultivators!”

The prisoners were all shocked.

In the Imperium of True Human Beings’ propaganda, “Cultivators” were never a formidable enemy and often showed up as the lackeys of the Covenant Alliance or the extraterrestrial devils.

However, the powerful damages that Li Yao demonstrated just now were enough to overthrow all the stereotypes that the prisoners had for “Cultivators”.

Li Yao’s explanation for the Cultivators triggered a strong mutual feeling in the hearts of the prisoners too.

“To be enslaved, tortured, and living a dark, miserable hopeless life forever!”

Wasn’t it exactly the depiction of their life?

The prisoners swallowed back their bloodstained saliva. Many of them breathed fast as they watched Li Yao’s awesome look, and they clenched their hands that carried sharp talons into fists.

“Nobody can save you right now except for yourselves!”

Li Yao continued bellowing, “Right now, the fleet of the Cultivators is engaged in a fierce battle with the fleet of the Immortal Cultivators in space. We are all determined to blow up ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ even if all of us will be sacrificed here!

“In order to completely annihilate the Cultivators, the Immortal Cultivators have launched most of the forces in ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ deep into space. This place can’t be more weakly defended right now. Only one-tenth of the soldiers at best, and we, are left here!”

Chapter 2101 - Wuying's Broken Dream

The word "we" touched all the prisoners.

Were people like them also qualified to be equal to the mysterious and strong Cultivator before their eyes and referred to as "we" by him?

"Outside of this place is the boundless sea of stars, where countless warships of the Immortal Cultivators are fighting. Leaving them aside, more reinforcements of the Immortal Cultivators will certainly arrive in ten to fifteen days. If you stay here, there is absolutely no way that you can get out of your doom!"

Li Yao continued bellowing, "No matter how you bend your knees and beg before the Immortal Cultivators' feet for their mercy, your fate will still be as cursed as before. You will still receive inhumane sufferings in the sunless prisons and laboratories until you die at the end without a sound!

"There is only one way that you can survive!

"While 'Manjusaka, the City in the Sky' is more weakly guarded than ever, attack the core of the space fortress with me, kill all the Immortal Cultivators, and occupy the place completely!

"There is an abundant reserve of resources here, including astronomical crystals, fuel, and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. A lot of civil carriers are docked at the spaceports at the periphery too. As long as they carry enough fuel and food, it is impossible that they can ship some people away. It will be a success as long as you persist until the moment of the space jump!

“But the prerequisite of everything is to conquer ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ first and grasp the defense system of the space fortress entirely!

“Otherwise, even if we can hijack a few civil carriers, it is still absolutely impossible to sail out of the spaceports. Even if we can sail out of the spaceports, we will be shot down by the defense system of the space fortress in half a minute!

“Yes. This is a very dangerous, life-blighting mission. Most of you will die here. Nobody can guarantee that you can certainly survive.

“But I can guarantee that the sacrifice of each of you will mean the deaths of ten or even a hundred Immortal Cultivators who will go to the other world with you!

“This is all I have to say. If you still have the slightest courage in your veins, if you do not wish to die anonymously like an ant and a cockroach, if you have had enough of the mockery and derision of the Immortal Cultivators, if you want to avenge your deceased family members, and if you want to fight for a slim chance of survival for yourselves, just come with me. I will fight side by side with you. The resisters and the avengers will blow up ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ and take back the freedom that belongs to us!”

After speaking resolutely to this moment, Li Yao did not waste any time but simply stretched the black wings at the back of his crystal suit to the maximum. Redness emanated from the endings of the feathers again, raising an overwhelming fire of fury, as he dashed to the main area of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”.

The prisoners in the remains of the prison looked at each other in bewilderment, pondering at a loss.

There was no telling who roared first, but very soon, the declarations of anger and regret echoed all over the beehive prison.

“FREEDOM!”

The furiously burning torrent of iron had been gathered. Under Li Yao’s direction, it congregated into an invincible tsunami that could destroy everything as it ran to the most vulnerable abdomen of the Immortal Cultivators!

…

At the central control room in the core part of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”, Wuying Lan, owner of the space fortress, still did not have the faintest clue about the superstorm that had already taken shape right next to him.

His face with a casual smile was covered by the colorful, flashing numbers and graphs on the thousands of light beams. He couldn’t have looked more confident of his victory.

The coalition fleet of Starlight in space had been tackled by the fleet of the Imperium led by Li Lingfeng in person. The crystal suit groups that looked like swarms of bees had blocked every gap that the Cultivators could possibly escape through.

Although it would take some additional efforts, the destruction of the coalition fleet of Starlight was only a matter of time.

The underground branch of Starlight on the Land of Sins, which they had intentionally kept as bait, was on the brink of collapse too. It seemed that they might lay down their weapons and surrender without him doing anything.

Everything had been conducted according to the scripts that Li Lingfeng and he had carefully drafted. Everybody was their chess piece and their marionette.

The ecstasy of having everything under control made Wuying Lan narrow his eyes and shiver softly. His nerve endings felt so comfortable that they seemed to be stimulated by feeble electric currents.

On the other hand, and on the more important level, the large epic quest “Dying Light”, a special show presented by the slaughter stream platform of the Heavenly Eye Group, now had an audience rate far higher than the shows of the other corporations of similar types. It was even higher than the combined audience rates from the second place to the tenth place on the rank. To some extent, it had completely monopolized the eyes of all the people in the entire Imperium.

According to the breath, heartbeats, brainwaves, and secretion of adrenaline on the few samples, the viewers had been deeply fascinated by their show and were completely dwelling in the world and ideas that they had constructed.

Both Wuying Lan and Li Lingfeng would announce their grand entrance in the show in the next step. Their influence in the entire Imperium would be expanded further than ever.

For a moment, a ridiculous idea occurred to Wuying Lan’s brain that was almost simmering in excitement.

If the Heavenly Eye Group continued developing like that, was it possible that Li Lingfeng would really become the leader of the Li family and one of four Kurfürsten of the Imperium, and he, as an abnormal member of a branch of the royal family, would get a chance to claim the ultimate throne someday?

But the idea was completely deleted by him after it only flashed for a moment in his head.

Wuying Lan laughed in amusement, at his own arrogance and idiocy.

His reliance was Li Lingfeng and the Li family, but the emperor right now had already been pushed forward and backed by the Li family. The Li family even arranged for Li Linghai to be the queen.

Then, according to the unspoken agreements of the four Kurfürst families hundreds of years ago, the Li family would certainly back off slightly regarding the candidate of the next emperor now that it had earned enough benefits from the current one. It was impossible for two emperors who were inclined to the Li family to be elected in a row.

Besides, the Imperium was now no longer at the age of Blackstar the Great a thousand years ago. The so-called emperor was just a puppet of the four Kurfürst families. Even if he did become an emperor someday, would it be anything interesting? He would be nothing more than a gigantic puppet.

The Heavenly Eye Group was his “imperium”. As long as he could completely grasp the Heavenly Eye Group and extend the tentacles of the slaughter stream platform to every corner of the Imperium so that everybody could hear his voice, see his perfect image, and dance according to his will, everything would be enough.

In such a case, he would be the uncrowned king of the entire universe!

“Hehe…”

Looking at the audience rate that continued on the rise and the looks of the “chess pieces” who were panicked, devastated, or bursting into fury, Wuying Lan chuckled in great satisfaction.

Right then, feeble explosions and quakes echoed from a place far away above his head.

Wuying Lan’s chuckle was immediately frozen.

As if hit right at the tip of his nose by a punch, the dominator of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” looked more awful than ever.

Narrowing his eyes, he stared at the water cup on the control panel coldly.

“Bo… Bo… Bo…”

The control center should have been absolutely still, but ripples were spreading in the cup nonstop, as if a dinosaur-like behemoth were crashing his fortress heavily.

“Damn it. What has possibly gone wrong? No starships of Starlight can approach us at all. All the attacks have been blocked by our defense shield!”

With a gloomy face, Wuying Lan stared at the ceiling without blinking. His grave eyes seemed to be piercing through the cabin walls in search of the origin of the explosions and the quakes.

“My lord, the beehive prison is under assault!”

The deputy commander of the “Heavenly Eye Legion”, a private armed force of the Heavenly Eye Group, who was responsible for the security of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” as the captain of the guards, stammered to him; his teeth clattering beyond his control.

Wuying Lan had such a pale face that the blood all over his body might have been frozen. Grabbing the captain of the guards by the collar, he gnashed his teeth. “What do you mean by ‘under assault’? Who has assaulted us in what way?”

“We do not have any idea yet!”

The captain of guards replied, almost crying, “We only know that the energy relay station of the beehive prison has been completely destroyed and the great array of ‘Dragnet’ is wasted too. The stability of our main energy core has been affected too. We have completely lost in touch with the prison. By estimation, things must’ve completely gone out of control!”

“How is it possible?”

Wuying Lan burst into fury. “The energy relay station of the beehive prison has a protective shell made of seven layers of superalloys. It has the defensive ability that equals the anti-explosive armors at the front of the main-force warships. Unless the garbage of Starlight sail their starships to the deepest part of the beehive prison and barrage it right next to the shell, it can never be blown up! Tell me. How many starships and troops have the enemy deployed to cause such damages? And where are the starships and troops?"

"I..."

The captain of the guards was as confused as his superior, not having the vaguest idea of how the unexpected attack was activated.

Taking a deep breath, Wuying Lan said—one word after another—his fury turning into gloom and indifference, "Why is the damage of such a large scale not detected earlier?"

"Our Spiritual Nexus was hacked by the enemy."

The captain of the guards replied, "The enemy sent false data streams into our alarm system. They were implanted in a very sophisticated way, which misled our system into thinking that the beehive prison had been peaceful and quiet."

"What?"

The veins on Wuying Lan's forehead were jumping crazily. "The garbage of Starlight can't boast such hacking abilities. What is the situation now?"

"Now, we are still repairing the system and tracing the enemy in an emergency. Ah. All the surveillance cameras from the beehive prison to the center of the City in the Sky have been controlled by us again!"

The captain of the guards operated quickly on his portable crystal processor for a moment, triggering more than ten delicate 3D light beams.

The surging torrents on the light beam completely collapsed Wuying Lan’s calm face.

Chapter 2102 - Total Sabotage!

The nearest facility to the beehive prison was the laboratories and the living quarters of the researchers.

Tens of thousands of specialists of the Imperium of True Human Beings in biochemistry and magical equipment production were gathered in the area. Many of them had been working and living in the large laboratory that was “Land of Sins” since hundreds of years ago.

They were the real precious treasure for Wuying Lan’s Heavenly Eye Group, Li Lingfeng’s Li family, and even the entire Imperium of True Human Beings.

For the convenience of retrieving “experiment materials”, and to save their time, the laboratories had been established right next to the beehive prison.

But at this moment, the specialists took the hit at first and suffered a cataclysm!

They were still dedicated to all kinds of experiments a moment ago, or busy tracking and observing the conditions of a certain “experiment subject” on the Land of Sins through the light beams.

All the laboratories were peaceful and quiet. Everybody was at ease.

But the serial explosions that Li Yao triggered at his best by blowing up the energy relay station of the beehive prison with “Cell Obliteration Cannon” affected the area too.

After a while of deafening explosions and world-shaking quakes, countless specialists who were running experiments were knocked to the ground. The illumination arrays on the ceiling flashed rapidly. The pathways and the laboratories were all consumed by darkness. The automatic fire-extinguishing system spurted out tremendous heat-absorption foams!

“Ahhh…”

Caught unprepared, the specialists did not even know what was going on. A lot of them were moaning in pain after they were buried by the cabinets and the operating tables that had fallen over.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The noises that resembled the bombardment of giant cannons echoed from far away. Very soon, they were replaced by a cracking sound. The indestructible gate was opened!

Thud! Thud! Thud! Thud! Thud! Thud! Thud!

Hasty footsteps came over from the pathways and the corridors. Twisted shadows tall and short popped up from the smoke, and spots of red light were flickering in the darkness.

At first, the specialists thought that they were the glimmers of the crystal suits of the reinforcement of the Immortal Cultivators.

However, the intense stench of blood and the heavy breath that sounded like animals made their pores constrict violently, and their adrenaline secreted to the maximum.

Out of natural instincts, they immediately realized that the red light was actually eyes that filled with the flames of fury, hatred, agony, desperation, and revenge.

“Aooooooo!”

The masters of biochemistry and magical equipment used to refine them in person and stimulate them to grow sharp claws and tusks, sparing no efforts to transform them from strengthless civilians into violent, brutal monsters and slaughter machines. Now, they were finally returning the generosity to the masters of biochemistry and magical equipment!

Thousands of prisoners charged into the laboratories like a flood that had grown tusks and sharp teeth!

“Stop—Stop there!”

A lot of the specialists and the masters of the magical equipment opened fire. To be frank, as experienced Immortal Cultivators, even if they were not pure battle-type, they were still significantly stronger than the common prisoners.

However, faced with the astonishing sturdiness of the prisoners and their absolute advantage in number, the best the researchers could do was to hit the few prisoners in the vanguard, before they were completely drowned by the furious tides!

Bam! Bam! Bam! Bam!

Rows of prisoners collapsed, but even more prisoners jumped close from all directions at a speed that far exceeded the limits of normal human beings before they tackled the researchers as quickly as lightning.

They bit with their teeth, they scratched with their claws, and they grabbed the researchers’ throats, windpipes, and even internal organs without letting go even if they had died, until they had dug out all their enemies’ organs.

The laboratories immediately turned into a living hell. No. The place was a living hell in the first place. Almost all the prisoners had tasted the feeling that was more miserable than death here. They had watched the mutations on themselves with their eyes or even been through the farewells with their families. The feeling of excruciating pain spread throughout every inch of the place.

Right now, they were venting all the pain back to the Immortal Cultivators without leaving any drop of it!

“Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!”

“Aooooo! Die now! Die now! Die now!”

As long as they fell into the hands or the mouths of the prisoners, all the specialists and experimenters would end up as bleeding, broken bodies in half a minute.

Somebody struggled to get away, but prisoners who had gone berserk were everywhere. They were all caught back helplessly, leaving deep scratch marks on the floor.

There were naturally experts who were supervising the enormous laboratories. Those experts were Li Yao’s targets.

Lurking among the frantic prisoners, Li Yao hid in the shadows of the tall prisoners and through the stealth techniques of the Mystic Skeleton Blood Wing, until he jumped out from the enemy’s back out of their expectation and executed the experts one after another.

Right next to the experiment area was a small arsenal, in which the state-of-the-art magical equipment that was being researched on the Land of Sins was stored.

Compared to the magical equipment that the Immortal Cultivators projected to the Land of Sins, the state-of-the-art devices here had gone through one or two rounds of real-life tests. Naturally, they were more steady and powerful.

Li Yao had long figured out the location of the small arsenal through Neltharion and the mental devil.

Naturally, the arsenal was sealed by barriers. But few, if any, barriers in the entire universe could ever stop somebody in the Divinity Transformation Stage.

…

“The beehive prison has completely gone out of control. The prisoners have somehow broken away from the suppression of the ‘Dragnet’ and run into the experiment areas and the living quarters of the specialists. They are now in the middle of a cruel massacre.”

The captain of the guards said drily, “Also… Also, they seemed to have opened the state-of-the-art arsenal affiliated to the laboratories and seized abundant magical equipment that we are now researching.”

Wuying Lan felt that the world was swirling. The muscles and the veins on his face were twitching at the same time, and there was no telling whether he was going to cry or to laugh. He almost couldn’t stand steadily and collapsed to the ground.

He had just climbed to the peak of his life. The most brilliant path was being unfolded before him slowly. His ambitions, his cause, and his dream were turning from unpredictable illusions into reality bit by bit.

But right now, the filthy, humble prisoners had smacked him right in the face heavily!

The specialists and the masters of magical equipment were all his most precious treasures. Many of them had been invited over by him from other Sectors. They were the foundations for the existence of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” and the Land of Sins!

But now, they were killed by a bunch of goddamn prisoners so easily!

Who did it? Who did it?!

Wuying Lan felt like grabbing the collar of the captain of guards and roaring desperately.

But he simply took a deep breath after his eyes were glued to the light beams and shivered for a long time. Gnashing his teeth, he declared, one word after another, “Find a way to stop them!”

“We-We’re on it!”

The captain of guards stammered, “But right now, most of our available forces are projected to the space battlefield to deal with the coalition fleet of Starlight. Look. The fleets of the two parties have been completely engaged. There’s no way to separate them. A lot of our Exos have taken off from the motherships and even invaded the enemy’s starships. It is very difficult to ask them to retreat immediately!”

While the coalition fleet of Starlight was essentially a pile of garbage, just like trapped beasts, at the last moment when they knew that they were dead for sure, their combat ability could be rather astonishing if they were determined to perish together with their enemy.

Now that the two parties were deeply engaged, it would be informing the enemy of their own weakness if they were to summon a large batch of forces back. One moment of carelessness, and the army might be crushed!

Besides, even if they could summon a large batch of troops back, so what? The enemy was not attacking from the outside of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” but savaging right inside the space fortress? Were they going to fight a great “street battle” within “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”?

The picture was so beautiful that Wuying Lan felt the urge of vomiting when he only thought of it.

“Is there no way to stop them?”

His eyes bloodshot, Wuying Lan said in a hoarse voice, “Cut off the channel from the experiment area to this place and pump away all the air in the experiment area. Or simply open all the airtight gates in the experiment area to space by remote control so that they will all be absorbed into space!”

“In that case, all our specialists would be screwed too.”

The captain of the guards reminded him carefully.

Generally speaking, considering the scale of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”, once all the specialists were killed abruptly, they would not be replaced by the specialists of the same quantity and quality in the next decades. The laboratory that Wuying Lan had constructed through arduous efforts would be completely destroyed.

Wuying Lan glared at him.

“Besides, it is hard to achieve even through remote work.”

The captain of the guards said, “The enemy is still disrupting our network and implanting all kinds of weird viruses into our crystal processors. The viruses are somewhat similar to the models that were once popular in the Imperium a hundred years ago, but they have gone through very special upgrades and mutations. All in all, they are quite tricky.”

…

Deep inside the mainframe crystal processor above the heads of the Immortal Cultivators, the mental devil was maneuvering Neltharion to pierce the crystal wires that were dozens of times thinner than hair into the complicated chips while whispering a weird tune.

Basically, the viruses that were implanted into the control system of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” were exactly those which “Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan” implanted into the super crystal processor of the federation. They were the super mutated viruses that had been fully upgraded and strengthened by the extraterrestrial devils.

However, Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan was trying to fully control the super crystal processor of the federation with such a virus. Therefore, it consumed a lot of his spiritual energy and computational ability.

The mental devil, on the other hand, did not need to bother with the problems of control and manipulation. All it needed to do was to sabotage blatantly and comprehensively to disrupt the enemy for ten to twenty minutes so that Li Yao would have enough time to charge into the central area of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”.

“Sabotage! Sabotage! Sabotage! Hahahaha. This is what I should always be doing!”

The mental devil grinned hideously in delight. “It feels really good to rage unstoppably and to destroy everything without any concern!”

Chapter 2103 - Tempest God!

Wuying Lan looked at the tides of prisoners on the surveillance light beam who looked like ferocious beasts in silence.

They were more like zombies and devils that were filled up with hatred, anger, and craziness than living human beings. Fearless of death, they pushed forward relentlessly, sometimes even not in search for a chance of survival but for the place where the Immortal Cultivators were densest so that they could die together with the Immortal Cultivators in the cruelest and most violent ways.

After looting a lot of latest magical equipment that was still being experimented from the warehouse affiliated to the laboratory, the lunatics had an even greater damage than before. Very soon, they broke through the channel between the laboratory and the central area of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”.

In the meantime, the guards of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” organized a few counterattacks. The well-trained Exos blew back the zealous lunatics more than easily. As a result, “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” was riddled with holes. The serial explosions led to a chain reaction, causing hundreds of holes on the outmost wall of the space fortress. Tremendous Immortal Cultivators and prisoners were sucked out, drifting into the dark, cold universe. Inside “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”, a lot of vacuumed, unpopulated areas had appeared.

Watching countless invaluable experiment facilities and dead bodies of the specialists floating in the vacuum or even sucked out of the space fortress altogether, Wuying Lan felt that his own internal organs were being sucked out of his body too.

His heart was truly aching more than ever!

“You—”

Glowering at the captain of guards, Wuying Lan asked, “Do you have any way to stop those lunatics?”

“It’s very difficult.”

Faced with Wuying Lan’s eyes that were brimming with killing intent, the captain of guards had no choice except to explain in fear, “My lord, as you have seen, the prisoners have occupied the entire experiment area and released abundant mutated beasts which have been through strengthening procedures. They are proliferating in the experiment area like a pandemic and infiltrating into the central living quarters. But it is impossible for us to shut off all the gates from the experiment area to the central area.

“Even if we do find a way to shut them off, it won’t be a difficult task to blow up the gates by force. After all, we never considered the possibility of a ‘street fight’ within ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ when the space fortress was designed at the beginning!

“Besides, we are now seriously short of hands, and we have to attack very cautiously. It is impossible for us to defend every pathway leading to the central area!

“Given five times—no, only three times more soldiers, I’ll be confident to annihilate all the prisoners. But the losses caused to ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ will be beyond our concerns.”

Wuying Lan’s lips trembled for a long time before the desperation in his eyes turned into infinite wrath.

“Somebody must be behind all this.”

Wuying Lan gnashed his teeth. “The prisoners couldn’t have run loose for no good reason. Our network couldn’t have been hacked so easily either!”

“Then—”

Thinking for a moment, the captain of the guards said, “Should we cut off the stream?”

The coldness beaming out of Wuying Lan’s eyes made the captain of guards tremble harder than ever before in his entire life. He berated, “Have you lost your mind? Do you have any idea what ‘Dying Light’ means for the Heavenly Eye Group as an epic quest? Everything! It means everything! Nothing can possibly stop the stream from going on!

“Now, I want you to block the goddamn prisoners with your guards in person, stop their passionate momentum, and find out whoever is behind them by the way. Then, I will take action in person. Whoever they are, I will dig out their hearts and livers and devour them right in front of their faces!”

“Yes, sir!”

The captain of the guards stood at attention and ran off in a hurry under Wuying Lan’s pressure.

Wuying Lan continued staring at the picture on the light beam that was half ocean and half fire, with the muscles and the veins on his face cramping at the same time. Eventually, he signed and reached out to “Tornado”, Li Lingfeng’s flagship.

Li Lingfeng was making progress very smoothly.

From the enormous light beam of the mainframe crystal processor of Tornado behind him, it could be clearly seen that a large starship of the coalition fleet of Starlight was exploding slowly and consumed by countless fireballs that looked like tumors. Li Lingfeng’s face was full of confidence under the illumination of the colorful flames. He appeared as certain of his victory as Wuying Lan was ten minutes ago.

But only three minutes later, his face was completely frozen first like Wuying Lan right now, before thousands of cracks showed up, and it completely collapsed.

Li Lingfeng craned his face to the crystal camera, filling the entire light beam so that Wuying Lan could see with his enormous face. “What did you mean? Mysterious intruders have set free all the prisoners of the beehive prison, who are now posing a threat to the central area of ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’? What kind of ‘mysterious intruders’ could’ve possibly achieved something so incredible?”

“I’m on it.”

Slightly frowning, Wuying Lan replied briefly, “But I need time and reinforcements. It is impossible for us to hold for long with the available forces of ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ right now.”

Li Lingfeng glared at Wuying Lan in fury.

Wuying Lan glared back at Li Lingfeng too, without saying anything.

Li Lingfeng and he were partners and not in a pure chain of command. Although the man had always been the greatest patron at his back, he had also provided incessant support for Li Lingfeng in the past decades and learned a lot of his secrets.

They had been on the same boat for a long time. Now that the boat was on fire, it was not a good time to decide who was more guilty of the accident.

As he expected, Li Lingfeng took a deep breath and calmed himself down. “How is the sabotage going right now?”

…

Like a furiously burning devil from hell, Li Yao roamed at the pathways of the central area of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”.

After opening a dozen gates leading to the central area through the most violent approaches, he asked the prisoners to freely attack and left the main troop for now.

There was only one reason for that.

His attacks were too brutal, too violent, and too wide. It was unsuitable for him to fight together with the common prisoners.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The cabins behind Li Yao were exploding all the time, bursting out overwhelming blasts and flames of spiritual energy.

Countless Immortal Cultivators were screaming in the flames as they were burned into ashes, but Li Yao did not even bother to look back for even once.

In his eyes, “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” seemed to have become an undefended, transparent city. He could clearly sense the flow inside every tube that transmitted spiritual energy and the mobilization of the panicked and helpless guards, which made it easier for him to select his targets and march at them without meaningless slaughters.

His targets were the many warehouses of crystals and assets in the enormous space fortress.

After every warehouse of crystals he found, he would absorb abundant crystals into his Cosmos Rings as fast as possible. Under the support of the entire federation, Li Yao had carried almost thirty Cosmos Rings of huge storages with him. It was a dazzling extravagance even for the standard of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

Li Yao was not a tight-fisted man. Therefore, after absorbing enough crystals into his Cosmos Rings, he would assemble the crystals and the components into crystal bombs while he pushed forward.

Such crystal bombs that were jumbled with bare hands but not through furnaces certainly wouldn’t be too powerful. But thankfully, the narrow and sealed space of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” was the best place for the crystal bombs to demonstrate their power.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Li Yao blew his way forward. In many cases, he was too lazy to go through the pathways that were as zigzagging as mazes, so he simply stuck the crystal bombs to the wall of the pathway before he activated the Cell Obliteration Cannon, blowing up both the wall and the Immortal Cultivators hiding behind it. He simply pushed forward in a straight line just like that!

Finally—

Sensing the super enormous space ahead of him that was releasing light and heat like a shining sun, Li Yao put on a mysterious smile.

The place was exactly his destination.

It was the energy core of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”!

…

“It’s very serious.”

Wuying Lan struggled to say, “The enemy is about to invade our energy core.”

“What?!”

Li Lingfeng was so greatly surprised that he was unable to say anything for a long time. He almost had the urge to turn his eyes into iron hands and throttle Wuying Lan. “You know what today means for us. Such a thing is never to happen!”

“Nobody could’ve foreseen such an accident!”

His eyes bloodshot, Wuying Lan shouted angrily, “I’m now even beginning to suspect if our queen has vaguely learned some secrets and is insane enough to meddle in this directly!”

The word “queen” made Li Lingfeng’s pupils constrict violently. After a moment, he said solemnly, “I’ll return to reinforce you immediately. Until then, you must defend the energy core whatever it takes, and the stream must not be cut off in any case.”

“I understand.”

Wuying Lan said coldly, “‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ is my lifelong work. I will not allow anyone to sabotage it. However, we have to prepare for the worst. We have to make preparations for a forced landing. It can’t be helped. Should the ‘energy core’ really be damaged, the space fortress will be grabbed by gravity and fall down immediately!”

Before Li Lingfeng replied, he cut off the communication quickly.

Expressionlessly, Li Lingfeng stared at the dark light beam for a long time, gritting his teeth at such a large noise that everybody on the bridge could hear it.

He rose abruptly and left the bridge.

A moment later, the most dazzling bluish brilliance burst out all of a sudden in the middle of the simmering battlefield. From the blue fire arose an iron giant almost forty meters tall. It seemed to have been condensed by raging wind, and the streamlined body was filled with the feelings of speed and dexterity. What was most eye-catching of all was the eight pairs of stabilizer fins that were distributed helically on its back like eighteen enormous wings!

BOOM!

The exhaust flames spurting out from the center of the eight pairs of stabilizer fins extended to dozens of kilometers away and were even more astonishing than the exhaust flames of the warships that were running at the highest speed. It immediately caught all the attention in the battlefield and became the unquestionable hero of the show.

It was the Tempest God, Li Lingfeng’s Colossus!

Chapter 2104 - Wuying Lan’s Metamorphosis!

Wuying Lan rushed into the central area of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” like an enraged crystal train.

Many people had learned that the beehive prison had gone out of control and a large batch of prisoners and mutated beasts had escaped. The central area was now in turmoil. The Immortal Cultivators had lost their condescending demeanor when they had everything under their control. They were now more like the ants on a hot pan.

It couldn’t be helped. Those people were the honorable guests that Wuying Lan had invited over. They were the leadership of the major families and even the military of the Imperium. It was impossible for him to block the news from them.

Besides, with their keen senses, they could more or less hear the explosions and the screams from far away.

Some of the prisoners and mutated beasts had even just fled to the area and were engaged in fierce battles with the Immortal Cultivators.

Both the guards of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” and the honorable guests from afar were obliged to join the battle and defeat the prisoners.

Wuying Lan closed his eyes in pain while forcing himself to not think about his dim future as he marched to the energy core at the highest of his speed.

If “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” was a bloody flower blossoming on the Other Shore, the energy core was exactly located on the “pistil”.

The defense system of the space fortress, the spiritual shield, the heavy turrets all over the body and the anti-gravity system were all founded on the basis of the energy core.

If the energy core was damaged, the entire space fortress would be turned into a cold city of death. It could even barely withhold its own weight, and it would only fall to the surface of the planet after dismembering into giant remnants.

He would never allow such a thing to happen!

Wuying Lan encountered an overwhelming tide of prisoners on his way.

When thousands of prisoners lunged at him through the narrow pathway, roaring and shouting, they did seem rather unstoppable, and it was like the end of the world.

As it happened, they boasted not only the tusks, the sharp claws, and the tough fists, but also the most advanced magical equipment that they looted from the arsenals and the dead Immortal Cultivators. Having marched all the way here, the prisoners now had almost as good weapons as the Heavenly Eye Legion did.

Wuying Lan went through quite some trouble to get himself away from the furiously burning tide of people.

But his personal guards who were acting with them were almost entirely trapped and swallowed by the prisoners.

The prisoners almost filled up every pathway in every direction. Now that their lust for killing had gotten the better of them, they couldn't care less whether they were faced with a noble, an important official, an expert in the Core Formation Stage, or even one in the Nascent Soul Stage.

Even if they must die, they would still spray their blood on the faces of the Immortal Cultivators. If they could bite a part of the Immortal Cultivators, they would never let it go until they were completely burned into ashes.

Wuying Lan had never seen such a dreadful army before. It also never occurred to him that such an army of exasperation would be built by him in person.

After ripping apart almost a hundred prisoners in a row, his breath turned more and more hastily.

After he finally reached the energy core in a path of blood, the entire cabin of the energy core was already enshrouded in furious flames and dark smoke that was as thick as thin.

The ever-rising explosions suggested that the heart of the entire "Manjusaka, the City in the Sky" was suffering the most violent attacks.

Under his feet, corpses of the Immortal Cultivators were lying in a mess everywhere. The bodies were so deformed that they could barely be recognized. The faces that had been extremely twisted were written with fear although they could not be identified anymore.

The eyes whose pupils had relaxed and had only whites left deeply intimidated Wuying Lan.

He had always been aware of the importance of the cabin of the energy core.

Stationed here were all the elites of the elites of the Heavenly Eye Legion.

However, it was not hard to tell from the miserable deaths of the “elites” how fragile and defenseless they had been under the enemy’s attack.

Who is it exactly…

Wuying Lan’s pupils constricted violently. An intense explosion took place behind him, completely blowing up the channel through which he entered the energy core cabin. His retreat was blocked, and it would take a significantly longer time for the reinforcements to enter.

In the black fog up ahead, dozens of crimson countdowns vaguely showed up. Some of the countdowns had only several seconds left, and some still had a couple of minutes.

BOOM!

After every countdown reached zero, a certain critical unit near the energy core would have an earsplitting explosion. Colorful flames of light spurted out and turned into gorgeous springs in the black fog.

Time bombs?

Wuying Lan found it hard to imagine what kind of insane enemy would be playing such a dangerous game with him at such a place.

The blasts raised by the explosions slightly blew apart the smoke, allowing Wuying Lan to notice a gargantuan crystal bomb more than three meters in diameter, or so he believed, that was closely attached to the shell of the enormous crystal reactor at the center of the energy core cabin right before his eyes.

There was also a terrifying countdown on the device, implying that only five minutes was left!

Ass*ole!

Wuying Lan could not imagine what would happen if the seemingly complicated and precise device was truly a crystal bomb that would explode five minutes later.

The shell of the super enormous crystal reactor was certainly indestructible.

But so was the shell of the energy relay station in the beehive prison, which the mysterious enemy had somehow successfully destroyed.

With cold sweat leaking out of his forehead, Wuying Lan searched the black fog around him gloomily.

“Desperate?”

A hollow, unpredictable voice suddenly came over from the black smoke. “Such desperation is what all the people on the Land of Sins have been tasting every day. Now, you should savor it well while you still can!”

“Who are you exactly?”

The cold sweat on Wuying Lan’s forehead was frozen into ice. In a hoarse voice, he asked, “Who sent you here? Do you have any idea who you are going against?”

A light chuckle came over from the black fog.

“Of course I do. I am going against the entire Imperium of True Human Beings. But so what?”

The voice in the black fog said casually, “I am just a random Cultivator. Isn’t it only natural that I go against the Imperium of True Human Beings?”

“A Cultivator?”

Never had Wuying Lan expected such an answer.

Wuying Lan wouldn’t have been as surprised if the enemy was sent by the queen, by the other three Kurfürst families, by the competitors who did not wish the Heavenly Eye Group to skyrocket and swallow their interests, or even the Covenant Alliance.

“A Cultivator!”

Wuying Lan bellowed in fury, “Nonsense. How is it possible? The Cultivators are already obsolete things that are not worth mentioning at all. How could they have raised such an expert as you?”

“Exactly.”

The voice in the black fog said, “It is a long, long story. If you are interested, why don’t we sit down and have a nice talk? But I need to remind you that you do not have much time left.”

BOOM!

The countdown of another crystal bomb reached zero, and it exploded brutally right before Wuying Lan’s eyes. His heart was chilled immediately.

“Do… Do you know the ramifications if you destroy the energy core?”

Wuying Lan bellowed, “The entire ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ will lose the energy support. It will crash to the Land of Sins all the way from beyond the atmosphere like a broken shooting star. Everybody will be killed by then!”

“It is exactly my purpose!”

The voice in the black fog was utterly unaffected. “I never planned to escape alive under the heavy siege of the fleets of the Imperium. I am exactly here to die together with ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’. Look at the countdown. You have already wasted one minute and thirty-two seconds, and you have three minutes and twenty-eight seconds left—Twenty-seven, twenty-six!”

“Gotcha!”

Wuying Lan grinned hideously and charged into the black fog in a streak of brilliance like a hurricane.

After every step he made, his body went through drastic changes. Sharp bone spurts protruded out of his face that was as handsome as a marble statue. His muscles were more like “bouncing” than expanding. His skin, which was as warm as jade, turned into a gray shell. Even his starry eyes turned into two clusters of green, demonic flames!

His overwhelming auras were more violent than ever too, which almost focused into a second raging image around his body that was as gigantic as a mountain. Within a breath, the halo already enshrouded more than half of the energy core cabin, pushing out Li Yao who was hiding in the black fog.

BAM!

Wuying Lan and Li Yao had a punch that was devoid of all tricks. Wuying Lan was blown back by three steps, while Li Yao flew back into the black fog again.

“Unparalleled strength very close to the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage. If you are really a Cultivator, you should be the greatest expert of Starlight in the past hundreds of years, shouldn’t you? What a horrible negligence the intelligence department has made to overlook you!”

Looking at his fists whose bones had been shattered, Wuying Lan put on a smile of hatred. “With such a strength, no wonder you were bold enough to sneak into ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ to sabotage and to set free those wretched prisoners.

“However, if you think that you can mess with me when you are only so strong, you will be too naïve a Cultivator!”

Wuying Lan bellowed. Thousands of streams of brilliance dashed out of the Cosmos Rings that had been deeply buried in his flesh. His magnificent body, which had expanded abnormally, was now covered in a crystal suit, which made it look even more hideous than before.

It was a terrifying crystal suit that had mixed the features of multiple kinds of insects. As a product of the essence of the magical equipment development in “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” over the past hundreds of years, it was more of an extra-sized Ares Extension than a crystal suit. Wuying Lan, whose body size had been multiplied after he went into the berserk state, turned into an iron giant that was even more enormous than “Fist King Lei Zonglie” after he put on the super crystal suit!

“Cultivator? Let me show you the real strength of ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’!”

After the metamorphosis, Wuying Lan’s personality went through certain changes too, as if some extremely brutal and violent things deep inside his heart had been woken up. “You destroyed the beehive prison and wasted all my experiment materials. Hehehehe. I will not let you die so easily. You are destined to be the very first ‘guest’ of the brand-new beehive prison, where you will understand what living is more miserable than dying means, and you will beg to be sent into the deepest level of hell!”

Chapter 2105 - I Won’t Hear I

In the brutal and savaging roars, Wuying Lan’s green flames of spiritual energy branched and darted into the black fog, limiting Li Yao’s zone of activity.

Li Yao bellowed. The translucent black crystal suit suddenly dispersed into a hundred clones that attacked Wuying Lan from all directions at the same time.

Laughing in amusement, Wuying Lan blinked into a hundred blurred shadows too!

For the experts of Li Yao and Wuying Lan’s levels, the so-called “clones” and “blurred shadows” were not as simple as ungrounded illusions but amalgamations of the will, spirit, soul, and even strength of their own bodies. They boasted equally shocking damages too!

BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM!

The hundred “Li Yaos” and the hundred “Wuying Lans” were engaged in close-distance combat in midair. The hundreds of blasts they raised further added to the chaos of the spot that had already simmered to the limits. At first look, it was almost like two armies in identical clothes were colliding.

Suddenly—

“Gotcha!” Wuying Lan roared.

The structures that were similar to the shell protruded on his crystal suit and spurted out abundant air masses, further increasing his speed to a higher level, before he grabbed the arms of one of the “Li Yaos” and exerted his strength!

Shua! Shua! Shua!

The hundred “Li Yaos” and “Wuying Lans” immediately dispersed. All the clones and the blurred shadows returned to their original bodies. In the middle of the soaring flames, there was only one last Li Yao left who was suppressed tightly by Wuying Lan, who was three times larger than himself.

The arms of the two parties were deeply entangled with one another. It was purely a competition of brute force!

“Hehe!”

The air currents spurting out of the gaps of Wuying Lan’s crystal suit formed smoke that was as thick as cement. Even his crystal suit could no longer hold back the expansion of his muscles and began to fall into pieces.

The floor below his feet that were made of superalloys and as hard as diamonds were spread out in ripples with his feet as the center, as if it were a wet swamp.

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

Li Yao’s hands were moved away by him with brute force, and his joints were twisted in the opposite direction. Both the crystal suit and the bones were letting out blood-freezing noises of contortions!

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

The bloody wings on Li Yao’s back, like a second pair of hands, waved sharp feathers as they attacked Wuying Lan in two streaks of redness.

At the back of Wuying Lan’s crystal suit, sharp appendages that looked like the forelegs of a mantis also ejected out. Blurring into thousands of shadows, they had countless clashes with Li Yao’s bloody wings in midair within half a second, raising noises that could break one’s eardrums and sparks that were scattered but dazzling.

“Cell Obliteration Cannon!”

Unable to move his arms anymore, Li Yao opened the breastplate again and shot Wuying Lan right in the chest.

However, the attack that was launched in a hurry did not cause much damage to the opponent. It only added to Wuying Lan’s animality.

The shell on the highly-rising shoulder of the ugly crystal suit was wide open, revealing the honeycomb-type flying sword launchers that bombarded Li Yao with hundreds of mystic rays. Li Yao was blown back right into the fog.

Li Yao seemed unable to hold it any longer and began to run away.

“You know the feeling of fear now?”

Wuying Lan sneered, “It’s a pity that it is too late!”

His body was as cumbersome as a combination of a dinosaur and a gorilla, but he was more agile than the swiftest hummingbird. Turning into a streak of greenness, he simply blew Li Yao away from the black fog. Before Li Yao hit the ground, he had already dashed to the landing point in advance and attacked heavily again!

After almost ten blows, Li Yao had nowhere to run to at all like a pebble in a transparent box!

BOOM!

After the continuous strikes, cracks appeared on the translucent black crystal suit. Li Yao seemed to have been pushed into desperation. Roaring in both anger and embarrassment, he spurted out the most violent crimson flames of spiritual energy, which embroiled the broken pieces of crystal suit and the remnants of magical equipment units on the ground and darted them at Wuying Lan like a storm!

Sensing Li Yao's agitation, Wuying Lan was even more secretly overjoyed. He also expanded his flames of spiritual energy to the maximum. In the techniques of "remote manipulation", he picked up countless metal scraps from around and shot them at Li Yao too!

The metal pieces controlled by the two parties carried their abundant spiritual energy. When they rubbed the air at a super high speed, they immediately raised the most colorful brilliance.

It was almost like the collision of two most splendid meteor shows, where ten thousand complicated hues and shades were caused.

The metal pieces of the two pieces continued changing the trajectories and the angles in the most unpredictable way while blocking the enemy's pieces. "Dazzling" was far from enough to describe one-millionth of the splendor of their competition!

Such remote manipulation in the blink of an eye was a heavy burden for the soul and the computational ability.

Very soon, Li Yao fell backward as if his soul and his computational ability could not sustain it longer. His “meteor shower” was obviously scattered and lackluster, and he was hit by the clusters of metal pieces the size of fists under Wuying Lan’s control. Vomiting blood crazily, he crashed to the floor.

The “meteor shower” controlled by Li Yao suddenly dispersed and spattered in all directions.

Wuying Lan’s “meteor shower”, on the other hand, was highly compressed. In the shape of an unstoppable saber, it was locked onto Li Yao tightly, enshrouded and boosted by green flames of spiritual energy.

Wuying Lan stood in midair and stared down at Li Yao coldly from the high stance. Closing his right hand, he raised it slowly as if it were a saber.

Right then, the nerves in Wuying Lan’s eyes suddenly cramped crazily.

He discovered that the mysterious person who claimed to be a “Cultivator” happened to crash right below the device that was suspected to be a super crystal bomb next to the main reactor.

The short but fierce battle between the two of them actually only lasted one minute. There was still two minutes and nine seconds to go on the countdown.

However…

Wuying Lan heard the deep and mocking laughter from below the black crystal suit.

Immediately, he realized what the enemy was trying to do.

But there was no time to stop him!

Li Yao drew a very simple rune in midair, which instantly broke apart and sent feeble ripples of spiritual energy to every crystal bomb in the place.

All the crystal bombs were detonated at the same time, including the one installed on the shell of the main reactor!

“No—”

Wuying Lan roared in desperation and watched as a cluster of pure white ball of light was generated and expanded before his eyes. The light ball easily ripped apart the nine shells of the main reactor and crawled in like a flood that had broken the dam, which immediately caused a chain reaction. An overwhelming, destructive power was activated and spurted to Wuying Lan right from the above!

It was the life-blighting light and heat that was as intense as a supernova outbreak. Even if Wuying Lan were wearing seven crystal suits, it would have been impossible for him to avoid the fate of being completely melted.

He did not expect the enemy to be so insane as to really die together with him. Out of his natural instincts, he narrowed his eyes and backed off slightly.

But in only 0.01 seconds, Wuying Lan realized that something was wrong.

This was not a movie or a lousy game. The energy reactor in reality had dozens of safety measures. How could a great explosion have been triggered so easily?

Even if catastrophic accidents such as a fracture of the shell or a meltdown took place, the pollution of radiations would spread out slowly and steadily in the following days or years. The power of the reactor would only drop down slowly. It was impossible to cause such a damage that looked like a supernova outbreak!

As he expected, despite the vivid, life-like illusions, his crystal suit and his body did not suffer any substantial damage!

It took Wuying Lan only 0.01 seconds to realize that it was a trap.

In the second 0.01 seconds, he already understood the construction of the trap. All the crystal bombs nearby were real. They had truly burst out scorching fireballs and led to explosions that turned the place into a mess.

But the crystal bomb that was installed to the shell of the main reactor was the only one that was absolutely false. It was not meant to detonate the main reactor but only to burst out astonishing sound and visual effects to mislead Wuying Lan into thinking that the main reactor had an explosion and to mire him in brief bewilderment.

It took Wuying Lan only 0.02 seconds to figure out the truth.

Given another 0.01 seconds, he was confident enough to escape from the fatal trap!

It was a shame that his enemy was not “at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage” but an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage who was stronger than him.

The life-and-death battle between the top experts could be decided in one moment.

Exactly at the moment when Wuying Lan was confused by the illusions, two giant hands suddenly extended out of the dazzling light. Closing the fingers, they cut open his breastplate and pierced into his chest deeply like two sabers as if there were nothing in their way!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Wuying Lan felt that ten thousand balls of lightning were rising among his internal organs, or two furious torrents of magma were flowing rampantly and gathering at his heart.

Itching and aching feelings were coming over from his ears, his nose, his throat, and his eyes at the same time, as if lightning and flames were dashing out of his head.

He wanted to struggle and counterattack, but the crimson flames of spiritual energy around the enemy's body were increased by ten times at the moment. They suppressed his green spiritual energy and even swallowed it!

The light was finally gone, and the black crystal suit that looked like the God of Death appeared before Wuying Lan clearly again. The hands that stabbed deep into his body grabbed his heart and his ribs and slowly pulled him down.

No facial organs could be seen because of the black mask. There were not even crystal cameras that were embedded on it. Only red ripples in half-transparent blackness were changing erratically on it, as if they were delivering the messages from the deepest part of hell.

Wuying Lan was so scared that his soul was almost shattered.

He finally realized what a ferocious animal it was that was standing before him and grabbing his heart!

It was a terrifying existence that could’ve been on the same level as Li Lingfeng!

“You have no idea what you are destroying!” Wuying Lan screamed in desperation and fear. “This is not just a simple platform for slaughter streams but a power that can control the entire universe. This—This is the way of life and government of the future. This is a strength that directly enters the head and the heart. Just listen to my explanation. I’m willing to give all the strength to you. Just listen to my explanation!”

Li Yao tilted his head and thought for 0.1 seconds.

“I won’t hear it,” Li Yao said.

The hands that he stabbed deep into Wuying Lan’s body began to burn as he launched the most splendid “Cell Obliteration Cannon” right in the enemy’s internal organs!

Chapter 2106 - Obliterated!

“Ao! Aooooooooooo!”

Wuying Lan was in such excruciating pain that his internal organs felt like on fire. He couldn’t have regretted more!

In terms of pure level, he was only at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage and had not passed the threshold of the top-tier experts at the Divinity Transformation Stage. Besides, he was not a pure battle-type Immortal Cultivator but one with rarely-seen triple talents in battle, administration, and research.

That was why he had come up with the creative notion of “slaughter stream” and established “the Heavenly Eye Group”, one of the greatest media platforms of the Imperium. He was also able to participate in the cutting-edge studies in the experiments on the Land of Sins in person. Although he might not know them very well, he at least knew the progress of the specialists and researchers in their work, and he could even occasionally shed groundbreaking insights on them.

However, just because Wuying Lan was gifted at administration and research, and he had to deal with the paperwork of the Heavenly Eye Group and the academic issues of the laboratories on the Land of Sins, it did not mean that Wuying Lan’s combat ability was low.

After realizing that his battle talents could only reach the limits of the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage at best, Wuying

Lan adopted a different approach and modified his body with abundant research products of the laboratories on the Land of Sins.

He had injected all kinds of strengthening drugs and gene activation drugs into his veins and his cells. He had even replaced all his internal organs with the brand-new organs grown by the mutated beasts. All the weak organs he had before were abandoned and substituted!

In the laboratories on the Land of Sins, “level” absolutely did not equal “combat ability”. For hundreds of years, they had created thousands of secret techniques at the cost of millions of lives, which could exploit the limits of potentials in the deepest part of a human body!

Therefore, although he was “only” at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage, Wuying Lan could carry out the combat ability equal to the low level of the Divinity Transformation Stage after activating the most insane bloodline inside his body.

When he was in high wariness, he was not entirely on the losing side even if his opponent was at the middle level of the Divinity Transformation Stage.

Even though he encountered an experienced expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage like Li Linghai, he would still have an opportunity to escape.

It was the greatest reliance for Wuying Lan to break into the energy core cabin and slay the mysterious enemy on his own.

He almost equaled to the entire best combat squad of the Heavenly Eye Group!

Also, the enemy’s strength at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage that he sensed at the beginning was rather fit for the identity of a super expert of Starlight.

Wuying Lan had never considered the possibility that Li Yao was hiding his strength.

By his estimation, it was already the best for Starlight, other forces of the Imperium, or the Covenant Alliance to have sent a great expert whose combat ability was close to the Divinity Transformation Stage in order to deal with an unimportant “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”!

Never would Wuying Lan have dreamed that he was faced with an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage, who was experienced, hiding his strength intentionally, and resorting to such a shameless trap that involved both authentic and false crystal bombs!

The enemy could’ve crumbled him with pure strength, yet he chose plots and tricks?

Wuying Lan couldn’t think it through at all.

The multiple wrong judgments completely deprived him of the chances to escape.

Right now, as Li Yao’s most violent spiritual energy crashed among his internal organs and limbs, vaporizing every mitochondrion inside his every cell, Wuying Lan’s head was an utter mess.

The memories of the past all surfaced on the mind. He did not want to give up. He regretted gravely in pain. He tried his best to survive, even if it meant that he had to kneel and beg the mysterious expert for mercy.

However, he was no longer able to utter any voice of explanation or begging from his throat, which was burning furiously in fear. What could be heard were his screams, each higher than the last.

Wuying Lan had never been more desperate before. He had also never felt that he was an ant more than when he was faced with the mysterious Cultivator.

Wuying Lan’s body continued expanding.

Li Yao’s spiritual energy that was raging like a flood had already burned up parts of his brains, making his ability to control the mutated cells inside his body completely go out of control. His limbs expanded and wiggled beyond his control, now growing clusters of hair and putting on scales, before the skin was completely ripped apart and dissolved, revealing the flesh down below that was as packed as tumors.

“Ho! Ho! Ho!”

Waving his abnormal arms, Wuying Lan tried to struggle, but he could not get out of Li Yao’s control however hard he tried. His body had already expanded to almost five meters tall, but the crimson flames of spiritual energy dancing around Li Yao had been condensed into an image almost ten meters high, which was still suppressing him tightly.

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

Wuying Lan’s expansion had finally reached the limits. The mitochondria in his cells had almost been entirely burned up. The bones all over his body were broken and collapsing like a glass castle. Rampant spiritual energy dashed out of his face and his ripped flesh. His enormous body was blackened and constricting rapidly.

“No! No! No!”

Wuying Lan’s soul let out devastating screams before it ran from the shell that was riddled with holes and burning furiously. It turned into hundreds of telepathic thoughts and escaped to all directions, hoping to get rid of Li Yao’s savagery.

However, before the telepathic thoughts ran far away, hundreds of streams of spiritual energy that looked like tentacles had already extended out of his shell, entangling every telepathic thought and pulling them back to the burning shell that was getting smaller and smaller.

Zhi! Zhi! Zhi! Zhi!

The telepathic thoughts already couldn’t constitute systematic thinking, but they were still shrieking like rats that had fallen into boiling oil, struggling futilely, until they were all pulled back into the body in the end and burned up into nothingness in the furious flames!

In less than half a minute, the abnormal body, which was as magnificent as a mountain before, turned into a burnt corpse no more than one meter long, which then fell apart into pieces.

The last bit of the remaining soul dashed out of the burnt corpse and condensed into a fuzzy face in midair vaguely in Wuying Lan’s appearance.

There were complicated expressions on the face, including pain, regrets, desperation, confusion, and many others.

The crystalline lens in Li Yao’s palms hadn’t retreated into the body yet. He opened his fingers and aimed at the remaining soul. As the light balls flashed continuously, it had already been completely blown up into smithereens before it emitted the ripples of begging for mercy!

Wuying Lan, the owner of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” who was trying to create a media empire ambitiously, was obliterated in the cold space without any hope of reincarnation just like that.

The only things that could prove his existence was the pieces of the burnt body on the ground that looked like charcoals and the fragments of his crystal suit, which had been melted into lumps!

Shua!

The bloody wings on Li Yao’s back that were raging like angry flames retreated, and the biochemical crystal lens in his palms that were used to activate the Cell Obliteration Cannon disappeared too. He did not even bother to look at the remains of Wuying Lan, who was nothing more than a lackey that did not deserve to waste his time.

Li Yao hurried to jump at the main reactor of the energy core.

Of course, he was not stupid enough to really destroy the main reactor.

It must be noted that the energy core was not only responsible for providing incessant energy for the defense system and the anti-gravity rune arrays of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”, but it also served as a protector of the overall structure of the space fortress.

If the main reactor completely exploded or shut down, the immense tidal forces alone would have been enough to tear apart “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” immediately and transform it into the most dreadful meteor shower that would hit the surface of the Martial Meritocrats Planet brutally, making the life on the Land of Sins, which was already difficult enough as it was, even more difficult.

In that case, the ordinary people living on the Land of Sins would have to shoulder a second catastrophic strike.

However, Li Yao did not want “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” to continue floating above the atmosphere either.

His main concern was that the people of the Land of Sins required the food and resources projected from “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” regularly in order to survive.

Right now, “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” had been embroiled in chaos. It could be foreseen that few assets would be projected into the atmosphere in the next year and a half.

The Imperium couldn’t have cared less about the life or death of the people of the Land of Sins. Perhaps it would even save them a lot of trouble if the people of the Land of Sins were all starved to death.

Therefore, Li Yao had to figure out a way to land “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”. It did not matter if the space fortress was blown apart, but the speed of the crash must not be too high. It would be best if the space fortress could be dismembered and sent to every part of the planet so that the people of the Land of Sins would have an opportunity to seize the abundant assets stored inside the space fortress and find new hope based on those things!

Li Yao ran to the control panel of the main reactor.

The control panel was well-protected by him just now with defense rune arrays, unaffected from the fierce battle between him and Wuying Lan.

As he expected, the main reactor was absolutely undamaged, except that its power output was slowly dropping because the affiliated units around it had been sabotaged by Li Yao.

Li Yao took a breath in relief.

The mental devil's voice came in his head. "You are already done? Simple as that?"

"I'm done."

Li Yao said, "What do you mean by 'simple as that'? Shouldn't there have been more?"

"I thought that you were going to chatter with Wuying Lan for a long time."

The mental devil said, "First of all, he would tell you all the pretentious but reasonable-sounding philosophies. Then, he would narrate his miserable origins, the reasons why he had to do everything he did, and his lofty ideas. After that, he would unravel certain shocking secrets. Eventually, you would find that he talked about so many things just in order to buy himself more time so that he could perform a certain awesome and dominating transformation. Later, with the ultimate transformation, he beat you up like you were a pig, but you somehow perceived a certain mysterious super ultimate skill the moment before you were killed like a pig, which allowed you to finally kill him at the most perilous and life-blighting moment."

Li Yao: "… How could it have been so sophisticated?"

The mental devil: “It is not sophisticated at all. You’ve been fighting like that before all the time!”

Li Yao: “Says who? ‘Vulture Li Yao’ is best known for his rapidity and decisiveness. I never talk if I can fight! Besides, I’m in the Divinity Transformation Stage after all; why did I need to listen to the bulls*it of a junior in the Nascent Soul Stage? It would’ve been a waste of my time! Enough of the crap. What’s your situation? Is our ‘show’ ready?”

Chapter 2107 - Beginning of the Stream!

“Everything is set. It is exactly what you have expected.”

The mental devil shared the sounds and visuals with Li Yao. It was now lurking in the middle of an enormous array of crystal processors at the main control center of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” and peeking at the specialists who were running about crazily like headless flies. “The space fortress indeed has an emergency plan for fully-automatic landing, which means that it can dismember on its own and slowly land on the ground when it suffers an expected strike, in order to ensure the completeness of the main structure and the safety of the members inside.”

“It is only reasonable.”

Li Yao said, “Such orbit space stations generally have standard automatic landing plans. Even if those inside the space fortress want to spare themselves of the trouble, those living on the planet certainly do not want to get killed in a crash! In the federation, all the orbit space stations must be installed with fully-automatic buffers and landing units. I imagine that same goes for the Imperium.”

“Now, the landing plan has been activated.”

The mental devil said, “The anti-gravity rune array is now gradually being shut down and weakened. We are cutting into the atmosphere slowly and will probably land on the ground in six to eight hours. As long as you stop sabotaging the energy core, I don’t think that the Immortal Cultivators in ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ will disrupt the landing program to crash them into pieces, will they?”

“Very good. I did not destroy the main reactor of the energy core violently but only sabotaged part of the cooling units so that the power output dropped to about… 70%.”

Calculating quickly, Li Yao continued, “Such a power output shouldn’t be enough to sustain its defense shield or provide much support for the mainframe crystal processors. On the other hand, how is the stream right now?”

“It is still ongoing.”

The mental devil said, “The enemy obviously does not bear to abandon the epic quest of ‘Dying Light’. Just now, I vaguely heard that it was deeply associated with the lottery groups, the stock price, the financial market, the interests of the major families, and so many other things. It is not something that Wuying Lan could cut off if he wanted to.

“The live stream is still going on. But what they are sending out right now are the data packages that have been highly rendered and modified. Some of the sounds and pictures are even purely fabricated. Technically speaking, this is no longer an actual ‘stream’.

“Now that Wuying Lan has been killed by you, ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ is in lack of leadership. The remainder of them will only be at an even greater loss about what to do. None of them will have the courage to shut down the stream.”

“Got it. They will soon learn the feeling of falling into their own traps.”

Li Yao sneered, “Have you located the nodes through which they are broadcasting the data packages and hacked them?”

“Of course. Can you ask some meaningful questions next time?”

The mental devil grimaced. “Don’t forget that I swallowed abundant tenebrum energy from the ‘Internet Extraterrestrial Devil’ and absorbed all of Professor Mo Xuan’s heritages on the Spiritual Nexus and the crystal processors. It is not exaggerating to say that I am a strengthened, new-generation Internet devil!

“The Internet devil before had devoured the ‘star child’ from the Imperium at the beginning and had a deep knowledge about the features of the crystal processors and the Spiritual Nexus of the Imperium. Also, you reduced more than thirty percent of the power output of the energy core, which significantly decreased the performance of the mainframe crystal processors here. Furthermore, I played the trick of distraction and misled the enemy into thinking that I was going to attack the mainframe crystal processors of ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ in full strength to seize control over the space fortress.

“As it turned out, the enemy dedicated whatever left of their computational ability to the defense of the mainframe crystal processors. None of them realized that our real targets are the nodes of the Spiritual Nexus in ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ and the data transmission bases!

“Hehehehe. This is now essentially an undefended city where I can gallop free at will without meeting any hindrance!

“However, I need to remind you that I can only catch the enemy unprepared at best. They have an enormous array of advanced crystal processors after all, which are too overwhelming for me to resist. Once they realize what is going on, it is absolutely possible for them to block all the loopholes in one minute.

“Also, we can only solve the problem on the data sender’s side, but we cannot influence the countermeasures of the data receptors. If the data from ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ are packed and sent to a certain Sector on the other side of the sea of stars, and the receiver finds that they are malicious, it is possible for the receiver to modify or even close the data exchange channel. Once the receiver closes the window and the door, there is nothing we can do about it.”

Frowning, Li Yao asked, “Ignore the details. Tell me, how much time can you earn at best?”

“Here, about one minute.”

The mental devil replied, “After the data are sent to other Sectors, depending on how smart the information scrutinizers of those worlds are, I may be able to persist for half a minute, or maybe ten seconds.”

“Ten seconds to half a minute?”

Li Yao grinned in satisfaction. “That’s enough. Remember to hack a few more crystal cameras and aim them at me. Try to make me look handsome, awesome, and extraordinary!”

While communicating with the mental devil on strategies, Li Yao did not slow down at all. After scanning and figuring out the situation in the main reactor, Li Yao simply reached for the collapsed pathway and waved his hands, blowing away all the metal remnants that had blocked the pathway!

On the other side of the pathway, a team of Immortal Cultivators was soaked in sweat as they tried to break through the pathway. Seeing that the pathway automatically expanded, they were all slightly dazed.

Li Yao did not leave much time for bewilderment and desperation for them.

The Mystic Skeleton Blood Wing turned into a streak of crimsonness and darted into the Immortal Cultivators, raising an overwhelming torrent of flames in exclamations of devastation!

Three minutes later, the furiously burning Mystic Skeleton Blood Wing strode forward unstoppably in the central area of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”.

The central area that was peaceful, quiet, comfortable, and filled with the extravagance and nonchalance of the upper class half a day ago had now turned into a hell drowned in the ocean of blood.

Roars of the prisoners and cries of the staff were resounding everywhere, mixed by the curses of some battle-type Immortal Cultivators. But their curses were often swallowed by the sounds of attacks and ferocious beasts having food after only a few seconds.

It was their own karma. Li Yao had only limited sympathy, and most of it had been given to the ordinary people on the Land of Sins. He found no disturbance at all when he saw the gory bodies of the Immortal Cultivators.

“Help me! Help me! Help me!”

A middle-aged man wearing a white gown who looked like a researcher of the laboratories ran to Li Yao in panic.

Perhaps Li Yao’s crystal suit and his indifferent vibe gave him the illusion that Li Yao was also one of the Immortal Cultivators. As if he had met a lifesaver, he jumped to Li Yao’s leg, half running and half crawling.

Li Yao rolled his leg and kicked the man right back into the hundreds of hideous, insane prisoners behind.

The sounds of flesh being torn apart and bones being broken immediately echoed in the crowd. In desperate screams, the researcher was ripped into sliced meat the size of fingernails by the “experiment subjects” he had created in person.

Huchi! Huchi! Huchi! Huchi!

Bulging their bloodshot eyes, the prisoners stared at Li Yao.

“Huh?”

Li Yao slightly frowned, releasing the most aggressive aura that lashed at the prisoners who had been caught in craziness like burning whips. They all grunted and finally cooled down more or less.

“If you have had enough killing, go steal some more fuel and assets. Then, try to find a carrier in the spaceports.”

Li Yao said, “Some of you must have experience in piloting the mining starships, don’t you? It depends on your luck if you can pilot a carrier. This space fortress will soon crash on the surface of the planet. If you really can’t find a carrier or are unable to pilot one, you’d better be prepared to live and lurk on or below the planet. In any case, this is as far as I can help all of you!”

All the prisoners were slightly dazed. After looking at each other in bewilderment for a while, they rolled their eyes in bewilderment and dispersed.

Li Yao continued pushing forward through the burning, exploding pathways, on the bleeding, twisted bodies of the Immortal Cultivators and prisoners, all the way to the most critical part of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”, which was the area where the main control room and the information processing center were at.

It was the last position that the Immortal Cultivators were still holding. Guarded by the elites of the Heavenly Eye Legion, the place was yet to be conquered by the tides of prisoners.

The dead bodies of the prisoners had been piled up on one side of the pathway. The prisoners who had gone berserk tried to break in time and time again, only to be blown back by the stormy firepower of the Immortal Cultivators. They were so exasperated that they were shrieking in fury and scratching themselves hard until they were bleeding.

Li Yao’s arrival raised the howls of the prisoners. Their passion and hot blood were almost blowing up the entire pathway.

Li Yao was unmoved. He simply patted one side of the helmet on his crystal suit lightly and sent a ripple to Neltharion that had long dived into the place. “Are you ready?”

“Everything is ready. All the crystal cameras have been aimed at you.”

The mental devil blew a whistle. “Bring it on!”

“You must make sure that I look handsome, invincible, graceful, and absolutely charming!”

Li Yao couldn’t remind the mental devil enough. “This is the first time in the past thousand years that a Cultivator has held an unprecedentedly super live stream toward all the people in the entire Imperium!”

“Got it. Come on.”

The mental devil said, “I guarantee that you will be as awesome, attractive, and charming as you can imagine and that even if the picture may only be a few seconds long, the girls in the entire Imperium, young and old, will feel their hearts flipped and fall in love with you without regrets and complaints as if intoxicated!”

“That’s good.”

In a smile, Li Yao hinted to the hideous, rampant prisoners to clear the way, while he fell on one of his knees, making preparations for a short-distance dash. Then, the two bloody rings were raised again like two red flags flapping in the end. It could even be vaguely seen that two enormous dragons were dancing crazily on the “flags”.

“You are so fond of live streams, aren’t you? Let’s play it then! Dear audience, the live stream that belongs to the Cultivators… begins now!”

For a moment, the passionate battle hymn that solely belonged to Li Yao swept across the entire pathway, the entire Imperium, and the entire universe in the most overwhelming way like an unstoppable tsunami!

Chapter 2108 - THIS IS WHAT CULTIVATORS DO!

Boom!

The bloody wings on Li Yao’s back immediately interwoven into a helix. From the center of the helix, a dazzling light almost as brilliant as a starship’s exhaust flames when it was moving at full speed spurted out.

The savaging light was so intense that it even rushed to a thousand meters away and melted through seven layers of cabin walls that were made of superalloys!

The Mystic Skeleton Blood Wing let out roars like a primeval beast. The quakes of the armors turned into blasts, blowing away the brawny mutated prisoners as if they were dry leaves and branches. Li Yao’s speed was immediately accelerated to the highest, as he charged at the defense line of the Immortal Cultivators against the bullets and mystic rays that were like a thunderstorm!

Dozens of Immortal Cultivators were blown to midair by him at the first contact. Before they had the opportunity to struggle, the crystal suits all over their bodies had fallen apart. The storm bolters, the machine guns, the crystal cannons, and all the other firearms were attracted to Li Yao.

Li Yao did not even bother to look at the Immortal Cultivators. Now that their battle formation had completely collapsed, they could be taken care of by the mutated prisoners who were now swarming forward.

The two wings behind Li Yao were folded in the front. The feathers made of mystic rays and spiritual energy revolved rapidly into an invincible drill, which dug into the indestructible gate, the last defense. The metals were melted, and white smoke was popping up. An orange, highly-heated channel was drilled through!

Stomping on the melted metal, Li Yao marched in unstoppably like a bloody tornado and barged into the control center at the most central area of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”, facing hundreds of research-type and admin-type Immortal Cultivators, who were biochemists, specialists of crystal processors, and the managers of the platform of “slaughter stream”.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

When all the Immortal Cultivators looked at him in shock, fear, and desperation, none of them noticed that the crystal cameras that were distributed everywhere in the control center were aimed at the awe-inspiring and dominating Mystic Skeleton Blood Wing at the same time, or that their crystal processors, which were still functioning at a high efficiency, had been implanted with abundant lethal viruses.

“Come on.”

Grinning hideously, Li Yao extended his arms to the maximum. Almost a hundred storm bolters, machine guns, crystal cannons, chaotic fire crossbows, and Taiyi Lightning Railguns were slowly unfolded behind him in the shape of a sector, and crystal bombs spurted out of his dozens of Cosmos Rings like raindrops. They were distributed around him evenly like well-formed chess pieces, spreading out slowly.

“If you are so eager to watch, I’ll show you what a real Cultivator is today!”

…

In the “temple of Cultivators”, the control center of the global sword network below the ground of the Land of Sins, under Wei Longtao’s highly agitative persuasion and the threat of countless spiritual puppets, most of the resistance warriors of Starlight had already collapsed.

Somebody collapsed to the ground, their faces pale, their eyes glazed, and their minds empty.

Some even sobbed against the wall, not for the upcoming fallout but because they had never really existed. Everything they knew was a lie. Their resistance, their endurance, and their pride were all jokes!

“No. It’s impossible. None of this is true!”

“Zuo Jingyun”, the bald, tattooed female warrior, and few others were the only ones left who were still resisting stubbornly. But their stubbornness was more because of the hatred when their blood family members were killed and the infinite fury of Wei Longtao’s betrayal than for the belief of “Cultivators”.

“How is this happening? Is there—Is there really not ‘a Cultivator who has been lost for a thousand years’?”

Of the two little fellows from the Desolate Worlds, Liu Li was holding the pot of Gold Barley seeds tightly, while Han Te was holding Liu Li. Both of them felt each other’s messy breath and hopeless voices.

For the first time in their lives, they felt the deepest confusion and the infinite malignance of the world of the adults.

Not far away from them, Xiahou Wuxin and Xin Xiaoqi, the pair of master and disciple who were in a rather unique relation, simply chuckled in their desperation, with the obvious determination of death in their eyes. They had already made up their minds to fight until their last breath today.

Perhaps the Fist King was the only guy who was still calm at this moment, because he was not literally a “guy” at all.

For him, he did not have emotions such as anger, desperation, fear, or frustration. As long as his metal body could continue to move, and his crystal processor could still select the tactic from the policy database that was most pertaining to the current situation, he would simply continue fighting as vigorously as before.

“Just wake up already. Stop dwelling on your fantasies!”

Looking at the army of spiritual puppets that were drawing close, Wei Longtao said earnestly, with sweat the size of beans leaking out of his forehead, “The Cultivators have been doomed to extinction since a thousand years ago! Those ghosts, those old-fashioned antiques, and those childish morons are unqualified, incapable, and impossible to survive in this world! Only the Imperium and the Immortal Cultivators are the sole dominators of the entire sea of stars! Zuo Jingyun, you are the warrior that I have the highest hope for in our organization. We can work for ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ as members of ‘the Heavenly Eye Group’ together. The most brilliant future is awaiting us, which will be a hundred, a thousand, a million times better than the sunless life we have right now like a rat in a gutter!

“Come on. Believe me. I have never made a wrong choice, and it is not going to be an exception this time. I will lead everybody to hope!”

He extended his hand to Zuo Jingyun in the most sincere way.

Her face rigid, Zuo Jingyun stared at Wei Longtao’s big hands with her almost transparent eyes for a long time. Taking a deep breath, she spat out two words.

“Damn you.”

The bald female warrior raised her saber and aimed at her leader; the tip of her saber shivering.

“We-we are Cultivators.”

Looking at each other, Han Te and Liu Li gritted their teeth and lifted their weapons like Zuo Jingyun, before they looked at each other again in uncertainty. “Aren’t we?”

The Fist King extended his fist. Xiahou Wuxin and Xin Xiaoqi supported each other to raise their sabers. Countless resistance warriors also gnashed their teeth while weeping hard, raising high their blades that had been dented.

“There will always be Cultivators.”

Looking at Wei Longtao, Zuo Jingyun declared, one word after another, “Even if you can kill all of us, you cannot kill all the Cultivators in the sea of stars. One day, our successors will show up. They will.

“Do you remember why our organization is named ‘Starlight’? Every glittering star in the dark universe represents a Cultivator. As long as there is starlight in the universe, there will forever be a Cultivator burning themselves out there somewhere!”

Wei Longtao felt that his rough face was itching, as if somebody were stinging it with needles.

For some reason, he did not have the courage to look Zuo Jingyun in the eyes.

“Alright. You are asking for your own death. That’s not my fault. Then… just go to hell with all the dummies in the space!”

Pointing at the starships of Starlight that were on fire on the enormous light beam above the temple, Wei Longtao laughed aloud to cover his frustration.

The thousand spiritual puppets around that were remotely controlled had all been unfolded into the battle form. Lethal brilliance was condensed in the dark barrels at the same time while all of them were aimed at the center of the temple.

The last Cultivators of the Martial Meritocrats Sector stood next to each other, shoulder by shoulder. Clutching to their chainswords and their vibration sabers, they let out the deafening roars.

Right then—

A few weird stripes flashed on the enormous light beam that was floating above their heads to sap their morale. In the next, the picture blinked and switched from the space battlefield to the inside of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”!

The 3D light beam that was as vivid as a statue manifested an unbelievably glamorous, violent, and dominating black crystal suit in front of all the Cultivators, the Immortal Cultivators, and the defectors.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The mystic rays and the barrage around the black crystal suit, like the wings of colorful butterflies, covered everyone’s eyes in the most eye-catching yet dangerous way, as if the whole world were under his savaging and suppression. Everything was blown up into smithereens, and explosions were taking place everywhere!

“This is—”

Utterly shocked, Wei Longtao could not recognize what was going on at all, and his beard was shaking nonstop.

Zuo Jingyun also opened her mouth wide. Her intuitions told her that it was unlikely to be a scene where the Immortal Cultivators butchered the Cultivators. Instead, it was more like…

Han Te and Liu Li were lost for words for a long time. Looking at each other, they found nothing but confusion on their faces.

All the Cultivators were dumbfounded, so shocked as if a series of crystal bombs had been detonated right on the tips of their noses.

From the broadcast rune arrays on the two sides of the light beam, the most violent music exploded out. The stormy drumming almost bashed everyone’s eardrum and heart at the same time.

However, even the most violent music could not suppress the roar of the master of the black crystal suit that was triggered by his soul. “Open your goddamn eyes and observe. THIS IS WHAT CULTIVATORS DO!”

What’s this? Cultivators?

There was nothing but dead silence in the “temple of Cultivators”. Everybody, be they a Cultivator or an Immortal Cultivator, was frozen into an ice statue, including the spiritual puppets that had entered the battle. The remote signals from “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” seemed to have been seriously jammed. The slaughter machines were all shivering slightly with their heads tilted. Some of them were even roaming about, opening and closing the weapon compartments but unable to lock onto a target.

“This—This is the interior of ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’, and the most central pivot of control, no less!”

Xiahou Wuxin, who knew a thing or two about the bloody Flower of the Other Shore, was the first to realize what was going on. He roared in ecstasy, “The Cultivators in the space have broken into the most central part of ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’. They are on a killing spree. Rivers of blood are running in the control center!”

“This wretched man has been lying to us!”

Holding Liu Li’s hand hard, Han Te mumbled, with hot tears flowing out of his eyes, “Look. What a strong Cultivator! The legend is true. The Cultivator that has been lost for a thousand years does exist. The strongest Cultivator in the sea of stars has arrived!”

The young man roared out with the strength that almost ripped apart his chest. Wei Longtao trembled with a face as pale as a dead person’s.

“It’s… It’s impossible!”

Looking at Li Yao on the light beam, who was slaughtering the enemy unstoppably, he stuttered, “There is no such thing as a Cultivator that has been lost for a thousand years. Everything is clearly under the Immortal Cultivators’ control. Everything—”

Before he realized what was going on, a metal storm had already rushed to his face!

“Cut the crap. Let the battle begin,” the Fist King said casually.

Inside the “temple of Cultivators”, roars and cries echoed, and flames of spiritual energy soared to the sky. A lot of resistance warriors of Starlight were repeating what Li Yao had just said.

“Open your goddamn eyes and observe. THIS IS WHAT CULTIVATORS DO!”

Chapter 2109 - Shocking the Universe!

The Land of Sins, or the Martial Meritocrats Sector, was the first world to have received the astonishing pictures and roars from “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”.

Almost at the same time, the data transmission bases that had been hacked, corrupted, and hijacked by the mental devil sent out countless data packages along the high-speed information transmission routes that had been long planned to the hundreds of Sectors and thousands of planets of the entire Imperium of True Human Beings, including the groundbreaking pictures and the roars from the Cultivators.

In the Unsettled Space Zone, on the mining starship of the model mining base of the Imperium, Gao Xiaojian, as a representative of the distinguished miners who had received mechanical modifications all over the body, was appreciating the special show with his workmates in the “Loyalty Room” together.

The Cultivators’ hilariousness made them burst into laughter. The explosions of the starships made their blood boil too. When the lightning trident, the national flag of the Imperium of True Human Beings, was flapping on the light beam, every miner was cheering for it from the bottom of their heart, feeling proud for the Immortal Cultivators and the Imperium.

Suddenly, the picture changed!

The dominating fleet of the Imperium, the invincible Immortal Cultivators, and the Cultivators who were fighting like caged beasts were all gone, replaced by the picture where Li Yao was running amok on a killing spree inside “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”.

The dark and mysterious crystal suit, the blood wings that were spluttering like flags, and the light cannons that were bursting consecutively made him look like a reincarnation of the God of Death, leaving an ineffaceable mark on the heart of Gao Xiaojian and his workmates!

It was impossible even for them to imagine the picture to be one where the Immortal Cultivators were massacring the Cultivators because Li Yao was reciting “Cultivator” after every blow, every kick, and every slash.

“This is what Cultivators do!”

“This is what Cultivators f*cking do!”

“After a thousand years, the Cultivators are back again!”

Li Yao was almost painting a caption of “Cultivator” right on his forehead.

Of the guys who were crying and escaping in panic, with their broken limbs flying everywhere, some were obviously wearing the military uniforms and the standard crystal suits of the Imperium of True Human Beings. There was the lighting trident emblem, the symbol of the Imperium, on the chest and the arms of the armor. It was impossible to erase them at all!

Bam!

On the picture, one of the Immortal Cultivators was tossed to the ground heavily. While struggling to crawl, he shrieked in the most earsplitting way.

He happened to reveal the emblem of the trident lightning and the logo of the Heavenly Eye Group on one side of his helmet to the camera. His shrieks that were filled with fear and desperation were blood-freezing enough for Gao Xiaojian and his workmates despite the long distance they had traveled in space.

BOOM!

Gao Xiaojian and his workmates were completely shocked into bewilderment, as if ten thousand crystal bombs had exploded in their heads at the same time.

They found it impossible to accept such an appalling picture, nor could they change their mindset so drastically in a hurry. Why on earth were the Immortal Cultivators butchering the Cultivators as if they were chicken, easily and confident of the victory, a few seconds ago, only to be butchered by the Cultivators as pitiful prey only a few seconds later?

It was too bloodthirsty, too violent, and too thrilling!

The Loyalty Room was caught in the chaos.

On the entire mining starship, all the cabins that were watching the special show of the slaughter stream were in chaos.

Gao Xiaojian felt that all the lubricants over his body were boiling. His head was bombarded by crystal bombs first, and a volcano was erupting fiercely at this moment.

He stood to his feet, lightheaded, waving his mechanical arms, but not knowing what to do exactly, he could only continue watching the 3D light beam in trauma.

On the 3D light beam, Li Yao’s slaughter and sabotage were still going on. After emptying all the ammunition of the storm bolters and the crystal cannons, he began to sweep across the place with the “Cell Obliteration Cannon” blatantly.

Most of the Immortal Cultivators in the control center were admin-type or research-type. None of them could sustain for a few seconds in front of the battle-type Cultivator in the Divinity Transformation Stage. They all turned into smoke and broken, burnt bodies in screams and moans.

The Immortal Cultivators who were lucky to survive to this moment were almost shitting their pants in fear.

Gao Xiaojian had never seen the Immortal Cultivators as devastated before.

In his impression, the Immortal Cultivators were always high and mighty, taciturn, fearless, and full of righteousness.

Wasn’t—Wasn’t such a devastated and hilarious demeanor more fit to be a standard pose for the Cultivators?

Or rather, even the desperate Cultivators just now did not look as panicked as them!

Deep down in Gao Xiaojian’s heart, something very feeble collapsed. The world before his eyes became fuzzy and unreal.

Earsplitting buzzes echoed inside the Loyalty Room.

Countless Immortal Cultivators charged into the room with their electromagnetic whips.

Before, Gao Xiaojian had the deepest fear for the electromagnetic whips of the Immortal Cultivators, which could cause the most excruciating pain to both a body of flesh and blood and a body of metals and gears.

However, the Immortal Cultivators were in obvious confusion too. They waved their electromagnetic whips for a long time, but they failed to find a target to land them on.

The massacre on the light beam was still going on, unstoppable and full of the gratification of resistance and revenge.

After a long daze, a few Immortal Cultivators jumped to the crystal processors, ripping apart the crystal processors as well as the light beams.

The Loyalty Room was immediately caught in darkness, with nothing but the heavy and disordered panting of the Immortal Cultivators left.

“Some-some sordid and cunning enemy disrupted our signals and displayed tremendous false videos that were made up!”

The Immortal Cultivators shouted drily, “The loyalty education is now suspended. Everyone… Everyone shall return to your respective chamber immediately. No talking, no moving!”

Gao Xiaojian and his workmates were silent under the waving, spluttering electromagnetic whips, as if they had become the most docile machines as they had always been. They lined up orderly.

However, when Gao Xiaojian peeped at his workmates next to him, he discovered that his workmates were also looking at him with weird faces.

Their man-made eyes were flashing nonstop, and they could both tell each other’s astonishment and confusion.

Are the Lord Immortal Cultivators… scared?

They were eager to ask each other the question, but eventually, they simply swallowed their confusion deeply and buried it together with other questions.

However many of their organs had been replaced by the crystals and cold machines, the numb miners had their own brains and their souls.

Deep inside their brains, countless questions were bubbling up like the leakage of the high-pressure gas deep inside the mines beyond their control.

Were the pictures real?

Was… Was the expert who looked like a God of War really a Cultivator?

Who is he exactly? What is this all about?

The thousands of questions congregated into Li Yao’s roar again—

“THIS IS WHAT CULTIVATORS DO!”

The same picture was displayed in the many planets in the many worlds of the many space zones in the entire Imperium at the same time.

Wuying Lan and Li Lingfeng went through all the trouble to establish the slaughter stream platform and to build up the information channels leading to the billions of terminals in different worlds for the purpose of etching their image deeply into the eyes, the brains, and the hearts of the billions of people of the Imperium.

However, it was now the shiniest state for Cultivators and for Li Yao.

While the Immortal Cultivators were in a flurry to cut off the Spiritual Nexus, to block the picture, to disrupt the signals, to smash the crystal processors, and to let out the roars of embarrassment and fury, hundreds of thousands of workers, farmers, and even bottom-level Immortal Cultivators had already seen the picture of Li Yao's invincibility. They saw how "Manjusaka, the City in the Sky" was riddled with holes under his attack, and how countless Immortal Cultivators were shuddering in fear under his feet, only to be blown into nothingness in screams!

"What… What is this about?"

Countless people took off their virtualization helmet and screamed desperately.

"What… What kind of monster is this? Such a tough Cultivator!"

Buildings that were similar to the "Loyalty Room" were mired in chaos, with exclamations of disbelief echoing nonstop.

"False! False! Everything is false!"

Some of the Immortal Cultivators were so shocked that their hearts were almost exploding. They kicked their crystal processors to the ground and blew it apart brutally. But a moment later, they immediately regretted their action and searched everywhere for new terminals that had access to the “slaughter stream”.

“Accident! A super stream accident!”

The governors of countless planets gnashed their teeth in utmost fury.

Wuying Lan and Li Lingfeng had always wanted to impress them with the power of the Spiritual Nexus and the media. Now, they couldn’t have learned it better, in such a ridiculous, weird, and unimaginable way!

In about ten seconds to half a minute, all the information transmission channels of the slaughter stream platform were shut down.

Some resource planets even resorted to extreme measures including “global blackout” to completely eliminate the import of the “poisonous information”.

But it was too late.

The shocking performance no longer than half a minute was enough to implant something into the hearts of countless people of the Imperium and to awaken something else, making them realize that the Immortal Cultivators were not invincible and that they totally had a different choice other than doing obediently what they were asked to do!

The power of the Spiritual Nexus couldn’t have been better shown at such a moment.

The pictures of a few seconds long disseminated quickly among the various nodes of the Spiritual Nexus of the Imperium virally.

The nobles, the Sectors Masters, and the sect leaders could stop slaves and part of the hominoids from bulls*iting in cyberspace.

However, a lot of middle-level and low-level Immortal Cultivators also saw the pictures and were deeply interested in the mysterious Cultivator.

A mysterious and formidable enemy was always particularly eye-catching. It was impossible for the Imperium to deprive all the Immortal Cultivators of their right to surf on the Spiritual Nexus, right?

In less than five minutes, Li Yao had become the star on the Spiritual Nexus that had the highest attention and became the topic of discussion for everyone. Nobody could’ve been more popular than him.

His declaration had shocked the entire universe!

Chapter 2110 - Focus of the Entire Imperium!

In no more than one minute and three seconds, all the Sectors had cut off the information transmission to the slaughter stream platform of the Heavenly Eye Group.

But by then, the mental devil had already completely grasped the Spiritual Nexus bases in “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”. The pictures of Li Yao’s invincible killing spree had been compressed into data packages and fabricated in multiple layers before they were sent to the various nodes of the Spiritual Nexus in the Imperium as well as all the addresses that could be found in the database of the crystal processors in the space fortress.

The nodes and the addresses on the Spiritual Nexus could be a certain professional academic forum in the Imperium, or the public mailbox of a certain export, or even the official website of a certain deep-sky fleet.

As an enormous country that included hundreds of Sectors, thousands of planets, and billions of people and spanned the entire universe, the Imperium of True Human Beings could not neglect the merits of the Spiritual Nexus however secluded and autocratic it was.

A hyperlight-speed communication network in space was the basis for the existence of a universal country and the tool for its governance. It was absolutely impossible to shut down the entire network.

If the Imperium of True Human Beings truly lost the Spiritual Nexus that connected all the Sectors, it would definitely fall apart in twenty-four hours.

Therefore, after the mental devil sent the videos of Li Yao’s battle, or massacre, to the nodes on the Spiritual Nexus of the Imperium, nothing could possibly stop it from spreading out exponentially.

“What a terrifying speed. What unstoppable moves. What a marvelously-made crystal suit. Since when do the Cultivators have such an expert?”

“It’s too amazing and unbelievable. Is he one of the… Cultivators who used to dominate the entire universe before the appearance of the Immortal Cultivators?”

At this moment, including the young officers of the army of the Imperium, countless Immortal Cultivators recalled again the days when the entire universe was governed by the Cultivators, and that the founders of “Star Ocean Republic”, the one and only superpower in the universe in the old days, called themselves “Cultivators” too!

“Who is he? Who can he possibly be?”

The Immortal Cultivators searched for Li Yao’s information on the high-level private forums and intelligence websites. Any expert couldn’t have just popped out of thin air. For a man as strong as Li Yao, there must be traces about him in the past.

But as it happened, after countless Immortal Cultivators shared their intelligence with each other, they couldn’t find out Li Yao’s origins at all. The only thing that kept spreading out nonstop was the slice of the battle pictures of the mysterious expert!

What a mysterious, mysterious Cultivator!

Even some of the leadership of the Imperium, including many sector leaders, elders, Sector Masters, and lords, had noticed Li Yao in great surprise.

The real upper class, the controllers, and the manipulators behind the curtain in the Imperium had been focusing on Li Lingfeng at the beginning.

In their eyes, the Cultivators who fought like caged beasts and who could never be annihilated like cockroaches and rats were really not too much of a headache. Compared with the heated, fierce war in the frontline, the minor military operation in the rear mattered little to the foundation of the Imperium.

Their interest was more on Li Lingfeng than on “Starlight”, the resistance group of the Cultivators.

Li Lingfeng was among the best Immortal Cultivators in the prime generation of the Imperium. It was said that many elders in the Li family had high hopes for him. He had a good chance to take a leap upward in the future or even become the leader of the Li family and one of the four Kurfürsten.

Maybe, in the near future one or two hundred years later, Li Lingfeng would be qualified to squeeze into the circle of the big shots, chatting and negotiating with them to maintain the balance of interests with each other.

The operation of “Dying Light” could almost be considered as a minor test given by the experts of the older generation of the Imperium for Li Lingfeng, in order to check if he was truly qualified to be a prominent “Kurfürst” and to enter the supreme hall where the stars and the cosmos were at his disposal!

Therefore, the Li family did not launch all the available resources or give Li Lingfeng full support. It was meant to see if he could resolve the problem of the Cultivators neatly with only his own abilities.

In the eyes of the many big shots of the Imperium, including the leader of the Li family, the Cultivators were nothing more than turtles in a tank, or loaches that had bitten the hooks.

Even though Li Lingfeng was not capable enough to command an operation of the scale of “Dying Light”, the battle would’ve only been protracted, which would significantly reduce its promotional value, or maybe a few small fries might’ve escaped. Nothing worse could possibly happen.

Little did they anticipate that a “Vulture Li Yao” would jump out of nowhere and shoot right through the heart of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”. As a result, Li Lingfeng’s game had completely collapsed, and he couldn’t have been more devastated!

Bam!

In the picture, the chest of one of the Immortal Cultivators burst out abruptly again. Through the bleeding, twisted hole in the middle of his internal organs, countless Immortal Cultivators could clearly be seen dancing crazily on fire, as well as the black crystal suit that looked like a fiend.

At this moment, the elites of countless Immortal Cultivator families had been gathered in “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”. A lot of them were among the most distinguished ones in the younger generation. As the hope of their family, they were instructed by the big shots of their family out of good intentions to grow more experience on the Land of Sins.

But at this moment, they were all killed miserably by Li Yao or the mutated beasts in the ugliest way.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Now that all the moving targets had been executed, Li Yao began to barrage the wall of the cabin crazily, blowing up all the units that could’ve been blown up.

The picture even jumped out of the interior of the space fortress and was switched to the exterior of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”, allowing all the Immortal Cultivators to see clearly the miserable outcome of the bloody Flower of the Other Shore, where it crashed to the Martial Meritocrats Planet slowly while dismembering, spurting out tremendous metal scraps, and drowned by fireballs.

Demonstration. It was an out-and-out demonstration!

“Who is he? Who is he exactly? I want you to figure it out in the shortest amount of time through whatever means possible!”

Including the four Kurfürsten, the real big shots of the Imperium were all infuriated by Li Yao!

The entire Imperium had been deeply shocked by the storm raised by the flap of wings of a “minor butterfly” that was Li Yao. It was needless to say that the space battlefield right next to “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” was where a fierce fight was going on.

The fleet of the Imperium commanded by Li Lingfeng and the coalition fleet of Starlight both received the data packages that the mental devil had sent out crazily. The most splendid and bloody pictures were displayed on the public channels.

“This is—”

The Cultivators and the Immortal Cultivators who were engaged in a fierce battle found it hard to believe their eyes. The scorching battlefield was frozen for three seconds because of Li Yao’s astonishing action.

They were suspicious for a moment if it were some kind of bad joke.

However, the collapse and fall of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” was an obvious fact that was happening right now.

All the starships had detected the disorder of spiritual energy and the plummet of the orbit of the Flower of the Other Shore.

As the space fortress and the atmosphere rubbed at a high speed, the bloody Flower of the Other Shore was immediately enshrouded in colorful flames. The crazy and futile dance could be clearly sensed even if all of them were hundreds of thousands of kilometers away.

One captain of Starlight launched a destructive mystic ray to “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” to test it.

The spiritual shield and the defense he expected, however, did not show up. The mystic rays marched forward unstoppably and hit the target in less than twenty seconds. A giant light ball was raised on the surface of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”, and when the light ball perished, a torrent of metals erupted out!

“The target—the target’s spiritual shield has lost effect entirely!”

“The force field twisting array is now gone too. The crystal railguns and the mystic rays guns can now easily hit the target!”

“‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ is dropping fast. It seems barely able to stabilize in its geosynchronous orbit!”

The amazing discovery overjoyed all the Cultivators.

They were here for a great battle and to die together with “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” at the cost of their own lives in the first place.

Now that the opportunity had presented itself, they had to grasp it no matter how grave the price was. They were determined to shoot down the man-eating nest of fiends!

The starships of Starlight seemed to have received the same instruction. All of them marched at the bloody Flower of the Other Shore relentlessly.

They completely ignored the bombardments that the Immortal Cultivators rained upon them crazily but simply vented their fury and hatred to “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”!

It was the simplest arithmetic question. The two parties were both dumping the fiercest firepower upon the enemy, but no matter how ragged the starships of Starlight were, they were under the protection of the spiritual shields and the force field twisting arrays. Before their spiritual energy ran out, they could resist at least 70% of the attacks.

“Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”, on the other hand, was both too large a target and had lost most of the energy supply, which resulted in complete paralysis of the defense system. It had to shoulder 100% of the Cultivators’ attacks.

Which parties would suffer great damages in such mutual attacks?

For a moment, the Cultivators’ morale was higher than ever, while the Immortal Cultivators seemed rather disorganized. It must be noted that they never considered the quest of “Dying Light” as a real battle but only a game. A game!

Only God knew why this was happening!

“Who is he? Who is the mysterious person exactly?”

Countless Cultivators were crying desperately on their starships.

“Who is he? Is he the Cultivator who has been lurking on the Land of Sins the whole time, the senior who went into hibernation in the heydays of the Martial Meritocrats Civilization a thousand years ago, and the legendary Cultivator who has been lost for a thousand years? Were the legends that we were told when we grew up all true? He does exist?”

Including Gao Kangda, all the Cultivators felt that their blood was boiling.

They could not think of a second possibility however hard they tried to.

A legendary hero arrived out of nowhere at the most critical moment and fought side by side with them, completely changing the outcome of the battle. It was really—

“As long as one of the billions of stars is still shining, there will forever be a Cultivator who keeps on fighting and burning themselves in furious flames that will illuminate the entire universe!”

“The starlight never dies, and neither will the Cultivators. There will always be Cultivators!”

“Let’s go now and show the goddamn Immortal Cultivators what Cultivators really are!”

Gao Kangda burst into laughter and tears. Activating the spiritual shield of “Great Mountain”, the armed mining starship, to the maximum, he charged at “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” unstoppably like a shooting star that was tearing apart the sky.

“The legendary Cultivator, let us give you a hand!”

Chapter 2111 - Pretend to Be Dead, or Burst Out Again?

At the center of the turbulence in space and everyone’s attention, deep inside the “pistils” of the bloody Flower of the Other Shore, Li Yao pushed away the last Immortal Cultivator in his view. With his left hand behind his back, he raised his right hand and opened his fingers, launching the Cell Obliteration Cannon that blew the unlucky fellow to more than twenty cabin walls away.

“Well…”

The mental devil’s voice suddenly echoed inside his brain.

“Who on earth can possibly stop me?”

Li Yao blew at his right palm. But of course, because of the blockage of the helmet on the crystal suit, it was nothing more than a cool and awesome pose.

“No. I’m trying to say…”

The mental devil hesitated.

“You want to know who I am? I, am your doom!”

Li Yao made yet another embarrassing pose to the many crystal cameras floating in midair.

“I think it’s time you call it a day. This place is about to be melted into a steel factory,” the mental devil said helplessly.

“Just wash your neck and wait patiently, for I will come to you one by one soon. Very soon!”

Li Yao poked his middle finger at the crystal cameras, declaring both thoughtfully and coldly. Then, after a sneer, he triggered mystic rays from the tips of his fingers and blew up all the crystal cameras brutally.

“How about it? How about it?”

After blowing up the crystal cameras, Li Yao seemed to have turned into somebody else. He asked the mental devil in a hurry, “Did you capture my last movement? Wasn’t it very shocking and characteristic? The Sector Masters, the lords, the emperor, and such in the Imperium of True Human Beings must be stumbling in fear, aren’t they?”

“That’s what I wanted to tell you earlier.”

The mental devil said, “Our channels to the outside world on the Spiritual Nexus have been completely cut off; both those on the slaughter stream platform and other miscellaneous nodes on the Spiritual Nexus. It is impossible for us to continue sending out the data packages.”

Li Yao: “So, I said the last few lines and made those poses for nothing?”

The mental devil: “Exactly. Since the line of ‘who on earth can stop me’, nobody could see or hear you anymore. However, speaking of which, how are you capable of speaking such shameful lines so solemnly? Do you not feel sick and pretentious?”

Li Yao: “Why didn’t you say it earlier!”

The mental devil: “I meant to say it just now, but you were too busy feeling good about yourself to notice me! It can’t be helped. I wanted to send out some more data packages too, but you specified that the control system of ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ was not to be sabotaged, in case the space fortress really went out of control and crashed on the surface of the planet brutally. As a result, some sort of internal barrier in the crystal processors seems to have been activated and automatically cuts off all the data transmission both internally and externally. There’s nothing I can do right now.”

“Forget it. Such things are all details. I think this is enough for the day. Let’s just offer a better performance to the people of all the Sectors of the Imperium next time we have an opportunity!”

Li Yao licked his dry lips. It was not until this moment that he felt the fatigue deep inside his brain and his veins. However, the fire of the soul was still burning furiously, and he couldn’t have been more excited. “How about it? You must’ve sent out quite a few minutes of video just now, didn’t you?”

“Yes.”

The mental devil replied, “Through the high-speed special channel of the ‘slaughter stream platform’ alone, we already transmitted about 55 seconds of video, shot from different perspectives and places. Later, after the slaughter stream platform was stuffed, I duplicated the video into thousands of copies and tossed them randomly into the depths of the Spiritual Nexus of the Imperium that was as vast as an ocean. A surging tide must’ve been raised in the entire sea of stars right now. I have to say that the game has truly gone big this time!”

“Of course. The Cultivators are announcing their grand return after a thousand years. The bigger the scene is, the better!”

In a smile, Li Yao said confidently, “In such a way, it is certainly possible to plant a different…’seed’ in the hearts of countless people and Immortal Cultivators of the Imperium, isn’t it!”

Li Yao still hadn’t forgotten the “Black Hole Plan” that he proposed a hundred years ago.

The so-called “Black Hole Plan” was not about magical equipment such as “black hole bombs”, but about how to activate the strength of the people and to transform millions of ordinary people into black holes that intimidated the Immortal Cultivators!

The Star Glory Federation was too small after all, and it was highly incapable of competing with a united Imperium of True Human Beings on the frontal battlefield. The best it could do was to show up as an unexpected army at a critical moment where the balance of strength was about to be lost.

But if he could raise the wrath of all the human compatriots in the entire sea of stars, it might be reshaped into overwhelming tides that would change the universe!

Li Yao had not quite figured out what he should do specifically.

It might turn out to be a protracted war that would last a thousand years, and he was nothing more than a minor vanguard in the war for the ordinary people to pick up their dignity and freedom again.

But at the very least, he had planted a seed in everyone's heart.

Li Yao had no doubt that in an appropriate time and place, the billions of seeds that had been sprayed to the hearts of the people would have a chance to root, sprout, and yield amazing fruits!

"Alright. The Immortal Cultivators have been mostly killed. We have announced our grand entrance in front of the billions of people of the entire Imperium too. The fall of 'Manjusaka, the City in the Sky' is unstoppable now. So, the only issue at hand right now is how to get away!"

Thinking quickly, Li Yao rubbed his hands while his lips curled into a cunning smile. "However, first of all, I don't think the thirty or so Cosmos Rings that we brought here are filled yet, are they?"

Li Yao looted trophies in the central area of "Manjusaka, the City in the Sky".

His targets were naturally the most bleeding-edge magical equipment and the most precious Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, including the marrow crystals of high purities and the advanced fuel that powered crystal suits.

Of course, he also wouldn't miss out on the abundant experiment files and research data in "Manjusaka, the City in the Sky".

All the precious files and data were stored in the mainframe crystal processors, locked tightly by all sorts of barriers and seals.

Li Yao and the mental devil were unable to crack the barriers for the time being, so they simply resorted to the simplest and most straightforward approach. They directly dismantled the storage chips of the seemingly most advanced crystal processors and stored the trophies into their Cosmos Rings.

The abundant data accumulated in the labs for almost a hundred years and all the files about countless top-secret projects all fell into Li Yao's hands.

While Li Yao was emptying the central control center, a deafening explosion echoed on the shell of the space fortress not far away.

Li Yao blew a whistle softly, outlining an azure storm that had gone mad in his head.

"Li Lingfeng is back with a Colossus. What a tough tsunami of spiritual energy. It is even fiercer than a fully-armed arsenal warship!"

Li Yao chuckled and set the Mystic Skeleton Blood Wing into stealth mode. He then controlled his breath and heartbeat and even locked all the pores over his body, not leaking the slightest spiritual energy.

As long as he was not spotted by the naked eye, he would look no different from any of the cold bodies around him on any scanning magical equipment.

It was true that Li Lingfeng was far stronger than him in terms of both level and experience. Whatever sordid and shameless tricks he were to resort to, there was not even a 1% possibility that he could take down Li Lingfeng like how he took down Wuying Lan.

But so what?

Both of them were in the Divinity Transformation Stage and had the help of a Colossus. He was only one minor level lower than Li Lingfeng and short of some battle experience with other experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage at best.

While he could not defeat Li Lingfeng, it was fairly difficult for Li Lingfeng to kill him too.

Besides, even if Li Lingfeng wanted to kill him, he must find him first!

“Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” was a rather large place. The main structure was like an amalgamation of multiple metropolises, which made it as complicated as a maze.

Right now, explosions, fire, and fallouts were happening everywhere. Every place was mired in chaos. Li Yao certainly would not be silly enough to go out and challenge Li Lingfeng. He would simply pretend to be a body that could be seen everywhere and just watch how Li Lingfeng could possibly find him!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Li Lingfeng, who was far away, seemed to be sabotaging the place with his Colossus “Tempest God”, venting the fury in his heart.

“Be my guest. This is your own space fortress after all. You can tear it apart however you want to. It is your own spiritual energy that gets consumed in the end!”

Li Yao sneered and could further see the weakness underneath Li Lingfeng’s dazzling identity and power.

It seemed that the unparalleled expert who could grow into the next “Kurfürst” was yet another spoiled descendant of the noble family who had never been through any major trouble in his life and who was not half as strong-willed as he appeared to be.

Li Yao had seen too many of such guys who thought they could control everything. Whenever things went out of their control, they would be completely at a loss about what to do, and their true selves would be revealed immediately!

Li Yao made up his mind to play dead until the end and see what Li Lingfeng could possibly do.

Right then, an accident happened again.

As if a hundred heavy cannons were stuck to one side of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” and barraged it brutally, the space fortress suddenly slanted and fell at a higher speed. The flames burning on the shell were much brighter than before too!

No. It was not the barrage of heavy cannons, but the collision from countless ragged, breaking starships, which had come relentlessly against the bombardment of the Immortal Cultivators and hit the main structure of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” heavily, before they activated their power rune arrays to the maximum and pushed the space fortress to the planet together while spurting out the most dazzling exhaust flames.

They were the starships of Starlight!

Li Yao could clearly sense the surging spiritual energy inside every starship, and the undying determination of fighting that belonged to the Cultivators inside the starships!

Dumbfounded, Li Yao immediately realized what the fellow Cultivators who fought hard at the center of the cosmos were trying to do.

Naturally, it was impossible for them to learn everything Li Yao had done inside “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”. They did not know that the space fortress was destined to fall.

They only saw the weakness of the Immortal Cultivators and wanted to give Li Yao a hand. With their starships and their lives as their weapons, they were going to knock the lofty and looming “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” to the surface of the planet together!

Chapter 2112 - Our Colossus!

One starship, another starship, and then yet another.

At least dozens of starships of Starlight crashed or were even deeply embedded into “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”. The exhaust flames that they were spurting out were like the slanted pillars of a splendid palace after the collapse or the many pillars of light that pierced deeply into the space fortress and accelerated the dismemberment and fall of the fiends’ nest!

More starships were providing protection for their comrades and taking the blow of the Immortal Cultivators until they fell apart and perished into the darkness of the universe in light balls.

The Cultivators’ strategy where they regarded death as their homecoming greatly stunned Li Yao.

He recalled visiting the “War Museum” at the East Ocean of the federation in his younger days, where he saw Distant Expanse, known as “the eternal flagship of the federal army”.

In the final battle against the Far East Demon Kingdom, which decided the fate of the Star Glory Federation, Distant Expanse, which had run out of all the supplies and ammunitions, did exactly the same thing. It charged at the enemy’s battle formation with its iron body and burning determination, knocking down the formidable enemy’s flagship!

Maybe, on the two ends of the sea of stars, the Cultivators of the federation and the Cultivators of the Imperium had a lot of differences.

Maybe, under the suppression and annihilation of the Imperium of True Human Beings, the Cultivators here had lost too many things.

However…

In any case, some things could never be changed.

They were all Cultivators!

Li Yao’s nostrils were on fire, from which hot streams that felt like smoke spurted out.

At this moment, he sensed that Li Lingfeng’s fury that could destroy everything was shifted at the starships that were crashing at “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”.

Most of the starships were modified based on carriers and mining starships. They were much less sturdy in structure than the military starships. Having taken too much bombardment in the fierce battle just now, they were already riddled with holes and on the brink of collapse. It was impossible for them to bear Li Lingfeng’s hateful attacks at all at this moment. They were all dismembering, exploding, collapsing, turning into scattered moths!

“Not good. Li Lingfeng is now on a rampage in fury and embarrassment!”

Devastating pictures immediately flashed inside Li Yao’s head. “If I continue pretending to be a dead person and leave it alone, he will certainly blow up the starships of all the Cultivators!”

Li Yao’s fingers began to move uncontrollably again.

The smoke that was rolling inside his nostrils and throat was condensed into scorching magma.

His brain was simmering even harder, and his soul was bouncing up and down like a gorilla in estrus.

“Hey, what are you doing?”

Maneuvering Neltharion, the mental devil turned into a streak of redness and appeared before Li Yao again, triggering sharp ripples. “Don’t do anything stupid. Li Lingfeng is not Wuying Lan. He is not someone you can deal with right now. That is an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage who has been famous for a long time!”

Li Yao rubbed his nose. “But I am an up-rising star of the Divinity Transformation Stage experts, like the sun at eight o’clock in the morning!”

The mental devil said in a hurry, “Sun my a*s! Don’t be rash, and don’t do anything stupid. You can’t win a head-on clash against Li Lingfeng! Even if the two of you are both in the Divinity Transformation Stage and have a Colossus, the combat ability of the Colossi depends on the sets of intact logistical, maintenance, and industrial systems! Without enough backup supplies and a maintenance workshop, our Colossus is nothing but a one-time weapon. If it is broken and runs out of supplies after the battle, what are you going to do in the next battle? Where are you going to maintain your Colossus, and where are you going to refill the fuel and ammunition?”

Li Yao hesitated. “Seems so. You do have a point!”

On the shell of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”, the massacre was still going on.

The starships of Starlight were absolutely no match for “Tempest God”, Li Lingfeng’s Colossus. They were ripped apart and completely blown into cosmic dust one after another!

The mental devil: “Of course I have a point. There’s also yourself. If you and Li Lingfeng are equally heavily wounded by each other in the battle, he can recover himself by going to the most advanced medical facilities at any moment, but what can you do? Don’t forget that we are in the Imperium. Where can you find a hospital that can treat the patients in the Divinity Transformation Stage?”

Li Yao: “Huh. Well said!”

The mental devil: “If you know that I’m right, don’t be rash and don’t do anything silly. Calm down. You must calm down!”

Li Yao: “Understood. Calm down. I must calm down.”

The mental devil: “…What are your hands doing? Why are you taking out of the Cosmos Rings? Why are you summoning Little Black? Why is your hair standing up as if in electric shock? It is now even entangled in cracking electric arcs and shining in red and gold! Hey, hey, hey. Don’t think that you can defeat your enemy by a headful of cool hair. Let me tell you. The most sensible decision right now is to preserve our strength and escape at the first opportunity available. Are you listening to me at all, a*shole?”

“I am. Your words are so correct and make so much sense.”

Opening his fingers, Li Yao combed his hair that had erected and risen to the sky like a bunch of arrows. Narrowing his eyes, he remarked, “However, as you know, I have always been like this since the first day I embarked on the path of Cultivation. This is what Cultivators do. This is ‘Vulture Li Yao’!”

…

At the edge of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”, on the bridge of “Great Mountain”, the armed mining starship, Gao Kangda, the captain, watched the starships of his comrades being blown up by Li Lingfeng’s Colossus one after another, yet he put on a smile of satisfaction with tears flowing on his face.

With everything coming to this point, the result of the battle had far exceeded everyone’s expectations.

They had truly shot down “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”. Nothing could possibly stop the fiends’ nest from falling, and all the evil Immortal Cultivators inside had been killed miserably. It was almost an accomplishment too good to be true.

Gao Kangda could totally imagine the furious and overwhelmed looks of the Immortal Cultivators.

The enemy had even deployed a Colossus to deal with the “mobsters” like them.

That was a Colossus, the ultimate weapon of the Imperium of True Human Beings and even the entire civilization of mankind, and the king of destruction that they had never dreamt of even in their nightmares!

Having shot down “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” and been killed by the wrath of a legendary Colossus, Gao Kangda felt that his life was worth it!

“Forward! Forward! Forward!”

While laughing hard, he operated on the control panel quickly, trying to exploit the last bit of impetus out of “Great Mountain”, so that it could dig deeper into the shell of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” and make it fall even faster!

When Li Lingfeng’s Colossus “Tempest God” ripped apart a light warship and appeared right in front of Gao Kangda’s “Great Mountain”, the old miner and Cultivator who had already fulfilled his wishes did not have any fear. He simply appreciated the destructive, invincible, and unstoppable beauty of the Colossus through the light beam.

“How… majestic!”

Despite the blockage of dozens of layers of super-alloy armor, Gao Kangda could still sense the aggressive vibe of the war machine.

It was like the sun was falling and crashing at him straightforwardly. It was impossible for his crew and him to grow any will of resistance. They could only watch the storms raised by Li Lingfeng to swallow them.

Every unit on “Great Mountain” that could shriek was shrieking. Feeble, floating electric arcs filled up the air. Everybody’s hair had exploded into a fluff, and even their fingernails had split apart in cracking noises. The air of destruction permeated in every pathway and every cabin on the entire armed mining starship. Even the metals that constituted the wall and the floor were moaning in pain.

It was exactly the smell of death.

The Colossus, the ultimate weapon in the sea of stars, was exactly as dominating as that!

Most of the crew members closed their eyes and gritted their teeth, waiting for the arrival of their destruction.

Gao Kangda, however, was the only exception. He bulged his eyes, unwilling to let go of the opportunity of a close-distance contact with the Colossus. The unparalleled magnificence and the astonishing beauty deeply shocked and fascinated him.

Then, he saw the most incredible scene that he could not forget for the rest of his life.

The “Tempest God”, Li Lingfeng’s Colossus, had already raised a saber more than twenty meters long, and the light triggered from the enormous saber had extended to hundreds of meters away. It was more than easy to cut a medium-sized starship into halves.

However, when the smooth movements of the Tempest God were stretched out to the maximum, it was frozen briefly.

After a moment, red flames that looked like blossoming lotus flowers erupted out of the twisted gaps of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” behind it.

In the middle of the red flames, black spiritual energy spread out in ripples. At the center of the ripples, a black Colossus dashed out abruptly!

It was almost like the gate to the deepest level of hell was wide open, setting free billions of undying soldiers who carried the wrath of the unrested souls. A black saber mixed with crimson fire was slashed at Li Lingfeng's "Tempest God" in a storm of overwhelming brilliance.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Caught unprepared, Li Lingfeng was hit right in the chest by the enemy. The two Colossi plowed a devastating ravine on the shell of "Manjusaka, the City in the Sky", and deafening noises echoed like the explosion of crystal bombs when the ripples of their collision spread to Gao Kangda's starship!

"Two—Two Colossi!"

Gao Kangda and his crew, the warriors of all the surviving starships of the Cultivators, and the soldiers in the Immortal Cultivators' warships further away, were all astounded to see what was happening before them.

The two Colossi were like two deities that had arrived from the sky. One of them had crimson flames of spiritual energy dancing on the black shell, and the two overwhelming wings on the back extended to a thousand meters away. The other one's blue body was forever enshrouded in the most violent tornadoes and had four interconnected wings made of storms on the back. There was also a saber that could slash a planet in his hands.

They passed by each other and collided brutally into hundreds of red and blue streaks, leaving dazzling blurred shadows and trajectories behind them. Having thousands of clashes in the moment, they were on par with each other!

The mysterious black Colossus had in fact blocked the fury of Li Lingfeng's "Tempest God" and saved Gao Kangda and most of the Cultivators!

"Is this…"

Gao Kangda’s eyes were hot and wet again as he watched. He mumbled in disbelief, “… Our Colossus?”

Chapter 2113 - Bluffing the Truth!

Gao Kangda had never thought that a Colossus would stand before him one day and resist infinite blades and flames for him.

He had seen the magnificent performance of the Colossi in some of the promotional videos of the Imperium of True Human Beings. They were truly the ultimate weapons that had been blessed and cursed by all the deities and devils in every universe, and something they did not even dare to think about how they could deal with!

In the original plan of Starlight, once the Imperium’s Colossi showed up, the only solution was to ask all the warriors to lunge at them relentlessly and buy a tiny bit of time for those behind them with their lives so that they could cause greater damages to “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”.

However, the ridiculous idea collapsed abruptly the moment the Tempest God showed up. It couldn’t have been more pale and absurd.

Faced with an exasperated Colossus, even if they were all shattered into smithereens, it was impossible for them to deploy it for long!

But right then, their own Colossus showed up!

The Colossus that belonged to the Cultivators and the Immortal Cultivators’ Colossus had an open, splendid, and brilliant confrontation of dreams!

At the moment, Gao Kangda seemed to have truly seen dazzling golden light focusing on their Colossus from billions of stars, further highlighting the mysteriousness and the unstoppable momentum of the black Colossus!

“Come on, our Colossus!”

Together with all the warriors of Starlight, Gao Kangda clenched his fists and gritted his teeth, trying to trigger the hot waves from the deep part of his soul and send them into the power units of the black Colossus to give it a hand!

BOOM! BOOM, BOOM, BOOM, BOOM!

The more they fought, the crazier the two Colossi became. Their original bodies were both only about forty meters tall, which was nothing but a grain of sand in the boundless universe. But the flames of spiritual energy that they unleashed raged to thousands of meters away, like two shining, unstoppable shooting stars. The universe seemed to be falling apart after their every collision!

“Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”, as the “battlefield”, was savaged again. It continued collapsing and disintegrating, while metal torrents rose nonstop like volcano eruptions. The shell of Gao Kangda’s starship was also bursting under the blow and might be ripped apart at any moment!

Suddenly—

The thousands of blurred shadows that the two Colossi created were all gone. The two of them grabbed each other by the arm and started to wrestle. From their bodies, an overwhelming image that was even larger than a starship was spurted out!

Invisible waves of spiritual energy spread out to all directions like surging tides. The starships of Gao Kangda and the rest of them were shaking like a lonely boat at the highest part of a tsunami!

Both the Cultivators and the Immortal Cultivators were so deeply shocked by the scene that they were almost choked.

Together with the overwhelming tides of spiritual energy, an intense telepathic thought was also sent to the starships of the Cultivators, which turned into a shriek.

“Hey, don’t come to get yourselves killed. Your mission has been accomplished. The doom of ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ is inevitable. Fall back now!”

Gao Kangda and the crew bulged their eyes as they listened to the unexpected voice. It was not until half a second later that they realized what was going on. “S-senior! Are you the legendary ‘Cultivator that has been lost for a thousand years’?”

It was obvious that the voices of Gao Kangda and the rest of them could not penetrate through the multiple layers of plate armor and the vacuum to be heard by Li Yao.

So, they could only continue to hear Li Yao gritting his teeth and bellowing, “Do you hear me? ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ has been blown up by us. The victory of this battle is ours! What matters most in the next is to retreat. Run. The more people who can escape, the better. There is no need to die for nothing here!

“You are seeds. You are hope. Your very existence is more important than anything else! Run. Run to the depths of the universe and tell the truths of what happened here to everybody. Disseminate the ideas of the Cultivators to everyone!

“The Immortal Cultivators will definitely try their best to disguise or even erase the battle. They will even deny the existence of you and me. But it doesn’t matter. You must’ve captured abundant videos. Together with yourselves, they will be the best proof! Tell the truth to everyone. This is your new mission and your new destiny!

“So, while I help you block this guy, you do your best to run off. Ahhhhhhhhhh!”

In a roar, every energy transmission tube around the body of the Tartarean Skeleton in the form of crimson thorns was doubled in size, and the wings in the back even split apart into eight pairs. Under the output of spiritual energy that far exceeded the limits, Li Lingfeng’s “Tempest God” was pushed away by the force and hit a nine-barreled turret at the edge of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”, smashing the turret into pieces!

The starships of Starlight all received the message sent by Li Yao’s soul.

They all felt that their noses were itching when they heard “victory is ours”.

However, it was not exactly the moment for tears of joy yet.

The “senior Cultivator” who “has been lost for a thousand years” was quite right. They had learned the sordid methods of the Immortal Cultivators in person many times. The Imperium, which had controlled all the media and public channels, could easily modify or even overturn the result of any battle and fabricate any “fact” that they needed free at will. For example, the miners who rose up in desperation could be embroidered as “rebellions”, and “Starlight”, as a resistance group of the Cultivators, could be described as an organization of terrorists!

Today, they had secured a rarely-seen victory in the countless resistances in the past hundreds of years. Somebody must send the refreshing news out and tell the entire Imperium the truth so that the ever-burning flames could be passed on!

“We have won. Let’s retreat!”

Many starships of the Cultivators who were not deeply trapped in the space fortress all began to reverse, preparing to break away from “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” and evacuate.

The starships of the Cultivators further away who hadn’t crashed into the space fortress yet also changed their directions and moved outwardly.

In the vast, boundless space where there was no restriction of any territory, it was barely possible to completely block a fleet that was dashing randomly.

Furthermore, the starships of the Immortal Cultivators were themselves deeply shocked by Li Yao’s unexpected arrival. They were also panicked and anxious because of the fall of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”, their base.

They were not sure whether they should block the starships of the Cultivators that were dispersing in a hurry, or help Li Lingfeng to deal with the mysterious and strong Cultivator, or figure out a way to hold “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” and stop it from falling.

The three missions were all terribly difficult. Having not received an order from Li Lingfeng yet, the commanders of the Immortal Cultivators' starships were all lost for a moment.

Some of the Cultivators' starships were too severely damaged to perform a space jump. Knowing that there was no way that they could survive, they simply turned around and crashed at the starships of the Immortal Cultivators to improve the odds of success for their comrades.

The Cultivators burst into laughter in the furious flames. "Let's show you who we are. This is what Cultivators do!"

The universe could testify that they had never been more gratified and magnificent in the past hundreds of years!

Sensing that the starships of the Cultivators nearby were all taking action, Li Yao laughed aloud crazily while vomiting blood in the spiritual residence of the Tartarean Skeleton.

Li Lingfeng was indeed the strongest opponent that he had seen in his entire life.

The collision of the experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage was absolutely different from that in the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage.

Perhaps, in terms of personal combat ability, the Divinity Transformation Stage was not much stronger than the Nascent Soul Stage, but it had much better control over the world nearby!

Li Yao felt that he had transcended the boundary of his physical body under the enhancement of the Tartarean Skeleton. He was "evenly distributed" to the thousand square meters around, which turned into a small world that was absolutely under his control.

Li Lingfeng on his opposite side, in the meantime, had also expanded into a small world where gloomy winds were howling with overwhelming flames of spiritual energy under the boost of the Tempest God!

The materials, spiritual energy, will, and even laws of the two small worlds were having the most mysterious and unpredictable collisions on every level while they tried to swallow each other.

After every collision, after the physical damage and the consumption of his soul, Li Yao even sensed that his beliefs were more or less shaking.

He couldn’t help but grow a deeper understanding of the dangers and the mysteries of the battles in the Divinity Transformation Stage.

After only one minute, Li Yao already felt as exhausted as if he had been fighting for three days and three nights. Li Lingfeng was indeed too strong for him to deal with right now.

However, he was not going to give up so easily either!

“Li Jialing said that Li Lingfeng’s Colossus was named ‘Tempest God’, which can condense the vortexes of spiritual energy in the form of tornadoes. It is truly impressive!

“However, my techniques at the very beginning were exactly perceived in the thunderstorm. I am a man who is capable of executing a tornado!

“Hehehehe. Come on. As long as I survive the battle, I will certainly be able to completely grasp the mysteries of the Divinity Transformation Stage and become an experienced expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage!”

Li Yao laughed crazily and burned his life and soul, waving out thousands of crimson flames from his bloody saber without caring about anything!

Li Lingfeng, who was bemused, was much more agitated and infuriated than Li Yao who had grasped abundant information. He did not anticipate that the Cultivator would have such a tough Colossus that it seemed to be even more advanced than his “Tempest God”, or that the user of the black Colossus was another expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage who boasted a “domain”!

Although the enemy was no match for him, he still felt that his heart was colder and colder, so he fought on.

Every expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage was the tip of an iceberg. There must be an inestimably huge force behind them.

Li Lingfeng immediately browsed through the files of all the experts in the Imperium of True Human Beings and even the Covenant Alliance as well as their Colossi, only to find absolutely no information about Li Yao and the Tartarean Skeleton.

He was even more panicked.

“Who are you exactly?”

After Li Yao blocked his attack for yet another time, Li Lingfeng finally couldn’t help it any longer and blew out intense waves at Li Yao’s Colossus. “Why are you insane enough to go against the Imperium?”

Li Yao thought of something. Chuckling, he sent the black waves of telepathic thoughts back at the enemy. “I am not half as insane as you are, because you were bold enough to steal the son of the queen of the Imperium!”

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Chapter 2114 - Thunderous Tornado Saber, the Luxury and Upgraded Version!

After saying that, Li Yao felt that Li Lingfeng's entire "domain" trembled, like a furiously burning planet suddenly collapsing inwardly. It was obvious that he had been greatly shocked.

"Do you work for the queen?"

Li Lingfeng's telepathic thoughts spread out in the most disordered way.

This is it!

Li Yao was overjoyed.

He was only bluffing Li Lingfeng with the highly absurd conclusion, which he inferred based on the incomplete information he learned, especially Li Jialing's look and his foster father's last words.

But considering Li Lingfeng's anxious reaction, his deduction was probably true!

The mysterious young man Li Jialing was truly the son of his foster father and Queen Li Linghai. Yet he somehow fell into the hands of Li Lingfeng, the queen's brother, who then built the young man into a secret weapon specifically to deal with the queen!

Yes. In that case, everything would make sense!

Had it not been for Li Jialing’s special identity, there would have been no reason for Li Lingfeng to invest so many resources on the young man or tell Li Jialing so many secrets.

What could’ve served as a better weapon to strike a mother than her son who was filled with hatred and misunderstanding?

“What do you think?”

In a moment, hundreds of malicious ideas popped up in Li Yao’s head. He laughed. “Of course I work for the queen. Otherwise, do you really think that the abjectly poor and devastated Cultivators are capable of raising an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage and retrieving a Colossus of such a performance?

“Li Lingfeng!

“The queen has learned everything you did. So, she sent me here in advance to sabotage your entire plan!

“Now, your scheme is bankrupted, and you have lost the game entirely. Just wash your neck and wait to embrace the infinite wrath from the queen!”

Li Yao’s telepathic thoughts pierced into the Tempest God’s spiritual residence like the sharpest flying swords.

Li Lingfeng’s flames of spiritual energy retreated crazily. It was obvious that he was greatly deterred by Li Yao’s roar.

For a moment, he was indeed deeply suspicious of his own plan.

However, in the next second, the quintessence of the prime generation of the Li family realized that he was tricked!

No matter what, the secret was the greatest weakness of his dear sister and the almighty queen of the Imperium. She would absolutely, absolutely, absolutely not tell it to anybody else.

It was even less likely for her to tell the secret to an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage, because it would be terribly difficult to kill the informant to keep his mouth shut after the job was done, even with the power of the queen.

“You are bluffing me?”

Li Lingfeng burst into fury, but there was no time!

During the moment when Li Lingfeng was shocked and wavering, the thorny veins on the Tartarean Colossus expanded at least three times like the most ferocious dragons waking up. A lot of the thorny veins were torn apart, spurting out intense mists of blood.

The black wings on his back were also splitting and extending, like clusters of black lotus flowers that were flourishing.

From the saber, which was made of the spine of a primeval beast, on his highly-raised arms, furious flames and overwhelming tides were rolling out, and the crimson brilliance from the saber was almost piercing through the entire universe!

Li Yao’s most fatal skill had been prepared in the moment!

His head was filled up by the scenes where he challenged the tornado in the super thunderstorm area deep inside the Grand Desolate Plateau when he wore his crystal suit for the first time.

He recalled the unparalleled sense of comfort and gratification when he slashed the tornadoes that were enshrouded in electric arcs and as crazy as dragons into halves without considering his own life!

At the moment, Li Yao’s domain expanded to the limits and completely swallowed Li Lingfeng’s domain.

The entire world was brimming with the crazy resonation of Li Yao’s heart, soul, and saber!

It was almost like the stars in the entire universe had turned into his notes, and the whole sea of stars was simmering under the boost of his battle hymn!

The domain in the thousand square meters around was entirely occupied by the auras of Li Yao’s blade and the determination of marching forward unstoppably despite the blockage of tornadoes!

“Returning to my experience at the beginning, the luxurious and upgraded version of the Thunderous Tornado Saber, the blade that executed the tornadoes, is going to kill you!”

Li Yao and the Tartarean Skeleton were completely melted. Countless octagonal, ancient, and shiny runes deep inside the Tartarean Skeleton fell apart, sending out a destructive force that swept across the Tempest God on the opposite side overwhelmingly!

BOOM!

A red-and-blue enormous ball of light was raised in the collision of the two Colossi. The thousands of ripples spreading out shoved away all the starships nearby!

Regardless of whether they belonged to Cultivators or Immortal Cultivators, all the starships’ spiritual shields and force field twisting systems were shrieking aloud.

The spiritual shields of many starships that had been too seriously damaged were even wasted, and their shells were uttering blood-freezing sounds of metal contortions when the overwhelming spiritual energy was dumped on them directly.

For the starships whose spiritual shields still managed to sustain, all the light beams were flashing crazily in all sorts of colorful stripes, as if they had been caught in an extremely crazy nightmare.

When the dazzling light ball finally dimmed, all the Cultivators and the Immortal Cultivators saw the scene that they would never forget for the rest of their life.

The “battlefield” below the two Colossi, or rather, the shell of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”, now had an enormous crater more than five kilometers in diameter after the blow. All the cabins and metal structures in the giant crater had been wasted and reduced into a gargantuan swirl. The metal scraps inside the swirl had been melted by the high temperature, only to be consolidated quickly into glittering pearls that were shot to all directions randomly.

The Tartarean Skeleton suffered heavy damage.

In order to launch the unstoppable, tornado-slaying attack, its shoulder joints, elbow joints, and ankle joints were all broken.

The saber had been cut apart from the middle too, and only one-third of the weapon was still grasped in the hand.

To pursue the highest damage, Li Yao did not bother to consider defense at all. In the dreadful counterattack of the Tempest God, the Tartarean Skeleton was riddled with holes. The broken internal parts were exposed to a lot of critical parts. Fuel, lubricants, and stabilizers were spurting out crazily, as if the internal organs of the machine were erupting out together with the flesh and the plasma!

However…

Li Lingfeng’s “Tempest God” was in no better condition.

The previously dazzlingly glamorous shell was not filled with damage deep to the bones. All kinds of silver, glittering liquids were surging out, condensing into shiny little balls in the vacuum.

Brilliant sparks were haunting all the joints. Several fingers were even cramping uncontrollably, which suggested a major fault in the neural connection system between the Colossus and its user.

What was most devastating of all was that Li Yao’s half-broken saber was deeply embedded in the face of the blue Colossus, so deeply that almost half of the head of the Tempest God had been chopped off.

The previously graceful and inviolable demeanor of the Colossus was entirely gone. It couldn’t have looked more ugly and distressed, without the dignity of the Tempest God at all.

“How… How is it possible?”

All the Immortal Cultivators were greatly shocked.

It was not exaggerating to say that their whole world was about to collapse!

The Divinity Transformation Stage had surpassed the limits of normal humans and embarked on a journey to the real world of the legendary deities and devils. In the hearts of the common soldiers, they were the living embodiments of “invincible”.

It was even more so for the battle-type experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage.

The admin-type, the research-type, or the culture-type experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage might boast their own marvelous techniques, create an unprecedented enterprise, command thousands of starships, and establish a study that would influence the future generations for the next ten thousand years.

But their causes and studies were mostly too esoteric and indirect. It was not easy for regular people to understand the immensity of their strength.

The battle-type experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage were different.

The destructive force, as well as the most primitive sabotages and slaughters, could be displayed right before their eyes in reality and perceived by every nerve ending of every soldier.

Most of the soldiers that Li Lingfeng brought for the mission of “Dying Light” belonged to his personal troop, which was founded and supplied on his own. They were loyal to him and only listened to his own command. Even other people of the Li family could not tell them what to do.

It was not hard to imagine the unwavering loyalty and belief the soldiers had for him.

Li Lingfeng was a god in their hearts, someone who could bring them from victories to triumphs, and from triumphs to eternality!

But right now…

At first, the game which was supposed to be an easy win turned into a chaotic war.

Then, his own base was conquered. “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” was turned upside down, and the massacres were even streamed to the public. It was almost like smacking Li Lingfeng’s left cheek and right cheek in turns.

At this moment, in a head-on clash that was devoid of all tricks, the invincible “god” in their hearts was slashed right in the face by the enemy, and the broken blade was deeply embedded in the head!

The saber was not just slashed on Li Lingfeng’s Colossus, but also on the faces, hearts, and souls of all the Immortal Cultivators!

“Ugh…”

Many of the Immortal Cultivators moaned in pain, finding it hard to believe that there was such an insane and tough Cultivator as Li Yao in this world!

“Ahh!”

Li Lingfeng pulled the broken saber out of his head, where a black, ugly wound was left behind, from which abundant metal scraps were bursting out. He looked even more wretched than before.

He had gone insanely mad, and the flames of spiritual energy each higher than the last erupted again. But there was nothing he could do to eliminate Li Yao’s awe-inspiring attack just now.

“The man is truly… outrageously strong!”

Inside the Tartarean Skeleton’s spiritual residence that was almost boiling, Li Yao vomited blood and grinned in self-mockery.

Li Lingfeng truly deserved to be one of the best in the prime generation of the Imperium and an experienced expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage.

In terms of their Colossi’s levels, Li Yao’s “Tartarean Skeleton” was an original good sealed deep inside the Nuwa warship for more than a hundred thousand years. It should be more advanced than Li Lingfeng’s “Tempest God”.

In terms of timing, Li Yao launched a full-strength strike after a long preparation, after throwing out a great secret to disturb Li Lingfeng’s mind.

Li Lingfeng, on the other hand, only managed a hasty counterattack when he was in the disturbance.

Li Yao had taken advantage of every detail. It was already the best situation he could’ve created. However, even in the mutual attacks where he had all the advantages, the two parties were still evenly matched, and the Tartarean Skeleton even suffered greater losses.

Judging from how the Tempest God was jumping and down, roaring in fury, it was not hard to say that the attack did not affect the enemy critically.

But it was impossible for Li Yao to perform a second attack anytime soon.

“The enemy turns out to be so strong. It can’t be helped. It appears that I have to burn my life and soul crazily to perform my secret ultimate skill!”

Li Yao swallowed a mouthful of blood. With his eyes constricting into the side of needle tips, he shrieked, “Run!”

It was indeed thrilling to run immediately after ambushing someone in the Divinity Transformation Stage!

Chapter 2115 - Vomiting Blood In Anger!

When an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage, driving a Colossus, the ultimate weapon in the sea of stars, unleashed overwhelming spiritual energy, as if he were determined to die together with his opponent, barely anything could possibly stop him.

On the other hand, when the Divinity Transformation Stage expert who seemed to have gone mad and determined to die with his enemy suddenly turned around and escaped like a weasel… even fewer things could stop him.

It was exactly the case for Li Yao’s Tartarean Skeleton.

A second earlier, it was still bursting out with all kinds of dazzling sound and visual effects, as if it were determined to perish together with Li Lingfeng.

In the next second, it had already turned into a stealthy streak of brilliance, diving into one of the holes on the broken “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”, rushing away at the highest speed!

The switch from dying with the enemy to running, from valiance to cowardliness, was smooth, natural, and immaculate!

Even Li Lingfeng was dumbfounded by the actions of the mysterious guy in the Divinity Transformation Stage.

He had witnessed the demeanors of countless people in the Divinity Transformation Stage in his life. Some of them were fearless of death, some were as crazy as devils, some were as magnificent as mountains, some as vast as oceans, and some as unstoppable as the scorching sun.

But never had he seen such a weaselly one before!

Now that the enemy intended to escape, Li Lingfeng naturally had to follow.

But he immediately found himself in an extremely awkward situation. He couldn’t have more concerns.

It must be noted that, although the mutated prisoners and Li Yao had insanely sabotage and slaughter inside “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” just now, it was a space metropolis that was gargantuan and was as complicated as a maze after all. It couldn’t be entirely destroyed in only half an hour.

At this moment, the main structure of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” was still intact. Although it was falling slowly into the atmosphere, the buffer rune arrays that enshrouded the bloody Flower of the Other Shore had already begun to function and flash, spurting out gentle exhaust flames. Together with the best trajectories of cut-in and landing set by the mainframe crystal processors, the possibility of a safe landing was very high. More than half of the buildings could be ensured to be unharmed.

Now, many Immortal Cultivators in the space fortress who were far away from the central area were still alive. A lot of them were the descendants of the major families in the Imperium and the leadership of the military. Li Lingfeng certainly did not want to accidentally hurt them.

So, they became Li Yao’s best shields.

What could Li Lingfeng possibly do?

Fighting a great battle inside “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”, turning the whole place upside down, blowing up the space fortress completely, and killing all the Immortal Cultivators who might or might not be alive altogether by the way?

If that happened, Li Lingfeng would not be able to shoulder the crushing wrath of the major families of the Imperium and the fleets of the military at all!

Everybody knew that he was the greatest patron of the “Heavenly Eye Group”. Many Immortal Cultivators had come to the Land of Sins for trials, vacations, and business negotiations out of respect for him. This place was the center for his connections and the most important nest outside of the Li family. How could he possibly destroy the place in person?

Besides, there were countless advanced facilities and experiment results in the space fortress, all of which were the precious yields of his decades of devotions. They were the greatest leverage for him to compete for the place of “Kurfürst”. How could he possibly destroy his decades of hard work?

Li Lingfeng’s heart was bleeding. No. It was having a massive hemorrhage.

To this moment, he still hadn’t figured out where exactly Li Yao could’ve come from.

It was obvious that Li Yao did not work for the queen. But if he were really a Cultivator, how could he have boasted the strength in the Divinity Transformation Stage and maneuvered a Colossus of such a remarkable performance?

Having no place to vent his anger at all, Li Lingfeng felt that his lungs were exploding in his fury.

The fleet of the Immortal Cultivators was now as awkward as Li Lingfeng.

At this moment, many of the starships of the Immortal Cultivators had already broken free from the chaos and approached “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”. Having not taken too much severe damage, they still maintained a tough firepower.

But even if they could wield all their firepower, so what?

An expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage who was hiding inside a Colossus was not so easy to be locked onto. It was possible that they would’ve blown up “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” as well as all the hostages of Immortal Cultivators inside before they hit Li Yao!

Therefore, they could only watch “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” falling deeper and deeper into the atmosphere and crashing to the surface of the planet inevitably.

Li Yao, on the other hand, seemed to have seen through their awkwardness. He was sabotaging everything on his way while holding his head as he fled inside “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”. The Tartarean Skeleton was now too seriously damaged to have another head-on clash with the Tempest God, but it was certainly more than easy to go on a rampage inside the space fortress, stomp on a few bug-like Immortal Cultivators, or blow up a few pieces of precise but vulnerable magical equipment.

Following Li Yao’s tail, Li Lingfeng watched his lifelong work burning and exploding nonstop. Countless blackened and twisted bodies of the Immortal Cultivators also brushed past his Colossus and crashed apart into ashes. He almost felt like crying and dragging Li Yao to hell with him.

“Stop there!”

Li Lingfeng’s telepathic thoughts seemed to be howling like ghosts. “Who are you exactly?”

Hiu!

Li Yao controlled the Tartarean Skeleton and shrunk it, dodging the three waves of light balls that Li Lingfeng shot out and moving horizontally with the help of the blast of the explosions. He then plucked the roof of a secret chamber where a hundred Immortal Cultivators were hiding, giving all of them a taste of the blasts that were blown out by Li Lingfeng.

The Immortal Cultivators were not very high in level, and most of them were even not battle-type. It was not hard to imagine their outcome in the competition of two Colossi.

Without even looking back, Li Yao chuckled nonstop. “We are both in the Divinity Transformation Stage. Would you please say something more philosophical instead of the meaningless crap like ‘stop there’ or ‘who are you’? How can I possibly stop or tell you who I am?”

“You—”

Looking at the hundred Immortal Cultivators being burned into roasted ducks by the exhaust flames of the two Colossi, Li Lingfeng was so exasperated that he almost vomited blood. He shouted, “I will not let go of you. I will certainly make you die the most miserable death and never have a next life!”

“Do you hear what you are saying? Same crap again! Do you have any constructive topics that we can talk about at all?”

Li Yao smiled. “In fact, the two of us do not have any conflicts in our fundamental interests. Besides, violence is never a solution to any problem. Why can’t we turn havoc into harmony and sit down to talk nicely?”

Violence is never a solution to any problem…

Turn havoc into harmony…

Sit down to talk nicely…

Looking at the messy, gory environment he was at, Li Lingfeng suddenly felt that he should not communicate with the sordid and stealthy guy in the Divinity Transformation Stage anymore, because he would certainly be pissed to death if they continued!

“Just activate your computational ability of the Divinity Transformation Stage and think hard!”

Li Yao, however, continued sending noises to Li Lingfeng’s soul. “My purpose was to blow up ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’, which I have accomplished already. Even if you dissect me into pieces and obliterate both my body and my soul, you cannot recover the space fortress to what it used to be in the past! Therefore, I am not necessarily your biggest problem at this moment. Right now, your greatest headache should be Li Linghai, your dear sister and the queen of the Imperium!”

Li Lingfeng’s soul trembled hard as he demanded loudly, “What do you know exactly?”

“I know that you stole your sister’s child.”

In a chuckle, Li Yao said, “That Li Jialing must be Li Linghai’s biological son and your biological nephew, but he can’t be His Majesty’s son. I do not need to bluff you; it is an undeniable fact!”

“It’s impossible!”

Instead of giving an answer, Li Lingfeng simply bellowed, “It’s impossible that you work for the queen or learned everything from her!”

“That’s true. I certainly did not learn everything from the queen, because even the queen is not necessarily aware of the whole truth, is she?”

Li Yao said in a hurry, “However, it doesn’t matter where I learned everything exactly, and what matters is whether or not I will release the secret to the public and make you bathe in the infinite wrath from the queen!”

“This… this is the greatest scandal for the queen. Once it is set to public, the queen will be the first to take the hit and be doomed forever!”

Li Lingfeng sneered and said, “As the queen of the Imperium of True Human Beings, she should be an example of all the mothers in the world, and yet, she had a bastard in secret. Once the issue is exposed, the Li family will be the first to punish her. On what basis do you think she can possibly deal with me?

“You are too naïve if you think you can blackmail me with that!

“I will be really naïve if I believe your bulls*it!”

Li Yao chuckled, “Anybody with the slightest wisdom can figure out the truth easily. It’s been more than a decade since you stole Li Jialing and refined him in secret. If you truly wanted your biological sister dead, or to protect the honor of the Li family, you should’ve submitted the boy to the leader and the elders of the Li family and asked for their discretion. For the interests of the Li family, they would’ve killed Li Jialing without any mercy!

“After all, as your biological sister, the queen is from the Li family too. Her scandal would’ve been the Li family’s scandal. Once the issue is exposed, it would’ve been an unprecedentedly heavy blow for the Li family. How on earth would Li Jialing have been tolerated in the Li family?

“But as it turned out, Li Jialing is still vigorously alive even today. He has also received all kinds of procedures from you and is raised into a highly-dangerous super warrior. I assume that you must’ve been doing everything behind the leader and the elders of the Li family, didn’t you?

“Yes. That must be the case. Otherwise, you wouldn’t have sent him to such a distant place as ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ for strengthening, when there were bound to be tremendous secret techniques within the Li family that Li Jialing could’ve been refined with, would you?

“Therefore, you had your own plans in the matter too. You were hoping to blackmail your sister with Li Jialing to achieve a certain purpose, a purpose that is not necessarily in the best interest of the entire Li family.

“If we get to the bottom of it, Li Lingfeng, Lord Li, your loyalty to the Li family is rather suspicious for me!”

Chapter 2116 - Rapid Fall!

The telepathic thoughts of the two parties collided hundreds of times like the edges of blades.

The two Colossi were still rushing and changing their locations nonstop, one running and the other chasing.

However, no matter how crazily he bombarded, Li Lingfeng achieved absolutely no result except for causing greater damage to “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” and accidentally hurting more Immortal Cultivators.

Li Yao’s insightful and penetrating criticism made his face pale, his heart frozen, and his soul tremble violently.

Sensing the panic in Li Lingfeng’s heart keenly, Li Yao knew that his deductions were correct.

The Divinity Transformation Stage was indeed marvelous. Not only had the damage been improved to an unprecedented level, but his computational ability was now also as quick as a lightning, allowing him to sort out the general picture of the picture from the broken, incomplete clues!

While holding his head and running like a rat, Li Yao dodged Li Lingfeng’s attacks in seemingly dangerous but actually riskless ways and laughed aloud. “Let me continue my guess. What do you want to blackmail the queen for? The biggest possibility is the place of the leader of the Li family and the Kurfürst, isn’t it?

“As you said yourself, the tallest tree in a forest tends to be destroyed by the wind first. Although you are one of the best of the prime generation of the Li family, there must be innumerous competitors who covet your position within your family. The Immortal Cultivators are all ambitious and ravenous. Not one of them is not greedy about the place of the leader of the family and the ‘Kurfürst’, right?

“It may be hard for you to defeat all the open and clandestine competitors on your own, but if the queen has a certain weakness in your hands that forces her to listen to your command, your chances of being the future Kurfürst will be very close to a hundred percent with your influence and the queen’s influence combined!

“Therefore, in order to be the future leader of the Li family and the future Kurfürst, you ignored the best interests of the Li family and kept ‘Li Jialing’, a highly-dangerous, unstable factor, in secret. Instead of informing the elders and leader of the Li family, you have carefully built him into a slaughter machine with great potential as the greatest leverage in your game with the queen in the future! Lord Li, am I right?”

“Who are you? Who are you exactly?”

Li Lingfeng truly felt more or less crept out this time, wondering how the mysterious Divinity Transformation Stage expert even knew such covert issues.

He hadn’t put all the cards on the table yet. Even his sister, the queen of the Imperium of True Human Beings, shouldn’t have known much about it yet!

For a moment, Li Lingfeng was even suspicious that the mysterious guy in the Divinity Transformation Stage had been following him for a long time, and that he was some sort of weird existence like a ghost.

“It doesn’t matter who I am.”

Waving the half saber, Li Yao blocked Li Lingfeng’s another hasty and unorganized attack. He cackled, “I have no interest in the filthy issues in the power struggles within the Li family, and the ethical drama between you and your sister has nothing to do with me either. What appears to be a great secret in your eyes is not worth mentioning at all in mine.

“However, if you continue pushing forward aggressively and have to kill me, don’t blame me for dragging you into the mess with me, Lord Li!

“Think about it, with the fuss that I have caused in ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’, your epic quest of ‘Dying Light’ is now completely disrupted. The entire Imperium has ‘seen’ clearly the pictures of my blatant sabotages and insane massacres. I believe that new fleets of the Imperium will soon be mobilized from the frontline to clean up the mess.

“Also, since the accident was caused by you, the newly-arriving fleets of the Imperium will mostly be the Li family’s, or at least be mixed with abundant private troops of the Li family, in order to wipe your a*s for you, right?

“Hehehehe. If the two of us are to fight on, naturally, I will be caught in the end by tremendous Immortal Cultivators of the federation. But take a guess. Will I tell them everything I know under their ‘interrogation’?

“The epic quest of ‘Dying Light’ that you were certain about turned out to be a mess, which is indicative of your inability. Hiding such a dangerous factor like Li Jialing behind the back of the big shots of the Li family suggests that you are not loyal enough to the family.

“If you are only not capable enough, there will still be chances for you to learn from your lessons and continue your training. But if your loyalty to the family is questionable, how do you want the big shots of the family to continue supporting you? Even if some of them are willing to support you, other people will lambast you with the issue. Tsk, tsk, tsk. Incapable and disloyal, how are you going to be the leader of the Li family and the future Kurfürst?

“Therefore, I have nothing to lose except for my worthless life, and I have enjoyed it enough. It doesn’t matter even if I die!

“I’m only sorry for you, Li Lingfeng, Lord Li, whose promising future will die with me!

“Hahahaha. For somebody as ambitious as you, the deprival of your power and strength will be more miserable than killing you, right?”

Lost for words, Li Lingfeng could only cover the panic and uneasiness in his heart with the furious flames each higher than the last.

That was because Li Yao was right. He had indeed done everything regarding Li Jialing behind the back of the big shots of the family!

Once the issue was exposed, it would be even more grave than the failure to annihilate the Cultivators.

The failure of the annihilation of the Cultivators was only a matter of abilities at best, but hiding the existence of Li Jialing was certainly a matter of attitudes and suggested ill intentions!

Li Lingfeng somehow regretted why he kept Li Jialing for refinement years ago.

But with everything coming to this point, there was already no retreat for him at all!

“Lord Li, I have an offer to make.”

Seeing that he was speechless, Li Yao continued saying solemnly, “Nobody wants things to turn as ugly as this, but what is done is done. There’s nothing you can do about it however furious you are. Why don’t we give each other a smile and forget our history? You will allow me to escape without alarming anyone, and I promise that I will not tell the issue to anybody else. In that case, you will have more time to clean up the mess and figure out how to respond to the chastisement of the competitors within your family and the wrath of the big shots of various aspects, right?”

Li Lingfeng: “…”

Li Yao: “Why, you don’t trust me? Rest assured. If we ever have the opportunity to get to know each other, you will realize that I am best known for my honor and integrity. When I say that I’ll keep something to myself, I will never say a word that is relevant to the matter! How about it? If you are okay with it, I’ll be off.”

Li Lingfeng: “…You want to go? I’ll be damned today if I allow you to leave in one piece!”

The intensity of the tornadoes raised by his saber was ten times higher than before. Li Lingfeng had already been too infuriated by Li Yao to care about “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” and simply blew out his ultimate skill again.

No kidding. If the enemy could escape through such fancy talks, he would be too disgraced as an Immortal Cultivator in the Divinity Transformation Stage to hang around in the Imperium anymore!

At this moment, they had already crashed into the atmosphere together with “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”!

The space fortress had activated the forced landing program at the beginning. Whatever left of the anti-gravity rune arrays were going at full strength, and the buffer rune arrays around also unleashed twisting force fields, reducing the speed of the fall to a bearable level.

However, the boost when the starships of countless Cultivators crashed into the space fortress heavily, as well as the great damage caused by Li Yao and Li Lingfeng’s huge fight within the space fortress, greatly disturbed the normal functionality of the forced landing program.

“Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” was falling faster and faster while dismembering on the way. It was like a meteor shower that had covered half of the sky!

Han Te, Liu Li, the Fist King, Zuo Jingyun, Xiahou Wuxin, and Xin Xiaoqi, who had just escaped from the underground trap, as well as all the sinners living on the Land of Sins, saw the dream-like scene that they would never forget for the rest of their lives.

The lofty, inviolable “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” that had controlled every aspect of their lives for hundreds of years was truly falling. It was almost like half of the burning sky was collapsing together with it too!

On the collapsing sky, two shadows as enormous as gods could be vaguely seen, one red and the other blue. They continued crashing and passing by each other, disrupting the stability of the world and raising super enormous ripples!

“That is—”

Holding their breath, Han Te and Liu Li observed the sky in disbelief, feeling the urge of bursting into tears.

“Very strong!”

The Fist King analyzed the combat ability of the two phantoms of gods. His crystal cameras were glittering in the most dazzling brilliance.

“The… The City in the Sky has collapsed. Manjusaka has been shot down. Was… Was it done by the two things?!”

Countless sinners grabbed their hair, overwhelmed and in confusion!

Even the most inert sinners had vaguely sensed that the fall of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” marked the end of an old era, and an unpredictable new era with infinite possibilities was arriving at full speed!

“Hurry up! Let’s loot it!”

Looting all the assets that had fallen from the sky was a natural instinct that was deeply buried in the veins of every sinner on the Land of Sins.

Only those with the most intense instincts could’ve survived the cruel eliminations in the past hundreds of years.

Very soon, somebody already realized that infinite resources must be stored in the remnants of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”, which would be a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand times more than what was offered in every “Bliss Ceremony” in the past!

All the sinners danced in ecstasy and swarmed to where the meteor shower was crashing, fully armed.

In order to minimize the force of the crash, the landing point of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” had been automatically set to the seashore.

However, the speed of the fall was now three times higher than the safe landing speed.

Before the main structure at the core hit the land, countless pieces and remnants that were dismembered from the main body already bombarded the surface of the ocean in advance. The high-temperature torrents of flames immediately boiled the ocean and raised a great amount of mist, as if it were the most bizarre dream.

The water pillars raised by the collisions of the remnants, however, swallowed the mist in the next moment. They soared to an altitude of almost a hundred meters, forming a weird forest of seawater!

Chapter 2117 - Li Yao’s Ambush

The sinners living in the seashore area all witnessed the apocalyptic scene to their astonishment.

The ever-rising tides far exceeded the most enormous tsunamis that they had seen in their entire life. Roaring like spears and ferocious beasts, they overlapped with each other and charged at the shoreline relentlessly.

Countless remnants also hit the shore directly, raising a splendid ocean of fire!

Mushroom clouds were rising to the sky and raging in the dim sky, as if it were another “Judgment Day”!

Before they realized what was going on, the largest remnant, which was the main body of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” that Li Yao and Li Lingfeng was at, had already landed heavily.

The blast had already pressed the ocean into a dent thousands of meters in diameter before it touched the ocean. The tides rising at the edge of the dent reached an altitude of hundreds of meters. Even the sky and the sun were almost blocked!

BOOM!

The collision of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” and the ocean raised such an explosion that the eardrums of countless sinners living ashore were directly ripped apart.

Blood zigzagged out of their ears, making them unable to hear the rumbling sound when the surging tides swallowed the shoreline. They could only see an azure highwall devouring the sky and the earth and coming at them unstoppably!

It was a great collision that could’ve been observed by the naked eye outside of the atmosphere!

The tides that spread out in circles did not die down until almost half an hour later.

The waves in many places even scourged to more than a hundred kilometers into the land, resulting in a rampant flood.

Both the Immortal Cultivators and prisoners within “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” and the sinners living near the shoreline were consumed by the waves. Some were even brought a hundred kilometers away in the moment. Everybody was mired in chaos.

Li Yao was certainly among them.

He had been waiting for the moment of the crash of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”.

The immense collision at the moment, the hazy mist when the seawater was vaporized by the scorching spiritual energy, and the ubiquitous explosions and blasts were his best cover.

The moment the space fortress hit the ocean, Li Yao who had been preparing it for a long time retreated his Colossus at the highest speed. He did not even put on a crystal suit as he reduced his breath, heartbeat, pulse, secretion of adrenalin, and the waves of his soul to the minimum, pretending to be a dead body that was everywhere to be seen while the surging tides consumed him and tossed him to the depths of the land!

Despite Li Lingfeng’s Cultivation in the Divinity Transformation Stage, he was also faced with the shock and chaos when “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” crashed into the ocean heavily.

When his Tempest God leaped out of the tides hundreds of meters tall and scanned the whole field with his telepathic thoughts, how on earth could he possibly locate Li Yao?

Even someone in the Divinity Transformation Stage could not find a drop of water from an ocean.

Besides, Li Yao’s “heartfelt advice” was still ringing in his ears.

When he thought of the troubles that he was about to be faced with, Li Lingfeng felt such a great headache that he almost jumped to his feet in fury and vomited blood hard!

“I won’t let go of you! I absolutely won’t let go of you!”

From deep inside the rampant ocean, Li Lingfeng’s desperate and crazy roars were coming over.

…

Ten minutes later, in the flooded area near the seashore, among the ragged reefs, Li Yao, who was heavily wounded all over his body, lay in the mud with all his limbs stretched out, as swollen as tea leaves that had been overly soaked in the pot. He stared at the pieces of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” that passed the sky while leaving black flames behind now and then and laughed while vomiting blood.

He did not expect that he could really poke down the man-eating nest of fiends!

Despite the minor error from his anticipation, which resulted in the heavy blow to “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” and the surface of Land of Sins because of the crash speed that was almost four times higher than it was supposed to be, the “forced landing program” did not lose effect entirely and preserved the city to the highest extent.

Otherwise, it would not be as simple as the scourge of the tsunami within the hundred kilometers from the seashore. “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” would’ve been completely vaporized during the moment of collision, and a super crater almost a hundred kilometers deep might have been caused. The blast would certainly sweep across the surface of the entire planet and annihilate all the creatures on it.

Li Yao could vaguely feel the vigorous, messy, and obstreperous waves of spiritual energy from everywhere around.

They were humans! The survivors!

Both the prisoners and the sinners from the Land of Sins were sturdy guys who had practiced all kinds of techniques. Most of them had struggled to survive the double blights of blasts and tsunamis before they were gathered together, driven by their natural instincts for survival.

Some of them were excavating the remnants of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”. Some were pulling the starships that had crashed together with the space fortress, trying to inject fuel into it and perform maintenance. Some of the less patient guys, seeing that the shackles in the sky had been completely shattered, even rose to the sky with their bare bodies or the minor magical equipment such as flying swords and crystal suits, flying to the beyond of the atmosphere!

Yes. People here had been sealed for too long. They had not seen what it was like beyond the sky for almost a thousand years.

Now that the seals had been completely lifted, almost none of them hesitated to escape from the Land of Sins and take a look at the space.

Freedom, the natural-born instinct of any life!

Li Yao closed his eyes, spat out a little fish, and chuckled.

It was not exactly a perfect and flawless combat operation.

However, he had truly done everything he could as a lone wolf lurking at the enemy’s rear.

After the trouble he caused, some of the starships of the coalition fleet of Starlight would be able to flee, avoiding the outcome that they were all destroyed here.

Now that “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” had crashed at the offshore area on the Land of Sins, a lot of assets had been pushed to the ground by the waves. They should be enough to sustain the sinners for a while.

Most importantly of all, the seals that blocked the sky tightly were now gone.

Li Yao believed that, with the strength of the sinners and their desire for freedom, they would certainly be able to find a lot of useful things from the remnants of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” and repair some of the smaller starships to get out of the wretched, cursed place!

As long as the war between the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance continued in the frontline, it was impossible for the Imperium to deploy too many troops on the unimportant sinners from the Land of Sins. Even if a new “City in the Sky” was to be established, the project wouldn’t be completed overnight. It would take at least a few decades.

In decades—No, in only three to five years, Li Yao was confident to raise greater trouble at the heartland of the Imperium to help the sinners in a different way to get rid of their fate as “experiment subjects” forever.

“Run now. In any case, you are all free humans, not the experiment subjects or the puppets at anybody else’s mercy!”

Looking at the pillars of light that were rising to the sky, Li Yao grinned in delight.

Li Lingfeng’s roars were vaguely echoing from the surface of the ocean far away.

However, Li Yao had reduced his body temperature to almost the same as the reefs nearby, and the Land of Sins was now simmering itself. How could Li Lingfeng possibly detect him so fast?

Li Yao extended his middle finger at Li Lingfeng’s direction and waved it.

A streak of redness flashed and floated over his head. It was exactly Neltharion under the control of the mental devil.

“Li Lingfeng is right there. He is now befuddled and has gone completely mad.”

The mental devil said solemnly, “There are holes all over his body right now. This is the best opportunity to continue the attack and destroy him. How does it sound? Let’s go!”

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao vomited yet another mouthful of blood. “Forget it. Mercy is a great virtue. I am not a cruel and bloodthirsty person. So, I’m just going to… let go of him today.”

“Is that so?”

The mental devil sniffed, “Are you sure you are not going to have another fight with him, you know, to perish together with the enemy?”

“I don’t think so.”

Li Yao shook his head while vomiting blood. “Let’s bear the big picture in mind. I think I’m smarter than that…”

“You are smarter than nothing!”

The mental devil shrieked, “If you were anything close to smart, you wouldn’t have charged out in hot blood and fought a life-and-death battle with the man! How brave, how magnificent, and how thrilling and mind-boggling! Everything is perfect now. Our Colossus is broken and ragged. You can’t stop vomiting blood after the fight, dozens of your bones have been fractured, and your soul is seriously blown. It is no better than the wound a few days back. But now you are picking up your rationality again and realize that you are still smarter than that? Why don’t you go and continue challenging him, seeking chances of survival from unavoidable death with your smartness? I won’t stand in your way at all. Go now!”

Li Yao: “… Don’t burst into fury just yet. Listen to my explanation!”

The mental devil: “Hehe!”

In a bitter smile, Li Yao said, “Do you think that I fought a life-and-death battle with Li Lingfeng just now because of the spur of the moment, and it was a rash decision made by an unclear head?”

The mental devil: “Was it not?”

Li Yao chuckled and said, “Of course not. Haven’t we ascertained a lot of intelligence from Li Lingfeng’s reactions?”

The mental devil sniffed. “The intelligence could’ve been proved through other methods gradually. Besides, you exposed part of your own intelligence too, which made Li Lingfeng focus his attention on us. He won’t let go of us easily. This is not necessarily a fair deal!”

Li Yao said, “You’re right. Proving the intelligence was only the secondary purpose. Or rather, it was a cover for my real purpose. I only fought hard against Li Lingfeng to make preparations for our escape!”

“Is that so?”

The mental devil was rather surprised. “What do you mean?”

“Do you know what’s my greatest advantage in terms of pure fighting when compared with Li Lingfeng?”

His eyes glittering, Li Yao explained elaborately, “It’s true that he is an experienced expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage. In regards to level, battle experience, and fire support available, he was much better than me. I was absolutely no match for him in a head-on clash. It was terribly difficult even if I wanted to escape and get away from his hunting completely.

“However, I still have the greatest advantage which Li Lingfeng, or rather, most of the Divinity Transformation Stage experts of the Imperium, probably do not have. That is my studies and knowledge about the Colossi!”

Chapter 2118 - Absolute Advantage!

“The Colossi?”

The mental devil circled around Li Yao and remarked, “Stop boasting about yourself. The overall development level of the magical equipment industry in the Imperium of True Human Beings is obviously higher than that in the federation. Are there no specialists who are better than you?”

“The magical equipment industry in the Imperium is doubtlessly far more advanced than the federation’s. However, when it comes to the most cutting-edge parts of a Colossus, and when it comes to a specific refiner, hehe, I’m not bragging about myself, but I am confident to compete with anyone!”

Li Yao snapped his fingers that were as swollen as carrots and grinned. “Don’t forget that I spent dozens of ‘Colossi’ for more than half a year on the Nuwa warship in the Ancient Sages Sector. There were both the super Colossi that were still intact, like the Tartarean Skeleton, and the remnants of them which had been dissected into components and were being maintained. Besides, there were even dozens of complete ‘maintenance manuals’ for the Colossi on the Nuwa warship!

“Dozens of Colossi, and their corresponding maintenance manuals—Are they something that you can see every day? Even for a country as powerful and prosperous as the Imperium of True Human Beings, I’m afraid that the appearance of any Colossus would raise a storm of bloody competitions, wouldn't it? Everybody would be fighting over it. Who could've been as extravagant as me who scrutinized dozens of Colossi from head to toe and from inside to outside?"

Li Yao was absolutely confident in terms of the maintenance and strengthening of the Colossi.

The arts of refining could be erratic and mysterious, but it was a skill where practice made perfect after all. If one could observe more, practice more, get hands on the real objects more, and conduct unrestrained and destructive training more, their expertise would definitely soar.

Without enough Colossi for practice, however much knowledge they had learned from books, they would barely be able to put it into real use.

Having occupied the center of the cosmos, the Imperium of True Human Beings certainly had a great number of Colossi. There could be hundreds if not thousands of them if counting all the jumbled, secondhand goods.

However, even if there were thousands of Colossi, after they were distributed to the major families, fleets, and Sectors, how many of them could every force get on average?

Li Yao estimated that, despite Li Lingfeng's prominence, the Colossi that he had gotten in touch with couldn't have been more than a handful. Also, the "touch" couldn't have been destructive dissection and dismemberment. The best he could've done was to observe and examine them.

The Colossus that the guy was really good at was probably the Tempest God and the Tempest God alone!

It couldn’t be helped. Li Yao’s experience in that regard was probably unique in the entire universe.

Not counting the few experts in the leadership of the Covenant Alliance who might have inherited abundant primeval relics, it was barely possible to find a second super refiner who had dismantled, repaired, and maintained dozens of Colossi in person like Li Yao did, at least not in the Imperium!

The gap between Li Lingfeng’s combat ability and Li Yao was almost as broad as the gap between their knowledge about the Colossi!

“Do you know the greatest feature of Li Lingfeng’s ‘Tempest God’?”

Li Yao elaborated on, “In short, fastness! You can figure it out by its name. Since it is named ‘Tempest God’, speed is certainly its specialty! You have also seen the helical wings on the enemy’s back. I can tell at the first look that it is a very advanced and precise spurt structure of spiritual energy, which can improve the speed to an unimaginable level. At the very least, it will be much faster than the Tartarean Skeleton!”

The mental devil was slightly dazed. “I don’t think Li Lingfeng’s Colossus is as good as the Tartarean Skeleton in terms of level, is it?”

“It is not a matter of levels.”

Li Yao explained, “The Tartarean Skeleton is a main-force Colossus that is quite balanced in every aspect without obvious shortcomings. It has a very high comprehensive battle performance. However, the Tempest God is somewhat like the ‘Yin Yang’, Long Yangjun’s Colossus. Both of them belong to the high-speed and agile type. Also, because Li Lingfeng’s level is slightly higher than mine, he can naturally carry out the advantage of the speed to the best. Had it not been for the obstacles in ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’, it would’ve been a probable event that he caught up to me in half an hour.

“I was not scared of the Immortal Cultivators’ starships, however many of them might come. After all, those faster than me were not as agile as me, and those more agile than me did not have an acceleration as high as mine. If I were left with no choice, I could almost march into the starships and turn everything inside upside down. In the boundless space, it was barely possible for the starships to prevent me from fleeing far away all by themselves.

“However, it could be quite a headache if Li Lingfeng’s ‘Tempest God’ kept following my trail behind me.

“I couldn’t defeat him, and I couldn’t get rid of him. The moment would eventually come when my own spiritual energy and the fuel of the Colossus ran out. By then, if the starships of the enemy attacked me together, what choice would I have except for raising my arms and surrendering?”

The mental devil was enlightened. “So, if we wanted to escape, we had to take care of Li Lingfeng’s Colossus first?”

“Exactly. However, completely wrecking Li Lingfeng’s Colossus was a bit too difficult. Damaging his power units in a certain way would be enough.”

Li Yao chuckled. “Why do you think I dueled with him as if I were fearless of death a moment ago? I paid the price of all the damage on the Tartarean Skeleton, which is now on the verge of collapse, just in order to destroy the power system of Li Lingfeng’s Colossus!”

The mental devil recalled the battle just now and did realize that Li Yao’s slashes and postures in the collisions were somewhat weird. He had intentionally exposed many flaws in a few rounds, as if he were feeding himself to Li Lingfeng for beating. Everything was finally clear now!

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao laughed like a blossoming sunflower. “It is true that my Tartarean Skeleton was riddled with holes and almost shattered in the extreme competition just now. It may seem deplorable right now, but every power rune array is still intact and can still carry out 100% of the speed because I paid special attention to the protection of the power system!

“Li Lingfeng’s Tempest God is different. It does not seem to have suffered any fatal damage, and it only looks less graceful than before on the surface, but my flames of spiritual energy have invaded its body without alarming anyone and sabotaged the core chips and rune arrays in the power units.

“If my calculation is correct, the maximal speed of the Tempest God has dropped by at least 11.2%, and the working duration is reduced by 7.7%. Something will go terribly wrong if it is to be overloaded for a long time!”

The mental devil asked, “Only 11.2%?”

“It is good enough. Going too far is as bad as not going far enough.”

Li Yao said, “Even if Li Lingfeng is someone who has more ambitions than talents, he is an authentic expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage and has some brains with him after all. If I had destroyed the power units of his Colossus too badly, he certainly would’ve been suspicious and come up with remedies after he inferred my real purpose.

“Through the understanding of the Tempest God that I gained in the battle just now, I am confident to wager on the possibility that Li Lingfeng is unable to catch me after the maximal speed is decreased by 11.2%!

“That is exactly my plan!

“You said we needed to preserve the strength and to keep the Tartarean Skeleton intact in order to face the many challenges later. That is very correct. However, if we cannot escape from the Martial Meritocrats Sector at all, there will be no ‘later’, will there?

“So, even at the gory price that the Tartarean Skeleton is completely blown up, it is worthwhile as long as we can flee from the Martial Meritocrats Sector!”

After a brief silence, the mental devil sniffed. “Why didn’t you say it earlier?”

Li Yao grimaced, “That was because the situation was too emergent for any explanation. Besides, I figured that you could’ve sorted through such a simple logic with your immense computational ability easily, right?”

The mental devil: “… Yes. What do we do now? I sensed that Li Lingfeng seemed to have left the area. He must’ve realized that things were not going to work out if he continued to act like a crazy person. He probably went back to beyond the atmosphere to gather his fleet and prepare to clean up the mess. Should we run now?”

“Not so fast.”

Li Yao vomited yet another mouthful of sticky plasma and laughed miserably. “While I planned everything well, that guy Li Lingfeng’s capability still far exceeded my expectation. Even my bladder has almost been blown up by him. No. I have to take a rest and fill me with some medical drugs and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures before I have enough strength to control the Colossus.

“Besides, there’s someone that I have to meet and a promise that I need to fulfill!”

Li Yao closed his eyes and released feeble telepathic thoughts first to detect Li Lingfeng’s whereabouts.

After ensuring that Li Lingfeng had truly left the area, he was finally relieved to increase the power of the telepathic thoughts, searching for a special signal that had been agreed on earlier.

Very soon, he locked onto the target.

“Spectacular. It is not far away from here. Several thousand kilometers at best. The Fist King and the rest of them are still alive!”

Li Yao said both in surprise and in delight.

…

In a rugged mountainous area three thousand and five hundred kilometers away from the shoreline, the earth was roaring, and tremendous dust and mist spurted out of the fissures.

A weird and hideous “earthly dragon” crawled out and rushed on the ground.

At first look, the earthly dragon couldn’t have looked more miserable.

It had pulled a dozen armed cars at the beginning, which constituted a body as narrow and graceful as a dragon’s, but it now only had the locomotive left at the frontmost with the drill of mystic rays.

Even the locomotive had been ragged, patched, and riddled with holes. It had also been installed with an assortment of turrets and reactive armors, leaving everyone the impression that it would fall apart after it was activated.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The moment the earthly dragon dug out of the surface of the planet, deafening serial explosions took place in the crevice in the valley behind it, sealing most of the chasers into the rock stratum.

The locomotive that was brimming with smoke was now fully loaded. Zuo Jingyun, Han Te, Liu Li, Xiahou Wuxin, Xin Xiaoqi, and a dozen resistance warriors of Starlight crammed the narrow space like packed sardines.

Zuo Jingyun was piloting it in person and carrying out her best driving skills that she had learned in the past decades. The Fist King, on the other hand, had connected his crystal processor to the mainframe crystal processor of the earthly dragon to improve its performance. That was how the unbelievable, extreme speed was achieved. The tracks rubbed the ground hard, raising sparks and electric arcs, as if the vehicle was about to fly!

Right then, the Fist King’s man-made eyes blinked. Staring at the fiery ocean where “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” crashed, he said, one word after another, “He is back!”

Chapter 2119 - Grandpa Yao’s Reappearance!

“Is… Is it Grandpa Yao?”

Han Te and Liu Li were blushing in excitement. There was no telling if their faces were dyed red by the sky that was burning furiously. Looking at each other, they finally summoned their courage and asked the question that they had been holding back for a long time, “Master Fist King, what do you think of the crash of ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’? Is the legendary Cultivator who has been lost for a thousand years real… and is it Grandpa Yao?”

After hearing the question, everybody focused their eyes on the Fist King.

“Isn’t the Cultivator who has been lost for a thousand years a lie the Immortal Cultivators fabricated?” Zuo Jingyun mumbled before she clenched her fists and asked with glowing eyes, “Does he really exist?”

“I do not have enough evidence to draw a conclusion regarding whether or not the Cultivator that has been lost for a thousand years exists.”

The Fist King pointed at a crystal processor on his left shoulder that was protruding abnormally because of a careless connection with his cold finger. Then he said casually, “However, the temple of the Cultivators, or the control center of the global sword network, was a real thing, except that it collapsed a very long time ago and eventually fell to the hands of the Immortal Cultivators. It is an undeniable fact that they modified and made use of the relic, which can be proved by the mainframe crystal processor of the global sword network here.

“So, in my opinion, of the ungrounded, obscure legends that have been passed on for hundreds of years on the Land of Sins, some are the lies made up by the Immortal Cultivators, but some others may be real. Some magnificent beings who far exceed the expectations of us and the Immortal Cultivators are still active on this dark land and beyond the stars where it is even darker!”

“It’s Grandpa Yao. It must be Grandpa Yao!”

Covering her eyes, Liu Li was so excited that she almost burst into tears. “Grandpa Yao is the Cultivator who has been lost for a thousand years. He has shot down ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ on his own and saved us by the way!”

“Yes. In that case, everything starts to make sense now!”

Han Te said confidently, “Grandpa Yao’s mysterious origins, his unparalleled strength, and his creative, unconventional methods! He is the Cultivator who has been lost for a thousand years. He snuck into the Land of Sins to gather intelligence in secret and to make tactical plans before the Immortal Cultivators implemented their great scheme. Finally, in a cutthroat attack, he completely sabotaged the Immortal Cultivators’ plan and rescued all of us!”

“Wait a moment—”

Zuo Jingyun and the resistance warriors of Starlight looked at each other in bewilderment, still confused even to this moment. “Who is this ‘Grandpa Yao’ that you are talking about?”

“It is an expert who is far stronger than me.”

The Fist King said casually, which made Zuo Jingyun and everybody else gasp hard when they heard it.

“Grandpa Yao is an expert who was active hundreds of years ago. He might’ve been through the Judgment War in person. Even the comprehensive scourge of the Immortal Cultivators failed to kill him!” Han Te said proudly.

“Grandpa Yao is very awesome. I believe that he is the one who has blown up ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ and the expert who went on a killing spree and slaughtered the Immortal Cultivators until they were begging for mercy on the light beam a moment ago!” Liu Li held back her excitement and declared.

Zuo Jingyun and the many resistance warriors of Starlight swallowed hard.

To this moment, and probably for the remaining days of their lives, they would never forget the bloody, cruel, and flagrant scenes that they saw on the enormous light beam in the underground temple.

The mysterious crystal suit that looked like a dark God of Death while triggering haloes that were as intense as blood had reaped the lives of the seemingly magnificent Immortal Cultivators blatantly, the high and mighty “angels”, as if they were chickens and dogs!

Was it the mysterious “Grandpa Yao”?

He was truly strong and deserved the title of “the Cultivator who has been lost for a thousand years”!

“He is moving toward us at a high speed.”

Pressing his crystal processor softly, the Fist King received the signals that Li Yao sent over incessantly. “1,500 kilometers. 1,000 kilometers. 500 kilometers. He’s here!”

Everybody felt that their heart was grabbed.

Although Li Yao hadn’t arrived yet, many resistance warriors of Starlight including Zuo Jingyun already felt the urge to worship him.

A distance of several hundred kilometers was nothing but a yawn for someone in the Divinity Transformation Stage.

Had Li Yao not been flying close to the ground and devoting most of his spiritual energy covering his traces, fearing that Li Lingfeng might discover him, and if he were to bring out the most intense flames of spiritual energy, Li Yao would’ve covered a distance of a thousand kilometers in three seconds.

“He’s here!”

Even the Fist King’s voice was mixed with subtle emotions, which was quite rare.

“Should we stop?” Zuo Jingyun asked, somewhat nervously.

The other resistance warriors were even more anxious, wondering what a magnificent man—probably with three heads and six arms—would be showing up before them.

They had thought that the entrance of “Grandpa Yao” must be astonishing and impressive, leaving a blazing trail of sparks and lightning. At the very least, there should be some sonic booms that were resulted from supersonic flight.

But out of their expectation—

“Huh?”

Nobody noticed any anomalies, and even the gate of the earthly dragon was not opened, but a stranger somehow found his way into the narrow space that had already been as crammed as a can of sardines.

It almost seemed that he ripped the ripples of the space and emerged out of the void.

What an uncanny technique and what a terrifying level!

“Excuse me, everyone. Please forgive my intrusion.”

The stranger said very gently, “Would you please slightly retreat your elbow? It is sticking in my groin.”

Everybody turned their neck in difficulties and stared at the mysterious man in bewilderment.

The weird guy who had shown up inexplicably…

He had ragged clothes and a body that was full of bruises. His face was black and blue, and it was so swollen that his eyes were barely recognizable. He had truly been deformed. It was almost a misery to look at him!

The Fist King: “…”

Zuo Jingyun: “…”

Xiahou Wuxin and Xin Xiaoqi: “…”

Han Te and Liu Li were dazed for a long time, before they stuttered to ask at the same time, “G-Grandpa Yao, is that you?”

“Yes.”

Li Yao grinned, only to stretch his swollen bruises and made him look even more awful. But delight beamed out of his eyes that had been narrowed into two gaps as he said, “I promised you that I’ll be back! No, Sister Zuo, let’s not stop here. Many Immortal Cultivators may be patrolling and peeking from the sky. It is safer to hide inside the vehicle until they disperse.”

“It’s really Grandpa Yao!”

Han Te cried in joy. He then observed Li Yao carefully for a long time and thought hard, before he said carefully, “I understand now. This is a very sophisticated technique of ‘body reincarnation’, right? Grandpa Yao found a body of flesh and blood that was relatively fresh and finally returned to the human world without the boundary of metals and machines!

“However—

“If you had reincarnated yourself in a body to be reborn, why didn’t you choose a body in better conditions, Grandpa Yao? This body looks like… a pig!”

“Does it matter?”

Liu Li frowned and argued, “With the magnificence of Grandpa Yao’s soul, he would certainly choose a strong body if he were to reincarnate himself. As long as the body sturdiness was good enough, it would suffice. Even if the body was as ugly as a pig, so what? Grandpa Yao certainly wouldn’t have cared less about that!”

Li Yao: “… Excuse me, but this is not ‘body reincarnation’ but exactly the body I was born with. This is what I really look like.”

Han Te and Liu Li were both astonished. “Huh?”

“You—”

Interrupting the two little chatterboxes, Zuo Jingyun couldn’t help but ask on behalf of all the resistance warriors who were exploding with curiosity, “Senior, are you the legendary Cultivator who has been lost for a thousand years? Were you the one who shot down ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’, performed the slaughter in the live stream, and had a battle with a Colossus in the sky just now?”

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao admitted frankly, “The crash of ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ indeed had a lot to do with me. The one who showed up in the stream was me too. Later, I competed against Li Lingfeng in a Colossus. However, the Cultivator who has been lost for a thousand years has nothing to do with me whatsoever. A legend is perhaps only a legend after all!”

“What?”

The answer was truly out of everyone’s expectations. Zuo Jingyun couldn’t help but ask, “Then, if you will forgive my bluntness, senior, who are you exactly? Are you a… Cultivator too?”

“That’s right.”

Li Yao put on a warm smile and said firmly, one word after another, “I am a Cultivator, and I always will be.”

Zuo Jingyun, Han Te, Liu Li, and all the other resistance warriors sensed the strength contained in Li Yao’s words, which set their blood on fire.

“Thank you for saving our lives, senior. We… We really don’t know what we should say!”

After a long daze, Zuo Jingyun finally said, “So, to speak, you are a hero from the space branch of Starlight who has been persisting in the resistance against the Imperium of True Human Beings in the sea of stars, senior?”

Li Yao pondered a moment, and deciding that it was not the best moment to reveal the great secret about the existence of “Star Glory Federation”, he simply shook his head and said, “I have nothing to do with Starlight. I can only say that the universe is far vaster than your imagination. Where there is darkness, there is light. In the depths of the boundless universe lie countless resistance forces similar to Starlight, some of which are even a hundred times stronger than Starlight in terms of comprehensive capabilities and capable of competing with the Imperium of True Human Beings. I am exactly from one of such resistance forces!”

“What?”

Zuo Jingyun and the many resistance warriors were truly shocked this time.

In the boundless sea of stars, there were countless other resistance forces similar to Starlight?

They were not alone. They were not fighting on their own. Countless people who were struggling to survive in darkness only to be mired in desperation were rising up to resist when they could not hold it any longer!

“Is it true?”

Zuo Jingyun’s voice was trembling hoarsely.

“Of course it is true. The universe is such a large place. Anything is possible. So, do not give up at all whatever desperate adversities you are in!”

Li Yao grinned. “However, this is not the time to explain everything yet. The most important thing right now is to get you out of this wretched planet!”

Chapter 2120 - Escape From the Land of Sins!

“Escape from the Land of Sins!”

It was what all the resistance warriors had been dreaming about.

“Tell me about it. What is your situation right now?”

Li Yao beamed with interest, but he was somewhat stunned when he saw the Fist King’s abnormal look where the guy seemed to be growing two heads. “Fist King, what’s with your style? Where did you find such an advanced crystal processor core?”

“We did find the temple of the Cultivators or the control center of the global sword network.”

The Fist King said, “However, as you must’ve guessed, it was a trap set up by the Immortal Cultivators. Wei Longtao betrayed us and led abundant spiritual puppets of the Immortal Cultivators to surround us. Then, they played the battle picture outside of ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ to make us vacillate.

“Many resistance warriors were caught in desperation. However, at the last moment, the streams all turned into the footage of your great sabotages. The Immortal Cultivators’ spiritual puppets were all paralyzed too.”

Li Yao nodded his head. The Immortal Cultivators’ spiritual puppets were under the direct control of “Manjusaka, the

City in the Sky”. When he blew up the control center entirely, it was only natural that the spiritual puppets lost effect.

The Fist King continued, “The spiritual puppets were all paralyzed, and the Immortal Cultivators were all overwhelmed by the pictures of your invincible slaughters too. We immediately started to break out of the siege and had a huge battle inside the ‘temple’.

“Then, when the place was reduced to smithereens in the battle, I accidentally noticed the deeper structure of the so-called ‘temple’. The so-called ‘global sword network’ probably did exist before and even played a certain role in the Judgment War, where it dealt a heavy blow on the Immortal Cultivators. Later, after suffering destructive damages, it was buried below the ground.

“I couldn’t repair the global sword network, but I found the crystal processor core. It was a piece of rather advanced computational magical equipment and a great help to boost my computational ability.

“With the enhanced combat ability after my computation ability was improved, Zuo Jingyun, Xiahou Wuxin, and I led a batch of soldiers to break out of the siege. Wei Longtao and the other Immortal Cultivators were all sealed below the ground now and would not get out anytime soon.”

“Even if they can go out, there will be nothing they can do.”

Li Yao smiled. “Now, ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ has completely collapsed. The Immortal Cultivators will not be able to block the sky again without a few months. At this moment, this world is a world that belongs to the sinners of the Land of Sins. If Wei Longtao and his Immortal Cultivators are bold enough to dig to the ground, what awaits them will be the ocean of wrath from the sinners. I’m afraid that their outcome will be more than miserable!”

“But this is not a place to stay in after all.”

The Fist King said, “If we sit here and do nothing, the place will be sealed by the Immortal Cultivators again sooner or later. We have to run away, whatever it takes!”

“Exactly.”

Li Yao said, “I was thinking the same. The fleet of the Immortal Cultivators is in chaos. Some of the starships of the coalition fleet of Starlight are still harassing them in space. This is the most precious timing for a successful escape. But I estimate that the hope of escape will significantly drop after each day or even after each hour. A few months later, when the Immortal Cultivators reestablish their order, a ghastly price will have to be paid if somebody wants to get away!

“Therefore, in no more than forty-eight hours, you have to find a starship that boasts the ability of space jump. You need to get out of here first!”

“Grandpa Yao—”

Han Te and Liu Li were rather anxious. “But what about the Village of Peace? What about our family and friends?”

“This is a war. Weakness and hesitation are not tolerated in a war.”

Looking at Han Te and Liu Li, Li Yao said solemnly, “Tell me, do you want to completely save the Village of Peace, your family and friends, and even the entire Land of Sins?”

Han Te and Liu Li looked at each other and nodded their heads heavily. “Of course!”

“In that case, you must get out of here first.”

Li Yao said, “You must’ve already realized what a vast place the universe is and how magnificent the Imperium of True Human Beings can be, right? Even if one ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ is destroyed, the Imperium is still capable of reestablishing ten or a hundred of them! If you stay here because you are concerned about your family and your homeland, you will simply repeat your life of the past and struggle in desperation together with your family, ending up as experiment mice and puppets that do not have any hope at all!

“If you do not wish to continue such a tragic fate, to see the Martial Meritocrats Planet degenerate into ‘Land of Sins’ as before, or to repeat the slaughters and plunders that have been happening for hundreds of years, just run out first. Train yourselves and build yourselves up in the sea of stars, and create a real, powerful Starlight. I believe that you will return with thunder and fury someday and completely liberate the entire Land of Sins!”

His words made all the resistance warriors breathe fast.

It was quite right. In the past hundreds of years, the descendants of the resisters of Starlight were nothing more than rats hiding among the rocks here and there below the ground.

But a broken sky was right before their eyes. From this moment on, it was absolutely possible for them to roam the sea of stars and wake up the strength that had been sleeping for a thousand years!

“Can… Can we really be a member of Starlight? Can we be real warriors and real… Cultivators?”

Han Te and Liu Li asked in disbelief.

“Of course.”

Zuo Jingyun couldn’t help but smile, “You were very brave just now and among the few people who fought side by side with us. You are certainly qualified to be real members of Starlight!”

“Go now. If you really want to protect your homeland and save the Martial Meritocrats Sector, it is all the more important that you march to the sea of stars. The greater trouble you cause in space, the safer it will be in the Martial Meritocrats Sector. You may find the logic hard to understand for the time being, but believe me, it is absolutely correct!”

Li Yao declared resolutely, “I believe that even if Leader Gu Zhengyang were here, he would definitely second my choice too. Perhaps he is trying to gather resources to build a starship and break through the sky at exactly this moment!”

Han Te and Liu Li thought carefully for a moment, before they looked Li Yao in the eyes and confirmed again, “But we will definitely be back, right?”

“Yes.”

Li Yao smiled and extended his hand through the crammed crowd, holding the young man’s hand. He said warmly but firmly, “We will certainly be back. When we return to the Land of Sins, it will not be so simple as blowing up a tiny ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’.

“Do you still remember what I said?

“This world is wrong.

“So, when we return to the Land of Sins, we will rectify the entire world!”

Han Te and Liu Li took a deep, deep breath. Looking at each other, they nodded their heads determinedly. “Understood, Grandpa Yao. We will fight side by side with you, Master Fist King, and Sister Yun!”

Li Yao smiled and patted the young man’s hand. Then, he moved his eyes to the Fist King. “How are you planning to leave?”

“A lot of broken pieces of ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ have been scattered at the coast area. We are planning to try our luck there and see if we can find remnants and fuel that are of use.”

The Fist King knocked his own head and said, “Don’t forget that I am a reasonably good refiner myself. With abundant remnants, it is absolutely possible for me to assemble a small starship or a space shuttle.

“As long as we have a small starship, a space shuttle, or a crystal suit, there will be hope for us to fly beyond the atmosphere and reach out to the space branch of Starlight. It will be even possible to take over one of the Immortal Cultivators’ starships and perform a space jump. This is about the original plan.”

“No, it is too risky.”

Li Yao shook his head. “Although the Immortal Cultivators are stuck in brief chaos, their main fleet did not suffer major damage despite the loss of ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’. It is impossible for you to take control over a warship easily.

“How about this. A lot of civil carriers were docked on the spaceports of ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’. They also boasted the ability of space jump. I estimate that the spaceports that were well-structured with anti-gravity facilities couldn’t have been all destroyed in the crash.

“I have detected the place where the main body of ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ collapsed on my way here. I’ll give you a pair of coordinates. Let’s try our luck there and see if we can find an intact civil carrier.

“However, even if we can find a civil carrier, it will still be a major problem to find the crew members that are capable of piloting it. Forget it. Let’s just find one first.”

The earthly dragon shifted the direction and rushed toward the coordinates given by Li Yao.

At this moment, almost everybody on the Land of Sins was coming to the coast area in a hurry with all kinds of magical equipment. It was like the most lively “Bliss Ceremony”.

Some were working together to dig out the burning remnants from the ground. Some tough bandits whose nature could not be changed were fighting each other hard. Some were engaged with the Immortal Cultivators who escaped from “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” in the fiercest battles.

Fire and smoke were everywhere. The entire coast area was now a battlefield. The situation couldn’t have been more chaotic.

However, faced with the gargantuan remnants that were as magnificent as mountains, as enormous as cities and as complicated as mazes, all the sinners of the Land of Sins felt the urge to worship them and forgot the competition among them for a while.

Even the smallest of the remnants were almost a hundred meters in diameter, as if they were an amalgamation of skyscrapers.

The largest of them were more than a thousand meters in diameter. They were like a city of the giants standing on the ground abruptly.

It could be clearly seen that the structure of a lot of remnants was rather intact. They were not torn apart by the brute force but were dismantled voluntarily under the control of the “forced landing program”, in order to minimize the blow of the crash.

Therefore, it was very possible that the persons, assets, and even the escape capsules and small starships inside were still kept intact.

Chapter 2121 - Mountain Moving!

Chapter 2121 Mountain Moving!

“Wait!”

When they passed a hill of broken remnants that looked like wasted metals, Li Yao suddenly called stop.

At this moment, the entire coast area had been enshrouded in fire and smoke. Yells, screams, and gunshots were everywhere. The weird dust was even soaring to the sky and tearing it apart.

Dozens of starships of the Immortal Cultivators had broken into the atmosphere from the sky in the middle of the tidal, fiery clouds, trying to get the chaotic situation back under control.

However, faced with the enormous planet which was more than twenty thousand kilometers in diameter and had a main continent of more than fifty million square kilometers, even the comprehensive supply starships, which could be more than five kilometers long, qualified to be called “super starships”, were nothing more than grains of dust. Based on what could they suppress everybody on the ground immediately?

The sinners on the Land of Sins were the most ferocious and fearless creatures. When they were too hungry, they would not hesitate to jump at the most invincible deity or devil in the universe just in order to figure out what their meat tasted like.

It was true that the Immortal Cultivators maintained absolute governance over the Land of Sins in the past. Many sinners were full of reverence for the high and mighty “angels”.

But that was because “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” was hanging on the firmament and suppressing everyone tightly.

Today, even “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” had been shot down. As the saying goes, “a phoenix that has lost all its feathers is no better-looking than a hen”. After the sinners realized that the Immortal Cultivators had their side of weakness, the fear hidden deep inside the blood of the sinners was immediately replaced by brutality.

They were not scared of anyone. If the Immortal Cultivators dare to come down, they would not hesitate to fight back!

In many places, the fleet of the Immortal Cultivators under Li Lingfeng’s command was already engaged in small-scale battles with the sinners, but the suppression did not go so well.

The main purpose of Li Lingfeng’s operation was to annihilate the space fleet of Starlight. He did not think too much of the puppets and chess pieces on the Land of Sins.

Therefore, the fleet that he brought was the type that was more suitable for space battles in the zero-gravity vacuum.

In the words of the Star Glory Federation, it was a standard “deep-sky fleet”.

Battles in the space environment of zero gravity were completely different from battles within the atmosphere where the gravity was normal or high.

It was not unusual that a magnificent starship specifically produced for the battle environment in space did not dare to cut in the gravity sphere or the atmosphere of a planet. Should it approach, the anti-gravity rune arrays of the starships would be wasted. Many of such starships had not even installed anti-gravity rune arrays. Their internal structure that was slightly vulnerable was not adapted to gravity either, and they would collapse because of their own weight before the engagement of fire.

After all, according to their design, they would be floating in the zero-gravity space for their entire life. Why would they bother to install the redundancies such as “anti-gravity units”?

It was like the murderous whales that were almighty in the deep ocean; once stranded on the beach out of the buoyancy of the high-density seawater, the whales would not be able to move at all. They would be choked by their own weight and even explode from inside to outside.

There was in fact a batch of planet attack warships that were designed for the assaults and landing battles within the atmosphere under Li Lingfeng’s command.

But it was a shame that the planet attack warships had been docked in the spaceports of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” and collapsed to the surface of the planet together with the enormous space fortress.

Chances were that some of them had fallen into the hands of the sinners.

Therefore, the Immortal Cultivators were now caught in a dilemma where they had abundant huge starships but could barely march into the atmosphere for a battle. They were too anxious to bother the existence of Li Yao and the rest of them.

Li Yao had planned to bring Han Te, Liu Li, the Fist King, and the rest of them to the remnants of the few spaceports that he had locked onto.

But from what he could see, they were already one step late.

Many gangs who were active at the coast area already got their eyes on the gargantuan remnants. They had invaded the facilities and were collecting resources skillfully. Some of them were even fighting each other over the trophies.

If Li Yao, the Fist King, Xiahou Wuxin, and their companions were to loot the items without caring about anything, naturally, none of the bandits would be a match for them.

However, it would certainly cause great noises, which would likely be detected by the Immortal Cultivators.

As it happened, Li Yao sensed intense metal reactions more than thirty kilometers to the east of the earthly dragon. Releasing his telepathic thoughts to scan its contour, Li Yao discovered that it was like an enormous starship which no gangs had discovered yet. He made the call immediately and asked Zuo Jingyun and the Fist King to move to the east!

“This is—”

Passing through a mountainous area, they discovered the ragged knoll of metals in a small basin. They found it hard to believe that it was a starship.

Everybody rubbed their eyes for a long time before they finally managed to realize that it seemed to be a broken starship that had crashed deeply into “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”, only to fall together with the space fortress and dismember into enormous remnants because it was unable to move itself out of the space fortress.

Can this starship still be activated? Can it fly out of the atmosphere and even perform a space jump?

Everybody looked at Li Yao suspiciously.

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao did not say anything but released his telepathic thoughts deep into the debris, scanning the structure of the starship carefully.

To his surprise, he discovered that the starship was truly as sturdy as a rhino and as solid as a weight. Although the shell was seriously broken and twisted, its main structure was still intact despite such a massive blow!

Moreover, there were still feeble life reactions inside!

Li Yao stopped hesitating. He slightly opened his legs and extended his toes into the ground, before he stretched out his arms and opened his fingers, aiming at the wasted metals that had dug into the ground deeply.

Everybody else was preparing to excavate and explore and did not know what Li Yao was going to do, but they did sense the flames of spiritual energy rising from his body like a tsunami. Gasping hard, they couldn’t help but step back nonstop.

Some of the resistance warriors were still mumbling a moment ago. They wondered if Li Yao was the legendary Cultivator who had been lost for a thousand years, and if

“Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” was poked down by him at all, after they saw his “awe-inspiring” style.

After seeing what happened next, everybody whose jaw had hit the back of their feet hard did not have any doubt for Li Yao anymore!

“Ho!”

Li Yao bellowed. The veins all over his body immediately protruded from his skin, entangling his extremely sturdy body like a hundred dragons.

His skin turned crimson in the blink of an eye. Translucent pearls of blood leaked out of his pores, only to be vaporized into intense red mists around him by his spiritual energy.

It was almost like a five-meter-tall bloody giant had jumped out of his body!

The hard ground was as vulnerable as tofu when his legs stabbed into it deeply. Ripples surfaced on the ground into giant concentric circles.

Every resistance warrior felt the violent quakes from below their feet, as if ten thousand ferocious beasts were breaking out of the crust!

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

Before their eyes, the metal remnants that looked like a hill were disintegrating and falling apart, as if they were being dismantled by countless pairs of giant hands. However, on a closer look, everybody noticed that the starship that was deeply embedded into the remnants was not damaged at all. What was removed was only the garbage that it was wreathed in.

In the next moment, the scene that made countless people’s hearts race and their breath stop took place!

Li Yao’s flames of spiritual energy burst out as he pressed his soul. Performing the technique of “remote manipulation” to the maximum, he actually “plucked” the enormous starships that had been deeply buried into the ground and moved it horizontally for hundreds of meters, before he laid it on the ground slowly!

Looking at the crater left on the ground that was almost a thousand meters in diameter, and then at the starship that was as huge as a mountain, everybody felt that they were in a dream, unable to control their pounding heart at all.

Such a mountain-moving technique was more like a method of the gods. It was too strong even for them to imagine!

“How can there be such a strong person in the world?”

“Is—Is he really a human being at all?”

“Don’t be silly. This is the Cultivator that has been lost for a thousand years. It—It is only natural!”

At this moment, no matter how Li Yao denied it, all the resistance warriors had already reached the same unquestionable answer in their heart. Li Yao was their legend, their hope, and the long-expected Cultivator that had been lost for a thousand years!

At the moment, everybody felt that the dark clouds in the sky were all gone. They were all able to see the glittering paths in the sea of stars!

“Great. The starship was extremely sturdy in structure in the first place. Besides, it had penetrated deeply into

‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’, and the assortment of buildings in the space fortress served as the best buffer for it during the crash. So, the main body of the starship is still intact. Most of the crew members in it are still alive too.”

Li Yao retreated his spiritual energy and grinned. “Judging from the shape, it should’ve been modified based on a civil mining starship, and there are no marks of the lightning trident of the Imperium or Li Lingfeng’s emblem on the shell of the starship. Everything suggests that it is a starship of Starlight. Let’s rescue them!”

…

Half an hour later, the crew members in the civil mining starship were all rescued by the resistance warriors.

Li Yao’s guess was correct. It was an armed mining starship named “Great Mountain”, which belonged to the coalition fleet of Starlight. It went too hard when it charged at “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” and drilled deeply through the shell of the space fortress. As a result, there was no time to get out of the place in time. So, it simply went deeper and accelerated at full strength, hoping to buy more time for the retreat of the comrades. Eventually, it fell together with the space fortress.

The remnants of the space fortress absorbed most of the blast. Most of the crew members of the “Great Mountain” did not suffer critical injuries. They were still lightheaded, but it would be better after they took a brief rest.

After learning that their life-savers were the fellow Cultivators they almost dreamed about and the offspring of the “authentic” Starlight from the underworld of the Land of Sins, Gao Kangda and all the crew members were naturally overjoyed. They were almost roaring in ecstasy.

But there was little Li Yao could do when they whispered to each about the tales of the Cultivator who had been lost for a thousand years while they were performing full maintenance on Great Mountain.

Chapter 2122 - Hearts of Machine

Li Yao was having a secret conversation with the Fist King far away from the crowd.

He had a rather self-contradictory attitude toward the Fist King, an artificial intelligence with automatic learning functions.

Li Yao had thought that he would be highly vigilant and strongly nauseated of the notions such as “virtual life” or “artificial intelligent” after experiencing the turmoil caused by the extraterrestrial devils in the Star Glory Federation, where the artificial intelligence almost went out of control and completely infiltrated the Spiritual Nexus.

But for some reason, when he was faced with the Fist King, an “auto-learning” artificial intelligence, he did not have the same feeling at all. Instead, he had an uncanny sense of warmth when he talked with the guy.

Perhaps, it was because he recognized deeper secrets regarding artificial intelligence and virtual lives in the “Virtual Spirits Sector”, the collapsed virtual world. The remark of “virtual virus from a higher-dimension universe” was still echoing in his ears.

Or maybe, the hideous and foul scoundrels among human beings were enough for him to loathe, and there were simply too many enemies in the boundless universe. The Pangu Clan, the extraterrestrial devils, the alien species… All of them boasted the potential to destroy the civilization of mankind.

He really did not have additional vigor to hate an artificial intelligence that did not show the sign of “life” yet.

In any case, the Fist King had fulfilled his part of the deal dutifully by helping him keep the safety of Han Te and Liu Li.

Li Yao did not want to violate his promise, although he was faced with only a cold machine.

“Grab this!”

Li Yao threw over a Cosmos Ring and sent an opening password to the Fist King’s crystal processor.

The Fist King snatched it and observed it for a while in his hand before he asked, “What’s this?”

“Didn’t we reach a pact where you help me protect the two little fellows and I’ll do my best and help you get stronger?”

Li Yao smiled. “You have done a great job so far. The two little fellows have been utterly unhurt in such a troublesome and dangerous environment. But it is quite a headache for me on my side. Now that we are still beleaguered and fleeing like mice, I can’t find a stable refining workshop and enough resources to help upgrade you.

“So, I’ll give you some good stuff first. Consider them as interests.

“They are the storage chips I stole from the mainframe crystal processors in the laboratories and the control center of ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’. All the data about the experiments on the cutting-edge magical equipment that were conducted on the Land of Sins in the past hundreds of years must've been stored inside. I believe that the test data of the cutting-edge magical equipment will be of great use for you."

The Fist King's man-made eyes were immediately brighter. His tone was still cold, but the tone of his speech was higher. "That's right. I am sort of a piece of special cutting-edge magical equipment myself. If the test data of all the best magical equipment in the past hundreds of years are melted into my main database, they will certainly yield more abundant variations and make my combat ability a hundred times higher than before!"

Pausing for a moment, he adjusted the light of the man-made eyes and said in a low voice, "Thank you."

Li Yao couldn't help but smile. "You know how to thank people too?"

"Not exactly."

The Fist King said, "Neither the real me nor the identity of 'Fist King Lei Zonglie' needs to say thanks very often. I am still learning."

Looking at his bizarre appearance with two heads, Li Yao wondered if he was making the right decision. Pondering for a moment, he still said, "Is the deal between the two of us still in force?"

The Fist King asked, "What do you mean?"

"You have to escape from the Land of Sins, but the universe is vast and full of dangers. It is possible that the world outside is even more dangerous than here. I am still not reassured about the two little fellows and the resistance warriors of Starlight. They are too weak."

Li Yao said carefully, "But you are different. With the mainframe crystal processor of the control center of the global sword network and the development data of all the cutting-edge magical equipment in the past hundreds of years, I believe that it would not take long before your combat ability soars and makes you a real super expert, would it?

"If you can continue protecting the two little fellows and the small group of Cultivators, I think the odds of their survival will be higher."

The Fist King asked, "What about you? You are obviously ten times stronger than me."

Li Yao shook his head. "I can't be with you for now. On one hand, I need to distract Li Lingfeng and other Immortal Cultivators in order to create an opportunity for you to break the siege. On the other hand, there is a greater secret that I must explore, one which probably concerns the power pivot of the Imperium."

What Li Yao referred to was obviously the dramatic relationship between Li Jialing, Li Linghai, and Li Lingfeng.

If he could get to the bottom of the issue, it was possible that he could reach out to Li Linghai through Li Jialing, thereby stirring trouble directly at the heart of the Imperium. Wouldn't it be easier for him to achieve his purposes of "diplomacy, balance, and sabotage" if so?

Therefore, Li Yao had to find Li Jialing. It was impossible for him to break out of the siege together with Han Te and Liu Li.

The Fist King would be the best bodyguard for the small group of Cultivators.

The Fist King's man-made eyes flashed for a while before he said coldly, "But I only want to be stronger."

"But you are already stronger than before!"

Li Yao smiled. Looking at the storage chips in the Fist King's hands, he said, "Trust me. If you continue walking down on the path, you will only become stronger and stronger, or even the strongest in the entire universe someday. Isn't the fall of 'Manjusaka, the City in the Sky' the best proof?"

The Fist King was deep in thought.

Although the two crystal processor cores of super performances were calculating at the same time, his metal body was still shivering violently.

"You are truly very strong."

The Fist King said, "However I calculate it, I cannot figure out the slightest possibility to shoot down 'Manjusaka, the City in the Sky'."

"I can't take all the credit for that."

Li Yao said, "I just showed up in an appropriate place at an appropriate time and did the appropriate things. It's more suitable to say that everybody in space and below the ground worked together, fought blood battles, and made the accomplishment together.

"If Starlight hadn't shown up, and without your intelligence and your cover, I might not have been able to poke down the space fortress even if I were ten times stronger."

The Fist King asked again, “The thing you used earlier was a Colossus, the legendary ultimate weapon in the sea of stars?”

“Exactly.”

Li Yao said, “If you are still willing to conform to our deal and protect the two little fellows, as well as the group of Cultivators, in the next few years, maybe I can strengthen you comprehensively someday with the components and units from the Colossi. Or rather, I can reshape you into a Colossus.”

Li Yao was not bragging.

He had discovered so many Colossi on the Nuwa warship in the Ancient Sages Sector. With the wealth and power of the “Glorious Sunlight Group” under his name, even if he could not get an intact Colossus, it would certainly be no trouble to purchase the debris of some of the Colossi.

In fact, the Glorious Sunlight Group was itself one of the state-of-the-art magical equipment development platforms in the Star Glory Federation. It had tremendous components and units of the Colossi for the research and duplication work.

Besides, Li Yao believed that he would be engaged in fierce battles with even more Colossi of the Imperium in the future. It wouldn’t be strange if he could capture one or two of them.

If the Fist King was willing to join the side of the Cultivators as “our” intelligence, Li Yao felt it would be a worthwhile investment to perform complete upgrades with the units from a few Colossi.

As he expected, the Fist King’s man-made eyes were glittering and scorching again.

He touched the breastplate at his chest.

There was not a heart inside, but only the Gold Barley seeds that Liu Li offered him.

“Alright. It is a very charming offer. According to my calculation and deduction, the deal has a strong positive effect on the improvement of my combat ability.”

The Fist King said, as if he were explaining about his logic thinking, “Until the Imperium or any other forces makes a better offer, I’ll keep Han Te and Liu Li safe and sound.”

Li Yao smiled. “Thank you.”

“There’s no need to thank me. Gratitude means nothing to me. All you need to do is to remember your promise as you have today.”

The Fist King confirmed with himself again. “You know who I really am, and you do not need to treat me like a human being. I am just a piece of sophisticated magical equipment, a cold puppet, and a fully-wound machine.”

…

Gao Kangda and his crew came.

They had performed full maintenance on “Great Mountain”.

Very fortunately, the ancient mining starship that could be dated back to hundreds of years ago was designed to work in the most perilous asteroids and stone belts in the first place. Having taken consideration of the possibilities of cosmic storms and meteoroid hits, the shell and the internal structure of the starship were produced in the toughest, sturdiest, and most robust way. It boasted a high ability of survival and could persist in flight under a damage level of 50%.

As long as the shell was more or less mended with temporary patches, and enough fuel was injected, the mining starship would be able to soar into the sky, get rid of the gravity of the planet, and even perform space jumps through the four-dimensional space, which, of course, would still be highly risky.

Under the introductions of the obstreperous “fellow Cultivators” of the underground branch of Starlight, and seeing the enormous crater left on the ground after “Great Mountain” was plucked, Gao Kangda and his companions finally realized how they were saved.

The pictures where Li Yao dominated the battles in space invincibly in his crystal suit and his Colossus were witnessed by them with their own eyes. The hearts of many of them almost exploded because of Li Yao’s spectacular performance.

Plucking such a behemothic armed mining starship from the ground with only the technique of “remote manipulate” was so marvelous a method that they couldn’t have been more stunned.

It was beyond any doubt that the halo of “the Cultivator who has been lost for a thousand years” had been stuck to Li Yao’s head tightly. There was no way that he could get rid of it at all now.

Chapter 2123 - New Way Out!

“Senior!”

Gao Kangda, Zuo Jingyun, and other resistance warriors of Starlight greeted and bowed at Li Yao at the same time.

Their eyes that were filled with both reverence and admiration made goosebumps appear all over his body.

“Don’t! Don’t call me a senior. I am just your ‘fellow Cultivator’!”

Li Yao was the worst at dealing with awkward situations like this. However, so many Cultivators of Starlight were looking at him earnestly. It seemed inappropriate to be silent. After pondering for a moment, he said frankly, “Captain Gao, and all the fellow Cultivators here, you must’ve heard the process of the whole thing from the fellow Cultivators of the underground branch, haven’t you? Right now, we are still in the middle of the emergency and have to fight a bloody way out while seizing every second. There’s no time for small talk, so I’ll go straight to the topic!

“I am not the Cultivator who has been lost for a thousand years. It is perhaps always a very wonderful tale. Whatever you may think in your mind, this is the truth. Even if I lie to you and say some ambiguous things, the day will come eventually that I am exposed. We will all be awkward by then. So, it is better to point everything out right now.”

“Well—”

Zuo Jingyun and Gao Kangda looked at each other, more or less disappointed at Li Yao’s outspoken denial.

“I understand that, for the weak resistance groups like ‘Starlight’ to struggle in desperation, you have to encourage yourselves with some groundless hope in many cases. That is perhaps how the tale of the Cultivator who has been lost for a thousand years originated, right?”

Having no time to bother with everyone’s disappointment, Li Yao simply went on solemnly, “But it is impossible to defeat the Imperium of True Human Beings and save your family and homeland purely with groundless tales!

“Besides, while I am not ‘the Cultivator who has been lost for a thousand years’, I am definitely an authentic, common Cultivator. You have all seen my strength with your own eyes. Such an ultimate weapon like ‘Colossus’ is not to be produced, maintained, and used by a single individual either!

“You should know the significance of the arrival of a Colossus that belongs to the Cultivators, right?”

Gao Kangda, as a resistance warrior who had traveled far and wide for more than twenty years, and with his profound understanding about the industrial system based on his working experience in the mining group, immediately realized what he was talking about. He asked in excitement, “Senior, where are you from exactly? Is there another ‘Starlight’, one that is more ancient, powerful, and authentic, in the depths of the universe?”

Li Yao smiled and said, “I know that you are not the Starlight that originated from the Martial Meritocrats Sector at the beginning but was only organized decades ago by some resisters who had enough of suppression and exploitation.

But in my eyes, you have done an excellent job and totally deserve to be called the real Starlight.

“No. The universe is a vast place. There are more Cultivators than you think. I am not from Starlight but a force a hundred times more powerful, where there are at least hundreds of Cultivators whose combat abilities are on par with or slightly lower than mine!

“Shouldn’t such a piece of news be a better boost for your morale than ‘the Cultivator who has been lost for a thousand years’?”

Li Yao slightly bragged about the Star Glory Federation here.

However, if “slightly worse than” could be defined as the level secondary to the Divinity Transformation Stage, which was the Nascent Soul Stage, it was possible to make up a team of a thousand Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators taking the eight worlds of the federation as well as the two “special districts”, namely Firefly and Boneyard, into account.

Together with the Colossi of the Black Wind Fleet that had been captured, the number of the Colossi in the federation nationwide was close to a hundred. Almost every battle-type Nascent Soul Stage Cultivator had the opportunity to receive training with the Colossi.

If the Imperium of True Human Beings was not regarded as a united whole, the Star Glory Federation was not significantly worse than any force within the territory of the Imperium, including the four “Kurfürst” families.

Therefore, although Li Yao was bragging, he certainly had enough confidence to do so!

“There are a hundred people who are as strong as you!”

Gao Kangda, Zuo Jingyun, and the rest of them were all shocked. They stammered, “Is… Is it true?”

“There’s no need for me to lie to you. If I were to deceive you, I could have followed your preconception and admitted that I was ‘the Cultivator who has been lost for a thousand years’.”

Li Yao said solemnly, “All in all, I hope you can understand two things, fellow Cultivators.

“First of all, your resistance is definitely not meaningless. Like the flames ignited in a dark night, however feeble and flickering it is, there is always a chance for it to illuminate the entire Imperium! Therefore, I am very happy to see that ‘Starlight’ exists for real. I also hope that the fellow Cultivators here will fight side by side through bloody battles until the flames that we ignited illuminate every planet!

“Secondly, there is still hope. I believe that drastic changes will happen to the Imperium of True Human Beings before long. As long as you persist for a while in the universe, you will certainly witness the arrival of the changes. By then, everything will be different from right now, and there will be a great room for the survival of Starlight!

“So, don’t be frustrated or desperate, and just live on stubbornly. Tell everybody everything that happened to the Martial Meritocrats Sector, or the Land of Sins. Another day of your survival will mean another triumph for us!”

Gao Kangda and Zuo Jingyun looked at each other and said gravely, “Are you saying that the force you are at will surface eventually and create more miracles like what happened this time?”

Li Yao smiled. “As you have put it yourself, it is a ‘miracle’, and miracles do not happen on a daily basis. However… you are not wrong. We will definitely surface and raise the banner of ‘Cultivators’ openly at the center of the cosmos!”

Gao Kangda nodded his head thoughtfully.

Just like Zuo Jingyun and all the other crew members, he was eager to figure out everything.

But as a member of Starlight, he had seen too many betrayals and defections and understood the cruelty of the interrogational methods of the Imperium. Naturally, he knew very clearly that he should not learn what he was not supposed to learn.

“Got it.”

Gao Kangda said solemnly, “The main body of ‘Great Mountain’, our armed mining starship, is fine. Now, my brothers are seizing every second to fix the shell. By estimation, the ability of space voyages will be recovered within one night at most. I will bring all the fellow Cultivators out of here safe and sound!”

“Excellent!”

Li Yao took a long breath in relief. Then he asked, “If you can break out of the siege, do you have a destination?”

“Well…”

Gao Kangda hesitated and said, “We had a few secret bureaus before. However, judging from the operation, our organization had been so deeply infiltrated that it was no better than a sieve. I don’t think that the few ‘secret bureaus' will be safe. We'll be walking into a trap if we go there.

"If left with no choice, we have to wander in space for a while and make a living by robbing the carriers of the Imperium."

"Robbing the carriers of the Imperium, like…'space pirates'?"

Li Yao thought of something and asked, "Captain Gao, you are from the space. I believe you must've been quite informed when you dealt with the army of the Imperium, didn't you? How much do you know about the space pirate groups in the Imperium?"

Gao Kangda was slightly dazed. Then he replied, "In our most difficult times, we sometimes did robberies and other things that we were not particularly proud of. However, we were different from the scoundrels who had no boundaries. Our targets were the starships from the noble families of the Imperium, which were shipping goods for the nobles and the warlords, and we never disturbed civilians. Therefore, we lived in peace with the traditional space pirates, each minding our own business. The best we knew were their names and active areas."

"Then—"

Li Yao asked, "Have you ever heard of a space pirate named 'Boss Bai', or a force named 'Big Bai Space Pirate Gang'?"

"Boss Bai…"

Gao Kangda thought hard for a moment, before he nodded his head affirmatively. "Yes, I have. He only started the business in recent years, but he did quite a few great jobs when he began his career. He is a notorious bandit who has risen to fame in the circle of the space pirates! Our organization never had any encounter with him. But we heard the news about him every once in a while and knew that he was a cunning, cruel, and most brutal man. The carrier fleets of the four Kurfürst families, the arsenals of the fleets of the Imperium, or other space pirate groups—he never lacked the courage to rob any of them, and he never failed any job!

“After all, the Imperium is too large. Boss Bai’s group of space pirates seem to be active in the few Sectors in the fourth quadrant of the Imperium and have nothing to do with us at all. Why did you mention him all of a sudden?”

“Nothing in particular. I only want to suggest to you that, if you truly have nobody to turn to, you can always jump to the area where Boss Bai is active to try your luck.”

Li Yao smiled. “Trust me. Wherever Boss Bai is at, the army of the Imperium must be too busy resolving their own crisis to spare enough attention on the small fry like you. There will be a greater room of activities for you.

“In the meantime, if you ever have the opportunity to meet Boss Bai, just describe everything I did on the Land of Sins for him, and he will naturally realize who I am. Then, there is a 50% likelihood that he will give you selfless help and provide tremendous support for you to live through the difficulties.”

“Is he an old friend of yours, senior? That’s great!”

Gao Kangda said, “However, there is only a 50% chance? What about the other 50%?”

Li Yao said solemnly, “Well, the other 50% chance is that he will find you and even myself to be great troubles. When he learns that I told you to go to him, he will kill all of you at the earliest opportunity!”

Gao Kangda: “…”

Li Yao: “We are only talking about the situation where you have absolutely nobody to turn to. Isn’t it even riskier to wander purposelessly in space? The death rate will certainly be well above 90%. So, it is better to try your luck at Boss Bai’s place! You can try to adulate him harder. For example, you can say that ‘the guy who asked me to find you thought most highly of you and believed that Boss Bai was the only person in the entire cosmos who could resist the infinite wrath of the Imperium and provide a shelter for all of us’, or things as such. I imagine that he won’t be too heartless… or maybe he will?”

Chapter 2124 - Create Your Own Future!

“Okay, got it!”

Gao Kangda nodded his head and said solemnly, “If we can indeed escape out of here, we will try to contact the fellow Cultivators that are now scattered in the sea of stars first, and if we really can’t find a place to stay in, we will try our luck in the area where ‘Boss Bai’ is active!”

Han Te and Liu Li had been listening quietly the whole time. Hearing the hint of farewell in Li Yao’s words, they couldn’t help but say in a hurry, “Grandpa Yao, are you not leaving with us?”

“I can’t leave with you.”

Grinning, Li Yao pointed at the sky and said, “The Immortal Cultivators are unlikely to drop the issue quickly. It is possible that the atmosphere has been heavily guarded by them. The odds of success are rather low if you intend to break out of the siege by brute force, but if you lurk here for another couple of days, more starships of the Immortal Cultivators will definitely come from all directions for reinforcements, in which case it would be even less possible to escape!

“Your starship needs twelve hours for maintenance and injection of the fuel. So, I will break the siege in ten hours, hoping to distract the Immortal Cultivators’ attention. If Li Lingfeng intends to capture me, he will certainly not be able to achieve the purpose without the coordinated work of more than half a fleet.

“It will be the greatest opportunity for your escape by then. Odds will be quite high that you can successfully get out of the place!”

“Then—”

Thinking for a moment, Han Te and Liu Li asked in worries, “Wouldn’t it be very dangerous for Grandpa Yao to be chased by more than half a fleet? Also, both crystal suits and Colossi only boast the ability of normal cruise and cannot perform a space jump, right? What will you do when you run out of your fuel and spiritual energy?”

Li Yao chuckled. “Rest assured about that. I will have my own solutions. All in all, I promise you that I will be fine! I’ll give you a way of secret communication later. After we are all safe again, we can always reach out to each other and fight for a common purpose again!

“Alright. I know that there are many things you want to say and many questions you want to ask, but it is very urgent right now. Every second can possibly decide whether or not we can escape. Please seize the day and go back to maintain the starship. I need to meditate and treat my wounds too, so that I can confront Li Lingfeng and his fleet in the best state!”

Li Yao was truly heavily wounded at this moment, and even his soul was more or less disordered. Knowing that it was a life-and-death moment for all of them, everybody simply bid farewell to Li Yao respectfully, not daring to interrupt Li Yao’s treatment anymore.

Gao Kangda and Zuo Jingyun went back to maintain the starship and to regroup the soldiers.

The Fist King left with them. He would try to connect his crystal processors to the mainframe crystal processor of “Great Mountain”, hoping to improve the performance of the starship.

Han Te and Liu Li, however, were still clinging to Li Yao.

The two of them hadn’t spent a long time with Li Yao yet, but Li Yao was truly the key that changed their lives.

Before they found Li Yao, they were just two insignificant characters in the Desolate Land living a plain, hopeless life.

However, Li Yao brought them into a bizarre, greater world, allowing them to appreciate the entire sea of stars!

The two of them deeply bonded with Li Yao, who was like a “navigator” to them.

“Grandpa Yao…”

Han Te and Liu Li looked at Li Yao in hesitation. The young man scratched the electromagnetic metal rings on his left arm, while the girl played with the corner of her coat while biting her lips softly.

“What’s wrong? Are you worried about the upcoming journey?”

Li Yao said in a smile, “Rest assured. I have asked the Fist King to continue taking care of you. While he claims to be a cold machine all the time, I find him much more reliable than most human beings. You’ll be fine under his protection. Also, if there is anything you need to know, you can learn from him. I believe that he will certainly teach you a lot of things."

"Yes."

Han Te nodded his head. "Master Fist King is truly a good guy. We also think that he is better than a lot of the mean, bad people on the Land of Sins. He gives us the same feeling as master and Grandpa Yao. We will definitely follow Master Fist King and learn as much as possible, but…"

Liu Li added, "But we still can't bear to leave Grandpa Yao."

Li Yao was slightly dazed. The reliance of the two little fellows on him was something that he had never sensed from Wu Mayan, Xie Anan, or Jin Xinyue.

Perhaps it was because when he met Wu Mayan, Xie Anan, and Jin Xinyue, his level was not high enough, and he could barely protect himself.

But right now, it was possible that he was already qualified to provide guidance for a lot of people and protection for a world.

"It's alright. We will meet again."

Li Yao patted the young man's shoulder before he opened his hand and offered two Cosmos Rings to him. "Inside the two Cosmos Rings are almost eight jade chips, which store the techniques that I have selected for the two of you over the past few days with consideration of the sequel of your random, unorganized training previously. If you work on them diligently, they should be able to shatter the coagula that have been condensed in your veins and your brains, allowing you to reach a brand-new level.

“There are also some Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and marrow crystals in them, which were stolen from ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ by me. Ha. It seemed to be a waste not to take them.

“As for the Cosmos Rings themselves, they are the ultimate treasures for the journey in space and the stealth, guerilla warfare. Come on, each of you will have one of them. Keep it safe!”

“Grandpa Yao…”

However uninformed Han Te and Liu Li were, they knew the preciousness of the Cosmos Rings. Their eyes were all red instantly.

Li Yao was scared of such scenarios more than anything else. He flicked the foreheads of the two little fellows softly and said in a smile, “Alright, this isn’t our last farewell. Do not make it so sad. I’ve offered you the two Cosmos Rings on the following conditions—I hope that you would have already grown into the experts that do not require the protection of the Fist King or anybody else and that you would already be real Cultivators the next time I meet you!”

“We will!”

Han Te held the Cosmos Ring hard and declared solemnly, “Just rest assured, Grandpa Yao. We will certainly become real Cultivators before we march back to the Land of Sins and change the world that is wrong!”

Han Te, however, asked in a low voice after a moment of hesitation, “Grandpa Yao, may I ask you one last question? What exactly makes a ‘real Cultivator’?”

Slightly dazed, Li Yao felt that he was blushing. He replied, “Well, this is rather awkward. I really don’t know the answer to your question.

“If somebody asked me the question a hundred years ago when I just became a Cultivator, I would’ve told them without any hesitation that Cultivators meant friendship, slaying the evils, helping the weak, and protecting the country. Cultivators must persist in what they believed in despite all the unfavorable circumstances and discouraging comments. Cultivators had to surpass the limits of their lives, explore the mysterious levels that no predecessors had ever reached, and find a new direction for the future of the civilization of mankind.

“But as I trained more and advanced into higher levels, I got in touch with more and more people and things, both good ones and bad ones. Sometimes, I was confused by the true meaning of ‘Cultivator’. Perhaps everything I mentioned just now is about the Cultivators, but the real ‘Cultivators’ are much more than that. They are related to everything in the entire universe.

“Many times before, I had absolutely no doubt on a certain definition of ‘Cultivators’, and I defended and fought for it, considering it as my firmest belief. But in the end, it often occurred to me that my understanding was not 100% correct, or rather, it was only correct on a very low level. When I leaped to higher levels, the new discoveries that I made required me to continue my training and to summarize the reasons of a higher level.

“So, I do not want to tell you what exactly makes a ‘real Cultivator’ or the true meaning of ‘Cultivation’, because it will only restrain your future development and confine you in my thinking pattern.

“I believe that everybody has their unique experiences and fate. Having been born in the dark Land of Sins, and after all the bloody and cruel things you’ve been through, it is highly remarkable that you can still keep the last bit of brightness in your heart.

“Then, just travel in the sea of stars with the brightness in your heart. Perhaps, a long time later, after meeting countless people and things, you will tell me what a real Cultivator is when we meet again!

“All in all, the thing about Cultivators is that you must find an answer with your own heart. No matter how the world and the universe change, I believe that something in your heart will stay the same.

“So, go and find your own answer. We’ll see each other again in space!”

Han Te and Liu Li nodded their heads hard, their eyes wet.

Thinking for a moment, Liu Li took out the can of seeds that she treasured as much as her life again and delivered a handful of the Gold Barley seeds to Li Yao solemnly.

“Grandpa Yao, I’ve given it a lot of thought.”

The girl said solemnly, “In the past, my mother’s last wish always occupied my mind. I wanted to grow the Gold Barley on the entire Land of Sins so that everybody would have enough to eat, and no wars would ever happen again.

“But if the universe has always been as dark and cold as it is, even if the Gold Barleys are truly grown all over the Land of Sins, it won’t take long before they all wither and perish, right?

“If the entire universe is drowned in the flames of war, how can the Land of Sins be an exception?

“So, I have upgraded my dream. I’m going to grow the Gold Barley in the three thousand Sectors in the entire universe!

“Grandpa Yao, can you help me spray the handful of seeds in space so that they will root, sprout, and spread to the entire universe?”

Li Yao took over the Gold Barley seeds carefully, and looking at the girl’s eyes that were as clear as water and as unwavering as jade, he nodded his head heavily.

“No problem. You can count on me!”

Li Yao said in a smile, “I’ll definitely find the most suitable place to plant the Gold Barley seeds. Who knows? It may be the splendid, inviolable royal palace of the Imperium of True Human Beings. Haha!”

“Thank you, Grandpa Yao!”

Liu Li bowed at Li Yao deeply and put on the most brilliant smile after rubbing her eyes. “Then, farewell and safe journey!”

“Safe journey!”

Li Yao took a deep breath, somehow hesitating to leave them too. But he still managed to wave his hands at the two little fellows. “Go now. Embrace your fate and create your own future!”

Chapter 2125 - Who Can Stop Me?

Ten hours later, night had fallen on the Land of Sins again.

But this time, colorful mystic rays were rising to the sky everywhere on the bleak land, ripping apart the dark sky and breaking beyond the atmosphere.

In the crevice of a mountainous area, Li Yao opened his eyes slowly and looked at the empty cans of medical drugs and strengthening nutrition. All the fluids in them had been absorbed by him without leaving a single drop. They had leaked to every mitochondrion inside his every cell.

After ten hours of meditation and recovery, his physical strength, soul, and fighting will had all climbed to the highest point.

It was time to break out!

In order not to bring trouble to Han Te, Liu Li, the Fist King, Zuo Jingyun, Gao Kangda, and the rest of them, Li Yao had been treating his wounds in the mountains more than five kilometers inland.

He was in the middle of the unmanned wilderness. The only things that could be seen were the flickering torches on the horizon. Everything seemed peaceful and quiet.

However, Li Yao knew that the tranquility was merely a disguise.

Li Lingfeng and his fleet would definitely not let go of him so easily. They must be gnashing their teeth and whetting their sabers, waiting to ambush him outside of the atmosphere when he boosted all his spiritual energy and broke out of the siege.

Li Yao only hoped that he was a big fish that was more worthy of catching than “Starlight” so that he would be able to distract the Immortal Cultivators and buy precious time for Han Te, Liu Li, and all the other people on the Land of Sins who craved freedom!

“Little Black, I’ll have to count on you again. Please hang in there!”

Li Yao touched the black Cosmos Ring on his index finger and raised his arm.

Clusters of black mucus flowed out of the Cosmos Ring and emitted the brilliance of mercury before it enshrouded him in the blink of an eye. He seemed to have put on a most mysterious crystal suit.

It was exactly the original body of Little Black—the flying sword named Black Wing, which was made of materials that were even more flexible and tensile than liquid metal and boasted very powerful abilities of spiritual energy interaction and telepathic thought enhancement.

Shua!

After every inch of skin was covered and protected by Little Black carefully, Li Yao opened his arms and slowly drifted to midair.

Black-and-red streaks of brightness continued spurting out of his Cosmos Ring, drawing the outline and the framework of a Colossus around him. In the next, it was the network that looked like veins and nerves. The last to be filled was the magical equipment units that were most precise in structure and could activate thousands of techniques.

The Tartarean Skeleton stood on the Land of Sins and let out a tsunami of spiritual energy while faced with the boundless night sky!

Li Yao’s soul seemed to have been completely melted with the Colossus.

He could clearly sense the heavy damage on the Tartarean Skeleton, which even led to stinging feelings at his nerve endings.

But the pain, which felt like needle stabbing, only made him even more excited. His soul was burning more intensely than ever.

Neltharion turned into a streak of redness and circled the Tartarean Skeleton rapidly like a satellite around a planet, further adding to the profoundness and the mysteriousness of the Colossus.

“Li Lingfeng, even if you have an entire fleet in your hands—”

Li Yao’s lips curled, and his eyes that were staring at the night sky were brimming with infinite fire. “—you can try and see if you can block ‘Vulture Li Yao’!”

BOOM! BOOM, BOOM, BOOM, BOOM!

The most violent flames of spiritual energy spurted out of the Tartarean Skeleton, which covered the land of almost a thousand square meters instantly. All the uneven hills were blown into powder by the airwaves. The pebbles the size of fingernails were captured by the force field of the Colossus first and spun around it rapidly before they hit the ground hard in cracking explosions.

Right when the hills were crumbled into stones and the stones landed heavily, the Tartarean Skeleton rose to the sky into a crimson pillar of light, piercing through the clouds like a glittering long spear!

“Grandpa Yao…”

Hundreds of kilometers away, Han Te and Liu Li held each other’s hands and stared at the scene in a daze. Something wet and clear was flashing in the eyes of both of them.

The Fist King stood in silence behind them, with disordered light beaming out of his man-made eyes. He seemed deeply confused as to why the very special human being was doing all that.

All the other resistance warriors of Starlight knew that Li Yao broke out of the siege in such an eye-catching way only because he was trying to distract the Immortal Cultivators for them. Their blood boiling and their hearts racing, they all secretly clenched their fists and cheered for Li Yao in their hearts.

Li Yao’s spectacular breakthrough was witnessed by countless sinners on the Land of Sins too. The red spear that pierced at the sky and did not disperse after a long time had also deeply pierced into their heart too.

Perhaps the scene would be a legend that the sinners talked about passionately even a long time later!

Outside of the atmosphere of the Martial Meritocrats Planet, Li Yao was unleashing heat and radiations, which were more than the main engine of a heavy starship could've released, in the most blatant way without hiding his existence at all, because he was hoping to catch the attention of all the Immortal Cultivators. Naturally, he was detected by the fleet of the Immortal Cultivators that was lurking beyond the gravity sphere.

Hardly had Li Yao sprinted out of the planet's gravity circle and entered the dark space when he sensed a magnificent wave of spiritual energy coming at him at high speed.

It was Li Lingfeng!

The guy indeed did not intend to let him go but was only ambushing him.

Not just Li Lingfeng, even the hundreds of starships of the Immortal Cultivators' fleet nearby were also attracted by Li Yao and marched at him aggressively like countless bloodstained tusks.

Hehe. You want to surround a Colossus in the vast, boundless space where there are no obstacles at all?

Li Yao sneered nonstop. You can't be more stupid!

It was not a siege on the ground.

The universe was too vast. Not just Li Lingfeng's several hundred starships, even thousands of them would be nothing more than grains of dust.

There was at least a thousand kilometers between every two starships, which was not enough to completely control the entire space at the edge of a planet. In the meantime, common material weapons could not catch up to his speed at all, and only the weapons of mystic rays that moved at the speed of light could possibly hit him—on the condition that the enemy could lock onto him first!

Until the fuel and the spiritual energy ran out, only Li Lingfeng's Colossus had the opportunity to catch up to and stop his Colossus, creating a window for the fleet around to surround him.

But Li Lingfeng's Colossus…

Very fast. “Tempest God”, it is certainly not a wrong name!

Li Yao grinned, baring his glittering teeth. The cunningness beaming out of his eyes made him look like a weasel that had just stolen a chicken.

It was impossible for Li Lingfeng to have predicted the coordinates where he broke through the atmosphere. So, the two of them were tens of thousands of kilometers away from each other at the beginning.

Despite the high speed of the Tempest God, it had to resort to the maximal power output in order to cover the long distance as soon as possible.

The result of a prolonged extreme output was that, when the two of them were only slightly more than a thousand kilometers from each other, the spiritual waves of the Tempest God suddenly blinked weirdly, and the speed of the Colossus plummeted!

The tricks that Li Yao played on the power units of the Tempest God in the competition at the beginning at the cost of the heavy damage to the Tartarean Skeleton had finally worked out!

Sensing that the enemy’s speed was lower and lower, and it was unlikely for him to be caught, Li Yao burst into laughter and rushed off in confidence!

Not far away up ahead, however, there was a lone starship of the Immortal Cultivators, which was launching mystic rays and electromagnetic bullets at him in vain, hoping to slow him down.

A “Piranha”-level arsenal warship!

Li Yao’s eyes glittered with interest, and cruelty spread out of the smile on his lips. To completely blow up an arsenal warship of such a level, it will only take me… seven seconds!

In the blink of an eye, the Tartarean Skeleton disappeared, or melted, in the space like a cluster of unpredictable black smoke.

The enemy’s stormy attack all missed the target, achieving nothing but the feeble ripples that were spreading out.

Shua!

In the next second, the Tartarean Skeleton somehow appeared on the top of the arsenal warship of the Imperium, staring at the enemy coldly from the high stance.

Although the Tartarean Skeleton at this moment had been heavily wounded and riddled with holes, it could not stop the ripples of spiritual energy from spreading out of the Colossus’ arms and condensing into a drill that looked like a red lotus. Tearing apart the seemingly solid armor of the arsenal warship, the Colossus raged and went on a rampage inside the cabins unstoppably!

Only seven seconds later—

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The “Piranha”-level arsenal warship, which had been armed to the teeth, indeed turned into dazzling light balls. The warehouses of ammunition and crystals all had the most intense explosions, releasing abundant radiations and high-energy particles that completely disrupted the detection of Li Lingfeng and the starships of other Immortal Cultivators.

There being no friction in vacuum, the remnants resulted from the explosion of the starship all darted away at a high speed like shooting stars. Without the interference of external forces, they would continue drifting forward until they flew out of the Martial Meritocrats Sector!

The moment when the arsenal warship exploded, Li Yao already retreated the Tartarean Skeleton under the cover of the intense spiritual waves. He simply covered him in the mustard-seed combat suit and Little Black, the mysterious “liquid crystal processor”, while he crouched in the middle of a medium-sized remnant and rushed to the edge of the Martial Meritocrats Sector.

There were thousands of such remnants in space right now. It would take Li Lingfeng at least a day and a night to scan each and every one of them.

Han Te, Liu Li, this is as far as I can help you!

Looking at the Land of Sins not far away, Li Yao had a lot of complicated feelings, which all turned into one blessing. I wish the best of luck for you and all the fellow Cultivators!

Realizing that he had been fooled, Li Lingfeng, who had burst into a fury, showed no intention of letting Li Yao go.

That did make sense. Li Yao had many secrets and even pointed out his relationship with Li Jialing. He was truly more valuable than Starlight.

Li Lingfeng, as expected, threw away the chaotic, unresolvable Land of Sins for now and summoned all the available forces to catch Li Yao.

However, he went in the wrong direction. He couldn’t have foreseen that, instead of running to the peripheral space zones of the Martial Meritocrats Sector, the guy had slightly adjusted the direction and moved to the ninth satellite of the fifth planet of the galaxy.

“Jingle Bell”, the most advanced stealth exploration starship of the Star Glory Federation, and the greatest reliance for Li Yao’s escape, was hidden right there!

Chapter 2126 - Blind Jump!

Li Yao spent half an hour searching before he found Li Jialing on the ninth satellite of the fifth planet of the Martial Meritocrats Sector.

Li Jialing had been sending out feeble signals through his crystal suit while hiding in the deepest fold inside a crater.

The special signals could only be received when one was close enough to the satellite and adjusted the communication channel to a certain frequency.

Of course, it was the communication method that Li Yao and Li Jialing had agreed on earlier.

Seeing that Li Jialing, the little weirdo who was full of enigmas but also deeply connected to him, was safe and sound, Li Yao took a long breath in relief. Dragging Li Jialing's elbow, he connected their communication channels and said, "Let's go to my starship. We'll talk later!"

Inside "Jingle Bell", Li Yao stored the crystal suit and Little Black back into the Cosmos Ring. Wearing only the mustard-seed combat suit and warming up his slightly exhausted body, Li Yao more or less calmed down.

There was only one last step to go before the final escape.

His hands turned into two clusters of mists as he operated quickly on the control panel of Jingle Bell.

Li Jialing, however, watched him from the back in a daze while observing Jingle Bell in suspicions and fear.

“What’s up?”

Li Yao said without looking back, “Why are you flinching? You are scared of me?”

“Of course I am, because you are an out-and-out monster.”

Li Jialing swallowed hard and summoned his courage. “I knew you were strong, but I did not know that you were THAT strong. Even ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ was blown up by you. So many Immortal Cultivators were also killed by you on the live stream. I-I have never seen anyone as terrifying as you before!”

“Monster?”

Li Yao grinned. “I feel flattered to be respected as a ‘monster’ by you, because you are a little monster yourself. As I told you before, although my skills are extraordinary, my combat ability is unparalleled, and my level is immeasurable, I am a low-key and approachable man. So, you need not regard me as an omnipotent expert who can destroy a world free at will, and you can just consider me as a regular ‘brother’.”

“Huh. Low-key and approachable?”

Li Jialing said in disbelief, “If I had not seen your brutal rampage and massacre on the live stream in person, I might have believed you.”

Li Yao smiled again. Not planning to pursue the issue any further, he simply threw a Cosmos Ring at Li Jialing. “Take it. This is the storage chip of the mainframe crystal processor of Wuying Lan’s most confidential laboratory. I believe that the data of his most cutting-edge projects must’ve been stored inside, for example, the procedures that have been performed on you.

“Those things should be of great help to unraveling the secrets in you!”

Li Jialing grabbed the Cosmos Ring and breathed fast. Thinking for a moment, he asked again, “What happened to Wuying Lan?”

Li Yao replied, “Now that even ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ has been blown up, of course, he was killed by me. But speaking of which, his strengthening mutations at the last moment were truly something. I once practiced a technique named ‘apocalyptic body’. His mutations were like an upgraded version of the ‘apocalyptic body’. Had he not underestimated his enemy, it would’ve been quite tricky to deal with him!

“Right, when I eavesdropped on Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan’s conversation, they mentioned that Wuying Lan had performed exactly the same type of procedures on you as he did on himself. Also, the refinements on you seemed even more advanced. Does that mean you will be like Wuying Lan when you are in an extreme outburst?”

After hesitating a moment, Li Jialing nodded his head dutifully. “Yes. While my combat ability is not as tough as his right now, we are on the same path.”

“So—”

Li Yao grew excited. “You can turn into a magnificent and hideous primeval beast like Wuying Lan did? Come on. Make a change and show Brother Yao what it’s like!”

Li Jialing: “… No!”

Li Yao: “Why are you so reluctant? I’m not asking you to do it for fun but only in order to measure your extreme combat ability, so that I can draft a few tailor-made tactics for you and figure out if there are ways of teamwork in a battle for the two of us. You must know that there is a long future road up ahead where too many battles are awaiting us. ‘Lawless, unrestrained freedom’? How can you get such a precious thing so easily?”

Li Jialing bit his lips softly, with a hint of confusion and panic beaming out of his eyes.

Ever since his independent will was awakened, the young man with unique origins and experiences had considered it his sole purpose; to rise against Li Lingfeng and to escape from the cage. It almost felt that he lived his life for a single goal.

When he was in the cage, every second of his life was fulfilled. He felt that he was one step closer to his target after every second.

However, now that he was about to get rid of Li Lingfeng’s control, he was somewhat at a loss about where to go next.

“Brother Yao” was quite right. The universe was a large place, but where could he find real freedom?

After a moment of silence, Li Jialing said, “Where are you taking me to, Brother Yao?”

“Let’s run out of the Martial Meritocrats Sector with a space jump and find a world far, far away from here first!”

Li Yao performed final tests as he admitted to Li Jialing frankly, “When I fought Li Lingfeng, I elicited some very interesting intelligence from him. Our speculation before was correct. There is indeed a very amazing relation among you, Li Lingfeng, and Li Linghai, queen of the Imperium. After we are out of danger, I’ll explain everything to you in great detail. But you must understand one thing first. Until the issues between you, Li Lingfeng, and Li Linghai are completely resolved, you will never find real freedom. Do you agree?”

Li Yao did not intend to deceive Li Jialing.

On one hand, he was hoping to reach out to Li Linghai, queen of the Imperium, through Li Jialing, so that he could observe the operation of the power center of the Imperium at the closest distance. It required Li Jialing’s cooperation, and honesty was the foundation for any cooperation.

More importantly, he was now 99% sure that Li Jialing was his foster father’s child, and probably the only one.

Li Yao had deep feelings for his foster father. Naturally, he did not wish to push his foster father’s biological son to a different side, in which case the two of them might be engaged in life-and-death battles one day in the future.

At the very least, from his experiences with his foster father in the Heaven’s Origin Sector, his foster father was more inclined to the ideology of the Cultivators. He was a kind, righteous, and warm man.

Li Yao did not think that his foster father would want his biological son to become a selfish, iron-hearted, and even inhumane Immortal Cultivator, a cockroach that was armed to teeth!

Li Jialing looked at Li Yao carefully for a moment, before he nodded his head slowly. “I agree. However, leaving Li Lingfeng and Li Linghai aside, I’m more curious about the role you are playing in the whole incident, ‘Brother Yao’. Was our encounter really a coincidence?”

Li Yao said, “It was. You can stop overthinking.”

Li Jialing frowned deeply. “I still find it hard to believe, and I feel that something is greatly wrong with your arrival, ‘Brother Yao’. So, let’s change a different way of asking. Were you and me not related at all before our encounter?”

Li Yao was slightly dazed.

Li Jialing, the little freak that had been built by Wuying Lan and Li Lingfeng together, was truly unexpectedly smart.

He couldn’t help but scratch his chin as he said, “Let’s get out of here first. I’ll explain it to you later!”

“So, that is a yes?”

Li Jialing blew a whistle in contentment with a simple and brilliant smile of a common young man.

He took a long breath in relief and sat down comfortably while leaning against Li Yao’s hibernation capsule, not scared of Li Yao anymore.

Tilting his head and looking at Li Yao’s back, he said in a low voice, “Brother Yao, do you know that I have never trusted anyone in my entire life, not Li Lingfeng, not Wuying Lan, or anybody else in the Li family? I never believed anything they said.”

The young man paused for a moment. His Adam’s apple moved up and down as he said softly, “However, I have decided to take a gamble. I would like to trust someone without any reservation for the first time. I only hope that I’m making the right decision!”

Jingle Bell began to shiver softly, and its shell that was as smooth as jade was covered in a dark red halo. Blowing away the stones and dust on it, the starship flew to space!

“You can never be wrong to trust me!”

Li Yao laughed aloud while the starship trembled violently. “Look. Haven’t we already escaped—”

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Before Li Yao concluded his sentence, more than ten violent fireballs already burst out around “Jingle Bell”. The rocks were spluttering out and crashing the shell of the starship in cracking noises.

The tiny stealth exploration starship was shaking as hard as a canoe in a surging tide. Li Jialing was knocked away, and he hit the ceiling with his head, which almost stunned him and made him rub his head hard.

Perhaps the raging, rampant, shocking performance earlier had used up all of Li Yao’s luck. Their almost perfect escape plan finally had a small error at the last moment.

Li Linghai detected where Jingle Bell was in time. Leading almost ten starships of the Immortal Cultivators, he came at the enemy aggressively!

Although the distance was too long for them to lock onto a tiny Jingle Bell, it was absolutely not a problem to aim at the gargantuan ninth satellite of the fifth planet of the galaxy. Cannons of mystic rays, crystal rail guns, and all kinds of space torpedoes bombarded the ninth satellite like a storm, until it was almost falling apart into pieces.

“Come on. You don’t have to go that far!”

Li Yao shrieked, “The space around us is so unstable. How can we perform a space jump?”

“What do we do now?”

Li Jialing clenched his fists hard; his face pale but with brutality beaming out. “I would rather die than being captured by Li Lingfeng back into the Li family to be studied like a freak and a monster. I might as well try my best to avoid that!”

“It’s true that we must try our best, not to fight against Li Lingfeng, but to see if we have enough luck!”

Gritting his teeth, Li Yao quickly altered the space jump pattern on the control panel and changed the destination into the nearest habitable planet in the star map database, before he turned on automatic navigation and landing. “However unstable space is, we have to jump out of here first. The time is too urgent for us to charge energy and lock onto the destination. We can only try a super-near space jump and see where it will take us to!”

Chapter 2127 - Desperate Escape

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

Under the scourge of the blasts and the pieces of rocks, the shell of Jingle Bell and the supporting structure inside were being twisted and broken quickly. Gaps and dents visible for the naked eye had shown up.

A starship that had been reduced to such a degree was absolutely unsuitable for a space jump. Even a gap as thick as a finger might result in the fallout of the entire starship during the journey in the four-dimensional space, and it would be trapped there forever.

It was the common sense of all common senses.

However, Li Yao already did not have any choice.

He could feel Li Lingfeng's overwhelming fury even though the man was in the cold space tens of thousands of kilometers away.

He would rather be buried in the chaotic storms in the four-dimensional space than fall into the hands of Li Lingfeng!

"It can't be helped. We have to wager on our chances now!"

Li Yao's eyes were so red that blood seemed to be dripping. Spiritual energy flowed out of his every pore and covered the entire starship like an invisible air mass. It equaled a defense layer of spiritual energy for Jingle Bell, and it also increased the cohesion of the internal components.

On one hand, Li Yao was now in the Divinity Transformation Stage, which guaranteed the intensity and stability of his spiritual energy output.

On the other hand, “Jingle Bell” was a lightweight starship, and it was no more than thirty meters long from head to toe. That was why Li Yao could support it on his own.

Otherwise, Li Yao wouldn’t be able to stand the shots at all under the scourge of such vehement bombardment.

“Let’s go! Let’s go! Let’s go!”

The bloodiness in Li Yao’s eyes was bursting out, and Jingle Bell grew out two black wings of spiritual energy like a crystal suit or a Colossus. Every feather on the wings was spurting out waves backward crazily, accelerating Jingle Bell to the highest speed as it charged at Li Lingfeng and the Immortal Cultivators’ starships!

The mystic rays and electromagnetic bullets that the Immortal Cultivators’ starships shot out smashed over and exploded around Jingle Bell nonstop. They were like the hellish claws extending out of the void trying to snatch Jingle Bell, only to be blocked and parried by Li Yao’s defense time and time again.

Even so, Jingle Bell was still shrieking hard in quakes, as if it might completely fall apart in the next second.

Li Jialing was so scared that his face turned pale. Despite all the terrible monsters he had seen in the Li family and the beehive prison, the young man had never imagined that there could be such an insane man as Li Yao!

Li Lingfeng’s Tempest God also turned into a streak of azure light rushing at Jingle Bell. Should it hit the starship in a head-on clash, even a god would not be able to rescue the stealth exploration starship!

Crazy, demonic laughter burst out of Li Yao’s chest. His eyes and his lips were ripped apart, and his skin was breaking too, as if his body of flesh and blood was already incapable of stopping the outbreak of the simmering spiritual energy inside his body. Jingle Bell’s speed had been accelerated to higher than ever when it confronted the Tempest God, Li Lingfeng’s Colossus!

“Catch me if you can, idiot!”

Li Yao condensed his wild laughter into a telepathic thought and sent it to the enemy. In the meantime, he smashed the control panel hard. “Space jump, activated!”

In the next moment—

The thousands of saber auras triggered by the Tempest God slashed at Jingle Ball overwhelmingly and unstoppably.

Almost a thousand destructive rays also spurted out of the Immortal Cultivators’ starship, blocking all the possible ways of escape for Jingle Bell in all directions.

However, before the saber auras, the mystic rays, the space torpedoes, and the electromagnetic bullets reached it, fuzzy ripples already appeared right in front of Jingle Bell. Ripping apart the three-dimensional universe, they formed a mysterious round gate, which seemed to be a hole that had been dug out by a worm.

Jingle Bell dived into the hole and disappeared, as if it had submerged into an invisible swamp!

All the attacks from the Immortal Cultivators missed their target, only managing to tear apart the shadows that Jingle Bell left behind.

When the fireballs perished, the gate of ripples had vanished into the vacuum too.

Li Yao and Li Jialing had successfully jumped out of the siege of the Immortal Cultivators and escaped from the Martial Meritocrats Sector!

“Go after them!”

Looking at the empty space before him, Li Lingfeng roared with the utmost fury. His voice was completely twisted as he roared, “Even if we have to go to the edge of the cosmos, the two of them must be caught. I will rip them apart in person!”

…

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

Zhi! Zhi! Zhi! Zhi! Zhi! Zhi! Zhi!

Du! Du! Du! Du! Du! Du! Du!

All the magical equipment units that could ring or sound were shrieking.

All the magical equipment units that could not sound were also screaming, moaning, and crying in the most earsplitting frequency.

However, even the orchestra of exclamations of the magical equipment units could not eclipse the roars from Li Yao and Li Jialing.

It was truly the most dangerous space jump that Li Yao ever had in his entire life. It was ten times more dangerous than when he crashed into Skeleton Dragon with Sparkle years ago and jumped to an unknown land together with the creature.

At the very least, there were few damages on the shell of Sparkle, and it was still relatively stable in structure.

He felt that he was a fly that had been thrown into a toilet and was being flushed into the abyss of the universe along with the turbulent water currents.

He was being minced apart into pieces a hundred times in every second, and every second felt as long as a hundred years.

His muscles, his bones, his neural network, and even his every cell had collapsed. Even the mitochondria and the cell cores were ripped apart by force and jumbled randomly after squeezing and kneading. He seemed to be pressed into a giant cell himself.

There was no telling how long the excruciating feeling lasted, but they suddenly felt their bodies becoming lighter, and they were thrown from the four-dimensional space back into the three-dimensional universe like wasted paper that had been crumpled into a cluster.

Just like leaping to the surface of an ocean all of a sudden from twenty thousand meters down below, although he was finally able to breathe in the fresh air, the inadaptation in the shift still almost made him vomit his internal organs out.

Li Yao was in relatively good condition.

He heard Li Jialing gagging so hard that the young man seemed to be throwing out his heart, livers, kidneys, lungs, and spleens.

But Li Yao had no time to take care of Li Jialing, because he already heard the automatic navigation and landing system of the mainframe crystal processor uttering the most devastating shrieks, and he saw the gigantic planet that was next to the starship.

The good news was that the automatic navigation and landing system of Jingle Bell proved to be trustworthy, and the star map of the Imperium from more than a hundred years that Di Feiwen, the deputy commander of the Black Wind Fleet, gave him still worked. The two of them had truly been brought to the closest world to the Martial Meritocrats Sector.

The bad news was that the automatic navigation and landing system of Jingle Bell was too damn trustworthy. Instead of jumping to the zero-gravity vacuum in space, they had directly jumped into the gravity sphere of an enormous planet!

The strong gravity immediately captured the tiny Jingle Bell.

Also, because Jingle Bell suddenly appeared from the void and did not have a relatively stable inertia with the gravity of the planet, the tidal forces immediately ripped Jingle Bell apart. Even the shell had been removed one piece after another!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Enormous fireballs burst out from the bottom of Jingle Bell, declaring the doom of all the power units. Having lost all the impetus, Jingle Bell fell from an altitude of tens of thousands of meters like a heavy block of iron!

At any other time, Li Yao and Li Jialing could’ve summoned their crystal suits easily, flown in the sky, and landed softly like feathers.

However, they had just been through a highly dangerous space jump, and they were suffering from the sequela caused by the raging space ripples. Their bodies were now an utter mess. How much spiritual energy could they possibly condense?

By the time Li Yao managed to focus some of his attention and a cluster of spiritual energy appeared, they were only a few hundred meters away from the ground in a starship that was more like a shooting star!

“Ahhhhhhhhhh!”

Li Yao blew out spiritual energy crazily and built nine buffer layers in front of the broken Jingle Bell while hinting Li Jialing to put on his crystal suit.

BOOM!

The moment the two of them put on their crystal suits, Jingle Bell finally crashed into a devastatingly huge fireball in the middle of a deafening explosion. The remnants and the components burned furiously and were sprayed to dozens of square kilometers nearby like dandelions by the wild wind, never to be seen again.

Jingle Bell had been completely wasted, including the set of magical equipment units that could assemble a super-remote information transmission base in space to contact his hometown.

Li Yao woke up half a minute later.

After realizing the fact, he repeated “f*ck” for another half minute.

As he struggled to breathe in the stinky air, the stinging feeling in his lungs reminded him of how bad the air of the planet was.

Looking at the horizon and observing his surroundings, Li Yao couldn’t help but gasp hard.

What a harsh “habitable planet” it was!

There was no telling what kind of weird materials were contained in the atmosphere here, but the sky seemed to be covered in dark clouds and black fogs all the time. Crazily dancing bolts of lightning were everywhere among the clouds. Now and then, some of the bolts of lightning would dive down from the sky and smash the ground into tides of electric arcs.

It was almost like an extremely weird forest of lightning that did not disperse at all after a long time.

Under the gloomy sky, Li Yao could not see any plateau or signs of human development. Folds that rose to the sky could be seen everywhere. The terrain of the place was similar to that of Boneyard, except that it was even more rugged than on Boneyard. At the very least, the folds on Boneyard were patterned and in circles, while the folds here, or the apophysis, were wry, interconnected, and disordered, like the tusks of the underground beasts that had been bared out of the ground!

Bolts of lightning and sandstorms were happening in all places. Measuring the wind speed with the probe magical equipment on his crystal suit, Li Yao discovered that even in the relatively steady area where he was at, the wind speed had surpassed the “level-three strong wind” in the federation. In the meantime, in the areas far away from where the giant rocks were rolling all the time, the wind must have reached the level of “hurricane” or “super hurricane”. It was needless to say that the tornadoes were standing on the horizon. They were moving slowly, swallowing the thunders and bolts of lightning, like giants whose heads reached the sky.

“What a wretched place it is. Is this really a ‘habitable planet’?”

Li Yao saw with his own eyes that a giant rock hundreds of meters in diameter was absorbed by a tornado surrounded by bolts of lightning and broke into pebbles enshrouded in electric arcs. He couldn’t help but remark in amazement.

He immediately retrieved the data of the few Sectors near the Martial Meritocrats Sector and compared them to the hellish view.

Then, he frowned even harder.

“This is… the Sand Primitive Sector!”

Chapter 2128 - Sand Primitive Sector!

When Li Yao found Li Jialing in the mess of debris, half slithering and half crawling, the young man was trying to move away from the garbage on him.

Huala!

Li Yao waved at the garbage, and the broken remnants flew away immediately, freeing the young man from the cage.

“This is—”

Looking at the rough environment around, Li Jialing was more or less stunned too. Pondering for a moment, his voice somewhat shivered as he asked, “Have we jumped to the Sand Primitive Sector?”

“Yes. I have found the mainframe crystal processor from the debris just now and checked the automatic navigation and landing system again. We have indeed jumped to and landed on the only habitable planet, and the home planet, of the Sand Primitive Sector.”

Li Yao said, “How much do you know about the Sand Primitive Sector?”

The Martial Meritocrats Sector and the Sand Primitive Sector were two deeply-involved worlds that were similar to the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector.

Of course, they were not as close as the Heaven’s Origin Sector and the Blood Demon Sector, which were a pair of “twin worlds”. But the distance between them was still much shorter than the regular distances between Sectors.

Otherwise, the first exploration fleet sent out from the Martial Meritocrats Sector wouldn’t have discovered the Sand Primitive Sector first or introduced the natives of the Sand Primitive Sector, which led to the destruction of the Martial Meritocrats Civilization and the birth of the Immortal Cultivators.

Therefore, when Li Yao commanded Jingle Bell to automatically search for and lock onto the nearest world to the Martial Meritocrats Sector according to the star map, it was only natural that they jumped to the Sand Primitive Sector.

The intelligence about the Sand Primitive Sector that Li Yao knew of was all from Su Changfa and Di Feiwen. It was the outdated information from more than a hundred years ago, and their descriptions about the Sand Primitive Sector were mostly quite obscure.

Li Jialing, however, knew more about the issue. Pondering for a moment, he said, “Li Lingfeng once told me something about the Sand Primitive Sector. By the time Blackstar the Great returned to his hometown with infinite wrath, the Martial Meritocrats Sector and the Sand Primitive Sector had already been highly integrated. They even had a coalition government and were sort of the same civilization.

“Therefore, when the Martial Meritocrats Sector suffered the attacks of the Imperium’s fleets, the same thunderous blows happened to the Sand Primitive Sector too. The civilization was completely destroyed, and the planet was reduced to a scarred land of nothingness.

“No, that is not entirely accurate. The Sand Primitive Sector had been a land of nothingness in the first place. It was a great desert where the environment was terrible and life was highly difficult. Otherwise, the people of the Sand Primitive Sector wouldn’t have tried so hard to immigrate into the Martial Meritocrats Sector with all their wisdom!

“The Sand Primitive Sector was not very suitable for the survival of human beings in the first place. According to the evaluation of habitable planets in the Imperium, it was at the worst and most unacceptable level, and its ‘Index of Human Survival and Development’ was close to zero.

“The strikes from the fleets of the Imperium only made the situation worse. It completely became a lifeless land of silence and death.

“Later, the Imperium seemed to have turned the Sand Primitive Sector into a gigantic laboratory of magical equipment too. But different from the ‘Land of Sins’, the place was used for the experiments of massive destruction with no consideration for the survival of human beings at all.

“After hundreds of years of experiments, the natives of the Sand Primitive Sector completely went extinct. The place has been completely forsaken since then.

“After all, the experiments of massive destruction could be conducted in any random desolate planet. There was no reason why they had to come here after a long journey for the experiments, right?

“The Sand Primitive Sector right now is exactly an abandoned and forgotten world whose values have been fully exploited.

“In the thousand years of war between the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Alliance of the Holy Covenant or in the universal war earlier between the Star Ocean Imperium and the rebellions of the Blood God, the extraterrestrial devils and the remnants of demons, it wasn’t rare for vigorous, prosperous worlds to be entirely blown up and reduced into desolate worlds. The Sand Primitive Sector does not have anything unusual.”

Li Yao nodded his head thoughtfully. Then, he asked somewhat curiously, “If it does not have anything unusual, why do you appear scared just now?”

While the environment of the Sand Primitive Sector was harsh, it was only so for the ordinary people.

Li Yao had the apocalyptic body that had been modified by the mental devil. His primeval cells had all been activated, and the organs inside his body were much more strengthened than general Cultivators.

Li Jialing, in the meantime, had also been through multiple procedures and could turn into a ferocious animal as hideous and aggressive as Wuying Lan at any moment.

The two of them were both out-and-out monsters. Although the air of the planet contained tremendous lethal elements, they could not cause any harm to the two strangers.

Besides, Li Yao carried abundant water, food, and crystals in his Cosmos Rings. There wouldn’t be a problem at all if they were to lurk here for a while.

Li Jialing, however, replied rather worriedly, “However, the Sand Primitive Sector is still slightly different from other abandoned worlds. I’m told that a lot of ‘apparitions’ live here.”

“Apparitions?”

Li Yao blinked his eyes, “What is that?”

“They are like the extraterrestrial devils of the lowest level, except that they are much more brutal.”

Li Jialing explained, “The Sand Primitive Sector was the territory of the Sand Primitive natives at the beginning, and the unique training system of the Sand Primitive Sector was different from the mainstream hierarchy of the Refinement Stage, the Building Foundation Stage, the Core Formation Stage, the Nascent Soul Stage, and the Divinity Transformation Stage of the outside world. The natives of the Sand Primitive Sector worshipped the Chiyou Cult. When they practiced the techniques to the best, they could summon ‘God Chiyou’ into their bodies, which would grant the unparalleled combat ability to even the ordinary people.

“According to the studies of the Imperium, it was some sort of ‘berserker’ technique that involved psychological hints and self-hypnotization to activate the forces deep inside the brain. The natives of the Sand Primitive Sector who practiced such a technique would have weird changes in their souls, and it was very possible that tremendous ‘apparitions’ would be left after their death.”

Li Yao had once communicated with “Mother White Lotus Wan Mingzhu”, an expert spectral Cultivator, in the Ancient Sages Sector. He had some basic understanding of the arts of the spectral Cultivators and the difference between “ghosts” and “apparitions”.

All the intelligent creatures had a soul in the world of Cultivation. If a person’s soul and will remained after their death, it would turn into a “ghost”.

Ghosts boasted most of the memories, self-awareness, and personalities when they were still alive. Other than the loss of the body of flesh and blood, they were not significantly different from the living people. That was why the Star Glory Federation had granted all the ghosts fundamental human rights and treated all of them as special human beings.

But not all the ghosts were lucky enough to maintain a stable form and structure for a long time.

Or rather, the ghosts who could maintain a stable form for a long time were the minority. Most of the ghosts would soon be disrupted by the radiation and the magnetic fields of the outside world after losing the protection of the body of flesh and blood. They would be shattered and lose most of their memories and personalities.

The soul pieces that had lost their true selves with only the slight instincts of life left were known as “apparitions”.

Apparitions were some sort of transitional beings between life and pure energy. Without too many interferences, they would be naturally transformed into pure energy and included in the vigorous cycle of life of the universe.

But if they were under evil influences, or if the master of the apparitions used to be a ferocious, brutal, bad-tempered guy when alive, it was also possible that the apparitions would not disperse for a long time. They might even absorb the foul and negative energy around and gain destructive strengths.

Some theorists held that the apparitions were the initial form of the “extraterrestrial devils”.

Some other theorists believed that, while the apparitions were not technically extraterrestrial devils, they were the soil for the birth of the extraterrestrial devils. When thousands of apparitions were combined, it was possible for a strong extraterrestrial devil to be born!

Li Jialing said, “Most of the people who practiced the Chiyou Cult were the fearless, disobedient rogues. Their souls did not disperse after their death but turned out countless apparitions that still haunted and roamed the scarred land of desolation. Even the hundreds of years of destructive experiments from the Imperium failed to completely annihilate all the apparitions.

“According to Li Lingfeng, the authorities of the Imperium changed their mind later. They wanted to close the Sand Primitive Sector for one or two hundred years as a way of preservation to see if the apparitions in the Sand Primitive Sector could evolve into beings such as extraterrestrial devils. If they could, the Imperium studies on the origins and the evolution of extraterrestrial devils would make a giant leap forward, and the Sand Primitive Sector would be valuable again for the tests of magical equipment and techniques designed to resist the extraterrestrial devils.”

Li Yao raised his eyebrows. “Is that so?”

“Yes. Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan talked about it before.”

Li Jialing said affirmatively, “During one of their chitchats, they mentioned that it wouldn’t be that many years before the reopening of the Sand Primitive Sector. If the few projects on the Land of Sins are all successful, they would have enough capital to bid for the monopolization rights of the Sand Primitive Sector. If they could win the lease of Sand Primitive Sector and invent some secret techniques to resist the extraterrestrial devils or even enhance their combat ability with the extraterrestrial devils, they would certainly make a fortune.

“There are still more than ten years to go before the reopening. Besides, it would be a public bidding instead of a clandestine deal. So, they simply talked about it openly. I see no reason why they would lie about it.

“So, I’m worried that some powerful apparitions, or even things like extraterrestrial devils, are active on this planet. It will be quite a disaster.”

While talking, Li Jialing looked far away at the gloomy, raging winds and fogs.

The bolts of lightning were condensing into appalling faces in the tornadoes, as if extraterrestrial devils were grimacing at them.

“Extraterrestrial devils?”

Li Yao grinned and said casually, “Rest assured. I estimate that there can only be some unworthy apparitions or insignificant devils living on the planet. Otherwise, the authorities of the Imperium would’ve opened the Sand Primitive Sector in advance to ‘reap’ them.

“Even if there are really extraterrestrial devils, Hehehehe, I happen to be their ancestor. They will definitely be a great deal!”

Li Yao and the mental devil both licked their lips.

Last time in the Star Glory Federation, the two of them worked together to rip apart the “Internet devil” and devoured tremendous tenebrum energy from the enemy, which laid down a solid foundation for the upgrades later.

The sweet and refreshing feelings were still lingering in their tongues!

At first, Li Jialing thought Li Yao was bluffing.

But after he saw Li Yao’s casualness and recalled his rampant killing inside “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” like a lunatic, he couldn’t help but shudder in coldness.

It’s possible that the guy is not bluffing.

The young man secretly mumbled to himself, “Judging from how brutal and violent he was, it should come as no surprise at all if he did swallow some extraterrestrial devils before!”

Chapter 2129 - Haunting!

Swallowing hard and observing the environment he was at carefully, the young man felt that he was further and further away from the “absolute freedom” that he always dreamed about. Sighing helplessly, he said, “Then, what do we do now, Brother Yao?”

“Calm down, Brother Yao always has a solution. The environment we are in seems to be very rough, but in fact, everything is under my control!”

Li Yao raised the many Cosmos Rings on his fingers and declared confidently, “First of all, before I found you, I had collected tremendous remnants of the starship, especially those related to the ‘space jump unit’. Even at the moment before the crash, I also specifically released abundant spiritual energy to protect the most valuable unit. It is still in perfect condition without any damage!

“Secondly, now that this place is the Sand Primitive Sector in the past, and the activities of human beings were very frequent, it will be much easier.

“While the people of the Sand Primitive Sector were barbaric and aggressive, their civilization had advanced to a very high level, especially since the contact with the Martial Meritocrats Sector. Through the advanced technologies they learned from the Martial Meritocrats Sector, they produced a fairly large space fleet, to the point that the resisters in the Martial Meritocrats Sector had to develop a ‘global sword network’ to deal with them, right?”

Considering for a moment, Li Jialing nodded his head. “Yes, that’s correct. The people of the Sand Primitive Sector must’ve been good at space voyages too.”

“So, problem solved!”

Li Yao said with a smile, “Just like the Land of Sins, there must be a lot of remnants of the starships of the Sand Primitive people on this planet. No matter how powerful the destructive weapons were, it’s unlikely for them to have completely wiped out all the remnants of the starships, right?

“Besides, my Cosmos Rings have stored a lot of units, crystals, and fuel that I got from ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’.

“Just rest assured. As long as we found enough remnants, with Brother Yao’s marvelous skills in refining, it will be more than easy to fix and strengthen a starship that is above average. Together with the ‘space jump unit’ in my hands, it won’t be a problem to escape from the Sand Primitive Sector!

“As long as we run out of the planet, with the strengths of you and me, wouldn’t we be like fish in an ocean and birds in the sky? Who can possibly stop us?”

Looking at the sky worriedly, Li Jialing did not loosen his furrowed eyebrows at all. He asked suspiciously, “Is that so?”

“Of course!”

Li Yao patted the young man’s shoulder and announced, “Trust Brother Yao. There can’t be any accident this time!”

Li Jialing pointed at the sky. “But look, Brother Yao. What is that?”

Li Yao looked at where the young man was pointing, only to discover that the surging, murky sky was as agitated as if simmering.

Ripples spread out nonstop, revealing immeasurably deep holes. Quite a few daunting starships of the Immortal Cultivators, like whales sinking in an ocean, were ripping the sky and slowly landing.

Right before the Immortal Cultivators’ starships was a Colossus that was brimming with spiritual energy and killing intent. What else could it be other than Li Lingfeng’s Tempest God?

“You’ve got to be kidding me. He has tracked me down all the way here?”

Li Yao was dumbfounded. “Has the guy lost his mind? Why does he have to capture us instead of handling the mess in the Martial Meritocrats Sector? How… How is he going to face the infinite wrath of the big shots of his family?”

Li Jialing: “… Well, Brother Yao, not that I don’t trust you, but do you think we should run separately?”

“Cut the crap. Let me think!”

Li Yao tapped his forehead and thought hard for a moment. Then, his face suddenly changed as he snapped his fingers and said, “Right. It was my negligence. Although I took many things into consideration, I never examined the big picture from Li Lingfeng’s perspective. The target Li Lingfeng is pursuing right now is not me but you, Li Jialing!”

“Me?”

Li Jialing blinked his eyes and pointed at his own nose. “Am I so important?”

“Absolutely!”

Li Yao said, “I thought that Li Lingfeng, as an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage, would’ve stayed in the Martial Meritocrats Sector to clean up the mess if he was rational enough to weigh the pros and cons, in order to preserve his power and the hope to move a step forward in future.

“If I were the only one who escaped, he might’ve made the choice helplessly despite his fury.

“But I brought you away, which made the situation entirely different. He could let go of me, but he absolutely could not let go of you!”

“Why not?”

Li Jialing was confused. “You destroyed ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’, Li Lingfeng’s dozens of years of investment, while I simply escaped because I had enough of his enslavement and exploitation. I did not even cause any actual damage for him. Why would he rather let go of you than let go of me?”

“Because you are a hundred times more valuable than me!”

Staring at the Tempest God and the Immortal Cultivators’ starships in the sky, Li Yao said solemnly, “If we are to view the issue from Li Lingfeng’s perspective, his fiasco this time has caused irreversible losses, which basically means the end of his path of power. He will barely be able to keep himself safe after he returns to his family! However he cleans up the mess, bends his knees to the big shots of the family, and concedes to the competitors of his generation, nothing can change that, right?”

Li Jialing immediately nodded his head and analyzed with the calmness that far exceeded his peers. “Yes. The failure this time is simply too terrible. It is almost the greatest shame of the Li family in the past hundreds of years. Whatever remedies Li Lingfeng takes, I’m afraid he will not be forgiven by the big shots of the family. Even if he is forgiven, it will still be the best weapon for other competitors to attack him with in the future. Chances are little to none that he accedes to the throne of the leader of the family and wins the title of ‘Kurfürst’ in the future!”

“Therefore, there is absolutely no way that he can clean up the mess in the Martial Meritocrats Sector.”

Li Yao said, “Then, with your understanding about Li Lingfeng, do you think he will simply abandon all his ambitions after the failure, conceal all his vigor and aggressiveness, and withdraw from the stage of the universe as a common warrior of the Li family, or perhaps an ‘elder’ one day in the future?

“Absolutely not!”

Li Jialing gnashed his teeth. “I know Li Lingfeng very well. His ambitions may be disproportional to his talents, but he is never a quitter. Whatever methods he must resort to and whatever prices they mean, he will certainly have a desperate struggle!”

“So, he has to catch you.”

Li Yao said solemnly, “It is meaningless now to go back and clean up the mess in the Martial Meritocrats Sector. The game there is already too messed-up for him to win. Instead of submitting humbly like meat on a chopping block and begging for the mercy of the big shots of his family and his peers, he might as well have a desperate attempt to knock over the chessboard and put his fate back into his control again.

“As the saying goes, the strong ones are never to be punished. As long as Li Lingfeng is strong enough, even if he has made a horrible mistake, the big shots of his family and his peer competitors will not be able to slate him with the debacle this time!”

Thinking for a moment, Li Jialing asked, “Then, how can he grow strong quickly enough?”

Li Yao said, “Naturally, it is impossible for Li Lingfeng to achieve a qualitative leap in his own strength in only a couple of days. However, he may get what he wants with the strength of somebody else, which is Li Linghai, the queen of the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“I suspect that Li Lingfeng had been planning to work with Li Linghai, his biological sister and the queen of the Imperium, since the very beginning. Of course, it would only be nominal cooperation, and he would be in fact controlling the queen’s forces as the dominator of the alliance. When the brother and the sister joined their forces, he would be able to negotiate with the competitors and the seniors in his family.

“For the purpose, he carefully refined you as a leverage.

“At that time, Li Lingfeng still had the support of his personal armed forces and the big shots within the family. He also had the Heavenly Eye Group and ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ as his fundamental bases. So, he was not in a hurry to show his hand to the queen. Or rather, he could have prepared for a while longer until his odds of success were greater.

“But now that he had lost everything, the game with Queen Li Linghai has become his only hope. If he can join hands with the queen, he will still have an opportunity to make a comeback in the family, or he will truly be doomed for good.

“Naturally, your importance as a leverage has been increased to an unprecedented level. You are his everything right now!

“That is why he has marched to the Sand Primitive Sector despite all the costs. He is not here for revenge but to grasp you again, whatever it takes!”

Li Jialing was silent for a moment. Instead of raising any doubt for Li Yao’s meticulous, dazzling analysis, he asked an unexpected question, “Tell me. Is there really a special relationship between me and Li Linghai, queen of the Imperium?”

After a brief daze, Li Yao said, “You are very smart.”

Li Jialing smiled bitterly. Rubbing his head, he said, “I do not want to be smart, but you will never know what a painful price I paid when Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan tried to build me into such smartness!”

After a moment of hesitation, Li Yao said, “What will you do if my answer is ‘yes’?”

“Nothing.”

Li Jialing said expressionlessly, “Li Lingfeng, Li Linghai, any other members of the Li family, and the powerful celebrities and the ambitious small fry from other Immortal Cultivator families are all the same. They are all jackals of the same lair. I do not want to be related to any of them or to live their life at all.

“I only want to live a free life where nobody commands me, enslaves me, and exploits me. Li Lingfeng can never use me, nor will Li Linghai, no matter how we are related, and no matter what they have given me, even including… my most precious life!”

The sensitive and smart young man had already vaguely guessed something from Li Yao’s analysis.

But the stubbornness and disobedience in the deepest part of his eyes had never changed.

Chapter 2130 - Arrival of More Dreadful Enemies!

Burned by the young man’s firm eyes, and sensing the strength that bellowed out of his soul, Li Yao couldn’t help but smile, “Alright, let’s figure out what we can do to get away from Li Lingfeng’s hunting again!”

Li Jialing said, “There is no way to escape at all here. On an abandoned planet of such a harsh environment, where we do not even have a starship, how exactly can we get away from Li Lingfeng’s hunting?”

“It is exactly because of the harsh environment that we have a chance of survival!”

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao scanned the environment and the speed and direction of the wind. “Trust me. The large starships brought by Li Lingfeng are not suitable for the battles in the standard gravity within the atmosphere, even less so on a planet where the magnetic field and the spiritual energy are so disordered and the weather is so extreme. They are like whales that are stranded, and they are much more unused to the environment here than we are.

“As for starships, hehe, who says we don’t have any? Aren’t there plenty right there?”

Li Yao pointed at the sky.

In the sky were the Immortal Cultivators’ starships brought by Li Lingfeng!

“Even if we are left with no choice and Li Lingfeng pushes us into desperation—”

Li Yao sniffed. “I will still have an ultimate method to reverse failure into victory, and he will definitely be caught unprepared!”

Li Jialing grew very curious, unable to come up with any ultimate countermeasure now that they were already stuck in such a dangerous environment. He couldn’t help but stutter, “What… What can that be?”

“Very simple. Since you are Li Lingfeng’s most important leverage—”

Grinning hideously, Li Yao opened his fingers and attracted the young man to him. Shaking a sharp dagger out of his Cosmos Ring, he stuck it to the young man’s carotid artery and declared gravely, “If Li Lingfeng really goes too far, I will simply kill you and destroy his only leverage. He and I will die with each other. Let’s see who’s more scared!”

Li Jialing was covered in cold sweat. “What kind of Cultivator are you?”

“The kind of Cultivator that can survive.”

Li Yao retreated his dagger, licked his lips, and observed the sky for a while. Then, the color of his face suddenly changed. “Not good. Li Lingfeng has discovered us. How is it possible? It’s such a large planet… Right, we caused tremendous spiritual waves and infrared radiations during the crash. It is only reasonable that he can track us down. Let’s go now!”

Their crystal suits were undamaged in the crash, and there was sufficient fuel in the reactors. Therefore, with dazzling light spurting out of the power rune arrays, they turned into two streaks of brilliance and charged at the mountains where the terrain was most unfavorable and the thunderstorms were most intense.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Li Lingfeng’s starships opened fire nonstop, building highly-rising volcanoes around the two of them. The magma and the metal shrapnel smashed at them overwhelmingly, only to be blocked by Li Yao’s volatile and ever-moving tentacles of spiritual energy.

Before Li Lingfeng’s Colossus approached, Li Yao and Li Jialing already marched into the forest of lightning that was enshrouded in black fogs and the cries of gloomy winds one step in advance!

BOOM! CRACK!

The environment within the thunderstorm was even tougher than they imagined.

Under the blowing wind, the raindrops that were surrounded by electric arcs seemed to be on parallel to the ground and shooting at them vehemently like bullets, raising colorful ripples on their spiritual shields.

The bolts of lightning as thick as boas and as hideous as dragons struck the ground straightly, spraying countless balls of lightning on the surface of the planet, which did not disperse until more than ten minutes later.

The highly-rising folds on the ground were all shattered by the lightning strikes. The smaller rocks had all been blown away by the furious wind, colliding with each other at a high speed in midair into a weird belt of floating stones. They were like the sharpest teeth of the monsters!

The magnificent power of the great nature was something that even the starships of the Immortal Cultivators did not dare to mess around with easily.

Even Li Yao and Li Jialing had to slow down in the thunderstorm despite their monstrousness. Increasing the intensity of the spiritual shields, they tried hard to resist the scourge of the wind, the lightning, and the broken stones.

With the help of the pale light when lightning illuminated the sky, Li Yao vaguely saw a collapsed building standing deep within the folds and mountains not far away.

When they drew near to observe more carefully, they discovered that it was a religious building that looked like a temple.

Perhaps it was high, magnificent, and awe-inspiring hundreds of years ago, which could be seen from the dark, gargantuan statues that were still standing inside the temple…

But right now, after hundreds of years of scourges from the lightning, corrosions from the wind, and blows of stones, the splendid temple in the past had only the shivering, dilapidated walls left. The iron-made, impressive statues had also been split apart by the bolts of lightning. They were more or less melted and inclined to two sides.

“This should be a ‘Chiyou Temple’.”

Observing the building carefully for a while, Li Jialing said in a low voice, “People of the Sand Primitive Sector worshipped the ‘Chiyou Cult’ in the past. The Chiyou Temples were the most important buildings in their civilization. They were mostly the hearts of the towns or the tribes.”

Looking at the collapsed temple before his eyes, Li Yao had a lot of mixed feelings.

It had been more than a hundred years since Su Changfa told him the stories about the Martial Meritocrats Sector and the Sand Primitive Sector for the first time in Kunlun.

No matter what a barbaric, zealous, and bloodthirsty role the people of the Sand Primitive Sector played in the destruction of the Martial Meritocrats Sector, it was already no longer important, because their civilization embraced its doom almost immediately after the civilization of the Martial Meritocrats Sector did.

Ashes to ashes, and dust to dust. The Martial Meritocrats Sector in the past turned into the Land of Sins, and the only things left by the Sand Primitive Sector were probably the collapsed Chiyou Temples.

The civilizations of mankind were sometimes extremely tensile and powerful, and yet, they sometimes could also be as vulnerable as the candles in a storm that might completely die out at any moment!

While Li Yao was pondering, creepy noises suddenly echoed from the collapsed temple. Then, hundreds of half-transparent energy entities crawled out!

The spiritual energy around was highly disordered, but the energy entities did not seem affected at all. They simply hissed at Li Yao and Li Jialing aloud before they lunged at the strangers aggressively!

“Apparitions!”

Li Jialing exclaimed in shock, “The apparitions that evolved based on the negative feelings such as hatred, regrets, and violence of the people of the Sand Primitive Sector in the old days after their destruction?”

“They are apparitions? They don’t seem very different from regular devils to me.”

Li Yao smiled and moved his hands quickly to cast his spell. Crimson flames of spiritual energy soon condensed into the image of a giant almost five meters tall. With dazzling brilliance beaming out, it extended its arms agilely and grabbed a few apparitions without any trouble. After crumbling them into the purest negative emotions, it devoured the prey.

Naturally, it was the skill of the mental devil.

In the first place, the mental devil and the extraterrestrial devils came from the same origin. One might even say that it was a very special extraterrestrial devil in a unique form.

In the ultimate battle in the Star Glory Federation, it also absorbed all the tenebrum energy of the “Internet devil” and gained a deeper understanding of the structure of the tenebrum energy.

The so-called apparitions were not even real extraterrestrial devils but only slightly more advanced than the pure negative emotions. However many of them there were, they were like lambs sent to a tiger when they approached the mental devil.

The mental devil gulped in the apparitions that were lunging over and soon swallowed all of them without leaving out any. Still unsatisfied, it uttered the weird noises of hunger and ravenousness.

The remaining apparitions wasted no time running back into the wind and lightning, not having the courage to mess around with the “unparalleled devil”.

Li Jialing, on the other hand, was truly dumbfounded. He did not expect that everything his “Brother Yao” spoke was true. When the man said that he was going to eat the apparitions alive, he was indeed swallowing all of them without any concession.

He couldn’t help but have even more complicated remarks on “Brother Yao”.

“What is going on?”

Li Yao cleaned up all the apparitions in the Chiyou Temple quickly. But there was confusion all over his face. Narrowing his eyes, he looked back beyond the thunderstorm. “Li Lingfeng and his lot did not chase after us, did they?”

“It seems they didn’t.”

Li Jialing was slightly dazed. “Is it because the lightning, thunders, tornadoes, and stones here are too violent for their starships to break in?”

“Even so, they should have small assault warships, all-terrain armed shuttles, and crystal suits, right? Shouldn’t they send a large batch of warriors to invade the place and surround us?”

Li Yao’s nose flipped fast, as if he smelled danger from the air that still carried the scent of electric currents. “Not right. Something’s seriously not right. Li Lingfeng… seems to have run into some trouble?”

Outside of the thunderstorm, very feeble explosions that sounded like broken bubbles were vaguely coming over from the obscure horizon.

Li Yao's expression changed quickly. He was even more anxious than when he discovered that Li Lingfeng had followed him here.

"The eight starships that Li Lingfeng brought seem to have been assaulted, and it was quite an unexpected attack?"

Li Yao mumbled, "Who is insane enough to attack an expert of the prime generation of the Li family, one of the four Kurfürst families, at the heartland of the Imperium of True Human Beings?"

Li Jialing observed, "Well, isn't it you, Brother You?"

"No, that's not the same."

Li Yao's eyelids twitched, and his expression was more and more grave. "I only played a trick on Li Lingfeng and went on a rampage while the place was out of his reach. It is impossible for me to have a head-on clash with Li Lingfeng.

"But right now… Somebody seems to be annihilating both Li Lingfeng and his eight starships!

"Who can possibly have such capabilities, such boldness, and such precise control over the timing?

"Is it an accident, or has somebody been observing Li Lingfeng from the dark the whole time, waiting for the opportunity to cut his throat?

"Let's go to the Chiyou Temple!"

Li Yao circled around the Chiyou Temple with Li Jialing for a few rounds, but instead of hiding inside the Chiyou Temple, they found a natural underground fissure behind the temple. The result of Li Yao's scanning suggested that the fissure was connected to a complicated cave with many branches, which led to the surface of the planet through another fissure five kilometers away. Since there were exits on both ends, it was the best shelter for them.

Inside the underground fissure, the roars of the thunders were finally less disturbing.

Sitting cross-legged on the ground, Li Yao closed his right fingers and touched the center of his eyebrow where the spiritual root was located. Spreading out his senses to the maximum, which passed through the chaotic thunderstorm, he "watched" where Li Lingfeng was at.

Chapter 2131 - In the Thunderstorm!

2131 In the Thunderstorm!

The thunderstorm was simply too chaotic and intense and echoed deep inside Li Yao's soul like ten thousand vortexes, which significantly disrupted his senses.

However, in the meantime, it provided perfect protection for his telepathic thoughts, making it impossible for the two parties who were engaged in the fierce fight to notice him.

Through the pouring rain and the rumbling thunders, Li Yao gradually painted a fuzzy, mottled picture inside his head.

The eight starships that Li Lingfeng brought were patrolling and searching like tyrannosaurs that were as huge as mountains.

However, from the dark corners, a hundred "velociraptors" marched out. They should be assault warships, hunting warships, and full-terrain armed shuttles designed for the battles within the atmosphere. Breaking apart the formation of the "tyrannosaurs" with their blow, they bit the critical parts of the "tyrannosaurs" brutally!

Li Lingfeng did not anticipate that he would encounter a second enemy other than Li Yao in such an unpopulated, forsaken world as the Sand Primitive Sector. He wanted to command the starships to float beyond the atmosphere, but there was already no time!

Everything had its own advantages and disadvantages. The main-force starships that could be three to five kilometers long were indeed awesome in the vacuum of the space, but in the atmosphere with high gravity, high friction, and disordered spiritual energy, their shortcomings, including the enormous weight, the weak anti-gravity units, the clumsiness in turning, etc., would all be exposed.

The enemy's small starships, on the other hand, seemed like the cutting-edge models that were designed most recently. Despite their small size, their firepower was no less impressive. Also, they had come in full preparations, and their first round of barrage already ripped apart the plate armor of Li Lingfeng's starships, raising a series of dazzling fireballs.

This is a planned attack!

Li Yao thought to himself, This is definitely not an accidental encounter, but a fatal attack launched by a mysterious new force, which had been monitoring and following Li Lingfeng all the way, until Li Lingfeng was separated from his main troops and recklessly asked the main-force starships to cut into the atmosphere!

Li Yao's telepathic thoughts were concealed and made to appear as the waves of lightning in the thunderstorm as he continued searching the battlefield. Very soon, he locked onto Li Lingfeng's coordinates.

The man's Colossus "Tempest God" had unleashed the most devastating tides of spiritual energy that were even more eye-catching than a volcano eruption. Naturally, Li Yao couldn't have missed him.

However, Li Lingfeng did not have any opportunity to deal heavy damage to the enemy's starships because his opponent was another Colossus!

What’s happening? Another Colossus? And one that is even stronger than Li Lingfeng’s “Tempest God”?

Li Yao’s heart was racing, and he was breathing fast. He felt that all his pores were stinging as if somebody were stabbing needles at him.

If the spiritual energy that Li Lingfeng was spurting out right now was like the infinite magma erupting out of a volcano, the Colossus that was fighting him right now was like a boundless ocean that was filled with the most horrifying swirls.

However much magma erupted from the “volcano”, it would be completely swallowed by the swirls without leaving any drop after it flowed into the ocean!

Of course, Li Lingfeng just had a fierce battle with Li Yao, and the shock and unsteadiness of his mind was inevitable after his decades of hard work was destroyed.

Also, the power units of his Colossus had been sabotaged by Li Yao, which resulted in the plunge of his speed. They were all the advantageous factors for him.

However, based on the collisions of the spiritual energy from the two Colossi, Li Yao estimated that, even if Li Lingfeng were at his peak state and his Colossus were just maintained with absolutely no damage and that he had the most sufficient supplies, he still would have been no match for the mysterious enemy.

Are you kidding me? My combat ability right now is more or less at the middle level of the Divinity Transformation Stage. I don’t have a slight chance of defeating Li Lingfeng in a head-to-head battle. So, he must be at least at the high level of the Divinity Transformation Stage.

But right now, the mysterious enemy is beating Li Lingfeng up as easily as eating a pie, which means that the mysterious enemy is at least at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage, or even higher—

Li Yao swallowed hard and did not dare to think any further.

While the mysterious enemy's target was Li Lingfeng right now, Li Yao was in the Imperium of True Human Beings where everybody was a potential foe after all. He did not think that the mysterious enemy had come here to rescue him.

Now that the enemy had been monitoring and following Li Lingfeng, they certainly had witnessed everything he did in the Martial Meritocrats Sector, and they knew that Li Lingfeng jumped to the Sand Primitive Sector in such a hurry just in order to capture him and Li Jialing. Then here came the question. Would the enemy let go of him and Li Jialing after they took down or captured Li Lingfeng alive?

"This is bad!"

Li Yao's face suddenly turned extremely awful.

He was absolutely confident to survive from the hands of Li Lingfeng, who had more ambitions than capabilities and who was only slightly stronger than himself.

However, the new mysterious enemy gave him the feeling of a viper—a viper that was as thick as a boa and could turn into a dragon to swallow the world at any moment. It was someone much more sophisticated than Li Lingfeng!

While Li Yao was thinking quickly on countermeasures, Li Lingfeng had already failed!

Li Yao sensed that his “Tempest God” spurted out a cluster of most dazzling spiritual energy first, as if a supernova were rising from the ground and blossoming to the maximum abruptly.

Then, it collapsed at a visible speed, as if it were reducing from a supernova into a black hole. Nothing could be sensed anymore!

Generally speaking, it was the sign that a Colossus had been completely blown up.

However, Li Yao captured Li Lingfeng’s intentions keenly—the guy was about to escape!

The Immortal Cultivators’ starships that Li Lingfeng brought crashed at the mysterious enemy’s Colossus relentlessly. While they were obviously no match for the mysterious enemy, they did manage to postpone the enemy for a few minutes.

Taking advantage of the precious time, Li Lingfeng retreated his Colossus into the Cosmos Ring and put on a stealth crystal suit quickly just like Li Yao did a moment ago, diving into the thunderstorm and disappearing into the disordered spiritual waves!

“Let’s go!”

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao rose suddenly. “We have to find Li Lingfeng!”

“What?”

Li Jialing was dazed, finding it hard to believe his ears. “Find Li Lingfeng? Wouldn’t we be feeding us to him? Also, it seems to be a mess out there. How can we find him?”

“We are not feeding us to him, and we do not have a choice right now.”

Li Yao sighed and said with a bitter smile, “As to how we can find Li Lingfeng, that is not a problem, because he is secretly sending out spiritual waves to all directions. He is expecting us!”

Concealing their spiritual energy and scent to the minimum, Li Yao and Li Jialing moved soundlessly in the thunderstorm like the ghosts of two loaches.

Very soon, they discovered Li Lingfeng who was staggering forward in the bolts of lightning and storms.

A few days ago, Li Lingfeng was still intimidating and awe-inspiring, giving the feeling that everybody was under his control. He was truly like a powerful, unparalleled expert.

But the Li Lingfeng right now, although not having many wounds on his body, was brimming with fear and panic, which were flowing out of every gap on his crystal suit. He couldn’t have looked more wretched, like a wild dog whose tail had been cut off.

Witnessing such drastic changes on him in only a couple of days, even Li Yao had to feel sorry for him although he was an enemy.

“He seems to be suffering from very serious internal injuries.”

Li Jialing said affirmatively, “If we join our hands to ambush him, there will be a good chance to take him down!”

“Wait a moment. I don’t think Li Lingfeng is our primary problem anymore.”

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao made the call. “Let’s talk with him first. There are many secrets about you that we have to dig out from his mouth, don’t you agree?”

Li Yao and Li Jialing showed up in the storm, one in the front and the other in the back, staring at Li Lingfeng who was not far away like two shadows without real entities.

Li Lingfeng sensed their existence immediately. Quivering, he wiped his helmet that had been covered in icy rain.

In a triangle, the three of them confronted each other in silence in the middle of the roaring winds and the pouring rain.

In the next moment, Li Lingfeng made an unexpected move. He touched a rune array on the left temple of the helmet, retreating the helmet into the crystal suit!

As a result, his entire head was exposed to Li Yao and Li Jialing without any protection.

It was a gesture of submission, or friendliness.

Li Yao chuckled in a low voice. “Lord Li has been wounded, and very badly? Do you need any healing drugs? I happen to have some.”

The lightning illuminated the bleak land, and Li Lingfeng’s face indeed couldn’t have looked more awful. Ignoring Li Yao’s mockery, he gnashed his teeth. “Didn’t you want to die together with me? This is your opportunity. If we attack each other right now, we will truly be holding each other to death. Come on. The choice is yours. If you want to fight, let’s fight!”

Huala! Huala!

Lightning struck next to Li Lingfeng, showing unprecedented determination on the face of the unworthy man of a noble family.

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao locked onto every muscle and every pore on Li Lingfeng’s whole body without leaving any chance for him. He asked very cautiously, “Who is chasing you right now? That is a really patient hunter!”

Li Lingfeng sniffed. “It seems that you have sensed the enemy’s magnificence and brutality too, after the eight starships that I brought over were completely wasted. You are too scared to not respond to my call and show up, right? ‘When a mantis is capturing a cicada, a sparrow is lurking behind to take them both’. Yes, this is exactly a reoccurrence of such an ancient but fatal trick. However, are you really a ‘cicada’? Tell me who you are exactly!

“And you—”

He turned his eyes to Li Jialing and stared at him resentfully, declaring, one word after another, “Why did you betray me?”

Li Jialing’s pupils were constricted to the minimum. His body shook slightly but was quickly stabilized. Opening his hands, he said casually, “I am an Immortal Cultivator. Betrayals are anything but unusual for us, right? Do I need a reason?”

“You—”

Li Lingfeng’s eyes almost bulged out of the sockets as he mumbled, “You do not have the slightest idea who you are and what you are faced with. You are truly idiotic and asking to be killed!”

“Then, just tell him frankly!”

Li Yao suddenly thought of something. He said, “Tell Li Jialing who he is, who his parents are, and who the mysterious enemy is that is chasing you right now!”

After a brief silence, when he simply allowed the raindrops to hit his face hard until it was covered in dents, he finally said a name in the end, “LI LINGHAI!”

Chapter 2132 - Shocking News!

2132 Shocking News!

The one who had been following and hunting Li Lingfeng at the heartland of the Imperium of True Human Beings against all rules was actually Li Linghai, his biological sister and the queen of the Imperium!

It was a shocking, unexpected but perfectly reasonable answer.

Who else except the queen of the Imperium could boast the capabilities to crush Li Lingfeng the moment they met and forced him to escape in desperation?

Li Yao was full of curiosity for the queen of the Imperium who was suspected to be his foster father’s “lover” in the past.

He knew that ever since Wuying Qi, a man of the time, rose unstoppably a thousand years ago and established the Imperium of True Human Beings, there had never been an emperor as dominating as “Blackstar the Great” in the Imperium.

The emperors that followed were worse and worse. Also, because of the natural restraints of the vastness of the universe, the imperial authority had been collapsing the whole time.

Today, the emperor had already been marginalized, and the warlords were rising and almost dissecting the Imperium.

The emperors had to be elected by the four “Kurfürsten”. Naturally, they were under the control of the powerful warlords as puppets.

Li Linghai, as the queen of the Imperium, was naturally a tool for the four Kurfürst families to monitor and control the emperor.

However, from Li Lingfeng’s lines, it was not hard to tell that the queen of the Imperium did not seem willing to submit to her fate as a “surveillance tool”, and she had her own ambitions!

Also, if the emperor were only a puppet of the warlords, how could he have commanded the army to secure such a strategic triumph in the frontline against the Covenant Alliance?

Even if it was part of the Covenant Alliance’s scheme of “retreating for a better attacking position”, as Li Yao and the deputy commander of the Black Wind Fleet had speculated before, the emperor’s leadership over the army of the Imperium was certainly unquestionable. In the enormous counterattack of the Imperium that lasted years, what kind of role had Queen Li Linghai been playing, and what was she up to exactly?

Was Imperium’s counterattack only aimed at the Covenant Alliance, or was it…

Thinking quickly, Li Yao did not change his expression at all but simply said with a chuckle, “Got it. Your schemes have been seen through by the queen. You are screwed!”

“Yes, I am screwed.”

Li Lingfeng did not refute at all but simply stared at Li Yao and Li Jialing in desperation. He grinned hideously. “But you are going to die with me. Both of you!”

“Lord Li, I remember that we have communicated sincerely earlier.”

Rolling his eyes, Li Yao said unhurriedly, “You wouldn’t be so naïve as to think that you can hide the relationship of yourself, Li Linghai, and Li Jialing right now, would you? Of course, your doom is inevitable, but why will anything happen to us?”

“Haha. Hahahaha!”

Li Lingfeng burst into laughter. In the violent thunderstorm, his messy hair was dispersed and danced crazily in the wind. “So, you idiots know nothing of the truth! Especially you, Li Jialing! I raised you out of goodwill and gave you the best resources. Even my own descendants never received such great treatments. Finally, you have been refined into the best expert in the younger generation of the Li family. And this is how you repay me? You are truly ungrateful. You don’t know what you are doing at all!”

“There’s no need to embellish yourself.”

Li Yao stepped forward and stopped before Li Jialing. He then said coldly, “We have learned about all your schemes. What now? Regarding Li Jialing’s real identity, do you want to talk about it, or do you want me to?”

“I… don’t have anything to hide at all. I planned to find an appropriate opportunity to tell Li Jialing in the first place. What’s wrong with saying it out frankly right now?”

Li Lingfeng couldn’t have looked more candid. There was no telling if he was faking it or he had been truly planning for that. Pausing for a moment, he said again, “However, before we get to the bottom of everything, you must make clear of one thing first. What do you think my ruthless sister Li Linghai is here for, and who is she trying to kill?”

Li Yao said, “You, of course. Is that really a question?”

Li Lingfeng smiled miserably. “Wrong. She may have learned about everything I did and therefore grew determined to kill me. However, if she wants to kill me, there will be countless opportunities for that. She has no reason to pick such a risky way.”

Li Yao blinked his eyes. “Is she here to kill me?”

“Wrong again!”

Li Lingfeng panted quickly, and staring at Li Yao with utmost hatred, he said in a hoarse voice, “I admit that you are very strong. Perhaps a mysterious, malicious force is looming behind you, and you cannot be regarded as a Mr. Nobody. But no matter how strong you are, it is not enough for the queen of the Imperium to attack you in person!”

Li Yao thought for a moment and realized that it did make sense. Unless Li Linghai boasted the techniques of divination, she couldn’t have predicted that he would appear in the Martial Meritocrats Sector and then jump to the Sand Primitive Sector.

However, the Sand Primitive Sector was a forsaken world without any living creature. The three visitors from outer space were all there were. Now that Li Linghai’s target was neither Li Lingfeng nor Li Yao, it could only be—

“Li Jialing?”

Li Yao bulged his eyes and asked in disbelief, “She is here to kill Li Jialing?”

“Yes, exactly!”

Li Lingfeng laughed aloud like a crazy lunatic. “I took everything into account and made the most thorough plans, but I still gravely underestimated my ambitious, brutal, and ruthless sister! I thought that even if the secrets were leaked out and she somehow learned the matter, it would’ve been absolutely impossible for her to get Li Jialing away from my hands! But little did I expect that she never intended to save anyone. She is here just to kill her own biological son!”

Huala!

The most dazzling lightning passed their heads.

Li Jialing seemed to have been slashed right in the face.

“What… What did you say?”

With a pale face, the young man asked with his lips trembling.

Li Yao moved horizontally and put his hand on the young man’s shoulder, sending in a stream of spiritual energy to help him stabilize his soul and his mind.

“I’m saying that you are Li Linghai’s biological son, my biological nephew. Now, your own mother is trying to kill both of us and keep our mouths shut forever so that she will have no troubles in the future!”

In the craziest, creepiest, and most hateful laughter, Li Lingfeng asked, “How about it? Is it clear enough?”

Although Li Yao had given Li Jialing some information before, allowing him to have a basic understanding of the relationship between him and the Li siblings, the darkest answer seemed to have astounded the young man deeply. He was lost for words for a long time.

Li Yao, on the other hand, considered the loopholes in Li Lingfeng’s declaration quickly with a gloomy face.

“What now? You think I’m lying?”

Li Lingfeng sensed the subtle changes of Li Yao’s soul quickly. He sneered, “Now, it is your turn to think carefully with your computational ability of the Divinity Transformation Stage. In fact, the whole matter is very simple. Li Jialing is the biological son of our almighty queen of the Imperium, but it is truly, truly, truly a shame that my dear nephew’s father is not His Majesty, who is ‘invincible, unconquerable, undefeatable, with a feat close to Blackstar the Great’. Tsk, tsk, tsk. Who will suffer most should such a great scandal be exposed?

“Yes. The Li family will definitely suffer a heavy blow. Even I will be affected by the astounding scandal. But wouldn’t it be the queen herself who would suffer the worst?

“My sister’s ambitions are even greater than mine. In the past hundred years, she seemed to be docile to the family and has accomplished all the missions that the family entrusted to her dutifully, as if she were truly loyal to the family and to the warlords and willing to be a tool to control the emperor.

“But in secret, she has been raising loyal subordinates and making friends with the smaller warlords at the peripheral worlds of the Imperium as well as the young, bottom-level officers in the space fleets. She gradually established her own force, and when the family vaguely noticed her ambitions, it was already too late to get rid of her!

“Although my sister is immeasurable, and even I don’t know what she is pursuing exactly, I am very certain that it requires the supreme power as the foundation, whatever it is!

“If the scandal that she has a bastard son behind the emperor’s back is disclosed at such a moment, the enterprise that she has worked hard on for a hundred years will be completely ruined. Her power, her position, her strength, and her ambitions will all be for nothing!

“So, smart and mysterious man, tell me, does Her Grace have any reason to keep such a great nuisance in the world instead of annihilating him completely to eradicate her weakness?”

Li Yao’s eyelids twitched quickly. He gnashed his teeth. “Is it going to help anything even if Li Jialing is killed or you are? Is there no evidence at all for such a great matter? For example, have you not kept any stuff, like experiment data or blood samples, that you tell her you will disclose if you die?”

“Those things are all indirect proofs. They are not enough to overthrow a mighty queen.”

Li Lingfeng sneered, “The big shots of the leadership of the Imperium have done too many clandestine deals in secret, but as long as there is no direct proof, there will always be a way to cover or even eliminate the deals.

“In regard to this particular issue, there is only one direct proof, which is Li Jialing himself!

“As long as Li Jialing is killed and his body is reduced into nothingness, however many indirect proofs other people may present, she can always argue that they are fabricated just in order to slander the queen. With the queen’s position and power today, such feeble attacks will not hurt her at all.

“Therefore, she can let me go today and allow me to escape in desperation like a stray dog. After all, I have lost everything and do not pose a big threat to her. Nobody will, or rather, nobody ‘dare’ believe me.

“But she absolutely will not let go of Li Jialing, because Li Jialing is the only one who poses a potential threat to her position, her power, and her ambitions!”

After hearing that, Li Jialing finally couldn’t help but grunt and vomit a mouthful of dark blood. He almost collapsed on Li Yao’s body.

“Are you alright?”

Li Yao hurried to support the young man. He thought for a long time, only to come up with no words of comfort. “Don’t! Don’t overthink it. In fact, this is quite normal. A lot of people experienced it before!”

“I’m sorry, my ‘dear nephew’. I planned to find a better opportunity and tell you everything gradually.”

Li Lingfeng said coldly, “However, you have forced me into this. Also, maybe informing you of everything in the most straightforward way is of greater help for you to recognize your fate and the coldness of the stars above your head!”

Chapter 2133 - The Young Man’s Armor and… Tusks!

2133 The Young Man’s Armor and… Tusks!

“Are you really alright?”

Li Yao felt that Li Jialing’s soul at this moment was like a shaking plaza that was about to collapse abruptly, and inside the plaza were countless crystal bombs that would explode at first touch. With cold sweat pouring off his head, he continued comforting the young man considerately, “I know that such a family ethical drama must be too hard for you to accept for the time being. Why don’t I stall your uncle first so that you can burst into tears and wail hysterically for a while?”

“… That will be unnecessary.”

Li Jialing took a deep, deep, deep breath.

Li Yao seemed to hear every muscle and every nerve inside the young man’s body being stretched so tightly that even his bones were about to be minced apart before they were gradually relaxed one after another.

The young man calmed down.

It was quite a creepy, if not terrifying, feeling.

The young man seemed to have turned into a completely different person in only a few seconds. Outside of his true self in the deepest level, a thick, cold armor that was embedded with tusks had taken shape.

Or rather…

He had removed the armor of the “regular young man” that was his disguise and finally revealed his cold, indifferent, heartless, and dark true self!

“I’m fine. I really am.”

Li Jialing said in a low voice, “Brother Yao was quite right. As an Immortal Cultivator, and growing up in a swirl of power like the Li family, parental bonds are nothing but jokes. This is quite regular!”

“Well said!”

Li Lingfeng burst into laughter. “Of course you are fine. That is the only way that you can deserve my decades of tutelage for you. For all those years, I have taught you schemes, betrayals, slaughters, and negotiations. I taught you to be untrustworthy, iron-hearted, and seek only after your own interests. Everything I did was meant for you to be as calm and rational when the moment came as you are right now!

“Even the ancient people knew that those who are born into the royal family will never be privileged enough to enjoy the love and friendship of the ordinary people. That is the price of power! Crushed by the absolute power, any parental bond will be blown into nothingness!

“The Li family controls so many worlds. Our power is a hundred times greater than that of the sovereigns in ancient times. On the other hand, your mother is the authentic queen of the Imperium. What a mother-son relationship do you expect with your identities? Wouldn’t you be too silly if you expect so?”

“You’re quite right, uncle.”

Li Jialing replied calmly. His voice that was as cold as an iceberg made Li Yao shudder. The young man was more and more adapted to his role after only ten seconds. He scorned, “However, why should we trust you 100%? Even if Li Linghai is truly my gene provider, is she really here to kill me? Is it possible that you are simply making things up in your desperate struggle because you don’t have any other choices now?”

Li Yao swallowed and asked in a low voice, “Hey, are you really alright?”

Li Jialing said indifferently, “I’m fine. In fact, I’ve never felt better. At the very least, I know who I am and where I came from now, don’t I?”

Li Yao was slightly dazed, not knowing how he should respond to the young man who was terrifyingly calm.

Li Lingfeng said solemnly, “With everything coming to this point, is there any reason for me to deceive you? You can figure out everything if you think about it carefully. If she hadn’t been planning it, how could Li Linghai have arrived so fast?

“It’s been less than 24 hours since Mr. Mysteries next to you disrupted my quest of ‘Dying Light’ and blew up ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’. Even the reinforcements of the Li family in the frontline haven’t been mobilized, gathered, regrouped, and teleported to the Martial Meritocrats Sector. How on earth can Li Linghai be so fast?

“Also, the matter has nothing to do with her at all. As the queen of the Imperium, she should have more important things to attend to. Why is she qualified and have the time to meddle in my affairs?

“There is only one possible answer—she has been here since a long time ago!

“She did not come for Mr. Mysteries next to you. It was possible that she did not even know his existence. Since the very beginning, her target has been very clear, which is you!

“I estimate that she has long learned the secret that I’ve been hiding you under my custody, but she simply held herself back and pretended she knew nothing of it while concocting in secret how she could completely ‘dispose of’ you.

“It was her best opportunity when I left the Li family’s fief for the Martial Meritocrats Sector to push forward the quest of ‘Dying Light’. Her secret fleet must’ve been lurking somewhere at the edge of the Martial Meritocrats Sector while monitoring my operation.

“Perhaps, if Mr. Mysteries hadn’t intervened, she would’ve jumped out of nowhere and performed a cutthroat attack at the most intense and chaotic moment in the middle of the quest!”

Li Jialing asked, “If it was a secret fleet, it couldn’t have had a large number of starships. How could they have broken into ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’?”

“Don’t you understand?”

Li Lingfeng raised his voice as he said, “She only needed to break into ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ if she wanted to rescue you. But if her purpose since the very beginning was to kill you and keep your mouth shut, she would not need to bother my main fleets and the space fortress at all. She only had to jump out of nowhere and obliterate the area you were at after ascertaining your coordinates. Then, she could just escape without alarming anyone. She could even let ‘Starlight’ take the blame for the assault.

“If everything went well, she would’ve returned to the capital of the Imperium in three days. By then, even if I had abundant indirect proofs in my hands, what could I do?

“This must be what was on her mind. The starships and crystal suits that she brought this time do not have any sigils or emblems. They must be a secret troop that she founded in person. But the starships have been through sanding and added with many wasted metals, which are in fact a similar style to the ragged starships of Starlight. Are these still not enough to prove my point?

“Of course, nobody expected that this mysterious friend here would suddenly pop up and disrupt everything, both ruining my decades of hard work and completely interrupting Li Linghai’s pace. She was forced to chase us to this place at risk!”

Li Yao rubbed his nose. “Well, you’re welcome. It was my pleasure.”

Li Lingfeng glared at Li Yao, and the brutality in his eyes was even more eye-catching than the flashes of lightning in the sky.

Tilting his head and thinking for a while, Li Jialing said slowly, “Even if what you said is true, it doesn’t prove that she has no intention of saving me. What if her secret fleet was lurking at the edge of the Martial Meritocrats Sector just in order to steal me away at the most critical moment?”

“Haha, hahahaha. You still have some sort of expectations for your gene provider—or your ‘birth mother’, if you will—

don’t you? I suggest you abandon such naïve and ridiculous ideas because they will only make it more painful!”

Li Lingfeng grinned hideously. “Do you think that I am both cruel and sordid? Then let me tell you. Compared to your mother, who seems to be straightforward and outspoken but has such a sophisticated heart that she almost deceives the Li family and even the entire Imperium, your uncle is almost a pure and flawless Cultivator!

“Are you not curious about one thing? If you are Li Linghai’s biological son, why did you fall into my hands, and why was I the one who raised you up in secret?

“Also, why have I invested so many resources on you without caring about the costs, to build you into a secret weapon to deal with Li Linghai, when I know your relationship with Li Linghai very well? Isn’t it common sense that mothers and their children are naturally connected? Was I not scared that you would join Li Linghai’s side after you found out the truth, in which case I would be losing everything and gaining nothing?”

Li Jialing was slightly dazed. “Perhaps you were too conceited to think that I would ever find out about the truth?”

“Hehe. If you think that way, you are underestimating your uncle and your birth mother greatly.”

Li Lingfeng said, “Your uncle is in the Divinity Transformation Stage, and your mother’s level is even higher than mine. As long as the two of you meet each other at close distance, how would she not have recognized that you are her biological son?

“When that happens, it would be a probable event that the son and the mother would team up against me. So, wouldn’t I be committing suicide and raising a gravedigger for myself?”

Li Yao and Li Jialing both frowned and thought hard.

It did make no sense. However arrogant Li Lingfeng was, there was no reason why he would leave such a great loophole!

“I was bold enough to do everything I did, and I was confident that you would stand by my side even if you learned the whole truth, for a simple reason.”

In a smile, Li Lingfeng spat out the answer unhurriedly, “Because this isn’t the first time, but the second one, that Li Linghai has tried to kill you!

“She killed you once decades ago. Or to be more exact, she disposed of you while you were still in the fetus state. At that time, she thought that she had completely disposed of the redundant fetus that was you. Little did she know that you survived the catastrophe and was saved by me in the end.

“Li Linghai at that time did not have the intimidating power and strength that she has today. So, I was still able to cover your existence for decades and eventually found a way to raise you up in secret!

“Do you understand now? Although Li Linghai is your birth mother, she has always considered you a trouble. She tries everything she can to kill you, and she already killed you once!

“As for me, I am only your uncle, and I did not save you because you are family, but because I regarded you as leverage and intended to build you into a secret weapon.

“However, objectively speaking, it was indeed me who saved you, raised you, and protected you at the most critical moment. I even summoned all the resources at my disposal to bring you up without any reserve!”

Li Jialing’s body trembled, and his voice became even colder. “So, I owe you a ‘thanks’, uncle?”

“Hehe. I never expected a thank you from you. I know that you hate my guts, but I couldn’t care less about your gratitude or hatred!”

Li Lingfeng sniffed. “I am now only telling you the truth as it is. Then, please think carefully with the calmness and rationality that I have inculcated into you after all those years whom you should side with, your uncle who saved and raised you, or your mother who has been trying to kill you time and time again?”

Chapter 2134 - Business Is Business

2134 Business Is Business

Li Jialing hesitated.

No matter how many armors and tusks were hidden in the young man’s heart, and how much darker and more sophisticated he was than his peers, his experiences were limited by his age after all.

Even if he were the sharpest sword in the darkness, it would still require the whetting and polishing of time for him to have an edge to cut apart the stars.

Li Lingfeng’s words sounded too true for Li Jialing to tell their veracity. His mind in a mess, he somehow glanced at Li Yao again, as if this “Brother Yao” who appeared out of nowhere was his greatest reliance right now.

But little did he know that Li Yao was in quite a headache himself.

After advancing into the Divinity Transformation Stage, Li Yao was even more skilled at the perception of other people’s micro-expressions, heartbeats, scents, and even quakes of the souls.

In other words, it was easier for him to tell if other people were telling the truth now that his senses were keener.

While Li Lingfeng was of a higher level than him, the man was heavily wounded, and his soul gave an unsteady, flickering feeling. It was barely possible for the guy to completely fool him.

In the meantime, Li Yao sensed clearly that when Li Lingfeng made the statements, his facial muscles, his heart, his nerve endings, and his soul did not show any anomalies at all.

At the very least, based on Li Yao’s experience, he should be telling the truth.

Are you serious? “Li Linghai” is brutal enough to kill her own biological son?

Li Yao secretly clicked his tongue, feeling that his head was exploding.

Ever since his foster father’s last words were revealed more than a hundred years ago, Li Yao had been uncannily mesmerized by the name “Li Linghai”.

The reason was very simple. Li Yao believed that his foster father was a kind, righteous good man, and his foster father had made it clear in his last words that should Li Yao or the Star Glory Federation run into trouble one day, they could go to Imperium of True Human Beings and find Li Linghai, who would definitely offer protection.

Since his foster father was a good guy who had faith in Li Linghai and was even probably in a romantic relationship with her before, Li Linghai should be a good person too, or at least “the lesser of the evils” among the many Immortal Cultivators.

It was exactly what Li Yao thought at the beginning.

His plan was to trace Li Linghai through Li Jialing and see if there were possibilities of concession or even cooperation between him and the “least bad” Immortal Cultivator.

One might even say that Li Yao’s main purpose after sneaking into the heartland of the Imperium of True Human Beings on his own was to search for Li Linghai!

But according to everything Li Linghai said just now, the queen of the Imperium of True Human Beings was almost the epitome of the Immortal Cultivators. Her ruthlessness and cruelty could almost be called classical, and she did not hesitate to abandon her son for power!

If she could kill her blood son without frowning, what could the foster son of her former lover more than a hundred years ago mean to her?

Li Yao’s dream was rather beautiful, but it was a pity that the cruel reality was too damn freezing!

“What’s there to hesitate about? The few starships that I brought to the Sand Primitive Sector are about to be torn up by Li Linghai. Make a decision now!”

Li Lingfeng opened his arms with a low and firm voice and the most honest expression. “Yes, Jialing, I admit that I have been lying to you all the time. In fact, I should’ve told you the truth earlier to avoid such misunderstandings, which resulted in you… running away!

“However, please think for a moment in your uncle’s shoes. In the past, your nature was not completely awakened, and your uncle could not perceive your psychological state clearly. If I told you the truth, only to upset you and even make you mentally deranged, what could I have done?

“Also, after you learned the truth, your demeanor would certainly be different from the past. Should you expose any loopholes, you might be causing a disaster to yourself at any moment. It must be noted that the Li family had been extending our hands into the royal palace the whole time, but ever since Li Linghai's influences grew strong enough, she was reversely infiltrating the Li family from the royal palace. Even I was not certain that she was unaware of your existence!

"As it turns out, however prudent and vigilant I was, she still discovered you and has led a secret squad to dispose of you in person!

"Good boy, I know you are a smart person and an out-and-out Immortal Cultivator. Let's not talk about the groundless familial bonds but the most simple and substantial interests!

"Yes. I admit that I thought you were a rare good when I rescued you at the beginning, and I simply wanted to build you into a secret weapon or a valuable bargaining chip for the highly dangerous game between Li Linghai and me.

"However, during the procedures of refinement, I gradually discovered the infinite potentials hidden underneath your weak appearance. They were the strength inherited from Li Linghai that awed me!

"Hehe. None of my descendants, both the sons and the grandsons, were worthy of anything. Even the most distinguished one of them had the aptitudes and ambitions that could only be called 'plain' at best. His accomplishments would be limited, and it would be his best to help the family to manage a resource planet. He was not as good as one-tenth of you!

"Since you had such amazing potential, and you were my blood nephew who could sort of carry on the genes of my bloodline, was there any reason why I shouldn't raise you well and refine you without bothering the costs?

"In conclusion, was I making use of you? Yes! Did I regard you as a leverage and a weapon? Yes! Did I hope that you could kill Li Linghai someday? Still yes!

"But did I raise you wholeheartedly? Yes! Did I invest ten times more effort and resources on you than I did on my biological sons and grandsons? Yes! Did I wish you to be my real heir, to pass on my genes, my power, and my title? Yes!

"Just think carefully about everything that I've done to you, and you will know that I am not lying at all.

"The relationships of human beings are all about manipulation. I make use of you, and you make use of me. Is there anything bad about that? To have the values that other people are interested in making use of is more reliable than any familial bonds!

"Let me repeat myself. Our interests are in accordance. We can absolutely work together to accomplish a great cause and control the family one day. The Li family in the next hundred years will be ours.

"However, your interests and Li Linghai's are not exactly on the same page. She already killed you once you were still a fetus. Do you think she will let go of you this time?"

Li Jialing breathed fast. He clenched his fists and gnashed. "I have no interest in your power struggles at all, yours or Li Linghai's. The blood connections of 'mother' or 'uncle' are utterly meaningless in my eyes too. I only want to live a life of absolute freedom where I can do anything I want!"

"Absolute freedom?"

Li Lingfeng was slightly dazed before he burst into laughter. “You silly boy. The universe is boundless with countless stars, but fights, slaughters, rules, and regulations that you have to abide by and unparalleled experts who can blackmail you, browbeat you, control you, hurt you, and meddle with you are everywhere! Where exactly can you find a life of ‘absolute freedom’?

“Let me tell you. If you really want to live a life of ‘absolute freedom’, it is very simple. You have to seize ‘absolute power’ through whatever means possible!

“Only when you have absolute power will you have absolute freedom!

“When you become the master of a planet and boast the absolute power of the planet, you will have ‘absolute freedom’ on the planet!

“By the same logic, when you become the lord of a Sector with the supreme power, you will be absolutely free in this world. You can kill whoever you want to kill and do whatever you want to do. Even if the world is turned upside down, nobody will dare to tell you to stop!

“Hehe. If you can dominate the Li family someday as my heir, many Sectors will have to listen to your command, and countless starships will obey your will. In the fief of the Li family, you will be unrestrained and enjoy absolute, lawless freedom!”

The young man began to breathe heavily.

Peeping at Li Yao, he said in a low voice after hesitating for a long time, “You have said a lot of things, but what do you want exactly?”

“I have a tiny plan, but whether or not it can work out will depend on the mysterious man next to you.”

Li Lingfeng focused his eyes on Li Yao again, but the brutality deep inside his eyes was all gone, replaced by cleverness and cunningness. “If I am not mistaken, you are not a real Cultivator, are you?”

After a brief silence, Li Yao chuckled. “Of course not. How could the daydreaming fools like Cultivators have raised an expert of the Divinity Transformation Stage and used him extravagantly as a scout? And how could they have such a well-maintained Colossus? You should know what a great pressure it is for the logistics department better than I do, Fellow Cultivator Li. It can’t be done without the support of a grand industrial system with full facilities and well-trained personnel. Do the Cultivators meet the conditions? They couldn’t have afforded a leg of the Colossus even if they sold all their belongings!”

Li Yao addressed Li Lingfeng as “Lord Li” at the beginning but “Fellow Cultivator Li” right now. It was obviously a hint that they were “on the same boat”.

“I assumed no less. The bulls*it such as ‘a Cultivator from the sky’ can only deceive the three-year-olds and the ignorant hominoids.”

Li Lingfeng said coldly, “Then, who might you be exactly, and what is your purpose of going through all the dangers on your own? In any case, the fancy combination of a Colossus whose combat performance is better than the ‘Tempest God’ and an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage is not something that the mobsters at the edge of the Imperium can present.”

“Do you know how popular and eye-catching your Heavenly Eye Group and your ‘slaughter stream’ platform were in the past hundred years?”

Li Yao said, “As the saying goes, ‘the bird who flies in the lead always gets shot first’. The slaughter stream is a new invention that has never been seen before in the past thousand years, and it is an interesting but scary thought to control the Imperium through the media. There are bound to be some pedantic, obsolete forces who dislike your ‘slaughter stream’ and do not want you or the Li family to control a new, unknown strength.

“Just consider me as an agent sent by the obsolete forces that do not like ‘slaughter stream’ and do not want you to grasp the new power. I am here to sabotage your cause, and they will take the opportunity to attack you to ruin your stream platform and swallow the Heavenly Eye Group.

“Don’t be angry. It’s nothing personal. In fact, I, for one, quite appreciate your ideas and creations. The Imperium is simply too moldy and ancient. It’s time to let in some fresh air. However… an order is an order, and business is business. I’m sure you understand me.”

Chapter 2135 - Turn a Foe… Into a Friend?

2135 Turn a Foe… Into a Friend?

“I am not angry. In fact, I appreciate your honesty, which is a good beginning for our cooperation.”

Li Lingfeng said sullenly, “At the very least, it is much better to admit to the truth than to persist in the ridiculous identity of a ‘Cultivator’.”

Li Yao couldn’t help but tap the helmet of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit to retreat the facial cover. With the look of “I do feel the same” on his face, he bulged his eyes and said, “You think that the identity of a ‘Cultivator’ is funny and absurd too, right? That’s too f*cking correct. When those a*sholes devised the identity for me, I thought exactly the same!

“I cursed them exactly on the spot—What is your problem? Is there something wrong with your head? Are you not considering reasons and logic at all? I would certainly have to reveal the capability of the Divinity Transformation Stage and my Colossus in the mission, but the Cultivators are a bunch of stray dogs and mobsters who have been killed and brutalized since a thousand years ago! What kind of foolish person would believe that the Cultivators could send someone in the Divinity Transformation Stage to carry out the mission in a Colossus?

“It… It was absolutely impossible. Even pigs wouldn’t have believed that. The readers would’ve criticized the author for being too unbelievable, outrageous, and adding too many lucky factors to the supervillains that were Cultivators even if it were in a novel. It was needless to ask how it could deceive you and the cunning, smart big shots of the Li family!

“To be honest, I have pretended to be a lot of people in my life. I can even play a sixteen-year-old whore vividly. But it is truly a very troublesome challenge to pretend to be a Cultivator in the Divinity Transformation Stage this time. I totally can’t imagine what exactly makes a ‘Divinity Transformation Stage Cultivator’, what is on their mind, or what they look like!”

Li Lingfeng nodded his head slowly. “I understand it very well. The high and mighty big shots of families and the commanders of the coalition fleets never care about the actual situations in the frontline but always expose the specific executors in all kinds of unnecessary dangers.”

Li Yao rolled his eyes and put on a cunning smile. “What now, Fellow Cultivator Li, are you trying to test which family or space fleet I come from? It does not seem important.

“All in all, guess how those sons of b*tches replied to me. They argued that victors did not need to explain and would not be punished. As long as I could sabotage your plan neatly and destroy ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’, nobody would care if ‘the Cultivator from the sky’ was true or false.

“Or rather, even if all the forces and everybody knew clearly that I was a fake Cultivator and in an obvious disguise, so what? Your stream platform would already be destroyed, and the Heavenly Eye Group would likely be merged and swallowed by other people. ‘The Cultivator from the sky’ would never show up again. It would be clean and neat without any sequela, right?"

"No, there is sequela."

Li Lingfeng said coldly, "The tales of the Cultivators would spread out in the sea of stars. Countless hominoids would be inspired by the nonexistent scumbag. They would cause great trouble and seriously jeopardize the overall interests of the Imperium."

Li Yao laughed. "I didn't know that Fellow Cultivator Li is such a noble patriot. But rest assured. The Imperium is so magnificent, and the Cultivators could barely be called an ailment. A questionable tale and a few videos that could be fabricated by any crystal processor can't hurt the foundations of the Imperium.

"Besides, that is all the families and relatively independent space fleets have been doing. The interests of the family and the fleet are always placed above the interests of the Imperium, right?"

"Yes. You have made it in a very remarkable way."

Li Lingfeng narrowed his eyes and said, one word after another, "Even though I am on your opposite side, I have to admit that it is a clean, rapid, and textbook stealth-and-sabotage operation. Other people will only appreciate your ruthlessness, decisiveness, and heartlessness, without being bothered by your ridiculous false identity as a 'Cultivator'."

Li Yao raised his eyebrow and blew a whistle. He said with a smile, "You really do not hate me? Your peace of mind right now strikes me as a bit pretentious, Fellow Cultivator Li!"

“Of course I hate you. I want to skin you, cut you into pieces, and burn you into ashes.”

When he thought of the damage Li Yao caused to “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”, the brutality inside Li Lingfeng’s eyes was running out again. “To be honest, if it were yesterday, or even just half an hour ago when I had eight warships and hundreds of elite warriors hunting you together, I definitely wouldn’t have let go of you but asked you to beg to be killed. I would’ve tortured you alive for ten years, before drawing out your soul and shattering it, making you die for good!

“But is there any point in saying that right now? Even if I hate your guts, so what? Right now, the greatest threat to me is not you but Li Linghai. In the meantime, the greatest threat to you is not me but Li Linghai, too!

“Like you said just now, ‘business is business’. There’s nothing personal between you and me. Even if we do have the greatest hatred toward one another, we can always make concessions at a life-and-death moment, right?”

Li Yao rolled his eyes again and again, and the smile on his face was even more intense. “Yes. Business is business, and interests are interests. Anything can be bargained and negotiated for survival.”

“Besides, you are just a tool.”

Li Lingfeng said, “I know everything about the experts above the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage who are public in the Imperium, including their techniques, their attack patterns, and the Colossi they use. All their data are in my head, but you are certainly not among them.

“So, the answer is obvious now. You are a secret weapon domesticated by a certain family, just like I raised Li Jialing and Li Linghai raised her secret armed force ‘Deep Ocean Fleet’.

“Like you said just now, you can pretend to be countless people in the most vivid way, and even acting as a sixteen-year-old whore is not a problem for you. It better proves my speculation.

“You are the kind of creatures, like ‘pretenders’ or ‘ghost warriors’, who are trained to help the family with the clandestine businesses through the most bloody, dark, and dangerous missions, right?”

Li Yao’s pupils constricted violently. As if he were stung by a nonexistent needle, his voice suddenly turned cold. “Ghost warriors? I don’t like the sound of that.”

“I know you don’t.”

Li Lingfeng smiled. “Every deeply-rooted ancient family has tragic persons like you, who can never show up with their real faces or enjoy the dignity, power, and glory that they deserve despite their dominating strength! Instead, they have to carry out the most dangerous, evil, and ugly missions time and time again. One moment of carelessness, and they will either be killed miserably in the frontline or thrown out as a scapegoat when the scheme is exposed!

“Take your mission for example. There’s no need to describe the dangers in sneaking into ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ for sabotages on your own and to face my thunderous fury. You may be killed by me at any moment.

“Even if you return in one piece for now, should any information be leaked, the Li family may burst into fury and trace back to the schemer behind the curtain, the force that you belong to. Chances are that you will be traded or sacrificed. Tsk, tsk, tsk. When I think that way, while I am quite miserable right now, your conditions are no better than mine!”

In the confrontation of the two of them, Li Yao seemed to be unable to hold back his temper for the first time. He said coldly, “Fellow Cultivator Li, what is it that you are trying to say? We seem to be running out of time!”

“What I want to say is that we are actually the same type of people. I understand you!”

Li Lingfeng was even more sincere than when he talked to Li Jialing a moment ago. “Although you are in the dark while I am in the light, we are actually the same tools for our families.

“Haha. Everybody knows that I am the best within the prime generation of the Li family, the well-acknowledged ‘next Kurfürst’. But how many people know that I am just a target that the big shots of the family have pushed to the front? ‘If a tree grows taller than other trees in the forest, it will be destroyed by the wind inevitably.’ Do the seniors of my family not understand such a simple logic? If they truly want me to be the leader of the family and the Kurfürst, there is no reason why they should tell everybody about it eloquently. Shouldn’t they simply train me, support me, and give me more troops and power in secret?

“But now, they have promoted it on a large scale and informed everybody in the world that I am very likely to be the next leader of the family and the next Kurfürst. What is the meaning of that? They are obviously pushing me to the stage to help them shoulder the storms and arrows from inside and outside of the family as a cover for the real future heir in their hearts!

“Hehe. They thought that I was truly bemused by my ambitions, but I knew exactly what they planned!

“I will never admit to being a tool. ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’, the Heavenly Eye Group, the slaughter stream platform, and everything about Li Jialing were the attempts I made to get rid of my pathetic fate!

“I am the captain of my own fate. The real big shots of the Li family consider me as a fool, a puppet, and a tool, but I will let them know who will laugh to the end and who is most qualified to control the entire Li family!”

As he approached the end, Li Lingfeng was already yelling.

Li Jialing, who had been raised by Li Lingfeng in secret since childhood, never knew that his uncle whom he deemed a fiend had such a side. He was stunned for a moment.

Sensing his subtle changes of feelings, Li Lingfeng smiled at the young man casually. “Why, Jialing, you did not expect that your uncle to be someone like this? In fact, you should have. Where exactly do you think the insubordination and sense of competition deep inside your soul came from?”

Pausing for a moment, he extended his hand at Li Yao again and said slowly, “Also, I believe that any expert who has advanced into the Divinity Transformation Stage is unwilling to have their fate controlled by a family, a fleet, or a sect, and to live like rats in the gutter that will never see the sunlight!

“Your Colossus is so tough. Do you not want to let it appear in the sky of the capital of the Imperium in broad daylight someday?”

Li Yao: “… Well, truth be told, I did give it some thoughts before.”

Chapter 2136 - Wisdom Back Online!

2136 Wisdom Back Online!

“It is useless to just ‘give it some thoughts’!”

Li Lingfeng suddenly raised his voice and declared in an oppressing way, “My fellow Cultivator whose name I do not know but who is as pitiful as me, although you have been covering yourself up, I have already figured out your identity and your situation from the traces you left behind!”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. “Have you?”

“First of all, raising an assassin, assaulter, and saboteur in the Divinity Transformation Stage in secret while hiding it from everybody else, and having a Colossus that is not registered in any database in the Imperium—Even taking the entire Imperium into account, the forces with such capabilities can only be the four Kurfürst families and the few warlords of the coalition fleets who rose recently. Your origins can be beyond the few forces!”

Li Lingfeng said resolutely and unquestionably, “However, with such a remarkable background and amazing capabilities, you have been used by the force behind you as a secret agent to carry out such a mission that is bordering on suicide. It appears to me that your life in your force can’t be too comfortable. It is possible that you are hated, envied, and ostracized too. Somebody might even have hoped to kill you through me, didn’t they?

“Otherwise, I can’t think of a reason why a high and mighty expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage would come to ruin ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ at such great risks. There are no benefits in it for you in person, and it is 99% likely that you would be killed!

“It’s just like right now, had Li Linghai not arrived all of a sudden, you would’ve been killed by me a long time ago!

“As an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage, you should be able to calculate the gains and losses in the blink of an eye. How could you have done such things rashly? It is utterly unreasonable!”

Li Yao’s pupils enlarged and constricted, and the veins on his face were visible now and then too. He said slowly, “Fellow Cultivator Li, should I compliment you for your wisdom that is finally back online and showing the computational and deduction abilities of the Divinity Transformation Stage?”

Li Lingfeng sneered, “Eliminating all the unreasonable and illogical choices, my speculation is the only possible truth. Otherwise, it is impossible to explain your arrival and what you did at all!”

After a long silence, Li Yao finally heaved a sigh and said, “It may be the truth, but so what? Everybody in the universe has their restraints. Even if you are as strong as a god, it is impossible for you to do whatever you want! The Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and various sources that someone in the Divinity Transformation Stage consumes every day are astronomical. The seemingly powerful Colossus also requires an enormous industrial system for maintenance. There are also issues of fuel, ammunition, and replacement of weapons… Without the support of a family, what can I do by myself and my Colossus?

“Therefore, although I know I’ll be hanging by a thread if I take the mission to sabotage your territory in the Martial Meritocrats Sector on my own, although I know that the fake identity of ‘Cultivator’ definitely cannot fool everyone in the entire Imperium, although I know that there is a good chance that I will be killed by you, or be hated by you who are at a higher level in the Divinity Transformation Stage than me for the rest of my life even if I am not, although I know that the entire Li family will consider me as prey should the incident be exposed and I will very likely end as a sacrifice in the private deals, although I know clearly that it is a scheme of someone in my force to kill me indirectly—I know everything clearly, but so what? So what?

“You’re quite right. I’m just a tool, the sharpest saber. However sharp the saber is, it cannot decide whose hands it will be grabbed in and what it will slash!”

As he approached the end, blood was glistening in Li Yao’s eyes, and his voice was filled with anger and resentment!

Li Lingfeng observed him quietly for a while before he suddenly chuckled. “It seems that I was not wrong at all. We truly share the same unfortunate life. It seems that I should not loathe you but the force behind you—the guys who went through all the trouble to destroy my lifelong work, the slaughter stream platform and the Heavenly Eye Group, and who intended to destroy you by the way too!”

The blood inside Li Yao’s eyes was shining as he said gloomily, “Yes. Maybe those guys wanted us to kill each other in a battle, which would’ve been a stone that killed two birds!”

Blinking his eyes, Li Lingfeng put on an even more sunny smile. He said, “We’ve been fighting and chatting for a long time, but I don’t seem to have learned my fellow Cultivator’s name yet.”

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao said, “Call me ‘Vulture Li Yao’.”

Li Lingfeng glanced at Li Jialing, and there was even more certainty in his eyes.

Li Yao narrowed his eyes, and with hostility beaming out again, he said, “Why have your senses been locked onto Li Jialing? You want to tell if I gave you a false name through his indirect reactions?”

“I have no doubt that you gave me a false name.”

Li Lingfeng chuckled. “However, judging from the reactions of my little nephew, you gave me the same pseudo name as you gave to him, which more or less proved your sincerity.”

Li Yao glanced at Li Jialing and mumbled, “I’m feeling more and more that I underestimated you yesterday. I thought that you were just a random guy in a noble family who had more ambitions than talents. But as it turns out, as the dangerous moment of life and death, your wisdom is soaring like a volcano eruption. Even such a top-secret, that ‘Vulture Li Yao’ is a false name, has been seen through you immediately. How impressive!

“Enough talking. Now that we have more or less learned each other’s cards, what exactly do you want, Fellow Cultivator Li?”

“Vulture Li Yao, Fellow Cultivator Li, right? Don’t be so vigilant. You may find it hard to believe, but I really don’t mean any harm to you right now—nor am I qualified to. I just hope that we can warm each other up and give each other a hand."

Opening his hands, Li Lingfeng said frankly, "You know it better than anybody else that the quest of 'Dying Light' has been completely messed up, 'Manjusaka, the City in the Sky' has been demolished, and the Heavenly Eye Group is hopeless. Whatever influences that I have built in the past decades are possible to fall apart. It is impossible for the big shots of my family to continue trusting and supporting me like before.

"All in all, I am poorer than any moment in the past hundred years, and it is barely possible for me to make a comeback on my own.

"Why would I refuse the friendship of another expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage under such circumstances? And it is one with such a powerful Colossus, no less!"

"Friendship?"

Li Yao sneered, "What will I get?"

"Same, the friendship of an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage!"

Li Lingfeng smiled. "Although I do not have anything right now, my core troops haven't suffered any damage. They are still cleaning up the mess in the Martial Meritocrats Sector, unaware of what is going on here. The wretched Sand Primitive Sector has been screwed up by the hundreds of years of destructive experiments. It is barely possible for us to send signals out.

"The bottom line is, as long as you help us survive the crisis right now, I'm absolutely confident to rise again. By then, if you really want to change your fate, I believe you wouldn’t mind receiving some selfless help from ‘the real controller of the Li family’, would you?

“The alliance of two experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage is enough to make the universe tremble. How does it sound? Do you want to show up in the most glamorous seat in the Imperium openly and claim the power and glory that belong to you?”

Li Yao’s eyelids bounced violently, and he ground his teeth like a grater. In an even more hoarse voice, he said, “That’s all? You want to fool me into selling my life to you with such weightless bulls*it?”

“Of course. That’s all about the future. Right now, what matters most is my dear sister and Her Grace of the Imperium.”

Li Lingfeng sniffed the air; his nose tip quivering nonstop. “She has already entered the thunderstorm and is searching for us in the middle of the pouring rain and the thunder. It is a pity that the magnetic field here is too chaotic. She can’t lock onto our coordinates for the time being, but it won’t be long before she does. How about it? I don’t believe that you are not interested in the queen.”

Li Yao said, somewhat unnaturally, “Why would I be interested in the queen?”

With a “you can’t fool me” look on his face, Li Lingfeng said, “Stop pretending, Fellow Cultivator Li. We have been communicating well and genuinely. Now that a great enemy is underway, is there any need to hide at all? If you and the force behind you are not interested in the queen, how on earth could you have learned so many secrets?”

Li Yao was dazed for a while, and the defense on his face gradually loosened as he said, “Alright. I admit that the major forces in the Imperium are all greatly interested in the queen. After all, as you said just now, she has gradually revealed her ambitions, and she poses a threat to many different people, doesn’t she?

“Who can argue with that? My sister is turning more and more unpredictable, immeasurable, and even horrible after only a hundred years.”

Li Lingfeng sighed and said, “Pushing her to the throne of ‘queen’ was perhaps the gravest mistake that the Li family made in the past hundred years. But who could have foreseen that she would grow into something like this?

“All in all, she has got everything she needs, and she is about to bare the most aggressive tusks. At such a critical moment, she absolutely will not allow any unexpected factor to disrupt her plan. The three of us have to be killed here!

“If we continue brutalizing each other, we will only be killed by her one after another. There’s no chance of winning at all.

“However, if we can join our hands, with two experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage and Li Jialing, a ‘perfect experiment subject’ that Wuying Lan and I carefully refined, we will not entirely be on the losing side!

“It must be noted that Li Jialing’s existence has always been her biggest secret. Even the ‘Deep Sea Fleet’, the secret troop that she founded on her own, will not be allowed to learn the truth.

“Besides, she couldn’t have guessed that we would join hands. She thought that the two of you had escaped into the deepest part of the thunderstorm. So, she would certainly come here to hunt on her own without bringing any help.

“This is our best opportunity!”

Li Jialing had been listening in silence all the time. He finally couldn’t help anymore, and so, he asked, “You want us to kill her together?”

Li Lingfeng chuckled. “I didn’t say that she must be killed. I know that you might be unable to make up your mind for that. However, getting her under control, talking to her, and making some deals with her, or asking her to tell the truth of your origins—Do you find that acceptable?”

“Rest assured. Your uncle wouldn’t bear to kill your mother.”

Li Yao said to the young man coldly, “He still wants to control the forces deep inside the royal palace with your living mother. Or to put it more frankly, he wants to swallow the forces that your mother accumulated in secret in the past hundred years to realize his own ambitions. Do you understand?”

Chapter 2137 - The Weird Queen!

2137 The Weird Queen!

“Smart!”

Giving no denial at all, Li Lingfeng simply grinned. “If the queen truly dies, many people will smile even in their dreams. But will that bring us any good? We will simply be doing somebody else’s a favor, won’t we?

“Besides, she is my sister who shares the same father and mother with me after all. If possible, I do not want to completely end up on bad terms with her.

“My plan is to talk to her nicely and see if we can combine our resources. Then, if I want to take back what is mine in the Li family, or she has any plan, or Fellow Cultivator Li has other ideas for the future, it will be easier for us to achieve the purposes if we help one another, right?

“I believe that as long as we join hands, faced with the ‘sincerity’ of two experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage, even my sister would have to think about it carefully.

“I’m done. Please cherish the rarely-seen opportunity. Fellow Cultivator Li, you should be well aware that if I hadn’t run into today’s misfortunes, I definitely wouldn’t have told you so many secrets and so many truths.

“Now that you have learned so many secrets, it is impossible for you to return in one piece. Cooperation with me is your only way out. Otherwise, even if the queen and I don’t kill you, thousands of people will if they know you know it!

“All in all, the lives of the three of us now lie in your hands. ‘Vulture Li Yao’, you will decide where we will go next!”

Li Yao’s eyebrows were furrowed, and his expressions were changing all the time. His eyes were now filled with brutality and now as profound as abysses. His eyeballs were also rolling crazily, as if he were calculating the moves in the game. Finally, he said cautiously, “It seems that I do not have a second choice other than trusting you. However, I have to figure out a few things first, which concerns the odds of success if I take action.”

Narrowing his eyes, Li Lingfeng stared at the edge of the thunderstorm and said hastily, “Alright. Just ask!”

Li Yao said, “What exactly is the greatest disagreement between you and Li Linghai? You are biological siblings. Although familial bonds are never what we, the Immortal Cultivators, care for, the two of you shouldn’t have too many conflicts of interest. It should’ve been possible for you to communicate well and deal with the older generation of your family together. Why have you become so antagonistic to each other? Isn’t such a ‘civil war’ too stupid?”

The question seemed to have poked Li Lingfeng’s critical parts. The muscles on his face jumped crazily for a while. Then, perhaps because the situation was too urgent for him to make up any lies, he pondered for a moment and said, “Yes. When my sister became the queen of the Imperium, it was impossible for her to return to the Li family as the leader and the Kurfürst. So, theoretically speaking, she can’t be my competitor, and it is only reasonable that the two of us form a stable alliance of interests, with one inside the Li family and the other in the capital of the Imperium.

“However, more than a hundred years ago, when the Li family was selecting a queen, she was still a junior without much influence, while I already distinguished myself and had a say in the matter.

“Regarding the issue of her entering the royal palace, I… might have played some tricks, which might have caused her to hate my guts even to this day.”

Li Yao thought of something. “She didn’t want to become the queen?”

Li Lingfeng nodded at Li Jialing. “If she were willing to be the queen, why on earth would my little nephew here be born? However, it was already more than a hundred years ago. Power tastes like the most delicious wine. Whoever enjoys one drop of it will not be able to get rid of it anymore. In recent decades, I could tell that she quite enjoyed being the queen!

“However, the thing about hatred is that it will eventually be worn out by time. The greatest disagreement between her and me is not the old grudge but our different beliefs.”

“Beliefs?”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. “You are both ambitious Immortal Cultivators. Are your beliefs any different?”

“They are absolutely different. My sister’s dreadfulness is utterly beyond the imagination of other people. Even the big shots of the Li family have never seen through her completely. Only I, as her biological brother who shares the same bloodline, can notice a thing or two unusual in her!”

When he mentioned Li Linghai, Li Lingfeng even shivered slightly. He struggled to continue, “My ambition is to be the leader of the Li family and one of the four Kurfürsten, which is not exactly a big secret. It is even safe to say that every Immortal Cultivator in the four Kurfürst families has the same ambition as mine. I believe you are the same, too. Do you not want to be the master of your force?

“It is a very common ambition. Nothing extraordinary.

“But my sister is different. She… She… In the few close-distance contacts with her over the last couple of years, I could clearly sense that what she wants is much more than a simple Li family; she wants the entire Imperium!”

Li Yao’s eyes were glittering. “Are you suggesting that Li Linghai intends to rule over the entire Imperium?”

Li Lingfeng shook his head. “If only it were so simple. I’m highly suspicious that her burning ambition will eventually destroy the entire Imperium!”

Destroy the Imperium!

Li Yao was truly stunned for a moment.

Li Lingfeng might not be the smartest person in the world, but he was without a doubt a bold, determined man.

Even someone like him had been awed by Li Linghai’s ambitions. What was Li Linghai trying to achieve exactly?

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao managed to calm himself down and asked, “Fellow Cultivator Li, you seem to be overstating. Do you have any proof?”

“I do not have any direct evidence.”

Li Lingfeng shook his head and said, “However, for those in the Divinity Transformation Stage like you and me, we can sense a lot of things through subtle traces based on our intuitions. In many cases, conclusions can be drawn without concrete evidence.”

“Intuitions?”

Li Yao smiled. “Your intuitions told you that our queen was as horrifying as that?”

“Trust me. There’s no need for me to lie to you at such a moment!”

Li Lingfeng said in a hurry, “I was perhaps the earliest person who discovered her horrors in the entire Imperium. The reason was simple. Decades ago, I accidentally intercepted the fetus of my nephew Li Jialing. After learning the background of the fetus, I tried to restore my relationship with her with the fetus as a leverage…”

Li Yao interrupted him, “I’m afraid that you did not want to restore the relationship but hoped to blackmail her so that she would stand by your side in the competition of the leader of the Li family and the Kurfürst, right?”

“It’s the same.”

Li Lingfeng said, “The bottom line is, after receiving Li Jialing’s fetus, on one hand, I asked Wuying Lan to devise a set of most perfect fetus strengthening plans, preparing to develop him at an appropriate moment. On the other hand, I secretly ran investigations on Li Linghai, trying to grasp more of her weaknesses before we showed our hands to each other.

“However, while I was utterly ignorant before the investigation, I couldn’t have been more shocked after the result of the investigation was out.

“As it turned out, my dear sister was not a loyal, dutiful tool of the family as she appeared to be at all. She had built a secret armed force known as ‘Deep Sea Fleet’ in secret, and she had also extended her influences into the critical departments of the Imperium, gathering power and establishing her own forces. There was no telling what she was up to at all!

“Not just that, her personality and her abilities had been through drastic changes, and she was like a totally different person from before. I even had a very ridiculous feeling—Her Grace of the Imperium of True Human Beings was not my biological sister at all, at least not the Li Linghai that I escorted to the royal palace in person more than a hundred years ago!”

“What?”

Greatly surprised, Li Yao thought quickly, “Somebody replaced or possessed her?”

“It’s impossible.”

Li Lingfeng shook his head. “It is a serious issue. It is absolutely impossible to possess the queen of the Imperium. The rigorous tests on blood samples, cells, genes, and even soul waves every year proved that the woman is indeed my biological sister Li Linghai.

“Otherwise, considering the brainwashing methods of the Covenant Alliance and the brain invading techniques of the extraterrestrial devils, if the queen could be possessed or replaced, wouldn’t the same thing happen to the emperor and the warlords? The vast Imperium would collapse abruptly!

“However… However, despite knowing for a fact that the woman is my biological sister Li Linghai, I still feel creeped out time and time again.

“For example, more than a hundred years ago, before my sister became the ‘Crown Princess’ in the capital, she was a very pure battle-type Immortal Cultivator and an elite warrior of the family. She was even an overly sentimental and indecisive person.

“She was indeed talented and even more gifted than me in training. No matter how complicated and abstruse a technique was, she would grasp them after a quick look. When she was in her twenties, she was already able to fight an even match with the warriors in the prime years of their lives in my family, and also me, who had already distinguished myself.

“However, for the standards of the Immortal Cultivators, she was simply too merciful, naïve, innocent, and ignorant of the treacherousness of human minds.

“Perhaps it was exactly because of her qualities of sentimentality, leniency, and innocence that she was finally picked by the family as the Crown Princess as that time and the future queen.”

Li Yao nodded his head. “Got it. A woman whose feelings were so abundant that she was almost fragile would be easier to be restrained and controlled by the family. She would serve better as a tool to monitor the emperor for the family. Should anything go wrong, she would have lots of weaknesses that you could take advantage of.”

Li Lingfeng hesitated for a moment, but he still nodded his head. “You’re right. None of the four Kurfürsten wishes to see an ambitious, sophisticated, and uncontrollable queen. Such tender, sentimental women who are highly dependent on the family have always been the best candidates for queens in every generation.

“On the other hand, although everybody was aware of the truth behind the political marriage, it was necessary to take the feelings of the prince or His Majesty himself into consideration too. It would be too simple and crude to see a well-trained, cold, and ruthless female spy as the Crown Princess or the queen. Should the prince or the emperor be provoked and grow resentful, it would be rather bad.

“Therefore, the four Kurfürst families still hoped to pick an unsophisticated, truly attractive woman, preferably with some unnecessary innocence, naivety, and kindness. Finally, it was my sister Li Linghai who was chosen in the end!”

Chapter 2138 - The Rapidly Growing Young Man!

2138 The Rapidly Growing Young Man!

“That explains a lot. I must thank you for your enlightenment, Fellow Cultivator Li.”

Li Yao said, “I’ve heard a thing or two about news from the royal palace whose authenticity I was not certain about. The… force that I belong to was involved in the issues of the election of the Crown Princess too. However, hehe, those guys only wanted me to train myself hard into a slaughter machine with more brawns than brains. So, they never cared to explain the inside information to me so clearly!”

Li Lingfeng said with a smile, “There is still a lot more intelligence that we can communicate with each other after things are settled here.”

Li Yao sniffed, giving neither approval or disapproval. “Please continue, Fellow Cultivator Li. If the queen was a kind woman, if not weak in nature, why are you so terrified of her right now?”

“That is the problem. My sister’s personalities have changed greatly in the past decades. She has turned even colder, more ruthless, and more iron-hearted than me. Perhaps she already changed more than a hundred years before she entered the royal palace, but she disguised herself very well and nobody discovered it.”

Li Lingfeng sighed and turned to Li Jialing. “Jialing, I do not want to lie to you. At first, I wanted to use you as a leverage because I thought it would be hard to completely eradicate one’s nature no matter how cruel and cold your mother tried to be. And that when we met, she would more or less show some hesitation or loopholes.

“In a competition of two experts, one moment of hesitation or loopholes would be more than enough to decide the outcome of the battle.

“I even thought that, even if she was relentless enough to dispose of you when you were a fetus, which in fact was nothing more than ‘abortion’, she would certainly hesitate slightly when she saw you standing before her as a grown man, right?

“But I was wrong. I truly underestimated my ‘kindhearted, sentimental, and docile’ sister. Or maybe, she had encountered amazing incidents in the past decades, which granted her terrifying opportunities.

“All in all, when I fought her just now, I intentionally used you to disrupt her mind. But I sensed very clearly that she couldn’t care less about you, and that she was exactly here to kill you. There was not the least maternal love in her at all. You must trust your uncle!

“Furthermore, I would like to disclose an even greater secret to you. In the past hundred years, my sister and His Majesty had twelve princes and princesses in total, four of which died. According to my secret investigation, the deaths of at least two princes were highly suspicious and very likely to be related to my sister!”

Li Yao and Li Jialing were both stunned. Li Yao asked, somewhat in disbelief, “Are you implying that she has already killed at least two of her own children?”

“Very possible, believe it or not. There’s no need for me to lie to you about that, right?”

Li Lingfeng sneered, “Jialing, you should understand it now. Ancient people said that ‘even ferocious tigers do not eat their own children’, but your gene provider is a fiendish woman a hundred times more ferocious than a tiger. If you have the slightest expectations or extravagant hope in her, it will be you who suffer in the end!”

Li Jialing swallowed hard. Despite the super modifications that Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan performed in his head, everything that happened today was enough to make it explode.

Li Yao narrowed his eyes. “So to speak, something is truly wrong with the queen?”

“Of course!”

Li Lingfeng said, “Think about it. She was just a mediocre woman who knew nothing but fighting at the beginning, but in only a hundred years, she founded her own forces while keeping it a secret from the spies of the four Kurfürst families and so many warlords. During the full counterattack of the Imperium against the Covenant Alliance, she also helped the emperor to consolidate his authority in the army and even won the support of the tremendous bottom-level officers in the army. Such sophisticated planning and the resources and wealth that were required for her to recruit her subordinates while deceiving everyone, where did they come from? They couldn’t have just come out of thin air, could they?”

“Got it. It seems that the queen indeed has great secrets behind her.”

Li Yao’s eyes glittered with greed and bloodthirst. “So, you wanted to tame the queen, monopolize the secrets, and grow even stronger than the queen?”

“Yes. That was what I had been planning in the past decade.”

Li Lingfeng opened his arms and admitted frankly, “But the situation is different today. I would like to, and I have to, share the big secret with you.”

Li Yao rolled his eyes quickly and asked, “One last question. How strong is the queen exactly?”

“Very strong. At least a minor level higher than me.”

Li Lingfeng seemed truly desperate for cooperation. Not fearing that it might scare Li Yao away, he said, “This is another amazing and uncanny issue. The queen is a tool we used to monitor the emperor. She shouldn’t have any secrets. The family has been paying close attention to her training all the time. However talented she is and whatever fortuitous incidents she went through, there is no reason why she can be so strong. Besides, she spent most of her time in the heavily-guarded royal palace. What kind of fortuitous incidents could she possibly have run into?”

Li Yao once heard Di Feiwen, the deputy commander of the Black Wind Fleet, talking about those anecdotes before.

Ever since Blackstar the Great, the biggest enemy for the emperor of the Imperium was not the Covenant Alliance or the Cultivators, but the large and small nobles and warlords including the four Kurfürst families.

The central government and the local forces continued the tug-of-war in a dynamic balance, which was the main theme of the thousand years of history of the Imperium.

Also, as the territory of the Imperium expanded, it was only natural that the strength of the warlords and the local forces grew stronger, and the authority of the emperor was gradually diminished. Eventually, they became the puppets of the nobles and the warlords.

To avoid the reappearance of an unprecedented man of the time like Blackstar the Great, the nobles and the warlords couldn't have been more cautious of the royal family. The education and the training of the royal family, in particular, were under the close watch of the four Kurfürsten.

The tutors of the royal family were all selected by the warlords. There were specific regulations regarding the arts and techniques that they could practice.

The disobedient and persistent members of the royal family were very likely to "die abruptly of mental derangement". It was absolutely impossible for an emperor or a certain royal prince to pick up an unparalleled technique from the "royal library" and rise unstoppably after grasping it.

Since Li Linghai was a member of the Li family, what she had been practicing should be the techniques of her family too, and the status of her training within the royal palace should be under high control.

So, how exactly did she advance into the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage, even higher than Li Lingfeng?

Li Yao's head was in a mess.

But thankfully, Di Feiwen had told him a lot of the inside information about the Imperium before, which spared him of the ignorant look on his face.

Li Lingfeng continued cheering him up. “However, there is no need to be too worried, Fellow Cultivator Li. Although the empress’ absolute combat ability is higher than ours, she has snuck into the Martial Meritocrats Sector and the Sand Primitive Sector for an annihilation operation, which must be kept a secret from everyone.

“It is difficult for us to kill her, but it wouldn’t be too realistic for her to kill two experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage with two Colossi even if she is at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage, right?

“On the other hand, we do not even need to have a head-on clash with her but only need to threaten her that we will run away for a few days, which will put her in a very awkward situation when the main troops arrive.

“Therefore, we do have bargaining chips to play the game with her. I stand by what I said. As long as we can put down our grudge and join our hands sincerely, she definitely would not be bold enough to attack us.”

Li Yao’s fists were clenched, loosened, and clenched again. Finally, he made up his mind and nodded his head slowly. “Fine, I’ll work with you for now and figure out what trump cards the queen has!”

“Spectacular!”

Li Lingfeng clapped his hands and smiled. “Then, please hide somewhere, Fellow Cultivator Li and my nephew. She is unaware that the two of you are right here. You will be an unexpected troop!”

“Wait!”

Li Jialing bulged his eyes and glanced from Li Yao to Li Lingfeng again through lightning and rain. He gnashed his teeth. “I-I haven’t promised anything yet!”

“Huh?”

Li Lingfeng frowned in a daze. “Jialing, I thought that you were already calm and rational enough after a dozen years of strengthening and refinements. As your uncle, I have explained everything to you just now. If you still can’t make the right decision because of rashness, hatred, or parental bond, you would be such a great disappointment.”

“I couldn’t care less about the parental bond. Even if Li Linghai is really my gene provider, so what?”

Li Jialing was trembling hard, but he managed to go on. “However, I still can’t completely trust you. There are still too many obscure details in the whole matter!

“Who is my father exactly? Is he from… the Covenant Alliance? And how did Li Linghai make acquaintance with someone from the Covenant Alliance, keep each other’s life seeds, and even combine them into a fetus in the end? Why did he do that? Where is my father?

“I will not be taken advantage of again like a fool until all the questions are clear to me!”

Li Lingfeng couldn’t have looked more awful. He glanced at Li Yao again, as if he were weighing the pros and cons of confessing everything. A moment later, he said coldly, “So, you have guessed it too. That does make sense. Now that I have told you your real identity, ‘the Origin Plan that was corrupted by the Covenant Alliance’ would not make any sense, and the incomplete ‘Path of Ultimate Benevolence’ deep inside your head would be inexplicable.

“Yes. Your father is indeed from the Covenant Alliance. But as to the specific details, even I only know the general picture...”

“Wait. I do not want to hear it from you. God knows if you are lying to me again!”

Li Jialing demanded, “I want to hear it from Li Linghai in person! If you truly want me to cooperate with you and deal with Li Linghai, you will find a way to allure her to speak out all the truth and to corroborate your words. Then, I will make a judgment myself! If what you said just now is true, we will certainly give you a hand at the critical moment. If not… you can go to hell!”

“You—”

Li Lingfeng did not expect Li Jialing would play such a move.

Even Li Yao couldn’t help but smile. “Fellow Cultivator Li, it seems that of everything you said, at least one thing is true—You have truly invested all your efforts and resources on your nephew. He has been built into such an excellent talent!”

Chapter 2139 - Queen In White!

2139 Queen In White!

At this moment, the rumbling thunders far away grew apparently intense, as if something had stabbed into the fauna of the dragon-like lightning.

The three of them looked at faraway, only to discover that the thousands of bolts of lightning on the dark horizon at the edge of the thunderstorm were all twisted weirdly and gathered in the same direction, as if they were attracted by a certain mysterious force. Billions of sparks that looked like a galaxy of stars were raised.

Li Lingfeng changed his facial expression. With dense sweat leaking out of his forehead, he said hastily, “Fine, I promise you that I will find a way to make your mother admit the truth. I hope that you are calm and rational enough to not get yourself killed before that!”

“Let’s go. Li Linghai is about to come!”

Li Yao knew it was time to leave. He dragged Li Jialing and took him to hide in the thunderstorm.

There were too many broken stones and rugged ravines in the thunderstorm they were in. They were all places where they could hide. With Li Yao’s delicate control over the spiritual energy right now, it was not a difficult task at all to conceal the scent and waves from him and Li Jialing.

When they hid in the mud at the deepest part of a ravine and adjusted their body temperatures to exactly the same as the environment, the young man hadn’t recovered from the shock yet and found his performance just now hard to believe. “I-I really checkmated Li Lingfeng just now and forced him to concede? Why do I feel that Li Lingfeng is rather weird today and does not have his usual sense of oppression at all? Even his computational ability seems to have dropped, and he doesn’t seem tricky to deal with at all?”

“It is not a matter of oppression or computational ability, and he did not suddenly turn stupid.”

Li Yao said with a smile, “It was only because his absolute capabilities had hit rock bottom, and he was left with no choices under such circumstances.

“Think about it, the Li Lingfeng that you were faced with was the ‘future Kurfürst’, who was deeply trusted by the family and boasted the slaughter stream platform and the Heavenly Eye Group. He had the best cards in his hands, and when you played a game with him, he could easily throttle you with a few random cards.

“But right now, he has run into a dead-end and lost everything. Not only are his base and his family’s trust gone, but he is also being hunted by his dreadful sister. How do you expect him to play a game with you when his head may fall from his neck at any moment?

“Even the best cook cannot make food without ingredients. Strength is the basis of everything. Both deceptions and acting skills are just petty tricks. Their effects can only be maximized under the support of magnificent strength. If you have a handful of worst cards, it is absolutely useless however you bluff your enemy.

“The thing about humans is that they always tend to believe what they are willing to believe. For Li Lingfeng right now, does he have any choice other than believing that the two of us are cooperating with him sincerely? As the saying goes, a dying patient will go to every doctor possible. That is exactly the case right now.”

“That explains a lot. The man couldn’t have foreseen he would be as miserable as today, could he?”

Greatly enlightened, Li Jialing couldn’t help but put on a gloating smile. He then glanced at Li Yao again and asked suspiciously, “But speaking of which, are you a Cultivator or an Immortal Cultivator, Brother Yao? Why do I feel that you were lying to me at the beginning and speaking the truth to Li Lingfeng just now?”

Li Yao said, “Are you serious? I am an out-and-out Cultivator. Trust me. I was deceiving him, not you!”

“But I don’t think that you being a Cultivator makes any sense. It will be more logical if you are an Immortal Cultivator, or a dark assassin and a ‘ghost warrior’ raised by a powerful force such as the four Kurfürst families.”

The young man said solemnly, “As you said so yourself just now, even the morons who have nothing but water in their heads would not believe that you are a Cultivator!”

Li Yao: “… This issue is very complicated, absurd, and hard to explain. I’ll explain to you later if we have the chance. Anyway, you can trust me for now. Just look how righteous, merciful, generous, and kindhearted Brother Yao’s style is. How can I not be a Cultivator?”

Li Jialing: “…”

Li Yao: “This is just a minor joke to lighten the mood in case you are feeling low. All in all, we can leave my identity aside and focus on you first. You have just heard many great secrets. Don’t… Don’t feel too sad!”

After a brief moment of silence, the young man said softly while biting his lips, “There is nothing to be sad about. In fact, after all those years of secret procedures, and because of the incomplete weird barriers inside my head, I had vaguely guessed that my gene provider was no random Immortal Cultivators but an eminent person in the family.

“Besides, Li Lingfeng obviously held ill intentions when he raised me without bothering the costs. I’m only a teenager, and it’s impossible for me to break into the Divinity Transformation Stage however he refined me. I couldn’t be of much help to him in terms of combat ability, so the answer was obvious. My origins were extraordinary and somewhat valuable for Li Lingfeng.

“So, after learning that one of my gene providers was Li Linghai, queen of the Imperium, I honestly did not feel much, except that I should’ve thought of it earlier.

“However, it was truly beyond my expectations that she tried to kill me multiple times.”

Li Yao put his hand on the young man’s shoulder and sensed the quiver of his every muscle in silence.

Li Jialing pushed Li Yao’s hand away softly. Putting on a stubborn smile, he pretended that he did not care about it. “However, it doesn’t matter now. I never had much hope for my birth parents after all.

“If you never have hope, you will never be disappointed; if you never trust anyone, you will never be deceived or betrayed by anyone; if you have foreseen the darkest future, you will not be too painful when the darkness does arrive. They are the doctrines that I lived by to survive all those years, and I will continue to abide by them in the future and live a good life!”

Looking at the tooth marks on the young man’s lips and the shimmers in his eyes as he pretended to be tough, Li Yao did not know what to say. After a long daze, he finally said, “At the very least, you can trust me. I will never deceive you or harm you!”

Hunger flashed in Li Jialing’s eyes. “Really?”

Li Yao replied resolutely, “Yes. I swear that even if Li Linghai does not treat you as a son, Brother Yao can still be your only family. You can absolutely trust me. Absolutely!”

Li Jialing: “Alright. Then, Brother Yao, please tell me honestly where you came from, who you are, why you are here, and whether or not you know my birth father.”

Li Yao: “Well…”

Li Jialing smiled. “Forget it. I know that you do not want to talk about it right now. I’ll just believe you one more time, considering that you would rather hesitate than make up a random lie to trick me, Brother Yao!”

Li Yao smiled too, and he took a long breath in relief. “That’s right. I’ll reveal the answers to all your questions at an appropriate moment. But right now, I only want to stress that you must not absolutely trust Li Lingfeng. I always feel that your mother Li Linghai is not a completely bad person.

Or rather, even if she has done some irregular things, she might have her reasons."

Li Jialing nodded his head. "I never trusted Li Lingfeng 100% in the first place. That was why I asked him to confront Li Linghai and tell us the truth!"

Li Yao said, "That's good. No matter what, I hope you can give your mother, as well as yourself, an opportunity!"

The young man was silent for a moment. He replied, one word after another, "I know what you mean. I am just me. I will not become Li Lingfeng or Li Linghai; I will always be Li Jialing!"

While two of them were talking, the thunders far away were already running close like a torrent outbreak!

Hundreds of bolts of lightning were twisted and reflected, constituting a bridge of the void at the altitude dozens of meters from the ground!

The clouds nearby were all vaporized into colorful mists, which spread out in rings and resisted the agitated spiritual energy and the disordered magnetic field. A small world, which was absolutely unaffected no matter how great the thunderstorm in the outside world was, had been created!

A pure white, flawless, and glittering crystal suit, stepping on the bridge made of lightning, walked to the three escapees through the colorful mists transformed from clouds.

The white and flawless crystal suit seemed to have absorbed all the violent energy between the sky and the earth the moment it showed up. The pouring rain and the lightning were suppressed. Even the crazily shaking tornadoes were frozen and completely destroyed after her entrance!

The ripples of spiritual energy that escaped from the broken tornadoes turned into visible streaks of brightness as they flew and hovered around the white crystal suit, as if they were building a special altar or a glamorous throne for her!

Wow, such a dominating vibe!

Li Yao secretly clicked his tongue. He examined the white crystal suit on Li Linghai's body carefully, only to discover no gap at all. It seemed to be carved out of a whole piece of natural white jade. The features of naturalness, simplicity, and smoothness were best carried out, giving the weird feeling that the crystal suit had no loopholes at all and no place for other people to land their attacks on.

Some of the raindrops occasionally fell on the crystal suit, only to raise colorful ripples on the surface of the pure white crystal suit, as if diamond shields were rising.

Li Yao had never seen such a weird material before. It might also be concerned with certain primeval treasures or some amazing refining technologies that he had never heard of before.

The basic performance of the crystal suit alone should be better than his Mystic Skeleton Blood Wing. The queen's acuity and delicate control of "domain" were also incomparable to him, who had only been in the Divinity Transformation Stage for only a couple of days.

The queen of the Imperium of True Human Beings turned out to be so strong. No wonder Li Lingfeng was terrified of his sister although he was at the high level of the Divinity Transformation Stage!

Li Lingfeng was sitting cross-legged on a rising dais between two ravines. Instead of running, he had stabbed a shiny saber before him and unleashed overwhelming spiritual energy. Burning his life and soul, he had boosted himself to the strongest state, as if he were about to fight one last battle with Li Linghai.

Chapter 2140 - The Past One Century Ago

2140 The Past One Century Ago

The fury of the Divinity Transformation Stage was never to be underestimated. Despite Li Lingfeng's unremarkable performances when he was faced with unexpected setbacks, he had the combat ability of the Divinity Transformation Stage after all.

Now that he was acting as if he were going to fight with his life, the ground was ripped apart, the rocks were shattered, and even the bolts of lightning were affected by his magnetic field, forming an indestructible fortress around him together with the rocks and the rain. He did look somewhat magnificent right now.

Huala!

It was Li Lingfeng who attacked first. The azure spiritual energy slashed apart the land like a visible saber, and the gap that was as thick as a boa zigzagged all the way to Li Linghai's feet!

The pure white crystal suit stopped at the end of the gap. The airborne stairs made of lightning turned into a glittering throne, making her stand in the middle of the thunderstorm like a monarch of gods.

Although there was nothing that could be called "expression" on the mask carved out of the white jade, her intense disdain could be sensed obviously.

“Not running anymore?”

The queen of the Imperium mocked casually from behind the jade mask.

Her voice was quite eccentric.

When first heard, it couldn’t have sounded more pleasant and elegant, mixed with some of the condescending indifference. It was exactly the most standard, perfect, and flawless voice that a “queen” should have.

However, when Li Yao examined it, he felt that the voice seemed to have been processed carefully. Every wave in every syllable had been micro-adjusted to the perfect condition before they were sent out by broadcast rune arrays.

This was a carefully modified voice. Even the feelings of mockery and nonchalance were fabricated. The real feelings and will of the voice’s master had been hidden deeply, making it impossible to tell what was on her mind at all.

Very impressive!

Li Yao’s pores that had been constricted to the minimum were almost expanding again and leaking cold sweat.

The queen was giving him too much pressure. Although she had only spoken three words, she seemed even more terrifying than Li Lingfeng a few days ago when the man was mysterious, unpredictable, and confident of his victory.

Li Yao even vaguely had an illusion. He was unable to tell whether the queen had spoken to Li Lingfeng or whispered the three words into his own ears next to him.

He couldn’t help but shudder hard.

Li Lingfeng also trembled hard. Holding his saber tightly, he demanded, “Li Linghai, don’t be too outrageous! If I am really to escape at full speed without caring about anything, you may not be able to catch me in three days and three nights! What can you do by the time the troops of the Li family and other families come?

“However, it will do neither of us any good. I will be as doomed as you!

“You and I are biological siblings who share the same parents after all. I do not want such a thing that will only satisfy the foes and dishearten the friends. That’s why I have chosen to wait for you here for us to have a proper talk. This is not because I’m scared of you.”

“Satisfy the foes and dishearten the friends?”

A low chuckle came over from below the jade mask again, before Li Linghai said casually, “So, after more than a hundred years, you remember again that you are my biological brother and we are family! We haven’t talked for a hundred years. What do you want to talk about right now, our siblinghood?”

“We should definitely talk about our siblinghood. Perhaps you had some misunderstandings about me regarding certain things a hundred years ago. However, so many years have passed, and we have both been through drastic changes. There is no grudge between a brother and a sister that cannot be resolved, right?”

Li Lingfeng rolled his eyes quickly and said, “However, let’s leave ‘siblinghood’ aside and focus on ‘parenthood’ for now. Let’s talk about your own children, shall we?”

There was no hesitation or fluctuation in the voice from below the jade mask, which almost sounded like a recording that was stored earlier. “His Majesty and I have twelve children. Which one of them do you want to talk about?”

Li Lingfeng sneered, “My good sister and our dear queen, let’s not waste our time beating around the bush. What I’m going to talk about is not the twelve children that His Majesty and you have, but the thirteenth child, the one you had with someone from the Covenant Alliance and the one you are here to kill today!”

The jade mask responded with silence.

Li Lingfeng said, “If you do not talk, I’ll consider it your admittance. Tell you the truth, I have indeed chased them all the way here to the Sand Primitive Sector, but the Sand Primitive Sector is not a land of desolation and nothingness. Quite a few starships are docked here!

“Where are the starships from? It’s very simple. You know that the Sand Primitive Sector is very close to the Martial Meritocrats Sector, and the place will open in another few decades for the devils that have been sealed for almost three hundred years.

“Wuying Lan and I were very interested in the Sand Primitive Sector and intended to build the place into a second ‘Land of Sins’. Because of our advantage of the short distance, we often snuck into the place for explorations. For safety reasons and for the convenience of our operations, we hid a few small starships that were filled with fuel and very easy to control here. It shouldn’t come as a surprise, should it?

“Let me tell you. Even if you kill me right now, it will be useless. The little guy where your blood and the blood of the

Covenant Alliance flow can still run loose in space on one of my starships, which wouldn’t be too good, would it?

“So, let’s talk about it and figure out how we can resolve the issue. Then, we can deal with the annoying old guys in the family. How does it sound?”

The jade mask kept silent, almost giving the feeling that it was not a crystal suit but a lifeless statue.

It was not until half a minute later that Li Linghai finally touched the left temple of the helmet softly, dissecting the helmet and retreating it into the crystal suit. The most astonishing, beautiful face was revealed.

Li Yao’s pupils constricted violently. He couldn’t help but shriek in his heart, Wow, a white-haired girl!

The queen of the Imperium before his eyes should be more than 150, and even close to 200, years old by age, but she still had an unworn face where time seemed to have been frozen. Her eyes, her cheeks, and her teeth were as captivating as they had ever been.

In the meantime, the contours of her face were more or less feeble, giving the feeling that she was a lonely, pitiful flower in a devastating storm, which had brought her too much pain and suffering. Whoever saw her would grow to have the urge to protect her. She did not have the aggression and the detachment in her voice at all.

However…

All the feelings were based on ignoring her hair and her eyes.

If counting her pure white hair that was as dustless and glistening as a crystal waterfall, and her eyes that were almost transparent and reflecting white light without any sign of blackness, the tenderness became domination, the weakness became brutality, and the seemingly feeble lines provided a major contrast for her cruelty and condescension!

It was perhaps inaccurate to describe her as an example for all the mothers in the world.

However, her astounding style was definitely befitting for the queen of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

Your mother is rather cool!

Li Yao secretly sent a feeble wave into Li Jialing’s head.

The young man turned around inch by inch and glared at him.

After she took off the helmet, she seemed to have unlocked a certain seal. Li Linghai’s aura was improved to the highest, almost making the whole sky of lightning kneel before her. Her white hair moved on its own although there was no wind, and she stared at Li Lingfeng with her almost transparent eyes for a long time, before she finally asked, “How much do you know exactly? Who else knows?”

“What I know is much more than you expect. If you don’t believe you, I can tell you a short story, dear sister.”

Rolling his eyes, Li Lingfeng began to speak before Li Linghai replied, “More than a hundred years ago, a gifted, smart, elite female warrior with infinite potentials emerged in a certain deeply-rooted, powerful family of the Imperium of True Human Beings. She defeated many competitors in a series of championships within the family and won the appreciation of many seniors and big shots of the family, who prepared to dedicate more resources to her and teach her more advanced and sophisticated techniques of the family.

“However, the elite female warrior who was almost perfect had one tiny flaw. For an Immortal Cultivator, she was too gentle, if not docile, despite her magnificent combat ability.

“To cure her of the illness of sentimentality and leniency, the big shots of the family decided that she should have more real-life battles as trials. Therefore, she was drafted into the exploration team of the family as an exception, and she was asked to explore the unknown world fragments in space.

“It is well known that almost all the Sectors have been discovered after the Imperium’s expansion to this day. Continuing to explore outer space is both costly and difficult. It is not a fair deal.

“However, there are still countless broken small worlds, or ‘world fragments’, that are scattered in the sea of stars. It is possible that relics from tens of thousands of years ago, the secret treasures of the senior experts, or even the Colossi—the ultimate weapons of the primeval era—can be found in those places.

“Therefore, other than the troops against the Covenant Alliance in the frontline, the exploration teams of the world fragments were the best armed forces of every family. It was not hard to tell how much the family valued her from the fact that she was drafted into the family’s exploration team, which she just distinguished herself.

“Unfortunately, the starship that the young female warrior was on encountered a cosmic storm on her very first mission.

They were blown to somewhere unknown by the violent space turbulence. The starship was destroyed, and there were huge casualties.

“But out of their expectation, they did find a mysterious world fragment in the unknown place in the depths of the universe!

“However, in this mysterious world fragment, they ran into another exploration team, which was from the Alliance of the Holy Covenant, the Imperium’s sworn enemy. The exploration team of the Covenant Alliance was also nearly blown apart in the cosmic storm and wandered all the way to the place.

“Having nowhere to run to in the world fragment, the two exploration teams, which had lost abundant crew members and assets, were both eager to loot trophies from the enemy in order to repair their starships. Naturally, the most heated battle began the moment they met.

“The fierce battle went on, until almost everybody died with each other in the end, except for the young female warrior who was on her first mission, as well as… a refiner from the Covenant Alliance!”

Chapter 2141 - Clearing the Mists!

2141 Clearing the Mists!

Li Yao almost cried out when he heard “a refiner from the Covenant Alliance”.

He was now almost certain that the refiner of the Covenant Alliance that ended up in the mysterious world fragment together with the “young female warrior” in Li Lingfeng’s mouth was exactly his foster father, who wandered to the Star Glory Federation in the Heaven’s Origin Sector at the edge of the cosmos later!

If Li Lingfeng was not lying, what unusual stories happened between the man and the woman who belonged to hostile sides, and what kind of influences did their encounter cause to them?

At the very least, from Li Yao’s eyes, the incident should be the turning point of his foster father’s life. His foster father came from the Covenant Alliance, and based on Li Yao’s understanding of the Covenant Alliance, people there all repressed their feelings and self-will and could barely be called humans. They were utterly different from his impressions on his foster father, who was warm, kindhearted, generous, and sometimes lonely.

How did his foster father turn from a standard local of the Covenant Alliance into the middle-aged man that Li Yao met in the magical equipment graveyard, one who had the feelings of a normal human and even sometimes burst into tears late at night?

It was possible that the answer lay in the mysterious world fragment?

He observed Li Linghai’s countenance in secret. Although the white-haired queen’s helmet had disintegrated and retreated, her face still seemed covered in a transparent mask. It was impossible to tell her real feelings.

However, she did not stop Li Lingfeng from continuing the story.

Li Lingfeng smiled. “All that happened later was only the young female warrior’s side of the story, because she claimed that the world fragment was a rarely-seen ‘floating world fragment’, which seemed to be drifting erratically between the three-dimensional and the four-dimensional space. Its entrance and coordinates were completely unpredictable. Nobody else had ever found the world fragment again either.

“All in all, according to the young female warrior, the two parties both had only one last survivor, but she was a warrior and the other survivor was a refiner. Naturally, she was at an overwhelming advantage and suppressed the enemy easily.

“To explore the world fragment, and to dismantle the magical equipment units on the enemy’s starship for the maintenance of her own starship, the young female warrior of the Imperium did not kill the refiner of the Covenant Alliance, but forced him to start exploration and maintenance. She even made up her mind to capture the guy back to the Imperium alive.

“Because the starship was too seriously damaged, and their hands were highly limited, it took them half a year before they finally managed to repair the Imperium’s starship.

“The man and the woman spent half a year in the mysterious world fragment that nobody knew about all by themselves, but they found nothing. It was an unattractive world fragment, with barely any resources or relics and not of any value to be developed. Naturally, it was still the young female warrior’s side of the story.

“All in all, half a year later, they finally escaped from the world fragment on the starship of the Imperium and returned to the Imperium.

“However, before they were discovered by the border patrol of the Imperium, something uncanny happened. According to the young female warrior, the refiner of the Covenant Alliance kept a few powerful weapons to himself in secret during the half year’s maintenance and exploration, and he attacked her at the last moment in an ambush, trying to seize the starship and escape back to the Covenant Alliance.

“But after a fierce battle, the refiner of the Covenant Alliance was killed by her, and even the body had been absorbed to the vacuum of the space through the broken holes on the shell of the starship. Naturally, it was impossible to locate a tiny body in the vast universe.

“It was about the whole incident. By the time the patrol teams of the Imperium discovered the young female warrior, the ragged, collapsing starship had only her and abundant bodies of the Immortal Cultivators that she brought back on board. She was the highest authority to tell everything that happened in the past year.

“Of course, I have to admit that everything that the young female warrior said so far is flawless without major loopholes, my dear sister, right?”

“Yes.”

Li Linghai said casually, “There are indeed no loopholes.

“Yes. The Imperium and the Covenant Alliance have been sworn enemies for a thousand years. Cases were rare where the Immortal Cultivators negotiated peace with the people of the Covenant Alliance. Besides, the young female warrior had also struck other people as meek, kind-natured, and readily-bendable. How could the seniors and big shots of the family have realized that she was lying?”

Li Lingfeng smiled, “Most importantly of all, the family arranged quite a few loyalty tests where her mind was questioned for her, asking her to repeat every detail that happened in the past year for hundreds of times. But no loopholes were identified at all. Eventually, her statement was considered real and trustworthy, and there was nothing wrong with her at all. She was back to the battle sequence of the family.

“Although she was back to the battle sequence of the family, her problems of submissiveness and sentimentality seemed even more serious than before. She sulked and was in a daze every day, and nobody could tell what was on her mind. Her potentials in training were almost drained. Her performance was not even as good as a year ago.

“Everybody thought that her mind was affected by the cruel encounter, and incurable holes had been left deep inside her soul. No matter how she trained herself, it would be impossible for her to grow into a natural, smooth, and flawless super expert. Her seniors and the big shots of the family abandoned her one after another too.

“Later, the family got a precious opportunity of picking a crown princess. After selections and negotiations, she was sent to the Empyreal Terminus Sector, capital of the Imperium, to be the crown princess first. Decades later, after the former emperor passed away and the crown prince acceded to the throne, she naturally turned into the almighty queen of the Imperium!”

Li Linghai listened in silence and observed indifferently. “Is there any problem?”

“Up until now, no problem at all.”

With the most brilliant smile, Li Lingfeng said, “However, a minor problem came right next, which I would like my sister to enlighten me with. Why did the eminent, well-revered queen of the Imperium, after living in the capital for decades, suddenly retrieved one of her life seeds, combined it with a life seed of someone unknown from the Covenant Alliance into a fetus, and launched it into the depths of the universe inside a very advanced automatic starship, as if she wanted the fetus to develop into a healthy baby inside the universe and… escape from the power turbulences of the Imperium to live a free, unrestrained life in somewhere remote?”

Li Linghai’s face was as hollow as before, and she did not give any response.

But the lightning below her feet suddenly turned bright and violent, like ferocious dragons.

Li Lingfeng sniffed. Grabbing his saber tightly, he showed his determination of a desperate fighter again as he shouted, “It seems that Your Grace is neither interested in my story nor willing to answer my questions, right? Fine. I’ll tell the story to the seniors of the Li family or even the experts of other families and ask for their enlightenment!”

Li Linghai’s almost transparent eyes were constricted into the size of needle tips, and she held the lightning dragons below her feet from lunging.

Li Lingfeng laughed and said, “That’s right. I have never wanted to fight you since the beginning. I only want to chat with you and ask you a few questions.

“What exactly happened in the mysterious world fragment a hundred years ago? Did you control the refiner of the Covenant Alliance in order to maintain the starship with him, or did more things that you didn’t care to admit happen?

“Also, is the mysterious world fragment really as barren and unpredictable as you described? Is it possible that many priceless treasures are hidden inside, and it is a rarely-seen relic?

“The oddest of all, if something was really wrong and you were lying, how did you pass the meticulous loyalty tests of the family? Was it because you already received some heritages from the relic a hundred years ago; some techniques that were enough to resist the interrogation of the mind?”

As a bystander, Li Yao more or less had answers about the questions as he eavesdropped.

It seemed that Li Linghai did lie to her family a hundred years ago.

She and Li Yao's foster father were certainly much more than a victor and a captive. The two of them must've grown deep feelings for one another during the half a year's time.

Otherwise, his foster father wouldn't have mentioned Li Linghai in his last words or asked Li Yao to come to the Imperium for her if he ran into any trouble.

On the other hand, the world fragment that Li Linghai and his foster father discovered couldn't have been a forsaken world that was "unattractive" and "barren".

The reason was simple. Little Black was found in the world fragment by his foster father!

Black Wing's seal was quite sophisticated itself, and the "liquid magical equipment" form after the seal was broken was also the best medium for human beings to use the Colossi. The enhancement and buffer effects were multiple times better than the neural connection liquids that the federation produced on its own!

Li Yao and the federation's masters of refining had run detailed analyses on Little Black and speculated that it might be a product of the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago.

The Star Ocean Imperium was the first magnificent empire of human beings that unified the entire universe in the modern times. The Cultivators of the contemporary sense were born from there!

The civilization was so brilliant and remarkable that it was tantalizing for the Cultivators in a lot of aspects even today!

There was also half of the weird key. Other than Little Black and the last words, Li Yao's foster father had left him half a weird key. Judging from the style and the material, it was not a product in recent millenniums but very likely a piece of magical equipment from the Star Ocean Imperium too.

His foster father asked him to bring the half key to Li Linghai if he had the opportunity.

Perhaps Li Linghai had the other half of the key?

What could the key open after the two parts of the key were combined?

The mysteries haunted Li Yao, but he was finally able to see the shimmers in the dark night, no longer utterly confused and clueless.

Also, Li Yao made the bold estimation that, even in the worst-case scenario, where Li Linghai had indeed become a cruel and heartless person who cared for neither the relationship with Li Yao's foster father nor her biological son Li Jialing, she would still be badly in need of the half key in Li Yao's hands that dated back to the age of the Star Ocean Imperium.

It was now more or less a new leverage for Li Yao to keep himself alive and to play the game with the queen.

Chapter 2142 - Rashness and Rationality

Li Linghai was still silent, as if she hadn’t heard a word that her brother said.

However, Li Yao vaguely noticed that thousands of cracks had appeared on the invisible mask on her face, and the feelings in the deepest part of her heart were slowly leaking out.

Li Lingfeng sensed his sister’s subtle changes too. Even more confidently, he went on, “If the queen cannot provide a reasonable explanation, I do have an immature speculation that I would like to propose.

“Perhaps the young female warrior had a lot of stories with the refiner from the Covenant Alliance deep inside the mysterious world fragment, but she kept it a secret and did not report it to the family.

“The things at the beginning were probably true. The exploration teams of the two parties did have a brutal battle, in which most people were killed by each other. She and the refiner from the Covenant Alliance were the only survivors. With her combat ability, it was naturally more than easy to capture the enemy and keep him alive in order to maintain the starship and explore the world fragment with the guy’s skills in refining.

“However, while there was no telling what happened when the man and the woman were all by themselves in the half year that followed, their relationship far exceeded the boundary of a captive and an enemy, and the most passionate love burst out.

“It was incredible, wasn’t it? By logic, a well-trained Immortal Cultivator who held unquestionable loyalty to the Imperium would absolutely in no way fall in love with someone from the Covenant Alliance.

“People of the Covenant Alliance, on the other hand, were all human-shaped machines whose feelings and emotions were under high control or had been obliterated altogether. How could they have boasted the ability to ‘love’?

“Therefore, nobody has ever thought that way during the past hundred years.

“But when I reflected on the whole incident, a eureka moment suddenly occurred to me. Was it possible that the world fragment itself contained certain anomalies, such as traps, arrays, or ancient relics and heritages, and that the two of them encountered something and received something, which interfered with their souls and facilitated a certain degree of mutations in both of them?

“The mutations allowed the refiner from the Covenant Alliance to break the blockage of the ‘Three Fundamental Laws’ and gain the ability to feel, and subsequently, fell in love with someone for the first time. In the meantime, the female warrior who used to be ‘meek, innocent, and unsophisticated’ was given a certain dark heart that even the big shots and the loyalty tests of the family could not see through?

“On closer look, the speculation does make a lot of sense, at least on the refiner of the Covenant Alliance’s side.

“A ‘human-shaped machine’ who had been suppressed by barriers all the time and never tasted any kind of feelings learned for the first time what was love, what was hate, and what were human beings’ natural-born urges after the shackles were completely shattered. Then, at exactly such a moment, he found a beautiful, captivating girl right next to him. Wasn’t it only natural that he fell in love with her devotedly?

“The female warrior, on the other hand, had encountered a cosmic storm and the death of all her companions on her very first mission to the sea of stars away from the family. It was only natural that her soul was greatly shocked. When she was in the middle of the perilous, mysterious world fragment, it wouldn’t be strange that she regarded the refiner from the Covenant Alliance, the only man nearby, as the sole reliance and gradually grew feelings for him, right?

“I can totally imagine in what a clumsy and passionate way the refiner from the Covenant Alliance would express his love after his seals were broken and his desires were released like wild beasts.

“The female warrior who used to only know training and fighting in the family had never been faced with such a situation too. It was only natural that she lost her defense and threw herself to him!”

Crack! Crack!

The land below Li Linghai’s feet was torn apart in huge explosions. The cracks extended to all directions like dragons in the most appalling way.

Li Yao, however, secretly frowned. He knew that it was a sign that Li Linghai’s mind was disturbed, and she lost control over her spiritual energy, which was certainly not good.

It appeared that Li Lingfeng was indeed onto something she would rather not talk about.

Li Jialing was breathing hastily too, and he almost couldn’t keep the stealth state. Li Yao thought that the young man was already remarkable enough to have kept cool for such a long time after eavesdropping on such astonishing information.

Li Lingfeng’s cockiness was almost flowing out of every pore on his face. He went on, “It was a shame that good days could not last. The unfortunate couple from antagonistic sides couldn’t hide in the world fragment forever after all. After the starships were repaired, they had to go separate ways.

“The female warrior reported after her return that she killed the refiner from the Covenant Alliance in person. Was it true? I’m inclined to a negative answer. Perhaps they repaired their respective starships with the resources in the relics inside the world fragment, before they returned to their own sides on two different starships, never to see each other again, except that they hid the relationship that must never be leaked deep down inside their heart.

“Perhaps the female warrior thought that it was just a minor episode in her life, and she would soon forget everything. Even though she couldn’t, the memory would be nothing more than a collection in her heart that she could play with now and then.

“But she had greatly underestimated a sentimental woman’s eagerness for love.

“It was especially so when she was forced to marry a man that she did not love at all as a tool of the family and to go to the heart of the Imperium, where she would monitor or even manipulate her husband according to the orders of the family. The cold and dark contrast made the ‘wonderful memories’ of the world fragment in the old days turn into a cluster of venomous thorns that gradually grew inside her chest and slowly entangled her heart, her limbs, and her head!

“Perhaps she had never been in love with her husband, had she?

“Even though she tried to forget everything of the past and to transfer her feelings for the refiner of the Covenant Alliance to her husband, the orders from the family would not allow her to do that. She was not allowed to have any feelings for her husband, which would affect the great cause of the four Kurfürst families to control the Imperium!

“Sometimes, I am even suspicious if she ever loved the twelve children that her husband and she had.

“None of the children were born out of her own intentions. She was only forced to retrieve her life seeds and fertilize them when there was no choice.

“She had no feelings for the children at all. Whenever she saw her husband and those children, she would be reminded of her desperate fate and become even more desperate!

“The desperation reached the climax in the year when her husband turned from ‘Crown Prince’ to ‘His Majesty’.

“Perhaps until then, she had illusions that some accidents might happen, and another prince would become the emperor, or that her husband would simply die an abrupt death. After all, there were too many crown princes who died abruptly in the history of the Imperium.

“In that case, her life in the future would be more or less freer, and it was even possible for her to flee from the center of the power swirls.

“But after the crown prince turned into His Majesty, and she turned from the crown princess into the queen of the Imperium, she would be trapped in the desperate cage at the capital of the Imperium forever!

“In utmost desperation, or perhaps under the inferences of the feelings that other people did not know, she did the most appalling and bold thing in the spur of the moment.

“She secretly retrieved one of her life seeds and unfroze the life seed of her lover from the Covenant Alliance that she had kept by her side for decades. After combining them into a zygote, she found a way to get an unmanned exploration starship, which was granted the abilities of automatic navigation and nurturing human babies after modifications.

“She placed the fetus into the unmanned exploration starship, set the destination to be the edge of the cosmos, and launched the fetus out!

“Why did she do that?

“Perhaps after giving birth to so many ‘biological children’ that she did not love, she yearned to have a baby that she truly wanted to give birth to with the one that she truly loved before?

“Perhaps she considered the baby to be some sort of reincarnation for her. She hoped that the child would go to a place that nobody could find in her replacement, where the child would be far away from slaughters, conflicts, schemes, tricks, deceptions, and betrayals, living a free and unstrained life.

“Perhaps it was just a soundless rebellion of her against the family?

“Or rather, did she want the child to find the man, her lover from the Covenant Alliance who had broken the boundary of the ‘Three Fundamental Laws’?

“Can you tell me the answer, Your Grace… and my… dear sister?”

Li Linghai shivered slightly. Her calmness when she just arrived was entirely gone.

“You are quite imaginative.”

Narrowing her eyes, Li Linghai sniffed and said, “What a shame that you are not a culture-type Immortal Cultivator.”

“Hehehehe. It has nothing to do with imagination; it’s all about computation and deduction abilities.”

Tapping his head softly, Li Lingfeng said, “Did you know that I spent thirty years drawing the psychological portrait of you without leaving any details? Also, we share the same parents after all. Although we do not know what is exactly on each other’s minds, we do have a lot of similarities in our thinking. After thirty years of repetitive deductions and computations, I believe that my speculations up above are at least 70% likely to be correct.

“There’s no need to deny it. Just let me finish. The most spectacular part is about to come. In fact, the story was quite warm and sweet so far, wasn’t it? It was quite normal for a woman to do something silly in her rashness when she was captured by love, right?

“But our queen was definitely no common woman. She was a woman who had certain amazing experiences in the mysterious world fragment, which triggered weird mutations in the deepest part of her heart, and who had been soaked in the swirls of power for so many years!

“Power is like drugs. As long as you touch any of it, you will never be able to get rid of it. You will only fall deeper and deeper and grow more and more addicted.

“Having sunk in the swirls of power for decades, the queen had enough of working as a puppet and a tool of the family and made other plans. She intended to seize the highest power, but the fetus that was a combination of her bloodline and the bloodline of the guy from the Covenant Alliance, which was a product of her rashness, was obviously her greatest weakness and loophole. There would be dire consequences should it be discovered.

“Therefore, from almost the moment the unmanned exploration starship was launched, she regretted, or rather, grew rational again.

“She immediately made up her mind to destroy the unmanned exploration starship and the fetus inside. She did put it into practice too. She caught up to and blew up the exploration starship in the depths of the space, obliterating the trouble for good. At the very least, she thought she did.”

Chapter 2143 - Imperium at Dusk

The young man’s breath suddenly turned heavy, and he almost cried out.

Li Yao hurried to pinch Li Jialing’s neck, in case the young man exposed the two of them to the dreadful white-haired woman.

Li Linghai’s whole attention seemed to have been fixated on Li Lingfeng, or rather, Li Lingfeng’s mouth. She appeared to be in a trance, and her delicate, flawless face seemed to be falling apart. From the cracks, a hint of regret, hatred, and persistence for power leaked out. But she failed to notice Li Yao and Li Jialing’s anomalies.

However, after only a few seconds, the feelings were all frozen, as if the invisible mask had been glued and repaired again.

Her heart was utterly frozen, without the tiniest loophole.

“It seems that since the moment you ordered to blow up the unmanned exploration starship, my dear sister has become a person whom you loathed and despised in the past, a monster that feeds on power, just like me.”

Li Lingfeng said with a smile, “Yes, the fetus was only a product of your momentary rashness. Or rather, it was the last residue of the soft-minded and sentimental Li Linghai in the past. As the fetus was destroyed in the explosion of the unmanned exploration starship, the Li Linghai of the past completely died too. From an utterly deformed corpse arose a brand-new person, an ambitious queen of the Imperium with stealthy intentions!

“Such a queen of the Imperium would never care about the methods and the sacrifices to achieve her purpose, including even her own children.

“Therefore, after she learned that the damn fetus, her sole weakness, was not destroyed but raised up, she wasted no time preparing to destroy the fetus for a second time and to kill her own son, an obstacle that hindered her ultimate purpose, in person. That is why you are here today. You are here to kill but not to save, aren’t you?”

Li Linghai was silent for such a long time that Li Yao and Li Jialing thought that she might deny it, or at least come up with an excuse.

But in the end, the pale-eyed queen of the Imperium simply smiled and said, “Which procedure went wrong exactly? The unmanned exploration starship?”

“Yes.”

Seeing that Li Linghai gave no denial, Li Lingfeng knew that Li Yao and Li Jialing must’ve heard the cruel answer. He said with an even more brilliant smile, “I had long been secretly watching you behind the family’s back before that. My original purpose was merely to learn the inside information of the royal palace from you so that I could gain greater benefits in the family.

“At that time, your wings were not fully grown yet, and your wisdom was far from impeccable. How could you have escaped everyone’s attention when you got an unmanned exploration starship and performed such weird mutations?

"You should really thank your brother, because I helped you kill two persons at that time and prevented the secrets regarding the unmanned exploration starship from leaking out. Otherwise, instead of us two being the only witnesses, the whole world would have learned the issue!"

"That explains a lot. I was truly too innocent, naïve, and reckless in the past."

With one of her hands in her back, Li Linghai rubbed her temple with the other hand, as if she was regretting her stupidity in the past. Looking at her brother through the finger gaps with her gloomy eyes, she asked, "So, what do you want exactly by raising up my child after decades of work?"

"He is not just your own son; he is my nephew too. If you do not cherish your son as a mother, it is only reasonable for his uncle to raise him up, isn't it?" Li Lingfeng said with a smile.

Then, he suddenly changed his expression and raised his voice as he continued, "I should be asking you the question, sister! For decades, you have been recruiting subordinates in secret and establishing a secret fleet. Recently, you seemed to be getting in touch with the young, bottom-level officers of various fleets of the Imperium, which had been gathered together for the Imperium's attack toward the Covenant Alliance. What are you up to exactly?

"Hehe. However great the misunderstanding between you and me is, we are siblings after all, and you will forever be a member of the Li family! It doesn't matter if you hurt yourself when you act recklessly, but your brother and your entire family may be burned by the fire that you have ignited. We may be doomed forever!

“So, whatever your plans and purposes are, why don’t you say them out frankly? Let’s communicate well, in case you ruin yourself, me, the family, and even the entire Imperium with your misbehaviors!”

“Ruin the Imperium?”

Li Linghai chuckled. With what could be determination or zealousness beaming out of her eyes, she said, “No, I am rescuing the Imperium.”

“Rescuing the Imperium.”

Li Lingfeng was amused. He waved his arms and said, “The Imperium of True Human Beings today includes the most prosperous Sectors in the entire universe, with a concourse of valiant warriors and strong experts and millions of starships. We have just crushed the Covenant Alliance, our old nemesis, on the battlefield. This is exactly our most flourishing moment in the past five hundred, no, the past thousand years. Why on earth does it need rescuing?

“Do you mean what you said, or are you simply just throwing the brainwashing propaganda out of habits?”

Looking at Li Lingfeng in the eyes, Li Linghai said casually, “Enough of the crap. You and I are both aware that the Imperium today is no longer the Imperium from a thousand years ago, and the Immortal Cultivators today have changed from the real Immortal Cultivators from a thousand years ago!

“A thousand years ago, when Wuying Qi, Blackstar the Great, established the Imperium of True Human Beings, what a promising, thriving, and an unstoppable country it was!

“At that time, everybody was full of ambitions. The hominoids were the fuel, whereas the Immortal Cultivators were the engine and battle units on the iron tank. Everybody was united to push the civilization of mankind forward in the infinite sea of stars. Expand, expand, and further expand. Evolve, evolve, and evolve nonstop to achieve the limits of the universe and make our civilization and human beings the strongest battle species in the universe. That was the loftiest ideal of the Immortal Cultivators a thousand years ago!

“But has such a magnificent dream been fulfilled after a thousand years?

“Hehe. Not to mention ‘exploring the land that has never been visited by ancient people bravely and surpass the limits of all the intelligent lives in history’, we have not even discovered and conquered the maximal territory of the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago yet, and we are not as good as the Star Ocean Imperium in many aspects. That’s ancient people from ten thousand years ago!

“What have we accomplished after sacrificing the lives of billions of hominoids as the fuel? Isn’t the so-called dream a great joke?”

Li Lingfeng blushed. He couldn’t help but argue, “Sister, don’t be too imposing. You know clearly that the Star Ocean Imperium inherited the enormous heritages of the Demon Beast Empire that endured thirty thousand years. It also received the direct enlightenment of the primeval civilizations, namely the so-called ‘Book of Revelation’. That was the reason for the gigantic leap of the civilization of mankind.

“There were almost ten thousand years of wars in darkness after the Armageddon Rebellion and the collapse of the Star Ocean Imperium. Many worlds fell apart and developed on their own, unable to reach out to others. It’s been only a thousand years since the Imperium of True Human Beings reunited the territory again. Also, we are faced with the threat of the uncanny enemy that is the Covenant Alliance. Nothing can be helped even though we cannot restore the glory of ten thousand years ago for now. Have you wavered as an Immortal Cultivator just because of that?”

“No, I have never wavered as an Immortal Cultivator, and I have always been the most loyal believer of Blackstar the Great. It is you, the selfish, greedy, corrupted, and conspiring worms, who have betrayed Blackstar the Great and the real Immortal Cultivators’ lofty belief that everything can be sacrificed for the civilization of mankind. You have degenerated into the slaves of your personal desires. You are the fake Immortal Cultivators!”

Li Linghai bulged her eyes and sneered, “It would be understandable if we could not achieve the dreams and oaths of a thousand years ago for now because of temporary difficulties. But look at the murky Imperium today. Look at the corrupted, decayed nobles, warlords, and benefit takers. Look at the bugs who cling to their own territories and interests and who spare no efforts extending their claws to fight for the cake with no consideration of the overall interests of the Imperium and the civilization of mankind. Are those people really comparable to the pure, real Immortal Cultivators a thousand years ago? Do they really deserve such a glorious title as ‘Immortal Cultivator’?

“The simplest example will be the battle between the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance.

“The battle this time is a long-prepared counterattack after a rest of hundreds of years. The expedition army includes the best fleets and experts of hundreds of Sectors. They have indeed conquered dozens of worlds unstoppably, all of which are resourceful, prosperous, and strategically important!

“Right now, the Covenant Alliance has been heavily wounded, and it is in the middle of dying struggles. As long as all of our nobles and fleet commanders remain united and forget sacrifices and personal interests, we will have a great chance to break into the heartland of the Imperium and eliminate the great trouble forever!

“Even if we cannot demolish the Covenant Alliance, I believe that we will at least deal such a critical blow that the enemy will not recover in three to five hundred years. It will lose all the bargaining chips to compete for the hegemony of the universe with the Imperium!

“Even I can think of such a simple logic, but why can’t you? Why can’t the noble ministers in the court think about it? Why can’t the family leaders, the warlords, and the fleet commanders think about it?

“The real reason is that nobody is willing to risk fighting an arduous annihilation battle at the heartland of the Covenant Alliance at great sacrifices.

“Nobody is willing to face the desperate counterattacks of the Covenant Alliance when it is dying.

“Everybody is simply keeping their eyes on other people. It will be best if they can take all the advantages after the fleets of other warlords perish together with the fleets of the Covenant Alliance.

“Even worse, while the war is not over yet, all the warlords have got their eyes on the dozens of prosperous worlds that have been newly conquered. Countless claws already can’t wait to reach for the hotcakes when they are not even out of the oven yet!

“Therefore, although the situation in the frontline looks great, the war cannot go on anymore.

“The nobles and the military theorists that they sponsored proposed countless reasons that we should not attack recklessly as if they were real. They claim that desperate enemies must not be chased after and swear that the Covenant Alliance is too maimed to be the Imperium’s problem in the next hundred years and the Imperium has secured the victory of a thousand years. Perhaps the stupid hominoids will believe that crap, but both you and I know that we are missing out on the greatest opportunity, right?

“This is exactly the situation of the Imperium today.

“The Imperium of True Human Beings seems powerful and even on the rise, but it is in fact at dusk right now, and it is rotten to the bones!”

Chapter 2144 - A Pig Is a Pig

Li Lingfeng opened his mouth but came up with no rebuttal. He rolled his eyes crazily, and there was no telling what was on her mind.

He approached Li Linghai quietly, and the muscles and nerves on the two sides of the spine were constricted. He was ready to attack at any moment.

Li Linghai felt none of it. Her voice grew louder and harsher. “The nobles and the warlords rule over everything. Their beliefs have degenerated. The social stratifications have been rigidified. The channels of ascension have almost been entirely cut off. The high and mighty pretentious ‘Immortal Cultivators’ are in fact parasites who resort to every method possible to earn personal benefits under the disguise of the Immortal Cultivators and the civilization of mankind. They consider the Imperium as a tree that will never fall, and they all pierce into its roots hard to absorb its nutrition.

“They waver and hesitate when they encounter an enemy, and they lunge forward like hungry wolves when they encounter benefits. They blatantly exploit the hominoids under the name of the Imperium, but all the gains from the exploitation fall into their own pockets, not spent for the nourishment of the Imperium at all. In the end, the Imperium has to take the blame for them!

“Is there any essential difference between such a dusky, dying Imperium and the Star Ocean Republic that we overthrew in the past? It is even worse than the Star Ocean Republic!

“A thousand years ago, the corrupted, croaking Star Ocean Republic was also haunted by too many problems to be cured. Blackstar the Great rose and created the Imperium with a set of just, fair, and open systems in order to completely eradicate the many problems of the old systems so that everybody who worked hard and did not hesitate to sacrifice would have a chance to distinguish themselves. That was the only way to carry out the full potentials of the civilization of mankind!

“But today, after a thousand years, the Imperium that was vigorous, hopeful, and just, where everybody had a shot as long as they worked hard, is already gone and replaced by a duplicate of the Star Ocean Republic. The aristocrats and the noble families today are no different from the corrupted MPs of the Star Ocean Republic in the past—those pretentious, hypocritical, and selfish Cultivators—are they?

“It is true that hominoids are a type of fuel that can be sacrificed.

“But don’t forget that Blackstar the Great’s original purpose was to boost the civilization of mankind to a new peak at a high speed with the sacrifice of the fuel!

“The sacrifice of the hominoids should be valuable. They should be sacrificed for the ultimate interests of the civilization of mankind, not for the interests of a noble or the personal desires of a certain Immortal Cultivator like they are today!

“The Immortal Cultivators who do such things have deviated from the original purpose of Blackstar the Great, the real founder of the true path of immortality and the Imperium.

They do not deserve the glorious name of ‘Immortal Cultivator’ at all, and they are jackals of the same lair compared to the Cultivators of the Star Ocean Republic in the past!

“The Imperium that is governed by such ‘fake Immortal Cultivators’, however powerful it looks on the surface, does not have the real corresponding strength inside. It cannot take any strike, and it may collapse abruptly at any minute!

“Does such an Imperium not require rescuing?”

Li Lingfeng was rendered speechless for a long time. Then, he gradually grew solemn as he said, “So, the queen actually has the lofty ideal to restore the glories of Blackstar the Great? It is true that all kinds of problems have been accumulated after a thousand years. The entanglement of interests and the sediment of conflicts have resulted in the lingering diseases that can barely be removed, especially during the recent hundreds of years. That is why ‘reform’ has become the common wish for all the elites of the Imperium in the past century. All wise people are thinking hard about how to reform the Imperium to create a prosperous era again.

“My Heavenly Eye Group and the slaughter stream platform are also minor tries for the reform of the Imperium. We should work with each other now that we share a common purpose!”

“Hehe. Don’t compare me to you.”

Li Linghai sneered, “First of all, it is just a fantasy to resolve the conflicts and reform the Imperium through the slaughter stream platform! The Imperium is already gravely sick, with cancers all over the internal organs, and your prescriptions are make-ups and a large dosage of anesthetics? It would be a miracle if you could reform the Imperium!

“Secondly, I know you as much as you know me. You are the most classic noble who does not have the spirit to sacrifice everything for the Imperium and the civilization of mankind at all. You are not a real Immortal Cultivator at all. Everything you have been doing is for your own selfish desires or for the interests of the Li family at most.

“The so-called ‘reform the Imperium’ is but a disguise for you to struggle for power. As soon as you become the leader of the Li family, you will throw away everything about the Imperium and the civilization of mankind and only mind the business of the Li family.”

Narrowing his eyes, Li Lingfeng declared angrily, “Don’t forget that you are a member of the Li family too!”

“It’s true that I am from the Li family.”

Li Linghai said casually, “But I am a member of the civilization first, and then a member of the Imperium of True Human Beings, a true believer of Blackstar the Great, and a real, pure Immortal Cultivator who is willing to pay everything for the civilization of mankind. I am only a member of the Li family after that, who will take the interests of the Li family into account.

“That is the greatest difference between you and me, and also the greatest momentum for me to save the Imperium.”

Li Lingfeng sneered, “You said that my slaughter stream platform could not save the Imperium, but do you have any solution?”

“Of course, I have my ways to completely eradicate the diseases that trouble the Imperium.”

Li Linghai replied calmly, “But until then, His Majesty must seize real power, without being manipulated by the four Kurfürst families and the other warlords anymore. Only a real emperor can renew the Imperium and restore the ultimate glory a thousand years ago!”

“After everything you said, it seems to me that you are after power just like me.”

Li Lingfeng grinned. “Everybody knows that the emperor is your puppet. Letting ‘His Majesty’ seize the power equals to letting you seize the power. So, it turns out that His Majesty does not want to be a second Blackstar the Great, but my dear sister is hoping to accomplish an unprecedented enterprise and become a she-emperor that controls the entire universe?

“I have to say that your ambitions have surpassed my expectations again and again. I’m truly curious. What is it that supports you deep inside your heart and makes you believe that you can achieve the unachievable?

“In any case, I have to remind you that the emperor and the lords managing the world together is the basis of the Imperium’s thousand years of reign. Whoever tries to break the balance between the emperor and the lords recklessly will die a miserable death in 99% of the cases!”

“Huh?”

Perhaps because her secret had been pointed out, and perhaps because of her brother’s undisguised threat, a brutality that almost felt like a real entity shot out of Li

Linghai’s almost transparent eyes again as she glared at Li Lingfeng’s neck.

“Don’t be nervous.”

Li Lingfeng, however, was completely relaxed. Thinking that he had dominated the conversation, he said with a smile, “Even if you are really a problem, it should be the real big shots of the four Kurfürst families who feel a headache. At the very least, I am neither the family leader nor the Kurfürst. It is definitely not my turn to kill you, right?

“Just like what I said before, whatever you want to do, we are siblings, and there is no deep hatred between the two of us. Why don’t we ignore our disagreements and see if there are any opportunities for cooperation?

“At the very least, under such complicated circumstances, you have a ‘loophole’ that is wandering loosely, and the reinforcements from the four Kurfürst families may arrive at any moment. Although their main purpose is to investigate the uncanny ‘Cultivator’, wouldn’t it be awkward if they notice your traces? Why don’t we grit through the difficulties together as a brother and a sister first?”

While talking, Li Lingfeng slowly approached Li Linghai.

He believed that Li Yao and Li Jialing were prepared to suppress the queen at any moment too.

Of course they could cooperate, but that would have to wait until he dug out all the secrets about the queen!

Li Linghai considered in a seemingly careful way for a while before she replied quickly, “No.”

Li Lingfeng’s confident smile was immediately frozen. “Why not?”

“Did you know that the stimulation and boost of IQ has always been a cutting-edge project in biochemistry?”

Li Linghai suddenly went off the topic and said something out of the blue, “Assume there is a pig that has been injected with countless strengthening drugs. Its muscles and bones may be a hundred times harder than before as a result, but its IQ will barely be increased. At the very least, the IQ cannot be improved to mankind’s level. Essentially speaking, it is still a pig.”

Li Lingfeng was slightly dazed. “What’s your point?”

“What I’m trying to say is that a pig is always a pig despite all the training.”

Li Linghai said, “Even if a pig is born into one of the four Kurfürst families and advances into the Divinity Transformation Stage at the consumption of tremendous resources of the family and through all kinds of shameless, clandestine approaches, it will be nothing more than a pig in the Divinity Transformation Stage.

“On my way to realize my dream and to reform the Imperium, I may encounter a lot of incredible, ferocious, and cunning enemies. But however dangerous the enemies are, they can’t be as dangerous as a teammate who is as stupid as a pig.

“So, I refuse to cooperate with you not because you played tricks to send me to the capital as the crown princess a hundred years ago, not because you secretly hid my son to blackmail me, and not because you are vile and selfish and may betray me at any moment, but only because you are a pig."

"You!"

Li Lingfeng blushed, not expecting that their conversation would end like that.

"Why, do you want to kill me?"

Li Linghai smiled, and the white hair behind her that looked like an ice waterfall began to dance again. "You had the intention of killing me as early as four minutes and thirty-three seconds ago. It's too late now!

"Don't think I'm vilifying you, my dear brother. I'm just speaking the truth.

"The best example is right before our eyes.

"In fact, the two guys hiding deep inside the fold two hundred and twenty meters away on your left side could've run off if they had escaped at their full speed.

"Yet, they were stupid enough to cooperate with you. With such a 'pig teammate' as you, they have already been locked onto by me while I was stalling you with all the bulls*it just now. Now, they cannot run away even if they want to.

"Do you still not admit that you are a pig?"

Chapter 2145 - Suffocating Heritages!

Two hundred and twenty meters away, deep inside the mud in the ravine, Li Yao and Li Jialing couldn’t have been more astounded.

They had reduced their heartbeat, breath, and even pores to the minimum and did not release the slightest bit of spiritual energy. Their body temperatures had been lowered to exactly the same as the mud, rocks, and rain nearby. Also, by common sense, it was impossible that they were working with Li Lingfeng. But still, they had been discovered by the queen!

Right!

Greatly shocked, Li Yao secretly regretted it. Just now, the queen spent such a long time talking about jibber-jabber with Li Lingfeng and even allowed Li Lingfeng to tell her great secrets probably for Li Jialing to hear!

Li Jialing is a young man no older than twenty after all. He has not been trained to the heartless and inhumane level. It is impossible that he has no emotional fluctuations after hearing such shocking origins.

It was exactly through the insignificant emotional fluctuations that the queen noticed our existence and locked onto us!

But how could the queen have foreseen that we were hiding nearby?

Was it because she knew Li Lingfeng's mind and style so well that she was certain her crushed, desperate brother had no choice except to cooperate with us?

Damn it. I shouldn't have trusted Li Lingfeng at all. He is a useless man for as long as I can tell. Even I can play him like a fool, not to mention the queen!

The queen is quite right. The guy is indeed a pig-like teammate. He is getting us killed this time!

Li Yao thought quickly for half a second if he should immediately run off before he peed his pants.

Or maybe he should rise up and lunge forward together with Li Jialing, each holding one of the queen's legs and crying "mom" at the same time. Would the chances of survival be higher this way?

But during the half a second, a series of dangerous changes already took place between the Li siblings, eclipsing the thunderstorm and the lightning.

Right when his sister berated him for being a "pig teammate" and pointed out Li Yao and Li Jialing's location, Li Lingfeng knew that his plan had failed.

As if he were trying to prove the correctness of his sister's accusation, he truly gave a pig-like performance. Instead of bursting into fury and fighting a desperate battle with Li Linghai, he bellowed and unleashed an infinite aura that filled up the entire "domain", triggering the most glamorous sound and visual effects. Then, under the cover of the aura and the domain, he rushed away immediately!

Perhaps, in Li Lingfeng's knowledge, Li Jialing was Li Linghai's must-kill target.

While Li Linghai was killing her son to get rid of the trouble forever, he would still have a chance to get away.

However, the moment he stomped on the ground, preparing to accelerate and escape, the land below his feet cracked apart. Thousands of lightning bolts, like glittering thorns, dashed out of the core of the planet and grabbed his feet and arms.

Sparks burst out of Li Lingfeng's crystal suit. Countless rune arrays and magical equipment units had been overloaded and blown apart!

As it turned out, in the middle of their conversation, Li Linghai pretended that her soul was shocked by what Li Lingfeng said, and countless lightning bolts were bashed into the ground.

It was supposed to be a sign of the loss of control over her spiritual energy. However, Li Linghai had in fact delivered the power of lightning into the soil in secret and established a magnificent cage around her brother's feet!

“Are you serious? Sending the lightning into the soil right in front of the two Divinity Transformation Stage experts and condensing them into a cage without alarming us at all?”

Bulging his eyes, Li Yao secretly clicked his tongue. “The queen's level is truly immeasurable. But it's impossible!”

“You worthless pig almost jeopardized my great cause!”

Unquestionable determination of killing gradually flowed out of Li Linghai's pale, almost transparent eyes. With a gloomy, expressionless face, she walked toward Li Lingfeng on the bridge of lightning in midair. “If I don't kill you today, who knows what kind of trouble you, the stupid pig who think that you are smart, will cause me tomorrow?”

“Hiss!”

Having been struck by thousands of lightning bolts, Li Lingfeng was in excruciating pain. In furious roars, the flames of the spiritual energy of the Divinity Transformation Stage flooded out like a tsunami and focused on his domain again, which looked like a giant sphere covered by lightning and rain. With his hair in a mess, he shouted in the middle of the sphere, “Li Linghai, don’t push me too far. We are both in the Divinity Transformation Stage, and I am not much worse than you! If you are determined to kill me today, you will have to pay the most devastating price even if I die. Let’s see how you are going to face the reinforcements of the four Kurfürst families that will soon arrive. You will die for sure too!”

“Do you think a pig is qualified to let me pay…’the most devastating price’?”

Not stopping at all, Li Linghai put on a smile of mockery on her face that was covered in frost. “That is why I said that a pig like you only has the petty cleverness that makes you think you are smart. You claimed that you had been drawing a psychological portrait of me for decades to infer my mindset and my behavior. You think you know everything about me, but you can’t be more terribly mistaken about the most fundamental facts!”

“Ahhhhh!”

Having been threatened in such a way, Li Lingfeng finally awakened his dignity as an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage. The whole domain around him was blown at Li Linghai like a volcano eruption, while he performed hand gestures quickly, trying to summon his incomplete Colossus to resist the enemy.

But the most astonishing scene happened!

Right when Li Lingfeng attracted the spiritual energy in nature with his entire soul, boosting his domain to the maximum, the bolts of lightning around Li Linghai were ten times brighter than before, to the point that they were almost dazzling.

After a while of stunning dances, spins, and interchanges, the thousands of lightning were condensed into nine purple, overwhelming dragons, and the nine dragons then turned into the image of a magnificent giant that was roaring in the middle of stars!

The image…

It was ensconced into an imposing throne majestically, with the vibe of suppressing everything, controlling everything, and dominating everything. It almost had “I am the strongest man in the entire world” written inside its eyes!

In the next 0.1 seconds, the grand image was suddenly gone and absorbed into her body by Li Linghai.

Two purple stars the size of needle tips appeared at the deepest part of Li Linghai’s pale eyes, and a hint of violet vaguely flowed out of the endings of her white hair that looked like a waterfall of ice too.

The queen looked calm, indifferent, and inviolable a moment ago, but right now, she was truly like a supreme dominator who could decide the life or death of billions of people with a wave of her hands!

She opened her hands, and dozens of dragon-like lightning bolts immediately dashed out of her fingertips to Li Lingfeng's right hand brutally. They controlled the enemy's Cosmos Ring and disrupted its functions with the intense spiritual energy, preventing Li Lingfeng from retrieving the Colossus!

There is even such a technique?!

Li Yao felt that his blood was freezing. He hurried to take off his Cosmos Ring, and after thinking for a moment, simply put it into his mouth.

Li Lingfeng, on the other hand, would seem less terrified even if he had run into a ghost. He had even completely lost his fighting will.

In a daze, he watched the purple electric arcs that were rolling like tides around Li Linghai. The electric arcs surged higher and higher and even built the illusions of thousands of soldiers launching a suicide charge in the middle of the thunderstorm. The neighs, roars, and collisions of blades and armors even dwarfed the rumbling thunders, further adding to Li Linghai's infinite dominance.

“The true dragon revealing itself, the infinite flames of the emperor darken the sea of stars!”

Li Lingfeng shouted desperately, “This… This is ‘Dragon Over The Sky’, a technique of the legendary ‘Supreme Emperor’! How is it possible? How is it possible? The Supreme Emperor was the only one who had ever grasped such an unparalleled technique with the fortunes of the dominator of the infinite sea of stars! Where did you find such a technique? This is a martial art that solely belongs to the emperors. Those who do not have enough fortunes will find it unbearable. You are just a mortal. How could you have survived such a blast of spiritual energy? Your body should’ve exploded!”

Li Linghai took a deep breath and simply allowed the purple flames made of thousands of lightning to flow among her nostrils and mouth. Her face was so hollow that it did not seem to belong to her. With a casual smile, she said, “Brother, you know too much.”

Her voice was low, deep, and majestic. Her every word sounded like the most unquestionable decree that would make everybody kneel and obey. She was like a totally desperate person from before.

“Could it be—”

Li Lingfeng finally understood everything. Caught in such desperation that his face turned pale, he shouted miserably, “I understand it now. The mysterious world fragment that you found when you were lost in space a hundred years ago was ‘Gold Throne, the Empyreal Transcendence Sector’ that all the Immortal Cultivators dream about, where the Supreme Emperor was buried!

“You… You excavated the legacies of the Supreme Emperor!”

“Supreme Emperor” were words that not only shocked Li Lingfeng but also made Li Yao and Li Jialing dizzy. Their ears were humming, and they found it barely possible to catch their breath for a long time.

The Supreme Emperor was the greatest expert of mankind in history, who overthrew the dark tyranny of demons that lasted thirty thousand years, who established an enormous country that spun three thousand Sectors and the system of the modern Cultivation civilization, and who pushed the civilization of mankind to the highest peak with the Star Ocean Imperium!

In the legends, the Supreme Emperor was the top expert of the civilization of mankind ever recorded.

In the legends, the Supreme Emperor received three volumes of “Book of Revelation” and opened tremendous heritages left by the Pangu civilization. Through the ultimate treasures and advanced technologies, he boosted the civilization of mankind forward by thousands of years.

In the legends, even though the Supreme Emperor developed twenty clones at the last years of his reign, pouring more than half of his strength into the clones so that the clones could help him control the sea of stars, the strength of his original body was still unbelievable and unparalleled!

In the legends, after the fierce battle between the Supreme Emperor and the Mad Armageddon, his strongest clone, which almost blew up the entire Empyreal Terminus Sector, the Supreme Emperor suffered heavy wounds and was never seen again.

In the legends, the Supreme Emperor hid in a world fragment named “the Empyreal Transcendence Sector” and fell asleep on the gold throne. The things that were buried together with him included the most sophisticated techniques, the most powerful Colossi, and the secret treasures that could arm an enormous space fleet!

Whoever had the “legacy of the Supreme Emperor” would be able to dominate the entire universe!

Chapter 2146 - Playing the Ultimate Move Again!

Li Yao was greatly enlightened.

If the mysterious world fragment where Li Linghai and his foster father were stranded together was the place where the Supreme Emperor perished, everything would make sense!

The Supreme Emperor was definitely an emperor of all times and an expert who had reached the highest peak. Not just all of his heritages, even 1% of his knowledge would have been enough to completely transform a girl who was naturally docile and sentimental into someone with sophistication and long-term visions.

His foster father came from the Covenant Alliance where feelings were highly repressed. But if the Supreme Emperor’s strength leaked out of the “Gold Throne”, it shouldn’t be strange at all that he could break the restraint of the “Three Fundamental Laws”.

After all, according to the legends, the Supreme Emperor had three volumes of Book of Revelation, which should’ve given him a profound understanding of the Pangu Civilization. It was not surprising at all that he could come up with solutions to the Three Fundamental Laws.

Besides, abundant secret treasures of the Supreme Emperor must have been hidden in the “Empyreal Transcendence Sector”, probably including crystal suits, starships, Colossi, and all kinds of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. It would be a lot easier if the queen recruited and raised her subordinates with the Supreme Emperor’s secret treasures.

In the meantime, what the queen received from the “Empyreal Transcendence Sector” was probably not pure strength but also part of the Supreme Emperor’s beliefs.

While the Supreme Emperor found an “imperium” in the legends as a dictator, he was an ancient man from ten thousand years ago after all, and he had his historical limitations. It was not appropriate to demand him too much.

At the very least, the prevailing opinions on the Supreme Emperor today were rather positive. Overthrowing the reign of demons, rescuing the people from disasters, ending the conflicts in the three thousand Sectors, leading humanity to the second peak after the age of the ancient Cultivators, laying the foundation of the modern Cultivation civilization, and determining the belief that “Cultivators are the sabers of the civilization of mankind”, which marked the boundary between “modern Cultivators” and “ancient Cultivators”, were all his feats.

Therefore, while he was technically an autocratic emperor, the Supreme Emperor was still regarded by modern people as a real Cultivator. The Star Glory Federation, despite the public elections and the parliamentary republic system, also admitted that the Supreme Emperor was a shared ancestor of everyone and a well-deserved hero. The Star Glory Federation had also considered itself as a spiritual heir to the Star Ocean Imperium too.

All in all, although they were both emperors, the Supreme Emperor and Blackstar the Great were utterly different. He was relatively bright, decent, and a representative of justice.

Therefore, if Li Linghai had truly found part of the Supreme Emperor’s heritages and beliefs, she would naturally grow to loath the murky, corrupted Imperium of True Human Beings and even make up her mind to “reform the Imperium” in her own ways.

Of course, there were still many problems. For example, how could Li Linghai have shouldered the Supreme Emperor’s intimidating heritages with her weak body?

But in general, Li Yao believed that Li Lingfeng’s speculation was at least 50% likely to be correct!

The reason was very simple. Little Black and the half key inside Li Yao’s Cosmos Ring were obviously the products of the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago.

Therefore, even if the world fragment that Li Linghai and Li Yao’s foster father discovered was not the “Empyreal Transcendence Sector” where the Supreme Emperor perished, it must have a lot to do with the Supreme Emperor too!

Thinking quickly, Li Yao immediately figured out the causes and consequences of everything.

Then, he felt like crying. Li Lingfeng was truly an out-and-out pig teammate, who had dragged him into trouble before his death. It was fine that he could tell the arts that Li Linghai used were “Dragon Over The Sky”, the Supreme Emperor’s ultimate skill, but why did the guy have to shout it out and explain it so colloquially?

It turned out great. Both Li Yao and Li Jialing had heard the big secret loud and clear.

Even if Li Jialing’s origin were a problem that could be resolved one way or another, would the queen let go of them now that the two of them had overheard such a great secret, that Her Grace received the heritages of the Supreme Emperor?

Grimacing, Li Yao looked at the queen and Li Lingfeng, only to discover that the electric arcs shining around the queen were brighter and brighter and tightening around Li Lingfeng like thousands of dragons, strangling Li Lingfeng’s muscles, veins, nerves, and bones!

Li Lingfeng was a seasoned expert at the high level of the Divinity Transformation Stage, but he was unable to resist the suppression of the queen’s dominating “Dragon Over The Sky”. His domain had completely collapsed into broken ripples that were writhing and weeping in the crazy storm, only to perish very soon.

Struggling hard, he shouted desperately, “S-Spare me. I’m sincerely hoping to cooperate with you. No, no, no. I’m willing to submit to you and help you deal with the four Kurfürst families and other nobles so that you will be a real queen that masters the entire sea of stars. You will gather the supreme power and reestablish a new Imperium!”

“Hehehehe…”

Li Linghai narrowed his eyes. With a smile of disdain, she said, “There are a lot of people who are willing to submit to me, but you are not qualified to be one of them!”

Li Lingfeng bulged his eyes. Lightning arcs were flowing out of his eyes, nose, ears, and mouth like magma while he moaned, “I-I am your biological brother!”

The purple brilliance deep inside Li Linghai's eyes gradually spread out again, exactly like his blossoming ambitions.

The queen of the Imperium of True Human Beings smiled. "So what?"

Hardly had she concluded her sentence when the lightning that Li Linghai shot at Li Lingfeng grew a hundred times brighter all of a sudden!

At the moment, the wind, the rain, and the lightning seemed to be frozen, and the whole world was eclipsed, turning into black and white under the illumination of the lightning.

The only thing that could be seen was the purple flames that stored the majestic aura of the Supreme Emperor. Turning into a sword of the true dragon that once raged the sea of stars, it ripped apart the last spiritual shield that Li Lingfeng managed to build and pierced through his chest at a speed a hundred times higher than the lightning!

After the sword entered his body, it immediately burst out into nine wild dragons of purple flames that ran amok inside Li Lingfeng's internal organs and limbs, tearing, burning, melting, and obliterating the man's every nerve, every vein, and every cell!

"Ahhh!"

In screams of disbelief and excruciating pain, Li Lingfeng's soul turned into an azure ball that fled to the sky desperately, only to be caught up by three purple dragons and ripped apart in the blink of an eye. In ripples of screams, it was entirely devoured by the fiery dragons!

The nine dragons of purple flames hovered in the middle of the pouring thunderstorm and soon returned to Li Linghai's back, further adding to the mysteriousness and magnificence of her white-haired and purple-haired style!

Li Lingfeng, an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage, on the other hand, had been burned up without even having the slightest ashes left. In less than twenty seconds, the man had been reduced to nothingness, never to be reincarnated again!

If the heart could sweat, Li Yao's heart would have been dehydrated right now.

The contrast between the two parties:

Li Linghai was at least at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage. She also had the enhancement of "Dragon Over The Sky", the unbelievably awesome and dominating martial art from the Supreme Emperor. Furthermore, there was no telling how much magical equipment from the "Empyreal Transcendence Sector" she was still keeping in her pocket and did not take out yet. By estimation, it should be more than easy for her to beat up someone in the middle or low level of the Divinity Transformation Stage.

Li Yao, on the other hand, was only at the middle level of the Divinity Transformation Stage. But his soul was rather special. Nobody knew that he had a second soul that was the mental devil. As some sort of an ancient extraterrestrial devil itself, it went through many fortuitous incidents and absorbed vast tenebrum energy. Despite the lack of a real entity, it was somewhat in the Divinity Transformation Stage too.

Therefore, Li Yao was in fact not simply at the middle level of the Divinity Transformation Stage. In terms of maximal combat ability, it was like two experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage were sharing the same body.

It was a more powerful and weird level than the teamwork of two regular experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage and somewhat similar to the amazing technique of the “Divinity Branching Stage” where the soul could be split apart and mind their own business.

Therefore, Li Yao was generally not scared even if he encountered someone at the high level or even peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage.

However… None of it was going to help when he was faced with such a dreadful queen!

Could he run?

Li Yao’s brain cells were all breaking apart as he reached the conclusion quickly. He absolutely could not!

If he intended to run, he should have done it when Li Lingfeng shrieked “Supreme Emperor” half a minute ago.

But even if he had a 1% chance to escape, there was no way that Li Jialing could’ve fled.

Li Jialing was probably his foster father’s only child, and Li Linghai was also very likely to be the only woman that his foster father ever loved.

Li Yao was very close to his foster father. Having been abandoned by his birth parents and struggled in the darkness on his own, he always regarded his foster father as his real father.

How could he watch the ethical tragedy that was about to take place between his foster father's woman and child while doing nothing?

Also, on a higher level, if Li Jialing was the sole weakness inside the heart of the queen, he would also be the last defense of her "humanity".

If she were simply allowed to kill the child that she truly wanted to have, the queen would become a cold and heartless monster completely!

Such a monster had probably grasped part of the Supreme Emperor's legacies and was ambitious to seize the highest power of the entire Imperium of True Human Beings.

If she did succeed, what would the Imperium of True Human Beings be like under the reign of such a monster? Would the Star Glory Federation be able to face such an Imperium?

Therefore, for both public interests and his own, for his foster father, for the federation and for the lives of him and Li Jialing, Li Yao had to hold back the pressure instead of running!

"I… still believe that the real Li Linghai whom pop loved couldn't have been like this!"

Li Yao gritted his teeth hard. "I have to keep the last part of humanity in Li Linghai's heart and slowly wake her up. It will be best to transform her into the kindhearted woman that pop loved in the past!

"Even better, since the Supreme Emperor in the past was a Cultivator, Li Linghai, having received the heritages of the Supreme Emperor, has a small chance of turning into a Cultivator from an Immortal Cultivator, right?

“Perhaps she is only short of a critical person who gives a push to her mind. A tiny push is all that is needed…

“It seems that I have to play my ultimate move now that I’m no match for her in terms of combat ability!”

The mental devil crawled out of Li Yao’s brain, anxious at the great enemy. “The ultimate move again? Isn’t our reserved ultimate move running?”

“Who says that?”

Li Yao’s cheeks and lips vibrated at a high frequency. “The ultimate move that I talked about is my silver tongue!”

Chapter 2147 - It All Depends on the Attempt!

The mental devil: “Are we going to deceive someone with the carefully-woven rhetoric again? Great, I like it! What are you planning to do?”

“Very simple. It is even possible that I can solve all the problems that the federation and we are faced with without fighting!”

Li Yao said confidently, “I am going to convince Li Linghai and awaken the real precious things in the Supreme Emperor’s legacy, which are the right ways to fulfill the glorious mission of defending mankind. I’m going to transform her into a Cultivator!

“Think about it. If the queen of the Imperium of True Human Beings can be transformed into a Cultivator, and the four Kurfürst families and the assortment of nobles and warlords are annihilated too, is it possible for the Imperium to gradually grow into a country of the Cultivators in the next several hundred years, or at least one where the experts and the ordinary people could coexist more harmoniously?

“Even if the queen cannot annihilate all the nobles and warlords, as long as the two parties reach a certain balance, and the Cultivators’ ideas can spread in the Imperium under the protection of the queen, it will be of great help in soothing the military pressure that the Star Glory Federation is faced with and our subsequent activities in public.

“Everything above needs not a soldier or a gun. I don’t even need to move a finger. All I have to do is to persuade the queen!”

“Wow!”

The mental devil shouted, “So, it seems truly an easy task to persuade the queen who has slain her biological brother without blinking and who is about to slay her own son. The trip to the Imperium will turn out to be the easiest and most comfortable ‘excursion’ since our career began, won’t it?”

While the two personalities were in an argument, Li Linghai, who was surrounded by purple air and dazzling lightning, had already started to float toward the two of them.

Her speed was not very high, but the bolts of lightning raging like dragons were wandering in the thousand square meters around under the control of her telepathic thoughts, interweaving into an impenetrable cage that nobody could escape from.

Having made up his mind to take a wild gamble, Li Yao abandoned the idea of running. He simply dragged Li Jialing and jumped out of the ravine and gritted his teeth to confront the queen!

Looking at the young man who was not wearing a helmet, Li Linghai’s eyes became deep and complicated.

On her flawless and beautiful face, the invisible, transparent mask cracked and recuperated again and again.

She slowly extended her hands at Li Jialing, with lightning arcs spurting out of her fingertips. There was no telling whether she was trying to touch Li Jialing’s head or simply to cut it off.

Li Jialing’s lips were trembling nonstop under the storm, but he was unable to say anything.

With the sharpest telepathic thoughts, Li Yao shouted at the young man, “Hey, don’t just stand there like a food. It is time to kneel and cry out ‘mother’!”

Li Jialing swallowed the rainwater and the air hard and hesitated for a moment. But stubbornness beamed out of his eyes. He clenched his fists and held his neck high, not saying anything at all.

In the middle of the wild wind, the sudden rain, the rumbling thunder, and the bolts of lightning that struck the dark sky and illuminated the earth into paleness now and then, the three of them were mired in a weird silence, like three distinctive monochrome sketches!

After observing Li Jialing without any expression for a long time, Li Linghai finally opened her mouth. “You are more like him than in the 3D photo… I truly wish that you could live on, and live on well.”

“Not good!”

The mental devil shrieked deep inside Li Yao’s brain, “The queen is growing killing intents. She is truly going to kill Li Jialing. If your tongue really works, it is time to shoot it!”

“Don’t be hasty. I’m still considering what I should talk about. The key is my identity. I really can’t explain my identity at all!”

Li Yao was rather anxious. “The queen is definitely not as foolish as Li Lingfeng was. Having hidden in the dark for decades and escaping everyone’s attention, she must know a hundred times more intelligence than Li Lingfeng did. I am obviously an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage, and I have such a powerful Colossus as the Tartarean Skeleton. Where did it come from? How have I been training myself? Which force is responsible for supplies and maintenance? I can’t explain myself at all!

“I cannot resort to the ploy that I fooled Li Lingfeng with either, telling her that I am a ‘secret warrior’ raised by a certain family in secret. The queen must know every family and every force in the Imperium very well. Should she casually chat about the details of the family with me, I will expose myself at any moment!

“Also, my ultimate purpose is to persuade the queen and transform her into a Cultivator. Even if I successfully pretend to be an Immortal Cultivator, all that we can talk about will be the true path of immortality since we are both Immortal Cultivators. What on earth can I possibly transform?

“Therefore, I have to admit honestly that I am a Cultivator. That is the only way I can debate with the queen and try to transform her without her knowing it!”

“But you can’t pretend to be a Cultivator!”

The mental devil said in a hurry, “If you confess that you are a Cultivator, it will mean the exposure of the Star Glory Federation. Do you think it is appropriate to let the queen know the existence of the federation with the characteristics and stance that she has demonstrated? Trust me. Even if she does not send out troops to destroy the Star Glory Federation immediately, she will certainly come up with all kinds of schemes to bind the federation to her war machine as her bargaining chip in the game with the four Kurfürst families. It is even possible that she will let the federation die together with the noble families before she claims all the advantages!”

“Not a Cultivator, and not an Immortal Cultivator, then who the f*ck am I exactly?”

Li Yao thought hard for a moment, and his eyes suddenly shone. “Should I pretend to be a Demonic Cultivator?”

The mental devil: “… Are you serious?”

Li Yao: “It seems to be a bad idea. But it is an unresolvable paradox. I, Vulture Li Yao, have traveled far and wide for a hundred years, but never was I forced to tell such a difficult lie!”

Li Linghai seemed to have overlooked Li Yao’s quickly-changing expressions and focused all her attention on Li Jialing. Her voice gradually turned cold as she said, “However, I am aware of the procedures through which the two b*stards Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan refined you. You have been corrupted by them into a complete monster. I really can’t keep you alive like this.

“Moreover…

“Your life in the past decades must be very painful, wasn’t it? Trust me. There are ten thousand kinds of pain in the world that are a hundred times more agonizing than death, and I would rather you taste none of them.

“How dark and desperate will your life be even if you can survive with your body right now and your past? The road I am walking on is one of thorns and flames and one where nobody can turn back. I really can’t bring you together with me.

“So, just let me grant you relief. Close your hands. It will be like a sleep without any pain, nothing like the inhuman experiments you had in the past…”

Li Linghai raised her arm high, and the lightning arcs danced and condensed around her fingertips, turning into the sword of true dragon again.

There was no telling if Li Jialing had been stunned or was heartbroken by his mother’s ruthlessness, but the young man truly closed his eyes slowly, biting his lower lip so hard that his teeth were buried into them.

The muscles around his eyes cramped violently. No matter how hard he closed his eyes, he could not prevent the clear tears from gradually leaking through his eyelids.

“Wait!”

Now that an ethical tragedy was about to happen, Li Yao had no choice except to stop before Li Jialing and bellow without considering anything.

“You can’t kill him!”

“Huh?”

Even the queen was surprised at what Li Yao, a mysterious person who emerged out of nowhere, was willing to do for Li Jialing. She had just killed an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage!

“Brother Yao—”

Even Li Jialing opened his eyes quickly and looked at Li Yao’s back that was as solid as a wall!

But of course, it was inevitable that the wall was slightly quivering right now.

“Who are you exactly?”

The queen observed Li Yao’s face carefully. Undisguised confusion popped up on her face for the first time when she said, “I do not want to kill you yet, not until I figure out the secrets about you. Back off now!”

She waved her hands softly, and the purple electric currents slashed at Li Yao brutally.

This will be a win-or-die gamble. Pop, if you are watching over me, please ensure that my fancy words will work and I can bring your old lover who was “innocent and kindhearted” back. Although what I’m about to say may be slightly in contradiction to reality, you certainly would not blame me, would you? I’m helping you to find back your lost youth!

Li Yao roared but did not dodge at all. A black light spurted out of the Cosmos Ring in his mouth and condensed into an arc-shaped shield before him.

Huala!

The purple electric sword slashed the black shield, and the blast threw Li Yao almost twenty meters away. His two legs left deep gulches on the ground. Half of his body was buried in the hard rocks!

On the surface, Li Yao was defeated.

However, the moment the black shield was condensed, Li Linghai seemed to be hit by ten thousand bolts of lightning.

The mask covering her face collapsed abruptly, and an authentic, utmost shock beamed out of it!

Shua!

A narrow, long crack was caused to the black shield by the bolts of lightning, but the wound recovered soon as if it was thick liquid metal. It was even wriggling slowly into a cute black ball.

It was “Little Black”, born from “Black Wing”, the flying sword that Li Yao’s foster father left for him!

“This is… This is…”

Her face, which looked like perfect, flawless white jade at the beginning, was now even paler than ever. There was not even any hint of blood in her lips. She asked with a shaking voice at first, but then, her voice turned sharp and desperate, and her flames of spiritual energy flooded at Li Yao like hissing vipers.

“Where did you find it? Who gave it to you? Or did you steal it or pick it up somewhere? Speak. Speak now!”

Li Yao could obviously tell that, although she looked ten times more intimidating than before, her killing intent was quickly ebbing.

He was more or less relieved, knowing that he had won the first round of the gamble.

The queen was indeed aware of the existence of Little Black. Perhaps she had seen Little Black’s own kind in the mysterious world fragment?

“This is my foster father’s belongings!”

Holding Little Black in his arms, Li Yao wagered on the chance and shouted aloud, “He held my hands tightly before he passed away and asked me to carry it with me and find a woman named ‘Li Linghai’ in the Imperium!”

Chapter 2148 - Everything I Say Is True!

“What?”

As if hit by a bolt of lightning, the queen of the Imperium trembled, and the invisible armor around her fell apart, revealing another “Li Linghai” that had been deeply hidden for a moment.

Li Jialing also exclaimed in shock as he looked at Li Yao in disbelief.

The queen only lost her calmness for a moment. When she was back to herself again, the dispersing determination to kill was condensed into a hundred times more aggressive than before. She shouted, “Liar! How can there be such a coincidence? What exactly do you know? Who sent you here, for what purpose? Speak now!”

The swords made of thousands of bolts of lightning all dashed to Li Yao’s front, hissing like cobras!

Li Yao could have defended himself, or even summoned his Colossus to escape, but his previous endeavors would be rendered futile if so.

Quitting halfway was never his style. Opening his arms to protect Li Jialing behind him, he bellowed, “I admit that the whole thing started as a coincidence, but the development later was very reasonable!

“From beginning to the end, the only coincidence was how I ran into Li Jialing. But you should know very well how similar he is to his birth father, my foster father? When I unexpectedly noticed a young man who was extremely like my foster father caged in a prison, receiving the most excruciating procedures, I naturally grew quite curious and wanted to rescue him to figure out everything. That was why I burst into conflicts with Wuying Lan, Li Lingfeng, and the rest of them, and I even accidentally blew up ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’. The rest is history!

“Think about it, Your Grace. Nobody could’ve foreseen that you would be here. Even if it were a trap against you, there was no reason why I should’ve shown up in such a high-profile way, right?”

Li Jialing couldn’t help but ask, “Brother… Yao, is-is it true?”

“Of course it is true!”

Li Yao declared solemnly, “Everybody who is familiar with me knows that ‘Vulture Li Yao’ is most respected for his honesty and integrity. I never said a single lie in my entire life!”

Li Linghai took a deep breath, but she was still in apparent shock. The purple flames deep inside her transparent eyes gradually dispersed.

Her eyes that were at a loss moved between Li Jialing and Li Yao nonstop, but the furiously burning swords of purple flames could slash neither of them now. She mumbled, “His-His last words… He has died. How could he die? What-What was your foster father’s name?”

“My foster father never told me his name. He said that his name and his real life had long been left in another world to a woman, and that the man standing before me was nothing but an empty shell without a heart."

Li Yao said, "So, my foster father only allowed me to call him 'Pop'. Even at his deathbed, he never told me his name but simply asked me to find 'Li Linghai' in the Imperium. He said that Li Linghai would tell me everything."

In his heart, however, Li Yao shouted at his foster father, Pop, please do forgive my horses*it. But speaking of which, fancy words to a girl cannot be counted as lies, right? Your son is trying his best to avoid an ethical tragedy in your family, to help you sustain your bloodline, and probably, to save the world by the way. You must understand and support my actions which boast such abundant significance!

"His name and his real life were left in another world…"

The sentence hit Li Linghai's heart again like a flying sword, making her put on a half-weeping and half-laughing look. She asked in a shivering voice, "What-What else did he say?"

"Before my father's death, his head had already become unclear, but he simply repeated that—"

Li Yao sobbed and said, "That I had to come to find Li Linghai in the Imperium no matter how many difficulties there might be. He said that Li Linghai was the gentlest and kindest woman in the three thousand Sectors, and she would love me, take care of me, and protect me like he did. As long as Li Linghai was there, I would have nothing to be scared of!

"Also, he said that he had countless regrets in his life, but even if all the regrets were combined and multiplied a hundred times, it would not be as great as the sorrow when he left Li Linghai years ago. Now that he was dying and it was impossible for his soul to fly to Li Linghai through the sea of stars, he demanded that I find Li Linghai and respect her as a mother. He asked me to do my best to protect and fight for Li Linghai on behalf of him in the evil Imperium even at the cost of my life!"

"Well—"

Li Linghai was caught in a trance. The purple flames on her fingertips were bouncing nonstop, and the electric currents were dashing to all directions beyond her control.

"Brother Yao, he… My birth father did say that?"

Li Jialing almost sounded like he was crying.

Li Yao secretly apologized in his heart.

But on a closer look, he was not exactly lying. He did see countless times how regretful and sorrowful his pop was after the man was drunk. It was probably what his foster father thought in mind but never spoke out.

If his foster father was too embarrassed to speak it out, it was certainly his responsibility to help his foster father confess it!

In the meantime, if his foster father knew that he and Li Linghai had a child, he would certainly be overjoyed and wish the whole family could be safe and sound and happy ever after.

He immediately nodded his head. "Of course. I was a poor orphan after the loss of my parents in my childhood. It was Pop who rescued me from darkness and raised me up. We were like a real father and son connected by blood. So, when I saw you, I saw my own brother. How could I have watched you suffer in Wuying Lan and Li Lingfeng’s place without doing anything?

“Although I had a father, I never had a mother. They say that the children without mothers are like weeds without roots. For decades, my greatest wish was to find a mother that I could respect and serve!

“After such a difficult long journey to the Imperium, my primary mission was to find Li Linghai and to respect her as a real mother.

“It was a great surprise to meet you, my ‘brother’, but little did I anticipate that the woman that my pop loved most would be… like this!”

Staring at the flawless armor and the dazzling sword on Li Linghai, Li Yao sighed and smiled in the most pitiful way, before he went on, “It seems that, unless the ‘Li Linghai’ that my pop mentioned is somebody else, and you two just happen to have the same name, the queen is too strong and ambitious to require the ‘protection’ of a Mr. Nobody such as myself. Or rather, our very existences are obstacles on Your Grace’s way.

“Your Grace, you have the heritages of the ‘Supreme Emperor’, the greatest expert of mankind in history. Although you and us may be similar in levels, we are absolutely no match for you at all. Even if we fight with all our strength, the best we can do is to seriously wound you. What’s the point?

“We can understand that you have your ambitions and your reasons. Come on, give us a quick death. When I see my pop in the other world, I’ll tell him that you live a great life in the human world and do not need his concerns or my protection.

His soul will rest in peace, and I… I will be able to return the favors for bringing me up!

“Do it, Li Linghai, Your Grace!”

Li Yao held his head high and closed his eyes, as if he were determined to die.

But deep inside his head, he simply shrieked at the mental devil, “Hey, you must be prepared. If the queen so much as moves her little finger, you’ll jump out with Neltharion to block her attack, and we’ll run as far away as possible. You understand me? If I’m hurt badly, you will be equally hurt!”

The mental devil replied sullenly, “… Sometimes, I can’t help but wonder if I should just let you son of a bi*ch be slashed and die with you. Really.”

The queen’s sword of true dragon never did slash.

The brilliance flashing in her eyes was probably the ripples of her memories rather than the determination of killing.

The purple colors in her eyes and her hair were gradually gone, together with the raging and roaring lightning around her.

The overwhelming killing intents completely dispersed. Even the thunderstorm of the outside world that was blocked by her domain had resumed peace again, creating a small world that was absolutely tranquil.

“Hu…”

She exhaled a long breath in relief. After the things that she had held back for a hundred years were spoken out, she now looked at Li Yao and Li Jialing in an even more complicated way.

“Tell me everything about you, including your origin, your training experience, how you advanced into the Divinity Transformation Stage, where you found your Colossus, and who is helping you in maintaining it.”

Staring at Li Yao, Li Linghai said, one word after another, “I’ll keep you alive for now, but as long as I notice a single loophole in your statement, I guarantee that I will torture you in ways a hundred times crueler than Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan’s ways for a thousand or even ten thousand years. Trust me. I do what I say!”

Li Yao couldn’t help but shiver. He struggled to say, “I never told any lies. How could there be any loophole?”

Li Linghai sniffed and said, “Fine. Tell me your name first. Are you an Immortal Cultivator, or a Cultivator as you claimed in the slaughter stream?”

Li Yao held his head high without any hesitation. “My name is Li Yao, and my nickname in the organization is ‘Vulture’. I’m a 100% Cultivator!”

“A Cultivator?”

With a feigned smile, Li Linghai played with the electric arcs on her fingers. “That doesn’t sound right. Are the mobsters of Starlight capable of raising an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage and equipping him with such an advanced Colossus? Don’t tell me that you come from another noteworthy resistance group of Cultivators in the Imperium. I’m pretty sure that other shrimps are even more unworthy than Starlight!

“Or do you want to tell me that you are from a certain mysterious relic, where you advanced into the Divinity Transformation Stage casually through primeval treasures and picked up a Colossus by the way? Ha. Do you think that I’ll believe your crap like the idiot Li Lingfeng did?”

Li Yao frowned and said solemnly, “I never thought to deceive Your Grace with such lies. Like I said just now, I came to the Imperium to find Li Linghai after a long journey. Naturally, I am not a Cultivator from the Imperium.”

“Oh?”

Li Linghai rolled her eyes and asked with great curiosity, “Then, it is getting interesting. I know that… he absolutely could not return to the Covenant Alliance. So, besides the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance, there is a third magnificent force that can raise such a young expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage and which boasts Colossi? Tell me where your hometown is and its coordinate parameters for space jumps.”

Li Yao said with a bitter smile, “Although my hometown is indeed powerful enough to support someone in the Divinity Transformation Stage and maintain the Colossi, it does not have coordinate parameters for space jumps.”

Li Linghai furrowed her eyebrows. “What do you mean? Are you messing with me?”

“Please don’t be angry, Your Grace. Everything I say is true!”

Li Yao took half a step back and waved his hands, somewhat in a panic. “My hometown truly does not have fixed coordinates because we are nomadic refugees in space. I am the last Cultivator from ‘Firefly’ of the ‘Star Ocean Republic’!”

Chapter 2149 - The Roses

The wind, the storm, the thunder, the queen, and Li Jialing were all stunned.

“The Star Ocean Republic?”

Frowning, the queen mumbled, “Firefly?”

Li Jialing blinked his eyes fast, finding it hard to believe.

“Exactly!”

Li Yao nodded his head matter-of-factly. Blinking his eyes that were as clear as water, he turned to the young man, “You heard of the Star Ocean Republic and Firefly before, right?”

“Yes.”

The young man thought for a moment and replied solemnly, “I’m told that it is a bunch of cowardly, shameless, garbage Cultivators who are even worse than cockroaches and rats. They were crumpled by the Imperium a thousand years ago and have been hiding and degenerating in space ever since. They should have become out-and-out space pirates or completely gone extinct, don’t they?”

Li Yao: “… Well, Brother Yao does not like your rhetoric, but yes, I am indeed from that Star Ocean Republic and that Firefly!

“How about it, Your Grace? However devastated Firefly is, it is ‘the last territory of the Star Ocean Republic’ after all. When we escaped from the Imperium years ago, we brought so many facilities away with us. The leadership is also aware of the highly confidential information, say, the coordinates of the relics and treasures of the Star Ocean Imperium! As the saying goes, even a starved camel is bigger than a horse. It is only reasonable that the Star Ocean Republic can raise someone in the Divinity Transformation Stage, and Firefly boasts the abilities to maintain a Colossus. Is there a loophole at all? Just take your time to think, and feel free to chop off my head if you come up with one!”

Li Yao declared confidently and aggressively.

But he was actually not as confident as he appeared.

The existence of Firefly should be a big secret that only he knew. According to the sailing log on Firefly, they were discovered by the Black Wind Fleet, the expedition army of the Imperium, a dozen years ago, after hiding for almost three hundred years. However, Heiye Ming, commander of the Black Wind Fleet, did not report it to the homeland of the Imperium in order to swallow the fat meat alone. Otherwise, the reinforcements sent from the homeland would’ve stolen all the credits.

Later, after the Black Wind Fleet suffered a heavy blow and was almost annihilated, Commander Heiye Ming was already gone, and Di Feiwen, the deputy commander, was determined to make peace with the federation and march back to the Imperium with the power of the federation. Naturally, he would not deliver the intelligence of such significance back to the homeland of the Imperium.

So, theoretically speaking, the homeland of the Imperium only vaguely knew that the Black Wind Fleet had sailed to the edge of mankind’s realm in the age of the Star Ocean Imperium, and the helpless folks of the Black Wind Sector were grimacing to bit the tasteless hard bones after encountering some worthless, barren worlds that were inhabited by disobedient barbarians.

They couldn’t have been aware of the powerfulness of the federation, the scale of treasures in the Ancient Sages Sector, and the Kunlun relic, or the whereabouts of Firefly from the Star Ocean Republic!

However, it was just “theoretically” after all. Who knew if the queen had other sources of intelligence?

Should he be seen through, with her bad temper, it would be helpless even if Li Yao clung to her thigh and cry “grandmother”!

Li Yao focused the acting skills that he had practiced for a hundred years on his face and his eyes. He couldn’t have been more nervous in his heart, but his face and his eyes couldn’t be more frank. Every wrinkle on his face seemed to be brimming with sincerity!

Frowning, the queen stared at him in silence for a long time. Her eyes seemed to be two vipers that were crawling into his head through the eyes and swallowing all of his memories. It was not until she observed him for half a minute that she finally said, “Continue. Tell me your birth and your growth on Firefly.”

Li Yao took a long breath in relief in his heart, knowing that he had passed the second test.

“I was born at a cabin at the bottom of a garbage ship, the most wrecked and low-level starship among the hundreds of starships that made up Firefly.”

With ripples of memories spreading out in his eyes, Li Yao said in a low and poignant voice, “It was a harsh, murky, difficult, and dark world where the strong prey on the weak. It is also known as ‘magical equipment graveyard’.

“Because Firefly was a wanderer in space, it might not find any relic of forsaken worlds or space battlefields to get supplies for decades in the most difficult times. So, we absolutely could not waste any scrap of magical equipment. Even the most useless and broken garbage would be piled up on the garbage ship into hills, which were exactly my home.”

Li Jialing couldn’t help but ask, “Difficult and dark? Where the strong prey on the weak? Didn’t you claim to be Cultivators?”

Li Yao moved his lips, blushing. As if he couldn’t answer the question, he turned his uneasy eyes to Li Linghai for help.

The queen sneered, “Is there a clear boundary between Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators? When there are enough resources, everybody is a decent and righteous Cultivator; when half of the people are going to be starved due to the inadequacy of resources, hehe, the men of honors and integrity in the past will have to consider ‘survival of the fittest’ as the ultimate slogan too!

“Firefly has drifted in the sea of stars for almost a thousand years. Although it did get away from the Imperium’s hunting, it was forced to flee to the places that were more and more barren and desolate at the edge of the civilization of mankind. No supplies, no communication, and no resources. How could there be any Cultivator left? I fear that the loyalists of the Star Ocean Republic are even worse than the fake Immortal Cultivators in the Imperium today!”

Li Yao coughed in embarrassment and said, “You may have a point, Your Grace. All in all, I spent my childhood in the harsh environment and the life-and-death struggles in the magical equipment graveyard. The dark experience is somewhat similar to Li Jialing’s growth. That is also why I felt close to my brother the moment I met him.”

“Brother Yao…”

While Li Jialing did not quite understand the real connotations of “magical equipment graveyard”, he did know a thing or two about “Firefly” and the “Star Ocean Republic” from history books and various kinds of readers.

Many specialists in the Imperium had inferred the ending of Firefly. Their speculation was similar to Li Linghai’s theory. They believed that Firefly would definitely collapse in the desperation of having no way out and because of the shortage of resources, and that the end of the world before its collapse would be a hundred times more terrifying than the harshest mines in the Imperium.

When Li Jialing thought that Li Yao was born in such a place, he further grew subtle sympathy for him.

Li Yao sighed and went on, “All in all, having no parents or anyone that I could count on, I should’ve died in the dark, cruel magical equipment graveyard in my childhood. However, I accidentally found a heavily wounded uncle in the magical equipment graveyard, which changed my fate, and probably the fate of yours too!”

Holding his breath, Li Jialing asked, “Was… Was he my birth father?”

“Exactly.”

Li Yao nodded his head and fell into the memories from a long time ago, as he was speaking the truth right now. "Nobody knew where the uncle came from or what he'd been through, but when I discovered him, he was badly wounded, and even his internal organs were exposed to the air…"

Li Yao noticed that Li Linghai's eyes were obviously shaking.

Her breath that had been even the whole time had a disorder of 0.01 seconds too.

For an unparalleled expert at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage or even higher, it was a loss of control that absolutely shouldn't have happened.

Before the young man exclaimed again, Li Yao continued, "At that time, I thought that the uncle escaped to our garbage ship because he did something bad or pissed off someone on other starships, which was quite usual on the hundreds of starships that made up Firefly.

"I couldn't tell what was on my mind, but I somehow grew slightly fond of the uncle. Perhaps it was because I never had a father, and he looked rather reliable.

"All in all, I saved the uncle, and after his wounds were healed, he saved me multiple times too. He even adopted me as a son and taught me all his skills in refining. He also gave me a rusty, weird flying sword. Later, the flying sword exploded, and the sticky, soft, and highly-elastic black ball that I call 'Little Black' jumped out."

"You… You…"

The queen couldn't help but pace back and forth. Perhaps even she did not know what she wanted to ask. After a long daze, she said, “You lived together, just the two of you?”

“Just the two of us. My foster father was never a great talker. He always maintained magical equipment in silence to trade for food to sustain us and for alcohol. His sole hobby was to polish the scraps of magical equipment until they were extremely thin and clear. Then, he would build them into beautiful roses that looked like diamonds.”

Li Yao smiled and said, “When their number was at the highest, our small cottage was filled up by the metal roses, and I felt that they were sticking me even when I slept at night. I asked him why he made so many useless items, which could barely be exchanged for any money, and why he did not jumble them into battle magical equipment instead, but he never answered me.

“Now that I think about it, I understand it now. Perhaps he spent his entire life carving 99,999 metal flowers with delicate runes to make them even more beautiful than real roses because he wanted to give them to a woman at the other shore of the sea of stars, right?”

The thing was true.

Of course, the number of metal roses might not necessarily be 99,999, but there was definitely a whole lot of them.

After his pop passed away, Li Yao buried his ashes with the metal roses and piled them into a small hill. Together, they were kept at the deepest part of the magical equipment graveyard, before they were covered by the infinite garbage mountains.

When Li Yao returned to the federation after a hundred years of hibernation, the magical equipment graveyard in Floating Spear City had been completely deformed.

But maybe today, his pop’s ashes were still deeply buried below the earth in the Heaven’s Origin Sector together with the glamorous, glittering roses, weren’t they?

Li Linghai was in a trance, but the invisible mask and armor of indifference around her could not be formed anymore.

His fingertips, her arms, and her shoulders were all trembling slightly, as if she were trying to hold back the thorns that had crawled out of her heart all of a sudden and entangled her entire body in the blink of an eye!

Chapter 2150 - The Only Reasonable Outcome

Li Yao took a deep breath. His own eyes were more or less moist too.

It was because while the background of “Firefly” was made up, everything else, including the struggles in the magical equipment graveyard, the shimmers in the dark, and the father-and-son relationship between him and his pop, was all real.

So real that… they couldn’t be any more real.

“I don’t know why I rescued my pop in the spur of the moment, and I don’t know what motivated my pop to adopt me who was disobedient, aggressive, bigoted, and brutal. At that time, I already had my nickname as ‘Vulture’, and I certainly wasn’t the most popular person in my place.”

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao tried to stay calm as he went on, “Other than the arts of refining, he also taught me a lot of lessons about life. He showed me the light in the dark for the first time and made me realize that ‘survival of the fittest’ shouldn’t be the only truth in the entire universe. He also let me taste the most sincere feelings between human beings for the first time.

“Perhaps—

“Many times, I saw him getting himself drunk to cover the tears in his eyes with the stink of alcohol all over his body. Then, he would pick up one of the metal roses that he carved carefully and bury his head in it to smell it, as if he could really smell the fragrance of flowers from the other side of the sea of stars.

“Sometimes, he would look at me in a very weird way. His eyes were even piercing through me, through the magical equipment graveyard, and through the shackles of time and space, reaching a place far, far away.

“There was no telling if I was overthinking, but I could vaguely tell that he truly wished that I were his real son and the fruit of love between him and a certain woman. Then, if our whole family could live in peace and happiness together, it would be the most beautiful thing in the entire universe.”

“Stop it! Stop it!”

The queen muttered before she suddenly had an outburst of emotions.

“I told you to shut up!”

Huala!

The land below the queen’s feet fell apart. Countless bolts of lightning were blown into the ground from her feet and rose to the sky along the thick chasms, tearing apart the sky like thousands of flying swords!

Even the storm and the thunder were shuddering in fear under the queen’s catharsis.

Li Yao and Li Jialing’s facial organs were almost blown out of place when the queen lost control!

“Stop talking about… the useless things.”

Covering her chest, the queen gnashed her teeth. “Tell me what happened later. How did you advance into the Divinity Transformation Stage, and how did you get a Colossus?”

Li Yao said, “Under the help of my pop, my expertise in refining soared. Firefly, which had wandered for a thousand years, might be short of many things, but the broken fragments of ancient magical equipment were certainly not among them. Together with my pop, I repaired abundant magical equipment and jade chips, from which I gathered some techniques and training methods. With that as the foundation, I grew up step by step.

“Firefly had already sailed to the edge of mankind’s expanse in its tens of thousands of years of history. It was a dim, barren, and lackluster area where resources were not available through regular approaches. Only by exploring the few world fragments and forsaken worlds could it be possible to gather some leftovers.

“We had an organization named ‘Occult Orbs Fellowship’, which was dedicated to the exploration missions.

“I joined the Occult Orbs Fellowship and adventured in countless world fragments and forsaken worlds, including ‘Boneyard’ where a great demon from the primeval age was hibernating, ‘the Nether World Sector’ that had been scarred by war with nothing but some foul spectral Cultivators left, etc. Through the dangerous adventures and the fortuitous incidents, I picked up a lot of heritages and luckily survived while I reached the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage step by step.

“As my combat ability grew higher, my position in the Star Ocean Republic rose steadily too. I was promoted all the way until I was nominated as the special emissary of the Speaker as well as the captain of ‘Team Red Lotus’, a team of secret guards for the Speaker. I could more or less be called the top expert on Firefly, and I was quite appreciated by the Speaker of the Star Ocean Republic. So, it shouldn’t be surprising at all that I got to use the ‘Tartarean Skeleton’, the only Colossus on board, right?”

“Huh…”

Pacing back and forth, the queen thought for a moment and said, “No wonder you are adept at stealth and sabotages and were even able to crush ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’. So, you have received professional training before and once worked as the captain of a secret squad?

“But your story does not make sense again.

“Since you are ‘the top expert on Firefly’, ‘special emissary of the Speaker of the Star Ocean Republic plus the captain of his guards’, and ‘the user of the sole Colossus’, you are definitely very powerful and influential. However uninterested in politics you may be because you are more familiar with fighting and refining, you are at the center of power at all, and many people should be dependent on you.

“Then, how exactly did the government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic allow such a super expert like you to leave Firefly with the only Colossus they had for the Imperium to join me? Did it not raise any suspicion of… defection at all?”

With a bitter smile, Li Yao said, “I already said it earlier. Perhaps you didn’t catch it, Your Grace. I said that I was the last Cultivator from Firefly of the Star Ocean Republic. So, there is neither a ‘Speaker’ or a ‘captain’ right now.”

The queen was slightly dazed. “What do you mean? What happened to your starship?”

This time, it was Li Yao who was caught in a trance. After a moment of hesitation, he grunted and vomited a mouthful of black blood, and he couldn't have looked more lackluster.

"Brother Yao!"

Li Jialing hurried to give him a hand. "What's wrong?"

"His belief is shaking."

The queen said coldly, "I sense that your soul is very unsteady and is on the verge of collapse. You are not far away from mental derangement. Why? Something so terrible happened on Firefly that you are almost losing your belief?"

Half narrowing his eyes, Li Yao wiped the blood at the corner of his mouth and struggled to say, "Yes. Firefly was destroyed, the Star Ocean Republic was gone, and I was the only survivor who ran to the Imperium to look for you. Could you please not dive into the details?"

"No."

The queen snapped, "You will have to confess it dutifully even if you are mentally deranged, or I will kill the both of you immediately!"

"You—"

The blood all over Li Jialing's body flowed to his head. For the first time, he summoned the courage and glared at his own mother, or to quote him, his "gene provider". "The collapse of beliefs and the mental derangement can possibly result in death!"

"So what?"

The queen sneered, “Do you not deserve to die?”

“Then, do it now!”

The young man who had been containing himself so far finally could not hold it any longer but burst into fury. Coldly-shining claws ejected from both of his hands, and his teeth protruded like the tusks of a ferocious beast. He glared at the queen and declared, “Do it as you will, but I will definitely not sit and be killed. I’ll fight a bloody battle with you to the end!”

“You think that I do not dare to kill you?”

As the queen looked at Li Jialing’s mutations in disgust, her lips trembled nonstop. “Look at what a monster the two b*stards Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan have turned you into. I really shouldn’t have let the pig die so easily!”

“I have always been a monster, ever since the moment I was born!”

Li Jialing shrieked, “But I never asked anyone to give birth to me. It was your mistake that such a monster like myself was created!”

“Indeed.”

The queen narrowed her eyes. “I am going to correct the ‘mistake’ now.”

Don’t!

Li Yao secretly shouted that it was not good and hurried to cut off Li Jialing and Li Linghai’s eye contact, while he put on a more and more complicated and painful look.

The queen retreated her eyes that were stabbed at Li Jialing. With a smile of mockery, she spoke to Li Yao casually, “I know what happened even if you don’t tell me. When the resources on Firefly ran out, did the so-called ‘Cultivators’ all completely rip apart their pretentious masks and brutalize each other to fight for the last chance of survival until all of them died together?”

Li Yao’s body trembled hard, and he stared at the queen in disbelief.

“Don’t look at me like that. This is the only reasonable outcome by common sense. What is there to be surprised at?”

The queen remarked disdainfully, “Countless specialists of the Imperium have run the most detailed deductions and inferred that Firefly would collapse from the inside after it wandered the sea of stars for a thousand years at most. The reality truly fitted their vision. Your hypocritical Cultivators are truly not surprising at all!”

Rendered speechless, Li Yao was at a loss for a long time, before he finally lost his vigor like a balloon whose air was emptied. He muttered, “Yes. After a thousand years of roaming, we still failed to find a Sector that was fit for survival. The resources of all the world fragments and forsaken worlds had been exploited, and our population had soared to five hundred million.

“The hibernation cabins and the recycling system on board were seriously damaged. Food, clean water, and even air were growing thinner each day. They were not enough to support five hundred million people.

“At that time, our Speaker Cui Lingfeng—who coincidentally had the same name as your brother—proposed a ‘Rebirth

Plan’, planning to kill 80% of the people with a randomly attacking biochemical virus. If the population was reduced to a hundred million, the ecological system of the whole starship would keep functioning.

“In fact, it was not exactly Speaker Cui Lingfeng’s idea. I learned later that the parliament always had such an ’emergency plan’. The lethal virus had been sealed for hundreds of years.”

“It’s perfectly normal.”

The queen said casually, “In such a closed and desperate environment, it was perhaps the only way to continue your civilization, although only by another few hundred pitiful years.”

Li Yao said with a pained expression, “However, there was another faction in the leadership of our government, led by Tang Zhengdong, captain of Firefly. They were the fundamentalist Cultivators who believed that no innocents should be killed under any circumstances.”

“Idiots.”

The queen gave a short remark.

After a brief hesitation, Li Yao said, “Captain Tang Zhengdong discovered Speaker Cui Lingfeng’s plan and had to stop the latter. The two factions had a fierce fight. Later, the issue somehow got leaked, and everybody on Firefly learned it.

“Everybody knew the existence of the ‘Rebirth Plan’ and the fatal virus. They also knew that the resources on board were bordering on bankruptcy. The doom arrived in almost less than one day, and Firefly turned into a living hell of dead bodies and blood!”

Chapter 2151 - To Save and to Be Saved

Li Yao was already choking with sobs after saying everything, and he covered his mouth as if he was going to throw up. However, leaking through his fingers was only thick blood.

The queen looked at him emotionlessly and continued to ask, “Whom did you side with, the Speaker or the captain? Kill 80% to save 20%, or let everybody die together?”

“I… I don’t know. I did not side with anyone.”

Li Yao smiled in the most miserable way. “Mad. They were all mad. All the Cultivators on board attacked each other like lunatics and animals. For Firefly, which was a ragged starship that had wandered for a thousand years in the first place, a war that broke out from inside was catastrophic.

“One starship after another was blown up from inside. Whatever few precious supplies were obliterated in the explosions or absorbed into the cold vacuum together with the corpses of the Cultivators, making the environment even more unfavorable for the survivors, who had to continue brutalizing each other for the resources that were fewer and fewer, until everybody turned into broken body and pulps of blood and meat.

“Although I claimed to be the top expert on Firefly, and I had a well-maintained Colossus that was full of ammunition on my back, what could I have done? Even if I could suppress the leadership including the captain and the Speaker, could

I make air, water, and food out of thin air? Could I revive the deceased? Could I bring new hope to the people who had wandered for a thousand years?

“I couldn’t. I was at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage back then, and I still can’t do it right now although I have advanced into the Divinity Transformation Stage.

“Looking at my comrades and compatriots of the past fighting each other hard, giving such a despicable performance that was even more appalling than the Immortal Cultivators in tales, I absolutely couldn’t find any solution. There was a crack in my heart, and I began to suspect the beliefs of the Cultivators. My soul was so terribly disordered that I almost suffered mental derangement.

“Right when I was doing my best resisting the inner demon and stabilizing my soul, Firefly was completely destroyed, and even my pop did not survive it. At the last moment, he told me everything and gave me a small starship that he modified in secret. He asked me not to abandon the beliefs of the Cultivators because of Firefly’s tragedy, and to go to the Imperium of True Human Beings to see how the world of the Immortal Cultivators operates. He believed that I would not change my attitude after careful consideration but live and fight on as a Cultivator.

“Most importantly of all, he asked me to look for you.

“Perhaps, my pop believed that you could save me, who no longer knew the distinctions between Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators anymore because of the collapsing beliefs, and that I… could save you too!”

“Hilarious!”

The queen seemed to have been stung by a bee. “Why did he think I needed saving?”

“That I don’t know.”

Li Yao opened his hands and said, “It is my guess—and MY guess only—that based on my pop’s deep affections and the few words he mentioned when he was drunk, the Li Linghai in his memories was definitely not a cruel, heartless, and inhuman Immortal Cultivator, but a kind, innocent woman full of humanities, or even… a good wife and a good mother.

“Perhaps he thought that the dark and cold Imperium of True Human Beings would sooner or later deform you, but he believed that something unchangeable must be hidden deep inside your heart, and that my arrival would help you activate the something again and find back who you used to be.”

“Shut up!”

The queen shouted angrily again. Her gracefulness and inviolability at the beginning were thrown away, and she declared in obvious fury, “Whatever I am, it is not your place to judge me or to save me!”

“As I said, it is just my guess.”

Li Yao said, “Perhaps my pop only wanted me to give you a hand with my extraordinary combat ability and my powerful Colossus. Simple as that.”

“Huh…”

The queen was obviously tempted.

No matter what, an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage plus a Colossus was definitely not a random present that she could see every day.

Li Yao was different from Li Lingfeng. Li Lingfeng had his own supporters, forces, ambitions, and complicated connections. Even if the two of them really cooperated, there would be tremendous trouble. It was needless to say the possible conspiracies and even secret plots against each other.

Therefore, Li Linghai would rather kill her biological brother to resolve the trouble once and for all than work with him.

But Li Yao was different.

He was an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage who had zero backgrounds and dependencies and who could be loyal enough to her “theoretically”.

As long as there was the slightest opportunity, nobody would wish a Divinity Transformation Stage expert to be their enemy instead of their ally.

“Go on.”

The queen thought hard for a long time, only to come up with no loopholes in Li Yao’s statement.

The scenes that Li Yao described were in no contradiction to all her known intelligence. They also matched the classic deductions made by the specialists of the Imperium.

Therefore, after pondering for a moment, she simply said, “Tell me your stories in the Martial Meritocrats Sector. Why did you risk ruining ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’?”

"The Martial Meritocrats Sector was the first stop after I jumped to the Imperium of True Human Beings."

Li Yao said quickly, "I chose this place for a simple reason. The patterned tidal outbursts of the Devilish Scorpion Nebula was a natural gargantuan star beacon that could significantly improve the accuracy of my jump. After all, the navigation system of my super tiny starship was not so reliable.

"After I jumped to the Martial Meritocrats Sector in the Devilish Scorpion Nebula, I naturally was filled with indignity when I saw so many ordinary people struggling in pain on the Land of Sins, and I made up my mind to help them.

"Before, I did not plan to make such a huge scene. I only hoped to sneak into 'Manjusaka, the City in the Sky' to steal some intelligence before I figured out what to do next. However, the discovery of Li Jialing disrupted my whole plan.

"On one hand, I had to distract everyone's attention with an astounding performance so that he could run away. On the other hand, I still wanted to save the ordinary people in the Martial Meritocrats Sector. Furthermore, and perhaps a selfish reason, my belief was on the verge of collapse after the destruction of Firefly, and I needed a gratifying battle to reinstate my belief as a Cultivator.

"Because of the three reasons, the battle took place. You should know what happened later since you were lurking not far away after all.

"This is about the whole story. You can choose to believe it or not, and you can choose to kill me or not!"

Li Yao held his head high and bulged his eyes after he was done, like a statue that was marching to a battle valiantly.

Li Linghai was silent for a long time, and there was still not the slightest expression on her face.

But the drastically changing thunderstorm in the sky more or less revealed the intense debates of her with herself in the heart.

In the end, the queen took a long breath and said coldly, “If I do not kill you, what will you do?”

Li Yao smiled, his eyes glittering. “In that case, I’ll certainly abide by my pop’s last words and follow Your Grace, to protect you and to be protected by you, to save you and to be saved by you!”

“Shut up. Like I said, I need neither your protection nor your salvation!”

The queen seemed to have had enough of Li Yao’s wittiness, and her face was brimming with killing intent as she glared at Li Yao for a long time. Then, something occurred to her. She managed to hold back her urge and said, “Right, did he ask you to bring anything to me?”

Li Yao blinked his eyes and nodded his head. “He did. It is a… or half a weird metal stick that looks like some sort of key.”

The brilliance in the queen’s eyes flashed, and she demanded, “Give it to me!”

Li Yao, however, shook his head. “No.”

“Huh?”

The queen’s killing intent turned into visible wind blades that were released from her crazily dancing white hair. “I beg your pardon?”

“I promised my pop that I would give his last item to the ‘real’ Li Linghai.”

Li Yao calmed down as he went on, “However, according to what I have seen today, everything that Your Grace did was far from what the Li Linghai that my pop talked about would have done. I will never give my pop’s most precious item to such a random Li Linghai.

“Even if I have lost my home, my compatriots, and my family, even if I have been reduced into nothingness and desperation, and even if my beliefs are collapsing and I can’t be more confused right now, I still have the dignity of an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage!

“Your Grace, your level is higher than mine, your techniques better than mine, and you may have a myriad of powerful magical equipment in your Cosmos Rings. If you are determined to kill me, I won’t be your match at all.

“But you must believe me. Even if I may inevitably be killed by you, I will certainly be able to destroy the Cosmos Ring and make it impossible for you to find the half key before my death!”

“Are you threatening me?”

Li Linghai’s white hair stood up, and she couldn’t have looked more intimidating. One word after another, she declared resolutely, “The queen of the Imperium of True Human Beings does not take any threats!”

“This is not a threat, but only a statement of facts.”

Li Yao struggled on as he said, “If you want to get the half key, there will be only two ways. Either you are convinced by me and transformed into the woman that my pop loved or even… a Cultivator, or you can persuade me into believing in the true path of immortality so that I will be a hardcore, pure, and unquestionable Immortal Cultivator!”

The queen stared at Li Yao gloomily.

Li Yao looked back at the queen with all of his spiritual energy, not giving in at all.

Even Li Jialing was glaring at the queen with a pair of eyes that couldn’t have been wider while hiding behind Li Yao’s back.

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

Dazzling sparks were raised in the collision of eyes. Every spark exploded like a crystal bomb, burning into an ocean of flames among the three of them.

The competition of their eyes even eclipsed the thunderstorm outside.

Suddenly, something amazing happened!

The queen grunted and vomited blood. She was defeated!

She appeared aggressive and dominating a moment ago, but she was like a collapsed reservoir right now. She couldn’t have looked more lethargic!

She was even barely able to keep herself steady and almost fell to the ground.

What the heck?

Li Yao wondered since when had his eyes become so awesome. For as long as he could remember, he had only been practicing his tongue and his face.

“Be careful!”

The mental devil took the opportunity to remind him. “She seems to be playing tricks!”

Chapter 2152 - The Queen’s Personal Bodyguard

“You…”

Li Yao spoke to the queen hesitantly, “Are you hurt?”

“Of course I’m hurt!”

The queen laughed rather devastatingly. There was no telling whether she was mocking Li Yao or herself. “Why else do you think I was patient enough to listen to all your jibber-jabber? However useless Li Lingfeng was, he was an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage after all. Do you think that I did not need to pay any price to kill him with such an unbelievably overwhelming technique as ‘Dragon Over The Sky’ that was of the Supreme Emperor’s own creation?

“In order to kill Li Lingfeng, I activated ‘Dragon Over The Sky’ to the maximum almost by exploiting every drop of my life energy and focusing my soul into a ‘sword of true dragon’, which dealt a heavy blow on myself when he was obliterated. I have only been bluffing since then.

“I thought that you would immediately escape in fear after witnessing that I slew an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage whose level was even higher than yours in one attack. In that case, I would have enough time to rest and recover before I figured out whether I should continue hunting you or simply return.

"But I did not expect that you had such a secret identity and that instead of running away, you had a conversation with me for such a long time. Naturally, my wounds attacked when I couldn't suppress them any longer."

"That does make sense!"

Li Yao was greatly enlightened. He was quite puzzled a while back because Li Lingfeng was an expert at the high level of the Divinity Transformation Stage after all, however incapable the man was. If the queen could stab him to death in one attack casually, everybody in the Divinity Transformation Stage should feel ashamed.

It was only reasonable that the queen almost exploited all her vitality and soul in order to perform "Dragon Over The Sky", the dominating technique that solely belonged to the Supreme Emperor ten thousand years ago!

"Careful. She may be lying."

The mental devil, however, reminded him again, "It is possible that she is intentionally showing her weakness to allure you to attack her because she cannot tell if what you said just now is true. If you attack her while she is 'feeble', it will prove that all your fancy words just now are made up, and she can easily perform multiple metamorphoses in 0.1 seconds. Do you believe me?"

Li Yao pondered for a moment and said, "That is a possibility too. But it is very likely that she is truly wounded. I don't believe that she is so strong that she can take down someone in the Divinity Transformation Stage without paying any price!"

The queen's eyes moved between Li Yao and Li Jialing, as if she were at their mercy now that her disguise had fallen apart.

However, while Li Yao's words just now were half true and half false, he did mean to get in touch and even cooperate with Li Linghai sincerely.

Besides, considering the situation right now, what could he achieve even if he were to kill Li Linghai? The reign of the Immortal Cultivators would not end here, but Li Yao and Li Jialing probably would.

Li Yao sighed and extended his hand to the queen.

The queen stared at his hand for a long time and frowned. "What's the meaning of this?"

"Well, it means that if Your Grace is too uncomfortable to stand, I can support you."

Li Yao said sincerely, "As I said, I'm here to help you."

The queen slowly wiped the bloodstain on her lips. Narrowing her eyes, she stared at Li Yao for such a long time that the gloominess almost pierced through every pore on his face.

In the end, she was truly relaxed, and all the killing intents over his body were concealed.

"You were the special emissary of the Speaker of the government-in-exile of the Star Ocean Republic?"

The queen rolled her almost transparent eyes, as if she was calculating Li Yao's value. "You must be familiar with the political struggles, conspiracies, and schemes, right?"

"Not exactly. I am almost a straightforward person, and I am the worst at plots and tricks."

Li Yao said, somewhat in embarrassment, "But I do know quite a few Speakers very well, and I had very in-depth communications with one of the Speakers!"

"Huh…"

Naturally, the queen did not know what Li Yao meant by "very in-depth communications". She thought for a moment and went on, "You were also the captain of 'Team Red Lotus', the Speaker's secret guards. Was it some sort of personal bodyguard and the head of the special forces? If you are given a bunch of capable but disobedient men, are you able to lead them to carry out missions similar to the destruction of 'Manjusaka, the City in the Sky'?"

"I think I can."

Li Yao said, "But I prefer to carry out similar missions on my own, because in such a countryside as Firefly, few experts were qualified to take action with me. Most of them would've only slowed me down."

"Besides, you are a reasonably good refiner?"

The queen looked at him coldly. "Can you maintain a Colossus on your own?"

"No."

Li Yao shook his head and said, "I am not a 'reasonably good' refiner, but a 'grandmaster' refiner. I am best at the maintenance, upgrade, and modification of the single magical equipment such as crystal suits and Colossi, and I know a thing or two about the runes, the arrays, and the refiners in the age of the ancient Cultivators too.”

The queen stared at him without blinking.

Li Yao added helplessly, “I could’ve been more modest, but you asked me to speak the truth. The truth is that I am really a grandmaster. What choice do I have? It’s quite upsetting for me too!”

“… Fine. Let’s hope that you are not lying because both the combat ability and the expertise in refining can be verified very easily.”

The queen paced and hesitated for a long time. Finally, she made up her mind and said, “Listen up, I am not particularly bothered by your stance and your ideas. After all, the organized Cultivators are no longer at the center of the cosmos, and you can barely call on many supporters on your own. It won’t be a big deal to keep you by my side.

“Trust me. Before long, you will accept the real true path of immortality and become an Immortal Cultivator.

“But one thing I do care about is whether or not a person is smart enough.

“I killed Li Lingfeng not because of his ambitions, not because of his brutality, not because of our grudge a hundred years ago, but only because he was an idiot who would bring me infinite trouble. Period.

“I hope that you are smart enough. The smarter you are, the more pleasant our time together will be. Do you understand me?”

Overjoyed, Li Yao nodded his head hard. Thinking for a moment, he shook his head again. “But I won’t help you with the looting, burning, or any other immoral things. Should I encounter you doing those things, I’ll definitely stop you too!”

The queen frowned hard and gnashed the coldest voice out of her teeth. “Looting and burning? Who do you think I am? The wife of a certain bandit? I am the queen of the Imperium of True Human Beings, mind you!”

Li Yao said, “Well, what I tried to say were things like the ‘Land of Sins’ and the ‘slaughter stream’. My belief won’t allow me to do nothing in front of such tragedies. So, I definitely won’t help you bully the ordinary people.”

“Bully the hominoids?”

The queen smiled. “You are truly adorably stupid. But it does make sense. You are new to the Imperium after all, and you do not know anything about what happened here in the past thousand years.

“It doesn’t matter. I’ll explain everything to you well after we return to the Deep Sea Fleet.

“Right now, all you need to know is that my target is never the hominoids but the well-respected high-level Immortal Cultivators, the noble families, and the experts who are supposed to die of old age.

“From that point of view, our short-term goals are the same. It was not in violation of your belief when I killed Li Lingfeng just now, was it?

“Tell me, if my ultimate goal is to destroy the four Kurfürst families and the other deeply-rooted families, sects, and forces of Immortal Cultivators, and to achieve the goal, I may even slightly loosen the control over the hominoids, give them more rights, and even get the hominoids armed as my troop—Will you give me a hand?”

This time, it was Li Yao who began to stare at Li Linghai, trying to find out the tiniest loophole on the queen’s face.

However, the queen’s un-aging face that looked like a snowy mountain was covered in the invisible solid armor again, making it impossible for Li Yao to notice anything in her heart.

“Loosen the control over the hominoids, give them more rights, and arm them on a large scale…”

Li Yao thought quickly but still found it hard to believe. “Really?”

The queen laughed. “You will know if it is real a while later. I believe that an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage who worked as the special emissary of the Speaker once is capable of making his own judgments.”

“Okay!”

Li Yao nodded his head and said without any hesitation, “If what you do is in the best interests of the ordinary people of the Imperium, as a Cultivator, I will naturally spare no effort in helping you!”

“Then, let’s go now. We have already wasted a lot of time.”

The queen said, “An expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage is like an awl in a bag. Their sharp edges cannot be hidden no matter what. So, you can stop bother thinking of a false identity.

“The Deep Sea Fleet is a private troop that I have founded in person. Few people are aware of its existence now. Every soldier holds unquestionable loyalty to me.

“I’ll tell them that you are a super expert that I raised in secret, some sort of ‘ghost warrior’ or ‘dark assassin’, for the purpose of carrying out secret missions that even the Deep Sea Fleet cannot, say, the mission to execute Li Lingfeng this time, for which you have been lurking for many years.

“Now that Li Lingfeng is dead, you can naturally surface and join the Deep Sea Fleet to stay by my side.

“Since you worked as the special emissary of the Speaker once, you can be my personal bodyguard for now. After we return to the capital and receive updates on the current situation, I’ll try to fight for a more important and critical place for you. Is there a problem?”

Li Yao thought for a long time. “No problem at all. Right. There is a problem. What about him?”

Li Yao grabbed the young man’s rigid shoulders and pushed him to the front.

Li Jialing glared Li Linghai so angrily that his eyes were almost torn apart.

“Him?”

The queen observed Li Jialing up and down for a while before she said coldly, “I almost forgot that there is still such a nuisance.”

“Hurry, say ‘mom’!”

Li Yao said in a low voice, “Her killing intent is gone. She won’t kill you now.”

“I am a monster who was born in a laboratory.”

Li Jialing’s muscles were so tightened that he looked as rigid as a monster. Gnashing his teeth, he squeezed out the words one after another. “I do not have a mother!”

“Exactly.”

The queen was not enraged at all but simply said casually, “I’m glad that you are aware of it.”

Hardly had she concluded her sentence when the queen suddenly took action!

Chapter 2153 - Gold Lion

It was an extremely weird feeling.

The queen was obviously still, but Li Yao clearly sensed that a certain “force field” made of her blood and her soul broke out of her shell, attracted all the lightning around, and condensed them into the weird shape of a human.

The weird human of electric arcs lunged at Li Jialing in shrieks.

Greatly shocked, Li Yao summoned his spiritual energy out of natural instincts and focused it into an overwhelming hand that snatched the weird human made out of electric arcs.

BOOM!

Li Yao and the queen had a clash.

It was like a collision of two “small worlds”. Their spirits and their souls were deeply entangled.

The domains of the experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage all boasted unique characteristics.

Li Yao’s domain, for example, boasted the qualities of freedom, unyielding, resistance, hot blood, etc., as if it were supported by the remaining souls of the ordinary people who were insulted and who were harmed.

During exactly the same moment, Li Yao truly saw a dominating image that looked like the emperor of the universe surging out of the back of the queen.

Her domain was filled with the qualities of majesty and invincibility.

It was a real reflection of the emperors. Naturally, it was not something that Li Linghai could've grasped on her own.

Li Yao confirmed again that Li Linghai probably found the Supreme Emperor's legacy.

Other than the Supreme Emperor, which monarch could have left such a clear and daunting image after thousands of years?

"Pu!"

Li Yao was absolutely no match for the "image of the emperor". He felt that the queen's domain was teeming with billions of soldiers and starships that were bombarding his domain. His domain was wrecked into nothingness in the blink of an eye, and he was blown backward after vomiting blood.

While he was still in midair, the weird human of electric arcs triggered by the queen already grasped Li Jialing in hideous laughter, before it split apart into thousands of electric arcs and whipped the young man hard.

Even Li Yao was no match for the queen, so naturally, Li Jialing was unable to defend himself at all.

However, the stubborn young man still gritted his teeth and tightened his muscles when he was faced with his birth mother as he struggled while making animalistic roars.

Li Yao, however, was more or less relieved.

The queen did not intend to kill anyone, or she could have slain Li Jialing just now. She was merely testing his capability.

But the queen’s attack seemed too heavy for a test. Every whip of electric arcs was like the brutal slash of a saber, leaving wounds deep to the bones on the young man’s face and body and burning the flesh around into charcoal.

Li Jialing screamed aloud under the excruciating pain.

The queen, however, did not show any sympathy at all. She attacked while she sneered, “Too weak. How exactly did Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan refine you? My sources reported that Li Lingfeng invested a great deal of resources on you, and yet he got such a useless garbage?”

“Hoo!”

Exasperated, Li Jialing lunged at the queen without bothering anything, only to be blown back by her whips of electric arcs time and time again.

“Weak. Weak. You are too weak. You don’t know the first thing about martial arts and fighting techniques despite the reasonably acceptable body!”

The queen’s voice was hastier and hastier, and the electric arcs were also falling at a higher and higher frequency. “You will be a complete redundancy if kept by my side! You don’t even have any ability to protect yourself, and you may be captured at any moment and ruin my great cause!”

“Ahhhhh!”

Having no intact skin anymore, Li Jialing burst into tears and shouted like a devil, “Then kill me! Kill me! Kill me!”

“Hehe. You dare to yell at me?”

Squinting, the queen opened her hand, and the electric arcs on her fingertips were condensed into five dazzling balls of light. “You really think that I’ll be lenient and let go of you?”

“Enough, Your Grace!”

Li Yao could not hold back his wrath anymore. His broken domain was condensed again, and he did not disguise his maximal strength of the Divinity Transformation Stage anymore. Both the apocalyptic body and the mental devil were set. The expanding ripples of spiritual energy exploded like bombs in the deep ocean. His fluffy hair rose up and turned into bloodred, with dark gold electric arcs dancing at the endings in sputtering noises. His roars, on the other hand, were a hundred times more astounding than the explosions of his spiritual energy. “Do not think that I’ve been talking to you nicely because I am scared of you. I am merely trying to accomplish my pop’s last wish. But I have my boundaries too!”

Seeing that Li Yao turned into somebody else in his outrage, the queen was slightly dazed. “Huh?”

Li Jialing was also greatly shocked by Li Yao’s drastic changes. “Brother Yao…”

“Li Jialing is absolutely not a monster. Do you know his biggest dream?”

With furious flames of spiritual energy burning on his body, Li Yao cut in the violent force field of electric arcs between the queen and Li Jialing impolitely, before he declared, one word after another, “No matter how Li Lingfeng allured him, he was unwilling to be Li Lingfeng’s tool. He only wanted to get away from Li Lingfeng, the Li family, and the Imperium, and to find a peaceful place at the edge of the cosmos, where he could live a peaceful and carefree life!”

The queen was at a loss again.

The crazy electric arcs all dangled down as if their bones had been plucked.

“Isn’t that exactly why you gave birth to him? You wanted him to escape from the turbulences of darkness and live the life that you had always desired most in your heart on your behalf.”

Li Yao said, “Perhaps without you knowing it, he heard your voice in some uncanny way and inherited your wish because he is your son!”

“Enough!”

Bloody streaks popped up in the queen’s almost transparent eyes, and both of her eyes turned red. She gnashed her teeth. “Don’t think that you are smart enough to presume what is on my mind! And don’t think that such an idiot like Li Lingfeng could be believed. Let me tell you. Of everything that the pig said, no more than 10% was true!”

“Is that so?”

Li Yao replied calmly, “Perhaps Li Lingfeng was truly a stupid pig, but he was your biological brother after all. I, for one, feel that his speculation was at least 70% accurate.”

“At first, I thought that you were a smart person.”

The queen’s killing intent sprang again without any disguise. “But I’m starting to think that you may be even more idiotic than Li Lingfeng!”

“Possibly. Such is the case for the Cultivators. We are all hopeless morons.”

Li Yao declared resolutely, “In any case, for my pop, I will not allow you to kill him. I don’t know if you are really hurt, but if you dare to kill him, I guarantee that whatever ambitions or great causes you have in mind will be gone for good!”

Li Yao and Li Linghai confronted each other again. This time, both of them seemed to have unleashed their maximal fighting will.

The queen’s right hand that was surrounded by electric arcs was raised high in midair for a long time, and her highly-rising breasts fluctuated for a long time. The ripples in her eyes were also struggling.

Eventually, she still—

Shua!

Five streaks of brightness darted out of her fingers as quickly as lightning, and before Li Yao realized what was going on, they shot into Li Jialing’s body from the weirdest angles in almost perfect curves.

“Ahhhhhhhhhhh!”

Li Jialing cried and writhed on the ground in pain. All his bones and muscles were uttering cracking noises.

“You!”

Li Yao was both shocked and infuriated. He did not expect that the queen would make up her mind of killing despite all the hesitation. The woman was truly ruthless and hopeless!

However, as he sensed clearly, he did not sense any killing intent that the queen held against Li Jialing. The overwhelming killing intent was obviously all aimed at Li Yao.

The young man who was struggling in pain on the ground, however, went through shocking mutations!

Just like Wuying Lan when Li Yao encountered him at the power core of the City in the Sky, Li Jialing's skin cracked, his muscles were ripped apart and regrown at a visible speed, his tusks pierced through his lips and even cheeks, his nails became sharp talons, and his bone protruded out of the body one after another, emanating lethal coldness!

Li Jialing truly became a ferocious monster, almost like a strengthened version of Wuying Lan.

Li Linghai's face was as gloomy as a swamp while the electric arcs on her fingertips flooded into the young man's body nonstop. She seemed to be performing a certain high-precision refinement.

Li Yao thought of something and did not interrupt the queen's procedure.

When Li Jialing's body size expanded to almost five meters like a hideous, terrifying mountain of meat, he finally began to shrivel after reaching the limits.

The weird body features were gone, but his skin gradually turned dark gold. He even grew fluffy golden hair.

In the end, he returned to the shape of a human, but his facial organs had subtle changes, and his body was covered in golden hair.

To put it in a descriptive way, the young man was like a majestic golden-haired lion that had assumed the shape of a human after training.

Of course, it was also certainly not inappropriate to say that he was like a big yellow cat.

“What… What happened to me?”

The young man was rather conscious despite the drastic changes that happened to his body. Looking at his furry arms and his fat hands in a daze, he rubbed his face hard and asked Li Yao earnestly, “What have I turned into?”

“Well…”

Li Yao looked at the young man’s bottom subconsciously.

“What are you looking at?!”

As if somebody stomped on his tail, Li Jialing scratched his bottom.

“I was checking if you had grown a tail.”

Li Yao really did not know what to say. “Don’t worry. There aren’t any. Also, you look… very handsome right now. Really. If you make a name for yourself later, you will probably win a nickname such as ‘Gold Lion’, which will sound much cooler than my ‘Vulture’.”

“What have you done to me?”

Feeling like crying, Li Jialing stared at the queen.

“I hate to see you around with… that man’s face.”

Li Linghai said indifferently, “Also, I just killed Li Lingfeng. If you walk around in the capital under the identity of ‘Li Jialing’, you will certainly cause me a lot of trouble. Someone will even trace you and find out my weakness.

“Your appearance is not built by me but contained in your genes in the first place. God knows what kind of refinements Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan did to your genes and how many weird things they have injected into your body. Your cells are an absolute mess.

“Just now, I merely stimulated your cells with my secret arts and tried to awaken a part of your ‘primeval cells’ to more or less change your look. I did not expect to see such a comprehensive change. But this is not half bad. At the very least, nobody will be under the impression that the two of us are in any way related.”

Chapter 2154 - Just a Deal

“Rest assured. I have nothing to do with you at all!”

From the young man’s round eyes that had turned yellow, tears that were emitting vague gold brilliance flowed out. He lost control of himself and shouted, “You are not my mother, and I am not your son. If possible, I would rather mince myself into pieces and return all the genes back to you!”

“Very good. If you can always remember your identity and your declaration, we will get along with each other much easier.”

The queen said coldly, “I will not kill you… for now, but I will not allow such a giant bomb that carries my genes to run loose outside either. You have to stay by my side under my close watch, and you are not to say or do anything without my permission.

“Of course, I will not keep you forever. If everything goes well, nobody will be able to stop me in a few years. When the four Kurfürsten and other noble families are no longer a problem, I will give you a starship, find a warless world at the edge of the Imperium’s territory, and let you fulfill your wish. You can live a carefree and unrestrained life there.

“You may consider it a deal. After all, you have spent so many years under Li Lingfeng’s shelter. You’ll be given real freedom if you stay by my side for a couple of years more. How does it sound? Or do you want me to destroy you right now and take back all the genes that I granted you?”

“You—”

The young man who looked like a gold lion or a yellow cat gnashed his teeth again. He was about to mock back when his shoulder was pressed hard by Li Yao.

“Yes. He said yes. A very fair deal!”

Li Yao said in a hurry. He then turned around and persuaded the young man, “Don’t be rash. Despite her cold face and her foul mouth, the key point of her words is that she is not killing you now! What does it mean? It means that, although she has just killed her biological brother, is making certain schemes against the entire Imperium, threatens to kill you multiple times, and is a cold, heartless, and ruthless monster for power, she is essentially a good woman and a good mother, isn’t she?”

Li Jialing’s face was brimming with suspicion. “... Is she?”

Li Yao: “Fine. I may have exaggerated a bit. She is indeed not exactly a good mother. But the important thing—the important thing is that I jumped to the Imperium through the entire sea of stars and found you two by sheer luck. Would you please take your own life slightly more seriously? Even if it is not for your own sake, you should at least consider it for your deceased father’s sake. At least, he did you nothing wrong, and he would’ve been overjoyed if he learned of your existence! Take a guess. When your soul goes to the other world and he learns that it was your mother who killed you, what will he think?

“Let’s repeat what I said. Give yourself an opportunity, and give her an opportunity, alright? Chances are that if you give each other an opportunity and spend some time together, you will discover that the queen actually has her reasons and she is forced to do what she is doing now, right?”

“I am not forced by anyone.”

The queen interjected coldly, “Li Lingfeng was not wrong about at least one thing. I do enjoy the ecstasy brought by power. In any case, I have to get the supreme power. Things like son are not within my consideration at all.”

Li Yao felt that his head was exploding. “Can we talk nicely, Your Grace? As a sophisticated schemer, why can’t you lie to him for now?”

“Forget it.”

Li Jialing bit his lower lip with his small canine teeth. “This is good, talking everything through at the very beginning. When there is no hope, there will be no disappointment. When there is no deception, there will be no pain. Instead of being covered in lies right now and suffering excruciating pain when the truth is revealed, this is perhaps for the best.

“Alright. I… I agree to your terms. Rest assured. I’ll bear my identity in mind at all times. You are the high and mighty queen, while I am just an abnormal monster. I do not dare to be related to you at all. Even if I am caught by the enemy, I will not admit that you are my… gene provider no matter how they interrogate me.”

“That seems… all we can do for now.”

Li Yao looked at the queen helplessly and asked, “Right. Can he still resume his original appearance? Well, don’t overthink. I’m not saying that you look terrible right now. In fact, it is rather… adorable. I’m just asking by the way.”

“As long as you can advance to the level where you can control all the cells over your body freely at will, you will naturally be able to suppress the agitating cells and resume your original look."

The queen said casually, "This is also sort of a small training for you to remind you of the strengthening of your cells.

"Wuying Lan and Li Lingfeng were two irresponsible and whimsical scumbags. They have injected an assortment of drugs into your body, turning your cells and your blood into a mess. It is almost a terrible disaster. This is a good opportunity for you to polish your own body.

"After we return to the Deep Sea Fleet, I will naturally teach you some body-polishing techniques of higher levels. I hope that you can fully carry out the potentials of the unique body.

"Make no mistake. I just don't want to bring a pure burden with me, which will definitely jeopardize my cause. At the very least, if you are caught by the enemy, I hope that you will at least have the ability to end yourself."

"I understand you perfectly."

Li Jialing said sullenly, "There will be absolutely no misunderstanding or unnecessary hope."

The three of them looked at each other somewhat in embarrassment.

"Great!"

Li Yao suddenly clapped his hands and said, "All the dark clouds in the sky are gone. We have talked everything through, and the family is reunited. Today truly calls for celebration, does it?"

Not saying anything, the queen groped on the ground with the electric arcs on her fingertips, picking up the three Cosmos Rings left by Li Lingfeng. Then, she retrieved a smaller armor from her own Cosmos Ring and tossed it to the ground before she turned around and left quickly, as if she did not want to talk anything more to Li Jialing.

“Let’s go too.”

Li Yao stuffed the armor into the young man’s arms and watched him put it on. Then, they followed the queen to move forward. He said, “Don’t be so stubborn. Try to get in touch with her more and let her have the fun of being a mother. My intuitions tell me that her heart is not as mean as her tongue, and that she can take adulations but not insults. If you can just play cute, I bet her heart will be softened!”

Li Jialing stared at Li Yao solemnly for a while, before he lowered his head and walked in silence. It was not until a long time later that he squeezed out a sentence. “I would rather die right now than play cute to her.”

“You…”

A strong sense of helplessness filled Li Yao’s chest. He complained to the mental devil, “I remember that I have jumped to the Imperium to facilitate the diplomatic relation of the two countries, overthrow the regime of the Imperium, resist the scourge of the Covenant Alliance, and to maintain the universe peace. But why do I feel that I am a nanny right now?”

That being said, it was certainly not going to work out if everybody was so cold and indifferent to one another. There were still a lot of secrets that Li Yao intended to find out from Li Linghai.

Now that Li Jialing refused to break the ice, Li Yao had to take action in person.

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao walked faster and caught up to Li Linghai. “Your Grace, well, I’m very curious about my foster father’s name. Could you tell me?”

Stepping on a lotus flower of lightning, Li Linghai moved fast and replied without looking back at all, “No.”

Li Yao was not frustrated at all. He went on asking, “Was the world fragment that you and my pop explored together really the ‘Empyreal Transcendence Sector’ where the Supreme Emperor was buried in the legends?”

Li Linghai’s footsteps slowed down, but then she drifted forward again as if nothing happened. “Do not mention that thing to anybody. You should understand the graveness of the issue. Should it be known by somebody else, a lot of people would be coming to kill you even if I don’t.

“Also, nobody knows that I am so strong. Even my subordinates in the Deep Sea Fleet know that I am in the Divinity Transformation Stage at best, but they do not have any clue about ‘Dragon Over The Sky’. Do not spill out anything that shouldn’t be said to them.”

“Understood.”

Li Yao knew that Li Linghai definitely would not expose her greatest trump card so easily. But after all, he still had the half key, and he could deal with her slowly. Thinking for a moment, he smiled again. “Right. Can I ask you a personal question?”

Li Linghai said, “I vaguely have a feeling that you are going to ask me something that will make me want to kill someone.”

“No, no, absolutely not.”

Li Yao hurried to wave his hands. “I am really not asking anything too sensitive but only interested in how I should address you in private in the future. I called my foster father ‘Pop’. So, when there are no outsiders, should I call you ‘Mother’ as a way to show respect?”

The queen came to an abrupt halt and turned around rigidly, staring at Li Yao in disbelief.

“I truly… find it a wonder.”

The queen mumbled, “How did such a guy like you advance all the way into the Divinity Transformation Stage without being beaten to death?”

Li Yao returned to Li Jialing, looking crestfallen.

“Did you see?”

Under the cover of the thunderstorm, Li Yao said to the young man in a low voice, “In fact, the queen is rather easy to get along with. I just had a pleasant conversation with her, didn’t I?”

After a brief silence, Li Jialing said, “Brother Yao, in fact, my hearing has always been keen, and it seems even keener after I turned into this. I heard everything you and the queen said.

“Although I thank you for everything you did in the past two days, I have to agree with the queen on this one. Sometimes, you do seem to be lacking some beating.”

“What are you talking about?”

Li Yao felt that he was wronged. “I’m just trying to resolve the misunderstandings between you!”

“You can stop wasting your time. I think it is great now.”

The young man smiled. “I’m already satisfied to have met such a ‘brother’ like you and to know my birth father. Really. One can’t be too greedy. I can live a good life even without a mother.

“However, just rest assured. I’ll forever remember everything you’ve done, Brother Yao, and I won’t do anything rashly for your sake.”

Li Yao was silent. After a long time, he sighed. “Forget it. You won’t believe it whatever I say right now. Let me just prove it to you gradually!”

The young man was slightly dazed. “Prove what?”

“Prove that there are a lot of bright and beautiful things in the world despite the coldness and the darkness.”

Raising his head, Li Yao looked at the murky, dark, and erratic sky of the Sand Primitive Sector through the lightning and the clouds and said softly, “In both the profound space and in the unpredictable hearts of humans… you can definitely find them!”

Chapter 2155 - Deep Sea Flee Forty

Outside of the thunderstorm, under the sky that was equally dim, in the middle of the blowing wind, almost thirty full-terrain small assault starships, which had been added with special units to make them able to carry out aggressive combat ability in both the vacuum of zero gravity and the surface of planets where the gravity was high, had been docked.

Those little monsters had already ripped apart the large but clumsy starships that Li Lingfeng brought into shreds.

At this moment, the queen’s subordinates were clearing the battlefield and moving the units, supplies, and fuel on the large starships that were still of value to their own starships. They were also shooting at the bodies on the ground to make sure that there were no lucky survivors.

After they dismantled everything in a large starship, they would install crystal bombs on it from inside to outside and completely blow it up into melted garbage, absolutely not leaving any trace behind.

Ruthless, decisive, and well-trained. It was definitely an elite troop that had been through plenty of battles. That was Li Yao’s first impression of “Deep Sea Fleet”, the queen’s secret armed force.

The unique appearance of the small assault starships and their slightly vintage style also slightly surprised Li Yao as a refiner.

Under the help of Di Feiwen, the deputy commander of the Black Wind Fleet, Li Yao had a deep understanding of the levels, configurations, and appearances of the starships that were currently serving in the army of the Imperium.

The Imperium of True Human Beings was different from the Star Glory Federation. After finding the primeval treasures in the Kunlun relic a hundred years ago, the federation entered an age of technological boom. The warships of the federation a hundred years ago and those a hundred years later were absolutely two concepts.

The Imperium, on the other hand, had gradually hit the bottleneck after developing for a thousand years. Although the Black Wind Fleet had been away from the homeland of the Imperium for a hundred years, the Imperium did not make such significant improvements in the production of starships in the meantime.

Therefore, Li Yao noticed after he reached the Martial Meritocrats Sector that the starships serving in the Imperium right now were not essentially different from the starships of the Black Wind Fleet that were brought out a hundred years ago, despite the upgrades and optimizations in certain details.

The queen’s “Deep Sea Fleet”, on the other hand, was different from the starships of the Imperium that Li Yao saw in the Martial Meritocrats Sector.

After removing the messy plugins that were installed to pretend to be “Cultivators”, the main bodies that they revealed were still the “Flying Leopard”-level full-terrain assault starships serving in the Imperium.

However, the anti-gravity units and the power units more or less carried the features of the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago.

For example, the rune arrays and the layered armors gave a feeling of noisiness, glamor, complexity, and even cumbersomeness, which was entirely different from the starship style of the Imperium, which pursued simplicity and smoothness and preferred that no manual traces could be found on the surface.

While Li Yao was observing the Deep Sea Fleet, the Immortal Cultivators of the Deep Sea Fleet noticed them too.

“Your Grace!”

A team of fully-armed Exos flew over and fell on one of their knees, paying respect to Li Linghai.

They all opened their helmets. The guy in the lead was a hideous brawny man with a “＃”-shaped scar on his face.

Because the scar involved his facial organs, his eyes bulged particularly out, making him look like some sort of fish living deep inside the ocean. He gave both a hilarious and chilling feeling.

Distracted by him, Li Yao sensed that the hideous man was a terrifying expert at least in the Nascent Soul Stage.

However, he was still more or less puzzled why the brawny man would left the creepy scar on his face. For someone in the Nascent Soul Stage, it was not a difficult task to stimulate the cells and to repair the simple wounds. If that did not work out, the medical and surgical technologies of the Imperium were definitely good enough to deal with a few scars, right?

The hideous man was also slightly stunned to see two strangers standing behind Li Linghai.

However, he knew that the queen had too many secrets and too many extraordinary subordinates under her command. So, he knew better than asking who they were recklessly.

Li Linghai was very satisfied with the performance of the hideous man. Narrowing her hands and glancing around the battlefield, she said with a smile, “All of them have been taken care of with none left? Well done, General Tu.”

She then turned around and explained to Li Yao and Li Jialing, “This is the deputy leader of ‘Deep Sea Legion’, a marine troop affiliated to the Deep Sea Fleet. He is also the captain of the First Assault Team. General Tu Zhengdao used to be one of the youngest lieutenant admirals of the Imperium, and he is best at stealth, assaults, and sabotages in the enemy’s rear. The two of you should get to know each other if you have the chance.”

Tu Zhengdao, the hideous man, slightly frowned and said solemnly, “There is no need to talk about my military rank in the fake army of the Imperium. Right now, I am loyal to the queen alone, and I am just the deputy leader of the Deep Sea Legion and the captain of the First Assault Team!”

“General Tu, rest assured.”

Li Linghai said with a smile, “One day, the real army of the Imperium will march back to the capital, and you will be an admiral of the Imperium of True Human Beings again. A real admiral of the real army of the real Imperium!”

Thinking quickly, Li Yao realized that the contradictions between Li Linghai and the aristocrats of the Imperium had escalated to such an extent that she did not even believe that her enemy’s positions were legitimate.

It was certainly not a bad thing for the federation.

“Li Lingfeng is too stupid to be of any help for our cause. Cooperating with him will not necessarily push our plan forward, but he is absolutely capable of destroying the dreams and hopes of all of us if we do not cooperate with him.”

Li Linghai said casually, “Therefore, I’ve been making secret plans to eradicate him since ten years ago. The two fellow Cultivators here were specially raised for the purpose of executing Li Lingfeng. Today, they have accomplished their mission and slain the scoundrel. So, they can now surface and officially join the Deep Sea Fleet.”

“Li Lingfeng is dead?”

Tu Zhengdao was apparently delighted. But then he glanced at Li Yao and Li Jialing rather warily. “He was killed by the two fellow Cultivators here?”

“Exactly. He is ‘Vulture Li Yao’, and he is Huang Feng[1]

.”

Pausing for a moment, Li Linghai said, “They’ll stay by my side for now and join my security team as my secretary and my personal guard. They are strangers to most people and unlike you who are all deeply connected to the obsolete army of the Imperium. It will be easier for them to enter and exit the capital city. They may be able to carry out certain missions that are not suitable for you.”

“Secretary and personal guard?”

Including Tu Zhengdao, all the Immortal Cultivators of the First Assault Team of the Deep Sea Legion were greatly surprised.

As Li Linghai’s secret troop, they naturally all knew how many appalling secrets and what great ambitions the seemingly meek queen held.

The queen’s secretary and the personal guard would definitely learn of many secrets of the queen. If their great plan did work out later, the future of the two strangers would be nothing but promising.

Who were the two strangers exactly, and what made them qualified to be trusted and appreciated by the queen?

The First Assault Team of the Deep Sea Legion was the elite of the elites. The guards in the queen’s security team were mostly the seasoned warriors in the First Assault Team. One might even say that they were the queen’s most trusted subordinates.

Otherwise, such a critical mission to execute Li Lingfeng wouldn’t have been entrusted to them to carry out.

The Immortal Cultivators were short of many things, but certainly not the ruthless and disobedient guys. Immediately, dozens of malicious eyes were glancing at Li Yao and Li Jialing.

Li Linghai smiled. “Having executed Li Lingfeng together with me, they naturally have something extraordinary about them. If you are interested, you should get to know each other better. Only after you know each other very well will you be more confident when you fight by each other’s side in the future.”

It was obviously a hint that she did not object to, or rather, she was encouraging, a test on the expertise of the two newcomers from the warriors of the First Assault Team.

Immediately, a few brawny and ruthless warriors walked out. One of the Immortal Cultivators who was more than 2.5 meters tall and as huge as an iron tower looked at the white hair all over Li Jialing’s body and chuckled. “Are you a body fundamentalist, or… of demon descendant?”

It was an ill-intended question.

The Imperium of True Human Beings considered itself the rightful successor of the civilization of mankind. Naturally, it was never fond of “demons”.

After ten thousand years of hunting and slaughtering, there were barely any large-scale, habitat-based demons in the territory of the Imperium. Whatever left of the demons were all slaves who were even more inferior than “hominoids”.

At the very least, hominoids had the possibility of awakening their spiritual roots and growing into Immortal Cultivators theoretically, but the odds were little to none for a demon to change their fate however strong they became after training.

In the Imperium, cursing someone to be a demon was even more serious than cursing him to be a “bastard”.

Of course, the body fundamentalists, who had built their bodies into magical equipment and awakened all kinds of primeval cells, would also grow the features of ancient beasts, and it was not easy to distinguish them from demons. Speaking of which, they were essentially the same thing. Demons were exactly the ancient body fundamentalists that the Nuwa Civilization raised during the primeval war.

This was already a well-acknowledged fact in the Star Glory Federation.

However, under the political correctness of the Imperium of True Human Beings where pure human beings were above anything else, it was certainly not to be admitted.

The brawny, tower-like man asked the question in an obvious provocation.

Li Yao looked at Li Jialing.

Li Jialing smiled and suddenly charged forward in a streak of gold brilliance.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Sharp claws ejected out of the plump palms, triggering a hundred golden arcs that enshrouded the brawny man. Very soon, his skin was falling apart, and he was bleeding hard.

The warrior of the First Assault Team did not expect Li Jialing’s attack to be so agile and brutal. After losing the initiative of the battle, he could not take it back at all.

After all, Li Jialing had received Wuying Lan and Li Lingfeng’s double refinements with a ferocious body that was even more perfect than Wuying Lan’s. He was also almost exploding in fury after everything he experienced today.

He couldn’t defend himself at all in front of Li Yao and Li Linghai, but it was more than easy for him to deal with a common warrior of the assault team.

It all happened too fast. After a series of dazzling attacks, Li Jialing suddenly dashed to the head of the brawny man and tied the man’s neck with his legs like a boa, not giving the helmet a chance to spread out of the armor and protect the head. Then, his claws stabbed at the enemy’s temples like eight gold daggers!

[1] Note: Huang Feng means “yellow wind”.

Chapter 2156 - Skinny Monkeys Forty

“Ah!”

The warriors of the assault team nearby exclaimed in shock, but there was no time for them to stop it. Li Jialing was too fast and too intimidating, like a bloodthirsty lion that had been enraged. He gave the feeling that he would die together with whoever was bold enough to intervene.

The Immortal Cultivators who had been through hundreds of battles and killed more people than they could count were all stunned for half a second by the fury that the young man had burst out after more than ten years of repression.

Tu Zhengdao, the deputy leader of the Deep Sea Legion and the captain of the First Assault Team, was the only one who sniffed despite his surprise and stomped on the ground, meaning to separate the two of them.

However—

While he was fast enough, somebody was even faster than him. Just the moment when he was about to leap forward, he felt that somebody pressed his shoulder softly.

After a single press, all the strength inside his body seemed to be absorbed by a black hole. His limbs turned empty, and his knees became sour and numb. He couldn’t jump at all.

Who is it?

Tu Zhengdao was greatly appalled, so chilled that his spine was almost frozen!

Everybody felt that something flashed before their eyes. Then, they saw the white-haired young man who was as aggressive as a crazy lion was grabbed by the neck by “Vulture Li Yao”, as if he were a biting cat.

The crazy lion turned into a giant cat, but it was still snatching, roaring, and grimacing, although it could not get out of the palm of “Vulture Li Yao”.

“Excuse us.”

Grabbing Li Jialing in one hand, Li Yao apologized to the brawny man who was bleeding and nearly strangled politely, “My little brother is a little bit cranky. Try not to piss him off, fellow Cultivators.”

The many Immortal Cultivators looked at the brawny man who fell to the ground and was not back to himself yet, and then at the raging Li Jialing and the polite Li Yao, and eventually their captain, Tu Zhengdao, who was pale and sweating. They all swallowed hard.

They couldn’t help but feel the utmost admiration for Li Linghai again.

Her Grace was truly immeasurable and had too many extraordinary subordinates under her command. The two brutal men that she had recruited were even more merciless than the seasoned warriors of the First Assault Team of the Deep Sea Legion!

Holding Li Jialing’s neck and picking him back to Li Linghai, Li Yao asked in a low voice, “Are you satisfied?”

Li Linghai smiled and waved her hands. “Let’s go back to the ‘Deep Sea Palace’!”

…

Near the splendid halo of the seventh planet at the periphery of the Sand Primitive Sector, more than twenty small assault warships were slowly sailing to a gargantuan mothership more than ten kilometers long. It was a super space base with the functions of communication, commanding, maintenance, and supplies!

The magnetic fields of the two parties attracted one another until all the small assault warships were attached to the shell of the mothership tightly, and the supply transmission channels, the short-distance teleportation arrays, and the Spiritual Nexus system were connected. They were like the barnacles attached to a whale or a giant ship.

Following Li Linghai, Li Yao and Li Jialing walked into the bridge of “Dragon Abyss”, the mothership, and felt that they were melted in the sea of stars.

The shimmers from the super crystal processors were like glittering stars. The spiritual energy of the wholehearted crew members was also spreading out non stop as they worked hard and congregated into an immeasurable ocean of spiritual energy. A vague feeling of graveness could be sensed.

Li Yao was deeply awed by the enormity of the bridge and the professionalism of the commanders.

He once visited the bridge of “Burning Prairie”, the most advanced main-force warship of the federation, but it did not seem as good as this place.

It was quite easy to build a legion where everybody was equipped with a crystal suit, which required only ten years at most. But the space warships, especially a command center of such a level that equated to the “brain” of a fleet, were definitely not something that could be produced with enough money and people. Hundreds of years of profound experience was a prerequisite.

Even if Li Linghai had truly found the Supreme Emperor’s treasures, it was still rather amazing that she had built such a “Deep Sea Fleet” in only decades.

Also, Li Yao noticed that the enormous light beam at the center of the bridge was displaying not just the intelligence of the small fleet but also the intelligence from every part of the Imperium, including some Sectors at the borderland of the Imperium.

Li Linghai must boast an overwhelming, penetrative intelligence network. What was she up to exactly? Purely power?

Li Yao focused his eyes on the military uniforms of the crew members.

Through Di Feiwen, Li Yao had profound studies on the military uniforms of the Imperium’s army in different environments. He knew the different combat clothes, working clothes, normal clothes, and courtesy clothes, which could be used in the scorching environment hundreds of degrees, the freezing environment covered in snow, or a stormy planet frequented by blowing wind and stones.

What was strange was that, while the crew members were wearing the standard uniforms of the Imperium’s army, it was not the latest model but the regular uniforms on the warships of the Imperium of True Human Beings about nine hundred years ago.

Under the illumination of the crystal processors, they were like a bunch of ghosts from a thousand years ago.

A great question mark popped up on Li Yao’s head.

Li Linghai sensed his confusion very keenly.

Now that she had decided to bring Li Yao and Li Jialing with him, Li Linghai did not keep too many things a secret from them.

Li Yao was not wrong about one thing.

Not just a Divinity Transformation Stage expert, even someone in the Nascent Soul Stage was a very important, strategic treasure. Unless it was absolutely necessary, no ambitious person would destroy someone in the Nascent Soul Stage or the Divinity Transformation Stage easily but would try their best to recruit the talents.

It was especially so for Li Yao, a Divinity Transformation Stage expert who was both good at fighting and refining, who brought a Colossus with him, and who was deeply associated with Li Linghai in a certain way. He was almost a gift of the heavens for Li Linghai’s ambitions.

Naturally, such an expert of the Divinity Transformation Stage could not be treated as a common “subordinate” but some sort of ally or partner.

Therefore, no matter how antagonistic they were at the beginning, after Li Linghai decided to recruit Li Yao, she would have to change her attitude and try to transform him into a “real Immortal Cultivator”.

“You seem to have a lot of questions regarding my warships and soldiers?”

While operating on the crystal processor quickly and handling the intelligence delivered from everywhere in the Imperium, Li Linghai asked casually.

“Indeed. I did not expect the queen’s force to be so strong. The soldiers of yours are almost as good as the elite soldiers on Firefly.”

Li Yao said frankly, “However, what baffles me more is why Your Grace established such a secret fleet at great risks. Was it really just for power, as Li Lingfeng said?

“To be honest, despite the tragedies on Firefly, which almost shook my belief, after everything on the Land of Sins, I held on to the ideology of the Cultivators and have refocused my almost broken belief, thereby advancing into the Divinity Transformation Stage!

“So, it will be quite disappointing if the queen’s purpose is just power.”

Li Linghai smiled and said, “Are you saying that you hope that I can have some lofty ideals whether I’m righteous or I’m evil?”

Li Yao thought for a moment and said, “You can say that. Or rather, I do not believe that you could gather such an enormous force just with the allurement of power and without the encouragement of a lofty ideal.

“To be honest, despite our different stances, the vigor and exuberance that I sensed after I boarded on your starship are exactly the same from what I felt from some of the firmest Cultivators.

“It’s been a long time since I last saw such a young army!”

“Give me a break about the clichés of the Cultivators.”

Li Linghai said unemotionally, “The path of the Cultivators are just the naïve, inconsistent, and ungrounded ideas when new human beings that are different from ordinary people were just born and still restrained by the ethics and morals of the old times. They are not of any value to provide guidance for reality or to resolve any problem.

“Yes, the logic of the Cultivator is very correct and pleasant to hear. Until they run into serious, actual problems, everybody can claim to be a Cultivator, but when they do run into irresolvable difficulties where devastating sacrifices must be made, the Cultivators’ theories will be entirely useless. They have to place their hope on ‘heroes’ or ‘miracles’, but heroes and miracles do not happen very often. The civilization of mankind, on the other hand, must live on even in the harshest environment, with or without heroes and miracles!

“Forget it. You are too deeply poisoned to be convinced by a few words. You are not wrong about at least one thing. We are indeed from the Immortal Cultivators you saw on the Land of Sins. Or rather, those people were fake Immortal Cultivators, while we are the real Immortal Cultivators and the hope of humanity!”

Li Yao blinked his eyes. “What are ‘fake Immortal Cultivators’ and what are ‘real Cultivators’? Do the ‘real Immortal Cultivators’ not oppress ordinary people?”

Li Linghai smiled in disdain. “Why, in your eyes, the most oppressed class in the Imperium of True Human Beings are hominoids, and the most fundamental conflict is the conflict between true human beings and hominoids?”

Li Yao was dazed. “Isn’t it so?”

“Let me put it this way.”

Pondering for a moment, Li Linghai said, “Let’s simplify the model of the society in the Imperium into a mine. The owner of the mine with whips and sabers, a young and heaty miner, and a skinny, low-intelligent monkey who can more or less do the mining.

“Who do you think is the most oppressed among the three?

“Or rather, if you are the mine owner with whips and sabers and you want the most ores and minerals to be excavated, who will you exploit mainly, the young and healthy miner or the skinny monkey?”

Li Yao was stunned for a long time before he mumbled, “I’m afraid that it will be the young and healthy miner, but…”

“That’s right.”

The queen of the Imperium said coldly, “In the eyes of the high-level Immortal Cultivators, the hominoids whose spiritual roots are not awakened are like skinny monkeys and do not boast much value to be exploited. The ones with the greatest value to be exploited are the ‘young and healthy miners’, or to wit, the vast population of middle- and low-level Immortal Cultivators, those in the Refinement Stage and the Building Foundation Stage, who are largest in number.

“Therefore, the major contradiction in the Imperium right now is not that between true human beings and hominoids as you have imagined at all, but the contradiction between the upper-class true human beings and the lower-class ones, namely the high-level Immortal Cultivators in the Nascent

Soul Stage and the Divinity Transformation Stage who are strong but small in number and the bottom-level Immortal Cultivators in the Refinement Stage and the Building Foundation Stage who are the largest in number. The most exploited, oppressed, harmed, and those who live the most painful lives are the Immortal Cultivators living at the bottom level!”

Chapter 2157 - The Immortal Cultivators of Different Classes

The queen’s astonishing conclusion stunned Li Yao for a long time. He finally shook his head and said, “I fear that you cannot draw the comparison so simply. Even though the strength of one ordinary person is weak, like a…’skinny monkey’, the ordinary people take up most of the population after all. Do they not have the greatest value to be exploited when considering them as a whole?”

“Theoretically, yes, but you have overlooked one point, which is that even ‘exploitation’ comes with a cost.”

Li Linghai said, “When the cost of management far exceeds the value that can possibly be exploited, such exploitation will not be a fair deal. It is like human beings are capable of building skinny monkeys into muscular and ferocious biochemical beasts through various kinds of secret techniques, but no mines or armies in reality would ever do that because it is simply too cost-ineffective.”

Li Yao said, “Human beings are no monkeys after all. The gap between the so-called ‘hominoids’ and ‘true human beings’ is smaller than you think. I’m aware that the Imperium has countless most cruel techniques, which can transform humans into abnormal, ugly appearances, or even replace their organs with artificial ones, just in order to change the ordinary people into a form that is more suitable for exploitation. Do you want to deny it, Your Grace?”

Li Linghai said casually, “Do you think that it is really ‘exploitation’?”

Li Yao asked back, “Is it not?”

Li Linghai replied, “Even if it is, that is for the sake of the hominoids. You should know that the Imperium’s spiritual puppet industry is already highly developed, making it possible to produce various sorts of puppets in a large bulk at a reasonable cost. If the hominoids do not transform them into hideous but highly-efficient shapes, they will only lose the cruel competitions and starve to death in the end—not just themselves, but their families too.

“Such examples are not rare in the history of the Imperium. Some mine owners were too kind to perform modifications on the hominoid miners in their mines, which kept the cost of mining at a high level. Unable to be used in the cruel commercial competition, the mines went bankrupt and were merged by other people as a whole.

“Then, after such mines were merged, a large batch of spiritual puppets would often be sent over in replacement of the human miners. How do you think the human miners who were replaced by machines would end?

“So, it was exactly for the survival of the bottom-level hominoids that the specialists and scholars of the Imperium came up with all kinds of body-building and mechanical modification technologies with all the wisdom, granting hominoids the ability to compete with spiritual puppets with unique abilities that the spiritual puppets did not have. Today, most of the hominoids have managed to keep their jobs and live on.

“In many cases, moral code and a kind heart will not solve any actual problem. Increasing the minimum wage and the working environment recklessly with no consideration of reality will only worsen the living conditions of the folks at the bottom level. I don’t believe that you do not understand such a simple logic as someone in the Divinity Transformation Stage.”

“Of course I do.”

Li Yao gnashed his teeth. “But that does not justify your decision to transform a living human into an iron spider. Anything has a line, and the Imperium’s action in pushing all the bottom-level people into cruel competitions irresponsibly has certainly crossed the line!”

The queen’s eyes flashed, and she took a step back. “Perhaps you are right. The Imperium is indeed greatly responsible for the bottom-level people. But things can only be changed on one prerequisite—a powerful central government that is capable of influencing the policies of every Sector, every resource plant, every family, and every sect directly. If the policies are only effective in the capital, nothing can be changed however you preach on your ideas and hopes.

“All in all, this is not the key of our discussion today. The key is that, compared to the bottom-level Immortal Cultivators, hominoids are just skinny monkeys in the eyes of the high-level Immortal Cultivators, who are not very interested in directly exploiting them.

“On the other hand, the Imperium of True Human Beings has governed the universe for a thousand years, and the true path of immortality has entered everyone’s heart. Even the hominoids also worship the theory of ‘survival of the fittest’ and consider the true path of immortality a law of nature.

“In such a state, the hominoids in fact do not have many complaints about their fate. Who else can they blame for their weakness? After they are used to their weakness, they will not have too many hopes. Most of the hominoids have submitted to their fate.

“The happiness of mankind depends on not materials but the mind most of the time. Believe it or not, many highly-developed Sectors in the Imperium have very mature and stable rules for the operation of society. The sample investigation on the hominoids there suggested that their happiness index was not low at all.

“Most of the hominoids felt that they should be content with their lives, which were much better than during the age of the ancient Cultivators, the Great Dark Age when the demons reigned, or the miseries when they were under the governance of the Alliance of the Holy Covenant. That is why Starlight never raised much trouble after stirring for hundreds of years.

“Of course, you may think that it is a result of the Imperium’s long-term brainwashing. I do not want to argue with you but only am telling you a fact.

“The fact is that the hominoids are not the class that is most dissatisfied about the situation in the Imperium and wants to change their fate most. The people who truly suffer the heaviest oppression, who are aware of the fact that ‘we are being oppressed’, and who have enough wisdom, courage, and combat ability to change the current situation, are the middle- and low-level Immortal Cultivators in the Refinement Stage, the Building Foundation Stage, and partly in the Core Formation Stage!

“The logic is rather easy to understand, isn’t it?

“If you are a hominoid miner, the gravest ‘exploitation’ that you may encounter is lifelong work in the sunless mines. Unless you come across accidents such as mine explosions, you can always keep your life. Nobody will ask you to go to the battlefield unless it is absolutely necessary. Those ‘skinny monkeys’ will be burdens even if they are driven to the battlefield.

“Also, you are unlikely to have a chance to receive enough education that will make you recognize your fate and your pain clearly. In many cases, there will be no pain if you cannot recognize the pain, right?

“But the bottom-level Immortal Cultivators are different.

“The ‘exploitation’ that they bear can possibly be a fight against a monster that will not show up even in their nightmares in a certain world fragment. They may be swallowed by the monster at any moment and slowly digested by the acids in the stomach of the monster in a span of a year and a half before you finally die in the last month.

“Yes. Safety is quite a problem in many unconventional small mines in many remote worlds of the Imperium, and accidents happen all the time. But however high the death rate of the miners is, it will not be higher than the death rate of the bottom-level Immortal Cultivators on the battlefield.

“On the other hand, even the Immortal Cultivators at the bottommost level, who have just awakened their spiritual root and are at the first level of the Refinement Stage, have enough wisdom to think about the society they live in, their future, and the entire world!

“You know that ‘Immortal Cultivators’ are regarded as the highest dominators of the country and the civilization in the traditional education of the Imperium. All the middle- and low-level Immortal Cultivators have high hopes for themselves. They are full of hot blood and ambitions. Do you expect such Immortal Cultivators to take it casually after realizing that they are just tools being exploited?”

Li Yao was deeply attracted by what Li Linghai said.

He used to consider the Immortal Cultivators as a whole piece in the same interest group, and he had never examined the issue from such a perspective.

After thinking carefully for a moment, he still shook his head slowly and said, “That’s still not right. The hominoid miners work in the sunless mines until their death without any hope, but doesn’t the Imperium have a very advanced ‘contribution point’ system, which claims to honor all the experts regardless of their origins and ensures the smoothness of the channel of ascension?

“Every Immortal Cultivator has an opportunity of getting abundant ‘contribution points’ during their fights with the ferocious beasts in the world fragments. After exchanging the contribution points, they would be able to upgrade step by step and eventually grow into an unparalleled expert someday. As for those who die halfway, they can only blame themselves for not being lucky enough according to your theory.”

Li Linghai laughed. “The contribution point system that claims to be absolutely fair and ensures a smooth channel of ascension? Even I do not believe such propaganda, and you do?”

Li Yao blinked his eyes quickly. “Not really. But… please explain it to me, Your Grace.”

“Getting to the bottom of it, it is all about making the cake and dividing the cake. During the period of rise, the cake grows bigger and bigger. Naturally, it can be distributed in any way. However, once the cake reaches the limits or even begins to shrink, you will never be able to divide it evenly.”

Li Linghai sighed. “The thousand years of history of the Imperium of True Human Beings, in fact, can be divided into the first five hundred years and the second five hundred years.

“In the first five hundred years, the Imperium expanded to all directions based on the center of the cosmos. A new Sector was discovered almost every year with triumphs. New territories, new populations, and all kinds of resources were added every year. New legions and fleets were established incessantly too. Naturally, the territories, legions, and fleets were accompanied by a great deal of jobs and opportunities.

“At that time, the channel of ascension for the middle- and low-level Immortal Cultivators was indeed smooth and unhindered. As long as they were determined, with the slightest luck, they might turn into a celebrity when nobody knew their name yesterday. Under the boost of countless resources, they could also train themselves into dominating experts.

“It was the golden age of the Imperium. Vigorous, ambitious, and thriving. At that time, the interest groups had not been rigidified yet, and social mobility was still very high. What you described was very true. The middle- and low-level Immortal Cultivators were passionate about participating in all kinds of wars to earn contribution points. Even if they died in the most painful way during the fights, they would only blame themselves for not being capable enough, and they would certainly not decry the high-level Immortal Cultivators for ‘oppressing’ them.

“However…

“About five hundred years ago, the territory of the Imperium of True Human Beings already expanded to more than 90% of what it is today. Having reached the limits, and when the expansion of the ‘cake’ stopped, the situation in the next five hundred years was entirely different.”

Chapter 2158 - The Strong Remain Strong!

Thinking quickly, Li Yao already envisioned the picture when the phase of the Imperium’s high-speed expansion came to an end. He blurted out, “In short, the resources in the universe are limited.”

“Exactly.”

Li Linghai said casually, “To put it more frankly, since the Imperium has only a limited ability of expansion and a limited territory, there are certainly limited jobs, opportunities, and intimidating power. One Sector could only have one master, after all, one sect could only have one leader and one fleet could only have one commander. Even a crystal mine could only have one owner, right?

“That was the center of all the contradictions.

“In the first five hundred years, as the Imperium expanded greatly, the vested interests had already split the positions such as Sector Masters, fleet commanders, sect leaders, or even mine owners. There would be no vacancy at all until one of them died!

“In the second five hundred years, it was often the case that the expedition army of the Imperium failed to find a single Sector after decades of exploration without bothering the cost. Or even when it found one, the new territory would be a land of desolation and nothingness. How could it help anything?

“Therefore, for the Immortal Cultivators who were born in the second five hundred years, even if they were talented, determined, and fortunate, it was impossible for them to rise to the sky in one step like their predecessors in the first five hundred years.”

Li Yao smiled. “Don’t the Immortal Cultivators worship ‘survival of the fittest’? If the cake could not be made any bigger, they could always rob other people of their slices of the cake!”

Li Linghai replied with a smile too, “Do you think that the class of vested interests that was gradually ossified were all dead people who would just watch the ambitious latecomers rob them without doing anything first?

“Even an idiot should know which side had more ways to eat the whole cake, the existent interest holders who boasted abundant training resources, techniques, and even space fleets, or the silly guys who awakened their spiritual roots with luck and who stumbled into their current level!

“All in all, the existent interest holders who made a fortune out of wars in the first five hundred years and who had occupied the high grounds of the politics, economy, military, culture, and all the other fields of the Imperium gradually rigidified into lumps large and small under the names of family, sector fleet. Whatever their names were, they were essentially the same. They were the monopoly groups that were huge enough to swallow the whole world. They were the dominators and the oligarchs.

“As the dominating oligarchs who had concentrated all the resources, they were naturally free to come up with rules that were in their favor, allowing all the new resources to flow into their bloody mouth legally and reasonably. That is the logic of the big growing bigger and the strong remaining strong. The talents who rose later without notable backgrounds were absolutely incapable of competing with the oligarchs.

“The simplest example would be the contribution point system that seems fair and gives everybody a chance.

“Calculate contribution points with military credits and exchange the contribution points for training resources, military ranks, and government posts. It seems very fair and reasonable, right?

“But the fairest and reasonable system has to be carried out by specific persons. If the Immortal Cultivators who are responsible for carrying out the contribution point system are from the deeply-rooted noble families, how would they treat the Immortal Cultivators who are from the civilian class equally?

“Under the contribution point system, the measurement of the mission difficulty is decided by organizations such as the ‘Military Credits Committee’ in the local Sectors. It is needless to say that the organizations are all controlled by the oligarchs and the nobles, who can totally tailor-make some easy missions with a high reward of contribution points for the members of their families and inform those members to claim the missions before the missions are released. In such a way, the members of their families will get abundant contribution points without any risk in a justifiable way, right?

“Even worse, when some missions are too difficult, they will intentionally allure the Immortal Cultivators of poor backgrounds to execute them, and when the Immortal Cultivators suffer heavy casualties and the goal of the mission is more or less reached, they will add the members of their families into the team under the excuse that the mission is too difficult and requires more hands. Naturally, the members of their families will be able to deal the last blow and earn tremendous contribution points in the easiest way.

“So, under the seemingly fair contribution point system, if you are from a noble family whose history dates back to a thousand years ago, you will find many easy missions that have a high reward of contribution points or missions tailor-made for you that have rigorous conditions for claiming, every now and then. You can accomplish them easily without any trouble and earn tremendous contribution points, which you can then exchange for the training resources.

“But if you have neither connections nor a familial background as an Immortal Cultivator who fights your way and risks your life to get where you are, you will find most of the missions available are highly difficult, and the reward of contribution points are very low. Or they may contain unexpected dangers, and other people will gain tremendous benefits by stepping on your bloody head in the end.

“Occasionally, you may find certain missions whose ‘cost performance’ seems to be very high on the open mission platform.

“However, those missions will either be claimed by a certain member of the noble family that you do not know in the next moment or come with additional, harsh requirements. For example, only the Immortal Cultivators in the eleventh level of the Refinement Stage with a five-star certificate from the Hungry Wolf Crystal Suit Training Camp are qualified to claim it. It is needless to say that the mission is specially designed for a certain descendant of a noble family. You can do nothing at all except to watch them accomplish the missions easily.

“Tell me about it. Under such a contribution point system that is ‘absolutely fair’, how can the Immortal Cultivators of poor backgrounds compete with the Immortal Cultivators from noble families?”

Li Yao sighed and said, “So to speak, the Immortal Cultivators at the bottom level are truly rather painful.”

“Of course they are. Other people have ten thousand ways to shove you out of the circle where the cake is divided, but you cannot say a word about it.”

Li Linghai said, “It is already the latter half of the story to have the ability to join the game under the contribution point system. What matters more first is education.

“Theoretically speaking, the Imperium worships fair competition more than anything. The descendants of noble families, poor families, and even hominoids are eventually entitled to training. Whoever shows the most potentials in the early education will be most qualified to receive the nourishment of the abundant Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and the enlightenment of brilliant teachers. Without the gifts of training, they should be abandoned ruthlessly even if they are the descendants of the Immortal Cultivators. Only in such a way can the configuration of resources be optimized to achieve the purpose of the development of the civilization of mankind as a whole.

“However, it is still ‘theoretically’.

“Theories are beautiful, but reality is cruel. Let me ask you. Which Immortal Cultivator family is really idiotic enough to present all the resources of their family to the hominoid descendants who have gifts and potentials while giving nothing to the younger generations of their own family?

“The descendants of the Immortal Cultivator families are nurtured by the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures from the moment they are born. When they are still toddlers, the experts of the family will start to cleanse their veins and nerves and build their bodies. After they grow slightly older, they will get in touch with the most incredible arts. Not just the descendants of most hominoids, even the descendants of the Immortal Cultivators of poor backgrounds do not have such privileges.

“Then, in the national tests on talents, potentials, and everything else on the children between five to seven, it is only natural for the descendants of the noble families to be more likely to have higher marks and gain access to the academies of the highest level. That is still not considering the fact that most of the national tests are in fact under the control of the oligarchs.

“Just like what I said a moment ago, the strong remain strong, and the big grow bigger still. The monopolization of the oligarchs means the healthy, legitimate methods of resource configuration in the Imperium are already gone. The interest group, epitomized by the four Kurfürst families, will not stop until they have sucked the last drop of blood from the country.

“Of course, as the training technologies and the human strengthening technologies continue to develop, the difficulties for the hominoids of the imperium to advance into low-level Immortal Cultivators have been significantly lowered. After the strengthening modifications, it is possible for them to boast half or a third of the low-level Immortal Cultivators’ combat ability.

“However, improving from a low-level Immortal Cultivator to a high-level Immortal Cultivator, or to be more exact, advancing from the Refinement Stage and the Building Foundation Stage into the Core Formation Stage and the Nascent Soul Stage, is now ten times more difficult than it was five hundred years ago. It is even safe to say that the channel of ascension in scale has been completely blocked.

“Besides, training consumes a great number of resources. The hominoids who have been strengthened and modified have a much higher demand for supplies too. It makes the bottom-level Immortal Cultivators further dependent on resources and their monopolies. As a result, they are forced to cling to the interest groups and struggle under the game rules of the oligarchs while they are exploited with their eyes wide open.

“You may even understand it this way—the high-level Immortal Cultivators discovered that the efficiency of exploiting the hominoids directly is too low and that it will be more convenient, straightforward, and efficient to allow a group of the hominoids to turn into low-level Immortal Cultivators before the exploitation.”

Li Yao took a long breath in relief and felt like sweating. He said sincerely, “This is… very different from the components and operation of the Immortal Cultivators’ society that I heard on Firefly.”

Li Linghai said, “The Star Ocean Republic was destroyed by the Imperium. Naturally, what you accepted before was the brainwashing education that vilifies and demoralizes the Immortal Cultivators. It is only natural that you grow disgusted by the Immortal Cultivators under your preconception.

“Besides, the Imperium that is governed by the monopolizing oligarchs and noble families is truly a murky forest where the wolves and the jackals get their way!

“In the court, the noble ministers who hold the lightning trident flags on their shoulders and cheer for the Immortal Cultivators are in fact selfish scumbags who only consider for their small groups without bothering the general picture of the Imperium and the future of mankind. Not just you, even I hate their guts!

“But please believe that they shouldn’t be what the real Immortal Cultivators look like. At the very least, the Imperium of True Human Beings that Blackstar the Great established in the past was nothing like what it is today!”

Chapter 2159 - Blackstar the Great's Utopia!

When she mentioned Blackstar the Great, the unparalleled man of the time, Li Linghai suddenly grew excited. Her eyes that had been as cold as ice all the time were glittering as she raised her voice and said, “In fact, the Cultivators and the Immortal Cultivators share a lot in common. A country that has developed for a thousand years will inevitably have all sorts of interest groups, the abnormally expanding cancers that suck the benefits of the people.

“The last years of the Star Ocean Republic are exactly the same as the Imperium of True Human Beings right now. Rotten wood was respected as officials in the court, and wolves and tigers occupied the sea of stars. The four Kurfürst families that control the politics of the Imperium today already took shape at that time, except that they were far less gigantic and awesome back then.”

Li Yao thought for a moment and sighed. “In fact, when I was on Firefly, I read some of the files declassified by the National Archive Library. Your criticisms on the mess at the last years of the Star Ocean Republic are not entirely wrong.”

Li Linghai looked at Li Yao in approval and nodded her head. “It is great that you honor the facts, unlike the other hypocritical Cultivators.

“All in all, the many diseases that the Imperium has today could also be found at the last years of the Star Ocean Republic, and it was already hopeless, which could be seen by the fact that a tiny Alliance of the Holy Covenant at the edge of the cosmos was able to crush the Star Ocean Republic's army.

"If the Cultivators' governance at the time was truly perfect, and the Cultivators and the ordinary people were really united in the same community without any grudge, how could the Star Ocean Republic, which occupied the center of the cosmos and boasted many prosperous worlds, have come up with no solutions to deal with the outweighed Alliance of the Holy Covenant?

"Therefore, Wuying Qi, as the border commander of the Star Ocean Republic, motivated by the lofty ideals of saving the country, the people, and mankind, purged the entire Star Ocean Republic with fire and blood when he had enough of it, trying to cut all the cancers and make his country, his people, and his civilization great again!

"In Blackstar's dream, a great government that had absolute power and could reach the most fundamental level in the vast sea of stars would be the core for the renaissance of the civilization of mankind. The noble families and their traditions did not have a place in the utopia. Those who were to handle the specific affairs should only be the civil servants of the government and His Majesty's hounds.

"By the same logic, even the farmers at the most barren planet in the most remote space zone of the Imperium should pledge their loyalty to the government, to the Imperium, and to His Majesty himself, instead of being controlled by a certain sect leader, Sector Master, or fleet commander.

"In such a way, the Imperium would be able to carry out the best of 'fairness'.

“His Majesty and the government under him would directly control all the resources in the Imperium. A clean, rigorous, and independent prosecution system, and the cold and ruthless envoys who boasted high combat ability and pledged loyalty to the emperor, would monitor the implementation of the ‘contribution system’ in local places. Should any case of corruption or cheating be discovered, harsh punishments would immediately be underway.

“In the meantime, through the abundant resources that were directly under His Majesty’s control, public education would be greatly promoted. The faculties of the public schools and the investment in the training facilities would be improved to ensure that both the descendants of the Immortal Cultivators and those of hominoids could be admitted into schools of similar levels equally, receive similar education, and be tested under the same rules. Origins did not matter, and potentials were all that counted. The strong went up, and the weak walked down. Everybody would be convinced by the fair system.

“All in all, while Blackstar the Great’s Imperium persisted in the differences between ‘true human beings’ and ‘hominoids’ and ensured that most of the resources were inclined to true human beings to achieve the maximal returns, it was also the Imperium’s responsibility, even at the cost of abundant resources, to make sure that the channel of ascension between ‘hominoids’ and ‘true human beings’, between ‘low-level Immortal Cultivators’ and ‘high-level Immortal Cultivators’ was unhindered, open, and fair and square.

“The two points were in an interdependent relationship, like the two legs or fists of a man. Neither of them could be thrown away.

“That is the only pure true path of immortality. It is the optimal configuration of resources and the only hope for humanity to thrive in the dark universe.

“The ‘true path of immortality’ that the nobles of the Imperium promote today only keeps the first point, ‘survival of the fittest’, and ignores the second point, ‘open, fair, and square competition’. It is completely an emasculated version. How can it possibly lead the civilization of mankind to continue to move forward?”

Li Yao blinked his eyes fast, but he still decided not to argue with the queen on the unimportant details. “Alright, although I don’t quite agree with the idea of regarding humans as resources and war machines, I have to admit that if public education is greatly promoted so that the offspring of all the ordinary people will have equal rights and conditions in training, and if the openness and fairness of the ‘potential tests’ and ‘contribution point system’ can be ensured, allowing everyone to compete from the same start line, it will at least be much better than the current Imperium.”

“Other than the mobsters of Starlight, I have never encountered any other Cultivator.”

Li Linghai stared at Li Yao thoughtfully. “You are sort of the first real Cultivator that I have met, and you are not exactly the same as what I read from the books either. It seems that we both have misunderstandings toward one another because of the vilifications and the brainwashing propaganda. If we continue the communication, it is quite possible that we may find more and more common grounds and opportunities of cooperation.”

Li Yao smiled. “Maybe. Please proceed, Your Grace. I’m very curious about how Blackstar the Great’s magnificent cause came to an end. How did the open, fair country where everybody had the equal rights of competition, with the great government that had absolute power and integrity, turn into the Imperium today?”

“Nothing but fate could have arranged it.”

Li Linghai sighed and said, “It was almost like a curse. What makes you in the beginning turns out to be what destroys you in the end.

“Blackstar the Great gradually gathered an enormous space fleet during the confrontations and campaigns against the Covenant Alliance. He established his prestige and his team in the meantime before he marched to the capital in the end.

“However, it was also because of the existence of the Covenant Alliance and its haunting military pressure that Blackstar the Great was unable to completely reform the Star Ocean Republic in the way he wanted and build an utterly refreshed Imperium of True Human Beings.

“In many places, the newborn Imperium of True Human Beings still kept a lot of residues of the Star Ocean Republic—the filthy and stinky residues.

“For example, the four Kurfürst families right now, including the Li family, are ‘noble families’ with a long history in the age of the Star Ocean Republic. They hold many seats in the parliament and control the economic lifelines of many fields of the country. They also have several Sectors that are almost their private territories.

“Under such circumstances, if Blackstar the Great intended to completely remove the cancers, he would have to do it at the risk of a ‘hemorrhage’ of the Imperium of True Human Beings. One moment of carelessness, and if the Covenant Alliance took the opportunity to attack, the country might be doomed forever.

“Therefore, in order to pass the turmoil during the change of regimes as quickly as possible, and to get the situation under control so that the Covenant Alliance could be dealt with, even such a strongman as Blackstar the Great had to concede to the seemingly smaller cancers. He attracted the smaller interest groups to strike the bigger oligarchs, thereby accomplishing an incomplete ‘reform’.

“Even so, the newborn Imperium was still faced with the crazy counterattacks of the oligarchs of the past. With the Covenant Alliance outside and the oligarchs inside, the Imperium passed the scariest ten years in its history.

“Hehe, you may understand the war in this period as one where the brave and stubborn Cultivators rose against the evil Imperium from your history books, but in fact, it was just the dying struggles of the oligarchs of the Imperium.

“It was a shame that, although the oligarchs were annihilated by Blackstar the Great in the end, the incomplete reform had overlooked some small fry, which, after hundreds of years of gradual expansion, gradually evolved into the new-generation oligarchs that are stronger, smarter, and greedier, like the four Kurfürst families.”

Li Yao frowned. “Based on what I’ve been educated with, Blackstar the Great did not seem to be a man who would show mercy on his enemy.”

“Everybody has their limits. Blackstar the Great was a human after all, not a god with an eternal life.”

Li Linghai sighed, not without regrets. “Perhaps Wuying Qi could have swept the corrupted system and the greedy, blood-sucking cancers with his wise strategies if he were in his prime years. He would not let go of a single shrimp but see that the great country in his visions was established. However, when he reformed and acceded to the throne, he was already an old man more than three hundred years old. Also, after a lifetime of adventures and battles, his body and his soul had long been seriously exhausted. By the time he was crowned with the name of ‘Blackstar the Great’, he had long passed the prime years of his physical energy, his wisdom, and his combat ability.”

Li Yao thought for a moment and realized that it did make sense.

According to Su Changfa and Di Feiwen’s introductions, Blackstar the Great spent his early years in the Martial Meritocrats Sector, where he was thrown into a volcano and nearly burned alive in the end. Naturally, it was a great damage to his body.

Later, he seemed to have found heritages from a relic of the primeval age of the Star Ocean Imperium, and he was transformed into half a human and half a monster. After that, he wandered for almost a hundred years in the sea of stars before he arrived in the Star Ocean Republic.

After his arrival, for an unknown man of obscure backgrounds to rise to the place of a border general step by step, it would take at least decades, right?

By the calculation, by the time Wuying Qi turned into Blackstar the Great, he was truly several hundred years old;

a dying old man like a setting sun.

Time was the greatest power that could destroy all the traces in the universe. Even a top expert of mankind was still not enough to compete with it!

Chapter 2160 - Those Who Are Old Should Die!

Li Linghai said, not without regrets, “The first fifty years after the establishment of the Imperium of True Human Beings were spent under the collective attacks of the Alliance of the Holy Covenant and the remaining forces of the Star Ocean Republic. After Blackstar the Great temporarily defeated both enemies after all the trouble, the army of the Imperium and his own vitality were already seriously worn out. He had to take a rest instead of pushing forward a complete reform.

“In his last years, Blackstar the Great thought to reform by force against all the unfavorable circumstances too.

“On one hand, the vested interests after disasters were smarter, more inconspicuous, and more loyal on the surface. On the other hand, the wounds that he got during the training and fighting in his early years finally attacked from within Blackstar the Great’s body. Even his perspicacity was affected, making him show the sign of mental derangement now and then. Some of his strategies and policies were indeed a bit radical. The reform that was meant to sweep all the cancers in the civilization of mankind eventually turned into a catastrophe that consumed the entire sea of stars.

“In the end, even the real Immortal Cultivators who had built the country together with him and who were unquestionably loyal to him had to grit their teeth to oppose the so-called reform. Blackstar the Great passed away gloomily in an environment where he could find no support, leaving infinite troubles to the Imperium that he founded in person.

“Today, when the hidden problems in the Imperium have broken out, the wise people finally begin to examine the ‘catastrophe’ in the old days in retrospect. But now that the opportunity has been missed, there is nothing they can do but to regret.

“The oligarchs of the Star Ocean Republic in the old days have reshaped into the new interest holders in the Imperium of True Human Beings. The high and mighty noble families swallow the flesh and blood of the Imperium and the people blatantly.

“They loathe and fear Blackstar the Great from the bottom of their hearts. They are scared that a second Blackstar the Great will show up and reclaim their everything on behalf of the country and the people.

“Deep down in their hearts, they regard Blackstar the Great as an enemy who is much more horrible than the Covenant Alliance or the Cultivators.

“However, on the surface, the fake, emasculated Immortal Cultivators have to raise Blackstar the Great’s banner and praise Blackstar the Great’s feats because only Blackstar the Great’s unparalleled prestige can unite the entire universe, justify the governance of the Imperium, and appease the Immortal Cultivators at the bottom level and hominoids who are ten times larger in number.

“It is exactly under such a self-contradictory stance that a lot of shameless propaganda materials have appeared in the Imperium, which commends on Blackstar the Great’s doings insincerely. Some of the dirty water has even found its way into the textbooks, the history books, and the promotional materials. They secretly demoralize Blackstar the Great while they praise him on the surface. It really can't be more shameless!"

Li Yao was greatly enlightened when he heard this part. He couldn't help but exclaim.

Li Linghai was slightly stunned. "What's up? You seem to have thought of something?"

Li Yao blinked his eyes and said quickly, "Nothing. So to speak, Blackstar the Great was truly an upright hero who fought for the country and the people?"

But deep in his heart, he understood a lot of things.

Li Linghai's words unraveled a mystery that had bothered Li Yao for almost a hundred years.

It was more than a hundred years ago, when Su Changfa and other Immortal Cultivators intentionally played the "brainwashing materials" of the destruction of three civilizations, trying to attract Li Yao to join their team.

The brainwashing propaganda later became the game "Civilization" in the Star Glory Federation, which led to a lot of new stories.

What baffled Li Yao at that time was that the destruction of the Curly Dragon Sector, the Medicine Fork Sector, and the Martial Meritocrats Sector was already powerful enough to prove the naivety, shortsightedness, and stupidity of the Cultivators, as well as the correctness and inevitability of the true path of immortality. It did not seem necessary to spill out the history of the rise of Blackstar the Great.

Even if it was meant to promote the glorious history of the "founding emperor", there did not seem to be any need to depict him as such a… ruthless, cunning, and inhuman person.

The stories in propaganda seemed to shape the image of a decisive and judicious emperor, but they in fact left too many loopholes, as if it were meant to let everybody see the darkness, cruelty, and ugliness hidden under the magnificent throne.

It did have such an effect.

It was exactly because of the many loopholes in the history of the rise of Blackstar the Great that Li Yao realized what was going on after discussing with the mental devil for a while. His belief was not shaken at all, and he still persisted in the ideology of the Cultivators.

However, it did not make any sense by logic!

The Imperium of True Human Beings had governed the center of the cosmos for a thousand years and conquered too many Sectors to be counted. How could it be incapable of making promotional material, and how could so many loopholes had been left behind?

Even if Blackstar the Great was truly a heinous and unpardonable fiend, as his descendants, wasn’t it all the more important for the Immortal Cultivators to cover his mistakes and depict him to be bright, sacred, and flawless?

Why would someone naturally feel that he was a supervillain after reading the brainwashing materials presented by the Immortal Cultivators and learning the history of the rise of Blackstar the Great?

Even the painters in court in ancient times knew to overlook the pimples on the emperor’s face when they drew a painting for the monarch.

But why did things only get worse in the Immortal Cultivators’ promotional materials, as if they were afraid that the audience could not notice how brutal, insane, and cunning Wuying Qi was?

It was an unqualified brainwashing material that was more likely to be written by a rebellion!

At that time, Li Yao thought that if he were the emperor of the Imperium, he would certainly have captured each and every one of them who wrote the promotional materials.

Li Yao absolutely did not believe that the promotional department of the Imperium of True Human Beings, which had a thousand years of history in conquest, colonization, and brainwashing, would be so retarded.

Later, he asked Su Changfa and Di Feiwen respectively, but neither of the two experienced Immortal Cultivators could explain. They only knew that it had been the tone of the official announcements since a very long time ago. On the surface, Blackstar the Great’s magnificent accomplishments were praised, but if one were to examine it more carefully, they would immediately sense the insanity and nastiness in Blackstar the Great’s doings.

The thing had bothered Li Yao for more than a hundred years until today.

In the Kunlun relic more than a hundred years ago, when he heard the stories of Blackstar the Great for the first time, his natural fear and disgust were not his illusions but the effects that were intended.

The promotional materials were probably written by the historians who were under the hire of the noble families. Not only were they giving the audience a first impression that the Imperium of True Human Beings was invincible, but they were also planting the idea that “Blackstar the Great was an insane, bloodthirsty butcher” in the audience’s head too.

The latter was even more important than the former!

That explains a lot. The promotional department of the Imperium is not retarded at all; they are all “rebellions”.

Li Yao thought to himself.

“Had it not been for Blackstar the Great, all the humans at the center of the cosmos would be under the tyranny of the Alliance of the Holy Covenant right now, their feelings and free will extricated, as inhumane machines of flesh and blood.”

Li Linghai said casually, “Does Blackstar the Great not deserve to be called a hero with the feat of resisting the Covenant Alliance and defending the center of the cosmos alone?

“It is a shame that history is always composed by the victors. Blackstar the Great fought through blood, defended the civilization of mankind at the risk of his life, and finally established the Imperium of True Human Beings after all the difficulties with the real Immortal Cultivators, but the fruits of their victory have all been stolen by the noble families.

“In the recent several hundred years, and especially in the recent century, the corruption of the noble families is more insufferable than ever.”

Li Yao was intrigued. “How so?”

“A simple and critical reason—longevity.”

Li Linghai said, “The biggest problem that the Imperium is faced with right now is that almost all the Immortal Cultivators from the noble families are living too long.”

Li Yao was dazed. “Living too long?”

“Yes. The new replacing the old is a law of nature. Those who are too old should die!”

Li Linghai said, “In the first five hundred years, the Imperium had been expanding outwardly nonstop and fought quite a few hard battles. Tremendous Immortal Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage, the Nascent Soul Stage, and even the Divinity Transformation Stage would go to the battlefield in person or burn their lives and souls to make intelligent contributions. The odds of their mental derangement, heavy wounds, or even sudden death were not low at all.

“Only when the Immortal Cultivators of the older generation die will the Immortal Cultivators of the younger generation have an opportunity to go up and have the hope and momentum to strive, right?

“But in the second five hundred years, the Imperium barely had any wars of conquest to fight. The ‘cake’ was almost entirely divided up. Every carrot had been deeply stuck to their own pit, and the only thing that they were concerned about was to not get plucked.

“As a result, most of the high-level Immortal Cultivators changed the purpose of their training from the improvement of combat and computational abilities to the extension of longevity or the pursuit of an eternal life.

“The high-level Immortal Cultivators boasted tremendous resources, so they could consume astronomical crystals blatantly without bothering the cost just in order to enlengthen their longevity for a few days. Naturally, they made significant progress.

“In the recent several hundred years, the average longevity of the Immortal Cultivators in the Imperium above the Nascent Soul Stage was longer and longer. Back in the years of the Blackstar the Great, even Blackstar the Great himself passed away before he reached four hundred years old. But today, a random guy at the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage, if taking care of his health well, will have a good chance to live three to four hundred years. If he advances into the Divinity Transformation Stage and has the enhancement of special secret arts, it won’t be unusual at all for them to live five to six hundred years.”

So amazing?

Li Yao secretly clicked his tongue.

Gui Suishou, a famous senior in the Star Glory Federation, with his bloodline of the Tortoise Clan and his irregular hibernations, was well-acknowledged for his remarkable longevity when he lived about nine hundred years.

The experts in the Nascent Soul Stage and Divinity Transformation Stage in the Imperium of True Human Beings, however, could live three to five hundred years easily. While they were not as shocking as Gui Suishou, it was still quite extraordinary.

Chapter 2161 - For His Majesty!

“I once heard a tale about the ancient Cultivators, which said that the crown prince of an empire on a certain planet rebelled and tried to kill his royal father. His reason was exactly ‘how can anyone be a crown prince for sixty years?'”

Li Linghai said unemotionally, “Hehe. In the Imperium of True Human Beings today, the resources are abnormally concentrated, and all kinds of techniques that can extend one’s longevity are prevailing. Not just a 60-year-old prince, even a 360-year-old prince may appear someday.

“Think about it. You are a talented, strong, ambitious young Immortal Cultivator who is eager to make some achievements, but in your Sector, all the leadership, including the Sector Master, the sect leaders, the CEOs of major corporations, the commander of the local garrison and fleets, etc., haven’t been changed at all for almost two hundred years. Also, it does not seem a problem at all for the old guys who look graceful and young sitting above your head to live for a hundred to two hundred years comfortably. How will you feel? Do you feel that the world is dark and your future is hopeless?

“Besides, it is inevitable that one’s mind turns rigid as they grow old. They will be reluctant to accept the new things and new training ideas but cling to whatever they had in the past. In the end, they are not simply unworthy leaders in their posts but also hindering the progress of the entire society when they defend their power and interests.

“Those old farts have ten thousand ways to kill the young Immortal Cultivators who pose a potential threat to them and who are unwilling to be recruited and corrupted by them to ensure their absolute reign.

“Once the young Immortal Cultivators are corrupted, however, they will inevitably be mired in the seniority-based system and the infinite cycle of suffering. They will be enslaved and exploited, until their edges are planished, turning themselves into a tiny component of the interest groups.”

Li Yao was silent.

As he thought about it carefully, if a society always abided by the idea of “survival of the fittest and winner takes all” but did not have a relatively steady rule for the new to replace the old, the situation that Li Linghai described was almost bound to happen.

“However, the old farts do have a fatal weakness.”

Narrowing her eyes, Li Linghai put on a cruel smile. “They can manage to keep themselves alive at the cost of countless precious resources, but it is impossible for them to keep their combat ability in the peak state forever.

“Never fight a young man, as said by the ancient sages. The Immortal Cultivators’ combat ability increases as their level advances but drops as they grow older. The world in reality is certainly not a tale, and there is no such thing as ‘the older, the better a warrior’. When one’s vitality and level both climb to the apex and form a gold cross, it will be the peak phase for an Immortal Cultivator, but once the phase is over, it is absolutely impossible to get it back.

“Therefore, although there are many 400-year-old Nascent Soul Stage experts and 500-year-old Divinity Transformation Stage experts who sound intimidating, they are nothing but empty shells that have nothing inside. Maybe they still have their insight, experience, and level, but in a real battle, they are absolutely no match for me or even you.

“One day, the zombies that should’ve decayed will taste the unstoppable exuberance from the younger generation. I have no doubt about that at all!”

Li Yao grinned. “I certainly would not turn down the opportunity if I can beat up dozens of high-level Immortal Cultivators in the Imperium.”

Li Linghai smiled casually. “Rest assured. Given the pleasant conversation we’re having right now, our cooperation will certainly be very effective. You will have your opportunity.

“What I said just now, the contradiction between the high-level Immortal Cultivators and the low-level Immortal Cultivators is the fundamental contradiction in the Imperium today.

“Besides the fundamental contradiction, there are naturally other contradictions large and small.

“For example, the exploitation and blood-sucking from the dozens of most-developed industrial worlds at the center of the cosmos on the hundred resource worlds at the edge of the Imperium. Do you need more explanation?”

Li Yao shook his head.

The exploitation and blood-sucking from the developed industrial worlds to the underdeveloped resource worlds was almost an irresolvable problem. Even the Star Glory

Federation was faced with the same conundrum, as illustrated by the competition of the ‘three old worlds’ and the ‘four new worlds’.

The Heaven’s Origin Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, and the Flying Star Sector, as three central Sectors, boasted relatively advanced technologies and an advanced industrial system for the production of magical equipment. When there were no tariffs and trade barriers because they were in the same country, it was more than easy for them to dump goods into the Water Crystal Sector, the Nether World Sector, the Forest Ocean Sector, and other resource worlds, completely destroying the unremarkable and primitive industries in those worlds. Eventually, the Water Crystal Sector, the Nether World Sector, the Forest Ocean Sector, and other resource worlds would forever be a dump for the industrial products and a supplier of preliminary resources.

It was exactly because of such a central conflict that the disagreement between the three old worlds and the four new worlds was quite distinctive before Li Yao and the experts of the Ancient Sages Sector returned to the federation. They formed two factions headed by Ding Lingdang and Jin Xinyue respectively, who were at loggerheads without giving in at all.

Of course, the Star Glory Federation was a very young country. It was as vigorous and flourishing as the Imperium of True Human Beings a thousand years ago.

On one hand, the federation had only no more than ten worlds in total, and a history of a hundred years was not enough for any solid fortress of interests to take shape. Whatever contradictions there were could be resolved by negotiations.

On the other hand, the federation was faced with the daunting threat of the Black Wind Fleet. At such a life-and-death moment, the long-term contradiction where the industrial worlds made a profit through price scissors from the resource worlds was certainly not a primary concern.

Thirdly, under Li Yao's leadership, the federation discovered prosperous worlds and primeval advanced technologies from the Ancient Sages Sector, the Kunlun relic, Boneyard, etc., which equated to a large sum of initial capital out of nowhere and significantly mitigated the contradictions that were growing more and more intense.

Also, the leaders of the interest groups such as Ding Lingdang and Jin Xinyue put the disagreement on hold temporarily with remarkable patience and wisdom, and with the organization of Jin Tuyi and other people behind the curtain, the three old worlds and the four new worlds finally became more united before they successfully defeated the Black Wind Fleet.

Even so, Li Yao found it hard to imagine how the Star Glory Federation would address the imbalance of the regional economies, the serious "siphonic effect" of the industrial worlds, and the greater and greater "scissors difference" hundreds of years later as it further expanded.

Therefore, many specialists of the federation even asserted that the best state for the federation was exactly right now with no more than ten worlds.

That was the limit of scalability and comprehensive national strength. If the country were to expand blindly, it would certainly die of indigestion.

The Imperium of True Human Beings which boasted hundreds of Sectors might have not died of indigestion, but it was certainly suffering from the disease.

The Imperium barely had any of the advantageous conditions the federation had.

Li Yao did not feel that the developed industrial worlds under the four Kurfürst families would show any mercy on the resource worlds that were discovered later during the expansion.

They would certainly suck as much blood as possible and dump as many goods as possible. It would be best if the cheap magical equipment produced from assembly lines could drown the remote worlds, ensuring that they would never develop any industrial system but forever remain a resource provider for the four Kurfürst families, mired in the trap of “five hundred tons of raw minerals in exchange for one crystal suit”.

Then, would the governors of the remote worlds, the Sector Masters, the warlords, and the fleet commanders who were equally ambitious, be willing to keep their worlds forever a barren town, which was full of mines but did not have any factory, and which was forever exploited by the four Kurfürst families?

It was certainly an escalated and enlarged version of the competition between the “three old worlds” and the “four new worlds”!

In the federation, the competition between the industrial worlds and the resource worlds was temporarily held back by Li Yao, Ding Lingdang, Jin Xinyue, and other people for now.

But the Imperium today certainly would not be so simple. It would not be surprising even if a civil war broke out.

Li Linghai observed Li Yao’s face quietly. Seeing that he was truly deep in thought, she thought even more highly of him and nodded her head. “Very good. As expected of a man who used to be the Speaker’s special emissary. You are smart enough to understand it at the first clue. You are certainly not a simple warrior.

“If you can understand the contradiction between the industrial worlds and the resource worlds due to the imbalance of regional economies, as a battle-type expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage, you will only find the contradiction between the military and the family, sects, and interest groups easier to understand, right?”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. “What is that?”

“It’s very simple. All the armies in the Imperium of True Human Beings belong to the Imperium in name, but there is actually not a united command and operation system. Even the control of the finance and the arm groups is not in the hands of the military.

“In fact, after hundreds of years of corruption from the nobles and the warlords, other than the imperial guards in the capital city who are as good as nothing, there are no troops that really belong to the Imperium at all.

“For most of the elite space fleets and crystal suit legions, their commandership, finance, and weapon provers are all controlled by the nobles, warlords, and Sector Masters.

“In other words, the Imperium’s armies are just the private troops and the lackeys of the nobles.

“The simplest example is the troop Li Lingfeng brought earlier. Could they be called the Imperium’s army? No. They were the Li family’s army, or even just Li Lingfeng’s. Technically speaking, they were just ‘house servants’.”

Li Yao nodded his head slowly.

It was only natural at the end of a dynasty when the royal authority declined and the warlords rose.

The troops that nominally belonged to the country or the emperor were in fact the private troops of the nobles and the warlords, who financed and supported the troops with crystal suits and starships. Naturally, the troops needed to and could only defend the interests of the nobles and the warlords.

“However, not every soldier of the Imperium is willing to be a house servant of a noble forever and die a worthless death in the competitions of the nobles. It is especially so for the young, vigorous, and ambitious officers who have great dreams and visions and who still remember the glorious history of the Imperium in the age of Blackstar the Great!”

Her eyes bloodshot, Li Linghai declared, “Gather the private troops that are scattered in various worlds in the hands of the nobles into a magnificent, real army of the Imperium so that the military can utter its own thunderous roar!

“Henceforth, they will only fight for the interests of the Imperium, for the civilization of mankind, and for His Majesty!

“That is the dream of countless hotblooded young officers, who are willing to live and die for the future!”

Chapter 2162 - Unsatiety Leads to Stupidity

Li Yao couldn't have agreed more on what Li Linghai said.

Even the look that was full of hope and enthusiasm was no stranger to him. He had seen it countless times on the faces of the soldiers in the federation.

In a country that was at war all the time or faced with serious military pressure, it was very easy for the military to be condensed into a behemothic beast and a destructible interest group in the first place.

At the very least, it was the case in the Star Glory Federation.

The military of the federation boasted a very high power and had its own mines, purification plants, magical equipment factories, and war-related enterprises. It even had one-third of seats in the parliament of the federation.

The military held a third of the seats, the Cultivation sects held another third, and the ordinary people held the last third. It was the basic balance of power in the federal parliament.

It was needless to say that the Star Glory Federation worshipped valiance, and the soldiers enjoyed a very high social position. The "Disabled Servicemen Association" had extended its tentacles to every corner of society, maintaining the interests of the soldiers as much as possible. Of course, as a result of the virtuous cycle, the adolescents were encouraged to join the army to defend the federation and the civilization.

At the very least, during the hundred years from Li Yao’s birth to the birth of the New Federation and the defeat of the Black Wind Fleet, the military of the federation, as a gigantic beast, did make great contributions and sacrifices for the peace, unity of the federation, and the happiness of the people. It certainly had its positive value.

However, if the gigantic beast went out of control, it might still cause dire consequences. In the early years of the Star Glory Federation, there was already the case where the soldiers meddled in politics, overthrew the regime, and established a “junta”, forcing all the Cultivators in the world to join the army that was known as “Red Dragon Army”. It was definitely a gory lesson.

Also, just a hundred years ago, Lu Zui, the director of the Secret Sword Bureau, conspired with “Iron Commander” Zhou Hengdao, an important leader of the military, and tried to hijack the entire country.

As the ancient people put it, “when you have the sharpest weapon, you will inevitably want to kill someone”. When the soldiers grabbed chainswords and storm bolters, put on their crystal suits and stepped on starships, and surrounded by their comrades who were going to fight through life and death with them, they would easily congregate into an iron torrent that could sweep across the sea of stars within a breath.

For the soldiers who were in the middle of the iron torrent, it was only natural that surging ambitions were ignited and the greatest responsibility for the country, the people, and the civilization of mankind dawned on them. They would crave to make accomplishments and realize their personal value while they saved the country.

Therefore, it couldn’t be more normal that the soldiers of the Imperium yearned to stop the current disunity where they were controlled by different nobles and to establish a united, strong, and “glorious” army!

Perhaps the high-level commanders of the various space fleets and elite crystal suit legions on the army of the Imperium today were from the nobles in order to realize the highest control over the army.

However, the middle- and low-level officers, especially the bottom-level officers who had to fight hard in the frontline, were not necessarily from the noble families, were they?

As Li Linghai said just now, the high-level Immortal Cultivators of the Imperium were living longer and longer lives today.

If the noble commander of a fleet did not move his place at all for two hundred years but seemed healthy and comfortable enough to live for another two hundred years, while Li Yao was a bottom-level officer who fought through life and death in the frontline under his command, even Li Yao would certainly rise up!

“Right now, the wise people within the Imperium, including the hopeless bottom-level Immortal Cultivators, the Sector Masters, and mine owners who have been shorn in the resource worlds at the edge of the Imperium, the businessmen who wander in the sea of stars looking for business opportunities but cannot enter the trades monopolized by the nobles, and the young officers who have dreams and visions, hoping to make accomplishments and save the country, all hate the guts of the noble families characterized by the four Kurfürst families!”

With her hands behind her back, Li Linghai said casually, while the brilliance that could pierce through the universe darted out of her eyes, “From top to bottom, everybody can see the sharpest contradictions, everybody is holding back their discontentment, and everybody is craving for a world-changing reform to completely break the internally corrupted old system and establish a great and glorious new Imperium!

“You must be aware of the great strategic counterattack that the Imperium launched at the Covenant Alliance in the recent ten years, don’t you? It is the attack of the largest scale that the Imperium has waged on the Covenant Alliance in the past hundred years. The strength of the Imperium has all been dedicated to the war.”

Li Yao nodded his head heavily.

It was exactly thanks to the great strategic counterattack that the Imperium was too occupied to investigate the Black Wind Fleet’s real situation or to send a new expedition army to the Imperium, and the federation was indirectly saved by it. How could Li Yao not know it?

“In fact, the noble families led by the four Kurfürst were not in favor of such a radical plan of strategic counterattack, as they had always been in the past five hundred years. They were more inclined to defense in strategic decisions. Sometimes, they even stayed in the fortresses and simply took the hit without doing anything.”

Narrowing her eyes, Li Linghai said coldly, “In many cases, it was not a military issue but a political one. The military strategies that were too radical had the risk of losing the entire game, which would seriously jeopardize the interests of the noble families.

“Clearing the border areas and staying back at the forts, however, could ensure the safety of their own territories and interests.

“What about the Sectors that were ravaged at the borderland? They were not the nobles’ territory after all, and the nobles could not care less about it. In the meantime, they could diminish the power of the recent risers by the hands of the Covenant Alliance in case new guys came to divide the cake. Why would they make any other choice?

“A hundred years ago, at the borderland of the Imperium, a new armed force named ‘Black Wind Fleet’ once appeared. It somehow survived the arduous wars and grew stronger and bigger as it fought on.

“People of the Black Wind Fleet were best known for their disobedience, brutality, and decisiveness, and they were likely to become the new dividers of the cake. But in the end, they collapsed. Even their mother world fell to the hands of the Covenant Alliance, which, of course, has been recovered right now.

“The collapse of the Black Wind Fleet was naturally partly because the Covenant Alliance attacked too vehemently, and they made mistakes in commanding. But was it also partly because the four Kurfürst families turned a blind eye to them and even tried to use the Covenant Alliance to eliminate the competitor?

“After all, having been born in the Li family, I have seen too many methods about how the Li family dealt with competitors in the past thousand years.

“However, a thousand years after the Imperium’s establishment, the internal contradictions of the country have escalated to such a point that even the four Kurfürst families cannot pretend that they do not see it anymore.

“An external war is always the best approach to transfer the internal contradictions.

“If a large-scale external war is not launched to transfer the resources, population, fury, and ambitions of the various parties in contradiction, a volcano would certainly erupt within the Imperium and turn the whole world upside down!

“That is exactly the real reason why the noble families have changed their norm and launched the largest strategic counterattack in the past five hundred years together with the new warlords at the peripheral worlds, the young officers at the fleets and legions, and the low-level Immortal Cultivators who crave for accomplishments!”

The queen’s detailed introduction made Li Yao greatly enlightened. He had a deeper understanding of the political ecology and the balance of forces in the Imperium of True Human Beings right now.

“The idea at the beginning was good.”

Observing the look on Li Yao’s face, Li Linghai went on calmly, “The Sectors, world fragments, and resource planets that are recovered in the strategic counterattack could be distributed to the smaller nobles, the governors of remote worlds, the bottom-level officers who rose in the recent hundreds of years, and all the other experts who did not earn enough in the first five hundred years. Even the royal family can be given one or two worlds to expand the territory that is directly under the emperor’s lead.

“In such a way, the contradictions between each other can be resolved, and a new common understanding of interests can be reached.

“However…

“Is it because the four Kurfürst families are scared that the new interest groups will continue to expand after getting the new territory and eventually threaten their reign, and thereby take action in case they are attacked, or is it simply because they can’t change their habits?

“All in all, the four Kurfürst encouraged the young officers and small sects under their commands, as well as the warlords and experts in the remote worlds, to join the strategic counterattack, promising that they would all benefit from it.

“But the Covenant Alliance was certainly not a pushover. In the arduous war, the young bottom-level officers, the small sects, and the new warlords in remote worlds paid the most sacrifices and suffered most losses to recover the lost lands.

“However, now that the Imperium has recovered all the territories lost in the past thousand years and driven the Covenant Alliance back to their barren nest a thousand years ago, and the defense line is stabilized again, the aristocrats and the noble families all begin to regret about how the cake should be divided.

“Hehe. When the dozens of worlds were still heavily guarded by the Covenant Alliance, it was easy for them to make the decision to give the worlds away.

“However, now that the worlds are reembraced by the Imperium and ready to be tasted like cheery and litchi that have been washed, how can the ill-natured noble families bear to deliver them to somebody else’s mouth?

“Not only are they willing to watch other people carve up the dozens of worlds ravenously, they even think that they are smart enough to find an ‘opportunity’ in it.

“It must be noted that in the gory strategic counterattack, the smaller sects, the relatively independent space fleets, and the Sector Masters of the remote worlds all suffered heavy casualties. They are exhausted and running out of supplies, and they are far away from their own camp too, in an environment that they are not familiar with. Many of the war assets have to be supplied by the four Kurfürst families. So, their necks are already grabbed by the big nobles.

“Isn’t it the best opportunity to swallow all of them?

“Not only will it be unnecessary to give the dozens of newly-earned worlds to anybody else, but even the territory of the small nobles and new warlords can also be swallowed too, to ensure their reigning status in the Imperium. For the four Kurfürst families, isn’t it a stone that kills two birds?

“It is exactly what is on the mind of the swine.”

Chapter 2163 - Honor the Majesty, Settle the Rebellions!

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao analyzed the situation of the Imperium with the lessons that he learned in the Star Glory Federation. He mumbled, “It is true that greed often means stupidity. Those swine are truly not giving them any choice!”

“Exactly. The big nobles and their families led by the four Kurfürst families have really underestimated other people’s strength. They are now pushing everybody to their opposite side.”

Li Linghai looked at Li Yao with both compliments and surprise. “Under normal circumstances, their decision may not be bad, because any small sect, fleet drifting in space, or master of a remote world at the periphery of the Imperium will be no match for the four Kurfürst families at all.

“The Imperium is simply too vast and boundless. Any two random Sectors may be hundreds of lightyears away from each other. It is barely possible for the experts, warlords, and bottom-level young officers to be united to oppose the big nobles at the center of the cosmos.

“However, the war in the past ten years changed everything.

“The elites of countless worlds jumped to the frontline of the fierce fight between the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance from every corner of the universe. They fought together through life and death, sometimes pushing forward unstoppably together and sometimes trying their best to save each other’s life. Many young officers and the newly-rising experts became good friends.

“Also, in the strategic counterattack of such an enormous scale, the army of any world cannot fight on its own. It was often the case that a couple or even a dozen fleets had to take part in a battle together, which inevitably required a ‘coalition command center’.

“As the saying goes, when the general is at war, he does not take orders from the king. In an ever-changing battlefield, the independent judgments and decisions from the commander in the frontline are required in many situations. The coalition command center expanded after each other. For the first time ever, the army of the Imperium had its own brain, veins, and nerval network, awakening its strength!

“More importantly, scared of casualties, the big nobles intentionally let the young bottom-level officers, the newly-rising experts, and the warlords from the remote worlds to lead the vanguard and bite the hard bones. While the strength of the latter was greatly consumed, the most determined, dangerous, and dreadful of them were also screened out during the cruel eliminations.

“It is always the truth of training that the best is left after a filtering.

“In the arduous war, countless middle- and low-level Immortal Cultivators, unfortunately, passed away as cannon fodder gone in the wind, but some people also grew rapidly and became heroes of the new time with the military credits, experience, and prestige they earned through the battles. They also realized their situation and were filled with wrath and ambitions!

“When such an army that has just finished a decade of cruel battles, full of patriotism and war experience, and has an effective command system is about to be dismembered by the major families again, retrograding from the glorious sabers that fought for the country and the civilization into the house servants and lackeys of the nobles, who will even have to fight against their comrades whom they fought side by side with yesterday for the interests of the big nobles, what attitude do you think the army will hold? What will the young officers who are as vigorous as blooming flowers and who are proud of the civilization of mankind?

“Hehe. Perhaps since the moment the Imperium waged a war on the Covenant Alliance, a transformation that is destined to shatter the stars has already begun!

“In the Imperium today, the wild tides in the ocean have been gathered. From the capital to the border, from the Gloomy World Sector to the Floating River Sector, from the engine cabins of the flagships of the big nobles to the assault teams of the crystal suit legions of the small warlords, a ubiquitous alliance is taking shape at a visible speed, and it will soon let out the roars that will shock the three thousand Sectors!”

The queen of the Imperium smashed her fist hard with the same look on her face that Li Yao had seen on Xiao Xuance, Lu Zui, Zhou Zhengdao, and Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan.

It was a strength that had absolutely nothing to do with levels.

Even if Li Yao’s heart did constrict violently, it was not because of Li Linghai’s strength that was beyond the Divinity Transformation Stage but because of a certain strength that was even more dreadful than the Divinity Transformation Stage.

He had long known that an unparalleled expert like Li Linghai couldn’t have been fighting for such a mundane purpose like “power”.

But he did not expect that Li Linghai’s ambitions were as huge either.

It was exactly like what she said herself; she was trying to “save the Imperium”!

It was also exactly as what her brother Li Lingfeng said from the perspective of the four Kurfürst families—she was going to “destroy the Imperium”!

Li Yao took a deep breath. He must not show any weakness right now.

Looking Li Linghai in the eyes, he said solemnly, “May I know the content of the ‘roar’ in advance?”

The queen of the Imperium stared at Li Yao thoughtfully, as if she were completely shattering the armor on his eyeballs and peeking at the deepest part of his soul.

After observing for ten seconds, the queen smiled.

“A real Immortal Cultivator is never scared of admitting their belief.”

Li Linghai said gently, “Besides, no lies can deceive a Divinity Transformation Stage expert like you for long. If we can really cooperate, I want it to be done when we are completely honest with each other and after we learn each other's ideas and goals. Otherwise, I would rather we go separate ways right now.

"After all, if two Divinity Transformation Stage experts in the same organization have to be wary of each other, it will be a great internal burden, won't it?

"That is why I'm willing to be honest with you since the beginning. Now that I have told you so many things, why would I keep the most important slogan to myself?

"Our roar is very simple. 'Honor the Majesty and settle the rebellions in the Shenwu reform'!"

Li Yao: "Well…"

He understood the first part of the sentence clearly, but what exactly was "Shenwu"?

Thinking quickly, he immediately realized that "Shenwu" was the era name of the current emperor[1].

The Imperium of True Human Beings followed ancient traditions. Other than chronology with the continuous calendar of the Imperium since its foundation, every emperor had a different era name after they acceded to the throne.

Era names were different from posthumous titles. Both officially and unofficially, it was well accepted that the emperor could be referred to by their era name.

Generally speaking, an emperor would only use one era name in their entire life.

After all, the puppet emperors at the center of power struggles often did not have a long "natural longevity". They would often pass away after they were on the throne for no more than a hundred years.

However, some of the emperors would adopt a second era name if any event that involved the entire Imperium took place.

For example, the emperor of the Imperium today, Li Linghai's husband, had the era name of "Tianzheng" when he acceded to the throne. So, he could be respected as "Emperor Tianzheng"[2].

However, twenty years ago, the war machine of the Imperium began to fulminate, and all the fleets were preparing their soldiers for the strategic counterattack on the Covenant Alliance, ready to clear their disgrace.

In order to bolster the troops and the people, the era name was changed into "Shenwu" as a symbol of the rising martial power of the Imperium. Naturally, the previous "Emperor Tianzheng" was renamed into "Emperor Shenwu".

This year was the year 1079 of the Imperium's calendar and year 18 of Shenwu. It was quite obvious what "Shenwu reform" meant.

Looking at Li Linghai's sincere and zealous look, Li Yao couldn't help but ask, "'Honor the Majesty and settle the rebellions'? I know who the 'rebellions' are. They are without a doubt the noble families including the four Kurfürsten. But I wonder, which 'Majesty' are you honoring exactly? Is it 'His Majesty', or 'Her Majesty'?"

Li Linghai looked at him coldly.

Li Yao went on without giving in at all. "Both Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan said that Emperor Shenwu who seems awesome with feats close to his ancestor’s is in fact just your puppet. I am not sure if they were exaggerating, but I’m certain about one thing.

“If Your Grace did find the ‘Empyreal Transcendence Sector’ and found the enormous heritages of the Supreme Emperor from ten thousand years ago, I’m afraid that you never shared them with your husband, today’s Emperor Shenwu, right?”

Li Linghai stared at Li Yao for a long time before she finally closed her eyes that felt like sabers. She said casually, “If you think that I am trying to be a female emperor who dominates the sea of stars, as the stupid pig Li Lingfeng said, you are greatly underestimating me.

“A female emperor? The ‘Supreme Emperor’ was honored as the highest lord of mankind ten thousand years ago, but so what? Is he anything more than a pile of dry bones today after ten thousand years?

“If I have earned everything through the heritages of the Supreme Emperor, how can I not see through such a simple logic?

“Believe it or not, I am not interested in becoming a female emperor or the highest dictator in any form.

“However, I am very interested in establishing a powerful central government.

“A queen, an emperor, and even the Supreme Emperor will eventually die.

“But a powerful, efficient, and honest central government is likely to lead mankind to sail forward bravely in the dark universe in the next ten thousand years!

“The many problems that the Imperium has today, including those regarding the suffering of the people which you Cultivators find intolerable, boil down to the weakness of the central government. The local hegemonies such as the four Kurfürsten have taken the opportunity to rise, and the internal attritions are worse and worse. The resources have been completely misconfigured.

“To resolve the problems that neither you nor me wish to see, a powerful central government is the prerequisite and the foundation.

“As for the external form of the grand government, I don’t really care about it whether it is a brilliant but autocratic emperor or a parliament under the constitutional monarchy. In many cases, I am even more inclined to the latter.

“Therefore, the ‘Majesty’ that we are honoring is neither His Majesty nor Her Majesty, and it certainly has nothing to do with a female emperor. You can understand it as ‘authority’. It is a very powerful central government, a powerful parliament symbolized by an emperor or a queen as the spiritual leader, and a magnificent army under the leadership of the parliament!

“The powerful central government, which regards the emperor as a spiritual leader, will be made of the elites of all classes and all space zones including the middle- and low-level Immortal Cultivators and the leaders of remote worlds, in order to ensure everyone’s interests as much as possible. It will be completely different from the ‘Council of Elders’, which is controlled by the four Kurfürst families and lurking in the capital city right now!”

[1] Note: Shenwu means “Godly might”

[2] Note: Tianzheng means “justice of heavens”

Chapter 2164 - Five Strategies That Guarantee a Victory!

li yao had long heard that in the court of the capital today, while the emperor was the theoretical highest authority, it was in fact the “council of elders” that managed the state affairs. of the five hundred elders of the imperium, except for part of the members that served as decorations, most of them were from the major noble families and sects, and more than half of them were connected to the four kurfürst families one way or another.

from what li linghai had said, it seemed that she was determined to uproot the council of elders together with the five hundred elders. it was truly bold and insane!

the more she talked, the more frank and passionate li linghai became. she extended five fingers and said, “honoring the majesty, settling the rebellions, and establishing a powerful central government is only the first step.

“if the first step works out, there will be four steps to make next.

“first of all, the public education of the imperium must be greatly supported, especially the early education targeting the hominoids. the country will pay for the tailor-made training packages, including nutrition tonics, strengthening drugs, and corresponding teachers, which will be provided for the hominoid children under seven for free to ensure that every hominoid with potentials in training can be distinguished.

“if they show no potentials in training by seven in such an absolutely fair environment of education, the country should not be held responsible for whatever becomes of them later, should it?

“secondly, an anti-fraud and anti-corruption agency must be established directly under the command of the emperor or the supreme parliament. for now, they can be regrouped from the seasoned warriors in the army of the imperium. they will be given the power that is only secondary to the parliament and patrol in the universe for misconduct under the royal decree.

“the anti-fraud and anti-corruption team will be responsible for investigating and preventing the dishonesty and embezzlement problems of the civil officials, especially when they conspire with each other for their own benefits, to ensure that the ‘contribution point system’, the foundation of the imperium, can be really fair and open. the channel of ascension for the bottom-level immortal cultivators will be kept unblocked. not a single talent will be overshadowed by the noble families!

“thirdly, the public infrastructures must be pushed forward, particularly the ‘space gates’ and the ‘spiritual nexus highways’ that spans multiple sectors.

“in the imperium right now, because of the weak central government, the local leaders and warlords have risen, and many of them consider their neighbors as competitors. as a result, the construction of the space gates and the spiritual nexus has been delayed. under many circumstances, it is not because they are incapable of building them but because of local protectionism and the selfish interests of the warlords.

“if we can increase the number of ‘space gates’ in the imperium by five times and the data interaction bases floating in the space by ten times, which will improve the average net speed of the whole imperium by at least 300%, in a hundred years, how much help will they provide for the development of the comprehensive national strength of the imperium?

“it will be an explosive leap and inestimable progress!

“if we can really achieve that, is the alliance of the holy covenant that has retreated to its lair licking its wounds in silence really a threat at all? completely destroying the covenant alliance and uniting the whole world of humans after ten thousand years will only be a starting point for the imperium of true human beings.

“our expedition is destined to be the sea of stars and the end of the universe!

“concentrate all the resources, hot blood, and courage of the civilization of mankind, produce bigger, faster starships that can jump more times, and develop the unknown space zones beyond the three thousand sectors that are a hundred times vaster. fight for greater space of survival for the civilization of mankind with the swords of the imperium. that is our destiny and the significance for the real immortal cultivators.

“when the five policies are combined, it will be ‘shenwu reform’ and the rebirth of the imperium and even the entire civilization of mankind!”

bellowing so far, li linghai clenched her fists hard, and passionate redness was vaguely emitting from her white hair and her transparent eyes.

li yao: “well…”

still dwelling in the wonderful future that she had envisioned, li linghai was obviously not happy with li yao’s response. she frowned and said, “what’s wrong? do you not agree with our ideas?”

“i wouldn’t say that.”

li yao scratched his chin and said, “this is certainly a beautifully-drawn pie that almost makes you feel its deliciousness. even i feel more or less tempted as an unwavering cultivator.

“however, there was once an emergent food on firefly named ‘fast noodles’, whose decoration and whose content were often totally different. their advertisements were not to be believed at all.

“while your magnificent dreams are truly refreshing to hear, i do have a question. of the five fingers that you have extended, you will have to invest infinite money and resources to accomplish any single one, right? do you have so much money and so many resources in the heritages of the supreme emperor that you have gotten your hands on?”

li linghai shook her head and admitted frankly, “not exactly. no relics or heritages can achieve everything.”

li yao said, “then, the ‘massive public education’, ‘infrastructure constructions’, or ‘exploration of the space zones beyond the three thousand sectors to find more space of survival for mankind’ sound like great plans that will bankrupt any government easily with all the money that they require. where do you plan to find the capital to put them into practice? i don’t suppose you are just drawing the pie instead of actually making it just in order to deceive the ignorant teenagers?”

li linghai smiled and said unhurriedly, “just because i don’t have does not mean that the four kurfürst families do not have, and just because i don’t have the money right now doesn’t mean i won’t have it after the four families are completely crushed and the wealth they accumulated before is squeezed out of their fat bodies, right?”

li yao nodded his head, feeling that his eyes were losing focus. “that does make sense. confiscate everything from the four kurfürst families and regard the fat from their bodies as the first bucket of gold for the rise of the imperium. it does make a lot more sense now.”

“so, are you willing to join us sincerely and carry out the mission to the end, to avoid the many tragedies of mankind, including what happened to firefly, from happening again?”

li linghai extended her hand at li yao solemnly. “despite our different stances, you will have to admit that our ‘new imperium’ is much better than the ‘old imperium’ that has fallen to the hands of the noble families, right?

“at the very least, the hominoids, or the ordinary people, will have more rights, a fairer environment of competition, and a channel of ascension that is smoother than they have in the old imperium.

“i cannot lie to you that every hominoid in the new imperium can live a good, happy, and carefree life, but i promise you that my fellow immortal cultivators and i will try to create such an environment where hominoids will have their chances to become true human beings without any external interferences as long as they have some potentials and are willing to work hard.

“think about it. if the hominoids have better chances to become true human beings, it transpires that the class of the hominoids is improved as a whole. for the ‘first-generation immortal cultivators’ whose brothers and sisters are all hominoids, how can they really be coldblooded enough to really abandon their family? they will certainly try their best to help their hominoid relatives and achieve a reasonable configuration of social benefits. this sort of agrees with the ideas of the cultivators, right?

“so, as long as you are not one of those obstinate fundamentalist cultivators who refuse to accept anything new but truly consider the happiness of the hominoids, is there any reason why you shouldn’t join us?”

blinking his eyes for a long time, li yao said, “it sounds fair enough, but i wonder, who does ‘us’ include right now? has your grace truly gathered the unorganized dissidents in your hands into indestructible iron and rocks?”

li linghai’s eyes flashed. she smiled and said, “it is truly difficult to convince someone in the divinity transformation stage. you are too smart. yes, i’m not going to lie to you. although many people are unsatisfied with what the four kurfürst families have been doing, they have governed the imperium for hundreds of years after all, and their reign is outstretched and flawless.

“it is certainly not an easy task to gather the oppositions who each have their own plan, is it?

“even if we have all the favorable conditions, i estimate that it will take at least a year and a half to finish the association that will involve the entire imperium.

“the four kurfürst families are not made of dead people. they will certainly sense my intention in the meantime and be shocked by my real strength. by then, they will stop me through all kinds of shameless methods, including personal assassination. while i am not a defenseless woman, it is inappropriate for me to take action in many situations, and i do need a bodyguard in the divinity transformation stage with a tough combat ability. i’ll be like a tiger that grows wings if you join my cause. it will be easier for me to deal with a lot of emergencies.

“therefore, your arrival is perhaps really a sign that the imperium will rise again. i’m really in need of you right now. so, whatever conditions you have, just bring them out.

“i know that a divinity transformation stage cultivator like you will certainly not be attracted by heavenly materials and earthly treasures or fame and fortunes. if your conditions are about policies and ideology, for example, better treatment for the hominoids, you can tell them to me right now. i’ll consider them as long as they are not too outrageous.”

looking at the queen’s earnest and passionate eyes, li yao scratched his cheeks for a long time again before he said slowly, “let’s not rush into the negotiation of conditions yet. i still feel that your grace’s plan has a fatal loophole.”

li linghai’s eyes shone brilliantly. “what loophole?”

“the covenant alliance, of course. people of the covenant alliance are merely emotionless, but they are not deaf, blind, or dead. will they simply wait and watch us complete the ‘honor the majesty and settle the rebellions in the shenwu reform’? they will definitely charge at the imperium and crush it when the internal conflicts within the imperium have a complete outbreak!”

li yao asked sincerely, “i don’t believe that your grace has never considered the question before. or are you confident that the covenant alliance will just stay back for a hundred years while watching the old imperium transform into a new, stronger one?”

“of course, the covenant alliance will not stand by and watch. they will attack us in search of benefits.”

the queen was not perplexed by the fatal question at all. with utmost confidence beaming out of her eyes, she smiled casually. “however, believe me, nothing can stop the rise of the civilization of mankind. all in all, the imperium will be a sure winner!”

Chapter 2165 - A Path of Obstinacy!

li yao was at a loss for words.

he knew that queen li linghai might be an insane, hopeless, and complete gambler, but she was certainly not a self-deceiving idiot.

now that li linghai was confident in defeating the alliance of the holy covenant while dealing with the four kurfürst families and reforming the imperium, she must have a certain strength that li yao was unaware of yet, one whose success rate was quite remarkable.

perhaps it was the greatest secret about li linghai, concerning the mysterious heritages from the star ocean imperium ten thousand years ago that she had inherited!

li linghai would definitely not tell him the truth about the secret easily, or anybody else in the deep sea fleet for that matter.

the communication so far had taken a lot of time despite the high efficiency of the high-level experts. li linghai handled the intelligence while she spoke to li yao, and she was already done with almost a hundred pieces of complicated intelligence.

pretending to be hesitating, li yao thought for a moment and said, “you do have a point, your grace. now that the star ocean republic is no more and firefly has been completely destroyed, there seems no place for me in the vast universe right now.

“i’m willing to be at the service of your grace wholeheartedly, on the grounds that the morals of the cultivators are not violated, but i will require a small sector, which will be authorized as a ‘special area’ after the cause is reached, and i’ll adopt the system of the cultivators in the sector. is that acceptable for your grace?”

“of course!”

in a look of “i know you will propose such a demand”, li linghai smiled. “with your combat ability in the divinity transformation stage, as long as you make slight contributions for the great cause of reform, is there any problem at all for you to work as the master of a certain sector?

“it will be your freedom to administrate your sector provided that it is not against the law of the imperium. on the other hand, considering your special identity, i can even help you get certain policies beyond the range of the law of the imperium for your ‘special area’.”

li yao was “overjoyed”. thinking for a moment, li yao said again, “i still believe in the excellency of the path of the cultivators. if a certain policy is deemed effective in my sector, is it possible to promote it in the national range?”

li linghai pondered a moment and smiled. “why not? in any case, our ultimate goal is the same, which is the rise of the civilization of mankind. the real immortal cultivators are not natural-born sadists. if a certain policy makes the lives of the hominoids more comfortable without harming the overall interests of the imperium and the civilization of mankind, is there any reason why it should not be promoted nationwide?

“after all, both the true human beings and the hominoids are the subjects of his majesty!”

li yao still wanted to say something, but li linghai waved her hands to interrupt him. “this is all about the future. you can wait until the four kurfürst families are really eliminated. if you truly give unparalleled performances in the battle, not just one sector, even a couple of sectors will not be entirely impossible, or you may become the most powerful man in court. by then, you will naturally be able to better carry out your influence and raise valuable suggestions for the major policies of the imperium. there is no need to talk about them right now, is there?

“getting to the bottom of it, you and i will both be screwed if we fail, and everything i promise you right now will be just a dream, right?”

li yao said in hesitation, “you do have a point, your grace, but i’m afraid that you were wrong about one thing.”

“oh?”

li linghai was slightly dazed. “what was it?”

rubbing his hands, li yao said, his eyes rolling quickly, “just now, you said that a divinity transformation stage cultivator such as myself would never be attracted by heavenly materials and earthly treasures or fame and fortunes. that is not necessarily the case.

“in fact, after we get to know each other better, you will realize that i am in fact a very casual and approachable man without the haughtiness of a top expert in the divinity transformation stage at all. apart from the discussions on ideas, i generally do not say no to treasures, fame, fortune, strengthening drugs, amazing arts, or powerful magical equipment.

“besides, when i escaped from my hometown, i did not carry many belongings with me in the first place, and my cosmos ring is now already empty. my colossus, the only treasure, is now almost wasted too. it is in dire need of maintenance and upgrading.

“therefore, while i am sincerely hoping to cooperate with your grace and make contributions to the establishment of the ‘new imperium’, well…”

li yao blinked at li linghai quickly with a greedy smile.

li linghai was both stunned and amused.

“that is not a problem at all. ‘dragon abyss’ is my secret flagship when i’m on a trip. it has all kinds of resources and training and maintenance facilities. now that you are my personal bodyguard, you are naturally free to use any of them!”

having recruited a useful subordinate in the divinity transformation stage, the queen was obviously delighted. she said, “if they are not enough, there will be a plethora of magical equipment for you to pick after we return to ‘deep sea palace’, my secret base.

“we will stay in the deep sea palace for five days before we return to the capital. you can change the appearance of your crystal suit and your colossus in the meantime. of course, for safety reasons, i still advise you to change to another crystal suit that is less eye-catching.

“after we return to the capital, it will be the time for ‘vulture li yao’ to distinguish himself and rise unstoppably!

“you may go to the resource warehouse and the maintenance workshop if you don’t have any questions. right. li lingfeng’s colossus is still waiting to be handled in the maintenance workshop, but the power units have been too seriously and weirdly damaged. the refiners on ‘dragon abyss’ all feel that it is very tricky. you were the one who caused the damage, right? do you want to take a look at it? i’ll give you the highest clearance in operation.”

li yao’s eyes were glittering when the topic turned to the colossus, like a weasel that had smelled chicken soup. he mumbled, “i almost can’t wait anymore.”

“then, leave now. right. bring him with you.”

the queen nodded at li jialing who was standing nearby and said indifferently, “go to my personal warehouse of crystal suits and pick a suitable crystal suit for him. then, adjust it as you see fit and teach him how to use it. i do not want to see him in such an ugly and stupid look again.”

the eyes of the young man, or the young lion, bulged out again.

li yao hurried to grab li jialing’s neck and dragged him away. “understood, your grace!”

…

on the pathway to the maintenance workshop, li yao followed tu zhengdao, the deputy leader of the deep sea legion, forward while dragging li jialing who was still struggling hard in his armpit.

inside his brain, the mental devil’s slightly high-pitched voice came over. “are you really going to work with li linghai in her so-called reform?”

li yao replied, “or what? we are here to look for the queen and to investigate the truth of the imperium for the first time. now, we have snuck into the heart of the imperium and become the queen’s personal bodyguard. i say it is a huge success!”

“however, don’t you feel that a divided imperium is more in the interests of the federation than an imperium with concentrated power, an invincible army, and zealous people?”

the mental devil said solemnly, “by the way, i don’t really care about it. after all, my strength grows when i feed on negative emotions and dark energy. what the queen does actually fits my appetite quite well. i’m just curious why you would agree to it.”

“first of all, a ‘weak imperium’ is not necessarily more favorable for the federation than a ‘powerful imperium’.”

li yao said, “don’t forget that our original purpose is to achieve a certain balance between the imperium and the covenant alliance so that the federation can secure the greatest advantage in the game as a ‘new player’.

“neither the imperium being too strong nor being too weak is in the interests of the federation.

“if the imperium is mired in the current chaos, or a confusing civil war breaks out in the competition for the new territory, the covenant alliance might take advantage of the weakness and completely demolish the imperium. that will be even more terrible than having a ‘new imperium’!”

the mental devil said, “but…”

li yao smiled, his eyes not half as obscure as when he talked to li linghai a moment ago. he said confidently, “besides, i don’t think that the reform is going to be as easy as the queen has described just now.“did you not hear it? the queen’s eloquent speech sounds fancy and sophisticated, but if we get to the bottom of it, she still fails to address the old system and the most fundamental contradiction.

“she is just trying to confiscate everything from the four kurfürst families so that the temporary conflicts in the imperium right now can be temporarily soothed with the bloody capitals earned through the confiscation.

“perhaps her ‘prescription’ will prove more or less effective in the next one to two hundred years, but it will not cure the root of the disease. in another two hundred years, after the mountains of gold dug from the four kurfürst families are used up, and the imperium still can’t find new living space and resources beyond the three thousand sectors, what can be done? wouldn’t the previous vicious cycle be back again? even the most ‘fair’ and ‘honest’ parliament will degenerate into the ‘council of elders’ of the imperium today.

“it is exactly because i believe in the correctness of the path of the cultivators that i am sure that the queen’s approach will not work out, and that the ‘new imperium’ in her dream will forever be a dream. she talks as if it were a simple task, but is it really so easy to be implanted?

“besides, have you felt that the queen is absolutely not as calm and aloof as she appears to be? she is in fact an extremely insane gambler, and she is going to take the gamble however risky it is.

“with or without me, or even if i stay on her opposite side, she would still go down on the path of obstinacy until the end.

“with that in mind, we can only agree with her for now and take part in the ‘reform’ to figure out what her greatest leverage actually is, so that we can find a way to pull the chaotic situation in the imperium to the direction that is most in favor of the star glory federation.”

Chapter 2166 - Lesson of History Forty

The mental devil said, “It does make sense. In any case, considering the size of only ten or so Sectors at the edge of the cosmos, it is impossible for the Star Glory Federation to fully take over the center of the cosmos despite the enhancement of the Nuwa warship and the Kunlun relics.

“In the hundreds of prosperous worlds at the center of the cosmos, there is bound to be one or more regimes. It may be the old Imperium, the new Imperium, or any other country. Whatever the regime is, the true path of immortality is not going to be forgotten anytime soon, considering that it has been spread in this area for a thousand years and well believed by the people.

“Now that the Star Glory Federation is not ready to march to the center of the cosmos yet, we can only seek the second-best option right now, which is to create an Imperium that fits our appetite better.”

Li Yao nodded his head. “That is exactly what I meant. Given the sharp contradictions in the Imperium of True Human Beings, even if there is not a ‘queen in white’ such as Li Linghai, there will always be a queen in red, queen in green, or queen in purple, who comes up with another version of reform.

“A storm that sweeps across the entire center of the cosmos seems inevitable now.

“For me, on one hand, I hope a new Imperium that is more favorable for the interests of the Star Glory Federation will show up after the storm; on the other hand, I also hope that the ordinary people do not suffer much pain and loss during the storm and that they can really earn something for themselves in the collapse of the four Kurfürst families!”

The mental devil chuckled. “Of course, if we truly make great contributions to the reform and become an important member of the government of the new Imperium, hahahaha, it certainly will be very awesome!

“We are experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage after all, and we are the queen’s close subordinates. If her crazy plan does work out, it will seem quite unnecessary to hide our past, and it will really be quite possible for us to be the most important official in the court!

“Ding Lingdang is the Speaker of the Star Glory Federation. How about we help the queen establish a parliament for the new Imperium and be a Speaker too?”

“Well…”

Li Yao thought for a moment and said, “You know that I am not interested in fame and fortune. I do not want to be the most powerful official in court after all. In fact, I want to get as far away from it as possible.

“However, now that we are talking about it, it’s true that I want to observe how the storm that sweeps across the Imperium will take place at the closest distance.

“Do you know? After hearing what the queen said, I’ve been studying Blackstar the Great.

“What kind of person was Wuying Qi exactly?

“More than a hundred years ago, when I listened to Su Changfa talking about Blackstar the Great in the Kunlun relic, he struck me as a ruthless, brutal man who would do anything for power.

“Later, the files that I got from Firefly further built up the impression. He was just a pure evil man!

“However, Di Feiwen, the deputy commander of the Black Wind Fleet, held a different view. He did not worship Blackstar the Great blindly but analyzed the policies in Wuying Qi’s age. At the very least, for the merchants who did not come from noble backgrounds, the age of Blackstar the Great was the golden years that were full of changes and opportunities. It was much better than the suffocating environment of the Imperium right now that is monopolized by the nobles and magnates.

“Today, the queen has said so again. Although she must’ve been exaggerating something, she might not be entirely pointless.

“Everybody has their own theory. I’m really confused about what Blackstar the Great was like in history actually.”

The mental devil yawned and said, “History is a fancy-looking bi*ch in the first place who does not speak anything truthfully. She is exactly what you want her to be like. But however sincere you are to her, and even if you think that she is sincere to you, it is impossible for you to figure out her realest look. Aren’t you simply upsetting yourself by considering such questions?”

Li Yao smiled. “Perhaps you’re right. I’ve thought it through now. It does matter what Blackstar the Great was actually like. Perhaps he was truly an unpardonable fiend, but such a moralistic judgment is utterly meaningless for a founding emperor.

“Is Blackstar the Great any different from the founding emperors of so many powerful dynasties in history? For example, what is the difference between him and the founding emperor of the Great Qian Dynasty in the Ancient Sages Sector?

“Perhaps when they first built their enterprise, they all had their ambitions, hoping to change the problems of the past, make unprecedented accomplishments, and climb higher and higher mountains with their people and their civilizations.

“I don’t believe that Blackstar the Great’s original purpose was to establish an evil empire to brutally exploit the ordinary people, which would’ve been too low for him, right?

“However, everybody has their limits. Both their life and their cause cannot resist the passage and corrosion of time. Even the most splendid palace has its day of rotting and collapsing. The greatest ambitions and visions will still be swallowed by the selfish desires in the deepest part of the mind!”

The mental devil said, “Well, you are suddenly acting like a sophisticated poet. I’m having goosebumps. What are you trying to say exactly?”

After a long silence, Li Yao said, “I want to say that I’m somewhat scared to see the Imperium of True Human Beings in its current status.”

The mental devil found it odd. “Why? It is exactly because the Imperium is in a mess that it does not have the time to attack the federation. If the Imperium were in unity, the federation would've been long crushed!"

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao said gloomily, "I'm scared that I will turn into another Blackstar the Great."

The mental devil hesitated for a long time before saying, "Well, I think your worries are ungrounded, and there should be a limit to your shamelessness. Regardless of Blackstar the Great's side, and even if he was an unparalleled fiend, he at least united hundreds of the most prosperous Sectors at the edge of the cosmos. He was the second greatest person next to the Supreme Emperor in the past ten thousand years!

"You are a 'dominator of three Sectors' at the edge of the cosmos at best, which is partly the result of your disciple Jin Xinyue's vehement promotion. If you are recorded in the official history of the Imperium, you will be nothing more than a barbarian master of a remote land. There's no need to be scared at all. Really. Just do whatever you want. You can't become Blackstar the Great in the next thousand years. Rest assured about that!"

"Try to get what I'm saying."

Li Yao said, "I am not talking about feats and sizes but the common conundrums that we are faced with.

"Leaving the ideology issues aside, is the Star Glory Federation today any different from the Imperium of True Human Beings a thousand years ago or the Star Ocean Republic several thousand years ago? They are all just born, full of vigor and ambitions, without many burdens from the past or interest groups that are too powerful. There are even benefits in many aspects that can accelerate the development of the country, improve the happiness of the people, and soothe the conflicts of different groups.

“But what will happen a few hundred years later?

“When the benefits from the Kunlun relic and the Nuwa warship run out, and the interest groups grow to the point that their greed and ambitions are awakened, what will happen?

“It can be seen from the collapse of the Star Ocean Republic.

“The Immortal Cultivators such as Su Changfa, Di Feiwen, and Li Linghai, and the Cultivators from Firefly such as Cui Lingfeng and Tang Zhengdong, all agreed that the Star Ocean Republic was indeed too sick to be saved at its last years.

“In other words, ‘Cultivators’ is not an elixir that can cure all diseases. You cannot ensure that you will stay uncorrupted, pure, bright, and righteous just by carving the word ‘Cultivator’ on your forehead.

“Cultivators can degenerate too, like those in the last years of the Star Ocean Republic. They were even corrupted to such an extent that the ordinary people chose Blackstar the Great over them.

“Perhaps, while the Cultivators and the Immortal Cultivators are against each other, they are faced with a common foe, which is something deep inside humanity.

“Who can ensure that the Cultivators of the Star Glory Federation will never be changed? Will the Star Glory Federation become the Star Ocean Republic in its last years and the Imperium of True Human Beings today several hundred years later? Will a class of powerful families and magnates that can swallow the country show up?”

The mental devil said, “You’ll have to ask yourself the question. Getting to the bottom of it, your group is exactly the biggest and most influential one in the federation!”

“Yes. That’s why I said that I’m scared that I will turn into the next ‘Blackstar the Great’.”

Li Yao said, “Think about it. I was only away from the federation for a hundred years, and Jin Xinyue was already capable of bragging me into ‘dominator of three Sectors’ and ‘founding father of the federation’. While I do appreciate my disciple’s fidelity, everything has limits. After all, a hat of ‘dominator of three Sectors’ is big enough for such a casual and low-key person such as myself. I won’t be able to hold it anymore if it grows any bigger.

“Imagine this. The Star Glory Federation truly has a chance to march to the center of the cosmos a few hundred years later, establishing an enterprise that is even greater than the Imperium’s today, and I have already died or been away in search of Earth by then. But ‘Li Yao’s group’ still exists and expands abnormally into a ‘Kurfürst family’ in a different form, and I am embroidered into some sort of ‘master of stars’ or ‘king of kings’ who far exceeds Blackstar the Great. Then, they do all kinds of bad things under my name and let me take the blame. Eventually, a new hero rises in public indignity and overthrows the federation, and I am described as an unpardonable fiend in the new history books. Wouldn’t I be terribly wronged in such a case?”

The mental devil was dazed for a long time. “That does make sense. Now that you put it in such a way, I am feeling somewhat sympathetic for Blackstar the Great!”

“The competition of the federation, the Imperium, and the Covenant Alliance will probably last for another hundreds of years, won’t it? But I can’t wait that long. As long as the three parties reach a balance, I will definitely set off to search for Earth, my earliest origins.”

Li Yao threw away her casualness and said most solemnly, “However, I do not want to leave a federation that is full of hidden problems and may repeat the fate of the Star Ocean Republic and the Imperium of True Human Beings when I leave for Earth. I do not want to see a divided and corrupted Star Glory Federation just like what the Imperium is today when I return to the universe after I accomplish my missions on Earth!”

Chapter 2167 - Eye of the Federation

the mental devil said, “then, what are you going to do? the problem you said just now carries no solutions at all!”

li yao said with a smile, “exactly. the problem that so many ancient monarchs and even blackstar the great have failed to address is certainly too difficult for me who is only good at refining and fighting to resolve, if i can understand it at all!

“so, i have thought everything through. since i do not have the wisdom to solve the problem, i might as well be a pair of dutiful eyes for the federation.”

the mental devil asked suspiciously, “eyes for the federation?”

“yes. the imperium of true human beings is in the middle of an outbreak of conflicts that have been accumulated for a thousand years and an unprecedentedly drastic transformation. i don’t know how to change the federation, and it is barely possible for me to completely change the imperium with my own hands. so, i might as well be the eye of the federation and observe how the imperium of true human beings is going to fix the problems.

“i don’t think that the reformists led by the queen will succeed, but even the lessons of failure will still be very valuable. i will observe everything at the closest distance and record the changes that are happening in the imperium. one day, i will bring what i have seen, heard, and experienced in person back to the federation, hoping that the politicians, educators, economists, and sociologists who are a hundred times smarter than me, and even every future citizen of the federation, can learn something from the lessons of the imperium. everybody can work and think together to prevent the star glory federation from repeating the mistakes of the ancient dynasties, the star ocean republic, and the imperium of true human beings, to avoid the swirl of degeneration that has looped for ten thousand years, and to create a better future!

“if i can really do that well, i will be able to search for earth without any guilt. the things in the future can be left to the hands of the future people. haha. i believe that a new generation of federal citizens who are stronger, smarter, and more excellent than ding lingdang, jin xinyue, and i will show up. they can take care of the upsetting mess!”

the mental devil said, “i sense that your belief is slowly condensing and consolidating. your level seems to have made a minor improvement.”

“of course.”

li yao smiled in his heart. “after knowing what i’m going to do exactly, i am completely relaxed, no longer disturbed by confusion and chaos. it is only natural that my belief is firmer!”

he strode forward. it was not until then that he remembered li jialing was still under his armpit. glancing at the golden-haired young man who was still angry, he couldn’t help but grin and ask him in private, “what’s up? are you still mad at the queen?”

li jialing’s dark golden eyes constricted as he said sullenly, “am i qualified to be mad at the queen? it was already kind enough of her to spare my life.”

li yao blinked his eyes and put li jialing down as he continued talking in secret, “don’t talk like that. the queen’s heart is obviously not as cold as her face. if she is not concerned about your safety, why would she ask me to pick a high-level crystal suit for you from her personal warehouse and to adjust it and train you in person? she could’ve cladded you with a random mass-produced product, couldn’t she?

“also, if she is not concerned about you, why do you think she analyzed the situation of the imperium today so eloquently in such great detail just now?”

li jialing bulged his eyes. “huh?”

li yao said with a smile, “if she only meant to talk me into joining her cause, it would’ve been unnecessary to explain the details so clearly, especially the dangers in the imperium today and the purpose of her many methods. those things were spoken to me on the surface but to you in fact. it is some sort of tutelage of a mother for her son.”

excited, the young man stammered, “is-is it true?”

“how would i know? it’s just a random guess.”

li yao rolled his eyes. “you want to know if it is true? very simple. you can go and ask the queen.”

li jialing was rendered speechless in fury.

“however, there is one thing that neither the queen nor li lingfeng lied about. the imperium is truly a stunning mess right now.”

patting the young man’s shoulder, li yao said seriously, “in such an imperium, you can never find a peaceful life of absolute freedom that you want. in the imperium today, there is only one kind of freedom, which is the freedom of fighting!

“later, i will help you pick an advanced crystal suit and teach you some pragmatic tactics. i hope you can focus your attention because i cannot stay by your side and save your life every time. for yourself, the queen and your birth father whom you never saw, you’d better… not die!”

li jialing was slightly dazed and deep in thought. feeble fighting will flowed out of his dark golden eyes.

while they were talking, tu zhengdao stopped at the end of the pathway. “fellow cultivators, we have arrived.”

shua!

the metal cabin carved with the lightning trident emblem of the imperium of true human beings was slowly opened, and the weird fragrance from the smoldering heavenly materials and earthly treasures, mixed with the scent of metal cutting and polishing, greeted the newcomers.

the fulminations of the various kinds of refining magical equipment also enshrouded them like tides.

the enormous maintenance workshop before li yao was as splendid and profound as a palace, making him feel that he was inside the magical equipment factory on a large planet instead of a warship in space.

as far as his eyes could reach, assembly lines that were swallowing and spitting components were everywhere. the multipurpose, automatic arms extended from the sides of the assembly lines under the control of the crystal processors, performing dazzling operations.

they were carving complicated runes, combining the chips that were as thin as paper to the breadboard, or completing the assembly of hundreds of tiny components within a breath. under the illumination of lights, they were like a silver, exuberant forest of metals.

behind the assembly lines, at least thousands of refiners were dedicated to the manual polishing and maintenance work that could not be accomplished by machines.

li yao's eyes fell on each of the refiners. he found that their eyes were focused and energetic, their hands deft and steady, and their movements as smooth as the flowing mercury. powerful and stable waves of spiritual energy surrounded them. they were definitely specialists in the standard of the star glory federation.

li yao couldn't help but compliment in secret. the imperium of true human beings truly had a huge talent base. even a private troop that li linghai secretly founded behind the back of the four kurfürst families boasted such a technological reserve!

however, his attention was soon attracted by the tempest god at the end of the maintenance workshop, which was leaning against a fixed maintenance shelf.

a colossus was always a colossus. no matter how many of them he had seen and touched, and although the wounds on this very colossus were caused by him in person, it was still full of fatal captivation and made it impossible for him to move his eyes away.

“brother li.”

tu zhengdao hadn't recovered from the fear when li yao pressed his shoulder earlier. as an experienced battle-type expert in the nascent soul stage, he naturally knew that, if li yao could press his shoulder without alarming him at all, the man could certainly cut his throat without blinking.

with such astonishing capabilities, the man should be a revered celebrity even in the imperium that had tons of experts.

tu zhengdao had been working in the military for years. he knew a thing or two about the experts of the hundreds of sectors and fleets in the imperium, and he was no stranger to the spiritual energy models and the skills of killing of the major schools. but he could not figure out li yao’s origins at all.

however, having become the queen’s personal bodyguard and taken part in such a crucial mission such as the execution of li lingfeng, the man must be the queen’s trusted subordinate—if not the most trusted one.

therefore, tu zhengdao was very respectful of li yao. weighing his choice of words, he said, “her grace asked me to provide all the help that brother li needs. whatever you may need, be they heavenly materials and earthly treasures, strengthening drugs, or magical equipment for battles, you can find them here. if brother li is interested in the colossus over there, you are free to examine it at a closer distance too.

“however, if i may remind brother li, the general manager of this maintenance workshop is master ‘jin tianzong’, the chief director of magical equipment of our deep sea fleet. he happens to be on board with us this time to provide technical support for her grace and the battle against li lingfeng and to deal with the ‘tempest god’.

“he is a master of refining in the divinity transformation stage that everybody in the circle knows. the queen went through a lot of trouble to invite him to join the deep sea fleet. his place is rather unique, and he can’t be treated as a simple subordinate.

“therefore, now that we have come to his maintenance workshop, you might want to check with him first if you need anything, brother li. naturally, given the queen’s order, he will certainly not decline your request!

“also, if you make friends with master jin, it will certainly be greatly beneficial for your training and fighting in the future. it is absolutely not a problem for the crystal suit that he adjusts in person to improve your maximal combat ability by 3% to 5%!”

a refiner in the divinity transformation stage!his heart racing, li yao couldn’t help but lick his lips and beam with interest.

as long as someone could advance into the divinity transformation stage, whatever their professions and gifts were, they would definitely be the expert of the experts. even the leaders of the four kurfürst families had to show enough respect for them. they were indeed not common subordinates.

it was just like when the queen tried to recruit li yao, she had to explain her ambitions and principles clearly first, describing the future that she envisioned, in order to seek common grounds. she couldn’t just simply offer a salary or propose other conditions.

li linghai’s private troop that had been hiding in the dark had attracted a master of refining in the divinity transformation stage, which immediately improved li yao’s evaluation of the queen’s capabilities.

of course, more importantly, he felt that his fingers were itching and burning again!

thinking for a moment, li yao narrowed his eyes and asked li jialing with the private-talking technique, “who is this ‘master jin tianzong’? have you heard of him before? is he very impressive?”

li jialing was a super warrior that li lingfeng carefully refined and raised as half an “heir”. having been informed of abundant intelligence in various fields of the imperium, he was naturally not ignorant of such a famous celebrity as jin tianzong. he simply bulged his eyes again and exclaimed in disbelief, “it’s him? he is still alive?”

Chapter 2168 - Groundbreaking Hybrid Engine!

looking at li jialing’s shining eyes and his disbelief, li yao was hooked. “what’s up? is he very famous?”

“yes. he was very famous, until three years ago!”

li jialing also said in a low voice through the private-talking technique, “master jin tianzong was a professor at the refining department of the imperial polytechnical university. he seemed to be also leading a very famous crystal suit laboratory. his main fields of study were the single magical equipment, namely the crystal suits and the colossi. he was one of the best specialists in these fields.”

“oh? he is from the imperial polytechnical university?”

li yao’s eyes beamed with interest, and the eagerness on his face was even more intense.

he was from the refining department of the grand desolate war institution, one of the most famous “nine elite colleges” of the star glory federation.

after encountering su changfa, di feiwen, and other immortal cultivators, he naturally took an interest in the most famous “holy land of refining” in the imperium.

according to the introduction of su changfa and di feiwen, the best refiners of the imperium of true human beings were mainly from three institutions—the imperial university, the imperial polytechnical university, and the imperial advanced college of metallurgy. the refining-related majors in the three academic establishments represented the peak of magical equipment production in the imperium of true human beings.

among them, the imperial university was a comprehensive universe that was one of the best in the imperium of true human beings. it boasted many departments that had a long history and a strong faculty, such as the “archaeology department”, which had monopolized more than 50% of the explorations of the primeval relics. they were perfect partners for the refining department.

therefore, the refining department of the imperial university was the best in the imperium!

the imperial polytechnical university, on the other hand, did not have so many primeval relics to excavate, but it boasted distinguished advantages in terms of industrial designs.

they were more creative and less bound by predecessors and traditions. so, they had produced a lot of bizarre, innovative, and experimental magical equipment. the place was also a “holy land of refining” and a “heaven of magical equipment” for many immortal cultivators in the imperium!

a master of refining in the divinity transformation stage from the imperial polytechnical universe certainly deserved to be made acquaintance with!

li jialing went on, “in the past hundred years, master jin tianzong developed more than fifteen models of brand-new crystal suits and held thousands of patents. he even won the prize of ‘heavenly craftsman’, the highest honor in the circle of refiners of the imperium, for two years in a row. he was one of the few masters who had made such an achievement.

“i remember that even li lingfeng had collected three crystal suits that were polished by master jin tianzong in person. he often brought them out to maintain them in person. from the brilliance in his eyes, i could tell his fondness of the three crystal suits. when i asked if i could take a look at them, he declined my request without any hesitation!

“however, i’m told that master jin tianzong already died three years ago. how did he end up here?”

li yao was intrigued. such a master of refining in the divinity transformation stage was definitely a national treasure. the man would be respected as an honorable guest whichever of the four kurfürst families he visited.

there must be more to the story about how li linghai recruited such a master.

li yao asked, “how exactly did he die according to what you were told?”

“he seemed to suffer heavy wounds in an experiment accident, and he died later in regrets.”

thinking for a moment, li jialing said, “when i went to ‘manjusaka, the city in the sky’ for refinements last year, li lingfeng happened to bring a few crystal suits to wuying lan and asked him to modify it, because wuying lan’s laboratory was quite capable in terms of cutting-edge magical equipment too. after all, there were so many ‘experiment subjects’ that he could test on.

“the two of them chitchatted on the test field and did not avoid me. when they happened to talk about master jin tianzong, they both agreed that it was a shame that master jin passed away. if he had not, the few crystal suits should’ve been modified and adjusted by master jin instead of being brought to wuying lan’s laboratory. they also said that something was seriously wrong, and master jin died probably because he pissed off someone.”

li yao narrowed his eyes. “every master of refining is backed by countless experts. even if he did piss off someone, who dared to do anything to a master of refining in the divinity transformation stage?”

“that i don’t know.”

li jialing said, “i only vaguely heard a theory. li lingfeng and wuying lan said that master jin was best known for his fairness and integrity in the refining department of the imperial polytechnical university. a few years back, he disclosed a large-scale academic cheating event that involved the four kurfürst families, which was a humiliation for hundreds of descendants of the four kurfürst families. it was a great scandal.”

pondering for a moment, li yao shook his head. “such kind of incidents would truly make certain scoundrels hate master jin, but it was not enough to get a divinity transformation stage refiner killed.”

li jialing recalled a moment and said again, “or maybe, it was about the studies that master jin had been dedicated to. li lingfeng and wuying lan said that master jin tianzong had been working on the studies of ‘hybrid’ crystal suit, and he seemed to have made such significant progress. he claimed to have made quite a few crucial results, but a lot of specialists in the circle of refiners said that master jin’s research was completely wrong and that his experimental data were edited and fabricated. for them, master jin was a fraud who only wanted to get famous.

“desperate to prove his research, master jin started extremely dangerous experiments without bothering with anything else. as a result, an accident happened. the leakage of a certain poisonous chemical killed him and his entire team. that… seemed to be his whole story.”

“hybrid crystal suit?”

li yao’s heart was suddenly racing, and his pupils were almost reduced to the size of needle tips. managing to hold back the excitement deep inside his heart, he asked, “does it mean to highly combine the spiritual energy within an exos and the spiritual energy inside the crystal reactor to realize the single output of a hybrid engine system?”

“seems so.”

li jialing said, “i don’t quite understand the details. they are too sophisticated.”

“not just sophisticated. this is a universal dilemma!”

li yao was so thrilled that he was almost yelling.

“hybrid crystal suit” was indeed a groundbreaking, revolutionary idea and also a super conundrum that countless specialists of refining believed could not be resolved.

all the popular crystal suits in the civilization of mankind today, in the star glory federation, the imperium of true human beings, and even the alliance of the holy covenant, and be they the most low-level engineering crystal suits, the beginner-level battlesuits plugged with skill cards designed for ordinary people, or the special crystal suits tailor-made for the divinity transformation stage experts—they all belong to the same category if classified by the power output—parallel engine system. two power sources were in function at the same time and provided impetus together.

after some training, the ordinary people could jump to almost ten meters tall, blow up a giant rock with a single punch, or run dozens of kilometers in an hour without panting after putting on a crystal suit. what was the power that boosted them to be faster, higher, and stronger? naturally, it was not the energy stored inside the human body, but the energy provided by the fuel cabin and the crystal reactor. the muscle and nerval reactions of the human body only provided the power of micro adjustments at best.

if there were still fuel and crystals in the crystal reactor, the crystal suit would continue to work incessantly. if the fuel ran out, the crystal suit would be wasted garbage and might even crush the user in it.

the logic naturally worked for the ordinary people, because ordinary people were relatively weak. how could they uphold the crystal suits, which weighed hundreds of kilograms, to move and fight with their own strength?

even if they gritted their teeth to do it after the injection of excitants, they would die of exhaustion in no more than five minutes.

therefore, for the ordinary people, crystal suits were the same as armed shuttles and crystal tanks. the power output was solely dependent on an external source, namely the crystal reactor. from that point of view, crystal suits were more like “vehicles” than “suits”.

however, for the trainers, especially the high-level ones, the case was entirely different.

the high-level trainers had powerful souls and abundant spiritual energy in their bodies, which equaled many minor “reactors” in their abdomens, spines, or other parts of their bodies.

both the cultivators and the immortal cultivators were capable of soaring to the sky, diving to the ground, or breaking the mountains with the “reactors” in their bodies in the first place.

after they put on crystal suits, as a battle unit, they actually had two power sources, one being the reactors inside their bodies and the other being the crystal reactors in their crystal suits.

here came the question. which of the two power sources was main and which was secondary? and how they should be coordinated.

after all, it was not an armed shuttle or a starship with two power units, whose distribution and output efficiency could be adjusted randomly. one of the power sources here was embedded inside the body that even the trainers could hardly change. it was exactly like a normal person could not change the place of their heart.

the two power sources were like two legs, one of which was real and the other was false. sometimes, one of them was longer than the other. how could the person walk or run with those legs?

the higher one’s level was, the more complicated the question would be.

the “reactors” of the high-level experts were powerful enough themselves, and their output was astronomical. the crystal suits they wore were extraordinary products too, with remarkable output from the crystal reactor. there would be dire consequences in the case of the discoordination of the two power sources.

the beginner-level crystal suits often enabled the function of the mode switch, which could change the power source between the crystal reactor and oneself. only one of them would be used at a given time.

when the crystal reactor outputted power, the user would hold themselves back.

on the other hand, if they were going to use the crystal suit by burning their life and soul, the crystal reactor would be put on hold.

it was not hard to imagine that whoever had higher pursuits would not accept such a simple and crude pattern of power output.

then, in the advanced crystal suits, many delicate circuits and rune arrays would be adopted, with a high demand on the architecture of the crystal reactor, to ensure that the crystal reactor and the trainers themselves could output spiritual energy at the same time in a coordinated way. in the end, the two power sources would help each other so that the user could “run with both legs”.

the more advanced a crystal suit was, the more considerate the power output models and the unit architecture would be. for the crystal suits tailor-made for the experts in the divinity transformation stage and the divinity branching stage, it was often the case that a brand-new power distribution would be designed from scratch according to the features of their cultivation arts and their fighting skills.

but all the polishing and designs had the same purpose, which was to coordinate the two power sources to the point that they were 100% synchronized.

that was the so-called “parallel” power output pattern, also known as “double-action” or “linkage”.

but “hybrid” was a completely different concept. it overthrew the popular power output plan in the past ten thousand years in terms of fundamental mechanisms and created a new, unique path!

Chapter 2169 - Jin Tianzong Who Was Too Distinguished!

the design of “hybrid engine” was that, when a trainer required the crystal suit or the colossus to be fully outputted, his body tissues that stored the “reactors” would transmit the energy into the crystal reactor in the crystal suit first, which would be highly combined with the crystal fuel that the crystal suit carried itself through the complicated melting procedures in the crystal reactor before the spiritual energy was delivered to every power rune array and every battle unit on the crystal suit through the output tubes of the crystal reactor. eventually, it would burst out in various forms of light blades, flames, or jetting force.

it meant that the two power sources at the beginning would coalesce into one.

it was not hard to imagine the difficulty of the task.

the spiritual energy outburst of a trainer was itself erratic, disordered, and hard to control even for the trainer himself.

when li yao burned his life and soul in fury to the point that he was about to explode, it was barely possible for him to precisely control every stream of spiritual energy bursting out of his cells.

however, the crystal reactor was a unit that required high stability and precision.

in li yao’s younger years, when he just entered the refining department of the grand desolate war institution, it was exactly because of a fault in the crystal reactor during an experiment that the laboratory exploded and almost the entire refining department was ruined.

that was only a mystic skeleton battlesuit for mass-production. the temperature and pressure that the crystal reactor needed to deal with were relatively not too high.

for the high-level crystal suits designed for the nascent soul stage or the divinity transformation stage experts, like the mystic skeleton blood wing that li yao was equipped with today, what drastic changes of temperature and pressure would the crystal reactor be faced with in a fierce battle, and how much spiritual energy must be outputted?

at such a moment, if the spiritual energy from the experts themselves that were of different natures, different degrees, and different vibration frequencies were added in to join the reaction, wouldn’t it be suicide?

“hybrid design” was a whimsical hypothesis. to produce it in reality, too many problems regarding the material science, the new fuel, the synthesis of spiritual energy, aerodynamics, and most fundamentally of all, the studies of rune arrays, had to be resolved first. it was barely possible to fix the assortment of problems!

countless refiners in the star glory federation had been working on the studies in the regard. li yao himself had done some preliminary explorations too, and he had modified a series of immature models.

however, faced with the irresolvable conundrums, even li yao had to admit that his capabilities were far from enough. or rather, the federation’s accumulations in the material science, aerodynamics, and other disciplines were not profound enough. perhaps it would require several hundred years of hard work before a mature, reasonable “hybrid” design was proposed.

despite all the difficulties, countless refiners were still devoted to the relevant studies.

that was because the advantages of the hybrid design were obvious.

if a crystal suit had two power sources, it was impossible to reach a 100% synchronization rate however they were coordinated. it could only reach 99.99% at best while continuing to approach “perfect synchronization”.

it was like even the most finely-made artificial leg was still different from the real leg. even if other people could not notice it, the user would know it very clearly.

the higher the level of the user was, the greater interference the “artificial leg” would trigger.

if a champion of a short-distance dash was to join a 100-meter race with one real leg and one artificial leg, it would certainly affect the final result greatly.

that was why many high-level trainers did not like double power sources and the “parallel” design.

if the spiritual energy of the trainers themselves could be inputted into the crystal reactors first and burst out again after a series of complicated reactions and a major boost, the problem of discoordination and synchronization would be no more, because there would only be one power source!

besides, because there were two power sources in the “parallel” design, there were two corresponding circuits of spiritual energy too.

one of them was the transmission tubes connected to the crystal reactor, and the other was used to transmit the spiritual energy generated from the body.

the second set of circuits might not have the actual “tubes”, but it had to be taken into consideration if the circuits were blocked or affected when the crystal suit was designed.

one crystal suit with two spiritual energy circuits was too messy and chaotic. it would also greatly diminish the crystal suit’s mobility and defense ability.

the crystal suit was a type of magic equipment that had to include thousands of rune arrays and units in the limited room to activate hundreds of different techniques. all the refiners had been sparing no effort doing subtractions. even the reduction of a component the size of a fingernail would mean a great improvement in the performance of the crystal suit.

if the “hybrid” design could work out, one fewer set of spiritual energy circuits would be required, and more than hundreds of components could be cut off. one would be able to be much more creative and unrestrained in the overall design.

the overall battle performance of such crystal suits would certainly be improved by more than 10%.

the tiniest factor could decide the fight between two experts. not just an improvement of 10%, even the improvement of 1% would be remarkable enough to be called “a revolutionary breakthrough”. so, how could the crystal suit designers not be captivated by the hybrid engine?

li yao had deep communications with di feiwen, the deputy commander of the black wind fleet before. he knew that the imperium hit the technological bottleneck a few hundred years ago as the territory of the imperium reached the maximum. in the circle of refiners over the past hundreds of years, everything seemed to have stagnated. there was even a bizarre theory that all the magical equipment that could be created had been created, and that all the refiners needed to do was to improve them to achieve perfection.

other than the advantages in the pragmatic fields such as “light membrane theory”, the crystal suits of the imperium were not much more advanced than their counterparts in the federation.

the issues regarding the “hybrid design” were as tricky in the federation as they were in the imperium.

however, this master jin tianzong…

thinking quickly, li yao immediately realized what had gone wrong.

if this master jin tianzong did make groundbreaking breakthroughs in terms of the hybrid design, then he truly “deserved to die”.

that was because the chain of interests that he had shaken was too solid, and the interest groups were too enormous and overwhelming!

compared to “parallel engine”, “hybrid engine” had the absolute advantages. it was the unquestionable “new-generation technology”.

if the new-generation technology was truly developed, what could the “old-generation technology” do?

crystal suits were the king of magical equipment. crystal suit production took up more than half of the entire industry of magical equipment production too. after all, the colossi were too few in number to support an enormous industrial system and the upstream and downstream industry chains. crystal suits were the real kings!

right now, all the refiners and crystal suit centers adopted the “parallel design”.

how many well-respected masters of refining had spent their entire lives polishing the parallel design trying to reach perfection?

how many crystal suit centers and military conglomerates had invested astronomical capital on the next generation of the parallel design, hoping to improve the synchronization rate of the two power sources from 99.9% to 99.99% and then to 99.999%?

the invention of the “hybrid crystal suit”, on the other hand, was very likely to crush the “parallel crystal suit”. too many well-respected masters of refining would lose their way of making a living, and even the interests of the military conglomerates under the name of the four kurfürst might be affected!

in a “young country” that was thriving and also faced with immense pressure for survival, the birth of new technologies was never a problem.

most people would only learn after and modify new technologies in a healthy competition, trying to make the cake bigger.

for example, the “glorious sunlight group” in the star glory federation and other major sects would spare no effort on the studies of the “hybrid crystal suits”.

the reason was simple. the federation might be destroyed by the imperium at any moment. only through more powerful magical equipment could everyone expect to survive!

also, everybody was confident that the cake would be bigger in the future as the federation developed. even if they lost some slices of the cake right now, they would soon earn it back in the technological progress.

however, it was not necessarily the case in a grand empire that had reached the limits of expansion with all the fields monopolized.

“the imperium of true human beings is the most powerful force in the universe. as long as the parallel crystal suits are polished to be 100% perfect, all the enemies will be destroyed. so, is it really necessary to work on the ‘hybrid crystal suits’ at the risk of confusion and chaos?”

li yao believed that many “grandmasters” in the circle of refiners in the imperium must’ve been thinking in such a way.

“jin” was not the surname of any of the four kurfürst families.

also, based on the fact that jin tianzong was remarked as “impartial and incorruptible” and exposed the academic scandal of hundreds of descendants of the four kurfürst families without any mercy, he couldn’t have been in a good relationship with the four families either. it was very likely that he had provoked them many times.

“even if the ‘hybrid crystal suits’ can truly be realized, the crucial technology should be grasped in ‘our’ hands instead of being blatantly squandered by an ‘outsider’.”

li yao was even more certain that somebody in the refining centers and the military conglomerates that were under the control of the four families would definitely think in such a way.

all things considered, it was rather understandable why this master jin tianzong who was too distinguished degenerated from a professor of the refining department of the imperial polytechnical university and a leader of a major laboratory to someone who hung around with an ambitious gambler like queen li linghai and worked on the schemes and conspiracies to overthrow the current system of the imperium.

li yao was only interested in the tempest god at the beginning.

but after hearing what li jialing said and analyzing the whole incident, he was now more interested in master jin tianzong than the tempest god.

“let’s go and appreciate the best refining arts of the imperium!”

li yao strode into the maintenance workshop in excitement.

Chapter 2170 - A Miracle Is Needed!

On the bridge of Dragon Abyss, Queen Li Linghai was talking to the maintenance workshop through the short-distance communication system.

Every detail in the maintenance workshop was reflected clearly by the panoramic light beam around her, as if she were exactly in the middle of the maintenance workshop.

The Colossi were ultimate weapons that could change the course of a battle. An additional Colossus was of great help for the expansion of the Deep Sea Fleet and the force of the “reformists”. How could Li Linghai have ignored the issues about the maintenance and upgrade of the Tempest God?

On the light beam, with the Tempest God as the background, on the floating maintenance platform where almost a hundred multipurpose mechanical arms were floating stood an old man with yellow-and-brown hair. He had a wrinkled face and a pair of shining eyes from which dark golden magma seemed to be splattering out all the time.

The old man looked particularly weird.

Interconnected scars could be found on his face, his body, and all his skin that was exposed to the air.

The scars were very narrow, as if they were cut by daggers as thin as hair.

But they were all over his body, like a dense chessboard, cutting his skin and his flesh into pieces.

The body that was on the brink of collapse, however, was tied by golden threads tightly and covered in a thin, clear, and soft armor, which had many interfaces that could be connected to abundant artificial limbs and strengthening components.

It seemed that the old man had suffered very serious damage. If it weren't for the fixation of the set of weird devices, he would've collapsed into a pile of bleeding meat.

The man was naturally Jin Tianzong, a master of refining and a specialist of the crystal suits and the Colossi who could almost be called a "national treasure" and who used to be quite famous among the refiners of the Imperium!

"You want me to investigate his lineage in refining?"

On the light beam, Jin Tianzong looked at Li Linghai suspiciously. His eyebrows furrowed hard, not disguising his dissatisfaction with being interrupted while he was studying the Colossus.

"Yes. Thank you for your trouble, Master Jin."

Li Linghai was rather respectful of such a national treasure who was also the director of magical equipment in the Deep Sea Fleet after her vehement invitation. She explained, "It is very easy for an extraordinary warrior who has received professional training to conceal the lineage of their battle skills, but for a refiner, many skills and habits in refining can never be changed.

"Master Jin is one of the best seniors in the circle of refiners in the Imperium. I believe no tricks can deceive your keen eyes.

“I want to know the lineage of this ‘Vulture Li Yao’ in regard to refining. Which of the many schools of refining in the Imperium does he come from, or maybe… he doesn’t belong to any of them?”

“Not belonging to any of the schools? How is it possible?”

Jin Tianzong was amused. “The arts of refining are different from fighting. It requires abundant practice, the enlightenment of great teachers, and neat teamwork. A battle-type Immortal Cultivator may be able to train and grow with the treasures from a certain relic, but a refiner must have their own school. The more awesome a refiner is, the more obvious his style will be. I haven’t heard of the name ‘Vulture Li Yao’ before, but maybe that is because he does not dare to use his real name now that he is joining the Deep Sea Fleet. How good is he probably?”

“Very good.”

Pondering for a moment, Li Linghai said, “However, it is possible that he is not a professional refiner but has only learned some skills to maintain crystal suits and Colossi. I don’t think he has remarkable expertise in refining.”

“Maintain the Colossi?”

Jin Tianzong’s eyes beamed with interest. He said, “If he is not bragging but really capable of repairing and maintaining a Colossus, it is already quite extraordinary. He must be from one of the best refining sects of the Imperium. There’s no reason why I can’t figure out where he came from.

“Hehe. After I come to the Deep Sea Fleet at Your Grace’s invitation, I haven’t helped Your Grace accomplish anything great yet. Even the maintenance of a Colossus has so many stumbles and falls. I truly feel embarrassed.

“While I cannot accomplish the great things, such little things shouldn’t be a problem. Please rest assured, Your Grace. I’ll certainly figure out his origins and backgrounds!”

As he approached the end, Jin Tianzong’s face was already full of frustration.

Li Linghai said in a hurry, “You must not blame yourself, Master Jin. In fact, I should be the one who feels embarrassed here. When I invited Master Jin to join the Deep Sea Fleet, I promised that I would provide state-of-the-art training facilities and laboratories for Master Jin and recruit the best refining team step by step so that you could finish the research that you did not finish in the Imperial Polytechnical University.

“But to this day, the construction of the laboratories and the configuration of the refining team have not been completed yet, and this has delayed Master Jin’s research as well as stopping you from carrying out 100% of your abilities. This is truly my fault.”

Jin Tianzong was more or less moved.

Although the master of refining was somewhat taciturn because he was completely devoted to the world of refining, and he was best known for his “impartialness” in the Imperial Polytechnical University, he was still deeply touched by Li Linghai’s respect for him.

“There is no need to comfort me, Your Grace. Nobody knows one’s problem better than oneself. You and I both know what our greatest problem is right now.”

On the light beam, Jin Tianzong raised his broken hands that had been connected by brute force. With intense sorrow beaming out of his face, he said hoarsely, “While there are a lot of theoretical studies in the world of refining, it is a discipline that highlights practice after all. The hands are the life for a refiner, and the senses are their soul. My body has been reduced to such conditions that it can only be supported by this ‘Heavenly Silk Jade Clothes’, or it will collapse at any minute. How can I carry out the best abilities like when I was in my peak state?

“Before… when I was heavily wounded and lost all my reputation, ending up as the greatest ‘joke’ and ‘fraud’ in the circle of refiners, I was so frustrated that I only wanted to kill myself. It was Your Grace’s repetitive, sincere invitations that the fire of my life was reignited.

“After I came to Your Grace’s Deep Sea Fleet, I never thought to return to the peak state either. I only hoped to teach my lifelong knowledge to the refiners here and help Your Grace build an elite team of refining that can be compared to the refiners in the Imperial University, the Imperial Polytechnical University, and the Imperial Advanced College of Metallurgy. Then, I would die without regrets.

“So, the improvement of the refining team’s stagnation and the slow increase of their technical expertise are all the faults of me as the ‘director of magical equipment’. You are not responsible for that at all, Your Grace.

“Your Grace has already done the best that can be done in terms of training facilities and the supply of precious materials. Right now, our hardware environment is absolutely as good as the Refining Department of the Imperial Polytechnical University, and we are even more or less better than our competitors in regard to certain precious materials and facilities. Even I don’t know where you got so many precious Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures from, Your Grace.

“However, please understand that a team cannot be built overnight, Your Grace. To raise an excellent refiner, however extraordinarily talented they are, it will still require decades of hard work.

“If we are to recruit talents from outside, who will be willing to abandon the high-paying positions in renowned academies or the Kurfürst families, the stable environment, and the honors in the academic world for the unknown, clandestine Deep Sea Fleet, if they don’t have special reasons?”

“You are quite right, Master Jin. To build a top-tier refining center, facilities and teamwork are both necessary. It is easy to build training facilities, but the construction of a team of elite refiners is truly our greatest headache right now. In that regard, I’m afraid that Master Jin and I have to work on it together and see what we can do.”

Pondering for a moment, Li Linghai asked, “Right, how is Ye Qingyun, your first assistant, right now? Before he came to the Deep Sea University, he was one of the best refiners in the younger generation in the Imperium.”

“Ye Qingyun is good, but just good. He still lacks experience, and he still needs to work harder.”

Jin Tianzong said, “Most importantly of all, the young man is too arrogant and cranky. Sometimes, he also hopes to achieve his purpose through unconventional approaches, which is not a good thing for the improvement of his expertise in refining.”

“Well…”

Li Linghai said with a bitter smile, “It seems that there are too many unorthodox guys whose styles in refining are whimsical if not insane in our team.

“That does make sense on second thought. The specialists and scholars who can be devoted to their studies without being distracted by fancy, groundless ideas are naturally living comfortable lives in renowned academic establishments and the four Kurfürst families. Why on earth would they risk joining the Deep Sea Fleet?

“Those who are willing to join the Deep Sea Fleet are all ambitious adventurers. I’ll have to ask Master Jin to spend more time on perfecting the team.”

“Please rest assured, Your Grace.”

Jin Tianzong said, “I have nothing to return Your Grace’s favors except for my loyalty and devotion.”

“You can rest assured too, Master Jin.”

The flames that could burn everything were ignited in Li Linghai’s eyes again. She said, “I will live up to your expectations as long as you live up to mine. One day, I will avenge you and help you take everything back. The pain that those people enforced on you will be returned to them a hundred times more!”

Jin Tianzong’s eyes flashed. He said solemnly, “I don’t care much about revenge or taking back everything. If possible, I only want to prove to the entire universe that the ‘hybrid crystal suits’ are absolutely possible, and they are the future!

“I am right, and the specialists of the Imperial University, the Imperial Polytechnical University, the Imperial Advanced College of Metallurgy, and so many refining centers and magical equipment research institutions are all wrong!”

“I believe in Master Jin.”

Li Linghai said, “Whatever you need, I’ll certainly do my best to get it for you.”

Looking at his wounded and broken hands for a long time, Jin Tianzong sighed softly with a bitter smile. “I… need a miracle.”

Chapter 2171 - Who Is He Exactly?

After ending the conversation with Queen Li Linghai, Jin Tianzong moved from the head of the Colossus to the feet on the multipurpose maintenance platform.

At this moment, dozens of refiners were busy doing their work around the Colossus on different maintenance platforms. But hesitation and caution were on all their faces.

Those qualified to participate in the maintenance of the Colossus were naturally the best refiners in the Deep Sea Fleet.

The average age of the refiners was very young. They carried both the vigor and fearlessness of the youth and the immaturity that was typical of the novices.

It couldn’t be helped. The so-called “Deep Sea Fleet” was a secret armed force that directly belonged to the queen of the Imperium in name but an out-and-out “rebellion” in the politics of the Imperium today. Why would any respected, experienced refiner join a rebellion army?

The fields that required technological reserve and experience were all dominated by the noble families and the magnates. It was not hard to imagine what kind of talents the queen could hire.

All the refiners knew that Jin Tianzong had just spoken to the queen. It wasn’t hard for them to guess that the queen must have asked if the overall maintenance plan for the Tempest

God had been proposed. They all felt more or less ashamed because they were stuck in the engine parts.

Thinking for a moment, Jin Tianzong announced, “Let’s wait a moment. Later, a new refiner will possibly join our team. He is recommended by Her Grace in person and perhaps has unique understandings on the maintenance of the Colossi.”

Jin Tianzong was unaware that Li Linghai’s solemn request was meant to figure out the origin of Li Yao’s school from the traces in his refining skills so that she could ascertain if everything he said was true.

If Li Yao’s refining arts came from a certain renowned school of the Imperium, it would mean that Li Yao couldn’t have just arrived in the Imperium.

Then, everything he said would only be a shameless lie.

For Li Linghai, she couldn’t be more cautious when she decided to keep such a dangerous person as Li Yao by her side and entrust important tasks to him.

Therefore, although Li Yao’s statement was flawless, Li Linghai still wanted Jin Tianzong, the master of refining in the Divinity Transformation Stage, to check him in person.

But naturally, she wouldn’t speak her intention out straightforwardly to Jin Tianzong.

Jin Tianzong, however, misunderstood Li Linghai’s intention. He thought that the queen had truly found a remarkable talent recently and wanted him to check the quality of this “Vulture Li Yao” before she filled the guy in his team.

Such things happened before. Almost all the specialists had been interviewed by him in person.

Of course, only the seasoned refiners that could be called “specialists” were qualified to waste Jin Tianzong’s time.

The elite refiners of the Deep Sea Fleet were all greatly surprised. They all knew that they were out for a battle mission. How on earth did a seasoned refiner pop up out of nowhere?

“Master, who is going to join our team? Which university or magical equipment center do they come from?”

A middle-aged man with a headful of short, rising hair, who looked rather arrogant but tried to be respectful before Jin Tianzong, asked.

The man’s name was Ye Qingyun. He was from the well-renowned “Luminosity Crystal Suit Center” and had profound expertise in the production of crystal suits. However, exactly like Jin Tianzong said, he was a proud, disobedient man who preferred the irregular approaches.

Because of his extreme character, he had almost pissed off all the big shots in his circle, and he had no choice except to come to the Deep Sea Fleet as Jin Tianzong’s first assistant.

Ye Qingyun respected none but Jin Tianzong. Naturally, he was most sensitive about the seasoned refiner who would arrive soon.

“Her Grace said that the refiner’s name is ‘Vulture Li Yao’ and that he has a lot of experience on the maintenance of the Colossi,” said Jin Tianzong.

“Vulture Li Yao? Never heard of the name before. Is there such a person in the circle of refiners in the Imperium?”

Ye Qingyun looked at the refiners around.

Although the refining team in the Deep Sea Fleet might be young and immature, they had one advantage, which was that they were made of talents of various worlds and schools of the Imperium. You could find any kind of person in it.

Even the refiners from every corner and every field of the Imperium knew nothing about the name “Vulture Li Yao”, which meant that it was not because he was ignorant but because the man was really not known by anybody else.

Ye Qingyun couldn’t help but feel amused. “If he is capable of maintaining a Colossus, he shouldn’t be a Mr. Nobody. But the name of ‘Vulture Li Yao’ does not ring any bell at all.”

Jin Tianzong sighed and said, “It is perfectly normal to use a fake name and a fake face when you are new to the place and still cautious.”

Ye Qingyun, however, sniffed and said, “Then, I’m going to see with my own eyes what kind of expert this ‘Vulture Li Yao’ is and how he is qualified to come to the Deep Sea Fleet!”

At this moment, a few refiners nearby speculated, “He is perhaps a refiner from the laboratory on the Land of Sins. The laboratory on the Land of Sins suffered heavy losses in the attack of the Cultivators. Even ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ has been shot down. Naturally, the refiners inside must’ve died or run away. It shouldn’t come as a surprise if some of them are saved by us.”

“That is indeed very possible.”

Ye Qingyun was greatly enlightened. “If he is a refiner from the laboratory on the Land of Sins, we will have to take a good look at him. I’m told that, although they do not have major breakthroughs in theories, they are backed with quite abundant real-life data, and their skills are very impressive too!”

“Qingyun, why don’t you greet this ‘Vulture Li Yao’ first?”

Seeing his eagerness, Jin Tianzong thought of something and said, “Her Grace said that they needed to pick a few crystal suits and possibly use the furnaces and maintenance platforms here. You will accompany ‘Vulture Li Yao’ during his pick. Whatever Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and strengthening components he needs, just give them to him.

“Of course, if he runs into any problem during the maintenance and adjustment, you can help him fix it if you can.”

“Understood!”

Ye Qingyun grinned and squinted his eyes as he looked toward the end of the maintenance workshop. Suddenly, with a weird look on his face, he said, “Master, is that ‘Vulture Li Yao’?”

Everybody looked at where his finger was pointing, only to discover that a plain-looking young man of medium height was walking to them slowly with a big, golden cat, or someone who looked like a cat, under the lead of Tu Zhengdao, the deputy leader of the Deep Sea Legion.

The young man did not have any of the tranquility expected of a master of refining at all. Instead, he was observing and touching everything, apparently fascinated by the entire magical equipment assembly line. Now and then, he even stopped and craned his head at them with his hands in his back, studying the structure of a certain mechanical arm or the purpose of the component being crafted, as if he had never seen such things before.

Looking at his eagerness for knowledge and his curiosity about everything around them, the many refiners including Ye Qingyun could only think of one thing—a bumpkin had just entered the city!

Is this the seasoned refiner from the laboratory on the Land of Sins who claims to be capable of maintaining the Colossi?

Everybody looked at each other in bewilderment and suspicion. Even Master Jin Tianzong couldn’t help but frown slightly.

Ye Qingyun even couldn’t help but chuckle. He hesitated for a long time, but still, he couldn’t hold back his insubordinate remark. “Has Her Grace been tricked?”

…

“Wow, this is truly impressive!”

As Li Yao and Li Jialing wandered in the magical equipment assembly lines in the maintenance workshop, he felt that he had entered a dazzling kaleidoscope and labyrinth. Even though he was a seasoned refiner, the technology of the Imperium of True Human Beings in producing the magical equipment on such a large scale still amazed Li Yao.

The traditional superpower truly deserved its name. Compared with the Imperium of True Human Beings, there were too many things that the Star Glory Federation needed to catch up with.

Look at their magical equipment assembly lines, their spiritual puppets, the efficiency of their multipurpose mechanical arms in cutting and assembling, their cooperation between the refiners and the puppets, and their management of the factory!

Li Yao couldn’t help but swallow hard, almost wanting to move the maintenance workshop back to the federation entirely.

Although he had seen it once on the comprehensive maintenance mothership of the Black Wind Fleet, the maintenance and production level on the queen’s flagship was much more sophisticated than what the Black Wind Fleet had. Li Yao couldn’t help but wonder to what degree the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and the Tartarean Skeleton could be strengthened if the maintenance workshop was completely under his control.

Thud! Thud! Thud! Thud!

Led by Ye Qingyun, almost ten refiners strode toward Li Yao.

They were all the best refiners of the Deep Sea Fleet. Such a luxury team also caught the attention of other common refiners nearby.

“Fellow Cultivator Li?”

With a smile on his face, Ye Qingyun bowed slightly at Li Yao respectfully and said, “I am Ye Qingyun, Master Jin Tianzong’s first assistant and the manager of this maintenance quarter. I’m told by Master Jin that you need a few crystal suits?”

“Yes.”

Tu Zhengdao handed over a flowery light card on which countless patterns were changing nonstop. “This is the highest clearance offered by Her Grace. He has been authorized to pick any crystal suits in the warehouses on Dragon Abyss and to conduct any adjustment and modification.”

Ye Qingyun took over the light card and inserted it into his own mini crystal processor. He then connected it to Jin Tianzong’s crystal processor, and upon receiving the permission of the director of magical equipment, he put on an even more mysterious smile. But his eyes were focused on Li Yao’s hands as he went on, “Now that the highest clearance has been activated, you are free to use all the magical equipment and facilities in this place. I wonder, do you want to pick a mass-produced crystal suit or a high-level crystal suit? Dragon Abyss has stored almost a hundred advanced crystal suits that are carefully produced by the masters of various schools, but their maintenance and adjustment can be quite tricky. If you need any help, Fellow Cultivator Li, I’ll be right there.”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. He naturally sensed the subtle hints concealed under Ye Qingyun’s smile.

After he advanced into the Divinity Transformation Stage, his body of flesh and blood had been through too many drastic changes and looked more and more unrefined. When he was not working, they looked plain and no different from the hands of ordinary people. It was impossible to gauge his expertise in refining from his hands.

However, Li Yao did not intend to nitpick Ye Qingyun.

It would be too petty if a college student nitpicked a kindergartener.

Chapter 2172 - A Lesson For Kindergartners

li yao smiled and simply said, “thank you, fellow cultivator ye, but let’s not rush into picking the crystal suits yet. i want to take a look at the furnaces and the maintenance platform of this place. i wonder, am i free to use the furnaces here?”

ye qingyun said, “of course. since you are going to adjust and modify crystal suits, i assume you will need small furnaces? the deep sea fleet has all kinds of refining facilities. the configuration of the small furnaces is as good as that of the few major crystal suit centers of the imperium. i don’t know which university and which school fellow cultivator li comes from, but i’m sure that you know the facilities of the few major crystal suit centers very well, right?”

after a brief daze, li yao said, “i really don’t know much about the facilities in the major crystal suit centers. i would appreciate it if i can have the opportunity to read the user manuals. i do not have any lineage or come from any school. i am sort of a… self-taught talent.”

user manuals? self-taught talent?

not that ye qingyun meant to laugh at li yao, but his words were simply too hilarious. ye qingyun slightly bowed to cover the mockery on his face and said, “… very well. then, i’m sure that fellow cultivator li’s ‘self-taught’ skills in refining will be a great eye-opener for all of us. this way, please.”

li jialing secretly dragged li yao’s sleeve from behind.

he had seen personally how violent and brutal li yao was during combat, and he thought li yao was a professional battle-type cultivator who only had a shallow understanding of the maintenance of crystal suits and colossi.

leaving jin tianzong aside, he had heard a thing or two about the name ye qingyun before. the man was one of the rising stars in the circle of refiners and certainly not to be underestimated.

the young man was not worried that li yao would embarrass himself, but that li yao would go on a rampage and kill all of the refiners after his embarrassment.

after all, his big brother who popped out of nowhere had killed thousands of refiners in “manjusaka, the city in the sky”. he was almost a “bane of refiners”!

li yao, however, did not bother to care about anything else. he simply walked to a chamber deep inside the maintenance workshop.

the maintenance workshop was mainly for the maintenance and modification of single battle magical equipment, particularly armed shuttles and crystal suits. most of the components were inputted from outside and polished, melded, assembled, and modified here. it was unnecessary to perform the complicated purification procedures starting from the raw minerals.

therefore, the furnaces here were mostly quite small and boasted very strong shaping abilities. they were mainly used to fashion the small components that were no larger than fists.

the laboratories outside were for the use of common refiners. almost a hundred furnaces had been established next to each other, presenting a rather splendid scene.

the laboratories inside were for the specialists of higher levels such as ye qingyun and jin tianzong. there were only nine furnaces in total, but they were all precise in structure, powerful in performance, and produced by renowned manufacturers. the hues on their shells that looked like rainbows alone were indicative enough of their extraordinariness.

naturally, it was highly tricky to control the excellent furnaces and to harness the flames that could melt superalloys by changing the temperature from minus a hundred degrees to thousands of degrees.

one moment of carelessness, and the violent spiritual energy inside the furnace might burst backward and burn the internal organs of the refiner into ashes. it was certainly not a joke.

therefore, when the elite refiners of the deep sea fleet, including ye qingyun, saw that li yao really sat down at the center of the nine furnaces, held jade chips, and read the user manuals and operation instructions of the furnaces wholeheartedly, they were so stunned that they did not come back to themselves until a long time later.

is this guy… really a refiner?

everybody had the same confusion.

the nine ultimate furnaces were all presented by the most famous magical equipment manufacturers in the imperium. the most classic operation interfaces were adopted, and their operations were the fundamentals and the common sense that must be learned in any refining academies in the imperium!

although the nine ultimate furnaces had a lot of sophisticated, advanced functions compared to the common furnaces, why did the guy spend so much time studying the simplest launch menu? it almost seemed that he had not touched furnaces of such a model before!

when they thought of the guy’s curiosity and eagerness when he just entered the maintenance workshop, like a bumpkin who had just gone into the city, everybody couldn’t help but feel greatly suspicious of his expertise.

even jin tianzong and li linghai were also observing li yao’s actions through the surveillance camera at a corner of the chamber.

“if i may ask, your grace…”

jin tianzong was silent for a moment before he continued, “where exactly did you find this ‘master vulture li yao’?”

li linghai smiled. unpredictable light beamed out of her almost transparent eyes, but she did not give an answer.

ten minutes later, li yao finally finished browsing through the user manuals of the nine furnaces and gained a deep understanding of the architecture of the nine furnaces.

he rose up abruptly, with excitement shooting out of his eyes.

“fellow cultivator li—”

ye qingyun asked patiently, “have you picked your ‘favorite’ furnace?”

he stressed “favorite” in obvious mockery.

“not yet. just wait a moment.”

li yao walked to the furnace closest to him. opening his arms and embracing the furnace, he stuck his face and ear to it and groped on the surface of the furnace with both hands while he said, “i need to further communicate with the furnace and pick a furnace that gets along with me.”

“one that gets along with you?”

behind ye qingyun, some of the refiners already couldn’t hold back their laughter.

ye qingyun was having a hard time withholding his own laughter too. his face blushing, he shook his head quickly, as if he was regretting the waste of his time.

jin tianzong, who was still staying next to the colossus, however, was shocked. solemnly, he played back the picture where li yao rubbed the furnace. enlarging and slowing down the picture, he finally managed to see that li yao’s fingers were shivering at an amazingly high speed in two clusters of grey mists although they seemed to be rubbing the furnace slowly.

the high-speed shivers of the fingers even affected the surface of the furnace, causing the illusion that it had turned from solid into liquid, with ripples spreading out!

“this… this is…”

jin tianzong was greatly surprised. “what kind of technique is this?”

while observing li yao’s movement, li linghai glimpsed at jin tianzong’s face and asked with great interest, “even you have never seen such a technique before, master jin?”

“it looks like the ‘snap and listen’ skill in the refining arts, which can sense the structure, gaps, and inner stress of a piece of magical equipment by the quakes of fingers. it does not belong to any single school. many schools have similar skills. it is not very surprising.”

jin tianzong said, “however, normal ‘snap and listen’ is only suitable for the small and delicate magical equipment because it is hard to penetrate the force into the thick and solid magical equipment and to receive the feedback of the waves.

“this ‘vulture li yao’, however, is playing the move on such a piece of huge and clumsy magical equipment like a furnace. is he trying to sink the subtle force through the solid shell of a furnace?

“is he simply being pretentious, or is he—”

how pretentious!

in the chamber, many refiners had already lost their patience and were secretly complaining in their hearts. ye qingyun was also frowning gravely. he asked, “fellow cultivator li, have you picked one?”

li yao heard none of it. the nine furnaces here represented the best technologies in refining in the imperium of true human beings. now that he had the opportunity, he would certainly study them well. why would he bother the humming flies nearby?

after embracing the nine furnaces one by one, li yao finally pointed at the seventh furnace with a smile. “yes. i want this one!”

“oh?”

ye qingyun discovered that the furnace that li yao chose happened to be the one that he had been using. he couldn’t help but sneer, “fellow cultivator li, you have picked this one after such a long time of selection. is there anything special about it?”

“actually, the fact that the nine furnaces are placed in this advanced chamber suggests that they all have excellent performance. any random one of them would have sufficed if they were just manufactured. after all, i am just crafting some components for temporary uses. there is no need to be picky, right?”

li yao explained unhurriedly, “however, it is obvious that the nine furnaces have been used for a long time. if not enough attention is paid during refining, there are bound to be a lot of flaws, just like the magical equipment that is not well-maintained will be rusty.”

everybody whispered to each other after hearing what he said. the refiners behind ye qingyun demanded angrily, “are you implying that we did not pay enough attention during refining and caused ‘flaws’ to the furnaces?”

“well, it is perhaps not because of the lack of attention. some habitual movements will inevitably lead to corrosions.”

li yao opened his hands and said, “furnaces are not treasures. they are bound to be corroded after they are used.”

“fellow cultivator li!”

ye qingyun raised his voice as he asked, “would you like to enlighten us by pointing out the ‘flaws’ for us?”

“take this one for example.”

li yao did not beat around the bush, and he did not even have any emotional fluctuations, because he was a teacher who was teaching a bunch of kindergartners. no matter how noisy and fussy the kindergartens were, there was no need to be angry with them, and all that needed to be done was to point out their shortages and deficiencies.

“the fellow cultivator who often uses this furnace prefers to join acids into reactions when he etches chips and special curved-surface components. however, he does not pay enough attention to cleaning after his work. or to be more exact, he overlooks the cleaning of the gas ports and other details, which leads to the tiny traces of corrosion inside the gas ports.

“for this particular fellow cultivator, the corrosion is naturally still tolerable. it is some sort of ‘regular corrosion’. when the time comes, he only needs to change new gas ports.

“but for me, the furnace is… slightly uncomfortable.

“and this one. well, this furnace is very impressive. the fellow cultivator who often controls this furnace must boast very impressive heritages of the spiritual energy of the fire class. it is perhaps a family skill or something, which makes him particularly good at high-temperature purifications.

“after all, just because you are good at dealing with high temperatures does not mean you have to keep the temperature at the highest point all the time. the consequence of the inability to control the temperature is that the components produced are often too ‘heated’ with an exceptionally high faulty rate, right? also, this furnace is filled with the air of smoke too, and it feels like an impatient man. how can the really qualified components be produced in it?”

Chapter 2173 - Reasons for Furnaces

With his hands in his back, Li Yao walked past every furnace slowly and pointed out the problems of the furnace. When he grew excited during his talk, he even activated the light beam of his crystal processor and drew the internal structure of the furnaces as quickly as flashes of lightning, illustrating the flawed parts and the reasons for the flaws.

The refiners of the Deep Sea Fleet including Ye Qingyun did not think much of it at the beginning and believed that he was just bragging.

However, after hearing what the guy said, those people began to have sweat the size of beans, and their mouths were wide open beyond their control as they stared at Li Yao in utmost disbelief.

Shocked!

Everybody couldn’t have been more shocked!

“Vulture Li Yao”, the refiner who had mysteriously arrived, couldn’t have visited the laboratory before, but he had described the characteristics of their refining most accurately based on the tiniest gaps or scrapes inside the furnace. He had even pointed out some of their habitual moments, or the advantages and disadvantages of a certain unique technique. He was almost like a ghost that had been haunting them and observing them during their refining work all the time!

Where… Where did this guy come from exactly? His sharp senses and his understanding of furnaces were too appalling!

Even Master Jin Tianzong was quite astonished. After a long daze, he asked Li Linghai, “Your Grace, did you show the videos of our furnace to this ‘Vulture Li Yao’?”

“Of course not.”

Li Linghai couldn’t help but put on a smile. “Master Jin, you wanted a miracle, and it seems that the miracle is already underway.”

“Fellow Cultivator Li!”

Inside the chamber, Ye Qingyun couldn’t hold it back anymore. Pointing at the furnace that Li Yao picked in the end, he asked, “So to speak, this is the best-maintained one of the nine furnaces in this room?”

The furnace that Li Yao picked in the end was the one that Ye Qingyun had been using.

Ye Qingyun was one of the best among the refiners in the Deep Sea Fleet, but he was certainly not half as good as Master Jin Tianzong.

Therefore, if Li Yao stated that the refiner was the best one in the room, it would mean that his eyes were just so-so.

But out of his expectation, Li Yao simply shook his head while smiling. “Not exactly. This furnace also has a myriad of problems. But compared with the other furnaces, it will do.”

“It will do?”

Ye Qingyun demanded angrily, “What are the problems of this furnace?”

“Most importantly of all, the joint of the components of this furnace is not tight enough. Many gaps that are invisible for the naked eye have appeared. Some of them may be too thin to affect refining normally, but they will hinder my senses and operations.”

Touching the furnace whose shell had been carved with abundant radial runes, Li Yao said solemnly, “It must be an expert who has been frequently using this furnace. His control over flames and his shaping skills are all very professional. It shouldn’t be difficult for him to devise and produce a crystal suit independently.”

With satisfaction on his face, Ye Qingyun snorted.

Li Yao, however, changed the topic and went on, “But the refiner’s problem is that he is too impatient and likes to show off. Let me give you a simple example. His favorite skill is to change the temperature of thousands of degrees at the center of the furnace to below zero abruptly in only a couple of seconds.

“The quick transformation of temperature can contribute to the reduction of the inner stress in the components and the improvement of the extension and the anti-interference abilities of the components. In such a way, the crystal suits produced will have a better chance of survival in a complicated battlefield.

“It is supposed to be an excellent skill, and the refiner is also very capable to achieve the transformation in only a couple of seconds.

“However…

“Just because you have mastered an awesome skill does not mean you have to use it in the production of every component, right? Except for the few critical components, it is not necessary to completely eliminate the inner stress of most regular components that can be easily replaced.

“The refiner’s skills, on the other hand, have not reached the most mature level yet. Or rather, adjusting the temperature at the center of the furnace so drastically every time will inevitably consume abundant spiritual and physical energy. Then, during the last few batches, negligence and loss of control will be unavoidable, which will lead to an increase in the faulty rate. Even the products that have passed the test may have hidden flaws and problems that can barely be noticed.

“The joints of the units of the furnace, because of the frequent thermal changes, also have metal fatigue due to the overflowing spiritual energy. They are more or less sloppy right now. They are all the prices of ‘showoff’.

“In fact, refining is very easy. Many mass-produced components have been crafted by predecessors since hundreds if not thousands of years ago. The most reasonable and standard refining procedures have long been figured out and written into the relevant operation manuals.

“In fact, I am quite excited to come to the refining team of the Deep Sea Fleet because I can tell that the team here is very young and creative. There is quite an air of innovation and insanity in your refining skills, which fits my appetite very well. Personally, I like the most unbelievably and crazy styles in refining better than anything else.

“However, the extremity in the style does not mean the exaggeration in the skills. Or rather, exactly because we are pursuing new, more creative ideas in overall designs, we have to be more dutiful and serious in the production of the basic components.

“If the ideas are crazy and the skills are crazy too, the magical equipment that is produced in the end will certainly be fickle.

“We are a real-life refining team that follows a fleet, not a team for experimental refining under a certain university or a research institute. Creations are indeed very important, but the most important thing is still to ensure the stable, efficient, and continuous output on a battlefield. Don’t you agree, Fellow Cultivator Ye?”

His eyes as clear as water, Li Yao looked at Ye Qingyun in the most sincere way.

Ye Qingyun truly lost all his temper because of what Li Yao said. While the guy’s words were full of provocation, they were put in such a way as if he was merely discussing the issue honestly with strangers. Ye Qingyun did not even know how he should throw his tantrum. After a long daze, he pointed at the furnace that Master Jin Tianzong had been using and asked, “What about this one? Why did you not choose this one?”

“This furnace can be called perfect.”

Li Yao complimented, “Judging from the internal corrosions, the fuel left on the wall inside, and the color of the metals, the refiner that has been using it is exactly what I described just now. He has the best basic skills and never shows off. He simply crafts all the components dutifully without overlooking any procedure.

“I am not saying that the refiner who uses this furnace is definitely much more skilled than other refiners, but he knows his limits very well, and he carries out his best during every refining process, no more and no less.

“Tsk, tsk, tsk. The hardest thing for any person is to know themselves. You can never have such a deep insight about yourself without a hundred years of hard work.

“After a long time, even the smoke and earthiness of this furnace itself have been completely consumed by him. Just tilt your head and look carefully, and you will see a vague halo on the surface of the furnace, as if it were covered in milk. If I have to describe it in one word, it will be ‘smooth’.

“The furnace that has been used by a master of refining for a long time is like an enameled pottery that has been played by a great collector for a hundred years. It is so natural and flawless!”

The refiners of the Deep Sea Fleet were all astounded as they listened. Ye Qingyun couldn’t help but ask, “Then—”

“Then, why did I not choose this one?”

Li Yao said with a smile, “Every master of refining has their unique techniques and habitual movements, which will be deeply ‘etched’ into the furnace during their refining process, while the refiner and the furnace adapt to one another and approach perfection. It is the reason why a refiner is often only used to one furnace and why they do not change their device often.

“The stronger a refiner is, the more distinctive their personal characteristics will be, and the more capable they will be in ‘etching’.

“This best furnace has been polished by the master of refining for at least two years. Every unit has been deeply soaked in the master’s personal features. It is almost like he has stamped the furnace with his soul.

“If I am to use this furnace, I will have conflicts with the personal features of the master first and be affected by his soul stamp.

“On the other hand, if I am to test the furnace without caring about anything and completely erase the master’s features, wouldn’t I be ruining his multiple years of hard work? What can he use for refining next time?

“A gentleman does not take away what other people love. Since this is a furnace that a master has been using, I might as well choose a different one. So, I have conceded and picked the second best-maintained furnace of the nine furnaces here.

“Of course, I will erase all the personal features lingering on the furnace during my refining. I will even use some extreme techniques to fully unleash the potentials of the furnace. When other refiners use it in the future, they will inevitably find it difficult to control. Fellow Cultivator Ye and other fellow Cultivators of the Deep Sea Fleet, you wouldn’t mind it, would you?”

Everybody was more or less stunned.

Ye Qingyun stammered, “Not-Not at all.”

“Thank you very much.”

With a smile, Li Yao said, “Then, I would trouble Fellow Cultivator Ye to fetch the crystals of the water class, the fire class, the wind class, and the thunder class for me. The higher purity, the better. Five kilograms for every type, please. I am going to test the furnace."

Furnace test was the test where a refiner performed some simplest refining work when they got in touch with a furnace that they had never used before in order to find out the performance of the furnace.

Of course, for the regular refiners, they could learn the performance parameters from the user manuals. Only the meticulous masters who pursued the best in the tiniest detail would find it necessary to test the furnace.

Chapter 2174 - The Furnace Is... Singing!

2174 The Furnace Is... Singing!

when ye qingyun brought back a batch of crystals of the highest purity on dragon abyss, he discovered that li yao had turned on the operation interface of the “scorching sun vii” furnace and was conducting the initialization settings.

the room was utterly quiet. all the refiners were watching li yao’s performance with the utmost bewilderment.

when ye qingyun saw the initialization parameters that li yao had set, he couldn’t help but gasp and feel astounded too.

he finally knew what “exploit the extreme potentials of this furnace” meant.

this “vulture li yao” had set the parameters of the furnace simply too crazily!

in the performance of the furnace, “power” and “stability” were often a pair of contradictory values. the furnaces that focused too much on stability would not reach the highest power, and it would be impossible to trigger the extreme high or low temperatures. as a result, some special materials wouldn’t be able to be refined.

however, if the furnace pursued nothing but extreme temperatures, it would not be hard to guess that the furnace would be highly unstable. not only would the faulty rate be greatly improved, but the spiritual energy would possibly overflow and swallow the refiner. in worse cases, even the furnaces would explode!

having been using this “scorching sun vii” frequently, ye qingyun naturally knew its most appropriate parameter settings and had reached the perfect balance between “power” and “stability” since a long time ago.

but right now, this “vulture li yao”, through a series of dazzling, complicated settings, had increased the power to the highest, which put the furnace in a highly-unstable, highly-sensitive state where the refiner might receive a backlash at any moment.

“is this a furnace at all?”

ye qingyun frowned hard. looking at the initialization data that he had set carefully before turning into an utter mess, he couldn’t help but feel enraged. he blurted out, “this is a crystal bomb!”

“not exactly. i’m quite familiar with crystal bombs.”

after finishing the most unbelievable settings smoothly, li yao turned back with a smile and said, “can i take a look at the crystals first?”

his eyelids twitching, ye qingyun commanded a few low-level refiners to push over the crystals that were stored in boxes on carts without saying anything.

the crystals for the use of furnaces were naturally not the raw minerals in bizarre shapes with all kinds of impurities.

they had been preprocessed and consolidated by the factories and transformed into clear, colorful bricks. the crystals of the wind, fire, water, and thunder classes seemed to have truly sealed four different powers inside. if one were to knock them with their finger, they would hear the sounds of raging flames, pouring storm, and rumbling thunder inside.

li yao squatted and picked up the crystal bricks one after another. tapping and sniffing their surface, he transmitted his spiritual energy into them now and then and observed the ripples on the surface of the bricks caused by his spiritual energy.

it was not until a long time later that he finally chose a brick and put it aside solemnly. he then began to pick the second one.

ye qingyun couldn’t help but ask, “those crystal bricks have been refined through dozens of procedures to ensure a purity of more than 99%. they are the fuel of the highest level that has more than enough to power crystal suits or even colossi. i wonder, what are you choosing exactly, fellow cultivator li?”

“even if their purity is 99%, the ‘idiosyncrasies’ of the crystal bricks are still different.”

touching the bricks and appreciating the splendid colors with his eyes half narrowed, li yao said, “in the eyes of the ancient cultivators, crystals are the essence of natural spiritual energy, consolidated by the souls of the living creatures after they die. according to modern theory, crystals are the regular minerals or the fossils of enormous creatures in the primeval era after they are condensed by high temperatures and pressure and soaked by all kinds of cosmic radiations, high-energy particles, and spiritual energy for a long time.

“also, we have classified the crystals into different categories such as ‘water, fire, wind, and thunder’ according to their general features, but such a classification is simply too simple and rough.

“due to the different environments, different histories, and different relative locations to the stars of every planet, even the crystals of the same quality will have subtle differences.

“for example, the crystals of the fire class that are excavated from a highly-unstable planet, which is very close to a star and fraught with volcano eruptions, and the crystals of the fire class that are collected from a very moist planet whose surface is almost entirely covered by ocean—can they be the same?

“the former certainly carry the features of violence, fury, and instability, and are more suitable to be crafted into crystal bombs, whereas the latter contains the features of both water and fire. they have both the toughness of fire and the gentleness of water, and they are the best fuel for refining.

“take a look at the two crystal bricks of the fire class here. they are both of 99% purity, and they look identical. however, when i input a stream of feeble spiritual energy into it, the ripples spreading on their surfaces are entirely different.

“the ripples of the first one are radial, in that they look like both the halo of a star and magma that are splashing out into a mess quickly. but the ripples of the second brick are very even rings that do not disperse until they reach the edge of the brick. they are also vaguely emitting bluish colors. that is exactly the combination of toughness and gentleness.

“in order to activate the extreme potentials of the furnace, i have adopted relatively extreme approaches in initialization settings. then, i have to be milder when it comes to the fuel and the catalysts. the second crystal brick can’t be better.”

while talking, li yao examined and filtered the crystal bricks, dividing them into two piles.

ye qingyun couldn’t have looked more awful.

although he was not convinced by li yao’s fancy, groundless explanation, he did know that the crystals on board were from two different suppliers. they were a combination of two different batches of goods.

in terms of the production of the standard crystals, namely the “crystal bricks”, the imperium of true human beings had a set of mature and rigorous standards. whichever world they came from, and however varied the features of the raw minerals were, the crystal bricks that were produced in the end were exactly the same and universally applicable to any starship, crystal suit, and even colossus.

but even the most rigorous standard of production would not involve the environment of the planet from which the raw minerals were excavated. what was that all about?

pointing at the different types of crystals, li yao explained in great detail again. he claimed that the best crystals of the water class were from the waterfalls in the mountainous areas because such crystals were relatively “unbent”. also, the crystals of the wind class and those of the thunder class were best to be from the same mine on the same planet to achieve the effect of resonation. he chattered on for more than ten minutes before he finally selected a few crystal bricks from the large pile.

even queen li linghai was more or less intimidated by what he said. she asked suspiciously, “master jin, is there really so much more to the standard crystal bricks?”

“well…”

master jin tianzong’s expression became more and more attentive, and the brilliance in his eyes was more and more dazzling. “there is already a mature system in the standard production of crystals in modern civilization. in fact, such concerns are unnecessary. however, i know that a lot of refining sects of the ancient civilization attached great significance to the sources of crystals. there are quite a few famous classics. for example, the ‘hundred smelting clan’, a famous sect of refining in the age of ancient cultivators, presented a book named ‘on stone tasting’, which was specifically about the selection of crystals. but it was lost a long time ago.”

“lost?”

li linghai said, “so, the major schools of refining in the imperium do not adopt such theories?”

“no.”

jin tianzong said with a smile of confusion. “this ‘vulture li yao’ is truly unpredictable. even i have never heard of some of the things he said before. impressive. he is truly impressive.

“let’s just see how this fellow cultivator li tests the furnace!”

his eyes glittering, master jin tianzong stared at li yao’s every movement.

inside the laboratory, all the refiners of the deep sea fleet including ye qingyun held their breath and bulged their eyes, not leaving out any detail.

however, li yao’s series of movements, including turning on the furnace, igniting the fire, boosting the combustion, filling in the materials, and testing the furnace, were more or less disappointing.

it was not because li yao had done anything outrageous but because his operations were too normal, plain, and unattractive, which was a major contrast to his sophisticated words just now.

his look as if he were treading on thin ice even made people suspect that he was worried the furnace would explode because he had set the parameters too “sensitively” just now!

while everybody was whispering to each other with confusion and doubt on their faces, li yao took a deep breath and raised his arm at the operating furnace. his fingers were spread open, and feeble brilliance emitted from the center of his palm.

boom!

as the brilliance at the center of his palm exploded, a blast burst out at the center of the furnace that had reached beyond a thousand degrees, as if a bell weighing ten thousand kilograms had just been tolled.

“what is this?”

everyone’s pupils were constricted to limits, and their ears couldn’t help but shiver hard too.

boom! boom! boom! boom!

with his left hand behind his back and his right hand unleashing spiritual waves at the furnace straightly, li yao triggered the resonations inside the furnace, letting out noises each higher than the last!

“he is blowing the furnace with spiritual energy to generate soundwaves and to sense the conditions of the furnace through the changes of the soundwaves so that he can further adjust the furnace accordingly and make the furnace completely adapt to him?”

master jin tianzong exclaimed in disbelief, “such a marvelous approach. how is it possible?”

“tolling a furnace like a bell? are you serious?”

many refiners of the deep sea fleet were almost driven crazy.

“even if you can toll the furnace like a bell, so what? however crazy you are, can you make the furnace sing?”

ye qingyun gnashed his teeth with a gloomy face.

hardly had he finished his remark when li yao changed his gesture, and the monotonous noises of the furnace immediately changed. they were now full of nuances and rhythms and truly sounded like a soul-stirring and blood-boiling marching song!

Chapter 2175 - Not a Showoff

“Ahhhhhhh!”

All the refiners of the Deep Sea Fleet went mad.

The music blown out by the furnace was certainly not as pleasant as an orchestra of the real instruments, but it was indeed filled with passion and penetration. There was even the vibe of splashing and running melted steel in the middle of the smoke. To put it shortly, it was “heavy metal”!

Enshrouded in the heavy metal music, the refiners felt that their stomachs were being churned, as if they were in the middle of a tsunami of magma or dancing above ten thousand volcanoes. Even their own veins and nerves seemed to have turned into metals!

They were about to exhale smoke, cough sparks, and vomit orange, melted steel!

With his eyes half narrowed, Li Yao shook his head and dwelled in the resonation of his heart and the heart of the furnace. The music was getting more and more rhythmic and powerful, making the entire Dragon Abyss shake in the heavy metal together with Li Yao!

On the bridge, Li Linghai had been observing Li Yao through the surveillance light beam, but the unexpected metallic noises occupied the entire bridge too.

All the crew members and the leadership of the warship on the bridge couldn’t help but tap the beat with their feet, their fingertips seething beyond their control.

“What… What kind of technique of refining is this?”

Li Linghai asked in disbelief. “Another secret technique from the ancient times?”

“Well—”

Master Jin Tianzong was more or less shocked. “I don’t think so.”

“Look!”

Some refiners shrieked and pointed at the light beam that was displaying the internal status of the furnace.

It was the picture directly captured near the center of the furnace by the crystal cameras made of highly heatproof materials.

In the picture, the metal materials that were just delivered into the furnace had already been melted into clusters of fluids under the boost of the fuel and the catalysts that Li Yao had carefully selected. They looked like glittering orange pearls and even stars that nobody could look at directly.

As the exciting music went on, the most glamorous and gorgeous ripples spread out on the surface of the clusters of melted metals.

After the ripples spread to the limits, the melted metals blossomed like buds that had savored enough dews layer after layer, revealing the most sophisticated and accurate internal structure!

When every cluster of melted metals the size of a finger bloomed, almost a thousand patterned wrinkles were exposed from inside. Like the integration of countless runes, they emanated colorful brilliance.

Nine clusters of melted metals blossomed slowly, but the flowers that they produced were in different forms.

The blossom of the flowers and their final consolidation were naturally under the control of Li Yao’s spiritual energy and telepathic thoughts.

The flowers were in such marvelous forms, and there were nine of them at the same time. The nine metal flowers slowly revolved in the flames at the center of the furnace, each containing a thousand runes that resonated with each other without any mutual interference. It was indicative enough of Li Yao’s profound abilities in shaping.

It must be noted that this was just a random test on the performance of the furnace!

As the nine metal flowers blossomed to the maximum, the soul-stirring and mind-boggling heavy metal music reached the climax too.

The entire “Dragon Abyss” was almost dancing.

“Ho!”

Bulging his eyes, Li Yao stuck his right hand to the wall of the furnace for the first time and pressed it slowly, as if he were sealing his entire life and soul into the furnace!

“Hum!”

Inside the brain of every refiner, a huge bell was bashed heavily, resulting in ever-lasting noises in their head.

Their retinas were also affected by the reverberation between Li Yao and the furnace. The moment Li Yao pressed his hand, the previously dark furnace seemed to turn transparent, and all the internal structures were clearly visible. All the magical equipment units and tiny components were dissected, as if the furnace also turned into a giant metal flower that was blossoming slowly.

But in the next second, all the components that had split and blossomed were compressed back. As if entirely reborn, they were even more compact and flawless than before.

The heavy metal music came to an abrupt halt.

Li Yao took a breath in relief and looked at the furnace that had been tested by him in great satisfaction.

After being washed by the cooling liquids, the nine metal flowers were sent out from the discharge hole.

Because of the high integration of metals and crystals, the “flowers” were so full of exuberance that they did not look like single components but were themselves flawless magical equipment. Under the control of Li Yao’s telepathic thoughts, they all flew to midair and swirled slowly, emitting dazzling brilliance like a kaleidoscope, and the light poured to the ground like a waterfall.

Including Ye Qingyun, all the refiners of the Deep Sea Fleet were enchanted. They looked at the nine metal flowers hovering around Li Yao and then at the furnace, all bewildered.

There was no telling if it was their illusion, but they felt that the furnace had been through fundamental changes compared to a moment ago.

How should they put it? It was almost like the differences between the raw minerals that were just excavated from below the ground and the crystals that had been carefully polished. The furnace was now more delicate, elegant, profound, and impeccable, or to quote Li Yao’s words, “smoother” now.

Even the most insignificant air of smoke had been removed in Li Yao’s test just now. The furnace at this moment did not look like a tool of productivity but a cautiously-carved piece of artwork. Before the refining work officially began, everybody already had uncanny faith in it and believed that what was to be produced from the furnace would certainly be the most extraordinary weapons!

“Did you just…”

However arrogant and disobedient Ye Qingyun was, he could tell the difference of the furnace in Li Yao’s hands from when it was in his own. He immediately blushed and stammered in confusion.

“This is a way to test the furnace of my own invention.”

Li Yao said, “Testing the furnace is so much more than simply learning the performance parameters of the furnace. On one hand, you must feel the ‘spirit’ and the ’emotions’ of the furnace by examining the basic performance parameters. On the other hand, and more importantly, you have to pass your own ideas and determinations to the furnace in a certain way.

“For a refiner, the furnace is his best partner and must not be treated as a cold, lifeless object. Furnaces are alive with their own feelings and personalities. The real furnace-testing is about communicating with the furnace in depth, telling the furnace your belief, and winning the acknowledgment of the furnace.

“I am fond of music personally, and the road that I have chosen is somewhat related to music too. So, I had an in-depth communication with the furnace by the reverberation of music so that my heart and the heart of the furnace can be completely melted together. Only in such a way can I get the most perfect furnace to produce the most perfect components.”

The refiners of the Deep Sea Fleet all whispered in admiration.

Ye Qingyun couldn’t help but ask again, “The song just now was—”

“‘Orders of the General’.”

Li Yao said, “It is the heavy metal version of ‘Orders of the General’, which fitted the character of this furnace and my state of mind now.

“Today, I only have limited time, and the level of the furnace here is not particularly high either. If there is a chance in the future, I would like to communicate with the fellow Cultivators more often and play more classic music to the fellow Cultivators here through the furnace. It is going to be some sort of academic communication.”

Li Yao did not disguise his capabilities at all; he was even blatantly showing them.

It was because he was in the Imperium of True Human Beings, the world of the Immortal Cultivators.

The idea of survival of the fittest was certainly not restricted to the battle-type Immortal Cultivators. It was the same among the creation-type Immortal Cultivators.

Here, modesty and concession were meaningless.

Now that he was going to spend a long time next to Queen Li Linghai, Li Yao naturally needed to find an appropriate place for himself in case somebody came looking for trouble every other day.

In a way, a refiner in the Divinity Transformation Stage was even more valuable than a warrior in the Divinity Transformation Stage, because the former could provide technical support for countless experts in the Nascent Soul Stage and the Divinity Transformation Stage, thereby improving the top-tier fighters of the entire force significantly.

On the other hand, if the technical support of Queen Li Linghai and even the entire faction of the reformists, namely the maintenance of the most cutting-edge crystal suits and Colossi, was under Li Yao’s hands, wouldn’t he be able to do anything he wanted?

“Fellow Cultivator Ye, we can go and pick the crystal suits right now.”

Li Yao touched the metal flowers that were floating in midair. The nine metal flowers all began to shiver and turned into thousands of clear, thin petals that fell loosely like catkins.

In the middle of the metal petals, Li Yao smiled at the many refiners of the Deep Sea Fleet.

…

Soon, they arrived at the warehouse of advanced crystal suits on Dragon Abyss.

Dragon Abyss was Li Linghai’s flagship and her nest when she snuck in space away from the capital.

Naturally, Li Linghai’s treasures in the past decades had been stored here. The advanced crystal suits from various schools of the Imperium and even ancient relics were as good as those stored in the secret warehouses of the four Kurfürst families.

At this moment, Li Yao had become the center of the show. Surrounded by a large group of respectful refiners, he wandered amid a hundred silent metal statues.

The Imperium of True Human Beings had a long history. After inheriting and absorbing abundant legacies of the Star Ocean Imperium and the Star Ocean Republic, it had arrived at the peak of the technologies of crystal suits after a thousand years of development.

Every advanced crystal suit was like a piece of the most extraordinary artwork. Li Yao’s telepathic thoughts crawled through the gaps of the crystal suits and tasted the extraordinary, indescribable feelings. He was so fascinated that he almost couldn’t bear to drag himself away from the treasures.

However, out of everybody’s expectation, what he chose for Li Jialing, in the end, was not any of the few ultimate, most precious crystal suits, but—

Chapter 2176 - Getting Serious!

2176 Getting Serious!

Li Yao squatted at a corner of the warehouse. With his fingers crossed, he stared at a pile of wasted garbage at the corner in deep thought.

“Fellow Cultivator Li.”

Despite the weirdness of his move, Ye Qingyun did not dare to jump to any conclusion anymore. He simply said cautiously, “Those crystal suits are too seriously damaged. Most of them will be declared to be total-losses. After we return to the base, the usable units on them will be dismantled, and the other components will be remade…”

It was quite true. Standing before Li Yao were blackened, burned, deformed crystal suits that looked like abnormal beasts.

If they were not seriously damaged, the maintenance workshop on Dragon Abyss would have been capable of handling them. Now that they were to be abandoned, it suggested that they did not possess any value to be rescued.

However, growing up in the magical equipment graveyard, Li Yao was best at turning garbage into goods. Such broken scraps of magical equipment were the best catalysts to trigger his whimsical creation.

Staring at the armed shuttles and the crystal suits without blinking, Li Yao opened his fingers and waved his hand casually, attracting a “Giant Crab”—an enormous heavy-firepower crystal suit with a thick armor—to himself with the technique of remote manipulation.

Then, he activated the function of a professional drawing on his crystal processor.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Almost a hundred blank, virtual boards immediately popped up and hovered around Li Yao. Emitting ivory brilliance, they made Li Yao look rather mysterious and unpredictable.

“Is he going to—”

The refiners of the Deep Sea Fleet looked at each other in bewilderment, not having any clue what Li Yao was going to do. If he were going to draw the structure design of the crystal suits for adjustments and modifications, it did not seem necessary to create a hundred boards at the same time. After all, he could only start drawing the next design after he finished drawing the current one, right?

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao closed his eyes slowly, his head teeming with the clearest, most detailed structures of the crystal suits, which were all scanned by him when he extended his telepathic thoughts into the damaged crystal suits for scrutiny just now.

At his command, the perspective drawings of various facets of the few damaged crystal suits, as well as the 3D designs after they were combined, including the detailed graphs of the high-precision units such as the crystal reactor, the knees, and the elbows were displayed on the boards as quickly as a rising tide!

Golden threads that were ten times thinner than the hair, like spirits that had their own wisdom, lengthened and joined each other. Growing from thin to plump, from plump to heavy, and from heavy to complicated, they eventually turned into mazes and castles!

The refiners of the Deep Sea Fleet all bulged their eyes. Drawing a hundred designs with telepathic thoughts at the same time? It was incredible!

Li Yao’s performance was not over yet.

What he did just now was simply “duplication”. He just scanned the structures of the crystal suits and manifested them on the boards.

However, in the next second, the hundred drawings rippled at the same time, like a pond under a spring breeze. As the ripples spread out, the complicated, precise structures began to fall apart, distort, and reshape. The speed of change was higher and higher, making them look like kaleidoscopes that were revolving fast.

All the refiners of the Deep Sea Fleet felt dazzled and overwhelmed.

“Is… Is he improvising the modification plans for those crystal suits? He wants to modify all the damaged crystal suits at the same time?”

“Such a design is too unbelievable. Only the refining facilities with a precision of at least 0.1 threads can cut the profiled curved-surface components that he needs!”

“He has squatted there for only a moment, and he has come up with so many crazy modification plans?”

Many refiners in the Deep Sea Fleet were almost too shocked to breathe anymore.

As the insiders of the trade, they could naturally see the value in Li Yao’s modification plans.

Although most of the modification plans were too whimsical and insane, the ideas in the plans were great eye-openers for them, who had never thought of such modifications before.

In the meantime, Li Yao was disapproving his own plans at an amazingly high speed too. Many of them were vetoed by himself mercilessly before the refiners of the Deep Sea Fleet figured out if they were feasible.

Bo! Bo! Bo! Bo!

The boards were breaking like bubbles all the time, leaving starry spots of light that looked like fireflies, but new boards would immediately be generated, with castles made of lines and curved surfaces popping up on them.

In the end, only a dozen or so boards were still drifting in midair, but the structures on them were so dense and complicated that most of the refiners here couldn’t comprehend them at all.

Even Ye Qingyun could only vaguely tell that Li Yao seemed to have taken parts of the units from the damaged crystal suits and kept the main framework of the “Giant Crab Battlesuit”.

It was not until this moment that Li Yao finally opened his eyes.

Millions of golden threads were still lingering inside his eyes, as if ten thousand crystal suits had exploded inside his pupils.

There was neither sorrow nor delight on his face, and he was surrounded by the vibe of terrorization, as if even the most powerful crystal suit was nothing but a toy in his hand.

Li Yao closed his hands; his fingers like petals, tides, and winds, congregating into a burning tsunami.

Pulled by his fingers, his telepathic thoughts were all projected to the boards. The dozen or so boards were immediately overlapped, and the virtual structure designs were embedded into each other perfectly without any flaw, making up the framework of one crystal suit that looked like a translucent gold giant.

Li Yao waved his hands and enlarged the “gold giant” ten times before he carefully adjusted the structure at the critical parts.

However, in the eyes of the general refiners of the Deep Sea Fleet, he was merely drawing curved golden lines in the middle of a mess.

“What… What is he doing exactly?”

“What kind of crystal suit can it possibly be to have such a complicated framework?”

The refiners whispered to each other.

Master Jin Tianzong, however, changed his expressions again and again.

Narrowing his eyes, he zoomed in the picture while his eyelids cramped hard. He carefully studied the structure design that Li Yao had drawn for a long time, only to be surprised first and overwhelmed by disbelief later. Was this seemingly young refiner really confident to strengthen such a crystal suit? It was not an “adjustment”, and not even a simple “modification”, but a complete recreation!

Looking at Li Yao’s hands that were gradually releasing light, Master Jin Tianzong was filled with eagerness and envy.

Ten minutes later, Li Yao “finally”, or rather, “already”, finished the modification designs and the spiritual energy flowcharts.

In fact, it was not exactly a brand-new creation but a new structure for crystal suits that he had been considering since he was still in the Star Glory Federation.

Starting from the prime days of the Star Ocean Imperium when the modern Cultivation civilization was just born, the modern refiners had embarked on a different path from the ancient refiners. They appreciated standards and procedures and attached great importance to mass production and the replaceability of the standard components.

In the jargon of modern magical equipment production, it was module design. In the federation, the Imperium, and even the Covenant Alliance, it was often the case that more than 90% of the components in the magical equipment of the same level and for the safety purpose were replaceable.

Such an approach greatly reduced the logistical pressure for a universal country that spanned countless space zones in a long-term war.

It also provided infinite possibilities for a refiner to bring out their creativity as much as possible.

It even allowed Li Yao to gain a profound understanding of most of the generic components on the crystal suits in the Imperium after carefully examining every component on the crystal suits that were brought by the Black Wind Fleet. That was why he could put up such an astonishing show—

The gold, glittering, translucent giant, as if ripped apart into a sparkly fire by a gentle breeze, fell to Li Yao's hair and shoulders.

Li Yao's hands, however, were moving faster and faster.

Electric arcs popped out of his fingertips. Purple, red, blue, green… The electric arcs in different colors and shades continued to split apart. One into two, two into four, four into eight, until they evolved into an overwhelming net of electricity, covering all the damaged crystal suits and the Giant Crab Battlesuit.

Huala! Huala! Huala!

The electric arcs found their way into the gaps of the crystal suits hurriedly and dismantled all the crystal suits into the most fundamental components in the blink of an eye like a dissection. Even the Giant Crab Battlesuit that was as thick as a bull was reduced into a lonely metal skeleton by Li Yao.

All the refiners of the Deep Sea Fleet felt that their blood was freezing.

To maintain, modify, or even produce a crystal suit independently, one must learn how to dismantle the crystal suit into the most basic state where it could not be further dismantled.

It was the rudiments for every refiner. All the rookies had to spend years practicing the dismemberment of crystal suits.

On one hand, it was meant to improve their deftness and the keenness of senses. But more importantly, it was supposed to make them more familiar with the structure of crystal suits so that they could develop “intuitions”.

However, in the schools, the training camps, or the crystal suit centers, they had never seen anyone who was as fast as Li Yao.

Li Yao, on the other hand, was not using his hand at all, but simply releasing electric arcs to process the seriously damaged and contorted crystal suits by the technique of remote manipulation!

Many refiners looked at Ye Qingyun.

Ye Qingyun swallowed hard, somehow feeling lucky that he did not do anything that would’ve humiliated himself just now.

More refiners, however, stared at Li Yao’s hands, hoping to see clearly at least one of Li Yao’s movements. They couldn’t bear to move their eyes away at all.

Dismantling the crystal suit was only the first step.

After all the damaged crystal suits were reduced into the most basic parts, the unnecessary components all flew out and fell into the boxes of supply components nearby according to their categories precisely.

The remaining components, and the metal skeleton of the Giant Crab Battlesuit, in the meantime, were enshrouded by the electric arcs that were denser and denser.

The electric arcs fluctuated and breathed, like a field that boasted its own life, while they were gradually condensed into the vein and nerval networks of a giant.

In the next—

Li Yao’s fingers were bouncing and moving at the highest speed, even raising the noises of storms and thunder.

The electric arcs that were dancing around the components and the metal skeleton were immediately ten times brighter than before. They exploded brutally at the “heart” of the metal skeleton like countless balls of lightning!

Chapter 2177 - It’s the Highest Difficulty That I Am After!

when the balls of lightning exploded, everyone’s pupils constricted so hard that there was nothing but blankness and dashing electric arcs on their retinas.

they couldn’t see anything but only hear the cracking noises of electric arcs, the sounds of metals being cut, and the splashing sparks every now and then.

an extremely weird metallic smell found its way into their noses, making them feel that they were in the middle of a noisy, blood-boiling battlefield witnessing the collisions and destructions of countless crystal suits.

at the center of the balls of lightning, there was even a subtle attraction force that absorbed all the small magical equipment that they were carrying.

li yao’s fluffy hair moved automatically although there was no wind. the dancing electric arcs seemed to have cladded him with a special suit of refining. his hands moved nonstop, pressing the modification plans into the rune arrays and sealing them into the balls of lightning. he couldn’t have looked more intimidating.

it was not until ten minutes later that the anomalies gradually dimmed and dispersed.

after the last spark was obliterated into nothingness, everybody was finally able to focus their eyes on the white smoke in the middle of the electric arcs.

under li yao’s control, the unpredictable white smoke was all absorbed, revealing a black, seemingly unattractive iron statue.

“this is—”

although they had been mentally prepared, all the refiners of the deep sea fleet couldn’t help but feel greatly surprised.

they did not expect that li yao’s expertise in remote manipulation was so terrifying that he had concentrated the components of almost ten crystal suits on the skeleton of one crystal suit without even moving a finger.

the many damaged crystal suits, despite the use of abundant generic components, were in vastly different shapes and styles. they had also been so seriously damaged in battles that a lot of the components had been melted together after contortions. but li yao had combined all of them flawlessly by picking the most appropriate components in only half an hour. the product looked smooth, natural, and impeccable, like a statue that had been carved out of an entire block of metal.

what great senses, self-control, and deep understanding of crystal suits it required!

if it were them, even with the guidance of the structure designs and the operation manuals, they might not be able to achieve it after a day and a night’s work on the most advanced maintenance platform!

of course, such a mix was only the simplest combination, like a mannequin that a craftsman built.

the joining components hadn’t been processed by the furnace, and they were not internally integrated perfectly yet. although the crystal suit might look solid and tough, it would not be able to withstand one barrage in a fierce battlefield.

however, as they recalled the unbelievable scenes when li yao tested the furnace just now, nobody had any doubt about the performance of the brand-new crystal suit after being processed in a furnace.

everybody simply looked at li yao, whispering to each other and wondering what was amazing about the new crystal suit that li yao had modified through all the trouble, full of expectations. the brand-new crystal suit had adopted abundant units of the damaged crystal suits, as the “giant crab battlesuit”, as the skeleton, was not any of the super crystal suits with the most distinguished performance. so, he was dazzlingly busy for such a long time just in order to show his expertise in crystal suit modification? or maybe…

huala…

in front of li yao, the crystal suit that was more than two meters tall but had a particularly thick shoulder and back slowly opened in the front.

an excellent crystal suit, even if as solid as steel, would let out beautiful sounds like running water when they were opened. it was the knowledge that many refiners were taught at school.

but this was the first time that many of them had truly heard the sound of a crystal suit that felt like running water!

li yao put on the crystal suit that he had just modified without any hesitation. he slightly activated the power rune arrays and moved his limbs.

this place was not a test room, and the crystal suit was only a simple combination of other crystal suits. without being processed by the furnaces and the cutting machine tools, it meant that it was inappropriate for any extreme movement tests to be done here.

when everybody was wondering what kind of trick li yao would play with such a newly-combined crystal suit, li yao unleashed all his spiritual energy after a bellow!

for a moment, inside the small warehouse of crystal suits on the starship, the world seemed to have been darkened by a dust storm!

the hearts and throats of all the refiners were frozen. their every nerve ending was shrieking loudly!

the many advanced crystal suits nearby were shaking slightly, as if they could not withstand the overwhelming pressure that was flowing out of li yao’s body, and they were about to kneel before li yao and the crystal suit on him!

an amazing thing happened!

after the bellow, li yao’s muscles bulged, his bones cracked, and his body size expanded by 30% at the moment!

every crystal suit boasted a certain degree of extension, which was made possible by gels or soft materials filled inside, in order to adapt to users of different body sizes.

however, crystal suits were made of metals after all. different from the mustard-seed combat suits that could be infinitely extended, it had limited abilities of adaptation.

that was why the crystal suits were classified into light, medium, heavy, and super heavy types.

the slim users could manage to wear the heavy crystal suits with enormous internal space, like a small horse dragging a huge wagon.

but it was barely possible to stuff a tall, brawny man whose muscles were as explosive as crystal bombs into a super small crystal suit that highlighted speed and mobility.

some of the “monsters” that had received genetic modifications or practiced secret techniques could be more than 2.5 meters tall.

but most of the high-speed crystal suits were no taller than 2.2 meters. how could they be stuffed into such crystal suits?

to make things worse, many brawny men who practiced secret techniques had a very bad habit on the battlefield, which was to break their clothes and go berserk. by blowing their cells crazily with spiritual energy, they could expand their body size by 30%, 50%, and even 100%!

they could break their clothes, but how could they break a crystal suit?

crystal suits were not armed shuttles or colossi, which had huge cockpits. they were all worn close to the body. if the user expanded by 50% in excitement in the middle of a fight, wouldn’t the crystal suit be crammed and even blown up?

it was indeed a very tricky problem.

many brawny men who were used to body transformations had to bring two crystal suits with them, one large and the other small, which were to be used before and after their transformation respectively.

the old problem was more or less solved, but a new problem showed up. body transformation and switching of crystal suits took time. not every exo could perform an “air change” in half a second like li yao. if they were barraged by the enemy halfway through their transformation, wouldn’t it be terribly awkward?

it seemed highly impractical to search for a shelter whenever one wanted to transform and go berserk in their battle frenzy, right?

however, those problems did not exist for li yao right now.

the crystal suit that had been modified by him carefully seemed to boast a very high ability of extension and transformation. as his body size expanded abruptly, a lot of brilliance shot out of the crystal suit, as it expanded and bloomed at the same time.

while li yao finished the transformation, the crystal suit also turned from a medium-sized crystal suit around two meters tall into a heavy crystal suit almost three meters tall. the protruding veins on the breastplate truly made it look like a tyrannical giant crab, full of aggression and intimidation.

“a transformative crystal suit!”

ye qingyun couldn’t help but exclaim.

the eyes of the refiners of the deep sea fleet shone brightly. they were surprised to witness a highly rare transformative crystal suit!

as its name suggested, the transformative crystal suits were special crystal suits that were meant to solve the body expansion problems of some of the berserkers.

such crystal suits were often embedded with one or two cosmos rings, in which a lot of changeable components were stored. through special designs, when the user's body size expanded abruptly, the crystal suit would have a series of changes too, and it would keep up with the body size of the user. even new magical equipment units and weapon systems would show up after the transformation.

in such a way, one crystal suit would display two different features and achieve entirely opposite effects.

theoretically speaking, it was a great idea.

however, to achieve the purpose of "transformation", the designs of the crystal suit had to be extremely sophisticated, filled with all kinds of unnecessary, redundant components, which would significantly drop the defense ability and the sturdiness. the crystal suit's survival abilities in the battlefield would be directly affected.

for the logistics department and the daily maintenance, it was even a greater nightmare. if something went wrong during the maintenance, the crystal suit might be stuck in the middle of the transformation, which would be really fatal.

therefore, the transformative crystal suits were not very popular among the berserkers whose body sizes could expand crazily. they were a very niche type of crystal suits.

in the over hundred years, there was not even a mature model that could be manufactured in the magical equipment industry in the imperium. this type of crystal suits had been completely abandoned.

it never occurred to them that the path that had been proved impossible by the mainstream refiners of the imperium was now furthered by li yao!

although they were not aware of the parameters and the performance in a real battle yet, they could tell from the dancing electric arcs around li yao and the glittering crystal suit that—

boom! boom! boom! boom!

while everybody was speculating in secret, the crystal suit on li yao uttered the roars of a waking primeval beast again and further expanded!

“double… double transformations?”

the refiners of the deep sea fleet were so astounded that they were almost screaming aloud.

in the middle of their exclamations, the crystal suit on li yao’s body expanded again to almost four meters tall.

a lot of magical equipment units were attached to the skeleton by the electromagnetic force. the spluttering electric arcs surrounded the crystal suit like strengthened armor, making it almost look like an ares extension. it seemed that a god that could destroy the world had arrived!

“a crystal suit with three phases? what-what kind of complicated designs it must have? i feel that my head is exploding just by thinking about it!”

“does such a crystal suit really boast any survival abilities in a battlefield? it would fall apart on its own because of the conflicts and interferences of the redundant components, wouldn’t it?”

“regardless of its survival abilities, it is already insane enough to complete the designs in half an hour, assemble it preliminarily, and realize the effect of double transformations!”

“wait, wait, wait. isn’t… isn’t he a refiner? what kind of astounding aura is this? he is almost tearing the entire starship apart!”

dozens of eyes that were filled with shock, suspicion, admiration, and fear were cast at li yao, who was floating in midair like a daunting devil!

Chapter 2178 - Sky Is the Limit!

Huala!

While everybody was staring at him in astonishment, the crystal suit on Li Yao suddenly quaked at a high frequency and broke apart.

“Ah!”

Somebody exclaimed in shock, thinking that the crystal suit that had been assembled roughly with too complicated a structure finally could not withstand the overwhelming blast of spiritual energy from Li Yao and completely collapsed.

However, after all the units and components dispersed, they were still attracted by the spiritual energy and electric arcs released by Li Yao. Hovering slowly and glittering five meters around him, they looked like dazzling stars.

In such a way, Li Yao was able to get a closer look at the tiny problems when the components were assembled and connected from inside to outside.

Li Yao, who was under the cover of the crystal suit, was beyond everyone’s expectation. He did not turn into a muscular man more than three meters tall but was surrounded by deep red spiritual energy and bluish electric arcs, as if he had released the energy into a second layer of muscles and veins. It was an unusual view when one’s control over the spiritual energy reached the highest extent!

“Is… Is he a refiner or an ace Exo?”

A lot of refiners of the Deep Sea Fleet, just like Ye Qingyun, swallowed hard.

They were no stranger to what Li Yao was doing right now. He was a “test pilot”!

For normal refiners, if they meant to test a brand-new crystal suit, they had to invite the experienced Exos as special test pilots.

The production of crystal suits and the use of crystal suits were two vastly different fields after all. Nobody had the courage to be a test pilot without dozens of years of experience in fighting.

Out of everyone’s expectation, Li Yao took care of all the work singlehandedly, which both astounded them and raised their envy. If they could test their crystal suits themselves, they would be able to sense the problems and flaws in the crystal suits from the perspective of the user, and their adjustments and modifications would definitely be more accurate and subtle.

Shua!

In their whispers of admiration, the thousands of components around Li Yao were attracted to him again and assembled into a complete crystal suit. After brief adjustments, it split apart and blossomed, before it was constricted again. Repeating the process for five times, Li Yao finally finished the preliminary adjustment. He restored the crystal suit to the original form and crawled out of it.

“Have you noticed the mysteries of this crystal suit?”

Li Yao said to Li Jialing with a smile, “This is for you. But it has to be delivered to a furnace for repetitive polishing and whetting before it is completely done.”

“It is for me?”

Li Jialing had long been fascinated by the crystal suit and was almost drooling. His eyes were shining so brilliantly that they were almost burning holes on the surface of the crystal suit. He mumbled, “What a beautiful transformative crystal suit!”

“Exactly. I have named such a transformative crystal suit ‘Demonic Crab’!”

Li Yao was quite satisfied with the crystal suit that he had created through crazy modifications too.

Generally speaking, he agreed with the mainstream ideas in the circle of refiners and did not appreciate the design of “transformative crystal suits”.

In order to achieve the purpose of changing the shape of the crystal suit to adapt to the body size of the berserkers, a lot of connection units and redundant components had to be added into the crystal suit, which would significantly increase the difficulty of maintenance and lower the battlefield survival abilities. The gains certainly could not outweigh the losses.

Those people might as well carry a large crystal suit and a small one for their uses!

When Li Yao just embarked on the path of a refiner, he had been focused on the ideas of “grassroots” and attached more importance to the sturdiness, simple maintenance, and universality of the magical equipment than to the pure increase of theoretical performance. Naturally, he despised the transformative crystal suits.

However, as he advanced into the Divinity Transformation Stage, he had new understandings about the production of the magical equipment.

There were no “grassroots” magical equipment or “elites” magical equipment in the world. There was even no difference between “low-level magical equipment” and “advanced magical equipment”. There was only the magical equipment that was “suitable” and the magical equipment that was not.

Any magical equipment had its advantages and shortcomings. The most critical thing was to carry out the maximal advantages of a piece of magical equipment and try to cover the shortcomings as much as possible according to the environment and the features of the user.

Transformative crystal suits indeed entailed a lot of serious deficiencies, but—

Firstly, the user of the crystal suit was Li Jialing, who had almost exactly the same methodology of training as Wuying Lan. They were both monsters who received abundant surgical procedures and who could, and needed to, expand their bodies crazily in a battle to change into terrifying beings that felt like primeval beasts.

Li Yao engaged in a battle with Wuying Lan before. To this moment, he still remembered the oppressive killing intent.

According to Li Lingfeng, Li Jialing was an “experimental subject” that was even more perfect than Wuying Lan.

Then, he would be the most standard berserker, and it was a rigid demand to “transform” in a battle for him.

Secondly, and more importantly, Li Jialing was not fighting alone right now but had the technical support of such a master of refining as Li Yao. The repair and maintenance were not going to be a problem at all.

Then, a transformative crystal suit would be the most “suitable” choice right now.

Right now, Li Yao already couldn’t see the differences between the grassroots and the elites, the ancient refining arts and the modern ones, the Imperium’s technologies and the federation’s, etc. Magical equipment was magical equipment after all. It was a tool that mankind had invented to address a certain specific problem. There was nothing mysterious and unchangeable about them.

He was approaching the essence of magical equipment.

Having picked a crystal suit for Li Jialing, Li Yao still needed to choose one for himself.

After all, he could not go on a killing spree in the Mystic Skeleton Blood Wing all the time. He did not intend to keep it a secret from the “rebels” of the Deep Sea Fleet, and it was impossible for him to keep it a secret too. However, it would seem too flagrant to walk on the street in the capital in the Mystic Skeleton Blood Wing.

Li Yao had long selected his target in the many crystal suits that were in a myriad of appearances but equally awesome and intimidating.

The crystal suit that he focused his eyes on was round and somewhat clumsy. There was also a weird protrusion on the back, which looked like a giant turtle shell.

Under the contrast of the many glamorous, high-level crystal suits, this particular crystal suit looked rather plain, if not overshadowed.

But when the refiners of the Deep Sea Fleet saw that Li Yao laid his eyes on the crystal suit, they were all whispering to each other.

“This crystal suit is very impressive!”

His eyes glowing, Li Yao said to Ye Qingyun with ecstasy, having discovered a real treasure. “The crystal suits here are all crafted by masters. Any of them will suffice. However, this crystal suit is natural and flawless from design to production. The designs of the crystal reactor and the power rune arrays on the crystal suit are particularly eye-catching. I have never seen such a weird asymmetrical nine-star distribution before. It seems random and unreasonable at first look, but if you think about it more carefully, such a disordered distribution can carry out the performance of the crystal suit in small-scale turning to the best.

“The heavy crystal suit that seems clumsy and heavy, after applying the power system of the asymmetrical nine-star distribution, will have an agility even higher than the scouting crystal suits on the battlefield. It will be like a smoke and a ghost. The enemy will be greatly surprised.

“The master who designed this crystal suit must be a top-tier expert in the power system!

“However…

“Although the designs are very advanced and the overall production has no problem at all, bordering on perfection, something seems to be missing during the final polishing and assembly. An error of around 0.3 threads can be found in a lot of the joints and gaps on the plate armor.

“Such errors are totally acceptable for a regular crystal suit.

“However, on such an impeccable crystal suit, the errors are like the slight flaws on a piece of white jade. It is quite a pity.

“It appears that this refiner is good at theories but not adept at practical operations. His hands are not steady enough to completely realize the perfect designs in his head.

“But that’s alright. After my adjustment, another ten percent of the potentials of the crystal suit should be able to be exploited!”

After Li Yao finished, he heard nothing but silence in the warehouse of crystal suits.

Including Ye Qingyun, everybody looked at him weirdly, with hesitation written all over their faces.

Li Yao was slightly dazed. Then he realized that they were not looking at him but behind his shoulders, with eyes that were filled with reverence and pity.

He turned around, only to discover an old man with fluffy hair and an unusual appearance. His body seemed to have been tied up by a dark golden fishing net, and that was the only reason why he could manage to stand or move.

Li Yao’s eyes fell on the old man’s hands.

The old man’s hands that were as smooth as jade at the beginning were now also full of devastating scars. There were so many red marks that his every finger had been cut into a dozen blocks. They were only jumbled together with a dense layer of golden threads under the support of very tiny metal bones. He was only able to move his fingers when the metal gears and bearings rolled.

Despite the support of the golden threads and the mechanical external skeleton, the old man’s hands were still shivering and even briefly cramping now and then.

Such a pair of hands was evidently not suitable for refining.

Thinking quickly, Li Yao immediately guessed everything from the complicated look on everyone’s face and the unique design of the power system on the crystal suit.

“Master Jin.”

Li Yao bowed to Master Jin Tianzong deeply. “Forgive me. Is this your work?”

“Fellow Cultivator Li, your expertise is so remarkable. I don’t deserve to be called a ‘master’ by you at all. Let’s just call each other fellow Cultivators.”

Jin Tianzong, the master of refiner and specialist of power systems whose hands had been disabled, turned out to be a person who was completely devoted to the world of magical equipment. Not bothered by Li Yao’s comments on his work a moment ago at all, he stepped forward and asked, with a pair of eyes as sharp as blades, “How did you solve the problem of the adjustment of the power output in the crystal reactor on your ‘three-phase transformative crystal suit’ when it is changed to different phases? If you don’t solve the problem, even if the crystal suit is transformed into a super large one, the crystal reactor will be exactly the same as before. Wouldn’t that be like a small horse pulling a huge cart? Is there any point in it at all?”

Chapter 2179 - Thank You, Fellow Cultivator Li!

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao admitted frankly, “I’m preparing to solve the problem with a drain valve that is crafted through special technique and a combustion improver that I have invented on my own.”

Master Jin Tianzong pursued further, “What kind of special technique is it?”

“Like this.”

Li Yao retrieved a metal cube the size of a baby’s fist from his Cosmos Ring. It was in lead gray and even and smooth on the surface.

Holding the metal cube in his hand, he inputted a stream of spiritual energy into it, and the metal cube immediately floated and hovered in midair.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Li Yao had never looked more serious before. Sweat the size of beans was even leaking out of his temples. Dozens of electric arcs jumped out of his fingertips and gathered into five deep blue rays of light before they immersed into the cube, changing, cutting, and carving along with his fingers quickly.

Smoke popped up while the surface of the metal cube was engraved with complicated, delicate patterns. It was almost like a combination of six mazes.

One minute later, Li Yao took a long breath in relief and finished the carving. Holding the beautiful metal cube, he delivered it to Master Jin Tianzong.

Ye Qingyun and other refiners of the Deep Sea Fleet were greatly confused. While Li Yao’s skill in focusing the spiritual energy into light blades to carve the surface of metals was quite beautiful, it was not exactly a rarely-seen trick. He might be only more fluent at it than most people.

Master Jin Tianzong, however, was more prudent than ever. He held his breath and took over the metal cube in Li Yao’s hands carefully.

He covered the cube with a thin layer of spiritual shield first, before he inputted a stream of spiritual energy into the cube.

An amazing scene took place again!

The metal cube that seemed to be in one piece turned into metal slips that were as thin as paper and almost transparent, dancing in midair softly!

Every metal slip was like a clear snowflake, engraved with sophisticated circuits.

They were the rune arrays related to combustions and power output, and the spiritual energy circulations that were extremely esoteric. They were a hundred times more complicated than the patterns on the surfaces of the metal cube!

The tiny and delicate metal cube had been cut into hundreds of metal slips without a sound with the blade of spiritual energy by Li Yao, and on each metal slip, entirely different rune arrays had been carved!

Ye Qingyun and other refiners of the Deep Sea Fleet were awed by Li Yao's extraordinary skill again. They were too shocked to exclaim anymore.

"Fellow Cultivator Jin—"

Li Yao could already tell that Master Jin Tianzong was a pure, devoted refiner. Formalities were not needed to deal with such a technical specialist, and he could only win the man's acknowledgment and trust with true skills. "If I carve thirty or so protection and stabilization rune arrays on the internal walls of the crystal reactor and control the change of power output with special drain valves, is it possible to provide three different power outputs for the three different forms of the crystal suit with only one crystal reactor?"

Master Jin Tianzong stared at the dancing metal slips for a long time; his eyes wandering in the patterns that Li Yao had carved, full of fascination. It was not until a long time later that he finally retreated his attention and focused his eyes on Li Yao's plain-looking hands.

Master Jin Tianzong heaved a blurred sigh. There was no telling whether he was envying Li Yao for having such a pair of fast and agile hands, or that he was mourning that he could never achieve what Li Yao had achieved just now because of the destructive wounds to his hands, which made it impossible for him to carry out half of his expertise in his peak years.

"May I know your teacher and your school, Fellow Cultivator Li?"

It finally occurred to Master Jin Tianzong that Li Yao bowed to him deeply in respect just now. He bowed back and said sincerely, "Your skills in refining will definitely raise a lot of attention even if you barge into the circle of refiners in the capital!”

Li Yao replied, “If I say that I accidentally found the heritages on refining from the age of ancient Cultivators and grasped them on my own, would you believe it, Fellow Cultivator Jin?”

Master Jin Tianzong was slightly dazed. Then he said, “Just now, I was still telling Her Grace that I absolutely did not believe anyone could reach the peak of refining on their own. But now that I have seen Fellow Cultivator Li’s extraordinary skills, I have to say that I’m having doubts of my conclusion if that person is Fellow Cultivator Li!”

Looking at Master Jin Tianzong’s hands, Li Yao changed the topic abruptly, “Fellow Cultivator Jin, your hands were heavily wounded in the past two years?”

Hearing his words, Ye Qingyun and other refiners of the Deep Sea Fleet looked embarrassed again. The hands of a refiner were everything to them. It was somewhat outrageous of Li Yao to tear apart Master Jin Tianzong’s trauma like that.

Master Jin Tianzong slightly frowned, with intense miseries surfacing in his eyes. It was not because he recalled the pain when his hands were wounded but because of the helplessness that he could never make use of his hands deftly and carry out the best of his refining arts. In a hoarse voice, he said, “Yes. The flesh exploded, the bones were all broken, the veins and the nerves were disrupted into a mess… Thanks to the most advanced flesh-regeneration technologies and the nurture of the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures that Her Grace has found through various sources, it is not a big problem in daily life or regular refining. But during the production of certain complicated components or the fashioning that required a high precision, it is exactly like what you said, ‘something is missing’.

“With our expertise, we are both clear that my hands have been crippled now that they have been reduced to this!

“Since I came to the Deep Sea Fleet, I have summarized all my knowledge in refining that I gained in the first half of my life, and I still believe in the correctness of my theories.

“There are countless brand-new power rune arrays that I want to create and hundreds of unique crystal suits that I want to craft. I even developed an ancillary power unit for the Colossi, which could increase the speed and agility of the Colossi by more than 5%!

“But because of my… crippled hands, all the experiments failed, and all the designs can only stay in my head!

“I have told Her Grace many times that, at best, I can only work as the ‘brain’ in the refining team of the Deep Sea Fleet and provide theoretical guidance, and if the Deep Sea Fleet truly wants to have the most powerful crystal suits and even Colossi in order to compete with other super fleets of the Imperium of True Human Beings, we have to find a pair of hands for the refining team; a pair of miraculous and legendary hands!

“I… I didn’t know that Her Grace was so omnipotent that she would find such a great expert as Fellow Cultivator Li!”

Master Jin Tianzong was so thrilled that he could not describe the shock that Li Yao brought to him at all.

Li Yao said, “I’m told that Fellow Cultivator Jin has been working on the ‘hybrid crystal suits’ and made groundbreaking breakthroughs? I was more or less suspicious about it in the beginning, but I’m starting to believe it after scanning the power system of this crystal suit. I can’t wait to start the exploration of ‘hybrid crystal suits’ together with Fellow Cultivator Jin.”

His eyes glowing, Master Jin Tianzong said, “With the participation of Fellow Cultivator Li, the magical equipment development team of the Deep Sea Fleet will be like a tiger that has grown wings. With enough time, it is even possible for us to surpass the refining teams in the Imperial University, the Imperial Polytechnical University, and the Imperial Advanced College of Metallurgy!”

To this moment, Master Jin Tianzong still thought that Li Yao was a pure refiner, or at least mainly a refiner. So, he was still encouraging Li Yao with the logic of a refiner.

Li Yao smiled and changed the topic back to Master Jin Tianzong’s hands. “Fellow Cultivator Jin, it was rather presumptuous of me to have inquired about the wounds of your hands abruptly just now. I was only eager to learn whether your wounds were new or old, because there were several secret prescriptions on the nurturing and training of the hands in the heritages of the ancient Cultivators that I got.

“Although the ancient Cultivators were far behind the modern Immortal Cultivators in terms of the systematical development of disciplines, there were still quite a few effective methods after tens of thousands of years of experience.

“My hands suffered a lot of serious wounds during my crazy refining. Some of the training methods even required that the flesh on my hands be gnawed up and regenerated in order to build up the sharpest senses.

“Had it not been for the support of the secret techniques that nourished the hands, my hands would’ve been wasted a long time ago!

“Therefore, if you trust me, Fellow Cultivator Jin, you might as well try my secret prescriptions. After all, I don’t think your conditions can get any worse, right?”

Master Jin Tianzong was immediately stunned.

The relationship among the Immortal Cultivators was generally cold and distant. Deals and negotiations were highly appreciated, and few people would show kindness to other people for no reason.

Also, back when he was in the Refining Department of the Imperial Polytechnical University, he had been working on the development of the “hybrid crystal suits”, which was rather a unique path and pissed off too many refiners.

Everybody was waiting to see him humiliate himself. So, none of them would give him any help.

Out of his intuitions, he wondered if this “Vulture Li Yao” was up to something and intended to obtain certain things from him.

It was not until he realized that he was in the Deep Sea Fleet, and this Fellow Cultivator Li had been invited by the queen in person, that he was finally more or less reassured.

Besides, he had been demoted from a professor of the Imperial Polytechnical University and a heated grandmaster in the circle of refiner to what he was today. Was there anything about him that could call for other people’s greed?

The only valuable things he had were the theories and designs regarding the “hybrid crystal suits”.

If they were what “Vulture Li Yao” wanted, he might as well take away all of them. Perhaps they could only be really put into practice someday if they were in his hands!

Hundreds of thoughts popped in Master Jin Tianzong’s head, but they eventually all turned into a gloomy sigh. He bowed at Li Yao deeply again. “Thank you, Fellow Cultivator Li. I believe that you and I will certainly have a lot of things that we can talk about sincerely in terms of refining!”

Chapter 2180 - Pleasant Cooperation!

li yao was very satisfied with master jin tianzong’s answer.

naturally, he was not giving the man a favor for no reason at all.

besides, jin tianzong and everybody else in the deep sea fleet, although being the “rebels” in the eyes of the authorities of the imperium, were still immortal cultivators.

the war between the low-level immortal cultivators and the high-level immortal cultivators was a simple one caused by the uneven distribution of interests.

every ancient prescription inside li yao’s head was an invaluable treasure. naturally, he would not play the role of a generous giver in front of a bunch of immortal cultivators for no good reason.

however, li yao was well aware of the weight of a refiner in the divinity transformation stage in an organization.

it was especially so for a rebellion force that had only risen recently such as the deep sea fleet, which couldn’t have attracted too many masters in refining. one might even say that master jin tianzong was unique here.

li yao estimated that the crystal suits of the deep sea fleet and even all the top-tier experts of the “reformists” had been repaired and maintained by master jin tianzong in person. many secret military operations that required pertinent modifications on the crystal suits couldn’t have been a secret to master jin tianzong either.

therefore, making friends with master jin tianzong would help him reach the center of the “reformists” more easily.

besides, many of li yao’s refining arts were too sophisticated for the common refiners to appreciate. they might even think that he was deliberately showing off his skills. it would be quite awkward if he worked and sweated hard only to discover that he was giving a performance to a bunch of blind people.

it was not like he could be barefaced enough to speak to li linghai in person, like “your grace, in fact, my refining arts just now were so awesome with this and that technique, so you must pay great attention to me and involve me in your every secret operation”.

only the masters of jin tianzong’s level could see li yao’s real value.

with jin tianzong vouching for him, he would be of greater value to queen li linghai.

thinking about that, li yao smiled and went on, “even the best techniques to nurture the hands cannot restore fellow cultivator jin’s hands to their peak state. the ancillary artificial limbs and strengthened external skeletons will still be necessary. i can tell that the strengthened external skeleton that fellow cultivator jin is using right now is very delicately made, but it still cannot recover 100% of your capabilities, right?”

master jin tianzong nodded his head. “this strengthened external skeleton is named ‘heavenly silk jade clothes’. if it weren’t for the support, i would’ve been completely paralyzed. right now, about 80% of my body functions have been recovered. this is already the most advanced strengthened external skeleton."

pondering for a moment, li yao said, "the strengthened external skeleton made of rigid metals is already perfect enough to be refined into the level of the 'heavenly silk jade clothes'. however, have you ever considered crafting a strengthened external skeleton with soft metals or liquid alloys? at the very least, you can cover your damaged hands with a pair of 'gloves' and control them with their spiritual energy and telepathic thoughts. i imagine it will be much better than the strengthened external skeleton right now, won't it?"

"liquid alloy?"

jin tianzong's eyes shone, then he shook his head and said, "are you talking about the soft metal materials that are used to repair the shell of the starships? those alloys have poor spiritual energy conductivity and shaping abilities. however you input spiritual energy into it, it will just be a sticky mess like mud or turn into a cluster of steel. even if my hands are covered by them, how can i expect to perform the highly-precise refining work?"

narrowing his eyes, li yao said, "there is a reason why i suggest fellow cultivator jin repair your hands with liquid metals. tell you the truth, i have a very special production plan of liquid metals, which is a top secret among the top secrets and cannot be provided to fellow cultivator jin easily. however, i can supply fellow cultivator jin with the liquid metals after they are produced. trust me, the enhancement of such a new strengthened external skeleton will be much better than the traditional rigid external skeleton!"

li yao was not exaggerating.

the new liquid alloy was not his invention either. his main focus was the design and modification of crystal suits, and he did not have a profound understanding of material science, the purification of metals, and other fundamental disciplines.

the production plan of such a liquid metal was come up with by professor mo xuan.

professor mo xuan lost his body of flesh and blood in the laboratory explosion more than a hundred years ago and turned into weird “phantom entities” together with his four disciples. later, due to the radiations of the cosmic storm, their self-awareness and their memories of the past were awakened, and they evolved into “star spirits”.

during the process when they evolved into the star spirits, their souls were somehow melted with the liquid metal repairers on the starship, which gave them a very unique artificial body made of liquid metals.

although their bodies became liquid metals, professor mo xuan and his four disciples had been persisting in their dream of refining. in a time span of a hundred years, they had been refining and experimenting on liquid metals repetitively, hoping to produce body materials that were more sensitive to spiritual energy, faster in condensing and melting, and more suitable for refining.

what they eventually got was a new material named “water soft crystal”, which could fully carry out the characteristics of the liquid metals, which were both hard and soft and full of variations.

the experiment data of the liquid metal materials in the hundred years had all been sealed in the enormous heritage and delivered to li yao and the mental devil.

that was why li yao was confident that he could solve master jin tianzong's problem.

of course, both the ancient medical fluids that could cure the hands and the rare metals and heavenly materials and earthly treasures needed to produce the "water soft crystal" were precious ingredients that were hard to come by.

li yao estimated that even queen li linghai had to spend at least a couple of months searching for all the materials.

however, after raising such enticing conditions, he could win master jin tianzong's trust immediately.

if master jin tianzong and he could monopolize the maintenance of the magical equipment of all the super experts among the "reformists" as two cores, wouldn't there be a lot of room that he could take advantage of?

"of course, none of this comes free."

li yao did not want to raise the suspicion of master jin tianzong and other refiners by being too generous. he simply said with a smile, "but i do trust fellow cultivator jin's integrity. i believe that you will certainly offer a price that will attract me, say, applying fellow cultivator jin's 'hybrid' design to my crystal suit, or giving me a hand when i craft large magical equipment, right?"

master jin tianzong's throat was rolling fast.

for a man who had melted the refining arts into his blood and soul, who had offered his entire life to the furnace as a sacrifice, and who was ambitious enough to challenge the entire circle of refiners, could he have given a second answer except “yes”?

what happened next was within li yao’s expectation.

his astonishing performance in the maintenance workshop completely disrupted li linghai’s arrangements.

at first, li linghai was still pondering how she should settle li yao.

the participation of a warrior in the divinity transformation stage was certainly a good thing, but she wondered if li yao should have access to the most central personnel and secrets when he was not on a mission.

however, now that li yao had proved him to be not only a warrior in the divinity transformation stage but also an excellent refiner who was on par with master jin tianzong in terms of level and even much better than him in terms of practical operations, the situation was entirely different.

besides, li yao had proved that he was not from the imperium through his incredible refining arts, which indirectly suggested that everything he said was true.

of course, li linghai did spend like thirty seconds considering if li yao was a spy from the covenant alliance.

however, li linghai had never heard that the covenant alliance, which had suffered a crushing defeat in the past ten years against the imperium, boasted such an extraordinary person as “vulture li yao” who was as remarkable in fighting as he was in refining.

such a man would play an irreplaceable role wherever he went. why would he have been sent to the enemy’s rear alone as a spy in such a preposterous way?

although li linghai was not entirely reassured about li yao yet, she did reach a conclusion after quick calculations, which was that the value li yao could provide far exceeded the insignificant suspicions about him.

as the leader of the “reformists” who intended to overthrow the four kurfürst families’ reign of the imperium despite the small chances, li linghai was a wild gambler, and she took a wild gamble regarding the use of li yao.

while his identity of “personal guard” remained unchanged, li yao was added with a rather absurd new identity—the queen’s personal magical equipment consultant.

the identity that equaled “deputy director of magical equipment in the deep sea fleet” would allow li yao to gain access to the top confidential magical equipment projects in the deep sea fleet as well as the crystal suits of most of the leadership. he was almost on the same level as master jin tianzong.

in any organization, two masters of refining with similar capabilities would be more or less in conflicts.

it was especially so when li yao had assumed a high place as a newcomer. it was inevitable that he gave the feeling that he had stolen somebody else’s power.

at such a moment, the two “gifts” that he offered played a vital role.

master jin tianzong was not very passionate about power or fame in the first place but was completely dedicated to his project of “hybrid crystal suits”.

before, when he looked at his wounded hands that bordered on completely destroyed, there had been little hope in the heart of master jin tianzong, who was only catching his last breath.

but li yao’s arrival poured a bucket of hot oil on the flames in his heart, making him see the light of hope clearly again.

master jin tianzong was still counting on li yao to repair his hands for him. why would he fight for power with li yao at such a moment?

therefore, their cooperation had been rather smooth and neat since the first day.

despite the disabilities, jin tianzong was one of the best specialists in refining in the imperium of true human beings after all, and he had been formally educated in the imperial polytechnical university. his head was almost an encyclopedia of the magical equipment in the imperium. li yao couldn’t help but feel that he had entered a mountain of eye-opening treasures, and he just couldn’t dig out enough of them.

also, when li yao casually mentioned the ideas or the structure designs that he got from the ancient cultivators or the kunlun relic, jin tianzong was secretly shocked too, and he felt more and more that the mysterious expert “vulture li yao” whom the queen had hired from he did not know where was too immeasurable.

Chapter 2181 - Deep Sea Palace

With their cooperation, the maintenance work of the Tempest God was pushed forward fast. The preliminary maintenance procedures had been drafted in only half a day.

The maintenance and adjustment work of the crystal suits also moved on smoothly.

Li Linghai had opened almost all the maintenance clearances on the crystal suits in the Deep Sea Fleet.

Experts such as Tu Zhengdao also came to visit Li Yao, asking Li Yao to help them adjust their crystal suits earnestly.

After all, the crystal suit was the Exo’s life. On the battlefield, even an improvement of 1% in performance would significantly increase the final odds of survival.

In only one day, Li Yao had got in touch with more than thirty most advanced high-level crystal suits.

Through their crystal suits, he made acquaintances with the myriad of experts and commanders in the Deep Sea Fleet and grew a profound understanding of their battle styles and basic levels according to the tiny scratches on their crystal suits and their own narrations.

Master Jin Tianzong observed Li Yao’s adjustments on the crystal suits carefully nearby. After watching Li Yao adjust more than thirty crystal suits in different styles and models, he was completely awed by the dexterity and precision of Li Yao’s hands. After the day’s work was done, he offered to present a lot of structural designs of the “hybrid crystal suit” for Li Yao to study.

It was exactly what Li Yao wanted.

However, after studying them carefully for a night, Li Yao could tell why Master Jin Tianzong’s research stagnated.

The design of “hybrid crystal suits” was too advanced after all, with too many complicated rune arrays and structures, which meant that they absolutely could not be manufactured on a large scale under current technological circumstances.

In many cases, the precision demand on many details was appallingly 0.05 threads, which was not only beyond the abilities of the tools on the assembly lines but also barely possible for experienced refiners with their manual work.

The crystal reactor, on the other hand, was the most important unit on the crystal suit. Even an error of 0.1 threads might result in the loss of control, paralysis, and even the explosion of the crystal suit.

No wonder the Imperial Polytechnical University scorned at Master Jin Tianzong’s design, and he even lost his reputation in the entire circle of refiners, who regarded him as a liar fishing for fame.

It also explained why Master Jin Tianzong offered the structure designs that he deemed most valuable to Li Yao the first day they met. That was because only Li Yao’s astonishing hand speed and senses could possibly produce the special components and the ultra-thin chips that Master Jin Tianzong needed.

“Fellow Cultivator Li, I have tried all the methods possible, and they all failed.”

Brilliance as thick as magma was spurting out of Master Jin Tianzong’s eyes, and thick veins were wandering on the back of his hands, his neck, and his forehead. He was almost roaring as he said, “Right now, your hands are my only hope! I believe that fate has sent you here, and the experiment this time will definitely be a success! Let’s join our hands and shock all the refiners of the Imperium!”

…

Twelve hours later, in the test field for crystal suits on Dragon Abyss, three crystal suits were fighting fiercely in three streaks of brilliance; one red, one yellow, and one black. Occasionally, ripples of spiritual energy were raised in collisions and spread to the defense rune arrays around the test field like overwhelming tides, causing deafening noises.

In the battle, the two crystal suits that were surrounded by yellow and black haloes were attacking the red crystal suit from the left and the right at the same time.

But the red crystal suit was not intimidated by the opponent’s aggressive and incessant attacks. It was simply wandering between the two opponents at ease.

The red crystal suit was tall, heavy, and thick, with a highly-rising protrusion on the back. It was a standard heavy crystal suit.

However, as the crimson exhaust flames spurted out dazzlingly, its movement was as unpredictable as a ghost and as agile as a butterfly that was hovering among flowers.

It was not stalled by the two opponents at all. Instead, taking advantage of the flawed teamwork of the two opponents, it dodged to the opponents’ back and used them as its shield again and again.

Aooooo!

The opponent in the yellow crystal suit finally could not withstand such “tease” anymore. In crazy roars, his body expanded nonstop, and even the Cosmos Rings embedded to the crystal suit spurted out even more units and components, which were gathered by the electromagnetic forces and made the crystal suit even bigger, fiercer, and more hideous. The sharp battle spurts appeared on the shoulders, the breastplate, the elbows, and the knees, truly making it look like a fully-armored, dominating crab!

Exhaust flames that looked like a tsunami burst out of the back of the black crystal suit too, improving its level to a higher level. Almost a hundred blurred shadows trapped the red crystal suit tightly.

The glittering “crab” was about to pinch the red crystal suit’s arms with its “pincers”.

The super-alloy high-frequency vibration blade in the hands of the black crystal suit was also slashed at the spiritual energy tube at the back of the red crystal suit from bottom to top sordidly.

Either of the attacks from the two crystal suits would be enough to cripple the red crystal suit if they hit the target.

The red crystal suit, however, was enshrouded into a dazzling ball of lightning by the exhaust flames that spurted out of its body crazily.

The deafening noises raised by the ball of lightning even stunned the two crystal suits that were performing the attack for a moment.

In the middle of the roaring lightning, countless streaks of brightness split apart and dodged all the attacks from the two crystal suits at ease, only to condense again at the back of the yellow crystal suit.

One heavy and aggressive kick, as unstoppable as the barrage of the main guns of a crystal warship, hit the waist of the yellow crystal suit brutally, blowing the plate armor into pieces immediately. The crystal suit that weighed several tons crashed into the defense rune arrays like a kite whose string had been cut off. Taking advantage of the moment when the broken pieces disrupted the vision and probe the magical equipment of the black crystal suit, the red crystal suit sprinted forward. The brilliance condensed by spiritual energy pierced into the chest of the black crystal suit like a bloodred saber, and flames entangled the black crystal suit like crimson vipers, completely paralyzing every rune array on the surface of the black crystal suit!

The yellow crystal suit collapsed to the ground, unable to rise again, with sparks spurting out crazily. Lubricants and the user’s blood were everywhere on the ground.

The black crystal suit kept the attacking posture, like a statue that had been frozen, and did not fall until three seconds later.

BOOM!

The red crystal suit had serious faults after crushing the two formidable enemies in the counterattack. Fulminations burst out of the highly-rising unit on the back, and disgusting black smoke popped up too.

Shua! Shua! Shua!

The yellow crystal suit and the black crystal suit split apart, and Li Jialing and Tu Zhengdao crawled out of them. They eyed the red crystal suit in disbelief.

The red crystal suit dissected like a blossoming flower too. Li Yao walked out in deep thought.

“Master Jin Tianzong is quite right. The hybrid structure is indeed the next-generation power output pattern that is more advanced than the parallel structure. It represents the future of crystal suits. However, it is indeed technologically tricky to craft them. This prototype has been worked on by Master Jin Tianzong for years and polished by me carefully, but it is still not steady enough. Faults were already happening when I just moved it casually. What do you think?”

Li Yao looked at Tu Zhengdao and Li Jialing, who were sweating hard, their chests moving up and down quickly.

“I think you are a monster,” Tu Zhengdao panted and said.

Li Jialing shook his furry big head and nodded heavily.

Right then, the starship slightly shivered, and there was a brief slowdown.

The “Deep Sea Palace”, the nest of the Deep Sea Fleet and home camp of Queen Li Linghai, was not far away!

…

On the bridge of Dragon Abyss, Li Yao and Li Jialing observed the broken, ragged planet that had almost been entirely modified into machines on Li Linghai’s left and right sides respectively.

The planet was somewhat similar to the “Ice King Project” that Li Yao had seen in the Flying Star Sector. The purpose of the project was to hollow an entire planet, install a great number of power rune arrays, and transform it into an enormous star fortress.

The Ice King Project of the Flying Star Sector originated from a magnificent project of the Star Ocean Imperium. The planetary fortress that had been highly modified was left from the age of the Star Ocean Imperium too.

Otherwise, with the technological power of the Cultivators of the Flying Star Sector at that time, it was absolutely impossible to perform such grand and complicated modifications on a planet.

The small planet at the edge of the cosmos was certainly not the only target involved in the magnificent projects of the Star Ocean Imperium.

The planet that Li Jialing used as her nest had been through similar modifications, and the modifications were even more thorough. More than 80% of the surface of the planet had been mechanized and militarized and could be used for real battles.

But it too was heavily damaged in the bloody battles ten thousand years ago, like a skull that was hollowed and riddled with holes.

The planet and the vast space zones around were not recorded in any space map of the Imperium. Barely anyone knew their existence.

They had spent the past ten thousand years in silence and loneliness deep inside the dark and profound universe.

However, in the recent century, and especially in the recent thirty to fifty years, countless rebels who were discontented, ambitious, and hated the authorities of the Imperium had come to this place, excavating the spaceports, arsenals, and relics from the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago. They had also recruited the highly dangerous schemers and desperadoes from everywhere and built the place into an impenetrable base together!

Dragon Abyss slowly sailed into the planetary fortress that was known as “Dragon Palace”. Activating his eyesight to the maximum, Li Yao saw that hundreds of starships were docked in the space neatly, and the highly-rising command towers looked like the fins on the back of sharks.

A lot of starships and crystal suit groups were practicing cooperative battles on the orbit. Their remarkable performance and tactics were as good as the Burning Prairie Fleet, the top-tier deep-sky fleet in the federation.

“The Deep Sea Fleet is not made of common mobsters. Even in my most difficult times, I never considered recruiting the infamous space bandits to increase my power. Just like my attitude toward Li Lingfeng, what matters is quality and not quantity. I would rather fight on my own than to recruit a bunch of ‘pig teammates’ to hamstring me!”

Faced with her army, Queen Li Linghai couldn’t help but feel proud. “More than 80% of the commanders in the Deep Sea Fleet in various levels came from the elite fleets in the Imperium’s army. One might even say that the most distinguished talents in hundreds of Sectors of the Imperium have been gathered here!”

Chapter 2182 - Power of the Reformists!

according to li linghai, while the deep sea fleet was a “rebellion army” that had not surfaced yet, it had quite a roster of great talents and generals. the abilities of the commanders at every level were far better than those of the deep-sky fleets of the imperium at the same level.

it was especially so for the bottom-level commanders in the frontline, who were definitely the elites that had survived hundreds of battles.

the elites joined the deep sea fleet for various reasons. but getting to the bottom of it, it was mostly because the channel of ascension had been blocked and because of the injustice caused by the monopolization of nobles and magnates.

the injustice had been enlarged by countless times in the fierce war. on many occasions, it even concerned the life and death of the young officers. naturally, it raised fierce resistance.

incapable and self-righteous, the superiors treated the precious lives as worthless cannon fodder in order to earn military credits for themselves and their families without caring about the life and death of the officers and soldiers at the bottom level. they even drove the soldiers into the burning battlefield to get killed when there was no hope of winning at all, just to get themselves the reputation of “valiance”. such things were not rare at all in the imperium’s counterattack in the past ten years.

the young officers at the bottom level and the low-level immortal cultivators who had no connections, after going through blood battles where only one-tenth of them could survive and returning from the hellish battlefields with broken bodies, might not be greeted by medals, contribution points, cheers, and flowers, but more likely the blames that their fellows and their superiors pushed to them.

if they were unwilling to plead guilty dutifully and take the blame for their fellows and superiors who were powerful, the cold and heartless military court would open its bloody mouth and swallow the promising future of countless young officers.

all in all, in the imperium of true human beings that was reigned by nobles and warlords, medals, honors, and military credits did not depend on the accomplishments on a battlefield but one’s backgrounds and patrons.

for the low-level immortal cultivators who did not have any background or person they could count on and who were unwilling to kneel before the nobles, they would never have a day to distinguish themselves no matter how much blood they shed and how many people they killed on the battlefield.

it was exactly the story for tu zhengdao, the deputy leader of the deep sea legion.

he used to be the highest commander of a very famous crystal suit legion in the expedition army of the imperium. without any background and reliance, he made his way to the vice marshal of the imperium’s army through all the bones he broke and all the blood he vomited on the battlefield.

he was a legend of the expedition army, and he once received the olive branches from the four kurfürst families too.

but at that time, he was loyal to the sector master of his hometown, and he thought that the sector master would remember his “loyalty” and shelter and support him no matter what.

but he was wrong.

in an extremely dangerous battle, the whole defense line completely collapsed because of the downfall of another crystal suit legion on his flank. he covered the retreat at the risk of his life, and his entire troop was almost wiped out before he finally managed to keep the allies’ forces as much as possible.

the crystal suit legion, which collapsed and ran first, turned out to be a subordinate of the yun family of wuchuan, one of the four kurfürst families, and its commander was a descendant of the main bloodline of the yun family.

naturally, as the pillars of the imperium, the four renowned kurfürst families never had any cowardly people in the families.

the commanders of the troops that were saved by tu zhengdao, intimidated by the power of the yun family, did not dare to speak the truth.

besides, the military committee who was responsible for the investigation was mostly made of the nobles and the descendants of traditional families. even if they told the truth, who would hear it?

eventually, tu zhengdao was the one to blame for the collapse of the entire defense line.

the sector master of his hometown, who had promised to support him before, was angry that he wasted the soldiers that he brought from his hometown, which significantly reduced the capabilities of his sector. also, the sector master was not bold enough to go against the four kurfürst families, and thus, offered him no help at all.

just like that, as a legend and one of the youngest vice admiral in the imperium’s army, tu zhengdao fell from the promising path to an infinite abyss. he was forced to lead a daring team made of criminals to launch a suicide charge at the most heavily guarded military stronghold of the covenant alliance, only to be obliterated into nothingness by the overwhelming bombardments of the covenant alliance. at the very least, if it weren’t for the help that li linghai offered, it would have been tu zhengdao’s only outcome.

after he was secretly rescued, tu zhengdao immediately joined the deep sea fleet with the surviving members of the daring team without any hesitation.

tu zhengdao’s story was just a common one among the soldiers of the deep sea fleet’s history of blood and tears.

countless officers had similar experiences, or even a hundred times more wronged and miserable ones.

those people were determined to overthrow the reign of the four kurfürst families and to establish a new imperium as well as a powerful army!

not just the soldiers, there were also scholars, specialists, and civilians such as master jin tianzong who were disliked by the nobles.

some of them could not see the channel of ascension, some of them had worked hard on their projects for decades only to be robbed by other people, and some were attacked openly or clandestinely in the seemingly fair competitions, eventually losing their reputations or even their families. they were all forced to walk on the desperate path that was “reform”.

“the whole world is already seething with fury and discontentment, which may burst out at any moment, because of the nobles’ reign over the imperium of true human beings.”

li linghai said to li yao, “the more greatly the noble families expand and the more interests they monopolize, the less room of survival there will be for most of the people. the majority will be pushed to their opposite side, thereby forcing a powerful alliance of resisters.

“when you are cursed by too many people, you will die without a disease. right now, the noble families led by the four kurfürst families are exactly being cursed by too many people.

“however, with a hundred years of preparations, the forces of the reformists are much more than the ‘deep sea fleet’ that you are seeing right now!”

according to li linghai, the forces that the reformists could make use of could be divided into five parts.

the most important armed force of all was naturally the deep sea fleet. in a world of immortal cultivators where the strong prey on the weak, no ideas could be spread without a powerful armed force.

secondly, the business alliance of ten thousand sectors, which was the main source of intelligence and capital for the reformists.

li yao was no stranger to the name of “business alliance of ten thousand sectors” because di feiwen, his nominal right-hand man and the deputy commander of the black wind fleet, was a merchant and had a lot to do with the business alliance of ten thousand sectors.

according to di feiwen, before he left the imperium, the merchants and the alliance of the small businesses who had been active at the remote areas of the imperium were already gradually awakening, hoping to compete with the monopolies supported by the noble families and even participate in the politics of the imperium.

when there were too many coins in their pockets, it was only natural that they wanted to forge and grab sharper swords to protect their pockets.

money was itself a bloodthirsty beast. the power of capitals was sometimes even greater than the power of the cultivators and the immortal cultivators. at the earliest chance, the clinking coins would come to life and seize the entire world.

a hundred years ago, the business alliance of ten thousand sectors was still relatively weak and could only infiltrate the remote worlds or the independent worlds that were in the middle of a war and had a complicated environment such as the black wind fleet.

but as it turned out, after a hundred years, the business alliance of ten thousand sectors had already teamed up with the queen from the imperium’s center of power. the ambitions of the organization were obvious.

the third force was the “tribunal of extraterrestrial devils” based in the empyreal terminus sector.

what the slightly weird name denoted was a terrifying organization that awed countless people hundreds of years ago.

as its name suggested, “tribunal of extraterrestrial devils” was a special troop that was designed to deal with the invasion of extraterrestrial devils.

it was said that the tribunal of extraterrestrial devils raised a batch of “devil huntresses” who had been trained using cruel secret techniques since childhood. they had very sharp senses and natural-born countermeasures against extraterrestrial devils. the organization was similar to the “devil slaying division” in the secret sword bureau in the star glory federation.

about seven hundred years ago, the tribunal of extraterrestrial devils had a ghastly history of expansion. the targets of their hunting were no longer restrained to the extraterrestrial devils or those possessed by the extraterrestrial devils, but also included the immortal cultivators who were involved in corruption, embezzlement, or other schemes. they became the bloody tool with which the emperor used to compete with the nobles who were growing too huge to be rid of.

“the real immortal cultivators should be loyal to his grace and contribute their everything to the imperium and the civilization!

“the guys who are corrupted and greedy about wealth and power have all been invaded by the extraterrestrial devils. their heads have been polluted by the devils, and they must be purged in the most complete way!”

in the past, countless “devil huntresses” once galloped among different sectors and implemented the most ruthless “purge” on the emperor’s enemies under such slogans.

if those people’s heads were entirely burnt up, there would naturally be no residues of any extraterrestrial devils, right?

with such a “dark history”, it was not hard to imagine how the tribunal of extraterrestrial devils was suppressed and diminished in the second five hundred years of the imperium’s history when the emperor was eclipsed by the nobles and the four kurfürst families dominated everything.

today, the tribunal of extraterrestrial devils had already been reduced to a bureau as insignificant as the cecum in the enormous and redundant political system of the imperium.

had it not been for the need of tremendous cannon fodder to die together with the extraterrestrial devils when they occasionally arrived, the organization would’ve been disbanded a long time ago.

however…

no matter how distressed they were, there were still abundant loyal “devil huntresses” who were raised and trained with the cruel secret techniques lurking in the darkness, protecting the secrets and the dark forces that they had earned after a thousand years of fierce battles against the extraterrestrial devils.

li linghai discovered the value of the tribunal of extraterrestrial devils and invested a great number of resources, awakening the dangerous beast that had lurked for hundreds of years into her great cause.

just like guo chunfeng’s secret sword bureau, jin xinyue’s dim moon fund, and long yangjun’s ghost character, it was her sharpest blade in the darkness!

Chapter 2183 - You Are a Good Sign

Besides the Deep Sea Fleet, the Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors, and the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils, the fourth force that was inclined to the reformists were the relatively radical young officers in the army.

At this moment, the young soldiers from hundreds of Sectors were gathered in the frontline, devoting their youth and hot blood together to the flowers named ambitions and hope. The magnificent and cruel space war in the past ten years had completely shaped them into machines of slaughter and destruction.

It was absolutely impossible to ceasefire with the Covenant Alliance and stop the running war machine with just an order while making sure that the young officers who were as ravenous as hungry wolves did not cause any trouble.

However, the army was the most sensitive place after all. The nobles and the warlords certainly had a high control over their fleets. Li Linghai did not dare to extend her hands into the army too deeply either. Although she had been rescuing the dissidents in the army and inviting them to join the Deep Sea Fleet, she had never infiltrated the army on a large scale.

The fifth force, on the other hand, was more or less out of Li Yao’s expectation.

It was the opposition within the four Kurfürst families.

But on second thought, it did make sense. The most solid fortresses were always broken from inside. Wasn’t Li Linghai herself one of the oppositions from within the Kurfürst families?

There was also her biological brother Li Lingfeng, who had been well-acknowledged as the next leader of the family and Kurfürst. He did not believe in the fancy words of the leadership of the family either, and he established his own force through whatever means possible and came up with his enormous, clandestine plans.

It couldn’t be helped. The rule of “survival of the fittest” did not just work between the noble families and the poor families, but also the aristocrats and the civilians. The power struggles and secrets within the noble families were anything but unusual. They were even gorier than the competitions in the outside world.

When there were competitions, there were losers. Many losers who had lost everything, for their own ambitions and interests, would not hesitate to sacrifice their entire families.

The Deep Sea Fleet provided military support, the Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors provided capital and intelligence, and the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils was responsible for the dark deals that were best not exposed. They were the three pillars for the queen of the Imperium.

Together with the young, bottom-level officers who were discontented and inclined to, or at least sympathetic for them, as well as the guys who failed the internal competitions in the four Kurfürst families and who craved for a comeback, they made up the fundamental forces of the reformists.

“There’s more to it. Besides the five forces, there are sharp contradictions among the nobles and the warlords that we can take advantage of.”

Li Linghai explained, “The four Kurfürst families are not a united piece. Their conflicts of interests are very intense too, especially those between the three families including the Li family and the Dongfang family as well as the biggest and wealthiest family known as ‘First Family’.

“When the Imperium of True Human Beings was just born, the traditional noble families including the four Kurfürst families were still hugging each other to warm each other up and check the powerful emperor at that time.

“At that time, none of them were very strong, and the emperor was their greatest opponent. They could only survive through unity.

“However, as the royal authority declined, the four Kurfürst families rose prominently. The emperor no longer a threat, they naturally grew vigilant of each other.

“It was especially so in the recent two hundred years, when the Dongfang family’s influence continued to expand. It has laid its fingers on the critical fields of the Imperium such as finance, transportation, energy, military industries, etc., and monopolized many of them. It poses a threat not just to the emperor and the low-level Immortal Cultivators but also to the other three families.

“While the other families haven’t said anything on the surface, they are naturally very dissatisfied in their hearts. There is even a trend that the three families will unite against the Dong family, just like how the four families united to check the emperor in the past.

“After the triumph in the war, dozens of important industrial worlds have been taken back, which will likely change the balance of the four Kurfürst families. So, nobody will give in regarding how the worlds should be divided. It is possible that they will end up on bad terms.

“If the enemies start to bite each other, it will be a great opportunity for the reformists to develop and flourish!

“For us, while we have to lay low for a while longer, we need to call for the army, the small nobles, the Sector Masters in the remote worlds, and all the other forces that can be united. We will expand the capabilities of the oppositions until the contrast of the two parties’ strengths is reversed.

“On the other hand, before we grow strong enough, we might as well make some deals with the other three families and put down the Dongfang family together!

“The Dongfang family is the largest Kurfürst family. Many people claim that the Dongfang family is the ‘First Family’ of the Imperium, and that the leader of the Dongfang family is the ‘uncrowned emperor’ of the Imperium. Hehe. If we can take down the Dongfang family, it will be the first barrage that marks the collapse of the old order. As long as the barrage explodes at the center of power brutally, nothing can possibly stop us from renovating the Imperium!”

Li Linghai slashed her hand down heavily, as if she were chopping an enormous family that had lasted thousands of years into pieces.

Taking a deep breath, she looked at Li Yao with passion and eagerness again. “I did not know that you were such an excellent master of refining. This is really great!

“I vaguely have a feeling that your arrival is a good sign that the reformists and the new Imperium will rise and radiate unstoppably like a morning sun!

“Right now, ‘Li Lingfeng’, my only loophole, has been completely erased. Everything is being pushed forward according to my plan. With your participation right now, I’m certain that our glory will soon arrive!”

Li Yao hesitated, “Well…”

Li Linghai frowned. “What now? Are you still bothered by your belief?”

“Not exactly.”

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao said, “I’m just flattered to be called a ‘good sign’. To be honest, nobody has ever said that I was a ‘good sign’ in my long life. Also, whenever I heard other people saying ‘everything is under control’ or ‘things are going exactly as planned’, accidents would happen shortly…”

“Huh?”

Li Linghai was slightly dazed. Right then, the crystal processor on her wrist began to buzz crazily.

It seemed to be a very private communication channel, because Li Linghai hesitated for a moment before she turned it on before Li Yao and Li Jialing.

A moment later, Li Linghai’s heart of ambitions was frozen, and ice seemed to be poking out of her every pore.

“Something is wrong.”

She gritted three words out from between her teeth.

…

Let the time be wound back to three days ago.

It was in the Green Wind Sector on the fourth arm in the second quadrant of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

The Green Wind Sector was one of the worlds that were closest to the frontline before the Imperium launched the splendid strategic counterattack.

Naturally, it became the home camp of the expedition army at the early phase of the war as well as a transfer base for supplies.

As the frontline was pushed forward along with the army’s victories, the home camp of the expedition army had been moved to the Sectors that had recently been recovered.

However, the logistical base of the army, which boasted hundreds of thousands of starships, was still deployed here.

Every day, billions of tons of supplies were shipped to this place from the resource planets at the remote corners of the hundreds of Sectors nationwide, before they were delivered to the fleets in the frontline after categorization and calculation.

The special location and the needs of war made the Green Wind Sector prosper abnormally. Most of the locals made a fortune more or less through the war, and their days were evidently better than before the war.

Therefore, it would not be exaggerating to say that the locals of this world were the most avid advocates of the war.

At this moment, to celebrate the recovery of an insignificant resource planet in the frontline, a triumph ceremony of an enormous scale was held in the capital of the Sector again.

The entire sky was rendered into the lightning trident flag of the Imperium by mystic rays. Balloons painted with eagles and iron fists were flying everywhere. The streets and the alleys were all ablaze with lights. Both the true human beings and the hominoids were standing on their toes waiting for the arrival of the awesome Exos of the Imperium and the assault starships. Everybody was shouting from the bottom of their heart, “Long live the Imperium! Long live the Immortal Cultivators! Long live the civilization of mankind!”

When Dongfang Tuo stepped on the podium on one side of the main avenue next to the central square of the capital, he immediately found himself drowned by the overwhelming cheers.

Before the war broke out, faced with such a zealous and “valiant” crowd, Dongfang Tuo, just like other Immortal Cultivators, was filled with excitement and pride.

But after such a long time of war, when he heard the roars for victories, the elegant-looking big shot of the Dongfang family, one of the five hundred elders in the Council of Elders of the Imperium, the CEO of the Imperial Expedition Bank, and the chief manager of the military supplies division in the expedition army, couldn’t help but sigh and furrow his eyebrows.

Triumph. Triumph. One triumph after another. When will they ever end?

Dongfang Tuo thought to himself.

For the people or the bottom-level officers in the frontline, triumphs meant military credits, medals, and infinite glories of the Imperium.

However, the big shots who were responsible for the resources and gears of the expedition army such as Dongfang Tuo knew clearly that every triumph meant that more troops had to be deployed to defend the newly-recovered territory. It would mean a longer and more fragile supply line and a “black hole” that would swallow infinite resources. Such black holes could never be filled.

From whatever perspective, the army of the Imperium had reached the limits of expansion, and it could not withstand any more of those “triumphs”.

However…

Anybody can decide when to start a war, but not everyone can decide when to stop a war!

Dongfang Tuo somehow thought of those words. He couldn’t help but put on a bitter smile.

Naturally, he did not let the bitter smile that represented his real feelings to last for more than half a second. Instead, he simply coughed and put on a solemn expression, before he made his way to the middle of the leadership of the government and the military who had medals and sashes all over their chests, waiting for the arrival of the victorious troop.

The sound of the assault warships tearing apart the clouds was already vaguely coming over from the sky not far away.

The earth began to shake slightly, implying that the iron hooves of the Imperium of True Human Beings that could stomp on everything were approaching.

At that time, the elder of the Imperium did not know yet that there were only 32 minutes and 47 seconds to go before the end of his life.

His killer, on the other hand, would not be the inhumane people of the Covenant Alliance who were like machines made of flesh and blood, but the army of the Imperium that he was waiting for.

Chapter 2184 - A Bunch of Idiots!

“Elder!”

Upon Dongfang Tuo’s arrival, the important officials of the Green Wind Sector who were chitchatting delightedly immediately stood at attention, held their right fist to the chest, and slightly bowed at him to show respect.

The five hundred elders of the Imperium had the most prestigious position. Even though they were not appointed in the army or the government, they still boasted the power and stature above everyone else, because they were the Imperium!

His face as gloomy as a swamp, Dongfang Tuo nodded at everyone and waved his hands casually, hinting that they need not be so nervous.

The Green Wind Sector was a transfer base of supplies for the expedition army of the Imperium.

Military supplies were a critical and beneficial field. Naturally, they were controlled by the noble families.

Therefore, the important officials who were qualified to stand on the podium to welcome the victorious army were all from the four Kurfürst families or their vassal forces. In short, they were his own kind.

Since they were his own kind, he could talk with them on a lot of topics freely.

Different from the fervent crowd on the street who were roaring “long live the Imperium”, the important officials were not too excited during their whispers.

“Another ‘glorious triumph’, and a new resource planet. Hehe. It’s a shame that the Covenant Alliance blew up all the mines before their evacuation under the new strategy of resistance. They even corrupted all the underground mines in a very sordid way. By estimation, the work to address the pollution alone will take years, and there is no telling how huge the investment will be. This is not a resource planet at all; this is yet another bottomless hole!”

“Exactly. The people from the Covenant Alliance are seriously brainwashed too, and they are quite against the Imperium. I’m afraid that they cannot be transformed into the fine labors of the Imperium without long-time tutelage. But it will mean that we will have to waste a lot of food on them. It’s not like we can kill all of them, right? Annihilating all the people in the dozens of Sectors that are newly recovered? Who is bold enough to make such a decision? This is really… upsetting!”

“The support of the people in the rear has already reached the limits. No matter how they are ‘encouraged’, it is impossible to unleash more potentials. On the other hand, the accident rate is on the rise, and the small-scale riots are happening all the time. As it happens, most of the available forces of the Imperium are concentrated at the frontline and cannot suppress the riots at the rear. As a result, a few days ago, the terrible event that a Cultivator destroyed a whole space fortress took place, and the whole process was live-streamed after the Spiritual Nexus was compromised by the Cultivator. Shame. It is truly a great shame for the Imperium. To think that an insignificant Cultivator…”

“An insignificant Cultivator cannot cause much trouble yet. But the pressure of currency inflation that we are faced with right now is too huge and already on the verge of collapse. If the war goes on, the malign devalue of the currency will be unavoidable. We have run detailed deductions. If the war goes on for another year at the current intensity with the current supply of resources, then by February next year, the currency of the Imperium will be devalued by at least 300%, and by the end of next year, ten times. The catastrophic consequences will be more grave than the appearance of ten thousand Cultivators!”

“So, what matters most right now is how to end the war in a decent way!”

His eyes half narrowed, Dongfang Tuo was expressionless and did not seem to catch the discussions around him. But in fact, he heard every word loud and clear.

He also knew that the discussions and complaints of the important officials of the Green Wind Sector were mostly meant for him to hear. They hoped that, as one of the elders of the Imperium, he could propose a motion to end the war as soon as possible in the Council of Elders.

However…

Dongfang Tuo sneered in his heart. Did those officials think that the Council of Elders did not hope to end the war “decently” as quickly as possible? The only thing was that the Covenant Alliance, whose large piece of flesh had been torn off, would not give the “decent” end that the Imperium wanted so easily, would it?

“The damn soldiers at the frontline do not appreciate the hard work of the supplies in the rear at all. All they can think of in their head is to fight, fight, and fight! If they continue like this, our logistical system will collapse in no time!”

“Yes. I’m told that there was a mutiny in the 27th fleet stationed in the ‘Heavenly Moon Space Zone’. The middle- and bottom-level young officers were quite moody and unwilling to carry out the order that asked them to ‘stand by’. They still intended to attack and further strengthen the battle line.”

“What are those people with more brawn than brains thinking? Are they going to feed the people on the newly-recovered planets who have been highly brainwashed? What a bunch of idiots!”

“Those insubordinate guys are only attracted by the military credits and medals and never think about the big picture. Once their heads are befuddled by their hot blood, they can do anything. Also, there is a disturbing phenomenon nowadays. The young officers from different Sectors seem to be reaching out to each other. They appear to have established a lot of groups such as ‘clubs’ or ‘fraternities’. There is no telling what they are up to. It is truly distressing.”

“That is all because of the indulgence of the Sector Masters. The Sector Masters of the remote worlds are a group of a*sholes who are ambitious, selfish, short-sighted, insatiable, and never consider the big picture!”

Dongfang Tuo sighed again in his heart.

As the CEO of the Imperial Expedition Bank and a manager of logistics who ran astronomical military supplies every day, he was well aware of the topics that everybody was talking about.

Having swallowed dozens of worlds in a row, the Imperium had already reached the limits of expansion in the current phase. If it were to continue to expand blindly, it would become an infinitely growing beast that would be collapsed by its own weight—like a whale stranded on a beach—and explode from inside.

Therefore, for the overall interests of the Imperium, “decently” or “indecently”, the Imperium’s counterattack that had lasted more than ten years must be ended as soon as possible.

However, the officers at the frontline who craved to make a name for themselves, and especially the young, bottom-level officers who had been seriously brainwashed by the invincibility of the Imperium and the significance of the civilization of mankind, thought otherwise.

They desired to distinguish themselves. They desired to expand the territory for their country. They desired to leave their name in the history books as one of the brilliant heroes during the rise of the civilization of mankind!

As the saying went, when a general was at war, he would not take orders from the monarch. In a universal war that spanned dozens of Sectors and thousands of lightyears, it was barely possible for the rear to effectively control the deep-sky fleets that were wandering in the depths of the boundless space.

Every deep-sky fleet boasted a super starship more than ten kilometers long, which had self-circulating air and water systems and also a storage for synthesized food that was enough for the use of twenty years and could provide the basic needs of energy despite the unpleasant smell.

With those things, every deep-sky fleet was a small, self-sufficient entity that could fight for years even without supplies. “Deep-sky” meant the ability to march beyond the sky to explore, fight, and conquer independently.

In many cases, it was impossible for the rear to observe what the deep-sky fleets were doing at the frontline all the time, and even if they did catch what the fleets were doing, there was little they could do to top those fleets.

More importantly, the deep-sky fleets were not directly controlled by the four Kurfürst families.

The Imperium was simply too huge. The vastness of the universe resulted in the terrible difficulty of a central government. Just like the emperor could not control the entire Imperium completely, the four Kurfürst families were unable to do so too.

At this moment, of the hundreds of fleets in the frontline, only half were direct subordinates of the four Kurfürst families, whereas the rest came from the peripheral worlds of the Imperium that were relatively independent.

Although a base had been established to coordinate all the fleets, the real controllers of the fleets were in fact the Sector Masters of the peripheral worlds, who were all disobedient and ravenous warlords.

Those warlords were often happy to see the radical behaviors of the young officers under their command.

After all, one more resource planet that they secured would mean one more accomplishment for the warlords themselves.

Also, before other people arrived, they could still loot the newly-recovered planets. Even if the Covenant Alliance had truly burned everything to the ground, some garbage that was still of value could certainly be found as long as they were determined to.

For the warlords whose nests were thousands of lightyears away, they never thought to control the resource planets at the frontline for a long time since the very beginning. What they were thinking had always been to loot and run. Therefore, their behavior was even more blatant, and they were almost a bunch of bandits.

As to how the planets that were first burned to the ground by the Covenant Alliance and then completely looted by the troops of the Imperium should be dealt with, how the battle line that was stretched all the time should be defended, how to address the exponentially increasing pressure on logistics… Those problems were the worries of the base of the expedition army or the Council of Elders. The warlords did not care about any of that, and they simply returned with abundant military credits and medals “triumphantly”!

Thinking about that, Dongfang Tuo couldn’t help but agree with the officials’ comment on the ravenous soldiers in the frontline—they were truly a group of a*sholes!

Right then, the soul-stirring marching song was begun, and the quakes of the air and the ground were more and more intense. At the same time, the dense crowd, like a volcano eruption, roared at the loudest of their voice, “Long live the Imperium! Long live the army! Long live His Majesty! Long live the civilization of mankind!”

The victorious army showed up.

In the sky came the assault warships that looked like floating mountains. They drifted close like hundreds of clouds made of iron. On the ground, they were the fully-armored, awe-inspiring crystal suit legions, who approached the main avenue and the podium together with the magnificent drumming.

“Let’s conquer, Immortal Cultivators! Conquer the ghosts and the evils!

“Let’s reign, true human beings! Reign the dark and cold universe!

“As our warships sweep past the surging tides, the glory of the Imperium will shine forever!”

“Glorious Imperium! Glorious army!”

The battle anthem of the Imperium of True Human Beings echoed in the sky and on the ground together with the cheers of the people.

Chapter 2185 - Blood Oath Alliance of the Imperium’s Army!

Thud! Thud! Thud! Thud!

Guided by the rumbling, six-turreted super-heavy crystal tanks, known as “fists of the Imperium”, the fully-armed soldiers in crystal suits marched past the podium in neat rows.

For the soldiers who had just retreated from the battlefield, many had incomplete crystal suits, with bloodstains and dark grime still lingering on them.

But it only added to the intimidation of a battle-tested army.

“Long live the Imperium!”

When the soldiers of every square array passed the podium, they would take off their helmets, raise their proud heads and perform a standard “unity etiquette” by straightening their right arms and clenching their fists.

The head that was held high represented the pride of the civilization of mankind, the arm that was straightened forward symbolized the path of humanity, and the clenched fist stood for the solidarity of all the human beings in the three thousand Sectors. The “unity etiquette” which was decided by Blackstar the Great himself was the highest etiquette in the Imperium of True Human Beings as well as the formal military etiquette of the Imperium’s army.

The important officials on the podium returned the etiquette to the soldiers and said solemnly, “Long live the Imperium’s army!”

The assault warships that sailed past in midair slowly blew the cannons to present glamorous fireworks in the clouds, showing the respect of the soldiers on board for the elder of the Imperium.

Such triumph ceremonies had been held far too many times in the Green Wind Sector.

At this moment, while the passion of the crowd was not reduced at all, the important officials on the podium had already formed mechanical reactions.

Dongfang Tuo, an elder of the Imperium, while performing the “unity etiquette” and roaring “long live the Imperium’s army”, stared at the troops that passed by in high spirits before them gravely and considered how much money would be spent on the regrouping, maintenance, and refilling of those troops as well as the treatment for the wounded Immortal Cultivators and the compensation for the sacrificed soldiers.

The elder of the Imperium felt that his heart was aching every time one more “zero” popped up in his head.

Dwelling in the world of numbers, Dongfang Tuo did not realize that the atmosphere was getting weird.

Although the triumph team that was slowly walking past the podium was emitting the distinctive scent of killing, it did not raise the attention of anyone. They were a troop that had just returned from the frontline after bloody battles. To show off their accomplishments, many of them did not even wipe the bloodstains on their crystal suits, and repugnant smoke was still rising from the gaps of their weapons. It was quite normal that they had the killing vibe. In fact, it would be strange if they did not.

It was not until ominous noises echoed from the midair, mixed with the scratches of metal scratches and explosions, that Dongfang Tuo finally realized something was not right.

When he raised his head, the elder of the Imperium was so astounded that his blood was almost frozen.

Above the podium, in the fleet of the assault warships that were passing by slowly, one of the assault warships had changed the direction and dove at the podium!

To let the people feel the “glory” of the Imperium’s army, the air troop that participated in the triumph ceremony consisted of the assault warships that could take off or land vertically, fly at a low altitude, and boast a high attack ability against ground targets.

Such airborne fortresses nicknamed as “ball lightning” were truly like countless balls of lightning being condensed. When they unleashed the most terrifying electric arcs, it was definitely a nightmare for any target on the ground!

The metal explosions just now, on the other hand, were the sounds that all the turrets and the honeycomb-type cabins were opened.

The cannons on board extended out of the gaps of the armor, like the sharp tusks of a beast that had just been bared. More than fifty firing points were glowing in fatal mystic rays at the same time!

“Slay the national thief and protect the Imperium!”

A devastating roar suddenly came from the square array that was striding past the podium. Dongfang Tuo looked at the source of the roar, only to discover that dozens of soldiers and bottom-level officers lunged at the podium like crazy devils with hideous faces, bloodshot eyes, and foams on their lips.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The assault warship opened fire while accelerating the dive. A hundred snakes of fiery bullets interwoven into the torrents of magma that drowned the entire podium immediately!

The podium was naturally surrounded by defense rune arrays.

However, as the counterattack pushed forward in the past decade, the Green Wind Sector was sort of the Imperium’s rear right now, and it was thousands of lightyears from the frontline of the war.

In the past few years, the Covenant Alliance had never performed any large-scale attack, which made the defense of the place sloppier and sloppier after each day. Besides, even the most whimsical person wouldn’t have thought that the Covenant Alliance would attack such a tiny podium!

As one of the five hundred elders of the Imperium, the CEO of the Imperial Expedition Bank, and a big shot of the Dongfang family, Dongfang Tuo naturally had an immeasurable level. He was an experienced expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage.

However, he was a specialist in finance and economics and a pure research-type Immortal Cultivator. His entire Cultivation had been dedicated to his brain and turned into all the formulas and algorithms. Besides, having lived for almost four hundred years, he was now old and weary and would be no match for a common battle-type expert in the Nascent Soul Stage in terms of combat ability.

The assault warship had obviously been planning for it for a long time. After the crazy bombardment, the defense shield of the podium was shattered like glass. All the important officials of the government and the military there were swept over. Dongfang Tuo, as the primary target of the enemy who shouldered all the barrages, was so heavily wounded on the spot that his guts were running out.

It all happened too fast. In the meantime, dozens of crazy soldiers had dashed onto the podium, which was now already a mess.

Dongfang Tuo and the officials naturally brought a lot of guards with them. Also, many of the officials were themselves experts at battle skills. They were immediately engaged in a fierce fight with the crazy soldiers.

However, the crazy soldiers were all determined to die together with the enemy. They had hidden tremendous crystal bombs in their crystal suits, and whenever they were stopped, they would immediately activate the crystal bombs and be blown into pieces together with their stoppers under the roars of “long live the Imperium”.

The assault warship in the air was diving at a higher and higher speed and showed no intention of stopping at all. It appeared to be determined to crash into the podium!

In the capital of the Green Wind Sector, almost a million people had gathered around for the triumph ceremony.

The abrupt change immediately overwhelmed all the people. Everybody was running in panic and tears.

The supposedly magnificent battle anthem of the Imperium was also disrupted by the explosions on the podium and the cries of the crowd.

At this moment, the soldiers from quite a few other squares also left the group and squeezed into the crowd, tossing a tremendous amount of flyers at the same time.

On the assault warship that was accelerating the dive, a tremendous amount of flyers were tossed out, falling above the heads of the million people like snowflakes.

The so-called flyers were a kind of small, thin paper slips that were painted with many words to disseminate certain news or illustrate a certain idea.

In the present day when the Spiritual Nexus had covered the entire universe and everybody could trigger dozens of light beams easily at any minute with their mini crystal processor, such an obsolete notion as “flyer” had been erased from the heads of a lot of people.

Many people had never seen a flyer. They had never even heard of such a clumsy, outdated, and slow way of information dissemination before.

However, under certain special circumstances, “outdated” and “advanced” might be reversed.

The authorities of the Imperium had abundant experience in dealing with the riots, the large-scale demonstrations, and the rumors on the Spiritual Nexus.

If the rebels were promoting the recalcitrant ideas through the Spiritual Nexus, the authorities of the Imperium could cut the dissemination of the “virus” within a minute and trace it back to the source, until all the marks were cleaned.

In the most extreme case, the entire network could be paralyzed, and nobody would be able to send a single word.

However, the millions of flyers that were thrown away were not so easy to be stopped and destroyed.

Many panicked people somehow picked the flyers from the sky while they were running away.

When they observed carefully, they found a big, shocking title on the crimson little paper.

“CRUSADE!”

Then, it was a declaration that was teeming with iron and smoke.

“Slay the national thief. Protect the Imperium!”

Then, it was narrated in a very reader-friendly way, if not the unrefined tone of the uneducated soldiers, that the brave and fearless soldiers of the Imperium were fighting through bloody battles in the frontline, hoping to seize greater glories for the Imperium, for their patriots and for the civilization of mankind. But while they were devoting themselves and risking their lives in the front, there was a bunch of national thieves and fat rats in the rear, who secretly intercepted the supplies that were supposed to be delivered to the frontline, replaced them with inferior goods, and made a fortune by selling the original supplies. They were simply watching the precious blood of the men of the Imperium to be shed for nothing, and they were the greatest obstacles for the Imperium to recover the three thousand Sectors.

Among them, Dongfang Tuo, the CEO of the Imperial Expedition Bank and the manager of the logistics of the expedition army, was the fattest rat of all.

It was exactly because of his inactions and even hamstringing in the delivery of supplies that the invincible army of the Imperium suffered multiple setbacks and a lot of soldiers died for nothing.

To make things worse, the patriotic soldiers in the frontline had received confirmed news that Dongfang Tuo was a shameless capitulator who was planning to negotiate peace with the Covenant Alliance and stop the war by force!

“The invincible light of the Imperium’s army has radiated to the entire universe. The most sacred war of mankind has been pushed to the most critical point. One little step ahead, and we will conquer the entire universe! Whoever asks for a truce at such a moment will be buying the time of rest for the enemy. They are the most shameless traitors of the Imperium and the civilization of mankind!”

The flyers said as such.

With that in mind, the patriotic soldiers in the frontline who knew the actual situation had been united and formed an alliance through blood oaths. They were determined to execute the traitors and the thieves to defend the Imperium even at the cost of their own lives or being cursed as “rebels”. They wanted to see the end of the sacred war and fight until the Covenant Alliance did not have a single habitable planet left!

“We will not stop the war until the blood of the last person of the Covenant Alliance runs dry!”

At the bottom, the signature was “Blood Oath Alliance of the Imperium’s Army”!

Chapter 2186 - Shocking Tide!

The local guards of the Green Wind Sector finally came.

But at this moment, the turmoil of the million people was already beyond any measure.

The assassins of the Blood Oath Alliance, although not all involved in the scheme, were still expanding the chaos intentionally or unintentionally to disrupt the reactions of the local guards under the stimulation of more than ten years of life-and-death comradeship.

“No one from the logistics department is a good guy!”

“It is exactly because of the sloppiness of supplies that we failed to make greater accomplishments in the war!”

“The soldiers in the frontline are all good guys. The officials at the back are all idiots!”

It was almost a consensus of all the troops in the frontline.

Even the troops that were directly under the commander of the four Kurfürst families would think so intuitively after a decade of bloody battles.

By the time the exasperated local guards finally rushed to the podium, the assault warships that were obviously determined to die together with the enemy had already crashed into it.

While the anti-air magical equipment could leave thousands of holes on the assault warship, it was impossible to completely obliterate the metals weighing almost ten thousand tons.

The broken, burning assault warship smashed on the podium like a shrieking shooting star. The blast blew the soldiers who came for aid to almost a hundred meters away. They could see nothing anymore in the middle of the rising flames and smoke!

To this moment, Dongfang Tuo, the elder of the Imperium, had not died yet.

His loyal personal guards were all blocking the assassins on the podium. Some of them even exhausted their lives and weaved powerful defense shields with their souls and spiritual energy, helping the elder of the Imperium to resist the damage caused by the collision of the assault warship.

“Protect the elder. Get the elder out of here now!”

A team of local guards of the Green Wind Sector escorted Dongfang Tuo, who had been heavily wounded, to leave the area.

They patted a piece of oval-shaped magical equipment on their waists, and a translucent, arc-shaped shield appeared behind each and every one of them. When ten or so shields overlapped, they sheltered Dongfang Tuo without a single gap, like a solid turtle shell.

Before that, however, one of the flyers drifted and found its way through the shields onto Dongfang Tuo’s face.

Dongfang Tuo managed to raise his head on the floating stretcher and concentrate his attention on the content of the flyer despite his wounds. He was already infuriated, with his face pale and blood flowing out of his mouth, when he was only halfway through it.

“Those a*sholes are truly insubordinate and lawless!”

The elder of the Imperium gnashed his teeth. “The army… has been infiltrated to such an extent. It’s really… It’s really—”

Before he was able to finish his remark, he heard the thick and disordered panting behind him.

Slightly stunned, he turned around, only to discover that a local guard of the Green Wind Sector was staring at him. The man was also sweating hard with bloodshot eyes and nervously cramping lips.

Dongfang Tuo’s pupils immediately constricted to the size of needles. “… Wait. This is not true!”

“Slay the national thief and protect the Imperium!”

The local guard of the Green Wind Sector roared and ripped apart his own crystal suit brutally, revealing the terrifying body below where most of his internal organs had been replaced by destructive crystal bombs through surgeries. He lunged at Dongfang Tuo and embraced the elder of the Imperium tightly before the rest of the soldiers realized what was going on.

“Long live the Imperium!”

The guard laughed and shouted desperately.

BOOM!

A dazzling crimson fireball burst out from within the halo of spiritual shields. Dongfang Huo, who had been heavily wounded in the first place, was killed on the spot.

The enemy’s crystal bombs seemed to have adopted unique designs and very sordid formulas that targeted the soul.

When the situation was finally under control, and the local guards sent Dongfang Tuo’s broken, burnt body to the hospital for resuscitation, it was already impossible to rescue a single part of his soul. The man had been completely obliterated.

It was exactly “Incident of the Blood Oath Alliance” that took place three days ago, and this would soon shock the entire Imperium.

The vast Imperium of True Human Beings included hundreds of Sectors, but there were only five hundred elders in total in the entire territory.

It was not hard to imagine the position and the value of every elder of the Imperium.

Before, cases were not rare where assassins from the Covenant Alliance tried to kill the elders of the Imperium.

However, it was indeed an unprecedented event since the establishment of the Imperium that an elder of the Imperium was assassinated by his own army in broad daylight in a triumph ceremony under the witness of a million people.

Although the crystal bomb embedded in the member of the Blood Oath Alliance only blossomed for 0.5 seconds, the blast it raised did not stop there at all. After it killed Dongfang Tuo, it spread out at a speed faster than light in the entire Imperium, causing heated reactions in all the worlds, forces, fleets, sects, and planets.

Three days later, the blast rendered the bridge of Dragon Abyss, the flagship of the Deep Sea Fleet, into dead silence. Queen Li Linghai stared at the intelligence on the light beam, unable to say anything for a long time.

“How did this happen? It essentially disrupted my whole plan. The reformists have been pushed to the center of attention and on the verge of doom!”

Li Linghai’s fury almost burned several holes on the light beam. Then, she began to stare at Li Yao who was standing next to her.

“This really has nothing to do with me,” Li Yao shrugged and said.

Pausing for a moment, he said again, “Was it not done by your people? The slogan of this Blood Oath Alliance sounds a lot similar to the ideas of the reformists!”

“Of course not. We have not been prepared to completely declare war on the four Kurfürst families. Why would we do such a serious thing as to assassinate an elder of the Imperium?”

Narrowing her eyes, Li Linghai gnashed her teeth angrily. “The Blood Oath Alliance is a radical organization established by the young officers in the frontline spontaneously. There are a lot of similar organizations in the dozens of Sectors in the frontline, such as ‘True Dragon Union’, ‘Pioneers’ Society’, etc. Just like what I said a few days ago, they are the products of the infuriated young officers who cannot see any light in their future and who have a strong sense of injustice.

“The Blood Oath Alliance, on the other hand, is the most radical and extreme one of all the organizations of the young officers.

“In fact, I actually thought to regroup the organizations of the young officers and unite all of them before.

“However, things are often particularly sensitive in the army. With swords, sabers, guns, starships, and crystal suits in their hands, the young officers might’ve caused irreversible trouble in their passion. So, our infiltration in the army has always been particularly prudent. The best we did was to exchange the ideas of the reformists with the young officers. Our talks were all very subtle, and we never asked them to organize such an intense assassination operation!

“This is great. The entire Council of Elders will burst into fury because of the assassination. Although the Blood Oath Alliance will certainly be uprooted under the thunderous strike of the Council of Elders, the other organizations of young officers and the forces under the influence of the reformists will certainly take a great hit at the same time. Our cause will suffer a heavy blow!

“The strategy we had in mind earlier, which was to hide and call for supporters in secret until the time was appropriate, is absolutely infeasible right now!”

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao asked, “Is this Dongfang Tuo so important?”

“Of course he is!”

Li Linghai’s voice was mixed with ice right now. “He was one of the most important persons in the Dongfang family and had a huge influence in the finance and economics of the Imperium. He was also the CEO of the Imperial Expedition

Bank, which is responsible for more than 50% of the military assets in the Imperium’s counterattack this time. Furthermore, he was personally responsible for the logistics affairs in the base of the expedition army, and astronomical money and resources slipped through his fingers every day. Was he not important?

“However, the manager of logistics in the expedition army is also a hot potato which has a lot of thorns in it. A lot of people hated Dongfang Tuo after he managed the supplies and logistics for so many years.”

Li Yao did not understand the subtleties in it until Li Linghai’s careful explanation.

This time, the Imperium of True Human Beings had launched a counterattack at the Alliance of the Holy Covenant with the power of the entire country. Naturally, the supplies that the overwhelming fleets and legions consumed every day were a terrifying number.

So many military assets could not be provided by any single Sector but required the joint efforts of all the worlds, in order to support the army’s battles in the frontline.

Then came the question. Different worlds had a different reserve of resources and a different view on the war. They also had different estimations about how many benefits they could earn through the war. So, it was a very subtle art to collect enough resources from those Sectors.

Offering all the resources of one’s own Sector dutifully to help the Imperium win the war only to watch other people claim all the advantages was certainly not something that any Sector Master or warlord was willing to do.

“Our world has supplied so many resources to the frontline, but my fleets in the frontline are often not fed. They are so hungry that they are almost licking the rust on the screws. Still, they have to carry out the most arduous battle missions. The troops that are directly under the command of the four Kurfürst families, on the other hand, are happy and healthy every day. Have my resources been fed to those pieces of crap?”

The warlords and the Sector Masters from the peripheral worlds sometimes had such complaints.

Honestly speaking, it was not necessarily true that Dongfang Huo had secretly stolen the resources of the peripheral worlds and supplied them to the fleets of the four Kurfürst families.

However, since astronomical military assets must be organized and distributed every day, it was simply too difficult to supply a fleet of a certain world exactly with the resources collected from the world.

Besides, for the warlords and the Sector Masters of many peripheral worlds, it did not matter at all what the truth was. They were only trying to get more benefits for their fleets with their tough stance.

While the Imperium was vast and prosperous, the total quantity of resources was limited after all. As the battle line was stretched out, the distribution of resources for the fleets in the frontline became more and more troublesome.

No matter how they were distributed, some fleets were always dissatisfied. They believed that “worms in logistics” such as Dongfang Tuo was intentionally giving them a hard time and therefore grew deeply resentful for the elder of the Imperium.

Therefore, the truth about the Blood Oath Alliance’s assassination was still hidden in the mist. There was no telling what it was exactly yet!

Chapter 2188 - Elements of the Reformists

After the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance, the “Deep Sea Palace”, the base of the reformists, began to function at a high speed like a fully-wound machine.

In the three days that followed, Li Linghai was busy handling complicated information and didn’t show up before Li Yao and Li Jialing.

Li Yao and Li Jialing, on the other hand, did not idle by either. They modified and tested crystal suits together with Master Jin Tianzong. Li Linghai wanted them to improve the stealth abilities of a batch of advanced crystal suits significantly. It seemed that they would very likely carry out a secret infiltration mission in the so-called wild gamble.

Three days later, in the deepest part of the Deep Sea Palace and led by Li Linghai, Li Yao walked into a sphere-shaped secret chamber that was as huge as a pavilion.

The secret room was more than a hundred meters in diameter. Drifting at the center of the room on the floating discs, Li Yao and Li Linghai were like two ants that had crawled into an enormous iron ball.

Dim light flashed on the dark wall around and congregated into colorful swirls now and then, which were as dazzling as kaleidoscopes.

According to Li Linghai, the secret chamber was a facility left from the Star Ocean Imperium. It was the core of the entire star fortress and a very powerful communication room.

Through the communication room, she could communicate with her subordinates everywhere in the universe without worrying that the Spiritual Nexus might be monitored or compromised.

Even if somebody wanted to intercept the content of their communication, what they could catch would only be twisted, meaningless code. It was even impossible to lock onto the coordinates of the two parties in the communication. No method of communication could have been safer.

It was exactly because of the discovery of such a powerful communication room that Li Linghai gradually built the Deep Sea Palace into her nest.

When Li Yao and Li Linghai slowly walked into the communication room, there were already ten magnificent, handsome officers with earnest eyes who were wearing the old military uniforms from when the Imperium of True Human Beings was just founded a thousand years ago.

Seeing that Li Linghai arrived, they all stood at attention and performed the most standard unity etiquette to the queen of the Imperium, before they said at the same time, “Long live the Imperium!”

Li Linghai and Li Yao raised their right arms and returned the etiquette.

This was the first time that Li Yao had performed the unity etiquette of the Imperium of True Human Beings solemnly. He then recalled that Li Linghai promised that she would nominate him as an elder of the Imperium the other day. He couldn’t help but feel funny and absurd.

He did not try to cover his uneasiness either. After all, Li Linghai knew his background very well. He would only raise suspicions if his attitude changed too fast.

After the unity etiquette was done, many people looked at Li Yao coldly.

The officers wearing the old military uniforms of the Imperium were naturally the leadership team of the Deep Sea Fleet, who craved to restore the glory of the Imperium in the old days.

Li Yao met some of them a few days ago, including Tu Zhengdao, the deputy leader of the Deep Sea Legion, who had tested crystal suits with him many times and was convinced by his expertise in both fighting and refining.

They were well aware of Li Yao’s professionalism in the arts of refining.

Even Master Jin Tianzong, director of magical equipment in the Deep Sea Fleet, admitted in person that, leaving theories aside, Li Yao’s skills were better than his in terms of practical maintenance and adjustment.

Besides, this “Vulture” was allegedly a trusted subordinate that Her Grace had raised in secret. His future was nothing but promising, considering that he was now the queen’s personal bodyguard and magical equipment consultant.

Therefore, many of them simply retreated their eyes after glancing at Li Yao and nodded in respect.

As for the other officers, Li Yao had never seen them before, but he had heard their names a lot of times.

The most important one of them all was naturally Dongfang Sheng, the highest commander of the Deep Sea Fleet.

From the surname, it could easily be told that Dongfang Sheng was from the Dongfang family, one of the four Kurfürst families. He shared the same family lineage with Dongfang Tuo, the former elder of the Imperium who had just met his demise.

However, just like Wuying Lan, who was technically a member of the royal family but received no attention at all because he was from a secondary branch, a lot of descendants of secondary branches who were as insignificant as dust, grass, and ants could also be found in the Dongfang family, which had also lasted more than a thousand years with a population of more than a hundred thousand.

The fate of the secondary descendants was even more miserable than the outsiders because they were the victims that the proud descendants of the main bloodline could reach and bully most easily.

Also, as members of the Dongfang family, it was expected that they shed the last drop of blood for the service of the family, and at the slightest disobedience, they would be punished by family rules that were a hundred times crueler than the law.

The outsiders could always escape. Those “members of the family”, however, were destined to be the most dutiful sacrifices of the family. They had nowhere to run to at all.

Theoretically speaking, the secondary branches of the family, after showing distinctive talents in training, would be appreciated by the big shots of the family, distinguish themselves, and march all the way to the leadership of the family.

But it was still just “theoretically”.

The weak stayed weak, and the strong would be forever strong. For the secondary descendants who lacked resources since the very beginning, it was certainly not an easy task to distinguish themselves in the cruel competitions within the family. Besides, if they wanted to distinguish themselves, they would have to stomp on somebody else in certain competitions and tests.

If they happened to stomp on the head of a beloved disciple of a big shot or a descendent of the eminent main bloodline, it was inevitable that they would be hated by those who failed. Those people had ten thousand ways to exterminate the hope of the ambitious secondary descendants.

There was no need to elaborate on Dongfang Sheng’s story. It was just one where a secondary descendant craved to climb upward, only to piss off somebody he shouldn’t have by accident. As a result, he was framed and even almost murdered. Unwilling to give in, he launched a counterattack and broke out of the siege, ending his relationship with the family on bad terms. That was basically everything.

When Li Yao heard the name of “Dongfang Sheng” for the first time, he was rather surprised by Li Linghai’s confidence to have appointed an officer from the Dongfang family to govern the entire Deep Sea Fleet.

However, after he learned that Dongfang Sheng had killed hundreds of descendants of the main bloodline of the Dongfang family, blown up a warehouse of crystals, and even executed an elder of the Dongfang family before he finally escaped and that he remained the “traitor” of the

Dongfang family with the highest bounty on his head after decades, Li Yao completely shut his mouth.

He was particularly astounded to know that Dongfang Sheng’s bounty by the Dongfang family was twice as much as the bounty on Li Yao offered by the authorities of the Imperium after he destroyed “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”.

It would be the first clue of the man’s dominance and his determination to challenge the family.

Li Yao and Dongfang Sheng looked at each other, and sensing each other’s immeasurable strength, lowered their eyes in silence at the same time.

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

On the arc-shaped wall around, the colorful swirls grew more and more intense and soon congregated into a fuzzy figure that was projected to the middle of everybody, turning into a hologram almost two meters tall.

It was a woman wearing a black cape, on which hideous runes that were as twisted as earthworms had been sewed with dark gold threads. Her entire face was hidden below the hood, and her back was slightly hunched, giving an extremely weird air.

Li Yao was somewhat alarmed. He knew that the woman who was far away in the capital of the Imperium and only manifested remotely through the Spiritual Nexus was the leader of the “Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils”, an assassination, sabotage, and intelligence agency under Li Linghai’s command. Her name was “Yue Wushuang”.

As the saying went, “when you are staring at the abyss, the abyss is staring at you too”.

The devil huntresses of the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils, during the thousand years of battles against the extraterrestrial devils, had also absorbed brand-new techniques from the extraterrestrial devils. They were even infiltrated and corrupted by the extraterrestrial devils again and again before they were treated and purged. In the end, while they had annihilated countless extraterrestrial devils, they were mixed with the devilish air that they could not get rid of.

Of all the special forces of the Imperium of True Human Beings, the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils was the most mysterious, dark, and cold one.

Many of their techniques were even performed with the strength of the extraterrestrial devils. When they burned their lives and souls to the maximum, they were no different from the extraterrestrial devils themselves.

It was also the reason why many elders of the Imperium intended to remove the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils and even kill all the devil huntresses because there was simply no telling whether they were humans or devils.

The only thing that could control the devil huntresses, or the “devils”, making them defend the Imperium in the darkness and slash their sabers at the extraterrestrial devils, was their infinite loyalty to the emperor.

Therefore, when the noble lords in the capital mentioned the leader of the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils in disdain occasionally, they would often address Yue Wushuang by another name—Moon Devil.

Li Linghai spared no effort reminding Li Yao that “Moon Devil” Yue Wushuang was an extremely dangerous person. Although she was “only” at the high level of the Divinity Transformation Stage, countless terrifying techniques originating from the extraterrestrial devils were hidden inside her seemingly weak body, which could allow her to kill other Divinity Transformation Stage experts of the same level easily. She was also particularly good at stealth and tracking.

In other words, if Li Yao were to duel with “Moon Devil” Yue Wushuang, it was possible that he would have nowhere to run to even if he wanted to.

As an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage, she certainly had her own beliefs and goals and would not work for anyone else easily. Li Linghai only managed to recruit “Moon Devil” Yue Wushuang by promising to expand the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils and make it the “First Agency” to monitor the Imperium.

Yue Wushuang, Dongfang Sheng, Jin Tianzong, and even Li Yao were all extraordinary people in the Divinity Transformation Stage. They could not be simply regarded as Li Linghai’s subordinates.

They were all fellow Cultivators who shared the same goal and made up the team of “reformists” together.

Therefore, even Li Linghai had to show enough respect to them.

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

On the opposite side of “Moon Devil” Yue Wushuang, a second hologram was projected and condensed into a tall, slim, smiling man in glamorous clothes, who gave Li Yao exactly the same feeling as Di Feiwen, the deputy commander of the Deep Sea Fleet, did.

As he expected, the moment he saw the emblem on the man’s chest, which was a pattern of nine overlapping coins, Li Yao realized that the man was Jin Yuyan, the highest director of the Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors.

Chapter 2189 - Rise In Hopelessness!

The Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors was merely a commercial group made of the small merchants and carrier fleets at the vast space in the border of the Imperium of True Human Beings for them to communicate with and warm up each other at the beginning.

However, businesses could never be separated from politics.

Only by grasping the power in politics and the fundamental armed forces could the interests in business be claimed and defended as much as possible.

Money had the highest charm and unparalleled techniques by nature. The Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors realized the logic soon after it was born. Extending its weak tentacles to the swirls of power at the peripheral worlds of the Imperium without caring about the cost, it raised distinctive representatives such as “Di Feiwen”.

But at that time, the Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors was still young and weak, and it was unable to compete with the monopolies under the four Kurfürst families at all.

Today, the situation was different.

When Li Linghai and the Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors met, they immediately realized each other’s value.

In only decades, both parties had risen by helping each other.

The Imperium’s counterattack in the past ten years also gave the best opportunity for the explosive development of the Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors.

In a war, the daily consumptions could be astronomical, but it was also a great chance to make a fortune.

In the Imperium today, the local warlords were all rising. The so-called “army of the Imperium” was made of the fleets from hundreds of worlds that were highly independent of each other.

The only method through which the base of the expedition army could check the local warlords and the miscellaneous troops was the supplies.

The food, the ammunition, and the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures formed the throat. As long as their throat was choked, even the most disobedient local warlord had to obey the orders of the base of the expedition army, not having any courage to move recklessly.

The local warlords and the miscellaneous troops, on the other hand, were certainly unwilling to be manipulated by the four Kurfürst families as sabers to attack the hardest bone that was the Covenant Alliance.

In order to achieve greater independence, they had to find a new source of supplies aside from the base of the expedition army.

At the very least, while the warlords were willing to obey the orders from the base of the expedition army 95% of the time, they wanted to be able to gather enough military facilities, ammunition, and supplies when they acted on their own and launch “active attacks” without orders from the base of the expedition army “for the glory of the Imperium”.

Of course, the warlords were not going through the trouble for nothing. After they “recovered” a planet, they would loot everything on it until nothing was left behind.

Then, there was no reason to deliver the tremendous resources that they exploited to their nest through the base of the expedition army, which would be like feeding a lamb to a tiger, right?

In that case, a carrier fleet of a fairly large scale, made up by the boldest desperadoes, which was in the same bundle of interests together with the local warlords and miscellaneous troops, was required so that the war supplies could be delivered to them from the rear in secret, and the trophies could be shipped to their home while bypassing the base of the expedition army.

Who else could play such a role except for the Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors?

Therefore, during the Imperium’s counterattack in the past ten years, the Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors and the local warlords at the periphery of the Imperium were in a quite heated relationship.

To put it more simply, the Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors would gather the money and resources of the new businessman class at the peripheral worlds of the Imperium in the forms such as secret war bonds to support the adventures and lootings of the warlords in the frontline. The trophies after the lootings would be divided by them evenly.

It was not hard to imagine how deep their cooperation was after more than ten years.

The Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors, after winning the trust of the local warlords and miscellaneous troops, even created such a business. They could help the local warlords to secretly transport the main-force warships that had the best engines, the fiercest firepower, and the thickest plate form to their hometown, while they reported to the base of the expedition army that the starship had been seriously damaged in a fierce battle and completely obliterated in an explosion.

In such a way, the local warlords would be able to preserve their strength and demand more benefits from the base of the expedition army.

Having done so many clandestine things for the local warlords, the Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors naturally grasped abundant secrets too, and it became an effective source of intelligence for Li Linghai.

Also, in many occasions, when the troops of the warlords from remote Sectors did not have enough supplies and did not want to beg the base of the expedition army, they would exchange the trophies they just earned with other warlords' troops.

The business was also organized by the Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors.

At first, it was only for emergencies. But as the expedition army of the Imperium recovered more and more worlds, the trophies in the pockets of the local warlords got more and more copious too, and the scale of the business grew larger and larger. Eventually, the troops were almost self-sufficient in the war.

The control of the army boiled down to the control of personnel and the control of finance.

After more than ten years of infiltration and planning, the Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors had partly helped the local warlords to get rid of the control of finance from the base of the expedition army and win greater independence.

Also, in the frequent trades, the warlords who were scattered in different parts of the universe and not familiar with each other learned each other’s existence, established a solid bond of interests, and even vaguely realized the great power once they were united!

Therefore, Jin Yuyan, director of the Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors, was certainly an important contributor to the “reformists”.

If Li Linghai’s ambitions of reform did come true, Jin Yuyan was even very likely to become the First Finance Minister of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

Different from “Moon Devil” Yue Wushuang, the taciturn head of special agents surrounded by black fog, the future finance minister of the Imperium simply nodded at everyone with a smile.

He showed no unnaturalness at all even though it was the first time he met Li Yao who seemed rather young, as if he had been working with Li Yao for many years. His demeanor was unquestionable and gave the feeling of comfort and ease.

Hardly had Jin Yuyan greeted everyone when another ten or so blurred and lackluster shadows appeared around, who were all the core members of the reformists in the fields of military, politics, economy, and many other fields.

Li Yao realized that the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance indeed affected the reformists greatly and pushed Li Linghai and the rest of them into such desperation that they had to take action now. Otherwise, it was impossible for the big shots of the reformists to show up and gather in the same room for a meeting.

“Alright. All the fellow Cultivators are here. We may begin now.”

Li Linghai flew to the middle of everyone, some real and some illusionary, on the floating disc. There was not the slightest panic or anxiety on her face. When she glanced around slowly, she seemed to have ignited everyone’s belief again.

She did not regard herself as the queen of the Imperium when she called the big shots of the reformists as “fellow Cultivators”. It was obvious that she considered them her comrades who shared the same purpose as her.

“I have sent detailed information about the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance to the virtual light beam before you. For us, it is indeed an unexpected event with dire consequences that has pushed our cause to the brink of a bottomless abyss.”

Li Linghai was rather straightforward and did not conceal the influence of the Blood Oath Alliance’s assassination at all. Changing the topic, she said, “However, the power of the reformists far exceeds the imagination of our enemy. We will not quit halfway or just wait to be killed!

“Great people who are determined to renew the Imperium have been joining us incessantly. Our strength grows bigger each day.

“Before our meeting officially begins, allow me to introduce Fellow Cultivator Li Yao to you.

“Fellow Cultivator Li has been fighting by my side since decades ago for the most secret and arduous missions. Not only is he in the Divinity Transformation Stage, but he also boasts rarely-seen dual talents both in fighting and creation. He is an excellent master of refining.

“Before, he has been safeguarding our cause in secret and paid a lot for that, to the point that he is never known in the Imperium although he is in the Divinity Transformation Stage.

“But today, when our cause is at the most perilous moment, I have to ask Fellow Cultivator Li to surface and work as my personal bodyguard and magical equipment consultant for now. He will work with us through the difficulties and let our enemy pay the most gory prices!”

Expressionlessly, Li Yao flew to Li Linghai’s side and nodded at everyone.

“Huh?”

Many of the big shots of the reformists who showed up last had never heard of the name Li Yao before.

However, they knew very clearly the value of an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage who was adept at both fighting and refining.

Seeing that Li Yao was standing so close to Li Linghai, they were also fully aware that he was the queen’s trusted subordinate.

Having taken out a Divinity Transformation Stage expert from her pocket casually, the queen was truly immeasurable. Who knew if she had more spies that nobody else knew lurking at the critical parts of the Imperium?

Many of the reformists who were somewhat panicked and at a loss because of the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance found themselves calming down.

It was exactly the effect that Li Linghai wanted. With a smile, she said, “Rest assured, everybody. There are many pure Immortal Cultivators who hold infinite love for the Imperium and loyalty to His Majesty. As long as the time is ripe, they will all rise!”

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao forced himself not to burst into laughter. He found that Li Linghai did boast a quirky sense of humor.

“Then, let’s begin our discussion now.”

Li Linghai retreated her smile and bulged her eyes, with intense determination beaming out of her almost transparent pupils. “How can we rise from the hopelessly dangerous situation and fight a bloody way out of it?”

Chapter 2190 - You Are Dead

On the light beam before Li Yao, the intelligence of the last few days was poured out like a waterfall, including the pictures captured in secret by the devil huntresses of the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils from the streets and valleys of the capital.

From the shaky pictures, it could be seen that the entire capital had entered a half emergence state. The sky was teeming with the assault warships that were painted with the lightning trident emblem of the Imperium of True Human Beings and the emblems of the four Kurfürst families. Now and then, the supersonic armed shuttles would swarm by like bees. The crystal suit legions with the emblems of the four Kurfürst families had also been deployed in the critical parts, as if a great enemy was coming near.

After the assassination of the Blood Oath Alliance, the four Kurfürst families, especially the Dongfang family, to which the victim Dongfang Tuo belonged, responded so quickly that it was almost suspicious. They made tough countermeasures almost as fast as lightning.

The Council of Elders wasted no time defining the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance as a shameless, sordid betrayal of the country. A special investigation committee was also established and authorized with the terrifying power to make rulings on its own and execute whoever put up any resistance.

Then, the most elite private troops were mobilized from the fiefs of the families to the special investigation committee as the sharp sword of the investigators.

In the next moment, the special investigation committee began to search for and capture the “accomplices of the Blood Oath Alliance” in the entire capital while waving the bloodthirsty sword.

In only a couple of days, thousands of renowned people from various fields in the Imperium had been captured with “direct proof”, and a hundred times more had been invited to “help with the investigation”.

As a result, everybody in the capital was mired in uncanny horror.

“The Blood Oath Alliance is a very simple fraternity of young, bottom-level officers in the frontline, established spontaneously by them when they see no hope of rising. It has nothing to do with any of the eminent forces in the capital. Even we were only guiding them indirectly and offering them some help occasionally. We have absolutely no direct link to them.”

“Moon Devil” Yue Wushuang, leader of the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils, had a voice that was even colder and gloomier than the queen’s. Her image was before Li Yao, and yet her voice seemed to be blowing from the back of Li Yao’s neck in a cold breeze. “It is highly unusual that the Council of Elders established a special investigation committee so quickly, armed it with the best family troops, and captured so many people as if they had everything planned earlier!

“Please take a look at the name list of the people that the investigation committee has captured and ‘invited for investigation’. Most of them have nothing to do with the army and are not connected to the young officers of the Blood Oath Alliance whatsoever. Instead, they are the wise people in various fields of the Imperium who generally oppose the monopoly of the four Kurfürst families and who propose to improve the power of the emperor and the peripheral worlds. They are all people who are likely to agree, or at least sympathize, with the ideas of the reformists.

“In short, they are all the political enemies of the four Kurfürst families.

“Of course, a lot of them truly belong to the reformists and have been contributing to our cause on various levels. Now that they have been captured or limited, our zone of activity in the capital has been greatly reduced with the additional restraints. They are also likely to leak our details.

“Although they do not know much, there is still a lot of them. If every one of them spits out part of the intelligence under interrogation, it will be possible for the four Kurfürst to figure out most of our trump cards.”

After Yue Wushuang was done, she closed her lips that were as sharp as saber edges and hid her face in the cape again.

“This is not an investigation; this is a setup and a purge!”

Li Linghai said coldly, “The smell of a plot is getting thicker and thicker. What are the four Kurfürst families trying to do exactly? Intimidate and strike the ministers, the nobles, and the warlords who are relatively independent at the peripheral worlds of the Imperium?

“Even though they might not be bold enough to execute all of the prisoners for non-existing crimes, they can always let the prisoners suffer and give them a warning so that those people will not go against them when they divide the dozens of newly-earned Sectors later. Do you think that is the case?

“Or… is it the more dreadful possibility? Are we the targets of the four Kurfürst families since the beginning, and they are trying to annihilate all the reformists with the opportunity?”

All the reformists took a deep breath.

“The intelligence from the frontline suggests so too.”

Jin Yuyan, director of the Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors, was as unmoved as before. He said casually, “Quite a few fleets from the peripheral worlds of the Imperium have been mobilized away from the defense areas where they were stationed for more than a year. They are deployed in completely strange space zones, surrounded by the dense fleets of the four Kurfürst families who are watching them closely.

“Unfortunately, of the fleets that are being watched in secret, quite a few have been infiltrated by us through great efforts. Many of the soldiers have accepted our ideas and will likely take our side once we declare war on the old regime.

“But right now, even if those fleets do join us, they will not be of much help. Besides, being heavily surrounded, it is impossible for them to join our cause without bothering anything.

“Also, our secret accounts in multiple banks of the Imperium were frozen almost at the same time. Many of the accounts shouldn’t have been involved at all. Does it suggest that the enemy has been watching us for a long time and done profound studies on us in secret?

“Also, according to the latest news that I have yet to confirm, the special investigation committee has begun the investigation on the troops in the frontline, and the first person that they invited for investigation is General Lei Chenghu.”

The name “Lei Chenghu” made the temperature in the secret communication room drop to zero. In the weird silence, Li Yao seemed to have sensed that everybody’s heart palpitated hard.

It appeared that this “Lei Chenghu” must be someone extremely important in the army of the Imperium.

Narrowing her eyes, Li Linghai looked ten times more intimidating than before. She said, one word after another, “The special investigation committee is bold enough to lay fingers on General Lei Chenghu? It seems that the storm sweeping across the universe is much more intense than our estimation. On what grounds did they invite General Lei for investigation?”

“General Lei has been invited for the investigation of the four damaged ‘volcano-level’ arsenal starships in the third branch fleet under his command.”

Jin Yuyan said, “Naturally, the four arsenal starships are not really damaged. They were shipped to their hometown in secret with our help, but they were reported to the base of the expedition army as completely broken in the war. It is a commonly-used trick.

“However, the four arsenal starships discovered by the inspectors were sent from the base of the expedition army in the middle of the transfer."

Li Linghai frowned and asked, "When did it happen?"

"Two days ago. But the sudden assault was very neat. We did not receive any message until this morning."

Jin Yuyan said, "It is obvious that the enemy did not run into them during the patrol by accident. They must've received precise intelligence and targeted exactly the four arsenal starships.

"A lot of people are involved in the issue. Not only will the Sector Master of the world that the four starships belong to be punished as a warning for other people, but General Lei Chenghu, the highest commander of the coalition fleet that they belong to, has also been invited for the investigation for a very absurd reason. The special investigation committee suspects that the four starships will be secretly transferred to the Blood Oath Alliance to contribute to betrayals of greater scales.

"Of course, our men who were responsible for the transfer of the four starships fell to the hands of the special investigation committee too. God knows how many secrets they are going to confess."

Closing her eyes, Li Linghai took a deep breath. "And General Lei left with the special investigation committee just like that?"

"Yes. We all know what kind of person General Lei Chenghu is."

Jin Yuyan was still smiling, but there was a hint of bitterness in it. "Now that the enemy has the authorization of the Council of Elders, even if they sent nobody but only an order, General Lei would’ve tied his own hands and entered the prison by himself.”

Li Linghai was silent for an entire minute before the brilliance in her eyes was condensed again. Looking around, she said, “Everyone, this is all the intelligence we have so far? Does anybody have any additional information? If not, I will draw the conclusion now.

“Taking all the intelligence into consideration, the incident is quite obvious now.

“The assassination of the Blood Oath Alliance is not a simple operation made by the radical officers from the frontline but a shameless scheme directed by the four Kurfürst families for the purpose of striking the reformists and eliminating all their political rivals in the capital and the army!

“The Blood Oath Alliance did not necessarily know the truth, but they must’ve been manipulated by the four Kurfürst families. There are two reasons.

“Firstly, it was impossible for the young, bottom-level officers, who had nothing but hot blood, to have infiltrated the Green Wind Sector to such an extent and to perform such a complicated assassination. If it wasn’t us who helped them, somebody else must’ve had!

“Secondly, in only three days, the situation in the capital and the frontline has been intensified to such a level that even General Lei Chenghu, the prestigious, extraordinary person in the army, has fallen into the hands of the enemy. It is evident enough of the four Kurfürst families’ determination, which couldn’t have been formed in only three days.

“So, fellow Cultivators, please abandon your illusions. What the Blood Oath Alliance did was not an accident but a plot carefully planned by the four Kurfürst families against all their political rivals, particularly the reformists, hoping to fish us up once and for all in a thunderous strike!

“I’m done. Please offer your opinion if you have any.”

Li Linghai bulged her colorless eyes and stared at everyone.

“Moon Devil” Yue Wushuang coughed lightly.

Li Linghai turned her head to the head of the assassins.

“I have no opinion on Your Grace’s analysis, but I just received a piece of latest intelligence from the capital.”

Yue Wushuang took off the cape, revealing a face that was enshrouded in black gas and looked like a dead person. She looked at Li Linghai as if she were quite sad and said, “You have been dead since half an hour ago.”

Chapter 2191 - Return to the Capital Openly!

Yue Wushuang sent the latest intelligence collected through secret channels to the light beams of the many reformist Immortal Cultivators.

According to the intelligence, the queen, who had been having a vacation on the “Eternal Spring Island”, a famous garden of the royal family in the capital, had a massive hemorrhage in multiple important organs including the brain due to the infection of a certain extremely rare virus. The rescue of the many doctors of the royal family proved futile, and her death had been officially announced half an hour ago.

In the meantime, Emperor Shenwu of the Imperium of True Human Beings suffered the attack of the same virus, but with lesser symptoms than the queen did. He was now being rescued by the royal doctors and the medical teams of the four Kurfürst families and should be able to recover. However, he would need a long time of rest. Naturally, he was delivered to a resort that was under the control of the four Kurfürst families for his “rest”.

Compared to the assassination of one of the five hundred elders of the Imperium, the sudden demise of the queen and the serious disease of the emperor was no news at all.

In the Imperium of True Human Beings, “emperor” had always been a highly dangerous profession over the last five hundred years. It was not unusual at all that they would “die abruptly” after several decades of reigning.

Emperor Shenwu, whose former title was Emperor Tianzheng, had been reigning for almost sixty years in total. By logic, it was time that he died.

Of course, the top-secret intelligence was only secretly passed in the Council of Elders and the few most central agencies of the government. It would take at least a fortnight for the news to spread out to the ears of all the nobles.

Then, after another half month, official news and announcements would be released to inform all the people of the country of the demise of their monarch.

Queen Li Linghai would not “die” certainly until then!

However, the ambitious schemers gathered in the secret communication room of the Deep Sea Palace knew clearly what the brief intelligence meant.

It meant that the four Kurfürst families had already attacked the queen.

It also meant that the four Kurfürst families would not hesitate to do anything to ruin Queen Li Linghai’s political life or even her physical life.

Did the so-called “extremely rare virus” really exist, and was it really “extremely rare”?

The former was likely to be true, but the latter was not necessarily so. At the very least, there were too many such viruses in the biochemical laboratories of the four Kurfürst families.

Thankfully, Li Linghai had risked leaving the capital because of her brother Li Lingfeng and only left a stand-in in the

“Eternal Spring Island”. As it turned out, the “extremely rare virus” of the four Kurfürst families hit the wrong target.

But what could Li Linghai do even if she was still alive?

As long as the four Kurfürst families all agreed that the queen had died of virus infection and soul exhaustion, who could object to it?

Who would have the courage to admit that the white-haired witch whose hair was rising and dancing in midair crazily like a God of Vengeance was the real Li Linghai?

Besides, even the emperor had fallen into the hands of the four Kurfürst families and was forced to “rest”!

Holding the emperor to command all the lords was not something that only Li Linghai could do. The four Kurfürst families were certainly familiar with the job.

Before Emperor Shenwu died together with the queen, there was still enough value in him that could be exploited.

The four Kurfürst families’ series of stormy attacks were too fast and brutal. There was no telling how much time they had been planning on it in secret, but the reformists were more or less stunned under the punch.

For a moment, the situation took a giant turn downward. Everybody was almost able to hear the rocks collapsing from the cliff and falling into the bottomless abyss.

They looked at each other in bewilderment. Except for Yue Wushuang, who had been cold the whole time, and Jin Yuyan, who had been smiling all the time, other people were all at a loss.

Of course, that was not counting Li Yao.

“I did not know that…”

The mental devil said gloomily deep inside Li Yao’s head, “After you advanced into the Divinity Transformation Stage, your prowess in trapping your teammates has gotten significantly more brilliant. You haven’t done anything yet, and yet the queen has suffered so much!”

“You must be kidding. Am I really to be blamed for this? It is obviously because she was too aggressive. Did she really think that the four Kurfürst families that had dominated the Imperium for a thousand years were all idiots?”

Li Yao sniffed and replied.

However, he was also very curious how the ambitious queen of the Imperium of True Human Beings would counterattack in the hopelessness when the enemy had almost stabbed the knife into the throats of the reformists.

Li Yao still remembered what Li Linghai said in the thunderstorm of the Sand Primitive Sector, as well as the dominating vibe of a fated, supreme sovereign of the universe when she performed the technique of “Dragon Over The Sky”.

She was the woman who had the legacies of the legendary “Supreme Emperor”. She would not give in so easily, would she?

Staring at Li Linghai without blinking, Li Yao did not leave any detail of the white-haired woman.

When she heard the message of her “death”, the queen of the Imperium did not even move her eyelashes although her white hair was dancing crazily.

Her eyes that were clear as if made of dews in the first place were even hollower. Her mind seemed to have drifted to the capital billions of stars away, while she concentrated all her attention deducing a way of survival out of the most dangerous situation!

“Fellow Cultivators…”

After considering carefully for a minute, Li Linghai finally said slowly in the calmest tone, “I know that many fellow Cultivators had unrealistic illusions on the noble families until just now. They were still wavering and thought that we could negotiate with those people through gentler approaches. Eventually, we would be able to renew the Imperium with no bloodshed.

“But after you hear the news of my ‘abrupt death’, do any of you still think that way?

“Open your eyes and see the reality. Our reform is a war where either our enemy or we will die. It will not end until the blood of either party runs dry. No mercy and hesitation can be tolerated!

“The four Kurfürst families are bold enough to assassinate their own elder and the queen of the Imperium. Even Lei Chenghu, a prestigious general in the army known as ‘God of War’, has been captured blatantly to ‘assist their investigation’. I can’t even imagine what crimes they will impose on General Luo!

“Fellow Cultivators, you can compare yourselves to Dongfang Tuo, me, or General Lei. Even if you abandon the ideas of the reformists right now and crawl to the feet of the four Kurfürst families to surrender, would they spare you with their ruthlessness?

“You and the families, sects, forces, fleets, and Sectors behind you are already too involved.

“You have all seen the name list of suspects of the special investigation committee. How many names on it are closely connected to you? And how long will it take before they trace the names to you?

“We have all been pushed into desperation with nowhere to run to. Instead of being cut and minced slowly and watching our cause and ideas to be obliterated, we might as well have a final attempt and take our chances. Even if we have to die together with the four Kurfürst families, the light when we are shattered will illuminate the future of the Imperium of True Human Beings!”

As she approached the end, Li Linghai seemed to have become transparent. From the deepest part of her soul, dazzling brilliance beamed out, making her truly like a lighthouse that could illuminate the entire dark Imperium.

“But…”

One of the reformists hesitated and asked, “Many fleets that are inclined to us have been mobilized and separated. Our secret accounts have been mostly frozen too. A lot of our sympathizers and supporters have been put into prison. Even you have been erased by the four Kurfürst families, Your Grace. What can we do?”

“The attacks of the four Kurfürst families may indeed be very aggressive and nearly cut our throat, but they made two fatal mistakes.”

With crazy flames blooming inside her eyes, Li Linghai extended her fist, as if she was performing a unity etiquette, or making a promise to everybody. “Firstly, they did not expect that I would leave the capital in secret and that the person in the capital was only a well-trained stand-in for me.

“Besides, it is impossible for them to know that I have already advanced into the Divinity Transformation Stage and that I was never eliminated by any kind of rare virus. They have missed the greatest opportunity to kill me.

“Secondly, and more importantly, however they pried and studied, they could never have thought that the power of the reformists had expanded to such an extent. They did not know that the Deep Sea Fleet that we built in secret and the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils that had been expanding were already among the best troops of the Imperium. They did not know that we have the unexpected help of Fellow Cultivator ‘Vulture Li Yao’ who have talents in two fields!

“The four Kurfürst families pushed themselves into hopelessness too as they pushed us into it, because all the smaller nobles, low-level Immortal Cultivators and the warlords at the peripheral worlds had seen through the ravenousness of the four Kurfürst families. They knew that they would only be embraced by their doom if they did not resist.

“At such a moment, as long as we deal a heavy blow on the dominating four Kurfürst families and call for supporters, we will be able to gather all the forces that oppose the great noble families nationwide!

“In any case, I will never admit that I have ‘died’ without a sound just like that!

“I promise to you that in less than one month, I will return to the capital with everybody here openly as the queen of the Imperium of True Human Beings. Nothing can possibly stop me!”

Everybody was more or less awed by the fervent and crazy air around Li Linghai.

After a long silence, the reformist who asked in the beginning said, “Then, what are we going to do exactly?”

Li Linghai smiled.

Opening her arms to everyone softly, the white-haired woman said in the most earnest way, with purple colors vaguely spreading inside her eyes, “Trust me. At this moment, all I ask from you is your complete, unreserved trust. You will carry out my every order dutifully no matter how crazy the order may sound. I will definitely not disappoint you. This is the darkness before dawn, and a stronger, new Imperium will soon be born in the darkness!”

Chapter 2192 - A Real Soldier of the Imperium!

Li Linghai was perhaps not a schemer with an extremely calm head that never miscalculated anything.

However, from the fact that she was ruthless enough to kill Li Lingfeng, her biological brother, and even tried killing her biological son, she indeed boasted the determination to achieve her purpose through whatever means possible even if the universe would die together with her. She was a red-eyed gambler deep to her bones.

Right now, the reformists and the oppositions of the four Kurfürst families, who were scattered in the sea of stars, panicked and unorganized, were perhaps exactly in need of the leadership of such a lunatic and gambler.

Everybody was deeply awed by Li Linghai’s half craziness and half fortitude.

They were also deeply attracted by her transparent eyes that were as deep as swirls, and they could not help but fall into Li Linghai’s thinking pattern.

Many big shots among the reformists were powerful people in their local areas who were rather independent. Now that they had the courage to defy the orders of the four Kurfürst families, they were certainly not to be driven by Li Linghai easily.

But right now, did they have any choice except to absolutely trust the queen of the Imperium whose death was about to be officially announced by the authorities?

The meeting lasted six hours in total. All the reformists that had been lurking in darkness surfaced one after another, contributing the resources, armed forces, and intelligence channels under their grasp and promising with the name of themselves and their families that they would fight to the end for the construction of a new Imperium even if it meant their own death!

Many of them had been contacting Li Linghai alone and did not know that other people were so deeply involved in the cause of the reformists. Hearing that so many resources and armed forces were at the disposal of the reformists, they were greatly surprised, and the confidence that had just hit rock bottom was burning furiously again.

Li Linghai’s brain functioned quickly like a high-level crystal processor, while she distributed and organized the resources when she was as dazzling as lightning.

Commanding the big shots of the reformists to hide away from the search, rescuing the fellow Cultivators who were already under arrest, uniting all the oppositions in the entire universe in the fields of military, politics, economics, media, and other fields, attacking the Council of Elders in the court of the Imperium that was under the control of the four Kurfürst families, and also influencing the troops in the frontline to win the army over… Everything had a decision, which was carried out in an orderly fashion.

Even Li Yao could not help but secretly compliment in his heart when he saw her issuing the orders calmly and smoothly with barely any gap in between, which almost felt like art.

The white-haired queen of the Imperium was tougher than his wife Ding Lingdang in terms of combat ability, but her craziness and brutality were like a strengthened version of Jin Xinyue.

She was almost like a combination of Ding Lingdang and Jin Xinyue after they were enlarged ten times.

If such a woman was to lead the entire “new Imperium” soon in the future, would it be better than the current situation or worse?

If the situation was worse, how should Li Yao stop her, or “transform” her?

After each order was given, one of the high-level officers of the Deep Sea Fleet would leave the communication, or one of the holograms triggered by the remote communication would be gone. They all began their work immediately.

Six hours later, Li Linghai issued the last order without any expression on her face.

Jin Yuyan, Yue Wushuang, Dongfang Sheng, Tu Zhengdao… Her right-hand men had all left the communication room.

A thunderstorm raised by the reformists would soon sweep across the entire Imperium.

The enormous secret communication room was like a sphere palace that did not have any gap on the arc-shaped wall, which was as smooth as a mirror, giving a feeling of coldness and depression.

The only persons left in the room were Li Linghai and “Vulture Li Yao”, her personal bodyguard.

Looking at the last line of words dispersing into starry spots and disappearing into the darkness like burning butterflies on the light beam in silence, Li Linghai suddenly grunted, and her face that had always been covered in ice cracked, with a hint of pain flowing out. Her body slightly shivered, and she seemed about to collapse on the floating disc.

Even though she had an immeasurable Cultivation at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage, her brain was still seriously exhausted and was on the verge of being burned after processing complicated intelligence and orders for six hours straight at a high intensity like a human-shaped crystal processor.

As her personal bodyguard, Li Yao felt that he was obliged to give her a hand. He stepped onto Li Linghai’s floating disc and supported the queen of the Imperium carefully.

Somewhat out of his expectation, the proud and cold queen did not reject his kindness. She simply kept her eyes shut, and her face was extremely pale, with dense sweat leaking out of her forehead.

It seemed that the four Kurfürst families’ sudden attack, which aimed to completely erase her both politically and physically, was quite a great strike on her. She was definitely not as zealous and determined as she demonstrated to other people.

In a trance, Li Yao even had an illusion. He seemed to see a twisted and feeble soul, which was the real Li Linghai, through the queen’s carefully disguised face and the solid armors behind the face!

However, the “feebleness” only lasted one moment. When Li Linghai opened her eyes again five seconds later, there was still nothing but cold ice that would never thaw in ten thousand years in her eyes. She became the unyielding queen of the Imperium who would fight to the end through bloody battles again!

“When they heard the news that I was erased, almost everybody wavered briefly except three people, namely Yue Wushuang, Jin Yuyan, and you.”

Looking at Li Yao, Li Linghai said solemnly, “Yue Wushuang and Jin Yuyan are both the most hardcore reformists and my closet comrades whom I trust most. Your performance, on the other hand, was out of my expectation.”

“Well, it’s because I’m used to such things.”

Blinking his eyes, Li Yao said, “Besides, I have taken your side not because you are the queen of the Imperium but because you were the woman that my foster father deeply loved and never forgot to his death. That reason alone is enough to make me never abandon you or watch you die without doing anything.”

After a long daze, Li Linghai suddenly smiled and said, “It never occurred to me that when my cause dropped to the lowest point on the brink of collapse, it would be a Cultivator who was standing by my side.

“Your arrival is indeed a timely gift of fate. I am truly in need of a strong personal bodyguard like you for a while in the future. Once the four Kurfürst families discover that the person their biochemical virus killed was not me, they will certainly initiate a second round and a third round of assassinations.

“Although I have received abundant heritages from the Empyreal Transcendence Sector, those heritages must not be exposed before the situation is stable. So, it will be inconvenient for me to take action in many cases. I'll count on you.

"Of course, your loyalty will certainly be duly rewarded. Do you want to take a look at the secret treasures from the Empyreal Transcendence Sector?"

Li Yao's pupils constricted violently, and he breathed fast.

He could not calm down his messy head despite the Cultivation of the Divinity Transformation Stage, because it was the heritage of the "Supreme Emperor" from ten thousand years ago!

Now that Li Linghai was willing to share the heritages of the Supreme Emperor with him, it meant that her trust for him had reached a new height.

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao shook his head hard. He knew that there was no free lunch in the world and that Li Linghai's generosity must be up to something.

He was unwilling to fall into Li Linghai's pace. Managing to calm himself down, he said, "Of course I would like to take a good look at the Supreme Emperor's legacies, but there is no need to do it now. Let's talk about the next part of the operations instead.

"Now that Your Grace is willing to share such precious legacies with me, it is obvious that you want me to carry out a certain dangerous, life-blighting mission, don't you?"

Li Linghai was slightly dazed, not anticipating that Li Yao did not waver at all when faced with such an alluring attraction. She thought even more highly of Li Yao now as she nodded her head and said, "Yes. This is indeed a very arduous mission, but you will not be doing it alone. We will all join the mission for a thunderous attack, and we must rescue General Lei Chenghu no matter what. It will be the key that decides the outcome of our cause.”

“Rescue Lei Chenghu?”

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao asked, “Who is this ‘General Lei Chenghu’ who is intimidatingly nicknamed as ‘God of War’?”

It was obvious that “God of War” was not a title that any random person could deserve.

“General Lei Chenghu is a legend of the Imperium’s army. He is the general with the most experience, the most military credits, and the highest prestige in the army aside from the generals and commanders from the four Kurfürst families. ‘God of War’ is certainly not an exaggeration but the most honest remark given by the local warlords and the miscellaneous troops.”

When she talked about the experience of “Lei Chenghu”, even Li Linghai, who had always been proud, had admiration in her tone. “General Lei is from the Lei family of Guangyuan, which is a medium-sized noble family between the four Kurfürst families and the small nobles. He could’ve lived a comfortable and carefree life in the Sector that belonged to him.

“If he was slightly ambitious, he could’ve had conflicts and fought for benefits against the warlords of the worlds nearby by leading his personal troops.

“But General Lei is an exception among the nobles and warlords.

“He is a real, pure, and selfless Immortal Cultivator. After he grasped all the resources of the Lei family of Guangyuan, he indeed expanded the military preparations and established an extremely tough private troop at the cost of all the resources in the family.

“But instead of using the fleet to expand to the neighboring worlds, he simply went into the space to strike the space pirates who lurked in the darkness.

“For fifty years, General Lei had been active in the battlefield against space pirates with his own fleet, clearing almost all the space pirates in the dozens of Sectors and space zones in the fourth quadrant of the Imperium. In the end, as long as the carrier fleets passing the area painted Lei Chenghu’s emblem on their starships, the space pirates would immediately run away in fear. General Lei Chenghu was exactly as tough as that!”

Chapter 2193 - Origins of the God of War!

“Then, isn’t he ‘the bane of space pirates’?”

Li Yao was greatly interested in the unconventional General Lei Chenghu. He couldn’t help but wonder what kind of intriguing sparks would be raised if Lei Chenghu’s fleet ran into Bai Xinghe’s.

Li Linghai continued, “Under the dominating suppression of General Lei Chenghu, the space pirates in the dozens of Sectors in the fourth quadrant of the Imperium almost went extinct. Even the Sector Masters and the warlords of those worlds were shuddering in fear under his iron fists, not having the courage to do anything recklessly.”

“Wait.”

Li Yao frowned and said, “Wasn’t General Lei’s target the space pirates? Did it have anything to do with the Sector Masters and the warlords of those Sectors?”

“You are still new to the place, and you do not know what the space pirates wandering in the infinite sea of stars in the Imperium really are.”

Li Linghai explained, “Think about it. The Imperium has united the center of the cosmos since a thousand years ago. It also has powerful troops. Is there any room of activity for the space pirates and the wandering bandits?”

Li Yao thought for a moment and realized that it did make sense. The last Sector with particularly rampant space pirates that he met was the Flying Star Sector, which did not have a central government but only had a loose coalition of major sects.

Later, the space pirates of the Flying Star Sector were throttled by the “Grand Illusionary Soldier Project” proposed by the six major sects. Their room of activity was smaller and smaller, and they were about to die in the end.

If the Grand Illusionary Soldier Project had not been a scheme with ill intentions since the very beginning, the space pirates of the Flying Star Sector definitely would’ve been annihilated by them.

Then, here came the question. The so-called “Grand Illusionary Soldiers” adopted the technologies of remote control on battle puppets from the Imperium of True Human Beings. If the Flying Star Sector was already capable of eliminating space pirates with such a technology, it should be more than easy for the Imperium of True Human Beings, which should’ve had more advanced Grand Illusionary Soldiers, to deal with the insignificant space pirates, right?

“In the Imperium, those guys who are called ‘space pirates’ on the surface can be more precisely addressed as ‘privateers’.”

Li Linghai sniffed and said, “The Imperium is simply too vast and boundless. There are all kinds of conflicts between the nobles and the emperor, the nobles and the magnates, and the magnates and the sects. It is impossible to establish a powerful central government to manage the local areas directly, and autonomy has been forced to be granted to them exactly like feudalism in the past.

“There is no need to mention the direct fiefs of the four Kurfürst families, which are essentially independent kingdoms with the power of levying taxes, forging coins, enlisting soldiers, and nominating officials. They are even threatening the capital.

“Even the Sector Masters and the warlords at the peripheral worlds are also lawless dominators who can only see their own territories. For the interests in trade routes, resource planets, or world fragments, they often had frictions with their neighbors.

“In order to check the smaller nobles and the warlords at the peripheral worlds, the four Kurfürst families intentionally allow them to attack each other and encourage them to escalate their frictions.

“Of course, on the surface, everybody is a citizen of the Imperium and an Immortal Cultivator, with the lightning trident emblem painted on the starships and the crystal suits. It is impossible for them to wage a war on each other with their fleets. So, two ways are often adopted to settle their conflicts.

“The way that is open and protected by the law of the Imperium is ‘arena games’.

“When there are trade conflicts or competitions in resources, each party will send a certain number of champions to have a fair match in the arena to decide the conflicts.

“Strength is highly worshipped in the Imperium. Such a way to resolve conflicts wins the support of most people. It has even evolved into an extremely popular way of entertainment. When two fairly large worlds send their famous experts to ‘settle the conflicts’, it is not unusual that they can catch billions of eyes. They are certainly much more attractive than the slaughter stream platforms.

“In the early years, when the order and ethos of the Imperium were not corrupted yet, most of the Immortal Cultivators still remembered the glory in the past and quite respected the system of the arena games. If they were defeated in the arena, they would carry out the ruling dutifully and give away part of their interests.

“However, the Imperium has been gradually decaying in the past ten thousand years, to the point that honor and law mean nothing today. More and more people show no respect for the arena games now.

“Now that they cannot seize the clandestine interests with the army under their command openly, ‘privateers’ inevitably come into being.

“They are space pirates in name but are in fact supported by the warlords and the nobles, and even the four Kurfürst families. Many of the ‘space pirates’ are actually the regular army in disguise.

“Many Immortal Cultivators are the prominent, upper-class men in their own world, and some might even have titles when they are in the Imperium. But when they sneak into other worlds, they will immediately change into ruthless and bloodthirsty bandits!”

“Hiss…”

Li Yao took a deep breath. He was certainly no stranger to “privateers”. As space pirates with official licenses, they were ten times more difficult to deal with than the common space pirates, because they were supported by the authorities in terms of delivery of supplies and trophies!

Li Linghai went on, “The dozens of Sectors in the fourth quadrant of the Imperium are almost all the territories of the small nobles and the warlords. Their territories are deeply entangled with each other, and the friction among them can be very frequent.

“When there are a lot of frictions, there are bound to be a lot of space pirates. You rob me today, and I’ll kill you tomorrow. Although the intensity of the battles is not very high, there has never been a ceasefire for a hundred years. Not only have the people been suffering, the local warlords and Sector Masters are also mired in the meaningless war of attrition, with no hope of complete peace.

“On the surface, General Lei Chenghu was trying to eliminate the space pirates, but in fact, he intended to completely settle the chaos in the fourth quadrant and establish a stable order.”

Li Yao exclaimed and began to feel that “Lei Chenghu” was truly not a common Immortal Cultivator.

“At first, nobody believed that Lei Chenghu was capable of resolving the chaotic situation in the fourth quadrant where everybody hated each other. In fact, barely anyone knew his ambitions—General Lei has always been more of a doer than a talker.”

Li Linghai said in admiration, “At first, General Lei visited one world after another, met the local governors, and proposed for everyone to establish a little organization to strike the space pirates that were getting more and more untamable. In order not to stimulate the capital, the organization could be given a low-key name such as ‘Sailing Route Guards’.

“At that time, nobody knew how terrifying Lei Chenghu was yet. They all considered him a fool. Even though they were patient enough to let him finish his proposal, for the sake that he was from ‘the Lei family of Guangyuan’, they would often burst into laughter after they saw him off politely.

“The so-called space pirates were all in fact privateers that were disguised by the regular armies, but even if they were not, how could the ‘Sailing Route Guards’ really work when the dozens of worlds were not united but each had their own plans?

“Nobody paid any attention to General Lei or took the young family leader’s words seriously. Many of them sighed that the Lei family of Guangyuan had chosen an idiotic leader when it had been passed on for almost a thousand years. They believed that the Lei family would soon decline.

“However, after General Lei annihilated three privateers in thunderous strikes in only half a year, those Sector Masters and warlords discovered that they were wrong. Greatly wrong.

“General Lei was serious. He was truly determined to end the mayhem in the fourth quadrant even at the cost of all the resources that the Lei family of Guangyuan had accumulated for a thousand years as well as his own life and soul.

“General Lei Chenghu was not exactly a talented great general or a judicious politician at the beginning. He was only a selfless man who strived with nothing but seriousness.

“All the Sector Masters and warlords had their selfish interests. They all wanted to hide from the attacks and conceal their own strength, not daring to have head-on clashes with General Lei’s fleet. Instead, they tried to attract General Lei’s troops to other people’s territories and even offered a lot of supplies and intelligence to General Lei for that.

“General Lei, however, simply regarded every battle to annihilate the space pirates as his last battle where he would perish with the enemy. He did not consider the interests of his own fleet at all. Naturally, he was invincible.

“His commanding arts that were slightly naïve and immature at the beginning were gradually honed in decades of battles.

“Then, with a true heart of selflessness, he traveled among the local warlords and leaders nonstop for decades, trying his best to eliminate the conflicts among them and show them the benefits of abandoning the frictions and trading with each other. Gradually, the foundation of the privateers was no more.

“Just like that, decades later, the organization named ‘Sailing Route Guards’ was indeed established!

“Although it had a harmless name and sounded like a co-op of the police of different worlds, it was in fact an enormous organization that included a package deal about military, trade, tariff coordination, and even development banks.

“It is even safe to say that it was a half-alliance of the peripheral worlds at the fourth quadrant of the Imperium with a span of military, politics, and economy!

“After completely destroying all the privateers of two Sectors that refused to obey the orders of the ‘Sailing Route Guards’, and when the army of the coalition army marched at their capitals, nobody dared to question General Lei’s authority in the fourth quadrant anymore.”

Hearing that, Li Yao couldn’t help but remark with his eyes glittering, “This General Lei Chenghu must be a deeply-hidden schemer if he is not a model soldier who is really selfless!”

Li Linghai smiled and nodded her head. “Yes. At that time, everybody thought that General Lei Chenghu was a deeply-hidden ambitious schemer, and he had used the disguise of selflessness for decades before he finally became the leader of the many worlds at the periphery of the fourth quadrant.

“Even the four Kurfürst families were shocked by General Lei Chenghu’s performance and considered him a great threat. They came up with many plans to deal with him.

“That was more than a hundred years ago. At that time, the War of Black Wind that shocked the entire Imperium took place. The Imperium suffered an unprecedented brutal failure in the five border worlds including the Black Wind Sector!”

Chapter 2194 - Silly General

Li Yao blinked and thought that the War of Black Wind was truly the origin of everything.

It was exactly because of the War of Black Wind that the remnants of the Black Wind Fleet marched to the edge of the sea of stars, and the worlds at the edge of the sea of stars were forced to be united into the “New Federation” against the enemy together.

It was also because of the Imperium of True Human Beings’ brutal failure in the War of Black Wind that the ideas of reform arose in the past hundred years and the four Kurfürst families’ reign loosened. Eventually, an ambitious reformist such as Li Linghai was born.

Right now, the legend of General Lei Chenghu was involved in the War of Black Wind too.

Li Linghai sighed and said, “In the past thousand years, when the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance fought for the hegemony at the center of the cosmos, although the Covenant Alliance had attacked many times aggressively, the Imperium always managed to hold the positions and never showed any sign of losing.

“In the recent several hundred years, the Covenant Alliance’s attacks were more and more hasty and disordered. Many leaders of the Imperium believed that the Covenant Alliance had seriously exhausted the national strength, and although their brainwashing techniques such as ‘Three

Fundamental Laws' could allure the people to dedicate their lives to their 'god', it was impossible for them to persist on.

"Therefore, the Imperium was filled with optimism. Everybody believed that as long as the defense line in the space was held for another several hundred years, the day would come when the Covenant Alliance collapsed on its own.

"However, the War of Blank Wind poured a bucket of icy water on everyone's back.

"The entire defensive line of the army completely collapsed. Quite a few deep-sky fleets suffered destructive strikes. Five war worlds, including the Black Wind Sector, fell to the hands of the Covenant Alliance, thus allowing the Covenant Alliance's unstoppable vanguard to reach the softest abdomen of the Imperium. What the Covenant Alliance's fleets were coveting became the prosperous lands that the Imperium had constructed hard for a thousand years!"

Li Yao asked, "War worlds?"

"Yes, according to the number of resources and the development, the Sectors within the territory of the Imperium have been generally divided into four levels, namely the underdeveloped worlds, the resource worlds, the industrial worlds, and the war worlds."

Li Linghai said, "The war worlds are the level with the highest comprehensive value. They have the deepest industrial foundation and boast an enormous scale of weapon factories, magical equipment assembly lines, and even space docks. They are capable of producing a great fleet independently, and they are heavily guarded by the troops of the Imperium.

“One war world is more valuable than ten underdeveloped worlds!

“The five worlds including the Black Wind Sector were all the military strongholds that the Imperium had operated for hundreds of years. Now that they fell into the enemy’s hands, there was no telling how many resources would be lost and how many secrets would be leaked. It was the greatest threat of the Imperium in the past hundreds of years.

“Having heard the news that the five war worlds at the border were lost, the nobles in the capital, after the initial shock, naturally burst into fury and decided to counterattack.

“Other than sending the elite troops of the four Kurfürst families to the frontline, they certainly called for the troops of the nobles and the warlords to ‘defend the Imperium’.

“At such a moment, the consequence of the four Kurfürst families dominating the politics for years, resulting in the fragmentation of the local areas, was revealed.

“Most of the smaller nobles and warlords at the local areas wavered and hesitated. They all thought that the elite troops of the four Kurfürst families were before them, and there was no need for them to go to the frontline as cannon fodder.

“The most shameless of all was naturally the warlord that had been managing the Black Wind Sector before.

“The Black Wind Fleet was to blame for the collapse of the defense line in the Black Wind Sector, and the Black Wind Sector that had been lost was their hometown. Wasn’t it only necessary for the people of the Black Wind Sector to reclaim the territory they lost without bothering the cost?

“However, Heiye Ming, the commander of the Black Wind Fleet at that time, was an old and cunning warlord. He simply swallowed the remaining troops of the other four war worlds ruthlessly, which gave him enough bargaining chips to negotiate with the capital. While the situation in the frontline was still a mess, he simply ran to the edge of the cosmos under the name of expanding the territory for the Imperium!

“Hehe. Although the journey to explore the edge of the cosmos was long and perilous, it couldn’t have been more dangerous than dealing with the army of Covenant Alliance that was right next to them. If they really wanted to ‘expand the territory for the Imperium’, they could’ve just turned around and marched back to their hometown. Why bother going such a long distance?”

Li Yao: “… Well, the commander of the Black Wind Fleet is truly sordid!”

But in his heart, he couldn’t help but chuckle. This was already a third theory about the Black Wind Fleet’s march to the edge of the cosmos. All the narrators had been trying to beautify themselves. As to what the truth was exactly, it probably had been obliterated in the dust of stars and nowhere to be found.

Apparently disgusted by what the Black Wind Fleet did, Li Linghai said coldly, “Now that the victims of the lost worlds had run off in fear, the private troops of the nobles and the warlords were certainly reluctant to take the blow for the entire Imperium and attack the army of the Covenant Alliance, which had a high morale after the winning streak.

“The four Kurfürst families did not want to waste their elite troops for nothing either. At the very least, they did not want to fight the Covenant Alliance in the first wave. So, they thought of General Lei Chenghu’s fleet.”

Li Yao exclaimed and said, “This is a scheme to kill two birds with one stone!”

“Yes. Even a blind person could tell what the four Kurfürst families were up to. Whether or not the Covenant Alliance’s attacks were blocked, General Lei Chenghu’s strength would be greatly diminished.”

Li Linghai said, “If General Lei Chenghu were a deeply-hidden schemer, as everybody thought him to be at that time, and a great warlord who valued nothing but his army, he couldn’t ignore the order from the capital or send out some random cannon fodder just like what other warlords did.

“After all, with General Lei’s prestige that was almost uniting the worlds at the periphery of the fourth quadrant, as long as he stayed back, what could the four Kurfürst families have done with him?

“It was not like that they could fight on two ends, dealing with the Covenant Alliance in the frontline and ending up on bad terms with General Lei Chenghu in the rear at the same time, right?”

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao bulged his eyes and said, “But General Lei still obeyed the order of the Council of Elders and led his elite forces to the frontline?”

“Exactly. In fact, General Lei did more than that. Not only did he led all his elite troops out, he also tried to bring as many soldiers of the ‘Sailing Route Guards’, who were all well-trained warriors from the dozens of worlds at the periphery of the fourth quadrant, as possible. Establishing an overwhelming coalition army, they marched to the defense line in the Black Wind Sector quickly!”

Li Linghai sighed. “At that time, General Lei had the highest prestige in the dozens of worlds nearby, and many fleets were under his command. However, the owners of the fleets, those nobles and warlords, entrusted the fleets to General Lei because they believed that General Lei would bring them benefits or even strike the privateers of the other few quadrants to earn their trophies. All in all, they gave him the fleets to make a fortune, not to let General Lei lead them to death for nothing!”

Blinking his eyes for a long time, Li Yao found it hard to believe. “So… Not only was General Lei a fool himself, he also led the elite forces of dozens of worlds to be the greatest fools in the universe!”

“Yes. The universe is vast, and it is not difficult to block messages. When the nobles and warlords that governed the dozens of Sectors finally realized what was going on, it was already too late for them to regret. Their elites had all been gone in the depths of the sea of stars, probably never to return.”

With a smile, Li Linghai said, “You can totally imagine that General Lei’s crazy decision infuriated all the nobles and warlords of the fourth quadrant. He also left no retreat for himself at all. The blanket agreement about the ‘Sailing Route Guards’ immediately collapsed too.

“Right now, General Lei only had an enormous coalition fleet that did not have a base. The Council of Elders, or rather, the four Kurfürst families, controlled all the supplies.

“Not surprisingly, the Council of Elders deployed the coalition fleet brought by General Lei to the most dangerous frontline.

“Faced with the massive attacks of the Covenant Alliance, General Lei did not have any complaint or hesitation at all. He simply fought bloody battles for five years, almost wasting all his trusted troops and elites and blocked the Covenant Alliance’s attacks that were as overwhelming as tsunamis.

“Although he did not take back the five worlds, including the Black Wind Sector, he managed to reestablish an impenetrable defense line and completely stopped the Covenant Alliance before him.

“In the hundred years that followed, General Lei’s fleet had been stationed in the frontline and blocked the Covenant Alliance like an iron wall. Not a single starship of the Covenant Alliance was able to cross his defense.

“It is even safe to say that the dirtiest and most exhausting jobs in the battlefield since the War of Black Wind had been shouldered by General Lei alone. That was why the army and resources in the rear could be trained and mobilized unhurriedly. Also, the Covenant Alliance’s morale and momentum were worn out by General Lei. They were the reasons why the Imperium’s enormous counterattack went so smoothly.”

After hearing all that, Li Yao took a deep breath. “So to speak, this General Lei Chenghu is truly not an ambitious schemer but an honorable, selfless soldier?”

“Yes. All the warlords have both armies and territories. Although General Lei commands a massive coalition army that has a shocking combat ability, he does not have his territory anymore. Everything he does is ordered by the Council of Elders.”

Li Linghai said, “As he fought through life and death on the battlefield again and again, everybody began to realize General Lei’s integrity. Even the four Kurfürst families were awed by General Lei’s charisma. Or rather, if they killed General Lei, they would have nowhere to find such a dutiful, ambitionless man who was good at fighting.

“The Council of Elders and the four Kurfürst families were in dire need of the ‘real soldiers who are loyal to the Imperium’ such as General Lei Chenghu to deal with the Covenant Alliance in the frontline. In the hundred years that followed, they completely let go of their wariness on General Lei and did not withhold the supplies for the ‘Astounding Thunder Fleet’ under his command at all. He was also given many awards.

“‘Special Blackstar Medal’, the highest medal of the army in the Imperium of True Human Beings, had been given seventeen times. Fifteen of them were given in the first five hundred years of the Imperium during the expansion of territory. Only two were given in the second five hundred years. One was given to a commander from the four Kurfürst families, and the other was given to General Lei Chenghu. It is indicative enough of his accomplishments and prestige!”

Chapter 2195 - Useless Bow

Li Yao secretly clicked his tongue. If the army of the Imperium was viewed as a whole, this General Lei Chenghu would certainly be a well-deserved big shot of the military.

Li Linghai said, “When the Imperium finally launched a strategic counterattack, it was General Lei Chenghu’s troop that led the charge and marched into the five worlds, including the Black Wind Sector, which had been occupied by the Covenant Alliance for a hundred years. He secured five triumphs in a row and recovered the former land a hundred years ago, clearing the obstacles for the subsequent troops.

“In the ten years that followed, General Lei Chenghu’s Astounding Thunder Fleet had been fighting in the most difficult battlefields and were almost broken to the point of destruction many times.

“Because of General Lei Chenghu’s prestige and the middle- and bottom-level officers’ worship of him, and because the war was still intense at that time, even the four Kurfürst families did not dare to play tricks on the reestablishment of the Astounding Thunder Fleet. They could only give the warships of the latest model that were produced recently to General Lei’s command.

“Of course, the troops of the four Kurfürst families would not listen to General Lei’s command easily. So, the soldiers that were placed into the Astounding Thunder Fleet were often from the local troops and the miscellaneous troops that had been collapsed in the bloody battles.

“After more than ten years of strategic counterattacks, it was inevitable that many troops were crushed and lost organization. Those failed soldiers with low morale were garbage that nobody wanted for fear that their lethargy would infect other troops. But General Lei Chenghu simply accepted all of them.

“After the bloody battles, General Lei’s troop had already become a hotchpotch with the crushed soldiers from every part of the universe.

“Many people who admired General Lei’s charisma and eminent military accomplishments volunteered to join General Lei when they had better choices. As a result, the composition of the Astounding Thunder Fleet was even more complicated.

“Such a ‘hotchpotch troop’ would be an unorganized mess in the hands of any commander. But General Lei had amazing skills that could transform the unorganized mess into seasoned warriors in the shortest amount of time and grant them the courage to die together with the enemy.

“General Lei Chenghu is perhaps not the best militarist in the Imperium, but when it comes to the training of soldiers, he is well-acknowledged to be the best of the Imperium!

“All in all, General Lei had been leading such a hotchpotch troop in the frontmost battlefield against the Covenant Alliance, making great contributions to the Imperium.

“Right now, the situation is more or less steady. The Fourth Coalition Fleet under General Lei Chenghu’s command, commonly known as ‘Astounding Thunder Fleet’ is the fleet with the most main-force warships, the best equipment, and the highest combat ability aside from the troops of the four Kurfürst families. In terms of the battle will, they are even much better than the private troops of the Kurfürst families. After the screening of iron and blood of a hundred years, there are neither cowards nor selfish scoundrels under General Lei's command. They are all the most distinguished soldiers boosted by the purest dreams who are willing to defend the Imperium with their hot blood!

“Right now, General Lei Chenghu is commanding the Fourth Coalition Fleet of the expedition army as the special admiral of the Imperium. He is also the commander of the Third Battle Area, which includes four newly-recovered war worlds and dozens of rather prosperous resource planets, as well as two twisted space zones that are very suitable for the collective space jumps of supermassive fleets. It is an important place that all the generals will fight over.”

After hearing Li Linghai's introduction, Li Yao said after a long daze, “So to speak, General Lei Chenghu is truly a giant pillar that holds the sky of the Imperium. Are the four Kurfürst families insane enough to involve such a big shot of the military just because they want to strike the reformists? Are they not worried that something may go wrong in the frontline?”

“I'm afraid you are wrong.”

Li Linghai said gloomily, “It remains to be seen whether the four Kurfürst families' main focus is the reformists and they are just removing General Lei Chenghu by the way, or their primary target has always been General Lei Chenghu while the measures against the reformists are just smoke grenades!”

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao bulged his eyes. “When the birds are all shot down, the bow will be useless?”

“Exactly. Do you remember what I told you when I introduced the situation of the Imperium to you a few days ago? After a decade of bloody battles, the troops that are scattered in different worlds of the Imperium are being awakened as a whole. They are craving to let out their own voice.”

With a smile, Li Linghai said, “Take a guess. If the military really wants to get out of the control of the four Kurfürst families and grow into an independent behemoth, who will it choose as its leader?”

Li Yao blurted out, “General Lei Chenghu?”

“Exactly!”

Li Linghai said, “General Lei Chenghu is almost an immaculate soldier of the Imperium. In terms of prestige, accomplishments, charisma, and the attitude of the bottom-level soldiers, nobody can be compared to him. He truly deserves to be called the ‘God of War’.

“If the military wants to get rid of the control of the four Kurfürst families and the Council of Elders, the extremists of the ‘Blood Oath Alliance’ are far from enough. They need the leadership of a real powerful big shot from the military, and General Lei Chenghu is the only candidate!”

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao asked, “What does General Lei Chenghu think himself? Or rather, what is his view on the so-called ‘reformists’?”

“General Lei Chenghu’s attitude does not matter. I believe that General Lei absolutely has no intention of leading the army to rise against the Council of Elders, nor does he have anything to do with the ‘Blood Oath Alliance’. If he had such ambitions, he wouldn’t have commanded all his troops to fight vehemently against the Covenant Alliance a hundred years ago. I absolutely believe that General Lei has been fighting for nothing but the country in his entire life.”

Li Linghai said, “However, now that he has been respected as the ‘God of War’, many things are unavoidable for General Lei. For example, the extreme organizations in the military such as the ‘Blood Oath Alliance’ may call for and instigate other soldiers under his name. Or when the time is ripe, he will be raised by countless zealous young officers and pushed to a throne that he is unwilling to take!”

Li Yao blinked his eyes. “I can totally understand the subtle situation that General Lei Chenghu is in.”

“Then, it should be easier for you to understand why the four Kurfürst families are more determined to settle the matter regarding General Lei Chenghu, at the risk of the instability in the frontline, than they are to deal with the reformists, right?”

Li Linghai sneered, “A hundred years ago, the four Kurfürst families did not take care of General Lei in a hurry not because they were merciful but because General Lei did not pose a great threat to them at that time. Also, the intense war required a ‘God of War’ such as General Lei badly.

“But right now, the military is growing more and more independent, and the young, bottom-level officers are more and more radical. General Lei is worshipped by more and more people too.

“Besides, the Covenant Alliance has suffered a crushing defeat and seems unlikely to be a major threat to the

Imperium in the next decades. Isn’t it the best opportunity to take away the bow now that all the birds have been shot down?

“God of War. Hehe. God of War! In the Imperium that is dominated by major noble families, how can a man that is respected as the ‘God of War’ end well?”

Taking a long breath, Li Yao wiped the sweat on his forehead and said, “If General Lei has such a high prestige in the army, how could the so-called ‘special investigation committee’ bring General Lei away from the Astounding Thunder Fleet so easily?”

“It was because General Lei volunteered to go with them.”

Li Linghai sighed. “You don’t know General Lei. He is a pure soldier who believes in obeying orders. The Council of Elders represents the glory of the Imperium. Until he completely loses hope in the Council of Elders, he will obey the orders from the Council of Elders unconditionally.

“Therefore, the special investigation committee does not need many hands at all. Even if they only sent two strengthless office clerks, General Lei would’ve left his own fleet and returned to the nest of the four Kurfürst families together with them.”

After a long daze, Li Yao smiled thoughtfully. “I did not know that such Immortal Cultivators exist.”

“General Lei is a model soldier and a model Immortal Cultivator in our vision. Whether you are his friend or his foe, you have to admire his honor and integrity.”

Li Linghai remarked, “A lot of people say that General Lei was born in the wrong age. He should’ve been born in the age of Blackstar the Great a thousand years ago in the Imperium of True Human Beings that was still young, vigorous, fair, and just.

“In that case, he probably would’ve helped Blackstar the Great annihilate the Alliance of the Holy Covenant as the commander of the Imperium, or at least clear the remnants of all the obsolete noble families!”

Li Yao rolled his eyes and said, “After hearing what you said, Your Grace, I think that General Lei Chenghu actually has the demeanor of a Cultivator!”

Li Linghai smiled. “I know what is on your mind. Do you think that you have a chance to transform General Lei into a Cultivator? If so, you can’t be more wrong. Be careful. If you ever meet General Lei one day, no matter what, do not reveal your identity as a Cultivator because General Lei loathes Cultivators.”

Li Yao was stunned. “Why?”

“General Lei is the firmest Immortal Cultivator who has suppressed the riots of the Cultivators many times.”

Li Linghai said, “Of course, they were not necessarily ‘real Cultivators’, or at least not from Starlight. Many space pirates and privateers like to be engaged in their activities under the banner of the Cultivators. Who can tell which of them are real and which ones are fake?

“After witnessing the ugliness of those ‘Cultivators’ and the idiocy and craziness of the ignorant people who had been instigated by them, do you think General Lei would have any fondness for the Cultivators? The Covenant Alliance, the extraterrestrial devils, and the Cultivators are all the same for General Lei. They are all the enemies of the Imperium in his eyes!”

Chapter 2196 - Rescue General Lei!

Li Yao sighed in his heart.

The real situation of the social classes in the Imperium was truly different from what he had imagined before he reached the center of the cosmos.

At that time, he was expecting in his silliness that the suffering people of the Imperium of True Human Beings who hated the guts of those in power would be hoping for the salvation of the Cultivators of the previous regime and that he could call for tremendous supporters as long as he gave a soul-stirring speech.

But the reality was too complicated. The Cultivators of the Imperium varied in nature, and some of them were downright fake. Even the relatively decent soldiers of the Imperium in the murky environment such as General Lei Chenghu had a great understanding of the ideas of the Cultivators too.

“You will basically understand General Lei Chenghu’s character after I tell you two stories.”

Li Linghai said, “Firstly, when General Lei Chenghu’s eldest son worked in the army, he was once involved in the trades of the contraband goods with the starships of the Astounding Thunder Fleet.

“In fact, such a thing couldn’t have been more regular. Most of the fleets of the Imperium were the private troops of the nobles and warlords in the first place. It was understandable however the fleets were used.

“Besides, after General Lei Chenghu spent all the fortunes of his family and cut off the connections with all the forces in his hometown, making his way to the frontline, he became a duckweed that did not have a base. The only thing he had was the fleet.

“With the supplies allocated by the Council of Elders, it might be possible to ensure the regular operations of the fleet. But what about the resources that were required for one’s own training?

“Therefore, almost all the fleets at that time, especially the deep-sky fleets that boasted the ability to cross Sectors and sail in the sea of stars, had been managing their ‘business’ more or less. They were combinations of armed groups, commercial corporations, and privateers.

“It was almost a public secret. Even the Council of Elders had to turn a blind eye to it.

“General Lei Chenghu, however, after learning that his eldest son was earning benefits for himself through the fleet, set the thing to be known by the public and sent his eldest son to the military court without any mercy. He wanted his eldest son to be sentenced to death according to the military law of the Imperium a thousand years ago!

“Eventually, it was the Council of Elders, which was greatly shocked, that mediated between them and granted a ‘special pardon’ for his eldest son. His eldest son’s life was saved, but ever since then, his eldest son’s wrongdoing has been publicly known, and he is never promoted to the highest leadership of the ‘Astounding Thunder Fleet’.

“The Astounding Thunder Fleet is a super-elite troop that General Lei Chenghu has worked on for a hundred years wholeheartedly. Other than the private troops of the four Kurfürst families, it is the strongest armed force in the Imperium. His harshness on his eldest son was certainly not a show but a sign that he was truly selfless and ambitionless.”

Li Yao took a long breath slowly.

General Lei Chenghu’s integrity was quite rare not just among the Immortal Cultivators but even among the Cultivators too.

At the very least, many big shots of the military in the Star Glory Federation had deep connections with the politicians and the businessmen. Although they would not go so far as to smuggle with the federal fleet, they were certainly not as honest as General Lei Chenghu either.

“The second story is about General Lei Chenghu’s second son. His second son was at the middle level of the Core Formation Stage in the beginning and tried to advance into the peak of it, which would naturally require tremendous resources.”

Li Linghai went on, “He knew his father’s personality very well and did not have the courage to play tricks. So, he simply filed a report to the leadership of the fleet dutifully.

“For regular nobles and warlords, when their biological children tried to break into the peak of the Core Formation Stage, they would certainly invest however many resources available they had to safeguard their descendants and increase the odds of success.

“However ‘fair and just’ General Lei Chenghu was, he should at least allocate an appropriate extent of resources according to the standard determined by Blackstar the Great in the past, right?

“After all, after his son advanced into the peak of the Core Formation Stage, he would be a top-tier expert, which would be beneficial for both the Astounding Thunder Fleet and the entire Imperium.

“But as it turned out, General Lei Chenghu simply withheld his son’s application report for resources without approving it. He was reluctant to give even a single dosage of ‘activation drug’ to his son. In fact, he warned his son many times to not try to break into the peak of the Core Formation Stage!”

Li Yao was astounded. “Why?”

“General Lei said that he knew his own son better than anybody else. His second son was average in talents and aptitude and was not training material at all. He was supposed to be a ‘hominoid’.”

Li Linghai explained, “However, General Lei Chenghu’s family consumed tremendous resources behind his back to cleanse the body of his second son and stimulate his son’s spiritual root. Eventually, because of the astronomical crystals and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, his second son was finally heaved into the Core Formation Stage.

“Although his second son reached the Core Formation Stage, the resources that he overly consumed were a great waste. If the resources were not devoted to his second son but to the ‘appropriate candidates’, such as the people who were born in the underprivileged class but had great potentials in training, it would’ve been possible to raise ten experts in the Core Formation Stage.

“Right now, not knowing himself at all, his second son was thinking to break into the peak of the Core Formation Stage. According to General Lei’s repetitive evaluation, the odds of success were extremely low, no higher than 5%. Most likely, a great deal of resources would be wasted for nothing, which would harm the overall interests of the Imperium.

“The true path of immortality dictates that the hypocritical and sanctimonious ethics of the past be broken, and the most precious resources be configured to the people who deserve them in the most reasonable and ruthless way, thereby boosting the high-speed development of the entire civilization.

“In short, only the experts are entitled to resources, and the weak do not deserve them at all. Nor should they waste any resources.

“His second son, on the other hand, was a weakling and a piece of garbage. It was already his greatest concession as a father that his son did not live a hominoid’s life. As the commander of the Astounding Thunder Fleet and a general of the Imperium of True Human Beings, he would not allow such a waste of resources to happen again.

“Therefore, he wanted his second son to completely drop the idea and stabilize himself at the middle level of the Core Formation Stage. According to him, his second son should die for his country with his current capability!”

Li Yao was more or less astounded. “Huh?”

This General Lei Chenghu was a little bit… too inconsiderate.

Although the optimal configuration of resources was indeed a truth for the civilization of mankind to proceed in the dark universe, such a way of doing things was quite cruel!

“Don’t presume that General Lei was just talking big.”

Li Linghai said casually, “It is exactly what General Lei has been thinking, saying, and doing.

“After supervising the frontline for a hundred years, he made countless contributions, and the Council of Elders never wronged him in terms of either awards or resources. In fact, they wanted to buy him over with high places in the court. So, many resources and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, in the name of both the Council of Elders and the four Kurfürst families, were awarded, offered, and allocated to him.

“If he had kept all the things to himself, even if he simply fed all the resources to his descendants like stuffing ducks, they would’ve been raised into above-average experts.

“But he only reserved one-tenth for himself and his family at best. The other nine-tenths were all given to the bottom-level officers and soldiers in the frontline, who were often born in poor families and did not have enough resources but had distinguished themselves in the war.

“After a hundred years of selfless rearing, lots of officers in every fleet of the expedition army in the frontline received favors from General Lei. Some of the officers whose fate was changed because of General Lei’s help a hundred years ago have already found their way to the decision-making circle of their fleets. General Lei’s prestige half comes from fighting and half comes from the support of those guys.”

Li Yao was greatly touched. After a long daze, he asked, “Then, what happened to General Lei’s second son later?”

“He died.”

Li Linghai said casually, “Despite General Lei’s repetitive admonition that he must not try to break into the peak of the Core Formation Stage, who in a world where the fittest survives could hold back the temptation of getting stronger? General Lei’s second son collected resources in secret and risked making the breakthrough in private, only to be killed in an accident.

“It was said that he was not killed on the spot after the accident, and he could’ve been rescued with the investment of tremendous resources. But General Lei sentenced his second son to death in person. General Lei said that there was no need to waste national resources on such a piece of garbage who had more ambitions than talents and who did not know what was best for himself.

“General Lei looked at his second son in the face and said that. Soon, his second son vomited blood and died.”

Li Yao was already sweating hard.

“What kind of Immortal Cultivator is this?”

In disbelief, he asked again.

“A real Immortal Cultivator. This is what the real true path of immortality should be like!”

With admiration popping up in her eyes again, Li Linghai said, “If there are no people of honor and integrity such as General Lei, how can we lead the civilization of mankind to break the dark fog that beleaguers us, and how can we argue that the true path of immortality is a better path than the path of the Cultivators?”

Li Yao did not intend to debate with Li Linghai on the topic. Pondering for a moment, he said, “All in all, I already understand now. This General Lei Chenghu is indeed one of the most important persons in the military or even the entire Imperium. If we can rescue him and he totally supports the reformists, our cause will have hope!”

“Exactly. In the past, General Lei still had fantasies on the Council of Elders. We never dared to reach out to him or expose our real strength and purpose to him.”

Narrowing her eyes, Li Linghai declared resolutely, “But we do not have a choice right now. As the saying goes, when the string of a bow is stretched, an arrow has to be shot out. No matter what the price is, we have to rescue General Lei Chenghu!”

Li Yao said, “Then, where exactly has General Lei Chenghu been invited to to ‘help with the investigation’?”

Li Linghai eyed Li Yao in a weird way and said, “Not a long time ago, you broke the beehive prison in ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’.

“However, in terms of defense, the beehive prison only ranks top five in the entire Imperium.

“The prison that is most heavily guarded and holds the most important criminals in the entire Imperium is the Godly Might Prison!”

Chapter 2197 - Trapped Tiger

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This was a clean and peaceful suite.

The wool carpet that was paved on the entire floor not only boasted a fine effect of noise absorption, heat blockage, and moisture removal, but it also had the amazing function of massaging the acupoints and reducing exhaustion. When one set foot on them, they would immediately feel that the bottom of their foot was cool and comfortable.

The invaluable manual carpet as well as the myriad of furniture carefully made by masters were indicative enough of the level of the suite.

Looking out through the giant window that was on the opposite side of the velvet bed, one would be able to see a blue ocean with glittering waves on the surface, which looked like billions of swimming silver fish. Countless Heavenly Wing Birds were soaring free at will under the azure sky like clouds, leaving graceful curves behind them.

The Heavenly Wing Birds were a rare type of bird that could only be found in the Empyreal Terminus Sector, the capital of the Imperium. Their wings were so broad that they were almost a hundred meters long when they were fully outstretched. When such birds swooped, they would raise the magnificent sounds that were similar to tsunamis. So, they had been considered as a symbol of the royal family.

Illuminated by the sun, the ocean was reflecting the silver color in thousands of different hues and shades, which was also the unique view of the “Secret Silver Ocean”, a scenic spot in the capital.

If one were to take a deep breath, they could even smell the unique wind of the Secret Silver Ocean that was a mixture of the metal scent and the smell of fish. It was truly refreshing.

Everything implied that the building where the suite was at was located near the Secret Silver Ocean in the capital.

However, if the “giant window” was truly opened, one would find that it was just a vivid, enormous light beam.

Even the so-called “unique scent of the Secret Silver Ocean” was only slowly released by a synthetical air generator hidden at a corner of the ceiling.

In fact, whether or not the ocean was seen, there was not a single window in the entire suite.

However hard one might try to focus their soul and pierce outward, it wouldn’t be long before they hit the metal walls that seemed to be endless.

The iron walls that had been specially processed proved the true purpose of the suite underneath the elegant and peaceful appearance.

No matter how extravagantly it was decorated, how refreshing the ambiance was, and how respectful the servants who brought food and cater to other needs every morning and evening were, it was just a prison cell.

The “guest” in the suite, an old man who was as short as a monkey, and who had so many deep wrinkles on his face that his eyes were deeply buried in them, had long realized his situation.

But still, he stood before the light beam that had been disguised into a window and “looked afar” to appreciate the view of the Secret Silver Ocean of the capital as he enjoyed the fresh air brought by the “sea wind”.

In such a way, he maintained the keenness of his brain.

After a rest of ten minutes, the old man returned to the desk next to the “window”.

Out of reverence, or fear of his identity, his capturers did not take away his Cosmos Rings.

However, the very special interference arrays deployed in the suite had seriously jammed his Cosmos Rings and his soul, making it impossible for him to retrieve his crystal processors and crystal suits or to deliver a single telepathic thought to the outside world.

He could only work with an old crystal processor provided by his capturers—the special investigation committee.

The crystal processor had been blocked. It could not send any data to the outside world and could only receive the data from a few designated nodes on the Spiritual Nexus.

Also, the old man had no doubt that every word he wrote on the crystal processor would be seen by his capturers immediately.

Even so, after calming down and considering for a moment, he still wrote on from where he stopped earlier.

“… In the boundless sea of stars, the blockage of passes, mountains, and rivers that were commonly seen in the continent wars in ancient times is no more. Once the space gates are established or controlled, the attackers may choose the time and location of their attacks free at will.

“Thanks to their configuration, the modern deep-sky fleets boast a particularly remarkable self-sufficient ability. They can fight independently in space for dozens of years without relying on any planet. Once they attack a planet and plunder tremendous resources from it, the duration can be significantly lengthened.

“Therefore, the universal wars are wars where an attack is greatly accentuated. To maintain the existence and deterrence of the deep-sky fleets is the primary concern. In short, the defense is absolutely meaningless, conquering more habitable planets and resources planets that have been greatly sabotaged is meaningless, and the people on the surface of the planet and the resources buried deeply below the ground that cannot be readily collected and made use of are meaningless!

“When there are people, there will be territory; where there are no people, there will be no territory. The current strategy of the Covenant Alliance is to give away its territory to preserve its available forces. Despite the consecutive triumphs our army has achieved in the past ten years, the main-force fleets of the Imperium have never been greatly weakened and stricken. Our enemy can make a comeback at any moment!

“As long as they deal a heavy blow on our main-force fleets, the dozens of newly-recovered fleets and the thousands of logistics points that have to be protected by troops will immediately become the burdens of our army.

“If our army intends to divide the troops in the next two or three massive battles to protect the newly-recovered worlds and the logistics points, it will be very easy for the main-force fleets of the Covenant Alliance to attack and conquer us separately. We will lose the initiative of the battle, and the situation of the war will be completely reversed.

“Therefore, in the overall strategy for the next phase, we should not ease our wariness or even fantasize that the enemy will surrender. Nor should we care about the gains and losses of a planet or a Sector. Instead, we should maintain the pressure and harassment on the central worlds of the Covenant Alliance while we search for the main forces of the Covenant Alliance actively for a decisive battle.

“Only a complete victory in the decisive battle will mark a brand-new phase of the war.

“If things do not go well in the decisive battle, we should abandon the ten or so newly-recovered Sectors without any hesitation and retreat the defense line to ‘Shenying-Guhe’ to avoid the possibility of a total annihilation…”

The old man was silent for a long time like a statue as he approached this part. He erased “total annihilation” but wrote it again. Repeating the process for almost five times, he still kept the stunning conclusion there.

Although in such a weird atmosphere, the conclusion might be a proof that he was affecting the morale of the army, he still did not change!

Door knocks echoed from outside in a seemingly respectful way.

The old man saved the paragraph he just wrote and opened the door expressionlessly.

It was just like before. Outside of the suite was a dark metal pathway that led to an unknown place. The pathway seemed to have been surrounded by billions of tons of metals, and it was impossible to send a single telepathic thought through them.

He had sensed more than twenty fully-armed crystal suits within ten meters from him. When their attack rune arrays were activated, they would rain a storm of firepower on the enemy at any moment.

There was no telling how many more people were hiding in the darkness.

His servants and guards were all gone.

A new female soldier brought food to him. In every meal, or whenever he needed anything, it would always be a new female soldier who showed up. They were equally courteous, respectful, and humble before him, and naturally, none of them answered any questions that he asked.

However, the female soldier this time brought a new piece of message. The “vetting meeting” would begin an hour after the meal.

It came as somewhat a surprise for the old man because he had never heard the name “vetting meeting” before.

He was supposed to go to the special investigation committee in the capital to assist the investigation of the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance. He even planned to go to the Council of Elders and give a magnificent speech to the five hundred elders on the current situation in the frontline and the underlying threats below the ostensible peace. It was exactly because his capturers promised so that he left his fleet, his officers, and his soldiers.

But right now…

Held in custody in such a creepy, gloomy, and heavily-guarded prison first and forced to attend “vetting meeting” later?

Even though the old man had billions of tons of confusion and fury in his chest, he did not show any of it in his tranquil eyes.

He was not one of the so-called “experts” who had entered the Nascent Soul Stage and even the Divinity Transformation Stage comfortably based on astronomical resources in their own manors and who had a weak and barren mind despite their enormous strength.

He was an iron-blooded soldier whetted in the storm of bullets and cannonballs in the past two hundred years. Steel and fire had saturated his bones.

The temperature of the blowing wind was in the minus-a-hundred-degree zone in the Bitter Silence Sector, the magma in the Red Lotus Sector that erupted to thousands of meters high any moment, the thousands of kinds of fatal venoms in the infinite jungles of the Green Devil Sector, the terrifying alien species in the Broken Bones Space Zone… The most dreadful enemies had shaped him in the life-and-death battles together, transforming him from an unknown, delusional guy, who was often mocked by others to be a fool, into the “God of War” today!

Compared to the ferocious enemies he encountered in the past, the scheme of the special investigation committee, if there was ever one, was nothing but a gentle breeze in a summer afternoon.

As per his habit of the past hundred years, he finished the meal quickly with the speed of a soldier in three minutes, before he exercised for ten minutes to facilitate digestion and ensure every drop of food had been transformed into energy. Then, he sat down again and continued to write the article entitled “Strategies In the Next Phase Against the Enemy”.

The imprisonment, the harsh environment, and the unexpected “vetting meeting” did not seem to have any influence on the old general.

Half an hour later, he had basically established the framework of his article. However, without the touch up of his secretary, some of the sentences were still somewhat too crude.

Respectful door knocks echoed from outside again.

However, Lei Chenghu did not rise and open the door this time, because it suddenly occurred to him that the scoundrels who had come in the name of “vetting meeting” were not worthy enough to waste one second of his time.

As he expected, after three minutes of silence, the door was opened from outside without a sound, and three human-shaped spiritual puppets stepped in rigidly and stopped before him like dead people.

Shua! Shua! Shua!

Light and shadow flashed on the surface of the three human-shaped spiritual puppets, covering a vivid virtual membrane of light on them and manifesting three Immortal Cultivators who were wearing feigned smiles.

Chapter 2198 - When You Want To Beat Your Dog

Lei Chenghu frowned slightly, trying his best to hold back his physical disdain and disgust for the three investigators.

Of course, he knew the three guys who were notorious in the frontline.

The guy with a slim waist and a pinky face in the lead was “Dongfang Bai”. He was the leader of the Bureau of Asset Statistics of the Recovered Areas in the expedition army.

The so-called “Bureau of Asset Statistics” was only an agency to collect data on the surface, but in fact, the agency was well-known by the officers in the frontline as one that was involved in espionage activities. In fact, it was the worst kind. It was a tool that the four Kurfürst families used to meddle in the affairs of the expedition army in the frontline, targeting people on their own side but never able to get any intelligence about the Covenant Alliance.

After conquering dozens of Sectors and hundreds of resource planets, it was natural that abundant trophies and properties had been confiscated. Many fleets that had a shortage of supplies would often keep part of the trophies to themselves for their own use.

Although Lei Chenghu honored the rules, he was not an obstinate man. As long as it was not for personal benefits but for the construction of the fleets and the defense work of the battle area, he had always given connivance to such things in the Third Battle Area that was under his command.

The Bureau of Asset Statistics, however, grabbed tremendous “proofs” with that as an excuse. They were the poisoned daggers that might stab the soldiers in the frontline at any moment. In fact, it was just a way to help the four Kurfürst families in controlling the fleets in the frontline.

The generals and the soldiers in the frontline who fought bloody wars had always scorned and loathed the agencies in the base such as the logistics department, the military demand department, the Bureau of Asset Statistics, etc. Such agencies were often considered as a septic appendix that was absolutely useless and often hamstrung the troops in the frontline, even getting people killed every once in a while.

However, the disgust of the soldiers in the frontline could not shake the position of the Bureau of Asset Statistics in the expedition army or the rise of the path to power for Dongfang Bai, the leader of the Bureau of Asset Statistics.

It was because his father was Dongfang Wang, the most powerful man in the Imperium and the current leader of the Dongfang family, who had been the prime minister of the Imperium for twenty years!

Therefore, after the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance, it was only natural that Dongfang Bai, as the head of the intelligence agency, was appointed as the chairman of the special investigation committee and took charge of the investigation on Lei Chenghu in person.

The two investigators by Dongfang Bai’s sides were also from the four Kurfürst families. They were also holding critical places in the expedition army. There was nothing particularly interesting about them. They were just jackals of the same lair.

The three investigators were wearing smiles that they had carefully pretended.

However, below the exceptionally humble and reverential smiles, unmistakable insincerity was flowing out.

When he saw them, Lei Chenghu thought of the hyenas hiding in the bush waiting for the giant beast that had been heavily wounded to die so that they could bite the dead body.

He also thought of flies that were rubbing their limbs in annoying noises.

At such a moment, he craved more intensely than ever to return to his own fleet, not to control the army in person again, but just to hang around with the rudest men under his command. Even that would’ve been much more comfortable than staying in the same room as the three sordid and shameless guys.

Although he was merely faced with their remote projections, he could already smell the stench of hyenas and flies leaking out of their pores.

What a disgusting smell!

“We’re privileged to meet you, Marquis Liaohai!”

The three investigators bowed to him pretentiously and addressed him with his latest title in respect. Every detail was done in the most appropriate way. Nobody could find any mistake.

Their behavior, however, further raised Lei Chenghu’s disgust. He did not even bother to return the courtesy but simply snapped coldly, “Stop wasting my time. If you want to vet me, just begin. But this is not the capital. Something will happen if you are determined to do this.”

Dongfang Bai, the head of the intelligence agency and the chairman of the special investigation committee immediately pretended to be shocked and wronged. He hurried to defend himself “in panic”, “I’m afraid there might be a misunderstanding, Marquis Liaohai. It is true that we intended to escort you to the capital where you can meet the Council of Elders directly, but due to the unexpected changes that happened while we were on our way, we were forced to bring you to this place for your protection. This is only a temporary measure. Please do forgive us for our lack of respect. It doesn’t matter however we are punished later, but right now, your safety and the big picture of the Imperium are our primary concerns.”

“Unexpected changes that happened?”

Lei Chenghu smiled, and not even bothering to look at the three investigators, he said casually, “What kind of changes can possibly affect my safety and make you think I need your protection? Are you worried that I’ll be assassinated like Elder Dongfang Tuo?”

“With your prestige in the army, Marquis Liaohai, you are admired by the soldiers in the frontline, even more than Prime Minister Dongfang and His Majesty. Of course, there is no chance that you can be assassinated.”

Dongfang Bai said with a smile, “But you may be caught in a situation that is even more dangerous than being assassinated. We have received unquestionable intelligence that dozens of fraternities of radical young officers, led by the Blood Oath Alliance, are planning to be united with each other and transform the Blood Oath Alliance into an enormous force that spans dozens of fleets and influences the entire expedition fleet as well as the army of the Imperium in the rear. Besides, they are also plotting to hijack Marquis Liaohai and force you to be the leader of the Blood Oath Alliance!

“If the vile, shameless traitors do succeed, wouldn’t you be forced into miseries and desperation that are a hundred times more painful than being assassinated?

“That was why we turned to the last resort by changing our route and protecting you in this secret place that nobody else knows.”

“Okay.”

Having seen too many great events, Lei Chenghu did not even bother to blink. “Got it now. You suspect that I am the leader of the Blood Oath Alliance and I planned the assassination against Elder Dongfang Tuo. So, you never intended to let me return to the capital since the beginning but decided to isolate and scrutinize me, right?”

“No, no, no.”

Waving his hands quickly, Dongfang Bai acted as if he couldn’t have been more wronged. “We do not dare to suspect Marquis Liaohai’s loyalty toward the Imperium and Council of Elders at all. The so-called ‘vetting meeting’ will be nothing but a formality. In fact, we admire Marquis Liaohai as much as the soldiers in the frontline do, and we are willing to vouch for you with our lives.

“However, under the instigation of a tiny group of traitors, there are indeed a lot of feverish young officers in the frontline who embarked on a wrong path and never to look back, and it is not entirely unlikely that those traitors instigated them under the name of Marquis Liaohai.

“Besides, should Marquis Liaohai really fell into the hands of the Blood Oath Alliance, while we absolutely trust your loyalty and believe that you will not give in no matter what, the enemy might be able to retrieve Marquis Liaohai’s soul stamp and fabricate your image, considering the hypnotization, interrogation, and virtualization technologies nowadays are so developed. Wouldn’t it be a stain on your lofty stature?

“We know that Marquis Liaohai might find it hard to believe the intelligence that we have just sorted out, but the influence of the Blood Oath Alliance is a hundred times more enormous than what we thought in the beginning. Their tentacles have long reached various troops in the frontline, particularly Marquis Liaohai’s Third Battle Area and the Astounding Thunder Fleet. The highly contagious virus has almost spread to your side. It truly made us worry for Marquis Liaohai when we read it!”

The spiritual puppet, controlled by Dongfang Bai, held an encrypted jade chip with both hands before giving it to Lei Chenghu respectfully. After decrypting it with his soul stamp, he helped Lei Chenghu to insert it into an interface that was fixed on the wall.

Immediately, a series of data erupted like a torrent on the 3D light beam.

Lei Chenghu read the intelligence concerning the Blood Oath Alliance without blinking.

Observing his face closely, Dongfang Bai gradually put on a confident smile. He said, “We absolutely trust Marquis Liaohai’s loyalty and that you have nothing to do with the

Blood Oath Alliance. But it is also true that so many captains, advisors, and commanders under your lead are deeply associated with the Blood Oath Alliance.

“If you were still in the Astounding Thunder Fleet right now, where the officers initiated a mutiny, electing you as the leader of the Blood Oath Alliance against your will, wouldn’t you and the Astounding Thunder Fleet that you have built after a hundred years of hard work be pushed into the pit of doom?”

“The intelligence is false and nonsense.”

Utterly unmoved, Lei Chenghu read all the intelligence without any expression on his face. He then read carefully from the beginning for a second time, before he made the conclusion casually, “How great do you think the Blood Oath Alliance is? How is it possible to have attracted so many officers under my command? If my officers had enough of it and decided to vent their fury to the rear, they would’ve established an organization ten times greater and more cautious than the Blood Oath Alliance, and they would never have done such a stupid thing as to assassinate an elder of the Imperium in public.

“Even if they were truly determined to assassinate someone —”

Lei Chenghu paused for a moment, and for the first time, he stared at Dongfang Bai’s carotid artery. He smiled casually and said, “The first to be assassinated should’ve been you who are hated by everyone, not Elder Dongfang Tuo who had been doing his job rather dutifully.”

Dongfang Bai’s face immediately turned pale. His carotid artery that was scanned by Lei Chenghu’s sharp eyes, however, bounced violently beyond his control, with hissing sounds echoing from the throat.

“Marquis Liaohai!”

The pinky-faced guy shrieked in an even louder voice, “I respect you very much personally, and I don’t want to run any kind of investigation. But we are here on behalf of the Council of Elders after all. Please respect the authority of the Council of Elders and consider carefully for the future of yourself and the Astounding Thunder Fleet!”

“Even without me, the Astounding Thunder Fleet will fight until the last soldier collapses in the war to defend the Imperium.”

Lei Chenghu sneered, “Just stop trying. You can just make up evidence and accuse me to be the leader of the Blood Oath Alliance, but however you ‘investigate’ me, I will not expose the information of any officer under my command to you.”

Chapter 2199 - Alluring Conditions

“Marquis Liaohai, I’m afraid this is another misunderstanding. I don’t think you should hold such a preconception that we doubtlessly mean harm to you and the Astounding Thunder Fleet. Getting to the bottom of it, we share the same purpose, which is the stability and magnificence of the Imperium.”

Dongfang Bai took a deep breath and hid his real emotions again. Gloomily, he said, “This is an important matter, and we will not do anything without concrete evidence. So, we do not need Marquis Liaohai to provide more intelligence. We are visiting you mainly to ask Marquis Liaohai to make a public statement.”

Lei Chenghu raised his eyebrow. “What statement?”

“In the name of ‘the highest commander of the Astounding Thunder Fleet, the commander of the Third Battle Area of the expedition army, admiral of the Imperium, Marquis Liaohai’, you will make a public statement to express your firm support on all the decisions the Council of Elders make to strike the rebellion forces, including the Blood Oath Alliance, reprimand the grave betrayals that the radical organizations such as the Blood Oath Alliance committed, and call for the middle- and bottom-level officers to return from the lost journey and pledge loyalty to the Imperium, the Council of Elders, and His Majesty.”

Rolling his eyes, Dongfang Bai said, “You are free to choose the specific words and phrases. We guarantee that we will not change any of it. As long as the three intentions listed above are expressed, it will be fine."

Lei Chenghu narrowed his eyes. "So, you want me to be absolutely loyal to the Council of Elders?"

Dongfang Bai raised his voice slightly. "The Council of Elders represents the ultimate glory of the Imperium and His Majesty. Is it not worth your absolute loyalty?"

Lei Chenghu's voice gradually turned tough. "The Council of Elders certainly deserves the absolute loyalty of every soldier of the Imperium. But when it comes to a specific elder, it may not necessarily be the case!"

"Marquis Liaohai, it appears to me that you do not have a clear understanding of the current situation!"

Grinding his teeth like a hyena, Dongfang Bai sounded even more gloomily than before. "We all absolutely trust your loyalty, and we want to settle the aftermath of the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance appropriately in the greatest kindness, so that the aftermath would not spread to all the troops in the frontline and escalate to the point that it is beyond rescue!

"A public statement by you will be the simplest and most effective approach!

"As long as you make such a statement, the Council of Elders will absolutely trust you immediately and end the so-called 'investigation'.

"If you can go one step further and cooperate with us to investigate the radicals hiding in the Third Battle Area and the Astounding Thunder Fleet, making all of them lay down their weapons and surrender, we will even punish most of them less severely, and they will still have an opportunity to return to the fleet after some time of isolation and investigation!

“Isn’t it the best choice for both of us?”

Lei Chenghu thought hard; his small and round eyes were completely hidden behind the wrinkles and the scars.

As to whether or not it was Dongfang Bai’s proposal that he was considering, that was something nobody could tell.

Half a minute later, Lei Chenghu asked calmly, “What if I make such a public statement to express my absolute support for the Council of Elders and cooperate with all the operations of the special investigation committee after I return to the Astounding Thunder Fleet and stabilize the situation in the frontline? Is it acceptable?”

“About that…”

Dongfang Bai smiled again, like a sharp-mouthed cub. “We think that there is no need for you to return to the Astounding Thunder Fleet in such a hurry. Out of admiration for you, I can reveal a piece of news that is probably true to you in private.

“To award your remarkable contributions in the Imperium’s counterattack in the past ten years, the Council of Elders has been discussing whether to grant you the rank of ‘Supreme Commander’. Tsk, tsk, tsk. You should know that the Imperium hasn’t had a new Supreme Commander for a hundred years. It will certainly be an unparalleled glory.

“Then, once you are truly accolated as a Supreme Commander of the Imperium, your place as the commander of the Third Battle Area of the expedition army will certainly not deserve Marquis Liaohai anymore.

“The Council of Elders is thinking to establish a new ‘Coalition Command Headquarters’. It is hoped that you can return to the capital and work as the leader of the Coalition Command Headquarters. We believe that you will make great contributions to the Imperium, the Council of Elders, and His Majesty like you did in the past.”

“Coalition Command Headquarters?”

Lei Chenghu pondered about the new department carefully. There was no telling what was rolling on his mind from either his eyes or his wrinkles. He said peacefully, “What is that? We have the ‘Department of National Defense’, ‘Department of Military Orders’, and ‘General Staff’. Are those bloated agencies that hamstring each other not enough to accommodate the descendants of the noble families? Why are you making a new, useless department?”

Dongfang Bai’s eyelids twitched quickly. Ignoring the thorns in the old general’s words, he continued his smile, “What you said is very true, Marquis Liaohai. It is exactly because of the overlapping architecture of the government and army of the Imperium that many problems such as low efficiency, corpulence, and uncoordinated orders have appeared. That is why we need to establish the ‘Coalition Command Headquarters’ to lead and balance the different departments that are in conflict.

“In the meantime, the Imperium’s counterattack that has lasted a decade has achieved the strategical purpose preliminarily. In the next phase, our main focus is to stabilize the defense areas and restore the productivity of the recovered worlds. With the new situation in mind, the ‘expedition army’ will no longer be necessary.

“Right now, the Council of Elders is planning to regroup and reorganize the troops in the expedition army’s base and frontline. Part of the expedition army will be regrouped into a border defense army and stationed in the frontline. Part of the troops that have come after a long journey will return to their hometowns. Part of the expedition army will be distributed to the recovered worlds as the first forces to build the new worlds.

“The interests involved will definitely be overwhelmingly complicated. We need a prestigious and selfless leader to organize everything. In the entire Imperium, who else is qualified to shoulder the responsibility if not Marquis Liaohai?”

Lei Chenghu was amused by the guy’s self-righteousness. Staring at Dongfang Bai for such a long time until the head of the intelligence agency felt creepy, he finally said, “Got it now. You want me to leave my own fleet and hassle with the Department of National Defense, the Department of Military Orders, the General Staff, and the glut of nobles. Is that all?”

“Of-Of course not.”

Although his real body was far away, Dongfang Bai was still sweating hard under Lei Chenghu’s scorching eyes. In an even more obsequious smile, he said, “If Marquis Liaohai is willing to return to the capital to lead the Coalition Command Center, the Council of Elders promises that the ‘Splendid Lake Sector’ of the recovered worlds will be set as Marquis Liaohai’s eupatrid fief. The Splendid Lake Sector will be your property as long as the Imperium exists!”

“The Splendid Lake Sector is the most prosperous one out of the dozens of newly-reclaimed worlds. Tsk, tsk, tsk. The Council of Elders is truly generous. I’m beginning to be convinced that you are here with utmost sincerity and kindness.”

With an even more brilliant smile, Lei Chenghu said, “Anything else?”

“Yes.”

Staring at every wrinkle on Lei Chenghu’s face, Dongfang Bai raised the trump card. “It is only natural for the first Supreme Commander of the Imperium after a hundred years and the leader of the Coalition Command Headquarters to enter the Council of Elders as one of the supreme elders of the Imperium, right?”

“Supreme Commander of the Imperium, elder of the Imperium, lord of the Splendid Lake Sector, leader of the Coalition Command Headquarters…”

Lei Chenghu seemed to be really thinking about it carefully. “This is your part of the deal, and all I need to do is to make a public statement and leave the Astounding Thunder Fleet?”

“Regarding the arrangement of the Astounding Thunder Fleet, we can talk about it slowly. I’m sure that Marquis Liaohai will find the result satisfactory.”

His eyes glowing, Dongfang Bai said, “Frankly speaking, Marquis Liaohai, the Astounding Thunder Fleet has indeed made the greatest contributions to the Imperium in the past hundred years. It was an iron wall that resisted the Covenant Alliance. But the situation of the war has been reversed. The Covenant Alliance is crushed without any ability to fight back. It is unnecessary and unaffordable to keep so many regular armies in the frontline.

“The brothers of the Astounding Thunder Fleet have been immersed in the bloody hell for a hundred years. How can we bear to watch them continue suffering in the frontline? Shouldn’t we try to let them live a few comfortable days?

“There are so many prosperous resource worlds in the recovered territories. Or rather, the Council of Elders is even willing to find a peaceful, beautiful, and resourceful planet in the rear to settle the soldiers who have made remarkable contributions. The Imperium will definitely not wrong any hero.

“Besides, the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance involves many aspects of the troops in the frontline. At such a delicate time, we are not especially targeting the Astounding Thunder Fleet, but it is not very good for everybody to keep any deep-sky fleet in the frontline on such a large scale and such high independence, right?”

Lei Chenghu chuckled in a low voice. Baring his teeth that had been dyed lead grey by fire and smoke, he said, “It sounds fair enough. But what if I refuse?”

“The Council of Elders trusts Marquis Liaohai’s loyalty and judiciousness. They know that you will consider the future of the Astounding Thunder Fleet and the Imperium even if you are not considering the future of yourself and your family.”

Dongfang Bai bent his back and glimpsed at Lei Chenghu from down below. “If you are truly considering for the Astounding Thunder Fleet and the Imperium, and you do not want a superstorm to sweep across the sea of stars and involve many people of the Astounding Thunder Fleet, you will certainly not refuse it.”

“You’re wrong. I refuse it,” Lei Chenghu replied casually, without hesitating for even half a second.

Dongfang Bai’s dry, adulatory smile on his face was entirely gone.

He was just like a hyena that had rushed out of the bushes at the dead body of a giant beast, ready to enjoy a great deal, only to discover that the beast suddenly woke up and bulged its giant brown eyes at it.

“W-Why?”

Dongfang Bai’s face couldn’t have been paler. He said, one word after another, “Marquis Liaohai, General Lei! You must trust the sincerity of the Council of Elders. This is all for the big picture! The big picture!”

Chapter 2200 - War Means Death!

“It is exactly for the sake of the big picture of the Imperium that I cannot make such a statement.”

Emotionlessly, Lei Chenghu said, “The so-called ‘incident of the Blood Oath Alliance’ is an out-and-out absurd scheme that is done either by certain malicious guys in the Council of Elders or by the Alliance of the Holy Covenant, our most dangerous enemy. There is no room of concession for me regarding the issue.

“The reasons why I refuse to make such a public statement are as follows. Firstly, the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance hasn’t been sorted out yet. It even remains unknown whether or not the Blood Oath Alliance is the culprit. How could a small organization of young radical officers have organized such a precise and large assassination and even controlled an assault warship?

“There must be forces of higher levels behind the assassination. It was certainly not as simple as the blatancy of some radical officers from the frontline as you described!

“Secondly, your investigation report, in which you accused the officers under my lead of joining the Blood Oath Alliance in secret and conspiring with their comrades in other troops in the frontline, is the opposite of facts and teeming with loopholes!

“They are all distinguished young men and the future pillars of the Imperium. At such a critical moment, I will not take an ambiguous stance and make a confusing statement that will corrupt their future and the Imperium’s.

“Thirdly, and most importantly, in either the Astounding Thunder Fleet or the other troops that have fought bloody battles in the frontline, even if some soldiers have established certain discussion groups because they are dissatisfied about the reality, I find it completely understandable, and I support them personally.

“It is true that they are soldiers whose duty is obedience. They should not be involved in nasty politics.

“But they are also the Immortal Cultivators. The great events of the world, the enterprise of the Imperium, the future of mankind… They are all the natural responsibilities of the Immortal Cultivators that they must shoulder without evasion!

“Therefore, even if the final investigation suggests that it is indeed the Blood Oath Alliance that planned and implemented the assassination against Elder Dongfang Tuo, I don’t think there is any need to expand the investigation and arrest. The blames that the Blood Oath Alliance should take must be limited to the Blood Oath Alliance. They have nothing to do with the other discussion groups of young officers.

“On the contrary, not only do I disagree with the decision to expand the investigation and search to other groups, but I also believe that those groups should be allowed to surface, and the young officers should be given a channel to speak to the Council of Elders in public.

“The complaints of the soldiers in the frontline on the dark reality in the rear can never be completely resolved by the destruction of a few groups.”

Dongfang Bai’s eyes were glittering. He seemed to be both angry about Lei Chenghu’s speech and happy about the many “loopholes” in his words. Preparing to consolidate Lei Chenghu’s rebellious theory, he remarked with a fake smile, “I did not know Marquis Liaohai held such an attitude toward the groups of the radical officers in the frontline. However, what do you mean by ‘dark reality in the rear’? Isn’t the Imperium thriving under the leadership of the Council of Elders and His Majesty and arriving at the peak in the past thousand years, with nothing but brightness in the future?”

“Even such a shameless, useless scoundrel who knows nothing but instigations and conspiracies like you can be promoted to a key place in the expedition army just because of your backgrounds and become a lieutenant admiral of the Imperium’s army who is even qualified to be involved in such an important national affair as the regrouping of the expedition army. Isn’t it exactly the dark reality?”

Lei Chenghu said coldly, “There is no need to trick me. I know that countless people are watching this ridiculous ‘investigation’ right now. I take responsibility for every word I said. Even if I were standing on the podium in front of the Council of Elders right now, I would still stand by what I said!”

“You—”

Dongfang Bai gnashed his teeth so hard that his eyebrows were almost rising. Rolling his eyes for a long time, he finally managed to put on a gloomy smile. “Marquis Liaohai, is it clear to you that the purpose of this meeting is to prove your innocence with the Blood Oath Alliance and other groups of young radical officers? We are trying to defend you, and we do not believe you are the leader of the Blood Oath Alliance or you instigated the rebellions of the officers in the frontline. But your words are filled with sympathy for the Blood Oath Alliance and other groups of young radical officers, and you are even vaguely endorsing their action. You are making it very difficult for us!"

"You're right."

Lei Chenghu did not even bother to look at Dongfang Bai's trap but simply stepped into it without any hesitation. He admitted frankly, "I don't agree with the Blood Oath Alliance's assassination against Elder Dongfang Tuo, and I do not want to see the glorious triumph ceremony of the Imperium's army to be deteriorated into a bloody mess. However, regarding the ideas of many young officers' groups in the frontline, including the Blood Oath Alliance's, I do not object to all of them.

"They have been fighting in the frontmost, and they know the situation of the war and the enemy best. The base and the Council of Elders in the rear must listen to them carefully. If that were done earlier, the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance would never have happened."

Dongfang Bai grew excited all of a sudden. With a drop of cold sweat dripping from his forehead, he asked, his voice shivering, "Marquis Liaohai, would you like to specify how you do not object to all the ideas of the young officers? We know that one of the essential ideas of the radical groups such as the Blood Oath Alliance is to strongly oppose the reorganization of the expedition army. Instead, more soldiers must be mobilized to the frontline, and more resources must be shipped there too. The independence of the expedition army should also be increased!

"Just now, you turned down the offer of the leadership of the Coalition Command Headquarters. So, does it mean you second the idea of the expansion of the expedition army too?”

“Yes.”

Lei Chenghu said calmly, “I agreed to leave the Astounding Thunder Fleet for the capital together with you because I wanted to state my firmest attitude in the Council of Elders before the five hundred elders. The expedition army must not be reorganized or disbanded. Instead, it should be further expanded. The soldiers in the frontline should also be given more autonomy so that we can control the war more promptly and search for the main force of the Covenant Alliance for a decisive battle!

“I didn’t know that I would be sent to this place.

“However, many elders must be watching this meeting. So, it will be the same if I talk here.”

There was nothing but dead silence in the air.

All the three investigators were dumbfounded. They never thought that it would be so easy to trick Lei Chenghu into saying the most disturbing words for all the four Kurfürst families.

The expedition army absolutely would not accept reduction or reorganization, and it demanded further expansion!

It also asked for greater autonomy!

What was Lei Chenghu, the man that had been praised by countless soldiers in the frontline as the “God of War”, thinking exactly?

Dongfang Bai took out a handkerchief that was as smooth as silk from his pocket and wiped the cold sweat on his forehead softly.

He couldn’t help but feel intimidated, as if he had gone fishing only to find that he caught a shark.

“Why?”

With everything coming to this moment, he became prudent and asked cautiously, “Marquis Liaohai, you should understand the subtle situation that the expedition army is in very well, right? We have secured a crushing triumph in the counterattack, and the rear’s support for the war has reached limits too. It is time to rest and digest the fruits of victory.

“War is logistics, and our logistics cannot supply another decade of war anymore. It is time to take a brief rest and refresh ourselves.

“Such a simple logic may be too difficult to understand for the young radical officers in the frontline, but I don’t think that an experienced general such as yourself does not know it.

“So, what is the real purpose of continuing to expand the expedition army? Please explain to the special investigation committee and the Council of Elders.”

Lei Chenghu stared at Dongfang Bai for a long time, before he burst into such great laughter that his tears were almost running out. “Who told you that we had secured a ‘crushing triumph’? Even the soldiers who fight in blood on the frontline do not dare to say that. People like you who know nothing but bragging in the rear have been telling lies for such a long time that you have even deceived yourselves!

"I have been fighting the Covenant Alliance for my entire life, and I know their styles and methods as clearly as I know my fingers. In the Imperium's counterattack over the past ten years, except for the battles that were for the purpose of consuming the available forces of our army, the fighting will of the Covenant Alliance was much weaker than the past in most of the battles. Cases were not rare that they collapsed at the first engagement of fire, not having the fearless and relentless determination of the zealots at all.

"It is highly unreasonable that the Covenant Alliance's morale dropped to such an extent in only several years. It is more like that our enemy is preserving their strength.

"Today, we seem to have recovered dozens of Sectors and hundreds of resource planets, but a fairly large part of them were forsaken by the enemy voluntarily after all the infrastructures on the planet was destroyed and the resources were taken away. As a result, those planets could not output soldiers and productivity for the Imperium in the next couple of years.

"After a great waste of soldiers, food, and other resources, what we have achieved is only a certain amount of strategic depth. However, in the wars today where the main way of projection is space jump, the so-called strategic depth matters little.

"Therefore, there is no 'crushing triumph' at all. The Imperium right now is like a boa that has just swallowed an elephant but is coveted by a new enemy. This is the most dangerous moment.

"Therefore, whatever the cost is, we must continue dedicating resources to the frontline and expand the expedition army until we find out the main force of the

Covenant Alliance and destroy it. Only after we annihilate the main mobile forces of the enemy can we digest the fruits of victory in peace.”

“The Imperium is already doing its best!”

Dongfang Bai gnashed his teeth. “To support the super war that involves dozens of Sectors, too many people in the farmlands and mines in the rear have died, and too many riots have been raised!”

“War means deaths. After such a long time of warfare, what is being tested here is exactly the determination of fighting. If the victory can only be secured with the lives of fifty billion people, let fifty billion people die. If a hundred billion must be devoted to the cause, a hundred billion it will be! Only in such a way can the remaining people survive and build a brand-new Imperium!”

Lei Chenghu said coldly, “If there is a riot, just suppress it brutally. I don’t think the useless soldiers staying in the rear are incapable of taking care of a few hominoids or Cultivators, are they?”

Chapter 2201 - National Gamble!

Dongfang Bai was truly dumbfounded.

The three hyenas that intended to gnaw the corpse of the giant beast suddenly discovered that they were the prey under its sharp tusks. They couldn’t help but shudder slightly under Lei Chenghu’s radiating eyes.

“Are-Are you serious?”

Dongfang Bai stuttered.

Lei Chenghu smiled sullenly, his eyes full of disdain and pity. He sighed. “You talk about ‘survival of the fittest’ all the time, and when you are faced with dozens of specific hominoids, you are not reluctant to ravage and take away their lives. But when things get serious, you all have cold feet.

“What kind of Immortal Cultivators are you exactly? You are just useless garbage under the disguise of Immortal Cultivators who dwell in the boring ecstasy of showing your magnificence by bullying the weak!

“Those words are exactly what I want to say to the Council of Elders. I am responsible for all of them, and none of them is a joke.

“Although I confronted the Covenant Alliance in the Black Wind Sector for a hundred years, I never agreed to launch the strategic counterattack in the first place.

“However, the Council of Elders had already issued the call of a general mobilization. I had no choice but to carry out the order of the Council of Elders dutifully.

“After our army pushed forward to the line of ‘Shenying-Guhe’ unstoppably, recovering eighteen Sectors in a row, I reported to the Council of Elders again and requested to change from strategic attack to strategic defense immediately. We should not launch a new round of attacks until we run the eighteen Sectors carefully for at least fifty years.

“However, the greedy, shortsighted guys in the Council of Elders and the base of the expedition army threw my kind advice aside again. They pushed forward recklessly like wild dogs that had smelled meat, until when dozens of Sectors are swallowed today, making the pressure on defense and logistics higher than ever.

“You know what fear is now, and you want to stop while you still can?

“Let me tell you, it’s too late!

“The Covenant Alliance will absolutely not stand by and watch the Imperium revives the recovered territory. In the past ten years, our army has conquered so many habitable planets and resource planets, but we never found any sign of the main force of the Covenant Alliance, which is the greatest hidden problem!

“I guarantee with the head on my neck that before long, perhaps when the noble lords in the court of the Imperium are struggling against each other while negotiating how the ‘fruits of victory’ should be divided, the main force of the Covenant Alliance will certainly march out from the least expected coordinates and launch the counterattack of the greatest scale so far. If our army cannot resist the counterattack, not only will we lose all the recovered worlds, we will even completely lose the strategical initiative of the war. Our heartland will be exposed to the edge of the Covenant Alliance at the mercy of our enemy!

“It is barely possible for us to get out of the peril. You people who sit in the offices daydreaming before the crystal processors are truly hilariously ignorant!

“The best defense is attack. Before, I did not support launching such an immature counterattack, but now that the counterattack has been carried out for such a long time, objection won’t help anything anymore. Instead of distributing the precious forces to the dozens of Sectors that have just been recovered and are seriously short of resources, I would rather concentrate all the soldiers and continue pushing forward to the heartland of the Covenant Alliance!

“In order to completely break through the Covenant Alliance’s last defense line and force the enemy’s main force into a decisive battle, the scale of the expedition army must be expanded by at least 20%!”

20%!

The three investigators including Dongfang Bai were completely dumbfounded. Looking at each other in bewilderment, they did not know what to say for a long time.

“I know that there are difficulties. But no war comes easily.”

Lei Chenghu said casually, “I have carefully studied all the economic policies and regulations of awards and punishments that are implemented in the general mobilization. It occurs to me that you have neither explained the great significance of the war and the dangerous situation the Imperium is faced with to the people, nor completely trigger the people’s resolution to sacrifice everything for the civilization of mankind.

“In my eyes, there are still great potentials to be dug out in the rear. I am writing an article named ‘Strategies of the Next Phase’, in which I have described a ‘concentration camp system’. It is supposed to be used on the people of the newly-recovered space zones who have been seriously brainwashed by the Covenant Alliance. But at such a critical moment, it wouldn’t hurt to set up certain ‘concentration camps’ in the worlds that are deeply polluted by the ideas of the Cultivators with riots happening all the time. I believe that it will significantly increase the work efficiency of the hominoids and their patriotism. At the very least, it will greatly lower their consumption, save more resources, and ensure the supply in the frontline.

“All in all, the war has reached the most critical moment. The Imperium and the Covenant Alliance are like two bulls who stick each other with their horns. Both of them are panting and exhausted. All that matters is who collapses first. Everything will be doomed when one of them shows the slightest sign of collapse!

“Therefore, from now on, we must be prepared to fight for another five to ten years and sacrifice at least fifty billion people. If you want to win, the Council of Elders must consider my strategies carefully.”

Dongfang Bai swallowed hard and slightly stepped back, as if a ferocious tiger surrounded by ghostly fire would rip apart the barrier of the space and tore his throat directly.

“The Council of Elders will never agree to such a crazy plan.”

The head of the special agents swallowed hard, his voice shivering like a flickering candle. “Besides, the local nobles and warlords are already complaining and resisting openly and secretly at the current intensity of resource supply. How can we further intensify the general mobilization?”

Lei Chenghu smiled. With a “I knew you cannot achieve it” look on his face, he changed the topic and said, “If you can’t, just prepare for a strategic retreat!”

Dongfang Bai was utterly confused. “What?”

“The dozens of newly-recovered Sectors are destined to be lost.”

Lei Chenghu explained patiently, not to Dongfang Bai, but to the many elders behind him. “Especially the twenty or so Sectors that have been conquered in the recent three years. They are the thorny, poisonous baits that the Covenant Alliance has tossed out!

“If the Council of Elders cannot send more soldiers to the expedition army, I suggest we abandon the twenty Sectors voluntarily and retreat the army back to the ‘Shenying-Guhe’ line to both concentrate the troops and reduce the logistical pressure. Perhaps there will still be a chance to resist the Covenant Alliance’s last counterattack.

“Of course, even if we choose the relatively conservative strategy and really retreat to the ‘Shenying-Guhe’ line, the expedition army must not be reduced or disbanded. It must retain its current scale and further concentrate on the chain of command. That is the only way to find an opportunity for a strategic decisive battle with the main force of the Covenant Alliance!”

“It is even less possible!”

Dongfang Bai blurted out, “The enemy has run off after a crushing defeat, and yet you ask our army to back off without fighting and abandon more than twenty worlds voluntarily. That is really—”

“Yes. It’s truly impossible. The ravenous nobles have long craned their necks ready to divide the delicious and succulent trophies. Who is willing to give away the fat meat that they have already swallowed?”

Lei Chenghu shook his head and sighed. “Cowardice is not the reason for failure, nor is greediness. But if you are both cowardly and greedy, or if you are greedy when you should be cowardly and cowardly when you should be greedy, there is no way that you can survive!

“This is all that I want to say. Do what you see as fit!”

Lei Chenghu closed his eyes slowly, deep in thought.

“Marquis Liaohai…”

Dongfang Bai was overwhelmed for a moment. After a long daze, he said, “I’m afraid you are exaggerating, aren’t you? While alluring the enemy to push forward recklessly has always been a trick in the military, who is ever crazy enough to pay the price of dozens of Sectors to do so?

“We are talking about dozens of habitable planets and hundreds of resource planets. The population, mother lodes, and all kinds of resources are inestimable!

“Such tremendous resources would be absorbed by the Imperium if there is an error in their strategy. By then, the Covenant Alliance will really be doomed for failure!

“Even the craziest gambler would not take such a wild gamble, would they? This is almost a gamble on the fate of the country!

“More than ten years ago, when the Imperium launched the strategic counterattack, the Covenant Alliance was clearly at an advantage. Why would they resort to such an insane gamble?

“Therefore, the base and the Council of Elders have considered if the enemy was alluring us to push forward, but the possibility is little to none!”

“Oh?”

Lei Chenghu opened his eyes abruptly again and said, one word after another, “A gamble on the country’s face? Well said!

“It is true that, if the Covenant Alliance is as strong as it appears, and it keeps its advantages over the Imperium, there will be no reason for any gamble.

“But what if the Covenant Alliance is not as strong as it appears?

“What if the enemy is on the verge of collapse after everything has been wasted in the millennium war?

“What if the Covenant Alliance is destined to collapse if they fight the Imperium in the battlefield for decades instead of playing the trick to allure us to push forward?

“In such a case, is it possible that the enemy would wager everything in a wild gamble? Tell me!”

Shocked, Dongfang Bai was rendered speechless.

“Compared to the system of the Imperium, the greatest advantage of the Covenant Alliance’s system is that the desires and the free will of the citizens are contained to the largest extent through the genetic brainwashing.”

Lei Chenghu said casually, “In such a way, the strength of all the citizens is highly concentrated almost without any internal conflicts. The friction within the society is close to none, unlike the Imperium where internal competitions happen all the time.

“But such an abnormal system also has a natural-born deficiency.

“Without free will, there will be no creativity and innovation. Without feelings and desires, nobody will think to push civilization forward. The whole world is lifeless, and everybody is just a fully-wound machine in their place.

“The only factor that pushes the Covenant Alliance to evolve is the Pangu relics that they have been excavating. They upgrade themselves by the technologies and the magical equipment that their ‘god’ grants them.

“A thousand years ago, with the advanced technologies from the Pangu relics and the zero-friction social system, the Covenant Alliance took the Imperium unprepared and secured a strategic advantage over the Imperium.

“However, wars are the fastest means of communication between civilizations. After a thousand years of war, the Imperium boasts technologies close to the Covenant Alliance through various channels.

“In the meantime, the fatal weaknesses of the Covenant Alliance, namely the lack of creativity and motivation and the lifelessness, have been more and more exposed.

“Besides, for the past thousand years, the Imperium has been occupying the most prosperous area at the center of the cosmos, with a comprehensive national power higher than the Covenant Alliance’s. Despite the brutal failures in the frontline, it can always refill new soldiers and resources incessantly. The Covenant Alliance, on the other hand, cannot afford such a war of attrition.

“The war of the Covenant Alliance against the Imperium is a typical war where a small country fights a big one. It is already a miracle of miracles that they persisted for a thousand years. Now that they are done with their clever tricks, and they know they only have several decades left, is it strange at all that they decide to play an insane gamble?”

Chapter 2202 - The Last Decency

The more Lei Chenghu said, the more absurd Dongfang Bai found it to be. He couldn’t help but interrupt him, “Marquis Liaohai, your theory about the gamble of the country’s fate is just your speculation, right? Do you have the slightest proof?”

“Not at all.”

Lei Chenghu pointed at his head and admitted frankly, “It is just my guess based on my intuitions.”

Dongfang Bai was amused. “Your guess? Intuitions?”

“War is an art of speculations. Any commander can be victorious when they have all the information both on their own side and on their enemy’s side, but only the most experienced, sensitive, and excellent commander is capable of predicting the enemy’s capabilities and strategies when the enemy is in the dark because of the lack of intelligence.”

Lei Chenghu said casually, “My intense intuitions are stabbing my brain brutally every second like iron needles, telling me that the main force of the Covenant Alliance is coveting us from the darkness in space. As long as we are sluggish for one moment, they will lunge out and cut our throats.

“It is a sense of danger that cannot be described in any words. Someone who has never fought in a battlefield for real can never understand it.”

Dongfang Bai gnashed his teeth again. “You…”

Eyeing Dongfang Bai up and down for a long time, Lei Chenghu suddenly put on a mysterious smile. “However, after observing the stupid look on your face, I’m starting to believe that the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance was not your scheme.

“Then, it is even worse now.

“If it was not certain malicious guys in the Council of Elders who organized the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance, it could only have been done by the Covenant Alliance.

“The spies of the Covenant Alliance have infiltrated the base of the expedition army and the Council of Elders to an unimaginably deep level, considering that they could both plan the assassination of the Blood Oath Alliance and manipulate you like fools.”

“W-What?”

Dongfang Bai’s face was as pale as a paper. “Are you suggesting that the Covenant Alliance is behind the Blood Oath Alliance?”

“Could it be anybody else?”

Lei Chenghu sighed and said, “In such a critical moment, who will benefit most from the escalation of the conflicts between the frontline and the fear?

“Think about the question clearly. If your greediness blinds your wisdom, and you are truly determined to do things that will hurt your friends and delight your foe, I assure you that the main force of the Covenant Alliance will certainly march to your front in the next second of your celebration!”

“Hehe...”

Dongfang Bai narrowed his eyes, full of suspicion.

“I’m starting to regret that I left the Astounding Thunder Fleet and returned to the capital with you under the illusion that I could convince the Council of Elders.”

Looking at the face of the head of the special agents, Lei Chenghu sighed. “I have realized that I made a horrible mistake, one that countless generals in the frontline have made since ancient times. They greatly overestimated the wisdom of the noble lords in the court behind them and underestimated their insatiable ravenousness.

“People can only see the things they want to see and believe the things they want to hear. A lot of people in the Council of Elders hate my guts. They cannot sleep in peace as long as I am alive. I’m afraid that they have been hoping that I can retire or even ‘unfortunately perish’ for a long time, haven’t they?

“For those elders, even if they are faced with a piece of intelligence regarding the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance that is brimming with loopholes, they will simply turn a blind eye to them and believe it unconditionally.

“With everything coming to this point, there is nothing we need to talk about now. I will never make any public statements. I cannot provide any convenience to help you control the Astounding Thunder Fleet either. My future depends on the ruling of the Council of Elders. Unless you are about to drag me out for a secret execution, you don’t need to come to waste my time again!”

Indifferently, Lei Chenghu held his arms and made a posture of farewell.

The three investigators looked at each other for a long time, all flinching.

After a long hesitation, Dongfang Bai gnashed his teeth. “Marquis Liaohai, if you insist on not making a public statement, and you are unwilling to persuade the radicals in the Astounding Thunder Fleet to leave the frontline and receive investigations in the rear, it is very possible that certain extremely unpleasant and violent conflicts will burst out. Wouldn’t that give an opportunity for the Covenant Alliance, which might cast the Imperium into eternal doom, like you said just now?

“Is that what you want to see? By then, will you be as peaceful as right now?”

Lei Chenghu stared at Dongfang Bai without blinking, the intensity in his eyes growing level by level. Eventually, they were glittering like the light of the double main guns of a super heavy warship immediately before a bombardment.

His voice that was as tough as iron and as indifferent as ice shot out clearly like the bullets of an anti-materiel sniper rifle. “I will do my best to protect my homeland, the Imperium of True Human Beings! Even if all the soldiers of the Imperium have sacrificed and I am the only one left, I will still charge at the enemy’s starships without any hesitation!

“However—

“Isn’t survival of the fittest the belief of the Immortal Cultivators and the self-explanatory truth of the Imperium of True Human Beings?

“If my warriors and I can’t rescue the decayed, corrupted country after doing everything we can, and the army of the

Alliance of the Holy Covenant sweeps across the entire sea of stars, it will mean that we chose a wrong path, and that the people and system of the Alliance of the Holy Covenant are more advanced than those of the Imperium. The Covenant Alliance, as well as the Pangu Clan hidden behind the Covenant Alliance, is a superior species that is more excellent than the humans of the Imperium and more entitled to the prosperous resources at the center of the cosmos, with which they will create a new-generation of Pangu Civilization that is more brilliant than the civilization of mankind.

“In that case, I will have nothing to say. What can I do except to admit my failure and pay the greatest homage to my opponent? Bursting into fury like a clown?

“In the infinite universal battlefield that is haunted by eternal wars, admitting failure after losing a gamble is perhaps the last decency of a civilization. Failures are as normal as victories for any general. I am already braced for any outcome.”

Faced with the honest eyes of Lei Chenghu, the three investigators were all uneasy.

The filth and insignificance in their hearts seemed to have been illuminated by the brilliance emanated by Lei Chenghu, which was even more dazzling than the star.

Their attitude was entirely different from when they just entered, and they had been truly awed by Lei Chenghu.

“G-Got it.”

Dongfang Bai said in a panic, “This meeting is now concluded. We will report everything that Marquis Liaohai said just now to the Council of Elders exactly as it is for discussion. In any case, I absolutely trust Marquis Liaohai's loyalty myself, and I will handle the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance cautiously. Please take a rest here for a couple of days. We will be off for now."

The three investigators bowed at Lei Chenghu deeply again and backed off until they left the clean and quiet prison room.

Lei Chenghu did not bother to waste any time on them when they closed the door of the room again. He simply switched the crystal processor to the precious document.

Crossing his hands, he was deep in thought, as if he did not care about the investigation just now at all but about to continue his article that was interrupted just now.

However, after he turned on the light beam, he was silent and still like a dry tree for ten minutes without recording a single word into the crystal processor.

After ten minutes of silence, deep gasps suddenly echoed in the dead air.

The old general's eyebrows, wrinkles, lips, and throat shivered at the same time.

Two drops of dirty tears, along the deep, interconnected trenches, slipped through his face that had been roughened by the wind and storm.

Lei Chenghu, the "God of War", covered his chest and moaned with the feeblest voice, "Imperium…"

…

Billions of stars away, in the Deep Sea Palace, the secret base of the reformists, Li Yao and the mental devil were discussing the legendary “God of War” too.

“While you were maintaining the crystal suits, teaching the boy Li Jialing, and studying the treasures from the Empyreal Transcendence Sector with the queen in the past days, I snuck into the Spiritual Nexus and collected the files on Lei Chenghu. Tsk, tsk, tsk. It is truly shocking!”

The mental devil remarked in amazement, “This man is certainly not a lenient folk that he struck us to be when we first heard of him. Yes. He is selfless, fair, and loyal to the country. Those parts are real. But his methods are extremely ruthless and brutal too. I like it!

“Let’s take for example his grand entrance more than a hundred years ago, when the Black Wind Fleet escaped with the remaining soldiers of the five worlds after the collapse of the battle line.

“The queen only told us that Lei Chenghu eventually resisted the attacks of the Covenant Alliance, defended the second defense line behind the Black Wind Sector steadily, and constructed an iron wall, making the greatest contribution by stalling the Covenant Alliance for a hundred years. But she did not tell you how Lei Chenghu made it, did she?

“Let me tell you, the moment Lei Chenghu arrived at the frontline, he announced that quite a few habitable planets and resource planets in the battle area were under ‘military control’. The assets of all the ‘hominoids’ and most of the ‘true human beings’ were all forced to be purchased with ‘military notes’. They were essentially appropriated.

“Those who showed the slightest disobedience would be sent to the ‘glory camp’, which was a concentration camp invented by him that was said to be even more cruel and dark than the slave mines.

“Only in such a way was he able to collect tremendous resources in the shortest amount of time and prevent the panic and riots on a few planets. How could anybody have rioted when they were all under ‘military control’?”

“So ruthless?”

Li Yao was greatly alarmed.

He knew that “hominoids” did not equal “slaves” in the Imperium of True Human Beings. Many hominoids were free folks and enjoyed the property rights.

After all, from a long-term perspective, the productivity of a pure slavery system was not very high. Today, even the slave mines in the Imperium had to stimulate and motivate the miners with the slaughter stream platforms or the energy pills.

Therefore, no matter how the hominoids were oppressed and exploited, most of the hominoids were theoretically free, and their private properties were protected by law.

In addition, Lei Chenghu was even bold enough to confiscate the properties of a lot of Immortal Cultivators and even throw them to concentration camps?

The man was truly crazy and tough!

Chapter 2203 - Firewall

“Furthermore—”

The mental devil went on, “General Lei Chenghu also enlisted a large batch of true human beings and hominoids into his army purely as consumable cannon fodder. That was how he earned the precious moment of rest, which allowed him to regroup the collapsed troops, rebuild the defense line, and get enough mobile forces.

“On the other hand, he also propagated that everybody, from the soldiers to the civilians, must die for their country. He distributed ‘banzai bombs’ and the battle excitants to all the people in the battle area, while he instilled the idea of dying together with the enemy for the service of the emperor and the country into them.”

Li Yao asked, “What is the ‘banzai bomb’ exactly?”

The mental devil replied, “They were lousily-made crystal bombs. Almost all people in the battle area under his command had one.

“Lei Chenghu demanded that, upon the arrival of the army of the Covenant Alliance, those people should inject excitants to their necks to receive momentary strengthening and stimulation, before they shout ‘banzai’ and die together with the enemy using the crystal bombs. At the very least, they should kill themselves with those crystal bombs to preserve their dignity as citizens of the Imperium.

“Of course, his decision was not entirely unjustifiable. After all, once the planet was occupied and the people were captured by the Covenant Alliance, they would be sent to the so-called ‘temples’ for brainwashing. They would be deprived of their feelings and self-awareness, transforming them into machines of flesh and blood that knew nothing except for carrying out orders dutifully. The strength of the Covenant Alliance would be further built up.

“However, from the perspective of the Cultivators, what Lei Chenghu did was certainly too cruel.

“All in all, Lei Chenghu was the first one to carry out the ‘wasteland strategy’, and he carried it out most completely. Whenever he retreated from a planet, he would not leave a single mine or warehouse to the Covenant Alliance. As for the industrial facilities, they had been blown to the ground since a long time ago.

“About the people, he would organize them to evacuate with the fleet through iron approaches to maintain the available strength as much as possible, but for the people that could not be evacuated, he never cared about their lives either. He even publicly encouraged them to die so that the burden of the Imperium would be reduced and they would not end up as the enemy’s cannon fodder.

“Lei Chenghu’s ruthless if not insane tactics were quite controversial even within the Imperium. The nobles whose properties were confiscated by him against the law and who were forced to go to the frontline as cannon fodder, as well as the interest groups that were involved in the issue, initiated crazy attacks on him later.

“However, after a series of impeccable victories, even those enraged guys had to admit that what Lei Chenghu did completely fitted the practice of the Immortal Cultivators, and that if he hadn’t done it, the army of the Covenant

Alliance would've likely marched into the heartland of the Imperium in their high morale, in which case everything would've been screwed!

"Anyway… If there is ever a real, textbook Immortal Cultivator, that will certainly be Lei Chenghu. He seems to have regarded everybody including himself as a chess piece and a weapon to defend the Imperium.

"I find a man with such a distinctive character very likable, but are you sure that you are going to rescue such a stubborn, hardcore Immortal Cultivator as a Cultivator?"

Li Yao thought carefully for a long time.

In fact, he had vaguely guessed it even without the introduction of the mental devil. How could a man who had been appointed as an admiral of the Imperium's army and accoladed as Marquis Liaohai be a good guy?

However…

"I think that our primary concern right now is not whether the reformists can seize the supreme power of the Imperium."

While considering, Li Yao said carefully, "The subtle situation within the Imperium is only one side, and the Covenant Alliance is the other side that is equally important. Those guys of the Covenant Alliance are only puppets but not dead. Would they really do nothing after losing dozens of Sectors and simply watch the Imperium digest the fruits of victory and complete the internal reorganization?

"When we were still in the federation, we had already discussed the issue with the deputy commander of the Black Wind Fleet. From the perspective of an observer, Di Feiwen also thought that the glorious triumph of the Imperium’s counterattack came too easily and uncannily.

“Also, after dozens of Sectors are swallowed, the problems of uneven distribution and indigestion are bound to happen. That will be an opportunity that the Covenant Alliance can take advantage of!

“So, although I don’t know why the Covenant Alliance decided to play a crazy gamble with dozens of Sectors as the wager as if it had gone mad, I believe that the Covenant Alliance must have a scheme!

“Let’s turn around and look at the Imperium right now. It is exactly like what Li Linghai said. All kinds of conflicts are more intense than ever in the last years of the dynasty.

“Conflicts between the smaller nobles and the four Kurfürst families, conflicts between the newly-rising warlords at the peripheral space zones and the traditional magnates at the central space zones, conflicts between true human beings and hominoids, conflicts between the low-level Immortal Cultivators and the high-level Immortal Cultivators, and conflicts between the expedition army and the Council of Elders.

“Even Li Linghai, who wants to eliminate all the conflicts with the dead bodies of the four Kurfürst families, may have deeper ambitions that she has not revealed yet, and it may bring about greater conflicts. Who knows?

“If the Covenant Alliance takes the opportunity when all the conflicts in the Imperium break out at the same time, what will happen?”

After a long silence, the mental devil said, “If the Covenant Alliance really plans to seize the precious moment when all the conflicts break out at the same time, they will have to know the things that are happening in the Imperium clearly.”

“It’s not unlikely. Do you still remember ‘Tang Qianhe’, the puppet of the Covenant Alliance we encountered in the Kunlun relic more than a hundred years ago?”

Li Yao said, “Tang Qianhe was a spy from the Covenant Alliance, but she was able to simulate the feelings of a normal person vividly and even infiltrate into Su Changfa’s exploration team without being discovered by anyone.

“Su Changfa also told us later that the Covenant Alliance’s technologies in the simulation of emotions were much better than the ‘Ring-Tu Test’ of the Imperium that was used to resist the infiltration of the Covenant Alliance. There is no telling how many spies have been sent into the Imperium. Many of the spies are the so-called ‘silencers’. They will not reveal their identities unless it is absolutely necessary.

“Let’s take Tang Qianhe for example. She only ripped apart her disguise and revealed her true intention after discovering a living member of the Pangu Clan.

“Think about it. What if we hadn’t discovered a living member of the Pangu Clan? Would it have been possible that Tang Qianhe followed Su Changfa and Kou Ruhuo into the federation?

“The Imperium and the Covenant Alliance have been fighting for ten thousand years. Countless spies of the Covenant Alliance are lurking within the Imperium and sending intelligence back to the Covenant Alliance incessantly. It is perfectly normal!

"But on the other hand, it is not so easy for the spies of the Imperium to lurk in the Covenant Alliance. Pretending to be someone whose feelings and free will are completely erased is too difficult!"

The mental devil said, "Now that you mentioned it, I remember 'Tang Qianhe' too. That woman was crazy enough to turn herself into pure energy in order to awaken the member of the Pangu Clan. That was truly horrible.

"If a spy of the Covenant Alliance could be found in a tiny exploration squad, it is possible that more spies are hidden in the critical departments of the Imperium. They are truly likely to grasp and even manipulate the escalation and outbreak of certain conflicts of the Imperium in secret."

"Therefore—"

Li Yao said, "The millennium equilibrium is not so easy to be broken. The glorious triumph of the Imperium's counterattack is not as glorious as it appears. Even if the army of the Imperium is truly invincible in the frontline, their rear is even more dangerous and vulnerable right now!

"One moment of carelessness, and the Covenant Alliance will launch a counterattack. It is not entirely unlikely that the Imperium that is mired in civil war will totally collapse!

"In the event of the Imperium's total collapse, there will be two consequences.

"Firstly, all the people living in the hundreds of worlds of the Imperium, be they Immortal Cultivators or ordinary people, will be involved in infinite warfare. Their lives will be a hundred times more miserable than right now. They will be either brainwashed into puppets of flesh and blood or blown into smithereens together with their homeland.

“Although I hate to admit it, the Imperium of True Human Beings has indeed maintained unity and general peace in the populated worlds at the center of the cosmos.

“It is better to be a dog in a peaceful world than to be a human in the time of war. I can’t imagine what kind of oceans of blood will be raised once the Imperium collapses abruptly.

“Secondly, after the Imperium collapses and the Covenant Alliance absorbs most of its strength, it will definitely expand into a behemoth that will swallow the entire universe. The Star Glory Federation will be faced with the pressure of the giant beast alone.

“The Black Wind Fleet still maintains the lowest level of communication with the homeland of the Imperium. The existence of the federation cannot be kept a secret for very long. In one to two hundred years at most, after finishing the absorption and combination of the Imperium, the Covenant Alliance will certainly lay its evil hands on the federation.

“What can the federation do in two hundred years? Build a giant starship and run away like the Star Ocean Republic in the past?

“If the Imperium and the federation both collapse, and the Covenant Alliance develop and awaken large members of the Pangu Clan, will there be any hope for mankind? Will they be completely abandoned by the Pangu Clan like tools that have fulfilled their purposes?

“Therefore, from the perspectives of the billions of ordinary people at the center of the cosmos, the national interests of the Star Glory Federation, and the civilization of mankind as a whole, it is best to maintain the stability of the Imperium, make it a ‘fireball’ between the federation and the Covenant Alliance, and keep the two as evenly matched parties.

“In the entire Imperium, if anyone can resist the Covenant Alliance’s fatal attacks, it will be ‘God of War’ Lei Chenghu.

“Besides, although the four Kurfürst families have arrested Lei Chenghu, they will not necessarily kill him. The two parties may reach a deal, and Lei Chenghu may break out of the siege in other ways. The bottom line is, we cannot influence him at all.

“If we rescue Lei Chenghu in cooperation with Li Linghai and place him on the side of the ‘reformists’, we will be able to observe and influence him from a close distance. In the most extreme scenario, there will even be a chance to kill him. He is an experienced expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage, but he is the commander of a fleet after all who must be more focused on the arts of commanding. There is no reason why he can be a better fighter than we are, can he?”

“Fair enough. Your head is getting clearer now.”

The mental devil pondered for a moment before it suddenly shrieked, “Watch out!”

Chapter 2204 - Majestic Wings

2204 Majestic Wings

Focusing his attention, Li Yao returned to reality.

When he was discussing whether or not General Lei Chenghu should be rescued with the mental devil in his head with 5% of his computational ability, the other 95% of his computational ability was controlling his body and the newly-strengthened Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit for the last real-life test.

It was in a super enormous cubic cage more than a thousand meters in diameter, which was the most advanced test field in the Deep Sea Palace with random gravity.

The most solid defense rune arrays were deployed in every direction. A lot of the defense rune arrays carried intensive electric arcs that would unleash flames with a temperature of thousands of degrees. If some of them were unfortunately blown to the edge of the cage, they would likely suffer a second damage.

In an environment of “random gravity”, they might be in the state of weightlessness in one second but caught in thirty times the standard gravity with a hundred times the standard air pressure in the next second, which made the challenges in the test field particularly dangerous.

When the mental devil shouted “watch out”, the blade made of special meteorites that looked like the teeth of a shark was only two centimeters away from the feeblest active component at the neck of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit while vibrating more than five thousand times per second.

Not just that, three flying swords were darting at Li Yao’s head, breastplate, and abdomen as quickly as lightning with more than four times the speed of sound.

The flying swords were so fast that the glittering attack rune arrays on their bodies left rainbow-like shadows behind them.

Not far away, more than fifty crystal cannons were bombarding Li Yao crazily, and a hundred vibration sabers and chainswords were coveting him too, blocking every one of Li Yao’s escape.

Everything around him was transformed into complicated data streams and sent into Li Yao’s brain.

They were analyzed by him clearly within a moment with more than fifty possible subsequent changes.

The hundred best members of the assault team in the Deep Sea Fleet, under the scanning of Li Yao’s soul, were nothing more than a hundred targets that moved relatively faster and roared relatively loudly.

“Pu!”

Tremendous black fog spurted out of the gap of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. Li Yao’s body became unpredictable again.

The unstoppable vibration saber was only one last centimeter away from his neck, but it was stopped by his spiritual shield and could not break through the defense at all.

On the other hand, Li Yao simply snatched the wrist of the saber’s owner, broke it apart, and took the saber away from him. Then, he threw the saber backward at where the soldiers were densest.

Hardly was it thrown to the air above those soldiers when the saber that had been filled with his explosive spiritual energy exploded brutally. The shrieking pieces were melted into high-heat metal fluids and splashed like a storm, greatly disrupting the siege of the soldiers.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Taking the opportunity of the gap, Li Yao released four black crystals the size of the palm. They flew agilely around Li Yao and immediately stretched out into four rhombus shields under the boost of his spiritual energy. As they hovered rapidly, they blocked the stormy barrage, and none of the cannons could leave any mark on the surfaces of the shields at all.

The special crystal material that was mysterious and unknown was one of the treasures that Li Linghai found in the Empyreal Transcendence Sector.

The queen of the Imperium did not go back on her words. Perhaps it was because she was desperately in need of Li Yao’s loyalty to the reformists in such an urgent situation, she indeed brought out a lot of secret treasures from the mausoleum of the Supreme Emperor as a gesture of friendliness.

Of course, Li Yao did not take away her treasures for nothing. It was a win-win situation for both of them.

Li Linghai had discovered the mausoleum of the Supreme Emperor more than a hundred years ago and received abundant treasures and heritages from it.

But Li Linghai was not a refiner herself. She did not know the first thing about the usage of many of the different types of ancient magical equipment or the effects and refining methods of the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures.

The mausoleum of the Supreme Emperor was too important a secret for the ambitious Li Linghai to share with anybody else. Even such a great master as Jin Tianzong did not know that a large batch of treasures in her hands was from the mausoleum of the Supreme Emperor.

So, it had been Li Linghai’s greatest headache as to how to deal with the treasures.

Should the message be leaked, and the four Kurfürst families learned that she held the secrets about the mausoleum of the Supreme Emperor, she would truly be doomed for good.

Li Yao, however, had already learned the secret through the mouth of Li Linghai. He was a top-tier master of refining himself. Most importantly of all, he had half a key that could completely open the mausoleum of the Supreme Emperor!

Naturally, it was not a problem at all for Li Linghai to share the secret with him.

So, the two of them had been cooperating in the past few days. Li Linghai would present the 3D images of the treasures of the Supreme Emperor for Li Yao to identify and study, and Li Yao would work on the materials that he was confident about to strengthen the crystal suits or build all kinds of magical equipment. Part of the materials would be given to Li Yao as a reward.

The four black crystals that looked like both glass and metal, with extremely high tenacity, extension, and resistance, were exactly some of Li Yao’s rewards.

Of course, when Li Linghai just brought them out, they were not dancing crazily and erratically like right now. Instead, they were meticulously preserved in a metal box that was carved with the emblem of the Star Ocean Imperium and locked in a very delicate way.

Li Linghai was unable to open the metal box, and she feared that she would break the items inside if she were to smash it. In the end, it was Li Yao who took the advantage.

The four black crystals boasted a very eccentric feature of energy absorption. Under the saturated attacks of the soldiers, they stretched out further and further, until they almost overlapped and protected the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit inside like a half translucent black ball.

When there was finally a moment of gap after the ammunition and spiritual energy of the enemy’s crystal cannons and storm bolters ran out, Li Yao roared and boosted the black ball to smash at the enemy. The four shields of black crystals exploded and darted at the crowd like four most ferocious black dragons, leaving black streaks of brilliance behind!

Countless soldiers immediately exclaimed in shock. The streaks of black brilliance seemed to have grown eyes and cut the spiritual energy transmission tubes, the most vulnerable parts of their crystal suits, precisely. As a result, abundant violent spiritual energy spurted out of their crystal processor, both disrupting the eyesight of their comrades and resulting in the plummet of the performance parameters of their crystal suits, which were now nothing more than heavy coffins. Eventually, when the gravity was significantly improved next time, they fell like hails and hit the ground heavily.

The hundred soldiers were teaming up against Li Yao alone, and yet almost thirty of them had been blown to the ground by him in the blink of an eye. They could do nothing except to watch the craziness of “Vulture” in midair while they were pressed down dozens of times the standard gravity!

“This is truly gratifying!”

Li Yao grinned, feeling that every pore on his body had been expanded to the maximum, making him more comfortable than ever. “I am absolutely certain that the mysterious world fragment Li Linghai and my pop explored a hundred years ago was certainly the legendary Empyreal Transcendence Sector! Otherwise, there is no way that she can get so many rarely-seen Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and components!

“After the significant enhancement of those treasures, together with the power system that I have carefully built with Master Jin Tianzong’s ‘hybrid design’, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit at this moment is almost a hundred times stronger than the prototype at the beginning. It is as good as any of the ultimate crystal suits of the Imperium of True Human Beings!

“That is not counting… Hehehehe…”

Licking his lips, Li Yao looked at the remaining soldiers who were intimidated and let out malicious laughter.

It was exactly the moment when the gravity of the real-life test field switched from thirty times the standard gravity to zero gravity.

All the soldiers were rigid for a moment due to the sudden change of gravity.

Right when they felt that their heads were dizzy, dazzling light burst out of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit and almost enshrouded the entire test field.

The four Cosmos Rings that were embedded to the two sides of the spine of the crystal suit spurted out abundant metal components, which were connected through the electromagnetic field tightly. They turned out to be—

Wings!

Wings that were as magnificent as the eagle’s and as glamorous as the butterfly’s!

It was not the monotonous black or red in the past but with four extra swirl-shaped patterns, two large and two small, that looked like demonic eyes!

It was exactly the result of the perfect upgrade on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit’s aerodynamic kits with the secret treasures of the Supreme Emperor.

Not only had the initialization process from stillness to the sonic speed been reduced by 20%, but the combat ability at the super high speed was also greatly increased too. With the changes of the four swirl-shaped patterns, the effect of the mental attacks could be greatly enhanced, allowing Li Yao to release massive, large-scale techniques of mental attack to deter the enemy.

Most importantly of all, after the complete transformation, the brand-new Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had completely got rid of the shape of the “Blood Wing” in the past, so nobody would be able to recognize it from the slaughter stream.

It was no longer accurate to describe the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit that had been fully upgraded with the name of “Blood Wing”.

So, Li Yao renamed it as “Majestic Wing”!

Shua!

The moment the Majestic Wing unfolded to the maximum, Li Yao’s mental power also spread out to the entire test field through the four swirl-shaped patterns on the wings.

The dozens of soldiers who had received the toughest training and who had a mind as unyielding as iron felt that their brains were being bashed by a hammer weighing ten thousand tons.

It also felt like a dragon was entangling their bodies while letting out thunderous roars next to their ears!

From the crystal processors that had been connected to the sensors inside every crystal suit wirelessly outside of the test field, it could be clearly seen that the brainwaves of all the soldiers were highly disordered. All their physical parameters were moving up and down beyond their control.

They had been completely intimidated by Li Yao!

Li Yao took the opportunity to flap the Majestic Wing, surpassing five times the speed of sound immediately!

Under the incredible five times the speed of sound, he was still able to control his every movement accurately and almost appeared before the dozens of dumbfounded soldiers at the same time!

Chapter 2205 - The Toughest of the Toughest of the Toughest!

When he walked through the narrow, long pathway, hearing the explosions and screams rising like tides, and entered the observation room next to the real-life test field, “Shadowless” Duan Rui’s heart was palpitating again and again. He felt he was back to a hundred and twenty years ago, when he lurked in a dark, stinky gutter for three days and three nights to assassinate a colonel of the Imperium.

Duan Rui was among the best assassins in the ten or so Sectors at the edge of the third quadrant of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

His amazing abilities of assassination and survival could be seen from the fact that he had retreated from more than three hundred assassination operations safely and lived more than a hundred and forty years in one piece.

It was quite rare for an assassin to live for more than a hundred years, particularly so when one pissed off the four major groups of assassins in the third quadrant of the Imperium and was given the “Black Death Order”.

But during the twenty years that he was hunted, he even assassinated the leaders of two groups of assassins and forced them to reach a “truce” with him on his own.

“Shadowless” Duan Rui was the only person to have made such an appalling achievement among the assassins in the third quadrant in the past hundred years.

“Shadowless” Duan Rui definitely should be proud of himself.

Therefore, when he was recruited by Queen Li Linghai with a high reward, he thought that he was the best assassin under the queen’s command, and he received the funding from Li Linghai for many years, practicing his unique arts with incessant Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures.

Finally, the queen asked him to surface and carry out a mission, after when his invisible sword had been feeling thirsty for a very long time.

However, after he came to the “Deep Sea Palace”, the queen’s most confidential base, where he was faced with the brutal men whose notoriety spread out to the entire Imperium, he was soaked in cold sweat and realized that he was just one of the most common experts under the queen’s command.

Di Xinghui, an expert of mental warfare known as “Soul Swallower”, who removed the “Blood Moon Sect”, their family’s nemesis for generations, by himself!

Mao Feng, a “space hunter” who traveled the sea of stars and made a living by hunting alien species!

Zhao Tiande, a super body fundamentalist who could allegedly tear apart a starship barehandedly and who boasted infinite strength and multiple terrifying techniques!

All of them were the tough men whose fame and capabilities were as good as his.

Just like “Shadowless” Duan Rui, they had vanished from their respective circles a long time ago. Everybody thought that they were dead.

However, they had actually arrived at this place at the same time. Also, their strength was even better than before after being nurtured by the inexhaustible resources that were provided by Li Linghai. The brutality beaming out of their eyes was even more dazzling than before!

The notorious experts who had never seen each other before but had heard each other’s names too many times looked at each other with complicated feelings.

On one hand, they were shocked at the immeasurability of Queen Li Linghai’s force, which had recruited so many desperadoes nationwide without alerting anyone.

In the meantime, they were more or less excited, knowing that the queen had secretly recruited so many tough experts and gathered them here for something great!

With complicated feelings, everybody walked into the observation room.

The magnificent man standing at the observation room, who was as daunting as a starship and as aggressive as a crystal bomb, however, gave all of them a great surprise.

It’s “Bloody Butcher” Wang Kou!

“Shadowless” Duan Rui’s pupils constricted to the minimum. The muscles all over his body constricted beyond his control, and he made the highest defensive posture subconsciously.

The twenty or so fearless desperadoes next to him held their breath too, with subtle reactions happening to their muscles and joints.

They were all scarily brutal men, but “Bloody Butcher” Wang Tu was not on the same level as them.

Their difference was almost like the gap between a killer whale and a tiger shark.

“Bloody Butcher” Wang Kou was a gladiator at the beginning.

Martial arts were highly appreciated in the Imperium of True Human Beings. When there were frictions between Sectors, it was also a common practice to settle the disagreement by a game in the arena.

Many Sectors that were powerful enough would carefully raise their own experts in martial arts to win the games in the arenas.

But some of the less powerful Sectors, due to the lack of advanced techniques, knew that the gladiators of their enemies were too strong and their own warriors would be committing suicide in a fight with them.

Therefore, they would hire strong warriors from the outside world at a high price and ask them to fight as the champions of their Sectors.

That was the origin of “rogue gladiators” as a profession.

They were the “professionals” who wandered among different worlds and fought for the employers in the major arenas.

It was not hard to imagine that, without absolute confidence in their own strength, nobody would be bold enough to take part in such a dangerous profession.

Once they lost a game, even if they were not beaten to death by their opponent, their employer, who would lose great interests, might vent their fury on them.

“Bloody Butcher” Wang Kou, on the other hand, was among the best rogue gladiators.

He once even accomplished a spectacular fifty-game winning streak, where he killed the opponents in forty-nine games.

The only time he did not kill his opponent on the spot was because his opponent kneeled and begged for mercy.

Then, out of kindness, he only blew up the opponent’s bones and internal organs but left the brain intact, giving the guy an opportunity to transfer the soul into an artificial body.

However, that was how he earned the nickname of “Bloody Butcher”.

He was a man who considered “fighting” his belief.

He was also a man who considered the rules of an arena inviolable laws.

Now that it had been decided that the disagreement between two parties would be settled through a game, once the winner was revealed, the loser should admit failure promptly without regretting.

It was a shame that people had changed.

Wang Kou’s rules were perhaps abided by three to five hundred years ago, but at a time when manners mattered no more, few forces were not playing dirty tricks in the darkness.

It was Wang Kou’s fiftieth game, where he encountered the strongest and most respectful opponent of his life; another rogue gladiator with remarkable achievements.

For those who were as capable of fighting as Wang Kou, the only reason they did not settle down but continue living a vagrant, thrilling life could be their passion for fighting.

Wang Kou and his opponent both admired each other.

The best way for the gladiators to show respect for each other was to kill their opponent with their best effort!

Eventually, Wang Kou offered an immaculate death to his opponent and won the match.

However, the force that his opponent represented suddenly went back on their agreement and did not admit the ruling in the arena. Instead, they wanted to settle the problem with starships.

Later, Wang Kou let the particular force know what the wrath of a gladiator was. He was henceforth known as “Bloody Butcher”.

“Shadowless” Duan Rui knew “Bloody Butcher” Wang Kou so well because he once received a mission to assassinate the guy.

It was after Wang Kou burst into fury, broke into the nest of the force that violated the rules of the arena, and went on a killing spree. The man also blew up three of his enemy’s mines and was almost determined to kill everybody who was in his way.

Ninety-seven assassins took the job to assassinate Wang Kou.

“Shadowless” Duan Rui was the most patient one with the clearest head.

Patiently, he watched Wang Kou kill the ninety-six killers one after another before he made the most judicious judgment with his clear head.

He could not kill Wang Kou.

He would rather break the rules of the assassins and leave his group, living a refugee’s life from the moment on, than to try and kill the guy because the former promised a greater likelihood of survival.

It was exactly how dreadful “Bloody Butcher” Wang Kou was!

But right now…

“Shadowless” Duan Rui and the thirty brutal bandits were all greatly shocked!

It was impossible!

What was even more terrifying, appalling, and unbelievable than the existence of “Bloody Butcher” in this place was that—

He was shaking!

“Bloody Butcher” Wang Kou was shaking!

“Bloody Butcher” Wang Kou, who had secured fifty triumphs in the arena in a row and brutalized the opponents using the cruelest methods in seventy-nine games, who challenged a powerful force on his own until his enemies were all shuddering in panic, and who had taken care of almost a hundred assassins casually—the super bandit that intimidated Duan Rui, Di Xinghun, Mao Feng, and Zhao Tian, making them unable to move forward—was really shaking!

Although he was still unleashing a shocking aura from his body, he was merely emboldening himself. Wang Kou’s hair, Wang Kou’s fingers, Wang Kou’s legs… In everyone’s perception, every hair on his body was shaking hard, as if he had been frozen to the bones!

What… What can possibly scare “Bloody Butcher” Wang Kou into this?

“Shadowless” Duan Rui and the other brutal men all swallowed hard. Their eyes surpassed “Bloody Butcher” Wang Kou and glanced at the test field with random gravity on their opposite side.

The test field was empty, but the aftermath of spiritual energy was still raging like a tsunami. A fierce battle was just over.

Broken, seriously twisted crystal suits were lying all over the ground. Blood and screams were erupting out of them now and then.

The hundred elite soldiers inside seemed to have just been crumbled by one, no, a horde of primeval beasts heavily.

Are you serious? This is supposed to be only a “test”!

“Shadowless” Duan Rui and other bandits felt that their blood was freezing.

What was tested inside just now? A super strengthened alien beast?

Shua!

The door between the test field and the observation room was opened. A man that seemed rather young and plain walked in.

“Shadowless” Duan Rui blinked his eyes and looked around, only to discover that other people were as confused as him and did not seem to know the young man. He couldn’t have been a famous expert outside, right?

But in the next second, the scene that made almost everybody’s jaw hit the ground took place!

“Bloody Butcher” Wang Kou rushed forward in a hurry and bowed to the young man deeply, before he said respectfully, “Senior Li, you’ve been troubled!”

Chapter 2206 - Terrifying Old Monster!

2206 Terrifying Old Monster!

“Shadowless” Duan Rui was completely overwhelmed.

His brain seemed to have been hit by a super-high-speed crystal train. The whole world was swirling and changing before him!

It was Wang Kou! It was “Bloody Butcher” Wang Kou, a brutal man whom the thirty or so desperadoes did not dare to approach even though he was just standing casually!

Why was he so humble and reverential to the plain-looking young man?

Duan Rui heard gasps from his sides and his back.

Even he had forgotten what breathing was for a moment.

Before they realized what was going on, “Bloody Butcher” Wang Kou did something that was even more astonishing.

The precise killing machine hurried to a corner of the room, picked up a large towel, and delivered it to “Senior Li” with both hands.

When Senior Li took it over matter-of-factly, Wang Kou grasped two cans of high-energy nutrition drugs, prepared to cater to his needs.

“…”

Duan Rui’s brain went blank, and he completely lost the ability to think.

Before he prepared to assassinate Wang Kou, he had watched one of the guy’s training videos.

It was in the harsh environment almost close to minus a hundred degrees, where Wang Kou resisted a ferocious beast named “Ice Rock Grizzly” barehandedly and nakedly.

Three seconds. Three seconds was all it took for Wang Kou to strangle the neck of the Ice Rock Grizzly that was more than half a meter in diameter with his hands. He even ripped off the beast’s head as well as the backbone that was as tough as iron.

It was exactly because of the video that Duan Rui made up his mind to end on bad terms with his assassin group instead of going against Wang Kou.

But right now, the hands that could tear an Ice Rock Grizzly apart were shivering slightly and holding two cans of high-energy nutrition drugs, ready to serve them at any moment?

Duan Rui found it hard to believe his eyes.

But his heart was beating faster and faster beyond his control. Even the muscles all over his body were quivering. He felt the sting of a needle on his back too.

Blinking, Duan Rui felt the deepest fear rising in his heart.

He suddenly realized that the vibe that intimidated them from moving forward when they stepped into the observation room was not from Wang Kou.

Wang Kou was already as scared as this. How could he hope to intimidate everyone?

Since the very beginning, it had always been the vibe from the plain-looking young man that terrified the thirty desperadoes and made them unable to move forward!

The young man was not even trying to scare anyone with his spiritual energy. The aftermath of a fierce battle alone was enough to stick so many experts, bandits, and lunatics to exactly where they were!

Where exactly did the queen find such a terrifying monster?

Despite knowing that the guy was on his side, Duan Rui still felt uneasy, like the natural fear of a small predator for a giant primeval beast. Who is he exactly?

Li Yao was still dwelling in the gratifying battle just now. He did not really care how the “heroes” that Li Linghai had recruited from many places viewed him.

Getting to the bottom of it, the real elites of the Imperium of True Human Beings were still mostly gathered in the major families and sects.

Those people who wandered off the main forces, without powerful support, couldn’t have been too strong at all.

After wiping his sweating body casually and drinking up the two cans of high-energy drugs in Wang Kou’s hands, Li Yao finally glanced at Wang Kou and said, “Are you…’Bloody Butcher’ Wang Kou?”

“Yes, I am.”

Wang Kou did not even dare to breathe loudly. He bashed his chest with his fist hard, performing the highest etiquette of the gladiators to Li Yao. “However, in front of Senior Li’s unparalleled might, I do not deserve to be called ‘Bloody Butcher’ at all. Her Grace asked me to come here to…”

Li Yao smiled. Instead of waiting for Wang Kou to finish, he suddenly extended his hands and pressed Wang Kou’s shoulders.

Then, his hands slithered downward from Wang Kou’s shoulders like wandering vipers. From his chest and his abdomen to his thighs, every place was touched by Li Yao.

Duan Rui and the other desperadoes, who were just back to themselves, were even more shocked.

They could all tell that Wang Kou was not captured by the guy willingly.

But the guy was simply too fast, and his uncanny, overwhelming spiritual energy suppressed Wang Kou’s instinctual defense. He caught Wang Kou as if he caught a fish from a water tank!

The movements of the hands were like the suppression of two overwhelming mountains. Any of them would’ve been caught by this immeasurable “Senior Li” and rubbed and kneaded however the guy wanted!

It was not until then that everybody began to realize why the murderous and fearless “Bloody Butcher” Wang Kou was so respectful toward “Senior Li”.

“You are rather strong, young man!”

After he was done touching Wang Kou, Li Yao patted his shoulders and smiled. “Don’t be nervous. I mean you no harm. Her Grace asked you to come to me so that I can help adjust and strengthen your crystal suits. Naturally, I need to figure out your body conditions and your battle features in order for me to bring out your maximal combat ability, right?”

“Bloody Butcher” Wang Kou’s face was as pale as paper. Even when Li Yao touched his abdomen and his most critical body part, he could not summon any strength to counterattack at all. Even his voice began to shake as he replied, “Yes, of course. Thank you for your trouble, Senior. Whatever you need me to do, Senior Li, just say the word!”

“Very good. You can help me take a look at those guys.”

Li Yao hinted at Duan Rui and the other desperadoes. “Her Grace asked me to help you adjust and modify your crystal suits. But my time is very limited. Those who are not above average experts do not need to waste my time. You should know most of those people, right? See if any of them are unqualified and make sure they do not hinder me.”

“Yes, I’ll check them immediately.”

“Bloody Butcher” Wang Kou quickly turned around and began to observe the newcomers. It was not until a long time later that he turned around again and said, “Senior Li, those people that Her Grace has selected carefully are indeed famous experts at the borderland of the Imperium. They shouldn’t be nuisances for Senior Li on the battlefield.”

“That’s good.”

Li Yao smiled and walked into the test field again with his hands behind his back. “It’s already cleaned up. Come with me and let’s begin the next half of the game!”

Li Yao walked into the test field first.

“Bloody Butcher” Wang Kou followed him closely.

“Shadowless” Duan Rui and other desperadoes, not having the courage to say anything, simply walked forward in their shadows prudently.

Right when they couldn’t hold back their curiosity anymore, they heard the voice of “Bloody Butcher” Wang Kou that had been compressed into a thread with the technique of private talk.

“You people better cheer yourselves up! I vouched for you before Senior Li just now. It is your fortune to receive tutelage from Senior Li. You’d better see that Senior Li is satisfied and do not piss off the old monster, or I will kill you and flay you!”

Pausing for a moment, “Bloody Butcher” Wang Kou knew that everybody was still confused. He continued explaining in a low voice, “This old monster is named ‘Vulture Li Yao’, an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage that Her Grace has recruited from somewhere. Also, he is a hybrid-type expert talented in both fighting and refining!

“He is now Her Grace’s personal bodyguard and magical equipment consultant. Her Grace’s safety and the magical equipment she uses are all his responsibilities. Do you have any idea what that means?”

Personal bodyguard and magical equipment consultant!

Duan Rui and the other desperadoes were all shocked.

Of course they knew what it meant. In terms of position and rank, “personal bodyguard” and “magical equipment consultant” were barely worth mentioning.

But the two jobs were both critical posts that were often involved in the most central secrets. Only the closest, most trusted subordinates were qualified for such jobs. When those people were sent out, they would often become powerful officials!

“Vulture Li Yao” was an unfamiliar name. They had never heard such a Divinity Transformation Stage expert in the Imperium before.

However, if he was a mysterious expert that Her Grace raised for decades for the great cause, it would be rather understandable.

“You did not see the old monster’s craziness just now. When you see it later, you will know that every word I said is true!”

“Bloody Butcher” Wang Kou continued his lecture, “Besides, the old monster’s expertise in refining is also extraordinary. The fact that Her Grace has given us the opportunity to have our crystal suits modified and strengthened by Vulture Li Yao in person is evident enough of the importance she attaches to us. You better seize it well and do not cause any trouble. If someone pisses off the old monster and he storms off without strengthening the crystal suits for us, I’ll certainly mince them into pieces and make sure that they will eat their meat in person!”

Duan Rui and other desperadoes were all greatly disturbed.

While they were at a loss, a smiling voice suddenly joined the conversation. “Hahahaha. Don’t listen to Wang Kou’s nonsense. In fact, I am a very casual, low-key, and charismatic man. As long as you give me a chance for me to enjoy myself, I'll certainly help you adjust your crystal suit well!"

It was exactly the voice of "Vulture Li Yao"!

All the desperadoes were flabbergasted. They did not expect the old monster's expertise to be so terrifyingly high that he could intercept and monitor the private talk of such an expert like "Bloody Butcher" Wang Kou.

It must be noted that Wang Kou was moving while he was talking, and he obviously changed the frequency of his soundwave almost ten times during the private talk!

But still, the old monster caught all of it!

As if hit by a bolt of lightning, "Bloody Butcher" Wang Kou was blushing so hard that his face was almost exploding. He was completely stunned!

"Don't be so formal. As I said, I am very casual, approachable, and charismatic. You can talk about anything you want. Just consider that I am not here."

With his hands behind his back, Li Yao walked forward slowly and spoke to the thirty desperadoes at the same time while smiling, "On the other hand, although I do not object to being called an 'old monster', you'd better call me that behind my back when you discuss me.

"Alright. This is the test field with random gravity. Come on and relax. Perform all your skills. Let me see if you are qualified to wear the crystal suits that I modify and strong enough to fight by the side of 'Vulture Li Yao'!"

Chapter 2207 - The Impenetrable Godly Might Prison!

The arrival of “Bloody Butcher” Wang Kou, “Shadowless” Duan Rui, and the other desperadoes suggested that Queen Li Linghai’s forces were surfacing, and the operation to rescue General Lei Chenghu was about to begin.

In the secret room, Li Linghai and four of her most important subordinates were having the last meeting about the battle.

Dongfang Sheng, the highest commander of the Deep Sea Fleet, was the leader of the secret armed forces of the reformists.

Jin Yuyan, the director of the Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors, was the man of wealth among the reformists. He was responsible for the operation of the tremendous secret capital.

Yue Wushuang, leader of the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils, was the head of intelligence for the reformists, who needed to both infiltrate the four Kurfürst families and get the confidential information and prevent the enemy from sneaking into the reformists. Naturally, until the reformists were completely exposed, it was the most critical post of all.

Besides the three of them, Li Yao took part in the meeting too.

Although it was more or less a surprise, Li Yao had completely proved himself with his shocking performance in the Deep Sea Palace in the past days.

Dongfang Sheng, Jin Yuyan, and Yue Wushuang did not have any objection either. All of them acknowledged that he was qualified to be on par with them.

Li Linghai, Dongfang Sheng, and Li Yao had all arrived in person, while Yue Wushuang and Jin Yuyan still remained to be 3D projections from a long distance away.

After the five of them were all present, Li Linghai smiled at Li Yao first and said, “Last time, I asked Wang Kou, Duan Rui, and the rest of them to go to you, partly to strengthen their crystal suits and partly to help you adapt to the new crystal suit and magical equipment as your training partners. How have they been behaving?”

“Not bad.”

Li Yao said, “The boys are very smart and hardworking in their training. They follow my instructions dutifully too. We get along quite well.”

“That’s good.”

Li Linghai nodded her head and said, “Wang Kou, Duan Rui, and the rest of them are not from the regular army but are rogue warriors traveling in different worlds. Despite their remarkable skills, they can be quite disobedient and insubordinate.

“I was in quite a dilemma about the arrangement of those people. If they were allocated to General Dongfang, I’m afraid nobody would’ve been happy. Now that you are getting along with them well, that’s the best.

“If they can learn obedience through training, those scoundrels might prove surprisingly helpful when critical moments come!”

Li Linghai smiled while she talked. Then, she coughed and changed the topic, her face gradually turning cold. “Now, let’s focus on the battle mission to rescue General Lei Chenghu.

“I don’t think I need to exaggerate on the importance of the mission, do I? In the past ten days, the four Kurfürst families initialized crazy purging in the entire Imperium, especially within the expedition army, with the investigation of the Blood Oath Alliance as an excuse. Countless loyal patriots have been secretly arrested by them. A lot of our sympathizers are panicking and can barely protect themselves. They do not have the courage to provide any support to us anymore.

“There is no telling how many secrets our fellow Cultivators who have been captured have spat out under the enemy’s interrogation. Many confidential information about the reformists may have been learned by the enemy.

“Even General Lei Chenghu’s Astounding Thunder Fleet has been visited by the people from the ‘special investigation committee’. It is said that the fleets of the four Kurfürst families are being mobilized stealthily near the third battle area. They seem to be planning to completely settle the most elite force of the Imperium that wanders from the four Kurfürst families while General Lei Chenghu is under arrest and the Astounding Thunder Fleet does not have a leader!

“This is a critical moment. Our cause and the entire Imperium are in peril. We cannot wait anymore but have to wager all our forces to assault the Godly Might Prison and rescue General Lei Chenghu!”

Shua!

As Li Linghai talked, a 3D space map appeared before the five of them, which, after being enlarged, turned out to be a dim stellar system, and the focus was the sixth planet of the galaxy. It was a frigid, white planet covered in ice and snow.

“This is the ‘Mystic Ice Sector’ where the Godly Might Prison is located. It is a half-barren world almost without any resources. The star of the world is in the last years of its life, and the energy it radiates out is very feeble.

“The only habitable planet with an atmosphere, on the other hand, is too far away from the star. As a result, the temperature of the entire planet is too low to maintain a natural ecological sphere.

“Ever since the age of the Star Ocean Republic, an enormous prison has been dug out and expanded below the equator of the planet.

“Because there are barely any natural resources that are usable on the surface and below the ground of the planet, and the spiritual energy in space is extremely thin and feeble, which will mean a time cost of twice as much as usual even if somebody runs to the space and launches a space jump, it is the best spot to imprison the felons.

“From the Star Ocean Republic to the Imperium of True Human Beings, the Godly Might Prison has been increased and improved for more than a thousand and five hundred years. It is now a super prison of the highest level in the entire Imperium with the most thorough defense.

“The craziest lunatics, the most dangerous criminals, the most violent zealots, and countless people who opposed the four Kurfürst families are kept in prison here.

“Right, ever since the Imperium’s counterattack began, we have captured a lot of captives from the Covenant Alliance. Those of higher levels are imprisoned in the Godly Might Prison too.”

Li Linghai pointed at the 3D light beam quickly, showing the complicated alert and defense system of the Godly Might Prison to everyone.

Looking at the densely distributed crystal cannons and the aggressive fleets wandering on the near-planet orbit, Li Yao frowned hard.

“Since so many felons are locked here, the Godly Might Prison certainly has a lot of alarm measures.”

Li Linghai pointed at the dense spots on the light beam and said, “If we are going to assault the Godly Might Prison, the first thing we will be faced with is the ‘Godly Might Fleet’. Although it is a near-planet defense fleet that does not have the ability to cross Sectors, it is made of the elites of the four Kurfürst families, and its combat ability in the near-planet orbit and within the atmosphere is not to be underestimated. It will definitely be a hard bone to bite.

“Also, the entire planet that the Godly Might Prison is at, especially the equator, has been established with too many automatic crystal cannons and underground fortresses almost without any gap. There are also the ‘Mystic Ice Puppets’ that are made of special, coldproof materials and designed for battles in the snow environment.

“Getting inside the Godly Might Prison, the magnetic array with powerful attraction forces is naturally the standard defense approach. We all know that Wuying Lan’s ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ boasted the same system, but it lost effect after the energy supply center was blown up.

“The magnetic system in the Godly Might Prison, in comparison, has three energy centers and a backup energy base powered by geothermal energy. It won’t matter even if three of the four energy centers are blown up.

“Furthermore, the Godly Might Prison has a special scanning system. The entire prison is filled with cameras that send out invisible rays every second to scan all the prisoners and the jailors. By analyzing their frequency of breath, body sizes, and walking postures, their identities will be confirmed, and their physical parameters will be under close watch.

“With so many state-of-the-art defense systems, the Godly Might Prison is a place where even water cannot leak out. Nobody has ever successfully escaped in the past five hundred years.”

Li Linghai paused for a moment and waited for other people’s input.

“It is indeed impenetrable.”

Dongfang Sheng, commander of the Deep Sea Fleet, frowned. “With all our available forces, we may be able to conquer the place. But there will definitely be heavy casualties, and the battle probably cannot be ended soon. If the four Kurfürst families mobilize elite forces from the frontline, everything will be screwed!”

“Besides—”

Jin Yuyan, director of the Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors, said cautiously, “Should the unexpected attack become a protracted battle, the prison can transfer or even kill General Lei Chenghu at any moment. In that case, our wild gamble will be meaningless.”

Li Linghai smiled confidently and looked at Yue Wushuang in expectation.

Yue Wushuang, leader of the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils, known as “Moon Devil”, still hid most of her face in the hood that had a silver lining. She said casually, “There is no need to worry about that. Our infiltration of the Godly Might Prison is far deeper than your imagination. Right now, a deputy advisor of the Godly Might Fleet, the captains of quite a few main-force warships, and a deputy warden of the Godly Might Prison are inclined to the reformists.”

“What?”

It was the first time that Jin Yuyan and Dongfang Sheng had heard the message. The two of them looked at each other in shock and disbelief.

Is it a coincidence?

Li Yao thought for a moment and listened calmly.

“Any rebels since the ancient times who wanted to change the world had to control the food warehouses, the arsenals, and the prisons, right?”

Yue Wushuang said calmly, “So many oppositions of the four Kurfürst families are locked in the Godly Might Prison. There are also countless experts who can never distinguish themselves under the current order. Aren’t they the natural best help for the reformists?

“Therefore, we have started the secret infiltration of the Godly Might Prison since a very long time ago.

“The difficulty of the infiltration is much lower than expected.

“The fleets and guards of the Godly Might Prison are the elites of the four Kurfürst families. Theoretically speaking, they should be loyal to their families.

“However… No matter how they brag about themselves, the nature of their job will always be ‘jailor’ that calls for no respect. They never have a chance to rise.

“It is especially so in the recent decade when the Imperium’s counterattack has achieved tremendous victories. The descendants of the four Kurfürst families who are slightly related to the expedition army have all earned abundant military credits with the least efforts, rising to power unstoppably. Their future in either their families or the other fields of the Imperium is nothing but promising.

“Then, how can the guys who are stationed in the Godly Might Prison and who have to face the snow and the prisoners every day without the least military credits not feel jealous when their peers are leaving them behind in the competitions within the families?”

Chapter 2208 - Horse-Running Ventilation Tubes!

Li Yao thought for a moment and realized that it did make sense. Considering the selfishness of the Immortal Cultivators and the cruel competitions within the four Kurfürst families, when the jailors watched their peers fighting battles and claiming military credits in the frontline before advancing into higher levels with the trophies while they could do nothing except to discipline a bunch of prisoners in a land of bitterness and coldness…

It was inevitable that they would think they were prisoners too, just in a different way.

No wonder the guards of the Godly Might Prison were angry.

“Wushuang’s work is very effective. Of course, we have to pay a high price for it too.”

Li Linghai smiled. “Thankfully, after we control the Council of Elders, there will be abundant vacancies that promise copious returns. They will be enough to meet the appetite of a deputy warden and a deputy advisor of the fleet.

“Those people who have joined the reformists have passed multiple tests. Their loyalty is certainly not a problem. I am not risking the future of all the reformists. Please rest assured about that.”

After hearing that, Dongfang Sheng and Jin Yuyan finally took a long breath in comfort.

“So, Your Grace has long prepared for the emergency.”

Jin Yuyan said, “No wonder Your Grace was as calm as before when the news came over that General Lei Chenghu was secretly locked in the Godly Might Prison.”

“This is not exactly a careful plan in advance. I can only say that the Imperium of True Human Beings is not destined to perish yet, and it is fate’s arrangement that we will revive the Imperium!”

Her eyes glowing, Li Linghai said, “I’ve been preparing since a long time ago to attack the Godly Might Prison when the time is ripe to free the prisoners inside. Many of the prisoners were indispensable persons in the enormous bureaucratic system of the Imperium before they failed the political competitions with the four Kurfürst families and ended up as prisoners because of slanders and setups. They will be an important help for us to keep the normal functions of the Imperium after we control the Council of Elders.

“In order to keep it a secret, the four Kurfürst families escorted General Lei Chenghu to the Godly Might Prison. They thought that nobody knew it, but it was exactly what I wanted!”

Dongfang Sheng said solemnly, “If a deputy advisor of the Godly Might Fleet and the captains of a few main-force warships have a ‘battlefield uprising’, and a deputy warden cooperates with us from inside, it will indeed be possible that we conquer the Godly Might Prison unstoppably before the four Kurfürst families realize what is going on!”

“It is not a possibility but a must. The future of the Imperium depends on the battle. General Dongfang, the burden on your shoulder is very heavy!”

Li Linghai demanded vehemently. Pausing for a moment, she calmed down slightly and said in a softer voice, “However, I have absolute faith in the Deep Sea Fleet and General Dongfang, and I believe that this battle will be a triumph.

“The only problem right now is General Lei Chenghu’s safety.

“Our ultimate purpose is not to conquer the Godly Might Prison but to rescue General Lei Chenghu.

“The Deep Sea Fleet is a rapid strike force that has been developed in darkness after all. Although it is made of one-in-ten-thousand elites, it is incomparable to the super fleets of the four Kurfürst families in terms of scale.

“Even if we have the cooperation of the spies, there will be heavy losses after the conquest of the Godly Might Prison. It will be impossible to stall the enemy for long.

“In any case, we have to attract the ‘Astounding Thunder Fleet’ and other troops in the frontline who are dissatisfied with the four Kurfürst families to join the reformists’ side.

“To achieve that, General Lei Chenghu must be alive and take our side.

“Without General Lei Chenghu’s unparalleled prestige, it will be barely possible for us to win the support of the troops in the frontline in a short time.

“This is exactly the biggest problem of the battle!”

“Indeed…”

Dongfang Sheng hesitated for a moment and said, “Even though we are an unexpected, unstoppable troop, it will still take some time to break into the Godly Might Prison from the outside. The Godly Might Prison will be able to deal with General Lei Chenghu unhurriedly in the meantime.

“In my opinion, although the optimal choice for the four Kurfürst families right now is to keep General Lei Chenghu under arrest and slowly control the Astounding Thunder Fleet through him so that the situation will not escalate suddenly, they will certainly not hesitate to execute General Lei Chenghu secretly to end the trouble once and for all if there is a possibility that General Lei Chenghu might escape or be rescued!”

“That is very true, General Dongfang. Once the Godly Might Prison confirms that they cannot resist our attack, they will certainly kill General Lei Chenghu in secret. Then, our hope will be gone.”

Li Linghai narrowed her eyes and said, “So, before our army launches the assault, someone must infiltrate the Godly Might Prison first for a single mission, which is to find and protect General Lei Chenghu from any harm until the Deep Sea Fleet completely occupies the Godly Might Prison!”

“Well…”

Di Feiwen and Jin Yuyan looked at each other and thought for a long time. “It will be rather difficult!”

“It is not just difficult; it is barely possible!”

Slightly frowning, Li Linghai said, “So, a special expert with an unparalleled combat ability, who is adept at stealth, disguise, infiltration, sabotage, and preferably the knowledge of all kinds of traps, rune arrays, and magical equipment, must be sent for the mission.”

While talking, Li Linghai looked at Li Yao with an expression that was full of expectation.

It was not until then that Dongfang Sheng and Jin Yuyan realized why Li Linghai let Li Yao take part in a secret meeting of such a high level.

Li Yao had reached a deal with Li Linghai a long time ago to help her with an extremely dangerous mission. Li Linghai made an empty promise that he would be an “elder of the Imperium” in return, but Li Yao was certainly not convinced. After much bickering, ten intact treasures from the Supreme Emperor were traded for Li Yao’s highly risky mission.

All the treasures had been scrutinized by Li Yao one by one. They were now resting inside Li Yao’s Cosmos Ring steadily.

Now that he was already paid, it was time to do his job. Li Yao coughed and walked forward, with determination beaming out of his eyes.

“Yue Wushuang is supposed to be the best candidate for the mission.”

There was not any regret that a lot of treasures of the Supreme Emperor had been given away on Li Linghai’s face at all. She looked at Li Yao in approval and smiled. “However, the situation in the capital is erratic and treacherous and requires the supervision of Wushuang. So, I have to ask ‘Vulture Li Yao’, my personal bodyguard, to take action. Is there any objection to the candidate?”

Of course, Yue Wushuang, Dongfang Sheng, and Jin Yuyan had no objection.

After all, there were not many experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage on the reformists’ side. Besides, not every one of them was suitable to sneak into a wretched hell such as the Godly Might Prison.

For those who had advanced into the Divinity Transformation Stage, they were mostly the important leaders of major forces such as Dongfang Sheng and Jin Yuyan. All of them were big shots that planned and influenced the general picture.

Only a few of the experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage preferred to fight in the frontline as a special force without any self-respect like Li Yao.

So, he was naturally the best choice in the current situation.

“Fellow Cultivator Li!”

Dongfang Sheng spoke with admiration. “The mission to sneak into the Godly Might Prison is very dangerous. It concerns not only the cause of the reformists but also the future of the Imperium in the next ten thousand years. We must thank you for your trouble!”

“It’s not a big deal. Ever since my spiritual root was awakened, I have sworn to my heart that I will live and die for the true path of immortality!”

Li Yao declared resolutely, “We, the Immortal Cultivators, are the sabers of mankind, the flames that pursue the momentary brilliance. For the future of the Imperium of True Human Beings, I will never hesitate to fight!”

Li Linghai: “Well, Bodyguard Li, that’s about enough.”

Li Yao: “Every man has responsibility for their country. In such a dirty and dark world, it is exactly the best moment for the hotblooded men to change reality and renew the

Imperium! The future of the Imperium of True Human Beings must be defended by us. Please rest assured, even if my bones are broken, my soul falls apart, and my every cell is obliterated, I will still protect General Lei and the Imperium with the last bit of my remaining soul! This is the oath of me, a most determined Immortal Cultivator! If I cannot achieve it, I would rather be haunted by the devil in my heart without relief forever!”

Dongfang Sheng, Jin Yuyan, and Yue Wushuang were all greatly touched. “Fellow Cultivator Li…”

Li Linghai: “That’s really enough, Bodyguard Li. We are all aware of your loyalty to the Imperium. You are a real, pure, and time-tested Immortal Cultivator. Your devotion to the Imperium and the true path of immortality can already be seen by the fact that you were willing to hide in the darkness for so many years for our great cause. We all appreciate your integrity. Please say no more.”

Li Yao: “… Okay.”

Li Linghai looked around and asked, “Is there any question?”

Li Yao jumped out again. “Yes.”

Li Linghai furrowed her eyebrows hard. “What is it?”

Li Yao blinked his eyes quickly. “If I may ask, Your Grace, do we have the detailed structure of the Godly Might Prison, particularly the part regarding the ventilation tubes?”

Li Linghai nodded her head. “Of course, in the beginning, we compromised the deputy warden exactly for the purpose of the detailed map of the Godly Might Prison. Everything including the ventilation tubes is included.”

"Fantastic."

Li Yao was quite delighted. "I wonder, how are the ventilation tubes of the Godly Might Prison constructed? Are there any special traps, rune arrays, defense systems?"

Li Linghai thought for a moment and replied, "There are no special traps and defense systems. They are just the most typical structure. Also, to provide fresh air for the hundreds of thousands of prisoners and jailors below the ground, the ventilation tubes of the Godly Might Prison are exceptionally broad. They are more than two meters in diameter. One can even ride a horse in it!"

"Really?"

Li Yao found it hard to believe his ears. "Ventilation tubes more than two meters in diameter, without any hindrance or special defense system? Are they not worried that the enemy might sneak in through the tubes, or that the prisoners will crawl out through the tubes to escape?"

"Of course they are, but any trap or defense system might go wrong. So, the prison adopts the silliest approach."

Li Linghai said, "The Godly Might Prison has arranged for abundant jailors to be stationed in the broad ventilation tubes. There is one after every dozen meters, making sure that every jailor can be seen by at least two companions at the same time.

"There is also a set of special random passwords. Every jailor has to report their latest password to their superior every minute, and they have to report more than a thousand different passwords every day. Furthermore, the passwords are shuffled every day. There is no pattern in them at all.

“Bodyguard Li, why do you look so awful all of a sudden?”

Chapter 2209 - Rounded to 100%

“… Nothing.”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and said, one word after another, with a hideous face, “I am just somewhat puzzled. In the present days when the technologies are so advanced and the modern defense measures are too many to be counted, the super prison that ranks top in the entire Imperium is still defending the ventilation tube through such a primitive approach? Why don’t they install some state-of-the-art, dazzling defensive devices, such as automatic defense arrays, which are so immaculate and impenetrable that no person will be required to watch over the ventilation tubes?”

“Exactly. Everybody knows that the defense system of the ventilation tubes of the Godly Might Prison is stupid, but it is a result of the Imperium’s accumulated problems.”

Li Linghai said, “The four Kurfürst families have so many members that they need to settle. Naturally, they have seized every opportunity to expand the government bureaus so that they can stuff their close relatives into the departments.

“The Godly Might Prison has a high position in the prison system of the Imperium, with a large budget from the Council of Elders every year. The budget was exactly for the purpose of settling the idle men of the four Kurfürst families. After those people are recruited, what can they do except for guarding the ventilation tubes?”

“Well…”

After a long daze, Li Yao sighed and said, “I did not know that the Imperium had been corrupted to such an extent. As a loyal and devoted patriot, I feel that my heart is broken!

“Then, if even the ventilation tubes are teeming with jailors, how exactly am I going to sneak into the Godly Might Prison and locate General Lei Chenghu?”

“This is your operation plan.”

Li Linghai pointed on the 3D light beam and operated quickly. Very soon, the structures of a carrier and a hibernation cabin were retrieved. She explained, “Because the ‘special investigation committee’ delivered General Lei to the Godly Might Prison in secret and does not want to show any anomaly, the Godly Might Prison has been receiving and releasing prisoners as usual recently.

“Three days later, a carrier that is fully loaded with frozen prisoners will arrive at the Godly Might Prison. The deputy captain of this carrier joined us a long time ago.

“Your mission is to approach the carrier when the carrier has just jumped to the Mystic Ice Sector but has not reached the near-planet orbit of the Godly Might Prison yet. Then, you will sneak into the vehicle from here.”

Li Linghai pointed at a complicated structure in the rear of the carrier.

Li Yao observed carefully and said, “This is the spurt of the exhaust flames on the carrier. The temperature there can be very high. Even if I wear a crystal suit, it will be barely possible for me to sustain one minute. Also, if I break it from the outside, the damage will certainly be reflected on the mainframe crystal processor of the starship."

"It is true under normal circumstances. However, this deputy captain who belongs to the reformists will sabotage the power unit that this spurt belongs to in advance, making the crystal processor loses senses over it for now and dropping the temperature in the tube to below a thousand degrees. There shouldn't be a problem then."

Li Linghai went on, "All the prisoners on the carrier have detailed data recorded. However, we will arrange a prisoner that is closest to you in terms of body size and appearance. His blood and even bone marrow will also be prepared, which should be enough to handle all the examinations.

"After you sneak into the carrier, our deputy captain will meet you and replace the real prisoner with you. Then, you will enter the freezing hibernation cabin as a prisoner.

"The difficult part here is that you have to reduce your breath, heartbeat, and even brainwaves to the minimum, like you are really hibernating, while your body shows the features of being deeply frozen. However, you cannot really be hibernating, and your soul must be kept at the most active state in order to deal with all the emergencies.

"To achieve that, we will give you a special freezing drug, which will make your skin, flesh, and internal organs appear to be frozen. But you will still need to have a very precise control over your body."

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao nodded his head and said, "No problem. I should be able to do that."

"Excellent. After you pretend to be a frozen prisoner, you will be sent into the Godly Might Prison, where you will naturally receive thorough examinations. The first examination will happen while you are still in hibernation. There shouldn’t be a problem when our guys cover you in secret. The second examination will be an interrogation carried out by three jailors after you are unfrozen and woken up.

“The mission is set to three days later because it will be the time when our deputy warden is on duty. He will be fully in charge of the entire jailor system for two hours, and as long as his orders are not too outrageous, they will all be carried out dutifully.

“When you are cross-interrogated by three jailors, our deputy warden will find an excuse to get two of them away, before he moves the surveillance cameras that are everywhere in the interrogation room.

“You have to kill the only jailor during the eight seconds when the surveillance cameras are away, put on his uniform, and let him wear your prison uniform and your identification band. In the end, you will need to blow up his entire head with a storm bolter.

“In the meantime, you will wear the skin membrane that we have prepared in advance and change the appearance of your muscles, pretending to be exactly like the jailor.

“It won’t matter even if you are not exactly the same due to the limited time, because you can fake some devastating wounds on your face and your body and cover yourself in blood.

“As a result, it will seem that a bloodthirsty, disobedient prisoner launched an assault when there was only one jailor in the interrogation room, only to be killed by the jailor’s counterattack.

“The whole thing will naturally look quite uncanny. Thankfully, we do not need to hide for long. Under the command of our deputy warden, you will be sent to the medical room. It’s right here.”

Li Linghai retrieved the internal map of the Godly Might Prison and enlarged the 3D image that was as sophisticated as a maze.

Li Yao looked at the ventilation tubes that were as thick as arteries with great affection before he focused his eyes on where Li Linghai was pointing at.

“Our deputy warden will meet you in the medical room in person to ask about the ‘highly-rare assault case’. Then, he will cover you to leave the medical room in secret.”

Li Linghai continued, “Then, in the surveillance system of the Godly Might Prison, the prisoner that you pretend to be should still be inquired by the deputy warden in the medical room. Within the clearances of the deputy warden, he can earn twenty-eight minutes and thirty seconds for you.

“The medical room is here, and the secret cells where General Lei Chenghu is suspected to be locked in are here. The two areas are 3.5 kilometers away in a straight line.

“It seems not very long, but the critical things are the complicated pathways as well as the surveillance cameras and sentry posts in them. There are also the invisible rays that fill the entire space. Those rays are highly sensitive. So much as one of your hair cuts the rays, the scanning system will be activated, notifying all the sentry posts nearby of your existence.

“Once it is discovered that your body figure and your posture are not in the database, and you are a jailor who is not supposed to be here, alarms of the highest level will be raised and sent to the warden’s office and the control center. There will be nothing the deputy warden can do about it.”

Looking at the zigzagging, complicated, up-and-down “shortest route”, Li Yao said, “So, in twenty-eight minutes, I have to dodge 188 jailors, avoid the sight of 2,544 surveillance cameras, and blink past the invisible rays with my body movement skills, before I arrive at the area where General Lei Chenghu is locked?”

“Exactly.”

Li Linghai nodded her head. “Of course, there are our men among the jailors too, who will do their best to safeguard you. So, it is not as difficult as it appears. According to my precise calculation, for experts like you or Yue Wushuang, the odds of success will be very high.”

Frowning, Li Yao asked, “How high is very high?”

“At least above 50%.”

Li Linghai smiled, with crazy flames burning inside her eyes again. “That’s about 100%, right?”

Li Yao sniffed and said, “If I can indeed arrive at the special area, then what? How do I know which cell General Lei Chenghu is locked in?”

“If everything goes well, the moment you reach the secret area will be the moment when we leap out of the void and attack the Godly Might Prison furiously under the guidance of our spies in the Godly Might Prison.”

Li Linghai said, “By then, the Godly Might Prison will certainly be a great mess. The enemy will definitely transfer or execute General Lei Chenghu at the earliest time. Whether he is to be transferred or executed, the order will be carried out by the people with the highest combat ability. So, you will find General Lei Chenghu by following those people.

“After the meeting is over, I will send the data and the battle videos of the best warriors in the Godly Might Prison to you for your reference. The Godly Might Prison is not extravagant enough to use battle-type experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage as jailors. Therefore, it won’t be a problem for you to get the situation under control and rescue General Lei Chenghu quickly.

“There is no telling if the enemy has impounded General Lei Chenghu’s Cosmos Rings. So, we will prepare a crystal suit and all kinds of magical equipment for General Lei. General Lei is a seasoned expert himself. As long as he is equipped with the top-tier crystal suit and makes up his mind to kill, it won’t be a problem for him to protect himself.

“The crucial thing is to talk General Lei into cooperating with us and joining the cause of the reformists so that he can really defend the Imperium!

“But I’m very confident in your ability of persuasion. I believe that you will certainly not disappoint me, right?”

“Please rest assured, Your Grace!”

Li Yao held his chest high and said, full of dignity, “I will certainly do my best to convince General Lei so that General Lei will fight for the Imperium together with all of us! Long live the Imperium! Long live the true path of immortality! Long live His Majesty!”

Chapter 2210 - Everybody Has a Plan

“That is really enough, Bodyguard Li.”

Li Linghai said, “All the maps of the Godly Might Prison, as well as the locations and ranges of all the sentry posts, surveillance cameras, and invisible rays, will be sent to your crystal processor immediately. The infiltration mission this time is highly difficult and requires 100% precision. So, I think you should seize every second and go back to start mock training right now.”

“Understood!”

Li Yao rose quickly. “I will go back and start training immediately. However…”

Li Linghai frowned hard. “Any problem?”

“I did not expect the mission this time to be so arduous. The secret weapon that I’ve been refining seems to be in need of full upgrading.”

Li Yao said solemnly, “But the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures allocated to me last time have been used up. I fear that the secret weapon cannot be whetted to the perfect form.”

“Got it.”

Li Linghai took a deep breath. “Whatever materials you need, just take them. As long as you can accomplish the mission of sneaking into the Godly Might Prison and protecting General Lei, you can have whatever you want!”

“Thank you, Your Grace!”

Li Yao was ecstatic. “I promise you, Your Grace, that the secret weapon will be a great surprise for everyone!”

…

Three hours later, Li Yao returned to the No. 1 maintenance workshop of the Deep Sea Palace.

Since a week ago, the maintenance workshop that was the largest and with the most advanced facilities for the maintenance of the Colossi had entered an unprecedented alert state.

Not only were all the irrelevant personnel blocked hundreds of meters away, but the refiners who had been working in the place were also mobilized to other workshops. Also, a strict order was given in the Deep Sea Fleet that whoever approached the maintenance workshop would be executed immediately!

All that was because of the Colossus that was lying at the center of the maintenance workshop quietly. It was the Tartarean Skeleton, which had been torn apart and utterly deformed.

The Tartarean Skeleton had already revealed itself in the slaughter stream that covered the entire Imperium. Everybody knew that it was the ultimate weapon of the Cultivators.

To show the Colossus publicly in the capital of the Imperium, it must be modified beyond anyone’s recognition.

As it happened, Li Yao had received many rare Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures from Li Linghai that originated from the mausoleum of the Supreme Emperor. It was not his style to keep treasures for collection. Naturally, he stuffed all of them into the Tartarean Skeleton.

For safety reasons, Li Yao only used Li Jialing as his assistant in the entire process. The heavy and clumsy work was mostly shouldered by the engineering spiritual puppets in the shape of spiders.

After Li Yao advanced into the Divinity Transformation Stage, his computational ability was tougher than ever. With the assistance of the super crystal processors, it was not a big problem for him at all to control a hundred spider-shaped puppets to perform the most delicate work on the Colossus at the same time.

Other than that, he had discussed with Master Jin Tianzong on the power system design of the Tartarean Skeleton, trying to apply the hybrid model of energy transmission and power output to the Colossus.

In the first place, Master Jin Tianzong was one of the best specialists in power units in the Imperium of True Human Beings. He was unparalleled in terms of theories, and he stagnated for a while only because of the accident that crippled his hands.

Now, Li Yao had treated his hands with secret techniques and offered him a liquid metal formula that could produce strengthened gloves. Not just his career but also his life had been saved.

Naturally, Master Jin Tianzong gave all the help he could provide and came up with a lot of innovative ideas for Li Yao on the upgrade of the power units.

The brand-new Tartarean Skeleton had been made by the joint work of the two masters of refining in the Divinity Transformation Stage.

It was a… fancy, tycoon-like Colossus.

The predominant black and red that was filled with mysteriousness and invincibility had been modified into a dazzlingly light gold camouflage by Li Yao. Such camouflage was made from a material taken from the mausoleum of the Supreme Emperor named “Star Silicon”, which boasted a very high performance to resist spiritual and magnetic interferences. Also, the mirror effect could reflect the radiations and mystic rays very effectively. More than 80% of the mystic ray attacks could be reflected without the spiritual shield.

The only problem was that it looked too luxury, high-key, and swanky.

As it happened, Li Yao had also produced tremendous highly-rising, unbelievably eye-catching components that had been attached to the plate armor of the Tartarean Skeleton densely. There was even a tall hat or a fin on the head that was also in the dazzling gold color, as if he were worried that people might not notice him from dozens of kilometers away.

It couldn’t be helped. The Tartarean Skeleton in the past had too distinctive a style. If it were not modified to be even more idiosyncratic and unforgettable, the marks of the past would not be completely erased.

“The new pose… will do for now.”

On the control panel, Li Yao controlled the hundred spider puppets to perform the last polishing and painting, while he pondered and said, “This should be called ‘Tartarean Skeleton, Gold Special Edition’, right?”

Li Jialing, the young man who looked like a gold lion, helped him while looking at him in hesitation.

“What are you trying to say?”

Li Yao looked at the control menu to adjust the connectivity among the magical equipment units subtly while he asked, “You have been unsettled ever since I came back here.”

“Brother Yao—”

Li Jialing couldn’t help but say, “Are you really going to sneak into the Godly Might Prison and rescue General Lei Chenghu? It’s too dangerous.”

“Of course it is dangerous. That is why it requires a smart, brave, responsive, and invincible expert such as myself!”

Li Yao replied casually, “Also, I believe in your beloved mother. Although your mother is an insane gambler, she will never take part in the games that she will surely lose. Now that she is confident to rescue General Lei, she will certainly give the most support she has!”

“Stop calling the woman my ‘beloved mother’.”

Li Jialing complained in a low voice, “Do you trust her?”

“Why not?”

Li Yao said matter-of-factly, “If the battle to conquer the Godly Might Prison fails, it will be your mother who suffers the heaviest losses, not me. Is there any reason why she wouldn’t do her best?”

After a long daze, Li Jialing said, “It does make sense. That is a good reason to trust her. But I am still perplexed. Does she have any reason to trust you and ask you to carry out such a critical mission? Isn’t Yue Wushuang, leader of the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils, more suitable than you?”

“I’m afraid that you are wrong about that. In fact, leaving aside our abilities, I am, in fact, more trustworthy to your mother than Yue Wushuang is, or anybody else for that matter.”

Li Yao said with a smile, “Yue Wushuang, Jin Yuyan, and Dongfang Sheng are more like Li Linghai’s political allies than her subordinates. They have joined each other and established the group of ‘reformists’ because of common interests.

“But interests may change at any moment. Your allies this second may become your enemies in the next second. If the four Kurfürst families can offer more interests than Li Linghai does, anybody may betray her at any moment.

“After all, what your mother can present right now are mostly empty promises. However great the rewards may be, they are not necessarily comparable to the real gold from the four Kurfürst families.

“But I am different. Leaving my personal relation with Li Linghai, I am a Cultivator of honor and integrity. As long as your mother abides by her promises and treats the ordinary people in the Imperium more kindly than the four Kurfürst families do, I will indeed support her all the time!”

“Right, speaking of which, I have another question.”

Li Jialing was greatly baffled. “General Lei Chenghu is an Immortal Cultivator. I have heard countless tales about him from Li Lingfeng. That is a heartless and merciless man who would do anything to achieve his purpose. Are you sure you are going to rescue him?”

“Well, about that…”

Li Yao blinked his eyes and said, “Yes, from the perspective of a Cultivator, Lei Chenghu is indeed an unpardonable Immortal Cultivator and an out-and-out villain.

“However, from the same perspective, your mother is a great villain full of schemes of ambitions too.

“Do you think it is better to face one villain or two villains at the same time?”

Thinking hard for a long time, Li Jialing was greatly enlightened. “Brother Yao, are you suggesting that General Lei Chenghu might not be on the same boat as the queen?”

“Yes. Even if they are on the same boat, their interests might not be the same. I have collected countless files regarding General Lei in the past couple of days. He is definitely not a man to be manipulated easily. The four Kurfürst families cannot control him, and your mother probably can’t either.”

Li Yao said with a smile, “Look, your mother has the Deep Sea Fleet, the Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors, the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils, and such a huge Deep Sea Palace, whereas we have absolutely nothing. How can we expect to compete with her? At such a moment, if I am the one who rescues General Lei in person, I will be able to make connections with him and try to force a new balance.”

Li Jialing stared at Li Yao for a long time and said, “So, you haven’t completely trusted the queen after all.”

“Come on. I am not a cold and ruthless man, and I want to completely trust the woman that my foster father deeply loved.”

Li Yao sighed and said, “However, you saw your mother’s intimidating style that looked like a white-haired witch too. Did she leave you the impression that she should be trusted?

“Besides, do you not feel that too many coincidences have been happening recently?

“The moment your mother ran out to hunt her brother, the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance took place.

“When the reformists greatly compromised the Godly Might Prison, General Lei Chenghu was secretly escorted to the place and kept under arrest?”

Li Jialing’s eyes froze gradually. “What are you trying to say, Brother Yao?”

“Nothing. I’m just having some random thoughts.”

With a smile, Li Yao looked at the tackily gold Colossus and said, “However, other than everything else, the secret treasures of the Supreme Emperor that I’ve earned from your mother alone will render the adventure worthwhile enough!”

“Right. You’ve been producing something with the rare materials from the queen, which you claim to be a ‘secret weapon’.”

Li Jialing was a young man after all. He shifted his attention and asked curiously, “What is it exactly?”

“Let me put it this way. You should know that there is a kind of special magical equipment named ‘Ares Extension’. They’re added to the outside of a crystal suit to enhance its combat ability.”

With a more and more brilliant smile, Li Yao said, “Have you considered if the Colossus can have its own Ares Extension?”

Chapter 2211 - The Arrow Is on the Bow

Three days later, in the Mystic Ice Sector, a half barren world in the first quadrant of the Imperium of True Human Beings, the lackluster star that had already entered the decaying phase was releasing bluish light lethargically.

The special elemental reactions yielded weird radiations that suppressed spiritual waves, making the area as lifeless as a frozen ocean.

All the planets were like lonely islands consolidated in the frozen ocean. Even if a few starships occasionally broke the barrier of the three-dimensional space and appeared on the barren land, the exhaust flames behind them were absolutely still, making them look like fish that were struggling to survive in the gaps of ice.

“New Birth 2”, a carrier, was exactly one of the struggling fish.

Because of a gap in the reactor in the third power unit, a fairly large explosion took place in the engine compartment, and the liquid fuel that could very likely cause a chain reaction was spilled everywhere. Immediately vaporized and expanded, the fuel spread out of the engine compartment, raising a series of screams and exclamations. The rear half of the carrier was in turmoil.

Right when “New Birth 2” minimized the power output of the main engine, switching to the cruise mode, in order to repair the damaged reactor and clean the leaked fuel in an emergency, feeble ripples unrecognizable to the naked eye appeared on their sailing route up front in the seemingly empty void.

It was almost like a big fish that was surfacing on an ocean, flapping the fins and opening its bloody mouth at the prey.

The working medium thrusters of the carrier were still emitting chaotic aftermath of spiritual energy, with the heat of almost a thousand degrees.

The ripples that were turning into the shape of a human had already swum in.

“Another tube.”

Under the protection of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, Li Yao resisted the scorching temperature while searching for the best part to breach into the carrier. He whined in his head, “Another infiltration operation that has taken every detail and every procedure into consideration. How can anybody ask for more? Hey, do you think there will be an accident this time?”

“The greatest accident has already happened. Who would have thought that the Godly Might Prison would build the ventilation tubes so broadly and stuff thousands of guards into it? How can the situation be any worse?”

The mental devil said, “In the past three days, we had 324 drills, and the success rate of the last hundred times has reached 96%. That is good enough!”

“It does make sense. Every sentry post, every surveillance camera’s degree, speed, and frequency of rotation, and every possible accident have been taken into consideration.

I don’t think we will be unlucky enough to meet any anomaly again, right?”

While mumbling in a low voice, Li Yao groped on the interior wall of the waste tube. Then, his eyes suddenly shone. “This is the place!”

Four hours later, when “New Birth 2” finally repaired the fault of the power unit and accelerated again, Li Yao had already changed into a completely different appearance and hidden himself in a freezing hibernation refrigerator, where he was locked together with hundreds of other ferocious felons.

His brow ridge rose highly, and his lips were half missing, exposing the crooked teeth to the air. It was a typical look of a disobedient, temperamental criminal.

He wore an orange prison uniform that was filled with special metal pads. There were two energy boxes on his chest and his back, which could release super electric currents that were as powerful as lightning into the clothes. Even the strongest prisoner would be paralyzed, if not electrocuted, immediately.

His identification information was on his wrists and his ankles, suggesting that he was a dangerous person who had committed a hundred murders and trained himself through bloody slaughters after his mind was deranged because of a training accident.

Everything about him was frozen in the temperature of almost minus a hundred degrees.

On the surveillance crystal processor next to the hibernation cabin, it could be clearly seen that all of Li Yao’s biophysical parameters were approaching zero at this moment. Even his cellar reactions were almost frozen. He looked no different from a dead person.

In the creepy refrigerator, the hundreds of prisoners were all the same, like ice sculptures that had slept for hundreds of years.

But nobody knew that underneath Li Yao’s dead-like appearance, his simmering soul was waiting to explode like a restless volcano, and every mitochondrion inside his every cell was like a spring that had been compressed to the minimum, ready to eject at any moment.

Neither did anyone know that, even though he seemed barehanded, Li Yao had kept more than ten Cosmos Rings inside his body.

The metal reactions of all the Cosmos Rings had been blocked by him by constricting the internal organs, which was enough to dodge the scanning of any magical equipment.

Once the weapons and ammunition inside the Cosmos Rings were retrieved, they would be enough to raise a small-scale war in the Godly Might Prison!

After a two-hour voyage, “New Birth 2” slowly cut into the extra-thin atmosphere of the sixth planet of the Mystic Ice Sector, diving into the frigid hell that was full of ice and frost.

The temperature of the place was so low that the starship did not even leave much flames when rubbing the air at a high speed. The scarce light was soon absorbed by the freezing fog.

All the continent was covered in frost, snow, fog, and rocks. Most of the places were desolate lands that one could not even find germs.

The circular area near the equator was the only paradise for all the lives on the entire planet.

Although it was the equator, there was no sign of sunlight and liveliness at all. It was dominated by ice and snow, like the poles of other planets. Only the mottled moss and fungi managed to keep the title of the planet as a habitable one.

However, other than the locals of the place—the highly coldproof moss and fungi—many other objects were active on the firn field.

They were the special spiritual puppets designed for battles in polar areas and made of coldproof materials. They were slaughter machines known as “Snow Monsters”.

Under normal circumstances, they would’ve been just training targets for the strong Immortal Cultivators. However, in such a place where the freezing wind was blowing in the environment of minus a hundred degrees, the charge of hundreds of “Snow Monsters” was enough to freeze the blood of any Immortal Cultivator or Cultivator.

The “Snow Monsters” deployed in the place, on the other hand, were much more than “hundreds”.

Other than the “Snow Monsters”, there were also dense underground bastions and automatic firing points on the ground, which could turn the snowy world into an ocean of fire at any moment.

That was still not counting the Godly Might Fleet cruising between the atmosphere and the near-planet orbit. Although the descendants of the four Kurfürst families considered working in the Godly Might Prison as a punishment, the four Kurfürst families were never petty on their starships and their gears.

At least four main-force warships were among the most advanced models of the Imperium. Their main cannons, which could reduce the temperature hundreds of meters nearby to absolute zero instantly, were enough to let anyone with a normally-functioning head to abandon the idea of resisting them in such an extreme environment.

Li Yao's head was functioning quite well.

Therefore, he was absolutely unwilling to be a lone hero to fight against hundreds of thousands of “Snow Monsters”, an equal number of cross-fire underground bastions, and hundreds of crystal warships in the sky in such a wretched hell.

He only hoped that, if Li Linghai was really a bold, ambitious schemer, her planning and organization abilities better deserved her ambitions. She must show up in time, cause a destructive blow to the Godly Might Fleet, and launch a blanket of bombardment on the surface of the planet.

The land that was covered in snow and frost suddenly split. From the silo whose bottom was too deep to be seen, hundreds of complicated lights were shot out and outlined a virtual sailing route in midair.

“New Birth 2” turned off the vertical thrusters, and adjusting the power output of the anti-gravity rune arrays, slowly landed into the underground port of the Godly Might Prison.

If nothing went wrong, Li Yao had one hour, 58 minutes, and 33 seconds to avoid the scanning of the guards and surveillance cameras, pass half of the prison, and find General Lei Chenghu to provide protection.

One hour, 58 minutes, and 33 seconds later, Li Linghai’s Deep Sea Fleet would show up in the sky of the Godly Might Prison and perform an attack that would shock the entire Imperium!

…

Right at the same time when Li Yao snuck into the Godly Might Prison as a “frozen corpse”, deep inside the prison, “God of War” Lei Chenghu met the first living “guest” who had come to visit him after half a month of custody.

The guest, however, was quite a great surprise for Lei Chenghu.

Even his face that had always been taciturn and serious like forever-frozen ice was caught in a moment of bewilderment.

The guest had a face exactly like his own, albeit a hundred years younger.

Of course, the ambitions, desires, impatience, and restlessness all over the young face could never be found on Lei Chenghu’s face that was full of wrinkles.

“Honghai, how did you find this place?”

Looking at Lei Honghai, his eldest son, Lei Chenghu frowned, without any ecstasy of meeting his family at all. Instead, he pondered, full of suspicion and alert for a moment, before his eyes turned even gloomier. “Did the ‘special investigation committee’ ask you to persuade me? You have abandoned the Astounding Thunder Fleet and joined the ‘special investigation committee’?”

“Father, I am indeed cooperating with the special investigation committee, but I have never abandoned the Astounding Thunder Fleet at all. On the contrary, the Astounding Thunder Fleet and the Lei family are both in peril and may be obliterated at any moment, which will be an inestimably heavy blow to the entire Imperium too. I am here to persuade Father exactly for the future of the Astounding Thunder Fleet and the Lei family.”

Lei Honghai almost couldn’t stand his father’s aggressive staring. Gritting his teeth, he went on, “The special investigation committee is directly under the command of the Council of Elders and represents the highest interests of the Imperium. Didn’t you always teach us that a soldier’s responsibility is obedience and that we have to consider the interests of the Imperium as the top priority no matter what we do? Then, is there anything wrong to cooperate with the special investigation committee?”

Chapter 2212 - Laureated or Cursed

“Cut the crap.”

Lei Chenghu said coldly, “Spit it out. What does the special investigation committee want you to do exactly?”

“I think you must know it, Father.”

Staring at Lei Chenghu, Lei Honghai said, “The Council of Elders, the special investigation committee, and I all hope that Father can make a public statement and inform all the troops in the frontline of your support for the Council of Elders’ investigation on the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance. We hope that you can chastise the radicals in the expedition army and persuade the members of the Blood Oath Alliance in the Astounding Thunder Fleet to turn themselves in. At the very least, we hope that father can give an order to restrain the Astounding Thunder Fleet so that no blood will be shed when the special investigation committee enters the fleet.”

“It will enter the fleet?”

Lei Chenghu’s pupils constricted abruptly. “The special investigation committee and the four Kurfürst families behind it are truly bold enough to lay fingers on the Astounding Thunder Fleet that has fought bloody battles for a hundred years with remarkable accomplishments?”

“There is no need to be worried, Father. It is only meant to remove the radicals in the Astounding Thunder Fleet.”

Putting on a gloating and rebellious smile, Lei Honghai said, “The Council of Elders does not intend to dissect the Astounding Thunder Fleet but only want to ensure the Astounding Thunder Fleet’s absolute loyalty for the Imperium. After the investigation and purge are done, it will still be commanded by us.”

“By ‘us’, do you mean ‘me’?”

Lei Chenghu narrowed his eyes. The shock on his face was entirely gone, gradually replaced by mockery and sadness. “I stand by what I said. I refuse it. Go now. Unless you are carrying the Council of Elders’ death sentence to me, you do not need to come again.”

“Father, why are you so obstinate?”

Looking at the Lei Chenghu who listened to neither kind words nor threats, Lei Honghai burst into fury and bellowed, blushing, “The situation can’t be more dangerous. The radicals in the capital are about to be eliminated. The fleets of the major warlords and the nobles have pledged loyalty to the Council of Elders too. The few remaining fleets are now the targets for everyone, but their throats have been choked from up above like the fish in a water tank. The Astounding Thunder Fleet is exactly one of them!

“The universe is a vast place, but we are rootless duckweeds. However strong the Astounding Thunder Fleet is, all our ammunition and fuel depend on the base of the expedition army, as well as the Council of Elders behind it, because we do not have a base of our own!

“They do not need to take care of us through violence at all. As long as they cut off our supplies, what can we expect to use to compete with the four Kurfürst families? The trophies we have collected in the frontline? How long can they sustain?

“The trend is not in our favor! The war is over. We have won. The expedition army has accomplished its historic mission. It is inevitable that the army is removed and reorganized. Nobody can resist such a trend!

“Now, the Council of Elders is surprisingly kind to ensure the maximal independence of the Astounding Thunder Fleet and give us a prosperous Sector as an eupatrid fief. I have no idea what you are persisting in. What benefits can you get for yourself, for the Astounding Thunder Fleet, or for the Lei family by going against the Council of Elders like this?

“Please. Think it through, Father!

“Ever since my childhood, haven’t you been teaching us that self-interest and disunity is the source of the problems in the Imperium, and as a proud soldier of the Imperium, we must not fight for our selfish desires but for the interests of the Imperium and all mankind under the governance of the Council of Elders?

“Right now, it is the Council of Elders that has given the order that the expedition army be removed and reorganized. Also, the way of reorganization is not too harsh either. The Astounding Thunder Fleet is part of the expedition army in the first place. Why do we have to be the only exception and go against the wishes of the Council of Elders and the four Kurfürst families?

“Let me tell you the truth, Father. The Council of Elders is determined to settle the issues of the expedition army at whatever cost. If they cannot be resolved with no bloodshed, they will be resolved with blood.

“Yes. With your prestige in the Astounding Thunder Fleet and the entire frontline, as long as you give a signal, most of the warriors in the Astounding Thunder Fleet will fight to the end. But what does it matter? What is the purpose? If you are ruining the Astounding Thunder Fleet that you have been working hard on since a hundred years ago and letting the thousands of people of the Lei family die with you, you should at least give us a reason and let us know what we have died for!”

Listening to his eldest son’s outspoken complaints and criticization, Lei Chenghu was silent for a long time before he slowly opened his mouth again. He said somewhat hoarsely, “Everything I’ve been doing is not for myself, not for the Lei family, not for the Astounding Thunder Fleet, but for the entire Imperium and the supreme civilization of mankind.

“Yes. I taught you often that a soldier’s responsibility is obedience, and that the Immortal Cultivators should take part in national wars instead of street fights. They should only fight for the interests of the Imperium and mankind under the governance of the Council of Elders.

“In the past two hundred years, I have been practicing the ethos every second. I might not be enough to be compared to the famous generals in history in terms of accomplishments and commanding arts, but I can announce proudly that I never used any bullet to gain personal benefits, and every enemy that I slew with my saber was an enemy of the country.

“Even if the orders given by the Council of Elders contradicted my personal interests, or even if I knew that certain elder or a certain noble family was behind it, I still carried out the orders dutifully without any negligence, just in order to set an example for other warlords and local troops and to make the entire Imperium be really united again.

“But this time…

“The Council of Elders is truly wrong. They have made a fatal mistake that will destroy the Imperium and the civilization of mankind!

“I am not saying this for myself, the Lei family, or the Astounding Thunder Fleet, but for the interests of the Imperium of True Human Beings. The expedition army must not be removed or reorganized. Instead, it must be further expanded and gain more independence. At the very least, it must maintain the current scale and be prepared for another thirty years of war for the final victory.

“This is a national affair that concerns life and death. How can I back off? If I take one step back, the entire Imperium will fall into a bottomless abyss!”

Lei Honghai could hear none of it. He simply sneered, “There are so many powerful and wise men in the Council of Elders, with intelligence a hundred times more than we do. How can they possibly be wrong?

“The situation they cannot see through has been seen by you and you alone. Is this because they are all drunk and you are the only one who is sober?”

“The Council of Elders maybe does have a lot of people whose wisdom is as profound as the ocean and whose computational ability is as fast as lightning. But they all have selfish desires. When one has selfish desires, involved in the swirls of power and interests, they will lose their senses and become the slave of their lust and ambitions. Or rather, they will turn into a donkey with a carrot hanging before their head, unable to see through the simplest trap."

Lei Chenghu sighed and said casually, "I don't think that I'm the only sober person. The Imperium is such a vast place. There must be a lot of other people who are also sober. However, in such a dirty world, some are unwilling to wake up, some daren't wake up, and some are shot to death when they open their eyes and want to scream, this time really never to wake up again."

"I don't know what you are trying to say, Father, but if you don't soften your attitude, the Imperium may be doomed and may be not, but you, the Lei family, and the Astounding Thunder Fleet will truly be doomed and for all eternity!"

Lei Honghai's neck was bulging because of his fury. He roared, "Ever since I was born, have you considered for your family for once? I only dispatched the starships under my command to ship some contraband. Everybody in all the fleets did that. Even the troops of the four Kurfürst families did that. It was a public secret and an unspoken tradition, but you had to expose it and wreck the reputation of me, your eldest son. Also, hundreds of my connections were involved. Almost all my friends were pissed off!

"There's also my younger brother. He was only one hair away from the peak of the Core Formation Stage. Was it wrong at all that he tried to break into it? You said that he wasn't talented. It might be true, but so what? Were the descendants of other noble families all exceptionally gifted? Didn't all of them advance into the supreme levels after multiple tries with astronomical resources?

"But you were unwilling to give him even one additional crystal. As a result, he was forced to make the breakthrough

through risky techniques. When he was mentally deranged and on the verge of death, you could’ve saved him easily, but you simply turned a blind eye to him!

“Hehe. My younger brother and I were not the closest siblings, but I was definitely not as heartless as you!

“Why, you think you are a great, selfless, pure Immortal Cultivator and an iron-boned, loyal contributor to the Imperium of True Human Beings?

“Do you know how other people comment on you behind your back? They say that you are not selfless, but your selfishness lies entirely on ‘reputation’. You have sacrificed your biological son just in pursuit of the reputation as a loyal official of the country!”

Those words had perhaps been held back in Lei Honghai’s heart for decades.

Now that he had vented them out, his eyes were bloodshot in excitement, and his mouth was almost foaming. He couldn’t have looked more devastating and exultant.

When his eldest son mentioned his youngest son, Lei Chenghu’s pupils apparently constricted hard, as if his eyeballs were about to collapse into two black holes.

However, he disguised himself quite well, and the brightness as tough as iron soon filled the “collapse area” in his eyes. Sulking in his own resentment, his eldest son did not notice his father’s anomaly at all.

“Everything I do, I do to with a clear conscience. I do not need to explain to anyone, nor do I care about their comments.”

“God of War” Lei Chenghu took a deep breath and said slowly, one word after another, “Those pests compare me to themselves and consider me as a person who fishes for fame, so be it. I don’t care whether I am laureated or cursed, because that is not what I fight for.”

Chapter 2213 - Something Ends, Something Begins

“Did you know, Dad, what I have hated most since childhood has always been your view that you are the only person fighting for the Imperium and that the entire world has betrayed it. I have had enough of it!”

Lei Honghai started calling him “Dad” instead of “Father”, and the mockery and rebelliousness on his face were even more intense than before. “It is a shame that no matter how self-righteous you are, there is nothing you can do right now.

“The Imperium is perfectly fine. It does not need your saving. Besides, you can barely save yourself right now!

“Let me tell you what will happen next.

“It does not matter even if you insist on not making the public statement, because the special investigation committee can do it on your behalf. As for the soul stamp, I am your son after all. Your blood runs in my veins, and our soul stamps are very similar. After some slight adjustment, my soul stamp can replace yours to issue the commands.

“It may be seen through, but so what? The Council of Elders is already ready to deal with the Astounding Thunder Fleet. If you insist on rejecting our kindness, and your wretched subordinates are as stubborn as rocks, we will have to settle everything in the most thunderous way!

“Do not blame me for being too cruel to the uncles. The Council of Elders gave them and you a lot of chances. I do not hate them, but I want to protect myself and the many people from the Lei family. Do you know what a great headache the Lei family has been having when we have a leader who decides to sacrifice the family for the country every now and then?

“As for your personal safety… Rest assured. Although you have been an inhumane and heartless father, and you can watch your son die while doing nothing, I will never be as cruel as you, and I will show you enough fidelity.

“You will not be killed, which is one of the terms that I negotiated with the special investigation committee. After the issues in the Astounding Thunder Fleet are taken care of and the situation is steady again, you will be sent to a beautiful and pleasant manor much bigger than this place where you can live your life of retirement comfortably and, by the way, watch how I govern the Astounding Thunder Fleet in a completely different way and make the entire Lei family thrive!

“This is everything that will happen next. Open your eyes and observe, Father. I will prove to you that the ideas that you’ve believed in all the time are wrong. You are not as correct and important as you imagine. Without you, the Imperium will still flourish at a high speed, and the Lei family will still rise a hundred times faster. Do you hear me?”

Lei Chenghu looked at his son as if he were a corpse in a grave.

He was utterly unmoved as his son grew more and more excited and high-pitched. Listening in silence the whole time, he did not observe until his son was done with the catharsis. “Got it. So, you have made up your mind to betray me for the commandership of the Astounding Thunder Fleet?”

“Betray…”

Although his father was like a tiger trapped in a cage with the teeth and claws removed, Lei Honghai couldn’t help but feel palpitation when he heard the word “betray”. Holding back the cramp on his eyelids and his lips, he said, “I never want to betray you, Father, but a lot of people—including myself and many from the Lei family and even the Astounding Thunder Fleet—we want to survive instead of dying for an ungrounded, ludicrous reason!”

“On a battlefield, the more afraid you are of death, the faster you will die. Only those who have forgotten their fate may fight a way of survival out of the dead bodies. You’ve been following me in wars for so many years, yet you do not understand such a simple logic?”

Lei Chenghu shook his head slowly, with his eyes full of confusion, as if he found it strange that he had such a stupid son. Staring at his eldest son so hard as if he would not see him again in the next second, he spoke in a voice that was even more frigid than the icy cold wind on the floor. “Let me tell you what will happen next, silly boy.

“Yes, your plan may work out at the beginning. With your cooperation, the Council of Elders can easily eliminate all the people in the Astounding Thunder Fleet who are loyal to me. Your soul stamp can be used to fake my orders and send the voices of ‘Marquis Liaohai’ to the entire frontline. But that is your entire value.

“Before your value is completely exploited, they might make you the commander of the Astounding Thunder Fleet. But good days don’t last. Soon enough, you will find the

Astounding Thunder Fleet utterly infiltrated and deformed, and that you are nothing but a puppet.

“Without the consent of those elders, you cannot even command a single starship.

“Do not think that you can play balance among the four Kurfürsten. It will be useless. You are no match for them at all.

“But perhaps, you will not meet such trouble at all, because the expedition army will have been removed and reorganized before that. The army groups that are highly concentrated with the highest alert and combat ability will return to their original units in the local areas. They will even fight each other over the ownership and development rights of the dozens of Sectors.

“By then, the main-force fleets of the Alliance of the Holy Covenant will definitely march out from the least expected place and crush the disorganized troops of the Imperium. The whole Imperium will be cast into panic and mayhem.

“By then, the dumbfounded, helpless Kurfürst families will remember me and put me back to power, asking me to command the remaining soldiers to resist the army of the Covenant Alliance that is in the highest morale, exactly like what happened during the collapse of the Black Wind Sector a hundred years ago.

“There is something that you’re wrong about, son.

“I am indeed a pillar of the Imperium. Perhaps, I am the only one who can save the Imperium. Without me, the Imperium WILL malfunction and even completely collapse.

“That is the only reason why the Council of Elders dare not kill me. It is not because of the ‘terms’ that you negotiated.

“I do not blame you for choosing to betray me today, but I feel very pitiful. I thought you were at least smarter than your younger brother, and after learning the lesson of using starships for personal interests, you would not overestimate your wisdom and abilities and do such stupid things anymore.

“It never occurred to me that you are even more stupid than him. Ten thousand times more stupid.

“Mark my words, son. You may betray me today, but the day will come when you regret your decision. I hope that you will hold your head high, face the repercussions of your betrayal, and die for the Imperium valiantly like a man when that day comes!”

Lei Honghai’s lips trembled for a long time.

He was about to argue, but he simply held back his words after thinking for a long time. He merely sneered and bowed deeply at Lei Chenghu. “Rest well, Father. Everything will be over in a few days.”

“Perhaps.”

Lei Chenghu’s eyes passed his son and the wall, reaching a place that nobody could tell. “Perhaps everything is already over.”

…

The dazzling halo triggered by the anti-gravity rune arrays of “New Birth 2”, the carrier, soon disappeared into the icy fog. Very soon, even the contour of the starship was beyond recognition.

As nine gates that were ten meters thick closed slowly, the frigidity in the snowy world was blocked outside and could not find its way into the prison at all.

The Godly Might Prison once again became an impregnable environment.

The five hundred frozen prisoners who had just been delivered were going through the first examination to confirm their identities under the watch of a thousand prisoners and even more spiritual puppets.

While controlling every muscle and every cell precisely to pretend to be a deeply-hibernated person, Li Yao controlled Neltharion carefully and wandered in the underground port in the stealth state.

One after another, Neltharion detected assault warships that were docked in the port to avoid the bad weather.

It also noticed thousands of spiritual puppets and the highly-vigilant jailors that had been armed to the teeth.

There was no need to mention the surveillance cameras that had crammed the entire spaceport and every pathway and could invoke a trypophobia attack when one looked at them, as well as the interconnected firing points and the hidden bastions in the rocks.

The more one looked, the more depressing they would be.

Thankfully, there was the help of the spies from inside, or Li Yao would absolutely refuse to sneak into such a heavily guarded place.

A few jailors, leading a team of spiritual puppets, arrived before Li Yao and turned on the cabin he was at.

Li Yao hurried to move the blood gel that Li Linghai had long prepared to the spot where the newcomers were about to collect.

Perhaps some of the jailors who were responsible for the identity check belonged to the reformists too. Li Yao did not run into any trouble. After the blood and skin samples were tested, the magical equipment in their hands began to emit a gentle green color.

The jailors changed a new identification armband for Li Yao and waved their hands to let him go, implying that the Godly Might Prison had accepted the prisoner, and he would be “defrost” soon.

The first test has been passed successfully!

Li Yao felt a slight relief in his heart. “In the next moment, I will fully carry out my tough personal abilities, assassinate a jailor, and impersonate him. Then, I will dodge the sentry posts, surveillance cameras, and invisible rays with my agile and phantom movements and sneak to General Lei Chenghu’s side without alerting anyone. This is really a super difficult challenge, but I vaguely have a feeling that I’m pretty lucky today. I’m going to accomplish the mission without setbacks!”

In another half hour or so, Li Linghai and the rest of them will launch an attack. As long as I can pass the half hour in peace, the job will be 99% successful!

The mental devil: “Well…”

Hardly had Li Yao thought of that in his head when he sensed the most intensive quakes, mixed with deafening explosions, coming over from somewhere deep below his feet.

Earsplitting buzzes echoed from all directions. The entire Godly Might Prison was immediately enshrouded in red lights. All the jailors, war puppets, hidden bastions, and firing points were all activated and entered the most emergent combat state. Desperate roars came from the broadcast runes everywhere.

“Enemy incoming! Enemy incoming! Somebody has broken in!”

Chapter 2214 - New Players Are Finally Here!

“What is going on?”

Hearing the alarms each higher than the last, Li Yao shuddered hard. “I-I did not even say that out just now. It was just a thought in my head. I am not so unlucky as to have been discovered before the infiltration formally begins, right?

“I said nothing but a ‘well’ just now. It did not exactly mean anything at all but was only an interjection!”

The mental devil pondered for a moment and mumbled, “Is it because this universe is more rejective to us as our level advances? How marvelous…”

Looking at the war puppets whose magazines and turrets were all opened, making them look like iron hedgehogs, and the guards nearby whose chainswords and vibration sabers were running at a high speed, Li Yao felt that his head was exploding. “Do you have any idea what the environment we are in is right now? You are still in the mood for jokes? Should the war puppets and guards come at us, we will have no choice but to run away!”

“Wait a moment—”

The mental devil said, “They do not seem to be looking at us. We are not their target!”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. He looked at the guards and the war puppets around and discovered that none of them were paying any attention to him although they appeared aggressive and intimidating. All the jailors were on high alert under the motivation of the alarms.

Did Li Linghai take action in advance?

Ten thousand self-contradictory thoughts popped up in Li Yao’s head. He couldn’t figure out the truth of the “incoming enemy” at all.

The quakes and explosions below his feet, however, did not stop at all, as if a dragon made of magma was crashing the underside of the Godly Might Prison from the core of the planet.

That’s unreasonable. The attack obviously comes from the bottommost floor of the Godly Might Prison, not a blanket bombardment from the sky. It is not the agreed tactic of the Deep Sea Fleet…

While Li Yao was thinking quickly, one of the patrol ships parked in a maintenance workshop of the underground port suddenly hummed.

A dazzling spiritual shield immediately appeared and flowed all over its body. Like a shark that had just dashed out of the deep sea, all the turrets and magazines were opened, revealing the daunting tusks.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The patrol ship was conducting maintenance and upgrade on anti-gravity rune arrays and power units on the maintenance platform. It could not move at all right now.

But the immobility could not prevent the hundred turrets on its body turning agilely and bathe the entire spaceport with the barrages of a stormy fire.

The jailors of the Godly Might Prison were naturally not as tough as the elites in the battlefield in the frontline. Little could they have anticipated that they would be attacked by a dormant starship parked at a corner of the spaceport.

Caught unprepared, they were blown up or running in devastation because of the storm of destruction right next to them. They couldn’t have looked more wretched.

Of the five hundred prisoners that were yet to be unfrozen, some less fortunate guys were pierced through by the wandering bullets, shot into icy, broken meat before they opened their eyes.

Are you serious? Who the heck is doing on this?

Li Yao could not hold it any longer. With his eyes wide open in the middle of the ice and frost, he watched the burning shrapnel passing him by, shooting through the hibernation cabins around him and burning the internal organs of the prisoners inside into nothingness, while he did his best to activate his mitochondria, cells, muscles, and veins to restore his peak combat ability as soon as possible!

The stormy barrage did not stop until half a minute later, when the jailors and the war puppets all began to counterattack the patrol ship after realizing what was going on.

While the jailors and the war puppets did not bring many powerful anti-material weapons, the patrol ship did not have a particularly solid armor either. Under the barrage of thousands of firing points, the ivory spiritual shield was soon blown into orange, crimson, and violet, until it exploded and obliterated into nothingness like fragile glass.

Losing the protection of the spiritual shield, the patrol starship was immediately riddled with holes, and the internal structure was too seriously damaged to support its heavy body anymore. It collapsed deeply.

But, in the next second, the warehouse of crystals and the engine compartment of the patrol ship exploded at the same time!

In such a completely enclosed underground environment, such a suicide explosion had dire consequences.

To make things worse, the mysterious intruder had placed tremendous lethally poisonous materials inside the patrol ship. Boosted by the flames, all the materials were vaporized and turned into raging, venomous gas that was as intense as ink as they spread out quickly.

Li Yao saw with his own eyes that dozens of jailors who were close to their target were swallowed by the flames caused by the explosion of the starship.

The hundred jailors behind, in the meantime, were struggling and cramping in the middle of the venomous fog. They barely had any time to escape when the venomous fog infiltrated into their armor and corroded their flesh into mucus. They collapsed to the ground, dying the most miserable death.

The venomous fog was highly corrosive. Even the war puppets would crack and degenerate into cramping garbage after their rune arrays, chips, and wires were corroded.

Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum!

Very soon, a swarm of tiny metal bugs flew out of the venomous fog and swept at the jailors like dancing wild bees.

Those “metal bees” were extremely fast and agile. However crazily the jailors shot, it was barely possible for them to hit the targets. Instead, the “metal bees” crawled into the gaps of their crystal suits and were tightly attached there with the highly-magnetic wings and tentacles.

Then, there were dull explosions. The metal bees that were only the size of fingers were able to blow out holes that were as big as bowls on the crystal suits and the bodies, destroying all the organs inside.

A patrol ship, a weird venomous fog, and a swarm of crazily dancing metal bees—the spaceport that linked the Godly Might Prison had been reduced into a chaotic battlefield!

At this moment, the Godly Might Prison finally confirmed the identity of the intruders. Desperate roars echoed from the broadcast rune arrays again. “The Covenant Alliance! A lot of people of the Covenant Alliance have snuck into the Godly Might Prison trying to rescue the prisoners here! All guards, hold your position and do not let any of them run away!”

“The Covenant Alliance has come to rescue the prisoners?”

Li Yao felt the urge of roaring. Why did the Covenant Alliance come at such a precise moment, no sooner and no later?

During the ten years of the Imperium’s counterattack, the expedition army of the Imperium had indeed captured many captives from the Covenant Alliance in a winning streak.

The ordinary people under the governance of the Covenant Alliance mattered little, but a lot of leaders of the Covenant Alliance and the mysterious “Temple Guardians” were all valuable targets.

Although the Covenant Alliance and the Imperium had been at war for a thousand years, the weird country made of puppets of flesh and blood and zealots who worshipped the Pangu Clan as their god had always been covered in an unpredictable mist. The Imperium was not well aware of the Covenant Alliance’s specific means of government or its social stratification.

By studying the captives who used to be part of the leadership of the country, it should be able to unveil the mask of the mysterious regime and allow part of the truths to be seen.

However, the interrogation and research on the people of the Covenant Alliance did not go well.

The Covenant Alliance’s expertise in terms of brain studies, or rather, in brainwashing, memory segregation, and soul defense was somewhat above the knowledge of the Imperium.

After the interrogation failed, the base of the expedition army had no choice but to escort the important captives of the Covenant Alliance to the Godly Might Prison in the rear. They planned to work on the captives slowly to figure out the secrets of the Covenant Alliance.

The Godly Might Prison was chosen, and a brand-new camp of captives was built, exactly because the defense of this place was meticulous, and it was safe enough at the rear of the Imperium.

But as it turned out, the Covenant Alliance was still crazy enough to assault the Godly Might Prison hoping to heist all the captives!

“Wait! It’s not as simple as that!”

The mental devil suddenly observed. “The Imperium’s counterattack has lasted more than ten years. This is not the first day that the captives of the Covenant Alliance have been locked here. Like what you said just now, why did they choose to break the prison at such a moment, no sooner and no later? Is it not too much a coincidence?”

Li Yao thought of something. With bubbles surfacing in his eyes, he said, “It is indeed too coincidental. Also, the Godly Might Prison is so heavily defended. How much effort did the Covenant Alliance devote on the infiltration, how much price will they pay in order to get the captives away, and how many of the captives can safely run away from the Godly Might Prison, the Mystic Ice Sector, and the heartland of the Imperium to return to the Covenant Alliance?

“Even if a couple of captives out of a hundred can make it back in the end, so many elites who are capable of infiltrating the Godly Might Prison will have been wasted here. Is it really worthwhile?

“The army of the Imperium has secured unstoppable victories in the frontline. But most of the victories were about the recovery of lost land. Few were about the annihilation of the enemy’s main force. Therefore, the captives of the Covenant Alliance can’t be very important. At such a moment when the situation in the frontline has basically been settled, a rescue operation, whose success rate is very low and which requires a high price no matter if it succeeds or not, has been planned for the captives who are not of high levels? The commanders of the Covenant Alliance are definitely not as stupid as that!

“Therefore—”

Alarmed, Li Yao and the mental devil exclaimed at the same time, “General Lei!”

Li Yao said, “The Covenant Alliance is here for General Lei!”

The mental devil said, “They are here to rescue the captives on the surface, but it is just a smoke grenade to cover their real purpose, which is to assassinate General Lei Chenghu!”

Li Yao said, “Lei Chenghu has been active in the frontmost line of the resistance against the Covenant Alliance since a hundred years ago. He is one of the few generals of the Imperium who remains invincible for the Covenant Alliance, which makes him a thorn in the flesh for the Covenant Alliance. Any price is worthwhile in order to get rid of him!”

The mental devil said, “What is even more incredible is that General Lei Chenghu is held in custody by the Council of Elders here. If he is killed uncannily right now, the Council of Elders and the four Kurfürst wouldn’t be able to explain themselves at all. The conflicts between the four Kurfürst families and the troops in the frontline will escalate all of a sudden. It won’t be strange even if a massive civil war breaks out!”

“Exactly!”

Li Yao’s eyes were brighter and brighter. “An almighty general of the Imperium, and the highest commander of the Third Battle Area, went missing on the way to the capital, locked in the Godly Might Prison uncannily, and got killed in an inexplicable prison break. It will be enough to chill all the warlords and local leaders of the entire Imperium. They will be more scared and wary of the four Kurfürst families than ever. The Astounding Thunder Fleet may even do unpredictable things that will lead to the collapse in the frontline!”

Chapter 2215 - Prison Turmoil

The mental devil shrieked, “That’s right. As long as General Lei Chenghu dies in the Godly Might Prison that is controlled by the four Kurfürst families and the issue is exposed to the public, the conflicts between the frontline and the rear will be completely irresolvable!

“With the selfishness and the proactiveness of the Immortal Cultivators, they are probably not going to sit down and talk to each other nicely to settle the issue in peace. The four Kurfürst families will only move one step further and suppress the smaller nobles and warlords, and those troops that do not belong to them will certainly rise in resistance for their own lives. When the war between the parties is at the most heated moment, the army of the Covenant Alliance will launch an unstoppable counterattack that nobody will be able to resist!”

“Damn it, the Covenant Alliance has infiltrated the Godly Might Prison to such a remarkable level. Right now, many assassins must be running to the spot where General Lei Chenghu is caged!”

Li Yao gnashed his teeth. “Li Linghai’s fleet is still waiting to launch the ‘unexpected assault’ half an hour later. Little do they know that Lei Chenghu will be as dead as anyone can be by then. We have to seize every second and get Lei Chenghu out of the place before the assassins of the Covenant Alliance do!”

Li Yao took a deep breath. The last cell on his body had been fully recovered, emitting powerful vitality and vigor.

Although his face was still blue as if frozen, the brilliance flowing out of his pupils was already as dazzling as the diamond under the sunlight in the middle of a day.

All the panicked jailors and staggering war puppets nearby were in his eyes. A series of numbers popped up from the head of every jailor. They were the basic estimations that Li Yao could see of the enemy’s speed, strength, battle style, and level of danger.

The entire underground spaceport seemed to have turned into an enormous chessboard. Everybody was a black-and-white chess piece, and he was the only player sitting on this side of the chessboard watching the player of the Covenant Alliance who had yet to reveal his true self on the other side of the board!

Li Yao soon locked onto his target.

It was one particular jailor that he suspected to be a “captain”. The guy had activated more than ten light beams on his crystal processor on one of his knees, contacting his superior in anxiety and learning the latest updates from deep inside the Godly Might Prison.

Li Yao rolled his tongue and delivered a Cosmos Ring out of his lips.

“Cosmos Ring” was just a name. They were not necessarily crafted in the shape of rings.

This particular Cosmos Ring, for example, was like a small button. It was no thicker than a razor.

Li Yao sent a telepathic thought to entangle his Cosmos Ring softly and send it to his left hand.

He waved his left hand, and a crystal bomb was immediately stuffed to his back in secret. After a huge explosion, the hibernation cabin was blown up into pieces, and a tremendous black fog was raised, blocking the sight of everyone within a hundred meters.

Right when the crystal bomb exploded, Li Yao had already leaped up into a streak of brilliance with a speed faster than the blast, blinking to the back of the captain that he had locked onto a moment ago.

He cut the back of the captain’s neck with his hand neither too heavily nor too lightly. When his spiritual energy flooded into his enemy’s brain crazily, the guy passed out immediately without having the chance to even grunt.

While taking off the guy’s clothes with both hands, Li Yao fixed his crystal processor with spiritual energy and released all the light beams to study the latest battle reports that had been sent over.

The situation inside the Godly Might Prison was rather rough.

Supposedly, with three main energy supply bases and one backup base powered by geothermal energy, it was impossible for the automatic defense and barrier system of the Godly Might Prison to crash. No enemy could break the three main energy supply bases at the same time.

But the problem turned out to be the backup base powered by geothermal energy.

“Geothermal energy” was an inexhaustible treasure house.

Any solid planet, no matter how low the temperature on the surface was and what an ice world it appeared to be, must have an extremely high temperature at the core of the planet. The energy of billions of years had been stored in space in the form of high-temperature and high-pressure magma.

When the geothermal energy was released slowly, it could provide heat for the entire Godly Might Prison to resist the bitter coldness and serve as a backup source of power in emergencies. It was supposed to be a marvelous design that killed two birds with one stone.

However, once the geothermal energy base was controlled by the enemy, who somehow made the magma of iron and nickel mixed with unknown elements to spurt out, tearing apart the rock stratum and activating the most violent force in the seismic area, it would certainly be a terrible disaster.

It was exactly what was happening right now.

At first, the pressure of the high-pressure magma below the ground suddenly increased by dozens of times, resulting in the gaps on the valves and tubes that connected the backup energy base to the magma area.

In the next moment, the mainframe crystal processor of the backup energy base was hacked by the Covenant Alliance and selected as a wrong defense measure. Instead of guiding and dredging the furious geothermal energy, it simply blocked the gaps trying to hold the energy back.

The strength of mankind was always limited. However huge the Godly Might Prison was, it was nothing more than a grain of dust compared to the entire planet. How could it block the most primitive, scorching, and violent forces at the deepest part of the planet?

The mainframe that was hacked and controlled by the spies of the Covenant Alliance, on the other hand, sent false data to the staff in the backup energy base, misleading them into thinking that all systems were normal.

When the earth began to shake and the temperature in the backup energy base rose continuously until the floor was as sticky as if it were about to melt, nothing could possibly stop a small but high-intensity volcano eruption from taking place inside the Godly Might Prison.

The valves exploded, and the tubes were torn apart. The deepest parts of the Godly Might Prison were riddled with holes. The enormous pressure tens of thousands of times the standard air pressure pushed the magma weighing millions of tons into the backup energy base through the gaps, drowning the place immediately. In the next moment, it ran everywhere through the convenient tubes, especially the ventilation tubes that were broad enough for horses to gallop in, and swallowed everything like an unstoppable tsunami.

To make things worse, the outbreak of the “underground volcano” caused a chain reaction and woke up a hibernating seismic area. A series of small earthquakes were raised, which added to the trouble of the bottom floor of the Godly Might Prison that was already on the verge of destruction.

Perhaps it was not a coincidence, but because the Covenant Alliance had long figured out the tectonic structure near the Godly Might Prison and planted crystal bombs on key locations.

The mental devil said, “I’ve been studying the battle style of the Covenant Alliance these days, and it occurs to me that they are particularly good at taking advantage of the terrain on every planet.

“When you think about it, it does make sense. The Covenant Alliance is a puppet of the Pangu Clan, and the Pangu Clan was the dominator of the universe before mankind. Their civilization was much more developed than mankind’s. In their heyday, they must’ve explored all the habitable planets in the three thousand Sectors in great detail.

“The planet where the Godly Might Prison is located, despite the frigidity, desolation, and lifelessness, has a thin atmosphere with primitive lives such as moss and fungi. The Pangu Clan couldn’t have missed it.

“In other words, the Pangu Civilization’s database probably has stored all the files relevant to the planet, including the critical data such as the tectonic structure and the distribution of the volcanos, faults, and seismic areas below the ground.

“Now that the Covenant Alliance has received tremendous heritages from the Pangu Clan, it is perfectly reasonable that they have gained access to the data and learned the greatest weakness of the planet!”

Looking at the chaos deep inside the Godly Might Prison that was displayed on the light beam and the blinking redness on the 3D map that implied the areas that were partly occupied by the energy or in the middle of a fierce battle, Li Yao felt as painful as if his teeth had been plucked forcefully.

The volcano eruptions and the earthquakes made by the Covenant Alliance had completely shattered the Godly Might Prison’s indestructible defense, malfunctioning the four energy supply bases one after another.

When it was the last energy base’s turn, although it was still providing energy for the entire Godly Might Prison, it was also on the verge of collapse.

The explosions deep below the ground that Li Yao heard at the beginning were exactly the suicide attacks did by the spies of the Covenant Alliance who had infiltrated the Godly Might Prison. They were trying to completely destroy the energy supply base.

The captives of the Covenant Alliance deeply caged inside the Godly Might Prison somehow received the call and commands of their companions too. Taking advantage of the weakened defense system, they ran out of their cells and sabotaged the prison in a riot.

Not just that, the most ferocious criminals of the Imperium were also set free by the spies of the Covenant Alliance who quietly hacked the mainframe crystal processor of the Godly Might Prison when the energy bases were all compromised, and it was on the verge of a crash!

Those qualified to be locked in the Godly Might Prison, aside from the political opponents of the four Kurfürst families, were without any exception the perverted, murderous, and highly-dangerous guys who caused great trouble to the current system, if they were really guilty of crimes.

Think about it. If even the Immortal Cultivators thought that they were “unpardonable”, their brutality was certainly beyond imagination!

Those bloodthirsty lunatics couldn’t care less about the war between the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance. Besides, they did not know what was going on at all. Driven by their instincts to kill, they lunged at the jailors closest to themselves, cutting out and chewing their living guts and enjoying the ecstasy that had been locked for too long!

Mess! Mess! Mess!

The entire Godly Might Prison had been reduced to a mess!

Human-shaped monsters who feasted on human flesh in laughter were everywhere, turning the prison into a slaughterhouse that was even more dreadful than the deepest level of hell!

Even so, this was perhaps not a successful operation from the perspective of a prison break.

However subtle the Covenant Alliance’s plan was and vehement their assault was, and despite all the chaos in the Godly Might Prison, the most critical problem was not resolved—how could they get out of the place?

On the surface of the planet and the near-planet orbit, countless soldiers of the Imperium were watching closely. All the warships had locked onto every exit of the Godly Might Prison, ready to launch a destructive attack any moment while ensuring that not a fly could get away.

It was also the greatest reason why the Godly Might Prison never thought that the Covenant Alliance would come for a prison break.

But of course, if it had not been a “prison break” since the very beginning but an assassination operation under the disguise of a prison break, the case would be entirely different.

Chapter 2216 - Bloody Abattoir!

All in all, the situation inside the Godly Might Prison was already out of control. While the guards that were still well-organized were watching over the periphery of the prison, it was impossible for them to rush into the furious vortex and settle the situation that was even more chaotic than a volcano eruption or a tsunami.

Li Yao, on the other hand, had not even begun his infiltration yet. He was still at the underground port, which was the entrance to the prison.

The area where General Lei Chenghu was secretly caged was naturally at the deepest part of the Godly Might Prison.

The map of the entire Godly Might Prison popped up inside Li Yao’s head. Every underground building and every pathway swirled, collided, and joined each other, while he analyzed the shortest route from his place to the target area.

It was a pity that, to arrive at the target area through the shortest route, he would have to pass the areas where the felons were locked, and then the areas where the captives of the Covenant Alliance were locked, before he finally reached a maintenance channel that would allow him to slide into the minus sixteenth floor where General Lei Chenghu was imprisoned.

If he did not want to pass through the two highly dangerous and chaotic areas, he would have to bypass the main body of the Godly Might Prison and slowly sneak in through the zigzagging ventilation tubes and maintenance channels. But naturally, those tubes were now teeming with guards who were panicked and highly vigilant. He could not pass by them easily either.

“The assassins of the Covenant Alliance might reach Lei Chenghu at any moment.”

Li Yao gnashed his teeth. “Also, the Godly Might Prison may transfer Lei Chenghu to a new location. Even the deputy warden who has joined the reformists may not know that we have to seize every second right now. So, I have to pass the area where the felons and the captives of the Covenant Alliance are rioting despite the risks!”

While analyzing the route and drafting the battle plans, Li Yao took off all the clothes of the captain of jailors who had passed out. The captain was of similar body size to Li Yao, and their postures were quite identical too. It was one of the reasons why Li Yao had chosen him.

However, right when Li Yao was about to sneak into the fog and smoke without alerting anyone, he somehow noticed that the vibe was not right.

He raised his head, only to discover that a team of jailors had arrived from the mist. They were staring at him, the guard uniform in his hands, and the naked captain below his feet in bewilderment.

“Well…”

Glancing at the orange prison uniform that he was wearing right now, Li Yao said solemnly, “Calm down, everyone. I can totally explain this!”

“The Covenant Alliance’s spy!”

The few jailors exclaimed at the same time.

“How can I be a spy from the Covenant Alliance?”

Li Yao shouted and pointed at his face which was changing fast. “Do you see it? I can cry, I can laugh, I have feelings. I was just somehow unfrozen because of the faults in the hibernation cabin…”

“An advanced spy of the Covenant Alliance who has been instilled with virtual emotions and can simulate human beings!”

The jailors shouted aloud. Their scream attracted even more companions and war puppets. Li Yao had no chance to defend himself at all when their barrage came at him from all directions like a tide, trying to drag him into the swirl of destruction.

“You’ve got to be kidding me!”

Li Yao had to release more smoke grenades and flashbangs from his Cosmos Ring. Under the boost of the blast, he flew out agilely, dodging the first round of attack of the jailors.

The jailors were not of high levels, and he could take care of a hundred of them in the blink of an eye.

However, after a hundred of them were down, another hundred would come, with ten times more beast puppets. There was no telling how many more reinforcements were arriving at the place incessantly.

However modified and strengthened the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was, it could only accommodate a limited amount of fuel and ammunition!

Li Yao had no choice but to flee in a hurry!

Shua!

The Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit spurted out of his Cosmos Ring in dozens of lights that seemed to be alive and covered his body instantly. Under the illumination of the fire and smoke, the lights consolidated into a hideous and fancy armor. A hundred super tiny flying swords no thicker than hair were shot out in swooshing sounds and turned into running stars under the enhancement of Li Yao’s telepathic thoughts, disrupting the attacks of all the jailors. Li Yao took the opportunity to rush at the depths of the Godly Might Prison!

The first gate from the port to the inside of the Godly Might Prison had long been closed, but it could not stop Li Yao at all. While the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit was still in midair, the four black crystals from the mausoleum of the Supreme Emperor were condensed and began to revolve rapidly like a drill.

The speed of the revolution was so high that the entire underground port was filled by the roars of the black crystals. In the next second, they crashed into the gate heavily, leaving long black flames behind.

Sparks were splashing, and melted metals were running. A hole one meter in diameter was dug on the gate that weighed ten thousand tons, with lackluster orange colors inside, implying that it had been melted. In the next second, Li Yao already crawled through the hole in the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit. He then turned out and launched the cannons, blowing back a few of his pursuers who intended to follow him through the hole. He also blew up the control panel of the gate nearby so that the jailors outside would not be able to open the gate for the time being.

After everything was done, and when Li Yao landed again, the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit had already retreated into the Cosmos Ring, and the prisoner’s uniform on his body had been replaced by the jailor’s uniform.

Even the universe was now ragged and riddled with holes. The epaulet that suggested his class had been ripped off. His badge and his brassard that showed his identity were contaminated by the smoke and blood too. Even his face was twisted and blackened, as if he just had a meltdown because of the unexpected attack!

The inside of the Godly Might Prison, however, was a hundred times more chaotic than the port.

The attack of the Covenant Alliance on the Godly Might Prison couldn’t have been improvised. They probably did have a plan of prison break before, and they knew the tectonic environment nearby as well as the fatal weaknesses of the Godly Might Prison’s defense system perfectly.

First, they introduced magma and earthquakes to sabotage the energy supply system. Then, they hacked the defense network and implanted viruses, setting tremendous prisoners free. After that, they threw highly poisonous and corrosive gas into the ventilation tubes. As a result, what was unfolded before Li Yao’s eyes was exactly an abyss of horror.

Explosions, screams, ecstatic howls, and raging venomous fog were everywhere.

Naturally, jailors that were running amok like headless flies were everywhere too.

A prison that was impenetrable and nobody had ever escaped from seemed to be a paradox.

It was exactly because nobody had ever escaped from it and nobody had even thought of attacking such a prison that the jailors here had never received real tests.

Any ambitious, capable Immortal Cultivator who craved to distinguish themselves would not be content to work here, where they would live their entire life unknown.

It was not hard to imagine the quality of the jailors that were eventually distributed to the place.

It was especially so today, when the Imperium’s counterattack had been fought for more than ten years, with glorious accomplishments in the frontline. The Immortal Cultivators that had the slightest ambitions and connections had all found a way to be dispatched to the frontline where they could fish for military credits.

The jailors that were left behind in this place were not prepared for such a hard battle at all!

The smoke that was as intense as ink was spreading in the entire Godly Might Prison. Many places were so dark that one could not even see his own fingers. Coughing people with bloodshot eyes were everywhere, which was rather convenient for Li Yao to sneak in.

With the blackened uniform on his body, his unsteady posture, and his vivid acting skills, it took Li Yao only two minutes to reach the minus third floor.

But that seemed to be as far as his luck went.

A team of organized guards, which had a commander who was rather calm and dutiful, gathered the wandering jailors and forced them to charge into the No.1 district together.

The No. 1 district was exactly the area where the felons were locked.

The felons who were qualified to be locked here had been sentenced to imprisonment for at least five hundred years. They were the beasts of beasts.

When the gate was opened, what Li Yao saw was ten thousand times more splendid and dreadful than what he had seen in the beehive prison in “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”.

Without the suppression of barriers and the threat of electric arcs, the most solid iron bars were nothing more than matches in the hands of those prisoners. Strangling and breaking their restraints, they dashed out of their cells and joined each other like ravenous beasts, venting their brutality on the jailors who were utterly caught unprepared.

Seeing that a new batch of jailors had arrived, the ferocious monsters roared and grimaced, pushing forward at the gate in a seething tide.

Although the jailors were few in number, their firepower was at an absolute advantage. The first barrage of their firearms already blew countless prisoners into smithereens.

If it were any common prison, such overwhelming firepower would have been enough to settle any “riot”.

However, for the prisoners who were locked in this place, their animality was further raised when they smelled the intense scent of flesh and blood.

Besides, many prisoners had looted weapons from the jailors. The venomous gas spurting out of the ventilation tubes seemed to boast certain elements that could stimulate the central nerves and the secretion of adrenalin. They turned the prisoners to be more excited than ever!

The felons launched a second round of attack fearlessly.

The formation of the jailors began to loosen. Some hesitated, and some even retreated.

What gave them a fatal blow, however, was the “metal bees” that flew out of nowhere.

Those secret weapons of the Covenant Alliance had just caused great trouble on the guards in the underground port just now. At this moment, they were exploding in the gaps on the helmets and armors of the jailors again.

Although they did not kill or hurt all the jailors, they still caused great chaos.

While the jailors were in a hurry dealing with the “metal bees”, the ferocious prisoners had already lunged at them. That was a bunch of lunatics who were bold enough to bite crystal suits with their teeth.

The most brutal head-on clash began!

Chapter 2217 - Fully-Wound Machines

Li Yao discovered that it was absolutely a mistake to put on the jailor’s uniform.

Faced with the overwhelming, feverish felons, he was as eye-catching as a lighthouse in a thunderstorm in the jailor’s uniform.

Although the felons’ combat ability had greatly reduced after years if not decades of imprisonment, they still had the absolute advantage in number and drowned Li Yao immediately.

Even though Li Yao could blow up a few prisoners in one punch and clear a space of ten square meters in one kick, he could not stop the felons from charging forward incessantly. In such an environment that was enshrouded in fire and smoke, the felons behind might not know what was going on in the front at all but simply ran forward in their doggedness.

After beating a few waves of felons in a row, Li Yao found himself to be a target for everyone. The prisoners in all directions were flowing at him. Hundreds of hideous-looking men with bulging muscles had piled up into a tower of flesh more than ten meters tall on the top of him.

This is the most unsuccessful infiltration mission of my life!

Li Yao howled in his heart. He could only change his tactic, and instead of blowing away the men all over his body with his spiritual energy, he simply wriggled forward in difficulties below the mountain of people.

After he finally crawled out of the flesh mountain, the jailor's uniform on his body was entirely gone, replaced by an orange prisoner's uniform that was stained with blood. His body figure was exactly like that of the prisoners around him, with bulging muscles and veins as thick as dragons all over his body. On his face, his eyes were bloodshot, and his lips were rolling. He grimaced like a monster.

“Freedom! Freedom!”

Li Yao waved his giant fists and screamed in a blurred voice, “Kill them all! Kill them all! Brothers, let's enjoy ourselves today!”

Countless prisoners passed by him and crashed into the jailors up ahead.

It seemed that some jailors activated the self-detonation rune arrays on their crystal suits in desperation, casting themselves and the felons around them into the fireball of destruction at the same time. The airwaves threw countless people and their broken limbs into midair, before they fell down again in a rain of blood. Everybody on the floor was showered by the blood and turned red!

While outlining the structure of the Godly Might Prison and the shortest route that he was about to take deep inside his brain, he lunged to the ventilation tube that led to the third district under the cover of the felons. But before he reached the closest entrance to the ventilation tube, the few gates that were connected to the districts had explosions and sounds of faults at the same time.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Now, all the districts of the entire Godly Might Prison that had been independent of each other were connected.

The chaos was immediately ten times multiplied!

In the meantime, three round gates were slowly opened on the dome above everyone’s head and released countless round battle puppets that flopped until they reached everyone’s head.

With cracking sounds, four pairs of stabilizer fines and six machine guns split out from their round bodies. After locking onto the prisoners, they immediately began to let out the most brutal firepower!

The Godly Might Prison, as a super prison that had never been compromised or broken for hundreds of years, was finally back to itself from the unexpected attack and began to show the capabilities that it should have.

Looking at the felons that were put down in rows and the barrage of a thousand explosive bullets shot by hundreds of battle puppets, Li Yao suddenly began to miss the jailor’s uniform that he took off a moment ago!

Why didn’t you come sooner?

Li Yao gritted his teeth and ran like a mouse, performing his movement skills in the storm of bullets without reserve. He had truly turned into a narrow, long, and agilely-turning ray of light, and the hundreds of attacks all missed their target. He even interfered with the bullets that were still flying with his spiritual threads, to slightly change their direction into the course of other bullets so that they would deviate from the designated trajectory or explode directly.

Even so, he did not get half a minute’s rest.

The automatic war puppets of the Godly Might Prison seemed to boast a unique algorithm. If one target was not conquered after a long time, the threat and the importance of the target would be increased, and more war puppets would be automatically mobilized to deal with it.

It meant that if two war puppets could not take care of Li Yao, four would come. Then, eight, sixteen, thirty-two, sixty-four… Under such an exponential increase, even Li Yao found it exhausting to deal with the enemy.

Finally, before thousands of war puppets aimed their machine guns at him at the same time, Li Yao finally escaped from the first district, somewhat in embarrassment, and dashed into a ventilation tube above his head that was allegedly broad enough for a horse to gallop on.

God knew how he missed the traditional, narrow, zigzagging ventilation tubes that were defended by the cutting-edge defense systems!

Thankfully, because of the turmoil in the Godly Might Prison, and since the ventilation tubes were a focus of the enemy's attack and tremendous venomous fog and smoke had been filled in, the ventilation tubes were utterly empty at this moment. The jailors that were supposed to guard the area had either died with awful expressions on their faces after breathing too much corrosive gas or left the area to reinforce the districts that were in riots.

But it did not mean that Li Yao's journey in the ventilation tubes would be easy and pleasant.

Vague, fluorescent air was floating before his eyes, and a sweet smell found its way into his nostrils too. It felt that countless little claws were crawling all the way into his brain from his nose.

Li Yao felt alarms ringing in his head. The fatal venomous gas and corrosive air were even possible to damage the central nerves of an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage!

“The Covenant Alliance’s biochemical technologies are so advanced!”

Li Yao was greatly shocked.

“Of course. Don’t forget that the Covenant Alliance originates from the Pangu Civilization, and the Pangu Civilization was on par with the Nuwa Civilization that created the ‘demon race’. How can their biochemical technologies not be advanced?”

The mental devil said quickly, “Think about the Pangu Laboratory deep inside the Land of Eternal Night in the Ancient Sages Sector. Weren’t there a kind of weird giant crabs that were lurking in the place, which could inject a certain mysterious liquid into the human body and turn human beings into the Pangu Clan? Was it not an appalling biotechnology?”

Li Yao was silent and realized that it did make sense.

Compared to the Imperium of True Human Beings, which had occupied the most prosperous worlds at the center of the cosmos with a plethora of soldiers, resources, and population, the Alliance of the Holy Covenant was fighting the splendid, magnificent millennium war with the barren land at the corner of the universe.

The reason why it was vaguely on the winning side after a thousand years of fierce battles was partly the zealous and determined believers and partly the magical equipment, heritages, and legacies excavated from the primeval relics.

Therefore, in terms of technologies, the Covenant Alliance should be the highest of the Covenant Alliance, the Imperium, and the federation.

In an enormous battlefield in space, a technological gap of one to two hundred years might be neglectable.

However, in an assault battle like this one, the party with the cutting-edge technologies would certainly have a great advantage.

Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum!

As Li Yao held his breath, locked his pores, and even covered his retina with feeble spiritual energy as protection, crawling forward in the middle of the venomous fog and the corrosive gas, he heard noises coming over from the darkness up ahead. A large swarm of “metal bees” had arrived.

Those little creatures had obviously replaced the guards of the Godly Might Prison and became new masters of the ventilation tubes.

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

Sensing the feeble heat from Li Yao’s body, the “metal bees” immediately ejected sharp stings and darted at Li Yao spirally!

Li Yao sniffed. His telepathic thoughts raged forward like a flood, trying to break the internal structure of the “metal bees”.

But out of his expectation, the materials that the metal bees were made of were a certain special alloy that Li Yao had never seen before. It boasted a high reflection of spiritual energy, and more than 90% of Li Yao’s attacks were parried when they hit the shell of the metal bees.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Before Li Yao had the opportunity to switch to a different attack mode, the metal bees had exploded next to him one after another. Although they caused no damage to him at all, they did blow a giant hole on the ventilation tube he was at.

The screams and explosions down below immediately crashed into his ears.

All the captives of the Covenant Alliance, in deep red prisoner’s uniform, had been released and were running in a hurry.

It was the first time that Li Yao had ever seen the warriors of the Covenant Alliance on such a large scale, who were the most authentic people of the Covenant Alliance that were not installed with emotion-simulation systems.

His first feeling was that he was faced with thousands of zombies. It couldn’t have been more creepy.

Although the captives of the Covenant Alliance were pressing the attack to the pathways in all directions like floods and ferocious beasts, all of them were indifferent and utterly tranquil. There was not any resentment for the jailors, yearning for freedom, or any feeling that had mutated after a long time of repression—not in the slightest!

Li Yao did not hear any roar or scream from them in such a massive riot. Even the heavily wounded people simply sat aside and waited for their death while covering their wounds. Occasionally, a pained expression could be found on the faces of some people, but it was soon stifled by force, as if “pained expression” was something even more horrible than “pain” itself.

Just now, Li Yao felt that the ferocious felons in the first district were already the craziest monsters in hell.

However, the people of the Covenant Alliance who looked like machines made of flesh and blood made Li Yao understand better than ever what was “a hundred times more evil than the Imperium of True Human Beings”!

Judging from their hollow eyes, their numb limbs, their cold faces, and the intense air of tombs around them, it was not hard to tell that they were not fighting for their own survival and liberty at all, and being locked deep inside the Godly Might Prison for a hundred or a thousand years meant nothing to them. They were just fully-wound tools that had been reactivated and were carrying out an order given to them!

Chapter 2218 - The Terrifying Computational Ability of the Divinity Transformation Stage!

When Li Yao observed the thousands of people of the Covenant Alliance carefully through the hole, they raised their heads and stared at Li Yao at the same time, as if they had received a certain signal.

It was an even more creepy feeling.

When a group of regular persons heard an explosion above their heads and saw a giant hole on the ceiling, their movements would certainly be irregular even if they raised their heads to check what was going on.

The looks on their faces should be complicated after they raised their heads. Some would be surprised, some scared, some confused, and some would be alarmed that a new enemy was above their heads.

But they were not the reactions of the Covenant Alliance's people at all.

As if they had received a certain signal, they raised their heads in unity in only half a second and stared at Li Yao carefully at the same time.

Thousands of eyes that were immeasurably deep but did not have any ripple, like frozen ink, stared at him at the same time. Although Li Yao was in the Divinity Transformation Stage and always considered himself to be audacious, he couldn’t help but feel chilly.

Then, Li Yao heard the voice.

It sounded like a prehistoric spell, a whisper of devils, or the mumbles right next to one’s ears that one heard in the middle of a night, only to discover that they were the cries of a baby outside of the window after one was woken up from the dream.

The weird voice loomed above the head of every person from the Covenant Alliance like an invisible swirl.

Li Yao fully activated his senses. His every brain cell was stretched out to the maximum like blooming epiphyllum. Using not his eyes and ears, but his mind and soul, he “saw”, “heard”, and deeply sensed the horrifying voice.

He “saw” that the brain of every person from the Covenant Alliance was erupting brainwaves like a sulfur spring. All their brainwaves soared to midair like black gas and congregated into a slowly-revolving swirl. Thousands of ripples and waves spread out from the swirl. Billions of items of information were exchanged, analyzed, and deployed in such a way.

Thinking quickly, Li Yao immediately realized everything.

He understood why the prisoners of the Covenant Alliance could form a battle formation so quickly and attack like a well-trained army so quickly.

They were not communicating with each other with voices and movements like regular people did, but by boosting their brainwaves to establish a temporary local area network.

One or two spies of the Covenant Alliance who secretly snuck in were all that was required to deploy the entire battle plan to the brains of every person from the Covenant Alliance through the battle network. It was even possible for the prisoners to upload their body data, combat ability, and best techniques so that they would be assigned to the most suitable tasks after calculation.

The efficiency in such battles was naturally much higher than the mobsters in the first district who were simply howling on a rampage without organization.

It was a common way of fighting battle puppets.

Li Yao never thought that it was applicable to human beings too.

That did make sense. In the eyes of the Pangu Civilization, wasn’t mankind just a relatively special “battle puppet”?

This was the first time Li Yao had sensed the meaning of “Covenant Alliance” for real. He truly felt that his heart had been squeezed hard.

The thousands of prisoners of the Covenant Alliance stared at the dome of the district at the same time, thinking that a new enemy would show up from up above.

But as it turned out, Li Yao was by himself and wearing the orange prisoner’s uniform of the felons from the first district. So, he was immediately determined to be harmless.

The people of the Covenant Alliance focused their attention on the jailors before them.

The jailors and battle puppets that had crowded into the third district like tides from all directions were indeed several more times than what the first district had.

After all, the first district was filled with felons and unorganized mobsters. Even if they did escape out of the Godly Might Prison with unbelievable luck, there would be absolutely no chance of survival on the surface of the harsh, ice planet. If they did not want to be frozen into ice, they could only return to the prison and be arrested.

But the captives of the Covenant Alliance were different.

Their companions had already caused great trouble. Who knew if there were more of them behind?

For a moment, all the tough soldiers of the entire Godly Might Prison were gathered in the third district.

The people of the Covenant Alliance, under the organization of the weird “brainwave network”, put up a rather impressive fight against the jailors. Of course, that was partly because the prison was not determined to completely annihilate them and simply used the non-lethal magical equipment at the beginning since they were all very valuable, important captives. When things went out of control, there was little the prison could do to save the day.

Li Yao, however, had no time to bother the hot mess down there.

What he was concerned about was the fleeting time.

Twenty minutes had passed from when he perceived the explosion below his feet at the beginning until the present.

Li Yao was almost certain that the assassins of the Covenant Alliance must have rushed at the spot of General Lei Chenghu’s custody under the cover of the riots.

The experts of the Godly Might Prison, in the meantime, could have reached General Lei Chenghu and forced him to move to somewhere else.

He had been stalled by the jailors and prisoners for too long. If he were to push forward according to the previous route, he would very likely be left behind by the assassins of the Covenant Alliance and the experts of the Godly Might Prison!

It can’t be helped. Recalculate the route. Now, now, now!

Li Yao blinked his eyes. Deep inside his pupils that were as dark as ink, two drops of pigment that seemed to be condensed by rainbows were dripped in, and ripples in thousands of different colors immediately spread out.

His brain cells were burning and shrieking, raising a tsunami inside his entire brain, pushing Li Yao’s computational ability to the limits of the Divinity Transformation Stage together!

Li Yao felt that the world was turning upside down, as if the planet were revolving ten thousand times faster. He almost couldn’t hold back his nausea.

It was a symptom of severe brain concussion.

In order to activate the highest computational ability, he forced his brain to function at a high speed, which made his brain crash the hard skull brutally at a frequency of a hundred times a second.

If it were a regular person, they would have passed out in three seconds at most, turning vegetative or even having brain death.

It couldn’t be helped. The biophysical structure that a human being was born with was not for the monsters in the Divinity Transformation Stage.

From a certain point of view, those who advanced into the Divinity Transformation Stage had stolen the strength that did not belong to them or any human being from the enigmatic universe!

With the price of severe brain concussion, under the boost of such a high computational ability, Li Yao naturally got what he wanted.

Beep, beep, beep, b—e—e—p…

The whole world slowed down before Li Yao’s eyes, as if it had been drowned by a certain extremely thick fluid.

The flying bullets, the raging mystic rays, the blasts raised by the explosions, and the shrapnel enshrouded in the blasts, as well as the emotionless people of the Covenant Alliance, the screaming felons, and the scared prisoners turned into statues that were almost absolutely still were like a group of actors playing a humorous mime.

One gave birth to two, two gave birth to three, and three gave birth to everything. Li Yao’s telepathic thoughts turned into thousands of lightning that entangled every person of the Covenant Alliance and every jailor, while he observed their postures, eyes, muscles, and even every micro-expressions, and thereby calculated their combat abilities, battle determination, and current purposes so that he could calculate the route through which he could pass the battlefield in the fastest and easiest way.

The lightning-like telepathic thoughts were Li Yao’s virtual nerves. As the virtual nerves spread out and joined each other, the entire battlefield was swallowed into Li Yao’s brain, turning him into the absolute dominator on the battlefield!

All the information was fed back to Li Yao’s soul instantly, almost as fast as if it were transmitted by his nerves.

As tremendous data were analyzed and outputted, the whole world before him turned clear.

At first, the crystal suits on the jailors gradually turned transparent. In the next second, the muscles of the jailors and the prisoners were removed piece by piece. The details of the veins and the nervous system were manifested too. The wriggling and constrictions of their internal organs were also under Li Yao’s control. Even the pressure that their hearts imposed on the veins and the speed of the flow of blood inside were within Li Yao’s perception.

No matter how weird the brains of the Covenant Alliance’s people were, they had to rely on the bodies of human beings as the carriers after all.

No human being could not be killed.

Within a breath, Li Yao had grasped the fatal weakness of everybody on the battlefield.

But that was far from the end of it.

The walls of the district, as well as the seemingly solid floor, revealed their most fundamental constituents under the crash of Li Yao's telepathic thoughts, allowing Li Yao to analyze the most vulnerable point in the structure. All the walls and pathways turned clear too, and dozens of walls and channels overlapped. The place looked like a complicated maze of glass.

In the end, all the branches and dead ends in the glass maze vanished. The only thing left was a channel that was almost a straight line.

At the end of the channel, Li Yao sensed more than ten clusters of highly-vigorous life energy unleashing and colliding.

Not good. The experts of the Godly Might Prison must be fighting the assassins of the Covenant Alliance!

The level of the life energy was dozens of times stronger than the jailors and captives here. They must be the experts of the two parties.

However, the experts on the Godly Might Prison's side were publicly known. Since Li Yao had done detailed research on them before his infiltration, there was no reason why the Covenant Alliance hadn't done the same.

In comparison, the assassins from the Covenant Alliance were lurking in the darkness. If so much as one of them escaped, it would be a disaster!

I don't have any choice now. I have to reach the destination in half a minute even if I get exposed!

Li Yao took such a deep breath that the air in the entire ventilation tube was almost absorbed, despite the venomous and corrosive elements in it.

Under the enhancement of the air, all his muscle fibers were burning sufficiently, unleashing the energy as powerful as the main thrusts of a warship.

BOOM!

Flames of light flowed out of his pores like magma, transforming him into a dazzling sun all of a sudden. However, the two parties that were engaged in a chaotic battle down below sensed none of it because his transformation was too fast. It was not until the sun was torn apart and the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit showed up majestically that a few jailors and prisoners who had the keenest senses put on an appalled look.

Beep!

Li Yao crashed on the floor like a shooting star, blowing away dozens of jailors and prisoners who were fighting in a mess!

Thirty seconds of infinite craziness began!

Chapter 2219 - Brand-New Technique!

In the first second, crazy music that sounded like a sweeping tsunami echoed inside Li Yao’s head, nerves, and veins as well as the space around him at the same time.

The violent music that felt like heavy bombs not only boosted Li Yao’s fighting will to the maximum but also smashed into the Covenant Alliance’s “brainwave network” brutally, raising a serial explosion that blew the entire battle network into pieces.

The prisoners of the Covenant Alliance that moved in unity as if they were one person had a moment of bewilderment, like marionettes whose strings were cut off and machines whose navigation system was broken.

Right when Li Yao crashed on the ground, raising an overwhelming blast, dazzling gold brilliance erupted out of his body again.

The gold brilliance interconnected with each other and condensed into mosaics that looked like a chessboard five meters around!

In such a way, in the eyes of both the enemies next to him and the surveillance cameras that were everywhere, Li Yao was not wearing a crystal suit with distinctive features but a large gold cube that had been made of mosaics!

It was exactly the brand-new technique that Li Yao had picked up in the Deep Sea Palace after summarizing the lessons of the previous battles—the Illumination Mosaic Art!

Because of his distinctive battle styles and eye-catching style of the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit, his every battle would be recognized by the enemy.

He could disguise himself by modifying the crystal suit crazily once or twice, but as time went by, some of the smart people would definitely notice the anomalies.

Therefore, he had been considering hard on a technique that would prevent the enemy from seeing through his “peak state”.

The so-called “Illuminate Mosaic Art” was a way to trigger dazzling lights with spiritual energy, adjust the frequency of the lights, and form mosaic patterns that were different in depths and looked like a chessboard. It would be of great help to disrupt the scanning of the naked eye and the crystal cameras. If the enemy could not even see what he looked like, it was even less possible for them to see how he attacked!

Pu! Pu! Pu! Pu! Pu! Pu!

Li Yao thought quickly and boosted his spiritual energy. His spiritual energy entangled the splashing pieces in midair and accelerated them to above five times the speed of sound like a cannon, before they were shot at the most vulnerable parts of dozens of people from the Covenant Alliance!

The barrage seemed to be casual but had in fact aimed at the most vulnerable and irresistible critical parts of the enemy’s body.

As it turned out, none of the thirty-two pieces missed their target. They left bloody holes the size of bowls on the captives of the Covenant Alliance.

Despite the enhancement of their zealousness and their determination, the captives of the Covenant Alliance grunted and lost their combat ability!

It was only the first second.

In the next second, the butterfly wings on the Mystic Skeleton Battlesuit were stretched to the maximum, and the sharp edges on the wings paved a way of blood in the crowd of the prisoners of the Covenant Alliance by force, like a highly-revolving mincer!

In Li Yao's perception, the captives of the Covenant Alliance were all dodging meaninglessly in the most sluggish movement. It was not until this moment that the devastating and irresistible desperation finally appeared on their faces!

In the third second, the best experts of the prisoners of the Covenant Alliance lunged at Li Yao from all directions like a bunch of lifeless machines. Some of them had even found a way to get a blade, a weapon, or a crystal suit. Judging from their postures, they were ready to die with Li Yao.

However, faced with Li Yao who had improved his level to the highest at the price of severe brain concussion, how could the captives of the Covenant Alliance be a match for him at all?

Loopholes! Loopholes! Loopholes everywhere! You are almost mobile targets made of loopholes!

Li Yao blinked quickly, and the dark gold, cubic mosaics split into almost ten phantoms, swallowing the captives of Covenant Alliance who came at him at the same time. After chewing hard for half a second, all of them were spat out again brutally, but none of the captives had one intact bone on their body!

The fourth second, the fifth second, the sixth second, and the seventh second!

Li Yao rose and jumped quickly, passing through the crowd of prisoners and arriving at the camp of the jailors.

The jailors were all deeply awed by Li Yao’s brutal performance. Seeing that he went on a killing spree in the middle of the captives, they thought that he was an expert on the Godly Might Prison’s side.

But as it happened, the identification system on every crystal suit was uttering screams, identifying the gold mosaics before their eyes as “highly-dangerous, unknown intruder”, which made the jailors at a loss about what to do.

“Don’t stand here. Get out of my way!”

Li Yao, who was on a rampage, shouted with a bloodstained voice that pierced into the faces of the jailors like an invisible blade. Those jailors were not the captives of the Covenant Alliance who had zero sense of fear. They all screamed and shuddered hard, only to be thrown into the crowd of the Covenant Alliance’s prisoners by Li Yao casually.

Behind the jailors was exactly the point of breakthrough that Li Yao had selected!

The gold mosaics were immediately ten times brighter than before. The daggers of the gold mosaics stabbed into the retina of every jailor and every captive through the defensive layers on the masks of their helmets, depriving them of their eyesight temporarily.

Sticking his hands to the wall made of superalloy, Li Yao took a deep breath again, and the crystal suit on his body was almost compressed into an iron ball. In the next moment, it was released brutally!

BOOM!

It was almost like the main guns of a super enormous warship had barraged the wall with all its firepower!

No. It was not just one barrage, but…

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Li Yao’s arms were like two indestructible pile hammers, blowing a pathway almost twenty meters long before him. Melted alloys were dripping everywhere inside the pathway. The blast caused by the barrages soon spread to the entire district, almost blowing up the internal organs of all the jailors and captives. Everybody was bleeding on their face and waving their hands crazily!

Shua! Shua! Shua!

The map of the Godly Might Prison deep inside Li Yao’s brain was infinitely enlarged again and covered the real world before his eyes, allowing him to understand the structure behind the hole perfectly.

Also, after blowing through such a channel that was almost a straight line, the life energy hiding behind several alloy walls a moment ago became much clearer.

Li Yao could sense the status of the more than ten clusters of life energy clearly. The battle was approaching the end, and one party seemed to have the situation under control.

It remained to be seen whether the assassins of the Covenant Alliance won or the experts of the Godly Might Prison did!

Li Yao narrowed his eyes, and the gold mosaic cube moved at a high speed again, turning into a streak of golden brilliance and rushing at the dozen clusters of life energy!

I hope… there is still time!

…

Zuo Zongchao’s bloodshot eyes slowly protruded out of his eye sockets as he stared at the sharp dagger that pierced from his back out of his chest in stillness. Sound of blood erupting echoed from his mouth, and pink, bloody bubbles popped out of his nostrils. He was both confused and desperate.

Of course, he knew the sword; one that was as twisted as a transparent fishbone, with countless evil runes carved on the surface.

At the present day when chainswords and vibration sabers prevailed, such secret swords produced in the old ways were rare to come by. As for a sword that was so delicately made and polished by countless experts for a thousand years, there was only one in the entire Godly Might Prison.

The name of the sword was “Fishbone”.

“Fishbone” was also the nickname of the sword’s master.

“Fishbone” Hong Jiping was one of the four best experts of the Godly Might Prison, on par with “Devilish Tiger” Zuo Zongchao, both being battle-type experts in the Nascent Soul Stage. Although he was short and slim, his attacks could always choke the enemy like a fishbone.

The four experts of the Godly Might Prison had also secretly practiced a teamwork tactic, in which “Fist Sting” Hong Jiping’s sword was responsible for the most critical attack. It was supposed to kill the enemy in one move after the pretended attacks and the disruptions of his fellows!

Therefore, when a riot took place inside the Godly Might Prison, and the riot escalated into an ambush of the Covenant Alliance, the four experts of the Godly Might Prison immediately went to the most confidential area of custody.

“Lei Chenghu” was not the only person who was locked here. There were a lot of other people who were influential and highly valuable but who refused to cooperate with the four Kurfürst families for the time being.

Naturally, such an important area deserved to be supervised by the four experts in person. Nothing could possibly go wrong by their estimation.

More than ten assassins attacked the area in the middle of the chaos, with at least four of whom were battle-type experts in the Nascent Soul Stage. Their crystal suits and their magical equipment were even slightly better than the four experts’ gears!

Greatly shocked, the four experts had no choice but to deal with the enemy with the teamwork tactic that they had practiced day and night.

Little did they anticipate that the deadly move of "Fishbone", which was supposed to be aimed at the enemy's throat, would pierce out of Zuo Zongchao's chest instead.

Also, as the sword shivered, the sharp spiritual energy that felt like thousands of fishbones dispersed to every part on Zuo Zongchao's body, flowing all over his body through his veins and nerves and breaking all his major acupoints!

Zuo Zongchao grunted and collapsed on the ground in excruciating pain, feeling that he was like a balloon riddled with holes, spurting out air and shriveling.

With his head tilted, he happened to see "Fist Sting" Hong Jiping slowly retreating his sword. There was not the slightest expression or temperature on his face that was covered in iron.

Are you from the Covenant Alliance?

Zuo Zongchao was of a mind to tear off the guy's mask and see if the face hidden below was equally cold and sullen. Recalling the scenes where he trained with Hong Jiping before, he still found it hard to believe. How can you be from the Covenant Alliance? How is it possible?

But all his words were drowned in blood. He could not utter any syllable anymore.

His body was cold, and black foams were rolling before his eyes. He did not know that the Covenant Alliance had compromised the experts in the Nascent Soul Stage in the Imperium. Could the Imperium really secure a triumph when faced with such a brutal and weird enemy?

Zuo Zongchao's eyes were gradually frozen, like two black, arc-shaped mirrors.

In the reflection of the black mirrors, the assassins of the Covenant Alliance who had the advantage in number finished off the remaining guards quickly and got the situation under control at the shortest amount of time even at the cost of dying together with the “four experts of the Godly Might Prison”!

Chapter 2220 - God of War!

Two assassins of the Covenant Alliance strode to the gate of a secret door at the end of the pathway, before they took out four pieces of round magical equipment from their pockets and pressed them to the corners of the gate.

The round magical equipment emitted squeaky noises and connected to each other with four red mystic rays of light. Then, two crossed rays shot out on the diagonals, and the six rays of light corroded the gate together. In less than ten seconds, a square hole was left on the gate, and the plate half a meter thick crashed to the ground.

The other assassins of the Covenant Alliance all fell on one of their knees and guarded the main entrances and exits nearby, preparing to die with the guards of the Godly Might Prison at any moment to buy their companions more time.

The two strongest assassins lowered their heads and were about to enter the hole when a black shadow dashed out of the secret room in advance!

The black shadow was wearing Lei Chenghu’s well-ironed uniform, and his movement was quite similar to Lei Chenghu’s as he leaped forward, except that the look on his face was rather creepy, mixed with shock and confusion. His action was slightly rigid too, as if he were under somebody’s control.

In the middle of the emergency, the two assassins of the Covenant Alliance naturally had no time to think. Including

“Fishbone” Hong Jiping with his transparent sharp blade, everybody attacked the critical parts of “Lei Chenghu” with their ultimate skills!

But out of their expectation, right when they had carried out their moves to the maximum aggressively, a second black shadow dashed out of the secret room and lurked below the first shadow. He was older but even more agile, like a ferocious tiger that had gone off the mountain!

When he dashed out of the secret room, he seemed to be naked or only wearing the underwear, but in 0.1 seconds, he had put on a daunting crystal suit, and the power claw made of five talons that were vibrating at a high frequency slashed at “Fishbone” Hong Jiping’s abdomen brutally.

It seemed that if “Fishbone” Hong Jiping were to send his sword into the heart of the first guy that jumped out, his own abdomen would certainly be dug out by the second guy!

“That is not Lei Chenghu!”

“This one here is Lei Chenghu!”

Even the cold and ruthless assassins of the Covenant Alliance did not know that Lei Chenghu was not alone in the chamber but accompanied by someone so similar to himself.

Also, little could they have imagined that Lei Chenghu would be so brutal as to figure out the situation the moment he heard the fighting noises outside, lock the joints and acupoints of the other person, put the guy in his own uniform, and throw him out as a “sandbag” and a “decoy”!

Lei Chenghu’s sudden counterattack caught the assassins of the Covenant Alliance unprepared. The assassins, including

“Fishbone” Hong Jiping, had no choice but to abandon the “decoy” and turn to the real Lei Chenghu.

Swoosh!

“Fishbone” Hong Jiping’s transparent blade pierced into Lei Chenghu’s left hand brutally.

Or rather, Lei Chenghu acted on his own to grab Hong Jiping’s sword with his left hand, making the sword that had been passed on for a thousand years unable to move at all.

His right arm, on the other hand, stabbed the power claw into Hong Jiping’s abdomen exactly according to the posture just now.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum!

The secret sword unleashed thousands of spiritual waves that felt like needles as thin as hair, trying to crawl along the arm all the way to Lei Chenghu’s internal organs and limbs.

Lei Chenghu’s power claw vibrated violently too. The flames of spiritual energy that had been suppressed for more than half a month erupted like a volcano, ripping, shattering, and burning Hong Jiping’s internal organs into ashes!

The weird damage of the sword only ascended to Lei Chenghu’s left shoulder blade and could not move forward anymore.

That was because Lei Chenghu had twisted and ripped off his own left arm by force on his own, preventing the attack of the sword from furthering.

His powerful knuckle, on the other hand, moved forward in a slant and grabbed Hong Jiping’s heart tightly, burning it into ashes!

“Fishbone” Hong Jiping’s eyes were wide open. He found it hard to believe that Lei Chenghu could be so ruthless even when flames of spiritual energy were popping up from his throat.

In terms of combat ability, “Fishbone” Hong Jiping, who was known as one of the four best experts of the Godly Might Prison and enhanced by many secret techniques of the Covenant Alliance, was perhaps stronger than “God of War” Lei Chenghu who specialized in the arts of commanding.

Lei Chenghu, however, told all the opponents with the toughest and coldest performances that “God of War” definitely deserved his name!

In one attack, at the price of a left arm, he laid waste to the best expert of the assassins from the Covenant Alliance and earned the five seconds that were of paramount importance for him!

The bleeding wound on his left shoulder blade was soon covered by the gel-like medicines. Lei Chenghu retreated the bloodstained power claws from the body of “Fishbone” Hong Jiping and waved it hard, throwing away blood and suspicious broken meat. He roared in excitement and stared at the remaining opponents, not bothering to look at his broken limb and his eldest son who had passed out on the ground at all.

His back hunched, Lei Chenghu breathed heavily, opening and closing his power claws. Infinite bloodiness spread out of his body. He was exactly like a caged beast fighting in a desperate fight in a pit!

At this moment, because nobody foresaw that “Fishbone” Hong Jiping would be heavily wounded, the siege of the assassins had a fatal gap.

All the assassins focused their attention on the gap caused by the collapse of “Fishbone” Hong Jiping. Quite a few assassins were ready to fill in the vacancy. Some of them even thought that Lei Chenghu would break out of the siege from there and locked onto the route of Lei Chenghu’s escape with their remote magical equipment in advance.

However, instead of running, Lei Chenghu lunged at where the assassins of the Covenant Alliance were densest. The power claws named “Tiger’s Soul”, which was made of the essence of five chainswords and vibration sabers collected from the battlefield and crafted carefully by the experts of refining in the Imperium after three years, truly looked as if the souls of five tigers had possessed it. It attacked five assassins at the same time!

Judging from the thunderous, unstoppable attack, it seemed that “run away” was not even an option in Lei Chenghu’s head.

He would either kill all the assassins or be killed by the assassins, standing.

There was no third option!

Chi!

The power claws pierced into the chest of one assassin and began to revolve rapidly.

The longsword of the second assassin, in the meantime, pierced into Lei Chenghu’s shoulder, only to be pinched by his muscles and bones and could not move forward at all.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The honeycomb-type magazines on Lei Chenghu’s shoulder were opened at the same time. Dazzling mini balls of light exploded between him and the assassins, blowing the crystal suits of the assassin into pieces of garbage.

His own crystal suit, on the other hand, was also barraged by the rest of the assassin. The spiritual shield soon turned dark red and completely collapsed, and the crystal suit was torn apart inch by inch, revealing the bleeding old body down below.

Lei Chenghu sensed none of it, as if his nerves of pain had been completely sealed in the hundred years of fierce battles. It was not until he executed three assassins in a row and the blood of his enemy’s and his own drowned the floor that he finally slipped and fell on one of his knees, pressing the claws deeply into the ground.

The crazy tiger had finally run out of all his ammunition, fuel, spiritual energy, and physical strength and had to come to a stop.

Even the assassins of the Covenant Alliance whose feelings had been sealed and who knew nothing other than carrying out commands dutifully were greatly shocked by Lei Chenghu’s toughness and craziness. It was not until half a second’s daze later that they all raised their chainswords, vibration sabers, storm bolters, and crystal cannons.

Lei Chenghu let out blurred chuckles from the broken facial cover of his crystal suit. There was no telling whether he was laughing at himself for his futile attack or the Council of Elders for their idiocy. He struggled to his feet and held his head high at the blades and firearms of the Covenant Alliance.

Right then—

When the storm bolters and crystal cannons of the assassins just shot out lethal flames of light, and the scorching bullets were flying at Lei Chenghu’s chest and head, four streaks of blackness stopped between the two parties at the perfect moment and stretched out to four black shields instantly, helping Lei Chenghu absorb all the attacks in clinking noises!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

It felt that an entire ocean was running at them in deafening noises!

The assassins of the Covenant Alliance immediately bulged their eyes, unable to believe what they saw with the crystal cameras on their helmets. When they looked back, they discovered that their crystal cameras were not wrong at all, and it was true that a dark gold cube in mosaics was rushing close!

BAM!

An assassin wearing a heavy crystal suit more than 3.5 meters tall crashed the dark gold cube heavily while waving a power knuckle that was thicker than the thigh, but the crystal suit was immediately blown into pieces. Even his bones were all broken and extended out of his flesh; he couldn’t have looked more miserable!

BAM! BAM!

Another two assassins of the Covenant Alliance lunged at the dark gold cube from two sides in weird positions, only to be blown back by appallingly huge forces into the wall. Their crystal suits were pressed until they became as thin as paper too!

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

Before the remaining assassins realized what was going on, the chainswords, vibration sabers, storm bolters, and crystal cannons in their hands all exploded, and they were swallowed by the uncanny forces each higher than the last, unable to control themselves at all like canoes in a tsunami!

By the time the four black shields turned into four black crystals again and slowly hovered around Li Yao, not a single assassin from the Covenant Alliance was still standing.

Huchi! Huchi! Huchi! Huchi!

Li Yao breathed heavily and swallowed abundant nutrition drugs and medicines into his stomach through the automatic energy refilling system on his crystal suit, draining all the supplies inside a Cosmos Ring in only three seconds.

It couldn’t be helped. The higher one’s level was, the greater energy they would consume when they were attacking with all their strength. The preparation time before the attack and the cooldown after it would be longer too. The crazy performance in the one minute just now was even more exhausting than training at high intensity for three days and three nights. Even a whole Cosmos Ring of high-energy nutrition drugs was not enough to refill one-third of what he had used up.

He would not be able to perform a similar crazy attack anytime soon.

But thankfully, he made it in time!

“General Lei, Marquis Liaohai?”

Li Yao stared at the middle-aged man before him who was short and slim, but who was fearsome and intimidating despite the loss of his left arm.

The gazes of “Vulture” and “God of War” collided heavily!

Chapter 2221 - Conquer the Godly Might Prison!

“You are not a guard of the Godly Might Prison.”

Lei Chenghu glanced at Li Yao up and down and said, not in suspicion but affirmatively, “And you are a rarely-seen battle-type expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage. Few warriors in the entire Imperium of True Human Beings have a Cultivation as high as yours, and certainly, none of them are bold enough to barge into the Godly Might Prison on their own and put themselves under the danger of being besieged by thousands of enemies! In the meantime, not only are you exceptionally strong, but the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures your crystal suit has adopted are more than valuable too. Even the top-tier experts in the four Kurfürst families might not be privileged enough to equip it. So, who are you exactly, and what do you want from me?”

“God of War” Lei Chenghu had just walked on the thin ice of death, but he did not waste half a second on surprise, confusion, or fear. He got to the critical question without any delay.

“My name is ‘Vulture Li Yao’. It is true that I have never been exposed on the stage of the Imperium until this battle!”

Due to the limited time, Li Yao had no time to chatter with Lei Chenghu either. “I am a secret guard of Her Grace. Knowing that Marquis Liaohai was held in prison, the queen ordered me to come here to rescue Marquis Liaohai!”

“Her Grace… Li Linghai?”

Coldness flashed in Lei Chenghu’s eyes as thousands of thoughts rolled over in his mind. He sneered, “It’s true that all kinds of devils will be arising when a country is about to die. Now that the Imperium of True Human Beings is walking to the sunset, all foul creatures are jumping out to cause trouble! Before, I hardly paid attention to the big shots in the royal palace. Little did I know that Her Grace, who had never shown anything special, had in fact secretly raised such a distinguished expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage and knew that I was caged here… Such a massive capability couldn’t have been achieved without a hundred years of hard work, could it? Li Linghai truly holds great ambitions!”

“Naturally, Her Grace is not the only one who should be credited. There are countless other real Immortal Cultivators and patriots, as well as the insightful people who hate the corrupted politics and the dark society today. We are only able to rescue Marquis Liaohai when we are gathered!”

Li Yao declared solemnly, “Of course, Marquis Liaohai can also understand it as an association of the oppositions of the four Kurfürst families, who hope to destroy the Council of Elders that is controlled by the major noble families and rebuild a new Imperium!

“The incident of the Blood Oath Alliance was obviously a trick of those noble families to eliminate their political opponents. They were also bold enough to confine and even try to murder Marquis Liaohai in order to completely swallow the Astounding Thunder Fleet. Such insanities were certainly beyond our expectations.

“But now that the noble families have revealed their true intentions, we have to fight for the future of the Imperium with our best too! Right now, Her Grace has gathered the troops of the reformists and is about to conquer the Godly Might Prison. The purpose of the battle is to rescue Marquis Liaohai so that Marquis Liaohai can return to the frontline to supervise the situation and wave the bloodstained flag for the reformists!”

With a pair of serious-looking eyes under the broken facial cover, Lei Chenghu stared at Li Yao without blinking, “All the oppositions of the four Kurfürst families have joined their hands in the pursuit of a reform under the leadership of the queen?”

It was indeed the sharpest eyes that Li Yao had ever seen in his entire life. Xiao Xuance, Bai Xinghe, or Lu Zui in the past were no match at all.

Although Lei Chenghu had lost one arm and almost run out of all his blood due to the heavy wounds, his eyes were still piercing through his skin, his bones, and his brain, catching what was really on his mind.

“Exactly!”

Li Yao gritted his teeth and said, “Her Grace believes that Marquis Liaohai is one of the few real patriots the Imperium has left today and that you will certainly second the ideas of the reformists. In any case, the disunity of the Imperium must not go on. If the Imperium of True Human Beings is to emanate infinite glories in the next ten thousand years, there must be a powerful central government and a highly-united and invincible army!

“The aim of the reformists is to collect the power that has been stolen by the noble families and the magnates and to return it to His Majesty to establish a powerful grand government. Who else except Marquis Liaohai is qualified to call for all the warriors at the center of the cosmos and establish a united army with a sense of honor and duty?”

Lei Chenghu’s eyes suddenly brightened, like the dazzling spots of light before the main guns of a starship roared.

An army of the Imperium, which was driven by a sense of honor and duty, but not by the selfish interests of the nobles, and which was really united and boasted its own will!

“Besides—”

Li Yao rubbed his hands and said, “I’ve been hearing the extraordinariness of ‘God of War’ Lei Chenghu since childhood. It was exactly because of Marquis Liaohai’s accomplishments and integrity that I finally firmed my belief and grew into a real, pure, and selfless Immortal Cultivator. So, I am your most loyal admirer. There’s no doubt about that. When I heard that Marquis Liaohai was arrested and would likely be killed by the scoundrels, I was in such anxiety that I couldn’t even wait for half a second to get Marquis Liaohai out of the place!

“Marquis Liaohai, there is no time for hesitation right now. Come with me. I have sensed countless experts of the Godly Might Prison and assassins of the Covenant Alliance coming to the place. They will probably arrive in a few minutes. I consumed too much spiritual energy just now, and my combat ability has dropped by at least 50%. There is no way that I can stop their incessant attacks!”

“A-Admirer?”

Lei Chenghu was rarely stunned, but he was now, as he never thought that an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage could be so shameless. His thoughts disrupted, he pondered for a while before he went on, “I can take action with you and even consider to cooperate with the queen on one condition. You have to listen to my command for now!”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. “What do you want, Marquis Liaohai?”

“You have snuck into the Godly Might Prison on your own?”

Lei Chenghu raised questions nonstop. “When is Li Linghai going to attack? How many troops does she have? Also, since you knew I was caged here, and you could sneak into the place without alerting anyone, you must have someone to help you in the Godly Might Prison, don’t you? Who is the spy of the highest level? Where do you want to take me to right now in order to avoid the hunters of the two parties?”

“The fleet of the reformists would jump to the Mystic Ice Sector in twenty minutes and arrive above the Godly Might Prison suddenly. Also, there are spies of the reformists in the Godly Might Fleet. It shouldn’t be a problem for us to take down the Godly Might Fleet thunderously.”

Li Yao replied, “It’s true that I have snuck in on my own, but I had the help of ‘Luo Wenyao’, a deputy warden of this prison. Right now, our focus is to help Marquis Liaohai to keep yourself safe until the reformists control the Godly Might Prison. Thankfully, the Covenant Alliance has offered us great help. With the chaos in the Godly Might Prison right now, as long as I slightly disguise you into a jailor or a dead body, we will be able to hide in any random dark corner. There will be a good chance that we can dodge the hunting with my keen senses!”

“You have bought a deputy warden?”

Pondering for a moment, Lei Chenghu said, “Can you reach out to him?”

Li Yao frowned. “There is an emergent line that we can contact each other with. But considering the chaos in the Godly Might Prison right now, this deputy warden is probably at the control center with the warden. Isn’t it too risky to contact him?”

“It can’t be better if Deputy Warden Luo is really at the control center.”

Lei Chenghu sneered, “Because our destination is exactly the highest command center of the entire Godly Might Prison!”

Li Yao was stunned, “What?”

“Vulture Li Yao, since you are an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage and you have saved my life, you do not need to call me ‘Marquis Liaohai’ to show respect. Let’s just call each other ‘fellow Cultivators’.”

Narrowing his eyes, Lei Chenghu said, one word after another, “Both of us are in the Divinity Transformation Stage, and we have the dignity of the Divinity Transformation Stage too. If you want me to hide in a dark corner like a rat, shuddering and waiting for somebody else to save me, you might as well kill me directly!

“I will not place fate in the hands of anybody else, neither my own fate nor the fate of the Imperium!

“Besides, the so-called ‘four best experts’ of the Godly Might Prison are all lying here. The other experts above average are either taming the turmoil in the rioting districts or marching to where I am caged. Then, who exactly is defending the control center that the warden is at? Nobody!

“It is needless to say that Luo Wenyao, your spy, is very likely to be in the control center!”

Although Lei Chenghu had lost one arm and his face was paler than a dead body, his eyes were so brilliant as if he were commanding thousands of troops in space!

Li Yao blurted out, “What are you trying to do exactly?”

“What am I trying to do?”

Lei Chenghu smiled. “To occupy the Godly Might Prison, of course. Do you want to fight by my side, Fellow Cultivator Li?”

There were only two of them, one of whom had lost an arm and almost all the blood in his body. Yet, they were talking about occupying the entire Godly Might Prison!

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao smiled too. “Naturally. General Lei’s plan is indeed a hundred times better than mine. Assault the control center and occupy the Godly Might Prison. That meets my appetite perfectly!”

Right then, a guy below Lei Chenghu’s feet was back to himself.

It was exactly Lei Honghai, his eldest son who passed out in fear just now.

“Dad…”

Lei Honghai was confused at first but then immediately scared out of wits when he saw that his father had lost an arm and looked as creepy as a ghost with all the blood on his body. He lost all his dominance when he persuaded Lei Chenghu earlier, and he simply stammered, “They-They forced me to do it. Help me, Dad, help me!”

When he noticed that the determination of killing condensed into lines in Lei Chenghu’s eyes, he simply burped and changed his way of talking. “Don’t… Don’t kill me. I am your biological son. Dad, don’t kill me!”

Lei Chenghu sneered and picked up a bloodstained saber with the tip of his foot. Then, in a bellow, he pierced it at his son’s head!

Lei Honghai shrieked in fear. Even Li Yao was more or less surprised, not expecting Lei Chenghu to be even more ruthless than he was told.

However, the saber did not penetrate through Lei Honghai’s face but only brushed past the side of his face, cutting off one of his ears.

“Don’t say that I’m a merciless father anymore. Use this saber to fight for a way of survival in the Godly Might Prison!”

One word after another, Lei Chenghu said coldly, “If you can make it, you will still be my son, and your betrayals will never be talked about again. If you can’t make it, as long as you die with your head held high like a man, I will bury you first and avenge you later!”

Chapter 2222 - You Have Lost. Surrender Now!

Looking at the shining saber that was stuck to his face, Lei Honghai wept hard and did not know how to react.

Lei Chenghu did not look at him anymore but turned to Li Yao. “Let’s go!”

Li Yao hesitated. “General Lei, your wounds…”

“They are just minor injuries. Not a big deal!”

Lei Chenghu had lost an arm, but he was as casual as if he had lost a finger. Picking up a storm bolter and holding it in his armpit, he grabbed a dented chainsword again before he said to Li Yao emotionlessly, “Where should we go?”

Considering for a moment, Li Yao dashed to the few guards of the Godly Might Prison that had been killed and dismantled their crystal suits into tiny components quickly. Soon, he found the identification units as well as the passes to the various gates of the Godly Might Prison.

The few guards were all the “four best experts” of the Godly Might Prison. Because of their high rank, their passes were enough to open most of the gates in the prison.

After embedding an identification chip and a pass to Lei Chenghu’s unit, Li Yao retrieved a piece of delicate communication magical equipment from his Cosmos Ring and activated the highly-confidential short-distance channel.

“Blackstone, Blackstone.”

Li Yao spoke to the communication channel in a low voice, “This is Vulture. The general has been saved, but we cannot persist for long because we have been surrounded. We’ve decided to change our strategy and go to the highest control center of the Godly Might Prison directly. Please give us clearances to the pathways on our way and distract all the surveillance cameras and guards.

“Repeat, this is an order from the general. Please see that it is done, or the general’s safety cannot be ensured!”

“Blackstone” was the secret code name for Luo Wenyao, the deputy warden that the reformists had bought over.

Since the wireless transmission was adopted, the so-called “secret channel” was naturally not so secret. It would be discovered by the enemy as time went by.

However, due to the emergency, there was no time to bother with that right now.

It was not until a long silence in the communication channel that a voice of surprise finally came over, “What?!”

“We are now moving toward the control center. Please inform us of the safest route.”

Li Yao was not bothered by the guy’s shock at all. He said quickly, “Or we will have to fight all the way over!”

The secret communication channel fell silent again. Li Yao was almost able to hear the heavy breathing of the guy on the other side. In the next second, a 3D map of the Godly Might Prison was sent over, with a crimson route glittering on it.

Luo Wenyao gnashed his teeth on the other side as he said, “You have three minutes. I will try to move all the guards on this route and cut off the image transmission of the surveillance cameras. Suspicions will be raised if the duration is any longer. Why are you coming to the control center?”

In a smile, Li Yao glanced at Lei Chenghu and said resolutely, “To catch them all!”

According to the instruction of the spy, the two of them entered a broad and comfortable ventilation tube.

Hardly had they crawled in when they heard roars and explosions coming over from the area where they were at in the beginning.

The guards of the Godly Might Prison and the captives of the Covenant Alliance who had received new orders arrived at the same time. Naturally, another bloody battle took place.

Li Yao secretly observed Lei Chenghu, only to discover that the man was groping forward in the darkness wholeheartedly, with thoughtfulness beaming out of his shining eyes, showing no concern for the safety of his son. Li Yao couldn’t help but feel cold again.

The Immortal Cultivators were as difficult to deal with as the people of the Covenant Alliance!

After the ventilation tubes were filled with the venomous fog and the corrosive air, most of the guards had evacuated from the place. What replaced them were the surveillance cameras and the automatic defense magical equipment that were floating in midair like green-headed flies.

Since the spy cut off the surveillance cameras for now and Li Yao and Lei Chenghu were carrying the identification units of the highest level, they were determined by the automatic defense magical equipment as friends and let through without any trouble.

Although Li Yao had wasted 50% of his combat ability in the fierce battle just now, it was not a difficult mission to release his spiritual threads to detect enemies in the several hundred square meters around.

Also, the spy was sending the latest distribution of soldiers and their movements over every now and then, allowing them to dodge all the guards perfectly.

Lei Chenghu’s estimation was quite right.

The highest commander of the Godly Might Prison was already more than anxious because of the Covenant Alliance’s unexpected attack. Even though he had learned the news that Lei Chenghu escaped, he would only think that Lei Chenghu was fleeing to the corners of the Godly Might Prison. Little could he have thought that Lei Chenghu and Li Yao would take a giant detour and stab into the heart of the prison as if they were trying to get caught!

The two of them pushed forward for several kilometers in the ventilation tube without encountering major dangers. They met three unavoidable patrol teams on their way, but Li Yao noticed all of them in advance and knocked them out neatly.

At the front was the control center of the Godly Might Prison.

The ventilation tube, however, came to an end. Lying ahead was a set of completely independent air circulation systems that was absolutely impossible to crawl through.

Down below was defended by heavily-armed troops. Hundreds of guards of the prison were watching over the control center like hundreds of iron fortresses, not letting a single fly pass.

Those soldiers were all the personal guards of the warden. The spy, as the deputy warden, could not dispatch them free at will.

“What do we do?”

Li Yao asked Lei Chenghu with his lips, not making any sound.

The hundreds of guards were tall and athletic, with spiritual energy dancing around their neat crystal suits. They were absolutely different from the common jailors that Li Yao crushed easily just now.

Li Yao had consumed too much spiritual energy and soul power. He had no intention of fighting hundreds of such guards, who were as tough as wolves.

When there were too many ants, they could bite an elephant to death. Even an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage might be killed when the number of enemies was overwhelming!

Lei Chenghu narrowed his eyes and completely took off the broken mask, revealing a face that seemed to be made of iron.

Then—

He simply broke the ventilation tube and leaped down.

“Who is it?”

The guards who were stationed outside the control center in high vigilance were all greatly shocked. They all aimed their guns at Lei Chenghu.

Li Yao secretly cursed but had no choice except to jump down together with Lei Chenghu. While he was still in midair, the dominating auras of the Divinity Transformation Stage already spread out like a tsunami, raising a ferocious storm around the two of them, which shook all the storm bolters and the crystal cannons hard and made them impossible to lock onto the enemy.

Lei Chenghu, however, did not bother to look at those people at all, and simply considered the blades and firearms in their hands nonexistent. He held his chest high and strode at the control center!

Lei Chenghu’s behavior and Li Yao’s dominance were great surprises for the guards.

The suffocating pressure of the Divinity Transformation Stage experts that felt like a hundred thousand tons of water made them grit their teeth and bulge their eyes, but they did not have the courage to pull the trigger.

The air around Lei Chenghu that was even more dominating than the Divinity Transformation Stage, as well as his somewhat familiar face, caused the hearts of the guards to palpitate.

“M-Marquis Liaohai!”

Some guards exclaimed, finding it hard to believe their eyes.

Since Lei Chenghu was secretly held in custody here, naturally, only part of the leadership was aware of the news. Most of the guards did not know it at all.

The guards of the Godly Might Prison, even though they were from the four Kurfürst families, were mostly the secondary branches of the families at the bottommost level. They had to suffer all kinds of exploitations from up above, and when all their values had been used, they would be kicked to the desolate, hopeless places such as the Godly Might Prison, where they would wait for their retirement in desperation.

They were quite indifferent to their families, and they were rather familiar, if not reverential, with the famous heroes of the Imperium such as “God of War” Lei Chenghu!

For a moment, many guards were at a loss about what to do.

They did not know why the legendary “hero of the Imperium” suddenly showed up here. They did not know why Lei Chenghu lost an arm and was covered in blood as if he had just been through a fierce battle. They did not have any clue about how to deal with the weird situation either!

Only a few commanders among them vaguely knew the truth, but Li Yao sensed their existence keenly the moment he jumped off. His spiritual energy bit their throats as tightly as vipers, making them chill and their hearts pound. They felt that a needle was stabbed to their spines, and they could not utter a single syllable.

“If you know me, why are you still standing in my way?”

Lei Chenghu pressed forward in the shiny forest of blades and bellowed with a face as gloomy as a swamp, “The Covenant Alliance is attacking on a large-scale basis. The Godly Might Prison is in peril. My Astounding Thunder Fleet is still on the near-planet orbit, unable to break in. Where is your warden? I need to speak to him!”

His words were illogical and obscure, but they were enough to stun the guards for a moment.

While they were dazed, Lei Chenghu had already walked to the gate of the control center under Li Yao’s protection.

Guarded by hundreds of tough soldiers, and because many officers were entering and exiting the place to pass orders, the gate of the control center was naturally wide open. Even if it had been closed tightly, it would have been barely able to resist Li Yao’s full-strength attack.

Lei Chenghu and Li Yao stepped into the highest control center of the Godly Might Prison.

Except for Luo Wenyao, the spy and the deputy warden, everybody in the control center was dumbfounded, unable to say anything other than making meaningless sounds with their throats.

It was not until this moment that the warden’s personal guards outside finally realized what was going on. They all crowded in and aimed their trembling guns at Lei Chenghu and Li Yao again!

“Marquis Liaohai!”

When the warden, who was giving commands before the mainframe crystal processor, turned around, it was such a weird picture of dead silence that he saw. He couldn’t help but blurt out with a pale face.

The current warden of the Godly Might Prison was named “Yun Chenghua”, a direct descendent of the “Yun family of Lantian”. He was also a rarely-seen expert in the Nascent Soul Stage with talents both in “administration” and “battle”.

However, faced with Li Yao and Lei Chenghu, two experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage, how was he able to unleash the capabilities of the Nascent Soul Stage at all?

“Fellow Cultivator Yun.”

Turning a blind eye to the hundreds of storm bolters and crystal cannons that were aimed at aim from nearby, Lei Chenghu kept one hand on his back and said unquestionably, “You have lost. Surrender now!”

Chapter 2223 - Pace of the God of War

Even a Nascent Soul Stage expert like Yan Chenghua was shocked by Lei Chenghu’s matter-of-fact declaration, which was made despite being surrounded by hundreds of personal guards. It was not until a long time later that he finally realized what was going on. With a face that was so gloomy that it was almost raining, he gnashed his teeth. “Is this some kind of joke, Marquis Liaohai?”

He seemed eager to lunge forward and catch Lei Chenghu.

But when Li Yao stared at him from Lei Chenghu’s back with a pair of unpredictable eyes, he felt that his internal organs were stabbed by ice spears. He couldn’t help but cry and wonder where Lei Chenghu found such a great expert to help him.

“Are you still unable to see through the situation, Fellow Cultivator Yun?”

Unhurriedly, Lei Chenghu moved forward to Yun Chenghua, warden of the Godly Might Prison. “The very fact that I’m standing before you right now is evident enough that the Godly Might Prison has been greatly infiltrated, and it was no secret at all that I was kept in custody here!

“Since half a month ago, the news that I was here has already been spread out. Right now, the special mixed troop made of the members of the Astounding Thunder Fleet and the royal guards loyal to the queen are ripping apart the four-dimensional space and jumping to the Mystic Ice Sector.

They are about to launch a destructive strike on the Godly Might Fleet!

“Trust me. Now that we have decided to take the gamble, it is impossible that we will lose!

“It is needless to mention the riots caused by the captives of the Covenant Alliance deep inside the Godly Might Prison. The suppression of the riots alone will waste ninety percent of your strength. What can you count on to resist the scourge of the Astounding Thunder Fleet and the royal guards? Or rather, do you want to resist to the end and be destroyed together with the Godly Might Prison?

“Hehe. Even if you are pigheaded enough to remain loyal to the four Kurfürst families, think about the soldiers, guards, and jailors outside. Are you asking so many people to die a meaningless death?

“I swear by the name of ‘God of War’ that if I cannot leave the place openly today, the entire planet will turn into an ocean of fire. The glaciers that have been frozen for ten thousand years will simmer, and everybody here, both the jailors and the prisoners, will die together with me!

“Fellow Cultivator Yun, the lives of hundreds of thousands of people are now in your hands. Do you still think that I’m joking?”

After every question Lei Chenghu raised, he made a step forward and crashed at the warden like a mountain ten thousand meters tall.

Warden Yun Chenghua, being an expert in the Nascent Soul Stage, had a combat ability higher than Lei Chenghu right now. But he was still sweating hard under the man’s aggressive posture.

“The Astounding Thunder Fleet and the royal guards loyal to the queen?”

Yun Chenghua rolled his eyes hard. “It’s… It’s impossible…”

“You will understand if it is possible very soon.”

Lei Chenghu said coldly, “If it weren’t for the future that a lot of innocent people would die when the great army arrive, why would I have bothered to come here to persuade you to surrender on my own? I could’ve hidden myself deep inside the Godly Might Prison while waiting for an opportunity to get away!

“This is the last opportunity for so many people of the Godly Might Prison, including yourself. I am not so lenient every time. Try to make a judicious decision, Fellow Cultivator Yun.

“In my opinion, even if you want to remain loyal to the four Kurfürst families, you wouldn’t have a chance to. Look at the rampant captives of the Covenant Alliance on the light beam who have almost burned half of the Godly Might Prison to the ground. This is a tragedy that has never happened to the dozens of wardens during the hundreds of years after the Godly Might Prison was established, but it has happened in your term.

“Somebody must be responsible for such a serious riot and prison break. Even if they are not sentenced to death, they will definitely be greatly punished. Who else can take the blame if not you, Fellow Cultivator Yun, as warden of the prison?

“You are an expert in the Nascent Soul Stage with dual talents. The appointment of you as the warden of the Godly Might Prison was sort of a punishment in the first place. If you take such a huge blame again, you won’t have any hope to rise again in the system of the four Kurfürst families.

“Not just you, there are also your personal guards, who are so loyal to you that they are bold enough to aim their guns at us when they know that a battle-type Divinity Transformation Stage expert is standing behind me. Tsk, tsk, tsk. They are all the best warriors, but it is a pity that they have a terrible leader. They will suffer for decades in the land of bitterness and desolation together with you, or be wasted meaninglessly as cannon fodder!”

Yun Chenghua couldn’t have looked more awful. His hands, where veins were protruding, grabbed the saber on his waist tightly, and he could chop off Lei Chenghu’s throat after a slight wave. But he could not unsheathe his weapon at all.

“Fellow Cultivator Yun, you know very clearly that everything I said is true. The job as the warden of the Godly Might Prison is one on the crater of a volcano in the first place. It is meant to take blames for other people.”

Lei Chenghu said casually, “If I were indeed killed miserably in the Godly Might Prison today, the local troops, including the Astounding Thunder Fleet, would certainly burst into fury when the news was out. Then, the four Kurfürst families would have to catch a few scapegoats to appease the public. Whose head do you think will be best to prevent the warlords from complaining anymore? Yours, Fellow Cultivator Yun!

“Therefore, since the moment I was sent to the Godly Might Prison, whether or not an accident happened to me, you would certainly take the blame in the end. To think that you are still working for the four Kurfürst families so dutifully!”

Yun Chenghua’s pale face blushed, and his veins that were as thick as earthworms surfaced, cramping violently.

His personal guards around also fell silent, with panic and confusion flashing in their eyes.

“The greatest reason why the Imperium has walked to the dead end today is that it cannot make the best use of talents and resources!”

Lei Chenghu continued, “An expert in the Nascent Soul Stage with dual talents in battle and administration, leading hundreds of loyal, tough soldiers, would’ve conquered dozens of planets after a decade of fighting if they were under my command. There would’ve been too many glittering medals for him to wear on his chest!

“But in the past decade, I hardly heard the name ‘Yun Chenghua’. Perhaps you will remain unknown in the next hundred years. I really feel pitiful for the hotblooded men like you and your warriors!”

“S-Stop it!”

Yun Chenghua drew half of his saber out of the sheath from his waist. His eyes bloodshot as if filled with blood. He gnashed his teeth and asked, “Marquis Liaohai, what are you trying to do exactly?”

Li Yao stared at Yun Chenghua’s saber tightly; his eyes so sharp that they were almost stabbing two holes on the edge of the blade.

Lei Chenghu, however, did not bother to look at the coldly-shining saber at all. He simply continued staring at Yun Chenghua with earnest and passionate eyes as he extended his only arm to the man and said, one word after another, “The Imperium today is exactly like the Godly Might Prison right now. It is in a moment of life and death. Lead all the ardent men under your command who crave to accomplish something and rescue the Imperium together with me. The Imperium needs you to make the right choice right now!”

“Well…”

Yun Chenghua’s face was gloomy and unsteady, but his half-drawn saber stopped in midair. He asked solemnly, “Even if you can conquer the Godly Might Prison, so what? What are you going to do in the next step?”

“As soon as the Godly Might Prison is conquered, there will be a whole set of consecutive plans waiting to be activated until we can make our own choice or even take our own place in the Council of Elders. The fewer prices we pay in the conquest of the Godly Might Prison, the greater the odds of success will be in the next phase. Therefore, your role is of paramount importance!”

Lei Chenghu suddenly turned his eyes to Yun Chenghua’s side and changed the topic, “However, our strength is much higher than your imagination. Our fellow Cultivators can be found in all the critical posts in the entire Imperium, including those within the Godly Might Prison. Why else do you think my rescue forces have come so fast?

“Opportunities only knock once. I don’t have time to talk sense into you. If you remain obstinate, tremendous other people will replace you and cooperate with us pleasantly!”

Yun Chenghua was greatly awed. He was completely caught in Lei Chenghu’s pace and even adjusted his breath and heartbeat according to Lei Chenghu.

His eyes also looked at his right side, where Lei Chenghu was looking at.

It was Luo Wenyao, the deputy warden, who was standing behind him on his right side.

Under the stare of Lei Chenghu's scorching eyes, Luo Wenyao's breath was disrupted, and his face was unnatural, as if he were under tremendous pressure.

Yun Chenghua immediately sensed the subtle changes of his deputy.

Thinking of the guy's stealthy behaviors earlier, he was greatly alarmed.

Right then, Lei Chenghu suddenly bulged his eyes and bellowed, “Do it!”

The pitiful Luo Wenyao, although having been bought over by Li Linghai a long time ago with a promise of great rewards to help with the rescue of Lei Chenghu, never thought to attack the warden in person.

He was extremely nervous because of his secrets in the first place, and the mini storm bolter close to his thigh cramped beyond his control.

Under Lei Chenghu's unexpected bellow, he drew his gun out of natural instincts. But he was at a loss about what Lei Chenghu meant after he took out the gun.

Yun Chenghua, on the other hand, had noticed what was happening behind him under the guidance of Lei Chenghu's eyes.

His nerves were even keener than those of a shocked bird, and his saber had been half drawn in the first place. Now that he sensed his deputy had taken out the gun, the alarms in his head turned into shrieks. The saber was unsheathed as quickly as a flash of lightning and swirled backward, and the massive spiritual energy of the Nascent Soul Stage spurted out crazily, concentrating into invincible blade auras that brushed past Luo Wenyao's wrist that had just drawn the storm bolter and then went upward to his neck.

Deputy Warden Luo Wenyao immediately turned rigid. Two narrow and long bloody marks appeared on his wrist and his neck, and his eyes bulged out like those of a dead fish.

Huchi! Huchi! Huchi! Huchi!

Yun Chenghua, the warden, breathed heavily. The seemingly plain attack cost too much of his strength.

Lei Chenghu, however, was absolutely still. He did nothing except for roaring "do it".

Li Yao was still standing behind Lei Chenghu, with the four black crystals hovering around him slowly, ready to fill in at any moment. His mission was to protect Lei Chenghu. Luo Wenyao's safety was naturally not his concern. Besides, he did not expect Lei Chenghu to play such a moment, and how could he have enough time to stop a Nascent Soul Stage expert's intuitional attack?

Most importantly of all—

Neither Yun Chenghua, Luo Wenyao, or Li Yao knew what Lei Chenghu meant at all!

Chapter 2224 - No Blood Shed!

Clang!

Luo Wenyao’s mini storm bolter dropped to the ground together with the right hand that was holding it.

He seemed to be gradually swallowed by an invisible swamp, and his face couldn’t have been more rigid and weird. He tried to lower his head to check his broken hand, but he could not move his jaw at all.

Three seconds later, the powerful blood pressure heaved the head and tossed it to the side of the broken right hand. There was still a look of confusion on his face.

The headless torso shivered for a moment and fell backward, not knowing what happened at all up to the moment of death.

Looking at the dead body of his deputy that had been cut into three pieces by one attack, Yun Chenghua yelled and stopped his personal guards from attacking. With a gloomy face, he stared at Lei Chenghu thoughtfully again and said in a shivering voice, “Luo Wenyao was your guy… But why did you remind me?”

“Wrong. Luo Wenyao was not my guy; he was the queen’s guy.”

Lei Chenghu replied, as if it were nothing worth mentioning at all, “I checked his files before. That was a hesitant, cowardly man who was not worthy to join our great cause. He was not a man whom I could trust my back with.

“As I expected, he drew the storm bolter just now, but he hesitated for half a second at the most critical moment. If he had been more resolute, I would’ve taken a gamble and lunged forward to control you when you were distracted by him. That way, he might’ve been able to survive. But as it turned out, he was too useless to be helped!”

Yun Chenghua’s voice was hoarser than ever. “So, you simply watched me kill him while doing nothing?”

“Exactly. I am trying to save the Imperium right now. Naturally, only the strongest Immortal Cultivators are qualified to cooperate with me. Such a piece of garbage was not worthy of my help.”

Lei Chenghu admitted frankly, “Besides, this is my gesture of sincerity for you. Luo Wenyao was the queen’s guy and the key to the rescue plan this time. If he were alive, he would be one of the greatest contributors to the battle, and whatever choices you make, Fellow Cultivator Yun, your contributions would be lower than his. It would be possible that he would suppress you for all eternity in the future.

“After all, he joined the queen’s cause much earlier than you did, Fellow Cultivator Yun.

“But right now, you have killed him, and you are now the key to the current situation. The future of the Godly Might Prison and even the Imperium hinges on your decision. If you are willing to stand by our side, allowing us to take over the Godly Might Prison and the Godly Might Fleet with no bloodshed, you will be the well-deserved best contributor of the battle.

“We are now competing with the leadership of the four Kurfürst families, and naturally, we need to unite all the forces that can be united. If Fellow Cultivator Yun chooses to join us as the ‘warden of the Godly Might Prison’, do I need to picture your promising future for you?

“I know a thing or two about your past, Fellow Cultivator Yun. I’m aware that you are a tough warrior, but you were bad at adulation and pissed off the competitors within your family, which was why you were sent to such a place. Compared to the wavering, spineless guys such as Luo Wenyao, I found talents like Fellow Cultivator Yun more admirable. I’m sincerely inviting you to join us. I’m willing to fight by your side and even entrust my back to your protection!”

While talking, Lei Chenghu took a giant step forward again.

The distance between Yun Chenghua and him was already close to each other in the first place. After he took the step forward, the two of them were almost next to each other.

Yun Chenghua’s pupils constricted violently, and his facial muscles twitched. He couldn’t take Lei Chenghu’s overwhelming pressure anymore.

Lei Chenghu, however, made a move that surprised everyone.

He reversed his own saber and stuffed the handle in Yun Chenghua’s hands.

“I trust my eyes that have never misled me. A man like you does not deserve to die an unknown death at the land of desolation as a warden. You should rage the sea of stars with me and make unparalleled achievements, making the name

‘Yun Chenghua’ one that is to be remembered a thousand years later!

“I’m done now. Make your choice!

“You can kill me and die together with the wretched Godly Might Prison.

“Or you can obey me. I do not have any titles or fortunes right now, but I swear that as long as you make the step, you and your men will have the opportunity to raise the flag of the Imperium on the last planet of the Alliance of the Holy Covenant in the future someday!”

Lei Chenghu’s saliva was almost smashing into Yun Chenghua’s face like nails.

Yun Chenghua felt that the whole world was shaking, and he was completely at Lei Chenghu’s mercy.

Lei Chenghu, however, simply helped him close and clench his hand, one finger after another. He then held the man’s hand and helped the warden to place the bloodstained saber on his own neck.

The sharp saber almost cut Lei Chenghu’s skin, leaving a zigzagging trace of blood.

Yun Chenghua, his hundreds of guards, and everybody else in the control center, including Li Yao, all held their breath as they looked at Lei Chenghu’s crazy action that bordered on suicide in astonishment.

“I… I…”

Yun Chenghua almost couldn’t believe his eyes and ears. Nor could he believe that the legendary “God of War” had truly put his life in his hands. The saber stopped beside Lei Chenghu’s carotid artery, not moving at all, but the veins on the warden’s arm that were as thick as dragons bounced crazily.

“If you are still hesitating, you will be such a disappointment.”

Lei Chenghu frowned hard. “I don’t know what you possibly have to hesitate about. Besides me, the Godly Might Prison has also locked countless political criminals who were all powerful big shots in the past and know countless secrets about the Imperium. They can make a comeback at any moment.

“The four Kurfürst families have kicked you to such a bitter cold world to waste your life. But they do not know that they have given you the most valuable treasure!

“It was not your fault that the political criminals were caught and kept here. However you have been treating them, it is your job and you do not have a choice.

“But if you can control the entire Godly Might Prison and set them free in person so that they can join our side, who will not be in your debt? If they do make a comeback one day, will they forget who rescued them from their miseries in person?

“Don’t presume that Luo Wenyao was the only spy in the Godly Might Prison. If you are unwilling to seize such a precious opportunity, Fellow Cultivator Yun, a lot of other people will!”

Lei Chenghu’s words bombarded him like a heavy cannon.

Yun Chenghua finally collapsed.

“But—”

With a face full of cracks and more twisted than ever, he wailed, “My wife and children and those of my guards are mostly in the heartland of the Imperium!”

“Then, it is all the more reason why you should make the right choice now.”

Glancing around gloomily, Lei Chenghu said, “If you die an uncanny death here, would your widow and orphans end up well in the cruel, dog-eat-dog environment in the four Kurfürst families?

“Don’t think that you will be the hero of the families after you die, or that your wife and children will be protected. Somebody must be responsible for the great upheaval this time. Dead men do not talk, which makes them the best candidates for scapegoats. After all the dirty water is poured on your dead body, even fewer people will care about your wife and children.

“Only if you are alive and you are gathered into a massive force can your wife and your children be protected in your big family. Do you not understand such simple logic?”

Yun Chenghua hesitated, “But—”

“Enough!”

Lei Chenghu bulged his eyes and interrupted the warden. He leaned even closer to the edge of the guy’s blade and roared, “If you want to kill me, just do it! Why are you wasting my time!”

Yun Chenghua’s hand shook because of shock, and the edge slightly cut Lei Chenghu’s neck. Blood immediately spilled out.

All the jailors and guards nearby exclaimed.

Yun Chenghua retreated his hands like he was electrocuted. His face was even paler than that of a dead person.

Lei Chenghu ripped off part of his clothes casually and covered his neck where blood was erupting. The cloth was immediately dyed red, but he seemed to have sensed none of it but simply pursed his lips, staring at Yun Chenghua without blinking.

Yun Chenghua swallowed hard; his face even paler than before. But the flames of resolution surfaced in his eyes.

Looking around, he seemed to have gained new strength from the leadership of the Godly Might Prison and his personal guards. Holding the saber with both hands, he returned it to Lei Chenghu respectfully and said, “Marquis Liaohai, please… give your orders. Everybody in the Godly Might Prison will obey you!”

Li Yao had been observing from the back the whole time. Finally, he opened his mouth slowly in shock, to the point that one could stuff a coconut into it.

Lei Chenghu took his saber and wiped the stains of blood that were as intense as ink. He turned around and glanced at Li Yao, speaking through the technique of private talk. “Forgive me for getting one of your spies killed. Has Her Grace told you what you should do under such circumstances?”

“That… That’s alright. It doesn’t matter.”

Li Yao said in a hurry, “I did not expect that General Lei would be so majestic. I am truly overwhelmed by your dominance. My admiration for you that has always been part of me since my childhood is now rolling up from my heart again. I almost can’t stop myself from pledging loyalty to General Lei and work under your command!”

Lei Chenghu slightly frowned. “Aren’t you the queen’s personal guard? Shouldn’t your loyalty be with Her Grace?”

Li Yao said, somewhat in embarrassment, “You may find it hard to believe, General Lei, but I’m in fact not very familiar with the queen. We only join each other for the lofty ideal to save the Imperium. But after witnessing what you have done today, General Lei, I find that you seem to be even greater than the queen. So, I can’t help feeling admirable for you and crave to fight by your side so that we can ‘rage the sea of stars’ together. Isn’t it perfectly understandable?”

Lei Chenghu had the whole situation under control with only a few words and no bloodshed, but he was caught in a rarely-seen confusion right now. “What kind of Divinity Transformation Stage expert are you?”

“The kind that rejects lowly entertainments and personal desires and is completely devoted to the overall interests of the Imperium and the civilization of mankind, just like General Lei.”

Li Yao coughed and said, “Therefore, General Lei, you can absolutely trust me. I did volunteer to save you, and I am totally on your side!”

Chapter 2225 - Make the Best Use of Things

Looking at Li Yao’s sincere face and earnest eyes, Lei Chenghu failed to come up with any reply until a long time later. “Is this some kind of lousy trick to win my trust through fake loyalty so that you can monitor me from close up?”

“Absolutely not.”

Li Yao shook his head quickly. “Trust me, General Lei. I mean it!”

“I trust nobody right now. None of the guys from the capital, either from the Council of Elders or the royal palace, are easy to deal with!”

Lei Chenghu looked at Li Yao thoughtfully but had no time to talk more to the strange guy. He turned around to Yun Chenghua again and said, “Warden Yun, what is the situation right now? How good is your control over the Godly Might Prison? Where is the Godly Might Fleet deployed? Is it under your absolute control?”

Just now, he addressed Yun Chenghua as “Fellow Cultivator Yun” because they were negotiating for cooperation.

At this moment, he began to call Yun Chenghua as “Warden Yun”, implying that he had accepted the man’s pledge of loyalty.

Yun Chenghua took a deep breath. Now that he had taken the step, there was no turning back. Lei Chenghu was quite right. In order to keep their wives and children safe, and for them to distinguish themselves in the vast stage in the sea of stars, they had to build up their strength as much as possible!

Therefore, he refreshed himself and was completely devoted to his new role. His hands moving as quickly as wind, he retrieved a hundred surveillance light beams and said while he operated anxiously, “The Godly Might Prison has just experienced a very serious artificial earthquake. Tremendous underground magma has been squeezed into the bottom level of the Godly Might Prison by the high pressure. The five floors at the bottommost level have all collapsed. Even the four energy supply bases were seriously wrecked. The emergent backup energy reserve is only enough to power the most fundamental defense system and the anti-air firing points on the ground.

“Besides, our mainframe crystal processor was hijacked by the weird viruses from the Covenant Alliance. When the magma swallowed the energy supply base and the mainframe was under the most pressure, it was hijacked by the enemy, who opened part of the prison cells in the first district and all of them in the third district through remote control, setting abundant prisoners and captives free.

“As a result, the first and the third districts have been completely occupied by the rampaging prisoners and captives. Most of the jailors inside have been killed by them. The situation is rather terrible.

“However, the defense system of the Godly Might Prison has been time-tested for hundreds of years after all. Even if the prisoners and the captives can completely take over the districts, it is absolutely impossible for them to get away.

“Right now, I have taken back the control of the mainframe crystal processor and cut off all the channels from the first and the third districts to the outside world. Not an ant would be able to crawl through. The crystal suit legions stationed at the upper levels of the Godly Might Prison have also set up bastions at the critical locations. They haven’t marched into the fallen districts yet only because the environment down below is too complicated.

“As for the Godly Might Fleet, it has learned of the riot in the Godly Might Prison too and is breaking into the atmosphere and switching to the ‘firepower blockage’ mode. They will descend to a low altitude of two to three hundred meters and lock onto every channel from the Godly Might Prison to the ground. Any prisoner or captive who is bold enough to crawl out will be the most obvious target in the snowy world!

“However…

“Although I am the warden of the Godly Might Prison and the Godly Might Fleet is under my command theoretically, the fleet is in fact very independent. General Dongfang Lei, the highest commander of the fleet, has always been loyal to the family and is only here to gain more experience. He will certainly persist to the end without surrendering.”

A warden and a commander of a fleet were absolutely different.

A warden needed to master the professional but otherwise useless abilities. They were essentially the seneschals of the desolate land. The future of their career was very gloomy.

In most cases, one day as a warden meant a lifetime of being a warden. Even if he was no longer the warden of the Godly Might Prison and sent to somewhere else, he would still be managing a bunch of wretched prisoners. What else was he capable of doing?

Besides, after spending enough time in a prison, one would be familiar with every brick, every rock, and every wood, as well as the psychological state of all the prisoners. So, there were even fewer reasons for their superiors to change them.

Quite a few wardens of the Godly Might Prison had died of old age in their post or retired with empty hands when they were so old that their Cultivations had plummeted.

Therefore, when Lei Chenghu gave him the opportunity, Yun Chenghua did not struggle much before he grasped it.

However, the commander of the fleet would be changed every few years. The young officers from the four Kurfürst families would accumulate experience in the place first, learning how to command an entire fleet. A few years later, they would have opportunities to be dispatched to other fleets, sometimes from the near-planet orbit defense fleets to the deep-sky fleets that could travel to thousands of lightyears away, in which case their future would be nothing but promising.

As long as there was the slightest hope, who would ever completely break apart from the four Kurfürst families and join Lei Chenghu who had nothing at all in his hands?

Therefore, Warden Yun Chenghua might surrender, but Dongfang Lei, the highest commander of the Godly Might Prison, would never do so.

“Got it.”

Pondering for a moment, Lei Chenghu said, “I remember that a rather tough anti-air fire net has been established on the ground for the defense of the Godly Might Prison, which can even reach beyond the atmosphere. I believe the anti-air troop should be under the control of your hands, right?”

“Yes.”

Yun Chenghua replied quickly, “Since the beginning, what the Godly Might Prison has worried most is the external attacks. Therefore, the anti-air fire net is an important focus. Nobody ever thought that the enemy would activate the magma and earthquakes below the ground, which, naturally, is absolutely useless aside from creating chaos.

“But the greatest problem right now is the serious instability of energy supply. Because most of the spiritual energy is supplied to the defense system in the different prison cells, several of the most powerful ‘Heaven Battering Cannons’ on the ground have been paralyzed due to the shortage of energy.”

“It doesn’t matter.”

Lei Chenghu said, “Now, pass my orders. First, reduce the energy consumption on the defense system in the underground prison cells as much as possible. Focus every drop of spiritual energy on the anti-air fire net on the ground, especially the most powerful ‘Heaven Battering Cannons’. Make sure that the Heaven Battering Cannons can perform at least one barrage. As for the other anti-air magical equipment, it will be fine as long as they can pretend that they have locked onto targets.

“Second, contact the flagship of the Godly Might Fleet and inform them that the worst situation has already taken place. A large batch of prisoners and captives are about to escape to the ground. Ask the fleet to approach the ground to suppress the runners. Tell them not to kill the runners if possible.

“In any case, make the flagship and the main-force warships of the Godly Might Fleet reach as close to the ground as possible. When they approach to the point that you are confident of the barrage, lock onto the flagship of the Godly Might Fleet with the maximal firepower!

“Third, prepare to turn on the broadcast system of the entire Godly Might Prison and make as many people as possible hear it. I will speak to the prisoners!”

“Concentrate all the spiritual energy on the anti-air fire net? Lock onto the flagship of the Godly Might Fleet?”

Greatly shocked, Yun Chenghua immediately realized what was going on. He stammered, “You-You want to shoot down the flagship as well as Commander Dongfang Lei? B-But to achieve that, we will have to drain all the spiritual energy down below, and the defense system will become an empty shell. All the defense rune arrays will stop working, and they cannot let out a single electric arc. The prisoners will likely crush the defenses!”

“That’s why I need to speak to the prisoners.”

Lei Chenghu glanced at Yun Chenghua coldly. “Warden Yun, just carry out the orders!”

“… Understood!”

Shuddering, Yun Chenghua did not dare to ask any further but operated on the mainframe crystal processor quickly.

Very soon, half of the light beams were displaying the pictures that the anti-air firing points in the snowy world were secretly turning directions and aimed at midair.

The other half of the light beams, in the meantime, were manifesting the rampant, crazy beasts in the underground prison cells.

Lei Chenghu observed for a moment and said, “Open all the prison cells in the first district.”

Yun Chenghua was slightly dazed. But he did not argue this time and simply carried out Lei Chenghu’s order.

Clang!

Before this, many prison cells at the corners and the ends of pathways in the first district had not been activated yet. The prisoners who were dizzy in their ecstasy did not notice it either. It was not until this moment when the iron bars as thick as arms slowly descended to the ground that the most ferocious prisoners were all released.

“Aooooooooooo!”

The thirsty roars of the inhuman beasts immediately came over from the surveillance picture.

“Open all the channels between the first district and the third district, including the ventilation tubes. All the channels!” Lei Chenghu said coldly.

Yun Chenghua blinked his eyes and immediately realized what Lei Chenghu was trying to do. But he found it hard to believe that Lei Chenghu was capable of doing that!

Clang! Clang! Clang!

The gates that were tightly closed before slowly opened, revealing ways leading to the unknown before the rampant beasts of the first district. The roars and explosions coming over from the ends of the pathways were natural temptations for the bloodthirsty beasts.

“Brothers of the Godly Might Prison who have long been caged, this is Lei Chenghu, the highest commander of the Astounding Thunder Fleet, speaking to you from the highest control center of the Godly Might Prison next to Warden Yun Chenghua!”

Lei Chenghu’s voice that was tougher than superalloys echoed in every corner of the Godly Might Prison, making the ears of the beasts hum hard. “My army has occupied the entire Godly Might Prison. As the new master of the Godly Might Prison, I pronounce that you are free now!”

The words were even louder than the earthquakes and the volcano eruptions. All the beasts were dumbfounded. The district that was as obstreperous as hell a moment ago was caught in dead silence.

All the ferocious beasts turned into statues, except that their lips were shivering and repeating the same word, “Freedom!”

“However, you should all be aware that the precious freedom is only temporary!”

Lei Chenghu’s voice was mixed with undeniable solemnity as he continued, “Even if you tear down the entire Godly Might Prison, so what? You will still be killed if you run to the snowy world outside. You may even be captured like a pig or a dog and suffer humiliations again!

“Now, I can give you the real freedom!

“But only the strongest warriors are entitled to such freedom!”

Chapter 2226 - Kill For Freedom!

The cruelest thing in the world was not to lose freedom, but to regain freedom after losing it for decades, only to watch it slip through the fingers once again!

All the beasts—the bodacious robbers, serial murderers, and perverted arsonists and explosion maniacs—craned their necks with dirty saliva flowing out of their lips as they listened to the broadcast rune arrays in all directions full of eagerness.

“Right now, the Godly Might Prison is in serious turmoil. The gates wide open before your eyes lead to the third district, where the captives of the Covenant Alliance caused all the chaos in the beginning. Their ultimate purpose is to detonate the four energy bases and completely activate the hibernating volcanoes below the ground so that the simmering magma will swallow the entire Godly Might Prison. All the guards, and of course, you, will die together with them!”

Lei Chenghu continued roaring, “Hundreds of my starships are breaking into the atmosphere, but there is still some time to go before the brave soldiers march to the bottom level of the Godly Might Prison. Right now, you are the only people who can save the Godly Might Prison as well as the lives of each other!

“Look around. Do you see the high-precision crystal cameras in the entire Godly Might Prison? They can capture your faces and your every move clearly. Charge forward now, and kill all the captives of the Covenant Alliance in deep-red uniform. As long as the surveillance cameras verify that you have killed one captive from the Covenant Alliance, I will pardon you and enlist you in my army.

“My army is stationed in the most prosperous Sectors in the newly recovered territory. It is the paradise on earth that had just been conquered by the Imperium, with inexhaustible wine, beauties, and crystal mines waiting for the enjoyment of my soldiers! Even a cook under my command lives a more extravagant life than the city masters in the worlds in the rear!

“How long has it been since you last enjoyed a woman? If you do not want to live the rest of your life in the snowy world where even your c*ck is frozen in front of each other’s butts, fight for freedom, sunshine, beauties, and wines with your fists! I don’t care what kind of unpardonable crimes you have committed. As long as you take down one person of the Covenant Alliance, I will pardon you and lead you to the paradise in the frontline!

“You can choose not to trust me, but look at your companions who are simmering in impatience. Remember, there is only a limited number of captives from the Covenant Alliance, which means that I will bring a limited number of people away. You will lose nothing if you finish one of them before your companions do. Remember, everybody should kill only one captive from the Covenant Alliance and leave the rest to your companions!”

His words completely aroused the bloodthirstiness of the animals.

The heavy breath of thousands of beasts gathered together, letting out deafening explosions like the power units of the space warships.

Of the thousands of prisoners who were to spend the rest of their lives in imprisonment, perhaps only one-tenth believed what Lei Chenghu said.

But as long as the one-tenth, or even two or three people, for that matter, started to move forward at the same time, the crushing tide would be completely unstoppable.

Better safe than sorry!

There was only a finite number of captives from the Covenant Alliance. They were not captives in crimson prisoner’s uniform, but single tickets to the paradise on earth!

If they did not take action immediately, the people of the Covenant Alliance would completely activate the underground volcanoes, burning all of them in the boiling magma until nothing was left!

So hot, and it was getting hotter. Magma was truly flowing from downwards. It-It was true!

That was the voice of “God of War” Lei Chenghu. General Lei was quite right. They could never get away. They would not lose anything if they gave it a try. It was better to take the gamble than to wait to die here!

Sunshine, wine, and beauties!

The beasts with tightened pants immediately congregated into an overwhelming tide that drowned the pathway leading to the third district.

Under Lei Chenghu’s command, Yun Chenghua gave them all the help they needed. Not only were all the gates on their way opened, but there were even giant arrowheads made of visible rays of light that guided their way.

In the third district, the captives of the Covenant Alliance were dispersing to all directions, hoping to create greater turmoil.

However, other than those in the first district, Yun Chenghua had sealed all the pathways and ventilation tubes. They did not have any heavy magical equipment and could only crash the gates and walls with their bodies of flesh and blood. Even though they had smashed a few holes on the wall, few people could crawl in at the same time.

Most of the captives of the Covenant Alliance were still wandering in the third district.

Many of them heard the roars of the beasts and searched in the directions of the first district, only to run into the burning tide head to head.

“Aooooooo!”

The surveillance cameras did capture the collision of the two parties clearly. Even the protruding veins on every prisoner’s face was clearly visible.

It was barely a battle, or even a massacre. Before the three captives of the Covenant Alliance realized what was going on, they were already swallowed by the tides of beasts, and when the tides passed, not a residue of them was left behind. All the prisoners had extended their hands at the captives of the Covenant Alliance crazily, biting them hard despite the lack of weapons and ripping apart their dead bodies even if they knew that the captives were long dead.

They did not disperse in dissatisfaction and look for the next target until the captives of the Covenant Alliance had ended up in a cluster of blood.

Nobody cared about Lei Chenghu’s order just now, that everybody should kill only one captive of the Covenant Alliance and leave the rest to their companions.

First of all, the lights were so dim, and the situation was so chaotic. Who knew if the surveillance cameras captured it clearly?

Secondly, so many people attacked at the same time. Who could tell which of them killed the captives of the Covenant Alliance?

Therefore, it would be safer to kill a few more!

In the control center, the battles on the surveillance picture seemed to be taken from the primeval age tens of thousands of years ago.

Most of the people in both parties were barehanded. They did not have weapons, much less crystal suits, and they were only fighting with their teeth and fists.

The captives of the Covenant Alliance were cold machines, but the prisoners of the Covenant Alliance were raging beasts.

The cruel pictures, with the broken limbs and the exploding internal organs, made even a lot of seasoned soldiers in the control center pale in fear.

“Their morale is rather high. This is a useful troop!”

Looking at the blood on the surveillance picture that was being shed in tons, Lei Chenghu nodded in great satisfaction. “Warden Yun, remember to analyze the pictures carefully and identify the warriors that we are to pardon. We will bring them away when we evacuate.”

“Are you really going to pardon them?”

Yun Chenghua blurted out, “They are all the most disobedient bandits. However high their combat ability is, they will only be the black sheep in the army!”

“My promises have never gone unfulfilled. Now that I said they would be pardoned in public, there is absolutely no way that I will go back on my words.”

Lei Chenghu glanced at the warden and said casually, “If you are worried that those disobedient guys will become the black sheep, you don’t need to. I only promised that I would lead them to the frontline; I did not say which troop they were going to join.

“I have a daring team under my command that is in dire need of the participation of the valiant and bloodthirsty warriors like them. Trust me. If those warriors can survive one year in my daring team, they will certainly repent of what they did and be better men.

“Right. Where is the Godly Might Fleet right now? How well has your anti-air fire net been prepared?”

Yun Chenghua breathed heavily. He opened the configuration map of the anti-air fire net and the map that marked the location of the Godly Might Fleet. Pointing at the maps, he said, “General, please take a look. I have transmitted 80% of the remaining spiritual energy in the entire Godly Might Prison to the four most central ‘Heaven

Battering Cannons' in the anti-air fire net. In the meantime, most of the warships of the Godly Might Fleet have descended to below the atmosphere and are still dropping, ready to carry out the suppression battle. I have reset the friend-or-foe identification system and secretly locked onto them."

"Very good."

Lei Chenghu said, "What about the flagship of the Godly Might Fleet?"

"That is exactly the problem. The flagship is still in the atmosphere and has not arrived completely. There's no telling if it has grown suspicious."

"We can't wait anymore."

Lei Chenghu said, "Considering the location of the flagship right now, is it possible to shoot it down in one round of barrage?"

"It is. The cannons based on the continent are a hundred times more powerful than the cannons loaded on warships after all."

Yun Chenghua replied, "But the interferences in the atmosphere are very serious. In order to make sure that the target is destroyed in one barrage, 95% of the spiritual energy must be focused on the Heaven Battering Cannons, and the Heaven Battering Cannons will probably overload and crash after the attack.

"The result will be that our spiritual energy runs out after the barrage, the anti-air fire net will be nothing more than adornment in the next hour, and the cores of the cannons may be completely melted. But the Godly Might Fleet that has lost the flagship will still be able to bombard us free at will. What can we do then?”

“Tell me—”

His eyes glittering, Lei Chenghu asked, “Is anyone on the Godly Might Fleet aware of the situation?”

Slightly dazed, Yun Chenghua shook his head.

“Then—”

Lei Chenghu continued, “Even if the Godly Might Fleet bombard us crazily, so what? Is the Godly Might Prison, which is buried hundreds of meters into the ground, unable to withstand a blanket bombardment for several hours? Or, is the Godly Might Fleet, which has lost their leader, bold enough to send their soldiers to break into the prison that is a complicated maze and fight over the quarters against us in the cruelest way?

“If both questions are negative, what are you worried about? Carry out the order immediately and concentrate all the spiritual energy in the anti-air fire net. Aim all the anti-air magical equipment that can be launched at the flagship of the Godly Might Fleet. Make sure that it will be shot down in the first round of attack!”

“Understood!”

Yun Chenghua stood at attention. Then he bulged his eyes and said, “Report, the flagship of the Godly Might Fleet sent a request for communication!”

“Ignore it. Carry out the order.”

Looking at the light beam, deep in thought, Lei Chenghu suddenly turned to Li Yao. “By estimation, our queen should be arriving soon, right?”

“Report!”

Before Li Yao replied, Yun Chenghua exclaimed in shock again, “Our far-end observatories have detected that objects of huge masses are tearing apart the barriers of the four-dimensional space and jumping to the Mystic Ice Sector quickly!”

“Hehe.”

Lei Chenghu smiled and bared teeth as sharp as a tiger shark’s. “Connect to the communication channel of the flagship of the Godly Might Fleet. Use their communication signals to increase the precision of your aiming. When the Heaven Battering Cannons are fully charged, launch them directly!”

Chapter 2227 - War Tolerates No Mercy!

The image of Dongfang Lei, the commander of the Godly Might Fleet, appeared on the light beam.

It was a handsome, vigorous young man who had eyebrows that looked like swords. His straight uniform highlighted his perfect and athletic body figure, as if it were part of his body. His attractive face was full of the pride of the upper-class men. One could tell at first look that he was a core descendent of the four Kurfürst families who was meant to control the lives of thousands of people after he was born.

Indeed, it was possible to distinguish him from Yun Chenghua just based on their faces.

One of them was a man who had no reliance in the family and was destined to spend his entire life suffering in the desolate land if there was no accident.

The other, however, had only come to the Godly Might Prison to gain more experience. This place was nothing more than a platform for him to climb to the higher sky.

Therefore, even though Dongfang Lei’s military rank was lower than Yun Chenghua’s and he was theoretically under the warden’s command, he was, in fact, free to act on his own and did not need to bother with Yun Chenghua’s orders.

It was also the reason why Li Linghai would rather infiltrate the deputy advisor and part of the captains of the Godly Might Fleet. Dongfang Lei, as the commander-general, was too tricky to deal with. It was impossible for him to be persuaded or bought over.

Lei Chenghu never thought to buy Dongfang Lei over either. He simply stared at the highest commander of the Godly Might Fleet emotionlessly.

Dongfang Lei, however, was greatly surprised by the mess in the control center as well as Lei Chenghu whose clothes were soaked in blood and whose left arm was gone.

Looking at Lei Chenghu and then at Yun Chenghua, who was commanding his subordinates to operate quickly next to him, Dongfang Lei immediately understood everything. Intense fear and fury spurted out of his eyes.

The fear and fury flashed quickly and were hidden in the deepest part of his pupils. Dongfang Lei took a deep breath and made the final attempt. “Marquis Liaohai, I surrender!”

Lei Chenghu made a “launch immediately” gesture at Yun Chenghua as he said casually, “Okay.”

“The Heaven Battering Cannons have been fully charged with spiritual energy. Launching in the extreme bombardment mode!”

With dense sweat of blood leaking out of his forehead, Yun Chenghua clenched his fists. He looked at Dongfang Lei, not without ecstasy, and smashed the control panel hard!

At this moment—

The hundreds of small warships that belonged to the Godly Might Fleet had all broken into the atmosphere. Drifting below the sky and the clouds, they completely exposed their abdomens to the anti-air fire net of the Godly Might Prison.

In order to increase the speed of the descent and to boost the anti-gravity rune arrays, they did not even activate the spiritual shield to 100%. They never thought that their allies would bare the sharpest tusks at them.

Dongfang Lei’s flagship was floating in the atmosphere, caught in a predicament.

By the time he discovered that he had been locked onto by four Heaven Battering Cannons and hundreds of anti-air weapons, there was already no time to either change the direction or to activate the spiritual shield!

A universal war had to follow the most ancient military common sense—that the firepower based on the continent was always higher than the firepower based on vehicles.

For even the super heavy warships more than ten kilometers long, it was already the limit to allocate one to two kilometers for the cabin of main weapons. It was needless to say that a starship could only accommodate limited fuel and ammunition. Even with the dozens of Cosmos Rings that were carried on board, it was not enough to sustain the long-time roaring of destructive cannons.

It was also the reason why the crystal suits and the Colossi prevailed in the war in space. Due to the restriction of the fuel and ammunition, both parties of the war had to adopt the most “cost-effective” way of fighting, which was the melee battles.

The firepower based on the continent, however, was totally different.

Even the smallest planet often had a diameter tens of thousands of meters larger than the length of a starship. Their sizes were even exponentially bigger.

Compared to the starships, which had limited rooms and had to worry about supplies all the time, a planet always had an infinite load of weapons and ammunition.

Some of the important military fortresses could totally dig a dozen kilometers into the ground to establish the appalling cannons, which could launch tons of bullets multiple times faster than the speed of sound with almost infinite fuel.

Unfortunately, the Godly Might Prison was such an “important military fortress”. The four “Heaven Battering Cannons” that were deeply buried below the ground, if dug out and placed on the ground, would have been skyscrapers rising to the clouds. It was not hard to imagine how powerful they were!

What was ironic was that although the Imperium worked on the Godly Might Prison for hundreds of years and built such four super anti-air cannons at the consumption of tremendous resources, the first time they were used was to be aimed at the Imperium’s own starships.

The Heaven Battering Cannons adopted a dual-attack mode with both super radiations and electromagnetic bullets. First of all, four mystic rays rose to the sky like a lightning storm and immediately locked Dongfang Lei’s flagship from four angles, destroying the spiritual shield that had been raised in a hurry unstoppably.

In the end, four cannonballs filled with highly-explosive crystals, dragging daunting exhaust flames behind, broke the void like the claws of devils and snatched the enemy.

Dongfang Lei’s flagship dodged hard. But the two parties were too close to each other, and the super radiations in the first wave significantly disrupted the anti-gravity rune arrays and the power units of the starship, making the starship unable to move at all as if it were caught in a vortex.

BOOM!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

With the price of almost tearing his starship apart, Dongfang Lei dodged the attack of the first highly-explosive cannonball. But the remote detonation rune array on the cannonball had been set in advance, and it exploded brutally when it was almost flying out of the atmosphere. The blast greatly disturbed his evasion, allowing the following three cannonballs to penetrate into his flagship one after another. Three deafening explosions, like a series of thunders, echoed in the front, middle, and rear parts of the flagship at the same time. The sky was immediately dyed red by the fireballs, only to be blackened by the intense smoke!

In the picture of communication, Dongfang Lei was completely consumed by the blast and the flames before he even had the chance to scream!

Despite the cruelty of the bombardment, Lei Chenghu did not let go of the flagship of the Godly Might Fleet that had been reduced to debris. He commanded Yun Chenghua to concentrate all the firepower on the ground, even including the single weapons of the spiritual puppets and the ground troops, to barrage the fireball in the sky crazily.

For a moment, ten thousand gold lines were blossoming in the sky and on the ground at the same time. The barrage almost dazzled everyone’s eyes.

The spiritual energy of the Godly Might Prison went completely dry. Even the lights in the control center were flashing.

The flagship of the Godly Might Fleet had broken apart and fell to the snow in billions of burning pieces, thawing the snow into thick, rising pillars of smoke that looked like a splendid gray forest.

All the starships of the Godly Might Fleet, as well the soldiers on board, saw the scene where their flagship was destroyed with their own eyes.

For a moment, the whole world and even time itself seemed to be frozen by the everlasting snow. On all the starships, all of them, from the captains to the common soldiers in the engine compartment, was dumbfounded!

“The Heaven Battering Cannons are broken. The whole anti-air fire net and the internal defense system are down too!”

Yun Chenghua gnashed his teeth and said, “The bombardment just now intensified the burden on the energy supply bases. Whatever left of the few reactors has been wasted too. We won’t be able to launch a single cannonball to the sky in the next three hours!”

“That’s alright. Continue locking onto all the starships in the sky and sending the signals out without disguise to show them that we have aimed at them accurately. Then, connect to the public channel of the fleet. I would like to speak to all the soldiers of the Godly Might Fleet.”

Lei Chenghu cleaned himself with his remaining right hand as the enormous light beam before him was dissected into almost a hundred sections, in which the picture of the bridges of almost a hundred starships was displayed.

Naturally, the bridges were teeming with the pale, confused soldiers of the Godly Might Fleet, who were even more panicked when they heard the sound of weapons aiming at them.

Seeing “God of War” Lei Chenghu all of a sudden, most of the captains and advisors were greatly shocked, and even more confused about what was going on.

“Brothers of the Godly Might Fleet, I am Lei Chenghu. I’m sorry that I blew up your flagship the moment we met, causing the deaths of countless innocent brothers.”

Frowning hard, Lei Chenghu announced solemnly, “However, I had no choice, because the Godly Might Prison is at the most perilous moment!

“The spies of the Covenant Alliance had long snuck into the Godly Might Prison and the Godly Might Fleet. They were carrying out the greatest prison break in the history of the Imperium. The underground volcanoes were detonated, and half of the Godly Might Prison was already destroyed!

“The Covenant Alliance’s operation went so well because their spies had infiltrated your heart and your brain. Your highest commander, as well as a large batch of captains and advisors, was a spy of the Covenant Alliance, or had been brainwashed and controlled by them!

“Should you land, the spies of the Covenant Alliance would’ve joined the captives below the ground and killed all of you, before they seized your starships and ran away. That was their plan!

“I was entrusted with the mission to crack the enemy’s plan in the emergency, but I was one step too late. So, I had to destroy the flagship that was completely controlled by the

Covenant Alliance, although there must’ve been our own brothers who knew nothing of the matter. I didn’t have a choice!

“Have you detected massive objects jumping out from behind? That is the main force of the Astounding Thunder Fleet, which has come to suppress the prison break. There is no need to panic. The reinforcements have arrived. The Godly Might Prison is still in our hands!

“I announce now that the Godly Might Fleet is officially under my command from this second. To prevent the spies of the Covenant Alliance who have snuck into the fleet from further sabotages or suicide attacks, all the starships shall cancel the spiritual shields and descend to one hundred meters from the ground in three minutes!

“I repeat. In three minutes, all the starships that are not controlled by the Covenant Alliance but still loyal to the Imperium will cancel the spiritual shields, descend to one hundred meters from the ground, and wait for the reinforcements!

“Three minutes later, the starships that have not canceled the spiritual shield and descended to the altitude of a hundred meters will be regarded as rebellious starships controlled by the spies of the Covenant Alliance. They will be destroyed without any mercy by the anti-air fire net and the soon-to-arrive Astounding Thunder Fleet like Dongfang Lei’s flagship!

“In the meantime, everybody on the bridge, watch your surroundings closely. It is very possible that the spies of the Covenant Alliance are lurking next to you! I authorize you to take any action necessary to those around you to descend the starship to the altitude of one hundred meters. As long as you find a spy of the Covenant Alliance, you will be duly awarded after the battle!

“Brothers of the Godly Might Fleet, please trust me that I do not want to fight any of you. However… war tolerates no mercy!

“You have only three minutes. All the starships staying at high altitude in three minutes will end up exactly like Dongfang Lei’s flagship!’

Chapter 2228 - The Situation Is Settled!

2228 The Situation Is Settled!

After Lei Chenghu finished his resolute announcement, he simply cut off the picture of communication on his end without waiting for the captains’ questions. He only retrieved a bloody countdown and displayed it on the opponents’ light beams.

From the pictures of communication on those guys that were still on, it could be seen that all the captains, advisors, and other people on the bridges were astounded and overwhelmed, at a loss of what to do.

Some ground their teeth, looking around to check other people’s reactions. Some were touching their swords and sabers nervously, with confusion in their eyes. Some other people on the bridges looked at their superiors in wariness after whispering to each other for a while.

The countdown elapsed without any mercy. Two minutes and fifty seconds, two minutes and forty seconds, two minutes and thirty seconds…

All the detection magical equipment on the starships and in the control center of the Godly Might Prison were shrieking. Not far away from the near-planet orbit, countless high-mass and high-density objects were ripping apart the barrier of the three-dimensional space. Like behemoths popping up in an intense fog, they revealed their hideous claws one after another.

Shaking off the dust on themselves, they lunged at the prey brutally.

“General, our anti-air fire net is far from repaired for a second launch. It cannot even shoot down an armed shuttle!”

Yun Chenghua asked in a low voice, “What if some of them do not surrender in three minutes?”

“Firstly, there are our guys in the Godly Might Fleet. Under their lead, in not three minutes but one minute at most, all the starships will land and surrender.”

Lei Chenghu said calmly, as if he were merely stating the most obvious fact, “Secondly, if some starships are too stubborn to surrender three minutes later, we will just command the starships that have surrendered to shoot down those pigheaded ‘traitors’.”

Yun Chenghua bulged his eyes. “Well…”

Lei Chenghu smiled and stopped talking. He even shifted his attention from the Godly Might Fleet to the Deep Sea Fleet that had jumped out of the four-dimensional space and was gathering outside of the near-planet orbit.

The eyes of the general were covered in consolidated blood. There was no telling what he was thinking behind those eyes.

It was a very difficult psychological war.

However, the Godly Might Fleet, which had just witnessed the explosion of their flagship and had to resist the immense pressure of the Deep Sea Fleet in their back and the “reformists” among themselves, was destined to be the loser.

When there were still two minutes to go on the countdown, the Godly Might Fleet had completely collapsed. One starship after another, they canceled their spiritual shields and descended to the altitude of a hundred meters.

They set good examples. As more and more starships landed, the starships that were still hovering in the sky by themselves looked more and more eye-catching and shouldered more and more pressure. The signals of being aimed that crashed the shells of the starships were denser and denser too, raising such incessant sounds of collisions that the ears and nerves of everyone on board were being savaged brutally.

As a result, even though the captains of those starships wanted to procrastinate, the scorching eyes of the people on the bridge and their impatient weapons forced the captains to join the crowd and land.

Three minutes later, all the starships descended to one hundred kilometers from the ground and canceled their colorful spiritual shields. They looked like bare chickens in the blowing wind.

All the captains sent signals to the control center of the Godly Might Prison through the public channel. “We would like to obey the command of General Lei Chenghu!”

The riot within the Godly Might Prison, on the other hand, was also approaching the end in the hellish slaughter.

However determined, ruthless, and fearless the captives of the Covenant Alliance were, and even though they were the best slaughter machines, their number was too small after all. They were only sent to the Godly Might Prison when the place was temporarily regarded as a captive camp.

Most of the criminals locked in the Godly Might Prison were ferocious, insane felons.

Those dangerous criminals were ten times more than the captives of the Covenant Alliance. Even though there was a slight gap in the combat and organization abilities of the two parties, it was easily made up by the gigantic gap in the demography.

When the wild tides made of the beasts roared close, the destruction of the captives of the Covenant Alliance was already inevitable.

As the battle approached the end, the guards of the Godly Might Prison had to join the battlefield just in order to save a few captives from the crazy felons to be interrogated later.

If they hadn’t done it, all the captives of the Covenant Alliance would have been torn into shreds and chewed up!

Of course, when the captives of the Covenant Alliance were almost entirely annihilated, the felons, with their unchangeable nature of killing, began to attack each other. Perhaps they thought that as long as they killed enough people, they could steal the victims’ credits, and Lei Chenghu would bring away all the survivors.

Lei Chenghu did not stop the felons from doing that. His connivance almost seemed to be an encouragement for the prisoners.

He even commanded Yun Chenghua to continue sealing the exits of the first and the third districts to the outside world. When necessary, the intensity of the oxygen inside could be lowered, and he could make all the prisoners pass out due to anoxia.

It was not necessary for that yet. The strength of the prisoners could be wasted more first, and their number could be further reduced.

Starting from the moment the assassins of the Covenant Alliance broke his door, only half an hour had passed.

In half an hour, the Godly Might Prison and the Godly Might Fleet had both fallen into the hands of Lei Chenghu!

“Warden Yun, send your most trusted guards to the ground for two missions.”

There was no ecstasy on Lei Chenghu’s face at all, as if seizing an enormous Godly Might Prison and suppressing the Godly Might Fleet were a trivial matter that was not worth mentioning at all and as simple as taking a toy away from a child. He said casually, “Firstly, search the snowy world in the hundred square kilometers around. I’m highly suspicious that Dongfang Lei, the spy of the Covenant Alliance, was not killed in the explosion just now. His dead body must be found. If he is still alive, kill him immediately!

“Secondly, ask the captains and the key persons on their bridges in the Godly Might Fleet to come to the Godly Might Prison. Tell them that I will praise them for making the right choice fearlessly at the most critical moment, which has saved the lives of countless soldiers. Also, tell them that I will go to the capital in person to ask for accolades for them.

“Furthermore, whatever the price is, repair at least one energy supply base as soon as possible and restore the preliminary defense abilities of the Godly Might Prison. As for the prisoners and captives who are still fighting, there is no need to bother them. Let’s just wait until they are all exhausted.

“Lastly, where are the political criminals? You and I can go and set them free together now.”

Yun Chenghua and everybody else in the control center found it hard to believe that the entire Godly Might Fleet was suppressed so easily.

It was not until a long time later that the warden finally stood at attention and went to carry out the orders while holding back his excitement.

Lei Chenghu moved his cold eyes to Li Yao and spoke in private, “Alright. You can go to your master and prepare for our negotiation. But until she reveals enough sincerity, I will not go to her starship. If she wants to talk, the graceful queen will come to ‘my’ Godly Might Prison to talk.

“Rest assured. You are my life-saver after all, and I won’t make things difficult for you. As long as you bring the words over, the queen will definitely come to the Godly Might Prison. After all, you should be more anxious than I am right now. With the Godly Might Fleet, I can return to my Astounding Thunder Fleet in the Third Battle Area as long as one of the starships can perform a space jump, but Her Grace has revealed her real forces after lurking in the darkness for so many years. I’m afraid that there is no turning back for her right now, is there?”

Faced with Lei Chenghu who had everything under his control, Li Yao blinked quickly and said, “Well, there is no rush to contact Her Grace. Can I go to release all the political criminals together with General Lei?"

Lei Chenghu was stunned again. Staring at Li Yao, he was even more confused about what kind of person Li Yao was and why on earth Queen Li Linghai sent such a guy for such a critical mission. He asked, "Are you not afraid that your master will lose her patience?"

"First of all, as I said, the queen is not my master. I am absolutely free and only loyal to the true path of immortality and the Imperium of True Human Beings."

Li Yao replied solemnly, "Secondly, before I came, Her Grace reminded me repetitively that I must ensure General Lei's safety. It is my top mission.

"Also, General Lei's charisma and infinite dominance that you demonstrated just now have greatly awed me. I can't admire and worship General Lei more right now.

"The Godly Might Prison is still in chaos. What if there are spies of the Covenant Alliance hiding among the political criminals? So, I have to stay by General Lei's side and protect General Lei with my own life if necessary!

"As for the queen, it doesn't matter to keep her waiting for a while longer. After all, the Godly Might Prison and the Godly Might Prison are both settled right now. General Lei's safety is what matters most right now!"

Lei Chenghu: "You are just hoping to follow me and make friends with the political criminals who will very likely rise again, aren't you?"

Li Yao: "That's your words. Not mine."

…

Eventually, Lei Chenghu failed to turn Li Yao down.

After all, with Li Yao’s capabilities, if he glued himself to Lei Chenghu’s butt like a sticker, few people could tear him off.

Besides, Lei Chenghu did not want to end on bad terms with Li Linghai. Despite the tough stance he had demonstrated, the two of them were truly in need of each other.

Therefore, the first light of hope that the political criminals, who had once controlled the critical posts of the Imperium of True Human Beings and were once powerful and influential in the capital but who had fallen from the clouds to the abyss overnight because they pissed off the four Kurfürst families, saw after spending decades in the dark, cold dungeons was exactly made of Li Yao, Lei Chenghu, and Yun Chenghua.

They were naturally no stranger to Lei Chenghu and Yun Chenghua. One of them was the legendary “God of War”, and the other was the warden of the Godly Might Prison.

Li Yao, however, left a particularly deep impression on them.

After he reached every prison cell, Li Yao would unleash the overwhelming aura of the Divinity Transformation Stage, enshrouding himself in the dazzlingly gold halo and the soul-stirring sound effects, making him look so awesome that he looked like the reincarnation of a god.

Before Yun Chenghua opened the gate, Li Yao would move forward and tear apart the bars, locks, and all the defense rune arrays with his hands that were filled with spiritual energy.

“In the name of the new Imperium, you are now reborn. I, ‘Vulture Li Yao’, will definitely ensure your safety with my life. Rest assured!”

Chapter 2229 - I’ve Done So Much!

His determined eyes, his tranquil face, his majestic body figure that seemed to be made of iron, and his brilliant and glamorous crystal suit illuminated by the flames of spiritual energy constituted the image of a “perfect Immortal Cultivator” in the eyes of the political criminals who hadn’t seen daylight for a long time.

Aside from the ecstasy, many of them were communicating with each other with their confused eyes.

Who is this ‘Vulture Li Yao’? Why have I never heard of him before?

Their surprise was understandable. In the five categories of the trainers, “battle-type” was always the kind with the highest danger and casualty rate. Also, it showed the distinctive feature of “easy to begin but difficult to rise”.

In the cruel, hellish battlefields, with enough luck and resources, it was not very difficult for ordinary soldiers to advance into the Refinement Stage and the Building Foundation Stage.

However, after one reached the Core Formation Stage and tried to advance into the Nascent Soul Stage or even higher, each step would be steeper than the last.

As their training approached the critical checkpoints, their combat abilities might be affected because of their anxiety and impatience after they failed to make a breakthrough after a long time.

Also, as the vanguards or the commanders who were of the highest level in a battlefield, they would be the targets of the enemy’s barrage. All the cannons and sniper rifles’ top priority was the trainers above the peak of the Core Formation Stage.

Therefore, most of the trainers halted after they reached the peak of the Core Formation Stage or the Nascent Soul Stage. If they wanted to make breakthroughs by force, they would either perish on the battlefield or be so heavily wounded that they could never expect any advancement in the future.

Besides, compared to the other fields such as administration, research, and culture, battle-type trainers were more susceptible to their “longevity”.

A research-type Immortal Cultivator could maintain a sharp and agile mind even if they were more than three hundred years old, and they could make up for their drop of computational ability with their abundant experience.

The battle-type Immortal Cultivators, in comparison, would plummet straightforwardly after they passed their prime years. The hidden injuries on their physical bodies and deep inside their souls that were accumulated in the past two to three hundred years would all burst out. Even the best elixirs would be of little help. It was not unusual that some fell from the Divinity Transformation Stage to the Nascent Soul Stage or from the Nascent Soul Stage to the Core Formation Stage.

The elders in the Council of Elders were good examples. They were all famous experts in the Divinity Transformation

Stage in name, and they once offered destructive performances one to two hundred years ago. But they were now old and weary and hadn’t blown out the maximal force of the Divinity Transformation Stage for decades. It appeared that their souls and their flesh and blood would be burnt out as long as they carried out the strength of the Divinity Transformation Stage for one second, turning them into dry corpses. Could such elders of the Imperium still be referred to as “experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage”?

The natural law to age and die was the cruelest and fairest restriction on all human beings.

Considering all the factors, after a thousand years of bloody battles, few battle-type Divinity Transformation Stage experts in their prime years could be found in the Imperium of True Human Beings.

Every such expert was an influential, strategic weapon that everybody in the entire Imperium knew.

But Li Yao seemed so young and so unfamiliar. He also followed behind the “God of War” closely while preaching for the “new Imperium”…

The big shots of the old days, who were sophisticated foxes, immediately drew a conclusion in their hearts. This “Vulture Li Yao” must be an important warrior of the “new Imperium” and Lei Chenghu’s trusted subordinate!

Little did they know that an extremely evil voice was alluring Li Yao in his heart. “Hey, this is perhaps the last opportunity for you to kill Lei Chenghu. If he returns to his own Astounding Thunder Fleet, he will be a tiger that returns to the mountain he belongs to. There will be few chances to kill him when he is in his army in the future. Are you sure you are not going to kill him?”

Naturally, it was the mental devil instigating him again.

Thinking quickly, Li Yao said in a low voice in his head, “Honestly, how good do you think I am compared to Lei Chenghu?”

“About that…”

The mental devil said, “To be honest, ‘God of War’ Lei Chenghu’s personal charisma, abilities of strategic deception, and ruthlessness are all state-of-the-art. He could abandon his own son without any hesitation, knock down a flagship of the Imperium to which he belonged without blinking once, and even took a great gamble, pretending that he was confident of his final victory when he clearly did not have any trump card in his hands. Tsk, tsk, tsk. That is really a man of the time and the out-and-out best expert of the civilization of mankind!

“Compared to him, both your silver tongue and your petty cleverness are just the lousiest, despicable tricks…”

“Hey, should a mental devil be so honest?”

Li Yao paused for a moment and said, “Of course, I also admit that there is a slight gap between me and Lei Chenghu right now. Speaking of which, how good do you think I am compared with Queen Li Linghai?”

“Well…”

The mental devil thought for a moment and said, “Li Linghai seems a little bit paranoid and considers things in a too simple way. She also acts like a gambler who will wager all her chips at any moment. But they are not necessarily her real personality but just a protective camouflage that she has faked.

“Besides, leaving all the scheming aside, she has inherited the legacies of the ‘Supreme Emperor’, the strongest expert of all time in the history of mankind, and she boasts the terrifying abilities of slaying an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage in one attack. It is very likely that she has advanced into the legendary ‘Divinity Branching Stage’. So, we are absolutely no match for her!”

“Yes. Both Li Linghai and Lei Chenghu are behemoths that we can barely compete with right now.”

With a cunning smile, Li Yao said, “That is why I cannot kill Lei Chenghu but have to achieve a subtle balance between Lei Chenghu and Li Linghai. Only if the two monsters are wary of each other will the stability at the center of the cosmos be ensured after the collapse of the four Kurfürst families!

“Besides, didn’t you and I have a feeling that something was wrong with Li Linghai, and that she has been keeping something of paramount importance from us? We failed to figure out what it is because of the lack of help.

“You have seen what kind of person Lei Chenghu is with your own eyes. If Li Linghai does have a scheme and is preparing to trick him, she will certainly regret it. What we failed to find out will definitely be dug out by Lei Chenghu!

“How would I bear to kill him right now?”

The mental devil sniffed. “That is a good plan. But be careful not to screw it up. Neither Li Linghai nor Lei Chenghu is readily manipulatable by us. Don’t be burnt in the fire that you started!”

“It won’t be a big deal even if I screw it up. I’ve already screwed it up countless times before.”

Li Yao sniffed and said, “Judging from the Covenant Alliance’s operation this time, it is not hard to tell that they are truly very vigilant of Lei Chenghu and want to eliminate him no matter what. But here comes the question. If the Covenant Alliance has really been crushed and forced to run back to their nest, why did they try so hard to kill Lei Chenghu? After all, the next great battle probably won’t take place until decades later!

“So, there can only be one truth. We already made the correct guess when we were still in the federation. The Covenant Alliance never failed as it appeared to be, and they are still planning fatal attacks in secret. Lei Chenghu, on the other hand, is the greatest obstacle in the eyes of the Covenant Alliance!

“The worst future will be that the army of the Covenant Alliance breaks the defense of the Imperium’s army, rage at the center of the cosmos, and even release the Pangu Clan that has been sealed for hundreds of thousands of years. I can’t get a worse result than that however I screw it up, can I?”

The mental devil fell silent and sank into the deepest part of Li Yao’s brain again.

In less than an hour, all the political criminals that were trialed in public, in secret, or not tried at all were set free.

Except for the few “lucky survivors”, all the captives of the Covenant Alliance were slaughtered by the criminals.

The search on the ground had a result too. Dongfang Lei was indeed not killed. With the unbelievably tough vitality, he fell eighty kilometers east to the Godly Might Prison with the help of a ragged, stealth escape capsule, catching his last breath in the snowy world.

Naturally, he was as dead as anyone could be right now, without even the slightest remaining soul left.

As the four reactors in the first energy base were restored, every part of the Godly Might Prison was bathed in the light again, and the defense rune arrays unleashed dazzling electric arcs, recovering the fundamental defense abilities.

At this moment, Lei Chenghu had controlled every main “vein” and “nerve” in the Godly Might Prison. He was able to greet “Li Linghai” as “master of the Godly Might Prison”.

Li Linghai, naturally, did not expect such drastic changes in the Godly Might Prison in only half an hour.

Although the Deep Sea Fleet did not need to fight the Godly Might Fleet anymore, which was now under the control of Lei Chenghu, the queen of the Imperium frowned so hard that her face was like a stagnant lake.

The very first question she asked after she reached out to Li Yao was exactly, “What has happened?”

“What has happened?”

Li Yao bulged his eyes and bellowed, “I would like to know what has happened too! Didn’t you say that everything and every procedure was under control and nothing could possibly go wrong? Then, I would like to ask you—Where exactly did so many spies of the Covenant Alliance come from?

“Do you have any idea how awkward and dangerous the situation was for me? Hardly had I snuck into the Godly Might Prison when the alarms of the Godly Might Prison were already ringing. The prisoners and the war captives all emerged like lunatics!

“I only managed to rescue General Lei Chenghu at the risk of my life, nearly burning my own soul up. Later, during the emergency, I had to take corresponding measures with the best of my bravery and wisdom when I dealt with the forces in and out of the Godly Might Prison. In the end, I finally reversed the situation on my own and accomplished my mission perfectly!

“I am not saying that I am the only one to be credited, and I am certainly not asking for rewards, but the flawed, dangerous operation has truly consumed my decades of Cultivation. I am now terribly exhausted. There’s no telling how many elixirs from the mausoleum of the Supreme Emperor are needed to fill it back.

“Right now, General Lei is inside the Godly Might Prison, unwilling to get out. I am also on the verge of collapse because of exhaustion too, and I cannot force him out of the place. This is about the situation right now!”

Chapter 2230 - The Enemies in the Council of Elders!

2230 The Enemies in the Council of Elders!

Li Linghai could turn a blind eye to Li Yao's pestering, but she could not ignore the Godly Might Prison that had been armed to the teeth as well as the Godly Might Fleet that was completely undamaged apart from the flagship. Eventually, she still "demeaned" herself and came to meet Lei Chenghu in the Godly Might Prison in person.

The secret meeting room in the Godly Might Prison was scanned inside and outside by Li Yao. At this moment, Li Yao, Li Linghai, and Lei Chenghu were the only three present.

A meeting that could possibly change the course of the Imperium of True Human Beings or even the civilization of mankind at the center of the cosmos began in the underground secret chamber that was somewhat gloomy.

Li Yao blocked the door like an iron tower, but his eyes were glittering, with the left one staring at the ambitious white-haired witch and the right one focusing on the ruthless one-armed general. The competition of two top Immortal Cultivators was too spectacular a show to be missed out!

"Lei Chenghu is privileged to meet Your Grace!"

The wounds all over Lei Chenghu’s body had long been recovered under the crazy proliferation of cells. Now that he had put on another military uniform that was clean and neat, he appeared even more majestic. His left sleeve, empty, waved by his side, while he smashed his chest with his right fist and bowed in respect at Li Linghai.

“Marquis Liaohai, you have been heavily wounded, and such courtesy is unnecessary. Please stand straight.”

Naturally, the formalities couldn’t be saved. Li Linghai paused for a moment and said earnestly, “In the capital, I, as the queen of the Imperium, will soon be announced to have unfortunately been killed in an assassination by lethal poison. In the Godly Might Prison, the God of War and Marquis Liaohai that His Majesty knighted in person, is likely to die an uncanny death exactly like I did. The two of them share rather similar experiences. The universe is a large place, but there is no room for us to stay in. Why do we have to keep the manners of ‘queen’ or ‘Marquis Liaohai’?

“In the eyes of countless powerful lords and elders, the two of us are people who should not live in this world anymore. We are nonexistent ghosts. In that case, why don’t we drop all the burdens and vanities and just call each other ‘fellow Cultivators’ in order to exchange what is on our minds straightforwardly?”

Lei Chenghu smiled and said, “As you wish, Fellow Cultivator Li!”

Li Linghai’s eyes shone as she said, “Fellow Cultivator Lei, you truly deserved to be the greatest general of the Imperium. To be honest, I’ve been admiring Fellow Cultivator Lei for your feats for a long time. If I had not been trapped inside the royal palace living a life that I could not control, I really would’ve fought side by side with Fellow Cultivator Li at the fiercest frontline as a common soldier of the Imperium to defend the glory of the Imperium and accomplish what Blackstar the Great failed to accomplish a thousand years ago.”

“You haven’t given yourself enough credit, have you, Fellow Cultivator Li? Just because one is in the royal palace does not mean that they cannot accomplish something great.”

Lei Chenghu sneered, “Take Fellow Cultivator Li for example. You never showed anything extraordinary, and everybody simply regarded you as a common queen of the Imperium. They thought that you did not surpass the limits of the queens in the past even if you had some ambitions. Little did they know that you established such an enormous fleet in secret and even raised… such a rarely-seen and unconventional genius like ‘Vulture Li Yao’!

“I wonder, what is your purpose exactly now that you have made such great achievements?”

“The Imperium is now at doomsday. Wolves and jackals have occupied the court, and the Council of Elders is completely corrupted. All the Sectors mind their own business. The common folk’s life is more than miserable. The young people and the low-level Immortal Cultivators have nowhere to vent their complaints and wrath too.”

Her eyes burning, Li Linghai said solemnly, “Also, His Majesty has fallen to the hands of the scoundrels too, who have secretly kidnapped and hidden him away. They even captured and tried to kill the queen of the Imperium and the admiral of the Imperium freely!

“We must not forget the undercurrents in the frontline. The Covenant Alliance is not necessarily ready to admit their defeat. It is possible that they will launch a desperate attempt at the last moment!

“However, the rigid, corrupted elders and nobles, who are still dwelling in the fantasy that the Imperium is invincible, do not have the slightest idea about the upcoming threat!

“At such a moment of life and death, only the Immortal Cultivators with clear heads such as you and me are the last saviors of the Imperium and the civilization of mankind!

“Yes. We are saviors. I have spent almost a hundred years and wagered everything that I have earned on the rescue of Fellow Cultivator Lei, at the risk of being cursed as a ‘traitor’, just in order to save the Imperium and the civilization of mankind!”

Lei Chenghu listened emotionlessly. There was no telling what he thought of Li Linghai’s slightly hollow answer. His eyes only rolled when Li Linghai mentioned the menace of the Covenant Alliance. He slightly nodded his head and said, “The general ideas of the reformists have been elaborated on by Fellow Cultivator Vulture Li Yao in great passion and details just now. In fact, he talked for almost half an hour, giving me quite a profound understanding of what it is.

“However, I always regard myself as the purest soldier. Unless I absolutely do not have a choice, I would rather not be involved in the politics in the capital.

“But Fellow Cultivator Li is right about one thing.

“I can guarantee with my life that the Covenant Alliance must be planning certain thunderous operations in secret, which, once activated, will likely sweep across the entire sea of stars!

“The only reason why I volunteered to be captured was to get myself an opportunity to convince the lords in the Council of Elders in the capital!”

“Those guys in the Council of Elders won’t listen to you.”

Li Linghai said coldly, “The only thing they can hear, besides the sound of coins, is the roars of bullets and cannons!”

Lei Chenghu sighed and went on, “In order to completely shatter the Covenant Alliance’s plan, the expedition army must not be diminished. Instead, it must be intensified and regularized to be regrouped into a ‘national defense army’ that is stronger, with the investment of twice as many resources, for not one year but a decade or even a century, until the Imperium or the Covenant Alliance collapses.

“If the goal is too far-fetched right now, the base of the expedition army must be kept at least. Its independence and control must be improved too, partly to get the base out of the boundary of the capital so that it can react to the emergencies in the frontline quickly, and partly to intensify the base’s control over the fleets in the frontline so that all the troops will be united like the limbs on one body.

“If that can be achieved, and an experienced general who is absolutely loyal to the Imperium is appointed as the commander of the base of the expedition army, I believe that there will still be a 30% chance to resist the Covenant Alliance’s thunderous attack on the premise of the current resource supplies!

“I am a soldier who does not know politics. But from the military point of view, everything that can be done must be done if the Imperium is to be saved!”

“I can’t agree with you more, Fellow Cultivator Li!”

Li Linghai’s white hair began to move although there was no wind. She declared confidently, “In the great ideas of the reformists, a powerful army of the Imperium is the key. In the entire Imperium, Fellow Cultivator Lei is the only one capable and qualified to lead such an army.

“Therefore, I second to Fellow Cultivator Lei’s opinion that the expedition army must not be diminished but can only be strengthened. Or rather, we should build a sacred ‘national defense army’ based on the current expedition army!

“If I were capable of making a voice in the Council of Elders, I would’ve spoken to the muddleheaded elders and told them that Fellow Cultivator Lei was the best candidate for the commander for the current expedition army and the future national defense army. Fellow Cultivator Lei is the only person who can reverse the situation, save the Imperium, and help us defeat all the enemies!

“It is a shame that we barely have any chance to appear in the Council of Elders in the capital. Even if we shout at the loudest of our voices at the center of the Council of Elders, no elders will ever hear us.”

Li Linghai sighed gloomily and stared at Lei Chenghu with her eyes that were as pale as ice.

Lei Chenghu’s face was utterly peaceful, and there was not the slightest ripple in his eyes. He said nonchalantly, “As I said before, I am a soldier. Unless there is absolutely no choice, I will not be involved in politics.

“But does ‘choiceless’ begin to describe the chaos in the Imperium today?

“It is a soldier’s responsibility to protect the country, both from the enemies outside and the worms inside. As long as they hurt the fundamental interests of the Imperium and the civilization of mankind, they will be the sworn enemies of all soldiers.

“At this moment… The enemies are in the Council of Elders!

“Fellow Cultivator Li, speak now. How are you planning to deal with the stinky zombies in the Council of Elders?”

Although Lei Chenghu was all by himself and even missing one arm, when he bellowed “the enemies are in the Council of Elders”, the shadows of thousands of starships appeared behind him. The auras from the invincible troop were almost simmering the entire chamber unstoppably!

Li Yao secretly compared “Iron Commander” Zhou Hengdao, the model soldier of the federation, with “God of War” Lei Chenghu, and he had to admit that the expert from the center of the cosmos was indeed stronger!

Li Linghai’s hair was dancing crazily in excitement. She shrieked, “First of all, we will escort Fellow Cultivator Lei back to the Astounding Thunder Fleet and try to gather more main-force warships!”

“Give me three days, and I will be able to mobilize 80% of the forces in the Astounding Thunder Fleet and a batch of elites from the brotherly troops in the frontline.”

Lei Chenghu said solemnly, “But it will be useless if we only have troops. Without a vast logistics base, our crystals, fuels, medicines, ammunition, and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures are all restricted by other people. With the current ammunition and fuel, we will run out of supplies after one assault at most. Whatever place we attack, the Council of Elders will not bend easily.

“Besides, the Covenant Alliance is still coveting nearby. It is impossible for me to launch a coup that is destined to fail with all the main forces. It will not be the Imperium’s salvation but acceleration to its destruction!”

Chapter 2231 - Armed Intervention!

2231 Armed Intervention!

“Rest assured, Fellow Cultivator Lei, I never intended to fight a protracted civil war. I want to fix the problem as soon as possible.”

Li Linghai’s narrow and long fingers danced agilely, drawing a glittering 3D light beam between the two of them, which was a map of the vast territory of the Imperium.

Under Li Linghai’s fingers, the map of the Imperium was enlarged, enlarged, and enlarged, until the only thing left at the center was a shining, glamorous planet.

Li Linghai smiled. “When my Deep Sea Fleet, Fellow Cultivator Lei’s Astounding Thunder Fleet, and the additional Godly Might Fleet are combined into the torrents that will revolutionize the Imperium, is it possible for us to march to this place and turn it upside down?”

“This place, the capital?”

Lei Chenghu bulged his eyes and looked at Li Linghai as if she were a lunatic. “Impossible. It’s absolutely impossible!

“First of all, due to the lack of enormous space gates, we cannot jump to the sky of the capital in an organized way. It must be noted that the space near the capital is brimming with automatic defense magical equipment. The autopiloting flying swords and the space torpedoes that can be detonated on their own almost filled all the sailing routes!

“Once our warships jumped to the nearby of the capital in a mess, we will be blown up into a mess even before the elite fleets of the four Kurfürst families show up. It will be barely possible for us to be gathered.

“Secondly, the capital of the Imperium is itself an enormous space fortress. Ever since the collapse of the Black Wind battle line a hundred years ago, possibilities that the Imperium might fight all the way to the capital have already been taken into consideration, and the capital has been strengthened again and again.

“After a hundred years of construction, the capital today has been armed to every alley, and there are countless permanent shelters and warehouses of crystals and magical equipment below the ground! Any battle to attack the capital will become a prolonged war of attrition. But due to the shortage of supplies, we can only afford a quick battle. It is impossible to take the capital down!

“Thirdly, and most importantly, ever since the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance, the scared elders of the Imperium have mobilized tremendous forces to the capital under the name of protecting the emperor. But of course, they are only trying to protect themselves.

“Three times more fleets are gathered in the Imperium today than usual. How can we expect to break in? Considering the capital as the target will be suicide. The soldiers under our command will die in vain, and the last hope of the Imperium will be gone.

“So, if this is the plan of Fellow Cultivator Li’s ‘reformists’, I don’t think that I can agree with it!”

“Please be patient, Fellow Cultivator Lei. There is a slight error in your evidence. The elites of the four Kurfürst families that are gathered in the capital right now are not three times than usual but at least five times. Also, when they hear that ‘Queen Li Linghai’ and ‘God of War Lei Chenghu’ have joined their hands to march to the capital for an ‘armed intervention’ under the banner of the reformists, it is very likely that not five times but ten times more troops will be gathered in the capital when the elders are intimidated, right?”

Li Linghai smiled. “However, even ten times more troops cannot stop us from lunging at the capital to reveal the ugly truths of the lords and the nobles and to awake the numb people with our lives and blood, right?”

Lei Chenghu sniffed. “Is there any point in that? It’s nonsense!”

“It is indeed meaningless. Marching to the capital recklessly for an armed intervention will not be worthwhile even if several elders are killed. Instead, the Astounding Thunder Fleet, the Deep Sea Fleet, and the Godly Might Fleet will all be destroyed. The capital will be blown into a mess. A heavy wound at the heart of the Imperium will likely collapse the reign of the four Kurfürst families, but it will be a lose-lose for us too.”

Li Linghai suddenly changed her voice and said with glittering eyes, “We are all well aware that we will not do such follies as to die together with our enemies, but our enemies do not know that, do they? Both Fellow Lei and I look like desperate gamblers right now. It won’t be surprising at all whatever insane things we do when we just want to take our chances.

“Therefore, the moment they know that we are about to march to the capital for an ‘armed intervention’, the elites of the four Kurfürst families will certainly reinforce the capital and defend the place vehemently!”

Lei Chenghu was slightly dazed. The flames in his eyes immediately burned up the entire chamber. He mumbled, “Yes. The news of the fall of Godly Might Prison won’t be kept a secret for long. In one day at most, the four Kurfürst families will learn that I have escaped and that the reformists have established such enormous forces!

“Marching to the capital for an ‘armed intervention’, on the other hand, seems to be our only option in our desperation!

“In that case…”

“Exactly. Please take a look, Fellow Cultivator Lei.”

Li Linghai reduced the map of the Imperium and pointed at a red area at the edge. “Right now, two-thirds of the elites of the four Kurfürst families are concentrated in the newly-recovered territory of the Imperium, partly to prevent the Covenant Alliance from taking the territory back, and partly, and more importantly, to keep an eye on the new warlords and the smaller nobles, ensuring that they will be at an advantageous position when the cake is divided.

“Those fleets will never be mobilized.

“Then, to strengthen the defense in the capital, they will have to use the one-third elites left in their hometown.

“Once they learn that we are about to march to the capital for an ‘armed intervention’, those elites will definitely reinforce the capital without any delay. Then, wouldn’t the nests of the four Kurfürst families be more weakly defended than ever?

“When the Astounding Thunder Fleet, the Deep Sea Fleet, and the Godly Might Fleet are gathered, even if we cannot conquer the capital, can’t we conquer the nests of the four Kurfürst families?”

Lei Chenghu thought hard for a moment and changed the size of the map of the Imperium now and then, studying the direct fief of the four Kurfürst families wholeheartedly. A moment later, he raised his head and looked at Li Linghai. “The nests of the four Kurfürst families will not be much easier to conquer than the capital. There will be heavy casualties. We cannot deal with four enormous interest groups that have been passed on for a thousand years at the same time.”

“Who says that we are going to deal with four of them? One will be sufficient.”

Combing her dancing hair, Li Linghai said casually, “Or rather, we may not need to conquer any of them. Just like what happened in the Godly Might Prison today, no blood will be shed.”

The flames bursting out of Lei Chenghu’s eyes were almost condensed into magma. He said sincerely, “Why have I never noticed such an extraordinary person as Fellow Cultivator Li before? If you were not in the royal palace but in the frontline, you would’ve made great accomplishments as a pillar that supported the Imperium!”

“It doesn’t matter.”

Li Linghai smiled. “Just like what Fellow Cultivator Lei said just now, it is possible to accomplish something great even if one is in the royal palace, right?”

Lei Chenghu smiled too. He went back to the topic. “Then, where will the operation end? I believe that the Imperium, which is too sick and also threatened by external enemies, is not suitable for a gigantic surgery. As long as we wipe out part of the enemies in the Council of Elders with high-precision attacks and make the remaining elders change their minds so that the base of the expedition army will be kept and intensified, our preliminary purpose will be reached.”

“Yes. The four Kurfürst families are too deeply rooted after all. We cannot wage a war at them at the same time. Therefore, even if our slogan is to Honor the Majesty and Settle the Rebellions, it is inappropriate to decry all of them to be ‘rebellions’.”

Li Linghai said, “We have only three simple purposes.

“Firstly, Dongfang Wang, the current Prime Minister of the Imperium, as well as his cabinet, must resign.

“Secondly, Fellow Cultivator Lei will be appointed as the commander of the expedition army and nominated as an elder of the Imperium. You will also be allowed to regroup the expedition army according to your will.

“Thirdly, His Majesty must return to the royal palace, with the honor and glory that His Majesty deserves!

“As for the future plans, we can discuss them after we have the advantage in the Council of Elders.”

Lei Chenghu’s eyes pierced through the glittering map of the Imperium. Under the illumination of the thousands of stars, they were already too deep to be measured.

“As you wish, Your Grace. I am willing to pledge loyalty to Your Grace and die for the great cause of the reformists!”

Lei Chenghu rose suddenly and performed a textbook “unity etiquette” to Li Linghai. Because of the missing arm, his action was particularly brutal and aggressive. He said, “In half a day, I will clean everything up in the Godly Might Prison and bring away the important persons. Then, I will return to the Third Battle Area in the frontline to summon my fleet.

“Right now, I am still the commander of the Third Battle Area and the highest commander of the Astounding Thunder Fleet. Even if the Council of Elders intends to dismiss me, it will still take some time, which will be enough for me!”

“Thank you for your trouble, General… No, Commander Lei.”

Li Linghai changed her mode of address too. “The Imperium will not forget your contributions. You will become the greatest soldier of the Imperium of True Human Beings in the past thousand years. The safety of me and His Majesty, as well as the future of billions of people, will lie in your hands!

“Right now, the situation in the Third Battle Area is treacherous. The fleets of the four Kurfürst families are monitoring you from nearby. Should they learn the fall of the Godly Might Prison, they might do something outrageous. Do you need my fleet to escort you to go back?”

“That will be unnecessary. The Godly Might Fleet will be enough.”

Lei Chenghu grinned. “I can return to the Third Battle Area with one accurate jump. That is my territory. Nobody can do anything to me!”

“Fine. In that case, I will input all the battle information into the crystal processor. We will contact each other through the super remote confidential communication channels in the future.”

Li Linghai said, as if it were not a big deal, “To ensure the smooth communication between us, please bring a liaison officer with you, Commander Lei. Now that you are already familiar with Vulture Li Yao, and the two of you seem to get along rather well, why don’t you take him with you? Should you run into an accident, he can also protect your safety, right?”

Lei Chenghu frowned hard and stared at Li Yao for a long time.

He did not turn down Li Linghai’s “kindness” but simply nodded his head in acknowledgment.

Chapter 2232 - The Imperial Fire Pearl!

Chapter 2232 The Imperial Fire Pearl!

After the commander of the Imperium and the queen of the Imperium settled their deal, they immediately seized every second to put it into practice.

Although the Godly Might Prison and the Godly Might Fleet had been settled, there were still tremendous things that needed to be taken care of. The identification and scrutiny of the prisoners, the appeasement and negotiations with the political criminals, the control and reorganization of the Godly Might Fleet, and so on. Everything was extremely complicated.

Lei Chenghu had stirred the nerves of thousands of people in the entire Godly Might Prison entirely on his own. It was unquestionable that no second person could have accomplished such a wild gamble.

Even he had to spend tremendous time and energy on dealing with the officers of the Godly Might Fleet in order to completely grab them in his hands.

Li Yao and Li Linghai, on the other hand, were left in the secret room by themselves to plan the operations in the next step.

“You want me to follow General Lei Chenghu? Why?”

Li Yao did not say anything a moment ago, but he frowned and complained right now, “Am I not the personal bodyguard and magical equipment consultant for the queen? Has Your Grace abandoned me?”

“Not exactly…”

Although they had known each other for a month, Li Linghai was still quite unused to Li Yao’s tone that was highly inappropriate for an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage. Having no idea what expression she should wear, she thought for a long time before she finally said, “Your performance in the Godly Might Prison has proved your abilities and your loyalty. That is why the job of ‘liaison officer’, which is of paramount importance, has been given to you.

“A guy as smart as you must’ve guessed that for the so-called ‘liaison officer’, keeping the liaison between the two parties is only your secondary mission, and your top priority is to monitor General Lei Chenghu’s every move from a close distance and ensure that he is truly contributing to the great cause of renewing the Imperium. At the critical moments, you may even have to resort to certain… necessary approaches.”

Li Yao blinked his eyes. “You don’t trust General Lei, Your Grace?”

“No. I trust General Lei very much and believe that he is indeed a pure patriot and an Immortal Cultivator. If he is truly determined to die for the cause of the reformists, I will not go back on my promise either and will support him with all the fellow Cultivators of the reformists to be the commander of the expedition army and the first person of the military of the Imperium in future!

“However…

“Our cause involves too many people and too many aspects after all. It concerns the life and death of the Imperium and even the civilization of mankind and therefore cannot tolerate any error. If General Lei has any anomaly, there will be dire consequences. Billions of people at the center of the cosmos will be killed in miseries. Even you wouldn’t want such a tragedy to happen, would you?

“Therefore, stay by General Lei’s side. If he is loyal to our cause, protect him; if he has other ambitions and schemes, warn him; if his ambitions and schemes pose a threat to the interests of the Imperium and even the civilization of mankind, you know what to do, don’t you?

“As long as we can truly influence the Council of Elders and collapse Dongfang Wang’s cabinet, replacing it with the people inclined to the reformists, your mission will be accomplished successfully, and I will not forget my promise.”

Rolling his eyes, Li Yao asked, “Why me? I’m sure there are better candidates.”

“There are not.”

Li Linghai explained, “General Lei Chenghu’s prestige in the Imperium is simply too high. If such an important mission is entrusted to somebody else, it is possible that they cannot make up their mind to take action at the critical moment. They may even be awed by General Lei’s stature and dominance. But I believe that you will not betray your belief and submit to the most ruthless, hardcore Immortal Cultivator, will you?”

“No, I probably won’t. As a loyal, determined, pure Cultivator, I will never bend my knees to such an evil

Immortal Cultivator as Lei Chenghu!”

Li Yao rubbed his temples, as if he was having a headache. “However, the mission to sneak into the Godly Might Prison and rescue General Lei was too exhausting both for my body and my mind. I’m still feeling dizzy right now and have to take a rest of half a month to be fully recovered. But you are asking me to go to the Astounding Thunder Fleet together with General Lei and kidnap him right around his trusted subordinates when necessary? I’m incapable of that even if I want to! Can I take a rest for a couple of days before I carry out such an onerous… What is this?”

While talking, Li Yao suddenly held his breath.

The room was obviously impenetrable, but the wildest wind was suddenly blowing. In the middle of the wind, rampant flames were echoing, projecting the red shadows of thousands of soldiers on the walls around.

The blowing wind and the flames were all from Li Linghai’s hand.

The queen of the Imperium was holding a crimson pearl the size of a baby’s fist, like the compression of ice and fire.

Although it was just a tiny pearl, thousands of soldiers and the most violent souls seemed to have been stored inside. They were eager to break the seal, return to the human world, and dominate the universe again!

Even Li Yao, who had seen countless primeval treasures in the Ancient Sages Sector and the Kunlun relic, couldn’t help but get mesmerized by the pearl. His soul seemed to have turned into streaks of brightness crawling into the pearl.

“This is… This is…”

Li Yao mumbled to himself in fascination. In the Ancient Sages Sector, the Kunlun relic, or the Hundred Smelting Clan in his uncanny dreams, he had never seen such amazing treasures.

It was a shame that there was a crack the width of a hair on the crimson pearl that contained thousands of soldiers. It zigzagged and crawled all over the pearl.

After Li Linghai slightly inputted some spiritual energy into it, the pearl already broke into halves in a crack, one larger and the other smaller.

Li Yao’s heart seemed to have broken into halves in a crack too, and he couldn’t have felt more sorry.

However, the crimson pearl was different from the regular magical equipment. Even though it had been dissected into two halves, the fractures were still very even and smooth, without any sign of pieces or slivers. Instead, from the fractures, even more erratic colors blossomed, as if two armies had risen and were fighting each other in the clouds.

“This is the ‘Imperial Fire Pearl’, one of the most precious treasures that I have earned from the mausoleum of the Supreme Emperor. It was the magical equipment that the Supreme Emperor carried with him and polished day and night in the old days.”

Li Linghai observed the “Imperial Fire Pearl” in affection for a while, before she finally opened her hand and delivered the pearl to Li Yao’s nose. “After I got the pearl, I looked into many files from ten thousand years ago and finally had a piece of speculation of its origins.

“This object used to be a core of a certain unusual beast, which trained in space and absorbed abundant radiations and magnetic pulses that led to the mutations of a certain special organ inside its body, before it finally crystallized several thousand years later. The core boasted the technique of compressing, purifying, and storing spiritual energy and was a hundred times more powerful than the ‘marrow crystals’ in the natural mother lodes!

“In his early years of training, the Supreme Emperor executed the unusual beast, seized the core, and built it into the Imperial Fire Pearl, which became an important ancillary device in his daily training.

“After he established the Star Ocean Imperium and grasped the unparalleled techniques of the best expert of the civilization of mankind, he embedded the Imperial Fire Pearl as well as some other magical equipment to his crystal suit.

“In the Battle of Empyreal Terminus, the whole world was almost blown up by the Supreme Emperor and the Mad Armageddon. Naturally, the Supreme Emperor’s crystal suit also fell apart. This Imperial Fire Pearl was shattered in two halves and lost deep inside the mausoleum of the Supreme Emperor, until it was discovered by me ten thousand years later.

“Although it was broken into halves, the functions it entailed were not gone. I know that you climbed into the Divinity Transformation Stage not a long time ago and cannot compete with the seasoned experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage yet. But with the help of this ‘Imperial Fire Pearl’, it may be possible for you to consolidate your current level and even reach a higher state!”

“A piece of magical equipment personally used by the Supreme Emperor!”

Li Yao swallowed hard and found it hard to believe his eyes and ears, or Li Linghai’s generosity.

But he certainly would not let such a treasure go. His eyes glowing, he said, “How do I use this magical equipment?”

Li Linghai smiled and said, “Hold the Imperial Fire Pearl and input spiritual energy into it. You will naturally find out.”

Li Yao considered for a moment, only to come up with no reason why Li Linghai would trick and kill him right now. Taking a deep breath, he took over the Imperial Fire Pearl with both hands and held it in his palms, before he closed his eyes and sent a stream of spiritual energy into the pearl.

BOOM!

A gigantic explosion echoed deep inside his brain. The secret chamber, the Godly Might Prison, and even the entire planet seemed to have been shattered. Li Yao found himself in the middle of the space, watching a glittering, gold army raging across the universe unstoppably!

There was also a gold figure whose brilliance even eclipsed thousands of stars leading the charge while waving a longsword that could stop a galaxy from spinning!

The infinite dominance, which was so dense that it was almost condensed into glittering dust, filled Li Yao’s mouth, nose, ears, eyes, and even every cell inside his internal organs. He almost couldn’t hold back the urge of roaring.

Thoughts that felt like tsunamis were flowing from the Imperial Fire Pearl to his brain too, giving him the weird feeling that he was the sovereign of the entire universe!

“This is thrilling!”

Li Yao moaned and struggled to let go of it. The Imperial Fire Pearl floated three inches away from his palm, but there was a red spot at the center of his palm because of the scorching power of the Imperial Fire Pearl!

He waved his hands casually, but the feeling that all the stars in the entire universe belonged to him was still haunting his fingers and did not disperse until a long time later.

Li Yao breathed heavily. “What kind of power is this? This is too strong and terrifying!”

“The soul mark that the Supreme Emperor left behind, of course!”

Li Linghai did not expect that Li Yao would get rid of the influences of the Imperial Fire Pearl so quickly. She was slightly dazed for a moment but soon resumed calmness. She said casually, “The Imperial Fire Pearl contained a spiritual energy a hundred times more powerful than the normal marrow crystals did in the first place, and it followed the Supreme Emperor for hundreds of years. Even though it was never intentionally baptized, it still absorbed the infinite dominance of the Supreme Emperor after the long company, which equaled his soul mark!

“As the saying goes, he who gets in contact with vermilion will become red. Use the Imperial Fire Pearl to help with your training and transfer the Supreme Emperor’s soul mark to your body to stimulate the flesh, the nerves, and even the soul. Isn’t it the most rapid and the most dominating method of training in the entire universe?”

Chapter 2233 - The Weird Queen

2233 The Weird Queen

Li Yao chewed on Li Linghai’s words and looked at the white-haired witch’s glittering eyes, feeling that they were like two holes on the infinite ice leading to somewhere deep and mysterious. He couldn’t help but sense that something was not right.

Training with the soul mark of the experts was not an unusual technique.

In his younger years, Li Yao had received the transplantation of the spiritual seed in the Star Glory Federation, where a Nascent Soul Stage expert would melt the soul, strength, and a lifetime of experiences into a spiritual seed before instilling it into the brain of a junior. It was a secret technique for the most rapid growth.

It was exactly because of the secret technique of “transplantation of spiritual seed” that Li Yao’s combat ability was strengthened instantly, and he survived the cruel battles on Boneyard.

It was needless to say that training with such secret techniques was highly dangerous. One might be badly hurt with one moment of carelessness. Therefore, even in the Star Glory Federation, it had to be done under the thorough protection of the experts.

The legendary soul mark of the Supreme Emperor was even more of a dominating and majestic being that no common trainers could bear easily.

However, Li Yao had advanced into the Divinity Transformation Stage, and he was a refiner adept at all kinds of magical equipment himself. He also had the memories from Earth deep inside his brain, as well as the weird creature that was the mental devil to share his pressure. Therefore, he was not concerned about the side effects of the Imperial Fire Pearl.

He somehow felt that Li Linghai's peculiarity was not aimed at him.

That made it even more strange.

Thinking quickly, Li Yao simply held the Imperial Fire Pearl in his palm and smiled. "Your Grace, you are too generous. I almost feel that I don't deserve such a treasure!"

"Don't be happy too soon. There is one condition."

Indescribable brilliance flowed out of Li Linghai's eyes that looked like frozen springs, mixed with both ruthlessness and a hint of… embarrassment. She gnashed her teeth and said, "Bring Li Jialing with you in the operation. Since this Imperial Fire Pearl has been divided into two pieces, one large and the other small, you may have the large one for your own training, which should be able to help you improve at least one minor level very soon, and you will give the small one to Li Jialing and supervise him while he absorbs the enormous strength contained inside.

"You should've sensed the overwhelming and aggressive spiritual energy stored inside the Imperial Fire Pearl. With Li Jialing's Cultivation right now, it is very possible that he will be badly wounded if he were to train recklessly. His mind may even be affected by the power of the Imperial Fire Pearl. But if he is protected by a great expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage like you, it will definitely be much safer.”

“That explains a lot!”

Li Yao was greatly enlightened. Li Linghai had the feelings of a mother after all. She offered such a piece of ultimate training magical equipment because she was considering it for her own son.

So, he simply said with a smile, “Why don’t you give it to Li Jialing in person and even watch over him yourself so that he will know that you care for him?”

Li Linghai was silent for a moment. Her lips trembled nervously, and her eyes were even deeper than before. Still, complicated brilliance beamed out of the abyss as she said coldly, “Cut the nonsense. Are you willing to do it or not?”

“Yes, of course I am!”

Li Yao was more or less puzzled why Li Linghai changed her mind so quickly and was pushing himself and Li Jialing far away when she obviously planned to keep the two of them by her side in the beginning.

However, on second thought, he did not see many harms in the arrangement, so he simply nodded quickly.

Holding the Imperial Fire Pearl in his hand and putting the two pieces together flawlessly, Li Yao observed the magical equipment carefully for a moment, even more impressed by the marvelousness of the treasure.

Then, Li Yao thought of another critical problem. “Your Grace, since the mausoleum of the Supreme Emperor is hidden in the Empyreal Transcendence Sector, and it contains all kinds of ultimate treasures, why don’t we develop it on a large scale to arm the reformists? Wouldn’t it significantly increase the odds of our success?”

“It will be developed on a large scale, but not now.”

Solemnly, Li Linghai said, “To this moment, the secrets of the mausoleum are limited to you, me, and Li Jialing. In the past decades, I always explored the mausoleum of the Supreme Emperor in secret on my own when I was free. Even if I collected almost a hundred Cosmos Rings through all the trouble, I could only bring part of the treasures out with me.

“Before, I was still too weak. If I recruited people and developed it on a large scale, should the four Kurfürst families discover it, all my endeavors would’ve been with their help.

“Besides, to reach the core at the deepest part of the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum and to dig out the enormous starships and massive magical equipment of the Star Ocean Imperium, I am still short of half of the most critical key.

“Right now, we are already strong enough. After we defeat the Dongfang family, the most powerful one of the four Kurfürst families, and we take our seats in the Council of Elders, we will naturally teleport the entire Deep Sea Fleet to the mausoleum of the Supreme Emperor to build the strongest fleet in the entire universe with the legacies and magical equipment there!

“Hehe. Never would the old guys in the Council of Elders have thought that we had such trump cards, would they?

“On the other hand, it will also be our greatest leverage to resist the Alliance of the Holy Covenant!

“Naturally, your role in the plan is crucial because you have the other half of the sky. Just like what I said, as long as you are loyal to me, I will not forget our promise to each other, and I will share the secrets of the mausoleum of the Supreme Emperor with you!

“Right, speaking of which, I think you can find some classics and files regarding the mausoleum of the Supreme Emperor and study them first. For thousands of years, from the Star Ocean Republic to the Imperium of True Human Beings, countless historians, archaeologists, and adventurers have been trying to locate the mausoleum of the Supreme Emperor. Countless exploration squads spent their entire lives searching for it, only to find nothing in the end. They have left countless notes, journals, and adventure files, in which certain very interesting knowledge was recorded, including some ridiculous tales. Try to study them!

“Remember, it is very important. Do as I said, or you will regret it.”

Li Linghai looked at Li Yao thoughtfully again and took a deep breath, as if something was left unsaid.

But she did not say it out in the end.

Before Li Yao figured out the meaning between her lines, she had already patted Li Yao’s shoulder and left the Godly Might Prison for her own Deep Sea Fleet to further planning for the reformists.

Li Yao was left alone in the secret chamber in astonishment.

“This is… so weird!”

Li Yao opened his hands again and released a stream of feeble spiritual energy, allowing the Imperial Fire Pearl to float and revolve above his hand like a tiny sun.

Even the most insignificant spiritual energy was enough to raise a tsunami inside the Imperial Fire Pearl with the sounds of galloping troops in Li Yao's ears.

Li Yao mumbled, "Hey, do you feel that the queen is rather weird today? There is something different about her, as if she has some sort of scheme."

Blood streaks flowed out of Li Yao's left eye, condensing into a tiny, red Li Yao, which dashed to the Imperial Fire Pearl in a hurry, only to be shrieking hard as it was burned by the scorching air around the Imperial Fire Pearl. Circling it for three rounds and still unable to find a flaw to sneak in, it could only drool at the Imperial Fire Pearl greedily.

"It is not strange that the queen has a scheme."

The mental devil wiped its drool while it sniffed. "What is weird is that the queen acted like 'you'd better be wary of me because I have a scheme'. That is quite uncanny!"

"Yes. That is exactly the feeling. Her behavior today was too unusual."

Li Yao focused his eyes on the Imperial Fire Pearl. "I thought that she would just offer me some common Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures to appease me. But as it turned out, she gave me such an ultimate treasure of the ultimate treasures. What exactly is her purpose? Is there something wrong with the Imperial Fire Pearl?

"Is it possible that part of the Supreme Emperor's personalities will be absorbed if I train with the soul mark of the legendary Supreme Emperor, to the point that I will become the Supreme Emperor? Is this ‘possession’ of a different form?”

Li Yao was greatly alarmed.

“Well, I think you are overthinking. Who is the Supreme Emperor? Only the greatest hero of mankind of all time. He is an upright, chivalrous, generous, benevolent, sympathetic, and flawless man who was worshipped by countless people.”

The mental devil said solemnly, “Just rest assured. It is absolutely, absolutely, absolutely impossible for you to become the Supreme Emperor however you train yourself.”

“Is that so?”

Li Yao was more or less relieved. Then he realized that it did not sound right. “What are you implying?”

“Nothing. I am just saying that, since this Imperial Fire Pearl was just a piece of magical equipment that the Supreme Emperor carried personally, it could’ve only stored 1% of his strength even if it was polished by him day and night, right?”

The mental devil said, “Even if it is entirely swallowed, it will not be enough to recreate the Supreme Emperor’s character. On the other hand, the pearl has been broken into halves, and its strength will be even weaker.

“Therefore, it is absolutely impossible to recreate the Supreme Emperor’s character with this pearl. The real Supreme Emperor must still be sleeping on the ‘Gold Throne’. If he can be reborn so easily, he would’ve returned to the human world thousands of years ago!”

Li Yao thought for a moment and realized it did make sense. Scratching his chin, he said, “I seem to be indeed overthinking.”

“Besides—”

The mental devil said solemnly, “From whatever perspective, the Supreme Emperor was a great hero that greatly helped the civilization of mankind. It is not necessarily a bad thing for the Supreme Emperor to return to the chaotic universe today that is dominated by the Covenant Alliance, the extraterrestrial devils, the Immortal Cultivators, and other crazy creatures! It is not a bad deal to trade a Vulture Li Yao for the greatest savior of mankind, right?”

“It seems not.”

Blinking his eyes, Li Yao frowned quickly. “Hey, this is not about if it is a good deal but about what scheme the queen has and why she let us think that she was hesitant, troubled, and embarrassed!

“Do you not feel that she looked at me in a very strange way just now, not the creepy cold way in the past but in a way that was almost some kind of cry for help?”

After saying that, Li Yao was blushing, feeling that he was flattering himself.

Li Linghai, as the queen of the Imperium, boasted the mausoleum of the Supreme Emperor and the Deep Sea Fleet. She could slay a Divinity Transformation Stage expert easily, like butchering a chicken. Did she need to ask for the help of a Mr. Nobody from nowhere like Li Yao?

But thinking again, Li Yao still believed that his instincts were right. Li Linghai intended to tell him something but did not say it out for some reason!

Chapter 2234 - Set Off to Take Everything Back!

“Now that you put it that way, there is indeed something quite weird. It is what the queen said in the end.”

Out of his expectation, the mental devil did not mock Li Yao but simply sat cross-legged on the Imperial Fire Pearl. Bathed in the intense air emanating from the Imperial Fire Pearl, it held its chin and said thoughtfully, “The queen said in the end that, for the convenience of the exploration of the mausoleum of the Supreme Emperor after we seize the highest power, we’d better find and study the classics, notes, and even the ridiculous tales that the ancient adventurers left after their futile searches.

“But it is utterly meaningless!

“Ever since the Supreme Emperor was forced to escape to the Empyreal Transcendence Sector and hide himself on the Gold Throne after he was caught in the weird status of neither alive nor dead in the battle against the Blood God, countless adventurers, grave robbers, archaeologists, and ambitious schemers have been trying to find the mysterious mausoleum, but none of them succeeded.

“The notes and classics left by the ancient adventurers are either the files of the other relics and treasures that they accidentally found on the way to search for the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum, or the exaggerated and fabricated tales. Some may even be the schemes that are carefully made up to allure other people to fall into the traps. All in all, less than 1% of the information is to be believed!

“Whoever goes to search for the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum with the notes, classics, tales, and made-up maps will definitely be doomed for sure!

“Here comes the question. Li Linghai has clearly found the Empyreal Transcendence Sector and discovered many treasures from the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum. She has even absorbed and shipped the treasures from the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum with Cosmos Rings multiple times. That is how she is able to build such a strong Deep Sea Fleet and gather a bunch of ambitious, insubordinate reformists around her.

“In other words, Li Linghai is a ‘living map’ herself. Nobody knows the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum better than she does. Then, why does she want us to study the groundless, ludicrous notes, tales, and legends?”

“Exactly. She also put it in a very strange way. She said that we must do as she said, or we will regret it.”

Li Yao’s mind seemed to have dived into a thick fog, and he was unable to drag it out at all. “What the heck did she mean by that? What is there to be regretful about?

“She clearly has the coordinates of the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum and has traveled between the capital and the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum many times. It shouldn’t be difficult at all. If she wants to take us there, why doesn’t she just do it?

“We also have the half key that can open the central area of the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum. Even if she wants to trap us in a scheme, she should at least wait until the key plays its role and opens a certain gate, right?”

“Perhaps… she does not want to trap us but is only reminding us of something.”

The mental devil thought for a moment and shook its head hard. “No. I still feel that she is indeed malicious. But there is some kindness in her too. All in all, it is very self-contradictory. Perhaps, even she couldn’t tell what her attitude was.”

Li Yao and the mental devil looked at each other in confusion for a long time, unable to figure out what was going on.

The Imperial Fire Pearl, on the other hand, was still emitting brilliance that projected two shivering shadows, one large and the other small, to the wall.

“Then, are we going to use the Imperial Fire Pearl in our training?”

Li Yao mumbled to himself. Before the mental devil chimed in, he already made the decision.

“Of course we will! We are now between the middle level and the high level of the Divinity Transformation Stage at best. Even though we may be among the top tier of the Imperium of True Human Beings under the enhancement of the brand-new crystal suit and the Colossus, the chaos at the center of the cosmos is still full of dangers, and we might get killed at any moment!

“Only by challenging difficulties can we be stronger. Of course, training can be dangerous. But if we cannot take such a risk, we should’ve stayed in the Star Glory Federation comfortably and simply be respected as the founding father of the New Federation!

“Hehe. Even if Li Linghai truly has a great scheme, never would she have imagined that my soul is highly eccentric compared to that of a normal person’s, and even a terrifying ‘Earth’ is hidden inside! Will the powers of the Supreme Emperor that is hidden in the Imperial Fire Pearl and ‘Earth’ raise any amazing sparks when they collide? How I look forward to it!”

Li Yao did not forget that there was a weird gap deep inside his brain that sealed the secrets about Earth.

To this moment, although he had entered the Divinity Transformation Stage, he was still unable to completely unravel the seal and learn the truth of Earth.

If the power of the Imperial Fire Pearl could help him dig out everything about Earth that was hidden deep inside his soul, it would really be a pleasant gift!

“At the very least, we have learned part of the reasons why pop’s lover in the past transformed from an innocent little girl to such a dominating white-haired witch.”

Li Yao said with a smile, “If Li Linghai had been training herself with the magical equipment similar to the ‘Imperial Fire Pearl’ in the past hundred years, absorbing abundant soul marks of the Supreme Emperor into her brain, it would be inevitable that her personality was gradually transformed to that of a dominator under the influences. In that case, everything starts to make sense now, right?

“On second thought, this is not a bad outcome at all.

“The Supreme Emperor was a great hero who considered the happiness of the people to be his responsibility. He was the ancestor of the modern Cultivators. If Li Linghai is truly moved by the soul marks of the Supreme Emperor without her knowing it, it will be possible that she can truly terminate the chaos at the center of the cosmos and make the Imperium of True Human Beings develop in the direction that is more favorable for the ordinary people. That will be great!”

Looking at Li Yao, the mental devil said gloomily, “Do you believe it yourself?”

“Well…”

Li Yao scratched his head hard. “I seem to be a bit wishful. It’s so complicated. But thankfully, we have another magnificent hero that we can count on—the legendary ‘God of War’ Lei Chenghu!

“If Li Linghai does have a scheme, General Lei will definitely resist her to the end unwaveringly, right? All we need to do is to cheer for General Lei and give him help if needed. After all, this is the internal affair of the Imperium of True Human Beings. A foreigner such as myself should not take care of their problems for them, right?

“Let’s go and appreciate how General Lei saves the Imperium from close up!”

…

In half a day, Lei Chenghu had taken care of everything in the Godly Might Prison.

He turned off the oxygen transmission in the first and the third districts at first, putting the prisoners who were worn out after the fierce battles and in dire need of oxygen into sleep and depriving them of their combat ability.

Then, he ordered the guards to enter the field and take away the prisoners who fought particularly gravely. The rest of the prisoners were simply left where they were.

As for the political criminals, after identification, most of the civil officials were transferred to Li Linghai’s Deep Sea Fleet, but part of the talents whom he thought highly of or who were of great help to him stayed with him.

The guards of the Godly Might Prison and the soldiers of the Godly Might Fleet were screened by the same principle that prioritized quality over quantity. In a ratio of 5%, the elites boarded on three starships, and the rest of the personnel and the other starships were all transferred to Li Linghai.

It was not until this moment that Warden Yun Chenghua vaguely realized that Lei Chenghu was all by himself, and that none of the starships descended from the sky so far were his direct subordinates!

However, with everything coming to this point, when he looked at the determination on Lei Chenghu’s face, Yun Chenghua, who had no retreat anymore, certainly would not point it out. Instead, he was even more loyal to Lei Chenghu, allowing the man’s control on the three starships to reach every tube and every cabin.

The news that the Godly Might Prison was conquered had probably been passed to the ears of the four Kurfürsten far away in space. It was time to evacuate.

Hundreds of starships that were filled with crystals and ammunition soared to the sky. The scorching exhaust flames they spurted out left complicated traces on the land that was covered in snow. Among them, three of the largest starships were particularly eye-catching. They tore apart the sky like three shooting stars and swooped to the infinite cosmos.

It was exactly Lei Chenghu's latest combined team.

He was about to take back his fleet with the three starships, and then a whole country after that!

…

On "Flying Tiger", the latest temporary flagship, Lei Chenghu stared at Li Yao, who held his head high with a resolute face like an iron-blooded soldier, as well as Li Jialing who was standing next to Li Yao, coldly.

"It seems that my guess was correct. No matter how you disguise yourself, you can't hide the fact that you are the queen's most trusted subordinate."

Lei Chenghu said casually, "She trusts you so much that even the mission to monitor me has been entrusted to you, 'Vulture Li Yao'!"

"I'm afraid that you are wrong, General Lei. I am not here just to monitor you!"

Li Yao said solemnly, "Besides monitoring you, Her Grace also instructed me that I am to 'give you a hand' when you lose faith and waver in the great cause of the reformists. It appeared to me that the queen wanted me to kidnap you or even threaten to kill you. But don't be nervous, General Lei, because as I said earlier, I have been admiring General Lei since childhood. I grew up listening to your tales, and I always regard you as an idol. So, when the moment that I have to take action comes, I will certainly be unable to take action. Chances are that I will even choose your side!"

Lei Chenghu: “… Excuse me?”

Li Jialing turned around rather rigidly and looked at Li Yao in astonishment.

“Who… are you exactly? What does the queen want by putting a guy like you to my side?”

Lei Chenghu narrowed his eyes, mired in a confusion that rarely happened to him again. He mumbled, “Do you know? I have a natural-born ability or intuition. Even though one is in the Nascent Soul Stage or the Divinity Transformation Stage, I can tell the deepest desires in their heart the moment I meet them, and I know what they want exactly.

“The queen is no exception. I can see clearly her ambitions that are growing like an ever-expanding beast that will swallow the universe.

“But what about you, Vulture Li Yao? I really can’t see through you. I cannot tell what kind of soul is hidden underneath your skin.

“My intuitions tell me that you may be even more dreadful than the queen. Are you?”

Chapter 2235 - I Am a Patriot, Too!

2235 I Am a Patriot, Too!

“You are flattering me, General Lei.”

Without changing his face, Li Yao said, “In fact, I have been training in Her Grace’s secret base in seclusion since childhood, same as this brother ‘Huang Fei’ here. I barely got in touch with anybody from the outside world. So, I am a simple and outspoken man. I have no clandestine secrets in my heart at all, so what can you possibly see in me, General Lei?”

Lei Chenghu’s eyebrows were furrowed so hard that it looked like an unsheathed saber, which was about to slash at Li Yao’s carotid artery brutally.

He clenched his fists, and his fingerbones were cracking. He seemed to be holding back his urges with his astonishing willpower.

“It’s true!”

Li Yao said sincerely, his eyes as pure and clear as a baby’s, “I’m sure that General Lei has noticed that my real age is not very old.”

“… Yes.”

After a long silence, Lei Chenghu nodded his head. “Your cells are very active. The waves that your soul spreads out are full of vigor too. You are not the strongest Divinity Transformation Stage expert I have seen, but you are definitely the youngest one. I assume that aside from secluded training or long-term hibernation, you should be no older than eighty years old, right?

“An expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage no older than eighty. That is truly incredible. What kind of monster are you? And how have you been training yourself?”

“I am not a monster but just a regular person who dedicated all his time to training.”

Li Yao said, “If I had not seized every second and every minute to train myself crazily, without caring about anything happening outside, how could I possibly have broken into the Divinity Transformation Stage in less than a hundred years? You have never heard of my name before, and you cannot find any information about me, right, General Lei? That’s only reasonable, because this is the first time I have ever visited the outside world. So, I may be immature due to my lack of social experience. If I say or do anything wrong, please do forgive me, General Lei.”

“Enough.”

Taking a deep breath, Lei Chenghu said, “Listen up. I don’t care if your bulls*it is true, and I don’t care if your queen has other purposes under the fancy banner of the reformists. For me, I’m doing this for only one reason—to fulfill the responsibility of a soldier!

“Tell me, do you love the Imperium?”

Li Yao raised his chin high and saluted in a textbook unity etiquette. “My love never ends!”

“But I hate the Imperium. I even loathe the Imperium that reeks of stink from every pore right now.”

Lei Chenghu said gloomily, “However, despite all the flaws of the Imperium of True Human Beings, and although it can be too dark and cruel sometimes and become the tools of the scoundrels to meet their selfish desires, the Imperium is always the toughest shield, the sharpest saber, and… the only home for the civilization of mankind.

“The Imperium may have all sorts of problems and too many reasons for people to hate it, but it has concentrated the strength of most human beings in the sea of stars, allowing billions of people to be united against the Covenant Alliance, the extraterrestrial devils, the bizarre alien species, and even the darkness of the universe itself.

“The universe is too vast a place, and the ambitions of mankind are too exuberant. Without the common acceptance of ‘Imperium of True Human Beings’, all the human beings in different Sectors will lose organization in a hundred years and separate into different countries even though there is no aggression from the Covenant Alliance, the extraterrestrial devils, or any alien species. They will raise their own colorful flags and brutalize each other under the most ridiculous excuses.

“By then, no devils or monsters are needed. Human beings themselves are enough to turn the entire universe into a bloody hell, just like the thousands of years after the Star Ocean Imperium’s collapse and before the establishment of the Star Ocean Republic!

“Therefore…

“Despite the many shortcomings of the Imperium today, despite all the spots, ulcers, and cancers growing on its bloated body, and even though I hate its guts in many occasions, I will fulfill my responsibility as a soldier of the Imperium and defend it forever with my flesh, my bones, and my soul!

“Please forward to your queen that if she is worried that I may waver, her concerns will be unnecessary. During the half month when I was under the custody of the four Kurfürst families, I completely thought it through. In the past hundred years, I was too docile, hesitant, and restrained by the honor code of a soldier. I did not try everything I could to save the Imperium.

“But today, I have completely found my own path. Nobody can stop me from saving the Imperium with iron and fire, or even the approaches that are sordid, shameless, and cross all lines!

“If the queen’s ultimate purpose is as upright and bright as she claims, then she will forever have my loyalty. Furthermore, if her personal interests coincide with the overall interests of the Imperium, is it really unacceptable to support her to be the first female emperor in history?

“However, if I discover that her ambitions are so violent that the interests of the Imperium will be jeopardized, our cooperation will immediately fall apart, and I will stop and destroy her whatever the price is. Do you understand?”

Li Yao nodded his head quickly. “Crystal clear!”

“And you, you are the same.”

Lei Chenghu’s eyes were suddenly sharper than ever, as if they were piercing through Li Yao’s body and the cabin walls behind him. “I don’t care whether you are just glib, or you are really ‘simple, immature, and outspoken’, but as long as you sincerely defend the Imperium and the civilization of mankind, I will call you ‘fellow Cultivator’ and fight by your side until the end!

“However…

“If I ever discover that you’ve been keeping other secrets, which harm the interests of the Imperium, trust me, the cannonballs from ten thousand warships will hit your head at the same time, and even if you escape to the edge of the cosmos and to a thousand years later, I will shatter my body and obliterate my soul to find you and kill you!”

Li Yao took a long breath in relief. “That’s great!”

Lei Chenghu frowned. “What is great?”

“I’m totally relieved right now.”

A brilliance that was even more scorching than the sun suddenly beamed out of his clear, big eyes. “Because I can guarantee with my life that I am absolutely a loyal, devoted patriot. I have an infinite love for my country, and I am willing to spill my hot blood, shatter my bones, and burn my bones into ashes, mix the ashes with water, and spray them to my homeland. This is exactly how much I love my country!

“I firmly believe that my country stands for the best interests of mankind. So, I will never turn against my country. However formidable, brutal, and ruthless the enemies I’m faced with are, I will fight them to the end. Even though I have nothing but an appendix left in the end, I will roll a saber with the appendix and keep on fighting!

"So, what General Lei described will never happen. Of course I am relieved!"

When Li Yao was swearing, Lei Chenghu stared at his eyes closely all the time, not disguising that he was looking into Li Yao's heart at all.

Li Yao, on the other hand, also opened his mind frankly for Lei Chenghu to perceive free at will.

Lei Chenghu sensed for a long time. Then, his face was less grave, but the suspicion on it did not disperse after a long time. He mumbled, "Why… is everything you said true and carries no air of fabrication at all?"

"Because it is true in the first place. I am really an unwavering, authentic patriot who has come to this place at great risks out of my infinite passion for my country and the civilization of mankind!"

Li Yao demanded, "I'm the one who should be confused here. Why is General Lei unwilling to believe me when everything I say is true? Is General Lei the only patriot in the vast universe?"

"Forget it…"

Looking at Li Yao's big face that had no loopholes at all, Lei Chenghu, unusually, chose to give up. "In any case, thank you for your help in the Godly Might Prison. If you are a real patriot, I believe we will get along very pleasantly… Fellow Cultivator Li.

"Now, let's return to the Third Battle Area."

Lei Chenghu cleaned his military hat with the newly-installed artificial arm and strode to the bridge with his head held high.

On the bridge were the soldiers who had just been gathered and who were ten times more excited than they were ill at ease.

A middle-aged officer whose entire body was covered in bandages and whose left hand and left foot had been replaced by artificial limbs staggered to Lei Chenghu; his face cramping all the way as if he was suffering excruciating pain. He saluted Lei Chenghu in the most standard way and said, “All the soldiers have been gathered. Please give your instructions, general!”

It was Lei Honghai, Lei Chenghu’s eldest son, who betrayed his father because of the four Kurfürst families’ attraction and who was taught a lesson by his father later. He had fought a path of blood out of the Godly Might Prison!

Lei Chenghu nodded his head emotionlessly. Looking around and detonating the magma in the hearts of the soldiers with the passion in his eyes, he finally walked to the control panel.

Gritting his teeth to hold back the pain when the unsuitable artificial limbs rubbed his wounds, Lei Honghai turned on the public communication channels of the three starships.

“Soldiers of the First Mix Team of the Godly Might Fleet!”

Before the complicated faces on the hundreds of light beams, Lei Chenghu roared reassuringly, “The war that will decide the future of the Imperium and even the civilization of mankind has begun, and you and I are the only main characters in the war!

“Until today, you were a bunch of nobodies. Nobodies. You were the losers in the competitions within your families, the offcut that nobody cared about, the secondary goods who had been kicked to this snowy world to pass the rest of your lives, the ‘nulls’ that did not deserve to leave your names on the family records, and even the prisoners who were destined to rot in the dungeons!

“But after today, your names will resound in the sky and be cheered by billions of people. Your names will be carved in the monuments in the central squares of the capital and every habitable planet!

“The Imperium, the history, and the civilization will not forget what you have done today. They will not forget your sacred and glorious games!

“Everyone onboard, be prepared. Full power output to the space jump units. Target the Third Battle Area. Move forward!”

Chapter 2236 - Lore of Red Nimbus!

2236 Lore of Red Nimbus!

The No. 223 resource planet in the West Wind Sector in the Third Battle Area in the Imperium of True Human Beings had an extremely harsh environment without an atmosphere.

The West Wind Sector was a small world with a diameter of thirty billion kilometers. The star here was still in the adolescent phase soon after birth. As a result, the seven planets around the star were all seriously torn by the drastic changes of gravitational forces and could not form a dense atmosphere. So, there was not a single habitable planet.

The ever-changing gravitational and tectonic movements, as well as the material exchanges when the meteorites hit the planets, endowed quite a few satellites of the West Wind Sector with abundant rare metals and crystals.

The West Wind Sector was the remotest world in the Third Battle Area, and the No. 223 resource planet was the remotest celestial body in the West Wind Sector.

On this planet, there was an abundant reserve of “nickel-fused crystals”, which, once added to the highly-explosive cannonballs, could significantly increase the destructiveness of the cannonballs and even double the radius of destruction.

Therefore, after the Imperium took the West Wind Sector back from the Covenant Alliance, a small fleet was sent to camp on the No. 223 resource planet.

The mission of the fleet was not to defend the No. 223 resource planet in the Covenant Alliance’s possible counterattack. The base of the expedition army did not expect them to be capable of that at all.

They were only responsible for cleaning and reestablishing the mining bases that had been seriously sabotaged by the Covenant Alliance in the extremely harsh, cruel world as “engineering soldiers”.

It was exactly the mission of the ninth fleet of the Third Battle Area of the expedition army of the Imperium, also known as the “Red Nimbus Fleet”.

The Red Nimbus Fleet was a miscellaneous force from a local area. To quote the powerful nobles and lords in the capital, they were just a bunch of mobsters who were formerly bumpkins. It was a typical example of all the miscellaneous troops.

The Red Nimbus Fleet was from the Red Nimbus Sector, a world that was not conquered, or to put it nicely, “did not join the Imperium”, until five hundred years ago at the last phase of the Imperium’s grand expedition.

Because the rulers of the Red Nimbus Sector judiciously chose to surrender when faced with the overwhelming army of the Imperium from the sky, and the Red Nimbus Sector was itself a barren and resourceless world that had nothing at all other than the billions of hungry people, the Imperium generously granted the Red Nimbus Sector a great deal of autonomy, as long as the Red Nimbus Sector submitted taxes and soldiers regularly and attacked the enemy together with the Imperium at the request of His Majesty and the Council of Elders when needed.

Despite the “generosity” and “mercy”, the life for the people and even the Immortal Cultivators of the Red Nimbus Sector in the past five hundred years was still quite difficult.

The taxes of the Imperium were heavier and heavier after each day. Besides the taxes that were directly submitted to the court, the four Kurfürst families also exploited them by setting up fancy regulations including all kinds of “fees” and “special taxes”.

In the meantime, the magical equipment and the industrial products made from the assembly lines of the highly developed industrial worlds at the center of the cosmos flowed into the Red Nimbus Sector like tides, completely destroying the industrial system of the Red Nimbus Sector that was rather underdeveloped but relatively independent. The Red Nimbus Sector was bound to the downmost stream of the interest chain of the noble families, turning into an insignificant component on the assembly line.

Five hundred years ago, in spite of the underdeveloped technologies, the Red Nimbus Sector was still capable of manufacturing crystal suits, armed shuttles, and even starships. It was even possible to produce one or two simplest space jump units.

But today, while the magical equipment that was used in the Red Nimbus Sector was more delicate, glamorous, and powerful on the surface, there was no longer a single crystal suit that was the Red Nimbus Sector’s own brand. All the crystal suit factories of the Red Nimbus Sector had been purchased by the sects under the four Kurfürst families. The “outdated” assembly lines were all shattered and replaced by the brand-new ones, which were “generously donated” by the noble families.

Naturally, the central technologies of the magical equipment assembly lines were controlled in the hands of the noble families at the center of the cosmos and never to be learned by the Red Nimbus Sector.

Furthermore, those magical equipment factories could not produce a whole set of crystal suit anymore but were only able to make 5% of the components. The other 95% of the components were all shipped from the center of the cosmos and assembled on the spot.

As a result, the independent industrial system of the Red Nimbus Sector completely collapsed and lost all the bargaining chips. Their throats were choked by the noble families from the center of the cosmos, and they became the dump of foreign magical equipment as well as the resource supplier.

What was even more pathetic was that the Red Nimbus Sector did not have any resources that were abundant enough to supply the entire Imperium except for manpower.

The price of labor in the place, as a result, was suppressed to an appalling extent. According to the lords from the center of the cosmos, it was exactly because of the cheap labor force in the Red Nimbus Sector and the dutifulness of the workers that the magical equipment factories were established here. Otherwise, the lords could have set up the factories elsewhere or replaced all human workers with spiritual puppets.

They were here to feed the workers as a charity for the sake that they were all the compatriots of the Imperium!

When they were shameless enough to say those words, the cocky lords had completely forgotten that it was exactly because of a hundred years of goods dump and the following sordid tricks that the local sects and magical equipment factories were destroyed and billions of workers reduced to destitution.

However, the lords were not saying that based on nothing but speaking in the bridge of the heavy warships. Even when they landed, they would bring a whole crystal suit legion to “protect the factories”. What could the workers in the Red Nimbus Sector do?

The healthy and strong workers of the Red Nimbus Sector who worked diligently in a magical equipment factory under the banner of the four Kurfürst families, to the point of blood-vomiting and even emphysema, would still be unable to feed their families. They had to ask their wives and daughters to go overseas and “work” in the entertainment locations at the center of the cosmos established by the noble families. Such tragedies were constantly happening in the Red Nimbus Sector in the past hundreds of years.

The noble families from the center of the cosmos had even extended their hands to the agriculture of the Red Nimbus Sector. The “spiritual rice” and “spiritual wheat” that had been genetically refined, as well as the foreign crops, replaced the local rice and wheat of the Red Nimbus Sector.

Because the “spiritual rice” and “spiritual wheat” had a high yield and a good taste, and they contained abundant nutrition and heat, and because the food groups controlled by the four Kurfürst families gave high subsidies so that the workers who earned little money in the factories could only afford the food that they provided, the foreign food groups expanded very fast in the Red Nimbus Sector. In only a hundred years, they had acquired all the food groups large and small in the Red Nimbus Sector and purchased tremendous land from the farmers—exactly like what they did to the magical equipment industrial system of the Red Nimbus Sector.

While the Red Nimbus Sector had nominal “autonomy”, it was part of the Imperium after all and could not set up independent laws to prevent the conquest of the foreigners. It could only watch the foreign food groups dominate the planet.

After most of the land and seeds were controlled by the foreign food groups, they finally revealed their true intentions. Waving the law as their weapon, they secretly changed the genes of the spiritual rice and the spiritual wheat so that all the seeds could only be harvested once but could not be sowed again.

In other words, the Red Nimbus Sector lost all their own seeds of crops. If they wanted to sow them again, they had to purchase from the foreign food groups.

Even if the people of the Red Nimbus Sector wanted to develop their own seeds through secret experiments, they discovered, to their surprise, that the “alien cash crops” that the foreign groups offered them as gifts and purchased the fruits of such crops at a high price actually boasted the function of changing the elements of the soil!

After being polluted by the foreign cash crops for a hundred years, the most fertile land of the Red Nimbus Sector was only suitable for the seeds of the foreign food groups. The other seeds would only wither on a large scale, if they could sprout at all.

In the beginning, when the foreigners purchased the bitter and sour “fruits of the cash crops”, claiming that the wealthy people at the center of the cosmos liked the flavor best, the people of the Red Nimbus Sector laughed hard at the queerness of the wealthy guys.

At this moment, the people of the Red Nimbus Sector finally realized what the “bitter fruits” tasted like.

What the wealthy people at the center of the cosmos tasted was not the juice of the fruits but their blood.

But the epiphany came too late.

From industries to agriculture and to the entire training system, everything had been invaded and destroyed by the foreigners from the center of the cosmos. The whole world had fallen into their hands.

Even if the Sector Master of the Red Nimbus Sector still had the nominal “autonomy”, what was the point?

It was even worse than direct aggression, because a government had to be founded after direct aggression to administrate and secure the local people.

But right now, everything was about economics and done by civil sects. They swallowed all the benefits, and the “obligations” were still in the hands of the dumbfounded Sector Master.

The life and death of the people of the Red Nimbus Sector did not concern the center of the cosmos. It was all because the local Sector Master was too ruthless and tyrannical. When the trouble was too huge, the four Kurfürst families would throw certain leftovers as reliefs. Nothing more.

The ordinary people of the Red Nimbus Sector lived such an insecure, struggling life.

The Immortal Cultivators fared no better than the ordinary people did.

Before, when it still had an independent industrial and agricultural system, the Red Nimbus Sector needed the support of Immortal Cultivators in every field. The position of the local Immortal Cultivators was high, and they were the unquestionable dominators.

But right now, as the foreign capitals and technologies flooded over, the first to be crushed were the dignities and dreams of the local Immortal Cultivators.

Their own sects were squeezed to bankruptcy by foreign corporations, and yet they had to swallow their anger and work for them. But even if they worked dutifully for their entire lives, they would still be the bumpkins in the foreigners’ eyes. They could never enter the management of the great corporations that were almost made of the people who skydived from the center of the cosmos!

It was exactly the destiny of the Immortal Cultivators of the Red Nimbus Sector in the past five hundred years.

Chapter 2237 - Can’t Take It Anymore!

Only on one condition would the noble families from the center of the cosmos be nice to the Immortal Cultivators of the Red Nimbus Sector, which was the time they needed the soldiers, or to put it more frankly, the cannon fodder, of the Red Nimbus Sector.

Not only would they satisfy the local Immortal Cultivators’ demands, but they would also make countless empty promises.

Although the expansion of the Imperium had gradually stopped, it did not mean the end of the war. The edge of the cosmos and the world fragments required exploring, and there were occasional conflicts among the noble families. The battles against the Covenant Alliance never ended either. The occasional skirmishes were even crueler than a massive war, and the honorable descendants of the four Kurfürst families were certainly not born for such meaningless fights.

The lowborn “bumpkin Immortal Cultivators” from the Red Nimbus Sector, as well as hundreds of other small worlds, were destined to lubricate the enormous machines with their flesh and blood now and then.

It couldn’t be helped. Being an Immortal Cultivator was a burdensome mission.

When one became an Immortal Cultivator, the resources they consumed every day would be dozens of times more than an ordinary person would.

Also, after one awakened the spiritual root and mastered spiritual energy, they would not be happy to work in a factory, listen to their bosses in the office, or sweat hard in a farmland under the scorching sun.

Their massive spiritual energy had no place to be devoted to in their barren homeland. They did not even have their turn to exploit the ordinary people, because the ordinary people had long been squeezed up by those from the noble families.

They had no choice but to board on the tanks of the noble families to fight for the unpredictable opportunity in a foreign land, craving to distinguish themselves.

It was a pity that, although the dead bodies of countless Immortal Cultivators of the Red Nimbus Sector were spread out in the unknown parts of the dark universe, and not even a piece of their crystal suits returned to their homeland, no more than one percent of them truly escaped their destiny and became a powerful and dominating high-level Immortal Cultivator.

The invisible glass ceiling had blocked them from the noble families at the center of the cosmos for five hundred years. They had never seen a tiny gap on it at all, much less destroying it!

The Imperium’s counterattack this time was probably the last roar of the Red Nimbus Sector as well as a hundred small worlds.

They truly had enough of the oppression, humiliation, and ubiquitous prejudice. They could not take it anymore!

They yearned for glory, land, infinite resources, and real power!

It was exactly because of such hysterical lust that they established small fleets after gathering all the resources in their barren hometown. Like hungry wolves joining into a pack, they occupied dozens of new worlds unstoppably in one decade.

Of course, they suffered all kinds of injustices in the meantime. For example, they were dispatched to the most dangerous frontline for the most arduous missions, but when the trophies were distributed, they could only wait behind the fleets of the four Kurfürst families.

In short, what they were given was dog food, but what they were asked to do was the job of tigers and lions.

But was any battle in the past five hundred years different? They had long been used to it. As long as there was a slim chance of a comeback, they were willing to do anything!

Besides, there was still General Lei, the “God of War”!

To be able to serve under Lei Chenghu’s command was perhaps the greatest luck of the Immortal Cultivators of the Red Nimbus Sector.

“God of War” Lei Chenghu was the only admiral of the Imperium who was willing to fight side by side with them and launch a suicide attack together.

He was also bold enough to argue with the arrogant guys in the base of the expedition army for their interests.

There were even several times when General Lei stopped the assets that were to be shipped to the fleets of the four

Kurfürst families and supplied them to the miscellaneous troops in priority.

It was General Lei Chenghu who let them know for the first time that the “miscellaneous troops” such as them could also rage unstoppably in the sea of stars.

It was General Lei Chenghu who let them know for the first time that “Imperium” was not just a synonym of exploitation and blackmail but stood for real honor and glory.

It was General Lei Chenghu who let them know for the first time the mission on their shoulders and the sacred significance of the war. They were not just fighting for the survival of the Red Nimbus Sector but also for the billions of people of the Imperium. Otherwise, everybody would be doomed together!

It was exactly under the command of General Lei Chenghu that the Red Nimbus Fleet and dozens of other local armed forces were trained from rookies into seasoned warriors and took over the vast area in the Third Battle Area!

Right now, the dawn of victory was slowly rising; the dawn that was exchanged by countless sacrifices of the hundreds of miscellaneous troops such as the Red Nimbus Fleet. It was time to fulfill the promises of the four Kurfürst families before the war!

The Immortal Cultivators of the Red Nimbus Sector did not hope to occupy a certain Sector in the newly-recovered territory. The Red Nimbus Sector, their nest, was too far away after all, and the consumption of spiritual energy on every space jump was astronomical. Economically speaking, the cost to maintain the close connection of two distant worlds was too high. Any resource development or commercial activity would have been defeated by the inestimable cost.

The Immortal Cultivators of the Red Nimbus Sector knew the situation very well. They only wanted to exchange more than ten years of blood and sacrifices for some permanent favorable policies, or the participation in the great development of the Imperium in the newly-recovered worlds, for example, part of the shares in the development company or the monopolization rights of a certain field. Nothing more.

It was a very fair requirement and not greedy at all. General Lei Chenghu promised them that he would definitely make sure that they got it!

The Immortal Cultivators of the Red Nimbus Sector believed in Lei Chenghu.

Therefore, even though they were cleaning up the messes left by the Covenant Alliance on the scorching resource planet that had magma everywhere, with victims falling into the craters after every step forward, they simply gritted their teeth and persisted for the beautiful life soon to come!

However…

Broken. Their beautiful dreams were all broken!

Deceptions, schemes, another betrayal, another bridge-burning!

The four Kurfürst families did not intend to fulfill their promise before the war at all. Why else would such an uncanny assassination of the Blood Oath Alliance have taken place? Also, soon after the demise of the elder, many members of the “special investigation committee” were sent to the various battle areas in the frontline aggressively, entering deep into every fleet to investigate “radicals in the military”. They were causing quite a fuss!

Their intention was elsewhere. On the surface, they were looking into the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance and capturing the radicals in the military, but in fact, they were trying everything they could to diminish their power and separate them for following procedures. With all kinds of shameless schemes and tricks, they were going to overthrow their prewar promise and kick the local troops back to where they belonged without offering them any reward.

The senses of the Immortal Cultivators were very keen. They detected the scheme behind the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance at the earliest time.

They wanted to discuss with General Lei about what to do, but they received a piece of shocking news—General Lei went missing on the way to the capital. It was very possible that he had been arrested or even secretly trialed by the Council of Elders. Even the Astounding Thunder Fleet might be dissected and swallowed by the four Kurfürst families!

Could there have been a more absurd and shameless thing in the world?

“God of War” Lei Chenghu had done the most exhausting work and made the most contributions in the Imperium’s counterattack. He deserved to be called a pillar that supported the Imperium. But not only did he fail to be given the honor and status that were due, he was about to be secretly trialed by the scoundrels in the rear when the war just got into hiatus!

The Immortal Cultivators of the Red Nimbus Sector were more than angry, but there was little they could do. They had to admit that, faced with the iron walls of the four

Kurfürst families, the “bumpkins” that had no leadership such as them were utterly insignificant. They could only be butchered like pigs!

“General Wei, have you read it carefully? This is the list of the members of the Blood Oath Alliance and the radicals hiding inside the Red Nimbus Fleet. Tsk, tsk, tsk. What happened to your fleet? Why have the radicals infiltrated it so badly?”

On the bridge of the flagship of the Red Nimbus Fleet, the 3D light beam was condensed into a sharp-mouthed, pale-faced short man who had the skeleton badge of the “special investigation committee” on his chest. With disdain and coldness beaming out of his eyes, he said coldly, “The Third Battle Area is the battle area that is most seriously infiltrated by the radicals. All the fleets deployed in the Third Battle Area must examine themselves thoroughly and hand over all the radicals and people who are involved with the Blood Oath Alliance. None of them are to be kept back whatever rank they are in!

“Remember, you have twenty hours to prove your loyalty to the Imperium and the Council of Elders. In twenty hours, I want each and every person on the list to arrive at my starship.

“If any of them is missing, I will be highly suspicious that the radicals have spread to the higher level of the Red Nimbus Fleet. For example… those around you!

“General Lei Chenghu is already receiving the secret investigation by the Council of Elders. I believe that it won’t be long before he shows up in the capital and expresses his support for all the decisions made by the Council of Elders and the special investigation committee. General Wei, make a judicious decision and do not get yourself or other people around you hurt!”

The short man did not even salute before he disappeared on the light beam.

BOOM!

Hardly had he vanished when a deafening explosion echoed from the control panel.

It was because Wei Guanghui, the commander of the Red Nimbus Fleet, gnashed his teeth and smashed the control panel so hard that smoke was popping up from his finger gaps.

“Damn it. A scoundrel in the Core Formation Stage who has come to my fleet on one starship is bold enough to talk to me in such a way!”

Blushing in fury, Wei Guanghui felt that the veins jumping on his temples were about to explode. “If you push me too far, I’ll just cut you apart, mince you into pieces, and—”

At this moment, the leader of the Red Nimbus Sector, in his humiliation, truly had the idea of “slaying the envoy from the special investigation committee and leading the brothers to join the Covenant Alliance”.

Chapter 2238 - Let’s Fight Them!

2238 Let’s Fight Them!

Of course it was not a feasible choice but just an outburst of anger.

However harsh the Imperium treated the miscellaneous troops from the remote worlds, they would never betray them to the Covenant Alliance, because the price of joining the Covenant Alliance was to give up all their feelings and the dominance of their self-will, which would be more miserable than killing them.

Besides, there were only different roles within the Covenant Alliance that did not have a hierarchy. They called each other “brothers” and “sisters” and regarded themselves as “lambs, tools, and missionaries of the gods”. Even the super experts who were capable of turning the world upside down would be equal to the weaklings who could not catch a chicken.

Wei Guanghui was a seasoned expert in the Nascent Soul Stage after all. As the dominator of the Red Nimbus Sector and the highest commander of the Red Nimbus Fleet, he was an ambitious Immortal Cultivator full of intense desires. How could he abandon everything he had for the monotonous life in the Covenant Alliance?

It was impossible for Wei Guanghui to defect, so was it for the heads of other miscellaneous troops and local forces too.

The four Kurfürst families were well aware of that. That was why they were exploited and taken advantage of blatantly, manipulated like dogs and pigs. They really had enough of it…

Wei Guanghui breathed heavily and bulged his bloodshot eyes. Staring at the name list that was still floating in midair, he almost couldn’t wait to snatch it and tear it into pieces.

The name list, however, was only a virtual object painted by mystic rays. It naturally could not be torn into pieces, just like how he knew the schemes of the four Kurfürst families clearly but could do nothing except to watch the noose on his neck getting tighter and tighter.

What else could he do except for holding the fury back?

“Father, are we really going to hand them over? Look at the list. They are all the critical roles in the Red Nimbus Fleet. Many of them are our loyal old brothers who have supported the Wei family for a hundred years. Some of the officers made remarkable contributions in the bloody battles in the past ten years and even rescued the Red Nimbus Fleet multiple times!”

Not everyone could swallow the fury like Wei Guanghui did.

The first to jump out was Wei Yuanjia, his deputy as well as his second son whom he thought most highly of.

Wei Yuanjia was a middle-aged, sophisticated man who never showed his feelings on his face. He also paid attention to his behavior closely and only addressed his father by the military rank. But right now, he was directly calling him “father”, which was obvious of his untamable anger.

Shuddering in fury, Wei Yuanjia pointed at a name on the last line of the list. “Please take a look, Father. Even Ah Xiao’s name is on it!”

On the last line of the list, there was “Wei Tianxiao”, who was Wei Yuanjia’s eldest son and Wei Guanghui’s biological grandson.

“If we are truly going to capture everybody on the list and deliver them to the special investigation committee, all the Immortal Cultivators of the Red Nimbus Sector will be scared, and the Wei family will lose all our support!”

Wei Yuanjia roared, “How are we going to lead the army in the future? How can we explain to the Immortal Cultivators that have supported our family for a hundred years? How can we face our compatriots when we return to our hometown? Who will support such a spineless family to inherit the place of ‘Sector Master’?

“Please think carefully, Father. You must—”

“Enough!”

Wei Guanghui glared at his second son; his eyes as vicious as a viper whose fangs were just cut off. He gnashed his teeth. “Do you think I like to be humiliated? Do you think I did not ‘think carefully’?

“I am an experienced expert in the Nascent Soul Stage, the Sector Master of the Red Nimbus Sector, and the highest commander of the Red Nimbus Fleet! Even ‘God of War’ Lei Chenghu has to show me some respect and call me ‘fellow Cultivator’ when he meets me!

“But today, a little bas*ard in the Core Formation Stage who is still wet behind the ears, because of the support of the four Kurfürst families, is bold enough to barge into my fleet on my carrier, throw this bulls*it list to my face, and demand I hand over the brothers who have fought through life and death with me for decades, as well as their descendants, the future of the Red Nimbus Sector!

“It is needless to say that even my own biological grandson is on the list!

“This is a brutal slap in the face that is blowing off all my teeth. I can’t think of a greater humiliation!

“Do you think I like to hold back my fury? Do you think I enjoy swallowing my teeth with blood? Do you think I am unaware of the consequences of delivering those people?

“But what choice do I have? As my deputy, you know the situation of the Red Nimbus Fleet best. We are now stranded on a barren, highly-unsteady planet that does not even have an atmosphere. Our food, ammunition, and crystals are highly dependent on the supplies from the rear. If the rear is dissatisfied, we wouldn’t have s*it to eat!

“It is needless to say that all the mining bases here had been completely destroyed by the Covenant Alliance before they left. Even if the mining bases are intact and we could excavate abundant minerals, so what? Are they edible? Can we stuff them into our reactors as fuel?

“We will be dead for sure if we do not hand over the people on the list. Before the elites of the four Kurfürst families come at us, we will already be starved!

“It is because the little bas*ard in the Core Formation Stage knew it that he was bold enough to show off before me!”

“But handing over the people on the list will also mean death, a death that is slower and more miserable.”

Wei Yuanjia said solemnly, “Father, as you are fully aware, the so-called ‘incident of the Blood Oath Alliance’ and the name list of the radicals are just the first step of the four Kurfürst families. If we do hand over the people on the list, they will certainly have their ways to interrogate the victims and frame us up with random crimes. What if they accuse us of being sympathetic toward the radicals and even involved in the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance?

“Hehe. The ambitions of the four Kurfürst families can’t be more obvious now. They are simply using the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance as a leverage to offset our achievements so far so that they can kick us back to our hometown when they divide the cake!

“But it is impossible for us to return empty-handedly.

“Father, not that I’m making a reckless proposal, but the situation in the Red Nimbus Sector is already on the verge of collapse now.

“You know that the local finance of the Red Nimbus government already collapsed last year. It is needless to say that so many disabled veterans in the Red Nimbus Fleet need compensation after more than ten years of war. The hominoid soldiers among them are easier to deal with, but most of the Immortal Cultivator officers are supported by sects and groups who are our fundamentals. How can we default on them?

“The Council of Elders promised nicely that the compensations of all the disabled soldiers would be taken care of by the base of the expedition army, but the subsistence has been delayed every single time. The disabled veterans in the rear are all expecting the money to buy food and crystals. As a result, we have to fill in the deficit with the local finance of the Red Nimbus Sector first and even by applying for loans from the major banks at the center of the cosmos, which, of course, are the properties of the noble families too!

“Even so, the deficit, as well as the interest of the loans, is growing larger after every day. We can never expect to pay them off now.

“From the fleet to the rear, from the Immortal Cultivators to the hominoids, everybody is complaining like a crystal bomb that will explode at any moment!

“Right now, the only reason why the soldiers are still listening to the command of the Wei family and why the sects and groups in the rear are still shipping supplies to us incessantly is because they believe our promise and trust that we will earn enough benefits for the Red Nimbus Sector and themselves after the war is over. The shares in the ‘Development Group of the Recovered Territory’ and the big mining and transportation corporations will be enough to make up for the blood and sacrifices they have made in the past decade!

“But right now, it is obvious that the sons of b*tches from the center of the cosmos are about to swallow the fruits on their own!

“If our people realize that the only thing they get after a decade of war is an empty promise and a collapsed economy, there will be a mutiny in the next second, in which both of us, as well as all the members of the Wei family, will be torn into shreds and devoured without any remains by the infuriated veterans, disappointed Immortal Cultivators, and even billions of crazy hominoids. Do you believe me?”

Wei Guanghui was silent, his beard shaking nonstop.

“Perhaps… that is the real purpose of the four Kurfürst families.”

With a strange look on his face, Wei Yuanjia pointed at the list and said in a low voice, “Do you not feel that a notable number of people on the list are loyal to the Wei family, but those loyal to the Huang family are few?”

Wei Guanghui was shocked. As he scrutinized, his eyes bulged wider and wider.

It was true. On the so-called “list of radicals”, most people were the Wei family’s loyal subordinates or their descendants.

But when it came to the “Huang family”, another important family of Immortal Cultivators in the Red Nimbus Sector, while there were some names on the list, they were all the peripheral members that did not matter.

Wei Guanghui felt that his heart was grabbed.

The Wei family did not start to rule over the Red Nimbus Sector five hundred years ago. In the beginning, the Wei family was just an inconspicuous family in the Red Nimbus Sector.

However, the previous dominator of the Red Nimbus Sector was not respectful enough of the big shots from the center of the cosmos and was always wary of the goods and investment from the center of the cosmos. Eventually, it was replaced by the Wei family, which “miraculously rose”.

In other words, the Wei family only became the ruler of the Red Nimbus Sector because it was a dog of the four Kurfürst families.

However, humans and dogs were different.

The closer you were to a dog, the more loyal it would be.

The closer you were to a man, however, the more ungrateful they tended to be.

After two hundred years, Wei Guanghui had forgotten the past where his ancestors worked as the dutiful dogs of the four Kurfürst families, and he was thinking to resist.

But he did not forget that the big shots from the center of the cosmos could raise another dog to replace them at any moment, just like how they replaced the earlier “Sector Master of the Red Nimbus Sector’.

The same things had happened in the remote worlds too many times.

In the far-flung and invaluable worlds, raising several different dogs and making them bite each other was exactly a strategy of governance for the four Kurfürst families.

The Huang family was exactly another dog of the Red Nimbus Sector. There was no telling if they had contributed to such a detailed “list of radicals”!

“Father!”

Wei Yuanjia observed his father who was filled with both fear and fury and said, “We cannot wait to die such a worthless death. Let’s fight them!”

Chapter 2239 - War of Capitals!

2239 War of Capitals!

“Fight? Fight with what? Crashing into the enormous warships of the four Kurfürst families with the few canoes of the Red Nimbus Fleet or kill an elder of the Imperium in public like the idiots of the ‘Blood Oath Alliance’ at the cost of our entire organization? It is purely nonsense!”

Wei Guanghui almost couldn’t wait to slap his son in the face to wake him up. After a pause, every wrinkle on his face was suddenly filled with wariness. “Wait. Tell me honestly, you are not a member of this so-called…’Blood Oath Alliance’, are you?”

“Absolutely not. I am not as stupid as that.”

Wei Yuanjia hurried to prove his innocence before his father, “Even Tianxiao, your biological grandson, has nothing to do with the Blood Oath Alliance at all as far as I know. He only joined the ‘Thousand Cherries Union’, another association of young officers.”

“Hehe. The young people today are joining this and that organization every day in their fever instead of working for their family and the Imperium dutifully. They are either stealthy doing their own thing or have no courage at all. They won’t accomplish anything!”

Wei Guanghui shook his beard and said in despise, “In my opinion, it is not a bad idea to let the special investigation committee bring Tianxiao away and let him examine what he has been doing. After all, they are just taking him as a leverage, and they certainly do not really dare to hurt him. If he suffers this time, he will learn to contain himself in the future!”

“Father… I’m afraid you’re wrong!”

Wei Yuanjia, in an unusual manner, confronted his father determinedly. “The noble families from the center of the cosmos treat the Immortal Cultivators of the local areas so harshly that even the most peaceful people in the world would burst into fury. We’ve been fighting in blood through life and death for more than ten years, but what we get is a basket of cold water and even a sentence to prison. Those guys tell us what to do in the rear all the time, regarding us as cannon fodder and chess pieces, and come to steal all the fruits of victory now that we have won. Tianxiao is not the only person dissatisfied with them. Even I, as well as the fellow Cultivators from dozens of small worlds, cannot hold it back anymore either!

“Although the noble families at the center of the cosmos are powerful, the fellow Cultivators at all the peripherical worlds are qualified to compete with them if we join hands with each other. At the very least, we can take back what belongs to us!”

“Of course. Everybody knows that the hundreds of smaller worlds would be able to check the dozens of powerful worlds at the center of the cosmos. But the hundreds of smaller worlds are scattered in every part of the Imperium, with a distance of tens of thousands of lightyears from each other. Many of the smaller worlds have been in conflict for hundreds of years. They are also intentionally controlled by the four Kurfürst families with the strategy of ‘divide and conquer’. They are just a tray of disorganized loose sand. How can they join each other’s hands?”

Wei Guanghui sneered, “When ‘God of War’ Lei Chenghu was still here, it was perhaps possible to unite the forces of a dozen smaller worlds with his prestige and the powerful combat ability of the Astounding Thunder Fleet.

“But did you not hear what the little bas*ard of the special investigation committee said? General Lei has been arrested by them. There is no telling what kind of interrogations he is going through. I imagine that it won’t take long before he completely surrenders.

“The Third Battle Area at this moment is in panic and lack of leadership. Even the Astounding Thunder Fleet can barely protect itself, and you want the Red Nimbus Fleet, with the few canoes, ragged guns, and the two assembled Colossi, to lead the resistance? Who will be idiotic enough to die with us?”

Wei Yuanjia was silent, but determination and weirdness beamed out of his eyes.

Nobody knew a person better than their father did. Wei Guanghui was slightly dazed. Knowing that his son must have very important intelligence that he had not spoken yet, he hurried to drag his son into the command room, locked the door, and blocked it with a soundproof rune array, before he finally asked solemnly, “What is going on?”

Wei Yuanjia cleared his throat, trying to pretend that everything was fine, but his shivering voice exposed the eagerness and excitement in his heart. “Father, what if I tell you that General Lei Chenghu is likely to have escaped from the prison and returned to the Third Battle Area, and that he is summoning the Astounding Thunder Fleet under the slogan of ‘Honor the Majesty and Settle the Rebellions’?”

“What? ‘Honor the Majesty and Settle the Rebellions’?”

Wei Guanghui was so shocked that a thunder seemed to have rumbled in his head. Despite the magnificent strength in the Nascent Soul Stage, he lost his control over his pores for a moment, and he had sweat all over his body.

He grabbed his son’s shoulders; his fingers piercing deeply into his son’s skin like pincers as he demanded, “Speak! Where did you get the news?”

He had every reason to ask the question.

The Red Nimbus Fleet was stationed at the edge of the Third Battle Area where the environment was harshest. The star here was like a temperamental child that was spitting out the most violent radiations and magnetic waves every second. There was also cosmic dust as thick as the fog that covered the area of more than one billion kilometers. Like a wall of fog, it significantly disrupted the signals of the Spiritual Nexus sent in from the outside world.

The No. 223 resource planet was like a lonely island. Even though the super-space communication base of the highest power had been deployed, the contact with the outside world was still intermittent. It was not unusual that no messages of the outside world were heard in two to three days. Sometimes, when they did receive messages, the information was nothing but meaningless, corrupted data.

The situation was even worse in the recent half month when the No. 223 resource planet had entered a period of frequent tectonic activities. All kinds of volcano eruptions and super earthquakes were happening, greatly hindering the communication between the Red Nimbus Fleet and the Astounding Thunder Fleet, which was also the command center of the Third Battle Area.

At the very least, on the official channel controlled by Wei Guanghui, the command center of the Third Battle Area kept silent.

But right now, before the information came over through the official channel, his son had brought him such a piece of shocking, unofficial news. How could Wei Guanghui not be suspicious?

“There is no doubt about that, Father. My intelligence should be 80% trustworthy.”

Wei Yuanjia said mysteriously, “It was sent over through the secret channel of the ‘Business Alliance of the Ten Thousand Sectors’.”

“The Business Alliance of the Ten Thousand Sectors?”

Wei Guanghui frowned hard. “You mean the organization of merchants that is quite active in recent years and offered us a low-interest loan half a year ago?”

“Exactly! The fraternities of young officers such as the ‘Blood Oath Alliance’ and ‘Thousand Cherries Union’ are just the child’s play of the fervent young men. But the Business Alliance of the Ten Thousand Sectors is different. Even you might not know how powerful they are. They are an organization that stands for the power of the local capitals in the more than a hundred Sectors at the edge of the Imperium!”

Wei Yuanjia completely threw away his disguise and said determinedly, “The most powerful force in the universe is the spiritual energy, but it is not as powerful as capitals! The war between the peripheral capitals of the Imperium and the central capitals has already begun. With the connection of the Business Alliance of the Ten Thousand Sectors, we will not be loose sand that can be bullied by anyone but a real alliance that condenses the strength of hundreds of smaller Sectors. Then, under the leadership of trustworthy experts such as General Lei Chenghu and big shots of higher levels, we will definitely succeed!”

Different from his son who was slightly anxious, Wei Guanghui calmed down as he listened on. He stared at his son and said, “Good boy. It seems that you have done a lot of things behind my back, and I was too old and blind to see any of it!”

Wei Yuanjia was choked for a moment. But he simply held his head high and looked back at his father. “Everything I’ve been doing is for the Red Nimbus Sector and the Wei family instead of my selfish interests. The reason I did not tell Father was for your own safety and to separate me from the family. Should what I did be exposed, I would’ve taken all the blame and punishment!

“No matter what, the Wei family is an honorable family of Immortal Cultivators. We are all supposed to be high and mighty, dominating Immortal Cultivators! We are born to rage in the sea of stars and accomplish something great, not to hold ourselves back and be dogs! Not to mention that we cannot even be dogs now even if we want to. They are about to butcher us and eat our flesh!

“Father, you are at the high level of the Nascent Soul Stage. Are you willing to live your entire life whining and die miserably like a hairless dog? Now that the four Kurfürst families are not giving us a chance to live, let's just go and fight with General Lei! The worst we can expect is just death. Having fought hundreds of battles against the Covenant Alliance for ten years, are we scared of death?"

Wei Guanghui, unexpectedly, did not scold his son for comparing him to a "hairless dog". He simply considered the situation with a gloomy face.

After a long consideration like a wooden statue, he seemed to have grown older by ten years. He asked hoarsely, "Are you certain that General Lei has returned to the Astounding Thunder Fleet?"

"It should be true."

Wei Yuanjia hesitated for a moment and said, "Tell you the truth, Father, the Red Nimbus Fleet is not the only one seething in impatience. All the local fleets in the Third Battle Area are rioting. Even the brother troops in the neighboring battle areas who used to fight with General Lei are ready to move. It is now or never!"

"I don't want probability; I want certainty!"

Wei Guanghui said gravely, "Investigate more. You must figure out if General Lei has returned to the Astounding Thunder Fleet and what helped him get out of the control of the four Kurfürst families exactly!"

"Understood!"

Realizing that his father was not as determined as before, Wei Yuanjia was overjoyed. "I am doing my best to establish the secret communication channel between the No. 233 resource planet and the command center of the Third Battle

Area. The fellow Cultivators of the Business Alliance of the Ten Thousand Sectors have shipped a super device of communication, and it is now being set up. The latest news will soon be over.”

“As for right now and the people on the name list…

“Well—”

Pondering for a moment, Wei Guanghui said, “Summon everybody on the list first, including Tianxiao, and show him the list. Tell them that they are in serious trouble.

“If General Lei Chenghu has not returned, don’t blame me for being too cruel. We can only tie those people up and deliver them in exchange for a brief period of peace for us.

“But if General Lei has indeed returned, those people will be the best and most daring team. Hehe. I will let the little bas*ard of the special investigation committee know the consequences of pissing off an Immortal Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage…”

Chapter 2240 - Terrifying Gold Colossus!

2240 Terrifying Gold Colossus!

Starting from that moment, the Red Nimbus Fleet began to take action busily. On the surface, it was peaceful and quiet, but undercurrents were in fact flowing everywhere. Countless invisible tusks were extended at the carrier sent by the special investigation committee, blocking all of the intruder's retreats.

As the latest communication device was set up, the center of the Third Battle Area and the fleets that were stationed in various space zones delivered the latest intelligence.

By cross-checking the information from the sources, the same theory had been proven—General Lei Chenghu was really back!

Not just that, the process of General Lei Chenghu's return was a hundred times more soul-stirring than the father and the son of the Wei family!

During the half month when Lei Chenghu was away from the Astounding Thunder Fleet, the situation in the Astounding Thunder Fleet worsened after each day. It was already in the peril to be dissected into pieces.

The four Kurfürst families were highly vigilant of the fleet that had made remarkable achievements and boasted a high combat ability. They were not so careless as to send just a carrier to bend the fleet like they did to the Red Nimbus Fleet.

The Council of Elders authorized the special investigation committee to summon part of the elite forces from the few best fleets deployed in the regions nearby and surround the Astounding Thunder Fleet.

In name, they were merely exchanging the defense area with the Astounding Thunder Fleet, but in fact, they were forcing the key persons of the Astounding Thunder Fleet to get out and receive the separate investigation of the special investigation committee.

The Astounding Thunder Fleet itself, on the other hand, would be dismembered into ten or so branch fleets and deployed to different worlds thousands of lightyears away from each other.

If the scheme did work out, the Astounding Thunder Fleet would fall apart and the key persons would be held in custody. There would be no hope for them at all.

The proud and battle-tested soldiers of the Astounding Thunder Fleet were naturally unwilling to wait to die.

In terms of combat ability, they were not necessarily worse than the elite forces of the four Kurfürst families that had been temporarily gathered, and they could’ve turned the Third Battle Area upside down.

But they were faced with three critical problems.

First of all, Lei Chenghu, their leader, had gone missing, and the whole fleet was in a panic.

Secondly, the Council of Elders, which was controlled by the four Kurfürst families, had a legitimate excuse that they were investigating the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance.

Going against the special investigation committee would mean going against the Council of Elders, which meant going against the Imperium and His Majesty. They would forever be “traitors”.

Most of the soldiers could not make up their minds for that.

Thirdly, and most importantly, the logistics.

When the Covenant Alliance fell back, they burned everything to the ground. The entire newly-recovered area was made of seriously-wrecked ruins and polluted areas. They were not enough to meet the daily demand of the top fleets such as the Astounding Thunder Fleet. 80% of the supplies were dependent on the rear.

Aside from everything else, the crystals, the high-energy nutrition, and the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures that the Immortal Cultivators of the Astounding Thunder Fleet consumed every day were already an astronomical burden.

In order to keep the current level, they had to train themselves hard every day. A couple of days without training would make their senses sluggish and their spiritual root wither. They would slowly retrograde and fall to lower levels.

It was like even the strongest warrior must have food every day. Also, the stronger they were, the better appetite they would have. How could a brawny man weighing a hundred and fifty kilograms carry out all his strength without having half a roasted pig first?

If the rear cut off their supplies, in less than half a month, the Astounding Thunder Fleet would have been stranded in the vast space like a lake that lost all the water.

Therefore…

The many generals of the Astounding Thunder Fleet, after struggling in pain for a few days, could only bend to the Council of Elders like the Red Nimbus Fleet did, agreeing to all the terms of the special investigation committee helplessly.

It was exactly at such a perilous moment that General Lei Chenghu returned to the Third Battle Area.

It was said that he only brought three starships back with him, but he seemed to boast immeasurable charisma, and he revived the lifeless fleet with a powerful excitant immediately.

He regained control over the fleet immediately, imprisoned the people who gave in, and ordered the officers who were stubborn to the last moment to secretly dispatch the most mobile and stealthy warships to form a special team.

At this moment, the starships of the special investigation committee were unaware that he had secretly returned to the Astounding Thunder Fleet. They were still dispersed in various parts of the Third Battle Area, arresting the radicals and warning the commanders of the local fleets, exactly like what they did to the Red Nimbus Fleet.

Taking advantage of the precious opportunity that the enemy’s troops were unfocused, Lei Chenghu led the special team to assault the area where the enemy’s flagship was at and captured it without any trouble!

The fleet temporarily summoned by the special investigation committee was only bluffing under the banner of the Council of Elders and not prepared to fight a hard battle with the Astounding Thunder Fleet at all.

When Lei Chenghu came aggressively and showed his determination that he would die together with the enemy, those cowardly guys soon collapsed and surrendered to the Astounding Thunder Fleet instead.

As a result, not only did the four Kurfürst families’ plan to dissect the Astounding Thunder Fleet step by step fail to work out, the Astounding Thunder Fleet was also able to capture a large batch of new warships with abundant crystals, fuel, magical equipment, and ammunition!

It was exactly what happened at the center of the Third Battle Area in the past two days.

Because the No. 233 resource planet was too remote, the astounding news did not come over until this moment.

The news was so appalling that the father and the son of the Wei family were too shocked to know what was happening for a long time.

But aside from their astonishment, they couldn’t help but grow suspicious—was the news true at all?

General Lei Chenghu’s victory seemed too smooth and unbelievable. Were there more to it?

After waiting in uneasiness for another three hours, the truth was finally out.

Quite a few battle videos captured from multiple perspectives with high-resolution cameras were sent over from the center of the Third Battle Area. All of them could prove that the flagship and the core warships of the investigators' fleet had been disarmed and captured by the Astounding Thunder Fleet!

“Father, please take a look at the video files that were just sent over. We have probably gained access to the crucial evidence earlier than the investigator does!”

In excitement, Wei Yuanjia activated the light beam with shivering hands. “It's true. General Lei has truly made it. Also—”

Wei Guanghui waved his hands to stop his chattering son. Narrowing his eyes, he observed the war in space taken from a hundred different perspectives.

Although it was a “war”, the two parties in fact did not have any fierce engagement of fire. The investigators' fleet seemed to be taken aback by General Lei Chenghu's special team when it suddenly leaped out of the void, but they did not have the courage to attack Marquis Liaohai of the Imperium.

The lightning trident emblem of the Imperium of True Human Beings was carved on the starships of both parties. They were at loggerheads and had even released the crystal suit groups, but they still maintained the last bit of their rationality and did not attack each other. They simply confronted each other in cold, desperate silence.

The soundless confrontation in the vacuum of space seemed even more suffocating than the bombardments and barrages.

Wei Guanghui could totally imagine that the communication channels of the two parties were filled with desperate roars despite the ostensible silence, demanding each other to lay down the weapons and surrender or there would be dire consequences.

It was a competition of willpower. All that mattered was which of them collapsed earlier.

Right then, a gold brilliance that was even more dazzling than the supernova outbreak suddenly flashed on the flagship of the investigators' fleet!

“This is—”

Wei Guanghui shuddered hard and almost couldn't believe his eyes.

A glamorous, gold Colossus appeared on the picture. It must have reached the flagship of the investigators' fleet without alarming anyone while the two parties were confronting coldly before it was summoned at an amazing speed.

What a Colossus it was!

Even though the picture on the light beam had been reduced to one hundredth proportionally, the gold Colossus was still releasing the dominance as if it were the king of the universe.

The moment it showed up, the crazy spurting exhaust flames of the hundreds of starships were immediately eclipsed. Even the light of all the stars in the universe was swallowed, turning the Colossus into the only player on the battlefield!

Wei Guanghui had never seen such a delicate, glamorous, and perfect Colossus before. Compared with the gold Colossus, the two jumbled products in his own fleet were as annoying as garbage.

The gold Colossus was holding a narrow, long starship-slashing saber. The body of the saber seemed to be made of infinite gold feathers, while the handle was sixteen overlapping wings.

The gold Colossus’ saber, drawing a flawless curve, ignored the spiritual shield and the seven layers of plate armor on the flagship of the fleet and pierced into a protrusion at the front part of the flagship more than easily.

Wei Guanghui knew the structure of such a model of warships, and he knew that it was the bridge behind the protrusion.

The gold Colossus that arrived out of nowhere pierced into the heart of the flagship in one attack. Perhaps everybody on the bridge was observing the edge of the saber in shock and cold sweat!

With the combat ability of the gold Colossus, as long as it boosted the slightest spiritual energy, the aura from the blade would have been enough to burn everybody on the bridge into ashes.

The competition that followed no longer had any suspense.

The investigators’ fleet, threatened by the gold Colossus, collapsed immediately, and Lei Chenghu’s special team secured a triumph with no bloodshed.

“This—”

Pointing at the gold Colossus, Wei Guanghui asked in disbelief, “What exactly is this Colossus? Who is using it?”

“According to the intelligence, the Colossus’s name is ‘Gold Vulture’. It is used by ‘Vulture Li Yao’.”

After watching the gold Colossus’ unbelievable performance that deterred the entire investigators’ fleet in one attack, Wei Yuanjia was apparently intimidated too. He said respectfully, “Vulture Li Yao is the greatest contributor to the war. It is said that even General Lei Chenghu was saved by him alone from dangers!”

Chapter 2241 - Expert From the Palace!

“Gold Vulture… Li Yao…”

Wei Guanghui pondered on the name for quite a while and could not come up with the guy’s background at all. Frowning, he asked, “Who is this guy? Since when does the Imperium have such an unparalleled expert who could use such a super Colossus?”

“You may not know this, Father, but according to sources, Vulture Li Yao is from the capital.”

Wei Yuanjia blinked his eyes. Although there were only the two of them, he still covered his mouth with his palm and said in a low voice, “Not only is he from the capital, but he is also someone who has escaped from the royal palace. He used to be around His Majesty.”

“Around His Majesty?”

Wei Guanghui bulged his eyes. “He has escaped all the way from the capital? How did it happen?”

“According to the sources, this Vulture Li Yao comes from a very secret family of Immortal Cultivators which has been loyal to the emperor since the age of Blackstar the Great a thousand years ago.”

Wei Yuanjia said, “The offspring of Vulture Li Yao’s family are few. It seems that the weird techniques that they practice can only be passed on to one heir in each generation. So, it is perfect for them to be the emperors’ personal bodyguards. They have been deeply trusted by the emperors.

“However, as you know, Father, the royal authority has been declining in the past five hundred years. The monarch of the Imperium of True Human Beings that should be supreme has been reduced into a ‘figurehead’. The corrupted lords and officials, on the other hand, dominated politics. Therefore, Vulture Li Yao’s family was not as distinguished as the old days and could only lay low in the royal palace. Nobody in the outside world knew their existence.

“This time, the four Kurfürst families pushed too far. Because His Majesty disagreed with them on the government of the newly recovered territory and was persistent in his opinion, they have heisted Emperor Shenwu from the royal palace and even plotted to kill Her Grace!

“This is too much for anyone to tolerate. Emperor Shenwu has decided to remove the scoundrels and to take back the power. Therefore, he asked Vulture Li Yao to escape from the capital with the jade chip that stored his decree, hoping to summon all the righteous men in the world to attack the insubordinate rogues!”

“Well…”

Fascinated, Wei Guanghui couldn’t help but hesitate.

For the remote worlds that did not join the Imperium until five to six hundred years ago, they had complicated feelings for the emperor of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

On one hand, in the official propaganda of the Imperium, the emperor was naturally described as brilliant, smart, invincible, supreme, and almost a living god.

As time went by, the general public of the Imperium had unrealistic illusions about the emperor. They believed that the reality, however dark and cruel, was just a temporary suffering, and that the emperor would lead all the people of the Imperium out of the trouble to the dawn someday.

But on the other hand, for the rulers of a whole Sector such as the Wei family, they had a rather deep understanding of the politics in the capital and the awkward situation of the emperor as a “figurehead”.

The emperor seemed high and mighty, but he was also exploited and oppressed by the noble families, just like the Immortal Cultivators from the remote worlds!

Such an understanding made them more or less sympathetic to the emperor.

Deep down in their heart, they also hoped that a second powerful, unquestionable sovereign like Blackstar the Great would show up, who could let them realize the value of their life while leading millions of Immortal Cultivators to explore the vast universe and bring the civilization of mankind to a new peak!

It would be much better than to work as the dogs of the four Kurfürst families right now!

“His Majesty’s life is so difficult, and he hates the four Kurfürst families so much that he has asked someone most intimate to him to escape from the capital with his decree?”

Wei Guanghui’s eyes rolled fast with complicated feelings beaming out. Breathing heavily for a moment, he hesitated again before asking, “This is a very important matter. Is it true or not?”

“My dear father, are you still unable to see things through? It doesn’t matter if the so-called ‘hidden decree’ is true. What matters is that, since such an ‘expert from the royal palace’ has escaped with His Majesty’s decree, we now have the legitimacy to resist the Council of Elders!”

Wei Yuanjia slightly raised his voice as he said, “Also, the force hiding behind the Business Alliance of the Ten Thousand Sectors was capable of rescuing General Lei Chenghu from their heavily-guarded prison, which is indicative enough of their strength!

“Now, General Lei has controlled the Astounding Thunder Fleet again, and the local fleets in the Third Battle Area are swarming to respond. There is also an immeasurable force cooperating with us in the capital. Isn’t this our best shot?

“‘Honor the Majesty and Settle the Rebellions’ is exactly the legitimacy that the decree offers us. This is the best opportunity to overthrow the old and replace it with the new. If we miss out on such a great opportunity, the Immortal Cultivators of the Red Nimbus Sector would never get rid of the fate of being manipulated by somebody else!

“Besides, by my estimation, this Vulture Li Yao who’s using the Gold Vulture was probably a real expert from the royal palace. You have seen the splendor of the Colossus and his unparalleled combat ability with your own eyes. Such a person has never been seen in the Imperium before. If he is not from the royal palace, where on earth could he have found such an advanced super Colossus, and how is he able to boost such terrifying spiritual energy? He can’t just have appeared out of thin air, right?”

“Huh…”

Wei Guanghui re-played the battle videos and watched them several times. The more he watched, the more shocked he became. Such a Colossus was indeed not something that a common sect could have.

“Father, there is no time for hesitation.”

Wei Yuanjia said passionately, “Let’s do it!”

Wei Guanghui was still considering when the mini crystal processor on his wrist buzzed crazily and reported an uncanny message to him.

The carrier from the special investigation committee, which had been docked at the periphery of the No. 233 resource planet, was showing signs that it had fully activated the power units and about to escape through a space jump when the time that they demanded earlier had not come yet.

“They must’ve received the news too. They know that General Lei is back!”

Both surprised and excited, Wei Yuanjia looked at Wei Guanghui nervously. “Father!”

Wei Guanghui took a deep breath. Now that he had made up his mind, he looked much more aggressive than before. Slashing his hand down brutally, he demanded, “Do not let the little bas*ard run away. Shoot him down!”

At the edge of the No. 233 resource planet, a carrier, which was carved with the dual emblems of the Council of Elders and the special investigation committee, was already spreading out ivory halos, implying that it was tearing apart the barrier of the three-dimensional space and about to enter the void for a space jump.

Suddenly, the bombardment from the starships around and the ground enshrouded the carrier like a storm.

After the bombardment, the smooth and flawless carrier a moment ago was riddled with holes, with air currents and pieces of explosion hissing out everywhere.

With all the wounds, it was impossible for the carrier to perform a space jump at all. If it were determined to jump, it would only be completely shredded by the surging tides in the four-dimensional space, never to be filled up again!

“Envoy Zhao…”

In the communication channel, Wei Guanghui grinned hideously. “The time of our agreement has not come yet. Why are you in such a hurry to leave without even saying goodbye?”

“General… General Wei!”

The sharp-mouthed scoundrel now had a face paler than that of a dead person. He stammered, pretending to be tough, “What-What is the meaning of this? Are you not scared of the wrath of the Council of Elders?”

“I don’t mean anything.”

Combing his beard, Wei Guanghui said with a smile, “All the radicals on the name list have been captured by me without missing any. I am sending them to your starship right now. There are so many secrets that they would like to confess and so many questions that they want to ask you. You can stay here until the investigation is over!”

From all directions, the assault warships that looked like sharks charged at the carriers that were heavily damaged and unable to move anymore. A bloody feast was about to commence.

“N-No!”

Envoy Zhao screamed aloud, “How-How dare you? Ahhhh!”

…

Nine thousand and seven hundred years away, at the center of the Third Battle Area, in the area where the flagship of the Astounding Thunder Fleet was temporarily stationed, on the head of “Iron Torrent”, the flagship of the Third Battle Area of the expedition army of the Imperium that looked like a high-rising horn, bathing in the infinite darkness of the universe and faced with countless stars was an overwhelming gold Colossus!

The powerful saber that was enough to chop a light cruiser into halves was kept on its legs. Below the shining gold mask, however, the complicated feelings of human beings were beaming out of its eyes while it stared at the sea of stars, deep in thought.

The Colossus sitting cross-legged on the flagship of the Astounding Thunder Fleet, called by all the soldiers of the Astounding Thunder Fleet as “Gold Vulture” in reverence, was naturally the “Tartarean Skeleton” that was fully upgraded with the secret treasures of the Supreme Emperor.

The user of the Colossus who was soaked in the mysterious liquid metal that “Little Black” transformed into, which allowed him to extend his spiritual energy and his thoughts to the tiniest sensors on the Colossus, was naturally Li Yao, who had become “an expert from the royal palace”.

Li Yao was waiting for someone.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Soundwaves could not be transmitted in the vacuum. However, when the three-dimensional space before Iron Torrent was torn apart and the ripples spread to the Colossus, slight noises were still raised.

Like fireflies rising from the bushes in a dark night, one starship after another in colorful camouflages with different emblems leaped out of the void and shone brilliantly before Iron Torrent.

Those starships were the armed forces and fleets in the Third Battle Area that came from local regions. They were even the most powerful warships and flagships that the leaders of the local troops treasured most.

They had indeed responded to Lei Chenghu’s call and come to join Lei Chenghu’s cause while ignoring all the obstacles and concerns!

Although it was just a war of interests within the Immortal Cultivators, Li Yao was still more or less touched by the starships that were jumping out of the void one after another, turning the darkness and nothingness into a glorious square of starships. He also burned his soul and triggered the majestic flames of the spiritual energy of the Gold Vulture.

“Hu!”

A vivid gold vulture did soar from the head of Iron Torrent and swallow the colors of all stars!

The starships from different Sectors released rays from the heads of their starships, which congregated into a dazzling band of light.

According to the tradition of the Imperium, it was the way for starships to express their highest respect when they countered.

They all sensed the magnificence of the Gold Vulture, recognized Li Yao’s identity, and showed their sincere reverence for the “warrior from the capital”.

Chapter 2242 - Everyone’s War Against Everyone!

“This is… splendid!”

Li Jialing exclaimed in amazement as Li Yao’s guard near the Gold Vulture wearing the super crystal suit that could transform in three phases.

He was a young man after all. Although his pursuit was “absolute freedom”, he still found it hard to control his hot blood when hundreds of starships leaped out of the void and worshipped Li Yao.

He vaguely had a feeling that it would be great if he was the one to whom those starships were paying homage.

Li Jialing had been raised by Li Lingfeng as a half-heir in the first place. Tremendous wisdom of cruel competitions and the abilities to see through the truth had been poured into his head through secret techniques.

It was just that he was suppressed by Li Lingfeng in the past, and he was unwilling to use the abilities at all as a rebellious young man. He only wanted to run to the corner of the universe as far away from Li Lingfeng as possible.

But right now…

Both Li Lingfeng and Wu Suiyun were dead. He had finally broken the shackles on his body and gained preliminary freedom.

But he was rather at a loss about what to do next.

The fleet that was as vast as an ocean before him, and their light that eclipsed the stars, however, ignited the natural-born desires in his heart that were inherited from his mother.

Thinking of the unstoppable expedition in the past three days, Li Jialing still felt that he was in a dream. Even his fingertips seemed to be on fire.

Li Yao's terrifying performance left a particularly deep impression on him.

In "Manjusaka, the City in the Sky", he had already witnessed Li Yao's incredibility.

But little did he expect that after the full upgrade of the Colossus, and with the enhancement of the "Imperial Fire Pearl", Li Yao could be strong enough to challenge an entire fleet on his own!

When the gold light that was enough to rip apart the universe flowed out of Li Yao's body crazily, even Li Jialing felt that his bones were shrieking. No wonder the small fries in the investigators' fleet chose to surrender.

"Almost all the fleets in the Third Battle Area have answered to General Lei Chenghu's call and gathered here for an uprising. Even some of the warships in the neighboring areas have jumped over without caring about anything. General Lei's prestige in the expedition army is truly unparalleled!"

Under Li Lingfeng's education, Li Jialing's little head was filled with the heraldic knowledge of the Imperium, which allowed him to tell the fleet, family, sect, or world to which a warship belonged quickly from the emblem on it. Pausing for a moment, he said again to Li Yao in the point-to-point secret communication channel, "However, besides General Lei's prestige, Brother Yao’s invincible capabilities were a major factor in attracting them over, weren’t they? The picture of you slashing into the flagship of the investigators’ fleet in one attack has been spread to the entire universe through the secret channels established by the Business Alliance of the Ten Thousand Sectors. It was ten times more awesome than what you did in the Martial Meritocrats Sector a month ago. No wonder those people are convinced that you are an expert from the royal palace. Even I would’ve believed in your origin if I were not aware of the truth.”

“Nobody is silly nowadays. They do not necessarily believe that I am an expert from the royal palace. It’s just that they are in need of an expert from the royal palace in such a situation.”

With a smile, Li Yao accepted the flashes of homage from the starships, but he was fully aware of his identity. “General Lei Chenghu’s prestige, my combat ability, or even the fabricated ‘expert from the royal palace’ and ‘secret decree’, are not the reasons why the local armed forces have come here. The only reason why they are here is that they have been pushed into desperation by the four Kurfürst families, and they have no choice but to fight.”

Li Jialing was deep in thought. “What do you mean?”

“If we get to the bottom of it, this is the most fundamental contradiction lying at the core of the ‘true path of immortality’ that can never be resolved.”

Li Yao sighed and said, “When ‘survival of the fittest’ becomes a self-justifying truth and the priority rule that guides the operation of a society, it will mean that the universe will completely become a bloody slaughterhouse.

“Today, the Immortal Cultivators can regard the ordinary people as ‘hominoids’, savaging, torturing, and exploiting them as if the latter are an inferior species. Then tomorrow, the high-level Immortal Cultivators can also regard the low-level Immortal Cultivators as a different and lowlier species that they can take advantage of without boundaries.

“But there are always higher levels. For an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage, is somebody in the Nascent Soul Stage a ‘lowly animal’ that is not the same species as himself and can be oppressed and butchered randomly?

“As a result, the entire civilization of Immortal Cultivators will become ‘everybody’s war against everybody’. True human beings and hominoids are not the same species. Those in the Refinement Stage and those in the Building Foundation Stage are not the same species. Neither are those in the Core Formation Stage, the Nascent Soul Stage, and the Divinity Transformation Stage… There is no foundation of the most fundamental trust and cooperation. Everybody is a natural competitor for each other.

“Everybody is an enemy. Nobody is trustworthy. The greatest purpose of training is no longer to contribute to the country and the civilization, but to build up oneself regardless of the cost. Climb. Climb higher using whatever methods possible, and you will be able to eat other people. If you can’t, you will only be eaten!

“Such an Imperium of True Human Beings does not have any cohesion at all. Despite all the fancy propaganda and fake glory, it is not an interstellar primitive jungle that has been decorated into a country.

“Even the wise people in the ancient times know that do unto others as you would have them do unto you. When true human beings regard hominoids as weeds, hominoids will naturally regard true human beings as enemies in return. Same goes for the high-level Immortal Cultivators and the low-level Immortal Cultivators, the four Kurfürst families, and the local Immortal Cultivators at the periphery of the Imperium. When the contradictions are intensified to the apex, one tiny spark will be enough to raise the fire of rebellion. We are now nothing more than a ‘spark’.”

Li Jialing mumbled, “It’s true that the four Kurfürst families can be too greedy sometimes. Has it never occurred to them that such harsh exploitation will only lead to strong discontent in the local areas?”

“It is not about greed or if they can think of the consequences.”

Li Yao said, “The cruel rule of ‘survival of the fittest’ works within the four Kurfürst families too. In the ruthless competitions where everybody else is an enemy, who can possibly consider the interests in the long term? They are all trying to earn the most benefits in the shortest amount of time possible to build themselves up.

“Those who think otherwise will soon be eliminated. Only the most sordid, vile, brutal, and ravenous people can survive and grow into the controllers of the families step by step.

“After hundreds of years of filtering, such a rule has been carved into their bones. Now that they have bitten a piece of fat meat, they will not let it go even if their heads are broken.

“Besides, the extreme admiration of power tends to make them ignore the voices of the ‘weak’. They do not know how terrifying the fury of the ‘weak’ is once the ‘weak’ are gathered. Perhaps they will not realize it until the moment of their death!”

Li Jialing was silent for a long time. He then asked, “Then… do you think the Imperium is still rescuable? Can General Lei and the queen save the Imperium?”

“If they can indeed destroy the four Kurfürst families and soothe the contradictions of other Immortal Cultivators with the dead bodies of the four behemoths, they will perhaps be able to earn themselves a buffer period of several hundred years.”

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao said, “However, the day will eventually come when the resources left by the four Kurfürst families are used up, and the smaller forces in indignity today will expand into voracious, insatiable beasts too. They will turn into new cancers and the next-generation ‘four Kurfürst families’. What can you do by then?

“If we get to the bottom of it, this is a systematic problem and the natural flaw of the true path of immortality. It cannot be changed for a perfect Immortal Cultivator of honor and integrity.

“Yes. Even I have to admit that, despite our disagreement on methods and ideologies, General Lei Chenghu is indeed a pure, selfless Immortal Cultivator who considers nothing but the civilization of mankind.

“But so what? How many Immortal Cultivators are as pure, loyal, and selfless as him? Even if he can revive the glory of the Imperium today, what will happen after he dies? The ‘new Imperium’ will only corrupt faster than the ‘old Imperium’!

“It can’t be helped. There may be one or two such pure, perfect Immortal Cultivators, but it is impossible for all the Immortal Cultivators to be like Lei Chenghu, because it is against human nature, unless you learn after the Covenant Alliance and brainwash everybody to deprive them of their desires. But as a result, the whole society will be lifeless and run like clockwork, with no vigor and innovation.

“Therefore, only—”

Before Li Yao said “only the Cultivators can save the universe”, Li Jialing interrupted him, “Brother Yao, what you said may be true, but I still feel—

“While 100% pure, perfect Immortal Cultivators are rare, 100% pure, perfect Cultivators are hard to come by too, aren’t they? Serving and even sacrificing for the ordinary people when they clearly boast unparalleled strength sounds like something that is against human nature too!

“If a country has to be maintained by 100% perfect Cultivators, it won’t take long before the country turns into what the Imperium looks like today, right?

“Perhaps even the most perfect theories of the Immortal Cultivators or the Cultivators are just theories that cannot defeat the corrosion of time or ‘human nature’. In the end, they will all be corrupted into their opposites.

“The universe is too vast and chaotic, and human nature is too complicated and mysterious. What should we do?”

Li Yao was silent for a long time.

“… I’m still willing to believe in human nature.”

In the end, he admitted frankly, “Your question is too huge for me to answer right now, but I am certain about one thing. If the queen and Lei Chenghu win the war and crush the four Kurfürst families, they will buy a few more hundred years for the civilization of mankind at the center of the cosmos.

“Who knows what will happen in a few hundred years? It is possible that a new generation that is smarter, more rational, and more visionary than us will appear and solve the conundrums that we can’t solve, right?

“This is also the reason why I, a Cultivator, am participating in a civil war of the Immortal Cultivators.”

Li Jialing said with mixed feelings, “Wow. Why do I feel that you are so philosophical, Brother Yao?”

“I have always been very philosophical, except that I prefer to keep a low profile and do not like to show off. However, the wisdom and talents in my head can’t be covered no matter how I try to, and they may spill out when I’m not careful. Try to catch them for me.”

On the Gold Vulture, Li Yao rose abruptly and looked around at the myriad of starships. “Let’s go. Almost all the elites are here now. We will go to meet General Lei and get things started!”

Chapter 2243 - You Are What I Say You Are!

When Li Yao entered the secret chamber in the rear of the command center on the flagship of the Astounding Thunder Fleet with Li Jialing, Lei Chenghu was watching the panoramic light beam in silence alone.

On the light beam, the stars were shining and circling around the perfect Immortal Cultivator slowly.

After he returned to his own fleet, Lei Chenghu was like a dragon that had come back to the ocean. He looked ten times more intimidating than the time that he was kept in prison!

Li Yao even vaguely sensed that the soul of the “God of War” was extending infinitely from the secret room to every starship of the Astounding Thunder Fleet and even the Third Battle Area like nerves and veins!

Lei Chenghu was completely melted into the fleet. Every starship was a cell for him. He was the fleet, and the fleet was him. He was a living embodiment of the army of countless starships!

“General, the elites of almost all the fleets in the Third Battle Area have been gathered. Those who have yet to arrive are preparing for space jump busily too, and they will show up at the… designated coordinates at the same time.”

Looking at the distribution map on the light beam, Li Yao asked, “How are the fleets of the four Kurfürst families doing? Are they reacting to our operation?”

“It’s been three days since we returned to the Third Battle Area. Those people should’ve realized that something was wrong however stupid they may be. But they are not sure what we are trying to do yet, and they are simply mobilizing forces near the Third Battle Area and cutting our supply lines. They are not bold enough to enter the Third Battle Area to be killed yet.”

Lei Chenghu sneered, “It is a pity that any blockage and defense is useless in the vast sea of stars. Attack, attack, and attack boldly is the only way of success!

“In eight hours, the Astounding Thunder Fleet, which has significantly expanded, and the special mix team of the Third Battle Area will be able to perform a massive space jump to reach the prearranged coordinates. But the attack without any reserve will consume all of our crystals, fuel, and ammunition. In other words, it will be a wild gamble. If we cannot get enough resources, we will be dead for sure!

“Let’s hope that your queen’s intelligence is as accurate as she claims to be and that the other fellow Cultivators of the ‘reformists’ work hard with us in the spirit of sacrificing themselves for the dawn of the new Imperium!”

“Rest assured about that, general. Her Grace’s Deep Sea Fleet is long prepared and will meet the Astounding Thunder Fleet at the prearranged coordinates. The destination of our attack has been seriously compromised by the reformists too. The cooperation from inside won’t be a problem. The enemy will definitely be caught unprepared, and we will exchange the minimal price for the maximal resources.”

Li Yao said, “As for the other fellow Cultivators of the ‘reformists’, it is even less necessary to worry about them. As long as the Astounding Thunder Fleet and the Deep Sea Fleet rise at the same time and the flames burn across the Imperium, will they have a second choice?”

Lei Chenghu stared at Li Yao thoughtfully and nodded his head. “Fine. For the Imperium, let’s wager everything on the gamble!”

He tapped his wrist crystal processor and said, “Bring him in.”

The door of the secret room glided without a sound, and two loyal guards, whose artificial bodies had been significantly modified, dragged in a middle-aged man who was also wearing the black military uniform of the Imperium.

The door of the room was closed again.

Judging from the silver skull on the middle-aged man’s shoulder, he was a vice-admiral of the Imperium’s army.

However, his hands, legs, and spine had been locked by the confinement magical equipment that looked like iron thorns, and he was unable to move at all.

He seemed to also have been coerced to take anesthetic and hypnotization pills that could suppress his soul and block his spiritual energy, which made his mind messy and sluggish.

The man’s name was Dongfang Yuan. He was the highest commander of the fleet under the special investigation committee’s command.

He was also the director to dissect the Astounding Thunder Fleet and capture radicals in the Third Battle Area under the Council of Elders’ command.

He thought that the leaderless, panicked Astounding Thunder Fleet would be meat on a chopping block at his mercy, but out of his expectation, Lei Chenghu jumped out of nowhere, and an unbelievable, super Colossus played a perfect “decapitation strategy”.

Dongfang Yuan did not have the guts to sacrifice himself and raise a civil war of the Imperium by the way. Threatened by Li Yao’s sharp saber, he had no choice but to surrender dutifully and become a captive.

To this moment, he was still unaware of all the ambitions of Lei Chenghu, Li Linghai, and Li Yao.

He only thought that it was just a random mutiny and that Lei Chenghu would just hold him as a hostage and ask for more benefits from the Council of Elders.

Therefore, the moment he saw Lei Chenghu, the commander of the investigators’ fleet hurried to explain, “Misunderstanding, misunderstanding, Marquis Liaohai, everything was a misunderstanding. It was only because the Third Battle Area needed a commander while you received the investigation in the rear that I was temporarily appointed to take over your job and strengthen the defense of the Third Battle Area. Now that Marquis Liaohai has returned from the rear, my fleet will certainly not meddle in the Third Battle Area anymore. Please do bear the big picture in mind. Brothers should not brutalize each other!”

Lei Chenghu and Li Yao looked at each other and scorned at the same time with disdain and cruelty.

“Marquis Liaohai, what… what do you want exactly?”

Sensing the determination of killing emanating from Lei Chenghu’s every pore, Dongfang Yuan swallowed hard, and his voice became high-pitched. “Don’t do anything rashly. All the resources of the Third Battle Area count on the supply of the rear. You are just an isolated troop that cannot cause any trouble. You-You must think before you leap and do not jeopardize so many brothers of the Astounding Thunder Fleet—”

Dongfang Yuan’s voice came to an abrupt end. His eyeballs seemed to have been pumped out by negative pressure when he stared at the panoramic light beam behind Lei Chenghu and Li Yao, sweating hard with his teeth clattering.

He saw the overwhelming fleets jumping out of the void on the light beam.

The fleets that were previously stationed in the various resource planets of the Third Battle Area, or at least the most powerful starships in those fleets, had jumped to the space zone where the Astounding Thunder Fleet was anchored, gathering into a gigantic united fleet.

It was a highly unusual mobilization, and it could not have been permitted by the command center of the expedition army.

Dongfang Yuan was a general too. Naturally, he knew that such an unusual mobilization would only have one purpose.

Lei Chenghu was about to launch a massive attack with all the forces of the Third Battle Area, but what would his target be?

Thinking quickly, Dongfang Yuan breathed heavily while his pupils constricted to the minimum. He could not say a single syllable anymore.

Staring at him coldly, Lei Chenghu suddenly ripped off the armband of the expedition army of the Imperium on the left sleeve of his uniform and replaced it with a crimson, new one.

At the center of the new armband was an emblem of the lightning trident, supported by the words “Honor the Majesty” on the left side and “Settle the Rebellions” on the right.

Black uniform, red armband, and shocking slogan!

“Show me your courage and do not act like a clown. Even though you have been corrupted by the extraterrestrial devils into a devil ‘Demonic Cultivator’, you are still a soldier of the Imperium.”

Lei Chenghu smoothed his armband and cleaned his clothes, before he said to Dongfang Yuan, “You will be offered to the flag later. Do not lose the dignity of a soldier!”

“Extraterrestrial devils? What extraterrestrial devils?”

There was confusion in Dongfang Yuan’s small eyes, but feeling that he had caught the last life buoy, he said in a hurry, “Honestly, how is this related to the extraterrestrial devils? I am not a Demonic Cultivator. Absolutely not. Marquis Liaohai, this must be a misunderstanding. A great misunderstanding!”

In his anxiety, he did not realize that Lei Chenghu said he would be offered to the flag later. He was even more dumbfounded after he realized it.

Lei Chenghu hinted at his two guards. One of the guards kicked Dongfang Yuan to the ground, and the other took out a dosage of a fluorescent, mysterious drug from his artificial body before he groped for Dongfang Yuan’s carotid artery and injected all of it in.

“Cough, cough, cough, cough!”

Poor Dongfang Yuan did not expect that things would end so badly. He was not resolute enough when he still had the ability to fight but simply surrendered obediently. He had seen through Lei Chenghu’s ambitions now, but it was too late.

Like a drunk lobster, he writhed on the ground and cramped violently, with an excruciating look on his face.

Foams ran out of his mouth like a spring, only to turn into thick, green liquids very soon, mixed with thousands of spots of blood.

Veins as thick as leeches crawled all over his body, with black air vaguely spreading out. He couldn’t have looked more terrible.

BOOM!

Black streams of spiritual energy were ignited on his body, which were more violent, brutal, and aggressive than common spiritual energy. They raged and shrieked as if they were alive.

Crack!

Even the magical equipment that confined him was torn into pieces by his astonishing force. Dongfang Yuan, like a furiously burning beast, burst into a rampage and lunged at Lei Chenghu, roaring.

BAM!

In the next second, he was already kicked to the floor by Li Yao; half of the bones in his body were broken. His brutality that was boosted by the drugs was immediately gone.

Stomping on Dongfang Yuan's head hard, Li Yao frowned and said, "Is this 'tenebrum energy'? He has indeed become a Demonic Immortal Cultivator?"

"Not exactly. It is just an excitant whose symptoms are very similar to the outburst of tenebrum energy."

Lei Chenghu said casually, "However, the forms of the extraterrestrial devils are mysterious and unpredictable in the first place. Nobody can say for sure what the real tenebrum energy and Demonic Cultivators look like. In the situation right now, if we say he is a Demonic Cultivator, he is a Demonic Cultivator.

"The Covenant Alliance is too unique after all. Accusing our enemy of joining the Covenant Alliance clearly does not make any sense. It will be much more reasonable if they have been corrupted by the extraterrestrial devils and become their lackeys."

Looking at Lei Chenghu, Li Yao said, "I thought that General Lei was a soldier of honor and integrity who despised such petty tricks… which could not stand scrutiny."

"In the past, I did despise such boring tricks."

Lei Chenghu admitted frankly, "But it does not mean that I do not know how to use the tricks."

"A soldier is a soldier. Soldiers cannot be classified as righteous ones and shameless ones. There are only two kinds of soldiers—the victorious soldiers and the losing soldiers.

“For the Imperium, I will win this battle whatever methods I have to use!”

Chapter 2244 - The Men of Justice Shall Slay Them Together!

When Li Yao, Lei Chenghu, and Li Jialing returned to the meeting room at the rear of the bridge, the commanders of the fleets had already projected themselves to the meeting room through holograms, waiting somewhat impatiently.

In the Imperium of True Human Beings where strength mattered most, the highest commander of the fleet of every Sector was either the real controller of the world or their trusted subordinates and even close family members. They were the spokespersons of the local interests.

Thanks to the continuous development of the space jump technologies, while the teleportation of a massive fleet would consume abundant spiritual energy, the commutation of one or two starships was still bearable. Therefore, many Sector Masters just traveled between the frontline and their nests in such a way.

After hearing that Lei Chenghu had escaped and even rose up, the Sector Masters and local lords who had been commanded by him for more than ten years all joined him, partly because of their loyalty, and partly, as well as more importantly, because they hoped that Lei Chenghu could defend their interests, like the Wei family from the Red Nimbus Sector.

“General!”

“My lord!”

“Commander!”

The moment they saw Lei Chenghu entered the room, all the 3D projections stood at attention and saluted Lei Chenghu in the most standard way, before they greeted Lei Chenghu in an assortment of ways.

However they called him, there was the same eagerness in every Sector Master and warlord’s eyes.

Lei Chenghu glanced around slowly and, surprisingly, he did not return the courtesy. Instead, he took off his hat and made a movement that shocked everyone. He closed his legs and bent his back by ninety degrees, bowing deeply at his subordinates!

“This is—”

All the Sector Masters and warlords were stunned. What they projected to Iron Torrent, the general flagship of the Third Battle Area, were only shadows, and their real bodies were still on their respective flagships. Naturally, it was impossible for them to move forward and stop him. They could only stammer, “What-What is the meaning of this, general?”

“Before the military meeting officially begins, allow me to express my deepest apology to everyone.”

Lei Chenghu did not stand straight again until he bowed for three seconds. He put on the hat again, cleaned his clothes, and said solemnly, “Don’t misunderstand me. I am not just apologizing to you but also to the men of the Imperium under your command who have fought in blood for more than ten years and even sacrificed valiantly.

“I promised to you and to every man that was gathered below my saber that I would lead them to victory and let them deserve what they did. Even if they died in the battles, their sacrifices would earn honor for themselves, rise for their offspring, and a future for their hometowns!

“I promised that I would make the Council of Elders fulfill their promise before the war and give the inconspicuous, miscellaneous troops in the past the respect, honor, credits, and interests that we deserved. I said that I would establish a monument of ten thousand meters in the capital, on which the name of every person who had sacrificed could be found!

“I promised everything with my life before!

“However…

“I have disappointed everyone. I failed to fulfill my promise. A month ago, I went to the Council of Elders to let them hear the voices of the frontline, our voices, in a peaceful way! But the Council of Elders turned down our reasonable request in the most indifferent, humiliating, and shameful way, smashing the efforts of all of us—both the living and the deceased—into pieces. Our hundred years of sacrifices, loyalty, devotion, and patriotism had been stomped on like dust!

“I am sorry for everyone. I’m sorry for every soldier of the Third Battle Area who has been fighting bravely. I’m sorry for all the deceased souls who charged at destruction under the lightning trident flag under my call. I’m sorry for everyone that used to trust me!”

As he spoke, the eyes of the “God of War” turned red, and his voice was shivering.

“General!”

“My lord!”

“Commander!”

Having grown into a big shot in their world in the cold, ruthless environment of the Immortal Cultivators, those warlords and Sector Masters had hearts as tough as iron. But still, they could not help but feel touched by Lei Chenghu’s mind-boggling apology. They said in excitement, “It’s… It’s not your fault. We all know that you have tried. It is a pity that the Council of Elders is full of wolves that nearly swallowed you too!”

“Only the losers say ‘I tried’; the winners will only think how to win!”

Lei Chenghu’s eyes were still red, mixed with the dirty tears shed for the heroes, but he had turned from grief and sorrow to determination. He gnashed his teeth and said, “The facts in the past month prove that the path of peace and stability has been entirely cut off. Not just the soldiers in the frontline such as us, even the Imperium and His Majesty have been mired in great danger.

“As Immortal Cultivators and soldiers of the Imperium, we have to do everything that can be done. We certainly cannot back off saying that ‘I tried’. Given the crisis right now, we will have to walk on a different path!

“At this moment, I am no longer a general, a lord, and a commander, but just a common Immortal Cultivator, a soldier of the Imperium, and a brother that has fought through life and death with you for more than ten years!

“Today, I have summoned all my brothers to this place because I want to ask you one question; are you willing to believe in me one time, one last time?”

Lei Chenghu’s eyes were the most accurate depiction of “the eyes of an aggressive tiger”.

All the warlords and Sector Masters hurried to nod their heads. “Of course we are. Not just one time, we will believe in you a hundred times!”

“One time. One last time will be enough, because I will not disappoint you again. No men will die in vain again, and no swine and wolves will ever lay fingers on the interests that you deserve!”

Lei Chenghu took a deep breath and looked around with his lightning-like eyes again, which were so intense that almost all the holograms were torn apart. In the end, he finally said unhurriedly, “I have introduced the details to you in the secret letters, so I will not waste time on that here. Now that you are willing to trust me and lead all your elites to fight with me without bothering anything, you will be the central forces to establish a new Imperium, and I am willing to trust all of you without reserve too!

“Allow me to introduce to you Fellow Cultivator Li Yao who escaped from the capital at the risk of his life. He used to be His Majesty’s personal bodyguard. Now, he has been authorized to represent His Majesty with His Majesty’s secret decree!”

Li Yao coughed slightly and moved forward. Vague flames of spiritual energy surged out of his body, highlighting the immeasurability of his dark eyes with the bright gold color.

“We’re privileged to meet you, Envoy Li!”

Whether or not this uncanny “Envoy Li” and the “secret decree” were authentic or fake, the Gold Vulture and Li Yao’s unparalleled strength were certainly true. The warlords and the Sector Masters were keen enough to realize that “Vulture Li Yao” was a key person of the reformists, and that once the cause succeeded, his identity would be justified even if it was fake at the beginning.

Therefore, they all bowed at Li Yao in respect, accepting his identity as the emperor’s envoy.

Solemnly, Li Yao did not return the courtesy but closed his hands in a gesture that looked like a blossoming lotus flower, while he retrieved a jade chip from the Cosmos Ring.

He was so careful and serious as if some incredible treasure was stored in the jade chip.

Everybody was slightly dazed. When they looked at the jade chip that was carved with the lighting trident emblem and the royal runes, they immediately realized what it was. Their hearts were all pounding.

Lowering his head, Lei Chenghu said, “Generals, please heed the royal decree!”

The secret decree was not an official, public one, and the Imperium of True Human Beings did not have all the formalities of the ancient dynasties. Therefore, they did not have to kowtow and kneel before the decree.

The warlords and the Sector Masters all stuck their fists to their chests, waiting in patience.

Li Yao mumbled spells while he changed his hands into dozens of different gestures in the blink of an eye, which were the protocols of the royal family that Li Linghai taught him recently. With the understanding and imitation abilities of the Divinity Transformation Stage, he naturally performed them without any error.

As his hands changed quickly, the delicate jade chip was shimmering too. Suddenly, a vague roar of a dragon echoed, and the light in the form of dragons soared out of the jade chip, running to all directions.

The glamorous sound and visual effects were enough to suggest that the jade chi was indeed produced by the royal refiners through hard work. It was indeed a piece of royal ware from the palace.

As Li Yao's spells approached the end, Li Yao clapped his hands, and a light beam was immediately triggered by the jade chip, which was decorated by lightning at the edge with dragons flowing vaguely up and down. At the center of the light beam, it was exactly—

Nothing.

The so-called "secret decree" was empty without a single word!

All the Sector Masters, warlords, and fleet commanders were dumbfounded. They looked at Li Yao in confusion.

"His Majesty's every action is monitored closely. If there were a single word on the secret decree, do you think I could've brought it out of the royal palace and the capital? Even if I did, wouldn't His Majesty be killed once it was discovered?"

Li Yao said coldly, "This 'wordless decree' is indicative enough of His Majesty's difficulties and the blatant arrogance of the scoundrels!"

“Yes. Please take a look at the stamp on this ‘wordless decree’. His Majesty’s soul mark is truly inside. Now that we have the stamp, we could’ve just written anything on it if we wanted to fool other people.”

Lei Chenghu said solemnly, “But it was exactly His Majesty’s purpose to express his situation and his fury with this ‘wordless decree’. Do you not know what is said in the secret decree in your heart? In that case, just let Envoy Li speak it out for you. They are all from His Majesty’s original words.”

The warlords and Sector Masters looked at each other in bewilderment and realized that it did make sense. They turned around and looked at Li Yao again.

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao declared resolutely, one word after another, “The scoundrels in the court are conspiring to marginalize the monarch and ruin the rules. The awards and punishments that they issued were not the will of the sovereign. All the men of justice in the universe shall slay them together!”

Chapter 2245 - Sacrificial Offering to the Flag!

Chapter 2245 Sacrificial Offering to the Flag!

“Ah…”

The warlords, Sector Masters, and fleet commanders whispered to each other again.

Although they had long known why Lei Chenghu summoned all of them here, they still couldn’t help but feel excited to hear such a demanding decree.

All the men of justice in the universe shall slay them together!

“Everyone!”

Lei Chenghu’s voice was so loud that his every word rumbled like a clap of thunder. “Given the crisis that our country is in, there is no time for hesitation right now. I have made up my mind to follow His Majesty’s secret decree and lead the army into the capital to restore the royal authority and renew the Imperium!

“All the souls who sacrificed for the Imperium of True Human Beings in the past thousand years must not have their blood shed for nothing! We cannot allow the scoundrels and rebellions to ruin the great Imperium! To achieve the purpose, I will not hesitate to pay any price, even if I am derided as a ‘traitor’, because I believe that we will receive the acknowledgment and dignity that we deserve after we really remove the scoundrels and rescue His Majesty!

“Are there any men of bravery and loyalty who are willing to reform the Imperium together with me as well as the other great heroes of the universe?”

His words were both blood-boiling and carried an unquestionable air. Who had the courage to reject him?

Immediately, Wei Guanghui, commander of the Red Nimbus Fleet, shouted first, “All for the Imperium! All the Immortal Cultivators of the Red Nimbus Sector will die for our great country!”

“We will follow Marquis Liaohai and Envoy Li until we die!”

“Commander, just give the order. All our men understand the situation perfectly. They will not hesitate to fight for the birth of a new Imperium!”

For a moment, everybody was throwing out gallantry words in excitement and expressing their loyalty and “patriotism” to Lei Chenghu and Li Yao.

“Excellent!”

Lei Chenghu nodded his head heavily; his eyebrows like an unsheathed saber. “Rest assured, everyone. I will never fight a battle that I am not confident about, and I will certainly not lead so many brothers of so many Sectors to commit suicide! By saying ‘Honor the Majesty and Settle the Rebellions’, we are not completely smashing the Council of Elders or starting a civil war nationwide, but just petitioning with our blood and will so that the noble lords of the Council of Elders can hear our voice. Nothing more!

“We believe that most of the elders in the Council of Elders are still loyal to the Imperium and His Majesty. Those elders and His Majesty have all been fooled by a tiny group of scoundrels. Even the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance might’ve been a scheme of those scoundrels.

“Those scoundrels, on the other hand, are probably deeply associated with the extraterrestrial devils!”

Everybody was greatly shocked by his statement.

They all looked at Lei Chenghu in confusion, wondering what he was going to do.

Were there extraterrestrial devils in the Imperium of True Human Beings? Of course there were, or Yue Wushuang’s “Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils” wouldn’t have existed.

However, the extraterrestrial devils were most often engaged in evil cults or blood offerings in the remote planets. The best they could do was to arrive on a certain planet on a large scale and possess the people on it. But as soon as the army of the Imperium arrived, they would be extinguished as fast as they rose.

For thousands of years, the extraterrestrial devils had never dealt a critical blow to the regime of mankind at the center of the cosmos. Or maybe, it was because the extraterrestrial devils’ schemes were so sophisticated that they had swallowed tremendous interests in secret and raised countless spokespersons among human beings for themselves without ever being discovered.

The many warlords and Sector Masters naturally did not believe that the extraterrestrial devils would meddle in the mess.

That was because the extraterrestrial devils, who worshipped chaos, disorder, and desires, were also sworn enemies to the Alliance of the Holy Covenant.

The Covenant Alliance was even more determined to annihilate the extraterrestrial devils than the Imperium were.

Once they discovered the traces of the extraterrestrial devils’ activities, the Covenant Alliance would even abandon their grudge against the Imperium and launch attacks at the extraterrestrial devils without caring about anything.

So… even if the extraterrestrial devils did exist, they should be more inclined to the Imperium by logic, and their top priority should be to eliminate the zealots of the Covenant Alliance.

After all, the soil that supported the extraterrestrial devils was mankind with profound feelings. If the Covenant Alliance governed the universe and transformed everybody into puppets without feelings and self-consciousness, who could the extraterrestrial devils possibly invade and corrupt?

If one were to think about it more carefully, the whole thing did not make any sense.

But now that Lei Chenghu put it that way, he certainly had his reasons to do so. Everybody held their breath while waiting for him to continue.

Lei Chenghu clapped his hands. The door of the meeting room was opened, and two guards dragged in Dongfang Yuan, the commander of the fleet under the command of the special investigation committee who had been “devilized”.

At this moment, Dongfang Yuan had been surrounded by yet another three barriers, and he was tied up from head to toe with runes carved with lightning runes.

He had gradually woken up from the effects of the excitant. In fear and devastation, he opened his mouth and tried to defend himself, but anesthetics that could paralyze the vocal cord had been poured into his mouth a long time ago, making it impossible for him to say anything.

“This guy came to the Third Battle Area half a month ago, claiming that he was here to investigate the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance by the order of the special investigation committee and the Council of Elders. But as it turned out, he framed the innocent people, turned the entire Third Battle Area upside down, and made everybody live in fear. Do they still have any combat ability at all?”

Lei Chenghu kicked Dongfang Yuan to the ground and declared solemnly while pointing at his nose, “It has been found after investigation that he is an accomplice of the extraterrestrial devils and a shameless Demonic Cultivator. What he abided by is a chaotic and false order!

“The Imperium of True Human Beings is the only heir to the Star Ocean Imperium in the past. We are all the descendants of the Star Ocean Imperium, which was destroyed by the extraterrestrial devils. We must never tolerate the extraterrestrial devils!

“Be vigilant, fellow Cultivators. It is very easy for the extraterrestrial devils to crawl into the weaknesses of humanity and enlarge your feelings infinitely, thereby transforming you into slaves of desires! Not just him, part of the undetermined elders in the Council of Elders as well as in the noble families at the center of the cosmos have been corrupted by the extraterrestrial devils and turned into hidden Demonic Cultivators!

“Our armed intervention this time is not against the Council of Elders, not in complete opposition to the noble families at the center of the cosmos, but to help them remove the bunch of Demonic Cultivators that are well hidden. I believe that they will understand our sincerity and that all the people of the Imperium will support us after they learn the truth!”

Lei Chenghu finished his speech without any stop. Not giving any time for the warlords and Sector Masters to question him, he stared at Dongfang Yuan and hinted to the man to stand up.

Dongfang Yuan was already caught in dizziness right now. Standing to his feet in ignorance, he was still hoping to beg for mercy, only to discover that the light of a saber that looked like a viper shone from Lei Chenghu’s waist at his neck. Then, the whole world began to swirl rapidly as if a warship had exploded, dragging him into a bloody vortex. He could not feel anything anymore after half a second.

Chi—

The blood rose to almost five meters high and sprayed all over Lei Chenghu’s body.

The spots of blood soon leaked into his black uniform and melted with the clothes, only to be vaporized by his surging spiritual energy into a cluster of red mist that enshrouded Lei Chenghu’s body and head.

The holograms of the warlords and Sector Masters were pierced through by the blood pearls, too, and feeble ripples were spreading out.

The headless torso wearing the uniform of the vice-admiral of the Imperium’s army staggered forward and collapsed to the group, cramping nervously.

All the holograms looked at the broken body and the rolling head in silence, not expecting Lei Chenghu to be so brutal that he was not leaving any room of peace at all.

Shua!

Lei Chenghu shook the blood on the edge of his saber and slowly put it back to its sheathe. Then, he said casually, “I have executed this devil as a sacrificial offering for our flag. It is your turn now, everyone.

“This is not the only Demonic Cultivator in the investigators’ fleet. I have locked all the other ‘suspects of Demonic Cultivators’ into a target starship. The spiritual shield of the target starship has been removed, and tremendous crystals have been filled in too.

“Everybody, the coordinates of the target starship are being sent to your flagships. Please open fire at the target starship one minute later to destroy all the ‘suspects of Demonic Cultivators’!”

“Suspects” was certainly an excellent choice of words.

A series of accurate coordinates were sent to the flagships immediately. The distance was so short that it was impossible to miss the target.

On the top of Lei Chenghu and Li Yao’s heads, a brand-new light beam surfaced too, and it manifested a ragged target starship that was shuddering in fear in the dark universe.

The warlords and Sector Masters looked at each other in shock and coldness, not expecting Lei Chenghu to be so ruthless.

Since the investigators’ fleet was sent by the Council of Elders to dissect the Astounding Thunder Fleet and suppress the other fleets of the Third Battle Area, it was naturally made of the people of the four Kurfürst families. The commanders of various levels were all the core forces of the four Kurfürst families, if not the biological family members of the big shots.

Who knew how many people Lei Chenghu had stuffed into the target starship and whose sons or grandsons they were?

One they performed the attack, there would be no turning back for them. They would have to “reform the Imperium” to the end with Lei Chenghu!

But the Astounding Thunder Fleet was watching them nearby, and because they each had their own plans, it was possible that somebody would show loyalty to Lei Chenghu and Envoy Li. If they fell behind others, their hesitation would certainly weaken their claim on the cake when the Imperium was really “reformed”.

Lei Chenghu and Li Yao, on the other hand, were staring at them coldly, not giving them an opportunity for discussion or consideration. Their flagships had also been connected to Iron Torrent, the flagship-general of the Third Battle Area. It would be obvious whether they opened fire or hit the target.

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Lei Chenghu had also filled the target starship with crystal bombs, which meant that it would be useless to intentionally hit the sturdy, unimportant parts because that would still raise a serial explosion and kill all the captives in the starship. Their crimes would never be cleaned!

One minute elapsed quickly.

“Everybody—”

Lei Chenghu bulged his eyes. “What are you waiting for? Let’s do it!”

The warlords and Sector Masters gritted their teeth at the same time. Some people’s eyeballs were almost squeezed out by wrinkles. They made up their mind at the same time.

Mystic rays, cannonballs that contained highly-explosive crystals, and bullets sent by crystal rails brutally darted at the target starship at the same time.

The target starship, along with nobody knew how many direct descendants of the four Kurfürst families, exploded in the eyes and the hearts of every warlord and Sector Master.

Chapter 2246 - More Dangerous Than Extraterrestrial Devils

Because of the abundant crystal bombs filled inside, the explosion was intense and complete. The cruel fireworks did not shine for long before they perished in the cold, dark universe.

As the light faded away, it also brought all the hesitation in the eyes, blood, and hearts of all the warlords and Sector Masters.

The Immortal Cultivators who were from the remote areas of the Imperium but were equally ambitious became as determined and ruthless as their commander Lei Chenghu!

“Excellent. From this moment on, we will all be fellow Cultivators in the cause of reform!”

His hands in his back, Lei Chenghu stood majestically like a pillar that supported the sky. He declared resolutely, “The Imperium’s life and our future will depend on our attempt. So, there is no need to reserve anything now. Allocate all the assets, ammunition, and Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, and ask your captains to inculcate the ideas of renewing the Imperium into every soldier at the bottom level!”

“Commander—”

Wei Guanghui, commander of the Red Nimbus Fleet, hesitated for a moment and said, “Our fuel, ammunition, and resources for the training of all the Immortal Cultivators can only support one month at best. If we are engaged in a fierce battle, they will probably run out in three days to one week. It is definitely impossible for us to conquer the capital in one week with our forces. What are we going to do next?”

“You don’t need to worry about that. I am certain of our final victory.”

Lei Chenghu said casually, “I assure you that inexhaustible resources will be awaiting everyone in one week. Now, let’s take action!”

A military order was certainly not something to be questioned. Now that the sword had been unsheathed, it would not be sheathed until it had drunk enough blood. The warlords and the fleet commanders, without further ado, ended the communication and began their preparations busily.

The space jump units of the starships were tested and charged with energy again to ensure that the soul-stirring jump could be performed in a few hours.

The warehouses of crystals and arsenals were opened, and the glittering crystals and blades were all distributed, even to the hands of the most humble hominoid soldiers.

The barges of the Astounding Thunder Fleet delivered abundant armbands to the branch fleets. The commanders of all levels in the branch fleets tore off their armbands of the expedition army and put on the new armband of the reformists.

For the common soldiers, they did not have enough armbands to replace the old ones. So, they simply threw away the armbands of the expedition army, wrote “Honor the Majesty and Settle the Rebellions” on a piece of white cloth with blood, and tied it around their foreheads, which looked rather serious and intimidating.

On the flagships from the remote worlds of the Imperium, the leaders were speaking to all the soldiers, especially the younger ones at the bottom level, to encourage them.

On the flagship of the Red Nimbus Fleet…

“Our country has been reduced to such a condition, and our people are in such misery that they are all being suffocated. Your families are suffering the same, right?

“Our factories have been crushed and corrupted by the nobles’ capitals from the center of the cosmos! Our farmlands are growing the crops from the center of the cosmos, which have stolen all the living space of the local crops savagely. There is not a single seed that is aboriginal to the Red Nimbus Sector anymore!

“The spiritual puppets from the center of the cosmos that are said to be advanced are also walking in the factories and farmlands of the Red Nimbus Sector blatantly, robbing us of our jobs brutally and shamelessly!

“The proud workers and farmers of the Red Nimbus Sector could stand straight and make a living for their families with their hands and sweat in the past. But right now, they cannot even get the most humble job, and they can only degenerate into beggars, rascals, and prostitutes without dignities!

“Even the Immortal Cultivators whose spiritual roots have been awakened, in order to get the tiniest training resources, have to swallow their discontent and bent their knees as muscles and lackeys for the magnates!

“Tell me, have you not suffered enough such days? Can you take it anymore?”

On the flagship of the Giant Whale Fleet…

“On the Battle Line of Ghosts’ Fury—the gory battlefield that swallowed three fleets, ten thousand starships, and millions of soldiers in only half a month—the warriors of the Giant Whale Sector pushed forward in no fear of sacrifices like moths darting at flames. On the dead bodies of our compatriots, we fought against the Covenant Alliance one bone after another and pressed the charge inch by inch. Eventually, we secured a great triumph!

“However, in the rear, at our hometown, our parents are crying in the middle of the night because of hunger, our children can barely stand on their feet because of the lack of food, and our sisters and wives have to sell their bodies and force their smiles to the nobles and magnates from the center of the cosmos, to be played by them flagrantly!

“Even so, even though we have demeaned ourselves to such an extent, we have still been betrayed, and we are about to be kicked away now that our values are fully exploited!

“Who is our real enemy exactly? Warriors of the Giant Whale Sector, loyal sons, husbands, and brothers of their suffering families in the hometown, open your eyes and see for yourself!”

On the flagship of the Bloody Fire Fleet…

“His Majesty will never bear to watch us suffer like this. This is absolutely not the intention of His Majesty. It is all done by the privileged lords and the corrupted officials next to His Majesty!

“Those villains tricked His Majesty, stole the power of the Imperium, and did all the evil things. They are the traitors of the Imperium, the worms of the civilization of mankind. His Majesty has had enough of their blatant lawlessness too!

“Right now, a secret decree has been brought by His Majesty’s envoy, ordering us to rise, remove the traitors, and renew the Imperium!

“It is the responsibility of us soldiers to die for the cause to cleanse the universe and let it re-embrace justice!”

On the flagship of the Green Frost Fleet…

“Not just His Majesty, most of the elders in the Council of Elders are supportive of our righteous action too. The citizens in the capital of all classes are also waiting for our army to enter the capital and make things right again!

“The group of villains who have been corrupted by the extraterrestrial devils is the only people who are scared of our thunderous march!

“Therefore, as long as our fleet appears at the periphery of the capital, the ambitions and schemes of the tiny group of enemies will be crushed unstoppably.

“Summon your courage and bring out the glory of the soldiers of the Imperium. March, charge, and fight. The victory will be ours. The victory will be His Majesty’s. The victory will be the Imperium’s!”

Countless starships, Immortal Cultivators, and soldiers of the Imperium stood like a dense forest made of iron.

At this moment, the iron forest was already set on fire.

On Iron Torrent, the flagship-general of the coalition fleet, the final battle preparations were being conducted busily too.

Above the grid command system made of ten connected super crystal processors, the names, numbers, and specifications of the starships popped up on the glittering light beam one after another.

Those starships had been connected into the anti-interference local area network of the coalition fleet as part of the “battle net”. Then, by the high-speed exchange of information between the soul and the crystal processors, they became tiny cells on Lei Chenghu’s body.

Lei Chenghu stared at all the appearing starships without blinking. With the massive computational ability of the Divinity Transformation Stage, he melted himself in the data chain and the computation array of the mainframe crystal processors, allowing the thousands of thoughts in his head to be transmitted to every starship instantly.

In such a way, the hundreds of starships from dozens of different branch fleets were mobilized by him as if they were his arms and fingers. Like ants and bees, they were moved and regrouped in an orderly fashion.

It was an enjoyment to watch Lei Chenghu organize the troops.

Standing behind Lei Chenghu, Li Yao hesitated.

“Is there a problem?”

Without looking back, Lei Chenghu asked casually.

“Nothing in particular. I’m just wondering…”

Li Yao couldn’t hold it back anymore and asked it out straightforwardly, “There was not a single guy from the four Kurfürst families on the target starship that was destroyed by the collective bombardment, was there?”

Lei Chenghu was silent for a moment while he gave orders smoothly without any stop. Not giving a direct reply, he said, “The Imperium is too seriously sick right now, and this is not the best opportunity for a great surgery. If possible, I still hope that less blood can be shed to make the Council of Elders change their mind.

“This is not a concession. I’m just trying to… preserve as much strength for the Imperium as possible.”

“Got it.”

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao asked again, “There’s one other thing that I’m very curious about. The Star Ocean Imperium was destroyed by the extraterrestrial devils ten thousand years ago. By logic, the extraterrestrial devils must’ve been very powerful. But why did they never cause too much trouble in the recent ten thousand years?

“This time, the queen and you are using the extraterrestrial devils as your disguises again, but has it ever occurred to you that the extraterrestrial devils might be really lurking in the Imperium waiting for a good opportunity to instigate chaos again? Are you not concerned about that at all?”

Li Yao was still ill at ease about the extraterrestrial devils, because the Star Glory Federation was almost destroyed by the extraterrestrial devils when the Black Wind Fleet attacked.

The extraterrestrial devil that possessed Lu Qingchen, on the other hand, was not necessarily eradicated but very likely had fled all the way to the center of the cosmos.

“I have been fighting in space for two hundred years, and I’ve encountered all kinds of ferocious enemies: the extraterrestrial devils, the Alliance of the Holy Covenant, and all kinds of bizarre alien species.”

Lei Chenghu said slowly, “However, faced with the real dangers, none of those enemies are worth mentioning at all. There is nothing to be worried about.”

Li Yao frowned. “More dangerous than the extraterrestrial devils? What is it exactly?”

“Mankind. Ourselves.”

Lei Chenghu said, “Faced with the puppets of the Covenant Alliance, the accomplices of the extraterrestrial devils, or even the gods themselves, I have never been afraid. Only when I am faced with human beings, as well as myself, will I feel the chill deep down to the bones.”

Li Yao was stunned and did not know what to say.

“Alright, Envoy Li.”

Lei Chenghu sighed and finally turned around. There was no determination and excitement on his face now that a great war was about to begin, only unquenchable exhaustion. He patted Li Yao’s shoulder and said, “The coalition fleet has been gathered. Prepare for the battle!”

Chapter 2247 - Reactions of the Capital

The capital in the Empyreal Terminus Sector was the greatest and most glorious place of all time, the heart of the civilization of mankind, and the center of the cosmos.

Ever since the Demon Beast Dynasty reigned the universe, all the united universal countries had regarded the Empyreal Terminus Sector as the center of their government.

The Demon Beast Dynasty, the Star Ocean Imperium, the Star Ocean Republic, and the Imperium of True Human Beings—None of them was an exception.

Any schemer who was ambitious enough to control all the stars in the universe would consider the Empyreal Terminus Sector as an ultimate goal that they had to conquer too.

The Empyreal Terminus Sector was not a particularly prosperous world hundreds of thousands of years ago.

In terms of the location in the three-dimensional universe, it was not exactly at the very center of the cosmos where the stars were densest either.

However, the three-dimensional space in this particular world boasted very mysterious features. Folds, gaps, and stable wormholes were all over the void in the place.

From the four-dimensional perspective, the travelers from other worlds could jump to the Empyreal Terminus Sector with the minimal consumption of energy, and people of the

Empyreal Terminus Sector could also leave for any part of the universe easily through the ubiquitous folds of space.

Such a feature made the Empyreal Terminus Sector an intersection of all the worlds in the entire universe and a location of strategic importance that all the generals fought over. It was also why every united country chose the place as the capital.

For the people who jumped to the Empyreal Terminus Sector through a wormhole for the first time, they were often shocked by the texture of the world that was as cold as metals.

In the past forty thousand years, from the Demon Beast Dynasty to the Imperium of True Human Beings, the metals and minerals of hundreds of worlds under the control of mankind had been shipped to the Empyreal Terminus Sector incessantly to perform high modifications on the main planet of the Sector, gradually transforming the planet into an indestructible iron fortress.

It was the highest symbol of mankind’s modification on the universe at their own will.

When travelers entered the atmosphere from the port at the peripheral orbit of the planet on the sightseeing vertical platform, they would see the continuous, crowded metal buildings shining under the sunlight. All the architecture demonstrated the ambitions, desires, and recklessness with their most bizarre shapes and most glamorous colors.

Except for the royal palace and the manors of some nobles, little green could be found in the capital. However, the air circulated tubes that were everywhere were releasing fresh air that contained all kinds of microelements that were beneficial for the physical and mental health so that the hundred billion people living on the planet like bugs would not go mad from suffocation.

The travelers who visited the capital for the first time, after being shocked by the metal buildings—some like lions, some like giant eggs, some like fiends, and some even like short pants—would immediately be awed by the second splendor, which was the gaps on the ground that were tens of thousands of meters deep into the ground. They were like enormous gorges that connected each other and scarred the land.

Legends had it that at the last years of the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago, the Supreme Emperor and the Mad Armageddon had such a world-blighting battle on the main planet of the Empyreal Terminus Sector that even the planet was blown up into halves by their unbelievable strength.

That, of course, was just a tale. However strong a human being might be, it was impossible to blow up an enormous planet, which would have violated the conservation of spiritual energy.

But it was an undeniable fact that the crust of the planet was riddled with holes and the seismic areas, which had long hibernated, were activated, resulting in violent changes in the tectonic plates that ripped the interconnected gaps. Perhaps… it was the limit of mankind’s combat ability.

In the ten thousand years after the Star Ocean Imperium’s destruction, the lucky survivors repaired the broken planet carefully and arduously.

They discovered, to their surprise, the mother lodes hidden deep inside the gaps and the enormous geothermal energy contained in the underground magma. So, they simply established vast underground cities in the gaps thousands of meters deep that were blown out by the Supreme Emperor and the Mad Armageddon. Living and thriving in those places, they expanded the living space of the capital by multiple times.

Naturally, the noble families would never live below the ground, where it was dark, soggy, and hot. With the sea level of the capital as a baseline, it was a distinctive distribution graph of the social classes of the Imperium of True Human Beings from thousands of meters into the ground all the way upward.

The hominoids and the slave workers at the bottom level all lived tens of thousands of meters into the ground, making their living by operating the geothermal factories and providing energy for the entire planet. Several thousand meters into the ground, it was the residence of the miners and purification workers, and there were also farmlands where the underground crops were grown. On the ground lived tremendous low-level Immortal Cultivators and part of the wealthy hominoids. Those hominoids often had blood connections with the Immortal Cultivators and were privileged to see the sunlight of the capital only because of the protection of the Immortal Cultivators. They were on the highest floor of the pyramid of the hominoid class. They were also responsible for businesses in the capital.

As for the noble families and the magnates, they mostly lived on the twelve satellites of the Empyreal Terminus. Except for the two natural satellites, the other ten were all artificial super space stations. It was said that the most beautiful, extravagant paradises on earth were inside them.

In the thousand years since the Imperium of True Human Beings was established, the capital had been run in such a hierarchical but orderly mode.

It was a shame that as the rules of Immortal Cultivators set up by Blackstar the Great gradually collapsed and the Imperium set off to sunset, the capital had slowly lost the glory of the past too.

As more and more worlds were merged into the Imperium, the Imperium grew simply too huge. As the heart of the Imperium, the Empyreal Terminus Sector was bloated too.

In only the past five hundred years, the population of the capital had been increased by ten times. Also, in order to maintain the governance that was getting more and more chaotic and complicated, the bureaus and the offices of the local worlds in the capital were expanding ten times faster than the growth of the population. The resources of the Imperial Terminus Sector themselves were far from enough to support such a gigantic population and the consumption of the daily training of so many Immortal Cultivators. The ecological chain was on the verge of collapse every year. As a result, the capital had to count on the blood transmission from the neighboring worlds.

When the total population of the Empyreal Terminus Sector surpassed eighty billion according to the official census, the residents of other worlds were strictly forbidden to enter the capital randomly. Not just the hominoids, even the Immortal Cultivators in the Refinement Stage would find it barely possible to apply for a permanent residence certificate in the capital.

But the capital remained a land of hope and dreams. No matter how it was forbidden, nothing could stop the poor lads who had nothing but their ambitions to crowd into the place.

Now, the total population of the capital by the official census was a hundred and twenty billion, but many demographers and economists estimated that the actual population was at least two hundred billion. Most of the illegal entrants lurked at the bottommost parts of the chasms of thousands of meters deep like ants. Even if ten thousand statisticians of the Divinity Transformation Stage were blessed by the authorities, it would still be impossible to figure out the actual population.

Such a huge population resulted in the vulnerability of the resource supply of the Empyreal Terminus Sector. If the external worlds stopped the blood transmission for one day, a riot would be raised in the capital. If it stopped for three days, the capital might completely collapse.

Also, as the population surpassed the tipping point, a powerful chaotic effect was caused too, giving birth to many lawless gray if not dark areas. Although the bottom of the underground gaps was only ten thousand meters away from the nominal highest authority of the Imperium, even the Immortal Cultivators in the Nascent Soul Stage and the Divinity Transformation Stage would hesitate to visit those murky places. Countless people abided by the unspoken rules on the most glorious and sacred planet of the Imperium, living like half a human and half a ghost.

Perhaps it was exactly what the four Kurfürst families wanted to see.

Keeping the Imperial too powerful wouldn’t do them any good. A bloated, weak, and filthy capital as it was right now was a paradise for the adventurers, a stage for the ambitious schemers, and a dinner table for the noble families to carve the sea of stars!

It was a pity that a new force had appeared out of nowhere and intended to barge into the paradise, stomp on the stage, and smash the dinner table!

The news that Lei Chenghu had escaped from the Godly Might Prison with abundant political criminals and the entire Godly Might Fleet had spread to the noble lords in the Council of Elders two days ago.

What was even more terrifying than Lei Chenghu’s escape was—based on what and with whose help was he able to escape?

And what did the force want by helping Lei Chenghu escape?

The questions kissed the elders’ throats softly like poisoned daggers.

The elders, although knowing that Lei Chenghu had returned to the Third Battle Area, could do nothing about him.

Lei Chenghu was a famous expert on defenses in the Imperium. When he held the Black Wind battlefront in the recent hundred years, the army of the Covenant Alliance was never able to trespass.

The Third Battle Area was also the most important focus in the frontline. Lei Chenghu had dedicated his lifelong wisdom and spent tremendous resources shipped from the rear to build the place into an impenetrable stronghold.

Even if the four Kurfürst families were to mobilize all their forces to attack the Third Battle Area, they might not be capable of annihilating the Astounding Thunder Fleet in a short time. Also, by doing that, they would be raising a civil war in the Imperium. None of the four Kurfürst families could shoulder such a consequence.

Besides, Lei Chenghu would not be waiting for their attacks in the Third Battle Area either.

A fleet was not a planet. It could wander about in the universe fast and randomly. Unless the enemy wanted it too, it would be barely possible to locate a fleet in the vast sea of stars for a decisive battle!

It was exactly the situation right now.

Before the Council of Elders realized what was going on, Lei Chenghu had cut off all the communications between the Third Battle Area and the outside world. Of course, all the space gates in the Third Battle Area were shut down too.

The Third Battle Area became a dark, immeasurable world of mists.

Heated arguments burst out in the Council of Elders because nobody wanted their own fleet to jump into the place, scattered, to be butchered.

They could only cut off all the resource supplies to the Third Battle Area, hoping that they could strand Lei Chenghu or force him to negotiate.

But even the most idiotic people could tell that Lei Chenghu would not wait to be killed. The resources he had in his hands were enough to launch a shocking, suicide attack!

Translator’s Note: The author’s acknowledgment: the Imperium’s capital is inspired by Trantor in Foundation, Isaac Asimov’s great work.

Chapter 2248 - Attack the Unprepared Enemy!

“God of War” Lei Chenghu was quite right about one thing.

After mankind explored the three-dimensional universe by way of “space jump” and thereby conquered thousands of Sectors and ten times more resource planets, “attack” was always a hundred times simpler than “defense” in any universal war.

Lei Chenghu was not an external enemy. He was an important commander in the Imperium’s army and a seasoned general who had fought for two hundred years. Also, it was possible that he had the help of a certain mysterious force from the capital, meaning that he would know the maps, the distribution of troops, and the jump coordinates of various worlds of the Imperium perfectly.

He could choose his target free at will and appear at any space zone unexpectedly.

The defender, on the other hand, could not distribute all the troops to every world and every planet evenly, which would only be divided and conquered by the enemy. They had to focus the troops in certain areas.

The attacker boasted almost infinite initiative in the battle, albeit with one limitation that was the resource supply.

It was true that the attacker could choose a target without any restraint in the first jump and attack, but the decision and the battle to come would consume whatever fuel and ammunition they had.

If the first battle could not secure glorious results with sufficient supplies, it would be impossible for the attacker to perform a second jump. They would be trapped on the burning battlefield forever.

Such attack and defense were like the duel of two shooters with snaphances.

Snaphances could only be shot once at a time. Whoever shot first would definitely boast huge advantages, but if they missed their target, they would be losing all their hope.

So, the most important thing for the “second shooter” was to predict the Astounding Thunder Fleet’s primary target.

In the meantime, when the slogan “Honor the Majesty and Settle the Rebellions” was passed to every street in the capital and the ears of every elder in the Council of Elders, Lei Chenghu’s purpose couldn’t have been more obvious.

Yes. For the dissatisfied soldiers in the frontline and the interest groups from the remote, small worlds who had been greatly wronged, what could be a better place to lay waste to than the capital?

Theoretically speaking, the “rebellions” that were gathered in the Third Battle Area in a haste could never conquer the capital.

But anything was possible in a war. Didn’t Wuying Qi, who used to be a border general of the Star Ocean Republic, march to the capital, control the parliament, slaughter the MPs, cause a chain reaction, and eventually usurp the entire country in a similar strategy?

The lesson of the “founding emperor” was still vivid. So, the lords of the Council of Elders could not help but feel intimidated, fearing that the Council of Elders today would become the parliament of the republic a thousand years ago.

Ghost-like rumors were spreading in every street and alley.

Many people had learned that the flag of the rebellions had been raised everywhere in the universe and that they were about to sweep across the capital thunderously. Even if they could not conquer the capital, they would smash the heart of the universe into smithereens.

The intelligence from the more secret sources, on the other hand, stated with confidence that the investigation regarding the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance had raised public indignity in many fields. Right now, many people of the forces other than the four Kurfürst families in the capital had secretly taken the sides of the rebellions, or the “reformists”.

As long as Lei Chenghu’s fleet appeared at the edge of the Empyreal Terminus Sector, those forces would rise and cooperate with the Astounding Thunder Fleet to take down the capital!

The intelligence system of the four Kurfürst families ran crazily at a speed that was ten times higher than usual while they searched for the source of the rumors. Then, they did capture a bunch of stealthy guys successfully and even break into several of the secret bureaus of the reformists.

The interrogation on the captured reformists, however, gave them a piece of astounding news.

The reformists, headed by Queen Li Linghai, had worked hard in the capital for decades and compromised the critical nodes of the defense system of the capital, which was in fact not half secure as it appeared.

The devastating intelligence pushed the poisoned daggers into the throats of the elders.

The elders knew a thing or two about Li Linghai’s ambitions, but however wary they were, they had never considered her to be beyond the politics in the royal palace. It never occurred to them that she would raise such a powerful rebellious army outside the capital through such crazy methods.

Based on Queen Li Linghai’s infiltration on the capital and the powerful combat ability of the Astounding Thunder Fleet, if the reformists were to really lunge at the capital in a wild gamble without caring about the consequences, there was at least a twenty to thirty percent likelihood that part of the ground areas of the capital would be occupied.

If the two parties were to really have a huge fight on the ground of the capital, separating the heart of the Imperium into halves, the millennium Imperium would be ruined too.

The elders from the four Kurfürst families were not necessarily loyal and devoted to the name “Imperium”. Many ambitious guys even fantasized, more than once, how gratifying it would be if the Imperium collapsed apart, the dozens of worlds under their control grew independent, and they proclaimed themselves to be emperors.

However, those big shots in the Nascent Soul Stage and the Divinity Transformation Stage boasted a high computational ability and rationality. They were aware that the name “Imperium of True Human Beings” was the “greatest common divisor” for the interconnected, complicated interest groups.

The Imperium might be terrible and annoying, but without the Imperium, the hundreds of Sectors in its territory would be disorganized again and enter a new warring state that was even crueler than the past.

They would inevitably fight and brutalize each other until everybody was wounded and exhausted before the Covenant Alliance destroyed them one by one.

Now that none of the four Kurfürst families was confident of swallowing the entire universe, the Imperium became an entity that they had to protect.

To defend the Imperium, nothing could happen to the capital, because any massive war that happened to the capital would definitely raise a series of unpredictable chain reactions that would escalate into a storm sweeping across the entire Imperium!

“The rebellions must not enter the atmosphere of the capital!”

“The ambitions of the Astounding Thunder Fleet and the reformists must be exterminated at the cold vacuum at the edge of the Empyreal Terminus Sector!”

They were the consensus of all the elders.

To achieve their purpose, the military machines of the four Kurfürst families operated in the most vehement way.

One month ago, when the Blood Oath Alliance’s assassination took place, the four Kurfürst families had already dispatched tremendous elite warships of the families to jump to the capital to get things under control.

Today, without caring about the fuel and the attrition on the starships, they ordered even more elites in the fiefs of the families to reinforce the Empyreal Terminus Sector as fast as possible in order to replace the local garrisons whose loyalty was suspicious as they were very likely to be involved with the reformists.

In only twenty-four hours, more than fifteen fleets had jumped to the capital one by one.

Although the capital was best known for the incessant starships coming and leaving on the sailing routes, it rarely welcomed the simultaneous arrival of so many super warships. The ripples when they tore apart the four-dimensional space did not die down until a long time later, like the waves on an ocean.

Very ironically, both the “rebellions” of the reformists and the elites of the four Kurfürst families had been gathered rapidly for the same reason—to protect His Majesty who was brilliant, invincible, and infinitely great!

With the reinforcement of fifteen fleets, plus the ten or so fleets that were stationed in the capital in the first place, the total number of the fleets dispersed in the Empyreal Terminus Sector had almost reached a terrifying thirty.

The best troops of the entire Imperium of True Human Beings, other than those in the frontline, had all been gathered in the capital, waiting for the arrival of the Astounding Thunder Fleet.

The rebellions would definitely come. None of the elders had any doubt about that.

The rebellions, who did not have a base in the rear, had only enough resources for the daily consumption of the fleet for one month.

After each day, the scale of victory would be more inclined to the four Kurfürst families' side. In the competition of determination, it would doubtlessly be Li Linghai, Lei Chenghu, and the so-called "reformists" who would collapse first!

However—

…

The Divine Rain Planet, lying in the core territory of the Li family on the second quadrant of the Imperium of True Human Beings, was a planet with abundant rainfall and resources that was particularly suitable for the growth of the crops that stored spiritual energy.

What was even rarer was that an assortment of rare crystals and mother lodes were hidden below the ground of the planet, which transformed the planet into a complex of industries and agriculture. It had a high rating among all the planets in the Imperium.The Li family, naturally, had established continuous farms and mines on the Divine Rain Planet, developed glorious metropolises that could accommodate ten billion people, and set up super-enormous universal docks on the orbit of the planet, which could produce almost all the warships below the rank of heavy cruisers.

In short, it was one of the most important core worlds of the Li family. It even had the responsibility to provide resources for the few neighboring Sectors.

That could be seen by the three gigantic space gates that covered the orbit of the Divine Rain Planet and could be stretched to a thousand kilometers long when fully unfolded.

The three space gates were like three enormous lighthouses in equilateral triangles. The brightness they emanated was enough to rip apart the four-dimensional space and transmit to the entire Imperium instantly, navigating the starships from every corner of the Imperium to jump to the Divine Rain Planet without any error.

In the No. 3 space gate of the Divine Rain Planet, since too many fleets from various worlds of the Li family had refilled fuel and ammunition in the place in the past twenty-four hours before they jumped to the capital, all the navigation staff had been exhausted.

Right now, the emergent mobilization finally came to a halt, and everybody was less anxious than just now. Many of them fell asleep in the operation booths that were still a mess. Even those who were still working were so fatigued that they could barely keep their eyes open no matter how their superiors scolded them. The few guys who had been refreshed by drugs, on the other hand, were hiding in corners whispering to each other about the reformists who had jumped out of the darkness all of a sudden and the spectacular show that they were about to perform in the capital.

Right now, a high-pitched alarm shrieked in the entire control center of the No. 3 space gate.

Chapter 2249 - Lightning Storm!

The ten thousand surveillance cameras floating around the No. 3 space gate captured everything in the space within hundreds of thousands of kilometers. After being computed and analyzed by the super crystal processors, the picture was projected to the enormous light beam of the control center.

It could be clearly seen that, on the ninth jump point near the No. 3 space gate, the three-dimensional space that was absolutely empty suddenly spread out black ripples like an erupting spring.

In only a moment, the feeble ripples turned into overwhelming and colorful tides, which even affected the starships on the neighboring jump points that had just leaped out of the space gaps.

Those starships all hurried to dodge in a panic with the maximal power. The spiritual shields of many of them were shining brilliantly, implying the great pressure that they were enduring.

At the center of the ripples, or tides, was a flower that was unbelievably glamorous but perished instantly.

When the materials weighing millions of tons had intense reactions and completely perished, the enemy they released left ineffaceable spots on the dark universe and every observer’s eyes. The white spots gradually turned into the shape of a skeleton, representing death and destruction.

Every piece of surveillance magical equipment in the control center was shrieking, informing all the staff that a terrible accident of “superimposing teleportation” had taken place!

Two starships that jumped to the Divine Rain Planet from different worlds, for some reason, arrived at the very same coordinates at the same time. Every unit on the two starships, every cell of the crew members, and even every atom that made up the units and the bodies overlapped.

The consequence of such overlapping was catastrophic.

Even if only ten percent of the two starships overlapped, the super explosion caused would still swallow the two starships in the blink of an eye. The crew members did not even have the time to panic when they were torn into shreds in the cellar if not atomic level.

It was just the beginning.

The space swirl caused by the collision of the space ripples brought forth by the two starships boasted a high attraction force that absorbed all the materials that were fleeing away in a hurry, transforming them into part of the death and destruction, like a tiny black hole. Even some of the starships that failed to escape in time were gradually attracted and about to be involved in the serial destruction.

“How did it happen?”

The most dazzling and devastating picture on the surveillance light beam cast the control center into a moment of suffocation and silence.

The manager of the Navigation and Coordination Center of the No. 3 space gate roared furiously, “Who is responsible for the coordination of the ninth jump point? Why did they send the same accurate jump coordinates to two starships?”

The scale of the universe was far beyond the imagination of any human being. Theoretically speaking, it was impossible for two starships to run into each other in a space jump.

However, in order to increase the precision of the jump, The Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan, mankind’s ancestors, created the magical equipment such as “star beacons” and “space gates”, which attracted travelers everywhere like the lighthouses in a dark night.

As a result, the jump coordinates of the starships that passed the space gates would be limited to an extremely small range. Chances were that two starships might affect, overlap, and melt with each other.

When two starships overlaid in the same space, or two bodies of flesh and blood jumped to the same spot simultaneously, there would be dire consequences.

The Navigation and Coordination Center on the space gates was an administrative department created to avoid such accidents.

According to the size and navigation radius of every space gate, the area near the space gate would be classified into different jump points, each of which had unique jump coordinates and control code.

Under normal circumstances, before a starship performed a space jump, it would send a request to the target space gate. After confirming the identity and mission of the starship, the target space gate would send the jump coordinates, jump time, and control code to the starship according to the traffic of the space gate at present.

In such a way, the safety, regularity, and rapidity of the space jump could be guaranteed.

Therefore, in a normal jump procedure where the two parties communicated closely, it would be barely possible for two starships to land on the same spot, leading to such a serious accident.

The identities of the two overlapped and mutually-destroyed starships had been confirmed. They were two carriers that had come to the Divine Rain Planet to ship goods on a normal, monthly transportation mission. Their jump requests had been sent over a day ago!

Then, there could only be one possibility.

It was a human-error accident. The coordinator gave the two starships the control code of the same time and coordinates.

The manager of the control center of the No. 3 space gate immediately blushed and glared at the coordinator of the ninth jump point.

There was no telling if it was because he sensed his superior’s scorching eyes, but the coordinator suddenly trembled violently and hissed. His face became grave, and tremendous foams spurted out of his mouth. He collapsed to the floor, cramped nervously, and peed and s*ited his pants.

It seemed that some kind of terrible disease had attacked him.

“Well…”

The manager of the control center was slightly stunned. “Doctor! Somebody call a doctor!”

At this moment, everybody in the control center of the No. 3 space gate was overwhelmed.

The chaos caused by two overlapped starships could not be settled so easily. While the fuselages of the two starships had been too badly destroyed to be rescued at all, the fragments raised by the explosion were still sweeping across the entire area.

Under normal circumstances, even a carrier would boast a spiritual shield of reasonable intensity, which would be enough to withstand the broken pieces.

But this place was next to the space gate. Every minute, a starship would leap out of the void and condense into a solid form from the fractured state.

It was the most vulnerable moment for the starships and the crews.

Even the experts in the Nascent Soul Stage and even the Divinity Transformation Stage would be more fragile than ever in the state between the three-dimension and the four-dimension. They could even barely control their own souls.

If one of the pieces happened to hit the power unit or the arsenal of the starship, or if a starship happened to jump to the pieces from the void and overlaid with the pieces, it would definitely be a tragedy of serial destruction.

Therefore, desperate roars were echoing both from the control center and from the bridges of every starship nearby.

Everybody was operating so quickly that their hands were cramping. Every surveillance camera was aimed at the starships that had already leaped out of the void. More than 90% of the computational ability of the mainframe crystal processor was dedicated to the recalculation of the sailing routes and the order by which the starships were being teleported. Both the human brains and the crystal processors were overloaded, with white smoke popping up from their heads.

In the turmoil, nobody noticed that on the nineteenth jump point, which was the farthest away from the No. 3 space gate and usually served as a backup point, a dark warship that seemed to have been melted into the universe surfaced from the void without a sound.

It was a warship that seemed to be carved out of a black gem.

The application of the energy-absorption and anti-interference materials reduced the ripples it raised when it ripped apart the three-dimensional space to the minimum, making it look like a crocodile that slowly craned its head out of the thick swamp.

When its slender yet powerful body completely surfaced from the “universal swamp”, revealing the lightning camouflage on the two sides of the body and staring at the chaotic space zone, still nobody caught its existence.

It was the first crocodile.

Very soon, the second, the third, the fourth… the tenth crocodile popped up from the void dozens of kilometers away. They were as soundless as the first crocodile. Except for the feeble ripples that looked like black fog, they barely showed any signs. The only thing that declared their intimidation was the lightning paint on the starships that were in the shape of abstract tigers.

Such a paint was the symbol of the Astounding Thunder Fleet.

After the space jump, they were only dozens of kilometers away from each other, short enough to gather into a battle formation quickly. It was almost a perfect group jump.

It was not until this moment that the control center of the No. 3 space gate finally detected the unannounced guests.

“What… What the heck!”

Looking at the light spots on the surveillance light beam that were gathering into a battle formation as quickly as bees and ants, the manager of the No. 3 space gate couldn’t have been paler. “How is it possible? So many unauthorized, unknown starships have jumped to the Divine Rain Planet at the same time… Where did they get the jump permission and the control code? It’s impossible! It’s absolutely impossible!”

To avoid the awkward situation where the enemy’s large group of troops marched into the heartland rapidly and unstoppably, both the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance had extremely high control over their own space gates. The frequency of the signals sent by the space gates was one of the top secrets too.

Every starship changed the frequency every day to broadcast different navigation signals. Only by learning the navigation signals of today, or even a particular hour, which included the top confidential data like the “jump password”, could the navigation purpose of the space gate be best achieved and the precision of the jump be maximized.

If the coordinates of a space gate were known but the jump password could not be decrypted, there was a 99% chance that the starships would jump to the edge of the target world. Perhaps it would take them ten to fifteen days to cruise at the sub-light speed before they arrived at the resourceful area at the center of the world, namely the planets frequented and mostly developed by human beings.However, the mysterious intruders had jumped right next to the Divine Rain Planet. There must've been—

The manager of the control center of the No. 3 space gate was greatly alarmed. Out of intuitions, he drew the mini storm bolter from his waist.

But all the navigators, coordinators, and operators before him were performing the operations according to the regulations dutifully, with confusion on their faces. There was not the slightest anomaly.

Thud! Thud! Thud! Thud!

The noises of boots echoed in the corridor. They were the guards who were responsible for the safety of the No. 3 space gate.

The manager of the No. 3 space gate was slightly dazed, because he did not order the guards to come. When he turned back, the gate of the control center had been kicked open, and more than twenty soldiers in crystal suits barged in aggressively, followed by the deputy captain of the guards who was not wearing a crystal suit but the military uniform of the Imperium's army, except that there were stains of blood on the uniform, as if he had just killed someone.

On the other hand, the armband that represented the Li family on his left arm had been ripped away, replaced by a new armband that said "Honor the Majesty and Settle the Rebellions" intimidatingly!

Chapter 2250 - The Fleet Blessed by Darkness

The twisted faces of the guards and the foams on their mouths made them seem to be enshrouded in queer and zealous flames, depriving them of their original sanity.

It also seemed that something new had been injected deep into their brains, allowing them to show the air that was entirely different from the common Immortal Cultivators of the Li family.

The manager of the No. 3 space gate pointed his mini storm bolter at the guards subconsciously and stammered, “What-What are you doing?”

Before he pulled the trigger, the weapons on a couple of crystal suits on his opposite side emanated weird brilliance at the same time, and the mystic rays that entailed powerful spiritual energy of the fire class hit his right hand that held the gun simultaneously.

The powerful spiritual energy of the fire class dashed into the mini storm bolter instantly and led to the loss of control and explosion of the ammunition, blowing the manager’s right hand and the arm below the elbow into magma.

“Ahhh!”

Looking at his flesh that was quickly melting and spraying to the floor like orange mud, the manager screamed in excruciating pain.

He was not a battle-type Immortal Cultivator in the first place. Under the agony and the pressure of almost thirty crystal suits, he completely lost the determination to resist and fell on one of his knees. Holding his right arm that had been completely melted into a blackened, broken bone, he sweated heavily in pain and cramped nonstop, almost passing out in shock.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

There were two guards in the control center at the beginning, but they seemed to be on different sides with the guards who trespassed without order. Hardly had they drawn their storm bolters, meaning to counterattack, when they were blown back by the enemy’s stormy attacks. The pieces of their crystal suits splashed nonstop, until they crashed into the control panel of the space gate and turned into two dazzling sparks.

All the navigators, coordinators, and operators were so scared that their faces lost all colors. The control center was not spacious at all, and they had nowhere to run to. Having no other choices, they could only raise their hands and surrender.

The leader of the guards, the only guy who was not wearing a crystal suit, walked to the front of the manager who was shuddering with a pale face, observing the man coldly from the high stance.

“How… How dare you—”

The manager of the space gate realized the enemy’s intention from his cold eyes, but he found everything that had just happened too absurd to believe. His question was more like deep confusion than to reprimand.

“Life and death, honor and disgrace, are none of our concerns right now. There is nothing we daren’t do!”

The leader of the guards drew the saber, raised it high, and roared. The aura of the saber cut in the manager’s left shoulder like a lightning and went all the way down to the right abdomen, chopping the manager into halves!

Because many organs were still connected to his head, the manager of the space gate did not die instantly. While the world swirled before him, he saw everything on the surveillance light beam.

He saw that the rebelled guards led a dozen mysterious persons that he had never met before into the center, replacing the previous coordinators and operators of the No. 3 space gate.

Those newcomers were all well-trained professionals. They navigated the jump of the unknown starships so smoothly that their efficiency was even higher than that of the previous staff of the No. 3 space gate.

Under their flawless operations, more and more unknown starships leaped out of the void. Their jump points were so immaculate that they were neither so close to each other that they would affect or even overlap each other nor so far away that the enemy would have an opportunity to attack them separately. With the most appropriate distance from each other, they were able to gather into the most solemn battle formation the moment they got rid of the aftermath of the space-time ripples!

At first, they were all the stealthy models in black camouflage that did not show any sign. They were like crocodiles that were covered in mud.

As more and more “crocodiles” crawled out and gradually formed an indestructible battle formation, more and more huge arsenal warships and behemothic mothership barged into the area without any hesitation, not covering their existence at all, like the killer whales weighing tens of thousands of tons jumping out of the surface of the ocean.

Before he fell into the infinite darkness, the last picture that the manager of the space gate saw was the crocodiles, swordfishes, sharks, and giant whales launching colorful streaks of brilliance at the local garrison of the world.

The dozens of brilliant streaks were even and long, just like his soul waves and cardiogram right now.

Then, his soul completely dispersed into the vast sea of stars, and he could feel nothing anymore.

…

The Divine Rain Fleet was as chaotic as the No. 3 space gate just now.

As one of the most resourceful worlds in the dominion of the Li family, the defense of the Divine Rain Sector was certainly an important focus in the Li family’s strategies.

The equipment and personnel configuration for the Divine Rain Fleet were among the best in the hundred fleets of the Imperium nationwide.

But the critical thing was that, in order to build up the defense of the capital, the Divine Rain Fleet had just dispatched one-third of the warships to reinforce the capital. The reinforcing warships brought away tremendous ammunition and fuel and resulted in a few insignificant flaws on the local defense system of the Divine Rain Sector that could be fixed within twenty-four hours.

Who could’ve thought that the rebellions would march out at such an awkward moment?

The strength of the Divine Rain Fleet had been diminished by at least a third, but the rebellions had gathered the elites of the dozens of smaller worlds at the periphery of the Imperium who were commanded by Lei Chenghu, the famous “God of War”!

Besides, a war was not a game of numbers, and the final victory could not be decided by the advantages listed on a piece of paper.

In the war between the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance over the past hundred years, in order to preserve their strength as much as possible, the four Kurfürst families often asked the bumpkins and the miscellaneous troops from the edge of the Imperium to lead the vanguard as cannon fodder. After the cannon fodder paid great sacrifices and crushed the tough enemy, their own troops would arrive and claim the fruits of victory easily.

Then, a paradox was inevitably raised.

A fleet could only be built through fighting, and a strong troop could only be whetted by blood. Since the cannon fodder had always led the charge, and they had never been tested by the real iron and fire themselves, the elites of the four Kurfürst families often had only the most advanced starships but not the determination of fighting or abundant battle experience. They were nothing but decorative vases.

In the meantime, of a hundred cannon-fodder fleets, ninety were perhaps crushed, crippled, or even collapsed to the point that their designations were canceled.

But there were always ten cannon-fodder fleets that were relatively lucky. They would hone their claws and horns with the enemy’s blades in the cruel, hellish battles, swallow the enemy’s bodies to build up their own flesh and bones, and grow into the most fiendish creatures from cannon fodder quietly!

Unfortunately, the Divine Rain Fleet was a typical example of the former, whereas the coalition fleet of the Third Battle Area of the expedition army, represented by the Astounding Thunder Fleet, was a quintessence of the latter.

The Divine Rain Fleet was equipped with the most advanced and powerful starships of the Imperium, but they had been stationed in the Divine Rain Sector for decades. In name, the heavy responsibility to defend the sailing routes and the jump points was on their shoulders. But was any space pirate, extraterrestrial devil, or rogue blind enough to come to the Li family’s heartland to be killed?

Aside from in the regular drills that were getting slacker and slacker, the starships, which had installed the most advanced cannons of the Imperium at the cost of tremendous money and resources, had never been stained with a single drop of blood.

In the meantime, the commanders of various levels of the Divine Rain Fleet were almost all the descendants of the Li family. Many of them had a high Cultivation. Even the captain of an insignificant cruiser might be at the peak of the Core Formation Stage.

But their high levels were often piled by infinite Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and high-purity crystals. They had never been through real tests. However fierce the internal competitions within the family were, and however vivid the trial fields were, like the “Land of Sins”, could they be compared to the frontline of the war where the entire universe was burning and everybody’s blood was simmering?

The Astounding Thunder Fleet was exactly their opposite.

It was a fleet of destruction that was a living example of the Immortal Cultivators’ creed, “survival of the fittest”.

Every starship of the fleet had been surrounded by at least ten starships of the Covenant Alliance once, before they broke the enemy’s siege with broken bodies.

Every person on the starships knew clearly that they had nothing to count on except for their fists, teeth, and blades.

They did not break into the Building Foundation Stage, the Core Formation Stage or even the Nascent Soul Stage in the training bases of their families that had a whole set of facilities and a standing-by medical team, but on the rough battlefield where they ate the enemy’s flesh, drank their blood, and perhaps with the enemy’s saber stabbed in their chest.

Ninety-nine of every hundred Immortal Cultivators who used to join the fleet had died in the onerous, ruthless battlefield, but their haunting will and their ravenous desires had turned into dark blessings that went to the last survivor, allowing the last of them to crawl back from the door of hell to swallow the whole world again!

Such a Divine Rain Fleet watched such an Astounding Thunder Fleet show up aggressively in astonishment.

“Enemy incoming!”

“Enemy incoming!”

“Enemy incoming!”

Such meaningless talks were echoing on every starship of the Divine Rain Fleet. Mixed with the alarms of the surveillance magical equipment, they were even more disturbing.

The natural reaction of the flagship was to ask for reinforcements from other worlds and the capital. But all the external communication was under serious interferences, and all the distress calls were mired in the chaotic whirlpools. There was no telling if they were delivered to the outside world.

Lei Chenghu was too experienced to let the garrison of the Divine Rain Sector send out distress calls easily. The first batch of troops to jump to the place already included a lot of interferential starships.

Li Linghai had also compromised a lot of signal bases of the Divine Rain Sector earlier and asked Li Yao to forward the accurate coordinates of the bases to Lei Chenghu. So, the first wave of interferential attacks was highly effective. The communication between the Divine Rain Sector and the outside world was almost immediately cut off.

When the Divine Rain Fleet finally gathered into battle formation in a haste and charged at the Astounding Thunder Fleet, one-fourth of the Astounding Thunder Fleet had recovered from the surging space-time ripples, one-fourth were slowly passing the gap of the four-dimensional space, and the other half were still being teleported.

Even the dumbest commander knew that it was the best if not the only opportunity to annihilate the Astounding

Thunder Fleet.

But at this moment, the dozens of streaks of brilliance that the manager of the No. 3 space gate saw earlier, after leaving exhaust flames almost a thousand kilometers long in the vast space, appeared before the Divine Rain Fleet like a small meteor shower!

Chapter 2251 - Too Fancy an Entrance!

2251 Too Fancy an Entrance!

As the dozens of streaks of brilliance approached, the objects hidden at their cores became clear too. They were metal cylinders more than a hundred meters long and around twenty meters in diameter. They were made of different sections, and the few sections in the rear were all power units and fuel cabins.

After they were shot out by the magnificence helical force on the rails of the starships, the fuel cabins were reacting crazily at an intensity close to an explosion, releasing brightness that was even more dazzling than the stars.

Every once in a while, part of the fuel cabin and the power units would break off and ignite new and more powerful explosion fuel, both expanding the size of the exhaust flame and accelerating the speed of the cylinders significantly.

In the end, all the fuel cabins and power units broke off, and the cylinders turned into the perfect shape that looked like a metal waterdrop. Their speed was pushed to higher than ever too, as they pierced into the defense circle of the Divine Rain Fleet brutally and exploded against the glittering barrage.

The enormous giants, which were as daunting as gods, were displayed on the surveillance light beam of every starship of the Divine Rain Fleet clearly.

The broken metal shell became the best decoy that attracted most of the bullets and cannonballs. Those giants, on the other hand, simply pressed forward under the boost of the powerful inertia, stabbing into the heart of the Divine Rain Fleet.

“Colossi!”

Desperate roars were echoing on every starship of the Divine Rain Fleet.

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

The Colossi of the rebellions just distinguished themselves on the frontline of the Imperium’s counterattack. Naturally, the Divine Rain Fleet’s database stored their detailed data. By scanning the appearance of the Colossi and analyzing the unique performance parameters such as the features of the exhaust flames, it would be easy to tell their models and identities.

Every astounding, intimidating name that slowly manifested on the light beam cast the commanders of the Divine Rain Fleet into a prolonged silence.

One of the two Colossi in the lead was named “Fiery Riven”, driven by “Lei Wuya”, a seasoned expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage in the Astounding Thunder Fleet.

Lei Wuya was a rarely-seen Divinity Transformation Stage expert that was purely battle-type. He had the terrifying feat of destroying twelve starships of the Covenant Alliance in a row in the frontline. In terms of combat ability, he was almost the top expert in the Astounding Thunder Fleet, and he might not necessarily be on the losing side even if he encountered the best experts of the four Kurfürst families!

Had he not been a sheer maniac in martial arts who did not know the first thing about commanding, planning, and resource allocation and who had neither the time nor the interest to learn the knowledge, even Lei Chenghu wouldn’t have been able to dispatch the super expert easily.

The other Colossus, named “Nether Star”, was used by an infamous lunatic “Shen Tumeng”.

Shen Tumeng was perhaps the most typical example of the lowborn, low-level Immortal Cultivators from the peripherical worlds of the Imperium.

Without a noble background, it meant that there were no sufficient resources and an excellent environment for training. Despite the amazing gifts one might have, one could only fight on a battlefield as cannon fodder and struggle to grow up through the hellish battles.

Of ten thousand rookies, 9,999 had died the most miserable death, but Shen Tumeng was the survivor who managed to survive and thrive with the dark blessings of his compatriots, entering from the Refinement Stage to the Building Foundation Stage, from the Building Foundation Stage to the Core Formation Stage, and from the Core Formation Stage to the Nascent Soul Stage in the ocean of blood!

It was a shame that every person had their limitations. A guy in the Nascent Soul Stage was no different than an ant in the vast sea of stars. However crazily Shen Tumeng trained and fought, he could not prevent the fleet from his hometown from being annihilated, while the survivors were berated by the base of the expedition army for “defection”.

When Shen Tumeng was almost sent to court for a trial, it was Lei Chenghu who found a way to save him.

Ever since then, the maniac who had lost his hometown and his compatriots pledged unquestionable loyalty to Lei Chenghu. He also proved that he was absolutely not a flinching coward and that he could crush any enemy as long as he had enough training resources, supplies, and reliable allies. Finally, he advanced into the Divinity Transformation Stage successfully after more than ten years of bloody battles!

Both Lei Wuya and Shen Tumeng were generals who had survived hundreds of life-blighting battles. Hardly had their Colossi appeared in the universe when the most aggressive killing intent was released from the gaps on the shell, which immediately covered the distance in between and raged on the bridges of the various starships of the Divine Rain Fleet.

However, Lei Wuya and Shen Tumeng did not lead the thirty or so Colossi to lunge at the Divine Rain Fleet’s flagship. Instead, they marched at the flanks of the Divine Rain Fleet, each leading a team of Colossi, like a pair of scissors that was slowly opening.

“What’s going on? Why is the highest combat ability of the rebellions not coming at the core of our army?”

While the commander of the Divine Rain Fleet was confused, the probe magical equipment screamed again.

It was not until then that everybody discovered that one of the metal waterdrops had not exploded yet under the cover of the surging exhaust flames when other Colossi of the rebellions went on a rampage.

This metal waterdrop was smeared with stealth materials that could absorb all waves and radiations. It seemed to have been melted with the dark universe while it flew forward based on the high inertia without releasing any waves or ripples, which was why it was not detected until this moment.

From the guardian starships, the arsenal warships, and the cruisers of the Divine Rain Fleet, hundreds of pillars of light immediately ripped apart the universe and darted at the rushing black waterdrop at the same time!

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Enormous noises echoed inside all the starships while the main guns barraged. The deafening explosions brought an illusionary sense of security, and the overlapping, dazzling light balls seemed to have established a gold, glittering, impenetrable wall before the Divine Rain Fleet, which further reassured the commanders of the Divine Rain Fleet. They thought that they had finally bought themselves a few minutes to prepare for the battle.

However—

The dazzling light balls made of various cannonballs did not perish instantly as usual but seemed to have been given a new life. Wriggling, twisting, condensing, and changing, they slowly extended to the two sides, with a weird protrusion rising on the top.

Ten seconds later, the dazzling brilliant formed an overwhelming gold vulture that was at least a hundred kilometers long!

“This… This… This is—”

On the bridge of the Divine Rain Fleet’s flagship, everybody gasped nonstop in shock. The gold vulture before them that was condensed by their own barrage was still flapping its wings slowly while staring at them in derision of all laws and rules!

“Tremendous energy reaction has been detected!”

“A Colossus! A new Colossus!”

“The energy reaction is even more intense than the ‘Fiery Riven’ and the ‘Nether Star’ just now. Also, there is absolutely no data about this Colossus at all in our database. How is it possible?”

In the exclamations of disbelief, the overwhelming gold vulture constricted and transformed again. But, however it was constricted, the gold brilliance that it emanated was still more than ten kilometers long. The streaks of brightness formed a cape that looked like wings, flying on the back of a gold Colossus majestically!

Before the commanders on the starships of the Divine Rain Fleet stopped gasping, the bright cape behind the gold Colossus more than ten kilometers had other mysterious changes. All the light zigzagged into complicated runes, and the runes were then focused into three lines of splendid, shining words that the entire space zone could see easily.

On the left side of the Colossus, it was “Gold Vulture”, and on the right side, “Vulture Li Yao”. On the top, however, was a calligraphic and unquestionable declaration: “Surrender now!”

Every word was more than one kilometer in diameter. Although it was not very eye-catching in the vast space, they were duly displayed on every light beam under the scanning of all the probe magical equipment while they flew like flags.

"…"

All the commanders of the Divine Rain Fleet who saw the three lines were rendered speechless.

"Gold Vulture, Vulture Li Yao… What-what the heck is this?"

The highest commander on the flagship found it hard to believe. "Painting his own name with spiritual energy before the battle? What's wrong with this guy? Is he trying to disturb us with such a lousy strategy?

"Where are our Colossi? Deploy them now and blow up this guy! We must not allow the enemy to disrupt our battle formation!"

In the competition between warships and Colossi, the only advantage of the warships was the incessant and destructive remote firepower.

In order to fully carry out the advantage of the remote firepower, the distance of the two parties must be maximized. In other words, the enemy's Colossi must not approach one's own warships. Otherwise, not only would there be blind angles in shooting, but the allies would tend to be accidentally hurt in the damage.

It was needless to say that once the Colossi broke the armor and the shell and entered the warships, it would be an even more destructive blow.

The only solution that could prevent the attacks of the enemy’s Colossi effectively, other than the stalling of the fearless crystal suits and armed shuttles, would be one’s own Colossi.

As an elite force of the Li family defending a central world, the Divine Rain Fleet naturally boasted tremendous Colossi too. Even though most of the Colossi had reinforced the capital, there were still a dozen Colossi left.

Immediately, the war machines that looked like iron gods leaped out of the starships, accompanied by the crystal suit groups that were as dense as bees and ants. The exhaust flames darted out by the power units enshrouded them into colorful clouds, which split into three groups and lunged at Li Yao, Lei Wuya, and Shen Tumeng respectively.

Behind them, the Divine Rain Fleet tried its best to transform into an arc-shaped battle formation that was most suitable for collective bombardment, before it aimed at Li Yao and the other incoming Colossi like a shining pan. The glittering barrage was immediately ten times denser than before, and a thunderstorm seemed to be pouring in the universe!

Inside the spiritual residence of the Gold Vulture, Li Yao was entirely enshrouded by Little Black as if he had sunk into a black swamp. His body of flesh and blood seemed to have been completely melted with the Colossus.

Faced with three hostile Colossi, thousands of crystal suits, and the overwhelming barrage that were coming at him, Li Yao put on a vague smile.

“For a Cultivator, is there anything more satisfying than using the resources of a bunch of Immortal Cultivators to take down another bunch of Immortal Cultivators, with the cheers of the Immortal Cultivators who are unaware of the truth?”

Chapter 2252 - Set Up the Brand of Vulture!

Li Yao was not sitting cross-legged but majestically with his legs open in a weird posture, as if the most magnificent throne made of the light of all the stars in the universe was below his bottom!

The Imperial Fire Pearl that Li Linghai offered him was glittering above his head. Thick gold brilliance flowed out of the Imperial Fire Pearl and poured on his head and his body like a waterfall, only to be absorbed by all the pores around his body.

It could be clearly seen that every vein and every nerve on his body was rising high. The energy in the shape of the sphere was running at his heart, his abdomen, and his brain nonstop. His veins and his nerves had lost their original colors and all turned to gold. Even his body of flesh and blood became translucent, like a hybrid of gold and glass.

The infinite dominance and fighting will of the “Supreme Emperor”, the strongest expert of mankind ten thousand years ago, ran into Li Yao’s internal organs, limbs, and soul incessantly, cleansing and polishing him again and again to the point that he was almost reborn!

It was perhaps not the scene that Li Linghai wanted to see.

It would not be so easy for a regular trainer to swallow the enormous energy and will that were hidden deep inside the Imperial Fire Pearl either.

However, Li Yao was an heir of the ancient Cultivators who had inherited abundant memory pieces of Ou Yezi, a grandmaster of refining forty thousand years ago!

Although there was not a piece of magical equipment as queer as “Imperial Fire Pearl” in Ou Yezi’s memory pieces, there were a lot of treasures that contained the spirits of the experts and shared similar characteristics and purposes.

Most of the experts of the ancient Cultivators hoped to pass on their strength and will by storing them in a certain artifact.

Some of the malicious guys perhaps even wanted to use the heritage as a bait for them to possess somebody else and be reborn.

The Hundred Smelting Clan, as the best refining sect in the world, naturally had a lot of secret techniques that could remove the impurities and traps in the treasures and activate the most strength in them!

Li Yao did not know the first thing about commanding. Therefore, he simply focused his attention on polishing the Imperial Fire Pearl in the last couple of days. Thankfully, he asked for a lot of rare materials from Li Linghai brazenly and found a few prescriptions of polishing fluids. After trying them one by one, he indeed made significant breakthroughs and found the safest and fastest way to activate the Imperial Fire Pearl stably and swallow the strength within.

In the next moment, he would completely purge and absorb the strength in the fiercest battlefield with the fighting will that could burn up the entire universe!

“Hu—”

The strength flowing out of the Imperial Fire Pearl truly formed a majestic gold throne behind Li Yao, which then turned into a gold armor that enshrouded Li Yao tightly like petals.

Two gold rings had even appeared outside of Li Yao's pupils on the right eye that was as dark as ink and the left eye that was in the weird blood-red color.

Li Yao's soul shook violently, and he was seeing all kinds of illusions. It was not one battlefield in front of him anymore, but three battlefields from different time and space.

The first one was naturally the fierce battle between the Astounding Thunder Fleet and the Divine Rain Fleet.

The second battlefield was the bloody war between the army of the Star Ocean Imperium commanded by the Supreme Emperor and the coalition army of devils and demons commanded by the Mad Armageddon. Even the stars were shuddering in fear in the war, and the universe might have been broken at any moment.

The third battlefield, on the other hand, was the battle to annihilate evils that involved dozens of Sectors forty thousand years ago. Ou Yezi led the disciples of the Hundred Smelting Clan into the battle in person. Although the weapons and the magical equipment were relatively underdeveloped, the fierceness of the war was as impressive as the modern wars tens of thousands of years later.

Forty thousand years ago, ten thousand years ago, and right now, the roars, explosions, and moans from the three battlefields, as well as the burning flames, the quickly dying light, the electric arcs spreading in all directions… Everything was overlapping.

Li Yao seemed to see every hideous, angry, and desperate face on the battlefield through the crystal suit. He saw the blood drops that were condensed into balls in the vacuum. He saw countless broken limbs being frozen into ice or burned into ashes by the raging light and flames.

That was the war that never changed and never ended.

For a moment, Li Yao’s mind suddenly passed through the river of time and went back to ten thousand years ago, perceiving the subtle feelings that the “Supreme Emperor” had when he was faced with the battlefield in space.

Did human beings have to brutalize each other forever?

Even though there were almost infinite resources in the universe, were they enough to meet mankind’s insatiable demands?

Was it true that war never really changed however civilizations changed?

As long as the universe was united and all human beings obeyed the same banner, such… ugly wars would not happen again, would they?

Li Yao sensed the Supreme Emperor’s state of mind in the past when he was in a trance carefully. The golden strength that was as overwhelming as a raging flood just now turned into running brooks that nurtured his every muscle, vein, and nerve like melted jade.

Li Yao’s eyes were brighter and brighter, until they were almost bright enough to see the dark universe clearly.

The three Colossi and the thousands of crystal suits that came at him aggressively seemed to have turned into translucent objects. He could clearly “see” the spiritual energy transmission tubes below the plate armor, as well as the operating model of every rune array. He was even able to sink his senses into the Colossi and “see” the faces that were highly twisted and covered in both fury and fear.

Even the starships that were opening fire crazily behind the Colossi and the crystal suit groups were seen through by Li Yao immediately. The structure, functions, and vulnerabilities of every cabin were obvious to him.

Faced with the overwhelming fire of destruction with only one Colossus, Li Yao was not in the least nervous or scared. There was only one idea rolling in his head crazily.

“Let’s go!”

Li Yao said to the mental devil, “Let’s see if we can end this war!”

After all, he was fighting an enormous group of starships with only one Colossus. Even Li Yao was not very confident about himself and had to ask the mental devil to work together with him.

“It doesn’t matter to work with you, but can I propose a minor request first?”

The mental devil said, “Can you take away the three lines of giant words made of spiritual energy next to our Colossus first?

“It is already quite embarrassing that you give this Colossus such a stupid name as ‘Gold Vulture’, and you are even displaying the name on your head with spiritual energy. Do you still have any sense of shame?”

“It’s not on the head.”

Li Yao frowned. “The name of the Colossus and my name are clearly on the two sides. On the head, it is ‘Surrender now!’, which I have tested countless times through all the trouble and built with the coolest sound and visual effects!”

“That is not important!”

The mental devil said angrily, “The important thing is that this is too stupid, alright? It is a hundred times more stupid that the mosaic technique that you came up with last time. Both your friends and your foes will laugh themselves to death!”

“They are free to laugh if they want. This is all about marketing. What do they know?”

Li Yao sneered and said, “Think about it. We have entered the Imperium deeply on our own. There is no force that supports and advocates for us sincerely. Our future is completely in Li Linghai’s hands. If she intends to make use of us, set us up, or kick us aside after she gets what she wants, there will be nothing we can do at all.

“Dragging Lei Chenghu into the same and striking a balance between ‘God of War’ and ‘queen’ is naturally an option, but the approach is too passive.

“In any case, I do not want to entrust the fate of my own, the federation, and even more people entirely to the hands of the Immortal Cultivators such as Lei Chenghu or Li Linghai.

“I have to master the fate of my own and the federation. I must make sure that Li Linghai and Lei Chenghu do not dare to touch me easily, or they will pay a terrible price if they do!

“Then, I have to set up my prestige, or at least reputation, in the Imperium of True Human Beings within the shortest amount of time. I must let everybody know that I am a central person of the reformists and a symbol of invincibility on the battlefield. I must leave a very deep impression on both friends and foes.

“Only in such a way will I be able to play the game further with Li Linghai and Lei Chenghu after the ‘reform’ succeeds and achieve a balance among the three parties!”

“That explains a lot!”

The mental devil was greatly enlightened. “So, that is why you are seizing every opportunity to advertise yourself and even to adulate the political criminals?”

“Of course. For a man as smart as me who never miscalculates, everything I do is done for a purpose. Am I such a superficial person who is interested in nothing but fame?”

Li Yao said, “Now that you have understood it, why don’t you boost the soul together with me to make ‘Gold Vulture, Vulture Li Yao’ larger, more cubic, and more awesome?”

The mental devil: “… No. I’ll give you three seconds to turn off the embarrassing words immediately. Do it now!”

Li Yao: “Fine. Don’t go mad. I’ll just turn them off. But there is also one other issue. When we slash the enemy later, if I perform an ultimate skill, can you display the name of the skill with the spiritual energy? I went through quite a lot of trouble to come up with many awesome names for the moves. It is sort of a decoration of my personal image to build up my own brand!”

The mental devil: “No!”

As they talked, the three Colossi and the tremendous crystal suits of the Divine Rain Fleet had already approached!

Shua!

The giant words around the Gold Vulture, dazzling and shivering, all exploded into unstoppable streaks of brilliant that stabbed at the crystal suits like a storm of swords.

The Gold Vulture that was galvanizing a moment ago also vanished all of a sudden. It seemed to have turned into thousands of clones that dashed into the group of crystal suits together!

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Dozens of crystal suits exploded at the same time. Inside every explosion, a streak of gold brilliance flashed. As if the explosions provided a new impetus, the gold brilliance moved faster and faster as it lunged at one of the three Colossi that was in the front!

Chapter 2253 - Gold Death!

2253 Gold Death!

The heavy Colossus named “Nebula Tiger” was also driven by an expert of the Li family at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage. When it came at the enemy aggressively, it also boosted tremendous impurities floating in the vacuum, which formed a glittering belt several kilometers long around. It truly looked like a cluster of raging nebulae in the shape of a tiger.

However, Li Yao was one major level higher than the opponent in the first place. He had also been swallowing the purest strength of the “Supreme Emperor” from deep inside the Imperial Fire Pearl.

The “Tartarean Skeleton”, the antecedent of the “Gold Vulture”, was an original product dug out from the Nuwa warship, which was 100% intact and undamaged. It had also been strengthened by tremendous secret treasures of the Supreme Emperor.

There was a major gap between the two parties in terms of both the user’s combat ability and the level of the Colossus.

So, the result of such a shocking collision was inevitable.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

When the gold brilliance and the tiger nebula collided brutally, hundreds of overwhelming waves of spiritual energy that were visible for the naked eye were spreading out to all directions like the blasts in the atmosphere. Even the crystal suits several kilometers away were affected. Their spiritual shields were torn apart into pieces immediately, and their power rune arrays exploded one after another, turning into cold iron coffins. Before that, the internal organs and even brains of the Exos inside had already been blown up, granting them an instant and painless death.

The Colossus “Nebula Tiger”, which took most of the hit, was knocked out by the “Gold Vulture” before it had an opportunity to wave the saber. The world was swirling, and all the magical equipment was malfunctioning. Then, its arms were tied and strangled hard, mincing the joints on the wrists, the elbows, and the shoulder blades into pieces.

Within a breath, Li Yao had grasped the tiniest structure of the enemy’s Colossus. His attacks were as smooth and oriented as a dissection.

His spiritual energy burst into the cockpit of the “Nebula Tiger” like a volcano eruption, dealing heavy wounds on the user before running amok on the entire Colossus along with the spiritual energy circuits. Almost all the sensors and power units on every limb were destroyed. As a result, the Nebula Tiger was cramping violently like a crippled cat. The orange lubricants and cooling liquids darted out brutally, turning into a round mist in the vacuum.

At this moment, the second barrage of the Divine Rain Fleet arrived as quickly as a bolt of lightning.

Under the accurate control of the group fire control system, the attacks that were supposed to be at different speeds almost hit Li Yao at exactly the same time.

Li Yao sniffed. The two shining gold rings on his red and black eyes were even more scorching than before. The hands of the Gold Vulture stabbed into the breastplate of the Nebula Tiger unstoppably like blades, completely paralyzing the opponent. Then, the Gold Vulture shrank into a cluster and covered the body with the enormous gold wings like a giant gold egg.

The Nebula Tiger became a shield for the Gold Vulture. The stormy, destructive attacks hit the back of the Nebula Tiger precisely.

Li Yao’s speed was so high that not a single piece of the probe magical equipment could capture his movement. Most of the starships, Colossi, and crystal suits only detected that a series of light balls were expanding crazily like abnormal cancers, swallowing the two Colossi completely.

Although one of their own Colossus had been trapped inside, the commanders of the Divine Rain Fleet were so flabbergasted that they did not stop the incessant, flood-like remote attacks until three minutes later.

However, the moment before the light balls that looked like grapes collapsed and perished, the Gold Vulture leaped out in a way a hundred times more dazzling than the light balls and snatched one of the legs of the second Colossus.

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

Thousands of gold electric arcs dashed out of the palms of the Gold Vulture, electrifying the second Colossus into shock and stiffness. Then, it was rolled into a circle by the Gold Vulture, before it was thrown at the third Colossus!

The third Colossus was several kilometers away from them. Naturally, it was not hit by the second Colossus. But it was too busy dodging the attack, so it was unable to keep 100% wary of Li Yao.

Then, it proved that, faced with such a brutal man like “Vulture Li Yao”, even 99.99% of wariness was not enough!

Shua!

Everybody on the battlefield saw perhaps the most dazzling gold light of their entire life.

The light not only ripped apart the dim universe but also their retinas brutally, making them hurt from the eyes to the hearts as if they had been burnt.

It was the rushing aura of a saber that lasted ten kilometers in total and did not perish after a long time under the boost of spiritual energy. Perhaps it would never perish!

At the end of the aura, the Gold Vulture was still holding the saber in the most majestic way, neither sheathing the saber nor turning back to look at the opponents.

On the path where the aura of the blade zigzagged through, the two Colossi were in the weirdest postures, spasming like zombies.

Eventually, two dazzling lights emanated from the joints between the chest and the abdomen, revealing two devastating fractures at the same time. Most of the mobility of the two Colossi seemed to be lost.

One attack to paralyze two Colossi!

All the soldiers of the Divine Rain Fleet, especially the Exos around the four Colossi, felt that they had been caught in the worst nightmare, so shocked that their souls were almost falling apart.

The soldiers of the Astounding Thunder Fleet, including the team of Colossi that were charging at the enemy's flanks under the lead of Lei Wuya and Shen Tumeng, were astonished by Li Yao's astounding performance and unable to calm down for a long time.

They were all impressed by the heritage of the royal family that had been passed on for a thousand years. This Vulture Li Yao, as an envoy of His Majesty, was truly extraordinary!

With everything coming to this point, aside from Lei Chenghu and Li Jialing, nobody in the entire battlefield was suspicious of Li Yao's identity as the emperor's envoy anymore.

The best evidence was right before their eyes. Had it not been for the legacy of the royal family, how could the Gold Vulture have unleashed such intense, majestic dominance?

Watched by thousands of complicated eyes, some in devastation and some in admiration, the Gold Vulture turned into an aggressive and unstoppable streak of gold brilliance again and rushed forward for a thousand meters in the blink of an eye, cutting into the crystal suit groups that followed the enemy's three Colossi.

In the competition between a Colossus and another Colossus, crystal suits were there as support.

Right now, the three Colossi of the Divine Rain Fleet had almost lost their entire combat abilities. The remaining crystal suits were naturally no match for Li Yao at all.

Wherever the Gold Vulture blinked by, fireballs were expanding crazily and spreading into overwhelming flames very soon. Hundreds of most advanced crystal suits were all destroyed by the Gold Vulture.

If it were a fleet and a crystal suit legion with abundant experience and determination after fighting in the frontline for a hundred years, they would have known that “even the most terrifying Colossus has its limits”. At a battle of such a high intensity, both the duration of the armor and the storage of ammunition and fuel were plummeting.

For the Gold Vulture, such a cruel truth was also inviolable.

Therefore, the more aggressive the Colossus was, the more important it would be to fight relentlessly in a war of attrition by the advantage in number. It was even an option to heavily damage the spiritual shield and the armor of the Gold Vulture with dozens of crystal suits, tie the limbs and the power units of the Gold Vulture with another dozens of crystal suits, and then ask the hundred starships in the rear to barrage the enemy together. Then, there would be a slight chance that the enemy’s super Colossus would be taken down.

However, such experience, determination, and fearlessness were not something that the Divine Rain Fleet, which had been enjoying all the benefits in the rear, could boast.

At the center of the battlefield, Li Yao’s crazy performance greatly shocked the flagship of the Divine Rain Fleet as well as the starships in the middle.

On the flanks, the Colossus team led by Lei Wuya and Shen Tumeng respectively were also imposing a heavy blow on the arsenal warships and interferential warships that the Divine Rain Fleet deployed there. Two Colossi of the two parties were engaged in a fierce battle, and it was barely possible for the Divine Rain Fleet to regroup.

Not far away from the No. 3 space gate, while the Colossi were fighting, most of the main-force warships of the Astounding Thunder Fleet had leaped out of the void, got rid of the space ripples on them, and joined the battle formation that was more and more grave and overwhelming unhurriedly.

They were not in a hurry to attack, as if the enemy before them was nothing but fish in a water tank!

Faced with such a situation, the Divine Rain Fleet was showing the sign of total collapse.

The fact was obvious. The only hope of their victory was to crush the vanguard of the Astounding Thunder Fleet that was purely made of Colossi before the Astounding Thunder Fleet was completely teleported over. That way, they would be able to hit the Astounding Thunder Fleet while it was not prepared yet.

The Astounding Thunder Fleet had focused the elite forces of dozens of Sectors from the Third Battle Area. Once it finished the jump and regrouped, it was certainly not something that the regional defense force, which was also incomplete now, could resist.

The barrage of the Divine Rain Fleet was disordered.

The previously perfect arc-shaped formation became uneven too. Many starships were hesitating whether to press forward or to flee in a hurry.

Li Yao sensed the enemy’s panic keenly.

Those idiotic guys shouldn’t have given him so much time to rest and prepare.

The Gold Vulture stood in the middle of the void flames, opening the wings and the arms at the same time. His spiritual energy turned into hundreds of visible rays of light that extended to all directions and enveloped the remains of the crystal suits that he had just destroyed.

The remains that were burning in the dual reactions of spiritual energy and fuel were dismantled into the most fundamental pieces. All the pieces were condensed and regrouped into giant swords that were different in length and shape but equally glamorous, aggressive, and sharp.

Vintage primeval patterns appeared in the void nonstop, only to be absorbed by the giant swords and turned into the inscriptions on the bodies of the swords like living creatures.

Very soon, a hundred giant swords enshrouded in gold light hovered around the Gold Vulture and shivered along with Li Yao’s breath while they emitted heart-hurting brilliance.

As the Gold Vulture slowly raised its right hand high, the tips of the hundred giant swords began to tremble crazily, like vipers that had discovered the prey.

Li Yao’s black and red eyes were constricted into two gold points the size of needle tips in an instant as he controlled the Gold Vulture to slash his right arm. The gold brilliance around the hundred giant swords immediately turned into a hundred electromagnetic channels that shot the giant swords out after spinning them for a while. In shrieks that were enough to tear apart the vacuum, the giant swords lunged at the remaining groups of crystal suits!

Chapter 2254 - Li Linghai’s Next Step

2254 Li Linghai’s Next Step

Although the crystal suits fled crazily the moment they heard the earsplitting alarms, the Gold Vulture’s ubiquitous rays of destruction had locked onto them in advance.

Li Yao’s telepathic thoughts and killing intent tied up the limbs of those crystal suits and invaded their power units like invisible vines, making their evasion movements slow, twisted, and abnormal. Eventually, they were pierced through by the gold flying swords made of remnants, raising a series of explosions. The pieces caused by the explosions further produced even more, even sharper, and even more brilliant gold flying swords!

There was nothing but desperate silence on the bridge in the flagship of the Divine Rain Fleet.

As long as there was the tiniest crack on the determination to fight, it would inevitably collapse.

Besides, even if they were to concentrate all of their firepowers and destroy the Colossus at the price of several starships and hundreds of crystal suits, it would still be of no help to stop the entire Astounding Thunder Fleet’s thunderous strike.

Right then, the Divine Rain Fleet suddenly detected a second wave of weird and powerful waves near the No. 3 space gate. A great number of massive objects were slowly passing the wormholes and jumping to the Divine Rain Sector!

The intelligence burned up the last resolution of resistance in the Divine Rain Fleet.

With everything coming to this point, they could only pray that it was the reinforcements from other worlds or even the capital, who had received their distress signals that they sent out before the battle began.

However, the few experienced generals in the fleet vaguely felt that it was not right. It wasn’t long since the distress signals were sent out. Even if they were not blocked by the enemy’s interferences but delivered to the outside world successfully, it seemed unlikely for the allies to gather so quickly and jump over in reinforcement in a formation.

As it turned out, as the new fleet slowly revealed its hideous appearance, the shapes and models of the starships did not match those in the database of the Li family at all.

Also, it was not the emblem of the Li family on the newcomers, but “Honor the Majesty” on one side and “Settle the Rebellions” on the other, both written calligraphically.

They did not collide with the Astounding Thunder Fleet that was right next to them. Instead, they emitted signals in tacit understanding. Then, while the Astounding Thunder Fleet lunged at the Divine Rain Fleet, the new fleet charged at the No. 1 and No. 2 space gates of the Divine Rain Sector.

Queen Li Linghai’s Deep Sea Fleet had finally arrived!

The powerful reinforcement of the Deep Sea Fleet and the ruthless performance of Li Yao’s Gold Vulture completely destroyed the last bit of determination of resistance in the Divine Rain Fleet. The morale of the defenders was almost reduced to none.

The highest commander of the Divine Rain Fleet made the helpless and most judicious choice—to retreat!

The full-terrain starships that were smaller and could fight in the high-gravity environment within the atmosphere fell back to the main planet of the Divine Rain Sector and continued to resist the enemy based on the firepowers on the planet and on the orbit defense rings.

The heavy arsenal warships and the cruising motherships, which were too huge to land within the atmosphere, accelerated to their highest speed and escaped all the way to the edge of the Divine Rain Sector.

The battle formation of the Divine Rain Fleet had already taken shape. It was as difficult to turn it around instantly as to ask a running elephant to stop in half a second.

Lei Chenghu did not let go of the rare opportunity. He launched attacks at the critical moment when the entire Divine Rain Fleet was turning around. The fury of the “God of War” that had been repressed for a long time and the commanding arts that had been honed for a hundred years were all carried out, teaching the rookie soldiers of the Divine Rain Fleet a good lesson of what a real war was!

Li Yao took the chance to go on a killing spree in the chaotic battlefield in the Gold Vulture, training himself crazily with fire and blood, while he melted the violent strength of the “Supreme Emperor” deeply into his cells and his soul.

Crystal suits were crushed into smithereens, starships were riddled with holes, and Colossi were torn apart. It was needless to describe the goriness of the battle.

Under the cover of the ground-based firepower on the main planet, at the cost of half of the starships being damaged and destroyed, whatever left of the Divine Rain Fleet finally broke away from the battlefield and escaped to the dark universe far from the star in panic.

Strategically speaking, it was not a wrong choice.

The absolute strength of the four Kurfürst families was still far higher than the only two troops of the reformists, the Astounding Thunder Fleet and the Deep Sea Fleet.

Although the Astounding Thunder Fleet had blocked the outward communication of the Divine Rain Sector before the battle, such a blockage had a high consumption of spiritual energy, and the range of the blockage was very limited.

As long as the remaining soldiers of the Divine Rain Fleet fled to the edge of the Sector, there would always be a way to send the distress calls out.

By the time the army of the four Kurfürst families arrived, the remaining part of the Divine Rain Fleet would naturally be able to march back again in cooperation with the reinforcements!

Such a choice could “preserve the available forces as long as possible”. Nobody could argue that it was wrong.

However, under the current situation, such a choice also meant the resourceful main planet, the orbit docks outside of the main planet, and the three space gates were all given to the reformists for free.

The Divine Rain Planet boasted a very strong ground-based firepower, and it was defended by quite a few well-trained crystal suit legions with advanced gears. Should the landing battles really begin to compete over every street and alley, it would be impossible to occupy the planet without a couple of months.

However, the reformists did not need to go so far as to break into the atmosphere. Outside of the near-planet orbit, quite a few space warehouses had stored tremendous military assets.

Because the Divine Rain Sector was one of the main supply bases of the Li family, according to the tradition, the resources collected from the hundreds or so resource planets nearby would be shipped to the Divine Rain Planet first, where they would be refined and further manufactured in the factories, until they were finally packaged into military assets that could be directly allocated to the starships, the Colossi, or the individual soldiers.

Such refining, manufacturing, and packaging work naturally could not be done on the ground of the planet.

Shipping the resources weighing millions of tons would consume abundant fuel, and so would shipping the products back to beyond the atmosphere. Therefore, as long as the manufacturing and the packaging factories were deployed in the zero-gravity area above the atmosphere, the fuel cost would be saved.

It sounded like a very sensible and reasonable choice.

But at this moment, the spaceports, factories, and warehouses without the protection of the atmosphere all fell to the hands of the reformists.

Unfortunately, for the defense of the capital, those warehouses were all stashed with military assets that were enough for the next step of the Astounding Thunder Fleet and the Deep Sea Fleet.

As the No. 1 and No. 2 space gates were completely destroyed by the Deep Sea Fleet, and the navigation frequency of the No. 3 space gate was changed to something that only the reformists knew, the chaotic battle gradually died down, and the reformists got the situation in the Divine Rain Sector under control.

Although half of the Divine Rain Fleet was still fleeing and the other half was running about crazily on the battlefield like headless flies, and the ground of the Divine Rain Planet was still under the control of the defenders, the reformists had got the resources that they desired most as well as the initiative of the battle.

An invisible bridge of information was established between Iron Torrent, the flagship of the Astounding Thunder Fleet, and Dragon Abyss, the flagship of the Deep Sea Fleet. Millions of data streams were being exchanged quickly.

Li Linghai: “General Lei truly deserved to be called ‘God of War’. You have destroyed the enemy unstoppably like a thunderous rock. I’ve been thinking one thing lately. Now that a small Astounding Thunder Fleet is already so remarkable under your command, what miracles will you create if all the army of the Imperium is managed by you?”

Lei Chenghu: “You are flattering me, Your Grace. We have settled the enemy so quickly in this battle mainly because of the contributions of the amazing ‘Vulture Li Yao’ under your command. To be honest, before him, I never thought that a Colossus could be operated in such a way.”

Li Linghai: “In that case, if General Lei doesn’t mind, just let him stand by your side and play a more important role later.”

Lei Chenghu: “… Right now, our army has achieved the first goal in our strategy, but the situation is still highly treacherous. The fleets of the four Kurfürst families may show up and besiege us at any moment. Although we have controlled the only space gate of the Divine Rain Sector, given the enemy’s advantage in number, it is still possible for them to jump to the edge of the Divine Rain Sector secretly and establish three to five new space gates at the same time. We wouldn’t be able to discover and destroy all of them in time.

“Also, the ground-based firepower of the Divine Rain Planet is rather fierce. We cannot take it down any time soon. Even if we do, it will consume all of the resources we have just earned.

“I do not want my men to survive the barrage of the Covenant Alliance only to be torn into shreds by the Imperium’s own cannons.

“So, please fulfill your promise, Your Grace. Didn’t you say that you had abundant supporters within the Li family and that they would launch a small ‘coup’ in the Li family, seize the power of the Li family, and join the reformists the moment our army arrived here?”

“Rest assured.”

Li Linghai’s eyes were shimmering. “Please continue to clear the enemies in space. Leave everything else to me. I… will certainly win!”

In the secret communication room on Dragon Abyss, Li Linghai cut off the communication with Lei Chenghu and was caught in deep thought. Black flames seemed to be leaking out of the pores all over her body, enshrouding the white-haired witch in a cluster of black mists.

Dragon Abyss had accommodated a most advanced super-space communication base, which sent out a sharp signal half an hour ago that ripped apart the four-dimensional universe and shot in a certain mysterious direction.

However, it received no replies at all.

Li Linghai crossed her hands below her chin. Faced with the silent light beam, she did not seem to have any feelings.

However, the cracking sounds that the metal cabin wall emitted as it was squeezed and torn betrayed the anxiety and madness in her heart.

Finally—

Twisted colors spread out on the black light beam, like bubbles popping up in the stagnant water. The hundreds of bubbles congregated into a face that was rather similar to Li Linghai but was much older, wearier, and furious.

Chapter 2255 - Old Patriarch!

2255 Old Patriarch!

“Are you not ashamed to call your family?”

The angry old man who looked very similar to Li Linghai bellowed, his lips trembling hard, “What have you done?”

“According to the four Kurfürst families, I am already a dead person. Had it not been for the accidents, you would announce the death of the queen to the public in a few days, wouldn’t you?”

Li Linghai said with a smile, “What can a dead person, a haunting ghost, do? Nothing but revenge, of course. Don’t you agree, father?”

“You—”

Li Mingxuan, Li Linghai’s father, was more than infuriated. His eyes were almost condensed into coals that would cross the few Sectors between them and burn his daughter’s skin and soul into ashes. He gnashed his teeth and said, “To think that you still know that I’m your father! Do you have any idea how your actions will destroy everyone in our bloodline.”

“Of course I know you are my father, but do you still remember I am your daughter, father?”

Li Linghai said gloomily, “When my clone was attacked in the capital, you couldn’t have known that it was just a clone, and you must’ve thought that it was myself, didn’t you? What did you think back then? Just watch your daughter die without doing anything?”

Li Mingxuan was immediately lost for words, the wrinkles and muscles on his face cramping at the same time.

Last second, he seemed to be venting all his fury and hatred on his daughter, but next second, he lost all his momentum and hope and could only say in frustration, “Tell me what happened to Ah Feng? Why is there no message of him after the riot in the Martial Meritocrats Sector? Was… Was it done by you?”

“Father, do you know why you are still just an elder of the Li family after more than a hundred years and probably will forever be one for the rest of your life?”

Li Linghai chuckled. “Your biggest problem is your hopeless blindness. I wonder what you saw in Li Lingfeng who was as stupid as swine, and why you devoted so many resources to him!

“I reminded you again and again that the swine was not worth investing, and it would only waste the resources that our bloodline had accumulated through all the trouble for hundreds of years. There would be no comeback for us, and other brothers and sisters would be affected too.

“But you never listened to my advice. It’s great now. The battle to destroy the Cultivators in the Martial Meritocrats Sector was a debacle and a great joke streamed to the entire Imperium, mortifying the Li family and, in particular, your bloodline!

“Is such a swine qualified to stay on and continue to waste the resources of the family? Even if somebody did kill him, it would be a timely stop of losses for us. Why are you so bothered?”

“You… You… It was really you!”

Li Mingxuan’s eyes immediately turned purple, and his fingers that were pointing at Li Linghai were shivering too. “You have lost your mind. You have truly lost your mind!”

“Exactly. Since the moment you poisoned my clone, I have already been completely out of my mind.”

Li Linghai continued smiling. “Do not piss off a lunatic without a good reason, because lunatics do not care about the logic or the consequences of their actions.”

“I’m really regretful.”

Brutality beamed out of Li Mingxuan’s eyes, but he could only protest helplessly, “I shouldn’t have sent you into the palace. I shouldn’t have…”

“Then, just step aside and regret. You are as much swine and garbage as Li Lingfeng, and you do not deserve to waste my precious time.”

Li Linghai said casually, “I know that all the uncles and elders of the Li family are monitoring this route of communication right now and that the leader of the family must be behind you. Instead of wasting your time with me when you know you can’t make any decision, why don’t you ask the leader to talk to me in person?”

Narrowing his eyes hard, Li Mingxuan declared, one word after another, “It’s impossible! You are now the greatest traitor and enemy of the Li family for the unpardonable crimes you committed. You may have invaded the Divine Rain Sector because of luck, but so what? The elites of the family will soon march back to the Divine Rain Sector and cut you into pieces in honor of the rules of the family!”

“Is that so?”

Slightly frowning, Li Linghai covered her nose and sneezed softly. “Achiu!”

Li Mingxuan immediately changed his face, because Li Linghai sent a short video over when she sneezed.

The video was watched by the big shots of the branches of the Li family clearly.

In the video, a starship whose spiritual shield had run out and whose plate armor was riddled with holes was being obliterated by bombardments.

In only 0.1 seconds, before Li Linghai’s sneeze was over, the starship had been completely destroyed into glittering dust under thousands of brilliant pillars of light.

At one corner of the video was a hundred grids of smaller pictures. Inside each grid was a prisoner locked on the starship. All the prisoners were sweating hard in panic, their faces pale.

As the starship exploded, the prisoners were also swallowed by fire and vaporized into ivory nothingness before they had the chance to scream.

“I do not like your tone, father, so I have performed a minor punishment.”

Li Linghai said with a smile, “That starship of the Divine Rain Fleet seems to be loaded with the core descendants of the Li family who are all the bloodlines of the uncles and elders here. As to exactly whom their parents and siblings are, I really don’t have the time to distinguish it. Why don’t I send the detailed video over shortly, so that you can confirm it on my behalf, father?

“Listen, father, I do not want to see your stupid face or hear your unconstructive voice anymore.

“I have captured more than a hundred starships just like the one a moment ago. From now on, I will blow up one starship as well as everybody on board every minute, until the leader of the family is willing to come out and talk to me.

“If you make any meaningless sound, I will blow up one extra starship, until all the starships and all the captives are killed. Are we clear?”

Li Mingxuan almost went mad in fury. “You—”

Li Linghai put on a cruel smile and raised two fingers from her delicate, carefully-maintained hand. “Two. You have killed another two starships of descendants of the Li family. Please go on.

“It doesn’t matter to me. I am a dead person after all. What can a dead person possibly be interested in other than dragging more people to go to hell with her?”

Li Mingxuan was completely stunned.

Then, he was blurred by colorful bubbles.

When the bubbles dispersed again, the slightly obscure shadow on the light beam already turned into a hunched old man in black, with a mountain of wrinkles on his face that made him look like the janitor of the underworld.

Li Mingxuan was himself a white-haired old man, but the newcomer in black seemed five hundred years older than him. The guy was almost a breathing fossil whose ability to walk was questionable.

Even though he looked like a rock that might collapse at any moment, and even though his facial organs had been drowned by the wrinkles, when the glittering eyes deep inside the wrinkles were occasionally revealed, they would impose such a strong sense of threat that even the experts in the Nascent Soul Stage would chill and sweat hard, as if the shell that might be gone in the wind at any moment was hiding a soul that had swallowed innumerous monsters.

The old man was exactly Li Jiande, leader of the Li family, one of the four Kurfürsten of the Imperium of True Human Beings, and a dominator of the universe whose cough could shake dozens of planets!

Li Jiande was the oldest of the four Kurfürsten. He was even one generation older than Dongfang Wang, the current Prime Minister of the Imperium, and a hundred years ago, he had been the Prime Minister for thirty years.

When he was at his most powerful, he once controlled all the affairs in military, politics, and the royal family entirely on his own. The arrangement for Li Linghai to become the crown princess and even the queen was also his decision and done under his supervision.

In his prime days, he once entered the legendary “Divinity Branching State”. With the computational ability a hundred times more powerful than the super crystal processors, he handled everything related to the Li family neatly and expanded in every field on a large scale. He even led the Li family to challenge the Dongfang family, the most powerful family of all.

It was a pity that his ambitions were too huge, and the Li family’s comprehensive capability was notably lower than the Dongfang family’s. The result of the arduous calculations and competitions was that his soul and his life were too seriously exhausted, making him fall back to the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage after staying in the Divinity Branching State for decades.

It was said that a lot of sequelae had been left because of the over-exhaustion of the brain. He had to sustain himself with the drugs extricated from the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, and he was no longer the charismatic man he used to be.

Even so, even though he had been away from politics for decades and did not have a place in the royal court, everybody knew that Li Jiande still had great influence in politics, economics, media, and many other fields. He was one of the four well-deserved “crownless kings”.

Although Li Jialing seemed old, if not dying, after a hundred years, and even if a gentle breeze might blow out his incomplete soul, nobody inside or outside the Li family had the courage to challenge his authority as long as his viper-like eyes were still glittering.

That was because everybody still remembered clearly how cunning, cruel, and terrifying “Silver Fox” Li Jiande was when he dealt with his enemy a hundred years ago!

Li Jiande, as the leader of the Li family and one of the four Kurfürsten, faced Li Linghai, queen of the Imperium.

The grandfather and the granddaughter stared at each other in silence.

“Your Grace.”

Eventually, it was Li Jiande who opened his mouth first. Taking a long breath, he finally said, “Forgive me for not being able to perform the full etiquette due to my old age and my diseases. Cough, cough. Cough, cough, cough, cough.”

He coughed hard, as if he were going to pass out.

Li Linghai smiled. “Grandfather, the queen has already died. Standing before you right now is just a common member of the Li family and your biological granddaughter. Why do you think etiquette is needed?”

“Is that so?”

Li Jiande waved his hands, and a muscular guard nearby immediately delivered a spittoon to him. The “Silver Fox” in the past coughed and caught his breath after a long time, before he finally went on, “Then, why is my beloved granddaughter here?”

“For the future of the Imperium and the future of the Li family!”

Li Linghai’s eyes shone, and her white hair moved automatically as she declared, “I’m here to realize grandfather’s lifelong wish to let the Li family defeat the Dongfang family and become the ‘First Family’ of the Imperium of True Human Beings!”

Chapter 2256 - Ultimatum!

2256 Ultimatum!

“Cough, cough. Cough, cough, cough, cough. Hahahaha!”

Li Jiande was like a crow that had coughed all his internal organs out. From the wrinkles that were shivering nonstop, two rays beamed out and stared at Li Linghai gloomily. “Firstly, you connected the many forces at the periphery of the Imperium behind the family’s back and developed a huge secret armed force on your own, raising a storm of blood and roasting your family on a stove.

“When the things were beyond rescue, you simply marched back to the family in your desperation, slaughtering thousands of descendants of your family without batting an eye and destroying more than half of the elite fleet of the family.

“Having committed such atrocious betrayals, you are telling me without any embarrassment that this is for the future of the family. Do you really think that the Li family does not have any rules?!”

Boom!

The old man who seemed to be dying and unable to shoulder the feeblest wind suddenly bulged his eyes and slapped his hands that were as slender as tree branches. Broken ripples spread out on the 3D light beam, as if it were about to be smashed into pieces.

“Please don’t be anxious, grandfather. You can listen to my explanation.”

Li Linghai, however, was not intimidated by the leader of the Li family at all. Not even a single hair on her eyebrows shivered. She still continued talking with a smile, “This is not what I had in mind either, but I don’t really have a choice. Most of the people in power in the Li family are the blind, hesitant, and useless cowards such as my father. If I have told them my plan directly, there wouldn’t have been a second result and that they would be too scared and more determined to get rid of me.

“Grandfather, you are the only visionary and extraordinary person who can foresee what will happen several hundred years later.

“But you are too old after all. You were too exhausted and devoted to the family in the past, and you have to rest in seclusion most of the time right now. The complicated affairs in the family have to be entrusted to somebody else. As a result, you can’t help but be burdened by your stupid teammates.

“Let me ask you, if it weren’t in such a way, even if I was the queen of the Imperium, would there have been an opportunity for me to meet you, shut the mouths of those stupid pigs, make the family realize the feasibility and graveness of the matter, and make you listen to my words carefully?”

“What if I don’t want to listen?”

Every wrinkle on Li Jiande’s face was radiating coldness like the edge of a razor. He leaned closer to the light beam and said, one word after another, “Good granddaughter, listen up. I don’t know what else you have got apart from the

Astounding Thunder Fleet, but the Divine Rain Planet is a strategic stronghold that the family has been working hard on for hundreds of years. Even I have personally perfected the defense system of the Divine Rain Planet.

“The entire Divine Rain Planet is filled with battle fortresses large and small, open and secret. There are millions of battle puppets and well-trained Exos too. The arsenals and food below the ground are enough to sustain the high-intensity resistance for a couple of years. You can never take down the Divine Rain Planet without a couple of years and the sacrifices of countless people!

“Hehe. The four Kurfürst families’ elite troops, on the other hand, will jump to the Divine Rain Sector in not a couple of years but a few days.

“It’s true that we have lost the jump signals of the Divine Rain Sector. You must’ve occupied and destroyed the three space gates, making it impossible for our fleets to jump over on a large scale, right?

“But so what? We have plenty of components that can be loaded on starships and assembled into portable space gates. As long as a few starships jumped to the edge of the Divine Rain Sector, they will be able to set up a few minor space gates in a day or two to summon the main troops.

“How many starships do you have in your hands? Can you monitor the infinite space zones at the edge of the Divine Rain Sector, locate all the small space gates that are secretly established, and destroy them without missing out any?

“Besides, the Divine Rain Fleet can’t be destroyed by you so easily, can it? Even if they are all pigs, they are still the pigs that are armed with the most advanced starships and crystal suits. I don’t believe that you can gain complete control over the entire Divine Rain Sector in one month!

“Therefore, I’m very curious about one thing. Tell me, my good granddaughter. Why do you think that you can force the entire family to sit down and negotiate with you just by doing what you have done?”

Li Jiande sat back again.

His dark, little eyes were slowly closed, as if he had lost interest in the conversation and might cut off the communication at any moment.

“Negotiate?”

Li Linghai pursed her lips and chuckled, shaking her finger slowly. “Grandfather, I’m afraid that you are mistaken. I am not here to negotiate with the family but to give you the ultimatum.”

Li Jiande’s eyes that had been closed were opened again.

They were so sordid and brutal that they might have been enough to open the breastplate of a heavy crystal suit.

“I have never intended to occupy the Divine Rain Planet or any habitable planet of the family. Therefore, I will never do such a stupid thing as to send my troops into the atmosphere for bloody landing battles street by street.

“What I want is only the resources stored in the warehouses and space fortresses on the near-planet orbit, mostly fuel and ammunition.”

Li Linghai raised her wrist and checked the time and progress on her mini crystal processor. “In twelve hours, my fleet will move all the assets on the orbit of the Divine Rain Planet. The ammunition and crystals on the starships that we have captured will all be transferred too.

“After that, I will tie the captured starships and the facilities on the orbit, such as the spaceports, the docks, the fortresses, etc. Then, with the immense impetus of a dozen starships, all the facilities on the orbit will be pushed into the atmosphere and hit the ground heavily.

“As for the targets, I have taken care of all of them. They will be the twenty cities on the Divine Rain Planet with the most population. I believe that the defense of the Divine Rain Planet must be very thorough, but when the ports and fortresses weighing millions of tons hit heavily at the highest speed, what a huge momentum and blast will they boast? Even the most advanced anti-air cannons won’t be able to obliterate such enormous masses, right?

“I estimate that I will completely ruin ten of the twenty metropolises of the Divine Rain Planet, or maybe fifteen, if I am lucky.

“Then, the entire Divine Rain Planet will be enshrouded in terrifying smoke, which will block the light of the star. In the next ten to twenty years, the Divine Rain Planet will be a frigid hell below zero. Perhaps nobody will appreciate the next spring blossom in thirty to fifty years. Whoever survives the catastrophe can wait patiently!”

Li Linghai looked at Li Jiande with a smile.

The more gloomy and hateful the guy looked, the more brilliant her smile became. She had completely taken his fury as a compliment.

“This is just the first step. I’m not done yet.”

Li Linghai continued, “After all the facilities on the near-earth orbit and all the starships that we have captured are pushed to the major cities on the Divine Rain Planet, the coalition fleet of the reformists will leave the Divine Rain Sector and jump to the other worlds of the Li family.

“However prepared the family is, it is impossible to distribute all the troops evenly to every Sector, is it? In fact, it will be great if they are so stupid.

“Yes. It is naturally impossible for me to control the space gates to all the Sectors. But as you put it just now, grandfather, there is a kind of magical equipment named ‘portable space gate’. As it happens, my fleet has a few of them with us too. They are enough for me to initiate protracted harassment and sabotage within the Li family!

“After we jump to every new Sector, we will crush the local garrison, swallow all the resources, and do our best to directly destroy all the habitable planets and resource planets, or at least destroy the living conditions of the habitable planets, making the environment of those planets harsher than ever.

“Before the main troops of the family realize what is going on, we will finish our sabotage, destruction, and transference, going on to the next target or simply rest for a while in the vast space. After all, the resources that we plunder will be enough for our consumption.

“After all the weakly defended worlds are looted and destroyed, we will jump to the central world right before grandfather and fight a decisive battle with the most elite forces of the family!

“Yes. Maybe we will be highly unorganized when we jump over, and there might not be the slightest formation. All the starships will be scattered in the vast, boundless sea of stars. So, we will inevitably fail the battle.

“But I believe that if we are determined to die together with the opponents, we will be able to drag at least thirty percent of the elite forces of the family into hell with us before I am completely obliterated, right?

“This is my plan, grandfather. Even if there is a slight change in practical operations, it won’t matter. As long as a handful of planets, as well as having a couple of elite fleets of the family die with me, I will be satisfied.”

An enormous wall of silence stopped between Li Linghai and Li Jiande.

“Silver Fox” Li Jiande was best known for his ruthlessness and mercilessness in his prime years, and he had killed more people than he could count without blinking his eyes.

However, there was no telling if the organs in a person would soften as they grew old, but the coldness on his face was gradually falling apart.

Li Linghai saw through Li Jiande’s hesitation immediately. The delight in her clear eyes was even more intense. She licked her sharp teeth with her soft tongue and said, “The four Kurfürst families are like four ravenous, insatiable tigers. While they are usually united against the hyenas, wolves, and leopards from the outside world, are they not coveting each other too?

“Two tigers cannot live on the same mountain. Despite the vastness of the universe, four tigers seem too many. If one of the tigers is heavily wounded, emitting enticing smell of blood and meat, grandfather, do you think the other three hungry tigers will treat it and help it to recover, or will they attack it while it is in trouble, carving it up and devouring it without leaving any bones behind?”

Chapter 2257 - Vicious and Unforgivable!

2257 Vicious and Unforgivable!

The wrinkles on Li Jiande’s face were all frozen, turning himself into a real cold, rigid fossil. He did not speak again until after a long silence. “Are you really bold enough to do that?”

“Look me in the eyes, grandfather.”

Li Linghai leaned her face close. There was not the slightest hint of blood on her fair, flawless skin, but some dark air was vaguely flowing below her skin and finally concentrated at the depths of her eyes into two black spots the size of needle tips.

She stressed and repeated, “Look at me in the eyes and tell me why I am not bold enough to do that.

“Don’t forget that you just planned an incident where the queen was attacked in the capital a month ago. You already decided to completely eliminate the queen who tended to be insubordinate, except that my strength was higher than you expected and your plan did not work out.

“Right now, we have ended on bad terms, and I have revealed all my plans and capabilities. Instead of taking a wild gamble, should I just wash my neck and wait for somebody to chop off my head?”

“Even if you are bold enough to do that—”

Li Jiande said calmly, “Such insane and inhumane actions will not win the support of all the reformists and soldiers. Without their support, your insane plan can’t work out at all.”

“I do not need to have the support of all the soldiers. At the very least, I only need a tiny proportion of the key persons to absolutely obey me.”

Li Linghai sneered, “Relying on the key persons, I will destroy the Divine Rain Planet and kill hundreds of millions of people first, completely declaring war on the family.

“The rest of the soldiers are chasing the remainder of the Divine Rain Fleet in the vast space of the Divine Rain Sector on their starships. They have no time to stop me at all. By the time they discover it, they wouldn’t be able to do anything except to watch the space fortresses and the orbit docks smashing the ground on fire.

“When the destruction does happen and what is done is done, will the soldiers who never knew the truth have any choice except to follow me and fight until the end? Such felonies will absolutely never be forgiven or pardoned. Even if you swear on your life that you will pardon the soldiers who were not involved in the massacre, there is no way that they are going to believe it.

“Besides, it is impossible for you to pardon them, right? Otherwise, how can you face the hundreds of millions of unrested souls on the Divine Rain Planet? And how can you face the various factions in the family who have tremendous interests in the Divine Rain Planet?

“Therefore, destroying the Divine Rain Planet will only strengthen our internal cohesion and my leadership over the coalition fleet of the reformists, allowing us to carry out the strategy to die together with the enemy to the end!”

Li Jiande took a deep breath and held back his urge to cough. He said, “You know that your crimes are unforgivable, too?”

“Of course I do.”

Li Linghai smiled again. “However, I also understand the saying that ‘those who steal a hook will be executed, but those who steal a country will be knighted’. Unforgivable crimes equal to zero crimes. None whatsoever.

“Besides, death means the conclusion of everything. Since I will die either way, will there be any difference in whether I commit the unforgivable crimes or not?

“Of course, grandfather, you are totally free to not believe everything I have said but launch an assault at the Divine Rain Sector right now. You can see if you can rescue a few heavy industrial cities that have been worked on for hundreds of years before I destroy the entire Divine Rain Planet.

“However, even if my strategies all fail, in the worst-case scenario, I will still be able to lead the remaining troops to wander and cause trouble in the Li family’s heartland as bandits, and I can still deal heavy wounds to the Li family, making the other three families grow covetous of you.

“This is not how your granddaughter envisions the future, but if you are too obstinate to listen to my heartfelt advice, I’m afraid that I will have to make the decision and never look back!”

Looking at Li Linghai’s smiling and enchanting eyes, Li Jiande was silent for a long time again. In the end, he heaved a long sigh and said slowly, “Good granddaughter, I agree with your opinion. Your father is a pig. How on earth did he fail to see the potentials in you and decide to send you into the royal palace as the crown princess? What a great waste it was!

“If he had discovered the ambitions and strength hidden deep inside your blood in time and sent you to me for education, perhaps I wouldn’t have been caught in the awkward situation where I could not find a worthy heir.

“A pig like your father should die a hundred times and that still won’t be enough!

“But it is still not too late, now that I have discovered you in person.”

There was not the delight that she was in an advantageous situation on Li Linghai’s face. She said casually, “Right now, the family hasn’t suffered huge losses, and the reformists haven’t declared the four Kurfürst families to be our enemies openly. Our targets are just the scoundrels in the capital. As long as Grandfather is willing to listen to the appeal of me and the fellow Cultivators, the situation will still be under our control, and… yours!”

“The appeal of the reformists?”

Li Jiande didn’t give a straight reply. “What do you want?”

“Very simple. We want the Li family, as one of the four pillars of the Imperium, to hear the voices of the soldiers from the frontline and the Immortal Cultivators from the bottom level of the peripheral worlds.”

Li Linghai said unhurriedly, “We hope that you can support our righteous action to ‘Honor the Majesty and Settle the Rebellions’ and that you can eliminate the villains in the Council of Elders, remove the cancers residing on the flesh of the Imperium, and build a more beautiful and magnificent new Imperium together with us.”

Li Jiande’s small eyes were rolling fast. “Who are villains? Who are cancers?”

Li Linghai declared loudly, “The Dongfang family, who are bold enough to arrogate the power of the royal family and claim to be ‘First Family’, is the cancer of the Imperium and even the civilization of mankind!

“The elders of the Dongfang family and their vassal families are the most heinous villains that must be wiped out.

“For the Imperium and for the civilization of mankind, the Dongfang family must be destroyed. The reformists have been gathered exactly for such a purpose. Whatever the price is, we are going to annihilate the national thieves and rescue the Imperium!

“However, the Dongfang family is too deeply-rooted, wealthy, and powerful for the reformists to defeat them on our own. Grandfather, please call for the forces of the entire Li family as well as the vassal families to stand on our side and support us!”

Instead of bothering whether or not the Dongfang family was truly the “villain” and “cancer”, Li Jiande simply asked, “Is the strength of the reformists and the Li family combined enough to settle the Dongfang family quickly and neatly, without casting the Imperium into a civil war when the two parties are caught in a predicament?”

Li Linghai replied casually, “The reformists and the Li family combined will be enough to be on par with the Dongfang family, but it is still not sufficient to crush the Dongfang family thunderously.

“However, if the other three Kurfürst families are united, together with the forces of the reformists, it will be enough for us to eradicate the cancer unstoppably!”

Li Jiande cackled like a crow again and beamed with interest. “Good granddaughter, can you convince the other two families to play with the fire?”

“I can’t, but I believe you certainly can, grandfather.”

Li Linghai said with a smile, “Why else would I come to seek grandfather with such enormous ‘sincerity’?”

Li Jiande said, “What if I can’t either?”

“Then I will have to die.”

Li Linghai said gloomily, “As the queen of the Imperium of True Human Beings, it is not an outrageous demand to ask a few planets to be buried with me, right?”

Li Jiande coughed lightly and calculated without saying anything.

“I absolutely believe that Grandfather is wise and persuasive enough to convince the other two Kurfürsten. The most important thing is that the three Kurfürst families have been dissatisfied with the Dongfang family for a long time. They are just short of a reason to fight the Dongfang family and an opportunity for cooperation."

Li Linghai said comfortably, "Politics is nothing more than a game of balance. The politics of the Imperium of True Human Beings in the first five hundred years was the balance between the royal authority and the four Kurfürst families. In the second five hundred years, when the royal authority declined, it became the balance within the four Kurfürst families.

"The four Kurfürst families are exactly like the four legs of a table. Only if they are of equal height can the longevity and stability of the Imperium be ensured. If any one of the families grows too huge, it will mean that they are knocking over the table for a reshuffle.

"It was a tacit understanding among everyone and a tradition that we all abided by in the past hundreds of years, but in the recent two centuries, the Dongfang family played dumb and expanded crazily in violation of the tradition, until it is almost twice as strong as any of the other families right now.

"I'm very eager to find out what the Dongfang family's purpose is in expanding their forces so drastically, and when their expansion will stop. Are they really going to replace the Wuying family, overthrow the Imperium of True Human Beings, and become the well-deserved dominator of the universe and the 'First Family'?

"When that day comes, what should the Li family and the other two Kurfürst families do? Should we pledge loyalty to the new superpower again and kneel before the Dongfang family? Even if we are willing to do so, will the Dongfang family be bold enough to accept our allegiance?”

Li Jiande seemed to have fallen asleep. Even his eyes had been half-closed.

Li Linghai, however, knew clearly that her old and cunning grandfather was listening, analyzing, and considering carefully.

“Grandfather, don’t think that I’m just fretting. ‘The strong stay strong’ is a truth that is never proved false in the cruel competitions of the Immortal Cultivators. For the smaller worlds at the edge of the Imperium, the four Kurfürst families are the strong ones that have stayed strong, but among the four Kurfürst families, isn’t the Dongfang family the strong that have stayed strong too? The Dongfang family is expanding faster after each other. If we do not stop them now, we will never stop them and can only watch them swallow us one bite after another!”

Li Linghai raised her voice and gnashed her teeth, as if she were angry. “For the Li family, there is another hidden problem that is even more critical. The Li family is not necessarily the weakest of the four Kurfürst families, but it is now in an awkward phase where it lacks talents in the next generation. Now that grandfather is still alive, we can still manage to deal with the Dongfang family. But if we do not seize the opportunity to launch a critical attack, when grandfather can’t hold on any longer one day in future, who can represent the interests of the Li family and resist Dongfang Wang, the leader of the Dongfang family and the Prime Minister of the Imperium who is in his prime years?”

Chapter 2258 - Treacherous Deal

2258 Treacherous Deal

Li Jiande smiled. The more kindly he smiled, the more aggressive the brutality in his eyes became. “So, my beloved granddaughter, do you think that the alliance of the four Kurfürst families is so unreliable that you can turn them against each other with a few fancy words? If so, the four families would’ve started fighting each other hundreds of years ago. How on earth could we have worked together to maintain the balance of the Imperium to this day?”

“I am turning nobody against anybody but just speaking the truth that other people do not dare nor want to talk about.”

Li Linghai said calmly, “The most direct evidence is right before us—the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance. Assassinating an elder of the Dongfang family in such a simple and straightforward way without caring about the consequences is certainly not my style and brings zero benefits to the reformists. It was really not done by us. If I may be so bold to ask, did the four Kurfürst families plan it, and was the Li family involved?”

After a brief silence, Li Jiande shook his head and said, “I swear by the name of ‘Silver Fox’ that the Li family definitely did not plan or participate in it. We did not know anything beforehand.”

"I didn't do it, and the Li family didn't do it. So, it was the Dongfang family who did it on their own?"

Li Linghai grinned, baring her sharp teeth. "After the demise of one elder, they became the greatest victim. Then, they established the special investigation committee as quickly as lightning, eliminating the dissidents, framing up the decent officials, and extending their influences to multiple battle areas to earn tremendous benefits for themselves.

"As a result, the Dongfang family gets the biggest slice of the cake, whereas the blame is taken by the four Kurfürst families together. Dongfang Wang has indeed made thorough plans. If I may ask, does such a sordid and shameless action signify their loyalty to the alliance of the four families?"

The wrinkles below Li Jiande's eyes constricted, as if they were pinching a nonexistent mosquito hard, but he did not refute Li Linghai.

Encouraged, Li Linghai grew even more excited and raised her voice again. "Grandfather, this is the most corrupt and the darkest age of the Imperium, but this is also a great age to embrace world-shifting changes! The Imperium's counterattack in the past decade has drained the national treasury. The enormous expedition army needs to be subsidized, the disabled and retired soldiers need to be compensated, the newly-recovered areas need to be reconstructed with tremendous capitals, and countless remote worlds whose economy is on the verge of collapse need rest and appeasement.

"Everything requires money and resources. Astronomical money and resources!

“Yes. The four Kurfürst families, with the wealth and the powerful troops, may turn a blind eye to the miscellaneous troops and the Immortal Cultivators from the remote worlds. But they are certainly not going to wait to die if you do not give them a chance to live.

“Today, I am asking for the support of the Li family as the leader of the reformists, but even without me, even if I am completely erased by the family, the strength that struggles for survival and seeks changes will not be gone. Instead, it will completely go out of control and become a raging flood that will destroy everything on its way!

“How can we harness the crazy strength? Where can we find the astronomical money and resources for the subsistence and reconstruction? Very simple. Any of the four fat and huge behemoths, once collapsed, will be enough for other people to feast on for decades and live through the most difficult years of the reconstruction of the newly-recovered territory!

“After the newly-recovered territory that was greatly sabotaged by the Covenant Alliance is reconstructed by us and yields all kinds of resources incessantly, and when the local people get rid of the Covenant Alliance’s brainwashing, it will be the turning point for the rise of the Imperium!

“All in all, the renaissance of the Imperium requires the sacrifice of a behemoth. If you do not wish to see the Dongfang family fall down, it will only be the Li family who does. There is not a third option!

“You have seen and heard the torrent of changes congregated by the wrath and hunger of the millions of Immortal Cultivators from the remote worlds, a torrent that has crushed your face overwhelmingly. Instead of resisting it stubbornly, you might as well control the strength in your hands tightly!

“I am willing to lead all the reformists and the soldiers of the coalition fleet to be the sharpest saber in the hands of grandfather and the Li family while we fight on the frontline to deal with the Dongfang family. All we need is a boost from the Li family in the back. One boost will be enough!”

Li Linghai spoke so passionately and enthusiastically that even her fair skin was emitting redness.

Li Jiande, however, remained untouched. He said coldly, “However, according to the rumors I have heard, the purpose of the reformists is more than that. You are not just dealing with the Dongfang family; you are going to destroy all the four Kurfürst families!”

“Yes, I’ve said that on a lot of occasions.”

Li Linghai did not deny it at all but said nonchalantly, “That is the thing about ideals. How could I have attracted so many hotblooded fellows of honor and integrity to me, and how can I make them cooperate with the Li family as willingly as the saber in Grandfather’s hands?

“As to exactly whether or not the saber will run out of control and even swallow the holder, it will depend on how you wave the saber. Are you not confident in manipulating the reformists, grandfather?”

“Then—”

Li Jiande asked with a smile, “What can you personally get from all this? Just save the bulls*it that you are just doing this for the revival of the Imperium and the future of the family.”

Li Linghai smiled and licked her lips. “If I say that I want to be the leader of the Li family while I am also the queen of the Imperium, would you consider it too outrageous, grandfather?”

Li Jiande said calmly, “There has never been an example of that in the Imperium.”

“Examples are always created by people.”

Li Linghai said without giving in, “The Imperium has never witnessed such a great era of changes in history either!”

After staring at Li Linghai for a long time, Li Jiande gave in first and changed the topic, “How exactly do you want the Li family to support the reformists?”

Without any hesitation, Li Linghai proposed her demands quickly, “First of all, I want the Divine Rain Fleet and all the armed forces deployed on the Divine Rain Planet to surrender to us. No. ‘Surrender’ seems to be too harsh. Please ask them to completely transfer their commandership to us. From this moment on, the Divine Rain Sector will be a temporary base for the reformists. As long as it is not armed, we will not interfere with the normal operations of the Divine Rain Planet. Of course, we will also have to ask grandfather to continue shipping resources to us for the daily consumption of our fleet. I’ll send the detailed list of assets over after discussing it with General Lei.”

The wrinkles on Li Jiande’s face were very steady. He asked peacefully, “What about the battle? How are we going to explain it to the family and to the public?”

Putting on a malicious smile, Li Linghai said softly, “A drill accident.”

Surrounded by enormous silence, Li Jiande failed to come up with anything until half a minute later. “Go on.”

“Secondly, I want the elders of the Li family and the vassal families to propose a motion in the Council of Elders tomorrow to express your concerns about the investigation of the Blood Oath Alliance, ask for the reorganization of the special investigation committee by reducing the members of the Dongfang family, and terminate the trend where the investigation is expanded randomly.”

Li Linghai said quickly, “Of course, the suspects of the Blood Oath Alliance who have been arrested randomly must be released too. Considering the complexity of the issue, half of them can be released first.

“Thirdly, the other motion is about General Lei Chenghu’s military rank. I know that the Council of Elders has been discussing it since a long time ago and there’s no objection in principle, except that the Council of Elders hoped to let General Lei work in the capital after he’s accoladed with the title of Supreme Commander. However, we feel that the frontline is still in dire need of the supervision of an influential general considering the instability of the area. Therefore, it will be most appropriate if General Lei is also nominated as the commander of the new expedition army and be fully responsible for the regrouping of the expedition army.

“Fourthly, the Li family will coordinate and ensure the security and smoothness of all the media and network of the reformists. I want every voice that the reformists make to be heard by everyone in the Imperium, or at least the Immortal Cultivators. I have collected countless shocking scandals and crimes of the Dongfang family in the past decades, and I’m waiting for this moment to turn them into cannonballs!

“Fifthly, and the last strike, grandfather will impeach Prime Minister Dongfang Wang in person and make sure that his cabinet collapses!

“As long as Dongfang Wang’s cabinet collapses, a chain reaction will inevitably be raised. All the forces in the entire Imperium will stand on the opposite side of the Dongfang family, hoping to bite a few pieces of meat from the shaking behemoth. By then, the Li family will certainly be able to replace it, or at least get the largest share and the fattest meat, right?”

Li Jiande was amused. “If I were two hundred years younger, I might’ve been convinced by you. But would it be really so simple when it is put in practice? You are asking the Li family to completely stand on the opposite side of the Dongfang family. We will be sworn enemies forever!”

“Exactly.”

Li Linghai declared aloud, “If you do not show your attitude clearly that you and the Dongfang family cannot live under the same roof, how can the reformists completely trust the Li family?

“Alright, grandfather, I have said everything I need to say. You must be tired too. This is an important matter that requires careful consideration, but I will not stop dying together with my enemy. In twenty-four hours, if I do not get a satisfying reply, the entire Li family will die with your granddaughter!”

Li Linghai demanded angrily; her face full of intimidation.

Li Jiande seemed to have been both lost for words and could not take her deterrence anymore. His eyes bulged wider and wider and gradually turned frozen. Suddenly, he grunted and collapsed.

The other side of the light beam immediately turned into havoc. The picture was moving up and down nonstop, mixed with panicked screams. By the time the crystal camera was squared again, Li Jiande was already nowhere to be seen. Li Mingxuan, Li Linghai’s father, was the one who pointed at the picture in fury and shouted, “You… You… You unpardonable witch, do you really dare to destroy your family?”

“What do you know, idiot?”

Li Linghai smiled sincerely and leaned back in the chair comfortably. Taking a long breath in relief and wiping off her sweat, she said casually, “It’s none of your business. Grandfather has agreed to my deal!”

Chapter 2259 - Crossing the Line!

At the edge of the Divine Rain Sector where the radiations of the star were little to none, in the universal swamp that was bleak and cold all year round, a bloody hunt and besiege was going on.

The remaining starships of the Divine Rain Fleet were like scared cubs trying their best to flee to the most distant, dark, and cold universe further away. They were even initiating space jumps without caring about anything, hoping to escape to the Li family's other worlds.

The fastest cruisers of the Astounding Thunder Fleet, on the other hand, were like sharp teeth that tore apart the softest abdomens of the runners from all directions. Before the ripples of the space quakes appeared, they would rip terrifying damages on the shells of the enemy's starships, forcing them to stop the operation of the space jump unit, lower the speed of the regular cruise, and grit their teeth to fight the chasers.

Then, it was the time for the Colossi such as the Gold Vulture to demonstrate their might.

Under the cover of the barrage on his own side, Li Yao drove the Gold Vulture to break into the starships of the Divine Rain Fleet again and again, after his saber opened the plate armor as easily as he opened cans.

As long as the Gold Vulture broke into the starships, there was barely anything that could stop him from going on a rampage.

Li Yao, on the other hand, did not intentionally attack and kill too many Immortal Cultivators. He simply pressed forward and destroyed the energy centers of the starships based on his profound knowledge of starships. As a result, the dazzling spiritual shields and power units of the starships all dimmed and completely lost their combat ability, and they could only wait to be captured by the enemy.

The gold brilliance that disappeared and reappeared now became the greatest fear for the soldiers of the Divine Rain Fleet as well as the loudest cheers for the soldiers of the Astounding Thunder Fleet.

Under the Astounding Thunder Fleet’s overwhelming attacks and Li Yao’s unstoppable invasion, the running soldiers were like little beasts that were dragged into a swamp by crocodiles, with less and less struggle.

Suddenly, a weird wave spread across the starships of all the running soldiers, and a white light popped up around the starships of the Divine Rain Fleet.

Even the starships that were about to break away from the battle area volunteered to reduce their speed, slowly shutting down the spiritual shield and the power units.

Li Yao, who was holding his saber high and about to break into a new starship, narrowed his eyes. Very soon, he received a message from the rear. The Divine Rain Fleet and the ground troops on the Divine Rain Planet had all surrendered, and the Li family had completely changed their attitude. They were now willing to support the reformists’ righteous move and renew the Imperium together with them!

…

Iron Torrent, as the flagship of the Astounding Thunder Fleet and the flagship-general of the Third Battle Area of the expedition army, accommodated three to five Colossi all the time. Naturally, it boasted a Colossus maintenance center with full facilities.

Li Yao's Gold Vulture had taken "Iron Torrent" as the base for now. After every fierce battle, it had to be repaired and maintained in the most comprehensive way here, before it was refilled with ammunition and fuel and stored back into the Cosmos Ring.

The moment he crawled out of the Colossus, he saw countless pairs of eyes staring at him in reverence from all directions. Both the Astounding Thunder Fleet and the experts from the dozens of other worlds of the Third Battle Area had all gained a deeper understanding of Li Yao as the "emperor's envoy". The awe-inspiring image of "Vulture Li Yao" was finally established.

Li Yao had no time to nod and smile at the soldiers or to maintain his Colossus at all as he was already summoned by Lei Chenghu to discuss the operations in the next step.

However, when he came to Lei Chenghu's command room, he discovered that Lei Chenghu was alone. Not a single commander of the coalition fleet was in the room—not even their holograms.

"The Li family has conceded. We have won the first gamble."

Crossing his flesh fingers and his iron ones, Lei Chenghu stared at Li Yao with cold eyes. "According to the latest news, Li Jiande, the current leader of the Li family and one of the four Kurfürsten known as 'Silver Fox', passed out due to the sudden attack of diseases. He is now unable to handle the affairs of the family at all, and Li Mingxuan, the queen’s father, is working as the leader of the family on behalf of him.

“Hardly had Li Mingxuan become the temporary leader when he commanded the defenders of the Divine Rain Sector to surrender and expressed his deep understanding and absolute support for the reformists as well as the soldiers from the frontline, encouraging us to make our justified voices.

“Did you know the issue beforehand? What’s your take?”

“Huh?”

Li Yao blinked quickly. “The old leader Li Jiande is about to kick the bucket because of heavy diseases, and the queen’s father became the new leader and announced full cooperation with the reformists the moment he took over the office? Well, the cooperator within the Li family that the queen was so confident about was actually her father Li Mingxuan? It doesn’t feel right!”

“You really do not know anything about it?”

Lei Chenghu observed and analyzed Li Yao’s face carefully, only to be slightly surprised. Frowning hard, he said, “It seems that Her Grace did not tell everything to her trusted subordinate!”

“As I said, I am not very close to the queen, and we are just regular friends. I am not her trusted subordinate at all!”

Scratching his chin, Li Yao said thoughtfully, “I somehow feel that everything is going on too well. The old leader is about to die after we have just attacked the place, and then the queen’s father became the new leader of the family. Also, he has such a high control over the Li family that he can command all the defenders of the Divine Rain Sector to surrender? This cooperator… seems too good, doesn’t he?”

“Not a new leader, but a temporary leader.”

Lei Chenghu knocked on the table and said, “I need to remind you something. ‘Silver Fox’ Li Jiande, the oldest of the four Kurfürsten, is one of the most famous seniors among the politicians of the Imperium. Since he resigned as the Prime Minister of the Imperium because of serious illness a hundred years ago, it was said that he had always been troubled by serious health issues, and he was almost always half dead.

“But after catching his last breath for a hundred years, he is still breathing, but his nemeses in the past, as well as the enemies who have jumped out coveting his place, are all as dead as can be.

“Rumors even have it that the old man does not suffer from any serious illness at all but is practicing a special secret technique that trades his health and final vitality for the ability to enter the Divinity Branching Stage at the critical moments!”

Li Yao was greatly shocked. “The Divinity Branching Stage?”

“Exactly. As long as one enters the Nascent Soul Stage, one will be reaching the limits of the human body in terms of strength and computational ability. Starting from the Divinity Transformation Stage, they will be breaking the limitation of ‘human being’ and evolving toward legends. The ‘Divinity Branching Stage’ is even inestimably terrifying. The strongest Immortal Cultivators in the Imperium today are in the Divinity Branching Stage too. ‘Silver Fox’ Li Jiande, standing at the peak of all the Immortal Cultivators in the Imperium, has survived a hundred years, and yet he is sick and almost dying at such a moment?”

Lei Chenghu analyzed carefully, “This Li Mingxuan, on the other hand, is not an extraordinary person, and he has mediocre aptitudes. He’s just a common elder in the Li family. How was he capable of stealing the power from the Silver Fox? Even if he did manage to usurp the power, there’s no reason why other people of the Li family would obey him and that the Divine Rain Fleet would surrender under his order.”

Li Yao rolled his eyes. “Got it. A puppet!”

“Exactly. I estimate that Li Mingxuan is probably a puppet that ‘Silver Fox’ Li Jiande has pushed to the frontstage and a pitiful scapegoat who will take the blame later.”

Emotionlessly, Lei Chenghu said, “Right now, Li Jiande pretends that he is bedridden and has lost all his power. Li Mingxuan is pushed forward as his puppet and supports the reformists on behalf of the Li family.

“Once the tide of reform truly sweeps across the entire Imperium, the Li family will naturally gain tremendous benefits. It will at least be able to keep the current wealth and position.

“However, if things do not go well and the fire of reform is about to be extinguished, hehe, the ‘unconscious’ old fox will certainly be invigorated and jump out to ‘serve the justice’ by killing his son Li Mingxuan and his granddaughter Li Linghai. He will annihilate the reformists on behalf of the Li family!

“In such a way, he has taken both sides at the same time, and there is no way he can lose.”

Pondering carefully for a moment, Li Yao couldn’t help but nod. “‘Silver Fox’ Li Jiande is truly remarkable!”

“But isn’t your queen even more remarkable?”

Staring at Li Yao, Lei Chenghu said gloomily, “I’d been speculating who the queen’s supporter in the Li family was and who was capable enough to challenge ‘Silver Fox’ Li Jiande and control the entire Li family. It never occurred to me that the queen’s supporter would be Li Jiande himself. No wonder she was confident to win the Li family’s full support.

“At that time, the situation was too urgent for any careful consideration. But now that things are preliminarily settled, I have realized that it doesn’t add up at all. If the queen had Li Jiande’s support right from the beginning, it wouldn’t have been necessary for us to fight so fiercely in the Divine Rain Sector. But if the queen did not have Li Jiande’s support in the beginning, how did she achieve it in only half a day?

“Walking in the queen’s shoes, I contemplated and ran deductions repetitively. Finally, I came up with the only solution, one that is similar to my strategy in the Godly Might Prison but only a hundred times more dreadful.

“Have you figured it out, Fellow Cultivator Li?”

Soon, Li Yao shuddered hard in coldness.

Lei Chenghu smiled like a scary ghost. “You have thought of it too.”

“I really don’t know the first thing about it.”

Li Yao said solemnly, “General Lei, you must trust me.”

“I trust you, but I trust my intuitions even more.”

Taking a deep breath, Lei Chenghu mumbled, “My experience, rationality, and computational ability all tell me that the only way to save the Imperium is to cooperate with the queen, but my intuitions are also vaguely reminding me that the queen is such a terrifying person that she cannot be calculated or inferred. She is different from all the Immortal Cultivators and even the four Kurfürsten. Nobody knows how she will eventually reform the Imperium, or completely destroy it!

“Fellow Cultivator Li, although we haven’t known each other for long, and your words are sometimes very absurd, my intuitions somehow tell me that much of what you said is true. To some extent, you seem to be even more trustworthy than the queen herself.

“I very much would like to know one thing. If your queen’s gamble is so wild that it crosses the line and may destroy the Imperium one day, whose side will you take, and what will you do?”

Chapter 2260 - A “Gift” Before the Final Battle!

2260 A “Gift” Before the Final Battle!

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao walked forward and stared at Lei Chenghu across the cold metal desk. He declared, one word after another, “I do not want to see the people at the center of the cosmos to be reduced into a state of misery. I am unwilling to face a shattered, collapsing civilization of mankind. I cannot tolerate the puppets of flesh and blood who do not have feelings and free will from the Alliance of the Holy Covenant sweeping across the entire universe, forcing my compatriots and my offspring to kneel before the Pangu Clan or any other deities in the universe!

“If the queen can stop them from happening, I will stand on her side unwaveringly and try my best to support her.

“If the queen cannot stop it and will bring even greater catastrophes to the center of the cosmos, then, I will side with whoever can stop her and terminate the chaos.

“Getting to the bottom of it, I am not loyal to the queen or the Imperium, but to the civilization of mankind itself!

“General Lei, are you satisfied with the answer?”

Lei Chenghu stared at Li Yao’s eyes where gold brilliance was shining vaguely and nodded his head. “Got it. It seems that you and the queen are indeed not exactly the same, which makes me very curious about your origins. How exactly did the queen raise such a… unique and unconventional person like you?”

Li Yao smiled and did not reply. He simply changed the topic and asked, “General Lei, what do you think are the odds that the queen’s gamble grows too wild? However ambitious she is, she cannot expect to fight the entire universe, right? Even if she can swallow the four Kurfürst families on her own, the fleets of the Covenant Alliance are still lurking and watching in the dark. Is she idiotic and insane enough to not see that?

“If she usurps the highest power of the Imperium through all trouble, only to be taken advantage of by the Covenant Alliance in the end, wouldn’t she be the greatest joke?”

“I don’t know where the queen’s confidence comes from. Perhaps she has even more trump cards that other people are unaware of, like you.”

Lei Chenghu said casually, “I only know that, for a gambler, the odds that their gamble grows too wild are a hundred percent. ‘Bow out’ does not enter the dictionary of the gamblers. Whether they win or they lose at the beginning, gamblers will only wager more and more chips on the game, until they lose everything.

“I am such a hopeless gambler myself, but the queen is playing an even greater game than mine. Now that she has tasted the delicious fruit of victory, will she stop in time? I… highly doubt it.”

Li Yao and Lei Chenghu both fell silent, deep in thought.

But the two of them were obviously thinking about different things in their heads.

The universe was vast, but the ambitions of mankind were too exuberant to be accommodated by even the biggest stars and worlds. They were destined to overflow.

Right then, the battlefield communicator on the metal desk was triggered by the signals from Dragon Abyss, the flagship of the Deep Sea Fleet.

The image of a white-haired woman appeared between the two of them like a ghost.

“Bodyguard Li, you’ve been troubled. Your remarkable performance far exceeded my expectations. It seems that I need to reevaluate your role in the tide of reform and your position in the new Imperium.”

Queen Li Linghai smiled at Li Yao thoughtfully, before she turned to Lei Chenghu and said, “General Lei, I have fulfilled my promise and won the full support of the Li family on behalf of the reformists. The sacrifices that you and all the soldiers made are now worth it, aren’t they?”

“With Your Grace’s wisdom, everything is naturally under control.”

Lei Chenghu said expressionlessly, “However, what I’m more curious about is how exactly did you convince ‘Silver Fox’ Li Jiande. If my guess is correct, Li Jiande is still the director of the Li family, right?”

“Very simple.”

Li Linghai said casually, “I told Li Jiande that all the reformists, as well as you and the Astounding Thunder Fleet, had been manipulated by me and that the Li family could totally use the reformists, General Lei, and the Astounding Thunder Fleet as knives to stab the Dongfang family. When the reformists and the Dongfang family both suffered heavy losses, the Li family would be able to take advantage and rise unstoppably.

“What has been motivating the old fox Li Jiande to live on for a hundred years? The decline of the Dongfang family, of course. How could he not be tempted?

“Besides, we are such a gigantic thorn that has pierced into the Li family’s abdomen brutally, and we will cut their guts out if the negotiation falls out. Now that we are clearly determined to die with the enemy, is there any doubt how he would choose?”

“Sounds fair enough.”

Lei Chenghu said, “Then, how do we know if they are just your lies and not your true thoughts, and that you are tricking Li Jiande on behalf of the reformists instead of manipulating the reformists as a representative of the Li family?”

“Of course I am manipulating you. Aren’t you manipulating me too, General Lei? We have common interests, and we manipulate each other to achieve the same purpose. Isn’t this the most steady and trustworthy relation that is more reliable than any blood bond?”

Li Linghai said matter-of-factly. With a smile, she said again, “Rest assured, General Lei and Bodyguard Li. I sincerely believe in the renewal of the Imperium and swear to clear all the corrupted forces and systems.

“I have no affection or interest in the Li family at all for a simple reason. Today, when the technologies are so advanced, the civilization is so developed, the low-level Immortal Cultivators are larger and larger in number, and the people are more and more enlightened despite all the suppressions, while the four Kurfürst families’ way of governance is simply too underdeveloped, shabby, and vulnerable.

“Governing the world with one family could barely be implemented on one planet in the age of the ancient Cultivators, let alone right now when every family rules over dozens of Sectors. Suppressing more than 99% of the population with the biological descendants of the family that often take up less than one percent of the population, how can such a government be long and steady?

“From that point of view, even the current system of the Imperium is more advanced than the system within the four Kurfürst families. The Imperium boasts a Council of Elders after all, and the interests of different parties have to strike a balance in it. The decline of the royal authority also leads to the rise of the secondary families. Many people are able to utter their voices more or less, with a narrow, rough, but hopeful road to the sky.

“Under the dominions of the four Kurfürst families, as long as your surname is not Li, Yun, or Dongfang, you will never be able to distinguish yourself. As to the conspiracies, fights, and stinky rules within the family, there are simply too many to count.

“Such a system that feels like a ten-thousand-year-old zombie constrains the combat ability and creativity of everybody in the dominions. How can those families lead the Imperium to the future? They are just abnormal freaks and a retrograde of history. Despite their momentary splendor, they will be crushed and eliminated without any mercy.

“My ambitions are very huge; so huge that even the entire Imperium and the universe might not be enough to accommodate them. Why would I bind my fate to such a family that is doomed to decline and be destroyed?”

Lei Chenghu looked at Li Yao, and after pondering for a moment, he said, “Great. Of course, I am willing to believe in and support Your Grace to cooperate with the Li family for now.

“Now that we have the full support of the Li family, what are we going to do next? It’s not like we can ask the troops of the Li family to attack those of the Dongfang family, right?”

“Of course not. Li Jiande will never agree to such a simple and straightforward approach either. We are seeking a reform, not a civil war.”

Li Linghai said confidently, “Rest assured, General Lei. I know what I am doing very well regarding the issue. Our goal is very specific right now, which is to try our best to take down Prime Minister Dongfang Wang and crush his cabinet!”

Lei Chenghu shook his head and said, “Di Feiwen has been the Prime Minister for twenty years, and his associations are everywhere in both the capital and the powerful industrial worlds. With the triumph of the Imperium’s counterattack, he is also respected as a Prime Minister of iron and blood. How is it possible to ask Dongfang Wang to resign and even remove his entire cabinet?”

Li Linghai said, “If the other three families oppose the Dongfang family together, it will be possible.”

Lei Chenghu said coldly, “Leaving the Li family aside, the other two Kurfürsten are also cunning and clever. Why will they go against the Dongfang family?”

Li Linghai said with a smile, “If we can find a way to shatter the reputation of Dongfang Wang and his family, to the point that everybody in the country curses them and the powerful persons within the Dongfang family are rising to object to him, those ‘cunning and clever’ Kurfürsten will certainly throw away their masks of hypocrisies and reveal their real faces of brutality and greediness, hoping to chop off a piece of meat from Dongfang Wang.”

Lei Chenghu’s eyes flashed. “How can you shatter Dongfang Wang’s reputation?”

“The incident of the Blood Oath Alliance.”

Li Linghai said, “Everything began with it, and everything should end with it. It was 100% Dongfang Wang’s scheme. As long as we can completely unveil his crime, showing the public that Dongfang Wang planned the assassination of an elder from the Dongfang family, he will be screwed forever both in and outside of the family!”

Lei Chenghu was amused. “Even if the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance was truly planned by Dongfang Wang, with his wisdom and meticulousness, would he have left any evidence for us to catch?”

“If there is no evidence, we can create it. After all, he is absolutely related to the issue. We will not be wronging a good guy.”

Li Linghai said, “Of course, it will be a cutthroat move that must not be performed easily unless we are 100% sure of the mission. Before we expose the truth of the ‘incident of the Blood Oath Alliance’, I have prepared a lot of ‘cannonballs’ for the Dongfang family. With the support of the Li family right now, the media and the network in the entire Imperium are no longer our obstacles. We can shoot the cannonballs one by one first, blowing the Dongfang family into dizziness and giving them no time to bother with anything else.

“General Lei, Bodyguard Li, get yourselves prepared. We will go back to the capital openly for the final battle.”

Both Li Yao and Lei Chenghu were slightly stunned. “Already?”

“Is it fast? I have waited long enough that I’m almost losing patience.”

Li Linghai grinned. With the dancing white hair on her head, she looked like a vengeful female ghost. “Besides, the little gift that I have prepared for the Council of Elders and the Prime Minister in the capital is about to be served!”

Chapter 2261 - Surplus Generals!

Chapter 2261 Surplus Generals!

In the capital in the Empyreal Terminus Sector, the heart of the Imperium of True Human Beings was like the frozen lake in early spring. While undercurrents were flowing rapidly below the ice, the river, enshrouded in frigid mists, still looked dead and silent when looked at from the shore. All the fish and shrimps were sealed in the ice, and there was no sign of thawing at all.

The rebellious troops loyal to the reformists did not attack the capital as the intelligence said. Instead, with the trick of distraction, they marched into the heartland of the Li family on a large scale. Such an attack was too huge and noisy to escape the attention of the other three families.

However, the Divine Rain Sector was a very sensitive place after all. The Li family blocked all the messages, announcing that they would gather the elites and settle the rebellious troops on their own. Naturally, it was inappropriate for the troops of the other three families to march to the heartland of the Li family without being asked to. They could only stand by and watch.

Besides, the rebellious troops’ mysteriousness and rapidity left a deep impression on the four Kurfürst families. Small riots and rumors never stopped in the capital. Who could tell if it was a strategy of the rebellious troops and that when the four families loosened the wariness in the capital, they would cause even greater trouble here?

Therefore, the elite troops of the four Kurfürst families were still stationed in the capital. Only the Li family dispatched some of the main troops back.

If truth be told, the other three families might be secretly chuckling and hoping that the rebellious troops churned up the guts of the Li family, in which case the Li family would have to offer them enough benefits for them to lend a hand!

The situation would certainly escalate later.

But in the recent couple of days, a subtle balance and stillness were still maintained in the capital.

On the other hand, the Imperium of True Human Beings was simply too huge, so huge that the consequences of any serious riot could not affect every corner instantly.

The Imperium was like a dinosaur hundreds of kilometers long. Even if its tail was set on fire, it would take a long time of transmission for the signals of pain to be passed to the brain. Or rather, the cells on the dinosaur's body might not know that the tail of the dinosaur had been burnt up at all.

It was even more so for the germs and bugs living on the wrinkles all over the super dinosaur that was the Imperium.

All the conspiracies and schemes of the upper class, their talks about triumphs, the civilization of mankind, and all the other fancy phrases, meant nothing but the germs and bugs. For them, the most important thing was how to pay yesterday's bills and how to find today's food so that they and perhaps their family could manage to survive.

The thirty-sixth district in the underground area of the Blackstar Continent, the main continent where the royal palace and the Council of Elders were located, was a dark corner that the radiance of the Imperium never reached.

It couldn’t have been more accurate to describe such a dark corner as a “wrinkle”, because the gorges caused by the fierce battle between the Supreme Emperor and the Mad Armageddon in the past were narrow, long, and deep, frequented by all kinds of people. They indeed looked like interconnected, grime-containing wrinkles on the body of a behemothic beast.

Every wrinkle was a district. On the fractures from top to down, spanning a distance of almost ten thousand meters, lived millions of people. Such districts had a population larger than many metropolises in the peripheral worlds.

During the day, intense smoke and steam were released from the “wrinkles” to the ground. At night, dim and hazy light would pop up nonstop like glittering dust, which was the only sign that the ants living deep inside the dark wrinkles showed that they existed and were still alive.

The thirty-sixth district was a district relatively close to the royal palace and the Council of Elders, with a reasonably good and safe environment.

The area one to two hundred meters into the ground, on the other hand, was still close to the surface and could be bathed in sunlight for a while at noon. In the entire underground city system, it was one of the high-level neighborhoods.

There were mainly two kinds of people who were qualified and wealthy enough to live in the district.

The first kind was the most distinguished hominoids. They were mostly the foremen of the underground factories, the few lucky dogs who started their own business successfully, and the family or lackeys of the Immortal Cultivators.

The second kind was the Immortal Cultivators—the losers among the true human beings, the bankrupts who had run into desperation, and the garbage who had been heavily wounded in training.

In the world of Immortal Cultivators where survival of the fittest was a self-justified truth, the race for survival was extremely cruel. The cruelty was not just manifested in the oppression of “true human beings” over “hominoids” but also in the ruthless competitions among the Immortal Cultivators.

When one wanted to win, one would have to advance into higher levels through whatever means possible. When one tried to break into higher levels without caring about one’s personal conditions, the odds of being heavily wounded could be very high. Then, when something went wrong in their training, or when they failed in the cruel competitions and lost all their values, their outcomes could be extremely miserable.

When one Immortal Cultivator soared to the sky, perhaps ninety-nine Immortal Cultivators had already fallen into the abyss. It was even more so for the battle-type Immortal Cultivators who made a living through fighting.

Because of their profession, the odds that they were wounded were multiple times higher than other Immortal Cultivators. Besides, after fighting every day, there tended to be a lot of hidden health problems in their body, and they might have made many sworn enemies too.

When they were at the peak of their Cultivation in their prime years, they could naturally enjoy the best entertainment and relish the reverence of other people. But when they were sick, wounded, or grew old, and they did not have a few strong disciples or enough savings, it was very possible that they would hit rock bottom from the summit, breaking into pieces.

Changing their names and fleeing to the underground world was almost their only way out.

The splendid experts in the past, in destitution and desperation, became muscles, mercenaries, assassins, and the lowest gladiators in the underground arenas. Such examples were not rare at all.

Exhausting their life and soul, exploiting their last drop of blood and sweat, in exchange for a few coins, which would be traded into high-intensity medical and painkilling drugs or the excitants with powerful paralyzing and narcotic effects immediately. The drugs were then injected into their abnormally expanded veins, before they leaned against the dark, damp wall, collapsing and fantasizing that they would rise again in hallucinations until their bodies turned cold and rigid. That was the pathetic and yet unavoidable outcome for many Immortal Cultivators.

From a certain point of view, those Immortal Cultivators were even more miserable than ordinary people.

Ordinary people could work in the factories. They could live on a tiny bit of synthesized food despite its bad taste. If there were a few “ham slices” made of condensed oil in their porridge, it would almost be a delicious meal.

But the Immortal Cultivators, even the old and heavily-wounded ones, would never demean themselves by working together with the “hominoids” as a common component on the assembly line.

Besides, the money they earned by working was not even enough to fill their stomach that was like a bottomless hole, much less paying for the astronomical medical fees.

Once a person became an Immortal Cultivator, they would be setting off a path full of thorns, never to return. They could not press forward until they were destroyed, but they could never turn back and become an ordinary person again.

The thirty-sixth district was teeming with such devastated Immortal Cultivators, the useless garbage that no sects, forces, groups, or families were willing to take in.

In the recent half of the year, the population of the garbage had been increased by ten times, turning the underground world, which had been crowded enough as it was, even more chaotic and obstreperous.

The losers who were exiled to the underground world were the officers of various levels eliminated from the expedition army. Most of them were the mediocre commanders in the miscellaneous troops who had lost most of their Cultivation because of heavy wounds and who had lost all their troops in the battles.

Thirty years ago, when the Imperium decided to launch the largest strategic counterattack so far, an unprecedented general mobilization was implemented to expand the army. Even the miscellaneous troops from the peripheral worlds, which were usually forbidden to have strong fleets, were permitted by the central government and increased like balloons.

In order to allure the bumpkins from the miscellaneous troops to sell their lives for the Imperium, or rather, for the four Kurfürst families, all kinds of ranks, destinations, medals, and titles had been offered to them besides the military aids.

A few hundred years ago, the Imperium was rather rigorous in terms of the accreditation of military rank and knighthood. When there was not any major war for hundreds of years, it was not rare that a Nascent Soul Stage expert worked hard for their entire life before they were finally accoladed as a vice admiral in the end.

However, the previous standard had been completely shattered this time. Any random expert in the Core Formation Stage from the peripheral worlds, as long as they could summon a team—even if the team was nothing but a group of half-armed carriers modified from civil carriers—would be given the honorable titles such as “vice admiral” or “knight of the Imperium”, not caring if their head was big enough to wear those hats.

Those people were all known as “surplus generals” in the upper-class circle of the capital. They were all worthless jokes.

Some of the unsophisticated Immortal Cultivators from the peripheral worlds, and those who were ambitious enough, hoping to win wealth and glory for themselves, did lead the men from their hometowns to the frontline, charging in the vanguard, with the honorable titles above their heads.

Those guys with more brawn than brains were, naturally, no match for the cunning weasels of the four Kurfürst families. They were manipulated easily as other people’s chess pieces and cannon fodder.

The more lucky ones of them, who were dispatched to the command of “God of War” Lei Chenghu in the Third Battle Area, were perhaps able to preserve the lives of their troops and themselves. Even if they died, they would die a hero’s death.

But for most of the “surplus generals”, they did not know how or why they were killed even after they died. In only a couple of years, the troops that they led to the frontline were wasted, and their Cultivation plummeted because of the heavy wounds they suffered on the battlefield. Some of them were even crippled, their spiritual root and internal organs messed up.

What they earned, however, was nothing more than a few fancy medals, or an upgrade of knighthood, or the elaborate empty promises, such as the rewards or the fiefs that would be given to them after the “final victory”.

As to what the “final victory” was, well, it had to be defined and announced by His Majesty… or the four Kurfürst families behind.

Chapter 2262 - Seminar of Generals

2262 Seminar of Generals

After decades of preparations, the bloody war finally began and lasted a dozen years. Millions of people were killed and countless troops were wiped out before the glorious victory was finally achieved in the end. In the meantime, the national economy of the Imperium of True Human Beings reached the verge of collapse too, and it was barely possible to support such an enormous and convoluted expedition army to continue to exist.

The Council of Elders was already prepared to hold the current battle line and “end the war with dignity”.

So, the elimination and reduction of the expedition army were inevitable.

Regarding the arrangements for the strong, bold troops who were still fighting, such as the tough warriors under the command of “God of War” Lei Chenghu, meetings and discussions were still being held.

But the surplus generals, who had lost all their troops and even their own strength, were naturally the first targets to be dealt with.

Naturally, since those people were the generals of the Imperium in name, leading either legions or fleets, and they had made great contributions in the Imperium’s counterattack, earning enough medals to wear on their chests like crystal suits, it would be inconsiderate to kick them away directly, which would also jeopardize the glorious image of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

The solution of the Council of Elders was to summon the commanders who had lost all the troops back into the capital and admitted them into the “Royal Seminar For Advanced Generals”, where they would be better educated and assigned with other tasks.

The “Royal Seminar For Advanced General” sounded rather intimidating, but it was actually poorer than anybody could think.

Before those strengthless commanders were stuffed in, the military academy was designed to transmit high-level officers for the Imperial Guards.

The Imperium Guards, the glorious and invincible Imperial Guards. What a splendid and awe-inspiring name it used to be!

When Blackstar the Great founded the Imperium, he once granted the strongest fleets with the most distinguished accomplishments the title of “Imperial Guards”. At that time, the Imperial Guards were truly one-in-ten-thousand elites and killing gods who survived hundreds of battles. In terms of combat ability, equipment, privileges, and future, they were all the best. They were the emperor’s most trusted subordinates!

Good days didn’t last. As the royal authority declined and the four Kurfürst families rose in the second five hundred years of the Imperium’s history, the four Kurfürsten were certainly unwilling to watch the emperor have a strong troop such as the Imperial Guards. Naturally, they contained, corrupted, and made use of the Imperial Guards through all kinds of approaches.

Also, the royal family was not competent enough. After a thousand years of enjoying the entertainment without doing anything, they had forgotten the schemes and fighting skills of their ancestors, but when it came to playing and drinking, they were all exceptionally talented.

A thousand years after the demise of Blackstar the Great, the so-called “Imperial Guards” had become a complete joke. Not only were they unworthy compared to the direct troops of the four Kurfürst families, but even the miscellaneous troops at the periphery of the Imperium were also better than them. Those miscellaneous troops were often needed to act as space pirates or privateers in their hometowns, or to fight against the nemeses from the neighboring worlds, or to struggle through the hellish battlefields in the frontline. They had more or less combat ability, but the Imperial Guards were all the most worthless rubbish. It was a pig farm where the four Kurfürst families raised everyone whose surname was Wuying into swine.

How could the commanders end up well after they were kicked into such a pig farm?

Leaving the future aside, the most critical thing right now was that the “Royal Seminar For Advanced Officers” did not have any funding or resources.

Now that it was under the name of the royal family, the military academy theoretically had nothing to do with the four Kurfürst families. After the files of the surplus generals were transferred to the school, their allowance would be the royal family’s responsibility.

Eight hundred years ago, everybody knew that even the dogs of the royal family had better food than the local Immortal Cultivators did. Whoever had “royal” on their head would be so proud when they encountered an enemy that their level would automatically increase!

But today, the situation was different. Everybody knew that even the royal family was abjectly poor and had to count on the intermittent relief of the four Kurfürst families.

The quantity of the relief was certainly not huge, and the quality couldn’t be very good either. It was barely enough for the daily needs of the royal family and the close relatives. There was absolutely no sufficient fuel and resources if they wanted to improve their personal combat ability or to practice with the outdated starships that were produced hundreds of years ago.

But the royal family had one thing good about themselves. Instead of fighting, they simply lived a happy and carefree life in the capital, raising birds, listening to songs, or having cricket duels every day. Their days were rather easy and comfortable.

Things were different for the surplus generals.

The blades and secret treasures of the Covenant Alliance were certainly no jokes. They were all the stuff left by the Pangu Clan on the primeval battlefields, and they could be as sordid and brutal as weapons could be. So much so that when they touched the enemy’s skin, one would be heavily wounded if not killed instantly.

After more than ten years of bloody battles, every surplus general was haunted by wounds and diseases or short of a few limbs. The medical fees to keep themselves in the current state were already astronomical, let alone the cost for a full recovery!

The royal family certainly did not have the money.

The liability was kicked from the royal family to the Department of National Defense, from the Department of National Defense to the Department of the Treasury, from the Department of the Treasury to the Department of Civil Affairs, and then from the Department of Civil Affairs back to the royal family. Everybody simply said the same thing—no money here!

Naturally, the surplus generals had their hometowns too. Their hometowns were usually at the peripheral worlds of the Imperium. By logic, if the royal family could not take care of them, their hometowns should.

However, for the Imperium’s counterattack, the peripheral worlds of the Imperium had used up the last drop of sweat and blood. Each of them was poorer than the rest. Their economies were all on the brink of collapse or already in the middle of it. How could they provide enough supplies for the treatment of the garbage?

Also, more than ten years ago, it was exactly them who led countless men to embark on the expedition, swearing that they would earn infinite wealth and glory for their homeland. Right now, the wealth and glory were still nowhere to be seen, but they had lost all of their men first. Even they had to return with broken bodies. How could they not be embarrassed to meet the acquaintances in their hometown?

More practically speaking, for the Immortal Cultivators in the Core Formation Stage or even the Nascent Soul Stage, how could they not have a few sworn enemies in their hometowns?

Their enemies were all whetting the blades waiting for their return. How would the lone commanders dare to return to their hometowns to be caught and killed?

They could not return to their hometowns, but the “Seminar of Generals” was a bottomless hole too. The subsidies that it offered could only keep them alive but guaranteed no future at all. They could turn to nobody for help at all!

Zhao Zhenwu was exactly the most typical “surplus general”.

He was from a harsh land at the edge of the first quadrant of the Imperium. After a few generations of relentless fighting, his ancestors created a rather powerful sect, before they spent tremendous money transforming the sect into dozens of carriers. They usually smuggled dutifully and lawfully, but they would not hesitate to kidnap and kill when there was an opportunity.

When it came to his father’s generation, the business grew larger and larger, and they were gradually bored of the smuggling business. Instead, they were officially upgraded into a privateer fleet, or licensed space pirates.

After his father was killed by his enemy or his subordinates in a deal, he took down the few other heads neatly and became the commander of the privateer fleet. But he had greater ambitions than his father. Killing and looting at the edge of the cosmos were too boring, and they would forever be bumpkins. A great man should accomplish something great to honor their ancestors by devoting their everything!

Right then, the Imperium’s counterattack began. In his feverishness, Zhao Zhenwu raised his own team and recruited a bunch of desperadoes with the savings of his family, before he dedicated himself to the “great and glorious” war as the vice admiral and the commander of the fleet.

But as it turned out, the ten years of bloody battles were like a dizzy dream. He had more and more medals, titles, and awards but fewer and fewer men. In the end, even his left eye and his left hand were broken off. Even his abdomen had been half blown up. His spiritual root was as soft as the penis of a crappy old man. When he turned around, he could find no brothers of the past at all!

The Immortal Cultivator Zhao Zhenwu woke up.

But before he realized what was going on, he had been politely asked to leave the advanced ward of the hospital, politely given new medals and honors, politely thanked for the unparalleled contributions he made to the Imperium, and then politely kicked to the Seminar of Generals.

At this moment, in the underground world of the thirty-sixth district, wearing the military uniform that was losing colors because of over-washing, Zhao Zhenwu folded and unfolded the hat in a daze.

It was a new habit that he had picked up in the Seminar of Generals.

His daze was mainly because he could not think it through. What exactly had happened, and how did all his men disappear step by step?

After all, there was nothing better to do in the Seminar of Generals. Many other surplus generals had been meditating like him all day. When they had too much thinking, they would also burst into tears, or found the relatives of the royal family for a fight. Even though they had been crippled and greatly lost their Cultivation, it was more than easy for them to beat up a few pigs.

But it was certainly not a good time to be absent-minded right now.

After a moment of dizziness, Zhao Zhenwu focused his attention again, and both his hands were sweating so hard that he was almost squeezing water out of the hat. He looked at the “Seven Star Jade Cutting Saber” half in affection and half in uneasiness.

At this moment, the Seven Star Jade Cutting Saber, which had never been away from him in the bloody battles over the past ten years, was like a salty fish in somebody else’s hands.

That was an appraiser of the pawnshop.

Judging from the young age of the appraiser, he couldn’t have been an experienced man of his trade but more like a rookie who had just entered the business. It was possible that he might misevaluate his familial saber.

“One miscellaneous saber made of common metals, dented, edgeless, rusted, without rune arrays, crystal chips, or incredible features. Estimated price… three thousand coins.”

The appraiser looked at the saber and then at him, yawning and announcing the price lethargically.

Zhao Zhenwu felt that his heart was heavy. His expectation was correct. The man was really a rookie who could not tell a real treasure!

Chapter 2263 - I Am a Vice Admiral!

2263 I Am a Vice Admiral!

“Would you please take a close look?”

Zhao Zhenwu had never said anything so awkward like “would you please” when he used to live a lawless life in his hometown, but he did pick it up rather fast after he came to the Seminar of Generals. Weighing his words, he tried to lower his self-esteem and said with a smile, “This is a legitimate familial treasure. The body of the saber alone is made of the Red Copper, the Secret Silver, and the Sun Crystal Gold and polished nine times. There is also the most advanced control chip inside the handle of the saber, which can store a hundred attack techniques and automatically protect the user when in danger. It saved my life many times on the battlefield before. I almost regret that I cannot maintain it with the blood from my heart. How on earth can it not have any crystal chips, rune arrays, or techniques?

“The last maintenance alone cost me a thousand crystal coins! Right now, you are giving me three thousand for me to pawn it? Isn’t it a jo—anyway, please be reasonable. How about eight thousand? I’ll redeem it in a few days.”

The young appraiser, who had a complete lack of interest, pushed back the saber and said, “Three thousand coins for the damaged saber. We are not taking it for any higher price!”

The smile on Zhao Zhenwu's face was completely frozen. He changed his face color, and his eyes somehow lost focus, gliding from the Seven Star Jade Cutting Saber to the nose of the appraiser, and then from the nose of the appraiser to the lobby.

Fearing that he might run into someone familiar, he intentionally chose a time to pawn his saber when there were few customers. Right now, the lobby of the pawnshop was empty except for two tall, strong guards, with high-rising temples and eyebrows, who were watching him coldly.

He looked at the appraiser again, only to discover that the guy's eyelids were almost stuck together and his head was falling again and again. The guy did not even give his saber or himself another look.

Zhao Zhenwu snatched the familial saber and turned around quickly, striding outside. But while he was on the way, he gritted his teeth and turned back again, putting back the saber and taking back a package that was covered in a silk handkerchief carefully from his pocket. Opening the package layer by layer, he took out an iron plate that had been carved with glamorous rune arrays and breathed hard. "Please ask somebody to give an appraisal on this. Fifty thousand. I'll pawn it for fifty thousand!"

The young appraiser raised his eyes lazily, not looking at the iron plate at all, before he said with a feigned smile, "A title deed?"

"Yes."

Zhao Zhenwu said confidently, "A title deed for three mountains with coverage of a hundred square kilometers on a resource planet in the newly-recovered territory, with all the necessary facilities from the mining bases to the infrastructure below the ground. This is no regular magical equipment. Please ask an expert of the properties department of your pawnshop to examine it carefully.”

With a smile, the young appraiser played with the title deed with his finger and pushed it back. Shaking his head, he said, “We won’t take it.”

“You won’t?”

Zhao Zhenwu was dumbfounded. In his fury, he had no time to bother if he would piss the guy off but raised his voice and shouted, “This title deed is hundred percent authentic. The seals of His Majesty and the Council of Elders are on it, with all the necessary certificates. After the mining bases are cleaned and prepared, the annual profit will be at least millions of crystal coins. Why are you not taking it when I’m only pawning for fifty thousand?”

“If I may advise my dear general here…”

The young appraiser said, “This is not just the rule of our ‘East Mountain Pawnshop’ but an agreement made up by all the pawnshops in the thirty-sixth district. Title deeds are naturally great things. The ownership of the properties and mines in the inland of the Imperium is definitely unquestionable hard currency, and we will take it however high the price may be. But when it comes to the newly recovered territory, that will be a whole different matter.”

“How is it different?”

Gnashing his teeth, Zhao Zhenwu grabbed the title deed. “They are both the territory of the Imperium!”

“Yes. All the territory in the universe belongs to the Imperium. Naturally, it is part of the Imperium.”

Seeing that he was exasperated, the young appraiser explained patiently, “However, everybody knows that the Covenant Alliance burned everything to the ground when they retreated and turned all the resource planets in the newly-recovered area into a mess. Almost every mining base has been completely sabotaged. Even the motherlodes thousands of meters into the ground have been polluted.

“In order to purge the pollution, rebuild the mining bases, and restore the operations, it will take at least twenty years and hundreds of millions of crystal coins.

“I imagine your mines are no exceptions, right?

“Of course, if the normal productions are recovered, the mines are likely to guarantee a revenue of millions per year. But the investment before that is simply too huge. How are you going to calculate the time and cost?

“Right now, you are pawning the title deed for fifty thousand. It appears to be a great bargain for us, but if you never come back to redeem it and it stays with us for all eternity, are we going all the way to the newly-recovered territory and invest a huge quantity of resources and money to develop the mines?

“Most critically of all, although the frontline is stabilized now, who can tell if the Covenant Alliance will come back again someday? If we really recover the mining bases in ten to twenty years at the cost of tremendous time and capitals, only to find the place mired in war and reduced to the ground again, we will have no choice except to hang ourselves!

“It is exactly because of such concerns that all the pawnshops and private trade centers of real estates in the thirty-sixth district are very cautious about the title deeds and the ownership of the mines in the newly-recovered territory. In principle, we are not taking any of those, but if you are really in dire need of money, I will break the rule and help you take care of it for a few days with ten thousand coins. How does it sound?”

Zhao Zhenwu was dumbfounded. Extending one of his fingers, he asked in disbelief, “Ten thousand?”

“Ten thousand. That is the market price.”

The young appraiser said sincerely, “Not just the thirty-sixth district, even if you fly to other districts five thousand kilometers away, it will be the same. As long as the super mining groups with wealth and power do not take them, nobody will be bold enough to accept the title deeds!”

“This is His Majesty’s award!”

Craning his head, Zhao Zhenwu bellowed, “My fleet earned this after fighting in blood for more than ten years. They said that this was at least worth eight million!”

“If this is His Majesty’s award, why don’t you go to His Majesty?”

The young appraiser turned cold too. Glancing at the two tall and strong guards nearby, he scorned, “Or maybe, you can go back and try to restore the mines first. As long as the normal productions are recovered, you can ask the specialists of our properties department to evaluate them properly. By then, not just eight million, you will be able to pawn them for eighty million. Everybody in the thirty-six district knows that the East Mountain Pawnshop is the most reliable and trustworthy.”

The two guards stood straight, the weapons hanging from their waists clinking against each other.

Zhao Zhenwu almost passed out in fury, but there was little he could do. In dizziness, he took out another few pointy iron plates from his inner pocket and placed all of them on the counter before he demanded, “Those… Those medals and this saber, for ten thousand crystal coins!”

The young appraiser sighed. Taking out a dark red monocle from his pocket and putting it on his right eye, he observed what Zhao Zhenwu had offered for half a second, before he casually said, “The title deed is unacceptable. The saber, three thousand. The medals, two thousand. Five thousand crystal coins in total. Are you pawning them or not?”

“Two thousand?”

Zhao Zhenwu was completely shocked. Then he burst into fury and shoved the medals to the young appraiser’s face vehemently. “Watch carefully. Open your eyes and watch carefully! One level-two Divine Cauldron Medal, one level-two Blue Sky Medal, one level-three Blackstar Medal. It’s the Blackstar Medal! I traded my eye and my arm for the Blackstar Medal, and you are telling me that it’s only worth two thousand? Two thousand?”

“Divine Cauldron and Blue Sky are five hundred apiece, and level-three Blackstar is a thousand. That’s the market price now.”

The young appraiser was untouched. “A lot of generals like you have come to the capital in the recent half of the year. They lack everything but medals. Now that there are too many of them, it is only natural that they grow cheap. Yesterday, a general pawned a level-two Blackstar Medal for two thousand and five hundred coins. It is already fair enough to give you a thousand for your level-three Blackstar Medal. In a few days, it will only become cheaper. Chances are that you won't even get eight hundred!"

Two thousand and five hundred, a thousand, eight hundred.

They were cheap because there were too many of them!

Zhao Zhenwu felt that his head was exploding. His ears hummed hard, and the level-three Blackstar Medal was enlarging nonstop. The stars on the background of the medal seemed to have turned into the starships of the Covenant Alliance, throwing thousands of heavy crystal bombs on his team and himself, blowing all of them into smithereens.

"Pa!"

His eyes bloodshot, Zhao Zhenwu drew the mini storm bolter from his waist and slammed it down on the counter before he realized what he was doing.

"This is the general's special gun. How much is it worth?"

He roared. He then dug out his artificial left eye brutally and slammed it down on the counter too.

"This is the artificial eye of a vice-admiral of the Imperium. How much is it worth?"

He then tore off his artificial arm and tossed it at the young appraiser.

"This is my arm. How much is it worth? Tell me! How much is it?"

He seemed to be back to the glorious years when he was a space pirate. His disobedience and violence completely released, he dashed to the top of the counter, meaning to grab the appraiser by the collar.

But out of his expectation, the seemingly empty counter was protected by powerful defense rune arrays in between the customer and the appraiser. Hardly had he extended his hand when dozens of electric arcs shot out from the counter and blew him out to the ground.

Before he had the chance to scream, the two daunting guards had already lunged close and beat him hard with the short sticks that were surrounded by electric arcs, forcing him to throw out his screams.

“This is outrageous!”

Zhao Zhenwu’s lunacy all turned into poignance. He roared in devastation, “I shed blood in the frontline, I made contributions to the Imperium, I am a legitimate vice-admiral of the Imperium and a commander of a fleet!”

“Vice-admiral?”

While the two guards beat him hard, one of them grinned hideously and said, “Old fart, do you know where you are? The capital! If you throw a brick to the street, you may smash ten sect leaders and eight generals!”

“I’ll kill you!”

Zhao Zhenwu groped for his Seven Star Jade Cutting Saber. But then, he recalled that his familial saber was still on the counter and that it already couldn’t perform the function of automatic defense due to the lack of crystals. So, he could only wail aloud, “Wait for it. Just wait until I get my strength back… I am a vice-admiral!”

Chapter 2264 - You Can Only Forgive Her...

Zhao Zhenwu was drowned by the storm of fists and electric sticks again. Sparks were flying before his eyes like a volcano eruption, and he was seeing all kinds of illusions in his trance. He felt that he was back to the battlefields of bombs and bodies.

His old brothers all turned into creepy ghosts and extended their skinny hands at him while they shouted desperately, “Commander? Where is the fortune that you promised? Boss, where is the gigantic fortune?”

Zhao Zhenwu shrieked and cramped hard.

The two guards beat him for a while more before they dragged his feet and threw him out of the pawnshop into a gutter on the dark street.

Clang! Clang!

His artificial eye, artificial arm, medals, title deed, and familial saber were all tossed out by the guards onto his body coldly.

Such things were anything but unusual in the thirty-sixth district or any other underground district in the capital in the recent half of the year.

There were even a bunch of scoundrels who lurked in front of the pawnshops every day, preparing for their shameless business.

The moment they saw that Zhao Zhenwu was thrown out, a large batch of scoundrels crowded forward. While shouting “somebody, help him”, they searched his body crazily.

Zhao Zhenwu was already half dead because of the beating. The world was swirling before his eyes. How could he have the strength to defend himself?

He tried to defend his medals, title deed, and saber, but somebody hit his head hard, and he immediately passed out.

Five minutes later, when he woke up again, he felt coldness to the bones. Even the general’s uniform on his body had been entirely taken away. The medals, the title deed, and the saber were gone too. The only things left were a few scoundrels at the door of the pawnshop who were picking their teeth while grimacing at him.

Zhao Zhenwu’s blood was completely frozen.

He felt that the air in the entire world had been pumped away. He was unable to catch his breath at all, and his heart was aching nonstop.

“My medals! My title deed! My saber!”

He cried and groped in the gutter, only to find an artificial eyeball that had been broken and a squeaky metal arm.

Waving his left arm with his right hand, he moved to the scoundrels like a zombie.

“Somebody stole your things and ran that way.”

The scoundrels laughed in no fear. Some even grimaced and pointed at the depths of the dilapidated alleys.

Zhao Zhenwu thought for a moment and turned around, trying to enter the pawnshop again.

The scoundrels moved forward and carried him out of the street together. Somebody leaned close to his ear and said with stinky air from their mouth, “Forget it. Consider the loss of your treasures a price for your life. Do you know to whom the ‘East Mountain Pawnshop’ belongs? The Dongfang family! If you make a fuss again, it is more than easy to kill a surplus general like you and throw you into the furnace of the energy factory than to butcher a dog!”

Zhao Zhenwu was kicked out of the street.

He felt that the bones all over his body were constricting, and his back couldn’t help but bend.

Looking at the entrance of the street that was as dark as the mouth of a man-eating beast, Zhao Zhenwu was stunned for a long time but did not have the guts to argue with them anymore. It was the Dongfang family’s property!

Like a ghost, Zhao Zhenwu wandered in the thirty-sixth district. In his trance, he did not even know how he returned home.

The Royal Seminar For Advanced Generals at least provided four-bed dormitories for them, no matter how ragged they were.

But he was not all by himself. He still had a wife and a son to feed.

Zhao Zhenwu was born a privateer, or a space pirate, and he had killed too many people and made too many enemies in the business when he was in his hometown. Now that he was out to fight the war, there was naturally no reason to leave his wife and child behind to be butchered by other people.

While he fought in the frontline, his wife and his son had been renting a house in the capital. His wife was also from a family of Immortal Cultivators with a long history, and she was used to the extravagant lifestyle. She had been living in an advanced neighborhood in the capital and spending tons of money every year.

A few years back, when he still had his troops, he naturally had various sources to make money and transfer it back to the capital to feed his wife and his son. At that time, Zhao Zhenwu was very confident before his wife, and he was the unquestionable man of the family.

Even if he looked for another woman outside, it was still what his job needed. His wife did not dare to ask anything about it.

Now that he had lost everything, and his strength had hit rock bottom because of the heavy wounds, nothing about Zhao Zhenwu could be hard anymore!

He hadn’t got his medical fees yet, and his son was about to enter the critical moment of awakening the spiritual root, which required tremendous resources. However, he was so destitute that he had even lost his medals, his saber, and his title deed… Zhao Zhenwu wandered before his house for more than half an hour but still did not know how he could explain it to his wife. He was almost of a mind to kill himself.

Suddenly, he heard his wife’s giggle from the house.

This was not the advanced neighborhood that his wife rented earlier but just a regular slum in the thirty-sixth district. How could there be any sound-blocking rune array?

Zhao Zhenwu bulged his eyes and stuck his ears to the wall, listening carefully. His jaw hit the ground before he knew it.

Huala!

Right then, the door opened, and a tall, fancy-looking man walked out of his house.

Zhao Zhenwu felt that his skull now weighed ten thousand tons and was pressing his head into the ground.

Countless voices were shouting in his heart, but his body seemed to have been emptied, and he could not even lift his finger.

The man saw him too, and he was quite embarrassed. After a cough, for some reason, the man went close and patted his shoulder, before he swaggered away.

He patted my shoulder.

In his dizziness, Zhao Zhenwu thought to himself, F*ck him! He dared to pat my shoulder!

“Aya.”

His wife’s voice came over unemotionally. “Why are you here? You didn’t go to the seminar today?”

Zhao Zhenwu’s blood was erupting out. He raised his hand high and meant to slap his wife, but his wrist was caught by her before he could touch her.

His wife was also an Immortal Cultivator, but she was a culture-type one. Naturally, she was no match for him in the past. But now, she easily dragged him into the room and threw him onto the messy bed.

As if suffering an electric shock, Zhao Zhenwu jumped to his feet and looked at the bed that was in a mess like it was a viper's nest.

"Is… Is he…"

Zhao Zhenwu's face was furious, but his voice was filled with tears as he asked, "Is he that 'Dongfang' guy?"

"Yes. He is Dongfang Ye, my current boss."

His wife admitted frankly. Combing her hair carefully, she said in peace, "Old Zhao, I did not know how to explain it to you before. Now that you have run into us today, let's just talk about now. There is no need to burst into a fury, which will only hurt your body. Your health should be your primary concern right now.

"As for me, I do not have time to quarrel with you either, because I'll be moving to the 'Cloud Sun District' too. I'm gathering my stuff right now. There is no need to make a scene. After all, when you enjoyed yourself outside before, I never fought you, right?"

The Cloud Sun District was a community of Immortal Cultivators on the ground that was within the reach of the sun. The house that Zhao Zhenwu rented for his wife and his son was exactly in an advanced neighborhood in the Cloud Sun District.

Naturally, the environment and the rental cost of the place were incomparable for the "thirty-sixth district" that did not even have a name.

After a long daze, Zhao Zhenwu asked, "How long has it been?"

His wife smiled. “Does it matter?”

Zhao Zhenwu fell silent. Then he struggled to say, “Why?”

His wife sighed and took out a golden, glittering card from her pocket. Putting into Zhao Zhenwu’s pocket carefully, she said, “The wounds you suffered in the frontline are too heavy. If you can’t find enough Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures to treat yourself, the levels you have lost will never be recovered. There are a hundred thousand crystal coins in the card. Use them to treat your wounds first. If they are not enough, I will give you some money every month later. Cultivation is what matters most for every Immortal Cultivator. In any case, try to recover your strength first.”

Zhao Zhenwu’s face almost turned green. He grabbed the card hard, meaning to throw it at his wife’s face, but he somehow thought to himself, The three medals that I earned with my life are only worth two thousand coins, but my wife… A hundred thousand? A hundred thousand!

“Also, you don’t need to worry about Ah Xiao’s spiritual root. I’ve taken care of everything.”

His wife continued, “Rest assured. Ah Xiao has great gifts. With the investment of abundant resources, he will certainly grow into an Immortal Cultivator stronger than you.”

Zhao Zhenwu felt like crying. He opened his mouth, but he did not know what to say. His throat constricted for a long time before he finally said, “You are taking Ah Xiao away with you?”

His wife smiled. “I’m not taking him to another world but just back to the ‘Cloud Sun District’. He lived there and was used to everything there, and he has been complaining about the filth and stink of the thirty-sixth district and asking me to find a way to move back to the Cloud Sun District!

“In any case, his surname is Zhao, and you are his father. What are you worried about?”

Looking at his empty sleeve, Zhao Zhenwu lowered his head helplessly. “I—I—I…”

“I don’t want to do this. I really don’t.”

His wife sighed and said gloomily, “I never left you when so many things happened to our family. After all, we have been a couple for so many years. I hoped that you could think of a solution as the man of the family. But half a year has passed, and you are as helpless as half a year ago.

“If men can’t come up with a solution, women have to step up and see what we can do. I know that the wives of a lot of senior officers in your seminar show up often in the entertainment places. Why? To support the family, of course!

“Today, if you insist that I do not leave with Dongfang Ye, I won’t, but where will your medical fees be tomorrow, where is the money for us two to keep our current level the day after tomorrow, and where is the money to help our son awaken his spiritual root the day after that?

“Are you going to be happy when I have to dance in the clubs like the wives of your ‘classmates’?”

His wife’s words couldn’t have been more true.

Rendered speechless, Zhao Zhenwu moaned and collapsed to the ground.

Chapter 2265 - Things Are Getting Huge!

Chapter 2265 Things Are Getting Huge!

When Zhao Zhenwu woke up again, his wife had already left. The small house was already cleaned up without any trace of her and their son at all.

Zhao Zhenwu sat on the bed in a daze for a long time. For some reason, he touched the pistol on his waist.

His medals and his saber had all been stolen, but nobody wanted his pistol that was a standard weapon for generals. Perhaps the gun was as worthless as the generals in the capital right now, was it?

Zhao Zhenwu took out the mini storm bolter and touched it carefully next to his thigh. The light reflected from the barrel somewhat boasted weird attraction, alluring him to open his mouth and put the gun into it…

Bam! Bam! Bam! Bam!

Somebody knocked on the door.

Zhao Zhenwu shuddered and threw the pistol far away as if he had an electric shock. Calming himself down, he asked, “Who is it?”

“Old Zhao, it’s me.”

A familiar voice said sullenly from outside.

He opened his door, only to discover that it was He Peng, his fellow general in the Seminar of Generals.

When the Immortal Cultivators were absolutely confident about themselves, they would naturally compete with each other openly and in secret.

But when they were in a battlefield fighting on the same planet or even in the same trench, they sometimes could also become best friends.

It was especially so when they had all been heavily wounded and pushed into the fire pit that was the Seminar of Generals. There was nothing in them that could be taken advantage of anymore. So, their friendship was rather pure!

Immortal Cultivators were human beings too, and they could be quite loyal sometimes. This guy, He Peng, had similar experiences to Zhao Zhenwu. The two of them were good friends when they were still on the battlefield and now even closer comrades in the desperate situation.

Zhao Zhenwu was rather anxious to see He Peng, thinking that the man had learned the conflicts between him and his wife and came to offer consolation.

However, his good brother looked too devastated for that. Frowning, he asked, “What happened?”

He Peng sighed heavily and shook his head, “Zhou Lifu is dead. His death was quite miserable.”

“What?”

Zhao Zhenwu was greatly shocked.

Zhao Lifu was also their fellow in the Seminar of Generals. He was a notorious, brutal man at the peripheral worlds in the first quadrant since decades ago.

The man used to be a gladiator and had a high Cultivation. It was said that he had a glorious accomplishment of thirty-five consecutive victories. In his peak, he once reached the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage and was known as “Ghost Butcher”!

In the Seminar of Generals, Zhou Lifu was also a very famous student. The man was outspoken and had a lot of friends. He was more or less a central person of all the students.

It never occurred to Zhao Zhenwu that he would die so abruptly.

“Old Zhou was different from you and me. I am all by myself and do not have any concerns. You have a wife and a child, which is not very burdensome. But Old Zhou had five sons, and all of them had shown talents in training. They all needed abundant resources for their growth.”

He Peng walked into the room, sat down, and slapped his thigh. “As the saying goes, a half-grown boy can easily bankrupt his father. Now that five boys are waiting to be fed in his home, how could Old Zhou’s subsidies and allowances be enough?

“The future of the kids is certainly important. Having no choice, he could only go back to his previous business. He somehow reached out to an underground arena and went to the games again.

“Sigh. Did he think he was still the ‘Ghost Butcher’ decades ago? After so many years of battles, what could he butcher now? With the stimulation of drugs, he managed to win two games. Last night, he encountered a tough person. Attracted by the large sum of the prize and also under the promise that he would get the money even if he failed as long as he fought another round, he was beaten to death in the arena!

“Damn it. How majestic and daunting the ‘Bloody Butcher Legion’ he established with the eight hundred gladiators used to be! He was not killed by the Covenant Alliance after so many years of perilous battles, but he died such a worthless death in the capital!”

With mixed feelings, Zhao Zhenwu couldn’t help but feel truly sorry for the guy who had similar experiences to him.

“That’s not all of it—”

Wiping his eyes, He Peng said, “After the dead body was carried to the home, his wife immediately changed. She did not burst into tears or make a fuss but even thanked the staff of the arena. When everybody had left and it was almost dawn, she almost left the world together with the five sons and Old Zhou!”

“Ah?”

Zhao Zhenwu was greatly surprised, almost forgetting that he put a barrel into his own mouth a moment ago. “How could she be so silly? Were they saved?”

“Thankfully, one of their debtors went to kick their door before dawn and discovered them in time. They are all fine.”

He Peng said, “But even if they are saved for now, so what? The pillar of the family is gone, and the family will soon collapse. What are the five little guys going to do in the future? Are they going to stay as ‘hominoids’ because of the lack of resources?

“Right now, all the fellows in the Seminar of Generals are at Old Zhou’s. Old Zhou used to be a good friend for all of them when he was alive. We are discussing working together and taking care of his family after he is gone. If he did not live peacefully, he should at least rest in peace, right?”

“Exactly!”

Zhao Zhenwu declared, “Let’s go together. I don’t believe that so many generals are not enough to give a comrade a proper funeral!”

The two generals of the Imperium packed up and walked to Zhou Lifu’s cottage in the thirty-sixth district.

He Peng naturally noticed Zhao Zhenwu’s anomaly too, and he asked what was troubling him.

Too embarrassed to confess that his wife had eloped with somebody else, Zhao Zhenwu simply said that his familial saber was stolen.

The two of them walked forward gloomily and soon reached Zhou Lifu’s alley.

At this moment, the alley that was no more than three meters wide was already packed with the surplus generals.

The black, gray, and brown uniforms covered the ghost-like humans. The atmosphere was particularly solemn and depressing.

Deep inside the alley, some women seemed to be crying. Zhao Zhenwu was so upset that he somehow recalled his own wife again.

Shaking his head, he looked around and discovered fellows that he was familiar and unfamiliar with everywhere. Most of them were in as much destitution as he was. Somebody was sighing, some were gnashing their teeth, some were angry, some were whispering to one another, and some were nodding their heads at Zhao Zhenwu and He Peng, as if they had made some sort of secret pact.

Zhao Zhenwu and He Peng squeezed into the crowd. Suddenly, they heard some people roaring desperately apart from the cries, reciting what sounded like a poem or a suicide note. Vaguely, they heard the same shouting,

“The warriors killed in the battlefields, the wandering souls in the universe, open your eyes and watch the bloody noble families built on your bones!

“You are killed for nothing in the frontline, your family is starving in the rear, but the corrupted officials and the noble families are still living the most extravagant life with your flesh and blood!

“Who will pity you? Who will remember you? Who can protect your innocent family? Let the storm blow harder to cover your miserable cries!”

Clenching his fists, Zhao Zhenwu asked in a low voice, “Who wrote this?”

“No idea.”

He Peng shook his head. “A certain dour and gloomy general, perhaps. A lot of people are writing and singing these days. What else can we do?”

The two of them went through a lot of trouble to squeeze into the memorial hall, only to discover Zhou Lifu’s widow kneeling on the ground in white, stunned. The five little guys next to her were all somewhat overwhelmed. They were all bulging their eyes observing the “generals” around them, who were supposed to be awesome.

A female officer was comforting Zhou Lifu’s widow in a low voice. There was no telling what sorrow she triggered, but Zhou Lifu’s widow suddenly burst into tears again and cried, “I don’t want to die either. I want to live a good life too! But sister, how can we survive? And how can we live on?”

Her words were exactly everybody’s pain. After a long daze, the female officer cried together with the widow.

The cries spread out contagiously like a virus. The weirdest thing that had probably never happened in the history of the Imperium of True Human Beings took place. In the dilapidated alley, hundreds of Immortal Cultivators began to sob one after another as they recalled their own misfortunes.

In the atmosphere, even Zhao Zhenwu and He Peng shed a few sincere tears.

When everybody was weeping sadly, an officer in the crowd suddenly said aloud, “We are all honorable warriors of the Imperium. The Imperium is already corrupted to such an extent, yet we are doing nothing more than a few secret cries in this place?”

Since there were too many people, and the light was too dim, it couldn’t be told who exactly was speaking.

Somebody argued, “We have neither the men nor the guns. Most of us are heavily wounded and have lost most of our Cultivation. Even if we want to contribute to the Imperium, what can we do except to weep for it?”

The first officer said, “Even if we can do nothing but to cry, we should not cry here stealthily, because nobody will know even if we cry ourselves to death. If we are going to cry, we should go to the gate of the Council of Elders and cry openly and shockingly to make all the people of the Imperium know what happened to us!”

The second officer continued to argue, “Everybody knows that the capital is under curfew right now. The elite troops of the four Kurfürst families have surrounded the Council of Elders. We will be discovered, dispersed, and captured when we are a hundred kilometers away from the Council of Elders. How can we possibly cry ‘shockingly’?”

“Everybody—”

The first officer finally stood out to the top and spoke in fury, “Fellow Cultivators, brothers who have been through life and death together, the highest authorities are disposing of us to such a degree that we cannot hold it anymore! What happens to General Zhou today will happen to all of us tomorrow. Are we really going to wait and die without doing anything to fight back?

“Yes, we are utterly unarmed, and we do not intend to start a rebellion. But we have no livelihood right now and are mired in sheer destitution. Let’s rally to demonstrate to the highest authorities and express the will of the people. Do you not even have the guts to do that?

“The Council of Elders is heavily guarded. Naturally, we cannot go there. Then… Right, the Emperor’s Mausoleum. Let’s go to the Emperor’s Mausoleum and cry before Blackstar the Great, the ancestor of the Immortal Cultivators, as well as all the previous monarchs of the Imperium of True Human Beings. We will tell them how we are wronged and ask the soul of Blackstar the Great to make things right for us!”

Chapter 2266 - Cry in the Emperor’s Mausoleum!

Chapter 2266 Cry in the Emperor’s Mausoleum!

Cry in the Emperor’s Mausoleum!

Shuddering hard, Zhao Zhenwu stood on his toes and looked at the man who was raising his arms and calling for supporters, only to discover that it was the “monitor” of his class in the Seminar of Generals. The man was named Chu Tianhe and was the leader of a top-ranking legion in the expedition army!

This Chu Tianhe used to be a very famous “general of wisdom” in the frontline and best at unexpected attacks. Before he lost his troops and went to the rear in desperation, it was told that he had foreseen that he would not be able to protect the properties in his hometown and therefore sold all of them in advance. As a result, he got quite a large sum of cash in his hands. Since he was also good at investment and operations, his situation was much better than his fellows.

The man was also rather friendly and generous. Whichever of his friends was caught in difficulties, and even if he did not know them in the past, he would always be the first to give them a hand.

In the past half a year, dozens of his indigent classmates only managed to this day because of Chu Tianhe’s help. As a result, Chu Tianhe’s savings were mostly gone too, and the man was about to be as poor as the rest of them.

Other people might find it hard to understand his generosity, but Chu Tianhe simply said with a smile that, after all of them survived so many bloody battles from the piles of dead bodies on the hellish battlefields, even life and death meant nothing to them. Would he cherish a few coins at all?

Money given away would come back one day. What mattered more was comradery!

After hearing that, all his classmates, including Zhao Zhenwu, were touched by him.

The man had a high prestige in the Seminar of Generals and was somewhat the leader of the “surplus generals”. After hearing his speech, everybody fell silent and began to consider his suggestion carefully.

Zhao Zhenwu thought quickly. The more he thought, the more he felt that Chu Tianhe’s idea was marvelous!

In the past, when Blackstar the Great established the Imperium of True Human Beings, he naturally hoped that the Imperium would grow into the strongest, greatest and longest country in history and that it would not rise brilliantly only to perish abruptly soon like the Star Ocean Imperium.

Even though it might not last forever, it should at least continue a few hundred thousand years, like the reign of the demons, right?

As a symbol of the regime, the Emperor’s Mausoleum certainly had an enormous scale.

Back when Wuying Qi was still alive, he already searched the best location on the planet and established the mausoleum based on the mountains and rivers. Even an entire mountain was built into a magnificent statue of him looking down at the great landscape of the capital.

It was said that the entire underground mausoleum was as complicated as a maze and could accommodate an entire army!

After the demise of Blackstar the Great, the emperors of every generation had been buried here, and the scale of the mausoleum was thus enlarged into a splendid city.

However, the Imperium of True Human Beings was not one of the ancient dynasties tens of thousands of years ago after all. After the education and enlightenment in the Star Ocean Republic, many popular ideas in society had changed. The Emperor’s Mausoleum was not regarded as a sacred, inviolable place.

Instead, when Blackstar the Great was still alive, he had already planned to build the mausoleum into a spiritual center of the entire universe. The main building on the ground, other than the mausoleum itself, was the “Museum of the Imperium”, which was dedicated to the introduction of the accomplishments of the Imperium of True Human Beings as well as the infinite glories of the true path of immortality.

In the first five hundred years, when the royal authority was still at its heyday, overwhelming visitors used to come from every part of the universe every day. The Imperium even pronounced in the law that every Immortal Cultivator should at least visit the Emperor’s Mausoleum in the capital once in their life.

In the second five hundred years, as the royal authority declined, the four Kurfürst families naturally did not want the shadow of Blackstar the Great to continue to loom. The regulation was gradually abandoned.

However, the supremacy of the emperor had entered everyone’s heart. Even the most powerful official could not stop people from visiting the mausoleum, which would be denying their own legitimacy of governance and would only raise public resistance.

Therefore, the Emperor’s Mausoleum and the Museum of the Imperium were still teeming with tourists every day. Pilgrims from hundreds of Sectors in every part of the universe came to visit them.

Many tourists and pilgrims had come a long way. Naturally, they would not leave immediately after sightseeing but often stayed in the towns near the Emperor’s Mausoleum to visit the entire capital slowly.

If a thousand generals who were still in service, as the most loyal warriors of His Majesty, cried hard to the monument of Blackstar the Great in the Emperor’s Mausoleum, it would certainly be great news that would be known by the whole world!

The most amazing part was that, since the Empyreal Terminus Sector was under curfew and the four Kurfürst families’ own troops were everywhere, the critical locations such as the royal palace, the Council of Elders, and the important departments of the government were all heavily guarded.

Those generals who had neither guns nor troops were naturally incapable of breaking into such places. It was possible that they would be knocked out and captured when they were dozens of kilometers away.

The troops that were stationed in the Emperor’s Mausoleum, on the other hand, were not the Kurfürst families’ troops but the Imperial Guards!

The reason could’ve been more simple. Most of the members in the Imperial Guards belonged to the royal family with a surname of “Wuying”. They were the descendants of Blackstar the Great as well as all the emperors that followed.

Who should guard the mausoleum of their ancestors if not them?

It was somewhat ironic, but in the entire Imperium of True Human Beings, the Emperor’s Mausoleum was perhaps the only place that was still under the control of the Imperial Guards.

The surplus generals, after being enlisted into the “Royal Seminar For Advanced Generals”, belonged to the Imperial Guards. To be more exact, they were all the reservists of the Imperial Guards!

The Emperor’s Mausoleum was their territory!

The plan could very likely work out!

For a moment, Zhao Zhenwu felt that all his blood was flooding to his head, and his breath was even heavier than before.

His friend He Peng, as well as all the other surplus generals around, also whispered in excitement and applauded Chu Tianhe’s plan.

Somebody hesitated. “It will be quite a huge event. Will it trigger the intense reactions from the Council of Elders? The accomplices of the Blood Oath Alliance are being captured in the capital right now. Innocent or guilty, a lot of people have been caught.”

Chu Tianhe declared loudly, “We are all people who have lost everything and are waiting to die. We may be captured and tossed into the sunless dungeons, but so what? Will that be any different from our situation right now? Even if we are beheaded, it will be a quick and clean end to our life!”

Somebody else asked, “What about the Imperial Guards? We will certainly raise a lot of attention with such a large group of people. Group visits have to be scheduled in advance.”

Chu Tianhe said, “The Imperial Guards work for the royal family. Many of them are even our classmates and tutors right now. Although there are minor frictions between us in the school, there is nothing too serious. In fact, I think we get to know each other better through the fights.

“The royal family hates the arrogance of the four Kurfürst families as much as we do. If we have a chance to humiliate the four Kurfürst families, they will certainly be glad to see it.

“Besides, by crying before their ancestors, we will be expressing our unquestionable loyalty to the royal family. Why would they stop us at all?

“You can rest assured about that. I know a few members of the Imperial Guards very well. Everything will be good as long as I talk to them. It all depends on whether or not you have the guts to do it right now. Are you going to live an ignorant, unchangeable life and die miserably exactly like General Zhou, or are you going to rise and counterattack?”

Zhao Zhenwu’s blood that had flowed to his head was boiling.

In his trance, he saw the cocky appraiser in the Dongfang family’s pawnshop again, the stormy fists of the guards and the scoundrels, the embarrassing man who walked out of his own house, and heard his wife’s cold and helpless chuckle.

The faces and the sneers all turned into bombs on the battlefield and the screams of his old brothers before their death.

“Where is our fortune? Boss, what are we fighting for exactly in the frontline at the risk of our lives?”

“Let’s do it!”

With a courage that came from he didn’t know where, Zhao Zhenwu clenched his fists and roared, “Even the Covenant Alliance never scared me in the frontline. Why should I be scared of the scumbags in the rear? Let’s just fight them and die if we must. If I had died a hero’s death in the frontline a few years ago, the misery today would’ve all been saved!”

“Exactly!”

Chu Tianhe’s eyes glittered. Then he declared in a high voice, “Brother Zhenwu is quite right. No Immortal Cultivators are scared of death. How many of our brothers have died as heroes in the frontline? Even if we must die, we will die for something worthwhile like them!”

“Then, we will have to ask Brother Chu to be our commander in the tribute to the Emperor’s Mausoleum!”

For some reason, Zhao Zhenwu blurted out, “Let’s go to the Emperor’s Mausoleum and turn it upside down!”

All the surplus generals who had been angry for a long time cheered for him, making Zhao Zhenwu enjoy the feeling of being respected again. His back that was hunched a moment ago straightened again!

Chu Tianhe frowned. Pondering for a moment, he nodded his head and said, “Alright. If this thing truly gets huge, the leader will probably not end well. But with everything coming to this point, we cannot think that much now. If they want to execute me, just take away my head!

“Besides, if my head can be exchanged for a way out for everybody and the dignity and privileges that we deserve, it will be a fair deal!

“Brothers and fellow Cultivators, I will gladly take the place of the commander. If you are willing to trust me, just follow my arrangements, and we will meet all the previous emperors and the ancestors of all the Immortal Cultivators, Blackstar the Great!”

The event was now inevitable.

All the generals cheered.

They had lost their troops and Cultivation after a decade of battles, but they still had abundant experience as professional soldiers. Immediately, they were organized into ten teams according to the military rules. While Chu Tianhe was named as the general commander, ten captains were also elected. They made a deal to gather in the Emperor’s Mausoleum from all directions tomorrow morning.

Zhao Zhenwu was the first to jump out and answer the call. So, he was nominated as a captain in the end.

He could be killed for the attempt, but he took the job without batting an eye.

While planning the route, discussing the strategies, and boosting the morale, he was thinking about something else in his head. If things got huge tomorrow, would his wife read the news on the Spiritual Nexus or even see his name?

Chapter 2267 - Cry For the Imperium!

The next morning, the surplus generals who had planned all night were not tired at all. Their nerves and their faces were all burning in excitement, as if they were back to their dominant days years ago.

They left from their temporary residences or the dormitories of the school for the Emperor's Mausoleum on civil vehicles.

The four Kurfürst families had been troubled by Li Linghai, the reformists, and Lei Chenghu's rebellious army for days. They were like shocked birds and considered everybody their enemy.

In the Central District, where the royal palace, the Council of Elders, and the major departments of the government were deployed, tremendous troops had set up impenetrable defenses. Most of the crystal suit legions and low-altitude fleets were deployed in the place too. The defenses were so meticulous that even a fly would not get in.

However, they had limited soldiers and attention after all. The accomplices of the Blood Oath Alliance alone were already too many to be caught. Who could've thought that the destitute, unfortunate generals would go to the Emperor's Mausoleum to cause trouble?

Besides, Chu Tianhe, Zhao Zhenwu, and the rest of them were the legitimate generals of the Imperium after all. It was one thing to rob them below the ground, but when they were walking in daylight, few people would dare to attack them openly.

Most importantly of all, visiting the Emperor’s Mausoleum was completely legal and even encouraged by the authorities. As the reservists of the Imperial Guards right now, they were supposed to train in the Emperor’s Mausoleum now and then. Even if they were stopped at checkpoints on their way, who would stop them after they revealed their identity?

The surplus generals, divided in ten teams, successfully reached the Emperor’s Mausoleum without meeting any obstacle.

In order to keep it a secret, they did not put on the uniform of a general in the beginning but wore casual clothes to be low-key.

It was not until the Emperor’s Mausoleum was right before their eyes that they put on the washed uniforms in the public vehicles and the toilets around, before they wore the medals on their chests. Gathering together from all directions, they held each other’s hands and pressed forward to the gate of the Emperor’s Mausoleum shoulder to shoulder.

It was a sunny, cloudless day. Tourists and visitors from every world of the Imperium had crammed the Emperor’s Mausoleum.

After the Imperium’s counterattack began, in order to encourage the people to devote themselves to the country, the custom to visit the Emperor’s Mausoleum was promoted again. Many schools, sects, and corporations at the edge of the Imperium would organize their members to visit the mausoleum and the national museum together.

On the west side of the Emperor’s Mausoleum, there was also a massive national cemetery, in which the people who had sacrificed in the multiple conquests over the past thousand years had been buried. It was the memorial park of martyrs of the highest level in the Imperium.

According to the design of Blackstar the Great, the souls of the sacrificed would continue their loyalty after their death by protecting the Wuying family and the future of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

Because of the scale of the memorial park, a lot of families and students came to pay tributes every day too.

Also, some kind of large activity seemed to be going on in the national museum and the memorial park today. Many official media companies, which were quite influential, had been gathered in the area.

The arrival of thousands of generals whose chests and arms were glittering with medals naturally surprised the guardians of the mausoleum. They hurried to check the schedule of group visits today and naturally did not discover the names of the generals.

They observed the generals carefully, only to discover that they looked sorrowful and furious. Those generals were also all wearing a piece of white cloth on their arms, which was a sign that their closest family members just passed away.

The guardians realized that it was not good, but they did not have the courage to stop so many generals from breaking in. They hurried to report the issue to their superiors, but their superiors simply hesitated with an ambiguous attitude. The highest commander of the guardians was even nowhere to be seen!

The few veterans with the “Wuying” surname, who were experienced and well-informed, immediately knew that there was a lot to the issue. They had recognized who the generals were, knowing that they were all from the “Seminar of Generals”.

Today, the generals were still in the seminar, but tomorrow, they might be dispatched to the Imperial Guards as the guardians’ direct bosses. Would they be stupid enough to give their future bosses a hard time?

Therefore, they simply hinted at each other. Knowing that there was a lot more to the whole event, they simply slacked off without stopping the unannounced visitors for real.

Zhao Zhenwu was the first to hold his head high and crash into the guardians of the mausoleum. Like a fence made of bamboo, the guardians were immediately dispersed by the angry generals. The thousands of surplus generals barged into the Emperor’s Mausoleum overwhelmingly and majestically.

The slightly weird team immediately attracted the attention of all the tourists around. Thousands of them crowded at the newcomers.

It was needless to describe the intimidation of the surplus generals such as Zhao Zhenwu. What was most bizarre was that, before all the generals, there were one woman and five kids, who were the widow and kids of “Zhou Lifu”, the general of the Imperium who was beaten to death in the arena the day before yesterday. The eldest child was also holding a picture of Zhou Lifu and changed the light beam into monochrome.

Such a configuration naturally raised people’s curiosity.

The surplus generals took the opportunity to hand fliers out to the people and described their misfortunes vividly.

They told the tourists how they fought valiantly on the battlefield, how they were reduced into abject poorness after they lost their troops and returned to the rear, and how they had to sell their dignity for survival only to be beaten to death in the arena, etc.

The fliers were just printed in time. They were still hot with their fury and discontent.

Naturally, they learned the use of fliers from the Blood Oath Alliance.

After the assassination of the Blood Oath Alliance, the oppositions and the reformists in the Imperium all discovered the amazingness of “fliers”, an ancient way of propagation.

Dissemination through the Spiritual Nexus seemed advanced and fast, but it was very easy to be interrupted, blocked, and traced back. However, once a flyer was thrown out and picked up by somebody else, it would be barely possible to retrieve it.

On the other hand, it was very easy to make the tools to print the fliers, which involved nothing more than rollers, metal plates, and special ink.

Even if they were not refiners, the common Immortal Cultivators could still carve small words on the metal plates with their spiritual energy. As long as they slightly practiced how to write the words reversely, a couple of them would be more than enough to print thousands of fliers in a single day.

The content on the fliers greatly astounded the visitors.

In the official propaganda, the Imperium’s counterattack in the past ten years was a gratifying, unprecedented triumph. Even if a lot of generals and soldiers had sacrificed, they died for a noble cause as heroes.

It never occurred to them that such filthy and dark scandals were behind the glorious triumph, or that the honorable warriors of the Imperium would be reduced to such an extent.

As all the fliers were handed out, more and more tourists and visitors gathered around the generals from various directions of the Emperor’s Mausoleum. Even the reporters of the major media caught the anomaly and came to check what was going on.

Surrounded by the crowd, the surplus generals pushed forward along the axis of the Emperor’s Mausoleum to Blackstar the Great’s monument.

The place where Blackstar the Great rested was deeply buried below the ground and must not be disturbed. But right above it was a statue 725 meters tall that was made of an entire mountain, showing Wuying Qi wearing a battle robe with a determined face and pointing at the universe with one hand. It was considered a symbol of Blackstar the Great. All the memorial ceremonies were all conducted below the super enormous statue.

The intention of the surplus generals had spread throughout the Emperor’s Mausoleum. Even the groups before them who were preparing to pay tributes cleared the way for them.

When they arrived below the super enormous statue of Blackstar the Great, hundreds of thousands of people had already gathered with the surplus generals. Despite the enormity of the crowd, they were all standing in silence.

The ceremony officially began.

Chu Tianhe, the leader of the event, invited Zhou Lifu’s widow and kids to stand next to him. Squaring his hat, he shouted aloud with the last bit of his spiritual energy, “I’m sure that all the compatriots here have learned why we are here. We are here not to pay tributes but to cry!

“We are all the firmest believers of the true path of immortality. We are the most loyal defenders of the Imperium, His Majesty, and the Council of Elders. We fought against the Covenant Alliance with blood and sweat, never hesitating to die together with the enemy. Although we have never made exceptional accomplishments, we at least did our part. Even our bodies have been reduced to such poor conditions.

“We do not have the luxury to hope that our work can be exchanged for a lot of things, but before the fire in the frontline completely dies out yet, some people already cannot wait to kick us away and deprive us of our chance of living.

“This is General Zhou Lifu’s widow. General Zhou was known as ‘Ghost Butcher’ in the frontline. He was a tough warrior that often intimidated the troops of the Covenant Alliance. But after he returned to the rear, he was unable to make a living and forced to death, leaving one widow and five kids who do not know what to do now.

“What happens to General Zhou today will happen to all of us tomorrow. If you lead livestock to the slaughterhouse to butcher them, even the livestock will scream and weep. We are all living people and soldiers who have sacrificed and shed blood for the country. But we cannot even get a mouthful of food today. How can we not cry?

“However, we are not just crying for ourselves, but also for all the sacrificed soldiers, for the emperors of all generations, for the true path of immortality and its creator, Blackstar the Great, and for the Imperium of True Human Beings as well as the whole civilization of mankind!

“The Imperium today is dominated by wolves and tigers. The arrogant aristocrats have caused all kinds of corruption. It is no longer the Imperium that was founded by Blackstar the Great!

“Even the seemingly intimidating generals such as us are about to be forced to death by life. What about other people? Is the Imperium not worth our cry when it has deteriorated to such an extent?”

Chapter 2268 - Loss of Control and Escalation

Chu Tianhe, Zhao Zhenwu, and a lot of other people discussed all night to compose quite an emotional speech.

However, Chu Tianhe had only just got started when General Zhou Lifu's widow suddenly burst into tears.

After their mother started to cry, the few little kids followed her and started weeping too. The few female officers attending to them nearby, soaked in the atmosphere, were upset and felt like crying too.

Chu Tianhe couldn't help but feel distressed after seeing that, and he could not go on with his speech anymore. He simply turned around and kneeled before Blackstar the Great and shouted, "Your Majesty, take a look at today's world!"

After his cry, many generals began to wail together with him.

The tourists and visitors nearby were all filled with indignity as they watched.

Right then, a team marched close aggressively from not far away. Many people in the team were wearing the uniform of the mausoleum's guardians.

At first, the bystanders thought that those people were here to disperse the surplus generals. They couldn't help but whisper. Some were even bold enough to move forward to stop the newcomers.

However, cries were echoing from the team that was growing larger and larger too. All the bystanders looked at each other in bewilderment, not knowing what was going on.

Before Chu Tianhe, Zhao Zhenwu, and the rest of them went forward to ask, the leader of the team had already introduced themselves. As it turned out, they all belonged to the royal family and were the descendants of Blackstar the Great.

The Emperor’s Mausoleum in the Imperium was a splendid and vast city. Besides the tombs of the emperors of all generations, the memorial park of martyrs, and the national museum, there were also smaller museums, hotels, restaurants, and business areas around. The tourism in the place was rather developed.

Most of the interests in the tourism industry, including the staff of the mausoleum’s guardians, the memorial park of the martyrs, and the tour guides in the national museum, were in the hands of the royal family.

It was also one of the few ways to make a living that the four Kurfürst families had left them. Many members of the royal family simply gathered in the city and lived on it.

The members of the royal family with the surname “Wuying” hadn’t seen so many generals of the Imperium paying tributes to their ancestors for years. Now that they read the fliers and learned why the generals were here, they were even more touched and also thought of their own misfortunes. Organized by certain people, they also formed a huge team to cry to Blackstar the Great.

The royal family was the natives of the place. Naturally, their number was dozens of times higher than the number of generals. Even though only one-tenth of them had joined the team of crying, the crowd had still significantly expanded. Pressing forward like angry tides, they boosted the atmosphere to an even higher level.

The leader of the newcomers walked forward to Chu Tianhe’s side quickly and kneeled before Blackstar the Great’s enormous statue first, before he turned around with his head soaked in blood and bashed his chest before the people. “I guarantee that what General Chu said is true. The Imperium has been corrupted to such an extent that even the members of the royal family can barely survive. It is needless to mention the generals here.

“Ancestor, please wake up and make things right. There are bad guys in the Imperium. Bad guys!”

While he was talking, the members of the royal family almost burst into tears.

The members of the royal family cried differently from the generals.

The surplus generals such as Chu Tianhe and Zhao Zhenwu were iron-hearted soldiers and ruthless Immortal Cultivators after all.

Even though their lives were terribly difficult, and despite all the dissatisfactions in their hearts, they still had the bones of soldiers and Immortal Cultivators after all. It was definitely impossible for them to weep and snot like women and children. The best they could do was to quietly shed a few tears while they bowed and paid respects to Blackstar the Great’s statue. Nothing more.

The members of the royal family, on the other hand, had mostly lived here for hundreds of years. Many of them had come with their entire families, with both the old and the young.

Also, without life-and-death experiences and without too much training, many of them were no different from civilians.

Those aunts and ladies who were slightly aged couldn’t care less about their manners. They yowled so hard that even the sky seemed cloudy and the earth was collapsing, with a combat ability ten times higher than the generals.

Such a splendid gathering went on a rampage like a raging flood and a volcano eruption. Soon, the emotions of all the tourists, visitors, and pilgrims on the spot were triggered.

The virus of grief instantly spread to every corner of the Emperor’s Mausoleum. Everybody was in a subtle reverberation of feelings. When hundreds of thousands of people burst into tears at the same time, the Emperor’s Mausoleum was in a state of almost falling, and Blackstar the Great could have crawled out of his tomb in fury!

After the unexpected turn, the ceremony of crying was already vaguely getting out of the control of the surplus generals.

At this moment, everybody inside and outside the Emperor’s Mausoleum was crying beyond their control. Even the Imperial Guards stationed at the edge were cursing that the royal family had been reduced to such misery only because there were too many bad guys in the Imperium today. They were also crying and shouting and spitting in the direction of the Council of Elders.

The surplus generals, on the other hand, became the most conscious ones on the spot.

Zhao Zhenwu vaguely felt uneasy.

This wasn’t where things should be going. According to their plan last night, they would cry in the Emperor’s Mausoleum, disseminate flyers to the people, and bow and offer flowers to the statue of Blackstar the Great. After they created enough influence, they would disperse.

In such a way, they would make their voices heard without giving any excuse to the authorities. Visiting the Emperor’s Mausoleum was the most natural thing in the world. It was even an obligation for every soldier and every Immortal Cultivator of the Imperium. What could the highest authorities do other than secretly cursing them?

But the situation right now was obviously going out of control.

When hundreds of thousands of people were on a riot in the Emperor’s Mausoleum, something terrible would definitely happen to them!

Zhao Zhenwu secretly observed Chu Tianhe who was next to him, only to discover that the commander of the gathering today had been completely devoted to his role. The man looked so excited that his eyes seemed to be bleeding. He cried while he continued instigating the people, as if he felt that the atmosphere was not hot enough!

Isn’t Chu Tianhe a very famous “general of wisdom”? Why is he acting so stupidly today?

Uncomfortably, Zhao Zhenwu looked at the direction of the Council of Elders and immediately bulged his eyes.

The Emperor’s Mausoleum was established next to the mountains. The enormous statue of Blackstar the Great was naturally at a high height. From the high stance, Zhao Zhenwu looked afar, only to discover that black torrents were rolling toward the mausoleum from not far away!

The overwhelming crowds were dozens of times more than the members of the royal family. Also, they were wearing the standard uniform of the expedition army of the Imperium.

The floods of people moved very fast and passed the Imperial Guards’ defense line in the blink of an eye. Naturally, the crying and cursing Imperial Guards did not mean to stop them either.

The troops of the Council of Elders?

Zhao Zhenwu grew rather anxious. But he was relieved after careful observation. Unlikely. They are not wearing crystal suits or carrying any heavy magical equipment. No starships are covering them from above either. They are not the Council of Elders’ troops!

However, the news that passed on from down below half a minute later shocked him so hard that he almost passed out.

The newcomers were the disabled veterans in the Imperium’s counterattack in the past ten years!

They had come from various worlds at the edge of the Imperium to the Emperor’s Mausoleum to pay tributes!

Tens of thousands of veterans had already broken into the mausoleum. Ten times or even more people were joining them incessantly from behind!

The lives of the disabled veterans were even more difficult than that of the surplus generals. The latter were taken in by the “Royal Seminar For Advanced Generals” after all, and they could manage to survive with the few subsidies and allowances.

The disabled veterans from the peripheral worlds, on the other hand, were simply kicked back to their hometowns, where they were supported by the local finance.

But right now, the governments of the peripheral worlds of the Imperium were all going bankrupt. They had to submit all kinds of war taxes and national defense fees. How could they find enough money to feed the garbage?

Therefore, the disabled veterans had been dissatisfied for a long time. When they heard that some generals were crying in the Emperor’s Mausoleum, they immediately came to join the event too!

This isn’t right!

Zhao Zhenwu’s brain hummed and exploded with ten thousand questions.

He knew the sufferings of the disabled veterans very well. But now that those guys did not even have the money for food, how could they have afforded the fees of transportation and accommodation when they traveled from the peripheral worlds to the Empyreal Terminus Sector?

Besides, how were the hundreds of thousands of disabled veterans organized and delivered to the capital? It couldn’t have been a spontaneous event.

Zhao Zhenwu knew very clearly that, since the Imperium was in an unusual period right now, the jump points and spaceports of the capital were thoroughly watched by the fleets of the four Kurfürst families. Only the starships of the four families could travel without obstacles. The civil carriers had to be examined dozens of times if they wanted to enter the capital. How could the disabled veterans have snuck in easily?

Also, it was too coincidental. They had not cried for long here, and both the members of the royal family and the disabled veterans had come to join them. That was really—

The more he thought about it, the more uneasy Zhao Zhenwu became. Sweating hard, he looked at Chu Tianhe unconfidently and said, “General Commander…”

“Old Zhao!”

Chu Tianhe’s eyes were bloodshot, but his face was calmer than ever. Patting his back heavily, the organizer of the event whispered to his ear, “With everything coming to this point, we will be executed anyway. The only way of survival for us is perhaps to make the trouble even greater and turn everything upside down. You used to command troops too. Do you not understand such simple logic?”

Looking at Chu Tianhe’s demonic eyes, Zhao Zhenwu shuddered hard. Rigidified, he was unable to say anything anymore.

Chu Tianhe smiled at him in the most hideous way. Then, he suddenly raised an arm and explained, “Look! A million disabled veterans have joined us. We are not leaving today! We will just wait in the Emperor’s Mausoleum until the Council of Elders gives us the justice that we deserve! Without justice, we would rather die below Blackstar the Great’s feet!”

Boom!

Zhao Zhenwu felt that he had been blown up into pieces. He had no idea where he was or what he was doing anymore!

Chapter 2269 - Unstoppable Storm!

The participation of the million disabled veterans upgraded the crying event into a superstorm that swept across the entire planet, if not the entire Imperium.

When the noises of the storm pressed unstoppably, Dongfang Wei, the prime minister of the Imperium of True Human Beings and leader of the Dongfang family, was having a friendly and constructive discussion regarding the special budget for national defense for the next year with the directors of the Department of National Defense, the Department of the Treasury, as well as many other departments in the prime minister’s residence not far away from the Council of Elders.

Or to be more frank, everybody was simply bickering with each other while they were mired in the swirl of numbers!

Dongfang Wang had been the prime minister of the Imperium for twenty years. Many people said that he was one of the most powerful prime ministers in the recent few hundred years of the Imperium. He certainly deserved to be called a prime minister of iron and blood.

That was also the reason why Dongfang Wang knew deeply what an arduous task it was to coordinate and balance the interests of hundreds of Sectors, resource planets, and countless forces, sects, warlords, and super experts as the prime minister of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

On the surface, he was the most powerful and unquestionable lord. Even the emperor had been eclipsed by him.

But in fact, the other three families controlled their troops tightly and established their own systems in their dominions. The orders sent from the prime minister's office were either ignored or pretended to be followed. As long as some policies affected their interests, so much as the loss of one hair, those people would be bold enough to pick up their sabers and fight him. There was even one time when two elders mauled each other right in the Council of Elders like two street thugs!

The other three families were insubordinate, but it wasn't like everybody within the Dongfang family listened to him as the "patriarch" either.

After a thousand years of development, the Dongfang family naturally had a lot of factions within. The seven most developed, heavy industrial worlds were all supervised by a big shot.

Those big shots were all at the high level or even peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage. Some were his peers, and some were his seniors. He could become the leader of the Dongfang family and even the prime minister of the Imperium only because of the powerful support from those people. How could he be really ruthless enough to deny their interests?

The special budget of national defense for the next year was what troubled him right now.

The Imperium's counterattack had lasted more than ten years. Billions of soldiers had been mobilized. A lot of new worlds had been occupied. The supply lines were stretched again and again. The cost in the attrition and the consumption of the troops had drained the wealth of the national treasury, which had been accumulated for a hundred years. The economics in many worlds in the rear were terrible. Many places were even having famines.

The war could not be fought anymore, and the scale of the expedition army had to be reduced. But the regrouping and the elimination involved tremendous retirement fees and compensations. A lot of bonds and shares had been awarded earlier with the promise that they would be fulfilled after the victory. It would be a great trouble to really fulfill them.

Therefore, the cost of national defense next year would not be reduced at all but would be even more than previous years. It was almost “throes of peace”.

The problem right now was that there was no money. Of course, it was not accurate to say that there was no money. There was no money in the national treasury, but the four Kurfürst families still had a lot. However, while they were wealthy, an agreement was certainly necessary for them to provide capitals to fill the gap.

Dongfang Wang went to the other three families to make an agreement. The other three families also looked at him docilely, gently, and obediently, adulating that the Dongfang family, as the greatest family of the Imperium, had unparalleled wealth and power and that its wrist was thicker than the thighs of other families. Naturally, the agreement should be taken care of by the Dongfang family. All in all, the Dongfang family should fill the gap as an example for other families, and when the gap was more or less filled, the other families would follow and make sure that the work was completed.

Whatever Dongfang Wang said, he could not get any money from them. The three families pointed at their starships and Colossi and claimed that they spent all their money on the weapons for the Imperium’s attack and that there was no additional funding at all.

Gritting his teeth, Dongfang Wang went to discuss it with the big shots of the factions within his family. The big shots glared at him and said that they elected Dongfang Wang as the prime minister because they wanted him to earn more benefits for the family. Why was he asking the family to devote money when he hadn’t earned any? Was he the prime minister from the Dongfang family, or was he from the Li family and the Yun family?

He was talking to the big shots at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage who controlled an entire heavy industrial world. Could he kill them and confiscate their belongings? Of course not! He could not negotiate with them.

After all the negotiations, the big shots of his own family and those of other families wanted the same. They had money and resources if they tried to search within the families, but they were not offering them for nothing. Those supplies had to be exchanged for the land, properties, and monopolization rights in the newly-recovered territories.

As the negotiations proceeded, the few resourceful worlds in the newly-recovered territories had already been carved up before the ceasefire in the frontline. Naturally, the peripheral worlds were greatly dissatisfied and thought that their interests had been harmed.

With everything coming to the point, the whole thing had become an unresolvable dilemma.

Without the support of the interest groups within the four Kurfürst families who had money and resources, the expedition army could not be regrouped and reduced, and the national economy could not shift from the warring system to peaceful development. The disabled veterans and the retired officers would certainly cause trouble too, if they did not receive enough subsidies.

But the investments of the interest groups were traded for the rights in the newly-recovered territories, which naturally hurt the interests of many people and many social classes too. It was even a form of betrayal for many local groups who were given a promise before the war. One moment of carelessness, and they would turn the world upside down too. The incident of the Blood Oath Alliance, the rise of the reformists, and the rebellion of Lei Chenghu all began because of that.

Faced with such a predicament, even Dongfang Wang felt a strong headache, not knowing what to do.

He thought of “Silver Fox” Li Jiande, his greatest political rival, who had been dying for a hundred years but never died.

A hundred years ago, “Silver Fox” Li Jiande was also once the prime minister of the Imperium. He worked so hard at that time that he was fatigued and fell from the Divinity Branching Stage. He had been bedridden since then and distancing himself from the politics of the Imperium.

At that time, Dongfang Wang mocked Li Jiande for what became of him in the end.

But now that he was the prime minister himself roasted on a fire, he finally understood the feeling of dilemmas and vaguely sensed that perhaps Li Jiande had made the smartest choice by falling sick.

Perhaps the universe was too huge, but everyone only had limited abilities. Even the computational ability and the wisdom of the Divinity Branching State were not enough to perform effective governance on hundreds of Sectors, right?

Or perhaps the infinite universe was too small to satisfy the desires of every human being?

It was exactly in such a state of mind that Dongfang Wang received the report of the crying event.

He stared at the report and read it for a long time, as if he was trying to see something more between the lines. Holding back the urge of bursting out in a fury, he raised the most critical question.

“Even if the generals from the Royal Seminar For Advanced Generals and the members of the royal family living inside the Emperor’s Mausoleum have ‘gathered spontaneously’, how did the disabled veterans from the peripheral worlds of the Imperium sneak into the capital? They couldn’t have directly jumped to the surface of the capital after one space jump, could they?”

Dongfang Wang smelled the scent of a plot.

An adviser proposed that the people who had gathered to cry in the mausoleum should be suppressed and captured because they were in obvious derision of rules and authorities.

Dongfang Wang immediately asked the advisor to leave the room. Pondering for a moment, he made a few instructions.

Firstly, set up a blockage outside the Emperor’s Mausoleum to prevent more people from crowding in.

Secondly, the Spiritual Nexus and all the signals near the Emperor’s Mausoleum must be cut off to make sure nothing happened there was leaked to the outside world. Of course, the media that was still in the mausoleum must be controlled too.

Thirdly, investigate the origins of the million disabled veterans immediately. It must be found out how they were organized and sent into the capital. It was very important!

Dongfang Wang’s reactions were timely enough.

Such standard procedures to suppress riots were often implemented by the authorities of the Imperium. They were quite familiar with the work.

But accidents took place one after another.

The Emperor’s Mausoleum was the territory of the Imperial Guards, which had a lot of members of the royal family. Now that they had grown emotional, they showed obvious hatred toward the troops of the four Kurfürst families.

However poor the Imperial Guards were, they still had several hundred of rusted, outdated starships.

Were those starships to be moved to the vacuum and fight the fleets of the four Kurfürst families, they would certainly be killed instantly. In fact, they would’ve paralyzed and fallen apart on their own before the enemy opened fire.

However, it was still more or less manageable for them to surround the Emperor’s Mausoleum and protect their last territory.

The Imperial Guards were protecting the disabled veterans, and the disabled veterans were shouting the names of Emperor Shenwu and Blackstar the Great. It was really a touching scene. What could the fleets and crystal suit legions of the four Kurfürst families do even if they arrived? Massacring those people in broad daylight under the watch of so many eyewitnesses?

The plan on the Spiritual Nexus and the media did not go well either.

There were four groups that provided network services for the Empyreal Terminus Sector. They belonged to the four Kurfürst families. Network was the most critical infrastructure for a modern civilization. The four Kurfürst families naturally did not want to be restrained by other people.

At Dongfang Wang’s command, the Dongfang family’s service provider immediately cut off the network, and the other two families soon followed too. However, the bases of the Spiritual Nexus that belonged to the Li family had no response at all but still sent the information of the Emperor’s Mausoleum to the outside world incessantly.

The media companies were the same.

The four Kurfürst families had all hired a lot of media. One might say that all the “official media companies” of the Imperium were endorsed and monopolized by the four Kurfürst families.

Given the graveness of the matter, the media of the other families naturally did not dare to do anything without the instructions of their superiors.

However, the media under the control of the Li family moved one step in advance and published a lot of shocking news!

Chapter 2270 - He Is Crawling Out of His Coffin

2270 He Is Crawling Out of His Coffin...

The high-resolution pictures that were taken from multiple perspectives, and even the panoramic videos from one of the shoulders of the enormous statue of Blackstar the Great, displayed the astounding gathering of a million people. Even if there was no sound, it was already possible for anyone to imagine the roaring tides on the spot.

Such professional ways of shooting could have only been done by the specialists who had worked in the trade for decades.

Or rather, the perspectives of those pictures had been decided even before the crying event took place. For example, the angle from the shoulder of Blackstar the Great’s gigantic statue couldn’t have been found in a haste.

Therefore, they were not the videos that the people on the spot recorded casually but had been long-planned!

Even more unbelievably, the media that belonged to the Li family managed to interview an elder of the Li family in only a few minutes!

“… I feel very sorry that such an event has taken place, but we cannot blame the generals and veterans who are caught in desperation now. Instead, it should be the highest authority that needs to reflect carefully. Why do the generals and soldiers who made remarkable achievements in the frontline and sacrificed everything for the Imperium have to express their voices in such a way?”

Faced with the crystal camera, the Li-surnamed elder said solemnly, “Mankind is the strongest fighting species in the entire universe—such a declaration has been passed on to this day from the age of the Star Ocean Imperium and has become our belief. The army is the cornerstone of the Imperium. If the cornerstone collapses, the Imperium of True Human Beings and the entire civilization of mankind will be no more!

“In the past ten years, we secured glorious triumphs in the frontline, and all the people are happy about our success. But the unprecedented victories were earned by the sweat and blood of those generals and soldiers. Right now, we have only reclaimed our lost territory. One day, we will have to march to the Covenant Alliance’s nest and completely destroy it to unite the universe again. When that day comes, won’t we still count on those generals and soldiers to make greater contributions to mankind?

“If the generals and soldiers are chilled because of their unjust treatments, who will devote themselves to the country in the future? I think that this is what the Council of Elders, and especially Dongfang Wang’s cabinet, should consider and take care of properly!”

The reporter asked the Li-surnamed elder whether it was his personal attitude or it was the stance of the Li family. The Li-surnamed elder simply smiled and said, “This is an unexpected event. I only received the news just now. So, it is naturally only my own attitude. However, I do believe that everyone who is considering for the Imperium and the civilization of mankind sincerely, be they from the Li family, the Yun family, or the Dongfang family, will have the deepest sympathy for the wailing, heartbroken generals and disabled soldiers that have gathered in the Emperor’s Mausoleum, and the most indignity for the culprit that let all this happen!

“Seriously speaking, this is shaking the foundation of our country. Shouldn’t somebody be responsible for the event? Let’s just wait and watch how the highest authorities and Prime Minister Dongfang Wang are going to settle and completely investigate the issue! I can only solemnly promise all the citizens and fellow Cultivators that I will fulfill my sacred duty as an elder of the Imperium and supervise the cabinet to settle it properly!”

Even though Dongfang Wang had been the leader of the Dongfang family for forty years and the prime minister of the Imperium for twenty years, and he was certainly not a person to be pissed off easily, he still almost burst into fury this time.

That was because he remembered clearly that the Li-surnamed elder was the first one to jump out to complain, unwilling to offer a single coin, when the Department of National Defense raised a proposal that the four Kurfürst families should provide a sum of money and give it away as “special subsidies” to the retired generals and the disabled veterans so that they would not cause any further trouble before the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance was completely settled.

When the Li-surnamed elder boycotted the proposal, the elders of the other families naturally supported him. Even the elders of the Dongfang family did not show any approval. Dongfang Wang was greatly embarrassed, and the proposal was postponed indefinitely.

It never occurred to him that the Li-surnamed elder would be shameless enough to declare to the citizens that he would “fulfill his sacred duty”, or that he would be blatantly insinuating Dongfang Wang’s cabinet. The prime minister was so angry that he almost couldn’t hold back the urge of killing him.

However, after the momentary fury, he felt coldness to the bones. The Li-surnamed elder was obviously not saying it without thinking. His words represented the attitude of the Li family. What was going on exactly?

Like a fat Buddha that was meditating, Dongfang Wang pondered emotionlessly, until two pieces of news came over.

Firstly, the source of the million disabled veterans was found out. It was impossible to cover the traces of such an overwhelming crowd at all. The Dongfang family’s intelligence organizations soon discovered that they came with the Li family’s fleet, landed on the defense area that the Li family was responsible for, and marched all the way into the Emperor’s Mausoleum under the protection of the Li family!

Secondly, “Silver Fox” Li Jiande, leader of the Li family, had “yet another” attack of diseases. It was said that he was unconscious right now. Li Mingxuan, his seventh son, was now the temporary leader of the family.

Slightly dazed, Dongfang Wang sighed.

With everything coming to this point, he knew clearly what was going on now.

“Family Leader.”

A tall, brawny guard walked into the office and declared aggressively, “Our troop has been gathered on the east side of the Emperor’s Mausoleum. We can march in and suppress the insubordinate rebellions at any moment!”

The guard was his trusted subordinate that he brought from the family. Therefore, he called Dongfang Wang family leader instead of prime minister.

“Idiot!”

There were not too many concerns in front of his personal bodyguard. Dongfang Wang glared at him and said, “Stand by and do not act rashly. Remember to be wary of the enemy’s intentional provocation. Absolutely do not attack!”

Known as the prime minister of iron and blood, Dongfang Wang was never a man hesitant to use violence.

If all the links between the Emperor’s Mausoleum and the outside world were cut off, and the Spiritual Nexus and the media were under his control, Dongfang Wang would have probably really settled the riot in the quickest way.

However, it was obvious that the Li family was behind the curtain. If he made a wrong decision, the four Kurfürst families would completely fall out. For the prime minister of the Imperium, it was definitely the last thing he wanted to see.

Besides, why was the Li family confident to challenge him at such a moment? This equaled a comprehensive attack on the Dongfang family. What was the Li family’s reliance? Did they have other backup moves? He had to figure out those things first.

The most important thing was that, since the media and the Spiritual Nexus of the other three families had been blocked, the Li family was the only source of information. If conflicts did break out, what would the outside world see and hear? And how would he be vilified as the prime minister of the Imperium?

While Dongfang Wang was hesitating if he should send the Dongfang family’s own media to follow, another piece of astounding news came over.

A small fleet was breaking into the Emperor’s Mausoleum by force!

“It’s not our guy!”

His personal bodyguard hurried to connect the live picture, which, naturally, came from the media of the Li family too. “Our troop is confronting the Imperial Guards on the east side of the mausoleum. We absolutely obeyed the family leader’s orders and did not have any conflict with them. Ah, this is—”

In the bodyguard’s exclamations of disbelief, Dongfang Wang narrowed his eyes and stared at the sky of the mausoleum in the picture.

Under the contrast of more than ten low-altitude starships, a gold giant grew bigger and bigger. Soon, it demonstrated the most majestic and awesome appearance in the cloudless, blue sky.

It was a pure gold and unbelievably eye-catching Colossus.

The violent flames of spiritual energy spurting out of the Colossus formed gold wings almost a hundred meters long on two sides. There were even words on the wings that said —

“Gold Vulture!”

“Vulture Li Yao!”

…

Before the gigantic statue of Blackstar the Great in the axis of the Emperor’s Mausoleum, before the Colossus that seemed to be entirely made of gold appeared, the fury of the generals, soldiers, and people reached the highest point, because they all saw the starships with the emblems of the Dongfang family flying over from the Council of Elders confronting the rusted, outdated starships of the Imperial Guards.

It seemed that the aggressive starships of the Dongfang family would’ve marched into the Emperor’s Mausoleum without the blockage of the Imperial Guards!

“Are the Dongfang family so arrogant that they dare to stomp on the Blackstar the Great’s place of rest?”

There was no telling from which corner the exclamation came, but it soon spread throughout the entire Emperor’s Mausoleum. The members of the royal family cried even harder, and the atmosphere was more poignant than ever. The surplus generals who led the crying ceremony in the beginning seemed to have envisioned their outcome.

Right when the two parties were at loggerheads, a small fleet was let in by the Imperial Guards from the west side of the Emperor’s Mausoleum, and it was not discovered by the crowd until it glided to the top of the crowd.

Then, a gold, glittering “seed” erupted from one of the starships and grew larger and larger in midair, turning into a Colossus that looked like the reincarnation of a god!

“This is—”

Zhao Zhenwu looked at the sky in astonishment. As a seasoned warrior, he had cooperated with Colossi in battles dozens of times, but he had never seen such a glamorous, dominating, and majestic Colossus before!

The Colossus was still standing at an altitude of hundreds of meters, but it was releasing the waves that stirred the soul of everybody. The waves were not filled with any killing intent at all but were full of vigor and determination to resist!

“It’s the Gold Vulture, one of the strongest Colossi of the Imperium!”

“I’m told that its user, ‘Vulture Li Yao’, is also one of the super experts of the Imperium. However, he has been working in the secret frontier, engaged in espionage and sabotage work against the Covenant Alliance. That is why he is known by only a few people. But Vulture Li Yao made great contributions to the glorious triumph of the Imperium’s counterattack too!”

“Yes, I’ve heard about the guy before too. He is a devoted patriot, a purest Immortal Cultivator, and a loyal believer of Blackstar the Great. He must be on our side!”

The rumors that Zhao Zhenwu had never heard before burst out from every corner of the Emperor’s Mausoleum the moment Li Yao showed up!

Chapter 2271 - Fuel on Fire!

Some rumors said that “Vulture Li Yao” was the strongest “secret weapon” of the Imperium’s army, and that he had been fighting arduous battles against the super experts of the Alliance of the Holy Covenant in the dark, desolate space zones in the frontline.

Some rumors claimed that “Vulture Li Yao” was an expert from the royal family and that his ancestors had protected the emperors dutifully for generations. They had been defending the throne since the age of Blackstar the Great. So, they were the first-generation Immortal Cultivators.

This time, His Majesty simply could not hold it back anymore and therefore asked him to protect the generals, veterans, and people who were in the crying ceremony.

The rumors were so vivid and elaborate as if somebody did see this “Vulture Li Yao” raging unstoppably in the frontline or in the royal family.

Encouraged by the rumors and instigated by certain people, countless people were already raising their hands at the gold Colossus and shouted, “A Colossus! His Majesty has sent a Colossus to protect us! His Majesty supports our effort. Long live His Majesty! Long live the Imperium!”

Zhao Zhenwu was both dumbfounded and grew suspicious. As someone who experienced the Imperium’s counterattack in person, he had never heard anything about “Gold Vulture” or “Vulture Li Yao” in his ten years of battles.

On the other hand, the Imperium’s counterattack involved four battle areas, dozens of worlds, and hundreds of resource planets. The battlefield spanned thousands of lightyears and far exceeded the observation of any individual. Nobody was confident to say that they knew every war in every space zone.

Therefore, if the guy was really a secret warrior from the dark frontline, it wouldn’t be unusual that he had never heard the name before.

But one thing was certain at least. Judging from the overwhelming gold flames of spiritual energy, both the Colossus and the user were incredibly strong. He was indeed qualified to be called a super expert of the Imperium!

A super battle-type Immortal Cultivator, using a Colossus that was exceptionally extravagant from whichever perspective, couldn’t have appeared out of thin air, right?

Therefore, chances were that he was really a secret weapon of the army, or a bodyguard who was responsible for His Majesty’s safety!

Zhao Zhenwu peeped at Chu Tianhe next to him, only to discover that Chu Tianhe was staring at the gold Colossus in the midair in obvious astonishment too.

However, the organizer of the crying ceremony soon calmed down. Lowering his voice, he spoke to Zhao Zhenwu, “Brother Zhenwu, do you believe me now? It is very possible that we can win the gamble. If we wager everything on the game, everything we lost will come back to us after we win!”

Zhao Zhenwu realized that it was true. The fire of desire flowing in his eyes was burning more vehemently than ever, and he clenched both the fist of flesh and that of iron.

Chu Tianhe was quite right. With everything coming to this point, there was no need to consider if they were taken advantage of by somebody else. To be taken advantage of meant that they still had value but were not garbage that could not be used at all!

There was no need to bother where the Colossus came from as long as the Colossus was on their side. After all, they only needed to make things big, and he would have his everything… and his wife back!

“Long live His Majesty! Long live the Imperium!”

Zhao Zhenwu waved his arms hard at the Gold Vulture in the midair and roared desperately.

The roars of thousands of generals, veterans, and common people seemed to have been condensed into the purest fuel that was injected into the Gold Vulture, allowing the awe-inspiring Colossus to release the most glamorous gold waves.

Letting out earsplitting explosions in midair, the Colossus lunged at the fleet of the Dongfang family that was deployed on the east side of the mausoleum in a streak of brilliance on its own!

The dozens of kilometers in between meant nothing more than a breath for a Colossus.

The million people on the ground only felt that something flashed before their eyes before the Gold Vulture stopped before the Dongfang family’s fleet majestically. The gold saber cut forward and raised an aura more than ten kilometers long, which turned into a gold wall and blocked the Dongfang family’s fleet from moving forward.

"Ah!"

A competition between a Colossus and a fleet above the Emperor's Mausoleum!

For most of the people, it was the first time in their lives to witness such a thrilling and splendid scene. They couldn't help but all exclaim in shock.

The Dongfang family's fleet was immediately disrupted.

The troop that had come to the Emperor's Mausoleum for suppression had only the low-altitude assault starships that were designed to deal with ground targets. Resisting a Colossus was not within their battle requirements.

Besides, the most important thing for starships to resist a Colossus was to keep a distance of at least hundreds of kilometers, so that they could block and stall the Colossus with their incessant firepower.

Right now, the two parties were only one kilometer away from each other. For a Colossus, it could march to the middle in 0.1 seconds or even break into the starships for sabotages. Also, their starships were so close to each other that the Colossus could directly sprint from the inside of one starship to the inside of another!

In short, their battle formation right now was not suitable to resist a Colossus at all. Dealing with the most advanced Colossus at such a battlefield would not achieve a good result whatever gory prices they paid.

The arrival of Li Yao with his gold Colossus disrupted their plan, forcing them to retreat for several hundred kilometers and set up defenses again.

Also, Prime Minister Dongfang Wang strictly forbade them from opening fire. At first look, it was almost like Li Yao threatened a whole fleet of the Dongfang family on his own!

Thunderous cheers and ovations burst out inside and outside of the Emperor’s Mausoleum. Everybody applauded Li Yao for his “valiant performance”.

Even the rusted, outdated starships of the Imperial Guards blew their cannons for Li Yao to show their utmost respect for the “loyal Immortal Cultivator” and “Blackstar the Great’s most avid follower”!

…

Inside the Gold Vulture, Li Yao was having mixed feelings and almost filled with tears.

The mental devil said, “Are you serious? You are not moved to tears by them, are you?”

Li Yao: “Of course not. I am moved by myself! A long time ago, I said that my dream was to arrive at the capital of the Imperium of True Human Beings majestically with the strongest Colossus to demonstrate my power in this place!

“And today, after my arduous efforts and determined work, my dream has come true. I can even pee and s*it on the head of the statue of Blackstar the Great! Is this what they say ‘God help those who help themselves’? I have come such a long way!”

The mental devil: “… Do you know what my biggest dream is right now?”

Li Yao: “What is it?”

The mental devil: “I truly hope that the enormous statue up ahead will split apart, and Blackstar the Great’s tomb down there explodes, so that Blackstar the Great will crawl out of his coffin and slap the shameless you on the face!”

Li Yao: “Well, however shameless I am, I cannot be compared to her, right?”

The mental devil: “That… That is very true.”

…

After forcing the Dongfang family’s fleet into retreating, Li Yao returned to the top of the mausoleum on the Gold Vulture right before Blackstar the Great’s statue.

Holding the saber with his right hand, he opened his left hand. At the center of his palm, a person was standing.

The Gold Vulture slowly landed.

The center of the Emperor’s Mausoleum was rather spacious. The generals and the veterans had already ordered the people to clear room for Li Yao to stand.

Li Yao straightened his left hand and raised the person in his palm high.

Through the special modifications, the Gold Vulture shot out a super enormous 3D light beam from the shoulder and the back with a coverage of thousands of square meters, displaying the image of the person in his palm to the sky clearly.

It was a graceful but gaunt woman in plain clothes and without any makeup, who was staring at the million people down below with the most merciful look.

It took the generals, soldiers, and people a long time before they finally recognized who she was. They all exclaimed in disbelief, “It’s the queen!”

“Her Grace has come to support us!”

“Her Grace has come on behalf of His Majesty. She’s on our side!”

The soundwaves congregated into torrents that flooded into the heart of every mourner in the mausoleum.

“Dear generals, warriors, and citizens, I’m sorry that I’m late!”

Queen Li Linghai spoke heartfeltly and almost wept half-way through her sentence, as if she had no time to care about the etiquette of the court anymore. “After learning that everybody spontaneously gathered here to pay tributes to the previous emperors, I came to the Emperor’s Mausoleum as soon as possible. I heard and learned a lot on my way here. The more I learned, the more scared and infuriated I got.

“I never knew that the brave generals and warriors who defended the Imperium and His Majesty in the frontline with blood suffered such unjust treatments after they returned to the rear, to the point that they were killed without anybody knowing!

“This is shaking the foundation of our country. This will chill the hearts of all the people. Some malicious guys are trying to destroy the cornerstone of the Imperium of True Human Beings and the entire civilization of mankind!”

Not expecting the queen to boast such a tough attitude, a lot of generals, soldiers, and people were stunned.

Many of them knew that the emperor and the queen of the Imperium were also puppets who could not master their own fate. They could not help but feel worried for Li Linghai for her outspoken behavior.

“His Majesty and I feel deeply sympathetic to the suffering people and the wronged warriors too.”

As if she were summoning her courage, Li Linghai said, “However, in many cases, His Majesty and I could barely do anything even if we wanted to. We… We are truly sorry for everyone, and we feel ashamed before the ancestors resting in this place and Blackstar the Great in particular!”

As she talked, she almost couldn’t go on any longer because she was sobbing.

The audiences listening to her were also weeping as their emotions were triggered. The tears they shed were like boiling oil that made the fire of wrath burn more and more furiously.

“Living inside the royal palace all the time, I don’t know the first thing about national affairs, and I don’t know how the issue can be properly addressed. But I’m sure that Prime Minister Dongfang Wang will come up with a solution, right?”

Li Linghai wiped her tears and said, “However, after all these years, I do have some personal savings. Until the issue is satisfactorily settled, the generals and soldiers who have come here after a long way need money for food, accommodations, and daily uses after all. My money will help you live through the difficulties. Please don’t refuse it. This is the least I can do as the queen of the Imperium for the generals and warriors who have made great contributions but who have been gravely wronged.”

Chapter 2272 - Who’s Responsible?

2272 Who’s Responsible?

After Li Linghai took out tremendous jewelry from her Cosmos Rings and asked the members of the royal family to sell them on her behalf to subsidize the surplus generals and the disabled veterans, all the generals, soldiers, and people were shocked.

They finally understood why the queen, who should’ve looked elegant and poised, was so plain. It was because she had donated her last hairpin for them.

What Li Linghai did next raised even louder cheers and applause.

She asked Li Yao to put her down and walked to the below of Blackstar the Great’s enormous statue, where she grasped the hand of Zhou Lifu’s widow and comforted her sincerely.

Then, she hugged General Zhou Lifu’s youngest child and wept in grief.

The picture soon spread throughout the Emperor’s Mausoleum through the enormous light beam in the sky. Even the crowd hundreds of kilometers away saw it clearly that the queen of the Imperium who had been away from the public for half a year returned to the center of attention in such an unexpected way!

Then, the queen sent comfort and instructions to the Imperial Guards who defended the Emperor’s Mausoleum. She complimented them for their determination in defending the souls of their ancestors first and asked them to believe that His Majesty and most of the warriors of the expedition army were on the same side as the Imperial Guards. She also asked them to protect the safety of the mourning soldiers and people at whatever cost and to prevent malicious scoundrels from sneaking in and causing trouble.

Naturally, for the generals, soldiers, and people who had come for mourning, she also told them to trust the highest authorities, the Council of Elders, Prime Minister Dongfang Wang, and his cabinet, and that they must not do anything outrageous out of consideration of the big picture. Wailing and crying before the tomb of Blackstar the Great would disgrace the Imperium after all. Therefore, she asked everybody to abide by the rules of the Emperor’s Mausoleum. If they had anything they would like to speak to the previous emperors, they could totally mourn in silence.

Everybody was divided into three shifts so that the hundreds of thousands of people could mourn in silence in the Emperor’s Mausoleum at any moment during a day. Was there any problem at all? Not at all!

To ensure the supplies, the queen and the members of the royal family would encourage the hotels, restaurants, and business agencies near the Emperor’s Mausoleum to provide free residences and food for the disabled veterans who had come after a long way. Their reasonable, legitimate, and supreme rights to pay tributes would certainly be guaranteed. It would be absolutely fine even if they wanted to stay here and mourn for a year and a half.

The queen’s words were both practical and reasonable and controlled the agitating soldiers and people effectively, transforming the overwhelming tides into continuous brooks. In the meantime, it was impossible to find any fault in the queen’s arrangements. Everything was flawless both in law and according to the regulations regarding the mausoleum visits.

Li Linghai’s touching performance was delivered to every corner of the Empyreal Terminus Sector incessantly through the powerful propaganda machine of the Li family, before it was sent to the many worlds of the Imperium through the signal relay bases deployed at the edge of the Empyreal Terminus Sector.

Even though the Dongfang family could control the Spiritual Nexus in their own territory and block all the cursed information, it was not so easy to cut the network of the other three families as well as the peripheral worlds of the Imperium.

At this moment, countless people of the Imperium saw a queen who was benevolent, fearless, and truly considerate of the people.

Of course, they saw the “Gold Vulture” that had stood behind her and protected her dutifully all the time too!

Only half a year after the fall of “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky”, Li Yao shocked the entire Imperium in a whole new appearance. It was just like what they said. You never knew what would happen next!

Naturally, the scene had long been delivered to Dongfang Wang’s office and made Dongfang Wang burst into rare fury and broke his teaware.

Dongfang Wang was so determined of killing that the first thought after he saw Li Linghai was to kill her no matter what the cost was, or to simply announce through the propaganda machine of the Dongfang family that the real queen had died of illness a month ago and the current one in the Emperor’s Mausoleum was a counterfeit!

But after his fury slightly dispersed and rationality took over his head again, the prime minister heaved a long sigh and knew that it was not going to be so simple.

No matter what happened in the past few days, all the intelligence suggested the same result. The reformists led by Li Linghai had already forged an alliance with “Silver Fox” Li Jiande’s Li family. Therefore, the enemies that he had to deal with included not just the queen but also the old, cunning Li Jiande, as well as the many interest groups from the peripheral worlds of the Imperium.

The Colossus “Gold Vulture” behind Li Linghai was of a very high level. Unless the top tier experts of the Dongfang family were deployed, preferably multiple of them together, it would be barely possible to take the Colossus down. So, it was hard to kill Li Linghai.

It was one thing to poison the emperor and the queen deep inside the royal palace when the night was dark, but it was a whole other thing to kill the queen of the Imperium right in public in the sacred Emperor’s Mausoleum under the witness of so many people.

No matter how arrogant the Dongfang family was, it did not intend to rebel and claim the throne right now.

Slaughtering the members of the royal family and the queen in the Emperor’s Mausoleum and even bulldozing the entire mausoleum to the ground would only give an excuse for the other three families and the new interest groups from the edge of the Imperium to attack and divide the Dongfang family together!

Besides, even if he truly gave such an insane order in his fury, the experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage who were capable of destroying “Gold Vulture” might not obey it at all.

Yes, since he was the leader of the Dongfang family, everybody in the family was supposed to listen to his command.

That was quite true. But it was on one premise, which was that his command would bring huge returns to the Dongfang family, instead of dragging the rank of the family into the abyss of destruction!

The latest intelligence he just received completely let Dongfang Wang abandon the idea of solving it through violence.

The fleet of the Li family deployed at the edge of the Empyreal Terminus Sector had sudden anomalies and showed vague hostility to the Dongfang family’s fleet.

Sweat leaked out of every wrinkle on Dongfang Wang’s face.

The defense of the sky of the Imperium was taken care of by the elite troops of the four families together. Leaving the edge aside, the Li family’s low-altitude fleets were hovering above the prime minister’s residence and the Council of Elders right now!

The Li family’s comprehensive capability was only half of that of the Dongfang family. A few days ago, a large number of starships were dispatched to the hometown to settle the rebellions. The fleets that were still stationed in the Imperium were far worse than the Dongfang family's in terms of both scale and firepower.

However, Dongfang Wang still did not risk a full battle against the Li family in the capital.

Even more critically, now that the reformists and the Li family were in alliance, the Astounding Thunder Fleet that broke into the Li family's heartland unexpectedly was no longer a threat to the Li family but its secret weapon.

If the Dongfang family's elite troops were all stalled by the Li family's fleets and the Imperial Guards in the capital, would the invincible troop in the frontline suddenly appear at the softest abdomen in the Dongfang family's dominion under the command of "God of War" Lei Chenghu?

Dongfang Wang took a deep breath and thought calmly. Now was definitely not a time to start a killing spree. The most critical issue was the stances of the other two families, namely the Yun family and the Song family.

The stances of the two families were not promising either.

In the recent hundred years, the Dongfang family had been expanding rapidly and was now bigger than any of the other three families.

Therefore, the politics of the Imperium were mainly about the Li family, the Yun family, and the Song family working together to stop the expansion of the Dongfang family.

In the recent twenty years, after Dongfang Wang became the prime minister of the Imperium, most of the members of his cabinet were from the Dongfang family and its vassal families. Many of the national policies were inclined to the

Dongfang family, which further accelerated the speed of expansion.

The other three families, unwilling to watch the Dongfang family growing larger and larger, were more and more inclined to work together.

To quote the political terms of the Star Ocean Republic in the past, it might be safe to say that the Dongfang family was the “ruling party” of the Imperium, whereas the other three families were the “opposition parties” in the Council of Elders.

While aristocracy was fundamentally different from partisan politics, and they were two concepts that must not be mixed up, they at least shared one thing in common. The natural and sole mission of the opposition parties was to hamstring the ruling party through whatever means possible, propose opinions that were the exact opposite of the ruling party’s, and then to laugh and mock the ruling party when they suffered setbacks.

Right now, it was obvious that the Li family had decided to wage a war on Dongfang Wang and his cabinet.

Even if the Yun family and the Song family did not stand on the Li family’s side openly, they would certainly be glad to watch everything and even secretly send fuel and cannonballs to the Li family to get the fire bigger. If he showed any sign of weakness, they might come to take advantage of him too!

As he expected, the news came one piece after another. The Yun family and the Song family, ignoring his ban, restored the Spiritual Nexus near the Emperor’s Mausoleum earlier than the Dongfang family and sent the media of their own for interviews.

Articles and comments soon appeared on the channels under the two families. Although their tones were not as aggressive and harsh as the news of the Li family, they were expressing the same idea—Dongfang Wang’s cabinet must take full blame for such an “unfortunate incident”, and that it must be settled immediately and unconditionally. In the meantime, the elders of the Yun family and the Song family would certainly enforce their “most sacred right of supervision” and demand Dongfang Wang’s cabinet to offer a satisfying reply.

With everything coming to this moment, it was impossible to block the event anymore.

The ripple from the stagnant water of the thirty-sixth district finally evolved into a storm that swept across the entire Imperium!

Looking at the elders of the Li family, the Yun family, and the Song family speaking to the major media solemnly, as if they were truly worried about the country, Dongfang Wang fell on the chair heavily and rubbed his nose hard.

But his voice showed absolutely no sign of exhaustion but was filled with determination and coldness. “Ask Dongfang Mingyue to meet me exactly. I want to know how many forces the queen has been hiding, who this ‘Vulture Li Yao’ is exactly, and how many men and resources are needed to take him down!”

Chapter 2273 - All the Crows Are Black!

2273 All the Crows Are Black!

Glittering stars congregated into a shiny torrent, expanding to every corner of the dark universe together with the unstoppable conquests, until the territory of the Imperium of True Human Beings today was stabilized.

It was exactly the scene that was played and replayed on the dome of the lobby of the national museum on the west side of the Emperor’s Mausoleum.

His hands in his back, Li Yao stood at the center of the national museum and moved his attention from the map of the Imperium to the front.

Right in the front was a black throne embedded with gold stripes of dragons. Nobody was sitting on the throne, but a black crystal suit had occupied it majestically. The horns protruding from the crystal suit made it look like an iron jungle.

It was said that the crystal suit was the gear with which Blackstar the Great dominated the universe and shattered the stars.

Appreciating the black crystal suit at a close distance, Li Yao couldn’t help but feel that “Blackstar the Great is about to be pissed back to life and crawl out of his coffin” again.

Queen Li Linghai returned to the capital at great risks. Naturally, she had whole plans and would not go back to the royal palace to be killed.

A million Imperial Guards, surplus generals, and disabled veterans were inside and outside of the Emperor’s Mausoleum right now, accompanied by countless people in fury. It was the safest place in the entire capital right now.

Therefore, she stayed here under the excuse that she was consoling the wronged soldiers and generals.

Perhaps for irony, she even transformed the national museum as her temporary base and changed the office area on the top two floors into her secret meeting room and her command center.

Li Yao was Li Linghai’s personal bodyguard in name, but he was well aware that Li Linghai’s combat ability was far higher than his own because of the Supreme Emperor’s legacies, and she did not need his protection at all.

Except for the occasional plays in front of other people, Li Yao quite enjoyed his leisure time and appreciated the national museum of the Imperium of True Human Beings for a few days, which gave him a deeper understanding about the history of the Imperium and even allowed him to observe Blackstar the Great’s many relics from the closest distance.

It was certainly not something that he had expected before he snuck into the Imperium of True Human Beings on his own.

Li Yao almost couldn’t wait to send his dreamy experiences back to the Star Glory Federation as a great surprise for Ding Lingdang and Jin Xinyue.

It was a pity that he had been in the company of Li Linghai, Lei Chenghu, and hundreds of Immortal Cultivators ever since “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” was blown up by him. He had no time to find a secret place to set up his super-remote communication base, and therefore had no chance to contact his hometown.

Therefore, he could only hold back his laughter and set them free later.

Walking along the stairs, he arrived at the third floor of the national museum, only to discover that Li Jialing was looking afar through the window at the crowds who were paying tributes to Blackstar the Great.

“You have been observing those people all the time over the last days.”

Li Yao walked over and asked, “And you seemed deep in thought. What’s on your mind?”

“Nothing.”

Li Jialing shook his head. After a brief silence, he said, “I only feel that those people are both pitiful and pathetic. They will be manipulated no matter what they do, just like I have been manipulated since I was born.”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. “I don’t know if the queen is manipulating those people, but for me, I am sincerely helping those people to get what they deserve, no matter if it is their military credits, their dignity, or just the rights of survival.

“Such an approach may be too extreme and carry too many risks, but they already cannot live on anymore. This is their only and last chance.”

Li Jialing looked at Li Yao, somewhat in surprise. “They are Immortal Cultivators.”

“Yes, they are.”

Li Yao sighed and said, “Immortal Cultivators are naturally the greatest enemy of the Cultivators. Also, those ‘surplus generals’ are definitely not the kindest people in the world. Many of them were ferocious bullies, if not bloody butchers, when they were in their hometowns.

“But things should be considered separately. No matter what atrocious crimes they committed, they should at least be credited for resisting the invasion of the Covenant Alliance and defending humanity.

“Whatever their motives to participate in the Imperium’s counterattack were, and even if they were just seeking fame and fortune, objectively speaking, without the fighting and sacrifices of those Immortal Cultivators, it is possible that the universe would’ve been occupied by the puppets of the Covenant Alliance. They might even have gathered enough resources and energy to revive the Pangu Clan, which would be an irreversible catastrophe for the civilization of mankind.

“Accomplishments cannot offset crimes, but crimes should not cover accomplishments either. Those people are both criminals and contributors. I want those Immortal Cultivators to be tried for their crimes in the past, and I even want to perform the punishments in person, but I am unwilling to see them kicked away like dogs after they devoted their everything for the civilization of mankind.

“Do you understand the difference between the two concepts?”

Li Jialing thought carefully for a moment and nodded his head.

“Besides—”

Li Yao said, “Those ‘surplus generals’ may have committed unpardonable crimes in the past, but those disabled veterans—the low-level Immortal Cultivators in the Refinement Stage and the Building Foundation Stage—are different… How should I put it? I’m not saying that they are innocent, but if they grow up on a different land under a different system in a different way of education, they might become Cultivators too.

“I cannot kill all the Immortal Cultivators at the center of the cosmos, but I truly want to find a way to destroy the soil from which the Immortal Cultivators are grown.”

Li Yao’s gaze went past Li Jialing’s shoulders as he watched the common veterans of the Imperium who strode forward in lines and pay tributes to Blackstar the Great’s statue. He had a lot of mixed feelings.

Li Yao was himself a “veteran” of the Star Glory Federation. When he took part in the College Entrance Examination in his younger years, and when he was smeared to be the Blood Devil after he returned to the federation, it was all thanks to the selfless help of the veterans that he lived through the difficulties.

He had deep feelings for the army and the veterans.

Although the Imperium of True Human Beings was a hostile country, he found it impossible to hate the veterans who had devoted everything to the war against the Covenant Alliance.

“The four Kurfürst families are too idiotic and greedy. Prime Minister Dongfang Wang is the same too.”

Li Jialing found it hard to believe. “Do they not know that they are shaking the foundation of the country? Why didn’t they address it earlier? This is outrageous!”

“I can only say that reality is not a game. It is impossible that everybody will follow the orders 100% without any discount like machines after the authorities press a button.”

Li Yao said, “Strong as Blackstar the Great might’ve been, weren’t there still people who pretended to obey him but in fact did not? How could one Dongfang Wang control so many people down below?

“I believe that Dongfang Wang must’ve foreseen the consequences of reducing the generals and ignoring the disabled veterans with his vision and wisdom, but everybody has only limited abilities. If his subordinates each have their own plans or even embezzle the subsidies for the veterans, what can he do?”

Li Jialing frowned. “Dongfang Wang is known as a prime minister of iron and blood. Is he unable to settle such a minor issue? If anybody dares to embezzle the subsidies, just behead them!”

“What if the criminal is an experienced expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage with deeply-rooted forces? Can he be killed too?”

Li Yao asked, “If the criminal is a Divinity Transformation Stage expert from the Li family, but other Divinity

Transformation Stage experts of the Li family are defending him, can you kill all of them? If the criminal is a Divinity Transformation Stage expert from the Dongfang family, can Dongfang Wang execute a member of his own family? If all the experts of the four Kurfürst families, regardless of their origins, already have unspoken rules and all of them embezzle, what can Dongfang Wang do?”

After a long daze, Li Jialing asked, “They are all unparalleled experts with high computational abilities. Can’t they think of the consequences? Why are they so greedy and shortsighted?”

“It has nothing to do with greed, idiocy, and shortsightedness. Getting to the bottom of it, it is a systematical issue. Their ideals and beliefs have grown awry since the root.”

Li Yao said, “It is exactly because the prevailing idea of ‘survival of fittest’ among the Immortal Cultivators that every rational Immortal Cultivator has strong motives to loot resources and benefits through whatever means possible to strengthen themselves.

“As to if the looting was reasonable and legal and what kind of catastrophic consequences it will bring in the long term, such things are beyond their concerns.

“If they do not loot crazily right now, they will become weaklings and losers in the short term, and they will lose everything in the cruel internal competitions. How can they care about the long-term and the overall interests?

“The majority of the rational Immortal Cultivators with normal thinking abilities will not hesitate to embezzle if it can increase their odds of survival. The resources that have already fallen into their pockets can barely be given away too. Why would anybody do such a thing that would lower their odds of survival?

“Perhaps when the Imperium of True Human Beings was just born a thousand years ago, there were still some Immortal Cultivators that had dreams and integrity. They were the ‘pure Immortal Cultivators’ such as Lei Chenghu. However, in the prolonged race of survival, those Immortal Cultivators are destined to be eliminated, just like the devoted surplus generals and disabled veterans would’ve been eliminated if we hadn’t appeared in time.

“The valiant Immortal Cultivators who fought bravely were all eliminated. Only the most selfish, shameless, blatant, and greedy Immortal Cultivators were able to survive. After generations of ‘adverse selection’, do I need to describe to you what the Immortal Cultivators who have survived to this day look like?

“The Imperium of True Human Beings today is made of millions of such Immortal Cultivators. Below the seemingly glamorous appearance, the stinky mucus is flowing everywhere, and the bizarre, crazy phenomena of corruption are happening without any stop. Even if the persons at the top intend to stop the trend, they have nowhere to get started at all. Any reforms from top to down will only become excuses for the interest groups to further exploit the underprivileged, making the situation at the bottom level of the society worse and worse. Is it strange at all that this is happening right now?”

Chapter 2274 - Dilemma of the Immortal Cultivators

Chapter 2274 Dilemma of the Immortal Cultivators

Looking at the disabled veterans bowing and offering wreaths, Li Jialing clenched his fists and said, “Things must’ve been different in the age of Blackstar the Great.”

“They’re all the same.”

Li Yao said, “If the Immortal Cultivators did not have so many corruptions and internal conflicts, and they were not as selfish and despicable as they are today, it was not because the Immortal Cultivators had higher integrity but because the Imperium was still in the phase of expansion. The interests of the newly-conquered areas could be swallowed in order to soothe the conflicts within.

“The vigor and vitality of countries such as the Imperium of True Human Beings are built on accelerated expeditions. Whenever they stop expanding, the internal contradictions will burst out together, resulting in their inevitable decline.

“The Imperium has deteriorated to such an extent that it is now too sick to be rescued by any medication. Any ‘reform’ will not solve the root of the problems. They may be able to cut out the cancers on the body, but they cannot change the genetic deficiencies. Not just Li Linghai and Lei Chenghu, even Blackstar the Great could not heal the country even if he were back to life.

“In order to transform and revive the Imperium, the true path of immortality must be criticized and denied in the most complete way. But here comes the question. Is the Imperium of True Human Beings without the guidance of the true path of immortality still the Imperium of True Human Beings? Which Immortal Cultivator could afford such a destructive reconstruction of their beliefs?"

Li Jialing thought hard for a long time. "Do we have to do that? Is there not a third option?"

"It is inevitable."

Li Yao said solemnly, "Survival is the natural instinct of any life. As long as the true path of immortality highlights the law of survival of the fittest, everybody will spend all the resources on themselves for survival driven by their instincts. The resources will be wasted in meaningless internal conflicts. Even if they are not needed for now, they will be secretly hidden in case they are needed in the future, and they will never be devoted to the public, the country, the civilization, and the external fights. So, how can the most optimal configuration of resources be reached at all?"

Li Jialing frowned hard and shook his head. "That being said, is the ideology of the Cultivators any better? Can the Cultivators always maintain high morals and fight for the general public under the guidance of their beliefs, and social ossification and enormous interest groups will never appear? If that is the case, the Star Ocean Republic and Firefly wouldn't have been destroyed!"

"You are right. I don't want to lie. Both Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators are humans, and every human has desires and deficiencies. What is happening to the Imperium of True Human Beings today will… has happened to the Star Ocean Republic and Firefly yesterday and even resulted in two destructions."

Deep in thought, Li Yao mumbled, "But I still prefer to believe that at the very least, in a society where the prevailing ideas are that the strong should help the weak, the weak should support the strong, and the strong and the weak should fight together, people will not be so motivated to jeopardize the interests of the whole just to strengthen themselves. If the community is the most solid shield and the warmest reliance for the individuals, then considering the interests of the whole before considering themselves will not be in violation of human nature, right?

“If you still find it hard to understand, we can construct a simplest social model, where the whole society is highly compressed and simplified into two persons and one unit of resources.

“One of the persons is you. You are not sure whether you are a Cultivator or an Immortal Cultivator, and you can switch between the policies of the Cultivators and those of the Immortal Cultivators easily.

“The other person is an expert who is far stronger than you. But he is heavily wounded and in dire need of the resources for recovery.

“Naturally, the resources are now in the hands of you, who are strong and healthy. If you choose to consume the resources yourself, your strength will be increased by 10%, but the heavily wounded expert will die soon.

“But if you give the resources to the heavily wounded expert, his strength will be increased by 100% after recovery.

“Right now. Other than the two of you, there lie all kinds of threats in this world. The stronger your overall strengths are, the more likely it will be to survive in the perilous world.

“Here comes the question. In the first scenario, if you know that the heavily wounded expert is a cold, ruthless Immortal Cultivator who believes in survival of the fittest, would you like to offer the valuable resources to him so that he can be fully recovered, while you are only one fifth if not one-tenth as strong as he is?

“In the second scenario, if you know clearly that the heavily wounded expert is a Cultivator who has fought for the weak countless times, what will you choose? Will you give the resources to yourself to maximize your personal combat ability, or will you give them to him to maximize the combat ability of the team?”

Li Jialing rolled his eyes again and again. It was not until a long time later that he finally struggled to say, “I can’t lie. In the first scenario, I will reserve all the resources for myself without a care for the life or death of the expert, but in the second scenario, I will very likely give the resources to the expert. After all, he will probably protect me after he is recovered.

“However, in the first scenario, there is still one option. If the resources can be divided, I will separate the resources, giving the larger proportion to myself and the smaller proportion to the expert to make him more or less recovered. Then, he will be slightly weaker than me but can still be of help.”

“That will be the same.”

Li Yao said casually, “No matter what the ratio is, the combat ability of your team will not be maximized. In other words, you haven’t achieved the optimal configuration of resources.

“Besides, if you give a few resources to the heavily wounded Immortal Cultivator, he might not be grateful for you at all but would likely resent you for your pettiness. In the team fights later, the two of you will be wary of each other and probably burst into conflicts before external threats show up, right?”

Li Jialing was stunned. “That’s right. But who can guarantee that the Cultivator will certainly protect the weak after he gets all the resources and recovers? What if he changes his mind, drops his mask of hypocrisies, and abandons me at a critical moment?”

“It’s all about probability. Everything has odds. I’m not saying that it is necessarily the right choice to give all the resources to the Cultivator expert in the second scenario; I’m just saying that such a policy will maximize the odds of survival. That’s all.”

Holding the windowsill with both hands, Li Yao stared at the statue of Blackstar the Great and said, “It’s true that Cultivators may be fake gentlemen sometimes, but Immortal Cultivators are certainly always real villains. Fake gentlemen will not hurt other people until they drop their disguise at the last moment, but real villains spurt out venom, implement schemes, and harm other people for their own interests twenty hours a day. If you have to choose one of them as partners, even a fool will know which option is better?”

Li Jialing frowned and said, “What are you trying to say, Brother Yao?”

Li Yao said, “What I’m trying to say is that, in a world of any scale, if your companions are Immortal Cultivators, it won’t matter however kindhearted, honorable, selfless, and devoted you used to be. Driven by the instincts for survival, your only policy will be to transform yourself into an

Immortal Cultivator as soon as possible, preferably an even more cruel, brutal, and cunning one than your companions. At the very least, you will have to strike a ‘balance of deterrence’ between one another. That is the only way for you to ensure your own safety and your partnership with other people.

“But as a result, the world made of the Immortal Cultivators cannot achieve the optimal configuration of resources that you brag about at all. On the contrary, if you have 100 points of combat ability in the ideal situation, it will only be 10 points because of your conspiratorial games of survival.

“I would like to name such a phenomenon as ‘dilemma of the Immortal Cultivators’. The entire Imperium of True Human Beings is now trapped in a gigantic dilemma of the Immortal Cultivators, to the point that it cannot destroy a minor Covenant Alliance at a corner of the cosmos, which does not have any creativity at all, when it has the most abundant resources at the center of the cosmos.

“In the second social form, if your companions are Cultivators, the odds that you are transformed into a Cultivator will be very high, and you tend to act selflessly, say, give the valuable resources to other people first, because you know that it is a reliable investment and that they will return even more resources to you after their wounds are recovered.

“Such a positive encouragement and feedback will make the two of you more and more selfless and united. In the end, you will achieve the optimal configuration of resources and output the highest overall combat ability, right?”

Li Jialing tilted his head and thought for a long time. “It does seem to make sense.”

“Of course it is. Isn’t a living example standing right here?”

Li Yao declared, “You were a little devil who could not tell kindness from evilness and who did not hesitate before bloody slaughters at all. You were the best talent to grow into an Immortal Cultivator. But after you got in touch with such a Cultivator of morals and integrity like Brother Yao, you have been touched by my lofty character without you knowing it, and you are learning to view the world from the Cultivators’ point of view. You are slowly transforming into a Cultivator. Isn’t this the best evidence?

“Therefore, as long as everybody offers a tiny bit of love, the universe will be a much more beautiful place tomorrow. Although the path of the Cultivators seems down and out right now, it will become the mainstream at the center of the cosmos in the days to come! Only the path of the Cultivators can save the Imperium. If the Imperium is to be reformed to give birth to a ‘new Imperium’, it shouldn’t be a new Imperium in the plan of Li Linghai and Lei Chenghu, but a new Imperium where everybody is a Cultivator!”

Chapter 2275 - From Evil to Righteous, and From Righteous to Evil!

“A new Imperium where everybody is a Cultivator!”

Li Jialing was dumbfounded first. Then, he was greatly enlightened. “So, that is why Brother Yao is cooperating with the queen and General Lei Chenghu!”

Li Yao said, “Of course, why else would such an honorable, selfless, generous, and patriotic Cultivator like myself participate in the so-called ‘reform’ of the Immortal Cultivators that will not resolve the problems from the source at all, and why would I work so hard?”

“However—”

Thinking for a moment, Li Jialing sighed and said, “Except for the guys who escaped from ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’, Brother Yao is the only Cultivator in the vast universe right now. How can you be a match for the queen and General Lei, and how can you possibly establish your utopia?”

“I never thought that I could succeed in only a hundred years.”

Li Yao said solemnly, “But at the very least, the storm of reform will completely tear apart the Immortal Cultivators’ disguise that they are ‘sacred, strong, and glorious’, showing more and more people the natural-born, unfixable flaws, and ugliness of the true path of immortality. As the reform goes on, some people will eventually consider whether or not the true path of immortality works at all. When they realize that it does not work, some of them will eventually recall the path of the Cultivators, again, won’t they?

“How about it? After hearing Brother Yao’s heartfelt tutelage, how do you feel? Is your blood boiling, and you cannot wait to become a glorious and proud Cultivator right now?”

Li Jialing scratched his furry head with his furry claw. Thinking for a moment, he shook his head and said, “Not exactly. I feel that you are tricking me.”

“Do you?”

Li Yao blinked his eyes quickly and said, “Then, even if you are tricked by me, do you not gain any understanding from it at all?”

“Well, I have indeed learned something.”

Considering carefully for a moment, Li Jialing clapped his hands heavily and said, “I have realized that the true path of immortality does entail serious problems. The inherent deficiencies and fundamental contradictions in it make it impossible to guide such an enormous entity like the Imperium of True Human Beings to operate well for a long time!

“However, there are as many problems in the Cultivators’ ideology. Just look at how the Star Ocean Republic ended!

“The greatest problem of the true path of immortality is that it is too simple, straightforward, cold, and cruel. Or rather, everybody is simply too frank. On the other hand, the

Cultivators wear the veils of warmth and gentleness, and their social relations are more friendly and harmonious!”

His eyes glittering, Li Yao looked at the young man, full of expectations. “So?”

“So, if we can combine the path of the Cultivators and the true path of immortality, we will be invincible!”

Li Jialing said in excitement, “Look, Brother Yao, in order to survive in the cold, cruel universe, the true path of immortality is indispensable. But even if we do as Immortal Cultivators, we can still propagate the ideas of the Cultivators with our mouths, right?

“Just like that, the ideas of the Cultivators will be the skin, and the ideas of the Immortal Cultivators will be the bones. Then, we can achieve both an optimal configuration of resources and a harmonious society. Wouldn’t it be one stone that kills two birds?

“Ah. I finally understand where the problems of the Imperium of True Human Beings lie now. The problem is that the Imperium is too outspoken! Things like ‘survival of the fittest’ should simply be kept to one’s own heart tacitly. How can they promote and disseminate to all the people every day? How can the country not be chaotic if everyone is so competitive?

“If propaganda is necessary, we should promote more about the ideas of the Cultivators such as ‘one for all, all for one’. Even if they are Immortal Cultivators in private, they should pretend that they are Cultivators on the surface. This is the true meaning of the new Imperium!

“Thank you, Brother Yao. I understand it now. I have truly understood it!”

Li Yao: “…”

Li Jialing: “Brother Yao, why are you walking further and further? What are you doing in the corner?”

Li Yao: “Nothing. Don’t talk to me right now. I want a moment to myself.”

While Li Yao was in mixed feelings, feeble quakes came from his wrist crystal processor, and a piece of new information jumped out. “God of War” Lei Chenghu was here.

Naturally, it was unnecessary for Lei Chenghu’s real body to go to the dangerous land in person. He was still staying in the mysterious space zone outside of the Empyreal Terminus Sector as a threat to the four Kurfürst families. That was also the way to better guarantee the safety of Li Linghai, Li Yao, and other central persons of the reformists.

Therefore, when Li Yao and Li Linghai marched all the way to the capital, Lei Chenghu led the Astounding Thunder Fleet to stay in the Divine Rain Sector first to supervise the smooth implementation of the agreement between the Li family and the reformists.

After the Li family and the Dongfang family completely ended up on bad terms, and nothing could possibly reverse the situation, the Astounding Thunder Fleet filled fuel and ammunition on a large scale blatantly, acting as if they were going to lunge at the central space zones of the Dongfang family in another massive space jump. Also, they did not keep it a secret at all but intentionally leaked the intelligence to the Dongfang family.

In such a way, they curbed Prime Minister Dongfang Wang’s urge to solve the problem with violence, when the man’s own hometown was threatened.

At this moment, Lei Chenghu's real body was still commanding the army of the reformists. Under the support of the tremendous resources of the Li family, the fleet was as menacing as a saber that was about to be unsheathed.

But he controlled a spiritual puppet through remote control to participate in the secret meeting of the reformists regarding the operations in the next step on behalf of him.

Li Yao, as the liaison officer between Lei Chenghu and Li Linghai, was naturally responsible for the maintenance and debugging work of the spiritual puppet.

After receiving the message that Lei Chenghu was ready, he fell on one of his knees and retrieved the spiritual puppet that had been specially modified to receive extraterrestrial signals. He set the frequency of the signals and activated all the rune arrays and antennas.

"Hum…"

The spiritual puppet shivered softly. The rune arrays all over its body shone and turned into a fuzzy halo that gradually condensed into Lei Chenghu's appearance.

"General Lei, Her Grace is waiting for you. This way, please!"

Li Yao asked Li Jialing to lead all the guards to watch over the third and the fourth floors, while he led "Lei Chenghu" to the fifth floor that had been entirely blocked.

On his way, he recalled the discussion with Li Jialing a moment ago. Not entirely satisfied, he couldn't help but ask, "General Lei, you must've seen what happened to the 'surplus generals' and the disabled veterans, right? I wonder, what is your take on this? And how would you have resolved the problems if you were the highest authorities?"

"Yes, I've seen it all. To be honest, when I was fighting in the frontline in the Third Battle Area, I never thought that the situation in the rear was so horrible. No wonder the force of the reformists has developed to an overwhelming level in darkness after only decades. The Imperium today does need a reform."

Lei Chenghu sighed but changed the topic, "However, the surplus generals have themselves to blame for what they have become today too!"

Li Yao was dazed. He asked, "Are you suggesting that they shouldn't have adopted such an extreme approach as 'crying in the Emperor's Mausoleum' however desperate they were, General Lei?"

"No. I'm saying that they should've sacrificed themselves in the frontline."

Lei Chenghu said casually, "That way, they would've saved their reputation, and the country's financial burden would've been reduced. Then, the regrettable thing that happened today would never have occurred."

"…"

Li Yao was rendered speechless again.

"As a soldier of the Imperium, they should be determined to serve His Majesty, the country, and the civilization of mankind even at the cost of their life. They must be prepared to be sacrificed at any moment, particularly when they know that they have been heavily wounded and it will take tremendous time and resources for them to recover."

Lei Chenghu frowned, "If they waver at such a moment, they will be the burden of the country, which is far worse than dying with a random soldier of the Covenant Alliance in the frontline. That is what a real warrior and a real Immortal Cultivator should do!”

Li Yao couldn’t stand it anymore. “General Lei, you must be kidding. Who can do that?”

“I can.”

Lei Chenghu turned around and looked at Li Yao. “Trust me. If that day does come, I will never be a burden for the army and the country. I will certainly cause the greatest losses to the enemy and make my last contributions with my broken body!”

Li Yao was stunned for a long time. “Of course I believe you can, but isn’t it too unrealistic for you to demand the common soldiers with such a high moral standard? After all, most of the Immortal Cultivators have families. They cannot cut their feelings and ignore their wives and children like the people of the Covenant Alliance!”

“That is exactly where our problem lies.”Lei Chenghu said coldly, “In a real, fully-functioning country of Immortal Cultivators, the configuration of resources should be fair, just, and open. All the children should be attended to, educated, and selected equally, and the accomplishments that the soldiers have earned through all the trouble will not be misappropriated.

“When a soldier knows that his accomplishments will not be claimed by somebody else, and his family will be taken good care of, he will have no worries. Why would he not have the courage to sacrifice himself?

“Then, after those disabled soldiers sacrifice themselves in the frontline, a great burden on the national finance will be saved. The money can both be used to expand the results of the war and to devote to their widows and offspring in the rear to form a virtuous cycle.

“But in a malfunctioning, corrupted country of Immortal Cultivators, all kinds of frauds, darkness, and injustice can be found in the rear. The most excellent and thorough system before is riddled with holes. As a result, everybody in the frontline is chilled, and they do not have any courage to sacrifice themselves at all. Instead, they will just drag their broken bodies to the rear to waste resources for nothing, which will further increase the pressure on the national finance, leading to the complete collapse in the frontline and in the rear. Such a vicious cycle is unavoidable.”

Observing the matter-of-fact look on Lei Chenghu’s face, Li Yao pondered for a long time and suddenly said, “In fact, I feel that the ‘fully-functioning country of Immortal Cultivators’ that you described first, other than being too cold and heartless, does carry a little bit of the air of… the Cultivators.”

“Maybe. It is possible that all the different paths lead to exactly the same destination. Maybe they are indeed all the same when you reach a high level.”

Lei Chenghu smiled, giving neither approval nor disapproval. “I am a soldier, and I am not interested in the groundless theories. Soldiers are only interested in killing. Battlefields are the most unreasonable places. No matter a saber belongs to a Cultivator or an Immortal Cultivator, it is a good saber as long as it can kill people!”

Chapter 2276 - Detonate the Lethal Bomb!

Chapter 2276 Detonate the Lethal Bomb!

While they were talking, the two of them walked into Li Linghai’s secret meeting room.

The meeting room used to be the center of the national museum where the damaged antiques were repaired. Many extremely fragile antiques had harsh requirements for temperature, humidity, and pressure when they were being repaired. Therefore, the repair center was surrounded by highly-keen sensors, which could also serve for the purpose of anti-monitoring after modifications.

Or maybe it was because Queen Li Linghai felt particularly great about herself when she discussed the cause to “renew the Imperium” under Blackstar the Great’s broken statue that needed fixing badly.

The participants of the secret meeting, besides Li Linghai who was in pure white, included Jin Yuyan, the greatest patron of the reformists and the General Director of the Business Alliance of Ten Thousand Sectors, who spoke for the interests of the businesspersons from the peripherical worlds of the Imperium; Yue Wushuang, the head of the “Tribunal of extraterrestrial devils”, which was a secret intelligence agency; and Dongfang Sheng, the commander of the Deep Sea Fleet.

They were all the most hardcore, devoted reformists.

Together with Lei Chenghu, the giant of the military, and Li Yao, the “super warrior” who had distinguished himself remarkably recently, they were the center of the reformists who had marched into the capital.

“Your Grace—”

Looking around, Lei Chenghu said straightforwardly, “Before we discuss the operations in the next step, I want to confirm one thing. None of the soldiers from the Third Battle Area believes that we are engaged in a rebellion. So, we do not wish the Empyreal Terminus Sector to be mired in irresolvable chaos. The crying event in the Emperor’s Mausoleum will stop here and not escalate any further, right?”

“Of course, General Lei. We are trying to rescue the Imperium, not to destroy it.”

Queen Li Linghai, whose face was fair and warm although she was not wearing any makeup, said, “If I really want the Imperium to fall into chaos, I could totally instigate the surplus generals, the disabled veterans, and the angry crowd to march to the Council of Elders and set the whole planet on fire with their blood. But such an effort would be too meaningless, and it is too shameless and contemptible. I never planned to do that.

“Look, I have controlled the intensity of the crying event perfectly and even dispersed a large part of soldiers and members of the royal family. That is exactly because I do not want to hurt any innocent people. The Emperor’s Mausoleum is not our main battlefield, and the bodies of those soldiers, generals, and civilians are absolutely not our cannonballs either. You can rest assured about that.”

Lei Chenghu nodded his head and said, “Okay. I have no further questions. Please begin, Your Grace.”

Li Linghai coughed lightly and cleared her throat. After Li Yao closed the door and deployed the sound-blocking rune arrays, she opened her arms and said, “First of all, I want to thank everyone for your relentless efforts and sacrifices in the past years. Our cause has finally made the critical step and secured an important victory!

“In the past half month, we fought a battle that was not in our favor in the most difficult situation when we were least prepared, and we have won it!

“With the support of the expedition army and General Lei Chenghu, we threatened the Divine Rain Sector, allied with the Li family, and forced the Yun family and the Song family to stand by and watch, limiting the range of our primary enemies to the Dongfang family alone. All our attacks are directed at Dongfang Wang, the prime minister of the Imperium!

“Now that we have the support of the Li family, we boast a smooth Spiritual Nexus and media channels to the entire universe without obstacles, which allow us to deliver the ideas of ‘renewing the Imperium’ to every corner of the Imperium instantly!

“The chain reaction caused by the crying event has kept Dongfang Wang and his cabinet preoccupied. Even the attention of the entire Dongfang family is distracted, and they have little time to care about anything else. This is exactly what we have done in the past month. At first look, the situation is absolutely in our favor!”

The leadership team of the reformists all looked delighted and ambitious.

“However—”

Observing everyone’s face in the room, Li Linghai suddenly turned solemn, and her voice grew high. “Do not be cocky, and do not let go of our wariness. While we have secured a preliminary success, we have also pushed us to the center of attention and a most treacherous environment!

“The saber of the reformists has been completely unsheathed, its edge entirely shown. The enemy has seen us clearly. It is impossible for us to conceal the saber again.

“In the meantime, the Dongfang family is the ‘First Family’ of the Imperium of True Human Beings with the greatest wealth and power after all, and it will not be crushed by a petty trick such as a demonstration.

“Most importantly of all, none of the Yun family, the Song family, or the Li family is sincerely on our side. They are just watching the competition between the reformists and the Dongfang family while they calculate which side has a better chance of winning and if it is possible for them to take advantage of our fight.

“The war between us and the Dongfang family is exactly like the duel of two experts. We have made our moves first, and our attacks are unstoppable, seamless, and incessant, like raging tides on an ocean. Our enemy is entirely drowned by us and unable to counterattack at all.

“At first look, the situation is completely under our control. But we are the only ones who know that the seemingly dazzling attacks have not caused any fatal wound yet, and our enemy is gradually accumulating their strength while hiding and evading. As long as our attacks halt, giving the enemy a moment to catch their breath, we will immediately be greeted with a thunderous counterattack.

“If we cannot kill the enemy immediately, as time went by, the Yun family and the Song family who are observing, as well as the Li family who seems to be on our side, may turn against us and kill us at any moment!

“Therefore, we are now racing against time. By my estimation, if we cannot deal a heavy blow to the Dongfang family with a critical move in the next month, the wavering Yun family and Song family will be inclined to the Dongfang family, and different voices will emerge in the Li family, too. ‘Silver Fox’ Li Jiande will even make deals with the Dongfang family in private and sell us out!”

Her words cast everybody into deep thought.

Lei Chenghu asked, “The crying event in the Emperor’s Mausoleum was not a fatal move?”

“Of course not.”

Li Linghai shook her head. “The demonstration can be settled easily. In short, it’s just about ‘money’. Although the petty big shots of the Dongfang family are usually reluctant to offer any money, Dongfang Wang must have ways to open their pockets at such a critical moment. If he is unable to do that, he wouldn’t have been known as a prime minister of iron and blood.

“As long as there is enough money, the surplus generals and the disabled soldiers won’t be a problem at all. Instead, they may even be bought over by Dongfang Wang. I believe that Dongfang Wang will certainly take care of the problem perfectly without leaving any flaw that we can make use of. It is too naïve if you think that we can force a prime minister who has worked for twenty years to resign with only a few tears!

“Like I said just now, the ‘crying event’ was just a disguise and a distraction to shift the enemy’s attention.”

“Then—”

Considering carefully for a moment, Lei Chenghu asked, “Have you found critical evidence of the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance, Your Grace? Was Dongfang Wang really behind it?”

“The incident of the Blood Oath Alliance must’ve been a play directed and played by the Dongfang family themselves for the purpose of taking a larger share in the interests of the newly-recovered territory. Even a blind person can see that.”

Li Linghai sighed and said, “However, it is not easy to find concrete evidence. Even if we want to ‘create’ certain evidence, we do not have enough credibility for that yet. Therefore, while it is indeed a fatal move, this is not the time to use it yet. Such a great card will be wasted if we do not play it at the right moment!”

Lei Chenghu frowned hard. “Then, where is the focus of our attack this time? Didn’t you say last time that there are a lot of ‘cannonballs’ in the arsenal of the reformists?”

“Exactly. I did say that.”

With a mysterious smile, Li Linghai said unhurriedly, “There are indeed a lot of cannonballs in the arsenal of the reformists. In the next couple of days, we will have a ‘blanket bombardment’, exposing many scandals of the Dongfang family. Some of them are even shocking cases that involve multiple financial groups.

“Although the scandals are not enough to completely crush the Dongfang family, they will at least further consume Dongfang Wang’s energy and divert his attention, making it impossible for him to see our real attack in his burning fury.

“Then, we will throw this giant bomb to him which will likely blow him into pieces!”

The light around Li Linghai dimmed, and a beautiful, delicate, and refreshing building appeared behind her.

Lei Chenghu recognized it after the first look. “The First Affiliated Hospital to the Medical University of the Imperium? What is the meaning of this?”

The First Affiliated Hospital to the Medical University of the Imperium, commonly known as “Heavenly Star Hospital”, was one of the state-of-the-art comprehensive hospitals with the most advanced facilities and the best medical and research teams in the entire Imperium of True Human Beings.

In the ten years of Imperium’s counterattack, it had also admitted tremendous heavily wounded soldiers who were evacuated from the frontline, making great contributions for the success of the Imperium’s counterattack.

Li Linghai smiled, but her face was more daunting than ever. “I wonder if General Lei and fellow Cultivators here have overheard a terrifying, monstrous rumor before. It is said that many high-level Immortal Cultivators who are aged, to pursue eternal lives, to stay at their peak state, or to cleanse and dredge the bodies of their offspring whose aptitudes are not good enough, have been producing all kinds of high-energy and strengthening drugs with the spiritual roots, the cores, or even the Nascent Souls of other Immortal Cultivators. Sometimes, they even absorb other people’s

Cultivation and spiritual energy by force through evil secret techniques to build up themselves in a cruel way.”

Lei Chenghu said solemnly, “They are just the groundless rumors that the ignorant folks come up with.”

Li Linghai smiled and did not say anything.

Slightly dazed, Lei Chenghu asked in surprise, “Is it true and did the cases happen in the ‘Heavenly Star Hospital’? I remember that the director of the Heavenly Star Hospital and the principal of the Medical University of the Imperium are both from the Dongfang family, and the two places have been under the control of the Dongfang family for the recent hundred years, right?”

Chapter 2277 - Cannibal Training!

The 3D image of the hospital behind Li Linghai gradually dimmed, replaced by a white-haired, healthy-looking, and high-spirited old man.

No. Except for his white hair and his sophisticated eyes, it was almost a vigorous middle-aged man, and his every movement was filled with exuberance.

“Dongfang Renxin, director of the Heavenly Star Hospital, vice-principal of the Medical University of the Imperium, deputy director of the Royal Society of Medical Science, one of the five hundred elders of the Imperium, and a doctor, a Meditation Healer, an herbalist, and a specialist of spiritual energy in the Divinity Transformation Stage. In the meantime, he is the biological brother of Dongfang Wang, the prime minister of the Imperium. He is already three hundred and ninety years old this year. You can’t tell that from his picture, can you?”

Pointing at the 3D light beam, Li Linghai said casually, “Two hundred years ago, Dongfang Renxin was already an exceptional specialist in foreign organ transplantation. He was best at eliminating the rejection reactions of the foreign materials, namely the demon beasts, the spiritual beasts, or the alien beasts, with human bodies so that the organs of the animals could be transplanted into a human body to build up their combat ability.

“In his most successful case, he replaced all the internal organs of a patient with the foreign organs from a demon beast. Later, the patient who was believed to be dying for sure lived another eighty-two years and even kept his Cultivation arts and capabilities before. In the end, he did not die of organ failures but got killed in a fight with other people.

“In other words, if he had taken care of himself in peace, he could’ve lived longer. The surgery of comprehensive foreign organ transplantation was definitely a huge success. It was much better than the regular replacements with artificial bodies.

“It is well known that the greatest headache in organ transplantation is the rejection reaction. The transplantations between human beings are still faced with severe rejection reactions, let alone those between a human being and a demon beast. But Dongfang Renxin solved the problem successfully and published multiple monographs. He also won the highest prize in medical studies in the Imperium with his achievements and was nominated as a director of the Royal Society of Medical Science.

“After he made a name for himself, he expanded his field of studies to the production of all kinds of drugs, trying to build the blood, bones, and cores of the magnificent demon beasts into the most effective strengthening drugs. As high-level Immortal Cultivators in the Divinity Transformation Stage, you should also know that the strengthening drugs made of biological materials have intense rejection reactions with the human body too. They need to be ‘purged’ slowly, and one might be seriously hurt after one moment of carelessness, right?

“It was exactly the problem that Dongfang Renxin tried to resolve. But no matter how perfectly he addressed the issue, the gap between mankind and beasts was still too huge, not to mention the alien beasts who were of totally different origins from human beings. The rejection reactions always existed.

“In practice, the organs of demon beasts that are perfectly in match with a patient’s body are rare to come by. The ratio of a match is often below 1/100,000, which means that if a patient with broken organs were to find Dongfang Renxin, Dongfang Renxin needs to filter a hundred thousand demon beasts to find a matching organ, and there is still no guarantee that he could find one.

“It means that such ‘foreign organ transplantation’ has a high threshold. Although Dongfang Renxin was adept at what he was doing, few people were privileged to enjoy the procedure. It became one of those fancy but useless arts.

“However, on a different methodology, human beings are beasts too, and they are not very different from general animals from the biological point of view. If the organs of demon beasts could be transplanted, those of humans could certainly be transplanted too. If demon beasts could be cooked for medicines, why couldn’t human beings? The cores of demon beasts are great tonics, and the spiritual roots and the cores of the Immortal Cultivators should be tonics too, with much fewer rejection reactions, right?”

Li Linghai licked her lips with a smile, as if she were enjoying it.

Even though everybody was a ruthless and ferocious Immortal Cultivator, they couldn’t help but feel a chill.

Li Yao took a deep breath dozens of times before he finally managed to calm himself down.

“Training is like rowing a boat against the current, and you are either making progress or falling back. Also, the higher levels you are, the more difficult it is to take another leap ahead. You have to maintain your level with countless efforts and resources. It is almost like a parabola. It is very easy to reach the apex, but it is terribly difficult to stay at the peak. The higher you reach, the faster you will fall. Regardless of your altitude, you will eventually plunge someday. Take yourselves for example, you must know the feeling of pressure at the high altitude very well, don’t you?”

Her hands in her back, Li Linghai continued coldly, “It is the law of nature to age and die. Training is all about going against nature’s will. When we are old and weary, it is inevitable that nature will get to us. Nobody can escape from such a destiny.

“Furthermore, ‘training’ and ‘power’ are essentially contradictory. Training highlights concentration and dedication, but if you are in power, you will be unavoidably occupied in all kinds of affairs, important ones and unimportant ones. You will likely spend twenty-four hours a day and 365 days a year in your work.

“To keep yourself at the peak state, you have to spend at least half of your time training in seclusion, but if you do seclude yourself for twelve hours in training every day, how can you control your power, how can you command your subordinates, and how do you process your daily affairs? Wouldn’t your subordinates manipulate you easily and turn you into a figurehead?

“Do any of you not have such troubles?”

“Your words do make sense, Your Grace.”

Li Linghai spoke exactly what had been troubling all of them. Lei Chenghu said, “To be honest, ever since I became the commander of the Third Battle Area, I had been drowned by the battle reports from the frontline every second and occupied in the most bizarre affairs in the entire fleet and the entire battle area. I barely had any time of my own that I could use for meditation, summary, and training. Both my body and my soul were seriously exhausted.

“Although I am still in the Divinity Transformation Stage right now, I am just counting on my accumulations in the past, and I do not dare to activate the computational ability of the Divinity Transformation Stage easily. If I continue to burn and exhaust myself like this, I don’t know how long I will be able to stay in the Divinity Transformation Stage as I grow older.”

Even Li Yao had the same feelings.

He was young and in his prime years, and his combat ability was still in the phase of rising. After he came to the Imperium, he had a series of adventures and found many unusual treasures, such as the “Imperial Fire Pearl”, which kept his level soaring all the time.

But Li Yao also knew very clearly that his level was like a flying sword that was raging skyward unstoppably. It required the incessant supply of energy for continuous acceleration. As long as the energy ran out, or so much as it was insufficient, he would certainly fall.

The universe was eternal, and the trainers were nothing but the brilliant yet momentary fireworks. They might shine dazzlingly for a short while, but they would eventually die down.

Why could Li Yao have been on a rampage in the capital on the Gold Vulture, as if he were absolutely invincible? Was there really nobody stronger than him?

Of course, that was not true. There were countless experts in the four Kurfürst families. Apart from Li Linghai, there were too many experts whose combat ability exceeded Li Yao's. But those experts must've been at least three hundred years old if they had advanced into the Divinity Transformation Stage through normal methods of training. They were uncles and seniors, and their bones were all too old. Why on earth would they fight Li Yao unless it was absolutely necessary? Even if they did take down Li Yao after all the trouble, it was possible that they would die very soon after they returned home because they were exhausted in the battle.

Leaving aside the hibernation time, Li Yao's real age was less than a hundred years old. He was arguably the youngest battle-type expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage in the entire universe. The advantage of his young age was his greatest reliance for him to show off blatantly!

To stay at the peak state all the time and remain a Divinity Transformation Stage expert as long as possible when they entered the level was truly the ultimate dream that all the trainers in history had pursued!

Li Linghai said calmly, "You all agree that for the high-level Immortal Cultivators who are powerful but who are getting old, it is terribly troublesome for them to maintain their level. Take 'Silver Fox' Li Jiande, the patriarch of the Li family, for example. After he became the prime minister of the Imperium, he suffered mental derangement because of too many insignificant affairs, and he eventually fell from the Divining Branching State.

“Although everything he did later was perhaps a show, it was absolutely true that he was once heavily wounded.

“But what about the Dongfang family? Do you not feel that it is weird if you think about it carefully? In the recent hundred years, a lot of experts from the previous generations of the Dongfang family stayed in their peak state. Accidents of severe injuries are rarely reported. Some of them are even advancing into higher levels when they are more than three hundred years old!

“In terms of ‘average peak duration’, the experts of the Dongfang family are apparently longer than the experts of the other three families. If we can stay at the peak for fifty years, they can stay there for a hundred years!

“On the other hand, the ‘talented children’ of the Dongfang family are emerging at an astonishing ratio in the recent hundred years too. Some of them are even one-in-a-hundred-years geniuses in training. In the matches held within the four Kurfürst families, the young people of the Dongfang family have won the championships for many years in a row. They are known as the ‘golden generation’.“It is exactly because of the vigorous seniors and the rising juniors that the Dongfang family has been expanding continuously until it is far stronger than any of the other three families today. Have you ever considered the reason for that?”

Lei Chenghu said solemnly, “Your Grace, are you trying to say that somebody in the Dongfang family is engaged in ‘cannibal training’?”

“‘Cannibal training’? That is a neat summary!”

Li Linghai said in a smile, “Yes, that is exactly what I’m saying. Headed by Dongfang Renxin, there is a secret research team that specially helps the leadership of the Dongfang family and their offspring with the ‘cannibal training’. That is how the Dongfang family grew into what it is today!”

Lei Chenghu took a deep breath. “This is an important matter that requires solid evidence. Where did you get such appalling intelligence, Your Grace?”

Pondering for a moment, Li Linghai said, “Such confidential information naturally couldn’t have been retrieved from the outside world. It was from the sources within the Dongfang family.”

Lei Chenghu frowned and said, “Why would anybody from the Dongfang family leak such intelligence? Aren’t they destroying their family?”

Chapter 2278 - Insatiable Ravenousness!

The question made Li Linghai smile and look at Dongfang Sheng, commander of the Deep Sea Fleet.

In a sniff, Dongfang Sheng said slowly, “The highest commander of all the fleets of the Dongfang family today is ‘Dongfang Polang’. That old fart has been the general commander of the family fleets since a hundred years ago, and judging from his vigorousness, he can easily live another hundred years.

“If such an old fart holds the position of the general commander of the family fleets for two hundred years, how can the people below him ever rise to the top?

“Besides, as one grows old, one tends to be rigid, arrogant, and without any creativity and courage to try new things. They also do not see eye to eye with the ideas and tactics of the young people. It was really a waste of life to be commanded by such an old fart and watch the family fleets grow ossified after each other, which felt worse than death.

“I couldn’t stand the old fart anymore, and I could not see any hope, fearing that he might still be alive when I died of old age. Finally, an intense conflict between us burst out, which escalated into a comprehensive competition. Later, I was wanted by the family and forced to escape. Then, I found my way to the Deep Sea Palace and served the queen as the commander of the Deep Sea Fleet.

“But my companions and friends in the past to whom I was very close are still in the family, infuriated by the old farts such as Dongfang Polang every day.

“If they by chance learn that Dongfang Polang and the rest of them are maintaining their level and strength through cannibal training, it is not strange at all that they would expose the information to the outside world in their exasperation. I would’ve done the same!”

Everybody thought carefully for a moment and nodded their head quickly.

“The evil arts that Dongfang Renxin has been studying, above all, jeopardize the interests of a large proportion of people within the Dongfang family. If the old do not die, the young will never rise. Besides, the ideas of the older generation and those of the younger generations are always in conflict. You think I am stubborn and conservative, but I think you are radical and extreme. When the old people always win the competitions, how can the young people not be angry? When their grudge is long accumulated, not just betraying the family, they will not hesitate to die together with the old people!”

Li Linghai said with a smile, “On the other hand, a confidential evil technique such as the ‘cannibal training’ is definitely not a privilege for everybody in the Dongfang family. I’m afraid that only a few central persons who are deeply associated with Dongfang Wang and Dongfang Renxin are entitled to it.

“Think about it. Suppose you are a rather capable middle-level manager in the Dongfang family, and you have a rather gifted son who crushed the kid of a certain big shot in the internal games of the family. You are very proud of him and believe that your son will lead your bloodline to a new altitude.

“However, unexpected changes take place in the family games this year. There is no telling what strengthening drugs he has been using, but the guy crushed by your son last year has made significant progress in only one year and broke all the bones of your son.

“You are angry, anxious, and in pain. In your curiosity, you investigate in secret, only to discover a great secret within the family. As it turns out, the central leadership of the family has mastered such an appalling evil technique. Henceforth, their bloodlines will forever dominate the family, and the secondary branches like you will forever be in their background and sidekicks!

“Hehe. Naturally, you want to join the little circle too, and get a ticket of ‘cannibal training’ for yourself or your offspring. But you are not qualified at all. You are even living in fear day and night, worrying that your peeping was caught and you will be killed to keep your mouth shut.

“In your anger and fear, it is almost the only option to seek help from the outside world, trying to completely expose the matter, which will at least keep the lives of your wife and children.”

Everybody looked at each other and was deep in thought.

“That’s not the end of it yet.”

Li Linghai’s smile was more and more intense. “Even the ‘cannibal training’ entails a certain extent of rejection reactions. Who do you think will trigger the minimal rejection reactions when they are eaten? Of course, judging from your look, you have all guessed it. The members of the

Dongfang family themselves, of course. The same bloodlines mean the least reject reactions and the highest absorption efficiency!

“Therefore, Dongfang Renxin’s primary targets are the low-level Immortal Cultivators of the secondary branches of the family, the cannon fodder who are destined to die for the family. But it is one thing to lead the vanguard and die in the frontline, and it is another thing to be drained as a medicinal ingredient. Somebody did not want to die just like that and escaped to the outside world in their desperation only to run into me later. Is it so hard to believe?”

“Therefore—”

Considering carefully, Lei Chenghu said, “Dongfang Renxin has established the hospital in the capital, which is not under the control of the Dongfang family, instead of the Dongfang family’s own dominion, because he is worried about his own people?”

“Mostly, yes. His primary concerns are the competitors within the family. If Dongfang Wang and Dongfang Renxin run surgeries and experiments in their own nest, there will be no room of defense at all once it is disclosed.”

Li Linghai said calmly, “But more importantly, it is meant to collect more varied raw materials. The low-level Immortal Cultivators of the Dongfang family are not all perfect matches. Also, they boast the same genetic deficiencies. Training with their own kin all the time is like intermarriage, which will lead to an outburst of genetic deficiencies someday.

“Therefore, a lot of fresh blood from the outside world is required as supplies. Such external experts are not easy to find in the Dongfang family’s territory, and even if they are found, it won’t be convenient to attack them. In the messy, murky capital that is nominally under His Majesty’s command, there will be no such concerns. Countless Immortal Cultivators go missing in the lawless land below the ground every day. Who can possibly find them?

“When the Imperium’s counterattack comes, many heavily wounded soldiers from the frontline had to retreat to the rear for surgeries, but they cannot suffer too many space jumps. So, they often chose to jump to the capital in one jump for treatment. The Empyreal Terminus Sector is an intersection of the universe and the easiest place to jump to after all.

“The Heavenly Star Hospital admitted tremendous heavily wounded patients. Those people had mostly been blown into a mess by cannonballs and spiritual energy, and their death rate was extremely high in the first place. Even if some tricks were played on them, or certain patients that could’ve survived passed away with incomplete bodies, it would be perfectly understandable, right?”

Lei Chenghu’s eyebrows were furrowed like raised sabers. “The patients that retreated to the rear for treatment included experts from the other three Kurfürst families. Dongfang Renxin was bold and insane enough to touch them?”

“That is exactly why we have chosen this matter as our ‘detonator’!”

Li Linghai said with a smile, “If they had only butchered hominoids for training, it would’ve been perfectly normal. Nobody cares about the deaths of a few hundred hominoids.

“If they had only trained with some low-level Immortal Cultivators of unknown backgrounds, Dongfang Wang and

Dongfang Renxin still could’ve taken care of the aftermath with their influence.

“However, what they have been training with are the experts from the other three Kurfürst families, which, once exposed with solid evidence, will definitely be a fatal blow to Dongfang Wang. Nobody can expect to save him. Then, it will be the landslide of the entire family!”

Lei Chenghu shook his head slowly. “I still find it hard to believe that Dongfang Wang and Dongfang Renxin would be unwise enough to lay fingers on experts of the other three families.”

“Greed can never be satisfied. Practicing the evil arts is like doing drugs. You will only be mired deeper and deeper with greater and greater addiction, until you completely go mad in the end.”

Li Linghai sighed and said, “General Lei, please imagine this. You are now a dying old man catching your last breath, and it’s been a long time since you fell from your peak state. Only in your dreams can you taste the feeling of the Divinity Transformation Stage. All the juniors are watching you like voracious wolves, ready to lunge forward and bite your body. Your offspring, on the other hand, are just mediocre. Your bloodline will completely fall as soon as you die.

“At such a moment, if somebody can make you return to the peak state and your children reborn with the most excellent talents… whatever the prices may be, and even if you have to piss off the other three families, would you reject the offer?

“Such evil arts are obviously not a one-time thing but have to be practiced regularly. Also, the dosage required will be larger and larger to keep your best state. Then, addicted and unable to free yourself, will you quit halfway and degenerate into what you used to be in only a couple of days, aging and weakening?”

After a long daze, Lei Chenghu shook his head firmly. “No, I will never do that. It is the most shameless betrayal on the true path of immortality!”

Pausing for a moment, he said in frustration, “But I can understand why some people in the Dongfang family are so bold and inconsiderate.”

“Now, you have all understood why I choose this matter as the ‘detonator’, right?”

Li Linghai concluded, “This matter also involves few people of the Dongfang family. The pressure we are faced with is not very huge. Also, the nature of the case is so ghastly that everybody will stand on our side once the truth is revealed. For their reputation, it is absolutely impossible for the other three families to negotiate and make deals with the Dongfang family.

“After we completely unveil Dongfang Wang and Dongfang Renxin, revealing the truth that they have been ‘possessed by the extraterrestrial devils’, we will naturally present our finding of the ‘incident of the Blood Oath Alliance’. Even if all the pieces of evidence are ‘created’ by us, who will suspect them? In short, if a wall starts tottering, everyone will give it a shove!

“As long as Dongfang Wang’s cabinet completely collapses and more and more big shots of the Dongfang family are involved, the other three families will certainly attack the Dongfang family together. In the dog-eat-dog battle of the noble families, the reformists will be able to take the most advantageous location, carry out our ideas, and realize our purpose to ‘renew the Imperium’.

“This is all I want to say. Any questions?”

Chapter 2279 - Li Yao's Role

Chapter 2279 Li Yao’s Role

“Yes.”

Thinking carefully, Lei Chenghu said, “Even if the whole thing is set to public, is it possible that Dongfang Renxin will separate his brother from him and keep the prime minister out of the issue, pretending that Dongfang Wang does not know anything about it?”

“It’s impossible.”

Li Linghai shook her head reassuringly. “Dongfang Renxin is more than a hundred years older than Dongfang Wang. A hundred years ago, the two brothers were unattractive in the Dongfang family and showed no sign that they would rise to power.

“It is safe to believe that Dongfang Renxin’s ‘medical arts’ helped him win the favor of a bunch of big shots of the Dongfang family, who formed a compressed interest group. Eventually, the little circle elected Dongfang Wang to represent their interests and endorsed him to be the prime minister of the Imperium.

“The whole circle will rise and fall together. As long as Dongfang Renxin collapses, nobody will survive. Dongfang Wang won’t be an exception.”

Lei Chenghu said solemnly, “Got it. Dongfang Renxin is the key. We have to take him down quickly and neatly and break into his secret institute to find unquestionable proofs, right?”

“Yes. This is the most difficult thing in the whole mission. We have to capture Dongfang Renxin alive and find critical proofs.”

Narrowing his eyes, Li Linghai said coldly, “Dongfang Renxin is a renowned, prestigious elder of the Imperium after all. If we accuse him of such serious crimes but cannot capture him on the spot with concrete proofs, he will have ten thousand ways to escape and bite us back.

“We have only one shot. Right now, Dongfang Renxin has no idea that we have got our eyes on him yet. If we miss the attack and alarm him, he will definitely destroy all the traces in the secret institute and run back to the Dongfang family’s territory immediately. In that case, there will be absolutely nothing we can do.

“In other words, the capture operation will be the decisive step in this war. If we catch the culprit and the evidence successfully, Dongfang Wang’s cabinet will definitely collapse and raise an avalanche-like chain reaction, and nobody can prevent the fall of the Dongfang family. If we fail, the Yun family and the Song family who are on the fences, as well as the Li family who seems to be on our back, will immediately change their attitude and annihilate us without any hesitation!”

Everybody thought quickly and had to admit that it was indeed a great opportunity for the reformists if the crimes were real, but it was also a dangerous move like a dance on the edge of a saber.

Lei Chenghu looked at Dongfang Sheng and said, “What are we going to do? An assault with a fleet?”

Li Linghai shook her head. “We cannot dispatch fleets. The unspoken agreement we have reached with the other three families is that they will keep an eye on the fleets of the Dongfang family as long as we do not move our own fleets.

“If our fleets are to assault the Empyreal Terminus Sector, leaving the odds of success aside, the Dongfang family’s fleet will definitely intervene. A war will be raised if we get into a huge fight in the capital. Nobody wants that to happen.”

“Exactly.”

Considering carefully, Lei Chenghu nodded his head slowly. “No one wants the Imperium to be caught in chaos, as that will only be in the Covenant Alliance’s favor.”

“Therefore, the capture operation this time will mainly be taken care of by Yue Wushuang’s Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils. Theoretically speaking, as long as they are suspicious that Dongfang Renxin has been corrupted by the extraterrestrial devils, they will have the legal rights to arrest and interrogate him.”

Li Linghai said, “General Lei and General Dongfang, your fleets will stand by and keep the pressure on the Li family’s fleets, forcing them to stall the Dongfang family’s fleet so that none of the fleets will make any bold moves.

“Director Jin, your mission is to continue lobbying in the business groups of the other three Kurfürst families to express the kindness and sincerity of the reformists. For example, they can totally have the largest share in the interests of the Dongfang family after the Dongfang family is split apart. All in all, you will reiterate the idea that the Dongfang family’s collapse will be greatly beneficial for the three families, and that the business groups from the peripheral worlds of the Imperium are all shortsighted bumpkins who will be satisfied by the tiniest benefits.

“Of course, now that everybody’s fleet is not moving on the surface, the dark battlefield in the capital will be very busy for a while in the future. Please dispatch all those that you can dispatch to the capital. There are many sources and informants that we need to buy over, many killers and assassins that we need to hire, and many wavering guys who can only be convinced by the coins.

“This is about our mission. Does anyone still have any confusion?”

This time, nobody asked any questions.

“Then, please continue fighting valiantly in your respective battlefield, fellow Cultivators!”

Li Linghai waved her hands and declared resolutely, “After we win this battle, the ‘new Imperium’ will succeed!”

Everybody rose abruptly, straightened their right arm, and clenched their fists, declaring at the same time, “Long live the Imperium! Long live the Immortal Cultivators! Long live the civilization of mankind!”

The secret meeting came to an end, and everybody left the room in a row except for Li Yao, who stayed under the hint of Li Linghai.

In the enormous antique repair center, Queen Li Linghai and Vulture Li Yao were left alone.

The 3D light beam behind Li Linghai rose up and down and soon displayed a brand-new graph. It looked like a translucent ant’s nest that was brimming with channels and holes. If a trypophobia patient looked at it, their blood would definitely be frozen.

“I would like to hear the opinions of a magical equipment specialist on one issue.”

Pointing at the graph behind her, Li Linghai said, “This is the detailed structure of the blocks two thousand meters below the twenty-seventh district of the capital. According to our intelligence, this is Dongfang Renxin’s secret institute.

“All the studies that he’s running in the Heavenly Star Hospital are naturally legal, open, and flawless. The real clandestine secrets, the facilities for ‘cannibal training’, and all the ‘ingredients’ are all kept here.

“What is troublesome is that Dongfang Renxin is fully aware of the importance of the location too. Therefore, not only is the entire twenty-seventh district heavily guarded by his accomplices, but a series of crystal bombs in delicate structures have also been installed around the secret institute. They are so powerful that they will blow up the secret institute and everything inside once detonated.

“Look, these are the locations and the structures of part of the crystal bombs that our spies have managed to get through after all the trouble. What’s your opinion? Is it possible to dismantle the crystal bombs before the assault?”

Li Linghai zoomed in the picture. Soon, blinking red spots appeared on the translucent map that was as complicated as a maze. As the red spots were enlarged continuously, they turned out to be the most delicate crystal bombs.

“Well—”

Li Yao’s pupils constricted violently, and his fingers trembled beyond his control. He mumbled, “It’s not just the secret institute. The entire twenty-seventh district is essentially sitting on an active volcano. Once the crystal bombs are detonated, I’m afraid that the entire underground town will be blown to the sky. No, they will fall apart and be buried below the earth for all eternity!

“Also, if I am not mistaken, these should be only 30% of the crystal bombs, and the whole array of crystal bombs is yet to be revealed, right?”

Li Linghai’s eyes were glittering as she nodded her head and said, “Exactly. You do have the keen eyes of an expert. It can’t be helped. This secret institute is the lifeline of Dongfang Renxin and Dongfang Wang. It is already the best we can do to get a glimpse at 30% of its self-destruct devices. How about it? Is it possible to break them without alerting anyone?”

Li Yao frowned hard, but eagerness was beaming out of his eyes.

It had been a long time since he last encountered such an interesting challenge.

He closed his eyes, but his eyeballs were rolling quickly below his eyelids, and his fingers hummed hard as they bounced at a frequency beyond the recognition of the naked eye. After repetitive deductions and calculations, he nodded his head first but shook it later. “If the remaining 70% of the self-destruct devices are crystal bombs of the same type, I will probably be able to accomplish the task. But it is obviously an expert among experts who set up these self-destruct devices. So, I’m suspicious that he deployed more sordid traps in the remaining 70% devices. I’ll have to find it out during the operation.”

“I knew that you wouldn’t disappoint me.”

Li Linghai pushed a badge over. “This arrest operation serves the interests of the people and the cause of justice. It should fit the beliefs of a Cultivator perfectly. I don’t think you need to charge for it, right?”

“Removing hazards for the people is definitely not free. If I do not have money and resources, I won’t be able to strengthen myself. Then, how can I remove more hazards for the people in the future? The best I can do is to offer you a discount, Your Grace.”

Li Yao played with the badge and observed it carefully, only to discover that it was a scale under the background of a pair of crossed saber and sword. On the left side of the scale was a bleeding heart, and on the right side was a hideous demon’s head whose eyes were wide open, implying that it was certainly not resting in peace. He asked, “This is… the emblem of the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils?”

“Exactly. The operation of the reformists is not a rebellion or a civil war. Now that everybody’s fleet is here, we have to fight the battle legally, or at least legally in name.”

Li Linghai smiled. “As my personal bodyguard, you do not have jurisdiction outside of the royal palace, nor can you arrest an elder of the Imperium easily. So, you are temporarily given the identity of ‘Special Counsel of the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils’ so that you can participate in the operation.”

“Right. There’s something that I’ve been meaning to ask Your Grace.”

Holding the badge in his hand, Li Yao thought for a moment and asked, “The Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils claims to have the rights to take part in all the cases nationwide that involve the extraterrestrial devils by capturing, interrogating, and punishing all the Demonic Cultivators who are corrupted by the extraterrestrial devils. The question is, who is to judge if a person is a Demonic Cultivator, if he is corrupted by the extraterrestrial devils, and if the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils is qualified to punish him?”

Li Linghai said casually, “The Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils itself, of course.”

Blinking his eyes, Li Yao said, “That is to say, the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils can totally accuse a random person on the street to be a Demonic Cultivator and capture him back to their dungeon for interrogations?”

Li Linghai said, “Yes.”

Li Yao asked, “What if they discover that the poor guy is not a Demonic Cultivator after the interrogations?”

Li Linghai said, “Rest assured. It will never happen. The Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils has ten thousand ways to make a suspect admit that he is a Demonic Cultivator.”

Li Yao said, “Well, what if there is no tenebrum energy on his body at all?”

Li Linghai said, “That’s because they have been corrupted only recently, or they are Demonic Cultivators that are hiding themselves very well. Is there a problem?”

Chapter 2280 - Mysterious and Unpredictable Dongfang Mingyue!

After a long daze, Li Yao said, “If you put it that way, there is certainly no problem at all.”

Li Linghai smiled and said, “In the first five hundred years of the Imperium, when the emperor still had the supreme power, the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils, as His Majesty’s sharpest saber, indeed boasted the unquestionable, absolute power to arrest and execute anyone. At that time, a little ‘devil huntress’ of the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils walking on the street could make the major ministers in the court shudder in fear. If the devil huntresses knocked on their door at night, they might have been scared to death.

“However, as the royal authority declined, the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils gradually lost its resplendence too. What I said just now was only a theoretical possibility.

“Theoretically speaking, the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils can indeed accuse anyone of being a Demonic Cultivator, arrest them back to the base to interrogate them, and even coerce them into admitting guilt. However, in reality, if they want to capture anyone, it still depends on if they are capable of doing so.

“Before they earned the full support of the reformists, the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils was far from capable enough of arresting any random guy, especially in the cases where the four Kurfürst families were involved. If you are bold enough to knock on their door, they will be bold enough to beat you to death, burn you into ashes, and spray you into space. What can you do?

“To be more straightforward, not just wronging the good guys and forcing them into admitting guilt, even if somebody in the four Kurfürst families was really complicit with the extraterrestrial devils as Demonic Cultivators, what could the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils have done except turning a blind eye to it and pretend that they did not notice?”

Li Yao was greatly shocked. “There are truly people who cooperate with extraterrestrial devils?”

“Even a Cultivator and an Immortal Cultivator like you and me can cooperate. Why can’t the extraterrestrial devils cooperate with humans as long as there are enough returns?”

Li Linghai said casually, “The extraterrestrial devils are also an intelligent lifeform. An intelligent lifeform means the possibilities of negotiations, concessions, deals, and ceasefire. The bottom line is, despite the full support of the reformists, the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils has not recovered back to its prime days yet. It only has the theoretical power of punishing the ungodly creatures but is actually not half as powerful as it sounds.

“But there is another organization that is different—the Association of Demon Hunters.”

Li Yao thought for a moment. “Got it. The authoritative agency of the Imperium in dealing with demons and demon beasts.

“Exactly. Ever since the Star Ocean Imperium collapsed because of the joint work of demons and extraterrestrial devils, they have been the two threats of mankind. All the regimes at the center of the cosmos later established agencies and even armies to cope with the threats. In the Imperium of True Human Beings, they are the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils and the Association of Demon Hunters.”

Li Linghai introduced, “After ten thousand years, the extraterrestrial devils have gone extinct despite the minor trouble they occasionally caused, and the demons have completely lost their organized, systematical country as a civilization, exiled to the edge of the cosmos. I think they are about to be annihilated, aren’t they?

“The Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils and the Association of Demon Hunters, losing their targets, have gradually degenerated into the two biggest secret agencies of the Imperium. The sharp weapons that dealt with demons and extraterrestrial devils in the past are equally suitable to deal with human beings.

“The first five hundred years of the Imperium was the age of the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils. With the support of His Majesty, it stayed on the top of the Association of Demon Hunters all the time. As a result, the Association of Demon Hunters joined the four Kurfürst families at a very early stage and made great contributions in the secret war to diminish the royal authority. Then, in the second five hundred years, they were properly rewarded, and their scale and level both expanded. The organization turned into a source of horror for all the Immortal Cultivators of the Imperium!”

Thinking quickly, Li Yao nodded his head and said, “Understood. Is it completely legal for a member of the Association of Demon Hunters to claim someone they do not see eye to eye with on the street to be a demon, capture them back and force them to admit guilt?”

“Yes. If the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils is His Majesty’s sharpest saber, the Association of Demon Hunters will be the most loyal hound of the four Kurfürst families. Those who dare to defy the orders of the four families and violate their interests will inevitably be accused to be ‘spies of demons’ or ‘hybrids of demons and humans’ until their reputation is gone and they are punished free at will.”

Li Linghai said, “Also, as the Dongfang family’s capabilities expanded in the recent hundred years, allowing them to extend their influence into all the key fields of the Imperium, the Association of Demon Hunters is naturally an important target of infiltration for them. The president that was just nominated is exactly from the Dongfang family. To be more exact, that person is Dongfang Wang’s trusted subordinate.

“Right now, everybody’s fleet is in a quandary, and nobody has the courage to start a civil war. So, the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils and the Association of Demon Hunters will have to restart the fire of war on the dark battlefield that they’ve been fighting on for a thousand years.”

Li Linghai touched a rune array. The light and shadow behind her flashed, and the map of the underground blocks just now turned into the image of a young woman.

That woman…

Her black and glamorous hair poured down straight like a waterfall to her waist. Her face could almost be called cute, but it did not have enough attraction as a whole and couldn’t leave a deep impression, like a few vague blots on a piece of gray paper.

After seeing the 3D picture, despite Li Yao’s memory and cognitive abilities, he still couldn’t tell what features the woman had apart from her long hair.

The waterfall-like long hair, however, was obviously a disguise that could be cut short, dyed, or reshaped at any moment. Focusing the attention on the hair was absolutely useless.

After Li Yao advanced into the Divinity Transformation Stage, he had never felt that a person could be so “unpredictable” before. It was truly uncanny!

“This woman’s name is ‘Dongfang Mingyue’, the president of the Association of Demon Hunters that assumed office last month.”

Li Linghai introduced, “We believe that she is head of the special agents under Dongfang Wang’s command and plays a similar role to Yue Wushuang’s on our side. She will be the most dangerous enemy for us in the next phase!

“Considering your performance in space and in the Emperor’s Mausoleum, Dongfang Wang must’ve got his eyes on you. It is very likely that you will need to deal with this woman. You must be careful!”

Looking at Dongfang Mingyue’s picture in great interest, Li Yao mumbled, “She looks really young. What’s her level and background? Are there any detailed files that I can study?”

Li Linghai shook her head slowly and said, “No.”

Li Yao was slightly stunned. “Shouldn’t you have collected all the files of such an important character, like if her ancestors ever had hemorrhoids? What do you mean by ‘no’?”

With a bitter smile, Li Linghai said, “Do you remember how I introduced you before? I claimed that you were a secret warrior that the reformists raised in darkness, one of the most traceless, mysterious, and unpredictable kinds.

“It is a habit of many major forces to raise such dark warriors who will participate in the most clandestine, filthy, and bloody business known as ‘Ghost Warriors’ or things like that.

“Naturally, you are a counterfeit, but this Dongfang Mingyue is an authentic dark warrior that Dongfang Wang has raised. There is barely any file about her before she became the president of the Association of Demon Hunters. But we have reasons to believe that she is related to dozens of shocking cases. She is an expert adept at stealth, assassination, and other secret operations!”

“So tough?”

Li Yao found it hard to believe. “There are no files about her whatsoever?”

“No. She is like a shadow that has emerged from the depths of a dark swamp. Nobody knows what level she is at exactly.”

Li Linghai suddenly changed the topic. “However, one and a half years ago, I once ran into her in the royal palace. At that time, her identity was an insignificant maid.”

Li Yao bulged his eyes. “What?”

“The four Kurfürst families all have spies in the royal palace. I was a spy that the Li family sent into the royal palace too. Therefore, it was not unusual that she was on a certain mission in the royal palace as a maid under Dongfang Wang’s order.”

Slightly frowning, Li Linghai mumbled, “What was strange was that I somehow grew a sense of wariness after just a casual glimpse at her.”

“Your Grace grew wary of Dongfang Mingyue?”

Li Yao was greatly surprised.

He knew Li Linghai’s terrifying combat ability better than anybody else. Even if she was not the best expert in the Imperium of True Human Beings, she certainly ranked at the top ten, if not top five.

Such an unparalleled expert, who practiced the Supreme Emperor’s techniques and who were protected by the true dragons of purple flames, felt wary of Dongfang Mingyue?

In other words, even if Dongfang Mingyue was not as strong as Li Linghai, she at least posed some threat to Li Linghai!

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao asked, “Your Grace, tell me the truth, do you ever have the feeling of wariness toward me?”

Li Linghai thought for a moment and said, “I don’t think so.”

Li Yao found it hard to believe. “Are you serious? Not even once? Not even for a single second?”

Li Linghai shook her head and said, “No, you are never perceived as a threat to me at all—that is, if you are not hamstringing me as my pig teammate.”

Li Yao sighed. “Fine. It means that Dongfang Mingyue should be slightly stronger than me, although we are both warriors in darkness.”

“Yes, but there is no need to be frustrated.”

Li Linghai comforted him. “I reflected on it carefully later. Even if Dongfang Mingyue is really stronger than you, she might not be strong enough to kill you. Should the two of you be engaged in a fight, you will still have a good chance to escape.”

Li Yao: “… Okay.”

“All in all, the demand for magical equipment will soar when the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils declares war on the Association of Demon Hunters. You and Master Jin Tianzong will have to do more work.”

Li Linghai said, “As for the files of Dongfang Mingyue, more will definitely be collected in the dark war. It will be even better if you can see how good she is yourself.

“But getting to the bottom of it, this massive dark war is only a distraction and a disguise. When the time is ripe and most of the enemy’s forces are distracted, we will take down Dongfang Renxin’s secret institute as quickly as a flash of lightning, locate the critical evidence, and, of course, capture him alive and bring him back to our secret base. Then, the avalanche of the entire Dongfang family will be unstoppable. Do you have any questions?”

“I do.”

Li Yao raised his hands. “Can I ask why Your Grace said that I was your pig teammate? When did I hamstring you? Also, have I really, really never posed any threat to you at all?”

Chapter 2281 - Self-Contradictory Queen

Chapter 2281 Self-Contradictory Queen

Li Linghai stared at Li Yao for a long time and sighed. “Vulture Li Yao, up until so far, we have suited each other’s needs very well, so I really don’t want to beat you to death by accident. Leave now. I’ll have a batch of materials delivered to you soon. Thirty percent of the materials will be yours, and the other seventy percent will be used to strengthen the magical equipment of the devil huntresses. As for the specific models and requirements, Yue Wushuang will talk to you later.”

Li Linghai turned around and did not look at Li Yao anymore, focusing her whole attention on the map of Dongfang Renxin’s secret institute.

Li Yao observed Dongfang Mingyue’s panoramic picture carefully for a long time. Then, for some reason, he suddenly asked, “Wait, Your Grace, I do have a question. Last time you ran into this Dongfang Mingyue, she didn’t happen to be managing the royal library in the palace or working as a cleaning lady in the library, right?”

Li Linghai turned around abruptly and stared at Li Yao’s face as intimidatingly as an eagle, as if she were pecking holes on Li Yao’s face—which was, of course, impossible, considering its thickness. “Why do you ask?”

“Very simple. The royal authority has declined for five hundred years. The royal palace is now heavily infiltrated by the four Kurfürst families. What secret intelligence deserves such a mysterious expert to sneak in and investigate?”

Blinking his eyes, Li Yao said without changing his face, “However, I’m told that the royal library is an information storage agency that has been passed on from thousands of years ago, in which many precious secret techniques and classics are kept. It is probably worth investigating.

“Truth be told, Your Grace, even I also feel tempted to go to the royal library and find a marvelous art to practice. So, I just assume that other people might’ve thought the same. How about it? Am I correct?”

“Yes, you are actually correct this time.”

After a brief silence, Li Linghai nodded her head. “This mysterious Dongfang Mingyue was indeed working in the library affiliated to the royal library. Perhaps she was trying to steal the secrets in the royal library…

“However, hehe, the internal structure of the royal library is highly complicated, like a maze with ninety-nine locks. Many techniques and technologies that have been passed on for thousands of years are sealed by barriers. They will even be destroyed if they are opened by brute force.

“In the earliest years, only the emperors and the crown princes were aware of the secrets to open the seals. But during the decline of the royal authority, quite a few emperors died abruptly and did not even set up a crown prince before they died. The secrets to open the treasures are now long gone with the wind. Nobody knows them anymore.

“The four Kurfürst families naturally have been sparing no effort on cracking the secrets hidden deep inside the royal library, but they gained nothing after a hundred years of attempts. Fearing that the entire library might be ruined if their approaches were too radical, which would annihilate the techniques, arts, treasure maps, secret prescriptions, etc. from thousands of years ago, they did not dare to act too aggressively either.

“It’s been decades since their last attempt on the royal library. Has Dongfang Mingyue grasped any new methods that can open the barriers in the deepest part of the library? We can’t be more careful about the matter…”

Deep in thought, Li Linghai waved her hands, hinting Li Yao to leave.

Thousands of thoughts were bubbling inside Li Yao’s heart too. He pondered while he walked out.

When he reached the door, however, the queen’s slightly hesitant voice came from his back. “… Wait.”

Li Yao turned around, somewhat in surprise. “Anything else, Your Grace?”

“The fragment of the Imperial Fire Pearl…”

Li Linghai’s face was completely hidden in the mottled shadow, and there was no telling what was on her face. But her voice was hesitant as she asked, “Have you given it to Li Jialing for training? What’s the progress?”

Despite her brutality on the surface, it seemed that Li Linghai cared about her son deep down in her heart. Li Yao grinned and said, “Rest assured, Your Grace. That boy Li Jialing is truly a one-in-a-hundred-year genius in training. His talents and aptitudes are extraordinary and only slightly lower than mine when I was in my younger years. How incredible!

“With the wholehearted enlightenment of such an unparalleled expert like myself and the investment of all the ancillary drugs, his absorption of the Imperial Fire Pearl is very fast.

“The Supreme Emperor’s dominating vibe contained in the Imperial Fire Pearl has been combined with the messy strengths that were injected into his body during the experiments in the past ten decades, leading to amazing chemical reactions. His combat ability has been increased by more than five times compared to when you just met him! Except for his lack of battle experience, he is now totally a top-tier expert!”

Li Linghai’s body further retreated deeper into the mottled shadow, but there was no delight in her voice at all, just full of chill. “Is… Is that so? There is no hindrance at all?”

Li Yao raised his eyebrows and narrowed his eyes, trying to split the mottled shadow. He asked suspiciously, “Why do I feel that Your Grace is not particularly happy after learning the accomplishments of your son’s training? If you have never considered Li Jialing as your son since the beginning, why did you give a treasure such as the Imperial Fire Pearl to him for training? Wait. Is there anything wrong with the Imperial Fire Pearl?”

Li Linghai took a deep breath and smiled bitterly. “You are a specialist both in fighting and in refining, and you have been training with the Imperial Fire Pearl too. What problem can possibly escape your attention?”

“That does make sense. I scrutinized the Imperial Fire Pearl from every aspect. It is absolutely fine.”

Li Yao was more and more confused, and he was unable to see through the obscurities on Li Linghai’s face. “Then, is there something wrong with you, Your Grace?”

Instead of denying it, Li Linghai suddenly changed the topic and said, “Dongfang Mingyue’s strength is truly immeasurable. I believe that she is an extremely dangerous enemy. Her Association of Demon Hunters will certainly capture the reformists in the capital on a large scale in the next phase. With Li Jialing’s current appearance, he can easily be accused of being a demon, no interrogation needed. He will be a problem if he stays in the capital.

“I… I have controlled a secret spaceport in the forty-seventh district, and there is a carrier that has been carefully camouflaged. Why don’t you help me escort Li Jialing get aboard and ask him to lay low for a while in any peripheral world of the Imperium for now?”

“Are you serious?”

Bulging his eyes, Li Yao found it hard to believe. “Your Grace, do you not feel that your orders are self-contradictory? At first, you asked me and Li Jialing to stay right beside you, claiming that it was the only way to keep your secrets safe. Later, you asked us to work as the liaison officers in General Lei Chenghu’s place, which was obviously an attempt to get Li Jialing away from you. But a few days ago, you asked us to march into the capital together with you, and you got Li Jialing back to yourself again. Right now, you are asking me to send Li Jialing to a peripheral world of the Imperium?

“You have changed your attitude three times in only two months. May I ask why?”

Although she was hiding in the mottled shadow, Li Yao still heard the gloomy sigh of the queen.

“I have to say that Your Grace’s excuse is truly lousy.”

Li Yao simply went on without caring for anything. “You’re afraid that Li Jialing would be captured by the Association of Demon Hunters because of his current appearance? His current appearance was made by you in the first place. With your capabilities and your technologies, it should be more than easy to turn Li Jialing back into what he used to be, shouldn’t it? Is it necessary to send him to a distant world?

“Also, since Dongfang Mingyue is a mysterious, dangerous enemy, why are you certain that she is unaware of the location of your secret spaceport? Chances are that she has got her eyes on you since a long time ago, and she is now simply waiting for a big fish to catch the hook. It is possible that Li Jialing will be caught by her the moment he leaves the capital, which will be even more dangerous!

“You are such a strong mother. If Li Jialing stays by your side, you can still look after him. If he does escape to a peripheral world of the Imperium, neither you nor I will be able to do anything should anything happen to him!”

Thinking for a long time, Li Linghai had to admit, “You do have a point.”

“Your Grace, I’ve never seen you as diffident before.”

Li Yao moved one step closer and raised his voice as he said, “I am just a straightforward and unsophisticated man, so I’ll just ask it frankly. Is there anything that you’ve been keeping to yourself?”

“What can I possibly be keeping to myself?”

Li Linghai finally raised her head from the shadow, but her face was more than pale. She stared at Li Yao and said, “Over the past two months, I have been fulfilling my promise all the time, realizing the maximal degree of reform with the minimal price. The Imperium is not reduced into chaos, and no innocent blood is shed, right?

“We are dealing with Dongfang Wang and Dongfang Renxin partly for my personal reasons, of course, while I pursue the supreme power, but it is also meant to remove hazards for the people. Removing such unpardonable scoundrels befits your beliefs perfectly too, right?

“Although we are all Immortal Cultivators, the reformists are more advanced than the four Kurfürst families anyway, and the new Imperium under the control of the reformists will certainly be better than the old Imperium controlled by the traditional noble families and more merciful to the ordinary people, right?

“If so, what are you worried about? I’ve said that I’ll abide by my promise and give you a Sector that you can administer on your own as long as it obeys the authority of the Imperium on the surface. There is no need for me to go back on my words in such a trivial matter. Rest assured about that!”

Li Yao thought for a long time, only to come up with nothing wrong. He could only say, “That being said, I still vaguely feel that something is wrong. Perhaps it is because your style is too creepy and ghostly, and one inevitably feels that you have a lot of schemes the moment they see you? To be honest, have you ever considered perming or dyeing your hair, putting on some cosmetics, and smiling more sunnily? Wouldn’t it be much better? After all, you will be a symbol of the Imperium one day.”

“Enough.”

Li Linghai retreated again, allowing the beehive-like shadows on the map of the Imperium to swallow her face.

“You may leave.”

“Copy that.”

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao asked, “What about Li Jialing? I don’t need to send him away now, do I?”

There was no response from the shadow until Li Yao almost walked to the door. That was when the queen’s unpredictable voice drifted over. “No. You were quite right. No matter where he escapes to, he will be found eventually. That is… destiny!”

Chapter 2282 - Try Whatever Might Work!

After he left the relic repair center, Li Yao was still thinking about Li Linghai’s last remark.

He felt that Li Linghai’s attitude was rather weird.

“Last time, she did not look normal in the Godly Might Prison, and she is changing her attitudes frequently without a good reason. There must be something wrong with the queen.”

Li Yao mumbled to himself. But after careful consideration, he had to admit that up until now, nothing the queen did had violated her promises at the beginning, and that the “new Imperium” would certainly be better than the “old Imperium”.

She even gave the commandership of the army to the big shots of the military such as Lei Chenghu without any hesitation, which gave the feeling of the separation of military and politics. It was a rather advanced approach.

Therefore, even if she did have a scheme, what could she count on to raise a storm?

Baffled, Li Yao was of the mind to chat with Li Jialing again.

But as he looked at the window at the end of the corridor, it was not Li Jialing that he saw but “God of War” Lei Chenghu who was standing by himself with his hands behind his back!

Slightly dazed, Li Yao walked forward, only to discover that Lei Chenghu was thoughtfully observing the generals and soldiers who were paying tributes in the Emperor’s Mausoleum in black uniforms not far away.

The God of War looked somewhat lost and confused.

Interested, Li Yao asked, “I thought you had left, General Lei.”

“Not yet.”

Lei Chenghu stared for a while longer before saying slowly, “It’s not easy to come to the Emperor’s Mausoleum. Although this is not my real body, I should still pay respects. I’m waiting for the people down there to be fewer so that I can bow to Blackstar the Great’s statue before I go.”

Li Yao knew that the heinous, inhumane crimes that Li Linghai described just now must have been a huge blow to Lei Chenghu. There was no telling how infuriated the seasoned general who was unquestionably loyal to the Imperium was.

The Imperium of True Human Beings was a country of Immortal Cultivators. Theoretically speaking, although the ordinary people were not regarded as humans but “hominoids”, which was a different species from “true human beings” and could be blatantly exploited, slaughtered, and even experimented on, there were still some laws and rules within the ruling class, namely the “true human beings”. The dog-eat-dog competitions, however cruel, still had the last disguise on them.

What Dongfang Wang and Dongfang Renxin did doubtlessly stomped on all the “morals” of the Immortal Cultivators and tore the last disguise apart into pieces.

If part of the Immortal Cultivators could absorb other people’s vitality and Cultivation through “cannibal training”, occupying the pivot of the ruling class forever, Lei Chenghu’s proud belief that the true path of immortality could achieve the optimal configuration of resources would be a joke. The legitimacy and the stability of the Imperium’s reign would be gone instantly.

It was certainly not something that Lei Chenghu could tolerate.

No wonder he was moping and hesitating in this place.

As Li Yao expected, after he observed the disabled soldiers down there together with Lei Chenghu in silence for a moment, Lei Chenghu opened his mouth voluntarily. “Although I do not like wars…”

“Huh?”

Li Yao felt that everybody was abnormal today and found it hard to believe. “You are the renowned ‘God of War’, an invincible general that destroys all your enemies, and you do not like wars?”

“The most popular prostitute in a brothel is not necessarily fond of sleeping with guests every night. Why must an invincible general love wars?”

Lei Chenghu sighed and said casually, “But you are not entirely wrong. After seeing so many disguises, conspiracies, betrayals, defections, and all the other despicable things, sometimes I even feel that the relation between the prostitutes and their guests is simpler, purer, and easier. You pay money, and I open my legs. It’s a fair deal and much better than the fancy, empty talks that neither parties believe.

“Therefore, although I do not like wars, I would rather stay in the frontline than to linger in the murky rear together with the treacherous, shortsighted, and wicked Immortal Cultivators who know nothing but their selfish interests.

“At the very least, even in the coldest trenches in the frontline, the blood of most warriors is still hot.

“Or rather, even the most ferocious enemies, those people of the Covenant Alliance, look more agreeable to me than the scumbags in the rear do.”

Li Yao frowned. “Are you serious? Even the people of the Covenant Alliance are more agreeable than the ‘false Immortal Cultivators’?”

“Aren’t they?”

Lei Chenghu said coldly, “At the very least, the people of the Covenant Alliance are simple, straightforward, and faithful. They express what they want frankly and never hide their real intention. So, the war between us is all about our strengths. If my saber is fast enough, you will collapse. If your sword is sharper than mine, I will die. Simple as that!

“Besides, the Covenant Alliance is very united. They are always in one piece. There is absolutely no such thing as conspiracies and schemes among themselves. They also boast the highest devotion. Every individual will not hesitate to sacrifice themself for the big picture. Although they may not be fully aware of the meaning of ‘sacrifice’, if only ten percent of their solidarity and commitment could be transplanted to the Imperium, the Imperium would never be what it is today, and no enemy would possibly stand in our way!”

“Wait—”

The more Li Yao listened, the weirder he felt. “General Lei, you are not thinking of joining the Covenant Alliance, are you?”

Lei Chenghu shook his head. “Of course, I will never join the Covenant Alliance, just like I will never be engaged in such a thing as ‘cannibal training’.

“But considering the chaos of the Imperium today, if somebody does join the Covenant Alliance, willingly removing the selfishness and the ugliness deep down in their heart and branding themself with the Three Fundamental Laws, it will seem rather normal.”

Li Yao was rendered speechless. He thought of “Tang Qianhe” again, who was a spy of the Covenant Alliance that he encountered in the Kunlun relic.

Tang Qianhe must have been a native of the Imperium in the beginning, or she wouldn’t have been admitted into Su Changfa’s exploration team.

What could she have possibly been through that made her transform herself into a subject of the Covenant Alliance willingly?

While he pondered, Lei Chenghu sighed again and said, “If only Blackstar the Great were still alive! He certainly would cleanse all the chaos and ugliness and revive the country!”

Li Yao couldn’t hold it back anymore but blurted out, “I hardly think so. Every person has their limits. Even if Wuying Qi were reborn, I’m afraid that he will have to be complicit with the ‘false Immortal Cultivators’.

“Or rather, there is no such thing as ‘false Immortal Cultivators’. Developing all the way by the principle of ‘survival of the fittest’, 99% of the Immortal Cultivators will only end up like this. The cause of the result today dated back to a thousand years ago. The chaos and corruption in the Imperium today are perhaps started by Blackstar the Great a thousand years ago in person!”

Narrowing his eyes deeply, Lei Chenghu stared at Li Yao and said, one word after another, “A while back, you said that my words sounded like what the Cultivators would say. But why do I feel that your words are more like what the Cultivators would’ve said?”

Li Yao smiled and bared his glittering teeth. “As the saying goes, a drowning man will clutch at a straw. The Imperium is too seriously sick right now to be rescued by any medication. In such an emergency, we might as well search the tomb of the Cultivators and see if we can find any pill that can treat the disease.

“Like you said earlier, General Lei, both the sabers of the Cultivators and those of the Immortal Cultivators can kill!”

Lei Chenghu sniffed and stopped talking.

The breeze outside the window gradually intensified. Soon, the sky was drowned by dark clouds, and heavy rain poured down.

The crowd paying tributes in the Emperor’s Mausoleum finally dispersed, turning hazy in the storm.

Ignoring Li Yao, Lei Chenghu dragged the heavy spiritual puppet and left the national museum, walking deep into the storm one step after another.

Li Yao stood next to the window and watched him disappear in the storm, but a name and a gender-neutral face popped up in his head.

“Dongfang Mingyue…”

…

At the south suburb of the central district of the capital, a gray, crude, and ragged-looking building, which seemed to be a common office building, was, in fact, the headquarters of the “Association of Demon Hunters” that could raise the fear of any Immortal Cultivator in the Imperium.

Deep inside the secret meeting room of the building, the most elite members of the Association of Demon Hunters were listening anxiously to the interpretation of Dongfang Mingyue, their new president, on the latest intelligence.

As the most dominating and ferocious secret agents of the Imperium, these demon hunters were naturally the most brutal and disobedient creatures who had killed countless people.

There were also factions within the Association of Demon Hunters. The power struggles and the secret battles were ten times gorier than those of the outside world.

However, at this moment, all the demon hunters placed their hands on their knees submissively and put their legs together, not even daring to breathe aloud. They seemed more docile than elementary school students.

It couldn’t be helped. The terrifying experience last month had told these brutal men clearly what would become of the people who showed the slightest disobedience to the new president Dongfang Mingyue!

“Li Linghai, Dongfang Sheng, Yue Wushuang, Jin Yuyan, Lei Chenghu… I have introduced the latest files of the key persons of the reformists to you in great detail just now. I’m sure you have grasped them, haven’t you? In the next second, I’m about to introduce to you ‘Vulture Li Yao’, who has been quite a hit recently.”

With a head full of black hair and zero makeup, Dongfang Mingyue retrieved Li Yao’s 3D picture and the battle video of “Gold Vulture”. Jabbing Li Yao’s forehead, she said with a smile, “This man is a dark agent, a ghost warrior, and a shadow assassin that Li Linghai has carefully trained for at least decades for the most secretive, filthy, and dangerous missions. Therefore, except for the few public battles recently, it is difficult to collect his earlier files.

“However, I do know a thing or two about him through other sources. Listen up carefully now!

“This Vulture Li Yao is a shameless, treacherous, and sordid rat. His combat style is not half as masculine and dominating as you are seeing right now. Deep down his bones, he is like a weasel and is best at stealth and running. He can also sneak into and out of all the dark corners like cockroaches. There is not a hole that he cannot crawl into.

“His level, well, is probably the middle or high level of the Divinity Transformation Stage. He is not necessarily the toughest Divinity Transformation Stage expert in the Imperium, but he is definitely the one who is best at escaping. By my conservative estimation, it will be impossible to stop him without three battle-type Divinity Transformation Stage experts and a few dozens of battle-type Nascent Soul Stage experts.

“Therefore, should you discover the traces of this cockroach, do not take action recklessly. You will not be able to take him down however many of you there are. Just inform me as soon as possible. I very much would like to find out… how grown this weaselly cockroach is right now!”

Chapter 2283 - Dark War!

The dark war between the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils and the Association of Demon Hunters began!

Ever since the ancient times, as long as a country intended to set up intelligence agencies, they would at least establish two departments that checked and balanced each other.

If only one intelligence agency was set, like the Star Glory Federation with the “Secret Sword Bureau” a hundred years ago, and it held the absolute power in intelligence and secret law enforcement, dire consequences would inevitably be caused as long as its head was ambitious and tricked other people in the leadership.

The riot of patriots planned by Lu Zui with the Secret Sword Bureau was exactly the best example.

Therefore, when the age of the New Federation came, the intelligence departments of the federation split apart into Guo Chunfeng’s Secret Sword Bureau and Jin Xinyue’s Dim Moon Fund, which had both competition and cooperation in a dynamic balance like a seesaw. That was the only way to ensure that the national security would not be threatened no matter which party’s ambitions expanded.

The same applied to the Imperium of True Human Beings. Five hundred years ago, when the royal authority was still in the heyday, the emperor never thought to abolish the Association of Demon Hunters no matter how trusted the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils was. In the second five hundred years, no matter how powerful and dominating the four Kurfürst families were, and however many contributions the Association of Demon Hunters made for them in darkness, it was impossible to completely annihilate the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils.

It was all about check and balance. Whether the power holder was the emperor or the four Kurfürst families, they would never completely trust the intelligence agencies.

As a result, the two intelligence agencies, haunted by their dark destinies, had to fight eternally to prove to the power holder that they were the colder, sharper, and more efficient saber in the darkness!

Right now, the operation of the reformists had been pushed to the second step.

The Dongfang family had sensed the vague hostility of the other three families. They also feared that Lei Chenghu’s Astounding Thunder Fleet would charge into the Dongfang family’s heartland and die together with the enemy. Therefore, the main force of the family’s fleets had to stay where they were.

Neither Lei Chenghu nor the leadership of the other three families wanted to fight a comprehensive civil war either. Unless it was absolutely necessary, none of them were willing to wage a war in space.

Facilitated by many powerful men and prestigious elders, the four Kurfürst families and the reformists reached a temporary, tacit agreement that the table named “Imperium” must not be flipped over. Whichever force’s fleet opened fire first would mean that they were overthrowing the table, breaking the company, and smashing everybody’s cake, and they would be attacked by the rest of the players together!

Now that all the armed forces were forestalled by each other on the surface, it was time for the dark forces to show themselves.

With the support of the four Kurfürst families, especially the Dongfang family, the Association of Demon Hunters was much stronger than the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils in terms of scale and capability. By conservative estimation, the number of “demon hunters” was at least five times the number of “devil huntresses”.

But the advantage of the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils was that the enemy was in the light and they were in the dark. In the past hundred years, they had been keeping such a low profile that they almost seemed to be an unimportant and nonprofitable government agency. Nobody knew that they had been trained by the queen in secret for decades. The devil huntresses, trained with the unparalleled techniques from the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum, were as good as the toughest demon hunters in terms of combat ability and much better than their opponents when it came to weirdness and brutality.

More importantly, the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils was the attacker, and they could choose their targets free at will.

It must be noted that, nominally, the dozens of worlds around the Empyreal Terminus Sector was administrated by the emperor in person, and all the bureaucrats of those places were supposed to be appointed directly by His Majesty.

However, as the royal authority declined today and the powerful lords took over everything, the emperor’s direct appointment was nothing but empty words anymore. The bureaucrats and administrative agencies of the dozens of worlds had long been infiltrated by the four Kurfürst families.

It also meant that a lot of Immortal Cultivators from the Dongfang family and its vassal families, who were in high places in the capital, actually lived and worked in those worlds.

With the Dongfang family as their reliance, such people were certainly not the most honorable and impartial officials. Claiming that it was for His Majesty, they exploited the Immortal Cultivators of other forces and the underclass, transmitting interests to their families while satisfying their own selfish needs in the process. It was a “convention” not to be surprised at right now.

Ever since Li Linghai made up her mind to “renew the Imperium”, she had collected tremendous evidence in secret, which she called “cannonballs”.

Before this, the Dongfang family’s position was indestructible. Those cannonballs would’ve been resolved easily even if they were shot out. Even the other three families would help cover for the Dongfang family. Not even half a piece of news would be seen on the Spiritual Nexus.

But the case was different today. The reformists had demonstrated their might and gave a heavy blow on the Dongfang family in the previous phase, showing everybody the weakness of the Dongfang family. Therefore, they won the support of the Li family and the connivance of the Yun and Song families.

Those cannonballs, once detonated, must be destructive.

Most importantly of all, the Immortal Cultivators of the Dongfang family who held high positions in the capital that they did not deserve must be captured!

There were thousands of such Immortal Cultivators, and the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils was free to arrest any of them.

As a result, the Association of Demon Hunters had to set up defenses everywhere in exhaustion, not missing out any important characters of the Dongfang family.

Despite the number of the demon hunters, and even counting the Dongfang family’s own bodyguard teams, it was still far from enough. It was not like every Immortal Cultivator of the Dongfang family could be protected by dozens of battle-type Immortal Cultivators when they went to work every day, right?

It was not an option to evacuate from the capital to the Dongfang family’s own territory either.

Such an action of running before fighting would be perceived as a signal of weakness by the Li, Yun, and Song families. Once the three wavering families whose attitudes were ambiguous and completely leaned toward the reformists, it would certainly be a catastrophe for the Dongfang family.

Therefore, however difficult it was, they had to persist until Dongfang Wang finished the dispatchment in darkness and reached secret agreements with the other three families to win their support. Then, they would be the winner of the war.

Therefore, the future of the war was still rather uncertain.

As May came, the capital entered the hottest season of the year.

The series of news that shocked the entire capital, if not the entire universe, further added the air of smoke in the scorching wind.

On May 2, Dongfang Yu, the Education Director of the military who was responsible for the management of seventy-one advanced military schools of the Imperium, was arrested by the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils in a sudden assault when he was going to a meeting. The next day, one of the media of the Li family exposed the shocking corruption that involved multiple cases of unjust distribution of military credits. Then, as the cases were pursued further, hundreds of members of the military education system were afflicted. Naturally, most of the people involved in the crime had the “Dongfang” surname.

On May 5, the CEO of “Blackmountain Bank”, which ranked the top twenty in the Imperium, was arrested in his personal residence. Although he had taken precautions, and his bodyguard team whose defense and firepower had been upgraded resisted hard, the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils still managed to capture him alive and leave before the reinforcements of the Association of Demon Hunters arrived. As to exactly where the man was kept in prison? Nobody knew. The public headquarters of the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils had long been emptied. The only persons left were a few bottom-level clerks who still worked in the office. As for Yue Wushuang and her elite devil huntresses, nobody knew where they were hiding and which target they had locked onto.

May 7… May 8… May 10…

The officials from the Dongfang family and its vassal families were secretly captured almost on a daily basis, and their crimes were exposed on the media of the Li family the next day or the day they were caught. Some of the crimes were corruptions and embezzlements, and some were about the homicide cases a long time ago. Fights among the Immortal Cultivators were more than usual. Even the families of the victims often chose not to settle the issue through the law but to practice more techniques and seek personal retaliation. But of course, the criminals could be punished by law. Whether or not the crimes were invented was not important; the important thing was to show everybody in the entire universe that the Dongfang family was not invincible!

The groups of Immortal Cultivators in the Imperium large and small were like sharks that would go crazy at the scent of the Dongfang family’s blood. As long as enough blood was spilled, all the sharks would lunge at the Dongfang family without a care.

Faced with the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils’ long prepared attack, the Association of Demon Hunters naturally counterattacked vehemently.

While the officials and magnates from the Dongfang family were secretly captured and accused of being “Demonic Cultivators”, the Association of Demon Hunters took action and did exactly the same thing on the reformists and the Immortal Cultivators of the Li family.However, the Li family was never as good as the Dongfang family, and it had fewer people in the capital than the Dongfang family did. The reformists had been acting stealthily the whole time too. How could they be captured in a hurry?

The Association of Demon Hunters, in their anxiety, resorted to all the means possible without considering the possible damages to the Empyreal Terminus Sector. Despite a few setbacks, they did manage to trace a few secret bases of the

Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils. The battles of the two parties in the darkness were a hundred times crueler than the competitions of fleets in space!

Every day, countless demon hunters and devil huntresses stabbed blades into each other’s bodies without sound in the dilapidated streets below the ground of the capital, before they dragged each other into the bottomless abyss, dying at the same time.

Every minute, the shows of schemes, deceptions, betrayals, and anti-betrayals were aired splendidly.

Every second, some humans would be marked as “demons” or “Demonic Cultivators” because of conflicts of interests and thrown into the dark dungeons.

Perhaps the slaughters humans performed on their own kind were always more brutal than their wars against demons and extraterrestrial devils…

On May 19, in White Stone Municipality on the west coast of the main continent, on the high-speed ancillary rail for shuttles in the suburb, a new assault and arrest operation was being conducted in secret.

Chapter 2284 - Let’s Get Some Excitement!

The high-speed rails were a public facility to help shuttles increase their speed and save their fuel.

While shuttles could fly in any directions freely, it had a huge consumption on the fuel. Also, when their speed was very high, particularly when they surpassed the speed of sound, accidents tended to happen too.

If hundreds of shuttles were soaring at the speed of sound, and two of them accidentally hit each other, there would certainly be dire consequences.

Therefore, in the “high zone” at the suburbs of the major cities of the Imperium of True Human Beings, convenient rails had been established, which could attract the shuttles to themselves with the electromagnetic force so that the shuttles could fly next to the rail. In such a way, the fuel could be saved, and the security could be greatly enhanced.

At this moment, a black, lengthened, extravagant shuttle was rushing on the rail toward the heavy industrial area at the suburb, surrounded by four fully-armed shuttles that had even exposed the cannons to the air, not disguising their highest alert at all.

At the backseat of this extravagant shuttle sat the president of the Industry Union of the West Coast, who controlled the lifelines of dozens of magical equipment corporations on the west coast. He was from the Dongfang family too.

Over the past half month, a large batch of bureaucrats and magnates had been secretly arrested, which raised the wariness of the Dongfang family. The bodyguard team of the president of the Industry Union had been fully upgraded too. Not only were the high-level agents of the Association of Demon Hunters sitting right next to him, but tremendous experts had also been summoned from the family. Furthermore, he had even hired assassins and killers from the underground world of the capital with his own money. The spacious extravagant shuttle was now crammed with people.

It seemed to be protected by only four shuttles around, but dozens of regular shuttles in a large range were actually also full of special agents, family experts, assassins, and killers. Many of them had already been armed to teeth and could rip the shuttles and unleash their toughest techniques at any moment.

Hundreds of pairs of eagle-like eyes stared at all directions.

Right then—

Theirs was not the only high-speed rail; there were dozens of such rails up, down, left, and right, like dozens of lanes. Four of the rails were specially designed for super-heavy trucks weighing more than fifty tons.

Right then, four trucks in different camouflages passed by the extravagant team of shuttles.

Those four trucks all weighed more than eighty tons. Their cars were so long that they were almost like crystal trains.

Without anybody knowing it, the four trucks moved on parallel with the team of shuttles and adjusted to the same speed. They seemed relatively still.

The experienced bodyguards immediately sensed danger and ordered the team to speed up.

However, the four trucks kept up with them at an unbelievable speed and stability!

The few shuttles in the front and the rear intended to scan the interior of the trucks with mystic rays, but the rays were all reflected back as if they had hit mirrors. Something was definitely greatly wrong!

“Open fire!”

The leader of the bodyguards made the call immediately. Having no time to bother if somebody would be accidentally hurt, he gave the order resolutely.

But before the bodyguards pulled the triggers, the rail before the shuttle team suddenly exploded and broke apart. Two bodyguard shuttles immediately went out of control and flew away!

In the meantime, dazzling electric arcs were unleashed among the four trucks and interconnected into a complicated web of electricity, with countless rune arrays and spiritual stripes glittering in it crazily. It was obviously an extremely brutal array!

Further away, the cars of two of the trucks opened their ceilings and extended glittering bowls that emitted intensive interferential waves, blocking the shuttle team’s distress calls!

Huala! Huala! Huala!

The cars of the four heavy trucks exploded, and a hundred devil huntresses that belonged to the Tribunal of

Extraterrestrial Devils charged out.

The long-prepared elite bodyguards broke the shuttles and ran at the devil huntresses too.

A high-speed, heated battle immediately began.

The demon hunters who were out of the range of interference in case of accidents sent out the distress calls immediately to the branch of the Association of Demon Hunters in White Stone Municipality.

Countless demon hunters and elites of the Dongfang family immediately leaped from the downtown area and rushed to the suburb, swearing to capture all the bold and blatant devil huntresses!

Everything that happened was captured clearly by the hundred stealth crystal cameras floating in the stratosphere.

The hundred stealth cameras were all the products of Li Yao's lifelong knowledge. While maintaining the previous stealth and anti-detection abilities, the range of scanning, the precision, and the distance of signal transmission were all five times better than before.

With the hundred stealth crystal cameras, as well as the spies of the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils and the reformists that were sent to White Stone Municipality a long time ago, Li Yao was able to grasp every detail of the whole battlefield.

The picture from the suburb, through the transmission of encrypted signals, immediately darted to the crowded central business district of White Stone Municipality.

On the thirty-sixth floor of a transparent plaza in the district, in the middle of the office of a seemingly plain business group, thousands of 3D light beams had drowned the small room. Most of the 3D light beams were displaying the pictures taken by the tremendous surveillance cameras of White Stone Municipality. The crystal processor specialists of the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils had found a way to hack the public security platform of the city and intercepted all the surveillance pictures.

Plus the secret crystal cameras of Li Yao and the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils, the whole city was now naked before Li Yao.

Lying on the ergonomic chair comfortably, Li Yao set it to the relaxation pattern and put his hands below his head as a pillow, his eyes half narrowed as if he were drowsy.

But deep inside his brain, he was inferring what was about to happen again and again to ensure that every procedure was perfect, every flaw had been erased in advance, and every detail was accurate!

The sudden assault at the suburb seemed to be failing.

The scale of the bodyguard team far exceeded their expectation. The reinforcements from downtown came very fast too. This arrest operation was neither sudden nor secret.

However, there was still nothing but tranquility in Li Yao’s eyes, as if he were more interested in the sugar beans made of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures on the table.

Most of the surveillance pictures around him, on the other hand, were not focused on the fierce battle in the suburb but on a luxury hotel in the downtown not far away from here.

Today, a meeting hosted by the mayor of the White Stone Municipality was to be held in the luxury hotel.

Yes, the “secret arrest” targeting the president of the Industry Union was just a distraction. Their real goal was the mayor of the White Stone Municipality!

White Stone Municipality was a super metropolis that ranked the top ten in the Empyreal Terminus Sector. The industrial city, especially with the production of crystal suits, was famous nationwide. A dozen crystal suit centers had set up their headquarters and the most important production bases in the place.

It was not hard to imagine how important the mayor of White Stone Municipality was.

If such an important person was caught, it would definitely be a serious blow to the Dongfang family, which would plant more doubt in the hearts of the Yun family, the Song family, and other wavering nobles.

Right now, a large batch of advanced agents of the White Stone branch of the Association of Demon Hunters had gone to the suburb, and the real arrest team of the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils had taken position around the luxury hotel. The operation would begin in half a minute.

Everything seemed to be under control.

There were twenty-five seconds to go.

Li Yao suddenly sat straight and stared at the seemingly peaceful light beams. Holding a sugar bean in his hand for a long time, he did not swallow it.

Twenty seconds remaining.

“Hawk ready!”

“Mole ready!”

“Tiger ready!”

The voices of the battle squads of the devil huntresses echoed in his ears.

Li Yao rolled his eyes crazily, and a drop of cold sweat leaked out of his forehead.

Fifteen seconds to go.

“General Yue.”

Holding his earlobe, Li Yao said, “Although I am only here to help you control the surveillance magical equipment, and it is inappropriate for me to meddle in your operation, I strongly suggest you abort all the operations and retreat as fast as possible!

“No, I haven’t discovered any anomalies, but something just doesn’t feel right. Trust me, ‘Vulture Li Yao’ did not become the best specialist of running in the entire Imperium for nothing!

“Do not take action and retreat immediately. I repeat, retreat. Do not take action and retreat immediately. Whatever you say, I’m out of here!”

After saying that, instead of waiting for Yue Wushuang’s reply, he simply took out the communication chips in his ears and every device on his body that could release signals, pinching all of them into pieces, before he activated the time bomb in the office. Then, he finally whistled and walked out with his hands in his pockets.

He did not take the lift. After all, with his speed, taking the emergent exit was as fast as leaving with the lift.

When he left the plaza, he had already become a businessman wearing fashionable clothes and picking a suitcase while he joined the crowd on the street.

Shua!

Li Yao opened all his senses. The jam-packed business district completely fell into stillness before his eyes. Every expression and every movement of the passers-by were caught by him.

Soon, he detected seven guys under stealth mode in the crowd.

It was almost as easy as identifying seven colorful figures on a monochrome picture.

Smiling, Li Yao squeezed through the seven of them. His gesture, posture, and the micro-expression on his face all suggested that he was a businessman completely dedicated to his work.

He even passed right next to a demon hunter, and yet the guy felt nothing abnormal at all.

This is too easy and unchallenging. I might as well go home and take a sleep.

Li Yao recalled the excitement when he was chased and blocked by Guo Chunfeng and his Secret Sword Bureau years ago. That was what life should be about. So, being too strong was certainly a trouble too. Who could understand the loneliness of an expert?

Then, he saw Dongfang Mingyue.

Dongfang Mingyue was sitting at the door of a very lovable dessert shop that was surrounded by colorful decorations and playing with the ice in her juice with the straw. There was nobody on the seat on her opposite side, except for a little cat that seemed as comfortable as her.

She seemed to have completely lost her passion to work because of the hot weather, and she did not even bother to change her plain clothes but simply allowed her black and glamorous long hair to swing in the scorching wind at the same rhythm as the high-heel slippers below her feet.

It was not until Li Yao showed up that she was finally more or less refreshed. After a slight yawn, she picked up the straw with a mouth as if it were a lady’s cigarette and smiled at Li Yao.

Chapter 2285 - Charm of the Sword!

Chapter 2285 Charm of the Sword!

Dongfang Mingyue was supposedly a plain-looking woman who could not leave a deep impression on anyone despite her delicate face, just the same as any of the office ladies to be seen in the business district.

However, the smile slowly spread from her lips, like a rainbow slowly surfacing on the thin sky, completely outlined and released her appeal.

Her eyes that seemed to have contained the stories of a hundred years stared at Li Yao without blinking, with subtle ripples spreading out. She did not seem to be eyeing a game trophy and an enemy but more like pleasantly surprised to have run into an old friend on the street by accident.

Li Yao, however, was not “pleasant” but only “surprised”, so surprised that even his spine was constricting.

His pupils, muscles, and nerve endings were all compressed to the limits, and his Cosmos Rings were seething impatiently on his fingers, at the tip of his tongue, and even in his groins, ready to blow out a dozen pieces of lethal magical equipment that could pierce through crystal suits at any moment.

Dongfang Mingyue’s lazy smile overlapped with another spurious, mysterious face deep in his memories.

Li Yao was still not certain if Dongfang Mingyue was the person—or rather, the “creature”—that he had been highly suspicious of.

If not, Dongfang Mingyue would only be a dark warrior of the Dongfang family and a trusted subordinate for Dongfang Wang, and Li Yao would be caught in great trouble right now. Chances were that he could leave without a crystal suit or a Colossus.

But if she was truly that “creature”, she would be a hundred times more terrifying than if she were the real Dongfang Mingyue. Li Yao might not be able to get away even with a Colossus!

Sweat ran out nonstop from Li Yao’s forehead, which soon congregated into brooks below his eyelids and on his cheeks.

Vague noises were echoing from all his clothes, which were caused by his increasing spiritual energy that tore apart the fibers of the cloth.

Ten thousand thoughts were rolling in his heart crazily. The map of the entire business district and even the entire White Stone Municipality from the sky to five hundred meters into the ground surfaced in his head clearly, allowing him to draw hundreds of routes of escape.

But as Dongfang Mingyue’s smile got brighter and brighter, all the routes of escape seemed to have become dead ends.

While smiling, Dongfang Mingyue took a sip of the juice, showing no intention of summoning the demon hunters around to attack him.

But her eyes never left Li Yao who was in his careful camouflage.

Thinking quickly, Li Yao sniffed and walked to her casually.

There was no need to pray anymore. It was certainly no coincidence that the president of the Association of Demon Hunters appeared at this place and enjoyed juice at ease. She was here waiting for him!

“It’s really you?”

While walking, Li Yao delivered three words into Dongfang Mingyue’s ears with the technique of private talk, trying to observe her micro-expression.

Dongfang Mingyue smiled and did not say anything, and her eyes curved into two crescent moons. She glanced around at first and then looked at the empty table next to hers.

She seemed to be hinting Li Yao to take care of the demon hunters around and asking him to sit at the next table so that the two of them could talk secretly.

Frowning hard, Li Yao recalled the picture when his opponent disappeared last time. If she was really “it”, she was certainly the most terrifying thing in the entire Imperium right now. What did it want? Should he…

Right then, he suddenly felt alarmed!

Dongfang Mingyue seemed to have foreseen that Li Yao wouldn’t fall for the trick easily. She did not even wait for Li Yao to really approach her. Raising the straw on her lips, she darted something deep inside the straw right in between Li Yao’s eyebrows!

Li Yao’s forehead almost exploded because of the upcoming danger. Two gold rings flashed in his eyes, and he summoned all the nerves, veins, and muscles over his body to shake at the same time, finally dodging what Dongfang Mingyue spat out of the straw narrowly!

The thing, on the other hand, exploded into a vague mist of ice after it brushed past his temple and sprayed on Li Yao’s face like the hair of a phantom.

It was ice. To be more exact, countless tiny pieces of ice were absorbed from the cup by Dongfang Mingyue and condensed into hair-like needles before they were darted at Li Yao!

Do you have to be so brutal?

Li Yao cursed aloud in his heart.

The vague mist of ice seemed to have crawled into his heart and gave him a cardiac arrest for a moment.

He finally understood why even Queen Li Linghai felt somewhat threatened by Dongfang Mingyue.

There were two ways for experts to fight. The first way was to unleash the spiritual energy and the damage to the maximum without a care, destroying mountains and oceans in the most astounding sound and visual effects. It was also the most typical way of fighting.

However, the other way, which was more advanced, was to blow out the most fatal damage without any sign. Sometimes, it was even possible to blow out the techniques of the Nascent Soul Stage, and the passers-by would feel nothing about it at all!

It was obvious that the latter was ten times more difficult than the former.

Besides the infinite expansion of spiritual energy and combat ability, it also highlighted absolute control and highly accurate computational ability.

When one reached the highest level, it was possible to use a leaf, a flower, or even a breath as a weapon, and the bystanders or the targets themselves would not even know how they died.

Dongfang Mingyue's attack just now was a perfect example of such a combat pattern.

She absorbed the ice from the straw first and accelerated it to at least three times the speed of sound, but the feeble straw did not explode. Also, there was neither the deafening sonic booms nor the misty sonic barriers. No walkers on the street felt anything wrong at all. When the attack missed the target, the ice immediately dispersed into mist, never to be found again.

It must be noted that this place was the central business district of White Stone Municipality. Most of the people working and living here were Immortal Cultivators. Even though they were not battle-type ones, their senses were still much keener than those of the ordinary people.

However, except for Li Yao whose back was soaked in a cold sweat because of the icy mist, nobody detected that a soul-stirring battle was going on at all!

Li Yao swallowed hard and quickly evaluated the combat ability of Dongfang Mingyue, or "it".

In Li Yao's eyes, Dongfang Mingyue's seemingly easy and casual blow just now was even more menacing than cutting a crystal warship into halves!

Damn it. If he hadn't advanced into the Divinity Transformation Stage by chance when he arrived in the Imperium, and if he were still in the Nascent Soul Stage, chances were that the needle would’ve pierced through his forehead and blown up his soul!

All the analysis and curses were done in 0.1 seconds.

But when Li Yao looked at the dessert shop again, the table was already empty.

The cat, however, jumped to the table and bared its teeth at Li Yao maliciously.

Without any hesitation, Li Yao walked to the dessert shop calmly.

If Dongfang Mingyue was lurking in the crowd preparing to attack him, the most unlikely place where she was hiding was the dessert shop.

When he passed by the table where Dongfang Mingyue was sitting, Li Yao snapped his fingers and grabbed the juice as well as the straw that Dongfang Mingyue enjoyed a moment ago.

Just now, Dongfang Mingyue was not wearing gloves. So, it was possible that her fingerprints were lingering on the cup and her saliva could be found on the straw. Naturally, neither the fingerprints nor the saliva was likely to be true, but he certainly would not lose anything by studying them.

The main continent on this planet had entered summer. Such dessert shops on the street always liked to set up a few tables outside of the shop, which would be covered by an umbrella to block the sun. The moment Li Yao stepped into the dessert shop, he condensed an invisible wind blade in his left hand and blew it at the handle of an umbrella, breaking it into halves.

In the exclamations of the shop owner and the customers, the umbrella fell like a parachute, covering a few customers while blocking the narrow door of the shop. If somebody followed Li Yao into the shop, they would certainly be discovered.

Before Li Yao stepped into the shop, he had scanned everything inside the shop. After he entered the shop, he went to the toilet without any hesitation and jumped out of the window of the toilet five seconds later. When he crawled out of the alley nearby, he had already changed his appearance into a young man in wrinkled clothes with a troubled face, as if he had recently lost his job.

While sighing and squeezing in the crowd, he calmed himself down and observed everyone around carefully. Thankfully, all the demon hunters probably lunged at the office he stayed in a moment ago. There was no threat here, like an immobile, monochrome picture…

Shua!

Li Yao summoned all the potentials of his body again to bend his cervical spine backward for fifteen degrees in 0.1 seconds. A white light flashed before his eyes. As if a sharp, unstoppable, unparalleled sword flew past his forehead, three strands of his hair were cut off and fell to the ground.

Had Li Yao not reacted in time, the sword was likely to have kissed his eyes and cut his eyeballs apart!

When he observed carefully again, he discovered that there was no sword at all. It was just an invisible blade of wind made by compressing the air to the minimum in the same way that he broke the umbrella of the dessert shop a moment ago, except that the performance this time was multiple times more brilliant than his.

That did make sense. When “it” was in the Ancient Sages Sector, “it” was already a great master even among swordmasters, being only second to “Sword Maniac” Yan Liren.

The charm of the sword just now definitely far exceeded “Sword Maniac” Yan Liren’s expertise when he was still in the Ancient Sages Sector. It couldn’t have been more perfect.

Li Yao looked at where the wind blade came from, only to discover that Dongfang Mingyue was smiling at him from about a hundred meters away. The fast and mind-boggling attack launched from a hundred meters away did not raise the attention of any passer-by again.

She did not disguise herself at all but looked as plain as before. Melting into the crowd and the background perfectly, she seemed to be an insignificant shadow in the monochrome picture of the crowd.

Even though Li Yao had locked onto her with telepathic thoughts, she still gave an unpredictable feeling as if she might be gone like a water drop melting into the ocean the moment Li Yao got slightly distracted.

She blinked at Li Yao with an innocent look on her face, as if the fatal attack a moment ago was not done by her at all.

Long Yangjun!

Gritting his teeth, Li Yao roared in his heart, Don’t think that you are awesome just because you have activated the weird blood of half Pangu and half Nuwa! You think that my Divinity Transformation Stage is false? Come on. Let’s have a fight and see who is scared of whom!

Chapter 2286 - Secret Battle!

Chapter 2286 Secret Battle!

Li Yao coughed lightly. A few lumps protruded on his abdomen, as if several mice were crawling on his body and dashing into his pants one after another.

When they crawled out from the bottom of his pants, they turned out to be four palm-sized, delicate beast puppets in the form of spiders!

The four beast puppets shook on the ground and entered the stealth state immediately, swooshing at Dongfang Mingyue, or “Long Yangjun”, Li Yao’s old opponent that he knew from the Ancient Sages Sector, who was neither a man nor a woman, both a friend and a foe.

Under the control of Li Yao’s telepathic thoughts, the four beast puppets were gentle and agile. Moving in the crowd swiftly, they did not touch the feet of any passer-by as they reached Long Yangjun in the blink of an eye.

Long Yangjun scorned, as if she were mocking Li Yao’s lack of creativity, which made him too unchallenging.

Li Yao sniffed. The backs of the four stealthy beast puppets suddenly split apart, and a hundred smaller beast puppets that were no larger than lice jumped out. Equally stealthy, they leaped at Long Yangjun’s critical parts without any sound!

They were not to be underestimated because of their tiny size. On the bodies of metals and crystals the size of lice, a hundred attack rune arrays had been carved, and the capsules at the abdomen stored lethal poison that could corrupt one’s core. Such an extraordinary technique of refining could’ve only been accomplished by Li Yao who was adept at the manual forging arts from ancient times.

The assault of the hundred “stealthy lice” finally made Long Yangjun exclaim, raising the attention of the walkers.

Her face immediately blushed.

Li Yao knew that the “stealthy lice” could not trap Long Yangjun. So, he simply strode forward into the teeming crowd again, while he calculated the height of the buildings around, the angle of the sunlight when it was reflected on the glass wall of the plazas, the speed of the moving crowd, and the structure of the blocks, trying to come up with the most perfect battle plan.

As he expected, in only three seconds, the connections between him and the beast puppets were all cut off, and the hundred windows in his brain were shut down. All the “stealthy lice” had apparently been taken care of by Long Yangjun.

Hot waves of embarrassment and fury were coming from his back. He did not need to turn around to know that Long Yangjun was gritting her teeth and following him.

Before him, it was an intersection. Although most of the vehicles flew in midair, some of the public vehicles and special cars ran on the ground. Also, when the traffic was too huge, the crowd going to different directions might be in conflict too. Therefore, a traffic light was still set up in this place, with an indicator that displayed the countdown of availability.

At this moment, it was the turn of Li Yao’s direction to go, and there were five seconds to go.

Li Yao’s telepathic thoughts rolled to the traffic light like the tentacles of an invisible octopus, and his spiritual energy hacked the control chip of the traffic light. Without anybody realizing it, the speed of the countdown was increased by 20%.

As a result, if Long Yangjun maintained her current speed, she would be forced to stay before the intersection while Li Yao would have just passed it.

So, Long Yangjun accelerated her movement.

At this moment, she was pretending to be a common office lady, and it would be too bizarre if she were to pass the crowd smoothly with the most brilliant body-moving techniques. Therefore, she could only pretend that she had urgent business and shoved the people before her to clear a way.

When the countdown had two seconds to go, Long Yangjun arrived at the intersection.

Right at the moment, the sunlight happened to be reflected by an arc-shaped glass wall of a plaza on her left side. As if concentrated by a magnifying glass, it darted into Long Yangjun’s eyes precisely!

It was a trap that Li Yao had carefully devised for Long Yangjun, which transformed the plain environment into the most fatal weapon.

However, Long Yangjun was an unparalleled expert at the peak of the Nascent Soul Stage decades ago. She was also not a regular human being but carried the ancient bloodline from the primeval age.

By absorbing the strength of the extraterrestrial devils in the war against extraterrestrial devils in the Star Glory Federation, she gradually activated the mysteries in her bloodline, and she could see the world clearly even without eyes. How could she be affected by the glaring sunlight?

Her retinas constricted for only 0.01 seconds before they became normal.

During the 0.01 seconds, she sensed that Li Yao touched something with his feet up ahead. Then, he suddenly shortened and disappeared into thin air.

She squeezed forward and checked, only to discover that it was the cover of a manhole. It must've been sealed for a long time, but it showed the sign of being moved recently.

A wrinkled old man nearby looked at the cover of the manhole somewhat in surprise and mumbled something to himself. He seemed to be wondering if his eyes had tricked him because somebody just vanished entirely.

Long Yangjun sneered. You really do not have anything new!

Raising the cover of the manhole with the tip of her feet, Long Yangjun released her telepathic thoughts downward to investigate. Suddenly, she felt that something was not right, and her face turned pale.

Just now, she memorized the faces and body figures of everybody around with the Heavenly Vision Technique, but the white-haired, wrinkled old man next to the cover of the manhole was not in her impression.

Hardly had the idea occurred to her when the “old man”, or Li Yao, already attacked!

His fingers seemed to be cramping like the habitual quakes of a common aged man, but every cramp actually meant that a wind blade that could break gold was condensed and blown at Long Yangjun’s critical parts.

A pink flower blossomed on Long Yangjun’s pale face again. Her fingers that were long and narrow danced deftly too, dispersing all the wind blades. She even cut off Li Yao’s control and twisted the direction of a few wind blades, making them attack Li Yao!

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

The two of them clashed a thousand times in only three seconds.

However, the passers-by right next to them noticed none of their attacks. They had no idea at all that two horrible “monsters” were lurking right next to them and engaged in the most soul-stirring battle.

Long Yangjun’s sword arts were apparently better than Li Yao’s. Coming back to herself from the initial shock, she soon took the initiative of the battle. The wind blades were like hundreds of invisible, tiny flying swords that almost occupied Li Yao’s eyes.

While Li Yao was dealing with the attacks anxiously and about to lose, from the cover of the manhole below Long Yangjun’s feet that had just been moved, a few transparent molecular mica threads crawled out stealthily and tied her legs.

Even though those molecular mica threads were not really as thin as molecules, the difference was little to none. As the sharpest weapon, they could cut any spiritual shield or strengthened armor.

Everything just now was a disguise. This was Li Yao’s fatal move!

Long Yangjun gritted her teeth again. She was the one dealing with the emergency in a hurry now. Dodging the embrace of the molecular mica threads somewhat ungracefully and cutting them apart, she raised her head again, only to discover that Li Yao had squeezed into the crowd again and turned to the street on the right.

BOOM! BOOM, BOOM, BOOM, BOOM!

Right then, from the plazas behind the two of them, explosions came over.

Yue Wushuang’s devil huntresses did choose to trust Li Yao’s judgment and retreated in advance, avoiding the outcome of stepping into the trap and being entirely annihilated.

But it was inevitable that they ran into the embarrassed and infuriated demon hunters. The two parties immediately started a thrilling and dangerous hide-and-seek game.

A hundred crystal suits were moving among the skyscrapers, unleashing the most destructive and eye-catching techniques that looked like fireworks during a day.

As a result, the glass wall was all falling apart under their attacks, and the broken pieces sprinkled like a shower.

The pedestrians on the street were immediately disrupted. Exclaiming and covering their heads, they hurried to dash into the stores and buildings on the two sides of the street to hide.

Hiding in the chaotic crowd, Li Yao and Long Yangjun found the erratic situation even more complicated.

However, the panicked crowd, the falling glass pieces, and the continuous explosions in the sky gave them a bigger room for attacks too.

Li Yao and Long Yangjun both vaguely guessed each other’s concerns.

Since the two of them were on par with each other, if they were to burst into a real fight, they would have to reveal all their trump cards.

However, they both got too many secrets and would rather their techniques and magical equipment to stay hidden.

It was especially so for Long Yangjun, who was not a human being but a member of the Nuwa Clan who was corrupted by the forces of the Pangu Clan in the fetus state. She was a weird being that nobody could tell what it was exactly.

Even though she could hurt Li Yao badly, she would have to reveal her real appearance, which would certainly be suicide in the Imperium that considered the Pangu Clan as a major threat.

Therefore, neither Li Yao nor Long Yangjun wanted to attract the devil huntresses, the demon hunters, or other Immortal Cultivators to them; they preferred to settle the problem in their own way.

The rapidly falling glass pieces, as if given a life uncannily, flew horizontally and crashed into each other, turning into sprinkling white powder.

The white powder was then condensed into flying swords the size of needles under the control of mysterious strengths, before they rushed to the two sides of the street fast and soundlessly.

At this moment, the street had already been vacant. Everybody had escaped to the stores and malls on the sides of the street and simply allowed the broken glass to fall on the ground.

Each on one side of the street, Li Yao and Long Yangjun moved forward unhurriedly and shot each other with the “storm of glass” in between. The “flying glass swords” brushed past them closely, before they turned into clusters of sand and collapsed to the ground.

Although there was not any sound or smoke, the battle was a hundred times fiercer and more dangerous than the battle between the devil huntresses and demon hunters up above.

Suddenly, Li Yao came to a halt.

Before him, it was a metro station, which had multiple entrances and exits in the malls on the sides of the street.

It was also a major station where two metro lines joined. There were a lot of branches below the ground.

He spat on the ground, and blowing the last flying glass sword that Long Yangjun shot over into pieces, blinked into the people that were running like headless flies, making his way to the metro station without looking back.

Chapter 2287 - Not My Own Kind!

Although the malls were crowded, few people squeezed into the metro station, perhaps because they feared that they would never be able to go up again once they entered it.

The passengers lingering in the metro station hardly came to the ground too. They were not sure what was happening on the ground, and they were all crouching in the corners waiting for the latest news.

A team of armed police officers set up checkpoints in the metro station, but judging from their shaking hands and their panicked faces, it could easily be told that they were not any elites.

The capital consisted of an assortment of forces. In name, all the police and troops were under the direct command of the emperor, but nobody knew who really controlled them. Li Yao did not intend to alarm those police officers and get involved in even greater trouble.

Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa!

Under the boost of his telepathic thoughts, the lamps on the ceiling of the metro station died out one after another, and the entire metro station immediately fell into darkness.

Although the emergent illumination rune arrays were activated one after another in only a few seconds, Li Yao already jumped over the door of a checkpoint into the tunnel taking advantage of the few seconds of darkness and flurry.

He rushed along the rail at his high speed. The dim light of the metro station was gradually swallowed by the darkness. It was so shadowy around that one would not be able to see their own fingers.

Li Yao came to a stop. Suddenly falling on one of his knees, he reduced his breath, his heartbeat, and even the flow of his blood to the minimum as he placed his hands on the rail and sensed the movement of the high-speed metro.

His eyes were staring at the darkness in the front even though there seemed to be nothing at all.

The darkness was like a mirror, but something crawled out of the mirror slowly.

Li Yao put his hands into his pockets. When his hands came out, each finger had put on a Cosmos Ring. All kinds of marvelous weapons, crystal suits, and even the Colossus were set for a life-and-death battle!

“Come on!”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes. With overwhelming fighting will beaming out of his eyes, he shouted, “Show yourself, Long Yangjun!”

“Okay.”

Long Yangjun’s faint laughter came over from the darkness. “As you wish. Don’t regret what you said. I’m about to show myself.”

“No, please don’t. Let’s just talk nicely!”

Li Yao said in a hurry, “We’ve known each other for years, and we used to be life-and-death comrades. In fact, I cherish our friendship very much. Why don’t we sit down and talk everything through in peace? Don’t show yourself. Don’t show yourself at all. If you show your true self, thousands of Immortal Cultivators of the Imperium may attack you together to slice and study you, right?”

“It doesn’t matter.”

Long Yangjun said casually, “If a certain irresolvable crisis happens someday and I am forced to deal with it with my true self, only to be caught by the Imperium and sliced for studies, I’ll certainly confess dutifully everything that I know before I’m sliced.

“For example, I perhaps will tell the Imperium that the Black Wind Fleet’s conquest at the edge of the cosmos is long over, and that the Black Wind Fleet has in fact been crushed and merged into an ambitious, rising superpower named ‘Star Glory Federation’. Although the Star Glory Federation is an insignificant weakling right now, it boasted tremendous legacies of the primeval age. It’s almost another version of the Alliance of the Holy Covenant from a thousand years ago!

“Right, I also have the accurate jump coordinates of the Star Glory Federation, as well as the detailed files including military, economy, politics, etc. I’m scared of pain more than anything else, and I’ll certainly tell them everything before they interrogate me!

“Oh, I almost forgot. There’s also the brilliant deeds and the enticing stories of Vulture Li Yao, who is the legendary founding father of the Star Glory Federation, the dominator of three or maybe seven Sectors, and the unparalleled expert from the edge of the cosmos. I'll be sure to compile the stories into three volumes and tell them everything that I know.

"It can't be helped. It will be too lonely if I am incarcerated or sliced for studies alone. As you said, we've known each other for years. We should go to prison or be sliced for studies together. That's what good friends should do, right?"

"Wow!"

Li Yao exclaimed, "You can't be that shameless, can you?"

"Why not? I've always been so shameless."

Long Yangjun said matter-of-factly, "Ever since my identity as 'Lead Eunuch Wang Xi', I have always been so shameless. This isn't the first day you know me, is it?"

"It is the same the other way around."

Li Yao sniffed, "If my identity is exposed or my life is at risk, I'll certainly expose your secrets and make sure that we die together! So, I'm truly confused. Why did you perform fatal attacks at me the moment we met, not fearing that we might've killed each other?"

"Fatal attacks?"

Long Yangjun sniffed and said, "Tsk, tsk, tsk. What an ungrateful man. It was only a minor joke with you a moment ago. If I had really performed fatal attacks at you, do you think that you could be standing here in one piece right now?"

"Enough of the nonsense!"

Licking his sharp teeth, Li Yao sneered, “You are free to try my current strength!”

“I know that you still have a ‘Gold Bird’ that you have not revealed yet. It’s really a name as lousy as ‘Tartarean Skeleton’. However, the time and location today are not appropriate. Maybe next time!”

Long Yangjun said lazily, “Your operations over the past month were too blatant. The Association of Demon Hunters is not Dongfang Wang’s only intelligence force. The Dongfang family’s own intelligence department figured out that you had a major operation in White Stone Municipality. As the president of the Association of Demon Hunters, can I turn Dongfang Wang down when he asked me to take action? I have to do something to trick him!”

“Speaking of which—”

Li Yao asked suspiciously, “It is quite incredible of you to have grown into a trusted subordinate of the Prime Minister of the Imperium in only a couple of years and the head of the most powerful secret intelligence organization, just like how you established ‘Ghost Character’ in the Ancient Sages Sector. Your life here is thriving again! What do you want exactly?”

“Monster Li, are you complimenting me or yourself? I thought that I was already good enough to climb the ladder upward whenever possible, but I did not know that you would be even better. How long have you been in the Imperium? Two years? One year? Half a year? You have become Queen Li Linghai’s trusted subordinate, the most popular super warrior of the reformists. Rumors even have it that you are an expert from the royal family, and your ancestors have protected the emperors for generations?

Hahahaha. You have no idea how hard I've been trying to hold back my laughter these days!"

Trying not to burst into laughter, Long Yangjun said, "Don't be so nervous. I do not have any clandestine schemes. However, after I came to the Imperium by myself, I had to count on a powerful force in order to retrieve sufficient training resources and to maintain my Colossus. It couldn't be helped. However strong one's bloodline is, it will soon run dry without the refill of incessant resources, won't it?

"As it happened, I ran into Dongfang Wang by accident and helped him to settle the multiple factions within the Association of Demon Hunters, allowing him to gain full control over the secret organization, which was not under the influence of other big shots of the Dongfang family anymore. Is it strange at all that I became his trusted subordinate after that?"

Li Yao observed, "Simple as that? I don't buy it! I've been fooled by you once in the Star Glory Federation. You appeared to be an elite warrior of the Nuwa Clan but were actually corrupted by the Pangu Clan! I'll be an idiot if I believe you again!"

Long Yangjun sighed and said, "It appears that you are strongly biased against the Pangu Civilization."

Li Yao said coldly, "Those who are not my own kind always think differently!"

"You human beings can be very hilarious sometimes."

Long Yangjun chuckled. "While you claim 'those who are not my own kind always think differently', you are never united against alien species. Instead, you always stab the sharpest blades into the people of your own kind.

“You describe the extraterrestrial devils, the demons, or the Pangu Clan as your sworn enemies, and you are all determined to remove the evils. But how many human beings were actually killed by the extraterrestrial devils, the demons, and the Pangu Clan in the past ten thousand years? How many evils have human beings killed? And how many human beings were killed in the slaughters against each other, and how many most prosperous planets were destroyed by human beings themselves?

“The example is right before our eyes. The Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils and the Association of Demon Hunters are supposed to deal with alien species, but where have their claws and blades been landing?

“Oh, I almost forgot. ‘Those who are not my own kind always think differently’ is not an idiom that describes the relationship between mankind and other alien species in the beginning. Instead, it refers to the different ‘people’ within mankind.

“It means that even if you are all human beings, as long as your culture and custom are slightly different, you will not belong to the same kind, you will always ‘think differently’, and you must be removed as soon as possible!

“From that point of view, between you, a human being, and me, a ‘half Pangu and half Nuwa’, who is like a leviathan, who should be wary of whom? My dear friend Monster Li, can you answer my question?”

After a long silence, Li Yao’s spiritual energy and tone both softened. “Hey, is there any chance of cooperation between the two of us?”

“Maybe.”

In the darkness, Long Yangjun gave neither approval nor disapproval. “However, for two people who each have their own malicious plans to cooperate, at least two prerequisites are mandatory.

“First of all, you cannot be too much weaker than me. If you are too weak, you will only be my burden. Will there be any necessity for cooperation?

“Secondly, you cannot be too strong than me, or you may kill me at any moment. Such cooperation will be too worrisome and exhausting.

“I know that although you look shameless, cowardly, and very good at running, you certainly have your greatest trump card in your hands and an ultimate skill that you have never shown yet. Hehe. When I figure out what your final trump card is, chances are that we can really cooperate again. After all, I feel very pleased with our cooperation last time!”

Long Yangjun chuckled like wind chimes, and her laughter gradually disappeared in the depths of the darkness.

Chapter 2288 - Long Yangjun’s Feelings!

Chapter 2288 Long Yangjun’s Feelings!

“Wait!”

Anxiously, Li Yao waved his hands in the darkness. “Don’t leave just yet, Long Yangjun!”

“Why? You haven’t been beaten enough?”

Long Yangjun’s laughter was unpredictable. “That’s alright. We may continue next time!”

“It’s about something else.”

Li Yao did not know how he should express himself. “You know that I’ve been against countless people on my journey from the Heaven’s Origin Sector to the Flying Star Sector, to the Blood Demon Sector, to the Ancient Sages Sector, and then to the center of the cosmos, and I have killed many experts in person. While some of them were truly atrocious and deserved their deaths, some other people would not have to die if they had not been so obstinate.

“If they were still alive, and their minds were slightly changed, the world might’ve been changed into a better and not a worse place. We could’ve even become friends. Even if we did nothing except having a dinner or chitchat over a cup of tea, it would still be much better than a life-and-death battle.

“What I’m trying to say is that I’ve killed enough enemies, and they are certainly not pleasant memories. Even if you are truly not a human being but a hybrid of the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan, as long as you are not determined to commit the unforgivable, monstrous things, I still prefer to be a friend to you, not just a cooperator, and certainly not an enemy. I meant everything I said!”

Long Yangjun seemed to be caught unprepared by Li Yao’s expression of emotions. After a daze, she said, “What do you mean by ‘unforgivable, monstrous things’ exactly?”

Li Yao said, “You know, the kind of stuff that the supervillains always do, like… destroying mankind.”

“Hahahaha!”

Long Yangjun burst into great laughter, which echoed longer than usual in the dark tunnel. “Aren’t you a little bit too imaginative? Does mankind need to be destroyed by me? You have done an excellent job of ‘destroying mankind’. All I need to do is to hold my chin, squat nearby, and appreciate it slowly. Why do I need to do any extra things in person?”

Li Yao said carefully, “Alright. Then, I’ll just assume that you are not too malicious to mankind. In that case, why don’t you tell me what you want exactly? Perhaps I can help you as a ‘friend’ without asking anything in return.”

Long Yangjun was dazed again. “Why?”

Li Yao said, “Do you need a reason to make friends? Brotherhood and camaraderie are what matters for all Cultivators! If I have to say a reason, it is because I feel that you are not a bad person. When we explored the underground laboratory of the Pangu Clan deep inside the Nuwa warship, you could’ve caused greater damage to the exploration squad with your advantage that you were familiar with the terrain, but you did not hurt any of them and simply slipped away on an escape capsule. It made me feel that however mean you talk, you still have feelings, or maybe expectations, for mankind, don’t you?”

Long Yangjun sneered and said, “Since when have you become such a romantic?”

Li Yao said, “I meant everything that I said. If you are willing to trust me as a human being, I will trust you too, and I’ll give you a hand whatever you are going to do!”

Long Yangjun fell silent again. It was not until Li Yao thought that she had left again in secret that she finally said slowly, “I told you what I wanted to do before I left the Star Glory Federation. I was not lying back then.

“Born in ‘a world of ancient Cultivators’, grew up as a human being, and even lived in a human society for a hundred years, I had completely regarded myself as a real human being. Except for those uncanny dreams, I never had second thoughts.

“But one day, new bloodlines and new identities awakened in me, not one, but two. I realized that I was no longer a member of the world that I was familiar with in the past, but a traveler from a more distant time and space. My compatriots were all gone hundreds of thousands of years ago, and I was the only one who was forgotten… until the present day.

“The dual bloodlines of Pangu and Nuwa entangled and fought inside my body, considering my cells and my soul as their battleground. I was faced with the tough choices between absolute order and absolute chaos, and I could barely decide who I was.

“Who am I? Where do I come from? And where am I going? Every person, or perhaps every intelligent life, has been seeking the answers to those questions ever since they were born, don’t they?

“From the edge of the cosmos to the center, from the Ancient Sages Sector to the Star Glory Federation and to the Imperium of True Human Beings, everything I’ve been doing is for a single purpose, which is to find the ‘ultimate answers’ to the three questions.

“I am now standing on an intersection of my fate. Lying before me are three roads leading to the future. I can choose to be a member of the Pangu Clan, I can also choose to be a member of the Nuwa Clan, or… if possible, I can continue to walk on as a human being.

“What should I choose? I haven’t found an answer yet. I guess I’ll just wait and see. Is this some sort of procrastination? Haha!”

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao tried to ask as calmly as possible, “You can continue to evolve into a member of the Pangu Clan—a god for the Covenant Alliance?”

“Is there a problem?”

Long Yangjun giggled. “I’ve discovered that both the federation and the Imperium are strongly biased against the Pangu Clan and the Covenant Alliance. As the ancient moral had it, if you are not a fish, you can never know whether or not a fish is happy when it is swimming in a pond. You always claim that you will liberate all the people of the Covenant Alliance and help them ‘awaken’ themselves. How do you know that the people of the Covenant Alliance need your liberation, or that they want to be awakened?”

“Isn’t it obvious?”

Li Yao declared angrily, “Those people of the Covenant Alliance are deprived of their feelings and free will. They are incomplete, miserable machines!”

“Wrong.”

Long Yangjun said, “Like I told you before I left the federation, human beings never had feelings in the beginning. It was just because their brains were invaded by the extraterrestrial devils, like crystal processors that contracted viruses, that they grew feelings and self-will.

“It is certainly not bad to have feelings and self-will, but even if one does not have such things, it will be just another regular form. Nobody needs to be saved by anybody.

“Variability is a norm of life after all. If all lives are identical, they will not be far away from destruction. Human beings with feelings and self-will are like birds in the sky, and those without feelings and self-will are like fish in the water. Perhaps the birds consider water a cage that confines and suffocates the fish, but if they snatch the fish out of the water, it will only lead to a greater tragedy.

“Besides, the life of the ‘birds’ like you is a mess too. Just go down along this tunnel for several thousand meters, you will see countless murky underground towns where millions of people live years without seeing any sunlight. What a miserable and painful life they have. You must’ve heard a thing or two about it too, haven’t you? Why, you want to liberate the people of the Covenant Alliance and make them live like the underclass of the Imperium?”

Li Yao was rendered speechless for a moment.

He found it impossible to lie to himself that the “hominoids” living at the bottom class of the Imperium, who were exploited and even butchered blatantly, certainly had a more comfortable life than the “demi-humans” of the Covenant Alliance who did not have feelings and self-will.

The more Long Yangjun talked, the more excited she became, as if the deepest anger and dissatisfaction in her heart had been triggered by Li Yao. “The more I get to know human beings, the more scared I become of such a smart and brutal creature. I thought that everything around me was corrupted because I lived in the ancient, undeveloped Ancient Sages Sector, but when I came to the federation and the Imperium that were far more advanced, civilized, and modernized, I discovered that nothing changed at all. In fact, they even changed for the worse.

“Under the excuse to conquer the universe, you invented all kinds of powerful, terrifying weapons that were a hundred times more destructive than the magical equipment of the Ancient Sages Sector. But the next second after they were produced, you projected those weapons to your own kind without any hesitation.

“Your elites and leaders fooled the innocent and the ignorant into fighting each other under the awesome banners using inspiring speeches, but despite all their rhetoric, you could always find the stealthy, selfish desires in their motivations.

“Compared to the Ancient Sages Sector, the modern society has copious materials, and those with wealth, power, and strength boast resources that are enough for their use for ten lives. Even a business leader, or a random senior worker, lives a more entertaining life than the emperor of the Ancient Sages Sector. However, in the corners deep below the ground, some people are still starved to death after crying all night. Why is that exactly?

“From the ancient times to the modern day, from the federation to the Imperium, I have seen so many… incomprehensible and unimaginable things. What reasons do you want me to convince myself to become a member of such mankind again? Assuming that I do not want to join the corruption but go to the Covenant Alliance, where I evolve into a real member of the Pangu Clan, leading the people there who do not have selfish desires because they do not have feelings and who cannot be evil because they do not have self-will, in search for a new lifestyle and a new form of civilization… Is that really an unforgivable and monstrous thing?”

Li Yao was deeply astounded by Long Yangjun’s words.

He felt that what she said was even more aggressive than the invisible wind blades that she launched a moment ago.

He did not have any answer to the questions either. So, he could only clench his fists and said, “If you also want to change the world, you don’t have to go to the Covenant Alliance. You can do it right here in the Imperium! Stand by my side and fight with me to help the reformists! As two travelers from the edge of the cosmos, we can look after each other. Whatever training resources, magical equipment, or weapons you need, the reformists will have more for you if the Dongfang family can’t provide them for you!”

Long Yangjun burst into laughter. “Hey, hey, hey. Have you sunk too deep in your role, or are you really brainwashed by Queen Li Linghai and transformed from a Cultivator into an Immortal Cultivator? You are persuading me to surrender on her behalf?”

“Of course, I remember that I’m a Cultivator, and I know what I am doing clearly.”

Li Yao said solemnly, “However, a world-changing revolution that involves hundreds of Sectors at the center of the cosmos cannot be achieved overnight. We can only choose the lesser of two evils. At the very least, the reformists are more advanced than the four Kurfürst families. So, I’ll side with the reformists for now. When the four Kurfürst families are all crushed one way or another, I’ll try to transform the reformists and carry out my will one step after another!”

Chapter 2289 - New Enigmas!

Chapter 2289 New Enigmas!

“Are you sure that it’s ‘the lesser of two evils’?”

Long Yangjun said thoughtfully, “Just because the four Kurfürst families are obstinate, unpardonable, and insane, does not mean that the reformists or your queen are any better. If you drive four wolves away only to replace them with a tiger, is it really better?”

Li Yao thought of something. “What do you know exactly? Is there anything wrong with Li Linghai?”

“Considering that you sincerely regard me as a friend, I will offer you a kind reminder. Your queen is very complicated and even… highly dangerous.”

Long Yangjun said, “When I just came to the Imperium of True Human Beings, I lurked in the royal palace for a while and encountered her once. We almost burst into a fight.”

Li Linghai mentioned the incident to Li Yao too, but she skipped the part that the two of them nearly fought.

Li Yao couldn’t help but bulge his eyes.

Long Yangjun continued, “I told you before I left the federation that I was very interested in the royal library of the Imperium of True Human Beings. Many ancient classics stored in the library recorded the history of the ten thousand years between the Star Ocean Imperium’s collapse to the establishment of the Imperium of True Human Beings. They might be of great help to light the road ahead of me.

“Therefore, the most important thing after I came to the Imperium of True Human Beings was to find a way to sneak into the royal palace. I intended to explore the mysteries of the royal library.

“It was at the bottom floor of the royal library that I happened upon Li Linghai.

“The royal library of the Imperium is divided into two areas. The upper floor is a public area that is open to the royal family and even the core descendants of the four Kurfürst families. Although the files and classics stored inside are also precious, they do not have many secrets. Many of them are merely rare editions, but you can find books of the same content outside.

“The bottom floor, however, is a forbidden area where the real secrets are hidden. A lot of anecdotes of the royal family, treasure maps, marvelous arts, and even mysteries of the primeval age are stored inside. Those things are supposed to be read by the emperor himself as well as the few most beloved princes only. Ever since the age of Blackstar the Great, multiple barriers have been installed. It is impossible for an outsider to open the area. If it is opened by brute force, the books, jade chips, and all kinds of classics inside will all be destroyed.

“It is a pity that the royal family had earthquakes five hundred years ago, and quite a few emperors died abruptly even before they sired a child. So, new emperors had to be selected from the branches, and the ways to unlock the barriers were lost in the river of time. Right now, it is safe to say that nobody in the entire universe can open the bottom floor of the royal library.

“I was not fully aware of the issue in the beginning. Although I learned a thing or two about it, I did not think too highly of the barriers but believed that I would certainly have a way to crack them. But after I snuck in, I realized that the barriers were much more sophisticated than my estimation. I tried every method possible, but none of them worked.

“I was about to return futilely when I ran into Li Linghai.”

Thinking quickly, Li Yao asked in shock, “Why did she come to the bottom floor of the royal library?”

“That is exactly the most important question!”

Long Yangjun said, “As the queen of the Imperium, there was no reason why Li Linghai was unaware of the rules and secrets of the royal library. The ways to unlock the barriers of the bottom floor had been lost for almost five hundred years. Neither the emperor nor the four Kurfürst families knew the solutions. It could barely be cracked by brute force. Although she was the ‘queen’, she was in fact just a spy that the four Kurfürst families sent to monitor the emperor and an ‘outsider’ too. She couldn’t have learned the solutions at all. It was unreasonable for her to go to the library because she could do nothing.

“But I obviously sensed that she was exactly there to open the bottom floor of the royal library, where the real valuable knowledge was hidden!”

Hooked, Li Yao couldn’t help but ask, “What then?”

“Then nothing.”

Long Yangjun said, “I was greatly surprised to discover that she seemed to be very familiar with the traps, tunnels, and barriers of the bottom floor of the royal library, and that every step she took worked effectively. So, I lurked in the darkness and reduced my breath and biophysical activities to the minimum, preparing to peep at what she was going to do next. But out of my expectation, I was discovered by her at the last moment.”

Li Yao was greatly appalled.

He had personally learned a lesson on Long Yangjun’s expertise in concealing herself a moment ago. Even though he knew that Long Yangjun was there, and he was more vigilant than ever, he could barely distinguish her from the crowd.

But Li Linghai was still able to discover her when she was lurking in the darkness and covered her breath and biophysical activities?

How dreadful Li Linghai was!

“At the moment, I perceived extremely intense determination of killing.”

Thinking carefully, Long Yangjun said, “Let me put it this way. Li Linghai’s killing intent at that time was ten times sharper than ‘Sword Maniac’ Yan Liren’s sword aura. Almost like a conditional reflex, I fled in panic at my highest speed, not even willing to have a single clash with her.”

The same event came in two different versions under the narration of Li Linghai and Long Yangjun.

For some reason, Li Yao still preferred to trust Long Yangjun more. “So, Li Linghai knows how to open the bottom floor of the royal library? Why?”

Li Yao’s first reaction was that it had to do with the heritages of the Supreme Emperor that Li Linghai received.

But on second thought, it was unreasonable. The Supreme Emperor perished in, or escaped to, the Empyreal Transcendence Sector ten thousand years ago, but the royal library of the Imperium of True Human Beings was apparently built only a thousand years ago.

Even if Li Linghai had all the legacies of the Supreme Emperor, they couldn’t have been related to the secrets of the royal library at all.

“I need to ask you the question. After all, you are her ‘trusted subordinate’!”

Long Yangjun mocked Li Yao. “Although it’s been two years, I still remember Li Linghai’s dominating vibe clearly today. It was almost like I found her biggest secret, and she had to kill me to keep my mouth shut.

“I fled in time after the encounter. It was likely that she did not recognize me, but in the few months that followed, a dozen guards that were responsible for the safety of the royal library and maids who worked in the area nearby died abruptly and uncannily. Presuming that she must be secretly investigating the ‘mysterious person’ who caught her weird behavior that night, I was too scared to stay in the royal palace anymore and escaped as soon as possible.

“Your queen was such a scary person. How am I bold enough to join her?”

Li Yao pondered for a moment and said, “Truth be told, I actually feel that something is greatly wrong with Li Linghai too. I am staying by her side because I am observing her schemes from close up so that I can stop her in time! If you have more intelligence, why don’t you bring it out so that we can discuss it together? Chances are that we can outline the truth of everything if we combine our intelligence, right?”

“Don’t overestimate your smartness. Li Linghai is such a dangerous person that even I am reluctant to be her enemy easily, and you want to stay by her side and manipulate her when you are such a fool?”

Long Yangjun chuckled. “As for the exchange of intelligence, maybe next time. Somebody’s here!”

Li Yao was greatly alarmed. Boosting his telepathic thoughts to the maximum, he did sense that dozens of rather impressive airs were approaching.

Behind Long Yangjun, a high-speed metro was rushing close too.

Shua!

The two of them jumped to the two sides of the tunnel in time. The metro brushed past the two of them in between. Li Yao sensed that Long Yangjun grabbed the shell of the crystal train, and her scent drifted further and further. But he simply embedded his body deeper into the maintenance slot next to the tunnel, planning to flee from the branches after the metro passed.

Li Linghai is capable of opening the central, secret area of the royal library… It should be true. Had it not been her own experience, she wouldn’t have made up such details. Also, what can she possibly get by lying to me on such details?

Li Yao pondered carefully in the dark. But why? What secrets have Li Linghai been hiding? Under the slogan of ‘Honor the

Majesty and Settle the Rebellions', what exactly are her ambitions?

Suddenly—

An invisible but unstoppable wind blade darted in from the gap of the metro without a sound. Li Yao was so shocked that he had goosebumps all over his body. Had he not been keeping the last bit of his wariness out of habit, his carotid artery would've been cut by the wind blade!

“What the heck!”

Li Yao roared, “Long Yangjun, you are still here?”

“I left a moment ago.”

Long Yangjun's delightful laughter came from the darkness. “But it seemed too great an opportunity when you were considering by yourself and appeared defenseless, so I couldn't hold myself back from shooting at you again. It did not occur to me that you had some vigilance after all.”

“What is wrong with you?!”

Li Yao burst into fury. “Just now, you claimed that the vileness and sordidness of human beings baffled and even intimidated you and that you would rather not be a member of such mankind, like you were a pure, innocent lotus flower. But the way I see it, you are taking a lot of pleasure in the shameless deceptions and ambushes!”

“That's right. I was a human being for more than a hundred years before my primeval bloodlines were awakened after all. It is all because of the bad influence of you people!”

Long Yangjun grimaced. “It can’t be helped. I am exactly such a contradictory and erratic person. Since we are friends, you should be more tolerant, shouldn’t you?”

“… That does make sense. Alright, I’ll forgive you one more time. This is the last time.”

While talking, Li Yao drew a saber as thin as paper from the Cosmos Ring without a sound and slashed it at where Long Yangjun’s laughter came from. “Forgive my a*s!”

The saber, naturally, missed the target.

Long Yangjun’s laughter was further and further away. “Look, what a traitorous human being. You said that we were good friends a moment ago, yet you are changing your face so quickly and attacking me so brutally.

“I’m really leaving this time. One last reminder, it is the ‘Fire Blade Squad’, the rapid response troop of the Dongfang family, that is surrounding you right now. The big guy in the heavy fiery crystal suit can transform four times, and his ultimate form highlights agility over weight. He can be quite tricky. Don’t be fooled by his appearance!”

Long Yangjun was really gone this time.

Hot waves were vaguely flowing over from the branches and maintenance channels nearby.

Spitting on the ground, Li Yao retreated his saber into the Cosmos Ring and warmed his fingers while cursing.

He did not want to use a saber right now; he only wanted to vent his fury through his fists!

Chapter 2290 - Sky Changing Operation!

Chapter 2290 Sky Changing Operation!

The fierce battle in White Stone Municipality represented the beginning of the full counterattack of the Dongfang family.

Despite the unpleasant episodes in the process—for example, the “Fire Blade Squad”, a rapid response troop of the family, was blown up by someone one punch after another in the metro tunnel of White Stone Municipality—the aggressive counterattacks of the Dongfang family on most of the battlegrounds defended the glory of the “First Family” of the Imperium.

Many secret bureaus of the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils were discovered and sabotaged. A lot of reformists who had been hiding surfaced and got caught by the Association of Demon Hunters. The propaganda machines of the Dongfang family also functioned at the highest efficiency, beautifying themselves while vilifying the reformists to be traitors who were trying to shake the foundation of the Imperium.

Dongfang Wang, the prime minister of the Imperium, frequently showed up on public occasions in the most approachable way, demonstrating his calmness in times of trouble. Many wavering forces that were sitting on the fence were more or less reassured and decided that they should wait for a while longer before they joined the reformists and the Li family.

When a storm was about to come, the wind would be blowing first. Even the most inert Immortal Cultivators could smell the smoke flowing beyond the atmosphere of the capital. The final battle of the two parties would begin in no time.

Nothing that happened seemed to have any influence on Li Linghai, who was commanding the missions in the Emperor’s Mausoleum.

She still worked according to the plan and simply allowed the Dongfang family and the Association of Demon Hunters to destroy the secret bureaus of the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils and capture the core members of the reformists. But through various channels in secret, the experts of the Astounding Thunder Fleet and the Deep Sea Fleet, as well as a batch of extremely powerful magical equipment, were delivered to the underground world of the capital.

At this moment, a remote video meeting was going on.

It was hosted by Li Linghai in person, and the participants were the important personnel of the reformists who were hiding in the dark corners of the entire planet.

Naturally, Li Yao was among them.

He was now neither in the Emperor’s Mausoleum nor in White Stone Municipality but had found a dark alley in the forty-seventh district below the ground. While modifying and strengthening the special gears purchased from the black market in a secret workshop, he simulated the final assault that was to be implemented soon on a similar terrain.

“In the past ten days, the Dongfang family’s counterattack was very fierce, and we have suffered great losses.”

On the 3D light beam, Li Linghai said casually, “But everything was within our expectation, if not guided by us intentionally. The dozens of arrests and all the shocking cases were all meant to cover our real targets, which are Dongfang Renxin and his secret institute!

“Right now, the Dongfang family has been tricked. At least two ‘decoys’ that we sent have distracted their attention entirely.

“Firstly, the operation in White Stone Municipality.

“Although the operation failed, it misled the Dongfang family into thinking that our target was the mayor of White Stone Municipality. Everybody knows that the mayor is the most trusted subordinate of Dongfang Tai, the fifty elders of the Dongfang family, and the CEO of the ‘Red Viper Heavy Industry Group’ which monopolizes over thirty percent of the productions of crystal suits and starships in the Dongfang family. It is not hard to imagine how important Dongfang Tai is. He cannot afford an accident.

“The operation in White Stone Municipality as well as the few subsequent arrests were all aimed at the key personnel of the Red Viper Heavy Industry Group. Plus the files that we intentionally left in the secret bureaus for the Dongfang family to pick up, they should be enough to let the Dongfang family make a wrong judgment and think that our ultimate goal is Dongfang Tai!

“With Dongfang Tai’s prestige and position, he would certainly not escape to his hometown like a loser. Instead, he has summoned tremendous strong soldiers and troops to protect his safety. As a result, the defenses of other places will inevitably be weaker.

“Secondly, all the people we arrested earlier are locked in the secret bureau we set up in Black Mountain City. The news has been learned by the Dongfang family through various sources. In the meantime, we have released messages half true and half false, claiming that we will arrest Dongfang Tai on June 10.

“The fish have bitten the bait. According to accurate intelligence, the Dongfang family is secretly planning a thunderous rescue operation. It is estimated that they will attack the secret bureau in Black Mountain City on June 10 and rescue all the prisoners.

“Both the protection of Dongfang Tai and the assault toward the bureau in Black Mountain City will require tremendous troops of the Dongfang family in the capital, weakening if not vacuuming the defenses of other areas. We have not done anything to Dongfang Renxin so far, and the enemy couldn’t have guessed that we have grasped all the evidence of Dongfang Renxin’s crimes.

“On Dongfang Renxin’s side, around June 10, he will be meeting a special guest in his secret institute. An elder of the Dongfang family, who is very close to Dongfang Wang and Dongfang Renxin, is going to perform the ‘spiritual root polishing surgery’ on his most beloved grandson. There is nothing on the detailed procedures of the surgery yet, but it is very certain that such a surgery will sacrifice a dozen if not more training geniuses who have high aptitudes. Only the deaths of dozens of geniuses can be traded for the rebirth of a mediocre man!

“This secret technique has a high demand for the freshness of the ‘raw materials’, which are difficult to come by. Therefore, as long as the appointment has been scheduled, it is not to be changed even if the capital is turned upside down. On June 10, Dongfang Renxin will certainly show up in his secret laboratory with all the evidence of his crimes!

“Our assault, on the other hand, will begin at 2 p.m. on June 10.

“Yue Wushuang’s elite tactical squad of the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils will be the first team, which is responsible for breaking into the secret institute, blocking the evidence, and capturing the criminals.

“The experts of the Deep Sea Fleet and the Astounding Thunder Fleet, who are now temporarily enlisted in the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils, will make up the second team, commanded by Tu Zhengdao. Your mission is to stop the warriors of the Dongfang family at the periphery of the secret institute, ensure the smoothness of the arrest operation, and cover the devil huntresses to evacuate with the targets and the pieces of evidence.

“The third team, made of Li Yao, Huang Feng, and Master Jin Tianzong, has only one mission, which is to destroy all the crystal bombs deployed inside and outside of the secret institute as fast as possible when the operation begins, terminating the self-destructing devices!

“However fierce the battles on the ground recently are, as long as we take down Dongfang Renxin, the collapse of Dongfang Wang’s cabinet will be unavoidable. It will even be barely possible for Dongfang Wang to resign in peace. His reputation will be gone, and he will be tried in a court of law. The sky of the Imperium of True Human Beings will be changed!

“Therefore, the code name for the secret arrest operation is —’Sky Changing’!”

Li Linghai introduced the details of the “Sky Changing Operation” confidently and quickly. In less than an hour, the operation that would decide the fate of the Imperium was already deployed.

After the meeting was over, everybody’s image disappeared into the darkness, but she retained the point-to-point remote communication with Li Yao.

“I’m told that you had a skirmish with Dongfang Mingyue in the secret operation in White Stone Municipality?”

Li Linghai asked straightforwardly.

Touching his neck, Li Yao replied, not entirely recovered from his fear, “Yes. That woman was truly brutal. Had Your Grace not warned me in advance, chances were that my head would’ve been cut off by her.”

“Huh…”

However smart Li Linghai was, she couldn’t have foreseen that Li Yao and “Dongfang Mingyue” were old acquaintances who had known each other for years. Pondering for a moment, she asked, “Neither of you seemed to make use of a Colossus, did you?”

“Didn’t Your Grace say that we’d better lay low in the capital and we should not use the Colossus unless it was absolutely necessary?”

Blinking his eyes, Li Yao replied innocently, “The situation was truly dangerous at that time. In the life-blighting battle, Dongfang Mingyue and I were both scared of each other’s fatal weapons, and we both disrupted each other’s movement to summon magical equipment from the Cosmos Rings.

"I assume that Dongfang Mingyue must've been more or less wary of me too. After all, my Gold Vulture certainly deserves its reputation. If she intended to kill me who was armed with the Gold Vulture, she would certainly have to pay a gory price!

"Therefore, neither of us used a Colossus in the end, and I managed to force the monster to retreat before I escaped."

Li Linghai nodded her head, not too suspicious of Li Yao's explanation.

Although he might be bragging about himself, she knew Li Yao's bizarre, inexhaustible life-saving methods very well and had even tried some of them in person.

"Alright. I'm reassured now that you are fine."

Li Linghai's tone suddenly softened. "Take a good rest these days and make thorough preparations. In the 'Sky Changing Operation', you will play an indispensable role. If the Sky Changing Operation succeeds, we will see the light of dawn on the cause to renew the Imperium, and I will not forget your contributions."

"Your Grace—"

Li Yao suddenly thought of something and asked, "There's something that has confused me for a long time. Since the slogan of the reformists is 'Honor the Majesty and Settle the Rebellions', His Majesty Emperor Shenwu should be playing a vital role in our cause. But why have you never come up with any plan to rescue His Majesty who is now still controlled by the Dongfang family?

"What if the emperor utters voices that are not in favor of the reformists or even yourself when His Majesty is under the custody of the Dongfang family for too long?”

With a casual smile, Li Linghai said, “You have to be powerful enough yourself for the emperor to endorse you. With the desperate situation that Dongfang Wang is mired in right now, even if he had asked the emperor to speak for him, nobody will admit that it is the real emperor.

“Of course, I have a rescue plan. I am now secretly investigating where Dongfang Wang is hiding His Majesty. When the Sky Changing Operation succeeds and Dongfang Wang’s cabinet falls, we will certainly get the emperor out. By then, we will still require your help.”

Looking at Li Linghai in the eyes, Li Yao asked, “Where will His Majesty be placed after the rescue?”

Chapter 2291 - Ambitionless Queen!

Chapter 2291 Ambitionless Queen!

With a smile of disdain, Li Linghai said slowly, “Our Emperor Shenwu, if put nicely, is an innocent idealist, or if put frankly, a stubborn, unexceptional man who dwells in his own illusions and really thinks that he is to be credited for the glorious triumph of the Imperium’s counterattack. He is even under the impression that he can restore the glory of Blackstar the Great and make all the soldiers and nobles kneel before him.

“All in all, that is a man who is more of a saboteur than a contributor. It doesn’t really matter even if he falls into Dongfang Wang’s hands now.”

Rolling his eyes, Li Yao asked, “Well, he is Your Grace’s husband after all… and you guys have a dozen children together.”

A hint of disgust and hate flashed on Li Linghai’s face. She said coldly, “You should know that becoming the wife of that pig is the one thing that I hate most in my life. If things could go my way, I would rather watch him die in person.

“However, considering that the Imperium of True Human Beings needs a nominal emperor in any case, as long as he does not commit any follies and get himself killed, I will still respect him as His Majesty after he is rescued. That is also my promise.

“Speaking of which, Li Yao, I’m beginning to think that you are not really asking about Emperor Shenwu but about me, right? You want to know where I will place myself after the mission to renew the Imperium is really accomplished, and whether or not I will become a dictator to some degree, some kind of ‘she-emperor’, right?”

Li Yao smiled, somewhat in embarrassment, as a way of acknowledgment.

Li Linghai sniffed, not considering it as an offense. “As I told you earlier, everything I’ve been doing is for the salvation of the Imperium but not for myself to gain the power, although I will certainly do a better job than the four Kurfürst families if I do control the supreme power someday.

“The reformists have come up with quite a few solutions to the politics of the Imperium after the four Kurfürst families partly collapsed. One of the plans is to add at least another two hundred and fifty members, who are all reformists, to the Council of Elders, which has five hundred elders right now, in order to check and balance the old interest groups.

“However, the plan is too tricky to be put into practice because it is likely to raise the vehement resistance of the old elders, which will intensify the conflicts. Therefore, a substitutional plan came forth, which proposes to divide the Council of Elders into two houses. The current Council of Elders will be the Upper House, and the prestige and privileges of the elders will stay the same. But a new agency named Lower House, which has three thousand seats, will be established. The elders in the Lower House will be elected by the broader interest groups and represent the interests of the majority to grasp the real power.

“The two plans, as well as some other plans about dividing and curbing the power and about how to establish an impartial, honorable, and effective grand government, have been discussed by the reformists for a long time. Everybody has been offering their thoughts and acknowledged the ideas. In any case, it will be much better than the oligarchy and tyranny of the four Kurfürst families. Do you think that it is possible for a brutal, powerful dictator to rise on such a philosophical foundation?"

Li Yao rolled his eyes again and again but did not say anything.

"I understand your concerns when you regard yourself as a Cultivator, but your concerns are all ungrounded."

Li Linghai's tone was even softer, as if she were explaining to herself, as she continued, "What are the most important factors in creating a ruthless dictator? Army and prestige. Taking the two factors into account, it means that countless experts must pledge their loyalty to myself and nobody else.

"But is it the situation right now?

"In terms of army, the Deep Sea Fleet is completely commanded by General Dongfang Sheng. I never ask about any of the details or interfere with the election and promotion of officers. It is needless to even mention General Lei Chenghu's Astounding Thunder Fleet. It is so independent that it can only be called my ally and not my subordinate.

"In terms of prestige, I have never encouraged any personality cult in the reformists. Dongfang Sheng, Yue Wushuang, and Jin Yuyan did not join the reformists because they worshipped or were loyal to me. They all had their own reasons and agreed with the ideas of the reformists. That was how we walked together.

"This is even more so the case when it comes to you and General Lei Chenghu. Let's be honest here. Am I 'prestigious' before the two of you at all?

“All in all, I am a guide of the reformists, but I am certainly not a unique leader of the reformists. If I had intended to be a dictator, or a ‘she-emperor’ like you said earlier, I wouldn’t have built the reformists into what they are today, and I would have tried to grasp the army in my hands, right?

“After all, no matter how strong my personal combat ability is, it is absolutely useless when faced with overwhelming starships and troops.

“I did not do it at the beginning, and I have even fewer reasons to do it when the reformists have expanded and boasted their own determination today. But it does not matter. It is not important whether or not I am the leader of the reformists or the Imperium. As long as a stronger and everlasting new Imperium can be created, it will be enough!”

After a long daze, Li Yao failed to find many loopholes in Li Linghai’s soul-stirring speech. He could only say, “It does seem to be the case.”

“Then, what are you worried about?”

With a smile, Li Linghai said, “Just drop the random thoughts and make preparations. Trust me, you are maintaining the balance and stability at the center of the cosmos by doing what you are asked to do. The lives of more people will be saved because of you!”

Li Linghai cut off the picture of communication, leaving Li Yao in the dark mist by himself.

He was even more worried than before.

The mental devil observed from his brain, “Has it occurred to you that the queen is particularly gentle today and tries very hard to defend herself, as if she is scared that we might misunderstand her, which is totally different from when we just met her?”

“Of course I have.”

Li Yao said, “Something is definitely wrong. A person who used to be as cold as ice suddenly turning so gentle is certainly not a good thing.”

However, even after Li Yao and the mental devil thought for a long time, they still could not figure out what the problem was.

Li Linghai was not wrong about one thing. Whatever schemes, ambitious plans, or insane ideas she had, they had to be put into practice by an army in the end.

But Li Linghai had indeed given the commandership of her army away. Even the Deep Sea Fleet that she founded in person had been entrusted to Dongfang Sheng, who was just an “outsider”. She couldn’t have been more frank and selfless.

Li Yao had met Dongfang Sheng several times. He was certain that the fleet commander, who was in the Divinity Transformation Stage too, did not have any absolute loyalty or admiration to Li Linghai herself.

It was needless to mention Lei Chenghu. Should Li Linghai act abnormally, it would be Lei Chenghu who would stand out first and destroy her.

The politics of the new Imperium in the design of the reformists were also much more advanced than the dark governance of the four Kurfürst families. Most of the reformists joined the cause to renew the Imperium because of the ideas. What they pledged loyalty to was the Imperium and not Li Linghai herself.

Therefore, assuming that Li Linghai truly had great ambitions, and a huge scheme was being operated in secret, on what grounds could she realize them and make the millions of soldiers in the entire universe obey her? It was absolutely impossible!

With her capabilities at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage—or even the Divinity Branching Stage—she was all by herself after all, and it was impossible for her to swallow the entire Imperium.

Li Yao's brain almost exploded as he thought hard, but he couldn't find the key to the questions. But what Long Yangjun said a few days ago seemed very reasonable too. Li Yao was truly baffled.

So, he simply called in Li Jialing. "Come on, little brother. Let Brother Yao take a look at your body. What's your progress on the training with the Imperial Fire Pearl now?"

Li Jialing right now was still covered in gold hair, but vague flames seemed to be burning on his head, making him look both fierce and glamorous, truly like an awe-inspiring golden lion.

However, before Li Yao who was half a master and half a mentor, the golden lion was as docile as a cat. He took out the smaller fragment of the Imperial Fire Pearl and held it in his hand.

"Really, so fast?"

Li Yao was rather shocked. The part of the Imperial Fire Pearl in Li Jialing’s hands was lackluster, and the surface that used to be as smooth as a mirror had holes that looked like needles. The treasure looked nothing more than a common rock anymore. The strength that vaguely flowed inside had dried—no, it had been entirely absorbed by Li Jialing!

After a hundred years of adventures, Li Yao’s body had been tempered and reforged again and again, and it was already too sturdy to be described by any word. He thought that his training speed was already high enough, but Li Jialing turned out to be even faster than him. He had absorbed the strength of the Supreme Emperor hidden inside the fragment of the Imperial Fire Pearl in only one month!

Although Li Jialing’s fragment was smaller than Li Yao’s, such training efficiency was still too… depressing for other people!

“Come on. Let me see how good you are right now.”

Li Yao extended his hands to Li Jialing. The two of them held their hands tightly.

BOOM!

Two bright golden flames rose on their bodies at the same time, enshrouding themselves in spluttering electric arcs. Thick veins were protruding from their chests and arms too, transmitting the terrifying strength in the deepest part of cells to their hands.

Very soon, their hands all turned transparent, and the muscle fibers, the veins, the nerves, and the bones inside were all clearly visible.

After another ten seconds, their hands all became ivory, like iron that had been heated to the point of melting!

It was not until this moment that Li Jialing finally showed the look of pain and grunted, trying to loosen his hand.

Li Yao, however, did not let go of him. The strength originated from the veins on his arms flooded into Li Jialing’s arms and body, examining the guy’s internal organs, veins, and abdomen without missing out any part.

But however he groped, he failed to find any uncanny force that had invaded Li Jialing’s body.

Chapter 2292 - Unannounced Guests to the Man-Eating Place!

Chapter 2292 Unannounced Guests to the Man-Eating Place!

Li Yao had the experience of being invaded by the alien strength of the Blood Stripe Virus. Or rather, the invader lingered on to this day and combined with his negative emotions to turn into the “metal devil”. Therefore, his and the mental devil’s senses were very keen about the foreign invasion. No uncanny force could have escaped their detection, including the strength from the Supreme Emperor.

Unable to figure out anything wrong after much groping, Li Yao could only slowly withdraw his own strength. Loosening his grip on Li Jialing, he asked suspiciously, “Didn’t you feel anything wrong at all when you absorbed the strength of the Imperial Fire Pearl so fast?”

“Nothing at all!”

Waving his hands, Li Jialing breathed fast and became normal very soon. He shook his head and said, “I couldn’t have felt better. Perhaps, it is because I suffered too much in ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’, and I was already used to the invasion of the bizarre forces? Although the strength inside the Imperial Fire Pearl was overwhelming, it was very comfortable and felt completely different from the past.

“When the forces in the past were injected into my body crazily, I often had the feeling that I could not take it anymore, and my body might explode at any moment. But when I absorbed the strength of the Imperial Fire Pearl, I could only feel the unparalleled confidence, as if I could control all the stars in the universe if my body absorbed them too!”

“Is that so?”

Thinking quickly, Li Yao knew that it was probably because of the Supreme Emperor’s “spiritual stamp” that was lingering inside the Imperial Fire Pearl.

The Supreme Emperor was certainly a tough person who could master all the stars in the universe.

Li Yao had been under the influence of the dominating vibe during his training too. But he was an adult that had been through far too many battles after all, and his soul couldn’t have been more solid. It was not easy to reshape his mind.

Li Jialing, on the other hand, had always been an innocent young man. It should come as no surprise that he was slightly changed under the edification of the Supreme Emperor’s spirits.

It was a perfectly normal influence and nothing like the evil methods such as “corruption” or “possession”.

It was like a child who read the Supreme Emperor’s biography was deeply awed by the Supreme Emperor’s accomplishments in saving mankind and uniting the universe and made up his mind to grow into a great hero just like the Supreme Emperor. As long as it was within a reasonable degree, it was not bad at all.

“Then, did you have any uncanny dreams, in which you became somebody else?”

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao asked again, “Or have you heard any stealthy voices, seen vague illusions, or even lost your memories, not knowing what you did exactly in the past few minutes and even hours?”

Bulging his eyes, Li Jialing shook his head hard. “No. Not at all. I feel better now than ever before. Such weird symptoms have never happened to me before. Besides, hasn’t Brother Yao been with me all the time? If I have shown any anomaly, you should’ve noticed it!”

“That does make sense. It seems that the Imperial Fire Pearl is perfectly fine.”

Li Yao couldn’t figure out the reason at all. Waving his hands randomly, he said, “Forget it. Just keep your training. Remember to familiarize yourself with the ‘Thunderous Tornado Saber’ that I taught you and understand every detail of it. It is a fatal skill that I created when I was young, and it can be very powerful.”

“I’m already familiar with it!”

Li Jialing replied in excitement, “Besides, Brother Yao, I have discovered nineteen flaws that you hid in the Thunderous Tornado Saber. They are all mistakes that will affect the exertion of strength, the speed, and the circulation of spiritual energy. That’s not how a saber art should be performed at all.

“You must’ve done it on purpose. It was a test to see if I could discover those mistakes, right?

“Ha. Not only have I discovered them, but I have also revised and optimized them. The power of the Thunderous Tornado Saber has been improved by at least 10%. That should be enough for me to pass your test, right?”

Li Yao: “… Well, good boy. You’ve done an excellent job to find the flaws that I intentionally hid in my saber art. Hahahaha. Brother Yao feels very happy that you are so distinguished.

“Alright. Keep up your training. I need to speak to General Lei Chenghu now.”

“General Lei?”

Li Jialing blinked his eyes. “What for? Is there anything wrong?”

“Everything is fine, but we can always bond with each other, can’t we?”

Touching his chin, Li Yao mumbled, “I vaguely have a feeling that I need to broaden my communication and friendship with General Lei Chenghu. Chances are that he might be of great help when the critical moments come!”

…

On June 10, in the twenty-seventh district below the ground of the capital, the Sky Changing Operation began!

The twenty-seventh district was located deep inside the central mountains of the main continent between the altitude of minus three thousand to minus five thousand meters. It was an underground city that repudiated sunshine but was filled with all kinds of lights.

Iron, rocks, mines, and machines constituted the main body of the city. The foundries and the furnaces fulminated day and night, never stopping for one second. The colorful minerals deep inside the mining holes emitted the fluorescence that carried vague radiations, wreathing the city in the mists of light that were almost rotten.

Looking above, it was a canyon that led to the sky, but since the place was too distant from the ground, the top of the canyon was always covered in smoke that completely blocked the blue sky and the white clouds.

There were also all kinds of interconnected tubes and stairs that penetrated through the crags. After rotting for hundreds of years, the joints of the tubes were not as seamless as before but dripping various types of suspicious liquids, as if the place was enshrouded in a drizzle that would never come to an end.

It was the lifelong home to countless humans, or animals, who were known as the “hominoids”.

For the people living in the twenty-seventh district, only a few of them could find a “normal” job in the underground mining bases, the purification plants, or the geothermal energy supply stations. Most of them counted on the leftovers from the upper areas for their livelihood.

Those leftovers came from the cities of the Immortal Cultivators from the ground in the beginning. After they were enjoyed by the Immortal Cultivators, part of the residues fell to the area within one thousand meters from the ground, before they were exploited and consumed layer by layer. By the time they leaked to the twenty-seventh district, there was often hardly anything left.

However, the twenty-seventh district was not the most miserable place of all, because in the deeper part in the dark abysses thousands of meters below them, countless hands and mouths were waiting to catch the wastes that they threw down.

If it were the ancient times when the resources were few and the technologies were undeveloped, most of the people in the underground world would’ve been killed in the cruel famines.

But today, thanks to the highly developed food production techniques, tremendous food, which was tasteless, if edible at all, but which boasted a high calorie, had been synthesized and managed to keep the underclass alive. Still, there was no place for their desolate souls. Those “hominoids” and “ants” would wander below the ground for all eternity like haunting ghosts.

Whether or not they had a normal job, and regardless of their gender and age, their destiny was the same—exchanging their labor in various ways for the synthetical food and the cheapest entertainment and narcotics, and enjoying the momentary pleasure in the self-comforting illusions where their souls temporarily got rid of the hopeless reality and ascended to the heavy piled up sand.

In days and years of degenerations, their health—their only reliance—was often consumed extremely fast.

The illusionary ecstasies were often associated with the indulgence of physical desire too.

After being injected with all sorts of narcotics, dozens of naked bodies entangled with each other and relished the most primitive pleasure. That was perhaps the happiest moment for the hominoids below the ground.

The authorities of the Imperium gave connivance to the hominoids’ action.

On one hand, it was because the authorities believed it was normal that a subhuman life such as a “hominoid” could not control their animalistic instincts. On the other hand, if the hominoids were all devoted to physical entertainment, they would have no time to consider the unorthodox things, which would certainly be beneficial for the order and stability of the Imperium.

As a result, all kinds of bizarre diseases naturally prevailed in the underground world.

In order to compete with the spiritual puppets in the blood factories, they had to exploit their bodies in the most extreme ways. Long-time fatigue led to many painful illnesses.

Bathed in the fluorescence created by the seemingly glamorous minerals in the mining holes that were full of radiations, their bodies gradually mutated, evolving into something with many abnormalities.

Then, there were the neural pathologies caused by the cheap entertainment products and the narcotics and the epidemic of STDs because of the outburst of desires… All kinds of sufferings haunted the underground hominoids like ghosts, corrupting their bodies as well as their souls.

In such a situation, a hospital that could at least give them the maximal anesthetics and comfort even if it could not treat any disease was as bright as a heaven in the dark, underground world.

There was exactly such a massive hospital at the center of the twenty-seventh district.

The hospital did not have a name, but the ivory brilliance it emanated every day seemed enough to illuminate the heart of everybody in the twenty-seventh district.

The medical facilities and expertise of the hospital were naturally incomparable to the cities of the Immortal Cultivators on the ground, but thankfully, the hominoids' requirements were not high either. As long as the nerves inside their bodies could be tricked and the damaged joints and muscles could be blocked so that they would be able to have the strength to make a living tomorrow, or their abnormal parts could be excised, they would be more than satisfied.

The doctors and nurses in the anonymous hospital had done those jobs very well.

Therefore, not just the twenty-seventh district, even the people in the neighboring districts had been visiting the hospital, and most of them returned in satisfaction, complimenting the benevolent and caring doctors in the hospital in gratefulness.

Few people knew that the anonymous hospital was a place where people were eaten.

However, the people it devoured were not hominoids, because most hominoids were not even qualified to be swallowed by the hospital.

At this moment, a large batch of unannounced guests had reached the periphery of the hospital from all directions through various channels.

Chapter 2293 - The Sky Changing Operation Begins!

Chapter 2293 The Sky Changing Operation Begins!

Fifty meters away from the anonymous hospital, in a dilapidated alley transformed from a forsaken mining tunnel, the miner who was lying on the ground, as if he had drunk too much wine to stand up, was in fact “Shadowless” Duan Rui, one of the best assassins from the peripheral worlds of the Imperium.

His invisible and unpredictable blades were even more volatile than the shadows in a mist. The queer saber that Li Yao had carefully forged for him could even pierce through the tiniest gap on the joints of the crystal suits.

Twenty meters away from “Shadowless” Duan Rui was a woman in sexy clothes and heavy makeup, but her face and her body were both old and flabby. At first look, she appeared to have been exhausted in the oldest trade of mankind, and she could barely do anything with her legs anymore except for opening them.

However, under the disguise of sloppiness and weakness, it was the healthiest and most perfect slaughter machine named Zhu Linglong that the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils had trained with the secret techniques that had been passed on for a thousand years. As an expert in the Nascent Soul Stage, she was Yue Wushuang’s most trusted subordinate and ranked top on the “Seven Devil Huntresses”.

In order to break the limits of the body and even the soul, the super warriors of the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils would even intentionally guide countless devils to invade their bodies and then grit their teeth to resist the intruders, until they drove the devils away from their bodies or even swallow them as the nutrition to develop their minds.

The Seven Devil Huntresses who had been polished through such a cruel secret technique were all specialists in mental attacks and the most brilliant “Meditation Healers”.

Take Zhu Linglong for example. As long as she glanced at the target, she would be able to plant an uncanny seed inside the head of the target, making the target’s spiritual energy lose control and body burn on its own!

Before her, the muscular man, whose upper body had expanded abnormally and with three enormous lumps on the back and arms that were thicker than the waist of a normal person, seemed to have come to the place for physical pleasure, but he was in fact the most fearless captain in the Astounding Thunder Fleet named “Iron Head” Ran Xiong. He was a lunatic who truly had the courage to charge at the Covenant Alliance’s battle formation on his own at the cost of his own life.

The brothers in the army called him “Iron Head” not because he had practiced any secret technique that made his skull extremely solid, but because everybody thought that there was nothing but a cold iron block inside his head, and he had absolutely no fear of anything!

There were a lot of other experts from the civic circle, the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils, and the army such as “Shadowless” Duan Rui, “Fiery Sorceress” Zhu Linglong, and “Iron Head” Ran Xiong.

After meticulous investigations beforehand, they had pretended to be miners, prostitutes, dealers, fighters, gamblers, patients, thieves… and any other kind of people that could be seen in this place as they moved to the nearby of the anonymous hospital and entered their positions, locking onto their targets.

The reconnaissance on the twenty-seventh district had been conducted far too many times, and the virtual battlefield had long been established. Everybody had rehearsed in the virtual battlefield for so many times that they could reach the gate of the anonymous hospital with their eyes closed.

Even so, those slaughter experts, who were experienced, ruthless, and audacious, couldn’t help but feel a little bit nervous the moment before the operation started.

It was because the targets who seemed to be locked onto by them were also experts who considered slaughter their job. Those people were even more professional and brutal than them!

Dongfang Renxin was the biological brother to Dongfang Wang, who was the leader of the Dongfang family and the Prime Minister of the Imperium. His marvelous, evil techniques were the sources of Dongfang Wang’s power.

It was not hard to imagine how heavily he would be defended when the techniques were performed.

For the sake of confidentiality, Dongfang Renxin did not trust the warriors of his family or the special agents of the Association of Demon Hunters. Instead, he established a tactical squad named “Thirty-Three Limits” which was only loyal to him alone.

Thirty-Three Limits was a weird name, but it represented thirty-three abnormal, strong experts.

They used to be experts who were notorious in the entire Imperium. When they were dying after some dangerous battles, they were delivered to Dongfang Renxin for treatment.

Dongfang Renxin did not replace their body parts with artificial limbs made of metals and crystals or synthetic organs through the regular approach. Instead, he transplanted tremendous organs, bombs, and limbs of the alien beasts onto those lunatics and beasts who did not care about their own lives but only wanted to grow stronger for their vengeance.

The universe was a vast place full of mysteries. Although mankind had never encountered an advanced civilization of the same size during the hundred thousand years of governance on the three thousand Sectors, a lot of strong alien beasts could be found lurking in the remote space zones.

Many alien beasts had absorbed powerful radiations and high-energy particles. Their cells also had abnormal changes in the extremely harsh environments, or as the ancient Cultivators put it, they “absorbed the essence of nature”. They were a hundred times stronger than the animals that human beings had domesticated!

In the Great Dark Age when the demons had reigned over the universe for thirty thousand years, since demons focused more on biotechnologies, alien beasts were slaughtered to be studied on a large scale. Almost all the alien beasts in the three thousand Sectors were butchered.

But the Star Ocean Imperium collapsed very soon after human beings reclaimed the leadership of the universe. The whole universe was in fact mired in chaos and darkness in the ten thousand years that followed. The fire of civilization died out in many worlds, and the alien beasts took the opportunity to proliferate again.

From the Star Ocean Republic to the Imperium of True Human Beings, an important training method for the human experts had always been to execute the alien beasts.

However, the experts in the past only swallowed the flesh of the alien beasts and purged their “cores” at best. Few of them directly transplanted the organs and limbs of the alien beasts onto human beings as creatively as Dongfang Renxin did.

With the wealth of Dongfang Renxin as an elder of the Imperium and the Dongfang family, he could naturally gather the strongest and freshest organs and limbs of the alien beasts.

The heavily-wounded experts who had been transplanted with the organs of the alien beasts, as long as they could survive the painful periods of conflicts, would not only recover and even improve their combat ability but also be influenced by the brutality of the alien beasts, which would turn themselves into the worst nightmare of any enemy.

According to the files that Li Linghai had secretly collected, when those “animalized experts” went back for their revenge, there were indeed bloody cases where they tore the hundreds of people in their opponent’s family apart on their own. However, Dongfang Renxin simply suppressed those cases from leaking out using his power and considered those revenge as live tests for the “animalized experts”.

Such terrifying beings who were half humans and half alien beasts were strong enough to deal with one tactical squad even if there were only one of them. It was needless to say what would happen when there were thirty-three!

At the periphery, the elite soldiers of the Dongfang family who stayed alert all the time were there. Inside the building, it was the unparalleled brutal men like “Thirty-Three Limits” who were responsible for the defense. Below the ground, it was a whole volcano of crystal bombs. No wonder Dongfang Renxin was bold enough to continue his evil tests below the ground when a storm of blood was blowing in the capital because of the clash between the Dongfang family and the reformists!

It was 1:55 in the afternoon.

In a world of darkness where sunlight was nowhere to be seen, “afternoon” seemed to be a meaningless word.

However, according to the latest intelligence, it had been more than two hours since Dongfang Renxin and his companions entered the anonymous hospital through a secret channel. If he was indeed performing any wicked surgery, it must’ve reached the most critical moment that was not to be interrupted!

The members of the arrest team that had taken their positions one after another could not dawdle any longer either. It would be unreasonable if a prostitute and a customer flirted with each other for a long time in the alley without finding a place to get the job done, right?

Quite a few tough men, who were wearing crimson leather armors with iron nails embedded in them, had already grown suspicious of them. Cursing, they walked to “Fiery Sorceress” Zhu Linglong and “Iron Head” Ran Xiong. They seemed to be complaining that the whore looked rather unfamiliar and that she was bold enough to not pay any protection fees to them.

At first look, they looked like gangsters who occupied the twenty-seventh district, who were anything but unusual in the dark world.

But according to the intelligence, they were actually the experts of the Dongfang family and Dongfang Renxin's most trusted nephews. They were here to protect Dongfang Renxin while pretending to be local gangsters.

No more waiting.

All the communication chips on the eardrums of the members of the arrest team received three long and two short beeps.

It was a signal asking them to take action when they were ready.

"Fiery Sorceress" Zhu Linglong suddenly exclaimed, as if her breasts had been pinched hard by the pleasure-seeker that was pretended by "Iron Head" Ran Xiong.

"Iron Head" Ran Xiong burst into laughter.

It was exactly the signal to attack.

At this moment, the few warriors of the Dongfang family who pretended to be gangsters were walking by "Shadowless" Duan Rui who was lying on the ground. Their attention was entirely distracted by Zhu Linglong's exclamation and Ran Xiong's laughter, and they did not notice that the "dying" drunkard on the ground was slowly opening his clear and cruel eyes.

Right after the last warrior of the Dongfang family walked by, “Shadowless” Duan Rui stood up without a sound and delivered his blade that almost did not have any thickness into the heart of the warrior from his back softly.

The warrior of the Dongfang family bulged his eyes before he had any time to let out an exclamation or summon his crystal suit.

The other warriors of the Dongfang family, including the main troop at the edge and the “Thirty-Three Limits” in the anonymous hospital, were more alarmed than ever.

Although “Shadowless” Duan Rui’s assassination was a textbook method, it was still noticed by them at the earliest time.

However, the moment Duan Rui pushed the shadow blade forward softly, all the lights within several hundred meters from the anonymous hospital died out, turning the place into a pitch dark swamp.

The hospital, where the lights were still on, became the most eye-catching target. Bombarded by thousands of flying swords and crystal cannons, it was also swallowed by darkness after abnormal fireballs burst out one after another!

Chapter 2294 - Bomb Expert!

In the swamp of darkness, the flames of light were shining brilliantly when the Immortal Cultivators of the reformists and the Dongfang family all put on their crystal suits.

The shimmers of their spiritual shields made everybody look like a glittering ghost. In the next second, all the ghosts were enshrouded by their own spiritual energy and the enemy’s bombardment, burning furiously.

The experts from the army, including “Iron Head” Ran Xiong, were responsible to block the elites of the Dongfang family at the periphery, while “Fiery Sorceress” Zhu Linglong led a hundred devil huntresses at the gate of the anonymous hospital. The battle of the two parties entered the most heated phase almost from the first second of the engagement. The dark swamp was simmering immediately!

Hooooooo!

Three devil huntresses had leaped over the first defense line of the anonymous hospital swiftly and were about to break into the hospital when an abnormally brawny man suddenly charged out from the hospital in devastating roars.

His body was already as thick and heavy as an iron tower, but his right arm that had been expanded to the maximum was more than one meter in diameter and almost as thick as his body. At first look, he was almost like a pair of conjoined twins whose shoulder blades were connected!

Not just that, the abnormally huge arm was also extremely long and dangled to the ground. The hand had retrograded into five enormous blades, and the whole arm was brimming with lumps. Among the lumps, tremendous bright yellow objects that looked like eyeballs were growing. It was both disgusting and blood-freezing.

Shua!

Thousands of dazzling lights were emanated from the crystalline lenses among the lumps on the arm, immediately disrupting the attack of the three devil huntresses.

The arm that was three meters long was both tensile and rapid when it was waved like a whip. Under the sound of air being split apart, it slapped the body of a devil huntress brutally, cutting both her crystal suit and her body into halves. The abnormal lumps on the arm of the freak seemed to contain highly-corrosive acids. When the lumps exploded and the acids splashed to the crystal suit, the crystal suit was immediately smoking with earsplitting noises and collapsing at a visible speed!

The freak was “Fearful Claw”, a warrior of “Thirty-Three Limits”. His entire arm was from a world fragment named “Venomous Wind Sector”, a land of terror covered by an ocean of acids!

“Fiery Sorceress” Zhu Linglong lunged forward and rescued her subordinate narrowly before Fearful Claw ripped apart the second devil huntress.

On the forehead of her crystal suit, a vivid, red eyeball carved out of crystals shot out a red spark under the boost of his soul, which darted into the eyes of Fearful Claw as quickly as a bolt of lightning.

Fearful Claw was slightly dazed. As if mired in Fiery Sorceress' mental attack, his movement was immediately slowed down. With painful moans coming from his throat, tremendous blisters emerged on his body one after another, and when the blisters exploded, flames dashed up from below!

It was a secret technique to interfere with the enemy's central nerves and make their brain issue wrong orders to the nerve endings all over the body. As a result, all the hormones would be secreted crazily, and the mitochondria inside the cells would do work peculiarly. Eventually, the cells would be "overloaded", resulting in the spontaneous combustion.

It was exactly what Fiery Sorceress was best at!

Fearful Claw, as a member of "Thirty-Three Limits" who had received the transplantation of the organs of alien beasts, focused purely on the buildup of the physical body and attached less importance to the training of the soul and the mental warfare. Therefore, he was hit immediately when he encountered Fiery Sorceress who was an expert in mental warfare.

Fearful Claw was totally on fire, turning into a giant burning ball rolling everywhere on the ground.

Fiery Sorceress was greatly exhausted after hitting the enemy with the critical attack. Her speed was lowered briefly.

From the furious fire on Fearful Claw's body, however, dozens of damp tentacles where acids were dropping suddenly darted out and tied up the limbs of Fiery Sorceress, dragging her to the direction of Fearful Claw brutally!

It was a new technique unrecorded by the intelligence. Nobody foresaw that Fearful Claw’s abnormal arm could explode and split into dozens of tentacles that were more than ten meters long!

More devil huntresses leaped close, trying to chop off the tentacles and rescue Fiery Sorceress.

From inside the anonymous hospital, tremendous hideous members of “Thirty-Three Limits” also emerged and clashed with the intruders in the goriest way!

Five hundred meters from the battleground in the twenty-seventh district, there was a building that was established next to a cliff.

Neither of the two parties engaged in the fierce battle noticed that the window of the inconspicuous, gray building slightly opened, allowing a piece of magical equipment that looked like a flower to extend out.

The flower slowly blossomed and turned into an antenna that was aimed at the anonymous hospital. When the “petals” shivered softly, the telepathic thoughts that had been enhanced were immediately delivered to every corner of the anonymous hospital.

The other side of the antenna extended into the building and was connected to an operating table in the shape of a cocoon. Li Yao was lying on the operating table, surrounded by mild nerve buffer liquids, with a ring of tiny metal slips stuck to his head.

On every metal slip the size of a fingernail, there were a plethora of super-tiny rune arrays that he had carved in person.

He was engaged in a more fierce and soul-stirring battle on a different battlefield.

Lying inside the cocoon-shaped cabin that was as warm as the womb, the quakes and explosions around him seemed to be gone. The twenty-seventh district was dissected into clear, transparent maps, allowing him to scrutinize every building, every firing point, and every tube within three thousand meters.

It was a shame that Dongfang Renxin would never make such a lousy mistake. The anonymous hospital, despite the ostensible shabbiness, did not have any ventilation tube or a sewer that could allow a human being to crawl through.

Also, the reformists were full of talents and experts. The mission was too critical for Li Yao to sneak into the location in secret on his own.

Right now, he was separating his attention and controlling a hundred and eight super-tiny mechanical spiders at the same time, making them crawl to the crystal bombs deployed near the anonymous hospital.

The super-tiny mechanical spiders were exactly the model that he used to deal with Long Yangjun a few days ago.

Their main purpose was never to attack but to help Li Yao invade the places that were uninvadable for human beings to sabotage or survey.

It was even safe to say that they were the “banes of crystal bombs” that Li Yao had produced specifically for this mission.

Under the cover of the vehement attacks of the main troop, the super-tiny mechanical spiders crawled into the underground tubes through the gaps like little bugs and approached the locations where the crystal bombs were planted.

Inside Li Yao’s brain, a hundred and eight 3D pictures popped up, as if he had been divided into a hundred and eight parts himself.

To blow up the entire anonymous hospital and the evidence inside into smithereens certainly required abundant crystal bombs.

Such crystal bombs would release extremely feeble spiritual waves to the outside world even when they were in the hibernation state. The experienced bomb experts could easily distinguish them from common magical equipment.

It was needless to say that Dongfang Renxin must’ve activated the self-destruction devices now that the anonymous hospital was under attack. As a result, the spiritual waves were even more intense, allowing Li Yao to locate all the crystal bombs immediately.

At this moment, Dongfang Renxin and the highly-influential elder of his family were both in the hospital. Naturally, they would not blow themselves up together with the hospital.

But Li Yao estimated that such a clandestine place must have short-distance teleportation arrays leading to the outside world. After Dongfang Renxin and his companions successfully evacuated, he would certainly blow up the hospital and even the entire twenty-seventh district without caring for anything else.

He had to race with time!

“What a delicate toy!”

Maneuvering the super-tiny mechanical spiders, Li Yao observed the crystal bombs that were deployed around the anonymous hotel from close up and complimented sincerely.

It had been a long time since he last saw such beautiful crystal bombs.

They were in the oval structure, like the shell of a snail, with a surface as smooth as a mirror. At first look, there was no place for any dismantling tools to work on at all.

Inside the crystal bombs, the most sensitive sensors must’ve been installed too, and even the feeblest quake would’ve been perceived.

Also, the dozens of crystal bombs were connected to each other both through wires and wirelessly. When any of them was damaged, the other crystal bombs would immediately go into the countdown to be detonated.

It was almost a flawless self-destruct device. Even a specialist in crystal bombs such as Li Yao felt tempted by it.

“It’s quite challenging. Even though I have advanced into the Divinity Transformation Stage, if I want to completely dismantle such a self-destruction device, it will still take me… one minute!”

The metal vesicles on the backs of the hundred and eight super-tiny mechanical spiders were suddenly opened at the same time, spurting out bright green mists of ice to the shells of the crystal bombs that were as smooth as mirrors.

The shells of the crystal bombs were immediately covered in a layer of vague heptagonal frost, which was completely different from the regular snowflake.

What was stored inside the metal vesicles on the backs of the super-tiny mechanical spiders was a material named “Jade Dragon Marrow”. Li Yao had only produced it by mixing twenty-seven kinds of low-temperature drugs according to a certain ratio.

The moment it encountered air, it would immediately turn into icy mist and lower the temperature around to minus a hundred degrees so that most of the materials in the environment would be inactive. It also boasted a particularly impressive effect on the suppression of the spiritual waves of crystals.

One might even say that it was a special gas that was both “cold” and “inert”.

Although every tiny mechanical spider could only carry one drop of the Jade Dragon Marrow, it was enough to freeze the sensor inside a crystal bomb.

In the next second, Li Yao held his breath and remotely controlled the mechanical spiders to crawl on the frozen shells of the crystal bombs.

A group of the mechanical spiders was stuck to the shells of the crystal bombs with the sucking discs at their abdomens, while the other spiders nearby used their sharpest blade limbs to draw perfect circles, cutting holes on the shells of the crystal bombs.

Putting the shells that had been cut out aside, all the super-tiny mechanical spiders crawled in through the holes and entered the crystal bombs.

Chapter 2295 - Living Bloody Hell!

From the perspective of the super-tiny mechanical spiders, the inside of every crystal bomb was a bizarre, enticing new world.

The crystal wires that were as thin as hair shimmered in vague light, constituting the veins and bridges of the new world. The chips were constructed on each other in the most believable way and formed complicated mazes. The rune arrays shaped the spiritual energy into different splendid forms and blossomed deep inside the mazes like translucent flowers of energy.

The new world that seemed to be alive was also so sensitive and fragile. Even if it was slightly frozen by the “Jade Dragon Marrow”, it was still like a tower of sand hung by a thread. The whole world might collapse at the slightest touch.

Now, it was time for Li Yao to do his best!

Li Yao took a deep breath inside the cocoon-shaped cabin, and the pores all over his body slowly expanded. Countless tiny bubbles popped up from the nerval buffer liquids. Around the ring on his head, the bubbles evolved into foams and flowed out of the cocoon-shaped cabin.

Li Yao’s telepathic thoughts were boosted to the maximum when they flooded to the nearby hospital like an overwhelming river.

All the super-tiny mechanical spiders jumped agilely at the same time, like phantoms made of crystals dancing crazily on the tip of a saber.

Going deeper and deeper, the mechanical spiders dissected the sensors and the detonation chips of the crystal bombs in absolutely accurate and synchronic movements as if it were a surgery, without even an error of 0.01 threads in any movement. While removing the chips, the spiders also needed to further spray “Jade Dragon Marrow” to freeze the deeper parts of the crystal bombs.

While the Jade Dragon Marrow froze the sensors of the crystal bombs, it would also disrupt the telepathic thoughts of remote control. Only a bomb expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage such as Li Yao was capable of doing the operations in such a harsh environment.

Dismantling dozens of crystal bombs was a huge burden on the soul. Even Li Yao had a drop of cold sweat on his forehead.

He was not holding anything in his hands, but veins were protruding on the backs of his hands. His fingers were also trembling, with feeble noises coming from the joints.

“Gotcha…”

Li Yao mumbled. Dozens of scarlet chips vaguely popped up inside his brain, as if he had pushed aside the petals and saw the hidden pistils inside.

They were the central trigger chips of the crystal bombs.

As long as the dozens of central trigger chips were frozen and removed at the same time, it would be possible to prevent the self-destruct devices from being activated.

However—

Li Yao suddenly rolled his eyes quickly, and he vaguely had a sense of danger. He felt that things shouldn’t be so simple.

“The guy who planted the serial crystal bombs must’ve been an expert among experts. The polishing of the shells of the crystal bombs, the deployment of real and false wires, and the structures of the control chips are all flawless. Barely anyone can break such a thorough defense.

“But his methodology seems to be too straightforward. There is not a single trap here at all? It does not befit the style of such an expert.

“There must be something more to it!”

Li Yao stopped at the last moment. Considering carefully, he released the super-tiny mechanical spiders for reconnaissance again.

“If I were in his shoes, how would I have set up such a set of self-destruct device that was of paramount importance?”

Li Yao retrieved the map and the structural graphs of the environment near the anonymous hospital again, considering the problem from the perspective of the designer of the self-destruct device.

The underground city of the capital was teeming with people in the first place. Cave buildings that were like beehives and ant nests could be found in every corner possible.

Since it was a secret institute, there was little room for retreat and counterattack.

Therefore, the room to deploy the self-destruction device was also highly limited. The design couldn’t have been too magnificent.

Most of the crystal bombs had been discovered and controlled by Li Yao. If there was any hidden crystal bomb, it must have been planted in the most vulnerable place on the structure of the anonymous hospital in order to blow up all the evidence. In that case…

“It’s right here!”

Li Yao found the last crystal bomb in an extremely inconspicuous tube below the anonymous hospital.

The crystal bomb was planted in an extremely treacherous place at the axis that supported the entire twenty-seventh district. Once it exploded, it might result in the collapse of the entire underground city. Tremendous rocks and metal structures would fall brutally. Not only would the anonymous hospital and the twenty-seventh district be completely buried, but the underground towns further away would be affected too. Eventually, the whole underground chasm would be buried by the landslide.

If that happened, the innocents that would be buried alive would be more than a hundred thousand!

In order to destroy the evidence, they did not hesitate to drag hundreds of thousands of people to die with them—Li Yao gained a deeper understanding of the brutality of the Immortal Cultivators.

Li Linghai’s team failed to detect the crystal bomb beforehand because it was covered in a shell made of special metal materials and sealed by complicated barriers. Also, it was in the hibernation state itself.

Li Yao investigated for a long time and discovered that the trigger system of the crystal bomb was rather interesting. The dozens of crystal bombs outside would send an extremely feeble wave to it every ten seconds. As long as it received dozens of waves at the same time, it would remain in the hibernation state.

As long as it did not receive the signals from other crystal bombs in time, it would explode immediately without any hesitation, blowing up the supporting axis of the entire underground city and raising a chain reaction to destroy all the crime evidence as well as the lives of hundreds of thousands of people!

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and gritted his teeth without him knowing it.

The design of such a vicious self-destruct device alone was a reason good enough for him to catch the monstrous doctor Dongfang Renxin and crush the Dongfang family!

Now that he had found the trigger system of the last crystal bomb, it would be much easier from there.

Li Yao went back and studied the dozens of crystal bombs that he found earlier. As he expected, he discovered a group of tiny signal transmission tubes in the deepest part of the bombs, which would send out a certain wave every ten seconds. Also, the wave from every crystal bomb was different. It seemed to be some sort of code or password.

All the signal transmission chips were connected to the control chips of the crystal bombs. If the control chips were dismantled or terminated, the signal transmission chips would be burnt up at the same time and stop sending the waves.

Due to the urgency, Li Yao did not have the time to simulate dozens of different signals.

Pondering for a moment, he reconstructed the circuits of the spiritual energy of the crystal bombs by cutting the signal transmission chips to the control chips and connecting them to new routes.

It was a way to deceive the signal transmission tubes and mislead them into thinking that they were still connected to the main routes.

After finishing the critical step, Li Yao was finally able to take a long breath in relief and start the final dismantling work.

A hundred and eight super-tiny mechanical spiders were activated at the same time, spinning the “pistils” inside the crystal bombs and plucking all of them.

The self-destruction device was destroyed!

Li Yao leaped up from the cocoon-shaped cabin and spat a mouthful of nerval buffer fluids before grinning.

He gestured Li Jialing to fetch a bowl for him while he turned on the communication channel unhurriedly.

As he expected, the communication channel was filled with the anxious roars of Yue Wushuang, Tu Zhengdao, and the rest of them.

Li Yao smiled and said, “The self-destruct device has been cracked. You may attack boldly without worries now!”

After he said that, the flames and explosions from the anonymous hotel were immediately intensified to a new level.

The secret studies that Dongfang Renxin had been conducting in this place were clandestine and even kept from a lot of people within the Dongfang family.

Therefore, although it was defended by the experts such as the “Thirty-Three Limits”, it was still impossible for Dongfang Renxin to summon a few crystal suit legions to garrison the place openly.

The reformists, on the other hand, had dispatched all the elite troops for the long-prepared arrest, even giving up a lot of bureaus on the ground. They were obviously determined to accomplish their goals.

The impasse between the two parties did not last long when the arrest team of the reformists broke into the gate of the anonymous hospital and pushed further into Dongfang Renxin’s secret institute.

Tremendous pictures inside the secret institute were delivered to Li Yao’s portable crystal processor in real time through the surveillance cameras on the crystal suits of the arrest team, allowing him to get a glimpse at a full picture of the man-eating place.

Inside the frozen containers, all kinds of abnormal, bizarre-shaped organs were soaked inside the suspicious nutrition liquids. There was no telling whether they came from humans or from alien beasts at all.

Many organs were connected to crystal wires, which were fluctuating as if they were alive!

There were also the brains of dozens of human beings that were connected to the bloody spines, the end of which slowly protruded like an egg in the dark gold color, suggesting that they were the brains, spines, and “cores” of the experts in the Core Formation Stage!

The devastating and disgusting pictures made Li Yao feel like vomiting.

The picture was a hundred times more ghastly than the scene he saw in Elder Nether Spring’s laboratory in the Blood Demon Sector where human beings were transformed into demons!

At the end of the secret institute was an operating room.

On two platforms that looked like both operating beds and devilish altars, two young people were lying unconsciously. However, one of them was locked by barriers tightly, unable to move at all.

His skull had been opened, and his brains had obviously shrunk, as if everything inside, from the spiritual root to the soul, had been pumped away and transmitted to the brains of the other young person.

The other young man, who looked rather elegant, was wide-eyed with spreading pupils. He had already died.

It appeared that the procedure was disrupted by the sudden assault at the most critical moment. Something wrong happened to the young man who was being purged and reborn. He was killed abruptly, and there was even no time to bring away his body.

“Haha. The Dongfang family is truly screwed this time!”

Tu Zhengdao’s delighted laughter echoed from the communication channel. “We have discovered a dozen experts of the Li, Yun, and Song families from the secret institute. All of them have been transformed into training materials and samples. Quite a few of them were reported to have gone missing mysteriously on the battlefields. Also, this is just the tip of the iceberg. Even more samples, materials, and files that they failed to destroy have fallen into our hands. It seems that there are thousands of victims in this place. Let’s see how Dongfang Wang and Dongfang Renxin are going to explain themselves to the four families!”

Chapter 2296 - Karma Has Come!

Chapter 2296 Karma Has Come!

“But Dongfang Renxin escaped!”

Yue Wushuang’s frigid voice came from the communication channel. “If he is not captured on the spot, even the most unquestionable proof will be flawed. Besides, Dongfang Renxin took the mainframe crystal processor of the secret institute away. Tremendous experiment data of the past are stored inside the crystal processor. A lot of leaders of the Dongfang family might be involved!

“That is the most important evidence. We have to completely control it in order to crucify Dongfang Wang and Dongfang Renxin!”

Dongfang Renxin escaped through a teleportation array.

But it was destined that he could not run far.

Ever since the arrest operation began, the eight “Space Ripple Generators” that the reformists secretly delivered to the underground city had been functioning at the highest power, spreading out waves that could shatter the void.

Those space ripples would not have any influence on the creatures living in the three-dimensional universe. They were absolutely harmless even if they were right next to the target.

However, if somebody were to tear apart the three-dimensional space and jump to somewhere far away by way of the four-dimensional space, they would be involved in a man-made storm.

A four-dimensional jump was a highly-dangerous endeavor after all. Neither the super long-distance space jumps that crossed billions of stars nor the short-distance teleportation that pursued accuracy could tolerate any interference.

Two consequences might happen when an accident took place.

Firstly, when a creature stepped into a teleportation array and their cells and gene strands were all dismembered, the components could not be assembled again because of the interferences of the four-dimensional storm, or jumbled in an extremely weird way.

As a result, what appeared in the target teleportation array was likely to be a pile of meat mud and plasma where hot air was popping up, or a monster whose internal organs were exposed to the air and whose limbs had turned into tentacles.

Secondly, the teleportation was successful, but the coordinates of the destination had a “minor” error. Instead of jumping to the teleportation array at the destination, one landed several meters away from it.

Then, it was very possible that the victim would be embedded into rocks, metals, or even somebody else’s body. When the living cells and the cold materials were integrated, the creatures would be equally dead.

Therefore, when the eight “Space Ripple Generators” of the reformists released interferences, they were almost like setting up transparent walls at the edge of the twenty-seven district. It was impossible for Dongfang Renxin to bypass the wall and jump to the ground dozens of kilometers away. The best he could do was to jump to a certain corner in the twenty-seventh district.

The resistance in the anonymous hospital was still going on, but a dragnet had been paved in the entire twenty-seventh district.

In the operation room, Li Yao worked on the control panel anxiously; his hands turning into clusters of mists.

Whenever a teleportation array was activated, unusual space ripples would spread out from both the jump point and the destination. Although they were much weaker than the ripples of starships after a long-distance jump, Li Yao was still able to detect them keenly with the search magical equipment that he forged himself.

Before Li Yao, the transparent map of the twenty-seventh district was displayed on the 3D light beam. Deep inside the anonymous hospital, a red spot was blinking vaguely. It was a teleportation array that had just been activated.

Very soon, below the twenty-seventh district, somewhere close to the edge, a red spot of equal brightness popped up.

It was also a teleportation array that had just been activated. That should be the place where Dongfang Renxin crawled out.

Dongfang Renxin went the opposite way. Instead of going to the ground, he fled deeper into the underground city.

Most of the warriors of the reformists were gathered on the upper floor of the twenty-seventh district. The search and blockage on the area down below were not flawless.

Li Yao smiled and wiped his face before he took out a Cosmos Ring from his pocket.

Ever since he encountered Long Yangjun the other day, he had been carefully refining a piece of magical equipment for today’s arrest.

…

Dongfang Renxin was supposedly a prestigious, well-respected elder of the Imperium and a great doctor, who valued his manners more than anything else. In his younger years, his handsomeness was well-acknowledged. Although he was old now, his face stayed young. He did not look like an old man hundreds of years old but a healthy and strong middle-aged man.

However, fleeing in a panic right now and sweating hard, he had completely lost his demeanor of the past. His wrinkles were bursting out at a visible speed, while his muscles were shriveling quickly. He seemed to have grown older by a hundred years within a moment.

How could the elder of the Imperium and the deputy president of the Royal Society of Medical Science not feel anxious when his enterprise that had been built for a hundred years was destroyed and his reputation could be gone forever because of that?

Explosions came from his back. Furious flames were burning from the secret research institute.

The flames burning in the underground world were not orange but creepily green.

Dongfang Renxin, however, did not have time to bother looking at it at all. He simply ran further to the abyss, because he had three secret evacuation points in the sixty-third district, the seventy-fifth district, and the eighty-eighth district respectively. As long as he could retreat with the most important crystal processor that had all the data of the Dongfang family's dominion, nobody would ever be able to catch him again.

The experts of "Thirty-Three Limits" were sent out by him to block the pursuers, but they were unable to stall the enemy for long.

Very soon, Dongfang Renxin had only the last two members of "Thirty-Three Limits" left by his side when a deafening explosion echoed from his back. Then, the fire, gunshots, and roars all fell silent.

Dongfang Renxin looked at his back in fear. Behind him, there was an expert who did not disguise his immense pressure at all. It was almost like a crystal warship had submerged into the ground and approached him in loud noises.

Dongfang Renxin's pupils were constricted to the minimum, and the two experts of the "Thirty-Three Limits" were all prepared to pour their fatal moves too.

However, the person who blinked from the darkness overjoyed Dongfang Renxin. "It's you? How did you—"

The plain face, the black hair that looked like a waterfall, and the tall and slender body figure—it was Dongfang Mingyue, the president of the Association of Demon Hunters!

"Enough talking. We've been greatly tricked this time!"

Dongfang Mingyue was not wearing a helmet. Under the dim light, it could be seen that her furrowed eyebrows were like a pair of crossed sabers and that the light crystal suit on her body was stained with blood with sparks popping up nonstop. It was obvious that she had just defeated a group of chasers in an exhausting battle. She said, “What the reformists did on the ground was just a distraction for them to concentrate all their forces to attack the secret research institute. The prime minister asked me to escort you to retreat. I didn’t bring a lot of soldiers with me, and they cannot sustain for long. Let’s go now!”

While talking, Dongfang Mingyue strode to Dongfang Renxin and the two experts of the “Thirty-Three Limits”.

“How can it be true?”

Dongfang Renxin moaned, “How can the reformists know our greatest secret? There must be a traitor among us… Wait, prime minister. You just called Dongfang Wang ‘prime minister’?”

Dongfang Renxin’s pupils constricted to the limits again, and all his white hair was exploding.

The two experts of the “Thirty-Three Limits” felt that something was not right too, but there was no time for them to do anything!

The “Dongfang Mingyue” next to them suddenly unleashed dazzling gold light that blinded Dongfang Renxin briefly. Before he realized what was going on, dozens of sharp tiny flying swords had pierced through the major acupoints on his body. Releasing powerful electric arcs, they tied up his limbs and his internal organs. He felt that his bones and his nerves had all been plucked, and he couldn’t have felt more painful!

The two experts of the “Thirty-Three Limits”, on the other hand, were in a pain a hundred times more painful than him. The screams that they let were not uttered even when they received the transplantation of the organs of alien beasts before.

Dongfang Renxin lost his eyesight for now, and his bones and nerves were locked by magical equipment, making it impossible to escape. He could only hear cracking sounds echoing next to him. The two experts of the “Thirty-Three Limits” sounded like their bones had been crunched one inch after another and ground in a mill.

In the first three seconds, it was still possible to hear their screams, but very soon, nothing could be heard again.

When Dongfang Renxin gradually regained his eyesight, he saw the picture that had never occurred even in his nightmares.

The two experts of the “Thirty-Three Limits” were all broken and compressed into two giant balls with the special crystal suits on their bodies. They were as dead as anyone could be right now.

The person standing in the darkness on his opposite side was naturally no Dongfang Mingyue but another face that devastated the Dongfang family in the recent month.

“Vulture Li Yao!”

Dongfang Renxin screamed in desperation.

They were both in the Divinity Transformation Stage, but the combat ability between them was obvious. Besides, by pretending to be “Dongfang Mingyue”, Li Yao had won Dongfang Renxin’s trust briefly, which allowed him to plant the confinement magical equipment that he carefully produced into the man’s body.

In the entire Imperium, no more than ten people could crack Li Yao’s own confinement magical equipment.

Dongfang Renxin was obviously not one of them.

“President Dongfang.”

Rubbing his face slowly, Li Yao got rid of the last bit of his disguise and put on a hideous smile. “You have committed atrocious crimes, and your karma has come today!”

Dongfang Renxin squirmed like an enormous worm, trying to move deeper into the darkness in vain. Deep inside the darkness, countless locals of the underground world were staring at them without a sound; their eyes glittering.

“You… You can’t touch me!”

His face twisted, Dongfang Renxin roared intimidatingly, “I am an elder of the Imperium! I am an elder of the Dongfang family! Do you know what you are doing? If you dare touch me, you will be an enemy to the Dongfang family, the Council of Elders, and the entire Imperium!”

Li Yao sniffed and pressed forward.

“Don’t touch me! Just let me go!”

Rolling his eyes crazily, Dongfang Renxin trembled. “I can give you whatever you want, Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures or unparalleled techniques. I have incessant resources. They are all yours!”

Unmoved, Li Yao went further.

“You… You are in the Divinity Transformation Stage right now, aren’t you? But your body is so perfect. It is even rare even among the battle-type Divinity Transformation Stage experts!”

Dongfang Renxin roared desperately, “Do you not want to be the strongest battle-type Divinity Transformation Stage expert in history? Do you not want to break into the Divinity Branching Stage? I can help you! I have technologies! The most advanced technologies! I can plant the organs of twenty different kinds of alien beasts into your body, making you twice, five times, ten times stronger than you are right now!”

Chapter 2297 - Let’s See If You Can Cure Yourself!

Chapter 2297 Let's See If You Can Cure Yourself!

Li Yao frowned. Looking at Dongfang Renxin's panicked and shameless face, he couldn't help but ask, "You are still trying to allure me in such a sleazy way when death is knocking the door? In order to make you stronger and more vigorous, you did not even let go of the heavily-wounded heroes who fought valiantly on the battlefield. Do you not feel that your methods are inappropriate at all?"

Dongfang Renxin's eyes widened, and obscure laughter echoed from deep down his throat. Illuminated by the dim light, there was no telling whether he was a graceful expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage or a ferocious animal. He shouted desperately, "Inappropriate? What's inappropriate? Only by making the strong stay strong can the barriers of evolution be broken!

"You and I are both in the Divinity Transformation Stage. Men as excellent as us are the pillars of our families and our country and the hope of mankind!

"If we can keep ourselves in the peak stage, we will be able to do a lot of things and make a lot of contributions to our country and our civilization! How many enemies can you kill with your combat ability? How many lives can I save with my brilliant medical arts?

"However, the goddamn longevity limits us. The stronger we are, the faster our lives will burn, and the shorter our lives will be! The best state in the Divinity Transformation Stage is like a shooting star. It can only last several decades at best!

“How is that enough for us to bring out light and heat, to make contributions to our country and civilization?

“Therefore, sacrificing the insignificant guys, transforming their blood, wisdom, and souls into nutrition that nurtures the epitomes of the civilization of mankind that are us so that we can make contributions to the civilization for hundreds of years longer; isn’t it only natural?

“Yes, it is true that I got the brains and even cores of a lot of heavily-wounded soldiers from the frontline, but so what? Those things helped me maintain my most exuberant energy and my keenest senses. They allowed me to perform surgeries one after another for ten days and ten nights in a row so that the lives of more people were saved!

“Sacrificing one to save a hundred is perfectly reasonable! After all, those people were prepared to be sacrificed since the day they walked into the battlefield. Their ending was no different from being blown up into pieces by the giant cannons on the starships. Is there any difference at all?”

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao said slowly, “What you’ve been doing is completely in violation of the meaning of the true path of immortality.”

“No, what I have been walking on is the real and ultimate true path of immortality!”

Dongfang Renxin completely went mad. Veins protruded on his face one cluster after another, looming around his facial organs like countless earthworms. His face more twisted than ever, he declared, “Survival of the fittest is the most original and pure true path of immortality! You and I are both in the Divinity Transformation Stage. So, we are more qualified to survive than those in the Nascent Soul Stage, the Core Formation Stage, the Building Foundation Stage, and the Refinement Stage. We are the real dominators of this world. Those below the Divinity Transformation Stage are just ants! Are you really going against one—no, a group of people in the Divinity Transformation Stage just for some ants?”

Li Yao’s eyes cramped hard. He observed, “President Dongfang, you have lost your mind.”

“No, I haven’t. It’s you who never saw it through, or never dare to say it aloud even if you did! Hypocritical! You people are all too hypocritical!”

Dongfang Renxin shrieked, “We are both in the Divinity Transformation Stage. We are the new human beings above all mortals. We have even exceeded the category of human beings; we are ‘supermen’ that are more excellent than ‘hominoids’ and ‘true human beings’!

“We are supermen, we are true gods. We do not need to abide by the rules and morals of the mortals. The hominoids butcher livestock, the true human beings slaughter the hominoids, and the ‘supermen’ will swallow ‘true human beings’. Is there anything wrong with that?

“A world of Immortal Cultivators is exactly a place where men eat men! A person will be equally dead no matter if you kill them with blades, bullets, or teeth! Vulture Li Yao, I don’t believe that you never killed anyone that you shouldn’t have killed, looted somebody else’s training resources, or trapped other people with dirty tricks on your ascension to the Divinity Transformation Stage!

“The killing is all the same. I just went one step further after they were killed and swallowed those people. In such a way, the spiritual root, the gold core, and the lifelong Cultivation that they had gained through arduous training wouldn’t be wasted. Do you have any idea what a great sin it is to waste resources when resources are on such high demand?”

Li Yao sniffed and walked up close to Dongfang Renxin’s face, not moved at all.

Dongfang Renxin had already backed off to a corner and had nowhere to retreat at all. His face seemed to have been ignited by the flames that had jumped out of the deepest level of hell, making it more creepy than the experiment subjects in his secret research institute. With a hideous smile, he said, “Don’t you see? The life of most Immortal Cultivators is as meaningless as that of hominoids. Even if they are granted some strength, they will only use it to brutalize each other, and it will be wasted for nothing.

“However, if the strength is all focused on the people in the Divinity Transformation Stage who are the real elites and rulers, we will be able to use the strength to do things that are more meaningful, or even to break into the levels that have never been visited before. Wake up! We are both in the Divinity Transformation Stage. We should not attack each other but should find a way to rule over the ants together!”

Li Yao smiled. “You talked so persuasively that I was almost convinced. However, even if what you said just now is perfectly true and reasonable, how can you explain the surgery you performed today? You polished the spiritual root of a mediocre young man with the brains and bodies of dozens of training geniuses, just because the mediocre young man had a powerful father or grandfather? Was it in line with the ‘original’ true path of immortality that you just described?”

Dongfang Renxin was so eloquent a moment ago that he seemed determined to persist to the end of the debate.

Li Yao’s sentence, however, was like a punch of an iron fist right on his face. He stuttered for a long time, only to come up with no rebuttal.

Li Yao said, “Save it. You know that I won’t let go of you today.”

“I know… I know…”

Dongfang Renxin immediately withered like a balloon whose air had just leaked. A moment later, with brutality beaming out of his eyes, he grimaced. “Now that this is just another power struggle, just don’t pretend that you are serving the cause of justice. It’s disgusting!

“You and I are both well aware that I am not the only one studying the secret techniques of ‘cannibal training’. Are any of the four Kurfürst families and the forces at the edge of the Imperium not studying similar techniques and killing countless Immortal Cultivators in secret?

“However, hehe, those guys are too idiotic to come up with such incredible arts. Only I can develop the unprecedented, unparalleled secret techniques that can change the entire world thanks to the inspirations of the ancient classics!

“You have no idea what you are messing with, Vulture Li Yao. You think that a few leaders of the Dongfang family are the only ones who tasted the feeling of ‘cannibal training’? Hahahaha. You will be terribly wrong if you think so. The enormity of my clients far exceeds your imagination. You can’t afford to piss them off. Even if you are backed by Li Linghai and all the reformists, you will have to concede in the end and even join the game!

“You think that you can annihilate me because you have captured me? That is the greatest joke in the world!

“You can’t destroy me. It is possible for you to destroy Dongfang Wang, but you can never destroy me! The most precious thing in the world is technology. Does any of the leadership of the four Kurfürst families who are hundreds of years old not want to live another five hundred years? Only I can help them with that!

“Therefore, even if you have destroyed my secret research institute, so what? Before long, under the protection of the four families and even your queen, I will change my name and establish a bigger, more advanced institute in an enjoyable, inconspicuous place under a different identity. By then, you might be crying and begging me to strengthen yourself!

“Therefore, you’d better mind what you are doing right now, because we will meet again sooner or later. Remember that!”

After a long hesitation, Li Yao said, “The four families have really been indulging and even endorsing your ‘cannibal training?”

“The four families, the emperor, and the queen; is there any difference among them?”

Dongfang Renxin laughed crazily. “In a man-eat-man world, if you don’t eat other people, other people will eat you. Is there a third approach?”

Li Yao was silent for a moment before he asked again, “Are your medical arts really so brilliant?”

After a brief daze, Dongfang Renxin was overjoyed. He nodded his head quickly and said, “Of course, of course. I can give you a hundred times more strength!”

"Your offer was ten times a moment ago, and it has grown to a hundred times so quickly?"

With a casual smile, Li Yao said, "Alright. Since your medical arts are brilliant, I'll give you an opportunity."

Hardly had he concluded his sentence when he suddenly kicked Dongfang Renxin right in the chest brutally!

The kick was both fast and heavy. Li Yao also activated the power rune array below the foot of the crystal suit when he kicked. The high-heated exhaust flames immediately blackened the flesh on Dongfang Renxin's chest.

"Ahhhh!"

In excruciating pain, Dongfang Renxin cried miserably.

Without changing his expression, Li Yao kicked Dongfang Renxin's limbs and joints as quickly as bolts of lightning without stopping. Very soon, all his bones had been blown into smithereens, but the nerves of pain were not affected at all. As a result, Dongfang Renxin was still able to taste the most intense agony.

In only half a minute, Dongfang Renxin turned into a pile of mud on the ground. He couldn't do anything anymore except for breathing hard on the ground and glaring at Li Yao in hatred.

"I almost forgot. Your soul is so powerful that it may escape to an artificial body even if your current body is broken and shattered, and you may hurt even more people."

Grinning, Li Yao extended a finger and stuck it to the center of Dongfang Renxin's forehead. Then, he leaned to the man's ear and said in a low voice, "Right now, I am about to damage your brain, cripple your spiritual root, and tear apart your soul. If your medical arts are so brilliant, why don’t you try to cure yourself under such circumstances? I’ll let you go if you can cure yourself!”

Chapter 2298 - National Indignity!

While talking, Li Yao's index finger was already as bright as an iron block that had been heated to the point of melting. Reacting with the air, it let out earsplitting sounds.

Rings of spiritual energy also drifted around his finger into waves the shape of sawtooth, and they revolved rapidly like the whorl on a drill.

He stuck his finger into Dongfang Renxin's forehead brutally like a drill sticking to the steel. Squeaky noises echoed first with white smoke popping out. Then, dazzling electric arcs burst out from the point of contact and covered Dongfang Renxin's entire head.

All the muscles on Dongfang Renxin's head were exploding. He tried to shake his head, but his limbs and his spine had all been shattered by Li Yao, making him unable to move at all. Even his devastating screams sounded more like the whining of the pigs that were to be butchered. After a predicament of three seconds, Li Yao's finger stabbed brutally!

His fingertip was like a gate that had just been opened, ushering the most furious spiritual energy into Dongfang Renxin's brain.

The soul power of the Divinity Transformation Stage was too massive. Like a scared beast, it launched an intuitional counterattack.

But Li Yao was clearly more skilled. He simply gritted his teeth and compressed his disgust and hatred into torrents of fury, which raged inside Dongfang Renxin’s head unstoppably and destroyed everything.

From Dongfang Renxin’s eyes and ears, red flames spurted out, with gold brilliant at the edge. They were exactly the aftermath of Li Yao’s spiritual energy.

His screams gradually died down.

Li Yao moved his finger away. An invisible spring of spiritual energy erupted out of the center of Dongfang Renxin’s forehead crazily, as if a colorful flower were blossoming slowly in the darkness. It did not wither until a long time later.

As the spiritual energy leaked out, Dongfang Renxin’s previously healthy and young face turned into a bag of bones. But he was still as alive as before. Staring at Li Yao with his sunken eyes that had almost been burned through, he appeared to be both desperate and shocked that Li Yao was really bold enough to do that.

Li Yao smiled at him and retrieved a few dosages of medical drugs and high-energy nutrition drugs from his Cosmos Ring. Injecting them into Dongfang Renxin’s carotid artery, he helped the walking skeleton to keep alive.

He then groped Dongfang Renxin’s body, which was like a pile of mud on the ground. Soon, he found four Cosmos Rings.

The four Cosmos Rings had all been planted with barriers, but it was not a problem for Li Yao who was a master of refining.

Hearing the roars and collisions of crystal suits drawing closer and closer, Li Yao suddenly thought of something. He knocked the half-dead Dongfang Renxin into a coma and dragged him to a dark corner in the deeper abyss.

He found a forsaken mining cave in the corner of the deeper abyss. After spending ten minutes cracking the four Cosmos Rings by brute force, he indeed discovered what seemed to be the storage chips of a mainframe crystal processor.

All the raw data of Dongfang Renxin’s experiments and surgeries in the past must’ve been stored inside.

Due to the limited time, it was impossible for Li Yao to copy all the data inside the storage chips. Pondering for a moment, he stuck a mini chip that he produced deep inside the storage chips.

The chip that was only one fourth the size of a fingernail and completely melted with the rune arrays of the storage chips themselves was equal to a physical “backdoor”. It also boasted a very strong navigation ability, allowing Li Yao to locate it from dozens of kilometers away.

Li Yao did not know why he played such a trick, perhaps because of what Dongfang Renxin just said, or because Long Yangjun’s reminder a few days ago was still lingering in his head.

In any case, he felt that the so-called “victory” came too easily.

Assuming that the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance was a scheme carefully concocted by Dongfang Wang, and the reformists were simply counterattacking in a hurry under the leadership of Li Linghai, the “scheme” would seem too clumsy and inconsiderate, and the “counterattack” was too aggressive, seamless, and unstoppable.

After assembling the four Cosmos Rings into their original looks and sealing them with the original barriers, Li Yao dragged Dongfang Renxin back to the twenty-seventh district.

In the darkness around, countless underground hominoids were staring at him without blinking. Some young men were exclaiming like panicked cubs, but more people were already used to the darkness below the ground. Their lifeless eyes were teeming with numbness, as if the fierce battle that happened just now was a drama that had nothing to do with them at all.

It would truly be a long and difficult path to let the people who had never seen sunlight to believe in brightness.

However, Li Yao would never give up, and he would fight with his best!

“I will definitely find out the truth… Li Linghai, what game are you playing exactly, and what is your ‘secret weapon?”

Looking at the devil huntresses who rushed close, Li Yao mumbled to himself, deep in thought.

…

Dongfang Renxin’s secret research institute was destroyed after all the pieces of evidence were seized. Even Dongfang Renxin himself failed to escape but was sequestered in the secret base of the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils. The news was as shocking as a destructive storm at the center of the cosmos.

Before the reinforcement of the Dongfang family arrived, the Li family's fleet had already appeared at the sky right above the twenty-seventh district. All the cannons and spiritual shields were activated, suggesting that they could start a battle at any moment. The reinforcement of the Dongfang family did not have the courage to act rashly.

Very soon, undeniable proofs were publicized on the Spiritual Nexus, revealing the crimes that Dongfang Renxin committed.

Li Linghai's judgment was quite correct. What Dongfang Renxin did had crossed the lines of the Immortal Cultivators as well as the unspoken game rules.

The Imperium of True Human Beings was a country of Immortal Cultivators where "true human beings" were the ruling class. No Immortal Cultivator could tolerate the fact that their companions were tied to an operation table, butchered, and even drained while they were alive. It was obviously a treatment for "hominoids", not something suitable for the high and mighty true human beings!

The victims of Dongfang Renxin's secret research institute, on the other hand, were not regular true human beings but mostly nobles of both large and small. Some of them were even the core members of the four Kurfürst families.

Many Immortal Cultivators had gone missing after their starships or bases were blown up by the enemies in the fierce battles against the Covenant Alliance in the frontline. In a universal war, the attacks could easily carry a temperature of thousands of degrees, which was more than enough to vaporize a body into nothingness.

As a result, after a massive battle, ninety percent of the bodies would go missing, either vaporized or drifting in space aimlessly, and only ten percent of the bodies could be found. It was perfectly normal.

Therefore, many missing soldiers were announced to have sacrificed for the country. Their family also thought that they were killed by the sabers of the Covenant Alliance.

But as it turned out, they were not killed by the Covenant Alliance but by Dongfang Renxin. Their cores and spiritual roots were even absorbed and used as the nutrition for other Immortal Cultivators!

The whole country was mired in indignity immediately. The relatives of the victims, who were naturally also powerful Immortal Cultivators, were more than infuriated.

The leaders of the Li, Yun, and Song families were absolutely incapable of suppressing the flames of fury. They could only grit their teeth to set up a joint investigation group with the reformists under the boost of the public indignity to investigate everyone that was involved in Dongfang Renxin’s case.

On June 17, an elder from the Yun family filed an impeachment proposal in the Council of Elders, demanding Prime Minister Dongfang Wang to resign immediately and his cabinet be disbanded and replaced by a new, temporary cabinet.

There was no direct proof that suggested Dongfang Wang was involved in Dongfang Renxin’s evil researches yet. Therefore, although the impeachment proposal partly won the support of the elders from the Yun, Li, and Song families, it was not passed.

However, everybody whose eyes were sharp enough could tell that the impeachment was a declaration of war. It meant that the Yun family and the Song family had taken the sides of the Li family and the reformists. The three Kurfürst families and the reformists had forged a temporary alliance, pointing their weapons at the Dongfang family at the same time!

The Dongfang family, on the other hand, had a morale lower than ever. It was even falling apart.

That was because the victims hit most by Dongfang Renxin’s studies were exactly the people within the Dongfang family. When some of the leaders benefited from Dongfang Renxin’s researches, some other leaders who failed the competitions naturally hated him and craved to seize power again.

The leaders were immediately divided into two parties if not more, which accused and blamed each other. They even considered in secret who should be pushed out as a scapegoat to settle the matter.

For the Immortal Cultivators of the branch family and at the bottom level, they were fully aware that they were but the cannon fodder of the family, and it was barely possible for them to distinguish themselves in the enormous system that was getting ossified. Most of them had already succumbed to their fate. However, the revelation of such a wicked and appalling case was still an astounding shock for them.

As it turned out, as the branches and the bottom of the family, not only did they have zero chance to distinguish themselves and had to fight desperate battles as cannon fodder, but they might be captured by the leaders of the family and squeezed into “high-energy nutrition drugs” for the enjoyment of the leaders and their descendants, as long as they slightly showed some talents in training!

Such a family was not a family at all but a cave of monsters!

After all, they had never benefited from the family at all. Even if the Dongfang family was completely screwed, did they need to do anything about it?

It was even so for the Immortal Cultivators of other surnames and the hominoid soldiers living on the Dongfang family’s dominion or working inside the Dongfang family’s fleet.

The Dongfang family governed almost twenty prosperous Sectors. The Immortal Cultivators under their governance were numerous. Naturally, not all of them had the “Dongfang” surname.

In fact, in the Dongfang family’s dominion and army, the Immortal Cultivators with the Dongfang surname only took up 10% of the population. The other 90% all carried miscellaneous names.

Among the hominoid soldiers, the ratio of the miscellaneous names was even higher. It was above 95%.

Before, the Immortal Cultivators of other surnames had been suppressed by the Immortal Cultivators of the Dongfang family. They could not distinguish themselves however talented they were, and they had been grumpy and dissatisfied about the situation for a long time. It was just that the Dongfang family was too deeply-rooted and powerful for them to vent their fury or change the reality.

However, now that the Dongfang family was caught in peril from both inside and outside, the Immortal Cultivators of other surnames could not help but take action, or at least start making other plans.

Chapter 2299 - Cursed by Everybody!

Chapter 2299 Cursed by Everybody!

For even the strongest deep-sky fleet, even if the important posts such as captains and chief of staff were occupied by the members of the Dongfang family, the remaining professional jobs had to be taken by the Immortal Cultivators of other surnames who were ten times larger in number.

It was needless to say the fundamental jobs at the bottom level. Hundreds of times more hominoid soldiers were required to play the glorious and sacred role that was “cannon fodder”.

By the same logic, in the factories that produced those starships, the crystal suit legions that acted in company with the starships, the regiments which provided fire support for the crystal suit legions, and in the crucial and fundamental posts that supported the effective operation of the Dongfang family, countless Immortal Cultivators of miscellaneous surnames and hominoids had been working dutifully.

If the Dongfang family could be compared to a pyramid, only a few bricks at the tip of the pyramid were carved with the surname “Dongfang”, whereas the enormous footing that supported the tip was exclusively made of Immortal Cultivators of other surnames and hominoids.

They had clearly made the greatest contributions and even done most of the job themselves, but it was those people who had the surname of Dongfang that stole their credits and accomplishments. More importantly, as it had been so in the past hundreds of years, it would still be so in the next hundreds of years!

Not a single Immortal Cultivator of other surnames could stand such a system.

When their wrath that had been accumulated for hundreds of years finally found a vent, the energy that they released was astonishing.

All the fortresses were conquered from within.

The Immortal Cultivators of other surnames, who had been suppressed by the Dongfang family for generations and who had no hope of rising at all for their entire lives, were destined to be the gravediggers for the Dongfang family.

Governing a dozen Sectors with only one family while lacking legitimacy, not even having a disguise such as “emperor” but only as an awkward “Kurfürst”, it was impossible for the Dongfang family to win the loyalty and trust of all the people under its governance. It was merely managing the reign with violence.

Violence originated from fear, and fear came from no hope of success. But now that the weakness behind the Dongfang family’s violence had been fully revealed, the hope of resistance vaguely popped up in the hearts of the Immortal Cultivators of other surnames. It was like the first dawn on the horizon when the dark night was about to be over!

It was needless to say that the other three Kurfürst families were all supporting the Immortal Cultivators of other surnames who were under the governance of the Dongfang family, offering them unrealistic promises and visions of success. The reformists had long leaked to the many worlds under the governance of the Dongfang family and boasted high influences among the Immortal Cultivators of other surnames who took up 90% of the population.

A storm was raised in the worlds under the control of the Dongfang family at the same time.

When it came to July, the incident of cannibal training was gradually brewing. In the entire Imperium of True Human Beings, and especially in the heavy industry worlds where the bottom-level Immortal Cultivators were concentrated, massive, astounding demonstrations were breaking out, demanding the case to be investigated thoroughly and all of Dongfang Renxin’s “clients” be found out without leaving out any.

Under the instigation of various forces, the demonstrations in the worlds of the Dongfang family were the largest and most heated of all.

In the biggest demonstration, it was said that more than five hundred thousand Immortal Cultivators were gathered under the slogan of “Million Immortal Cultivators Coalition” against the highest leadership of the Dongfang family. They were even questioning if the Dongfang family’s local governance was legal. The entire planet was set on fire.

Faced with such public “rebellions”, the Dongfang family naturally chose to suppress them without any mercy.

However, their opponents were not strengthless civilians but Immortal Cultivators who could control spiritual energy freely with their awakened spiritual roots.

Many Immortal Cultivators of other surnames, during their hundreds of years of work as “cannon fodder” of the Dongfang family, also mastered rather magnificent combat ability. They were all adept at fighting.

Besides, every battle-type Immortal Cultivator was a fast, intelligent slaughter machine that boasted high stealth and survival abilities. They would never be silly enough to confront the Dongfang family’s fleet openly but would place themselves in the skyscrapers or the underground cities, where they were engaged in the “unrestrained warfare” unpredictably.

To deal with an insane, battle-type Immortal Cultivator in the complicated city environment, it would require a dozen battle-type Immortal Cultivators of the same level. During the capture, it was very possible that the enemy would sabotage quite a few skyscrapers and completely jam the traffic. They could even destroy the tubes that transmitted spiritual energy, resulting in inestimable losses.

It was just the case of one Immortal Cultivator.

What if the rogues were a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, or five hundred thousand?

In the highly-developed, important towns of economy and industry in their own dominion, they were going to fight a protracted street battle, which might result in a “collateral damage” of millions of people and reduce their hometowns into smithereens by the way.

No fleet commanders of the Dongfang family with a normal intelligence would do such a thing.

More trickily, on the fleets that were sent for suppression, more than 90% of the middle-level officers and bottom-level soldiers were Immortal Cultivators of other surnames and hominoids.

Under the reign of the Dongfang family, the middle-level officers never had the chance to be promoted as long as their surname was not “Dongfang”. Even if they were blessed with luck, it would be their best to become a deputy captain or an advisor.

In that case, would the middle-level officers have any reason to help the Dongfang family slaughter another group of Immortal Cultivators of other surnames who were fighting for their own interests?

Even the captains, whose surname was Dongfang, might not be at the center of the family. They were also faced with the glass ceiling, unable to rise to the stop at all, and their accomplishments were sometimes stolen by the central members of the family too. Although they did have loyalty to the family, they had been inevitably complaining about the different treatments of the main branch and the secondary branches. Why were the secondary branches like them only allowed to pilot the ragged, outdated starships whatever accomplishments they made, whereas even the rookies of the main branch had the opportunity to make use of the latest warships that were newly produced?

Such suppression fleets did not have any morale or combat ability at all. They were already loyal enough to the ancestors of the Dongfang family since they did not rebel.

As it turned out, the Immortal Cultivators of other surnames had zero loyalty and reverence for the ancestors of the Dongfang family at all.

When the suppression operation proceeded to the third day, a mutiny did take place.

Two arsenal warships of the Dongfang family were hijacked by the mutinying soldiers and landed on the surface of the planet. The Immortal Cultivators who were demonstrating broke in and tied up all the advanced officers on board who had the surname Dongfang. All the captives were tied up as if they were pigs.

The picture, as well as the overwhelming gatherings and demonstrations of the Immortal Cultivators of other surnames, was sent to the outside world through secret channels and played day and night by the propaganda machines of the reformists and the three Kurfürst families, slapping the Dongfang family in the face again and again.

The Dongfang family’s reign of violence fell into a vicious cycle.

The mutiny suggested that all the Immortal Cultivators of other surnames were unreliable. To settle the issue neatly, the only solution was to gather all the Immortal Cultivators of the Dongfang family and suppress the rebellions through blood with their own people.

But if they were really doing that, they would be completely standing on the opposite side of the 90% of Immortal Cultivators of other surnames, who would be forced to rebel even if they did not intend to in the beginning.

Besides, while the Immortal Cultivators of other surnames were unreliable, the secondary branches within the Dongfang family might not be reliable either. Or rather, they were even more unreliable!

In the worlds under the control of the Dongfang family, two convincing rumors had already spread out.

The first rumor was that the Dongfang family had reached a consensus to not trust Immortal Cultivators of other surnames anymore. They were about to initiate a purge within the Dongfang family and kill at least one-third of the Immortal Cultivators of other surnames.

The remaining two-thirds did not need to be happy too soon either. To ensure their loyalty, their bodies would be planted with barriers by the Dongfang family, and they would be forced to wear necklaces that could be detonated at any point.

In such a way, they and their posterity would have to stay loyal to the Dongfang family for all eternity!

The second rumor claimed that the Dongfang family had serious disagreements within. Many secondary branches believed that the leaders of the main branch should take the blame for the matter because they were the ones who caused the trouble. In order to save the Dongfang family, the only way was to capture all the leaders of the main branch for a just trial.

In other words, the secondary branches of the Dongfang family were planning a “family coup” against the main branch!

The two rumors were in fact contradictory and could not stand scrutiny.

However, rumors tended to become self-fulfilling prophecies in many cases. Even if something was entirely ungrounded, as long as many people were talking about it, it might become the accepted truth.

The two rumors hit the weakness of humanity most accurately.

Nobody could deny the possibilities of the two rumors.

For a moment, the Immortal Cultivators of the Dongfang family did not trust the Immortal Cultivators of other surnames, and the main branch of the Dongfang family did not trust the secondary branches. Everyone’s war against everyone that Li Yao had described before was about to begin within the Dongfang family. How could the so-called “suppression” possibly go on?

With the chaos inside the family, how could the fleets deployed in the capital and the noble lords in the court who were loyal to the Dongfang family defend themselves from the aggressive attacks of the other three Kurfürst families as well as the reformists?

Gatherings and demonstrations burst out in the Empyreal Terminus Sector one after another too. The voices that demanded Prime Minister Dongfang Wang to resign never stopped. In several cases, the crowd even marched to one kilometer away from the prime minister’s office under the connivance of the many forces. The roars that sounded like raging tides shocked the glass of the prime minister’s office day and night.

The blood-boiling pictures and “the roars of the regular citizens of the Imperium” were delivered to the entire universe through the modern Spiritual Nexus instantly, further prompting the bottom-level Immortal Cultivators who were filled with fury.

The will of the people was just unpredictable air most of the time, but occasionally, it could also turn into oil that was poured on the fire.

After more than a month of instigation, Dongfang Wang was already cursed by everybody in the country. The lethal dagger could be unsheathed now.

Therefore, the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance that had been cold for a while was brought up again.

Chapter 2300 - Rescue His Majesty!

Chapter 2300 Rescue His Majesty!

“The incident of the Blood Oath Alliance was planned by Prime Minister Dongfang Wang in person. He had Elder Dongfang Tuo assassinated through careful arrangements for two purposes. Firstly, it was meant to frame up the young officers of the frontline and give him an excuse for a ‘grand purge’, which could strengthen his control over the expedition army and help him achieve his clandestine goals.

“Secondly, Dongfang Wang and Dongfang Tuo had not been the closest friends. The two of them had a lot of contradictions regarding the future development and the leadership of the family. Dongfang Wang killed him in order to eliminate a major rival of the family for himself too!”

The news spread out on the Spiritual Nexus quickly and soon reached every corner of the Imperium.

The breakthrough was found on Elder Dongfang Tuo’s dead body.

The investigators from the other three Kurfürst families found one of Dongfang Tuo’s secret offices. The tremendous files retrieved from a mini crystal processor in the office suggested that Dongfang Tuo had been dissatisfied with Dongfang Wang’s policy of iron and blood. He thought that the consumption of the war far exceeded the prewar estimation and that the Imperium’s hundreds of years of accumulations had been drained in it.

Because the Covenant Alliance burned everything to the ground during their retreat, it would take decades to cover the war cost from the newly-recovered territory. A lot of things might happen in decades. If anything went wrong, the losses of the war would certainly outweigh the gains.

Dongfang Tuo believed that Dongfang Wang was building the image of an invincible prime minister of iron and blood with the resources of the entire Dongfang family and even the entire Imperium and that his real intentions called for suspicion.

Dongfang Tuo even suspected that Dongfang Wang was going to control the expedition army and take one step further with the expedition army to become the first “lifelong Prime Minister” in the history of the Imperium. In such a way, his personal prestige and influence would far exceed those of the four Kurfürst families!

Therefore, the moment the war in the frontline was more or less settled, Dongfang Tuo returned to the family and associated with more leaders of the family as an elder of the Imperium, and to get the family to object to Dongfang Wang together. It was even possible for them to drive Dongfang Wang away from the seat of the prime minister of the Imperium.

The proof indirectly suggested that Dongfang Wang ordered the assassination of Dongfang Tuo in order to secure his place and to achieve his personal ambitions!

The proof whose veracity was questionable was almost like a gunshot right next to Dongfang Wang’s forehead.

The four Kurfürst families could never tolerate any dictator to sit on top of them. Not the emperor, and certainly not a “lifelong Prime Minister”.

The anxious Dongfang Wang had not been freed from the swamp of his brother’s “cannibal training” yet when he was faced with such a fatal accusation again. He could hardly defend himself.

The entire Imperium was seething. Not only were gatherings and demonstrations that were even more intense breaking out in the heavy industry worlds which were of paramount importance, but even the expedition army was also shocked and expressed their concerns on Dongfang Wang.

The people not only demanded for his resignation but also asked for a new investigation group to be established to fully investigate the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance so that the name of the innocent, patriotic young officers on the frontline could be cleared.

In the meantime, more and more proofs were thrown out. More and more leaders of Dongfang Wang’s group were proved that they had received “cannibal training”. Even Dongfang Wang himself had been using the “special nutrition drug” provided by Dongfang Renxin to maintain his vigor. The massive undeniable proofs made Dongfang Wang’s reputation hit rock bottom.

Faced with such a huge external pressure, the situation inside the Dongfang family had subtle changes too.

In only half a month, the main branch of the family was unable to get the situation under control anymore. The secondary branches, which had the advantage in number, all made their own voices.

“The main branch of the family headed by Dongfang Wang has already become the ‘negative asset’ of the Dongfang family. If we want to save the family, we have to separate ourselves from Dongfang Wang’s company as soon as possible and send the criminals to the court of justice!”

“Only if the Dongfang family gives a fair and just punishment on the insane, heinous criminals can the honor and dignity of the Dongfang family be defended!”

“The family cannot protect those criminals anymore, which will only make us an enemy for everyone else in the Imperium!”

“People like Dongfang Wang are not the real members of the Dongfang family at all. According to the evidence of the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils, they had long been corrupted by the extraterrestrial devils and transformed into Demonic Cultivators! Therefore, this is not the Dongfang family’s fault, but because the extraterrestrial devils are too sly and evil! In order to recover the reputation of the Dongfang family, we have to fight the devils to the end without showing any mercy!”

Similar voices spread out on every heavy industry planet and every super enormous starship of the Dongfang family. Mixed with the angry roars of the hundreds of Immortal Cultivators of other surnames, they congregated into overwhelming tides that could drown anything.

A losing army was as unstoppable as a falling mountain. When everybody hated Dongfang Wang’s guts, even if he had a couple of Divinity Transformation Stage experts under his command, what could he do?

Getting to the bottom of it, as Immortal Cultivators, they were equally ferocious and fearless of death, and they would certainly not be intimidated only by Dongfang Wang’s title and strength.

When it came to the second half of July, multiple mutinies took place within the elite fleets of the Dongfang family.

Different from the few mutinies earlier, the new mutinies did not happen inside a single starship under the organization of low-level Immortal Cultivators of other surnames but were raised by the captains with the Dongfang surname in multiple starships at the same time. They controlled their starships in the blink of an eye and gathered dozens of them together, stating that they would eradicate the black sheep of the family!

The mutiny troops and the suppression troops did not really fight. Nobody could stand the consequences of a great battle at the most vulnerable heartland of the family. Besides, the fleets of the other three Kurfürst families, as well Lei Chenghu’s Astounding Thunder Fleet and Li Linghai’s Deep Sea Fleet, were still eyeing them covetously.

If a civil war were to break out within the Dongfang family, everybody would certainly burst into laughter and enjoy the great show.

Therefore, the two parties merely confronted each other in silence.

But that was enough.

When the switch of the machine of violence went out of control and did not obey Dongfang Wang’s command anymore, it equaled a death knell for Dongfang Wang and his company.

After each day of confrontation, countless Immortal Cultivators of the Dongfang family would be reaching out to the opposition. As long as the conditions were acceptable, they would abandon Dongfang Wang without any mercy.

As the “prime minister of iron and blood”, Dongfang Wang was betrayed by almost everyone in half a month. His power was little to none now.

On the last day of July, the second impeachment proposal targeting Dongfang Wang was finally raised by a renowned elder of the Li family who had a lot of followers in the Council of Elders. It demanded for Dongfang Wang’s resignation, the previous “special investigation committee” to be disbanded, and a new, fairer special prosecution team to be established and investigate the relationship between the prime minister and the assassination.

Except for the few elders of the Dongfang family who were too close to Dongfang Wang to get away from him, most of the elders were involved in the impeachment against Dongfang Wang.

Many of them were actually the elders from the Dongfang family.

Very ironically, it was actually the elders of the Dongfang family who stood on the side of the Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils firmly and even offered abundant evidence to prove that Dongfang Wang, Dongfang Renxin, and the rest of them had long been corrupted by the extraterrestrial devils into Demonic Cultivators.

After the final attack, Dongfang Wang’s fall was almost inevitable. There was no chance of a comeback now.

…

On August 4, deep inside the Silver Moon Ocean to the east coast of the main continent of the capital, a hundred warships were flying at a low altitude, almost sticking to the surface of the ocean. The tides that they raised were like a hundred iron sharks that had grown wings.

The warships were in different shapes. It could be easily seen that they had been produced for different purposes. However, they were equally brutal and aggressive. All the turrets had been activated. The spluttering electric arcs and mystic arcs were dancing around themselves, vaporizing the tides into colorful mists that were both splendid and fatal.

On the dozens of warships that were marching forward in parallel, the emblems of the Li family, the Song family, and the Yun family could be found. Some of the warships also carried the sign of the Astounding Thunder Fleet. On the few warships at the edge, there was even the sigil of the Dongfang family.

It turned out to be a coalition fleet that included the major forces of the Imperium right now!

In his crystal suit, Li Yao sat cross-legged at the front of a warship of the Astounding Thunder Fleet, faced with the raging sea wind while the warship rushed forward.

Li Jialing stood behind him, swallowing nervously.

He was not nervous about the upcoming battle but the fact that he was about to meet the theoretically supreme His Majesty of the Imperium of True Human Beings!

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

Li Yao tapped the helmet of his crystal suit softly and searched the brief of the mission again.

Yesterday, the impeachment on Prime Minister Dongfang Wang had been passed. Dongfang Wang was displaced from the office immediately. The ten or so elders of the Imperium who were involved in the “cannibal training” and the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance were restrained too.

A new special prosecution team had been set up too, which was mostly made of the reformists and the members of the other three Kurfürst families. There was also a group of members from the secondary branches of the Dongfang family. It would be easier to locate all the evidence with the help of the insiders.

So far, the reformists’ goals before the operation had been half accomplished.

However, Dongfang Wang fled one step in advance before the new special prosecution team arrived.

He had a rather huge secret base deep inside the Silver Moon Ocean to the west of the Blackstar Continent. There were even enormous space jump facilities similar to “cosmic slingshot” that could allow his starship to be launched to space from the bottom of the ocean immediately.

He had kidnapped the emperor and intended to jump to space from the undersea base before he jumped to his hometown, which he thought was the only place that still supported him. Then, he could use Emperor Shenwu as his last resistance.

It was a shame that Dongfang Wang overestimated his prestige as the prime minister of Iron and Blood and underestimated the ambitions of the people of his hometown and the speed of their betrayal.

So, before he put his escape plan into practice, the intelligence already came from the Dongfang family. Massive troops immediately flew to the Silver Moon Ocean, blocking all the ways of escape.

The mission of the battle was to capture former Prime Minister Dongfang Wang alive and rescue Emperor Shenwu!

Chapter 2301 - The Experience of Showing Off

Chapter 2301 The Experience of Showing Off

The ocean up ahead seemed peaceful and tranquil, but it was in the color of devastating redness under the illumination of sunlight.

The redness soared up into a crimson pillar of smoke that could be seen clearly from hundreds of kilometers away.

It was exactly the location of the undersea base that had been accurately marked by the reconnaissance troops who had come in advance. The base was right below the pillar of smoke.

At this moment, the fastest warships had already reached the smoke. Abundant bombs were released from the warships and sank into the ocean, not exploding until they submerged for almost five hundred meters.

The bombs were so powerful that the blasts raised splendid tides on the surface passing through the seawater hundreds of meters deep. The entire ocean seemed to be boiling.

According to the intelligence, Dongfang Wang’s undersea base was constructed in the undersea mountains more than two thousand meters below sea level. Naturally, those bombs could not damage the base at all.

However, they could trigger overwhelming undercurrents below the ocean, which could disrupt the teleportation arrays and stop the starships from being directly launched to space.

Dongfang Wang’s last retreat had been completely blocked.

A hundred warships, with almost a hundred thousand elite soldiers on board, flew to the top of the bloody pillar of smoke. A gory hunting was about to begin.

Dongfang Wang in the undersea base seemed to have realized that he had nowhere to go anymore. Even if he was lucky enough to run to space, there would still be no place for him in the enormous Imperium.

But it was absolutely impossible for him to give up and surrender as the former prime minister of the Imperium and the leader of the Dongfang family, to be tied up, tried, and butchered like a pig later.

Resisting in hopelessness and fighting to the last moment was his only outcome.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

A hundred serial explosions suddenly echoed from the bottom of the ocean. Then, water pillars as thick as dragons rose abruptly to an altitude of a hundred meters.

From the water pillars, thousands of flying swords and ten times more grenades were shot at the warships overwhelmingly.

Ripples in various colors were spreading out on the spiritual shields of the warships under the barrage. Many of the spiritual shields were shot through, and the power units and the anti-gravity units were badly damaged. Hideous smoke popped up on the starships one after another.

However, more warships had already locked onto where the assault came and counterattacked with the cannons on board. The vast ocean was immediately riddled with holes.

The seawater weighing billions of tons was vaporized immediately into a stinky storm of blood.

After a prolonged mutual shooting, the two parties gradually slowed down. Then, tremendous crystal suits and Colossi leaped off from the warships into the ocean.

Both the crystal suits and the Colossi were the best anti-pressure models. They had also been installed with the fin kits for the undersea battle. Even under the pressure of the water thousands of meters deep, they could still carry out at least 60% of their combat ability.

In a moment, the previously dirty water turned translucent under the illumination of the light of the crystal suits and the Colossi. It was almost like a colorful crystal that was emitting gloomy coldness with a weird sense of beauty.

“Let’s go now. If we can successfully rescue His Majesty, it will be a major accomplishment!”

Li Yao grinned and said to Li Jialing half-jokingly. Then, he rose and warmed up his limbs, before he sprinted and leaped from the front of the warship!

While he was still in midair, his crystal suit was already glowing, outlining a cluster of glamorous wings, as if an enormous golden-winged bird was flying out of his body and enshrouding him. His Colossus Gold Vulture showed up again!

BOOM!

The Gold Vulture dived deep into the ocean and swooped to the dark, deep bottom of the ocean.

The battle in the deep ocean was entirely different from those on the ground or in space.

The ocean water was a natural barrier that would significantly disrupt and slow down the transmission of spiritual waves.

Even the weapons such as flying swords and bullets would be terribly decelerated in the water.

It was needless to say that the senses of human beings would be mostly blocked once they entered the deep ocean.

The most terrifying of all was the pressure in the ocean. At the bottom of the ocean thousands of meters deep, the pressure of the seawater was enough to press a crystal tank weighing dozens of tons into a flawless iron ball by brute force. There would not even be a hole that a needle could stab in on the ball.

The battle in such an environment was extremely treacherous even for the experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage who were protected by the super anti-pressure crystal suits and Colossi.

The reason was simple. The experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage could not stay in the Divinity Transformation Stage every second and every minute. It would be quite impressive if they could unleash the intensity of the Divinity Transformation Stage a couple of times in a fierce battle. Most of the time, they would only keep themselves in the Nascent Soul Stage or the Core Formation Stage to lower the consumption on the life and the soul.

The turrets of the latest warship cannons of the Imperium of True Human Beings had a longevity of about three minutes, which meant the addition of all the moments when the cannons were fired.

The same logic applied to the experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage.

No turrets could stand opening fire for dozens of minutes continually, and no experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage could stay in the Divinity Transformation Stage for dozens of minutes by burning their lives incessantly.

The heavy pressure of the seawater, on the other hand, was endless without any gap. Unless one had escaped into an undersea base, it would be impossible for them to relax for a single moment.

From that point of view, Dongfang Wang, who had an undersea base as a shield, was in a much more advantageous position than the attackers.

When Li Yao dived to five hundred meters deep, the entire undersea world was already a mess.

Chaotic currents, turbulences, and dazzling electric arcs triggered by invisible barriers were everywhere. Flames were squeezed into all kinds of bizarre shapes by the water, before their gloomy fluorescence swallowed the lives of countless people.

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

The mainframe crystal processor of the Gold Vulture let out alarms nonstop. The entire undersea mountain had almost been built into a forest of flying swords, and a thousand of them darted at Li Yao’s face without a sound along with the undercurrents!

While dodging the attacks unhurriedly, Li Yao boosted his telepathic thoughts to the maximum and observed the layout of the undersea base.

At this moment, the elite warriors of the two parties had already clashed. Dozens of Colossi and tens of thousands of crystal suits raised the craziest tides at the bottom of the ocean. One side was determined to capture Dongfang Wang, and the other side was resisting hard because they had no retreat. The battle had entered the most heated phase the moment it started!

“Li Jialing!”

Locking onto a position, Li Yao called the golden-haired lion in the point-to-point private channel. “This way, follow me!”

Evading the last flying sword as agilely as a shark, the Gold Vulture moved to the dark bottom of the ocean.

“Huh?”

Following Li Yao, Li Jialing found it strange. “This… does not seem to be the direction to the main battlefield. The undersea base is that way!”

“Of course I know this isn’t the direction to the main battlefield. That’s why we are heading this way!”

Li Yao replied matter-of-factly, “Hurry and switch your crystal suit to stealth mode. Turn off all the units except for the anti-pressure ones in case other people discover us!”

While talking, Li Yao turned off the light around the Gold Vulture first. The Colossus now looked like a piece of rusted bronze.

“What are you doing?”

Li Jialing was astonished. “Aren’t we supposed to rescue His Majesty?”

“That was just a joke. There are countless loyal and devoted patriots in the Imperium of True Human Beings. It’s inappropriate for us to do everything in person, right?”

Li Yao said matter-of-factly again, “Young man, you must keep a low profile and never show off easily!”

Li Jialing: “… B-but you’ve been showing off in your every battle in the past, Brother Yao!”

“Here, allow Brother Yao to teach you a life lesson about when you can show off and when you can’t.”

Li Yao said solemnly, “Before, when I showed off in the battles, I had run careful evaluations in advance and foreseen that the difficulty of the battles was not high and the enemies were not determined to resist but likely to collapse at the first sign of failure. If you are engaged in such battles, of course you need to show off, or you won’t deserve your hard training, right?

“There is another scenario. The battles are terribly difficult, if not life-blighting, but you have no retreat at all because all the responsibilities are on your shoulders. Then, there is no other way except to try your best. In that case, you might as well die a cool death if you have to be killed!

“But today’s battle is different.

“Dongfang Wang used to be the prime minister of the Imperium after all, and he certainly has tremendous extraordinary talents under his command. This place is also the last nest that he has carefully operated on for years with all kinds of traps, barriers, and arrays. This is definitely one of the most dangerous places in the world!

“The experts deployed here are all Dongfang Wang’s last trusted subordinates whose lives have been completely tied to Dongfang Wang. There is no way for them to surrender at all. They are just the most ferocious rabid dogs that have no plans of escaping alive. They will feel worth it if they can kill one enemy.

“Also, the water pressure here is so high. Even an expert like myself might have an accident after one moment of carelessness. Is there any reason why we should fight hard with the rabid dogs?

“Furthermore, the four Kurfürst families have all sent experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage for the operation to arrest Dongfang Wang. This place has been beleaguered by so many crystal suits and warships too. It is impossible for Dongfang Wang to get away at all. So, it won’t matter whether the two of us join the battle or not.

“Therefore, we will just keep a low profile, hide at the periphery, and clear the small fries who intend to break out of the siege while we cheer for the experts who fight in the front!”

Li Jialing was dazed for a long time, before he said, “But the queen said…”

“Please, don’t be so rigid. Just forget what the queen said!”

Li Yao said, “Just sense the experts of the Divinity Transformation Stage on the main battlefield carefully. Can’t you tell that ‘our’ Divinity Transformation Stage experts are all sluggish as if they haven’t woken up yet? They are all planning the same, and none of them is willing to lead the vanguard to fight the enemy. Even the main forces of the four families and the reformists are thinking that way. Why do the two of us need to work so hard when we only joined the cause halfway?”

Rendered speechless, Li Jialing followed Li Yao to dive further into the ocean.

Li Yao nodded his head in satisfaction. He was about to teach the boy more life lessons when the Gold Vulture suddenly received a familiar signal from the depths of the dark, boundless ocean.

Chapter 2302 - Battle in the Deep Ocean!

Chapter 2302 Battle in the Deep Ocean!

Bo… Bo… Bo… Bo… Bo…!

The feeble pulse signals were only the meaningless waves of the undersea turbulences or animals for other people, but Li Yao could vaguely distinguish the familiar pace in them.

The pace was the signal of communication that he and the Cultivators of the Ancient Sages Sector agreed upon when he returned to the Heaven’s Origin Sector ready to resist the Black Wind Fleet.

Considering that all methods of communication could be interrupted, they had set up almost twenty different ways of communication. Such signals were exactly one of them.

In the Imperium of True Human Beings, only two people would have known the signals. Besides him, it was Long Yangjun.

So, you are hiding here?

Li Yao’s eyes glowed.

As the saying went, “when a tree falls, all the monkeys on it will run away”. When Dongfang Wang’s cabinet was about to collapse, the Association of Demon Hunters naturally would not cling to their reliance, which was already shaking, anymore.

After all, their loyalty was never to Dongfang Wang himself but to the four Kurfürst families.

When the cannibal training and the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance were exposed and fermented, a series of power struggles burst out within the Association of Demon Hunters. The faction loyal to Dongfang Wang was purged. The whole organization was in a panic and on the brink of collapse.

What was weird was that “Dongfang Mingyue”, president of the Association of Demon Hunters, disappeared in advance as mysteriously and unpredictably as she landed on the organization.

Li Yao had been searching for Dongfang Mingyue—or Long Yangjun—to no avail. He thought that the erratic, androgynous guy had long escaped. It never occurred to Li Yao that she was so “loyal” to Dongfang Wang that she was staying by his side to this moment.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao decided to go to Long Yangjun.

Long Yangjun was definitely not a good guy. She was even possibly a malicious alien species.

But for some reason, Li Yao still felt that she was more trustworthy than the four Kurfürst families and Li Linghai.

Although the deep ocean where the pulse signals came from entailed a great threat, the risks would be worth it.

“Li Jialing, it suddenly occurred to me that there’s something I need to do. Just play with yourself here for a while.”

Li Yao boosted the Gold Vulture to swim deeper into the ocean. “I’ll be back soon!”

“Huh?”

Li Jialing was dumbfounded. “Brother Yao, what-what are you going to do? And what am I supposed to do here?”

“I’m going to enjoy the coolness in the deep ocean.”

Li Yao said, “As for you, just observe the battle and find a place where the enemies are fewer and weaker to fight. Then, just pretend that your crystal suit is too seriously damaged to fight anymore and go back to the surface of the ocean. Remember, don’t run to the center of the battlefield where it is most heated. Dongfang Wang’s subordinates are all desperate mad dogs. They can be dreadful!”

Li Yao’s voice was still echoing when the wings of the Gold Vulture already retreated into the shape of fish fins, allowing the Colossus to dash into the ocean.

Two thousand meters, three thousand meters, five thousand meters…

It was already the deep ocean where there was absolutely no sunlight. The water pressed the Gold Vulture from all directions like half-consolidated iron, squeezing the shell of the Colossus that emitted squeaky noises and giving a strong sense of suffocation.

The sense of suffocation of this place was even stronger than the “earthly dragons” below the ground of the Land of Sins.

After all, the rocks there were solid and would not really fall although they looked intimidating.

However, in this place, after every meter he descended, the pressure of the water would grow by a little bit. Although the Gold Vulture had adopted the shells and the anti-pressure kits made of superalloys, it seemed to be kneaded into the size of a fist any minute.

Is this… Long Yangjun’s real strength?

Li Yao was greatly alarmed. He did not expect Long Yangjun to be capable enough of sending her telepathic thoughts to his Colossus accurately through such thick water.

He was even more curious about what the guy was up to.

Maximizing his senses, he looked down and could vaguely sense the bottom of the ocean.

However, at the center of the rugged bottom of the ocean lied a narrow, long trench, which boasted a feeble attraction force and absorbed seawater nonstop, as if it were a bottomless hole leading to the core of the planet.

Bo… Bo… Bo… Bo… Bo…

The pulse signals came from the trench and were as enticing as the songs of a siren.

Frowning, Li Yao dived into the trench in the Gold Vulture.

The faults on the two sides of the trench were like vertical precipices. Maximizing the searchlight on the Gold Vulture, Li Yao could vaguely see countless bones of primeval beasts, as well as enormous artificial buildings and utensils, embedded in the faults.

Several of the huge objects looked like twisted, broken starships. There were also the bones of giants, which reflected creepy brilliance under the searchlight. Li Yao was rather shocked at first but then realized that they were all the debris of the Colossi from hundreds of thousands of years ago.

It appeared to be a primeval battlefield that hadn't been discovered yet.

Since the Empyreal Terminus Sector was an “intersection” of the three thousand worlds, it was not strange that the place used to be a main battlefield in the primeval war hundreds of thousands of years ago.

It appeared that Long Yangjun had recovered a lot of “primeval memories” to find this unvisited primeval battlefield. But what treasures had she found from this battlefield?

Li Yao glanced at the control menu. It was already nine thousand and nine hundred meters below sea level.

The ocean below his feet suddenly glowed. At first, it was just a tiny spot of light. But it soon turned into the most glamorous crystal and dashed at the Gold Vulture as quickly as a bolt of lightning, completely ignoring the blockage and pressure of the seawater!

Shua!

In the exact moment, the glamorous crystal passed by the Gold Vulture, leaving a devastating damage on the breastplate of the Colossus with brute force. Although it was probably a minor damage on the ground, it might've led to catastrophic consequences at the deep ocean almost ten thousand meters below sea level!

“Long Yangjun!”

Li Yao was both shocked and exasperated. His telepathic thoughts soared to the glamorous crystal like overwhelming undercurrents. “You have tricked me to this place because you want to die together with me?”

“Hehehehe. I said last time that I would like to try your ‘gold bird’. How can I not honor my words?”

Long Yangjun’s giggling voice was shot into the “Gold Vulture” through the iron-like water in the waves of telepathic thoughts. “We’ve been fighting since the first second we met. Later, deep inside the Nuwa warship, we only reached cooperation after we revealed all our trump cards only to discover that neither of us could defeat the other person, didn’t we?

“Now, we have come to a greater stage and gotten brand-new techniques. How can we talk about cooperation if we do not fight and get to know each other better? I do not want to hamstring you or to be hamstrung by you!

“That is why I have prepared the battlefield that absolutely nobody will disrupt. I am not playing any trick this time. It is just a competition of pure strength. Watch closely, I’m coming!”

Hardly had she concluded her sentence when Long Yangjun charged at him again.

While she was talking, Li Yao had already seen clearly that the Colossus she was using was not the high-speed scout model “Yin Yang” that he discovered from the Nuwa warship in the Ancient Sages Sector, but a new, more elegant, and more classical model!

The Colossus was about twenty-five meters high, slightly shorter than the Gold Vulture. It did not adopt any regular superalloy material at all but seemed to be entirely made of transparent crystals that were changing their colors all the time.

Once somebody was attracted by the dazzling light, their soul would be entirely under the mercy of Long Yangjun.

Li Yao shuddered hard, only to discover that Long Yangjun had already reached right in front of him with the weird Colossus. It was really fast!

He turned his wings into two shields and protected the body in time. But still, he was knocked dozens of meters into the rocks on one side of the cliffs because of the clash. The rocks fell apart, the seawater was rolling, and the mud blocked everything around. His senses were reduced to almost zero!

Li Yao roared crazily, and his wings immediately split apart into hundreds of streaks of light. The metal feathers that looked like willow leaves were darted out and protected his body within a web. He jumped out of the fault and immediately locked onto the diamond-like Colossus. The breastplate of the Gold Vulture opened, and the gold cannon inside hit the target precisely!

BOOM!

The previously colorful Colossus was blown into gold under the attack!

But after a moment, the gold color dimmed, and the Colossus was utterly undamaged!

Not only was it undamaged, the Colossus even had weird changes after absorbing the energy of the attack. The shell of the Colossus flowed like water and assembled into a new “fin” and a “tail”, exactly like a siren in the deep ocean.

“This is a Colossus that I found after I came to the center of the cosmos. Its name is ‘Heavenly Crystal’.”

Long Yangjun chuckled. “How about it? It is as good as your ‘Gold Vulture’, isn’t it?”

In the next second, the Colossus turned into a streak of brilliance and charged at Li Yao again!

One blue and the other gold, the two streaks of brilliance were engaged in the fierce battle ten thousand meters below the ocean and collided a hundred times in only three seconds!

It had been a long time since Li Yao last gritted his teeth so hard.

He finally understood why Li Linghai had such a high remark on Long Yangjun and believed that she was a great “threat”.

Long Yangjun, with her primeval memories awakened and her dual bloodlines of Nuwa and Pangu activated, was certainly no longer the “Lead Eunuch Wang Xi” that was second to “Sword Manic” Yan Liren in the Ancient Sages Sector.

Her every movement carried the most ancient and dominating air, as if a real god were standing before Li Yao.

Her goddamn Colossus was also erratic and boasted the weird technique to absorb the enemy’s attacks. It was truly horrifying!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

After the 1,001st collision, Li Yao was blown into the fault and punched by a storm of fists again. Cracks appeared all over the Gold Vulture, and the squeaky noises caused by the heavy pressure of the seawater were particularly earsplitting.

“It appears that your ‘gold bird’ is not good enough.”

Long Yangjun appeared right next to Li Yao like a ghost. She was even bold enough to crane the head of her Colossus to the head of the Gold Colossus and said in a low voice, “If this is your best, how are you qualified to cooperate with me and explore the greatest secret of the universe?”

At the moment, the killing intent behind Long Yangjun’s lighthearted words seemed to have really been raised to the maximum.

In the meantime, the sharpest voice also burst out in Li Yao’s head. “Go to hell. He is mine!”

Chapter 2303 - When One Is Dying

Chapter 2303 When One Is Dying

It all happened too fast. The Gold Vulture, which seemed to have been hit brutally all the time, suddenly opened its mouth, spitting out a cluster of bloody mist that pierced at the face of the “Heavenly Crystal” like a blade that could tear everything apart!

The two parties were very close to each other, and the Gold Vulture’s movement was very fast. Caught unprepared, the Heavenly Crystal was hit in the forehead precisely!

The materials that the Heavenly Crystal was made of were not any regular metals but the cores and skeletons of dozens of kinds of primeval beasts after they were squeezed together deep inside the crust and refined by the high temperature and pressure for millions of years. They were extremely rare even in the primeval battlefield where the debris of the Colossus could be found anywhere.

The bloody mist’s physical form was merely just “Neltharion”, a training model of the Star Ocean Imperium. Naturally, it was impossible to break in.

However, just because Neltharion could not penetrate into it did not mean that the mental devil could not invade it.

With the creepy laughter that was getting louder and louder, the mental devil turned into a raging phantom, trying to crawl into the Heavenly Crystal through the gaps on it.

However seemingly flawless the Colossus was, there were bound to be joints and gaps on it as long as it could move agilely.

The mental devil’s body suddenly exploded into thousands of bloody threads, exploring the weakness of the Heavenly Crystal inch by inch!

Long Yangjun finally exclaimed in shock.

Even though she had foreseen that Li Yao had more trump cards, she did not expect the trump cards to be as effective.

Li Yao bellowed and cooperated with the mental devil. While Long Yangjun’s mind was greatly disrupted by the mental devil, tidal exhaust flames surged out of the back of the Gold Vulture, blowing apart the fault behind him completely. Despite the heavy pressure of the ocean, he unleashed the terrible momentum above the speed of sound and crashed into the Heavenly Crystal brutally!

BOOM!

This time, it was the Heavenly Crystal that was blown to the other side of the fault by the Gold Vulture and swallowed by the furious flames. Li Yao’s attacks did not stop when the entire fault collapsed as a whole and buried the Heavenly Crystal into it.

Soon, the mental devil and the Heavenly Crystal dashed out from the two sides of the fault.

The Heavenly Crystal was no longer as brilliant and colorful as it was a moment ago. It was now mottled, with narrow, long red lines vaguely slithering below the crystal shell like tapeworms.

The mental devil, on the other hand, stood on Neltharion and glared at Long Yangjun.

“Do you still want to fight?” said Li Yao coldly.

“Hu… Hu… This is more like it. This is what ‘Vulture Li Yao’ should do!”

Long Yangjun panted hard but chuckled in a low voice. “So, this is your secret weapon. I think I’ve seen it from somewhere? Right, this little guy was there when we dealt with Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan in the Star Glory Federation. How cute. Is it your second soul?

“I did not expect that you had trained your second soul to such a terrifying level. Except for the lack of a real entity, its combat ability is as good as any regular expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage, and its weirdness is significantly greater than them. What is it exactly? Some sort of underdeveloped version of the ‘Divinity Branching Stage’?

“No wonder you’d been playing weak all the time. You intended to trick me with your second soul. That was indeed in line with your style. Thankfully, I knew that you were sordid and shameless since the very beginning, or I might’ve really been hit. Hehehehe!”

“Allow me to introduce you.”

Li Yao said emotionlessly, “This is indeed my second soul named mental devil. Mental devil, this is Long Yangjun. You should get to know each other.”

“I won’t. I hate this sexless, creepy monster!”

The mental devil sniffed at Long Yangjun. “Hey, I do not object to you at all if you want to kill this stupid idiot. But this body is mine. If you dare to break one hair on it, I will certainly fight you until I die!”

“How interesting. It seems that your second soul has developed an independent character!”

Long Yangjun chuckled. “No, it is much more than a second soul. I’ve smelled something more ancient and distant from it. It seems to have come from somewhere far, far away beyond the three thousand Sectors a long, long time ago. At the very least, I cannot feel too much of the air of Pangu and Nuwa in it.”

Li Yao was somewhat surprised. The “Blood Stripe Virus”, the mental devil’s antecedent, was indeed from an extremely distant space zone beyond the three thousand Sectors.

Li Yao did not even know if the Blood Stripe Virus’ hometown and the world that the Pangu Clan, the Nuwa Clan, and mankind lived in were in the same universe.

“That explains why you look so familiar. So, we share similar identities and experiences!”

Long Yangjun continued with a smile, “I am a member of the Nuwa Clan, but I was corrupted by the forces of the Pangu Clan. You are a human being, but you have been corrupted by the mental devil. We are both carrying double destinies and bloodlines. No wonder you and I feel like old friends at the first meeting.”

“We do?”

The mental devil stared at Long Yangjun in wariness. “What is your scheme? What do you want exactly?”

With a smile, Long Yangjun retreated the Heavenly Crystal on her body. She was simply wearing a regular anti-pressure crystal suit. Opening her arms, she showed that she did not have any hostility.

Li Yao sneered, “You’ve had enough fighting?”

“Since you boast such a weird and powerful second soul, it is impossible for me to take down the both of you at the same time. It is possible that your second soul will invade my brain and cause serious damage when I kill you. Even my body might be heisted.”

Long Yangjun admitted straightforwardly, “In that case, why do I need to waste my time and energy? Like I said earlier, this is not a life-and-death battle but just a way for us to bond since we haven’t seen each other for a long time.”

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao said, “Fine. Now that my trump cards have all been put on the table and seen clearly, you can finally tell me what you want now, can’t you?”

“I don’t want anything in particular. I’m just traveling at the center of the cosmos to get a closer look at this world as well as myself.”

Long Yangjun said, “However, during my journey, I have indeed discovered some interesting things. Do you remember that I told you to be wary of Queen Li Linghai last time?”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes. “Why? Have you discovered any important evidence?”

“I wouldn’t say evidence, but it is nonetheless very interesting.”

Long Yangjun suddenly changed the topic. “Do you want to meet Dongfang Wang? He is about to die. Also, his soul is withering together with his body, and there is even no chance for him to turn into a spectral Cultivator. As the saying goes, ‘when a man is dying, his words will be wise’.

What he says at the end of his life will perhaps be very reasonable and interesting!"

"What?"

Li Yao was slightly shocked. "Dongfang Wang is with you? And he is dying? Why?"

"Because his brother's secret research institute was destroyed and the supply of his 'soul nutrition liquid' was cut off!"

Long Yangjun said, "Don't look at me like that. That was the biggest secret between the two brothers. I did not know it at all until you exposed the whole issue. After Dongfang Wang's unavoidable failure, he told me everything. If he had told me sooner, everything perhaps would've been different!"

Thinking for a long time, Li Yao still found it hard to believe. "A prime minister of iron and blood is about to die just like that? He seems… too weak from the beginning to the end!"

"It is exactly because he is the prime minister of iron and blood that he is so weak and he dies so fast."

Long Yangjun made a statement that sounded utterly unreasonable. Then she asked back, "You should know how many worlds, planets, starships, Immortal Cultivators, and civilians are under the effective control of the Imperium of True Human Beings, right?"

Li Yao nodded his head. He knew the series of boring astronomical numbers, but he knew nothing more.

"If you were the prime minister of the Imperium, are you confident to manage the hundreds of Sectors, thousands of resource planets, millions of starships, and billions of people and Immortal Cultivators, not carrying out their greatest potentials but only ensuring the normal functioning of the enormous system?”

Long Yangjun asked, “Or maybe, another question. If a prime minister of the Imperium is really capable of doing that, how much computational ability will it consume? And how much soul power and vitality will he have to burn?”

Li Yao had never considered the question before.

He was never good at management and administration but preferred gratifying battles and erratic refining work.

But as Ding Lingdang’s husband, he knew very clearly the complicated questions and the tough dilemmas that Ding Lingdang was faced with every day when she was only managing the ten or so worlds at the edge of the cosmos.

The questions and challenges that the prime minister of the Imperium was faced with were certainly a hundred times more than those of the Speaker of the federation!

Every human being had their limits. Not just an admin-type Immortal Cultivator in the Divinity Transformation Stage; even if they were in the Divinity Branching Stage or even higher levels and had the help of countless super crystal processors, they would still feel overwhelmed when they were faced with the vast universe.

“Do you understand it now? The Imperium is simply too huge. Anybody who intends to govern the entire universe on their own will inevitably burn up their head completely, just like all the chips inside a crystal processor will be burnt up when it performs a mission that is too complicated and enormous.”

Long Yangjun said, “Besides, Dongfang Wang is not a common prime minister but a ‘wartime prime minister’ and a ‘prime minister of iron and blood’. Under his leadership, the Imperium started a supermassive war that was unprecedented in the past five hundred years. Although he was not a commander in the frontline, as the helmsman of the entire Imperium, he had devoted inestimable efforts, energy, and even vitality into the war.

“I didn’t know it until a long time later after I got in touch with Dongfang Wang, but the seemingly majestic ‘prime minister of iron and blood’ had long been exhausted by the Imperium’s counterattack. By logic, his soul should’ve been drained, and his body should’ve been crippled. He only managed to sustain himself with the ‘soul nutrition liquid’ provided by his brother.

“But the ‘soul nutrition liquid’ had side effects too. The most important one of all was that the dosage requirement would be higher and higher. At first, one dosage a day was enough. But later, even ten dosages a day were insufficient to moisten the dried brain cells.

“It was also an important reason why Dongfang Renxin’s secret research institute did not close even when the situation in the capital was so intense. It couldn’t be helped. Dongfang Wang could not live without the medication.

“Once the medication was cut off, his body conditions immediately deteriorated. He had collapsed on his own even before your attacks—collapsed by the entire universe and by his own ambitions.”

Chapter 2304 - Truth of the Tenebrum Energy!

Chapter 2304 Truth of the Tenebrum Energy!

After hearing that, Li Yao couldn’t help but recall that the Speakers of the Star Glory Federation had all been exhausted both physically and mentally in their ten years of work. Many of them plummeted after they were out of the office and never made any advancement for the rest of their lives.

The Imperium of True Human Beings was at least ten times larger than the Star Glory Federation. The pressure on the prime minister of the Imperium was truly unbelievably huge!

Thinking of that, Li Yao somehow remembered his wife. Thankfully, it would be enough for Ding Lingdang to work as the Speaker for only five years. She would never pursue a second term. Therefore, the burden on the body and the mind couldn’t have been too heavy.

Now that he was at the center of the cosmos, it was convenient for him to search for Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures. He should spend some thoughts on searching for the warming and nurturing tonics for Ding Lingdang after he returned to the federation.

“Now that I think of it, Dongfang Wang’s fall was inevitable. His ambitions couldn’t have been realized since the very beginning. The four Kurfürst families, including the majority of the Dongfang family, have been dissatisfied with him for a long time. With or without the reformists, he couldn’t have worked as a Prime Minister for long, and it was unavoidable that he was driven out of the office in a shameful way.”

Naturally, Long Yangjun did not know what was on Li Yao’s mind. She simply went on, “The reason is simple. Both the four Kurfürst families and the warlords, as well as the Sector Masters from the peripherical worlds of the Imperium, only want to be dominators of the local area. They absolutely do not want to be superseded by anybody, be it the emperor, the queen, or the prime minister.

“The previous prime ministers of the Imperium were not as powerful and prestigious as Dongfang Wang. They were just a mediator and a host that the four Kurfürst families elected. If the prime minister’s words sounded nice, they would listen to him; if the words were unpleasant, they would just ignore him. How easy was that?

“However, in the recent hundred years, the unstoppable rise of Dongfang Wang leading the Dongfang family has seriously jeopardized the interests of the other three families. Also, thanks to the glorious triumph of the Imperium’s counterattack, he has also garnered a high reputation among the civilians and even won the title of ‘prime minister of iron and blood’. He is now even extending his hands into the army. Then, what does he want exactly? To be a second Blackstar the Great?

“The tallest tree in a forest is bound to be destroyed by the wind. Dongfang Wang is simply too powerful and galvanizing. The Imperium will absolutely not tolerate such a grand prime minister. Everybody will attack and annihilate him together, or at least hamstring him so that they can keep the original balance of interests!

“The attack of the reformists came right in time. The other three Kurfürst families and the oppositions within the Dongfang family naturally ‘frowned’ and took your sides. But in fact, hehe, you don’t know how happy they were in secret.

Why else do you think Li Linghai could’ve convinced the old and cunning leaders of the three families just with her silver tongue?”

Thinking carefully for a moment, Li Yao realized that it did make sense.

He also felt that the Li, Song, and Yun families changed their attitudes so fast that they almost disgraced themselves as families that dated back to a thousand years ago. Now that Long Yangjun analyzed it in such a way, it did sound perfectly reasonable.

“You might find it hard to believe, but Dongfang Wang is an out-and-out ‘patriot’.”

Long Yangjun said with a smile, “Or rather, all his ambitions are to become the greatest prime minister in history, who revives the Imperium of True Human Beings, destroys the Alliance of the Holy Covenant completely, and leaves his name as the ‘prime minister of iron and blood’ on the history books of the future generations of mankind.

“It is a pity that the man was too simpleminded. Or rather, the high-speed calculations every second, every minute, every hour, and every day over the past twenty years, especially when he was planning the super enormous mission that involved many aspects such as Imperium’s counterattack, had drained all his wisdom, keenness, and computational ability. Also, bolstered by the glorious triumph, his ever-expanding ambitions blocked his last wariness, making them both inert and stubborn, if not wishful, in all the fields except for the Covenant Alliance.

“He thought that he could continue to control the entire Imperium with the victory of the war and the power to allocate trophies. Little did he know that his very existence had hindered too many people in their way. Did he not have himself to blame for his final catastrophe?”

Li Yao was silent. Now that Long Yangjun analyzed it logically, it was really not a surprise that Dongfang Wang failed so quickly.

Long Yangjun sighed and said, “After Dongfang Renxin’s secret research institute was conquered, Dongfang Wang already knew that he was losing. He also knew that the secret research institute wouldn’t have been discovered if nobody in the family had betrayed him. He finally realized that the enemy he was faced with was not the queen or the reformists, but the entire universe!

“If the reformists were his only enemy, he could summon his courage to fight the last battle, but faced with the entire universe, did he stand any chance in a counterattack at all? Dongfang Wang did not expect that he would end up like this after winning such a great victory for the Imperium. He almost abandoned himself in devastation later and did not want to organize an effective counterattack at all. Otherwise, the ‘prime minister of iron and blood’ could’ve had some dying struggles, and your progress wouldn’t have been so smooth at all.

“Forget it. It is not going to help however much I talk. Why don’t you go to him and hear him in person?”

Thinking quickly, Li Yao asked, “Does Dongfang Wang know who I am? What will he talk to me about?”

Long Yangjun smiled and said, “I told Dongfang Wang that you were not on the same boat as Queen Li Linghai but were more inclined to the military. Because you were too close to Lei Chenghu, Li Linghai was already suspicious and wary of you. So, what do you think Dongfang Wang will talk to you about?”

Frowning, Li Yao asked, “Dongfang Wang simply believed everything you said?”

“He might not trust me, but whose words could he have believed if not mine?”

Her hands behind her back, Long Yangjun said casually, “Don’t forget that I’d been by his side ‘loyally’ the whole time!”

“Speaking of which, I am very interested in something else. How did you win Dongfang Wang’s trust in the beginning, and how did you explain your backgrounds, your identity, and your strength? Dongfang Wang is no fool. You couldn’t have become his trusted subordinate with a random identity that you fabricated.”

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao offered to confess, “I told Li Linghai that I was a Cultivator from Firefly, and she was more or less convinced. You couldn’t have used the same excuse, could you?”

“Firefly? The Star Ocean Republic?”

Long Yangjun was amused. “I do love your prowess of telling lies. Why was I unable to come up with such a neat excuse? Silly me. I simply told Dongfang Wang that I was a Demonic Cultivator that had wandered to the Imperium.”

“Huh?”

Li Yao was greatly surprised. “A Demonic Cultivator? Dongfang Wang did not catch you immediately, and he even treated you as a trusted subordinate?”

“If Li Linghai did not catch and execute you who was a Cultivator, why would Dongfang Wang catch me who was pretending to be a Demonic Cultivator?”

Vague mockery was mixed in Long Yangjun’s voice. “Dongfang Wang and Li Linghai are the same kind of people. They do not see morals, ideas, or friendship, but only interests and schemes.

“What is the greatest enemy of the Imperium today? The people of the Covenant Alliance who are unemotional and mechanical. The Demonic Cultivators, on the other hand, are all guys whose feelings are copious and even overflowing. They are the sworn enemies of the Covenant Alliance. The enemy of the enemy is a friend. One or two Demonic Cultivators could not hurt the big picture, just like one or two Cultivators were nothing to be scared of at all. Instead, they could prove to be very useful!

“After all, for the upper class like Li Linghai and Dongfang Wang, strong foreigners like us have two advantages.

“Firstly, we are absolutely helpless in the Imperium. It is impossible for us to conspire with anybody else, and we seem only able to work hard for them dutifully.

“Secondly, our identity is our greatest weakness. If our values are fully exploited and they decide that they do not want us anymore, all they need to do is to expose our ‘real identities’. Then, we will be the rats on the street that everybody stomps on. They will not even need to move their little finger. We are more convenient than disposable garbage bags.

“Therefore, is there any reason why they should not trust and appreciate us?”

Thinking for a long time, Li Yao found no flaws in it. But he was still suspicious. “Wait, the Demonic Cultivators are expected to be familiar with the ‘tenebrum energy’, right?”

“You mean this?”

Long Yangjun extended her index finger, where a cluster of violet ball lightning soon appeared and spread to all directions as if it had life and emotions.

“This is… tenebrum energy!”

Bulging his eyes, Li Yao clearly sensed the more agitated and vehement air that was entirely different from regular spiritual energy. “Wait, you can’t be a real Demonic Cultivator, can you?”

“For an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage, your shallowness is truly regrettable.”

Long Yangjun raised her finger, making the purple, vigorous ball lightning revolve rapidly. As it moved faster and faster, the electric arcs became glamorous and danced on her fingertip like a spirit of lightning. “I thought that after all the adventures and shocking changes, you should’ve long known that both ‘Cultivators’ and ‘Demonic Cultivators’ are defined by human beings, and that they are nothing more than names that have been agreed upon. In fact, is there a clear boundary that divides the Cultivators from the Immortal Cultivators?

“Doesn’t the same apply for ‘Demonic Cultivators’? Is there really such a thing in the universe?”

“That is different.”

Li Yao said warily, “The Cultivators and the Immortal Cultivators only differ in their beliefs, but they all train with the spiritual energy. Naturally, it is difficult to distinguish them. However, what the Demonic Cultivators practice is the foul ‘tenebrum energy’ that can corrupt the heart. I’ve been through multiple tragedies where I witnessed thousands of victims corrupted and possessed by the tenebrum energy!”

“How hilarious. I thought that you should’ve at least grown into college-level after everything you’d been through. But as it turns out, you are still staying at the high-school level.”

Long Yangjun said slowly, “Do you really believe that some energy in the universe is more righteous than the rest? It is true that both the Cultivators and the Immortal Cultivators train with the spiritual energy, but so what? How many wars are fought with the spiritual energy as the main weapon? How many innocents are blown into smithereens by the spiritual energy? How many planets have been destroyed by the bombardment of the spiritual energy? Let’s just talk about the Imperium of True Human Beings in the past thousand years. Did the Immortal Cultivators commit few slaughters and destructions with the spiritual energy? Is that the so-called ‘righteous energy’?

“No, the spiritual energy and the tenebrum energy cannot be divided according to a moral criterion. They are not even two opposite kinds of energy. Let me tell you the truth of the ‘tenebrum energy’!”

Chapter 2305 - ift From the Ancestral Civilizations!

2305 Gift From the Ancestral Civilizations!

Looking at the light ball of tenebrum energy on Long Yangjun’s fingertip, Li Yao was deep in thought.

Energy was neither righteous nor evil but only differed in frequency and characteristics. Many people had told Li Yao this simple logic on his path of training so far.

He had considered the nature of energy a lot of times himself, too, and he was not certain that there was such a thing as “evil energy”.

However, the horror of the arrival of extraterrestrial devils, as well as the rapid changes of one’s mind after they were corrupted by the tenebrum energy was also a fact that he had witnessed and experienced multiple times too.

The examples of the former included the arrival of the extraterrestrial devils at the tenth space ring of the Flying Star Sector and the horrible event where the Black Wind Fleet was almost entirely possessed when it attacked the federation.

As for the latter, “Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan” was the best example.

It was exactly because of the invasion of extraterrestrial devils and tenebrum energy that the previously upright Professor Mo Xuan was twisted and changed into an extraterrestrial devil that almost destroyed the federation.

The Blood Stripe Virus could also be counted as an extraterrestrial devil from a distant land. Li Yao knew how tough and tricky it was very clearly. When he was corrupted, his negative emotions were all enlarged, and he almost turned into a fiend that knew nothing except for slaughtering freely.

The tenebrum energy and the spiritual energy were entirely different. To be more exact, the tenebrum energy had a greater influence on human beings' souls, and the "interaction" was deeper.

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao asked slowly, "What is tenebrum energy exactly?"

With a smile, Long Yangjun asked back instead of answering, "Have you ever considered the essential differences among the 'prosperous worlds', the 'infertile worlds', and the 'desolate worlds'? There are infinite space zones and galaxies in the vast universe, and all the galaxies have stars. Among them, a lot are stellar systems where the stars are in the prime years and can radiate light and heat incessantly. They also boast planets of reasonable distance from the stars.

"However, of all the cosmos that mankind has explored, only three thousand Sectors boast spiritual energy and are suitable for the living of intelligent lives. It is almost a drop in the ocean. Why?"

After a slight daze, Li Yao frowned and replied, "Even the most advanced forums on cosmology in the Imperium of

True Human Beings do not have a well-acknowledged theory. There are only countless hypotheses. For example, the big bang hypothesis, which believes that the entire universe comes from an unimaginably massive explosion in the primeval times, and the three thousand Sectors were exactly three thousand most heated ‘pieces’ that had the most intense waves. Therefore, they carry the features that regular galaxies do not have.

“There is also the hypothesis of ‘high-dimensional hole’, which believes that there are higher dimensions beyond the three-dimensional universe, and certain gaps or holes exist between those higher dimensions and the three-dimensional universe. The regular energy in the higher dimensions is leaked to the three-dimensional universe through the gaps, turning into spiritual energy that nurtures everything. The regular stellar systems do not boast such ‘high-dimensional holes’. So, it is impossible for them to generate spiritual energy and intelligent lives no matter how excellent the natural conditions are.”

Long Yangjun nodded her head and said, “Exactly. They are two of the most mainstream hypotheses about the origins of spiritual energy. So, you must be aware of the third theory, which believes that it came from prehistoric intelligent lives, right?”

Without any hesitation, Li Yao replied quickly, “On the planets that had creatures, after billions of years, under the tectonic movements and the high temperature and pressure, the dead bodies of the prehistoric creatures could be transformed into energy sources such as coal or oil. Although their utilization efficiency was not very high, they were enough to support a relatively primitive civilization. It’s just that those energy sources alone were hardly enough to let the civilization break out of the stellar system it was at.

“Then, if the dead bodies of the prehistoric creatures can be transformed into energy under certain circumstances, is it possible that the soul and will of the prehistoric intelligent lives can be turned into another kind of energy?

“The vast universe has witnessed the passage of time of at least a hundred billion years. Before the civilization of mankind, there were the Pangu and Nuwa civilizations. Then, how many civilizations were there before the Pangu and the Nuwa civilizations? Theoretically speaking, there could’ve been ten thousand civilizations before us.

“If the individuals in the super civilizations billions of years ago already reached the magnificent levels a hundred times stronger than the human beings in the Divinity Transformation Stage, how overwhelming must their souls and will have been? Would their souls and will be gone forever after those unparalleled experts passed away? Is it possible that their souls and will were transformed into a new, pure-energy form because of the reactions with the cosmic radiations and space waves?

“Therefore, the hypothesis of prehistoric intelligent life holds that the spiritual energy we are using today is exactly the souls and will of countless unparalleled experts from the advanced civilizations billions of years ago, except that it has been too highly compressed and condensed for us to know what it used to be, just like when you see a bucket of oil, it will be impossible for you to imagine that it was a dinosaur at the beginning.

“However, I do not support such a hypothesis personally, because there are two obvious questions.

“Firstly, if the so-called ‘spiritual energy’ is the souls and will left by the super experts from the advanced civilizations in the past, there is bound to be an ‘initial civilization’ at the beginning of everything. Where exactly did the experts of the first-generation civilization absorb spiritual energy for their training? Without spiritual energy, how were they capable of breaking out of the mother planet and the stellar system, creating the first glory?

“Secondly, an important method of training is to absorb the natural essence. The radiations of stars are one of the biggest sources of spiritual energy too. How can such a hypothesis explain that?”

“It’s very simple.”

Long Yangjun said with a smile, “The three hypotheses on the origins of spiritual energy are not necessarily independent and separated. They can totally support and enhance each other.

“First of all, the entire universe came from the big bang billions of years ago. During the big bang, countless ‘pieces’ that were extremely hot and sharp were blown out and ripped out thousands of cracks in the three-dimensional universe. Those gaps led to the four-dimensional universe or even higher dimensions, introducing the energy that was not supposed to belong to the three-dimensional universe from the higher dimensions. The energy then irrigated the prosperous worlds.

“With the nutrition of the energy of the higher dimensions, the first civilizations gradually appeared in those worlds. The experts of the first civilizations studied the energy from the higher dimensions and slowly melted their feelings, will, and souls into the high-dimensional energy, which was the prototype of spiritual energy.

“There used to be countless advanced intelligent lives in the billions of years in the history of the universe. After the best experts of the super civilizations perished, they were all melted into the ‘ocean of energy’ that flowed all over the universe in a certain form as the spiritual energy that mankind uses today. Therefore, you can consider the spiritual energy as a gift from the ‘ancestral civilizations’ for their offspring!

“As for the spiritual energy that radiates from stars, it is even simpler. You should know that not the radiations from all stars are beneficial for training. The radiations of most stars are just the most fundamental light and heat.

“So, is it possible that certain super intelligent lives used to live inside the stars, or that the stars were themselves some kind of super-intelligent life forms but are already dead?”

Li Yao was astounded. “Wait, wait, wait. What are you trying to say? How is it related to the tenebrum energy?”

“It is related in every way.”

Long Yangjun said solemnly, “If the spiritual energy originated from the feelings, will. and souls of countless intelligent lives billions of years ago, do you not think that it is too much of a waste to just use it as an energy source? It’s just like after you have excavated oil of the best quality from below the ground, you simply light it with fire. That is not the way to completely unleash its real power!

“What I’m saying is that the so-called spiritual energy is the feelings, will, and souls of the prehistoric intelligent lives, except that they gradually entered the hibernation state in the billions of years of changes of the universe. 99% of their power has been sealed.

“The way that human beings make use of spiritual energy is too primitive to activate its real power. You are sitting on a mountain of treasures, and yet you regard the gold and the diamonds as rocks. This is exactly how it feels.

“In short, the tenebrum energy is not the opposite of the spiritual energy but the advanced form of the spiritual energy. The tenebrum energy is exactly the spiritual energy that has been fully activated, while the spiritual energy is the tenebrum energy in the hibernation state!”

Li Yao found it hard to believe. “It does sound more or less reasonable, but do you have any evidence?”

“I don’t have any direct evidence. Otherwise, it wouldn’t be a ‘hypothesis’ at all.”

Long Yangjun said with a smile, “However, isn’t it the best evidence that I can make use of the tenebrum energy freely at will? Not just me, you can do the same too. Just free your mind, make your soul travel to billions of years ago so that you can feel the power deep inside the spiritual energy and hear the roars of the prehistoric civilizations during their conquests of the universe and the moans when they passed away. You can inherit the spirits and will of the prehistoric civilizations and unlock the ‘seals’ that cover the spiritual energy, transforming it into the tenebrum energy that is a hundred times more powerful!”

Blinking his eyes for a long time, Li Yao asked, “If the tenebrum energy is really an advanced form of the spiritual energy, why are the extraterrestrial devils such a hazard? Tremendous ordinary people and even trainers who were corrupted by the tenebrum energy were possessed and deranged!”

“That was because the tenebrum was too powerful for regular people to handle! If you ask a three-year-old to rein a disobedient stallion or wave a saber weighing a hundred kilograms, how can they not fall over and hurt themselves? If an indigent man who has not a single coin in his pocket suddenly inherits tremendous wealth, how can they not be lost in the extravagance?”

Long Yangjun replied casually, “Think about it. The feelings, will, and souls of the best experts of countless super civilizations in the past billions of years all flooded into the brain of an ordinary person. How could the ordinary person contain themselves and not be lost?

“Also, the living form of the prehistoric super civilizations was clearly different from mankind today. They must’ve had some moral codes that human beings cannot accept or understand. When the ‘prehistoric morals’ all flooded into the head of an ordinary person, is it strange that they are turned into a mentally deranged person and something entirely different?”

Chapter 2306 - Personal Question

Chapter 2306 Personal Question

Li Yao thought quickly and realized that although Long Yangjun’s words were rather unconventional and whimsical, they did seem self-consistent and explained the situation logically.

Considering for a long time, Li Yao said again, “Even if your speculation is correct and the tenebrum energy is not ‘evil’, it is nonetheless very ‘dangerous’.”

“Exactly. Tenebrum energy is a kind of energy that is almost too powerful to be controlled. It is indeed very dangerous and not to be touched by ordinary people and low-level trainers.”

Long Yangjun said, “However, for the experts in the Nascent Soul Stage or the Divinity Transformation Stage, exploring the mysteries of the tenebrum energy is the only way to make them stronger.

“It is already the limit to advance into the Divinity Transformation Stage or the Divinity Branching Stage with spiritual energy alone. Only the tenebrum energy can help the insignificant human beings to touch the ultimate mysteries of the universe and inherit the precious ‘legacies’ left by countless intelligent lives in history!

“Of course, that being said, it is perfectly normal that you have concerns. Not just you, even the Pangu Clan in the past did not agree with training using the tenebrum energy!”

Attracted, Li Yao couldn’t help but ask, “Have you remembered more things about the primeval war now?”

“More or less. The mottled memory pieces are getting clearer and clearer inside my soul.”

Long Yangjun sighed and said, “The ultimate war between the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan, in terms of ideology, was a war of ‘order’ against ‘freedom’. But apart from the metaphysical theories, the real trigger of the war was whether or not to develop the tenebrum energy on a large scale.

“In the last years of the Pangu Civilization, the technologies and the training techniques were all highly advanced. They also found the relics of countless ancestral civilizations from billions of years ago. All the requirements to develop and apply the tenebrum energy on a large scale were met.

“However, the energy form that was a hundred times more powerful and dangerous than the spiritual energy naturally raised everybody’s wariness.

“The thirteen main civilizations of the Pangu civilizations’ alliance only joined each other because they were exhausted and almost mutually destroyed in the countless universal wars against one another. The wars in the past taught them a good lesson about the dread of desires, ambitions, hatred, and chaos. Therefore, the Pangu Civilization’s alliance worshipped absolute order and believed that everybody must conceal or even erase their feelings to maintain the peace and harmony of the universe.

“While the tenebrum energy was an energy form that was a hundred times more advanced and powerful, it entailed the residues of the feelings, will, and desires of countless prehistoric civilizations. If they were taken in recklessly, it was possible that the ambitions and hatred that the Pangu civilizations had just suppressed would be stirred up again.

“Therefore, the leaders of the Pangu civilizations reached a consensus to seal the tenebrum energy together and abolish all the technologies that can develop the tenebrum energy. Also, the tenebrum energy was defined as ‘Chaos’, ‘extraterrestrial devils’, and things like that, to inform every individual in the alliance of civilizations how evil and dreadful the energy was, and how it could destroy the entire alliance of civilizations when it was released and activated!”

Regardless of the credibility of Long Yangjun’s words, Li Yao felt greatly enlightened.

Long Yangjun went on, “The first twelve civilizations that joined the alliance had all been through the destructive wars against one another. They were fully aware of the importance of order, and they carried out the ban dutifully in the next thousands of years.

“However, the ‘Nuwa civilization’, which was youngest and joined the alliance last, was not a participant of the goriest wars in the past. They loved freedom by their nature, not knowing that freedom would lead to chaos and chaos would result in destruction. The Nuwa civilization believed that the spiritual energy in the suppressed state was not enough to help the alliance of civilizations to break out of the known universe, just like coal and oil alone are not enough for a planetary civilization to march out of the stellar system.

“In order to explore the vast universe and even conquer the entire sea of stars so that the civilization can climb higher peaks, the tenebrum energy must be activated and made use of!

“Otherwise, the seemingly glorious and brilliant alliance of civilizations was nothing but a frog at the bottom of a well. It would be forever stranded in the known universe and perish without a sound in the end!

“Disregarding the ban of the Pangu civilizations’ alliance, the Nuwa Clan researched on the tenebrum energy in secret. Naturally, the studies couldn’t have been flawless at the beginning. When the magnificent power was released, some tragedies happened too, and the Pangu civilizations’ alliance learned of the matter.

“To maintain the peace and order of the universe, the other twelve civilizations of the alliance, including the Pangu Clan, the Kuafu Clan, the Gonggong Clan, the Zhurong Clan, etc., decided to wipe out the Nuwa civilization that was already polluted by the tenebrum energy so that the chaos and destruction could be terminated while they were still in the cradle!

“That was the trigger of the primeval war. You know most of what happened next. Fighting against twelve powerful civilizations that were far stronger than themselves at the same time, the Nuwa civilization was naturally on a losing streak at the beginning and almost entirely obliterated.

“But at the last moment, the Nuwa civilization freed the power contained in the spiritual energy, upgrading the spiritual energy into the tenebrum energy. With such a power, they transformed the ‘full-terrain generic miniature biochemical tools’, or human beings, which were most widely used in the Pangu civilizations’ alliance, into ultimate weapons that had their own will and emotions, with a high independence and inestimable potentials. Eventually, the Nuwa Clan and their opponents suffered equally heavy losses, and human beings finally became the owners of the three thousand Sectors after Pangu and Nuwa passed away!

“Therefore, human beings are in fact very strong, and they have the natural-born gifts to make use of the tenebrum energy. As long as I tell you a few tricks, you will soon be able to play with it skillfully!”

Long Yangjun told the whole story without any stop and grimaced at Li Yao, as if she had said nothing but an unimportant rumor instead of a shocking legend.

Li Yao felt the urge to scratch his head. Pondering for a long time, he asked, “You are willing to teach me how to use the tenebrum energy? Why?”

Long Yangjun said, “If I say that it’s because I was moved by your statement that you regarded me as a friend in the metro tunnel of White Stone Municipality the other day, and that I would like to treat you as a real friend, would you believe me?”

Li Yao replied, “Not that I don’t believe you, but it does sound a little bit… nauseating.”

“Ha, I feel that it is a little bit nauseating too. Then, let me put it in a different way.”

Long Yangjun swam inside the deep ocean as agilely as a mermaid while she said with a smile, “Dongfang Wang is dying, but I am still in need of abundant training resources, and I need somebody to help me maintain my Colossus. So, I have to find another thick thigh to cling to, don’t I? Li Linghai is too dangerous, and I don’t really want to deal with her. After weighing all the candidates, I think that Monster Li is relatively dependable. That’s why I’ve decided to offer you a gift. Does that make sense?

“If you think that it is not good enough, I have one more reason. Most of the details of the primeval war as well as the interpretation of the tenebrum energy that I described just now are merely my speculations that are not supported by any evidence. I think that I will have to explore deeper fields to find the whole truth of the primeval war or even the mysteries of the primordial age before the appearance of the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan after I gather enough intelligence and files in the Imperium of True Human Beings! The journey will be too long and lonely if I were to finish it on my own, and I can totally use some company. Monster Li, are you willing to come with me?”

“Mysteries of the primordial age? That’s rather distant!”

After a long daze, Li Yao said, “I’ll have to check with my wife first.”

Long Yangjun: “…”

Li Yao: “Or maybe we can explore the mysteries of the primordial age together after my wife retires from the office. You know that she is very good at fighting. If she picks up the tenebrum energy, her speed of training will certainly be ten times higher than mine!”

Long Yangjun: “…”

Li Yao: “If you think that it’s going to be awkward if there are two of us and only one of you, we can bring more people, like Jin Xinyue, Yan Liren, Wu Mayan, and Fiend Blade Peng Hai. The more, the merrier!”

Long Yangjun stared at Li Yao for a long time.

Even in the dark and profound bottom of the ocean, her eyes still appeared extremely sharp through the crystal suit and the seawater.

Long Yangjun sniffed and swam to the depths of the undersea chasm, waving the metal fins next to her legs. “Enough of the nonsense. If you want to meet Dongfang Wang while he is still alive, just come with me!”

Li Yao scratched his chin for a long time and still decided to go down with Long Yangjun.

It couldn’t be helped. He and Long Yangjun were caught in the dilemma where neither of them could defeat the other person and both of them were capable of dying together with each other. It seemed that they had to work together now.

Retreating the Gold Vulture and absorbing the mental devil back into the body again, Li Yao followed Long Yangjun and descended quickly.

Looking at Long Yangjun’s agile body that looked like a mermaid, Li Yao couldn’t help but send a telepathic thought over. “Well, there is a personal question that I’ve been meaning to ask you. It’s not a big deal, but I’m very curious about one thing. Are you… a man or a woman?”

Long Yangjun swam silently ahead of him. Half a minute later, when Li Yao thought that she had turned a deaf ear to his question, she replied casually, “It has occurred to me that you are not only narrow-minded but also childish. Is it important whether I am a man or a woman?”

“Not really.”

Li Yao was more or less embarrassed. “Forget it. Just forget it if you don’t want to answer it. It’s just that since we are such close friends and comrades, we are likely to be faced with certain extremely dangerous battles in the future. If your body is blown into a mess and you are unconscious, I will need to know how to treat you.”

Long Yangjun was silent for a while longer. Then she sniffed and said, “The so-called ‘man’ and ‘woman’ is just a classification of human beings in terms of reproduction. Not every one of the thirteen civilizations of the Pangu’s alliance had genders, and those which did have genders were not necessarily divided as males and females. They could have three or even more sexes.

“As for the Nuwa Clan, their naturally-endowed gift is ‘creation’. Frankly speaking, the genes of the Nuwa Clan boasted very powerful integration abilities, which allowed them to breed with most of the intelligent lives with barely any reproductive isolation. That was why the Pangu civilizations’ alliance entrusted the mission of creating human beings to the Nuwa Clan.

“While my soul was corrupted by the Pangu Clan, my body came from the Nuwa Clan. Therefore, I do not have a specific gender. Or rather, I can turn into any gender I want. How does it sound? Is your curiosity satisfied?”

Chapter 2307 - Dongfang Wang’s Ending

Chapter 2307 Dongfang Wang’s Ending

“It certainly is satisfying.”

Li Yao hurried to say, “In that case, your situation is indeed rather unique. You might not be able to find your own kind in the entire universe, right?”

“My own kind?”

Long Yangjun smiled. Splitting the water before her, she said casually, “If you are talking about the members of the Pangu Clan or the Nuwa Clan who are in the super-long hibernation, maybe there are. But cases like mine are indeed rare. I do not expect to run into my real own kind.

“But it doesn’t matter. Loneliness has always been the main theme of the vast universe. You have billions of people of your own kind around you, but aren’t you plotting and fighting against each other all the time? How many people can you trust without any reserve? Life is perhaps more comfortable without one’s own kind!”

Li Yao could tell the solitude in Long Yangjun’s words. When he thought of his unique identity as an “earthling”, he couldn’t help but feel sympathetic to Long Yangjun.

It was true that one could only bear and pursue a lot of things on their own without sharing them with anybody else. Long Yangjun could barely find her own kind, but was it possible for him to encounter a second “earthling” while he was still alive?

Each thinking of their own things, the two of them swam down for a moment. Then, Long Yangjun suddenly volunteered to ask. “Since I have answered such a personal question truthfully, shouldn’t you be honest and tell me if this ‘mental devil’ is your last trump card?”

“Of course!”

Li Yao blurted out, “I am not a God of Gamblers. How can I keep a dozen trump cards in secret? The mental devil is my only and last trump card!”

Long Yangjun was rather suspicious. “Is it?”

“It is!”

Li Yao announced resolutely, “I swear on my honor and integrity!”

“Then I’m screwed.”

Long Yangjun sighed and said, “It seems that you do have more secrets. I finally understand why you threw out the ‘mental devil’ so straightforwardly. You foresaw that I wouldn’t give up until I found your trump card, so you intentionally played the card that was your ‘mental devil’ just in order to satisfy my curiosity and win my trust. But in fact, it is just a smoke grenade, and you must have deeper secrets and more trump cards!”

“You are exaggerating the matter.”

Li Yao struggled to reply, “Why do I sound so vicious in your description?”

“You are vicious from head to toe.”

Long Yangjun said without looking back, “You have always played dumb and looked gullible, leaving everybody the impression that you can be easily tricked and manipulated, but after a hundred years, all the people who were convinced that you were silly and naïve, be they commanders or schemers, and no matter how wise, meticulous, and calculative they were, had been killed by you. If that is not vicious, I don’t know what is!”

Li Yao chuckled somewhat in embarrassment and did not say anything anymore no matter how Long Yangjun mocked him.

Soon, the two of them had descended to the depths of the trench more than 13,000 meters below the sea level. The environment was as dark and thick as a swamp.

On the fault on the east side, the traces of artificial work were obvious. Naturally, the artificial work was not done by human beings but by the Pangu Clan or the Nuwa Clan.

“This way.”

Long Yangjun led Li Yao to pass a narrow, long gap. Swimming forward for one minute, where even the uneven rocks around became metals that were as smooth as mirrors, they entered the tube of a certain artificial object.

Shua!

Behind them, a circular door slowly spun and closed, and the holes around pumped away from the seawater. A hot wind was also blowing. The tube that was filled with water a moment ago immediately became dry and warm.

Hu!

Li Yao was finally able to take off his helmet and breathe deeply. The air here was soggy, dirty, and reeked of metals, but thankfully, it did not carry too many impurities and toxins. For an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage, breathing was naturally not a problem.

However, the air was also mixed with the stink of blood, which smelled rather fresh. A gory massacre seemed to have just taken place here.

Raising his eyebrows, Li Yao looked at Long Yangjun in wariness.

“Relax.”

Long Yangjun made a gesture, and the airtight gate before them slowly opened. Several dead bodies that were riddled with holes and melted with the crystal suits on them immediately dropped out.

Frowning, Li Yao looked at the inside of the airtight gate, only to discover that it was almost a steaming slaughterhouse. At least dozens of dead bodies, together with their crystal suits that were nothing more than garbage, lay on the ground awry or had been blown into the cabin wall. Their eyes were all wide open, implying that they did not die a peaceful death.

“This ship is the last resort of escape that Dongfang Wang has prepared for himself.”

Long Yangjun explained, “The guy in the undersea base supervising and commanding the battle is just a stand-in. The real Dongfang Wang intended to distract your main force with the undersea base as the bait, while he slipped away through the undersea trench on this ship.

“The shell of this ship has been specially refined, allowing it to rush at a high speed even in the deep ocean tens of thousands of meters deep. Also, the power units of the ship have been quieted and will absolutely not release any spiritual waves. It is hard to detect or capture the ship.

“More than 75% of the surface of the capital planet is covered by the ocean. Given the large coverage, if he hides in the deep ocean, it is very possible that he can escape your search with any luck.

“It is a shame that his ‘trusted subordinates’ did not seem willing to be trapped in the deep ocean together with him and die for the ‘former prime minister’. They planned to tie Dongfang Wang up and deliver him to your queen in exchange for their own lives and their future. But I did not want to deal with Li Linghai. So, this is how it turned out in the end.

“It was not really a big problem to take care of those guys, but this ship was seriously damaged in the meantime and stranded here. It was impossible for me to repair and activate it on my own. Dongfang Wang, on the other hand, burst into such fury when all his ‘trusted subordinates’ betrayed him that he vomited blood crazily and is about to die!”

Li Yao couldn’t help but feel that the human mind was truly the most treacherous thing in the entire universe. Even if Dongfang Wang had calculated everything and carefully prepared the last way of escape for himself, he was still not able to guarantee that his subordinates would not betray him.

After all, humans were not as reliable as machines!

Passing through the bloody corridor, and opening two doors, Li Yao found Dongfang Wang, the former prime minister of the Imperium, in a corner of the cockpit.

Although Long Yangjun had prepared him in advance, Li Yao was still deeply shocked by the appearance of the prime minister of iron and blood right now.

He had seen Dongfang Wang on all kinds of videos and 3D pictures more than once. His body was muscular, if not slightly fat, and he looked as unshakable as a bell, filled with exuberance and intimidation.

But Dongfang Wang at this moment couldn’t have looked more slim and haggard. All the fat and muscles on his body seemed to have been gobbled by some weird bugs, leaving the saggy skin dangling down in multiple layers on his face and his body. His skin was also brimming with black spots, from which black air was popping up and dispersing into the air that was filled with the stench of putrid bodies. Any visitor couldn’t help but cover their mouth and nose.

The only organ on his entire body that kept the vigor of a living person and the expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage was his eyes.

Dongfang Wei’s entire face was drooping like a melted mask, but his eyeballs were rising and protruding forward, almost occupying half of his face. He did not look like a human being at all.

With his hands that were more like claws, he clung to a giant package in the shape of a stick, with the excitement in his frenzied eyes that were focused on the map of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

The map of the Imperium rotated slowly. The Sectors and the resource planets all radiated the most colorful and splendid brilliance, which made Dongfang Wang's eyes look like burning glass balls when they were reflected there.

"Hehe. Hehehehe!"

Dongfang Wang did not notice that Li Yao and Long Yangjun arrived at all but simply kept watching in fascination while making low chuckles. Now and then, he was extending his hand that was shivering like a reed to touch the "newly-recovered territory" on the map of the Imperium, as if he were covering the entire universe with his palm.

Long Yangjun coughed lightly.

Dongfang Wang suddenly shrank. His bag of bones was puffed up by his last breath, and he held the map of the Imperium with his arms like a giant and thin balloon. Roaring angrily, he demanded, "Who is it? Who is it! Nobody is taking away the universe from me. It's mine! It's all mine!

"It was I who led the Imperium to win the unprecedented counterattack! It was I who planned and commanded everything, defending the dignity of the civilization of mankind! It was I who have revived the Imperium and controlled all the stars in the universe in its hands!

"I am the well-deserved best prime minister of the Imperium of True Human Beings! I am the greatest contributor to the renaissance of the Imperium! Nobody can oust me! You shameless, ungrateful swine, don't even think about it!

"I only swallowed a few living persons for my training! What's the big deal? It is nothing compared to the great contributions that I have made! If I had not swallowed those guys to maintain my computational ability at the peak state, how could I have coordinated the resources and troops of hundreds of Sectors in a boundless battlefield that spans thousands of lightyears for a total war? Nobody can do that!

“Sacrifice one to save a hundred. When we win the Imperium’s counterattack, countless human beings will be saved! For the victory, everybody has been devoting and sacrificing themselves. Even I have drained my body and soul. Is it really important that a few more people are sacrificed? Is it really important?!

“I have done nothing wrong. I do not regret anything I have done. This is a setup, this is a shameless betrayal, this is just an excuse that you come up with to overthrow me. Nobody is qualified to give me a trial, particularly not the hypocritical, cowardly traitors such as yourselves. The Imperium will forever remember me and give me the justice that I deserve. The Imperium will! Haha. Hahahaha!”

“His brain has been seriously burnt up—”

Long Yangjun spoke to Li Yao in a low voice, “It seems that you don’t have much time left now.”

Chapter 2308 - The Real Enemy!

Two feeble golden wings flashed past Li Yao’s eyes. By focusing his spiritual energy on the pupils and projecting it to Dongfang Wang’s body, he was able to perceive Dongfang Wang’s vitality field clearly.

Peeping at one’s vitality field was very rude and provocative. If Dongfang Wang’s head were clear and his soul were solid, he would certainly have launched counterattacks automatically.

However, the former prime minister of the Imperium was now mad and insane, completely dwelling in the glories of the past and the crazy illusions. He did not notice the peeping from the outside world at all.

Under Li Yao’s eyes of spiritual energy, Dongfang Wang was entirely gone, replaced by the twisted and undulating fields that looked like the entanglements of countless glittering double helixes.

However, the double helixes that were supposed to be glamorous and vigorous were consumed by darkness all the time and rotting at a visible speed, only to disperse into a black mist in the end, reduced to nothingness in the air.

Long Yangjun did not lie to him. Dongfang Wang was indeed dying. His vitality field was about to completely collapse. His physical body, his soul, and his will were all perishing soon.

Seeing that the prestigious former Prime Minister of the Imperium of True Human Beings ending up like this, Li Yao was caught in mixed feelings. For a Cultivator, Dongfang Wang, as a leader of Immortal Cultivators, was supposed to be one of the “ultimate supervillains”, who should’ve been killed by him after arduous battles through tremendous prices at the cost of gory prices.

But as it turned out, Li Yao had not done anything yet, and the man was already dying?

Li Yao and the entire Star Glory Federation’s illusions and fears about the Imperium a hundred years ago seemed entirely ungrounded. Was that why they said “every family has troubles of its own”?

The federation had the federation’s fatal threats, and the Imperium had the Imperium’s fundamental problems. Faced with the vastness of the universe, both the federation and the Imperium were as insignificant as ants!

Pondering a moment, Li Yao opened his hands and released two streams of mild spiritual energy into Dongfang Wang’s body, trying to slow down the total collapse of his vitality field and stimulate his brain that was about to dry so that he could be conscious for a moment.

As the bright gold spiritual energy enshrouded his body, Dongfang Wang moaned in a low voice. The craziness and compunctions in his eyes slowly ebbed, but they were soon covered by the mist of agony and desperation.

“It’s you… You’re finally here… My time has come.”

The Dongfang Wang at this moment was like an old man who was finally facing the reality. Leaning his head to the human-shaped package in his arms, he mumbled, “I’ve lost, as crushed as anyone can be!”

Although he was looking at Li Yao, his attention was obviously not focused on Li Yao. Instead, he seemed to be mired in the memories of a long time ago while he summarized his life.

“I am defeated, not by the Covenant Alliance, the reformists, or the churlish guys of the four Kurfürst families…”

Dongfang Wang was now gnashing his teeth in fury, now caught in self-pity, and now saying in utmost tranquility without any emotion on his face. “I’ve lost to the three thousand Sectors. I’ve been defeated by the entire cosmos. I’ve been overwhelmed by everyone’s desires and ambitions!

“Hehe. I thought that I could continue what Blackstar the Great failed to accomplish a thousand years ago by uniting the Imperium of True Human Beings and the universe!

“How childish I was to have considered the cosmos and mankind in such a simple way?

“The Imperium of True Human Beings has hundreds of Sectors and tens of thousands of resource planets. The worlds are thousands of lightyears away from each other, with utterly different living environments, customs, and traditions. They have their own appeals and interests. To make things worse, there are even countless sects inside each world, countless Immortal Cultivators inside every sect, and all the Immortal Cultivators are minding only their own business and plotting against each other. How could I have united all of them and let them obey my command?

“The Imperium is not a country at all but a tray of loose sand that pretends to be a country. It is a wobbly alliance that is somehow jumbled together, and the greatest enemy for everybody in the alliance is exactly the ‘allies’ next to them! Why was I such an idiot that I could not see through such a simple fact?

“All in vain! My years of hard work and even my life have been wasted for nothing!

“I burned all my will and my soul and completely devoted myself to the Imperium, and what have I got?

“The four Kurfürst families, including the Dongfang family, hamstrung me in secret. The local leaders and warlords at the periphery of the Imperium simply ignored my orders and worked their ways around them! When I added the war tax by 5%, they were bold enough to levy 50% more on the taxpayers! When I wanted to build an honorable, clean government, they simply sat in the office doing nothing every day! When I asked the warlords’ troops to push forward to the frontline that was of paramount importance, they would immediately ‘encounter a space storm and suffer heavy losses’. All their starships simply wandered off. Instead of contributing to the frontline, they sometimes even turned into space pirates and ransacked the rear while it was undefended, stabbing their blades into their own people!

“It is needless to mention the wicked merchants who hoarded goods and made a fortune through the war. I wanted to punish them hard, but everybody from the four Kurfürst families, including the leaders of the Dongfang family and even my own son, came to me to beg mercy for them. What could I have done? What could I have done even if I was the ‘prime minister of iron and blood’?

“Even so, despite the unexpected difficulties and troubles, I still combined the resources through hard work with my best and finally won the Imperium’s counterattack! Are the generals who know nothing but fighting and asking for resources in the frontline aware of what a hard-earned victory this is? Do they have any idea how many times I wiped their a*ses for them and how many conundrums I settled for them?

“I thought that those people would be convinced after such a glorious triumph, and that the Imperium would rise to the peak again under my leadership. But I still underestimated the shamelessness of those guys. The war is still not over yet, and they are already impatient enough to stab me in the back. Are they so scared of me, so desperate to get rid of me, and so unwilling to see the rise of a powerful Imperium?”

Dongfang Wang chattered on like a poor old man.

Li Yao listened in silence, not knowing whether he should loathe or pity the former leader of Immortal Cultivators.

Getting to the bottom of it, it was impossible for the Immortal Cultivators who worshipped survival of the fittest to be really united or to have a real leader.

Their leader was nothing but someone who suppressed all the other experts with absolute strength while promising the greatest returns for all the experts.

For Dongfang Wang, he did not even have “absolute strength”. How could he make the disobedient, selfish Immortal Cultivators obey him, follow him, and sacrifice for him willingly?

Dongfang Wang was perhaps a real “patriot”. His ambitions were deeply entwined with the fate of the Imperium of True Human Beings. He truly wanted to become a prime minister with achievements, not one who would resign the moment difficulties emerged, like “Silver Fox” Li Jiande.

That was the reason why Dongfang Wang’s tragedy was destined since the very beginning. He was destined to die for his ambitions and the ambitions of all the Immortal Cultivators.

“I understand it now. I finally understand it now.”

Clinging to the human-shaped package in his arms, Dongfang Wang put on the most mocking smile on his shapeless lips. “I finally understand why even the ‘Supreme Emperor’ and ‘Blackstar the Great’ were not able to expand their influence to the entire universe, because the universe is not something that mankind is capable of uniting at all!

“Human beings are not a naturally created animal but a creature of gods and devils. We did not proliferate to the three thousand Sectors naturally and got used to everything gradually; we were sprayed to the entire universe by the Pangu and Nuwa civilizations in less than a hundred thousand years.

“Our ancestors were just certain monkeys jumping in the jungles of a certain planet. Even if Pangu and Nuwa injected their genes into our bodies, transforming us into tools and weapons, our wisdom was still far from enough to inherit such enormous legacies such as the three thousand Sectors.

“It’s an unbearable gift for us and a catastrophe that will haunt mankind forever. Our ambitions are infinitely magnified by the universe, and yet we do not have enough wisdom and technologies to really conquer this… universe that we both love and hate!

“The Supreme Emperor intended to unite the sea of stars, but his empire collapsed abruptly after only a thousand years. Blackstar the Great wanted to unite the universe too, but his Imperium has also become hopeless today after a thousand years. I thought I could save the Imperium, and I even saw the hope of success, but it still ends up like this.

“Perhaps the universe is never supposed to be united, and it is in fact the best form of the civilization of mankind if it is divided by dozens or hundreds of small countries? However, hehe, the hundreds of small countries will never be satisfied with the reality. Their leaders will still be swallowed by ambitions. There are bound to be frictions. New wars that are a hundred times more fierce will still be raised!

“This is the destiny of mankind. As an ‘artificial civilization’, we are fated to destroy everything, including ourselves, since the moment we were born. Nobody can change such a fate. I can’t, His Majesty can’t, the four Kurfürst families can’t, nor can the hotblooded and simpleminded reformists like you!”

Dongfang Wang’s eyes were finally concentrated on Li Yao to the point that he could recognize who Li Yao was.

“Even if you tarnish me, kill me, and even annihilate the four Kurfürst families so that the reformists can take over the Imperium, so what? That will be just the insignificant first step of a journey of ten thousand kilometers!”

Dongfang Wang smiled viciously. “Your real enemy is not me, not the four Kurfürst families, but the universe itself as well as the desires and ambitions of all humans in it. You may defeat me and the four Kurfürst families easily, but it is impossible for you to beat the universe. One day, you will end up exactly like me, if not a hundred times more miserable!”

Chapter 2309 - Unexpected Evidence!

His laughter was as gloomy and creepy as that of a rotten crow.

If Li Yao were a real Immortal Cultivator and a reformist, and he had ambitions for the supreme power, he would certainly have been intimidated.

“It’s useless. Even if you can eradicate all the four Kurfürst families today and govern the Imperium yourself, it will still be useless. By then, you will be faced with all the problems that I am faced with today, and you will taste all the sufferings that I have tasted!”

There was intense mockery and hatred in Dongfang Wang’s eyes as he went on, “Hundreds of Sectors, each having their own interests. Tens of thousands of resource planets, where all the Immortal Cultivators secretly resist you and earn benefits for themselves with you as a disguise. Nobody cares about the future of the Imperium except for you. Even you will be deformed and bloated under the corruption of power. Eventually, you will watch yourself be swallowed by the universe like I am today, embracing your doom!

“By then, hahahaha, by then, I’ll be observing you from the deepest level of hell to see how you repeat the mistakes and how you struggle before your doom. Hahahahahaha!”

Dongfang Wang could barely catch his breath in his crazy laughter. He then coughed so hard that black clots of blood were spat out. Or maybe, they were not blood clots but the fragments of his internal organs.

Li Yao was truly worried that the man might be killed by his own laughter. He hurried to say, “Prime Minister Dongfang, please don’t be too excited. Let’s talk about it slowly. In fact, I can’t agree with your opinion more. I believe that both the reformists and the four Kurfürst families are hopeless and walking to their doom in different ways. One party dies faster and the other party dies more slowly, but they will be equally dead in the end anyway. What a profound speech you have made just now! It was such an enlightenment!”

Dumbfounded, Dongfang Wang did not say anything until a long time later. “… Excuse me? Aren’t… Aren’t you ‘Vulture Li Yao’, a reformist?”

“Well, I am a progressive young man among the reformists. You may consider me as a ‘reformist of the reformists’.”

Li Yao said, “My identity is not important. What is important is that your theories are too hollow and do not help the current situation at all. I’m not here for a lecture. If you do not have anything better to offer, why don’t we call it a day? I’ll get out of your way while you are busy dying. Right. You are a former prime minister of the Imperium after all. Do you have any last words? I can help you pass them out.”

Dongfang Wang rolled his eyes again and again. He seemed to be considering Li Yao’s identity and the insinuation of his previous words.

However, in his current situation, he did not have any leverage for negotiation, and he did not have a second choice other than to believe Li Yao.

“Wait!”

Dongfang Wang struggled to breathe and stand straight. With feeble light beaming out of his eyes, 1% of the charisma of the “prime minister of iron and blood” of the past was filled into his almost dry shell again.

“Tell me, Vulture Li Yao.”

Dongfang Wang looked at Li Yao earnestly. “Which is more important for you, Li Linghai or the Imperium?”

Looking at Dongfang Wang in the eyes, Li Yao said without any hesitation, “I am a real patriot. Naturally, the Imperium is more important. No matter how despicable today’s Imperium is, I do not want to watch it fall apart, which will only result in greater chaos. Like you described just now, the civilization of mankind might be separated into hundreds of countries attacking and destroying one another. Of course, there is also the Covenant Alliance to consider!

“Therefore, I am loyal to the queen because she is the leader of the reformists. We were also forced to counterattack and go against Prime Minister Dongfang only because the four Kurfürst families directed the ‘incident of the Blood Oath Alliance’, trying to exterminate the reformists!”

Dongfang Wang sneered and asked again, “General Lei Chenghu was rescued by you in person, right?”

Li Yao nodded his head, “Yes. It was me who broke into the Godly Might Prison and got Marquis Liaohai out!”

Dongfang Wang’s eyes were brighter and brighter, and his head was clearer and clearer. Even his voice was louder and more stable than just now. “Great. Even if I am dying, there is something that I must let you know. Please forward it to General Lei.”

Refreshed, Li Yao knew that the most important thing was coming. He hurried to send another stream of mild spiritual energy into Dongfang Wang's body and injected a dosage of medical drugs, slowing the collapse of his body and soul for now. "You can speak now, Prime Minister Dongfang. I'm all ears. I swear that I'll pass your words to General Lei Chenghu."

"Alright, listen up—"

Dongfang Wang craned his head over, almost embedding his bright eyes into Li Yao's face. His face twisted, he gnashed his teeth and said, one word after another, "I may have done a lot of things that are in violation of the law of the Imperium, and I may have been unfair to the miscellaneous troops commanded by General Lei Chenghu, because I intended to weaken the peripheral forces of the Imperium and ensure the long-term reign of the four Kurfürst families. I often regarded them as cannon fodder and even considered to swallow his troops many times. I have done a lot of things like 'cannibal training' too.

"Yes, I've done all those things. I admit that you are not wrong to say that I am 'unpardonable' from your stance. However, the 'incident of the Blood Oath Alliance' was truly not done by me!"

It was Li Yao who was stunned this time. "What? The incident of the Blood Oath Alliance was not your trick?"

"Of course not. Although there were certain contradictions between me and Dongfang Tuo, who was the CEO of the Expedition Bank of the Imperium, within the family, because our ideas did not really agree, and we were not in the closest relation because I imposed a lot of pressure on him to exploit more resources during the Imperium's counterattack, how could I have assassinated him in public when he was an honorable elder of the Imperium?”

With a bitter smile, Dongfang Wang said, “Also, three days before his assassination, I had already reached a blanket agreement with him in secret. I gave away part of my interests by allowing his personal group to be deeply involved in the postwar reconstruction. There would be great profits in it!

“Was there any reason why I should attack him when we had already reached a deal?”

Thinking quickly, Li Yao asked, “Why did nobody else bring up the issue? And why did you not defend yourself?”

“It’s a secret agreement with a lot of clandestine parts.”

Dongfang Wang slightly blushed. But he still went on, “The advantages in the postwar reconstruction were not offered to him for nothing but exchanged for his interests in the Expedition Bank of the Imperium. It was too great a matter to be exposed to the public.”

Li Yao immediately understood everything.

Dongfang Tuo, the elder of the Imperium who was assassinated, was the CEO of the Expedition Bank of the Imperium, but it did not mean that the Expedition Bank was his private property. He was just a leader and had some shares in it at best.

With the power in his hands, he could secretly separate the interests of the Expedition Bank and let them pass into the hands of Dongfang Wang before they were returned to Dongfang Tuo’s personal consortium. Then, the profits would’ve been 100% his own. Everybody would be happy.

But naturally, the other stakeholders of the Expedition Bank would not be happy. They would certainly not allow Dongfang Tuo to benefit from their losses. It was only reasonable that the blanket agreement was kept a secret.

Dongfang Wang groped on his body for a moment and found a Cosmos Ring, before he went on intermittently, “The secret agreements between Dongfang Tuo and I are all inside. There are also two drops of our blood and our signatures with the soul stamps. However, he who has a mind to beat his dog can easily find a stick. Now that everybody wanted me dead, what could I have achieved by presenting the ‘unquestionable’ proof? I am already denigrated. Even if the evidence is real, somebody will prove that it is fabricated. I would’ve lost the great card if I defended myself recklessly.

“I can only hold myself back and wait for someone who can possibly trust me to show up. In the hands of the right person, those agreements will prove that I absolutely did not have any motive to assassinate Dongfang Tuo. Even if I truly intended to set up a trap, I could’ve assassinated any other elder of the Imperium, instead of Dongfang Tuo whose support I had finally won after all the trouble!”

Holding the Cosmos Ring in his hands, Li Yao felt that thousands of thoughts were raging inside his brain.

“Also, I did not plan to keep General Lei Chenghu in custody at all in the beginning. He was the highest commander of the Third Battle Area after all and the commander of the Astounding Thunder Fleet. With his high prestige in the expedition army, how could I have deprived him of his commandership without being fully prepared? I was not such an idiot!”

Panting, Dongfang Wang went on, “However, some of my subordinates did it before they reported the issue. I did not receive any message until he was in custody for two days. At that time, rumors were already arising in the frontline, and it was already impossible for General Lei Chenghu to abandon his biases against the Council of Elders and me. What was done was done. I certainly could not release the tiger back to the mountain but could only grit my teeth and continue locking him.

“The incident of the Blood Oath Alliance was not planned by you, and General Lei Chenghu was not arrested under your command?”

Li Yao frowned. “Don’t forget that General Lei Chenghu was captured and imprisoned by Dongfang Bai, your biological son. Has your son turned you into a figurehead?”

“Biological son. Hehehehe. Does blood bond mean anything compared to the interests and the power of the entire universe?”

Dongfang Wang laughed more unpleasantly than crying. “I was simply baffled. I was already the prime minister of the Imperium, and Dongfang Bai was nominated as the director of the secret force at a young age. He was one of my favorite sons. For him, wasn’t it in his best interests to help me stabilize the current situation and to help me make one step further? He would be the director of the secret force as long as I was the prime minister. What could he have possibly gained by doing that?

“What enticing attractions of interests and power could’ve possibly made him betray me without any hesitation? What made him believe in that person, trusting that his position would still be stable, if not one step higher, after the fallout of the Dongfang family?”

Li Yao asked, “Who is that person?”

Dongfang Wang said coldly, “Naturally, it was the person who really planned the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance and the incarceration of General Lei Chenghu—our Queen Li Linghai!”

Chapter 2310 - Emperor Shenwu Shows Up!

Chapter 2310 Emperor Shenwu Shows Up!

Li Yao nodded his head, as if it were not a big deal at all. “Oh, it’s her!”

Dongfang Wang’s eyes bulged again, bloodshot. He exclaimed in desperation, “Why are you not shocked at all? You knew it a long time ago? You are Li Linghai’s conspirator!”

“No, not at all. I’m afraid that there is some misunderstanding, Prime Minister Dongfang. I am absolutely unaware of the issue, and I am certainly not the queen’s conspirator. It’s just that I’ve seen too many similar things based on personal experience, so it cannot surprise me anymore.”

Li Yao hurried to explain, “Please think about it carefully. Your karma is getting to you for your monstrous crimes, and you are about to die the most miserable death. There is no need for me to lie to you at all, is there?

“Speaking of which, you seem to be very certain that the queen is behind the scenes. What evidence do you have?”

Dongfang Wang stared at Li Yao and thought for a long time, only to come up with no reason why Li Yao would bother to lie to him right now. He said in regrets, “I do not have any direct evidence, but isn’t the truth obvious? Had it not been for the ‘incident of the Blood Oath Alliance’, which completely intensified the contradictions between the four Kurfürst families and the young officers from the frontline as well as the peripheral warlords of the Imperium, how could they have leaned toward the reformists so quickly?

“Also, if General Lei Chenghu were not arrested and informed that his commandership would be removed, how could he have made up his mind to betray the Council of Elders and join hands with Li Linghai?

“From the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance to the imprisonment of Lei Chenghu, the reformists have been given a large batch of allies without any cost, and the oppositions of the four Kurfürst families are more united than ever. Who gains the most from the whole matter? Li Linghai, of course!

“Then, who else could the whole thing have been planned by if not her?”

Holding his chin and considering for a long time, Li Yao shook his head slowly and said, “This is a serious allegation. Your speculation does not seem persuasive enough!”

“Then, how much evidence did you have when you accused me of planning the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance, and how persuasive were they?”

His eyes bloodshot, Dongfang Wang roared hysterically, “Both the young officers from the frontline and the warlords from the edge of the Imperium wanted nothing but interests. They would not shake the foundations of the four families or challenge me as the ‘prime minister of iron and blood’ at all. We could’ve totally negotiated slowly. With enough time, it is always possible to come up with a plan of interest distribution that everybody will be satisfied with.

“But when the war is not entirely over yet, and the distribution of the interest in the postwar reconstruction is still distant, why would I be in such a hurry to intensify all the conflicts through such radical approaches?

“Even if I were indeed crazy enough to completely annihilate all of you with violence, I would’ve certainly planned out everything. Once the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance was activated, there would’ve been incessant thunderous strangles that would’ve suffocated all the reformists, young officers, and peripheral warlords. You wouldn’t have stood any chance at all!

“But what about the reality? The reality was that I was running and fighting here and there. Did I seem to have planned everything out at all? Do you think that the enormous scheme of the prime minister of the Imperium was so flawed that it had no backup moves at all?

“If you want evidence, the greatest evidence is my misery right now. Is my current situation not enough to suggest that I truly did not know anything about the matter, and I was simply hit when I was not prepared at all?”

Dongfang Wang couldn’t have sounded more depressed and heartfelt.

Even Li Yao was somewhat convinced by him.

He continued roaring in fury, “After the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance, the reformists seemed to be hit heavily in the emergency. A lot of people were caught, and your organization suffered heavy losses, but you regrouped very soon and even admitted Lei Chenghu, the Astounding Thunder Fleet and its tremendous young officers, peripheral warlords, and the ambitious, unstable factors within the four Kurfürst families. Your capability soared more than ten times!

“Then, you initiated the overwhelming, incessant, and seamless counterattacks, bulldozing all my forces to the ground without any stop. Let me ask you, could such powerful and fierce counterattacks really have been made in a haste?

“Vulture Li Yao, I don’t know if you are Li Linghai’s accomplice or if you are aware of the whole thing, but if you are, then you have my admiration for your self-control, your planning, and your acting skills. This is really almost a perfect scheme. I did not have any chance to counterattack at all. Whatever I did, I was simply dead for sure!

“If you are unaware of the truth, that will be very pathetic, because you were manipulated by Li Linghai too, as her pawn, her hound, and her dagger!

“Trust me, Queen Li Linghai knew that an elder of the Imperium was going to be assassinated before the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance. She calculated all the chain reactions that followed and planned the coping strategies in every step. It was not a counterattack in a haste at all but a long-prepared aggression!

“Haha. Impressive, Li Linghai. I have underestimated you again and again. I never realized that you were so dreadful that everybody—from the four Kurfürst families to the reformists, from the soldiers in the frontline to the warlords in the rear, and from a prime minister like me to the seasoned generals like Lei Chenghu—was manipulated by you like a puppet!”

Dongfang Wang laughed in the most devastating way. His dangling skin and his hideous smile made him truly like a scary ghost.

“Wait, there is still the most critical question.”

Frowning hard, Li Yao pondered carefully for a long time before he asked, “Prime Minister Dongfang, you claim that the queen was the mastermind who came up with all the schemes because she gained the most from them. But I’m confused. What exactly has she gained?

“In terms of commandership, she does not have any troops. The Deep Sea Fleet is commanded by General Dongfang Sheng, and the Astounding Thunder Fleet is managed by General Lei Chenghu. The elite troops of the four Kurfürst families are not her place to control at all either.

“In terms of prestige, while she is the leader of the reformists, she has done nothing except for calling for the supporters and facilitating the communication. Except for her performance in the ‘crying event’ in the capital, where she won the favor of the surplus generals and the disabled veterans, she has been keeping a low profile and barely left a deep impression. If we are being completely honest, she has appeared on the battlefield even less often than me. Right now, everybody knows Vulture Li Yao and the Gold Vulture, but not everybody knows the queen’s role in the revival of the Imperium!

“In terms of the situation, after the fall of Prime Minister Dongfang, the Dongfang family will certainly be greatly weakened, but the other three families and the reformists are very likely to settle everything peacefully. We are about to welcome the return of Emperor Shenwu and rebuild the Council of Elders. The queen’s position and influence will only be further lowered.

“From the perspective that the interests of the Imperium should be above everything else, her so-called ‘schemes’ do not carry many disadvantages or bring many returns to the queen herself! If you insist that the queen lurked and secretly operated for decades planning the traps carefully for no selfish reasons at all but the revival and rise of the Imperium, then I… will have nothing to say.”

“For no selfish reasons at all? Hehehehe! You are about to welcome the return of Emperor Shenwu? Hahahaha!”

Dongfang Wang laughed so hard that he almost choked himself. He suddenly bulged his eyes and shrieked, “Then come on and welcome His Majesty now!”

Since the very beginning, he had been clutching a human-shaped package the size of a dog. There was no telling what the package was made of, but it had a high blockage ability. Li Yao peeped at it many times with his telepathic thoughts but never penetrated in successfully.

At this moment, Dongfang Wang shook the package and opened it. From inside the package, an object that was as dark as charcoal flew out with a pungent smell. It fell right before Li Yao into pieces.

Slightly dazed, Li Yao activated his spiritual shield before the pieces splashed to his body. He then observed the charcoal-like object carefully.

At first look, it was like a burnt monkey.

But the limbs and the face were apparently a human’s, except that they had been reduced multiple times proportionally.

Although it was as dark as charcoal, it did not seem to have just been burnt in a fire. Instead, the water inside the body seemed to have been entirely vaporized, and the blood and the soul were sucked up by certain secret techniques before the body shriveled to such an extent.

"Well—"

Staring at the blackened head the size of a fist for a long time, Li Yao tried to locate some traces from the grimacing, painful face, only to find nothing. "What is this?"

He was confused about why Dongfang Wang was holding such a terribly burnt body in his arms when he was about to die.

"Don't you see? As I have said just now—"

Dongfang Wang's smile was both bitter and hideous. "This is the dominator of the universe, the sovereign of the Imperium of True Human Beings, and Li Linghai's husband—His Majesty Emperor Shenwu that you have been trying to rescue!"

Li Yao's eyes were immediately frozen and did not move again until half a minute later. "Wow… You are truly… audacious and unrestrained. You were crazy enough to turn His Majesty into this?"

With a bitter smile, Dongfang Wang said, "If I say I wasn't the one who did this, would you believe me?"

"I… would."

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao nodded his head. "You can only coerce the other people into obeying you with a living emperor, not a dead one. But speaking of which, when you kidnapped His Majesty, he couldn't have looked so… sorry back then, right? Therefore, His Majesty died under your watch, and you certainly can't get away from it. How exactly did it happen?"

"Intoxication."

Intense confusion surfaced in Dongfang Wang’s eyes as he said, “By a very uncanny but strong poison. I asked the best doctors to examine His Majesty’s body every day to ensure his safety, but nothing had been found at all! Also, I’m highly suspicious that the poison was injected into His Majesty’s body a long time ago and could be activated indirectly through timing or remote control, just so that His Majesty would die in my hands!”

Chapter 2311 - Underground Palace!

Li Yao stared closely at the blackened body again, but he still couldn’t tell whether it was poisoned or had been drained up by a certain extremely dominating art. He couldn’t help but frown. “Why do you say that it was intoxicated by a poison that was planted a long time ago?”

After a brief hesitation, Dongfang Wang said, “Everybody in the world knows that His Majesty is heisted by me, and that I am coercing other people into following me with the help of His Majesty’s authority. But if I say that His Majesty actually trusted me very much, and because he was concerned that somebody was going to murder him, he acted together with me to fool everyone, and he in fact came to my place to seek protection, would you believe me?”

“Wow. So, that is the truth. Of course I will believe it!”

Li Yao said, “As it turns out, Prime Minister Dongfang is truly selfless and devoted to the country. You are a loyal subject to His Majesty, as pure as a lotus flower!”

Dongfang Wang coughed and said, “Fine. That might be an exaggeration. But His Majesty and I were truly not entirely opposite. In many cases, the two of us had to cooperate. He needed to suppress the other three Kurfürst families with my power as well as the unstable factors within the court, including Li Linghai!”

Li Yao asked, “Was His Majesty dissatisfied about the queen?”

“Not dissatisfied, but intimidated!”

Dongfang Wang said, “His Majesty had the deepest fear for Li Linghai. According to him, in recent decades, especially after the outbreak of the Imperium’s counterattack, Li Linghai had been changing more and more significantly. Sometimes, she was completely like somebody else, one that creeped him out and made him barely able to stand on his feet.

“Not worrying that he might be laughed at, His Majesty said that he and Li Linghai hadn’t slept on the same bed for almost thirty years. He was even physically incapable as a man whenever he met Li Linghai. However, he was still as vigorous as before when he was with his other concubines, and it was not difficult for him to do it ten times a night.

“Also, His Majesty said that Li Linghai often wandered in the royal palace late at night stealthily. There was no telling what she was up to at all. His Majesty was of a mind to investigate, but Li Linghai sometimes just vanished into thin air.”

“Wait.”

Li Yao raised his hands and asked, “Vanished into thin air? What do you mean by that?”

“Nobody knew how Li Linghai did it. The royal palace was an important focus of the four Kurfürst families’ surveillance, with cameras and our spies everywhere. By logic, nobody should be able to sneak around inside the royal palace.”

Dongfang Wang said, “However, it is said that the royal palace of the Imperium of True Human Beings was established on the relic of the royal palace of the Star Ocean Imperium from ten thousand years ago. Although the world has changed significantly, it is possible that a lot of secrets are still buried below the ground.

“Years ago, when Blackstar the Great supervised the construction of the royal palace, he regarded the place as the last base of resistance for the Imperium of True Human Beings. Therefore, the underground part of the royal palace is very spacious, with abundant mazes, arsenals, and entrances to world fragments, connected by secret tunnels and teleportation arrays. There are also astonishing defense arrays and complicated traps that can stop the experts in the Nascent Soul Stage or even the Divinity Transformation Stage.

“It is said that Blackstar the Great summoned hundreds of thousands of Cultivators for the construction of the ‘underground palace’. Those Cultivators were mostly the war captives during the collapse of the Star Ocean Republic. Blackstar the Great promised that they would be pardoned as long as they built the ‘underground palace’, and that they could live a new life in the Imperium of True Human Beings as Immortal Cultivators.

“But out of their expectation, after the ‘underground palace’ was really established, Blackstar the Great simply killed the hundreds of thousands of Cultivators in the underground palace and transformed their unrested souls into extremely powerful defense arrays. Ever since then, hundreds of thousands of restless ghosts have been haunting the underground world of the royal palace, whose secrets are only known by the emperors of every generation. Then, after a few emperors died abruptly while they were on the throne, the secrets of the underground palace were known by none.

“The four Kurfürst families are naturally intrigued by the secrets of the underground palace too, but our four families have been checking and balancing each other. Nobody wants any other family to get the secrets ahead of themselves. Also, it was simply too difficult to excavate the entire underground palace. One moment of carelessness and the crust of the entire planet might experience drastic changes. The ecological equilibrium will be gone. The environment will be too harsh for the survival of mankind. Since the consequences are severe and the returns are few, the issue has been put on hold for a long time.

“According to Emperor Shenwu, Li Linghai seemed to have grasped a way to travel freely in the underground palace, which was highly suspicious. Naturally, I conducted investigations in secret. It was not until then that I discovered the traces of the ‘reformists’ and realized the tip of the iceberg of Li Linghai’s ambitions.

“But at that time, I still did not know that Li Linghai’s goal was so huge and her methods would be so seamless and brutal. I thought that she was just another woman who intended to bring disasters to the palace and the court, like many other women did in the past five hundred years.

“Therefore, I only made use of regular approaches and wanted her to ‘die of diseases’ in order to maintain the dignity of the Imperium, while I captured her in secret to interrogate her for the secrets of the underground palace.

“As for His Majesty, since he came to seek my protection, it would have certainly been impolite of me to turn him down when he walked into my trap voluntarily.

“I meant no harm to His Majesty. However, his head was overwhelmed by the victories in the Imperium’s counterattack, and he had grown too egoistic, with ambitions that he could not bear at all. As the prime minister of the Imperium, I was naturally obliged to teach him a lesson, calm him down, and make him realize the reality, in case he was taken advantage of by the malicious guys.

“However, the arrest operation targeting Li Linghai did not go well. What we caught was just a stand-in. The real Li Linghai had long escaped.

“Having no other choices, we could only poison the stand-in and plan to announce the demise of the queen, trying to lower the threat of Li Linghai to the minimum in such a way. But little did we know that we still underestimated her tremendously.

“His Majesty, on the other hand, had been well ever since he received my protection. But after the outbreaks of the ‘cannibal training incident’ and the ‘incident of the Blood Oath Alliance’, when I was most anxious and caught unprepared, all the liquids in his entire body were vaporized in only half an hour without any sign, reducing him into such conditions. Not even the slightest soul remained.

“At that time, several doctors and Meditation Healers were with His Majesty and performed first aid immediately. They injected a hundred dosages of medical drugs into His Majesty’s body, but none helped. There seemed to be a mini black hole inside His Majesty’s body that sucked him up!

“Not earlier, and not later, His Majesty died such an uncanny death right in the middle of my most troubled time. It was obvious that somebody set me up and wanted me to take the blame! It’s true that I can’t explain His Majesty’s death even if I have tongues all over my body. There’s nothing I can do except to wait to die now!

“Such carefully-arranged schemes and such vicious drugs couldn’t have been prepared by anybody other than Li Linghai, could they?”

“However—”

Li Yao asked, “Why did the queen do that? Why did she kill her sovereign and husband?”

“Perhaps it was because His Majesty knew too many of her secrets and was even considering abolishing the queen. Or perhaps it was simply because she wanted the four Kurfürst families and even the entire Imperium to fall into mayhem!”

Dongfang Wang said, “Like you said just now, as long as the Dongfang family gives away tremendous interests and welcomes Emperor Shenwu back, it will still be possible for the four Kurfürst families and the reformists to strike a balance, which is perhaps not what Li Linghai wants to see. What if her purpose is exactly to cast the Imperium into chaos?

“Emperor Shenwu had been on the throne for sixty years, which was a long time even among all the emperors of the Imperium. He was emperor for sixty years in peace naturally because the four Kurfürst families were all relatively satisfied with the current distribution of interests, and there was no need to replace him with somebody else.

“It was also for that reason, and because the focus of the Imperium in the past twenty years was war, that not even a crown prince had been nominated.

“Before, the four Kurfürst families were all thinking to postpone the nomination of the crown prince until the war was over. By then, the crown prince would be a condition in the deals regarding the distribution of the interests in the postwar reconstruction.

“But with the emergency right now, after the demise of the emperor, the four Kurfürst families and the reformists are immediately at loggerheads.

“For the reformists, your slogan is ‘Honor the Majesty and Settle the Rebellion’. Now, even His Majesty himself has been murdered by the rebellions. It is impossible for you to let go of the culprits, and you wouldn’t consider your cause accomplished until you annihilate the entire Dongfang family, right?

“For the Dongfang family, many secondary branches could’ve shown up and cleaned the mess. As long as my branch is sacrificed, it is possible to sustain the whole family. But everything is unknown now that such a terrible thing has happened. Chances are that all the remaining forces of the Dongfang family will jump out for a desperate counterattack!

“For the other three Kurfürst families, they naturally all have their candidates for the crown prince, and they will support the spokespersons of their interests.

“We are in the unprecedented changes in the history of the Imperium now. In both the frontline and the rear, the interests of all fields are being reshuffled. If one family’s puppet becomes the emperor, they will certainly hold great advantages and even replace the Dongfang family as ‘First Family’!

“Therefore, the competition for the new emperor will certainly be fierce!

“Li Linghai is so vicious that she certainly has other moves. With a few tricks, the three Kurfürst families will burst into a great fight against each other.”

Although the man was speaking in a hurry, he had recovered the computational ability of the prime minister of the Imperium while he analyzed the whole thing.

Li Yao sweated hard and felt that his heart was cold.

“I’m still baffled.”

Li Yao mumbled, “What can the queen benefit from the chaos of the Imperium?”

“I don’t know what Li Linghai can gain from the chaos.”

Gritting his teeth, Dongfang Wang struggled to say, “I only know that if the Imperium remained in peace and you passed the transition period of power without any disasters, Li Linghai would forever be an insignificant queen. As time went by, it would be less and less possible for her to stir any trouble. In the end, she would only perish like dust without any sound!

“Having done so many things through so much trouble, she would never want to perish like that. Never!”

Chapter 2312 - Possessed By Whom?

Chapter 2312 Possessed By Whom?

In Li Yao’s senses, Dongfang Wang’s soul power erupted from the depths of his brain like a volcano outburst.

It was certainly not a good sign but the last exuberance of his life.

Li Yao said in a hurry, “Prime Minister Dongfang, don’t be excited. I trust you. Just take your time!”

Dongfang Wang’s eyes were burned into hazy glass balls. There was no telling if he still had normal vision. His hands that were as dry as twigs, however, were groping randomly in midair, tearing the map of the Imperium into broken ripples.

The former prime minister of the Imperium roared hysterically, “Li Linghai, Li Linghai, you may have taken everything into consideration, but you couldn’t have known that Dongfang Tuo and I had reached a secret agreement, and that I had the evidence that I absolutely did not assassinate Dongfang Tuo!

“Vulture Li Yao, Dongfang Mingyue, if you are both Li Linghai’s subordinates, everything will be done, and I’ll just admit my failure in the gamble!

“However, if you still have the slightest concerns for the big picture of the Imperium and the civilization of mankind, then help me bring the evidence and everything I said just now to General Lei Chenghu. Tell it to everybody in the whole world and ask them to unveil Li Linghai together!”

Li Yao was about to inject another dosage of medical drugs for Dongfang Wang when he stood on his feet, shaking. Every pore on his body was emitting feeble flames, and he laughed crazily in the weirdest way. “Haha. Hahahaha. However, even if your schemes all work out, it’s going to be useless, Li Linghai! You can defeat me, you can deceive and steal the entire Imperium, but you can never beat the universe! You will eventually be collapsed by the Imperium and swallowed by the universe just like me!

“Nobody… Nobody can escape from the universe. This boundless yet barren universe is a cage for billions of civilizations!

“Both us and the gods and devils in the primeval age are but ants in the sea of stars and grains of dust in the vast space…”

Dongfang Wang’s hands tore apart the map of the Imperium and groped through the spotty light, as if he were reaching for the real universe above his head beyond the seawater.

The flames of spiritual energy around him gradually dimmed. He finally stopped moving and became a lousy statue. His life that was difficult to judge came to an end.

Li Yao gave up the idea to inject more medical drugs for him.

Dongfang Wang’s vitality field was on the brink of collapse in the first place. He only persisted until this moment with his astonishing willpower and his resentment for Li Linghai. Now that he had confessed everything and let go of his burdens, he had lost the last thing of his life that he clung to. Nobody could save him anymore.

Li Yao sighed and stepped forward to close Dongfang Wang’s eyes that were still wide open. He then put the man on the ground and cleaned his clothes, making him look as if he had fallen asleep.

Dongfang Wang was certainly not a good guy. Being engaged in “cannibal training” in modern society suggested that he had crossed all the lines of humanity and that he was nothing more than an animal wearing clothes.

However, it was also an undeniable fact that he had devoted his life and soul to the Imperium of True Human Beings in the past twenty years, and he had combined all the resources available for the temporary victory of the Imperium’s counterattack.

Li Yao really did not know how he should comment on Dongfang Wang.

Nor did he know how he should deal with the man’s last words or how to confront Queen Li Linghai!

“How about it?”

Dongfang Mingyue, or Long Yangjun, who had been leaning against the wall in silence the whole time, walked forward and patted Li Yao’s shoulder with a smile. “I didn’t lie to you, did I? Aren’t Dongfang Wang’s last words thrilling?”

“They indeed are.”

After cleaning up Dongfang Wang’s body, Li Yao wrapped Emperor Shenwu’s remains and put the two of them together. He then took out a few bottles of drugs from his Cosmos Ring and processed the cadavers carefully.

Many Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures were the body tissues of beasts and could only be preserved for a long time after being carefully processed. Human bodies were not greatly different from those of animals. So, the same drugs could also be applied to preserve the bodies of humans.

The two corpses were both the most important pieces of evidence. Li Yao naturally would not allow them to perish in the deep ocean.

While processing the corpses, Li Yao analyzed, “Dongfang Wang’s words are not to be entirely trusted. We can only say that they are of very high referential value. It is true that, if we consider who earns the most from an event, then the queen will be the top suspect for the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance. Also, the thunderous counterattacks that she initiated after the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance were too smooth, violent, and showed the signs of prearrangements. Furthermore, it is true that Dongfang Wang handled the whole thing very lousily, as if he had been hit unprepared!

“However, even if all the indirect proofs point at the queen, there is still the most critical question—if the Imperium really falls into chaos, how will Li Linghai benefit from it exactly? What can she do, and what does she want?

“No military power, no prestige, and no great influence in the Council of Elders. It is impossible for the four Kurfürst families to obey her easily. Even the reformists are not following her but the ideas that she has proposed. How can such a Li Linghai clean up the mess when the Imperium is mired in chaos?”

“What if she does not need to clean up the mess at all?”

Long Yangjun said casually, “Assuming that the queen of the Imperium right now is not the real Li Linghai but has been possessed by something else, which has transformed her into… say, a puppet of the Covenant Alliance?"

"If Li Linghai is from the Covenant Alliance, everything will make sense. Her very purpose is to turn the Imperium into a mess so that the army of the Covenant Alliance can take the advantage!"

His eyebrows furrowed like a towel, Li Yao considered for a long time but shook his head slowly. "It's true that everything will have a reasonable explanation if Li Linghai is a puppet of the Covenant Alliance, but I don't think that it is so simple.

"I know that the Covenant Alliance has very advanced technologies on the simulation of emotions, which can allow the puppets of flesh and blood to simulate normal feelings and pass all the 'Ring-Tu Tests'. However, Li Linghai and I are both experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage, and I've seen her burst into a fury with my own eyes. I'm not under the impression that she is controlled by the Covenant Alliance."

Li Yao kept something to himself.

Li Yao's foster father was exactly from the Covenant Alliance. But because of Li Linghai, he broke the Three Fundamental Laws and gained the feelings and self-will that a human being deserved.

His foster father transformed from a puppet of the Covenant Alliance into a normal person, but Li Linghai turned the opposite way? That would be ridiculous!

When Li Yao mentioned his foster father, he could sense the vulnerability and affection in Li Linghai's heart clearly. Such sincere emotions couldn't have been simulated at all.

“That does make sense. Even if Li Linghai were from the Covenant Alliance, many other things would still be inexplicable. For example, why she knows the secrets of the royal library and the underground palace.”

Pausing for a moment, Long Yangjun asked, “Right, you haven’t told me the source of Li Linghai’s strength yet. Based on what did she turn into a mysterious, powerful schemer from a regular doll queen in only decades, establish a rather advanced fleet in secret, and associate with so many oppositions to form a new force that is ‘reformists’?

“A revolution requires money and resources. Leaving aside all the planning, plots, and combat ability, where did she get all the resources?”

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao realized that he had to speak the truth now.

“If I say—”

Thinking and rethinking, Li Yao finally said, “Li Linghai is indeed possessed, not by the Covenant Alliance but by the legendary… Supreme Emperor, would you believe me?”

Slightly dazed, Long Yangjun lost her calmness. “Li Linghai received the heritages of the Supreme Emperor? She… She discovered the Gold Throne in the Empyreal Transcendence Sector?”

Li Yao nodded his head. “If that’s true, would everything be explainable?”

Thinking for a moment, Long Yangjun shook her head hard. “I don’t think it is true. The legendary Supreme Emperor represented light and justice. He was an open and straightforward man. If Li Linghai were really possessed by the Supreme Emperor or received his legacies, she wouldn't have bothered to resort to such plots and schemes.

"Of course, if you insist that the legends are fake and the Supreme Emperor was, in fact, a scoundrel, or that certain weird changes happened to him during his long sleep, resulting in the mutation of his character, I won't be able to deny your theories either."

Li Yao also thought that the idea was too far-fetched. Most importantly of all, the half key leading to the Supreme Emperor's mausoleum had always been in his hands, which meant that Li Linghai had never entered the core of the Supreme Emperor's mausoleum. Then, how could she have been possessed by the Supreme Emperor or found the Supreme Emperor's legacies?

Thinking about that, Li Yao suddenly had a palpitation.

Yes, it was impossible for Li Linghai to enter the core of the Supreme Emperor's mausoleum. She… She couldn't have accessed the Supreme Emperor's legacies at all!

Then, where exactly did she receive the dominating air that could swallow the stars and the dragon sword of purple flames?

What secrets lie inside the Supreme Emperor's mausoleum?

Li Yao suddenly recalled that Li Linghai asked him to pay more attention to the files relevant to the Supreme Emperor's mausoleum. Intrigued, he asked, "Long Yangjun, haven't you been to the royal library? I'm told that it is the place that keeps the most ancient classics and files in the entire Imperium. There must be a lot of classics concerning the Supreme Emperor's mausoleum, right? Did you find anything special?"

“Anything special? No, none whatsoever!”

Long Yangjun shook her head quickly. Frowning, she said, “Don’t you talk about it with me. There are indeed millions of files about the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum in the royal library. They almost take up one-tenth of the entire library. I thought that I could’ve discovered something from them. However, after browsing through them for a long time, it occurred to me that they were either ungrounded tales or exaggerated travel journals. There was nothing useful at all. It was a complete waste of my time!”

“One-tenth of the entire royal library is reserved for the classics regarding the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum?”

Confused, Li Yao asked by the way, “Why?”

“Because Blackstar the Great loved studying the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum more than anything else, of course. He almost collected all the files about the exploration of the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum in the past ten thousand years and piled them in the royal library for his passionate studies. Do you expect his offspring to drag the books out and burn them up?”

Long Yangjun continued, not thinking that it was a big deal, “A few hundred years ago, there were even rumors in the Imperium stating that Blackstar the Great did not die in peace in the royal palace in the capital but embarked on a journey in search for the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum when he felt that his death was drawing near. In the end, he eventually perished inside the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum!”

Chapter 2313 - Great Catastrophe!

Chapter 2313 Great Catastrophe!

The blood all over Li Yao’s body was immediately frozen. His every drop of blood seemed to be piercing through his veins, muscles, and skin and protruding out of his pores like stings.

“What did you say?”

Sounding like a ghost whose neck had been choked, he stammered, “Say… Say again? What did you say just now?”

“Why do you act like you’re peeing your pants? Did I say anything so scary?”

Long Yangjun was rather confused. “I don’t remember saying any. There are no secrets in the royal library, and the classics concerning the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum are not of much research significance.”

“No.”

Li Yao struggled to say. His throat seemed to have been blocked by a large piece of ice, which made his voice high-pitched and filled with coldness. “Just now, you said that Blackstar the Great was very interested in the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum and had likely died inside it?”

“So what?”

Long Yangjun frowned and asked, “Is there any great person in the universe who is not interested in the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum? Does any of them not want to explore the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum if they have the chance to? Do you not want to visit it? I certainly do!”

"You don't understand!"

Veins were bulging out on Li Yao's face, which was as pale as that of a dead person. He seemed to be of a mind to grab Long Yangjun by her collar and shake her hard. "Where did you read the so-called 'rumor'? How credible is it? Is it supported by any valid proof?"

"I read it from a journal from more than seven hundred years ago. The author of the journal was a deposed member of the royal family. In his journal, he gathered plenty of bizarre stories and tales that were not recorded by historians. However, his writing was rather lousy, and the content was ridiculous. After hundreds of years, it is already barely possible to be found on the market. Even in the royal library, it was kept in a deep corner. I skimmed it for a moment and threw it back there."

Seeing Li Yao's nervousness, Long Yangjun realized the importance of the matter and became solemn too. "As for proofs, the author certainly did not provide any. But I, for one, feel that it is quite possible. Whether or not he indeed found the Supreme Emperor's mausoleum in the end, it was very possible that Blackstar the Great left the Empyreal Terminus Sector for the Gold Throne in the Empyreal Transcendence Sector when his death was about to come."

Li Yao's eyelids and veins were bouncing at the same time. "Why are you so certain?"

"Very simple. Because of his personality!"

Long Yangjun opened her hands and said, "Does Blackstar the Great strike you as a person who would lie on a sickbed waiting for his death? If you were Wuying Qi and you knew that you were dying soon, would you not have wanted to travel in space to search for new opportunities? Should you find the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum and the legacies from ten thousand years ago, chances were that you could break into new levels and live another few hundred years!”

Clenching his fists, Li Yao said anxiously, “But Wuying Qi’s mausoleum is in the capital!”

“So what? What lies inside the mausoleum is just a stone coffin as well as an enormous statue established next to a mountain.”

Long Yangjun said, “Don’t forget that, in case anybody disturbed the rest of their remains, all the emperors of the Imperium of True Human Beings had burnt their bodies into ashes in a temperature of almost ten thousand degrees. It means that even if you open Wuying Qi’s coffin, the best you can expect is a handful of ashes.

“Right. The tradition was set up by Wuying Qi himself. Chances were that it was a disguise!

“Then again, even if his bones were really inside the coffin, it still wouldn’t prove anything. For someone in his level, he could totally separate his soul from the body and reside inside an artificial body to search for the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum. Naturally, his dead body would be left in the capital, and his demise would be announced!”

Li Yao was lost for words. Recalling his adventures in the Land of Sins that were completed with an artificial body, he couldn’t help but nod his head.

If he could achieve such a thing when he was only new to the Divinity Transformation Stage, it certainly wouldn’t have been a problem for Blackstar the Great.

Just now, Li Yao’s face was as pale as a dead person, but it was now as dark as the blackened Emperor Shenwu on the ground now.

He paced back and forth in the narrow cabin. After every lap, his face would look more awful. It seemed to not be sweat but ink that was leaking out of his pores.

“Have you been poisoned too?”

Long Yangjun asked, “Why do you look so terrible?”

“Hush—”

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao said, “Let me think. Let me think in the calmest state by connecting all the known factors… I’m about to make a series of bold assumptions. Help me analyze if they are possible.”

Long Yangjun nodded her head. “Of course, bring it on.”

“First of all, Blackstar the Great was very interested in the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum when he was alive. Of course, you are quite right. Nobody in the universe is uninterested in the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum.”

Breathing heavily, Li Yao continued, “But Wuying Qi was different. As the ‘founding emperor’ of the Imperium of True Human Beings, he was certainly capable of gathering all the classics and files about the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum in the entire universe.

“Also, his palace was established on the relic of the royal palace of the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago by hundreds of thousands of Cultivator captives, who built an enormous, complicated ‘underground palace’ for him.

After that, all the Cultivator captives were killed to keep their mouth shut.

“Can we make a bold assumption that Blackstar the Great killed the hundreds of thousands of Cultivator captives not just because of his brutal nature but also because he found certain things in the relic of the Star Ocean Imperium’s royal palace that he did not want anybody else to know?

“Or rather, is it possible that the construction of the enormous royal palace was itself a disguise, and that Blackstar the Great’s real purpose had always been to excavate the relic of the royal palace from ten thousand years ago and to search for the secrets of the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum inside?”

Pondering for a moment, Long Yangjun nodded her head. “It is indeed possible.”

“Next, with all the classics and files about the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum in the past ten thousand years, and the secrets he found from the relic ten thousand years ago, Blackstar the Great was more likely to know the accurate coordinates of the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum than anyone else, wasn’t he?”

Li Yao went on elaborately, “However, in his prime years, he was too occupied in dealing with the Covenant Alliance, expanding the Imperium, and suppressing the remaining forces of the Star Ocean Republic to leave the capital for the mysterious mausoleum in the vast space.

“However, at the end of his life, when he felt that his death was coming near and when most of the preparation work was done, he decided to have a try no matter what might happen. So, he pretended that he died, putting his physical body in his tomb but leaving the capital in the form of a soul, and followed the trace of the Supreme Emperor!”

Long Yangjun said, “Up until so far, all the deductions are rather reasonable.”

“Let’s assume that Blackstar the Great did find the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum, but the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum must’ve been heavily defended, and it was not necessarily possible for his soul, which was about to perish, to break in. Or at the very least, it was impossible for him to reach the most central part.”

Li Yao said, “Can we imagine such a picture… At the deepest part of the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum, before a splendid bronze gate, Blackstar the Great’s remaining soul wandered and wandered, but no matter how he gritted his teeth and despite all his endeavors, he was unable to break in.

“With Blackstar the Great’s selfishness, it was impossible that he had told the accurate coordinates of the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum to anybody else. Therefore, there was not a second adventurer who came to the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum for a long time—perhaps a thousand years. Blackstar the Great’s remaining soul naturally dispersed in regrets in the end after lingering in loneliness for a long time.

“However, it was impossible that Blackstar the Great did not take the scenario into consideration in his lifelong preparation. Was it possible that he had a certain secret technique to preserve part of his soul for a thousand years? Technically speaking, it shouldn’t be a problem. It could’ve been done in a lot of ways!”

Long Yangjun nodded more and more slowly. “Fair enough. If Blackstar the Great really found the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum, he wouldn’t have given up even if he died before the last gate. Even if his soul really perished, he would certainly be able to preserve part of his resentment.”

Li Yao’s voice was colder and colder. “Then, assuming that two adventurers did find the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum a thousand years later and came to the last gate and that they accidentally activated the fragmented soul or curse that had hibernated for a long time…

“The new adventurer thought that she got the legacies of the Supreme Emperor. After all, the overwhelming, dominating air could not be seen on every expert. Little did she know that it was actually Blackstar the Great’s heritage. Blackstar the Great’s fragmented soul even resided in her body and slowly possessed her! Is there any loophole in my theory?”

“I don’t think so…”

Long Yangjun narrowed her eyes too. Looking at Li Yao gravely, she asked, “Are you serious? Li Linghai did go to the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum?”

“Of course. Where do you think Li Linghai got the resources to establish the Deep Sea Fleet and to associate with the reformists?”

With a bitter smile, Li Yao said, “I believe that Li Linghai must’ve been to the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum. Also, her motives and purposes are clear now!

“If she is just ‘Queen Li Linghai’, it will be meaningless to reduce the Imperium into chaos, because she does not have the prestige and power to clean the mess!

“But what if she is not just ‘Queen Li Linghai’ but also ‘Blackstar the Great’?

“When the Imperium is caught in trouble from both inside and outside, and when the emperor dies an uncanny death, right before the country and the civilization come to the doom, Blackstar the Great—the greatest emperor of the Imperium, the ancestor of all the Immortal Cultivators, and the supreme founder of the country—has come back to save the day!

“If the Imperium is in peace, and the four Kurfürst families and the peripherical warlords are united, they might not welcome Blackstar the Great’s return and will even plot against him.

“However, as long as the four Kurfürst families, the peripherical warlords, and the reformists are caught in a fierce civil war, when the Imperium is faced with the overwhelming military pressure of the Covenant Alliance, nobody will be able to resist Blackstar the Great’s prestige and power. All the oppositions will only be divided and conquered. They will even kneel before his feet without fighting, worshipping him as the last savior of the world!”

This time, it was Long Yangjun who was lost for words.

Her face gradually turned dark too, as dark as Li Yao’s.

“I really hate my ominous mouth.”

Looking at Long Yangjun’s gloomy face, Li Yao said pensively, “This is a disaster. Blackstar the Great is really crawling out of his coffin!”

Chapter 2314 - Bloody Palace!

When the water of the Silver Moon Ocean to the west of the main continent was dyed red by blood, the sun above the royal palace at the east of the main continent thousands of kilometers away was also setting into the mountains. Its last radiance swept across the continuous mountains like an ocean of blood, consuming the entire royal palace with the man-eating tides.

Red mists were soaring everywhere inside the royal palace.

Because the entire spatial zone was filled with gaps and wormholes, making it very convenient for space jumps, the Empyreal Terminus Sector had already been a highly-developed world since the glorious days of the Pangu civilization in the primeval age hundreds of thousands of years ago.

Even though the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan had destroyed each other in the gory wars, the Empyreal Terminus Sector remained the center of the three thousand Sectors and a place of paramount military significance.

In the age of the ancient Cultivators, only the strongest sects were qualified to claim the hegemony of the Empyreal Terminus Sector, and the sects that completely controlled the Empyreal Terminus Sector would have the easiest method to spread to all directions. They tended to be prosperous for thousands of years.

In the Great Dark Age that lasted thirty thousand years, the Empyreal Terminus Sector was also the political center of the Demon Beast Empire, controlled by the most powerful demon warlords.

After the Supreme Emperor overthrew the reign of demons, the Empyreal Terminus Sector’s importance was further highlighted. The place became the well-deserved heart of the entire universe!

For hundreds of thousands of years, countless experts regarded the Empyreal Terminus Sector as the foundation of their enterprise and worked hard on it, establishing countless residences, headquarters, fortresses, war bases, and royal palaces. They had also collected the resources in the entire universe and gathered them here.

Hardly had the royal palace of the old dynasty been razed to the ground in a war when the royal palace of the new dynasty rose in the smithereens without any delay. Such a thing had happened countless times during the ten thousand years from the collapse of the Star Ocean Imperium, the establishment of the Star Ocean Republic, and the usurpation of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

If somebody were to cut the crust near the royal palace vertically, they would discover the strata that were in obvious different layers, like spumoni. Every stratum represented the glory of an age. The most ancient of them could even be dated back to more than a hundred thousand years ago almost as fossils. One could dig out the dilapidated walls or even magical equipment fragments when they excavated on the ground randomly.

During the excavation of the ancient royal palaces and residences, the seals and barriers of the old age were sometimes triggered, setting free the ferocious beasts or leading to astonishing explosions, which might reduce the hundred square kilometers around into a mess and kill tens of thousands of victims. Such tragedies had been recorded many times on the history books.

Some even inferred that the fierce battle between the Supreme Emperor and the Blood God took place exactly at the core of the planet. As it turned out, the blast of their battle triggered a certain sleeping force, or a destructive machine, from the primeval age, which tore the crust of the planet apart, leaving enormous gaps everywhere. The whole planet was almost destroyed.

Despite all the risks, the experts and rulers of every generation simply went on to establish the massive palaces and excavate the secrets at the deepest part below the ground.

Of them, Blackstar the Great was certainly the epitome.

It was said that, after he stole the supreme power of the Star Ocean Republic, he deceived the panicked Cultivators with fancy words first, promising that they would be given an opportunity to be a citizen of the Imperium as long as they donated 50% of their wealth and resources.

Most of the Cultivators were indeed tricked. They gave up resistance and submitted their wealth and resources obediently, which were a major source that funded the construction of the royal palace.

But after Blackstar the Great got everything under control, and it was no longer necessary to negotiate with the Cultivators, he immediately changed his attitude. All the Cultivators were captured and enslaved as the construction workers of the Imperium. A second deception was made with the lives of the poor captives as a threat.

Based on the resources and the lives of the Cultivators, the Imperium of True Human Beings had an unprecedented coverage of thirty thousand square kilometers. It was itself a splendid super city.

Besides the crowded pavilions, command centers, and defensive fortresses on the ground, there were also countless war bases and warehouses deep inside the complicated mazes below the ground. The brand-new crystal suits and Colossi were all carefully preserved through secret techniques there and remained perfect after a thousand years, ready to be activated and devoted to a battle at any moment.

It was said that Blackstar the Great also went through all the trouble to find nine world fragments and transferred the entrances of the nine world fragments into the underground world at the consumption of infinite resources.

As for the mysteries of the world fragments and whether or not certain unknown beasts and magical equipment were hidden inside, nobody aside from Blackstar the Great was aware of it.

Even the emperors of the Imperium of True Human Beings after Blackstar the Great did not know 100% of the secrets of the “underground palace”. The nine world fragments were nothing but groundless tales.

After the four Kurfürst families dwarfed the royal authority, a series of bloody coups took place in the palace, where countless members of the royal family were killed, and the secrets of the “underground palace” sank into the abyss at the core of the planet forever. Unless the whole planet was cut into halves, they would never be exposed to the outside world again.

Today’s royal palace was not half as glorious as it was in the Blackstar the Great’s age.

The four Kurfürst families checked and stalled each other, but they also worked together to diminish the central position of the Empyreal Terminus Sector. Also, the Council of Elders gradually replaced the role of the royal palace.

After five hundred years of loneliness, the splendid, magnificent palace was as lifeless as a city of ghosts. Even when the maids and guards walked by, they were also like phantoms whose feet did not touch the ground. Under the illumination of the setting sun, the place couldn’t have looked more gloomy and devastating.

Holding a rarely-seen ancient scroll made of beast hide, Li Linghai walked out of the royal library slowly and faced the empty, desolate palace. The bloody mists raised by the sunset had dispersed, and the night had fallen like a black ocean, whose waves were swallowing the last hues of redness in the sky.

Staring at the first dazzling star on the horizon beyond the dragon sculpture above the building far away, Li Linghai was deep in thought.

After the exposure of “cannibal training” and the “incident of the Blood Oath Alliance”, the fall of Dongfang Wang’s cabinet was already inevitable, and the general collapse of the Dongfang family would only be a matter of time. The reformists were closer to the other three Kurfürst families than they were to the Dongfang family. Many reformists were now even able to appear on the streets of the capital, promote their ideas, and win the support of the bottom-level Immortal Cultivators and even civilians.

Because Emperor Shenwu was still in Dongfang Wang’s hands, many elders of the Imperium asked Li Linghai to return to the royal palace to stabilize the current situation.

Also, the subsidy issues of the surplus generals and disabled veterans gathered in the Emperor’s Mausoleum had been more or less addressed, and the “crying event” was about to embrace a happy ending. There was no reason for Li Linghai to linger in the Emperor’s Mausoleum anymore.

It was impossible for her to hide there forever. After careful consideration, she still returned to the royal palace.

Naturally, Li Linghai would not completely trust the old and cunning Kurfürsten, and she would not count on the untrained imperial guards for her safety.

The Astounding Thunder Fleet was still deployed at the heartland of the Li family, stalling the four Kurfürst families. The elite troops of the Deep Sea Fleet, on the other hand, were stationed in the royal palace under the leadership of Dongfang Sheng and could take off to the sky at the first anomaly.

Besides, the control permission of all the defense arrays inside and outside the royal palace had fallen into Li Linghai’s hands. Her safety was certainly a problem.

However…

Looking at the royal palace that was as empty as a ghost city, Li Linghai smelled a whiff of danger.

Putting on a vague cold smile, she combed her white hair, not bothered at all by the “minor problem” that her guards outside were gone. She simply heaved a sigh and trotted forward by herself.

Up ahead were three shadows, which had been extra lengthened by the last bloody light of the setting sun. They were like three sharp red blades that were aimed at Li Linghai.

The shadows belonged to three persons of different shapes but with an equally violent and dominating air.

They ripped apart the peace in the royal palace casually, and their killing intent had been gathered into invisible electric arcs that surrounded Li Linghai from three directions in sputtering noises.

The expert standing on the east side had an extraordinarily huge head, which was bald and had rugged lumps on it. At first look, he seemed to have grown horns all over his head, giving the hilarious feeling that he was a giant-headed doll.

But anybody who heard his name would not feel fun at all.

That was because he was Li Jianyi, known as “Devilish Abyss”. He was one of the best Meditation Healers of the Imperium of True Human Beings, whose mind had been trained to be as profound and terrifying as the hell, and the strongest expert in mental warfare!

He was nicknamed “Devilish Abyss” because whoever was hit by his mental attacks would be hypnotized into a trance, where they felt they had fallen into an abyss teeming with devils with no way of getting out at all!

The expert at the south was medium-sized and looked plain, but he had a pair of giant hands that were like fans.His hands could crunch the hardest diamonds with no external help, tear apart the most brutal alien beasts in space, or even “knead” a crystal suit into a cluster of metals bare handedly.

It was exactly because of his iron hands that he became the dean of the Combat Department of the Imperial University!

“Acyclic Earth” Yun Kuohai’s brutality had been known by the entire Imperium since a hundred years ago!

The expert at the west was a hunched lady.

In terms of body size, she was the smallest, but in terms of dominance, she seemed to be the most appalling one.

She was enshrouded in translucent, bright gold blades. Every blade was only the size of a fingernail. They were rolling and moving according to the rhythm of her breath, leaving golden streaks behind them. Like thousands of flying swords, they were already eager to jump out.

She was “Star Breaker” Song Huanzhen, known as the best expert of flying swords in the Imperium, who was also the chief tutor of sword arts for the thousands of Immortal Cultivators of the Song family!

Chapter 2315 - Kicking Me Away Already?

Chapter 2315 Kicking Me Away Already?

There were infinite wonders in the vast universe. In only the territory of the Imperium of True Human Beings, the extraordinary talents were already too many to be counted. The battle-type Immortal Cultivators above the Divinity Transformation Stage, in particular, were the terrifying beings who could resist a whole fleet on their own!

Naturally, such battle-type experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage would not fight each other in a life-and-death battle if they did not have any vendetta. Even when they were fighting, it would be merely an exchange of knowledge.

Therefore, the ranks and titles such as “top ten experts of the Imperium” or “best expert of a certain family” were hardly verifiable. They were only of some referential value at best.

According to the position in the family, the accomplishments in the past, and the intensity in training, however, it was still able to distinguish the “super experts” from the “great experts” and the “mediocre experts”.

“Devilish Abyss” Li Jianyi, “Acyclic Earth” Yun Kuohai, and “Star Breaker” Song Huanzhen were all the central leaders of their respective families as well as the elders of the Imperium, and it was more than easy for them to mobilize the resources of a whole planet. What they counted on was their Cultivations, which were at least in the high level of the Divinity Transformation Stage.

The three of them were absolutely the extraordinary persons in the top tier of the Imperium of True Human Beings when it came to individual combat ability. They could tear a warship apart or kill thousands of people with a breath!

Also, besides the three experts, there were still dozens of first-rate experts in the Nascent Soul Stage lurking far away, blocking every gap that one could possibly escape through.

The place was quiet and empty. All the guards and maids in the entire royal palace seemed to be gone. Or rather, an invisible film seemed to have covered the ten square kilometers around as an impenetrable barrier. Even if the most astonishing battle were to take place inside, nobody outside would notice anything wrong.

The elite troops stationed at the northwest corner of the royal palace seemed to be utterly unaware of the situation, showing no sign that they were soaring and offering the queen protection.

The three super experts looked at Li Linghai emotionlessly, showing no intention of bowing at the queen with respect either.

The killing intent and electric arcs around them, however, were even more intense and dazzling, to the point that they were almost forging a dragnet around Li Linghai and mincing her apart directly.

Slowly closing the book in her hands, Li Linghai kept the scroll of the beast hide into her Cosmos Ring. Glancing at Li Jianyi, Yun Kuohai, and Song Huanzhen thoughtfully, she simply said casually without any surprise on her face, “Elder Li, Dean Yun, and Chief Tutor Song, aren’t the three of you supposed to be capturing Dongfang Wang in the Silver Moon Ocean? Why have you suddenly come to the royal palace?

“Or maybe, it is your clones who are engaged in the fierce battle in the Silver Moon Ocean, and you have come to the capital after such a long journey because your real target is not Dongfang Wang but me?

“Tsk, tsk, tsk. I did not expect that you would be kicking me away so fast. Before Dongfang Wang is caught, you are already determined to get rid of the people who are not needed anymore? However, isn’t it too much trouble for three grandmasters to come here together to deal with me, when I am just a weak woman? I almost feel… flattered!”

“Those who attack first will have advantages, and those who counterattack suffer losses first. Everybody understands the simple logic.”

Li Jianyi was of the same generation as “Silver Fox” Li Jiande, the leader of the Li family. As sort of a grandfather to Li Linghai, he was the first one to talk. “Also, I’m afraid that Your Grace has some misunderstanding. We never planned to kick you away or remove anyone that is no longer needed; we just have many questions that we would like to ask for Your Grace’s enlightenment.

“For example, where did you get the resources to secretly establish the Deep Sea Fleet? Also, you seem to have practiced a lot of techniques that do not belong to the Li family, thereby ascending to the beginning level or even the middle level of the Divinity Transformation Stage? Having advanced into a battle-type expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage in the royal palace under the watch of countless spies, you are certainly no ‘weak woman’ at all!”

After a sigh, Li Linghai smiled even more mysteriously. “The royal palace is obviously guarded by the elites of the Deep Sea Fleet. The guards and the maids have been replaced by my own people too. But still, you have broken in without alarming anyone and set up such an immaculate array.

“Also, you know the details of the Deep Sea Fleet and even myself very clearly. It seems that the last thing I want to see has indeed happened.

“General Dongfang Sheng, if you are bold enough to betray me, why are you too shy to meet me? I know that you’ve been very curious about the resources that the Deep Sea Fleet was established with and the origins of the starships for many years, and you peeped at my training countless times in secret. Hehe. If you are so desperate to know the answers, just stand before me and let me explain all of them to you!”

Heavy footsteps echoed behind Li Linghai.

The person who blocked the last gap was exactly Dongfang Sheng—a central leader of the reformists, Li Linghai’s trusted subordinate, the Dongfang family’s greatest traitor, and the highest commander of the Deep Sea Fleet!

One top expert from each of the four Kurfürst families had surrounded Li Linghai, ready to suppress her!

Dongfang Sheng, on the other hand, did not arrive alone. He was also pushing a floating medical chair. Below the translucent mask and lying in the middle of the high-purity oxygen was “Silver Fox” Li Jiande, the oldest and the most renowned Kurfürst!

Li Linghai looked at Dongfang Sheng and then at “Silver Fox” Li Jiande before she chuckled.

“Grandfather, I know that you would not ‘rest in peace’ so easily.”

Li Linghai said without worries, “So, it was you who planned and gathered such three super experts. I wonder, what offers have you made to General Dongfang Sheng to make him betray me? Hehe. Is he invited to return to the Dongfang family as the leader to clean the mess?”

“You must be joking, Your Grace.”

Dongfang Sheng, however, bowed at Li Linghai deeply and said, “With my experience and prestige, it is naturally impossible for me to lead the entire Dongfang family. However, since the family is now falling apart and about to be destroyed, as a member of the Dongfang family after all, I should contribute to the family in the time of peril.

“The highest commander and most leaders of the Dongfang family’s fleet will die together with Dongfang Wang. It is now in a mess due to the lack of leadership. With my experience in commanding the Deep Sea Fleet, I think I’m more or less qualified to return and command the fleet of my family.”

“That explains a lot. So, the highest commander of the Dongfang family’s fleet is enough to buy you over.”

Li Linghai was neither surprised nor infuriated. She simply shook her head and said, “General Dongfang, your vision is too restrained. How do you know that the future of the Deep Sea Fleet would not be a hundred times better than that of the Dongfang family’s fleet? In fact, I have always thought very highly of you. If you remained loyal to me, your future would be more promising than you could possibly imagine. What a shame!”

“Your Grace, I’m afraid you’re wrong again.”

Dongfang Sheng looked determined and did not regret his decision. “Since the very beginning, I have never been loyal to you but the ideas of the reformists. Right now, I’m returning to the Dongfang family in order to carry out the ideas of the reformists from a more advantageous position for the big picture of the Imperium. What is the ‘betrayal’ all about?

“Your Grace, I’m afraid that you are the one who has been keeping something from all the reformists. I’ve been meaning to ask you this for a long time—are your ambitions really limited to ‘Honor the Majesty and Settle the Rebellions’?”

Li Linghai sneered and did not answer Dongfang Sheng’s question. She simply turned to “Silver Fox” Li Jiande.

Li Jiande was not a battle-type expert in the first place, and he had been dying and was haggard for almost a hundred years. No matter how many tubes extended from the medical chair to his body, injecting the medical and nutrition drugs incessantly, his health still seemed hopeless.

However, the three super experts, the fleet commander who betrayed Li Linghai, the dozens of experts in the Nascent Soul Stage outside, and even the entire Imperium further outside seemed to be all within the calculation of the old and cunning Silver Fox!

“I made a horrible mistake.”

Li Linghai sighed. “I underestimated you too much, grandfather. Of the four Kurfürsten today, you are even more terrifying than Prime Minister Dongfang Wang. I really should’ve killed you without bothering anything!”

“Good granddaughter, you have indeed made a horrible mistake, but the mistake is not about me.”

“Silver Fox” Li Jiande slowly opened the nebulizer on his face slowly and looked at Li Linghai with a complicated expression. He struggled to say, “You and Dongfang Wang made the same mistake. You destroyed the most important thing that sustained the Imperium of True Human Beings, which was balance.

“The Imperium has persisted to this day with a scale of hundreds of Sectors and tens of thousands of resource planets without being collapsed by its own weight only because of the balance of the four Kurfürst families.

“No matter how the four families compete openly and in secret on the surface, deep down our hearts, all the leaders of the families should know that we have to maintain the balance among us. The four families are like the four legs of a table. Only by maintaining the balance can we ensure that there can be a cake on the table for us to divide.

“If the table is uneven or collapses, the cake will either fall to the ground into a mess, or we won’t be able to control our hands when we cut the cake, and we will chop off all our fingers!

“Dongfang Wang did not understand the logic. He was ambitious and determined to make the Dongfang family expand into ‘First Family’, which was a great destruction on the balance. It equaled doubling the length of one leg of the table. How could he not be swallowed by the recoil when nobody could eat the cake anymore?

“Standing in other people’s way when they are making a fortune is like killing their parents. When you are cursed by too many people, you will die even if you don’t have any disease. Dongfang Wang was asking to be killed. Nobody could’ve saved him!

“But the purpose of the other three Kurfürst families was only to cut the Dongfang family’s leg of the table, which is too long by a half, so that the balance could be restored. But you, on the other hand, are trying to completely knock the leg off. Wouldn’t that cast us into another loss of balance?”

Chapter 2316 - Black and White Queen!

Chapter 2316 Black and White Queen!

Li Linghai rolled her eyes and said, “The Dongfang family has collected tremendous wealth during the sudden expansion in the past hundred years. Are you not tempted to carve up the Dongfang family at all? Also, you have already caused heavy wounds to the Dongfang family, and all the Immortal Cultivators of the Dongfang family will hate you for it. If you don’t get rid of all of them right now, you might be swallowed by the survivors of the Dongfang family one day!”

“Hehe. My good granddaughter, your little trick can only fool the shortsighted, ravenous guys. It is too naïve a move to be played before your grandfather!”

Li Jiande said with a smile, “The prospect to completely divide the Dongfang family is naturally very wonderful, but a chain reaction might be caused in one moment of carelessness, and we may get burnt by the fire that we started. Not only will we have to spit out all the resources that we have swallowed, but the foundations of the four Kurfürst families might be shaken!

“In fact, that is your ultimate purpose, isn’t it?

“In the past months, you’ve been instigating the Immortal Cultivators of other surnames and at the bottom level in the Dongfang family and intensifying the contradictions between the main branch and the secondary branches. Finally, the two sides have congregated into a torrent that devours the entire family!

“The other three Kurfürst families seem to be taking great advantage of the so-called ‘reform’, but we are actually faced with the same fatal threat.

“In the more than ten Sectors under the Dongfang family’s governance, 90% of the Immortal Cultivators do not belong to the Dongfang family. On the best starships, most of the fundamental jobs are also taken up by the Immortal Cultivators of other surnames who are highly dissatisfied with the Dongfang family. Aren’t the Li family, the Yun family, and the Song family the same?

“The Dongfang family has the contradictions between the main branch and the secondary branches, and the secondary branches want to overthrow the main branch and replace it as the dominator of the Dongfang family all the time. But is any of the other three families utterly united without any gap?

“You have stirred the ambitions of the Immortal Cultivators of other surnames and those of secondary branches in the Dongfang family’s dominion. While the fire that they have raised can let us finish the so-called ‘First Family’ of the Imperium, if the fire burns brighter and brighter, is it possible that the fire will spread unstoppably like a wildfire and eventually burn the Li family, the Yun family, and the Song family?

“If the Immortal Cultivators of other surnames and secondary branches in the Dongfang family can rise and overthrow the reign of the main branch, why can’t those in the Li, Song, and Yun families?”

Li Linghai sniffed and said casually, “Grandfather, you are overthinking.”

“No, I am not.”

Li Jiande sighed and said, “If we are really greedy enough to indulge the fire to continue burning the Dongfang family to the ground, it will be too late. With the Dongfang family as the fuel, the fire will inevitably sweep across the entire Imperium. None of the few people of the main branch in the Li family, the Yun family, or the Song family can expect to compete with the Immortal Cultivators of other surnames and secondary branches who are on a rampage. The four families will be like four gravestones falling one after another. Eventually, the order of the entire Imperium will be gone, and the center of the cosmos will fall apart, mired in incessant wars!

“Although I have no idea why you are doing this, I cannot let your plan succeed for both the Li family and the Imperium. I’m sorry, my good granddaughter!”

“I understand it now.”

Li Linghai said coldly, “Even when you were threatened by my army, you never thought to completely annihilate the Dongfang family!”

“Yes, your grandfather is already old. When one is old, a lot of things will shrink, including their ambition. They tend to be more conservative when they are considering things. Instead of thinking about what they will gain if they succeed, they will care more about what they will lose if they fail.”

Li Jiande was truly like a kind, graceful grandfather teaching his mischievous granddaughter a lesson. “If I were a hundred years younger, I might’ve been tricked by you and risked everything on destroying the Dongfang family.

“But right now, I understand that the four Kurfürst families are a community of shared destiny. We will rise and fall together. Protecting the authority of the Dongfang family is protecting the authority of the four Kurfürst families including the Li family. If the Dongfang family declines or even gets annihilated, countless people will be motivated to overthrow all the four Kurfürst families. The Imperium will completely fall into chaos by then!

“Therefore, I never intended to destroy the Dongfang family from the beginning; I only wanted to beat them and let them elect a leader whose head is clearer.

“The four families are the four legs of a table. If one family is too strong, just give them some knocking; if one family is too weak, give them a hand. After all, the universe is too large a cake to be swallowed by any individual family if they do not want to be stuffed, right? Hahahaha. Cough, cough. Cough, cough, cough, cough. Now that we are all going to eat on the table, no matter how unfriendly we look and how hard our forks clash, we have to be careful on our feet, and it will be inappropriate to really break the legs of the table. Don’t you agree, my good granddaughter?”

Li Linghai looked more and more terrible. She said, one word after another, “No wonder the Yun family and the Song family took the side of the reformists so easily. So, they were persuaded by you when they changed their attitudes, and they have been holding sabers in their hands!”

Li Jiande put the nebulizer on his nose again and took a deep breath. He sighed, “My good granddaughter, I truly regret sending you into the palace. I should’ve kept you by my side and taught you wholeheartedly so that you could grow into the most distinguished heir of the Li family! You have such great gifts, but you do not have the enlightenment of the wise. You are too young, too impatient, too confident, and too aggressive!

“The tallest tree in a forest will be destroyed by the wind first. Always!”

Li Linghai stared at Li Jiande thoughtfully and focused her eyes on Dongfang Sheng again. “After the restoration of balance among the four Kurfürst families, the reformists will soon be removed. General Dongfang, is this how you express your loyalty to the ideas of the reformists?”

“My good granddaughter, you have truly misunderstood General Dongfang.”

Before Dongfang Sheng argued, Li Jiande defended him instead. “Peace is always the best. ‘Silver Fox’ is certainly not as pigheaded as Dongfang Wang who was known as ‘iron and blood’. Killing is my least favorite thing. We are all the people of the Imperium. What can’t be resolved through peaceful negotiations?

“While the four Kurfürst families are the pillars of the Imperium, the smaller nobles and the warlords at the peripherical worlds are indispensable parts for the Imperium too. The reformists are also very important lubricants for the Imperium. Your operation under the slogan of ‘Honor the Majesty and Settle the Rebellions’ is a great warning for the four Kurfürst families, making us reflect on whether or not the behavior of certain people among us has really crossed the line.

“Rest assured. After the incident, the four families will have internal reorganizations. We will give away rather copious interests so that the forces that have made major contributions and suffered heavy losses in the past twenty years of war can be satisfied. In any case, I do not want a civil war to burst out inside the Imperium when the Covenant Alliance is not destroyed yet.”

“Grandfather, you sound really convincing. If the brutal name of ‘Silver Fox’ had not been so resounding since a hundred years ago, I would’ve bought it.”

Li Linghai sneered and then suddenly shrieked, “General Dongfang, do you really believe that the four Kurfürst families will fall back and let go of the fat meat next to their mouths? This is just a delaying trick. After they are back to themselves and figure out the strength of the reformists, they will certainly come for retaliation. Don’t regret what you did when your doom comes!”

“Your Grace, I’ve made up my mind. You can stop your futile argument.”

Dongfang Sheng said emotionlessly, “I find it impossible to trust you with all the secrets that you have been keeping, unless you tell us everything first, including where the resources to build the Deep Sea Fleet came, how you achieved your marvelous Cultivation, and also… how you went missing after a blink when you snuck into the depths of the royal library a moment ago. What happened exactly? Where were you?”

“Yes, just confess everything, my good granddaughter.”

Li Jiande coughed violently for a while again and managed to continue, “Confess all the secrets and agree to our conditions, and you will still be the most honorable queen of the Imperium of True Human Beings. You will still be involved in the distribution of the interest in the postwar reconstruction. In the game of power, I’ll do my best to keep a place for you.”

Li Linghai completely calmed down.

Her transparent eyes seemed to have lost the heat of a human, releasing gloomy a fire that burned toward all directions.

Combing her hair that was like a white waterfall, she said casually, “What if I don’t want to confess?”

“Then we will have to invite Your Grace to somewhere else to talk!”

“Acyclic Earth” Yun Kuohai rubbed his enormous hands and grinned hideously. “Don’t blame us for being too merciless. I believe that Your Grace will certainly tell us everything that happened in the past hundred years in the end!”

“Give up your dying struggles, and don’t make a scene.”

Li Jiande also frowned and said, “Our men are everywhere. All your subordinates in the Deep Sea Fleet who are loyal to you have been controlled. Even the control system of the defense arrays in the royal palace has been compromised by us!

“Seven barriers have been set up here. You cannot even send a single telepathic thought out. It is impossible for you to call ‘Vulture Li Yao’ or anybody for help. I regarded you as an unparalleled expert at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage when I planned the arrest carefully. You don’t stand any chance at all. Is it time to admit your failure, my good granddaughter?”

“Is it?”

Li Linghai smiled without giving a reply. Black veins suddenly protruded from her pale face and wriggled like thousands of worms. Her smile was more and more mysterious and aggressive.

She was still combing her long hair that was like a white waterfall. However, as her pure hands waved, her white hair that felt like ice and frost turned black inch by inch from the top!

The devastating white in the beginning turned into an immeasurable black. It was almost like a certain unique coating that could absorb all the visible and invisible light!

No, not just the hair, even her white eyes were injected with the black fog that was like ink. Soon, there was nothing but blackness in her eyes, as if two mini black holes had been embedded on her gorgeous face.

In the blink of an eye, her hair turned entirely black without any sign of whiteness, and there was not the least light in her eyes anymore. The white queen had completely become the black queen!

“I—I—Your emperor never knows what ‘failure’ is!”

The black queen grabbed her hair that was waving madly like tentacles and burst into crazy laughter.

Chapter 2317 - An Emperor Does Not Joke!

Chapter 2317 An Emperor Does Not Joke!

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Together with her mad laughter, the earth below her feet fell apart, and countless gaps darted to all directions like black blades. Explosions resembling thunder were echoing from the core of the planet!

Very soon, centered at Li Linghai’s feet, the cracks had already spread to thousands of meters away. The earth was like a farmland suffering from a drought, broken and rugged!

BOOM! CRACK! BOOM!

The thunderous explosions from below the ground were more and more loud and astounding, sounding like both the drumming of the malicious ghosts at the deepest level of hell and the roars of the ravenous beasts that had slept for thousands of years and just woken up.

The thunder and roars from the center of the planet seemed to have attracted the spiritual energy and the magnetic field in the sky. It was a peaceful night with a bright moon and shining stars a moment ago, but all of a sudden, dark clouds were rolling over like enormous tides, colliding and fighting with each other into gigantic vortexes. It seemed that the dark night had opened countless dark eyes that were staring at all the creatures on the ground. Some of the black clouds were dangling from the night sky like tentacles to such a low altitude that they seemed to be tying everybody’s neck!

Everybody felt that their heart was pounding, and it was difficult to breathe. It was almost as if they might be devoured by the dark clouds at any moment!

Suddenly—

The thunders below the ground were synced to the same pace, and the hard ground several kilometers around seemed to have turned into a soft ocean. On the surface of the ocean, overwhelming tides were sweeping.

Some places collapsed deeply, as if immeasurable hollows and faults had appeared below them, and some places had stone pillars and stalagmites that were dozens of meters tall rising. They were both like the tusks of the underworld fiends and a forest of bloodstained blades!

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

Between the stalagmites and the gaps that were biting each other, the most intense black gas was spurting out like a volcano eruption. When the black air darted to the midair, it turned into thousands of raging, hideous black dragons that hovered above everybody’s head with bloodshot eyes!

The black dragons below the ground and the cloud tentacles from the night sky finally joined each other. Like a monolithic black cage, they sealed more than half of the capital!

Li Linghai stood on the steepest stalagmite majestically. Her black hair that looked like tentacles was dancing even more violently. Her long robe, which was pure and white in the beginning, was corrupted by the black gas into the darkness as hopeless as the night sky. The two black swirls inside her eye sockets were growing larger and larger, almost swallowing the entire royal palace, the entire capital, and even the entire universe!

Such astonishing changes covered the three super experts at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage, as well as Li Jiande, Dongfang Sheng, and all the Nascent Soul Stage experts ambushing at the edge, in cold sweats. Their blood and souls were almost entirely frozen!

What—what kind of “domain” is this?

The few super experts were all intimidated.

After one reached the Divinity Transformation Stage, they would be able to implement a “domain” free at will. By combining the world around them together with their own vitality field, they would become the unquestionable masters of an area.

Li Jianyi, Yun Kuohai, and Song Huanzhen were all experienced experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage who had been famous for a long time. Naturally, they all had their own “domains” and profound knowledge on the activation, utilization, and tricks about the “domain”.

However, it had never occurred to them that somebody could unleash such a horrifying domain that the whole nature seemed to be under her control!

Was she really at the beginning or middle level of the Divinity Transformation Stage as the intelligence suggested?

Even though they were at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage, they were unable to trigger such a domain even if they burned their lives and souls desperately without caring about the cost!

The lumps on “Devilish Abyss” Li Jianyi’s bald head were like racing hearts that had just been through intense sports, and a brilliance hundred times more dazzling than sunlight was shooting out of his eyes. He had boosted all his mental power to resist the terrifying domain that Li Linghai had created.

“Acyclic Earth” Yun Kuohai’s both arms had been expanded twice. At first look, it was almost like three equally magnificent bodies were sharing the same head. His hands that were as huge as fans were also uttering cracking explosions. At first, the bronze-colored skin became rough and grew a layer of dense scales. Then, sharp thorns occupied the fingertips and the back of his hands. Two crystal-like objects the size of a goose egg also protruded out of his palms.

The two crystal-like objects were glittering in orange brilliance, like the barrels of two crystal cannons that were ready to be launched!

The “sword balls” around “Star Breaker” Song Huanzhen were shrieking as if alive. Congregating a small tide around her, they rolled nonstop and unleashed sword auras more than ten meters long now and then, competing with the black dragons and the cloud tentacles in the midair nonstop. However, no matter how her sword auras cut the black gas and the dark clouds apart unstoppably, the dark forces were always recovered in the blink of an eye.

The three hunters who had been confident of their victory previously sensed the most primitive threat at the same time. Their cells were all letting out intuitional moans.

Dongfang Sheng, who had just chosen to be a traitor, was so shocked and sweating so hard that he did not know what to do at all.

“Silver Fox” Li Jiande activated the spiritual shield of his medical chair at the earliest time, turning the medical chair into a fully-enclosed medical cabin covered in yellow light, trying to resist the scourge of the black gas and the dark clouds.

While he was also in the Divinity Transformation Stage, he was not a battle-type Immortal Cultivator. Besides, he had been catching his last breath for years in a poor health condition. How could he stand such an intense competition?

He intended to run away immediately, but there was already no time. Thousands of streams of black gas and dark clouds surged through his spiritual shield, sabotaging the power rune arrays of the medical cabin. He was fixated to the battlefield, unable to move anymore.

“You… You are not Li Linghai!”

Even Li Jiande, who always had everything planned out, changed his expression greatly as he paled out. A dense layer of cold sweat was gathering among his wrinkles, only to be vaporized by his brain that was functioning at a high speed immediately. “Who are you? Who are you exactly?”

Narrowing her black eyes in great satisfaction, Li Linghai seemed to be dwelling in the domain that had not been unleashed for a thousand years. Her countenance, charisma, and even gestures were entirely different from when she was white-haired and white-eyed.

Completely ignoring the five Divinity Transformation Stage experts and dozens of Nascent Soul Stage experts, she opened her hands and enjoyed it for a long time, before she finally glanced at Li Jiande and smiled. “‘Silver Fox’ Li Jiande, the oldest politician of the Imperium today, truly deserves his name. Your emperor has been too focused on Prime Minister Dongfang Wang to have paid enough attention to you, which almost led to a disaster.

“What a shame. If you had taken action a few days earlier in another place, it would’ve been possible for you to cause certain trouble to your emperor.

“But you are doing it today and in the royal palace? Hehe. Hehehehe. You are truly… asking to be killed!”

“… Your emperor?”

Everybody finally heard how Li Linghai was addressing herself.

It was a title that even the four Kurfürsten did not dare to take over. Why was Li Linghai—

“Are you not curious about what I got from the underground palace? Then, open your eyes and observe!”

Li Linghai’s smile was more and more intimidating, giving the feeling that her words were the inviolable law of nature. Whoever was looked at by her eyes that looked like black holes would feel chilled and the urge to worship her. Their every breath and heartbeat were so heavy that their throat and chest seemed to have been stabbed by a saber!

“You are just being pretentious!”

“Silver Fox” Li Jiande seemed to have realized something. Changing his face abruptly, he roared at the loudest of his voice, “Kill her! Let’s attack together and kill her! She can’t be too strong! She must’ve used all her spiritual energy to unleash the domain. She is just bluffing and scaring you so that she can take down each one of you separately! Kill her! This is the best opportunity. If we miss it, nobody will be able to restrain her in the future!"

"Tsk, tsk, tsk. It seems that you have guessed who I am. As expected of 'Silver Fox'!"

After a creepy smile, Li Linghai suddenly bulged her eyes and roared thunderously, "You recalcitrant subjects have the guts to point your blades at your emperor! All of you should be sentenced to death, and your entire families should be minced into pieces!"

Her roar almost blew up everybody's soul immediately.

"However—"

She was so intimidating a moment ago as if she were determined to kill thousands of people, but she suddenly concealed her dominance and sneered, "I am in desperate need of hands right now. Considering that you were unaware of my identity, I can be lenient enough to give a few of you one last opportunity of expiation.

"Listen up. Not just the Divinity Transformation Stage guys in the front but also those behind in the Nascent Soul Stage; whoever acknowledges his mistake, obeys me, and gives me a hand to kill the rebellions, I shall forgive his wrongdoings in the past. Not only will his life and family be saved, but the most promising future will be awaiting them too.

"However, if you are all obstinate enough to resist me to the end, then, not only will you be killed yourselves, none of your family members will get away either. To give them the most excruciating agony, they will all be cut into pieces, and their souls will be plucked from their bodies!

“Until I slay the last of you, the offer stands. Whoever stabs a knife into the back of someone around you will be recognized as a great loyalist!

“However, you’d better make it fast if you want to stab a knife into your partner’s back, because I will only spare three of you!

“Do you understand? Only three of you, as well as your families, will be kept alive. The rest of them will all be sentenced to death!

“General Dongfang, you are the same. Although you just betrayed me, I still would like to give you the opportunity of expiation. However, a piece of advice: you better do it fast.

“Although you are all in the Divinity Transformation Stage, their specialization is fighting, while you are more adept at commanding fleets. Should the four of you kneel before me begging for mercy at the same time, and since I will only keep three of you alive, I fear that you won’t be able to defeat those three battle-type experts!

“Hehe. The only way of survival for you and the Nascent Soul Stage experts at the edge is to stab the three battle-type Divinity Transformation Stage experts in the back while they are fighting me. In that case, I will certainly acknowledge your contribution.

“Think about it carefully. Life is invaluable. Besides, you have not just your own life in your hands but also the lives of your entire family. Whoever among you lot dies, your entire family will die together with you in the most miserable way!

“Rest assured. An emperor does not joke. When I say that I will execute your entire family, they shall be executed!”

Chapter 2318 - United and Devoted!

Chapter 2318 United and Devoted!

The creepy speech, spoken with her casual and relaxed tone, gave a weird but convincing feeling.

The three super experts at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage never felt as much pressure even when they were surrounded by a whole fleet before.

The black gas from below the ground and the dark clouds in the sky turned into vipers that crawled into every pore on their body.

“Kill her!”

His hair and beard exploding, Li Jiande roared desperately and in fear, “She is certainly not as strong as she appears, or she wouldn’t have needed to chatter on at all! As long as we remain united and devoted, we will certainly be able to kill her!”

“Can you?”

The four Divinity Transformation Stage experts, including Dongfang Sheng, were still hesitating. Li Linghai had already walked down from the top of the sharp stalagmite on the invisible stairs in the midair with a hideous smile.

Her every step in the midair was like a heavy drumming from the deepest level of hell. The rugged earth had even more cracks, and the dark clouds on the night sky were also rolling like dirty tides. All the stalagmites around were shrinking and shivering. Everyone’s heart seemed to be breaking out of the chest and escaping in a panic!

“Then, show me how good the new-generation Immortal Cultivators of the Imperium are after a thousand years!”

Li Linghai’s skin was still fair and translucent, but her fingernails had turned into the same astounding blackness. The black streaks also sprawled out along her fingerprints, donning her hands in a pair of glamorous and weird gloves.

She extended her right hand to “Devilish Abyss” Li Jianyi in a “crawl over now” gesture.

The lumps on “Devilish Abyss” Li Jianyi’s head suddenly expanded as if more than ten horns were rising high at the same time. His eyes were almost exploding when they released brilliance that was like swirls, before they collided with Li Linghai’s eyes brutally.

In the next moment, their vitality fields were all activated to the maximum.

It was a competition between “domains”, like two abysses staring at each other.

Everybody else could only see the air around them blurred and twisted, as if they were about to vanish from the three-dimensional universe into warped smoke.

Through the vague smoke, it could be seen that “Devilish Abyss” Li Jianyi’s face was gloomy. He was now angry, now gnashing his teeth, and now intimidated from the bottom of his heart, as if he were begging for mercy.

“Pu!”

After only one second of the collision of eyes, the few lumps on “Devilish Abyss” Li Jianyi’s forehead were already collapsing quickly, and he vomited blood hard. Staggering backward for a few steps, he looked as lethargic as if all his blood had been sucked up by Li Linghai.

Hiu! Hiu! Hiu! Hiu!

As the two of them looked at each other and fought hard in their “domains”, “Star Breaker” Song Huanzhen had already injected all her spiritual energy into the thousands of “sword balls” around her. Those sword balls were all made of soft metals and liquid alloys, which had a high memory ability. Under the boost of spiritual energy, they were immediately unfolded into the narrow, sharp blades like willow leaves.

The surface of every narrow blade was glamorous and teeming with complicated spiritual stripes. As the blades passed each other, the sounds of wind and thunder were rising.

When the narrow blades were flying at the highest speed, boosted by Song Huanzhen with all of her strength, they could turn into metal torrents that could pierce through the thickest plate of the space warships.

Hardly had “Devilish Abyss” Li Jianyi backed off when Song Huanzhen’s swords rushed over like broken shooting stars. One third of them attacked Li Linghai’s hands, preventing her from retrieving any magical equipment, crystal suit, or Colossus. One third were aimed at her critical acupoints and body parts. The last one third blocked all the space around her where she could possibly dodge!

Any of the thousands of narrow blades that looked like willow leaves carried the speed and damage of the best flying sword. Their trajectories that were as unpredictable as mists almost suggested that a hundred most distinguished swordmasters were controlling them together. The chief tutor of sword arts of the Song family certainly deserved her name!

However, the moment when the swords were unleashed, the black dragons that hovered above everyone’s head gathered around Li Linghai, as if they were enshrouding her in an indestructible spiritual shield. When thousands of narrow blades hit the spiritual shields, they could not press any further but simply shivered nonstop.

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

Song Huanzhen roared miserably. Thousands of electric arcs were triggered from her fingers and hit the rear of the narrow blades, allowing all the blades to be significantly brighter than just now.

But however she summoned her spiritual energy, it was impossible for her to pierce in. Many of the narrow blades were contorted from the back to the front into metal blocks, but they were still held back by Li Linghai’s spiritual shield.

Narrowing her eyes, Li Linghai shook her head and extended her hand at Song Huanzhen slowly. Then, she closed her hand hard, as if she were suffocating Song Huanzhen’s throat remotely.

Song Huanzhen bulged her eyes, and five black marks did appear on her neck. They were so deep that her throat seemed about to be torn apart and her neck was going to be broken!

Song Huanzhen’s face was immediately paler than that of a dead person. Not even having the time to scream, she hurried to retreat.

She did not have the faintest clue how the enemy’s strength penetrated her spiritual shield without being blocked. Naturally, she had no time to care about her narrow blades.

All the narrow blades fell to Li Linghai’s control. They were all thrown back at “Acyclic Earth” Yun Kuohai behind her.

While Yun Kuohai’s arts were the most masculine and straightforward ones, his combat style was stealthy and sordid. Seeing that Li Linghai was distracted by “Devilish Abyss” Li Jianyi and “Star Breaker” Song Huanzhen, he intended to sneak to Li Linghai’s back for an ambush.

But out of his expectation, Li Linghai had locked onto him since a long time ago. When thousands of sharp blades were thrown at him, their speed and their damage were as good as Song Huanzhen’s own performance. He hurried to dodge the attacks.

“What are you waiting for?”

Li Jiande howled, “Those who do not have a Colossus, stall her together with Yun Kuohai. The rest of you, activate your Colossus immediately!”

It actually only took several seconds for Li Linghai to force the three experts at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage to retreat. The Nascent Soul Stage experts at the edge did not realize what was going on until this moment. Then, they all activated their crystal suits and lunged at Li Linghai in sonic booms.

“You are rather bold for a few juniors in the Nascent Soul Stage!”

When dozens of Nascent Soul Stage experts rushed to Li Linghai like arrows, Li Linghai suddenly burst into laughter and raised her hands abruptly. From the cracks on the ground, countless high-pressure black gas erupted again.

There was no telling what foul and evil forces were hidden in the black gas, but when a few Nascent Soul Stage experts were hit by the black gas in their carelessness, not only were their spiritual shields collapsing immediately, even their crystal suits were blackened at a visible speed as if the crystal suits had contracted a virus. The dark forces leaked into the gaps of the crystal suits and corroded their skin and flesh, resulting in their painful screams.

Li Linghai took the opportunity to open her fingers and grab the helmets of the few experts in the Nascent Soul Stage, while she grinned hideously and declared, “You and your family shall all be executed!”

The helmet of a crystal suit was theoretically the unit with the toughest materials that offered the best protection.

Those experts in the Nascent Soul Stage were all powerful people too. Naturally, the crystal suits they were using were the best products. The helmets were so solid that even the full-strength blow from a crystal cannon that was stuck to their heads should’ve been offset.

However, Li Linghai’s remote grab left a few black marks on the helmets of those Nascent Soul Stage experts. The black marks seemed to be alive and groped for the gaps on the helmets in squeaky noises, before they found their way into the helmets in the end.

Everybody else could only hear the inhuman screams of the few victims coming over in the communication channel, followed by the noises of bone cracking. In the blink of an eye, the few experts fell down as if their bones had all been plucked.

Everybody was appalled. Their courage had already been diminished by the terrible scenes where Li Linghai defeated three experts at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage at first and broke the skulls of several experts in the Nascent Soul Stage on her own. They all thought to themselves, There are five experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage here. They can certainly take her down with their Colossi. Why do I have to get myself killed and even possibly involve my family in the trouble?

So many people are attacking her at the same time. Nobody can tell it if I slow down while I am in the middle of the crowd!

Since they were all in the Nascent Soul Stage, they were naturally specialists in controlling their speeds and postures. For a moment, all the experts slightly adjusted the power rune arrays of their crystal suits. Not only were they slowing down, but they also changed the directions of their sprinting. Instead of charging at Li Linghai, they tried to alter their routes so that they could hide behind somebody else.

If only one of them was doing that, it might be impossible to tell the difference.

However, since all of the experts in the Nascent Soul Stage were doing the same thing, it was almost like an aggressive tide suddenly lost momentum. Some people almost crashed into each other when they tried to hide behind each other’s back. It was rather awkward.

Even “Acyclic Earth” Yun Kuohai was no exception. Being at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage, if he had lunged at Li Linghai and stalled her without caring for anything, he would certainly have bought enough time for

“Devilish Abyss” Li Jianyi and “Star Breaker” Song Huanzhen to retrieve their Colossi.

Or rather, if he were not afraid of sacrificing himself and fought Li Linghai in the spirit of dying together with the enemy, chances were that all the experts in the Nascent Soul Stage would lunge forward and settle Li Linghai once and for all.

But how was it possible to ask a high-level Immortal Cultivator like Yun Kuohai to devote themself selflessly?

The four Kurfürst families each had their own plans in the first place and only initiated the arrest under the persuasion of “Silver Fox” Li Jiande, even though many people within the four families did not second to Li Jiande’s opinion.

Yun Kuohai, Li Jianyi, Song Huanzhen, and Dongfang Sheng were half allies and half competitors in the first place. They thought that Li Linghai was at the high level of the Divinity Transformation Stage at best, and it wouldn’t be a problem for three experts at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage to suppress her together at all. The risks were not high, and the returns were copious. Therefore, they did not think that the mission was a big deal.

But as it turned out, Li Linghai was much stronger than expected. Why would Yun Kuohai sacrifice himself and let the Li family and the Song family take the advantage? Not a chance!

Therefore, “Acyclic Earth” Yun Kuohai did not care about “Silver Fox” Li Jiande’s roar asking him to stop Li Linghai. Instead, he simply retreated and summoned his own Colossus. It was certainly a top priority to summon his own Colossus in such a treacherous situation. As for the life and death of other people, was it his problem at all?

Chapter 2319 - Hellstar!

Chapter 2319 Hellstar!

The air was burning, the earth was shaking, and the dark clouds were roaring. Even the splendid buildings in the royal palace seemed to be falling apart into broken pieces that were swallowed by the battlefield!

By paying their lives, several experts in the Nascent Soul Stage finally bought enough time for the three experts at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage to retrieve their Colossi.

It was like three chaotic swirls suddenly appeared from the void, spreading out into magnificent giants that were clearer and clearer.

When the space ripples gradually dispersed, the swirls turned into three ultimate slaughter weapons in different shapes but equally appalling!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The flames of light unleashed by the power rune arrays of the three Colossi broke the night sky of infinite darkness. The earsplitting roars they let out were also shocking the air of the entire royal palace.

Through the enhancement of their Colossi, the three experts at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage were finally able to completely suppress Li Linghai’s dark air.

At this moment, “Devilish Abyss”, “Acyclic Earth”, and “Star Breaker” finally revealed their most aggressive form. Passing the many experts in the Nascent Soul Stage, they attacked Li Linghai with their full strength at the same time.

Many experts in the Nascent Soul Stage involved in this operation were also equipped with inferior Colossi. Those inferior Colossi were mostly made of the broken parts of the original Colossi after fierce battles or even installed with more than fifty percent of magical equipment units that were crafted by human beings. Naturally, their battle efficiency was not as good as the original goods left from the primeval battlefields. But however inferior they were, they were Colossi after all!

For a moment, chaotic swirls were surging out of the void nonstop. Under the illumination of the colorful light, iron giants appeared one after another, turning the center of the royal palace into the place where the densest Colossi in the entire universe could be seen!

However…

The Nascent Soul Stage experts’ concerns just now slowed down their attacks for a moment, which left a tiny gap on the supposedly impenetrable siege.

In the meantime, “Acyclic Earth” Yun Kuohai summoned his Colossus after retreating quickly. He seemed to be ten times more daunting than before, but his retreat left enough time for Li Linghai to perform her skills too.

Therefore, while many Colossi leaped out of the void, the two black holes on Li Linghai’s face had spread out to the maximum too, and they almost swallowed her entire face. Her arms were entirely mired in black streaks while they cramped weirdly in the midair as she cast her spells.

A spell was nothing more than a gesture of order to activate a certain field.

The fields that were being activated by Li Linghai at this moment, however, filled the entire royal palace!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The violent beasts’ roars below the ground were immediately a hundred times louder than before. The cracks that were as dense as a spider web all expanded into dark gorges and abysses. All the gorges and abysses were melting at a visible speed, swallowing the whole ground and transforming it into a… black hole more than five kilometers in diameter, a terrifying “crater”!

“How is it possible!”

Everybody was shocked and intimidated.

The earth below them was no more. Looking downward, they could only see the black fog rolling like boiling ink, as if the gate to hell had been opened and countless monsters were about to lunge out.

Not only were their bare eyes unable to see through the truth deep inside the “crater”, but even the crystal cameras as well as the many kinds of detection magical equipment on the crystal suits and the Colossi, including the senses of the experts in the Nascent Soul Stage and the Divinity Transformation Stage, could not reach the bottom of the crater through the hundreds of meters of black fog.

But it was absolutely impossible!

In the past five hundred years, the four Kurfürst families had been trying to unveil the secrets of the “underground palace”. Although they did not excavate the royal palace for a large-scale development due to technological limitations and their competition, they had still scanned everything several hundred meters into the ground clearly as preparatory work.

Even though there were the underground parts below every building in the palace, including the secret tunnels and arsenals that were as complicated as mazes, it was impossible that such a huge, terrifying space just appeared out of nowhere.

Where were the buildings and rocks that weighed billions of tons a moment ago? How could they just vanish?

If there was such a huge empty chamber below the ground, how could it have avoided their attention for five hundred years? Were they all blind?

Unless—

Unless there were really nine “world fragments” below the royal palace, which were connected to the three-dimensional universe in mysterious, cutting-edge technologies! They were activated just now and swallowed all the rocks, foundations, and underground buildings!

In other words, the swamp-like abyss did not really lead to the underground world but to the nine world fragments that Blackstar the Great had carefully prepared a thousand years ago!

Everybody thought quickly. Those who were keener had realized what was going on. Recalling Li Linghai’s weird way of addressing herself and her unbelievable strength, they were so shocked that they almost cried out aloud.

Those who were less responsive, however, were still in ignorance. Staring at the abyss below their feet, they managed to float in the midair by boosting their power rune arrays, but they were at a loss of what to do.

The underground black hole that was five kilometers in diameter was erupting tremendous black fog like a volcano eruption, enshrouding the entire sky and earth. It had also generated a weird force of attraction that was dragging all of them into the black hole.

They could not even see their own fingers in the darkness. Their communication with the outside world had been cut off too. They seemed to have been snatched into a cage that could never be broken.

The penetrative black fog, on the other hand, was also corroding their spiritual shields nonstop and sabotaging the joints on the Colossi. Their vitality fields were greatly disrupted too.

It was not just a mysterious, unpredictable dark space below the ground, but also a ubiquitous, terrifying array. They had even lost their senses of direction, and they did not know where to run even if they intended to escape!

The three experts at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage were naturally among the people who had the highest computational ability and fastest response.

The moment Li Linghai turned from white to black, they had already felt a vague alarm. The infinite dominating air around Li Linghai gave them quite a familiar feeling.

It was also one of the reasons why they backed off instead of fighting Li Linghai with their lives.

At this moment, associating Li Linghai’s weird behavior and the uncanny changes in the royal palace, they couldn’t help but come up with a horrifying name.

Could it be… him?

The three experts at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage found themselves caught in an extremely awkward and dangerous situation.

It was something that they never expected when they accepted the mission that they thought was absolutely riskless.

“Kill her! She will not let go of you! She will certainly execute every last member of the four Kurfürst families! Don’t have any illusion! She’s certainly going to kill us all!”

“Silver Fox” Li Jiande was perhaps the most conscious one here. He was still struggling in the overwhelming black fog and roaring futilely.

But the three experts at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage were naturally on full alert when they had just fallen into such a weird “underground black hole”. Who was willing to charge at Li Linghai, or… him, without caring about their own life?

Besides, the moment the underground black hole took shape, Li Linghai had disappeared.

Under the cover of the falling rocks, the spreading dust, and the erupting black fog, her air had been entirely concealed, and she ran out of the siege in advance, escaping to the deepest part of the underground black hole.

But her mad and dominating laughter was still echoing from the deepest part of the black hole, or rather, from every direction of the black fog. “You could’ve chosen heaven, but you’ve come to hell! Fighting your emperor at the royal palace is the greatest mistake that you’ve ever made. It’s time to regret what you did. I will only keep three of you alive. Three!”

Her laughter was still echoing when the thickest metal tentacle suddenly extended out of the black fog and darted at the dozens of Immortal Cultivators in the Nascent Soul Stage without a sound. Before anybody realized what was going on, it had already tied up one of the Immortal Cultivators together with his crystal suit!

The metal tentacle was about one meter in diameter and filled with dense thorns and suction discs on the surface. When it strangled the victim like a boa, the Immortal Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage couldn’t struggle at all before he was dragged into the fog.

The sounds of metals being torn apart, bones being minced, and flesh exploding immediately came from the fog.

Then, a cluster of plasma mixed with metals, broken bones, and blood was spat out from the darkness.

Li Linghai laughed aloud. “Another traitor whose family will be wiped out! Whoever wants to surrender, help me remember the names of those who have died. Remind me later that their entire families are to be executed!”

The devastating picture and the creepy laughter made all the experts in the Nascent Soul Stage palpitate although they were all seasoned warriors. Losing the courage to march forward, they wasted no time hiding behind the Colossi of the four experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage.

“Don’t believe her! She has already been exhausted and cannot persist for long!”

“Silver Fox” Li Jiande roared, infuriated by their uselessness, “Go now! Attack together! She will certainly be suppressed!”

“Haha. Hahahaha!”

Li Linghai laughed with utmost disdain. The black fog was suddenly rolling ten times faster and dispersing, revealing Li Linghai in a Colossus before everyone again!

Everybody including the four experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage gasped hard.

What a weird and terrifying Colossus it was!

At first look, it did not have a regular torso that looked like a human being’s at all. Instead, it resembled an enormous iron ball fifty meters in diameter.

Around the iron ball, six gigantic but twisted faces had been engraved. Some were solemn, some angry, and some mysterious. Six faces and six enormous swirls overlapped and covered the surface of the iron ball.

A hundred metal tentacles were also waving crazily around the iron ball. Each of the tentacles could be stretched to hundreds of meters away freely. It was exactly one of such tentacles that swallowed an Immortal Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage a moment ago.

The main color of the “Colossus” was the depressing dark, but the shining purple flames around it enshrouded it in the most intimidating aura. The moment it showed up, the overwhelming air spread out to the entire dark space again!

“Come on.”

Li Linghai said casually, “Whoever wants to be the first victim of ‘Hellstar’ after a thousand years, just come!”

Chapter 2320 - Divide and Conquer!

Chapter 2320 Divide and Conquer!

Together with Li Linghai’s declaration, the black fog around was immediately a hundred times denser than before. It was truly like clusters of dark ink that were drowning all the crystal suits and Colossi.

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

The navigation systems of all the crystal suits and Colossi were shrieking. The data was jumping, and the indicators were spinning crazily. They felt that they were in the middle of the vacuum in space, unable to tell the direction at all.

The black fog had even blocked their communication channels with each other. There was nothing but the background noise in the communication channels, and they were unable to hear a single word from their partners.

Li Linghai had activated the magnetic interferential arrays in the underground palace and imposed the most intense interferences on all the crystal suits and Colossi, disrupting the navigation systems as well as the localization ability in the human brain. She had even constructed illusions inside everyone’s head with mental attacks. In the meantime, by turning on multiple world fragments in a row, she had dragged everybody into the mysterious, twisted space!

Here, nobody could find the traces of their companions. They seemed to be faced with the boundless darkness as well as the unbelievably tough Colossus “Hellstar” entirely on their own!

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Including the three experts at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage, everybody felt that their blood was freezing. They all boosted the speed of their crystal suits and Colossi to the highest. They intended to escape from the underground palace and free themselves from the overwhelming darkness.

However, when the interferential arrays that Blackstar the Great had carefully worked on a thousand years ago were fully functioning, the navigation abilities of both the crystal processors and the human brains were greatly undermined.

They thought that they were rushing skyward in a straight line, but they were actually dancing an 8-shaped dance nonstop as if they were drunk, returning to the same location every once in a while. They were only getting further and further away from their companions.

Li Linghai’s laughter was still coming over from every corner of the darkness and squeezing into their Colossi, crystal suits, and their mustard-seed combat suits. It was crawling into their ears like bugs and eating their brains!

“Acyclic Earth” Yun Kuohai couldn’t have looked more awful. Trying to drive away the panic in his heart by angry roars, he accelerated again and again, not knowing that he was further and further away from his companions at all, until “Hellstar” slowly surfaced in the darkness and shot a hundred tentacles at him!

BOOM!

“Earth Shocker”, Yun Kuohai’s Colossus, unleashed a dazzling spiritual shield, burning up the hundred tentacles.

Li Linghai, however, felt none of it. The burning tentacles were still clinging to the thick arms of the “Earth Shocker”, shortening the distance between the two Colossi.

The giant face on “Hellstar” that was aimed at the “Earth Shocker” grinned hideously while the eyes glittered. Two of its most powerful and lethal attacks were apparently being prepared.

Crack!

Sensing the high-energy reactions from “Hellstar”, Yun Kuohai roared desperately. Having no time to care about the fatigue of the elbow joints of his Colossus, he broke a few tentacles with brute force and managed to tilt his head to one side.

Hardly had he tilted the head of his Colossus when two crimson rays darted out of the enormous face of “Hellstar” and brushed past the shoulder of the “Earth Shocker”, leaving a ravine on the shoulder of the Colossus that was deep to the bones. All the plate around had been melted.

Had he not dodged in time, the attack would’ve seriously damaged the detection and information processing units on the head!

At the moment of life and death, Yun Kuohai finally fully carried out the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage as a battle-type expert. Without caring about the damage on the shoulders and the arms of his Colossus, he blinked to the back of “Hellstar” with an agility that was utterly disproportionate to his gigantic body size. On his shoulders, his chest, his abdomen, and his arms, all the weapons were activated, shooting hundreds of furious torrents at “Hellstar”!

However, “Hellstar” was not a Colossus in the shape of a human or a deadly beast, but a round iron ball. Naturally, there was no difference between its front and rear.

The black fog around that was as intense as venom significantly diminished the power of his attacks too.

His hundreds of attacks were all blocked by the spiritual shield of “Hellstar”. Although “Hellstar” was blown backward nonstop by his bombardment, he never succeeded in breaking Li Linghai’s last defense.

Li Linghai did not bother to dodge his attacks at all. Instead, dozens of lethal mystic rays darted out of the enormous face that was in his direction, and a hundred tentacles that were still on fire whacked at him. She was defending herself by attacking aggressively, as if she were determined to die together with the enemy!

Under the crazy barrages, both the Colossi had been enshrouded in the colorful, ever-expanding fireballs. The spiritual shields of both parties were being consumed quickly, and the magical equipment units were all seriously worn out. Their mainframe crystal processors were both screaming.

Accompanied by the earsplitting sounds of metal fatigue, the arms of the “Earth Shocker” that were as thick as the main guns of a starship finally had astounding cracks.

The tentacles of “Hellstar” fell apart one after another too. However, the broken tentacles all seemed to boast independent fighting abilities. Turning into metal vipers, they slithered around the “Earth Shocker” continuously.

In a one-versus-one battle, Li Linghai in “Hellstar” was stronger than Yun Kuohai in the “Earth Shocker” in terms of absolute capability.

But of course, the gap between the two parties was not so huge that Yun Kuohai was destined to fail.

Such a head-on, close-up battle meant the consumption of energy and soul power that was devoid of any trick. All that mattered was their determination to fight.

If Yun Kuohai was really determined to sacrifice himself in the battle against Li Linghai, Li Linghai would certainly have to pay a gory price when he was entirely obliterated in the end, and the performance parameters of “Hellstar” would be lowered by at least a half.

In that case, “Devilish Abyss” Li Jianyi and “Star Breaker” Song Huanzhen would be able to take the advantage and easily suppress Li Linghai whose soul had been exhausted and whose Colossus was seriously damaged.

But… Why would he do that?

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

The left arm of the “Earth Shocker” finally could not withstand the intense collisions anymore and entirely exploded.

The heavy damage exceeded what Yun Kuohai could tolerate. He bellowed and blew out the last barrage in a seemingly magnificent way before he poured all his spiritual energy on the power rune arrays, turned around, and escaped.

Li Linghai chuckled and stopped bombarding him remotely. She simply tailed Yun Kuohai neither too far away nor too close, like a haunting ghost.

Yun Kuohai’s “Earth Shocker” was not a speed-type Colossus that highlighted mobility in the first place. In the environment that was filled with black fog and chaotic magnetic fields, it was naturally impossible for him to get rid of Li Linghai’s pursuit. When the locking waves hit the shell of the “Earth Shocker” again and again, he was more and more disturbed.

He accelerated and turned multiple times but could not lose “Hellstar” behind him at all. In shock and fury, he threw a telepathic thought backward. “Why are you only chasing me?”

“Because you are the dumbest!”

Li Linghai sneered, “Other people have guessed who I am and are all hiding in the deepest parts of the world fragments, waiting to take the advantage when the situation is clearer. Only you are the most ‘fearless’ one who was bold enough to challenge my authority. How can I intimidate all of them without cutting you into pieces?”

I didn’t!

Yun Kuohai couldn’t feel more wronged. He was neither “fearless” nor “bold enough to challenge her authority”; it was she who had been chasing him the whole time!

However, the implication between Li Linghai’s lines made Yun Kuohai even more shocked and suspicious. He couldn’t help but ask, “Are… are you really?”

“How dare you!”

Li Linghai suddenly roared, “Now that you have recognized who I am, why are you still not kneeling before me? Are you really determined to be a rebellion and have your entire family wiped out?”

Yun Kuohai grunted and accelerated again, but he could not beat “Hellstar” in speed at all. He could almost vaguely hear the metal tentacles of “Hellstar” scratching the back of his Colossus!

“Yun Kuohai, other people were scared off once they realized that I had arrived in person. None of them had the courage to fight me, but you were audacious enough to challenge me?

“Yun Kuohai, you are only a third-ranked elder in the Yun family because you are not good at operation and leadership despite the magnificent strength. Your offspring are all simple warriors with more brawns than brains too. Your branch is entirely supported by your invincible strength! If I kill you without a care about the cost, the enterprise that you have built for hundreds of years through hard work will be entirely gone tomorrow, with all your offspring killed!

“Yun Kuohai, do you really think that today’s battle is your sudden ambush on me and that I did not have any spy among you? Do you really think that General Dongfang Sheng betrayed me? Haha. Hahahaha. The entire plan and all the arrangements were all meant to attract you to the battlefield that was most suitable for me to carry out all my strength so that you would all be fished up!

“Yun Kuohai, ‘Devilish Abyss’ Li Jianyi and ‘Star Breaker’ Song Huanzhen are already wavering. Together with Dongfang Sheng, the three survivors that I will keep alive are enough. Make a decision fast, or you will have to embrace the broken souls of your wife and your children and cry with them in hell!

“Yun Kuohai, do you not crave more strength? Do you not want to unlock the energy form that is more advanced than spiritual energy? Do you not want to break into the Divinity Branching Stage or even higher levels in your life?

“Yun Kuohai! Yun Kuohai! Yun Kuohai!”

Thousands of thoughts, like thousands of invisible vipers, found their way into Yun Kuohai’s brain through the gaps on the Colossus.

Yun Kuohai was immediately disturbed; his mind reduced to a mess. Even his Colossus was shaking violently.

For some reason, the black fog before him suddenly dispersed, revealing a brand-new Colossus.

It was a medium-sized Colossus in a bronze camouflage and an ancient style. The greatest feature of the Colossus was the breastplate that was in the stripes of a tiger, as well as the rising shoulders that were like two enormous tusks.

Yun Kuohai recognized after the first glance that it was “Smilodon”, Dongfang Sheng’s Colossus!

“General Dongfang—”

Li Linghai grinned hideously. “Do it now!”

Chapter 2321 - The Most Correct Survival Policy

Chapter 2321 The Most Correct Survival Policy

To be honest, Yun Kuohai was an Immortal Cultivator at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage with extraordinary computational ability. However Li Linghai disturbed his mind, he was not entirely convinced by Li Linghai that Dongfang Sheng’s betrayal was pretended.

However, Li Linghai’s words were mixed with the dark spiritual energy that had been condensed for a thousand years. When his brain was invaded, he was not entirely free from its influence either.

Seeing that Dongfang Sheng suddenly charged out with his “Smilodon”, Yun Kuohai was suddenly alarmed. His natural intuition was to condense all his spiritual energy and activate all his attack magical equipment, covering all the critical parts of his body.

Being chased by “Hellstar”, he had already accelerated to the highest speed. The “Earth Shocker” was an enormous, super-heavy Colossus, and it was difficult for the Colossus to change direction. Naturally, it was not easy for him to dodge Dongfang Sheng.

Besides, Yun Kuohai did not intend to alter his direction either. Altering the direction at such high speed would only further rip apart the Colossus that was already on the brink of destruction, which would give Dongfang Sheng a perfect opportunity to attack. Chances were that “Hellstar” would catch up to him too.

Yun Kuohai was 90% sure that Dongfang Sheng was on his side, but… what if the odds beat him?

Despite Li Linghai’s bulls*it, she was quite right about one thing. The position of Yun Kuohai’s branch in the Yun family was entirely supported by his unparalleled strength. He could not die. If he died, his branch would soon decline, and his unworthy offspring could not defend the enterprise that he had created at all. They would even kill each other in internal strife. It would be no different from his entire family being wiped out!

Therefore, although hundreds of contingency plans popped up in his head, Yun Kuohai finally gritted his teeth and chose the plan that guaranteed the highest odds of survival for himself.

The plan was to continue to rush unstoppably at Dongfang Sheng who was on his way without changing his speed!

If Dongfang Sheng is on our side, he will certainly jump away voluntarily!

Yun Kuohai thought to himself.

Dongfang Sheng, however, was greatly shocked by Yun Kuohai’s aggressive “assault”.

He had been confused by the black fog just now, and the navigation system on his Colossus was almost entirely wasted. He did not even reach the edge of the world fragments after wandering in the darkness for a long time, much less figuring out a way to escape from the realm of horror.

But however he called other people, he was responded with either the background noises or creepy laughter in the communication channel.

Deep down his heart, Dongfang Sheng already more or less regretted it.

He regretted that he was reckless enough to have been persuaded by “Silver Fox” Li Jiande with only a few words before he saw all of Li Linghai’s trump cards. Had he known better, he wouldn’t have fallen into such an awkward situation.

If Li Linghai was not simply “Li Linghai” but…”that emperor”, or someone who had inherited the strength of “that emperor”, he certainly had made the most terrible decision of his life. He couldn’t have regretted it more.

However, there was little he could do about it right now. He had just betrayed Li Linghai to take the four Kurfürst families’ side. Could he just betray the four Kurfürst families and return to Li Linghai after only ten minutes? That seemed too—

While his head was in a mess, the fog around him was suddenly driven away by a dazzling light. In the next moment, he saw that “Acyclic Earth” Yun Kuohai was lunging at him, screaming and shouting, in his Colossus “Earth Shocker” that was best known for its toughness and sturdiness. In the meantime, Li Linghai’s “Hellstar” was covering the back of the “Earth Shocker”, as if the two of them were going to attack and kill him together!

For some reason, Li Linghai’s shriek echoed next to his ears. “Yun Kuohai, kill the traitor!”

Every one of Dongfang Sheng’s nerve endings almost protruded out of his body in shock!

Dongfang Sheng couldn’t have known “Acyclic Earth” Yun Kuohai’s personality and battle style. The man seemed to be simple and straightforward, and the arts that he had been practicing were all open and masculine too, giving the feeling that he was just a reckless man. But in fact, he was sordid, shameless, and selfish. He would not let go of the slightest interests and would not get involved in the tiniest danger.

Naturally, the experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage, particularly the battle-type ones, were mostly like this. As the saying went, “there are fearless battle-type Immortal Cultivators, and there are battle-type Immortal Cultivators in the Divinity Transformation Stage, but there are no fearless battle-type Immortal Cultivators in the Divinity Transformation Stage”. Why? The reason was simple. Blades and guns on a battlefield did not know who you were. The real bold and fearless guys had all been killed before they advanced to the Nascent Soul Stage!

The battle-type Immortal Cultivators who had survived thousands of bloody battles for hundreds of years and who had even entered the Divinity Transformation Stage, no matter how macho and candid they looked like, were certainly cowardly and shameless in their hearts.

However, even cowardliness and shamelessness had different levels. “Acyclic Earth” Yun Kuohai, on the other hand, was the king of cowardliness and shamelessness!

If someone among “Devilish Abyss”, “Acyclic Earth”, and “Star Breaker” bent under the pressure and shifted to Li Linghai’s side, it could only be “Acyclic Earth” Yun Kuohai!

Dongfang Sheng had not been confident in the first place. Furthermore, his combat ability was far from Yun Kuohai’s, which meant that he had little time to think everything through.

If he were to spend one more second thinking, it was possible that his Colossus would be torn into halves by Yun Kuohai's "Earth Shocker", and his head would be punched into a pulp by Yun Kuohai's iron fists!

Before his head figured everything out, his soul and his body already had natural reactions. The spiritual shield around his body expanded by three times, and the saber that he had been holding in his hand unleashed an aura dozens of meters long at Yun Kuohai!

As a result, if Yun Kuohai did not change his direction, he would be stabbing himself into Dongfang Sheng's saber with his lightning-like speed.

Dongfang Sheng's logic was simple and clear. His pose was only the most fundamental, defensive movement. If Yun Kuohai was still on the four Kurfürst families' side, he certainly would turn his direction and dodge the saber after recognizing the Colossus "Smilodon" and realizing that Dongfang Sheng was an ally.

As for why Dongfang Sheng did not get out of the way himself? The reason was even simpler. It was because Li Linghai's "Hellstar" was coveting him from sideways, and however he moved, he would inevitably reveal loopholes, which might allow "Hellstar" to swallow him entirely!

From the perspective of self-protection, the policies that they chose were absolutely correct.

However, when the two correct policies cooccurred, they became the greatest joke and tragedy.

Dongfang Sheng and Yun Kuohai both realized each other’s movements and misunderstood each other’s intentions.

Although they were both in the Divinity Transformation Stage, Dongfang Sheng’s level was slightly lower than Yun Kuohai’s, and his combat ability was even lower.

However, Yun Kuohai just had a huge fight with Li Linghai. His Colossus “Earth Shocker” had been deformed by “Hellstar”, and one of its arms was gone. Its combat performance had plummeted. Due to the heavy damage, their real combat abilities were actually similar.

In other words, they posed a fatal threat to each other at this moment, and they both had a slim chance of winning if they attacked the enemy first.

The opportunity would be gone for good if not grasped in the next 0.01 seconds.

When one party’s saber unleashed dazzling brilliance, it was hard for the other party to not join the “arms race” by intensifying his own spiritual energy and firepower.

There was no telling who attacked first, but driven by their instincts, Dongfang Sheng’s saber “naturally” slashed forward, and all of Yun Kuohai’s aggressive magical equipment was bombarded at Dongfang Sheng.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

“Earth Shocker” and “Smilodon”, the two Colossi, collided brutally. Blasts were immediately surging out like tides. It was often the case that the first round of blast had already been caught up by the second round even before it dispersed. A colorful rainbow seemed to be taking shape on the intense battlefield.

In the middle of the rainbow-like blasts, hundreds of interconnected cracks appeared on the shells of the two Colossi. The longest and deepest damage almost pierced through the entire “spiritual residences”, i.e., the cockpits. As the battle intensified, the two Colossi were like two magnets that were stuck together, and there was simply no separating them.

“Traitor!”

Yun Kuohai let out the most furious roars. He was an expert at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage who specialized in fighting after all. Despite the exhaustion of his soul and the disability of his Colossus, he was not to be beaten easily by a fleet commander such as Dongfang Sheng in a duel.

“Earth Shocker” kicked “Smilodon” right in the chest brutally, almost blowing the breastplate as well as the spiritual shield up at the same time. In the meantime, the balance system of “Smilodon” was disrupted, forcing the Colossus to stagger in the midair. Its speed, mobility, and dodging ability were almost reduced to zero. Then, the remaining arm of “Earth Shocker” glowed with spiritual energy, which transformed the entire arm into a heavy cannon or a battering ram. It was about to punch the broken breastplate of “Smilodon”!

Every magical equipment unit on “Smilodon” was moaning in desperation. Under the overwhelming pressure, the cockpit was almost on fire.

His head entirely blank, Dongfang Sheng simply stabbed his saber forward without considering anything under the motivation of his natural brutality.

He thought that he was dead for sure, but halfway during Yun Kuohai’s bombardment, dozens of tentacles from “Hellstar” pierced into the back of “Earth Shocker” and completely penetrated the Colossus.

Even the arm that was smashed at “Smilodon” brutally was stalled by more than ten tentacles.

Yun Kuohai’s punch condensed all of his fury. It was unstoppable and magnificent. Even the metal tentacles could not stop its entire momentum. It was not until more than ten metal tentacles were ripped apart that his attack was finally slowed down.

The result of the other dozens of metal tentacles sabotaging the body of “Earth Shocker” was that the spiritual shield around the Colossus was immediately gone.

Having no time to consider, Dongfang Sheng simply pressed his burning saber forward.

Having lost the protection of the spiritual shield, and because the frontal plate armor had been broken in the battle against “Hellstar” a moment ago, how could “Earth Shocker” withstand Dongfang Sheng’s desperate counterattack?

After a crack, the super enormous saber dozens of meters long with a temperature of thousands of degrees submerged in the breastplate, penetrated through the cockpit, and almost blew the left side of Yun Kuohai’s body up!

Chapter 2322 - Token of Trust!

Chapter 2322 Token of Trust!

The blades that the Colossi used were mostly known as “starship-slashing sabers”, whose length varied from ten meters to a hundred meters. When the auras were unleashed to the maximum, the edges of the sabers could be pushed to hundreds of meters away. It was certainly no exaggeration that such weapons could cut apart a starship.

Even though Yun Kuohai was an expert at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage, he was a man made of flesh and blood after all. The “starship-slashing saber” could cut a warship into halves, not to mention his body that had been seriously worn out in the battle against Li Linghai just now.

He could’ve avoided the attack, but the dozens of metal tentacles from “Hellstar”, which had pierced into the cockpit from the rear, blocked all the places that he could possibly dodge to. Several of them were tied to his limbs. When the thorns were activated at the same time, the dark forces corroded his spiritual energy and flooded into his body, depriving him of his resistance.

Dongfang Sheng was an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage too. Although he was not a maniac leading the charge, he was a seasoned warrior. When a battle was most intense, it was not unusual for him to fight in his Colossus on the battlefield in person. Naturally, he was not one of the research-type or admin-type Immortal Cultivators in the Divinity Transformation Stage who could not deal any damage.

After only one attack, half of Yun Kuohai’s body was almost burnt up, and he let out the most painful roars.

Li Linghai took the opportunity to wave the metal tentacles of “Hellstar” and urged them to move forward along his wounds, attacking his bones, veins, and nerves all the way. His burnt internal organs were immediately minced into a mess.

“W… Why!”

Due to the heavy wounds, Yun Kuohai’s brain was almost boiling, and his computational ability had hit rock bottom. He could only let out blurred roars in confusion, wondering why Li Linghai attacked him from his back when she was trying to recruit him a moment ago.

“Very simple. Dongfang Sheng is more useful than you. He is an excellent fleet commander, while you are just a simpleminded warrior.”

Li Linghai delivered a telepathic thought to the broken “Earth Shocker” and sneered, “The simpleminded warriors such as you are pawns that can be abandoned anywhere and anytime!”

Before the waves of the telepathic completely dispersed, the dozens of metal tentacles had strangled and ripped Yun Kuohai’s broken body into pieces. Then, they retreated and tied up the power units of the “Earth Shocker”. From the sharp end of every tentacle, orange brilliance was emitted, implying that they had been heated to thousands of degrees.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Part of Yun Kuohai’s soul survived and escaped from his broken body, but it was immediately wreathed in the overwhelming tides caused by the serial explosions of the Colossus, which entirely devoured it in the next second.

The expert at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage was completely obliterated just like that, both physically and spiritually!

Right when the “Earth Shocker” exploded, the thick black fog around suddenly turned thinner, like a black tide ebbing, revealing a large space. More than ten hunters in the Nascent Soul Stage were exposed.

Of the ten or so experts in the Nascent Soul Stage, five were also using Colossi, and the rest were equipped with the most advanced crystal suits. At first look, they were rather glamorous and dominating.

However, their hearts were colder than ever when they could not find a way out in the dark fog because the navigation systems on the Colossi and the crystal suits were seriously damaged and when they had vaguely guessed Li Linghai’s identity or her source of strength.

While they were still in a panic, the black fog around them suddenly dispersed. Before they reached out to their partners, their eyes had been attracted by the intense explosions.

When the explosions took place, “Hellstar” stabbed the metal tentacles in the back of “Earth Shocker”, and “Smilodon” had cut into the cockpit of “Earth Shocker” with his saber. It appeared that Li Linghai and Dongfang Sheng had joined their hands and killed Yun Kuohai together.

As Yun Kuohai’s soul was vaporized in the explosion, Dongfang Sheng was no longer able to explain himself at all!

Seeing that, all the Nascent Soul Stage experts were so shocked that their blood was almost frozen.

Thinking quickly, how could they not know that was going on?

Li Linghai’s traces were reported by Dongfang Sheng, the “riskless battlefield for an ambush” was selected by Dongfang Sheng, and the guards around Li Linghai were personally arranged by Dongfang Sheng so that they would not be on the spot during the operation.

But right now, they had been tricked into such a weird, dark space, which was likely to be the most treacherous world fragment. It was all part of Dongfang Sheng’s plan!

Dongfang Sheng did not betray Li Linghai at all! They had been tricked!

When the Nascent Soul Stage experts had the “epiphany”, thousands of lightning bolts were striking in Dongfang Sheng’s head too. Thinking everything through, he couldn’t help but moan in pain.

“General Dongfang, so many people have witnessed you killing Yun Kuohai in person, including many from the Yun family.”

Li Linghai’s creepy voice came over in time. “No family can stand the loss of an expert at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage. Even if you can escape today, you cannot get away from the wrath of the Yun family. They might not kill you, but you will never be the commander of the Dongfang family’s fleet. To appease the Yun family, Li Jiande will certainly kick you away without any hesitation!”

“Your Grace—”

Dongfang Sheng couldn’t have looked more painful. Thinking for a moment, he changed his way of addressing. “Your Majesty…”

“Have you seen those guys who each have their own malicious plans?”

Li Linghai said, “I will only keep three of you alive. Besides ‘Devilish Abyss’ Li Jianyi and ‘Star Breaker’ Song Huanzhen who have the highest combat ability, there is one last opening. Take a guess. If those people are kneeling before me and fighting for the last opening, will they try to kill Li Jianyi and Song Huanzhen, or will they try to kill you?

“Your only way of survival is either to lead those guys in the Nascent Soul Stage to kill Li Jianyi or Song Huanzhen, or to convince Li Jianyi and Song Huanzhen to kill all of them. Otherwise, you will end up exactly like Yun Kuohai. I assure you that you will certainly be killed even if no one else here dies, because they did not betray me, did they?”

“No—”

Dongfang Sheng’s mind completely collapsed. He defended himself in panic, “I—I did not know that Your Majesty… was Your Majesty!”

“Fair enough. It was an honest mistake. You betrayed Li Linghai, not me, which was why I was willing to give you one last opportunity to correct your mistake, and why I killed Yun Kuohai instead of you a moment ago!”

Li Linghai sneered, “Now that you have recognized who I am, do you not foresee what magnificent strength I can grant you? Can the commander of the Deep Sea Fleet or the Dongfang family’s fleet be compared to the commander of the fleets of the entire Imperium of True Human Beings?”

Dongfang Sheng’s breath halted. Although he knew that it was not as simple as that, he was still exhaling flames because of Li Linghai’s instigation—the flames of desire and ambition!

“You have ten seconds.”

Li Linghai said, “Right now, ‘Devilish Abyss’ Li Jianyi and ‘Star Breaker’ Song Huanzhen are still trapped by my great array and stalled by my branched souls. In ten seconds, I will remove the array and expose them before you. Make a judicious decision!”

The looks on Dongfang Sheng’s face changed nonstop, until it was entirely covered by darkness in the end. Howling like a ghost, he snatched a broken fragment of “Earth Shocker” from the flames and raised it high before he jumped to be above all the experts in the Nascent Soul Stage.

“You’ve been fooled!”

His eyes bloodshot, Dongfang Sheng roared at the many experts in the Nascent Soul Stage like a hideous monster, “His Majesty and I have long made the plan to catch all his opposition in the four Kurfürst families. Right now, a fierce battle is going on outside, and all the people you brought are being annihilated by the Deep Sea Fleet. You are trapped here without any chance to escape too.

“Look at what has become of ‘Acyclic Earth’ Yun Kuohai and his Colossus. Can any of you resist His Majesty’s dominance?”

Dongfang Sheng threw the remains of “Earth Shocker” at everybody. All of them dodged in such a hurry as if it were not remains but a corpse filled with viruses.

“Yun Kuohai was obstinate enough to resist. Not only has he been killed, but his entire family will also be executed soon. Do you all want to end up like him?”

Dongfang Sheng demanded aggressively, “Right now, His Majesty is lenient enough to give you one last chance of survival by attacking ‘Devilish Abyss’ Li Jianyi and ‘Star Breaker’ Song Huanzhen together with me. As long as the two of them are killed, you and your families will all survive. You can even take it a step further and become the most renowned noble families in the Imperium!”

Staring at the remains of “Earth Shocker”, the many experts in the Nascent Soul Stage all thought hard and analyzed Dongfang Sheng’s words nervously.

A lot of them were indeed tempted.

“However—”

Grinning hideously, Dongfang Sheng said, “It is going to be useless without a Colossus in the fierce battle to come. Clean up all the useless guys that are not equipped with a Colossus first!”

Hardly had he concluded his sentence when he slashed his saber that had been long prepared. The aura of the blade covered a distance of hundreds of meters within a breath and ripped a Nascent Soul Stage expert only in a crystal suit into pieces!

One of them was a Divinity Transformation Stage expert in a Colossus, and the other was in the Nascent Soul Stage only wearing a crystal suit. It was also an unexpected attack. Naturally, nobody could save him at all.

“Why are you still standing?”

Dongfang Sheng bulged his eyes and roared, “If we can kill Yun Kuohai, we can also kill Li Jianyi and Song Huanzhen. The greatest opportunity is right before your eyes. If you are not doing anything, your entire family will die together with Yun Kuohai. Is that what you want?”

After hearing that, while those in Colossi did not do anything yet, those only wearing crystal suits already screamed and escaped to all directions.

Their escape, however, triggered the brutality of their companions behind them. There was no telling who opened fire first, but very soon, all the Nascent Soul Stage experts in Colossi were venting their fear and cruelty to all directions.

It was needless to describe the difference between the Colossi and the crystal suits. Besides, in terms of combat ability, those who were qualified to use a Colossus were mostly much stronger than those who were only wearing crystal suits. Also, there was still a malicious expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage that was Dongfang Sheng, who was supervising the situation. Who among them could escape the slaughter?

Very soon, ten or so Nascent Soul Stage experts who were only wearing crystal suits ended up in struggling fireballs, only to be swallowed by the black fog and obliterated!

Chapter 2323 - Kneel Before Me!

The five Nascent Soul Stage experts in Colossi, having been stained by the blood of their partners a moment ago, thought differently from a moment ago.

Betrayal was anything but unusual for the Immortal Cultivators. Now that they had already started it, they'd better see the end of it. Many of them had already begun to fantasize about how many benefits they would earn if "that emperor" was really behind Li Linghai.

It was exactly at such a critical moment when "Devilish Abyss" Li Jianyi and "Star Breaker" Song Huanzhen broke out of the black fog and appeared before everyone.

"Kill them!"

Informed of their arrival, Dongfang Wang urged the five Nascent Soul Stage experts in Colossi to charge at the two experts at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage.

The charge was different from the situation a moment ago when Li Linghai was the prey.

Besieging Li Linghai was only a regular mission issued by their families, and they could not gain much from it personally. Besides, the four Divinity Transformation Stage experts were the main force for the mission, and those in the Nascent Soul Stage were just here to help.

To be honest, even if they slacked off or even escaped, which led to dire consequences, what could the leaders of their families have done to them? No matter how severe the punishments were, it was not like they would be sentenced to death directly when they were all at the high level and peak of the Nascent Soul Stage and qualified to use a Colossus, right?

Although they were not in the Divinity Transformation Stage, they were all influential persons in their local areas, and they had a lot of connections in and out of the families. Who could demand that they be killed?

Therefore, they did not feel guilty and pressured at all when they hesitated back then.

But now that they had betrayed their families to take the sides of “that emperor” and killed their own partners, it would certainly be an unpardonable crime should it be exposed. None of their connections would be enough to save them.

Therefore, they had to kill “Devilish Abyss” Li Jianyi and “Star Breaker” Song Huanzhen whatever the cost was!

Naturally, they were no match for the two experts at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage. But there were still Li Linghai and Dongfang Sheng. Even “Acyclic Earth” Yun Kuohai who was on par with them had been killed by them easily. Now that they had another five Colossi, the odds of success were rather promising.

The Immortal Cultivators were not cowards all the time. Were that the case, the Imperium of True Human Beings wouldn’t have persisted for a thousand years.

Whether or not they were fearless depended on the odds of success and the returns if they succeeded.

The battle before them guaranteed a high chance of success. If they won, they would win the trust of “that emperor”, which would certainly bring them infinite returns. More importantly, they could not afford the result of their failure, because they would have nowhere to run to at all. Naturally, they could only fight with all their strength!

Therefore, together with Dongfang Sheng and Li Linghai, seven Colossi burst out astonishing flames of light at the same time as when the five experts in the Nascent Soul Stage burned their souls to the maximum. They were like totally different persons from when they attacked Li Linghai a moment ago, and they crashed at the two experts at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage like seven shooting stars!

Li Jianyi and Song Huanzhen were both greatly surprised.

They were the targets that Li Linghai paid the most attention to. Not only were the forces of interference and corruption from the array concentrated on them to disrupt their Colossi, but she had also spared half of her telepathic thoughts, trying to penetrate through their brains. Li Jianyi and Song Huanzhen were both exhausted in the resistance.

After they finally got rid of the interferences of the great array, they were surprised that those who were coming at them were “their own people”, who were mad and aggressive.

Through the communication channels, Li Jianyi and Song Huanzhen meant to shout at everyone to make them stop, but there was nothing but background noises in the communication channels.

They intended to transmit information directly through telepathic thoughts and communicate with everyone to learn what was going on, but Li Linghai's mental attacks that felt like a raging flood were suddenly magnitudes greater and surging into their brains. They could barely catch their breath, much less having any chance to send any message!

It all happened too fast. The two Colossi at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage were soon enshrouded in stormy attacks!

"Those people have all betrayed us!"

Li Jianyi and Song Huanzhen immediately understood everything. Fury and desperation tied their souls like two giant snakes.

A hundred clashes might take place in one second during a battle of Colossi. There was no time to think at all, and the two experts at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage launched the most daunting counterattacks immediately.

The nine Colossi were immediately mired in a dangerous battle. Everyone's soul was seething as they were doing their best—perhaps not including Li Linghai.

The five Colossi piloted by those in the Nascent Soul Stage were naturally no match for the experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage. However, Li Linghai's "Hellstar" was leading the charge and helping them to withstand more than half of the enemy's attacks, giving them the illusion that they could kill the two experts if they worked a little bit harder.

However, when "Devilish Abyss" Li Jianyi and "Star Breaker" Song Huanzhen performed their ultimate skills at the risk of blowing up their bodies and souls, “Hellstar” suddenly rolled to their back like a high-speed gyroscope!

Greatly shocked, the five experts in the Nascent Soul Stage intended to flee, but they had been attracted by the domains of the two experts at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage tightly. In the meantime, the metal tentacles of “Hellstar” suddenly extended and pierced into the backs of their Colossi, fixating them to where they were at like five marionettes.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

A series of fireballs expanded abnormally in tens of thousands of colors that were beyond the recognition of the naked eye. Thousands of crazily dancing red snakes illuminated the entire dark world, but they did not shed any light on the path of survival.

The fierce battle was still going on in the fireballs that were almost ten thousand degrees. Now and then, it could be seen that the streaks of brilliance that were even brighter than the flames were colliding and splitting, only to be obliterated into nothingness. When the temperature gradually lowered, they turned into hideous black spots.

The fireballs that looked like man-made suns did not disperse like thousands of burning moths until one minute later.

The five Colossi used by the Nascent Soul Stage experts had been either twisted into wasted garbage or reduced to broken limbs.

Naturally, the fury of those in the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage was too much for the experts in the Nascent Soul Stage. The cockpits of the five Colossi were entirely empty, and the experts inside had all been burnt up into nothingness.

However, in order to slay the five Nascent Soul Stage experts under the pressure of Li Linghai’s covetous “Hellstar” and Dongfang Sheng’s “Smilodon” which might attack them at any moment, both “Devilish Abyss” Li Jianyi and “Star Breaker” Song Huanzhen paid a miserable price.

The spiritual shields around their Colossi had only a thin, lackluster layer left, which covered their broken plate armor like the wrinkled skin of a snake.

Not only were the fuel and ammunitions of their Colossi running out, but their souls and spiritual energy were about to be exhausted too. At the very least, it would be barely possible for them to carry out the combat ability of the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage unhurriedly, and they could only keep themselves in the middle level of the Divinity Transformation Stage or even lower.

The overwhelming majestic air around Li Linghai, however, was still expanding. It was truly going to swallow the two of them like surging tides.

The four Colossi confronted each other in silence in the black fog.

“Li Jianyi, Song Huanzhen—”

Li Linghai demanded, one word after another, with the soul-stirring and sacrosanct voice, “Kneel! Kneel before me!”

Li Jianyi and Song Huanzhen looked at each other. Their broken Colossi shook hard.

Controlling “Smilodon”, Dongfang Sheng raised his saber high again.

He was not nearly as strong as the two experts at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage in the beginning, but he was the one who learned the whole plan earliest. Therefore, when he pretended to be charging at the two experts at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage fearlessly, he had already made up his mind to use the five Nascent Soul Stage experts and their Colossi as his shield.

Right now, the five Nascent Soul Stage experts and their Colossi had significantly exhausted the strength of the two experts at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage. In comparison, he hadn’t suffered any serious wound since the beginning of the battle. The supplies of his Colossus, as well as his own soul and spiritual energy, were all kept at the best combat state. He was even somewhat stronger than Li Jianyi or Song Huanzhen right now.

“Kneel!”

The six faces on the surface of Li Linghai’s “Hellstar” roared at the same time, and tides were rising in the black fog again, as if thousands of troops were hiding inside the darkness, giving unbelievable pressure. “I will not repeat twice. Kneel!”

After a grunt, Li Jianyi finally collapsed.

Known as “Devilish Abyss”, he was a Meditation Healer who was particularly sensitive about mental attacks. So, he had the deepest perception of the horror of the overwhelming air around Li Linghai. It was truly like the arrival of the dominator of the galaxy!

Swallowing the blood in his mouth, he controlled the Colossus to curl the right leg and kneeled before Li Linghai on one of his knees.

After Li Jianyi kneeled, Song Huanzhen did not have any choice, or rather, did not have any psychological burden anymore. She quickly kneeled too.

The two experts at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage, in their Colossi, lowered their heads before Li Linghai at the same time and said, “Your Majesty…”

“Take off your Colossi.”

Li Linghai said coldly, “Store them in your Cosmos Rings and give them to me!”

Greatly alarmed, Li Jianyi and Song Huanzhen looked at each other in bewilderment, wondering if they should follow the order.

“Do you know why I spared your lives but killed Yun Kuohai? Because you are smart people who have brains!”

Li Linghai said casually, “With your status right now, even if you are hiding in your Colossi, it will be more than easy for me to kill you. But there are still tremendous members of the Li family and the Song family that need your management.

“Right now, I am in dire need of hands. I promised that I would spare your lives, and I will not go back on my words.

“Your two ragged Colossi are nothing in my eyes. Now that you are judicious enough to do the right thing, I will certainly grant you more strength and better Colossi!”

Li Jianyi and Song Huanzhen were immediately glowing with interest.

It did make sense on second thought. Whether or not the person was Li Linghai or “that emperor”, it was not like that person could achieve a great cause with no external help at all and entirely by him- or herself, right?

It might be easy to kill them, but how was he going to face the thunderous attacks of the four Kurfürst families?

After hesitating for a long time, the two of them gritted their teeth and crawled out of their Colossi, before they stored the Colossi in their Cosmos Rings obediently and allowed the metal tentacles of “Hellstar” to take them away.

Finally, the “riskless” siege carried out by five experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage and dozens in the Nascent Soul Stage had completely failed!

Chapter 2324 - A Thousand Years Cannot Soothe the Pain!

Chapter 2324 A Thousand Years Cannot Soothe the Pain!

Li Linghai took away the Colossi of the three Divinity Transformation Stage experts but were not in a hurry to deal with them. Instead, she steered “Hellstar” to the depths of the black fog, where the black fog enshrouded a medical cabin with thousands of sticky tentacles, making it unable to move at all.

Naturally, it was “Silver Fox” Li Jiande, the most senior Kurfürst of the family, that was inside the medical cabin.

While Li Jiande’s vision and other senses were blocked by the black fog a moment ago, preventing him from seeing the progress of the battle, he knew exactly that he had failed now that he saw his brother Li Jianyi and the rest of them had taken off their Colossi and floated in the midair obediently, and the remains of countless crystal suits and Colossi were spreading around them. He simply heaved a sigh, apparently in the deepest regrets.

“Hellstar” extended two metal tentacles and dragged the medical cabin to right below the gigantic faces. The soul-stirring eyes all stared at him gloomily, as if they were trying to collapse the former prime minister of the Imperium from the bottom of his soul.

Under the pressure that felt like billions of water, “Silver Fox” Li Jiande was utterly not scared but simply laughed aloud. “Idiots! Idiots! What a bunch of hopeless idiots! They will know how stupid their retreat today is when they die the most miserable death one day!”

Li Linghai had covered the space around the medical cabin with her spiritual energy, and therefore, she was not scared that Li Jiande’s voices and telepathic thoughts would spread out. She sneered, “Why are they stupid?”

“Even if you have been possessed by a thousand-year-old ghost, you cannot be Blackstar the Great in his prime days!”

“Silver Fox” Li Jiande’s eyes were bloodshot, and his hair and beard were flying. With the courage as if he were fighting all the stars in the universe, he finally shouted out the name of “that emperor”. “The real Blackstar the Great died a thousand years ago. Even if part of his soul lingered till this day, it must be terribly weak! Even though you have attached yourself to Li Linghai and nurture yourself through her flesh and soul, it is impossible that you have recovered 100% of your strength. It will already be incredible if you can recover twenty or thirty percent of your strength!

“You may boast the combat ability of the Divinity Branching Stage, but you can’t be higher than the middle level of the Divinity Branching Stage. But the three of them are all at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage! If they truly summon their courage to fight you, you can kill one of them at best before you are suppressed by the other two!

“Besides, you have not completely possessed the body, and it’s only part of your soul that is temporarily residing inside Li Linghai’s body. There will be great damage for both your remaining soul and Li Linghai’s physical body if you bring out the combat ability of the Divinity Branching Stage for a long time, won’t there? It must be noted that your enemy includes not only the five experts in the Divinity

Transformation Stage and dozens in the Nascent Soul Stage here but also everybody else of the four Kurfürst families! So, how could you have been bold enough to fight with your best? You cannot afford the risk of being heavily wounded at all!

“Those idiots who have more brawn than brains could’ve figured it out as long as they gave it some thought! Hehe. If you can really unleash your expertise in your prime years, why on earth have you been hiding inside Li Linghai’s shell stealthily, too gutless to let the world know your existence, and why did you play those tricks and divide and conquer us with the advantage of the array? Wouldn’t it have been much easier to simply suppress all of us?

“I suspect… Haha, I suspect that your spiritual energy has almost been exhausted after you slew the first guy in the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage, or maybe there’s something wrong with the melting of your remaining soul and the body, and it’s impossible for you to kill a second expert at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage, is it not? What a shame! If they had slightly summoned their courage and attacked you together, they would’ve cut you into pieces and removed the hazard once and forever!”

Li Linghai listened in silence and did not burst into fury even when she heard Li Jiande’s vicious curse in the end. Instead, she laughed aloud. “Isn’t it only logical? Today is not like the old days. The Imperium at the sunset is no longer the Imperium a thousand years ago!

“A thousand years ago, when the Star Ocean Republic was corrupted by the Cultivators and catching the last breath, the first-generation Immortal Cultivators were all transformed from the Cultivators who were of honor and integrity and who were worried about the future of mankind.

“They were all the real Immortal Cultivators with dreams and ambitions! Only such Immortal Cultivators could sacrifice for the civilization of mankind fearlessly under my lead without caring about their own interests!

“But today, after a thousand years, the Imperium of True Human Beings has contracted the exact same disease that killed the Star Ocean Republic. The Immortal Cultivators today have retrograded into selfish, shortsighted, and conspiratorial guys that are no different from the pigs in the bloated parliament of the Star Ocean Republic a thousand years ago!

“You can only see yourselves in your eyes. You have no dreams, and you do not know what you are fighting for. You are just a bunch of worms carrying the banner of the Immortal Cultivators but actually under the control of your instincts. You are talking about ‘unity’ and ‘sacrifice’? Such people in the Divinity Transformation Stage without beliefs are all gaudy counterfeits. Not just four, even if a hundred had come today, I would still have grasped your weakness and suppressed all of you!”

“Silver Fox” Li Jiande was rendered speechless. His inviolable courage a moment ago was entirely gone, and his body began to shrivel. Like a drowning person, his face was covered in lifelessness as he mumbled, “… Your Majesty, I-I’m willing to surrender!”

“You are a rarely-seen smart person. You were once the prime minister of the Imperium. You are rather prestigious nationwide. By logic, I should give you an opportunity to correct your mistakes because I am in dire need of hands right now.”

Li Linghai said coldly, “But it’s a shame that there is no place for ‘Kurfürst’ in my vision!”

“Silver Fox” Li Jiande’s lips trembled, and he was even more withered than before.

He was not really saying that to surrender. He did not even care too much about his own life anymore, and he was simply using it to test Blackstar the Great’s attitude toward the entire Li family.

It seemed that Blackstar the Great did not intend to keep the four Kurfürst families at all, and they were destined to perish!

“You—”

Having ended up on bad terms, “Silver Fox” Li Jiande did not need to hide anything anymore. The wrinkles on his face immediately gathered into a hideous ghost face as he laughed crazily. “Whatever vision you may have, it won’t work out! Even if you can eliminate the four Kurfürst families, so what? You will die eventually someday! After you die, the royal authority will still decline, and the local magnates will still rise! The future emperors will only be more and more idiotic and weak. Very soon, new ‘Kurfürst families’ will show up and destroy the Imperium that you have carefully constructed! You cannot defeat us. You cannot beat time and the entire universe!”

“You’re wrong.”

Li Linghai picked up Li Jiande and dragged him to her face before she said, one word after another, “Now that I have returned to the human world, I will not allow the Imperium to fall into somebody else’s hands. From today on, I will be the Imperium. I will not age or die in the next ten thousand years, and the Imperium of True Human Beings will surpass the Star Ocean Imperium in the past and become the best regime of the civilization of mankind that unites the entire universe!"

"Not age or die in the next ten thousand years?"

"Silver Fox" Li Jiande trembled hard.

For some reason, he did not hear any insanity from Li Linghai's declaration but only solemnity and graveness, as if…

As if the ghost that should've been gone a thousand years had truly found a way to live for ten thousand years!

"You have missed the best opportunity to stop me."

Li Linghai squeezed Li Jiande's medical cabin and said casually, "But I'm rather curious about one thing. As 'Silver Fox', you are best known for your calculation and carefulness. But why are you unwise enough to get involved in the dangerous mission in person? With your identity and strength, shouldn't you be supervising the battle in the rear? In that case, you possibly could've realized the secrets of the underground palace and made corresponding remedies.

"But you have chosen to come here in person, not even resorting to a spiritual puppet with remote communication abilities or a hologram projector. Why?

"Give me an answer to solve my confusion, and I will spare a hundred lives of those from the Li family."

Li Jiande could've refused to answer the question.

After all, the distance between “Blackstar the Great” and “credibility” was as long as the distance between the Empyreal Terminus Sector and the edge of the cosmos.

However, in his sorrow and desperation, “Silver Fox” Li Jiande trembled for a long time but still said in remorse, “The arrest operation targeting Li Linghai was planned by me in person, but Li Linghai happened to be my biological granddaughter. The Yun family, the Song family, and the Dongfang family could not completely trust me, fearing that it was my scheme with Li Linghai and Dongfang Sheng to catch all of them.

“Therefore, they demanded me to arrive in person and command on the spot in order to trust my sincerity and send out the toughest warriors. I am… essentially their hostage!”

“That explains a lot.”

Li Linghai couldn’t help but burst into laughter, and the hundred metal tentacles around “Hellstar” trembled crazily at the same time. “‘Silver Fox’ Li Jiande, just ask yourself, do such ‘four Kurfürst families’, who are utterly disorganized and do not have the slightest mutual trust, not deserve to die?”

“… They do.”

“Silver Fox” Li Jiande said in devastation, “They all deserve to die. None of them is wronged!”

“Then die now!”

The metal tentacles of “Hellstar” minced brutally. The medical cabin, together with “Silver Fox” Li Jiande inside, was immediately shattered and enshrouded in black flames as the background of “Hellstar”.

“The Imperium that I have established through arduous work has been reduced to such poor conditions by the unworthy descendants. A thousand years can pass by easily, but the pain will stay forever!”

As the black flames fell down, high-pitched roars that completely did not sound like Li Linghai echoed from deep inside “Hellstar”, “To clean up the broken realm from the beginning, Imperium, I have returned!”

Chapter 2325 - Throne of Gods!

Half an hour later, in the world fragment deep inside the underground palace…

The arrest team led by “Silver Fox” Li Jiande was not large in number. In order to keep it a secret, they did not even bring many crystal warships since they were hoping to take down Li Linghai with the four experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage and their Colossi neatly and quietly.

In the meantime, the Deep Sea Fleet was founded by Li Linghai in person after all, and most of the resources and even starships came from Li Linghai’s supplies. Dongfang Sheng only equaled a senior manager. While he could control the critical posts temporarily with his trusted subordinates, it was certainly impossible for him to turn everybody in the fleet against Li Linghai.

Therefore, after Li Linghai got Dongfang Sheng, Li Jianyi, and Song Huanzhen under control, she immediately sent a message to the Deep Sea Fleet, which then took action and seized the entire royal palace tightly.

At this moment, the elite troops of the four Kurfürst families were either protecting the Council of Elders or capturing Di Feiwen above the Silver Moon Ocean. It meant that Li Linghai had a few hours of precious time to perform modifications on the three experts at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage so that they could unleash more magnificent forces!

The boundless black fog seemed to have consumed all creatures that were struggling in pain. From the darkness, the roars of Dongfang Sheng, Li Jianyi, and Song Huanzhen were coming over.

Their roars were extremely weird. They seemed both trapped in the most excruciating agony and moaning in the greatest ecstasy of the universe. It also sounded that they had retrograded from a highly-developed intelligent species into a primeval beast haunted by their natural instincts.

Surrounded by the roars of the three experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage, Li Linghai stood alone on a highly-rising stone pillar in the dark abyss.

At first look, the gigantic pillar more than thirty meters in diameter seemed to be made of translucent obsidians. Rising from the core of the planet, it was emitting deep and mysterious colors even though it was in the middle of the black fog.

But one would only notice if they were to observe from up close, that the raw materials that constituted the gigantic pillar were exactly the bones of countless primeval beasts!

The primeval beasts, which were dozens of meters tall, had been squeezed together by uncanny, weird forces. After hundreds of thousands of years of corrosion and polishing, they had been refined into materials with a texture that resembled crystals.

Among them, some of the remains looked like humans, only significantly larger and melted with bizarre-shaped beasts. They should be the remains of the intelligent lives from the Pangu civilizations’ alliance, or the primeval gods that the ignorant would kneel and worship when they saw them.

At this moment, countless primeval beasts and ancient gods were stomped on by Li Linghai’s feet!

On the top of the gigantic stone pillar, the claws of the beasts and the arms of the gods were all raising high, as if they were drowning and extending their hands out of the surface of the water for help. The claws and the arms bound and twisted each other, forming a concavity that looked exactly like a throne!

Li Linghai, however, was not sitting on the throne. Instead, she was holding the handle of the throne, and her back was as hunched as if she were a lobster. Her entire body was trembling hard. The look on her face was also more painful than ever.

From her eyes, her hair, and the black stripes on her fair skin, the thickest black fluids were leaking out and dripping to her feet into a pool of black water.

As the black fluids leaked out, Li Linghai’s eyeballs and hair returned to the color of white that bordered on transparency, except that she looked much more lackluster and haggard than before, as if she were about to die.

Perhaps “Silver Fox” Li Jiande was not wrong. To be possessed by such an unparalleled expert like Blackstar the Great and to activate the strength that did not belong to herself indeed came with a terrible price. Li Linghai’s vitality and brain seemed to have been entirely drained.

Shivering, she groped for a dosage of the dark red drug from her Cosmos Ring and injected it into her carotid artery. She took a few deep breaths, but she did it in such a haste that she was coughing aloud again until tears were running out, and she almost vomited out her internal organs. It was not until she coughed for more than half a minute that she was finally more or less back to herself.

The black water below her feet that was as thick as a swamp, however, were bubbling weirdly. In the next moment, a black phantom rose from the black water slowly. Higher and larger, it expanded into a shadow of a human more than three meters tall!

It was almost like Li Linghai's shadow had come to life and was staring at her coldly from her back.

Even though the shadow did not have any facial organs, Li Linghai still felt a pair of scorching eyes.

"Your body… is simply too weak."

A gloomy, heavy voice came from the shadow. "Because of your weakness, I was forced to play so many despicable tricks even though my foes were only in the Divinity Transformation Stage. I even had to make many promises to the insubordinate subjects in order to divide and conquer them. This is truly my greatest humiliation!"

Li Linghai recovered her sanity from her trance. She hurried to kneel on the ground. "Please forgive me, Your Majesty!"

The shadow did not reply to her but simply mumbled to himself, "'Silver Fox' Li Jiande, on the other hand, is truly a tough person. If he had reacted sooner, or if the four Kurfürst families had not demanded him to command on the spot, chances were that he would have won the competition by organizing everything from the rear!

"My strength has not been entirely recovered yet. This is not the best opportunity for me to surface. But after 'Silver Fox'

Li Jiande’s game, there is no choice but to take action right now!

“Thankfully, most of the plans have been accomplished. As the thousands of surplus generals and millions of disabled veterans cried before my statue day and night in the Emperor’s Mausoleum, they had poured their spirits and beliefs into the array that I left a thousand years ago. My remaining soul is now completely unlocked and can be transferred into a new shell.

“Where is Li Jialing right now? I cannot stand hiding inside your weak shell anymore!”

Li Linghai trembled. After a long hesitation, she still said in a low voice, “He is in the Silver Ocean with Vulture Li Yao, participating in the operation to capture Dongfang Wang.”

“Excellent!”

The shadow said casually, “By estimation, the battle to capture Dongfang Wang will be over soon. Summon them back now. Huh, no. Let’s go there in person and prepare for the transference of the soul. Do not play any trick this time.”

Li Linghai’s voice was quivering even harder. “I do not have the courage for that.”

“You do not?”

The morose voice from the shadow suddenly turned high as the shadow remotely grabbed Li Linghai by her throat and picked her up, demanding, “You do not have the courage for that? I hardly think so. You have the guts for everything!

“Decades ago, when you learned my plan, you were bold enough to try to destroy the life seed and stop me from obtaining the perfect carrier!

“After you discovered the existence of Li Jialing, you thought multiple times to send him away to the edge of the cosmos. When that did not work out, you then planned to kill him for good!

“Even right now, when I am hibernating, you have played a lot of tricks with that Vulture Li Yao, haven’t you? Hehe. You thought that I had grown senile after sleeping a thousand years and that I did not know anything about your smart moves?

“Let me tell you, my lenience is limited. Do not be trapped by your own cleverness!”

The shadow tossed Li Linghai to the ground heavily. There was already a ring of black marks on Li Linghai’s long neck, which was turning into black blisters at a visible speed, as if her entire neck had been corroded to the bones!

Li Linghai was both in agony and greatly scared, but another emotion that was even more intense finally defeated her pain and fear. Covering her neck, she moaned, “Your Majesty, why—why Li Jialing? He is not your descendant at all!”

“You know the answer!”

The shadow replied coldly, “Like I told you before, years ago, it was you and the guy from the Covenant Alliance who woke me up together. At the intersection of your fates and mine, two mysterious forces that you cannot understand yet found their way into the two of you.

“On your side, the force helped you break through the acupoints in your training, transforming you from a plain, mediocre Immortal Cultivator into an ultimate expert.

“On the guy from the Covenant Alliance’s side, it helped him shatter the boundary of the Three Fundamental Laws, returning to him the feelings and the free will of a normal person.

“Therefore, the child of the two of you, who is the combination of your fates and your strengths, is the best carrier for me to return to the universe. He is my real blood descendant!

“As for the members of the royal family with the ‘Wuying’ surname, what kind of weak, unworthy, and ambitionless beings have they retrograded into after a thousand years? Look at the Imperial Guards, look at the pig-like Emperor Shenwu. How have my offspring been corrupted into this? Those worthless swine are absolutely useless. I only hate that I cannot slaughter all of them to save the precious resources that they are going to waste. Are they even qualified to accommodate my powerful soul?”

The shadow had truly burst into fury when he mentioned the royal family nowadays. When the black flames surged out, it was almost like thousands of sharp blades were about to be slashed at the members of the royal family.

“In the past decades, it’s not like we did not try transferring my soul to other members of the royal family.”

The shadow suddenly sneered, “Your two sons included. Didn’t they die abruptly because my soul was too tough for them? Why, now that you have sacrificed two sons for me, what’s the big deal to sacrifice one more?

“I know that those royal princes were born by you unwillingly with Emperor Shenwu. You hate Emperor

Shenwu’s guts, and naturally, you did not have any feelings for those royal princes.

“This Li Jialing, on the other hand, is the only child of you and the man you loved most. It is only natural that you find it hard to let go of him.

“But you’d better understand one thing. This is his destiny that he cannot escape from. Since he could even absorb the Imperial Fire Pearl perfectly, is it not the best sign that he would be the most perfect carrier for me?”

Chapter 2326 - Fight For the Imperium For Another 100,000 Years!

Chapter 2326 Fight For the Imperium For Another 100,000 Years!

Lost for words, Li Linghai asked in a shivering voice, with the ripples of desperation spreading out of her eyes, “What… What about ‘Vulture Li Yao’? He could absorb the strength in the Imperial Fire Pearl too. Although he was not as fast as Li Jialing, he was significantly better than the members of the royal family that had been tested before. It was indicative enough that he did not reject Your Majesty’s strength.

“Besides, his level is higher than Li Jialing’s, and he is already in the Divinity Transformation Stage. He must be strong enough to accommodate Your Majesty’s powerful soul!”

“Vulture Li Yao is indeed a rather excellent carrier.”

After a brief silence, the shadow said, “I don’t think he lied about being the foster son of the guy from the Covenant Alliance. After absorbing part of my strength, the guy from the Covenant Alliance escaped to the edge of the cosmos in a hurry and fostered a child. Then, perhaps the strength was delivered into his foster son’s body by him without him knowing it, or his foster son absorbed it voluntarily.

“Therefore, this Vulture Li Yao is deeply associated with me too. His fate and mine are entwined too. It is not surprising that he could digest the strength in the Imperial Fire Pearl.

“However, since the man rose to a high place in the regime of the remaining rebellions of the Star Ocean Republic, he must’ve experienced a series of fortuitous events in the past, which filled his body with a myriad of uncanny forces. In my senses, his body is like a multicolored dye vat and not nearly as pure as Li Jialing’s.

“Besides, after a hundred years of experiences, and since he used to be a powerful man in the past, his soul has already been fixed, and his beliefs will not be changed easily. There will be a lot of unnecessary risks if I am to invade and occupy his body.

“Furthermore, for those who have advanced into my level, we have a lot of mysterious visions and prophecies that you cannot understand. I have sensed that there are many secrets to this Vulture Li Yao, and I felt a cold warning that I must not try to possess the man whenever I studied the man’s files. Otherwise, I might embrace my doom, and it would be very likely that I fail to possess him and he simply melts my remaining soul in the end.

“Therefore, I will not possess him in any case. I would rather beat this Vulture Li Yao into smithereens, even if it will be a great waste of his great body, than try to steal his brain!

“Naturally, the man’s Cultivation and wisdom are among the best. His shameless character and his sordid combat style are also my favorites. If he can kneel before my feet genuinely, what’s the harm of sparing his life? But if he doesn’t, I’ll have other ways to deal with him too. That shouldn’t be your concern!”

“I know what to do.”

Li Linghai, however, was not entirely convinced. Sobbing, she asked, “Your Majesty, is—is Li Jialing really the only option?”

“Hehe. Rise and look at me!”

Thousands of tentacles suddenly extended out of the shadow and grabbed Li Linghai’s limbs and neck, dragging her right next to the shadow.

The shadow had almost turned into a gigantic mouth that was about to swallow Li Linghai. “I have been reborn today not to be a mediocre emperor for another one or two hundred years, but to revolutionize the Imperium and to create an enterprise that will not change for all eternity!

“Why has the Imperium of True Human Beings been corrupted to the point of dying? Why do the local magnates in the universe turn a blind eye to the Empyreal Terminus Sector? Why are the clowns such as the ‘four Kurfürst families’ bold enough to usurp the power? The only reason is that my ideas were abandoned immediately after I died!

“The bloody lessons in the past thousand years have taught me that to create an enterprise that will not degenerate, I must remain alive forever and be the only emperor of the civilization of mankind in the next thousands of years!

“To achieve eternal life, a perfect carrier is indispensable. I am not pursuing an eternal life for my personal interests, and Li Jialing is not dying to meet my personal desires. Our lives and deaths are all for the Imperium, for the longevity of the realm, and for the civilization of mankind!

“Look at me and tell me, are you not disappointed at the Imperium of True Human Beings today, and do you not want to eradicate all the worthless, selfish, and conspiratorial scoundrels so that the sun will shine in the Imperium again?”

Dark air flowed from the depths of the shadow and split into thousands of streaks, which then crawled into Li Linghai’s almost transparent eyes.

Blackness flashed in Li Linghai’s eyes. Her face was somewhat inert and stagnant at first, but then it became determined.

“… I do!”

The queen of the Imperium gritted her teeth.

“Do you not want to combine the forces of the four Kurfürst families and hundreds of Sectors into an invincible, indestructible army, to completely annihilate the Covenant Alliance, save the civilization of mankind, and ensure the prosperity of the entire universe?” the shadow continued asking.

“I do!”

Li Linghai’s voice was firmer and louder.

“Do you not want the Imperium of True Human Beings to surpass the Star Ocean Imperium in the past or even the primeval civilizations hundreds of thousands of years ago, stomping on all the species that were once gods for us, so that mankind will be the only ‘god’ in the entire universe?” The shadow’s voice was more and more dominating and insane.

“I do! Mankind, as the strongest fighting species in the universe, should be the only true god!”

Li Linghai’s eyes were boiling, and countless tiny black bubbles were flowing deep inside her transparent eyes.

“Then, pay sacrifices!”

The dominance and madness of the shadow were suddenly entirely concealed. Calmer than ever, it said casually, “For the Imperium, for the civilization of mankind, everybody can and must be sacrificed, including myself! It is easy to die a hero’s death, but it is terribly difficult to live and work for the civilization of mankind for a hundred thousand years. As the supreme commander of all ‘true human beings’, I will naturally walk on the difficult path, but I also need the sacrifices of a lot of people to give me a hand!

“Besides, I promised you that I would be careful and try to preserve Li Jialing’s soul, didn’t I?”

The shadow’s voice suddenly softened.

Li Linghai was like someone drowning who caught the last straw, although there was no telling whether it was a straw or a viper. Her eyeballs shivering violently, she asked, “Is… Is it true, Your Majesty?”

“Of course it is true. What I want is his body. Is his soul of any use for me?”

The shadow smiled and said, “If everything goes well, after I occupy his body, his soul will be sent into an artificial body, and he will live for another hundreds of years as a spectral Cultivator. Despite the minor inconvenience in training, his daily life will not be greatly affected. Can you not live with that?”

“I-I certainly can.”

Li Linghai was overjoyed but somewhat found it hard to believe. She hesitated and asked, “I wonder, how much confidence does Your Majesty have to preserve Li Jialing’s soul?”

“Hehe!”

The shadow snorted and became aggressive again. “Are you questioning my abilities?”

“I-I daren’t!”

Li Linghai shuddered hard and kneeled deeply again. “I daren’t at all. I misspoke because I cared about him too much.”

“If you are really concerned about the safety of Li Jialing’s soul, go and persuade him to cooperate with me. As long as he cooperates with me obediently without any struggle, nothing will go wrong at all.”

The shadow said, “However, if he is obstinate enough to resist his destiny under the instigation of the rogues such as ‘Vulture Li Yao’, I cannot say what will happen during the transference of souls!

“Therefore, the safety of Li Jialing’s soul is not up to me but all lies in your hands. Think carefully about what you are going to do!”

Li Linghai’s body trembled. With the craziness of what a mother beast could do to protect her cub, she panted and said, “I-I understand what I have to do now.”

“Good. I knew that you wouldn’t disappoint me!”

The shadow laughed aloud. “The refinement of the three Divinity Transformation Stage experts is almost done. Right now, five forces, namely the four Kurfürst families and the reformists, have been gathered in the sky of the Silver Moon Ocean. Their strength seems overwhelming, but they, in fact, each have their own plans and are highly wary of each other, exactly like the battle here just now.

“Let’s go and tame the forces above the Silver Moon Ocean, find Li Yao and Li Jialing, suppress the entire capital, and then… reclaim the Imperium!”

The raging shadow slowly retreated into Li Linghai’s pores and melted into her long shadow, nowhere to be seen again.

Deep inside the black fog, the roars and moans of the three experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage all weakened, but their air was getting stronger and stronger, as well as more chaotic and evil.

On Li Linghai’s face, her weakness and hesitation when she confronted the shadow just now were entirely gone. The toughness and solemnity of the queen of the Imperium and the leader of the reformists occupied her face again as an indestructible mask.

She narrowed her eyes at the Silver Moon Ocean, with sparks splashing out. There was no telling what was on her mind.

…

Deep inside the Silver Moon Ocean, Li Jialing was utterly ignorant about his fate to be a “soul container”. He was still waiting at the edge of the battlefield obediently for Li Yao who had gone to nobody knew where.

At first, he was indeed clearing the small fries at the edge of the battlefield as per Li Yao’s instruction. However, few enemies were able to run to his place after passing so many defense lines. After clearing up the few small fries, he grew bored and stared at the center of the chaotic battlefield in a daze.

His hands and his veins were itching, and he was wondering if he should also go on a rampage and show himself off like Brother Yao did.

To be honest, it was not in his nature to pursue a free, unrestricted life. That was only the reverse psychology after living more than ten years of suffocative life when he was imprisoned and refined by Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan. You wanted to incarcerate me, so I wanted freedom. Nothing more.

Now that he had truly obtained freedom, Li Jialing found that his real nature was… Well, Li Jialing did not know what his real nature was either. After all, it was quite normal for an adolescent who was less than twenty years old to be confused about his life.

However, because of the training with the fragment of the Imperial Fire Pearl recently, his Cultivation had been soaring like the mushrooms after a rain. His strength was almost overflowing from all his internal organs and veins. His fists were itchier and itchier too. In such a fierce battle, he found it difficult to contain himself from going on a killing spree.

The feeling was almost like his first ejaculation in the middle of a night while he was still in a dream a few years ago. It was simply a natural instinct that could not be controlled at all!

Chapter 2327 - What the—

Chapter 2327 What the—

While he was upset, the mainframe crystal processor of his crystal suit sent out familiar beeps, which were exactly the secret signals that Li Yao and Li Jialing had agreed upon.

Overjoyed, Li Jialing hurried to swim deeper into the ocean where the signals came, only to discover that Li Yao was rising from a deep undersea crack in a crystal suit.

“Brother Yao, where have you been? I was truly worried when I was waiting!”

Li Jialing said, half in complaint and half in expectation, “I’ve been dawdling at the edge of the battlefield as you instructed, and I did not approach the center of the battlefield at all. But wouldn’t it be inappropriate if we slack off from the beginning to the end? Why don’t we go to the center of the battlefield and join the party? At the very least, we should be able to see which expert finally kills the supervillain Dongfang Wang and rescues His Majesty. It is perhaps going to be a fierce battle that can be seen only once in a lifetime!”

“Well, if that’s what you want, there will be no need to go to the center of the battlefield.”

Li Yao said solemnly, “I have already killed the supervillain Dongfang Wang and rescued His Majesty by the way.”

“…”

Dumbfounded for a moment, Li Jialing grumbled, “What… What the heck? Didn’t you say that you were going to the deeper part of the ocean to enjoy some fresh air?”

“Yes, that was exactly what I intended. However…”

Li Yao was of a mind to scratch his head despite his helmet.

“However, as it happens, I ran into Dongfang Wang in the undersea crack and met His Majesty who was heisted by him. I know that it is very hard to explain and that you want to spit in my face badly from your viewpoint, but that is exactly what happened. It’s not like I had a choice!”

Li Jialing took a deep, deep breath and looked around Li Yao, asking, “Then, where is His Majesty?”

“Here.”

Li Yao waved his Cosmos Ring.

“What!”

Greatly surprised, Li Jialing immediately realized what was going on. He stammered, “His—His Majesty has died?”

“Yes, it was a few days ago. But he was not killed by Dongfang Wang but… Forget it. This is not the place for such a conversation. Follow me. There’s something that is very unbelievable but deeply affects you. I need you to stay calm!”

Li Yao dragged Li Jialing by the hand and swam to the deeper part of the ocean. Very soon, they encountered a crystal suit that was as gorgeous as a mermaid at the entrance of the trench.

The person inside the crystal suit was naturally Long Yangjun.

“Somebody’s here!”

Li Jialing was surprised. “Who is it?”

Li Yao replied, “Dongfang Mingyue.”

“What!”

Li Jialing was greatly scared again. It occurred to him that he would have a heart attack sooner or later if he hung around his mysterious “brother” Li Yao more often. He stammered again, “Isn’t… Isn’t she the most evil and sordid expert under Dongfang Wang’s command, the president of the Association of Demon Hunters, and the she-fiend whose traces are mysterious and whose Cultivation is immeasurable?”

“Exactly?”

Li Yao led Li Jialing to swim to Long Yangjun. “But don’t be scared. This she-fiend has been domesticated by me.”

“What’s going on exactly?”

Li Jialing did not even know how he should feel right now. Finding it hard to believe, he asked, “How is it possible? You’d been away for two hours at most, but you suppressed Dongfang Mingyue, slew Dongfang Wang, and stole the remains of His Majesty? How did you manage it?”

“Very simple.”

Li Yao said, “When I met Dongfang Mingyue, I immediately released my dominant air and said to her solemnly that the trend of the Imperium’s renewal was like an overwhelming tide, and that whoever went along with it would thrive but whoever went against it would die. Now that Dongfang Wang had died and the Dongfang family was about to fall apart, if she were to insist on her follies, not only would she die miserably, she would also be forever cursed by the future generations.

“When I said to her righteously, and Dongfang Mingyue thought about it carefully, she naturally found my points enlightening and persuasive. Then, daunted by my overwhelming strength, and since she had been admiring ‘Vulture Li Yao’ for a long time, knowing that she was no match for me at all, did she have a second option except to surrender to you?”

Li Jialing: “… If possible at all, I really do not want to believe you.”

Li Yao: “The fact is right before our eyes. This is exactly the power of the brand of ‘Vulture Li Yao’ that I have carefully established recently. Now that I have accidentally made my personal image too magnificent and awe-inspiring, the great men in the universe are all coming to me and begging to work for me. I feel rather disturbed too!”

Gritting his teeth, Li Jialing swam to Long Yangjun in silence and observed the crystal suit on her body in suspicion, only to discover that it was indeed an ultimate product of unknown materials and doubtlessly only affordable for the real top-tier experts. He couldn’t help but feel even more shocked.

“You are Li Jialing?”

Long Yangjun giggled and sent a telepathic thought to Li Jialing. “Don’t be nervous. Just call me Sister Mingyue.”

“Sister… Mingyue…”

Li Jialing’s brain seemed to have been bombarded by dense bolts of lightning, and he couldn’t have been more astounded. Did such a casual tone really come from the leader of the “Association of Demon Hunters”, the arguably strongest organization of special agents of the Imperium? Even if she were indeed forced to surrender, she shouldn’t have been so relaxed!

Looking at Long Yangjun and then at Li Yao, the young man had ten thousand question marks emerging from his eyes.

“Take it easy.”

Li Yao said, “This… Sister Dongfang Mingyue has been touched by Brother Yao’s personal charisma. She has decided to do the right thing and be a good person from the bottom of her heart. Therefore, you can trust her as unconditionally as you trust Brother Yao.”

Thinking for a moment, Li Jialing said, “But I do not trust Brother Yao unconditionally!”

“…”

Li Yao coughed and said, “There’s only limited time for us now. Let’s not talk about the unimportant details. All in all, Li Jialing, you must be prepared, because we will tell you the most shocking and devastating news. You must hang in there!”

Li Jialing looked at the… unbelievable combination again and stammered, “Is there anything that can be more shocking than what I’ve seen and heard just now?”

“Yes. According to our accurate analysis and meticulous deduction, it is very possible that your mother is haunted by a ghost. A thousand-year-old ghost, no less.”

Li Yao said solemnly, “That is Blackstar the Great Wuying Qi, the founding emperor of the Imperium of True Human Beings!”

Li Jialing was lost for words. Another thousand question marks popped up in his eyes. Biting his lips and thinking for a long time, he finally managed to ask, “I-I don’t know how I should react now. What are you talking about exactly? Haunted by a ghost? What is that? How did you learn it?”

“There is a term about the spectral Cultivators named ‘old grandpa’. I think you must know it, don’t you? It’s basically a seasoned ghost who tails you all the time and who offers you enlightenment in training or treasure-hunting. Of course, some of the malicious ‘old grandpas’ try to possess a new body so that they can be reborn, or to manipulate the living people as if they are puppets.”

Seeing that Li Jialing nodded, Li Yao went on, “We suspect that your mother has run into such a condition, except that her old grandpa is rather unique and indescribably tough, because it is Blackstar the Great!

“Most of your mother’s strength and resources came from the Empyreal Transcendence Sector, where the Supreme Emperor was buried. Blackstar the Great, in the meantime, had also been to the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum and eventually perished there before his death. Your parents should be the first persons who accidentally trespassed on the Empyreal Terminus Sector and touched Blackstar the Great’s remaining soul. But since your father was an emotionless guy from the Covenant Alliance in the beginning, which was perhaps not suitable for manipulation and possession, Blackstar the Great eventually chose your mother as his ‘host’!”

Li Jialing was rather astounded. He asked in a hurry, “How did you learn it, Brother Yao? How confident are you with your theory?”

“Before his death, Dongfang Wang told me and Long… Dongfang Mingyue a lot of things. By combining what I knew with her intelligence, we have found the astonishing truth.”

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao said, “As for the accuracy, let me put it this way. Based on the known information, it’s about fifty-fifty. However, I can guarantee with 100% confidence that it is true!”

Li Jialing was rather confused. “Wait. If the possibility is only fifty percent according to the intelligence, why are you certain that the queen… my mother is really haunted by a ghost?”

“If I did not observe and participate in the matter, it would’ve ended either well or badly, and the odds would’ve been fifty-fifty.”

Li Yao analyzed solemnly, “However, now that I’ve been involved in this mysterious swirl, the whole thing will only escalate toward the worst direction, and the truth will only be the worst possibility. Therefore, your mother must’ve been haunted by the thousand-year-old ghost that is Blackstar the Great. I’m absolutely positive!”

Li Jialing’s previously golden face turned pale, and he almost cried out. “What-What are you talking about, Brother Yao? You must save my mother!”

“Of course, I also want to save the queen and destroy the unparalleled monster that is Blackstar the Great.”

Li Yao heaved a sigh and said, “However, according to my careful evaluation, it occurs to me that my Cultivation right now seems to be slightly lower than Blackstar the Great’s, and I might not be a match for him if I am not in my best combat state. Therefore, for safety reasons, we better make thorough plans.”

Li Jialing was almost really crying when he grabbed Li Yao by his wrist and asked, “What do you mean by ‘we better make thorough plans’?”

“I mean that we need to wing it. Let’s just run away now. In any case, I do not want to confront the queen right now. Who knows whether or not an invisible old ghost is observing me malevolently behind her when I am bragging about myself in front of her? It is too creepy!”

Li Yao declared quickly, “Also, you must hide yourself, too! I have just analyzed the situation with Dongfang Mingyue just now. If your mother is truly haunted by Blackstar the Great, and Blackstar the Great is up to a certain world-shifting scheme, you must be the key to the scheme, and you are absolutely much more important than me.

“Therefore, you must not fall into the hands of the queen or Blackstar the Great. You are perhaps the only person that can help us reverse the situation!

Chapter 2328 - Good Brother, Let’s Challenge Blackstar the Great!

Chapter 2328 Good Brother, Let's Challenge Blackstar the Great!

Every gold hair on Li Jialing's face and body was rising. Like the most delicate statue, he was dazed for a long time before he finally mumbled to himself, "The only person who can reverse the situation? I… am so important?"

"Definitely."

Li Yao said affirmatively, "Otherwise, how can you explain the queen's erratic attitudes toward you, and why did she offer such an ultimate treasure as 'Imperial Fire Pearl' for us to train with? Yes, I have scanned and experimented on the Imperial Fire Pearl many times, and it certainly does not have anything wrong. But it also has the feature of condensing and purifying the miscellaneous forces. Didn't you say that the forces inside your body were all melted after you absorbed the energy contained inside the Imperial Fire Pearl's energy crazily?

"If my guess is correct, it was some sort of… preparation that the queen, no, Blackstar the Great performed on you with the Imperial Fire Pearl. To put it more simply, it is just like you would have to make a pig grow fat first before you butcher it and enjoy the meat."

Li Jialing was almost crept out. He couldn't help but hold his arms and said, "Is my mother… the queen really cold enough for that?"

“Not exactly. Judging from her inconsistent behavior, it is obvious that she does not regard you as a pure tool or intentionally wants you dead.”

Li Yao sighed. “However, if she is truly under the control of Wuying Qi, how can she defeat the thousand-year-old ghost?”

“Then… What about Brother Yao?”

Li Jialing thought carefully and immediately noticed something was wrong. “You swallowed the strength of the Imperial Fire Pearl too. Also, your share of the Imperial Fire Pearl is even larger. Why aren’t you the key to the whole scheme?”

“The queen only gave the Imperial Fire Pearl to me because she could not give it directly to you without a good reason. Even if she did, you might not know how to digest and absorb the strength inside the Imperial Fire Pearl. That was why she gave it to me and used me as a disguise.”

Li Yao’s head was very clear, as if the brain cells and computational ability that he had saved before were all for this moment. “I cannot be the key to the whole scheme, because my arrival was purely an accident, but the scheme began at least decades ago when the queen established the Deep Sea Fleet. However high Blackstar the Great’s computational ability is, it is impossible that he foresaw my arrival decades ago, isn’t it?

“Therefore, when we inferred the whole scheme, we must completely rule out the ‘unexpected factor’ that is me and consider what would’ve happened if I were never here.

“Then, it is very simple. Without me, ‘Manjusaka, the City in the Sky’ wouldn’t have collapsed, but the assault of

‘Starlight’ and the association of Cultivators would have still taken place on time. The battle of the two parties would still have happened, and it’s very possible that the queen would’ve snuck into the City in the Sky and taken you away.

“I estimate that her original purpose wasn’t to kill you. Well, I mean, Blackstar the Great’s plan was certainly not to kill you but to capture and build you into a certain… artifact, device, or maybe carrier. In any case, you would’ve certainly endured insufferable torture.

“With that in mind, Li Lingfeng’s speculation at the beginning was obviously wrong.

“Think about it. According to Li Lingfeng, the queen’s reason to kill you was that your existence would expose one of her relationships a long time ago, which would lead to severe consequences. He intended to coerce the queen with the ‘scandal’.

“However, if the queen was really backed by Blackstar the Great, why on earth would she have been stopped by Li Lingfeng? If she really wanted you dead, Blackstar the Great could’ve taken action in person. Was Li Lingfeng strong enough to resist him?

“That’s why I argue that Blackstar the Great does not want to kill you.

“In the meantime, if the queen had been under the control of Blackstar the Great, and she was not a woman who was lustful for power and scared of scandals but one who loved my foster father and your birth father, there would’ve been no motivation for her to kill you either. The only reasonable explanation was that she knew that you would suffer the most excruciating suffering had you fallen into Blackstar the Great’s hands before your unavoidable death, which she could not stop. So, she only wanted to give you a quick and clean death!”

Li Jialing almost passed out in shock.

Li Yao spoke faster and faster. “We know now the powerful counterattacks of the reformists after the incident of the Blood Oath Alliance were all carefully arranged beforehand. In other words, the whole scheme had all been set before the queen left the capital for the Martial Meritocrats Sector.

“At such a critical moment, not commanding in the Deep Sea Palace, not fomenting trouble in the frontline, the queen went all the way to the Martial Meritocrats Sector to look for you, didn’t she? Even if she were determined to kill you, she did not need to do it in such a hurry, right? After all, Li Lingfeng and she hadn’t ended up on bad terms yet. Couldn’t she just wait for another couple of years?

“All the evidence suggests that you must be the most crucial part of the whole scheme, so crucial that the queen—or Blackstar the Great—had to drop all the work at hand and find you first!”

After a long silence, Li Jialing struggled to say with an almost suffocated voice. “Fine. If everything Brother Yao said is true, what are we going to do right now?”

Long Yangjun had been listening to Li Yao’s analysis in silence the whole time. It was not until this moment that she chuckled and said casually, “Very simple. Since you are the key to the whole event, and Blackstar the Great cannot activate his scheme without you, I can just kill you right now and burn you up completely, ensuring that not any part of your soul and not a single cell will be left for Blackstar the Great. Isn’t that the perfect solution?”

“What?!”

Greatly alarmed, Li Jialing hurried to hide behind Li Yao out of natural instincts, before he looked at the mysterious “Sister Mingyue” in a cold sweat.

He could tell that… she was not entirely joking!

“Hey, don’t be too outrageous. If I allow that, what kind of Cultivator would I be?”

Li Yao glared at Long Yangjun. “Also, it will be absolutely useless to simply kill Li Jialing. Our enemies include not just one Blackstar the Great but also the Alliance of the Holy Covenant which is coveting in space. We do not know Blackstar the Great’s real scheme yet. Assuming that something about Li Jialing goes wrong, who knows whether or not the thousand-year-old ghost would go mad because of the debacle and drag the entire Imperium to die with him?

“If Blackstar the Great turns the Imperium into a mess and the army of the Covenant Alliance marches in, even ‘Vulture Li Yao’ with my Colossus might not be able to resist them!”

“Not ‘might not’, but ‘certainly can’t’.”

Long Yangjun yawned and said casually, “That’s why I was patient enough to listen to you for such a long time instead of killing this little brat the moment I see him. I’ve shown enough respect for you, right?”

“Brother Yao.”

Li Jialing jostled Li Yao’s back and said, “Is this… Sister Dongfang Mingyue really suppressed by you? Why am I under the impression that the truth should be the opposite, and you’ve been suppressed by her?”

Li Yao blushed. “What are you talking about? It is I who suppressed her, of course. She is only so cold because I hurt her pride during my suppression!

“But don’t be nervous. She is rather kind despite her nasty mouth. She seems to have a secret base in the capital. Let’s hide there for a while, figure out the situation, and contact the righteous men out there before we take any action.”

“The righteous men out there?”

Li Jialing’s eyes shone brightly. “For example, General Lei Chenghu?”

“Well, maybe somebody else.”

Li Yao smiled bitterly. Lei Chenghu was Blackstar the Great’s zealous admirer. During their conversation in the Emperor’s Mausoleum last time, the man even mentioned that he wanted Blackstar the Great to be reborn and clean up all the filth in the Imperium. If Lei Chenghu learned the truth, he would possibly waste no time arriving at the capital to pledge allegiance to Blackstar the Great as his vanguard. How could Li Yao go to Lei Chenghu?

However, of the influential fleet commanders in the Imperium, Li Yao happened to know a certain someone who was his “best friend”. It was said that the guy’s carrier was soaring at the borderland of the Imperium. Last time, Li Yao even asked Han Te, Liu Li, the Fist King, the warriors from the Land of Sins, and the Cultivators of Starlight to join him. It never occurred to Li Yao that he would be asking for the guy’s help in person so shortly.

Boss Bai, we’ve known each other for more than a hundred years. Even if you are busy enjoying your life right now, you cannot turn a blind eye to an old friend, can you?

Li Yao mumbled to himself, Also, if Blackstar the Great really controls the power of the Imperium again, it will be no good for your “Big Bai Space Pirate Gang”. An Imperium of iron and blood that is completely united will not tolerate any pirate gang. Therefore, saving me is also saving yourself!

While he was thinking how to escape from the capital and ask for the help of Bai Xinghe, the Pirate Potentate in the Divinity Transformation Stage, earsplitting shrieks suddenly echoed from his crystal suit.

“Somebody’s here!”

Long Yangjun also sounded a bit nervous.

Li Yao was slightly dazed. Then he sensed that dozens of the most dominating clusters of air sweeping at the center of the ocean like the tentacles of fiends.

“Something’s not right.”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes and perceived the situation at the center of the undersea battlefield, only to discover that the intensity of the undersea battle was dropping but waves were rising on the surface of the ocean.

After he turned on the public communication channel and browsed through the past information carefully, he couldn’t have looked more awful.

The operation to hunt Dongfang Wang and rescue Emperor Shenwu involved more than ten battle-type experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage. It was already a luxury team.

However, even in such a luxury team, few people were at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage.

But right now, “Devilish Abyss” Li Jianyi and “Star Breaker” Song Huanzhen, two experts at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage, as well as their hundreds of personal guards, showed an anomalous behavior?

Also, even the Divinity Transformation Stage had sent hundreds of starships to the sky of the Silver Moon Ocean to “provide firepower reinforcement”!

Chapter 2329 - At the End of the Trench!

Chapter 2329 At the End of the Trench!

Those who had advanced to the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage were all at least two hundred years old. Naturally, they had a lot of disciples and descendants, who, under the tutelage of the Divinity Transformation Stage experts, could mostly reach the Core Formation Stage or the Nascent Soul Stage without much trouble.

When an expert at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage joined a battle, they would often be followed by ten or so or even more squires, who would cooperate with them with lesser Colossi or advanced crystal suits. Those squires were mostly the Divinity Transformation Stage experts' true disciples or biological descendants. Their combat abilities, loyalties, and teamwork were far better than the outsiders.

In the world of ancient Cultivators, those squires would be the greatest reliance for a Divinity Transformation Stage expert to compete for the hegemony of the world. They would always invest tremendous resources and efforts in their squires, and their squires considered their leader to be more important than anything else.

When Li Yao and Ding Lingdang were in the Star Glory Federation, their personal squires were managed by Wu Mayan, Li Yao's true disciple. It was not hard to tell how important the squires were.

Right now, the squires of "Devilish Abyss" Li Jianyi and "Star Breaker" Song Huanzhen, an elder in their respective family, had all been deployed. It was obvious that they couldn't have been attracted by Dongfang Wang who had already kicked the bucket. Then, they certainly had another target…

Also, considering the anomalies of the Deep Sea Fleet, it was hard to not think of Queen Li Linghai. Li Yao was greatly alarmed. “They’re so fast!”

More information came to the communication channel. “Devilish Abyss” Li Jianyi and “Star Breaker” Song Huanzhen had the highest Cultivation, combat ability, and position in their respective family in the “coalition army of the five forces” here. When the two of them led their squires to their commanding ships on the Silver Moon Ocean, it was naturally impossible for anyone to stop them.

Also, the Deep Sea Fleet, commanded by Dongfang Sheng, was observing and suppressing them from nearby. It was said that the four Kurfürst families issued new orders. For a moment, everybody was at a loss about what to do when the commandership was taken away.

The more he thought about it, the more scared Li Yao became. He suddenly bulged his eyes and demanded, “Cut off your communication with the battle network, block all the communication and information transmission channels, and turn off all the power and defense units on the crystal suit. Do not make any spiritual wave spread out!”

His warning came too late.

Long Yangjun and Li Jialing had indeed suppressed the spiritual waves of their crystal suits to the minimum as quickly as possible, yet the water around them immediately squeezed them like a landslide, resulting in the cracking noises on the crystal suit.

The three of them sank to the depths of the ocean like three iron blocks.

However, there was still the coldest wave that passed the trench that they were at. It was like a frigid wind that pierced through their internal organs and limbs.

Li Yao, Long Yangjun, and Li Jialing couldn’t help but shudder hard.

“Damn it. We’ve been noticed. Also, it was probably Blackstar the Great who could scan such a deep trench accurately with his telepathic thoughts through the dark ocean!”

Breathing heavily, Li Yao rolled his eyes and spoke through the point-to-point private channel.

“Right now, Blackstar the Great is still unaware that we have inferred his real identity. It is possible that he is gathering the troops above and below the Silver Moon Ocean. Do you think we can expose his real face if we march out and declare the truth to everyone?”

“Absolutely. But then what?”

Long Yangjun asked back, “Are you sure that you can stop his plan after unveiling him? Don’t forget that he is the founding emperor of the Imperium of True Human Beings. Now that Emperor Shenwu is already dead, who can say that he does not have the legitimacy to succeed the throne? Chances are that other people will kneel before him immediately after you reveal who he is! At the very least, ‘Devilish Abyss’ Li Jianyi and ‘Star Breaker’ Song Huanzhen seem to have betrayed the four Kurfürst families and taken his side.”

“It does make sense.”

Thinking quickly, Li Yao came up with a new plan. “Then, since he is unaware of your existence right now, if you hide in the darkness, is it possible to kill him directly in an ambush?”

Long Yangjun shook her head hard. “No.”

“Why?”

Li Yao raised his voice. “Are you not the reincarnation of a primeval god? Shouldn’t you have a hundred other forms? Can’t you beat him?”

“Primeval god my a*s. We are both carbon-based lives, and we have to abide by the fundamental laws about energy transformation and cell division. If I am as strong as you described, I would’ve slapped you to death already!”

Long Yangjun replied, not in a good mood, “Just think with your pig head. If the primeval gods were so awesome, why is it mankind who survived in the end but not the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan? The air constituents and the energy changes on most of the habitable planets in the three thousand Sectors are no longer suitable for the survival of the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan. It’s almost like putting the human experts on the primordial planets billions of years ago. They would find it difficult to get accustomed to the air and terrain at that time!

“Also, I am not the reincarnation of a primeval god, but an elite human warrior who received the dual refinements of the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan. Essentially speaking, I am still just a common warrior, whereas Blackstar the Great is an excelsior warrior at least among trillions of human beings. How could he be killed by me so easily? What are you thinking about?”

“It does make sense.”

Li Yao mumbled. He narrowed his eyes and looked at the black water above his head where spots of light were bursting out.

In a trance, he seemed to notice a pair of gloomy, profound eyes that were staring back at him.

Shuddering again, Li Yao discovered that his team had fallen into a predicament.

At the bottom of the ocean ten thousand meters deep, in order to run away at the highest speed, they would have to activate the power units and the spiritual shields of their crystal suits to resist the pressure of the water and create a path for themselves.

But as a result, intense spiritual waves would spread out, which would be perceived and followed by the unknown enemy immediately. If the enemy was really Blackstar the Great, Li Yao was not confident to get rid of him.

What if they did not activate their crystal suits?

It was certainly not a joke. While crystal suits were not as monolithic as Colossi, they were metal objects that could easily weigh ten tons. How could the runners prevent their crystal suits from not sinking in the ocean with only the spiritual energy inside their bodies? If they tried to swim forward, they would only be slower than tortoises!

Now that the enemy boasted the experts including “Devilish Abyss” Li Jianyi and “Star Breaker” Song Huanzhen as well as all of their squires, it was only a matter of time that they laid a dragnet to search for the escapers. There was no chance that Li Yao and his companions could run away.

Time was running out. They had to get away before the enemy completely controlled all the troops in the Silver Moon Ocean!

“There is only one solution for us to escape right now.”

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao said, “It is impossible for the three of us to escape simultaneously. We have to send a great hero who is both smart and brave to distract Blackstar the Great so that the other two people can escape through the trench. Otherwise, the three of us will be screwed together!”

After saying that, Li Yao looked at Long Yangjun.

Long Yangjun looked back at Li Yao emotionlessly.

Li Yao: “Well, judging from your face, you are not very interested in carrying out the arduous mission of distraction, are you?”

Long Yangjun: “What do you think? Whether or not Blackstar the Great is reborn, and whatever scheme he may have, why should I care about it at all? I only came to the Imperium to enjoy a new life, and I’d lived quite a few years peacefully and comfortably here. But everything changed the moment you showed up!”

Li Yao: “It does make sense. Then, do you think we should send Li Jialing… Forget it. The worst outcome is just death. I’ll go! The enemy should be unaware of the situation yet. Chances are that I can deceive him and elicit even more intelligence from him. If we figure out what Blackstar the

Great is up to exactly, we will be able to come up with corresponding countermeasures!"

Long Yangjun: "… What a great plan. With your wisdom, you will certainly be manipulating Blackstar the Great like a toy. My concerns are redundant. Then, we'll leave now and meet you at the agreed upon coordinates!"

Long Yangjun waved the crystal fins next to her legs and swam to Li Jialing. Snatching the young man's arm, she said, "Follow me."

"Huh?"

Before Li Jialing realized what was going on, he had already been dragged to the depths of the ocean by Long Yangjun.

Long Yangjun even cut off their communication with Li Yao, in case the enemy followed the traces and caught all the three of them.

"You are really—a fast runner!"

Looking at Long Yangjun and Li Jialing's shadows disappearing in the trench quickly, Li Yao gritted his teeth and unleashed his spiritual energy, swimming to the opposite side of the trench.

Now that he had decided to distract the enemy's attention, there was no need for any disguise. He retrieved "Gold Vulture" at the earliest chance and set all the attack magical equipment to the active state, ready to launch the weapons.

As he submerged deeper and faster, the dozens of cold winds were gradually left behind. It seemed that the top priority for "Devilish Abyss" Li Jianyi, "Star Breaker" Song Huanzhen, and Dongfang Sheng's Deep Sea Fleet was to seize the commandership of all the starships in the Silver Moon Ocean and to suppress the disobedient guys so that the fairly-large troop would be under their control. They had no time to bother with the runners for the time being.

However, the pair of eyes that were even more profound than the trench had been staring at the back of Li Yao’s head the whole time. The stinging coldness went all the way down along his spine, giving him the feeling of fear and intimidation.

Finally—

He reached the end of the trench. There was no way ahead now.

He could either sink to the bottom of the trench to be buried by the water weighing billions of tons or rise to the surface of the ocean and confront the owner of the terrifying eyes.

Calculating the time, Li Yao estimated that Long Yangjun and Li Jialing should be far away now. He took a deep breath and surfaced.

Hardly had the Gold Vulture leaped out of the trench when he detected the giant iron ball that was full of tentacles that were dancing crazily like vipers.

In the gloomy water thousands of meters deep, Li Yao in his “Gold Vulture” and Li Linghai in her “Hellstar” floated and confronted each other in silence.

Chapter 2330 - Li Yao Versus Blackstar!

“It’s me.”

Li Linghai sent a soul signature to Li Yao, proving her identity. Then, she asked Li Yao to turn on the point-to-point communication channel, “Why are you escaping as if you have done something wrong?”

“It’s—It’s you, Your Grace?”

Rolling his eyes crazily, Li Yao adjusted that power rune arrays and the attack units of the Gold Vulture without a sound while he detected the terrain of the undersea world and calculated every detail on the battlefield accurately. He simply said, “Why are you suddenly here, Your Grace, and equipped with such a brutal Colossus? I thought you were an expert on Dongfang Wang’s side!”

“Is that so? You were fleeing because you encountered an expert on Dongfang Wang’s side? That does not seem like the style of the magnificent ‘Vulture Li Yao’.”

Li Linghai mocked him but did not pursue the issue any further. Instead, she released a few mystic rays to scan Li Yao’s surroundings. “Where is Li Jialing? Isn’t he your servant? Why is he not fighting together with you?”

“About that…”

Li Yao thought quickly. Now that it was impossible to hide Li Jialing’s whereabouts, he simply threw out an unexpected answer. “You must brace yourself for what I am going to say next, Your Grace. Li Jialing had just… perished!”

“What!”

Li Linghai shrieked but immediately realized what was going on. Her voice suddenly turned extremely cold and gloomy. “You dare trick me?”

“I certainly daren’t. There are so many desperate experts on Dongfang Wang’s side, and they could do all kinds of insane things in their hopelessness. Even I could not protect Li Jialing’s safety in the chaos!”

Li Yao naturally knew that Li Linghai would never believe the bulls*it. But what he really intended to ask was the next question. “Why do I feel you are very anxious, Your Grace? Aren’t you too addicted to power to care about blood bonds, and you even tried to kill Li Jialing many times in the beginning? Your wish is somewhat fulfilled now that Li Jialing is really dead, isn’t it?”

After a brief silence, Li Linghai indeed calmed down. She said casually, “You’re right. Then, let’s go. Come back with me.”

While talking, she swam to Li Yao with “Hellstar”.

Intimidated, Li Yao back off nonstop. The feathers on the Gold Vulture all erected, ready to shoot at the enemy like bullets at any moment. He acted as if he were confronting a great enemy.

Li Linghai stopped and said coldly, “You seem to grow scared of me overnight.”

“That can’t be right.”

Li Yao smiled drily. “Hahahaha. Your Grace, you are so kind and approachable, and you’ve brought me the warmth that I never experienced. Why would I be scared of you?”

Li Linghai said, “Then, why are you so vigilant and unwilling to return with me?”

Thinking for a long time, Li Yao said, “What if I say… that I’m tired of the bloody life and I want to live somewhere isolated and peaceful as a hermit? Well, it does not seem very convincing, does it?”

Li Linghai said, “It does not.”

Li Yao swallowed, lost for words.

Li Linghai chuckled. The hundred metal tentacles seemed to be dancing as she said unhurriedly, “It seems that you have truly learned something you shouldn’t have learned. Tell me about it. How much do you know, and where did you know it from?”

Li Yao had been pushed into desperation. Also, he estimated that he had bought Long Yangjun enough time for her to bring Li Jialing out of the battlefield. To find them, it would be as tricky as to fish for a needle in the ocean.

Now that he had no more concerns, he was free to make one last attempt. Roaring brutally, Li Yao declared, “Exactly. I have indeed learned everything about you. Blackstar the Great Wuying Qi, come on out now. I know that you must be hiding inside the queen’s body!

“Your Grace, Li Linghai! If this is the message you intended to deliver to me, I have completely solved the puzzle! I don’t know whether you are cooperating with him because you are forced by him or because you are bewildered by him, but I only want to remind you that cooperating with such a sordid, shameless, brutal, bloodthirsty, untrustworthy, nation-stealing thief like Blackstar the Great is like asking a tiger for its hide. You will certainly not end well!

“If my guess is correct, Wuying Qi does not boast the abilities to take action independently. Even if he can, his combat ability is as weak as a chicken, right? That is why he has to trick and manipulate you! Once he really recovers 100% of his combat ability, you will be the first person that he kills, Li Linghai! Because such a ‘Blackstar the Great’ will not tolerate anyone who has seen him when he’s at his most vulnerable state and who grasps his greatest secrets!”

“Shut up!”

Li Linghai’s most twisted voice came from deep inside “Hellstar”. “Just retreat your silver tongue. You know nothing. You know nothing at all! His Majesty is a real Immortal Cultivator and the savior of mankind. The Imperium cannot survive without His Majesty!”

“That’s bulls*it! You’ve been fooled by him, Li Linghai! It is exactly because of the sh*tty system Wuying Qi set up a thousand years ago that the Imperium has grown awry from the root! That’s the origin of all the messes and corruptions in the Imperium today! He is the ultimate culprit for everything!”

Confirming that Li Linghai was indeed stalled by Blackstar the Great, Li Yao spoke even more loudly, “He is no different from the selfish Immortal Cultivators, except that he hide better and knows how to camouflage himself with lies! Trust me. This path is not going to work out. If you really want to save yourself, Li Jialing, and everybody else, just hold him back with your best. The two of us can certainly come up with a way to skin, mince, and obliterate him after we join our hands!

“Li Linghai! Li… Your Grace? What’s happening, Your Grace? Can you hear me? Hey, hey, hey. Hang in there, Your Grace. You must hold him back. You must!”

There was nothing but silence in Hellstar.

However, the eyes that looked like black holes around the Colossus were suddenly widened to the maximum, blowing a foul, violent, dark force deep into Li Yao’s brain.

Huala!

For a moment, countless black bubbles were leaking out of Hellstar, and the water hundreds of meters around was completely boiled. Infinite venom seemed to have been injected into it, turning the bottom of the trench into utter darkness, making it impossible to tell whether they were in the deep ocean or in the middle of a certain mysterious but powerful “domain”!

When Li Linghai was using the Colossus, the six enormous faces on Hellstar all closed their eyes with dumb looks, as if they were sleeping.

But right now, the twelve eyes on the six fiendish faces had opened at the same time!

“What did you say?”

“Hellstar” was ten times more dominating than before, giving Li Yao the impression that a high mountain had just risen before him. The voice that came from “Hellstar’ was no longer sharp and hasty either, but instead, it was a deep, soft, and thick voice, like a bottomless swamp that was spurting out venom nonstop. “What did you compare my combat ability to? And what were you going to do to me?”

He’s… He’s really here!

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao stared at the soaring parameters on the main interface of the Gold Vulture, all his cold sweat vaporized.

Although the enemy’s Colossus was floating in the deep ocean in stillness, a few several performance parameters had already been off the limits. One bloody question mark after another popped up on the interface, which meant that the target’s battle performance was beyond evaluation!

Although Li Yao had swallowed the violent strength inside the Imperial Fire Pearl, the improvement of Cultivation was never so simple. If engaged in a life-and-death battle, he could not even defeat Li Linghai in the regular state, much less her in the ultimate state enhanced by Blackstar the Great’s remaining soul.

Now that he could not defeat the enemy with his strength, he could only try to beat her with his unparalleled wisdom and resolution!

“N-No, I didn’t say anything!”

Rolling his eyes quickly, Li Yao hurried to put on a smile. “Are you… Blackstar the Great? Misunderstanding, it’s all a misunderstanding!”

“Hellstar” fell silent for a moment again. Blackstar the Great Wuying Qi was amused. “What a flexible ‘Vulture Li Yao’. You are a great eye-opener for me. I thought that all the Cultivators were mulish, stubborn idiots who would not retreat even when they hit a wall. I didn’t know that there would be such interesting variants like you after a thousand years.

“I like smart people who know what’s best for them. So, if you say it’s a misunderstanding, so be it. I can spare your disrespect just now and give you an opportunity to serve me.

“Naturally, now that you know who I am, you should know that I will never keep a Cultivator by my side. Come on. Abandon the hypocritical, sanctimonious ideas of the Cultivators and be an Immortal Cultivator on my side!”

“Hellstar” extended a metal tentacle at Li Yao.

After a sniff, Li Yao hesitated and said, “I don’t seem to have a second option right now, do I?”

Blackstar the Great replied, “What do you think?”

Li Yao heaved a long sigh. “Fine. Your Majesty is unfathomably strong. I’m absolutely no match for you. Besides, I’ve read a lot of classics on the true path of immortality these days and find them very reasonable. They almost opened a gate to a new world for me. Perhaps the true path of immortality is indeed more suitable for survival in this dark, cold universe than the path of the Cultivators.

“Besides, Firefly has exploded, the Star Ocean Republic is completely gone, and I am the last Cultivator in the entire universe right now. What can I possibly achieve?

“Since the true path of immortality is the inevitable, would I be asking to be killed if I do not follow it? Then, I would like to be an Immortal Cultivator and pledge loyalty to Your Majesty!”

“Enough.”

Blackstar the Great scorned, “Your change is rather fast.”

“You have to be fast if a knife is stuck to your neck.”

Li Yao said rather in embarrassment, “Just now, I thought that Your Majesty hasn’t recovered all your capabilities yet. That was why I was bold enough to make the insane proposal. I did not know that Your Majesty was so immeasurably strong that you could crumble me into pieces with only the little finger even if only thirty percent of your strength had been recovered. I managed to escape from Firefly, which was a living hell, through all difficulties, and I haven’t enjoyed my new life enough yet. Wouldn’t it be a great shame if it is lost for no good reason?

“All in all, I have completely thought it through. Starting from this second, no, the last second, I have become a glorious and great Immortal Cultivator. Wow. I truly feel that I have been reborn! The whole world looks different in my eyes now! Long live Your Majesty, long live the Imperium, and long live the truth path of immortality!”

Chapter 2331 - Put Out the Fire that You Started!

Chapter 2331 Put Out the Fire that You Started!

Blackstar the Great showed neither approval nor disapproval. “Is that so?”

“Of course it is!”

Li Yao declared resolutely and touchingly, “I have truly understood how wrong and hilarious I was in the past! From this moment on, I will not hesitate at all to sacrifice for Your Majesty and the Imperium! I know that such a change is a bit abrupt, but it doesn’t matter. Please just wait and see my performance in the future, Your Majesty!”

Blackstar the Great sniffed. “I’m neither patient nor fond of the people who prefer talking to doing. You don’t have to describe your loyalty at all but only need to show me. I’ll give you the coordinates of a random town in the underground world, and you will slaughter each and every hominoid in the town without leaving out any. If you can do that, I will naturally believe you and regard you as a trusted subordinate like what Li Linghai did.”

Li Yao immediately turned rigid, not knowing what to say anymore.

Blackstar the Great smiled casually. “Or maybe such trouble is unnecessary. If someone like you escapes to the underground districts, you may cause too much trouble.

“Right now, a thousand crystal warships are hovering above our heads, and each of them is carrying a lot of hominoid soldiers. I’ll name a random warship, and you will kill all the hominoid soldiers on board. If you can do that, I’ll also be convinced that you are sincerely hoping to be an Immortal Cultivator!”

Li Yao took a deep breath and managed to calm himself down before he said, “Are you serious, Your Majesty? There will be no room for negotiation at all if you are so pushy.”

Blackstar the Great burst into laughter. The tentacles around him waved even more crazily, almost like the head of a demon whose hair was snakes. It was not until the water around had been boosted into violent swirls by his laughter that he said unhurriedly, “… That’s why I like Cultivators like you far better than I like the ‘fake Immortal Cultivators’ in the four Kurfürst families.

“Those selfish, fake Immortal Cultivators do not have any pride, belief, or boundaries. They are just a bunch of worms driven by their natural instincts for survival. If they were engaged in such a situation, they would raise their weapons without any hesitation. Not just killing several hominoids that they do not know, even if I demand that they kill their parents, they will not bat an eye at all but kill them in great joy!

“With that in mind, it is hard to tell the ‘fake Immortal Cultivators’ from the ‘real Immortal Cultivators’ quickly. A thousand years ago, it was exactly because I couldn’t recognize their differences that the misery of the Imperium today took its place!

“But Cultivators like you are different. Despite all your fancy talks and camouflages, there are always some lines that you will never cross. When you have a line, you will have a weakness and can easily be shattered!

“Therefore, I’m not lying that I truly appreciate and like you. I also cannot wait to conquer you now. It’s been a thousand years since I conquered a real Cultivator. How I miss that wonderful feeling! Haha. Hahahaha!”

Li Yao was almost crept out. He spat on the ground hard and shouted, “Old fart, I did not know that you were such a pervert. I will never be… conquered by you even if I die!”

“You will.”

Blackstar the Great said casually, “I’ve seen too many Cultivators like you a thousand years ago. The more firm you are in your hypocritical beliefs, the faster you will slide to the other end after they are shattered by reality. Cultivators and Immortal Cultivators are the two sides of the same coin in the first place. The most unwavering Cultivators always tend to become the purest and most zealous Immortal Cultivators.

“The worms without beliefs and bones, on the other hand, were the corrupted MPs who were at positions that they did not deserve in the Star Ocean Republic. In the Imperium of True Human Beings, even if they became the nobles and Sector Masters, raising the banner of the Immortal Cultivators, did that mean that they really believed in the true path of immortality?

“They couldn’t care less about being a Cultivator or an Immortal Cultivator. The ideas that we cherish and fight for are nothing but tools to earn money and save their lives.

“Therefore, if it weren’t absolutely necessary, I wouldn’t want to trust any of the people of the Kurfürst families. The Cultivators like you, on the other hand, will be my right-hand man if you are completely conquered! I… really don’t want to kill you. So, do not ask to be killed, and do not fail my expectations.

“Come on, Vulture Li Yao, abandon your stupid ideas and stand by my side! I know that it is not going to be easy for you to make such a great transformation, so I’ll give you plenty of time! Even if you cannot kill a whole starship of hominoid soldiers, as long as you can kill ten of them—no, only one of them, I will believe in your sincerity for now!”

Li Yao thought for a moment and asked, “Well, can I find a hominoid soldier and break his arm for a start? I guarantee that I will be very brutal!”

Blackstar the Great: “… Vulture Li Yao, I thought that you were a smart guy. It never occurred to me that you are as idiotic as other Cultivators. You are such a disappointment!

“Why do the self-righteous Cultivators like you never understand the meaning of the true path of immortality and my purpose? Everything I do is for a single purpose—to build up the civilization of mankind! Right now, the Imperium is faced with trouble both from inside and from outside. Inside, there are the four Kurfürst families fomenting trouble blatantly; outside, the army of the Covenant Alliance is coveting us and may launch a counterattack at any moment. At such a moment of life and death, who else can unite all the people of the country except me after I am reborn, and who else can save the Imperium and our civilization?

“Vulture Li Yao, are you not an open-minded Cultivator? Did you not cooperate with Li Linghai who was an Immortal Cultivator? Why are you so hostile against me and unwilling to cooperate? My purpose is exactly also to ‘Honor the

Majesty and Settle the Rebellions' and to renew the Imperium. Nothing more!

"Are you also deceived by the shameless vilifications of me by the four Kurfürst families in the past hundreds of years? Hehe. Those are all lies. That's the dirty water they threw on me. The establishment of the Imperium of True Human Beings a thousand years ago was nothing like that!"

"Wrong!"

Inside the Gold Vulture, Li Yao grabbed the saber tightly, with the bright gold flames dancing on the edge. He declared, one word after another, "It is true that nobody can tell what happened a thousand years ago and whether your cause was justified.

"But just look at everything you've done a thousand years later for your rebirth and to reclaim power, and it will be easy to tell your personality!

"If you had returned to the Imperium openly, declaring to the public that Blackstar the Great had been reborn with a new life and summoning all your supporters to fight for the supreme power, I would've regarded you as a real man!

"However, you stealthily haunted the queen of the Imperium, stealthily built the Deep Sea Fleet and gathered the reformists, and most importantly of all, you stealthily assassinated an elder of the Dongfang family to frame other people up, creating the situation where most of the reformists, as well as General Lei Chenghu, had to join you. Such shameless methods are exactly pushing people to go to Liangshan[1]!"

"Wait—"

Blackstar the Great frowned and asked, “What is ‘pushing people to go to Liangshan’?”

Li Yao: “… It’s an idiom on Firefly in the recent thousand years. All in all, my bottom line is that you are a shameless person who has resorted to any means possible, including lies, deceptions, and assassinations, in order to usurp the supreme power! I did not know that the whole thing was your plan at the beginning. That was why I was stupid enough to cooperate with Li Linghai. Now that I have learned that everything is all part of a plot, I will certainly not be your accomplice anymore regardless of whether or not you exist!”

“It’s all about politics. If I had returned ‘openly’ like you just said, I would’ve been killed by the rebels of the four Kurfürst families.”

Blackstar the Great sniffed and said, “Those who accomplish great things are not hindered by trivial matters. What I pursue is the rise of the Imperium and the eternality of the civilization of mankind. Any method can be adopted and anybody can be sacrificed for the two purposes!”

“Trivial matters? I’ll be damned if I believe you. Your shameless tricks are likely to raise a comprehensive civil war in the Imperium, giving the Covenant Alliance an opportunity to take advantage. Is that a ‘trivial matter’?”

Li Yao laughed aloud. But his eyes were suddenly frozen in the middle of his laughter. Frowning hard, he mumbled, “Wait, wait, wait. I got it now. I’m afraid that the whole Imperium’s counterattack was part of your scheme, and your ultimate purpose was not to recover the lost territory but to stretch out the battle line as long as possible so that the troops of the four Kurfürst families would be diverted and exhausted. Eventually, when the Covenant Alliance initiates a powerful counterattack, the main-force fleets of the four Kurfürst families will be diminished to the most extent.

“That’s right. You knew that it was impossible to crush the Covenant Alliance in only one war, which would only raise the most intense counterattack of the Covenant Alliance and push the entire Imperium to the brink of a precipice!

“If the four Kurfürst families were as powerful as before and the situation within the Imperium were steady, who would’ve bothered you? Those who are too old should just die. Your time had already passed a thousand years ago!

“Therefore, only by sabotaging the stability of the Imperium as much as possible and using the Covenant Alliance to weaken the four Kurfürst families could you create the illusion that everybody was dying and only the rebirth of Blackstar the Great could rescue the Imperium. That’s the only way for the forces in the Imperium who had been mired in desperation as well as the remaining troops of the four Kurfürst families to listen to your command!

“In other words, the situation did not develop to what it is today ‘by accident’ but has been carefully planned by you the whole time. The Covenant Alliance, the reformists, the four families, the citizens of the Imperium, the true human beings, the hominoids… Everybody is your chess piece!

“A*shole, your shamelessness and brutality have indeed far exceeded my expectations. Is that any different from a firefighter who put out the fire that he started himself in order to win the cheers of the public and the copious awards?”

[1] Being forced to go to Liangshan” is an idiom that means “being driven to drastic alternatives

Chapter 2332 - A Valiant Cultivator!

Chapter 2332 A Valiant Cultivator!

Blackstar the Great was silent for a moment. Instead of denying it, he simply said, “I will certainly extinguish the savaging fire of the Covenant Alliance that has been on a rampage for a thousand years and save the Imperium and our civilization.”

Li Yao raised his voice and said, “What if you fail? What if your calculation is wrong? It doesn’t matter if you are burned by the fire that you started, but everybody else will die with you too!”

“No ‘what if’!”

Blackstar the Great roared, “Without me, the Imperium would still rot and decline gradually, and there would be no future for our civilization either! With that in mind, it is better to play a wild gamble! If you are sincerely considering the civilization of mankind, you should stand by my side!”

Holding back his humming eardrums, Li Yao gnashed his teeth. “Just because the Covenant Alliance and the four Kurfürst families aren’t anything decent does not mean that you are a savior of mankind! Old fart, I will never bend to a scumbag like you! You’ve been completely deranged!”

Blackstar the Great burst into laughter. “I am not deranged; I am going to lead the civilization of mankind to stomp on all the deities and devils in the entire universe!”

“In your dream.”

Li Yao said brutally, “You already failed once a thousand years ago. Now, a thousand years have passed. Even if you can be splendid for a while, your enterprise will immediately fall apart after you kick the bucket one day. Your reign is consolidated purely through lies, violence, and schemes, which will only be destroyed by lies, violence, and schemes that are twice greater someday!”

With a mysterious smile, Blackstar the Great extended his tentacles at Li Yao. “I already have a perfect solution to solve the problem of insubordination in the local areas once and forever. The Imperium will only be stronger and stronger even ten thousand years later. Come on, join the side of the Immortal Cultivators, and I’ll certainly tell you my ‘ultimate plan’!”

Solemnly, Li Yao turned it down on the spot. “Wuying Qi, just give it up. Those of different beliefs can never cooperate. I will not take your side ever. Just leave now. I don’t want to see you again!”

Blackstar the Great was slightly dazed before he burst into fury and snapped, “You don’t know what you are doing. After a thousand years, you Cultivators are still as idiotic as before!”

“Hehe. Hahahahaha!”

Li Yao finally tore off all the camouflages and burst into wild laughter. “It is you who are really idiotic, old fart. It used to be ‘Vulture Li Yao’ who was deceived and stalled by the enemy in the past. Finally, it is my turn to buy myself enough time with empty talks!”

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Hardly had he concluded his sentence when the bright gold flames around his Colossus became a hundred times more dazzling. It was almost bursting out nonstop like gold fireworks, illuminating the dark and thick water into a splendid palace!

In the most stunning view, the Gold Vulture's feathers were erecting like unsheathed sabers and colliding with each other into the most complicated and gorgeous patterns, as if countless eyes had been opened on the broad wings.

The saber that had already ripped apart countless crystal warships, enshrouded in the gold brilliance, seemed to have expanded by ten times all of a sudden. It was even more eye-catching than the Colossus itself!

Li Yao's soul power was also increasing like a serial explosion.

All of Blackstar the Great's tentacles were straightened while he shrieked, "What exactly did you do?"

"Nothing important."

With a miserable smile, Li Yao said casually, "I just swallowed more than three hundred dosages of strengthening drugs, almost draining the goods that Li Linghai offered to me. Then, with the strengthening drugs as catalysts, I… completely unleashed my vitality and my soul power.

"It did take me some time to digest and absorb the three hundred dosages of strengthening drugs. That was why I talked to you for such a long time just now. Please do forgive me. Right now, I have been boosted in the unprecedented, strongest form. Let's fight!"

“You—”

Blackstar the Great said sullenly, “Swallowing more than three hundred strengthening drugs of the highest purity equals to completely burning up your soul. After the battle, you will be crippled if not killed immediately. Are you not scared?”

“Haha. Hahahaha. What’s scary about death? Does the so-called death not mean the reunion with my family and friends who perished on Firefly?”

Li Yao laughed in the despondent way but also with some eagerness. “After the Star Ocean Republic was destroyed in the internal strife on Firefly, my family and my friends were all killed in the catastrophe in the most ghastly way. Even I did something that I terribly regretted and could barely think about later!

“Escaping from the remains of Firefly and wandering in the sea of stars like a zombie, I did not know why I was still alive. I asked myself ten thousand times why I did not die together with my family and friends, and why I did… that thing like an animal!”

While he was talking, Li Yao was choked by his sobs, as if he could not go on anymore. With the relief that almost sounded like “everything is finally over now”, he chuckled and went on, “After I drifted to the Imperium and found Li Linghai, I fulfilled my last mission, and my life was no longer of any significance. But Li Linghai promised me that I could be given a world that ran according to the rules of the Cultivators. It would be a small civilization of Cultivators.

“I was thinking of living for that purpose. It would also be repentance for what I did in the past.

“However, your appearance has completely shattered my final hope again!

“Such a reality is just a hell for me, in which I am more miserable than being dead. Now that my last hope has been broken, I only want to die a hero’s death like a real Cultivator!

“Haha, speaking of which, I am truly fortunate. What befits a hero’s death more than fighting against Blackstar the Great and causing him heavy wounds?”

Blackstar the Great said coldly, “How little do you know yourself and me that makes you think you can cause me heavy wounds?”

“Cut the crap!”

Li Yao laughed aloud. “Don’t think that I can’t tell it. Despite the performance parameters of your Colossus and the astonishing forging work, it has just been through a fierce battle, and all the magical equipment units are seriously worn out. In order to disguise it, you have covered yourself with so much ink like an octopus, turning the environment murky and creepy. But you can never fool my eyes!

“As for yourself, you are nowhere near as strong as you were in your prime days. I must’ve overestimated you when I said that you recovered thirty percent of your strength!

“Also, controlling Li Linghai’s body as a remaining soul comes with a price, doesn’t it? A fierce battle in such a state must’ve caused severe damage to your remaining soul, possibly even resulting in sequela, right?

“Otherwise, how could you have tolerated me talking nonsense for such a long time without cutting me into pieces? Not just you, if I were in your shoes, I would’ve cut myself into pieces!

“Therefore, your camouflage has been seen through, Blackstar the Great. I will let you pay the greatest price even if I must die today. Your ambitions and your schemes will all be dragged into hell together with me, to be gone with the last Cultivator!”

Li Yao’s voices were like undercurrents below the ocean. They were even triggering thousands of dense bubbles in the dark gold water!

The indestructible saber inside the hands of his Colossus could not take in the explosive energy flowing in from Li Yao incessantly anymore. Thousands of cracks appeared on the surface, and it exploded entirely!

A shocking scene took place. After exploding into hundreds of thousands of gold scraps, the saber was gathered again under the envelopment of Li Yao’s vitality field and smashed at “Hellstar” overwhelmingly in a gold torrent!

Blackstar the Great sniffed. The hundred metal tentacles on “Hellstar” interwoven into an arc-shaped net that completely stopped the gold torrent made of Li Yao’s broken saber!

Even if some of the scraps did penetrate through the metal net, they were still devoured by the dark spiritual shield surrounding “Hellstar”!

The attack did not cause any damage to “Hellstar”.

Li Yao did not even blink, because he had seen it coming. If Blackstar the Great could be killed so easily, he wouldn’t have been qualified to be the ancestor of all Immortal

Cultivators. The only reason he broke his saber to launch the attack was to buy him more time so that he could prepare for the tougher move.

When the gold aftermath of the attack gradually dispersed in the black water, all the feathers on the two wings of the Gold Vulture that had been fully stretched out dashed out in gold brilliance. Drawing mysterious and uncanny curves, they condensed into swords and sabers in different shapes in the middle of the water.

Despite the pressure of the water that weighed billions of tons, all the swords and sabers were still roaring astoundingly. Li Yao also cried out, “Old fart, don’t ever forget my name. I am—Cultivator Li Yao!”

In the wild laughter, he launched the final attack with the determination of a moth darting at a fire.

The mainframe crystal processor of “Hellstar” shrieked crazily, and Blackstar the Great’s eyes were also completely occupied by the furiously burning gold brilliance.

“… Unreasonable Cultivators.”

Mumbling, he frowned and slightly retreated.

The Cultivators a thousand years ago and those a thousand years later were no different. They were all fond of proving themselves with death. While Li Yao’s final attack that was exchanged with his life and soul was vehement, it was not aimed at the target accurately. There was no need for Blackstar the Great to have a head-on clash with such a man who was seeking death.

It was not until the hundred gold swords and sabers brushed past him that he vaguely sensed the differences between the hundred torrents and real attacks. His pupils were constricted to the minimum.

Wait. Why was the enemy’s attack which was earned with his life not half as powerful as it looked? Not good!

When Blackstar the Great’s sharp eyes tore apart the gold water before him, he immediately saw that, under the disguise of the so-called “final attack”, Li Yao was fleeing as fast as he could inside the Gold Vulture!

It was rather incredible. Li Yao’s escape was as smooth and seamless as the flowing mercury on the ground, and his routes were utterly random and unpredictable. The moment the hundred swords and sabers were launched, he had already dashed to more than ten kilometers away in the heavy water. His fluent movements were truly enjoyable and impressive!

“Cultivator Li Yao!”

Blackstar the Great was dumbfounded at first, but he soon burst into fury and shouted at Li Yao with his telepathic thoughts, “Were you not going to die a hero’s death? But you are—running!”

“Who says that I’m running?”

Rushing at the highest speed, Li Yao threw back a telepathic thought without turning around. “I am clearly going to ambush you from your back after I circle the whole planet at a lightning-like speed. This is actually my ultimate skill. Just stand there and wait if you are a real man!”

Chapter 2333 - The Price of the Divinity Transformation Stage!

Chapter 2333 The Price of the Divinity Transformation Stage!

Behind Li Yao, it was an undersea plateau that did not have any obstacles. With Blackstar the Great's Cultivation, he could've caught up to the enemy in the blink of an eye.

However, when Li Yao chatted with Wuying Qi to buy more time, he secretly asked the mental devil to dig holes on the underground plateau with Neltharion and planted enough crystal bombs in the holes.

When Wuying Qi chased after him furiously inside his "Hellstar", Li Yao detonated the crystal bombs with his telepathic thoughts. Clusters of black smoke that looked like mud immediately burst out, rising from the bottom of the ocean like thousands of pillars. Wuying Qi's eyes and other senses were greatly disrupted.

Li Yao boosted the power units of the Gold Vulture to such an extent that they might fall apart at any moment when he rushed to almost a hundred kilometers away without any stop. Wuying Qi's "Hellstar" had completely submerged in the darkness, as if he had been left behind.

However, Wuying Qi's infuriated voice was still following him like a parasite. "You think that you can get rid of me with such petty tricks? I will certainly catch you today and open your skull and see how different a freak's brain is from the Cultivators a thousand years ago!"

“Just save it. There were too many guys in the universe who hated my guts and wanted to skin and mince me, but right now, their own skins and bones had all been made into drums that were beaten every day, and I am still as alive as can be!”

While running, Li Yao laughed hard. “I did not get my moniker of ‘King of Counterattack’ for nothing. You want to catch me? Wait until you completely recover your strength!”

Wuying Qi bellowed, and the speed of “Hellstar” was immediately ten times higher. Dozens of metal tentacles darted out rapidly like flying swords at exactly the direction where Li Yao’s laughter came from.

But out of his expectation, his attack hit nothing except the seawater.

As it turned out, Li Yao had foreseen that his enemy would be tracing his every movement. His last telepathic wave had actually been transmitted using the reflection of a magical equipment unit that had been carved with quake rune arrays. Li Yao’s real body was naturally somewhere else.

Narrowing his eyes deeply, Wuying Qi spread out his telepathic thoughts to all directions and locked onto Li Yao’s body again very soon.

Watching Li Yao, who was fleeing fast and stealthily inside the Gold Vulture that was supposed to be majestic and magnificent, Wuying Qi did not even know how he should feel. He gnashed his teeth and snapped, “I don’t understand. If you are so scared of death, why do you not surrender to me? I guarantee that I will spare your life!”

“Even an ant craves to live. I went through all the trouble to advance into the Divinity Transformation Stage. There are many places that I haven’t visited and many great things I haven’t done. Of course I don’t want to die!”

Li Yao half ran and half crawled while he shouted, “However, living in a world governed by you is even more insufferable than death for me! All in all, you cannot force anyone into sincerely obeying you. A word of advice: don’t come any closer. I still have the most terrifying and brutal skill that I have yet to perform. I am not lying. Don’t push me to carry out my ultimate attack!”

Blackstar the Great sneered nonstop. Like a hybrid of a metal sea urchin and a giant squid, “Hellstar” was faster and faster as the black fog spurted out, until all the metal tentacles around the body were connected at the end into two giant drills, one in the front and the other at the back, making the Colossus look like a weirdly-shaped shuttle.

After assuming the new shape, the Colossus moved in the water ten times more efficiently than before. “Hellstar” darted at Li Yao in a streak of blackness, covering the dozens of kilometers in between in the blink of an eye.

The metal feathers on the wings of the Gold Vulture had just been shot out. The only thing left was the skeleton. Li Yao simply held them on the back to block the crash of “Hellstar”. But after the collision, the skeleton was broken apart and blown away.

“Pu!”

Inside the cockpit of the Gold Vulture, Li Yao vomited a mouthful of blood crazily. He felt that the evilest energy flowed into his body through the gaps on the Colossus together with the intense collision of “Hellstar”. Ten thousand ants seemed to be nibbling his nerve endings and veins, and thousands of terrible illusions were popping up inside his head too.

“Huh, what a familiar feeling.”

The mental devil exclaimed in shock, “Tenebrum energy! What Blackstar the Great uses is not the spiritual energy but the tenebrum energy that belongs to the extraterrestrial devils!”

…

In the opposite direction of Li Yao and Wuying Qi’s fierce battle, thousands of kilometers away, deep inside the Silver Moon Ocean, Long Yangjun slowly sank to the bottom of the ocean together with Li Jialing and found a supply station.

The supply station that was hidden beneath the mud at the bottom of the ocean was originally prepared by Di Feiwen for his escape in secret. Weapons, ammunitions, crystals, fuel, medicines, fin kits that could increase the speed of the crystal suit in the deep ocean… Everything useful could be found here.

Dongfang Wang died because of traitors, and all the traitors had been finished off by Long Yangjun. Naturally, Long Yangjun was the only one left who was aware of the accurate coordinates of the dozens of undersea supply stations, which were enough to support them to sneak to the continental shelf without a sound and enter the underground towns deep inside the chasms on the main continent through the secret tunnels on the continental shelf.

“Kid, just wait here.”

Long Yangjun knocked on Li Jialing’s head and hinted him to crawl into the narrow supply station. “I’ll be back soon.”

“Sister… Dongfang.”

After a brief hesitation, Li Jialing emboldened himself to ask, “Are you going back to rescue Brother Yao?”

Long Yangjun sniffed softly and said, “It remains to be seen whether I will rescue him, but if his enemy is really Blackstar the Great, how can I miss the spectacular show where ‘Vulture Li Yao’ is thrashed and tormented by Blackstar the Great?”

“Is that so?”

Li Jialing looked at Long Yangjun in suspicion. He finally couldn’t hold it back anymore. “Sister Dongfang, you and Brother Yao must’ve met a long time ago and not just recently, right?”

“You are rather smart, kid.”

Long Yangjun said casually, “Why do you say that?”

“I am just young, but I’m not stupid. If the two of you were not close to each other, why would you risk your life to come back and save him when the enemy is very likely to be Blackstar the Great?”

Li Jialing had his answer, but his confusion was not answered at all, and his curiosity was almost stuffing his stomach. Thinking for a long time, he still found it hard to believe. “But how is it possible? How could Brother Yao have known you a long time ago? What’s your relationship exactly? Are you… a couple?”

“A couple?”

Long Yangjun was amused. “Come on, kid. Let me ask you a question. What do you think is the most important thing for a couple?”

“The most important thing for a couple?”

Bulging his eyes, Li Jialing thought for a long time. “Mutual interest? Devotion? Fidelity? Trust?”

“Wrong. It’s sex!”

Long Yangjun curled her finger and tapped the young man’s forehead neither too lightly nor too heavily. “Let me ask you another question. If you were a woman, could you imagine yourself having sex with Li Yao?”

Pondering for a moment, Li Jialing shuddered hard. “It feels… rather scary!”

“I, for one, do not feel that it is scary, only very hilarious. Assuming that it does happen someday, I think that I’ll burst into laughter in the middle of it.”

Long Yangjun said casually, “Besides, ‘couple’, as a seemingly intimate relationship, is only meaningful in the short phase after the amphigenetic lives developed the institution of fixed spouses. For the intelligent lives who count on asexual reproduction or community reproduction, they do not have the concept of love and marriage at all. As such, ‘couple’ means absolutely nothing for them. So, my life will never be bound by such a lame concept.”

Li Jialing was apparently puzzled. “Well, I don’t understand what you are talking about…”

“You silly kid, your Brother Yao and I are not a couple.”

Long Yangjun said with a smile, “Such an excellent and devoted man only deserves the strongest, most invincible, and unstoppable woman. It is a pity that I am not that woman.”

“Strong, invincible, and unstoppable?”

Li Jialing blinked for a long time, but he still could not picture a woman that fitted the descriptions. But he was finally clear about one thing now. “So you are friends? Can you tell me more about Brother Yao? I’ve never seen such a… peculiar Cultivator before.”

Long Yangjun said emphatically, “There is no need to be so subtle. I understand what you are saying. In fact, Li Yao was not like this in the past. In fact, his behavior was quite normal when I just met him.

“However, you should know how training and fighting can damage the body and especially the brain. Li Yao has been a complete lunatic in training and fighting, and he went through countless fierce battles in the past decades. The frequency and intensity of his fights and training are far higher than the regular people in the Nascent Soul Stage and the Divinity Transformation Stage.

“It is exactly because he burned his life and soul and exploited the potentials of his brain without any restraint in the hellish slaughterhouses again and again that he defeated opponents who were far stronger than him, allowing him to become the youngest expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage in the entire universe.

“However, such crazy fighting and rapid upgrading eventually significantly damaged his brain and left irrecoverable sequela, transforming him from a determined, self-respecting, sunny young man into… whatever he is today.”

Li Jialing was deeply awed. “That explains why Brother Yao’s behavior is completely the opposite of what is expected for an expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage! It’s all because of his severe brain damage! So to speak, Brother Yao must’ve been a hero in the past, right?”

“Hero?”

Long Yangjun smiled, and waving the metal fins next to her legs, she swam away. “Maybe, but that is not what I care about. I simply find him very interesting. There are so few lives in such a vast universe. I only wish that more of them could be as interesting as him.

“Therefore… just hang in there, I don’t think you will be blown up by Blackstar the Great so quickly as a sordid cockroach, will you?”

Long Yangjun glowed brilliantly, and the seawater around her seemed to have been frozen into clear glass. Her Colossus “Heavenly Crystal” showed up again and enshrouded Long Yangjun while she rushed at the battlefield!

Chapter 2334 - The Policy to Win!

Chapter 2334 The Policy to Win!

The water around Li Yao disappeared.

What replaced it was a certain black material that was as thick as asphalt, as corrosive as acids, and could interfere with telepathic thoughts and magical equipment units as much as possible.

Wreathed by such black matter, the Colossus seemed to have been embedded in a whole piece of diamond tightly. Even moving forward by one step would consume tremendous spiritual energy and result in the serious metal fatigue of the Colossus, much less running.

Since “Hellstar” caught up to him, the earsplitting alarms of the “Gold Vulture” never stopped. Upset, Li Yao simply turned off the alarms of dozens of key units, but he could not stop the disturbing red lights from blinking nonstop, nor could he stop the battle performances of his Colossus from plummeting under the bombardment of “Hellstar” as if it were a balloon whose air was leaking.

The shocks from the Colossus to his crystal suit to his internal organs informed Li Yao unmistakably that the changes of water around him were not illusions resulting from mental attacks but real changes on the material level.

Blackstar the Great had covered the water several square kilometers around with his most powerful vitality field, which allowed him to alter the form of the water from the molecular and even atomic level. Such a field had far exceeded the limits of the Divinity Transformation Stage!

Mired in Blackstar the Great’s absolute domain, Li Yao would be committing suicide if he were to continue running desperately. He could only grit his teeth and resist the pressure.

Hardly had he turned around when he felt that he was trapped in a swamp at the deepest level of hell. From the black mud around, hideous, screaming soldiers crawled out and lunged at him in streaks of blackness incessantly, as if they were going to suffocate him alive.

Li Yao, naturally, could also unfold his domain to perceive and control all the matters nearby.

Ever since he advanced into the Divinity Transformation Stage, he had been studying the mysteries of the domain day and night. He thought that he had a deep knowledge of it, and that he could compete with the great experts of the world when he fully boosted his vitality field.

However, it was not until he witnessed Blackstar the Great’s remarkable utilization of the domain today that he realized he had only just passed the threshold. The resonation and reaction between the vitality field of a human being and the natural fields in the universe could be so sophisticated and incredible!

Wuying Qi’s dark domain was like a boundless black fog descending from the starless night sky, enshrouding him without a gap.

His own domain, on the other hand, was but a small gold candle, which was shaking and dying out any moment under the corruption of the black fog!

He could even barely locate “Hellstar”. It was almost like he was fighting an invisible, gigantic octopus, whose fatal tentacles were filled with sucking discs and sharp teeth but could not be seen at all!

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

Under the lash and bondage of the invisible tentacles, the bright gold spiritual shield of the Gold Vulture was getting thinner and more lackluster. The sound of ice thawing in a fire echoed every now and then.

Then, it was the earsplitting cracks. That was because the spiritual shield in a certain place was too thin to withstand the corrosion of Blackstar the Great’s dark field anymore. As a result, the plate made of tempered alloys was shaken and folded, leading to thousands of tiny cracks inside the metals. When it surpassed the tipping point of metal fatigue, the plate would be collapsing inward.

If the competition of “domain versus domain” went on, the entire “Gold Vulture” would surpass the limits of metal fatigue too, and it would not be able to resist the pressure of the water anymore. The Colossus would likely be ripped apart or even completely collapsed!

Li Yao’s evaluation was not wrong. Their combat abilities were not on the same level at all. He could not even defeat Li Linghai in the regular form, let alone her in the form of “Blackstar the Great”.

Even if he was trying his best, it was barely possible for him to make a strategic counterattack.

What was even more blood-freezing was the mental devil’s shriek just now: it was the tenebrum energy that Blackstar the Great had been using!

In fact, the mental devil’s warning was redundant. Having fought the incarnations of extraterrestrial devils many times himself, Li Yao could easily tell that the energy that filled the entire absolute domain was more violent, hasty, and unsteady than regular spiritual energy. It was also more emotional and erratic, as if it were some sort of life.

He had vaguely sensed similar energy forms from Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan and Extraterrestrial Devil Lu Qingchen. It was exactly the tenebrum energy that had brought infinite damage and destruction to the three thousand Sectors!

However, neither Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan nor Extraterrestrial Devil Lu Qingchen could even be compared to Blackstar the Great in terms of the intensity of their tenebrum energy.

Was Blackstar the Great a Demonic Cultivator of a higher level than Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan and Extraterrestrial Devil Lu Qingchen?

But according to Long Yangjun’s theory, there was no such thing as “extraterrestrial devil” or “Demonic Cultivator” in the world. Or rather, human beings were themselves extraterrestrial devils, and the billions of ideas in their heads were billions of “devils” that constituted a precise and complicated ecological system.

“Devils” were not scary per se. Same as the microorganisms, they were the necessary constituents of a human body. As long as the balance in the “ecological system” was maintained, human beings would retain their normal feelings and emotions, neither too altruistic nor too corrupted and evil.

However, once the balance was broken and some of the “devils” expanded normally, sweeping across the entire ecological system like a cancer, they would burst out the most unparalleled energy while affecting the mind of the host, transforming normal people into lunatics!

Wuying Qi, what did you get in the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum in the past thousand years, and what have you become?

Gritting his teeth, Li Yao tried to hold back the savaging and brutalization on his body and his soul while he thought to himself. No, not during the past thousand years, but a thousand years ago!

A thousand years and a couple of centuries ago, you were still an insignificant Cultivator in the Martial Meritocrats Sector, who had to flee to the depths of the universe in a hurry with your broken body after you were beaten into heavy wounds by the people who worshipped the “Chiyou Cult”.

You were obviously dying and could not be too strong. How on earth did you rise quickly after you came to the Star Ocean Republic, which was even more developed than the Martial Meritocrats Sector, and even grew into a border commander before you usurped the supreme power of the Star Ocean Republic in the end?

What are the origins of your strength? How long was it between your escape from the Martial Meritocrats Sector and your entrance into the Star Ocean Republic? Decades? What happened during your vagabond in the universe? What… are you exactly?

BOOM!

Li Yao’s brain was almost churned into a mess by thousands of bubbling questions. His absentmindedness was noticed by Wuying Qi immediately. Emerging out of the black fog immediately, “Hellstar” slashed the metal tentacles that were even more dazzling than Li Yao’s saber at the limbs of the Gold Vulture.

The Gold Vulture managed to retreat the limbs in time, but it could not stop “Hellstar” from kicking its chest brutally. The blast was so heavy that the entire spiritual residence almost collapsed.

Despite the protection of “Little Black” as a flexible liquid crystal processor, Li Yao was still vomiting blood again. Even his brain was almost spurting out of his earholes and nostrils!

What was even more terrifying was that, together with the collision with “Hellstar”, Blackstar the Great’s mental power was also crawling into his brain in the shape of black tentacles, inserting the scenes of horror into his soul.

Faced with such powerful mental attacks, if he did not have the mental devil swallowing the negative emotions and dark forces all the time, he would be driven mad already!

A*shole! The gap between this old fart and me is too huge. There’s no way that I can win this battle at all!

Holding back the excruciating pain from his head to his toe, Li Yao thought quickly. Quickly, quickly, quickly. Neither the Colossus nor myself has any spiritual energy left now. I have to come up with a solution before the spiritual energy runs out!

It hurts. My brain hurts so much. This old fart’s mental attacks are really powerful. What does he want exactly?

Wait… I got it!

Li Yao’s eyes, one red and the other black, each containing a golden ring, were constricted to the size of a needle tip immediately. Taking a deep breath, he spoke to the mental devil, “Stop. Don’t swallow Blackstar the Great’s mental power that is flooding in. Just let him corrupt our brain and soul!”

The mental devil was stunned. “Seriously? You can’t take it anymore and want to surrender?”

“Surrender my a*s! It’s because I’ve finally figured out what he is trying to do and found a solution to deal with him. Chances are that I can really annihilate the supervillain in the counterattack!”

Putting on a confident, cold smile, Li Yao said quickly, “Hey, do you not feel that what this ‘Blackstar the Great’ has been doing seems a bit too shameless and stealthy? It is rather different from what we expect of the founding emperor of the Imperium of True Human Beings and much more lowly, isn’t it?

“We speculated that he did not recover his peak strength and might even have a lot of hidden diseases. That’s why he could not compete with the four Kurfürst families openly and could only play the dirty tricks while hiding inside the queen’s body.

“Then, if we were such an incomplete Blackstar the Great, what would be our top priority? To find and possess a stronger body, of course!

“With that in mind, Li Linghai’s inconsistent attitude toward Li Jialing and Li Jialing’s critical role in the whole scheme will be perfectly explainable. He is the brand-new container that Wuying Qi has chosen for himself.

“Come to think of it, Li Jialing is indeed a very suitable candidate. That is why Wuying Qi offered him a piece of ‘Imperial Fire Pearl’ through Li Linghai. It was probably part of the preparations for the possession!

“But don’t forget that we got a piece of the Imperial Fire Pearl too, which was even larger than Li Jialing’s. What does that suggest?”

The mental devil asked back, “What?”

“Idiot. It suggests that we are one of the ‘backup containers’ that Blackstar the Great prepares to possess!”

Li Yao grew excited as he continued, “It is very possible. Our body is so healthy and strong. Which thousand-year-old ghost would not be drooling when they see it? Now, Li Jialing is still missing. If I were Blackstar the Great, I would certainly possess the body before my eyes at the earliest chance for safety reasons!

“Hehehehe. Then, it is much easier. This old fart couldn’t have foreseen how mysterious our soul is and that the last thing we are scared of is possession! In the next moment, all we need to do is to pretend that we are weak and lackluster and allure him to possess us. If his soul is tricked into the gap deep inside our brain, we will be winners for sure!”

Chapter 2335 - Critical Moment!

Chapter 2335 Critical Moment!

The mental devil hesitated and said, “You do… seem to have a point.”

“It is absolutely going to work out!”

Li Yao shouted, “Think about it. Did we not crush the most ferocious enemies in the past with exactly the same move, including your antecedent ‘Blood Stripe Virus’? It’s all about dragging the enemy into the area that we are most familiar with before beating them with our abundant experience!”

Pondering for a long time, the mental devil said, “But why do I still feel ill at ease?”

“There is no time to feel ill at ease!”

Li Yao struggled to sustain the fire of his soul from dying out as he grimaced. “We can’t defeat him, and we can’t run away. What other solutions do you have except this? There’s no time to hesitate. Just listen to me. Let’s do it!”

While talking, he simply pressed the mental devil’s head down, stopping it from further swallowing the dark forces released by Blackstar the Great.

The terrifying illusions were immediately more vivid and hideous. Li Yao’s brain was almost riddled with holes.

Li Yao grunted, pretending that he was too seriously wounded to use the Colossus anymore. The flames of spiritual energy around the “Gold Vulture” dimmed to the minimum, and it could not resist the attacks of “Hellstar” at all. The plate armor made of superalloys all fell apart, revealing the broken framework.

In secret, however, Li Yao focused all his mental power and bombarded the gate at the deepest part of his brain, which seemed to be leading to the mysterious world “Earth”, forcing the gate to open again.

Come on, Wuying Qi. I am already so “weak” now. It’s time to possess me!

Li Yao licked the blood at the corners of his lips while he smiled intimidatingly with soundless roars, As long as most of your soul enters my brain, I will immediately show you how powerful “Earth” is!

His remarkable acting skills seemed to be really working.

The hundred crazily waving metal tentacles around “Hellstar” gradually slowed down. The water that was extremely thick just now became much thinner. It was almost like Blackstar the Great was not in a hurry to destroy Li Yao but was evaluating his status right now—especially his mental status.

Come on, come on, just crawl into daddy’s brain!

With a telepathic thought, Li Yao intentionally inputted excessive spiritual energy to the head of the “Gold Vulture”, resulting in the explosion of a piece of magical equipment that was about to be destroyed earlier. Then, the head of the Colossus tilted backward.

It was a “weakness” that he intentionally exposed to Wuying Qi!

Wuying Qi was indeed intrigued. “Hellstar” revealed its true self in the swirl condensed by the dark water. The six enormous faces on it were particularly thoughtful and hideous, and the six bloody mouths opened at the same time, spitting out shapeless black forces that interweaved into an enormous helical sting stabbing at Li Yao.

He’s coming!

Closing his eyes, Li Yao could clearly sense the enormity, dominance, and cruelty of Wuying Qi’s mental world. The invisible helical sting seemed to be made of infinite blood and unrested souls who had dispersed in the universe. When it was still a distance away from the “Gold Vulture”, the cries and screams were already delivered into Li Yao’s brain clearly.

Li Yao couldn’t be more familiar with such a technique.

Blackstar the Great was about to establish a “mental bridge” between their brains before he launched the soul invasion.

It was like when two starships were engaged in a “boarding battle”, the attacker would have to pierce the invasion channel deep in the defender so that the troops could be deployed incessantly.

Li Yao was overjoyed, but he knew that he must not expose himself right now. Should there be any anomaly in his soul, all his endeavors would be for nothing.

The invisible helical sting finally touched the breastplate of the Gold Vulture softly.

From “Hellstar”, black ripples flooded into the Gold Vulture quickly along the helical sting.

However—

Li Yao was still dwelling in the fantasy of a final battle with Wuying Qi's soul when he suddenly had a sense of wariness. What took Wuying Qi's soul so long? And why were the sharp ends of the hundred metal tentacles of "Hellstar" all opening like blossoming flowers?

"Not good!"

Li Yao shrieked. The fire of his soul was suddenly burning more furiously than ever, and the gold flames of spiritual energy on the "Gold Vulture" that just dimmed became dazzling gold balls again!

The moment he reestablished his defense, the rapidly-revolving spiral sting already pierced at the spiritual residence of the "Gold Vulture". A mental attack that was devoid of any feeling of "occupation" but filled with pure destruction exploded inside the spiritual residence right around Li Yao!

BOOM!

The whole world seemed to be gone, as if Li Yao's soul had been moved from reality to a mental world that Wuying Qi had carefully constructed.

Billions of people who were once massacred by Wuying Qi turned into hideous ghosts and lunged at Li Yao with hollow, bleeding eyes, trying to rip apart his soul and make him one of them.

By the time Li Yao's self-consciousness finally struggled to get away from the terrible quake of the soul, the limbs of the Gold Vulture had already been tied up by the metal tentacles of "Hellstar".

The sharp ends of a few tentacles had even drilled into the plate armor of the Gold Vulture, fixating the two Colossi tightly.

His domain was suppressed, his Colossus was locked, and he had failed the mental competition!

Then, “Hellstar” split apart.

The round structure that looked like a sea urchin separated into two hemispheres, revealing a circle of cannons below the shell that could cover 360 degrees. On the circular rail that surrounded the torso of the Colossus, a thousand ultimate marrow crystals of the highest purity had been embedded. The energy contained inside each marrow crystal could be drained in half a second’s shooting, but the next marrow crystal would immediately replace it in the next 0.1 seconds so that the most destructive firepower could be output incessantly!

The four limbs of the Gold Vulture had been tethered by the metal tentacles, and it was impossible to break so many tentacles in only one second. In the meantime, the cannons on “Hellstar” shot out hundreds of purple flames without any mercy, drowning the Gold Vulture completely!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The dull soundwaves, mixed with the destructive blasts, swept across the torso and the limbs of the Gold Vulture. Under the “help” of the intense blast, the Gold Vulture finally broke free from the bondage of “Hellstar”, at the price of losing two arms and one left leg.

Even so, it failed to escape from the continuous tracing and bombardment of the cannons and was blown all the way to the bottom of the ocean again. Then, it was even blown into the undersea plateau for almost a hundred meters. For a moment, the sand and mud at the bottom of the ocean were all surging, further adding to the chaos and darkness of the undersea world!

Violent flames were flowing all over Li Yao’s body and even in his brain. He did not even have the strength to vomit blood now.

The Colossus was nervily connected to the user. The pain of two arms on the brink of destruction and the left leg being completely minced and ripped off was delivered to Li Yao’s central nerves without any reserve, giving him the illusion that he had truly lost three limbs.

“How is it possible?!”

What suffered the greater strike was his mind. His head in a mess, he could not believe what had just happened at all. He had clearly taken every factor into calculation, and Blackstar the Great was supposed to regard him as a backup choice of possession. Why else would he have offered Li Yao the precious Imperial Fire Pearl for training?

It was such a great opportunity. The fat meat had cooked itself and sent itself to his mouth, but why did Blackstar the Great not take the bait? It… did not make any sense!

Little Black flowed forward in time and extinguished the fire on his body, but the trauma in his heart could not be healed.

The devastating damage on the Gold Vulture could not be repaired for the time being either. The Colossus had only 30% combat ability left at best. Did it stand any chance of winning at all when faced with such a ferocious opponent as “Hellstar”?

“I know what you are up to exactly, but you seem to misunderstand my purpose.”

Wuying Qi’s gloomy voice came from the darkness with faint mockery. “For me, you do have some value to be recycled, but that’s in somewhere else and not here. You will know it very soon!”

The cannons at the center of “Hellstar” radiated the most dazzling brilliance again. This time, dozens of mystic rays congregated into the sharpest scythe of energy, which was about to be launched out and chop off the remaining three limbs of the Gold Vulture.

But it all happened too fast. In the deeper darkness, three rhombus crystals slid over without a sound and accelerated abruptly when it was only a hundred meters away. Piercing through the spiritual shield of “Hellstar”, they exploded brutally on the shell of the Colossus that was full of thorns, pushing it away for a few meters. The rushing scythe of spiritual energy naturally deviated from the original course and brushed past the Gold Vulture’s head, leaving a crack dozens of meters long on the bottom of the ocean not far away!

“Who is it?”

Wuying Qi was both surprised and infuriated. The two hemispheres of “Hellstar” that split apart before were closed seamlessly again, and the whole Colossus began to roll nonstop, increasing the defense to the highest.

“You may find it hard to believe.”

Long Yangjun’s sharp telepathic thoughts came from the depths of the water. “But I’m your ancestor!”

The Colossus “Heavenly Crystal” leaped out of the ocean and fought Wuying Qi’s “Hellstar” in Li Yao’s place just now!

“Long Yangjun!”

Li Yao, who thought that he was dead for sure, was almost cheering, dancing, and offering flowers to Long Yangjun.

He knew that he was a charismatic man. As he expected, even Long Yangjun, a eunuch from a corrupted, obsolete society who did nothing but to cause trouble, had been edified by him into a selfless good guy in the new society!

“You are… Dongfang Mingyue!”

Wuying Qi was keen enough to recognize her identity from her spiritual waves that were spreading out. “How interesting. You are perhaps the only person in the entire Imperium that I cannot completely see through. I did not know that you were complicit with ‘Vulture Li Yao’. This is really interesting!”

Chapter 2336 - All the Reasons to Stay Back

Chapter 2336 All the Reasons to Stay Back

When Blackstar the Great made a remark that sounded like the overlapping roars of all the deities and devils in the universe, “Hellstar” suddenly disappeared, and six gigantic swirls appeared in the dark seawater around. From the swirls, six faces in different shapes but equally hideous features gradually surfaced!

Behind the six faces were tails that were connected to the swirls, making them look like six bizarre-shaped monsters that surrounded Long Yangjun’s Colossus “Heavenly Crystal”!

“Heavenly Crystal” did not give in at all. More and more glass clusters blossomed on the body, condensing into prongs and horns and expanding the size of the Colossus by several times.

Countless rhombus crystals surrounded her and raged nonstop inside the water. Wherever they reached, the waves were all turned into clear crystals!

Wuying Qi, Blackstar the Great, and Long Yangjun, the heir of the primeval age, had both activated their vitality fields to the maximum. Disrupting and manipulating the materials around them, they built two unique “domains”!

It was not even the competition of the two of them anymore, but the great collision of two realms!

The water around Wuying Qi all turned into a black matter that was as thick as asphalt. The six faces that were made of the black matter got more and more brutal and hideous. One could even notice after careful observation that the six gigantic faces were made of countless incomplete and wriggling bodies!

The water around Long Yangjun, on the other hand, had been frozen into materials that looked like ice and crystal but still retained part of the fluidity of water, making her look both elegant and mysterious.

So, Long Yangjun is actually so strong!

Li Yao was still stuck in the pit at the bottom of the ocean, unable to crawl out, not because he was too seriously wounded, but because the three remaining limbs of the “Gold Vulture”, which had reached the limits of the metal fatigue, were deeply embedded in the hard rocks. If he was to break himself away by force, it was possible that the limbs would be ripped off. He had to control the big guy that was on the brink of destruction to move away from the pit bit by bit carefully.

While adjusting the movements of the “Gold Vulture”, Li Yao observed the battle above his head. He couldn’t help but feel embarrassed.

He had thought that with the mental devil as his trump card, he was at an advantageous position in the match against Long Yangjun. It never occurred to him that Long Yangjun did not do her best either, and her previous two ambushes were really just for fun.

However…

Long Yangjun also did not lie to him that however strong she was, there was still a gap between her and Blackstar the Great.

Li Yao estimated that Long Yangjun’s maximal combat ability was above the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage at best, and she had not broken into the Divinity Branching Stage yet.

It was very likely that she had grasped part of the mysteries regarding the tenebrum energy, but she was not able to use it free at will yet.

Blackstar the Great, on the other hand, was doubtlessly an expert in the Divinity Branching Stage even though his strength had been discounted.

After people advanced into the Nascent Soul Stage, their combat ability would not increase infinitely like before. The advantages of higher levels were often the indescribable “senses”, “vision”, and “alarm”.

The Divinity Branching Stage, as the name suggested, allowed the soul to be branched into dozens of parts, thereby significantly expanding the domain. The control over every inch of space inside the entire domain would be more than accurate. One would even be able to be absentminded. While a few branches of the soul were engaged in the fierce battle, another few branches could analyze the whole battle calmly from the perspective of an “observer”.

It was exactly the case right now.

In terms of style, Long Yangjun seemed to be fully carrying out the bloody and aggressive arts in the chess game. Her every attack was as shocking as the launch of a cannon. Occasionally, the result was very satisfying too. She was able to break Wuying Qi’s domain and chop a few metal tentacles off “Hellstar”, sometimes even ripping apart a piece of arc-shaped armor.

Wuying Qi, on the other hand, seemed to be playing go. He expanded his domain without a sound and squeezed Long Yangjun’s room of activity. Sometimes, the cluster of black fog that he seemed to have released casually and meaninglessly would play a vital role in a certain attack later.

After only half a second of collisions, Li Yao already sensed that Long Yangjun’s air was shaking.

More and more crystals were corrupted by the black fog. Black nervures were spreading among the crystals quickly.

As the successor of the primeval civilizations, she certainly had extraordinary arts that were beyond her level.

However, Blackstar the Great was not a simple warrior who crushed the enemy with his sheer advantage in level either. He must have other more devastating moves that he hadn’t performed yet, including “Blackhole’s Heart”, the legendary Colossus that only belonged to him!

“This is not going to work out.”

Li Yao spat a mouthful of saliva that was mixed with blood and teeth. “Long Yangjun is going to lose!”

“Are you still concerned about her outcome at such a moment?”

The mental devil said in a hurry, “Such a decent Colossus has almost been wasted by you only half a year after it is upgraded. It just occurs to me that you are the bane of crystal suits and Colossi, aren’t you? Anyway, enough talking. Just keep the Gold Vulture and hurry to retreat!”

“That we can’t do.”

Li Yao shook his head quickly without thinking. “Whatever happens, we cannot abandon friendship.”

“Seriously?”

The mental devil shouted, “Just think who Long Yangjun is! You are honoring your friendship with her? Don’t forget that she is possibly a supervillain who is on par with Blackstar the Great, if not higher. Chances are that she is planning a certain treacherous scheme in secret, and coming back to rescue you is all part of the scheme!”

“Then, it is all the more reason why I cannot abandon her at such a critical moment!”

Li Yao coughed and swallowed the blood that had flowed into his throat. He said firmly, “I believe that there are as many elements of a human being inside Long Yangjun as there are the elements of the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan! She hasn’t figured out which path she will walk on yet. Everything is possible. What she will become in the end depends on how the world treats her!

“She was brought to the outside world by me, and I will not let her be disappointed by the world outside. Trust me, as long as I move, edify, and transform her with my noble character constantly, she will certainly not disappoint this world!”

The mental devil: “… Really? Are you not sure that it will end the opposite way? But even if you want to do anything, what can you do? The Gold Vulture has been reduced to such conditions that it will collapse before it reaches their domains. You can’t help them at all!”

“Says who?”

Grinning hideously, Li Yao closed and rubbed his hands, his fingerbones cracking, before he retrieved a hundred dosages of colorful strengthening drugs before him from his fistful of Cosmos Rings. “Don’t forget that we still have one last… secret weapon!”

Slightly stunned, the mental devil realized something and gasped hard. “You are crazy. Absolutely no! That ‘thing’ is clearly still under test with a hundred flaws. It cannot be applied to a real battle at all!”

“I know.”

Li Yao opened the bottom of a strengthening drug with his mouth brutally and swallowed it together with the glass pieces. He then gnashed his teeth and said, “But I’m going to fire it away anyway!”

“Nobody has ever done it before. We don’t even know whether it’s because nobody ever thought of it or because all the people who tried it before have died in the catastrophic consequences!”

The mental devil shrieked, “Besides, the Gold Vulture is missing one leg and two arms right now. The overall framework has been basically shattered. How can it withstand the recoil at all? After the barrage, I don’t know what will happen to Wuying Qi’s Colossus, but the Gold Vulture will certainly be wasted! This is the only Colossus we have, while Blackstar the Great, the queen, and the four Kurfürsten are all our enemies. In other words, we cannot find sufficient resources and legitimate factories to repair the severely damaged Colossus at all. Do you understand?”

“I understand it perfectly.”

Li Yao chugged in dozens of dosages of strengthening drugs. His mouth was cut by the sharp pieces of the tempered glass, and blood was leaking out of his lips, chin, and chest, but he couldn't care less. "But I'm just going to fire at Blackstar the Great today!"

"Your body cannot take it either."

The mental devil declared, "Don't think that it is an awesome achievement to be the youngest expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage in the whole universe. The faster one's training is, the more side effects there will be, and the more severe the counterattack of spiritual energy is. You cannot take it however special your soul is!"

"You are quite right. All the reasons make sense too."

Li Yao injected the last few doses of strengthening drugs into his veins, and his veins immediately became as thick as dragons, almost ripping apart his flesh and skin. He roared crazily, "But the battle today is simply too humiliating. Nobody has ever reduced 'Vulture Li Yao' to such wretched conditions. How can I talk to other people in the future if I don't settle the score?

"Therefore, whatever the price is and however severe the consequences are, I am going to fire at the head of Blackstar the Great today!"

The mental devil: "Do you have to be so exaggerative? Many people have brutalized you before! Yan Xibei, Boss Bai, Xiao Xuance, Elder Nether Spring, Jin Tuyi, Lu Zui, and Long Yangjun. Then, there were Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan and Extraterrestrial Devil Lu Qingchen. So, it is not a big deal to be brutalized by Blackstar the Great right now but perfectly normal. I'm sure that you are already used to it, aren't you?"

Li Yao: “… Damn it. Do not hamstring me when I am making a soul-stirring speech! Do you know what the key is at all? The key is that Blackstar the Great’s ultimate strength is certainly much more than what we have seen. But he must have concerns and therefore is unwilling to perform them.

“However, if his battle with Long Yangjun goes on and escalates, he will have to expose his strongest form and fight a life-and-death battle with us. By then, everything will be doomed!

“Our opportunity is to take advantage of his state of mind where he is unwilling to do his best and to force him to just swallow his ultimate strength so that he wouldn’t be able to die together with us at all even if he wants to. That’s the only way to turn the situation around today!”

It was another very persuasive reason.

The mental devil pondered for a long time and finally shut up.

“You understand it now, don’t you?”

Li Yao chuckled weirdly, with blood spurting out of his mouth, nostrils, and ears, as if he had put on a crimson mask that made him unrecognizable. “Then just drag out our cannon already. I cannot wait to find out the answer to that question!”

The combat ability of a crystal suit could be increased by three to five times through the enhancement of an “Ares Extension”.

If a Colossus was equipped with a gargantuan “Ares Extension”, what a terrifying picture would it be?

Chapter 2337 - Ultra-Galactic Cannon!

Chapter 2337 Ultra-Galactic Cannon!

When Li Yao made his brain boil like a volcano eruption and his vitality fully surge out with a hundred dosages of strengthening drugs as the catalysts, the battle between Long Yangjun and Wuying Qi in the deep ocean entered the most heated phase too.

Inside the domains of the two parties, the crystals and the black fog penetrated and entangled each other, like two ferocious beasts that had bitten each other's necks hard.

“Heavenly Crystal” and “Hellstar”, the two Colossi, had both been locked onto by the enemy's domain, unable to move at all.

But flames of spiritual energy that were flowing out crazily were like the most violent undersea currents, resulting in hundreds of swirls in all directions. Even the undersea plateau was affected and had dense cracks although it was an intact piece in the beginning.

Around the pit where “Gold Vulture” collapsed, on the crags that were not so solid, countless gaps were expanding and extending too.

Li Yao took the opportunity to release the invisible saber aura to loosen the rocks and increase the gaps.

Very soon, a dull explosion echoed above his head, and the rocks around his head all collapsed, covering the Colossus tightly.

The sand and the mud soared too, and they dispersed like an undersea mushroom cloud, both blocking the eyesight of the two Colossi above his head and disrupting the senses of the two unparalleled experts.

Long Yangjun and Wuying Qi were both fully concentrated on each other. Neither of them expected that Li Yao's vitality would be so strong that he could still fight under such circumstances!

"Hehehehe. Old fart Blackstar, don't presume that 'Vulture Li Yao' really has nothing behind me!"

The veins over Li Yao's body had been expanded to the limits. In the next moment, his skin fell apart, but what was revealed from his opening wounds was not the bleeding muscles but an orange brilliance, as if his body were not made of flesh and blood but the purest, most passionate, and explosive energy!

Li Yao roared crazily and stood straight inside the cockpit, stretching out his arms and legs to the maximum. His fingers and toes were all straightened, and orange threads of spiritual energy darted out of his broken wounds to every unit on the Gold Vulture. The "nerve system" of the Colossus was immediately ten times more copious than before, and the information transmitted every second soared too!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The four Cosmos Rings that were attached to the shoulder blades and the pelvis of the Gold Vulture immediately glowed. In intense quakes, they spurted out abundant gigantic strengthening components.

As the spiritual energy and the telepathic thoughts spread out, the electric arcs in purple, blue, white, or red rose from the strengthening components like the veins of a living creature, before they stuck all the strengthening components to the plate armor of the Gold Vulture.

Having lost a leg, the Gold Vulture could only manage to stand on one of its knees with the assistance of its hands.

But it did not stop the Colossus from putting on layers of new gold armors and expanding significantly. It was so daunting that it looked like a gold giant that had crawled out of the depths of the ocean!

The Colossus’ height of slightly more than thirty meters was not increased by much, but the width had been more than doubled. On each of the two shoulders, the most intimidating portable cannon had appeared, whose energy-focusing disc that collapsed inward helically stared at the battlefield above the head with fury and determination like two enormous eyes.

The gold feathers on the wings behind him had already been launched at Wuying Qi as flying swords. Even the bare skeleton had been shattered and strangled by “Hellstar”. But right now, eight pairs of gold wings that were even more graceful and glamorous had grown out. At the ends of the wings were strings that looked like phoenix tails, emitting colorful brilliance under the dancing electric arcs.

The Gold Vulture had lost a leg, but the unprecedented “Ares Extension for the Colossus” had supportive components itself. Like the eight legs of an enormous spider, they pierced into the undersea rocks deeply, fixating the entire machine and melting it with the undersea ground.

What was most eye-catching was the thirty-six flying swords around the Colossus.

Each of the flying swords was more than thirty meters long, surrounded by the cracking electric arcs. Also, they were being stretched out under the effects of the rune arrays and the electromagnetic fields. Fifty meters, sixty meters, eighty meters, a hundred meters!

The flying swords that had been extended to a hundred meters long were carved with dense rune arrays on the surface without even one inch of blankness. But after careful observation, one would notice that the rune arrays were not just carved on the surface but leaked all the way to the core of the flying swords. “Delicate” did not even begin to describe it. At the core of every flying sword, there was also a “heart” made of marrow crystals, and Li Yao was insane enough to even carve attack rune arrays on those marrow crystals!

No, those “flying swords” were simply too long for flying at a high speed or changing directions. Also, their hardness had been seriously undermined because of the excessive rune arrays too. It was certainly not a suitable form for an acceptable flying sword.

They were not flying swords at all but rails and parts of a crystal cannon. The very purpose of producing them was to blow the cannon once, even if it meant that they would all be shattered into pieces!

The thirty-six rails made of marrow crystals were all gathered on the chest of the Gold Vulture, which had entered the berserker state, constituting an invincible super railgun!

Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi! Chi!

Li Yao’s soul was burning furiously. His fury penetrated the combat suit, the crystal suit, the Colossus, and the strengthening components, dissecting the water around into surging tides in bright gold and crimson before it flowed all the way to the top.

The infinite energy contained inside the marrow crystals was ignited by Li Yao’s fighting will too. The thirty-six rails became translucent at first and then almost disappeared, as if they could not withstand the overwhelming energy anymore and about to melt.

In the narrow, long space in the middle of the thirty-six rails, silver spots began to show up, both appearing like the countless glowing plankton that had been attracted by the magnetic field and the whole galaxy that had appeared before Li Yao out of nowhere!

Even Li Yao’s own red and black eyes were stung by the brilliance of the galaxy. This was also the first time that he had increased the power of the strengthening components of the Colossus to such a destructive level without any concerns!

It was certainly not an easy task to devise an Ares Extension for a Colossus. Despite Li Linghai’s generous support with the resources from the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum, Li Yao’s progress had not been very well.

He could not resolve the issues of hardness and structure completeness when the gigantic strengthening components were moving on a large scale. To be more frank, even if he could indeed craft such an “Ares Extension” and cover it on a Colossus, the mobility of the Colossus would’ve been reduced to the minimum.

Once putting on the enormous Ares Extension, the Colossus would barely be able to move. Such a design was unacceptable in any case.

Li Yao thought for a long time but still failed to address the problem. Too many engineering and design obstacles were involved in it. Perhaps it required years of work of a team made of a hundred specialists before a satisfactory answer could be provided.

Li Yao, who had barged into the Imperium on his own, certainly did not have so much time and so many specialists. He came up with the creative idea that, since the Colossus' mobility was reduced to the minimum, making it barely able to move, he might as well give up the pursuit of mobility altogether and simply increase the factor of "firepower" to the highest, transforming the Colossus into a half-automatic, monolithic bastion. Would it work?

Of course, it was a rather absurd methodology.

So, Li Yao had never intended to put the so-called Ares Extension for Colossi into a real battle. It was just a cutting-edge study that was meant to accumulate experiment data and performance parameters for the production of the "real" special enhancing components of the Colossi in the future.

Even if he wanted to put the Ares Extension that was still being tested into practice, it was still impossible, because the time it took for the railgun to be prepared was too long. Unless it was bombarding a fixed target, his enemy would have either run off or come close and cut both him and his Colossus into pieces during such a long time of preparation!

However, all the obstacles had been cleared, and none of the problems was a problem anymore.

Long Yangjun had stalled Wuying Qi and bought Li Yao the precious time for a perfect preparation!

"Long Yangjun!"

Li Yao roared in the communication channel desperately, “Stop him! Whatever it takes, just stop him for another three seconds!”

“What—”

Long Yangjun was slightly surprised, not expecting Li Yao to be still so vigorous after being terribly beaten up just now. When she sensed the astonishing energy leaking out of the rocks below the mud, she was even more shocked. Then, in delight, she said, “I knew that you had other moves!

“Vulture Li Yao, what monster are you, Vulture Li Yao?”

At the same time, Blackstar the Great also sensed the spiritual ripples that came from below his feet like a volcano eruption, as if a ferocious beast that had slept for a thousand years at the center of the planet had woken up. He did not expect Li Yao’s soul to be so sturdy. The guy had clearly been pierced through by his most intense mental attack. Normal warriors would’ve been mired in nightmares for days, if their souls were still in one piece at all. But Li Yao seemed to have not been hurt at all, and he was launching an aggressive counterattack so quickly!

“Hellstar” rolled quickly while Wuying Qi intended to dodge the attack, but there was no time.

Long Yangjun’s domain of crystals expanded several times within a moment, establishing walls of crystals around “Hellstar”.

From the depths of the rocks at the bottom of the ocean, hundreds of Li Yao’s telepathic thoughts dashed out and crawled into the gaps of “Hellstar” relentlessly, as if he were determined to drag Wuying Qi’s soul to the ground and make Wuying Qi die with him.

At the Gold Vulture’s chest, in the middle of the thirty-six rails, the “galaxy” made of the glowing spots was completely seething.

“Even the entire galaxy cannot extinguish the fire in my heart!”

Li Yao’s eyes were sunken, but they were even more dazzling than a supernova outbreak. As if he had filled his own soul into the railgun, ready to launch it out, his roars almost tore his mouth apart. “Old fart Blackstar, get a taste of this—Ultra-Galactic Cannon!”

Chapter 2338 - Collision of Souls!

Together with his roars that were boiling the ocean and breaking the clouds, Li Yao’s blood and every cell were burning furiously at the moment. Mixed with his soul that had been boosted to the maximum, they pierced through the silver, glowing energy at the center of the “Ultra-Galactic Cannon”, enlivening the pure energy and pushing out the silver brilliance that could destroy everything!

BOOM!

The thirty-six crystal rails were all melted externally. The Gold Vulture that had been on the verge of destruction in the first place could not take such an intense counterforce at all. The one-time strengthening components broke apart into thousands of gold and silver butterflies, splashing to all directions. Then, the torso and the framework of the Colossus had fatal contortions and fractures too. It was completely wasted from the front to the back, broken and blown away!

However, the cluster of energy that was as overwhelming as an infuriated galaxy, mixed with Li Yao’s soaring fighting will, charged at “Hellstar” at an unbelievable speed!

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

Both Long Yangjun’s “Heavenly Crystal” and Wuying Qi’s “Hellstar” were pierced through by the unexpected high-energy reactions. Earsplitting alarms were ringing.

“This is impossible!”

Long Yangjun was dumbfounded and was not back to herself until the silver pillar of light had passed her. She was covered in a cold sweat. “It’s been only several years, and this monster’s ultimate strength has been increased to such a terrifying level. This is too unbelievable!”

“THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE!”

Wuying Qi, on the other hand, let out the roars of disbelief too. His vitality field turned from the excessive expansion in the beginning to excessive constriction, condensing all the black fog around him into an indestructible black shield. The six giant faces in the black swirls overlapped and opened their bloody mouths at the same time, spitting out a black pillar of light at Li Yao’s attack!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The collision of the two pillars raised tides a thousand meters high in the seawater. The waves even pierced through the ocean thousands of meters deep, leaving hundreds of waterspouts on the surface of the ocean that looked like dragons.

However, since the black pillar of light was condensed in a hurry, it did not resist long before it was split apart by the silver pillar that was mixed with bloody waves. Even the six giant faces were ripped apart and pierced through directly!

The silver pillar hit the center of “Hellstar” precisely, heating the shell of the Colossus to almost ten thousand degrees immediately. The previously dark and black metals turned orange and almost transparent, twisted and about to be melted!

It was only the first step.

The Ultra-Galactic Cannon was not as simple as a cannon to concentrate the energy inside marrow crystals and launch it out.

After the mystic rays pierced through the target's spiritual shield and heated the target's external armor to the maximum, depriving it of its original hardness and rigidity, abundant broken pieces of the Gold Vulture were all turned into tiny metal pieces and accelerated into high-energy particles, which darted close like a storm and penetrated through the shell of "Hellstar"!

Eventually, it was Li Yao's mental power that he had condensed by almost draining his brain.

Now that Blackstar the Great was unwilling to possess him, he would check how good the soul of the old fart was on his own!

If he were faced with any "normal" expert in the Divinity Branching Stage, the Divinity Transformation Stage, or even the Nascent Soul Stage, Li Yao would never be so reckless and insane as to devote all his mental power to his brain knowing that there might be dangerous consequences after his soul left the body.

It was because the connections of the souls and the bodies of the normal experts were extremely accurate and seamless. He would barely be able to find any flaw to invade through.

His soul leaving his body to be engaged in a fight in the enemy's brain would mean that he had to fight in an unfamiliar environment, which couldn't have been in his favor.

However, the case of Blackstar the Great was different. No matter how high his level was in the past, what remained after a thousand years was just part of the highly-mutated and highly-abnormal soul. Also, the remaining soul couldn't have integrated well with Li Linghai's body. Otherwise, he wouldn't have been in such a hurry to change a better shell.

It was exactly the greatest weakness of the founding emperor of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

It was also Li Yao's only opportunity to win, and his ultimate reason to launch the "Ultra-Galactic Cannon" without caring about anything.

He was going to take the chance to knock Blackstar the Great's remaining soul out of Li Linghai's body!

BOOM!

On the mysterious level that was unrecognizable for the naked eye, a streak of burning brilliance seemed to have leaped out of the remains of the Gold Vulture and turned into a raging falcon, whose wings shook abruptly and then covered its body, before it crashed into the shell of "Hellstar" that was wide open like a rapidly-revolving drill.

"Ahhhh!"

Blackstar the Great shrieked in both shock and fury. The metal tentacles of "Hellstar" immediately waved crazily, and all the black fog nearby was squeaking. The six giant faces that had been blown apart but not dispersed yet were all in agony.

Li Yao's soul felt unprecedented quakes too. The thousands of flames of his soul seemed to be dying out at the same time. But at the same time, countless dark forces were injected into his soul, allowing him to see infinite illusions in a trance.

He seemed to see the Martial Meritocrats Sector, the civilization of the Cultivators that was highly-developed but getting bloated and corrupted, walking to the doom with the morbid body.

He seemed to see that in the Sand Primitive Sector, which abutted the Martial Meritocrats Sector, the berserkers who believed in the “Chiyou Cult” were fighting each other in the harsh environments of sandstorms and gloomy winds and paying tributes to the ultimate god in their hearts with blood and guts that were filled in the wine cups made of skulls.

He seemed to see the decline of the Martial Meritocrats Sector, the rise of the Sand Primitive Sector, the war between the Cultivators and the Chiyou Cult, and Wuying Qi’s struggle and screams in the magma.

The picture flashed. What was unfolded deep inside Li Yao’s soul was a boundless universe where Wuying Qi, lying inside a tiny starship that looked like an iron coffin, drifted toward the darkest abyss in the sea of stars…

Right when Li Yao tried to focus his attention and figure out the truth of the dark abyss, a pair of glittering eyes was suddenly opened in the abyss and threw bolts of lightning that could break a planet at him.

BOOM!

Li Yao’s soul shook hard. He was blown out of “Hellstar” back to his own shell.

“Hellstar” was enshrouded in the black fog again, and it fled away under the cover of the black fog.

“Vulture Li Yao!”

Blackstar the Great couldn’t have sounded more furious and atrocious. “I will come back for you. Whichever corner in the three thousand Sectors you are hiding in, I will come back for you, and then—”

With a sniff, Long Yangjun chased after Wuying Qi in the “Heavenly Crystal”, forcing Wuying Qi to swallow everything that he had yet to say.

Li Yao’s soul was back to the original place, but he seemed to have just died once. Even blinking was terribly difficult for him, and he would feel the most excruciating pain even when he only moved his little finger.

A collision of souls was never a joke, let alone one with such an unparalleled expert like Blackstar the Great.

Even though Li Yao’s soul originated from the mysterious Earth, it was still almost completely blown apart and obliterated.

It was not until Long Yangjun returned from the deep ocean and dug him out from the remains of the Gold Vulture that Li Yao finally regained the ability to transmit telepathic thoughts.

“You… You killed him?”

Vaguely, Li Yao saw that a giant iron ball that had been pierced through was floating behind “Heavenly Crystal”. What else could it be if not “Hellstar”? Overjoyed, Li Yao almost found it hard to believe his eyes.

“No. This Colossus is empty. How can Blackstar the Great be killed so easily?”

Shaking her head, Long Yangjun paused and changed her attitude as she said, “However, to think that you have forced Blackstar the Great to escape in a panic without even having the time to retreat his Colossus… I really don’t know how I should comment on you.”

“There is no need to comment. Cough, cough, cough. I’m not in my best state today. Cough, cough, cough, cough. My performance was not very satisfactory, and I failed to kill him in one blow. That was—cough, cough—my bad.”

While coughing hard and vomiting blood, Li Yao said intermittently, “His Colossus has been blown up. This is a rare opportunity. Why did you give up chasing?”

“You wouldn’t think that the almighty Blackstar the Great travels in the universe with only one Colossus, would you? As far as I know, his symbolic Colossus is known as ‘Blackhole’s Heart’. Although I don’t know how strong it is exactly, it can’t be the one just now. Are you sure that he would not fight a battle that would kill both me and himself in his desperation if I were to chase him?”

Long Yangjun scorned, “I do not want to be a hero that saves the world. Why would I do such a costly but unrewarding thing? Besides, I vaguely felt several people at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage on the surface of the ocean who were searching for our traces. Who do you think they are, our reinforcements or Wuying Qi’s?

“Or maybe when the experts at the peak of the Divinity Transformation Stage come at us with their Colossi, you will be as macho as a moment ago and blow them up one after another?”

“Then… let’s just drop the idea.”

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao said, “Never chase a desperate enemy. Cough, cough, cough. Let’s just let them go today and allow their heads to stay on their necks for a few more days. We will come back—cough, cough, cough—a few days later!”

Long Yangjun: “If you keep on talking like that, I’m thinking if I should just abandon you in this place.”

Li Yao immediately grew anxious. “Don’t! For the sake of the federation and the Ancient Sages Sector, hurry up and give me a hand!”

Struggling and waving his limbs in the water, he finally crawled to the leg of Long Yangjun’s Colossus and clung to a protruding component there. “This will do. Truth be told, I don’t even have the strength to make use of the power system of the crystal suit right now. Please give me a ride. I’ll need to take a… a…”

Li Yao’s voice was lower and lower. His soul seemed to have sunken into the gap deep inside his brain, embracing the boundless darkness.

Chapter 2339 - Foreigners and Friends

Chapter 2339 Foreigners and Friends

Li Yao’s soul floated in the darkness, and he had a lot of bizarre, absurd dreams.

Now, he dreamed that Blackstar the Great’s scheme worked out, and the man became the supreme sovereign of the Imperium of True Human Beings again. Uniting the entire universe with iron and blood again, he transformed all human beings into “iron cockroaches” that would do anything for their survival.

Eventually, millions of iron cockroaches flooded at the Star Glory Federation, waving their tentacles and claws. It was absolutely helpless even though Li Yao stretched out his limbs and blocked the way. He was soon swallowed by the tides of iron cockroaches, both his skin and his bones.

In the end, he even became a gigantic, hideous cockroach himself, swallowing one planet after another in ignorance driven by the primitive instincts.

Now, he dreamed that he finally stopped Blackstar the Great’s scheme after arduous battles. The brutal man from a thousand years ago was sealed and obliterated, and all the catastrophes he caused were ended.

But good days didn’t last. Without the leadership of the evil Blackstar the Great, the Imperium of True Human Beings was still loose sand. The four Kurfürst families and the hundreds of warlords of the peripheral worlds were still plotting and fighting against each other every day. They could not abandon their feud and conflicts of interests even when the

Alliance of the Holy Covenant was attacking on a large scale but simply hamstrung each other for personal benefits.

Eventually, the Imperium’s flags were replaced by the Covenant Alliance’s emotionless seals. Human beings did not become “iron cockroaches”, but they turned into puppets without feelings and desires.

Thousands of expressionless puppets surrounded Li Yao. Their eyes were like dry wells without any ripple or change. Such a form seemed even more dreadful than the “iron cockroaches” a moment ago.

The ghost of Blackstar the Great was even sneering behind him and mumbling, “Do you see, Vulture Li Yao? This is the consequence of you stopping me! The path of the Cultivators will not work out! Your self-righteousness will only lead to greater disasters. Only my true path of immortality is the way out for mankind!

“What’s wrong about being iron cockroaches? At the very least, the strongest of us will survive. Where there is life, there is hope. Thousands of years later, on the putrid corpses of the iron cockroaches, the most beautiful flower of civilization can still blossom!”

Deeply trapped in the nightmare, Li Yao felt that his brain had been swamped, and his mind was slower than ever. He was thinking how to defend himself, when the illusions of cockroaches, puppets, and Blackstar the Great were all gone, replaced by the eternal and magnificent wars of the godly species in the primeval age.

Pangu and Nuwa, order and chaos, absolute rationality and absolute desire… On the battleground that was the sea of stars, the most shocking collisions were happening!

His soul seemed to be both floating high above the universe and entering every part of the battlefield, allowing him to observe and perceive the ideas and philosophies of the two parties from the sparks splashing from the blades. Time and space lost their meaning. He did not know how long he had wandered on the battlefield, but he was suddenly back to himself after sensing a gentle breeze.

According to the time displayed on the interface of his crystal suit, it had only been slightly more than two hours since he launched the Ultra-Galactic Cannon.

He was still clinging to the calf of Long Yangjun’s Colossus and being carried forward by her. They had almost swum to the center of the Silver Moon Ocean and were already very far away from the battlefield just now.

Thankfully, there was no sign that other troops were chasing them. They were safe for now.

But nobody could tell what would happen next. Now that Blackstar the Great decided to reveal his real appearance, it was obvious that he must’ve activated his final plans. After decades of careful planning with Li Linghai, even if he could not control the entire Imperium just yet, it wouldn’t be a problem for him to at least control the capital.

The capital was a fairly large place, but it was teeming with Immortal Cultivators everywhere. Once it fell to the hands of Blackstar the Great, where could he possibly hide as a Cultivator?

“You’ve woken up?”

Long Yangjun’s cold voice came over. “How do you feel?”

Li Yao slightly summoned his spiritual energy and immediately felt that a hundred canyons had been ripped all over his body and inside his brain. Not only was he in excruciating pain, but his strength was also pouring out along the “canyons”, and he could not concentrate at all.

Li Yao whined in pain and said, “I feel that I just died once and will die again very soon.”

“So, you know your conditions very well!”

Long Yangjun snapped, “I was quite puzzled how you could become so majestic as to scare Blackstar the Great off with one blow. As it turned out, you wagered all your soul power and vitality on the attack without caring about your own life. Your status right now is even worse than your Colossus that is on the verge of falling apart. You won’t be able to fight anyone in the next half month, and it remains to be seen how much you can recover half a month later!”

Li Yao grimaced, feeling that he was quite lucky.

Blackstar the Great was a great expert who was at least one major level higher than Li Yao. Having escaped from his thunderous fury in one piece, Li Yao was certainly the winner no matter what gory prices he had paid.

There was no telling what Long Yangjun thought of, but she suddenly chuckled and continued, “I estimate that Blackstar the Great couldn’t have seen such a… weird Cultivator like you before, who was so sleazy in the beginning but so masculine in the end. Such a great transformation must’ve confused him. Otherwise, your final attack might’ve not been able to hit him at all.

“However, there is one thing that I’m rather curious about. After your blow of cannon, whether or not you hit the target, you would completely lose your combat ability, if you could still move at all. What were you going to do in such a case? Were you so confident that I would rescue you?”

With his eyes half-closed, Li Yao moaned and said, “It was too much of an emergency back then. I couldn’t find a way to win at all except for the final blow. So, I had to turn to the last resort and take my chances!

“Besides, I didn’t think that you would just watch me get caught by the enemy, would you?”

Long Yangjun slightly frowned. “Why not?”

“Because if you did not want to rescue me, you wouldn’t have shown up in the first place.”

Li Yao struggled to put on a smile. “We are friends. Aren’t friends all about rescuing each other when either of them is in trouble? Comradery is all that matters!”

“Make no mistake. The reason why I showed up had nothing to do with comradery. I was only scared that you would be caught by Blackstar the Great alive.”

Long Yangjun said coldly, “You know too many secrets. Besides those regarding the Star Glory Federation, you also know the inside information of the Ancient Sages Sector, the Nuwa warship, and my identity. Should you fall into Blackstar the Great’s hands alive, giving him access to all the secrets, my identity would’ve been completely exposed. He would have even fewer reasons to let me go, and my odds of beating him would be even lower.

“Therefore, I snuck back not necessarily to save you but, very probably, to kill you and keep your mouth shut. However, after analyzing the situation at the time, it occurred to me that rescuing you was the more promising option. That was why I… saved you by the way.”

“Is that so?”

Li Yao said in fatigue, “It doesn’t matter. As long as we are still friends, it’s fine.”

“Friends?”

Long Yangjun sniffed and said, “I remember you said a quotation last time we met. ‘Those who are not of my own kind are bound to think differently’. Can you really think of a ‘foreigner’ like me as a friend?”

“I was wrong to say that.”

Li Yao admitted frankly without any hesitation. “You were right. ‘Those who are not of my own kind are bound to think differently’ is a quotation that was originally used to describe human beings living on different planets or even human beings living on different continents of the same planet. Just because of the slight difference between the latitudes and longitudes of their residences, they considered each other as foreigners and never trusted each other, which eventually led to wars and mutual destruction.

“Now that human beings are themselves able and passionate to destroy themselves, it seems that I do not need to view you in prejudice regardless of what you are. Pangu, Nuwa, extraterrestrial devils, or virtual lives, there is no difference. Those species may all be very ferocious, but human beings are not the most peaceful creature in the world either. Why can’t we be friends if we are equally aggressive?”

Long Yangjun clicked her tongue. “You are rather quick to admit your mistake. Should I say that you are shameless, or should I compliment you for rectifying yourself so promptly?”

“Of course I should be complimented. Being good at making mistakes and then correcting them is my greatest shining point in the first place!”

Closing his eyes, Li Yao held back the urge of falling asleep and groaned, “Ever since I became a Cultivator, I have committed more mistakes than I can count. I may be childish and idiotic even today. But does it really matter? I’ll always correct my mistakes after I find any! Isn’t ‘Cultivation’ the repetitive process of discovering your mistakes, correcting them, gathering more information to reach higher levels, and then discovering more mistakes and correcting them?

“Perhaps I will always make mistakes, but as long as I am more ‘correct’ and closer to the truth today than I was yesterday, it will be enough!”

After a brief silence, Long Yangjun’s voice suddenly became creepy. “Are you not scared that I have any scheme?”

Li Yao said, “If you are really onto something that violates ethics and jeopardizes the people, I will certainly stop you.”

Long Yangjun scorned, “You cannot even walk on your own with your body that is no better than jumbled clothes right now if you are not clutching my leg. How can you stop me?”

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao replied feebly, “It is a different matter whether or not I can stop you, but I will certainly try my best. If I fail and get killed by you, whatever happens later will no longer be my concerns.”

Lost for words, Long Yangjun was silent for a long time before she suddenly accelerated.

Narrowing his eyes and sensing the rapid undercurrents and deep ocean before him, Li Yao couldn’t help but ask, “Where… are we going right now?”

“My secret base.”

Long Yangjun gnashed her teeth. “If what you said just now was just your excellent acting skill, then I admit that I’ve been fooled by you. I was thinking to abandon you and Li Jialing in a random corner below the ocean, but… Forget it. I’ll lead you to my nest!”

Chapter 2340 - A Public Competition of Beliefs!

Chapter 2340 A Public Competition of Beliefs!

“Your nest?”

Li Yao was slightly dazed. “Isn’t it too dangerous to return to the base of the Association of Demon Hunters right now?”

“Wrong. The base of the Association of Demon Hunters is just a nest for ‘Dongfang Mingyue’.”

Long Yangjun said with a smile, “I’m about to lead you to the nest of myself, ‘Long Yangjun’. I spent a couple of years there when I just snuck into the Imperium and hadn’t fabricated the identity of ‘Dongfang Mingyue’. I’ve made some preparations there.”

Li Yao immediately bulged his eyes and quacked, “Some preparations? What are you up to exactly? Do you really have a scheme?”

“Of course I do. Why else do you think I’ve come to the Imperium? Just for sightseeing?”

Long Yangjun said casually, “However, after analyzing your life carefully through a hundred perhaps ungrounded biographies, and based on the long-time, close-up observation during the time I fought together with you, I have discovered a pattern.

“After you began your career, you encountered countless tricky enemies, starting from Yan Xibei, to Xiao Xuance, the Elder Nether Spring, to Lu Zui and Zhou Hengdao, and then to Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan and Extraterrestrial Devil Lu Qingchen later…

“Those people would have all been called men of their time. They were sophisticated, brutal, determined, and powerful, and their final plans were accurate and meticulous too.

“However, no matter how sophisticated, brutal, determined, and powerful those men of the time were, and despite their thorough plans, they could not avoid their fate of being sabotaged by you in uncanny, unconventional, and even unintentional ways.

“The same thing happened to Blackstar the Great today. Such an unparalleled expert who is at least in the Divinity Branching Stage and has countless secrets with him has met a debacle when he is faced with you. Why is that?”

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao blinked his eyes and said, “Because… justice always wins, and I am a representative of justice?”

“Wrong. It’s because you seem to have been born with a certain weird luck. Also, the more stealthy your enemies’ schemes are, the more effective your natural-born luck will be.”

Long Yangjun said, “As a dual successor of Pangu and Nuwa, I am certainly not someone who believes in supernatural powers. The so-called ‘luck’ is nothing more than a statistical probability or a mysterious pattern that people haven’t figured out yet.

“But now that the probability and the pattern are out there, I will not follow the examples of Yan Xibei, Xiao Xuance, Elder Nether Spring, Lu Zui, Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan, and Extraterrestrial Devil Lu Qingchen to act and deal with you stealthily only to be sabotaged by you in the end.

“There have already been so many lessons. I will be an idiot if I repeat their mistakes, wouldn’t you agree?”

Li Yao thought for a moment. “Well, but I’m indeed weaker than ever right now. Chances are that you can kill me with only your little finger.”

“This is not the first time you are weaker than ever. Didn’t the great men of the time try to kill you more than once? Which of them succeeded in the end? Not only did they fail, but they also made you stronger and stronger.”

Long Yangjun said, “Not that I’m being modest, but I don’t think I’m smarter than Xiao Xuance, Lu Zui, or Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan. Chances are that you still have certain trump cards that even you are unaware of, and that those trump cards will be activated when I decide to kill you. That is the greatest reason why I am never determined to kill you!

“All in all, after careful thinking, it has occurred to me that those men of the time dealt with you in the wrong way. Since they all believed in their cause, there was no need for them to hide it at all. Must their beliefs be kept clandestine and away from public competitions?

“They had already lost when they decided to go stealthy and work in darkness because it meant that they were not confident in their beliefs at all. Then, your victories wouldn’t be surprising at all.

“Therefore, I will bear the lessons in mind this time. It’s true that I have a tiny plan, but I’m willing to show you every procedure of the entire plan clearly. Whatever details you want to see will be given to you. I will tell you the origins, the development, and the final purpose of my plan. Then, Vulture Li Yao, let’s see if you can stop me!”

Hearing Long Yangjun chuckle, Li Yao could not hold on anymore but fell into a prolonged dark dream.

In the dark dream, he seemed to be experiencing a long time, from the big bang of the universe to right now, and from right now to the oblivion of the universe. It was so long that he almost forgot who he was, and his soul was gradually perishing.

But whenever his soul was about to perish, the blue planet—Earth—would always pop up deep inside his soul, sending him a feeble strength, which brought him the last hope of persistence like a blue, flickering candle in a dark night.

Li Yao knew that his body and his brain had suffered unprecedented wounds in the battle versus Blackstar the Great. It was even more dangerous than the excessive radiations he suffered in the Devilish Scorpion Nebula when he broke into the Divinity Transformation Stage.

But withering was always followed by a new life. When the old brain cells decayed, new power flowed out incessantly from the gap deep inside his soul, refreshing his soul and his brain and reestablishing a mental world that was even more magnificent!

“I will accomplish the Vulture Plan. I will destroy Earth. I will… set all of you free!”

Whenever the deepest darkness was about to completely corrupt and swallow his broken soul, the feeble but unwavering voice would resonate with his soul pieces, invigorating his brand-new mental world!

Perhaps he was in a deep coma at the beginning.

But after the reestablishment of his mental world, he seemed to be in the state of metamorphosis.

In his trance, he did not know how long he had been sneaking in the deep ocean, but he felt he entered a narrow, rugged, sunless tunnel that led straight downward.

He was in darkness for a few consecutive days. Occasionally, he saw the starry lights on the rock walls around but could not tell whether they were the brightness from the minerals or the eyes of demon beasts. Later, he found himself in a massive underground settlement, where countless people in gray capes surrounded them.

Long Yangjun seemed to boast a very high position in the underground settlement as an unquestionable authority. Vaguely, Li Yao saw countless people worshipping him. There was no telling if it was just his hallucination.

After Li Yao really broke the “mental cocoon” and woke up, he discovered that he was lying in the middle of a gigantic, square pool, surrounded by a certain ivory material that looked like paraffin wax. It was thicker than the common jelly-like gels that were used for healing. Li Yao had to tear them off from his body one piece after another.

“Brother Yao, you’re finally up!”

Li Jialing was sleeping in a corner of the room, wagging his short, furry tail. Hearing the cracks from the healing pool, he immediately bulged his eyes and shouted in delight.

“Huh…”

Li Yao managed to make a sound as a reply. He struggled to stand on his feet in the healing pool before he tore off the consolidated “paraffin wax” on his body and scanned his body carefully with spiritual energy.

As he expected, his body was only generally fixed, and there were still many invisible, fatal cracks inside, like a vase that had been stuck together cautiously after it fell into pieces. Whenever his spiritual energy flowed to the cracks, it was like a waterfall running into an abyss and nowhere to be found again.

Such devastating wounds meant much more than the plunge of his level. Heaving a sigh, Li Yao scratched his puffy hair and thought, The sequela is indeed rather severe. The blow was too strong after all…

It was already unbelievably fortunate of him to have survived the disaster. He could not be too greedy. After all, there was always a solution to any difficulty. Even Long Yangjun had complimented him for his uncanny luck. So, there would always be chances for him to restore his peak combat ability or even reach a level higher!

While clearing his messy thoughts, Li Yao punched slowly, testing his speed and strength, and observed the environment.

He was in the middle of a vintage healing pool, which was established in a small medical chamber.

Judging from the texture of the wall and the precision of the joints, such a medical chamber must’ve been built by a rather developed civilization.

However, all the facilities around were rusted. The chamber was also in a mess and filled with garbage. All kinds of mosses and vines whose names Li Yao couldn’t tell had sprawled on the wall. Everything suggested that the place had been forsaken for a long time.

The air here was suffocating, mixed with the stink of putridity. Even a deep breath could not make the lung lobes expand much.

Despite the flickering lights above his head, Li Yao still felt the thick darkness pressing over.

He sensed keenly that he should be somewhere deep below the ground.

“How long have I slept? What is this place?”

Holding back the headache that almost felt like a hungover, Li Yao glanced at the side of the medical pool. His mustard-seed combat suit had been folded neatly on the ground, next to his own Cosmos Rings.

Except for the few Cosmos Rings that he had swallowed into his body, all his Cosmos Rings were here. There were even two additional Cosmos Rings that Li Yao had never seen before. Attracting them with his spiritual energy and sensing them carefully, he discovered that the two Cosmos Rings were not installed with any barrier, and he could explore them with his telepathic thoughts freely. One of the Cosmos Rings stored the broken pieces of “Gold Vulture”, while the other contained the remains of “Hellstar”. It appeared that Long Yangjun had helped him collect the detritus.

Long Yangjun is really considerate enough!

Li Yao felt delighted. Then he thought of the scheme or plan that Long Yangjun talked about before he passed out. He couldn’t help but frown again.

“Brother Yao, you’ve slept for ten days!”

Li Jialing stepped forward and said, “This is the 10,084th district, more than thirty thousand meters into the ground and almost on the border of the crust and the mantle!”

Chapter 2341 - Forgotten Land

Chapter 2341 Forgotten Land

“A five-digit district!”

Li Yao was slightly surprised. He knew that he must be well below the sea level from the dull air, but he did not expect that it would be so ridiculously deep.

The habitable planets with a stable tectonic structure that was suitable for mankind generally boasted triple layers, namely the core, the mantle, and the crust. The capital planet of the Imperium was certainly not an exception.

Such habitable planets were like enormous eggs, where the core was the yolk, the mantle was the white, and the crust, which was thirty to fifty kilometers thick, was the thin “eggshell”.

While the crust was the thinnest layer, it was the most important area for residence and resource collection for human beings.

In the mantle below the crust, magmas of high temperatures and pressure were everywhere. Any random hole that was drilled might lead to an eruption and destroy everything. There could also be rocks that were denser than the superalloys. Even the most advanced drilling magical equipment could not dig very deep after the cost of astronomical spiritual energy. The seismic energy released in earthquakes were also hundreds of times more powerful than human beings’ best crystal bombs. The overwhelming squeezing and tearing forces in the tectonic movements were too much for any human expert to handle.

In short, the mantle was an area of death that was dangerous and not cost-effective. Even though the tentacles of the civilization of mankind had reached thousands of planets in the three thousand Sectors, they only stopped at the “eggshell” on the surface of those planets. They did not, nor was it necessary, to dig into the mantle yet.

On the capital planet of the Imperium of True Human Beings, according to the sea level and the development, all the towns were classified into six tiers.

The first tier was the cities on the ground that had names. For example, the central politics area where the Council of Elders was located and which was named after the founding emperor of the country, was known as “Blackstar City”.

There was also the “White Stone Municipality”, the heavy industry city where Li Yao and Long Yangjun had a fierce fight. All in all, the cities that had names were usually the metropolises inhabited mostly by Immortal Cultivators with a highly-developed civilization.

The underground towns, on the other hand, did not have a name, only a number. But according to the sizes and digits of the numbers, one could still see the difference.

The one-digit underground towns, numbered from “0” to “9”, had the most important underground fortresses and strongholds of the capital, with all kinds of magical equipment, supplies, and training facilities. The defense system here was even more flawless than the cities on the ground so that most of the Immortal Cultivators could evacuate to the towns and continue the resistance should the cities be conquered by powerful enemies.

The two-digit towns from the 10th district to the 99th district were generally the areas where the bankrupted

Immortal Cultivators and the brainworkers among hominoids lived. There were also all kinds of large public facilities, such as hospitals, schools, and ventilation bases that delivered fresh air to the deeper parts nonstop.

Dongfang Renxin chose to set up his secret institute in a two-digit town because only two-digit towns could support such a massive hospital. For the fourth-tier areas from the 100th district to the 999th district, which were the places where the industrial workers among hominoids lived, they could not support large hospitals at all.

However, the three-digit areas where the industrial workers lived were not the most miserable and barren areas.

Below their feet, in the underground mines and rocks more than five thousand meters deep, there were four-digit and five-digit towns. Those towns, like forgotten corners, had been abandoned by the upper class of the Imperium completely. They did not even have the value to be exploited, and they were simply left to live and die on their own.

Li Yao had been quite interested in the four-digit and five-digit areas that were at least five thousand meters below the ground. He tried to gather materials about the places, but the only things he found were rumors. It was said that the lost people in the abysses had retrograded, their most fundamental intelligence gone. They were like the “wolf kids”, who were abandoned in the jungle as infants and raised up by animals. They had the appearances of human beings but the souls of beasts. Those ignorant, uncivilized creatures were also the best evidence to prove that “true human beings” and “hominoids” were not the same species, and that “hominoids” were essentially a beast that looked very much like a human, nothing more.

The forsaken people deep below the ground were to the Immortal Cultivators what ants deep inside the mud next to their feet were to elephants. The latter completely ignored the former and were not even interested in wasting some strength to stomp on them.

It never occurred to Li Yao that Long Yangjun had set up her nest in a five-digit town. What were the residents here who had been “abandoned by the civilization” like? What was Long Yangjun’s so-called “scheme”?

Li Yao’s head began to hurt again. Frowning, he tried to crawl out of the medical pool and cleaned his body with Li Jialing’s help. Putting on the mustard-seed combat suit and all the Cosmos Rings, ensuring that his crystal suit could be activated and put on at any moment, he was finally refreshed and asked, “What is this place? Where did Dongfang Mingyue go?”

“I don’t know how I should describe it. I used to live on the ground and in starships all the time. It has never occurred to me that there are such places in a civilized world, or humans living in such a way.”

Li Jialing hesitated for a long time but did not know what to say. He simply said, “Now that you are awake, Brother Yao, you can take your time and see for yourself. That… Sister Dongfang reminded me when she left that Brother Yao was free to go wherever you wanted to go. Everything that you are interested in is open to you too. It doesn’t matter if you want to go to her either. All in all, everything is free.

“However, let’s leave that aside for now. Brother Yao, are you sure you are really alright? Should we scan you with medical magical equipment? Sister Dongfang informed me of the whole battle. I did not know Brother Yao was so strong that you could even blow Blackstar the Great away. That was really… really—”

Glancing at the medical magical equipment nearby that was rusted and dusted, Li Yao shook his head. “There’s no need for that. I should be fine. Even though my wounds are not healed yet, they won’t help much… Why are you staring at my head?”

“Nothing, nothing.”

The little lion shook his head hard and said in a hurry, “I’m just saying that Brother Yao can take your time to treat your wounds. Whenever you need to deduce or calculate anything with your brain, you can just ask me to help you instead. Do not savage your brain cells for the unimportant issues. However gifted and distinguished you are, you must pay attention to your health!”

Blinking, Li Yao stared at Li Jialing suspiciously. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Nothing. I’m just saying that you should take care of yourself.”

Choked for a long time, Li Jialing finally said, “If you don’t take care of yourself, how can you fight Blackstar the Great next time?”

“Right, speaking of which, I wonder if Dongfang Mingyue has told you yet—”

Li Yao said in a hurry, “But after the battle ten days ago, we were already certain that your mother had been haunted since decades ago—no, since more than a hundred years ago when she explored the Supreme Emperor’s mausoleum, except that it did not attack her until the recent decades. Therefore, it was not her own wish to kill you!”

Biting his lips, Li Jialing seemed both comforted and sad. He said in a low voice, “I know. If possible, I will certainly drive Blackstar the Great’s remaining soul out of the queen’s body!”

Li Yao shook his head. “Driving him out won’t be enough, because you are very likely to be a carrier that he has carefully prepared for himself. Should he escape from the queen’s body only to dash into yours later, the consequences will be even more severe.

“Thankfully, Blackstar the Great’s remaining soul must’ve suffered grave wounds in the battle too, which will probably slow down his schemes for a while and give us some time of rest. We can figure out what he is up to exactly and come up with a solution!

“But first of all, let’s sort out all the cards we have in our hands now. Since this place is Dongfang Mingyue’s nest, is there any workshop with advanced facilities that can repair the Colossi?”

Li Jialing shook his head quickly. “No, there is only a small refining workshop here, which can repair crystal suits at best but can do nothing about Colossi.”

“Fine.”

Li Yao thought for a moment and realized that it did make sense. The super workshops where the Colossi could be maintained required enormous space, a steady supply of spiritual energy, and the technical support of a whole team. It was indeed not something that could be found in Long Yangjun’s secret base.

“What do you have here, then?”

He asked helplessly.

Before Li Jialing replied, soft door knocks echoed outside.

It was a little girl in a gray cape who pushed the door and walked in. She had a face that had never seen any sunlight and was almost transparent. The veins that were vaguely blue were clear, and her pupils that were slightly red were immediately gathered into two red beans, suggesting that she was not used to the light. But there was no expression of discomfort on her face at all. She bowed at the two of them first and then left a giant tray before them, before she said, “Please help yourselves, honorable guests.”

Li Jialing thanked her. The little girl did not say anything else but simply walked backward until she was out of the room.

Having lived tens of thousands of meters below the ground for years, never been to the ground and never touched the real sunlight, she already looked slightly different from the people on the ground and in the shallower underground towns.

Her tone was filled with a hollow and monotonous air, like the water drops on the stalactites deep below the ground dripping on the rocks that were as smooth as jade. It was both pleasant and weird.

Li Yao studied the identity of the girl and the habit of underground humans with great interest. From her politeness, it could easily be told that she was not a “human-shaped beast” that the Immortal Cultivators slandered.

The big metal tray before him was supposed to be a smooth industrial product, but it must’ve been used for thousands of years because there were dents everywhere. However, the edge of the tray was polished so clearly that it could reflect the light.

On the metal tray, it was a large bowl of paste that was thicker than porridge and a roasted beast leg that smelled delicious. Roasting was certainly not a skill to be underestimated. In fact, the development level of a civilization could often be seen from the complexity of their culinary arts.

It was impossible for a primeval species who feasted on raw meat and blood to be adept at cooking. A civilization that was aware of dozens of cooking techniques and hundreds of condiments must be a highly-developed civilization.

Chapter 2342 - Serenity Seraph

2342 Serenity Seraph

“This porridge is a hybrid of gigantic rock worms and mosses. It is the main food in this area. Although it may not taste very good, it contains a lot of nutrition.”

Li Jialing explained earnestly, “The roasted meat here is the back leg of a Red Lizard. The Red Lizards are the main vehicles in this place. They hop forward with their strong back legs. Therefore, their legs are the most muscular parts of their body and a delicious food when roasted with the magma that has just consolidated. People here might not even get the chance to have it once a year. Enjoy it while it is hot!”

“Is that so?”

Having slept for a long time, Li Yao indeed felt that he was starving. He fetched the porridge and the back leg of the Red Lizard and started to gobble them. The porridge indeed tasted rather bad, like half-frozen candles, and only had a slightly salty flavor. The roasted meat tasted much better. It was chewy and covered his mouth with scrumptious aromas, making him feel even more hungry.

Li Yao did not really care much about the flavor. He had eaten synthetic food that tasted even more awful than candles too many times. The only thing that concerned him was the refill of energy. While drinking the porridge, he observed, “Why are they made of common ingredients? This place is Dongfang Mingyue’s nest after all. Does she not have any high-energy nutrition drugs? She can’t be that petty, right?”

“Huh…”

Li Jialing said dutifully, “There was in the beginning. However, during the days you were unconscious, Brother Yao, you swallowed dozens of high-energy nutrition drugs more than what common trainers would’ve had every day. As it turned out, you exhausted all of Sister Mingyue’s storages. She jumped up and down in fury. That’s why… there’s no more of them now.”

Li Yao coughed and changed the topic in embarrassment. “Right. Do you know the girl who came to drop the food a moment ago? Why was her attitude so weird and cold as if somebody owes her thousands of dollars? Are we not welcomed in this place?”

“That is not exactly the case.”

Li Jialing shook his head and said, “Sister Mingyue boasts a high prestige in this place. Many residents of the underground world are her believers, including those who have been serving us. We are both the honorable guests brought over by Sister Mingyue. They cannot welcome us enough. Why would they reject us?

“It’s just that Sister Mingyue’s believers are all the same. They must repress their feelings. Even if they are very delighted in their heart, they will not show much of it on the surface.”

Li Yao stopped attacking the leg of the Red Lizard. Chewing the meat fiber among his teeth, he found that it did not sound right. “Believers? What believers?”

“Believers of Nepenthe.”

Li Jialing said quickly, “Nepenthe is a religion that Sister Mingyue founded a few years back at the deepest part below the ground. It has been developing very fast in various areas below the ground. Not only are her believers everywhere in the abyssal towns numbered larger than 10,000, but even the four-digit and even three-digit towns that are closer to the sunlight have a lot of people who joined Nepenthe too.

“Right, those believers all call her…’Serenity Seraph’. Although she is not exactly the leader, she is the spiritual symbol of Nepenthe. People here believe in her.”

“What the heck?”

Li Yao tossed the leg of the Red Lizard that only had the bone left now onto the tray and frowned. “Nepenthe? ‘Serenity Seraph’? She really can’t change her habit of propagating superstitions anywhere she goes!

“Come on, tell me about it. What are the philosophies of this ‘Nepenthe’? How exactly did she attract followers?”

With an even more complicated expression, Li Jialing weighed his words for a long time before he finally said carefully, “The main idea of Nepenthe basically claims that the feelings and desires of human beings are the sources of all pains. If the reality cannot be changed, as long as the feelings and desires are suppressed and eradicated as much as possible, one will also be able to destroy all pains and enjoy a carefree new life.”

Li Yao was astounded.

His eyes and his mouth gradually widened, as if he were going to swallow Li Jialing.

“What?”

Li Yao grabbed the leg bone and waved it as if it were a saber. “Eliminating feelings and emotions equal to eliminating pains? A ‘carefree new life’? Is—Is it any different from the claim of the Covenant Alliance?”

Considering the “scheme” that Long Yangjun mentioned ten days ago, Li Yao immediately felt that his back was covered in a cold sweat. The porridge and roasted meat that he had a moment ago seemed to have turned into poisons.

“Sister Mingyue said that her claim was slightly different from the ideas of the Covenant Alliance.”

Thinking for a moment, Li Jialing said, “If the Covenant Alliance wants to destroy 100% of mankind’s feelings and emotions, turning human beings into detached puppets, she only wants to destroy 90% of the feelings and desires. No, not exactly ‘destroy’, but repressed.

“According to Sister Mingyue, if there were enough resources for everyone to release their feelings and desires freely, it would certainly be unnecessary to repress anything, and everybody could be the truest and freest version of themselves. But what if the resources are insufficient? In order to avoid unnecessary conflicts and pains, one should keep only 90%, 80%, 70%… and so on of their feelings and reduce the demand for unnecessary resources. It is just a helpless choice!”

Li Yao was stunned for a long time. “Isn’t that still the Covenant Alliance’s theory under disguise? There’s no fundamental difference at all!”

Li Jialing nodded his head and bit his lips. “In fact, when she told that to me, that was how I refuted her with courage. But she simply replied with a smile that there was nothing she could do if I thought that way, and that I could regard her as a spy from the Covenant Alliance.”

“A spy from the Covenant Alliance?”

Greatly shocked, Li Yao smashed his fists. “Great. The evil she-fiend has finally revealed her real face! But wait. By logic, should she be engaged in the superstitious activities below the ground stealthily and planning the shocking great operations, only to be exposed and sabotaged by me at the last moment? Why has she confessed everything dutifully before I even begin to investigate and infiltrate?

“What then? She said that she was a spy of the Covenant Alliance, and then what happened? Did she say anything else? Did you firmly resist her?”

“How could I resist her?”

Li Jialing replied pensively, “Her combat ability was obviously higher than mine. She did not need to take action but only stared at my neck with a smile, and I already felt that my neck and spine were going to be broken by her telepathically. Besides, this is her territory. You were not up yet, and she appeared all candid and unharmful. What could I have done?

“As to whether or not she is a spy of the Covenant Alliance and her purpose, she did not say anything but simply let me ask you. She said that you would tell me everything, including her real name. She is not the real Dongfang Mingyue, and the two of you have known each other for a long time as good friends, right?”

Li Yao: “Well…”

Li Jialing: “Right, she also said that you would start jibber-jabber after a ‘well’ every time. She asked me to not believe anything you would say after a ‘well’.”

Li Yao: “…”

Li Jialing: “In fact, I do not need her to remind me that Brother Yao has the habit of bragging and chattering on. But sometimes, seeing how happy you are when you are swanking, I feel that it will be too awkward if I point it out, so I simply echo with you in case the atmosphere gets too weird.

“After all, Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan’s years of refinements on me were certainly not for nothing. I am just young and inexperienced, but I’m certainly not an idiot.”

Li Yao: “Enough. We are in the middle of an emergency. Let’s save the crap and get back to the topic. That woman is indeed not really Dongfang Mingyue. Her name is ‘Long Yangjun’. I can’t tell you much about her identity and origins except that she is an extremely dangerous and dreadful woman.”

Li Jialing asked, “Even more dreadful than Blackstar the Great?”

“They are dreadful in two different ways and cannot be compared in such a simple way.”

Thinking for a moment, Li Yao said, “I can only say that I would rather be faced with the Flying Star Sector that is fully armed and backed by thousands of troops than confront Long Yangjun who is smiling with no weapons in her hands at all. But of course, if she is really on the Covenant

Alliance’s side trying to brainwash everyone into emotionless and desireless dummies, I will certainly fight her to the end however dreadful she is!”

Li Jialing was rather astonished. “So to speak, she is really from the Covenant Alliance? Then, how exactly did she sneak into the Imperium and even win the trust of the prime minister? And how did you become best friends with such a dangerous person, Brother Yao?”

Li Yao thought for a moment and realized that it was inaccurate to say that Long Yangjun was a “spy of the Covenant Alliance”. That was almost an insult.

Long Yangjun was an elite warrior of the Nuwa civilization who was corrupted by the Pangu Clan. In terms of bloodlines, techniques, and ideas, the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan were fifty-fifty in her.

Half of her was the successor of the Pangu Clan, and the Pangu Clan was worshipped by the Covenant Alliance as the supreme god. Therefore, instead of saying that Long Yangjun was a spy of the Covenant Alliance, it would be better to say that Long Yangjun was a living god for the Covenant Alliance.

Even though the bloodline of the Pangu Clan was too thin inside her body for her to be respected as a “god”, it should be enough for her to be a spokesperson of the gods.

When thinking that way, it was not surprising that she was secretly disseminating the ideas of the Covenant Alliance in the underground world deep below the Imperium of True Human Beings as “Serenity Seraph”.

Wiping his lips, Li Yao said, “She is… not exactly from the Covenant Alliance. The situation is too complicated to be explained in a few words. Anyway, where is she right now?”

“Sister Mingyue—No, Sister Long went to the dark areas, which had been completely forgotten, deeper below the ground three days ago. She said that she was going to stop the war among a few barbaric tribes and let them abandon their vendettas against each other.”

Li Jialing said, “Before she left, Sister Long told me that I could take you on a tour in the underground town and check the believers of Nepenthe if you woke up while she was away, and if you were still furious, she would be waiting in the dark areas below the ground for you to stop her. She said that she would never evade or retreat in the competition of beliefs.”

Chapter 2343 - Refugees Below the Ground

2343 Refugees Below the Ground

“Let’s go!”

Li Yao quickly rose and said solemnly, “I’m going to take a good at what her so-called ‘beliefs’ are!”

Led by Li Jialing, Li Yao pushed the door and went out. It was not until then that he discovered he had been in the middle of a stalagmite that was as thick as a tree.

The stalagmite was at least twenty meters in diameter. Many caves and rooms had been dug out in the middle. There wasn’t even a flight of helical stairs outside that could be used to move from inside the tree to the ground.

Looking downward from the stairs, Li Yao noticed that he was at least dozens of meters away from the ground. But due to the hazy mist on the ground, it was impossible to tell the accurate height.

There naturally could not be mist in an underground world. Li Jialing told Li Yao that they were the powder from the fungi. The bizarre-looking fungi, mushrooms, and wriggling mosses were the main plants in the underground world.

Raising his head and looking above, on the top of the rocks that were about hundreds of meters high, dozens of small suns were hanging lethargically. Li Yao estimated that they were some sort of manmade illumination rune arrays that could output light steadily. But even the best steadiness would’ve been worn out after thousands of years. Right now, those “small suns” seemed to have been riddled with holes because of the bites of worms. Not only was their light little to none, but there were also mottled spots on the surface, making them look like glistening pies that had gone moldy.

Under the illumination of the dim light, and enshrouded in the flying powder of the fungi, the entire 10,084th district was drowned in a vague, ever-rolling mist, which further added to its mysteriousness.

The construction of the underground town was even more unrestrained and creative than the cities on the surface of the planet. Right next to every stalactite was a tunnel, expanding the traces of the civilization in the middle of the rocks wherever possible. Like vines that were spreading out as much as they could, they occupied all the available spaces.

The magnificent stone pillar that Li Yao was on had at least dozens of peers standing nearby. They constituted the main body of the town.

The stone pillars were connected by thick chains.

Li Yao saw that many locals, who were in gray capes, were riding a certain enormous, two-legged lizard, whose skin was dark red, while they bounced agilely among the chains. The claws of those two-legged lizards were similar to the claws of the birds, allowing them to grasp the chains easily or even to hang themselves on the chains and swing forward for dozens of meters. It was not unusual for them to jump from one stone pillar to another one with only a few swings.

As the people moved between the stone pillars, the chains were shaken by the Red Lizards nonstop in clinking noises, which, together with the oinks that were coming over from all directions, made up the main sound of the 10,084th district.

Li Jialing told Li Yao that the Red Lizards were likely to be the products of genetic modifications. Although they seemed hideous and aggressive, they were actually more docile than cows and horses, and they were the best help for the locals to move around.

As for the oinks that were coming over from all directions, that was the rock worms devouring their food. This was a town that lived on husbandry, and raising rock worms was the livelihood for most people. Rock worms, in fact, did not look like worms but were fair and fat creatures like piglets. They were also animals that had been genetically refined. Their digestion system had been particularly strengthened, allowing them to feed on rocks, mosses, and fungi. They could absorb the nutrition of the lousy fodder as much as possible and transform it into fat and proteins edible for human beings. Therefore, they were the main food that was very popular in the underground world.

Around this tectonic belt, the five-digit towns such as the 10,084th district mostly regarded raising rock worms as their main business. Most of the rock worms were not eaten by themselves but shipped to the four-digit towns up above in exchange for energy and other industrial products so that the residents who had been forgotten by the surface of the planet could keep the last spark of civilization shining.

Li Yao roamed in the town and observed the stalagmite, the chains, and the streets in great detail. He felt that the town, which seemed medieval, was filled with contradictions.

The stone pillar that he came from was not a natural product. It seemed that a very developed civilization erected hollow iron cylinders below the ground first and then piled materials, such as liquid metals or concretes, on them. That was the only way to ensure that the “stone pillars” that were dozens of meters wide and hundreds of meters tall had enough hardness.

Besides the rugged streets and tunnels, cutting the mosses and vines layer by layer, Li Yao could see the wires that had been carefully arranged to connect all the stone pillars. It should be some sort of large system of the Spiritual Nexus, but Li Yao could tell that it had been abandoned for a long time because he could not sense the least reaction of spiritual energy from the dense wires.

In many places, after ripping off the mosses, Li Yao could see the rusty metal wall, and after Li Yao erased the rust with great efforts, he saw the surface that was as smooth as a mirror, the seams that were as thin as hair, and square, huge words.

Some of the words were warnings, such as “Rune Array Inside. Do Not Enter”. Some were the designations of troops, such as “The 33rd Legion of Production and Construction”. Even more words had already been entirely corroded. Li Yao’s slightest breath had turned them into powder, dispersing everywhere.

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao found the longest seam and scratched it with his index finger from up to down. He felt that it was smooth without the least hindrance. Had he not been sensing it carefully, he could have barely noticed the seam.

The seam joined two iron plates that were at least dozens of square meters. After years of thermal reactions, stress changes, and tectonic movements, they were still so flawless. It was indicative enough of how developed the civilization that built the town was at the beginning.

“This place must’ve been a very advanced underground shelter at first, right?”

Li Yao slapped off the mosses and mud in his hands and continued to observe the structure. The 10,084th district was brimming with a sense of contradiction. It felt like a tunnel of time that had jumbled the entirely opposite features—advanced and underdeveloped, civilizational and primitive, artificial and natural—into the same place.

Perhaps the seemingly messy “vines” were actually the most advanced energy wires in the past. What appeared to be stalactites were the defense rune arrays that had been dusted for a long time. The super crystal processors that used to control the entire underground shelter had only an empty shell left after thousands of years, and they were now kicked by the naughty kids who had forgotten the glories of the past as footballs.

“Probably.”

Li Jialing said, “Sister Long’s theory is similar to Brother Yao’s. A long, long time ago, this place was indeed a very advanced shelter or an underground base.”

Li Yao curled his finger and knocked on the iron plate. Listening to the heavy echo, he asked, “Then, how did it become like this?”

Li Jialing said, “Sister Long gave me two examples. The first example is the tectonic faults. As time goes by, the more ancient a creature or a civilization is, the more likely it will be to be buried by mud and fall to the depths of the ground.

“If the planet is cut open, revealing the faults that look like different layers of a cake, it will be easy to notice that the fossils in the upper layers are of recent ages and those buried deep represent ancient creatures and civilizations.”

Li Yao nodded his head. “It’s very easy to understand. What else?”

“Then, there is the ocean.”

Li Jialing said, “The immeasurable ocean is itself a cubic ecological circle from top to down according to the sunlight, temperature, saltiness, density, and pressure. In fact, the ecological systems in different layers are independent of each other. The fish living in the shallow water will perhaps never submerge to the bottom of the ocean thousands of meters deep for their entire life, and the gigantic squids living thousands of meters deep never long for the warmth of the sunlight either. Although they are all aquatic creatures, the upper level and the lower level are already two independent worlds that never get in touch with each other.”

Li Yao asked, “What do the two examples suggest?”

“According to Sister Long, different classes have, in fact, been branched gradually during the hundred thousand years of mankind’s civilization. Human beings living in different levels are like fossils formed in different ages or ocean creatures living at different depths. They are already people of different worlds. Even if they are not classified as ‘true human beings’ or ‘hominoids’, their differences cannot be overlooked. Ignoring it will not solve the problem.”

Li Jialing said, “Ever since the age of the ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago, the strong have never stopped exploiting the weak for one day or even for one second. The weak who could not resist the strong could only escape.

“Some of the weak people ran to the rugged and barren mountains, and some went to the underground world and escaped even deeper as the strong laid their hands into the underground world.

“At first, the escape was scattered, spontaneous, and unorganized.

“Forty thousand years ago, at the beginning of the Great Dark Age, when demons took over the leadership of the universe and replaced the human beings, the human beings who did not want to accede to the demons’ reign were the first main force to immigrate to the underground world.

“Ten thousand years ago, when the demons’ tyranny was overthrown, human beings launched the bloody, revengeful slaughters against the demons. Filled with the hatred and fury that had been accumulated for thirty thousand years, they swore to kill every last demon in the universe. Therefore, a second massive escape to the underground world began, except that the runners this time were demons.

“Good days did not last. When the Star Ocean Imperium established by human beings had only endured a thousand years, it was already faced with the cruelest civil war that almost consumed every Sector. The human beings who used to fight against demons together in the past went against each other and became sworn enemies. Then, the third massive escape came.

“The ten thousand years that followed were the bloody years of chaotic battles in the universe. A critical place like the Empyreal Terminus Sector was certainly a center of the battles that the generals fought over. It was not strange at all that the people who lost their homes escaped to the underground world.

“The refugees, generations after generations, are the main part of the underground residents, who regard the shelters, military bases, and magical equipment warehouses built by different species and different forces of various ages as their new homes. This is exactly the origin of most of the underground towns.

“Naturally, the residents who escape to the underground world later always live on the shallower parts, and those who escaped here earlier, would naturally be pushed by the latecomers and could only go down even further and gradually sink into the depths of the planet, such as this town here.”

Chapter 2344 - Forgotten World

Chapter 2344 Forgotten World

Li Yao and Li Jialing walked under a “gigantic tree”.

The tree was hundreds of meters tall and situated in the middle of dozens of stalagmites and stalactites of different heights. Its branches were extended to all directions, and its root that protruded like a ridge also radiated all the way to the bottom of the soil.

Li Yao broke a few vines softly and wiped away a cluster of mosses. Then, he vaguely recognized a row of interfaces of crystal cards.

The object that appeared to be a giant tree was actually an accurate and huge central control system. He had only seen similar systems on the bridges of certain super enormous starships.

But right now, all the crystal processors and computational chips embedded in the central control system were rusted and covered in mosses, vines, and worms that were similar to ants. There were even spores that resembled lumps in the middle of the vines and mosses spurting out hazy mist nonstop.

The spores that seemed to be breathing made it look like a monster that was a combination of a living creature and a high-precision machine.

It was the greatest “playground” of the town. Many naughty kids had crawled to the branches of the tree, which were in fact the tubes of crystal wires. They were picking the bugs that had grown out of the crystal processor and putting them on the heads and backs of their companions. Teasing each other, they all laughed merrily.

Li Yao noticed that the children whose skin was translucent and whose eyes were slightly red were the few people in the entire town who could laugh.

Looking at the children, Li Yao was deep in thought. “The underground towns numbered above 10,000 are beyond the limits of the Imperium’s statistics. So, the residents here are the most ancient refugees?”

“Not exactly.”

Li Jialing shook his head and said, “The refugees who came in the age of ancient Cultivators forty thousand years ago or during the rise and decline of demons were too far away from today after all. Most of them have decayed in the underground darkness in the passage of time, or ‘assimilated’ with the people who came later.

“Even if some of them are still alive, they have long forgotten who they are, the significance of civilization, and even the most fundamental intelligence. They have become barbarians who feast on raw meat and blood, if not ignorant, human-shaped beasts who know nothing but their instincts.

“Those barbarians and human-shaped beasts have all been exiled to areas of darkness and death that are deeper than the five-digit towns. Not just names, they do not even have numbers. Sister Long has gone to such tribes of those wild creatures to mediate in their conflicts.”

Slightly frowning, Li Yao asked, “Then, when did the people here escape to the underground world?”

“Probably ten thousand years ago when the Star Ocean Imperium collapsed.”

Li Jialing replied, “Originally, this place was an underground shelter in the age of the Star Ocean Imperium. The ancestors of most residents must’ve escaped here at that time to hide temporarily, but their hiding turns out to be much longer than they expected. They’ve been struggling to live in this place and never returned to the world with sunlight again.”

Li Yao sighed but was still more or less confused. “Since it is an underground shelter constructed by the Star Ocean Imperium, there should’ve been all kinds of facilities and educational systems, right? Even though the first refugees here were all civilians, they certainly had the knowledge of basic living skills. But why am I under the impression that everybody here is sluggish and just catching their last breath?”

Li Jialing thought for a moment, as if he were recalling what Long Yangjun said. In the end, he said, “Sister Long said that the continuity and development of a civilization is just like training, you make progress or you fall behind. Only by running and evolving at a higher and higher speed, surpassing one peak after another, can a civilization be maintained.

“If they decide to stop and take a rest, it is very possible that they will be collapsed by their own weight, and they will inevitably decline and die.

“However, the more advanced a civilization is, the more complicated the social structure will be. As the requirements to sustain the social form grow more and more, the civilization’s ability to resist the pressure of the environment will be weaker and weaker. Sister Long said that as a refiner, you must understand the logic that the fewer components, the lower the fault rate. As the components that make up a piece of magical equipment grow more and more, however carefully it is produced and used, some faults are bound to occur as time goes by."

Li Yao nodded his head. In the circle of magical equipment production, there was a saying that "every additional component means a double faulty rate". Although it might be an exaggeration, the idea certainly made sense.

As the number of components increased, the difficulty in producing, assembling, and maintaining would soar exponentially. A piece of large magical equipment made of millions of components was essentially a chaotic system that was utterly unpredictable. Nobody could ensure that it would not have any bizarre problem during usage. Even Li Yao could not make such a promise.

Perhaps, as the components and the rune arrays surpassed the limits, the magical equipment was also given life to some extent, and lives were the most uncontrollable and unpredictable things in the universe.

"Sister Long said that civilization is exactly like magical equipment. Just like a piece of super huge magical equipment made of trillions of components, no matter how it is maintained, it is destined to collapse someday, and a highly developed civilization is also most vulnerable, and may be completely destroyed by the slightest issue."

Li Yao sniffed. "How are magical equipment and civilization the same?"

Li Jialing opened his hands and said, "Sister Long said that a village in the world of ancient Cultivators, whose buildings are made of the simplest wood and rocks and whose people make their living by hunting and farming every day, is in fact very easy to resist the corrosion of time and the change of environment although it seems rather underdeveloped. Even if all the villagers migrate from the surface of the planet to below the ground, they can still keep their previous social form and live for a long time.

“But what if it is a modern town?

“Think about it. What does it require to sustain a modern town? Even from the most superficial point of view, there are interconnected vacuum tube systems and high-speed crystal rails above their heads, the convenient tunnels and lifts below the feet, and the dense sewers, ventilation tubes, and information transmission tubes that join each other. Also, enough space is needed to accommodate vehicles such as shuttles. All these need the incessant supply of energy.

“Assuming that the population is the same, the energy consumption in a modern town is hundreds of times higher than a medieval town. How can a modern town not collapse in the barren underground world where there is barely any source of energy except for geotherm?

“There are also human factors. Sister Long said that although the civilians in the ancient times seemed as weak as ants, ants actually boasted high survival abilities. The ancient people are sturdy and diligent. They can keep on farming and hunting even if they are having the worst food every day. Also, it is their habit to have as many children as possible. Even though most of their offspring pass away, there will still be a few descendants to pass their bloodlines.

“In comparison, although a strong group known as Cultivators have appeared in the modern society, and the myriad of magical equipment makes life easier than ever, they have all weakened the survival abilities of human beings on their own. The stomachs of most people are only used to the most delicate cuisines. They need air conditioning rune arrays to create a cool and comfortable environment. Not just the shortage of sewers and toilets, they will feel dead even if they are only lacking the Spiritual Nexus.

“The modern people have long forgotten the skills to farm and hunt with the crudest tools, or even barehanded, in harsh environments. They are crystal processor engineers, crystal train drivers, architects of skyscrapers, and great storytellers. All their living skills must be supported by a platform that is accurate, complicated, and therefore tends to err. When the platform is gone, 99% of the modern people will be as good as dead.

“Furthermore, the more advanced a civilization is, the more discouraged the people will be to have children. They have no ability to resist risks at all.

“That was exactly the case for the remnants of the Star Ocean Republic who immigrated to the underground world. Perhaps the facilities in the shelter were indeed advanced and the supplies were abundant when they just escaped. They also had modern talents such as doctors, scholars, teachers, and engineers, who could continue their tiny civilization.

“But it is just an illusion. Faced with the pressure of tectonic movements, the seemingly indestructible wall of the shelter was as fragile as a soap bubble. One ‘tiny’ earthquake was enough to destroy their entire modern civilization. Should the engineers in certain critical posts perish, unfortunately, it would be barely possible for them to raise a qualified successor in a few years.

“It was perfectly normal that dozens of earthquakes and volcano eruptions took place in the past thousand years. The remnants of the Star Ocean Republic have struggled to survive to this day in such a harsh environment without losing all their humanity, and they still boast the abilities of language, thinking, and basic social organization. It is already very impressive!

“Right, Sister Long also said that it was perhaps how the Pangu and Nuwa civilizations were destroyed. The more advanced a civilization is, the more fragile the internal structure will be. Therefore, when the Pangu and Nuwa civilizations were most developed, they must’ve been a hundred times more susceptible than the civilization of mankind today.”

Li Yao scorned at the theory. He could totally come up with a hundred counterexamples. Was Heaven’s Origin Sector’s ability to resist disasters lower than the Ancient Sages Sector’s? Of course not!

However, he did not intend to be pedantic. Looking at the hazy darkness above him, he asked, “Do the authorities of the Imperium know the situation here? Why didn’t they do anything?”

“Of course they know. Why else would the place have been numbered ‘10,084’?”

Li Jialing said, “However, why would they do anything, who would do it, and what could they gain by doing it? The Immortal Cultivators are all the most selfish creatures. They… We certainly wouldn’t do things that have no rewards!

“If certain rare mines or precious civilization relics are discovered below the ground, the Immortal Cultivators will certainly crowd over and fight hard, not hesitating to wipe out the entire underground town.

“But a barren village that lives on rock worms like the 10,084th district has nothing to be exploited at all. Earning one penny in this place comes with a cost of a hundred dollars. It is not a fair deal at all. Why would the Immortal Cultivators waste their precious time training on those insignificant ants and ‘garbage’?

“Besides, the Empyreal Terminus Sector is also theoretically a ‘vacuum of power’ for the four Kurfürst families. This is the capital that directly belongs to His Majesty. Which Kurfürst will be a fool and help the emperor take care of the untouchable and the wild creatures below the ground?

“Therefore, except for the census two hundred years ago to number the areas below the ground, unless rare mines and ancient relics are found somewhere, few Immortal Cultivators will come this deep. This is an ignored, forgotten world that has been completely abandoned by the rulers on the surface of the planet.”

Chapter 2345 - The Little Lion Is Deceived!

Chapter 2345 The Little Lion Is Deceived!

Li Yao was silent. Li Jialing's words did have a point, and he failed to come up with a rebuttal.

Before he came to the Imperium of True Human Beings, as a Cultivator from the Star Glory Federation, he always had a misunderstanding about the main contradiction within the Imperium and thought that the exploitation of "true human beings" over "hominoids" was the major problem.

It was not until he came to the Imperium and saw the society in different facets and the conflicts of interests that Li Yao learned the typical "ordinary people who are bullied by the Immortal Cultivators" working in the assembly lines and the industrialized farmlands were in fact not the most miserable people at all.

It was true that those ordinary people were mistreated, but they often had a stable source of food, clean water, safe houses, and a small sum of wages. In order to boost their enthusiasm for work and to exploit more surplus value from them, the Immortal Cultivators even offered them certain entertainments. For example, Wuying Qi's "slaughter stream" was exactly an anesthetic for the labor forces to give them mental pleasure.

As the saying went, it was better to be a dog in a peaceful world than to be a human in a war. In the areas that the authorities of the Imperium could and would implement effective governance, public services of the minimal degree were still provided and the infrastructure was worked on to maintain the order of society. Also, theoretically, there were laws that protected the justifiable interests of most people. Even though the flawed laws were often broken by the Immortal Cultivators blatantly, they were still better than nothing.

After all, the Immortal Cultivators’ government was still a government, not the headquarters of bandits.

The “forgotten towns” numbered beyond 10,000 meters below the ground, on the other hand, were not even qualified to be enslaved and exploited. In other words, they did not have a chance to be a slave even if they wanted to. Naturally, the authorities of the Imperium did not provide any public services for the area, and the people here were entirely left to themselves.

In the dark and silent world, there was no sunlight and little drinkable water and food. The seismic damage was hundreds of times more powerful than on the surface of the planet. Collapses were happening all the time, and destructive magma might spurt out at any moment. Li Yao did not know whose life was more miserable, the slave workers who sat behind the assembly lines in the magical equipment factories for their entire lives or the abandoned folks below the ground who had been forgotten by the entire universe?

In the metaphor that Long Yangjun told Li Jialing, she mentioned the ocean. It was true that the world of the abandoned folks was like an undersea plateau. No matter what intense tides were surging on the surface of the ocean and how many ferocious beasts were fighting, the mud at the bottom of the ocean would not be affected at all. In the eyes of the dominators of the ocean, the fish and shrimps that struggled to survive in the mud did not exist at all.

However, Li Yao could understand why Long Yangjun brought him and Li Jialing to this place. Right now, Blackstar the Great had activated his plan and probably controlled the entire capital planet. Whichever city they were to hide in, it would’ve been barely possible to dodge the dragnet of surveillance cameras.

Most of the towns below the ground were still more or less controllable for the authorities. A lot of crystal cameras had been established in those places and connected to the wireless network. So much as they left a fuzzy shadow in one of the crystal cameras, tremendous pursuers might be coming after them.

The forgotten towns numbered beyond 10,000 were the only places that did not have the Spiritual Nexus or the crystal cameras. Utterly ignored by the high-level Immortal Cultivators, such places were the sanctuaries for them to heal and rest without concerns.

Being from a world with sunlight, Li Yao and Li Jialing naturally looked slightly different from the human beings below the ground who were almost transparent. As they wandered in the town casually, they attracted the attention of a lot of locals.

However, most of the locals were just hiding behind the stalagmites and the fungi, enshrouding themselves with the intense fog as they observed the intruders cautiously, not having the courage to make any eye contact.

Wherever Li Yao and Li Jialing watched, the locals would shrink their necks and disappear into the mist.

Only the innocent children were bold enough to stare at them. Seeing that they did not look malicious or dangerous, the few bravest kids finally followed them like a tail and mimicked their walking posture.

Li Yao turned around and grimaced at the children. The children exclaimed and dispersed in a hurry. After a while, seeing that Li Yao had no other actions, they gathered again and grimaced at Li Yao exactly like he did just now, before they shouted in a weird tone, “Black eyes! Yellow eyes!”

The children who were born in the underground world had never seen the real sunlight. Even the illumination rune arrays above their heads were set at the dimmest level due to the shortage of energy and could barely illuminate the interconnected chains among the stalagmites and the stalactites. The brightest thing that the children had ever seen was probably the rolling magma.

After ten thousand years, their eyes had been through mutations. Their slightly red pupils gave them a certain ability of night vision and made Li Yao’s black eyes and Li Jialing’s brownish-yellow eyes the outliers in this place.

The children’s giggles caught the adults’ attention. Several hands suddenly extended out of the fog and dragged the children back. Their laughter was suffocated by the crude hands.

Li Yao slightly frowned. Feeble spiritual energy circled between his eyes, allowing him to see through the hazy fog and clearly observe the locals of the underground world who thought they were hiding very well.

Li Yao discovered a very weird phenomenon. As the locals aged, their abilities to express their feelings seemed to be weakened.

The innocent, carefree kids could still cry, laugh, play, and express their emotions freely.

But the tall, big adults were always frowning, with alert and panic slightly beaming out of their eyes, as if they were ready to hide in a crevice at any moment. Li Yao and Li Jialing’s arrival seemed to have disrupted the solemnity of the place, making them extremely uncomfortable.

For the seniors who were older and had wrinkles all over their faces, they did not even have the shimmer in their eyes anymore. Like statues made of stalactites, they squatted next to the wall for a long time without moving, as if they had been melted with the underground world.

Li Yao also saw some other people wearing gray capes. They were as tranquil and hollow as the girl who delivered them the food a moment ago. Sitting cross-legged in random places of the underground town casually, they seemed to have entered a weird hibernation state, their breath little to none.

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao asked solemnly, “Have the people here all been brainwashed by Long Yangjun, their feelings and desires erased?”

He thought that it must be what happened, but Li Jialing shook his moment after a brief hesitation and said, “I asked Sister Long too, but she said no. The people here had been lifeless and placid before she came.

“Sister Long said that intense feelings and desires are based on abundant materials and advanced interaction of information. As the saying goes, only when you are warm and full will you look for fun. If you are not even fed and the basic safety of your life is not guaranteed, there will be no place for ‘feelings’, ‘desires’, or ‘free will’.

“Sister Long said that living in the highly-developed post-industrial and post-informational society, modern people can easily find ten thousand types of food to stimulate our appetites and ten thousand entertainments to trigger our intense feelings. Most of our desires are met. As time goes by, we begin to take the desires and feelings of such a high level for granted.

“However, in the worlds that are in a serious shortage of materials, such as in the ancient times or the underground world before us, the inadequacy of food is normal, safety is not guaranteed, and there are few ways of entertainment. Everybody’s mind is empty and unfulfilled. How can the people have intense feelings and desires like the people on the surface of the planet?

“Think about it. If a child is born in this place, he has never seen the sun, the singing birds, or the colorful flowers; he does not know what is a forest or an ocean, much less the popular stars; he does not have games or virtual friend-making platforms; the sole meaning of his life is to survive and reproduce; and he has to worry about the shortage of food and the rampant earthquakes and magma every second; how will he not become numb and nonchalant like the residents here?

“Sister Long said that the adults here were exactly like this when she came to the underground world a few years ago. They were silent all year around like stubborn rocks because they had nothing else to do in their lives, and there were no resources to support the tiniest feelings and desires.

“It’s true that she taught the locals certain tricks to repress their pain, contain their desires, and tranquilize the mind, but she wasn’t the one who started it. If there were abundant resources in this place and the locals could enjoy the best food and the most interesting video games, only idiots would’ve followed her and studied the inhumane tricks!

“Sister Long also said that not just this place, even the Covenant Alliance must be in a similar situation by her estimation. If you have a hamburger, will you eat bread instead? If you have a piece of bread, will you starve yourself? If the Covenant Alliance had abundant resources that everybody’s feelings and desires can be satisfied, who would ever abandon the most beautiful things in their life? The problem is that it doesn’t! The many worlds under the governance of the Covenant Alliance are the harshest areas in the first place. I estimate that they have wasted whatever left of their resources in the chaotic battles in the past ten thousand years. It is because they cannot live on anymore that the people have to abandon their feelings and desires and dedicate all the resources left to the only thing that matters—continuity of life.

“Sister Long also said—”

“Enough!”

Li Yao interrupted Li Jialing’s eloquence. “It has occurred to me that something is seriously wrong with your stance, my young friend. Why can’t you stop quoting ‘Sister Long’? Even if you are not considering it from the perspective of Cultivators like me, you should at least support feelings, desires, and free will as an Immortal Cultivator, shouldn’t you? You haven’t picked up anything good after learning after me for half a year, so why are you so deeply deceived by Long Yangjun when you’re only with her for ten days? You need to work harder on your firmness!”

Chapter 2346 - My Little Brother Has Grown Up!

Chapter 2346 My Little Brother Has Grown Up!

Unlike before, Li Jialing was not convinced by Li Yao. Instead, he said softly but resolutely, with determination beaming out of his eyes, “I am not deceived by Sister Long, and I do not think that everything she said and did was right, but it doesn’t mean that anything she said makes no sense!

“Brother Yao, did you know? Before I came here, I only knew that there were certain towns numbered beyond 10,000 deep below the capital, and I thought that they were no different from the common underground towns even though they might be more badly short of resources and chaotic and harsh than the surface of the planet.

“It never occurred to me that the insufficiency, barrenness, chaos, and harshness were so severe.

“This place and the surface of the planet are two worlds. The people here and those on the ground are actually… two species!

“Hehe. In the past, I thought that the world I grew up in was a burning inferno, and Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan were the foulest and most dreadful fiends. But now, I have realized that I never knew what a real hell should be like. How childish and hilarious I was!

“It’s true that Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan refined me through all the cruel methods, often giving me the most excruciating agony, but they never limited me in terms of resources. Whatever training resources I needed, I would be given immediately. Sometimes, they were even poured into my body even though I didn't want them.

"Besides resources, there were also techniques, knowledge, and information, which were inoculated into my brain and opened my eyes. Whatever Li Lingfeng had in mind, and whether or not he was simply trying to build me into a secret weapon to deal with the queen, he at least never restrained my feelings and desires. If anything, he tried to activate my feelings and release my desires through anything possible, opening brand-new gates for me one after another against my own will!

"At that time, I truly loathed him and wanted him dead. I didn't understand at all why he asked me to learn so many things, grasp so many techniques, and master such powerful strength. I did not like it one bit, and I thought I was the most miserable person in the world.

"Today, after seeing the people who are sealed below the ground, I realized how ostentatious and hypocritical I was. The things that I hated and refused in the past are unavailable and even unthinkable for the underground folks no matter how they dream and struggle for them!

"Li Lingfeng perhaps did have bad intentions, but he was also really raising me as an heir and digging the infinite potentials in me. Even though he deserved his death, I do not hate him as much as I did in the past now.

"There are also my partners, the bottom-level members of the secondary branches of the Li family. I thought that their lives were rather difficult. They had less than one tenth of what the heirs of the main bloodline had, and they had to undertake the arduous family missions. Sometimes, they were even the living targets for the heirs of the main bloodline. When they distinguished themselves, it was very possible that they would be eliminated by dirty tricks.

“But at the very least, keeping themselves fed and warm was not a problem. Theoretically, there was still a chance for them to distinguish themselves, even if the likelihood might be only 1% of the heirs of the main bloodline. But that was still a chance!

“What about the locals here? No sunlight, no resources, no safety, no knowledge, and not even one billionth of a chance for a new life. Ever since they were born, their future has been predestined, which is to freeze and decline slowly in the darkness, until they melt into the rocks as dust without a sound.

“Looking at their life, I suddenly feel that all my complaints, hatred, and fury in the past are so pale and helpless. I even have a… subtle sense of guilt, feeling that I do not deserve such a life and such enormous strength!”

“Wow…”

Li Yao found it hard to believe. “Seriously? Are you really Li Jialing? How did you become so mature after only ten days?”

“Perhaps I had always been mature enough to figure out a lot of things, but I did not want to be mature or think hard.”

Looking at the town in the mist, Li Jialing said casually, “In the past ten years, I’d been resisting Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan with all my wisdom. I camouflaged myself carefully every day and activated my brain cells to the maximum every second while I considered the ways to deal with them.

“The techniques, schemes, and conspiracies that they poured into my head by force consumed a lot of my computational ability too. My soul was like a tightened bowstring all the time, and I felt neurasthenic.

“Therefore, after I escaped from their control and my nerves were relaxed, I simply let go of everything. I did not want to think about anything but only hoped to live a carefree, unrestrained life.

“It’s true that I’ve been resisting and evading, resisting the life that Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan planned for me and evading the fate that I should’ve shouldered.

“I want to wander to a random town at the edge of the cosmos and live the rest of my life in anonymity, which is an evasion. But isn’t it another evasion to listen to your arrangements on everything and regard you as a guardian angel, Brother Yao?

“In many cases, I knew clearly that you were not telling the truth or not even making any sense, but I was too lazy to argue with you. So I simply seconded to you and let you handle everything. I knew that you must be considering on my behalf, so why would I bother to consider for myself independently? I have never been a man who likes to quarrel or show off!”

Li Yao: “Well…”

Li Jialing had never looked more grave. “However, after seeing the hopeless people below the ground and their fate that is a hundred times more miserable than mine, it suddenly occurred to me that my life is not the curse that I thought it was in my self-pity but actually the most unbelievable bliss!

“At the very least, after all the sufferings and tortures, I now boast overwhelming strength and exuberant feelings, and I have got a general picture of what the universe looks like! If I don't do anything with my strength, would I deserve the bliss that the locals of the underground world are never entitled to?"

Li Yao was quite shocked by the brilliance in the young man's eyes. In a trance, he felt that the dominating vibe of the "Imperial Fire Pearl" was dashing out of the young man's eyes. He couldn't help but feel amazed. "Then, what do you want to do exactly?"

"I haven't figured it out yet."

The determination in Li Jialing's eyes turned into deep confusion. He shook his head and said, "I haven't decided on the path that I will walk on yet, but it doesn't matter. I still have plenty of time to observe the world carefully and consider my path."

"Young man, you've finally had an epiphany!"

Li Yao placed his warm hands on Li Jialing's shoulders and remarked with mixed feelings. "In fact, the first time I met you, I could already tell that you were naturally-endowed. Your spiritual root was as thick as a tree, and flames were erupting from your skull like a volcano eruption! You are a great dragon, not a shrimp at the bottom of the pond. You are born for great achievements!

"I never said it to you because I thought you were still young, but since you have such a deep understanding today, come on and be a Cultivator just like Brother Yao. Let's save the world and defend the peace of the universe together!"

"Excuse me, Brother Yao."

Li Jialing slowly moved Li Yao’s hands away and said solemnly, “First of all, I only want to live up to my… special life, but it does not mean that I want to save the world!

“Secondly, and more importantly, can I save the world by being a Cultivator?”

“Of course!”

Li Yao blurted out without even thinking, “The path of the Cultivators is very effective. Brother Yao has advanced into the Divinity Transformation Stage at such a young age all because of that. I even almost blew up Blackstar the Great, the ancestor of all Immortal Cultivators, into smithereens in one attack! Are you turning down the path of the Cultivators and insisting on the true path of immortality?”

“Yes, it’s truly incredible that Brother Yao is one of the few geniuses who have advanced into the Divinity Transformation Stage at such a young age, but…”

Li Jialing hesitated. “Well, how should I put it? I do not want to be like you.”

“What do you mean?”

Bulging his eyes, Li Yao scratched his cheeks. “You do not want to be like me? Is there anything inappropriate about the way I look? Am I not handsome and charming enough?”

“No, I am saying that being a Cultivator or an Immortal Cultivator is not the focus of my thinking. It doesn’t even matter whether or not Blackstar the Great can be blown up!”

Pointing around, Li Jialing said, “The underground folks have lived in darkness for ten thousand years. They had been living like this long before Wuying Qi and the Immortal

Cultivators were born. Can you rescue all of them by blowing Blackstar the Great into smithereens in one attack, Brother Yao?

“Even if you were ten times stronger, Brother Yao, and you blew up Prime Minister Dongfang Wang in one attack, Blackstar the Great in another, and then the four Kurfürst families in a round of crazy bombardments, then what? Will everyone including the underground folks be immediately reborn and given a resourceful, carefree, and happy life?

“If your answer is yes, Brother Yao, would you tell me the specific procedures? Perhaps I will truly join your path!”

Dumbfounded, Li Yao was lost for words.

“Forget it. I know that the question is too huge for an answer to be found so shortly. Not just Brother Yao and Sister Long, even Blackstar the Great wouldn’t have an answer. Perhaps nobody in the entire universe can find a perfect solution, not even the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan in the past. Why else would they have been completely destroyed?”

Li Jialing patted Li Yao’s shoulder and comforted him, “I’m just telling you some of my random thoughts. Please don’t take it personally, Brother Yao, and don’t waste your precious brain cells on such philosophical questions. Your wounds are not entirely healed yet, and you should focus more on maintaining your body and brain. As for my path, I will think more about it and figure it out on my own.”

Chapter 2347 - Lifeline of the Underground World!

“Why are you looking at me in such a way?”

Li Yao was perplexed by Li Jialing’s eyes. “Why am I sensing intense ‘sympathy’ in your eyes? What’s going on?”

“Nothing.”

Li Jialing closed his eyes and said solemnly, “I just want Brother Yao to know that whatever path I eventually choose and whoever I will become, I will never forget that you are my… family. In my heart, you weigh even heavier than the queen. I consider you as my big brother sincerely, and I just hope that you are safe… well, and healthy, all the time.”

“Is that so?”

Sensing Li Jialing’s sincerity, Li Yao grinned. “I regard you as my little brother sincerely too. All in all, Little Brother, do not be enchanted by the she-devil Long Yangjun, and do not push yourself too hard when you have just encountered some minor darkness and difficulties. Let’s just focus on one thing at a time. Saving the world can be put aside for now. You can try to give a hand to whoever needs help first. That will be a good start. The bottom line is, Brother Yao is confident in you. I believe that you will perceive the essence of the Cultivators’ ideas one day and become an even better Cultivator than me!”

“Maybe.”

Li Jialing said, “I need to travel, observe, and think more before I choose my final path. Only in such a way can I rush on my path without looking back!”

While talking, the two of them had reached the deepest part of the town.

It was a rock wall hundreds of meters tall that was filled with caves, making it look like a honeycomb. Every cave was around five meters in diameter and blocked by fences made of vines. Oinks were echoing from inside.

The locals of the underground town were carrying abundant mosses, veins, and fungi, sometimes even broken minerals, into the caves. It could be easily told that their burdens were very heavy. Their bones and veins were all protruding, and they looked rather painful.

Very soon, the people inside the caves poured their mosses and vines. Then, they carried out buckets of stinky excrements. Their burdens were finally more or less relieved, and the pain on their faces was replaced by the usual numbness.

Li Yao and Li Jialing were both honorable guests of the place. The locals did not even dare to make eye contact with them, much less stopping them from entering the caves. They simply lowered their heads and passed by the strangers quickly.

The two of them entered a random cave and immediately saw dozens of rock worms that had been raised.

It was true that rock worms were more like fat piglets than worms, except that they were slightly narrower and longer. They could be three meters long and two meters in diameter, like oval meatballs.

It seemed more appropriate to call them “rock pigs” than to call them “rock worms”.

Li Yao did not know if the rock arms had any hooves or claws in the beginning, but he could not see any organ that could be used for movement right now. Perhaps they had all been blocked by the flaccid fat.

They were a species of animal with extremely low mobility, like the sloth. Crouching deep inside the cave like statues, they were not moving at all. Li Yao suspected that they could not find any food on their own at all.

The oinks turned out to be not their moans but the sound of breathing from the air hole on the top of their heads. Those silly and lazy animals were too sluggish to even moan.

The locals ground abundant mosses, vines, and fungi into pieces, mixed them with the minerals which had been pulverized, and tossed the food into the trough. Then, a few rock worms wriggled over unhurriedly. On their fat and eyeless head, a cross slit apart and spewed out thousands of white threads, tying up the food into balls and pulling it back into the cross. For them, that was the way to take in food.

While the rock worms were devouring food, the locals bypassed them and searched for their turquoise-colored feces inside the cave. They were cleaning every corner carefully without leaving any.

Some of the locals were scrubbing the rock worms hard with brushes that had a long handle. Li Yao thought at first that they were cleaning the rock worms before butchering them, but when he observed more carefully, he discovered that he was wrong. The locals were simply massaging the rock worms!

It could be easily seen that the rock worms were almost the only source of income for the residents of the 10,084th district. Their care for the rock worms couldn’t have been more meticulous.

Li Jialing told Li Yao that the rock worm was a type of excellent edible animal that had been genetically refined on a large scale in the Star Ocean Republic ten thousand years ago. The earliest researches could even be dated back to the Demon Beast Empire that was best at biochemical technologies.

The rock worms could absorb tens of thousands of roughest ingredients, including the minerals that contained tremendous microelements, and transform them into fat and proteins, providing the nutrition that was necessary for the survival of human beings in the harshest environment.

The rock worms were treasures from inside to outside. Because of certain genes of spiders and silkworms that were integrated into them, the threads with which they covered their food were also the best raw materials for the textile industry. Also, they would exuviate every year, and their ecdysis could also be made into light and warm leather coats.

Also, the feces of the rock worms were natural fertilizers that barely needed any purification. They could be applied to most plants, mushrooms, and mosses, allowing people to domesticate wild plants into crops with high yields.

It was safe to say that when human beings colonized in an unknown area, as long as they brought rock worms, they would be able to settle the critical problems of “clothes” and “food”. Such animals would also lay a solid foundation for the development of agriculture too.

However, because of the excessive genetic modifications on “polyphagia” and “usability”, the rock worms were growing fat and proteins all the same. As a result, their mobility and hunting abilities had been weakened to almost zero.

It was a life created in the laboratory. On the premise of its current characteristics, it could barely get used to the harsh life in the wilderness. Therefore, they could only stay in the pen and be raised by human beings.

When the underground shelters were devised in the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago, there was naturally a whole set of automatic feeding facilities that were extremely advanced and accurate, ensuring that the “meat factory” could output products incessantly, starting from the reproduction of the rock worms to the readily-edible meat that was sealed in the cans on the assembly lines. The whole process did not require much supervision of workers and breeders.

However, as time went by, the automatic feeding facilities in the past had long run out of energy and were gone for good, and the knowledge to culture the rock worms at the beginning was lost too. The locals of the underground world today could only raise them in the most primitive ways.

Since the rock worms could grow so much fat, they naturally had a huge appetite. Unable to find food on their own, they counted on the locals to collect mosses, vines, fungi, and minerals before grinding them and tossing the food into the trough. Such physical labor could be very tiresome. A couple of healthy adults must work for an entire day to keep only one rock worm fed.

Also, to ensure that the mosses, vines, and fungi grew in the underground world, the locals had to toss the feces of the rock worms into the crevices and tend to the various crops carefully. The underground world was not suitable for any crop in the first place. Even the tiniest cluster of mosses had only grown because of the irrigation of blood and sweat of the locals.

Because the real automatic feeding families were broken a long time ago, the rock worms were not adapted to the environment deep inside the cave. Therefore, somebody must rub their body day and night and force them to move and exercise. Otherwise, black spots would soon grow out of the rock worms, which meant that the flesh and blood inside had all necrotized and were no longer edible.

Those works took up 99% of the time of 99% of the locals. It was even safe to say that the entire 10,084th district was dependent on “rock worms”.

According to the numbers of the stalagmites, stalactites, and caves on the wall that he had seen just now, Li Yao quickly calculated the ratio of the rock worms to the residents here, only to discover that the rock worms seemed too many for the population of the 10,084th district. Even if the animals were all butchered for food, the residents wouldn’t be able to eat all of them. Wouldn’t their lives be much easier if they kept fewer rock worms?

But Li Jialing shook his head and told Li Yao that he did not know the whole story yet. Like Li Jialing said a moment ago, although the locals were keeping so many rock worms, they did not often have the privilege to have meat. It was not bad at all if they could cut a piece of meat into pieces and mixed it into their porridge.

Most of the rock worms, after exuviating three times and turning completely mature, would be carried to the upper towns, namely the four-digit towns numbered between 1,000 and 9,999, in exchange for precious energy, civil magical equipment, and weapons.

The residents of the 10,084th district were not completely ignorant barbarians after all. They still retained the basic language and culture. Some of their magical equipment and rune arrays were still functioning. They also craved to know what the worlds up above were like. Their resources and fuel had to be traded with rock worms. But as it happened, synthetic food prevailed in the upper worlds, and rock worms could not be sold at a good price. Even a couple of rock worms might not be enough to be traded for a standard magazine of bullets.

Even if they gritted their teeth and did not purchase any magical equipment or energy, there was at least one indispensable thing that they had to buy from the towns up above, which was the freshly compressed air as well as the components to repair the air circulation and filtering system.

In the towns tens of thousands of meters below the ground, despite the most enormous and effective ventilation system to introduce the fresh air from the surface of the planet all the time, it was still very suffocating and depressing, filled with all kinds of lethal gases.

If the wastes exhaled by human beings condensed too much, everybody was likely to be choked too.

Therefore, the underground residents could abandon all magical equipment, including the illumination rune arrays above their heads, to become ghosts in the darkness, but they could never abandon the air circulation and filtering system.

Once the air circulation and filtering system broke down, they also needed to release highly-compressed fresh air in time to buy themselves the precious time for maintenance.

A lack of air was even scarier than a lack of sunlight. It would really be a catastrophe.

It was exactly what the residents of the four-digit towns took advantage of. They pegged the relevant components and the compressed air at an extremely high price, and dozens of rock worms could only be exchanged for a tiny can of compressed air.

Therefore, what the residents of the 10,084th area farmed and herded every day was not just what they wore and ate but also the air that they could not live without for one minute!

Chapter 2349 - Hatred in Darkness

Of course, most of the so-called “wildlings” were the humans who escaped to the underground world in the Great Dark Age when they could not withstand the tyranny of the demons anymore as well as the demons who escaped here in exactly the same way when the reign of demons collapsed.

That was because the environment on the border of the crust and the mantle was terribly harsh. Not only was the breathable oxygen lethal here, but the temperature was also ridiculously high. Normal human beings could not get used to the wilderness that did not have an air circulation system or cooling rune arrays, and they would be gone soon after they entered the rough country.

Demons, as well as the humans governed by demons in the “Great Dark Age”, however, boasted their unique advantages.

Li Yao now knew that the so-called “demons” and human beings were essentially the same thing, and the thirty thousand years of the Great Dark Age were in fact still the cruel oppression and tyranny of humans over humans.

However, that was the age when the biochemical technologies were highly developed. The studies on how to release the power of genes had reached the peak.

In order to excavate the underground mother lodes and to make use of the geothermal energy, many humans were forced to accept genetic modifications, which turned them into demons that required little oxygen and could endure droughts and heat remarkably. Even their forms were changed into bizarre-looking, gigantic reptiles.

The offspring of the human beings whose genes had been modified had a much higher chance of mutation than ordinary human beings did because the “gene locks” inside their bodies had been ripped off. After generations of such “humans” or “demons” escaping to the underground worlds, their progeny further mutated because of the harshness of the environment, consuming less and less oxygen and becoming more and more resistant to drought and high temperature. Some of the variations even grew a layer of dense plants on their skin. The plants would absorb carbon dioxide and exhale oxygen, and demons would absorb the oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide. It was a rather amazing collaboration.

At first look, those demons were like plants that could walk and talk, but actually, they were still just poor folks who were forced to immigrate to such a rough environment.

Therefore, the humans in the 10,084th district, who only descended to the underground worlds during the Star Ocean Imperium, could barely get accustomed to life in the deeper parts without shelter and a civilization. However, for the humans and demons who were born in the Great Dark Age, a tiny part of their offspring could still live inside the darkness as “wildlings”.

Besides wildings, there were also other animals and plants. The demon emperors and demon gods in the Great Dark Age, as well as all the civilizations of Cultivators from the Star Ocean Imperium, had tried to colonize the underground world without an exception. Apart from establishing shelters and bases below the ground on a large scale, they had also raised countless kinds of creatures that were used to the poorness of oxygen, darkness, and high heat below the ground by means of genetic modifications and radiation mutations.

They intended to copy the entire ecological system on the ground. In such a way, the living space for everyone would be expanded by a hundred times. However, 99% of the experiments on underground creatures failed. The animals and plants that they produced could only be used in the artificial environment in the shelter and the base at best. They were all abnormal species that could only live their entire lives in a comfortable laboratory like the rock worms.

However, after a lot of shelters and underground towns were destroyed in earthquakes and magma eruptions, 1% of the experimental creatures escaped and survived the difficulties with luck, turning into wild animals and wild plants again!

The wild animals were to the rock worms what boars were to pigs, or what wolves were to dogs.

Li Jialing told Li Yao that while the wildlings and the animals were aggressive, they would not attack the organized towns such as the 10,084th district without a good reason, because while the shelter system in such places had collapsed, some of the defense rune arrays might still be working. Besides, people here had traded abundant rock worms with the residents of upper levels for a lot of tough attack magical equipment. If the wildlings were not attacking with all their strength, it would be barely possible for them to swallow a town.

Besides, there were conflicts among the wildlings, too. They were divided into different clans and tribes, and their hatred could even be dated back to ten thousand years ago. In most of the cases, it was the wildlings who were fighting the wildlings, and they barely touched the residents of the 10,084th district.

Li Yao asked Li Jialing why the wildlings hated each other.

Li Jialing replied that, according to their origins and the time they entered the underground world, the wildlings had gradually evolved into different tribes. The wildlings of this tribe were the oppressed humans who came here during the thirty thousand years of the Great Dark Age, while the wildlings of that tribe were the demon nobles who were forced to flee here during the rise of the Star Ocean Imperium. Wouldn’t such two tribes be mired in a natural vendetta against each other?

While the two tribes were engaged in a fierce war, the Star Ocean Imperium on the surface of the planet collapsed again, and a bunch of people who had just accepted the ideas of the Cultivators escaped to the underground world too. Although most of them stayed in the shelters, some of them did intend to stir trouble by making use of the strength of the wildlings. As a result, more fuel was poured on the fire, and the incessant war in the darkness got more and more chaotic and cruel.

Although most of the brilliance of civilization had dimmed in their heads as time went by, the memory of hatred had been passed on generations after generations. Today, even those wildling tribes did not know why they were fighting the hostile tribes. It was now just a natural instinct that had been engraved on their gene strands.

Li Jialing told Li Yao that there were three wildling tribes in the areas of death near the 10,084th district, respectively known as “Black Armors”, “Night Wings”, and “Red Rings”.

The Black Armors, as their name suggested, boasted an extremely solid black shell. Not only did the shell possess a high defense ability, but more importantly, it could also store the high temperature below the ground like a special solar panel and transform the heat into part of the energy that was vital for their survival, thus significantly reducing the Black Armors’ demand on food. So, they could be spared from the unnecessary hunting as much as possible, and their survival abilities were greatly increased.

The Night Wings, on the other hand, boasted a pair of broad membrane wings. In the underground world that was full of narrow, rugged caves, the membrane wings were naturally not for flying or gliding. Instead, they could envelop the Night Wings completely into cold, giant cocoons. On one hand, they could prevent the heat and the water inside the body from losing; on the other hand, they could also stop other underground predators from noticing the Night Wings through infrared senses.

Many residents of the 10,084th district believed that after the Night Wings covered themselves with the membrane wings, they would turn into cold stalagmites and enter the special hibernation state where they did not need to take in anything for years. Naturally, that was an exaggeration of their abilities, but the Night Wings were certainly adept at survival.

The Red Rings, in the meantime, were the most terrifying predators of the area.

The Black Armors and the Night Wings’ naturally-endowed techniques focused more on defense, but the genetic mutations of the Red Rings were more inclined to attacks.

They had a pair of red eyes that were extremely sensitive to infrared rays. They also gained an organ that could detect ultrasonic waves like bats. The two abilities allowed them to perceive everything around them clearly in the depths of the darkness where there was absolutely no light.

With their powerful hunting abilities, the Red Rings had been crushing the Night Wings for thousands of years. Even the membranes of the Night Wings were likely to have been grown to avoid the detection of the Red Rings.

It was not until the Black Armors moved here from somewhere else and resisted the Red Rings with the Night Wings that the war of the wildling tribes came to a balance again. That, of course, was only the roughest theory. Outsiders were neither aware of nor interested in the specific details.

However, the earthquakes near the 10,084th district were more and more frequent and seemed to have destroyed the habitats of a lot of wild animals and plants. Those animals and plants were the targets of hunting and collections for the wildling tribes. Having lost most of the sources of food, the tension among the wildling tribes immediately escalated.

If the tension was not resolved in time, there would only be two possibilities.

Optimally speaking, the Black Armors, the Night Wings, and the Red Rings would be killed by each other in a fierce battle and go extinct.

But it was also possible that, when the three tribes were all short of food, they would temporarily hold back the grudge deep inside their genes and attack the nearest 10,084th district together. After all, the oinks of thousands of fat rock worms could spread to deeper parts of the world along the gaps.

It was exactly under such a background that Long Yangjun went to the areas where the three wildling tribes were active. A lot of Nepenthe believers went with her. Apart from the believers of the 10,084th district, many of them were from the four-digit towns or higher places.

According to the principle of Nepenthe, all humans were brothers and sisters and worth saving no matter where they lived.

Frowning, Li Yao decided to enter the wildling tribes and trace Long Yangjun after hearing Li Jialing's introduction.

When they passed the "giant tree" at the center of the 10,084th district, he suddenly changed his mind.

"Wait a moment."

Li Yao said, "Tell me where the core units of the air circulation system and the cooling arrays of the 10,084th district are."

As Li Yao had expected, the core units of the air circulation system and the cooling arrays were right below the "giant tree", or the mainframe crystal processor.

The two things were both critical for the locals. Once they broke down, the locals would either be choked due to the lack of oxygen or be killed by the high temperature.

However, perhaps because of their fear for "Immortal Cultivators", or because of their absolute trust for the "Serenity Seraph", believing that the Serenity Seraph's honorable guests would not hurt them, none of them had the courage to stop them from investigating but simply observed from far away.

There was still confusion, doubts, and anxiety on the young people’s faces, but the adults and the seniors had nothing but the usual tranquility and silence.

The air filtering and circulation magical equipment was a piece of fundamental tool for space voyages and could be found on every starship.

Besides, as the Prince of Ventilation Tubes, Li Yao had profound studies on ventilation tubes and air circulation systems of various forms and structures. Naturally, it was impossible for him to make any mistake.

Removing the shell of the units smoothly, Li Yao became grave when he saw the carbon dioxide sieve, the cartridge, and the oxygen generator inside.

Chapter 2350 - i Yao’s Approaches

There were very mature and reliable technologies on the production of air circulation devices and cartridges. Even in the Great Dark Age tens of thousands of years ago, people had been roaming in space on the starships that boasted air circulation magical equipment.

No matter how technologies declined in the ten thousand years of warfare, this most fundamental technology was never lost. Even the Star Glory Federation at the edge of the cosmos had developed it to such a high level that the gigantic air circulation system in the space fortresses could provide fresh air for millions of people at the same time.

The technologies of the Imperium of True Human Beings were at least decades more advanced than those of the Star Glory Federation. They certainly had more knowledge about air circulation too.

Li Yao had received tremendous files about the starships of the Imperium in Li Linghai’s Deep Sea Palace. He had profound studies on the air circulation systems of the starships.

Even the heavy starships more than ten kilometers long produced hundreds of years ago had never met any technical difficulties in terms of air cleaning, filtering, and recycling. With a tiny bit of highly-compressed “catalyst”, the wastes could be transformed into fresh air incessantly, before the “sieves” in the molecular level filtered the toxins in it. Even when there was a huge fire on a starship yielding intense poisonous smoke, the battle performance of the entire starship would not be affected at all.

The air circulation devices adopted in the underground world were slightly different from their counterparts on the starships. The requirement on airtightness was lower, but the requirements on anti-heat and anti-vibration abilities were much higher.

But that was not a big problem either. Li Yao himself knew quite a few special porcelains that could significantly improve the performance in anti-heat and anti-vibration as long as they were sprayed on the surface of the components. It was not complicated, and the cost was certainly not high.

However…

In the core units of the air circulation magical equipment of the 10,084th district, all the cleaning chips and exchange units were rusted and deformed. The rune arrays on the surface and inside were all as twisted as the scribble of naughty kids. Absolutely no anti-heat measures were taken.

Because of the continual work day and night and the lack of a decent cooling system, the temperatures inside the units were so high that one would leave a dent on them by jabbing at them softly with a finger.

“Crude” did not even begin to describe such components. They were far behind the current age. Even the assembly lines five or eight hundred years ago wouldn’t have produced such lousy products. God knew which unqualified factory crafted them!

Something would be terribly wrong if the air in the town could be fresh when such unworthy components were used.

That explained why Li Yao had been smelling dirt and rust the whole time while he was here!

Li Yao was infuriated and even disgusted. For a master of refining like him, to watch such shi*ty components was almost sullying his eyes and his mind. Holding back his fury, he stood straight and shouted at the locals outside, “Who purchased those components? Who installed them? And from whom did you buy them? You’ve been tricked!”

Li Yao’s exclamations echoed in the giant cave and crashed into pieces on the stalactites and stalagmites, only to be greeted by silence. The locals who were hiding behind the spikes and the fungi and observing them in secret all quickly retreated their heads like shocked snakes.

“It’s useless, Brother Yao, stop shouting. Except for the few designated talents trained by Sister Long, nobody will talk to us.”

Li Jialing explained, “The locals thought of us as the Immortal Cultivators, or at least people who come from the surface of the planet.

“For hundreds of years, the Immortal Cultivators from the surface of the planet have never brought anything for the locals except slavery, destruction, and catastrophes. In the past, wherever the Immortal Cultivators showed up, it often meant that precious mother lodes and relics had been discovered in the area, and it also meant that the villages nearby would suffer a disaster!

“As time went by, the dread for the people from the ground has been deeply branded into the flesh and bones of the underground locals, whose only way of resistance is silence.

“There are too many lessons for that. When the Immortal Cultivators heard that new mother lodes and relics were discovered below the ground, they came here pretending to be kind and friendly, even offering resources that the locals were in dire need of in the name of His Majesty or the major sects. But they were simply trying to elicit information concerning the mother lodes and the relics from the underground locals.

“After the information was retrieved and the coordinates and reserve were figured out, the Immortal Cultivators would immediately change their attitudes. The whole village would be destroyed, and the villagers would either be annihilated on the spot or enslaved until they died.

“Such things happened hundreds of times before and cannot be entirely kept a secret. As time goes by, all the locals know that talking to the people from the ground will lead to disasters and that they have to remain silent and keep a distance from the strangers.”

Li Yao frowned. “Aren’t we the honorable guests of that…’Serenity Seraph’?”

“It is exactly because we are Sister Long’s honorable guests that they are bold enough to watch us and a maid can slightly talk to us.”

Li Jialing said, “Otherwise, when the people from the ground like us came here, chances were that all of them would’ve hidden themselves in the caves, shuddering in fear together with the rock worms!”

Li Yao sighed and looked through the fog again. His eyes even pierced through the cold and hard shell of the underground locals, almost allowing him to feel the panic, anxiety, confusion, and even a tiny bit of… expectation under the nonchalant appearance.

Li Jialing continued, “In fact, you don’t even need to ask them such a simple question. The answer is obvious if you think about it. If the components sold to them are not so lousy that the facilities break down on a daily basis and can be used steadily for a long time, then, there will be no problems for the supply of oxygen at all, will there?

“If the oxygen supply does not have any problem, and there are sufficient rock worms, this place will be totally able to feed itself. Then, how can the three-digit and four-digit towns up above control the five-digit towns such as the 10,084th district, and how can they get dozens of rock worms by paying a tiny can of compressed air?”

Slightly dazed, Li Yao gradually became cold.

Li Jialing said with a bitter smile, “After living half a year of a carefree life with the help of the omnipotent Brother Yao, I seem to have returned to the days when I had to activate my brain cells to the maximum to deal with Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan in the past in order to see everything clearly. This is really… uncomfortable!”

Li Yao stopped talking but fell on one of his knees before the air circulation magical equipment. With his eyes half narrowed, he listed the materials inside his Cosmos Rings and drafted the plans of maintenance in his head.

Maintaining a piece of air circulation magical equipment was really nothing for an expert like him who could even repair a Colossus.

However, Li Yao considered the plan for five minutes and polished the whole plan in the most cautious and careful attitude. Then, he cleaned and whetted all the components with his best for an entire hour. The garbage that was too crappy to be used was simply thrown away and replaced by the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures that he tricked from Li Linghai. By using his soul that was still extremely feeble, he reorganized the entire circulation and cleaning system with the micro-engraving techniques in the molecular level.

As for the catalysts to transform carbon dioxide into oxygen, he did not have any of them in his Cosmos Rings. Thankfully, it was not complicated to mix them. Without even frowning, Li Yao combined a bucket of them with a few kinds of invaluable cooling liquids and combustion improvers. Considering the consumption rate of all the residents of the 10,084th district and the rock worms, it should suffice for the next couple of years.

“Nailed it!”

Li Yao smiled at the renewed, glittering components and then closed the cover of the core units. Then, he adjusted the activation rune arrays nearby.

Immediately, a wave of cool and fresh air spurted out of the roots and branches of the “giant tree” which spread out to the entire tire. It was as refreshing as a drizzle on a hot summer afternoon.

Many locals had been snooping on what Li Yao was doing from far away carefully. They did not dare to stop him, and they did not know what he was doing exactly until this moment. Almost finding it impossible to believe what their eyes and their skin had sensed, they were all utterly dumbfounded.

It had been for a long time, perhaps thousands of years since the ancestors of their ancestors, that they had forgotten the feeling of “ecstasy”. The darkness and destitution of reality even forced them to accept Long Yangjun’s “kindness”, abandoning their feelings that had nothing but pain and desperation.

But right now, their brains that had been sealed for a long time were suddenly rippling. Rigid, twisted, and weird expressions appeared on their faces, where sunny flowers were gradually blossoming regardless of their ages and genders. They were all staggering and dancing as if they were drunk.

“Dear folks, I have just repaired your air circulation system. The oxygen percentage in the air is gradually restoring to normal, and the toxins in the air have been filtered. You have been used to a low oxygen intensity for a long time, and you will encounter a phenomenon called ‘oxygen intoxication’ after the sudden increase of oxygen intensity. But it will not harm you at all and will only make you smarter and stronger. There is no need to be anxious!”

Li Yao stood straight again. Not caring if the locals were following him, or if they would believe him even if they understood what he was talking about, he simply went on and announced, “It has occurred to me that the general cooling system of this town has a lot of hidden problems too. I will help you fix the problems after I return from the deeper parts. Then, I will compile all the maintenance procedures into an operation manual for you so that you will be able to maintain them in the future on your own. Trust me, it is not complicated at all.

“However, for safety reasons, you’d better elect two representatives who are smartest and deftest. By then, I will teach them hand by hand, and they can teach the rest of you. Then, you will no longer need to trade the rock worms that you’ve raised through all the trouble for the insignificant compressed air, and you will not be exploited by the upper levels anymore!”

Chapter 2351 - How to Pursue the Cheerleader

Chapter 2351 How to Pursue the Cheerleader

Li Yao's deafening voice echoed in the town for a long time, almost ripping apart the mist that surrounded all the locals.

Dwelling in the amazing "oxygen intoxication" state, the locals felt unprecedented vigor despite their dizziness. Even the tranquil faces of the old were spreading out the redness of excitement.

Although nobody had the courage to say anything back to Li Yao, the eyes of many of them were apparently much more emotional, and they were not as docile and lifeless as a moment ago.

"Let's go!"

Finishing what he did, Li Yao patted his hands and grinned at Li Jialing. "Now, we may set off and find Long Yangjun!"

Frowning, Li Jialing looked at the people around who had subtle changes and then at the air circulation magical equipment that Li Yao had just repaired. He said thoughtfully, "Even if you can temporarily fix the air circulation magical equipment, Brother Yao, so what? The catalysts that you left will run out sooner or later, the cartridges will eventually be dusted and stained, and all the chips and rune arrays will be worn out one piece after another. Eventually, the magical equipment will be damaged again, and the oxygen percentage that you just raised will drop. This place will become suffocating and stinky just like before. You can only save them for the time being, but you can't save them forever.

“Even if you can save the 10,084th district forever, there are still thousands of sunless towns like the 10,084th district deep below the ground of the capital, and there are probably millions of more miserable towns and villages in the hundreds of Sectors under the control of the Imperium! Even if you can save one of them, it is impossible for you to save them all. Then, what’s the point?”

Li Yao slowly retrieved all the maintenance tools into his Cosmos Rings before he slapped his forehead and said, “That’s very reasonable. I can save them for the time being, but I can’t save them forever; I can save one of them, but I can’t save them all. So, everything I did is utterly meaningless. But in such a case, I have a minor question for you.”

Slightly dazed, Li Jialing asked, “What is it, Brother Yao?”

“You know that hundreds of thousands of people must be receiving excruciating refinements and experiments in laboratories, prisons, and dungeons exactly at this moment, right? It seems unlikely for me to rescue all of them. Then, why did I rescue you from Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan at great risks? If it were utterly meaningless, I could’ve hidden in a corner, bulged my eyes, and blown whistles while I watched Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan rub and knead you into a real slaughter machine. Wouldn’t that have been great?”

Li Jialing’s golden face was immediately frozen, unable to say anything for a long time.

“Answer me, do you really think that it was meaningless that I saved you? After all, I saved you, but I couldn’t save everybody else!”

Staring at Li Jialing in the eyes, Li Yao said, “If you really think so, I have ten thousand ways for you to relive the sufferings of the past. I'll respect you as a good man if you agree to that!

"But if you have accepted my help gladly, only to feel that me helping other people is utterly meaningless, how can you justify yourself? Because you are more handsome and more worthwhile to be saved, and the despicable people here are not as great as you?"

Li Jialing was rendered speechless and blushed. But thanks to the clusters of golden fur on his face, it was barely possible to tell his embarrassment.

Li Yao curled his middle finger and his index finger and knocked Li Jialing's forehead, causing a huge noise.

"Wow! It hurts!"

Not expecting that Li Yao would attack him abruptly, Li Jialing covered his head and jumped to his feet.

"Damn right it hurts."

Li Yao said, "Why are you playing sophisticated as if you have seen through the darkness of humanity and the cruelty of society when you are at such a young age? For a young man like you, you should be more sunny, hotblooded, and recalcitrant. If you really want to see through everything, you can wait until you are two hundred years ago. Right now, your wings haven't grown tough yet, and you'd better watch and learn after Brother Yao!

"Furthermore…

"Saving them for the time being and saving them forever, saving one of them and saving them all—these are not in contradiction at all! A journey of a thousand kilometers has to begin with a most insignificant first step, doesn't it?

"Come on, widen your eyes. No, that's not wide enough. Keep bulging them until your eyeballs are jumping out. Yes. That's right. Keep it. Now, use your egg-like eyes to look at Brother Yao's solemn face, and tell me if I am joking. Do you think that I was teasing you when I said that I was going to save the world?

"Let me tell you again. Brother Yao is best known for his truthfulness. I never tell any lies. I will save them both for the time being and forever, and I will save one of them and all of them!"

Li Jialing was completely overwhelmed by Li Yao's dominance.

For a moment, he had forgotten Long Yangjun's words about Li Yao's "brain disability due to wounds". In a trance, he seemed to see Li Yao's magnificent performance when he challenged Wuying Lan and Li Lingfeng with one crystal suit and one Colossus in "Manjusaka, the City in the Sky" again!

"Brother Yao…"

Li Jialing felt that Li Yao's heavily-wounded soul was expanding into a giant that was ripping apart the crust almost ten thousand meters deep, letting the sunlight on the surface of the planet into the place.

In comparison, his own soul was as insignificant as a grain of dust.

The young man considered it for a long time and hesitated before he said, "However, what exactly are you going to do, Brother Yao? You are not helping them repair the air circulation magical equipment one town after another, are you?”

“Of course, that’s impossible. The efficiency will be too low.”

Li Yao said carefully, “The source of all the problems is the dark, corrupted system of the Imperium of True Human Beings. Whatever scheme your mother and Wuying Qi have, they are at least right about one thing. The Imperium today has been corrupted to the point that a world-shifting reform is necessary. Without a reform, everybody from top to bottom will be suffocated in the stinky and dirty air while the oxygen percentage drops exactly like the locals of this place!

“However, there are different approaches for reforms. I have my own ways, which are entirely different from Li Linghai and Wuying Qi’s and absolutely incompatible with Long Yangjun’s!”

Li Jialing sighed and said, “After spending time with you for such a long time, I have finally discovered that no matter how casual Brother Yao appears, you are always an unwavering Cultivator deep down your bones. Even the flames of ten thousand stars cannot burn your beliefs.

“About the path of the Cultivators… Truth be told, Brother Yao, I’ve been considering the differences in the paths recently. The path of the Cultivators, the true path of immortality, and the Path of Ultimate Benevolence, which represses feelings and desires to reduce resource consumption and maintain the harmony of the universe.

“To be honest, the future lying in front of the path of the Cultivators is indeed beautiful. Who doesn’t want to live in a world which is peaceful, open, prosperous, and where everybody helps each other kindly?

“It is a pity that resources are limited and humans are born evil. So, it is most difficult of all to transform the ideas of the Cultivators into reality. I’m afraid that it will only be a dream however hard you work!”

Li Yao nodded his head and said, “I admit that, compared to the true path of immortality which takes advantage of the weaknesses of humanity, and the ‘Path of Ultimate Benevolence’ that completely abandons humanity, it is indeed most difficult to carry out the philosophies of the Cultivators and build a harmonious, beautiful world.

“However, that is not the reason why we shouldn’t work on it. Let me give you an example that young people of your age can understand. Let’s say that you are studying in a school where there are more boys than girls, and there is a cheerleader in your class who can be rated ten in every aspect. Not only is she uncriticizable in look, body figure, charm, and whatever, but she is also good at cooking, sewing, and other home skills. Furthermore, she is kindhearted and helps a grandma to cross the street every day. Most importantly of all, her interests and hobbies are exactly what you like too. Whenever the two of you start talking, you can never stop. All in all, she is a goddess of goddesses.

“Naturally, such a girl certainly has a bunch of pursuers, and it is terribly difficult to get her. Several brawny men surround her like sharks every day and glare at whoever approaches her.

“Then let me ask you, as a passionate, ambitious young man, should you just abandon her and pursue another girl that you don’t really like because it is too difficult to pursue the cheerleader?”

Li Jialing slowly bulged his eyes and thought for a long time. Then he shook his head. “I don’t think so.”

“What do you mean by ‘I don’t think so’? Be specific!”

Li Yao frowned and said, “If you pursue a girl that you are actually not satisfied with and don’t even like, just because the odds of winning the love of the cheerleader is too difficult, isn’t such an action cowardly and shameless?”

“It truly is!” Li Jialing nodded his head heavily.

“On the other hand—”

Li Yao carefully guided him. “If you are truly going to be a shameless coward, shouldn’t you at least try your best to pursue her first and wait until you are cruelly refused by her or beaten up by her brawny bodyguards before you pursue somebody else?

“What if she is blind and just like your tiger—no, lion appearance? What if those brawn bodyguards are actually her brothers who are testing her pursuers for her? What if no one else has the courage to pursue her, and she has hungered for a long time? In that case, wouldn’t you suffer a heavy loss if you don’t even dare to try?”

Li Jialing was greatly enlightened, but then he was confused again. “Brother Yao, you do have a point, but what are you trying to say exactly?”

“It’s very simple. The cheerleader is exactly the path of the Cultivators.”

Li Yao said, “Although I am your brother, I’m not forcing you to embark on the path of the Cultivators at all. However, if you feel that the world depicted by the Cultivators is beautiful albeit it is difficult to put the ideas into practice, it is all the more reason why you should work on it so that you wouldn’t waste your youth! If it doesn’t work out when you have burnt up your hot blood, you can always shift to a different rail! In the early years of the Imperium of True Human Beings, too many Cultivators were transformed into Immortal Cultivators. If you are defeated by the dark reality in the end after trying your best, and you become an Immortal Cultivator again because you do not have an option, you will not regret it, and Brother Yao will not berate you either. But if you run back like a coward without even having the courage to pursue the cheerleader, don’t blame Brother Yao for criticizing you. Doesn’t it make perfect sense?”

Chapter 2352 - The Deepest Dungeon

Chapter 2352 The Deepest Dungeon

Complicated expressions popped up on Li Jialing’s face as he mumbled, “It does make sense, but… why do I feel that what Brother Yao said made sense, what Sister Long said made sense, and even what Blackstar the Great said made sense too? You are all right. I-I’m completely confused!”

“That’s why I said that you are still too immature and need more personal experiences.”

Li Yao said, “Besides, in many cases, if you are merely talking, even the most bizarre reasons can be decorated flawlessly, but what actually matters is what you do and how you put them into practice.

“I admit that the situation at the center of the cosmos is chaotic, and that the ideas of the Cultivators look rather obsolete. But it is exactly because of the chaotic situation and the balance of Blackstar the Great, the four Kurfürsten, and the Covenant Alliance that we can take the opportunity and rise!

“If it were five hundred years ago when the Imperium of True Human Beings was still relatively united and steady, we would be really hopeless!

“Therefore, give some credit to Brother Yao and the path of the Cultivators. Trust me, I am best at taking advantage of chaos!”

Li Jialing hesitated for a long time but still nodded his head. Not giving a straight answer, he simply said, “I will remember what Brother Yao said. In any case, I am definitely not a coward!”

Right then, the two of them suddenly heard intermittent but rhythmed voices far away from the town. Somebody seemed to be singing a weird tune.

Slightly dazed, the two of them looked at each other and listened quietly, only to realize that the young and vigorous voices were from the kids who were playing on the mainframe crystal processor a moment ago.

Having never breathed such fresh air before, the children showed more intense reactions from the “oxygen intoxication” than the adults did. They clapped their hands and sang ancient rhymes while giggling. Perhaps the children born in the Star Ocean Imperium ten thousand years ago, who were the ancestors of everyone today, might’ve sung exactly the same song in their momentary joy, didn’t they?

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao listened for a while and remarked, “Very pleasant, isn’t it?”

“Yes.”

In a trance, Li Jialing said in a low voice, “When I was little, I spent every second in training and fighting. I never had any chance to sing any song.”

Li Yao said, “You will have children someday, chubby and lovely kids. Do you want them to live in a world without light and rhymes?”

After a long silence, Li Jialing gradually clenched his fists and said, “Brother Yao, let’s go and see what the wildlings living in the areas of darkness and death look like.”

After checking the assets they were to bring with them and confirming the map of the complicated tunnels and gaps, Li Yao and Li Jialing passed a long channel and opened the rusted gate of the shelter while a few fully-armed sentinels observed them, entering the wilderness.

The moment they left the ancient shelter, they immediately discovered that the temperatures had risen by dozens of degrees. The air was soggy and stagnant, enshrouding them in invisible magma that might melt them into parts of the colorful rocks at any moment.

There were countless tunnels outside of the shelter that led to every direction up and down. Li Yao touched the wall of the tunnels, finding that it was smooth, unnatural, and had traces of manual work. There were also helical whorls on it, suggesting that all the tunnels had been dug by enormous excavators and shield tunneling machines a long, long time ago.

Li Jialing and Li Yao said that when the Demon Beast Empire and the Star Ocean Imperium collapsed, countless demons and Cultivators escaped to the underground world. They naturally carried a lot of large magical equipment for the underground environment, of which excavators and shield tunneling machines were certainly the key.

At that time, nobody hoped to be stranded in a shelter in loneliness. All the refugees had ambitious plans, hoping to dig countless tunnels with the excavators and shield tunneling machines and connect all the shelters so that they could reestablish an enormous “underground empire”.

Perhaps they partly succeeded at the beginning. The force made of hundreds of shelters could exchange resources and information as much as possible, thus continuing the civilization from the ground.

But good days did not last. Very soon, the regime of the demons and that of the Cultivators discovered each other. A bloody, incessant war immediately began. The Cultivators at that time had just passed the thirty thousand years of the Great Dark Age, and they still held larger-than-life hatred against demons. The demons, having just lost their country and their lineages, would never concede either.

The brutality of the war must’ve been a hundred times crueler than the battle to besiege “Starlight” below the ground of the Land of Sins. Deep below the surface of the planet, where there was a shortage of all resources, including sunlight and water, it was inevitable that nobody could win the war.

The tunnels of demons and those of humans met and collided together. The excavators of the two parties drilled through the enemy’s skulls, their tracks crushing over the enemy’s bones. The gigantic shield tunneling systems with a hundred discs could’ve dug out a bright future, but they only shattered the enemy’s civilization as well as their own in the end.

Ten thousand years later, the civilization of the past was almost gone, and the only things left were the twisted tunnels and the abandoned shelters, as well as the dead bodies at the corners which had decayed into ashes, telling the brutality of the war in silence.

Li Jialing told Li Yao that, because of the earthquakes and volcanic eruptions in the past ten thousand years, most of the tunnels had been twisted and deformed into dead ends.

The destination of many tunnels was a forsaken shelter, in which there was nothing but bones and ashes. Anything with the slightest worth had been ransacked.

Only a few of the tunnels led to the caves deeper into the ground that were barely suitable for the survival of living creatures. Those caves were mostly gigantic bases that were supposed to be super towns accommodating the refugees’ civilization, but they were the habitats for the wildlings and the animals now.

Long Yangjun had spent a long time in this place. She explored all the tunnels and natural cracks near the 10,084th district and drew them into a 3D map that had been imported into Li Jialing’s portable crystal processor. Together with the localization chip that could report her coordinates in real time, they were not worried that they could lose their way.

Those tunnels were the “underground highways” that connected different shelters. Naturally, they were not small at all but at least three meters in diameter, broad enough for a fully-armed warrior in a crystal suit to pass by. So, it was not too hard to push forward.

Li Yao and Li Jialing were both capable of a lot of techniques. Although there was no light, and the air was hot and pungent, they were still moving fast.

Even though the tunnels had been torn apart by earthquakes, leaving only zigzagging, narrow gaps, they could also change the structures of their bones and muscles and squeeze through. Since the wildlings were able to move through the gaps, they couldn’t have been too narrow and twisted.

Soon enough, the lights of the 10,084th district completely disappeared into the darkness. They seemed to have walked into the rocks that nobody had ever entered since the primeval age. They heard absolutely nothing in the utter silence. As a result, the sounds of the organ movements inside the body and the running blood were much clearer than before. Even every breath became as deafening as thunders.

This place was exactly the areas of darkness and death that were often frequented by the wildlings.

The two of them released their spiritual energy and sensed the crevices carefully, discovering a lot of creatures that could only be found at such a depth below the ground.

There was a creature that looked like moss but had a tiny umbrella on the head growing in the hottest areas inside the crevices. What was most bizarre was that their umbrellas would release orange brilliance during a bloom, like tiny lanterns.

Li Jialing told Li Yao that the creature similar to moss was known as “Fire Flower” by the locals and could be traced back to the primeval age hundreds of thousands of years ago. They were likely to be an experimental life created by the Pangu civilization or the Nuwa civilization because natural-born creatures rarely had its bizarre characteristics.

The Fire Flowers fed on heat. They would even join each other in clusters, forming carpets that could slither forward, while they chased after magma like herding livestock.

Their body structure was naturally not strong enough for them to survive the magma without being damaged, but whenever the magma slightly cooled down and consolidated, it would immediately become their most succulent prairie. Tremendous Fire Flowers would enshroud the cooling magma and absorb the heat inside without leaving out a single drop.

The Fire Flowers were at the bottom level of the underground ecological system as the food of countless insects and reptiles, supporting the entire complicated plaza of food chains. Also, by absorbing heat on a large scale, they significantly reduced the temperature of the environment, allowing the wildlings to manage to survive. More importantly, after absorbing sufficient heat, the Fire Flowers could also unleash abundant visible light, which was a prerequisite for the underground plants to conduct photosynthesis. Only through such an amazing reaction could the carbon dioxide be absorbed and transformed into indispensable oxygen.

However the wildlings evolved, it was impossible for them to change into anaerobic lives that did not require oxygen at all. In other words, the whole underground ecological system would collapse abruptly without the Fire Flowers.

It was said that a lot of best scholars of the Imperium of True Human Beings tried to figure out the mysteries of the Fire Flowers too. Such a simple-structured and ancient-looking fungus seemed to be a transitional form between life and non-life that had been carefully refined by the primeval civilizations such as Pangu and Nuwa. The enigmas about them were too sophisticated for human beings to understand at this moment.

Chapter 2353 - Battle of Wildlings!

Chapter 2353 Battle of Wildlings!

Apart from the Fire Flowers, Li Yao and Li Jialing discovered a lot of other bizarre underground lives. The biodiversity reminded Li Yao of his exploration in the silver lake below the ground of Boneyard years ago.

However, almost all the underground lives seemed to be whimsical variations of the lives from the surface of the planet but not natural creatures. It seemed that they only managed to survive in such a harsh environment thanks to the genetic modifications and the artificial interferences of the intelligent lives since the Pangu and Nuwa civilizations.

The habitats of most of the underground lives were the shelters that had been collapsed, buried, and abandoned in the past tens of thousands of years.

In only half a day, Li Yao and Li Jialing passed by three forsaken shelters or ancient relics.

Ancient relics sounded like mysterious places that boasted infinite treasures that attracted the experts everywhere, like the Kunlun relic that the Star Glory Federation discovered, or the Nuwa warship deep inside the Land of Eternal Night near the north pole of the Ancient Sages Sector.

However, such relics that were intact because of the special sustenance system or the refrigeration in the north pole were too hard to come by.

For most of the relics, after being corroded for hundreds of thousands of years, the magical equipment and dead bodies of the slightest worth were long gone. They were either vaporized or completely melted with the rocks. There was no possibility to excavate and recover them at all.

It was exactly the case for the three relics near the 10,084th district.

The crystal processor systems, which used to boast extraordinary computational abilities, had turned into rusty, deformed shells. The rune arrays to clean the air and reduce the heat were covered by mosses and vines too. Most of the channels were blocked by collapsed rocks and spurting magma. Traces of the painful struggles of the final victims could be vaguely seen, because they had been branded on the uneven wall clearly as part of the fossils.

No matter whether the masters of the relics were the Pangu Clan or the Nuwa Clan who controlled the universe hundreds of thousands of years ago, or the ancient Cultivators who were ignorant but inherited abundant primeval treasures, or the demon nobles during the Great Dark Age, or the first modern Cultivators in the Star Ocean Republic… There was no difference at all. Their glory and civilization were gone, their bodies warped. The dim light of the Fire Flowers passed their traces that were covered in mosses, and even the lizards and snakes slithering by in a hurry simply ignored their ashes, because there was nothing to be sucked and absorbed inside at all.

However, locating the relics meant that they were not far away from the wildlings now, because most of the wildlings were the offspring of the people who lived in the relics.

Li Yao and Li Jialing both covered their telepathic thoughts with spiritual energy and spread them out like ripples. Soon, they discovered a few wildlings in the depths of the darkness.

The two of them appreciated a splendid ambush.

At first, it was a Red Ring hunting a Black Armor.

The Red Rings were thinner than general humans. They were only about 1.5 meters tall, but the thick and strong muscles tied their bodies like moorings, suggesting their astonishing explosive strength.

They were as agile as leopards in the underground world, both graceful and brutal. Their canine teeth that protruded like daggers allowed them to bite the skull of another human from the rear, penetrate into the eyes, and destroy the brain tissues of the target immediately. There were no other large mammals below the ground except humans. Such a teeth structure could only imply that they were used to eating their own kind.

Li Yao paid special attention to the eyes of the Red Ring, only to discover that his pupils were crimson, concentric rings that were glittering in the darkness, just like what Li Jialing described. When they were illuminated by the Fire Flowers, they would be glowing even brighter, filled with the soul-stirring power.

It seemed that, besides “night vision”, the eyes were also attached with a certain natural ability related to mental attack, like some sort of “deterrence” or “shock”. Although the ability was weak, it should be more than enough to deal with common prey.

The ears of the Red Rings were also broad and thick, filled with a lot of wrinkles. It was said that tremendous keen sensing organs were hidden inside the wrinkles, allowing them to perceive the terrain around, as well as the breath and heartbeat of the prey, through the feedback of soundwaves.

With such tough weapons of searching and attacking, the Red Rings were the best predators in the areas of darkness and death. They were at the top of the food chain.

When Li Yao sensed the Red Ring, he was hanging on the ceiling of a cave and crawling without a sound to a Black Armor who was gnawing at a lizard.

Li Yao had thought that the Black Armors must’ve been huge and shallow, like turtles, but now that he had seen one with his own eyes, he realized that the Black Armors were also very thin and that the shells around their bodies weren’t in one piece but like dense fish scales. They were more like armadillos.

Except for the black shells, they hadn’t grown any weapons for attack, which naturally put them in a disadvantageous situation in the competitions against the Red Rings.

Seeing that the lone and ignorant Black Armor was about to be killed by the Red Ring, Li Yao considered if he should stop the fight of the two wildlings.

But right when the Red Ring lunged at the Black Armor, something that appeared to be a stalagmite moved abruptly and threw a dark object at the Red Ring, knocking the predator to the ground immediately.

It was exactly a Night Wing who was pretending to be a rock!

Li Yao was greatly surprised by the Ning Wing’s camouflage. Although he was heavily wounded and only triggered one tenth of his telepathic thoughts for detection, it was still quite remarkable for the Night Wing to have avoided his scanning. The racial talent that they had evolved below the ground was rather extraordinary.

Besides, it was obviously a preset trap, where the Black Armor was a bait and the Night Wing was to attack and hunt the careless Red Ring. Based on the fact that they could set up such an accurate trap, it was obvious that their wisdom had not been entirely gone yet, and they were still in the category of “human beings”, not some sort of beasts in human skin.

The dark object that the Night Wing threw out seemed to be an alloy composed of a piece of magical equipment with sharp edges. The Red Ring was made of flesh and blood and had never practiced any spiritual energy after all. Having suffered the terrible blow, he immediately fell to the ground, bleeding hard.

Seeing that the Black Armor and the Night Wing were about to bite the throat of their prey, Li Yao stood up from the darkness and slightly released his spiritual energy.

The underground residents were most wary of potential dangers. The Black Armor and the Night Wing did not even consider for half a second before they abandoned the prey and fled in a hurry.

Li Yao did not stop them but went forward to check on the Red Ring.

The man’s head had suffered a heavy hit, and his skull collapsed deeply on his left temple. It was obvious that he was dying.

Li Yao observed the Red Ring’s body. He discovered that although the man was not wearing any clothes, there was an uneven tattoo on his chest made through the biting of beetles. The man also had a rubber band on his right arm, to which two sharp bone blades were attached. According to Li Jialing, the Red Rings had the habit of whetting their daggers with the teeth of their beloved ones. They believed that the souls of the deceased would reside in the daggers that were as sharp as the canine teeth, and such daggers would bring good luck to the living and protect their safety.

It seemed that the beloved ones of this particular Red Ring did not bring him luck today.

However, the complicated tattoo and the unique custom proved that the Red Rings were not ignorant beasts wearing human skins, as the Immortal Cultivators had slandered, but a part of mankind.

Li Yao had accepted the bizarre-looking demons, and he certainly had no reason to reject the underground people who had retained most of the appearances of human beings.

The Red Ring’s special eyes gradually lost the dim brilliant, turning into grey rocks. His chest stopped moving too. His muscles that had been tense the whole time gradually relaxed, but his veins constricted and rigidified, making him appear in a weird posture.

Li Yao sighed and crossed the Red Ring’s hands on his chest, as if the man was in a sound sleep. Then, he placed the body in a corner of the cave and blew off a few rocks to bury it. That was the best he could do right now.

Li Jialing observed in silence from nearby and hesitated, but he did not raise his questions in the end.

After burying the Red Ring, the two of them kept pushing forward.

The caves and cracks up ahead were even more rugged and mysterious. Had it not been for the guidance of the map, the coordinates, and the giant arrowheads that Long Yangjun had painted with special fluorescent drugs, Li Yao and Li Jialing wouldn’t have realized that there was such a winding path through the seemingly dead ends at all.

Walking and crawling for another half a day, the two of them found themselves in front of a tunnel more than thirty meters in diameter. The whorls on the wall suggested that it must’ve been dug out by a certain piece of gigantic excavation magical equipment.

“The Pangu Clan or the Nuwa Clan must’ve built the tunnel hundreds of thousands of years ago!”

Li Yao observed the environment and said, “It was supposed to… lead to the surface of the planet, right? However, because of the tectonic movements, the upper half of the tunnel leading to the surface of the planet was collapsed and buried, nowhere to be found again, and only the lower half was left behind.”

There was a vague light at the end of the tunnel.

Also, the oxygen percentage and the air pressure up ahead were both different from where they were standing, to the point that they could almost feel a gentle wind.

According to the localization chip, Long Yangjun’s coordinates were right before them at the end of the gigantic tunnel.

Li Yao and Li Jialing looked at each other. Now that they had come to this place, there was nothing to hesitate about anymore. If Long Yangjun had been truly malicious, she wouldn’t have bothered to rescue them from Blackstar the Great at all, and if she really wanted to hurt Li Yao, she had plenty of opportunities in the past ten days. It was unnecessary for her to trick them to come here for an ambush.

“Let’s go and see what this woman is up to exactly!” Li Yao waved his hands and strode into the tunnel.

Chapter 2354 - Superstition!

Chapter 2354 Superstition!

They walked into the uneven tunnel that was brimming with the Fire Flowers and the shimmering mosses. Now and then, when they stepped on the soft spores by accident, countless glowing, colorful dust would spread out. Such a mysterious and amazing environment seemed to be leading the two of them into an unprecedented alien world.

The deeper they went, the more they could hear hums that were inaudible for the ears. Even the air, which was vaguely flowing, was filled with tiny waves and ripples, a sign that countless thoughts were colliding, entangling, and spreading.

What was known as “thoughts” were known as “information streams” by the moderners. Countless information streams rolled inside every intelligent life naturally and could be released by way of brainwaves after training.

General thoughts were only fuzzy, incomplete, and inaccurate information streams. For example, the thought of “I’m going to dinner” failed to describe time, location, and food. So, little information could be transferred.

However, when the trainers combined thousands of thoughts with spiritual energy into a “telepathic thought”, they would become an amalgamation of information that had been highly restructured and compressed. The same telepathic thought of “I’m going to dinner” could entail the time, location, and even the flavors of the cuisines and be transferred to the target in a highly-oriented way so that the target would actually sense the taste of the food, which, after all, was just the stimulation on nerve endings that could be simulated by the information transmission of brain cells.

Right now, what was wandering in the midair was exactly a certain special information stream between “thought” and “telepathic thought”.

Although not much information was contained in each wave, thousands of them were flowing from the deepest part of the tunnel incessantly, as if an ancient and mysterious ocean were rolling nonstop.

The target was so clear that Long Yangjun’s localization was unneeded. Li Yao and Li Jialing accelerated and soon passed three magnificent but broken airtight gates from ancient times, reaching a splendid, boundless underground cave.

Such a cave, which was as huge as a space fortress in size, was generally developed in the middle and upper parts of the crust. But this place was the border of the crust and the mantle, if not already deep into the mantle. By logic, such a huge room that was as grand as a palace couldn’t have come into being naturally.

The only possibility was that it was an artificial room created by an intelligent life.

Also, judging from the scale, it was not a product of human beings who were only around two meters tall, but probably one made by the giants of the Pangu Clan or the Nuwa Clan who were more than ten meters tall.

As he expected, when Li Yao focused his spiritual energy on his eyes, he saw the countless square, flawless characters on the wall, which were identical to the primeval characters he saw in the Kunlun relic, the Nuwa warship, and the Pangu’s underground laboratory.

Those primeval words had been engraved on the rocky wall by force with spiritual energy. Because of the abundance of spiritual energy, countless Fire Flowers and glowing mosses were attracted to them. As time went by, even the runes became iridescent, bringing vague light to the profound, bottomless cave.

With the light, Li Yao narrowed his eyes and looked at the bottom of the cave, where thousands of thoughts were rolling, only to be slightly surprised.

He saw a whole horde of wildlings, at least a thousand people.

It was an astonishing number in the underground world where the resources and the air were thin. Quite a few tribes must’ve come here.

What surprised him was not just the number of the wildlings but also their races. The Red Rings, the Black Armors, and the Night Wings; the three tribes that should be fighting each other relentlessly in grudge were all sitting cross-legged with their hands on their knees obediently. There was nothing but tranquility and expectation on their hideous and abnormal faces as they stared at the center of the crowd piously.

The thousand wildlings were sitting in a circle. At the center of the circle were dozens of highly-rising stalagmites whose tops had been cut, turning them into stone seats and high podiums. Dozens of Nepenthe believers in gray capes were sitting cross-legged on the stone. In a certain meditation state, they were moving their heads while enchanting weird spells as they guided all the wildlings to release and receive thoughts.

Surrounded by the dozens of Nepenthe believers, on the top of the highest column, Long Yangjun was in exactly the same posture. She couldn’t have looked more graceful, solemn, and divine.

This guy…

Li Yao’s eyelids were cramping nonstop. Had he not known Long Yangjun’s true appearance a long time ago, he would’ve likely been fooled by her deceptive style!

She was also wearing a white, flawless cape, but it seemed to be made of a certain fluorescent material and enshrouded her in an ivory halo, both making her look sacred and lofty and stopping people from seeing her face. The only things that could be seen were the astonishingly long and black hair that dangled like a waterfall and her bare feet that were as immaculate as if made of jade.

What Li Yao found most hilarious was a glowing ring that hovered slowly half a feet above her head. After every lap, it would release gentle ripples. Li Yao estimated that it was some kind of magical equipment for mental attacks with the function of pacifying the soul, but it did give her a sense of mysteriousness as if she were an angel walking on earth.

The sexless person indeed deserved to be a deceptive charmer from the Ancient Sages Sector. Her style and her vibe were truly professional!

What are they doing exactly?

Li Yao vaguely felt that what he was watching looked familiar. It was certainly not as simple as brainwashing the wildlings and removing their feelings and wild hatred.

After thinking for a moment, Li Yao immediately bulged his eyes. He knew what it was now!

What he was seeing was so similar to the scene of the riot of the captives from the Covenant Alliance in the Godly Might Prison!

When Li Yao snuck into the Godly Might Prison, ready to rescue Lei Chenghu, he happened upon a riot of the captives of the Covenant Alliance. The communication among the captives was not necessarily conducted through language but done in a way similar to “thought reverberation”. As a result, the thousands of captives were as united as one person!

Li Jialing and Li Linghai both told Li Yao that the Covenant Alliance boasted very special techniques. Even the ordinary people had the uncanny abilities that were similar to telepathic thought transmission, which made their unity and organization much better than the ordinary soldiers of the Imperium. It significantly made up for the Covenant Alliance’s shortage of high-level warriors.

Li Yao did not expect that Long Yangjun was capable of that!

In other words, she was not just “harmlessly” teaching the underground locals the ways to suppress their feelings and desires; she was also issuing certain clandestine instructions to the people who had been brainwashed through “thought reverberation”!

Well, wait, since Long Yangjun voluntarily invited him to come to this place, it was not exactly “clandestine”. But all in all… there must be something sleazy and dangerous going on!

In fury, Li Yao focused his telepathic thoughts and slashed them on Long Yangjun's forehead on the podium. "You should've been more careful with your costume. Why didn't you carry a few chicken wings on your back?"

The profound and mysterious hums stopped.

Perhaps it was an illusion, but even the overwhelming, gleaming primeval runes on the wall dimmed a lot.

The brutal, disobedient wildlings all stood up. They did not howl or look at Li Yao at all. Instead, they simply disappeared into the darkness without a sound, crawling into the deeper cracks.

Even the dozens of Nepenthe believers in grey robes hid stealthily.

Long Yangjun glanced at Li Yao casually. Touching her white, flawless, and glistening robe, she stepped on nonexistent stairs and walked down from the top of the stone column in midair.

"Why bother? You could've just jumped off!"

Li Yao threw another telepathic thought over. "I don't believe your legs will be broken if you jump from only dozens of meters high!"

Long Yangjun stared at Li Yao and replied coldly, "Cut the crap. Follow me."

Li Yao pondered for a moment. He had a lot of secrets that he did not want Li Jialing to know yet, not because he did not trust the little lion, but because if Li Jialing was unfortunately captured and possessed by Wuying Qi, all his memories would likely be absorbed by Wuying Qi.

Then, everything about the Star Glory Federation that Li Yao told Li Jialing right now would probably be learned by Blackstar the Great.

Therefore, it would be safer to keep it a secret from Li Jialing for now.

Li Yao asked Li Jialing to wait outside for a moment. He also gave the young man some prospection magical equipment, asking him to measure the edge and structure of the artificial cave. Then, he followed Long Yangjun to go to the deepest part of the cave.

In the rocks of the deepest part of the cave, a gigantic artificial carrier had been stabbed in abruptly. However, after a long time of being melted by the high temperatures and high pressures, and because of the corrosion of minerals, it had long become a fossil and could not be compared to the Kunlun relic or the Nuwa warship. It was barely of any value to be excavated.

Li Yao wondered why there was a huge warship deep below the ground. It was not until he observed carefully for a long time that he realized it was not a warship but an enormous excavator that could shatter rocks and build tunnels.

The general structure of the vehicle was similar to the “earthly dragon” adopted by Starlight in the underground world of the Martial Meritocrats Sector but, of course, significantly larger in size. It must’ve been the drilling machine that the giants of the Pangu Clan or the Nuwa Clan used.

At this moment, the most advanced drilling magical equipment in the old days had turned into a lifeless, collapsed palace that served as a perfect temple for the wildlings.

Following Long Yangjun, Li Yao walked into the primeval excavator and did find a lot of giant corpses that had been highly dehydrated and fossilized. Some of them had human heads and snake bodies, some had three heads and six arms, and some had green faces and bulging tusks like fiends.

It was not the first time that Li Yao had seen similar corpses of the “primeval gods”. He had seen too many of them in the Kunlun relic and the Nuwa warship and therefore was not surprised.

However, he could totally imagine how panicked and astounded the underground locals were when they saw the “primeval gods” for the first time. Perhaps Long Yangjun used exactly those corpses to deceive them and mislead them into thinking that she was an envoy of the gods, didn’t she?

Chapter 2355 - A Friendly and Frank Conversation

Chapter 2355 A Friendly and Frank Conversation

“Why are you not talking after you see me? You haven’t figured out yet how to trick me?”

Looking at Long Yangjun’s cold and mysterious back, Li Yao sniffed. “You’ve done a better job in acting than ‘Mother White Lotus Wan Mingzhu’. Why have I never noticed that you have such a facet?”

“Aren’t you well aware that I have dual personalities?”

Long Yangjun was not infuriated but simply walked to the depths of the gigantic excavator. She said casually, “Most of the time in the past, what you saw was my side that was more inclined to the ‘Nuwa Clan’, but what you are seeing right now is the Pangu Clan’s side of me.

“Now that I have brought you to the underground world, I will not keep anything from you. Just widen your eyes and watch this side of me carefully!”

Li Yao stopped and said solemnly in full wariness, “Stop walking anymore. What’s your purpose exactly?”

Long Yangjun said with a smile, “Don’t be scared. I am your life-saver after all. Since I have rescued you from Blackstar the Great’s hands at great risks, and I have brought you back to my nest for careful treatment, is there any reason why I should do you harm? There is no need to be so anxious at all. To be honest, even if I want to harm you, I’ll prefer to crumble your beliefs inch by inch and enjoy your furious but helpless look, rather than simply savaging you physically.

The destruction of a physical body is always most crude and boring, isn't it?"

Li Yao gnashed his teeth. "I will certainly bear your favor in mind. Next time you are savaged by Blackstar the Great to the point that you are almost destroyed, I will naturally come back for you too! However, just because you did me a favor does not mean your ideas are justified! You should know it more clearly than anybody else that I am a man of principles. I am a selfless, devoted, and loyal Cultivator who will not waver in front of what is right and what is wrong!"

"Is that so?"

Long Yangjun finally stopped and turned around, looking at Li Yao. A familiar smile gradually popped up on her cold and indifferent face. "But I don't feel that I am crossing your lines. Then why do you have to act so aggressively as if you are holding me responsible for something I've done?"

"In that case, let me ask you, what were you doing just now? Were you not brainwashing the underground wildlings and eliminating their feelings and desires?"

Li Yao said confidently, "Also, can you turn off the light ring above your head for now? Let's just talk nicely and throw away all the occultic sound and visual effects. If you insist on doing that, I can surround myself in dazzling electric arcs and get a headful of golden and explosive hair so that we will be communicating on equal terms!"

"Excuse me, I forgot about it."

Long Yangjun waved her hands, and the light ring hovering above her head gradually dimmed, eventually turning into a silver metal ring that was stored into her Cosmos Ring.

She said, undisturbed, “If you are accusing me of being pretentious, I will not deny it. After all, neither the residents of the 10,084th district nor the ignorant wildlings here will trust an outsider easily. If I had not pretended to be an envoy of the gods, it would’ve been impossible for me to join them and make them absolutely trust me so that I can settle their wars and conflicts.

“Besides, by claiming that I am an envoy of the gods, I was not entirely lying, because I am a successor of the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan after all!

“As for your accusation that I’ve washed off their feelings and desires, I’m afraid that you’ve wronged and overestimated me.

“Haven’t Li Jialing told you that the so-called feelings and desires all depend on a material foundation? In the places where materials are abundant, communication is frequent and smooth, life security of the people is ensured, and the future of the people is promising, it will be natural that the feelings and desires of the people will blossom. Everybody will be passionate and self-expressive. They will not be implicit at all.

“However, in the remote mountains that are poor, secluded, and hopeless, people who are going to spend their entire lives there were born to be taciturn, nonchalant, and numb. They do not have any hope for the future, and they have few desires except for survival and reproduction. Even if they do have some feelings deep inside their hearts, they will usually hide the feelings very well. Isn’t it only natural?

“The ecological system ten thousand meters below the ground is a relatively simple and extremely barren system. Look at the monotonous environment around you. Do you think the wildlings living here boast profuse feelings and desires require my ‘brainwashing’? How hilarious!”

Li Yao was not moved. He simply sniffed and said, “Then, what were you doing just now? Why did the wildlings of three different tribes, who should’ve been fighting each other relentlessly, sit below your feet obediently in harmony?”

“It’s true that I taught them certain tricks to repress their feelings, but my lessons were mainly about how to hold back the fury and abandon unnecessary hatred.”

Long Yangjun replied confidently, as if she did not feel guilty at all, “After ten thousand years of bloody battles, in the areas of darkness and death, few beautiful feelings are left in the brains of the Black Armors, the Night Wings, and the Red Rings. The only thing they remember is the ineffaceable hatred. Nobody knows how the hatred originated, but they know they will not stop until one or two of the tribes are completely wiped out.

“When I just came to the underground world, the three tribes were about to summon all their people for an unprecedented bloody war. Although they did look hideous, they were a part of mankind after all and the creatures of Pangu and Nuwa. Whatever my stance was, I did not want them to die together with each other.

“Therefore, through what I was capable of, I helped them settle the war and saved the precious lives of a thousand wildlings. Why, Cultivator Li Yao, is that in violation of your principles? Do you want me to just sit by and watch the wildlings slaughter each other until none is alive?”

Li Yao was stunned for a moment. Then he sneered, “So to speak, you did it for a noble purpose?”

“Does it really matter what my purpose was?”

Long Yangjun smiled casually. “As the saying goes, you just judge people by what they do, not what they think. Whatever clandestine purposes I might’ve had, it was an undeniable fact that I saved the precious lives of so many wildlings, soothed the pain of the residents of the 10,084th district as well as many other zones, and even… condensed them in a certain way so that they could be highly-organized. Wow, I have done so many great things. I think you should be applauding me. Why are you acting as if I were a criminal?”

“Highly-organized? Right, I remember it now.”

Li Yao said, “The way you controlled the wildlings was exactly the same as how the commander of the Covenant Alliance led the common soldiers in the Godly Might Prison. I’m afraid that you are not just saving the precious lives of those wildlings but also trying to transform them into your tools, aren’t you?”

“It is not exactly ‘control’. To be more exact, I was merely ‘communicating’ with the wildlings.”

Long Yangjun explained, “It is a very special way of communication, similar to the direct communication with brainwaves. You may call it ‘telepathy’.

“Theoretically speaking, every ordinary person is capable of ‘telepathy’ without special training. Our brains are born with such an ability. The connections between a mother and her child, or those between twins, are all phenomena of telepathy due to the overflow of brainwaves.

“A man would have a very weirdly familiar feeling when he visited a place for the first time, as if he had visited the place a long time ago. In fact, it is only because he accidentally received the brainwaves of the passers-by and connected with them.

"However, in daily life, the heads of the ordinary people are filled with exuberant emotions and self-awareness, and they are used to transmit information via soundwaves. As a result, such an ability is gradually covered.

"But as long as one suppresses the emotions to the minimum, trying to empty their brain, they will naturally recover the ability of 'telepathy' under some guidance. How should I put it? It's like how the blind always has keen ears, and the intellectually disabled can sometimes come up with brilliant ideas. They are all part of the biophysical 'compensation effect'.

"Therefore, I was not brainwashing the wildlings just now but only talking to them by way of 'telepathy'. It was no different from standing on a podium and giving a blood-boiling speech to refresh the audience."

Long Yangjun had been peaceful and patient the whole time, and Li Yao could not vent his fury at all even though he had a lot of it. He could only ask in suspicion, "Telepathy? Is it a real thing?"

"Yes."

Long Yangjun said casually, "However, it is destined that you cannot master such an ability because your soul, feelings, and self-awareness are simply too intense. It is absolutely impossible for you to repress your emotions and completely clear your brain."

Li Yao was still not entirely convinced. "If there is such a convenient way of communication where everybody can talk to each other just by thinking, then why have the Pangu Clan, the Nuwa Clan, and human beings developed speaking abilities? Isn’t it completely redundant?”

“You are wrong about that. The language based on the vibration of sound waves is in fact a more advanced way of communication than ‘telepathy’, which directly relies on the interaction of brainwaves.”

Long Yangjun said solemnly, “The biggest problems of ‘telepathy’ are that it can only be used to deliver the fuzzy, general concepts and that it will make the whole group of people likeminded. When the brain waves are mixed, the speed and efficiency of communication will certainly be improved, but it is obviously very disadvantageous in the cruel competitions of nature if ten thousand people only have one idea. It will take only one foolish decision to ruin the entire community.

“Communicating with a language seems inefficient and underdeveloped, but it protects the brains of all the members of the group so that everybody will be an independent individual who can think entirely on their own. As a result, the community as a whole will have a myriad of different ideas, and the diversity and abundance of decisions will be ensured to the largest content. That is the most important and safest approach on the way of evolution!”

Chapter 2356 - Join the Noble Cause!

Chapter 2356 Join the Noble Cause!

Li Yao thought for a moment and realized that it did make sense. When he discussed with Di Feiwen, the deputy commander of the Black Wind Fleet, about the situation of the Imperium back when he was in the Star Glory Federation before, and when he talked with Li Linghai about the development of the battle after he came to the Imperium, they had both compared the Imperium with the Covenant Alliance and explained the features of the warriors of the Covenant Alliance.

With the ability of “telepathy” and a system of high efficiency and absolute obedience, the Covenant Alliance had been on the winning side in the war against the Imperium for a thousand years, even though it was just a barren country based in a corner of the cosmos.

But as time went by and the war fell into an impasse, the fatal flaws of the Covenant Alliance were gradually revealed, which were the rigidity, lifelessness, and lack of creativity in their society. From top to bottom, all the people of the Covenant Alliance thought exactly the same. Such a problem was even more severe in the Covenant Alliance than it was in the Imperium. After all, however decayed and corrupted the Imperium was, the major forces never lacked creativity when they plotted against each other.

During the Imperium’s counterattack, the Covenant Alliance’s weaknesses were completely exposed, and the Imperium’s army secured a gratifying triumph by taking advantage of them!

Long Yangjun told Li Yao that there was no seemingly immaculate ability in the universe that was really immaculate and did not come with a price.

It was like no ferocious beasts could unlimitedly increase their strength and speed, or they would collapse on their own. The seemingly powerful ability of “telepathy” was actually a lethal trap on the way of evolution. The convenient communication and the easy organization for the time being were actually traded with the independent thinking and the diversified development of the whole community.

When the Pangu civilizations’ alliance rose first, it was obvious that there were more carbon-based civilizations than Pangu, Nuwa, Kuafu, Houyi, etc., that were engaged in the million years of wars among them. Some of the civilizations did choose to establish their society by communicating with brainwaves.

When the “language civilizations” encountered the “telepathy civilizations”, they were almost caught unprepared by the enemy’s effective communication and meticulous organization, but as long as they could weather through the first attacks, the endless whimsical tactics of the “language civilizations”, as well as the schemes and ploys formed in their independent heads, would often turn the situation around for the “language civilizations”, allowing them to completely annihilate the “telepathy civilizations”.

Therefore, when the Pangu civilizations’ alliance was really founded, the thirteen carbon-based civilizations reached a consensus that languages made by the vibration of sound waves would be the medium of communication to ensure the independence and diversity of the individuals.

But of course, the ability to use “telepathy” to transmit information directly through brain waves was still retained to control the generic flesh puppets such as “human beings”.

As the resources were running out, and their contradictions against each other escalated, many people within the Pangu civilizations’ alliance raised doubts on language communication. They believed that it was because of the existence of languages that there were misunderstandings, contradictions, and social differences, and only by completely shifting to “telepathy” could they achieve real harmony and equality.

When the civil war between the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan broke out and went to the most heated phase, to resist the Nuwa Clan that was corrupted by the extraterrestrial devils and who were overzealous about individuality, the opinions that fully supported “telepathy” prevailed within the Pangu Clan. Since Long Yangjun had the legacy of the Pangu Clan, she was naturally capable of such an ability.

Seeing that Long Yangjun had confessed the fatal flaws of “telepathy” dutifully without hiding anything, as if she were truly being honest, Li Yao couldn’t help but ask why she was spreading such an ability below the ground when she knew that “telepathy” had so many shortcomings.

Long Yangjun opened her hands and replied, “I don’t really have a choice in such a situation. While using a language is a more advanced way of communication than telepathy, those underground wildlings have forgotten most of their languages in the past ten thousand years of wars in darkness. They can only talk with a few simplest syllables.

“However capable I am, it is impossible for me to teach the wildlings to speak the language of human beings in only a couple of days, right?

“However, because of the entanglement of the many negative factors, including their feud and the shortage of resources caused by earthquakes, their contradictions have been intensified to the point that a total war will break out at any moment.

“The Stupa Sect of the Ancient Sages Sector, from which Master Bitter Cicada came, has a saying that ‘saving one life is better than building a seven-floored pagoda’. I was too desperate to stop the conflicts that had lingered for ten thousand years and to save the lives of thousands of wildlings. Therefore, I had to talk to them through ‘telepathy’ by activating the brainwaves in the emergency. It was a helpless choice!”

“Seriously?”

Li Yao bulged his eyes and tried to search for a loophole on Long Yangjun’s sacred and flawless face. “Since when have you become so great?”

“I am a dual successor of Pangu and Nuwa after all, alright?”

Long Yangjun’s lips curled before she said casually, “The Pangu Clan is mankind’s father civilization, and the Nuwa Clan is mankind’s mother civilization. As a representative of the parent civilizations, shouldn’t it be natural for me to try to save certain individuals of the child civilization? What’s great about that?”

Thinking carefully for a long time, Li Yao became more grave than ever. “Is that a subtle way of implying that I am your son?”

Long Yangjun: “… Why are you always so lowly? It has occurred to me that talking about civilizations and philosophies with you is just a complete waste of time!”

Li Yao: “Fine, I withdraw my question. Let’s say that you can communicate with those wildlings through ‘telepathy’. Then, how did you persuade them to give up their hatred? Did it really not involve the creepy and evil stuff about ‘brainwashing’?”

Long Yangjun was amused. “Why are you still bothered by things like ‘brainwashing’ even today? Back in the Star Glory Federation, your textbooks stated to the citizens of the federation that the leadership of the Imperium transformed all the people whose spiritual roots were awakened into selfish, bloodthirsty Immortal Cultivators through evil brainwashing.

“In the Imperium, the textbooks of the Imperium stated to its people that the Covenant Alliance turned all the people into emotionless idiots through evil brainwashing.

“But as a matter of fact, isn’t the education that the Star Glory Federation imposes on the adolescents who are like blank paper another kind of brainwashing? Why are you certain that your ideas are absolutely correct?

“All in all, brainwashing may be real, but it is not exactly how you pictured it. It was impossible for me to be so omnipotent as to control the minds of a thousand people and brainwash all of them!”

Li Yao’s curiosity was almost overflowing. “Then how did you make the wildlings obey you?”

“Very simple.”

Long Yangjun said, “I found the battlefield where the Black Armors, the Night Wings, and the Red Rings were about to fight on. Then, I intimidated them with my daunting spiritual energy before I demonstrated my strength by blowing up a stone column of almost five meters with one punch.

“Even the most ignorant beasts should know that it was better to retreat, not to mention that they were still human beings with some wisdom after all. Naturally, they did not have the courage to defy me.

“After that, I transmitted certain fuzzy information into their heads by way of ‘telepathy’, letting them know that I had inexhaustible food and resources and that I could lead them to live in a heaven that was a hundred times better than this place. Those Nepenthe believers did bring tremendous compressed food from the upper towns, which were enough for the wildlings to have a great meal.

“The hatred among the wildlings had lasted ten thousand years. They did not have to fight their final war that day. It was just because the frequent earthquakes and volcano eruptions destroyed their sources of food that they had to fight a war to reduce the population as much as possible. Now that the food problem had been resolved, why would they fight at all?

“Do you understand it now? There is nothing superstitious at all. If it were you, you probably would’ve done the same, wouldn’t you? The only difference would be that you would only shout aloud and make silly speeches, before you and the wildlings look at each other in awkwardness, while I could simply send brainwaves through telepathy and prevent the disaster in the simplest way.

“But as it turned out, right after I finally managed to complete everything through so much trouble, and when they laid down their weapons and sat with each other in harmony, you popped out of nowhere and lambasted me when you did not know what was going on at all. You also questioned my purpose without the slightest proof, as if I would certainly bring disasters to the world, and you were on the moral high ground as a Cultivator and could judge other people freely.

“It may be too much to say that I feel wronged, but I do feel that my heart is more or less chilled when I see you so furious. I really want to dig out my heart and ask myself why I bothered to save you at such great risks, and why I did those things which were not beneficial for me at all. Wouldn’t it have been much easier for me to just stand by and watch the wildlings fight and kill each other until everybody is gone? In that case, I wouldn’t be blamed and cursed at all, right?”

“Well…”

Li Yao was rendered speechless and scratched his head hard. Then something suddenly occurred to him. “Wait, that’s not right. You said just now that you would lead the wildlings to a heaven that was a hundred times better than this place. Where exactly is this heaven?”

“Up.”

Long Yangjun extended her narrow and long finger and pointed at the top of the cave. “One of the four-digit or three-digit towns. Although they are still filthy, murky places compared to the surface of the planet, aren’t they much better than this inferno at the border between the crust and the mantle? Rest assured, I never thought to lie to them even though they are wildlings.”

“But how is it possible?”

Li Yao found it hard to believe. “Most of the underground towns are already crowded with people with barely any living spaces, aren’t they? Even the residents of the 10,084th town can barely move upward even if they want to, much less the hideous, brutal, and disobedient wildlings! Why would the residents in upper towns welcome them? How are they going to make a living even if they are up?”

“That’s not a problem. They will be welcomed!”

Long Yangjun said with a smile, “Nepenthe has everything planned out! Nepenthe is recently organizing a great uprising that involves dozens of towns and hundreds of factories. It is now in dire need of valiant, fearless warriors as vanguards. Those wildlings are the best warriors for the uprising. That’s why the Nepenthe believers have come here to sincerely invite them to join the noble cause!”

Chapter 2357 - Father Li’s Tutelage

“That explains a lot!”

Li Yao was greatly enlightened. “And here I was wondering why you suddenly became so great. I thought you had come here to stop the war of the wildlings because you were sincerely trying to save the people. But that did not seem like your style at all!

“As it turns out, you are just deceiving those wildlings to go upward as the cannon fodder of your scheme!”

“Wrong. It’s not a scheme but an uprising. They will not be cannon fodder but the warriors of a righteous army!”

Long Yangjun said with a smile, “The life of the Imperium’s people is already insufferable because of the dual oppressions of the Immortal Cultivators and the external enemies. Even the situation tens of thousands of meters below the ground is the same.

“The past ten years of Imperium’s counterattack almost drained every last drop of blood in every person of the Imperium, and the drastic changes in politics over the past few months, particularly the fall and collapse of the Dongfang family, have led to severe consequences too. It is inevitable that all the classes below the ground are affected as collateral damages.

“Many factories and energy bases below the ground originally belonged to the Dongfang family, but now that the ‘reformists’ are determined to eradicate the Dongfang family, all the major forces are attacking it together. Those factories and energy bases are certainly fat meat that everybody drools over.

“When the high and mighty big shots fight each other in the struggle for power up above, even the losers will have a chance to maintain their basic dignity, but for the small fries living below the ground whose livelihood depends on the factories and the energy bases, if the factories stop for one day, their whole families will be hungry for one day, and if the factories stop for ten days, none of them will survive. That is still not counting the collapses of buildings, fractures of tubes, fires, and leakages of poisonous gas caused by the battles of the Immortal Cultivators below the ground.

“The critical assets of the underground towns have changed their owners multiple times. To make up for the losses, the new owners further exploit the workers through whatever means possible, to the point that the workers are either starved because they do not have a chance to work, or die in exhaustion because of too much work, or accidentally get killed when they are unfortunately involved in a fierce battle between the Immortal Cultivators.

“In short, most of the hominoids living below the ground have had enough oppression! By launching a magnificent uprising to occupy the factories and energy bases, they will have enough food, compressed air, and coolers. This is their instinct for survival. Is there anything wrong about that?”

Li Yao said solemnly, “There is certainly nothing wrong about that. If I were on the spot, I would certainly participate in such an uprising in person. But how is it related to those wildlings?”

Long Yangjun chuckled. “Since they have decided to go big, they will certainly need to unite all the forces that can be united. The wildlings are a part of the underground civilization of mankind, and they are natural-born tough and dangerous hunters. Of course they must be invited for the great cause!

“It’s true that the uprising is risky and 99% of them will likely be suppressed, but those wildlings were preparing to die with each other in the first place. In the war among the Black Armors, the Night Wings, and the Red Rings, there would be no winner at all. Even if somebody managed to survive, it wouldn’t take long before they go extinct.

“Since they would be dead either way, don’t you think that it is more meaningful if they die in a noble cause by resisting the tyranny?

“Speaking of which, I actually learned my ideas from the legendary, glorious, sacred, and lofty Vulture Li Yao, the founding father of the Star Glory Federation and the dominator of three Sectors! Father Li once taught us that the federation was too weak and the Imperium was too strong, and that the federation would certainly be smashed into pieces if it were hit by the Imperium’s iron fists.

“However, the Imperium could not win the support of the people with its governance of violence and cruelty. The hominoids that took up 99% of the total population must be very dissatisfied with the reign of the ruling class. They were like a powder keg filled with infinite energy that could be detonated with a single spark.

“Therefore, if anybody had a chance to sneak into the Imperium, they must find a way to awaken the hominoids and ignite the fire of resistance that would illuminate the universe. As long as all the hominoids were roused and resisted the tyranny bravely and relentlessly, no matter how huge and overwhelming the Imperium of True Human Beings was, it would collapse without being attacked!

“That is exactly the tutelage of our noble Father Li. I have always regarded Father Li as the greatest man in the entire universe. I recite Father Li’s quotes three times every night before I go to sleep, and I’ve been carrying out Father Li’s directions in my work scrupulously. That’s why Nepenthe came into being and why such a great uprising is to take place! Why, are you bold enough to suspect Father Li?”

Li Yao was stunned for a long time before he took a deep, deep breath.

“Why do you look so angry?”

Long Yangjun said casually, “Your nostrils are widened enough to be stuffed with two eggs. It seems that you are truly dissatisfied with Father Li.”

“Do not twist what I said. That was not what I meant at all.”

Li Yao frowned; his veins protruding. “It’s true that I said the strengths of the billions of ordinary people of the Imperium must be activated, and that they should fight for the rights that they deserve when the time comes. But it is based on two things. Firstly, the ordinary people must be really awakened first to make them realize their situation and the way to completely change their fate, and then they will launch the charge following the Cultivators because the blood of the strong should be shed first! Secondly, in any case, there is no reason to suppress the feelings, desires, and will of human beings and transform them into ignorant beasts. That’s not how you should achieve the purpose!

“Let’s just talk about those wildlings. Having lived below the ground for ten thousand years, they have lost most of their wisdom, and their intelligence might be as good as a five-year-old kid! Are you able to make them understand the idea of fighting for their own freedom by resisting the tyranny in only half a day? How is it possible? Even though they are following you willingly on the surface, it is still just a deception!

“Is such an action any different from tricking a bunch of five-year-olds into going to a war with fancy talks?

“As for the Nepenthe believers from upper towns, they perhaps boast fundamental wisdom and judgment, and they have abandoned their feelings and desires to be your tools of their own will, but ask yourself with your conscience, will you lead the charge as the ‘Serenity Seraph’ and face thousands of aggressive Immortal Cultivators, or even Blackstar the Great who has come as a reinforcement, before everybody else? Will you?”

“I’m sorry, but my body structure is different from yours, and I don’t have an organ named ‘conscience’ inside my body.”

Long Yangjun said with a smile, “However, I do not need a conscience to give you a straight answer, which is that I certainly won’t. I will never charge in the frontline. That’s a stupid thing that only an idiot like you would do. I will not even lurk in the rear and command the battle. As a matter of fact, the upcoming great uprising barely has anything to do with me. The most that I’ve offered is a tiny bit of guidance to push the situation to where I want it to be. Don’t forget that I had been in the royal palace first and then with Dongfang Wang as the director of the Association of Demon Hunters for the past two years. It was impossible for me to have planned this… meaningless and suicidal uprising in person!”

Li Yao thought for a moment and realized that it did make sense. Neither Queen Li Linghai nor Prime Minister Dongfang Wang was easy to deal with. Long Yangjun must’ve devoted all her attention to them while she was dealing with them. It was impossible and unnecessary for her to instigate such an uprising of hominoids.

“As for your criticism, it may be very reasonable, but it is too ideal.”

Long Yangjun said, as peaceful as before, “If it were you, how would you have cleaned up the mess below the ground? Were you going to teach them languages and what made a human a human for ten years, the ideas of the Cultivators for another five years, before you finally let them awaken their determination of resistance?

“What if all the wildlings killed each other during the ten or so years?

“What if they did not kill each other, but all starved because of the shortage of food?

“What if the Immortal Cultivators noticed your tricks in your protracted preparation and suppressed all the wildlings who were half awakened?

“Li Yao, you are a good man, and you are an out-and-out good Cultivator. Perhaps it is because of people like you that I am not entirely disappointed at the civilization of mankind. But just by being a good man cannot solve the complicated, infinite problems in reality. In many cases, you cannot afford to wait in an emergency, and you must be cruel and heartless to settle the problems quickly. In the drastic changes, if a few ants are accidentally sacrificed, although it is very pitiful and not quite right, is there anything else you can do?”

Li Yao completely calmed down.

He suddenly discovered that Long Yangjun was adopting a different approach to infuriate him and locate the loopholes of his beliefs so that his mental defense line could be breached easily.

After more than a hundred years of life-and-death adventures and collisions of beliefs with so many great men of the time, Li Yao’s soul had already been polished and indestructible, and his heart was also as pure as a newborn baby. Even though he looked shocked and angry now and then, his mind and his soul were never shaken easily.

“What is your purpose exactly?”

Ignoring the details, Li Yao went directly to Long Yangjun’s motive. “I don’t believe that you are doing everything genuinely for the sake of the underground locals. You must have a certain purpose by establishing a so-called ‘Nepenthe’ through all the trouble and instigating such a great uprising, and the purpose can’t be entirely for the benefits of the locals of this place. Let me take a guess—is it related to the Covenant Alliance?”

“Smart!”

Brilliant sparks were flashing inside Long Yangjun’s eyes as she looked at Li Yao with great interest. “That’s why I have to constantly remind myself during competitions with you, that the you who are standing before me is an extremely smart, extremely sleazy, and extremely dreadful Monster Li, and that I must not be fooled by your childish appearance that almost looks like a middle school student. This is really exhausting!

“However, you are only half right. What happens below the ground of the capital is not deeply connected to the Covenant Alliance. This is just my personal interest. I want to conduct a social experiment to explore the origins of the Covenant Alliance. Simple as that.”

Chapter 2358 - Experiment of Origins

Chapter 2358 Experiment of Origins

“With the universe as your laboratory and billions of mortals as your pawns and subjects.”

Li Yao said, “This is indeed as expected of your identity as a dual successor of the Pangu civilization and the Nuwa civilization!”

“Don’t overstate it. Thousands of experiments are required even when a new strengthening drug is to be synthesized or when you are designing a new crystal suit.”

Long Yangjun remarked, “Then, shouldn’t we run a small-scale experiment if a certain ideology will affect the future of billions of people? If you do not run an experiment, how do you know whether or not the ideology is righteous? Is your ideology naturally self-justified just because you are passionate and hotblooded?”

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao said, “Fine, let’s not waste time on the unimportant details. Tell me your specific experiment. Since you are exploring the origins of the Covenant Alliance, how is the underground world of the capital related to it? The Covenant Alliance couldn’t have originated from below the capital of the Imperium, could it?”

“Of course it couldn’t, but it might have originated from the same logic.”

Long Yangjun suddenly leaned close and said mysteriously, “Do you not find it strange that the descriptions on the origins of the Covenant Alliance in the history books of the

Imperium of True Human Beings are all fuzzy and ambiguous? It feels like the weird, far-flung country rose exactly together with the birth of Blackstar the Great a thousand years ago, and the Path of Ultimate Benevolence and the Three Fundamental Laws were already very perfect back then.

“Here comes the question. We know that there was absolutely no such thing as ‘Alliance of the Holy Covenant’ ten thousand years ago when the Star Ocean Imperium was founded, and it was even less possible for the Covenant Alliance to have been created in the Great Dark Age earlier because the entire universe was ruled by demons back then.

“In other words, until the Star Ocean Imperium collapsed ten thousand years ago, the worlds which worshipped the Pangu civilization and observed the Three Fundamental Laws had been dominated by ‘normal people’ who had feelings and free will.

“The local governors could’ve been Cultivators or dictators with the immature ideas of the Immortal Cultivators, but they couldn’t have been the desireless and emotionless puppets, much less the reborn members of the Pangu Clan, right?”

Li Yao was slightly stunned because he had never considered the problem before. He couldn’t help but nod his head. “It seems… correct. Take the Heaven’s Origin Sector for example. Although the Heaven’s Origin Sector is at the edge of the cosmos, we have never forgotten the glories of the Star Ocean Imperium but regarded ourselves as the descendants of the Supreme Emperor. The memories are still fresh after ten thousand years.

"The worlds under the control of the Covenant Alliance can't be more remote than the Heaven's Origin Sector. So, the people who dominated the places at the beginning were naturally the good or bad experts, who should've been perfectly normal human beings with feelings."

"That's right."

Long Yangjun said, "If it were 'normal human beings' who lived in those worlds at the beginning, how exactly did they abandon their feelings and become cold, heartless puppets step by step?

"Even if they had indeed excavated tremendous relics of the Pangu Clan, or even certain…'brainwashing temples' as you put it, which could be dated back to the primeval age, they could've totally made use of what was beneficial for themselves and abandon what was harmful. Just because they utilized the technologies and the magical equipment left by the Pangu civilization did not mean that they had to become the puppets of the Pangu Clan again!

"Think about it. If it were you who discovered a massive relic of the Pangu civilization, would your first thought not to learn and digest the technologies inside and not to repair all the powerful magical equipment, but to send your head into a certain weird device to be washed?"

Li Yao shook his head and said, "I certainly wouldn't do that."

"Of course, you are not an idiot, and you wouldn't do that at all."

Long Yangjun said, "But were the initial people of the Covenant Alliance all idiots, who were willing to be the

Pangu civilization’s most loyal slaves, most docile livestock, and the most precise tools for no good reason at all?”

Furrowing his eyebrows, Li Yao thought for a long time. “Then… did somebody force them to do that?”

“Perhaps. This is exactly what I want to find out through my ‘social experiment’.”

Holding her arms, Long Yangjun sat on a primeval corpse that had already fossilized and swung her legs while she continued, “I am different from you. You have been educated with the ideas of the Cultivators since young, and you have fought for the ideas of the Cultivators your entire life. In the meantime, you have received the most copious returns, and you have become an indispensable part of a world of Cultivators. You are even some sort of ‘symbol’. It is safe to say that your personal worth is highly realized on the path of the Cultivators. Their ideas have been completely melted into your life and cannot be excised at all.

“Making you doubt or even object to the ideas of the Cultivators is like to force you to cut your flesh or even kill yourself. It is absolutely impossible.

“But I am different from you. The dual bloodlines that I carry and my unique fate allow me to see the complicated universe and the paths, which each had their own characteristics, from four different perspectives. I am a person from ancient times, but I can also be a moderner. I can be a member of the Pangu Clan, but I can also be one of the Nuwa Clan. I can even free myself from all the identities and just be a lonely yet unique ‘observer’, who wanders in the universe among the three thousand Sectors.

“Observers know a game better than its participants. The difference between you and me lies not in the computational ability or the thinking patterns, but in the fact that I am more unrestrained than you. Therefore, my ideas are less hindered by stances and preconceptions, which allows me to think more calmly and less emotionally.

“As a Cultivator, when you heard about a country such as the ‘Alliance of the Holy Covenant’, you will feel disgusted and rejective intuitively, believing that the Covenant Alliance is even more violative of humanity than the Imperium of True Human Beings is.

“But for me, there is no such thing as ‘humanity’ at all. Or rather, the two extreme approaches—to release the feelings as much as possible and to repress them as much as possible—are both parts of ‘humanity’. What intrigues me more is not whether the Covenant Alliance is right or evil, but how it was born, how it rose, and where it will go to. Why did the initial people of the Covenant Alliance willingly abandon their feelings? If they were forced to do it, then who forced them?

“Do you not think that if someone did force the initial people of the Covenant Alliance to abandon their feelings, that person would, in fact, be the worst villain of all?

“Since half of me carries the legacy of the Pangu civilization, there is a connection between me and the people of the Covenant Alliance who admire Pangu as their supreme god. It is naturally my obligation to consider the origins and the future of the Covenant Alliance.

“If somebody contorts the philosophies of the Pangu civilization and is doing evil things under Pangu’s banner, they will be ‘false gods’ and ‘evil gods’, and I must destroy them as a ‘true god’, don’t I?

“Of course, when I just came to the Imperium from the federation, I hadn’t thought so much yet. At that time, I had just awakened all the heritages inside my body. It felt that I just opened my eyes after I was reborn. I only wanted to travel and get to know this… beautiful but strange new world.”

Long Yangjun seemed to become tired after a long time of talking. Leaning against the giant corpse of the primeval creature, she smiled at Li Yao lazily and said, “Do you want to know my experiences in the few years after I left the federation? That is a long story that I wouldn’t tell to anybody else. I’m only willing to tell you because of our special relationship.”

“Wait, let’s get one thing straight first—”

Li Yao felt that his hair was all rising. “What ‘special relationship’ do we have exactly? You must not be ambiguous about that!”

“Thanks to your hospitality, I was brought to the Star Glory Federation from the Ancient Sages Sector. At that time, I certainly clung to the thigh of Vulture Li Yao, the dominator of three Sectors and the founding father of the federation, a lot.”

Long Yangjun said, “In return, you clung to my thigh without any courtesy after the battle against Blackstar the Great, didn’t you? Therefore, we are in a relationship of ‘mutual thigh-clinging’. Isn’t that a special relationship?”

Stunned for a long time, Li Yao gave up resisting. “Fine, whatever you say. After all, I am a righteous man, and I am not scared of gossip. Just go on!”

He sat straight with his legs crossed before the giant corpse and said with his eyes glowing, “Tell me now. What exactly have you been through in the Imperium? For the record, while I am a firm, unwavering Cultivator, it does not mean that I am an obstinate, stubborn fundamentalist. Since you know me well, you should know that I am always ready to rectify my mistakes. After all, I’m already used to being slapped in the face by other people with their ideas. If you have a point, I will simply borrow your point and melt it into my beliefs, and I will certainly not persist in my own theories doggedly!”

“I knew that you would be a communicable friend.”

Long Yangjun said with a smile, “Otherwise, I wouldn’t bother to tell you those things.”

Long Yangjun began to tell her own story unhurriedly.

She told Li Yao that she did not lie to him when she was awakened in the Ancient Sages Sector at the beginning, and she never kept the legacy of the Pangu Clan a secret on purpose.

It was because she did not know her bizarre, twisting past, that she was a warrior of the Nuwa Clan who was corrupted by certain uncanny forces of the Pangu civilization in a certain way.

Later, after the fierce battles and the extraordinary views she saw in the Star Glory Federation, the strengths of the dual heritages gradually awakened inside her body.

It was not until “Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan” activated his plan, and both she and Li Yao fell into the virtual space where they were faced with the enormous energy of the extraterrestrial devils, that her heritages were completely awakened.

The Pangu civilization and the Nuwa civilization, order and freedom, law and chaos—two opposite strengths immediately began a fierce battle inside her brain, splitting her personality and making her lost.

She left the federation at that time because she intended to find somewhere peaceful and quiet in the vast space to sort through the messy but overwhelming strength inside her body. Otherwise, if she had gone out of control while she was in the Star Glory Federation, it wouldn’t have been anything good for either herself or the federation.

Chapter 2359 - Every Mortal Suffers!

Chapter 2359 Every Mortal Suffers!

After she learned how to control the two contradictory strengths inside her body, Long Yangjun wandered all the way to the Imperium on the escape capsule of the primeval age. Her primary target was exactly the capital in the Empyreal Terminus Sector.

It was because the capital boasted the largest library of the entire Imperium and was a half vacuum where the four Kurfürst families were in conflict. It would be easier for her to take action here.

At first, Long Yangjun did not intend to sneak into the royal palace.

It was because she was new to the place and did not know much about the customs of the Imperium of True Human Beings or the details of the major forces. Besides, the important cities on the surface of the capital were full of surveillance cameras. It was very possible that she would be locked onto when her traces were exposed.

The royal palace was a sensitive place. She certainly needed to be fully prepared before any action was taken.

Therefore, Long Yangjun entered the underground world of the capital through the bottomless, gigantic chasms, planning to collect the basic intelligence about the Imperium of True Human Beings indirectly and to establish a few bases where she could temporarily hide as her shelters.

She chose the underground world partly because the place was chaotic, murky, and mostly devoid of the annoying surveillance of crystal cameras.

But more importantly, it was because the Pangu Clan, the Nuwa Clan, and the other eleven clans in the alliance had all left tremendous relics below the surface of the planet in the primeval age hundreds of thousands of years ago. The Empyreal Terminus Sector was a pivot of space jumps for the three thousand Sectors thanks to the brimming wormholes in the area, which made it a critical location that Pangu and Nuwa fought over relentlessly.

Long Yangjun's previous self was only a common soldier in the primeval war. Naturally, she was not aware of the accurate coordinates of the relics. But because of her knowledge from the primeval age, as long as she entered the underground world and approached the relics, she would be able to mysteriously sense them.

If a primeval relic was truly located, it would be much easier for her to excavate.

With that in mind, Long Yangjun camouflaged herself and went deep into the underground world, getting a taste of the life of the hominoids of the Imperium of True Human Beings.

Leaving aside the glittering, splendid cities of Immortal Cultivators on the surface of the planet, even the hominoid worlds below the ground were not the same but had clear boundaries. Every several thousand meters deeper would be like crossing a barrier between two worlds that had entirely different characteristics.

The districts one hundred meters below the ground that were numbered 0 to 9 were the important military strongholds of the old days. They were controlled by the powerful sects of Immortal Cultivators today. Besides a tiny proportion of low-level Cultivators, the residents of the places were mostly “senior hominoids” who were vassals to the Immortal Cultivators.

Those “senior vassals” were more like the Immortal Cultivators’ toys, pets, tools, and pawns than their “vassals”. What they pursued in their entire life was to win the affection of the Immortal Cultivators by satisfying the Immortal Cultivators’ peculiar demands.

In short, they were like what cats and dogs were to humans.

In the hominoid worlds, those “senior hominoids” often took part in the most gorgeous and eye-catching professions, say, the superstars in show business.

When they dressed up and danced on the 3D light beams, there were truly countless “lower hominoids” who regarded them as sacred, inviolable goddesses or handsome, charming princes.

Little did the lower hominoids know that their goddesses were nothing but playful cats and dogs in the eyes of the Immortal Cultivators, and the seemingly good-looking and valiant princes, after exiting the stage, had to kneel before the feet of the old and ugly female Immortal Cultivators and lick their toes.

In the meantime, no matter how hard those “senior hominoids” sold themselves, they could only attract the low-level Immortal Cultivators no higher than the Building Foundation Stage.

The high-level Cultivators wouldn’t be enticed by the mortals at all. If they had any desire, countless low-level Immortal Cultivators would naturally throw themselves over.

Although it sounded rather contemptible, the “senior hominoids” living in the one-digit districts had ostensibly secure and dignified lives. At first look, the districts were not significantly different from the cities of Immortal Cultivators on the surface of the planet. After all, the Immortal Cultivators were here for fun. If the environment here were a mess, how could the Immortal Cultivators enjoy themselves?

Long Yangjun spent some time here with great interest. According to her, she even “adjusted” her body into a male and had a subtle relationship with a popular female star, which almost pissed off a few sects of Immortal Cultivators, before she left for the districts numbered 10 to 99.

The two-digit districts, ranging from minus a hundred meters to minus five hundred meters, were the second class of the underground hominoids.

Those places were the communities of the brainworkers among hominoids.

Finance, education, the Spiritual Nexus, design, fundamental political affairs… The professions also seemed rather decent, and they attracted most of the high-end talents among the hominoids.

However, since the real creative and explorational works were monopolized by the admin-type, creation-type, and research-type Immortal Cultivators on the surface of the planet, and only the fundamental brainwork that required abundant repetitive computations was dissected into different steps and distributed to the underground hominoids, their seemingly decent work was nothing more than massive, monotonous inputs, calculations, and outputs. They were called brainworkers, but they were no different from the farmers tilling the land under the scorching sun.

No, their pain was even greater than the farmers in the ancient times. At the very least, the farmers of the Ancient Sages Sector that Long Yangjun met could work when the sun rose and rest after the sunset. However, the modern “brainfarmers” had to work for at least fourteen hours every day. If they were given temporary tasks that had high workloads, it was not unusual for them to work twenty hours a day.

Such a high intensity of brainwork was certainly too much for their brains. However, the Immortal Cultivators had produced all kinds of “tonics” and “energy pills” for them. After they took the medications, their brain cells would be on fire, and they could work for three consecutive days without closing their eyes. As for the consequences, they were not severe at all, except that those hominoids would lose their longevity, have abnormally huge heads, or even die abruptly once in a while.

But despite all the unfavorable outcomes, the “brainfarmers” did not dare to slack at all, and they even made it a habit to work sixteen hours a day. Even if their Immortal Cultivator bosses did not demand them to do so, they would still volunteer to stay and overwork.

On one hand, it was because the living environment, as well as the medical and educational resources in the two-digit districts, were slightly better than the areas down below after all, and the daily cost to live in such districts and enjoy the more or less complete infrastructure and public services were astronomical. They could only make ends meet by exploiting their lives all the time.

On the other hand, their Immortal Cultivator bosses had set “deadlines” for the “brainfarmers”. There was a due date for every major assignment. If they could not accomplish the tasks in time or too many errors were detected after they submitted their work, they would be executed immediately!

Resources and deadlines were carrots and sticks. When the measures were taken at the same time, those “brainfarmers” had been domesticated into things like livestock.

The three-digit areas from the 100th district to the 999th district, ranging from minus five hundred meters to minus three thousand meters, were teeming with component factories where assembly lines had been applied on a large scale. Most of the civil magical equipment and relatively fundamental military magical equipment were produced in those underground factories.

It was particularly so when it came to the magical equipment that was dumped from the central worlds of the Imperium to the peripheral worlds.

After all, for the lowly, civil magical equipment, the quality did not matter, and everything would be fine as long as the cost was cheap and the productivity was high.

To achieve the maximal profits, the workers sitting before the assembly lines in the magical equipment factories had received the most professional training and the harshest exploitation. They had almost been squeezed into bizarre-shaped components and embedded into the assembly lines precisely.

It was said that the most excellent assembly line workers could weld fifty thousand coils to different chips every day. Not only was their efficiency higher than the spiritual puppets, but their cost was also only one third of the spiritual puppets.

It was exactly because of the potentials that human beings could unleash that most of the jobs regarding the production of low-level magical equipment were still occupied by humans instead of being completely taken over by spiritual puppets. It was some sort of defense for mankind’s dignity according to the Immortal Cultivators.

Naturally, the assembly line workers wouldn’t feel very great to weld fifty thousand coils every day, but their working environments and intensity were still much better than the residents of the four-digit districts below them ranging between minus ten thousand meters and twenty thousand meters in every aspect.

The 1000th district to the 9999th district were the areas for energy exploitation and resource recycling. Hominoids at the bottom level resided in such areas. Some of them fought magma in the geothermal factories that were scorching and suffocating, some excavated minerals at the risks of collapses and explosions, and some looked forward to the garbage falling from the sky every day. The pieces of garbage from the upper worlds were all treasures in their eyes and could be put back to use again after dismantling, cleaning, and maintenance. The places equaled to gigantic magical equipment graveyards.

The living environment here was extremely harsh, and the intensity of labor was higher than anywhere else. The average longevity was the lowest, and the death rate caused by accidents was the highest. It was an out-and-out living hell.

Naturally, even hell had different levels. The only reason why the average longevity of the four-digit districts was the “lowest” was that those districts were still within the statistics of the authorities, and both the geothermal factories and the mines of rare metals were within the control of the Immortal Cultivators.

The five-digit districts further down, namely the “forgotten corners” such as the 10,084th district, were mostly responsible for providing synthetic food for the entire enormous underground world. They were essentially the real farmers and never counted in statistics at all!

“Every mortal suffers.”

Long Yangjun sighed gloomily and forced a benevolent look on her face. “After seeing the misery below the capital of the Imperium, I finally realized that you were not lying at all. The hominoids of the Imperium of True Human Beings are truly living in anguishes and agony!”

Chapter 2360 - Ugliness Below the Ground!

Chapter 2360 Ugliness Below the Ground!

Li Yao secretly felt more or less ashamed as he listened.

It was true that he was the one who came up with the idea of activating the strength of the ordinary people in the Imperium of True Human Beings so that the Immortal Cultivators would be mired in their wrath that was essentially a black hole.

However, after he snuck into the Imperium, after witnessing the miserable and desperate lives of the people known as “sinners” in the Martial Meritocrats Sector at the beginning, he was soon involved in the power struggle between the reformists and the four Kurfürst families following the lead of Queen Li Linghai, and he barely had any time to pay attention to the lives of the ordinary people of the Imperium.

In that regard, Long Yangjun, as a malicious “foreigner”, had deeper observations and insights than him.

However, Li Yao had always kept an open mind. From so many opponents in the past, including Xiao Xuance, Bai Xinghe, Jin Tuyi, Lu Zui, and Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan… Li Yao had learned a lot of new ideas and melted the ideas with his own thoughts into the strength that pushed him forward.

Now that Long Yangjun did have a point, he would simply listen quietly!

Long Yangjun went on. “… From the space fortresses beyond the atmosphere to the metropolises of the Immortal

Cultivators on the surface of the planet, to the dark towns below the ground on so many levels, the whole world of Immortal Cultivators is a gigantic cage and arena. What is ironic is that in most of the cases, it is the people inside who built the cage and the arena willingly.

“Inside the cage and the arena, everybody is the oppressed and the victim, but everybody is also an oppressor and an inflictor. It is exactly like what they say. In an avalanche, not a single snowflake is innocent.

“The ‘senior hominoids’ living in the one-digit districts are in the highest class of ordinary people. They seem to be gorgeous, wealthy, and eye-catching superstars, but they have to kneel and force smiles before the Immortal Cultivators, abandoning all their pride and dignity. And when they grow old and less attractive, they will immediately be thrown away like garbage. Is their outcome not pitiful?

“However, how condescending are the superstars who are both humble and wretched in front of the Immortal Cultivators when they are faced with smaller stars or the people working for them? If they do not regard themselves as humans but only pets, they will certainly not regard other people as humans either. They will only impose the humiliations that the Immortal Cultivators have imposed on them to the smaller stars and the people working for them. In such cases, are they any less horrible than the Immortal Cultivators who play with them blatantly?

“On the other hand, when faced with the loyal supporters from the lower districts, they would immediately put on an immaculate mask, saying fancy words that they do not believe at all, to deceive the supporters through whatever means possible so that the supporters would willingly donate their life savings to make their idols look even more spectacular.

“Their idols never stop thanking the supporters from lower districts, as if they were born for the supporters from lower districts, and their supporters were as important to them as their parents.

“But I’ve seen their real attitudes in the backstage. They make fun of the bottom-level supporters, considering them to be idiots and swine. They laugh at the stupidity and humbleness of the supporters, who consider their yawns and farts to be the latest fashion and follow it. The Immortal Cultivators are their real patrons, and the dirty people from the lower districts do not even have the privilege to touch them.

“The situation in the two-digit districts where the brainworkers live is exactly the same as the first class.

“Those ‘brainfarmers’ had to run excessive calculations every day under the pursuit of the haunting ‘deadlines’. Naturally, their lives are more than miserable. But few of them have ever considered if such a life is correct and if they should rise to resist. Instead, they simply shift their sufferings to the hominoids who are even lower than them, namely the servants who cater to their daily needs.

“You know that the ‘brainfarmers’ are dedicated to computations and almost melted into the crystal processors. Their limbs have significantly shrunk, and they are not very fond of outdoor activities. Therefore, a lot of servants live in the two-digit districts to look after those ‘brainfarmers’.

“The ‘brainfarmers’ are in the seemingly trendy business. They have access to the latest crystal processors and the most up-to-date information. Their wages are dozens of times higher than the wages of the people below them. Dwelling in the illusion that they are the cornerstones of the Imperium, they can be quite nasty toward the servants. I’m sure you can imagine it.

“The simplest example is that every ‘brainfarmer’ often hires three to five servants, who will put clothes on them, deliver food into their mouth, and even wipe their a*s for them after they go to the toilet. Naturally, they are also never short of the bed slaves who satisfy their biological desires. They may argue that most of the servants are legally hired from the districts further down, but if you think about it more carefully, you will realize that it is still oppression for the teenagers, who barely have any education, to serve other people or even sell their bodies for their entire lives, isn’t it?

“However, most of the ‘brainfarmers’ have already been used to it. They even believe that the mind laborers are destined to rule over the body laborers, thinking that they are ‘mind laborers’ themselves. Hehe. Do they really deserve it?

“Those people can be even meaner than the Immortal Cultivators. The Immortal Cultivators have easier ways to get resources and money. In many cases, when they are in a good mind, their pets and slaves can live a good life for a year and a half because of their generosity. But while the ‘brainfarmers’ consider themselves to be advanced, they have to count on the few wages for their livelihoods. After they pay the bills on every payday, how much money will they have left to give their servants?

“Therefore, they always come up with all kinds of bizarre reasons to nitpick the servants and cut their allowances. The best that the servants can expect is to keep themselves warm and full. As time goes by, it is only natural that the servants hold a deep grudge, and the contradictions between the two parties are more and more intense. Somebody even comes up with the theory that the servants are natural-born larcenists and must be monitored every second with a crystal camera hovering above each of their heads. It is safe to say that this is the most direct and general exploitation.”

Listening attentively, Li Yao couldn’t help but have a lot of mixed feelings. It was true that he who traveled far knew much. When they made examples where the Immortal Cultivators exploited ordinary people during the education against Immortal Cultivators in the Star Glory Federation, they could often only think of the slaves in the mines, farms, and army.

Who could’ve thought that there was such devastating exploitation and slavery in the seemingly unattractive service industry, and who could’ve thought that the exploitation and slavery were not from the Immortal Cultivators but “senior hominoids”?

Long Yangjun sneered, “Of course, don’t presume that the servants, the assembly line workers living in the third class, and the miners living in the fourth class are any decent folks. Their minds are, in fact, the darkest of all, but they are too weak to vent their anger in reality and often unleash all of it on the Spiritual Nexus.

“In the beginning, they blatantly threw profanities at other people on the Spiritual Nexus to let out their pain caused by the failures. Gradually, such a way was not enough to fill their empty hearts, and they began to snoop on other people’s pain. It appears that the more painful other people are, the happier they will be.

“With such a state of mind, a lot of bizarre videos where people mutilate themselves or even swallow cockroaches and rats alive popped up on the Spiritual Nexus. You may find it surprising, but the more painful, cruel, and mind-boggling the videos are, the more popular they will be among the bottom-level hominoids. Even the performances of the big stars are not as good as a clip where an ordinary person eats a basin of cockroaches.

“By the time when such dark, sensational stimulations were not enough to fill their empty minds, the catharsis reached the highest point—the slaughter stream.

“Who do you think most of the people among the audience of the slaughter stream are? The Immortal Cultivators? Wrong! If the Immortal Cultivators want to kill anyone, they can totally do it on their own. They’re already tired of killing each other every day. Who’s interested in watching a bunch of ordinary people fighting one another?

“Most of the viewers of the slaughter stream are exactly the miners, servants, and assembly line workers living in the third and the fourth classes. Those people aren’t satisfied with only watching the slaughters. They often gather their money and ask the gamers in places like ‘Land of Sins’ to kill someone in designated ways!

“Whatever few wages they earn through hard work at great risks will be transferred to a certain ‘killer’ once the money arrives into their pockets, just so that the killer will kill someone they absolutely do not know in the cruelest ways somewhere far, far away. That is exactly what is happening in thousands of underground factories and mines right now when the workers want to pursue a moment of joy. Tsk, tsk, tsk. Human beings truly deserve to be the best carriers of extraterrestrial devils!”

Dense cold sweat leaked out of Li Yao’s forehead. Recalling what he had seen in the Martial Meritocrats Sector, he couldn’t help but sigh.

“Since they are passionate enough to be involved in the slaughter stream, it should come as no surprise that they slightly maintain and pack the garbage from the upper districts and sell it back to the upper districts pretending that the goods are original.”

Long Yangjun said casually, “It seems that everybody is hopelessly evil, and only the farmers of the fifth class, such as the residents of the 10,084th district, are the innocent, good guys, doesn’t it?

“That is not necessarily the case.

“How do you think they have bred the rock worms to make them so huge and fat when the environment is so harsh and the resources are so few? Have they added certain additives of unknown backgrounds, and are those additives harmful to human bodies?

“Hehe. Most of the rock worms are not served on their own dinner tables after all. Besides, the people of upper levels peg the compressed oxygen at such a high price. If they do not make the rock worms fatter and get more compressed oxygen back, how can they possibly live on? Don’t you think so?”

Chapter 2361 - Devil of Desire!

Chapter 2361 Devil of Desire!

Li Yao slapped his thigh and remarked in a loud voice, “Yes, you can’t be more right. This is exactly what we discussed when we were still in the Star Glory Federation. Suppressed by the Immortal Cultivators’ idea of ‘survival of the fittest’, the whole civilization will only become hierarchical exploitations. Those in the Divinity Transformation Stage oppress those in the Nascent Soul Stage, those in the Nascent Soul Stage oppress those in the Core Formation Stage, those in the Core Formation Stage oppress those in the Building Foundation Stage, those in the Building Foundation Stage oppress those in the Refinement Stage, those in the Refinement Stage oppress the ordinary people, and then the ordinary oppress and hurt each other. Eventually, it will escalate into everyone against everyone!

“Such an Imperium of True Human Beings has wasted most of its strength on internal strife even though it boasts millions of Immortal Cultivators and starships and hundreds of prosperous worlds. It is only reasonable that the Imperium is no match for the Covenant Alliance. The Imperium might not have the power to destroy a ‘barbaric and remote’ country like the Star Glory Federation.

“This is exactly also why I have snuck to the center of the cosmos swearing to turn the Imperium of True Human Beings upside down!”

Long Yangjun smiled casually and shook her head. “If you think that I’m just talking about systems and ideologies and that the chaos here is only caused by the cruelty lying in the true path of immortality, you will be too shallow and shortsighted.

“In my opinion, this is not a problem unique to a country or a civilization but a terminal disease caused by the character that all intelligent lives share.

“While the Imperium of True Human Beings is so decayed, was the Great Qian Dynasty where I once lived any different? The Star Ocean Republic was founded by the Cultivators, but was it not corrupted in its last years?

“There’s still the Great Dark Age of demons, which is too far away from today for us to know the well-being of the bottom-level people at that time. But the Blood Demon Sector, as a ‘living fossil’, can give us a clue. Inheriting the ‘Four Pillars System’ of the Great Dark Age, the Blood Demon Sector paralyzed the people with the groundless superstitions that they called ‘obliteration, rebirth, immortality’. Had it not been for your arrival, wouldn’t the demons at the bottom of the Blood Demon Sector still be mired in such lies?

“The Great Qian Dynasty was established by the ancient Cultivators, the Blood Demon Sector was governed by demons, the Star Ocean Republic was founded by Cultivators, and the Imperium of True Human Beings was created by Immortal Cultivators… Four forces of different eras and places, four entirely different systems and ideologies, but the results are all the same. Do you still not feel that it is an inborn disease of humanity, but only the ideas of ‘true path of immortality’ are wrong?”

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao said firmly, “That is not the case in the Star Glory Federation. I believe that the federation will certainly carry out the real path of the

Cultivators to the end. The strong will protect the weak, and the weak will support the strong. When the whole civilization is united, it will certainly push forward to the land that none of the Great Qian Dynasty, the Demon Beast Empire, the Star Ocean Republic, and the Imperium of True Human Beings has ever reached!”

“Is that so?”

Long Yangjun asked, “If the Star Glory Federation is entirely different from the four countries above, may I ask what exactly was the ‘magical equipment graveyard’ where you were born in? Also, I’m told that there are also ‘underground ghost cities’ in the federation, and there are also countless people who live underneath the surface of the planet.

“Of course, I do not need your defense to know that most of the underground cities of the Star Glory Federation are shallow with environments not nearly as harsh as what their counterparts in the Imperium have. Also, the Star Glory Federation is trying to improve the situation on the ground. Places like ‘magical equipment graveyards’ are getting fewer and fewer.

“But in my opinion, the Star Glory Federation is just a stand-alone case that cannot represent general humanity.

“When the Star Glory Federation was born, it was already faced with the severe military threats of the Blood Demon Sector. Every day could’ve been its last day. So, the people could only stick together. The strong and the weak had to support each other and fight for each other.

“After the Star Glory Federation defeated the Blood Demon Sector, and the pressure for survival had just been mollified, two behemoths that were the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Alliance of the Holy Covenant showed up.

Within the foreseeable future in the next several hundred years, it is hardly possible for you to defeat them. Naturally, the Star Glory Federation cannot give up ‘unity’.

“Also, there have also been a series of fortuitous incidents and uncanny factors such as you. As a result, the Star Glory Federation discovered Boneyard, which has plenty of resources, and the Kunlun relic, which boasts tremendous primeval treasures, giving it an edge in resources and technologies. That’s why the federation seems to be flourishing vigorously in the golden years today.

“I’ve been thinking about an interesting question. What if you weren’t there? What if there were never a person named ‘Vulture Li Yao’ in the history of the federation? What would the federation have become? Would it have fallen to the bottomless abyss when it could not bear the gravity of humanity anymore, exactly like the Ancient Sages Sector, the Blood Demon Sector, the Star Ocean Republic, and the Imperium of True Human Beings?”

The more Long Yangjun talked, the softer her voice became, and the more mysterious her look became. In the end, she even blew at Li Yao.

“Cut that crap. Do you really think I’m an idiot? Such questions are purely hypothetic. No matter how I answer them, I will only step into your trap.”

Li Yao said solemnly, “Perhaps humanity is truly decided by the environment, but since the Star Glory Federation today can bring out the bright side of humanity so brilliantly today, you cannot argue that humanity only has darkness and evil. In any case, whatever you say, I will not believe that humans are born evil. No matter how difficult it is, I will do my best and make the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance exactly like the federation!”

“Then, you have chosen the longest, hardest, and most twisting road.”

Long Yangjun said gloomily, “As your best friend, it pains me to watch you hit obstacles, crying and bleeding, on the road that is destined to fail, only for you to surrender and give up in the end!”

“Stop!”

Li Yao furrowed his eyebrows. “You are such a horrible ‘best friend’. I think we should just be regular friends!”

“Whatever you say.”

Long Yangjun said with a casual smile, “Anyway, I’ve seen too much darkness of humanity from the Ancient Sages Sector to the federation and from the federation to the Imperium.

“The life in the Ancient Sages Sector was extremely cruel, and everybody would be starving after a famine. As a result, there were the primitive rebels such as ‘Heaven Battering King Qi Changsheng’ and ‘Mother White Lotus Wan Mingzhu’. But at that time, I thought that it was only because the civilization was too underdeveloped.

“After I came to the Imperium of True Human Beings, which was ten thousand years more advanced than the Ancient Sages Sector, where the resources were highly abundant, the synthetic food could feed everybody, and more people were entitled to entertainments and convenient facilities that even the emperors in the ancient times never had the privilege to enjoy, I still see a lot of people who are living in pain.

“In the underground worlds tens of thousands of meters straight down, the five classes are like five universes. Everybody spends every second in extreme anxiety. On one hand, they’re worried that they may fall to the deeper abyss; on the other hand, they try their best to crawl upward through whatever means possible. But even if they reach the world where the sunlight is and become Immortal Cultivators, so what? Will they ever be free from the incessant conspiracies and internal brutalization?

“Perhaps the pain of human beings boils down to not the insufficiency of resources but the expansion of desires. Or rather, it is exactly because of the insatiateness of everybody from top to down that the resources are highly insufficient.

“Desire is a thing that can never be satiated. The desires that can be satiated are not real desires at all. Human beings, on the other hand, are creatures who will find a way to spend up however many resources that are given to them, aren’t they?

“Do you remember what I told you before I left the Star Glory Federation? Humans are devils, and devils are humans. Every human’s brain is made of a devil, and when the devil wriggles, struggles, and screams, that will be the feelings of the human.

“The more humans feed the devils, the stronger and the more ravenous they will be. As the appetites of the devils grow larger, humans’ desires will be stronger too. It is an endless vicious cycle.

“Hehe. What are the so-called ‘extraterrestrial devils’ exactly? Does it really mean ‘devils which come from the extraterrestrial lands beyond the three thousand Sectors’? That is obviously not right. Devils are everywhere in the three thousand Sectors. Is it possible that there are no ‘extraterrestrial devils’ at all, but only ‘devils of desires’?

“Stop glaring at me with your bulging eyes. I’m not criticizing human beings condescendingly as if I were a god. Like I said just now, I do not feel that intense feelings are a uniquely evil nature of mankind. On the contrary, I think that it is very likely to be a special gift left by the Pangu and the Nuwa civilizations.

“Perhaps every civilization of carbon-based intelligent lives, which boasts individuals whose brains are closed and independent, will inevitably witness the polarization of individuals and cannot stop the rampantly flooding desires. That’s why all of them have been destroyed.

“The Pangu civilizations’ alliance must’ve realized the problem. They are terribly scared of their feelings and call their emotions and desires ‘devils’, trying their best to seal their ‘inner devils’. To avoid having emotional fluctuations in the complicated and dangerous environments, they even abandoned the explorations of the outside world and created a tool named ‘human being’ to explore and modify the universe on behalf of them. As for themselves… they might have exiled themselves to the meditation state where they could not feel anything, right?

“However, despite everything they did, they could not stop the rise of desires. A rebel appeared among them at last—the Nuwa Clan.

“The extremity of everything is often its contrary. The consequence of repressing feelings and desires for a long time was the most complete indulgence! Led by the Nuwa Clan, all the intelligent lives in the alliance who could not stand the lack of feelings and desires rose to resist, eventually leading to the great demolition of the primeval civilization!”

“Wait!”

Li Yao was confused. “On one hand, you claim that feelings and desires are extremely terrible and will lead to eventual destruction. But on the other hand, you say that feelings and desires are unavoidable and that they will unleash a huge power if they are highly repressed. Then, which side are you on exactly?”

“Why are you silly again?”

Long Yangjun smiled. “I have the dual legacies of Pangu and Nuwa in the first place. Of course I’m on both sides, and I think they both made excellent points!”

Chapter 2362 - Accidental Achievemen

Chapter 2362 Accidental Achievemen

Fine. Li Yao rubbed his nose and had to admit that Long Yangjun’s self-defense was too reasonable. She was neither a man nor a woman, neither an ancient person nor a moderner, neither a human being nor a pure member of the Pangu Clan or the Nuwa Clan. She was indeed the most self-contradictory being in all the three thousand Sectors.

Li Yao’s attitude toward such a contradictory person was rather complicated.

If he regarded her as a friend, Li Yao found her opinion that humans were born evil unacceptable. It seemed that they should just go separate ways when they clearly had different beliefs.

But if he regarded her as an enemy, she had just rescued Li Yao from Blackstar the Great’s hand, and she disclosed all her “evil plans” and changes of her mind to Li Yao openly and frankly. She did not even hide her most secret base. Li Yao couldn’t help but feel amused. It would seem inappropriate for him to burst into fury.

Pondering for a long time, Li Yao thought that he had grasped a loophole. He said, “Wait, since your previous self experienced the primeval war in person, you should know that the Pangu civilizations failed to stop their doomsday even though they did cut out their feelings and desires. The Pangu Clan was still annihilated in the end! Therefore, whether humans are born kind or evil, it will not help to simply repress, seal, or erase feelings.

“In that case, why did you found the so-called ‘Nepenthe’ and play the moves that have been proved useless on human beings again?”

“The reason is very simple.”

Long Yangjun replied with a smile, “Because Nepenthe was not founded by me at all!”

“What?”

Li Yao felt that he was having a dialogue with the deaf. “What do you mean? Are you not the ‘Serenity Seraph’?”

“Yes, I am the ‘Serenity Seraph’. When I was active below the ground of the capital as a foreigner, I had to resort to a disguise. Could I have just told everybody that I was a eunuch from the Ancient Sages Sector?”

Long Yangjun said matter-of-factly, “I only taught some of the locals here how to forget their pain and repress their feelings as the ‘Serenity Seraph’. Little did I expect that they would spread the tricks out and established a ‘Nepenthe’ spontaneously. What could I have done? I am rather troubled too!”

“Is that… so?” Li Yao looked at Long Yangjun suspiciously.

“Of course it is. You should know that I am a very selfish person. For me, the most important thing is to find my origins. I certainly do not want to ask for any unnecessary trouble!”

Long Yangjun pursed her lips, as if she were upset. “As the saying goes, the bigger trees catch more wind. Why could I have possibly gained by establishing a ‘Nepenthe’? Those people are not good at fighting or collecting intelligence.

Their organization is full of flaws and will collapse after the first blow. They will only serve as a burden and expose my existence. Something will be seriously wrong with my head if I am going to lead such a bunch of folks. If I really intended to set up an evil organization, I would’ve hired a group of professionals first!”

“That does make sense.”

Li Yao realized that Long Yangjun used to be the founder of “Ghost Character”, a professional intelligence and assassination group in the Great Qian Dynasty. It was unlikely that she would recruit a group of believers through superstitions like what “Mother White Lotus Wan Mingzhu” did in the past.

Before Li Yao raised new questions, Long Yangjun already told him her experiences below the ground.

According to Long Yangjun, although she had seen so many sufferings of the mortals, she did not plan to do anything at the beginning. After all, as a newcomer to the place, it would be best if she kept a low profile.

But later, she witnessed an upcoming outburst of devils in a large mine fifteen thousand meters below the ground!

In an outburst of devils, the legendary extraterrestrial devils would arrive from the void and consume countless people, boosting their feelings and desires to the maximum, to the point that they would completely lose control of themselves and become possessed, destroying everything that they saw. It was the greatest catastrophe!

It was exactly how the outburst of devils was defined in the textbooks of the Star Glory Federation.

However, Long Yangjun told Li Yao that most of the outbursts of devils were not as unbelievable as that, and the devils did not necessarily come from the extraterrestrial lands billions of lightyears away.

Every person’s head was inhabited by an infinite number of devils. When the brain world made of the devils was kept in balance, the host would boast normal thinking ability and steady emotions. However, when an external force completely broke the ecological balance inside the head, resulting in the limitless expansion and overflow of some devils, the person would be deranged and possessed.

Once a person was deranged, his brain waves would become highly powerful and contagious, and it was very easy for the symptom to spread out exponentially. The process was both like the infection of a virus and the resonation of sound waves. In the terms of Meditation Healing, it was also known as “collective hysteria”.

Of course, under normal circumstances, however one suffered and no matter how anxious one was, it was not easy for the devils in their head to completely lose control. Some triggers or fuses were required for the “collective hysteria” to escalate into an outburst of devils.

The lives such as “Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan” and “Extraterrestrial Devil Lu Qingchen” were naturally the best inducers, but they were often too advanced to come by.

Most of the triggers of outbursts of devils were not as terrible as that. The vindictive thoughts left from dozens of years ago or the “devilish artifacts” excavated from the underground relics that carried feeble tenebrum energy were enough to stimulate and transform the desperate and resentful ordinary people.

As it happened, stellar radiations and cosmic storms could barely pierce through the thick rocks and reach the underground world ten thousand meters deep. Therefore, the last brainwaves of the victims who died a miserable death hundreds of years ago might be perfectly preserved into vindictive thoughts that might linger for a hundred years.

In the meantime, the “devilish artifacts” that the Nuwa Clan used to unleash the tenebrum energy were not rare either.

Therefore, small outbursts of devils were anything but unusual.

As a matter of fact, it was not just the case in the capital. In various Sectors of the Imperium of True Human Beings, small, low-intensity outbursts of devils were happening every now and then.

Even though most of the outbursts of devils were suppressed as fast as they rose, they had greatly consumed the national power of the Imperium, which was also one of the important reasons why the Imperium had been on the losing side in the war against the Covenant Alliance in the previous thousand years.

“By logic, I should’ve just left it alone. After all, the outbursts of devils are happening all the time in the Imperium. The Tribunal of Extraterrestrial Devils and the local sects of Immortal Cultivators were all there to take care of the incidents. What was it to me? Besides, I also had the heritages of the Nuwa Clan. The Nuwa Clan practiced the tenebrum energy and worshipped absolute freedom and chaos. So, I could almost be counted as a kin to the devils!”

Long Yangjun blinked her eyes and said, “I should’ve just ignored it and watched the ordinary people who went on a rampage be entangled by uncontrollable tenebrum energy and transformed into hideous devilish people, destroying the mines where they lived and worked, before they were suppressed by the Immortal Cultivators who would come soon.

“However, when I was about to turn around and return to the darkness, countless heroic images suddenly popped up inside my head. The first to show up was naturally you, Vulture Li Yao, dominator of three Sectors.

“I thought that, if it were you, you would certainly not turn a blind eye to the upcoming tragedy but would do your best to stop and change it.

“I’m not kidding. Perhaps I was indeed deeply influenced by you while we fought by each other’s side during the last couple of years. I suddenly felt that you were right. If you only care about yourself but do not try to change other people’s fate and even the whole world when you have the most powerful strength, what’s the point of your strength? It’s like you have a mountain of gold but you are reluctant to spend a single coin. Are you going to bring all your gold and jewelry to your coffin?”

“Stop it—”

Li Yao said, “You can say and do whatever you want to do, but please don’t act like you are doing it because of my charisma!”

Long Yangjun smiled and continued, “At that time, I had two options, one being the Nuwa Clan’s solution and the other being the Pangu Clan’s.”

The so-called solution of the Nuwa Clan meant appearing in the form of the Nuwa Clan that was surrounded by overwhelming tenebrum energy so that the army of possessed people would be better trained, more hideous, last longer, and cause greater damage.

Long Yangjun said that she did not really care about the consequences or hold any prejudice against the arts of devils that highlighted freedom and chaos. However, she had indeed witnessed what Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan and Extraterrestrial Devil Lu Qingchen achieved in the Star Glory Federation.

The minor outburst of devils before her couldn’t have been as huge as the trouble caused by Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan and Extraterrestrial Devil Lu Qingchen no matter what she did. In that case, what was there to appreciate?

The heritages of the Pangu Clan, on the other hand, were newly awakened inside her body and had never been practiced yet. She was somewhat eager to try them.

Therefore, she snuck into the army of miners who were about to go on a rampage and absorbed the devils that were overflowing from their brains. After sucking away all the devilish air and the vindictive thoughts that had been accumulated for hundreds of years, she resolved a great catastrophe before it happened without alerting anyone. The Immortal Cultivators did not even notice it at all.

Absorbing the devils and the vindictive thoughts was just the first step. The situation of the miners did not change, and they were still in agony and wrath. If they were left alone, there were bound to be new outbursts of devils sooner or later.

Therefore, Long Yangjun “kindly” taught them the ways to forget their pain, suppress their anger, and pacify their soul.

The miners were all uneducated, unrefined people, and Long Yangjun was also unwilling to expose her traces and identity. Therefore, she came up with “Serenity Seraph” as her pseudonym and named the shallow tricks that she taught them to be “Serenity Arts”.

“I swear that I did not mean anything malicious or have any long-term plan in the beginning. It was purely because the miners were too much in pain and angry and would be mentally deranged at any moment if I left them alone. In that case, they would be really hopeless! Besides… I was very curious whether or not the Pangu Clan’s secret techniques to suppress feelings were really effective. That was why I gave it a shot.”

Long Yangjun said solemnly, as if it were not her fault at all, “Who would have foreseen that things would somehow go out of control later?”

Chapter 2363 - Ideas of Nepenthe

According to Long Yangjun, she only selected the few most in pain and resentful miners and taught them the “Serenity Arts” so that they could get rid of the incessant and unforgettable agony.

In order to teach the rather complicated techniques to the miners who were uneducated, she had to teach them by using the methods of telepathy and directly stamped the arts into their heads through the transmission of brainwaves.

It was only a minor experiment at the beginning, but she greatly underestimated the potentials of the hominoids below the ground. The Serenity Arts and the methods of telepathy were spread among the miners like a wildfire. They were disseminated from this tunnel to that tunnel, from one mine to ten mines, from the mines to the geothermal factories, and from the geothermal factories to the assembly lines on upper levels or even the financial districts even upper above.

“It was not until then that I realized the underground hominoids had so much anxiety and pain regardless of their class, and that they had such a high demand for the Serenity Arts.”

Long Yangjun chuckled, not thinking that it was a big deal. “I like killing and sabotaging best in my entire life, and I’ve barely done anything good, but the propagation of the Serenity Arts, which helped so many people to relieve their pain, is certainly one of them!”

“But when you ‘relieved’ their agony and anxiety, you erased their delight and happiness altogether!” Li Yao observed coldly.

“Li Yao, why do you still not understand? Just look around!”

Long Yangjun slightly raised her voice, and her eyes became aggressive. “For the people living in this place, the universe is a hell, their own people are fiends, and living is suffering! They hardly have any delight and happiness. The seething black venoms inside their heads are endless pain and unpacifiable anxiety. Do they have any joy and happiness to be erased?

“I never forced anybody to do anything. Even when I kindly helped the miners who risked being deranged, I told them the side effects of the Serenity Arts and the methods of telepathy in great details truthfully. I said that the tricks were like the leukotomy where parts of the brain tissues were removed, and that while they could help you reduce your pain, it was very likely that you would never taste the feelings of happiness again.

“Can you guess their reply?

“Those miners said that they had never tasted the feeling of happiness in their harrowing life. So, it didn’t matter at all!

“At first, I did not know the full features of the Serenity Arts. It was only part of the knowledge that I found from the fuzzy ancestral memories. How would I know that practicing the Serenity Arts would be like drug addiction? How would I know that they would want to be more tranquil after they were tranquilized, more comfortable after they were comforted, and further eliminate all the pain when their pain was slightly relieved?

“But drug addiction or not, if we get to the bottom of it, that was their own choice!

“I was told that the patients who were on the verge of death due to terminal diseases were allowed to inject certain high-intensity anesthetics or drugs to relieve their extreme pain, which is in the spirit of humanitarianism. Then, for the pathetic hominoids living in the underground worlds, are they not suffering mentally terminal diseases when they are about to destroy themselves in the outburst of devils? Is it not in the spirit of humanitarianism to provide the Serenity Arts for them?

“Let me make it more frank. Flies only lay eggs in the gutter. If the world is really peaceful and quiet, and everybody is enjoying their life happily, not a single person will be fooled no matter how I deceive them and beg them to practice the Serenity Arts! But the reality is that they are crying and begging me to relieve their pain for them no matter what the price is. After all, they already have absolutely nothing to lose!”

“You’re right. It is the world that is wrong!”

Li Yao stood straight and argued, not giving in at all, “It is exactly for that reason that we should change the world instead of changing the people who are exploited and enslaved by the world!”

“Do not say ‘we’ when it is only your personal opinion.”

Long Yangjun said casually, “Perhaps you are a benevolent great hero who swears to save all the people, but as for me… Even if I am not a bad guy, I am still just a selfish person who is only willing to do things that I am capable of when my own interests are not hurt.

“If I can help somebody by lending my hand, I wouldn’t mind doing so, but if you are asking me to challenge the entire world at the risk of my own life, hehe, I’m afraid that it will be too demanding and outrageous, isn’t it?

“Besides, the situation at that time was highly emergent, and the devils would break out at any moment. I did not have any choice at all. If I did not teach them the Serenity Arts, I would be watching them be mentally deranged and consumed by violent feelings and desires, degenerating into insane, mad people! That was the only cure in my pocket. If you were in my shoes, what could you have done?

“Li Yao, just give up your biases and think about it calmly. If I have not lied about anything up until so far, can you find anything wrong with what I did? Was it in violation of your chivalry? If your soul were in my shell, and you were faced with thousands of ‘half lunatics’ who were about to go on a rampage when you were entirely on your own, would you have made a better choice?”

His eyes bloodshot, Li Yao stared at Long Yangjun and thought hard for a long time. Then, he managed to say, “While you do have some points, I am still suspicious that you are not as kindhearted and innocent as you claim to be. You taught the miners the Serenity Arts probably because you wanted to test the power of the technique or to figure out its specific usages. After all, the knowledge retrieved from ‘ancestral memories’ can be fuzzy and disordered. It was necessary for you to test and sort it through! Don’t deny it. Although I do not have any proof, it was probably the fact based on my understanding about you!”

“Look, you are being cynical again, aren’t you?”

Long Yangjun said with a smile, “Even if that was what was on my mind, so what? Is the almighty Father Li going to punish someone for what they think? Is thinking in violation of any law?”

Li Yao coughed and said, “We’re off the topic. Let’s focus on Nepenthe. What is that about exactly?”

“Very simple. As more and more people learned the methods of telepathy and then practiced the Serenity Arts, they naturally formed a secret society.”

Long Yangjun opened her hands and raised them, as if she were surrendering, to show her innocence as she said, “That thing was truly not within my plan. The gathering of so many people would not do me any good! However, on second thought afterward, I realized that the birth of such an organization was a necessity because human beings could only be effectively motivated by certain instructions or when seeking the significance of their lives.”

Li Yao was confused. “What do you mean?”

“Literally what I said. Everybody is living for something, not just to eat and sleep.”

Long Yangjun said, “Human beings were manufactured by the Pangu Clan and Nuwa Clan as their tools in the beginning. Since they were tools, their users would naturally pack certain instructions into the heads of humans so that humans could do their work dutifully, right?

“After all the primeval civilizations perished and human beings survived, they began to be driven by their feelings and desires. The significance of their lives is the satisfaction of their feelings and desires. It is exactly because feelings and desires can never be satisfied that human beings have been moving forward incessantly.

“Do you understand it now? The orders from the Pangu Clan or the Nuwa Clan and the orders from the desires in their heads are all the ‘significance of life’.

“But right now, the underground hominoids who practice the Serenity Arts have suppressed their feelings and desires to an extremely low level, resulting in the shortage of inner motives in their hearts. In the meantime, there is not a supreme being such as the Pangu Clan or the Nuwa Clan, which gives them orders from the outside. Here comes the question. What exactly are they living for under such circumstances?”

“Right!”

Li Yao was greatly enlightened. “This is indeed a very serious problem. Human beings cannot lack beliefs. Even the most evil or cheesy beliefs are still the motives to push people forward. Those who have completely lost their beliefs are like spiritual puppets without given orders. They will not have any reason to do anything at all!”

“Therefore, since they have lost their beliefs of the past, they will naturally search for or create new beliefs as the significance of their lives.”

Long Yangjun said, “That might’ve been caused by my neglect, but I couldn’t have seen it coming, could I? Thankfully, they did not need my help to come up with a set of new ideas, which were the prototype of the doctrine of Nepenthe.

“The doctrine of Nepenthe holds that all the sufferings in the world are because of excessive desires, and all the mortals in the universe are tortured by the devils of desires. Even the high and mighty Immortal Cultivators are but slaves and puppets of the devils in their heads.

“It is exactly because they are haunted by the devils and they have lost their sanity since a long time ago that the Immortal Cultivators exploit the ordinary people brutally and the ordinary people abuse each other, turning the whole universe into a boundless hell of infinite darkness and horror.

“Therefore, there are no ‘Immortal Cultivators’ in the world at all but only the possessed people who pretend to be Immortal Cultivators. What rules over the Imperium of True Human Beings is exactly the devils!

“Even though all the planets in the three thousand Sectors are drained, it is impossible to meet the demand of the possessed people whose feelings of ravenousness are as deep as black holes. They are essentially the worms of the universe and will drag the three thousand Sectors into destruction.

“To protect the universe and recover the real tranquility, the first thing that is to be done is to annihilate the feelings and desires in one’s own head and to return to the original, pure state. Then, it is necessary to help other people who are tortured by emotions and extricate them from eternal pain and anxiety. In the end, everybody must be united and go to ‘purge’ the fake Immortal Cultivators living on the surface of the planet without fear.

“The universe will not embrace the ultimate salvation until the last Immortal Cultivator is purged and destroyed. Henceforth, human beings will live in peace with the universe carefreely forever without any wars among themselves!”

Chapter 2364 - The Innocent Long Yangjun

Chapter 2364 The Innocent Long Yangjun

“Wait, wait, let me see…”

Li Yao blinked his eyes quickly and asked in suspicion, “Why do the ideas of this Nepenthe sound so much like the approaches of the Covenant Alliance? It’s almost like a small replica of the Covenant Alliance!”

“Yes, you’re absolutely right!”

Long Yangjun nodded her head heavily and said, as if she had been greatly wronged, “That’s why I said that I was innocent. Nepenthe was not founded by me at all, and their core ideas did not come from me. It was the spies of the Covenant Alliance who were behind everything!”

“The spies of the Covenant Alliance?” Li Yao suddenly grew alert.

Li Yao was told that the Immortal Cultivators’ tyranny on the underclass naturally raised the intense resentment and resistance of the underclass. Since the ideas of the Cultivators had declined a thousand years ago, the spies of the Covenant Alliance had a perfect opportunity to occupy the vacuum.

The Imperium today was teeming with spies of the Covenant Alliance everywhere. They had a set of solutions that could perfectly simulate feelings to help them pass the “Ring-Tu Test” of the Imperium that was supposed to distinguish human beings from “demi-humans”. They had been spreading the ideas of the Covenant Alliance blatantly in the

Imperium, exactly like what was described just now, including the philosophies that desires were the greatest enemy of a civilization, and only by completely purging and erasing the possessed Immortal Cultivators could a civilization live in peace with the universe, etc.

Such ridiculous thoughts would have absolutely no market if they were in countries like the Star Glory Federation, where the nation was thriving, the society was in order, and the people boasted independent will and a healthy mind.

However, under the cruel governance and suppression in the Imperium, countless people including a lot of Immortal Cultivators were living in the deepest agony, and they could not see the future of the country where everybody brutalized each other like beasts in a jungle. As a result, some of them did abandon the true path of immortality and shift to the Path of Ultimate Benevolence that gave up personal desires for the beliefs.

Li Yao once encountered a colonization team of the Imperium in the Kunlun relic. Tang Qianhe, the navigator in the team, was a spy of the Covenant Alliance who betrayed the true path of immortality and joined the Path of Ultimate Benevolence.

Of course, Tang Qianhe, who was at the peak of the Core Formation Stage, was a rarely-seen senior spy. They would not expose themselves easily. Instead, they would lurk like ghosts in a deep ocean. Only when they were involved in great events such as an opportunity to bring a member of the Pangu Clan back to life would they rip their masks and reveal their true appearances.

But there were still tremendous low-level spies, as well as chess pieces who did not know that they were being manipulated in their ignorance, who disseminated the Path of Ultimate Benevolence in the territory of the Imperium inexorably and fearlessly.

Their feelings being highly repressed, they naturally did not have any fear for death but only had infinite loyalty for the Path of Ultimate Benevolence. They were absolutely not scared of death no matter how the Immortal Cultivators suppressed them. Even if ten thousand of them were killed today, they would pop up again tomorrow like wild grasses that could never be burnt up.

The Empyreal Terminus Sector was a power vacuum where the four Kurfürst families checked and balanced each other. The Immortal Cultivators' reign over the bottom-level people was relatively feeble. Naturally, the underground worlds here were the best places of activities for the spies of the Covenant Alliance and the believers of the Path of Ultimate Benevolence.

In the meantime, the Covenant Alliance's techniques were of the same origin as Long Yangjun's heritage. They were highly exchangeable and complementary. Some of the spies of the Covenant Alliance were also aware of the tricks similar to the Serenity Arts, except that theirs were errored and incomplete and not as good as Long Yangjun's.

The methods of telepathy were the same. The people of the Covenant Alliance could communicate via telepathy, but their methods of telepathy had been misinterpreted far too many times and were naturally not as good as Long Yangjun's first-hand techniques.

In any case, after the underground hominoids practiced the Serenity Arts and the methods of telepathy under Long Yangjun's tutelage and organized themselves, they immediately attracted a lot of spies of the Covenant Alliance and believers of the Path of Ultimate Benevolence like magnets.

The governance of the Imperium of True Human Beings on the bottom level was messy and corrupted, but the spies of the Covenant Alliance had been deeply rooted at the bottom level, dedicated to solving the practical problems of the poor folks. When the problems were unresolvable, they were still willing to comfort people’s traumatized minds. Therefore, the spies of the Covenant Alliance were quite popular at the bottom level. However the Imperium brainwashed the people, there was always a group of people who sympathized with or even supported the spies of the Covenant Alliance, which made it the best soil for the Path of Ultimate Benevolence to bloom and fruit.

Now that there were already established ideas, the believers of Nepenthe were naturally unnecessary to create a new path, nor were they capable of doing so. Under the deception of the spies of the Covenant Alliance, it was only natural that the doctrine of Nepenthe became a simplified version of the Path of Ultimate Benevolence.

If the things were left alone, it wouldn’t take long before the so-called “Nepenthe” became a branch and an advance base of the Covenant Alliance in the Imperium.

Li Yao suddenly thought of something as he listened. “So, there are still spies from the Covenant Alliance in Nepenthe right now, who are authentic natives of the Covenant Alliance?”

Long Yangjun shook her head with a smile and said that Li Yao mistook “spies of the Covenant Alliance” for “spies from the Covenant Alliance”. It was true that there were some spies of the Covenant Alliance in Nepenthe right now, but they were all natives of the Imperium who were born and raised locally, even if they had been brainwashed by the Path of Ultimate Benevolence.

On the other hand, those who brainwashed them were not necessarily authentic “spies from the Covenant Alliance” but also the believers of the Path of Ultimate Benevolence who were born and raised in the Imperium.

The war between the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance had lingered for a thousand years. The people of the Covenant Alliance had already worked hard to infiltrate the Imperium from seven to eight hundred years ago. After hundreds of years and dozens of generations, they had completely rooted themselves in the Imperium and became part of the country.

“You should not consider ‘Alliance of the Holy Covenant’ purely as a hostile country on the outside.”

Long Yangjun thought for a moment and said, “Let me make a metaphor with the Ancient Sages Sector. You should regard the Covenant Alliance as a combination of an invasive, hostile country and the uprising peasants within. If the Imperium is compared to the Great Qian Dynasty, the Covenant Alliance will be the Ghost Qin plus the White Lotus Cult plus the Heaven Battering Army. That is why it is extremely difficult to get rid of the Covenant Alliance.”

Long Yangjun told Li Yao that, after discovering that certain sleazy guys approached the miners whom she had enlightened, she captured and interrogated a few of them in curiosity, but she did not find much useful information.

It was not because the spies of the Covenant Alliance were too organized. On the very contrary, they were too unorganized, to the point that they were almost acting on their own. So, it was impossible for Long Yangjun to track their leader.

“The Covenant Alliance’s activities in the Imperium are not based on any ‘organization’ but on the ideas of the Path of Ultimate Benevolence. Organizations can be detected and uprooted, but ideas can barely be extinguished.”

Long Yangjun said, “The Path of Ultimate Benevolence haunts the sky and the earth of the Imperium like a ghost, alluring a lot of people to ‘awaken’ on their own. The spies of the Covenant Alliance that I caught were merely common workers, farmers, and students in the beginning. They had all abandoned everything and embraced eternal peace voluntarily because they could not endure the cruel oppression and the dark life anymore. What could I have done with them?

“Even if I found out the ‘mentors’ who taught them the methods of telepathy and the ways to repress feelings, those people would only be another bunch of common workers, farmers, and students. What could I do with them? As for their mentors, those people were very likely to have been executed by the Immortal Cultivators. What could I do except to simply watch?”

Faced with such a complicated situation, even Long Yangjun was in a dilemma.

But of course, she was not the most lenient person in the world, and she would certainly do something when other people were corrupting her followers or even snooping on her secrets.

She had been focused on intelligence collection and her own training in the beginning. By the time she noticed it, Nepenthe had already grown to a certain scale with its own ideas. Quite a few spies of the Covenant Alliance were even asking about her, wondering if this “Serenity Seraph” was a senior spy from the Covenant Alliance who had come to guide them to disseminate the Path of Ultimate Benevolence and purge the Imperium.

Long Yangjun was immediately mired in a cold sweat. The last thing she wanted was to be involved in the war between the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance. If the leaders of the Imperium was misled into thinking that a senior spy from the Covenant Alliance named “Serenity Seraph” appeared in the capital, wouldn’t she be killed in no time?

Long Yangjun took care of the talkative spies of the Covenant Alliance quickly and then took over Nepenthe. She then established certain rules to restrain the believers.

With her experience of running the “Ghost Character”, wasn’t it more than easy for her to handle a tiny Nepenthe?

All the rules could be summoned into one sentence. Whatever the Nepenthe believers did would be fine, provided that they kept it a secret and a low profile. Most importantly of all, they should not leak the identity of the “Serenity Seraph” and that they should not ask her to clean their messes for them!

Long Yangjun had thought that Nepenthe was just a nuisance.

However, when Nepenthe grew active below the ground, she discovered that it was not entirely devoid of merits.

First of all, Nepenthe was like a huge magnet that attracted the spies of the Covenant Alliance all the time.

Through the interaction between those people and Nepenthe, Long Yangjun was able to study the origins of the Covenant Alliance. She was very suspicious that the Covenant Alliance was developed slowly and exactly like Nepenthe at the beginning.

If she could truly figure out the origins of the Covenant Alliance, it would be much more convenient for her when she snuck into the Covenant Alliance one day in the future. That was exactly what she meant by “social experiment”.

Also, the believers of the Covenant Alliance all possessed certain brainwashing and telepathic techniques. While those techniques were crude and incomplete, they were of the same origin as Long Yangjun’s techniques after all and could make up for the shortcomings of her fuzzy knowledge that she awakened from her genes.

What was most unexpected of all was that some Nepenthe believers gradually expanded their influence to the fifth class below the ground, namely the five-digit towns like the 10,084th district, and helped her locate a lot of secret primeval relics!

Chapter 2365 - The Supervillain This Time!

Chapter 2365 The Supervillain This Time!

The Empyreal Terminus Sector had been the capital of the Demon Beast Empire and the human civilizations later for tens of thousands of years. It was the main battlefield of the battle between the Supreme Emperor and the Blood God ten thousand years ago, and it was also the last battleground during the collapse of demons more than ten thousand years ago. But furthermore, it was also an important location in the primeval wars hundreds of thousands of years. Naturally, abundant relics were hidden below the ground. Many of them had been discovered by the underground hominoids.

However, the hominoids had suffered a lot in the past. When they accidentally leaked the messages about the relics, the ferocious Immortal Cultivators would often come and demolish their towns.

After being taught lessons hundreds of times, all the underground hominoids became dummies who cherished their words as gold. They would never leak any information to the outsiders. Whoever had a big mouth would be cut by the people of their town until they ran out of blood.

Therefore, it had been almost a hundred years since the Immortal Cultivators excavated any valuable relic below the ground. They thought that most of the relics had been emptied.

After Nepenthe reached the forgotten corners fifteen thousand meters below the ground, its believers soon won the trust of the locals. It was quite ironic that in the underground worlds, the locals trusted the believers of

Nepenthe and even the spies of the Covenant Alliance more than they trusted the Immortal Cultivators.

The intelligence that the believers of Nepenthe further collected regarding the relics was a great treasure for Long Yangjun.

She had been highly sensitive about the primeval relics because of her gifts in the first place. Based on the new information, she soon discovered dozens of primeval relics in a row.

Most of the relics had decayed, corrupted, and melted into fossils, but some of them were still perfectly preserved because of the fortuitous conditions. She found plenty of rarely-seen treasures in them, including, for example, the Colossus “Heavenly Crystal” that she was using right now!

“Under the guidance of the Nepenthe believers, I discovered quite a few valuable relics in a row and got a Colossus and some other magical equipment for self-protection. I also had a deep understanding of my heritage. Finally, I was prepared to travel in the cities of the Immortal Cultivators on the surface of the planet.”

Long Yangjun said, “Besides, Nepenthe was already quite influential at that time. Worrying that it would catch the attention of the Immortal Cultivators as it developed, I was in a hurry to get away from the trouble. Therefore, I insisted on leaving the underground worlds despite the persuasion of the believers and returned to the surface of the planet.

“Later, I ran into some Immortal Cultivators of the Dongfang. After a series of events, I snuck into the royal palace as ‘Dongfang Mingyue’. The rest is history.

“This is about everything. All in all, after I returned to the surface of the planet, and especially after I snuck into the Dongfang family, I barely contacted the Nepenthe believers below the ground. After all, they could develop however they wanted, and whatever trouble they caused would be none of my business. For Prime Minister Dongfang Wang, it was perhaps not a big deal if someone who practiced the tenebrum energy was working for him, but it would be rather scary if I was suspected to be a senior spy of the Covenant Alliance!

“Therefore, I did not have any long-term plan in the beginning. The situation has become what it is today only because one thing led to another. If it weren’t necessary, I wouldn’t have thought to come back to ‘guide’ the Nepenthe believers at all. It can’t be helped. Who could’ve known that Blackstar the Great would suddenly come back to life and even control the surface of the capital? I had no choice except to bring you and Li Jialing to this place! After all, there were no surveillance cameras here, and some of the people here were more or less of use.

“It was not until I returned that I discovered that Nepenthe was ten times larger than when I left, and that it was planning a shocking uprising. If it worked out, it would likely help the residents of hundreds of towns to eliminate their pain, purge their soul, and return to eternal peace. I swear that none of those were my plans. They did everything on their own. I never thought that they would go so big, and I’m having a headache myself!

“Fame often leads to disasters. When hundreds of underground towns are on a rampage together, it will be impossible even if the ‘Serenity Seraph’ intends to keep a low profile! I will certainly be deeply remembered by Blackstar the Great, Queen Li Linghai, and the brutal men of the four Kurfürst families who will hate my guts. Even the experts of the Covenant Alliance will learn my existence. I haven’t decided whether I should join the Covenant Alliance or just be a happy devil yet! What a headache!

“Come on, Monster Li, I have confessed everything. All in all, I have been innocent and unfortunate in the whole incident, and I’ve got into so much trouble uncannily. Please help me come up with an idea to fix the mess!”

Long Yangjun crossed her hands and looked at Li Yao cutely and pitifully.

Li Yao’s goosebumps were almost falling when he was stared at by her. Taking a deep breath to keep his head calm, he analyzed every word Long Yangjun said carefully before he shook his head. “That’s not right.”

“What’s not right?”

Long Yangjun bulged her eyes, with water rolling in them. She bit her lips softly and trembled in self-pity. “I offered to tell you everything because I considered you a friend. I almost cut my heart and showed it to you, but you still don’t trust me? Didn’t you say that you would treat me as a friend in the beginning? Or maybe, are you still holding on to the idea that ‘people of not my own kind always think differently’, and you reject me because I’m a ‘monster’?”

“Cut the crap. Nobody is a better actor than myself. Nobody.”

Li Yao’s eyes were like two deep wells, one red and the other black. His face was extremely calm and thoughtful as he considered for a moment and said, “Perhaps everything you said was true, but the same truths, if combined in different orders and different ways, may result in different and even opposite conclusions.

“Do you know my greatest suspicion of your whole theory? Your passiveness. You were almost led by the possessed miners, the Nepenthe believers, and the spies of the Covenant Alliance, and you could not stop the situation from escalating at all.

“Such passiveness, blindness, and weakness are not in line with the Lead Eunuch Wang Xi who could manipulate the ‘Three Saints, Four Rapscallions, One Monk, and One Emperor’ like toys, nor Long Yangjun who tricked me and the entire federation and who did not confess that she was a ‘spy of the Pangu Clan’ until the last moment!

“Therefore, is what you said really the truth? Did you really want to save lives in the emergency out of sheer kindness, not expecting that things would gradually go out of control? Or maybe, are there invisible strings behind the possessed miners, the Nepenthe believers, and the spies of the Covenant Alliance, and all those strings eventually end in your hands after twists and turns?”

Long Yangjun rolled her brilliant eyes again and again. “Why would I do that intentionally? Could I gain anything by gathering such a bunch of people?”

“Yes, you could.”

Li Yao nodded his head and extended three fingers. “Firstly, you could use them to conduct your ‘social experiment’ to explore the origins of the Covenant Alliance and consider if you should take the Covenant Alliance’s side. Secondly, you could attract the spies of the Covenant Alliance with Nepenthe and learn their techniques, which could significantly make up for the shortage of your knowledge from the hereditary memories. Thirdly, only by establishing Nepenthe could you infiltrate the forgotten areas and win the trust of the residents of the five-digit towns, thereby locating the primeval relics that were buried twenty to thirty thousand meters below the ground in the shortest amount of time!

“I do not know if you have any deeper purposes yet, but the three benefits alone were enough for you to risk establishing Nepenthe!”

Long Yangjun listened in silence and remarked without showing any emotion, “It does sound reasonable. Too bad that everything is just your speculation. You do not have any proof.”

“No, I don’t. I have no doubt that I can’t find any proof either.”

Looking at Long Yangjun, Li Yao said solemnly, “So, I can only ask you as a friend—is my speculation correct?”

Long Yangjun bit her lips softly and stared at Li Yao poignantly, to the point that her tears were almost rolling down like pearls. But suddenly, she burst into laughter, her pensiveness gone, while she kicked crazily and clapped her hands. “Monster Li truly deserves to be Monster Li. Even such disguises cannot fool you? As I expected, your usual stupidity is just your camouflage, and your appearance right now is the real you.

“Assuming—listen closely, I’m saying that it’s just an assumption—that your guess is correct, and I did slightly ‘enlighten’ and ‘push’ somebody in the beginning to make the whole incident develop toward the direction in my favor, what will you do, and what can you do?

“Fight me and even kill me? Can you solve the problem by killing me? Besides me, thousands of spies of the Covenant Alliance are secretly establishing ‘Nepenthes’ large and small in the entire Imperium of True Human Beings!

“Admit it, Li Yao, the battle you are faced with this time is different from any of the battles in the past hundred years!

“In the past, you were faced with specific enemies. However ferocious, powerful, and overwhelming they were, problems would be solved and the world would be saved as long as they were taken down!

“In the Flying Star Sector, you killed Xiao Xuance and stopped his ‘Grand Illusionary Plan’. In the Blood Demon Sector, you killed Elder Nether Spring and won Jin Tuyi’s support, shattering the ‘Spore Stratagem’. After you returned to the Star Glory Federation, you killed Lu Zui and Zhou Zhengdao, hehe, saving the federation yet again and facilitating the birth of the New Federation. In your second return to the federation, you defeated Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan and killed Heiye Ming and Extraterrestrial Devil Lu Qingchen, haha, saving the world at the critical moment once again!

“It’s always like this. It’s been simple and straightforward every time. It’s almost like a virtual game where a supervillain is standing at the deepest part of every level, and you will solve all the problems after the supervillains are defeated.

“But not this time, Vulture Li Yao. It is not so simple this time.

“Even if you kill me, you will not settle the problems of ‘Nepenthe’. Even if you kill Blackstar the Great, a second ambitious schemer who is greedier and more brutal than him will show up. You may be able to completely destroy the four Kurfürst families, but it’s impossible for you to destroy all the warlords and nobles. You may sneak into the Covenant Alliance on your own, crawl in the ventilation tubes and the sewers a hundred times, and eventually execute the master of the Covenant Alliance, but, hehe, you can never completely eradicate the soil from which the Covenant Alliance is born.

“Perhaps what Prime Minister Dongfang Wang said before his death was right. This time, your enemy is no longer a specific schemer, tyrant, or dictator, but the boundless universe itself and the dark side of the civilization of mankind that is illuminated by the stars of the infinite universe.

“I’m very curious and looking forward to the result. Can you really defeat the cold sea of stars and the dark side of humanity?”

Chapter 2366 - Attack the Great Iron Plants!

Chapter 2366 Attack the Great Iron Plants!

Long Yangjun’s voice got louder and louder until she completely stood straight in the end and leaned close to Li Yao, looking at him mockingly and provocatively.

Li Yao was caught in a long silence.

“Ha!”

Long Yangjun grinned. “You’ve got nothing to say anymore?”

“You’re wrong.”

Li Yao shook his head slowly and took a deep breath. Looking at Long Yangjun in the eyes, he said slowly, “While I am indeed a rarely-seen genius in the universe who is adept at fighting, sneaking, maintenance, analysis, planning, and acting and who is blessed by fate with countless trump cards, which makes me one of the few most special persons in the entire universe, I have never fought alone in any battle in the past hundred years, and there hasn’t been a case where I settled the problem and saved the world solely on my own.

“Countless good brothers and friends fought side by side with me every single time. Countless seemingly insignificant persons whose names I was unaware of fought together with me for their own fate and the fate of everybody else every single time! I never feel that I saved a lot of people; we simply worked together in solidarity to save ourselves!

“When we were against Xiao Xuance in the Flying Star Sector, countless Cultivators fought side by side with me and sacrificed their precious lives so that we could eventually march to Xiao Xuance's face!

"When we were resisting Lu Zui in the Heaven's Origin Sector, it was the citizens of the federation who raised their hands, waved the Rising Dragon of the Nine Stars flag, and covered me all the way to the parliament building so that we could unveil Lu Zui's real appearance!

"During the second time I returned to the Heaven's Origin Sector, when I fought Extraterrestrial Devil in the realm of spirits, the national anthem of the New Federation sung by so many people together granted us infinite strength, allowing us to finally destroy the realm of spirits, disrupt the extraterrestrial devils, and rouse Professor Mo Xuan's real soul. You were there with me at that time, and you were saved by countless ordinary people who burnt their souls and lives. Have you forgotten about it?!

"In the fierce battle against the Black Wind Fleet, who was the greatest contributor for the dozen Colossi to arrive in time and sabotage the space gate? Not me, but a common officer of the federation named Helian Lie. It was he who sacrificed his life to stall the creation of the space gate! I will remember him forever. The Star Glory Federation will remember him forever!

"So, don't think that you can scare me by intentionally exaggerating the coldness of the universe and the darkness of humanity. Yes, individuals are insignificant when faced with the overwhelming sea of stars, but insignificance does not equal to humbleness. Human beings will never admit that they are humble, and I will never be fighting alone!

"It's the same this time. Behind my back is the Star Glory Federation. I believe that every Cultivator and every citizen of the Star Glory Federation will fight side by side with me. We will carry out the bright side of humanity with our best and illuminate the dark universe even if we are burned into ashes!

“I believe that even in the Imperium of True Human Beings, in the cruel, dog-eat-dog worlds of Immortal Cultivators, countless people are unwilling to sink in the sh*thole! They will be awakened and want to change a different road. If they are willing to abandon their feelings and embark on the so-called Path of Ultimate Benevolence, is it really so hard to let them try the path of the Cultivators?

“I also believe that for even the people living thirty thousand meters into the ground, even though their lives are full of exploitations and sorrow, it is impossible that there is absolutely no brightness. Do you know that the kids were singing when I left the 10,084th district? They were singing!

“If the children can sing, why can’t the adults? Nobody can deprive them of their power to sing. Not the Immortal Cultivators and certainly not the Covenant Alliance! I will do my best to defend their songs!”

This time, it was Long Yangjun who bit her lips and fell silent.

“There’s also you. Why do you have to be so snarky as if you have seen through humanity and the universe which disappoint you greatly?”

Li Yao extended his hand at Long Yangjun and said sincerely, “Come with me, and let’s see if we can change the world together. It’s going to be fun!”

Long Yangjun trembled, not sure if she should be shocked. She eyed Li Yao as if he were an idiot while she remarked, “Seriously? I just complimented your smartness, and you are turning into a silly person again? Knowing clearly that I am a malicious villain full of schemes who may trick you anytime, you are still persuading me? Why? Do you really think I’m your ‘best friend’?”

“It has nothing to do with that.”

Li Yao said, “In fact, I’ve tried to persuade each and every one of you. Xiao Xuance, Bai Xinghe, Jin Tuyi, Lu Zui, Zhou Zhengdao, Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan… Every one of you is a hundred times more capable, ambitious, and wiser than me! If you are all willing to embark on the path of the Cultivators and help your own kind in the correct ways, the whole universe will certainly be brighter! Some of those people have indeed been convinced by me and become my friends. So, I’m certainly reluctant to fight you!”

“Stop flattering yourself. Do you really think Bai Xinghe and Jin Tuyi were convinced by you?”

Long Yangjun spat on the ground. “They were obviously taking advantage of you to achieve their own purposes, alright? Who do you think is as idiotic as you? Despite your high Cultivation, you are as simple and childish as a high school student. ‘Illuminate the whole universe’? Come on, man, this is not a movie set. Do you have any idea that it was something even the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan were incapable of? None of the prehistoric civilizations in the trillions of years before the Pangu Clan and Nuwa Clan were able to do that either, and you want the civilization of mankind to accomplish it? The odds are little to none!”

“Little to none is still not none, right?”

Li Yao said, “The odds to win the top prize of a lottery border on zero too, but doesn’t a lucky dog win it every single time?

Why can’t the civilization of mankind be the lucky dog who hits the jackpot?

“Do you know what is the key to winning a lottery prize? The key is that you have to buy a lottery first! If you don’t buy it at all, doesn’t it mean that you’ve abandoned your chances?

“If you think about it in perspective, it’s true that the Pangu civilizations, the Nuwa civilizations, and the thousands of prehistoric, advanced civilizations before them all failed to achieve it, but what does it mean? It means that nobody has ever won the lottery yet, and the money in the prize pool must be astronomical now. Then, if the civilization of mankind can win the lottery, it will certainly be a great windfall!”

Rendered speechless, Long Yangjun was stunned for a long time before she covered her forehead and said, “Idiot. It suddenly occurs to me that I’m talking to a wall. I’m so tired.”

“Those who are ignorant, are fearless.”

Li Yao said, “Of course, I am not as smart as you, Xiao Xuance, Lu Zui, Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan, or Blackstar the Great. So, it always puzzles me what exactly you are scared of. Even if the universe is truly so cold and humanity is really so dark, why can’t you just fight it valiantly, when you will die eventually either way? What’s the big deal?”

“Forget it…”

Long Yangjun waved her hands and said in exhaustion, “I don’t want to debate with you on the useless philosophies anymore because it occurs to me that you’re about to drag me to your level and defeat me with your abundant experience in stupidity.

“It won’t help anything no matter what fancy speeches you may give. Let’s just see how you are going to fix the problem of Nepenthe. Three days. Nepenthe is going to attack the Great Iron Plants in three days. Will you stop them?”

“Great Iron Plants?”

Li Yao blinked. “What is that?”

Long Yangjun told Li Yao that “Great Iron Plants” was an area with different plants inside the rocks several thousand meters above the 10,084th district. Quite a few geothermal factories, heavy component manufacturers, and mines of rare metals had been deployed in the area.

The rare metals collected from the mines, after being refined with the infinite geothermal energy, were delivered to the assembly lines for fashioning before they were shipped to the surface of the planet. Such a practice was more cost-effective, and the heavy pollution would be kept tens of thousands of meters below the surface of the planet without affecting the fresh air and the clean water on the ground.

“Great Iron Plants” was the underground residents’ nickname for the place. It was also the center of the hundreds of towns nearby. Almost all the locals worked for the Great Iron Plants or were engaged in the indirect service for the Great Iron Plants on the upstream or downstream chains of the factories in the place.

The official name of “Great Iron Plants” was “Black Iron Group”, whose CEO was named “Li Minghui”. He was a typical man who only cared about his own interests.

His surname was not “Li” in the beginning but “Hei”. He used to be a destitute, bottom-level Immortal Cultivator who was not appreciated on the surface of the planet. It was also said that he once tricked certain major sects for their resources. In his desperation, he had to flee to the underground worlds to make a living.

But the man was best at flattery and bribery. He somehow made acquaintance with a big shot of the Dongfang family, whom he respected as a foster father. He even changed his family name from “Hei” to “Dongfang”, thereby becoming “Dongfang Minghui”.

With the Dongfang family, one of the four Kurfürst families, as his reliance, Dongfang Minghui naturally thrived in the underground worlds. It did not take long before he seized a mine of rare minerals. In the following decades, he acquired and expanded his corporation blatantly through all kinds of shameless approaches, building it into the Black Iron Group that was a minor celebrity in all the underground worlds today.

The most awesome skill about the man, on the other hand, was not his cruel, cunning methods or his shameless character, but his keen senses. When he smelled that the Dongfang family was about to fall apart, he joined the Li family in advance and respected a big shot of the Li family as his foster father exactly like last time, changing his family name from “Dongfang” to “Li”. He also offered tremendous evidence about the dark history of the Dongfang family, which he had carefully collected during the past decades, to help the Li family strike the Dongfang family. Naturally, he did not forget to bribe his new “foster father” with a fortune so that he would not be badmouthed.

Therefore, regardless of the changes in politics on the surface of the planet, the man had been enjoying his life below the ground for decades. He was almost a local dominator of the thousand square kilometers around!

Chapter 2367 - Super Brainwave Magnifier!

Chapter 2367 Super Brainwave Magnifier!

“Li Minghui has been seeking ‘fathers’ everywhere. His ‘fathers’ were certainly not idiots. Why would they admit him as their foster son without a good reason?”

Long Yangjun explained, “The only reason is that the man offers them a fortune every year and helps the Immortal Cultivators on the surface of the planet to earn the interests from below the ground.

“Li Minghui claimed to be able to turn granites into oil. He is almost the most brutal and harsh one of all the Immortal Cultivators below the ground. The death rate in the mines and factories affiliated to the ‘Black Iron Group’ is thirty percent higher than other underground mines and factories. It must be noted that the hominoid workers and miners are already treated very harshly in other places, but his treatment is thirty percent even more brutal. You can totally imagine how atrocious it is!

“After he gradually extended the tentacles of the ‘Black Iron Group’ to hundreds of underground towns ten thousand meters above and below under the support of the Dongfang family, he completely controlled the dark lands. The workers have to be exploited in his factories during the day and buy synthetic food and compressed air provided by his corporation at a high price at night. The price is at least fifty percent higher than in other towns, but the quality is lower. However, he has monopolized the business, and the workers do not have a second option at all. Whoever dares to ‘smuggle’ the synthetic food and the compressed air from other providers will be beaten to death alive and thrown into the geothermal furnaces, to be burned into nothingness!

“Only in such a way of exploiting every rock and every hominoid below the ground can the guy accumulate a large sum of money and offer it to the big shots of the Dongfang family so that he can keep his surname of ‘Dongfang’. It should come as no surprise that there was almost an outburst of devils in his territory.”

Long Yangjun told Li Yao that the hominoids under the control of the Black Iron Group had already been living in misery decades previously.

In the recent half a year, quite a few tectonic levels in the area had earthquakes of very high intensities, collapsing dozens of mines and destroying quite a few energy factories. As a result, the Black Iron Group’s progress in resource collection slowed down significantly. Li Minghui was infuriated and exploited his workers even more roughly.

The conflicts between the reformists and the four Kurfürst families dealt another heavy blow on Li Minghui.

It was true that his senses were keen enough for him to flee and change his side before the collapse of the Dongfang family. However, it took loads of money for him to change his name from “Dongfang” to “Li”. Otherwise, why would his new fathers want to keep him like a dog?

It was said that he spent half of his belongings on the purchases of a myriad of Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures and rarely-seen primeval artifacts before he finally made his way through in the Li family and got accepted by a rather powerful new father. He promised his new father that if the Black Iron Group were to operate under his supervision just like before, there would be more resources and profits in the next couple of years.

Considering Li Minghui’s greediness, the loss of half of his belongings was like cutting his heart, plucking his veins, and pumping all his blood.

Such a heavy loss could only be made up for by even more severe exploitation on the underground hominoids.

Therefore, in the last few months, Li Minghui had essentially turned into a rabid dog. In the towns and factories controlled by the Black Iron Group, the quota of productivity had been doubled. All the hominoids were overworking day and night. The odds of accidents and deaths had been increased by half. The hominoids were either killed in exhaustion or died without a full body in accidents.

On the other hand, Nepenthe had hit the bottleneck after it developed and expanded in the darkness, and it would certainly be discovered by the Black Iron Group if it were to further develop.

Instead of waiting to be killed, they might as well attack actively even if it meant death, which would significantly be better than being killed in a mine collapse or an explosion of the energy factory!

“This is about the background of the upcoming riot, which really has nothing to do with me.”

Long Yangjun said with a bitter smile, “Except for teaching the hominoids ‘Serenity Arts’ and the methods of telepathy at the beginning, I never interfered with the specific operations of Nepenthe. After I became the president of the Association of Demon Hunters as ‘Dongfang Mingyue’, I had even fewer reasons to stay in touch with the Nepenthe believers who were destined to be annihilated. So, I volunteered to keep a distance from them.

“I really did not know that they were planning such a huge event in the underground world. Otherwise, I wouldn’t choose to come back here even though I was fleeing.

“It’s been more than ten days. Considering Blackstar the Great’s methods and Li Linghai’s position among the reformists, they must’ve controlled the surface of the capital planet or even the entire Empyreal Terminus Sector. After the Nepenthe believers’ fuss below the ground, Blackstar the Great will certainly notice it, which means that we will have to run to somewhere else!”

Frowning, Li Yao asked, “Since you are the prestigious ‘Serenity Seraph’, can you not convince the Nepenthe believers not to do anything rashly?”

Long Yangjun shook her head. “As I said, I never meddle in the specific affairs of Nepenthe. All the planning and operations are commanded by the ‘Grand Guardian’ of Nepenthe. The Grand Guardian has a high position and prestige among the believers. He is as respected as me!

“After all, I was away for years. Although I taught them certain techniques in the beginning, the Grand Guardian was the one who expanded Nepenthe by ten times through hard work.

“Besides, faced with the cruel oppression of the Black Iron Group, where countless hominoids would die in the factories and mines miserably on a daily basis, do I have any reason to stop the resistance of the Nepenthe believers?”

Li Yao said solemnly, “But they stand no chance at all. It will only be suicide.”

Long Yangjun chuckled and sighed. “Li Yao, don’t you understand? In the rebellion of the White Lotus Cult and the riot of the Heaven Battering Army in the Ancient Sages Sector, the resistance of Starlight in the Imperium of True Human Beings, or the upcoming uprising of Nepenthe, does anybody really care if they stand any chance? Even a dog will bark and bite before it is butchered. Humans must not be more docile than dogs, right?”

Li Yao clenched his fists. With fury beaming out of his eyes, he chewed on the names. “Black Iron Group… Li Minghui… Then, what exactly is the purpose of Nepenthe’s uprising? Kill Li Minghui?”

“Killing Li Minghui is naturally part of the purpose, but more importantly, it’s about occupying a central geothermal factory of the Black Iron Group.”

Long Yangjun said, “Nepenthe has excavated an ancient treasure from a primeval relic, which can significantly enhance brainwaves, magnifying them countless times so that they can penetrate through the rocks and spread far away.

“If all the Nepenthe believers entered the state of telepathy, allowing their brainwaves to resonate with each other, and spread the brainwaves out via the ‘super brainwave magnifier’, it will be possible for them to influence the residents of the thousands of towns around. Everybody will forget their pain, anxiety, and worries and appreciate the eternal tranquility when their feelings are gone. Then, the scale of Nepenthe will be expanded by a hundred times immediately.

“Hehe. In such a way, whatever happens to them in the end, they will have made it huge. Everybody living on the capital planet and even in the entire Imperium will know their ideas. That’s exactly what the Grand Guardian and all the Nepenthe believers are planning.

“However, the super brainwave magnifier requires astronomical energy and can only be supported by the largest geothermal factory of the Black Iron Group. Therefore, they have to occupy the ‘Great Iron Plants’ first.”

“What?!”

Li Yao’s pupils constricted violently. “Are you suggesting that they are trying to create a hundred times more Nepenthe believers overnight?”

“Yes. Let me repeat, it has nothing to do with me.”

Long Yangjun frowned so hard that her eyebrows had joined her nose as she said, upset, “What can I do when they are planning something so huge?”

Li Yao narrowed his eyes. “You’re worried that you will be affected by the incident, but you do not want to take care of it in person, so you are simply kicking it to me?”

“Please don’t put it like that. As I told you at the beginning, I will certainly not keep anything away from you.”

Long Yangjun’s distress turned into a smile. “If I had not told you this great ‘scheme’, would I be any different from Xiao Xuance, Lu Zui, Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan, and all the other supervillains? Besides, I’m really curious about what you are going to do. Destroying the ‘super brainwave magnifier’ and even killing the Grand Guardian as well as the central leadership of Nepenthe is naturally very easy, but are you really going to do that? If you really destroy and kill them, then what?”

Li Yao considered in silence for half a minute before he said, “What about the Black Iron Group? Which level is Li Minghui at?”

“Ha. I knew that you would want to play a hero again. But not this time. Your body can’t take it.”

Long Yangjun said, “Having dominated the underground worlds for decades as the local tyrant of a hundred towns, Li Minghui is certainly not a random person. He is an Immortal Cultivator at the beginning level of the Nascent Soul Stage with talents in both fighting and administration. He has also recruited the most ferocious gangsters who are known as ‘Black Iron Sect’. They are the Black Iron Group’s muscles during the expansion and the competitions for territory.

“Recently, due to the changes in politics on the surface of the planet, the situation below the ground is rather tense. Li Minghui, who cherishes his life more than anything else, has introduced a ‘fully-automatic defense system’ at a great fortune, which is mostly made of five thousand most advanced battle puppets. It is estimated that they are three times stronger than Xiao Xuance’s Grand Illusionary Soldiers during the riot in the Flying Star Sector!

“If you were still in the Divinity Transformation Stage and had an intact, well-supplied Colossus, those gangsters and battle puppets certainly wouldn’t be a problem for you. But your body is now falling apart, your soul is lackluster, and your Colossus is a pile of garbage. By comprehensive evaluation, can you still carry out the strength of the Nascent Soul Stage?

“Let’s say that you can really carry out the combat ability of the Nascent Soul Stage miraculously, but your chances of winning are close to zero when you are drowned in the ocean of five thousand puppets and countless desperadoes!”

Chapter 2368 - The Grand Guardian

2368 The Grand Guardian

“What about you?”

With expectation beaming out of his eyes, Li Yao bit his lips hard. “You can take down Li Minghui, can’t you? Whatever you want me to do—”

Long Yangjun was amused. “I’m truly puzzled by your brain structure now. Why are you still ignorant of the situation? Both of us have been wounded badly, and we do not have a stable base to treat the wounds, maintain the crystal suits and the Colossi, and refill enough ammunition and fuel!

“In the meantime, the most terrible fiend in the Imperium of True Human Beings in the past thousand years are searching for us with his eyes wide open right above our heads. So much as he detects a slight trace, a handful of experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage, a dozen in the Nascent Soul Stage, and a hundred in the Core Formation Stage will be coming at us!

“We can barely keep ourselves safe right now. We are now rats on the street that everybody will stomp on, man!

“Under such circumstances, you are asking me to charge at five thousand battle puppets and at least an equal number of Immortal Cultivators and execute their leader entirely on my own? Have you overestimated my ability? Do you really think that I am a reincarnated god?

“Forgive me, but my previous self is a footman in the primeval war. Well, fine, not a footman, but a special soldier. But so what? I can be tired, I can bleed, I can be hurt, and I may die! Once my Colossus is blown up, I will have no place to repair it! The Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, the ammunition, and the fuel that I bring with me are limited and precious! If I really kill Li Minghui, only to attract Blackstar the Great’s luxury hunting team, how are we going to resist them? With your tongue?

“Besides, even if I can take down Li Minghui despite all the obstacles, then what? Can you stop Nepenthe from carrying out the massive brainwashing plan with the super brainwave magnifier? Don’t look at me. As the ‘Serenity Seraph’, I don’t have any justification to prevent them from doing that!”

Li Yao opened his mouth, only to be lost for words.

“Do you see?”

Long Yangjun said with a bitter smile, “You’ve realized that the trouble this time is highly unusual, haven’t you?”

“Where is the Grand Guardian?”

Li Yao gritted his teeth. “I would like to meet him.”

“You can. The Grand Guardian is in a mine affiliated to the ‘Black Iron Group’. We can go to find him together with these wildlings.”

Long Yangjun opened her hands and said, “However, he is an overzealous believer of Nepenthe who is devoted to the abandonment of feelings and the embrace of eternal tranquility. I estimate that you will never talk him out of his plan unless you chop his head off.”

“Why?”

Li Yao couldn’t help but feel curious. “Has he completely given up his feelings and become a puppet of the Path of Ultimate Benevolence?”

“More or less.”

Long Yangjun said, “The Grand Guardian was an ordinary miner in the Black Iron Group at the beginning who had two sons. His first son was a miner just like him, but his younger son had unusual gifts and an extraordinary computational ability. His younger son was the hope of his entire family.

“To raise his younger son, the Grand Guardian and his first son worked hard in the mines without any reserve. They were the most distinguished workers in the hundreds of mines affiliated to the Black Iron Group every year and even won dozens of competitions against the most advanced mining puppets. They were known by their coworkers as ‘iron men’.

“However, when his first son just turned twenty, the two of them worked too hard for a bonus to notice the upcoming danger, and they did not have time to run away when the tunnel collapsed. Although the Grand Guardian survived the accident, his first son was smashed into pieces.”

Hooked, Li Yao couldn’t help but ask, “What happened later?”

“Because the Grand Guardian and his son were the most excellent workers in the Black Iron Group, in order to set an example for other miners, even someone as petty and brutal as Li Minghui had to offer consolations and gave the Grand Guardian an impressive compensation."

Long Yangjun said, "Later, the Grand Guardian's younger son went to an upper town with the compensation and got admitted into a legitimate school. After he graduated, he began to work in the offices of the Black Iron Group as a person who made a living using his brain and not with his hands like his father and his brother.

"Later, when the younger son was coping with the version iteration of the bugs of the automatic mining system, he worked too hard before the deadline and injected excessive 'brain exciters'. All of a sudden, his cerebral vessels exploded, and he died abruptly."

Li Yao was lost for words for a moment. Thinking for a moment, he asked again, "Well, what about his wife? The Grand Guardian certainly has a wife, right?"

"He did at the beginning, but she passed away when the two sons were very young due to the failure of organs caused by a malignant tumor."

Long Yangjun said, "The Grand Guardian's wife used to work in a purification factory of the Black Iron Group, where a lethal gas would be gradually released during the refinement of a rare metal. If the protection measures were not in place, it was possible that a lot of diseases would be triggered. Many workers died exactly the same way as the Grand Guardian's wife.

"After his wife died, the Grand Guardian had considered his two sons everything in his life. He raised them up through all the trouble both as a father and as a mother. Little did he expect that they would end like this."

Li Yao couldn’t hold it anymore. He slapped his thigh and exclaimed, “What a miserable man!”

“Is it strange?”

Long Yangjun said casually, “Haven’t the textbooks of the Star Glory Federation been saying that the ordinary people are living in sufferings because of the Immortal Cultivators’ tranny? The weightless summary in the books has countless bloody examples in reality! There are too many people in the underground worlds who share similar experiences with the Grand Guardian. Why else do you think the Path of Ultimate Benevolence would be so popular and that so many people would offer to abandon their feelings and desires?

“So, what are you going to say after you really meet the Grand Guardian? ‘Brother, there is in fact still light in life. We should all just move on and forget the unhappy things of the past. Just boost your feelings and desires and relish the fun of life!’, something like that?”

“I—”

Li Yao clenched his hands so hard that his finger bones were cracking. He gnashed his teeth and snapped, “I’ll figure out what to do!”

“Then, I’ll be watching you settle the problem.”

Long Yangjun stared at Li Yao thoughtfully. “Or, I’ll watch you admit your mistake and concede that ‘Path of Ultimate Benevolence’ is partly reasonable and is one of the justified paths just like the path of the Cultivators and the true path of immortality!”

…

When Li Yao and Long Yangjun left the enormous excavator, he felt that the darkness around him was even more profound, hideous, and pungent.

It was like a web made of black mists that could not be torn apart, consuming countless people.

It was also like the stomach of an overwhelming beast, and humans were just the bugs inside the stomach that would be corroded and digested in no time without leaving the slightest residue.

“Brother Yao—”

Seeing that the two of them were out, Li Jialing hurried to greet Li Yao. He then bowed at Long Yangjun dutifully. “Sister Long!”

“Good boy!”

Long Yangjun said with a smile, “Your Brother Yao seems to be caught in a conundrum. You’d better not disturb him in the next few days. Why don’t you hang around with me more often? We can talk about the real path that you should follow!”

“Get away!”

Li Yao glared. “Who says that I am caught in a conundrum? I will certainly come up with a solution. So, just stay away from such an innocent young man like Li Jialing!”

While they were talking, deafening noises were suddenly echoing from the giant cave. Slightly dazed, Li Yao looked at Long Yangjun suspiciously.

“Brother Yao…”

Li Jialing looked at Long Yangjun, somewhat in fear, before he pointed at the depths of the cave and said in a low voice, “The Nepenthe believers handed over some magical equipment to the wildlings. There is no telling what they are up to!”

Li Yao frowned and glanced at Long Yangjun.

Long Yangjun sniffed and hinted at them to follow her.

The three of them went to the source of the sounds, only to discover that a dozen of Nepenthe believers were dismantling heavy boxes, which contained magical equipment, and distributing the devices to the Black Armors, the Night Wings, and the Red Rings, who were all eager to try.

Most of the magical equipment was in gray and brown, like enormous pebbles.

What was weird was that when part of the magical equipment was given to the wildlings, and the wildlings bit their own fingers and smeared their blood on it, the gears were all emanating a golden brilliance, and the shell in the texture of rocks fell apart, revealing the real body that was full of futuristic feelings. They turned out to be streamlined, uniquely-designed, and powerful-looking weapons.

The tests proved the power of the weapons.

After the weapons were unfolded through the complicated mechanical structure, they were attached to the arms of the wildlings like knuckles and blades. As the wildlings waved their arms, dazzling brilliance was dashing out and smashing the giant stalagmites hundreds of meters away in thunderous noises that echoed in the cave for a long time.

“Very powerful!”

Excitement beamed out of Li Yao’s eyes. As a refiner, he was most sensitive about magical equipment. He could tell after the first look that not only was the magical equipment powerful, but it also had little recoil. In the meantime, it boasted certain auto-navigation and auto-attack techniques, which made it most suitable for ordinary soldiers and low-level trainers.

But wasn’t it a waste to equip the unintelligent wildlings with such awesome magical equipment?

Li Yao looked at Long Yangjun suspiciously.

Long Yangjun smiled and explained, “After I left, the Nepenthe believers further excavated a lot of relics and battlegrounds from tens of thousands of years ago, and they did find a lot of ancient magical equipment.

“However, most of the magical equipment in the activation state had been too rusted to be used again.

“The magical equipment in the hibernation state was mostly intact, but they could only be activated and used after blood recognition.

“As an insider, you naturally know that blood recognition is just ‘gene tests’. If the magical equipment was produced by the demon dynasties more than ten thousand years ago, only the genes of demons and their descendants could activate the weapons. If they were produced in the Star Ocean Imperium, it would be very likely that only the soldiers of the Star Ocean Imperium and their descendants could open them.

“In the worlds up above, the bloodlines have been through too many dilutions and mutations due to the intermarriages. Isn’t it a shame that the magical equipment cannot be activated because the gene tests cannot be passed?

“The wildlings living below the ground, on the other hand, had few contacts with the outside world. Their bloodlines are pure, and they retain the genetic features from ten thousand years ago. Therefore, their blood can often activate the magical equipment that others can’t.”

Chapter 2369 - Bing Bing’s Questions

2369 Bing Bing’s Questions

Li Yao was greatly enlightened. He had been wondering if the underground wildlings were the best warriors because, despite their tough nature, they were unintelligent after all.

Now that Nepenthe was thriving, they did not appear to be in need of the help of a few wildlings. Why would they send a few people to gather wildlings at such a critical moment?

So, the purpose was to unlock the weapons that had hibernated for ten thousand years with the blood, or in other words, the pure genes, of the wildlings. That made much more sense!

As the powerful magical equipment unleashed a dazzling light, blowing countless stalagmites and stalactites into pieces, the whole cave was mired in a bright, aggressive mist.

The wildlings popped up in the darkness, staring at the marvelous weapon in shock and thirst. For the wildlings who had lost most of their sanity and only kept the instincts of killing, those marvelous weapons were obviously more attractive than anything else in the world!

What was weird was that, despite the eagerness in their hearts, neither the wildlings nor the Nepenthe believers showed much delight. They were as tranquil as the water in a well, like machines that had been inputted with the instructions to kill.

Li Yao couldn’t tell which was more terrifying, the ferocious, hideous wildlings with abundant expressions on their faces or the humans who were obedient but who were nothing but empty shells.

Countless thoughts were rolling in Li Yao’s head. He couldn’t help but recall “Fist King” Lei Zonglie, the machine expert that he encountered on the Land of Sins!

The Fist King was not a human being, but he could simulate the feelings and even the self-awareness of humans perfectly with the highly-developed databases and the optimal screening mechanisms. As a result, people tended to forget that he was not a human of flesh and blood but a machine of iron and steel.

The people before Li Yao’s eyes, on the other hand, were undoubtedly human beings, but they were doing their best to abandon their flesh and souls to become cold machines.

Machines wanted to become men, and men wanted to become machines. What exactly marked the boundary between machines and men? Men were nothing more than machines made of countless cells. Were they any different from the machines made of metals? If there were really a civilization of machines, would the civilization of mankind be different from it?

“Brother Yao…”

Li Jialing couldn’t help but approach Li Yao. Rubbing the goosebumps on his arm hard, he said in a low voice, “Those guys are so creepy. They are like the emotionless people of the Covenant Alliance. I would rather face the ferocious Immortal Cultivators than confront those cold, inhumane monsters!”

After spending a long time with Li Yao, while he never admitted it, Li Jialing considered him less and less an Immortal Cultivator, or at least not a pure Immortal Cultivator.

Li Yao was silent.

Before he had the heartfelt communication with Long Yangjun, he had nothing but 100% disgust and wariness toward the guys who were emotionless and as cold as machines.

But right now…

Li Yao sighed and said in a low voice, “How could there be the emotionless Covenant Alliance if there weren’t the ferocious Immortal Cultivators?”

“What?”

Li Jialing was rather surprised. “Brother Yao, what did you say?”

“Nothing.”

Li Yao clenched his fists, and his face became colder than ever. But two stubborn fires were ignited inside his eyes, as if he were going to blow up the ice that sealed the souls of the wildlings and the Nepenthe believers with the sparks.

Staring at them for a long time, he said, one word after another, “Let’s go back above and see what changes we can bring to this absurd world!”

…

When Li Yao, Li Jialing, Long Yangjun, and the Nepenthe believers returned with the huge group of wildlings who had “found peace”, the 10,084th district looked entirely different from when they left. Every sign suggested that a war was coming.

The 10,084th district was one of the towns where Nepenthe was promoted best. More than half of the residents were Nepenthe believers. The remainder of them were also sympathizers and supporters of Nepenthe.

This time, Nepenthe had decided to overthrow the Black Iron Group’s reign in the local area in a riot. Naturally, everybody of the 10,084th district was mobilized.

By the time Li Yao and his companions returned, the whole town had been enshrouded in vague gold mist. The air was brimming with the oily, scrumptious aroma. That was the folks butchering the rock worms and roasting their meat as food.

As for the Red Lizards, they could not bear to butcher them anymore because the Red Lizards were the best “horses” that could arm the folks into “underground cavalry” that could move freely in the tunnels.

From the hollow stone columns, countless young people walked out in lines and sat cross-legged like cold statues. Staring at the dim and illusionary light above their heads, they chanted spells in solemnity and entered the state of telepathy. There was no telling whether it was just their daily brainwashing or a prewar mobilizing speech.

The prewar mobilizing speeches were supposed to be the most exciting, blood-boiling moment, but the only things that covered the town from inside to outside were gloom and lifelessness, giving Li Yao an illusion that it was just the activation of countless battle puppets in his trance.

Even the children were too scared by the heavy and dull atmosphere to laugh and sing anymore. There was no telling where they were hiding.

Li Yao couldn’t help but feel that his heart was heavy.

He wanted to help the people who had completely lost hope and therefore did not trust the world or themselves at all, but he did not know where he should get started from.

It was like being locked in an impenetrable iron room that did not have any windows or doors, and furious flames were burning outside of the iron room. There was barely any chance to break the cage at all.

Perhaps Long Yangjun was right. The battles after he came to the center of the cosmos were entirely from those at the edge of the cosmos.

This time, it was not a specific enemy that he was dealing with. It was not the four Kurfürsten, not Dongfang Wang, not Lei Chenghu, not Long Yangjun, not Li Linghai, and not even Blackstar the Great, but the twisted, topsy-turvy, and ludicrous world!

Could he win this time?

Or rather, could he luckily win the help of the majority again?

While he was very resolute when he talked to Li Jialing, Li Yao was somewhat confused when he was by himself after he returned to the stone column where he was resting.

“Honorable guest, please have dinner.”

Right when Li Yao was upset and at a loss about what to do, the door was knocked again.

The girl who brought food to them earlier came again. She still appeared cold, taciturn, and rejective. Bowing at Li Yao courteously first, she then put a tray of food before Li Yao, like a precisely-devised machine.

However, compared to yesterday, the frost on her eyes was slightly loosened.

Perhaps she had sensed Li Yao’s difference when he went through all the trouble to repair the air circulation system.

His mind occupied, Li Yao did not pay much attention to the girl’s minor change. He simply said thanks and kept planning what he was going to do next.

But out of his expectation, the girl did not leave but stood before him in silence.

“Anything wrong?”

Li Yao raised his head and looked at the girl in curiosity, only to discover a hesitant face covered in the broad hood. She appeared to be much more emotional than the cold machines.

It appeared that the girl had only joined Nepenthe recently and her abilities to express feelings hadn’t been washed yet. Slightly relieved, Li Yao said with a smile, “Don’t be scared. Just speak if there’s anything you want to say. Do you have any magical equipment that needs maintenance? Or maybe you want to learn how to repair the air circulation system? That’s not a problem.”

“Not exactly.”

After a long hesitation, the girl still took off her hood and her mask of coldness. Widening her black and bright eyes, she summoned her courage and asked, “I only mean to ask… Does the honorable guest come from the surface of the planet far, far from here?”

Li Yao smiled. “That’s right. It’s true that I come from the ground. To be more exact, I’m from the sky that is even higher than the ground. My name is Li Yao. What’s yours?”

He was supposed to give a fake name.

But for some reason, he did not want to carry too many disguises when faced with the girl who had volunteered to take off the cold mask. So, he might as well give his true name. Even if Blackstar the Great might find him, so what? He would certainly drag Wuying Qi to die together with him if he must!

“My name is Bing Bing,” said the girl[1].

The underground world was often insufferably hot. The temperature could easily go beyond fifty degrees. The ice blocks made of cooling rune arrays were almost necessities for survival. Therefore, the names of a lot of locals had “Bing” in it. In many underground dialects, “Bing” also meant peace and auspiciousness. “Bing Bing” was a rather common name here.

Bing Bing introduced herself rather ill at ease and secretly observed Li Yao. Seeing that the big shot from the ground did not grow angry but hinted her to keep talking with a smile, she grabbed a corner of her clothes and said, “If you come from the ground, you must’ve seen the real sun, haven’t you? They say that the sun is more dazzling than ten thousand Fire Flowers combined. Is it true? I can’t imagine what the sun is like at all.”

“Of course it is true.”

Li Yao couldn’t help but smile. “It’s more than ten thousand Fire Flowers. When the sunlight is at its brightest, it is more brilliant than a million Fire Flowers that are blooming at the same time. I can’t describe how spectacular it is, but I’m sure that you will have a chance to see the sun, the blue sky, the white clouds, and the billions of stars with your own eyes on the ground!”

“Okay…”

Bing Bing bit her lips and bowed at Li Yao deeply. “Thank you, honorable guest.”

Although she said thanks, she did not move but appeared even more hesitant, as if she was wondering if she should continue asking.

“No.”

Li Yao was too smart to be fooled even by Xiao Xuance, Bai Xinghe, or Lu Zui. Naturally, a little girl’s thoughts could not escape his attention. “Bing Bing, what you really want to ask is not the sun but something else, right? If so, just ask me. Brother Li Yao will certainly tell you the answer if I know it."

"Thank you, honor… Brother Li Yao."

Encouraged by Li Yao, Bing Bing grew braver. Worries finally surfaced on her face, and she raised the questions that had been haunting her for a long time. "Nepenthe is about to fight a war up above. I was told that it will be a real war, nothing like the defenses against the wildlings. My father and my mother will go to the frontline too. Brother Yao, since you are from the ground, you must've been through real wars, right? What are they like exactly? Will we win? Will… anything happen to my father and my mother?"

[1] Note: Bing Bing means "ice ice". She is not the player of the former Wings, though xD

Chapter 2370 - Flowery Bugs, Sweet Stones, and Ocarinas

2370 Flowery Bugs, Sweet Stones, and Ocarinas

Li Yao was slightly stunned by her questions. He observed the girl named “Bing Bing” carefully.

The girl was around fifteen years old, an age between a child and an adult. Although there was the indifference of abstention from feelings on her face, it looked nothing more than a thin layer of ice.

Below the cracking ice, however, were her real feelings that were flowing out.

Something in Li Yao’s heart was triggered. He asked in a soft voice, “Bing Bing, do you not want your parents to fight the war?”

“... I don’t know.”

With intense confusion beaming out of her eyes, Bing Bing hesitated for a moment. “Our town fought wildlings and other towns before. That was only hundreds of people fighting at most, but too many people already died. I’ve seen some of the dead bodies. Their faces were all bleeding, their guts were running out, and their limbs were all squeezed. That was horrible.

“I’m told that hundreds of hundreds of people are going to fight a war this time. I can’t imagine what it will be like at all. I-I’m scared that my parents will be reduced to such conditions and never come back again.”

Li Yao thought for a moment and asked, “Have you told your parents what you think? Why do they have to participate in the war?”

“Yes, I have.”

Bing Bing nodded her head hard and said, “But they said that they had to join the war because the Serenity Seraph and the Grand Guardian both told them that as humans, we should not live in fear and indignity below the ground for our entire life.

“We are supposed to live under the real sun and the blue sky. At the very least, we should go to the ground and see what the sun looks like for once in our lives.

“In order to watch the sun on the ground, we have to fight a war and blow away the crust tens of thousands of meters thick that blocks our way!

“I don’t really understand what my parents said. The Fire Flowers are already very beautiful. Is the sun really so spectacular that we need to watch it at the cost of so many lives? I told my parents that I was scared and asked them not to go, but they said that as long as I recite the ‘Serenity Arts’ more often with full attention, I would soon be scared of nothing.”

Li Yao thought of something. Looking at the sorrow on the girl’s face that was getting more and more intense, he asked, “But you did not recite the Serenity Arts well, did you?”

Embarrassment immediately beamed out of Bing Bing’s face. She hesitated and said, “I… I did recite the Serenity Arts well. Every day when the adults practiced it, my partners and I always read it together. But for some reason, I never fully understood it. I couldn’t focus my attention and be completely devoted to it. Maybe… Maybe it’s because I didn’t know if I should turn into what my parents looked like.”

Li Yao frowned. “You don’t like what your parents look like right now?”

“I-I don’t know.”

Bing Bing hesitated for a moment but slightly shook her head. “My parents are indeed a bit weird right now. They are either pacing back and forth without saying a word every day, or sitting cross-legged chanting the Serenity Arts, or staring at the light above their heads next to a road in a trance like stalactites. Even when they talk to me, there is little warmth in them. It feels completely different from the past.

“But… But I don’t like what they looked like in the past either.

“In the past, they were sighing and complaining all the time. Not only did they often fight, but they also often lashed out at me or even abused me.

“But I never blamed them, because I had already grown up and knew how troublesome and painful their work was. They had so many things they needed to take care of and so many problems that they could not fix. Sometimes, when I was half asleep, I could still hear my mother crying in a low voice.

“At the very least, after practicing the Serenity Arts, my father and my mother stopped fighting, sighing, or sobbing in secret. Also, there is now a light in their eyes. When they chant the Serenity Arts together with everybody else, they have a new vigor that I can’t tell exactly.

“So, I think the life right now is perhaps the best for them. I just don’t know if I should forget both the unhappy things and the happy things like them.”

Attracted, Li Yao couldn’t help but squat down to be on the same height as the girl. “Do you have any happy experiences in such a place? Would you like to share them with me?”

“Of course I do!”

Bing Bing put on a sincere smile. Perhaps it was because she hadn’t smiled for a long time, her smile was like a blossoming bud. “Did you know, Brother Li Yao? Deep inside a crevice two kilometers from the town, there grows a kind of purple Fire Flower. A very, very small bug, even smaller than ants, lives inside its pistils. We all call it ‘Flowery Bugs’.

“The Flowery Bugs do not have any color, but as long as you shake them hard, they will vibrate their wings and unleash colorful brilliance. It is very beautiful.

“In the past, before Nepenthe came, my partners and I liked catching the Flowery Bugs best. We would catch a lot of Flowery Bugs, hold them in our hands, and shake them hard. Then, we would blow at them. Wow, when hundreds of

Flowery Bugs were blown out by us, they would be like fireworks.

“We often competed with each other about whose fireworks were most splendid. The way you shook them and the force to blow at them both mattered. I always blew the biggest and most beautiful fireworks!

“I remember the time when we found the deepest, darkest, and most spacious cave to blow the Fire Flowers. When my partners and I blew the Flowery Bugs at the wall, the whole cave was illuminated by us. It was the most glamorous thing that I’d ever seen. We were so enthralled that we forgot about the time until the adults came to find us. Naturally, we were all punished after we were back, and we were all grounded the next day. None of us could leave the town for a long time. Haha!”

The more she talked, the more excited she became. Her face was blushing, and there was not the slightest coldness on it anymore. She was just an innocent and cute girl like any other girls of her age!

“Also, do you know that the stalactites have different flavors? There is an icy, moist, and cool stalactite that we call ‘Sweet Stones’. In the hottest season, we all like to go to sleep while hugging the ‘Sweet Stones’. That is the most comfortable thing!”

After Bing Bing began to talk, there seemed to be no stopping her. With brilliance beaming out of her eyes, she went on, “Also, stones with a lot of holes can be found from a lot of relics. When you blow at them, you will make very pleasant sounds. If you block different holes, the pitches of the sounds will change too. We call such stones ‘ocarinas’. When dozens of ocarinas are blown at the same time and a handful of Flowery Bugs are released, we will just listen and watch while we are lying on the ‘Sweet Stones’. That is the happiest thing for me!”

Li Yao seemed to be truly seeing the beautiful picture in the endless darkness and hearing the giggles of the children mixed in the wonderful sounds of the “ocarina”. He couldn’t help but feel caught in a trance.

Bing Bing pursed her lips and said in a low voice, “My best friend’s name is also Bing Bing. Everybody calls her ‘Big Bing Bing’ and me ‘Little Bing Bing’. I am best at releasing the Flowery Bugs, and Big Bing Bing was best at playing the ocarina. She could play hundreds of melodies that were from a long, long time ago. Everybody liked to listen to her playing. Even the Flowery Bugs that I released liked it. We would cooperate every time. When she played the ocarina, the Flowery Bugs that I blew out would be dancing. It was really beautiful!

“But her father was eaten by a demon beast while scavenging in the relics. She has been practicing the Serenity Arts carefully with her mother since then. She doesn’t go out with us again or play the ‘ocarina’. I went to visit her once and asked her to go out with us, but she said that she had forgotten all the tunes.

“I was very sad. I did not want to be like Big Bing Bing. I did not want to forget how to release the Flowery Bugs ever… Every time, when everybody in the town gathered together to practice the Serenity Arts, my head was full of Flowery Bugs, ocarinas, and the stalactites of different flavors that we licked in the past. That is probably the reason why my partners have all picked up the Serenity Arts but I never got the hang of it, right?”

Li Yao was silent. Looking at the girl's gray cape, he asked, "Why have you joined Nepenthe when you do not want to practice the Serenity Arts? Did someone force you?"

"Force me? No!"

Bing Bing bulged her eyes and said, "It's because the people of Nepenthe are all good guys and the only ones who give us a hand from upper areas.

"Our town is so poor and remote that nobody had ever come down to help us whatever disaster we encountered in the past. I was told that the guys who occasionally descended from the upper areas were very mean and that whoever ran into them would not end very well!

"Only the people of Nepenthe have helped us sincerely. In our most troubled times, it was they who brought crystals, fuel, and compressed air from the upper worlds and helped us survive the difficulties. They are not as arrogant and brutal as other people from up above at all. They say that we are all equal brothers and sisters. They eat and live with us, telling us a lot of things about the upper worlds. They also help us to dig tunnels, tighten the wall, maintain the magical equipment, and resist the demon beasts and the wildlings. Many believers of Nepenthe whom we did not know have sacrificed for our town. They are buried around our town and continue to protect us!

"Since Nepenthe is so nice to us, isn't it only reasonable for us to join Nepenthe? Besides, although they are incapable of playing the ocarina or flying the Flower Bugs anymore after practicing the Serenity Arts, it's true that they are free from troubles and pains too. Besides, when they chant 'Serenity Arts' together, there will be… some kind of reverberation that will make them smarter and stronger!

“Brother Yao, are you not an honorable guest brought by the Serenity Seraph? How can you not know this? Are you not the Grand Guardian of Nepenthe?”

Chapter 2371 - Fight for the Melody!

2371 Fight for the Melody!

Faced with the girl’s clear eyes and her matter-of-fact arguments, Li Yao almost felt ashamed of himself. After a long bewilderment, he finally shook his head and said softly, “No, I am not the Grand Guardian of Nepenthe. I am a… Cultivator!”

“A Cultivator?”

Bing Bing blinked her eyes for a long time and asked, “What is that?”

Li Yao could come up with two hundred definitions of Cultivator any minute, but he suddenly felt his mouth was too dry for him to say a word under the girl’s eyes that were as clear as water. Thinking for a long time, he struggled to say, “Bing Bing, listen to me. I don’t know if it has ever occurred to you, but the world is not supposed to be like this, and your life is not supposed to be like this.

“This world is not supposed to be dark and violent as when it is reigned by the Immortal Cultivators, and it is absolutely not supposed to be a cold, emotionless one where everybody loses the abilities to sing and smile!

“The world can and should be something else. It should be a place where the strong protect the weak, the weak support the strong, and everybody works together to resist all the problems that occur during the development of the civilization. They will tramp on all the obstacles and leave our most brilliant mark in the dark and cold universe while releasing as much heat and light as possible!

“In such a world, a girl like you should not be wearing a gray cape hiding in the suffocating, dull cave breeding the rock worms with your best if you do not want to be starved, never having a chance to see the real sun or the billions of shining stars!

“No, it shouldn’t be like this!

“You should be living carefreely and happily under the blue sky and the white clouds, or at least in the settlements with an appropriate temperature as well as clean air, water, and food. You will receive the best education to dig out the infinite potentials of yourself and the future. In the future, you may choose to be a doctor, a teacher, a soldier, an engineer, or any profession you like freely. If you like the Flowery Bugs best, you can become an entomologist and study the Flowery Bugs for your entire life! If you want to sing, you will sing; if you want to dance, you will dance. You can squander your youth however you want to. Your parents are the same. They will not be sobbing in the middle of the night even if they are not brainwashed!”

Bing Bing listened in astonishment, full of confusion and fear. She mumbled, “How is it possible? How can there be such a world? Isn’t it a dream?”

“Yes, it is exactly a dream, one that probably will not be realized until a long, long time later!”

Li Yao pointed at himself and said, “Cultivators, on the other hand, are the people who swear to make such a dream a reality!”

Bing Bing did not entirely understand it. Observing Li Yao's face, she asked timidly, "So, Brother Li Yao is a good guy too? Are the Cultivators better than Nepenthe?"

"Totally!"

Li Yao said firmly, "A hundred times better!"

"Then why…"

Bing Bing lowered her head and said gloomily, "If the Cultivators you describe are so nice, Brother Yao, why didn't any Cultivators come to our aid in the past hundreds of years?"

Li Yao was rendered speechless for a moment. Blushing, he sighed and had to admit it frankly. "Right, your criticism is very right, Bing Bing. Cultivators have been too lame and lousy in the past thousand years, to the point that our dream is considered to be a lie and a joke because it is too distant and beautiful.

"So, it's perfectly normal that so many believers of the Path of Ultimate Benevolence have emerged below the ground!

"As a Cultivator who has come late and has done absolutely nothing for you, I'm in no place to criticize the people who believe in the Path of Ultimate Benevolence or even to lambaste the organizers of Nepenthe and the spies of the Covenant Alliance who have snuck to the underground worlds. At the very least, they have been doing things to help the people and resisting the Immortal Cultivators in the years when there were no Cultivators.

"I-I-I just want to tell you that, for the people living in the deepest part of the planet, if you did not want to die without a sound in the oppression of the Immortal Cultivators, you could only join Nepenthe and worship the Path of Ultimate Benevolence. You didn’t have a choice.

“But right now, you have a third option, a better one. The Cultivators are back to the center of the cosmos to correct the mistakes we made a thousand years ago!

“So, trust me. Whatever happens, do not give up on the things you cherish, do not abandon the memories of catching Flower Bugs and playing the ocarina, and do not forget how to laugh and how to cry, because one day, you will see the real sun, and you will dance and sing under the blue sky! I, and all the other Cultivators just like me, will fight for the day to come!”

Li Yao’s excitement obviously intimidated the little girl.

Bing Bing was stunned for a long time. She then observed Li Yao carefully for a while. She was more or less relieved and grinned again. “Brother Yao, although what you said is rather weird, you don’t strike me as a liar.”

“Of course, I’m not a liar!” said Li Yao.

“But why? Why are you fighting for the people that you do not know?”

Bing Bing looked at Li Yao in confusion. “You are very strange, as strange as the Nepenthe believers when they just came to the underground worlds. The Nepenthe believers said that we were all the lambs of the gods. We were brothers and sisters created by the gods together, so we had to help each other. Are you helping us for the same reason?”

Li Yao shook his head. “I don’t believe in ‘lambs of the gods’. As for why I’m helping you…”

He suddenly saw a silver object on the girl’s waist, which was in the shape of a cone and looked like a conch. He thought of something and asked, “Is that ‘ocarina’? Can you play a tune for me?”

“This is Big Bing Bing’s ocarina. She offered it to me and said that she did not need it anymore.”

Bing Bing’s face dimmed. Although she did not know what Li Yao meant, she still took down the ocarina and started playing it.

Although they were thousands of meters below the ground, the sound still reminded Li Yao of the boundless universe.

Li Yao listened in silence in the next three minutes.

After the tune was finished, Bing Bing wiped her lips rather in embarrassment and said, “I hope it’s not too bad. Big Bing Bing would’ve played it much better!”

“Not at all. It’s very pleasant. It’s been a long time since I last heard such a piece of wonderful music.”

Taking a long breath, Li Yao smiled. “Then, you may think that I’m fighting for you for such a wonderful melody!”

“Huh?” Bing Bing’s eyes widened.

“You may be too young to understand this, but you can remember it deeply now. Human beings cannot live without the sun just as much as they cannot live without songs.”

Looking at the girl in the eyes, Li Yao said, “I hope that I can hear people singing whichever planet in the universe I visit. Perhaps that’s the reason for my fighting!

“As for your parents, rest assured, nothing will happen to them until I fall down. Trust me!”

Li Yao’s solemn face was like a sharp sword stabbing into Bing Bing’s chest. The girl jumped like a shocked deer.

“Thank… thank you, Brother Yao. You are a good guy, as good as the Serenity Seraph!”

Bing Bing bowed at Li Yao deeply and left, half in panic and half in confusion.

Li Yao, however, failed to calm himself down for a long time. Watching the girl’s back disappearing from the door, he suddenly thought of something and shouted, “Wait!”

Bing Bing suddenly turned around and looked at Li Yao shyly.

“Wait, wait, wait!”

Li Yao’s eyes were more and more scorching. He waved his hands at the girl and said, “Come here. Something very weird has just occurred to me. Bing Bing, you said that your partners had all memorized the Serenity Arts, and you were the only one who could not grasp it. So, you are in fact… the most impious believer of Nepenthe among your peers, aren’t you?”

Blushing, Bing Bing replied embarrassedly, “P… Probably?”

“Then, does everybody else know? I mean other people of the town and the Nepenthe believers from up above,” Li Yao asked.

“They do.”

Bing Bing said, “In the state of telepathy, the countenance and the behavior will be very usual. You can easily tell who is pious and who is not. Everybody knows that I’m very… special.”

“Then, it is quite peculiar.”

Li Yao said, “Since so many pious believers are out there, why is the most impious person selected to bring food for me? Does the Serenity Seraph not know the matter?”

“She does too!”

Bing Bing said, “The Serenity Seraph knows that I cannot memorize the Serenity Arts. But she is very nice and likes me very much. She told me that I shouldn’t force myself if I could not understand the Serenity Arts, and that it was the most important thing to be myself. Right, just like Brother Li Yao, she asked me not to give up the fun of catching the Flower Bugs and playing the ocarina.”

“What?”

Li Yao was greatly surprised. “She knows all that? So, it was her idea to send you to bring food for me?”

“Yes!”

Bing Bing nodded her head hard. “The Serenity Seraph specifically asked me to deliver food to the honorable guests. She also said that you may ask me strange questions and say things that do not make sense. She asked me not to be scared, claiming that you were in fact a good guy although you might jump up and down like a gorilla on fire when you grew excited, so all I needed to do was to answer your questions dutifully.”

“I—”

Lost for words, Li Yao waved his hands and said, “Got it. Thank you for taking care of me, Bing Bing. You can go back and take a rest!”

“Okay!”

Bing Bing turned around and left again. When she was about to exit the stone column, she suddenly turned back and said, “Brother Li Yao, the Serenity Seraph was right. You are really a good guy!”

Looking at the girl disappearing into the mist, Li Yao contemplated about Long Yangjun’s intention and suddenly smiled.

“Long Yangjun, what are you up to exactly?”

Li Yao mumbled to himself, “At first, you raised a conundrum that seemed to carry no answers, casting me into desperation in the competition of beliefs. But then, you arranged for such a seemingly nonchalant but actually cute and impious believer of Nepenthe to ignite my fighting will.

“Are you raising a question for me, or are you… interrogating yourself? Do you want me to submit to your beliefs, or do you want me to completely crush them?

“Is it possible that deep down in your heart, you also know that the Path of Ultimate Benevolence will not work out, and you still have slim expectations for the path of the Cultivators?

“Caught in confusion, dilemmas, and contradictions, you cannot find an answer, but you are too proud to ask for my help directly. So, you hope that I can find an answer for you in such a way? What an odd guy!

“If that is the case, then as your wish. I will give you an answer—the answer of the Cultivators!”

Chapter 2372 - Clean the Cultivators’ Gold Brand!

2372 Clean the Cultivators’ Gold Brand!

A day later, Li Yao, Long Yangjun, and Li Jialing, leading the brawny soldiers that had been carefully selected, climbed through the zigzagging cracks and the unknown, abandoned wells, ascending for several thousand meters on the giant excavators that were similar to the earthly dragon. Finally, they approached the altitude where the “Great Iron Plants” was at.

On their way, they passed countless desolate or dying towns.

The five thousand meters below the ground was generally a boundary. The views and the purposes of the towns up and down were entirely different.

The towns established above the five-thousand-meter line were mainly to accommodate the excessive population on the ground and to expand the living space of humans. The towns below the five-thousand-meter line, on the other hand, were almost all created because of the discovery of a certain resource.

Both the rare mother lodes and the residences from tens of thousands of years ago were enough to attract the Immortal Cultivators who came like locusts. They brought tremendous hominoid slaves to the place. Those hominoid slaves often attracted even more people to work together. It was often the case that a lively, thriving town would rise spontaneously in a very short time.

However, the good days did not last. Once the mother lodes ran dry or the treasures in the relics were all collected, it would mean the doomsday of the towns.

The Immortal Cultivators who had enjoyed enough would simply stand up and leave, but they usually would not bring the hominoid slaves who had worked hard for them, as well as the persons of the service industry who gathered for the hominoid slaves.

The fate of those people was all entwined with the mother lodes and the relics. They were barely capable of anything except for mining and working as mice in the explorations of relics. After the resources were exhausted, their outcome after they were abandoned by the Immortal Cultivators was certainly more than miserable.

Apart from the stronger ones who could risk passing the narrow, deep cracks and tunnels to try their luck in other underground towns, most of the people were destined to wait for their death in the desolation and darkness, ending even more pitifully than the residents of the 10,084th district.

Li Yao had seen too many of such towns on his way here.

The residents of a lot of towns had been entirely annihilated, leaving the fluorescent bones that were emitting gloomy light. There was also the rusted, collapsed mining magical equipment that had also lost the vigor, like the tombs of iron and skeletons.

But what was even more miserable were the towns where the residents had not entirely died but were still struggling in desperation.

On the faces that looked like walking skeletons, their eyes were full of hunger and thirst. The brilliance that they were beaming out made even Li Yao unable to look back at them.

Naturally, Nepenthe developed well in the desolate towns. Wherever they reached, as long as it was not really a place where everybody was dead, some Nepenthe believers would come to meet them, offering them clean, drinkable water and taking away the roasted meat from the 10,084th district, which was then distributed to the local residents after being pulverized and mixed into the porridge in case the residents choked on the meat.

Judging from the residents' gratitude when they gobbled the food, Li Yao estimated that they would never betray Nepenthe even if their heads were cut off. The religion certainly had the support of the people.

According to Long Yangjun, Nepenthe was not the only religion flourishing in the underground worlds. In fact, a myriad of peculiar thoughts and organizations had been developing rapidly in the remote towns in every Sector of the Imperium. Some people worshipped Nepenthe, some trusted the Covenant Alliance, some believed in the Chiyou Cult, and some even directly put their faith in the extraterrestrial devils. There was a weird approach to training named “devil dance” that was popular among them.

All in all, as long as they could temporarily forget their pain, with their wounded, broken body paralyzed for a moment, and they were given a slim chance of defeating the Immortal

Cultivators, those “humble hominoids” were willing to believe in anything from the gods to the devils.

“Let me put it this way—”

Long Yangjun summarized, “The people here believe in everything except for the true path of immortality and the highest authorities.”

Li Yao thought of something. He meant to ask Long Yangjun what about the ideas of the Cultivators.

But on second thought, he realized that Starlight had been active at the edge of the Imperium for hundreds of years, reborn after destruction dozens of times. The more it developed, the greater it became. Was it not because of the Immortal Cultivators’ cruel oppression too?

Yes. The picture where he announced the return of the Cultivators in “Manjusaka, the City in the Sky” had been spread to the entire Imperium via the Spiritual Nexus. Chances were that a lot of hominoids of the Imperium had been awakened and were training themselves and preparing for resistance with “Cultivator” as their goal.

Perhaps there were also such people who had been moved, shocked, and convinced by the ideas of the Cultivators deep inside the capital planet?

He should be more confident in the ideas of the Cultivators and stop underestimating himself. Even the Chiyou Cult and the extraterrestrial devils had their followers. Were the ideas of the Cultivators really devoid of any attraction?

There must be people who trusted the Cultivators, who looked forward to the Cultivators, and who were willing to become Cultivators whatever it might take!

In any case, the trip to the underground worlds was a great eye-opener for Li Yao, which made him realize how decayed and corrupted the foundation of the Imperium was. The Immortal Cultivators' reign over the place had actually lost effect. People would rather believe in the emotionless Path of Ultimate Benevolence or follow the extraterrestrial devils than trusting the Immortal Cultivators above their heads. How ironic and pathetic was that?

No matter how the Immortal Cultivators brainwash the people of the bottom level and promote the ideas that the "true human beings" are supreme and the "hominoids" must contribute their everything, their reign is about to fall apart!

Li Yao thought to himself, The people of the Imperium have abandoned the true path of immortality with their real actions. In the next second, it will be the Cultivators' turn to show our sincerity and win as many people as possible over from the ideas and organizations such as the Covenant Alliance, the Chiyou Cult, and the extraterrestrial devils!

Such a purpose could only be accomplished through wisdom but not by force. Even if he was not heavily wounded but at his peak state with the best gears, it would be impossible for him to simply kill the heads of the Covenant Alliance, the Chiyou Cult, and the extraterrestrial devils one after another. After all, they had the wide support of the people because they had done a lot of good things diligently or provided comfort for the people at least.

If Li Yao were to act recklessly, he would completely ruin the appeal of "Cultivators".

I have to find a way to erect the brand of the Cultivators. Right now, the bottom-level people at the center of the cosmos have had enough of the Immortal Cultivators. They are simply turning to the cults because they do not have a way out! The path of the Cultivators is a business that can be dated back to ten thousand years ago after all. The invisible assets it has are prodigious. As long as we can set up the brand again, there is no reason why we can’t win the competitions against the Covenant Alliance or the Chiyou Cult!

Li Yao scratched his chin quickly. Well… I’m best at creating brands!

After they took a brief rest in a desolate town, a lot of warriors would join Nepenthe’s army and march upward with them.

Li Yao secretly observed the army. The quality of the soldiers was out of his expectation. They were all extremely strong. It was hard to imagine that such a group of people was raised in the underground worlds where the resources were highly inadequate. Although their spiritual roots were not awakened, they all had bulging muscles and rising temples, which suggested that they were all good fighters.

Li Yao secretly compared them to the general soldiers of the Star Glory Federation, only to discover that they were not very far behind in terms of body quality.

Thinking quickly, Li Yao soon realized that it was probably a “survivorship bias”.

First of all, the refugees escaping to the underground worlds over the past tens of thousands of years were certainly the elites and experts on the ground back then. So, their bloodlines had been very powerful since the beginning.

It was exactly because of the harsh environment and the shortage of resources in the underground worlds that the people who were relatively weak were screened out in the cruel filtering in the ten thousand years, their genes eradicated in the infinite darkness.

The people whose bloodlines survived to this day were naturally the most stubborn and strong ones!

Most of the warriors in the army used to be miners and relic explorers. They were the best type of soldiers.

Miners were sturdy and highly organized. To control the complicated and precise mining magical equipment, they had to be more or less educated. At the very least, they knew the operations of a lot of magical equipment and how to maintain the simple-structured civil magical equipment. So, they could control the military magical equipment after slight training.

Also, the mine owners of the Imperium of True Human Beings, to reduce the cost and increase productivity, often insanely modified their miners, which, objectively, transformed them into monsters with infinite strength.

Think about it. If a miner’s work efficiency was higher than a spiritual puppet, he must be as good at smashing someone’s head into pieces.

In the “Heavenly Ring Sector”, one of the four new worlds of the Star Glory Federation, a great riot of the miners against the rulers had taken place before. Ding Lingdang was even the organizer of the riot who experienced it in person. Later, when she chatted with Li Yao about the details, Li Yao learned how terrifying the well-trained miners could be after they were organized.

It was needless to say the relic explorers.

Although the Immortal Cultivators were just using hominoids as mice, which they put in the unexplored relics to test the traps and the defense rune arrays, and nine out of ten “mice” were killed in accidents, those who luckily survived could become terrifying monsters after they passed the trials of the relics.

Boss Bai, the Pirate Potentate that Li Yao encountered in the Flying Star Sector, was such a relic explorer at the beginning.

There was also “Heaven Battering King Qi Changsheng”, one of the “Four Rapscallions” of the Ancient Sages Sector on par with Long Yangjun. The man and his Heaven Battering Army were grave robbers at the beginning, which was another kind of relic explorers.

While the relic explorers were far fewer than miners in number, they were the captains and lieutenants of the army. Every one of them had been lashed by the Immortal Cultivators with electromagnetic whips to explore the unknown relics and survived when too many of their companions were killed. Naturally, they were full of resentment for the Immortal Cultivators.

Such an army, after being armed by the magical equipment excavated from the warehouses, shelters, and relics, was truly not to be underestimated. Chances were that they could really achieve something great.

Chapter 2373 - Thing in the Great Iron Plants!

2373 Thing in the Great Iron Plants!

Since they had already been gathered into an army, they would certainly be discovered if they were to move together. Most of the soldiers hid in the forsaken towns and mines not far away from the “Great Iron Plants” and would turn into a surging torrent below the ground at an order.

Only Long Yangjun, Li Yao, Li Jialing, and the few experts in the army were bold enough to approach the Great Iron Plants and contact the local Nepenthe believers who were directly commanded by the Grand Guardian.

The underground worlds were essentially a giant maze made of countless caves that were connected through tunnels and gaps. Theoretically speaking, it was easier to defend than to attack. As long as an elite troop was sent to block the critical tunnel between two caves, nobody would be able to move between the two places.

However, the Great Iron Plants was a developed mining area that had been operating for a hundred years. There were simply too many complicated, interconnected holes and channels. Even the most experienced miner might not know where exactly a deep, dark branch inside a certain tunnel led to.

In the meantime, in order to transmit fresh air and clean water from the top to the bottom, and to ship the precious resources from the bottom to the top, tremendous ventilation and logistical systems were required.

In the past tens of thousands of years, the demons had built such tube systems, and so did the Star Ocean Imperium and the Star Ocean Republic. Naturally, the Imperium of True Human Beings was not an exception either.

The tube systems abandoned by the previous regimes became the best shortcuts for the secret march. It was impossible to catch them with the few Immortal Cultivators in the area.

Among the Nepenthe believers, there were old miners who had spent their entire lives with rocks. Li Yao was also an unparalleled expert when it came to traveling in ventilation tubes. They crawled from the cracks into the ventilation tubes, from the ventilation tubes to the tunnels, and from the tunnels to an abandoned cave that had been drained decades ago smoothly without meeting any trouble.

According to the regulations of the excavation industry in the Imperium of True Human Beings, caves that had been completely drained must be filled with rocks and rapidly-consolidating liquid metals to ensure the stability of the entire tectonic structure and to prevent the massive collapses and tectonic movements from affecting the worlds of Immortal Cultivators on the ground.

However, the cost to refill the rocks was very high. For the greedy, corrupted Immortal Cultivators, the regulations were nothing but nonsense. The Black Iron Group was under the name of the Dongfang family at the beginning. The capital was not the Dongfang family’s territory. Why would Li Minghui care about the regulations at all?

Therefore, the Great Iron Plants was surrounded by dark, empty caves that had been abandoned. The Nepenthe believers spent a few years digging through most of the caves before they covered the caves with disguises carefully. The rocks in the area were like a tree that had been hollowed by ants. They were full of holes inside but showed nothing outside.

Li Yao and Long Yangjun crawled out of the depths of such a cave. They had bypassed the guards of the Black Iron Group and appeared on the rocks not far away from the Great Iron Plants.

Wearing the gray cape, everybody seemed to be melted with the rocks nearby. As they observed the general picture of the Great Iron Plants from the high stance, the first thing that could be seen was naturally the well of magma at the center of the factories, which looked like an erupting volcano.

The torch that was ignited by billions of fires was burning and screaming furiously. Although they were several kilometers away, they could still sense the scorching heat. Sparks seemed to be splashing on their faces when they blinked.

According to Long Yangjun, below where the Great Iron Plants was at was a place where three mother lodes of fiery spiritual energy were gathered. They could yield the very intense and stable spiritual energy of the fire class. In the terms of the modern Cultivation civilization, there was a magma belt below the Great Iron Plants, which had a super high temperature, a super high pressure, and a very steady tectonic structure. Also, since there were a few rare mines nearby that had a high reserve and an excellent quality, a lot of purification factories were established on the spot to refine the minerals with the geothermal energy. The raw minerals would be shipped to the surface of the planet after they were refined into concentrates. In such a way, the cost would be significantly reduced.

Li Yao looked far away and did see the geothermal factory that was constructed around the well of flames, as well as the mines, purification factories, and fashioning factories that were based on the geothermal factory. There was also a factory that produced the components of magical equipment.

The refining furnaces large and small rose all the way to the dome of the space like cold giants, making the underground space that was supposed to be spacious rather suffocating.

The trickiest problem for underground refining was not the water but the discharge of poisonous wastes. Li Yao noticed that a lot of giant tubes with powerful attraction forces were distributed on the dome and the wall of the Great Iron Plants. They were pumping the black air that was so dirty that it was almost consolidating without any stop. After multiple filtering procedures, the toxins were all screened out and compressed into very small cubes, and the air that had been cleaned would be provided back.

Although the thousand most powerful air cleaning devices for industrial purposes were working at the highest efficiency, the air was still filled with all kinds of choking flavors. Even Li Yao felt slightly uncomfortable, as if somebody had stuffed two clusters of hybrids of rubber and asphalt into his nostrils. He truly wondered how the workers and their families could handle it.

“In fact, the Imperium of True Human Beings is just like the New Federation before your return. A lot of demon workers are used here. To be more exact, the ‘demonic cells’ inside the body of the bottom-level workers are activated through all kinds of drugs, giving them a myriad of uncanny ‘abilities’ that have severe side effects.”

Long Yangjun said in a low voice, “Or rather, ever since the demons’ reign collapsed ten thousand years ago, humans have never stopped enslaving demons at the center of the cosmos. Leaving aside the high-level demons, the strong and sturdy low-level demons are the best labor force. Who could’ve been determined enough to slaughter all the ‘livestock’? Wouldn’t it have been a great waste?

“Of course, to defend the dignity and pride of mankind, and for ‘humanitarianism’ reasons, the simple and crude approaches to completely transform humans into bizarre-looking demons are rare today. However, to partly modify the organs inside a human body or to let the human beings with certain demonic genes to mate according to the principle of ‘eugenics’ so that offspring with certain functions may be produced, just like how pet dogs are bred, has never stopped.

“For the workers living inside the heavily-polluted factories below the ground, their respiratory system is more like demons than like humans, which allows them to survive and work in the heavily polluted area.

“But the advantage comes with a cost. The demonic genes can only help improve their working abilities in their prime years, but they cannot stop the lethal heavy metals from accumulating inside their bodies. The final result will be a significantly reduced longevity and the possible damage to their intelligence. For the owners of the factories, that is not exactly a ‘cost’ at all. After all, they do not need the miners to live to the end of their natural lives or to have a high intelligence. It will be easier to control the workers if they are dumber.”

Li Yao was both scared and infuriated. “Those Immortal Cultivators are truly unbelievably sordid!”

“I’m afraid that you are wronging the Immortal Cultivators.”

Long Yangjun said coldly, “The Immortal Cultivators are just the successors of the practice, not the founders. Back in the Star Ocean Republic, those sanctimonious Cultivators built ‘model factories’ on the surface of the planet during the day, and such factories were beautiful and full of flowers and birds. But below the ground where the sunlight could not reach, weren’t they doing exactly the same thing? After all, since the demonic genes of those workers had been activated, they could be considered to have been corrupted by demons, or simply a part of demons.

“Demons are the greatest enemy of mankind. Then, neither the Cultivators nor the Immortal Cultivators should have any guilt when enslaving the ‘demons’, right?”

Li Yao was silent. He suddenly wanted to appreciate Jin Xinyue for what she had done in the past hundred years.

If it weren’t for her resistance with the demons, would the Star Glory Federation have kept so many cruel factories like those here today?

They were certainly not the things that should exist in Li Yao’s dream world!

Apart from the fatal gas, the deafening noises raised by the thousand air-cleaning devices when they were functioning with the full power also hovered above the Great Iron Plants incessantly like thousands of snakes that were dripping venom, finding a way into everyone’s ears.

Li Yao tried concealing his spiritual energy to the minimum and just resisting the noises with his tough body. But very soon, his mouth was dry, his heart was racing, his back was covered in sweat, and his veins were bouncing. Countless dark and bloody thoughts popped up in his heart.

“How about it?”

Long Yangjun said with a smile, “You should understand now why so many people are crying, screaming, and begging me to practice the Serenity Arts, shouldn’t you? It will certainly be worth it if the skill can do nothing other than to resist the ceaseless noises!”

Narrowing his eyes, Li Yao observed the air cleaning magical equipment above his head that was running stridently. He shook his head and said, “This is unreasonable. Even though it may be a high-power air cleaning system for industrial purposes, as long as it is carefully produced and regularly maintained with the replacement of quieting pads, such earsplitting noises will be impossible. There’s no reason why the Imperium of True Human Beings cannot resolve the problem that even the Star Glory Federation can take care of!”

“Like you said yourself, it needs to be ‘carefully produced’ and ‘regularly maintained with the replacement of quieting pads’. Each replacement will mean that parts of the factories have to be shut down. The cost is very high, alright?”

Long Yangjun said, “Compared to such a high cost, it will be a lot cheaper to simply offer three headsets to every worker and their family every month. Which approach do you think an Immortal Cultivator like Li Minghui will adopt?”

Li Yao frowned. “The air cleaning system is running all the time, which means that the noises will not be away for a single second. Wouldn’t it be very inconvenient for the local residents to talk to each other with their ears stuffed every day?”

“Such an inconvenience can’t be better!”

Long Yangjun said, “They might as well not talk and just shut up and work for the Immortal Cultivators diligently. Wouldn’t that be much greater?”

Chapter 2374 - Rise in the Chaos!

2374 Rise in the Chaos!

Silently, Li Yao focused his spiritual energy on his eyes and observed the workers in the Great Iron Plants carefully by maximizing his eyesight.

When observed from so far away, the workers who were busy working on the furnaces, the tubes, and the iron scaffolds were like black and brown ants.

Most of them had covered themselves tightly in gray capes and were wearing simple protective respirators and eyepatches. Their skin that was exposed to the air, however, had been smeared into brown and black because of the dust and the pollutants. Also, because of the protective earplugs that they were wearing, they were somewhat sluggish and inert, like a bunch of mechanical reptiles that were not fully-wound or a group of lifeless zombies.

Li Yao finally understood why Nepenthe could spread far and wide in the area without being noticed. Whether or not the workers had practiced the Serenity Arts, they looked equally emotionless, like machines experiencing mental fatigue.

Most of the workers were occupied inside the mines or the factories and could not be directly noticed. However, Li Yao did notice that workers were dragging carts of raw minerals from caves in rows.

Even such a simple job that could absolutely be taken over by spiritual puppets was shouldered by the hominoid miners. As far as Li Yao's eyes could reach, the only spiritual puppets he saw were the monitors at the commanding heights. In the Great Iron Plants, it was machines that were supervising the work of humans and maintaining the cruel and bloody order!

Li Yao even saw a cross-shaped execution terrace in a corner of the factory area. A hominoid miner was tied to it, and a battle puppet was slapping the miner's back that was full of scars brutally with an electromagnetic whip.

Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa!

Flesh and blood were splashing together with sparks. The hominoid miner was screaming miserably because of the excruciating pain.

A hundred hominoid miners were forced to watch him by the battle puppets. There was no telling their countenance because their faces were covered by the masks, but judging from their shaking shoulders, they were obviously in extreme fear and anger.

Also, based on the bloodstains around the execution terrace, it was clear that somebody was sent here for punishment every other day.

Clenching his fists, Li Yao mumbled to himself, "What crimes have this worker committed to deserve such whipping?"

Long Yangjun said, "He has been whipped more than ten times. So, it is probably a major crime like damaging the mining magical equipment instead of a minor crime like spending too much time in the toilet."

Li Yao was rather surprised. “What? Spending too much time in the toilet is a ‘crime’ that needs to be punished by whipping?”

“Of course. The Immortal Cultivators keep so many workers and offer them wages every month not because they want you to go to the toilet every day.”

Long Yangjun said, “According to sex and age, everybody is given a toilet time. If you are more than five minutes late before you return to your post, you will be violating the rules of the Great Iron Plants and have to be whipped once.”

Li Yao was stunned for a long time. Observing the commanding heights and the firing points around the entire Great Iron Plants, he continued asking, “I can tell that the battle puppets that the Immortal Cultivators have deployed in this place are indeed much more advanced than Xiao Xuance’s Grand Illusionary Soldiers years ago, but why are there not many civil puppets? Many simple, repetitive, and cumbersome works can be accomplished by civil puppets, can’t they?

“That’s rather odd. The Imperium’s overall technological abilities are at least decades more advanced than the federation’s. It is the case in terms of the military magical equipment and the battle puppets, but the Imperium’s advantages are not so obvious when it comes to the civil magical equipment, the civil puppets, and the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus. The federation even has greater advantages in certain fields!”

“Don’t you understand? It’s because there is no demand in those aspects!”

Long Yangjun said in a low voice, “The Star Glory Federation paid more attention to the benefits of the ordinary people.

As a result, the cost to hire ordinary people is extremely high. In order to lower the cost, the new technologies and the new resources must be devoted to industrial automation and the development of civil puppets, replacing the previous workers with civil puppets. It is because of the demands in the aspects that the technologies have thrived.

“The Imperium, on the other hand, does not have such concerns at all. They can reduce the cost to use the hominoids to the minimum blatantly without considering their benefits, rights, or occupational diseases.

“In the meantime, the Imperium also has a lot of approaches that have severe side effects, such as, for example, activating the demonic genes or using excitants excessively to increase the work efficiency of the hominoids and the cost advantage.

“Under such circumstances, it is only natural that the civil puppet industry is never developed in the Imperium. All the new technologies and new resources are devoted to the exploitation of hominoids!

“Same goes for the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus. In fact, neither the four Kurfürst families, the warlords in the local areas, nor tycoons such as Li Minghui like the idea of connecting the entire Imperium because the Spiritual Nexus means information, and information is innately equal, dangerous, and uncontrollable.

“They prefer to keep themselves secluded and be kings in their own territories, only letting in the information that is in their favor to brainwash the hominoids. It would be a miracle if the grand-unified Spiritual Nexus can be developed under such circumstances!

“Therefore, it is not because the Imperium is not as technologically capable as the federation but because they have chosen different directions of development. Don’t look down on those battle puppets. I once stole one of them and dismantled it. They are truly precise, complicated, and advanced!”

“I know.”

Li Yao watched a team of battle puppets whipping the hominoid first before the medical puppets, which had been painted white, began treating the punished. Then, another team of battle puppets escorted all the other miners back to the wells. The whole process was in order and did not have any accidents. There was not even a single Immortal Cultivator supervising the situation.

It meant that the control crystal processors of those battle puppets were advanced enough to make complicated logic judgments spontaneously.

With such powerful control crystal processors, their combat ability couldn’t be weak.

However, Li Yao was still more or less confused. “Why are no Immortal Cultivators seen around the entire Great Iron Plants, and the order is only maintained by the battle puppets? Is Li Minghui not here?”

“As you have seen, the environment here is too harsh. The Immortal Cultivators naturally would not stay here all day.”

Long Yangjun said, “Normally speaking, the administration made of the Immortal Cultivators and the private troop of the Black Iron Troop will stay five hundred meters right above the Great Iron Plants. There are a fairly large training field and rest area up above. That is the place of residence for the Immortal Cultivators.

“Li Minghui, on the other hand, spends even less time below the ground. He is mostly occupied in pulling strings and negotiating businesses with other Immortal Cultivators on the surface of the planet!

“However, it is true that the Great Iron Plants is particularly undefended in recent days. The turmoil you caused on the surface of the planet raised tides below the ground too. A lot of underground sects and groups who were attached to the Dongfang family are now homeless dogs living in fear all day. So, Li Minghui is taking the opportunity to expand his territory and devour the forces large and small nearby by leading the most brutal bandits under his command. The Dongfang family’s properties are all becoming the Li family’s. How else can he make up for the losses when he changed sides?

“It is exactly because of the chaos in the underground worlds that Nepenthe is planning an uprising. There is still one last day for that!”

After observing the distribution of guards and the environment in the Great Iron Plants, the two of them retreated into the caves and snuck into the living areas near the Great Iron Plants through the unknown gaps.

The messy huts and caves were the homes of the workers. Not only were the families of the workers living here, but there were also many entertainment providers and sometimes even merchants who traveled among different underground districts.

Compared to the depressing, cold, and lifeless factory areas, while the living areas had been developed without any order like crazy ant nests or beehives, such places were at least full of vigor. People’s shouting and bickering could even sometimes overwhelm the noises above their heads.

According to Long Yangjun, the Immortal Cultivators had been leaving the hominoids outside of the factory areas to themselves. They barely went deep into the stinky cottages in the living areas to search for suspects and maintain order, mostly because none of the Immortal Cultivators were willing to come to such a dirty place where they could gain nothing.

Before this, Li Minghui had thought to restrain all the hominoids roughly with the battle puppets as the police in the living areas. Then, it occurred to him that the unexpected situations were too many and the environment was too complicated in the living areas for the battle puppets’ crystal processors to handle. In order to transform “soldiers” who were purely responsible for slaughter and suppression into “police” that had to take care of the most insignificant trivia, the crystal processors of the puppets had to be upgraded by at least two generations.

The price was too high, and there was not much necessity. So, Li Minghui dropped the idea and simply assigned certain seemingly obedient, seasoned miners as the managers of the living areas. His attitude was obvious. As long as the productivity of the factories was not affected and no great trouble was caused, he did not really care what the living areas of the hominoids became.

The Grand Guardian of Nepenthe, named “Xu Zhicheng”, was a model worker of the Great Iron Plants that everybody knew in the beginning. After his two sons passed away one after the other, as a special treatment, the corporation had nominated him as the manager of a living area.

Since Xu Zhicheng was qualified to be the Grand Guardian of Nepenthe, he certainly had ways to manage the area that was assigned to him well. It was the safest and least troublesome area for the Immortal Cultivators. The workers living in the area were exceptionally diligent and hardworking. Gradually, he won the trust of the leadership of the corporation. More and more living areas were administered in his ways, and they joined Nepenthe one after another. Today, all the living areas nearby had been highly infiltrated and controlled by Nepenthe, surrounding the Great Iron Plants and the Black Iron Group instead!

Chapter 2375 - Succeed, or Sacrifice!

2375 Succeed, or Sacrifice!

Passing the obstreperous huts that felt like a chaotic whirlpool and the underground hominoids who had covered themselves tightly with capes, Li Yao sensed the air of an upcoming storm from the seemingly peaceful streets.

Unusual high-frequency vibrations filled the air. Deep inside the darkness of the dilapidated alleys, people sitting cross-legged on the ground were everywhere. They must've all entered the state of telepathy, passing the clandestine signals regarding the riot tomorrow and conducting the last preparations.

It was exactly like a volcano where magma was about to rise to ten thousand meters tall. The intense smoke had been gathered in the crater, and nothing could prevent it from roaring.

It was exactly in such intense reverberation of brainwaves that Li Yao and Long Yangjun reached the home of Xu Zhicheng, the Grand Guardian of Nepenthe.

As a model worker of the Great Iron Plants and the manager of the living area, Xu Zhicheng boasted the most spacious cave. It was the center of Nepenthe's secret activities.

Because Li Minghui and most of the Immortal Cultivators were not in the Great Iron Plants, and the uprising would take place tomorrow, the Nepenthe believers stopped covering their operation. Tremendous tall, strong believers of Nepenthe were entering and exiting Xu Zhicheng’s cave with full packages but indifferent faces, carrying his order to other living areas and even the central posts of the factory areas.

Seeing that Long Yangjun had arrived, all the Nepenthe believers bowed at her deeply. Even Xu Zhicheng came out to greet her. The other people were asked to go somewhere else, and Long Yangjun and Li Yao were invited to go to the room for further discussion.

Entering the room behind Long Yangjun, Li Yao closed the door on the entrance of the cave and spread his senses to the entire cave. The cave was approximately a hundred square meters, which was almost luxurious in the underground worlds where space was highly limited. It had been divided into three parts. The innermost part was Xu Zhicheng’s bedroom, and the outmost part was his living room and the place where he handled the affairs of Nepenthe. There was not much furniture except for a long table made of tempered iron. The place was rather neat and tidy.

In the middle part of the cave that spanned horizontally, however, was a bunk bed made of iron. There were also a lot of toys that were made of iron wires, screws, and magical equipment components on the desk nearby. They were perhaps the most beloved objects of the house owner because they were all glittering after being touched day and night.

On the wall, there were a lot of things that were similar to certificates and medals. All the certificates had been preserved in glass frames carefully and hung on the wall squarely.

This place was probably where Xu Zhicheng’s sons used to live.

Li Yao noticed a detail.

The Great Iron Plants were heavily polluted. The air was full of dust and various sticky pollutants. It would only take half a day for a table to be covered in a thin layer of stains that could barely be cleaned.

In order not to draw any attention, Li Yao did not activate his spiritual energy when he snuck in. His cape had been wreathed in sticky dusk after only half an hour, and he could not shake it off at all.

The huts of the workers that he saw on his way here were also dark and covered in dust.

Xu Zhicheng’s home was the same. In the living room outside and his own bedroom, there was a dense, black coating on the wall, the floor, and even the bed, and five-finger marks would be left on it if one were to touch it with their hands. The people here were probably used to such an environment and did not consider the dust and the pollutants to be a big deal anymore.

But in the small room where the bunk bed was kept, it was clean and dustless.

The toys on the desk made of wasted iron and the certificates on the wall, in particular, were so spotless that they were almost shining.

Somebody must’ve been wiping them carefully after every couple of hours in order to keep them as shiny as new.

Did the Grand Guardian do it himself?

Did those certificates and toys belong to his sons?

Were the clumsy toys made of wasted iron jumbled by Xu Zhicheng one screw after another a long, long time ago for his sons in person?

With all the questions, Li Yao looked at Xu Zhicheng, the Grand Guardian and the actual leader of Nepenthe.

Xu Zhicheng had a most common name, which did not carry any dominating air or mysteriousness.

Exactly like his name, he was an old worker with a headful of gray hair, a face of wrinkles, and scars all over his body.

Even though he was about to lead thousands of people to wage a war against the Immortal Cultivators tomorrow, he was still wearing the work uniform that had been sewed and washed so many times that it had lost all the original colors. He did not have the charisma of a leader of an uprising army or the evil vibe of a cultist. He was nothing like what Li Yao imagined an overzealous believer of the Path of Ultimate Benevolence should be like.

According to Long Yangjun, boosting the brainwaves of thousands of people to resonate with the methods of telepathy was essentially a brain exercise that was beneficial for the people at the center of the reverberation to awaken their spiritual roots. After years of training, Xu Zhicheng had miraculously awakened his spiritual root and advanced to approximately… the Refinement Stage!

Even so, in terms of level, power, combat ability, judiciousness, scheming, or any other ability, Xu Zhicheng was still the weakest opponent that Li Yao had ever seen in his entire life. He was so vastly different from Xiao Xuance, Bai Xinghe, Jin Tuyi, Lu Zui, Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan, and the rest of them that he could not even be compared to them.

However, while Li Yao could face Xiao Xuance, Lu Zui, and Jin Tuyi with confidence and challenge them in bloody battles to the last moment, he was somewhat at a loss about how to deal with Xu Zhicheng who was as good as nothing in terms of strength.

“Serenity Seraph, I’m told that not only have you activated a large batch of ancient weapons, you have also recruited tremendous wildlings from the depths of the underground worlds. This is truly wonderful!”

Xu Zhicheng bowed deeply at Long Yangjun first before he said, “In such a case, we will be more confident about the war tomorrow!”

Just like all the other Nepenthe believers, he seemed to be wearing a heavy mask. When he was talking, his wrinkles did not move at all, and even his eyeballs barely rolled. He did not have the anxiety now that a great war was coming near, nor the fury of having enough sufferings. He was exactly in the “eternal tranquility” that Nepenthe promoted.

He did not look at Li Yao until it was necessary. “If I may ask the Serenity Seraph, this is…”

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao introduced himself. “My name is Li Yao. I am a Cultivator.”

“A Cultivator?”

Xu Zhicheng’s eyes were frozen. He considered carefully for a moment before he replied in wariness, “I heard your name before. I’m told that you caused a riot in the Martial Meritocrats Sector at the edge of the Imperium and killed a lot of Immortal Cultivators! So, you are against the Immortal Cultivators too. What are you doing here?”

“I’m here to convince Grand Guardian Xu to abort your uprising.”

Looking at Xu Zhicheng in the eyes, Li Yao went to the topic directly. “You won’t gain anything from doing that!”

Xu Zhicheng was slightly stunned. His pupils obviously constricted, as if he were going to argue with Li Yao in fury, but he simply held it back and turned his eyes to Long Yangjun rigidly, asking in calmness, “If I may ask the Serenity Seraph, is this your intention too?”

“Don’t overthink, Grand Guardian Xu. That is not my intention.”

Long Yangjun said casually, “Since the first day I taught you ‘Serenity Arts’, I have solemnly promised you that I would only teach you two secret techniques but wouldn’t influence your usage of the techniques. Later, after you established Nepenthe and insisted on worshipping me as the Serenity Seraph, we made a deal to each other too. I would never meddle in the affairs and actual operations of Nepenthe. Whatever you are going to do, I would neither support nor object to it. In the meantime, if you were to come to ask for my help when in trouble, it would depend on my mood whether or not I would give you a hand.

“This is exactly the same. You will be in full charge of the issue. I have no intention to steal your power at all.

“But my Cultivator friend here, however, has different opinions regarding your operation and insists on meeting with you.

“Speaking of which, from the perspective of an onlooker, I do feel that he is not entirely pointless. Your operation is so rushed, your enemy is so formidable, and the environment is so rough. It is destined that Nepenthe’s uprising will not succeed. Not only is the entire Nepenthe likely to be destroyed, but the whole Great Iron Plants, as well as everybody living here, may face their doom too!”

“If we can’t succeed, we can at least die for it!”

Expressionlessly, Xu Zhicheng said, one word after another, “Both the Serenity Seraph and your Cultivator friend have seen our living environment and the oppression that we suffer day and night. Do you think that we are scared of death when we are living in hell?

“We… should’ve died a long time ago! If the extraterrestrial devils did arrive that year and corrupted our abnormal bodies and violent souls, we would’ve congregated into an overwhelming torrent and swallowed all the Immortal Cultivators including Li Minghui!

“The extraterrestrial devils did not arrive, and the Serenity Seraph granted us more brilliant techniques and more secret methods of communication, freeing us from pain and fear! In that case, why do we have to hold it back anymore? As long as we can drag the Immortal Cultivators like Li Minghui to die with us, we are willing to pay any price!”

“Grand Guardian Xu, listen to me—”

Li Yao tried to make himself sound harmless and sincere. “We, the Cultivators, are against the Immortal Cultivators too, and we also support everybody defending their dignity and glory with violence and sacrificing themselves when it is necessary. Therefore, I am not stopping you from sacrificing yourselves.

“However, sacrifices should be worthwhile. Meaningless sacrifices will not damage the Immortal Cultivators at all, much less destroying this wretched world.

“Li Minghui is just one of the most insignificant Immortal Cultivators. Even if you really die together with him, you will not change anything. Very soon, an Immortal Cultivator who is even more greedy, shameless, and cruel will come from above and take over his place.

“Besides, I’m highly suspicious if your operation can kill Li Minghui. Maybe even after the sacrifices of tens of thousands of Nepenthe believers, you will only take down a few of Li Minghui’s lackeys and thousands of his battle puppets, which won’t help anything at all!”

Chapter 2376 - The Father of Two Boys

2376 The Father of Two Boys

Vague brilliance flashed in Xu Zhicheng’s eyes as he said coldly, “Our operation is certainly much more than just killing Li Minghui, but there is no need for an outsider to know our deeper purpose.”

“But I already do.”

Li Yao said, “You intend to activate the ‘super brainwave magnifier’ and inculcate the Serenity Arts into countless people by force, thereby transforming them into emotionless Nepenthe believers, don’t you?”

Xu Zhicheng was slightly stunned. He turned his eyes to Long Yangjun. Every wrinkle on his face was slightly shivering, but he simply repressed his wrath. There was no telling if it was because he feared Long Yangjun’s strength or because he was bound by the doctrine of his religion.

“Yes, it was me who told him that.”

Long Yangjun opened her hands and said helplessly, “However, Grand Guardian Xu, you must believe me. This man is unimaginably dangerous and strong. Even if I hadn’t told him such a scheme, he would’ve unraveled and stopped it through uncanny approaches. So, it is better to just tell him frankly.”

“That’s right!”

Since the “Serenity Seraph” was so straightforward, it was naturally impossible for Xu Zhicheng to keep lying. He simply went on, as coldly as a machine. “As long as we occupy the geothermal factory, we will be able to boost the function of the ‘super brainwave magnifier’ to the maximum, allowing everybody within thousands of kilometers to taste the wonderfulness of the Serenity Arts so that all their pains and fears will be relieved!

“By then, even if we are all killed, even if we fail to execute Li Minghui, it will no longer be important because our ideas will have been spread out. Nobody can stop Nepenthe from propagating and reincarnating in the underground worlds!”

“You can’t do that!”

Li Yao raised his voice. “Even if you are willing to abandon everything yourself, you cannot force other people to wipe out their feelings and desires!”

“We are not forcing them. We are helping them to forget all the fears and pains and gain the strength to fight the Immortal Cultivators!”

Xu Zhicheng also raised his voice and declared like a tolling bell, “Look around us, look at our life. For hundreds of years, we have been living like swine and zombies in ceaseless pain and suffering. Everybody regards us as weeds and ants. Nobody cares about us, nobody helps us, nobody fights for us! Right now, we finally have the ability to fight for ourselves. Are we going to just abandon it without teaching it to everybody else?”

“Somebody will fight for you, in a much better way!”

Li Yao did not know how he should convince the scarred and stubborn man. He could only say, “Trust me, I’m willing to fight for you, the Cultivators are willing to fight for you! However, we need to make thorough plans, accumulate our strength, and wait for a better opportunity so that the unavoidable sacrifices will be more worthwhile!”

“The Cultivators… will fight for us?”

Xu Zhicheng was slightly stunned, but he soon recovered his stiffened face that was devoid of any expressions. He said coldly, “It’s impossible. Nobody has ever fought for us, and nobody will ever do so in the future. The Cultivators and the Immortal Cultivators are just jackals of the same lair. You are just a bunch of guys who blatantly bully the weak and destroy everything with your desires when you are unrestrained after you pick up the massive strength!

“I remember it now. Weren’t the Immortal Cultivators today Cultivators in the beginning? Is there any difference despite the change of names? Even in the Star Ocean Republic that was ruled by the Cultivators, the life of the underground locals was not any better!

“All in all, Nepenthe does not need the help of the Cultivators. We will fight for ourselves and all the people who have had enough sufferings just like us. We will completely change the world and destroy the source of all the evils and injustice—feelings and desires!

“Stop wasting your time. It’s useless. If you want, you can kill me directly. I can tell that you are far stronger than me, and killing me is no different from crumbling a bug for you. Hehe, in the eyes of the experts like you, the underground locals like us are just a swarm of insignificant bugs, aren't we?

"But let me tell you, even if you kill me, thousands of people who are exactly like me will show up, and the final victory will definitely be ours!"

Xu Zhicheng stepped forward and stood straight right before Li Yao. He even raised his head and revealed his bouncing carotid artery.

Li Yao did not intend to make the situation so intense but planned to take care of the issue slowly.

It never occurred to him that Xu Zhicheng was such a tough and stubborn man that he left no room for negotiation at all.

With everything coming to this point, Li Yao had no choice except to find the sharpest weapon in his messy head.

"I will not hurt you, Grand Guardian Xu. Like I said before, I will only fight for all of you and kill those who have pushed you to such a situation."

Taking a deep breath, Li Yao immediately calmed himself down. "However, if you truly intend to spread the Serenity Arts to all the underground worlds through the 'super brainwave magnifier', you should at least confirm the effectiveness of the Serenity Arts first, shouldn't you?

"As the Grand Guardian of Nepenthe, you must've fully grasped Nepenthe, right? Please tell me, have you really found 'eternal tranquility'? Have you really forgotten all your pains?"

"Of course."

Xu Zhicheng replied without any hesitation, “Under the enlightenment of the Serenity Seraph, I have forgotten all the pains and completely returned to eternal peace. Nothing dark and foul can corrupt my soul.”

“Then what about the dustless toys and frames in the chamber next door?”

Staring at Xu Zhicheng in the eyes, Li Yao seemed to be piercing through the seemingly peaceful man’s eyes into his soul. “The room outside is so dirty, with dust everywhere. For a man who is occupied in the affairs of your religion, you certainly do not have much time to clean the room. But why is the room inside so clean, as if you’ve been cleaning it many times a day?

“If my guess is correct, that is the bedroom of your sons. The items inside were used by your sons in the past, weren’t they?

“Tell me, why have you been doing that? Why did you wipe the ‘meaningless’ and ‘useless’ things?”

Xu Zhicheng’s pupils constricted violently.

There was one second when indescribable grief and fury almost flooded out of the deepest corners of his pupils like raging torrents.

But in the next second, the torrents were frozen by his astounding willpower.

“You-You dare snoop around my house?”

Clenching his fists, he questioned in a hoarse voice.

“Yes. I have indeed snooped at your house very rudely.”

Observing the look on Xu Zhicheng’s face carefully, Li Yao remarked, “So, you are very angry, and you want to beat me up right now, don’t you?”

“… No.”

The wrinkles on Xu Zhicheng’s face were cramping. He struggled to shake his head and said, “I-I’ve forgotten what anger is. If I am going to fight, I will only fight for the things that are really worthy, not for such trivia just to vent my fury.”

“This is certainly no trivia. If I ever encountered a shameless scoundrel who snooped at my family’s bedroom without my permission, I would certainly beat them hard!”

Li Yao said, “Look at me in the eyes and answer my question. Why do you wipe your sons’ last belongings many times a day? If you have truly abandoned your feelings and desires, those objects will be absolute garbage that should be thrown into a dumpster, right?

“Or maybe, is it because even though you have fully grasped the Serenity Arts, even though you can give up almost all of your feelings, you cannot cut out your love for your sons?

“Is it because even if you recite the Serenity Arts again and again, it cannot stop you from missing your sons? You can only wipe the items again and again to remember the most beautiful, happy days in the past. No matter how dark and painful life is, there must’ve been happy moments when the family was together, right?

“Tell me, is the Serenity Arts really effective? Can it really make you forget your pains? I don’t think so. I think you have been faking it the whole time. You are just deceiving and paralyzing yourself!

“Love and pain are the two sides of the same coin in the same place. The more you love, the more hurt you will be. Since you can never erase your love for your sons, you can never eliminate the pain of losing them, not in the slightest, no matter how many times you chant the Serenity Arts!”

Xu Zhicheng was apparently breathing faster.

His tranquil eyes were broken by rushing rocks, and chaotic ripples were surfacing and ripping Li Yao apart like ten thousand sharp blades.

His veins and muscles were bulging beyond control. On the previously brown skin, bloody spots were gradually bursting out. Even his joints were cracking loudly, as if two enormous forces were fighting inside his body.

“Stop.”

The iron mask on his head fell apart, revealing the most hideous face, as he howled like a lone wolf in the wilderness. “I told you to stop!”

“Okay, I’ll stop. Just let me give you a hand.”

Li Yao pretended to be walking to the inner room. “Your sons’ last belongings are your last hindrance. Let me burn your hindrance up in a fire, and you will have nothing that hamstrings you from reaching the highest level of the Serenity Arts!”

“How dare you!”

Before his brain realized what was going on, Xu Zhicheng already lunged forward like a ferocious beast. He grabbed Li Yao’s collar with his left hand as he raised his right fist high as if it were a hammer. He looked so daunting that flames of fury seemed to be running out of his pores, and even if he were not faced with Li Yao but a reincarnation of a god, he would still smash it into pieces with his fist!

However, the moment he raised his fist high, he realized what was going on. His aggressive face a moment ago, along with his broken mask, completely collapsed at the same time.

Xu Zhicheng—the Grand Guardian of Nepenthe, the model worker of the Black Iron Group, and the father of two boys—stepped back; his eyes bloodshot. Blood mixed with dirty tears ran down on his face. He looked at Li Yao, Long Yangjun, and his sons’ room in confusion as he howled meaningless syllables.

Chapter 2377 - Everybody Dies Twice!

2377 Everybody Dies Twice!

“Help me, Serenity Seraph!”

Xu Zhicheng stepped all the way back to the wall before he finally struggled to stop. He looked at Long Yangjun with his unfocused eyes again while he moaned like someone about to be drowned. “I’ve been invaded by devils… Day and night, no matter how I practiced the Serenity Arts, I cannot completely get rid of the devils!

“I don’t deserve to be the Grand Guardian of Nepenthe. I can’t deal with the devils… So many devils. Those damn devils have been haunting me all the time, giving me such a headache that I always want to go mad!

“If… If we can win this war, I will certainly be able to completely eliminate the devils in my head, right? Serenity Seraph, please tell me, please save me!”

He raised his arms that looked like dry branches and extended them at Long Yangjun.

Long Yangjun had been standing nearby and watching Li Yao and Xu Zhicheng’s conversation in silence. It was not until this moment that vague confusion and bitterness appeared on her face. She stepped back and said with a helpless smile, “Grand Guardian Xu, you should know that even I haven’t completely erased my feelings, right? I cannot execute my own feelings and desires, and I cannot even save myself. How can I save each and every one of you?”

Looking at Long Yangjun in a daze, Xu Zhicheng was gradually burning. The fire was condensed into a desperate and furious mask on his face along with his shivering wrinkles. His branch-like hands were aimed at Li Yao again before he waved them crazily and roared, “What-What-What are you up to exactly? What Cultivator are you? You are an incarnation of the extraterrestrial devils! You are intentionally raising the devils in my head! What do you want? Why are you messing with my head in such a way? Why are you so shameless and vicious?”

“I’m sorry. I’m truly sorry!”

Watching Xu Zhicheng melting down into a lunatic from the calm and indifferent man in the beginning, Li Yao felt that an indestructible wall in his own heart was smashed too. He bowed deeply at Xu Zhicheng sincerely with the urge of crying himself and said, “I’m sorry. I know that my methods are really shameless and vicious, and I couldn’t handle such a situation as well if I were the father of two children.

“But… But I really don’t have a choice right now. This is the only way to save you and your children!”

“What… What nonsense are you talking about?”

Panting hard, Xu Zhicheng was like an old wolf who had been pushed into desperation. With brutality beaming out of his eyes, he said, “My sons are dead! Both of them! Nobody can save them! Not Nepenthe, not the Cultivators, and not even the gods! How are you going to save them? Tell me!”

“Grand Guardian Xu, please listen to me. Whoever dies is gone for good. Of course, there is no way for me to bring the people whose souls have dispersed back to life. However—”

Opening his arms, Li Yao said sincerely, “I’ve heard a theory before. Everybody dies twice. The first time is when their physical body and their soul perish, and the second time is when everybody forgets them!

“Yes, your sons are already dead, but now, they still ‘exist’ in your memories, in your feelings, in your ineffaceable love and your haunting pains, in the toys and certificates that you clean carefully every day!

“Did they have classmates? Did they have friends? Did they have childhood crushes? I believed that they must’ve had them, right? Then, they are also existing in the memories of their classmates, friends, and loves, in the affection and agony of so many people!

“They are already dead, but exactly because of the memories of so many people, and the emotional fluctuations that you cannot erase no matter how you practice the Serenity Arts, that they can ‘exist’ in such a form. This is their last connection with this universe and the only thing that they have left for you!

“If you are erasing everything just because you cannot deal with the pain, you will also be erasing your love for your son, the most beautiful things in the past, the only brightness in the infinite darkness, and their last existence!

“By the time you completely forget them and burn up the toys and certificates that carry very special meanings because they are hindering you, by the time when all their friends and loves can’t remember their voice, their looks, and even their names, they will be completely gone from this universe, sinking into oblivion!

“Do you want your son to end like this, in an ‘oblivion’ that is even more terrible than ‘death’?”

As if struck by lightning, Xu Zhicheng was so astounded that he almost forgot how to breathe.

“I can totally imagine your pain. Really. Although I do not have any children yet, my computational ability is enough for me to simulate the… avalanche of emotions. I can feel what you are feeling, and I’m feeling it right now!”

While he was talking, Li Yao’s eyes became red. “However, I also believe that ‘father’ is a great name. A father can do anything and hold back any pain for his children.

“So, for your sons, for yourself, and for your late wife who gave birth to them—do not forget them, do not let them sink into oblivion, and live on stubbornly while carrying their existence!”

“Carrying…”

Xu Zhicheng touched his shoulders with his shivering hands while he mumbled, “Their ‘existence’?”

“Not just their existence, but everybody’s existence made the happiest moments of the locals!”

Li Yao raised his voice, which burst out next to Xu Zhicheng’s ears like a clap of thunder. “Do you know? In the darkest and hardest towns below the ground, I heard the most wonderful songs from children, who told me their happy stories vividly. Even when I passed the murky, stinky huts outside just now, I heard people laughing too!

“No matter how dark life is, there is always vague brightness, isn’t there? Isn’t the brightness made of songs, laughters, and loves for each other while we are gritting our teeth to endure the pains and sufferings? Isn’t it why we are human beings and not animals, weeds, and rocks?

“But what you are going to do will destroy the last brightness in the dark!

“If you truly erase the emotions and desires of everyone here including your own, there will be no more songs, laughters, and babbling, wobbling children in the living areas. There will be no more boys and girls whispering their affections for each other in the forsaken tunnels. There will not be a father who creates toys for his children in great enthusiasm despite the arduous work, just to watch the innocent smile on his children’s faces! There will be nothing! Everything will be gone!

“If the Immortal Cultivators’ exploitations and oppressions are taking away your life, what you are doing right now is depriving everybody of their ‘existence’! By the time your so-called ‘eternal tranquility’ does arrive, each of you, no matter if you are living or dead, will no longer have any personality, a name, a past, or any significance as a human being! Is that what you want? Tell me! Because you have lost your family, you want everybody to lose theirs in such a way? Is that your purpose?”

“As*hole, shut up!”

Xu Zhicheng had enough of it and truly jumped at Li Yao. He was naturally no match for Li Yao. In his fury, he was not even attacking with any technique but simply hit Li Yao’s chest with his head like an angry bull.

He thought that he would be crashing into a wall, but out of his expectation, Li Yao did not activate the slightest spiritual energy and was knocked to the floor.

“You—”

Xu Zhicheng’s attack hit the target, but he did not know what to do next. He collapsed and stared at Li Yao not far away in a daze.

Li Yao rose to his feet and rubbed his chest. Then he smiled at Xu Zhicheng and said, “I’m sorry, Great Guardian Xu, I was talking nonsense again. I know it is definitely not your purpose. Besides, you haven’t lost your family yet. Your wife and your children still live in your emotions. The stronger your emotions are, the more vivid their existence will be. If you recall the joy and happiness you had in the past, they will forever live in the delightful memories.

“You will not truly lose them until the day comes when you completely slay all the devils and abandons your feelings and memories!”

Xu Zhicheng listened in a daze. His face was numb, but his eyes were extremely complicated and brimming with mixed feelings. He looked at Li Yao, full of expectations, as if he were hoping that Li Yao could continue.

“There’s something that I don’t understand.”

Li Yao said, “Why did you create Nepenthe independently at the beginning, instead of directly joining the Covenant Alliance? As far as I know, a lot of agents of the Covenant Alliance are active in the underground worlds below the capital, aren’t they?

“Was it only because the Serenity Seraph was strong and powerful? Or was it because you thought that the ‘Path of Ultimate Benevolence’ of the Covenant Alliance was too extreme, too cold, and too devastating?

“However, the thing about executing inner devils is that it will never succeed. It will only deprive you of your humanity and make you more and more extreme until you become simple tools like the people of the Covenant Alliance.

“Grand Guardian Xu, there is still time to turn back. Just call it off!”

Lowering his head, Xu Zhicheng was silent for a long time, before he finally said sullenly, “But only the Serenity Arts and the methods of telepathy can help us eliminate the dread when we are faced with the Immortal Cultivators, so we can fight the Immortal Cultivators fearlessly! We’ve already had enough of everything, and we are determined to fight a bloody battle!”

“Wrong. You are not fighting at all but fleeing!”

Li Yao’s voice became both cold and tough. He said straightforwardly, “You are only trying to use a great suicide attack to flee from this dark world and the real battles!”

Chapter 2378 - Unexpected!

2378 Unexpected!

Xu Zhicheng meant to argue, but he was unable to say anything when he looked at Li Yao’s eyes that were as shiny as the edge of a saber.

“No feelings, no determination, no battle plans, and just want to die in a great riot. What is flight if this is not?”

Li Yao, on the other hand, did not let go of Xu Zhicheng but continued stabbing at the wounds in the deepest part of his heart. “If you truly want to avenge your sons, just raise your blades in the most furious gesture with the deepest love for them and deepest hatred against the Immortal Cultivators. That will be a real fight!”

“It’s useless.”

After a brief silence, Xu Zhicheng shook his head softly. “We are no match for the Immortal Cultivators in any case. Fight or flight, the result will be the same.

“You say that everybody dies twice. It is probably right, but even if you don’t practice the Serenity Arts, we will be exploited to death by the Immortal Cultivators, and nobody will remember us after we die. We won’t even have a gravestone that has our names on it. Aren’t we not going to slip into the complete oblivion that you mentioned?”

“Don’t give up yet. You still have a chance!”

Li Yao grabbed Xu Zhicheng’s shoulders hard and refreshed the devastated father with the sharp pain. “Listen to me, Grand Guardian Xu, I’m not here to berate you or to watch you humiliate yourselves condescendingly. We, the Cultivators, truly mean to help you win this war and fight by your side. I’ve come with my own solution too!”

Light of hope beamed out of Xu Zhicheng’s eyes. The weird strength that he suddenly grew out of nowhere made him get rid of Li Yao’s hands and grab Li Yao’s shoulders instead. He asked, “What is the solution? Master Li, can you help us win the battle?”

Li Yao coughed and said, “Don’t call me ‘Master’, just call me ‘Fellow Cultivator’. This battle is too hasty, and the Cultivators are not in the best situation. Therefore, it is impossible to win the battle at all. However, if Nepenthe is patient enough to wait for a while longer, things will perhaps be very different.

“Don’t think that this is just an excuse to stall you. I mean it.

“After I heard the things of Nepenthe, I’d been thinking about how we should communicate and negotiate while on my way to the Great Iron Plants.

“Right now, Nepenthe is spreading deep below the ground under Grand Guardian Xu’s leadership, which is a very good start.

“I have a lot of plans, graphs, and procedures about the production of fundamental magical equipment that I can teach to you. Some of the magical equipment does not even need to be powered by crystals. Even ordinary people can use them freely. Naturally, such weapons are not very powerful, but when there are too many of them, it will be enough to deal with the lone, low-level Immortal Cultivators, who will consider it a dangerous trip to go to the underground worlds.

“Also, the methods of telepathy that you’ve been practicing are based on the reverberation of brainwaves, which is very similar to the way of training of a unique profession in my memory that is known as ‘qi-trainer’. Through the soul resonation, the qi-trainers can condense the fighting will of thousands of people and unleash overwhelming strength although they are only in the Refinement Stage!

“Of course, the qi-trainers’ techniques and yours are not exactly the same. At the very least, the qi-trainers have all awakened their spiritual roots. In order to transplant their techniques, a lot of modifications and experiments are certainly required, but it is definitely an approach worth trying!

“Also, while I’m all by myself, ‘Starlight’ still lives on stubbornly at the edge of the Imperium. Countless Cultivators are developing and thriving by taking advantage of the internal strife of the Immortal Cultivators, and they will definitely march toward the Empyreal Terminus Sector one day!

“It is needless to say that beyond Starlight, we have an… even more enormous and thorough organization, which is capable of competing with the Immortal Cultivators in a head-on clash!”

Greatly surprised, Xu Zhicheng looked at Long Yangjun in suspicion.

Long Yangjun nodded her head and said, “Grand Guardian Xu, I can assure you that Li Yao is not lying to you about that. The strength of the Cultivators is far greater than what you and the highest authorities of the Imperium imagine. Also, in terms of both behavior and fighting will, they are much better than the Cultivators in the last years of the Star Ocean Republic.”

“Also, the reason why you should lay low for a while longer is that the capital planet will witness great turmoil soon!”

Li Yao declared resolutely. Faced with the unstoppable rise of Blackstar the Great, the four Kurfürst families would certainly not idle by, not to mention that there was still the main fleet of the Covenant Alliance that had been lurking in secret the whole time. In the next year and a half, the Imperium would certainly be very lively. “If you truly want to accomplish something, your uprising will have much better results if you start it when the capital planet is in chaos!

“Think about it, Grand Guardian Xu, if you can’t hold it back and start a fuss tomorrow, the best result you can expect is to destroy the Great Iron Plants and kill one Li Minghui. It will not raise any influence on the capital planet, much less in the entire Imperium.

“However, if you keep laying low for a while longer, I’ll be able to teach the techniques that are suitable for you and the ways to produce the low-level magical equipment to you. Since you are the best workers, I’m sure that you can build the simple and preliminary components, can’t you? I can further simplify the production procedures of the magical equipment of ‘grassroots’ so that you can craft it in secret.

“Then, you will contact the other resistant forces below the ground and try to win them over. Even if they do not join your side, you can at least communicate and cooperate.

“In the meantime, I will go to the edge of the cosmos to contact the main force of Starlight. I have a big brother with the surname Bai who values brotherhood more than anything else. He has raised a strong team at the edge of the cosmos. I’ll certainly be able to persuade him to join our cause with our hundred years of friendship.

“By then, you will be much stronger on your side, and you will have the powerful support of the Cultivators on the outside. If the Immortal Cultivators happen to be fighting each other most intensely, wouldn’t that be a much better moment of uprising than right now?

“My visions will be fulfilled in a year and a half at most. You’ve been trapped in the darkness for thousands of years. Can you not wait for a while longer?”

Xu Zhicheng was deep in thought. His face was obviously not as tight as before.

He looked at Long Yangjun in inquiry again. Long Yangjun frowned for a long time and said, “Well, while this guy is not to be entirely believed, he is basically correct. Perhaps, the situation will be more in your favor if you postpone the uprising for a year and a half.”

Xu Zhicheng lowered his head again and touched his knees with his sweaty hands as he mumbled, “The arrow has been set on the bow and must be released. We have done all the preparations. Also, if Nepenthe continues to spread, Li Minghui will certainly discover it!”

“We can discuss and work out those technical details one by one!”

Li Yao gritted his teeth and said, “How about this? If Grand Guardian Xu changes your mind, I’ll help you kill Li Minghui!

“Taking down Li Minghui is of course not enough to dissect the whole Black Iron Group or solve your fundamental problem, but it will cast the corporation into chaos for a while, and someone new will replace Li Minghui.

“Once the new guy is appointed, what he is most concerned with is certainly to stabilize his position and to eliminate Li Minghui’s loyal supporters. There will be a lot of internal conflicts among themselves. He will certainly not lay his hands on the bottom-level workers at the beginning. Chances are that he will even appease you by offering you more benefits first.

“In such a way, you will have a precious moment of rest, and you can take it slowly according to my plan.

“Also, you don’t need to worry that you will be found out in the investigation. Such a treacherous man as Li Minghui must have tremendous nemeses. This is a sensitive moment when the Dongfang family is collapsing. I can totally pretend to be someone from the Dongfang family who has come to execute the ‘traitor’. He is in the Nascent Soul Stage and certainly not someone that any random person can kill. Nobody will suspect you!”

Xu Zhicheng widened his eyes and almost couldn’t believe what he just heard. His voice shivering, he asked, “Are… Are you serious? Li Minghui is an Immortal Cultivator in the Nascent Soul Stage, protected by a bunch of the most ferocious lackeys. He has also introduced thousands of battle puppets of the latest models. You want to kill him on your own? That’s too dangerous!”

“If that’s what it takes for Grand Guardian Xu and all the Nepenthe believers to change your mind, the risk is certainly worth it!”

Staring at Xu Zhicheng, Li Yao asked, “An honorable man always keeps his promise. How about it, Grand Guardian Xu?”

Caught in a dilemma, Xu Zhicheng asked for Long Yangjun’s advice again.

Long Yangjun, however, claimed that she was neutral and would never interfere with any decision of the Nepenthe believers. She only guaranteed that Li Yao could certainly fulfill his promise and help them kill Li Minghui.

Xu Zhicheng wiped the sweat off his forehead, only to smear his face. Taking many deep breaths, he finally made up his mind.

“Fine, we…”

Before he concluded his sentence, the ceiling above his head suddenly shook violently, and dense dust was sprinkling.

Almost at the same time, a deafening explosion echoed, and the soundwaves blasted the door of the cave like tides, making it fall apart.

In the next second, earsplitting alarms were echoing around the entire Great Iron Plants.

“Not good. The mining caves had an explosion!”

Xu Zhicheng’s face changed. Having no time to care about Li Yao or Long Yangjun, he rushed to the entrance of the cave. Hardly had he opened the door when a second explosion that was even more intense came over. The soundwaves almost knocked him over like a wild wind.

Li Yao and Long Yangjun looked at each other. They had both sensed that the explosions were of a high intensity and mixed with extremely chaotic spiritual energy.

In the mother lodes below the ground, apart from the rocks and the minerals, countless chambers of poisonous gas with a high temperature and pressure were also hidden. If the chambers were accidentally dug through and the inflammable gas leaked out, explosions were anything but unusual.

However, the normal gas explosions would not contain such powerful spiritual waves. Also, the raw crystals that included a lot of impurities were not something that could be detonated so easily.

Something was greatly wrong!

Chapter 2379 - Evil Double-Headed Snake!

Looking far away, Li Yao and Long Yangjun noticed that fiery snakes were surging out of a handful of caves like volcano eruptions on a wall on the south side of the Great Iron Plants. The fire was in the most eccentric violet color and condensed into hideous shapes in the midair, only to be ripped into shreds by the air cleaning system, as if countless incomplete ghosts had haunted the underground space.

The air cleaning system was overloading and squeaking because of the burn, sounding exactly like the shrieks of the restless specters.

Then, a third explosion that was even louder came over.

This time, Li Yao and Long Yangjun had both sensed the overlapping waves of spiritual energy darting out of the depths of the caves, powerful enough to blow away all the rocks on the wall.

Even some carts, which weighed dozens of tons after being loaded with minerals, were knocked away and did not fall after rolling for dozens of circles in the midair and being burnt into black, wasted iron.

It was indicative enough of the intensity of the explosions!

A lot of women and children immediately began to wail in the living areas, but the sounds seemed to be concentrated in one hut particularly. For the convenience of the workers, the families of the workers who belonged to the same factory or mine would live next to each other in the living areas. The families of the victims, after discovering that the mines in which their breadwinners worked had exploded, immediately lost their souls.

Staring at the burning caves, Xu Zhicheng seemed to have fallen into a frigid lake, not knowing what to do at all.

His eyes were extremely hollowed, and his body was all covered in sweat. His reaction suggested that it was his chest that just had an intense explosion and not the regular mining caves.

He looked even more devastated and desperate when he saw that the antifire spiritual puppets that were particularly resistant to high temperature and pressure went deep into the caves against the scorching flames.

Mine explosions were certainly no joke. If it was not dealt with in time, the whole mining area might collapse, and the Great Iron Plants would be destroyed.

Therefore, even someone as petty as Li Minghui had to spend a fortune purchasing the fully-automatic antifire spiritual puppets, as well as the excavators modified from crystal tanks with additional special antifire armor and tanks that were filled with super-compressed coolers, in order to deal with such emergencies.

At this moment, not only had tremendous antifire spiritual puppets marched in, but even the Immortal Cultivators deployed in the rest area up above were also charging into the most dangerous tunnels on the excavators to stop the fire and the collapse from spreading, which seemed to be a major reason why Xu Zhicheng was upset.

Observing his face in silence, Li Yao could easily tell that something was troubling the Grand Guardian.

Very soon, a few miners whose faces had been blackened hurried to come to the living area. Even though they had practiced the Serenity Arts for years, they could not stop the panic on their faces. They did not even have time to greet Long Yangjun before they cried, “Not good, Grand Guardian! It was the No. 37 cave that had explosions. The abandoned caves behind are affected too! The… things we hid there are half detonated and half discovered by the Immortal Cultivators!”

Xu Zhicheng’s body shook hard, and his face immediately became pale.

Li Yao was quick enough to support him and transmit a stream of gentle spiritual energy into his body so that his mind could be stabilized. He then listened to the Grand Guardian talking about the disaster in bitterness.

As it turned out, Nepenthe had been using the forsaken caves and tunnels to hide the weapons and magical equipment for tomorrow’s uprising. A large batch of crystal bombs was kept exactly behind the No. 37 cave. They were supposed to be distributed to every soldier tonight.

Those crystal bombs were all crudely made by the workers themselves. Naturally, the stability and heat resistance of the crystal bombs were close to zero. Nobody expected that the No. 37 cave before them would explode. The first explosion was actually not important, but it triggered the crystal bomb that was only one wall away, leading to a serial explosion and making the situation beyond rescue!

“Grand Guardian, so many spiritual puppets and Immortal Cultivators have marched in. They will certainly discover the crystal bombs that have not exploded yet!”

The few Nepenthe believers who came to report shouted, “Even if all the crystal bombs have been detonated, the color of the fire and the impurities in the air will still be different from a common gas explosion. The spiritual puppets and the Immortal Cultivators will certainly detect it in no time!”

“We can’t explain why so many crystal bombs are there at all. We’ve been exposed!”

“What do we do, Grand Guardian? We’ve been exposed. The Immortal Cultivators know what we are going to do. Give the order now!”

“Yes, Grand Guardian. Give the order now. There will be no time if we dawdle!”

Hardly had they finished when another few explosions echoed from the burning mines, except that they were not from deep inside the caves but more like explosions of crystal bombs in the midair mixed with feeble gunshots. It seemed that a minor engagement of fire had just happened.

“Not good!”

The few Nepenthe believers changed their face color abruptly and exclaimed, “The Immortal Cultivators must be trying to go to the hotspot through the few neighboring caves, but those caves are hiding our assets too. The brothers who are watching the assets… are already engaged in a fight with the Immortal Cultivators!”

With everything coming to this point, it was impossible to end the issue in peace.

Xu Zhicheng’s lips trembled for a long time before he roared loudly, “This is fate!”

When he looked at Li Yao again, his eyes became as determined and cold as before. He gnashed his teeth and said, “Fellow Cultivator Li, this is about the situation right now. We appreciate your kindness, but there is no time for us to take it slowly now. We’ve been exposed and have to start the uprising immediately. Are you going to stop us?”

Looking at the extreme chaos in the Great Iron Plants and the dancing flames, Li Yao was lost for words for a long time.

He thought that he had convinced the Grand Guardian of Nepenthe despite all the trouble. Little did he expect that the situation would escalate because of a minor explosion!

Was there really such a thing as “fate”?

Seeing that he was silent, and having no time to hesitate, Xu Zhicheng stared at Long Yangjun thoughtfully.

Long Yangjun shook her head slightly with a bitter smile. There was no telling whether she was laughing at herself or Li Yao. She took one step back and cleared the way for Xu Zhicheng.

“Tell all the Guardians that something has happened, and we can’t wait until tomorrow. Mobilize our guys and rise according to the plan to occupy the geothermal factory so that we can spread the ideas of ‘no horror, no worries, eternal tranquility’ to every district and every gap below the ground!”

Xu Zhicheng waved his hands aggressively. “We have absolutely nothing, and there is nothing we can lose now. Ask all our brothers and sisters to not be scared of the

Immortal Cultivators' swords and sabers because their blades will only send us to our real hometown that is ten thousand times better than this place!”

Surrounded by a few Nepenthe believers, Xu Zhicheng left the cave without looking back and dived into the fires that looked like tides and the darkness that felt like swirls.

Very soon, high-pitched sirens were ringing inside all the factories in the Great Iron Plants and repeated in the same rhythm.

The sirens were exactly the signal of fighting for the workers.

Inside every factory, every cave, and every living area, countless people wearing eye patches and masks, who seemed obedient and as humble as ants, stood straight and raised their heads high before they drew shabby blades from secret corners and lunged at the spiritual puppets closest to themselves, fighting iron with blood.

Some people who were stronger and wearing armor were even shouting and jumping at the few Immortal Cultivators in the area, with crude crystal bombs attached to their waists, trying to die together with the Immortal Cultivators. For the Immortal Cultivators who had extremely keen senses, such attacks were certainly futile if not ridiculous. However, for the Nepenthe believers who had activated the Serenity Arts to the maximum and were in absolutely no fear of death, they were simply marching relentlessly.

It was perhaps the only way that they could harm the Immortal Cultivators.

They would be satisfied as long as they could shower their blood on the Immortal Cultivators.

Even though their feelings and desires had been extinguished, their blood was still hot!

The air was like a pot of boiling porridge and an ocean where the torrents were raging unstoppably. The brainwaves of thousands of underground locals gathered together into the same cry, “Kill the Immortal Cultivators!”

The messy, blind, and unorganized uprising of Nepenthe began irreversibly!

Li Yao stared at the Great Iron Plants that was on fire and the underground locals who were charging at the fully-armed battle puppets and Immortal Cultivators while grabbing the most primitive weapons. His body seemed to be split into two parts, half frozen and half fiery.

The explosions in the mine seemed to be just an accident.

However, the Nepenthe believers were not real warriors at all but only desperate workers, farmers, and their families, as well as thousands of other pitiful folks who had been bullied, insulted, and exploited. The messy start of their hasty uprising was only an inevitability, just like their eventual failure!

“Do you know that for a moment, I was almost convinced by you?”

Long Yangjun’s face that was illuminated by the fire was devoid of sorrow or joy. She was truly like an indifferent onlooker as she remarked gloomily, “But the result is all the same. You can’t stop anything. You can’t change anything. Right?

“However, this great riot at least proves my theory indirectly. Perhaps this is how the Covenant Alliance originated in the beginning, isn't it?"

Li Yao's eyes were frozen for a long time before he finally turned to Long Yangjun slowly. "What are you talking about?"

"Nothing. I just want to ask you a question. Are the Immortal Cultivators and the people of the Covenant Alliance really sworn enemies? Are the Imperium of True Human Beings and the Alliance of the Holy Covenant absolutely incompatible?"

Long Yangjun sighed and said casually, "Or maybe they are just the two sides of the same coin, a pair of abnormal conjoined twins, and an inseparable double-headed snake?"

Li Yao's eyes rolled faster and faster.

Chapter 2380 - Origins of the Covenant Alliance!

2380 Origins of the Covenant Alliance!

“It seems that you have discovered the absurdities of the whole thing, right?”

Long Yangjun glanced at Li Yao and said, “For the high and mighty Immortal Cultivators, the bottom-level hominoids that they need are supposed to be dutiful, docile puppets of flesh and blood without the least resistance. Only by being so can they serve as the ‘foundation’ of the Imperium of True Human Beings for all eternity, collecting infinite resources for the Immortal Cultivators.

“To some extent, aren’t the people of the Covenant Alliance, who have no feelings, desires, and thoughts, and who are just walking corpses, more suitable to be reigned by the Immortal Cultivators than the workers before us who are full of resistance?

“The reason why the Covenant Alliance is against the Imperium of True Human Beings is that the people of the Covenant Alliance are implanted with the Path of Ultimate Benevolence. They are bound by the Three Fundamental Laws, which make them respect the Pangu Clan as the supreme god. Everything they do, as well as their own lives, is for the interests of the Pangu Clan.

“However, what if they had not been implanted with such an order but something else? For example… they were asked to regard the Immortal Cultivators as absolute dominators, and they had to sacrifice everything including their own lives for the Immortal Cultivators?

“If such orders do exist, wouldn’t the ‘demi-humans’ who are absolutely devoid of feelings and desires the best tools in the hands of the Immortal Cultivators?

“Therefore, the Immortal Cultivators at the tip of the pyramid and the ‘demi-humans’ who serve as the foundation of the pyramid are in fact perfectly compatible. At the very least, for the part of the Immortal Cultivators who are most selfish, it is perhaps the ultimate form of the civilization of mankind in their vision that only their families are entitled to emotions and thoughts while all the bottom-level people are just walking tools!”

Li Yao’s skin was boiling because of the hot waves, but his heart was almost frozen by what Long Yangjun just said. He mumbled, “Very reasonable. The Immortal Cultivators have been exploiting the ordinary people like livestock and machines blatantly. Since they are livestock and machines, feelings, desires, and even free will are all unnecessary!

“If the Path of Ultimate Benevolence can be redefined, and the worship of the ‘demi-humans’ for the Pangu Clan is changed into the worship for the Immortal Cultivators, before they replace all the ordinary people, it will indeed be possible for a tiny group of Immortal Cultivators to govern the civilization of mankind for tens of thousands of years and even longer. What a dark and rigid world it will be!

“Yes, yes. If I am such an Immortal Cultivator, it will not be my purpose to just defeat the Alliance of the Holy Covenant and destroy the primeval gods. My ultimate purpose should be to swallow the Covenant Alliance and transform most of the ordinary people into demi-humans, and I will be the new-generation Pangu Clan and the new-generation god!”

“If that is the case, a mystery that has lingered a thousand years can be resolved.”

Long Yangjun said thoughtfully, “It’s about how the initial people of the Covenant Alliance came from. For the first person of the Covenant Alliance who was brainwashed or ‘produced’ by an assembly line, who exactly brainwashed or produced him?

“I studied tremendous history books in the royal library, but the Imperium of True Human Beings is quite ambiguous about the issue, as if the people of the Covenant Alliance just emerged out of nowhere from a black hole at the edge of the cosmos and launched sudden assaults at the Star Ocean Republic at that time, before Blackstar the Great saved the universe in the great catastrophe. It doesn’t make any sense!

“The Covenant Alliance is the Imperium’s sworn enemy. The Imperium should have the most detailed studies on the origins and the development of the Covenant Alliance. It is exactly the same in all the other fields, where files from a myriad of perspectives are too many to be counted, but regarding the origins of the Covenant Alliance, all the history files seem to be covered in a dense fog, making it impossible to see through the truth.

“We can only be certain that it couldn’t have been the Pangu Clan who created the first person of the Covenant Alliance because the Pangu Clan had perished hundreds of thousands of years ago. Even if some of them are woken up again from hibernation or through genetic duplication, it will be barely possible for them to get used to the universe at present.

“More importantly, if such a living member of the Pangu Clan did exist, he must’ve been worshipped by the Covenant Alliance as a god. However, we have never discovered the existence of such a ‘living god’ in the propaganda of the Covenant Alliance.

“So, the possibility that the Pangu Clan created the Covenant Alliance is little to none.

“Then, did some human beings discover certain ‘man-manufacturing factories’ or ‘brainwashing factories’ from the primeval relics and decided to brainwash themselves?

“It doesn’t make sense either. Why on earth would anyone brainwash themselves and turn themselves into tools? Also, you have discovered a lot of primeval relics in person, and you must know that astronomical resources must be devoted in order to repair the facilities in the relics and make them operate again. It is certainly not something that a few adventurers can accomplish but requires the forces of a whole Sector who are coordinated by a government or an army.

“Of course, a long, long time ago, the combination of a government and an army is also known as a ‘sect’.”

Li Yao said solemnly, “Are you suspicious that a certain Cultivation sect created the first person of the Covenant Alliance a thousand years ago?”

“It is a very reasonable suspicion, isn’t it?”

Narrowing her eyes, Long Yangjun condensed all the flames that were reflected in her eyes into the sharpest redness. “Let’s wind the time back to two thousand years ago and observe the cold, dark edge of the cosmos on the exact opposite side of the Star Glory Federation.

“At that time, it had been at least seven thousand years since the fallout of the Star Ocean Imperium. After thousands of years of chaotic battles, the glories of the Cultivators in the old days had been mottled if not corrupted. Even though a new ‘Star Ocean Republic’ was born at the center of the cosmos, it was impossible for the radiance of the country to illuminate somewhere so distant and dark. The barren, harsh Sectors in the area were still governed by the experts, tyrants, sects, and warlords.

“In order to end the warfare and to unite the edge of the cosmos, and at least not to be swallowed by other people, all the experts, warlords, tyrants, and sect leaders must’ve been collecting resources, practicing techniques, recruiting troops, and waging wars through whatever means possible!

“For those Immortal Cultivators, it was certainly the most sophisticated art to exploit the last drop of blood and sweat from the ordinary people without causing their riot.

“Think about it. What if an Immortal Cultivator accidentally discovered a primeval relic and found a way to brainwash or even directly ‘produce’ ordinary people?

“In such a way, he would be able to produce the most excellent workers and the most fearless warriors in the universe incessantly, significantly increasing his own strength, and he would not worry that the ignorant, zombie-like ‘demi-humans’ would ever resist him. He would unite the edge of the cosmos, march to the center of the cosmos, and rule over all the stars in the universe for the next ten or hundred thousand years!

“Do you think that the Immortal Cultivators would not be allured by such temptations?”

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao shook his head. “Even though this Immortal Cultivator was enticed, would the sect or the government he belonged to risk it without caring about anything? None of them could see the danger behind it at all?”

“Do not consider the problem with your way of thinking two thousand years later.”

Long Yangjun said, “You are already aware of the existence of the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan. You know the horror of the primeval wars. You also see the aggression and the dominance of the Covenant Alliance. Of course, you can’t be more clear about the danger of hiding behind the ‘Path of Ultimate Benevolence’.

“But how could the Immortal Cultivators at the edge of the cosmos known as much two thousand years ago?

“Most of the files about the early phase of the civilization of mankind were lost and destroyed in the thousands of years of warfare. Based on the edge of the cosmos, which was uninformed, it was even less likely that they knew anything about the primeval wars. Even if they did, they wouldn’t care about it very much. Chances were that they would even think that it was a gift from the primeval gods!

“You know that when somebody is about to be drowned, he will grab at anything drifting by even if it is just a straw. Perhaps those guys were already dying under the attacks of their enemies. They were about to fail anyway. Why couldn’t they give the method a shot however dangerous it might be?

“Therefore, the Immortal Cultivators did the things that were most reckless and idiotic in hindsight. Devoting all their resources, they excavated and repaired the ‘man-manufacturing factories’ or ‘brainwashing factories’ before they transformed most of the ordinary people under their governance into emotionless, fearless, and hardworking ‘demi-humans’, with the instruction that they must be absolutely loyal to their rulers.

“At first, things went rather well. With those demi-humans, their efficiency in collecting and utilizing the resources was more than doubled. They truly reversed the outcome of the war and even united the dozens of barren worlds at the edge of the cosmos.

“However, what those guys who were celebrating their triumph did not know was that an instruction of a higher level was hidden in the heads of the ‘demi-humans’, which was exactly the ‘Path of Ultimate Benevolence’.

“When the ‘Path of Ultimate Benevolence’ was activated, it immediately overrode the instructions that the Immortal Cultivators gave to the ‘demi-humans’. The livestock, slaves, and soldiers who were loyal to the Immortal Cultivators a moment ago suddenly turned into their gravediggers. After burying all of them, they became the first natives of the Covenant Alliance.

“It was probably more than a thousand years ago. Due to the lack of proof and files, and since it happened so far away, it is impossible for me to deduce the specific details, but that was probably the general idea of what happened. Isn’t the riot of Nepenthe before us very similar to the rise of the

Covenant Alliance? If the Immortal Cultivators were not as strong, and you were never here, Grand Guardian Xu Zhicheng and his lot might really be able to create a minor Covenant Alliance, right?”

Thinking quickly, Li Yao discovered another loophole. “Wait, since it was more than a thousand years ago, there couldn’t have been Immortal Cultivators back then! Wuying Qi, the first Immortal Cultivator, was still drifting in space back then and had yet to arrive at the center of the cosmos. His Imperium of True Human Beings wouldn’t be established until a long time later when the Covenant Alliance invaded the Star Ocean Republic!”

Chapter 2381 - Meaningless Death

2381 Meaningless Death

Long Yangjun was amused. "'Immortal Cultivator' is just a name, a reference, and a mask. A mask can be freely changed, and even the face behind the mask can be entirely deformed, but the man-eating bones below the face have never changed in history.

"The masters of the man-eating bones were known as 'family elder', 'emperor', and 'deities' in the age of ancient Cultivators tens of thousands of years ago. In the thirty thousand years of the Great Dark Age, they were 'Ultimate One Demons' and 'saint-blood demons'. When it came to the Star Ocean Imperium, chances were that they got rid of their feathers and fangs and snuck into the Imperium's army, pretending to be 'Cultivators' shamelessly, and eventually leading to the collapse of the Star Ocean Imperium.

"In the thousands of years of bloody wars after the meltdown of the Star Ocean Imperium, they were the warlords, tyrants, dictators, and 'saviors' in the universe. After the Star Ocean Republic was established, they corrupted the parliament without anybody knowing it and became the degenerate representatives in it. Naturally, after the rise of the Imperium of True Human Beings, they put on yet another fancy, ostentatious mask and changed their name into 'Immortal Cultivator'!

“Do you honestly think that Blackstar the Great is the evilest human being in the universe and that there had been no Immortal Cultivators before Wuying Qi thought of the name ‘Immortal Cultivator’? Was it strange at all that the lords and emperors in the ancient times, the Ultimate One Demons in the medieval age, or the corrupted Cultivators in modern times would brainwash and enslave their own kind?”

Li Yao thought carefully for a long time before he replied, “If your deduction is correct, Blackstar the Great is probably greatly related to the whole incident!”

“Yes, that’s what I thought, too. After all, Blackstar the Great and the Alliance of the Holy Covenant rose almost simultaneously. It was exactly because of the Covenant Alliance’s invasion on the Star Ocean Republic that such an abnormal freak as the Imperium of True Human Beings was created. In the meantime, it was because Wuying Qi usurped the supreme power of the Star Ocean Republic that a civil war broke out, giving the Alliance of the Holy Covenant more opportunities to corrode the worlds at the center of the cosmos.”

Long Yangjun said, “We discussed before how Wuying Qi could steal the country as a foreigner after only working in the border defense army of the Star Ocean Republic for decades. It was simply too fast and too incredible.

“Was the Star Ocean Republic at that time really so decayed and corrupted that not a single general who was familiar with wars could be found, and Wuying Qi had to be the only candidate to save the day?

“But if we make the bold assumption that Wuying Qi was associated with the initial people of the Covenant Alliance, it would be much more reasonable.

“Wuying Qi was not necessarily the mastermind who ordered the production of the first people of the Covenant Alliance, but chances were that he was involved in the whole incident as an assistant or an observer. From the excavation of the primeval relics to the production of ‘demi-humans’ to the awakening and revolt of the ‘demi-humans’, resulting in the complete loss of control at the edge of the cosmos… It was possible that he experienced everything in person!

“Maybe he reached certain deals with the people of the Covenant Alliance who had awakened their Path of Ultimate Benevolence? It was highly likely. The people of the Covenant Alliance have only lost their feelings and desires but not the ability of rational thinking. On the contrary, many people of the Covenant Alliance boasted rigid but extraordinary computational abilities like spiritual puppets. As long as Wuying Qi raised attractive terms, say, he would help the Covenant Alliance spread its influence to the center of the cosmos, I think that the people of the Covenant Alliance would’ve considered such cooperation.

“Or maybe Wuying Qi was not just cooperating with the Covenant Alliance but also in possession of certain ways to manipulate part of the people of the Covenant Alliance, allowing his orders to override the Path of Ultimate Benevolence. Isn’t that a possibility?

“In any case, Wuying Qi and the Covenant Alliance reached a certain tacit agreement. Conspiring with each other, they carved up the Star Ocean Republic at the center of the cosmos that was reestablished after all the trouble. As a result, the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance became two pythons that entangled each other.

“Later, what exactly led to the fallout of the alliance between Wuying Qi and the Covenant Alliance? Was it because the Path of Ultimate Benevolence of the Covenant Alliance became more extreme and zealous, making them unable to tolerate such an ambitious man like Wuying Qi who was full of desires, or was it because Wuying Qi completely unveiled his schemes, where he was going to replace the primeval gods and rule over all the people in the universe with a supreme stature?

“We don’t know exactly what happened.

“However, if we view Blackstar the Great’s rebirth from that point of view, it will be much more reasonable. Why was he bold enough to surface at such a critical moment, at the risk of causing a civil war in the Imperium, against common sense? Was he not scared that the army of the Covenant Alliance would advance and take the advantage when he and the four Kurfürst families were engaged in a fierce war?

“He is a great man of the time from whatever perspective. It is impossible that he neglected the possibility and just let other people take advantage. The only explanation is that Wuying Qi may interfere with or control the Covenant Alliance’s strategies on a certain level to some extent!”

Li Yao’s pupils constricted quickly. He said coldly, “Yes. Perhaps Blackstar the Great did not reject the people from the Covenant Alliance. The only problem is, how can they worship the Pangu Clan who were gone hundreds of thousands of years ago? The people of the Covenant Alliance should worship him and regard him as the supreme god and savior!

“Before his fight with me, Wuying Qi expressed his abhorrence against the ‘false Immortal Cultivators’, claiming that he had a way to settle the ‘false Immortal Cultivators’ once and for all. At that time, I thought that he was just bragging. After all, the universe is too vast and boundless. Who could he count on if he intended to rule over the three thousand Sectors without those ‘false Immortal Cultivators’? But now that I think of it, if he can redefine the Path of Ultimate Benevolence and ‘reboot’ the brains of the people of the Covenant Alliance, is it possible that he can turn himself into a god of the Covenant Alliance?

“The selfless, tireless, fearless people of the Covenant Alliance who never disobey will be the best tools for him to curb the ‘false Immortal Cultivators’. They will be the puppet sabers that will absolutely carry out his will to the end!”

Long Yangjun put on a rigid smile and said, “You’re thinking much further than me. But on second thought, your theory is indeed self-consistent and explains why Blackstar the Great chose to rise at such a moment.

“However, it is not related to what’s happening right now, and we need more pieces of evidence to consolidate our speculations. Let’s go!”

Li Yao was stunned. “What?”

“Let’s go now!”

Long Yangjun said matter-of-factly, “You too have seen that the Great Iron Plants is in chaos and Nepenthe has been exposed to the Immortal Cultivators. The situation is beyond control. Do you want to die with the Nepenthe believers?”

Li Yao shook his head slightly, focusing his eyes on the burning battlefield.

He had been observing the battlefield since the beginning, mostly the fixed firing points, the automatic turrets, and the pivots of the defense rune arrays.

At this moment, tremendous battlefield parameters were flooding into his eyes incessantly, and a detailed combat plan was being generated quickly deep inside his brain.

“You know that I can’t run away from such things,” Li Yao said softly.

“Are you serious?”

Long Yangjun looked at him in disbelief. “You are even sicker now? You can’t be that stupid, can you? Do you have any idea about your body conditions? Tell me the truth, can your broken soul sustain you in the Nascent Soul Stage for two minutes?”

Li Yao sniffed and said determinedly, “Vulture Li Yao has seen worse in the thousand dangerous battles from the edge of the cosmos to the center of it over the past hundred years. I may have suffered certain minor wounds after the battle with Blackstar the Great, but you are greatly underestimating me if you think that I can only do it for two minutes! However weak I am right now, I can easily maintain the Nascent Soul Stage for two and a half minutes!”

Long Yangjun smiled even more hideously. “Fine, fine, fine. Let’s say that you can keep yourself in the Nascent Soul Stage for three minutes, then what? The Nascent Soul Stage does not mean invincibility. Your enemy has thousands of the most advanced battle puppets. Let’s say that each of them launches a hundred super-tiny self-exploding flying swords at you. Just calculate how many of them there will be in total. Are you sure that your body can handle it?

“Besides, Li Minghui has so many Immortal Cultivators under his command. Do you know that enough ants can bite an elephant to death?”

“It doesn’t matter!”

Pondering for a moment, Li Yao blinked his big and sparkling eyes and looked at Long Yangjun full of expectations. “Even if I am too heavily wounded to fight anymore, I still have two life-and-death brothers with me who will certainly try their best to help me resist the Immortal Cultivators!”

Long Yangjun: “… Two? One of them is Li Jialing, but who is this other one? It can’t be me, right?”

Li Yao nodded his head quickly. “Yes!”

“Cut the crap. I remember that a certain somebody drew a line two days ago and said that I was not his ‘best friend’ but just a ‘regular friend’. You can’t expect a regular friend to help you resist the infinite wrath of Blackstar the Great, right?”

Long Yangjun spat on the ground and declared angrily, “Most importantly of all, this battle is utterly meaningless. The Nepenthe believers are asking to be killed. Their riot does not concern the big picture and will not change anything at all.

“If they win temporarily, the days below the ground will not be brighter. If they are entirely wiped out, the situation will not be any worse! In the great game of the Cultivators, the Immortal Cultivators, the people of the Covenant Alliance, the extraterrestrial devils, and perhaps the primeval races, the insignificant battle here can barely be called a spindrift.

“Therefore, if you are ruthless enough to challenge Blackstar the Great, I’ll more or less understand you, and even if you are killed by Blackstar the Great, it will not be a disgrace for ‘Vulture Li Yao, dominator of three Sectors’. It will be a rather brilliant and glorious way of death.

“But you are now going to participate in an insignificant, meaningless battle, together with a bunch of miners and farmers, expecting to be beleaguered and killed by the spiritual puppets and the low-level Immortal Cultivators? What… What’s wrong with your head? Is it meaningful? Does such a way of death carry any significance?”

Long Yangjun seemed to be rather angry about Li Yao’s stupidity. She was grabbing Li Yao’s shoulders hard while trying to press her roars into his unreasonable brain.

Chapter 2382 - The Trivial Unchangeability!

2382 The Trivial Unchangeability!

“It seems… pointless for the big picture or the splendid, universal war.”

Breaking free from Long Yangjun’s grabbing, Li Yao grinned bitterly. “But it is more or less meaningful for Xu Zhicheng, for his two sons who have died but still ‘exist’, and for thousands of underground locals who have been living in the darkness for ten thousand years, both the living ones and the deceased one, isn’t it? Don’t forget that I just promised Xu Zhicheng that I will fight side by side with them!”

“What about your mission?”

Long Yangjun asked calmly, “You are here in the Imperium of True Human Beings as a full-fledged representative and a special envoy of the Star Glory Federation, aren’t you? You are here to strive to earn more national interests for the Star Glory Federation or at least to help the Star Glory Federation to survive, aren’t you? You are even hoping to change the war between the Imperium and the Covenant Alliance on your own and to achieve a certain subtle balance, aren’t you?

“Instead of focusing on the insignificant battle before your eyes—no, it can barely be called a battle and is just a messy riot that is destined to fail—don’t you feel that you have more important missions and more lofty destinies that need fulfilling? Should anything happen to you, what about your mission, and what about the Star Glory Federation?”

Li Yao hesitated for a moment. Then, the brilliance in his eyes was even more dazzling, and his smile became sunnier. “Yes, it is exactly because I’m here to promote the ideas of the Cultivators as a representative of the federation that I have even fewer excuses to retreat.

“Here, I am the Star Glory Federation, and I stand for all the Cultivators. How can a real Cultivator just get up and leave under such circumstances?

“If we can ignore the lives of so many ordinary people just because of certain ‘more lofty destinies’ or ‘more important missions’, will we, the Cultivators, be any different from the Immortal Cultivators? If you can turn a blind eye to the death of hundreds of thousands of people for ‘loftier destinies’, you will certainly not hesitate to sacrifice the lives of a million for ‘loftier, loftier destinies’!

“If I really do that, how can I be confident to promote the ideas of the Cultivators in the future? Nobody will trust me, nobody will believe the Star Glory Federation. Even I will not believe in myself anymore!”

Long Yangjun frowned so hard that water seemed to be dripping from her eyebrows. She said sullenly, “The federation really shouldn’t have sent such an idiot like you for such an onerous, complicated, and critical mission. You will screw it up 100%!”

“Perhaps, but this is exactly what the Cultivators of the federation are like.”

Li Yao retrieved three crystal suits and all the attack magical equipment from his Cosmos Rings and conducted the final maintenance while he grinned. “I believe that even if it were not me but my wife, Ding Lingdang, who was sent, she would undoubtedly make the same choice. She wouldn’t even have wasted so much time talking and would have charged at the enemy at the very first second.

“As for other people… I believe they are the same. The federation would certainly send a real Cultivator for such a mission, and a real Cultivator does not have a second choice when they encounter such a thing.

“Even if… I really screwed up the mission, it will not be the end of the world, will it? The universe will not stop existing because I’m gone. Didn’t the federation operate neatly in the hundred years while I was away searching for the Ancient Sages Sector?

“I trust Ding Lingdang, I trust Guo Chunfeng, I trust Senior Brother Peng Hai, I trust ‘Solar Eclipse’ Jiang Shaoyang, I trust Wu Mayan, Xie Anan, and Jin Xinyue. I trust all the Cultivators and all the citizens of the Star Glory Federation, who must be working diligently for the ideal of the Cultivators and the future of mankind! Even without me, the ideas of the Cultivators will be spread to the center of the cosmos and the entire universe someday. I have no doubt about that!”

Long Yangjun could’ve refuted what Li Yao said from a hundred perspectives.

But looking at Li Yao’s unbelievably scorching eyes, she was somewhat lost for words.

It was like a debate between someone smart and an idiot. No matter how many philosophies the smart guy knew, how adept he was at debating, and how unquestionable his rebuttals were, it was just useless.

The smart guy would only admit his debacle in the idiot’s ignorant but sunny smile!

“I also believe that even if I cannot change the big picture, I can at least influence the people around me and plant the seed of ‘Cultivators’ in their cold, barren hearts!”

Li Yao stared at Long Yangjun passionately. “As long as the seed roots and sprouts at the bottom of their hearts, it may boil their frozen blood and make them take over my responsibility and fulfill my destinies for me!”

Long Yangjun felt crept out while she was being stared at. “Hey, hey, hey. You can talk whatever you want, but don’t look at me like that, alright? I’ll certainly not join you and act like an idiot… What are those?”

Astounded, Long Yangjun looked at the three jade chips and two Cosmos Rings that Li Yao stuffed into her hands.

“Inside the jade chips are the methods of communication with the federation, as well as the production and assembly procedures for the super-remote communication bases.”

Li Yao looked at Long Yangjun, full of expectations. “The Cosmos Rings contain the basic units of the communication bases. But most of the components are broken now. They need to be maintained and reproduced in a large refining workshop.

“After all, we have been fighting together for a long time. Should… anything happen to me, please inform the federation of the news, or maybe you can find Boss Bai and ask Boss Bai to deliver the message back to the federation. You’re definitely okay with that, aren’t you?”

“I’m not!”

Clenching the jade chips and the Cosmos Rings, Long Yangjun gnashed her teeth and snapped, “Why would I help you and go insane with you? I’ve told you that I am an absolutely neutral observer. The federation, the Imperium, the Covenant Alliance, and even the extraterrestrial devils have nothing to do with me at all. I will help none of you, and I only care about myself. Everything I do, I do for my own purpose. Your life and death do not concern me at all!”

“If that is the case, why did you arrange for a little girl who was least pious toward Nepenthe to bring food for me in the 10,084th district? Didn’t you want her to ignite the fire in my heart as well as that in yours?”

Li Yao argued without giving in, “Furthermore, why did you go through all the trouble and set up a Nepenthe deep below the ground? Was it really meant to build a new hideout for yourself, to complement your own techniques, or to run a ‘social experiment’?

“Was it really a coincidence that you brought me to this place at the most critical moment?

“Or maybe, is it because deep down in your heart, you believe that the world before your eyes is wrong, and you vaguely expected that my arrival would change everything and achieve what a smart guy like you cannot through the most childish, idiotic, and clumsy approaches?

“Although you don’t want to admit it, the choice I’m making right now is what you have been looking forward to in your heart, isn't it? If I really flee with you, you will be very disappointed, and your confidence will be completely swallowed by darkness, won't it?"

"You…"

Long Yangjun was rendered speechless. Somewhat too nervous to make contact with Li Yao's aggressive eyes, she simply mumbled, "It's impossible. You can't change the world. It's hopeless. The Pangu civilization, the Nuwa civilization, and the infinite primordial civilizations earlier before them have all been devoured by the dark universe. This is perhaps the destiny of all civilizations. How can mankind survive it?"

"Yes. Compared to the boundless universe, human beings are simply too insignificant."

Li Yao put on the first crystal suit and retreated the other two crystal suits into the handiest Cosmos Ring. He then carried nine sabers on his back in the shape of a sector, which cast him into the halo of gold and silver brilliance.

Li Yao smiled at Long Yangjun and said, "However, no matter how insignificant we are, I will fight this world to the end, and I will never be changed by it!"

Long Yangjun's breath came to a brief halt. In her trance, she had the feeling that idiocy was contagious.

She could not look at Li Yao in the eyes anymore. So, she turned to the battlefield and changed the topic. "How are you going to fight this battle?"

She immediately regretted it after saying that, because her question on such details implied that she admitted the significance of Li Yao's battle.

“I don’t know. This battle is truly extremely dangerous. The chance of winning is no more than 1%. I can only hope that the control system of those battle puppets is not hard to compromise.”

Pointing at the firing points and the pivots of defense rune arrays around the Great Iron Plants, Li Yao said, “First of all, I will blow up all the fixed firing points and the pivots of the defense rune arrays, which will greatly reduce the pressure of the Nepenthe believers so that they can keep the battle puppets and the Immortal Cultivators occupied.

“Then, I will go to the control center of the battle puppets. There must be such a thing, right? If I can crack and compromise it, I can hope to control part of the battle puppets and even the whole defense system of the Great Iron Plants.

“Although the odds of success are extremely low and such actions may not be enough to stop Li Minghui’s elite troops, it is the only method available right now.”

The mental devil had swallowed a lot of tenebrum energy and heritages from Extraterrestrial Devil Mo Xuan and Extraterrestrial Devil Lu Qingchen, allowing it to learn many ways to hack and control the Spiritual Nexus from the predecessors.

Right now, most of the forces that were taming the riot were battle puppets, and the Immortal Cultivators were few. If he could locate the control pivot and hack it with the mental devil, it would be one way to settle the desperate crisis.

As to exactly what he was going to do when Li Minghui’s elite troops were back, or how he was going to deal with Li Linghai and Wuying Qi after they learned the incident later—Li Yao had no time to care about those things right now.

Right then, the earth quaked, causing huge noises, and a super heavy excavator drove out of a forsaken mine not far away from the two of them. The excavator had been modified and was pulling a piece of weird magical equipment that looked both like a silver pan and an iron hat. It was protected by dozens of tough-looking, fully-armed Nepenthe believers.

Li Yao was rather surprised because it looked quite familiar. He asked, “What is this?”

Chapter 2383 - Modify the Brainwave Magnifier!

2383 Modify the Brainwave Magnifier!

“It’s the super brainwave magnifier!”

Long Yangjun said, “The Nepenthe believers have accommodated it to an excavator, making it mobile, before attaching countless enhancement coils to it. As long as it is connected to the energy factory, it will magnify their brainwaves by millions of times, giving them a chance to be heard by all the residents in the underground towns within a thousand kilometers. For the record, that thing is completely made by themselves and has absolutely nothing to do with me. I’m highly suspicious about its stability, too. It will likely explode the moment it is connected to the energy factory, won’t it?”

“That’s not important. What’s important is that—”

Scratching his chin, Li Yao said quickly, “Why does this thing look so familiar to me? I think I saw it from somewhere else before. Got it. We once dug out similar magical equipment from the Kunlun relic and the Nuwa warship. It used to be the magnifying and interfering magical equipment in the primeval wars for the specialists of mental attacks of the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan to boost their mental combat ability, right?”

“Exactly.”

Long Yangjun nodded her head. “According to the Nepenthe believers, it was taken off from the head of a gigantic corpse deep inside a primeval relic. It could’ve been a piece of magical equipment for mental warfare from the Pangu Clan or the Nuwa Clan.

“You know that the primeval war of Pangu and Nuwa was a war about whether the soul should be sealed or be released to the maximum. Both parties tried their best to ‘brainwash’ their enemy. The Pangu Clan tried to inculcate the ideas of abandoning feelings and sealing desires into the Nuwa Clan, whereas the Nuwa Clan tried to ‘contaminate’ the Pangu Clan with the extraterrestrial devils in their heads. So, both parties boasted tremendous experts of mental warfare. The mutual transmission, interference, blockage, and corruption of brainwaves were among the main forms of war. It was not strange at all that such a piece of magical equipment was dug out from a primeval relic!”

Li Yao mumbled, “I wonder if this ‘super brainwave magnifier’ is of the same model as the devices that we excavated from the Kunlun relic and the Nuwa warship. When I returned to the federation from the Ancient Sages Sector, Master Jiang Shaoyang had already repaired a few pieces of magical equipment of the same type leading a team. They were the prototypes of the interferential magical equipment on the starships of the federation, and they could also be modified into facilities to help with mental training and increase the intensity of brainwaves.

“I spent some time in seclusion in one of the ‘mental training chambers’, learning the mysteries of brainwaves. I even dismantled and modified one of those devices!

“As far as I know, the magical equipment of such a type does not consume much energy. Why can it only be activated after the geothermal factory is occupied?”

“Come on, you were already in the Nascent Soul Stage back then and even slew a member of the Pangu Clan in person. Your brainwaves were unbelievably powerful. It was only natural that you could make use of the special magical equipment for mental warfare easily!”

Long Yangjun said, “However, most of the Nepenthe believers are ordinary people whose spiritual roots are not awakened. Compared to the experts in the Nascent Soul Stage and the Divinity Transformation Stage, their brainwaves are unrecognizably feeble. Even though they can resonate with each other, how can they power the magical equipment that used to be the tools of the primeval gods?

“Besides, the underground towns are blocked by too many rock stratum. Even the most intense waves will find it difficult to pass through the rocks. In order to deliver their brainwaves to thousands of kilometers away, they naturally need to enhance their brainwaves crazily, which requires the support of incessant, massive energy!”

“Got it.”

Li Yao mumbled. Rolling his eyes again and again, he considered the brand-new plan carefully, and his eyes got brighter and brighter. “In other words, if the device is not used by them but by me, the messy magnifying coils around the device and the massive energy in the energy factory will no longer be needed. The crystals that I’m carrying with me as well as the spiritual energy inside my body should be enough for it to work for a couple of minutes, right?”

Long Yangjun bulged her eyes again. “Hey, hey, hey. Don’t overestimate yourself. Your soul was seriously damaged in the battle against Blackstar the Great. It is already suicide to charge forward and attack so many enemies, and you are planning to exhaust your soul like that? Are you regretting that you can’t die soon enough?”

Ignoring her, Li Yao went on, “You said that I couldn’t enter the state of telepathy because the feelings and desires in my head were too strong, which stopped me from perceiving the amazing connection among the Nepenthe believers. If I do not want to get into the state of telepathy but only want to launch out my strong brainwaves, is it possible for all the Nepenthe believers to receive them?

“Perhaps my brainwaves cannot spread to thousands of kilometers away, but it shouldn’t be a problem for me to cover the entire Great Iron Plants as well as the dozens of underground towns nearby, right?”

Long Yangjun was more than furious. “You’re insane! You’re insane!”

“About that—”

Li Yao smiled and bared his white and sharp teeth. “You should have known it a long time ago, shouldn’t you?”

Rendered speechless, Long Yangjun almost couldn’t hold back the urge to roll her eyes and roar aloud.

Li Yao extended his hand to Long Yangjun. With the dominating, irrefutable brilliance beaming out of his eyes, he simply said, “Help me!”

…

BOOM!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The battle inside and outside of the Great Iron Plants entered the most heated phase the moment it began.

The Immortal Cultivators were much stronger, and they controlled all the fixed firing points and the defense arrays. In the meantime, the Nepenthe believers were the locals of the place who were familiar with every cave on the wall and every piece of magical equipment in the factories. Although the uprising began in a rush, they had already planted crystal bombs at the critical locations earlier.

At this moment, the crystal bombs exploded one after another, filling the entire factory area with lethal black smoke. No matter how the giant fans on the ceiling pumped, they could not reduce the intense fog by the slightest.

In the dense fog, light glittered nonstop. Broken limbs of human beings, mixed with the iron shells of the battle puppets, were thrown to the midair together into dazzling fireballs.

They were like ten thousand fireflies that had expanded abnormally. Feeding on human lives, they danced the craziest dance in the smoke and fire!

Because of the hasty activation, the Nepenthe believers' unprofessional nature had been exposed since the first second.

Although the miners and farmers were charging unstoppably and fearlessly, and they seemed to be on the winning side, their charge barely had any accomplishment. The lives of countless people were sacrificed just in order to destroy a few battle puppets. The Immortal Cultivators, on the other hand, hid behind the fixed firing points and the defense arrays at the earliest chance when they saw that things were not good. They were not in a hurry to have a head-to-head clash with the lunatics and simply held their positions while waiting for the mob to be exhausted and for Li Minghui’s elite troops to return.

If the rebels were not organized effectively, their blind riot would only be completely suppressed sooner than expected.

By the time Li Minghui’s elite troops arrived, the knell of death would be tolled for Nepenthe.

However, for the regular Nepenthe believers, such questions were beyond their concerns.

They were just dwelling in the reverberation of their brainwaves and carrying out the agreed-upon orders mechanically.

The dozens of Nepenthe believers driving and protecting the giant excavator were no exceptions. They were just trying to move the “super brainwave magnifier” to the geothermal factory at the center of the Great Iron Plants.

Bombs and grenades were exploding all the way, and the guards that were supposed to cover the flanks were not in positions, meaning that the vehicle would likely be destroyed halfway. However, for the rebels who lacked training and experience, they had no idea about what to do at all except sticking to the original plan.

As it turned out, they were caught in trouble soon after they drove out of the cave.

Because of the hasty beginning of the operation, the covering forces were not in position. They were soon discovered by three battle puppets.

The weird shape of the excavator drew the attention of the battle puppets. Those battle puppets seemed to have been set to the reconnaissance mode, and they would approach and scan it when they detected an anomaly on the battlefield. The battle puppets, which were in the shape of humans at the beginning, suddenly folded their heads and the limbs, and a second pair of ancillary claws extended out of their bodies, turning themselves into six-footed spiders. They jumped to the ceiling of the cave and crawled to the giant excavator quickly.

The Nepenthe believers who were protecting the super brainwave magnifier immediately opened fire at the battle puppets. It was a shame that they had never received professional shooting training, and the recoils of the guns were too huge for them. The bullets from the storm bolters raised a storm of dust on the wall, blowing off countless stalactites and stalagmites. But except for the one battle puppet which was sparking under the barrage, the other two battle puppets hopped to the front without being damaged at all.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Sharp blades ejected from the front ends of the arms and the feet of the battle puppets before they vibrated at a high frequency in humming sounds. The cold redness in their eyes locked onto all the Nepenthe believers one after another. All the Nepenthe believers felt that ice cones were being stabbed into their throats!

“Ahhh!”

A tall and stronger Nepenthe believer raised the vibration pickaxe that was used to shatter rocks. If he hit the target, the metal skull of the battle puppet would certainly be dug through. However, before he completed his movement, which was strong enough but too slow, the battle puppet whose crystal processor had been imported with tremendous slaughter skills had evaded agilely and leaped onto his pickaxe after a weird turn.

The blade ripped quickly, and the pickaxe immediately fell into two parts. What the Nepenthe believer held in his hand was just the handle now. As if dancing a graceful dance, the battle puppet swung the edge of the blade, which was vibrating thousands of times a second, toward the neck of the Nepenthe believer.

It was not even a battle but just a one-sided massacre.

The Nepenthe believer could not even see the battle puppet’s movement. There was no time for his nerves to react.

However, when the edge of the blade was about to cut the Nepenthe believer’s throat and carotid artery, the metal spine with which the battle puppet connected its crystal processor and the six sharp limbs was grabbed by someone before it was pulled out of its body by brute force!

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

The crystal processor of the battle puppet was completely separated from the shell and was still sparking brilliantly in Li Yao’s hands together with the metal spine!

Chapter 2384 - Such Old-Fashioned Trickery!

2384 Such Old-Fashioned Trickery!

Before the first spark died out, the metal skull of the battle puppet had already been waved by Li Yao like a hammer and thrown into the chest of the second battle puppet, which immediately collapsed.

The second battle puppet was still active. It took two steps back and intended to run off, but Li Yao’s giant hands had grabbed its head in advance. As Li Yao exerted his strength suddenly, the upper half body of the puppet was pushed back into the wall nearby. After a boom, the scorching flames of spiritual energy blowing out of Li Yao’s palm demolished the head of the metal puppet.

At this time, the third battle puppet fell down.

The battle puppet was barraged by the Nepenthe believers a moment ago, but it had not entirely lost its combat ability yet.

Li Yao grabbed the pieces of its companions and tossed them over casually. In earsplitting sounds, they pierced through the computation chips in its head and the reactor in its chest, making it dim and collapse in weird wounds.

In only one second, three battle puppets were all wasted!

The Nepenthe believers had repressed their feelings and desires but had not entirely lost their thinking abilities. They were all astounded by Li Yao’s unbelievable attack.

“Change of plan. Pull the ‘super brainwave magnifier’ back. I’m going to modify it!” Li Yao shouted at the Nepenthe believers.

The Nepenthe believers looked at each other in bewilderment. Noticing the crystal suit on Li Yao’s body that far exceeded their imagination and the battlefield up ahead that was even more dangerous, they were hesitating whether or not to follow Li Yao’s order when weird waves suddenly spread over in midair and flowed into their brains like brooks.

It was Long Yangjun who was directly giving them an order through the reverberation of brainwaves.

The “Serenity Seraph” had a high prestige. Although she was never involved in specific affairs, the battle was too chaotic right now, and Grand Guardian Xu Zhicheng was unreachable on the battlefield. Naturally, they needed to follow the Serenity Seraph’s order.

Therefore, the giant excavator returned to the exact forsaken cave where it came from. Li Yao’s spiritual energy spread out quickly like tides, scanning every tool and every piece of maintenance magical equipment, as well as the backup materials piled in the corner.

Li Yao had seen several pieces of “brainwave enhancing magical equipment” of the same type in the Star Glory Federation. He had once discussed the maintenance and modification plans with “Solar Eclipse” Jiang Shaoyang.

While this particular brainwave magnifier was slightly different from the few devices that he had met before, the general structure and the basic mechanism were the same.

He drafted the most convenient modification plan in only five minutes.

“Brother Yao!”

All the Nepenthe believers were asked to defend the cave on the outside, but Li Jialing barged in and said, “Sister Long said that you needed my help?”

“Exactly. I’m going to modify this ‘super brainwave magnifier’. You can give me a hand.”

Li Yao retrieved the materials from his Cosmos Rings and placed them on the ground before he said casually, “It’s not a complicated job. All we need to do is to dismantle the messy enhancing coils that the Nepenthe believers added and then install a few anti-gravity units and defense units so that it may hover around my head slowly. Due to the limitation of time, it doesn’t matter how it looks as long as it works. In the next second, you will do exactly as I say, and don’t have any concerns. Do you understand?”

“Okay!”

Li Jialing nodded his head and ran to Li Yao’s side, but he seemed rather hesitant.

Li Yao glanced at Li Jialing and asked, “Anything else you want to say?”

“N-Nothing.”

Li Jialing hesitated for a moment, but he still couldn’t help but say, “Sister Long said that you were sick again and that it was hopeless and could not be saved this time.

“She also said that you tried to trick her for a long time outside, only to no avail, and you would probably try to trick me by asking me to help you! She asked me to widen my eyes and raise my wariness and not to be deceived by you and commit the follies together with you no matter how convincing and blood-boiling you sound!”

Li Yao blushed and coughed. Not stopping what he was doing, he simply said, “Don’t listen to her nonsense. She is not a good guy at all!”

“If Sister Long is not a good guy, why are you hanging around with her, Brother Yao?”

Staring at Li Yao for a long time, Li Jialing said with a worried tone, “Brother Yao, is what Sister Long said true? Are you really going to resist the entire Black Iron Group with such a body? Do you have any idea how badly wounded you are? You just survived Blackstar the Great’s hands ten days ago, alright? Few people can achieve that in the entire universe, and they have to pay a horrible price even if they do!”

“Wrong.”

Li Yao said casually, “It was Blackstar the Great who survived my hands. Do not be mistaken about that.”

Li Jialing grew rather anxious. “Is that going to help the situation at all? The key is that your body is really broken and riddled with holes, and your soul is a hundred times more wounded than your body! You cannot take another high-intensity battle. Besides, you will be faced with Blackstar the Great’s infinite hunting after the battle?

"I'm really confused. What are you doing this for?"

On one of his knees, Li Yao focused his attention on polishing and building the chips and components that he was going to use next. After a long silence, he said, "Have you ever heard a theory that says 'with great power comes great responsibility'?"

"Huh?"

Li Jialing was dumbfounded, finding it impossible to believe his ears. "Brother Yao, seriously? Even if you can't stop yourself from tricking me, you should know better than tricking me with such old-fashioned and boring words. What do you mean by 'with great power comes great responsibility'? It is absolutely bulls*it. Is it a crime to be strong? Does it mean that you owe it to somebody else and have to sacrifice yourself for them? Why? I'm strong because I've trained hard and because of the prices I've paid. I deserve it! I like a free and enjoyable lifestyle. Is it not enough that I am not bullying other people or hurting any innocent? Is anyone justified to force me to shoulder the responsibility that does not belong to me?"

Li Yao smiled. "'With great power comes great responsibility' shouldn't be understood in such a way. It is just a malicious distortion.

"Let me give you the simplest example. You are an ordinary person, with extremely limited strength and senses, and you are playing with the crystal processor in your home after a dinner. You have no idea that an evil crime is taking place three blocks away. For example… a girl less than ten years old is tormented by a few mean gangsters.

"You have no idea that it is happening at all, so you are not responsible for it at all, right?"

Slightly stunned, Li Jialing nodded his head.

“But what if you are a trainer in the Refinement Stage?”

Li Yao said, “Your eyes are keen enough for you to hear the feeble cries and chuckles. Will you open the window and take a look, or even go to search for the source of the screams and the laughter? If you don’t do anything, will you feel that you are sort of guilty when you see the girl’s broken body on the news the next day?”

Li Jialing was silent.

“If you are as strong as someone in the Building Foundation Stage—”

Li Yao said, “Then, you may be able to hear the screams and the obscenities clearly when you are sitting in your home, which makes you immediately understand what is going on three blocks away. Every scream and every laughter would be stabbing your head like iron needles. Are you sure that you can still play with your crystal processor in your home as if nothing were going on?

“Furthermore, if you are an expert in the Core Formation Stage, you can hear, see, and sense even more things besides the scream and the laughter, including the girl’s desperation, her running tears, and the stink that is leaking from the gangsters. Besides, you know clearly that you can stop the tragedy from happening by just moving your little finger and making the gangsters get the punishment they deserve. Do you think that you are responsible for that?

“One step further, you are an expert in the Nascent Soul Stage or the Divinity Transformation Stage. Then, your senses can easily spread to ten blocks away. You can perceive the pains and desperation of so many people, you can stop countless crimes that shouldn't have happened, and you can help so many people escape from the swirl of fate. But of course, you can also idle by and watch those people to be insulted, damaged, and exploited, eventually stepping into their doom. Their every scream when they are hurt and destroyed will be etched into the deepest part of your brain. It can't be helped. Your senses are too sharp for you to avoid those sounds!"

Li Jialing said in a shivering voice, "I can suppress my senses and stop the information from getting in!"

"Yes, you can, but you will only be deceiving yourself because you know clearly that countless evils are happening around you right now, and an innocent little girl is being bullied, and you could've stopped everything."

Li Yao said, "Do you understand it now? For ordinary people, there is a middle ground between 'kind' and 'evil'. Ordinary people can always live on freely without shouldering any responsibility as long as they manage themselves well.

"However, for the experts, especially for the ultimate experts standing on the summit, there is no middle ground at all. You will either save the little girl, punish the mean gangsters, and shoulder the damn responsibility henceforth, fighting for everyone being bullied in your perception to seek the peace of your conscience; or stand on the gangsters' side, blowing whistles with your hands in your pocket while watching themtorture the little girl into bloody pieces. Such things happen countless times around you all the time, and you know it clearly.

"Do you get it now? Every ordinary person in the Great Iron Plants is a little girl being tortured by the mean gangsters. I can hear their cries and screams every second, I can smell their tears and blood. Such sounds and smells forever haunt me, and I know I can do something for them! I really can’t be untouched. I really can’t stop my eyes from seeing, my ears from hearing, and my blood from boiling, so that I can just walk away. I can’t do it!

“This is why with great power comes great responsibility. Nobody will force you to shoulder such a responsibility. I certainly won’t. It’s only your own ’empathy’ that will force you. Touch your chest and listen to your heart carefully. Is there the slightest ’empathy’ in the deepest part of your heart?”

Chapter 2385 - Moth or Butterfly?

2385 Moth or Butterfly?

Li Jialing’s breath became fast, and his pupils and nostrils expanded at the same time. Eyeing Li Yao in a completely strange manner, he mumbled, “Brother Yao, I feel that this is the first day I know you. So, this is the reason why you are fighting, and this is the real you?”

“Exactly.”

Li Yao smiled casually and said, “I’ve told you many times that the plain and stupid-looking appearance that I usually have is just a disguise for me to hide in the crowd. The real me is exactly so caring, benevolent, and righteous. When I told you before, none of you believed it and even looked at me as if I were a retard. But you are finally convinced now, aren’t you? How about it? Are you not deeply moved and astounded by what I said, and your beliefs had critical changes that made you a better man of integrity and devotion? Give me the No. 16 pliers.”

“I am indeed very touched.”

Li Jialing handed over the tool and thought for a long time, but he still shook his head and said, “But I’m sorry. It’s still difficult for me to make up my mind to be killed together with you. Sister Long said that you were a moth darting at a fire, and I feel the same. However fancy you describe it to be, it is still a stupid action.”

“That’s not a big deal. I wasn’t hoping to ask you to die with me, either. One person is enough to finish the follies. Your mission is to live on. If you are really touched by me and want to do something for me and the underground locals, you can go to Long Yangjun and ask for a few jade chips and Cosmos Rings. My secrets and my destinies are all kept inside.”

Flames of spiritual energy began to burn on Li Yao’s hands. The orange and the purple flames illuminated each other, connecting the components in the most simple and straightforward way. Determination beamed out of his eyes while he said, “However, Long Yangjun is wrong about one thing. I am not a moth, but a butterfly.”

“A butterfly?” Li Jialing was confused.

“Yes, a butterfly, one that might raise a storm!”

Li Yao grinned and said, “Do you know that the weather changes on any habitable planet that has an atmosphere involve billions of factors, which make it a system of chaos that can barely be predicted or controlled? That’s why some people say that the gentle breeze caused by the flap of wings of a butterfly on this end of the continent may turn into an overwhelming storm on the other side of the continent after being enlarged by the chaotic system!

“I think that the course of mankind in history is a similarly chaotic system that cannot be predicted or controlled, isn’t it? Because a nail was broken, a horseshoe was destroyed; because a horseshoe was destroyed, a horse was crippled; because a horse was crippled, a king fell off; because a king fell off, a country was lost. Who knows whether or not the most insignificant ripple today will intensify into the most intense, surging tides in the near future?

“That’s why I’ve been acting based on my beliefs on my whole journey without caring about the prices and the consequences. I know very clearly that I am incapable of resisting the dark and cold universe by myself, but I believe that every human being is a sealed star, and there is always some light and heat deep down in their hearts. Everything I do will more or less influence the people around me, causing cracks on the most solid shells and the hardest seals, so that the light and heat in the deepest part of their hearts will be released, even if by the slightest.

“You were a 100% Immortal Cultivator before you met me, but what about now? Even if you are a 99% Immortal Cultivator, it still means that we have made a progress of 1%, right?

“I believe that when thousands of 1% progress are combined, they will turn into an unstoppable brightness in time. One billionth of hope is different from complete desperation. A dark universe without any star and a universe where only one star is shining stubbornly are also different. As long as the first star begins to shine, the second, the third, the fourth, and the millionth star will soon follow, until all the stars in the entire universe will begin to glitter, illuminating the darkness and driving away the coldness, changing the universe into a different appearance!

“So, hehe, I will glitter on in the brightest way no matter what!”

Li Yao finished all the modifications and kicked the last component into the magical equipment heavily. Right now, the messy coils around the “super brainwave magnifier” were already gone. It was light and delicate, like a disc that slightly hollowed, connected to four anti-gravity units and four twisting field generators. There were also another four mysterious units that had metal membrane covers on the surface, making them look like honeycombs.

Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum!

Li Yao made up his mind and guided his spiritual energy into the “super brainwave magnifier” like a tide. The silver disc immediately hovered above his head, sprinkling out colorful, dazzling brilliance.

There was no telling if it was because of the influences of the “super brainwave magnifier”, but Li Jialing found himself deeply caught in Li Yao’s logic, unable to free himself. He couldn’t help but touch his chest.

Why… is my heart beating so fast, and why is it so hot?

Is what Brother Yao said true? Is it true that a star that contains infinite light and heat is sealed inside everyone’s heart?

Stupid! Childish! Idiotic!

But… why is every bone on my body seething in impatience? Why do I want to do such a stupid, childish, and idiotic thing together with him without bothering about anything else? Why exactly?

Li Jialing’s head was in utter chaos. He was deeply confused and overwhelmed when Li Yao pushed him away softly.

“Run to somewhere safe together with Long Yangjun. She was right. Even if we can defeat the Black Iron Group, Blackstar the Great’s hunting team will immediately come. Ten days are enough for Wuying Qi to get the whole capital under control. So, a couple of experts in the Divinity Transformation Stage will be coming for us, if he doesn’t come in person. At such a critical moment, you cannot afford being wounded.”

Li Yao gave Li Jialing a most brilliant smile. “As for here and now, just watch Brother Yao’s splendid performance!”

Li Jialing’s nose suddenly grew sour. Staring at the magical equipment hovering above Li Yao’s head, he suddenly asked, “Brother Yao, what are those? Are the things next to the anti-gravity units and the twisting field generators your last trump cards? You certainly have a lot of backup plans, and you will not… die just like that, right?”

“Of course, they are naturally my last trump cards. They’re four of the most shocking and stirring loudspeakers of the highest power, level, and penetration.”

Li Yao said, “You know that I’m a person who loves music. I also love a world where everybody can sing freely. So, let’s blow the crust ten thousand meters thick with our songs!”

While Li Yao finished his last syllable, the first thunderous note arose from deep inside his abdomen and the four super stereo loudspeakers above his head. Congregating into a highly-oriented blast, the sound marched to the battlefield unstoppably!

On the battlefield, the regular Nepenthe believers were still fighting the battle puppets in dizziness, but the leaders of Nepenthe, including Grand Guardian Xu Zhicheng, were caught in desperation!

Leading a commando team made of the elite soldiers with the highest combat ability, Xu Zhicheng tried to pierce through the few fiercest firing points around the Great Iron Plants, only to be blown back again and again.

The few firing points were nailed to the strategic locations that were of paramount importance like burning wedges, separating the workers within the Great Iron Plants and those on the outside, and stopping them from forming a united whole. Xu Zhicheng was unable to command all the troops effectively. Most of the Nepenthe believers were simply minding their own business and charging to get killed in a mess.

Without an effective command, the advantage in number was barely of any use when faced with the modern, fully-automatic magical equipment. The Nepenthe believers pushed forward like surging tides, but when the tides hit the reefs next to the shore, they could not shake the reefs at all, and they were simply blown apart themselves.

Although the Nepenthe believers had all practiced the Serenity Arts, they were not the people of the Covenant Alliance who had completely erased their feelings and desires. Their expertise varied, and they still held vague fear for death. The futility of such a long-time attack and the dead corpses everywhere on the ground resulted in the plummet of morale. Ripples of fear were already spreading on the seemingly indifferent and numb faces of a lot of people.

If things went on like this, it wouldn’t take long before they fully collapsed!

Gritting his teeth, Xu Zhicheng led another charge, but his hands that were only used to pickaxes were not familiar with sabers and swords after all. After leaving dozens of dead bodies, they had to fall back in frustration again.

On their two sides, many battle puppets had also noticed the relatively tough commando team. Cold redness flashed on the shells of the battle puppets, and their blades opened like sickles as they reaped the lives of humans and pressed at them.

Fearless, senseless, heartless, and tireless. In terms of those “advantages”, no matter how the Nepenthe believers practiced the Serenity Arts, and even if they became exactly like the people of the Covenant Alliance, they wouldn’t be nearly as good as the spiritual puppets, which were the real iron machines that were specifically designed for slaughters.

Deep inside the fixed firing points, the Immortal Cultivators, who were resting and waiting for their enemies to wear themselves out, simply smiled and enjoyed the slaughter dance of the battle puppets.

The messy riot was nothing but an interesting entertainment in their boring lives and a game that could help them exercise their bodies.

The Immortal Cultivators’ desire to kill was stirred by the bloody and stimulating picture they saw. Some of them were even discussing in a low voice if they should play a game where they would compete with each other on who secured a hundred or a thousand kills first.

It was exactly at such a moment when the explosive music rose and astounded the whole battlefield!

Chapter 2386 - Battle of Fury!

2386 Battle of Fury!

“No fears, no horrors, no worries, and eternal peace!”

Faced with the butchering sabers of the battle puppets, the blades and weapons of the Nepenthe believers were all minced apart into sticks. They could also retreat futilely until they fell to the ground, reciting the Serenity Arts of Nepenthe pretending to be calm with their eyes closed, waiting for the arrival of eternal peace.

Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi! Zi!

On the tubes of spiritual energy inside the battle puppets, daunting waves were spreading to the sharp blades at the front ends of their limbs. Under the scanning and analysis of their crystal processors, the “creatures” which were made of cells and boasted “temperature” were no different from the cold data. They did not really know the feeling of killing but were merely carrying out their orders dutifully.

“This is truly bad luck!”

The Immortal Cultivators in the fixed firing points all spat. After the fuss of Nepenthe, the operation of the Great Iron Plants would certainly be greatly affected, which meant that their bonuses and training resources in the next few months would shrink, too. There was no telling when the operation would be restored.

Everything was done by the ants who did not know what was best for themselves at all. So, it was only necessary for the Immortal Cultivators to go on a killing spree to vent their anger and to show the other ants the prices of violating the Immortal Cultivators!

“Don’t stop me. I’m going to kill a thousand of them today!”

Dozens of Immortal Cultivators chuckled creepily and all adjusted the output power of their crystal suits to the maximum. They all warmed up their joints, ready to leap out.

Outside of the fixed firing points, Xu Zhicheng’s commando team was surrounded by almost a hundred battle puppets. The shiny sabers, which were vibrating at a high frequency, were raised high, and the scanning and locking cameras on the battle puppets even drew narrow and long red lines on the vulnerable throats of the human beings.

The sabers fell!

BOOM!

The music that was as rampant as a flood, like a cannonball of soundwaves, was launched out of a forsaken mine, releasing ripples in the form of circles when it hit the hundred battle puppets brutally.

The first three or four battle puppets that took the hit were all blown back by the soundwaves before they were slowly dissected in the midair. All the components were ripped apart and spread to all directions.

The ten or so battle puppets behind them, in the meantime, were shattered by the deafening soundwave and the manipulative telepathic thoughts contained in the soundwaves. They seemed to be intact on the surface, but the joints, bearings, and gears inside were all loosening and dropping into a mess, with sparks splashing out. They were unable to take any action anymore, and they were completely paralyzed after shaking violently for a moment.

The dozens of battle puppets further behind were also affected by the soundwaves. Like puppets whose strings were cut off, they became rigid and sluggish, and all the lights on their shells were flashing crazily, half because of the interferences of the soundwaves and half because they had detected unbelievably extraordinary reactions of spiritual energy!

“What is that?”

The thunderous roars made all the Nepenthe believers tremble hard. Grand Guardian Xu Zhicheng and other people all turned around in astonishment and looked at where the soundwaves came from.

“What is that?”

The battle puppets did not have any wisdom, and they naturally did not know what fear was. They simply searched their database for the coping policies for such high-energy reactions. The result when all the crystal processors were functioning at a high speed was that all the battle puppets were briefly halted and silenced, as if they were deeply awed by Li Yao’s dominating vibe.

“What… What’s that exactly?”

The Immortal Cultivators in the fixed firing points were truly shocked. They had enough keen senses and abundant experiences for them to perceive how terrifying the fire, which was getting brighter and brighter, in the forsaken mine far away was!

It was impossible. Could… Could it be…

When everyone’s eyes were turned to the forsaken mine, a furiously burning streak of brilliance had already appeared at the center of the battlefield right above their heads through the route of the soundwaves just now!

It was a crystal suit that was glittering from head to toe. It seemed to be emanating all the brilliance in the thousand years within a moment. The nine humming sabers on its back were spurting out flames like tides, congregating into two enormous wings. Above the head, a silver disc was hovering and revolving rapidly, releasing dazzling silver arcs in all directions without stopping!

Before the Nepenthe believers, the battle puppets, and the Immortal Cultivators realized what was going on, the owner of the glittering crystal suit—Li Yao—had already raised the saber in his hand high and slashed it down, holding it so tightly that the handle was almost broken!

BOOM!

CRACK!

It was truly like a thunder tearing apart the sky. Li Yao’s saber was deeply embedded into the rocks below the ground, and the furious spiritual energy raged forward like a burning dragon in the direction of his saber and burst out, swallowing all the dozens of battle puppets.

The spiritual shields of the battle puppets were squeaking and thawing. The tempered shell made of superalloys and composite porcelain could not resist Li Yao’s fury and were falling apart. Tremendous sparks were splashing from every joint. Eventually, they all fell to the ground in sparks and noises.

BOOM!

Even Li Yao’s saber had tremendous cracks because of the thunderous slash. It was so deeply embedded into the rocks that it fell apart when it was grabbed again.

Without any hesitation, Li Yao threw the broken saber at the fixed firing point up ahead. He then stretched out his arms to the maximum and opened his hands, where two clusters of fatal light were quickly condensing and expanding, before he shot them out and hit the crystal reactors and the control crystal processors of the dozens of battle puppets precisely. Dark holes were stabbed on the skulls and the chests of the puppets, turning the most precisely-made slaughter machines into wasted garbage.

BOOM!

The broken saber pierced through the defense network outside of the fixed firing point in the most brute way, penetrating into the full-metal shell of the firing point like high-heat metal particles. Although it did not deal any direct damage, the earsplitting explosion echoed in the heart of every Immortal Cultivator like the drumming from the deepest level of hell.

They found it impossible to believe their eyes.

In the middle of the underground hominoids who were weeds, ants, and swines, an unparalleled expert who was at least in the Nascent Soul Stage had emerged!

How was it possible? Why was it happening?

The Immortal Cultivators who were willing to be hired by Li Minghui and stay in the underground world to suppress the hominoids naturally couldn’t have been top experts. They were mostly third-rate Immortal Cultivators in the Refinement Stage and the Building Foundation Stage.

Besides, the elite soldiers of the Black Iron Group had been taken away by Li Minghui to expand his territory in other towns. The guys that were left behind were the third-rate Immortal Cultivators of the third-rate Immortal Cultivators. How could they resist Li Yao who was on fire?

In the deafening, violent music, they were so shocked that their souls were falling apart.

There was no time to escape. The sabers on Li Yao’s back flew out one after another. Surrounded by the flames of spiritual energy, they were like gold falcons that were flapping the wings and flying at the pivots of the defense arrays and the main fixed firing points around.

The seemingly indestructible iron shell was soon ripped apart under Li Yao’s crazy bombardment. Devastating damage was left on the surface.

Li Yao extended his hand and snapped.

One, two, three… Thirty-six Triple-Headed Six-Barreled Vulcan Machine Cannons rushed out of the Cosmos Rings and floated above the fixed firing point that had the largest number of Immortal Cultivators. The dark turrets of the cannons stared through the cracks torn by the sabers at the Immortal Cultivators whose real faces had been revealed in their fears.

Those who enslaved other people with violence and who considered other people as pigs and ants would certainly be more despicable than pigs and ants when they were faced with violence that was stronger than themselves. It was exactly the logic of their survival.

“This Immortal Cultivator here, we would like to surrender! We would surrender!”

The Immortal Cultivators screamed in desperation.

They thought that Li Yao was an Immortal Cultivator from one of Li Minghui’s hostile forces or a survivor of the Dongfang family who came for revenge. So, they were all fleeing or begging for mercy.

Li Yao grinned and bared his sharp teeth. “That will be unnecessary. I am not an Immortal Cultivator… I’m a Cultivator!”

The thirty-six Triple-Headed Six-Barreled Vulcan Machine Cannons opened fire at the same time. Those cannons, which had been renewed and remodified by Li Yao and equipped with the most expensive cannonballs made of marrow crystals, were certainly much more powerful than the regular models. They had completely exceeded the category of single, portable magical equipment and were like an arsenal warship shooting from a close distance. The Immortal Cultivators in the fixed firing point could not resist at all. Their spiritual shields, crystal suits, and mustard-seed combat suits were all ripped apart. Their bodies were reduced into pulps of flesh and blood that looked like paste in only half a second!

The Nepenthe believers were so shocked by the scene that they were not back to themselves until a long time later. None of them, including Grand Guardian Xu Zhicheng, had any idea about what to do.

“What are you waiting for?”

Li Yao opened his helmet and shouted at Xu Zhicheng, “Launch the attack now!”

“You—”

Xu Zhicheng was still in a trance. Although Long Yangjun had briefly described Li Yao’s strength to him earlier, such overwhelming dominance was too much for him to fathom. It was not until this moment that he truly understood what great strength the insignificant body of a human being could possess.

More importantly…

Even a human, who could barely be called a human with his daunting strength, was willing to fight for them instead of enslaving and exploiting them?

Why?

Xu Zhicheng recalled his conversation with Li Yao a moment ago. At that time, he was not entirely convinced by Li Yao’s words, and deep down in his heart, he did not believe in the Cultivators. He could not imagine that a world of Cultivators could exist.

Such a world was simply too wonderful, so wonderful that it was almost a tantalizing dream or just another trap that would lead to even more miserable endings.

But right now…

Perhaps a dream could be realized after all, and their outcome couldn’t get any more miserable now, could it?

Seeing that countless Immortal Cultivators were butchered and blown apart into pieces by Li Yao as if they were chickens and dogs, and hearing the drumming of wrath, stubbornness, and excitement that sounded like from the deepest level of hell, Xu Zhicheng felt that his heart was burning. He roared at the Nepenthe believers around him, furiously and emotionally, “Let’s go and take back our Great Iron Plants!”

Chapter 2387 - Li Yao’s Preach!

2387 Li Yao’s Preach!

The deafening drumming and the unstoppable soundwaves immediately drowned the entire Great Iron Plants.

Even the magma well in the geothermal factory at the center of the Great Iron Plants was awed by Li Yao’s dominance, and its spurting fire became a glittering background for him.

Together with his breath and his heartbeat, the flames were rolling higher and higher.

Encouraged by the soul-stirring battle hymns, all the Nepenthe believers seemed to have been injected with new energy. They roared, charged, and ripped apart everything they saw again.

The battle puppets standing in their way, on the other hand, were interrupted by the flames of spiritual energy that Li Yao was releasing nonstop. Their movements immediately slowed down because of the massive interferential attacks, and countless minor logic errors were occurring, giving the Nepenthe believers a most precious opportunity of attack!

The torrents of flesh and blood instantly devoured the wall made of iron. Leading the vanguard, Xu Zhicheng led his elite commando team and broke into the central part of the

Great Iron Plants, successfully meeting with the workers who were on a riot within the Great Iron Plants!

The whole army was like a person whose nerves and veins were connected. It was now “alive”!

Li Yao, in the meantime, did not waste a single second, either. Like a dark gold god of death, he appeared on the top of all the fixed firing points one by one, leaving frightening blurred shadows behind him. Wherever he went, the enemies were crushed unstoppably. Not any Immortal Cultivator could resist him for one around. None of them were even able to keep their bodies intact. Their last cell was obliterated in his fury.

Two minutes later, most of the fixed firing points and the pivots of the defense arrays were destroyed, ending up as orange garbage in the thousands of degrees of temperature.

The Immortal Cultivators were either killed by Li Yao’s saber and spiritual energy or fleeing in desperation, trying their best to survive. How could they be idiotic enough to charge at Li Yao to be killed?

Those Immortal Cultivators, or rather, the “false Immortal Cultivators” who did not have real beliefs, were in fact not determined to fight at all. They were merely hired by the Black Iron Group and making a living in this place. Getting to the bottom of it, their lives mattered to themselves more than anything else. Was it necessary to sacrifice themselves for the little money that Li Minghui offered them every month?

Very soon, except for the battle puppets that were still resisting the tides of attacks loyally and tirelessly, there was not a single enemy as far as Li Yao could see.

Standing in the scorching air, under the contrast of the smoke and steam, Li Yao was somewhat unpredictable, but he was spreading out bright golden halos and illuminating the entire dark Great Iron Plants.

Ensuring that there would be no more interference from the Immortal Cultivators, Li Yao took a deep breath and inputted his thoughts into the “super brainwave magnifier” above his head.

The silver disc was immediately revolving multiple times faster than before. The runes on its surface began to glitter. Like a giant gyro, it emanated the most glamorous colors in the high-speed revolutions.

“Summon your courage!”

Li Yao spread the strong, persistent information to all directions through the “super brainwave magnifier”, not only reaching out to the entire Great Iron Plants but also to other underground towns far, far away along the dark, zigzagging tunnels around the Great Iron Plants.

“Summon your courage and fight the dark world to the end. In the meantime, do not ignore the feeble light in the darkness. Always remember what you fought for in the beginning!

“Do not forget happiness, do not forget anger, do not forget how to be touched, do not forget how to sing, do not forget your friends, your love, and your family, and do not forget your hope for the sunlight and the future because they are the reasons why you are fighting!

“Trust me, please trust me. There is hope. There is always hope! Do not abandon your feelings and desires in your desperation. Being emotionless will not make you any stronger but will only turn you into spiritual puppets of a different form. Spiritual puppets can never defeat the Immortal Cultivators and will only be manipulated by them! Even if you can defeat the Immortal Cultivators, does a world that is full of spiritual puppets without a single real human being have any point?

“Only by holding tightly to your feelings and desires can you be even stronger. This is the source of strength for all human beings, both you and me. This is the ultimate reason for our fight!”

Li Yao had never practiced the Serenity Arts, and he was incapable of telepathy, either. Naturally, he could not simply brainwash the Nepenthe believers with his ideas.

He was only releasing all the thoughts with the techniques of mental warfare that were within his knowledge, which danced in the midair like butterflies.

As to how much the Nepenthe believers could receive and if they could be awakened after they received the message, it would be up to themselves!

Li Yao knew that the speech that he came up with in a hurry was rather unconvincing and might not be enough to move the minds of the Nepenthe believers that had been sealed.

Therefore, he condensed tremendous pictures deep inside his memory that left a deep impression on him into ripples, spreading them out as many as possible.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

The first picture that Li Yao sent out was a music festival in which a hundred thousand people joined. All their hands were raised high to the sky, as if they were blowing up the sky. Their sweat was vaporized at the same time and mixed with the deafening sounds, turning the air into multiple colors. Everybody was shrieking, roaring, and hugging the people around them that they knew or did not know, releasing the most exciting feelings and desires.

The second picture that Li Yao sent out was one where the children were studying, laughing, and singing in the clean and spacious schools. When the gentle sunlight illuminated the faces of the children, turning their hair and eyelashes to dark gold, they appeared to be the best gifts for mankind that could only be condensed by consuming the spiritual energy of the entire universe.

Then, Li Yao showed the Nepenthe believers the supermarkets that were extravagant with a myriad of goods, the mass weddings that were warm and enjoyable, the ball games that were exciting and thrilling… as well as all the other pictures representing the feelings, desire, and will of mankind that he could think of.

Many of the pictures had long been mottled because they were kept in the memory for a long time. Also, their quality would suffer significant losses when they were transmitted through highly-unstable brainwaves. Perhaps by the time they were perceived by the Nepenthe believers, the only things left would be some incomplete pieces.

But even those pieces had dealt an unprecedented blow on the Nepenthe believers. A gate to a new world seemed to have been opened inside their brains slowly. They were all trembling and having trouble breathing, too overwhelmed to believe that such a world existed in the universe!

“Is this true?”

“That can’t be true.”

“But it would be so great if it was true!”

The Nepenthe believers looked at each other and Li Yao in confusion, expectation, desperation, and hope!

Li Yao felt that his brain was about to be emptied.

The mental attack tool, which was supposed to be used by the Pangu Clan and the Nuwa Clan, was now entirely powered by his heavily-wounded soul without the support of the energy from the geothermal factory. It was within his expectation that his brain was exhausted to the point of drought.

However, he had not fulfilled his destiny yet, and he could not stop!

In the next second, Li Yao gritted his teeth and condensed the tremendous fundamental knowledge on refining that he knew, including the production methods of certain weapons that did not require crystals, into information streams.

He also compressed the tactics and strategies for the ordinary people to deal with trainers or for the low-level trainers to deal with the high-level trainers, as well as the guiding principles of guerilla warfare, war of attrition, unrestricted warfare, etc., before he spread all of them to all directions, sending them to the towns further away through the tunnels and the cracks in the darkness!

Naturally, the direct transmission of information would not have very promising results. Even though he had sent out astronomical information, it was possible that the ordinary people below the ground could only receive some of the broken pieces, the fuzzy pictures, and the twisted numbers, which would only be forgotten very soon.

But Li Yao believed that the mottled pieces would be seeds. As long as they were sprayed and planted in the hearts of the underground locals, even if most of them forgot the information, some of the extraordinarily-talented guys would certainly remember it and study it in the darkness, making it grow into magnificent trees someday!

“Always remember that it’s not true that the ordinary people stand no chance of winning against the trainers. You are absolutely not lambs waiting to be butchered!

“The most critical factor is the cost for the trainers to take action!

“It takes massive resources and tremendous time for every trainer to stay at their current level. If they are unfortunately wounded, it will consume even more resources and time for them to recover. Trainers are extremely expensive and precise weapons that require huge investments every second!

“Take the Imperium of True Human Beings for example. Even for an Immortal Cultivator in the Refinement Stage who does nothing but conduct the fundamental training to maintain his current level every day, it will still cost him hundreds of crystal coins on a daily basis!

“If they are fully armed and march to the underground world to attack you, the cost will be increased by ten to twenty times. Even though they have so many resources, they still won’t be able to make up for the time that they have wasted!

“By comprehensive estimation, if the Immortal Cultivators march tens of thousands of meters into the ground to annihilate you, the cost will be dozens to hundreds of crystal coins even if they are destroying the most insignificant of you!

“It’s true that you are no match for the Immortal Cultivators, but you can try your best to increase the cost for the Immortal Cultivators to eliminate you through guerilla warfare and unrestricted warfare. If the Immortal Cultivators have to pay hundreds if not thousands of coins in order to kill one of you, then the Black Iron Group, the four Kurfürst families, and even the financial system of the entire Imperium of True Human Beings will go bankrupt!

“So, abandon the idiotic head-on clashes, try your best to preserve yourselves, and increase the cost for you to be destroyed. In the meantime, awaken as many people as possible and invite them to join your cause. Every new comrade you have will mean one fewer slave for the Immortal Cultivators and an additional cost of thousands of coins. Not a single financial system can bear such consumption. This is actually the greatest leverage that you have in the game against the Immortal Cultivators!”

Chapter 2388 - Caught in a Hard Battle!

2388 Caught in a Hard Battle!

The information above, as well as the tactics and policies that the geniuses of the federation came up with, including Jin Tuyi's ideas of transforming the Blood Demon Sector into a wasteland to resist the invasion of the federation, was propagated through Li Yao's explosive brainwaves unstoppably.

All the Nepenthe believers in the entire Great Iron Plants were bathed in Li Yao's mind ripples and ocean of information, thinking, chewing, and perceiving in a trance.

Compared to the ignorance and fearlessness a moment ago, their eyes right now were much clearer, and feeble sparks were gradually glittering in their eyes.

However feeble one spark was, they would certainly illuminate the infinite darkness when thousands of them were combined!

"Brother Yao… has truly succeeded?"

Li Jialing and Long Yangjun observed the battle from the high stance on the top of the forsaken mines to the southwest of the Great Iron Plants. They also sensed Li Yao's brainwaves that were spreading out like a rampant flood.

Li Jialing did not expect that Li Yao would choose such a surprising way to move the Nepenthe believers. He remarked in disbelief, “It’s truly as expected of Brother Yao!”

“You are a fool. He is still far from success!”

Long Yangjun’s face was gloomy, with complicated feelings brewing inside her eyes. There was no telling whether she was wishing Li Yao to succeed or to fail. She said coldly, “No matter how I overestimate his idiocy, he always manages to break the limits of my toleration again and again. His soul was so heavily wounded in the battle against Blackstar the Great that it would’ve fallen apart if he were a normal Cultivator! But after the narrow escape, he does not cherish his life at all but is powering the ‘super brainwave magnifier’ so crazily to send out his brainwaves.

“It’s like a ‘magnate’ who seems wealthy but actually heavily indebted and is on the brink of bankruptcy. But still, he is still doing philanthropy work without any hesitation. He is obviously flaunting himself!

“Hehe. It’s been many three-minutes since he joined the battlefield. Just observe. His spiritual energy and even the fire of his soul will soon die out. On the other hand, the battle puppets in the Great Iron Plants and the stealthy Immortal Cultivators are not entirely annihilated. It is needless to say that Li Minghui’s main forces have not returned yet!

“Burning himself up completely just to show off for one moment, only to be beaten into a meat pie alive later. Those idiotic Cultivators…”

Long Yangjun’s words were like a cruel prophecy. Hardly had she concluded her sentence when Li Yao, who was floating above the Great Iron Plants, began to tremble and dim clearly.

Although he looked as dominant as before, and the common Nepenthe believers might not be able to tell the difference, Li Jialing and Long Yangjun sensed at the same time that the heavy wounds on Li Yao's body and soul were beyond control and had burst out at the same time!

Li Yao grunted, feeling that a black hole full of tusks was slowly surfacing inside his head and sucking his every brain cell.

Ever since he advanced into the Divinity Transformation Stage, his head had never ached as much before. It was so painful that he almost wanted to blow up his head with his own fist.

His soul that was full of "cracks" and on the verge of falling apart was seething in impatience, too. He was unable to control the veins, nerves, and muscles around his body. His internal organs, or rather, all his body parts, were cramping violently.

The circulations of spiritual energy that were operating in order a moment ago were immediately jammed like an air highway that just had a series of accidents.

He could not maintain the combat ability of the Nascent Soul Stage anymore, and his level was plummeting like an avalanche.

Is it… finally coming?

Li Yao tried to swallow the blood that was as hot as magma and grinned.

Of course, he knew how much damage he caused to himself by blowing the magnificent “Ultra-Galactic Cannon” at Blackstar the Great half a month ago.

It was already beyond his expectation to have persisted for such a long time.

However…

“Damn it. How many battle puppets are out there exactly? Why do I feel that I can never finish killing them?”

The battle puppets were certainly not under the interference of his deafening battle hymns and his blood-boiling fighting will. They were still lunging at him in teams of three to five coldly and mechanically.

Also, in the battle just now, his speed, movement, and habitual techniques had been captured by the crystal cameras of the battle puppets and sent to the super crystal processors deep inside the Great Iron Plants to analyze his weakness and the coping policies.

As the brand-new database of tactics was upgraded, the battle puppets were even more sleazy, cunning, and tricky to deal with. Also, they loosened the suppression of the Nepenthe believers and focused most of their firepower on Li Yao.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The thousand battle puppets were firing at Li Yao at the same time. The stormy barrage crazily consumed Li Yao’s spiritual shield that was dimmer and dimmer, but Li Yao could not dodge at all, because countless Nepenthe believers, as well as the common underground locals who were not even Nepenthe believers, were right behind him. They were the people that he swore to protect!

He could only grit his teeth and open the spiritual shield to the maximum and push forward against hundreds of fireballs that were bursting all the time until he marched into the battle formation of the puppets and initiated the most brutal head-on clashes!

One attack! One attack! Another attack!

Li Yao’s strength had dropped to the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage. The ways of fighting in the Core Formation Stage and those in the Nascent Soul Stage were different. They were much more direct, cruel, and bloody, allowing Li Yao to wave a saber no longer than three meters as if it were more than ten meters long. Wherever the shiny edge of the saber reached, the broken limbs made of iron were flying randomly while all the battle puppets were cut into pieces by Li Yao!

However, Li Yao did not stay long at the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage. As the mechanical debris around him grew more and more, his level soon dropped from the superlative height of the Core Formation Stage to the general peak and then the middle level of the Core Formation Stage. Soon, he could barely keep himself in the Core Formation Stage anymore!

Clang!

For the first time, Li Yao’s indestructible saber was blocked by the blade claw of a battle puppet.

A second battle puppet took the opportunity to ambush Li Yao from his flank. Its saber completely broke Li Yao’s spiritual shield, leaving a hideous mark on the surface of the crystal suit.

The broken pieces of the spiritual shield dispersed like butterflies that were almost transparent. Li Yao was completely exposed to the edges and barrels of the battle puppets. It was needless to say that countless Immortal Cultivators were impatient in the darkness. Those guys who had been hiding so far all noticed Li Yao’s weakness and that he seemed to have marched into the battlefield on his own without any reinforcement. Rolling their eyes quickly, they were all growing determined to kill him again.

If they could slay such an expert who emerged out of nowhere, it would certainly be a great accomplishment.

Besides, judging from the quality of the man’s crystal suit, he must be in possession of many ultimate treasures. Now that Li Minghui was not back yet, if they could kill him and loot his treasures…

From the nostrils of the Immortal Cultivators that were expanding, bloody air was spurting out.

“Sister Long, Brother Yao really can’t hold on anymore!”

Hiding in the forsaken mine high on the wall, Li Jialing saw everything clearly. He asked, his voice shivering, “What-What do we do?”

“What do you mean by ‘what do we do’? He had it coming. If he wants to die, he is free to do that!”

Her face full of coldness, Long Yangjun gnashed her teeth and said, “What, are you thinking to rescue him, or rather, die together with the dummy?”

Looking at the heated battlefield and Li Yao who was glowing at the center of it, Li Jialing was somewhat in a trance and confusion. He mumbled, “I don’t know. It’s true that I have never gotten in touch with anyone as… unique as Brother Yao before.

“Perhaps he can be innocent and childish sometimes, and he doesn’t look like a renowned expert in the Divinity Transformation Stage, like Li Lingfeng and his lot, at all.

“However, when I used to be with Li Lingfeng and the other Immortal Cultivators, my nerves were tightened every second, and I had to be wary of the schemes and clandestine all the time. My life at that time was truly tiresome and devastating.

“But when I am with Brother Yao, my days are very relaxed and happy, and I do not need to worry about a thing. That is something that I’ve never experienced before. I do not want Brother Yao to die here in such a way!

“Please, Sister Long, come with me to help him!”

“Help him?”

Long Yangjun sniffed and eyed Li Jialing up and down. “It seems that idiocy is truly contagious. Are you an Immortal Cultivator or not? Since when have you learned ‘altruism’?”

Li Jialing blushed and thought in a daze for a long time. Not denying it at all, he simply said, “I’ve killed people and helped people. Before I killed anyone, I had imagined the feeling of killing people countless times, and I thought that it would certainly be wonderful and gratifying.

“But after I did kill someone, it occurred to me that it was not wonderful and gratifying at all. Instead, it felt much greater to help other people and hear their gratitude and see their smiles.

“Sister Long, you must’ve killed a lot of people. Is it really fun to kill people? More fun than helping people?”

Frowning, Long Yangjun said coldly, “I don’t know. I’ve never helped anyone.”

“Yes, you have.”

Li Jialing said solemnly, “Didn’t you say that you once helped the workers of the Great Iron Plants get rid of the shadow of extraterrestrial devils when you just got to the underground worlds? They must’ve thanked you from the bottom of their hearts, didn’t they? Were you not happy to hear their gratitude?”

Narrowing her eyes, Long Yangjun stared at Li Jialing with dominating air beaming out of her eyes. “Kid, are you giving me a lecture?”

“Sister Long, you are angry.”

Summoning all his courage, Li Jialing looked back at Long Yangjun. “Are you mad at Brother Yao’s stupidity or at yourself because you do not have the courage that Brother Yao has?”

“I am mad at your idiocy!”

Long Yangjun dragged Li Jialing, who was about to lunge out, back. “Don’t underestimate your damn ‘Brother Yao’. You think this is enough to push him into a dead end? He still has trump cards, and he does not need you to add to his trouble!”

Chapter 2389 - The Gold Lion’s Decision!

2389 The Gold Lion’s Decision!

“Trump cards?”

His eyes widened, Li Jialing mumbled to himself in disbelief while he stared at Li Yao’s fire that was burning out in the iron torrent, “His soul is about to be exhausted, his Colossus is on the brink of destruction, and he lacks enough spiritual energy to power his crystal suits even if he still has any. Does Brother Yao… still have trump cards?”

…

Huchi! Huchi! Huchi! Huchi! Huchi!

Li Yao, who was sweating blood, naturally did not hear Li Jialing’s mumble. He simply bulged his bloodshot eyes and stared at the battle puppets, which were stepping over the debris of their companions and surrounding him, as well as the Immortal Cultivators who were hiding behind the battle puppets hoping to take advantage of the situation.

At such a close distance, he could see the hideous grin of the Immortal Cultivators clearly and perceive their ravenousness.

Those jackals and hyenas must’ve thought that he was exhausted, didn’t they?

“Hehe.”

Li Yao vomited the most intense blood and spoke to the other party in his mind. “You are quiet for a long time. This does not look like your style. Why did you not persuade me to give up?”

“Did it ever work?”

The mental devil sighed and said, “We’ve been entangled for a long time. Do I not know you at all? I’ve already given up trying. You can do whatever you are happy to do!

“Besides, the doctrines of Nepenthe are in direct contradiction with my beliefs, too. Don’t forget that I’m more inclined to the extraterrestrial devils and feed on intense feelings and desires. Naturally, I do not want to see everybody to be ’emotionless and free from worries’!”

Li Yao smiled. “So, you are going to help me?”

The mental devil was silent for a moment before it snorted, “It won’t happen again!”

When the voice was still echoing, a bloody sprout emerged at the center of Li Yao’s forehead where the conarium and the spiritual root were located. Expanding and splitting instantly, it enshrouded Li Yao in infinite brilliance of blood.

“Ahhhhhhhhhhh!”

Li Yao let out inhuman roars. The extremely lackluster gold flames around him turned into an even more dazzling red, stretching out tentacles to all directions like an undersea monster. He was on a rampage again!

The crystal suit that was on the verge of destruction completely fell apart, and he switched to a second battlesuit in the color of blood. The sixteen bloody wings on the back that looked like those of a bat were stretched out to the maximum. It was like the ghost from the deepest level of hell had crawled out of the bottomless abyss back to the human world for revenge!

“What—”

All the Immortal Cultivators who had left their shelters were dumbfounded; their minds completely overwhelmed by the brutal vibe around Li Yao. They could barely keep themselves on their feet!

“M-Master!”

Some of the cleverer Immortal Cultivators immediately kneeled, pretending that they were here to surrender to Li Yao instead of ambushing him, but it did not change their ending at all. Before their regrets and fears spread to their entire bodies through the nerves, they had already been completely swallowed by the storm of blood!

Five minutes. For the next five minutes, the only thing that could be seen was a streak of golden brilliance reflecting in the entire Great Iron Plants nonstop. Wherever it reached, the battle puppets all exploded into the tiniest pieces, while the Immortal Cultivators became blood blocks mixed with metal scraps. His attacks were even more aggressive and brutal than before. Even the Immortal Cultivators who were hiding in the corners were found out and crumbled by the bloody claws.

Under the illumination of the magma, the entire Great Iron Plants became a real slaughterhouse brimming with dead bodies, and the only butcher was Li Yao!

One slaughtering a thousand!

Li Yao at this moment seemed to have been enhanced by the blood and valiance of all the martyrs of the Star Glory Federation in the past hundreds of years. He was almost invincible!

…

“Brother Yao does have more trump cards. He… H-He is so awesome!”

Li Jialing jumped high and waved his arms in excitement. He couldn’t tell why he was so excited, but when he watched Li Yao going back and forth on a rampage unstoppably, he felt that something was echoing in his head and his chest. “This is what a real man should do!”

Long Yangjun, on the other hand, looked more and more awful. She suddenly fell on one of her knees and sensed the quakes in the rocks that were getting more and more intense.

“Li Minghui is back with his main forces.”

Long Yangjun mumbled to herself, “What trump cards does your Brother Yao still have this time?”

…

It was true that Li Yao had played all his cards.

When the first armed excavator dug out from the rocks above the Great Iron Plants, even the mental devil had run out of strength.

Li Yao and the mental devil were the two sides of the same soul. Since the fierce battle against Blackstar the Great seriously damaged Li Yao’s soul, the mental devil was naturally affected, too. The brief outburst just now couldn’t last at all.

After the brief outburst, he was even more fatigued than before. It was barely possible for him to keep himself steady with his saber as a stick.

One, two, three… More and more armed excavators that were wearing heavy armors and looked like hybrids of rhinos and beetles dug out of the wall, followed by an iron torrent of thousands of battle puppets, as well as the Immortal Cultivators who were fewer in number but much tougher and mostly in the Building Foundation Stage or even the Core Formation Stage!

Having dominated the underground worlds for decades, Li Minghui was naturally capable of much more than bribery and a*s-licking. He had recruited a crew of ferocious and ruthless bandits to work for him.

Those people were obviously not of the same level as the weaklings who were left to watch over the Great Iron Plants. Also, most of the newcomers had shares in the Black Iron Group. This place was where their livelihoods depended on. So, their determination to fight was very strong.

“What exactly has happened?”

Li Minghui was still dozens of kilometers away, but he had seen everything that happened in the Great Iron Plants through the tactical network. He was so infuriated that he was roaring crazily, “Who is he? Kill him! Kill him!”

Thousands of battle puppets in the form of spiders occupied the rocks above the Great Iron Plants densely. They all lowered their bodies like springs at the same time before they jumped at Li Yao abruptly.

The Immortal Cultivators followed them closely, dispersing unhurriedly to besiege the enemy and to clear the Nepenthe believers around, blocking all Li Yao’s possible routes of escape.

Li Yao vomited blood as he grinned miserably. Retrieving the last saber from his Cosmos Ring, he raised his saber high and charged at the first battle puppet that was coming at him.

“You want ‘Vulture Li Yao’ to flee? You scumbags are far from qualified!”

…

“Sister Long!”

Li Jialing’s eyes were red, like an angry calf, but his voice was extremely hoarse, as if his throat had been burnt up by his fury. “Brother Yao has run out of his trump cards. Are you really not going to help him?”

“He may have, but so what?”

Long Yangjun eyed Li Jialing and said, “A word of advice. Li Yao’s sleaziness is far beyond your imagination. Who knows if he has even more trump cards? If he really has no more trump cards, you will also be killed if you go down and help him! You are still young, and you have a promising future. Why do you have to die for this guy and his idiotic beliefs?”

“I-I don’t know.”

Taking a deep breath, Li Jialing shook his head hard and said, “You’re right. I’m too young to understand whose beliefs are right and whose are wrong. It’s just—It’s just that I suddenly feel that my life before has been too good for nothing. I just want to fight a gratifying battle just like Brother Yao! If I miss the battle and watch Brother Yao be killed in front of me, I will certainly spend the rest of my life in regrets, unable to eat and sleep again. What ‘promising future’ would I even have?”

Long Yangjun was of a mind to dig the skull of the silly boy with her eyes and see if the brain inside was in the same structure as Li Yao’s. “I’m truly confused. Why are you all so desperate to be heroes—heroes that will be killed immediately?”

“Heroes…”

Li Jialing’s furry face blushed again. Thankfully, it was barely recognizable because of the cover of the golden hair. “Maybe. Who doesn’t want to be a great hero who changes the world when they are young? It’s just that many people do not have the courage to admit it!

“Craving to be a hero but not daring enough to be one, and then claiming that there is no such thing as a ‘hero’ in the world, that all the people who want to be heroes are fools, and that their stay-out-of-trouble decision is the mature and rational thing to do, in order to cover their cowardice and hesitation… That’s the excuse that many people use to deceive themselves, right? Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan said exactly the same things to me in the past.

“At that time, I thought that they were right. The world was really dark, and heroes didn’t really exist.

“But today, I’ve seen a real hero, and it occurs to me that what they said was bulls*it. If heroes do exist, maybe the world is not as dark as they claimed, is it?

“Death, hehe, did you know that the last thing I’m scared of is death, Sister Long? I lived miserably for more than ten years in Li Lingfeng and Wuying Lan’s laboratory, and I prayed for death countless times. At that time, if Li Lingfeng were ‘merciful’ enough to allow me to die, I perhaps would’ve kneeled and thanked him.

“Besides, didn’t Sister Long and Brother Yao say that Blackstar the Great was looking for me because I was a carrier for his possession and reincarnation? Without Brother Yao, I estimate that I wouldn’t be able to get away from him on my own. Instead of falling into the hands of that old fart and being modified in peculiar ways that would transform my body into unbelievable ugliness and evilness, I might as well fight side by side with Li Yao in a glorious battle. This is my body, and no one else can control it except for me!”

Long Yangjun was shocked by the golden brilliance emanating from the young man’s eyes.

It suddenly occurred to her that Li Yao’s young and naïve brother was just as not to be underestimated as Li Yao himself.

“Sister Long, if you can’t help, just go away now. It will be terrible if you are besieged by Li Minghui’s team.”

Li Jialing smiled and clenched his fists. “There’s no need to persuade me. Brother Yao needs me. We are brothers. This is our war. I have no reason to retreat at all.

“Brother Yao, hang in there, I’m coming!”

The young man let out the roars of a lion and put on the transformative crystal suit that Li Yao carefully made for him. Like a glittering gold cannonball, he threw himself into the battlefield in a brilliant arc in the darkness!

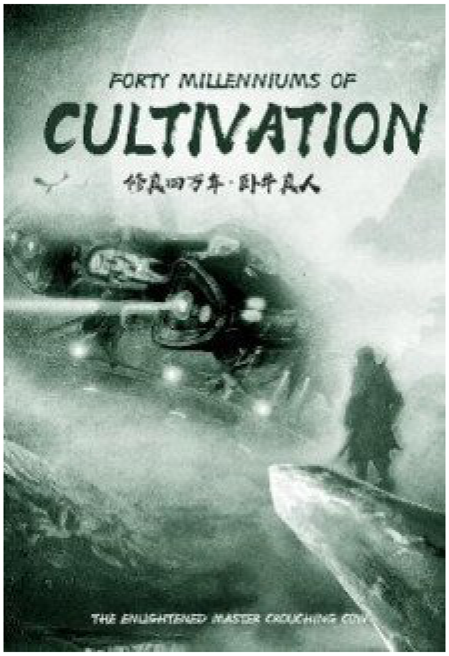
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